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Is Airline Travel Safe? Do They Know What They're Doing?

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DSC640-T302 Data Presentation & Visualizations (2243-1)

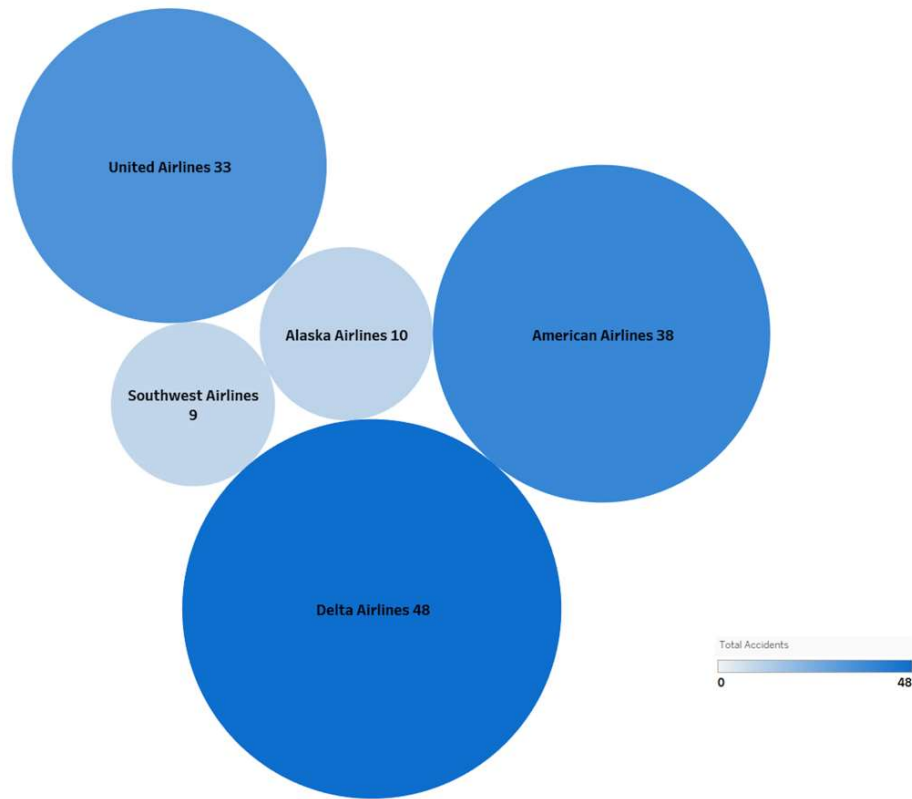
I was around 11 when my little brother and I began flying between Houston and Dallas, Texas. My parents were divorced, and like many children, we'd fly to another city once a month to see our dad. Our mom would drop us off with the nice Southwest Airlines lady who would keep us corralled with the other kids until it was time to board what was affectionately known as the "Divorced Daddy" flight. We had the same routine every month until a big thunderstorm delayed our flight. Finally, we were on our way, but it was a really scary ride, swinging side to side, going up and down, and my little brother squeezed my arm so tight it left a big bruise.

Kids don't think about air travel safety, but I remember how scared I was every time an airline accident is the lead story on all the newscasts, **AND I WONDER ...**

How Safe Is Air Travel ... Really?

In 2022, there were 32.2 million flights and only 5 fatal accidents. Commercial aircraft go through extensive testing before they leave the factory. Airplanes are tested for weather-related turbulence, birds getting sucked into the engines, and the wings are stress-tested to make sure they won't break.

30 Years of US Based Airline Accidents

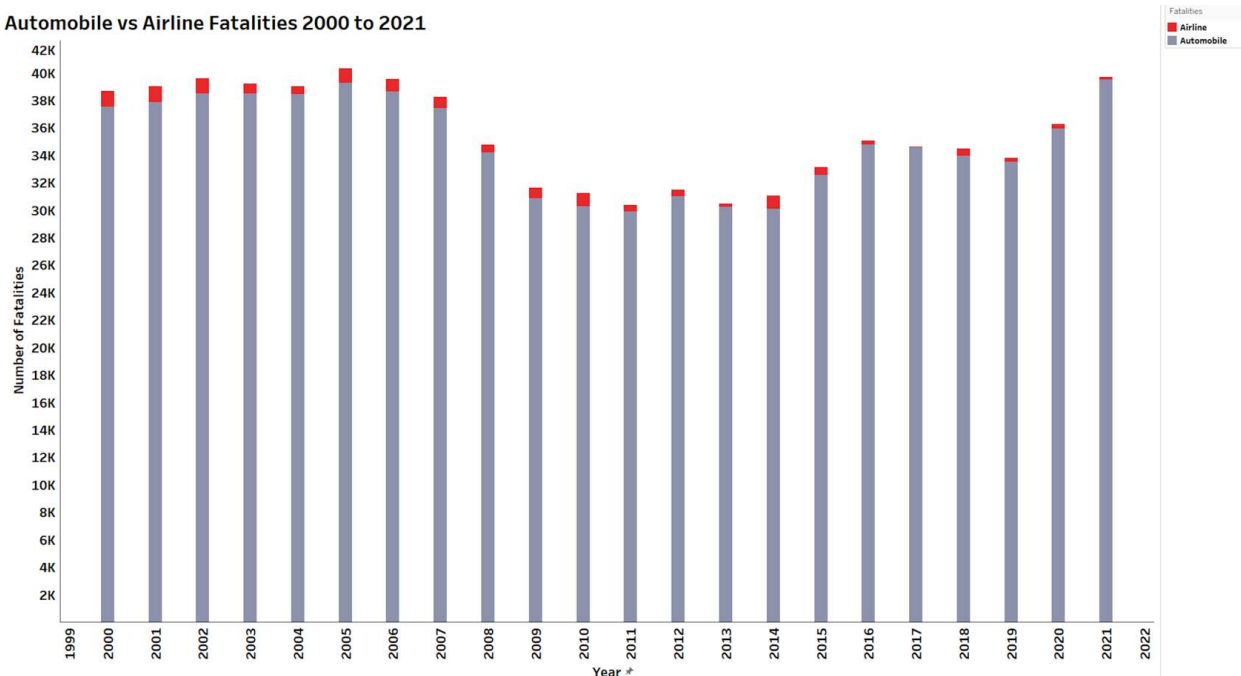


In 30 years, there have been 138 accidents involving US-based airlines, that's 4.6 accidents per year. Southwest Airlines had only 9 accidents in 30 years, less than 1 every 3 years.

Wouldn't It Be Safer To Just Drive?

Whether it's a fender bender, rollover, or the occasional car-b-que (car fire), accidents are so common that you just change lanes and grumble about being stuck in traffic, and they rarely make the news.

Automobile vs Airline Fatalities 2000 to 2021



In 2019, there were 39,000 deaths from car accidents in the United States, while there were only 257 airline fatalities worldwide. Odds are you are more likely to die in a car crash than on an airplane. If it takes longer than 4 hours to drive somewhere, I fly.

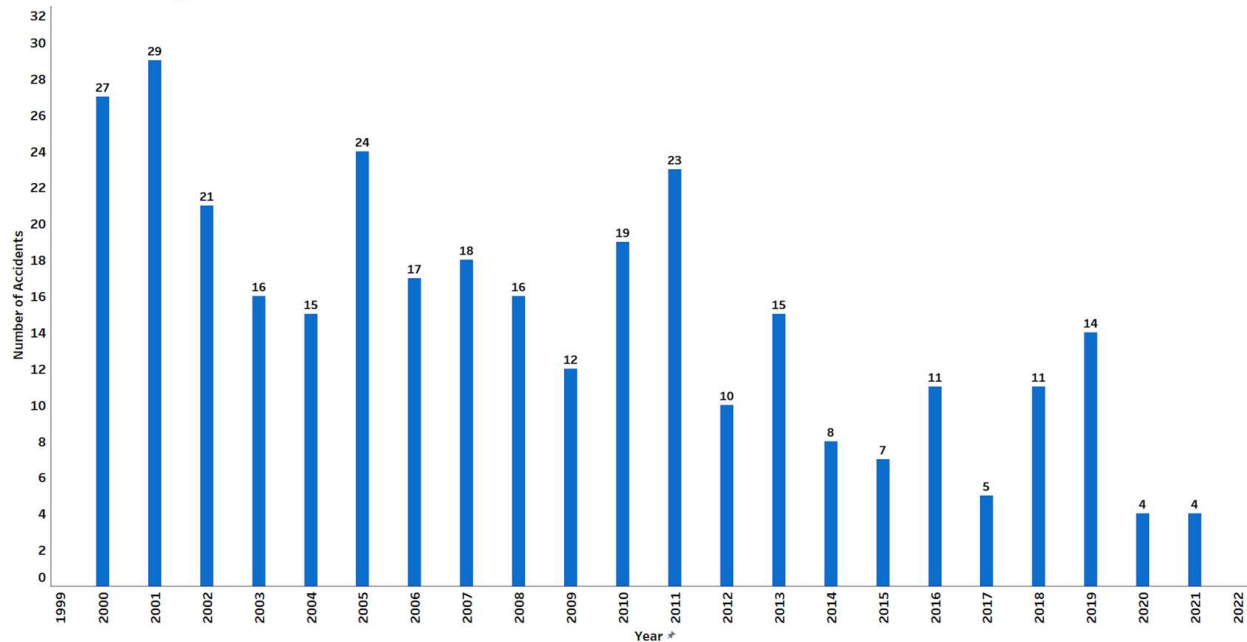
Do Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers Actually Know What They're Doing?

Pilots have serious skills; many come from the military, and other people have a college education. Pilots train for a minimum of 1000 hours in some of the most advanced simulators ever created and by flying actual jets and turboprop aircraft. They are also taught to handle major, minor, and medical emergencies that can happen during a flight. Southwest Airlines created Destination 255 as a training program for people with various backgrounds who want to become airline pilots. Air Traffic Controllers learn from experienced instructors spending hours in the classroom, on state-of-the-art Air Traffic Control simulators, and through real-life simulations. Even the ground crew and flight attendants participate in hours of training.

Has Air Travel Become Safer Over Time?

As technology advances, flying becomes safer. In 1985, major accidents occurred every couple of weeks. Now, it's months and years without one. Everything is designed with safety in mind, from fire suppression to communications to alerts when an aircraft is too close on the ground and in the air. All those systems and more have built-in backups; if one goes out, another is ready to take its place.

Worldwide Passenger Airline Accidents 2000 to 2021



In 1985, major accidents occurred every couple of weeks. Now, it's months and years without one. During the 1st 11 years of this century, there was an average of 19.5 accidents per year; for the next 11 years, that number was cut in half to 10 because of the advances in training and technology.

Flying to see Dad or going to Disney World was fun when I was a kid. Now, I'm a grown-up, flying all over the world. I've dog-sledded in Alaska, seen the Northern Lights, and been to Machu Picchu and the Amazon River. Flying is the only way to see the world when you only have 1 week each time. My next flight is to receive my Master's Degree, and Southwest Airlines will take me there.

For my next adventure, I'm off to Spain, but I still get scared of flying through thunderstorms.

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