



## START

On 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020, IATA released a [publication](#) assessing prospects for domestic markets concerning COVID-19. The overall consensus found the rise in air travel for the remainder of the year and into next will be slow. Whilst 40% of passengers say they will wait six months or more before travelling. To date, we have not yet found any report that considered the specific views of passengers with a disability in the aviation sector. And wanted to expand on these initial findings.

*In 2018, an estimated 3.2m disabled passengers flew through UK airports. This equates to 1-2% of overall passenger numbers.*

### The key findings from the survey found:

*1 in 3 people with a disability have said they will not travel by air until a COVID-19 vaccine is available.*

Airlines and airports may want to pay particular attention to this when ascertaining appropriate levels of special assistance staffing both in the short and medium term.

*38% of individuals stated they may still travel before a vaccine.*

However, this comes with significant concerns and dependencies of course. The most common causes of concern for those disabled passengers were;

- Lack of clean circulated air inside the cabin
- Social distancing not being followed at the airports and onboard
- Being in a confined spaces and close proximity to others
- Special assistance having to assist passengers through the airport including on and off the plane
- Inadequate seat provisioning and re-design making seats difficult to access due to the virus
- Catching the virus abroad

The aviation industry, could if optimistic, still expect to see 2 in every 3 disabled passengers continue flying, but with a big 'if'. Airlines and airports will need to reassure disabled passengers distinctly of their strict procedures and processes that have been implemented to reduce these heightened, but of course expected concerns.

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*Ryanair has already start such awareness, with their 'Keep Europe Flying and Healthy' [video](#).*

Failing to address such concerns could see PRM numbers drop consistently for the foreseeable future by up to 50-75%.

*70% of respondents said the financial constraints of COVID-19 have NOT made any impact on their decision to book future air travel.*

This should be a re-assuring message to the travel industry that the Purple '£' remains relatively strong and coupled with the industry providing re-assurance and instilling confidence into passengers – the future outlook for PRM travel could remain optimistic.

Prior to COVID-19, 54% of respondents flew more than once or twice a year. And 52% of respondents said they would wait at minimum 6 to 12 months before returning to the skies again, 28% were unsure, along with an eager 20% saying they would return within a month or so (or as soon as it was deemed appropriate to do so). Interestingly, we asked respondents when they decide to fly again, where would they be willing to travel, with 87% saying they would be happy to travel domestically and internationally, with 13% stating they would stick only to domestic travel.

When comparing our results to IATA's [recent findings](#), there is a common correlation (regardless of disability) that the industry is of course going to require confidence boosting measures. However, more emphasise will be required amongst PRM's. In comparison to IATA's 40% of passengers returning within 6 months or so, disabled passengers were at 25% suggesting a much slower return over the short to medium term. Additionally, 69% of IATA's respondents suggested they could delay a return to travel until their finances stabilize. Whereas only 29% of disabled passengers stated their finances have impacted their decision on booking future air travel.

## FINISH

### For more information, please contact:

Josh Wintersgill

Telephone: +44(0)7770510766

Email: [joshwintersgill@easytravelseat.com](mailto:joshwintersgill@easytravelseat.com)

### Notes for editors:

- easyTravelseat – award winning transfer device for wheelchair users to use when being lifted on and off aircraft. You can follow us on Facebook or Twitter using @Able\_MoveUK
- Between 11<sup>th</sup> May – 25<sup>th</sup> May, 330 disabled people across the globe shared their thoughts on flying in a COVID-19 world with a good variety of mobility/impairments and geographical responses across Europe, America, Asia, Australia/New Zealand and Africa
- IATA (International Air Transport Association) represents some 290 airlines comprising 82% of global air traffic

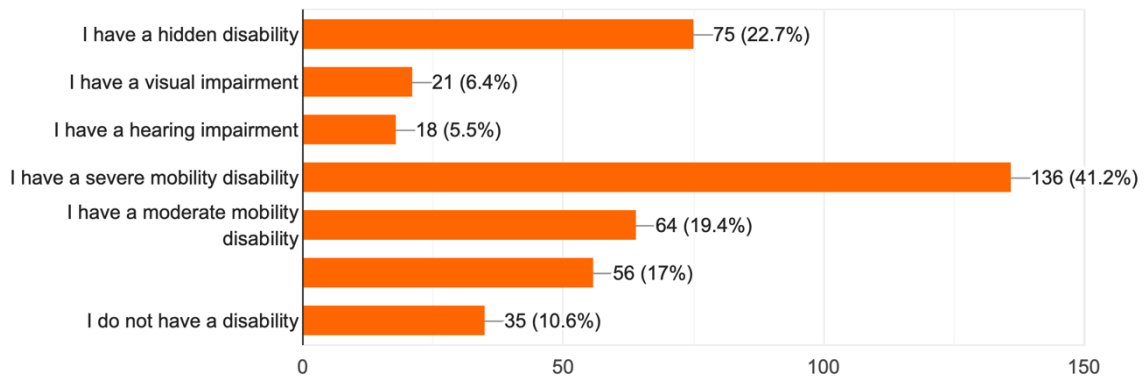
Annex 1 - The Findings:

Q1. The first question was to identify what disability and/or impairment the individual had.

**Note:** the missing label states 'I am a travelling companion of someone with a disability.'

Which best describes you? (Please tick all that apply):

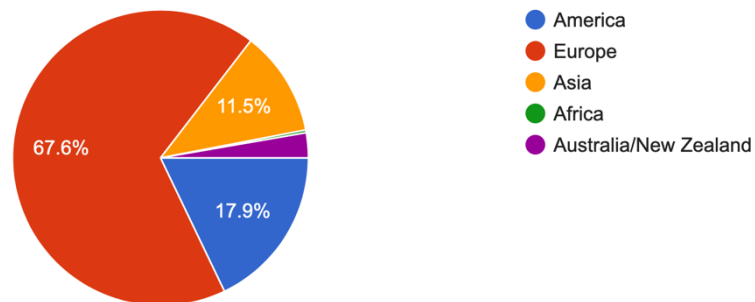
330 responses



Q2. The second question was to identify in which location the individual resides.

Your location

330 responses



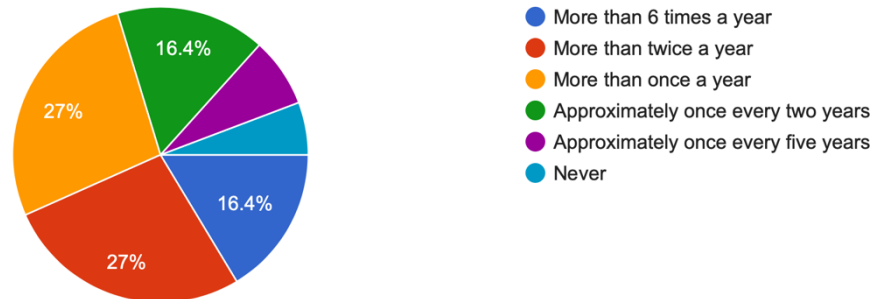
\*\* Africa = 0.3%, Australia/New Zealand = 2.7%

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Q3. The third question was to understand how frequent an individual would have flown prior to COVID-19

Before COVID-19, how frequent would you have flown?

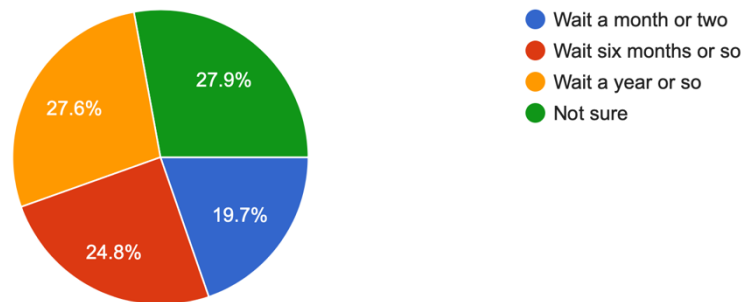
330 responses



Q4. The fourth question was to identify when individuals envisage being able to fly next

When do you envisage being able to fly next?

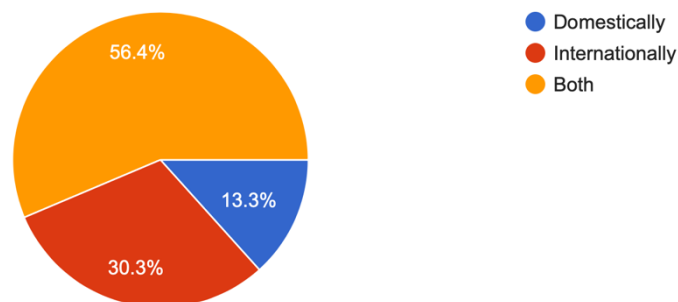
330 responses



Q5. The fifth question looked to ascertain when individuals would be willing to fly:

Would you be willing to fly:

330 responses

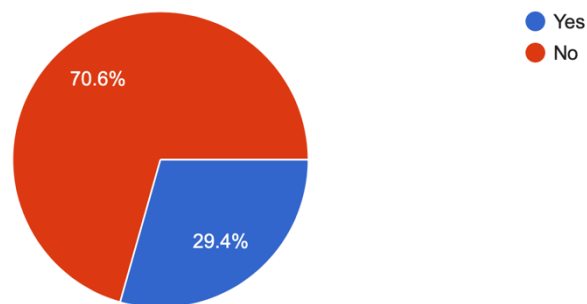


Q6. The sixth question gave individuals the opportunity to explain what aspects related to flying in a COVID-19 world, gives them most cause for concern. A total of 87% respondents provided a response. *\*\* see all answers in Annex 2 \*\**

Q7. In question 7, we asked individuals whether the financial constraints of COVID-19 made any impact on their decision to NOT book future travel by air

Has the financial constraints of COVID-19 made any impact on your decision to not book future travel by air?

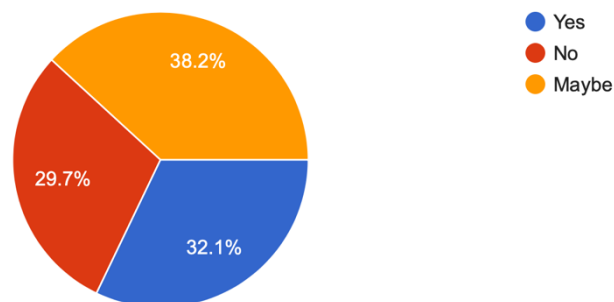
330 responses



Q8. In question 8, individuals were asked whether they would consider flying before a COVID-19 vaccine is made available

Would you consider flying before a COVID-19 vaccine is made available?

330 responses



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Annex 2 – Answers to Q6 around individual causes of concern relating to flying in a COVID-19 world.

Cost, air filtration on board, cleanliness/safety going through the airport.
Sanitation and assistance
being in close contact with people I do not know.
Airport & aircraft cleanliness also PAX travelling with symptoms or bugs
The destination
contracting the virus
Close proximity of other passengers
Don't know yet as a lot of people are grounded currently, I've never been uncomfortable flying and do see what is going to change for me personally... Unless the government or the air industry bring in barriers for disabled to get back flying...
Being exposed to someone with the virus
Getting assistance
People not respecting social distancing
A contained area where I would expect everyone has some form of test that's been approved by the UK government. I am fully aware that the chances of risk would be high. I am personally still sceptical of our Government doing a rush job on this. British Airways/IAG are looking to make 12,000 staff redundant, also to close operations at Gatwick. My wife and I have lost two holidays this year, and the third to Lanzarote with BA looks very doubtful. I guess that passengers will have to fly with an approved make of mask and own oxygen bottle to lessen the impact. I've seen most things working for Air Traffic for thirty years, but I have never seen anything like this. It may take years to return to normal operations.
Transmission of virus
The hidden symptoms - anyone can carry and spread
Contracting the virus
I'm afraid that airlines require passengers to wear a mask. For a person with respiratory difficulties, it's impossible to breathe through the mask, especially in the aircraft. I'm also afraid that airlines create new seat designs with new barriers, so that it's impossible to lift a person to the seat.
People in airport
Contracting the virus
The virus on other passengers
General safety regarding COVID-19 in planes, and with assistance.
Being close to people and the manual handling
Infection control and less attention being paid to access requirements with covid distractions and perhaps additional protocols that airlines and airports maybe have to take.
Proximity to passengers in terminal and in aircraft as well as assistants who have to lift my disabled son being carriers of COVID-19 and the infections that can come through aircon on the plane.
Germs in the air
Catching Covid as I'm also a high risk group
The close proximity to others

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Been surrounded by too many people
Being in a confined space with others as well as restrictions at destination
My severely disabled son Catching it and not surviving it
In a tight space with the air being circulated.
The uncertainty of the safety of other passengers
Dying.
Lot of people tightly packed.
I'm worried for my heart health.
Protection
Safety. Masks for everybody in all airplanes and airports.
A country is less protected
Restrictions that exclude disabled for example masks (cannot breathe through them), not able to have assistance in airport and transferring to plane, Seats that i cannot sit on
Unforeseen restrictions whilst abroad
Staying safe
covid 1 makes no difference to my opinion of flying
Air conditioning in confined space
Too many people breathing in recycled air
PRM staff being too close on ambulifts and on board,
General hygiene and safety
Relying on the correct assistance
Hygiene
Transmission
If COVID-19 sprides me during fligth
Being in a confined space without social distancing
Not flying commercial again before a vaccine is available
Spreading the disease myself
Catching it
Not getting treatment if ill
Sitting close to other passengers
Airconditioning, lack of space and just simply breathing the same air as others in the plane.
Catching COVID-19
The risk of catching COVID-19
Inadequate treatment for Covid or the absence of a vaccine. I would look for adequate safety precautions at the airport or, more importantly, protections on the plane - physical distancing, adequate masks. I would also need the disabled assistance to be in place air and land side.
Risks of catching it from people

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ability of airline to accommodate me - 1.87m 130kg
None just flying in general as I've not flown before
Infection
The accessibility of new arrangements, ie. Desinfection sprayings etc, that are being planned. Also the face mask.. i am not able to wear one and the problems this might bring up. I also worry about assisting Services, that they are not closed. I hope they don't put all who need assistance to a high risk class and say they are not allowed to fly at all.
Other passenger inconsideration
Special assistance restrictions
Special assistance will be limited or not with full PPE
Getting sick
Social distancing - cleanliness not just on flight but where food is made-blankets-tv screens-magazines-trays actually anything I would need to touch
Risk of contracting the virus from lack of social distancing
The whole procedure from airport lounges to sitting on the plane make any social distancing difficult. Also, as I am a wheelchair user who cannot walk at all, I need actual physical help to get on and off. Recirculated air in the cabin is also a concern.
Being in close proximity with others
Social Distancing in the airport and on the plane.
Making sure there is Screening for the virus
Longer queues at airports, higher fares
I need to take someone's arm and walk sighted guide and I am concerned they won't allow that with social distancing.
Other people who travel whilst ill
social distancing measures still being followed fresh, new masks not being available hand gel not being made available personnel trained in full hygiene protocols when serving food, beverages, dealing with luggage, etc
The challenges I usually associate with air travel - primarily having to be carried on and off the plane because I can't fly in my wheelchair
Getting assistance through check-in, security & baggage Reclaim
The air con! Recycled air and close proximity to others
Social distancing
Yes definitely
I can't stay in my chair and I am not letting airport staff touch me.
Catching covid
Dealing with requirement Changes for children with autism
Not safe. Inadequate seating provision- too close to others.
Being close to those lifting on and off the aeroplane
Potential illness and the destruction of My expensive electric wheelchair in cargo.
Catching the virus



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My biggest concern I the risk of catching it just from pushing my wheelchair in public places with bare hands
Contagious
Enclosed space , shared breathing space
Daughter is at high risk, will stay quarantined until there is a vaccine
Catching it on the plane
Long queues, security checks, getting Infected due to low immunity.
airplane cleanliness, airplane washroom cleanliness, airplane air filter cleanliness
COVID is nothing compared to the ongoing discrimination I've experienced having my disability challenged and debated over and over again. I feel at ease now knowing that everyone is mandated to comply with a mask rule. I was already taking significant precautions from every day germs while traveling. I hope we are afforded (without disbelief) opportunity to preboard as we've requested prior to this. to settle in and know we feel safe.
N/A
Lack of planes due to companies not making it through covid 19 finances, making air fair more expensive - also spread of virus in small compacted space
Contracting virus
Safety to COVID-19
Catching Covid-19
Lack of ability to provide suitable physical distancing, untracked community spread in countries I might want to visit
Genera safety and lack of accessibility
Airport crowds and sanitation worries
As soon as it's deemed safe to do so, I would not have any additional concerns relating to COVID 19. But I would not fly for at least 6 months after the all-clear has been given.
cleanliness, being able to eat and drink during a flight with a mask
getting covid 19
The uncertainty
Not too much
Having to wear masks which hopefully won't happen for long
The safety of the area I'm travelling to
Masks and security with loud noises
Crowds in airports, sitting close to each other on the plane
Other passengers being inconsiderate
Being medically compromised & catching covid
Spreading the virus country to country
Getting sick
The increased time taken to get through the airport. My son needs clarity and a plan before we go anywhere so managing expectations accurately is key. If there is a lot of hanging around, a lot of checks, a lot of instructions, coming and going, the need to be distanced and so on it w ill be prohibitive for us to fly - probably more so than worries about the virus itself.

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Being to close to people
Being in a packed cabin environment with no social distancing. Lack of screening at airports. I have to weigh up wellbeing of others vs my own. My mother lives on her own in a remote part of France & flying is the cheapest & quickest way of visiting her. I'm worried about the long term impact of lockdown on her health & feel I would have no alternative but to fly in order to see her.
Risk of being infected due to air conditioning systems onboard etc.
Unprotected closeness
Proximity to other people and not being able to move around.
Clarity on status of COVID-19 in each country.
Sanitization of flight, boarder procedures
The close contact as a result of a lift on lift off
air conditioning spreading germs for people with low or no immunity
No access to toilets and being treated like cattle
Being quarantined when landing in another country, Stuck in another country,
Me and love ones catching the virus
I am a wheelchair user and require use of the aisle chair and assistance from airport staff transferring. This of course requires close physical contact. I would strongly protest if the assistance folk were not wearing PPE (at minimum a quality mask and gloves). For my safety, theirs, and that of other passengers they assist.
Behaviour of other passengers
Infection
Other people's lack of respect for rules
Social distancing on the plane
Irresponsible passengers and staff
close contact with others, recycled air on planes, unclean planes
Being so close to other people
Catching Covid19
Living
Need to shield myself from the virus as am ventilator dependent.
People support especially when social distancing is a norm. Also a general concern on the close atmosphere while flying and chances of getting infected
sanitation of airplane
The variation in responses to how accessibility will be managed
As we are shielding we really need to wait for a vaccine plus there's a huge worry about travel insurance not covering Covid -19
The lack of clear visible instructions posts visitor of airports to reduce stress and exciting touring the airport journey.
Too much additional text read as I am dyslexic.
If I became ill with COVID-19 I could be unable to travel for several weeks
Not being able to social distance correctly

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Proximity to people in the airport, cleanliness of the airport
Unpredictability of how other passengers might behave. If they've been safe, if they're taking precautions, etc.
Damage to my wheelchair. Contracting the virus from TSA inspection, plane transfers, etc.
Social distancing as need help to get to the seat
None
Needing assistance to board and disembark
Catching Covid-19
The cost of flying, the risk of the virus spreading through the cabin,
Health & Safety arrangements
healthcare abroad
Proximity to people who don't take social distancing seriously
Being safe on the plane
The air being circulated around the cabin causing a concern of virus transmission
Oxygen levels
The virus
Invasive medical assessments and selfish able-bodied people carelessly spreading their germs near me.
How close everyone is sitting next to each other
Contagion and community transmission.
Being able to travel safely without fear of infection
Contagious passengers
recycled infected air in the cabin of the aircraft
I traveled by airplane (for medical) one week ago. My concern was lack of masked passengers and lack of knowledge of airport terminal, airline, & medical staff.
I'd like to know that other passengers aren't infected and that the people who are helping me board are not infected. It's even more annoying that I have to be lifted onto a plane by several people and not be able to roll on in my wheelchair without having to be touched by others.
My son needs help being lifted into the plane. Lots of hand touching. Use of family bathroom to change him on the floor is a huge concern.
Lots of different people assisting/lifting me on/off to plane seats... I'm a C5 Quad
Being in confined space sharing the same air.
My concern is always my 2 kids motorized wheelchairs weighing 500 lbs each
Catching it and bringing it home
Social distancing and clean aircraft
Getting the virus while away from home.
Cleanliness/sterilization - so many shared surfaces in planes & airports - it's almost impossible to sterilize them all (hand rails, arm rests, seat belts & buckles, conveyor belts, ticket counters, turnstiles, faucet/toilet handles), walls, windows, etc.
The space between the seats.

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Tight confinement in plane
social distancing because I need assistance to board
Lack of social distancing
Having the assistance I need i.e aisle chair to board and use the restroom onboard.
Airline assistance might be denied due to distancing norms.
Safety
None
Recirculating air meaning social distancing is not an option. If one person is carrying covid, I would catch it.
Financial implications
Physical contact with others for transfers
Monitoring of passengers and staff
Flying while the threat of Covid 19 is still out there with no vaccine is an absolute no no
Nothing
Complications over personal assistant ability to help me as much as usual
I'm in high risk group
Don't know yet as allot of people are grounded currently,lve never been uncomfortable flying and do see what is going to change for me personally... Unless the government or the air industry bring in barriers for disabled to get back flying...
Not sure
Recirculated air on a plane with passengers coughing etc
None
Isolation at end of trip
Close contact with strangers
Issue around my access needs becoming more of a problem with new rules
Contracting it with an auto immune disease ( RA)
Contamination spread through close contact on aircraft
Being exposed to the virus
Not concerned
Accessibility still concerns me more than anything. Access to the toilet, accessing my seat & getting my son to his (with w.chair). Crutches being stored? Passengers too close, lost mobility aids and not wanting to use airports, list goes on....
Waiting times at the airport and all the risks on the aircraft. As for the aircraft cabin, I believe cabins are very safe.
Slower processes at the airport and during boarding and therefore possible flight delays.
everything
Spread via air conditioning
Social distance inside the plane
The mask

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Getting infected
Safety
Protective gear
Just I won't go back to my home pls
The regulations of masks. I have unseen breathing issues that are severe, and my doctor has written a note, but it singles me out and causes great shame to have others stare, as if I don't care about my fellow human beings. If my nose and mouth are covered too long it hinders my breathing so much I hyperventilate and pass out, or worse, begin to choke (none of this is related to Covid; it has been here since a terrible breathing sickness in 2017). I usually fly every 3 weeks.
Passenger assistance
Other passengers hygiene diligence
Catching it
moving through different countries before reaching final destination
Weakened immune system. I need protection from others.
Summer vacation
Transmission
I am in the high risk category, so being in close contact with other people would be my biggest cause of concern.
Im not concerned, i cant wait to travel
Pregnancy
Aircraft and airport security
My daughter has a degenerative condition which is consider a precondition to COVID, her condition does not an approval medical treatment so our only hope is the medical trials which are in other cities or countries, not flying will kill her but flying with this risk also will. So my concern is to ensure that the full travel journey is safe for her. BTW, I work for you! Or at least I will for some months more I needed to quite to move to another country were they discovered what she has, in Spain (where I was) they were not able to discover not even close
Transmission
Travel restrictions, quarantines, virus outbreak
Insufficient control measures applied by airports and airlines
I think everyone will maintain the security then there is no problem to fly
Infection
The lack of interest from people and everyone discouraging or making it difficult to fly. Also my personal health safety.
Contagion, uncertainty
Needing wheelchair assistants
Boost economy
Catching Covid-19
Social Distancing
Lots of people sharing the same sealed space without external exchange of air, and the same air being pumped around by a/c. One person coughing can spread stuff within 2m, which in many cases means significant part of plane. And then that air will be quickly circulated around.

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Not enough space to be able to move and relieve pressure points. This is a huge concern for those who are paralyzed.
Density of people at the airports
Not being checked at airports
the recirculating of air in an aircraft as i usually pick up a low grade infection after flying
The heavy disinfectant use (allergies to fragrance and VOCs), infection risk, and forced quarantines in places I may have no control over the environment.
Proximity to people while loading and on the aircraft
Cleanliness of planes, mainly seats, food trays etc
Restriction of space
I often catch viruses when I fly and I am clinically high risk so I don't know if I will ever be able to travel on a plane again unless there is a vaccine to SARS-Cov-2
Close proximity and breathing the same air as others
People not maintaining social distance. Catching the virus, as I could become seriously ill with it. That safety measures may not be ensured by the airline or airports. That the country being travelled to may not have proper safety measures in place either.
How they will maintain social distancing and getting sick abroad and travel insurance finding a way not to cover it. I also think it will become expensive to fly as there is going to be less people on each plane
Something happening that means I couldn't get home eg outbreak and lockdown where I've flown to. Obviously infection is also a high concern.
Getting help but distance
Being such high risk and getting on a plane with people who might be carrying something, ending up in a foreign hospital where people don't understand your hidden disability or your other issues
Small spacesw
Social distancing & hygiene
Air borne germs circulating through the ventilation system
Catching it, no point social distancing in a metal tube that recirculates the air you breathe
Risk of infection and lack of social distancing!
Spread of disease
queuing at airports
My poor mobility means trying to sit down would be a challenge as seats so close together on a plane.
Close proximity and air quality
Accessibility
Safety measures
Air quality
Flights suspended
Flights suspended
Flights suspended
Spread of disease

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I have many dependent
I am a labour, my contract period was finished,
the inability to keep my distance during transfers and on the plane frightens me.
Sitting close to eachother
I am physically challenged no job no money kindly give some concern because I have dependents
None
Regenerated air on the plane
X
Queuing for longer periods than normal, whilst standing. Proximity to other passengers. Recycled cabin air.
No
Not being able to read lips because my companion has a hearing impairment and people wear masks covering their mouths
Getting covid19