



ACCESS TO FLY: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DISABLED PASSENGERS' AIR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

The first disability law in air travel was enforced in **1990**

Accessible air travel is a human right. A recent survey found that **84%** of passengers with disabilities had at least one negative experience when flying ^[1]

We reviewed studies to better understand the air travel experiences of people with disabilities and gaps in research.

We reviewed articles from **9** databases, covering publications from **1990 to 2024**

We covered the experiences of different disability types

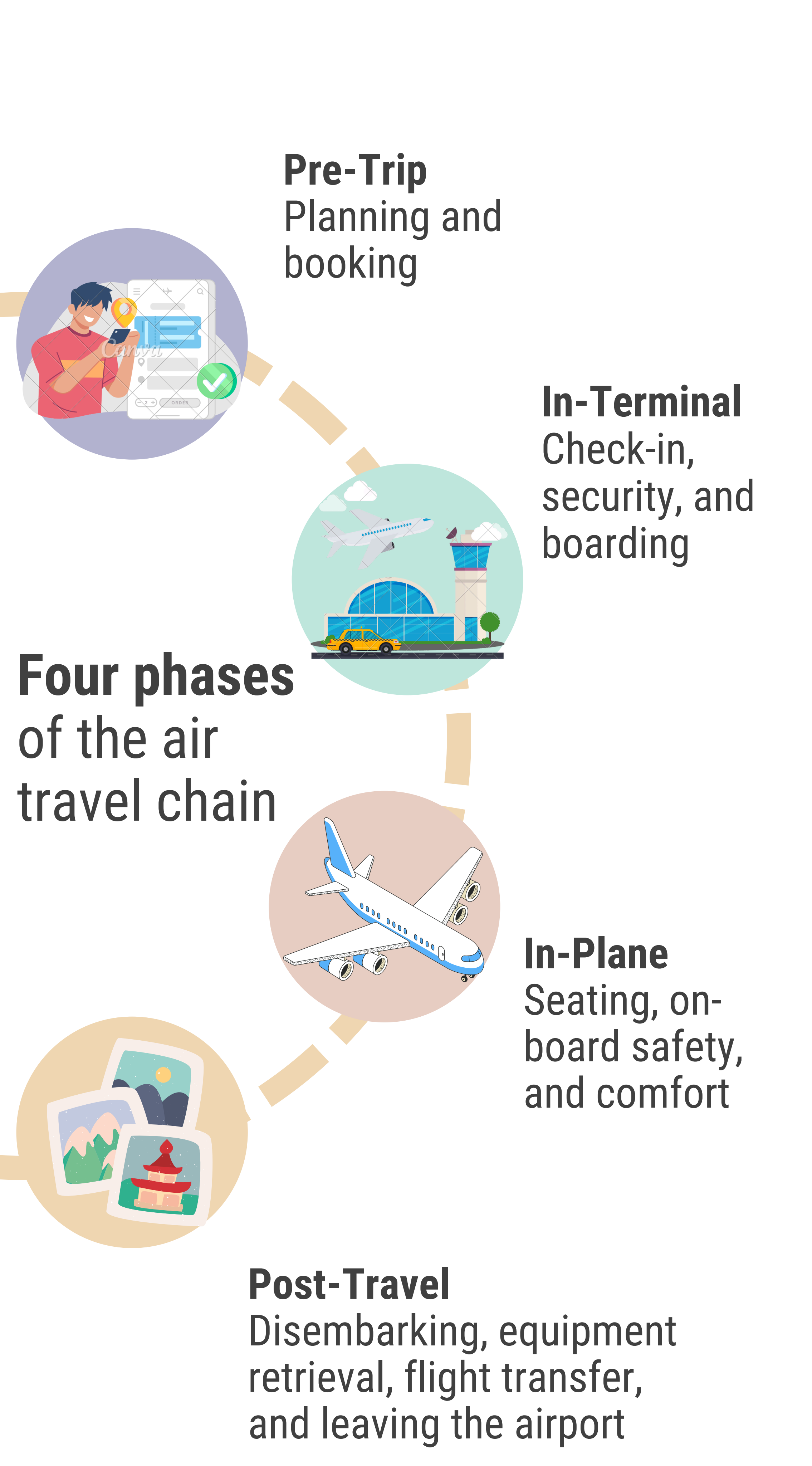
- Mobility Limitations: **11 studies**
- Visual Impairment: **8 studies**



We included 26 articles across the world

- United States: 7
- Europe: 10
- Asia: 5
- Australia: 2
- South America: 2

We found five themes occurring throughout the air travel chain



1

INFORMATION-RELATED ISSUES

- Unclear booking information
 - e.g., Websites are not screen reader-friendly
- Unclear flight information
 - e.g., Airport audio-only announcements

2

PERSONNEL INTERACTION CONCERNS

- Lack of knowledge
 - e.g., Personnel unaware of existing policies
- Inappropriate attitude
 - e.g., Personnel exhibiting ableist behaviors

3

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE BARRIERS

- Airport accessibility and navigation issues
 - e.g., Inaccessible restaurants in some airports
- Inaccessible airplane design
 - e.g., Narrow cabin seats and lavatories

4

ASSISTIVE DEVICE PROBLEMS

- Damage or loss of personal assistive devices
 - e.g., Broken wheelchairs
- Insufficient or uncomfortable operator-provided devices
 - e.g., Narrow aisle chairs

5

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE CONSTRAINTS

- Non-standardized protocols
 - e.g., Invasive security checks
- Unfair disability accommodation strategies
 - e.g., First-on, last-off strategy

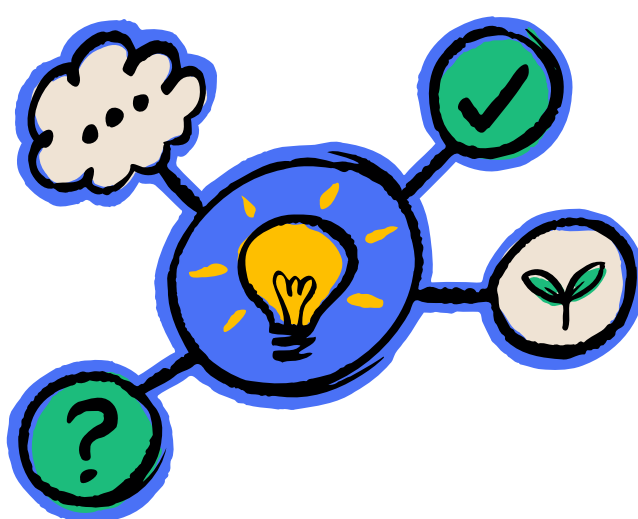
We identified the following gaps that should be explored



Experiences of people with hidden disabilities



Access to disability-related information



Co-development of Training Programs



Streamlined air travel policies

Reference: [1] Ansley, H. (2022, June). Flight plan. *Paraplegia News*, 76(6), 24-28.