



Fact Sheet

Unruly Passengers

Background

Statistics collected by IATA, together with data from individual civil aviation authorities and evidence from member airlines, confirms that unruly passenger incidents on board aircraft in flight have become a significant problem.

- In 2016, the rate was one incident for every 1,424 flights (2015: 1 incident for every 1,205 flights)
- The majority of reports are Level 1 incidents which are verbal in nature and can usually be dealt with to a successful conclusion by crew using de-escalation training
- 12% of reports relate to level 2 incidents which involve physical aggression to others or damage to the aircraft
- Intoxication from alcohol or drugs was identified as a factor in 33% of reported cases
- IATA's statistics do not cover all airlines around the world, so are likely to significantly underestimate the true extent of the problem

Unruly passenger incidents include violence against crew and other passengers, harassment, verbal abuse, smoking, failure to follow safety instructions and other forms of riotous behavior. Although such acts are committed by a tiny minority of passengers, they have a disproportionate impact. They create inconvenience, threaten the safety and security of other passengers and crew, and lead to significant operational disruption and costs for airlines.

Enhancing the legal deterrent

A strong international legal framework and robust enforcement should act as a deterrent to unruly behavior. However, gaps in the Tokyo Convention 1963 (TC63) which governs offenses and certain other acts committed on aircraft means that many unruly passengers escape punishment for their misconduct.

IATA lobbied effectively for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to conduct a thorough review of TC63. This resulted in a Diplomatic Conference at ICAO in April 2014 that agreed the Montreal Protocol 2014 (MP14). MP14 amends TC63 by extending jurisdiction over offences to the state of intended landing (destination) in addition to the state of aircraft registration. Other changes give greater clarity to what as a minimum constitutes unruly behavior and reinforces the right of airlines to seek recovery of the significant costs from unruly passengers.

These changes, along with the measures already being taken by airlines, will provide a more effective deterrent for unacceptable behavior on board aircraft. However, 22 states must become Parties to MP14 before it enters into force. IATA is actively promoting the ratification of MP14 by states and has advocacy campaigns ongoing in local markets around the world. Today, 31 states have signed MP14 and 12 states are Parties to it. Egypt and

Portugal became Parties to MP14 in 2017 and a number of countries including Kenya and Turkey have passed the domestic law

IATA is also advocating for better enforcement action against unruly passengers to strengthen the deterrent. Often, even when there are no jurisdictional issues, prosecutors do not take action against disruptive passengers because it is not seen as being in the public interest due to the cost of bringing criminal cases. IATA used its participation in an ICAO Task Force on the revision of ICAO Circular 288 (“Guidance Material on the Legal Aspects of Unruly/ Disruptive Passengers”) to advocate for the inclusion of more guidance for states on the use of administrative and other types of sanctions (for example, monetary fines) in addition to criminal prosecutions. This revised Guidance will be published by ICAO in late 2018.

Prevention and Management

The role of preventing incidents from happening and managing them effectively when they do happen is critical. Many airlines already have specific policies on the consistent handling of unruly passengers across their route network as well as training courses for ground and cabin crew covering topics such as de-escalation techniques. IATA’s work is focused on supporting airlines when implementing new policies and procedures or amending existing ones. We have developed extensive [guidance materials](#) which contain information, advice and international best practice.

In addition, IATA is advocating for airports and other service providers to play their part in preventing incidents. For example, this includes bar and restaurant operators providing staff with [safe service of alcohol](#) training to avoid intoxication which has to be dealt with by cabin crew in the air.

The Industry Core Principles on Unruly Passengers

At the 70th IATA Annual General Meeting in June 2014, the industry unanimously adopted a set of core principles for dealing with the issue of unruly passenger behavior.

The principles call on governments to ratify MP14 so they have the legal powers at their disposal to ensure unruly passengers face the appropriate consequences of their actions. They also called on airlines, airports and others to work together to implement the right procedures and train staff to respond effectively to such instances.