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CTA Air Passenger Satisfaction Survey

Summary

Prepared for the Canadian Transportation Agency

Supplier: EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.

Contract Number: CW2332540

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For more information on this report, please contact the Canadian Transportation Agency at:

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Canada 

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This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of the Canadian Transportation Agency. The research study was conducted with 2,065 Canadian air travellers between January 25 and February 6, 2024.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre .

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SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) is an independent regulator and quasi-judicial tribunal with the powers of a superior court. It operates within the context of the very large and complex Canadian transportation system.

The CTA has three core mandates:

- To help ensure that the national transportation system runs efficiently and smoothly in the interests of all Canadians: those who work and invest in it; the producers, shippers, travellers, and businesses who rely on it; and the communities where it operates;
- To protect the human right of persons with disabilities to an accessible transportation network; and
- To provide consumer protection for air passengers.

The research will provide a greater understanding of Canadian air traveller opinions on their air travel experience.

The target population for the survey was Canadian air travellers over the age of 18 who have travelled by air in the past five years.

B. METHODOLOGY

The research involved an online survey of 2,065 Canadians 18 years of age and older who have travelled by air since 2019. The survey was conducted across Canada in both official languages. The field dates for the survey were January 25-February 6, 2024.

All survey results were weighted by region, age, and gender according to Statistics Canada data to ensure that the results were representative of the Canadian public. The margin of error for a survey of n=2,065 is +/- 2.2 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

Appendix A contains a detailed description of the methodology used in this study.
Appendix B contains the full survey questionnaire.

C. KEY FINDINGS

Outlined below are key findings from the study. The remainder of this report describes results in more detail.

Frequency of Air Travel

Respondents were first asked how often they have flown within Canada and internationally in the past five years. The plurality of Canadians say they have flown 1-2 times over this timeframe, both within Canada (34%) and internationally (38%). About one in five say they have flown six times or more domestically (23%) or internationally (17%) over the past five years.

Passenger Experience

Results reveal general satisfaction with air travel. When asked how satisfied they were with their most recent air travel experience, three in four (75%) said they were satisfied, and only 12% said they were not satisfied.

When asked, unprompted, what improvements or changes they would suggest to airlines or airports to enhance passengers' air travel experience, a wide range of suggestions were provided. Fourteen percent indicated they would like to see improvements to seating (seats too small, no legroom), 12% indicated they would like to see more reliable flights (avoid delays/cancellations/changes to itinerary), and 11% mentioned ticket prices (stop overcharging, too many extra charges).

Air travellers were asked to rate the clarity of the information provided about their most recent flight. Results reveal that the vast majority (93%) felt the travel itinerary was clear, and eight in ten (78%) felt that seating information and fees were clear. Two-thirds (68%) felt the terms and conditions of the ticket were clear, and just over half (52%) felt the same way about the rules for refunds. However, only about four in ten felt other fees or charges (46%) or rebooking fees (43%) were clearly communicated.

Respondents were also asked about their confidence in air travel the next time they fly. Most Canadians (59%) express confidence that they will have a positive travel experience the next time they travel by air but are much less confident that the airline will provide them with a satisfactory solution if there is a problem with their flight: only 29% express confidence that they will receive a satisfactory solution in the event of a problem.

Airline Handling of Passenger Complaints

Findings reveal that many Canadian air travellers have experienced an air travel disruption that resulted in a delay of more than two hours: 53% indicated this had occurred in the past five years, and fewer than half (45%) said they had not encountered an air travel disruption lasting more than two hours in the past five years.

Those who indicated they had experienced a flight disruption of more than two hours were asked if the airline provided them with needed information and assistance during the disruption. Just over half of these respondents (52%) indicated they were informed frequently as to the status of their flight, but only four in ten (40%) felt the airline provided needed information in a clear and timely manner. Very few indicated that the airline provided them with assistance during the delay in the form of food or drink (28%) or information about compensation for the delay (11%).

All respondents were asked in the event of a flight disruption, such as a delay, cancellation or denial of boarding, if they were aware of their rights with respect to the disruption. Results reveal that most Canadian air travellers are unaware of their rights in the event of a flight disruption: fewer than half indicated awareness of their right to assistance in the form of food, drink and accommodation (41%), rebooking (40%), compensation for inconvenience due to the disruption (39%), or refund (31%).

Results suggest that few Canadian air travellers have submitted a claim or complaint with an airline in the past five years about a flight disruption (17%) or lost or damaged baggage (13%).

Among those who indicated they submitted a claim or complaint with an airline, only four in ten felt the airline staff were helpful in resolving the complaint (43%), and even fewer felt the airline provided them with the information they needed in a clear, concise and timely manner (31%), or informed them of their air passenger rights (18%).

Fewer than four in ten (39%) of those who submitted a complaint with an airline express satisfaction with the resolution of the issue, and almost half (49%) indicate dissatisfaction with the resolution of their complaint.

Passenger Experience with the CTA

All respondents were asked if they were aware that Canada has consumer protections for air passengers. Three in four (72%) say they are aware of these protections, and only one in four (24%) say they are unaware.

Air travellers were also asked if they were aware that the Canadian Transportation Agency can resolve air travel complaints. Only about one in three (36%) say they know the CTA can resolve air travel complaints, while 58% say they are not aware of this.

When asked if they had filed a complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency, only three percent of respondents indicated they had filed a complaint with the CTA; the vast majority (97%) had not.

Conclusions and Implications

Survey results reveal that Canadian air travellers are largely satisfied with their most recent travel experience and express reasonably high levels of confidence that they will have a positive experience the next time they travel by air. However, air travellers are far less confident there will be a satisfactory solution if there is a problem with a flight in the future.

Results also reveal that many Canadian air travellers have experienced a significant travel disruption in the past few years, and few of these respondents felt the airline provided them with needed information or assistance during the disruption. Moreover, most Canadian air travellers appear to be unaware of their rights in the event of a flight disruption.

Among those who submitted a complaint with an airline, few felt the airline provided them with information or assistance in resolving the complaint, and most of these air travellers were dissatisfied with the resolution of the complaint.

Findings also reveal that despite high claimed awareness of consumer protections for air passengers, few Canadians express awareness of the CTA's role in resolving air travel complaints, and very few have filed a complaint with the Agency.

D. CONTRACT VALUE

The contract value for the POR project is \$65,822.50 (including HST).

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

PWGSC Contract Number: CW2332540

Contract Award Date: September 29, 2023

To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail: info@otc-cta.gc.ca

E. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by:


