

# U.S. Department of Transportation Annual Report on Disability-Related Air Travel Complaints Received During Calendar Year 2023

## Background

The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), 49 U.S.C. 41705, requires the U.S. Department of Transportation (Department) to “regularly review all complaints received by air carriers alleging discrimination on the basis of disability” and “report annually to Congress on the results of such review.” This annual report to Congress covers disability-related complaints received in calendar year 2023<sup>1</sup> by U.S. and foreign air carriers operating to, from, and within the U.S., conducting passenger operations with at least one aircraft having a designed seating capacity of more than 60 passengers,<sup>2</sup> and complies with the ACAA requirement.

Five categories of information are being presented in this report covering 2023 complaint data:

- (1) a summary of the Department’s findings resulting from its complaint data review;
- (2) complaint totals for all reporting carriers in Appendix 2023-A;
- (3) complaint totals for reporting U.S. air carriers in Appendix 2023-B;
- (4) complaint totals for reporting foreign air carriers in Appendix 2023-C; and
- (5) detailed complaint data from each reporting carrier in Appendix 2023-D.

## Summary of 2023 Complaint Data Review Findings

- The Department estimates that approximately 33 million Americans with disabilities traveled by air.<sup>3</sup>
- U.S. air carriers reported receiving 41,620 disability-related air travel complaints, a 14 percent increase over 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> All references in this report to the year “2023” refer to calendar year.

<sup>2</sup> See 14 CFR 382.157(b) (requiring a covered carrier, conducting passenger operations with at least one aircraft having a designed seating capacity of more than 60 passengers, to report annually to the Department disability-related complaint data received by the carrier).

<sup>3</sup> According to data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2022, 73.4 million American adults (about 1 in 4) had a disability. See CDC, *Disability and Health Data System (DHDS) Data*, [Link to CDC webpage with data](#) (accessed October 30, 2024). The Department does not have data regarding the number of persons with disabilities who travel by air; however, we assume that 40 percent of Americans with disabilities travel by air. This assumption is based on research suggesting that nearly 50 percent of the U.S. adults traveled by air in 2023 and the Department’s Bureau of Transportation Statistics’ finding that persons with disabilities travel less frequently than persons without disabilities. See Airlines for America, *Air Travelers in America, Key Findings of a Survey Conducted by Ipsos*, March 2024, [Link to Airlines for America webpage with survey information](#); see also United States Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Travel Patterns of Adults with Travel-Limiting Disabilities*, 2024, [Link to DOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics webpage with report](#). Under this assumption and based on more recent data available from the CDC, the Department is updating its estimate of the number of passengers with a disability who traveled by air in 2022 from 26 million, as stated in its report on 2022 disability-related complaint data, to 29.4 million. Assuming the number of enplanements for passengers with a disability increased at the same rate as enplanements of the public from 2022 to 2023, *i.e.*, a rate of 12.5 percent, the number of passengers with a disability in 2023 was approximately 33 million.

- Foreign air carriers reported receiving 7,462 reportable disability-related air travel complaints, a 27 percent increase over 2022.
- U.S. air carriers enplaned 12.5 percent more passengers than in 2022, while foreign air carriers enplaned 32 percent more passengers than in 2022.<sup>4</sup>
- Complaints concerning a carrier’s failure to provide adequate assistance to persons using wheelchairs accounted for 51 percent (25,166) of complaints received by carriers. Another 10 percent (4,934) of complaints, concerned damage, improper storage, or delay in return of assistive devices. These complaint categories represented 48 percent and 10 percent of complaints, respectively, in 2022.

**Table 1 Summary of Disability Complaint Data for Years 2019 through 2023**

Calendar Year	Total Number of Disability Complaints Received by U.S. Carriers	Total Number of Disability Complaints Received by Foreign Carriers	Total Number of Disability Complaints Received by All Carriers	Passengers Enplaned (U.S. and Foreign Carriers)	Total Disability Complaints Per 100,000 Passengers
2019	35,510	6,908	42,418	1,056,823,849	4.0
2020	13,450	1,580	15,030	400,901,178	3.7
2021	32,047	1,584	33,631	703,560,769	4.8
2022	36,434	5,872	42,306	940,888,535	4.5
2023	41,620	7,462	49,082	1,058,055,492	4.6

The complaint numbers in this report should not be interpreted as reflecting violations of law. The data derive directly from reports submitted by carriers about the complaints they received, and the Department has not reviewed the substance of each complaint to determine whether the incidents constituted violations of the ACAA or the provisions of 14 CFR Part 382, the Department’s regulations concerning nondiscrimination on the basis of disability. The Department’s Office of Aviation Consumer Protection (OACP) does, however, investigate each complaint that it receives directly from passengers. In addition, OACP will examine the data as appropriate for year-to-year discrepancies in the data or other concerns which would inform the Department on whether further action is appropriate.

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<sup>4</sup> Domestic and international on market revenue passengers enplaned by U.S. and foreign carriers increased from approximately 940.9 million in 2022 to approximately 1.058 billion in 2023. U.S. carriers enplaned 945,743,953 domestic and international on market revenue passengers in 2023, and foreign carrier enplaned 112,311,809 international on-market passengers (to or from the United States) in 2023. These totals are the sum of field F Scheduled Passenger/Cargo and field L Nonscheduled Civilian Passenger on T-100 Traffic Reports filed with DOT’s Bureau of Transportation Statistics by U.S. and foreign air carriers as of November 4, 2024. Data are stated as approximations because over time some airlines might amend reports with corrections.