In 2000 civilian aircraft flew a total of 25 billion kilometres. If someone flew this distance they could circle the earth more than 630 000 times. If the total distance flown by all aircraft passengers was divided equally between everyone living in the world, we would each fly 317 kilometres a year. In fact some people fly thousands of kilometres a year, whilst others have never been in an aeroplane.

The people flying the most kilometres tend to be from island territories. On the other hand, people from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, also island territories, are amongst those flying the smallest number of kilometres per year.

“Seeing one parked at a gate, dwarfing luggage carts and mechanics, one is induced to feel surprise, overriding any scientific explanation, at how such a thing might move – a few metres, let alone to Japan.” Alain de Botton, 2002.