



# Digital Processes for Testing & Vaccines Critical for Restart

Increased processing times to manage paper COVID-19 testing and vaccine certificates could see confidence-destroying havoc in airports with hours-long queuing and overcrowding at check-in and border control.

Adoption of digital processes and the establishment of a digital standard for testing and vaccination certificates is critical to reduce the impact of health credential checks and ensure that aviation's restart is not brought to a halt by paper documentation.

## Critical Need for Digital Solutions

To re-open borders without quarantine, governments must be confident that the risks of COVID-19 importation via travelers are being mitigated. Additional information from passengers including COVID-19 health status—test or vaccine certificates, contact tracing information, COVID-19 insurance, health questionnaires, hotel reservation etc. are currently part of these mitigation measures.

While IATA strongly recommends that these measures be phased out as the epidemiological situation improves, a quick move to enable advance automated "ready-to-fly" checks is required to limit the impact on passengers and airport capacity. The criticality of this to a restart of global travel and tourism was recognized by the G20 Tourism Ministers. [The G20 Guidelines for the Future of Tourism](#) call for a common international approach on COVID-19 testing, vaccination, certification, and information as well as promoting digital traveler identity.

Digitalized certificates linked to a traveler's identity come with several advantages by:

- Limiting the risk of fraudulent documentation.
- Reducing queuing, crowding and time in airports by allowing these documents to be downloaded directly onto governments' portals.
- Increasing security through integration with digital identity management being used by border control authorities

- Reducing the risk of fomite virus transmission via the exchange of paper documents

## Travel Time for Passengers has Doubled due to Paper Processes

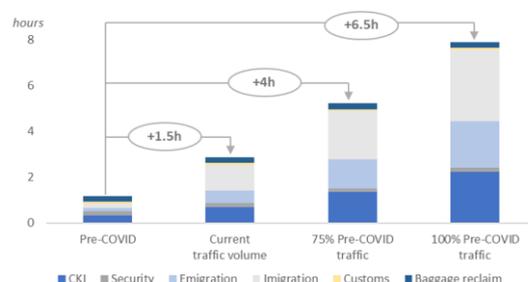
Even with current very low international traffic levels, IATA research indicates a 100% increase in airport processing times primarily driven by the time needed to verify COVID-19 travel credentials at check-in, emigration, and immigration.

Pre-COVID-19, the average time taken to complete airport processes (including queuing) was 90 minutes. That has increased to three hours.

Without digitalizing document checking processes, airport processing times could increase more severely as traffic volumes rise:

- To 5.5 hours with traffic at 75% of 2019 levels
- To 8 hours with traffic at 100% of 2019 levels

## Average Passenger time increase through the travel journey



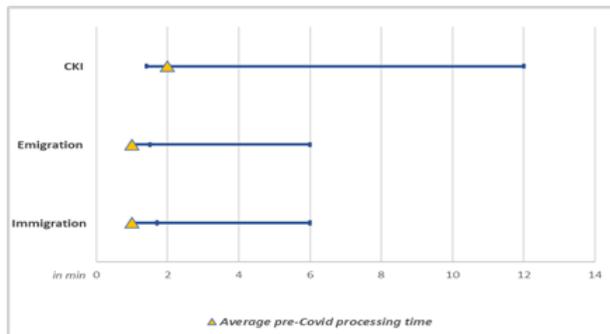


The requirement for airlines to check that passengers hold the appropriate health credentials through a paper-based document check severely impacts their processing and waiting times. Without even considering additional requirements such as social distancing, available terminal capacity will be drastically reduced and processing of passengers at pre-COVID-19 traffic levels virtually impossible.

## Check-in Sees the Largest Increase in Processing Time

The research indicates that the largest increase in average processing time is at check-in which has increased 500% - from an average of 2 mins to 12 mins.

### Increased processing times for paper-based checks



In addition to the increased processing time per passenger, the total number of travelers that need to present themselves at a check-in counter has increased, as paper-based document checks have forced the disablement of self-service processes.

## Four Priorities to Enable Digitalization

To enable digital processes for managing travel health credentials.

1. Governments must issue vaccination certificates based on WHO Smart Vaccine Certificate data standards once launched, including QR codes which can be read offline.
2. COVID-19 test certificates must be issued in accordance with the data requirements set out by ICAO
3. Governments need to accept digital COVID-19 test and vaccine certificates in their dedicated

traveler portal. Where this is not feasible, they must accept digital COVID-19 test and vaccine certificates at the border

4. Digital solutions to manage digital health and vaccine certificates need to be adopted

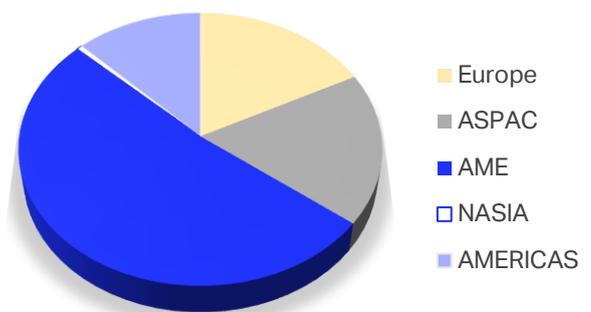
Solutions to facilitate a trusted and reliable framework for the processing of digital health-credentials exist.

## Lack of Government Trust and Acceptance of Digital Processes

If Governments require temporary COVID-19 health credentials for travel, such as contact tracing, departure or arrival health forms as well as testing and vaccination certification, those measures need to be aligned to internationally agreed standards, automated and integrated in the most effective way through digital processes allowing a truly interoperable system coordination between all stakeholders.

While progress has been made, there is still a lack of trust and acceptance of digital processes across many states, hence the reliance on paper-based document checks. Governments should recognize the benefits of digital solutions which help to reduce the risk of fraudulent documentation and can actually enhance security through the integration with digital identity management being used by border control authorities.

### Regional breakdown of states requiring paper based document checks





## Travelers Support Digitalization

Digitalization of health credentials is supported by travelers. Recent IATA polling shows strong support for a digital solution.

- 89% supported globally standardized COVID-19 test or vaccination certifications
- 84% want an app to manage their travel health credentials

## Digital Travel Solutions

There are various methods that governments can utilize to verify that travellers have the health credentials required for entry and IATA urges them to work with the industry so that we implement effective standard based solutions that can be operationalized while protecting public health. Where governments have decided to delegate the verification to airlines, there are a number of digital applications that have been developed.

This includes the IATA Travel Pass which is being developed specifically for the aviation sector.

For travelers, it will conveniently store travel credentials on their mobile phone and link seamlessly with their airline travel apps for check-in and other processes.

Automation and integration with existing processes will be particularly useful as the air travel demand

ramps up. The integration of the digital passport and visa would bring a real added value to passengers even beyond the pandemic.

It fits with the industry's technology roadmap that will focus increasingly on digital identity and contactless processes.

## Post Pandemic

Digital transformation – already a catalyst for the modernization of aviation before the pandemic- will be critical to a sustainable and profitable air transport post-pandemic recovery.

Travel expectations have changed with the pandemic. There is greater demand for contactless processes, concern for crowding/maintaining social distancing, and faster processing times that avoid queuing. These all enhance the digitalization of the passenger process including ID and travel authorization checks and align with [OneID](#), a long-term goal of the [NEXTT](#) initiative sponsored by Airports Council International and IATA.