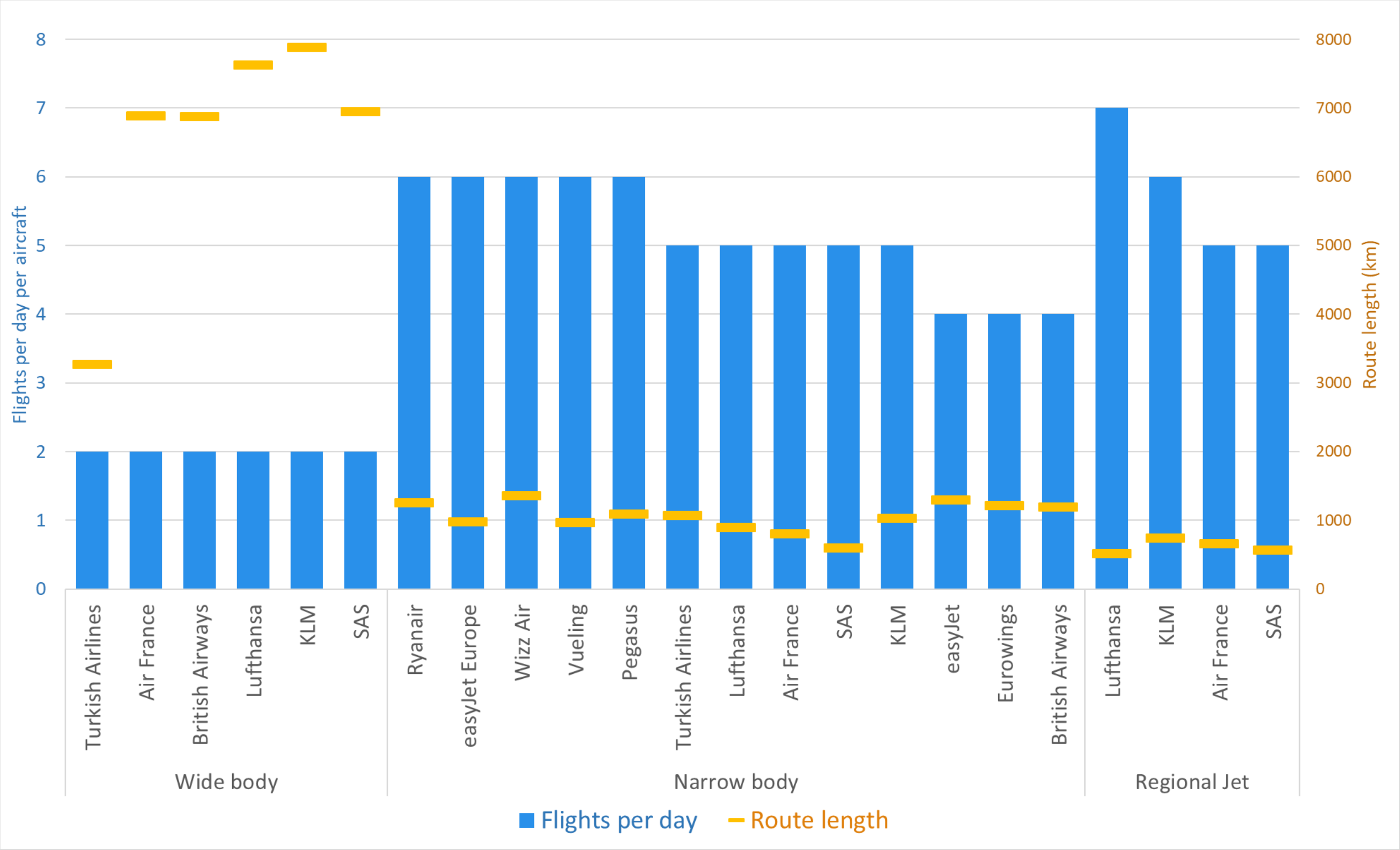
EUROCONTROL Data Snapshot

With the recovery in flights, the daily utilisation of aircraft is getting back to pre-COVID levels.

17 May 2022



Aircraft ownership and leasing are major costs for airlines, so they need to get as many flights per day out of each aircraft as they can. During the COVID-19 downturn this principle was overtaken by more urgent needs but, as demand recovers, we are seeing a return to pre-COVID patterns.

The graph shows typical flights per day for each aircraft that was active in the weeks since Easter. Widebody aircraft, largely flying long-haul, on average manage one flight there and one back each day. Turkish Airlines also use some widebodies on high-volume short-haul routes, hence a lower average route length.

There's more variety for narrowbody aircraft. No surprise that a number of low-cost carriers get the most flights out of their aircraft, typically 6 per day. No surprise either that it's an even number, since returning crew and aircraft to home base at the end of the day saves in overnight costs. But in 2019, KLM, Lufthansa and SAS were also on 6/day in 2019, so not quite recovered yet.

Regional jets typically serve either short routes or thin routes (with few passengers), or both. This allows even more flights per day, but this market hasn't yet recovered and later in the year we would expect to see 1 or 2 extra flights per day from most of these airlines.

Technical Bits: 'Typical' flights per day is given by the median. 'Flights' is in the ATM sense: one take-off to one landing, sometimes referred to as 'flight leg'. Data are for 25 April to 8 May 2022 inclusive, with comparable periods in previous years. Analysis is by individual airlines as identified by their 3-letter ICAO codes, they are not grouped with other partner airlines. Source: EUROCONTROL Network Manager ETFMS flight data