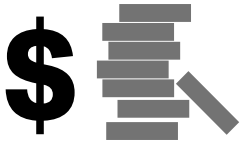
THE VALUE OF AVIATION SOUTH AFRICA

The economic impact of aviation in South Africa

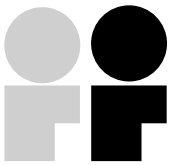
The aviation sector and its quantifiable economic effects made up 1.7% of South Africa's GDP and 1.2% of the country's employment in 2025. This covers the sector itself, its supply chain, employee spending, and international air transport-enabled tourism to South Africa.

GDP and employment created by aviation in South Africa in 2025



7.4
USD billion

1.7%
of GDP



328.6
thousand jobs

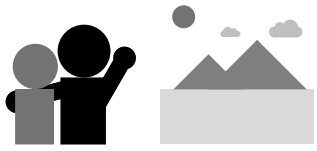
1.2%
of employment

Included economic impacts:
***Direct** – within aviation sector, **Indirect** – aviation supply chain,*
Induced** – employee spending, **International tourists arriving by air

Breakdown of GDP and employment created







Airlines	Airports, ANSPs, civil manufacturing	International tourists arriving by air
USD 2.1 billion	USD 3.5 billion	USD 1.9 billion
79.4 thousand jobs	153.7 thousand jobs	95.5 thousand jobs

Source: Air Transport Action Group, 2026. Aviation Benefits Beyond Borders report based on data from Oxford Economics.
Note: Economic impacts are calculated using Oxford Economics' Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders methodology with inputs sourced from publicly available statistics and recognized industry datasets wherever possible, with modelling-based estimates applied where direct data are not available. Estimates do not include domestic tourism spending, nor the wider catalytic benefits of aviation on trade, investment, productivity gains, and enhanced connectivity, among others.
Note: Average 2025 exchange rate: USD 1 = ZAR 17.89

Air transport brings millions of people safely to global destinations

Around 18.9 million air passengers departed from South Africa in 2025, based on Origin-Destination(O-D) traffic, making South Africa the 39th largest air passenger market globally.

Air travel from South Africa in 2025, Origin-Destination (O-D)

18.9
million
passenger departures

GROWTH

14.5%
10-year growth

9.3%
year-on-year growth

RANK

39th
Global
▼ 1 since 2015

2nd
in Africa
▼ 1 since 2015

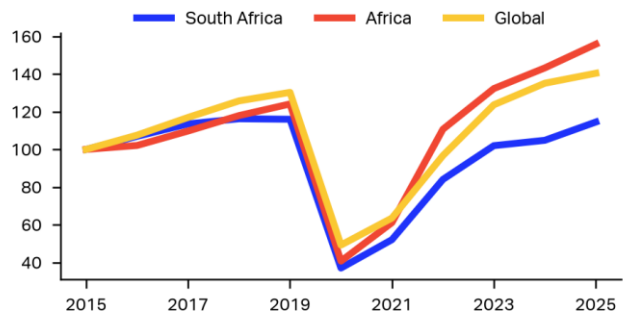
SHARE

0.4%
of global departures

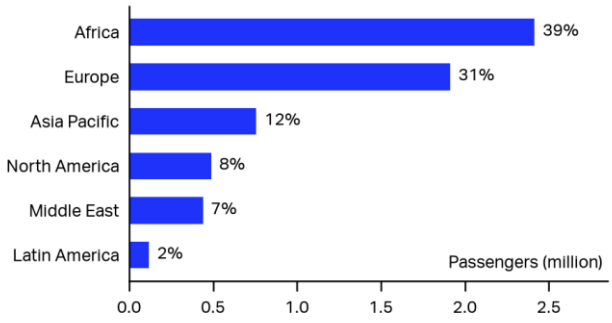
14.8%
of African departures

International: 6.1 million passenger departures, 15.6% 10Y growth, 7.5% YoY growth
Domestic: 12.8 million passenger departures, 14.0% 10Y growth, 10.1% YoY growth, % share of total market: 67.6%

Total passenger departures, O-D, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



International passenger departures by destination region, O-D, 2025



Top air travel markets Inbound & outbound	Top origin cities Inbound	Top destination cities Outbound
1. United Kingdom	1. London	1. London
2. Zimbabwe	2. Amsterdam	2. Dubai
3. United States	3. Frankfurt	3. Mauritius
4. Germany	4. Harare	4. Windhoek
5. United Arab Emirates	5. Dubai	5. Harare

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using IATA DDS data.
Note: O-D (origin-destination) departures measures passengers beginning their journey in South Africa, to their final destination, excluding transfer and transit passengers.
Top air travel markets based on total O-D passenger traffic between South Africa and other markets in 2025. Top outbound and inbound cities are based on round-trip passenger journeys.
IATA DDS data are derived from ticketing and sales transactions using IATA methodologies and estimates; therefore, results may not exactly match officially reported traffic statistics.

Air transport directly connects South Africa to 42 different countries

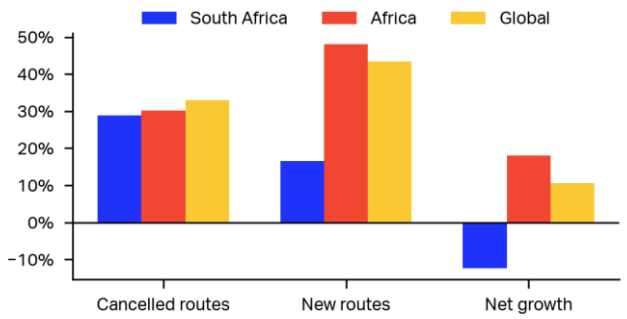
In 2025, there were 21 airports and 50 operating airlines in South Africa, providing a total of 186 regularly scheduled commercial passenger routes for South Africa, connecting to 42 countries with about 142 daily international departures.

Air Connectivity in South Africa

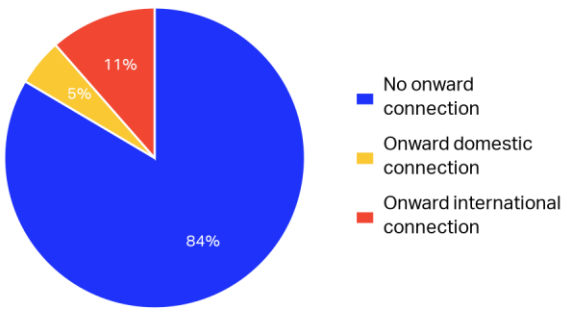


		Total		
		Available routes	Connected countries	Daily int. departures
2025	Total	186	42	142
	Global rank	53rd	46th	50th
	Africa rank	7th	6th	3rd
2015	Total	212	46	140
	Global rank	45th	31st	45th
	Africa rank	4th	5th	3rd

Route network change, 2015 to 2025, % of 2015



Onward connections of international arrivals, 2025

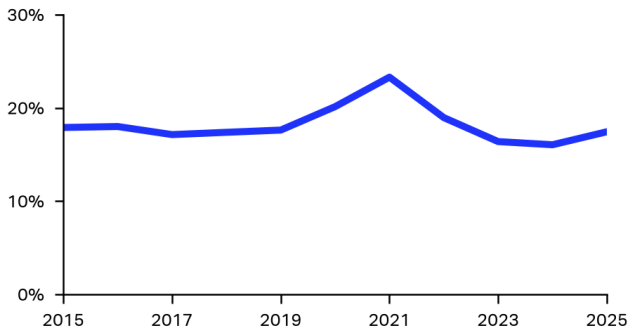


Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using OAG & IATA DDS data.
Note: Airport, airline, and route counts include only those with regularly scheduled passenger services from South Africa. Airports with fewer than 1,000 regularly scheduled seats in 2025 are excluded.

Air Cargo provides South Africa timely and safe access to global markets

Although air transport accounted for an estimated 0.5% of South Africa's traded goods by weight, it carried 17.4% of their total value.
South Africa's airports handled around 496.4 thousand tonnes of air cargo in 2025, ranking South Africa as the world's 32nd largest air cargo handler market and the 1st largest in Africa.

South African air cargo, value, % of total, 2015-2025



South African air cargo, share of trade, 2025

0.5%
of trade by weight

17.4%
of trade by value

Air cargo handled in South Africa, 202

496.4
thousand tonnes
air cargo handled

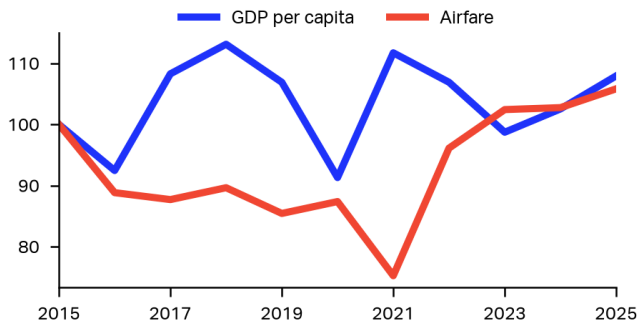
32nd
Globally
1st in Africa

Source: Airports Council International (ACI) for air cargo handled, Global Trade Tracker (GTT) for imports and exports by air.
Note: South Africa's trade by air includes imports and exports . It is based on the country's self reported customs data.

International air travel from South Africa has become more affordable over the past decade

South Africa's nominal GDP per capita increased by 7.9%, while the average nominal air fare for an international ticket from South Africa increased by 5.8%, over the past decade. Therefore, international air travel has become more affordable for local residents over this time period.

Nominal GDP per capita & average international fare, South Africa, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



Source: IATA DDS, World Bank. Nominal GDP per capita and fare developments measured in USD terms