# U.S. TRAVEL
### A S S O C I A T I O N®

# Under-Vacationed America:
## A State-by-State Look at Time Off and Travel

# Leaving **vacation days** unused has become an unfortunate national pastime.

America is not, however, monolithic. There are also more severely under-vacationed areas that give clues to why Americans pass on time off. And there are bright spots across the country to learn from and emulate. Equally varied are the travel preferences state-to-state. From the vacation budget to what goes in the suitcase, differences abound from coast to coast.

# THE GREAT AMERICAN VACATIONERS

## Vacation day leaders...

**Top 3**

**Colorado**
20.3 days

**Virginia**
18.9 days

**Arizona**
18.8 days

**U.S. Average: 17.2 days**

**1**

**Colorado workers hit a Rocky Mountain high, taking 20.3 vacation days on average, the most of any state and three days more than the national average of 17.2**. The Centennial State's employees report earning the most time in the U.S. as well, averaging 27.9 days, compared to 23.2 days earned on average nationally.

Coloradoans used 57 percent of the vacation days they used to travel, far more than the national average of 47 percent. While a strong majority of them still feel they have not seen enough of the country (74%), they are the second-least likely state after Minnesota (73%) to feel that way. With more than six national parks visited on average—many in their own backyard—Colorado workers are above the national average of four parks and close to the top of the list for all states.

**2**

**Virginia** comes in second for vacation usage with an average of 18.9 days taken. They also earn above the national average at 25.0 days. It may be the supportive work cultures that are helping Virginians put that out of office up. More than half (52%) of Virginians say their company cultures encourages vacation usage, the second-most encouraged state after Washington for the top spot, and far more than the 38 percent of all Americans who say the same.

**Arizona** clocks in at a close third, with 18.8 days used. Workers in Arizona are tied with those in Washington for the highest rates of happiness with their company, with a resounding 68 percent saying they are happy, compared to 54 percent nationwide. **Their contentment at work translates to leaving work behind on vacation, as half (50%) of Arizonans unplug when they take time off.**

## ...and laggards

| Montana | Delaware | Rhode Island | Bottom 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16.3 days | 16.5 days | 16.5 days | |

**U.S. Average: 17.2 days**

**Montana, Delaware,** and **Rhode Island** are the worst at taking vacation. At the bottom of the list for vacation usage is Montana, where workers take an average of 16.3 days. But employees in the Treasure State also earn less time, with an average of 21.8 days, the third-lowest of all states, behind Rhode Island and Delaware (both earn on average 21.6 days).

# TRAVEL-HAPPY AMERICA

*State of American Vacation* **2018 found that workers who use the majority of their vacation days for travel are significantly happier than those who travel less or not at all.** Americans taking all or most of their vacation days to travel report being 20 percent happier with their personal relationships and 56 percent happier with their health and well-being than those who travel with little or none of their vacation time. They also show greater evidence of success—and enjoyment—of their careers. Those who travel with all or most of their time are 28% happier with their companies and 24% happier with their jobs than those that travel with little to none of their vacation days. These frequent travelers are also 18% more likely to report receiving a promotion in the last two years.

Virginia, Colorado, and New Jersey are the states most likely to be unlocking these travel benefits with their vacation time.
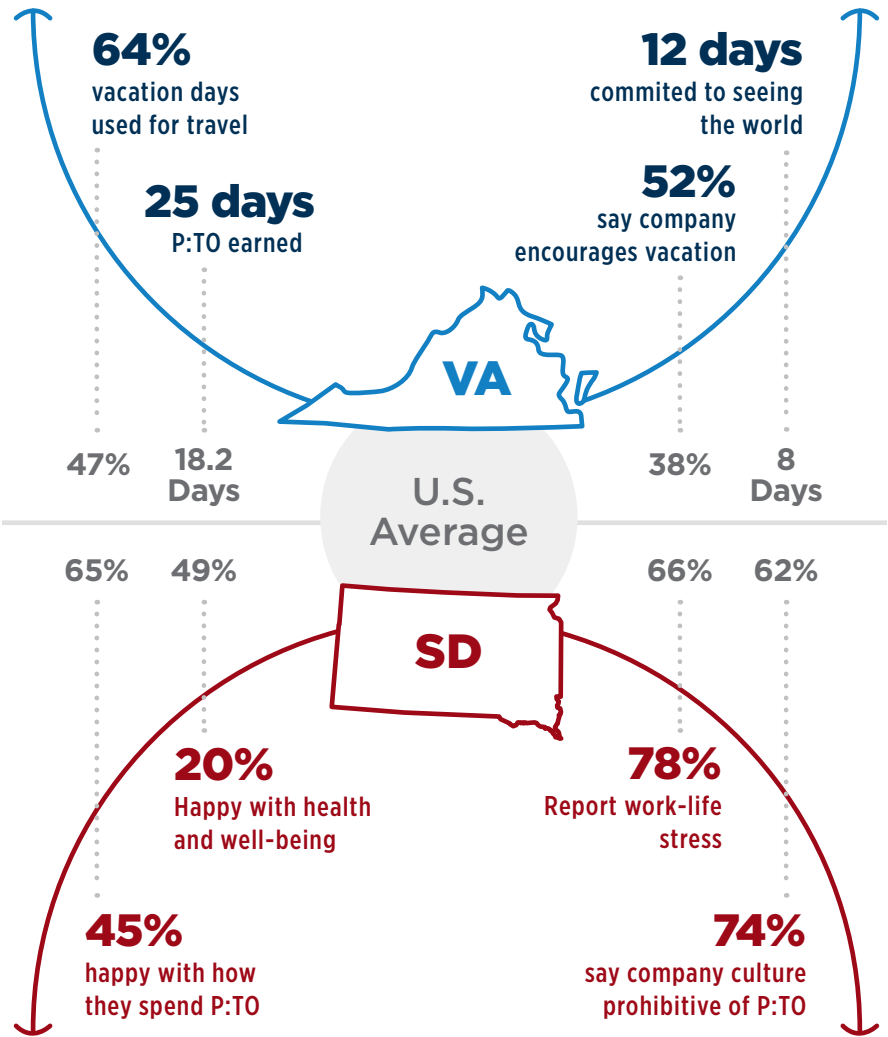
## States Making the Most of Vacation

| | State | Percentage of Used Days for Travel | Mean Days Spent Traveling |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Top 3** | **Virginia** | **64%** | **12.2** |
| | **Colorado** | **58%** | **11.7** |
| | **New Jersey** | **63%** | **11.1** |
| **Bottom 3** | **South Dakota** | **26%** | **4.3** |
| | **Missouri** | **29%** | **5.2** |
| | **Iowa** | **31%** | **5.4** |
| **U.S. Average** | | **47%** | **8.0** |

Virginia is for lovers—of travel. Virginian's use 64 percent of their vacation days to travel, the most of any state by a large margin and significantly higher than the American average (47%).

Employees in the Old Dominion State earn more time off than the average American (earning 25.0 days and using 18.9). But unlike most Americans who are only using eight days to go explore, Virginians commit 12 of their days to seeing the world. They are supported by their employers in doing so. More than half (52%) say their companies encourage vacation usage, far more than the 38 percent of employees nationally who say the same.

**64%**
vacation days used for travel

**12 days**
commited to seeing the world

**25 days**
P:TO earned

**52%**
say company encourages vacation

VA

**47%** | **18.2 Days** | U.S. Average | **38%** | **8 Days**

**65%** | **49%** | | **66%** | **62%**

SD

**20%**
Happy with health and well-being

**78%**
Report work-life stress

**45%**
happy with how they spend P:TO

**74%**
say company culture prohibitive of P:TO

South Dakota is at the bottom of the list. Perhaps when a state is home to some of the most breathtaking sights in America, from the Black Hills to the Badlands, its residents are more reluctant to leave. It is not that they do not want to travel—only 45 percent say they are happy with how they spend their time off, compared to 65 percent nationally. What's worse is that just 20 percent of employees in the state report being happy with their health and well-being, far below the national average of 49 percent.

Work culture in South Dakota is especially prohibitive, with **74 percent** of workers saying their company culture says nothing or is negative about vacation usage.

Stress levels are higher in South Dakota as well: 64 percent report home-life stress, compared to 44 percent nationally; 78 percent report work-life stress, compared to 66 percent nationally. Unfortunately, the work culture in South Dakota is especially prohibitive, with 74 percent of workers saying their company culture says nothing or is negative about vacation usage—just 62 percent of workers nationally say the same.

Missourians take more time than the average American, using 18.0 days of the 24.4 days they earn; however, only five of those days are used for travel vacations. Though not as severe as South Dakota, they also report lower than average happiness with their health and well-being (39% say they are happy) and how they spend their time off (50% say they are happy).
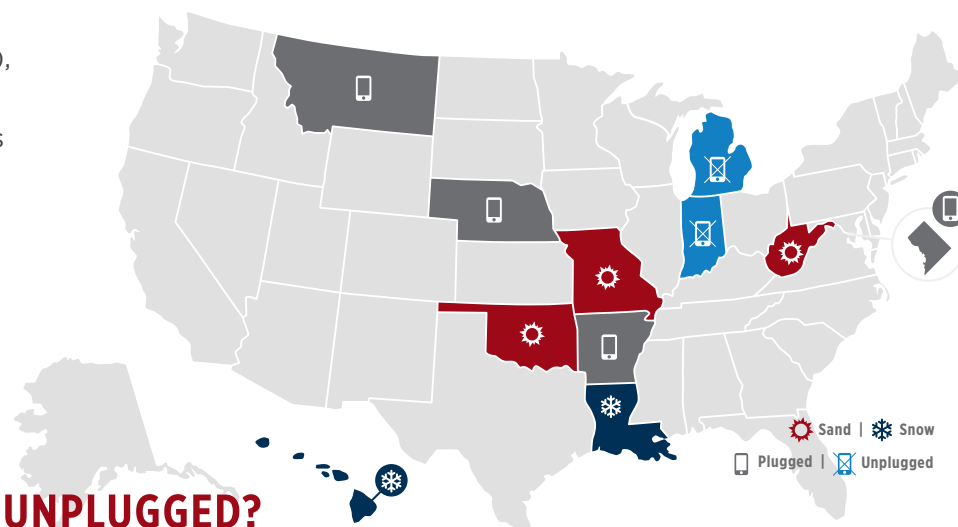
**Those who travel with all or most of their time are 56% happier with their health and well-being than those that travel with little to none of their vacation days.**

# AMERICAN TRAVEL STYLE

State to state, the way Americans like to travel varies. Do not expect to find a West Virginian in a cold destination or a South Carolinian roughing it. Washington, D.C. workers are the most likely to require a passport for travel, and Nevadans are probably going to order dessert when they vacation.

**Sand or Snow? The vast majority of Americans (88%) are in search of a warm climate for their vacations.** West Virginians (97%) particularly think a warm vacation spot is almost heaven, followed by Missourians (96%) and Oklahomans (95%). But there is one state looking for a place to chill out. The constant warm weather of Hawaii has its residents seeking cold climates for their vacation time in much greater numbers—42 percent of the state reported preferring colder destinations. Louisiana comes in a distant second, with 24 percent of Pelican Staters preferring snowmen to sand sculptures.
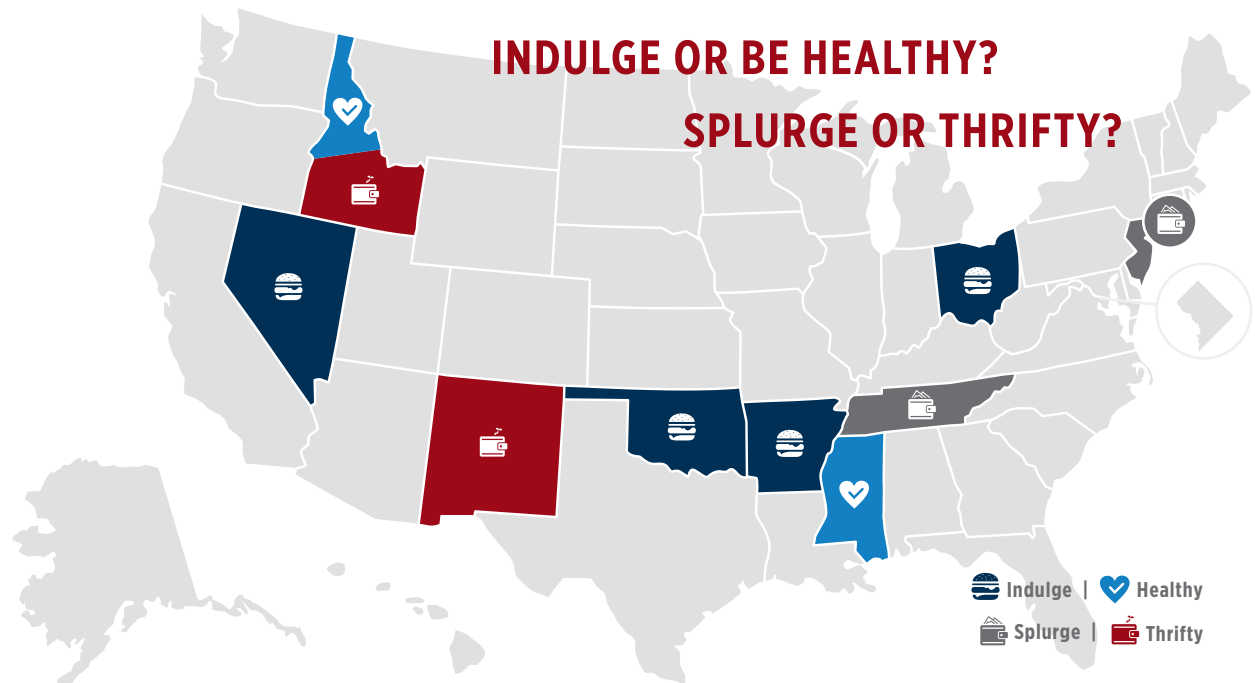
**Indiana is the state most likely to go off the grid. Six-in-ten (60%) Hoosiers say they completely unplug when they go on vacation, compared to just 37 percent nationally.** Their neighbor to the North, Michigan, is second with 52 percent saying they are not checking in at the office. The most plugged-in place in America is Washington, D.C., with one-third (33%) of its workers saying they check-in frequently with work and just 13 percent saying they unplug totally when on vacation. Arkansas (30%), Montana (28%), and Nebraska (28%) also have their phones nearby. Nationally, just 14 percent of employees say they are checking in with the office frequently while on vacation.
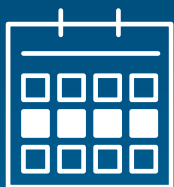


Sand | ❄ Snow
📱 Plugged | ⊠ Unplugged

## PLUGGED OR UNPLUGGED?

## SAND OR SNOW?

Vacations for most Americans are a time to kick back and indulge—skip a workout, try new foods that may not be on the diet plan at home. **Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Americans say they prefer to indulge than be healthy on vacation.** Vacationers from Nevada (78%), Oklahoma (77%), Ohio (76%), and Arkansas (76%)  are most likely to agree with that sentiment while the only states where a majority said they preferred to be healthy were Idaho (54%) and Mississippi (52%).
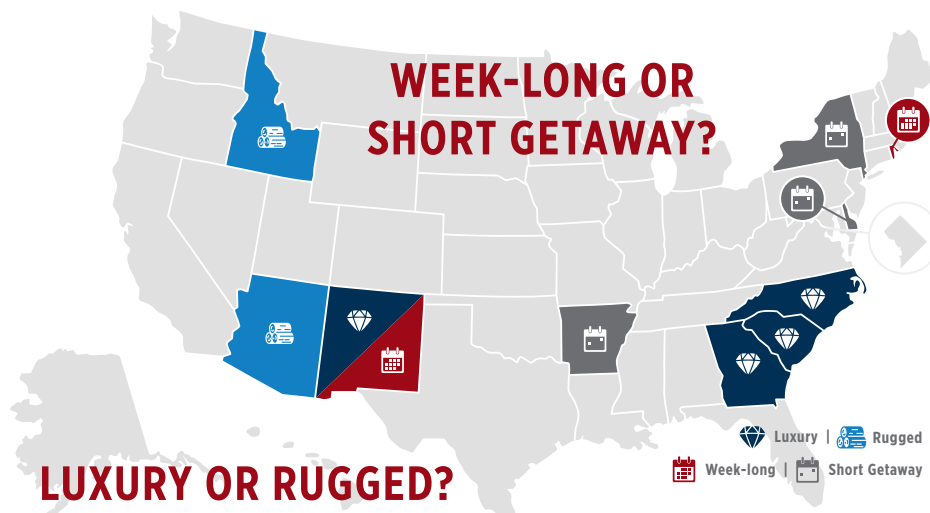


**INDULGE OR BE HEALTHY?**

**SPLURGE OR THRIFTY?**

Indulge  |  Healthy
Splurge  |  Thrifty

**Americans are split on whether they prefer to save or splurge on vacations—just over half (52%) say save and just under half (47%) say splurge.** The thriftiest travelers are in New Mexico and Idaho where two-thirds (67% and 66%, respectively) want to save on their vacations. On the other end of the spectrum are Tennessee and New Jersey, where 64 percent in both states say when it comes to travel, they want to splurge.

**Even in places where traveling inexpensively is preferred, luxury is often expected.** In New Mexico, 75 percent say they want luxurious accommodations over rugged, more than the national average of 70 percent. Though no one prefers the finer things in life more than Southerners, with South Carolina (85%), Georgia (82%), and North Carolina (79%) leading the pack of states that prefer luxury when they travel. While no state had a majority of its population that preferred more rugged accommodations, Idaho (47%) and Arizona (45%) favored the idea most.



**WEEK-LONG OR SHORT GETAWAY?**

**LUXURY OR RUGGED?**

Luxury | Rugged
Week-long | Short Getaway

The traditional week-long trip is still the gold standard for most Americans, with 72 percent saying they prefer that length over a long-weekend vacation. But there are some places more interested in a short getaway. New Mexico (41%) and Rhode Island (38%) are most likely to choose a quick trip. Meanwhile, in Delaware (90%), Arkansas (88%), and New York (85%), there is a strong preference for a week-long vacation.



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# METHODOLOGY

GfK conducted an online survey from January 4-23, 2018 with 4,349 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 and have a margin of error of +/-1.99%. The geographic data above represents all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

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.