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# Disruptive behaviour on board UK aircraft 2007/08

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## 1 Background

1.1 Since 1999, UK airlines have reported disruptive passenger events to the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on a common reporting basis. This note summarises the outcome of the analysis of disruptive passenger data for the year 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008, hereafter referred to as 2007/08. A table comparing key data over the last five years is available at annex A.

1.2 Membership of the disruptive passenger reporting scheme is voluntary, however 94% of passengers carried by UK airlines in 2007/08 flew with an airline that participates in the scheme. Reports received through the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting Scheme (MORS)[1] are also included in the data.

1.3 Each disruptive passenger report is assessed by the CAA to determine whether the incident was "serious" or "significant". Serious incidents are those where the safety of an individual or the aircraft was compromised and includes injury to personnel and aircraft diversions. Significant incidents are those that caused concern but did not cause a major threat to safety.

1.4 The number of disruptive passenger incident reports received by CAA varies each year, especially the number of "significant" incidents that are reported. This was especially evident in 2006/07, where there was a large increase in the number of reports received. Over the past four years, there has been an increasing awareness of the issue, and the introduction of zero-tolerance policies in dealing with disruptive passengers has seen an improvement in reporting by some airlines. Therefore, rather than an actual significant rise in the number of disruptive incidents occurring during the last two years it is likely that we have seen a continued increase in reporting. However, analysis of the reports received in 2007/08 shows that the number of "serious" incidents is the lowest of the last four years even though there were the highest number of total reports received.

1.5 The number of reported incidents should be seen in the context of the number of flights operated by UK airlines and the number of passengers carried. In 2007/08, the chance of an individual passenger boarding a flight on which a serious incident took place reduced to 1 in 35,000, compared to 1 in 18,000 in 2006/07.

[1] The MOR scheme is used by the aviation industry to report any incident to the CAA where safety was or could have been endangered. Further details may be found at: <http://www.caa.co.uk/CAP382>.

## 2 Number of Incidents Recorded

2.1 In total, the CAA received 2702 reports of disruptive behaviour on board aircraft during 2007/08. Of these, 31 were considered to be serious, compared to 58 in the previous reporting year. 2671 reports were considered to be significant, compared to 2161 in 2006/07.

2.2 Cabin crew are more likely to experience a disruptive passenger incident than passengers by virtue of flying more frequently and the nature of their responsibilities. The number of reported incidents of violence towards cabin crew in 2007/08 increased to 99 incidents (4% of total), compared to 58 (3% of total) in 2006/07.

2.3 During 2007/08, no case was reported in which disruptive behaviour contributed to an aviation accident.

## 3 The Offenders

3.1 Information regarding the types of passenger that cause an incident is not as well reported as detail regarding the types of incident that occur. Although no information is available on the exact demographic of UK passengers carried by reporting airlines compared to disruptive passengers, the reports do provide some information on the types of people involved in an offence.

3.2 83% of reports indicated whether the perpetrator was male or female. Of these, 74% involved male passengers and 26% involved female passengers. The ratio of male to female disruptive passengers has remained relatively stable over the past five years, while the proportion of reports indicating the sex of the perpetrator has steadily increased.

3.3 The data indicates that the predominant age group committing disruptive passenger incidents in 2007/08 was those in their 30s. Although the age group most commonly perpetrating an incident has remained the same from 2006/07 to 2007/08, the percentage of reports where the age is given has increased from 16% to 21%. However, this is still a low proportion of the total number of reports therefore this statistic should be treated with caution.

3.4 38% of reports indicated whether the perpetrator was travelling alone or in a group (including people travelling with only one other person). Of these, 17% involved passengers travelling alone; this figure has been steadily decreasing over the past five years, from 31% in 2003/04.

3.5 There were 31 reports of incidents involving groups of 10 or more people in 2007/08, compared to 40 in the previous reporting year. Incidents are viewed as involving a large group even if only one member of the group is reported as being disruptive, provided that other members of the group have contributed to the

incident. This could include attempting to intervene on behalf of the perpetrator or by supplying him or her with alcohol.

## 4 The Offences

4.1 The offences described below are not mutually exclusive; some reports involved a number of different categories of event while others fell into only one category.

4.2 35% of reported incidents were described as general disruptiveness, while 38% of reported incidents involved verbal abuse and 28% involved passengers disobeying airline staff.

4.3 Smoking featured in 24% of reports, of which 88% involved smoking in the toilet, compared to 82% in 2006/07. Furthermore, smoking restrictions were identified as a contributory factor in 25% of reports. Since the contributory factor is slightly higher than the actual number of reported smoking incidents, it may be concluded that the desire to smoke has contributed to a small number of other incidents.

4.4 Alcohol was identified as playing a part in the behaviour of passengers in 39% of reported incidents. Of these incidents: 27% involved passengers drinking their own alcohol, 13% involved passengers drinking alcohol supplied by the airline, and 22% involved alcohol drunk by passengers before boarding. A further 38% of incidents where alcohol was suspected to be a contributory factor do not state the source of the alcohol. Because this category includes suspected alcohol consumption, it is to be expected that the source of the alcohol is not known in some cases.

4.5 Violence was involved in 7% of reported incidents, which is a lower proportion than in any of the past five years. The most common contributory factor to a violent incident is alcohol; the second most common is a conflict with other passengers.

4.6 The following observations relate specifically to the 31 incidents classified by the CAA as serious: These incidents most commonly involved alcohol as a contributory factor, followed by conflict with other passengers; it should be noted that in all of the serious incidents involving alcohol, the alcohol was either consumed before boarding or was the passengers own; none of the serious incidents involved alcohol supplied by the airline; there were a number of cases of threatening behaviour and physical violence.

## 5 The Consequences

5.1 In the majority of reported incidents a warning was given to the offending passenger. In 25% of cases, the warning was reported to have been effective, while in 26% of cases, the warning was not effective (in the remainder, the effectiveness of the warning was not reported).

5.2 There were 5 reported incidents where passengers were physically restrained by handcuffs and/or a strap and in a further 11 cases other forms of restraint were used. This is lower than in 2006/07, where there were 21 reported incidents of passengers being physically restrained by handcuffs or a strap and a further 21 where other forms of restraint were used.

5.3 There were 284 cases of passengers being removed from the aircraft in 2007/08, compared to 235 in 2006/07. This number has steadily increased over the past five years. In 13 cases, the aircraft had to discontinue taxi or take-off procedures and return to the stand to offload the passenger. In 15 cases the

aircraft had to divert during the flight. This translates to a rate of 13.9 diversions per million flights, compared to 13.6 in 2006/07.

5.4 Disruptive passenger reporting forms are filled out at the time of the incident. Therefore, it is very difficult to know how many incidents led to an arrest or other police action. However, police or airport security attended 437 (16%) incidents in 2007/08, compared to 345 (also 16%) in 2006/07. Police or security were reported to have attended 52% of serious incidents and 32% of all violent incidents (both serious and significant).

## Annex A â Comparison of Key Data Over Five Years

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
<b>Number of reported incidents</b>					
Serious	28	53	56	58	31
Significant	668	1433	1303	2161	2671
Total incident reports received	696	1486	1359	2219	2702
<b>Reporting</b>					
% of UK airline passenger-carrying flights covered by the scheme	60%	77%	75%	85%	87%
% of UK airline passengers carried, covered by the scheme	74%	92%	91%	95%	94%
<b>Context</b>					
Number of flights per serious incident	24,000	17,000	16,000	18,000	35,000
Millions of passengers carried per serious incident	2.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	4.0
<b>Offenders</b>					
Male/Female offenders	78:22	80:20	80:20	75:25	74:26
Travelling alone	31%	25%	24%	18%	17%
<b>Incident details</b>					
Violence involved	106 (15%)	183 (12%)	142 (10%)	172 (8%)	197 (7%)

	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Violence towards crew	46	79	64	58	99
<b>Contributory factors</b>					
Alcohol involved	290 (42%)	530 (36%)	479 (35%)	746 (34%)	1041 (39%)
Alcohol â pre boarding	85	151	118	172	232
Alcohol â airline	66	95	90	124	134
Alcohol â own	85	154	171	215	282
Smoking involved	275 (40%)	562 (38%)	546 (40%)	563 (25%)	643 (24%)
Smoking in toilet	226	430	455	459	564