

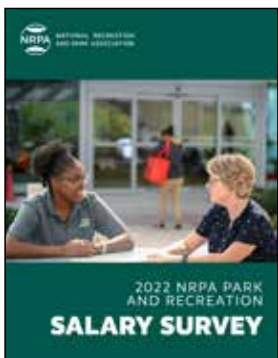


NATIONAL RECREATION  
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



2022 NRPA PARK  
AND RECREATION

# **SALARY SURVEY**



Cover image:  
Two people seated outside talking

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# INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation transforms our cities, towns and counties into vibrant, healthy communities. From neighborhood and regional parks and sprawling trail networks to pools and recreation centers, local park and recreation agencies provide places and programs that offer much-needed respites from our increasingly complicated lives. By offering community members opportunities to be physically active, reconnect with nature, learn a new skill or care for our youngest or oldest residents, parks and recreation touches the lives of millions of people every day.

A group of tireless, passionate and dedicated professionals makes all of this happen. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that local park and recreation agencies employed more than 165,000 full-time (FT) staff throughout the United States in 2020. These employees, combined with the efforts of several hundred thousand more part-time and seasonal workers, deliver services in nearly every city, town and county virtually every day of the year. These skilled teams program events, maintain facilities and otherwise ensure that all community members can access and enjoy all that their local park and recreation agencies offer.

Before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, most agencies competed with other employers to recruit and retain workers. As the nation and the economy continue to recover from the worst of the pandemic, the labor market has grown even tighter. During spring 2022, labor force participation continued to lag pre-pandemic levels, while empowered workers switched jobs more frequently than they had in the past as a part of the “Great Resignation.” Consequently, park and recreation agencies must offer compensation packages for their staff that include competitive salaries and robust benefits to attract and retain the best and brightest for their teams.

Comprehensive compensation data provides park and recreation agency leaders with guidance on how to attract the best candidates for their staff. Such data also can provide park and recreation professionals with insights into salary and benefits offered by potential employers. To amass that data, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) research team sent a 37-question survey in March 2022 to elicit the salary data of 10 positions at park and recreation agencies and general information about benefits and salary policies. The responses from leaders of more than 500 park and recreation agencies across the United States are the basis of this report.

The *2022 NRPA Park and Recreation Salary Survey* report features detailed base salary and bonus data for 10 typical park and recreation agency positions:

- Park and Recreation Agency Director (or Executive Director or Superintendent)
- Planning Director (or Superintendent)
- Director of Finance (or Administrative Director or Business Manager)
- Recreation Director (or Recreation Superintendent or Assistant Director – Recreation)
- Park Operations Director (or Maintenance Director or Maintenance Superintendent)
- Park Operations (or Maintenance Foreman)
- Facilities Manager
- Athletics Supervisor (or Athletics Manager)
- Aquatics Supervisor (or Aquatics Manager)
- Recreation Program Coordinator (or Recreation Program Manager)

No two park and recreation agencies are exactly alike. Neither are the compensation packages they offer their teams. The *2022 NRPA Park and Recreation Salary Survey* report presents compensation data by agency size, type and specific demographic characteristics of incumbents in the positions (e.g., education, certifications and years in the profession). The analysis also examines factors determining pay raises and bonuses (if offered) and highlights other benefits of park and recreation professionals’ compensation packages.

## 2022 PARK AND RECREATION SALARY SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

### MEDIAN 2021 TO 2022 SALARY INCREASES

Park and Recreation Agency Director

+3.1%

Planning Director

+3.5%

Director of Finance

+3.2%

Recreation Director

+3.4%

Park Operations Director

+3.5%

Park Operations

+3.8%

Facilities Manager

+3.1%

Athletics Supervisor

+3.4%

Aquatics Supervisor

+3.5%

Recreation Program Coordinator

+3.4%

### SALARIES TYPICALLY ARE HIGHER FOR THOSE WITH:



Greater professional experience



Higher education attainment



Professional certification

### MEDIAN ANNUAL VACATION DAYS:



10 days upon hire

20 days after 10 years of employment

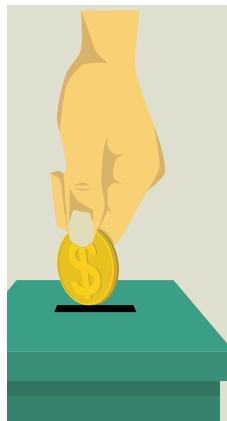
PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES TYPICALLY COVER

**84%** OF THEIR FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES' HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS



**76%** of park and recreation agencies offer their full-time employees a **defined benefit** retirement plan

**67%** of agencies offer their full-time employees a **defined contribution** retirement plan



# KEY FINDINGS

Compensation is more than just base salaries. Valuable employee benefits — including paid vacation and sick-leave days, health and dental insurance, and retirement plans — can put thousands of additional dollars into workers’ pockets and improve their standard of living. These additional benefits significantly increase the total financial value of an employee’s compensation.

## VACATION AND SICK LEAVE

One of the most valuable components of employee compensation after salary is the amount of vacation and sick leave provided to workers. This is certainly true for the park and recreation profession — a field that celebrates the importance of leisure as a part of a healthy lifestyle. Further, vacation benefits that increase over time are essential in retaining quality staff.

Most park and recreation agencies divide paid time off (PTO) into separate vacation and sick-leave accounts. Thirteen percent of agencies provide PTO in a single account combining both vacation and sick leave.

Park and recreation agencies typically provide 10 days of annual vacation to their newly hired full-time (FT) employees (after any preliminary probation period). After five years of employment, the median number of vacation days increases to 15 days per year and swells to 20 days after 10 years of service. With few exceptions, the typical number of vacation days does not differ significantly by agency size or type.

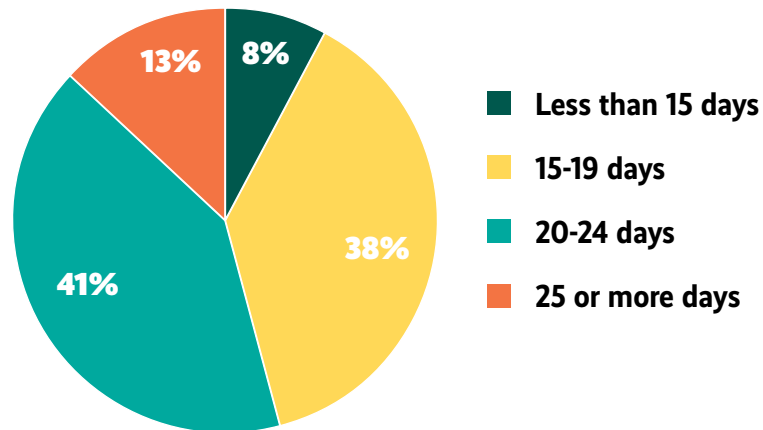
The amount of annual vacation time employees earn increases when they stay with the same agency for a long time. At 54 percent of agencies, FT park and recreation professionals with more than 10 years of service earn 20 or more days of vacation annually (including 13 percent of agencies that provide at least five weeks — or 25+ days — of annual vacation to their longest-tenured employees). Thirty-eight percent of park and recreation agencies provide between 15 and 19 days of annual vacation to employees with at least 10 years of service.

### MEDIAN NUMBER OF VACATION DAYS OFFERED TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Annual days of vacation upon hire	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	12
Annual days of vacation after 5 years of employment	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Annual days of vacation after 10 years of employment	20	20	18	20	20	18	20	20	20	20

## NUMBER OF ANNUAL VACATION DAYS OFFERED TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES AFTER 10 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE AGENCY

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)



Most park and recreation agencies also provide PTO that employees can use when they or their close family members are ill. The typical FT park and recreation professional receives 12 days of annual sick leave; this figure does not vary significantly by agency size or type. Unlike vacation time, annual sick leave offered to park and recreation professionals typically does not increase with employee tenure.

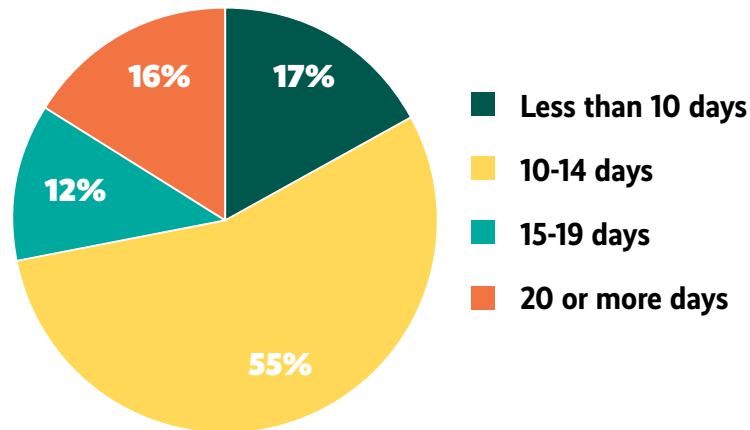
Upon hire, nearly three in five park and recreation agencies offer their employees 10 to 14 days of sick leave each year. Thirty percent of agencies offer fewer than 10 days of sick leave per year; at the other end of the spectrum, 15 percent of agencies offer 15 or more days of annual sick leave to their employees.

## MEDIAN NUMBER OF SICK DAYS OFFERED TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Annual days of sick leave upon hire	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Annual days of sick leave after 5 years of employment	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Annual days of sick leave after 10 years of employment	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12

## NUMBER OF ANNUAL SICK DAYS OFFERED TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES AFTER 10 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE AGENCY

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)



### THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT OF 1993

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), qualified employees are guaranteed up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year with no threat of job loss. FMLA also requires employers covered by the law to provide the same health benefits for eligible workers during this time off as these employees had while working. All public agencies — including state, federal and local employers — must follow FMLA rules. Employees are eligible for such benefits under FMLA if they meet any of the following situations:

- The employee cannot work due to a serious medical condition.
- The employee must care for an immediate family member with a serious medical condition.
- The birth, placement and/or subsequent care of the employee’s child (including adoption or foster care).
- A “qualifying exigency” due to an employee’s spouse, child or parent being on active duty or having been called to active duty by the National Guard or Reserve in support of a contingency operation.

### MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE

Whereas FMLA guarantees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, workers can continue to receive paychecks by drawing from their vacation, sick leave and/or paid time off allotments. In addition, some employers choose to pay employees for a portion or all of the time employees are on leave. Maternity and paternity leave benefits are examples of this.

Sixty-seven percent of park and recreation agencies do not offer specific paid leave benefits associated with birth or adoption. Eleven percent of park and recreation agencies provide specific paid maternity benefits, while 22 percent of park and recreation agencies provide specific paid maternity and paternity benefits.



## PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES' PROVISION OF MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE

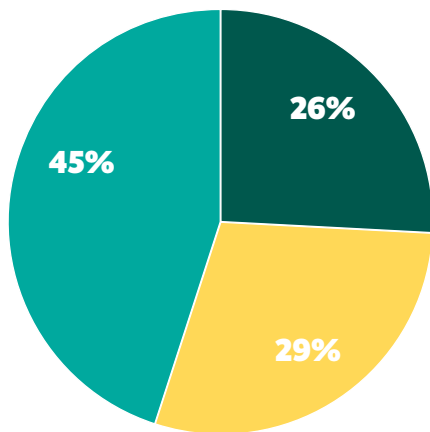
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

Type of Leave	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Offers paid maternity leave	11%	11%	7%	8%	11%	*	12%	7%	9%	12%
Offers both paid maternity and paternity leave	22	21	21	14	17	45	22	23	21	33
Does not offer specific paid leave benefits associated with the birth or adoption of a child	67	68	72	78	72	55	66	70	70	56

\* = less than 1%

### NUMBER OF WEEKS OF PAID MATERNITY LEAVE

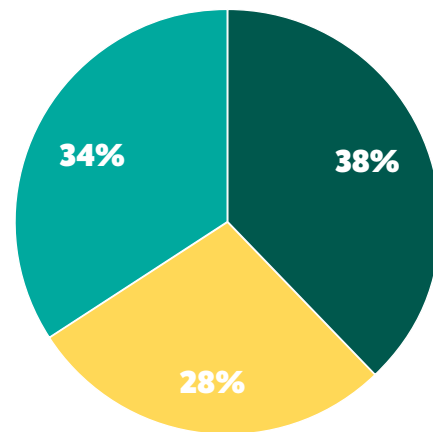
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies Providing Paid Maternity Leave)



■ 1-5 weeks   
 ■ 6-8 weeks   
 ■ 9-12 weeks

### NUMBER OF WEEKS OF PAID PATERNITY LEAVE

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies Providing Paid Paternity Leave)



■ 1-5 weeks   
 ■ 6-8 weeks   
 ■ 9-12 weeks

## HEALTH INSURANCE

Providing access to quality healthcare is another valuable component of employee compensation. Virtually all park and recreation agencies offer health insurance coverage to staff and their families. Most agencies (86 percent) provide benefits for both employees and their families, while 13 percent provide benefits to employees only. In addition, most agencies require employees to share in health insurance costs, including having their staff contribute to insurance premiums. The percentage of the premiums an agency pays and the percentage that an employee must cover may vary significantly between agencies.

Typically, park and recreation agencies cover 84 percent of their employees' health insurance premiums. Some agencies pick up an even greater part of the tab: 39 percent pay for at least 90 percent of their employees' health insurance premiums, including 23 percent of agencies that cover the entire amount. At the other end of the spectrum, 16 percent of agencies cover less than 70 percent of their employees' health insurance premiums. Special park districts tend to pay a higher percentage of their employees' health insurance premiums (a median of 87 percent) than do other agencies.

### PERCENTAGE OF HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS PAID BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
100 percent	23%	32%	30%	27%	10%	11%	28%	25%	29%	28%
90-99 percent	16	15	17	9	10	11	12	10	20	22
80-89 percent	30	27	27	36	42	28	32	45	24	33
70-79 percent	16	10	15	20	26	44	17	10	27	11
50-69 percent	8	6	10	7	13	*	11	10	*	*
Less than 50 percent	8	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Median agency contribution	84	85	85	85	85	80	85	85	87	84

\* = less than 1%

In addition to health insurance and PTO, an overwhelming majority of agencies offer other valuable benefits as a part of their compensation packages for FT employees, including:

- Dental (offered by 99 percent of agencies)
- Continuing education (97 percent)
- Vision (97 percent)
- Life insurance (96 percent)
- Employee assistance/Counseling (95 percent)

In some cases, the agency pays the total cost of the benefit; in other cases, the agency and employee share the costs. Park and recreation agencies are more likely to bear the full cost of continuing education, life insurance and employee assistance.

## PERCENTAGE OF STANDARD BENEFITS PROVIDED AND FUNDED BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

Type of Benefit	Benefit Provided, Funded Fully by Agency	Benefit Provided, Funded (at Least) in Part by Employee	Benefit Not Currently Offered
Continuing education (courses, conferences, certificates)	78%	19%	3%
Dental	30	69	1
Life insurance	59	36	4
Vision	31	66	3
Employee assistance/Counseling	79	16	5
Long-term disability insurance	35	48	18
Short-term disability insurance	34	48	18
Tuition reimbursement (college, trade school)	24	42	34

### RETIREMENT PLANS

Employee compensation not only includes wages and benefits that workers currently receive, but also can provide a foundation for financial security when employees retire. Virtually all park and recreation agencies' compensation packages include quality retirement benefits as a tool to attract and retain high-performing employees.

Historically, government employees — including park and recreation professionals — participated in defined benefit (DB) plans. Under these plans, frequently referred to as pension plans, the employer promises the employee specific retirement benefits (either a weekly/biweekly/monthly payment or a lump sum upon retirement) based on the employee's length of service and salary level. Typically, the employer contributes most, if not all, of the funds for these retirement benefits and guarantees the payments when the employee retires and begins to draw on those benefits.

DB plans are valuable tools in recruiting and retaining high-quality employees. Still, the financial obligations associated with such plans have made them untenable for many local government employers who continue to offer them. In recent decades, private-sector employers have moved away from offering DB plans to new employees. While the shift away from pension plans has been less prevalent in the public sector, park and recreation agencies have been moving toward (or at least supplementing their DB plans with) another increasingly common retirement savings tool: defined contribution (DC) plans.

In DC plans, the employee and frequently the employer both make regular contributions to an employee-owned retirement account. Funds held in DC plans — e.g., 401(k), 457(b) or 403(b) — may be withdrawn without penalty by the worker until a certain age, typically 59.5 years old. The worker receives a tax deferral on contributions made to these plans and the income earned over the years until they withdraw funds from the plan during retirement.

Unlike DB plans, DC plans do not guarantee a specific payment amount at retirement. However, they usually give employees a choice in how to invest retirement savings based on employees' appetite for risk. These plans also can be attractive to employees because they are portable: when employees change jobs, they may roll over the funds into their new employer's plan or a bank's or investment company's investment product of their choice. On the other hand, DB plans have vesting schedules that require an employee to remain with the employer for a certain number of years before "earning" any retirement benefits.

Forty-three percent of park and recreation agencies offer their employees DB and DC plans, providing a greater diversity of retirement options for their staff. More than three in four agencies have a DB program as part of the compensation packages they offer to their newly hired, full-time employees; 67 percent offer a DC plan either in conjunction with a DB plan or as the sole retirement benefit offering.

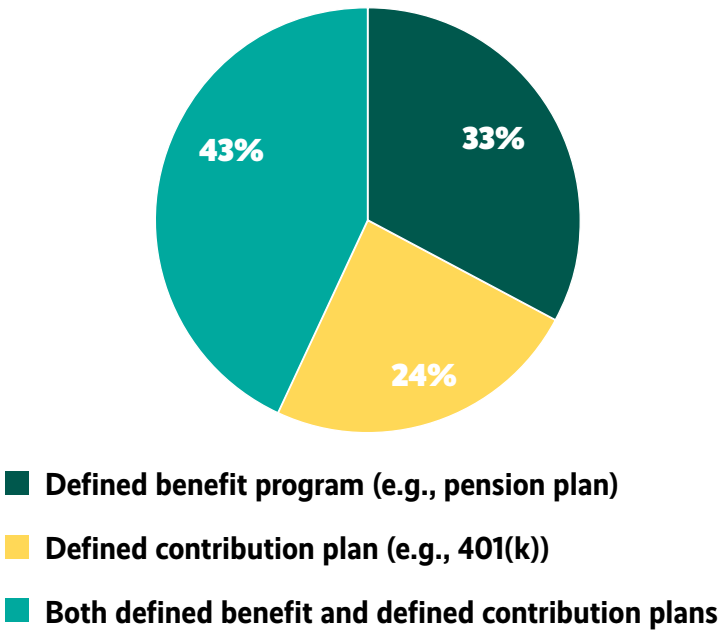
In those park and recreation agencies that offer DB retirement programs, 84 percent of employees contribute to those retirement accounts. The typical DB employee contribution is six percent.

Sixty-three percent of agencies that offer a DC plan provide a percentage match to participants' contributions. The median employer match is six percent.

**RETIREMENT PLANS OFFERED TO NEWLY HIRED,  
FULL-TIME PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY EMPLOYEES**  
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Defined benefit program (e.g., pension plan)	33%	35%	43%	27%	26%	32%	36%	29%	24%	42%
Defined contribution plan (e.g., 401(k), 457(b), 403(b))	24	32	21	26	24	6	26	20	22	10
Defined benefit and defined contribution plans	43	33	37	47	50	61	38	51	55	48

**RETIREMENT PLAN(S) OFFERED TO NEWLY HIRED,  
FULL-TIME PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY EMPLOYEES**  
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)



## PAY RAISES AND BONUSES

Regular salary adjustments are an important part of a compensation system. Further, the inflationary environment as the economy continues to recover from the pandemic has made raises even more vital. The methods that park and recreation agencies use to set pay raises vary significantly, as they do by job title. Between 2021 and 2022, the 10 tracked job titles saw average pay raises range from 3.1 percent to 3.8 percent.

The two most common salary changes result from cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and individual performance. In the case of COLAs, the salaries of every member of the park and recreation agency staff increase at a similar rate that matches the rate of inflation in the local area. Sixty-eight percent of park and recreation agencies offer COLAs to their employees. Fifty-four percent of agencies award merit-based pay raises; high-performing employees receive larger pay adjustments than other workers.

Park and recreation agencies also may increase employees' salaries because of:

- Increased employee responsibilities and duties (cited by 40 percent of respondents)
- Predetermined step raises (32 percent)
- Jurisdiction-wide raises as granted by the mayor, county executive, council, etc. (25 percent)
- Union contract requirements (23 percent)

### KEY DETERMINANTS OF PAY RAISES FOR PARK AND RECREATION PROFESSIONALS

(Percent of Agencies)

Key Determinant	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Cost-of-living adjustment	68%	68%	74%	73%	52%	68%	74%	56%	58%	70%
Individual performance	54	48	54	62	52	61	51	37	84	55
Increased employee responsibilities/duties	40	38	37	38	52	45	35	34	65	36
Market adjustments	35	26	34	38	43	48	29	39	55	33
Step raises	32	29	34	38	24	42	36	34	18	45
Jurisdiction-wide raises as granted by the mayor, county executive, council, etc.	25	22	26	24	24	39	27	37	13	24
Union/Contract requirements	23	15	24	27	26	32	27	22	13	42
Longevity increases	20	21	22	27	9	6	23	24	7	12
Other	1	1	3	2	*	*	2	*	*	*

\* = less than 1%

Beyond base salaries, many park and recreation agencies include a bonus plan as part of their compensation packages for employees. Half of park and recreation agencies offer bonuses to at least some of their employees.

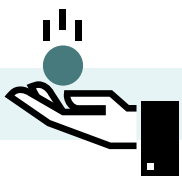
The most common bonus plans — offered by 23 percent of agencies — are longevity based. Employees at 14 percent of park and recreation agencies are eligible for merit-based bonuses based on their performance. One percent of agencies have plans in which employees in a specific department earn a bonus based on the success of their department meeting stated goals.

## PREVALENCE OF BONUSES FOR PARK AND RECREATION PROFESSIONALS BY AGENCY TYPE

(Percent of Agencies)

Type of Bonus	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Longevity bonus	23%	29%	19%	25%	17%	16%	24%	20%	20%	16%
Individual-based performance bonus	14	8	16	17	13	19	13	7	22	13
Holiday bonus	9	12	9	8	4	13	10	5	9	13
Tenure based bonus (e.g., length of service)	9	5	13	6	9	16	10	2	11	9
Other	8	6	7	3	15	19	8	7	11	9
Department-based performance bonus	1	*	*	*	2	6	1	*	2	6
Agency does not offer bonuses to its staff	50	50	47	59	54	48	50	59	47	53

\* = less than 1%



*Larger park and recreation agencies and special park districts are more likely to offer bonuses to their full-time employees.*



## MINIMUM WAGE POLICY AND SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

Part-time and seasonal workers are essential contributors to park and recreation agencies' ability to deliver services and amenities to their communities. In many cases, part-time and seasonal workers are in front-line, customer-service positions, such as lifeguards at a pool, aides or instructors at a summer camp, or staffing the customer help desk at a recreation center. Often these positions are the first jobs for young adults entering the workforce.

Part-time and seasonal employees typically receive compensation at or just above minimum wage. The lowest hourly wage paid by nearly two-thirds of park and recreation agencies is the statutory minimum wage to which they are subject. At 15 percent of agencies, the minimum wage paid matches the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour; another 48 percent of agencies pay a locality/state minimum wage that is higher than the federal minimum. Thirty-seven percent of park and recreation agencies set their lowest hourly wage above the minimum wage rate to which they are subject. The typical park and recreation agency pays a minimum wage of \$12 per hour.

### PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES' MINIMUM WAGE POLICY

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

	All	1-10 Full-Time Employees	11-20 Full-Time Employees	21-50 Full-Time Employees	51-100 Full-Time Employees	More Than 100 Full-Time Employees	City/Town/Borough	County	Special Park District/Regional Authority	Urban
Agency's minimum wage matches the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour	15%	16%	13%	34%	25%	10%	32%	17%	5%	13%
Agency's minimum wage matches locality's and/or state's minimum wage, which is higher than the federal minimum wage	48	51	49	32	49	42	37	46	64	29
Agency's minimum wage is higher than the locality and/or state minimum wage	37	33	38	34	25	48	32	37	31	58
Median minimum hourly wage	\$12	\$12	\$12	\$12.20	\$12	\$14.79	\$12.25	\$12	\$12	\$14.15

# SALARY INFORMATION

This section of the report presents detailed salary, bonus and demographic data for the 10 park and recreation professions covered in the survey:

- Park and Recreation Agency Director (or Executive Director or Superintendent)
- Planning Director (or Superintendent)
- Director of Finance (or Administrative Director or Business Manager)
- Recreation Director (or Recreation Superintendent or Assistant Director – Recreation)
- Park Operations Director (or Maintenance Director or Maintenance Superintendent)
- Park Operations (or Maintenance Foreman)
- Facilities Manager
- Athletics Supervisor (or Athletics Manager)
- Aquatics Supervisor (or Aquatics Manager)
- Recreation Program Coordinator (or Recreation Program Manager)

## MEDIAN BASE SALARIES AND TYPICAL ANNUAL SALARY INCREASES

	January 1, 2022: Base Salary	Median Year-to-Year Percentage Change
Park and Recreation Agency Director/ Executive Director/Superintendent	\$109,000	+3.1%
Planning Director/Superintendent	\$93,400	+3.5%
Director of Finance/Administrative Director/Business Manager	\$94,347	+3.2%
Recreation Director/Recreation Superintendent/ Assistant Director – Recreation	\$79,430	+3.4%
Park Operations Director/Maintenance Director/ Maintenance Superintendent	\$78,879	+3.5%
Park Operations/Maintenance Foreman	\$58,838	+3.8%
Facilities Manager	\$62,073	+3.1%
Athletics Supervisor/Athletics Manager	\$54,413	+3.4%
Aquatics Supervisor/Aquatics Manager	\$56,300	+3.5%
Recreation Program Coordinator/Recreation Program Manager	\$52,304	+3.4%

In the same way park and recreation agencies differ significantly in size, programming and facility offerings, the scope of their mission, and funding, they also differ in the responsibilities and ultimately the compensation of their professional teams. Taking those differences into account, this report provides a broader snapshot of compensation data, including a presentation of not only the median and average salaries for each of the 10 positions covered in the survey, but also salaries and bonuses at the 10th, 25th, 75th and 90th percentiles. Agencies with broader missions and offerings and those with greater funding resources may be more apt to pay their employees at the 75th or even 90th percentiles in order to recruit and retain professionals best suited for their agencies. Conversely, agencies with more modest offerings or funding resources may choose to offer compensation levels below the median.



Other factors can impact a park and recreation professional's compensation, such as agency size, type, location and employee demographics (education, certification, etc.). This report also looks at the relationship between the characteristics of agencies and employees and their salaries.

- **Agency size:** In general, base salaries and bonuses tend to be higher at agencies with a larger full-time staff. (Note: Agency size is measured by the number of full-time staff employed.)
- **Agency type:** Cities, towns, counties, special park districts, regional authorities and agencies located in urban locales. While base salaries and bonuses can vary significantly, both tend to be higher at special park districts and agencies located in urban locales.
- **Region:** The four census regions of the Northeast, South, Midwest and West, with significant regional differences. Agencies located in the West tend to offer higher base salaries.
- **Highest level of education attained:** Generally, park and recreation professionals with a bachelor's degree tend to have higher base salaries than their peers without a four-year college degree. Furthermore, professionals who have earned a graduate degree (e.g., master's, MBA, J.D., Ph.D.) have base salaries higher than those with a four-year college degree.
- **Certification:** Many park and recreation professionals have professional certifications in lieu of or in addition to a degree. Employees holding a professional certification have more success in achieving upward career mobility, finding jobs or receiving promotions based on the employer's job requirements. Also, for certain job titles, park and recreation professionals who have earned one or more professional certifications — including, but not limited to, the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE) — tend to earn more than their peers who do not hold these certifications.
- **Years of professional experience:** Experienced park and recreation professionals earn more than their peers who are relatively new to the field.

Following the salary data for each of the 10 jobs is a sample job description outlining the key responsibilities and typical job experience of incumbents in those positions. Park and recreation agencies can use these sample job descriptions as guides when creating or updating the list of key responsibilities at their organizations. Please note that incumbents with greater responsibilities than those listed in the sample job descriptions tend to earn more than those whose job responsibilities match those listed in the samples.



*Experience and specific job responsibilities and duties lead to higher wages for seasonal workers.*



## CONCLUSION

The success of park and recreation agencies would not be possible without the dedication of the more than 165,000 full-time professionals and the hundreds of thousands of part-time and seasonal workers who serve these agencies. The ability to make a real difference in the lives of members in their communities is what draws many park and recreation professionals to this work. At the same time, competitive compensation packages — including base salaries and benefits — are critical in attracting and retaining the best employees. Armed with information, such as the compensation data and sample job descriptions presented in this 2022 *NRPA Park and Recreation Salary Survey* report, park and recreation agencies can recruit and retain highly qualified professionals to ensure those agencies best serve their communities.

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## ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public.

The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more about NRPA research reports and resources at [nrpa.org/Research](https://nrpa.org/Research).



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**22377 Belmont Ridge Road,  
Ashburn, VA 20148  
800.626.NRPA (6772) | [nrpa.org](http://nrpa.org)**