

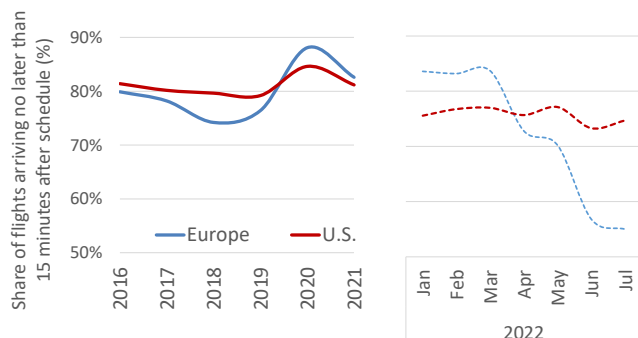
# EUROCONTROL Data Snapshot

Comparing On-Time Performance in the United States and Europe – How turbulent was summer 2022 in both regions?

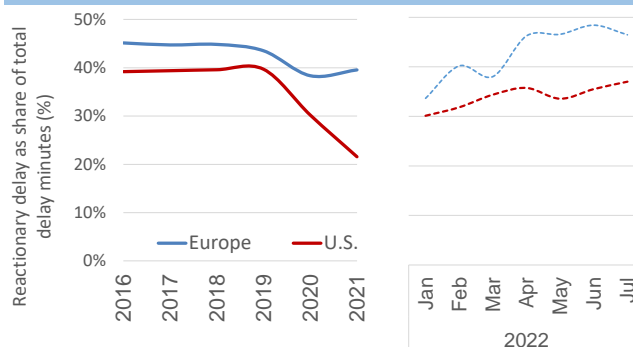


10 October 2022

On-Time Performance (OTP15) in the U.S. and in Europe



Share of reactionary delay in total delay



COVID-19 caused a massive drop in traffic on both sides of the Atlantic – and also created new challenges in terms of handling passenger flows while enforcing COVID related protective measures. The recovery was quicker in the U.S. than in Europe, mainly due to the market there being mostly domestic rather than international. By 2022, traffic in both regions had widely recovered to above 85% of pre-pandemic levels but on time performance (OTP) differed notably.

The graphic on the left shows the evolution of flights arriving no later than 15 minutes after the scheduled time (OTP15). Historically, OTP15 in the U.S. (in red) showed more stable behaviour than in Europe up to 2022, ranging between 79% and 85%. In Europe it varied more, from 74% to 88%. For 2022, the U.S. has seen a stable situation with monthly OTP15 ranging between 73% and 77%. This in sharp contrast to Europe where the summer has been turbulent. Monthly OTP15 fell from 84% at the beginning of the year to 55% in July. Reports of staff shortages and industrial action across the industry (airlines, airports, baggage handlers and ATC) regularly made the headlines. These issues contributed to unacceptably high delays, flight cancellations and uncertainty for passengers.

Delays can be further classified as “primary” (directly attributable to the flight) or “reactionary” (originating from earlier flights: of this aircraft, for this crew, or these passengers). A high share of reactionary delay shows that the air transport network is more sensitive to disruptions and doesn’t have enough buffers in the schedules to compensate for variations in operations. In the U.S., this sensitivity decreased at the beginning of the pandemic, but then rose throughout 2022 to reach almost pre-pandemic levels. In Europe, there was a more moderate improvement in 2020/21, followed by a substantial increase in the reactionary delay share during the first half of 2022 which suggests that the air transport system was less and less able to accommodate the increase in demand, particularly in the summer of 2022.

Overall, analysis of the on time performance in the two regions suggests that the U.S. showed a higher level of flexibility and scalability to adjust its air transport operations and capacity to the fluctuating travel demand during the recovery phase, thus ensuring better performance than its European counterparts.

**Technical Bits:** The data for this snapshot is derived from the [US Bureau of Transportation Statistics](#) and [EUROCONTROL’s Central Office for Delay Analysis \(CODA\)](#). CODA and the Aviation Intelligence Unit support stakeholders with a variety of data products to analyse and improve performance. For more information please visit also the AIU portal @ [www.ansperformance.eu](http://www.ansperformance.eu).

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