



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

New Employee Survey at Encore Boston Harbor

January 2019 through December 2021

Prepared by the UMass Donahue Institute's
Economic & Public Policy Research Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 2022

Project Staff

Kazmiera Breest, *Research Analyst*

Ellen Aron, *Research Associate*

Andrew Hall, *Senior Research Analyst*

Rebecca Loveland, *Senior Research Manager*

Unit Director

Mark Melnik, *Director of Economic & Public Health Policy*

Acknowledgements

Financial support for the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA) study comes from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. This multi-year project was competitively bid and awarded to the University of Massachusetts Amherst in April 2013. In June 2019, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission issued a subsequent Request for Response (BD-19-1068-1700-1-40973) for Research Services and the University of Massachusetts Amherst was awarded the contract effective January 2020.

We would like to thank Mark Vander Linden, Director of Research and Responsible Gaming at the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, whose leadership and research insights have contributed to our work. We would also like to thank Teresa Fiore and Marie-Claire Flores-Pajot at the Massachusetts Gaming Commission for helping us to acquire data critical to this report. Finally, we would like to express appreciation to Lisa McKenney at Plainridge Park Casino, Jacqui Krum at Encore Boston Harbor, and Daniel Miller at MGM Springfield, along with their Human Resources staff teams for managing the data collection process necessary to complete this project.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Breest K, Aron E, Hall A. (2022). New Employee Survey at Encore Boston Harbor: January 2019 through December 2021. Hadley, MA: University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, Economic and Public Policy Research Group.

A PDF OF THIS REPORT CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT: umass.edu/seigma/reports

Executive Summary

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 New Employee Survey was designed to gather information on work-related characteristics of new casino employees that could not be collected from any other source. The survey data can help workforce development providers and policy makers better understand the workforce at the Commonwealth's three casinos. This report summarizes the results of a New Employee survey administered by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) to the incoming employees hired at Encore Boston Harbor (EBH).

For this report we analyzed new employee survey data collected at EBH from January 2019 to December 2021. The findings draw from a sample of all employees who elected to participate in the survey, capturing hires from pre-opening through two and a half years of operations after EBH opened its doors in June of 2019. It is important to note that this study was conducted before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. EBH opened for operation in June of 2019 until the government ordered all non-essential establishments to close on March 13, 2020. Following a three-month period of total shutdown, the casinos reopened in July 2020. Since then, they have continued to operate amid a shifting landscape of regulations and limitations.

To gain insight into how casino jobs meet the needs of workers, the survey asks new employees about their demographics, previous employment, residency, experience, and other economic measures. Analysis shows that casino employment has been serving several purposes for the Commonwealth's workers, including those who have been underemployed, younger workers, women, and workers of color. For many, casino employment is a way to leverage existing experience from other fields such as the food, retail, or hospitality industries and continue a career with the potential for growth. Casino hires also include the unemployed; new workers joining the workforce for the first time; retired individuals; and some workers needing non-traditional hours. Survey respondents report improved economic situations through increased income, access to benefits, and employment status, though there is still some unmet demand for full-time employment and higher pay.

What do jobs at EBH offer workers?

Stable and flexible work opportunities

- After being hired by the casino, 79 percent of new hires surveyed obtained one full-time job—up from approximately 70 percent of workers' who held one full-time job in their most recent work arrangement.
- One in four surveyed new employees who are taking full-time positions at the casino previously worked less than full-time.
- The majority of workers who wanted full-time work at the casino obtained it. Eighty-six percent of those who were previously unemployed found full-time positions at EBH. Sixty-seven percent of former part-time workers (including those holding multiple jobs totaling less than full-time) found full-time jobs at EBH.

- Nevertheless, there is still some unmet demand for full-time employment. For example, 63 percent of current part-time workers at EBH reported that they wanted to work full-time but did not obtain full-time jobs.
- Most new surveyed workers at EBH—nearly 83 percent of those surveyed—moved into hourly pay positions rather than salaried ones.

Increased pay and improved benefits as compared to their previous jobs

- Forty-one percent of respondents expect to earn more income than they did at their previous job, and another 29 percent expect to earn roughly the same.
- Of the 30 percent who expect to earn less salary and wage income, half expect to earn tips as well. The proportion of tip earners in this category is higher than among those who will be earning higher pay, suggesting that the chance to earn tips at the casino may counterbalance the prospect of lower base salary pay.
- Regardless of full-time status, EBH provided some type of benefits package to 91 percent of new workers such as healthcare benefits, retirement benefits, and paid time off.
- A large number of surveyed workers gained improved access to at least one benefit type with their new casino job—23 percent gained paid time off, 26 percent gained health care benefits, and 29 percent gained retirement benefits over their previous jobs.

Career potential and training opportunities in the casino industry

- When asked about the reason they chose to work at a casino, the primary answer—for 65 percent of respondents—was for the opportunity of career advancement.
- Ninety-four percent of workers reported being either somewhat or very interested in a career in the casino industry.
- Most newly hired casino workers are taking a casino job for the first time, while approximately one in five are entering their new jobs with work experience in the casino industry.

Employment for long-term and local residents

- Workers who are long-term residents of Massachusetts account for 79 percent of the surveyed workforce. The others (21 percent) moved to the state less than one year before hire.
- Eighty-six percent of survey respondents reported Massachusetts residencies at time of hire.
- Eighty percent of surveyed new employees report residencies within 30 miles of the casino.
- Forty-eight percent of all surveyed employees live in Host and Surrounding communities.
- Workers from 144 of the 351 municipalities across the state started new jobs at EBH.

Improved employment opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups

- White workers account for the largest share of surveyed workers (35 percent) while Asian workers make up the next-largest share (20 percent), followed by Hispanic or Latino workers (23 percent), and then Black workers (18 percent).
- Women make up under half (43 percent) of the surveyed workforce at EBH.
- A large proportion of surveyed EBH workers (43 percent) were born outside of the U.S.
- Workers of color represent 65 percent of survey respondents, and 70 percent of respondents who were working less than full-time at the casino.
- Just over 41 percent of minorities and women respondents, respectively, reported that they are expecting to make higher salaries than they did in their most recent job, at rates proportional to respondents as a whole.
- Women, unemployed and underemployed workers, and minority workers, received or retained benefits at proportional rates to that of all respondents.

- Unemployed and underemployed workers who wanted full-time positions were less likely to get full-time positions than other groups and all respondents.
- It appears that EBH's diversity hiring goals positively impacted the availability of full-time jobs; there was relative parity across demographic groups among those who wanted a full-time job. Male or White employees reported very slightly higher rates of full-time employment while female or Asian workers had slightly lower rates of full-time employment. Black and Hispanic workers had a proportionate share of full-time jobs for those who sought one.