



# Examining Passenger Perception of Discrimination in European Airports: Providing a Good Passenger Experience for All

December 2023

Source: [www.uso.es](http://www.uso.es)

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# Why Analyse Discrimination in Airports?



Discrimination at airports is highly unreported.



Difficult to differentiate.



Normalization of unfair treatments.



COVID-19 Pandemic and other crises enhance unfair behaviors.



Airport Security Practices perceived as discriminatory.



Frequent interactions at different Airport Touchpoints.

# Discrimination and its Forms

Perceiving discrimination is a **reality** to that person. Therefore, acknowledging it and **understanding individual experiences** can be a great opportunity for development.

Discrimination is present in situations where individuals with specific ethnic or racial characteristics are treated or will be treated unfairly compared to another individual in a similar situation without a valid reason (Council Directive 2000/43/EC).

Spread of diseases or fear shows a tendency of discriminatory treatments causing harmful effects.



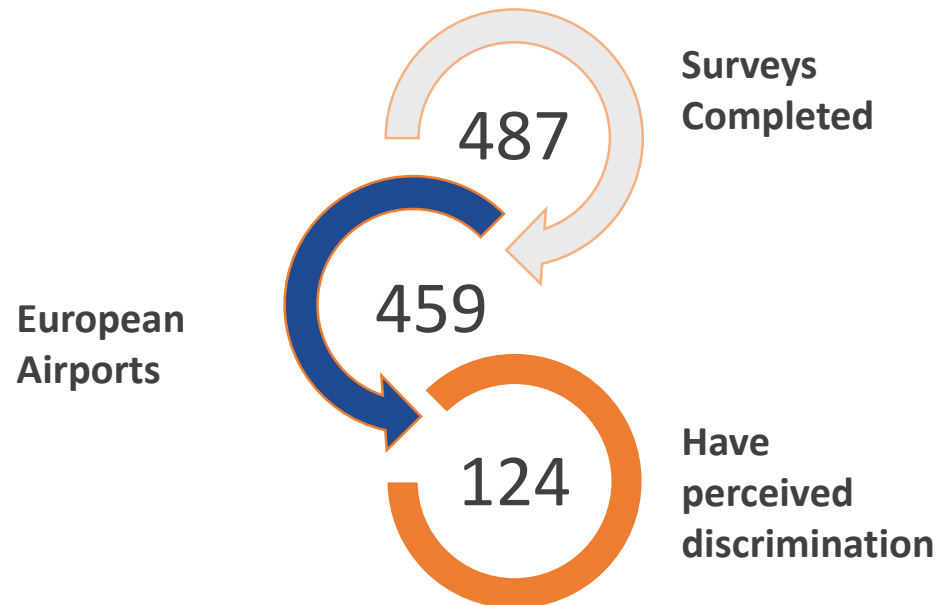
What do passengers perceive as discrimination in European Airports, what impact does it have on the passenger experience, and how can discrimination be mitigated?



The research aims at identifying Airport Touchpoints susceptible to Perceptions of Discrimination

# Survey on Perceived Discrimination at Airports

- An online survey was prepared with Google forms and distributed through different channels
- 27% of 459 respondents perceive discrimination at European airports and these persons continued with the survey to gain further insights

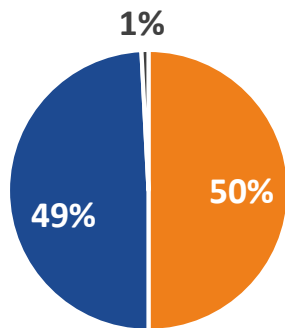


**Around 1 out of 4 surveyed persons perceived discrimination at European Airports.**

# Results of this Research

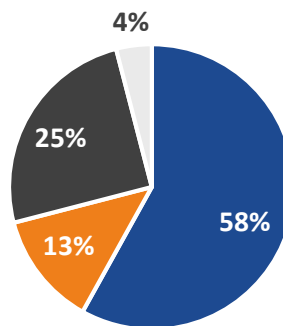
- The results represent different age groups, genders, cultures, and ethnicities, indicating experiences at different touchpoints at European airports.
- Staff were identified as responsible for unfair treatment.
- These perceptions were mainly attributed to **disrespectful, rude, unfair, or derogatory treatment** and **unjustified procedures**, such as unclear extra screening or questioning.

Gender of Participants perceiving Discrimination



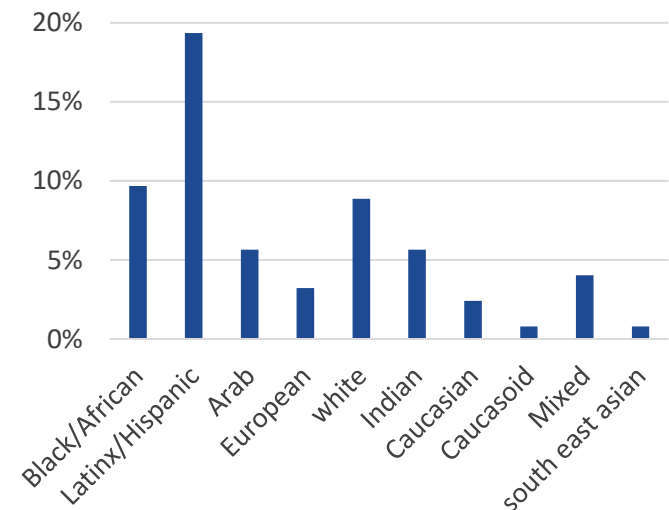
■ Female. ■ Male. ■ Prefer not to say.

Age of Participants perceiving Discrimination



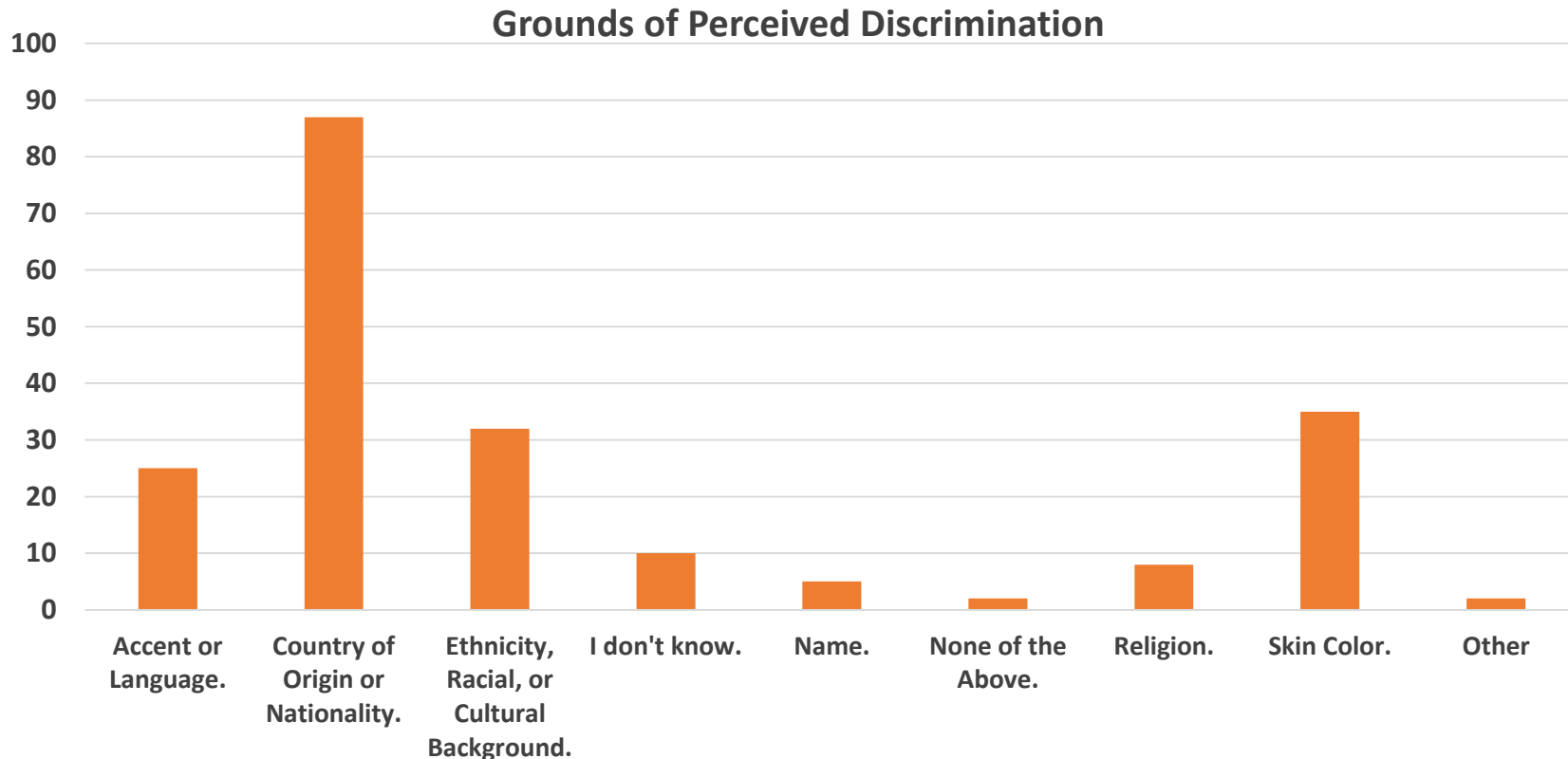
■ Below 25 ■ 26 - 45 ■ 46 - 65 ■ 66 or more

Ethnicity/Race of passengers that perceived discrimination



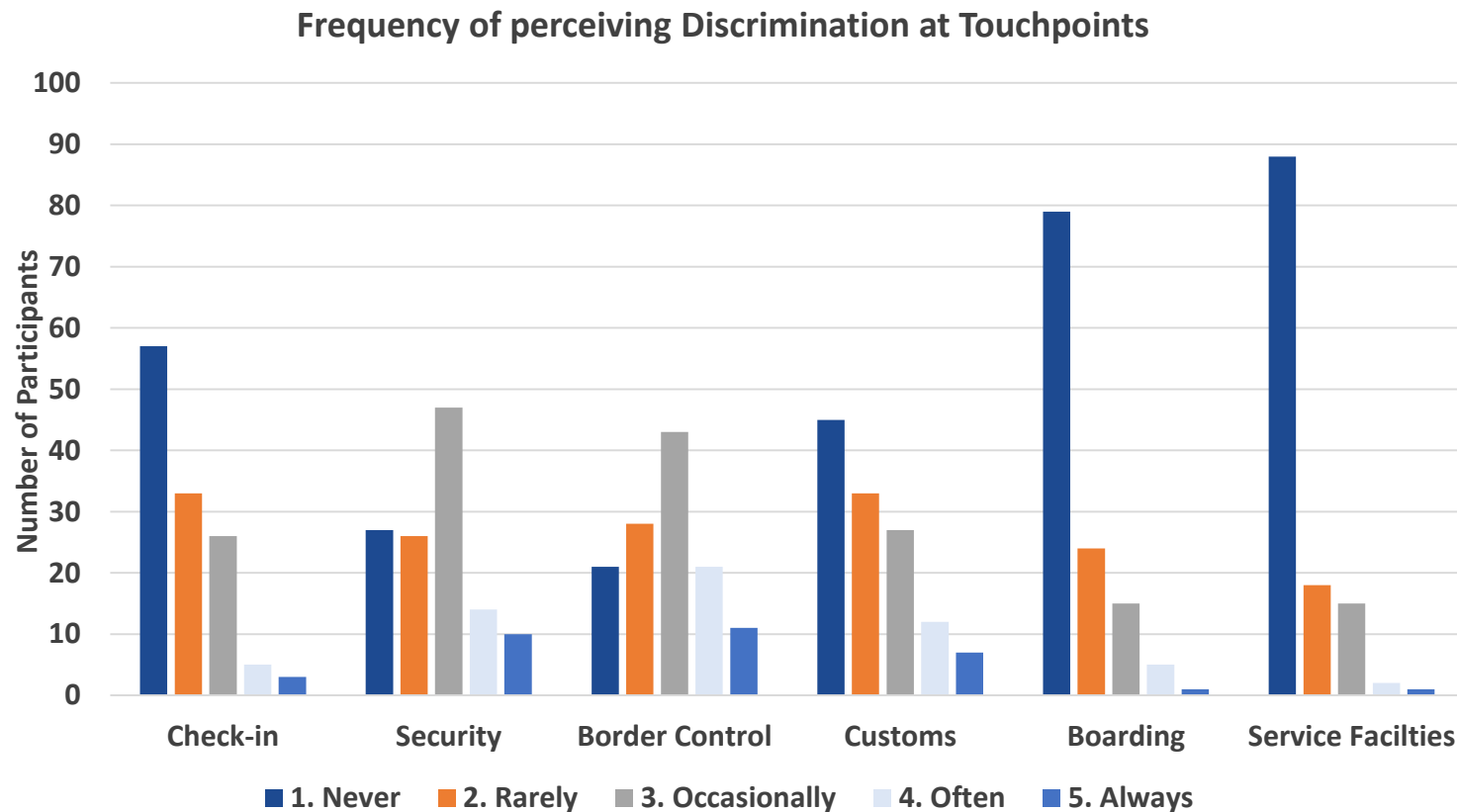
# Results of this Research

- Respondents highlight an evident normalization of unequal treatment caused by stereotypes.
- Country of Origin is highlighted as a major ground.



# Results of this Research

- ✈ Regarding the frequency of perceived discrimination, Border Control followed by Security are the touchpoints where passengers more frequently perceive discrimination.
- ✈ Similar results were obtained on the severity of discrimination at different touchpoints

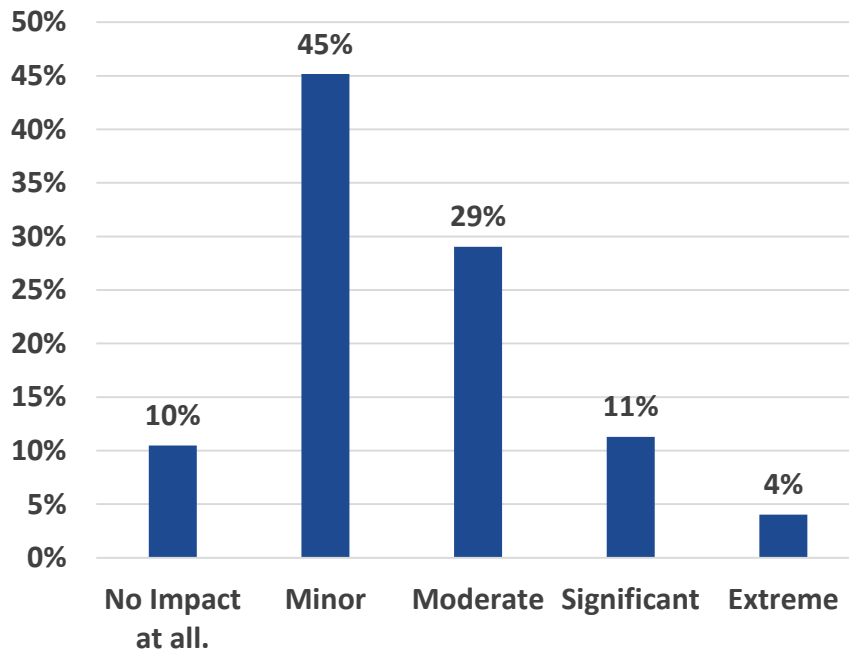




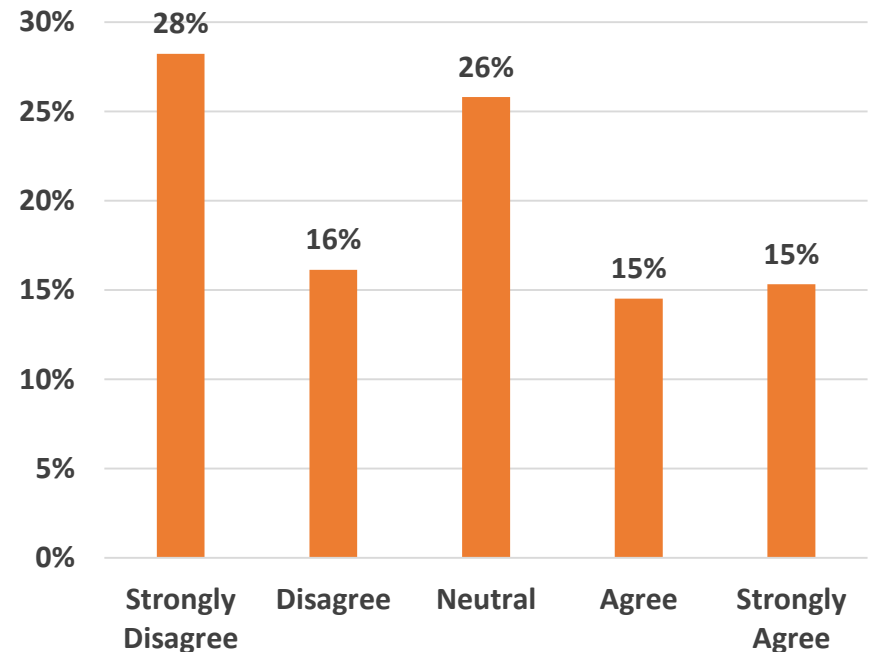
# Results of this Research

- On average, perceiving discrimination has a moderate negative impact on the passenger experience.
- Perceiving discrimination at an Airport can also influence how the passengers link these incidents to the culture of the country visited.

### Impact of perceived Discrimination on the Airport Experience



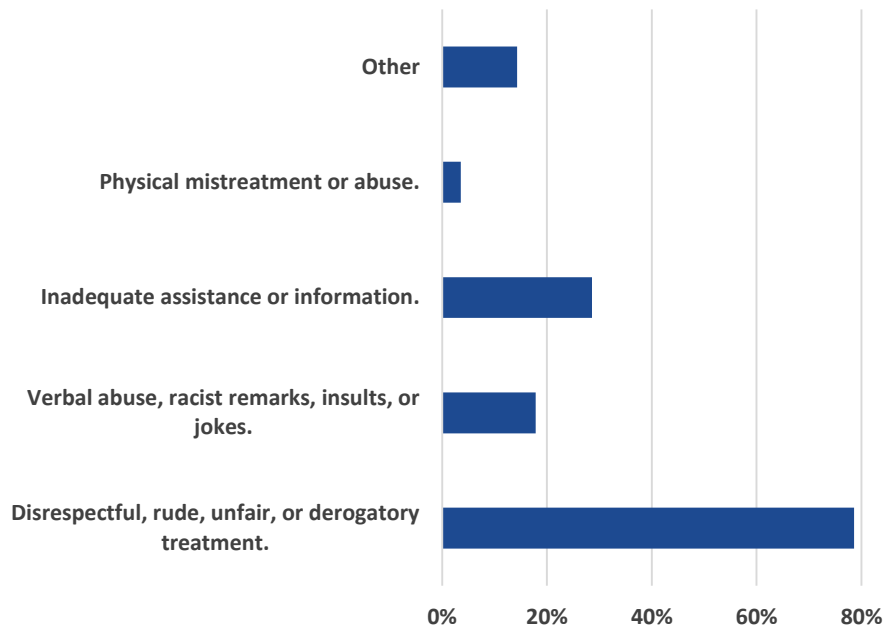
### Link between Perception of Discrimination and Culture of the Country visited



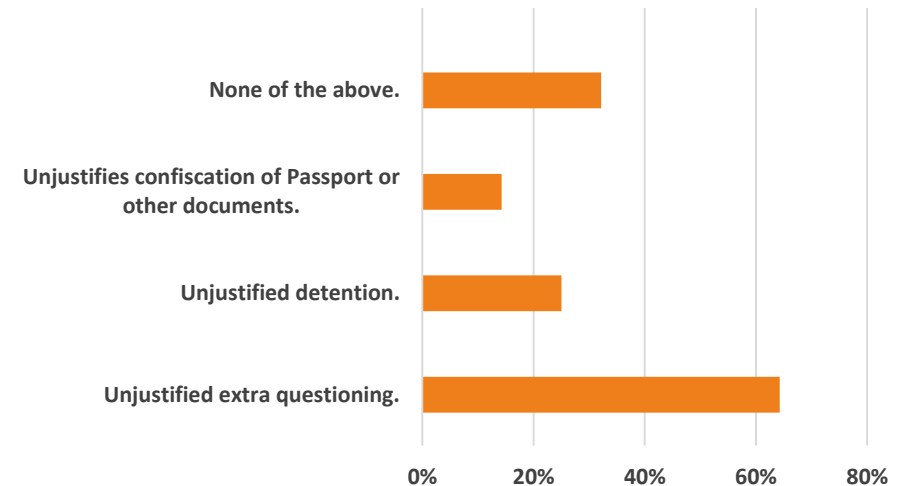
# Results of this Research

- ✈ Example Border Control: What did passengers perceive as Discrimination?
- ✈ Disrespectful, rude, unfair, or derogatory treatment turned out to be the main cause of perceived discrimination at Border Control
- ✈ Unjustified extra questioning was another experience perceived discriminatory

### Treatments perceived as Discriminatory

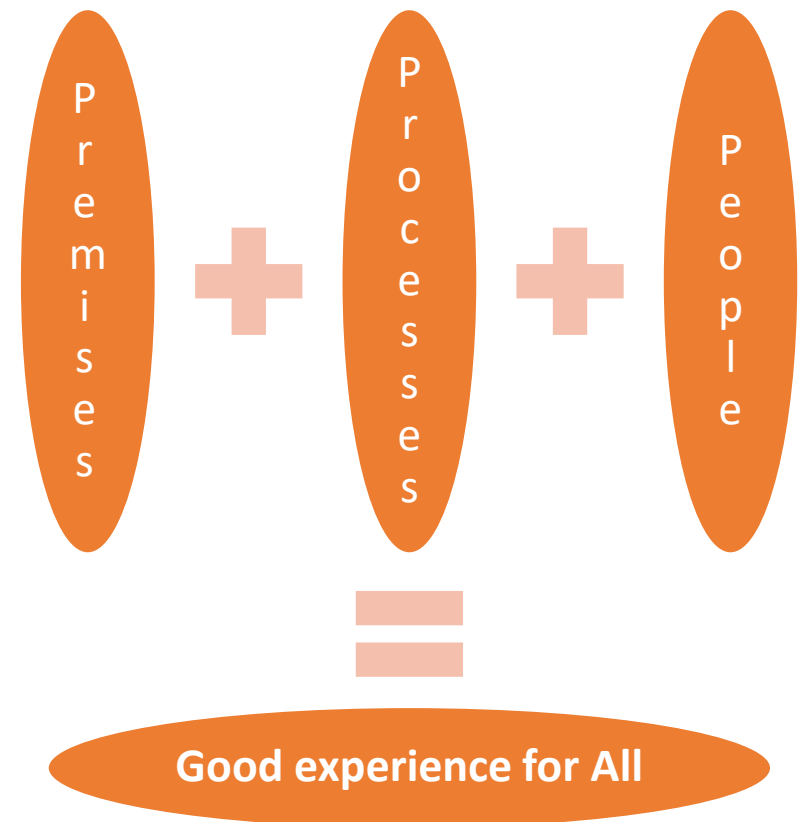
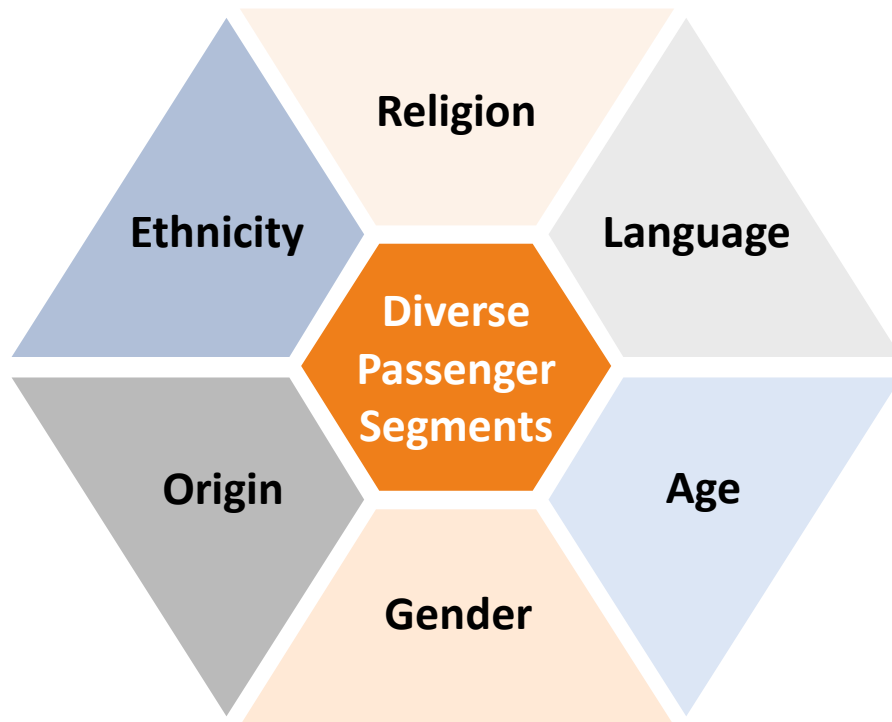


### Other Experiences perceived as Discriminatory



# Methodology to improve the Passenger Experience for All

- Identification and segmentation of the passenger groups who are prone to discrimination
- Analysis of their specific needs and vulnerabilities
- Enhancing the Passenger Experience for Premises, Processes and People (3P Approach)



# Initiatives on Airport Premises (physical environment)

**Goals:** Create a Physical Environment which improves wellbeing and reduces stress levels likewise for all passengers and staff. Provision of passenger guidance and facilities considering the needs of passengers with diverse backgrounds.



Adapt airport spaces for a positive passenger experience which reflect diverse and inclusive passenger needs

Design spaces to reduce stress or other negative emotions through ambience (light, color, sound, scent, artefacts)

Provision of prayer rooms, silent rooms, infant changing rooms and other services for diverse passenger groups

Guidance (visuals and announcements) considering symbols and languages according to your ethnic passengers



# Initiatives on Airport Processes

**Goals:** Design inclusive processes which prevent discrimination through biased staff behavior. Provide a frictionless passenger journey with efficient, reliable and predictable processes by maximizing utilization of non-discriminatory technologies while providing all needed information.



**Provide clear information and transparent explanations**

**Improve efficiency for second-line checks or different processes that split passenger paths e.g. passport control lines for EU nationals and for non-nationals**

**Automated processes reduce interactions, therefore reducing human interaction and possibly unfair treatments**

**Promote technological advances in equipment to prevent unnecessary additional procedures**



# Initiatives on Airport People (staff and stakeholder)

**Goals:** Establish an Airport Culture where all staff working at an airport are aware of passenger groups with diverse backgrounds who perceive discrimination and where they are working together to provide a good experience for all passengers.



Prepare managers to identify discrepancies, resolve problems, and promote an inclusive organizational culture

Prepare HR departments to combat discrimination and promote it internally

Highlight the importance of staff-passenger interactions

Collaborate with various stakeholder groups to foster a common ethical airport culture

Consult NGOs, authorities, and psychologists to raise awareness

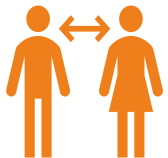
Provide training, campaigns, and workshops for front-line staff



Anti-discrimination training of frontline staff including awareness of unconscious bias and perceived discrimination.



Training on Communication - communication skills and body language in addressing passenger concerns that surpass standard processes e.g. communication with special category passengers.



Training on Cultural Sensitivity and Language- cultural sensitivity and to transcend language barriers and ignorance by having multilingual personnel.



Training on Handling Stressful Situations- managing passenger diversity especially during peak times.



Training on addressing passengers during events such as health pandemics or threats to national security, where passengers may feel stigmatized by passenger profiling and need assurance that procedures that they undergo are not based on race, religion, gender, or disability.



Training Stakeholders- importance of sharing information and addressing discrepancies among stakeholders to promote the airport culture and excellent passenger treatment.



Train managers to identify discrepancies, resolve problems, and promote an inclusive organisational culture.



# Recommendations of this Research

- ➔ Acknowledging passenger discrimination and understanding individual experiences can be an excellent opportunity to improve the passenger experience for all.
- Know your ethnic passenger and other groups prone to discrimination
- Understand their needs and expectations, considering ethnic, religious, and cultural factors
- Provide a good passenger experience for all by improving your premises, processes and people
- Educate, inform, and cultivate an ethical airport culture
- Implement cultural sensitivity, service excellence, and intercultural hospitality training





Discrimination perceived by passengers is experiencing unfair treatment due to attributes on ethnic origin, religion, culture, abilities, gender and sexual orientation, age, family dynamics other individual characteristics.



A number of passengers at European Airports perceive discrimination through unfair treatment or unclear procedures and passenger profiling. Tackling both active and perceived discrimination enhances inclusivity.



Addressing perceived discrimination should be a shared commitment to improve the passenger experience.

**Therefore, this study encourages airports to conduct targeted passenger experience surveys to address discrimination, yielding personalized results that foster individual development.**

## Research Study on Passenger Discrimination in European Airports

Bachelor Thesis by **Valeria Gomez** :

- Aviation Management, IU University of Applied Sciences, Bad Honnef
- Supervised by Prof. Ulrich Desel & Torsten Hentschel



### TH Airport Consulting

- **Independent Consultancy:** Passenger Experience, Airport Processes, Terminal Planning and Aviation Security
- **Pioneer in Passenger Experience:** Contributor to ACI EUROPE Guidelines for Passenger Services at European Airports, Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience and Handbook on Airport Culture
- Continuous work and research on the Passenger Experience



**Thank you very much for your attention!**

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