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## Airline Quality and the Consumer Perception

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## Abstract

Operational performance of the U.S. airline industry has been monitored for the past 27 years by a quantitative model of metrics known as the Airline Quality Rating. The National Airline Quality Rating (<http://airlinequalityrating.com>) sets the industry standard for comparing performance quality among U.S. airlines. Criteria included in the Airline Quality Rating (AQR) report are screened to meet two basic elements: (1) they must be readily obtainable from published data sources for each airline, and (2) they must be important to consumers regarding airline quality. Results from this report are retrieved from the April 2016 Airline Quality Rating Report.

## Method

- The data for the Airline Quality Rating for all criteria is drawn from the U.S. Department of Transportation's monthly *Air Travel Consumer Report* (<http://dot.gov/airconsumer/>).
- Weights were established by surveying 65 airline industry experts regarding their opinion as to what consumers would rate as important (on a scale of 0 to 10) in judging airline quality.
- Weights reflect importance of the criteria in consumer decision-making, while signs reflect the direction of impact that the criteria should have on the consumers rating of airline quality.

## Airline Passenger Survey

- The Airline Passenger Survey (APS) was added as a new feature of the AQR in 2008 following increased interest in the relationship between consumer perceptions and objective airline industry performance.
- The goal of the APS is to gather information from the flying public on airline preferences, perceived passenger-friendliness of airlines, satisfaction and perceived importance of DOT quality measures, and other relevant industry issues.
- The APS most recently included items regarding air carrier preference, perceptions of passenger friendliness, weighting of quality factors considered when selecting carriers, open-ended items on recent travel crises and experiences, frequent flier status, and a variety of demographic variables.

## Criteria & Weights

On-Time (OT) Weight: 8.63

Denied Boarding (DB) Weight: 8.03

Mishandled Baggage (MB) Weight: 7.92

Customer Complaints (CC) Weight: 7.17

(Flight Problems, Oversales, Fares,  
Ticketing, Refunds, etc.)

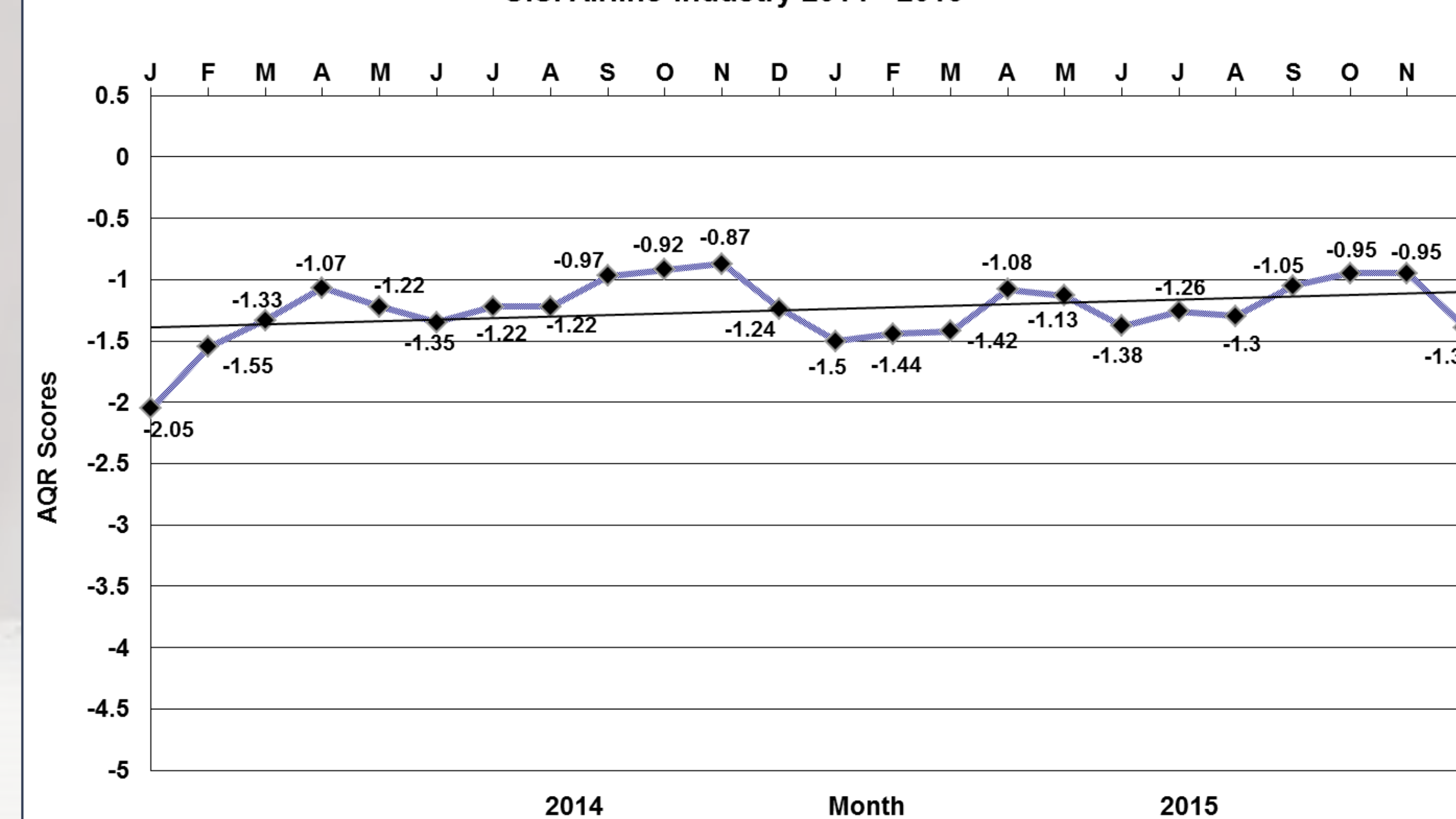
$$AQR = \frac{(+8.63*OT)+(-8.03*DB)+(-7.92*MB)+(-7.17*CC)}{(8.63+8.03+7.92+7.17)}$$

Airline Quality Rating Scores

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank	Score Rank
Alaska	-0.80 5	-0.65 5	-0.69 5	-0.77 6	-0.79 5	-0.94 4	-1.35 11	-1.16 9	-
American	-1.73 10	-1.35 7	-1.10 9	-1.11 10	-1.24 10	-1.28 11	-1.25 9	-1.71 9	-
Delta	-0.49 3	-0.60 3	-0.59 4	-0.58 4	-0.80 6	-1.22 7	N/A -	N/A -	-
Envoy Air	-2.85 12	-2.83 12	-1.95 15	-1.78 11	-2.51 15	-2.82 16	-2.83 18	-3.12 16	-
ExpressJet	-1.66 9	-2.12 11	-1.78 13	-1.95 13	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	-
Frontier	-2.60 11	-1.48 8	-1.35 11	-0.78 7	-0.75 4	-1.27 9	-1.09 7	-1.31 7	-
Hawaiian	-0.67 4	-0.53 2	-0.59 3	-0.71 5	-0.59 2	-0.58 2	-0.40 1	-0.69 1	-
JetBlue	-0.44 2	-0.61 4	-0.42 2	-0.43 2	-0.60 3	-0.70 3	-0.62 3	-0.90 3	-
SkyWest	-1.39 7	-1.84 10	-1.84 14	-1.88 12	-1.15 9	-1.28 10	-1.57 14	-2.13 13	-
Southwest	-1.00 6	-1.22 6	-1.08 8	-0.91 8	-0.93 7	-1.01 5	-1.00 5	-1.23 6	-
Spirit	-3.18 13	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	-
United	-1.43 8	-1.62 9	-1.43 12	-2.18 14	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	-
Virgin America	-0.40 1	-0.30 1	-0.32 1	-0.35 1	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -	-
Industry	-1.21	-1.24	-1.07	-1.11	-1.08	-1.20	-1.27	-1.63	-

NOTES:  
Scores and rankings for 2015 reflect the addition of Spirit to the airlines tracked.  
As of January 2014, data of the merged operations of American Airlines and US Airways are combined and appear only as American Airlines.  
As of January 2014, data of the merged operations of Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airlines are combined and appear only as Southwest Airlines.  
American Eagle became Envoy Airlines as of April 2014.  
Scores and rankings for 2012 reflect the combining of ExpressJet and Atlantic Southeast (appears as ExpressJet), the combining of United and Continental (appears as United), and the addition of Virgin America.  
As of January 2010, data of the merged operations of Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines are combined and appear only as Delta Air Lines.  
Scores and rankings for 2008 reflect the addition of Hawaiian to the airlines tracked.

Airline Quality Rating  
U.S. Airline Industry 2014 - 2015



## Conclusions

### Airline Quality Rating 2015

### Consumer Preferences 2015



- Airlines that have consistently performed poorly on objective quality measures are also low on consumer preference.
- The continued positive perceptions of carriers that have fallen in objective performance measures may suggest lingering consumer affiliation and loyalty.
- Future research on both the AQR and APS data seek to identify additional strategies for integrating such data. Such models and analyses will enhance researchers' ability to communicate the needs of the flying public to both airline industry and government leaders.

## References

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