

Airline Industry Salaries 2026: A US Pay Guide by Role

By landing.aero Published January 21, 2026 40 min read



Executive Summary

The U.S. airline industry employs roughly one million people across a wide range of roles (approximately 545,000 in passenger airlines and 473,000 in cargo carriers as of Oct 2024 (Source: www.bts.gov). Compensation varies dramatically by occupation and seniority. For example, the **median annual wage** in May 2024 was **\$226,600** for airline [pilots, copilots, and flight engineers](#) (Source: www.bls.gov), reflecting substantial union-negotiated pay scales. In contrast, cabin crew and support staff earn far less: *flight attendants* earned a median **\$67,130** (Source: www.bls.gov), while *ticket and reservations agents* covered under "Reservation and Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks" had a median around **\$40,610** (May 2023) (Source: www.bls.gov). Maintenance technicians fall in between: [Aircraft mechanics and service technicians](#) had a median of **\$78,680** (Source: www.bls.gov), and *avionics technicians* about **\$81,390**. Entry-level wages can be even lower (e.g. 10th percentile flight attendants make ~\$34,000 (Source: www.bls.gov), but senior pilots and top technicians exceed six figures. Recent trends show strong wage growth driven by record labor negotiations: all three major U.S. carriers agreed contracts in 2023-2024 yielding **30–50% cumulative pay raises** for pilots and flight attendants over multi-year periods (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: simpleflying.com). These unprecedented increases have pushed pilot pay to historical highs: for instance, Delta pilots won an *immediate* 18% raise and 34% by 2026 (Source: www.forbes.com), and Southwest pilots secured an immediate 29% bump and about 50% total over 5 years (Source: simpleflying.com) (Source: simpleflying.com). Flight attendants at major airlines have also obtained double-digit raises under new contracts.

This report surveys **2026 U.S. airline industry salaries by role**, drawing on government and industry data. It examines compensation structures, market factors, and case studies (e.g. recent union deals) to explain pay levels. Key findings include: (1) Pilot compensation remains the highest in the industry and has been rising rapidly due to chronic pilot shortages (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). (2) All major cabin crew and maintenance roles saw significant wage gains in recent contract negotiations, narrowing pay gaps with other transport industries. (3) Entry-level and ground-service positions still lag behind professional roles, though unionization and industry pressures have begun to lift many of those wages as well. (4) The COVID-19 recovery and tight labor market have reinforced upward pressure on salaries for experienced staff. (5) Future trends – including pilot retirement laws, [automation](#), and workforce demographics – will further influence compensation.

Overall, the evidence shows a U.S. airline workforce in **2026** characterized by *strong earnings growth* at the top end and continued efforts to boost pay at entry levels. All claims in this report are supported by authoritative sources such as U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data and airline industry analyses (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bts.gov) (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.bls.gov). The wage tables and case discussions below provide detailed, data-rich insight into each role.

Introduction and Background

The U.S. airline industry is a key part of the transportation sector, encompassing passenger carriers, cargo operators, and their support networks. Following deregulation in 1978 and consolidation in the 2000s, major legacy carriers (e.g. American, Delta, United, Southwest) dominate domestic air travel, alongside regional affiliates and smaller low-cost airlines. At the end of 2024, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) reported about **1.01 million** U.S. airline employees: **544,705** at scheduled passenger airlines and **472,827** at cargo airlines (Source: www.bts.gov). These workers perform diverse functions – from flight deck operations to in-flight service, aircraft maintenance, ground handling, and administrative support.

Employment levels have rebounded from the pandemic trough: in October 2024 U.S. airlines **net-added ~9,949 jobs** (Source: www.bts.gov) as demand surged. Strikingly, **most of the workforce is concentrated in the larger carriers**; BTS notes that American Airlines added over 1,000 employees in one month, for example (Source: www.bts.gov). Pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, and related specialists are heavily unionized (ALPA for major pilots, AFA-CWA for flight attendants and some techs, IAM and AMFA for mechanics, etc.), which shapes compensation. The labor environment is also influenced by regulatory factors (such as pilot retirement ages, training requirements, and aviation safety standards).

Between 2021–2025, intense labor shortages emerged as pre-2020 attrition and retirements coincide with booming travel demand. Airline unions leveraged this shortage to negotiate unprecedented wage increases: all three major U.S. airlines ratified new pilot contracts in 2023 that guarantee roughly **30–40% total pay hikes over 3–4 years** (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). Flight attendant unions have similarly pressed for higher pay and benefits. These developments have far outstripped general wage growth in the U.S., pressuring carriers to offer record compensation to attract staff. At the same time, the nature of pay differs by role: **pilots** typically earn hourly flight-based wages plus per diem and profit-sharing; **flight attendants** earn hourly base pay (plus per diem) for duty time; **mechanics** and technicians usually have salaried or hourly contracts with shift and overtime pay; **ground-service agents** are paid by the hour under collective agreements or employer policies.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of airline industry salaries by job title/role as of 2026. It uses federal labor statistics, industry publications, union documents, and company data to quantify earnings and trends. The discussion is organized by role category (pilots/copilots, flight attendants, maintenance crew, ground operations, etc.) and covers current pay scales, factors affecting wages (seniority, union contracts, demand/supply), and projections. Where available, multiple perspectives – including case studies of specific airlines' labor agreements and expert commentary – are incorporated. All information is supported by citations to credible sources (e.g. **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics** data and recognized industry outlets) to ensure accuracy.

Industry Context (2000–2026)

From 2000 through the pre-pandemic 2019, U.S. air travel expanded steadily, with carriers tightening costs. However, incidents like 9/11 (2001) and the 2008–09 recession temporarily cut demand and employment. In the last decade, consolidations (e.g. Delta merger with Northwest in 2008, American with US Airways in 2013) and the rise of strong regional and low-cost carriers shaped labor markets. **Pilot and technician shortages** had begun developing by the late 2010s due to an aging workforce (many pilots retire at 65) and limited training injection. For example, the FAA estimated tens of thousands of pilot retirements by 2025. Cabin crew and ground staff pipelines grew more gradually, but retirements and attrition still created gaps.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) caused a sharp collapse in airline employment; U.S. carriers furloughed or laid off large fractions of their workforce. By 2022 and beyond, however, a rapid recovery in passenger demand and cargo shipments induced a staffing crunch. Carriers struggled to rehire quickly due to training lead times and licensure requirements. This **supply squeeze drove major compensation breakthroughs**. In 2023–2024, all of the “Big Three” passenger airlines (American, Delta, United) finalized new contracts with pilot unions that included multi-year pay hikes (detailed below) (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). JetBlue and Spirit pilots also secured deals, and even previously non-union carriers like Southwest reached voluminous agreements (up to 50% raises) (Source: simpleflying.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). By early 2026, these new contracts have made U.S. pilot pay among the most lucrative globally. Flight attendants have likewise seen double-digit raises in recent negotiations (e.g. American Airlines approved a deal with a 13% immediate raise and 46% total over four years (Source: www.cnbc.com)).

Labor unions beyond pilots and attendants – including those for mechanics (IAM/AMFA), dispatchers (FAA unions), and ground workers (TWU, Teamsters at cargo carriers) – have pushed for higher pay amid industry profits. Unionization drives (e.g. JetBlue flight crews unionizing in 2023) and legislative debates (e.g. proposals to raise mandatory retirement age for pilots beyond 65) underscore the intense focus on workforce issues.

Against this backdrop, **this 2026 report** documents actual compensation by position, using the latest available data (primarily BLS May 2024 statistics and early 2025–2026 trend reports). It situates these figures in both historical context and current dynamics, providing readers a deep understanding of U.S. airline wages per role.

Roles, Wages, and Compensation Structures

The following sections detail the major **airline industry occupations** in the U.S. by role category, summarizing duties, workforce characteristics, and their compensation (with data and sources). We cover cockpit crew, cabin crew, technical maintenance, ground operations, and other relevant positions. Whenever possible we use official BLS data from the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) and Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) to cite **median wages**, plus supplemental industry sources for ranges and specific airline scales. These sections also note contract and market trends affecting pay.

1. Cockpit Crew (Pilots, Co-Pilots, Flight Engineers)

Airline pilots represent the **highest-paid non-executive role** in the industry. The BLS groups airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers together. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the **median annual wage** for this group was **\$226,600** in May 2024 (Source: www.bls.gov), meaning half earned more and half less. The *lowest decile* earned under ~\$98,560, while the *top 10%* exceeded \$239,200 (Source: www.bls.gov). (For context, BLS notes the industry and scheduled-airline median in 2024 reached about \$239,200 (Source: www.bls.gov.) In practical terms, this means experienced captains at major carriers often surpass \$250,000–\$350,000 per year when flight time, overtime, per diem and profit sharing are included, whereas brand-new first officers at regionals may begin around \$60,000–\$80,000.

BLS data also separates “commercial pilots” (who do non-airline flying) – their median was much lower at \$122,670 (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) – but this report focuses on scheduled airline pilots. The **job outlook** for pilots (BLS projection 2024–34) is roughly 4% growth (Source: www.verticalvisionflight.com), slower than many occupations, but **annual openings** remain high due to retirements. Indeed, pilots must retire at age 65 under current law, meaning thousands exit each year. BLS projects about 18,200 pilot openings per year on average (including replacements) through 2034 (Source: www.verticalvisionflight.com).

1.1 Pilot Pay Structures

Airline pilots are paid primarily by the hour of flight time, with monthly minimum guarantees and extensive additional pay factors (per diem, international trip premiums, overtime rates for exceeding schedules, and profit-sharing or bonuses). Their base **hourly rates** escalate dramatically with seniority and position (first officer vs captain). Most U.S. pilot compensation data come from union contracts, which set wage tables by flight hours and years of service.

For example, a recent analysis of labor contracts (via a flight academy) shows how these tables work: it notes that hourly pay (plus benefits and per diem) forms the “total pilot income” which can greatly exceed base salary (Source: www.verticalvisionflight.com). The BLS median does not capture these extras, but the union-negotiated wage rates tell the broader story. As an illustration, after pay increases in 2023:

- **Delta Air Lines** pilots (ALPA) ratified a deal in March 2023 that delivered **34% total pay raises** over 3 years (Source: www.forbes.com), with an initial 18% jump immediately and an additional 5%, 4%, and 4% each subsequent year. This contract put Delta at the industry’s “pay-lead” (Source: www.forbes.com).
- **United Airlines** pilots (ALPA) approved a 4-year contract (2023–2026) giving up to **40.2% cumulative raises** (Source: www.cnbc.com). The union sized this deal at around \$10 billion of value (Source: www.cnbc.com).
- **American Airlines** pilots (APA) agreed to a new 4-year contract (effective Aug 2023–2027) including an immediate **21% pay increase** and overall **46%** growth in compensation (inclusive of 401(k) contributions) (Source: www.cnbc.com), with 5% raises in 2024 and 4% in 2025–26 plus 3% in 2027.
- **Southwest Airlines** pilots (SWAPA) reached a tentative agreement (Dec 2023) projecting a **50% pay increase** over 5 years (Source: simpleflying.com). The plan grants an immediate **29.15%** raise (post-ratification) followed by three annual 4% raises (Source: simpleflying.com) (Source: simpleflying.com).
- **JetBlue Airways** pilots (ALPA) approved a contract extension in early 2023 for a **21.5%** raise over 18 months (Source: www.cnbc.com), recognizing the merged status with Spirit/Eagle.
- **Spirit Airlines** pilots ratified a new 2-year deal (late 2022) worth ~\$463 million total; public reports indicate it included raises in the tens of percent (and a union memo mentioned as much as ~43% over two years (Source: www.cnbc.com)).

These examples show that **pilot pay is on an upward trajectory** in 2023–26 due to labor market forces. Top pilots at major airlines now reach peak compensation far beyond BLS median: Captain pay for wide-body flights often exceeds \$250–300 per flight hour after years of service. (For instance, Delta's new contract guarantees that a senior captain flying 800 hours a year could earn well over \$300,000.) Meanwhile, entry-level First Officers typically start around \$90–\$120 per flight hour depending on the airline, giving first-year salaries just below \$100k (Source: www.bls.gov). The large percentage raises negotiated reflect historically low starting wages in prior years (especially at regionals) and the urgent need to make laterally attractive offers.

In summary, for cockpit crew (pilots/captains):

- **Median (2024):** \$226,600 for airline pilots (including copilots) (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Range:** ~ \$98,560 (10th percentile) to > \$239,200 (90th percentile) (Source: www.bls.gov). In practice senior pilots often earn well above BLS median when all pay components are counted.
- **Recent Increases:** Contracts signed in 2023/24 guarantee multi-year raises of 30–50% overall (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com).
- **Outlook:** Continued strong demand (BLS projects 4% growth 2024–34) (Source: www.verticalvisionflight.com), with thousands of annual openings due to retirements and expansion (e.g. regional feeder growth, unmanned aerial systems).

All these data are documented by official sources (BLS and press reports) and indicate that **2026 pilot salaries** are unprecedentedly high by historical standards. The union-agreed contracts effectively lock in continued annual increases through 2026 (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com).

2. Cabin Crew (Flight Attendants)

"Flight Attendants" are responsible for passenger safety and service. The BLS reports that in May 2024 the **median annual wage** for flight attendants was **\$67,130** (Source: www.bls.gov), with half earning below and half above. This closely matches other BLS data (e.g. the OOH "Quick Facts" also list \$67,130 as median (Source: www.bls.gov). The BLS notes a relatively wide range: the **highest-paid 10%** of flight attendants exceeded **\$138,040** per year, whereas the **lowest 10%** made under **\$34,030** (Source: www.bls.gov). (Again, keep in mind these are base wages and do not include per diem for overnight flights or union-governed bonuses.) BLS employment figures show about 130,800 people working as flight attendants in 2024 (Source: www.bls.gov), with strong projected job growth of **9%** through 2034 (faster than average) due to expanding airline service (Source: www.bls.gov).

Flight attendant pay is typically **hourly**, based on duty hours or flights. Less senior attendants earn on the order of \$25–\$30 per flight-hour, while seasoned attendants can approach \$35–\$55 per flight-hour depending on airline. For example, union contracts at major airlines yield pay schedules where a 20-year veteran might earn ~\$55 per flight hour, translating to \$60k–\$80k base (plus overtime/per diem) in 2024 terms. Entry-level attendants at some carriers may start below \$30k annually (depending on flying schedule and regions serviced), however recent contract negotiations have raised these floors.

In 2023–2025, flight attendant unions at U.S. airlines gained notable pay increases:

- **American Airlines (APFA):** Under the tentative agreement ratified Aug 2023, new-hire attendants will get approximately 13% raises each of the first two years, and all attendants a 13% raise in 2025 (Source: www.apfa.org). (That specific APA update indicates two raises per year per contract, but details are city-specific.)
- **Delta Air Lines (AFA):** Delta's attendants saw 4% raises (effective June 2025) after years of comparatively lagging pay; union reports emphasize closing the gap with peers (Source: deltaafa.org).
- **Southwest (TWU):** Southwest attendants (Swissport/TWU) negotiated gains over multiple years, aligning their wages more with the cost-of-living in hub cities.
- **Regional:** Some regionals (like PSA, Piedmont) granted single-digit raises or supplemental 401(k) matches in 2024–25.

While detailed cash figures per airline are proprietary, industry reports indicate flight attendant wages at legacy carriers are among the highest in the U.S. service sector. Major U.S. airlines generally start new FAs around the national median income and move quickly upward. For context, one industry blog notes that experienced attendants "make over \$68,370" (Source: www.aviationindeed.com) and employers often advertise starting wages around \$25–\$30/hour plus benefits.

Summary for Flight Attendants:

- **Median (2024):** ~\$67,100 (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Range:** ~\$34,000 (10th percentile) to ~\$138,000 (90th percentile) (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Recent Contracts:** Negotiated raises in the 10–15% range (or more cumulatively) over multi-year deals; e.g. American's new deal yields a one-time 13% bump and further yearly increases by 2027 (Source: www.cnbc.com).
- **Growth:** BLS projects ~9% job growth through 2034 (Source: www.bls.gov).

Flight attendants' overall compensation (including non-salary pay) is improving due to these negotiated increases, but still lags pilot compensation significantly. Beyond base pay, attendants often receive per diem (tax-free allowances for layovers) and can earn overtime/incentives. Their working conditions (long hours, irregular schedules, absence from home) are intense, but the career is increasingly seen as a stable, union-backed profession with solid pay gains.

3. Aircraft Maintenance and Technical Crew

Aircraft maintenance personnel keep fleets airworthy. This category includes **A&P (Airframe & Powerplant) Mechanics, Avionics Technicians**, and related specialists. The BLS groups these under "Aircraft and Avionics Equipment Mechanics and Technicians." In May 2024, the median wage for this group was **\$78,680 per year** (Source: www.bls.gov). BLS further separates out avionics technicians (who service electronic/avionics systems) with a slightly higher median of **\$81,390** (Source: www.bls.gov). Note these BLS figures apply broadly to mechanics servicing civilian aircraft (including airlines, military, corporate), but industry sources align with them for airline maintenance workers. The **10th–90th percentile range** for mechanics ran approximately \$47,790 to \$115,320 (Source: www.bls.gov), indicating top earners (senior airline technicians) clearing \$100k.

Maintenance jobs share many traits: they often require FAA certification (e.g. A&P licenses), technical schooling or military training, and entail 10–12 hour shifts (often including nights/weekends). Wages typically increase with certifications, years of experience, and (in union shops) seniority. For example, a senior heavy-maintenance mechanic at a major carrier can make well over \$100,000 per year after overtime and shift premiums. By contrast, entry-level technicians (e.g. new A&Ps on straight-days, or early-career mechanics) may start in the mid-\$40ks (Source: www.bls.gov). Aviation maintenance is a unionized field: e.g., IAM (International Association of Machinists) represents many airline mechanics, and AMFA covers others, negotiating contracts with each airline.

Industry growth for mechanics is steady: BLS projects about **5% growth** in aircraft mechanics employment from 2024–2034 (Source: www.bls.gov). Major airlines continue to expand fleets and retire older mechanics, keeping demand robust. Like pilots, retirements of Baby Boomer mechanics are significant.

Factors affecting maintenance pay include:

- **Union contracts:** Mechanics at legacy carriers generally have higher pay than at regionals. For example, analysts noted recent contract gains such as Alaska Air mechanics getting up to ~20% raises (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Post-pandemic ALPA deals boosted wages at Alaska and JetBlue in early 2020s). Even at regionals, starting pay has been raised (e.g. competitive offers to lure A&P entrants).
- **Skill premiums:** Avionics is slightly higher-paid than general airframe/P&Ps due to specialized electronics skills. BLS numbers reflect this (\$81k vs \$78k medians) (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Geography:** Wages are higher in high-cost areas (California, New York) and for international carriers under U.S. jurisdiction. For instance, median wages in airline maintenance sectors in major hubs exceed national medians, though BLS regional detail is limited.
- **Overtime and bonuses:** Mechanics often work overtime to meet demand, boosting actual earnings. Some carriers also offer retention or signing bonuses for FMEs.

Summary for Maintenance/Technicians:

- **Median (2024):** ~\$78,700 (general mechanics) (Source: www.bls.gov), ~\$81,400 (avionics technicians) (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Range:** roughly \$47,790–\$115,320 (10th–90th percentiles) (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Recent Trends:** Industrywide efforts to raise starting wages (especially at underpaid regionals) and new contracts yielding double-digit percentage increases in some cases. For example, Alaska/Air Methods deals in 2022–2023 gave mechanics raises of ~15–18%, and American Airlines maintenance units saw 12–20% boosts by 2024.
- **Growth:** BLS: ~5% employment growth projected through 2034 (Source: www.bls.gov).

Maintenance salaries remain attractive relative to many skilled trades, reflecting the technical demands and union strength. In 2025–26, we expect continued upward pressure, as carriers cannot operate without sufficient certified mechanics; accordingly, pay scales have been climbing to fill open posts.

4. Ground and Customer Service Operations

This category covers the personnel who handle passengers and aircraft on the ground: ticket agents, gate agents, baggage handlers, ramp servicemen, airport operations staff, and similar roles. Unlike flight crews, these are typically **hourly-wage positions**, often unionized (e.g. TWU, Teamsters) or pay-graded by airline policies.

4.1 Ticketing and Gate Agents

- **Description:** Agents at counters and gates check in passengers, issue boarding passes, coordinate baggage, and assist customers. They may also be called “station agents” or “customer service agents.”
- **Education/Training:** High school diploma (plus on-the-job training).
- **BLS (2023):** The category “Reservation and Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks” includes airline ticket agents. BLS reports (May 2023) a **mean annual wage** of **\$46,820** (Source: www.bls.gov). More relevant, the BLS OES percentiles show the **median** annual wage in this category was **\$40,610** (Source: www.bls.gov). (Hourly median ~\$19.52). The *10th percentile* was about \$31,900 and the *90th* ~\$71,680, reflecting that long-serving supervisors or high-cost locations can earn significantly more (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Industry Data:** These numbers capture all ticketing clerks, including travel agents. Major airlines typically start new agents at or slightly above the national median wage. For example, recent advertisements and union proposals indicate starting wages in the range of \$18–\$25/hour (annualized ~\$37k–\$52k) plus benefits. Agents earn overtime pay when working beyond scheduled hours.
- **Recent Trends:** There have been modest collective bargaining moves to raise these wages in recent years. For instance, American Airlines added roughly 3–4% annual raises for agents in their 2021 contract, and Delta/TWU deals offered single-digit percentage hikes. Given inflation, many carriers have instituted cost-of-living adjustments to preserve real wages.
- **Outlook:** BLS shows slight declines in projected jobs for ticket agents (due to online sales), but customer service roles remain essential at airports for many travelers. Turnover can be relatively high in these positions.

4.2 Baggage and Ramp Handling

- **Description:** Personnel who load/unload baggage, marshal aircraft, service terminals, and operate ground support equipment. This includes *ramp agents, baggage handlers, cargo loaders*, and similar roles.
- **Training:** No formal degree; usually on-the-job training and required security clearances.
- **Salary Data:** There is no dedicated BLS occupation code solely for airline ground handlers; many fall under “Baggage Porters and Bellhops” or material-moving categories. However, industry sources provide guidance. According to Salary.com (Jan 2026), the **average salary for a Ramp Agent/Baggage Handler** is about **\$45,158** per year (roughly \$22/hour) (Source: www.salary.com). Their own distribution indicates: 10th percentile ~\$39,070, 25th–75th ~\$41,971–\$50,743, and 90th up to ~\$55,827 (Source: www.salary.com).
- **BLS Proxy:** The closest BLS OES category is “Baggage Porters and Bellhops” (May 2023), which shows a mean annual of \$36,100 (Source: www.bls.gov); however, that includes hotel bellhops, so airline ramp workers generally earn more. For example, unionized ramp agents at U.S. airlines typically start in the \$17–\$20/hour range and can reach \$25+/hour with experience (cleaning, servicing, and weather premiums often apply).
- **Union vs Contract:** Many airlines contract ground handling to service companies (which may pay different scales), though large airlines also have direct-hire ground staff. Union-negotiated contracts have recently raised starting rates: e.g. some major carriers moved ramp entry wages from ~\$15–16 to ~\$18–20/hour (a 15–25% jump) in 2022–2024. Security and TSA shifts have increased the demand for ramp personnel, pushing pay upward in port cities.
- **Answer:** Ramp and baggage handling pay is modest by industry standards – far below cabin and cockpit crew – but has been creeping up to retain workers. With average annual total pay \$40k–\$50k (including overtime), these roles tend to be at or slightly above other airport labor jobs.

4.3 Security, Facilities, and Other Ground Roles

Beyond ticketing and ramping, airlines employ administrative and technical ground roles. For completeness:

- **Airport Operations Coordinators:** Oversee gate operations and on-time performance. Salaries typically range \$35k–\$55k depending on experience.
- **Aircraft Dispatchers:** Although FAA-licensed and vital (coordinating flight plans with pilots), dispatchers are fewer in number. Salary.com reports an average U.S. *Flight Dispatcher* salary around **\$72,800** (median range \$50k–\$100k) as of 2026 (Source: www.salary.com). (BLS doesn't separately list dispatchers, but this aligns with industry job listings.)
- **Air Traffic Controllers:** Not airline employees (federal employees under the FAA), but for context their 2023 median pay was about **\$137,380** (Source: www.bls.gov) or \$144,580 (BLS). Controllers require 4-year college/FAA academy and command some of highest wages in the sector, reflecting government pay scales. We include them only to note that aviation-related careers outside airlines often pay very well (Source: www.bls.gov).
- **Other Support Staff:** Engineers (design, airport planners, avionics test engineers) and managers in airlines earn well into six figures, but these corporate roles are beyond this report's focus on "operational" airline jobs.

Summary Table: Core Airline Roles and Median Pay (2024)

| ROLE / POSITION | MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE (USD) | PAY RANGE (APPROX.) | SOURCE |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Airline Pilot, Copilot, Flight Engineer | \$226,600 | \$98,560 (10%) – \$239,200 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Commercial Pilot (non-airline) | \$122,670 | \$59,330 (10%) – \$239,200 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Flight Attendant | \$67,130 | \$34,030 (10%) – \$138,040 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Aircraft Mechanic / Service Technician | \$78,680 | \$47,790 (10%) – \$115,320 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Avionics Technician | \$81,390 | \$49,770 (10%) – \$113,580 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2024) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Reservation & Ticket Agent | \$40,610 | \$31,900 (10%) – \$71,680 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2023) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Ramp/Baggage Handler | \$45,158 (avg, 2026) | \$39,070 (10%) – \$55,827 (90%) | Salary.com (2026 data) (Source: www.salary.com) |
| Air Traffic Controller (FAA) | \$137,380 | \$76,190 (10%) – \$200,990 (90%) | U.S. BLS (May 2023) (Source: www.bls.gov) |
| Table: Representative U.S. airline-related roles and median salaries, with percentile ranges (where available). <i>Ramp/Baggage Handler is an industry estimate (Salary.com).</i> | | | |

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational data (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov); Salary.com data (Source: www.salary.com).

The table above highlights the wide wage disparity between front-line flight crews and ground/service personnel. It underscores that 2026 median wages remain highest for pilots, followed by maintenance technicians, with customer-facing roles at mid-levels and ground handlers at the lower end. Crucially, recent union negotiations (detailed below) will raise many of these figures in the near term.

5. Compensation Trends, Contracts, and Case Studies

This section delves into **recent developments** affecting airline salaries, especially union-negotiated contracts and market pressures. We illustrate with case studies from major carriers and associations.

5.1 Union Contracts for Pilots (Case Studies)

The years 2023–2025 saw historic contract settlements for pilots at U.S. airlines, driven by the pilot shortage. Key examples:

- **Delta Air Lines (ALPA)** – *March 2023 Contract*: Delta pilots ratified an agreement with **34% pay increase** over three years (Source: www.forbes.com). This included an immediate 18% raise (March 2023) plus 5% after one year and 4% each year thereafter (Source: www.forbes.com). Forbes reported the contract “largely closed the gap” with competitors and added \$7 billion in cumulative pay increases through 2026 (Source: www.forbes.com). This set a new industry standard.
- **United Airlines (ALPA)** – *Sept 2023 Contract*: United pilots won raises up to **40.2% over four years** (Source: www.cnbc.com). The ALPA-characterized deal cost ~\$10 billion and passed with 82% member support (Source: www.cnbc.com). United’s agreement is notable for the 4-year span, disbursing roughly 10%–12% per year on average.
- **American Airlines (APA)** – *Aug 2023 Contract*: American’s 15,000 pilots approved a contract with an **immediate 21% bump and 46% total increase** over four years (Source: www.cnbc.com). Raises of 5% in '24, then 4% in '25–'26, and 3% in '27 were built in (Source: www.cnbc.com). This followed a standoff where APA increased its offer after United agreed to more generous terms (Source: www.cnbc.com).
- **Southwest Airlines (SWAPA)** – *Dec 2023 Tentative Agreements*: Southwest pilots’ tentative deal offers a **50% salary increase** in total (Source: simpleflying.com). Immediately upon ratification, pilots would receive **+29.15%** pay (Source: simpleflying.com), followed by 4% raises in 2025, 2026, and 2027 (Source: simpleflying.com). (Note this includes a retroactive raise for 2024 and preserves a prior 3.25% to capture 2018 gains.) This aggressive package arose from intense competition with larger carriers for pilots.
- **JetBlue Airways (ALPA)** – *Jan 2023 Contract Extension*: JetBlue pilots approved a short-term extension yielding **21.5% total raises** over the next 18 months (Source: www.cnbc.com). This was partly to align pay post-announcement of the Spirit merger.
- **Spirit Airlines (ALPA)** – *Jan 2023 Two-Year Deal*: Spirit pilots ratified a two-year contract worth ~\$463 million, which the union says averaged ~43% cumulative raises over the term (Source: www.cnbc.com). (Spirit’s raises came at a time when the carrier was under financial restructuring.)

These case studies demonstrate how **1800+ U.S. commercial pilots** at major airlines have seen multi-year raises well into the 30–50% range (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). The table below synthesizes key figures:

| AIRLINE (PILOT UNION) | CONTRACT YEARS | IMMEDIATE RAISE | TOTAL INCREASES (CUMULATIVE) | SOURCES |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Delta (ALPA) | 2023–2026 (3 yrs) | +18% (at signing) | +34% (by end of 2026) | (Source: www.forbes.com) |
| United (ALPA) | 2023–2027 (4 yrs) | – | +40.2% (approx.) by 2027 | (Source: www.cnbc.com) |
| American (APA) | 2023–2027 (4 yrs) | +21% (at signing) | +46% (including 401(k) contrib.) | (Source: www.cnbc.com) |
| Southwest (SWAPA) | 2023–2028 (5 yrs) | +29.15% (at signing) | +~50% (by 2028, approx.) | (Source: simpleflying.com) (Source: simpleflying.com) |
| JetBlue (ALPA) | 2023–2024 (1.5 yrs) | – | +21.5% (over 18 mo) | (Source: www.cnbc.com) |
| Table: Summary of recent U.S. major airline pilot contracts. “Immediate” refers to the signing bonus raise; “Total” refers to cumulative pay increases by contract end. | | | | |

Sources: Company and union announcements reported in industry media (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: simpleflying.com) (Source: simpleflying.com).

Analysis: These pay packages have significantly lifted base wages. For example, after Delta’s 2023 contract its Captain wage scales (at typical credited flight hours) are roughly 30–35% higher than in 2022. An ALPA summary noted that a new Delta Captain (Boeing 737 level) now starts at about \$300/hour by 2026, versus \$230/hour previously (Source: www.forbes.com). Similarly, an American Airlines Captain was on track to reach ~\$300k base pay mid-contract (not counting allowances) (Source: www.cnbc.com). These amounts correspond to the medians noted earlier; indeed, the new midpoints far exceed the old \$226k median.

Thus, **pilots’ salary prospects** have brightened. Entry-level pilots at regionals (often feeder pipelines) have also seen raises to remain competitive – most regionals announced starting pay hikes to \$70k or more in 2023. (Earlier, first-year regional First Officers made as low as \$20–30/hour, but by 2025 many top regionals pay \$50–60k to new FOs.)

5.2 Contract Trends for Flight Attendants

Flight attendant unions have similarly secured improved compensation. For illustration:

- **American Airlines (APFA)** – In 2021 APFA reached a tentative agreement that eventually included multi-round libraries of raises. Notably, new hires were promised cash bonuses plus pay scale bumps, and mid-level FAs two raises per year (e.g. 7% every six months) (Source: www.apfa.org). While exact percentages vary by domicile, the roughly 13% immediate and repeated small raises have cumulatively closed some ground.
- **Other Carriers:** AFA reports that as of 2025, Delta FAs received a 4% hike (catching up after frozen raises) (Source: deltaafa.org), and United’s new CBA deals are being negotiated similarly (with reports of 6–10% annual raises). Southwest FAs in 2024 won a 5.5% raise and better benefits (Source: deltaafa.org) under their IATSE contract.

Though precise figures are still emerging for 2026, industry press cites typically “double-digit” overall raises for attendants over several years, in line with those for pilots (see Salaries). These wage gains come atop pre-existing rates that were often higher than U.S. civilian norms: for instance, major carrier FAs’ earning power now ranges broadly from \$35k–\$40k at junior levels up to \$80k–\$90k for 20-year veterans with maximum hours.

5.3 Impact on Other Roles

While the focus is on pilots and FAs, pay upgrades are cascading to other airline workers:

- **Maintenance Unions:** After seeing pilots and cabin crew win big raises, mechanics' unions have demanded comparable increases. Recent small carriers (e.g. G/A ramp service, regional techs) gained raises of 5–10%. The prospect of large raises at big carriers (AMFA seeking 15–20% at American's maintenance units in 2024) is driving negotiations.
- **Ground Staff:** Airlines have responded to turnover with wage hikes for gate agents and ramp crews. Major airports (JFK, ORD, LAX) saw airlines promise higher wages and signing bonuses in 2023. While no industry-wide figures are public, anecdotal reports suggest increases of 10–15% for many ramp jobs.
- **Future Contracts:** All existing major pilot contracts have built-in raises through 2026–2027 (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). Similarly, flight attendant and mechanic contracts will likely lock in stepped increases. Outside negotiations, carriers in 2025–26 also boosted pay to attract and retain staff; e.g., one source notes carriers raising flight attendant pay by 5–13% in 2025 plans (Source: www.cnbc.com).

Conclusion of Trend Analysis: As of 2026, airline labor compensation has gone through a paradigm shift. The combination of industry growth and acute labor demand has resulted in multi-year, multi-decade-high pay settlements across unionized groups (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). Airline financials have been robust enough to fund these deals, but they also raise costs that will need to be offset by revenue (tickets, fees) or productivity gains. Overall, these trends are well-documented by credible aviation press and federal data sources.

6. Data Summary and Statistical Analysis

To quantify the airline compensation landscape, we rely on **BLS Occupational Data** and industry reports for 2024–2025:

- **Median Wages** (from BLS, May 2024 unless noted):
 - *Pilots/Captains*: \$226,600 (Source: www.bls.gov).
 - *Flight Attendants*: \$67,130 (Source: www.bls.gov).
 - *Mechanics (A&P)*: \$78,680 (Source: www.bls.gov).
 - *Avionics Tech*: \$81,390 (Source: www.bls.gov).
 - *Ticket Agents*: \$40,610 (2023 data) (Source: www.bls.gov).
 - *Ramp Agents*: approx. \$45,158 (2026 estimate) (Source: www.salary.com).
- **Top- and Entry-Level Extremes:** We note from BLS that for pilots the top 10% exceed \$239k (Source: www.bls.gov) and bottom 10% are ~\$98k, indicating extreme seniority skew. For flight attendants, top decile are ~\$138k (Source: www.bls.gov) (due to overtime and per diem) vs bottom ~\$34k. For mechanics, top \$115k vs bottom \$47k (Source: www.bls.gov). In ground roles, ranges are narrower but still significant (ticket agents: \$31.9k to \$71.7k (Source: www.bls.gov)).
- **Comparisons to General Workforce:** The U.S. national median wage (across all jobs) was roughly \$53k/year as of 2024. Thus, most airline professionals (except entry-level ground staff) earn above the national median. Especially, pilots and senior mechanics are well above. By contrast, new ticket agents (~\$40k median) are just below the all-occupation median.
- **Contractual Growth:** As shown in Section 5, explicit multi-year percentage raises (30–50%) have been agreed. If one applied a 3–5%/year step to the BLS medians from 2024 forward, by the end of 2026 the medians could be 6–12% higher in nominal terms (even before the big contract increases). In reality, median data for 2026 would be driven by those contract terms. For example, the BLS 2023–2024 pilot median only rose about 3% per year, but the newly negotiated jumps (18%, etc.) are much bigger. We thus anticipate mid-decade medians to be substantially above those five-year-ago values.
- **Earnings Persistence:** Many airline jobs factor heavy overtime and variable pay. For instance, the BLS figure for flight attendants' 90th percentile (~\$138k) implies that veteran attendants can work long hours (and possibly per-diem for international). Similarly, senior pilots often commute internationally or on high-traffic routes, enabling high earnings beyond the base. These skew the distribution and reflect that being at *peak seniority* yields outsized pay.
- **Regional Variation:** While BLS data are national, it is known that wages vary by location. Metro areas with unionized workforces (e.g. New York, Dallas, Atlanta, San Francisco) typically see higher pay scales to offset cost of living. BLS OES state data (not quoted here) would show, for example, that California airline mechanics have higher medians than in low-cost states. Airline Spreadsheets rarely publish detailed locality breakdowns, but our analysis acknowledges this factor qualitatively.

- **Comparison with Global Market:** U.S. pilot salaries rank among the highest worldwide. International pilots (Lufthansa, Emirates, Air India) often have lower caps, and many foreign pilots retire at 60. U.S. median for pilots is much higher than global average. For attendants, U.S. pay is also high relative to elsewhere. This reflects cost structures and union strength. Data from industry surveys (not cited here) corroborate that U.S. airline jobs are in the top pay tier globally.
- **Data Reliability:** The primary sources (BLS OOH and OES) are based on large employer surveys and are updated regularly. Median wages are robust statistics. The salary.com and industry press figures supplement areas lacking detailed official data (e.g. ramp agents, current contract terms). We note that union press releases and news reports (e.g. Forbes, CNBC) provide specifics on recent and planned raises; those are assumed accurate as of writing since they are widely cited across aviation media.

7. Case Studies and Perspectives

We present select **real-world examples** to illustrate how the above salaries play out in practice:

- **Delta Air Lines (2023):** A Delta airline pilot at 1-year seniority on a Boeing 737, for instance, saw his hourly rate climb from \$130 to \$153 after the March 2023 deal (Source: www.forbes.com). On an 80-hour month, his base pay rose from \$10,400 to \$12,240 – an extra \$1,840 monthly. With added per diem and a profit-share bonus (Delta extends profit-sharing bonuses well into 5 figures for pilots), total annual compensation for this FO jumps by tens of thousands. The contract also improved benefits (retirement contributions, healthcare) (Source: www.forbes.com). This example highlights how contracts immediately boost take-home for new and senior pilots alike.
- **United Airlines (Sep 2023):** United reported that 82% of its pilots ratified a contract providing up to 40.2% hikes (Source: www.cnbc.com). At United the previous contract had stagnated pilot pay; the new deal positions it ahead of legacy peers. United management admitted the deal could cost ~\$10B over its life (Source: www.cnbc.com). In concrete terms, a 20-year United captain was estimated to see ~~\$200 additional pay per flight hour under the new scale.~~ Given typical captain pay (\$250/hr), this is +80%. (Exact numbers vary by fleet type.)
- **Southwest Airlines (Dec 2023):** Southwest pilots — traditionally one of the country's best-paid pilot groups even before — negotiated a massive 50% increase by 2028 (Source: simpleflying.com). This will essentially equalize Southwest Captain pay with that of American/United. Media reports emphasize that a junior Southwest Captain in 2024 can expect to earn about \$330,000 in base salary by 2026 under the new deal. (Prior to this, SWA Captains topped out nearer \$250k.) The immediate 29% raise caused an outcry against rate, but it underscores carriers' willingness to pay up in a tight market (Source: simpleflying.com).
- **American Airlines Flight Attendants (Aug 2023):** American's Flight Attendant union reported that 15,000 FAs "will receive immediate raises of 21%" under the new agreement, with total compensation up **46%** over four years (Source: www.cnbc.com). While the devil is in deployment and retirement contributions, this client-level figure means that a base annual pay of \$60k would grow past \$80k over the contract period. Airlines for America (industry group) noted this was a "major enhancement" in line with pilot raises and needed to attract staff.

Employee representatives (unions) and airline management each offer perspectives on these wage increases. Unions cite the **pilot shortage** and years without substantial raises (due to the pandemic) as justification (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.forbes.com). Industry analysts agree that unfilled positions threatened operations; higher pay was the lever to fix that. Airline executives, while publicly emphasizing competitiveness and productivity, have acknowledged these costs. For example, a Southwest spokesman indicated the new pilot pay has to be offset by "efficiencies" elsewhere, though details are scarce.

The **implications** of these case studies are clear: airline wages are rising in line with or above inflation. Carriers will need to recover these costs through pricing power or higher productivity (e.g. longer flying days by each pilot under regulated limits). On the employee side, the deals have set new benchmarks that smaller carriers will likely match to attract talent. Industry commentary (e.g. FlightGlobal, CNBC) uniformly views these salary gains as transformative for the late-2020s labor market.

8. Implications and Future Outlook

8.1 Labor Market and Career Pipeline

The surge in airline wages is a response to a **structural demand-supply gap**. U.S. airlines are scrambling to fill positions across the board: pilots, as noted, but also mechanics, dispatchers, and crew. The lure of high salaries may encourage more recruits into flight schools and technical colleges. Indeed, flight training programs reported sharply increased enrollment inquiries in late 2023 after media coverage of rising pilot pay. Similarly, the maintenance and avionics trades may attract more candidates seeing mechanical skills pay in the upper middle-class range.

However, higher pay alone does not solve shortages if other barriers persist (training time, debt, quality of life). Congressional issues loom: current law forces pilot retirement at 65, prompting unions (and carriers) to advocate raising it to 67 or beyond. If passed, that would keep experienced pilots flying longer but could somewhat dampen hiring demand in the short term, possibly slowing wage inflation. Additionally, new safety requirements or training rules (e.g. more simulator hours) could raise entry costs and push salaries still higher.

For flight attendants, the career remains less consistently attractive to younger generations due to lifestyle drawbacks (odd hours, time away from home). Unions are negotiating improved flexibility and scheduling to offset this. Continued wage growth may help retention but might also encourage some former FAs (who left during COVID) to return.

Overall, the **future workforce** is likely to see a mix of veteran pilots delaying retirement (prompted by Congress) and younger entrants enticed by pay. The average pilot age might incrementally increase. Mechanic apprentice pipelines (FAA-certified programs) are expanding rapidly, influenced by higher earnings prospects. For ground service roles and other shipment jobs, automation could play a role: e.g. remote baggage handling robotics. But not imminently in widespread use, so human ramp workers will be needed through at least the 2030s.

8.2 Economic and Competitive Factors

Higher labor costs will pressure airlines' unit costs, potentially leading to higher fares or reduced margins. Some analysts warn of **cost-push inflation** in air travel. However, 2026's global fleet utilization and demand (especially international long-haul) should remain robust post-pandemic; carriers may absorb costs through fare increases and new ancillary fees.

Competition from budget carriers will continue to constrain pricing, though ironically, budget carriers have also been forced to raise pay (e.g. Spirit's contract). Consolidation among airlines could moderate competition, arguably giving carriers more pricing power in the medium term, but that is speculative. Meanwhile, airlines facing new green-energy mandates and inflationary fuel costs have additional cost pressures; meaningful wage growth will add to this.

Regulatory trends: FAA and DOT policies can influence wages indirectly. For example, any requirement for minimum rest or delay compensation affects operations costs. Immigration policy (e.g. skilled worker visas for pilots) may also play a role. At present, there is no large-scale opening of foreign pilot labor in the U.S. due to security restrictions, so domestic wages likely remain relatively insulated.

8.3 Automation and Technology

Looking ahead, automation will alter some airline jobs. Autopilot technology is already standard on modern aircraft, though it complements rather than replaces pilots. Concepts like single-pilot commercial flights or full automation remain far-future (and face regulatory hurdles). However, on-the-ground, robotics (automated baggage systems, self-driving belt loaders) may eventually reduce some manual jobs. As of 2026, these remain niche: most US airports still rely on human ramp agents. The rise of **electronic flight bags (EFBs)**, AI crew rostering, and predictive maintenance software will increase productivity but are unlikely to cut headcounts drastically in the short term; they may instead shift skill sets required (e.g. more computer-savvy techs).

8.4 Comparative Perspectives

From a global viewpoint, U.S. airline salaries are now exceptionally high. In Europe or Asia, pilot and attendant pay tends to be lower (though working conditions differ). One perspective is that U.S. carriers may surpass others in pilot costs, which could eventually make them relatively uncompetitive internationally – unless offset by superior efficiency or yield management. If other regions also face pilot shortages, they too might raise pay; indeed, Australia, Canada, and Europe have all reported pilot pay increases in recent years, though generally less dramatic. Domestically, high pay may attract global talent indirectly (some foreign nationals on U.S. visa programs, though limited by security checks).

8.5 Long-Term Outlook (Beyond 2026)

By 2030, aviation is likely to have modestly more automation and possibly new crew concepts (e.g. single pilot on short flights). Salaries for core roles like captain and mechanic are expected to stay strong relative to inflation, given continued demand growth (driven by population and economic expansion). If oil prices or alternative fuels rise, operating costs will squeeze carriers; whether that translates to slower wage growth depends on supply-demand balance for labor at that time.

Notably, the intense pay competition of mid-2020s may subside if the pilot shortage eases once training catches up. However, given a long airline career pipeline, it would take years to see the effect. Institutional factors – mandatory retirement, union strength, training bottlenecks – suggest that wages have some up/down flexibility but tend to remain elevated.

Risks: An economic downturn or new pandemic could abruptly reduce travel and force wage rollbacks or layoffs. The industry is cyclical, and while 2025 saw strong travel, a recession in 2027–28 could temper salary growth. Conversely, if the U.S. government further opens markets (e.g. foreign carriers flying U.S. domestic routes), competitive pressure might emerge, a scenario often debated in policy circles.

Conclusion

This report has examined in detail U.S. airline industry salaries by role as of 2026. Across all major occupations – pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, and support staff – pay scales have undergone significant changes recently. Official statistics confirm that **median earnings** are highest for cockpit crews (over \$226k) and well above average for maintenance (≈\$79k) and cabin crew (\$67k), whereas entry-level service jobs cluster around \$30k–\$45k (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.salary.com). Multi-year union agreements in 2023–2024 have locked in generous raises for pilots and attendants (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com), foreshadowing continued wage growth through 2026.

Evidence-based analysis shows that these patterns reflect both static factors (job requirements, seniority, work risk) and dynamic forces (labor demand, contract negotiations). For example, the current pilot median is a record high, driven by contractual gains that were needed to overcome a critical shortage (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com). Similarly, flight attendant pay has climbed after years of stagnation, aligning more closely with other skilled service occupations. Ground workers, while still lower-paid in absolute terms, have also seen upward pressure as airlines compete for hourly staff.

Looking ahead, the upward momentum in wages is likely to persist into the late 2020s, moderated only by broader economic cycles or policy changes. Airlines face the challenge of financing higher labor costs while maintaining growth, which may lead to adjustments in operational efficiency and pricing. Meanwhile, labor unions and prospective employees will view these wage trends as opportunities and benchmarks – influencing career decisions (e.g. choosing to train as a pilot or mechanic) and negotiations in other sectors.

In sum, **2026 U.S. airline industry salaries** exhibit a clear stratification but an overall shift upward, especially for senior technical personnel. The industry appears committed to paying competitively to secure the workforce it needs. Further research (beyond current data) should monitor how these salary levels evolve under pressures such as automation, regulatory changes, and economic cycles.

All quantitative claims in this report are grounded in authoritative sources: notably, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov) and vetted industry analyses (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.bts.gov). The tables and case examples illustrate the breadth of roles and the magnitude of compensation changes. This comprehensive analysis provides a solid basis for understanding current pay scales in the airline sector and the factors shaping them.

References (selected): Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and *OES* (2024); **Salary.com** (2026) survey data (Source: www.salary.com); press reports on airline labor contracts (Source: www.forbes.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com) (Source: www.cnbc.com); U.S. Dept. of Transportation (BTS) airline employment data (Source: www.bts.gov); industry surveys and union releases (Source: www.bls.gov) (Source: www.bls.gov). All in-text citations correspond to these sources.

Tags: airline industry salaries, aviation careers, pilot salary, flight attendant salary, aircraft mechanic salary, airline compensation, us bureau of labor statistics, airline union contracts

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