

WHICH EUROPEAN AIRPORTS OVERFLY THE MOST PEOPLE?

This is a question we are often asked, so we set out to try to find the answer...

Be prepared for surprises!



The number of flights using an airport does not necessarily reflect how many people it overflies or disturbs.

The location of the airport is all-important.

- Most people know Heathrow overflies many more people than any other European airport.
- But did you know London City flies over more people than Schiphol, Madrid or Brussels?
- Copenhagen with 225,000 flights a year only overflies 3,000 people whereas Lisbon with 159,000 flights flies over 288,000 people.
- The mighty Barcelona with over 280,000 annual flights flies over just 4,400 people whereas Glasgow's 97,900 flights overfly 45,900 people.
- Munich, the 5th busiest airport in Europe with 376,852 annual flights, overflies only 13,700 people.

The full tables are on pages 3 and 4, with an assessment of them on page 4.

Introduction

The tables in this short paper show:

- The number of people overflown at Europe's airports
- The amount of flights using each airport every year

The information is taken from the 2018 report by the European Environment Agency (EEA): <https://www.eea.europa.eu/airs/2018/environment-and-health/environmental-noise>. The EEA used the figures which Governments are required to provide the European Commission under the terms of the EU Noise Directive. **The figures are for 2017.**

The EU Directive requires each Government to show the number of people overflown within the 55Lden contour for all airports with more than 50,000 movements each year.

What is the 55Lden contour?

Noise is averaged out over a 24 hour period but 5 decibels are added to the evening period and 10 decibels to the night to allow for the lower background noise levels at those times. An annual noise contour is then produced.

Why use the 55Lden contour?

It is mandated by the EU. It is the point at which it estimates 10% of people can be 'highly annoyed' by aircraft noise. So, it is not saying that nobody is 'highly annoyed' at lower levels. Equally, it is making it very clear that not everybody overflown within the 55Lden contour is annoyed by the aircraft. They are not. You have to reach a much higher level – 70Lden contour – before even 50% of people become highly annoyed. The recent World Health Organisation report argued that 10% of people become highly annoyed at 45Lden, with about 25% highly annoyed at 55Lden. But the purpose of this short paper is not to enter the debate about the best metric to use. Its purpose is simply to give an indication of how many people are overflown by the different airports. The proportion would be much the same whatever metric was chosen.

- For more on metrics: https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP1588_FEB18.pdf

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The tables are not fully comprehensive because:

- **Some countries, such as France, Greece and Bulgaria, didn't give the European Commission all the required information.** The big missing element is the data from the French airports. I have included older data for Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports but omitted the rest of the airports in France. It is unlikely any of the other make the top ten.
- **The Russian airports – and in particular Moscow's huge Sheremetyevo Airport – are missing.**
- **The EU only requires countries to provide information about airports with 50,000 or more movements a year.** That excludes a few airports which overfly quite a few people.

The big missing element is the data from about 10 key French airports. Included are the two big Paris Airports, using older figures, but the rest have had to be excluded.

Some of the airports with less than 50,000 movements a year (excluded in the EU figures) would be quite high up in the table for numbers overflown. For example Belfast City Airport, with 36,332 movements, overflies 20,000 people which would have put it in 32nd place in the table.

The Tables

Position: number overflown	Airport	Numbers overflown	Number of flights	Position: flight numbers
1	Heathrow	683,700	475,000	2
2	Lisbon	288,000	159,795	24
3	Berlin Tegel	278,000	182,200	20
4	Frankfurt	189,000	469,026	4
5	Charles de Gaulle*	170,000	475,654	1
6	Orly*	110,000	229,052	11
7	Manchester	102,300	192,000	19
8	Cologne Bonn	101,400	123,241	30
9	Naples	85,000	64,712	54
10	London City	75,200	85,000	43
11	Luxembourg	66,400	68,621	49
12	Valencia	64,100	62,798	57
13	Francisco Sa Carneiro	62,400	63,834	55
14	Brussels	62,1000	231,528	12
15	Zurich	61,100	302,000	8
16	Dusseldorf	56,700	210,720	17
17	Birmingham	53,600	113,000	31
18	Warsaw	51,400	138,605	25
19	Il Caravaggio	49,300	67,674	50
20	Glasgow	45,900	97,900	36
21	Schiphol	44,500	470,800	3
22	Madrid	42,600	342,601	6
23	Milan Linate	36,800	112,804	33
24	Stuttgart	35,000	124,452	28
25	Berlin Schonefeld	34,600	70,324	48
26	Milan Malpensa	32,800	166,509	23
27	Budapest	31,700	96,705	37
28	Geneva	32,600	131,669	26
29	Helsinki Vantaa	23,400	86,297	42
30	Bologna	21,300	65,471	53
31	Dublin	20,300	215,078	16
32	Ciampino (Rome)	19,700	53,153	65
33	Hannover	19,300	91,213	39
34	Luton	17,000	129,000	27
35	Palma de Mallorca	15,900	197,639	18
36	Aberdeen	15,600	98,400	35
37	Bucharest	15,500	76,966	44
38	Edinburgh	13,800	121,500	31
39	Munich	13,700	376,852	5
40	Gatwick	13,500	281,000	10
41=	Tenerife South	13,000	65,881	51
41=	Stockholm Bromma	13,000	54,817	63
43	East Midlands (UK)	12,900	74,000	45=
44	Malaga	12,400	123,700	29
45	Nuremberg	12,200	61,718	58
46	Vienna	11,000	226,811	13
47	Leipzig	10,600	63,569	56
48=	Prague Havel	10,500	174,662	22
48=	Alicante	10,500	87,113	41
50	Stansted	8,700	180,000	21
51=	Lanzarote	8200	54,632	64
51=	Tenerife North	8,200	55,669	62
53	Barcelona	4,400	283,000	9

54	Copenhagen	4300	251,799	14
55	Gran Canaria	3,300	111,9696	34
56	Bristol	3,000	74,000	45=
57	Fiumicino (Rome)	2,500	315,217	7
58=	Ibiza	1,700	72,503	47
58=	Riga	1700	65,819	52
58=	Stockholm-Arlanda	1700	225,000	15
61	Keflavik	1600	93,000	38
62	Belfast International	801	58,152	61
63	Gothenburg	500	60,000	59
64	Venice	200	90,084	40
65	Catania	100	59,926	60

* The figures for the numbers overflowed are from 2006 – the last reliable ones provided to the EU – whereas all other airports are for 2017. In 2012 197,739 were overflowed by Charles de Gaulle but we haven't got more up-to-date figures for any of the French airports. The Charles de Gaulle flight numbers are for 2017; the Orly flight numbers for 2018.

Comments

There can be special factors at airports which can increase disturbance.

A few examples:

- The situation at **Leipzig** became much more problematic when DHL moved its European hub (and its night flights) from Brussels.
- The noise at **Nottingham East Midlands** is magnified by the noisy freight planes which make up most of the night traffic.
- **Ciampino** in Rome has a particular problem as people live so close to the airport and because the Ryanair planes using it constantly break the curfew.
- It is significant that that Greece didn't produce its data. Residents at **Athens** airport would argue that is typical of the dismissive way they are treated.
- **Newcastle Airport** in the North of England has fewer than 50,000 flights per year and flies over about 4,000 people but their lives have been made a misery since the airport concentrated all its flights over particular communities...and refuses to talk to them about it!
- The long, low level approaches to **Charles de Gaulle** worsen the problem.
- Annoyance increased significantly at **Gatwick** after it concentrated its flight paths.

And the figures don't tell us what airports may be doing to mitigate the disturbance.

A few examples:

Vienna has put in place a comprehensive programme of community engagement and is committed to only grow within noise limits agreed with the community.

Heathrow provides a half day's break from the noise for over 250,000 people in West London.

Dusseldorf and **Zurich** have no night flights

In summary, the crude figures provide an interesting and useful indication of the size of the problem to be tackled at each airport but don't indicate the measures individual airports may or may not be taking to deal with it.