

Western Massachusetts Casino Health Impact Assessment

What is the impact of a proposed casino on Western MA?

Executive Summary

Overview of key findings

A casino opening in Western Massachusetts is likely to have a mix of **positive** and **negative** impacts on health determinants and health outcomes related to *jobs and employment, access to local casino gambling, traffic, and crime/public safety*. The extent to which the effects are positive or negative are dependent on the type of local and regional strategies put in place to promote positive impacts. Cross-sector collaboration and strategies that involve the casino operator, municipalities, government agencies, local businesses, regional planning and transportation organizations, public health agencies, local service providers, and other stakeholders have the greatest opportunity for synergy and positive impact.

The new resort casino also has the potential to impact health equity in the region. New employment opportunities may lead to a reduction in some existing health inequities depending on the strategies put in place to ensure that vulnerable populations have the opportunity to access needed jobs. Increases in exposure to near road-way air pollution and access to local casino gambling have the potential to increase existing health inequities as vulnerable populations may experience disproportionately negative impacts. Thus, it is important to carefully consider the effects on these vulnerable populations and identify strategies to mitigate identified negative effects.

Background

Casino gambling was legalized in 2011 under Chapter 194 “An Act Establishing Expanded Gaming in the Commonwealth,” which allows for “up to three destination resort casinos located in three geographically diverse regions across the state,” one of which is Western Massachusetts (Region B).

The Western Massachusetts Casino Health Impact Assessment (WMCHIA) was conducted from Spring 2013 to Fall 2013 by Partners for a Healthier Community (PHC) to assess the health effects of a new casino in Western Massachusetts and to make recommendations to mitigate negative and enhance positive predicted health impacts. Other lead partners included the University of Massachusetts and the City of Springfield Department of Health and Human Services. The WMCHIA was initiated because of questions and concerns raised by community members about how proposed casinos would impact health. The HIA originally focused on the three potential host communities: Palmer, Springfield, and West Springfield. As residents in two of the three communities voted not to allow the proposed casino in their community, the report focuses on the sole remaining potential host community as of December 2013, Springfield.

Massachusetts Expanded Gaming Act Regions



Source: Massachusetts Gaming Commission-
<http://massgaming.com/about/expanded-gaming-act/>

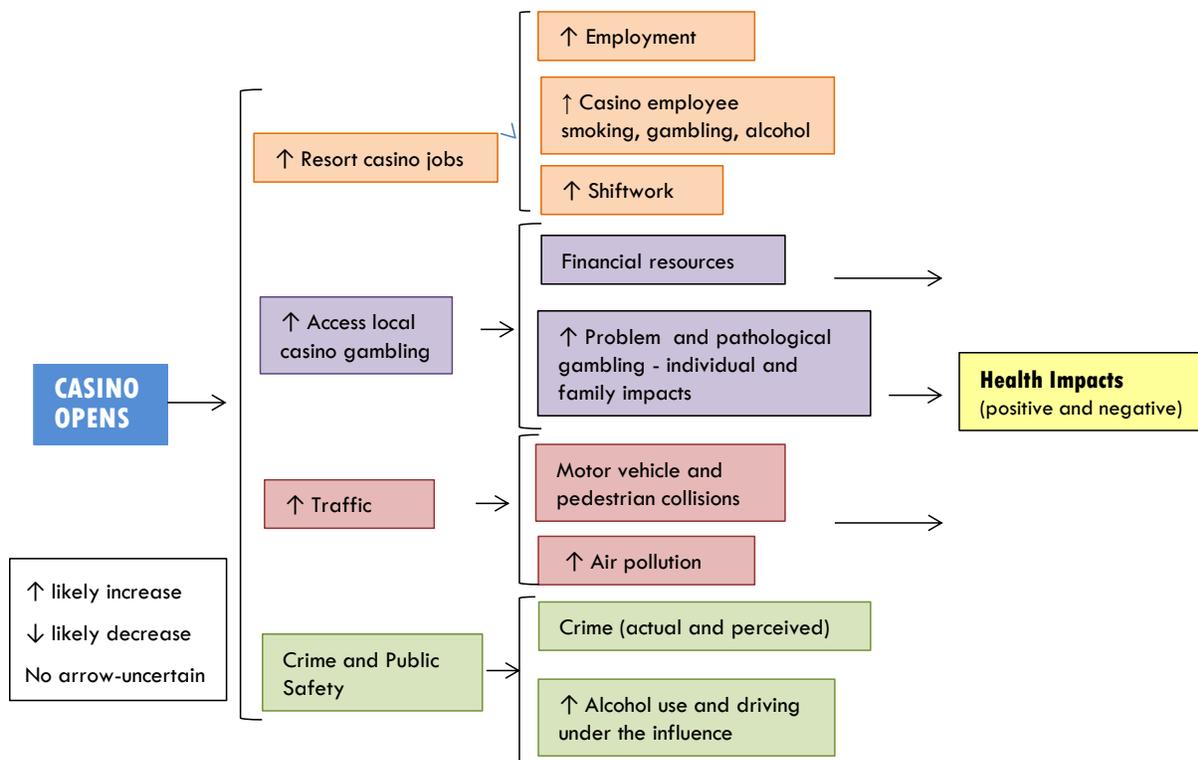


The WMCHIA’s goal was to inform decision-making related to the development and operation of a casino. It also strived to inform the Massachusetts Gaming Commission’s (MGC) licensing and regulation process, the MGC’s casino licensing decision, and the state-funded casino monitoring and evaluation project lead by the University of Massachusetts.

What is HIA?
A systematic method utilized to proactively inform decision-making and promote the most beneficial health impacts using data, scientific research, evidence, and stakeholder input.

The WMCHIA report is intended to reflect community priorities and needs. Community input was incorporated throughout the entire project through a variety of mechanisms. The WMCHIA focused specifically on how the proposed western MA casino would impact health through **jobs and employment, access to local casino gambling, traffic,** and **crime and public safety** health determinant pathways. Other health determinants identified by stakeholders were recognized to have likely health impacts - such as economic development and tax revenue – yet were not included due time and resource constraints. The WMCHIA also examined impacts on health equity.

Health Determinant Pathways Assessed



↑ likely increase
 ↓ likely decrease
 No arrow-uncertain

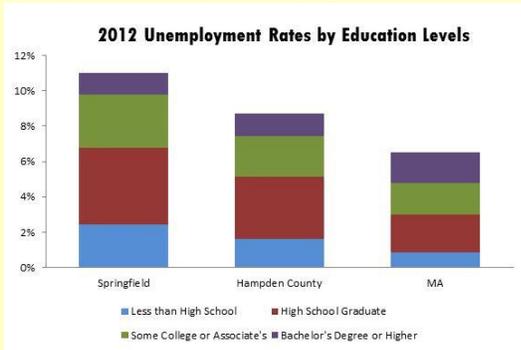
Major Findings Key			
Impact Direction		Impact Likelihood	
Positive	+	Likely	▲▲
Negative	-	Possible	▲
Uncertain	+ -	Unlikely	●
		Uncertain	▲▼

Major Findings

Jobs and Employment

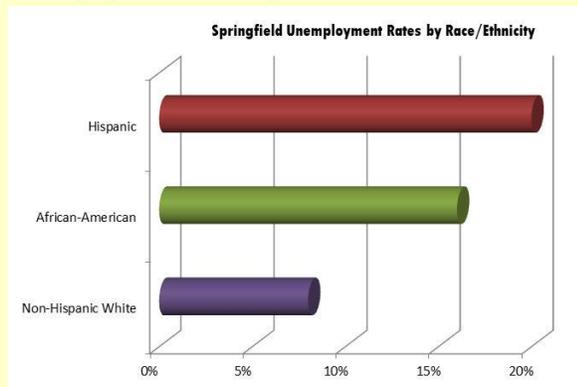
CURRENT CONDITIONS

Springfield has high unemployment rates



U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment rate disparities exist



U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011

- Local and regional **barriers to employment** in entry-level positions exist, including limited: 1) workforce readiness capacity, 2) access to needed basic adult education and English as a second language courses, and 3) public transit service capacity.

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Employment & New Jobs

Impact Direction +
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

Anticipated 3,000 new jobs, 2,200 FTEs. Existing barriers could prevent those most in need of the new resort casino jobs from obtaining the jobs.

- The more a casino hires locally, the greater the positive benefits to impacted communities.
- Turnover rates may be as high as 40% for unskilled entry level positions (similar to other positions in hospitality and retail industry)

Income

Impact Direction +
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

Higher income associated with reduced risk for chronic disease, mental health conditions and lower mortality rates.

Casino Employee Risk Behavior

Impact Direction -
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

Casino employees have been found to have a higher prevalence of smoking, alcohol, and problem gambling.

Shiftwork

Impact Direction -
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

- Associated with increased risk for chronic disease, cancer and mental health conditions.
- A large proportion of resort casino employees will work shiftwork. An estimated 23-40% of casino gaming positions will work night shift work, which has the most risk for negative health impacts.

Summary of Recommendations

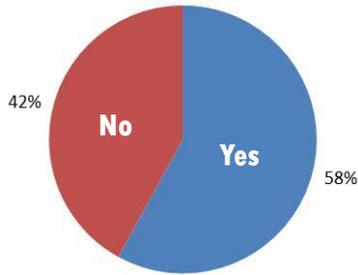
- Casino operator should clearly articulate plans to ensure local hiring and promote employee retention.
- MGC should provide funding to MA Casino Careers Training Institute to convene regional Workforce Collaborative to develop and implement cross-sector strategies to address local and regional workforce barriers, promote employment among the under and unemployed, and to address regional racial/ethnic disparities in unemployment.
- MGC and casino operator should provide funding 1) to conduct outreach to under and unemployed to connect them to needed education and training, and 2) for needed additional adult basic education and English language courses.
- Casino operator should work with the Workforce Collaborative to: 1) define skills needed for resort casino employment, 2) identify potential workforce shortages due to the new resort casino positions and work with the Workforce Collaborative to create training programs for these categories, and 3) articulate transparent career paths as described in the Expanded Gaming Act (Section 119.01(34)) and utilize incentives to encourage employee participation in these career paths.
- MGC should require casino operator to monitor and report employment characteristics, including but not limited to residence, race/ethnicity, sex, veteran status. This information should be made publicly available by the MGC.
- Casino operator should implement health and wellness programs to reduce risk for increased incidence of employee smoking, alcohol abuse, and disordered gambling.
- Casino operator should educate employees about strategies to reduce harmful health effects of shiftwork, consider providing products to mitigate shift-work related sleep disruption, and implement best practice policies to remediate harmful effects of shiftwork (e.g. rotating shifts forwards, adequate time for sleep between shifts).

Major Findings

Access to Local Casino Gambling

CURRENT CONDITIONS

MA Residents Gambled in Past Year (2012)



Top types reported: lotto /scratch tickets (45%) casino (22%)

***Bring it on Home. An Overview of Gaming Behavior in New England** UMass Dartmouth, 2012.*

- Estimated **prevalence of disordered gambling** is approximately 2.6% (1.2% problem gamblers, 1.4% pathological gamblers).
- Springfield has large number of at-risk populations for disordered gambling.

At-Risk Groups	Springfield Population
Living below poverty level	27%
African-Americans	20%
Hispanic/Latinos	37%
Young People	13 higher education institutions in area

- Very few people with gambling disorders seek treatment in the region.
- Lack of understanding of problem and pathological gambling as a serious problem.
- Limited local capacity to identify and treat gambling disorders.

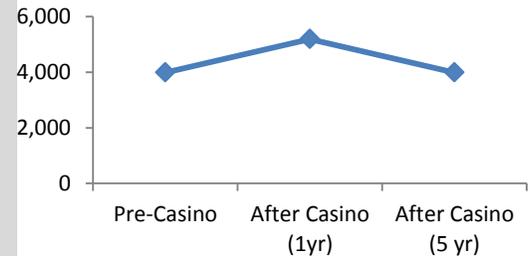
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Problem & Pathological Gambling

Impact Direction —
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

- Affects health through decreased financial resources/job loss and comorbidity with other risky behaviors, addictive disorders, and mental health conditions. Family members experience negative health impacts due to increased risk of spousal/child abuse and neglect, suicide, and gambling addiction.

Estimated Impact of Casino on Number of Disordered Gamblers in Springfield



**Estimated using U.S. Census data, MA disordered gambling prevalence of 2.6% (Bring it on Home, UMass Dartmouth, 2012), and 30% increase after 1 year (Jacques 2006)*

- Populations experiencing some of the greatest health inequities in our county are also vulnerable to disordered gambling, particularly low income individuals and some racial/ethnic groups.
- The younger one starts gambling, the greater the risk of becoming a problem gambler later in life.

Change in Financial Resources (general population)

Impact Direction + —
Impact Likelihood ▲▼

Research is inconclusive as to whether access to local casino gambling disproportionately impacts financial resources of low income individuals.

Summary of Recommendations

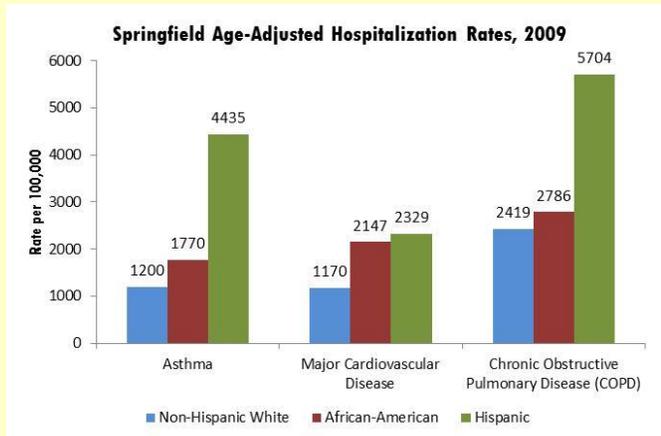
- The Western MA Council for Gambling Accountability should work with the MA Department of Public Health to convene a Problem Gambling Collaborative to develop best practice cross-sector strategies to identify, treat and manage pathological gambling.
- Funding should be provided from the Public Health Trust Fund for the MGC, casino operator, Problem Gambling Collaborative and Host Community to develop evidence-based communications strategies to raise awareness of disordered gambling as a public health problem.
- Casino operator should 1) have responsible gambling information centers in their facilities in addition to the Expanded Gaming Act's required substance abuse and mental health counseling center, and 2) implement best practice strategies to assist disordered gamblers in managing their addiction as recommended by the Problem Gambling Collaborative and MGC.
- Evidence-based prevention strategies should be promoted by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MGC, and the Problem Gambling Collaborative in schools and at institutes of higher education.
- Casino operator should educate employees about increased employee risk of problem gambling.
- Public Health Trust Fund should be used for disordered gambling training and certification of local mental health and addiction providers.
- All strategies to prevent, treat and manage gambling disorders should be accessible to vulnerable populations, including ensuring that they are culturally competent, accessible and affordable.

Major Findings

Traffic

CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Springfield has **high hospitalization rates for diseases affected by air pollution** - asthma, cardiovascular disease, COPD - and **large racial/ethnic disparities**.



* MDPH, MassCHIP

- Large portions of Springfield, including the downtown area in which the casino will be located, are **Environmental Justice** communities.
- As an urban area, Springfield has greater access to PVRTA transit bus service than other communities in the region, though residents have cited barriers to usage, particularly among employees working shift work during overnight hours or weekends.
- Highest traffic volume in the region occurs on I-91 at the northern Springfield limit (approximately 110,000 vehicles per day).
- Traffic volume on Springfield local likely casino access routes ranges from approximately 5,000 – 13,500 vehicles/day.

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Traffic Volume

A casino is anticipated to generate an estimated 15,000 – 30,000 new vehicle trips per day.

Air Pollution

Impact Direction —
Impact Likelihood ▲▲
Near Roadway ▲▲
Regional ▲

- High levels of traffic-related air pollution increase risk for asthma, CVD, and cancer. Children, older adults, and those with preexisting respiratory diseases are vulnerable to increased risk.
- Greatest impact of air pollution likely for those within 200m of roadways with high traffic volume (near roadway air pollution)
- In Springfield, traffic volume on likely local casino access routes could exceed thresholds for negative health impacts.
- Vulnerable populations in Springfield likely to be disproportionately impacted: children, older adults, African-Americans and Hispanics.

Motor Vehicle Collisions

Impact Direction —
Impact Likelihood ▲▲

Increases in traffic due to a casino may increase risk for motor-vehicle related injuries and fatalities. In particular, predicted increases in traffic volume in Springfield reach levels associated with increased risk for pedestrian injury in urban settings found in some studies.

Summary of Recommendations

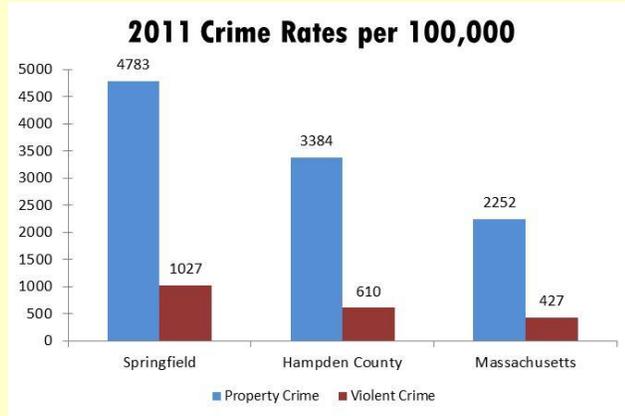
- MGC should provide funding to Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to convene a regional Transportation Collaborative to identify and implement best practice strategies to reduce likely casino-related traffic increases in the region and host community once a casino operator has been identified.
- Casino operator, host community, surrounding communities and PVRTA should implement best practice strategies to promote the use of public transit and alternative modes of transportation. As part of this process, MGM should implement 1) the transportation demand strategies included in their traffic assessment (e.g. bikes for employees, employee promotion of public transit), and 2) their proposed Trolley Bus system, as discussed in the host agreement, using a fee structure that encourages usage and appropriate mechanisms to reduce impact on air quality.
- MGC should ask PVRTA and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to assess increase in public transit needs due to a casino and allocate appropriate funding to upgrade transit service as needed.
- The casino operator should assess potential for instituting public transit mechanisms for their employees (e.g. casino operator bus), particularly in the case where public transit options do not provide adequate service.
- Casino operator should provide funding to assess intersections in a mile radius of the proposed casino, and in partnership with municipal agencies, upgrade those found to be adversely impacted.
- Casino operator and municipal agencies should develop strategies to minimize impact of near roadway air pollution exposures on vulnerable populations through traffic demand management strategies or other evidence-based strategies to reduce exposure (e.g. barriers, roadside vegetation).

Major Findings

Crime and Public Safety

CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Springfield has crime rates 2x that of the state



*FBI Uniform Crime Data

- Evidence indicates that there is a **high perception of crime** in Springfield.
- In 2011, there were 90 driving under the influence (DUI) charges in Springfield.
- In 2011, **30% of fatalities** due to collisions in Hampden County **involved a driver that had a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit** (greater than 0.08).

IMPACTS

Crime

Impact Direction —

Impact Likelihood ▲

- Crime is associated with negative physical and mental health impacts.
- Studies have had conflicting results on a casino's impact on crime, with those finding an increase finding an average of 10%.
- The extent to which a community is accepting of the proposed casino and prepares accordingly may impact crime rates.

Perception of Crime

Impact Direction —

Impact Likelihood ▲▼

- Perception of crime or lack of safety can also negatively impact health.
- Community environment contributes to perception of crime and can affect crime rates. Environmental design elements, such as enhanced lighting and infrastructure to support pedestrian activity, have been shown to deter crime and increase perception of safety.

DUI, Collisions & Fatalities

Impact Direction —

Impact Likelihood ▲▲

- Best available evidence suggests that **DUIs may increase** with likely increased access to free alcohol, thus increasing risk for motor vehicle collision-related injuries and fatalities.

Summary of Recommendations

- Community policing strategies - which includes a community partnership model - should be used by the local police department to monitor and address casino impacts on crime and perception of crime in the host community.
- A joint casino-host community effort should be established to 1) implement and enhance casino operators planned design elements that prevent crime, which includes proper lighting, amenities that promote pedestrian activity, and maintenance of private properties and public space, and 2) align these efforts with any related host community activities.
- Host community of Springfield and community development organizations should implement strategies to support the proposed MGM proposal and host agreement elements that increase foot traffic and “eyes on the street” by promoting connectivity between the casino, other City attractions (e.g. museums, Basketball Hall of Fame) and Main Street. Examples include publicly available maps, street kiosks, and cobblestone walkways.
- Best practice strategies should be implemented to reduce DUIs and associated fatalities, including: 1) funding from the host agreement community impact fund should be provided to the host community Health Department to conduct a campaign about risks and consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol in collaboration with community partners and the licensed casino operator, and 2) host community Police Department should conduct expanded sobriety checks and strictly enforce minimum legal drinking age and zero tolerance laws.

Major Findings

General

CURRENT CONDITIONS

- A number of regional needs exist that were identified as areas likely to be impacted by a resort casino, including:
 - limited public transit capacity due to funding challenges over time,
 - limited workforce capacity, including workforce readiness,
 - high crime rates and perception of crime in Springfield.
- Large health inequities exist in Hampden County and Springfield for African-Americans and Hispanic/Latinos.

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Regional Impact

Integrating resort casino plans with other initiatives in the region creates the greatest opportunity to address existing prioritized regional needs and increases the potential to positively impact health.

Health Equity

A resort casino has the potential to improve or worsen health inequities depending on strategies implemented.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The MGC should consider how resort-casino plans will impact *existing regional needs* and *health equity* by including the following in their evaluation of casino operator Phase 2 applications:
 - a. how the casino operator plans to leverage existing regional resources and feed into integrated strategies to address existing prioritized regional needs, including but not limited to: improved public transit and infrastructure to support alternative methods of transportation; regional workforce development and career pathway programs; livable wage employment; and addressing disordered gambling
 - b. the extent to which the casino operator describes plans to minimize negative health impacts and promote positive health impacts
2. A transparent, dynamic *process should be established that ensures continued collaborative work between licensed casino operator, municipalities, community organizations, etc. during casino development and operation*. The process should include 1) evaluation of the extent to which resort casino development and operation improves existing regional prioritized needs and health equity, 2) modification of plans as needed, and 3) reallocation of funding to support implementation of modified plans. As a part of this process,
 - a. MGC and the host community should create procedures or regulations to allow this type of dynamic process to take place.
 - b. Workforce, Problem Gambling and Transportation Collaboratives should review data and make any needed recommendations for modification of strategies and reallocation of funding to support these modifications.
 - c. MGC and host communities should make publicly available: gaming impact data and reports, impact reviews, and any recommended modifications to casino operator and collaborative strategies.

