

# WHAT COMES WITH LOYALTY

An insights report by U.S. News & World Report's Marketing and Business Intelligence Teams and Best Western.

U.S. News

BW

Best Western  
Hotels & Resorts

# CONTENTS

- 3. Purpose
- 4. The Travelers
- 7. The Trips
- 9. Getting to the Points
- 12. More Ways Than One
- 14. Brands Matter
- 16. Conclusion
- 18. How it All Went Down





# PURPOSE

U.S. News & World Report's Marketing and Business Intelligence teams conducted a co-branded survey with Best Western Hotels, for a close look at how travelers use hotel loyalty programs, plus their general preferences and behaviors when on the road. The goal was to gain insight into how consumers view such programs while identifying areas programs could enrich the member experience, and the co-branded survey is [the second consecutive one](#) from these two teams. Like last year, the 2018 survey revealed that loyalty programs are a significant, worthwhile component of the traveler experience.

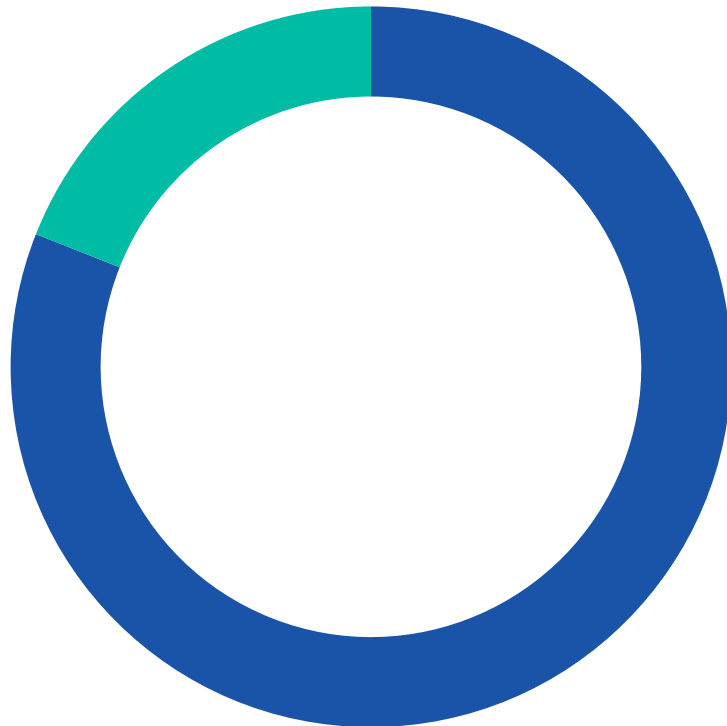


# THE TRAVELERS

Here's a snapshot of the 1,350 survey participants.

# THE TRAVELERS

They're a mix of ages, traveler-types and nationalities.



**81%**  
Of respondents  
were from the U.S.

**19%**  
Of respondents  
were from Canada.



**55%**  
of respondents  
are employed  
full-time



**69%**  
have children



**73%**  
are married or  
in a domestic  
partnership

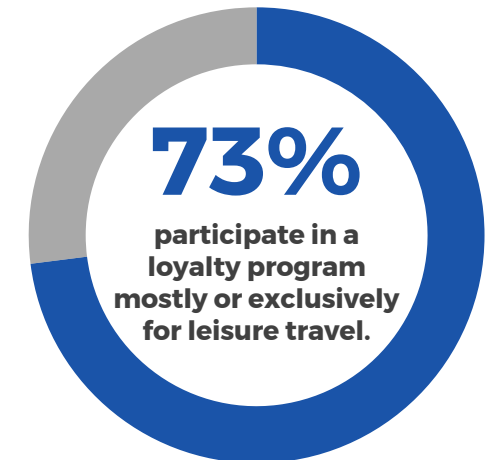
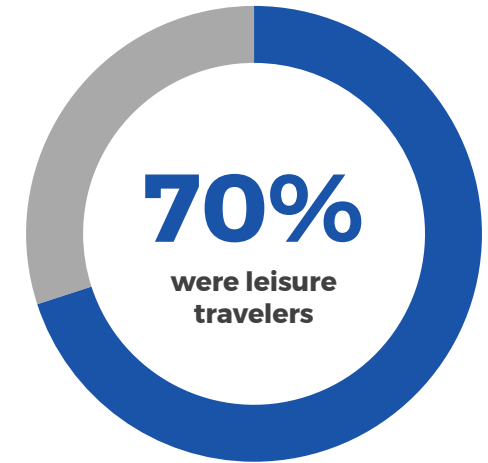
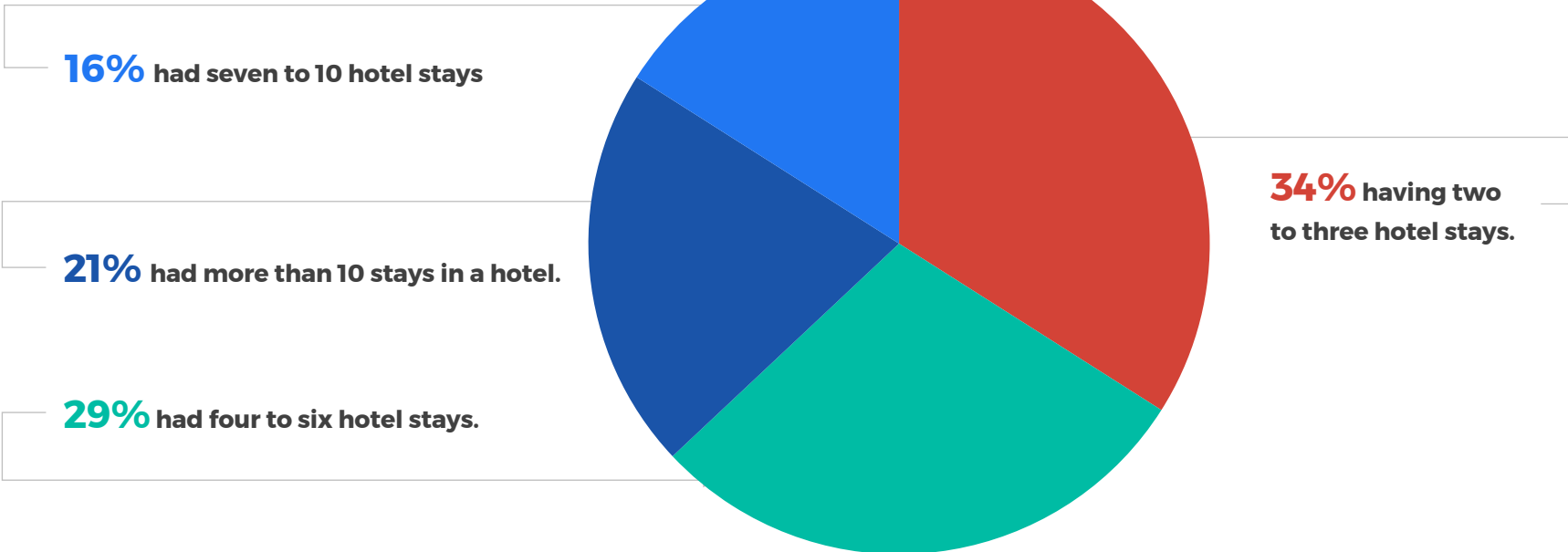
## THEY'RE LOYALTY PROGRAM REWARDS USERS:

All 1,000 of the general population participants belonged to a rewards program. And to supplement the responses, an additional 350 active Best Western Rewards Program members were added in.

# THE TRAVELERS

They travel often.

All survey respondents had traveled within the last calendar year



**41%**

The polled **Best Western Rewards members** had more hotel stays: 41 percent of those respondents had more than 10 hotel stays in the last year. In comparison, only 14 percent of the main sample had as many hotel stays.



Toronto (NOTL)

ETHIOPIA

RIO DE JANEIRO

Lexington →

TANANARIVO

ARGENTINA

Berlin

SAINTE-CATHERINE

PRAGUE

# THE TRIPS

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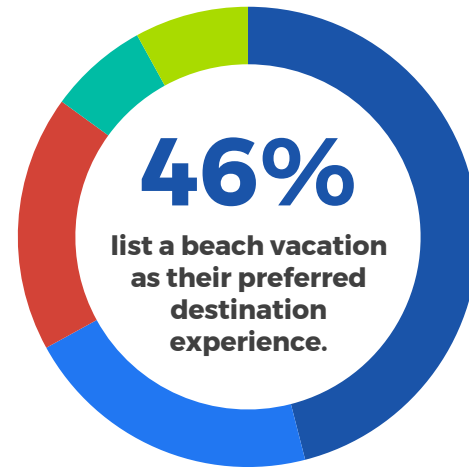
This year's survey also analyzed a potpourri of traveler behaviors and preferences.

**21%** prefer a city trip

**18%** like the national parks

**7%** prefer amusement parks

**8%** listed "other" as their preferred vacation, which included: Hunting and fishing trips, golf vacations, ski trips and cruises.



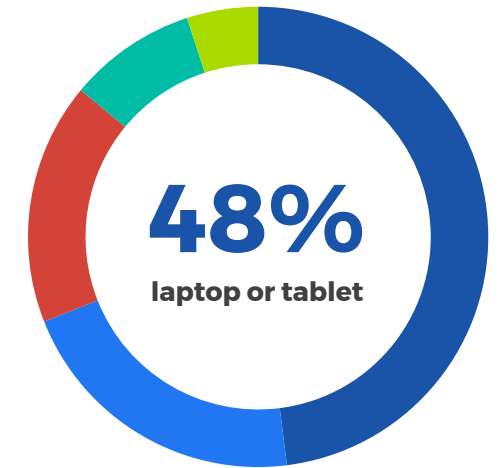
Other than a cell phone, these were the top items respondents said they couldn't travel without:

**21%** skin and hair products

**17%** reading material

**9%** pillow

**5%** listed "other" as the items they couldn't vacation without. Write-ins of specific must-haves included: Cameras, credit cards, headphones, good walking shoes, and...spouses.



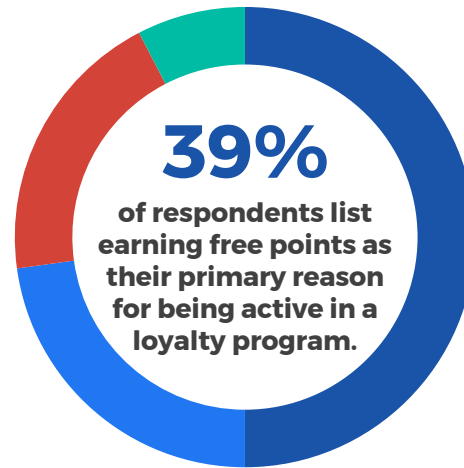


# GETTING TO THE POINTS

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**Survey participants use loyalty program points as the currency they are: We found...**

**39%** of respondents list earning free points as their primary reason for being active in a loyalty program. **16%** are most interested in their programs' discounted rates and **12%** are most swayed by point redemption options.



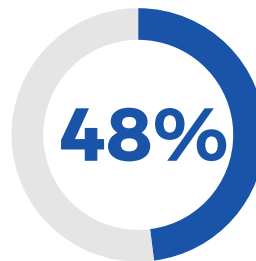
**98%**

**use earned points to book hotel stays.**

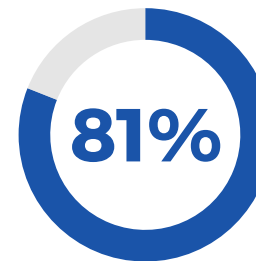
For two years in a row, loyalty program members' biggest grievance is points that expire. This is followed by the time it takes to move up a tier and blackout dates.

## ABOUT BEST WESTERN

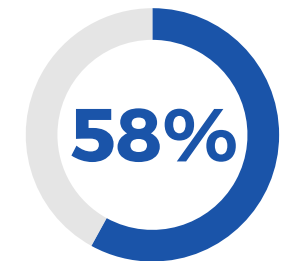
Respondents prefer Best Western Rewards over any other polled program, plus they find it easier to redeem Best Western Rewards points than any other polled program. Most noted that Best Western Rewards' features make the program either somewhat or much better than other loyalty programs.



**of Best Western members are saving their points to redeem for a big trip.**



**of Best Western Rewards members use their hotel loyalty program points to book at least some of the time.**



**of Best Western members are very satisfied with the treatment they receive at a hotel where they're a loyalty member.**

# GETTING TO THE POINTS

Survey respondents said their **top travel purposes** for using their points are ...

**No. 1 Family Vacation**

**No. 2 Holiday Travel/To See Family**

**No. 3 Bucket-List Trips**

**No. 4 Solo Trips**

**No. 5 A Friends' Getaway**

**Honorable Mentions:** Sporting Events, Romantic Getaways, Culinary Tours and College Visits



# **MORE WAYS THAN ONE**

# MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Travelers like the opportunity to earn points with more than a hotel stay. More say receiving bonus or milestone points based on booking frequency is their favorite way to earn points. This is followed by earning points for deferring housekeeping and earning points while dining.

**51%**

**of the respondents are hoarding those hard, many-ways-earned points to take a big trip.**

**And when respondents were asked to describe their big-trip plans, they said ...**

“Using [the] points to go to San Diego to watch the Angels and Padres play.”

“A big trip with my adult daughter to a foreign country.”

“Taking a long trip on my Harley Davidson and seeing more of our country.”

“A stay before and after a cruise in Florida!”

“I would like to go back to the Oregon Coast someday soon.”





# **BRANDS MATTER**

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Participating in a rewards program heavily influences the hotel choices its members make.

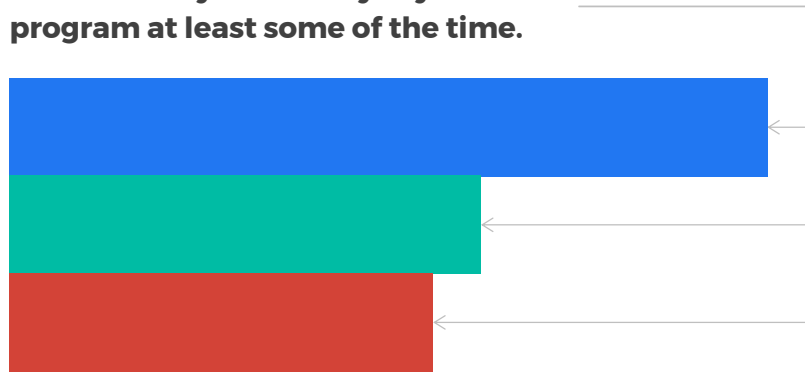
**97%**

of respondents' hotel choice are influenced by a hotel loyalty program at least some of the time.

49% most of the time

25% all of the time

23% some of the time



When booking a room with a loyalty program,

**41%**

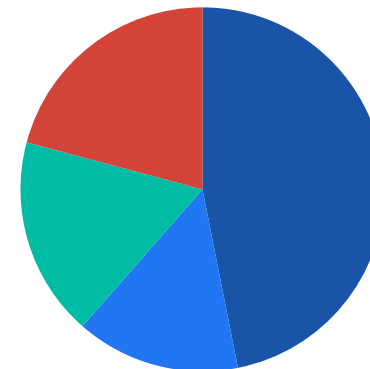
of respondents cared most about staying at a hotel brand they can trust and that offers great service.

**8%**

of Best Western Rewards members who participated said their hotel choice is influenced by a hotel loyalty program at least some of the time.

**45%**

of Best Western members care most about staying at a hotel brand they can trust.



14% are concerned with the points they're going to be able to earn with that hotel stay.

17% say it's the amount of points needed to earn a free night.

20% of respondents said having abundant locations from which to stay in is the loyalty program feature that matters the most.



# CONCLUSION

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## Loyalty programs are a significant, worthwhile component of the traveler experience.

- 98% of respondents report their hotel choice is influenced by a loyalty program at least some of the time.
- 54% are very satisfied with the treatment they receive at hotels where they're a loyalty member.
- 70% of Best Western Rewards members were aware that their program points don't expire. Seventy-four percent reported being more likely to book with Best Western because of that feature.

## Program members are most interested in earning and using points toward lodging, not activities.

- 82% use program points to book hotel stays at least some of the time.
- Other than hotel stays, respondents' preferred way to earn points is through bonus/milestone points for booking frequency.
- Guaranteed room availability on free night redemptions is the most appealing new feature for the Best Western Rewards program.

## Consumers are thoughtful and specific on how, when and why they travel.

- Most respondents reported planning to take more trips in 2018 than they did last year.
- 51% are planning to redeem their loyalty program points for a big trip.
- The No. 1 travel purpose for which they'd like to use their points is a vacation with family, followed by trips to see family.





# HOW IT ALL WENT DOWN

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This is a report prepared by Best Western and the U.S. News & World Report marketing and business intelligence teams regarding hotel travel rewards programs. The U.S. News editorial staff was not involved in the creation of the survey or preparation of the report, and the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. News editorial staff. U.S. News and Best Western used a third-party survey administrator to poll more than 1300 travelers online between late April and early May 2018. One-thousand participants were from a general population, all of which had stayed at least two times in a hotel in the past 12 months. To supplement the responses, there was then an over-sample of 350 respondents who are active Best Western Rewards members. Those members were solicited via email to participate.

