

EUROCONTROL Data Snapshot

Further, higher, bigger...

25 July 2024



		Average value 2023	
	Flight distance	1,140 km/flight <i>+90 km vs 2018</i>	
	Maximum take-off weight (MTOW)	89.0 tonnes/flight <i>+2.6 tonnes vs 2018</i>	
	Achieved Flight Level*	FL 350 <i>+502 feet vs 2018</i>	

What does an ‘average flight’ look like in the EUROCONTROL area? And, more importantly, if we look at how it has changed over the last five years, what does it tell us about overall aviation trends?

In terms of distance, the average flight in 2023 was **1,140 km** crossing 3.5 countries. Setting aside the “COVID years” (2020-21) when flights were shorter because of the travel restrictions, flight distance has been growing since 2018. This trend is to some extent driven by regional and domestic flights being substituted by alternative modes of transport such as high-speed rail services.

At the same time, the fleet mix has changed with fewer turboprop aircraft operating and an increased use of narrow-body aircraft offering greater range capabilities and higher cruising speeds. This change also contributed to the continued increase in average aircraft mass between 2018 and 2023 reaching an average maximum take-off weight (MTOW) of **89 tonnes** in 2023. This is slightly above the weight of a typical Airbus A320 or Boeing 737 which are the most common aircraft types operating in European airspace.

With jet aircraft operating most efficiently at higher altitudes, the average flight climbed to flight level (FL) **350** in 2023 – around 35,000ft and some 500ft higher than in 2018. Achieved flight levels were particularly high during the COVID-related traffic reduction and the subsequent removal of many flow management measures in 2021, but decreased again as traffic returned in 2022.

Overall traffic in 2023 (10.2 million flights) was down on 2018 (11.0 million flights) but, as can be seen, there are clear trends behind this headline figure.

Technical bits: * Average of the maximum flight level achieved in the month of July calculated considering only flights above FL200.