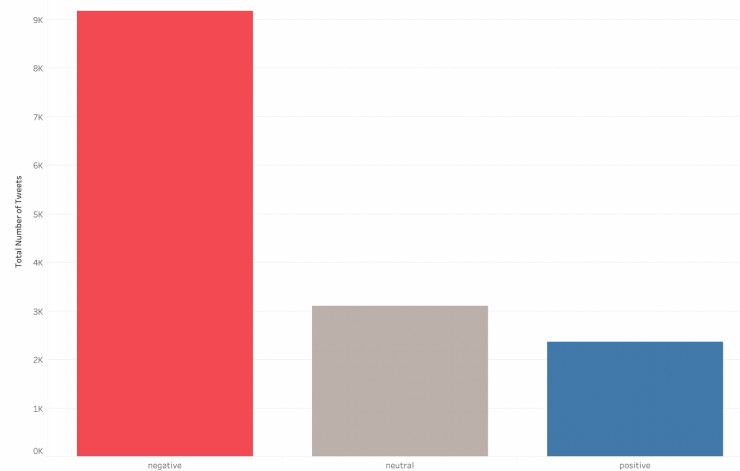## Is air travel safe?

Recently, statistics have been floating around on social media portraying that air travel is no longer a safe way to travel. After devastating crashes such as the American Airlines Flight 587 in 2001, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in 2014 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019, the general public is scared and doesn't know what to believe. The public often takes their fear to the internet to share their feelings. Is there any truth to what is being portrayed on the internet about airplane safety? Is traveling by air a high risk? Should the public be scared to step foot on a plane? Let's investigate.

Air Travel vs. Vehicles

On any given day, the typical American travels by vehicle – cars, trucks, buses, etc. – without any hesitation. Air travel is a much bigger commitment, so it isn't as common in daily commutes, but how does it compare in safety to vehicles? From 2000 - 2010, the number of deaths per passenger-mile on commercial airlines in the United States was about 0.2 deaths per 10 billion passenger-miles ([link](#)). Meanwhile, for driving, the rate was 150 deaths per 10 billion vehicle-miles traveled in 2000 ([link](#)). This amounts to roughly 750 times higher deaths per mile compared to flying on a commercial airplane ([link](#)).

Comparing Total Air Fatalities & Total Highway Fatalities
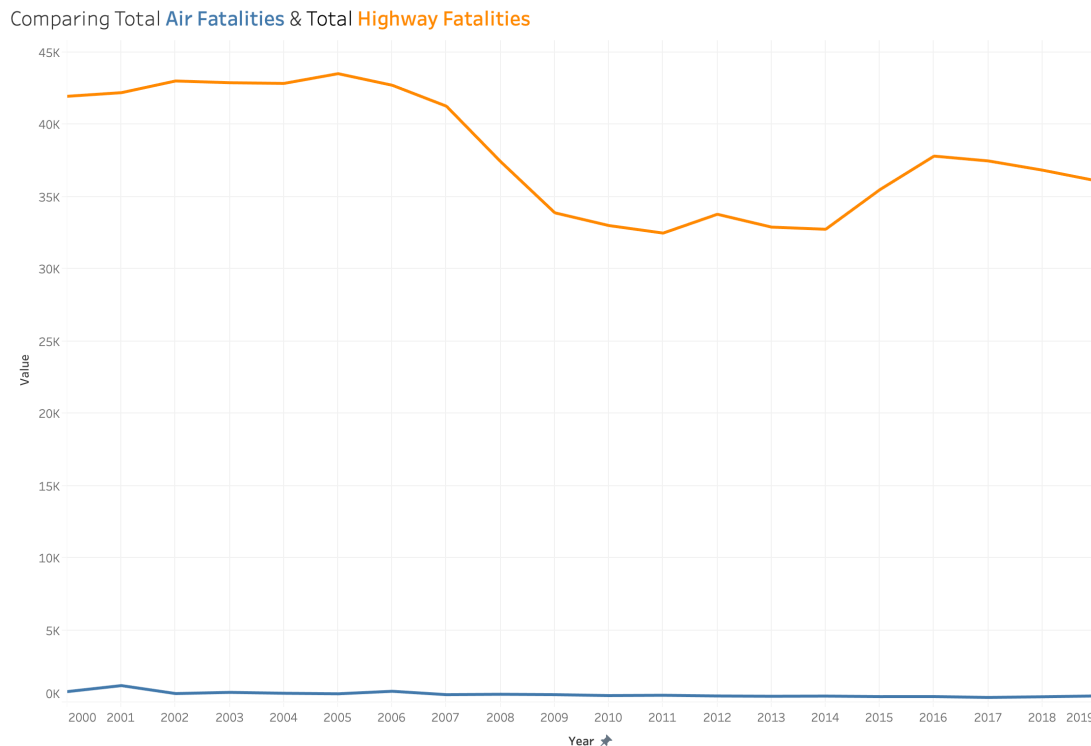
Highway fatalities are significantly higher for every year shown above. This supports the claim that traveling by air is safe, especially compared to travel by vehicles.

What is the trend?

While there have been some years with significant numbers of deaths by air travel, the overall trend is that deaths have been decreasing over time. In 1972, there were 3,346 reported deaths in air travel whereas in 2020, there were only 463 deaths reported. This is a HUGE decrease, and the graph below illustrates this trend.

Number of Airplane Deaths by Year
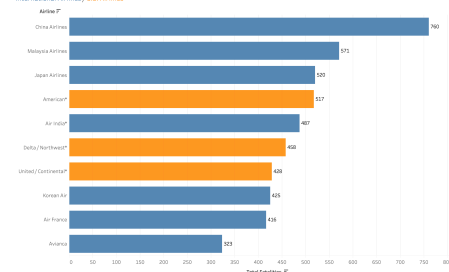Significant **decreases** have happened over time

1972
3,346 deaths

2020
463 deaths

1 null

Year
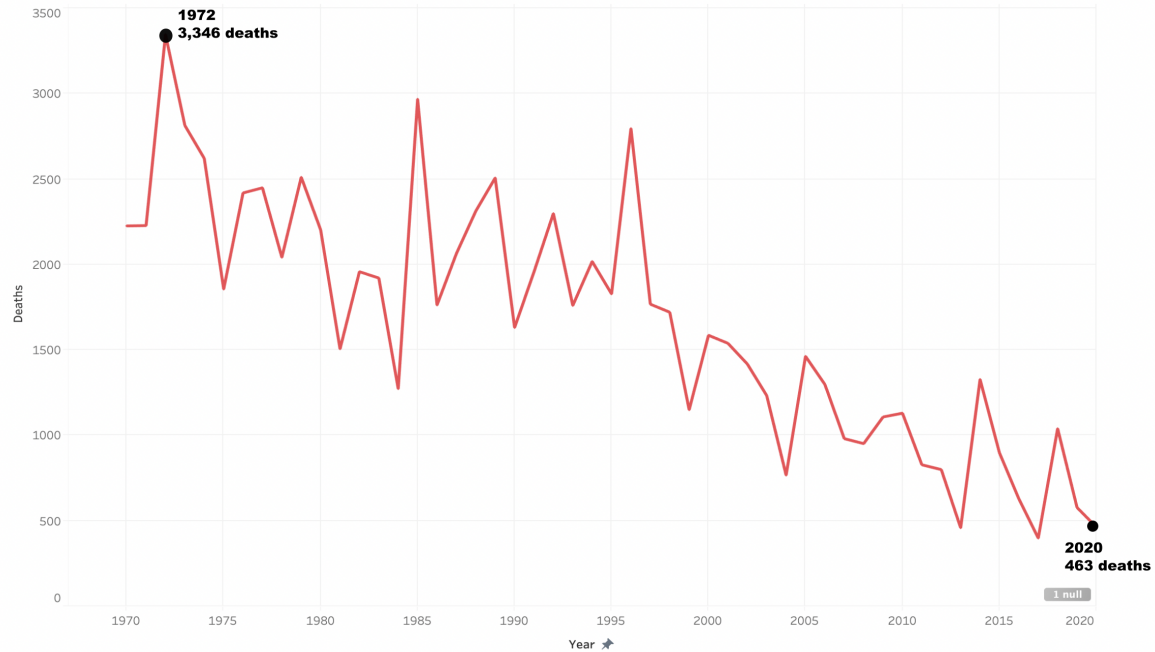
Deaths

It is clear that death rates are decreasing over time.

The Truth About Fatalities

Above we saw that the trend of air fatalities continues to decrease over time. If that isn't enough to convince the public that air travel is getting safer with time, there are more facts to support this as well. From 1985 – 2014 there were a total of 4,905 total air fatalities reported worldwide. Only 28% (1,403) happened with commercial airlines based in the United States. The majority of these air fatalities come from international airlines such as China Airlines and Malaysia Airlines. Americans do not need to worry when traveling in the country with our domestic airlines.
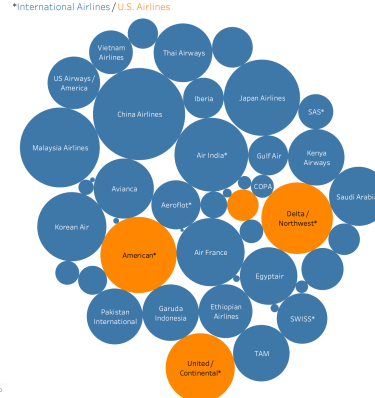
Conclusion

In conclusion, air travel is completely safe. We trust vehicles to get us from point A to point B on a daily basis without hesitation, but air travel has proven to have fewer deaths each year. We need to put our trust back into air travel. Rumors and buzz can fill the internet, but the facts are the facts. To recap:

- Air travel is safer than vehicles per passenger-miles traveled
- Deaths for air travel continue to decrease significantly over time
- U.S. airlines have lower fatality rates than international airlines

The public needs to see the truth about air travel within the United States. Please like and share this blog post as well as comment to ensure the *real* facts get out!

1 death per
50 billion
passenger-miles traveled
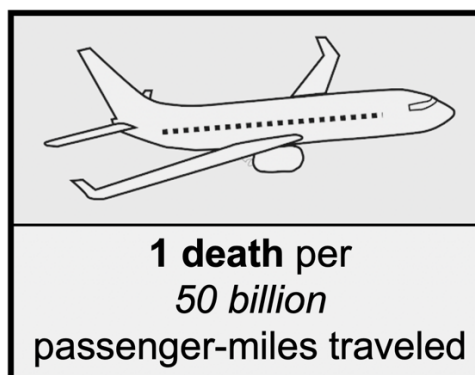
References

[1] Aviation Safety. Retrieved April 30th, 2021 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviation_safety

[2] Cleartrip Pvt. Ltd. (2019). *10 Worst Accidents in Air Travel History*. Retrieved April 30th, 2021 from https://www.cleartrip.com/collections/10-worst-accidents-in-air-travel-history/

Data Sources

[3] Aviation Accidents and Incidents. Retrieved April 30th, 2021 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviation_accidents_and_incidents

[4] Github airline-safety
https://github.com/fivethirtyeight/data/tree/master/airline-safety

[5] Twitter Sentiment Analysis Dataset https://www.kaggle.com/crowdflower/twitter-airline-sentiment

[6] Total Airline Fatalities and Highway Fatalities Dataset https://www.bts.gov/content/transportation-fatalities-mode