

Screened passenger traffic at Canadian airports, October 2023

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Monday, November 27, 2023

Highlights

In October, 4.6 million passengers passed through pre-board security screening at checkpoints operated at Canada's eight largest airports. This was an increase of 14.6% from October 2022 and of 1.6% from the same month in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

October 2023 marked the first month that counts of screened passengers for non-United States international flights surpassed 2019 levels; the domestic sector reached this milestone in May 2023. Screened traffic for transborder flights (Canada–United States) in October remained just below (-3.3%) the pre-pandemic level.

A new monthly indicator of passenger traffic

The rapid recovery in air travel during the busy summer travel season (July to September) of 2022 posed capacity challenges for some Canadian airports. [Canadian air carriers transported 21.2 million passengers in the third quarter of 2022](#), more than twice the number flown during the same period of 2021. To monitor air travel recovery and traffic, Statistics Canada is publishing a new and timelier monthly data series for passenger traffic. The data series begins with the January 2019 reference period.

The new series provides counts of air passengers processed by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority at pre-board security screening checkpoints in Canada's eight largest airports. This new measure complements the comprehensive annual counts of enplanements/deplanements available in Statistics Canada's annual "[Airport activity](#)" release.

Uneven recovery

Total screened passenger traffic at the eight largest airports returned to 2019 levels in the summer of 2023, with July 2023 marking the first month that total passengers exceeded pre-pandemic volumes. This trend continued into October.

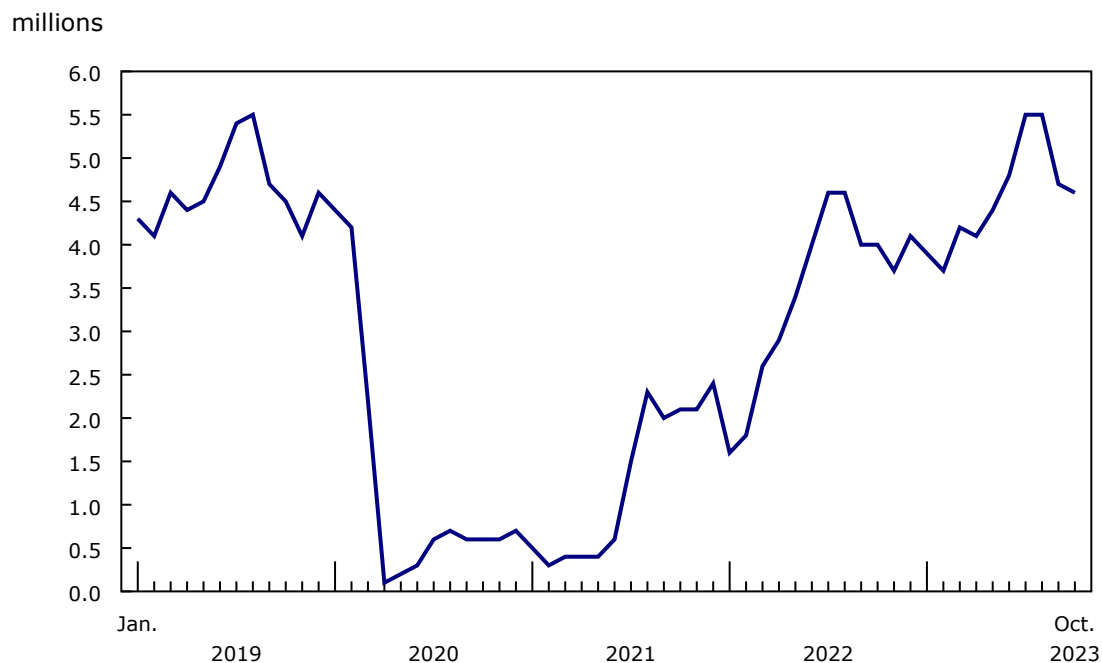
The recovery, however, has been uneven across different travel sectors. The domestic sector, the first to recover from pandemic lows, reached pre-pandemic levels in May 2023. Domestic screened passenger traffic in October was 2.2 million, up 5.2% from October 2019 and up 9.1% from the same month in 2022.

Conversely, transborder traffic to the United States continues to be below pre-pandemic levels. In October 2023, there were 1.2 million screened transborder passengers; this number is 17.0% above that of October 2022 but 3.3% below that of October 2019. The recovery has been steady since January 2021, when restrictions to combat the new COVID-19 Omicron variant resulted in counts almost 75% below the 2019 level.

For the other international sector (non-United States), October 2023 was the first month in which the number of screened passengers surpassed that from the same month in 2019. At 1.1 million passengers, this number was just above (0.3%) the level recorded in October 2019. International traffic increased 24.1% from October 2022, the largest year-over-year increase among the three sectors.



Chart 1
Number of screened passengers at the eight largest airports in Canada, monthly, 2019 to 2023



Source(s): Table 23-10-0312-01.

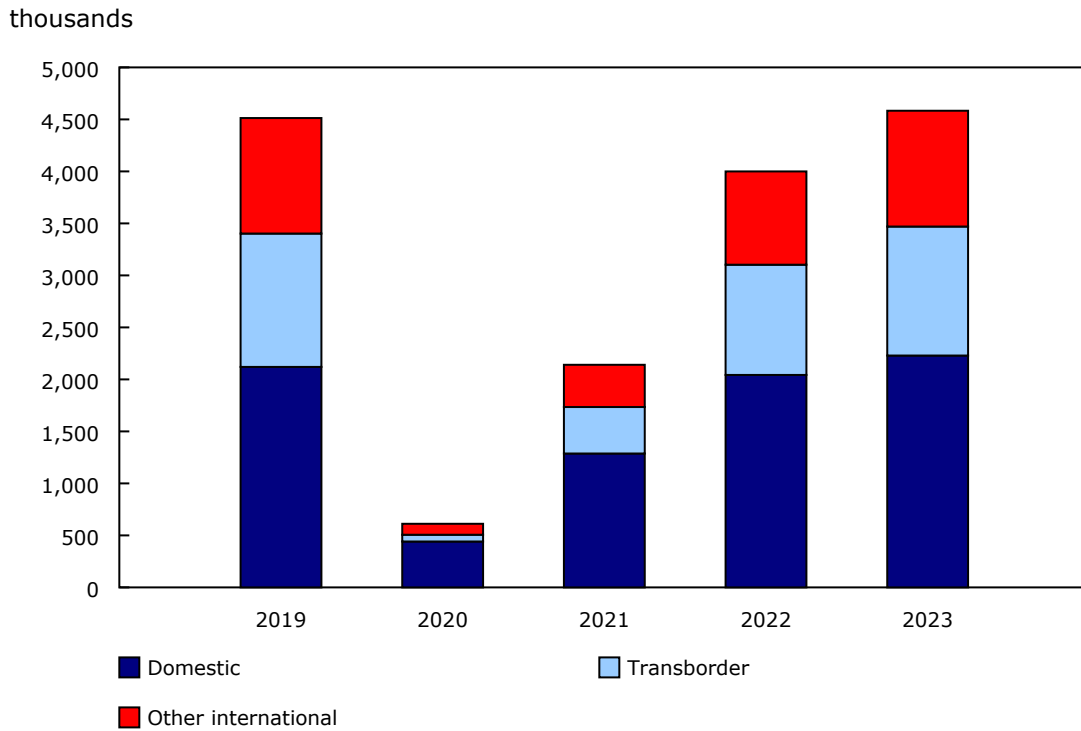
Halifax first airport to recover, but Calgary and Montréal recoveries are stronger

In November 2022, Halifax Stanfield International Airport was the first of Canada's eight largest airports to record a month in which the number of screened passengers exceeded the pre-pandemic level. Screened passenger counts at both Edmonton International and Winnipeg Richardson International have also returned to pre-pandemic levels in recent months.

Calgary International Airport and Montréal-Trudeau International returned to 2019 traffic levels in April 2023, and they have both since recorded the strongest recoveries from pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, Calgary International's almost 600,000 passengers screened in October 2023 is a 16.5% increase from the same month in 2019. Vancouver International recorded a screened passenger count above the pre-pandemic level in October 2023 (+3.4%), after fully recovering for the first time in September (+0.1%).

In comparison, both Toronto Pearson International Airport and Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport have yet to reach their pre-pandemic monthly volumes. The gap between 2019 levels at Toronto Pearson International, Canada's busiest airport, has narrowed steadily from 10.9% in January 2023 to 2.7% in October. Despite screened counts being up 15.6% year over year in October, Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier was down 15.6% from the same month of 2019, the lowest recovery among the eight largest airports.

Chart 2
Number of screened passengers at the eight largest airports in Canada, by sector, October, 2019 to 2023



Source(s): Table 23-10-0312-01.

Note to readers

Data for this release are derived from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) Boarding Pass Security System and include screened traffic at pre-board security screening checkpoints at the eight largest airports in Canada.

Screened passenger traffic includes air travellers required to go through pre-board security screening and excludes aircrew and airport employees. The new data series is a different measure of traffic than the counts of enplaned/deplaned passengers published in Statistics Canada's annual [Airport activity](#) report or produced by the individual airports. For example, the screened passenger data will not account for passengers with connecting flights who did not pass through security. For more information, please consult the [Definitions, data sources and methods for this release](#).

Users interested in accessing daily counts of screened traffic at Canada's major airports can obtain them from the [CATSA website](#).

Available tables: table [23-10-0312-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5404](#).

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).