



U.S Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
www.transportation.gov/briefingroom

News

DOT 56-16
Monday, May 16, 2016
Contact: Caitlin Harvey
Tel.: (202) 366-4570
caitlin.harvey@dot.gov

March 2016 Complaints About Airline Service Down From Previous Year and February 2016

WASHINGTON – Airline consumer complaints filed with DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division in March 2016 were down 17.7 percent from March 2015 and down 5.0 percent from February 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s *Air Travel Consumer Report* released today.

In March, the Department received 1,429 complaints about airline service from consumers, down from the total of 1,736 filed in March 2015 and down from the 1,504 received in February 2016. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 4,629 complaints, up 1.0 percent from the 4,583 filed during the first quarter of 2015.

The reporting carriers posted an on-time arrival rate of 81.5 percent in March 2016, up from the 78.7 percent on-time rate in March 2015, but down from the 83.6 percent mark in February 2016,

The consumer report also includes data on cancellations, tarmac delays, chronically delayed flights, and the causes of flight delays filed with the Department’s Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) by the reporting carriers. In addition, the consumer report contains a tally of aviation service complaints filed with DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division by consumers regarding a range of issues such as flight problems, baggage, reservation and ticketing, refunds, customer service, disability, and discrimination. The consumer report also includes statistics on mishandled baggage reports filed by consumers with the reporting carriers, data on oversales, and information about the total number of animals that died, were injured, or were lost during air transport in March, as filed by the air carriers with the Aviation Consumer Protection Division.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 1.0 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in March 2016, an improvement over both the 2.2 percent cancellation rate posted in March 2015 and the 1.6 percent rate in February 2016.

Tarmac Delays

In March, airlines reported six tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and one tarmac delay of more than four hours on an international flight. Five of the long domestic delays and the long international delay took place in Denver during a snowstorm on March 23. All reported extended tarmac delays are investigated by the Department.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of March, there were three flights that were chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for three consecutive months or more. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is [available from BTS](#).

Causes of Flight Delays

In March, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 18.46 percent of their flights were delayed – 5.86 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 4.81 percent in February; 6.24 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 4.90 percent in February; 4.65 percent by factors within the airline’s control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.34 percent in February; 0.45 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.48 percent in February; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.03 percent in February. In addition, 0.99 percent of flights were canceled and 0.23 percent were diverted.

Weather is a factor in both the extreme-weather category and the aviation-system category. This includes delays due to the re-routing of flights by DOT’s Federal Aviation Administration in consultation with the carriers involved. Weather is also a factor in delays attributed to late-arriving aircraft, although airlines do not report specific causes in that category.

BTS uses the data collected from airlines to determine the percentage of late flights delayed by weather, which includes those reported in the categories of extreme weather, late-arriving aircraft, and National Aviation System delays. In March, 34.60 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up from 26.57 percent in March 2015 but down from 35.72 percent in February 2016.

Detailed information on flight delays and their causes is available from [BTS](#).

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.49 reports per 1,000 passengers in March, an improvement over both March 2015’s rate of 3.20 and February 2016’s rate of 2.64. For the first quarter of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.80 reports per 1,000 passengers, an improvement over the 3.59 rate for the first quarter of 2015.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the first quarter of this year. The 12 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 0.60 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, an improvement over the 0.82 rate reported for the first quarter of 2015.

Incidents Involving Animals

In March, carriers reported three incidents involving the death, injury, or loss of an animal while traveling by air, equal to both the three reports filed in March 2015 and the three reports filed in February 2016. March's incidents involved the deaths of two animals and injury to one other animal.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in March against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 77 disability-related complaints in March, up from both the 52 complaints received in March 2015 and the 71 complaints received in February 2016. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 225 disability-related complaints, up from the total of 161 filed during the first quarter of 2015.

Complaints About Discrimination

In March, the Department received six complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – up from the total of three recorded in March 2015, but down from the seven recorded in February 2016. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 20 discrimination complaints, up from the total of 14 filed during the first quarter of 2015.

Consumers may file air travel service complaints on the web at www.transportation.gov/airconsumer or by voice mail at (202) 366-2220 or by TTY at (202) 366-0511. They may also mail a complaint to the Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, C-75, W96-432, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590.

Consumers who want on-time performance data for specific flights should call their airline's reservation number or their travel agent. This information is available on the computerized reservation systems used by these agents. The information is also available on the appropriate carrier's website.

The Air Travel Consumer Report can be found on DOT's website at <http://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/air-travel-consumer-reports>.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT May 2016

KEY MARCH 2016 ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 12 Reporting Carriers and Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers

Overall

81.5 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 89.8 percent

2. Delta Air Lines – 87.9 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 86.4 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Spirit Airlines – 64.6 percent
2. Virgin America – 73.8 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 76.0 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. Delta Air Lines flight 1517 from Denver to Atlanta, 3/23/16 – delayed 247 minutes on the tarmac in Denver
2. Frontier Airlines flight 1280 from Denver to Chicago O’Hare, 3/23/16 – delayed 239 minutes on the tarmac in Denver
3. Frontier Airlines flight 250 from Denver to Houston Bush, 3/23/16 – delayed 238 minutes on the tarmac in Denver
4. Frontier Airlines flight 214 from Denver to Austin, Texas, 3/23/16 – delayed 227 minutes on the tarmac in Denver
5. Delta Air Lines flight 1616 from Denver to Atlanta, 3/23/16 – delayed 223 minutes on the tarmac in Denver

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

1. Southwest Airlines flight 720 from Denver to Los Cabos, Mexico, 3/23/16 – delayed 294 minutes on the tarmac in Denver

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Frontier Airlines – 2.6 percent
2. SkyWest Airlines – 2.3 percent
3. Spirit Airlines – 1.5 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Delta Air Lines – 0.1 percent
2. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 0.5 percent

###