

## BUSINESS INDICATORS

September 1995

### Profile of Gamblers<sup>1</sup> in British Columbia

According to a 1994 Survey of Participants at B.C. Gaming Establishments<sup>2</sup> carried out by BC Stats on behalf of the British Columbia Ministry of Government Services, the gender make-up of the typical B.C. gambler is approximately evenly split between males and females. While there are virtually no differences between the sexes with regard to propensity to gamble, there are some variations when it comes to types of gambling and the amount of money spent.

For instance, men tend to spend more on gambling than do women. On average, men spend \$2,132 annually on gambling, compared to women, who spend \$1,658 annually. This is likely due, at least in part, to the choice of games. Although men and women are almost equally likely to play the lottery, there is quite a gender split among the other three types of games. Bingo is nearly exclusively a woman's game with almost 82 per cent of Bingo players being women. On the other hand, men are more likely to go to casinos and to play the horses. It is at these two pursuits that men tend to spend the most.

The lottery is by far the most popular of the gambling ventures. Over 99 per cent of all gamblers surveyed played the lottery, and for almost 64 per cent, the lottery was the only type of gambling in which they engaged. Bingo is the next most popular at 24 per cent, followed by casinos at 11 per cent and horse racing at 10 per cent.

The majority of gamblers (64 per cent) spend less than \$1,000 per year on games of chance; however, almost 8 per cent of gamblers surveyed said they spent, on average, over \$6,000 per year on gambling. The total average annual expenditure is \$1,900 for all the gamblers surveyed.

In terms of age, there are a disproportionate number of older gamblers. The 65 and over age group represents only 17 per cent of the British Columbia population 15 and

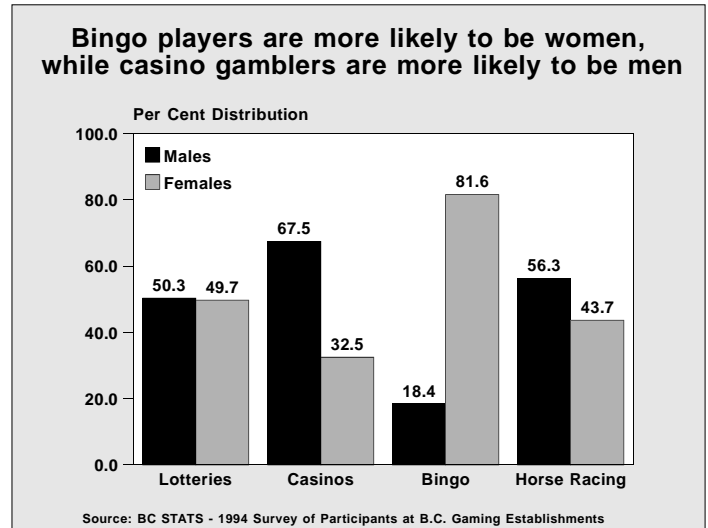


Figure 1

- 1 Refers to all persons in British Columbia who gamble at one or more of the following games: Lotteries, small scale casinos, Bingo, or the horse races.
- 2 The survey took place in the last week of July and the first week of August of 1994. It was administered through a personal interview of persons on site at selected gaming establishments across the province. These establishments were comprised of Bingo halls, lottery line-ups, horse tracks and tele-theatres, and casinos. 2,709 people were surveyed at 48 locations throughout the province. These locations were situated in the following areas: Courtenay, Nanaimo, Victoria, Greater Vancouver, Chilliwack, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, Cranbrook, Williams Lake, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John.

over, but comprise almost 28 per cent of gamblers. By contrast, the 25 to 44 age group makes up 43 per cent of the 15 and over population, but only 32 per cent of gamblers.

Although the 65 and over age group are over-represented in the gambling population, they spend the least, on average, of any of the age groups (except the under 19 group) at an annual average of \$1,406. The biggest spenders are in the 45 to 54 group (\$3,333 per year), and next is the 55 to 64 group (\$2,055 per year). This is likely a reflection of the fact that people in these age groups tend to be more affluent and have more money to spend. The elderly are often on fixed incomes and can't afford to spend as much on entertainment as they used to, and the younger age groups are either still trying to establish themselves in terms of a career, or are burdened with familial responsibilities that take up most of their income (e.g. expenses on children, mortgage, etc.) and leisure time.

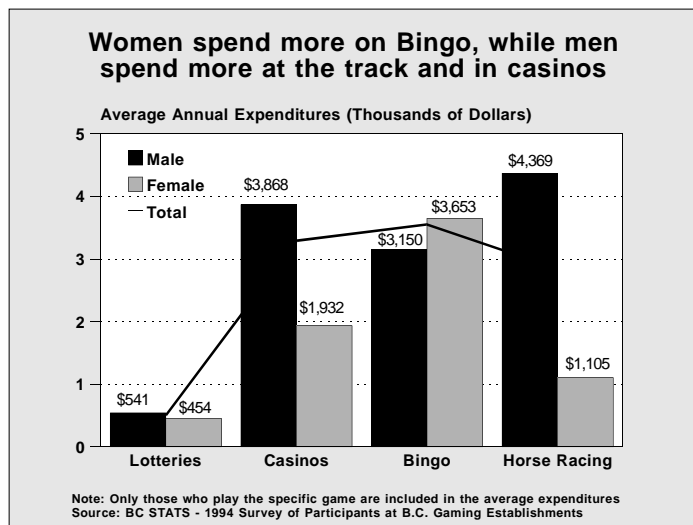


Figure 2

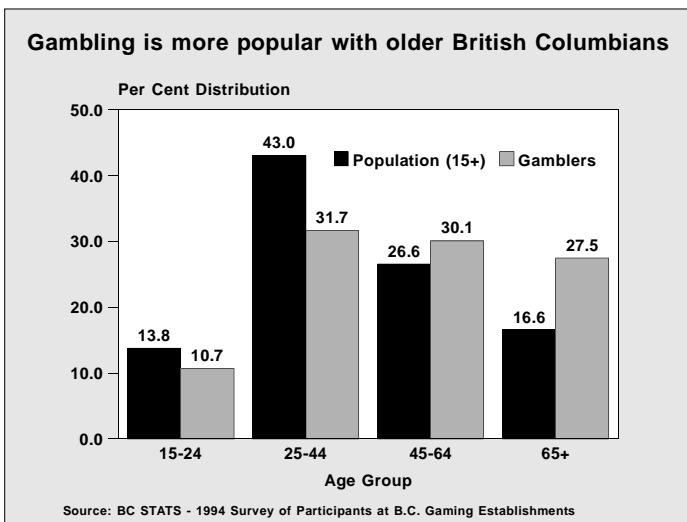


Figure 3

An analysis of expenditures by income level lends some evidence to support this idea. Those gamblers who make in excess of \$60,000 per year are the biggest spenders with an average annual expenditure on gambling of \$3,835. The other income groups range from a low of \$1,334 per year for those in the \$20,000 and under group to a high of \$1,742 per year for those in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 income group. It is interesting, though, that those in the middle income groups are actually more likely to gamble than those in the low and high income groups.

In terms of education, it appears that gamblers with higher education spend more than gamblers with less education. Once again, this is likely a reflection that they have more to spend. In other words, those with higher education are more likely to be working in better paying jobs.

There appear to be differing preferences for each type of game depending on income levels and education levels. Bingo is the most preferred of the gambling venues for low income gamblers and those with less than a high school education, as in both cases there are a disproportionate amount of gamblers in these categories that play Bingo. High income gamblers and gamblers with at least a partial post-secondary education are disproportionately represented at the casinos. Horse racing is also a favourite of the high income gamblers.

There are some notable regional differences as well. Virtually all betting on horse racing is done in the Lower Mainland (98 per cent), with the remainder on Vancouver Island. The reason for this is simple — all the major race tracks are in these areas. (At the time of the survey, tele-theatre facilities for betting on the horses had just been introduced in some of the non-metropolitan regions.) Bingo is a major social outing in the North, and is also a big draw on the Island, but it has less appeal to those

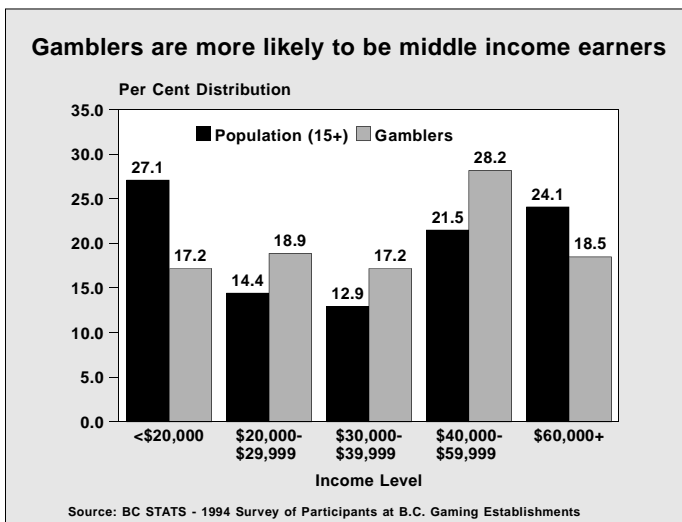


Figure 4

gamblers in the Interior and the Lower Mainland. Casinos are the venue of choice for many Lower Mainland gamblers and quite a bit less so for the other areas. Again, this is partially a function of availability.

Overall, it appears that gambling habits are at least partially a function of a person's socio-economic status. In some ways this is an obvious result, since expenditures are clearly a function of income, and some gambling venues are more expensive than others. Some of the more interesting findings are those related to gender differences. While men and women are equally likely to gamble, the method of gambling and the amount spent in that pursuit are quite different.

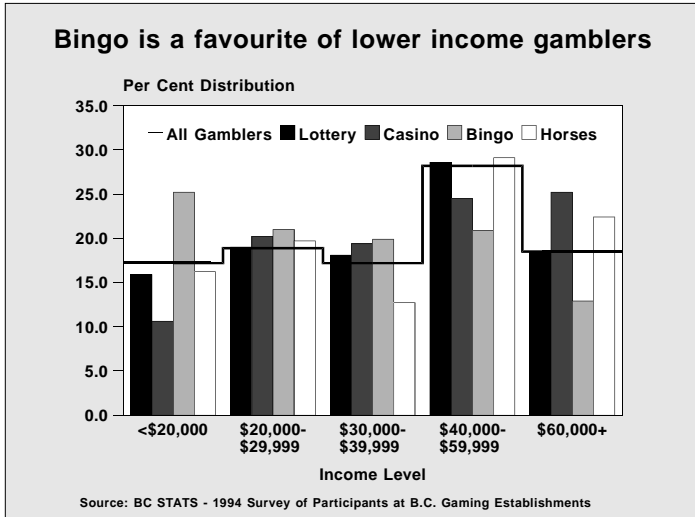


Figure 5

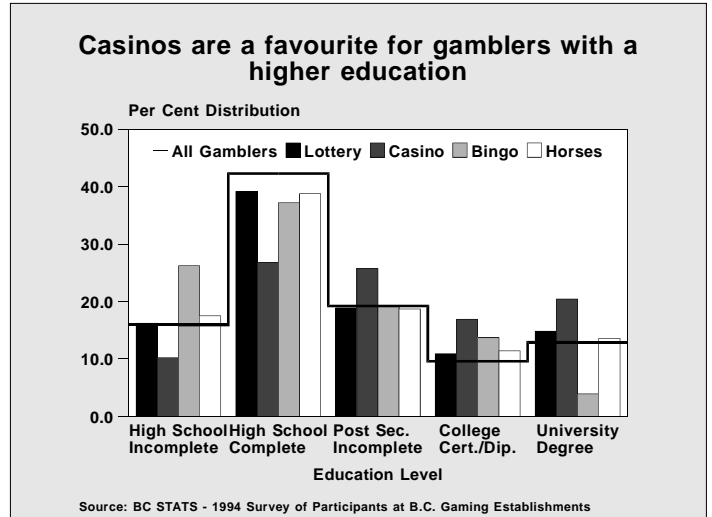


Figure 6