

14 October 2020  
SB 31/2020

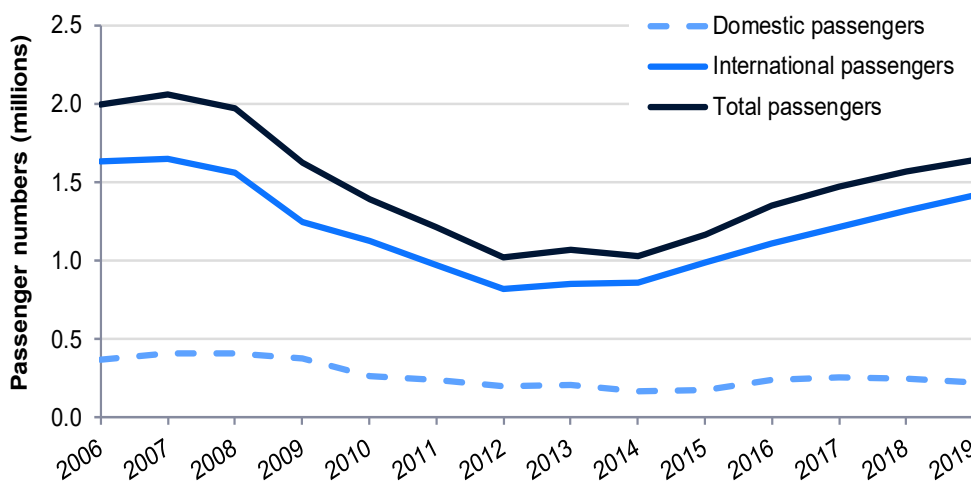
## Air transport in Wales during 2019

### Key points

- The number of passengers using Cardiff International airport increased by 4.3 per cent in 2019, to 1.63 million (Chart 1). This includes both arrivals and departures.



**Chart 1: Terminal passengers at Cardiff Airport from 2006 to 2019**



Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

- During 2019 there were 76 international destinations that operated out of Cardiff International airport, 19 fewer than in 2018.
- Amsterdam was the most popular international destination in 2019 and Edinburgh the most popular domestic destination ([Chart 2](#)).
- There were around 32,000 flights (inbound and outbound combined) at Cardiff International airport in 2019, a 2.6 per cent increase on the 2018 figures ([Chart 11](#)).
- After a period of exceptionally low freight movements, around 1,800 tonnes of freight were moved through Cardiff airport in 2019, an increase of 23.6 per cent compared to the previous year ([Chart 12](#)).
- Only 13.0 per cent of passengers travelled to Cardiff Airport on public transport in 2019

### About this bulletin

This statistical bulletin presents information about Cardiff International airport in 2019, the only major domestic and international airport in Wales. No data in this release relates to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The information was provided by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Further information about the source data is provided in the [notes](#) section.

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## Introduction

Air transport is an important driver for economic development. It connects Wales to the global economy which facilitates inward investment and trade. It provides a gateway for business and leisure passengers, which is an enabler for tourism and helps support industry.

**The passenger data presented in this report are the total number of *passenger journeys* (outbound and inbound flights combined), *not* the number of different individual passengers.** This is because it is not possible to identify arrivals and departures from the source data. In this report we use the term terminal passengers, or passengers, to mean the total number of passenger journeys. On many routes the number of individual passengers is likely to be very close to half the total number of passenger journeys, because most are return journeys.

During 2019, there were 297 million passenger journeys through UK airports with Heathrow the busiest (80.1 million), followed by Gatwick (46.6 million), Manchester (29.4 million) and Stansted (28.1 million). Cardiff was the 20th busiest airport in the UK with 1.63 million terminal passengers, which was 0.6 per cent of the UK total.

## Cardiff airport



Cardiff airport is the only major domestic and international airport in Wales. In 2019 it saw an increase of 4.3 per cent in passengers to 1.63 million, compared with 2018.

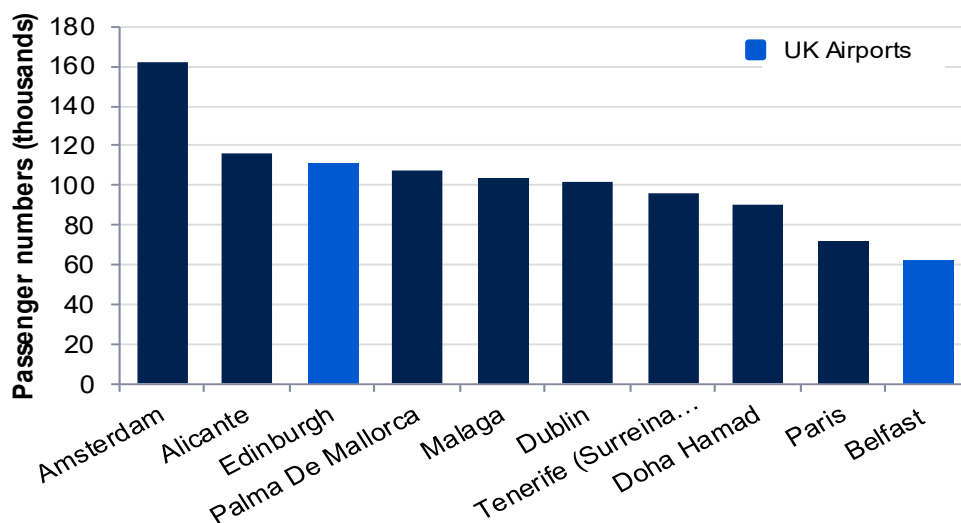
86.3 per cent of passengers flew to international destinations and 13.7 per cent used domestic routes. There was a 7.1 per cent increase in international passengers at Cardiff airport in 2019 and a 10.3 per cent decrease in domestic passengers.



There were 224 thousand domestic passengers in 2019 that used Cardiff airport. 98.3 per cent used scheduled flights (regular flights operating according to published timetables) and 1.62 per cent used chartered flights.

Out of the top ten destinations from Cardiff airport in 2019, only two (Edinburgh and Belfast) were UK destinations. Amsterdam was the most popular international destination and Edinburgh the most popular domestic destination (Chart 2).

**Chart 2: Most common destinations from Cardiff airport in 2019**

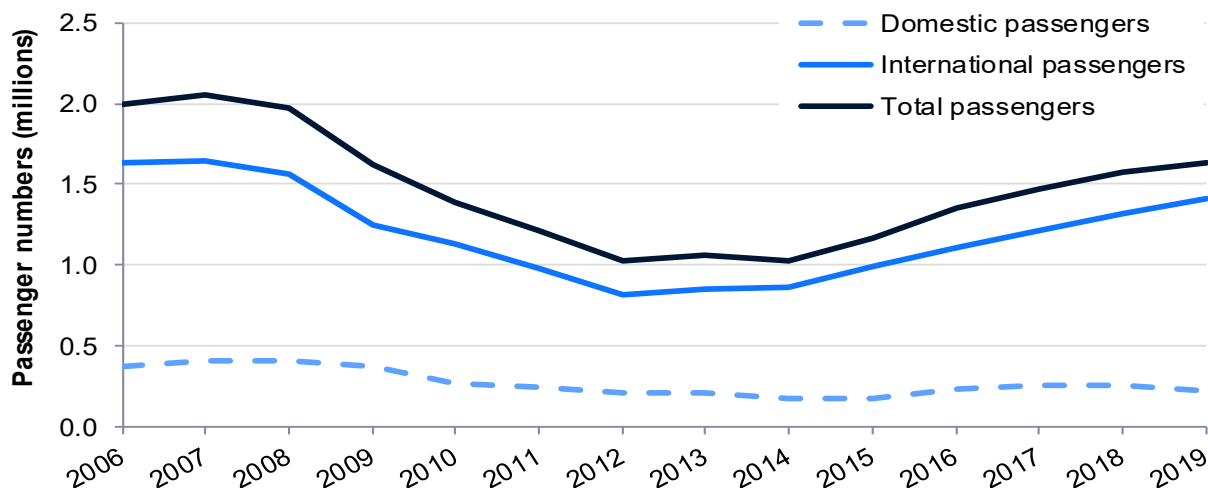


Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## Long term trends

There was a 50 per cent fall in passengers at Cardiff airport between 2007 and 2012, from 2.1 million to 1.0 million (Chart 1 and Chart 3). This corresponded with the global recession, which resulted in some carriers reducing capacity and others ceasing trading altogether. Passenger numbers have increased by 59.3 per cent since 2014, but are still some way below the peak of 2007. 2019 saw an increase of 4.3 per cent in passengers compared with 2018. The increase was driven by an increase in international passengers as domestic passengers decreased in 2019.

**Chart 3: Passengers at Cardiff airport from 2006 to 2019**

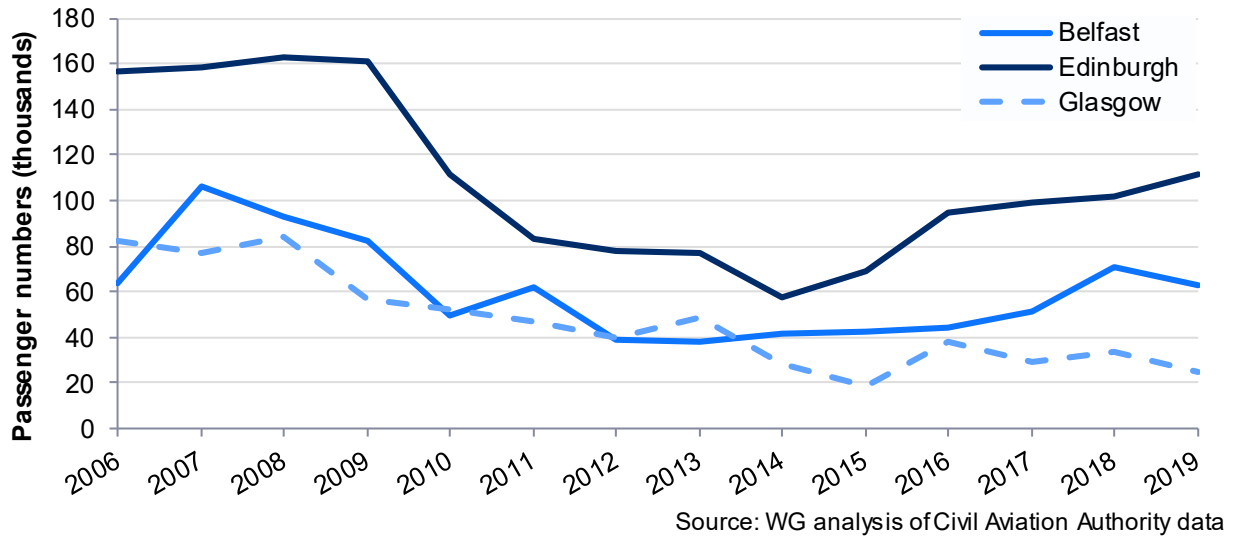


Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## Domestic routes

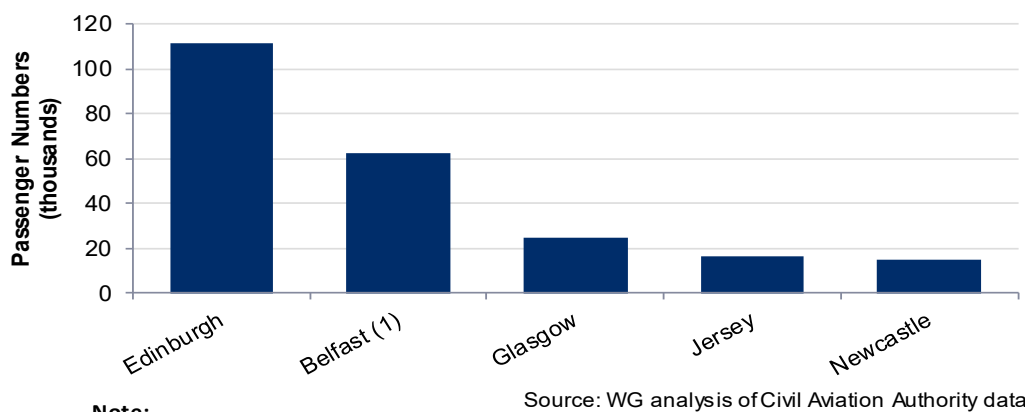
Passenger numbers have increased by 31.4 per cent since 2014, after falling significantly from 2007. 2019 saw a decrease of 10.3 per cent in domestic passengers to 224,000. On the key domestic routes, there were increases in passengers for Edinburgh (9.1 per cent) and decreases in passengers to Glasgow (26.0 per cent) and Belfast (12.0 per cent) in 2019 (Chart 4).

**Chart 4: Most used domestic routes from Cardiff airport, 2006 to 2019**



- 224,000 passengers travelled to or from other UK airports in 2019. The most common routes were Edinburgh (111,000), Belfast (62,000), Glasgow (25,000), Jersey (17,000) and Newcastle (6,000) (Chart 5).

**Chart 5: The 5 most popular UK destinations from Cardiff airport, 2019**



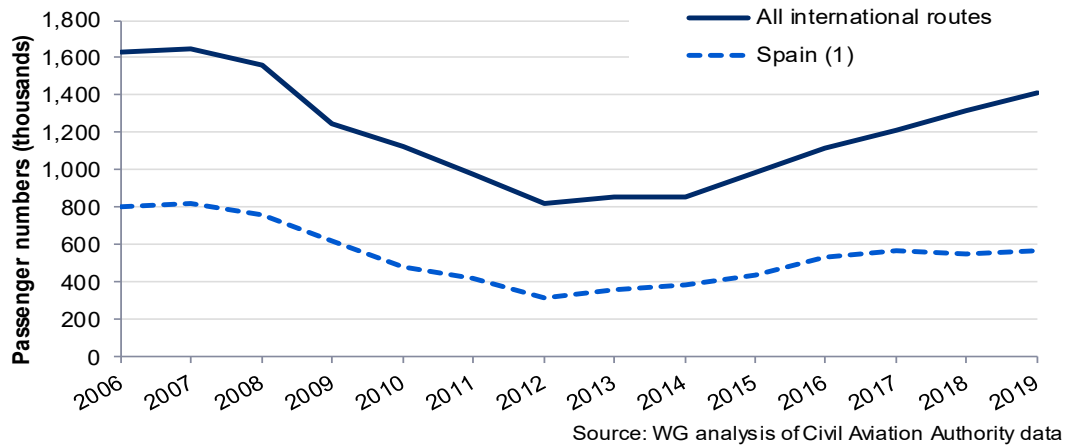
**Note:**

1. Includes Belfast International and Belfast George Best

## International routes

During 2019, 1.4 million passengers travelled between Cardiff airport and overseas destinations. International passenger numbers peaked at 1.63 million in 2007 and subsequently fell to 0.8 million in 2012. Thereafter, there has been a steady increase, with a 7.1 per cent increase in the latest year. Since 2006, Spanish passengers accounted for between 38 and 50 per cent of all international passengers, and in 2019 accounted for 40 per cent (Chart 6).

**Chart 6: International travel from Cardiff airport, 2006 to 2019**

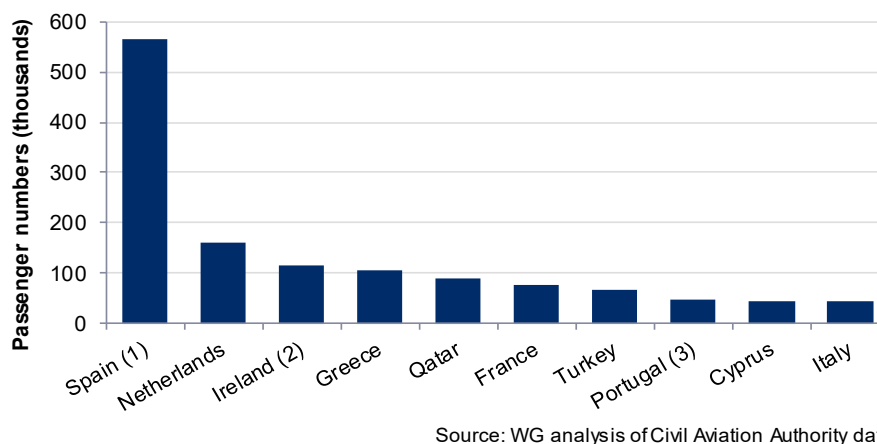


**Notes:**

(1) Includes Canary Islands

- 566,000 passengers travelled to Spain (including Canary Islands) in 2019, a 2.5 per cent increase from 2018 (Chart 7).
- Passenger numbers for the Netherlands peaked at 226,000 in 2007 and fell by 50 per cent in 2012 to 112,000. In 2019 there was a 10.9 per cent increase to 162,000 passengers.
- Passenger numbers to Ireland increased by 80.3 per cent in 2015 after the introduction of Flybe routes to Dublin and Cork. In 2019 there was a 6.1 per cent decrease.

**Chart 7: Most common overseas destinations from Cardiff airport, 2019**



**Notes:**

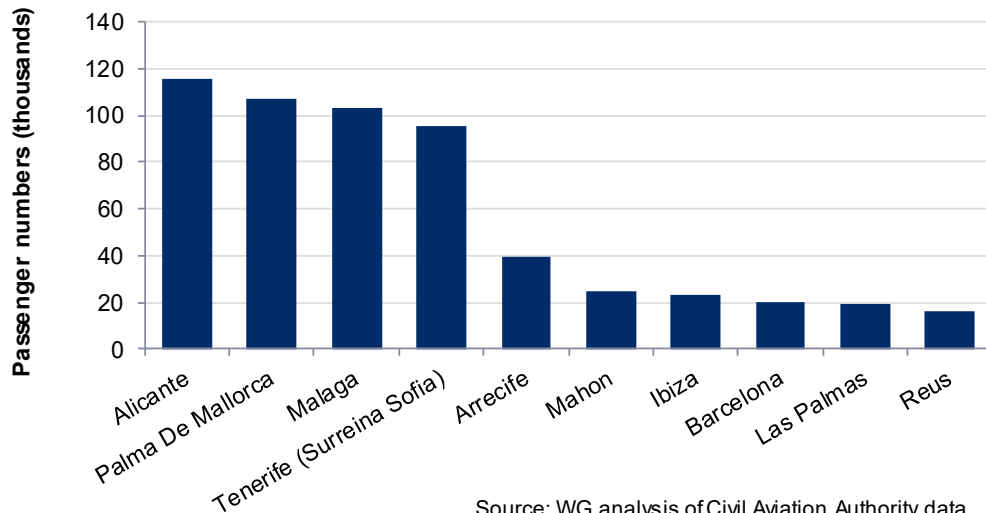
- (1) Includes Canary Islands
- (2) Refers to the Republic of Ireland only
- (3) Excludes Madeira

## Spain

Spain was the most common destination country with 556,000 passengers in 2019; of which 154,000 visited the Canary Islands (Chart 8).

In 2019, Spain represents 40 per cent of all international travel through Cardiff airport and 35 per cent of total travel. The key destinations to the Spanish mainland were Alicante (116,000), Palma de Mallorca (107,000), and Malaga (103,000). In the Canary Islands, Tenerife (Surreina Sofia) was the most visited destination with 96,000 visitors followed by Arrecife, situated on the island of Lanzarote (40,000).

**Chart 8: Main Spanish destinations from Cardiff airport in 2019**

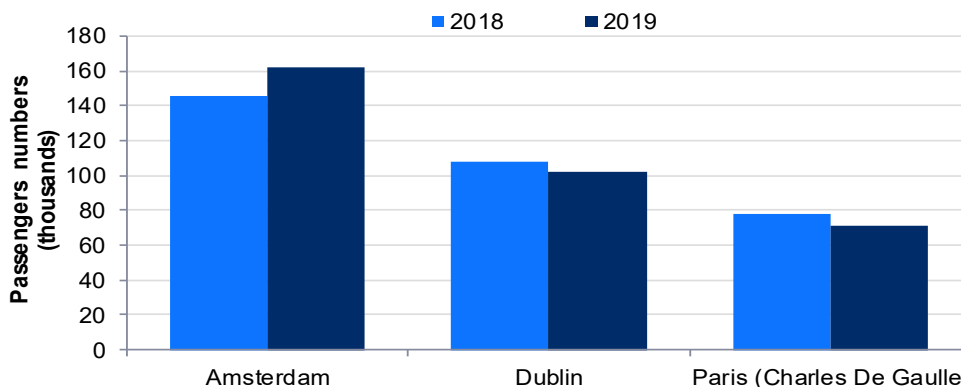


Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## European hubs: Amsterdam, Dublin and Paris

Key international routes are to Amsterdam in the Netherlands (162,000 passengers), Dublin in the Republic of Ireland (102,000) and Paris Charles de Gaulle airport in France (72,000). These airports make up 23.7 per cent of all international travel through Cardiff airport (Chart 9). Only Amsterdam saw an increase in passenger numbers in the latest year. Paris, Amsterdam and Dublin are key European hub cities that offer the opportunity for onward connections to a wider range of destinations.

**Chart 9: Main Dutch, Irish (Republic of) and French destinations from Cardiff airport in 2019**

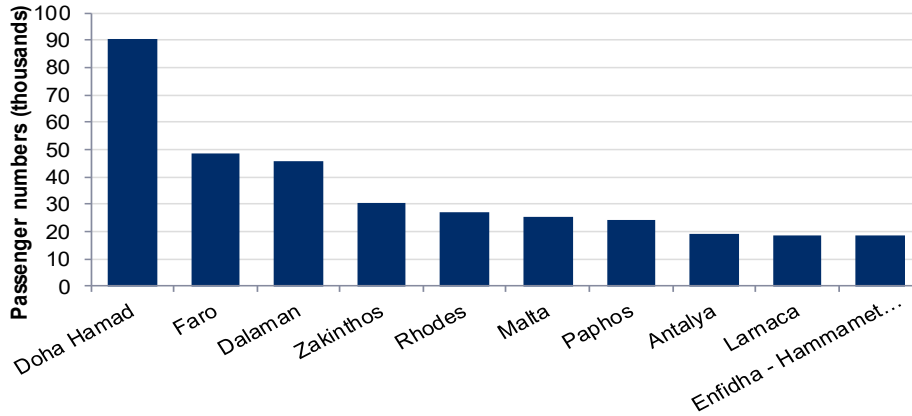


Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## Other destinations

Doha Hamad was the most visited of the other destinations with 91,000 passengers in 2019. There were 105,000 passengers for Greek destinations including Zakinthos (31,000) and Rhodes (27,000). Other common destinations include Faro (49,000 passengers), the coastal plain of Dalaman in Turkey (46,000) and Paphos (24,000) (Chart 10).

**Chart 10: Other most popular destinations from Cardiff airport, 2019**



Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## Aircraft movements (flights)

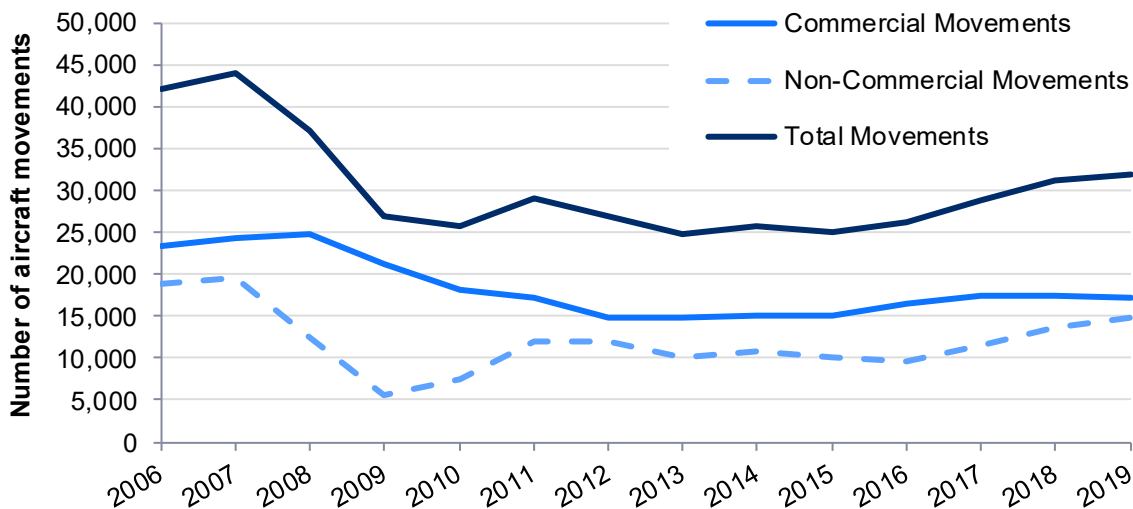
An aircraft movement is an aircraft taking off or landing at an airport.

Commercial flights involve aircraft engaged in the transport of passengers or cargo on commercial terms, as well as positioning flights and local movements. Non-commercial flights cover all other types of flight, including private and Aero Club flights.



In 2019, there were 32,000 aircraft movements at Cardiff International airport, an increase of 2.6 per cent compared with 2018 (Chart 11). The number of movements fell from a peak of 44,000 in 2007 to 25,000 in 2013, and there have been increases in each of the last four years.

**Chart 11: Number of aircraft movements at Cardiff Airport from 2006 to 2019**



Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data

## Air freight

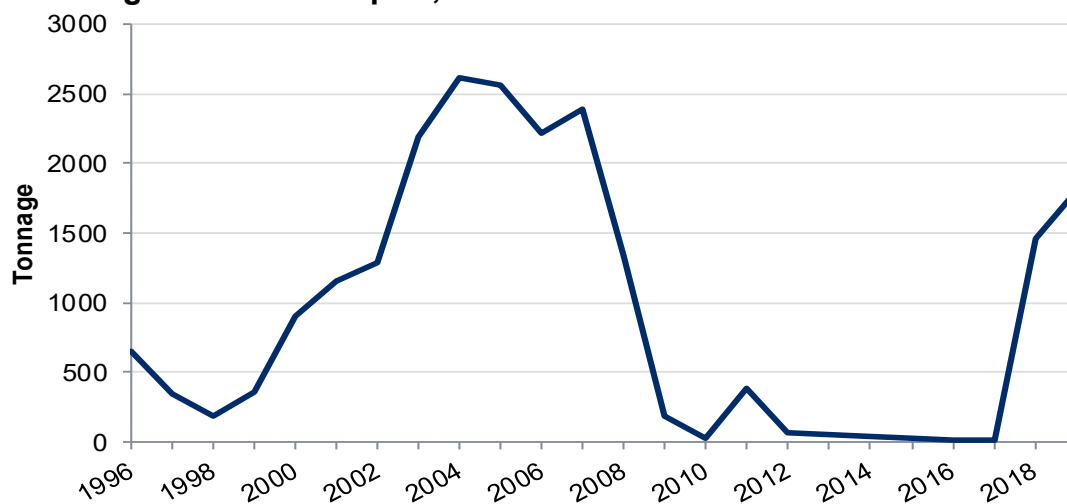
Historically, the volume of freight moving through Cardiff airport has been volatile (Chart 12). The volume peaked in 2004 at 2,600 tonnes, but fell by 93 per cent between 2007 and 2009, from 2,400 to 178 tonnes. Thereafter it remained at low levels



and in 2017 just 4 tonnes of freight were moved through the airport, the lowest figure on record. In 2018 freight levels increased to 1,500 tonnes, driven primarily by the introduction of the Qatar route in May 2018, which transports significant volumes of cargo as well as passengers. In 2019 air freight through Cardiff airport further increased by 23.6 per cent to 1800 tonnes when compared to 2018.

Users of air freight include those with high value goods which need to be transported in small quantities or perishable goods, such as food and medicine, which have a short lifespan. Items commonly transported by air include electronics, telecoms, vehicles and auto parts, and biotech and health products.

**Chart 12: Freight at Cardiff airport, 1996 to 2019**



Source: WG analysis of Civil Aviation Authority data



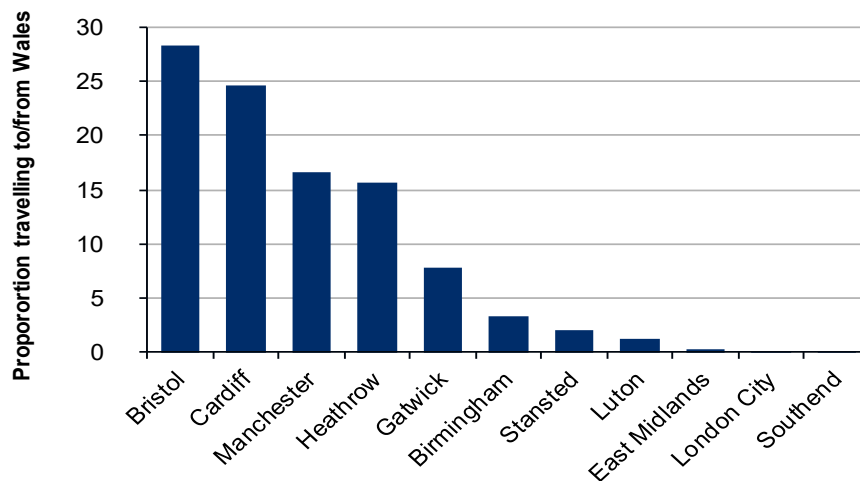
## Air passenger survey

The CAA's departing passenger survey can be used to identify which airports are used by people travelling to or from Wales. The survey collects data from a sample of UK airports annually. The latest survey to include all of the major airports used by travellers to and from Wales was conducted in 2019.

### Which airports are used by people in Wales?

Of the surveyed airports, 24.6 per cent of air passengers travelling to or from Wales in 2019 used Cardiff airport. However, Bristol was proportionately the most used airport, accounting for 28.4 per cent of all passengers travelling to or from Wales. Manchester and Heathrow made up the top four, which together accounted for 85.3 per cent of all passengers travelling to or from Wales.

**Chart 13: Proportion of air passengers with Origin/destination in Wales, 2019**



Source: Civil Aviation Survey Passenger Survey Report

The 2019 survey showed that 5.2 million scheduled passengers indicated that Wales was either their point of origin or destination. For charter passengers the equivalent number was 804,000 ([Table 1](#)). The airports covered in this survey included Birmingham, Gatwick, Heathrow, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester and Stansted, which along with Cardiff and Bristol were the other main airports used by people travelling to or from Wales in 2019.

**Table 1: Origin/Destination of terminating passengers at the 2019 survey airports**

*Numbers (000's of passengers) and proportion of total (percentages)*

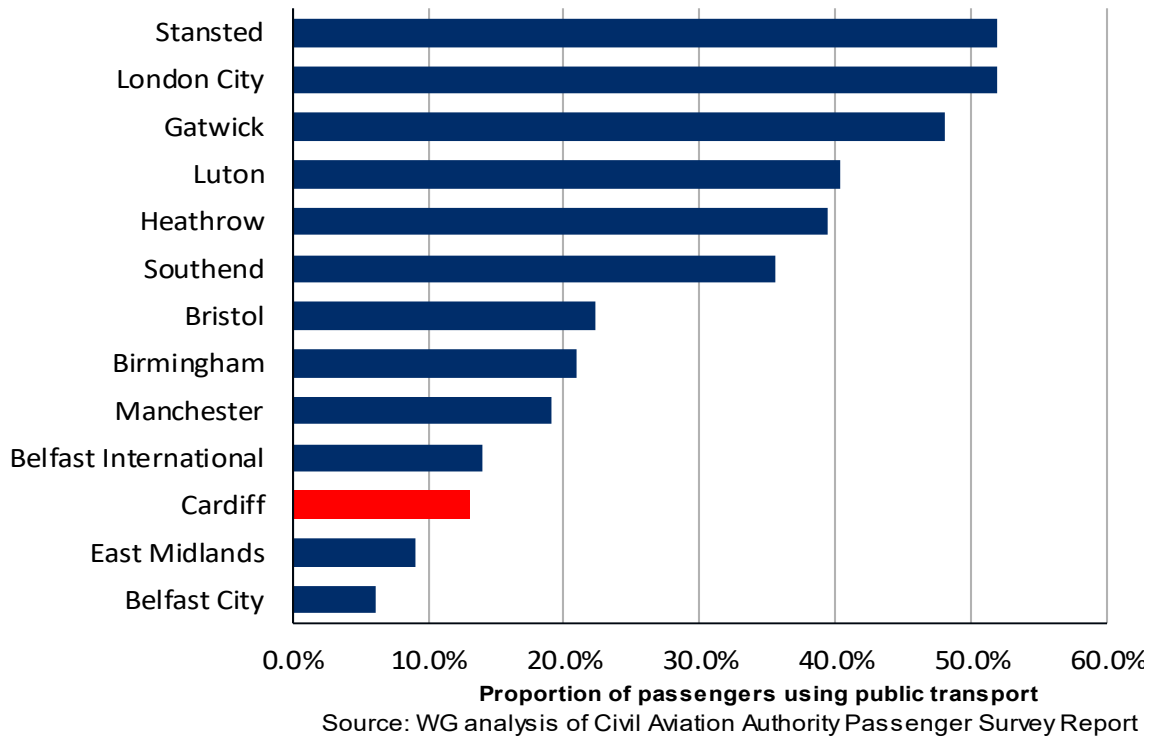
Airport	Scheduled		Charter	
	Passengers		Passengers	
	Sampled	Percentage of total	Sampled	Percentage of total
Bristol	1561	92%	134	8%
Cardiff	957	65%	512	35%
Manchester	893	90%	96	10%
Heathrow	936	100%	1	0%
Gatwick	435	93%	30	7%
Birmingham	168	85%	29	15%
East Midlands	11	97%	1	6%
Stansted	121	99%	2	1%
Luton	68	98%	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,151</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: Welsh Government analysis of the CAA Passenger Survey Report

### What proportion of journeys to the airport involved public transport?

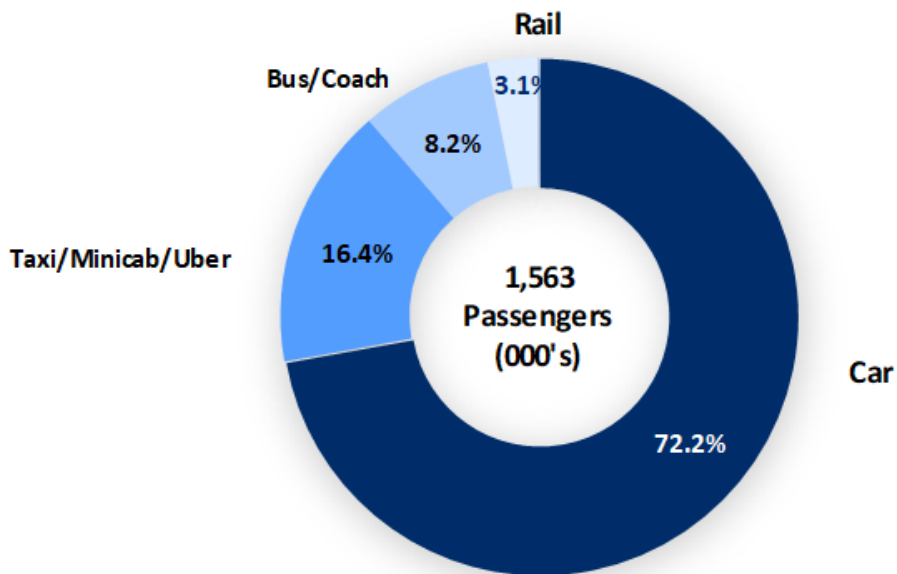
[Chart 14](#) shows that during 2019, 13.0 per cent of passengers travelling through Cardiff Airport used public transport (87.0 per cent used private transport); the third lowest of the airports included in the survey. East Midlands (9.1 per cent) and Belfast City (6.2 per cent) were the only airports lower than Cardiff. A greater proportion of people travelled by public transport to Bristol airport (22.3 per cent), The Airports with the highest proportion travelling to and from the airport by public transport was London Stanstead and London City at 51.9 per cent. This was closely followed by London Gatwick (48.0 per cent) and London Luton (40.4 per cent). London airports likely have the highest proportion of passengers using public transport as they are better served by public transport than other airports.

**Chart 14: Proportion of terminal passengers using public transport to get to or from the airport, 2019**



When looking at the specific modes of transport used by passengers arriving/departing at Cardiff Airport in 2019, private cars (72.2 per cent) accounted for the majority of passengers. The remaining 28 per cent travelled to the airport by Taxi/Minicab/Uber (16.4 per cent), Bus/Coach (8.2 per cent) and Rail (3.1 per cent), Chart 15.

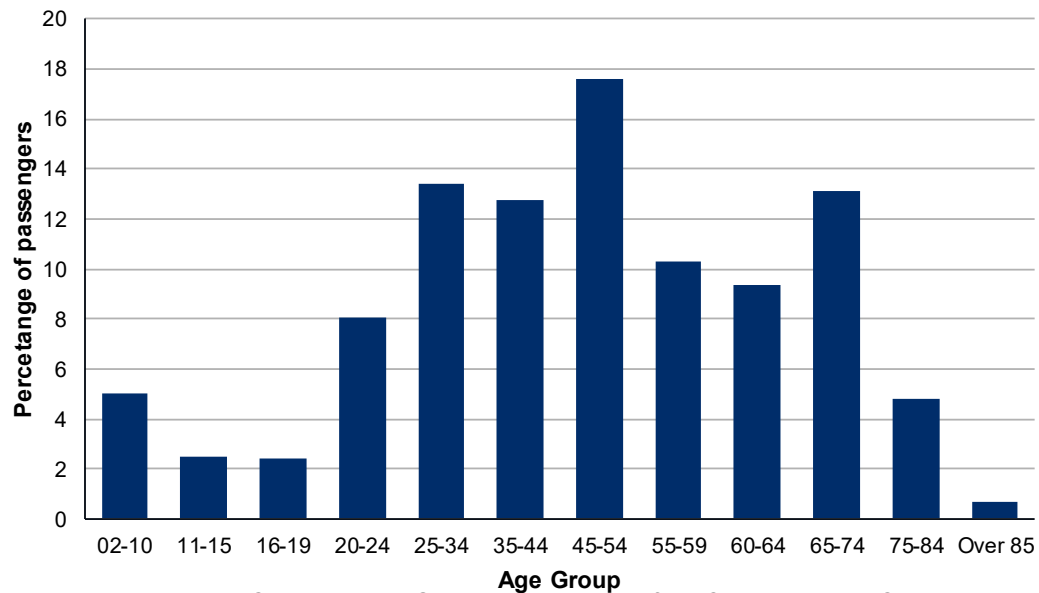
**Chart 15: Mode of Travel to Airport by passengers, 2019 Survey**



## What age are UK and foreign passengers at Cardiff Airport in 2019?

Passengers aged 45-54 accounted for the highest proportion of passengers using Cardiff airport. A similar distribution as seen in chart 16 was also observed at Bristol Airport, however, the dominant age group of passengers was 25-34.

**Chart 16: Age distribution of UK and foreign passengers at Cardiff Airport in 2019**



Source: Welsh Government analysis of the CAA Passenger Survey Report

**Note:**

Age groups width are not the same and data is as shared by CAA

## Notes

### 1 Context - Related publications

The Department for Transport produce a series bringing together documents relating to [UK Aviation Statistics](#).

Transport Scotland produce a compendium publication titled "[Scottish Transport Statistics](#)" which includes a chapter on Air Transport.

The Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland produce a publication titled "[Northern Ireland Transport Statistics](#)", Chapter 7 includes information on Air Transport.

### 2 Data source

The information on air transport through Cardiff airport in this bulletin and associated StatsWales tables reproduces the statistics compiled by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Its work is gratefully acknowledged. The [CAA data](#) are outside the scope of National Statistics. The information includes the CAA's own notes about the figures.

### 3.1 Definitions

The statistics in this bulletin relate to Cardiff International airport as this is the only major domestic and international airport in Wales.

Up to 2000, all statistics include air taxi operations (defined for statistical purposes as charter flights utilising aircraft of less than 15 tonnes MTWA). From 2001, air taxis are included in the total of air transport movements but traffic carried, both passenger and freight, on air taxi services is excluded.

### 3.2 Glossary

**Air transport movements:** Landings or take offs of aircraft engaged in the transport of passengers or cargo on commercial terms. All scheduled service movements, whether loaded, empty, or positioning, and charter movements transporting passengers or cargo and air taxi movements are included. For the purpose of these statistics, where flights are operated on a sub-charter basis the operator is identified according to the flight number, an internal flight is counted as a single air transport movement.

**Domestic service:** Services flown entirely within the United Kingdom, Isle of Man or Channel Islands.

**Freight:** The weight of property carried on an aircraft including for example the weight of vehicles, excess baggage and diplomatic bags, but excluding mail and passengers' and crews' permitted baggage. Freight in transit through the airport on the same aircraft is excluded.

**International Service:** Services flown between the United Kingdom, including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands and places outside.

**Non-scheduled or Charter Services:** All air transport movements other than scheduled services.

**Passengers:** All revenue and non-revenue passengers on air transport movement flights

Scheduled services: Those performed according to the published timetable including supplementary timetables, available for use by the members of the public.

Terminal passenger: A passenger joining or leaving an aircraft at the reporting airport. A passenger travelling between two reporting airports is counted twice, once at each airport. A passenger who changes from one aircraft to the other, carrying the same flight number is treated as a terminal passenger.

Transit passenger: A passenger who arrives and departs from a reporting airport on the same aircraft. Each transit passenger is counted only once.

#### **4. CAA departing passenger survey – topics covered in survey questions**

The CAA departing passenger survey asks questions relating to the person, the airport and the airline and the journey. More detailed information relating to the [2019 passenger survey report](#) can be found on the CAA website.

#### **5 Key quality information**

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

##### **5.1 Relevance**

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor air transport trends and as a baseline for further analysis.

##### **5.2 Accuracy**

This is described by the CAA at the link given under 'data source' above.

##### **5.3 Timeliness and punctuality**

The information in the bulletin, covering air transport through Cardiff Airport, is based on the most recent annual UK Airport Statistics from the CAA.

##### **5.4 Accessibility and clarity**

This statistical bulletin is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics for Wales](#) website, with the underlying figures published on [StatsWales](#). Historically, this information was released in Chapter 11 of 'Welsh Transport Statistics' and excel spreadsheets.

##### **5.5 Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## **Further details**

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/air-transport>

## **Next update**

May 2021 (provisional)

## **We want your feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [stats.transport@gov.wales](mailto:stats.transport@gov.wales).

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