Under-Vacationed
AMERICA:

An Analysis of the States and Cities That Need to Take a Day

The growth of domestic travel is central to U.S. Travel's overall mission. We support policies to improve travel infrastructure and national parks, among others, and foster programs and research that encourage increased domestic travel.

In the fall of 2018, U.S. Travel folded its domestic leisure-focused Project: Time Off initiative into an expanded public affairs portfolio, enhancing the association's advocacy and research on domestic travel. Analysis that informs and advances this area of focus—including tracking America's vacation usage and its benefits to travelers—is included in U.S. Travel's research and messaging platforms for our members' use and in support of activations such as National Plan for Vacation Day.

Americans are taking more vacation. Last year, vacation usage rose to an average of 16.8 days, the second year of growth after bottoming out in 2014 at 16.0 days.

Despite the improvement over the last two years, there are still 54 percent of Americans who did not use all their vacation time last year. These workers left a collective 662 million vacation days on the table—days that carry significant economic potential. If Americans were to use that vacation time, it would generate $128 billion in direct spending, and an overall economic impact of $236 billion for the U.S. economy.

Breaking down the vacation picture in America reveals profound geographical differences— some encouraging and some deeply worrisome—in workers' vacation perceptions and behavior.

METHODOLOGY

GfK conducted an online survey from January 26-February 20, 2017 with 7,331 American workers, age 18+, who work more than 35 hours a week and receive paid time off from their employer. These data were weighted and scaled. The geographic data below represents all 50 U.S. states and the 30-largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the country, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Oxford Economics projected total unused paid time off using Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) employment data, adjusted by the share receiving paid time off. The potential economic impact for the states and cities was developed using a per diem spending approach based on data from TNS, the U.S. Travel Association, and the BEA Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts.

VACATION ACROSS AMERICA

State (Ranking)		Percentage Leaving Vacation Time Unused	Vacation Days Left Unused	Direct Spending Potential of Unused Days
Alabama	47	41%	10.1 million	$818 million
Alaska	3	73%	1.7 million	$651 million
Arizona	48	41%	11.4 million	$3.2 billion
Arkansas	45	45%	4.5 million	$506 million
California	13	61%	90.4 million	$17.9 billion
Colorado	32	52%	12.2 million	$3.1 billion
Connecticut	22	55%	6.5 million	$854 million
Delaware	18	57%	1.6 million	$226 million
Florida	36	50%	33.3 million	$13.2 billion
Georgia	26	54%	18.3 million	$2.7 billion
Hawaii	49	39%	3.3 million	$4.4 billion
Idaho	1	78%	3.1 million	$433 million
Illinois	34	51%	22.9 million	$4.2 billion
Indiana	39	48%	13.2 million	$1.1 billion
Iowa	31	53%	6.2 million	$1.1 billion
Kansas	9	64%	5.8 million	$529 million
Kentucky	27	54%	9.0 million	$763 million
Louisiana	41	47%	7.8 million	$2.3 billion
Maine	50	38%	2.6 million	$700 million
Maryland	17	58%	17.8 million	$1.8 billion
Massachusetts	24	55%	15.6 million	$3.0 billion
Michigan	43	46%	15.8 million	$2.5 billion
Minnesota	19	56%	13.2 million	$1.5 billion
Mississippi	11	63%	10.6 million	$1.7 billion
Missouri	30	53%	13.1 million	$1.8 billion
Montana	6	67%	1.8 million	$690 million
Nebraska	8	66%	5.0 million	$382 million
Nevada	12	62%	7.4 million	$5.1 billion
New Hampshire	2	77%	2.7 million	$552 million
New Jersey	37	49%	15.2 million	$4.3 billion
New Mexico	15	59%	5.0 million	$770 million
New York	25	54%	38.1 million	$10.1 billion
North Carolina	35	50%	16.6 million	$2.4 billion
North Dakota	40	47%	2.6 million	$408 million
Ohio	38	49%	22.0 million	$1.9 billion
Oklahoma	5	69%	9.7 million	$690 million
Oregon	20	56%	10.0 million	$1.4 billion
Pennsylvania	44	45%	23.3 million	$3.8 billion
Rhode Island	21	55%	1.8 million	$313 million
South Carolina	14	61%	8.8 million	$1.7 billion
South Dakota	4	73%	1.8 million	$404 million
Tennessee	42	46%	11.8 million	$2.1 billion
Texas	23	55%	67.1 million	$7.7 billion
Utah	28	54%	7.7 million	$1.2 billion
Vermont	10	64%	1.3 million	$777 million
Virginia	16	59%	16.0 million	$2.9 billion
Washington	29	53%	14.4 million	$2.2 billion
West Virginia	33	52%	3.8 million	$838 million
Wisconsin	46	44%	10.6 million	$1.6 billion
Wyoming	7	66%	1.2 million	$743 million
AVERAGE/TOTAL		**54%**	**662 million**	**$128 billion**

The No Vacation States

Idaho tops the list with 78 percent of its workers leaving vacation time unused in 2016, far outpacing the national average of 54 percent. When it comes to time off, Idahoan workers are particularly challenged by concerns that they have to show complete dedication to their job (36% to 26% overall), feel their company culture does not promote time off (27% to 20%), and worry that they would appear replaceable (28% to 23%).

Workers in **New Hampshire**—number two on the list—have more acute anxiety about taking vacation. They are far more likely than the average worker to fear what their boss thinks about time off (38% to 18% overall), believe that skipping vacation will make them appear more dedicated (42% to 26%), and worry that getting away will make them appear replaceable (37% to 23%).
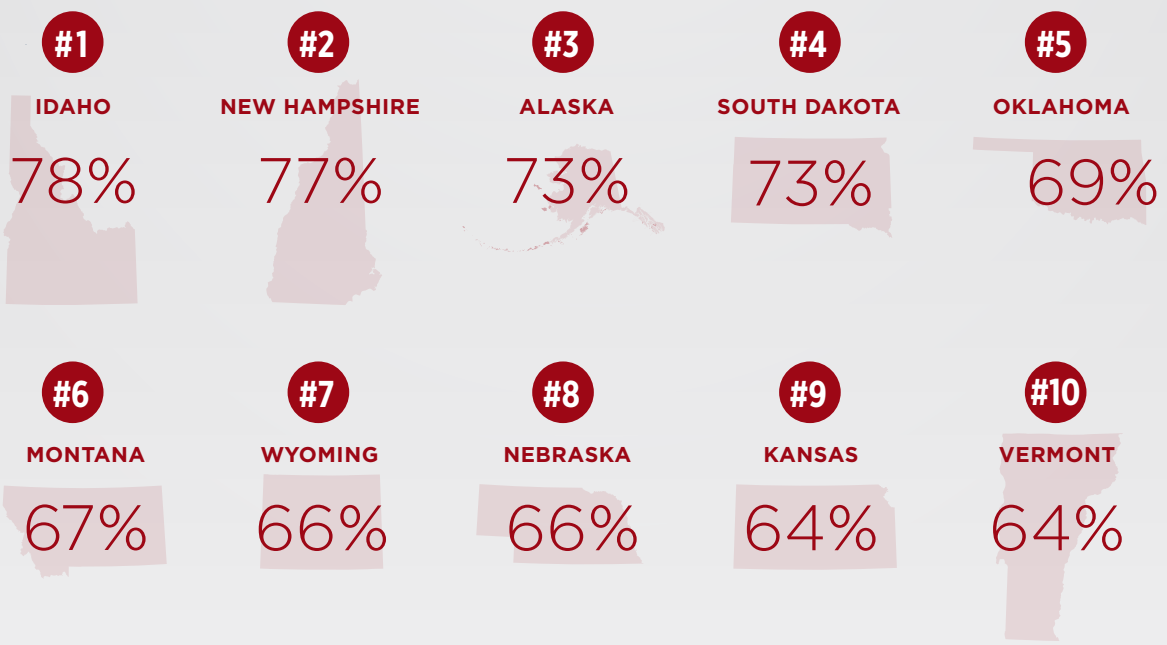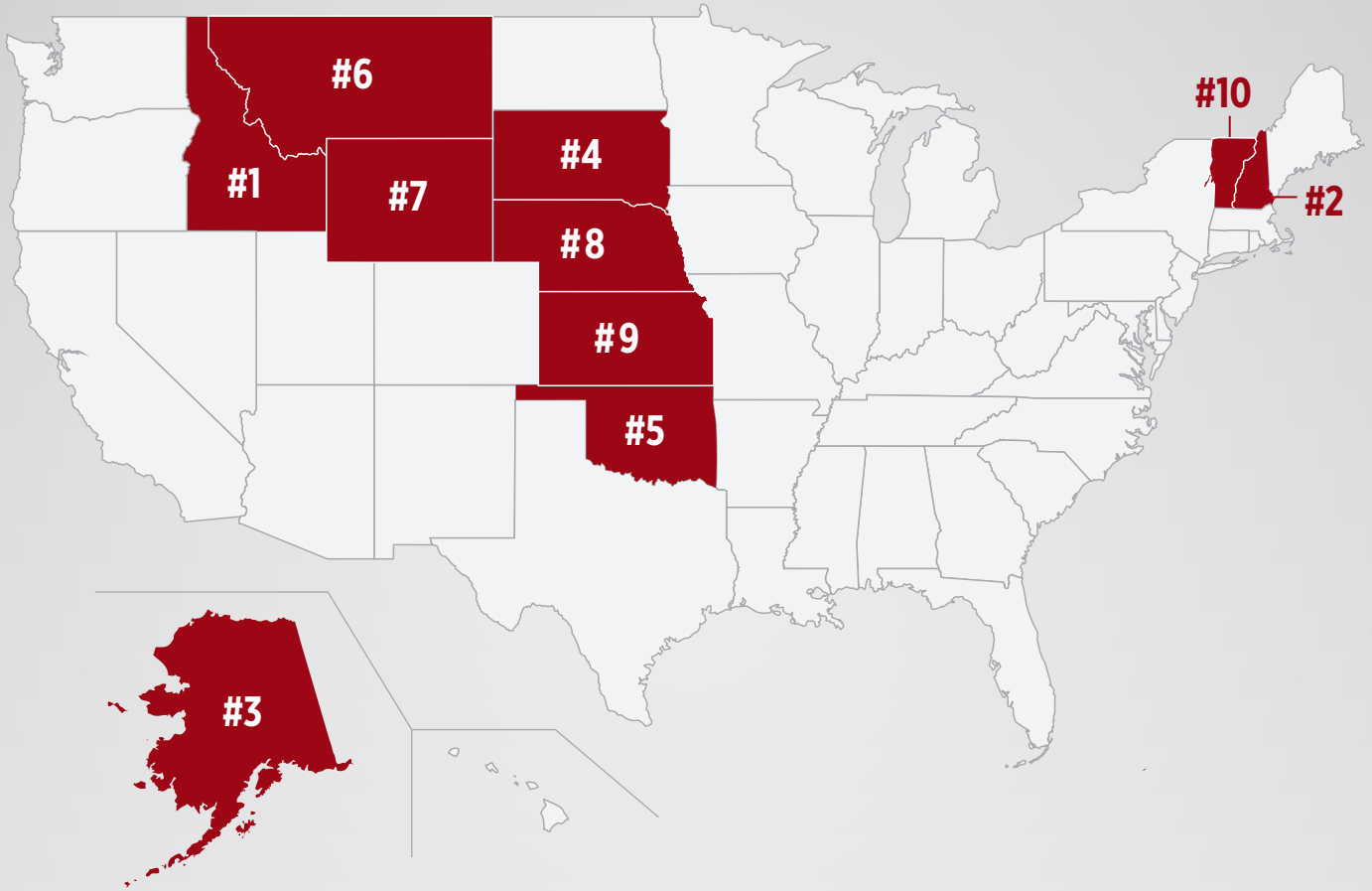
Alaska is the only state that ranked the cost of a vacation as its top barrier, compared to the average American worker who puts it as the number four barrier (51% to 32%). Following cost, Alaskans also fear appearing replaceable (34% to 23%) and worry about what their boss would think (28% to 18%).

South Dakotan workers are the most likely to skip time off due to workload, with 60 percent saying the mountain of work they would return to was a barrier to taking vacation, compared to 43 percent nationally. The Mount Rushmore State's workers are also the number one state for fearing they would lose consideration for a raise or promotion if they took time off. It is paradoxical thinking as The State of American Vacation 2017 found that workers who forfeit vacation time are less likely to have received a recent raise or bonus (78% to 84%) or been promoted (23% to 27%) than those who did not.

These states should not be shamed for bad vacation habits. Rather, their culture needs to shift around the importance of time off. Unfortunately, many of the states with the worst vacation usage work in cultures where workers hear negative or mixed messages about time off more frequently. Where just 17 percent of workers nationally say their company sends negative or mixed messages, the majority of the states in the top ten for unused vacation time are more likely to agree, most notably Alaskan workers at 28 percent.

10 STATES WITH THE MOST UNUSED VACATION

#6

#10

#4

#1

#7

#2

#8

#9

#5

#3

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
IDAHO	**NEW HAMPSHIRE**	**ALASKA**	**SOUTH DAKOTA**	**OKLAHOMA**
78%	77%	73%	73%	69%

#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
MONTANA	**WYOMING**	**NEBRASKA**	**KANSAS**	**VERMONT**
67%	66%	66%	64%	64%

States Where Vacation Rules

Maine holds the top spot when it comes to vacation usage, with just 38 percent of its workers leaving time on the table. Overall, Mainers are less affected than the average worker by the barriers to taking time off, particularly the fear that they would lose consideration for a raise or promotion (11% to 21%). Pine Tree State workers also report better vacation cultures at their companies. More than half (54%) of Maine's workers say their company encourages time off, far more than the 33 percent of workers nationally who say the same.
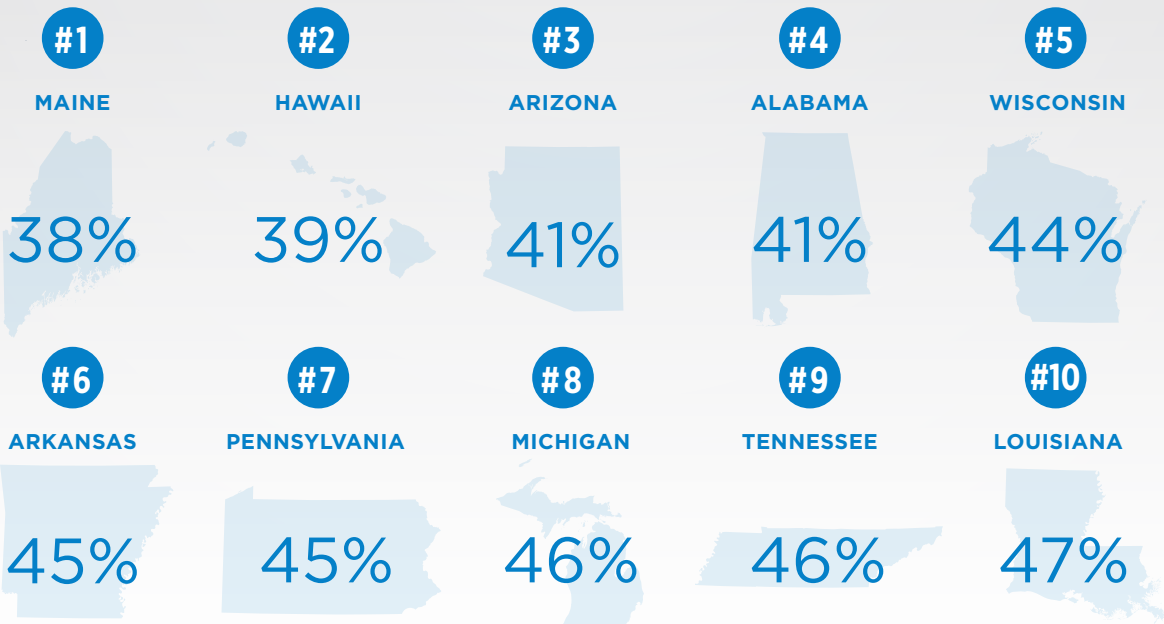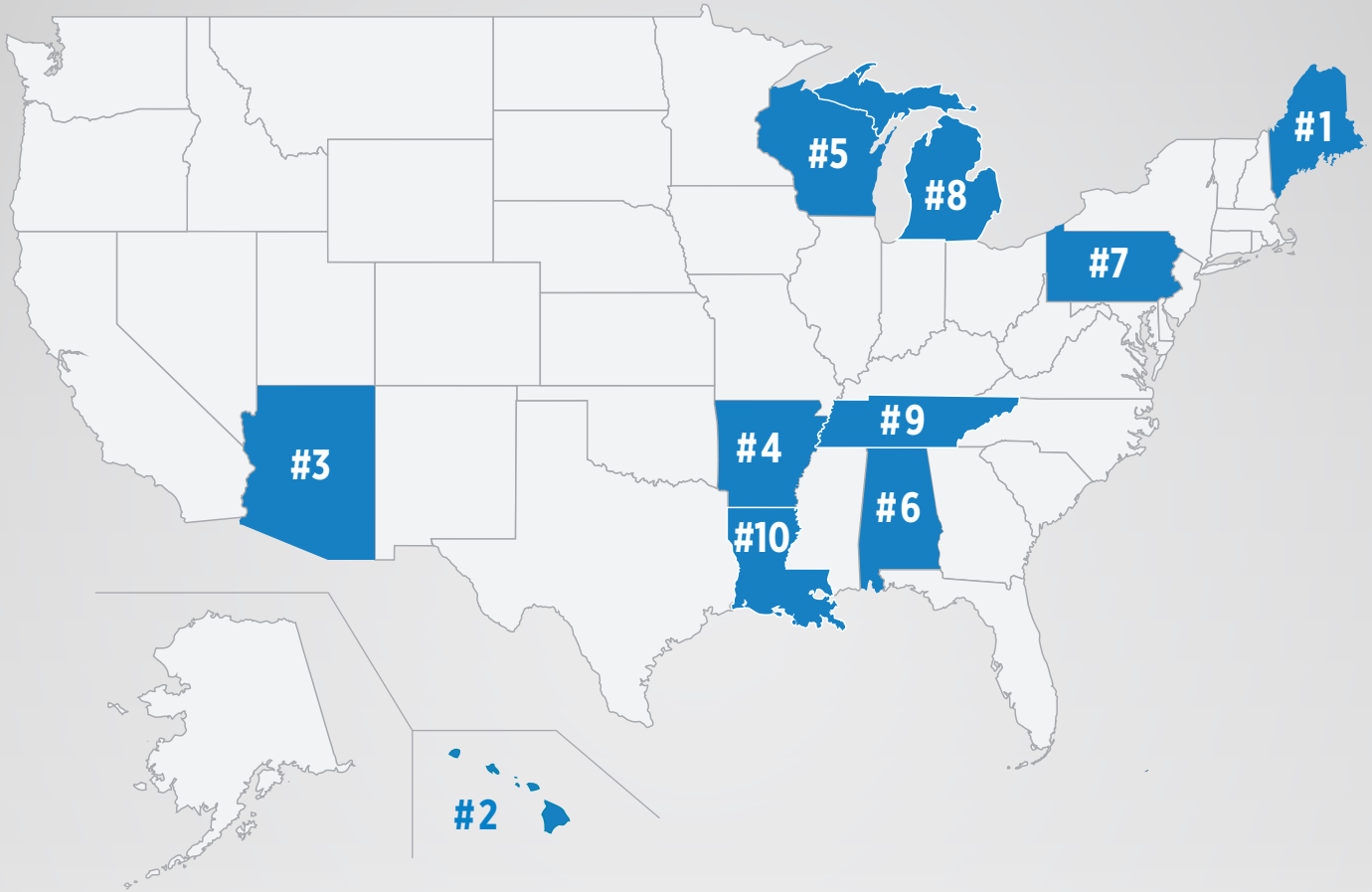
Working and living in a bucket list destination has its rewards as **Hawaii's workers** come in a close second, with 39 percent leaving vacation time unused. Only six percent of Aloha State workers said their company culture did not promote time off, compared to 20 percent of workers nationally. They are also much less likely than average to feel that they would be expected to work on vacation (8% to 21%) and that no one else can do the work while they are out (23% to 34%).

Work stress is much lower than average for workers in some of the top states for vacation usage. **Arkansas**, **Hawaii**, and **Arizona** are among the five-lowest states for work stress and appear at the top of the list for the least amount of vacation left unused. Compared to 70 percent nationally, 56 percent of Arkansas' workers, 59 percent of Hawaii's workers, and 61 percent of Arizona's workers report experiencing work stress.

Alabaman workers, coming in at number four, are less vulnerable to the challenges of taking time off, and are below the national average in almost every barrier measured. They are particularly unaffected by the feeling that they would be expected to work on vacation (13% to 21%), fears of the boss' opinion (10% to 18%), or that they could lose their job (9% to 16%).

Wisconsin rounds out the top five. The biggest challenge to taking vacation for American workers overall is returning to a mountain of work, but Wisconsin workers are some of the least likely to be stopped by that barrier. Just 34 percent of Wisconsin workers said workload kept them from taking time off, compared to 43 percent nationally. Only West Virginia and Arizona were lower at 33 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

10 STATES WITH THE LEAST UNUSED VACATION

#5	#8	#1
#3	#4 #9 #6	#7
#10		
#2		

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
MAINE	**HAWAII**	**ARIZONA**	**ALABAMA**	**WISCONSIN**
38%	39%	41%	41%	44%

#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
ARKANSAS	**PENNSYLVANIA**	**MICHIGAN**	**TENNESSEE**	**LOUISIANA**
45%	45%	46%	46%	47%

VACATION
IN AMERICA'S CITIES

City (Ranking)		Percentage Leaving Vacation Time Unused	Vacation Days Left Unused	Direct Spending Potential of Unused Days
Atlanta, GA	23	49%	10.9 million	$2.2 billion
Baltimore, MD	11	57%	9.2 million	$756 million
Boston, MA	5	61%	11.6 million	$2.4 billion
Charlotte, NC	24	48%	4.6 million	$659 million
Chicago, IL	29	44%	18.2 million	$3.5 billion
Cincinnati, OH	13	56%	4.5 million	$434 million
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	17	53%	19.4 million	$1.9 billion
Denver, CO	6	60%	6.7 million	$1.3 billion
Detroit, MI	21	51%	7.1 million	$847 million
Houston, TX	16	54%	16.6 million	$1.7 billion
Kansas City, MO	25	48%	4.7 million	$696 million
Las Vegas, NV	10	58%	5.4 million	$4.6 billion
Los Angeles, CA	4	62%	32.5 million	$6.4 billion
Miami, FL	26	45%	10.2 million	$2.4 billion
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	12	57%	8.0 million	$1.0 billion
New York, NY	18	53%	37.5 million	$7.8 billion
Orlando, FL	27	45%	4.7 million	$3.4 billion
Philadelphia, PA	20	51%	11.1 million	$1.3 billion
Phoenix, AZ	28	44%	8.2 million	$1.6 billion
Pittsburgh, PA	30	40%	4.6 million	$696 million
Portland, OR	8	58%	5.4 million	$756 million
Riverside-San Bernadino, CA	7	59%	7.7 million	$1.3 billion
Sacramento, CA	14	55%	5.3 million	$673 million
San Antonio, TX	9	58%	5.7 million	$1.1 billion
San Diego, CA	22	50%	8.2 million	$2.3 billion
San Francisco-Oakland, CA	2	64%	12.8 million	$3.1 billion
Seattle, WA	15	54%	8.5 million	$1.6 billion
St. Louis, MO	19	52%	5.6 million	$792 million
Tampa, FL	3	62%	5.1 million	$1.2 billion
Washington, DC	1	64%	17.3 million	$3.8 billion

The No Vacation Cities

Washington, D.C. tops this year's list, despite being less challenged by many of the barriers to taking time off. The nation's capital is home to far more government workers than average (40% to 13%), and government workers are more likely to leave vacation time unused. With 63 percent of government workers leaving time on the table, it is the second-worst industry at using time off, just after education (65%). Government workers have more generous vacation rollover policies than average. Nearly four-in-ten (37%) government workers say they can roll over 21 or more days of vacation. Most U.S. workers who can roll over time are limited to one to five days a year (38%); just 16 percent can roll over 21 or more days.

Despite the Golden State moniker, three California metro areas are included in the top ten cities for unused vacation. **San Francisco** is the city most challenged by workload, with 62 percent saying the mountain of work they would return to stopped them from taking time off, 19 percentage points more than average. **Los Angeles** workers have greater fear about what their boss would think of them taking time off (27% to 18%). **Riverside-San Bernardino** workers are more likely than average to feel that no one else can do the work if they go away (46% to 34%), second only to **St. Louis** (50%).

Tampa's workers are some of the most likely to feel that they cannot afford to take time off: 42 percent of the city's workers pointed to cost as a barrier, compared to the 32 percent national average. Only **Riverside-San Bernardino (46%), San Diego (45%)**, and **Charlotte (42%)** said the cost of time off was more of a challenge.

Salaried workers are more likely than those paid an hourly wage to leave vacation time on the table (57% to 49%). Two of the cities atop the list of unused vacation days, **Washington** and **Boston**, have the highest percentage of salaried workers of all the cities reviewed (79% and 77%, respectively).

Most Vacationed Cities

Pittsburgh gets the top spot for using the most vacation. Steel City workers are less susceptible to anxiety around taking vacation. They are less likely than average to worry about feeling guilty for being away (13% to 22% overall), fear not appearing as dedicated (18% to 26%), or be afraid of what their boss might think about their time off (10% to 18%). They also have below-average work stress, with 63 percent of employees confirming they experience work stress, far below the national average of 70 percent.
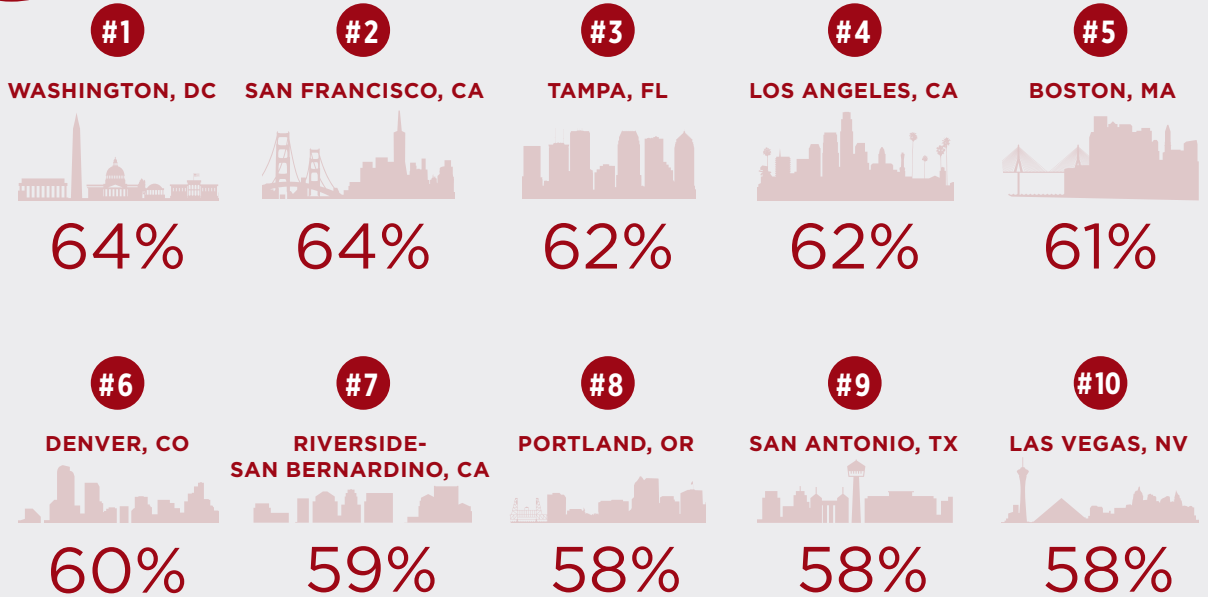
In **Phoenix**, workers are much less likely to feel that skipping vacation makes them appear more dedicated than the average employee (14% to 26%) and they do not worry as much about losing consideration for a raise or promotion (11% to 21%). They are also less likely to report they can bank or rollover time (11% to 21%).

Orlando has a high percentage of hourly workers, with 54 percent of the workforce reporting an hourly wage. Nationally, 46 percent of workers are hourly, and these workers are better at using their vacation time than salaried workers (51% to 43%).

Orlando workers also enjoy a more positive vacation culture, with 39 percent agreeing their company culture encourages taking time off, compared to 33 percent nationally.

The top challenge to taking time off for U.S. workers is the mountain of work they return to (43% agreed), but in several of the cities that leave less vacation time on the table, that challenge is less severe. Of the top five cities using the most vacation time, all five are less subject to the mountain of work—**Pittsburgh at 37 percent; Chicago at 40 percent; Phoenix at 38 percent; Orlando at 37 percent;** and **Miami at 40 percent.**

10 CITIES WITH THE MOST UNUSED VACATION

#1 WASHINGTON, DC — 64%

#2 SAN FRANCISCO, CA — 64%

#3 TAMPA, FL — 62%

#4 LOS ANGELES, CA — 62%

#5 BOSTON, MA — 61%

#6 DENVER, CO — 60%

#7 RIVERSIDE-SAN BERNARDINO, CA — 59%

#8 PORTLAND, OR — 58%

#9 SAN ANTONIO, TX — 58%

#10 LAS VEGAS, NV — 58%

10 CITIES WITH THE LEAST UNUSED VACATION

#1 PITTSBURGH, PA — 40%

#2 CHICAGO, IL — 44%

#3 PHOENIX, AZ — 44%

#4 ORLANDO, FL — 45%

#5 MIAMI, FL — 45%

#6 KANSAS CITY, MO — 48%

#7 CHARLOTTE, NC — 48%

#8 ATLANTA, GA — 49%

#9 SAN DIEGO, CA — 50%

#10 DETROIT, MI — 51%