

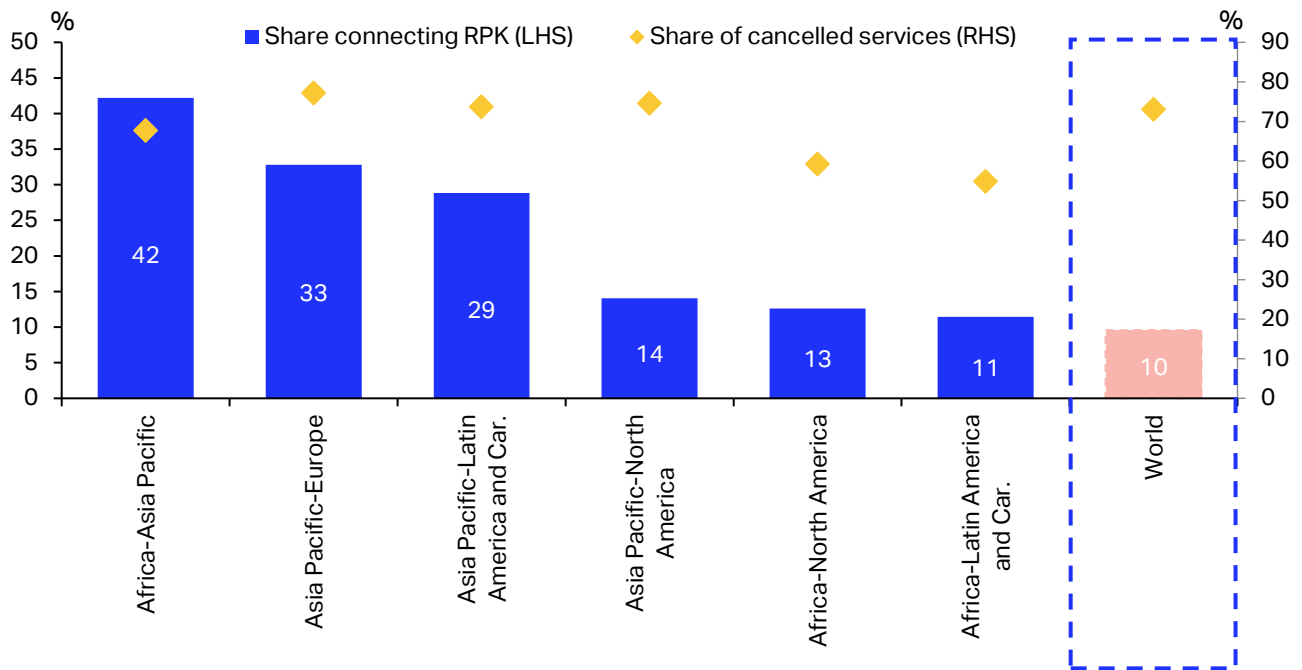


Chart of the Week

27 March 2026

Global Air Traffic Disruptions in Strategic Middle East Hub

Share of International RPK connecting in the Middle East (2025), and cancelled services (1-10 March 2026)



Source: IATA Sustainability and Economics, based on DDS and FlightRadar24.

- Thanks to its strategic location, the Middle East is a global transit hub for long-haul travel. 10% of all global international Revenue Passenger-Kilometers (RPK) passed through airports in the region in 2025. In absolute terms, more than 67 million passengers connected via the Middle East last year. The region serves as a critical global bridge, particularly for Asia Pacific connectivity. Of the six major route pairs that rely on the Middle East as a connecting hub, four involve Asia Pacific. Among these, traffic between Asia Pacific and Africa has the highest share of connections routed through the region’s airports, followed by Asia Pacific–Europe and Asia Pacific–Latin America and the Caribbean (see chart).
- The conflict that was initiated on 28 February 2026 has forced airlines to cancel flights to and from the Middle East at very short notice, severely disrupting connectivity across the region. Within ten days of the first attacks, 73% of Available Seat-Kilometers (ASK) from and to the Middle East had been cancelled.
- Corridors to and from Asia Pacific were most affected. Nearly 80% of services between the region and Europe via the Middle East were cancelled. Routes to North America, and to Latin America and the Caribbean followed with capacity reductions of 75% and 74%. This level of disruption was only seen during the covid pandemic, when 95% of the supply to and from the region was removed at short notice.
- The concentration of cancellations along these routes reflects the degree to which global connectivity, in particular for Asia Pacific, depends on the Middle East’s hub function, with implications if disruptions persist over an extended period.

IATA Sustainability & Economics

economics@iata.org

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