



## INDIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY

**Domestic passenger traffic reported ~8%  
YoY growth in September 2024; ~15%  
higher than the pre-Covid level**

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### October 2024

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## BUSINESS OUTLOOK: STABLE



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ICRA expects the Indian aviation industry to report a net loss of ~Rs. 20-30 billion in FY2025 and FY2026 each, against ~Rs. 10 billion in FY2024.

Supply-chain challenges and engine failure issues have impacted the industry capacity over the last 18 months and are expected to continue affecting it this year.

For September 2024, domestic air passenger traffic was estimated at ~132.3 lakh, ~0.8% higher than ~131.3 lakh in August 2024. Further, it grew by ~8.1% on a YoY basis and was notably higher by ~15.2% than the pre-Covid levels, i.e., September 2019. The airlines' capacity deployment in September 2024 was higher than September 2023 by ~7.3%, but lower by ~1.7% over August 2024.

For H1 FY2025 (April–September 2024), domestic air passenger traffic was ~795.5 lakh, a YoY growth of ~5.6% and ~12.9% higher than the pre-Covid level of ~704.4 lakh in H1 FY2020. Further, for 5M FY2025, the international passenger traffic for Indian carriers stood at ~135.9 lakh, a YoY growth of ~15.7%, and higher than the pre-Covid level of ~92.2 lakh by 47.4%.

- Stable outlook on the Indian aviation industry** – The outlook for the Indian aviation industry remains Stable, driven by expectations of moderate growth in domestic air passenger traffic and a relatively stable cost environment in FY2025. Moreover, the industry witnessed improved pricing power, reflected in the higher yields (over pre-Covid levels) and, thus, the revenue per available seat kilometre—cost per available seat kilometre (RASK–CASK) spread of the airlines. The momentum in the air passenger traffic witnessed in FY2024 is likely to marginally taper down to 7-10% in FY2025 (compared to 13% in FY2024), given the high base of FY2024 and lower passenger traffic in Q1 FY2025, impacted by severe heat waves and other weather-related disruptions. The yields are also likely to be under pressure, as airlines strive to maintain adequate passenger load factor (PLF) amid elevated aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices. International passenger traffic for Indian carriers is expected to grow by 15-20% in FY2025.
- ATF prices in 7M FY2025 remained stable on a YoY basis but significantly elevated over pre-Covid levels** – Despite healthy growth in air passenger traffic and improvement in yields, the movement of the latter will remain monitorable amid elevated ATF prices and depreciation of the INR vis-à-vis the USD over pre-Covid levels, both of which have a major bearing on the airlines' cost structure. Average ATF prices stood at Rs. 103,499/KL in FY2024, lower by 14% than Rs. 121,013/KL in FY2023. In 7M FY2025, the average ATF price at Rs. 96,952/ KL was flat on a YoY basis; however, it was higher by 48% than the pre-Covid level. Fuel cost accounts for ~30-40% of the airlines' expenses, while ~45-60% of the operating expenses—including aircraft lease payments, fuel expenses and a significant portion of aircraft and engine maintenance expenses—are denominated in dollar terms. Further, some airlines have foreign currency debt. While domestic airlines have a partial natural hedge to the extent of their earnings from international operations, overall, their net payables are in foreign currency. The airlines' efforts to ensure fare hikes, proportionate to their input cost increases, will be the key to expand their profitability margins.
- Industry net losses to remain range-bound** – The pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual owing to the high fixed-cost nature of the business. ICRA expects the Indian aviation industry to report a net loss of Rs. 20-30 billion in FY2025 and FY2026 compared to ~Rs. 10 billion in FY2024 due to anticipated pressure on yields as airlines strive to maintain adequate PLF amid continued elevated ATF prices. However, the estimated loss for FY2025 is lower than ICRA's earlier estimates of Rs. 30-40 billion on account of

better pricing discipline witnessed by the airlines in FY2024 and YTD FY2025 as compared to our earlier expectations and a relatively stable cost environment. The industry debt metrics in FY2025 are expected to remain range-bound at the improved levels of FY2024, with Total Debt/ OPBDITA in the range of 6-6.5x times and interest coverage of 2-2.5x times.

- **Supply chain challenges and engine failure issues impact industry capacity** – The industry has been facing supply chain challenges and issues of engine failures for the Pratt and Whitney (P&W) engines supplied to various airlines. In FY2024, Go Airlines (India) Limited grounded half of its fleet due to faulty P&W engines, thus stalling its operations. InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) also grounded more than 70 aircraft as on August 01, 2024 due to the P&W engine issue, including the powder metal (used to manufacture certain engine parts) contamination factor with its P&W fleet. This has led to the grounding of ~134 aircraft for select airlines as on June 30, 2024, which is 15-17% of the total industry fleet, thus impacting overall industry capacity (as measured by available seat kilometre or ASKMs). Considering the bulk recall of the engines globally by P&W and other existing issues with the original equipment manufacturers' (OEMs') engines, the testing by P&W is likely to take longer, around 250-300 days. This will result in increased operating expenses towards the cost of grounding, increased lease rentals due to additional aircraft being taken on lease to offset the grounded capacity, rising lease rates and lower fuel efficiency (due to replacement by older aircraft taken on spot lease). These are likely to adversely impact an airlines' cost structure. However, healthy yields, high PLF and partial compensation available from engine OEMs would help absorb the impact to an extent. In the current fiscal, the industry has also faced challenges related to availability of pilot and cabin crew, leading to several flight cancellations and delays. Such issues impact the capacity availability and add to customer grievances.
- **Select airlines face financial distress, stretched liquidity issues** – While some airlines have adequate liquidity and/or financial support from a strong parent supporting their credit profiles, the credit metrics and liquidity profile of others will remain under stress over the near term, despite some improvement relative to the last few years. With half of Go Airlines (India) Limited's fleet grounded due to faulty P&W engines, it faced payment defaults with vendors, aircraft lessors and financial creditors. Consequently, GoFirst filed for insolvency with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). After receiving multiple extensions to complete the resolution process, on May 1, 2024, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), on the directive of the Delhi High Court Order, deregistered all 54 aircraft of GoFirst.

### PASSENGER TRAFFIC

Domestic passenger traffic: **~132.4 lakh**  
 Sequential growth of: **~0.8%**  
 YoY growth of: **~8.1%**

### CAPACITY DEPLOYMENT

Domestic capacity: **~92,574 departures**  
 Sequential de-growth of: **~1.7%**  
 YoY growth of: **~7.3%**

September 2024

### DOMESTIC PASSENGER LOAD FACTOR

Estimated PLF of **~86.2%** in September 2024  
 against **~85.6%** in September 2023 and  
**~85.5%** in September 2019 (pre-Covid)

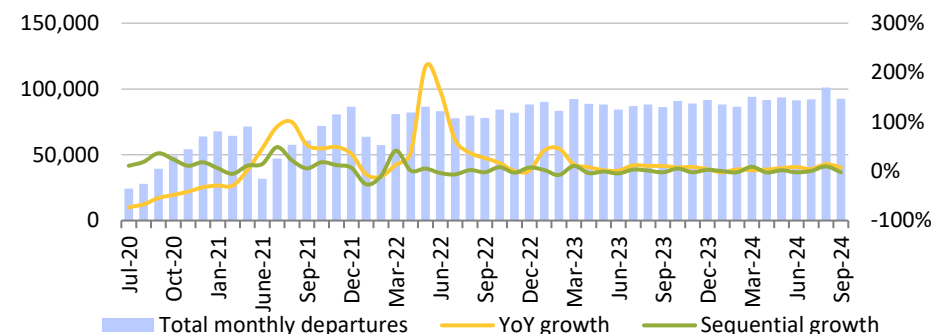
### AVIATION TURBINE FUEL PRICES

Prices in October 2024 lower by **~26.5%** on a  
 YoY basis over October 2023 and lower by  
**6.2%** over September 2024

## Domestic Passenger Traffic: ~8% YoY growth in September 2024, higher by ~15% against pre-Covid level

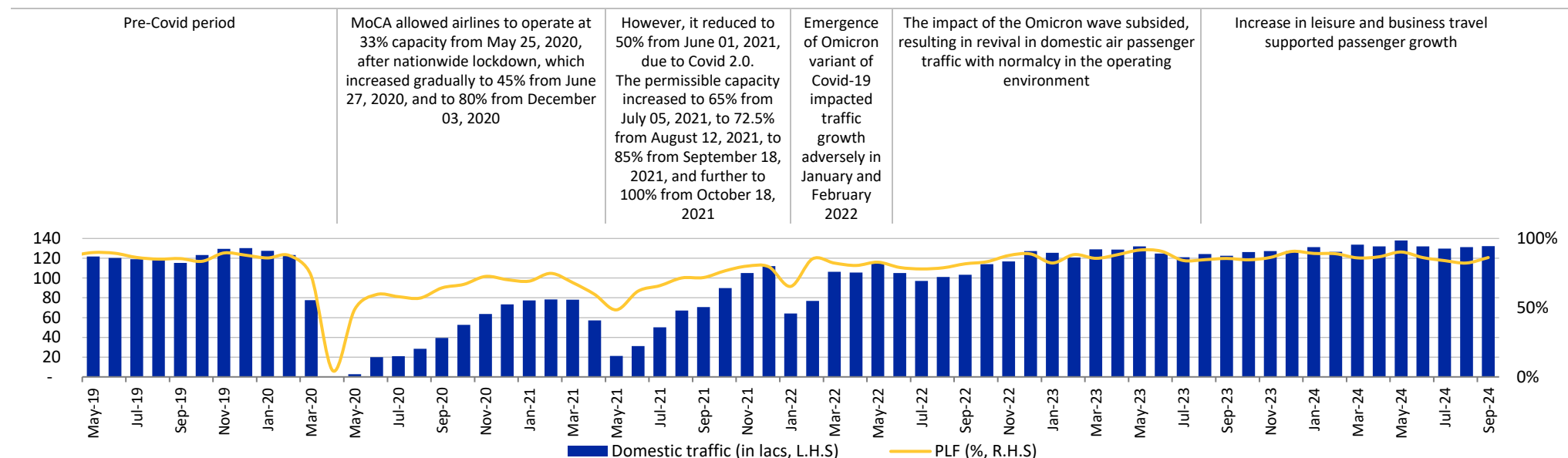
With the onset of Covid 2.0, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) had reduced the permissible capacity deployment by airlines on domestic routes to 50% of the pre-Covid level, with effect from June 01, 2021. The increase in the permissible capacity deployment was gradual before the restrictions were removed, with effect from October 18, 2021. The capacity deployment for September 2024 was higher by ~7.3% over September 2023 (92,547 departures in September 2024 against 86,294 departures in September 2023). However, the number of departures in September 2024 were lower by ~1.7% on a sequential basis.

**EXHIBIT 1: Trend in Capacity Deployment by Domestic Airlines**



Source: MoCA, DGCA, ICRA Research

**EXHIBIT 2: Domestic Passenger Growth & PLF**

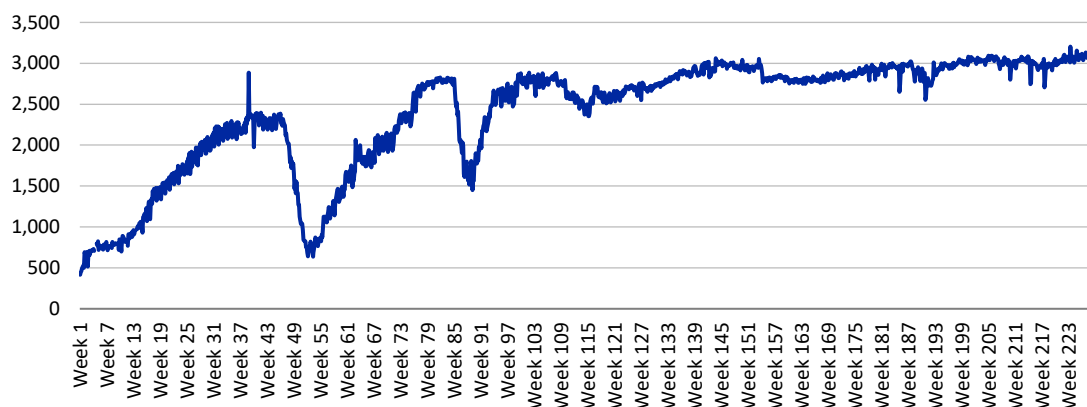


Source: MoCA, DGCA, ICRA Research

For September 2024, domestic air passenger traffic stood at ~132 lakh, against ~122 lakh in September 2023, implying a YoY growth of ~8%. On a sequential basis, domestic air passenger traffic in September 2024 was higher by ~0.8% over August 2024.

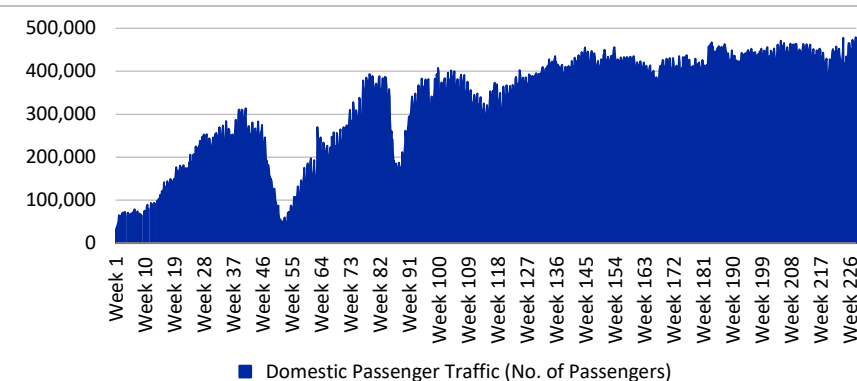
The highest single-day traffic of 479,170 was recorded on September 29, 2024, surpassing the previous historic highs. For September 2024, the average daily departures were ~3,086, higher than the average daily departures of ~2,876 in September 2023, and also higher than the average daily departures of ~3,054 during August 2024. The average number of passengers per flight in September 2024 at 143 was similar to 142 in September 2023 and marginally higher than 139 in August 2024. It is estimated that the domestic aviation industry operated at a PLF of ~86% in September 2024 against 85.6% in September 2023, and 85% in September 2019 (pre-Covid level).

**EXHIBIT 3: Domestic Daily Flight Departures since May 25, 2020**



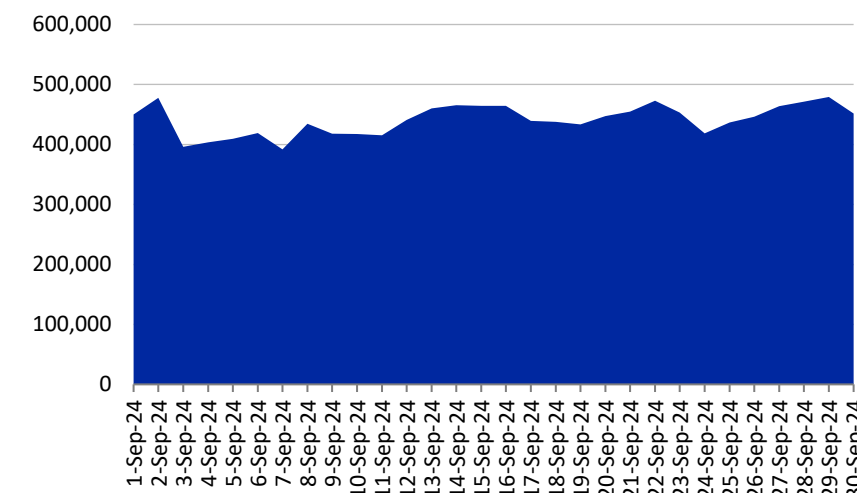
Source: MoCA, DGCA, ICRA Research

**EXHIBIT 4: Daily Domestic Passenger Traffic since May 25, 2020**



Source: MoCA, DGCA, ICRA Research

**EXHIBIT 5: Daily Domestic Passenger Traffic in September 2024**

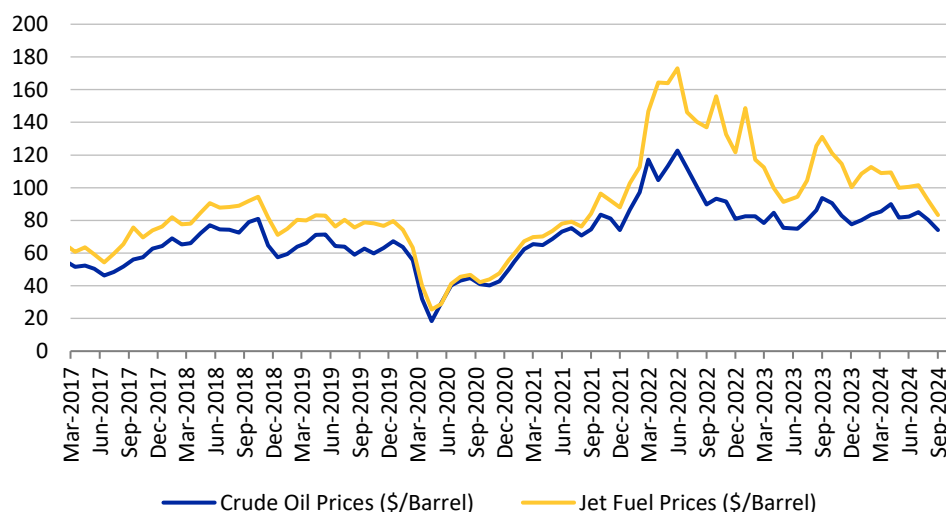


Source: MoCA, DGCA, ICRA Research

## ATF Prices: Lower by ~17.8% on YoY basis in September 2024 and lower by ~4.5% sequentially

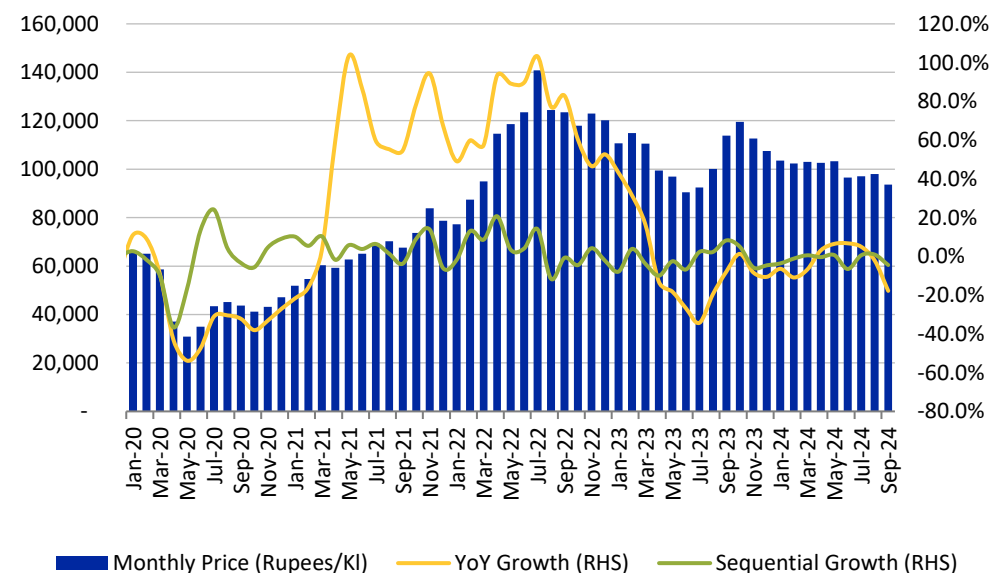
Following the pandemic, crude oil prices declined materially, reaching a low of ~\$19/ barrel in April 2020 (the sharpest decline since Q4 CY2018). However, **the prices increased gradually since then and are currently at around \$78/barrel**. The increase is attributable to geopolitical disruptions. Following a YoY decline of 14% in average ATF prices in FY2024, the prices in April 2024 declined by 0.4% sequentially and rose by 0.7% in May 2024. In June 2024, it declined by 6.5% sequentially. However, in July and August 2024, it rose marginally by 0.6% and 0.9%, respectively. In September 2024 and October 2024, it was lower by 4.5% and 6.2%, respectively, on a sequential basis. Between April 2023 and March 2024, the ATF prices were lower on a YoY basis, except in October 2023. From April 2024 till July 2024, the prices were higher by 3.1%, 6.4%, 6.7% and 4.9%, respectively, on a YoY basis. In August, September and October 2024, the prices were lower on a YoY basis by 2.2%, 17.8% and 26.5%, respectively.

EXHIBIT 6: Movement in Crude Oil & Jet Fuel Prices (\$/Barrel)



Source: International Air Transport Association (IATA), ICRA Research

EXHIBIT 7: Movement in Jet Fuel Prices



Source: Indian Oil Corporation Limited, ICRA Research

## ICRA-rated Airline Companies

EXHIBIT 8: Rating Distribution of ICRA-rated Universe of Airline Companies (as on October 7, 2024)

Company Name	Rating Outstanding	Last Rating Action
AIX Connect Private Limited	[ICRA]A1+	Assigned
Interglobe Aviation Limited	[ICRA]AA- (Stable) / [ICRA]A1+	Long-term rating upgraded and short-term rating reaffirmed
Tata SIA Airlines Limited	[ICRA]A% / [ICRA]A1%	Continues on rating watch with positive implications

Source: ICRA Research; %: Ratings on watch with positive implications



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## ABOUT ICRA

ICRA Limited (formerly Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited) was set up in 1991 by leading financial/investment institutions, commercial banks and financial services companies as an independent and professional investment Information and Credit Rating Agency.

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- Assist the regulators in promoting transparency in the financial markets;
- Provide intermediaries with a tool to improve efficiency in the funds raising process.

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