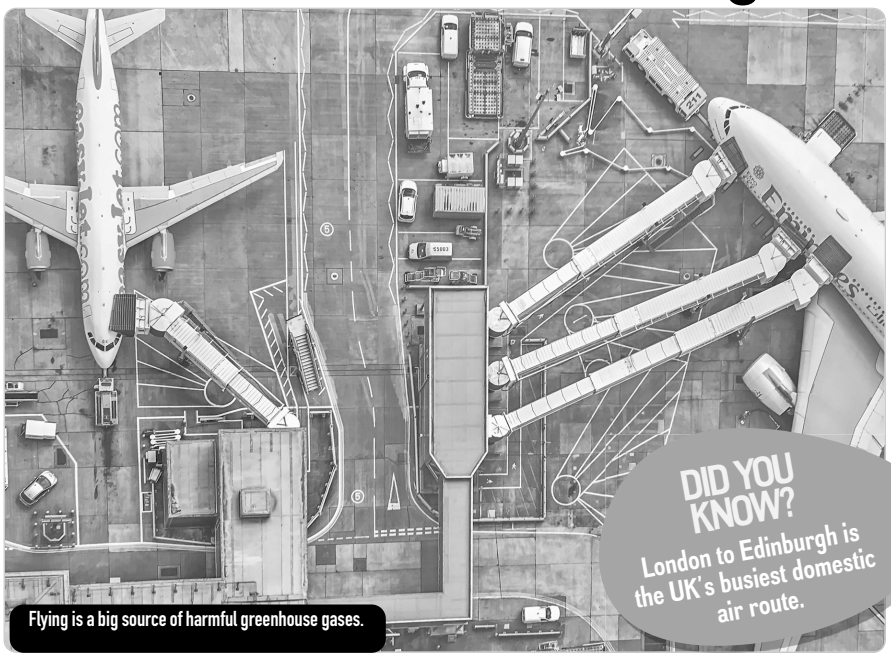
Should the UK Ban Short Domestic Flights?

Some people say the UK should follow France's example.

What you need to know

- **Members of the French parliament have voted to ban domestic passenger flights (that's flights within the country) in France if the same journey can be made in less than two and a half hours by train.**
- **Planes are a big source of greenhouse gas emissions – which is one of the main causes of climate change (the long-term change in world weather patterns, such as rising temperatures, which is caused by human activities).**
- **The number of domestic flights in the UK has fallen by 20% in the past decade. In the same period, passenger numbers fell by 10% – although there are still around 22 million passengers per year.**



Flying is a big source of harmful greenhouse gases.

DID YOU KNOW?
London to Edinburgh is the UK's busiest domestic air route.

In 2019, French president Emmanuel Macron created the Citizen's Convention on Climate. This was a group of 150 French citizens who were asked to think of ways that France could reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% over the next 10 years. One of the ideas they put forward was banning any domestic flights (flights within the country) where the same journey could be made in less than four hours by train. However, opposition from airlines and people living in remote areas of France meant that this was reduced to train journeys of two and a half hours. On 10 April 2021, French MPs voted in favour of the idea. Some say the UK should do the same thing to help tackle climate change. What do you think? Should the UK ban short domestic flights?

Yes – it's better for the environment

Flights are a huge source of greenhouse gas emissions. Over a six-day period in 2019, domestic flights in the UK emitted almost 4,416 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO_2) into the atmosphere. Given this, flights should only be taken when they are absolutely necessary. People don't need to get on a plane to go from one part of the UK to another. Most big cities in the UK have more than one railway station, and there are more than 2,500 stations in the UK in total. This makes train travel a convenient, easily accessible and more environmentally friendly alternative to flying. Travelling by rail also means that people can get to see much more of the country than they would do sitting on a plane.

No – it will cause problems elsewhere

If people aren't allowed to travel by plane any more, they might decide to drive instead. Cars are another big source of greenhouse gas emissions, so this won't help the environment. Trains can be very expensive, and banning domestic flights might make them overcrowded. Besides, trains aren't completely clean. A journey by train causes about 40% as much pollution as one by aeroplane, and fewer flights would mean more trains would be needed to carry the extra passengers. Could the rail network cope? People should have the option to take a flight if that's what they want to do. There are better ways of protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions than limiting people's ability to travel.

THE WEEK Junior SHOW

Listen to our podcast to hear Bex from Fun Kids radio and three of T*he Week Junior* team bring this big debate to life. You'll find it at tinyurl.com/TWJpodcast

YES Three reasons why the UK should ban short domestic flights

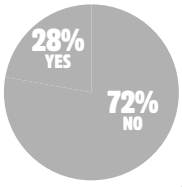
1. **Flights are a huge source of greenhouse gas emissions and should only be taken when absolutely necessary. This would protect the environment.**
2. **There are more than 2,500 railway stations in the UK – train travel offers a convenient and more environmentally friendly alternative to flying.**
3. **Travelling by rail means that people could get to see more of the country than they would sitting on a plane.**

NO Three reasons why the UK should not ban short domestic flights

1. **If people can't fly they might decide to drive cars instead, which isn't good for the environment either.**
2. **Travelling by train can be very expensive and trains might become overcrowded if short domestic flights are banned.**
3. **Fewer flights would mean more trains, which would place pressure on the rail network and would lead to an increase in pollution from trains.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if New Year should be celebrated in the spring, rather than winter. Most of you were happy to keep things as they are, with 1 January as New Year's Day.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Now that you've read a bit more about it, tell us what you think by voting in our poll at theweekjunior.co.uk/polls. Vote YES if you think short domestic flights should be banned, or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The aim of the Big debate page is to present two sides of an issue fairly and objectively, in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on the page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties. The page is created in association with the English-Speaking Union, an educational charity helping young people discover their voice and realise their full potential. For more information, please see esu.org

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