Airline safety culture in Europe

A pan-European survey study of over 7000 pilots

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Why this project & survey

• Future Sky Safety (EC funded under Horizon2020) Project #5 - ‘Resolving the organisational accident’

• Why is Safety culture so important?

• Objectives are to:
  ➢ Identify pilot perceptions on organisational safety culture
  ➢ Identify areas for improvement
  ➢ Compare experiences in different organisations and work contexts
Safety Culture Dimensions

- Management commitment to safety
- Collaboration & Involvement
- Risk Handling
- Communication & Learning
- Perceived Organisational Support
- Fatigue
- Just Culture & Reporting
- Colleague commitment to safety
- Speaking up in the cockpit
- Staff equipment
- Procedures & training
The Study

• Online survey via ECA & Social media
• Commercial pilots based in Europe
• 7,239 replies (14% of population)
• State of the art statistical analysis
• Strong measures to prevent manipulation
• Not a ‘grievance survey’
• Perceptions only
Responses by Country Base

(Nb. Excludes those that make up >1% of sample; Nationality very similar make-up)
Responses by Company Type

55% Network
24% Aereal work/ambulance/surveillance
7% Business
6% Cargo
2% Charter/leisure
2% General Aviation
1% Helicopter
2% Low cost
Other (Please state)
Responses by Contract Type

Typical contract = Permanent contract
Atypical contract = Self-employed; Zero-hours, fixed-term, pay-to-fly contracts
Overall Results per dimension

- Colleague commitment to safety
- Speaking up
- Risk Handling
- Procedures & Training
- Just Culture and Reporting
- Communication and Learning
- Collaboration and Involvement
- Management commitment to...
- Staff and equipment
- Fatigue
- Perceived Organisational Support
Responses to individual items

B01 My colleagues are committed to safety.

C10r I have to take risks that make me feel uncomfortable about safety.

D08 Captains encourage their crew to speak-up if they are concerned with decisions made by the Captain.

C05 I am satisfied with the level of confidentiality of the reporting and investigation process.

D07 My national aviation authority takes safety seriously.

B12 We get timely feedback on the safety issues we raise.

B06 Pilots have a high degree of trust in management with regard to safety.

D01r Pilots in this company are often tired at work.
Lower safety culture ratings amongst pilots at Low Cost & Cargo airlines than other airline types (esp. Network airlines)
Company variations

(NB. Company ID varied per graph)

(NB. Excludes companies with >30 responses)
• Pilots with atypical contracts view safety culture less positively than those on typical contracts

(NB. Typical (n=6394), Atypical (n=805) contracts)
Concluding comments

• Overall, the *average* safety culture is good.
• Over 50% of pilots say they are often tired at work and feel their companies do not take *fatigue* seriously
• Those pilots on *unsecure contracts, Cargo* and *Low Cost* airlines generally had poorer perceptions of safety culture
• The study has is representative for the European pilot community and provides excellent insights for the EC, regulators, airlines and pilot associations to take safety initiatives.
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