

How ISA Has Impacted Women in Aviation Today

The world of aviation has inspired and challenged women since 1911 when Harriet Quimby took the skies as the first woman in the United States to earn a pilot license. Regardless, women have been vastly underrepresented in the aviation community. Over time, more stories of women such as Katherine Cheung, Bessie Coleman, Amelia Earhart, Pancho Barnes, and Anne Morrow Lindbergh began making their way into newspapers. But despite their accomplishments, the number of women in aviation remains low compared to their male counterparts. Recognizing the need for a supportive network in encouraging and empowering women in a male-dominated profession, a group of pioneering female airline pilots initiated the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, or ISA+21, in 1978. From that point onward, the organization has worked hard to raise public awareness about the important contributions that women make to the aviation industry and to encourage young girls to careers in aviation.

Over the years, ISA+21 has advocated for female airline pilots, by acknowledging many of its members and giving out awards for their achievements in the workforce. For example, Emily Howell Warner was the first woman to be hired by a U.S. commercial airline and was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2014 for her accomplishments in the industry. Additionally, Beverley Bass was honored at The Points Guy Awards dinner in 2019, raising a \$50,000 donation for her contributions to ISA+21. These pilots are just a few of many influential women shaping the future of aviation. They are role models, demonstrating that anything is possible if you put your mind to it.

According to the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, *“ISA is the world’s largest donor of advanced flight scholarships for women, annually awarding at least two aircraft type ratings and thousands of dollars of scholarship monies to qualified women.”* Since 1988, ISA+21 has provided scholarships to enthusiastic and diligent female aviators all around the world, funding over \$1.4 million. Fulfilling its promises, the organization continues to work hard, having pledged \$50,000 in 2023 to promote equality and support more women working as airline pilots.

Furthermore, the organization has grown to over 800 members across international borders, representing over 90 airlines and 25 countries. Among aviators, they have made themselves known and their voices heard, inspiring numerous women of all ages that they too are more than capable of pursuing a career in aviation and succeeding. ISA+21 has done a

remarkable job of building a well-rounded community full of support and encouragement. Their persistence and dedication are remarkable.

In an interview with the Communications Director of ISA+21, First Officer Erin Jackson expressed her gratitude for the many experiences she has had thanks to the group.

“There are so many, it is hard to narrow down!” she exclaimed. Everything from small experiences in my day-to-day work life when I walk through an airport and see another female airline pilot.. we excitedly wave and smile at each other, knowing that we are ISA sisters. To big experiences like our yearly conferences around the globe when many of us convene, and the media is drawn to the presence of so many female airline pilots in uniform in one place. Last year, when our conference was in Dublin, we were featured in the Dublin Times as the photo of the day. It is overall such a rewarding and inspiring organization to be part of, and to serve on the board for!”

Without the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, it is difficult to imagine where women would be in the flight community today. ISA+21 has inspired, supported, and advocated for these pilots and students over the last 45 years and will remain committed to their mission for each new coming day. In the here and now, the organization has impacted women in aviation by bringing recognition to their successes online on social media, providing scholarships globally, writing books, and holding annual conferences; celebrating being an airline pilot. By establishing a safe community full of sisterhood and unity, ISA+21 vows to be an international voice for female airline pilots.

“I am also inspired by the way that each woman has their own unique individual aviation journey. Everyone’s experiences are different, yet we all have a common thread of being a woman in a male-dominated industry. And that is the thread that binds us so strongly together.”