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# Extending Business Travel into Leisure Time – Bleisure Study

North America-Based Business Travelers

June 2017

Please note this is an abstract and only includes selected excerpts. The full report includes 24 pages of detailed analysis including several charts, graphs, and related tables of information. GBTA Members please login into [GBTA Hub](#) to access the full report.

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In partnership with:

**Hilton**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Study overview

This study, conducted in partnership with Hilton Hotels & Resorts, is based on a survey of 675 North American business travelers and their experiences taking “bleisure trips” in which they extend work travel for leisure. Key questions include:

- 1) How many business travelers have extended a work trip for leisure in the past year?
- 2) What traits make travelers more likely to take bleisure trips?
- 3) How long do bleisure trips typically last?
- 4) Which types of lodging accommodations do bleisure travelers use? Do they stay at the same place for their entire trip?

While answering these questions, the study considers the implications of these answers for managed corporate travel.

### Bleisure travel: definition and context

Last year, the GBTA Foundation released a report finding that 36% of U.S.-based business travelers had extended at least one work trip for leisure in the past year.<sup>1</sup> This practice, called “bleisure travel,” has remained a hot topic. This largely reflects the rise of the Millennial business traveler. In a study released last year, the CWT Institute found that the youngest business travelers—ages 20 to 25—take bleisure trips at more than twice the rate of the overall business traveler population.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, bleisure travel may increase as a result of changing corporate culture. Many companies have invested heavily in employee well-being. They have incorporated leisure into the workday – providing on-site gyms, lounge areas, and games, and in some cases even granting unlimited time off. In this context, employees may have greater flexibility to take bleisure trips.

Employees extended 7% of work trips for leisure in 2015, about the same rate as in 2011, according to the CWT Institute study.<sup>3</sup> Yet this figure could rise in the future, especially as Millennials travel for work more frequently.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **In the past year, one-third (37%) of North American business travelers extended a work trip for leisure.** Millennials (48%) did so at a higher rate than Gen-X travelers (33%) and Baby Boomers (23%).
- **In the past year, the most common reason why business travelers *did not* extend a work trip for leisure is that they *did not have time* (58%).** Less common reasons include company policy (18%), undesirable locations (17%), and cost (14%).

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<sup>1</sup> GBTA Foundation, *GBTA Business Travel Sentiment Index™, in Partnership with American Express®* (Alexandria, VA: GBTA Foundation, 2016), 31.

<sup>2</sup> CWT Institute, *A Quantitative Look at the Bleisure Phenomenon* (Carlson Wagonlit Travel, 2016), 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

- **Business travelers are more likely to extend a work trip for leisure in the future when they have done so in the recent past.** When rating the probability that they *would* take a bleisure trip on a 10-point scale, almost half (46%) who have taken one in the past year give a rating of eight or higher, indicating they are likely to take another one soon. Of those who did not take one in the past year, more than half (56%) give a rating of three or lower, indicating they are unlikely to take one.
- **When business travelers extend their work trips for leisure, they typically extend them for a short period.** While ninety percent extend them for more than one day, only one one-quarter (23%) extend them for more than three days. On average, travelers typically extend their trips for three days.
- **When taking bleisure trips, travelers overwhelmingly stay at hotels for both the business and leisure segments of their trip.** On their last bleisure trip, 91% of business travelers stayed at a traditional or extended stay hotel for the business portion, while 81% stayed at a hotel for the leisure portion.
- **Travelers rarely change lodging on bleisure trips.** On their last bleisure trip, 82% of business travelers stayed “at the same place for both the business and leisure portions of [their] trip.”

## METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted of 675 business travelers in the United States (460) and Canada (215). The survey was conducted by the GBTA Foundation using a business traveler panel. Fielding took place from February 26, 2017, to March 6, 2017.

Respondents qualified if they (1) were at least 22 years-old, (2) were employed or self-employed, on a full-time or part-time basis, and (3) had traveled for business at least once in the past year. After 207 completes were collected in the “soft launch,” respondents qualified if they met these three criteria *and* had extended at least one work trip for leisure in the past year.

Six hundred and seventy-five business travelers completed the survey. Quotas were set for age, gender, and country to obtain a sufficient number of respondents from each demographic and to mirror the business traveller population, thereby allowing comparison between groups.

After sampling, data was weighted further to approximate the business traveler population in North America. However, weighting was not applied in two scenarios: (1) when estimating the share of business travelers who had taken a bleisure trip in the past year, and (2) when reporting data on non-bleisure travelers. This is because data on non-bleisure travelers was only collected during the soft launch when weighting could not be applied.

The table on p. 21 shows the weighted age and gender distribution of respondents *who had taken at least one bleisure trip in the past year*.

Results were tested for significant differences between comparison groups at the 95% confidence level. When found, the significantly higher result is marked with the letter that corresponds to the significantly lower result. Comparison groups include:

- **Age:** 22 to 35, 36 to 54, 55 or older
- **Annual income:** Less than \$50,000, \$50,000 to less than \$100,000, \$100,000 or more

- **Children under 18 at home:** Yes, No
- **Number of “personal time off” (PTO) days annually:** 10 or less, 10 to 20, more than 20
- **Number of business trips in the past year:** 1 to 3, 4 to 11, 12 or more

## BLEISURE FREQUENCY

### How often do business travelers extend work trips for leisure?

In the past year, one-third (37%) of North American business travelers extended a work trip for leisure, similar to the share (36%) obtained in a 2015 survey of U.S.-based business travelers, the *Business Travel Sentiment Index™*, conducted by the GBTA Foundation in partnership with American Express.<sup>4</sup>

### Who extends work trips for leisure and who does not?

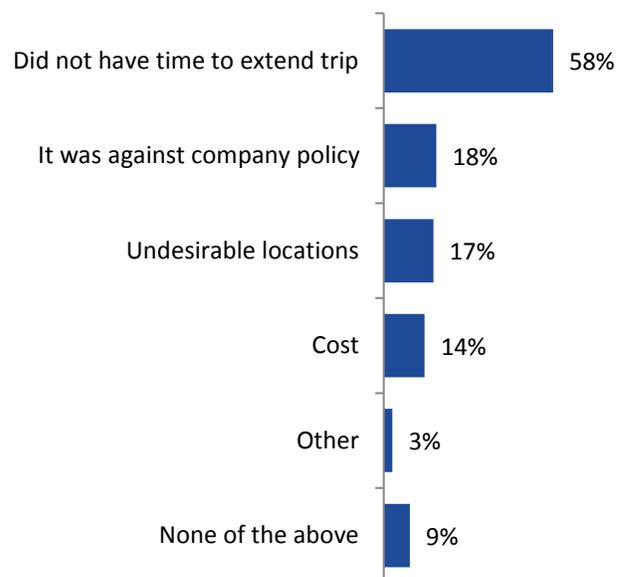
A key study objective was to discover *who* extends work trips for leisure. Is there a particular type of person—a “bleisure traveler”—who habitually extends trips? Or do a variety of business travelers—with different demographic traits and travel habits—extend work trips in different situations?

It is difficult to find consistent answers to these questions. On the one hand, when business travelers have *not* extended a work trip for leisure, it is rarely because they do not want to—or cannot afford to—explore the destination they are visiting. In the past year, the most common reason why business travelers *did not* extend a trip is because they *did not have time* (58%). Less common reasons include *company policy* (18%), *undesirable locations* (17%), and *cost* (14%).

On the other hand, business travelers are much more likely to take a bleisure trip in the future when they have taken one in the recent past. When rating the probability that they *would* take a bleisure trip on a 10-point scale, almost half (46%) who have taken one in the past year give a rating of eight or higher, indicating they are likely to take another one soon (see next page). Of those who did not take one in the past year, more than half (56%) give a rating of three or lower, indicating they are unlikely to take one.

### Why Did Business Travelers Not Extend a Work Trip for Leisure?

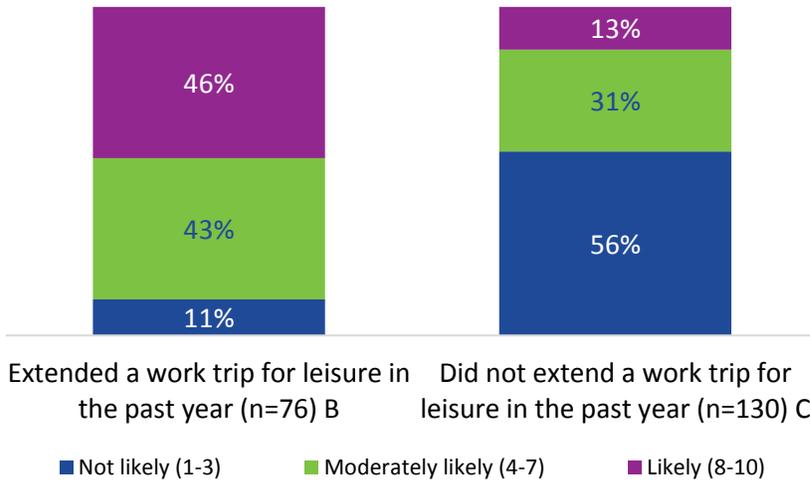
-among those who did not extend one in the past year (n=130)



Q. How likely are you to extend a business trip for leisure? **Note: Question only displayed to respondents who did not extend a business trip for leisure in the past year.**

<sup>4</sup> GBTA Foundation, *GBTA Business Travel Sentiment Index™*, in Partnership with American Express® (Alexandria, VA: GBTA Foundation, 2016).

## How Likely Are Business Travelers to Extend a Work Trip For Leisure? -rated on a 10-point scale



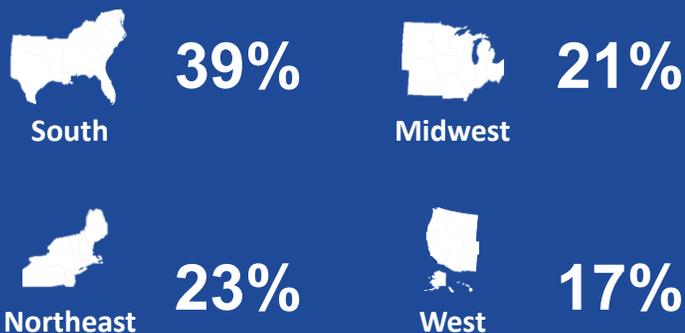
Q. How likely are you to extend a business trip for leisure?

The next page shows demographic traits of travelers who have taken at least one bleisure trip in the past year. It shows that bleisure travelers are a diverse group. They are spread across the U.S. and Canada, have different types of positions, work for companies of different sizes, and include frequent and infrequent travelers.

On average, these travelers took 7 work trips in the past year, earn \$79,000 annually, and work at companies with 950 employees. They occupy middle management positions (42%) at a slightly higher rate than entry-level (27%) and senior leadership/C-level positions (31%). In addition, almost three out of five (58%) bleisure travelers have children at home. These figures may be slightly different from the general business travel population.

# Characteristics of Business Travelers Who Extended at Least One Work Trip for Leisure in the Past Year

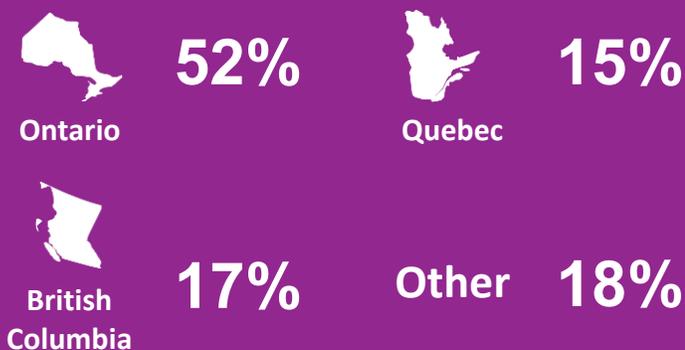
## U.S. Census Region



## Position



## Canadian Province



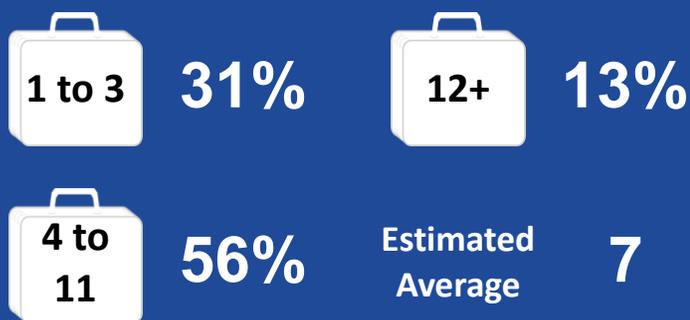
## Children at Home?



58%

Yes

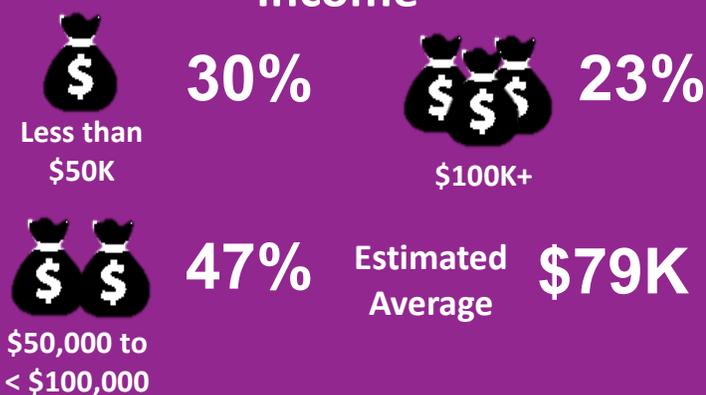
## # of Business Trips in Past Year



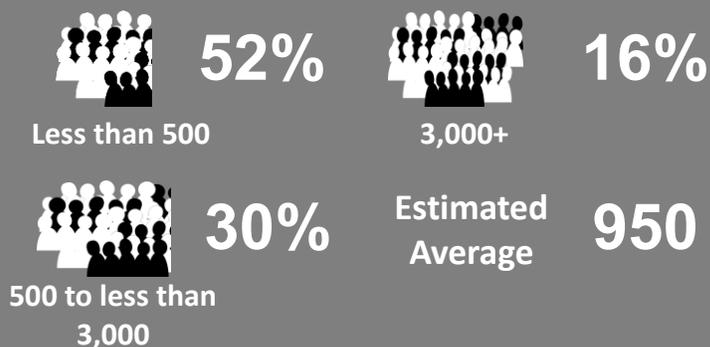
## Employment Status



## Income



## # of Employees at Organization



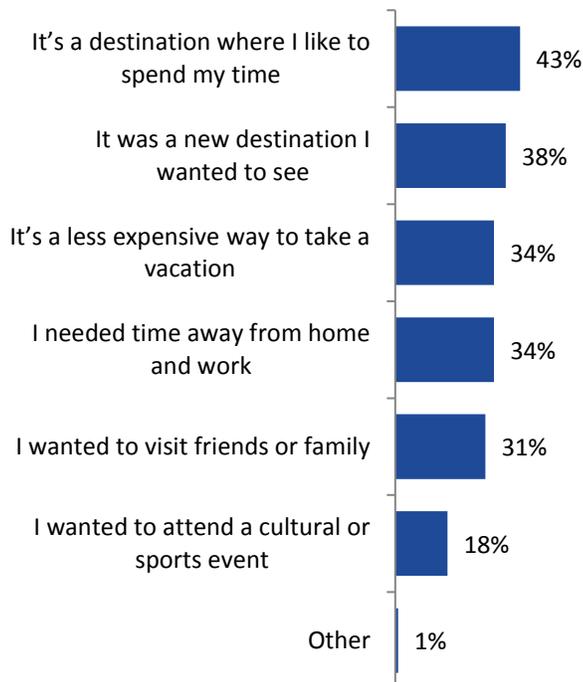
When it comes to group comparisons, Millennials are more likely to take bleisure trips, compared to older travelers. It is not clear whether this reflects unique preferences or transitory life events. Do Millennials take more bleisure trips than other generations did in their 20s and 30s? Or will Millennials take much fewer bleisure trips in later years? It seems possible that Millennials are actually different. One observation in particular reinforces this view: When business travelers have children, they are equally likely to take a bleisure trip, compared to those who do not have them, as shown in the graph at right. Thus, when Millennials have families in greater numbers, they may still take bleisure trips.

## BLEISURE PRACTICES

### Why do business travelers take bleisure trips?

In the past year, business travelers have taken bleisure trips for a variety of reasons. The most common are to visit *a destination where [they] like to spend [their] time* (43%) or a *new destination [they] wanted to see* (38%).

### Reasons for Extending Business Trips for Leisure (n=545)

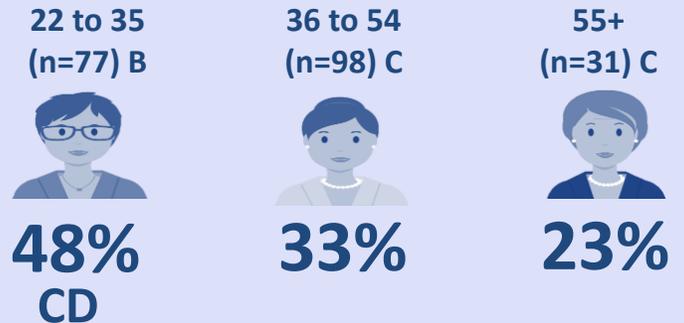


Q. Which of the following are reasons why you decided to extend your business trip to take personal time off? Please select all that apply.

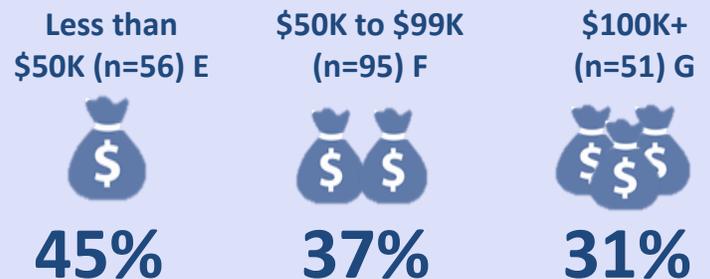
## Share who have extended a business trip for leisure in the past year

### Group Comparisons

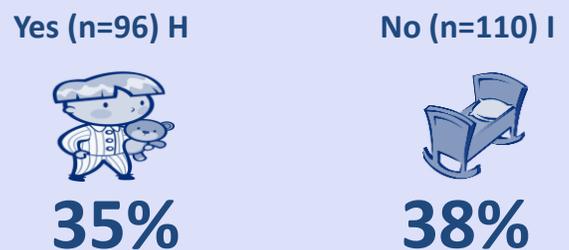
#### Age



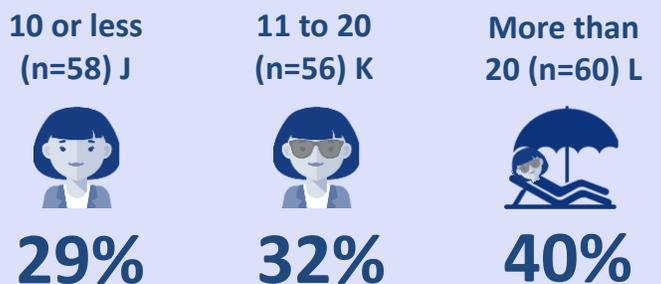
#### Annual Income



#### Children Under 18?



#### Number of PTO Days Annually



Compared with Millennials, older travelers are more likely to stay at the same place for both portions of the trip. High frequency travelers are also more likely to stay at the same place.

The most common reason why business travelers stayed at the same place for both portions of their last bleisure trip was *convenience* (71%).

## Share Who Stayed at the Same Place on Both the Business and Leisure Portions of Last Bleisure Trip

### Group Comparisons

#### Age

22 to 35  
(n=305) B



78%

36 to 54  
(n=200) C



86%  
B

55+  
(n=40) D



88%

#### Annual Income

Less than  
\$50K (n=156) E



83%

\$50K to \$99K  
(n=252) F



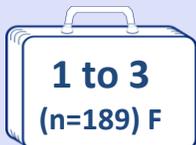
80%

\$100K+  
(n=127) G

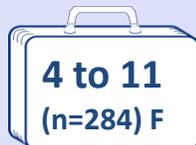


86%

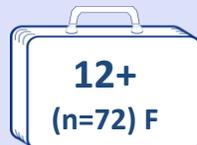
#### # of Business Trips in Past Year



81%



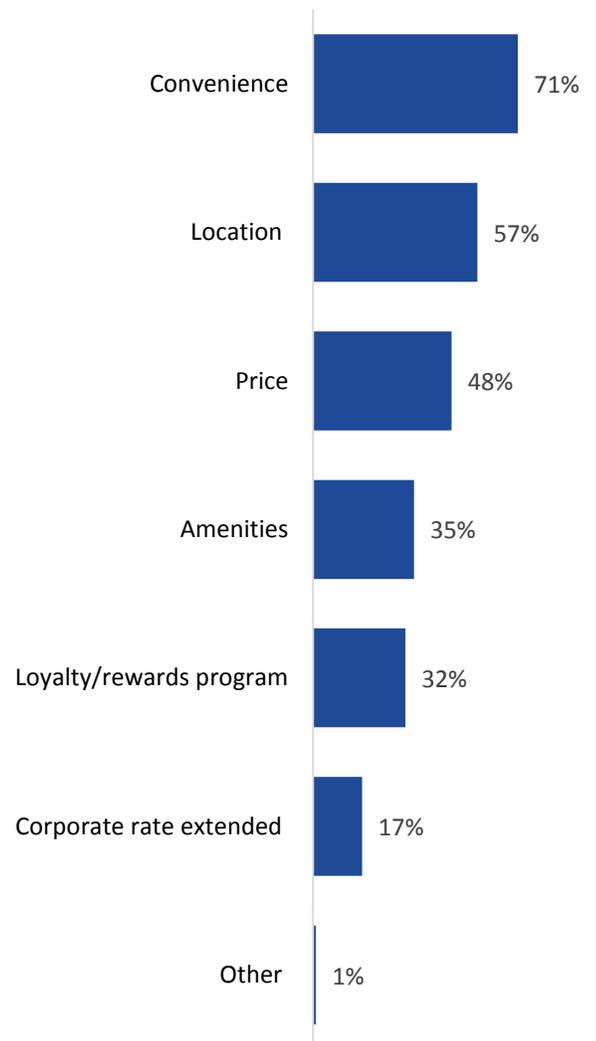
81%



91%

## Why Did Business Travelers Choose to Stay at the Same Place for the Leisure Part of Their Trip?

-among respondents who stayed at the same place for both the business and leisure portion (n=439)

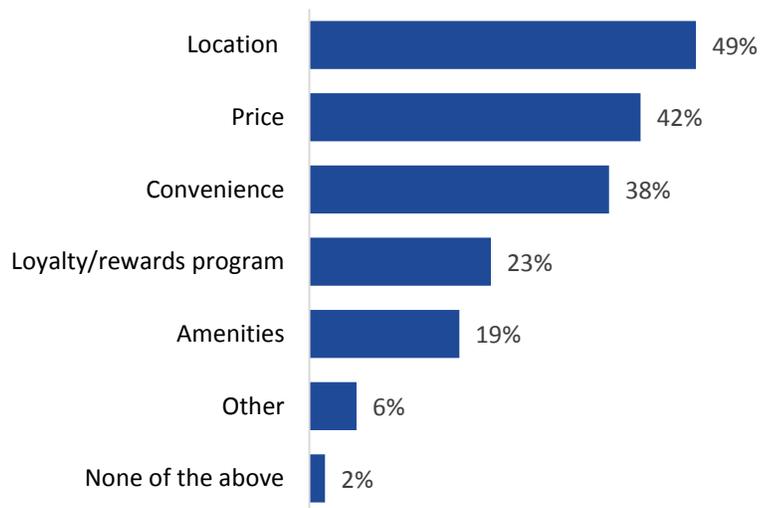


Q. Why did you chose to stay at the same place for the leisure part of your trip? Please select all that apply.

As shown earlier, only 18% of travelers changed accommodations between the business and leisure portions of their last bleisure trip. The most common reasons why they did so were *location* (49%), *price* (42%), and *convenience* (38%). These reasons relate to circumstances of their *trip* and not characteristics of their *hotel*. When it comes to hotel characteristics, less than one-quarter of these travelers mention *loyalty/rewards program* (23%) or *amenities* (19%) as a reason why they changed accommodations.

### Why Did Business Travelers Choose to Stay at a Different Place for the Leisure Part of Their Trip?

-among respondents who did not stay at the same place for both the business and leisure portion (n=104)



Q. Why did you chose to stay at a different place for the leisure part of your trip? Please select all that apply.

### Lodging decision factors

One key study objective was to determine how travelers choose lodging on bleisure trips. Do they consider the same factors they use when choosing lodging for business-only trips? Do they search for hotels using the same channels?

#### Decision factor #1 – Price

As shown earlier, an overwhelming majority of business travelers (82%) stayed at the same place for both the business and leisure portions of their last bleisure trip. Almost half (48%) of these travelers mention *price* (48%) as one of the reasons why (see p. 13). In addition, when business travelers changed accommodations, they commonly mention price (42%) as a reason why (see above).

Clearly, price has an impact on lodging decisions. Yet it not only impacts whether travelers *change* accommodations during their bleisure trip. It can also influence whether they extend a work trip for leisure at all, and if they do extend one, which hotels they choose in the first place—not only for the leisure portion of their trip but potentially for the business portion too.

# RESPONDENT PROFILE

## Respondent Profile: Demographics

### Country (n=545)



91%



9%

### Gender (n=545)

Female



45%

Male



55%

### Age (n=545)

22 to 35



51%

36 to 54



42%

55 or older



7%

Estimated Average: 37 years old

### Income (n=535)

Less than \$50,000



30%

\$50,000 to < \$100,000



47%

\$100,00+



23%

Estimated Average: \$79,000

### Position (n=545)

C-level 16%

Senior leadership 15%

Middle management 42%

Entry level Position/Management 27%

### Children at home? (n=545)

Yes



58%

### Organization Size (n=545)

Less than 500 employees



52%

500 to less than 3,000



30%

3,000 or more employees



16%

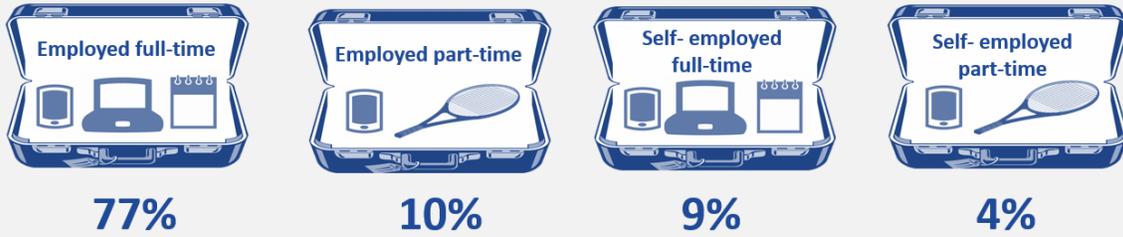
Not sure

2%

Estimated Median: 950 employees

## Respondent Profile: Business Travel Habits/Characteristics

### Employment Status (n=545)



### Number of Business Trips in Past Year (n=545)

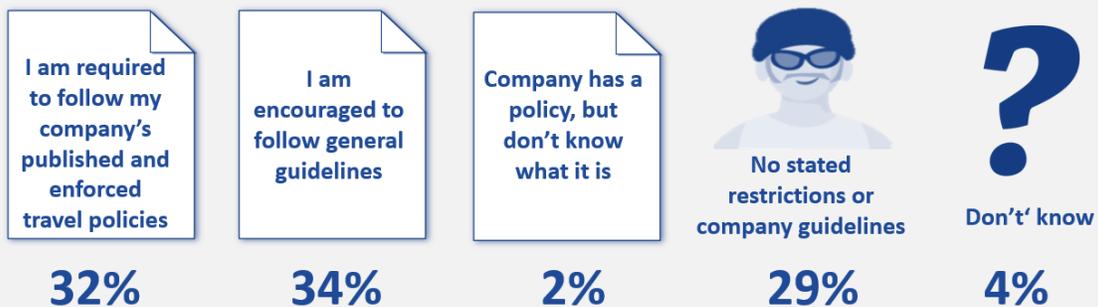


Estimated Average: 7 trips

### Number of PTO Days Annually (n=470)



### Travel Policy (n=545)



## ABOUT THE GBTA FOUNDATION



The GBTA Foundation is the education and research arm of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), the world's premier business travel and corporate meetings organization. Collectively, GBTA's 9,000-plus members manage over \$345 billion of global business travel and meetings expenditures annually. GBTA provides its network of 21,000 business and government travel and meetings managers, as well as travel service providers, with networking events, news, education & professional development, research, and advocacy. The foundation was established in 1997 to support GBTA's members and the industry as a whole. As the leading education and research foundation in the business travel industry, the GBTA Foundation seeks to fund initiatives to advance the business travel profession. The GBTA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For ore information, see [gbta.org](http://gbta.org) and [gbta.org/foundation](http://gbta.org/foundation).

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