Why is Air Travel Safer Than Traveling by Car?

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People use cars for day to day travel as well as for long distances. Using a car to get from place to place doesn't exactly invoke a stigma or fear for most, but air travel does. People are worried about dying in plane crashes, perhaps because they are not using air travel as often as car travel as well as not being educated about the reality of the statistics on related fatalities. Air travel has been hit hard due to the Covid-19 outbreak, which created travel restrictions and plummeted the revenue for air travel. For this reason, it is important that we provide information about the safety of air travel over traveling by car, especially now that people are being vaccinated.

We need to make sure that the public knows that it is not only safe, but safer to travel by air than it is to travel by car. The pie chart on my blog post shows preventable deaths in the U.S. (2019), and you will notice that air travel related deaths aren't even included. This is because the amount of deaths due to air travel are so small in relation to other preventable death causes. Notice, however, that motor vehicle related deaths comprise about 21% of all preventable deaths in 2019. This is not to say that air travel is without any risks. There has been a history of plane crashes and fatalities, but the odds of dying in a car crash are so low that they cannot even be compared to how common it is to die in a car crash.

Despite the downward trend of motor vehicle deaths per mile driven, we can still see that fatalities remain high over the years in car travel. Mileage death rate for car crashes decrease over time, but fatalities still remain high. This only reiterates the unsafety of traveling long

distances via car. Seat belts were only put in cars as recently as 1968. Despite this implementation, car related fatalities still have remained very common, with 1 in 107 people having the odds of being in one in one year (NSC Injury Facts, 2021). In 2020, over 39 thousand people were killed in motor vehicle related crashes (NSC Injury Facts, 2021). Even though the rate of fatalities per 100,000 people is on a downward trend, fatalities still remain high. One might also consider the rate of fatalities in car rash in respect to miles driven, which also indicates the further you drive the less fatalities occur. Despite this, the fatalities over the years have also remained high. This indicated that no matter how far or how the population increases, fatalities from motor vehicles still remain high.

Despite the obvious distinction in how much riskier it is to travel by car than by airplane, another point needs to be made due to the Covid-19 outbreak. It has been shown that the probability of dying from Covid-19 that is contracted while flying is less than 1 in 4.7 million, which should especially ease the minds of travelers (Garrick, 2021). The air travel industry has been hit very hard since the beginning of the pandemic, as is shown by the graph below depicting the number of flights plummeting since the beginning of the pandemic. It is important that travelers traveling by car understand that they are undertaking a travel means that is riskier than traveling by air, with 1 in 107 people statistically dying from motor related incidents per year in the U.S.

My blog post shows a line graph that makes it clear just how drastically different the fatality numbers of travelers are between car travel and air travel. In one year, it is estimated that roughly 38,000 people die in the U.S. from car related accidents. On the other hand, in 2019 there were

only 299 fatalities due to air travel accidents. This alone should make it obvious what the better form of travel should be. Fatalities have also been decreasing over time for air travel related incidents. An area graph on my blog post shows that both fatalities and the percentage of those that die aboard a plane accident are on the downward trend. This is good news! This implicates that airlines are dedicated to providing safety for their passengers and are statistically improving their safety measures.

The benefits of traveling by air also go beyond safety. Not only do you have the convenience to not have to focus on the road, you also prevent wear and tear of your vehicle. Monetarily, it could be more efficient to travel by air, especially with the rise of gasoline prices. Overwhelmingly, it is a better idea both for your safety and peace of mind to travel by air instead of by car. Go ahead, take a nap on your next flight to your dream vacation!

The colors that I chose for my visualizations were blue and red. Because red tends to be associated with something wrong you want to avoid or an error, I associated that color with car travel. I used blues for air travel because I wanted air travel to be associated with something calm, as well as a depiction of blue skies. I chose a clean format so as to appear scholarly, which would make the audience better trust the information.

References:

Garrick Blalock, V. K. (2021, March 15). *Opinion | Flying is safer than driving, even during the pandemic. These statistics show why.* The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/15/flying-safer-than-driving-pandemic/ .

NSC Injury Facts. (2021, March 29). *Deaths by Type of Incident*. Injury Facts. https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/historical-fatality-trends/deaths-by-type-of-incident/.