

North Carolina Ski Areas Association

2022/23 Economic Value Analysis



PREPARED BY:

RRC ASSOCIATES

303-449-6558

WWW.RRCASSOCIATES.COM

PREPARED FOR:

North Carolina Ski Areas Association

www.GoSkiNC.com

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Executive Summary

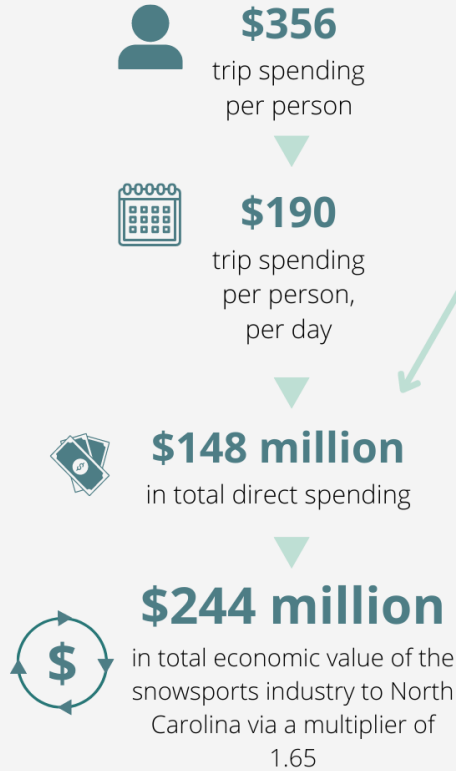


NORTH CAROLINA SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION: 2022/23 ECONOMIC VALUE ANALYSIS



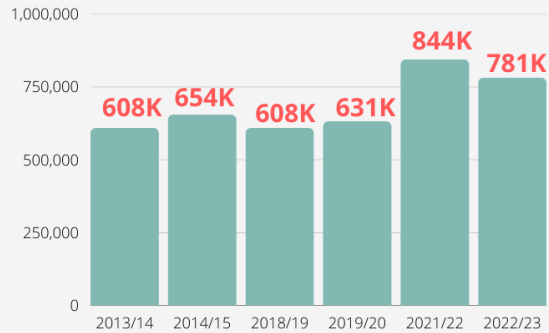
North Carolina is home to 6 operating ski areas which provide a wide variety of opportunities for snowsports enthusiasts. This report summarizes the findings of a Visitor and Economic Value Analysis Study of alpine skiing and snowboarding in the state.

ECONOMIC IMPACT



KEY STATISTICS

Skier/Snowboarder Visits:



Average party size:
4 people

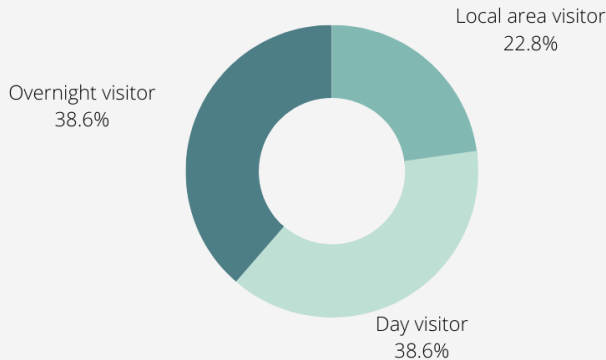
Average age:
35 years

Average length of stay:
3 nights

First-time/Beginner:
30%

NORTH CAROLINA SKIER/SNOWBOARDER ORIGIN

Visitor Type:



- In 2022/23, just over **half of respondents (51%) were in-state visitors**
- **Another third (37%) of respondents hailed from other South-Eastern states** such as Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee.
- **90% of respondents drove from home** as their main mode of transportation to the ski area

Sources: North Carolina Ski Areas Association Visitor Survey and Operator Survey

Executive Summary

The Economic Value is defined as the total value to the economy due to the existence of ski areas. The total value is the amount that such ski areas contribute to the North Carolina economy, and as such, the amount by which the economy would suffer without those ski area facilities.

The total economic value documented in this report is the sum of visitor expenditures and area revenues, along with economic multipliers that take into account the ripple effects (indirect and induced effects) of the industry's impact. The focus of this analysis is the winter season during which the ski areas operate, generally November to March.

Primary sources of information for this analysis included (a) surveys of skiers and snowboarders at North Carolina ski areas and (b) a survey of the state's ski area operators. The guest surveys profiled visitors in terms of demographics, geographic origin, satisfaction, and expenditure patterns, among other details. The survey of ski area operators documented total volume of business (skier and tubing visits), revenue, expenses, employment, days of operation, and capital expenditures.

Using these data sources, a model was created to estimate the total economic value of the ski resort industry to North Carolina.

- Direct Value for the 2022/23 winter season was **\$148.0 million**
- Indirect and Induced Value for the 2022/23 winter season was **\$96.2 million**
- Total Economic Value, the sum of direct and indirect/induced value, was **\$244.3 million**

The overall economic value of the ski resort industry to the state of North Carolina was \$244.3 million, based on a multiplier of 1.65, for the period covering the 2022/23 winter season.

This economic value figure quantifies only the most direct impacts, and does not include summer value, social, environmental, or cultural impacts, which can be significant but are more difficult to quantify and have thus been excluded from this analysis. See the section titled "Other Benefits" for a discussion of some of these qualitative effects.

This season's research also reveals other important information about the state of snowsports in North Carolina. Some highlights include:

- 30% of visitors to North Carolina ski areas were **first-time/beginners**; compared to 10-15% of visitors to ski areas nationally and approximately 20% of visitors to Southeast ski areas.
- Just over half of respondents (51%) were **in-state visitors**. This share coupled with increased average ski trips to North Carolina areas this winter shows strong local loyalty.
- **Strong visits** (781K) and equivalent or improving ski area operation metrics, such as capital expenditures, revenue, and employee count.

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of an Economic Value Analysis Study of snowsports at ski areas in the state of North Carolina.

The North Carolina Ski Areas Association (NCSAA), the trade group for ski areas in the state, commissioned the study, which was conducted by RRC Associates (RRC) of Boulder, Colorado. RRC is the leading consulting and market research firm in the snowsports industry and tracks many statistics and figures for the industry throughout North America. RRC publishes annually on behalf of the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) the Kottke End of Season Report, the National Demographic Study, and the Economic Analysis of U.S. Ski Areas, three industry reports that track patterns of significance related to operational, demographic, and financial information, respectively.

North Carolina has six operating ski areas within the state's borders, drawing visitors from across the Southeastern U.S. The ski resort industry is very important to the state, particularly during the time of year when such businesses operate (November through March) and quantifying the economic value of the industry is necessary to understanding its significance.



Methods

Several sources of information were utilized to construct this Economic Value Study. Ski areas in the state submitted questionnaires to RRC about their operations, including total volume of business (skier/snowboarder, tubing, and ice-skating visits), revenues, expenses, number of employees, days of operation, capital expenditures, and other information.

A second survey was administered during the 2022/23 winter season to visitors to North Carolina ski areas. The guest surveys profiled visitors in terms of demographics, geographic origin, satisfaction, and expenditure patterns, among other items. Surveys were conducted at four different ski areas in North Carolina (Appalachian Ski Mountain, Beech Mountain Resort, Cataloochee Ski Area, and Sugar Mountain Resort) using two methodologies: 1) intercept survey via tablet or paper and 2) post-visit email, counts of which are listed in Table 1. Questions across survey method/mode and across ski area remained consistent. The completed surveys were statistically weighted to be proportionate to the skier visits at the respective ski areas, making the overall results more representative. A total of 3,691 surveys were collected during the season, which represents a very good quantity of surveys for this study¹ and represents the largest response coverage this study has seen thus far.

*Table 1
Visitor Survey Volume by Ski Area and Method, 2022/23*

Ski Area	Overall	Tablet	Paper	Post-Visit
Appalachian Ski Mountain	468		468	
Beech Mountain Ski Resort	2,256	3		2,253
Cataloochee Ski Area	226	226		
Sugar Mountain Ski Area	741	623		118
Total Sample	3,691	852	468	2,371

In contrast to other types of visitor or tourism impact studies, this report focuses on the economic value of snowsports to North Carolina. While many economic impact studies focus on new or incremental spending from out-of-region visitors, this analysis instead highlights the value that the industry produces given its current configuration, inclusive of residents and visitors alike. Importantly, skiing and snowboarding are activities that participants would likely do elsewhere if no facilities existed in North Carolina. In other words, resident skiers and snowboarders most likely would not give up their sport – but would instead travel, and thus spend time elsewhere to participate. As such, this study is not limited to visitors to North Carolina, but is inclusive of all skiers and snowboarders who participate at facilities within the state’s boundaries.

¹For the total sample size of 3,691 interviews conducted, the margin of error is +/- 1.6 percent (for the 95 percent confidence interval). Note that the margin of error is different for each question on the survey, depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various market segments and from year to year, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

Final Report Findings

North Carolina Ski Resort Industry

Figure 1
Ski Areas of North Carolina – NCSAA Brochure, 2022

1 Appalachian Ski Mtn.
The NC High Country's 1st ski area. Renowned for teaching beginners, families and groups how to ski since 1962. Home of the French Swiss Ski College, the South's largest ski school and SKIwee. 3,000 sets of ski, snowboard and skateboard rentals. NC's only late-night skiing. Snowmaking on all slopes, mostly after operating hours. Jacket, bib, glove, goggle and helmet rentals. 3 terrain parks, refrigerated outdoor ice skating rink, 46,000 sq. ft. Bavarian-style lodge with wireless internet and 200' observation deck. Restaurant with fireplace overlooking slopes, Ski Shop, Gift Shop, nursery, locker room, TV lounge and group meeting rooms. Ski-in/ski-out chalet rentals. Open 7 days and nights, mid-November to late March. 2 miles off 4-lane US Hwy. 321 between Blowing Rock and Boone. Closest resort to Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Raleigh. Online time-slot reservations required.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 4,000 ft. - 13 Slopes - Ice Skating
- Base Elevation: 3,635 ft. - Lifts: 2 Quads, 1 Double, 1 Surface, 2 Conveyors


940 SKI MOUNTAIN RD. - PO BOX 106 - BLOWING ROCK, NC 28605
828-295-7828 - 800-322-2373 - 828-295-3277 (Fax)
info@appskimtn.com - www.appskimtn.com - www.appterrainpark.com



2 Sugar Mountain Resort
Sugar Mountain Resort features a six-passenger and two quad high-speed chairlifts, and a double black diamond slope, Whoopdedoo. Enjoy skiing and snowboarding on 125 acres, and snowshoeing day and night. State-of-the-art snowmaking covers all 20 slopes. The Snowsports School accommodates all ages and abilities including half or full-day programs for kids. The rental shop specializes in top of the line equipment and clothing. Sugar has an easy access tubing park with several 700' lanes and a 10,000 sq. ft. outdoor ice-skating rink. The base lodge houses two cafeterias, the Last Run Lounge, a group sales department, a locker room, and the Sugar Mountain Sports & Gift Shop. Summer fun includes weekend chairlift rides, a gravity bike park, mountain bike camps, a food truck festival, the Summit Crawl, Fourth-of-July fireworks, and Oktoberfest. Located just off NC Hwy 184.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 5,300 ft. - Lifts: 1 Fixed Grip Quad, 2 Doubles, - Ice Skating
- Base Elevation: 4,100 ft. 1 High Speed Six Pack, - Tubing
- Vertical Rise: 1,200 ft. 2 High Speed Quads, - Snowshoeing
- 20 Slopes 1 Surface, 1 Carpet Conveyor

1009 SUGAR MTN. DR. - PO BOX 369 - BANNER ELK, NC 28604
828-898-4521 - 800-SUGARMIT
info@skisugar.com - www.skisugar.com



3 Beech Mountain Resort
Experience the majestic beauty of the North Carolina mountains at Beech Mountain Resort. Sitting at 5,506 feet in elevation, Beech Mountain offers a stunning landscape and the perfect skiing, snowboarding, or tubing adventure for the whole family. And when you're not on the slopes, get a unique taste of mountain culture with live music, an on-site brewery, and plenty of activities everyone can enjoy. Make the most of your stay and take advantage of all-inclusive packages, including lodging, lift tickets, transportation, and even food. Plus, get extra savings with group discounts or the popular weeknight specials. Don't forget to check out the resort village with its delightful light display and cozy fire pits – the perfect backdrop for your relaxing getaway.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 5,506 ft. - 17 Slopes, 2 Terrain Parks - Tubing
- Base Elevation: 4,675 ft. - Lifts: 4 Fixed Grip Quads, 2 Doubles, 2 Carpet Conveyors, - Vertical Rise: 830 ft.


1007 BEECH MOUNTAIN PARKWAY - BANNER ELK, NC 28604
828-387-2011 - 800-438-2093
info@skibeech.com - www.beechmountainresort.com - #beechnm



4 Cataloochee Ski Area
North Carolina's first ski area. Our advanced state of the art automated snowmaking system starts the ski season after the first cold weather of the year and keeps it going into late March. Come and enjoy skiing and snowboarding on our 18 slopes, 17 slopes feature lights to allow the fun to continue into the night. Our Snowsports Center offers instruction for all and uses a dedicated teaching area, staffed by professionals, to help you learn and increase your skills in both skiing and snowboarding. Cat Trackers, offered for full or half days sessions, can get ages 4 to 12 enjoying a day on the slopes. Cataloochee offers something for everyone. Facilities include full-service equipment rentals, clothing rentals, cafeteria style restaurant, full-service bar, and a sports shop to purchase forgotten gear. Tube World, our snow tubing facility, is located at a separate location at the base of our mountain in Maggie Valley. We are located 40 minutes from Asheville.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 5,400 ft. - 18 Slopes - Tubing
- Base Elevation: 4,660 ft. - Lifts: 1 Double, 1 Triple, 1 Quad, 3 Carpet Conveyors
- Vertical Rise: 740 ft.


1080 SKI LODGE RD. - MAGGIE VALLEY, NC 28751
828-926-0285 - 800-768-0285
info@cataloochee.com - www.cataloochee.com



5 Hatley Pointe Ski Resort
Hatley Pointe Boutique Ski Resort stands as North Carolina's most conveniently accessible ski slope, a mere 5 miles away from I-26 (Wolf Laurel Exit #3) and a 30-minute drive north of Asheville, NC. Explore our expansive terrain, featuring wide-open spaces and carefully graded teaching areas. Our esteemed Snow Sports School offers group or private lessons to enhance your skills on the Mountain. The newly enhanced lodge lying below the slopes offers a cozy yet sophisticated retreat complete with crackling fireplaces, a delectable restaurant, an exclusive VIP lounge, a bespoke retail experience, and state-of-the-art rental center. With a focus on unparalleled service standards, genuine and authentic hospitality, paired with some of the most incredible terrains in the region, we invite you to experience unforgettable moments and exceptionally crafted experiences with us.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 4,700 ft. - 15 Slopes - Tubing
- Base Elevation: 4,000 ft. - Lifts: 1 Quad, 1 Double, 2 Surface
- Vertical Rise: 700 ft.


578 VALLEY VIEW CIRCLE - MARS HILL, NC 28754
828-689-4111 - 800-817-4111
Hello@hatleypointe.com - www.hatleypointe.com



6 Sapphire Valley Ski Area
The Sapphire Valley ski slopes are an integral part of a 5,700 acre four-season resort nestled in the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains. Sapphire Valley is the closest North Carolina ski hill to Atlanta, GA and is an excellent opportunity for a day trip. The intimate nature of our ski hill and short lift lines make Sapphire Valley a popular choice amongst families and beginning skiers. Our state of the art quad chair lift means the guest can optimize the number of runs they take and our lift tickets are good for the whole day. The main hill is 2,000 feet in length with a 200 foot vertical drop and is very skiable for all ages. We offer skiing, snowboarding and tubing at the most affordable rates in the state. Lessons and group discounts are also available.

STATS: - Peak Elevation: 3,400 ft. - 2 Slopes
- Base Elevation: 3,200 ft. - Lifts: 1 Quad, 2 Carpet Conveyors
- Vertical Rise: 200 ft. - Tubing

217 SAPPHIRE VALLEY RD. - SAPPHIRE, NC 28774
828-743-7663 (Main) - 828-743-1169 (Hotline)
svma@aol.com - www.sapphirevalleyresorts.com




The state has 6 operating ski areas which provide a wide variety of opportunities for snowsports enthusiasts. The ski areas are in the mountainous western part of the state, as illustrated above in in Figure 1². Figure 1 also provides verbal summaries of each ski area’s landscape, elevation, infrastructure, and amenities.

Of the six ski areas in the North Carolina ski resort industry, all returned surveys about their operations. Unless otherwise specified³, all statewide totals in this report reflect *all six* of North Carolina’s ski areas. Table 2 below outlines some of the key operational and financial statistics regarding the North Carolina ski resort industry during the 2022/23 fiscal year compared to 2019/20 (the season this report was last conducted).

*Table 2
Key Statewide Statistics for North Carolina ski areas, 2022/23 vs. 2019/20*

Key Statistics	2022/23	2019/20
Total Skier/Snowboarder Visits	781,013	631,241
Total Gross Revenue, Resort Operations	\$66,815,884	\$49,131,417
Year-Round Employees (includes full-time and part-time)	126	91
Winter Seasonal Employees (includes full-time and part-time)	1,760	1,342
Total Capital Expenditures	\$16,067,507	\$7,851,672

As seen in the table above, this winter season was strong for North Carolina ski areas, with higher skier and snowboarder visits than had been seen in 2019/20 or seasons prior. Additionally, ski area operators in North Carolina provide **126 year-round jobs and 1,760 winter seasonal jobs**, each an improvement over employment figures in 2019/20. **In 2022/23, the industry generated over \$66 million in gross revenue from ski area operations**, including lift tickets and season passes, lessons, equipment rental, retail stores, food & beverage (which is a concession at some North Carolina ski resorts), and other operating departments, which was up \$17.7 million (not adjusting for inflation). Resorts also invested just over \$16 million on capital expenditures (nearly double the reported investment from 2019/20), including new and upgraded lifts, on-mountain facilities, and summer/fall operations.

While most North Carolina ski areas do not own or operate onsite lodging accommodations, the industry is responsible for many overnight stays in local commercial lodging and private accommodations (rent-by-owner or managed by property management firms). Thus the snowsports industry is responsible for additional economic benefit through gross lodging revenues (and associated lodging tax revenues) generated in local municipalities like Boone, Blowing Rock, Maggie Valley, Beech Mountain, Banner Elk, and Sugar Mountain, as well as counties such as Madison County (Wolf Ridge Ski Resort), Haywood County (Cataloochee Ski

² As of the 2022/23 season, Wolf Ridge Ski Area came under new ownership and underwent a name change to Hatley Pointe Ski Resort.
³ Visits estimated for 1 ski area in 2022/23 using the prior season visit report with a regional adjustment. Employment statistics estimated for 2 ski areas in 2019/20 using previously reported data. Capital Expenditures were not provided for 2 ski areas in 2019/20 and 1 ski area in 2022/23.

Area), Avery County (Sugar Mountain Resort) and Watauga County (Beech Mountain Resort and Appalachian Ski Mtn.).

Visitor Expenditures

One of the primary functions of the survey research was to document spending patterns among skiers and snowboarders in North Carolina. Survey respondents were asked to detail the dollar amounts their immediate travel group spent (on the trip during which they were surveyed) for a variety of categories, including lift tickets (31.7% of the total), ski/snowboard lessons, ski/snowboard equipment rental, lodging, food & beverage, shopping/retail purchases, non-ski entertainment/activities, and other spending. This section of the report details these results.

Results for total group expenditures for the ski trip were divided by the number of people in the group to arrive at a per person spending figure for each of the categories, as presented in the table below. The sum of all the categories results in a total per person expenditure figure for the visit. As shown in Table 3, the average total expenditure per person, per trip within the state of North Carolina during winter 2022/23 was \$356.32. Per person expenditures were then divided by the number of days participating in snowsports activities, as specified by each respondent (locals and day visitors were considered to have visited 1 day)⁴. **The average total expenditure per person, per day within the state of North Carolina during winter 2022/23 was \$189.54.**

Table 3
Average Trip Spending per Person, 2022/23 Ski Season

Type of Expenditure ⁵	Per Person Per Trip Spending	Per Person, Per Day (PPPD) Spending	Percent of Total (from PPPD)
Lift tickets	\$72.02	\$48.01	25.3%
Restaurants/food and beverage on the mountain	\$15.41	\$10.28	5.4%
Restaurants/food and beverage elsewhere in North Carolina	\$47.82	\$20.85	11.0%
Ski/snowboard lessons	\$9.82	\$4.85	2.6%
Equipment rentals	\$24.72	\$17.00	9.0%
Shopping/retail purchases on the mountain	\$18.21	\$8.38	4.4%
Shopping/retail purchases elsewhere in North Carolina	\$15.89	\$9.50	5.0%
Lodging/accommodations on the mountain	\$97.43	\$36.06	19.0%
Lodging/accommodations elsewhere in North Carolina	\$34.20	\$22.73	12.0%
Non-ski activities on the mountain	\$5.05	\$3.44	1.8%
Non-ski activities elsewhere in North Carolina	\$4.89	\$3.11	1.6%
Other (incidentals, tips, sundries, etc.)	\$10.85	\$5.33	2.8%
TOTAL PER PERSON SPENDING	\$356.32	\$189.54	100.0%

⁴ The average days participating in snowsports activities for all respondents (including local and day trips) was 1.5 days. Per person, per day spending is also adjusted for outliers, by capping responses in each spending category at approximately the 99th percentile of the distribution.

⁵ Lift ticket and on-mountain restaurant food/beverage spending estimates were derived from revenue per skier visit figures provided by North Carolina ski areas in the Operator survey.

The per person per day expenditures in each spending category are then multiplied by the total skier/snowboarder visit figure for the state in 2022/23 (781,013 final statewide total according to operator surveys) to derive a total direct expenditure figure. As presented in Table 4 below, **skiers and snowboarders visiting North Carolina ski areas were directly responsible for \$148.03 million in direct expenditures** during the 2022/23 winter season.

Table 4
Total Direct Expenditures, 2022/23 Ski Season

Type of Expenditure	Total Direct Expenditures
Lift tickets	\$37,498,618
Restaurants/food and beverage on the mountain	\$8,025,314
Restaurants/food and beverage elsewhere in North Carolina	\$16,286,736
Ski/snowboard lessons	\$3,788,417
Equipment rentals	\$13,276,116
Shopping/retail purchases on the mountain	\$6,541,158
Shopping/retail purchases elsewhere in North Carolina	\$7,421,248
Lodging/accommodations on the mountain	\$28,163,220
Lodging/accommodations elsewhere in North Carolina	\$17,749,962
Non-ski activities on the mountain	\$2,688,770
Non-ski activities elsewhere in North Carolina	\$2,431,353
Other (incidentals, tips, sundries, etc.)	\$4,163,063
TOTAL PER PERSON SPENDING	\$148,033,974

Visitor Expenditures On-Mountain vs. Off-Mountain

Skiers and snowboarders make expenditures associated with their trip at both the ski area as well as at other businesses in the community (including lodging properties, restaurants, retail stores, equipment rental shops, and other local businesses). This spillover effect of spending in the local community is important to document via this Economic Value study.

The majority of skier/snowboarder spending occurs on-mountain, with 63% of expenditures (\$119.52 per person, per day) accruing to the ski area and its on-site amenities. 37%, or \$70.02 per person, per day of skier/snowboarder spending happens elsewhere in the local area of the ski area or in North Carolina as a whole. On-mountain spending comprises a larger share of the total this season partly due to more spending categories being broken out into on vs. off-mountain spending, allowing the study to capture more granularity on-mountain. Prior to 2022/23, only restaurant spending was broken into these two components whereas in 2022/23, shopping/retail, lodging/accommodations, and non-ski activities also incorporated this distinction. These results show the importance of ski areas in North Carolina to their local economies.

*Table 5
Per Person, Per Day Expenditures On-Mountain vs. Off-Mountain, 2022/23 Ski Season*

Type of Expenditure	Per Person, Per Day Spending	Percent of Total
On-mountain spending	\$119.52	63.1%
Off-mountain spending	\$70.02	36.9%
TOTAL PER PERSON SPENDING	\$189.54	100%



Economic Value Conclusion

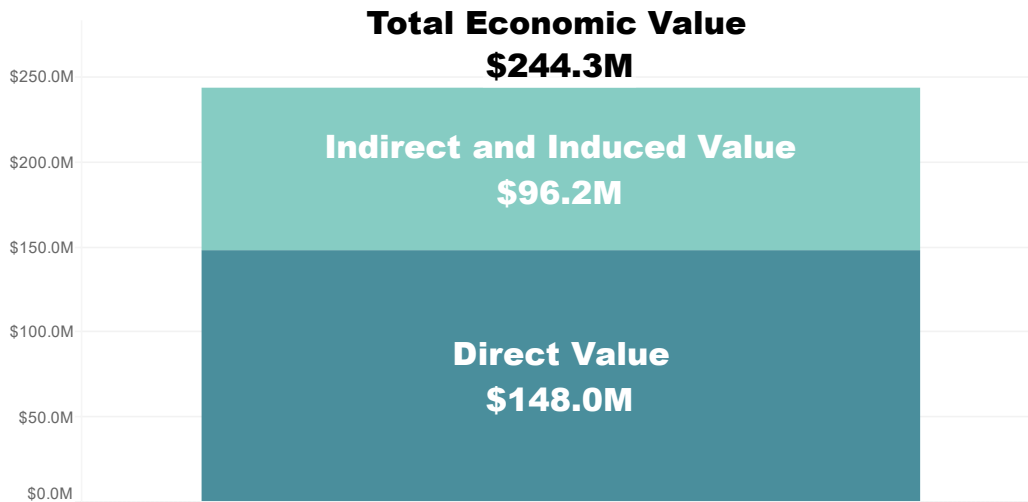
This Economic Value Analysis provides a conservative estimate of the value of the ski resort industry in the State of North Carolina. Through direct and indirect value, the ski resort industry plays a critical role in the North Carolina economy, particularly during the mid-November through March period of the year when other segments of the tourism economy are at a seasonal lull.

Economic value has several effects, including direct and secondary (indirect and induced effects). Thus far, this report has focused on the direct value that ski areas generate. To estimate the indirect and induced effects, a multiplier is generally utilized. A multiplier is a figure used to estimate the secondary effects on the statewide economy of a particular industry.

Several factors impact the size of a multiplier. Industries in large urban areas generally have higher multipliers because more of the spending by the industry stays within the local area. Smaller industries in more rural areas would generally have smaller multipliers because more of their spending leaks out to other regions where the goods are produced. For tourism and other service industries, multipliers might be somewhat higher because the spending is actually for a service, not a product, and thus more value is retained locally. A multiplier for a state-level analysis would tend to be higher than one for a regional or local analysis. All these factors must be taken into consideration when estimating the multiplier. The reliability of the level of tourism activity (in this case, skier visits) and spending should also be taken into account.

Given some of the above factors and the conservative nature of this analysis, a relatively low multiplier has been utilized for this report. While the confidence in the direct spending is high (very reliable skier visit, tubing visit, day/overnight visitor percentages, and visitor expenditure numbers), the calculation of a multiplier through an Input-Output model or other academic modeling is beyond the scope of this analysis. Rather, comparisons to similar industries and expert judgment were used to derive the multiplier figure. For this analysis, a multiplier of 1.65 has been utilized. Multipliers amplify the effects of the direct spending of skiers. As skiers and their families make purchases, the suppliers of those goods and services must also buy inputs (often business to business) to meet that demand (indirect effect). Additionally, this spending increase the personal income of the employees who work in the sector where the monies are spent. This creates an induced. Together, the indirect and induced impacts amplify the direct spending. In the case of North Carolina (and many others) ski areas, for every \$100 spent by a skier, another \$65 is generated through the indirect and induced impacts.

Figure 2
Summary of Economic Impact, 2022/23



As outlined above, direct spending was estimated to be \$148 million. Taking the multiplier (1.65) into account, the **total economic value of the ski area industry to North Carolina is \$244.3 million**. The major conclusions of this Economic Value Analysis are depicted above in Figure 2. The study done in 2019/20 estimated a total value of \$165.2 million, with the same methods and multiplier used. The 2022/23 economic value figure is 47.8 percent higher than the 2019/20 number, indicating nominal (not inflation adjusted) average annual growth of 15.9 percent over the past 3 winters.

It is particularly important to note the importance and economic value of the ski resort industry during the four-month winter season in which these businesses primarily operate. Tourism is an important industry in North Carolina throughout the year, but the summer months tend to dominate this industry. The winter months represent the low season in most tourism areas in the state, with the exception of those regions where skiing and snowboarding is offered. In other words, the ski resort industry provides economic value at a particularly important time of the year. As well, its presence allows for year-round employment opportunities for residents of these areas of the state and provides for a diversified and year-round economy.

Skiing and snowboarding facilities draw residents and visitors to areas with such services and amenities, and they are frequently the economic impetus to the communities in which they operate (which tend to be more rural), as well as to nearby commercial and residential development, including enhanced property values and higher property tax collections. The overall economic value of the ski resort industry to the State of North Carolina is \$244.3 million for the 4-month period covering the 2022/23 season. Other important benefits not included in this Economic Value Analysis include Quality of Life impacts, Health and Wellness impacts, Events and Exposure, and additional special programs.

Other Benefits

The presence of the ski resort industry in North Carolina has many other benefits not included in the direct economic value analysis presented above. This section describes some of these non-monetary benefits, which exist but are difficult to accurately quantify.

Quality of Life Impacts

Overall, ski resorts have a positive impact on the quality of life in the parts of the state in which they operate. They provide a sense of community, civic pride, something that local residents identify with and are a part of, and other intangible benefits. Ski areas also encourage quality family experiences; create opportunities for competitive & non-competitive clubs; provide social benefits through social clubs; and allow for winter season healthy, athletic after-school programs. An appreciation for natural beauty and learning about habitat is also enhanced through the essential outdoor component of the skiing experience.

Events and Exposure

Media coverage of events at ski areas provides terrific promotional and branding exposure that is worth much more than the events themselves cost. Some of the larger events which garner significant regional and national media coverage include ski races, snowboarding freestyle competitions, and numerous other events and festivals. Summer and fall activities and festivals include weddings, fall festivals, hiking, mountain biking, scenic chairlift rides, and other popular activities. These events bring new visitors to the region and provide media exposure to potential customers to visit in the future.

Health and Wellness Benefits

Skiing provides one of the few opportunities for outdoor recreation during the winter, a season in which many people stay inside and exercise less. All participants – from kids to Baby Boomers and beyond – reap positive health benefits from skiing and snowboarding. The importance of providing opportunities for exercise cannot be overstated, especially as more Americans become overweight and obese. The health benefits of skiing and snowboarding are clearly of vital importance.

Additional Visitor Research Findings

The visitor survey covered additional topics beyond visitor spending. Some of the highlights from these additional questions, including visitor demographics and geographic origin, visitor satisfaction, and other visitor characteristics, are summarized here.

Ski Area Visitor Demographics

Visitor survey results provide a comprehensive view of skiers and snowboarders in North Carolina. This section portrays some of the highlights of the visitor demographics and other visitor information. Detailed demographic comparisons year-over-year can be found in Appendix B.

Like prior seasons, visitors to North Carolina ski areas tend to be households with children at home or single individuals (combined 73% of sample) who are between 18 – 44 years of age (average age is 35.4 in 2022/23, with a median of 34 years). Consistent with this age and household type, household incomes of skiers are moderately high, with 53% of the sample reporting between \$50K and \$200K before taxes. Like 2019/20, approximately 50% of the sample was composed of men, with the remaining 50% composed of women (46%) or those of other gender (3%).

Most visitors were in a group of two to five people, though some larger groups were recorded. The average group size was somewhat smaller this season at 3.9 people, mirroring an increase in single (no children) visitors seen this season (32%).

Skier/Snowboarder Characteristics

New skiers/snowboarders (first-time or beginner) made up a somewhat smaller share of visitors this season compared to prior seasons; however, this group still composed 30% of survey respondents., which is larger than the national share of new participants, which is closer to 12-15% in recent winters, as well as larger than the regional share of new participants, which is approximately 20%. The largest groups of North Carolina participants continue to fall within the low or high intermediate level, making up 55% of the sample. Consistent with the smaller share of new skiers/snowboarders, 39% indicated that it was a first-time snowsports experience for someone in their party (down from a high of 47% in 2019/20).

Alpine skiers composed 54% of the sample this winter with another 51% of respondents reporting snowboard use. A small share also participated in tubing, ice skating, or other outdoor winter activities⁶. In terms of lift access, half of respondents (50%) said they were using a full-day lift ticket, followed by a season pass (13%), or a half-day ticket (10%). Like many ski areas across the nation, season pass usage has seen steady growth over the last decade, having increased from 9% in 2019/20.

Perhaps contributing to the rising share of non-first-time participants this season, the distribution of visitation type between overnight and day visits were equal this season at 39% (continuing a

⁶ Multiple response permitted for this question.

multi-season decrease in overnight visitors and a simultaneous increase in day visitors). Local area visitors also increased slightly to 23%. Among overnight visitors, the plurality (90%) drove from home, stayed 3.1 nights, on average, and skied approximately 2 days, on average during their trip. Average nights stayed in the area increased this winter from 2.8 in 2019/20, which aided in boosting the total economic impact to North Carolina.

Among all respondents, all measures of days skied this season (this trip, this season at all areas, this season at North Carolina ski areas, and total days at this ski area) increased compared to prior seasons, as shown in the Table 6. The average number of total days skied/snowboarded this season (at any ski area) was 9.9, with an average of 8.2 days at ski areas in North Carolina, and 6.6 days at the specific ski area where the survey was taken. Increasing ski/riding days is consistent with this season’s larger share of more experienced skiers and snowboarders that are not on their first trip to a ski area, as well as with the modestly rising share of season passes.

*Table 6
Average Days Skiing/Snowboarding, YOY*

Question	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
How many days will you ski/snowboard on this trip ?	2.2	1.9	2.2
How many total days will you ski/snowboard this season at all ski areas ?	9.9	9.0	7.2
How many of those total days will be at North Carolina ski areas ?	8.2	7.8	6.1
How many of those total days will be at this ski area ?	6.6	5.9	5.1

Source: Visitor Survey

Lastly, all visitors were asked how they found out about the ski area they were visiting. Most commonly, people cited informal means – a prior visit (53%) or talking to friends/family (27%). Given the larger share of non-first-time visitors this season, 2022/23 also saw an increase in information from prior visits.

Increasing ability level, prior visit-driven information source, and days of participation points toward strong sport retention and local loyalty within North Carolina snowsports. Detailed comparisons of skier/snowboarder characteristics can be found in Appendix C and visitor experience ratings can be found in Appendix D.

Geographic Residence

The geographic origin of all skiers and snowboarders in North Carolina shows that over half (51%) reside in-state with 49% hailing from other states or countries. Over the course of multiple studies, the top states have consistently included Florida (10%), Georgia (10%), South Carolina (9%), and Tennessee (8%). These states combined with North Carolina itself make up 88% of the total share of respondents.

Figure 3
Top 10 States, Year over Year

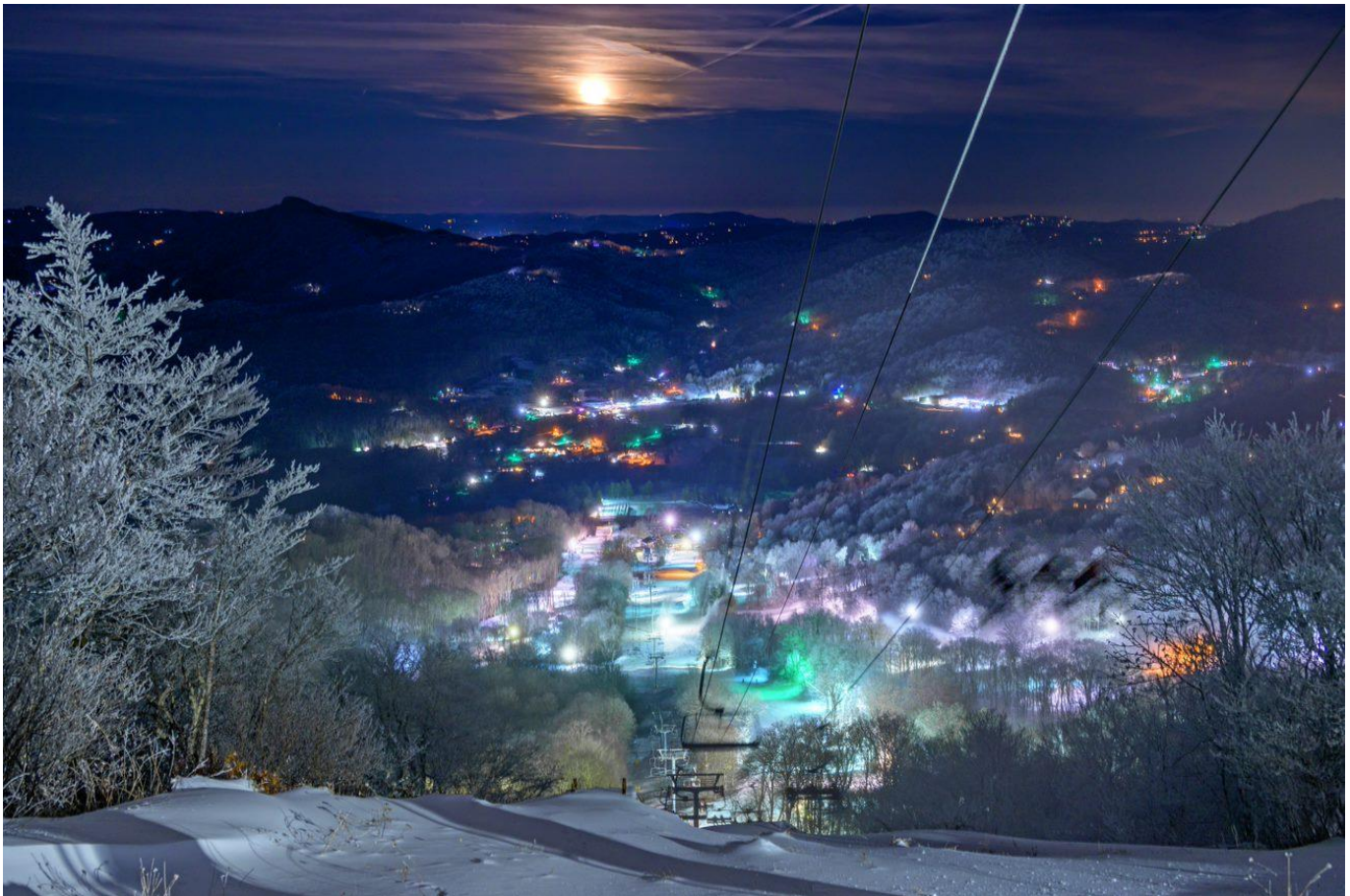
State of Origin	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
North Carolina	51%	56%	42%
Florida	10%	10%	15%
Georgia	10%	12%	16%
South Carolina	9%	10%	14%
Tennessee	8%	6%	6%
Virginia	2%	1%	1%
West Virginia	1%	0%	0%
Alabama	1%	2%	2%
Kentucky	0%	0%	
Louisiana	0%	0%	0%
n=	2,917	1,751	1,656

Finally, looking at market areas, nearly one-third of respondents live in the Charlotte area (30%), having seen steady growth over the last three studies. Other market areas such the Greenville (10%), Raleigh (8%), Atlanta (8%), Greensboro (6%), and Orlando areas have remained consistent contributors of visitors to North Carolina ski areas – composing 65% of 2022/23 market shares. Perhaps facilitated by this season’s use of post-visit surveys, the share of the international market hit a multi-season high of 6%, having increased from less than 1% of the sample in prior studies.

Figure 4
Top Markets, Year over Year

DESIGNATED MARKET AREA

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Charlotte – NC, SC	30%	27%	22%
Greenville - Spartansburg - Asheville - Anderson -- GA, NC, SC	10%	19%	11%
Raleigh - Durham (Fayetteville) – NC, VA	8%	8%	9%
Atlanta – AL, GA, NC	8%	9%	13%
Greensboro - High Point - Winston-Salem -- NC, VA	6%	5%	5%
International, US Territories, and Overseas Armed Forces	6%	0%	0%
Orlando - Daytona Beach - Melbourne -- FL	3%	3%	3%
Miami - Fort Lauderdale -- FL	3%	2%	3%
Tri-Cities – KY, TN, VA	2%	3%	2%
Nashville – KY, TN	2%	1%	1%
n=	2,917	1,751	1,656



About RRC Associates

RRC Associates is a multi-disciplinary consulting firm providing market research, strategic analysis, and community/land planning services. RRC specializes in collecting and analyzing customer feedback for a variety of public and private clients nationwide and internationally. Research techniques we utilize are customized to clients' needs, but often incorporate web-based surveys; national and regional panels; intercept, telephone, and mail back surveys; and/or focus groups. RRC additionally provides customized mobility data analysis and consulting through our *Movement* Platform. These new analyses provide enhanced opportunity to expand and deepen market and destination understanding.

RRC is the leading consulting and market research firm in the snowsports industry and tracks many statistics and figures for the industry throughout North America. RRC publishes annually on behalf of the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) the Kottke End of Season Report, the National Demographic Study, and the Economic Analysis of US Ski Areas, three industry reports that track patterns of significance related to operational, demographic, and financial information, respectively. Our firm also collects national figures for the ski resort industry in Canada, giving us an unprecedented depth of understanding of the North American snowsports industry.

Principal areas of focus by RRC include the ski and snowboard industry in particular, and the travel, tourism, parks and recreation industries generally. In these subject areas the firm is considered national experts and are frequently quoted and contacted for information concerning trends and opportunities. RRC also provides consulting services in real estate feasibility and market demand analysis, financial consulting and modeling, data base management, competitive analysis, customer demographic profiling, and customer satisfaction/loyalty assessments. Lastly, RRC provides a wide range of community planning, land planning, public processing, and affordable housing studies for a variety of public agencies and communities as well as private entities.

Appendix A: Additional Operations, 2022/23

Table A1
Other Statewide Statistics for North Carolina ski areas, 2022/23 vs. 2019/20⁷

Other Statistics	2022/23	2019/20
Avg Total Days Open (4 ski areas)	121 days	122 days
Total Tubing Visits (4 ski areas)	60,323	45,263
Avg Gross Ski Area Revenue per Skier Visit (a)	\$89.20	\$81.75
Avg Percent of Revenue from Summer Operations	4.1%	2.8%

Table A1 shows additional operator statistics for this winter, compared to 2019/20. While average days open among ski areas remained effectively identical to 2019/20 (though higher than the national average of approximately 110 days and the regional average of approximately 90 days), tubing visits and average revenue per visit increased. While tubing visits represent a much smaller proportion of clientele compared to skiing and snowboarding, growth in tubing highlights the versatility in North Carolina ski areas and their continued ability to attract younger audiences and different types of outdoor enthusiasts who may go on to try other, more intensive snowsports. Lastly, like many ski areas in the country, summer/fall operations have expanded over time to compose 4.1% of revenue, on average, for North Carolina ski areas in 2022/23.



⁷ For comparability over time, measures include a consistent sample of 4 ski areas.

Appendix B: Expanded Visitor Demographics

Figure A1
Marital Status, YOY

What best describes your marital/family status?

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Household with children at home	41%	46%	50%
Single, no children	32%	25%	25%
Couple, no children	15%	19%	12%
Household with children no longer at home ("empty-nester")	6%	6%	8%
17 years or younger	5%	4%	6%
n=	3,039	1,925	1,709

Figure A2
Household Income, YOY

What is your annual pre-tax household income?

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Under \$25,000	12%	11%	15%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	14%	14%	14%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	22%	27%	24%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	19%	21%	20%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	12%	14%	11%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	8%	7%	5%
\$250,000 - \$499,999	8%	5%	8%
\$500,000 or above	5%	2%	3%
n=	2,393	1,662	1,380

Figure A3
Gender and Race/Ethnicity, YOY

		2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
With which gender do you identify?	Male	50%	50%	55%
	Female	46%	49%	45%
	Non-binary/Other	3%	0%	
	Prefer not to respond	2%		
	n=	3,087	1,926	1,687
How would you describe your race or ethnic background? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)	White	79%	83%	85%
	Hispanic/Latino	11%	6%	4%
	Black or African American	5%	9%	3%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	5%	6%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	1%	1%
	Other	1%	1%	2%
	n=	2,897	1,877	1,701

Figure A4
Age of Respondent, YOY

Age of respondent

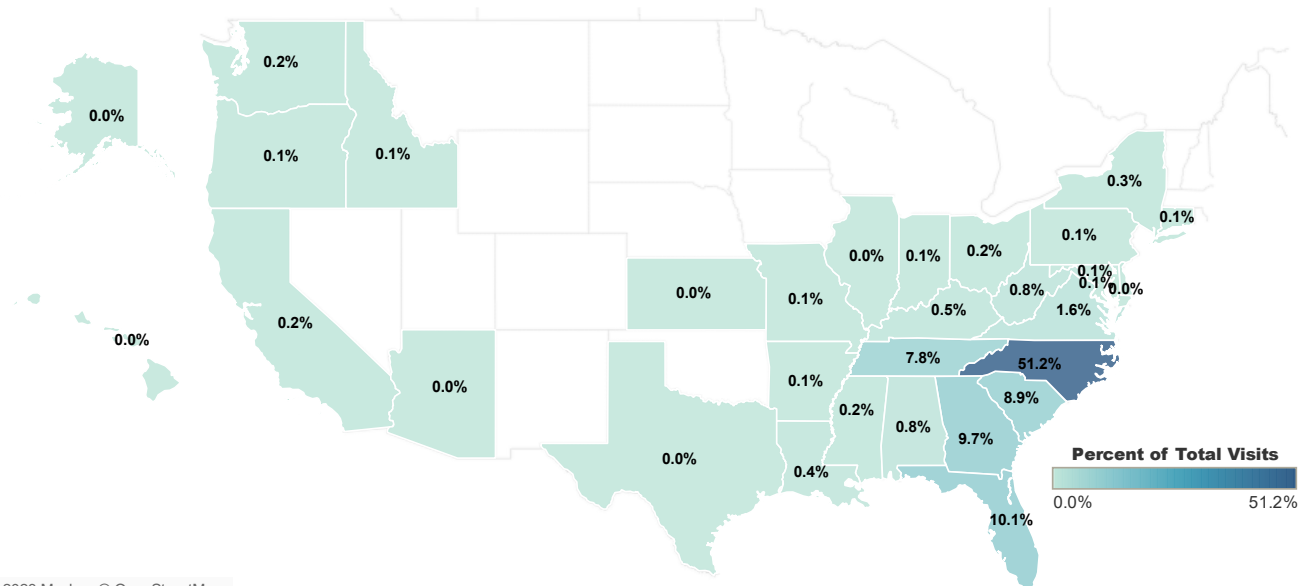
	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Under 18	3%	3%	5%
18 - 24	24%	14%	21%
25 - 34	25%	27%	19%
35 - 44	23%	28%	24%
45 - 54	19%	20%	20%
55 - 64	4%	7%	7%
65 - 74	2%	2%	3%
75 or older	0%	0%	1%
Avg.	35.4	37.4	37.0
n=	2,633	1,915	1,738

Figure A5
Travel Party Size, YOY

How many people are in your immediate travel party? [cap of 20 people]

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
1	17%	12%	6%
2	20%	24%	22%
3	14%	14%	13%
4 - 5	32%	31%	34%
6 - 7	8%	9%	11%
8 - 10	3%	3%	5%
10 or more	5%	7%	9%
Avg.	3.9	4.2	4.7
n=	2,705	1,915	1,632

Figure A6
Geographic Origin, Share of 2022/23 Respondents by State



© 2023 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Appendix C: Expanded Visitor Skier/Snowboarder Characteristics

Figure A8
Ability Level, YOY

What is your ability level on that equipment?

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
First time out	13%	17%	16%
Beginner/Novice	17%	20%	18%
Low Intermediate	29%	26%	25%
High Intermediate	26%	24%	26%
Advanced	10%	9%	11%
Expert	5%	4%	6%
n=	3,280	1,793	1,710

Figure A9
Equipment Type, YOY

What type of equipment are you using today? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Alpine/downhill skis	54%	62%	62%
Snowboard	51%	44%	32%
Tubing	6%	7%	1%
Ice skates	2%	5%	2%
Other	1%	1%	3%
n=	3,603	1,950	1,724

Figure A10
Visitor Type, YOY

Visitor Type

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
A resident of the local area	23%	21%	11%
A day visitor to this ski area (returning home tonight)	39%	36%	31%
An overnight visitor	39%	44%	58%
n=	3,560	1,927	1,685

Figure A11
Transportation to Ski Area, YOY

What was your main mode of transportation to this ski area?

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Drove from home	90%	88%	92%
Flew	7%	9%	3%
Chartered bus	2%	3%	3%
Other	1%	0%	2%
n=	1,672	840	977

Figure A12
Nights Stayed (if Overnight Visitor), YOY

How many nights are you staying in the area this trip? [cap of 28 nights]

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
1 night	12%	13%	12%
2 nights	28%	39%	34%
3 nights	33%	27%	29%
4-5 nights	20%	15%	15%
6-9 nights	6%	4%	8%
10+ nights	1%	1%	1%
Avg.	3.1	2.8	3.0
n=	1,628	839	973

Figure A13
Lift Ticket/Season Pass, YOY

What type of lift ticket/season pass are you using today? (multiple response permitted)

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Full-Day	50%	55%	58%
Season Pass	13%	9%	6%
Half-Day	10%	14%	17%
Multi-Day	8%	9%	5%
Twilight	6%	9%	8%
Night Session	5%	3%	8%
Group Package	2%	3%	5%
Tubing	2%	4%	1%
Gold Card	1%	2%	0%
Ice Skating	1%	3%	1%
Lodging Package		1%	1%
Other	3%	2%	
n=	3,466	1,931	1,715

Figure A14
Information Source, YOY

How did you find out about this ski area? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

	2022/23	2019/20	2014/15
Previous Visit	53%	47%	47%
Word of mouth / talked to family or friends	27%	37%	29%
Internet search	15%	21%	
Called ski area directly	6%	12%	14%
GoSkiNC.com	5%	2%	5%
Other source	4%	6%	13%
Travel agent	3%	4%	2%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)	3%	13%	4%
NC Ski brochure/vacation guide	2%	4%	2%
Ski club publication	1%	2%	1%
Other webpage	1%	1%	14%
Mall video	1%	0%	
None of the above	3%	2%	
n=	3,358	1,901	1,691

Appendix D: Visitor Experience Ratings

Figure A15
Detailed Rating Responses, 2022/23

Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the ski area during your visit. Use a 1-to-10 scale where 1 is “Extremely Dissatisfied” and 10 is “Extremely Satisfied.” (NA/DK is “Not Applicable/Don’t Know.”)

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Negative (1-6)			Neutral (7 & 8)			Positive (9 & 10)		
Overall employee service	8.4	2,788		12%	10%	21%	31%	21%	36%	57%	
Friendliness of lift operators	8.3	2,723		13%	11%	23%	34%	19%	34%	53%	
Overall skiing/snowboarding experience	7.9	2,803		17%	17%	26%	42%	19%	21%	41%	
Quality of grooming	7.7	2,715		22%	16%	25%	40%	17%	21%	38%	
Overall food and beverage	7.5	2,547		25%	17%	25%	42%	12%	21%	33%	
Overall value for price paid	7.5	2,777		26%	17%	22%	39%	15%	21%	35%	
Length of lift lines	7.2	2,786		32%	13%	19%	32%	15%	21%	36%	
Variety/number of trails	7.2	2,751		33%	18%	21%	39%	12%	16%	28%	
Level of crowding on trails	6.9	2,777		37%	15%	20%	35%	12%	16%	28%	
(IF TAKING LESSONS) Overall lesson experience	8.3	596		17%	10%	17%	27%	16%	40%	57%	
(IF RENTING) Overall rental experience	7.8	1,452		22%	13%	23%	36%	15%	27%	42%	

Figure A16
Average Rating Responses, YOY

Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the ski area during your visit. Use a 1-to-10 scale where 1 is “Extremely Dissatisfied” and 10 is “Extremely Satisfied.” (NA/DK is “Not Applicable/Don’t Know.”)

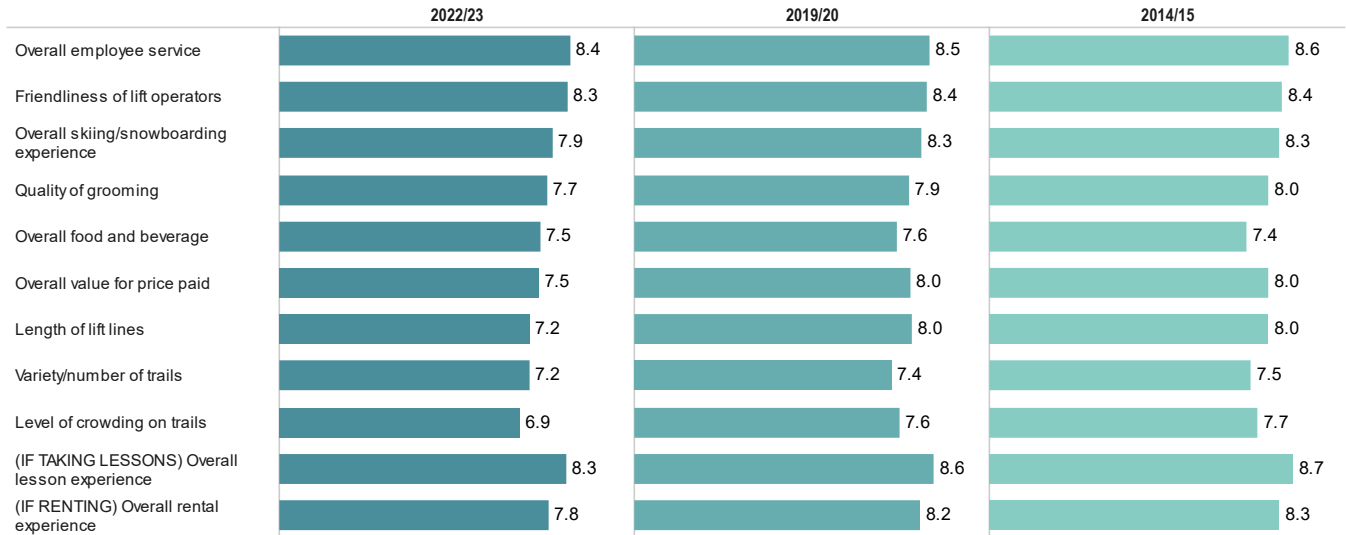


Figure A1
Likelihood to Recommend (Net Promoter Score), YOY

How likely are you to recommend this ski area to a friend, family member, or colleague?

