

# Airline Safety

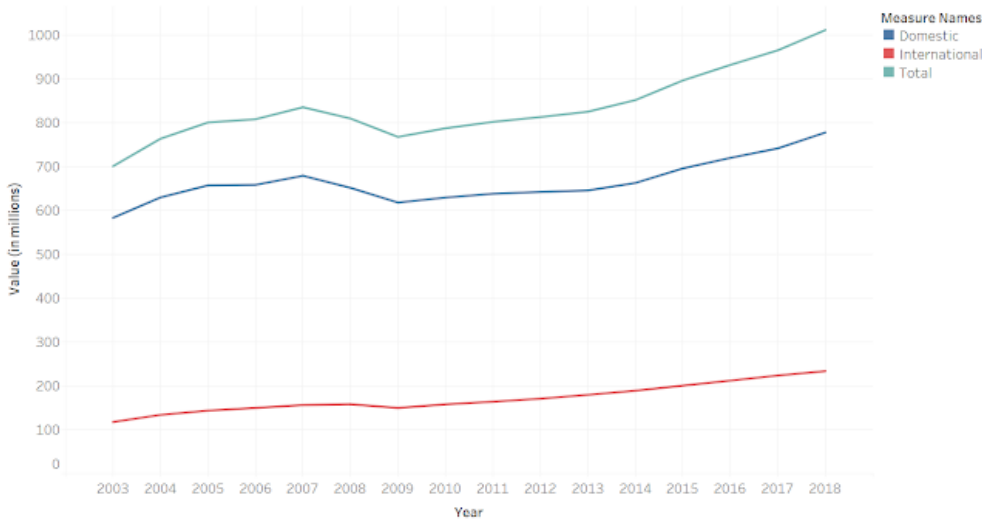
Wednesday, February 19, 2020

## Is Flying Getting More Dangerous?

About 40 percent of the general population reports some fear of flying, and 2.5 percent have what is classified as a clinical phobia, one in which a person avoids flying or does so with significant distress. We all get that feeling in our stomach when it is time for a plane to take off, "What if something goes wrong?". In the last year or so we have heard all about the dangers of the new Boeing 737 MAX. From the media covering every plane incident for days and days, sometimes it feels like planes are getting more dangerous. Is it true though? Is flying really more risky than ever before.

Before we get into plane safety, let's see if peoples fear of flying is reflected in the number of people flying. We can see below that, other than the financial crisis in 2008, the number of passengers flying in the U.S. each year has been steadily increasing. This is especially true with domestic flights. This means that the fear of flying isn't necessarily stopping many people from flying. Instead, it is an anxiety that people work through.

Annual Passengers on All U.S. Scheduled Airline Flights



When we look at the data, the narrative seems to change. Keep in mind that the number of flights have increased over time and look at the plot below. In blue, we see the number of incidents with aircrafts from 1985 to 1999 by airline company. Then, in red, we see the number of incidents that occurred between 2000 and 2014. While some companies have seen increases in incidents from the old data to the new data, the majority are better off. We should feel pretty good about increased number of flights with reduced incidents.

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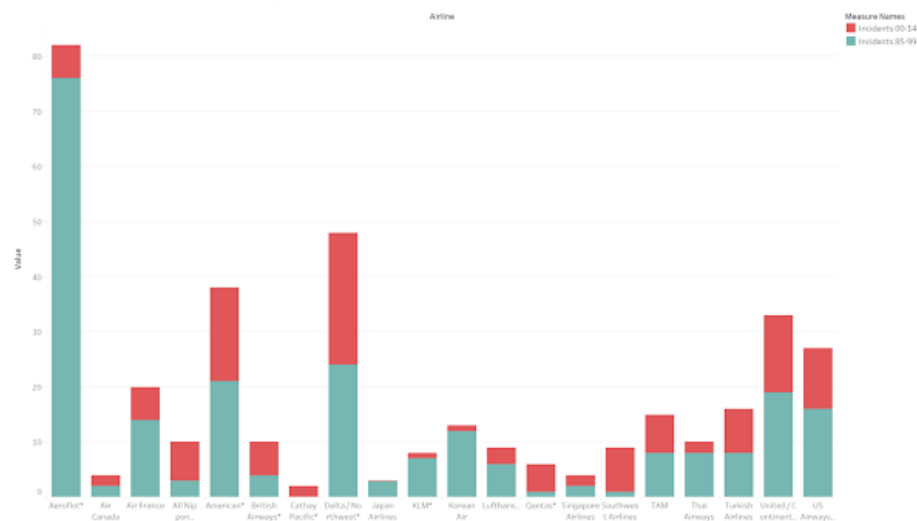


### Blog Archive

- ▼ 2020 (1)
- ▼ February (1)
- [Is Flying Getting More Dangerous?](#)

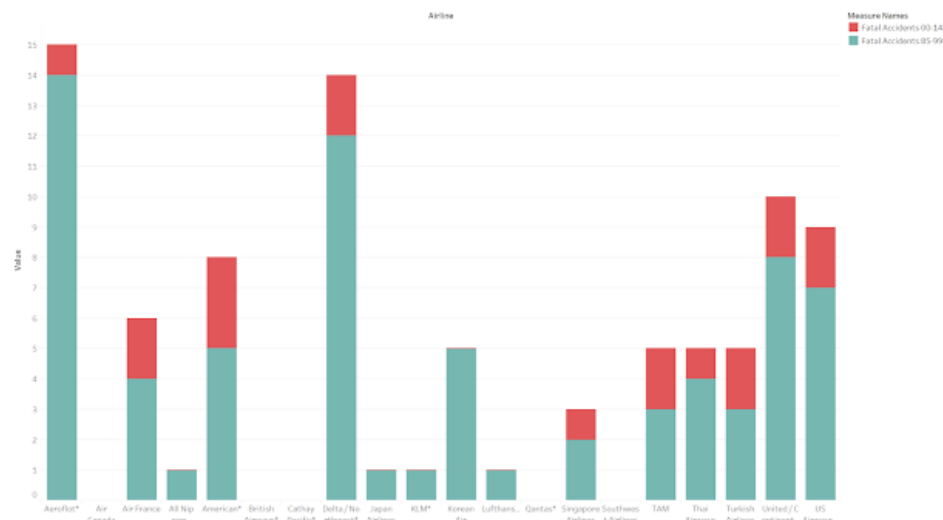


Airline Incidents from '85 to '99 vs. '00 to '14



While we love to see a reduction in incidents, the biggest concern for passengers are fatal accidents. Many problems can happen on a plane, but nothing compares to situations that results in deaths. Thankfully, the data shows the fatalities have reduced considerably. Below, we have a similar plot to the incident one above. Blue represents the number of fatal accidents from 1985 to 1999 and red represents fatal accidents from 2000 to 2014. This is even more convincing evidence that flying has not become more dangerous.

Fatal Airline Accidents from '85 to '99 vs. '00 to '14



Being anxious about flying is something that many people can relate to. The thought of being 30,000 feet in the air is a scary thought. The media coverage can make it seem like fatal plane crashes are common place. When we take a step back and look at the data though, the risk is lower than it may seem. It is unlikely that risks of flying will ever fall to zero. Just like other forms of transportation, there is always the possibility that things can go wrong. That being said, it is clear that safety is improving and flight continues to be a great way to travel.

Sources:

1. Schaaff, S. V. (2019, October 12). Lots of Americans have a fear of flying. There are ways to overcome the anxiety disorder. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/lots-of-americans-have-a-fear-of-flying-there-are-way-to-overcome-the-anxiety-disorder/2019/10/11/d4746d84-d338-11e9-86ac-0f250cc91758\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/lots-of-americans-have-a-fear-of-flying-there-are-way-to-overcome-the-anxiety-disorder/2019/10/11/d4746d84-d338-11e9-86ac-0f250cc91758_story.html)

2. Annual Passengers on All U.S. Scheduled Airline Flights (Domestic & International) and

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Posted by Taylor Anderson at 10:11 PM

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