

Barbara Wolfe, Jessica Jakubowski, Robert Haveman and Hannah Goble (University of Wisconsin - Madison, United States), "Casino Revenue and Indian Health: the Link Between Tribal Gaming and the Health Status and Behaviors of American Indians"

Abstract

Establishing the causal relationship between income and health remains elusive despite extensive prior research. The recent legalization of American Indian (AI) casino gaming and the sizable income flows to a historically impoverished and disadvantaged population from it creates a unique opportunity to examine this relationship in a quasi-experimental way. Net revenue from AI gaming has been used to provide both direct financial support to tribe members and to support tribal infrastructure, such as health care facilities. In our study, we rely on the establishment of gaming facilities by selected tribes (due to both tribal heterogeneity and varying state law) and not by others to provide a relevant comparison enabling the identification of the effects of the increased revenues on AI health. We use data on tribal gaming, ecological health access data from the Area Resource File and individual health and socio-economic characteristics data from the Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System from 1988-2003. Our results provide identified estimates of the effect of revenues from gaming on individual AI health, cash income, and poverty outcomes. No prior research designed to evaluate the potential health effects of the largely exogenous introduction of gaming income exists.