Despite Inflammatory Incidents, Airline Customer Satisfaction Keeps Improving, J.D. Power Finds

Alaska Airlines, Southwest Airlines Rank Highest in Respective Segments

COSTA MESA, Calif.: 10 May 2017 — Lower fares, better on-time performance, fewer lost bags and the lowest bump rate ever recorded have contributed to steady improvement in customer satisfaction with North American airlines. According to the J.D. Power 2017 North America Airline Satisfaction Study, over all customer satisfaction with airlines has reached its highest level ever, continuing a trend that now stretches five consecutive years.

“It’s impossible to think about airline customer satisfaction without replaying the recent images of a passenger being dragged from a seat, but our data shows that, as a whole, the airline industry has been making marked improvements in customer satisfaction across a variety of metrics, from ticket cost to flight crew,” said Michael Taylor, travel practice lead at J.D. Power. “As recent events remind us, however, airlines have significant room for improvement. Airlines still rank among the bottom tier of most service industries tracked by J.D. Power, far lower than North American rental car companies or hotels.”

Scores are higher this year than one year ago in all of the study factors that measure customer satisfaction. This performance contributes to the steady improvement in customer satisfaction with North American airlines.

Following are some of the key findings of the 2017 study:

- **Overall satisfaction reaches for the sky:** Overall satisfaction with the airline industry in 2017 increases by a significant 30 points to 756 (on a 1,000-point scale), continuing a trend of steady performance increases that began in 2013. Both traditional and low-cost carriers have shown improvement, with the traditional carriers continuing to close the satisfaction gap with low-cost carriers (740 vs. 784, respectively).

- **Lower costs, fewer problems, satisfaction with crews drive improvement:** The average North American airfare fell 8.5% in 2016 to $349, helping to drive satisfaction levels in the cost and fees factor in the study to the highest level since 2006. Improved on-time performance, fewer lost bags, historically low bump rates and high scores for flight crews also contribute to the overall increase in airline customer satisfaction.

- **Social media is feedback tool of choice:** Among business travelers, 21% posted a comment about their airline experience on social media, while 8% of leisure travelers did the same. It is worth noting that nearly three-fourths of social media comments are described as “positive” by those posting. The most commonly used social media platforms are Facebook (81%) and Twitter (41%). When an
airline responds to any social media post—whether it’s positive or negative—there is a noteworthy 121-point lift in passenger satisfaction.

- **“Ladies and gentlemen, the overhead bins are full...”**: After a slight dip in 2016, passenger problems with overhead storage has become more common, with 14% of passengers in 2017 reporting this as an issue on their flight. Satisfaction among flyers having difficulty with overhead storage is 82 points lower than among those who don’t have difficulty. The problem is inversely related to age, as travelers in younger generations are more likely to experience a problem with overhead storage than are older travelers.

- **Bumping occurs infrequently—but significantly affects satisfaction**: Although instances of denial of boarding and re-booking to another flight (bumping) have reached historic lows in frequency, they have the greatest negative influence on overall satisfaction. However, when there are delays, such as those caused by weather or mechanical issues, satisfaction levels fall by 101 points when a traditional carrier is delayed and by 59 points when a low-cost carrier is delayed.

**Study Rankings**

Among traditional carriers, **Alaska Airlines** ranks highest for the 10th consecutive year, with an index score of 765. Alaska Airlines performs particularly well in all seven factors of the study. **Delta Air Lines** ranks second (758), improving in all seven factors.

Among low-cost carriers, **Southwest Airlines** ranks highest for the first time with a score of 807, performing particularly well in all seven factors. **JetBlue Airways** ranks second (803), improving in six of the seven factors.

The North America Airline Satisfaction Study, now in its 13th year, measures passenger satisfaction with North American airline carriers based on performance in seven factors (in order of importance): cost & fees; in-flight services; aircraft; boarding/deplaning/baggage; flight crew; check-in; and reservation. Satisfaction is calculated on a 1,000-point scale.

The study measures passenger satisfaction among both business and leisure travelers, and is based on responses from 11,015 passengers who flew on a major North American airline between March 2016 and March 2017. The study was fielded between April 2016 and March 2017.


See the online press release at [http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2017052](http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2017052).

Join the conversation on social media using **#AirlineStudy** and follow J.D. Power on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

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Media Relations Contacts
Geno Effler; Costa Mesa, Calif.; 714-621-6224; media.relations@jdpa.com
John Roderick; St. James, N.Y.; 631-584-2200; john@jroderick.com


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NOTE: Two charts to follow.
J.D. Power
2017 North America Airline Satisfaction Study℠

Traditional Carrier Ranking
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carrier</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Airlines</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Air Lines</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment Average</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Airlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Airlines</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Canada</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: J.D. Power 2017 North America Airline Satisfaction Study℠

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Low-Cost Carrier Ranking
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

Southwest Airlines
JetBlue Airways
Segment Average
WestJet
Frontier Airlines

Source: J.D. Power 2017 North America Airline Satisfaction Study℠

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