

## Travel Frustrations Dip...Except over Costs

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Access America's Traveler Frustration Index Shows Frustration with Airlines Down but Concern over Overall Prices Up

The quarterly barometer that tracks traveler frustrations with such headaches as cost, safety and service found movement in both directions during the past summer. While frustrations with rising gas prices fueled a spike in concern about overall travel costs to their highest levels in the past year, travelers registered more resignation over the hassles associated with airline travel. Overall, the quarter's frustration index stood at 55.1 percent, dipping 2.4 points since March but still above the 53.9 point level reported last summer.

The latest Access America's Traveler Frustration Index conducted in August and released today reported that Americans' frustration with gas prices was 8 percentage points higher than during the same three months in 2007, peaking this past spring at 88 percent. The survey found a similar boost in frustration levels over the cost of airline, cruise line and train tickets, up 7 points year over year. Frustration with hotel prices checked in at 49 percent, an increase of five points over 2007 levels.

Despite these concerns over rising costs, Americans reported less frustration with airline and airport service. Frustration levels declined five points since August 2007, now registering at 49 percent.

'Despite a summertime dip in gas prices, we're seeing a continued climb in frustrations over the cost of travel,' said Mark Cipolletti, vice president for Access America. 'The good news for the travel industry is that lower frustration levels in other categories, airline travel in particular, are moderating the spike in concerns over travel and lodging costs. But while the trend line in overall frustrations is encouraging, it's small comfort in the knowledge that more than one out of every two Americans is frustrated with various aspects of travel.'

The Traveler Frustration Index is created using a series of quarterly polls by Ipsos Public Affairs, a leading global research firm. Results of the aggregated index over the past five quarters are shown in the attached graphic.

Topping the list of frustrations is the cost of gas (86%), followed by the cost of airline, cruise or train tickets (55%), airline/airport service (49%) and the cost of lodging and/or other attractions (49%).

Many Americans report feeling frustrated when it comes to 'illness or injury' which causes a cancellation (37%), homeland security/safety (37%), labor actions (33%), 'the weather' (28%), service by other travel suppliers (27%) and difficulty booking trips (21%).

When asked an open ended question about the most frustrating aspect of travel in the last couple of months, one in three (31%) cited gas prices, while others report being most frustrated by issues related to traffic (18%), delays/timing (6%), airport/airline (6%) and security (4%).

The index also allows for comparisons among various demographic groups. For example, leisure travelers (55.2) are more frustrated than are business travelers (52.9). Women (57) are significantly more frustrated with traveling than are men (53.2) on the whole.

Other specific findings of note:

Women (61%) are considerably more likely than men (50%) to be frustrated with the cost of airline, cruise or train tickets. Similarly, women (26%) are more likely than men (17%) to be frustrated with difficulty booking their trip.

Younger Americans (52%), aged 18 to 34, and middle-aged Americans (52%), aged 35 to 54, are more likely than older Americans (42%), aged 55+, to be frustrated with the cost of lodging and/or attractions. Younger Americans (60%) are also more likely than their older counterparts (53%) to be frustrated with the cost of airline, cruise and train tickets. Older individuals (40%) are more likely than younger ones (35%) to be frustrated with homeland security. Booking trips also causes more older people (26%) grief than younger Americans (19%).

Interestingly, few regional differences exist. However, those living in the Northeast (33%) are more likely than those in the South (29%), West (28%), and the Midwest (22%) to be frustrated by the weather while traveling.

### **About the survey:**

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted Aug. 11-19, 2008. For the survey, a nationally representative sample of 2,006 Americans (including 1,025 recent travelers) was interviewed by telephone via Ipsos' U.S. Telephone Express omnibus. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points (3.1% for recent travelers), 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of adults in the U.S. been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data was weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/gender composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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