

MGC Research Snapshot

Assessment of Job Quality at Massachusetts Casinos, 2022

April 2024

What you need to know

The purpose of this report was to examine workforce conditions at the Commonwealth's three casinos, analyze the extent to which Massachusetts casino jobs are benefiting the casino workforce, and assess the quality of casino jobs. Overall, casino operators in Massachusetts are committed to their goals of recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce. Casino jobs offer flexibility in scheduling, low barriers to entry, and career advancement for women and minority workers. Casino workers are well compensated in comparison to other jobs in the accommodation and food services industry and have far lower rates of turnover. The analysis suggests that hiring across job title hierarchy is intentionally geared toward gender equity, though equity across this hierarchy for people of color has yet to be achieved.

What is this research about?

Through the establishment of the casino industry in Massachusetts, lawmakers provided avenues for the creation of new jobs, revenue, and economic growth in the state. The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA) study, of which the Economic and Public Policy Research unit at the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) is a part, strives to understand the impact of the casinos on the people and economy of the Commonwealth.

The purpose of this report was to examine workforce conditions at the Commonwealth's three casinos, Encore Boston Harbor (EBH), MGM Springfield (MGM), and Plainridge Park Casino (PPC), analyze the extent to which Massachusetts casino jobs are benefiting the casino workforce, and otherwise assess the quality of casino jobs.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers from the UMDI team first examined conditions of the regional workforce in and around Massachusetts, as well as within the Accommodations and Food Services sector, to provide context for their findings.

They then analyzed payroll data from each casino from January 2022 through December 2022 to assess patterns in hiring, compensation, mobility, and turnover. Using this data, they described characteristics and composition of the industry's workforce.

The final section of the report analyzed the quality of casino jobs, both across the industry and at individual casinos, by determining the extent to which they adhered to the principles of good jobs defined by the U.S. Department of Labor.

This assessment did not feature any data from the employees, such as interview or survey data, and only analyzed payroll data with information on hours, wages, and demographics. The researchers suggest that qualitative data representing the opinions of the operators and employees themselves would complement this analysis and should be considered in future iterations of this report.

What did the researchers find?

Findings include insights on the regional workforce context, composition of the Massachusetts casino workforce, and casino job quality.

Regional Workforce Context

- Each of the Commonwealth's three casinos are located in very different parts of the state, with different casino characteristics, population demographics, and different labor markets which shape their respective workforces.
- The compensation necessary to be considered a living wage in Massachusetts is one of the highest in the country.
- The Accommodations and Food Services industry has higher turnover rates when compared to industries overall (115% vs. 54%).



Casino Workforce

- The casino industry is made up mostly of workers who are people of color (52.3%), though white workers are the largest racial group (32.6%).
- Workers are mostly men (55.7%), full-time (67.6%), and hourly (87.1%), though there are major demographic nuances across the three casinos.
- The largest division by share of employees is Gaming and Recreation (37.9%), and most workers are at the junior staff level (45.5%).
- Of the 6,601 employed in the industry, 39.1 percent make a living wage or higher with the median hourly wage at \$28.31.
- Massachusetts casino workers live throughout New England and are heavily concentrated in the Boston and Springfield areas.

Casino Job Quality

- **Recruitment and Hiring:** Based on the employee population in 2022, casinos are meeting or exceeding their hiring goals for minority, veterans, and local workers, while hiring for women continues to fall short.
- **Wages:** The Accommodation and Food Services Industry typically pays the minimum wage or less, but with Massachusetts' historically high cost of living, minimum wage is insufficient for most households to afford basic needs. Thirty-nine percent of workers across the casinos make at or above the living wage for their respective cost of living, but there is a large difference across individual casinos (43.6%, 33.8%, and 18.0% at EBH, MGM, and PPC, respectively).
- **Job Security and Working Conditions:** Compared to the Accommodations and Food Services Industry as a whole, turnover rates at casinos are surprisingly low (28.6% vs 115%).
- **Career Advancement:** Very few workers were promoted in 2022 across the industry (2.0%).
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:** At the industry level, men make up the slight majority of workers across job levels, and the share of minority workers consistently becomes smaller as seniority increases.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, casino operators in Massachusetts are committed to their local economies and to their goals of recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce. Casino jobs offer flexibility in scheduling, low barriers to entry, and career advancement for women and minority workers. Casino workers are well compensated in comparison to other jobs in the Accommodation and Food Services Industry and have far lower rates of turnover. The analysis suggests that hiring across job title hierarchy is intentionally geared toward gender equity, though equity across this hierarchy for people of color has yet to be achieved.

About the researchers

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Further qualitative research could assist in developing a fuller picture of job quality in the Commonwealth's casino industry. Additional research questions could include:

- Presence and nature of benefits such as paid time off, retirement, parental leave and leave for family related responsibilities, and Employee Assistance Programs;
- Accommodation for people with disabilities or unique circumstances;
- Presence and adequacy of career pathways, including opportunities for on-the-job training and professional development;
- Transparency in performance management related to bonuses, raises, and promotions;
- Reasons employees decide to continue their employment, quit, or were terminated.

Citation

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<https://massgaming.com/about/research-agenda-search/?cat=economic-impact>

Key Words

Economic Impact; Casino Workforce

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About this Snapshot

MGC Snapshots are intended to translate lengthy and sometimes technical reports into an easily understandable overview of the research. The findings and recommendations in the Snapshot are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the MGC.

