

1.7 Arguments For/Against Gambling

Gambling is often the evil. How can something be so commonly and passionately desired but also the most hated? It is an activity that touches on mankind's deepest dilemmas. The desire for risk-taking versus providing safety for the family. The possibility of winning big vs. the danger of losing it all. The lure of the lights versus the fear of the dark. What, then, are the arguments for, and against gambling?

← -----Against-----Neutral-----For----->

Philosophical – Group 1	Pragmatic – Group 2	Pragmatic – Group 3	Philosophical – Group 4
<p>This group is philosophically against gambling no matter what. Sometimes, but not always, there is a religion driver. All forms of gambling are sinful.</p>	<p>People in this group are not against gambling in and of itself, but they think gambling has simply too many undesired consequences. Two main lines of objection are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gambling feeds and cultivates organized crime. It is a primary money laundering tool. 2. People become addicted to gambling, lose control, risk too much and ruin their and their families' lives. 	<p>This group does not necessarily disagree with Group 2 on possible harms, but focuses more on benefits of legalizing and regulating gambling. The typical benefit arguments are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People will gamble no matter what. Prohibition does not deter the activity, only moves it further underground. 2. Creation of jobs/tax revenues. Revenues can also be directed towards various good causes, including addiction problems. 	<p>On the philosophical grounds, the argument is the libertarian one. Nobody, including the government, has a say on what people do within the walls of their homes. This is the exact opposite of the against-all-gambling types (Group 1).</p>

The tension between Group 1 and Group 4 is deep and it is unlikely that they come to agreement anytime soon. On the other hand, if one looks at Groups 2 and 3 in the middle, essentially the discussion becomes a cost benefit analysis. It is, however, very difficult to quantify the costs and benefits, and it is therefore no surprise the discussion continues. As a natural extension of this, the legality of gambling is also extremely fragmented in the U.S. Legal gambling has evolved as different interest groups, federal and state governments, businesses and other participants successfully argued one way or the other and resolved issues in certain ways, which led to a mix of different models with somewhat inconsistent patterns in different places. A uniform and consistent approach does not seem likely in the near future.