

MGC Research Snapshot

Assessing the Influence of Gambling on Public Safety in Massachusetts Cities and Towns: Comparative Analysis of Crime in the Plainridge Park Casino Region 2010-2023

June 2025

What you need to know

This report is an analysis of changes in activity in the communities surrounding Plainridge Park Casino (PPC) from 2010-2023. This analysis clearly shows that crime and disorder is not directly impacted in the immediate area around PPC. The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and the casino.

What is this research about?

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) has contracted with crime analysis consultants to assess changes in crime and calls for service in casino surrounding communities. Work began in 2015 with baseline and first-quarter analyses of the Plainville area, where Plainridge Park Casino (PPC) opened in June. This is the eighth annual report to investigate the changes since Plainridge Park opened and covers the years 2010-2023.

The primary purpose of this report, prepared by Justice Research Associates, LLC, under the guidance of Dr. Noah J. Fritz, was to provide a comprehensive analysis of crime trends, hotspots, and potential mitigating strategies in the communities surrounding PPC.

What did the researchers do?

Data on crimes during the period 2010-2023 was collected from Plainville, Attleboro, Mansfield, North Attleborough, Wrentham, and the Massachusetts State Police.

Geographic Information System software (ArcGIS Pro) was used to assess crime hotspots throughout the region, and more detailed analysis was conducted on five statistically significant hotspots, including PPC. The researchers focused on the highest density crime areas and compared different crime categories in the region. The study also compared crime across the fourteen years of data that was available. Crime categories analyzed included Violent Crime, Property Crime, Drug & Alcohol Related Crime, Disorderly, Simple Assaults, Fraudulent and Human Trafficking activity.

What did the researchers find?

Overall, this analysis clearly shows that crime and disorder is not directly impacted in the immediate area around PPC. The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and casinos. The primary hotspots are predominantly farther away from the casino and in clear relationship to other crime attractors, like adult venues and business districts prone to property crime.

Key findings include:

- Assuming distance decay and routine activity theory applies, crime and disorder do not directly impact the immediate area around the Plainridge Park Casino.
- The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and the casino.
- While there are a few crimes of concern, the crime appears to be geographically clustered as a result of other spatial factors, crime attractors and unique adult venues. They include Gillette Stadium, Xfinity Center Boundary Kitchen, and the Bar and Events Center. Several commercial strip malls at the south end of Attleboro near the apex of Highway 1 and A1 and the Main Street & Park Street in downtown Attleboro also cluster geographically. Of concern are the crimes of Theft of Motor Vehicle Part (i.e., typically targeting catalytic converters, air bags and rims-tires) skyrocketing in 2021 and 2022 to 124 and 129, respectively from 45 and 43 in 2019 and 2020.



- Shoplifting and Auto Theft have spiked and have trended significantly higher than previous low numbers.
 - Shoplifting has risen to pre-2016 levels reaching 545 incidents in 2023 after dipping to a low of 269 in 2021.
 - Auto Thefts reached nearly record numbers in the region going back to 2014 (consistently above 100 before 2014), where 2021 and 2023 brought 99 and 95 stolen automobiles, respectively. Lowest auto theft incidents occurred between 2017 and 2020 dropping between 60-73 during this timeframe.
- Since the casino opened in 2016, very few thefts were attributed to the area around the casino: only 2% of Auto Thefts, 2% of Burglaries & Theft from Buildings, and 2% of Theft of or from Auto Parts as percentage of all thefts in the region during this period occurred near the casino.
- Drug and Alcohol Related Offenses have remained low since 2020.
- The number of Simple Assaults trended back up into the 600's the past three years, typically ranging from the high 500s to the mid 600s throughout the timeframe.
- Vandalism experienced a slow decline since 2010 and has remained steady through the years the casino opened and beyond, until the past two years where it has climbed above 500 once again since its low watermark of 417 in 2019.
- Fraud-Con Games-Betting and Trespassing, each climbing significantly since the casino opened.
 - Fraudulent or betting offenses have risen nearly every year since 2010 (n=113), with only slight reductions in numbers in 2014 and 2020, tripling in 2023 with 352.
 - Trespassing has followed the same trend line as Disorderly Conduct with a steady decline from 2010 to 2020, only to rebound to historically high marks of 132 and 310 in 2023.
- In terms of the five densest hotspots in the Plainridge Park region:
 - Attleboro Downtown has the greatest density of crime with 33,004 crimes occurring there since 2010. Attleboro also claims the second highest crime hotspot with 23,876 crimes in and around the commercial retail stores along Highways 1 and 1A.
- Statistically significant micro-hotspots exist in the region that are offered as locations for further analysis and subsequent problem-solving initiatives.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations for future research include:

- Longitudinal studies that track crime rates before and after the introduction of casinos.
- Effectiveness of different regulatory and law enforcement strategies in mitigating casino-related crime.

About the researchers

This report was prepared by Justice Research Associates, LLC, crime analysis consultant to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. For more information about this report, please contact Noah Fritz at njfritz@gmail.com.

- Exploring the social and psychological dimensions of gambling to provide a deeper understanding of its impact on crime.
- Further analysis of the data and micro-hotspots by local crime analysts and officers.

Other recommendations include:

- Pursuing Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) projects and other evidence-based policing strategies to address localized issues related to crime and disorder.
- Acquisition of mitigation funds that are available to create multi-faceted responses and targeted solutions.

Citation

Justice Research Associates (2025). Assessing the Influence of Gambling on Public Safety in Massachusetts Cities and Towns: Comparative Analysis of Crime in the Plainridge Park Casino Region.

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

Key Words

Public Safety; Plainville

Acknowledgements

Financial support for this study comes from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission through the Public Health Trust Fund.

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.

