



## **FACT SHEET 1**

### **What is General Aviation (GA)?**

- General Aviation (GA), together with Aerial Work (AW), covers all civil aircraft activity other than that carried out by the commercial air transport (CAT) sector. It is the largest part of the UK aviation community.
- Whilst the CAT sector operates about 900<sup>1</sup> aircraft and uses 25 airports, the GA fleet exceeds 21,000<sup>2</sup> aircraft, including helicopters, gliders, microlights and balloons. These are flown by more than 32,000 pilots.<sup>2</sup>
- The number of GA aircraft represents a growing proportion of the total aircraft on the UK register. GA in the UK uses 143 aerodromes licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and between 350 to 500<sup>3</sup> unlicensed flying sites.
- Whilst 85%<sup>4</sup> of filled seats on airlines are occupied by people flying for leisure purposes, more than 70%<sup>5</sup> of flights carried out by GA/AW have some business or safety connotation. These include business flights, pipeline work, police and pollution patrols, traffic surveys, medical flights, newspaper and postal flights, aerial surveys, civil search and rescue operations and pilot training.
- The airline industry depends very heavily on GA to provide a supply of new junior pilots, many of whom start by learning to fly for pleasure and who later decide to opt for flying careers. These people, most of whom train at their own expense, must be able to fly without undue restrictions, from aerodromes that are within easy reach of their homes or their places of work.
- In 1988, 43%<sup>6</sup> of new entrants to the airline profession qualified via the club and private flying route. By 2001, this figure had risen to some 70%<sup>7</sup> and a recent survey, by a team of professional industry researchers, has now confirmed that 86%<sup>8</sup> pay their own way for airline entry to the profession.

For further information please contact the below address or go to [www.gaac.org.uk](http://www.gaac.org.uk)

2013

- 
1. UK register of Civil Aircraft, CAA (updated annually).
  2. T Lober, 2008 – ‘*The effectiveness of national strategic guidelines at a local level: a case study of the UK general aviation industry.*’ PhD Thesis, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, London University. Microlights on CAA register, gliders registered by BGA, balloons registered by BBAC.
  3. Estimate derived from Pooleys, Lockyears, Farmstrip Guide and practical knowledge.
  4. Press release issued by BAA in 2001. Subsequently increased but no figures available.
  5. AOPA survey.
  6. Survey by Aviation Training Association, 1988.
  7. AOPA survey, 2001.
  8. Report in Aerospace International, October 2004, on Airline Training Partnership Scheme run by CTC.

---

### **General Aviation Awareness Council**

Bicester Airfield, Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 5HA  
[www.gaac.org.uk](http://www.gaac.org.uk) e-mail: [info@gaac.org.uk](mailto:info@gaac.org.uk)

**This is one of a series of GAAC Factsheets**