



Business travel

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Opinion polls

## The grumbling of passengers

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NO MATTER what changes, it seems North Americans like to grumble that nothing ever gets better. That's one finding of Ascend Worldwide's [annual survey of business travellers](http://www.ascendworldwide.com/download/Ascend-CorporateTravelSurveyResults-2011.pdf) (<http://www.ascendworldwide.com/download/Ascend-CorporateTravelSurveyResults-2011.pdf>). 70% of North Americans surveyed by the aerospace investment consultant said airline service is worse today than it was two years ago. And when given the chance to say what has improved, 40% said "nothing"—a level of pessimism more than twice that of Asian and Latin American respondents. But the negativity wasn't just limited to North America: 70% of the more than 380 people surveyed worldwide said global consolidation in the airline industry would result in fewer flight choices and higher prices.

Such consolidation could reverse a trend toward more low-cost airlines and cheaper fares, two of the top improvements business travellers say they have enjoyed over the past two years. The biggest positive change, though, has been greater efficiency in check-in and pre-flight services. The biggest complaints related to crowded planes—a byproduct of cheaper flights and a recovering economy, one would think—increased security queues and declining onboard services.

Travellers also said they expect business budgets for air travel to increase by about 5% this year, with almost half expecting the number of business flights to rise (compared with 35% in 2010 and only 10% in 2009). But if higher fares are on the way, something has to give.

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