

DEMAND FOR AIR TRAVEL STILL 67% LOWER THAN IN 2019



Global demand for passenger air travel (measured in paid passenger-kilometers, RPK) was down 66.7% in the first half of 2021 compared to the same period in 2019, showing the difficult situation of the global airline industry considering the pandemic. The data was released last week by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

IATA disclosed that demand for international air travel in June fell by 80.9% compared to June 2019. **On the domestic side, which has shown to be stronger, demand fell 22.4% taking the same basis of comparison.**

The sector's positive side continues to be cargo transportation, whose demand grew by 8% in the first half of this year compared to 2019. In June, the growth in demand for cargo was 9.9% compared to June 2019.

IATA director-general Willie Walsh stressed that the industry is in a period of recovery, but still has many challenges.

"Demand for cargo is at a good moment. I believe air carriers are responsible for sustaining supply," he said in a reference to the smaller space to carry parcels in the belly of aircraft given the drop in passenger flights.

Walsh said the international scenario is still quite short of the ideal. "I don't think it's what we expected. We know how important international demand is for this sector. But there is evidence that vaccination is succeeding. We see the disparity between people vaccinated and those in hospitals. The evidence is clear that fully vaccinated people should not be prevented from traveling".

Despite the growth of vaccination against COVID-19 around the world, nations have shown resistance in reopening borders. According to data compiled by IATA, three out of four countries have put in place international traffic restrictions by June 2021 - either through full lockdown, quarantine measures or a ban on travelers entering from higher-risk countries.

An association survey of 182 countries said 23 had the market completely closed to international traffic in June and 60 had restrictions on higher-risk regions. In addition, 52 required quarantine measures for travelers originating from countries with high contamination. Only 46 presented an open market to travelers, imposing measures such as proof of vaccination.

The figure is very similar to an identical survey done in January this year, where 28 nations were completely closed, 67 had restrictions in some regions, 44 enforced quarantine measures in regions with higher risk, and 43 did not enforce restrictions.

The similarity between the numbers stunned the association, as the number of people vaccinated was zero in January. By June, many countries had already administered around 70 doses of the vaccine for every 100 inhabitants. **"It is illogical to prevent vaccinated people from travelling", Walsh said.**

According to the IATA director-general, opening up the international market is key. "International

air travel is not just a holiday. It connects people and routes. It connects business. This has a big effect not only for the airline industry or tourism," he said.

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