Australian Aviation Network Overview

October 2024

airservices
australia

Contents

Executive Summary

In October 2024, the Australian aviation network recorded a three per cent increase in daily flights compared to the previous month, primarily driven by domestic traffic while international flights have plateaued this year.

Short-term volatility remains a key feature for our sector. Connectivity and choice in domestic regional markets has not fully recovered since the exit of Bonza in April. Inbound passengers from top markets such as China, Japan and the United States remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Based on the latest available data from the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE), the overall industry OTP was three percentage points higher than the previous month, as industry focused on lifting capacity to meet the surge in demand during the school holiday period and major sporting events. Our industry's capability to better prepare for and respond to disruptions is still a key focus area to deliver a more predictable month-on-month experience for the travelling public.

In October 2024, 0.2 per cent of total network flight delays were attributed to Airservices with 0.8 per cent of flights impacted. Fine tuning demand/capacity balancing with Digital Twin Technology has enabled a steady improvement in network management, with ground delay hours at the lowest level in 30 months.

Airspace service variations reached the lowest level in the last 30 months. Tower service variations also continued to trend downwards, largely due to increased hours of coverage at Parafield and Avalon. However, the consistency of our service performance in some areas is still not at the levels expected by our customers and stakeholders. We remain focused on recruitment, training and introducing additional resilience measures in rostering practices to support industry growth, particularly in areas such as Sydney, enroute airspace around Perth, and Metropolitan Class D aerodromes.

Economic and social trends

Economic factors

Key economic factors for our industry are showing improving signs, with declining inflation rate, rising consumer sentiment, and downward trends in jet fuel prices and air fares. However, projected economic slowdowns in China and Japan, and geopolitical tensions highlight ongoing uncertainties for the industry.

Figure 1. Real GDP growth outlook (annual percent change) for key economies
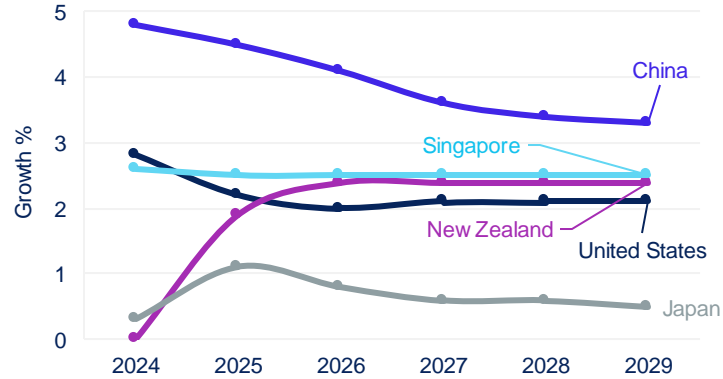
Source: IMF (website)

Figure 2. Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index

Sources: Westpac Economics, Melbourne Institute
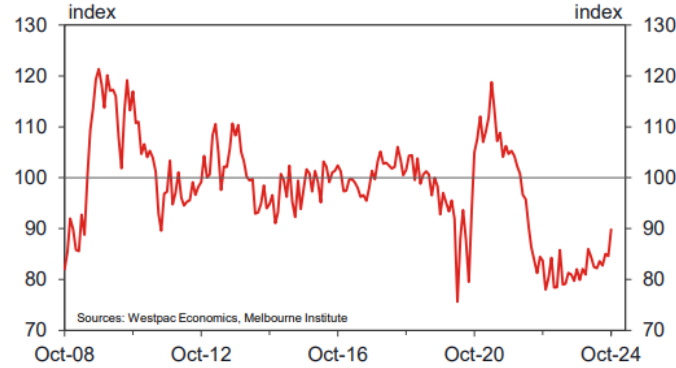
Source: Westpac (website)

Figure 3. International travel inbound and outbound

Residents Returning — International Visitors

Source: ABS (website) – data released 15/10/2024 up to August 2024

Figure 4. Jet fuel and Brent crude oil prices

Singapore Jet Kero Spot (AUD) — Brent Crude Spot (AUD)
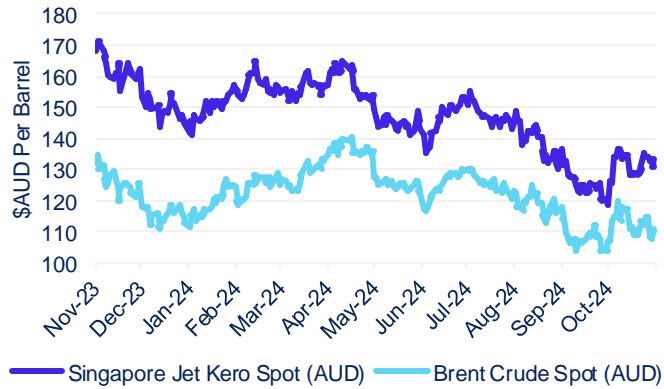
Source: Bloomberg

Figure 5. Consumer Price Index (CPI) Indicator

Monthly CPI (%) — Monthly CPI - Annual Trimmed Mean (%)
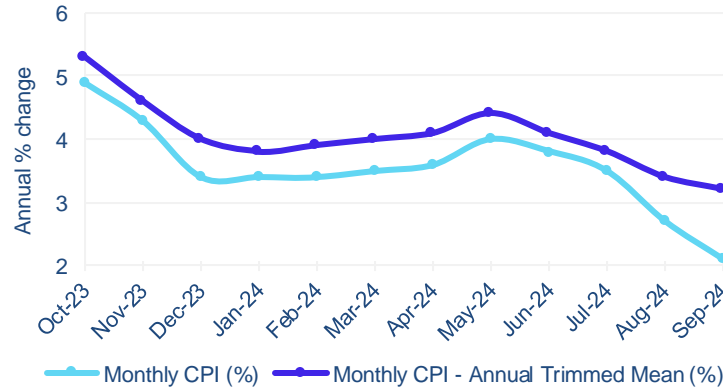
Source: ABS (website) – data released 30/10/2024 up to September 2024

Figure 6. Domestic air fares (best discount)

Real Best Discount Fare — 13 Month Moving Average
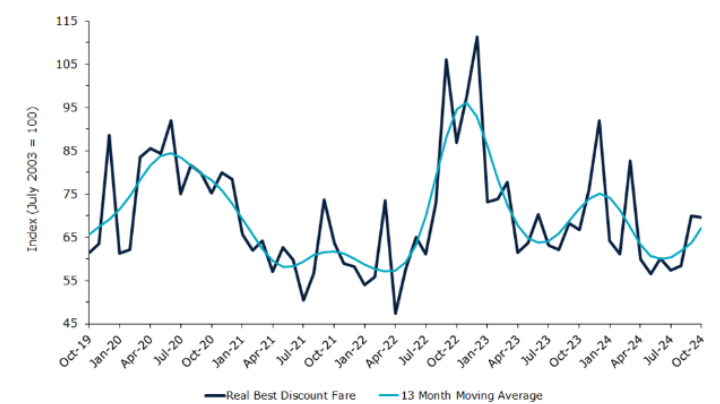
Source: BITRE (website)

Social factors

Understanding and mitigating the environmental and social impact of aircraft operations is an ongoing priority for the aviation sector. In recent months, we have seen the level of complainants impacted by factors such as major runway works that affected traffic flows at Brisbane and Perth. A collective focus on aviation social licence is prompting increased collaboration and community-by-design approach to airport infrastructure development and airspace demand management.

Figure 7. National aircraft noise complaints (top) and complainants (bottom) per month

Figure 9. CO2 emissions savings from optimised User Preferred Routes (UPR) across oceanic and cross-continental airspace per month

Figure 8. Airport aircraft noise complaints, complainants, and complaints by complainant per month

Airport Noise Complaints

Airport Noise Complainants

Airport Noise Complaints per Complainant

■ Brisbane ■ Sydney ■ Perth ■ Melbourne ■ Other Airports*
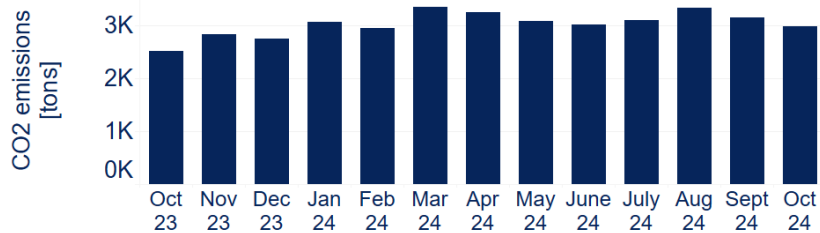
Source: Airservices Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS) and Airservices ODAS.
* Other airports include Ballina, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, and Hobart.

Australian aviation and regional context

State of Australian aviation growth

The Australian aviation network recorded a 3% increase in daily flights compared to last month, driven by domestic traffic. However, international traffic has plateaued throughout 2024 at approximately 95% for the number of flights and 85% for the number of inbound passengers compared to 2019 levels.

Average Daily Flights
(October 2024 and % of October 2019)

3,920
101%

Total Domestic Flights
(October 2024 and % of October 2019)

102,973
102%

Total International Flights
(October 2024 and % of October 2019)

18,543
94%

Figure 10. Domestic and international average daily flights compared to Airservices' forecast (shown in dotted line) per month

Domestic Flights

International Flights
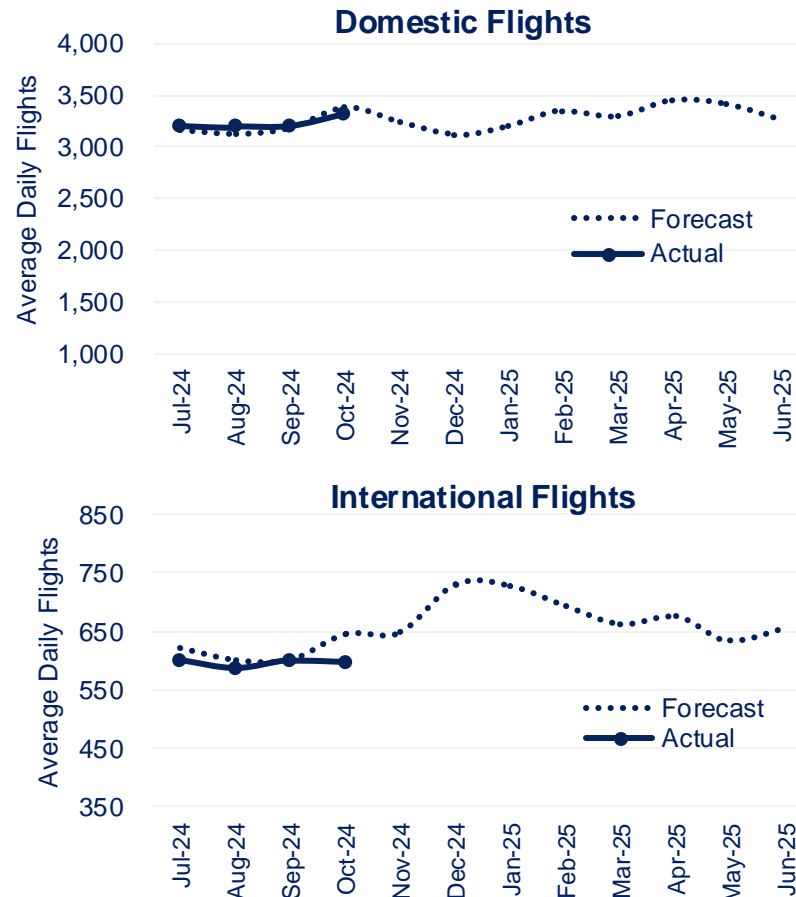
Figure 11. Average daily flights by industry segment per month
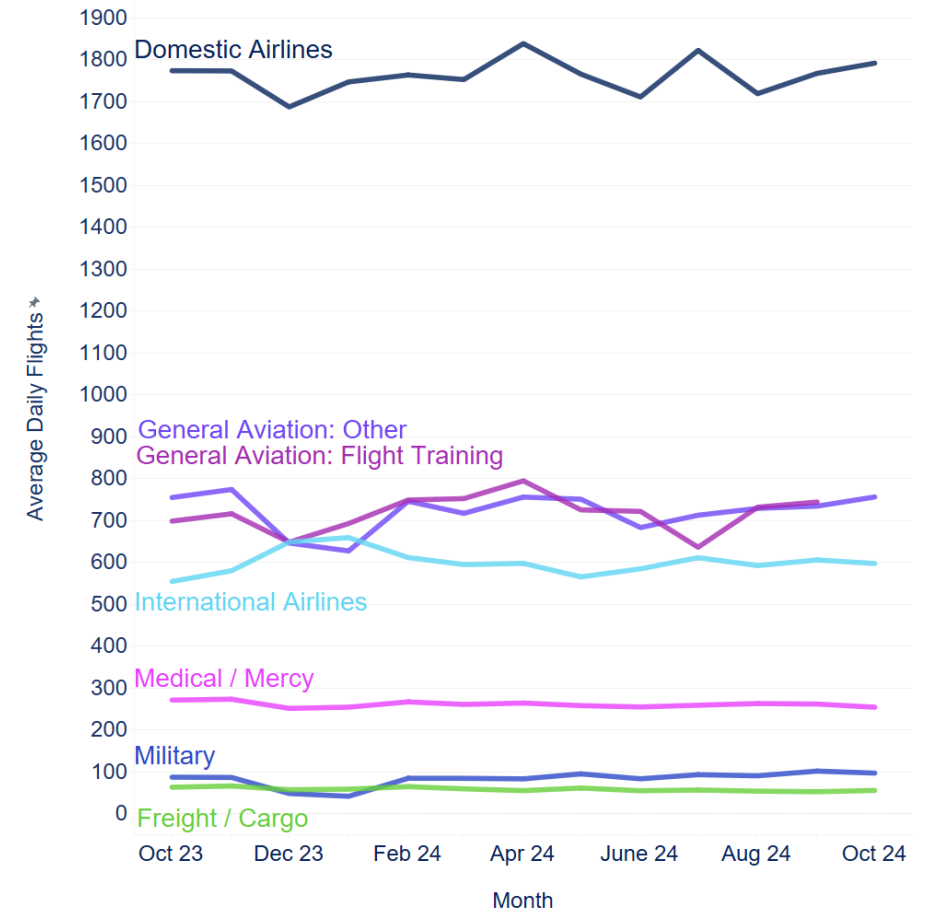
Source: Airservices aeronautical charge database. Excludes some general aviation flights that are not subject to Airservices aeronautical charges. Airservices' forecast proposed as of July 2024 and is subject to review by ACCC.

Source: Airservices ODAS (excludes helicopters).
Data for 'General Aviation: Flight Training' is one month in arrears.

Australian Aviation Network Overview

Top aircraft operators

Domestic growth continues to be driven by major airline groups and regional operators servicing the mining sector and regional communities. Internationally, low-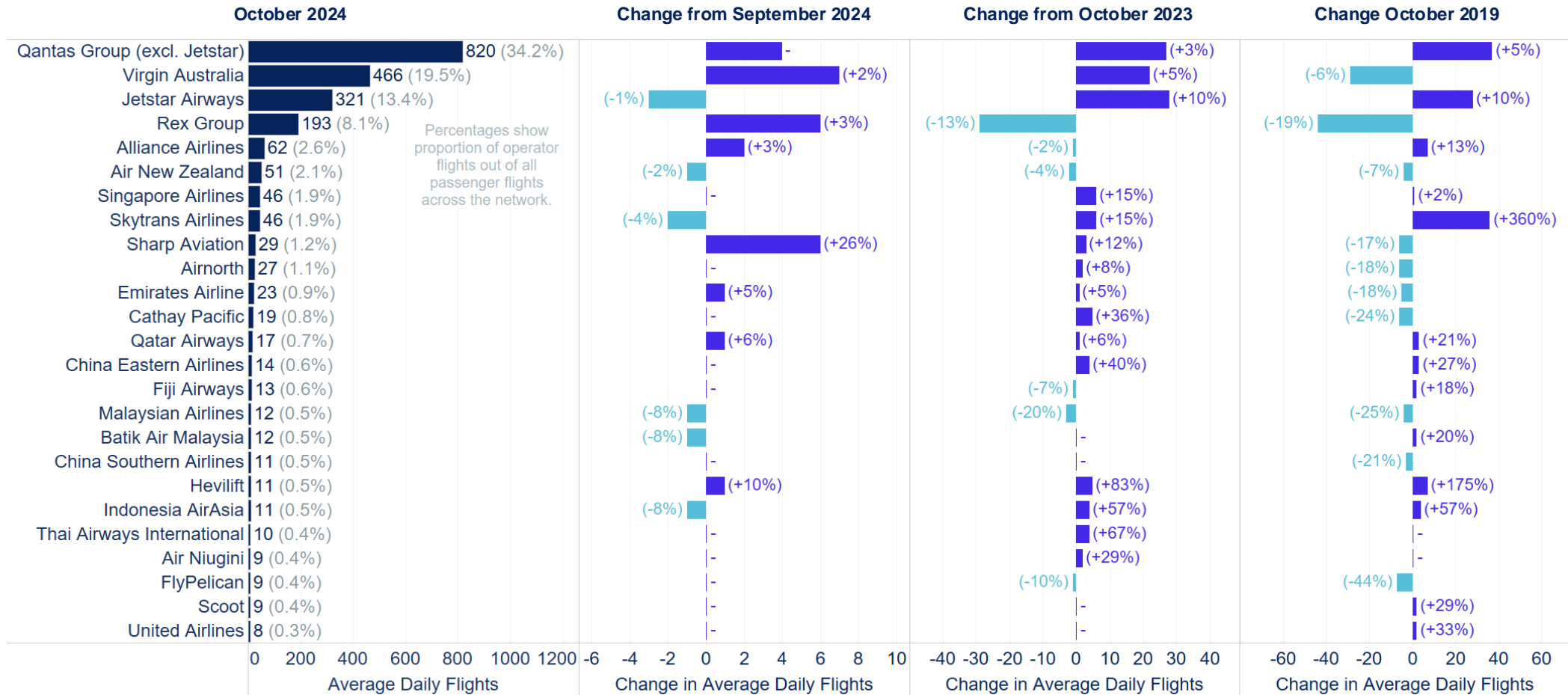cost carriers targeting Southeast Asia's leisure markets are experiencing strong growth, while traditional hub-and-spoke international airlines stayed below pre-pandemic activity levels.

Figure 12. Average daily flights by top operators (October 2024) and comparisons across three reference periods

Operator	October 2024	Change from September 2024	Change from October 2023	Change October 2019
Qantas Group (excl. Jetstar)	820 (34.2%)	-	(+3%)	(+5%)
Virgin Australia	466 (19.5%)	(+2%)	(+5%)	(-6%)
Jetstar Airways	321 (13.4%)	(-1%)	(+10%)	(+10%)
Rex Group	193 (8.1%)	(+3%)	(-13%)	(-19%)
Alliance Airlines	62 (2.6%)	(+3%)	(-2%)	(+13%)
Air New Zealand	51 (2.1%)	(-2%)	(-4%)	(-7%)
Singapore Airlines	46 (1.9%)	-	(+15%)	(+2%)
Skytrans Airlines	46 (1.9%)	(-4%)	(+15%)	(+360%)
Sharp Aviation	29 (1.2%)	(+26%)	(+12%)	(-17%)
Airnorth	27 (1.1%)	-	(+8%)	(-18%)
Emirates Airline	23 (0.9%)	(+5%)	(+5%)	(-18%)
Cathay Pacific	19 (0.8%)	-	(+36%)	(-24%)
Qatar Airways	17 (0.7%)	(+6%)	(+6%)	(+21%)
China Eastern Airlines	14 (0.6%)	-	(+40%)	(+27%)
Fiji Airways	13 (0.6%)	-	(-7%)	(+18%)
Malaysian Airlines	12 (0.5%)	(-8%)	(-20%)	(-25%)
Batik Air Malaysia	12 (0.5%)	(-8%)	-	(+20%)
China Southern Airlines	11 (0.5%)	-	-	(-21%)
Hevilift	11 (0.5%)	(+10%)	(+83%)	(+175%)
Indonesia AirAsia	11 (0.5%)	(-8%)	(+57%)	(+57%)
Thai Airways International	10 (0.4%)	-	(+67%)	-
Air Niugini	9 (0.4%)	-	(+29%)	-
FlyPelican	9 (0.4%)	-	(-10%)	(-44%)
Scoot	9 (0.4%)	-	-	(+29%)
United Airlines	8 (0.3%)	-	-	(+33%)

Percentages show proportion of operator flights out of all passenger flights across the network.

Average Daily Flights | Change in Average Daily Flights | Change in Average Daily Flights | Change in Average Daily Flights

Source: Airservices ODAS (includes airline flights only).

Domestic network connectivity

Following the voluntary administration of Bonza in April, the impacted routes have not been replaced by other operators, resulting in a reduction in connectivity and choice particularly for regional-to-regional routes across Eastern states. Major domestic airline groups have gradually added capital-regional routes.

Figure 13. Domestic connectivity by unique routes per month.
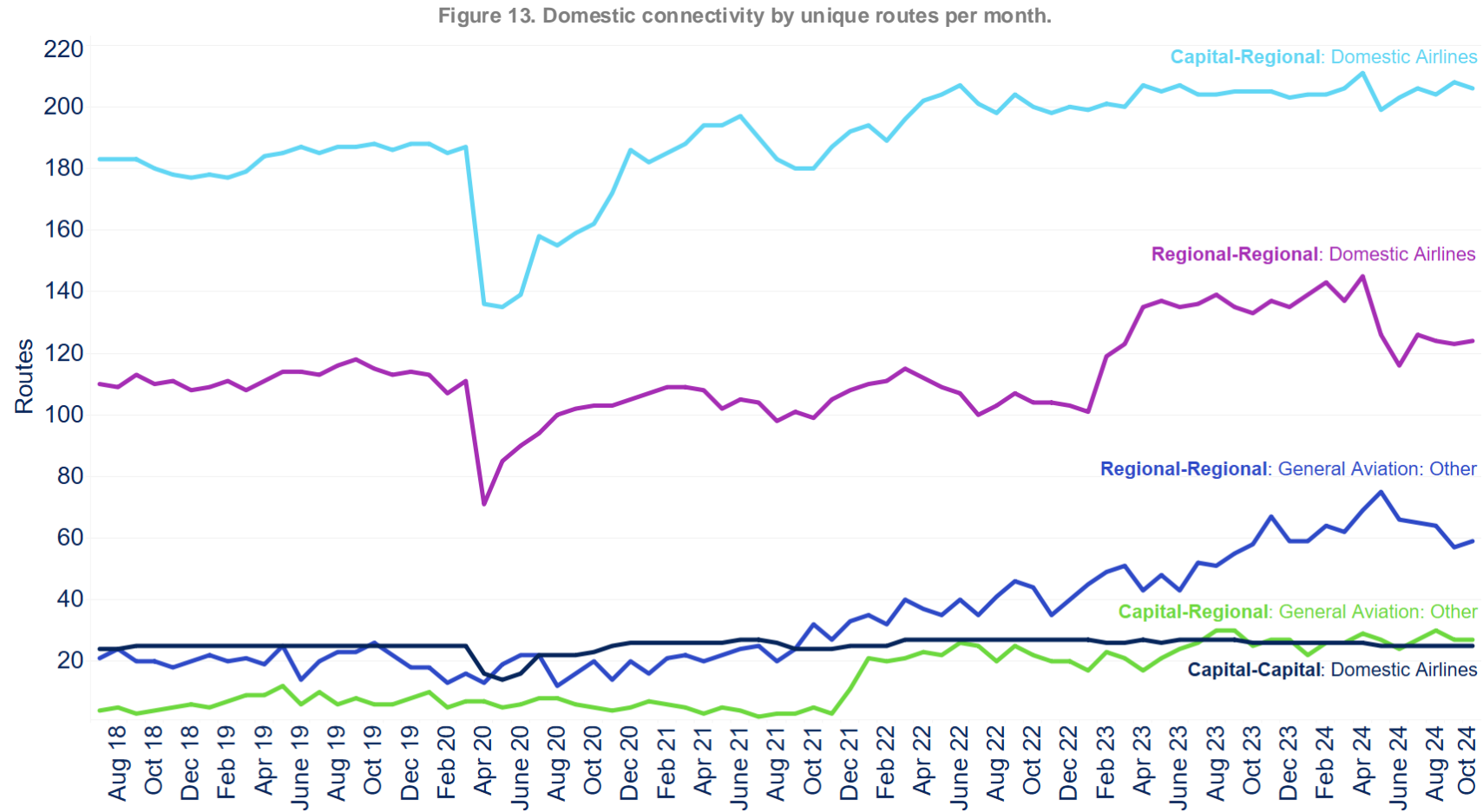
Source: Airservices ODAS (excludes military, medical/mercy, training, and return flights).
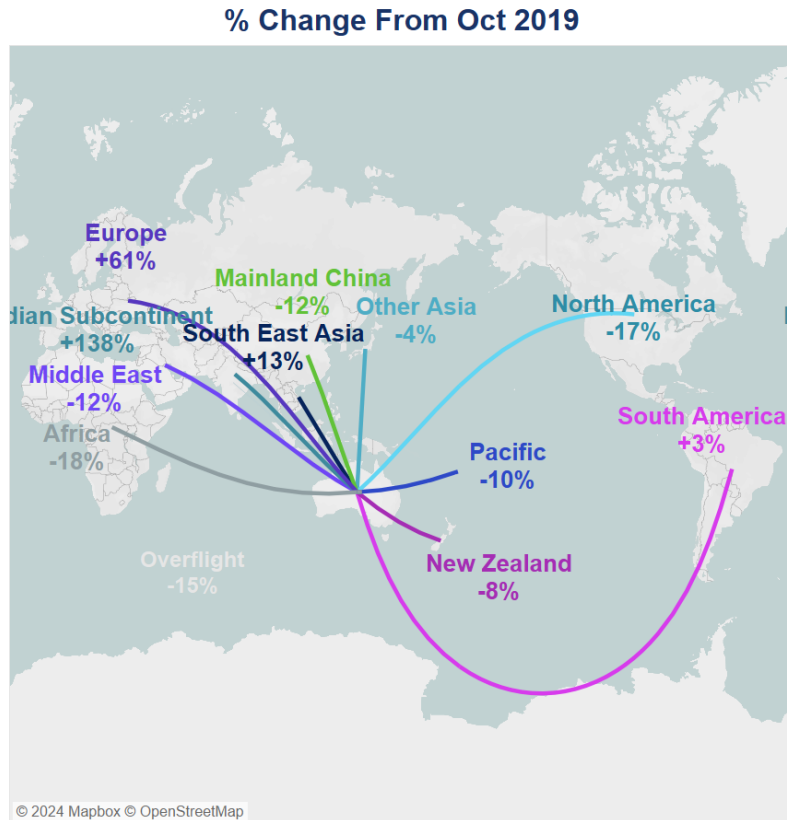Only routes with at least one operator with at least 2 flights weekly are included– this includes airline and general aviation flights.
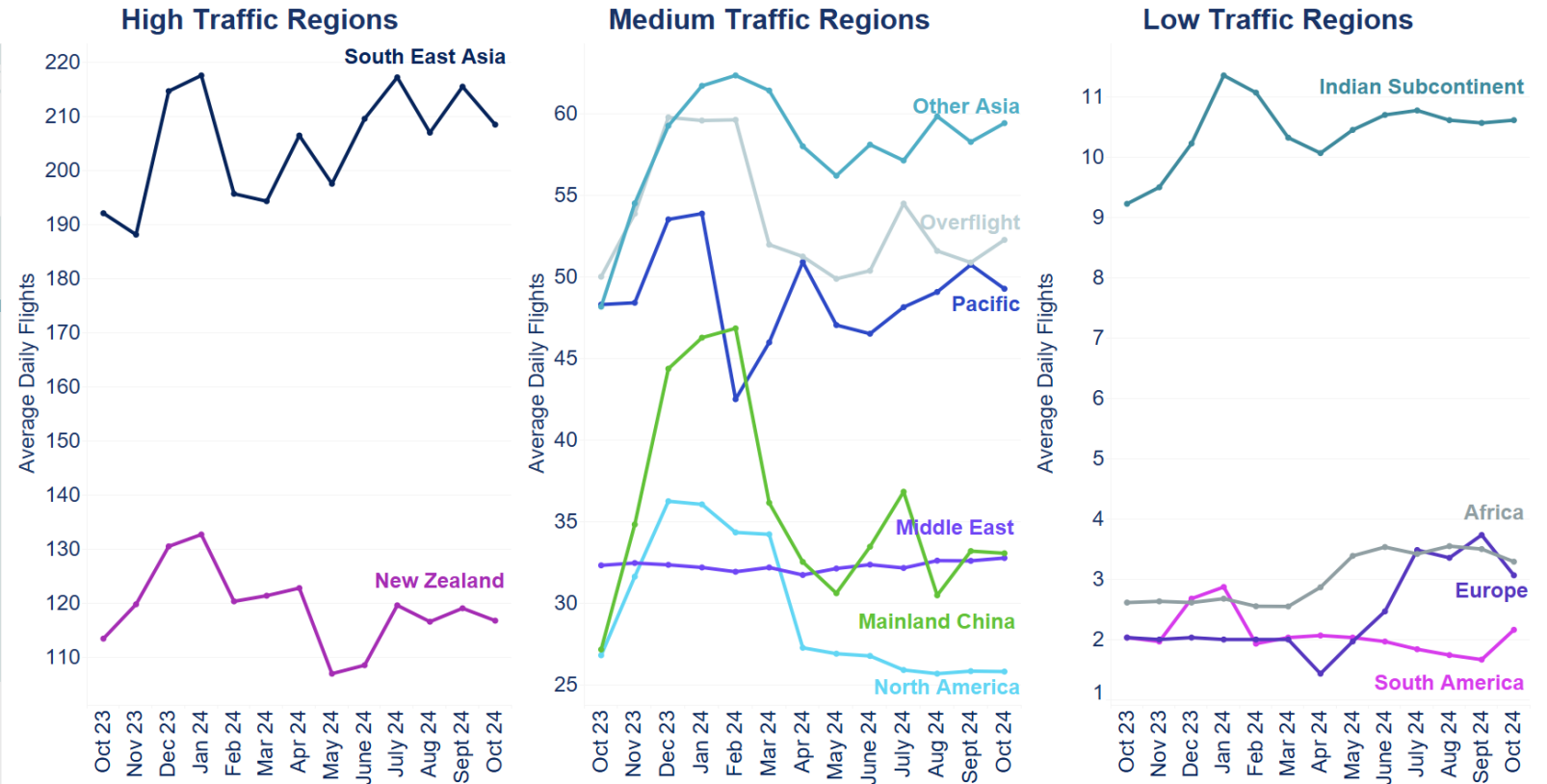
Traffic flows from international markets

Accounting for 30% of Australia's inbound passengers, visitor arrivals from China, the United States, and Japan remain below pre-pandemic levels (at 62%, 86%, and 81% respectively), indicating the potential impact of economic challenges and declining international student numbers. In this environment, the Australian government has launched a $15 million grant to attract international visitors to Northern Queensland. Transport Canada has expanded the air transport agreement with Australia to strengthen bilateral air travel with North America.

Figure 14. Percentage change in total flights by international markets (October 2024 vs October 2019)

Figure 15. Average daily flights by international markets per month

% Change From Oct 2019

Europe +61%
Mainland China -12%
Other Asia -4%
North America -17%
Indian Subcontinent +138%
South East Asia +13%
Middle East -12%
Africa -18%
Pacific -10%
South America +3%
New Zealand -8%
Overflight -15%

© 2024 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Note: Percentage changes for some regions are from a low base.

High Traffic Regions
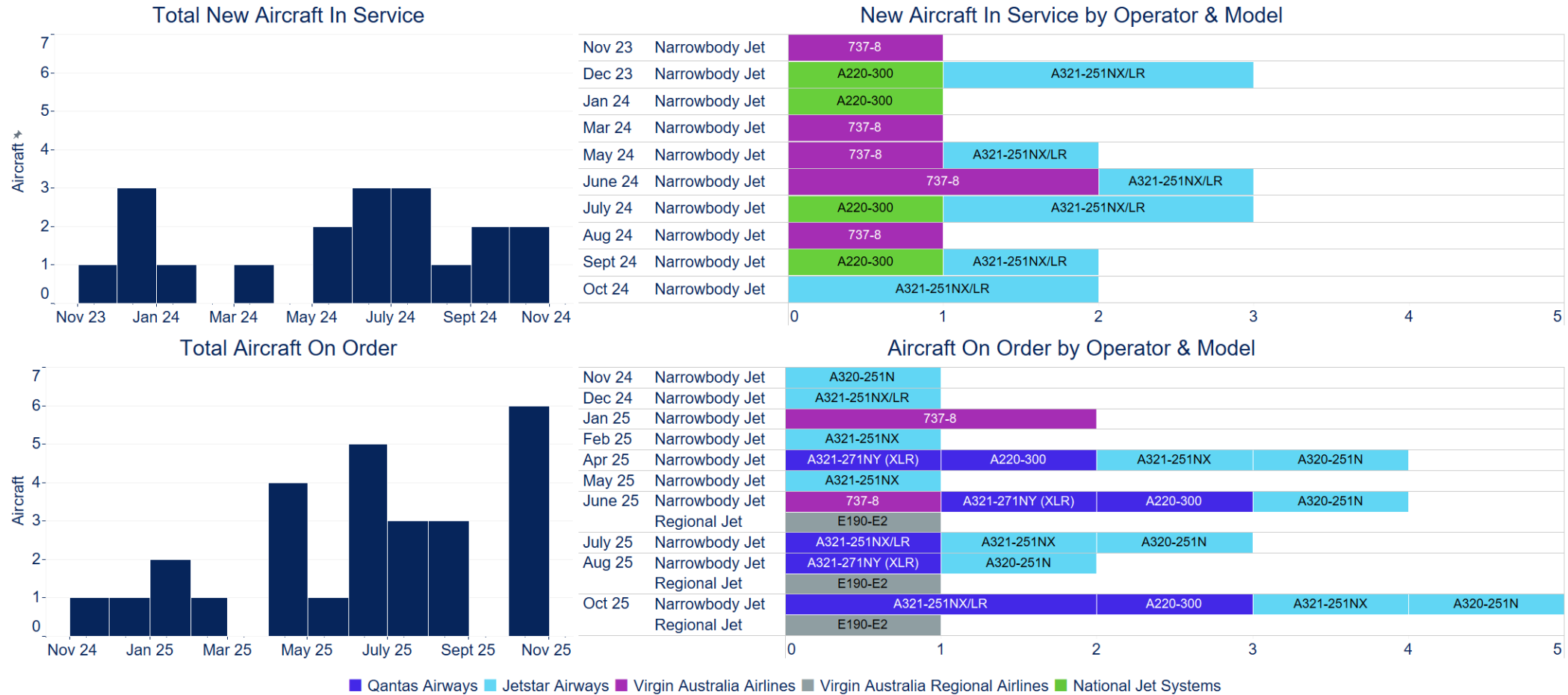

Medium Traffic Regions

Low Traffic Regions

Source: Airservices ODAS (includes airline flights only).
For multi-leg flights, legs that start and end outside Australian airspace are not included.

Australian fleet

Australia's fleet renewal remains steady, with two new narrow-body A321 LRs entering service in October. However, financial losses resulting in workforce reductions by major aircraft manufacturers and supply chain issues continue to challenge the rate of aircraft delivery to meet airlines' growth needs.

Figure 16. New aircraft that entered service in the past 12 months and those scheduled for delivery in the upcoming 12 months, as of 31 October 2024.

Total New Aircraft In Service

New Aircraft In Service by Operator & Model

Nov 23	Narrowbody Jet	737-8
Dec 23	Narrowbody Jet	A220-300 / A321-251NX/LR
Jan 24	Narrowbody Jet	A220-300
Mar 24	Narrowbody Jet	737-8
May 24	Narrowbody Jet	737-8 / A321-251NX/LR
June 24	Narrowbody Jet	737-8 / A321-251NX/LR
July 24	Narrowbody Jet	A220-300 / A321-251NX/LR
Aug 24	Narrowbody Jet	737-8
Sept 24	Narrowbody Jet	A220-300 / A321-251NX/LR
Oct 24	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX/LR

Total Aircraft On Order

Aircraft On Order by Operator & Model

Nov 24	Narrowbody Jet	A320-251N
Dec 24	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX/LR
Jan 25	Narrowbody Jet	737-8
Feb 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX
Apr 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-271NY (XLR) / A220-300 / A321-251NX / A320-251N
May 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX
June 25	Narrowbody Jet	737-8 / A321-271NY (XLR) / A220-300 / A320-251N
	Regional Jet	E190-E2
July 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX/LR / A321-251NX / A320-251N
Aug 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-271NY (XLR) / A320-251N
	Regional Jet	E190-E2
Oct 25	Narrowbody Jet	A321-251NX/LR / A220-300 / A321-251NX / A320-251N
	Regional Jet	E190-E2

■ Qantas Airways ■ Jetstar Airways ■ Virgin Australia Airlines ■ Virgin Australia Regional Airlines ■ National Jet Systems

Source: Centre for Aviation Fleet (CAPA) data.

Australian aviation network performance

On-Time Performance (OTP) in the previous month

In September 2024, the overall OTP in Australia was 3% higher than past month and 5% higher compared to September 2023, as industry focused on lifting capacity to meet the surge in demand due to the school holiday period and major sporting events.

Figure 17. Total industry OTP and cancellations (data available up to 30 September 2024 based on latest BITRE data release)
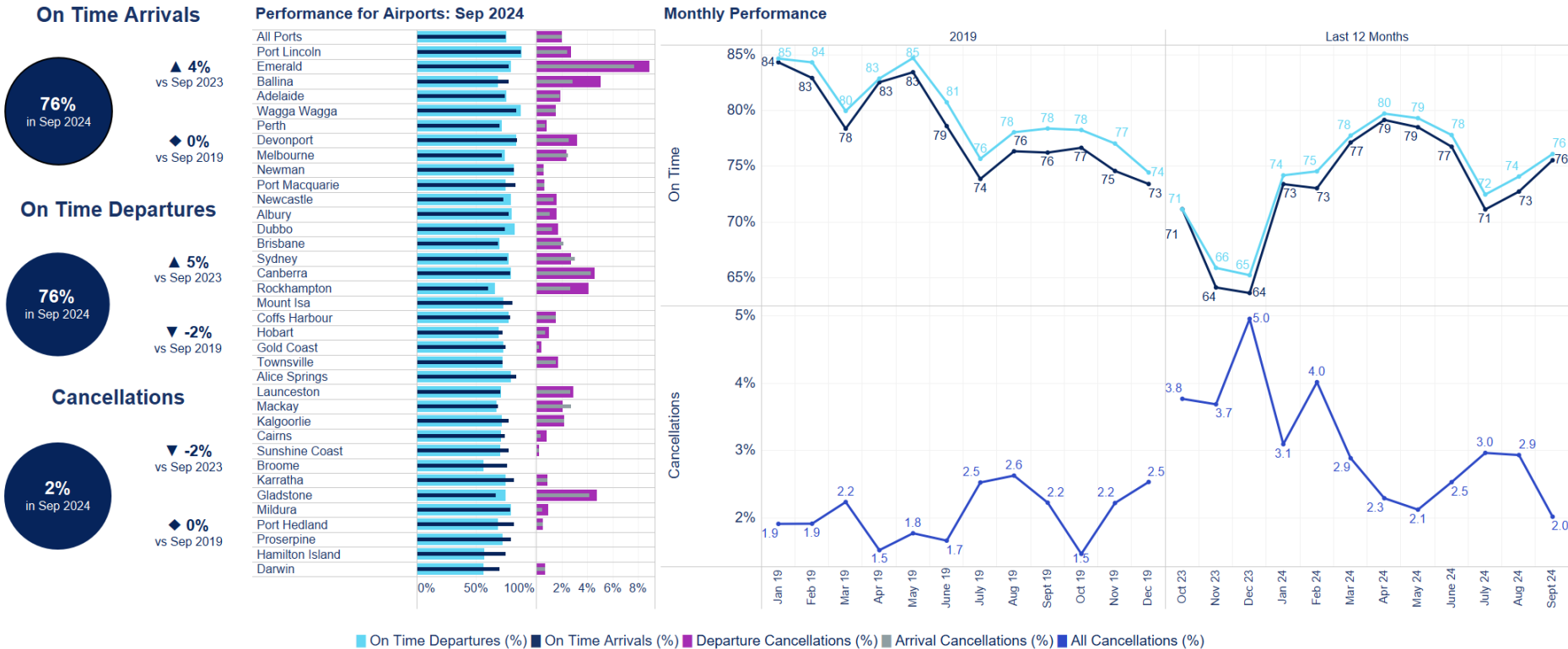

On Time Arrivals

76% in Sep 2024

▲ 4% vs Sep 2023

◆ 0% vs Sep 2019

On Time Departures

76% in Sep 2024

▲ 5% vs Sep 2023

▼ -2% vs Sep 2019

Cancellations

2% in Sep 2024

▼ -2% vs Sep 2023

◆ 0% vs Sep 2019

Legend: ■ On Time Departures (%) ■ On Time Arrivals (%) ■ Departure Cancellations (%) ■ Arrival Cancellations (%) ■ All Cancellations (%)

Figure 18. Arrival OTP for top ten performing airlines by region (September 2024) in comparison to Australia's top eight airlines

| Region	On-Time Arrivals	Previous Month Change
Asia-Pacific	79%	▲4%
Europe	78%	▼1%
Latin America	86%	▲4%
Middle East & Africa	88%	▲8%
North America	82%	▲10%
Australia	**76%**	**▲3%**

Source: BITRE for Australian data (website) and Cirium (website).

Lead indicators of OTP

Based on the key components of network delays as a lead indicator of OTP, in October 2024 reactionary and other departure delays which constitute over 74% total network delays at the four major airports increased 6% compared to the previous month. Compared to 2019, there has been an overall increase of other departure delays (12%) and in-flight delays (30%). Data sharing from airlines is crucial to understand the underlying causes of network performance changes from month-to-month and target improvement efforts.

Figure 19. Breakdown of delay components for major Australian airports, as a percentage of total delays for October 2024 (left) and average flight values per month (right).
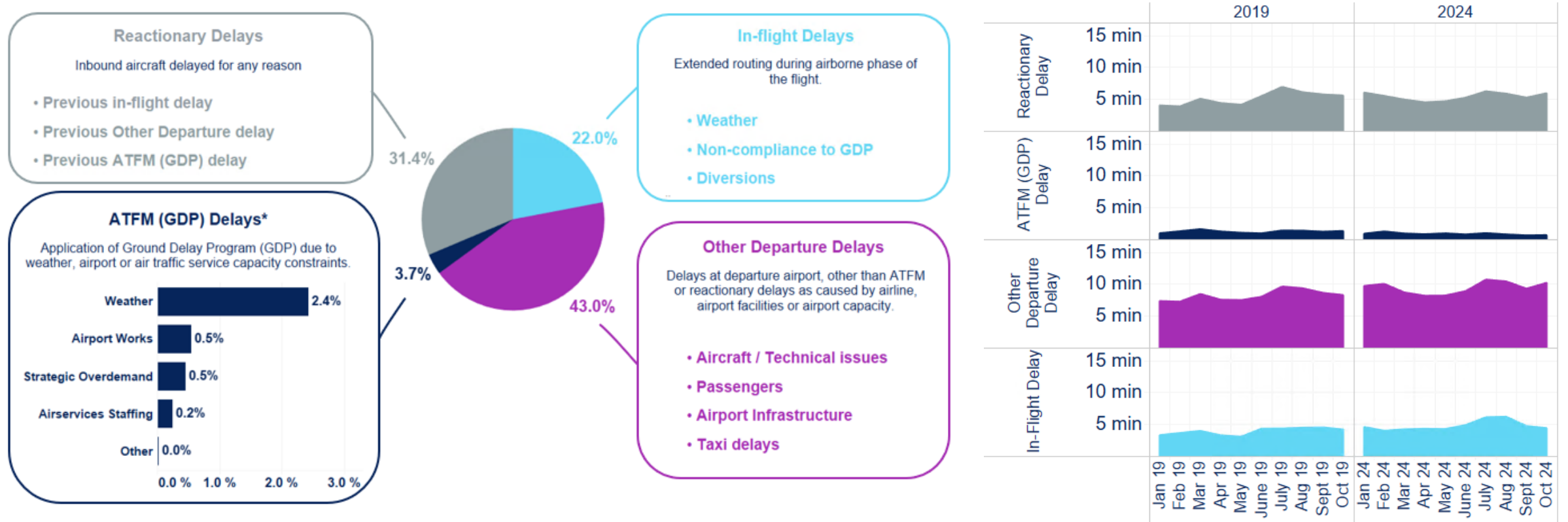
Source: Airservices ODAS (includes airline flights only).
The delay presented is an estimate based on domestic flight data available to Airservices. Airservices is working with airlines and stakeholders to refine the estimation method and identify complementary data to better understand causal factors.
* The ATFM system allows airlines to change GDP slots and adjust delays compared to their original allocation.

Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM)

Weather remains the main driver for Ground Delay Programs (GDP) on the East Coast. The adoption of Digital Twin Technology in early 2024 has enabled the continual fine-tuning of network decisions and avoiding GDP application in marginal weather conditions, as demonstrated in October when GDP hours reached the lowest level in the last 30 months. While only 0.2% of total network delays in October were attributed to Airservices, consistency of performance still needs to improve, with 24 ground delay hours at Perth Airport due to Airservices staffing challenges in the surrounding enroute airspace volume. This is expected to improve through active recruitment, training and introducing additional resilience measures in rostering practices.

0.8%
Flights Impacted
% impacted by Airservices capacity constraints across all flights

0.2%
Total Network Delays
% attributable to Airservices, out of all network delays

6.7%
ATFM Delays
% attributable to Airservices (total ATFM delays are 3.7% of all network delays)

1.2%
Arrival Cancellations
% attributable to Airservices

Figure 21. ATFM (GDP) delay by attribution.

**Figure 20. GDP application hours, airborne delay, and compliance**
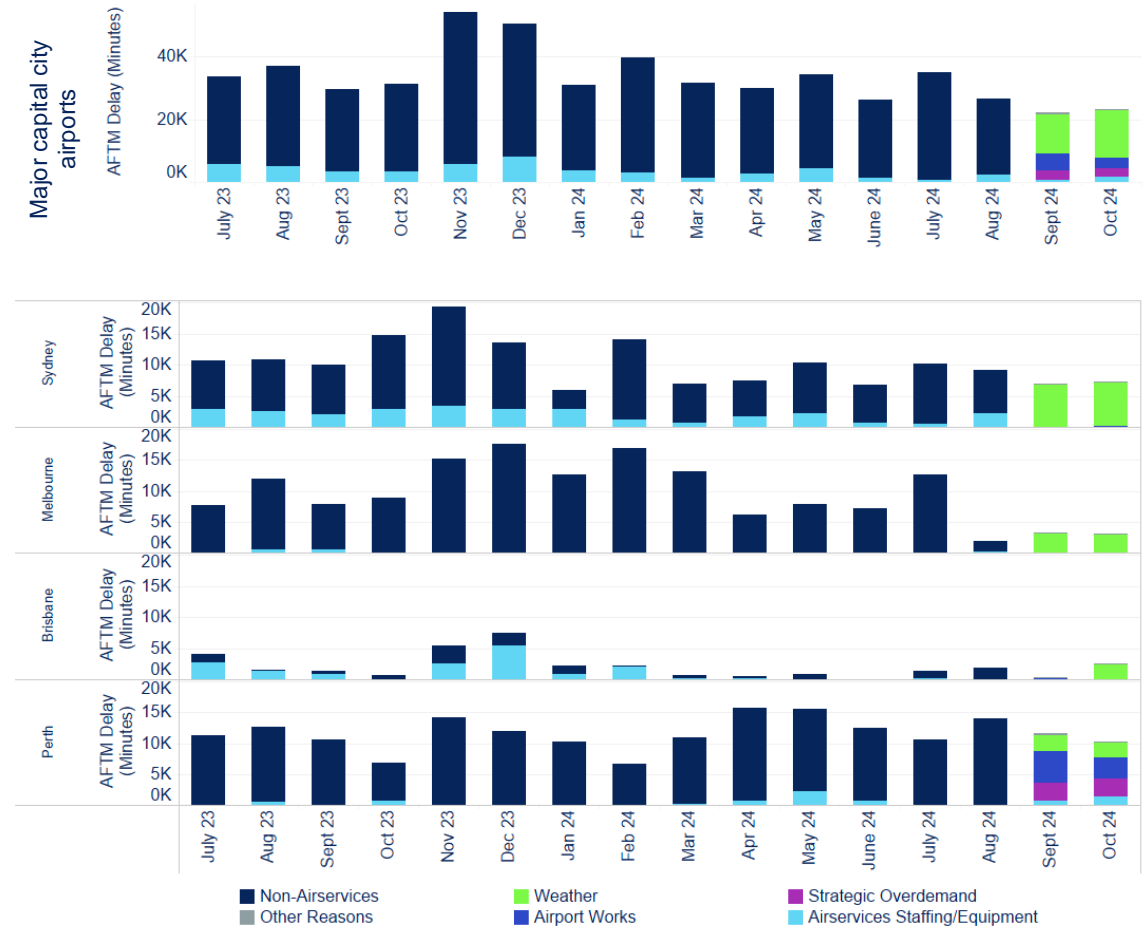
Source: Airservices ODAS. A GDP is an agreed industry plan to balance the demand (based on airline schedules) to the available runway capacity that is collaboratively agreed (refer to GDP Fact Sheet). GDP compliance represents the proportion of flights into an airport that departed compliant with their assigned GDP slot.

Perth network performance

Domestic flights in Perth's network have grown by 22% since 2019, predominantly driven by intra-state flights servicing the mining sector. Schedule delays have increased by 74% leading to a 13 percentage point drop in punctuality, as a result of a broad cross-section of air transport operators not adhering to strategic airport slots or ATFM programs. Industry-led actions are required to address the demand management challenges to ensure sustainable growth of mining and leisure travel in Western Australia.

Figure 22. Perth domestic network movements, punctuality, and total schedule delays (January to September 2024 for all, except for monthly movements).
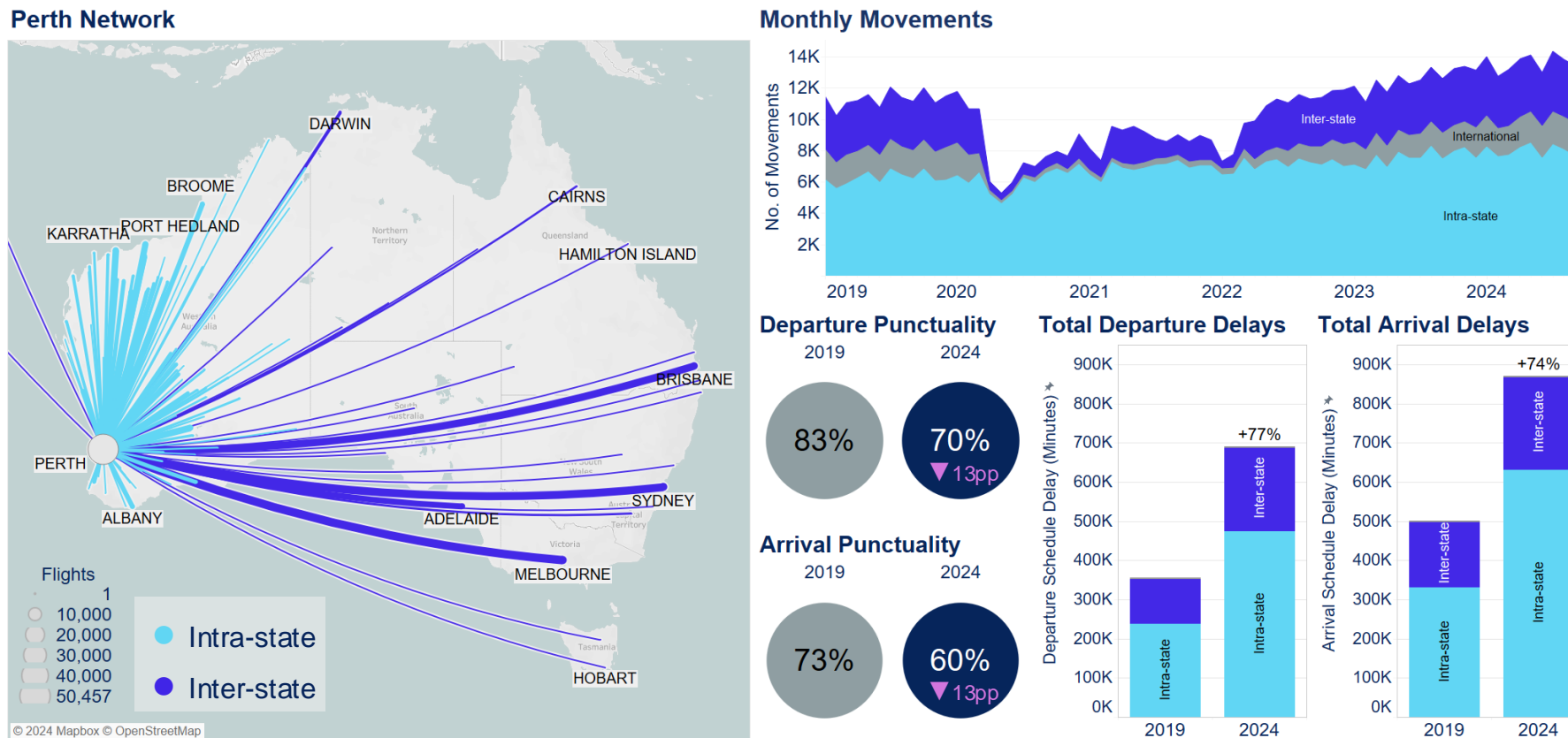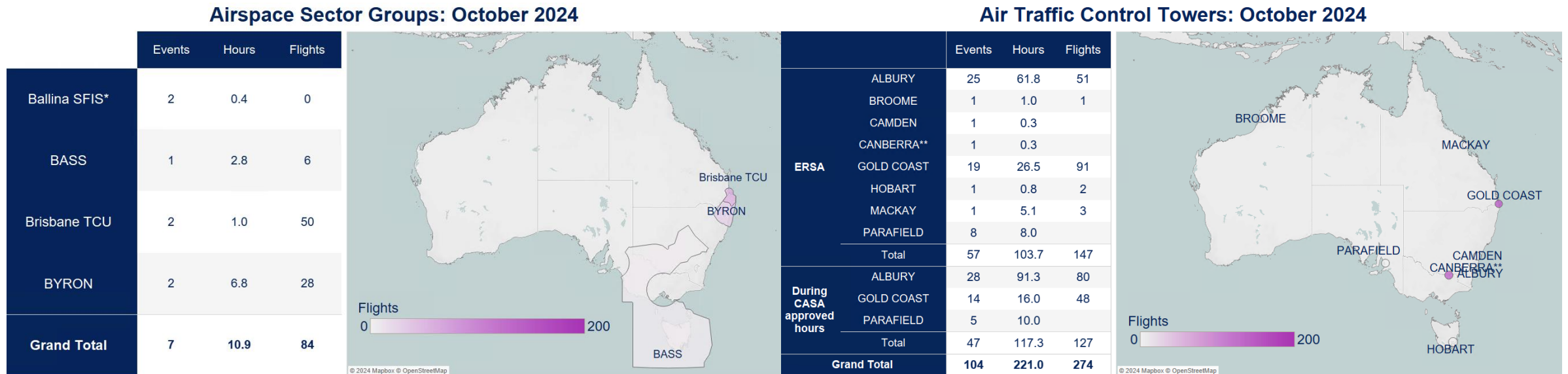

Source: Airservices ODAS. The data presented is an estimate based on domestic flight data available to Airservices, where departure and arrival punctuality and delays are based on take-off and landing times against initial times of the ATFM process.

Air Traffic Service Provision

In October 2024, airspace service variations reached the lowest level in the last 30 months as efforts on improving service consistency and resilience continue. Tower service variation events also reduced by over 30% compared to the previous months, largely due to increased hours of coverage at Parafield and Avalon.

Figure 23. Events, hours, and flights estimated to operate when air traffic services delivered varied from published levels across Airspace Groups (left) and ATC Towers (right) (October 2024).

Airspace Sector Groups: October 2024

	Events	Hours	Flights
Ballina SFIS*	2	0.4	0
BASS	1	2.8	6
Brisbane TCU	2	1.0	50
BYRON	2	6.8	28
Grand Total	**7**	**10.9**	**84**

Air Traffic Control Towers: October 2024

		Events	Hours	Flights
ERSA	ALBURY	25	61.8	51
	BROOME	1	1.0	1
	CAMDEN	1	0.3	
	CANBERRA**	1	0.3	
	GOLD COAST	19	26.5	91
	HOBART	1	0.8	2
	MACKAY	1	5.1	3
	PARAFIELD	8	8.0	
	Total	57	103.7	147
During CASA approved hours	ALBURY	28	91.3	80
	GOLD COAST	14	16.0	48
	PARAFIELD	5	10.0	
	Total	47	117.3	127
Grand Total		**104**	**221.0**	**274**

Source: Airservices ODAS (general aviation, military, and government flights are excluded).

* When there is a variation to published Surveillance Flight Information Service (SFIS) at Ballina airport, standard Class G services as regulated by CASA are still provided by Brisbane Air Traffic Services Centre.
** At Canberra Tower during the periods of service variation, the Canberra Approach service managed the airspace surrounding the airport to the ground. Instead of contacting the tower, aircraft contacted Approach directly for instructions.

Variations to published services comprise of Temporary Restricted Areas and tower closure periods. During the periods of variations to published services at regional aerodromes, services in adjacent Class G airspace are generally unaffected (e.g. provision of flight, traffic information and safety alerting). Service variations are with respect to published services as per ERSA including any approvals by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) for temporary amendments. Flights shown are estimated approximations by historic airline, charter, cargo and medical flights that typically operate during the periods of variations to published services, noting the exact impacts to flights cannot be directly inferred from information on flight times or tracks. Airservices is working with airlines to refine the estimation method to better understand the impact of variations to published services.

Runway Occupancy Time (ROT)

During peak periods, runway occupancy times can vary significantly between operators using the same runway exits. For certain exits, some operators take an average of 10 seconds longer per aircraft compared to the best performers. Ongoing data sharing with operators and airports helps identify operational improvements when utilising existing infrastructure.

Figure 24. Average arrival ROT by operator and runway exit (January to October 2024) during peak periods at major capital-city airports.
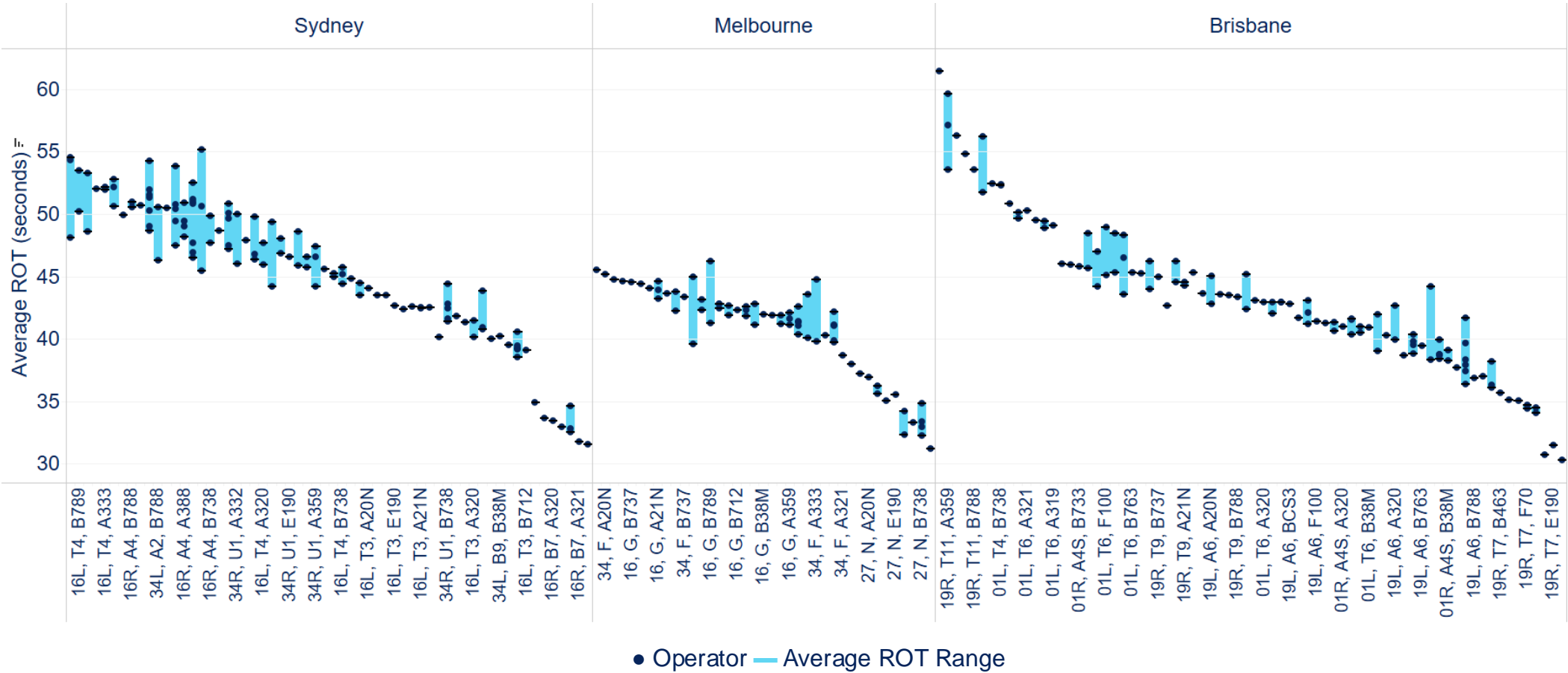
Source: Airservices ODAS. Data for Perth Airport is currently unavailable.

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