

How Do You Reopen a Casino in an Era of 'Social Distancing'?

Written by Administrator
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The Paris Las Vegas Resort & Casino on Las Vegas Boulevard in Las Vegas, Nev., August 22, 2012. (Charles Platiau/Reuters)

The *New York Times* did an [in-depth piece on the hardest of times in the city of Las Vegas yesterday](#), noting that out of all the cities and communities in the country, “few places were hit harder than Las Vegas, where a full one-third of the local economy is in the leisure and hospitality industry, more than in any other major metropolitan area in the country. Most of those jobs cannot be done from home.”

The leisure and hospitality industry in the city is more than just the casinos — hotels, restaurants, bars, shows — but in the end, a lot of that is driven by those who come to the city to gamble. How on God’s green earth are they going to safely reopen casinos until there is a coronavirus vaccine, or a quick and reliable treatment, or herd immunity?

Most gambling games involve handling things — cards, chips, the lever on a slot machine. Having every patron wear masks and gloves helps, but we know people won’t always use them the way they should. The consumption of beverages would presumably be ruled out, as that would have people lifting up their masks and constantly adjusting. (Good luck, facial-recognition technology.) Casinos can probably make patrons sit further apart, but the size of the table is set. Staff would have to disinfect tables, chairs, railings, slot machines, video poker machines, and every other piece of equipment extremely frequently.

One analysis of the major casinos calculated that they can [last anywhere from five months to 14](#) months without reopening before going broke. But that’s for the institutions themselves — waiters, waitresses, maids, bartenders, cooks and chefs, blackjack dealers, and other casino staff — they’re all out looking for work. And casinos provide \$1.5 billion in tax revenue for the state of Nevada — almost 38 percent of the total.

On the other side of the world, in Macau, casinos are functioning as best they can: “At casinos in Macau, the world’s biggest gambling hub, customers must wear masks, have their body temperature taken upon entry and refrain from eating or drinking at the gambling tables.” It’s early, but the Macau casinos are operating on about [20 percent of the revenue as the same month last year](#).

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