



# New Study Shows General Aviation's Economic Impact On U.S. States

Molly McMillin June 20, 2023



Credit: Jetlinerimages / Getty Images

Now more than ever, it is important to raise awareness about the importance of general aviation and general aviation airports and the economic impact on communities across the country, experts say.

The general aviation industry has been under attack. Roughly 100 U.S. airports have closed since 2008. The Senate and the House are currently debating new FAA reauthorization bills, and the industry is being "vilified" with negative perceptions about its value, says Selena Shilad, Alliance for Aviation Across America executive director.

"There have been a lot of misconceptions and a lot of vilification of general aviation and our network of local airports," Shilad says. "We can certainly pick out an example here and there of a wealthy flyer, but there are hundreds and thousands of businesses and charitable organizations and farms and local communities and flight schools that depend on general aviation and our network of airports every day, not to mention critical services, such as disaster relief, medical care and many other efforts."

A recent economic impact report by the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), the Alliance for Aviation Across America (AAAA) and the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) includes comprehensive state-by-state studies about the impact of general aviation on each of 38 states. Information includes the number of jobs supported, airports, pilots, aircraft and other indicators of local activity.

All told, general aviation supports more than 1.1 million jobs and a more than \$246 billion in economic impact a year, the report says.

Industry leaders are investing in important areas of growth, such as sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and technology, advanced air mobility and workforce development.

More than 4,800 public-use airports around the U.S. today can be directly accessed by general aviation.

According to the study, there are more than 2,200 charter flight companies, 4,144 repair stations, 643 pilot schools, 3,383 fixed-base operators and 125,440 airframe and power plant specialists. According to the FAA, the U.S. has more than 680,000 pilots, the majority of whom fly general aviation aircraft.

A single business aircraft supports about \$2.5 million in incremental economic benefit, NEXA Advisors said in a 2017 study, the report notes. S&P 500 companies that use business aviation outperform those that do not by 23% in revenue growth, according to NEXA Advisors.

At the same time, 46.7 million Americans live more than an hour away from a Level 1 or 2 trauma center. “Air medical services and air ambulances are more critical than ever,” the study says. Medevac fixed-wing aircraft transport 150,000 patients a year to locations not within range of helicopters, which transport about 400,000 patients a year.

Many residents of rural communities know they have an airport, but they don't necessarily know who is using it or why it is there, says Niel Ritchie, past president of the League of Rural Voters. “One thing is for sure—that is that rural places really depend on [local airports]. Primarily, those are not areas that are served by scheduled airline service .... It's still so critical to the life of rural places and rural economies,” Ritchie said. “We have a lot of work to do to keep letting people know and making the people who depend on them understand that they have to be part of this dialogue and to make their voices heard.”

The study may be accessed here:

<https://store.transportation.org/Item/PublicationDetail/5056?NoCategory> or <https://www.aviationacrossamerica.org/economic-impact/>

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