

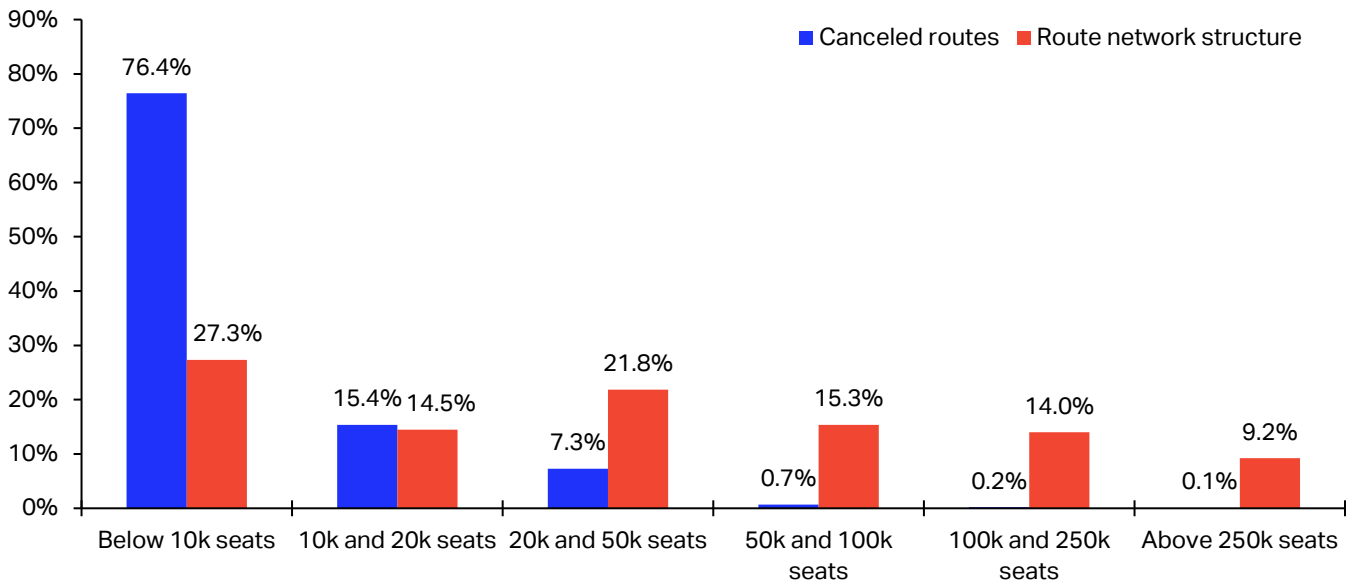


Chart of the Week

10 April 2026

Low-Volume Routes Most Vulnerable to Being Discontinued

Composition of the route network and canceled routes, by annual volume of seats (2025)



Source: IATA Sustainability and Economics, based on data from OAG

- Globally, 6,500 routes operated in 2024 were discontinued in 2025. In total, routes offering less than 20,000 seats constituted 41.8% of the global network but 91.8% of all cancellations. Of the total number of canceled routes, 76.4% offered fewer than 10,000 seats per year, despite only accounting for 27.3% of the entire route network. This highlights the vulnerability of the low-volume routes – and the passengers who rely on them – to changing circumstances. In contrast, very high-volume routes with above 250,000 seats per year accounted for 9.2% of the network but just 0.1% of all route cancellations.
- To put this into perspective: 20,000 seats annually is equivalent to an ATR-72 flight five times per week, a narrowbody flight twice a week, or one weekly widebody flight. Indeed, 53.3% of the canceled low-volume routes were short haul operations, 39.9% medium haul, and only 6.9% long haul.
- Importantly, all regions suffer the same plight. Asia-Pacific saw the lowest proportion of routes below 20,000 seats, at 33% of the overall network, but these represented 87% of the region's canceled routes. North America had the highest share of low-volume routes at 47% of the network, and 97% of discontinued connections fell into this category. The remaining regions' shares of low-volume routes and their share of discontinued routes were: Latin America 44% (90%), Africa 46% (96%), Europe 45% (92%), and the Middle East 35% (91%).
- The low volume routes feature low and fragile demand, and lower flight frequency. Lacking economies of scale, it is more challenging for airlines to sustain such connections profitably. Simultaneously, though, low-volume routes are often literal lifelines for remote communities, with local businesses and citizens depending on air transport to maintain access to essential services.
- Shifts in demand, operating costs, and administrative or regulatory burdens can have a disproportionate effect on low-volume routes, which often serve more remote communities. Policies and regulations in air transport must consider their impact on the regional and local operating environment and ensure that they do not sacrifice regional connectivity and further impair the economic development of such communities.

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