

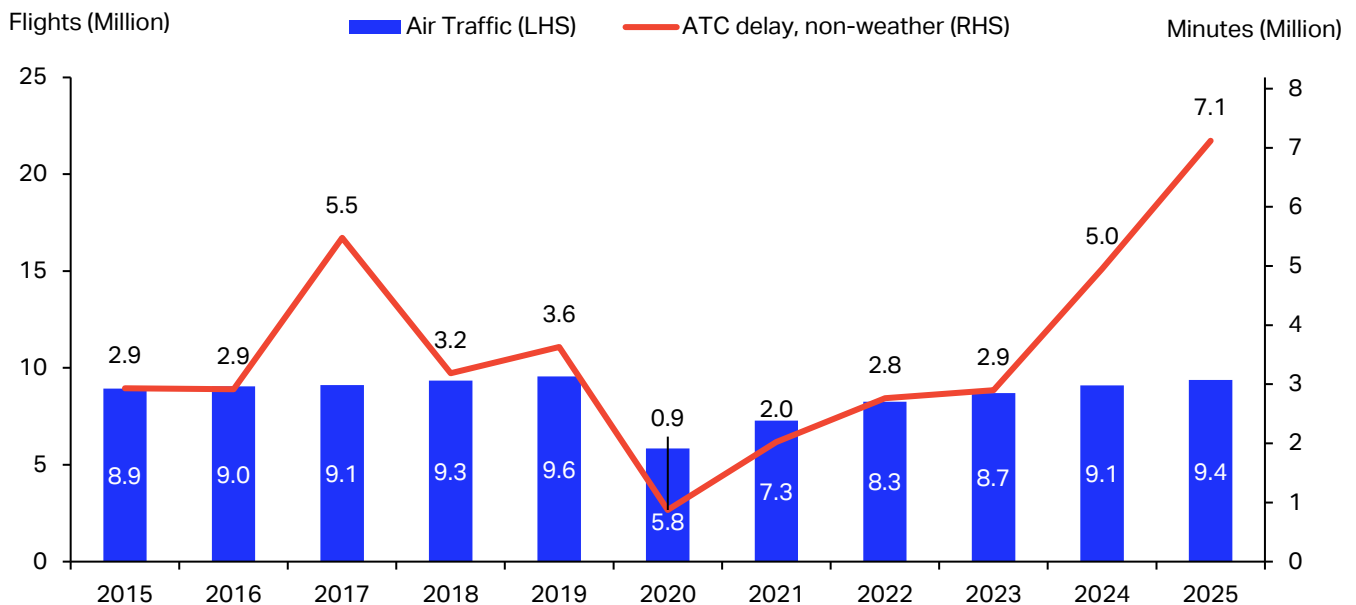


Chart of the Week

21 August 2026

US ATC-Caused Delays Outpaced Traffic Growth

Air traffic and non-weather ATC delay in the US, 2015-25



Source: IATA Sustainability and Economics, OAG, FAA.

Note: Both traffic and delay numbers refer to scheduled commercial passenger flights only, excluding cargo, business, general, and military aviation

- The growth in delays attributable to air traffic control (ATC) related causes in the US far exceeds the growth in air traffic. The number of scheduled passenger flights in the US increased by only 4.9% over the 2015-2025 period, while the non-weather ATC delays they incurred surged by 143%. The significant escalation in this problem suggests that underlying capacity or operational challenges are at play, and these have notably grown more severe in the wake of the covid pandemic.
- The consequences extend well beyond inconvenience. Delays impose high costs on airlines through increased fuel burn, crew expenses, aircraft utilization losses, maintenance costs, and disruption across network operations. Passengers also bear substantial direct costs as well as opportunity costs related to the time lost. IATA estimates that FAA-related delays generated approximately USD 10.9 billion in costs for airlines and passengers between 2015 and 2025 ([Air Traffic Control Delays in the US](#)).
- ATC capacity constraints were at the origin of most of these costs, while staffing-related disruptions emerged as an increasingly important source of delay in recent years - a problem exacerbated by US government shutdowns.
- Delays are also highly concentrated. Just ten FAA facilities cause nearly two-thirds of the total. Targeted improvements could generate significant benefits for passengers, airlines, and the overall efficiency and competitiveness of the US National Airspace System.
- Beyond the direct burden on airlines and passengers, persistent delays reduce the productivity of the wider economy. Air transport supports business travel, trade, tourism, and time-sensitive supply chains. When the air transport system becomes less reliable, the economic value generated by connectivity is diminished.

Terms and Conditions for the use of this IATA Economics Report and its contents can be found [here](#):
By using this IATA Economics Report and its contents in any manner, you agree that the IATA Economics Report Terms and Conditions apply to you and agree to abide by them. If you do not accept these Terms and Conditions, do not use this report.

IATA Sustainability & Economics

economics@iata.org