

Global air passenger demand hits new record in 2024

Global air passenger demand reached unprecedented levels in 2024, with total traffic rising 10.4% compared to 2023 and surpassing pre-pandemic figures by 3.8%, according to new data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The industry achieved record efficiency with an average load factor of 83.5% for the year. International traffic increased 13.6% versus 2023, while domestic traffic grew 5.7%. December capped the strong performance with overall demand up 8.6% year-on-year and a record monthly load factor of 84%.

"2024 made it absolutely clear that people want to travel. With 10.4% demand growth, travel reached record numbers domestically and internationally," says Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General. "Airlines met that strong demand with record efficiency. On average, 83.5% of all seats on offer were filled—a new record high, partially attributable to the supply chain constraints that limited capacity growth. Aviation growth reverberates across societies and economies at all levels through jobs, market development, trade, innovation, exploration, and much more."

Air passenger market in detail - 2024

	2024 (% year-on- year)	World share ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (%- pt)	PLF (level)
Total Market		100%	10.4%	8.7%	1.3%	83.5%
Africa		2.2%	13.2%	9.9%	2.2%	74.9%
Asia Pacific		33.5%	16.9%	12.3%	3.2%	83.4%
Europe		26.7%	8.7%	8.1%	0.5%	84.8%
Latin America		5.3%	7.8%	7.1%	0.6%	83.7%
Middle East		9.4%	9.5%	8.4%	0.8%	80.8
North America		22.9%	4.6%	4.6%	0.0%	84.3%

¹% of industry RPKs in 2024

Asia-Pacific carriers led regional growth with a 26% increase in international traffic, though still 8.7% below 2019 levels. Latin American airlines posted 14.4% growth with the highest regional load factor at 84.8%, while African carriers saw 13.2% growth and achieved record load factors despite remaining the lowest regionally at 74.5%.

European traffic rose 9.7%, Middle Eastern airlines grew 9.4%, and North American carriers

reported 6.8% growth. In domestic markets, China stood out with 12.3% growth over 2023, while Japan achieved 3.2% growth despite capacity contraction.

Looking to 2025, Walsh predicts continued but moderating growth of 8.0%. "The desire to partake in the freedom that flying makes possible brings some challenges into sharp focus," he notes, emphasizing both safety commitments and sustainability goals.

"While airlines invested record amounts in purchases of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) in 2024, less than 0.5% of fuel needs were met with SAF," Walsh adds. "SAF is in short supply and costs must come down. Governments could fortify their national energy security and unblock this problem by prioritizing renewable fuel production from which SAF is derived. In addition to securing energy supplies and increasing the SAF supply, diverting a fraction of the subsidies given for fossil fuel extraction to support renewable energy capacity would also boost prosperity through economic expansion and job creation."