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THE STATE OF THE SKI INDUSTRY: NSAA REPORTS RECORD VISITATION IN THE 2021-22 SEASON

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) reported record visitation at U.S. ski areas for the 2021-22 season, a total of 61 million skier visits. This is an increase of 3.5% over last season's national number. Skiing and snowboarding have rebounded in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, providing economic relief and thousands of jobs to communities across 37 ski states. Strong season pass sales and a continued desire for outdoor recreation are two of the primary contributing factors to the season's record-breaking results.

NSAA has been tracking skier visits since the 1978-79 season; you can find historical visitation numbers [here](#). A skier visit is recorded every time an individual uses a lift ticket or pass at a ski area. Although a handful of U.S. ski areas are still spinning their lifts, the number is not expected to increase significantly.

Regional impacts

NSAA divides the country [into six regions](#). The Rocky Mountain region reported a record high number of skier visits, totaling 25.2 million visits. Other regions with increases in season-over-season skier visits were the Northeast, Midwest and Pacific Southwest. Only two regions – the Southeast and Pacific Northwest – reported decreases in skier visits compared to 2020-21.

What the number means

This record visitation signals that the U.S. ski industry is healthy, and that the demand for outdoor recreation remains strong. There were signs of this during the 2020-21 season as the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic led more people to seek outdoor activities. Strong skier numbers bode well for the long-term health of the sport, especially since participant numbers have been relatively flat over the past decade. The number of operating ski areas also jumped from 462 last season to 473 this season, another positive indicator.

Snowfall

Historically, changes in skier visit numbers could be correlated with snowfall; more snow generally meant more skiers. However, the average snowfall this season was 145" nationally, lower than the 10-year average of 166," signaling once again the strong desire for people to get outside.

Capital investment

Capital investment by ski areas is projected to reach an all-time high, totaling \$728 million for the upcoming capital season. Over the past three seasons, the average ski area has invested \$16 per skier

visit back into its operation, as evidenced by the installation of new lift infrastructure, terrain expansion, workforce housing, upgraded dining and other amenities.

Season passes holding strong

For the third season in a row, season passes surpassed day tickets in share of skier visits. Season pass holders made up 51.9% of visits nationally, with day tickets claiming 37.3% of visits (the balance is claimed by off-duty employees, complimentary products, etc.). Ski areas of all sizes, from small to large, in all regions of the country saw an increase in number of season passes sold.

Staffing

Like many industries, the ski industry struggled to attract and retain staff for the season. Approximately 81% of responding ski areas reported that they were not fully staffed, with an average of 75 positions left unfilled. Ski areas responded by raising wages, adding end-of-season bonuses, and investing in affordable workforce housing.

For additional national and regional analysis of the 2021-22 U.S. ski season, please email Adrienne Saia Isaac, NSAA director of marketing and communications, at aisaac@nsaa.org. NSAA does not collect or report on state-level metrics.

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The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) is a trade association representing the business interests of ski area operators, industry suppliers and affiliated members. Formed in 1962, NSAA develops and supports ski industry initiatives and programs covering safety, sustainability and growth from its Lakewood, Colo., headquarters. Learn more about NSAA's mission and programs at [NSAA.org](https://nsaa.org).