



AS IT IS

Airline Mask Requirements Encourage More People to Travel

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Airline travel in the United States fell more than 95 percent in April. Many people stayed at home because they were afraid of getting the highly infectious coronavirus on an airplane or at the airport.

The number of people flying now is still down about 75 percent.

This shows “traveler **confidence** is increasing in the United States,” says Joe Leader. He heads the Airline Passenger Experience Association. But that percentage represents a large drop from the usual “2.5 million passengers” at this time of year, Leader told VOA.

Airline companies have been disinfecting their aircraft, enforcing social distancing rules and requiring passengers to wear facial coverings.

Seth Kaplan follows the aviation industry. He says that as soon as the airlines required face **masks**, people started flying again.

Bill Lentsch serves as chief **customer** experience officer at Delta Airlines. He told VOA that the company is keeping its flights no more than 60 percent full. He said Delta was keeping the middle seats empty, which will likely continue until the end of September.

At Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C., Francis Massaquoi arrived on a United Airlines flight from Chicago. It was the first time he had flown since the **pandemic** began in March. Massaquoi said he was nervous at first. But once he got on the plane, he said, he felt better because everyone was wearing a mask.

Law student Sue Choi flew into Dulles airport on Korean Air. She said she was a “little **scared**. I’m only traveling now because I absolutely have to,” she said, “but I don’t feel **comfortable** with it.”

Kaplan noted that a lot of business travel has stopped, and most people are visiting friends and relatives. They include people like Donald MacCormack, who was at Dulles flying to Texas after visiting his daughter in Virginia. MacCormack said he also had been a little worried about flying.

“I’m **wiping** down my seat,” he said, as he was about to get on a flight to Houston.

The airlines are trying to persuade the public that travel is safe.

Airlines for America is a **lobbying** group representing the interests of large North American airlines. It said in a statement that the airlines are using high-quality air **filters** to improve the air passengers breath.

Most industry observers believe that airline cleanliness will continue long into the future.

Recently, however, the demand for air travel has begun to slow a little. That is probably because some states have announced travel restrictions as coronavirus case numbers in other areas continue rising.

Jennifer Rockwell of Alexandria, Virginia, said she is not planning to fly anytime soon. Her parents live in California, where infection numbers have been increasing. Rockwell said she will not visit them until there is a vaccine.

I’m Susan Shand.

VOA’s Deborah Block reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

Words in This Story

confidence - *n.* certainty

mask - *n.* a facial covering

customer - *n.* one who buys things from someone

pandemic - *n.* a contagious disease that spreads to other countries

scared - *adj.* being frightened

comfortable - *adj.* relaxed and easy

wipe - *v.* to wash or dust with a clothe

lobbying - *adj.* to represent and advocate for someone or something

filter - *n.* a device or a mass of material with tiny openings that cleans the air
