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Redeeming Frequent Flier Miles Is Getting Much Easier

by Michal Addady

This article is based upon a report issued by IdeaWorksCompany.

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According to the Switchfly Reward Seat Availability Survey, which was released on Wednesday in conjunction with consumer-focused IdeaWorks, airlines will be offering their frequent fliers more reward seats. The survey looked at 7,000 flights, both domestic and international between June and October, and found that there were reward seats available on 76.6% of them. That’s the highest it’s been in the seven years that this survey has been conducted.

“I would say it is getting easier, especially if you live outside the United States,” IdeaWorks president Jay Sorensen told CNBC. “I think the airlines have realized that for too long they have been too stingy with rewards on these long-haul routes.” Of the 25 airlines that were surveyed, two of them have reward seats available on 100% of the flights that were looked at — Southwest and Air Berlin. Lowest on the list is LATAM Airlines at 45%.

LATAM is a merged business enterprise that brought together LAN and TAM airlines in 2012. It’s still experiencing a number of changes, which could mean its rewards program isn’t currently its top priority and possibly explaining why it’s so far down on the list.

Such is the case for American Airlines as well, which came in 21st on the list with 56.4%, 10.7% down from last year. Despite the decrease in availability, a spokesperson told CNBC that the airline’s AAdvantage redemptions went up by 5% last year.