



Household Expenditure on Gambling and Smoking in Singapore

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Introduction



Household spending patterns reflect broader societal trends and individual lifestyle choices, offering insights into consumer behaviour patterns. In Singapore, expenditure on gambling and smoking activities can potentially impact household finances and public health outcomes. These activities are also subject to various regulatory measures and public awareness campaigns. Changes in household expenditure provide an indication of evolving social attitudes towards such activities.

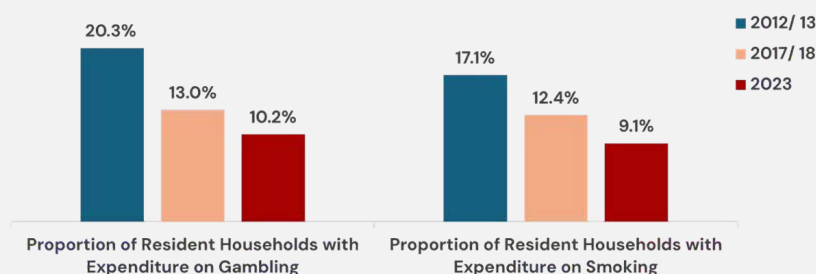
This article examines trends in household expenditure on gambling and smoking among resident households [1] in Singapore. It reveals how spending patterns for these items vary across dwelling types and income groups, and analyses the proportion of household spending allocated to such expenditures.

The data are from the Household Expenditure Survey (HES), conducted once every five years by the Singapore Department of Statistics, with the latest conducted in 2023. Expenditure on gambling [2] and smoking [3] in the HES is reported in respondents' recording of their regular expenditure and daily expenses over a two-week period. Households that did not report such expenditure during the recording period were considered as having no gambling or smoking expenses.

Proportions of Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure Lower than a Decade Ago

Between 2012/13 and 2023, fewer households reported gambling and smoking expenditure (Chart 1). The proportion of households with gambling expenditure declined from 20.3% in 2012/13 to 10.2% [4] in 2023, and those with smoking expenditure dropped from 17.1% in 2012/13 to 9.1% in 2023.

Chart 1: Proportions of Resident Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure, 2012/13 - 2023



[1] Resident households refer to households where the household reference person is a Singapore citizen or permanent resident.

[2] Includes various forms of gambling, such as Singapore Pools lotteries (e.g., 4D, Toto, Singapore Sweep), sports betting, horse racing, casinos and other games of chance including mahjong and card games.

[3] Includes cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products. E-cigarettes have been prohibited in Singapore under the Tobacco Act since 2018. As with other countries, survey respondents are unlikely to report expenditure on illegal activities in government surveys.

[4] Based on the 'Report on survey on participation in gambling activities among Singapore Residents, 2023' published by the National Council on Problem Gambling. The overall gambling participation rate among Singapore residents aged 18 and above decreased from 47% in 2011 to 40% in 2023.

Proportions of Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure by Type of Dwelling

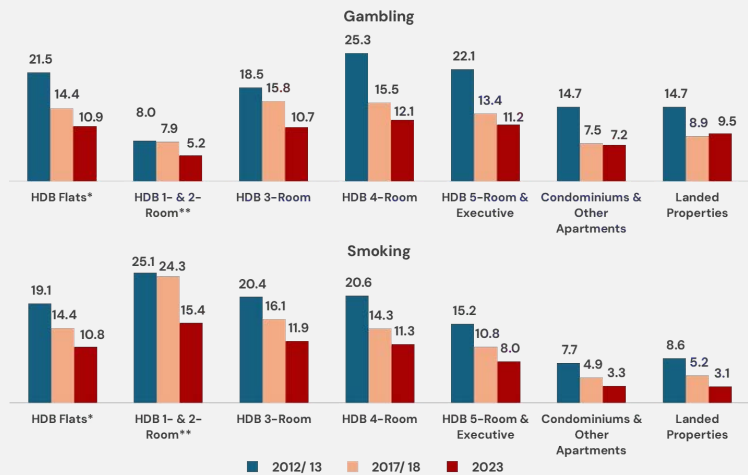
Across all dwelling types, the proportions of households with gambling and smoking expenditure were lower in 2023 compared to 2012/13 (Chart 2A).

In 2023, gambling participation was most prevalent among households living in Housing & Development Board (HDB) 4-room flats (12.1%), followed by HDB 5-room and 3-room flats. In comparison, smoking was more prevalent among households living in HDB 1- & 2-room flats (15.4%), and subsequently HDB 3-room and 4-room flats. Between 2012/13 and 2023, the prevalence of smoking among households saw the largest decline among households living in HDB 1- & 2-room flats from 25.1% to 15.4%, followed by HDB 4-room and 3-room flats.

* Data prior to 2017/18 include non-privatised Housing and Urban Development Company (HUDC) flats. As at 2017/18, all HUDC flats had been privatised and are grouped with 'Condominiums & Other Apartments'.

**Includes HDB Studio Apartments.

Chart 2A: Proportions of Resident Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure by Type of Dwelling, 2012/13 – 2023 (%)

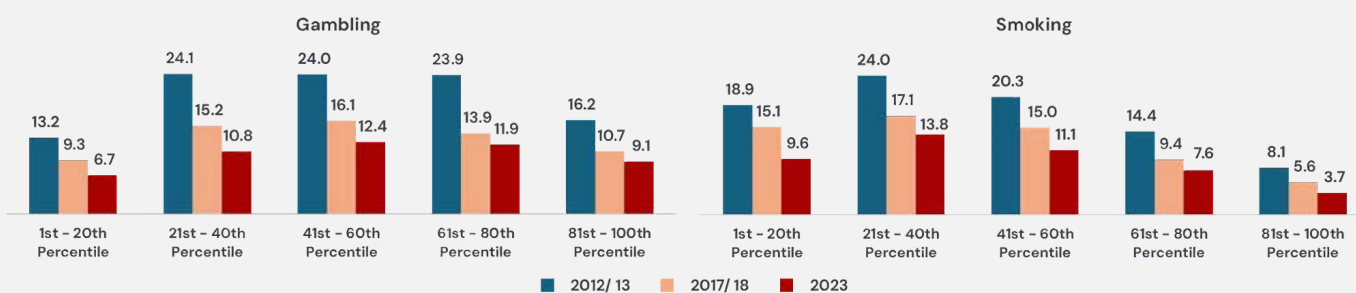


Proportions of Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure by Income Group

Participation in gambling and smoking also fell across all income quintiles [5] from 2012/13 to 2023 (Chart 2B).

In 2023, gambling participation was more prevalent among households in the middle 60% income groups, with 10.8% to 12.4% of the households reporting expenditure on gambling. In comparison, smoking was more prevalent in the lowest 60% income group, with 9.6% to 13.8% reporting expenditure on smoking. Between 2012/13 and 2023, the prevalence of smoking among households recorded larger declines for households in the lowest 60% than those in the top 40%.

Chart 2B: Proportions of Resident Households with Gambling and Smoking Expenditure by Income Quintile[^], 2012/13 – 2023 (%)



[^] Based on ranking of all resident households by their monthly household income from all sources per household member (including employer CPF contributions).

Average Expenditure on Gambling and Smoking Increased Among Resident Households with Such Expenditure

While the proportions of resident households with gambling and smoking expenditure declined over the years, households with such expenses were spending more.

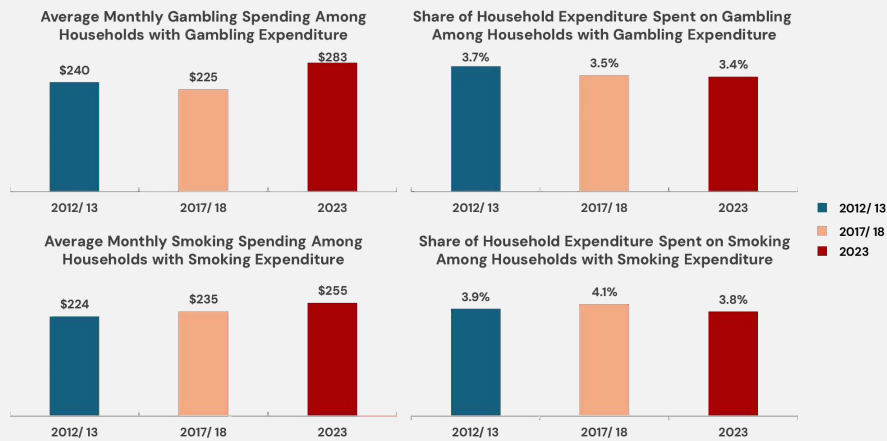
In 2023, households that gambled spent an average of \$283 per month on gambling, more than the \$240 in 2012/13 (Chart 3) [6]. Similarly, households with smokers had a higher average monthly smoking expenditure of \$255 in 2023 compared to \$224 in 2012/13.

The share of total household expenditure on gambling slipped from 3.7% in 2012/13 to 3.4% in 2023, while smoking maintained a relatively stable share at 3.8%.

[5] Based on ranking of all resident households by their monthly household income from all sources per household member (including employer Central Provident Funds (CPF) contributions).

[6] Expenditure is based on nominal value for the respective year.

Chart 3: Average Monthly Household Expenditure on Gambling and Smoking and Share of Household Expenditure[^], 2012/ 13 - 2023

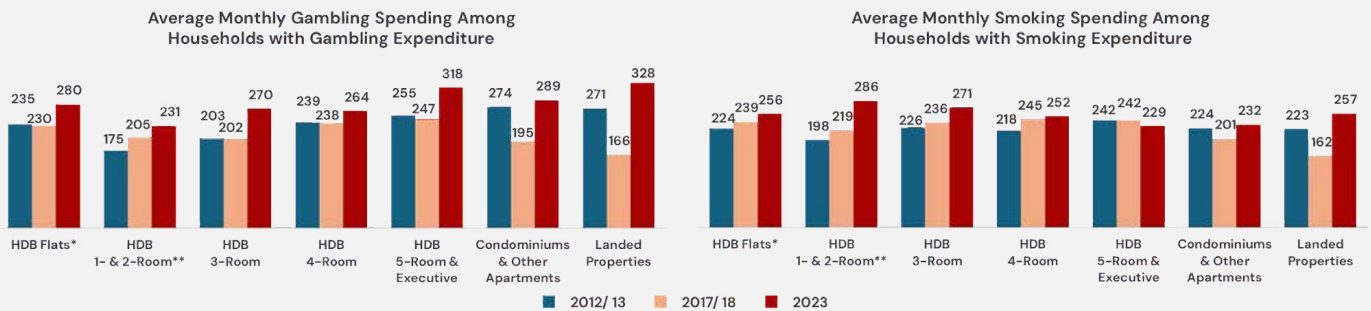


[^] Expenditure data include imputed rental of owner-occupied accommodation.

Gambling and Smoking Accounted for Larger Share of Expenditure Among Households in HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats

Between 2012/ 13 and 2023, the average monthly spending on gambling and smoking among households with such expenditure increased for most dwelling types (Chart 4A).

Chart 4A: Average Monthly Household Gambling and Smoking Expenditure[^] by Type of Dwelling, 2012/ 13 - 2023 (\$)



[^] Expenditure data include imputed rental of owner-occupied accommodation.

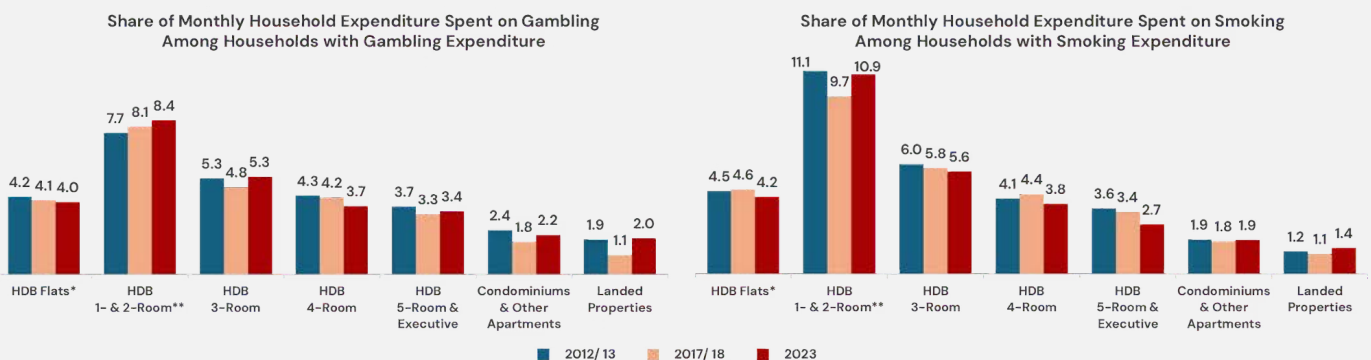
* Data prior to 2017/ 18 include non-privatised Housing and Urban Development Company (HUDC) flats. As at 2017/ 18, all HUDC flats had been privatised and are grouped with 'Condominiums & Other Apartments'.

**Includes HDB Studio Apartments.

Although gambling households living in HDB 1- & 2-room flats spent less on gambling than those in larger dwellings, they faced a higher relative burden, with gambling consuming 8.4% of their monthly household expenditure in 2023 (Chart 4B). In comparison, gambling accounted for 5.3% of the monthly household expenditure for HDB 3-room flats and was lower for larger dwelling types.

Similarly, households with smokers in HDB 1- & 2-room flats spent a larger share (10.9%) of their household expenditure on smoking compared to larger dwelling types, and had the highest average monthly spending of \$286 in 2023.

Chart 4B: Share of Monthly Household Expenditure[^] on Gambling and Smoking by Type of Dwelling, 2012/ 13 - 2023 (%)



[^] Expenditure data include imputed rental of owner-occupied accommodation.

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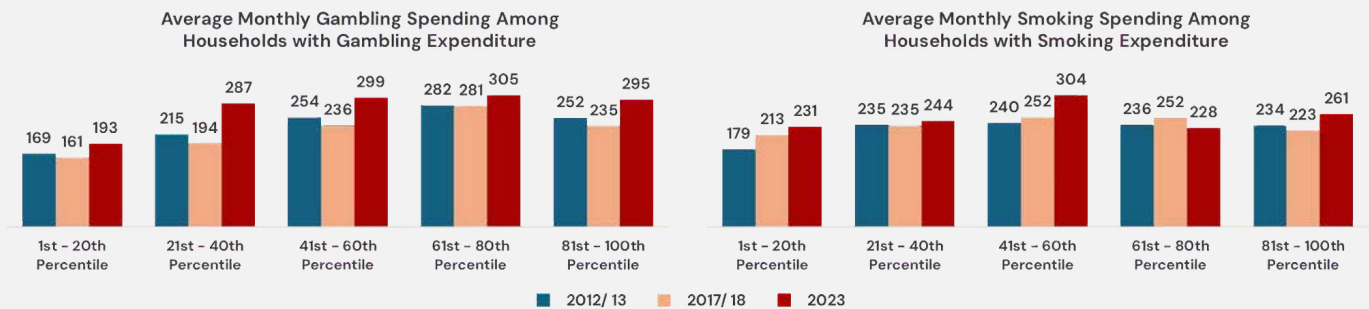
**Includes HDB Studio Apartments.

Gambling and Smoking Accounted for Larger Share of Expenditure Among Lower-Income Households

Between 2012/13 and 2023, the average spending on gambling and smoking among households with such expenditure rose across most income groups (Chart 5A).

The lowest 20% income households showed similar spending patterns for both gambling and smoking. Such expenditures recorded smaller amounts but accounted for larger shares of their household expenditure than households in higher income groups. Overall, the proportion of household expenditure spent was lower in 2023 compared to 2012/13.

Chart 5A: Average Monthly Gambling and Smoking Expenditure by Income Quintile[^], 2012/13 - 2023 (\$)

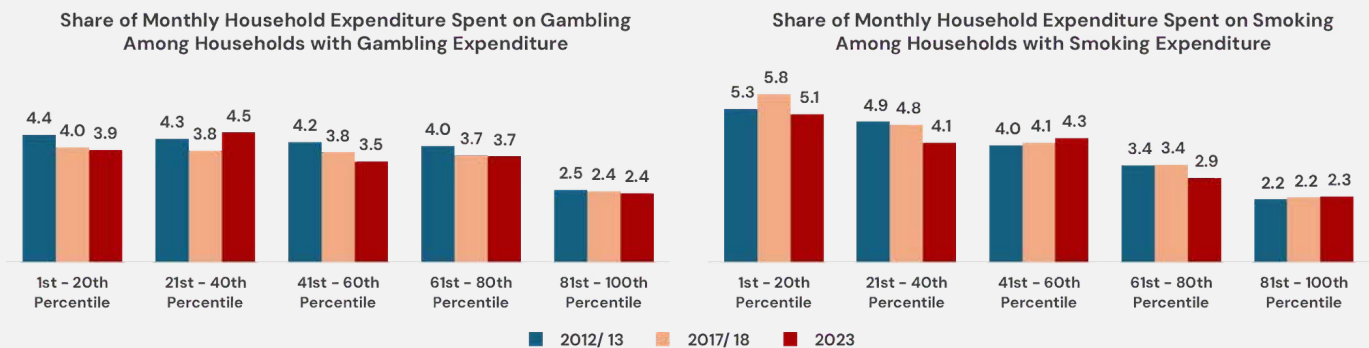


[^] Based on ranking of all resident households by their monthly household income from all sources per household member (including employer CPF contributions).

In 2023, gambling households in the lowest 20% income group recorded the smallest amount spent on gambling across all income groups, with an average monthly expenditure of \$193, or 3.9% of their household expenditure (Chart 5B). This proportion was lower than that of the 21st to 40th income group (4.5%), and larger than that of the top 60% income groups (2.4% to 3.7%).

Similarly, households with smokers in the lowest 20% income group spent an average of \$231 per month on smoking, or 5.1% of their household expenditure. This proportion surpassed the 2.3% to 4.3% share among higher income households.

Chart 5B: Share of Monthly Household Expenditure^{^^} on Gambling and Smoking by Income Quintile^{^^}, 2012/13 - 2023 (%)



[^] Expenditure data include imputed rental of owner-occupied accommodation.

^{^^} Based on ranking of all resident households by their monthly household income from all sources per household member (including employer CPF contributions).

Conclusion

The analysis revealed a nuanced picture of household expenditure patterns on gambling and smoking. Between 2012/13 and 2023, the proportion of households with expenditure on gambling and smoking in Singapore declined. This likely reflected the impact of public awareness campaigns and evolving social attitudes towards these activities, as well as stringent tobacco control measures. However, households that continued to spend on gambling and smoking saw an increase in their average monthly expenditure over the past decade. This suggests a divergence in consumption behaviour, where those who gamble and/ or smoke are spending more on these activities due to their addictive nature, while a growing proportion of households have given up such activities.



Keen to perform deeper analyses as a Researcher?

The HES datasets are accessible to academic researchers in local Autonomous Universities via DOS's Anonymised Microdata Access Programme (AMAP), which facilitates deep-dive research using anonymised microdata in a safe environment (DOS innovation Data Lab). Currently, six projects from the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University are underway, delving into topics such as population and family dynamics, housing choices and expenditure patterns. Click [here](#) to find out more about AMAP!