

# Monthly civil aviation statistics, January 2021

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## Highlights

The Canadian airline industry ushered in the new year with even more bad news, posting larger year-over-year declines in January than in December.

Major Canadian airlines carried 797,000 passengers on scheduled and charter services, down 88.8% from January 2020 and the largest year-over-year drop since July 2020.

In January, capacity fell 81.4% year over year and declined 6.9% from December due to further route cancellations amid low demand and ongoing travel restrictions.

Compared with January 2020, operating revenues were down 84.6% to \$320.2 million in January, making it a dismal start to the new year.

## Bad news continues for airlines

The year began with more bad news for the airline industry, as the number of COVID-19 cases rose and new, more contagious variants appeared. In response, many governments introduced new restrictions. In Canada, for example, provinces extended or imposed lockdowns, stay-at-home orders and curfews.

Since January 7, international air travellers boarding a flight to Canada are required to present proof of a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test taken within 72 hours of departure. On January 29, Canadian airlines agreed to suspend all flights to and from Mexico and the Caribbean from January 31 to April 30.

In January, major Canadian airlines announced further capacity reductions, route suspensions and workforce reductions.

## Air travel declines further in January

Despite lower air fares—the [Consumer Price Index](#) for air transportation fell 5.5% year over year in January—air travel recovery was hampered by the resurgence in COVID-19 cases and new mutations of the virus. As the [second wave peaked in January](#), additional travel restrictions were imposed.

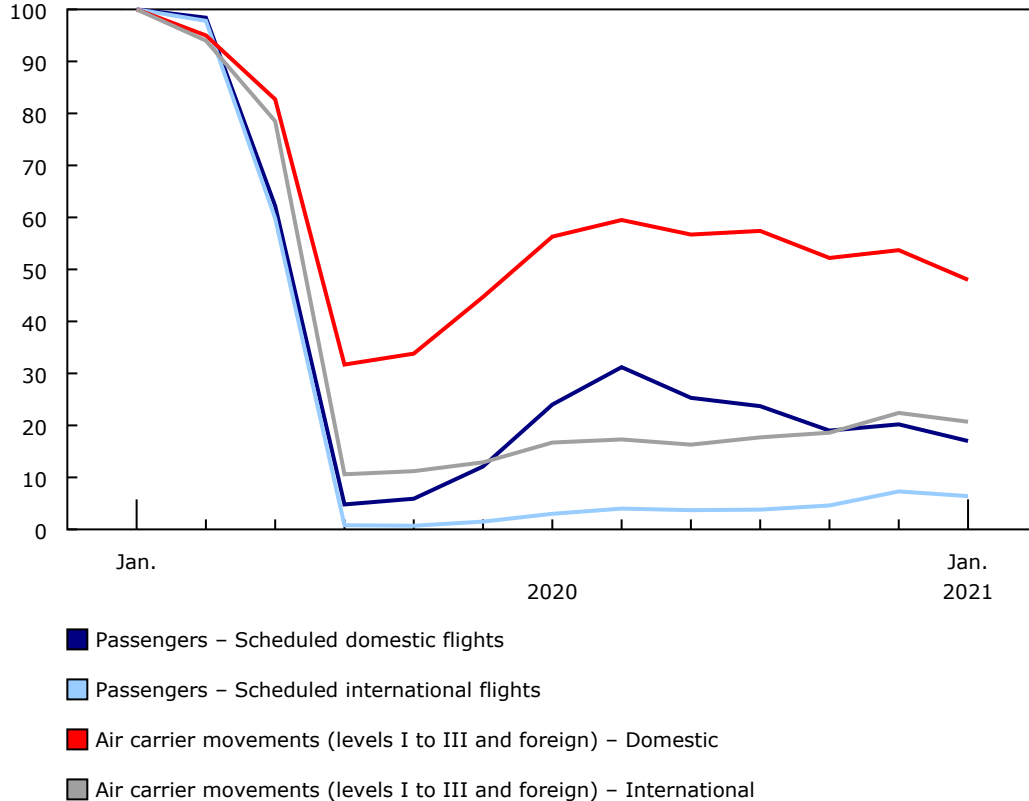
Canadian Level I air carriers flew 797,000 passengers on scheduled and charter services in January, down 88.8% from the same month in 2020. This was the largest year-over-year decrease since July 2020 and the eleventh consecutive year-over-year monthly decline, a period with the sharpest drop on record.

From December, the number of passengers declined 14.7%, significantly larger than the average drop of 0.7% from December to January over the previous three years. Although passenger volumes weakened on both domestic and international routes in January, the largest decrease was in domestic traffic.



**Chart 1**  
**Indexes of passengers carried and air carrier movements, domestic and international, January 2020 to January 2021**

Index (January 2020 = 100)



Source(s): Monthly Civil Aviation Survey (5026); Aircraft Movement Statistics: Major airports (2715).

Overall, traffic fell 90.0% year over year to 1.9 billion passenger-kilometres in January, while capacity contracted 81.4% to 4.2 billion available seat-kilometres, the largest declines since August. While both traffic and capacity typically increase slightly from December to January, this year they decreased 13.2% and 6.9%, respectively.

As a result, the passenger load factor (the ratio of passenger-kilometres to available seat-kilometres) was 44.1% in January 2021, down from 82.0% in January 2020 and 47.4% in December 2020.

**Lower demand continues to impact all measures**

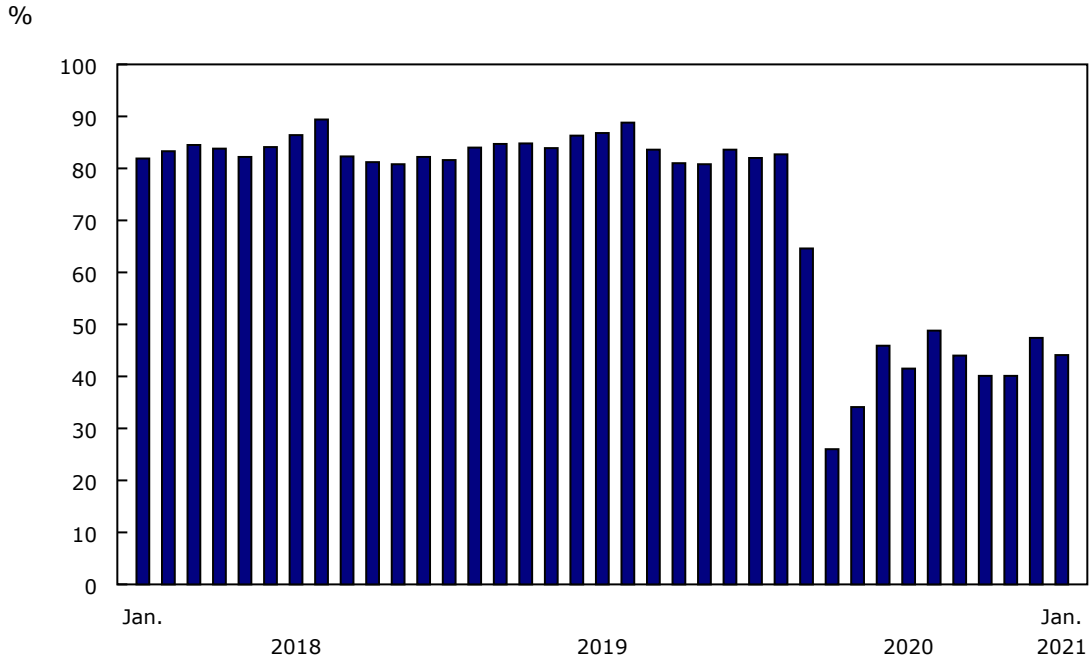
In January, each passenger travelled an average of 2,334 kilometres, down 11.2% from January 2020.

As the number of flying hours dropped 81.9% to 36,000 in January, the volume of turbo fuel consumed also declined, falling 79.3% to 143.6 million litres.

Operating revenue earned by Level I carriers totalled \$320.2 million in January, down 84.6% from \$2.1 billion the same month a year earlier.



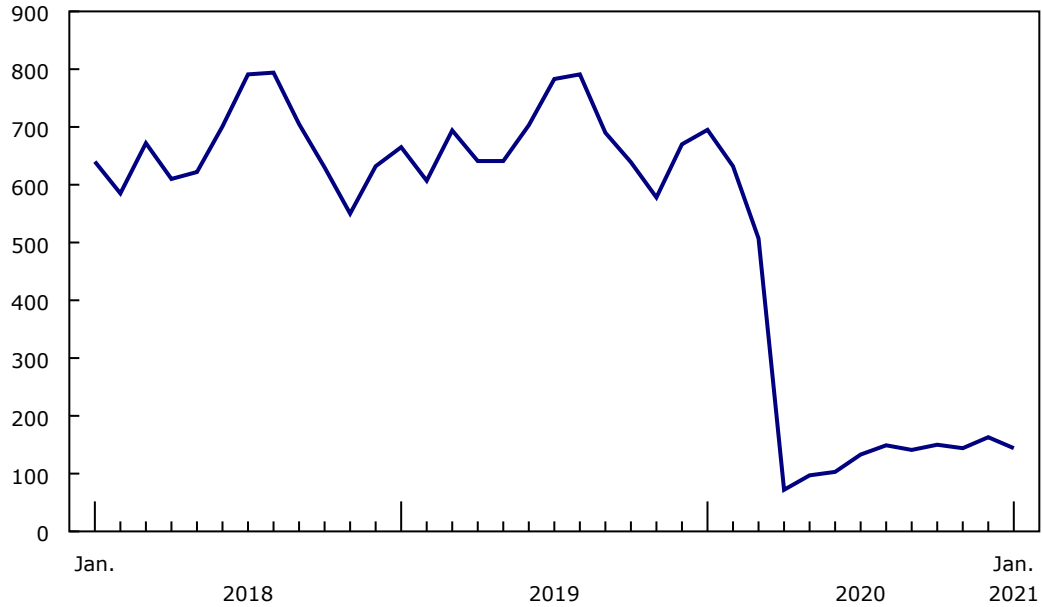
**Chart 3**  
**Passenger load factor, Canadian air carriers, Level I**



Source(s): Table [23-10-0079-01](#).

**Chart 4**  
**Turbo fuel consumed, Canadian air carriers, Level I**

millions of litres



Source(s): Table [23-10-0079-01](#).

**Note to readers**

The Monthly Civil Aviation Survey covers all Canadian Level I air carriers: Air Canada (including Air Canada Rouge), Air Transat, Jazz, Porter, Sky Regional, Sunwing, and WestJet (including Swoop, WestJet Encore and WestJet Link).

The average passenger trip length is calculated by dividing the number of passenger-kilometres by the number of passengers. Trips across Canada and the world are included in this calculation.

The data in this monthly release are not seasonally adjusted.

**Available tables:** table [23-10-0079-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [5026](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).