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Brent D. Bowen

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, bowenb6@erau.edu

Dean E. Headley

Wichita State University

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Airline Quality Rating 2017

The 27th Year Reporting Airline Performance

**Dr. Brent D. Bowen
College of Aviation
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott, Arizona**

**Dr. Dean E. Headley
W. Frank Barton School of Business
Wichita State University
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Brent Bowen is Professor and Dean, College of Aviation, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Prescott Arizona. Previously Dr. Bowen Chaired the Department of Aviation Technology at Purdue University. Bowen attained his Doctorate in Aviation Sciences from Oklahoma State University and a Master of Business Administration degree from Oklahoma City University. His Federal Aviation Administration certifications include Airline Transport Pilot (Type-rated Douglas DC-3 SIC), Certified Flight Instructor (SEL, MEL, Instrument) with Gold Seal, Advanced-Instrument Ground Instructor, Aviation Safety Counselor, and Aerospace Education Counselor. Dr. Bowen has authored/co-authored numerous successful grant proposals totaling awards exceeding \$25 million and has in excess of 500 publications, papers and program appearances to his credit. His research interests focus on aviation applications of public productivity enhancement and marketing channels, specifically in the areas of service quality evaluation, benchmarking, safety and security. Dr. Bowen is an active industry consultant, pilot, and former fixed-base operator and scheduled air carrier operator. Dr. Bowen served on the National Research Council Steering Group on the Small Aircraft Transportation System and was named by the FAA Administrator to a National Academy of Science study group on airspace optimization as a component of the Next Generation Air Transportation System. Additionally, Dr. Bowen was appointed by the FAA Administrator to serve on a National Academy of Science panel to examine the need to cultivate a future generation of transportation leaders.

Dr. Dean E. Headley is Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing at the W. Frank Barton School of Business, Wichita State University. He holds a Doctorate in Marketing and Statistics from Oklahoma State University, a Master of Business Administration degree from Wichita State University, and a Master of Public Health Degree from the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Headley's research interests include methodology development for measurement of service quality, the connection between service quality and consumer behavior, consumer choice processes in service settings, and the effects of marketing activities on consumers and providers of services.

Dr. Bowen's and Dr. Headley's research on the development of the national Airline Quality Rating (AQR) is viewed by more than 75 million people each year and is annually featured by national news outlets such as ABC's Good Morning America, The Cable News Network, The Today Show, C-Span, USA Today, The Associated Press, The Wall Street Journal, Aviation Week and Space Technology, the network evening news shows, and in numerous other national and international media. Bowen and Headley have served as invited expert witnesses before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Operations and have served as invited speakers and panelists for such groups as the National Academy of Sciences/Transportation Research Board, Department of Transportation and other Congressional and Executive panels.

Their body of research has been recognized with awards from the American Marketing Association, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the Travel and Transportation Research Association and others.

AIRLINE QUALITY RATING 2017

**Brent D. Bowen, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Dean E. Headley, Wichita State University**

Abstract

The Airline Quality Rating (AQR) was developed and first announced in early 1991 as an objective method for assessing airline quality on combined multiple performance criteria. This current report, the Airline Quality Rating 2017, reflects monthly Airline Quality Rating scores for calendar year 2016. AQR scores for 2017 are based on 15 elements in four major areas that focus on airline performance aspects important to air travel consumers over the calendar year of 2016.

The Airline Quality Rating 2017 is a summary of month-by-month quality ratings for U.S. airlines that are required to report performance by virtue of having at least 1% of domestic scheduled-service passenger revenue during 2016. Using the Airline Quality Rating system of weighted averages and monthly performance data in the areas of on-time arrivals, involuntary denied boardings, mishandled baggage, and a combination of 12 customer complaint categories, airlines' comparative performance for the calendar year of 2016 is reported. This research monograph contains a brief summary of the AQR methodology, detailed data and charts that track comparative quality for domestic airline operations for the 12-month period of 2016, and industry results. Also, comparative Airline Quality Rating data for 2015 are included, where available, to provide historical perspective regarding performance quality in the industry.

The Airline Quality Rating System

The majority of quality ratings available in the past have relied on subjective surveys of consumer opinion that were infrequently collected. This subjective approach yields a quality rating that is essentially non-comparable from survey to survey for any specific airline. Timeliness of survey-based results can be a problem in the fast-paced airline industry as well. Before the Airline Quality Rating, there was effectively no consistent method for monitoring the quality of airlines on a timely, objective, and comparable basis. With the introduction of the AQR, a multi-factor, weighted average approach became available that had not been used previously in the airline industry. The method relies on utilizing published, publicly available data that reports actual airline performance on critical quality criteria important to consumers and combines them into a rating system. The final result is a rating for individual airlines with interval scale properties that is comparable across airlines and across time periods.

The Airline Quality Rating (AQR) is a weighted average of multiple elements (see Table 1) important to consumers when judging the quality of airline services. Elements considered for inclusion in the rating scale were screened to meet two basic criteria; 1) an element must be obtainable from published data sources for each airline; and 2) an element must have relevance to consumer concerns regarding airline quality. Data for the elements used in calculating the ratings represent performance aspects (on-time arrival, mishandled baggage,

involuntary denied boardings, and 12 customer complaint areas) of airlines that are important to consumers. All of the elements are reported in the *Air Travel Consumer Report* maintained by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Weights were originally 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. Each weight and element was assigned a plus or minus sign to reflect the nature of impact for that criterion on a consumer's perception of quality. For instance, the criteria of on-time arrival performance are included as a positive element because it is reported in terms of on-time successes, suggesting that a higher number is favorable to consumers. The weight for this criterion is high due to the importance most consumers place on this aspect of airline service. Conversely, the criteria that includes mishandled baggage is included as a negative element, and is reported in terms of mishandled bags per 1000 passengers served, suggesting that a higher number is unfavorable to consumers. Because having baggage arrive with passengers is important to consumers, the weight for this criterion is also high. Weights and positive/negative signs are independent of each other.

Weights reflect importance of the criteria in consumer decision-making, while signs reflect the direction of impact that the criteria should have on the consumer's rating of airline quality. When all criteria, weights and impacts are combined for an airline over the year, a single interval scaled value is obtained. This value is comparable across airlines and across time periods. In the spring of 2002, a nationwide survey of frequent flyers was conducted that allowed a revisiting of the weighting for the AQR elements. Analysis of the sample of 766 opinions showed no appreciable difference in the relative weights for the AQR elements. To maintain comparability across the years, the weights have been held constant.

The Airline Quality Rating criteria and the weighted average methodology allow a focused comparison of domestic airline performance. Unlike other consumer opinion approaches that have relied on consumer surveys and subjective opinion, the AQR continues to use a mathematical formula that considers multiple weighted objective criteria to arrive at a single, fully comparable rating for airline industry performance. The Airline Quality Rating provides both consumers and industry watchers a means for monitoring comparative quality for each airline on a timely basis, using objective, performance-based data. Over its 27 year history, the Airline Quality Rating has often been cited as an industry standard for comparing airline performance. Currently, the AQR stands as the longest regularly published rating available for airline performance. With the continued global trend in airline operations alliances, the argument becomes even stronger for the Airline Quality Rating to be used as a standard method for comparing the quality of airline performance for international operations as well.

Table 1

AIRLINE QUALITY RATING CRITERIA, WEIGHTS AND IMPACT

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	IMPACT (+/-)
OT On-Time		8.63 +
DB Denied Boardings		8.03 -
MB Mishandled Baggage		7.92 -
CC Customer Complaints		7.17 -
Flight Problems		
Oversales		
Reservations, Ticketing, and Boarding		
Fares		
Refunds		
Baggage		
Customer Service		
Disability		
Advertising		
Discrimination		
Animals		
Other		

Data for all criteria is drawn from the U.S. Department of Transportation's monthly *Air Travel Consumer Report*. (<http://dot.gov/airconsumer/>)

The formula for calculating the AQR score is:

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

What the Airline Quality Rating Tells Us About 2016

The Airline Quality Rating industry score for 2016 shows an industry that improved in overall performance quality over the previous year. Nine airlines (Alaska, American, Delta, ExpressJet, Frontier, SkyWest, Southwest, Spirit and United) showed improvement in AQR scores in 2016. Spirit had the largest improvement in their AQR score for 2016. Three airlines (Hawaiian, JetBlue and Virgin America) all had a decline in their 2016 AQR score from the previous year. JetBlue had the largest decline in AQR score for 2016.

The **overall industry** AQR score improved for 2016. Taking all 12 rated airlines together, the AQR score for the industry improved from a level of -1.21 in 2015 to -0.95 in 2016. The 2016 score is to the best AQR score in the 26 year history of the rating. Improved performance was seen in all four of the areas tracked. As an industry, the AQR criteria show that on-time arrival percentage was better (81.4% in 2016 compared to 79.9% in 2015). The industry mishandled baggage rate was better, decreasing from 3.24 per 1,000 passengers in 2015 to 2.70 per 1,000 passengers in 2016. Involuntary denied boardings per passenger served by the industry improved to 0.62 per 10,000 passengers in 2016 from 0.76 per 10,000 passengers in 2015. The consumer complaint rate across the industry declined to 1.52 per 100,000 passengers in 2016 from 1.90 per 100,000 passengers in 2015. Of the 12,766 complaints registered with the DOT regarding all U.S. domestic carriers, 73.5% were for flight problems, baggage problems, reservation, ticketing and boarding issues, or customer service problems. Improvement in industry performance in all of areas in the ratings is a positive sign for consumers and airlines alike. The 20% decrease in the rate of consumer complaints in 2016 suggests that improved performance in important areas to consumers has been noticed.

Alaska Airlines (AS) had performance improvement in two of the four areas tracked. Better on-time arrival performance (87.3% in 2016 compared to 86.4% in 2015) and a 50% reduction in the rate of mishandled baggage were the bright spots. An increase in involuntary denied boardings per 10,000 passengers (0.40 in 2016 compared to 0.33 in 2015) was the only negative. An identical rate of customer complaints (0.50 per 100,000 passengers in 2016 and 0.50 in 2015) had a neutral effect on the AQR score. Alaska Airlines' overall AQR score is the third most improved of all airlines rated. With two of four areas showing improvement in performance, the AQR score of -0.80 for Alaska Airlines for 2015 improved to -0.39 for 2016.

American Airlines (AA) The AQR score for the airline improved in 2016 compared to 2015. The improvement in AQR score reflects better performance in three of four criteria measured. On-time arrivals declined slightly (79.4% in 2016 compared to 80.03% in 2015). Involuntary denied boardings (0.64 in 2016 compared to 0.77 in 2015), baggage handling (3.38 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 compared to 3.98 in 2015) and customer complaints per 100,000 passengers (2.49 in 2016 compared to 3.36 in 2015) all showed improved performance. The impact of better performance outcomes for most criteria combined to produce an improved (-1.35 in 2016 compared to -1.73 in 2015) American Airlines' AQR score for 2016.

Delta Air Lines (DL) On-time percentage for 2016 shows an improvement over 2015 (86.5% in 2016 and 85.9% in 2015). Their rate of mishandled baggage of 2.08 bags per 1,000 passengers in 2015 was improved to 1.81 for 2016. A decrease in the rate of denied boardings (2016 rate of 0.10 per 10,000 passengers compared to 0.16 for 2015) also helped improve their AQR score for 2016. A decrease in the rate of customer complaints (0.68 per 100,000 passengers in 2016 compared to 0.74 in 2015) combined with other improved performance measures to yield an overall improved AQR score for 2016 (AQR score of -0.49 in 2015 improved to -0.40 in 2016).

ExpressJet (EV) On-time performance improved in 2016 (79.8% in 2016 compared to 77.9% in 2015). ExpressJet's involuntary denied boarding performance in 2015 of 1.86 denied boardings per 10,000 passengers was improved to 1.51 in 2016. Even with improvement, their involuntary denied boardings rate is well above the 2016 industry average of 0.62. A customer complaint rate of 0.51 complaints per 100,000 passengers is well below the industry average of 1.52 for 2016 and is better than their 2015 rate of 0.62. Their mishandled baggage rate of 4.31 per 1,000 passengers is higher than the industry rate of 2.70 bags per 1,000 passengers, but is an improvement over their 2015 rate of 5.06. Overall, ExpressJet's AQR score improved for 2016 compared to 2015 (-1.36 for 2016 compared to -1.66 for 2015).

Frontier Airlines (F9) On-time performance in 2016 (76.0%) improved compared to 2015 (73.2%). Frontier's denied boarding performance (0.58 per 10,000 passengers in 2016 compared to 1.00 in 2015) was better than last year. Their mishandled baggage rate of 3.83 per 1,000 passengers for 2016 was worse than their 2015 rate of 3.08. A customer complaint rate of 5.94 complaints per 100,000 passengers for 2016 was noticeable lower than their 2015 rate of 7.86. Frontier's 2016 AQR score of -2.24 compared to -2.60 for 2015 was the result of performance gains in three of the four criteria.

Hawaiian Airlines (HA) On-time performance (88.4% in 2015 and 91.1% for 2016) is the best of all airlines rated for 2015 and 2016. Hawaiian's involuntary denied boarding performance (0.05 per 10,000 passengers in 2016 and 0.03 in 2015) is the best of the airlines rated and compares very favorably to the industry average of 0.62. A customer complaint rate of 1.16 complaints per 100,000 passengers in 2016 is worse than last year's rate of 1.06. Their mishandled baggage rate of 2.67 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 is slightly worse than their 2015 rate of 2.65. Hawaiian had the fifth best AQR score for 2016 at -0.69 and is one of three airlines to show a decline in their 2016 AQR score.

JetBlue Airways (B6) On-time performance in 2016 declined to 75.0% from 76.0% in 2015. Jet Blue's denied boarding performance (0.92 per 10,000 passengers in 2016 up from 0.02 in 2015) is a noticeable reversal from previous years. A customer complaint rate of 0.75 complaints per 100,000 passengers was lower in 2016 (0.86 in 2015) and was about half the industry rate of 1.52 for 2016. Their mishandled baggage rate of 1.61 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 was second best among airlines rated and was lower than their 2015 rate of 1.81. JetBlue had the fourth best AQR score (-0.60) of the airlines rated for 2016. The decline in AQR score for 2016 from their 2015 score of -0.44 was the largest decline of all airlines.

SkyWest Airlines (OO) On-time performance of 79.7% in 2015, improved to 82.3% for 2016. SkyWest's involuntary denied boardings performance (0.98 per 10,000 passengers in 2016, compared to 1.78 in 2015) improved, but was above the industry average of 0.62 for 2016. A customer complaint rate of 0.49 complaints per 100,000 passengers in 2016 compared to the 2015 rate of 0.65 had positive impact on their 2016 AQR score. Their mishandled baggage rate of 3.36 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 improved from the 2015 rate of 4.05 bags per 1,000 passengers. SkyWest's AQR score improved to -0.97 in 2016 from -1.39 in 2015 and is the second most improved airline in the ratings.

Southwest Airlines (WN) An on-time arrival percentage of 80.8% in 2016 was better than their 79.7% in 2015. A customer complaint rate of 0.47 per 100,000 passengers in 2016 was better than their 2015 rate of 0.52. An involuntary denied boarding rate of 1.08 per 10,000 passengers in 2015, decreased to 0.99 per 10,000 passengers in 2016. A mishandled baggage rate of 2.98 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 was better than their rate of 3.31 per 1,000 passengers for 2015. Overall, Southwest shows improved performance (AQR score of -0.88 for 2016 compared to -1.00 in 2015) for 2016 with performance improvement in all four areas rated.

Spirit Airlines (NK) was included in the AQR for the first time as an airline required to report performance data in 2015. On-time performance of 69.0% in 2015 was improved to 74.3% in 2016. Spirit's rate of involuntary denied boarding performance of 0.31 per 10,000 passengers in 2015 declined to 0.58 for 2016. Their mishandled baggage rate of 2.16 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 improved from 2.57 in 2015. A customer complaint rate of 11.73 complaints per 100,000 passengers in 2015 was reduced to 6.74 in 2016. This rate does not compare well to the industry average of 1.52 for all airlines rated. Overall, Spirit Airlines entered the AQR ratings 2015 with the worst AQR score (-3.18) of any airline rated that year. Their AQR score of -2.01 is the most improved of all airlines rated in 2016.

United Airlines (UA) On-time arrival performance improved from 78.2% in 2015 to 81.7% in 2016. Their mishandled baggage rate decreased from 3.21 per 1,000 passengers in 2015 to 2.60 in 2016. Performance regarding involuntary denied boardings of 0.77 per 10,000 passengers in 2015 improved to 0.43 for 2016. A positive performance in customer complaint rate of 2.27 in 2016 compared to 2.85 per 100,000 passengers in 2015 combined with the other three positive performance improvements helped improve United's 2016 AQR score to -1.05 from -1.43 in 2015.

Virgin America (VX) On-time performance of 76.2% in 2016 was a decline from their 79.9% for 2015. Virgin America's involuntary denied boarding performance (0.12 per 10,000 passengers in 2016 was the same as their 0.12 rate in 2015) was the third best of the airlines rated and compares very favorably to the industry average of 0.62. A 2016 customer complaint rate of 1.85 complaints per 100,000 passengers is worse than the industry average of 1.52, and is worse than their 2015 rate of 1.66. Their mishandled baggage rate of 1.03 per 1,000 passengers in 2016 (best of all airlines rated) is better than the industry rate of 2.70 bags per 1,000 passengers but is a decline over their 2015 rate of 0.84. Overall, Virgin America declined in three of the four criteria. They were not able to maintain their industry leading AQR score (-0.40 for 2015) and had a decline in AQR score for 2016 to -0.50.

Previous Airline Quality Reports

Bowen, Brent D., Headley, Dean E. and Luedtke, Jacqueline R. (1991), Airline Quality Rating, National Institute for Aviation Research Report 91-11, Wichita, Kansas.

Bowen, Brent D. and Headley, Dean E. (1992,1993,1994,1995), Airline Quality Rating Report, National Institute for Aviation Research Report Series, Wichita, Kansas.

Bowen, Brent D., and Headley, Dean E. (1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), Airline Quality Rating Report, W. Frank Barton School of Business, Wichita, Kansas.

For more information contact either:

Dr. Dean E. Headley, Associate Professor
Department of Marketing
W. Frank Barton School of Business
Wichita State University
304 Clinton Hall
Wichita, KS 67260-0084

Dr. Brent D. Bowen, Professor & Dean
College of Aviation
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
3700 Willow Creek Rd.
Prescott, Arizona 86301

Office: (316) 978-3367
E-mail: dean.headley@wichita.edu

Office: (928) 777-6802
Email: brent.bowen1@erau.edu

Detail of Airline Performance

Since the Airline Quality Rating is comparable across airlines and across time, monthly rating results can be examined both individually and collectively. The following pages outline the AQR scores for the industry and for each airline rated by month for 2016. For comparison purposes, results are also displayed for 2015, where available. A composite industry chart that combines the airlines tracked is shown at first, with individual airline performance charts following in alphabetical order.

Airline Quality Rating Scores 2009 - 2016

	2016 AQR		2015 AQR		2014 AQR		2013 AQR		2012 AQR		2011 AQR		2010 AQR		2009 AQR	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Alaska	-0.39	1	-0.80	5	-0.65	5	-0.69	5	-0.77	6	-0.79	5	-0.94	4	-1.39	11
American	-1.35	9	-1.73	10	-1.35	7	-1.10	9	-1.11	10	-1.24	10	-1.28	11	-1.25	9
Delta	-0.40	2	-0.49	3	-0.60	3	-0.59	4	-0.58	4	-0.80	6	-1.22	7	N/A	-
ExpressJet	-1.36	10	-1.66	9	-2.12	11	-1.76	13	-1.95	13	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-
Frontier	-2.24	12	-2.60	11	-1.48	8	-1.35	11	-0.78	7	-0.75	4	-1.27	9	-1.09	7
Hawaiian	-0.69	5	-0.67	4	-0.53	2	-0.59	3	-0.71	5	-0.59	2	-0.58	2	-0.40	1
JetBlue	-0.60	4	-0.44	2	-0.61	4	-0.42	2	-0.43	2	-0.60	3	-0.70	3	-0.62	3
SkyWest	-0.97	7	-1.39	7	-1.84	10	-1.84	14	-1.88	12	-1.15	9	-1.28	10	-1.57	14
Southwest	-0.88	6	-1.00	6	-1.22	6	-1.06	8	-0.81	8	-0.93	7	-1.01	5	-1.00	5
Spirit	-2.01	11	-3.18	13	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-
United	-1.05	8	-1.43	8	-1.62	9	-1.43	12	-2.18	14	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-
Virgin America	-0.50	3	-0.40	1	-0.30	1	-0.32	1	-0.35	1	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-
Industry	-0.95		-1.21		-1.24		-1.07		-1.11		-1.08		-1.20		-1.27	

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 USAirways 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.

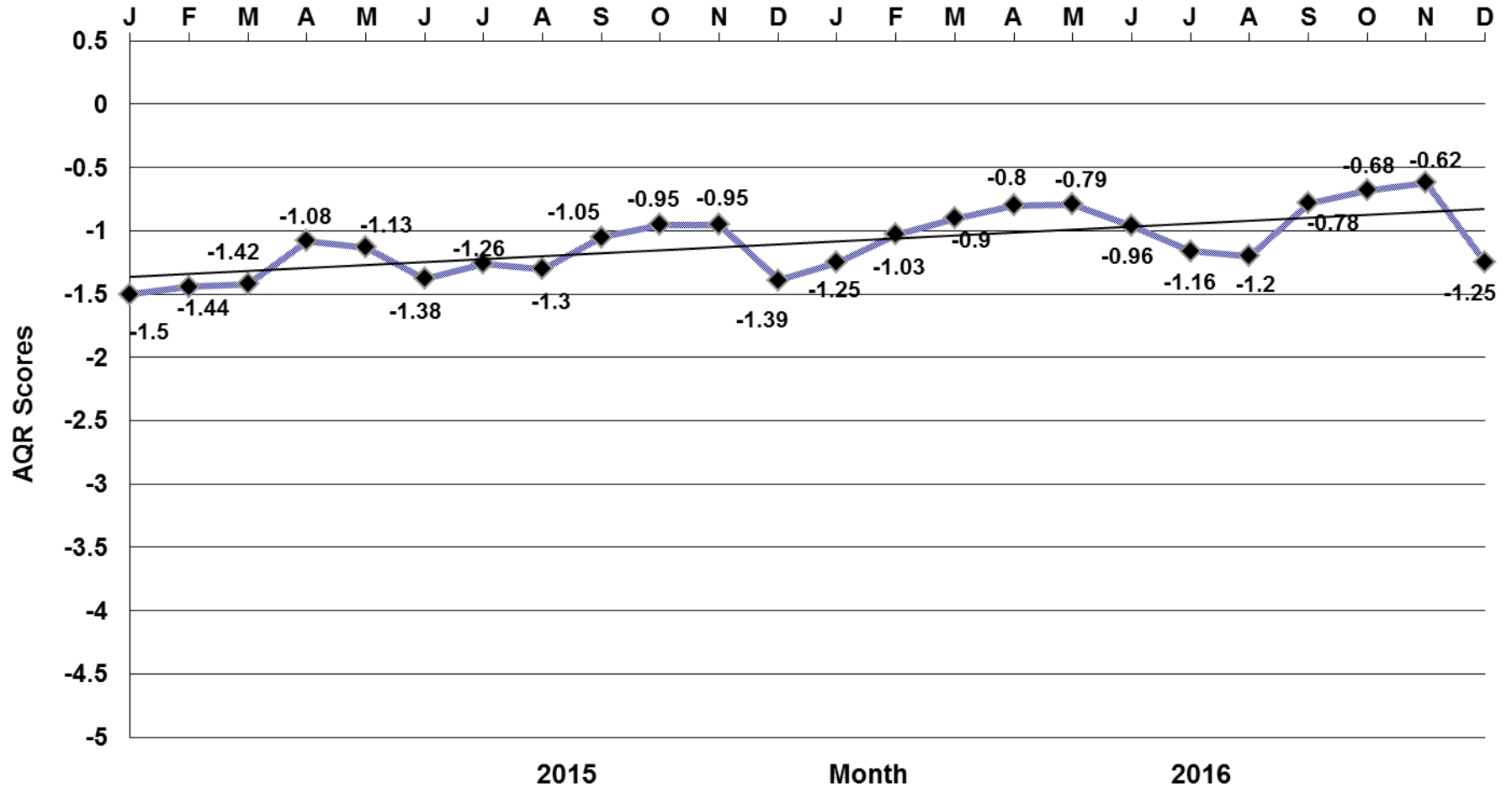
American Eagle became Envoy Airlines as of April 2014.

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.

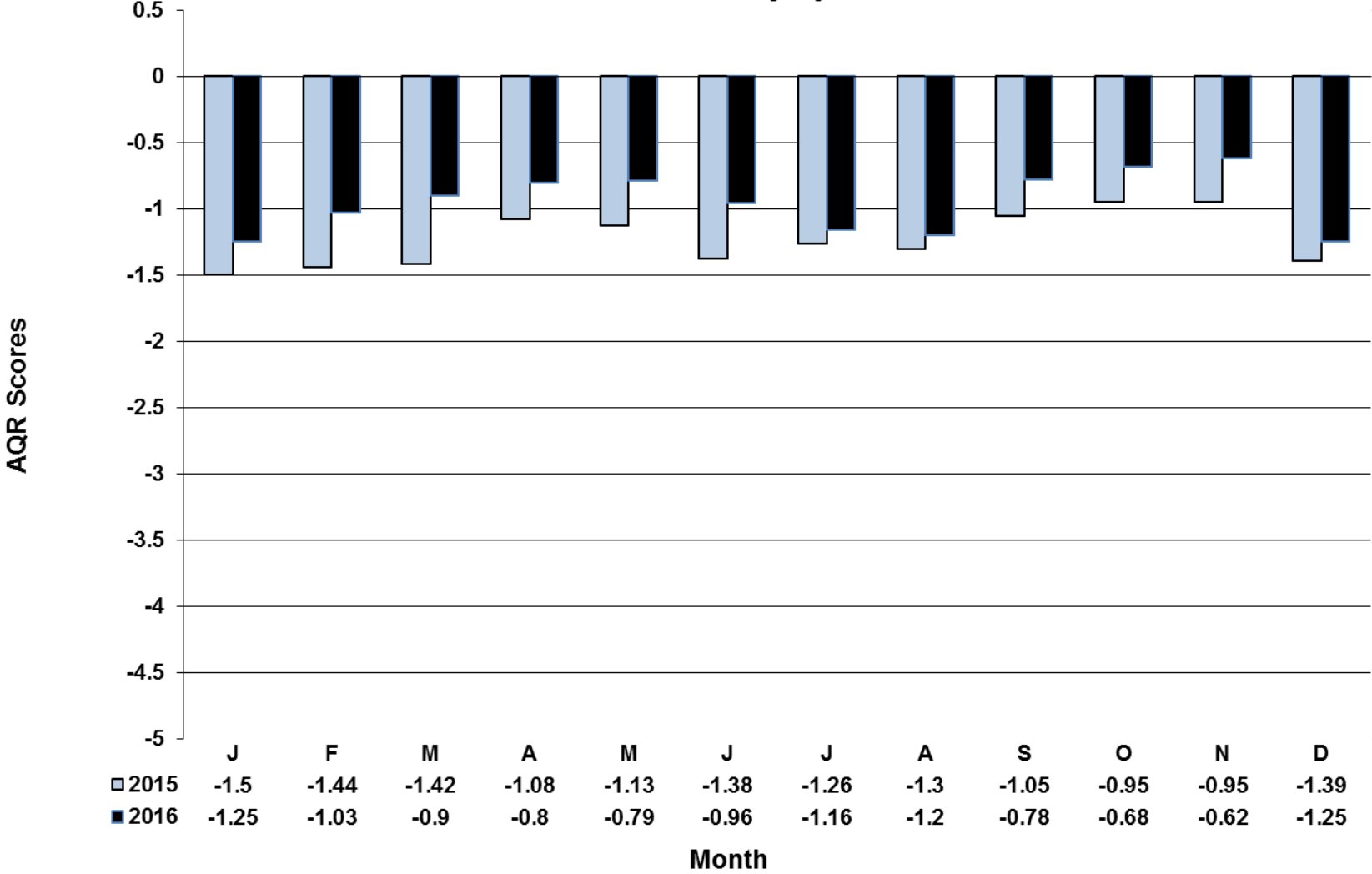
Airline Quality Rating

U.S. Airline Industry 2015 - 2016



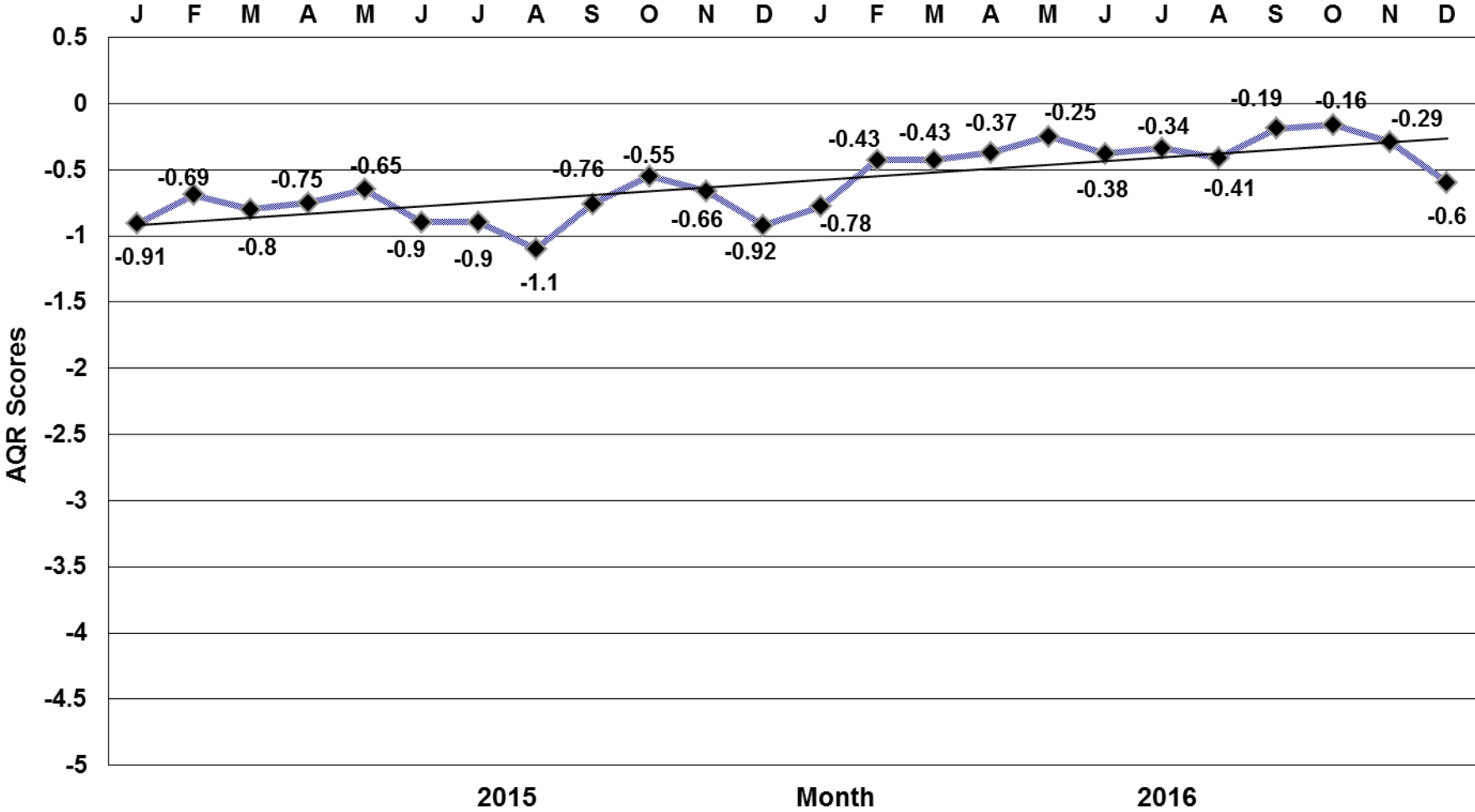
Airline Quality Rating

U.S. Airline Industry by Month



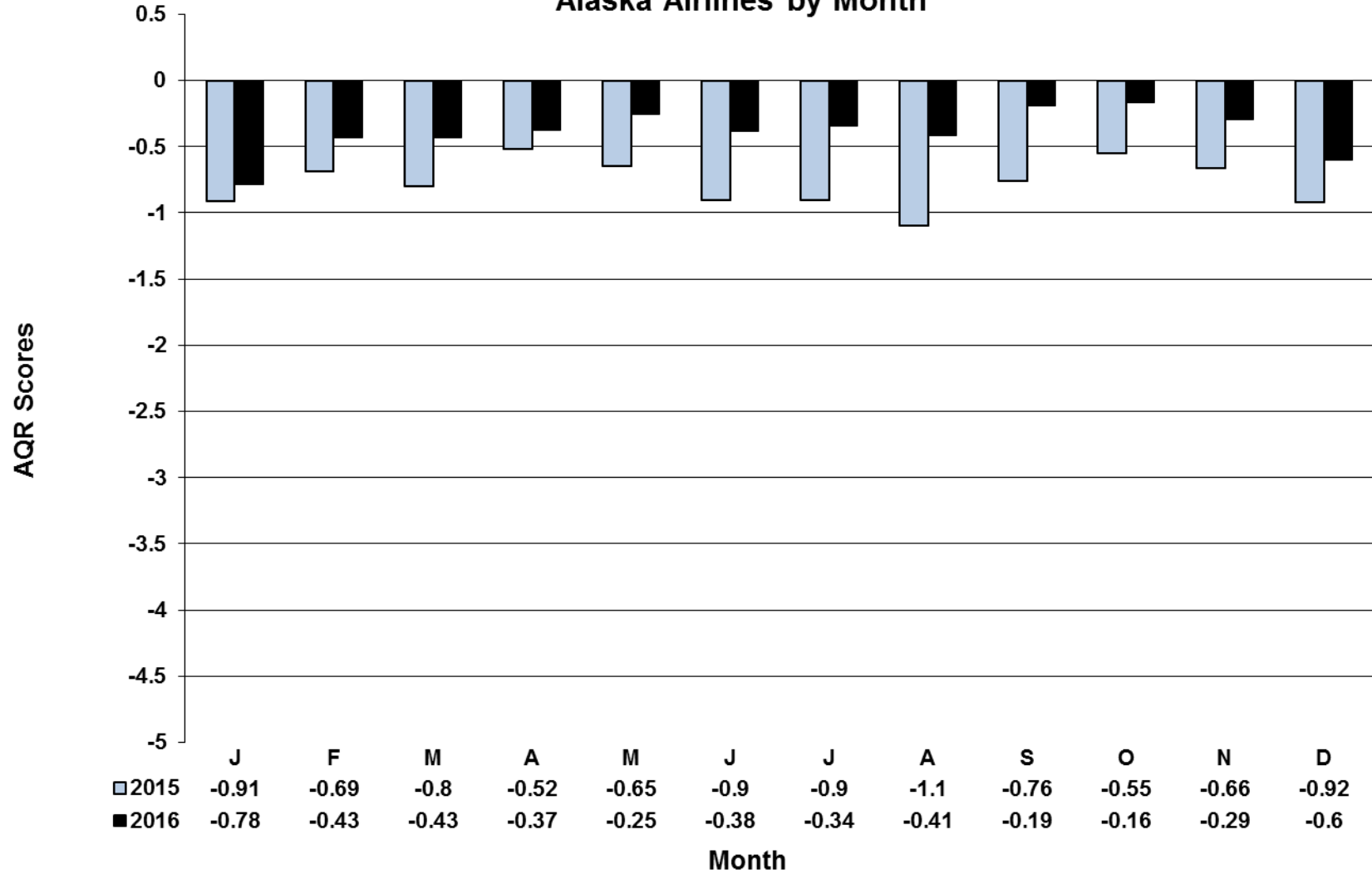
Airline Quality Rating

Alaska Airlines 2015 - 2016



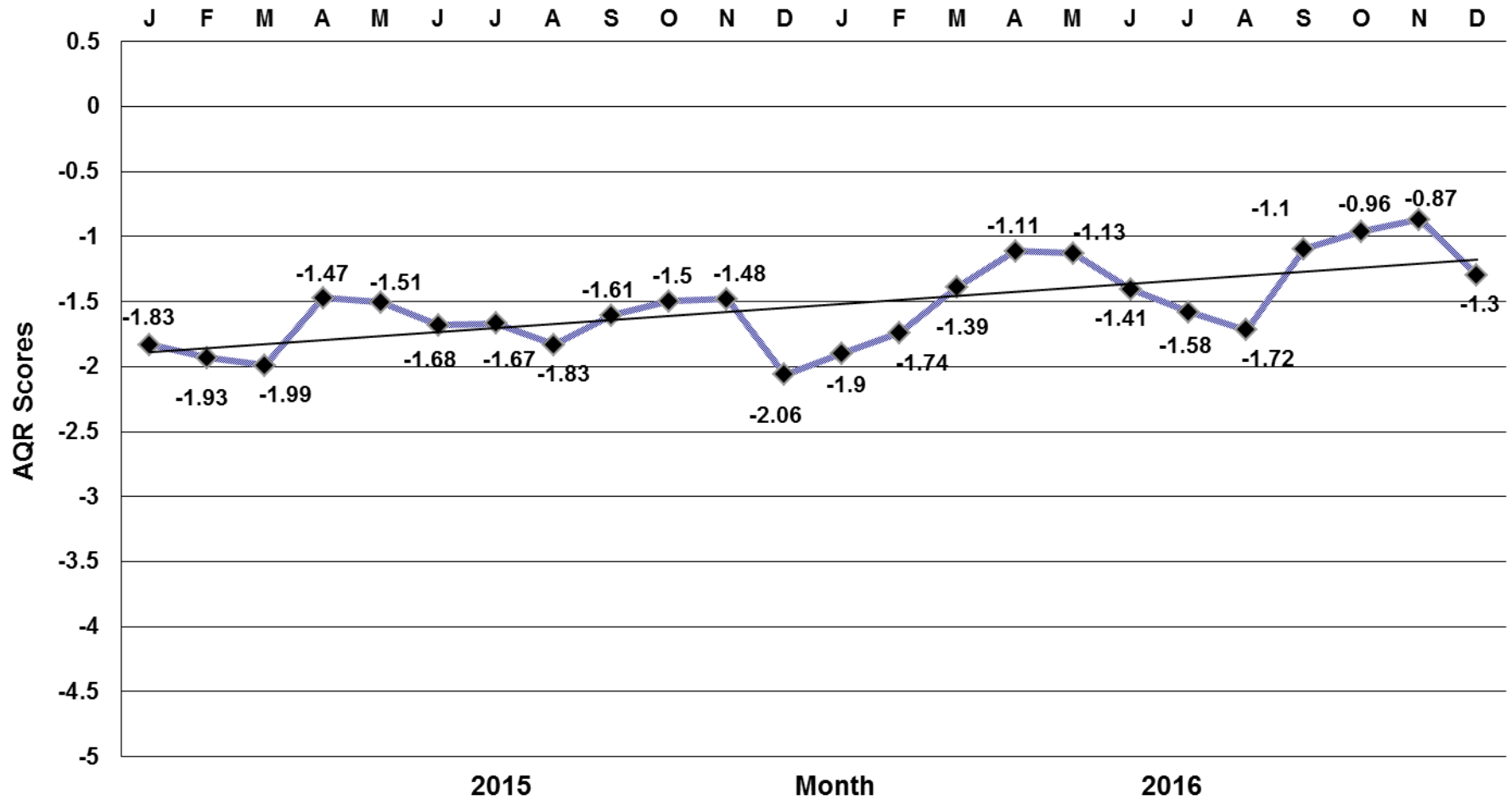
Airline Quality Rating

Alaska Airlines by Month



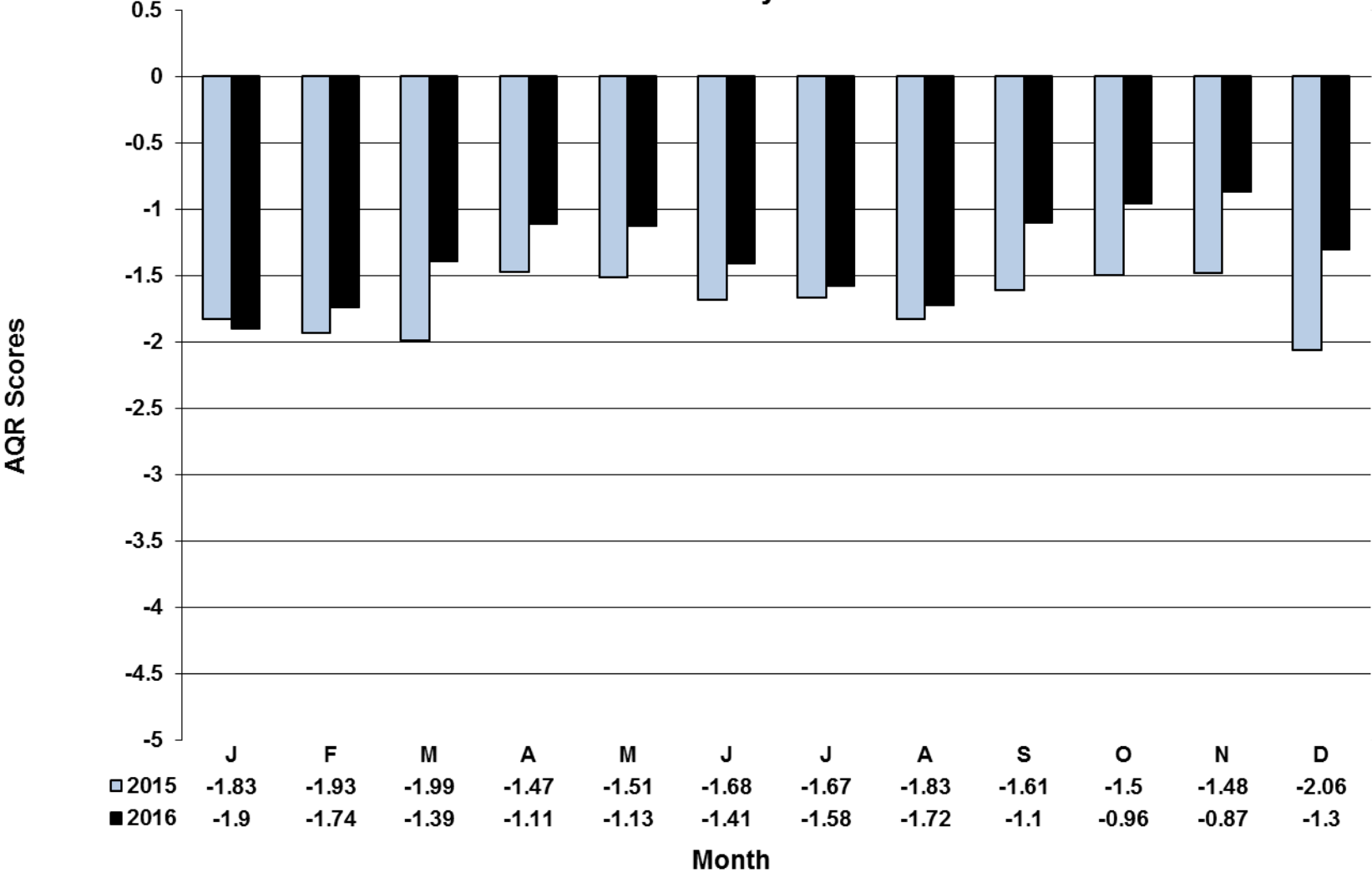
Airline Quality Rating

American Airlines 2015 - 2016



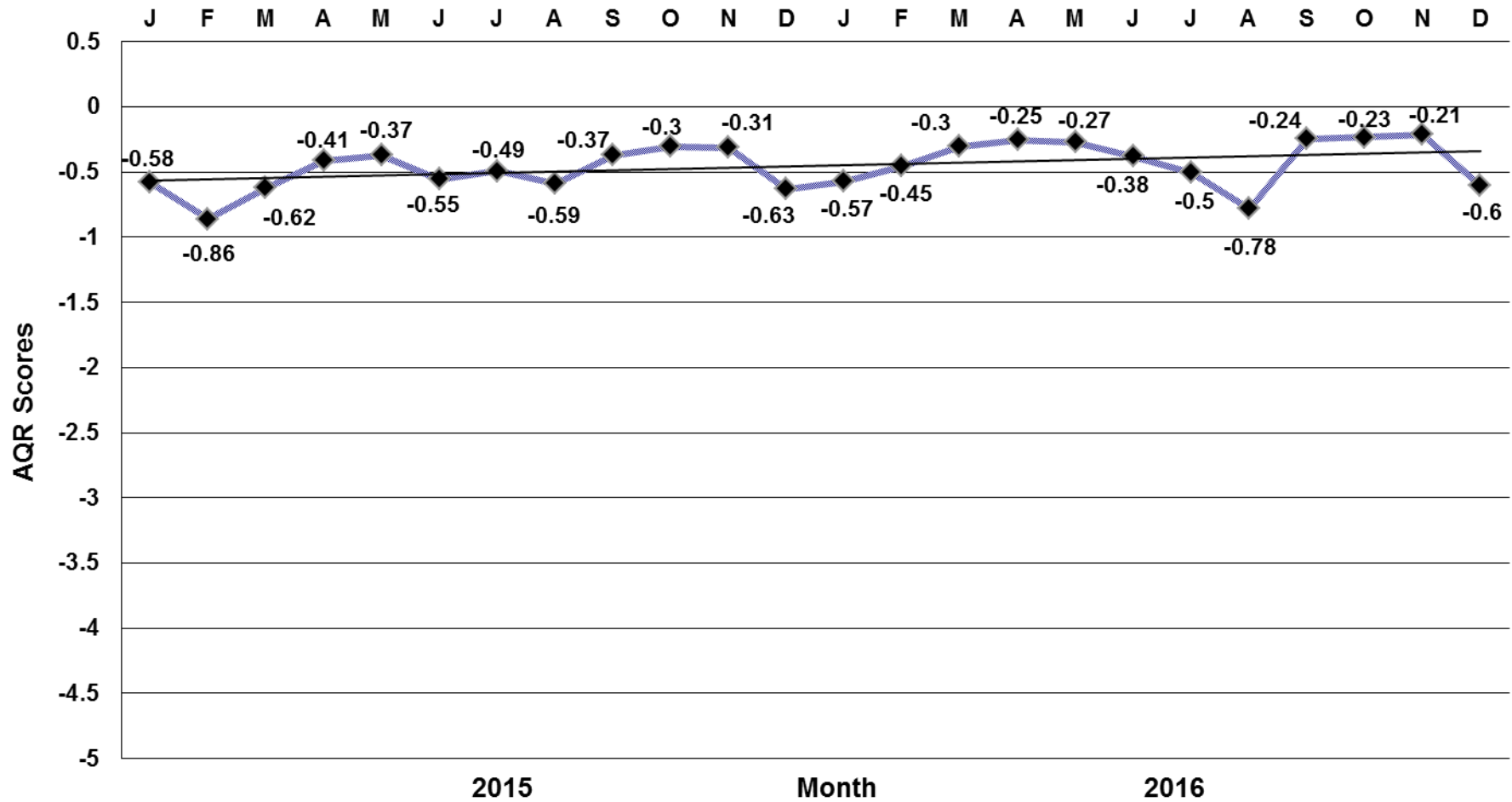
Airline Quality Rating

American Airlines by Month



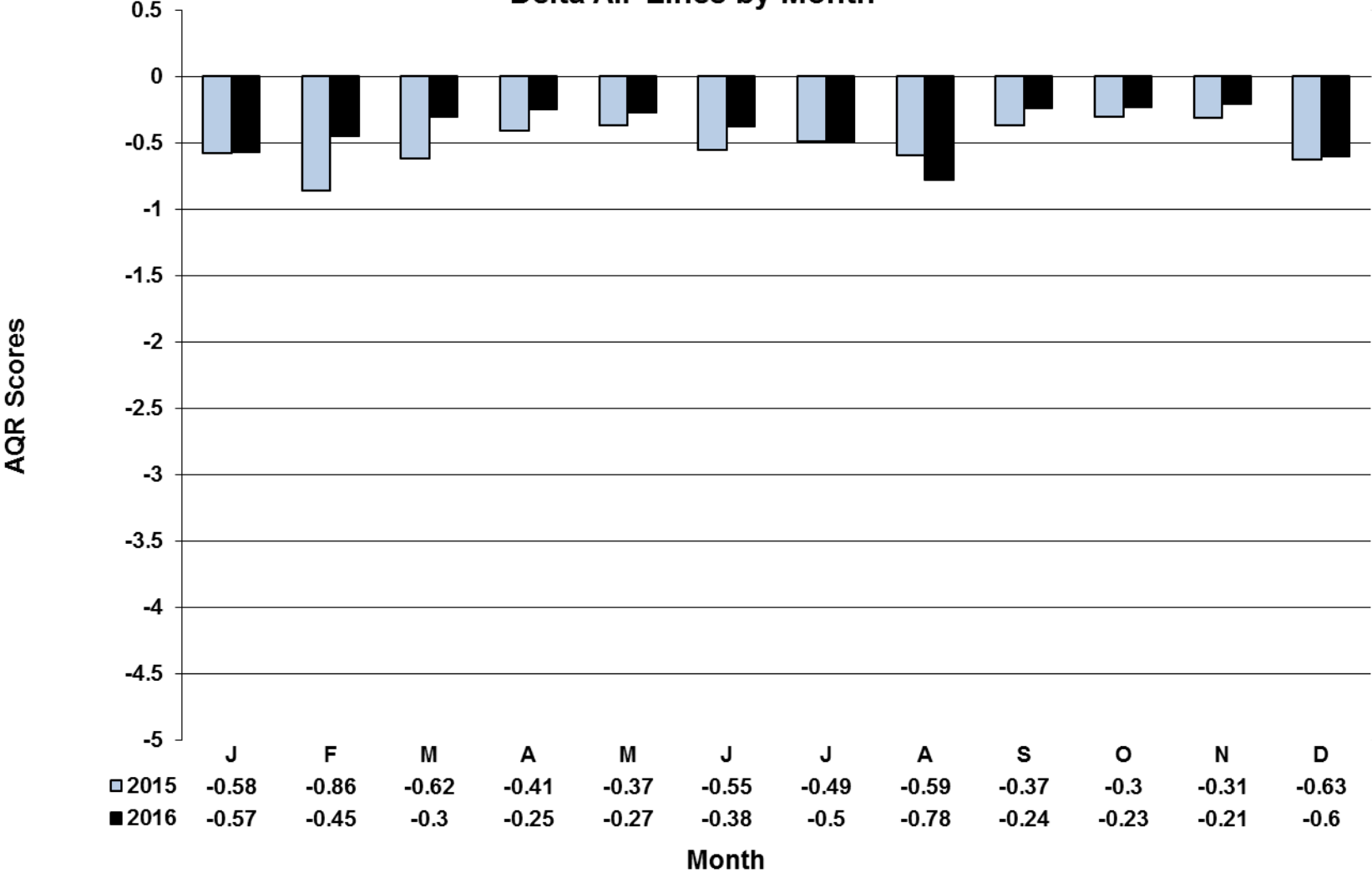
Airline Quality Rating

Delta Air Lines 2015 - 2016



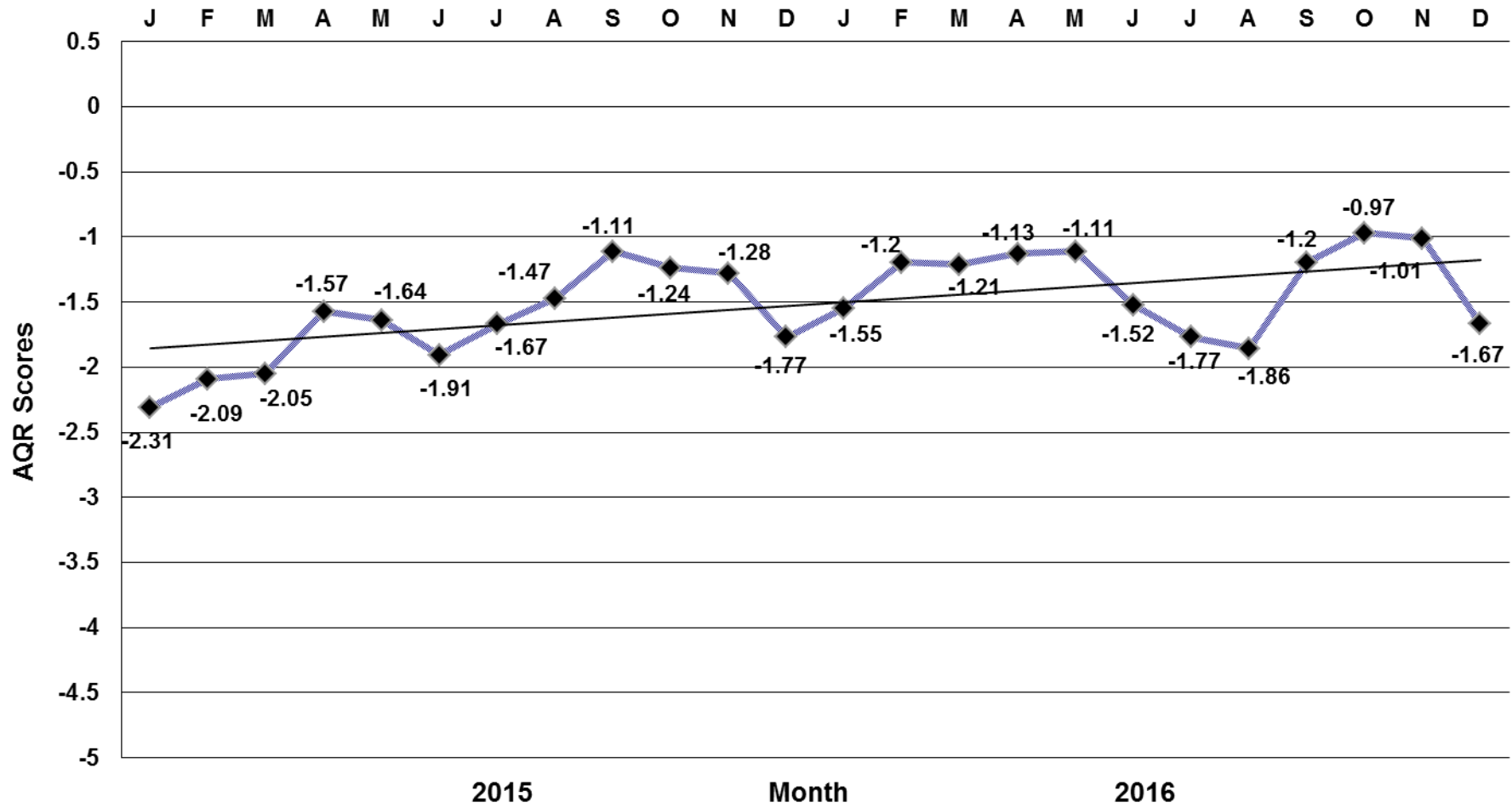
Airline Quality Rating

Delta Air Lines by Month



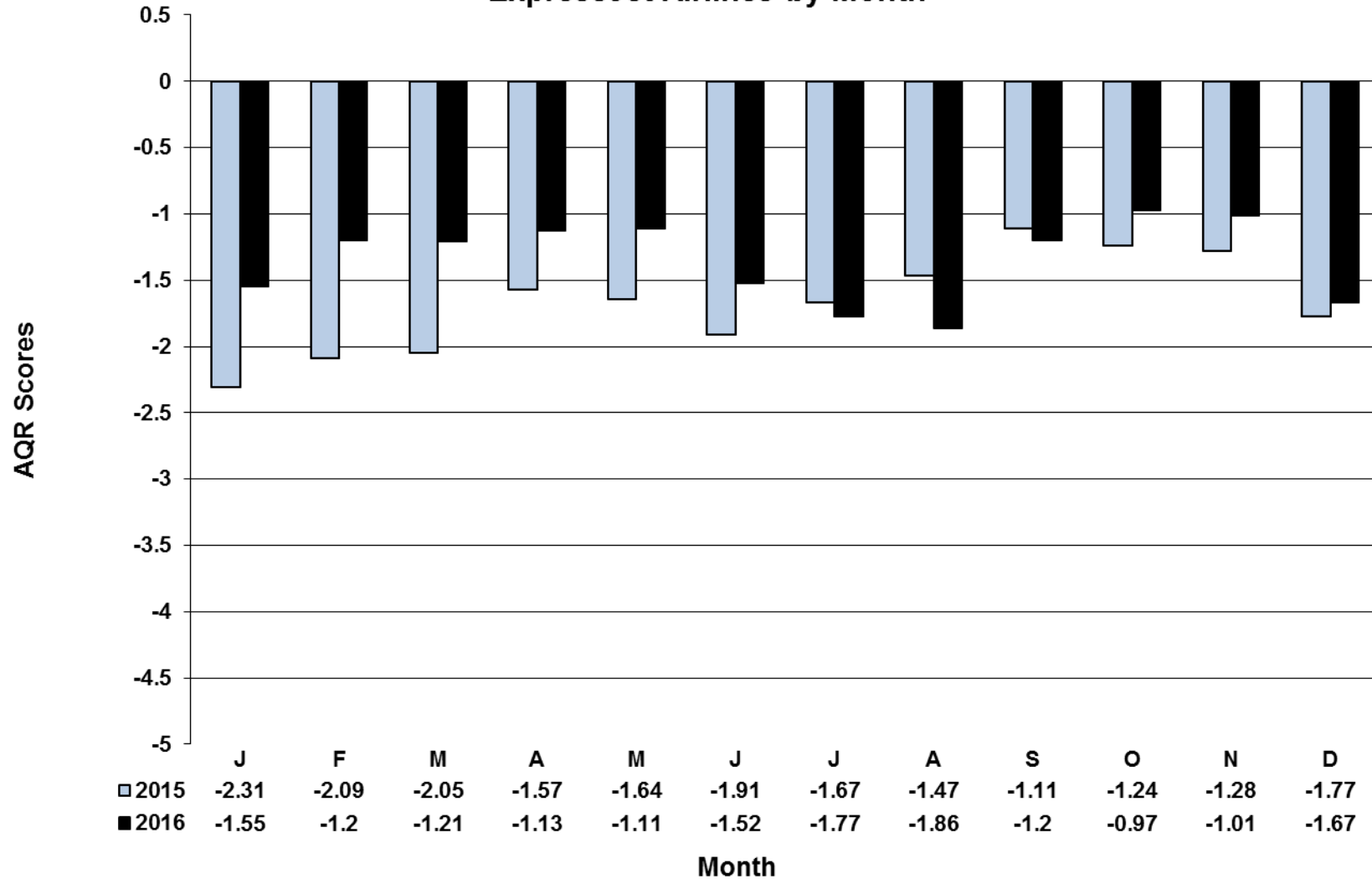
Airline Quality Rating

ExpressJet Airlines 2015 - 2016



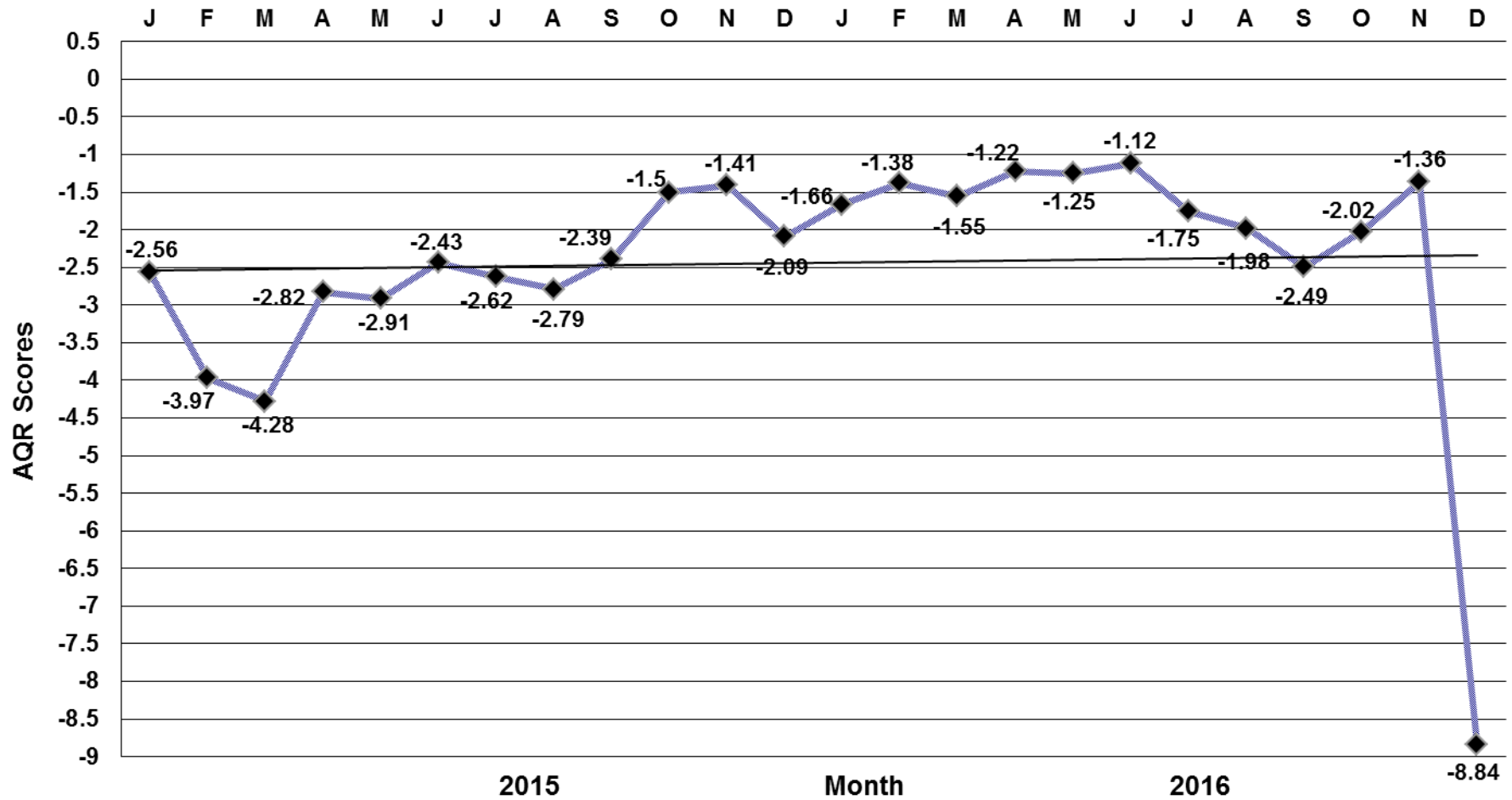
Airline Quality Rating

ExpressJet Airlines by Month



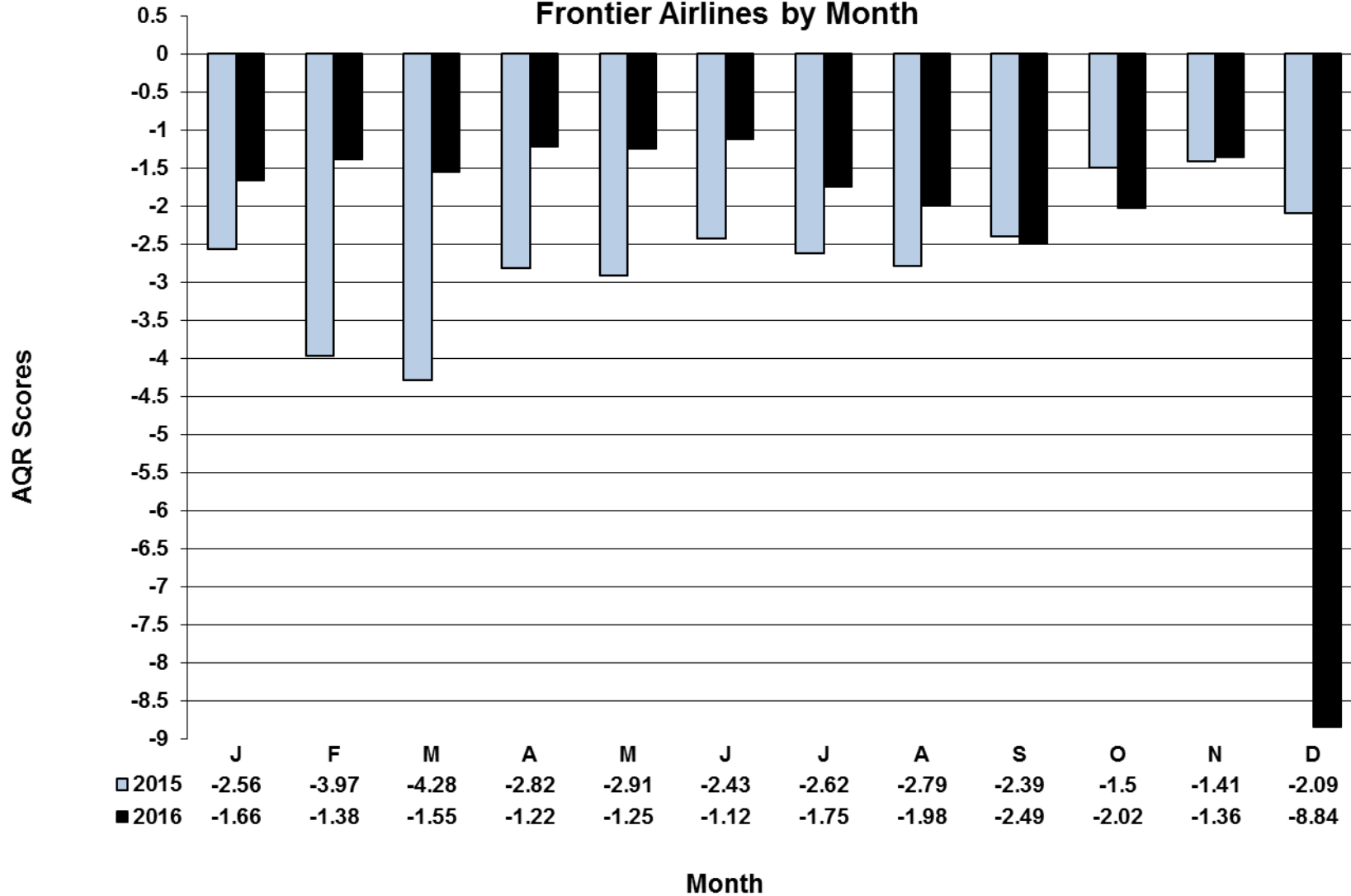
Airline Quality Rating

Frontier Airlines 2015 - 2016



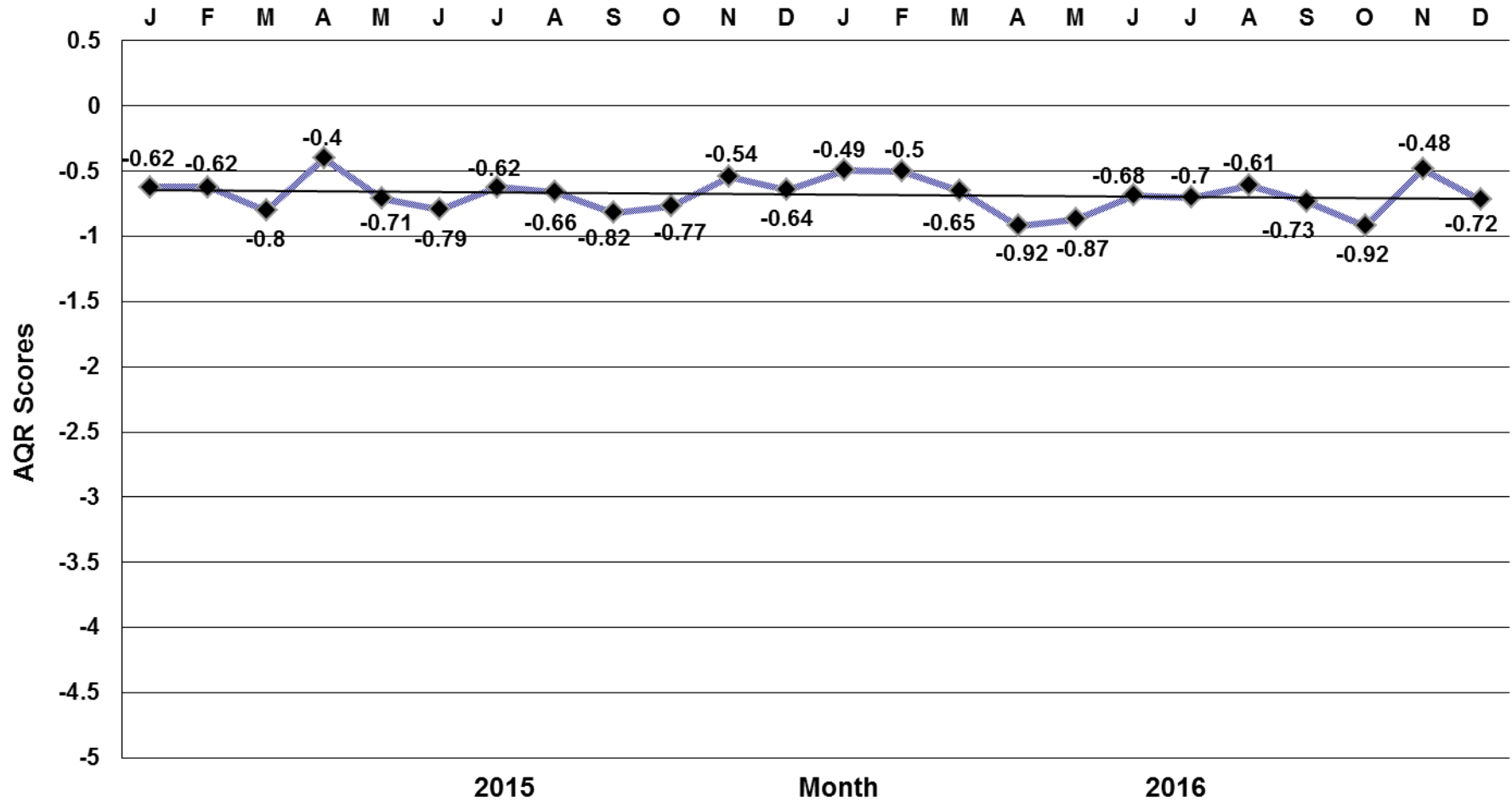
Airline Quality Rating

Frontier Airlines by Month



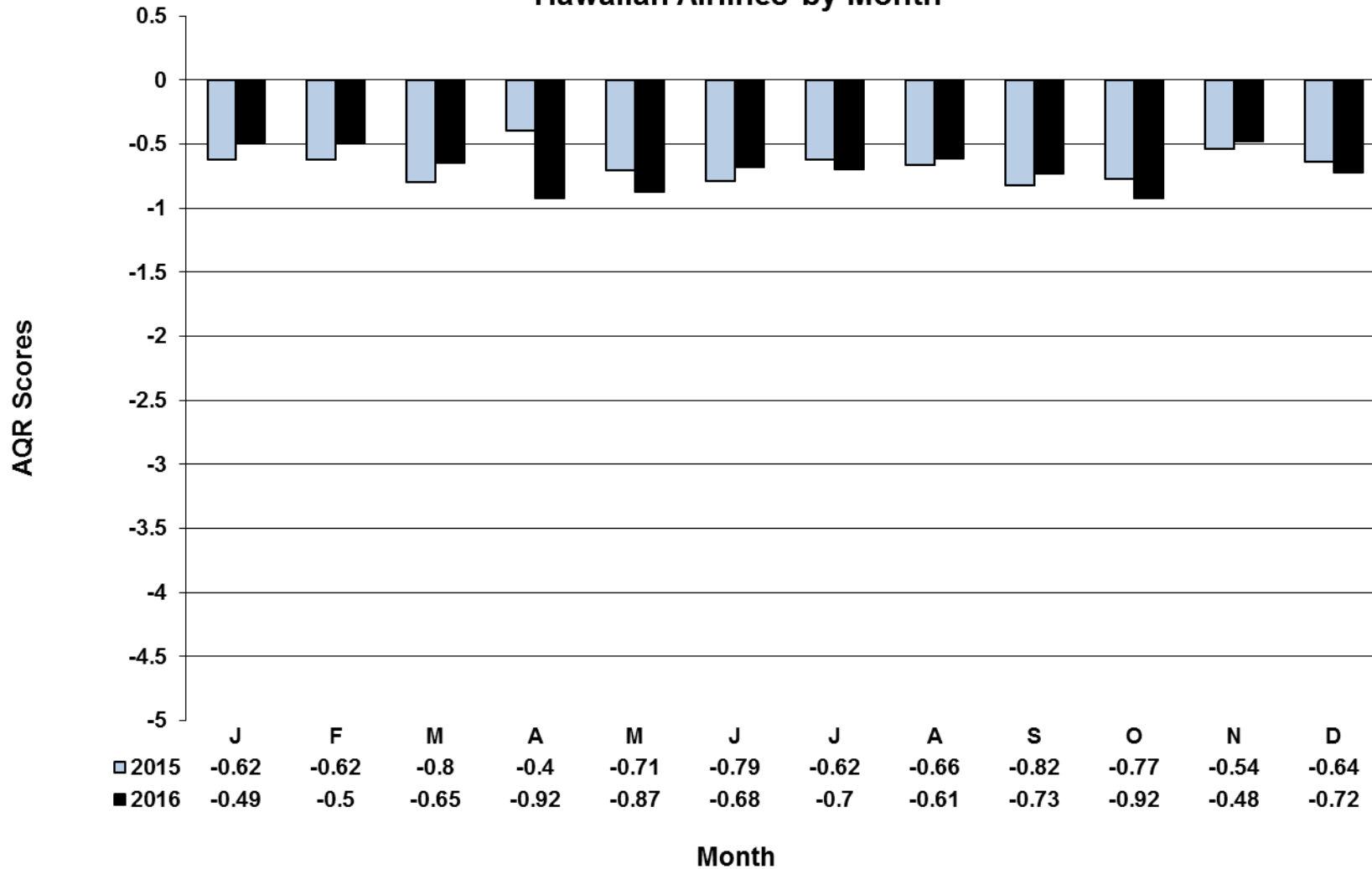
Airline Quality Rating

Hawaiian Airlines 2015 - 2016



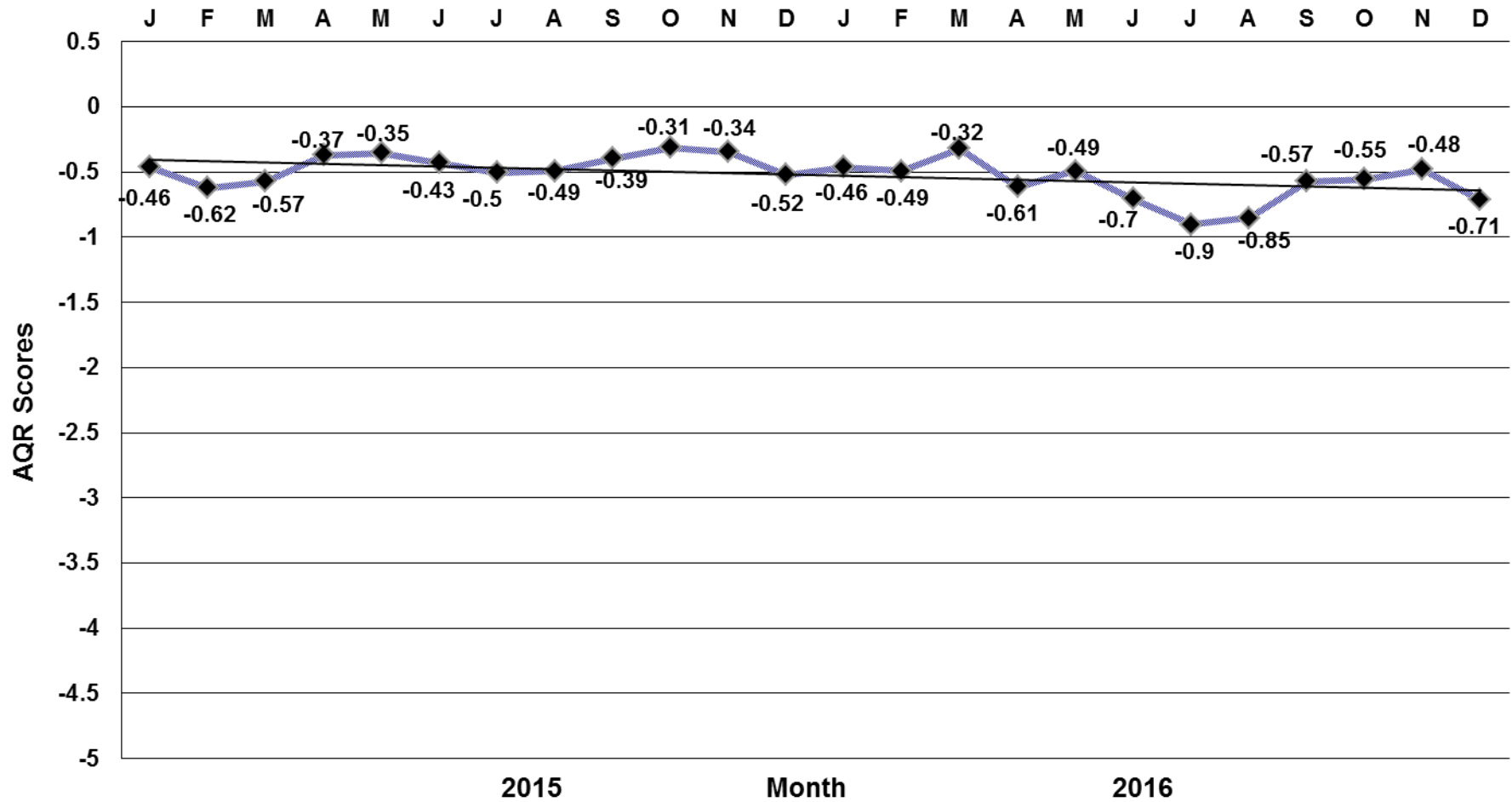
Airline Quality Rating

Hawaiian Airlines by Month



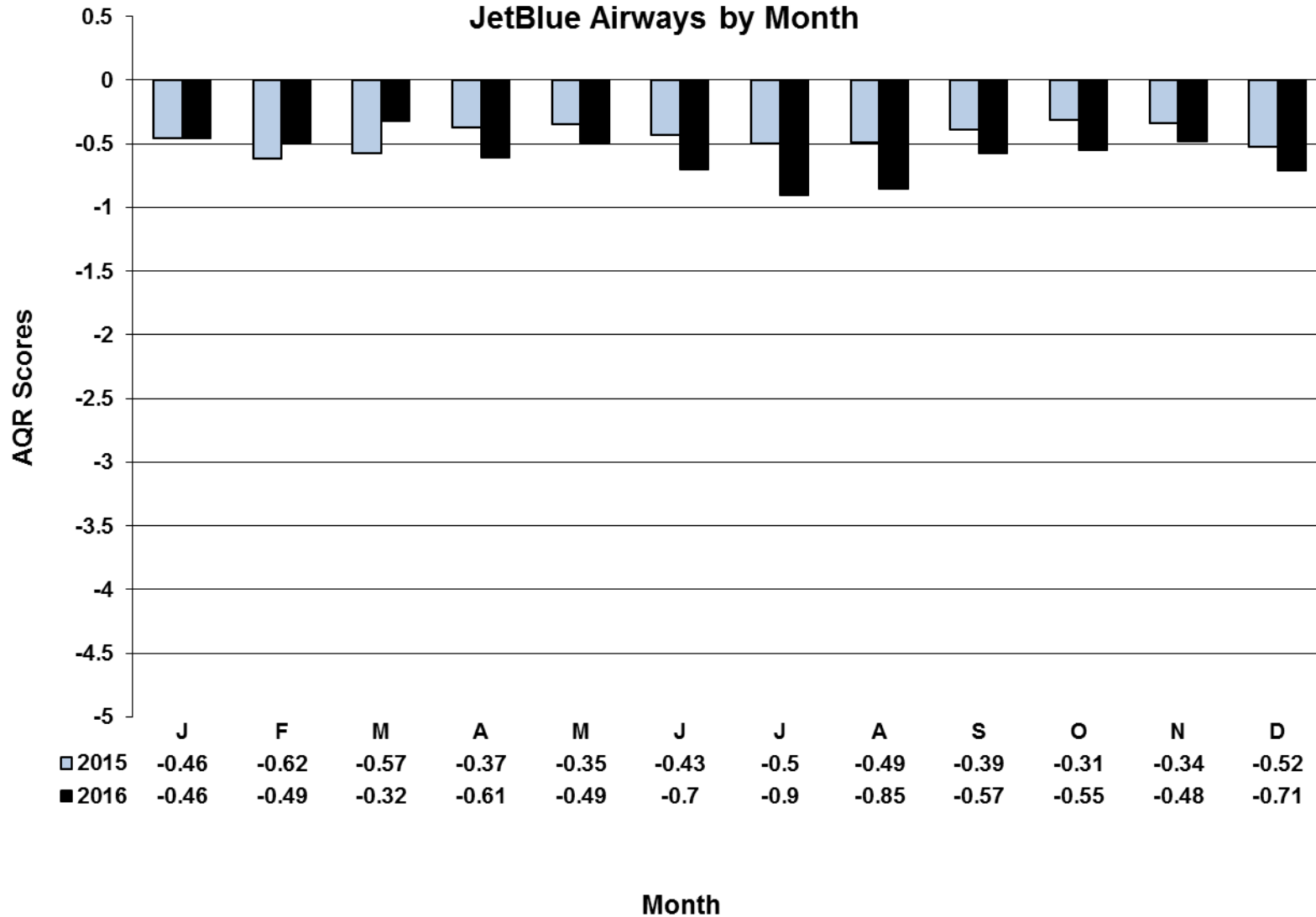
Airline Quality Rating

JetBlue Airways 2015 - 2016



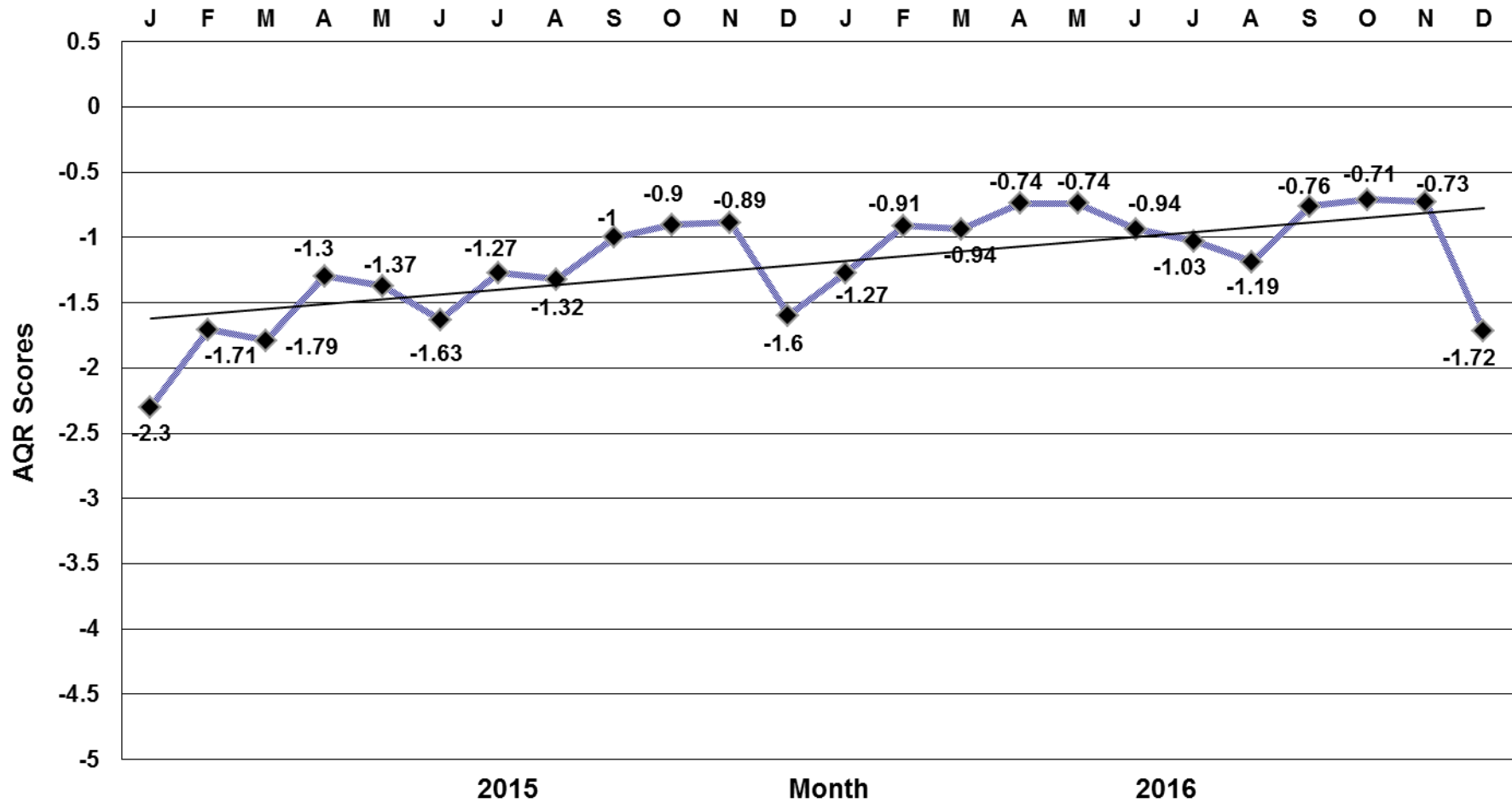
Airline Quality Rating

JetBlue Airways by Month



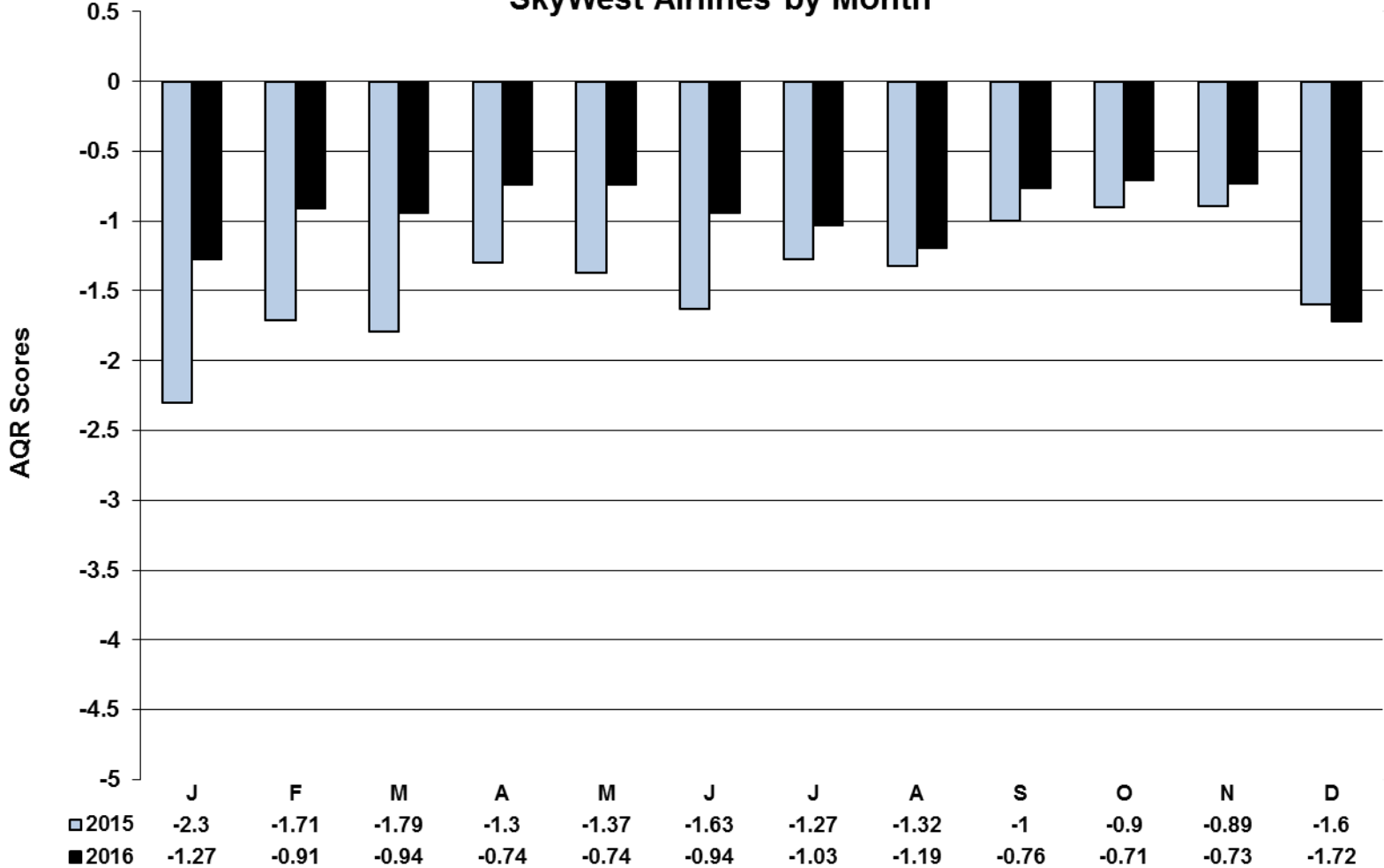
Airline Quality Rating

SkyWest Airlines 2015 - 2016



Airline Quality Rating

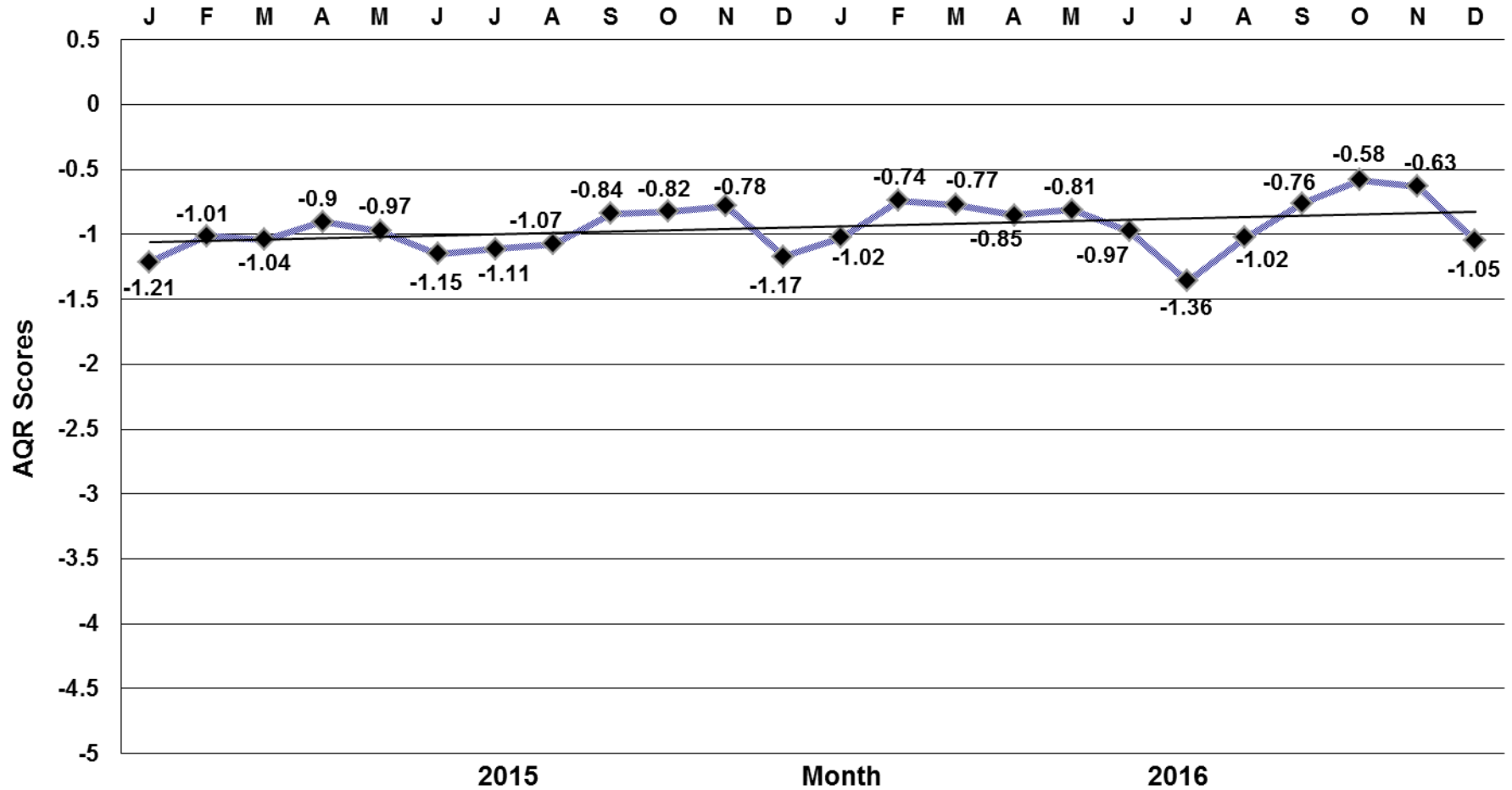
SkyWest Airlines by Month



Month

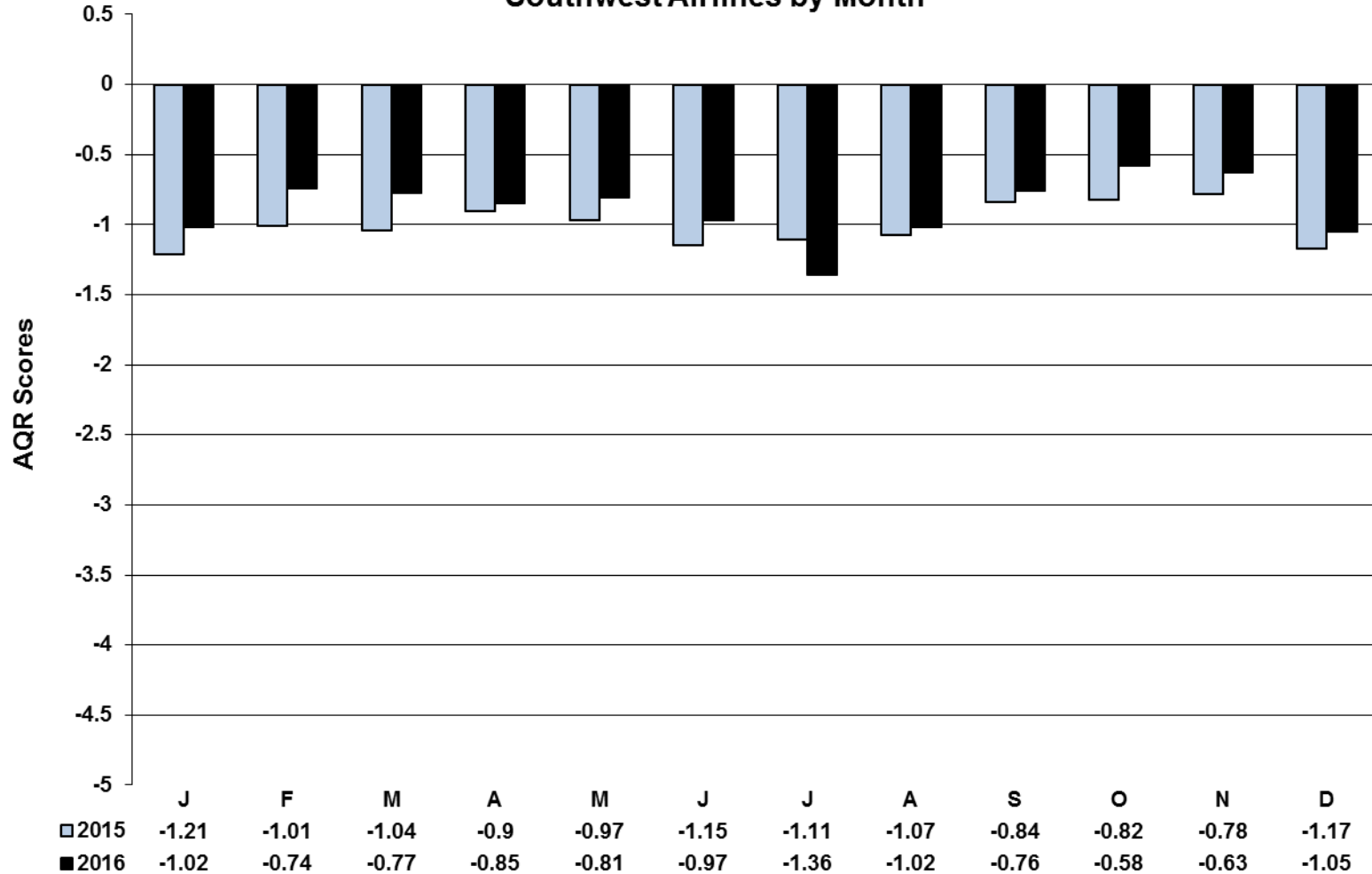
Airline Quality Rating

Southwest Airlines 2015 - 2016



Airline Quality Rating

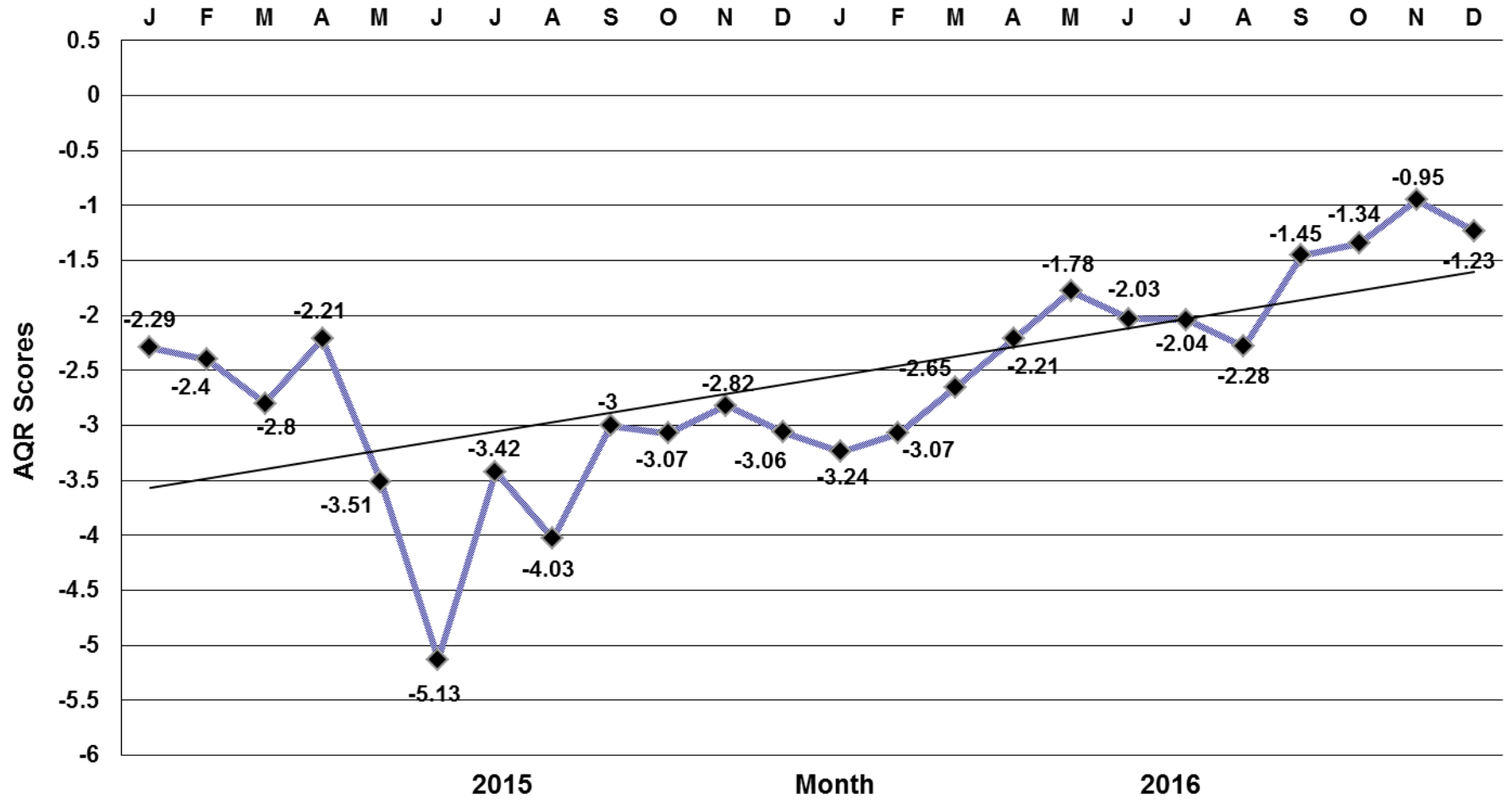
Southwest Airlines by Month



Month

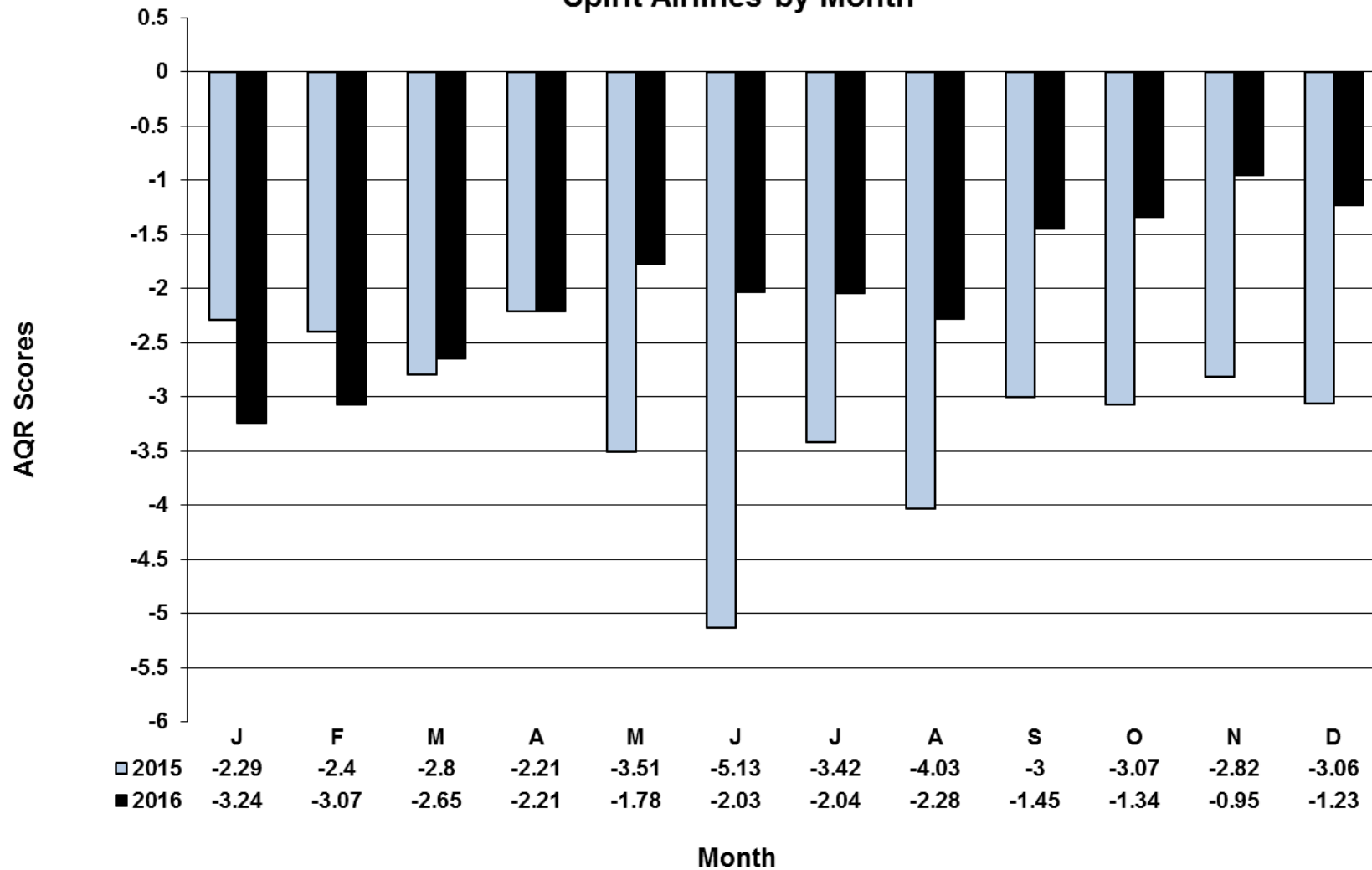
Airline Quality Rating

Spirit Airlines 2015 - 2016



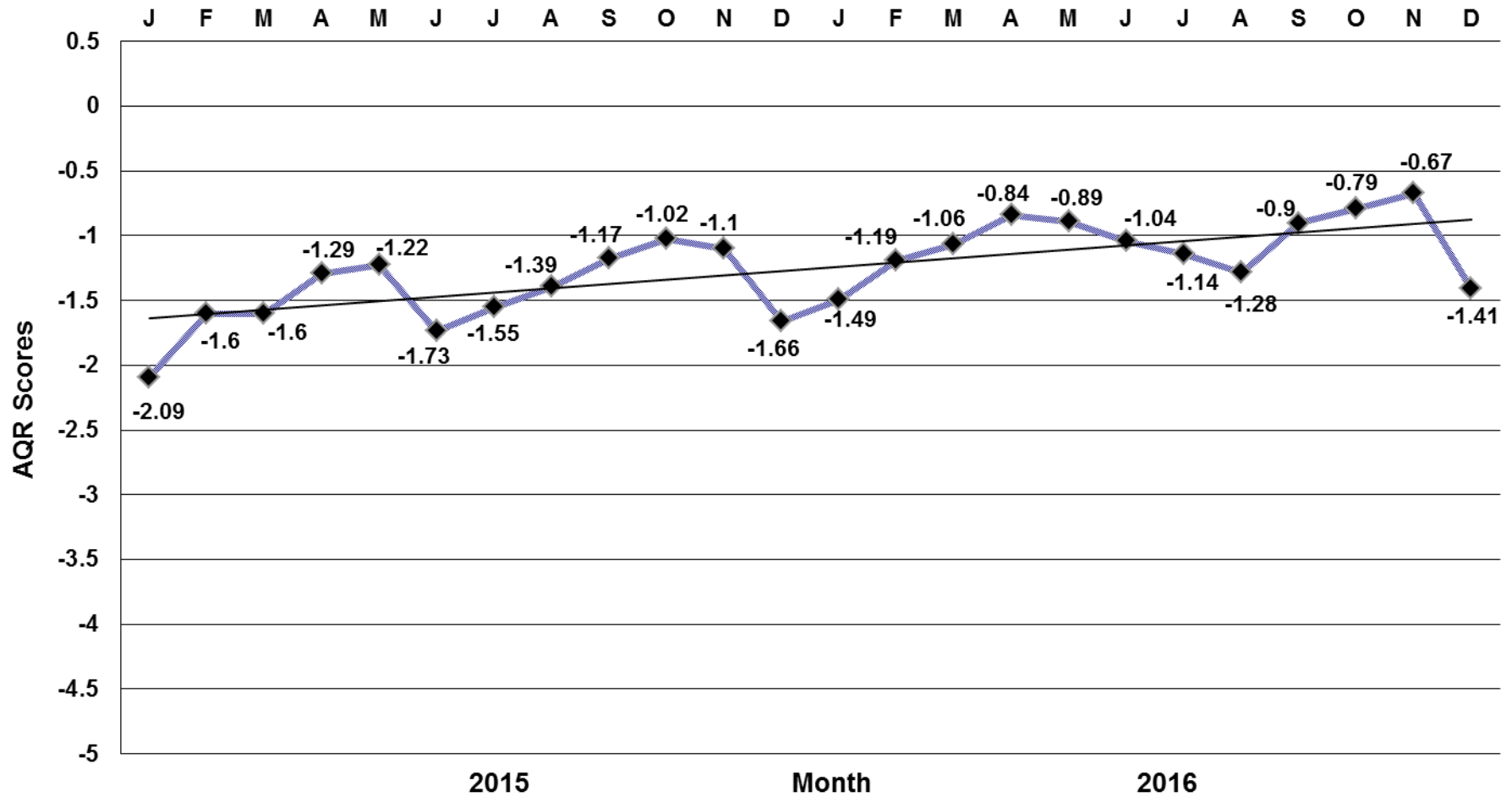
Airline Quality Rating

Spirit Airlines by Month



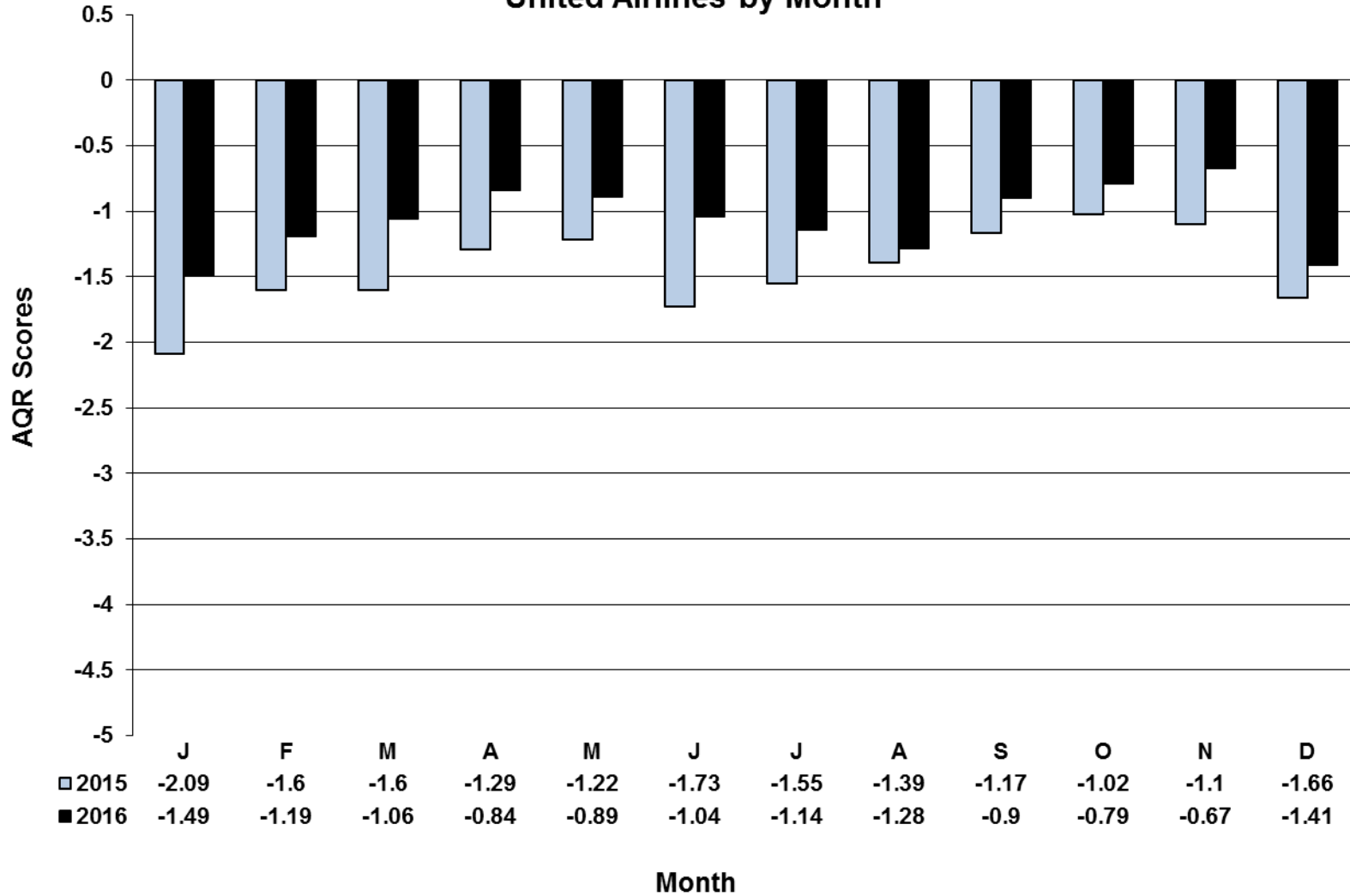
Airline Quality Rating

United Airlines 2015 - 2016



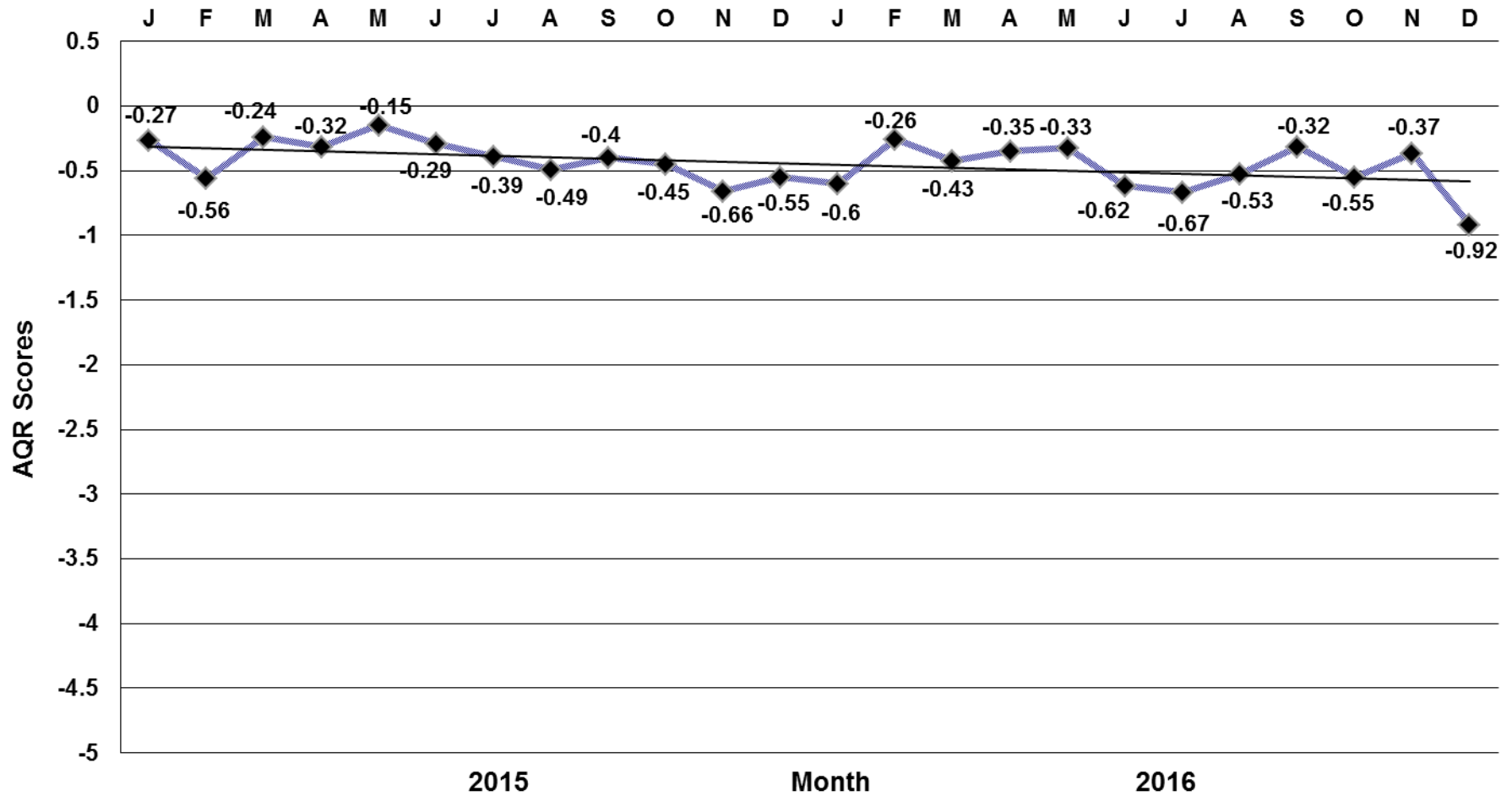
Airline Quality Rating

United Airlines by Month



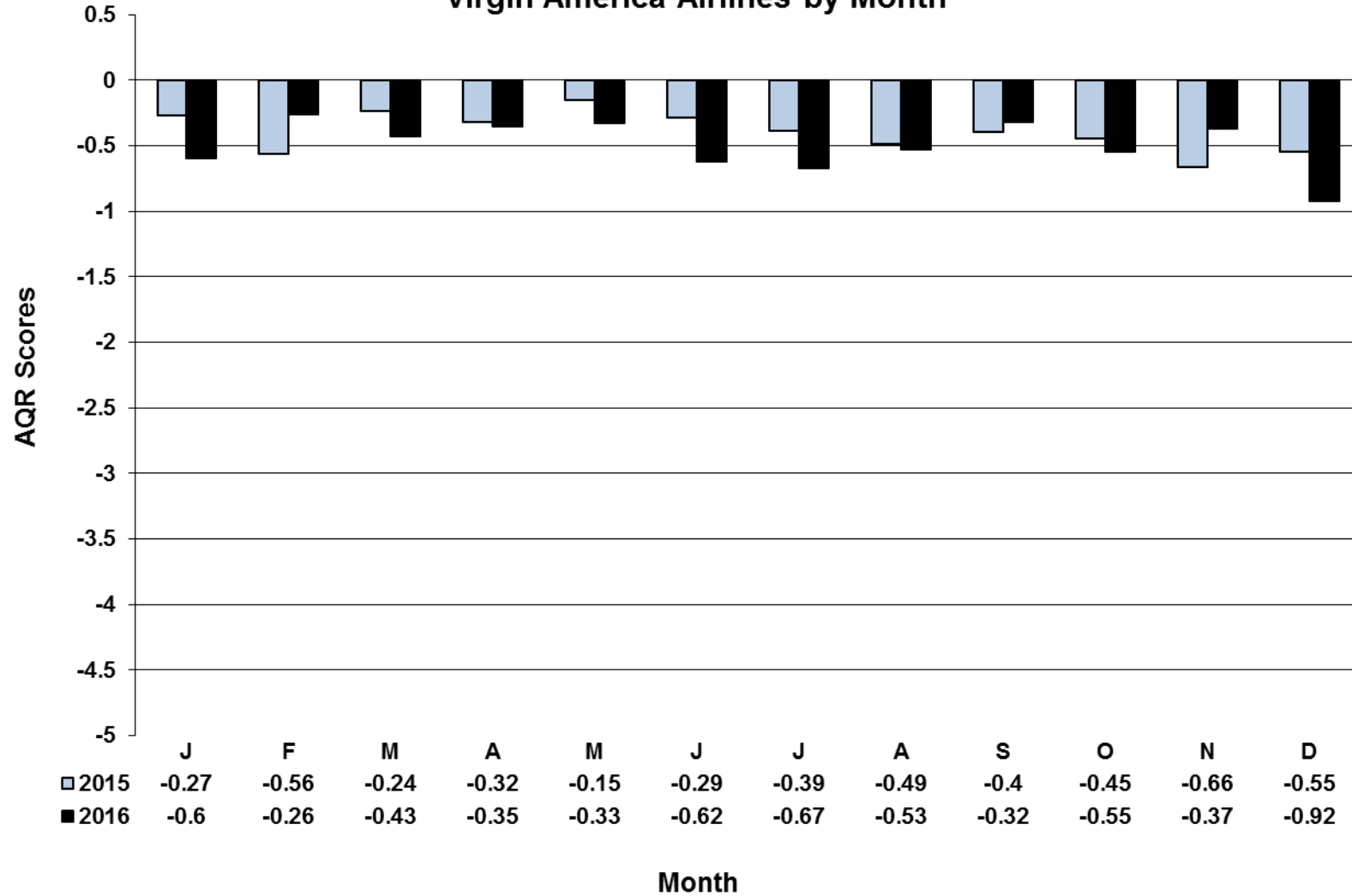
Airline Quality Rating

Virgin America Airlines 2015 - 2016



Airline Quality Rating

Virgin America Airlines by Month



Detail of Frequently Cited Airline Performance Criteria

Consumer interest remains high regarding such issues as on-time performance, mishandled baggage, involuntary denied boardings (bumping), and treatment of customers. Since these criteria are central to the AQR calculations, it is important to provide more complete data for individual airlines in these areas. The following data tables provide a detailed look at the performance of each of the 12 U.S. airlines required to report performance in the specific areas of on-time arrivals, mishandled baggage, involuntary denied boardings, and consumer complaints to the Department of Transportation in 2016. The requirement is based on the criteria that an airline handled at least 1% or more of the total domestic scheduled-service passenger revenues for 2016. Data were drawn from the U.S. Department of Transportation monthly *Air Travel Consumer Report*. The final pages of this report outline the Airline Quality Rating criteria definitions for reference and clarity in more fully understanding the nature of the data reported.

2016 On-Time Arrival Percentage by Month for U.S. Airlines

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	.870	.893	.864	.894	.903	.864	.894	.878	.903	.875	.880	.761	.873
American (AA)	.798	.830	.807	.835	.807	.724	.707	.719	.830	.847	.854	.791	.794
Delta (DL)	.852	.864	.879	.903	.886	.834	.816	.799	.902	.922	.914	.814	.865
Express Jet (EV)	.812	.785	.830	.857	.835	.781	.709	.737	.831	.847	.828	.735	.798
Frontier (F9)	.851	.873	.776	.858	.802	.756	.633	.659	.717	.778	.875	.624	.760
Hawaiian (HA)	.917	.919	.898	.941	.921	.911	.888	.926	.913	.932	.915	.851	.911
JetBlue (B6)	.694	.689	.760	.789	.807	.744	.678	.730	.787	.770	.843	.713	.750
SkyWest (OO)	.776	.819	.787	.857	.851	.846	.829	.815	.886	.855	.852	.698	.823
Southwest (WN)	.838	.878	.811	.813	.812	.743	.708	.798	.856	.848	.861	.749	.808
Spirit (NK)	.681	.632	.646	.738	.764	.730	.728	.718	.851	.836	.864	.721	.743
United (UA)	.825	.862	.811	.851	.837	.792	.766	.775	.844	.834	.861	.760	.817
Virgin America (VX)	.745	.846	.738	.764	.767	.726	.754	.739	.823	.763	.814	.683	.762
Industry by Month	.813	.836	.815	.845	.834	.780	.752	.776	.855	.855	.865	.756	.814

Effective January 2015, Spirit Airlines became a reporting airline.
 American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.
 Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2015 On-Time Arrival Percentage by Month for U.S. Airlines

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	.846	.851	.856	.893	.880	.874	.864	.829	.887	.882	.855	.853	.864
American (AA)	.774	.731	.770	.802	.809	.772	.800	.806	.856	.857	.837	.792	.803
Delta (DL)	.861	.780	.840	.868	.872	.822	.842	.855	.905	.921	.895	.836	.859
Express Jet (EV)	.743	.697	.762	.802	.776	.705	.787	.808	.858	.840	.808	.773	.779
Frontier (F9)	.671	.588	.652	.725	.731	.676	.714	.771	.858	.851	.740	.750	.732
Hawaiian (HA)	.855	.822	.873	.927	.909	.905	.886	.815	.842	.907	.939	.930	.884
JetBlue (B6)	.719	.597	.715	.804	.843	.781	.765	.740	.800	.809	.830	.701	.760
SkyWest (OO)	.734	.740	.825	.831	.821	.773	.787	.798	.853	.857	.811	.729	.797
Southwest (WN)	.791	.775	.800	.818	.786	.725	.735	.795	.878	.876	.833	.761	.797
Spirit (NK)¹	.719	.649	.739	.747	.612	.499	.687	.637	.767	.780	.753	.687	.690
United (UA)	.754	.736	.782	.794	.766	.663	.735	.788	.862	.876	.839	.779	.782
Virgin America (VX)	.822	.761	.789	.835	.760	.805	.768	.806	.864	.833	.835	.711	.799
Industry by Month	.768	.728	.787	.818	.805	.748	.781	.803	.865	.870	.837	.778	.799

¹ Effective January 2015, Spirit Airlines became a reporting airline.

American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2016 Involuntary Denied Boardings by Quarter for U.S. Airlines
(per 10,000 passengers)

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Annual
Alaska (AS)	0.53	0.44	0.29	0.35	0.40
American (AA)	0.84	0.53	0.64	0.54	0.64
Delta (DL)	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.10
Express Jet (EV)	1.46	1.54	1.72	1.28	1.51
Frontier (F9)	0.51	0.76	0.61	0.43	0.58
Hawaiian (HA)	0.01	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.05
JetBlue (B6)	0.03	0.91	1.47	1.19	0.92
SkyWest (OO)	1.03	0.92	0.95	1.02	0.98
Southwest (WN)	0.91	1.07	1.19	0.80	0.99
Spirit (NK)	0.27	1.38	0.36	0.25	0.58
United (UA)	0.49	0.40	0.46	0.40	0.43
Virgin America (VX)	0.17	0.08	0.15	0.08	0.12
Industry by Quarter	0.60	0.63	0.68	0.54	0.62

Effective January 2015, Spirit Airlines became a reporting airline.
American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.
Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2015 Involuntary Denied Boardings by Quarter for U.S. Airlines
(per 10,000 passengers)

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Annual
Alaska (AS)	0.44	0.34	0.28	0.29	0.33
American (AA)	0.80	0.62	0.69	1.10	0.77
Delta (DL)	0.22	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.16
Express Jet (RU)	2.16	2.04	1.52	1.73	1.86
Frontier (F9)	0.79	0.85	1.22	1.07	1.00
Hawaiian (HA)	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.03
JetBlue (B6)	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02
SkyWest (OO)	2.52	2.35	1.20	1.12	1.78
Southwest (WN)	1.04	1.18	1.17	0.93	1.08
Spirit (NK)¹	0.36	0.45	0.15	0.29	0.31
United (UA)	1.00	0.78	0.63	0.70	0.77
Virgin America (VX)	0.03	0.08	0.09	0.23	0.12
Industry by Quarter	0.85	0.79	0.69	0.72	0.76

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American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.
Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2016 Mishandled Baggage by Month for U.S. Airlines
(per 1,000 passengers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	3.00	1.76	1.80	1.44	1.35	1.57	1.64	1.76	1.22	1.11	1.14	2.04	1.64
American (AA)	4.23	3.68	3.19	2.89	3.08	3.83	4.12	4.12	2.68	2.41	2.39	3.86	3.38
Delta (DL)	2.38	1.95	1.57	1.36	1.56	1.83	2.11	2.72	1.35	1.28	1.23	2.55	1.81
Express Jet (EV)	5.25	3.90	3.97	3.57	3.62	4.74	5.49	5.61	3.43	3.23	3.16	5.67	4.31
Frontier (F9)	3.40	2.58	2.62	2.54	2.75	2.38	3.90	4.29	5.62	4.69	3.09	7.36	3.83
Hawaiian (HA)	2.14	2.21	2.78	3.04	2.72	2.68	2.47	2.58	3.27	2.73	2.32	3.06	2.67
JetBlue (B6)	1.94	1.73	1.60	1.44	1.59	1.72	1.87	1.75	1.29	1.26	1.31	1.81	1.61
SkyWest (OO)	4.36	3.29	3.14	2.57	2.68	3.22	3.74	3.92	2.64	2.49	2.62	5.76	3.36
Southwest (WN)	3.55	2.58	2.65	2.87	2.77	3.20	4.16	3.05	2.44	2.23	2.41	3.83	2.98
Spirit (NK)	2.57	2.27	2.29	2.11	2.06	2.18	2.77	2.37	1.71	1.78	1.69	2.09	2.16
United (UA)	3.10	2.53	2.58	2.09	2.29	2.60	3.10	2.81	2.15	2.12	1.93	4.01	2.60
Virgin America (VX)	1.10	0.78	0.82	0.76	1.05	1.03	1.21	1.32	0.94	0.96	0.96	1.37	1.03
Industry by Month	3.32	2.64	2.49	2.31	2.40	2.82	3.32	3.15	2.23	2.06	2.02	3.58	2.70

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American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.
Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2015 Mishandled Baggage by Month for U.S. Airlines
(per 1,000 passengers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	3.75	2.80	3.20	2.73	2.74	3.80	4.07	4.65	3.28	2.49	2.79	3.80	3.36
American (AA)	4.81	4.98	4.64	3.65	3.86	4.33	3.73	3.88	2.95	3.03	3.25	5.14	3.98
Delta (DL)	2.40	3.10	2.56	1.90	1.82	2.30	1.97	2.43	1.51	1.47	1.51	2.61	2.08
Express Jet (EV)	7.24	6.30	6.30	4.38	4.98	5.79	4.94	4.93	3.50	3.67	3.78	5.70	5.06
Frontier (F9)	2.41	2.74	2.74	3.37	4.19	3.72	3.25	2.94	2.50	2.51	2.63	3.52	3.08
Hawaiian (HA)	2.72	2.92	2.77	2.05	2.39	2.68	2.48	2.85	2.53	2.72	2.51	3.24	2.65
JetBlue (B6)	1.93	1.92	1.91	1.74	1.68	1.87	1.87	1.95	1.50	1.52	1.57	2.18	1.81
SkyWest (OO)	6.39	4.59	5.01	3.26	3.57	4.45	4.07	4.12	2.95	2.91	3.02	5.55	4.05
Southwest (WN)	4.09	3.36	3.57	2.90	3.20	3.58	3.48	3.46	2.63	2.85	2.80	4.10	3.31
Spirit (NK)¹	2.35	2.26	2.35	2.57	2.76	3.32	2.92	2.73	2.23	2.27	2.10	2.81	2.57
United (UA)	5.31	3.86	4.11	2.73	2.85	3.79	3.13	2.90	2.19	2.23	2.44	4.33	3.21
Virgin America (VX)	0.84	1.04	0.83	0.73	0.76	0.88	0.89	0.94	0.69	0.74	0.90	1.01	0.84
Industry by Month	4.33	3.92	3.86	2.93	3.09	3.63	3.22	3.33	2.46	2.49	2.58	4.04	3.24

¹ Effective January 2015, Spirit Airlines became a reporting airline.

American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2016 Total Complaints to the Department of Transportation by Month for U.S. Airlines
(per 100,000 passengers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	0.61	0.46	0.38	0.65	0.19	0.50	0.44	0.61	0.26	0.15	0.70	0.93	0.50
American (AA)	3.78	3.69	2.64	2.13	1.99	2.30	2.57	3.23	2.19	2.01	1.63	1.83	2.49
Delta (DL)	0.81	0.76	0.52	0.61	0.45	0.57	0.78	1.31	0.55	0.61	0.57	0.73	0.68
Express Jet (EV)	0.40	0.30	0.34	0.38	0.21	0.71	0.71	0.98	0.61	0.32	0.53	0.59	0.51
Frontier (F9)	4.06	3.73	4.33	2.76	2.61	2.39	3.54	4.12	4.98	4.22	3.18	31.29	5.94
Hawaiian (HA)	0.92	0.85	0.89	1.76	1.89	1.05	1.38	0.92	0.69	2.08	0.59	0.77	1.16
JetBlue (B6)	0.71	1.05	0.54	1.02	0.37	1.07	1.11	1.06	0.38	0.63	0.38	0.65	0.75
SkyWest (OO)	0.60	0.22	0.49	0.43	0.33	0.60	0.38	0.85	0.43	0.30	0.20	0.95	0.49
Southwest (WN)	0.58	0.47	0.42	0.36	0.29	0.46	0.94	0.77	0.35	0.25	0.26	0.44	0.47
Spirit (NK)	12.03	11.56	9.68	6.81	5.00	5.90	6.46	7.96	5.14	4.71	3.11	3.73	6.74
United (UA)	3.60	2.97	2.28	2.00	1.99	2.25	2.01	2.98	2.09	1.70	1.42	2.30	2.27
Virgin America (VX)	2.15	1.10	1.68	1.52	1.14	2.37	2.39	1.62	1.19	2.20	1.46	3.28	1.85
Industry by Month	2.16	1.97	1.53	1.31	1.13	1.39	1.60	2.02	1.28	1.17	0.95	1.89	1.52

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 Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

2015 Total Complaints to the Department of Transportation by Month for U.S. Airlines
(per 100,000 passengers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Alaska (AS)	0.42	0.50	0.56	0.98	0.52	0.45	0.23	0.41	0.50	0.43	0.54	0.56	0.50
American (AA)	2.81	3.02	3.72	2.75	2.72	2.90	3.45	4.01	4.15	3.10	2.72	3.18	3.36
Delta (DL)	0.70	1.07	0.68	0.63	0.56	0.75	0.85	0.78	0.89	0.63	0.61	0.75	0.74
Express Jet (EV)	0.72	0.73	0.63	0.80	0.43	0.61	1.18	0.35	0.40	0.51	0.52	0.55	0.62
Frontier (F9)	8.61	14.38	15.84	8.67	8.20	6.52	7.50	8.69	7.51	3.69	3.05	5.09	7.86
Hawaiian (HA)	0.72	0.52	1.50	0.63	1.60	1.61	1.01	0.73	1.80	1.46	0.72	0.34	1.06
JetBlue (B6)	0.72	1.27	1.20	0.68	0.68	0.77	1.08	0.88	1.03	0.63	0.73	0.70	0.86
SkyWest (OO)	1.18	0.58	0.56	0.52	0.50	0.60	0.72	0.90	0.84	0.53	0.32	0.57	0.65
Southwest (WN)	0.61	0.53	0.46	0.44	0.40	0.69	0.66	0.58	0.54	0.49	0.33	0.52	0.52
Spirit (NK)¹	7.99	8.53	10.27	7.34	12.73	19.16	12.56	15.42	11.57	11.71	10.75	10.97	11.73
United (UA)	3.17	2.58	2.36	2.77	2.31	3.41	3.59	3.18	3.10	2.33	2.41	2.70	2.85
Virgin America (VX)	1.22	2.21	1.05	1.54	0.67	1.18	1.58	2.02	1.97	1.92	2.66	1.92	1.66
Industry by Month	1.85	1.97	2.04	1.66	1.68	2.11	2.17	2.27	2.20	1.71	1.56	1.84	1.90

¹ Effective January 2015, Spirit Airlines became a reporting airline.

American Airlines and US Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways data are combined to reflect the merger.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

**Monthly Count of Complaints Received by the Department of Transportation
Regarding U.S. Airlines for 2016**

Complaints for All U.S. Airlines 2016		Complaints for 12 AQR Rated Airlines 2016	Top Four Categories ¹ of Complaints for 12 AQR Rated Airlines 2016			
			1	2	3	4
Jan	1,257	1,139	FP	BG	TB	CS
Feb	1,113	994	FP	BG	TB	CS
Mar	1,055	927	FP	BG	CS	TB
Apr	870	762	FP	CS	BG	TB
May	815	691	FP	CS	TB	BG
Jun	1,079	891	FP	BG	CS	TB
Jul	1,357	1,061	FP	BG	CS	TB
Aug	1,603	1,282	FP	BG	TB	CS
Sep	879	731	FP	BG	CS	TB
Oct	842	697	FP	CS	TB	BG
Nov	642	546	FP	CS	TB	BG
Dec	<u>1,254</u>	<u>1,110</u>	FP	BG	CS	TB
	12,766	10,831 for 12 rated airlines				

¹ FP = Flight Problems; CS = Customer Service; BG = Baggage; TB = Reservations, Ticketing, and Boarding; RF = Refunds.
Details of categories are at the back of this report.

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

**Overview of Complaints Received by the Department of Transportation for All U.S. Domestic Airlines
by Complaint Category for 2015 and 2016**

	% of all Complaints Received		Number of Complaints Received	
	2015	2016	2015	2016
Flight Problems	36.1%	41.4%	5,506	5,284
Baggage	13.4%	12.0%	2,050	1,538
Customer Service	11.3%	10.5%	1,728	1,352
Reservations, Ticketing, and Boarding	11.8%	9.6%	1,807	1,240
Fares	8.5%	6.8%	1,300	869
Refunds	7.2%	6.4%	1,097	814
Disability	5.0%	5.4%	771	719
Oversales	3.3%	3.4%	509	444
Other	2.2%	2.5%	324	343
Advertising	0.8%	0.5%	119	82
Discrimination	0.4%	0.5%	54	80
Animals	0.0%	0.0%	3	1
Total	100%	100%	15,268	12,766

Source: *Air Travel Consumer Report*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings.

Airline Quality Rating Criteria Overview

The individual criteria used to calculate AQR scores are summed up in four basic areas that reflect customer-oriented areas of airline performance. Definitions of the four areas used in this AQR 2017 (2016 data) are outlined below:

OT ON-TIME PERFORMANCE (+8.63)

Regularly published data regarding on-time arrival performance is obtained from the U.S. Department of Transportation's monthly *Air Travel Consumer Report*. According to the DOT, a flight is counted "on time" if it is operated within 15 minutes of the scheduled time displayed in the carriers' Computerized Reservations System. Delays caused by mechanical problems are included as of January 1, 1995. Canceled and diverted operations are not considered on-time arrivals. The AQR calculations use the percentage of flights arriving on-time for each airline for each month.

DB INVOLUNTARY DENIED BOARDINGS (-8.03)

This criterion includes involuntary denied boardings. Data regarding denied boardings is obtained from the U.S. Department of Transportation's *Air Travel Consumer Report*. Data includes the number of passengers who hold confirmed reservations and are involuntarily denied boarding on a flight that is oversold. These figures include only passengers whose oversold flight departs without them on board. The AQR uses the ratio of involuntary denied boardings per 10,000 passengers boarded by month.

MB MISHANDLED BAGGAGE REPORTS (-7.92)

Regularly published data regarding consumer reports to the carriers of mishandled baggage is obtained from the U.S. Department of Transportation's *Air Travel Consumer Report*. According to the DOT, a mishandled bag includes claims for lost, damaged, delayed, or pilfered baggage. Data is reported by carriers regarding the rate of mishandled baggage reports per 1,000 passengers and for the industry. The AQR ratio is based on the total number of reports each carrier received from passengers concerning lost, damaged, delayed, or pilfered baggage per 1,000 passengers served.

CC CONSUMER COMPLAINTS (-7.17)

The criteria of consumer complaints is made up of 12 specific complaint categories (outlined below) monitored by the U. S. Department of Transportation and reported monthly in the *Air Travel Consumer Report*. Consumers can file complaints with the DOT in writing, by telephone, via e-mail, or in person. The AQR uses complaints about the various categories as part of the larger customer complaint criteria and calculates the consumer complaint ratio on the number of complaints received per 100,000 passengers flown for each airline.

CONSUMER COMPLAINT CATEGORIES

Flight Problems

Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to cancellations, delays, or any other deviations from schedule, whether planned or unplanned for each airline each month.

Oversales

This complaint category includes all bumping problems, whether or not the airline complied with DOT oversale regulations. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to oversales for each airline each month.

Reservations, Ticketing, and Boarding

This category includes airline or travel agent mistakes in reservations and ticketing, problems in making reservations and obtaining tickets due to busy telephone lines, or waiting in line or delays in mailing tickets, and problems boarding the aircraft (except oversales). Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to ticketing and boarding for each airline each month.

Fares

As defined by the DOT, consumer complaints regarding fares include incorrect or incomplete information about fares, discount fare conditions and availability, overcharges, fare increases, and level of fares in general. Data is available for the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to fares for each airline each month.

Refunds

This category includes customer complaints about problems in obtaining refunds for unused or lost tickets, fare adjustments, or bankruptcies. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to refunds for each airline each month.

Baggage

Claims for lost, damaged, or delayed baggage, charges for excess baggage, carry-on problems, and difficulties with airline claim procedure are included in this category. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to baggage for each airline each month.

Customer Service

This category includes complaints about rude or unhelpful employees, inadequate meals or cabin service, and treatment of delayed passengers. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to customer service for each airline each month.

Disability

This category includes complaints about civil rights complaints by air travelers with disabilities. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints pertaining to disabilities for each airline each month.

Advertising

These are complaints concerning advertising that is unfair, misleading or offensive to consumers. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints regarding advertising for each airline each month.

Discrimination

Civil rights complaints by air travelers (other than disabilities); for example: complaints based on race, national origin, religion, etc. (This category was first reported in May, 2002).

Animals

This category tracks customer complaints about loss, injury, or death of an animal during air transport by an air carrier. Data is available by the total number of customer complaints regarding animals for each airline each month.

Other

Data regarding consumer complaints about frequent flyer programs, smoking, tours credit, cargo problems, security, airport facilities, claims for bodily injury, and other problems not classified above are included in this category. Data is available by the total number of consumer complaints regarding other problems for each airline each month.