

Airline Passenger Travel



OmniStats



Bureau of Transportation
Statistics



US Department of
Transportation

Based on data from the *Omnibus Household Survey*,¹ the Bureau of Transportation Statistics estimates that about one out of every three (74 million) adult US residents² flew at least once on a commercial airline during the 12 months prior to the survey.

When asked to describe their most recent flight, about 23 percent of travelers reported that the flight was for business or was work-related. Proportionally, more men (32 percent) than women (13 percent) reported that their most recent flight was for business or was work-related.³

Four out of five airline travelers (79 percent) reported that, for their most recent flight, their seat was in the coach or economy section⁴ of the aircraft and three out of five (59 percent) reported that their ticket carried restrictions (e.g. length of stay, day of travel, penalty for changes).

About three out of five airline passengers (62 percent) obtained a boarding pass for their most recent flight at the ticket counter while 13 percent used curbside check-in, 12 percent used a self-service kiosk, 6 percent used the Internet, and 4 percent obtained one at the departure gate.

On average, travelers reported arriving at the airport about one hour and 43 minutes before their scheduled departure time. Almost nine out of ten passengers (87 percent) reported spending 30 minutes or less at security checkpoints. The average time spent to clear a security checkpoint was 18 minutes.⁵ Over half of airline passengers (53 percent) felt that the amount of time they spent at the security checkpoint was about what they expected while 37 percent reported their wait time was less than expected and 10 percent reported the wait was more than expected. For those passengers who checked in at the

ticket counter, the average time spent waiting in line at the counter was 22 minutes.

The majority of passengers (83 percent) felt the thoroughness of the screening process was adequate and 74 percent reported that screening procedures were consistent at departure airports. Four out of five passengers (82 percent) reported having a moderate amount, a great deal, or total confidence in the ability of the passenger screeners to keep air travel secure from individuals with hostile intentions. About four out of five passengers reported that they were satisfied with the courtesy of the airport screeners (81 percent) and with their overall experience at the security checkpoint (79 percent).

Regarding the changes in passenger screening procedures since September 11, 2001 and the impact of those changes on the inclination to travel via commercial airlines, 25 percent of adults reported that the changes have made them less inclined to fly, 68 percent reported that the changes have had no impact on their inclination to fly, and 8 percent reported that they are now more inclined to fly. A significantly higher percentage of women (29 percent) than men (20 percent) reported that they are less inclined to use commercial airlines due to changes in passenger screening procedures.⁶

About one out of five adult US residents (18 percent) reported that they had never flown on a commercial airline. Compared to flyers, non-flyers were much more likely to

- report having a disability or health impairment
- be under 25 years of age
- have no more than a high school education
- have a yearly household income of less than \$30,000 .

¹ Results are averaged over 4 months of data-February, April, June, and August 2003.

² Non-institutionalized US residents, 18 years or older.

³ Significant at $p < .05$.

⁴ Data for one major airline showed that, for those planes with separate seating sections, about 85% of the seats were in the economy or coach section.

⁵ August results showed a significant decline to 14 minutes; however, additional data are necessary to determine if this decline represents a trend change.

⁶ Significant at $p < .05$.

<i>Omnibus Household Survey</i> Questions used in this report	Results	Margin of Error	Population Estimates	Sample
In what month and year was your most recent commercial airline flight?		+/-	(in millions)	
Less than 3 months ago	20%	1.47	36.2	745
More than 3 months but less than one year ago	19%	1.48	34.8	683
One year ago	2%	0.47	3.1	62
More than one year ago	41%	1.87	74.6	1,460
Have never flown on a commercial airline	18%	1.52	32.0	552
	100%			
<i>The remaining questions were only asked of passengers who had flown in the 12 months prior to the survey (n=1,490).</i>				
Was the primary purpose of your trip business or work related?				
Yes	23%	2.33	16.7	363
No	77%		57.3	1,126
	100%			
Still thinking of your most recent flight, in which of the following sections was your seat located?				
Economy or coach (also called main cabin)	79%	2.37	57.8	1,167
First class section	5%	1.18	3.7	85
No sections on the plane-all seats in same section	15%	2.12	10.9	207
Other	1%	0.54	0.8	17
	100%			
Did the price paid for the airline ticket carry any restrictions? For example, did you have to book your trip two weeks in advance, were you required to stay overnight on a Friday or Saturday, or were you prohibited from changing your ticket without paying a penalty?				
Yes	59%	3.04	38.7	800
No	41%		27.1	513
	100%			
How soon before your most recent flight did you arrive at the airport?				
30 minutes or less	3%	0.97	2.0	44
31-60 minutes	24%	2.44	17.4	354
61-90 minutes	23%	2.41	17.2	358
91-120 minutes	37%	2.77	27.2	550
More than 120 minutes	13%	2.11	9.6	176
	100%			
Average arrival time before departure = 103 minutes		2.51		
How long did you wait in line to check-in at the ticket counter for your most recent flight? [This question was asked for the first time in August 2003.]				
Less than 15 minutes	37%	5.57	26.1	145
15-30 minutes	47%	5.99	33.1	160
More than 30 minutes	16%	4.59	11.2	47
	100%			
Average wait at ticket counter = 22 minutes		2.52		

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to independent rounding. Response values for "Don't know" and "Refused" are not included in the table.

Source: US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Omnibus Household Survey*. Data from the February, April, June, and August 2003 surveys have been combined. Data cover activities for the month prior to the survey.

<i>Omnibus Household Survey</i> Questions used in this report	Results	Margin of Error	Population Estimates	Sample
And again thinking of your most recent flight, where were you issued your boarding pass? [This question was asked for the first time in August 2003.]		+/-	(in millions)	
Curbside baggage check-in	13%	3.76	9.8	51
Ticket counter	62%	5.55	46.6	233
Self-service check-in kiosk	12%	3.71	9.0	47
Departure gate	4%	2.15	3.1	17
Internet	6%	2.78	4.5	20
Other	3%	1.93	2.2	11
	100%			
How long did you wait in line to go through the passenger screening checkpoint for your most recent flight? The checkpoint we are referring to is the only one where you must walk through a metal detector and your carry-on items are x-rayed.				
Less than 15 minutes	50%	2.92	36.4	746
15-30 minutes	37%	2.84	27.2	543
More than 30 minutes	13%	1.99	9.2	172
	100%			
Average wait at security checkpoint = 18 minutes		1.18		
How did you feel about the amount of time spent waiting in line at the passenger screening checkpoint?				
Less than you expected	37%	2.81	27.6	557
About what you expected	53%	2.89	38.9	788
More than you expected	10%	1.75	7.2	134
	100%			
How would you rate the thoroughness of the screening process?				
Inadequate	10%	1.75	7.2	145
Adequate	83%	2.25	60.9	1,233
Excessive	8%	1.60	5.5	103
	100%			
How would you describe your level of confidence in the ability of the passenger screeners to keep air travel secure from individuals with hostile intentions? Would you say you have				
No confidence	3%	0.97	2.5	59
Small amount of confidence	15%	2.16	10.9	203
Moderate amount of confidence	49%	2.89	35.7	732
Great deal of confidence	24%	2.50	17.7	354
Total confidence	9%	1.70	6.4	124
	100%			
How satisfied were you with the courtesy of the screeners at the passenger screening checkpoint? Were you				
Very or somewhat unsatisfied	7%	1.44	4.9	96
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	12%	1.94	9.0	179
Very or somewhat satisfied	81%	2.29	59.9	1,210
	100%			
How satisfied were you overall with your experience at the passenger screening checkpoint? Were you				
Very or somewhat unsatisfied	7%	1.42	5.1	107
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	14%	2.04	10.1	203
Very or somewhat satisfied	79%	2.35	58.5	1,173
	100%			

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to independent rounding. Response values for "Don't know" and "Refused" are not included in the table.

Source: US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Omnibus Household Survey*. Data from the February, April, June, and August 2003 surveys have been combined. Data cover activities for the month prior to the survey.

<i>Omnibus Household Survey</i>				
Questions used in this report				
	Results	Margin of Error	Population Estimates	Sample
How consistent have screening procedures been in airports you have departed from? Have they been		+/-	(in millions)	
Very or somewhat inconsistent	26%	2.53	18.7	396
Very or somewhat consistent	74%		52.8	1,049
	100%			
Have the changes in passenger screening procedures since September 11, 2002, made you				
Less inclined to travel by commercial airline	25%	1.54	50.0	973
More inclined to travel by commercial airline	8%	0.97	15.7	296
Had no effect	68%	1.68	137.0	2,685
	100%			

Responses for those who have never flown on a commercial airline (n=552)				
	Results	Margin of Error	Population Estimates	Sample
Do you have any kind of disability or health impairment?		+/-	(in millions)	
Percent with a disability/health impairment who have never flown	26%*	5.36	4.2	89
Percent with NO disability/health impairment who have never flown	16%	1.55	25.9	445
Please stop me when I reach the category that includes your age.				
Percent of 18-24 year olds who have never flown	29%*	5.95	6.6	81
Percent of 25 year olds and older who have never flown	15%	1.48	23.1	448
What is the highest level of education you have completed?				
Percent with high school education or less who have never flown	33%*	3.08	22.7	391
Percent with more than a high school education who have never flown	7%	1.25	7.0	135
Please stop me when I reach the category that includes your total household annual income for last calendar year, that is, 2002.				
Percent with household income of < \$30,000 who have never flown	37%*	4.11	14.1	252
Percent with household income of \$30,000 or more who have never flown	9%	1.41	10.4	188
*Differences are significant at $p < 0.05$.				

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to independent rounding. Response values for "Don't know" and "Refused" are not included in the table.

Source: US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Omnibus Household Survey*. Data from the February, April, June, and August 2003 surveys have been combined. Data cover activities for the month prior to the survey.

Methodology. Data presented in this OmniStats are taken from the several issues of the 2003 BTS Omnibus Household Survey (covering activities in the months prior to the survey). Data are preliminary and are subject to change. The target population for the survey is the adult (18 years or older) non-institutionalized population of the US. Results are based on a completed bi-monthly sample of 1000+ households that are randomly selected using a list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) methodology.

Margin of Error. Survey data provide estimates of population parameters and are subject to error because findings are based on a sample, rather than on the entire population. Standard error estimates for each Omnibus Survey item are available on the BTS website for the Omnibus Survey at

<http://www.bts.gov/omnibus/household/index.html>. After selecting the month of interest, choose "Marginal Frequency Distributions." Margins of error for findings in this report are shown in the table above (based on a 95% confidence interval). Estimates are also subject to nonsampling error, e.g., coding, transcription, or data coding errors. These errors would occur if a census survey was conducted under the same circumstances.

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