Scottish Transport Statistics 2025

Air Transport

Contents

Introduction

This chapter provides information on air transport, such as passenger numbers by origin, destination and type of service, flight punctuality, amount of freight carried and air transport movements.

> **Transport and travel habits in Scotland were profoundly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with restrictions on travel and daily activity in place for large parts of 2020 and 2021.**

Key Points

- **There were 28 million air passengers at Scottish airports in 2024, 8% more than in the previous year.**
- **56% travelled to or from Edinburgh and 29% to or from Glasgow.**
- **50 thousand tonnes of freight were carried by air in 2024.**

Main Points

Passengers and Airports

There were 28 million air terminal passengers in 2024, 2 million (8%) more than in 2023. Passenger numbers increased by 39% between 2010 and 2018 reaching a peak of 29.4 million before falling 318% to 7 million in 2021 due to the pandemic and associated travel restrictions. (*Table 8.1*)

Edinburgh airport had 15.8 million terminal passengers in 2024 (10% increase) and Glasgow airport had 8.1 million, 10% more than the previous year. Aberdeen had 2.3 million, (up 3%) and Inverness had 796,000 (1% less). Together these four airports accounted for 96% of the total passengers. Over the ten years prior to the pandemic, which started in 2020, trends for these airports were similar with increases in passenger numbers in most years.

 (Table 8.1)

In 2023, London Heathrow accounted for 46% of passengers on selected domestic routes to and from Aberdeen, 25% for Edinburgh and 29% for Glasgow. London Gatwick had 32% of the domestic passengers to/from Inverness. Other domestic routes with large passenger numbers included those between Edinburgh and Gatwick, Stansted, Luton, London City, Belfast and Bristol, and between Glasgow and Gatwick, Luton, Belfast, Bristol and Stansted. It should be noted that the figures

will include passengers who are going for connecting flights to the rest of the world, particularly from London Heathrow. *(Table 8.2)*

Origin/destinations

The most popular country of origin/destination for passengers flying directly to and from Scottish airports was Spain (excluding the Canary Islands) with 2.6 million passenger journeys in 2024, 15% of all passengers on direct flights to and from Scotland. Other popular origins/destinations were the Irish Republic, Spain(Canary Islands) and the Netherlands (all with 1.5 million passengers). The trends for many destinations are increasing numbers of passengers, either as a result of more people travelling or more routes becoming available. *(Table 8.3a and Table 8.3b)*

Some countries e.g. Jamaica and Barbados are only served by charter flights, whereas all those who travelled to/from Qatar and Malta used scheduled flights. *(Table 8.4)*

The most popular international airports (those with the largest numbers of passenger journeys for flights directly to and from Scotland's main airports in 2024) were Amsterdam (1.4 million passengers) and Dublin (1.3 million passengers). However, it should be noted that Amsterdam and Dublin are global hubs with extensive connections to the rest of the world. *(Table 8.5)*

In 2024, 4% of all terminal passenger traffic was within Scotland, 34% was to/from other parts of the UK, 54% was between Scotland and mainland Europe and 8% was to/from North America, the rest of the world and UK offshore. *(Table 8.6)*

Delays and Movements

In 2024, the overall average delay was 18 minutes for flights to or from Edinburgh airport and 15 minutes from Glasgow (the user guide section describes the basis for these figures). Around 19% of flights to or from Edinburgh and 13% of flights to or from Glasgow airports were delayed by more than 30 minutes. *(Table 8.8)*

The total number of aircraft movements in 2024 was 365,526. Edinburgh had the highest number of aircraft movements with 120,406, (97% of which were commercial movements), followed by Glasgow (76,916) and Aberdeen (72,100). *(Table 8.9)*

Air freight

Air freight carried in 2024 decreased by 2,678 tonnes (6%) over the previous year to 49,693 tonnes. *(Table 8.13)*

Other statistics

The Civil Aviation Authority's 2018 passenger survey found large differences between the 4 main airports. Business passengers ranged from 22% at Glasgow and Edinburgh to 47% at Aberdeen. 53% of passengers at Aberdeen airport were for leisure, compared with 79% at Glasgow. *(Table 8.14)*

While around 30-49% of departing passengers at each airport arrived by private car, there were marked differences in the use of other modes of transport: taxi/minicab use ranged from 5% at Inverness to 29% at Glasgow; bus/coach travellers varied from 7% at Edinburgh to 12% at Aberdeen and hire car users from 3% at Glasgow to 25% at Inverness. *(Table 8.15)*

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