

NEW RESEARCH FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES & PATRIOTIC MILLIONAIRES

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Press contacts at end

High Flyers 2023: How Ultra-Rich Private Jet Travel Costs the Rest of Us and Burns Up Our Planet

New research from the Institute for Policy Studies and Patriotic Millionaires reveals 10 stunning facts about the high-flying private jet industry.

Washington, D.C. – On May 1, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Patriotic Millionaires released a critical [new report](#) exposing how private jet travel costs ordinary families money and exacerbates the climate crisis.

Key highlights include 10 stunning facts about the high-flying private jet industry:

- **Private jets make up approximately 1 out of every 6 flights handled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but contribute just 2 percent of the taxes that make up the trust fund that primarily funds the FAA.** Instead, the majority (roughly 70 percent) of the tax revenue that makes up the aviation trust fund is financed by passengers purchasing commercial air travel. Passengers pay a 7.5 percent tax on the prices of their tickets plus a passenger facility charge of no more than \$4.50. Passenger taxes are increasing as flight prices increase. Meanwhile, private jet fliers only pay fuel surcharge taxes — roughly \$0.22 per gallon of jet fuel.
- **Private jets emit at least 10 times more pollutants than commercial planes per passenger.** Unsurprisingly, approximately 1 percent of people are believed to be responsible for about half of all aviation carbon emissions. In addition, since the start of the pandemic, private jet use has increased by about a fifth and private jet emissions have increased more than 23 percent, according to a recent study.
- **The median net worth of a full and fractional private jet owner is \$190 million and \$140 million respectively.** They represent **0.0008 percent** of the global population. The

jet-owning oligarchy is overwhelmingly male, over the age of 50, and concentrated in the industries of banking, finance, and real estate.

- The private jet sector set industry records with regards to transaction and dollar volume in 2021 and 2022. **The size of the global fleet has increased 133 percent** in the last two decades from 9,895 in 2000 to 23,133 in mid-2022. This bonanza was accompanied by an unprecedented number of business jet flight operations, **5.3 million** in 2022.
- **A 10 percent and 5 percent transfer fee on pre-owned and new private aircraft would have raised \$2.4 billion in 2021 and \$2.6 billion in 2022.** The size of the private jet market grew from \$32.3 billion in 2021 to \$34.1 billion in 2022, with the market only set to expand.
- **Elon Musk would pay an additional \$3.94 million in taxes if our recommended transfer fee and jet fuel tax were implemented.** He is the most active high flyer in the United States. He purchased a new jet, took 171 flights, contributed to the consumption of 837,934 liters of jet fuel, and was responsible for 2,112 tons of carbon emissions in 2022.
- **Thousands of municipal airports in the US are funded by the public, but many primarily serve private and corporate jets.** These airports may not offer scheduled passenger service, but they still offer airport runways subsidized by taxes.
- **The largest player in the private jet lobby, the National Business Aviation Association, has spent an average [\\$2.4 million](#) each year since 2008 lobbying the federal government, primarily for tax giveaways.** During the Covid-19 pandemic, the industry specifically [lobbied](#) for Covid relief, particularly “medium- to long-term liquidity assistance and relief from air transportation excise taxes,” even though industry demand was quickly [climbing](#).
- **The wealthy can transfer ownership of their jets to a private trust, obscuring the true ownership of the aircraft. In an age where commercial passengers must take off their shoes to be screened and fly, beneficial ownership of aircraft presents a fully legal yet significant security risk.**
- While sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) have a role to play in reducing aviation emissions, they should not be considered a panacea by the private jet industry. **SAFs still release**

emissions, though less than traditional fuels, and they are currently expensive and rarely used.

"Private jet travel by billionaires and the ultra-wealthy imposes a tremendous cost on the rest of us," said **Chuck Collins, director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies and a co-author of the report.** "Not only do ordinary travelers and taxpayers subsidize the air space for private jets, but the high flyers also contribute considerably more pollution than other passengers. If we can't ban private jets, we should at least tax them and require them to pay to offset their environmental damage and subsidies."

"Flying on a private jet is amazing, it's the best travel experience ever. But after reading this report, I've decided to sell my jet," said **Stephen Prince, Vice Chair of the Patriotic Millionaires and founder of Card Marketing Services, Inc.** "It's virtually impossible to square any iota of concern about the environment and humanity with the supreme selfishness of jumping on a big jet all by myself. It's simply not right."

"The private jet industry is expected to have steady growth over the next few years, and that provides us with a great opportunity to levy a luxury transfer tax on private jet sales," noted **Omar Ocampo, a researcher with the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies and a co-author of the report.** "The revenue raised from this tax can be invested towards developing a green transportation system."

"Private jets are a microcosm of our system of wealth inequality even beyond their image of extravagance," said **Kalena Thomhave, a researcher with the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies and a co-author of the report.** "Private flyers pay just 2 percent of the taxes that primarily fund the Federal Aviation Administration, yet nearly 17 percent of flights handled by the FAA are private. Meanwhile, private jets contribute disproportionately to carbon emissions while often representing significant tax savings for their wealthy owners."

[Read the full analysis.](#)

The report recommends several critical measures to help rein in the private jets industry and hold owners accountable, including:

- Implement a transfer tax on all private jets
- Levy a private jet fuel tax

- Institute a “short hop” surcharge
- Resist efforts to increase passenger facility charges until private jet owners pay their fair share
- Create a sustainable transportation equity trust fund
- Increase TSA security oversight of private jets
- Pass the Aircraft Ownership Transparency Act

To speak with one of the co-authors of the [report](#) for an interview or comment, please contact IPS Deputy Communications Director Olivia Alperstein at (202) 704-9011 or olivia@ips-dc.org.

For requests for an interview or comment from Stephen Prince or other members of the Patriotic Millionaires, please contact Sam Quigley at (317) 752-9150 or sam@patrioticmillionaires.org.

About the Institute for Policy Studies

For sixty years, the [Institute for Policy Studies](#) has served as a leading multi-issue research organization that provides key fact-based support for bold policy solutions to urgent issues from rising inequality to the climate crisis. Follow IPS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or Instagram to learn more about our programs and research.

About the Patriotic Millionaires

Members of the [Patriotic Millionaires](#) are high-net worth Americans, business leaders, and investors who are united in their concern about historic levels of inequality and the destabilizing concentration of wealth and power in America. The mission of The Patriotic Millionaires organization is to build a stable, prosperous, and inclusive nation by promoting public policies based on the “first principles” of equal political representation, a guaranteed living wage for all working citizens, and a fair tax system.

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