2023

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE ISSUES
Gambling

Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF **HOUSTON**

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Texas Legislative Issues 2023
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The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texans ages 18 and older to assess their preferences and opinions regarding legislation that will be considered by the Texas Legislature during the 2023 legislative session. The survey was fielded between January 9 and January 19, 2023, in English and Spanish, with 1,200 YouGov respondents, resulting in a confidence interval of +/-2.8%. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education and are representative of the population of Texas adults.

This is the second of six reports. The first report examined the saving and spending preferences of Texans related to the state's current $33 billion budget surplus, support for legislation to reimburse universities and colleges for tuition benefits provided to veterans and to expand Medicaid's postpartum coverage, and support for a series of proposed sales tax exemption bills. This report examines support for gambling legislation presently under consideration in the Texas Legislature. Future reports will examine support for school choice, and for legislation regulating marijuana, abortion, firearms, elections, immigration, and energy.

Executive Summary

Texas Senate Joint Resolution 17 (SJR 17), if passed as introduced during the 2023 regular session of the Texas Legislature and approved by a majority of Texans in a November 2023 constitutional amendment vote, would dramatically alter the landscape for gambling in Texas. SJR 17 would allow the following:

- The creation of one destination casino resort in each of the state's four major metro areas: Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin

- Limited casino gambling to be conducted by each existing horse racetrack (three total) in Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio

- Limited casino gambling to be conducted by each existing greyhound racetrack (two total) in Corpus Christi and in Harlingen (Rio Grande Valley)

- The Alabama-Coushatta in East Texas, the Kickapoo in Eagle Pass, and the Tigua in El Paso to operate slot machines or casino gambling on tribal land

- Legal sports betting to take place in Texas

- The tax revenue raised from these casinos and gambling would be used to provide tax relief and to provide funding for education and public safety.

As proposed, SJR 17 enjoys solid support among Texans across multiple socio-demographic lines.

75% of Texans support the passage of SJR 17, including 41% who strongly support its passage.

25% of Texans oppose the passage of SJR 17, including 13% who strongly oppose its passage.

Two-thirds (66%) or more of every one of 22 distinct Texas socio-demographic sub-groups examined support the passage of SJR 17.

83% of Black, 77% of Latino and 73% of white Texans support the passage of SJR 17.

78% of men and 72% of women Texans support the passage of SJR 17.

Texan generational support for the passage of SJR 17 ranges narrowly from a high of 81% among Millennials to a low of 69% among Generation Z.

80% of Texas Democrats and 72% of Texas Republicans support the passage of SJR 17.

69% of Texas born-again Christians support the passage of SJR 17.

61% of Texas evangelical Protestants support the passage of SJR 17.

75% of Texans in the state's five populous urban counties and 66% of Texans in the suburbs surrounding these five urban counties support the passage of SJR 17.

74% of rural Texans, 81% of Texans living along the U.S.-Mexico border and 82% of Texans in regional hub counties (e.g., Bell, Lubbock, Nueces) support the passage of SJR 17.

69% of Texans support separate legislation that would only legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas, including 31% who strongly support it.

31% of Texans oppose legislation that would only legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas, including 17% who strongly oppose it.

74% of Texas Democrats and 66% of Texas Republicans support legislation that would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas.

74% of men and 65% of women support legislation that would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas.

62% of Texas born-again Christians support legislation that would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas.

Survey Population Demographics

Whites account for 45% of this survey population of Texans 18 and older, Latinos 37%, Blacks 12%, and others 6%. Women account for 51% of the population and men for 49%. Regarding generations, 29% of the population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 25% to Generation X (Gen-X, 1965-1980), 30% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation, and 16% to the Generation Z (Gen-Z, 1997-2014) cohort. The highest educational attainment of 40% of the population is a high school degree or less, while 29% have either a two-year degree or have attended some college, and 31% have a four-year college degree or post-graduate degree as their highest level of educational attainment. One in four (25%) of these Texans is a born-again Christian while 75% are not. Two-fifths (39%) of the population identifies as Democrat, 36% as Republican, 20% as Independent and 5% are unsure about their partisan identification. Geographically, half (50%) of these Texans reside in one of the state's five populous urban counties (Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Tarrant, Travis) while 17% reside in the suburban counties surrounding these five populous urban counties (e.g., Collin, Denton, Fort Bend, Guadalupe, Montgomery, Williamson), 13% reside in counties which serve as regional hubs for the surrounding areas (e.g., Bell, Jefferson, Lubbock, McLennan, Nueces, Smith), 8% reside in populous border counties (Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Webb), and 12% reside in the state's more sparsely populated rural counties.

Public Opinion on SJR 17, the Bill Which Would Legalize Casino Gambling in Texas

At the time of the drafting of the survey, one casino gambling bill had been filed, Senate Joint Resolution 17 (SJR 17). The survey respondents were asked the following question: "Current legislation under consideration would provide for the following if passed by the Texas Legislature during the 2023 session and approved by voters in the fall of 2023. This legislation would:

- Allow for the creation of one destination casino resort (with Las Vegas style casino gambling) in each of four major metro areas: Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, Austin.
- Allow the one existing horse racetrack (three total) in Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio to each conduct limited casino gambling.
- Allow the one existing greyhound racetrack (two total) in Corpus Christi and in Harlingen (Rio Grande Valley) to each conduct limited casino gambling.
- Allow the Alabama-Coushatta in East Texas, the Kickapoo in Eagle Pass, and the Tigua in El Paso to operate slot machines or casino gambling on tribal land.
- Allow legal sports betting to take place in Texas.
- The tax revenue raised from these casinos and gambling would be used to provide tax relief and funding for education and public safety.

Do you support or oppose this legislation as described above?"

Figure 1 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support (41%), somewhat support (34%), somewhat oppose (12%) and strongly oppose (13%) SJR 17, which would legalize casino gambling (in the manners specified above) in Texas. In all, three out of four Texans (75%) support the passage of SJR 17 while one out of four Texans (25%) oppose the passage of SJR 17. These proportions exclude the 13% of Texans who did not know enough to have an opinion on the legislation.

Figure 1: Support for & Opposition to the 2023 Texas Senate Joint Resolution 17 (SJR 17) on Casino Gambling (%)
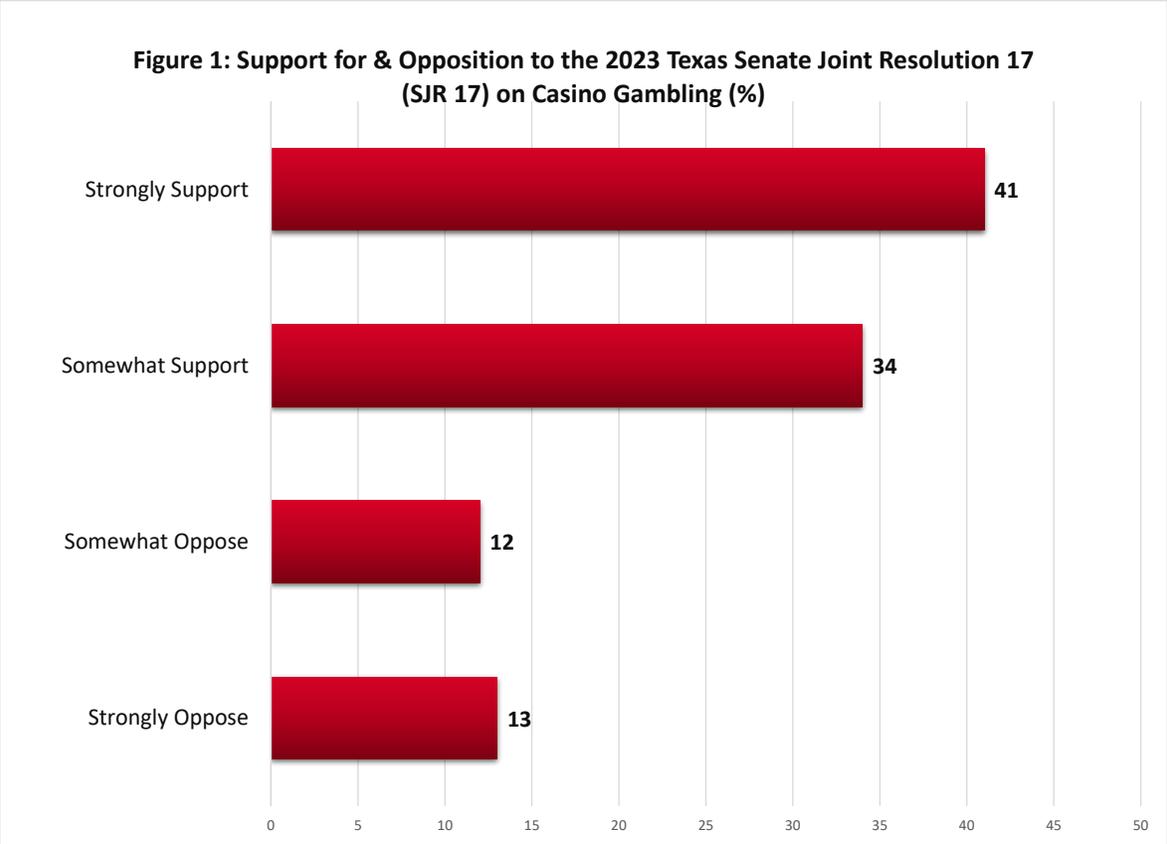
Table 1 breaks down support (strongly or somewhat) for SJR 17 by ethnicity/race (white, Latino, Black), gender (women, men), generation (Silent/Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z), highest educational attainment (high school, two-year degree or some college, four-year degree or postgraduate degree), partisanship (Democrat, Independent, Republican), religion (born-again Christian or not a born-again Christian), and region of residence (urban, suburban, regional hub, border, rural).

Table 1: Support for Texas Casino Gambling Legislation (SJR 17)

Group	Sub-Group	Proportion of Support (%)
Overall	Overall	75 (41)
Ethnicity/Race	White	73 (37)
	Latino	77 (48)
	Black	83 (39)
Gender	Women	72 (34)
	Men	78 (47)
Generation	Silent/Boomers	70 (39)
	Generation X	77 (43)
	Millennials	81 (45)
	Generation Z	69 (31)
Educational Attainment	High School or Less	78 (46)
	Some College/2-Yr Degree	74 (39)
	4-Yr Degree/Postgrad	73 (36)
Partisan ID	Democrat	80 (46)
	Independent	74 (43)
	Republican	72 (38)
Religion	Born-Again Christian	69 (30)
	Not Born-Again Christian	78 (46)
Region	Urban Counties	75 (40)
	Suburban Counties	66 (29)
	Regional Hub Counties	82 (48)
	Border Counties	81 (56)
	Rural Counties	74 (41)

Proportion strongly in support in parentheses.

Support for SJR 17 across these 22 different socio-demographic sub-groups ranges from a low of 66% to a high of 83%, underscoring the deep and wide support for the passage of this casino gambling legislation in the Lone Star State, with little in the way of salient socio-demographic differences in support for the legislation. Even partisan and religious differences, while statistically significant, are also relatively muted from a substantive perspective, with 72% of Republicans and 80% of Democrats
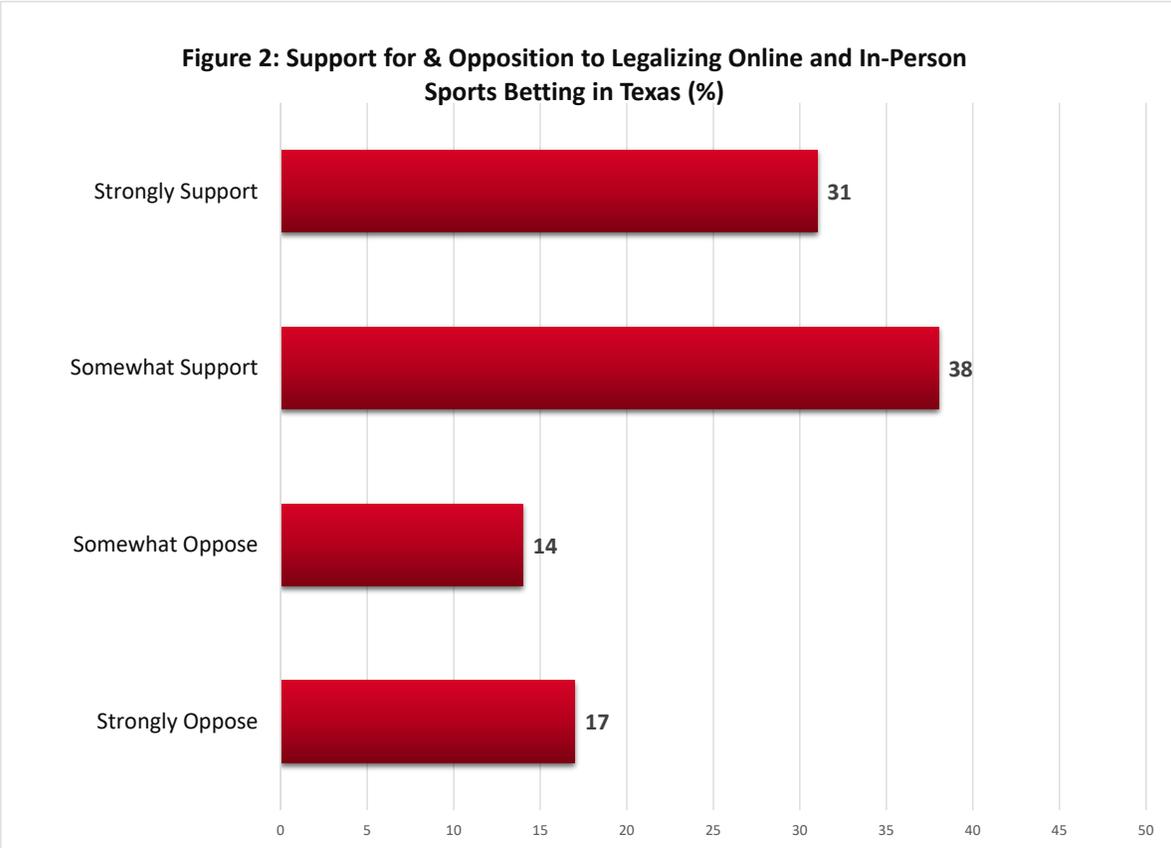
in support of SJR 17 and with 69% of Texans who are born-again Christians supporting SJR 17 compared to 78% of Texans who are not born-again Christians. The proportion of the largest sub-group of born-again Christians, evangelical Protestants, who support SJR 17 is somewhat lower, 61% (28% strongly), but still represents a robust majority.

Public Opinion on Legalizing Online & In-Person Sports Betting in Texas

The survey respondents were also asked the following question: "Legislation currently being considered by the Texas Legislature would allow legal sports betting to take place in Texas online and in-person. If passed by the Texas Legislature during the 2023 session, it would be on the ballot for approval by voters in the fall of 2023.

Do you support or oppose this legislation?"

Figure 2 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support (31%), somewhat support (38%), somewhat oppose (14%) and strongly oppose (17%) this legislation which would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas. These proportions exclude the 14% of Texans who did not know enough to have an opinion on the legislation.

Figure 2: Support for & Opposition to Legalizing Online and In-Person Sports Betting in Texas (%)

Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of Texans support legislation which would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas, compared to 31% of Texans who oppose the legislation. That said, this 69% is lower than the proportion who support the more expansive and inclusive SJR 17 (i.e., 75%). And,

significantly more Texans strongly support SJR 17 (41%) than strongly support legislation to legalize sports betting in Texas (31%).

Table 2 breaks down support (strongly or somewhat) for legalizing online and in-person sports betting in Texas by ethnicity/race (white, Latino, Black), gender (women, men), generation (Silent/Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z), maximum educational attainment (high school, two-year degree or some college, four-year degree or postgraduate degree), partisanship (Democrat, Independent, Republican), religion (born-again Christian or not a born-again Christian), and region of residence (urban, suburban, regional hub, border, rural).

Table 2: Support for Sports Betting Online and In Person

Group	Sub-Group	Proportion of Support (%)
Overall	Overall	69 (31)
Ethnicity/Race	White	66 (32)
	Latino	73 (32)
	Black	74 (28)
Gender	Women	65 (23)
	Men	74 (40)
Generation	Silent/Boomers	57 (25)
	Generation X	72 (38)
	Millennials	78 (35)
	Generation Z	79 (27)
Educational Attainment	High School or Less	69 (32)
	Some College/2-Yr Degree	69 (31)
	4-Yr Degree/Postgrad	69 (30)
Partisan ID	Democrat	74 (35)
	Independent	68 (32)
	Republican	66 (29)
Religion	Born-Again Christian	62 (23)
	Not Born-Again Christian	72 (35)
Region	Urban Counties	72 (33)
	Suburban Counties	58 (17)
	Regional Hub Counties	69 (37)
	Border Counties	79 (38)
	Rural Counties	63 (32)

Proportion strongly in support in parentheses.

The range of support for the legislation which would legalize online and in-person sports betting in Texas across these 22 different socio-demographic groups ranges from a low of 57% to a high of 79%. There do not exist any significant ethnic/racial or educational differences in support. While large majorities of men (74%) and women (65%) support the legislation, men are significantly more likely to support it than women, and especially more likely to strongly support it (40% vs. 23%). And although a majority of the members of the Baby Boomer/Silent Generation (57%) cohort support the legislation, this proportion is significantly lower than that of the members of the three other respective generational cohorts (72%, 78%, 79%). In terms of partisanship, two-thirds of Republicans (66%) and 68% of Independents support the legislation, with a significantly higher proportion of Democrats (74%) than Republicans in support. Finally, while more than three-fifths (62%) of born-again Christians support the legislation, this proportion is significantly lower than that for Texans who are not born-again Christians (72%).

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