

# WAGE & SALARY SUMMARY

## Ski Industry Wages Jumped Significantly, With Steep Increases To Continue Next Season

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**TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL STAFFING PROBLEM**, ski areas are responding with significant increases in wages to attract and retain labor. **Many key front-line positions saw between 30–50% wage increases** over the last five seasons, outpacing wage inflation in many other U.S. jobs.

In the last five years, **the weighted average wage rate for all positions increased 28% for ski resort jobs**, according to the 2022 NSAA National Wage & Salary Survey, compiled in partnership with Sierra Research Associates with support from PepsiCo. This compares to 19% growth for U.S. wages in all industries, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), with a lookback to June 2018 versus June 2022. While **ski industry wages rose 10.4% over the previous season**, in the U.S. overall, wage rates for all jobs only grew at about half that rate (5.1% increase per BLS data for the 2021 calendar year). In short, ski industry wage rates this season were nearly double the growth of comparable U.S. wages in 2021.

The Wage & Salary Survey set a record this season for participation, with 152 ski areas reporting wage data for 242 different resort positions. **Some of the largest gains came from resort food and beverage departments**, and F&B banquet supervisors saw their wages grow 61% in the last five seasons. Banquet servers also saw a big wage jump, rising 53% over the 2017–18 season. Similarly, cafeteria line workers were close behind, with wages jumping 46%. Dishwashers were up 37%, with an industry weighted average this past season of more than \$15 an hour, surpassing nearly all state minimum wage levels. These significant wage gains reflect the overall importance of F&B as a front-line revenue driver, which on average hovers around roughly 13% of total resort revenues (upwards of 20% for some regions), according to data from NSAA's Economic Analysis.

Other key departments also saw significant gains. **The No. 1 job in terms of ski area hiring numbers is lift operators or attendants, whose wages increased 37% percent** over the last five seasons. Likewise, rental technicians — another top position in terms of resort hiring — experienced a 41% increase over five seasons. Ski instructors without any certification, one of the top five positions by employee numbers, saw wages grow 32%. Sought-after lift mechanics also saw gains of 29% overall across the U.S., with significant regional differences. In the Pacific West, mechanics' wages went up 47% in the last five seasons.

This year's wage survey also underscored **one notable growth area: adaptive lessons, which reflect overall industry**

### Positions With Highest Wage Increase

(Weighted Average 2018–2022)

1. Marketing – Research Analyst, 80%
2. Accounting – Cash Room Supervisor, 73%
3. F & B – Banquet Supervisor, 61%
4. F & B – Banquet Server, 53%
5. Competition Department - Coach/Supervisor, 50%
6. F & B – Cafeteria Line Worker, 46%
7. Ski School – Adaptive Ski Instructor, 45%
8. F & B – Banquet Server (Includes Tips or Service Charges), 45%
9. Building Maintenance – Janitor, 42%
10. Ski Patrol – Radio Dispatch, 41%

**efforts toward a more inclusive snowsports community.** The demand for adaptive instruction (typically from resorts with a dedicated nonprofit program) pushed average wages for this group of specialized instructors to a 45% jump. Other hard-to-fill positions, such as janitors (42%), tubing park attendants (39%) and day care staff (39%), also saw important wage gains over the past five seasons.

### Expect further steep wage increases next season.

In March this year, Vail Resorts announced it was raising its minimum wage starting July 1 for all positions to at least \$20 per hour across all its U.S. ski areas — increases that were not reflected in the current NSAA Wage & Salary Survey but that will affect next year's survey data.

One key remaining question: how to factor in these higher wage costs? Given the unusual rate of inflation resulting from the pandemic, supply chain issues and the war in Ukraine, many businesses are passing these higher costs on to their customers. Another way, though, is to **take advantage of the federal Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERC)**, which can result in a refund of previously paid payroll taxes, often to the tune of six or seven figures in refunds from the IRS. Albeit a one-time infusion of money, the ERC refunds could finance hiring bonuses and other incentives for returning employees and managers. 📌

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera for a link to purchase this year's Wage & Salary Survey and to watch an ERC webinar.

