

Louisiana Gambling Study Casino Employee Survey

Methodology

An important consideration in the comprehensive analysis of gambling in Louisiana is information about casino employees. In particular, characteristics of casino workers themselves, their past employment experiences, reasons for accepting a casino job, and overall perceptions of their work are meaningful factors to examine.

A survey of casino employees was used to collect this information. A draft copy of the employee survey was distributed for comments to all members of the Louisiana Gambling Study Editorial Board and to the general managers of all thirteen riverboat casinos. A revised draft was faxed on December 1, 1998 to give those who had not responded a second opportunity to comment.

A total of 4,500 copies of the survey were printed and sealed in envelopes together with business reply envelopes. These were delivered to each riverboat so that they could be distributed to a random sample of employees with paychecks or at employee meetings in early to mid-December. In some cases, one in three employees were surveyed; in others, one in four were surveyed. The inexact count of employees available before printing of the instrument resulted in this difference. The total number of surveys distributed to each area is as follows: Baton Rouge **B** 650, Lake Charles **B** 1,221, New Orleans **B** 949, and Shreveport-Bossier City **B** 1,600, for a total sample size of 4,420.

A total of 1,264 surveys were returned by the time analysis began, translating into a response rate of 28.6%. Several more surveys arrived after the analysis process had begun and are, thus, excluded from the results.

Weighting

Response rates from individual casinos/operators varied across the geographic areas. Therefore, analyzing the survey responses as they were collected would have resulted in inaccuracies, particularly when combined to form totals for all gambling venues. To overcome this imbalance, a weighting scheme was designed to adjust the number of responses in each casino/operator according to the proportion of the workers in the state employed by that riverboat/operator.

The weights were derived in a relatively simple fashion. Each weight was the quotient of two factors **B** the proportion of the total number of employees in each casino/operator area divided by the proportion of the total number of responses in each casino/operator. The table below displays the numbers used as a basis for the weighting procedure by area.

Information Used for Weights for Casino Employee Survey

Area	Number of Employees	Surveys Received
Baton Rouge	1733	157
New Orleans	3433	249
Shreveport-Bossier City	5746	279
Lake Charles	3922	516

Findings

Current Employment Characteristics

- C Completed surveys were received from employees in a variety of casino occupations. The two most frequently cited occupation by far were dealer (26%) and management/professional/technical (20%). Three other occupations each accounted for 10% of the responses B cashier/money handler, slots, and beverage/food service. The vast majority (89%) of the respondents work full-time in their casino job. Their work week averages 40 hours, but range from 20 to 84 hours. Their weekly earnings average \$509, ranging from \$64 to \$5,200. Hourly wages average \$12.18, ranging from \$3.63 to \$80.00. Some 12% hold one or more jobs in addition to their casino job.

Previous Employment Characteristics

- C Almost one-third (29%) of the casino employees who completed surveys have worked in another casino at some time before being hired in their current job. Remarkably, 29% were unemployed just prior to being hired by their current employer. Some 8% held more than one job before coming to work for the casino. Because so many of the current casino employees were already working in the casino industry, it is impossible to determine the occupations they held before taking any casino jobs. However, the most common occupations in their previous jobs cited by casino workers were management/professional/technical (18%), cashier/money handler (14%), and beverage/food service (13%). Although, many thought that the opening of casinos would attract tellers and teachers to the industry, only 1% and 3% of the respondents cited these occupations as their immediate prior job, respectively. The vast majority (84%) of the respondents worked full-time in their previous job. Their work week in that job averaged 42.8 hours, ranging from 10 to 84 hours. Their weekly earnings averaged \$389, ranging from \$44 to \$5,200 and their hourly wages averaged \$9.31, ranging from \$3.35 to \$122.

Changes in Employment Characteristics

- C The appeal of casino jobs was carried into a number of factors. On average, survey respondents listed more than two individual reasons why they accepted employment in the casino industry. The most frequent response was higher wages (54% of total respondents). Other notable reasons were career opportunity/advancement (48%) better benefits (46%), and better working conditions (34%).
- C The earnings of casino workers are significantly higher in the statistical sense from the earnings in their previous job. Again, current average weekly earnings is \$509 compared to \$389 in their previous job, an increase of \$120. Their average hourly wages are \$11.50, up by \$1.59 from \$9.91 in their last job.
- C Interestingly, the incidence of multiple job holding increased from 8% to 12%. While two-thirds of the workers who previously held more than one job cut back to one **B** their current casino job. However, 80% of those who now work two or more jobs held only one job previously.
- C Respondents commonly mentioned three factors pertaining to the value their casino job affords them. Two of these related to their abilities and future -- 76% felt that they learned new and more marketable skills from their casino job and 74% felt that their self worth had increased. Many also mentioned better health care benefits (69% of respondents).
- C Answers to the open-ended question regarding casino workers opinions of their job were largely positive. In fact, 69% of the respondents cited only positive factors, while 12% reported only negative comments. Among the most commonly cited positive answers were overall job satisfaction (53% of all respondents), better work environment or conditions (25%), better pay (16%), and better career development opportunities (13%). The top complaints were poor working environment or conditions (11%), poor pay (7%), and negative feeling about the casino industry in general (5%).

Area Differences

Overall there were few differences between characteristics and perceptions of riverboat casino employees according to location. However, those few are interesting.

- C The proportion of respondents who were unemployed just prior to being hired by their current employer was 29% statewide, but varied from 22% in Baton Rouge to 32% in New Orleans.
- C On average, 8% of employees held more than one job before working in the casino, ranging from a low of 6% in Lake Charles to a high of 10% in Shreveport-Bossier City. One-sixth of all Shreveport-Bossier City workers currently hold another job, while 9% of those in Lakes Charles do.

- C The responses imply that Lake Charles casinos employ more part-time workers than those in other areas. Some 16% of the respondents from Lake Charles were employed part-time, compared with 4% in New Orleans, 6% in Baton Rouge, and 10% in Shreveport-Bossier City.
- C Respondents from New Orleans casinos reported the highest average earnings in the state, while Baton Rouge workers reported the least. Total weekly earnings in New Orleans averaged \$540 and average hourly wages averaged \$13.06. Respondents in Baton Rouge averaged \$485 per week, \$11.59 per hour. Shreveport-Bossier City and Lake Charles workers earned about the same, both weekly (\$510 and \$505, respectively) and hourly (\$12.11 and \$12.04, respectively).
- C The largest jump in average weekly employee earnings from pre-casino employment to the current job was \$139 in New Orleans. Baton Rouge had the smallest increase (\$79 per week) while Lake Charles and Shreveport-Bossier City had \$132 and \$120 gains, respectively. However, the largest gains in average hourly wages were in Lakes Charles (\$3.31) and Shreveport-Bossier City (\$3.04). New Orleans workers hourly increases averaged \$2.99, while Baton Rouge wages increased the least (\$1.60).