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## United Airlines in top 10 in redeeming miles, survey shows

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United Airlines ranked in the top 10 among all carriers allowing passengers to use frequent-flier miles to book flights, according to the Switchfly Reward Seat Availability Survey by IdeaWorksCompany.

The survey, released today, found that Chicago-based United had reward seats available 80 percent of the time and ranked eight for overall reward availability.

"This is good news," said George Hamlin, an aviation consultant based in Fairfax, Va. "Because in an industry where a product is increasingly not respected, and in some cases reviled by its users, the fact that they have gotten a positive out is a good thing."

"We've worked hard to address customer frustration about their ability to use miles when and how they want to," United spokesman Rahsaan Johnson said. "We've put significant effort behind making award seats available during the periods that customers prefer to book, which vary by market, as well as rolling out new ways for customers to use their miles beyond travel, like merchandise, hotel and experiential awards."

Overall, United's rate dropped 7 percent since last year, though it ranked higher than many of its U.S.-based competitors at No. 8. Chicago-based American Airlines, which ranked 17th, allowed travelers to purchase reward seats with miles 48.6 percent of time.

U.S. Airways and Delta Air Lines tied for 20th place, allowing customers to purchase reward seats 36.4 percent of the time.

Discount airlines topped the list, with Southwest Airlines coming in with 100 percent availability. Jet Blue also ranked higher than United with 88.6 percent availability.

Tying Southwest in first place was Air Berlin and GOL, both of which had 100 percent availability.

IdeaWorks collected data based on 7,560 booking queries for a party of two travelers at the websites of 25 frequent-flier program websites during March.