

Monthly civil aviation statistics, March 2022

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Highlights

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, passenger numbers, traffic and capacity all reached their highest levels since March 2020.

Major Canadian airlines carried 4.2 million passengers on scheduled and charter services in March 2022, surpassing four million for the first time in two years. While this was more than eight times the number of passengers carried in March 2021, it was 55.2% of the level reported in March 2019, prior to the pandemic.

With traffic at 10.4 billion passenger-kilometres and capacity at 13.6 billion available seat-kilometres, the passenger load factor (the ratio of passenger-kilometres to available seat-kilometres) was 76.6% in March.

Travel restrictions relaxed

March marked two years of the pandemic. The advisory against non-essential international travel, reintroduced in December 2021, was lifted. Pre-departure testing was still required for travellers arriving from abroad, but as of February 28, authorized rapid antigen tests were deemed a sufficient option.

The Government of Canada announced that, as of April 1, [the testing requirement would be removed, while random testing on arrival will continue](#). Travel restrictions remain in place for those who are not vaccinated with an accepted vaccine.

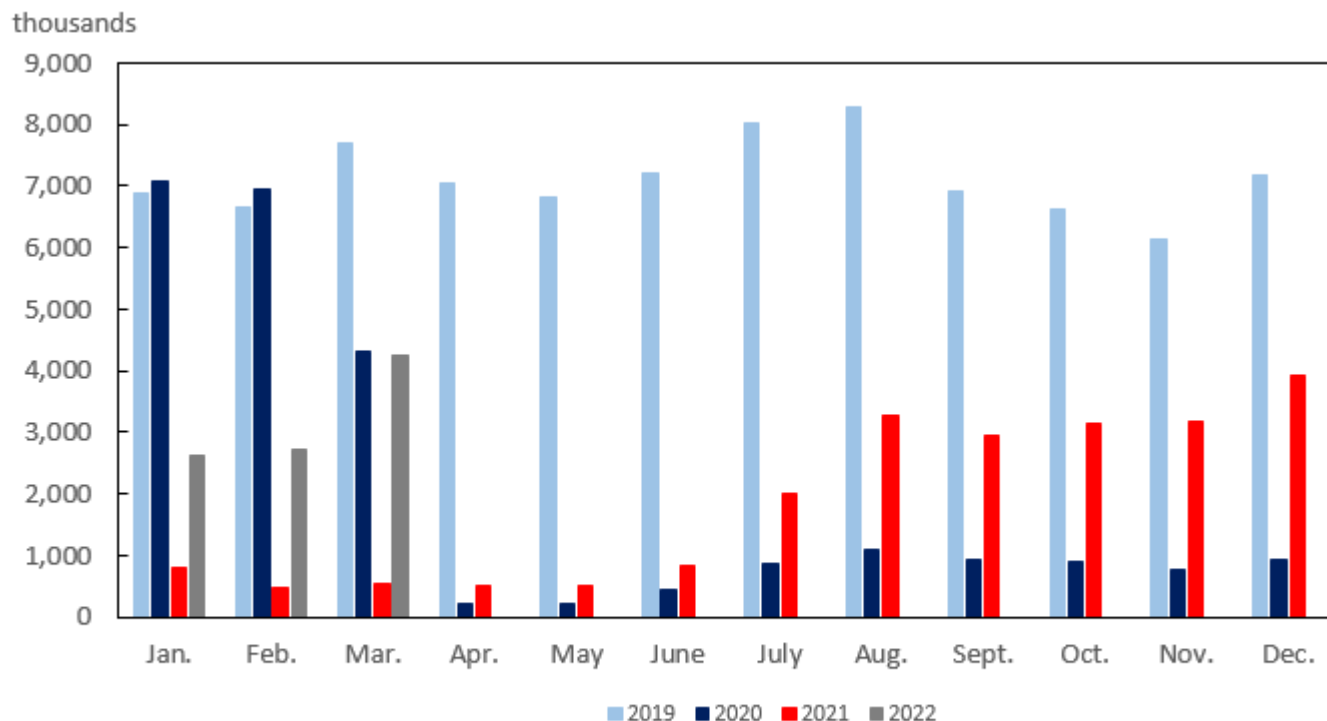
On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. In the months that followed, Canadian air travel remained well below historical levels. Unless otherwise specified, comparisons for a given month are made with the same month in 2019 (also referred to as "pre-pandemic levels"), when airline activity levels were in line with historical trends.

Air travel on the rise in March

Canadian Level I air carriers flew 4.2 million passengers on scheduled and charter services in March, recovering to 55.2% of the pre-pandemic level reported in March 2019. This was an improvement over the 40.9% proportion recorded in February (compared with February 2019) and the highest proportion of pre-pandemic levels reached since March 2020.



Infographic 1 – Passengers carried by Canadian Level I air carriers, monthly, 2019 to 2022



Source: Monthly Civil Aviation Survey (5026), table 23-10-0079-01.

On a monthly basis, the number of passengers increased 55.5% from February to March, much higher than the five-year pre-pandemic (2015 to 2019) seasonal average increase of 14.8%. As is typically the case in March, passenger volumes increased on both domestic and international flights.

With traffic at 10.4 billion passenger-kilometres and capacity at 13.6 billion available seat-kilometres, the passenger load factor was 76.6% in March. This was the highest since August 2021 and the second time since the beginning of the pandemic that the load factor surpassed 70%. Note that pre-pandemic, the March 2019 load factor was 84.7%.

Each passenger travelled an average of 2,462 kilometres in March, down 4.7% from March 2019.

At 117,000, the number of flying hours in March was 57.6% of the pre-pandemic level.

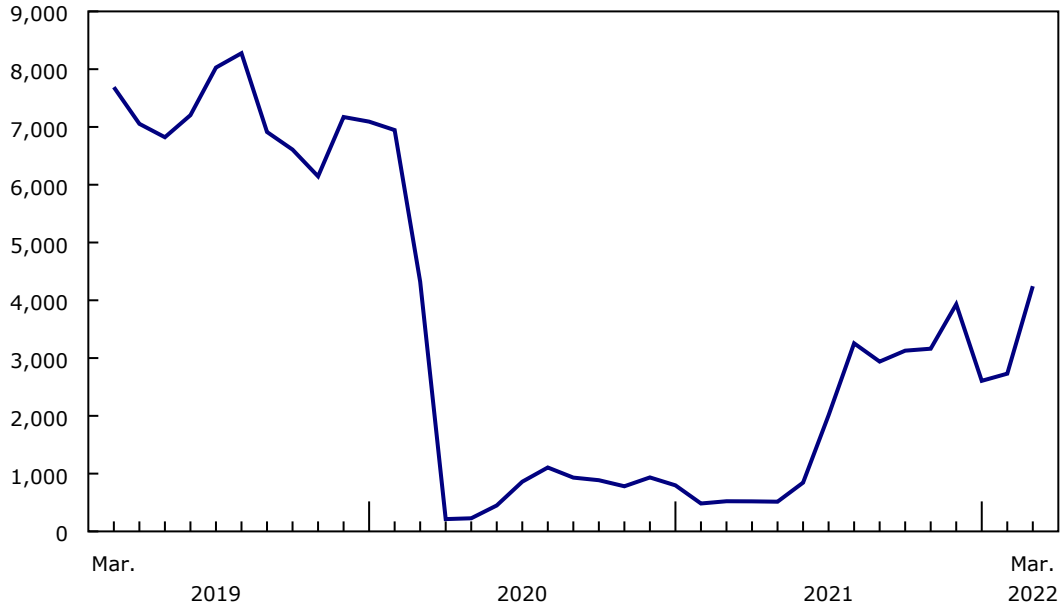
Operating revenue earned by Level I carriers totalled \$1.4 billion in March, almost two-thirds (65.0%) of the \$2.2 billion earned in the same month in 2019, pre-pandemic.

A look ahead

With the further easing of restrictions, there are indications that the volume of air passengers will continue to grow. For example, according to the [Leading indicator of international arrivals to Canada](#), April saw large year-over-year increases in the number of non-resident visitors and Canadians returning from abroad arriving at Canadian airports.

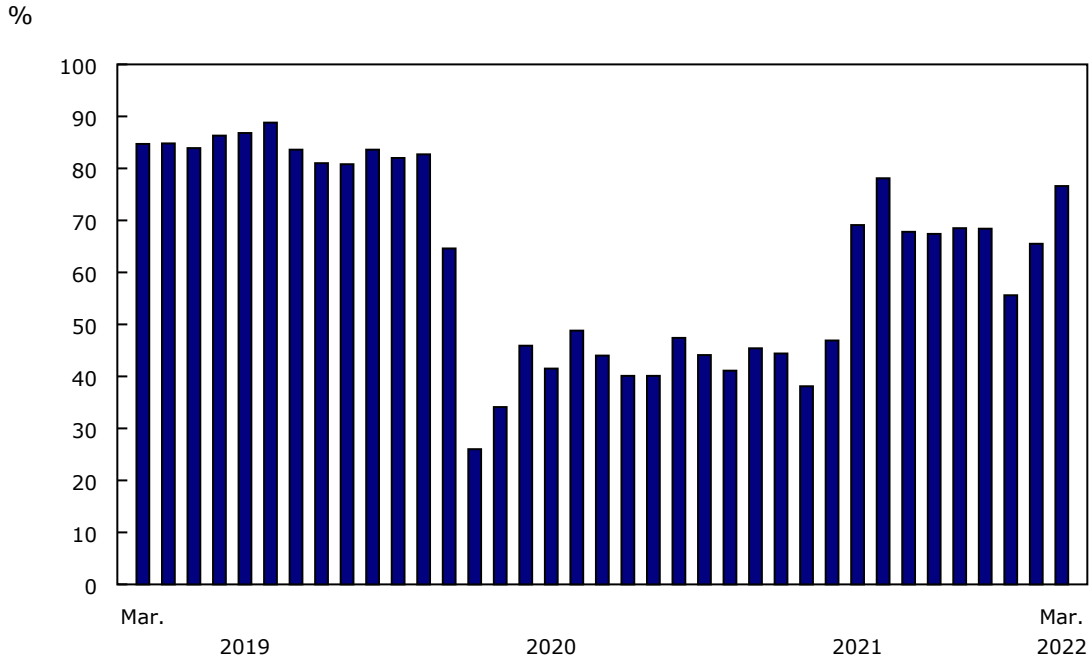
Chart 1
Passengers carried, Canadian air carriers, Level I

thousands



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

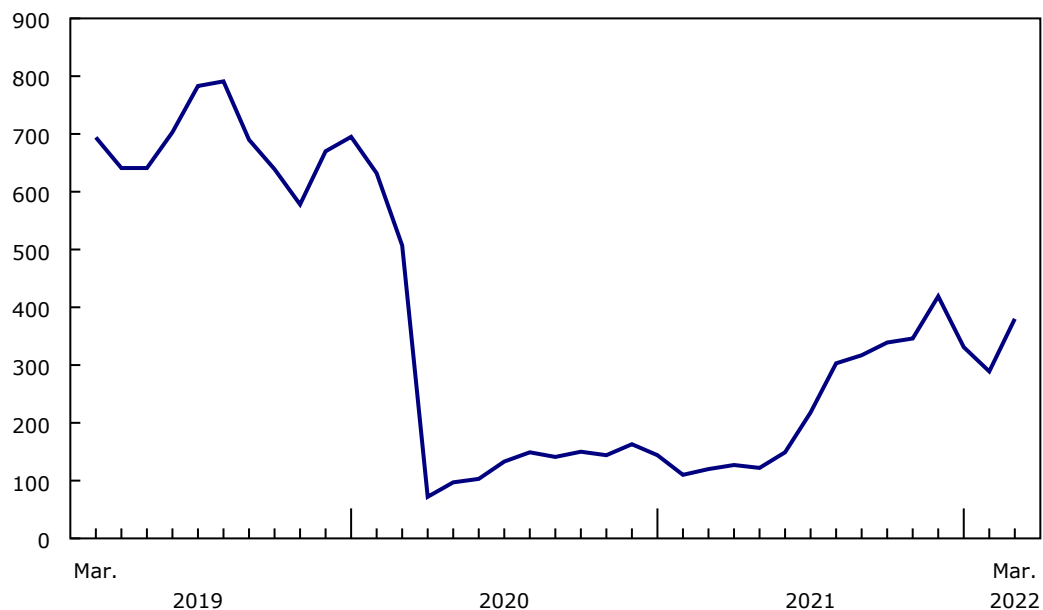
Chart 2
Passenger load factor, Canadian air carriers, Level I



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

Chart 3 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, 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 around 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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).