

Global air travel demand grinds to a halt in November

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has revealed that recovery in global air passenger travel demand, which had been slowing since the Northern hemisphere's summer travel season, came to a full stop in November 2020.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

According to Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director-general and CEO, this is because governments responded to new outbreaks with even more severe travel restrictions and quarantine measures.

"Such measures increase hardship for millions. Vaccines offer a long-term solution. In the meantime, testing is the best way that we see to stop the spread of the virus and start economic recovery. How much more anguish do people need to go through—job losses, mental stress—before governments will understand that?"

IATA's analysis found that the total demand (measured in revenue passenger kilometres or RPKs) was down by 70.3% compared to November 2019, virtually unchanged from the 70.6% year-to-year decline recorded in October. November capacity was 58.6% below previous year levels and load factor fell 23.0 percentage points to 58.0%, which was a record low for the month.

International passenger markets

International passenger demand in November was 88.3% below November 2019, slightly worse than the 87.6% year-to-year decline recorded in October. Capacity fell 77.4% below previous year levels, and load factor dropped 38.7 percentage points to 41.5%. Europe was the main driver of the weakness as new lockdowns weighed on travel demand.

Asia-Pacific airlines' November traffic plunged by 95.0% compared to the year-ago period, which was barely changed from the 95.3% decline in October.

The region continued to suffer from the steepest traffic declines for a fifth consecutive month. Capacity dropped by 87.4%, while the load factor sank 48.4 percentage points to 31.6%, the lowest among regions.

European carriers saw an 87.0% decline in traffic in November versus a year ago, worsened from an 83% decline in October. Capacity withered by 76.5%, with the load factor falling by 37.4 percentage points to 46.6%.

Middle Eastern airlines' demand plummeted by 86.0% in November year-to-year, which was improved from an 86.9% demand drop in October. Capacity fell 71.0%, with the load factor declining by 37.9 percentage points to 35.3%.

North American carriers had an 83.0% traffic drop in November, versus an 87.8% decline in October. Capacity dived 66.1%, while the load factor dropped 40.5 percentage points to 40.8%.

Latin American airlines experienced a 78.6% demand drop in November, compared to the same month last year, improved from an 86.1% decline in October year-to-year.

This was the strongest improvement of any region. Routes to/from Central America were the most resilient as governments reduced travel restrictions—especially quarantine requirements. November capacity was down 72.0%, while the load factor dropped by 19.5 percentage points to 62.7% – the highest by far among the regions, for a second consecutive month.

African airlines' traffic sank by 76.7% in November, little changed from a 77.2% drop in October, but the best performance among the regions. Capacity contracted 63.7%, and load factor fell 25.2 percentage points to 45.2%.

Domestic passenger markets

Recovery in domestic demand, which had been the relative bright spot, also stalled, with November domestic traffic down 41.0% compared to the prior year (it stood at 41.1% below the previous year's level in October). Capacity was 27.1% down on 2019 levels and, with the load factor dropping by 15.7 percentage points to 66.6%.

Australia's domestic traffic was down by 79.8% in November compared to November a year ago, improved from an 84.4% decline in October, as certain states opened up; but it continued to significantly lag other domestic markets.

India's domestic traffic fell by 49.6% in November, an improvement over a 55.6% decline in October, with more improvement expected as more businesses reopen.

[View the November Air Passenger Market Analysis](#)