

Travel behaviour in public passenger transport – a comparison between air and rail travel

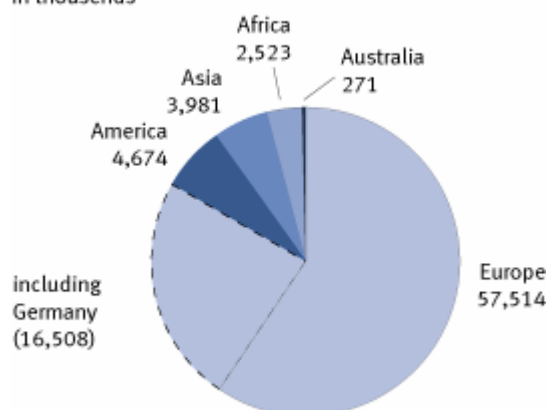
Destatis, 21 February 2008

In 2006, every German citizen on average travelled 2.3 times by air or rail (with at least one overnight stay). Of these journeys, 56.2% were made within Germany and 43.8% to foreign countries. What is the most favoured mode of public transport for travelling? Are there still any traditional rail travel destinations or do people only travel by air now? Are airplanes and trains used equally often for travelling within Germany?

Destinations on the European continent predominate in air travel

Air trips from German airports in 2006

in thousands



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Trips to other continents have almost exclusively been made by plane. In 2006, 11.4 million out of the total of 69.0 million air trips from Germany were made to other continents. America topped the list of non-European destinations, followed by Asia, Africa and Australia.

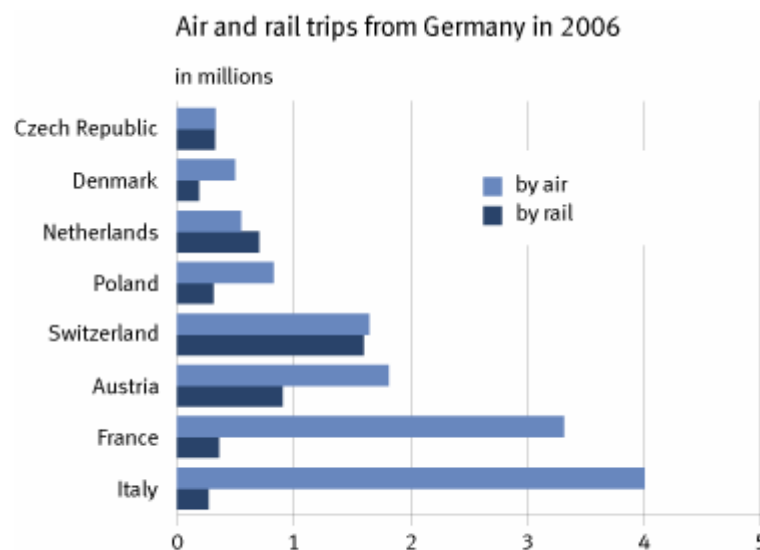
Air passengers travelled 41.0 million times to other European countries. Here, Spain ranked first (9.9 million air trips in all), with the Spanish islands alone accounting for 6.2 million air passengers. Another 4.9 million air trips were made to the United Kingdom, which ranked second among the most popular European countries of destination. The third most favoured destination for air travel was Turkey, accounting for 4.4 million air trips departing from Germany.

A total of 16.5 million air trips ended at German airports.

Railways dominate internal travel in Germany

In 2006, a total of 120.0 million train trips were made to long-distance destinations. The majority of these trips ended within Germany (110.1 million). Only every tenth rail trip was made across Germany's borders. 4.9 million railway passengers went abroad, while 4.5 million passengers arrived from foreign countries. A total of 0.4 million railway passengers were counted on transit trips through Germany.

How do people travel to Italy and Germany's neighbours?



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Accounting for 4.0 million trips, Italy ranked fourth among the most popular European destinations for air travel. Only 0.3 million trips to Italy were made by rail. To France, too, far more trips were made by air than by long-distance trains. Twice as many passengers travelled to Austria by air (1.8 million) than by rail (0.9 million). Switzerland, which accounted for the majority of rail trips starting from Germany, welcomed just as many train passengers as air passengers (1.6 million each). The Czech Republic, too, recorded nearly equal numbers of air and rail passengers. Long-distance passenger travel to Spain, the United Kingdom and Turkey played a rather insignificant role; the three countries taken together accounted for less than one per mill of all rail passengers travelling from Germany to destinations abroad.

Trains overtake planes between Berlin and Frankfurt

A new set of five-yearly statistics, which were compiled for the first time for 2005, has provided data for detailed comparisons of the passenger flows in domestic rail transport in Germany. According to these statistics, nearly 110 million passengers travelled by rail to long-distance destinations within Germany in 2005. Nevertheless, air travel dominated many routes between major regions with airports.

The majority of air passengers were recorded on flights between Cologne-Bonn airport and the airports of Berlin, accounting for a total of 1.4 million trips. The respective number of trips made by rail on this route was one million. The second strongest intra-German air connection was between Berlin and Munich. In 2005, a total of 1.3 million air passengers travelled on this route, exceeding the number of railway passengers by about 800,000. Accounting for 1.1 million trips, the third strongest air connection was the one between Munich and Hamburg. On this route, less than half as many railway passengers (485,000) were counted. The fourth strongest connection between Düsseldorf and Munich was also dominated by air travel with 1.1 million passengers. The number of railway passengers on this route was, at least, half the level of air passenger transport.

However, where particularly fast rail connections are available, it is possible for trains to overtake planes. Accordingly, the rail connection from Frankfurt/Main to Berlin (and back) was used by 1.3 million passengers in 2005, surpassing the number of air trips by almost 300,000. More rail passengers than air passengers were also counted on the route from Frankfurt/Main to Hamburg and back. However, the German Railways established their biggest lead on the route between Düsseldorf and Berlin.

Intra-German air transport compared with intra-German rail transport in 2005			
Between ... and ... (both directions)		By air	By rail ¹
		1,000 passengers	
Cologne	Berlin	1,367	1,053
Berlin	Munich	1,315	518
Munich	Hamburg	1,145	485
Düsseldorf	Munich	1,117	582
Cologne	Munich	1,035	677
Stuttgart	Berlin	985	424
Frankfurt/Main	Berlin	984	1,270
Frankfurt/Main	Hamburg	731	950
Düsseldorf	Berlin	712	1,168
Stuttgart	Hamburg	665	272
Other intra-German connections		5,454	102,209
Total		15,510	109,609

¹ Anker--Fussnote1Administrative region in each case.