



2019 Priceline Work-Life Balance Report: 44 Million Working Americans Have 7+ Vacation Days Remaining Unused

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More than half of Americans leave paid vacation days unused each year; Nearly one in five cite "work guilt" as reason why

NORWALK, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 22, 2019--

Nearly forty-four million working Americans report having seven or more paid vacation days left to use this year, and a commonly cited reason is work guilt, according to the 2019 Priceline Work-Life Balance Report, released today. Nearly one in five (18 percent) say they feel guilty taking a break from work, with the same percentage reporting that they are simply too busy to go on vacation.

The Priceline Work-Life Balance Report is an annual study that examines how, why and whether American workers use the full allotment of paid time off (PTO) available to them. The 2019 study was commissioned by Priceline and executed by Savanta, an international research firm. Savanta asked 1,000 working Americans to report on their work vacation habits and the unspoken reasons why many left their days unused.

Americans Make Limited Use of Limited Time Off

More than half (55 percent) of American workers report having more than 10 paid vacation days available to them each year. This contrasts sharply with workers in Europe, who typically enjoy a minimum of 20 annual paid vacation days, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. More than half (53 percent) of respondents say they typically leave available vacation days unused at year's end, and a full third of American workers report leaving at least half of their days unused.

When Americans do leave the office, many say that work follows them. Nearly one in three (29 percent) say their company, or their supervisor, expects them to be "available" while on break, while nearly one in four (38 percent) report that they feel "pressure" to check email or voicemail while away. A full 15 percent of American workers say that they end up working during some portion of every vacation they take.

"The respondents in this study report feeling pressure to work while they're on break. They shouldn't. Instead, their *company* should feel pressure to show employees that they're valued, by making it clear that 'out of office' means fully disconnected," said Liz Dente, Chief People Officer at Priceline. "At Priceline we give our employees an extra bonus every year, specifically to use on travel. Not just because we're a travel company, but because our employees are happier and more productive when they have time to recharge."

Work Guilt Starts Early

The youngest American workers were the likeliest to report feeling guilty when using paid vacation time. Nearly half of Generation Z workers (47 percent) reported feeling the most pressure to check email and voicemail while on vacation, though those pressures do diminish with age. Four in ten Millennials report feeling the same pressure, as do a third (34 percent) of Generation X workers. Baby Boomers, at 24 percent, feel the least pressure.

The Priceline Work-Life Balance Report also reveals that for Americans, "work guilt" is immediately present when employees start a new job. More than six in ten respondents said that they would wait a minimum of six months before feeling comfortable enough to take a vacation of any appreciable length, while 21 percent of respondents would wait at least an entire year.

Wedding Weariness a Top PTO Regret

Among those who expressed frustration over their use of vacation this year, one in three (30 percent) cited a lack of spontaneity – not taking enough last-minute getaways – as their top regret. The same percentage complained about spending too much vacation time engaged with work.

A full quarter (26 percent) of respondents reported frustration at having to spend too much of their work vacation on "other people's events," such as weddings and bachelor/bachelorette parties. This is a consistent complaint; four in ten American workers reported the same wedding resentment in the 2018 Priceline Work-Life Balance Report.

Last-minute getaways are increasingly popular, which may explain why so many working Americans report frustration at missing them. In fact, last-minute breaks are now among the most common ways Americans travel. Given the ubiquity of travel apps, and millions of new alternative lodging options such as [private homes](#) and apartments, Americans now book vacations closer to their date of departure than they once did.

2019 News and Events Spur Desire for Escape

When specifically asked how the "news and events of 2019" impacted their vacation desires, respondents cited a need for escape and relaxation. More than one in three (34 percent) working Americans cited "relaxation" as their top goal for time off, the most common response.

When asked how they did use vacation time in 2019, respondents said the most popular trip was a "staycation," either resting at home or exploring their local region. Beach vacations were the second most-popular use of PTO (27 percent), followed closely by a vacation within the United States (26 percent). The fourth most popular use of paid vacation, and the most frustrating, was "special occasion travel," such as weddings (20 percent).

Vacation Cost a Concern, But There's Good Holiday News

One in four Americans report that they failed to take a work vacation simply because they felt it would be too expensive. Approximately the same percentage of respondents voiced that worry in 2018.

There is good news on the holiday price front for Americans with remaining vacation time, however. A Priceline analysis showed that hotel prices during Thanksgiving and Christmas are expected to either remain flat or decline. Hotel prices on New Year's Eve should follow the same pattern – either remaining stable or declining. And Priceline will be offering "[Express Deal](#)" hotels that are available for up to 60 percent off, which can help defray cost concerns for those who need to use any remaining vacation days before year end.

Last-minute hotel rates also regularly yield particularly good value: hotels compete for business every day, and as each day progresses, hotels grow more competitive, and prices can fall as a result. The [Priceline app](#) spotlights "Late Night Rates" every evening at 9pm, presenting the best hotel deals available nearby.

Working Americans' Favorite Fib: The 24-Hour Flu

Even if working Americans fail to use the full allotment of approved vacation time, many do supplement that time with periodic "sick" days. More than one in three respondents admit to having "pretended to be sick" to steal a day away from work. And more than a quarter (27 percent) report having "made up a random story" to secure a free day.

The practice of faking illness is most prevalent among the young. Generation Z workers were likeliest to admit to it, with more than four in ten (43 percent) saying they've done so. As workers age, they report a decreasing likelihood to lie to their employers – 36 percent of Millennials reporting doing so, then 30 percent of Generation X, and only 22 percent of Baby Boomers.

The 2020 Work-Life Resolution

Last year, the Priceline Work-Life Balance Report found that nearly six in ten (59 percent) of respondents intended to use more paid vacation time in 2019. This year, a full 66 percent of American workers say they plan to use ALL of their time off in 2020. The 2020 Priceline Work-Life Balance Report will reveal how many kept that promise.

Methodology

These results are based on an online survey of 1,000 consumers, aged 18+ who are currently full-time employed. The survey ran from September 30 to October 4, 2019. The results are nationally representative across gender, income and geographic markets in the United States.

About Priceline

[Priceline](#), part of Booking Holdings Inc. [NASDAQ: BKNG], is a world leader in travel deals. Priceline offers exclusive discounts on hotels, flights, alternative accommodations, rental cars, cruises and packages. We offer more than a million lodging properties, helping travelers find the right accommodation at the right price. We negotiate great deals every day, and put our best pricing on the Priceline app. Our deep discounts on hotels, flights, rental cars and more are also exclusively distributed through our partnership brand, Priceline Partner Network. With free cancellation for many rates, 24-hour customer assistance and the option for both pre-paid and pay upon arrival reservations, Priceline helps millions of travelers be there for the moments that matter. For us, every trip is a big deal.

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