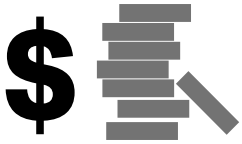
# THE VALUE OF AVIATION SOUTH KOREA

## The economic impact of aviation in South Korea

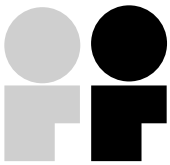
The aviation sector and its quantifiable economic effects made up 4.0% of South Korea's GDP and 3.7% of the country's employment in 2025. This covers the sector itself, its supply chain, employee spending, and international air transport-enabled tourism to South Korea.

### GDP and employment created by aviation in South Korea in 2025



**74.9**
USD billion

**4.0%**
of GDP



**1.1**
million jobs

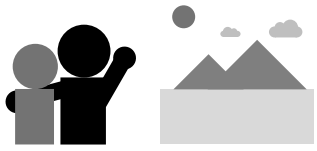
**3.7%**
of employment

*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 26.3 billion | USD 24.9 billion | USD 23.8 billion |
| 280.7 thousand jobs | 334.8 thousand jobs | 475 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 = KRW 1,422.44

# Air transport brings millions of people safely to global destinations

Around 69.4 million air passengers departed from South Korea in 2025, based on Origin-Destination(O-D) traffic, making South Korea the 16th largest air passenger market globally.

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

**69.4**
million
passenger departures

**GROWTH**

**39.1%**
10-year growth

**2.9%**
year-on-year growth

**RANK**

**16th**
Global
▲ 1 since 2015

**5th**
in Asia
▲ 1 since 2015

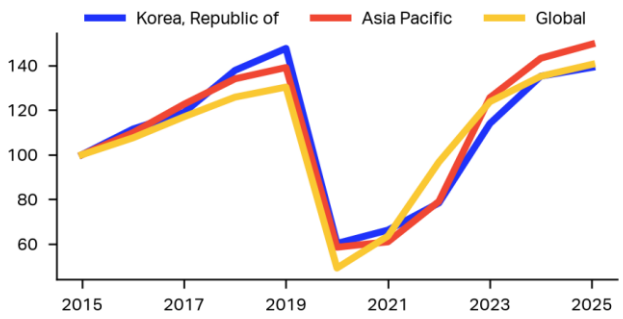
**SHARE**

**1.6%**
of global departures

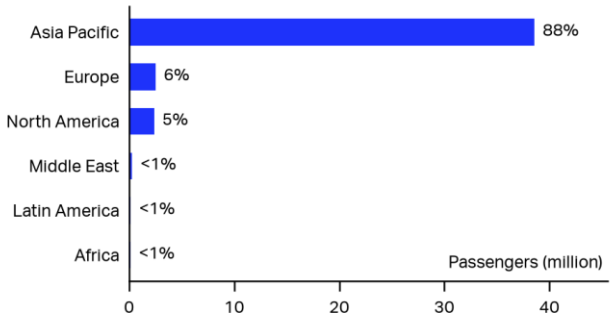
**4.3%**
of Asian departures

International: 44.0 million passenger departures, 61.5% 10Y growth, 7.2% YoY growth
Domestic: 25.3 million passenger departures, 12.0% 10Y growth, -3.9% YoY growth, % share of total market: 36.5%

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




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




| Top air travel markets<br>Inbound & outbound | Top origin cities<br>Inbound | Top destination cities<br>Outbound |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Japan | 1. Tokyo | 1. Osaka |
| 2. China | 2. Osaka | 2. Tokyo |
| 3. Viet Nam | 3. Taipei | 3. Fukuoka |
| 4. Chinese Taipei | 4. Hong Kong | 4. Da Nang |
| 5. United States | 5. Shanghai | 5. Nha Trang |

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using IATA DDS data.
Note: O-D (origin-destination) departures measures passengers beginning their journey in South Korea, to their final destination, excluding transfer and transit passengers.
Top air travel markets based on total O-D passenger traffic between South Korea 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 Korea to 51 different countries

In 2025, there were 15 airports and 93 operating airlines in South Korea, providing a total of 336 regularly scheduled commercial passenger routes for South Korea, connecting to 51 countries with about 641 daily international departures.

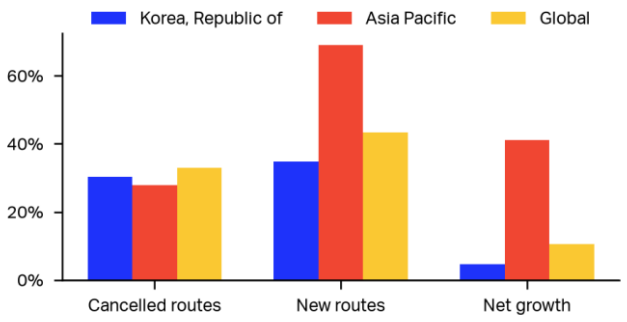
### Air Connectivity in South Korea

**15**
**Airports in 2025**
14 in 2015

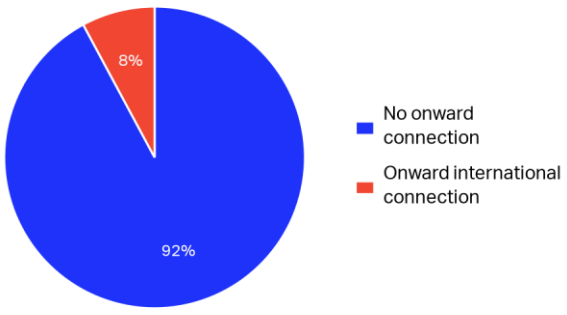
**93**
**Airlines in 2025**
76 in 2015

| | | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Available routes | Connected countries | Daily int. departures |
| 2025 | Total | 336 | 51 | 641 |
| | Global rank | 36th | 29th | 13th |
| | Asia rank | 8th | 4th | 3rd |
| 2015 | Total | 321 | 46 | 476 |
| | Global rank | 30th | 31st | 16th |
| | Asia rank | 7th | 6th | 4th |

### Route network change, 2015 to 2025, % of 2015




### Onward connections of international arrivals, 2025

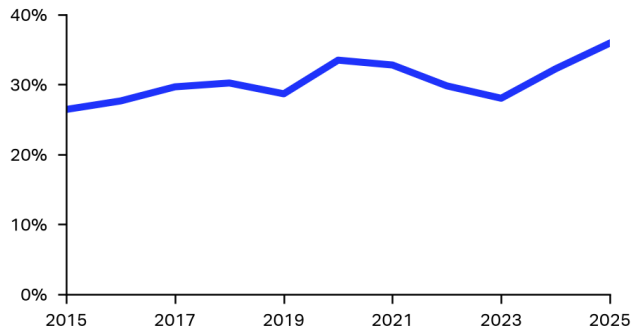



Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using OAG & IATA DDS data.
Note: Airport, airline, and route counts include only those with regularly scheduled passenger services from South Korea. Airports with fewer than 1,000 regularly scheduled seats in 2025 are excluded.

## Air Cargo provides South Korea timely and safe access to global markets

Although air transport accounted for an estimated 0.2% of South Korea's traded goods by weight, it carried 35.9% of their total value.
South Korea's airports handled around 3.1 million tonnes of air cargo in 2025, ranking South Korea as the world's 8th largest air cargo handler market and the 5th largest in Asia.

**South Korean air cargo, value, % of total, 2015-2025**




**South Korean air cargo, share of trade, 2025**

**0.2%** of trade by weight

**35.9%** of trade by value

**Air cargo handled in South Korea, 2025**

**3.1** million tonnes air cargo handled

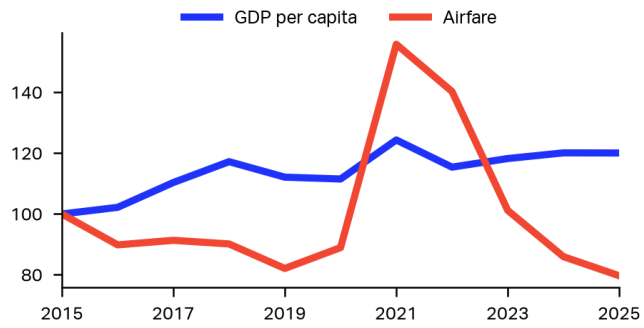
**8th** Globally 5th in Asia

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

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

South Korea's nominal GDP per capita increased by 20.1%, while the average nominal airfare for an international ticket from South Korea decreased by 20.3%, 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 Korea, 2015-2025, index 2015=100**




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