

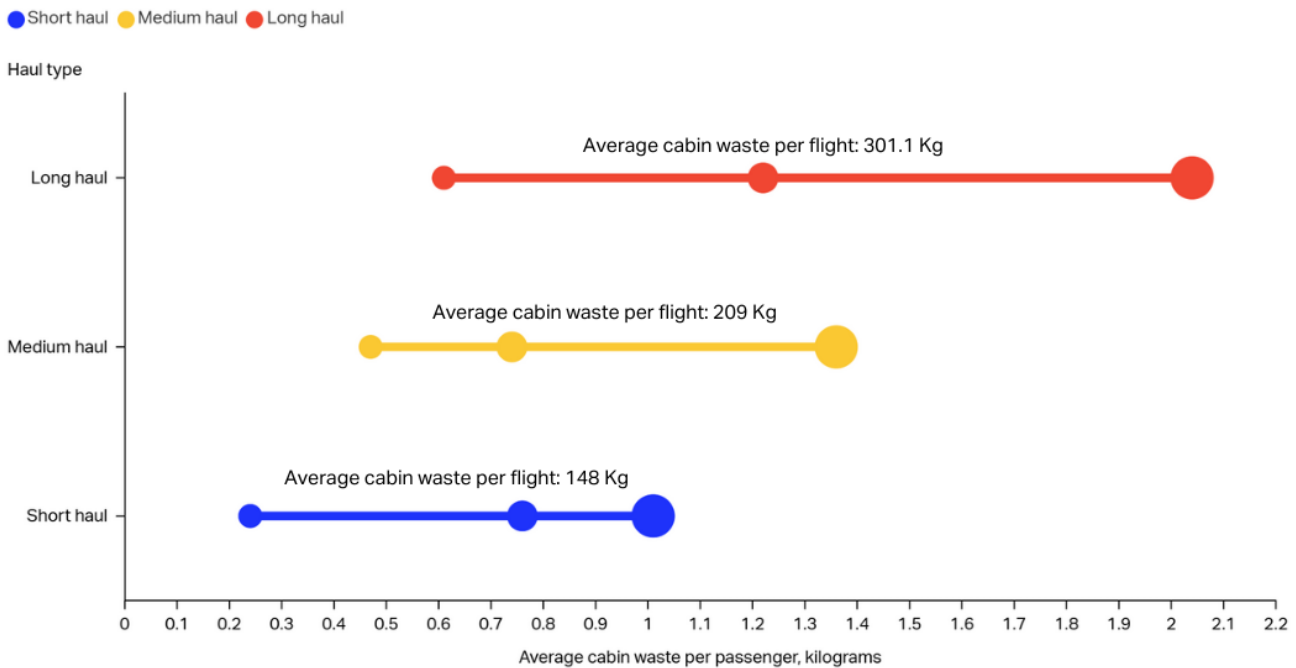


Chart of the Week

21 February 2025

Airline cabin waste – progress toward a circular economy

Average cabin waste per passenger, by flight length, 2023/24 audit results



Source: IATA Sustainability and Economics using data from ASF

- Effective waste management is critical to the air transport industry's efforts to achieve a circular economy and minimize its environmental impact. As passenger numbers grow, airlines face increasing challenges in managing onboard waste. This is compounded by a lack of reliable data which makes cost quantification difficult. Airlines can significantly reduce waste disposal costs by emphasizing reuse, recycling, and recovery principles and actively monitoring and taking steps to address waste generation.
- The Aviation Sustainability Forum, supported by IATA, audited 25 inbound flights to Changi Airport, Singapore, from November 2023 to March 2024 to understand cabin waste better. The audit revealed an average cabin waste of 237.3 kilograms per flight or 0.94 kilograms per passenger.
- For long-haul flights, the averages were 301.1 kilograms per flight and 1.22 kilograms per passenger. Importantly, this shows a sizeable 15% reduction in waste compared to a similar 2014 audit of 14 inbound long-haul flights to London Heathrow, which reported 354.7 kilograms per flight and 1.43 kilograms per passenger.
- The 2023/24 audit showed significant differences in cabin waste depending on flight length. Long-haul flights produced about twice as much waste per passenger compared to short-haul flights, and roughly 33% more than medium-haul flights.
- The variation in cabin waste across different flight types highlights the need for consistent waste management practices, including a common [cabin waste analysis methodology](#) that allows for data to be defined, monitored, and recorded in a regular and uniform manner. Although progress has been made, achieving a circular economy in cabin waste will require additional and ongoing efforts, which incorporate regulatory approaches that facilitate the implementation of zero-waste to landfill practices.

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