

Summary:

International and domestic air travel in Norway 2009

International air traffic to/from Norwegian airports was down 5,4 percent in 2009 compared to 2008, while domestic traffic decreased by 2,0 percent. This came after several years with strong growth, in particular with respect to international travel. In 2009, some 12.6 million domestic and 14.7 million international single trips were taken. This represents about the same number as in 2007, when the previous air travel survey was conducted. However, traffic has changed since 2007 with a continued growth in leisure travel and a decline in business travel. Leisure trips now constitutes 48 percent of domestic air travel (44 percent in 2007) and 65 percent of international air travel (59 percent in 2007).

On the domestic market, SAS continues to be the biggest operator with 49 percent market share, whilst Norwegian has 35 percent and Widerøe 14 percent. However, Norwegian continues to gain market shares and increased the number of passengers by 41 percent between 2007 and 2009, while the number of passengers travelling with SAS decreased by 20 percent. On the three main domestic routes Oslo-Bergen, Oslo-Trondheim and Oslo-Stavanger, Norwegian and SAS have about 50 percent each of the market.

SAS is also the biggest operator internationally with 30 percent of the market, whilst Norwegian has enjoyed a strong growth over the last two years to reach a 27 percent share. In total, low cost airlines had 40 percent market share in 2009, compared to 34 percent in 2007.

Amsterdam Schipol has surpassed Copenhagen Kastrup as the biggest international hub for air travel to/from Norway.

About the study

This survey is the latest of a series of surveys conducted by Avinor (former Luftfartsverket) since 1972. The aim is to supplement passenger statistics with data on air passengers and their travelling habits. Avinor, its subsidiary Oslo Lufthavn (Oslo Airport) and Transportøkonomisk Institutt (Institute of Transport Economics) have partnered for the study, which has been financed by Avinor and Oslo Lufthavn.

Data were collected during certain weeks throughout the year to allow for seasonal variation. For international flights, 84,942 interviews were conducted at 9 airports (charter passengers included), and 55,035 interviews were conducted

for domestic traffic. In principal, the study covers all flights between Norway and foreign destinations, except traffic to/from Moss airport Rygge. For domestic travel the data includes flights between the main airports and between main airports and regional airports. However, flights between one or more regional airports are not covered by the survey.

Trip frequency and customer base

Air travel accounted for 6 percent of domestic passenger transport work in Norway in 2009, and was the major form of transport for long domestic and international journeys. More than 60 percent of domestic travel over distances in excess of 500 km is undertaken by air.

Trip frequency is defined as the number of air journeys undertaken within a given area within a year divided by the population of the same area. For Norway, trip frequency in 2009 was 1,6 journeys for international travel and 2.3 journeys for domestic travel. Residents of Oslo and Akershus travel most abroad, whilst people living in Northern Norway made the most domestic air trips during the year.

The customer base is defined as the number of Norwegians making at least one air journey in a given year. The customer base for international air travel in 2009 was estimated to 1.56 million persons and for domestic travel 1.55 million, which is about the same number as in 2007. This means that every third Norwegian made an international/domestic air trip in 2009.

Domestic air traffic

The last couple of years have seen increased competition on the main domestic routes. In 2009, SAS and Norwegian were competing on all routes to/from Oslo airport Gardermoen, except from Oslo-Kristiansund where SAS is still the only operator. Since 2007 Norwegian has opened routes from Oslo to Kristiansand, Haugesund, Ålesund, Molde, and Kirkenes, and their entrance has contributed to lower fares on these routes.

The opening of Moss airport Rygge just 60 km south of Oslo has increased competition between airports in the larger Oslo area. In 2009, Rygge had 5 domestic destinations (Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, Bodø and Tromsø). However, of the total number of passengers travelling between these cities and Gardermoen/Rygge, only 5 percent fly via Rygge. Primarily, Rygge serves residents/visitors to the county of Østfold; 60 percent of the domestic trips starts/ends in Østfold, while 30 percent starts/ends in Oslo/Akershus.

Men clearly make up the majority of domestic travellers in Norway, even though the proportion of women has risen. Women only accounted for 25 percent in 1982, a proportion which had grown to 41 percent by 2009. An increased number of private journeys and the fact that women have gained a stronger position within business are the reasons for this trend. In terms of age, the majority of passengers

is evenly spread through the 20-60 age range, but it is worth noting that 12 percent of air travellers now are over 60, compared to just 6 percent in 1992.

Air traffic between Norway and foreign destinations

Leisure travel to/from Norway continues to increase. In the period 2007-2009 the number of leisure trips increased by 800 000 and leisure travel now constitutes 65 percent of the market. On the other hand, the number of business trips was down by 700 000 in the same period.

Oslo Airport (OSL) is retaining its position as the national hub for international air travel with 67 percent of the passengers departing from OSL. However, there is increased competition from neighbouring airports (Sandefjord and recently Moss), but also due to the expanding route network offered by other airports. In 2007, 72 percent of the international passengers departed from OSL.

London (London City, Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted combined), Copenhagen and Stockholm are the three biggest destinations, and represent the final destination for ¼ of all international flights from Norway. The number of passengers travelling to the two Scandinavian capitals was down from 2007 to 2009, whilst London increased by 11 percent. Prague also experienced traffic growth, while Aberdeen has seen the largest decline due to a significant drop in business travel.

In recent years, a number of new routes have been established leading to a decrease in transfer abroad. Only 30 percent of passengers now need to change planes abroad to reach their final destination, compared to 36 percent in 2005. Amsterdam has surpassed Copenhagen as the biggest transfer hub. Approximately 900 000 passengers to/from were in transfer at Schipol in 2009, compared to 860 000 at Kastrup.

Air travel plays a decisive role in bringing tourists to Norway. The number of foreign tourists travelling by air when visiting Norway has grown steadily over the last 10-15 years, from 14 percent in 1995 to 34 percent in 2007. In 2009 32 percent arrived by air. Lower prices and more direct routes are major factors in this trend. Great Britain is easily the biggest market (15 percent), However, since 2003, arrivals from Germany and Poland has shown the highest growth rates.

The growth in international air travel to/from Norway in the period 2003-2009 was 66 percent. In terms of age, growth has been strongest in the younger (<30 years) and older (>60 years) age groups.

Air passengers paid somewhat less for foreign travel in 2009 than in 2007, regardless of whether travelling for business or pleasure.