The air transport sector makes a major contribution to the UK’s economy

It creates jobs...

Airlines, airport operators, airport on-site enterprises (restaurants and retail), aircraft manufacturers, and air navigation service providers employed 330,000 people in the United Kingdom in 2014. In addition, by buying goods and services from local suppliers the sector supported another 360,000 jobs. On top of this, the sector is estimated to have supported a further 250,000 jobs by paying wages to its employees, some or all of which are subsequently spent on consumer goods and services. Foreign tourists arriving by air to the United Kingdom, who spend their money in the local economy, are estimated to have supported an additional 610,000 jobs in 2014.

...and generates wealth

The air transport industry is estimated to have supported a further $48 billion gross value added contribution to the country’s GDP. This means that 4.5 percent of the country’s GDP is supported by the air transport sector and foreign tourists arriving by air.

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Air transport brings tourists and investment into United Kingdom, and helps businesses trade their goods and services around the world. In 2014, foreign tourists spent US $35.2 billion in United Kingdom, supporting restaurants, hotels, transport providers, and others who cater to tourists. In addition, United Kingdom exported US $840 billion worth of goods and services in 2014. Over time, the country has accumulated US $1.7 trillion in foreign direct investment.

The ten most popular direct flight links:

1. Spain
2. Germany
3. Ireland
4. France
5. Netherlands
6. Italy
7. United States
8. Switzerland
9. Portugal
10. Poland
The air transport sector connects people around the world

Number of direct flight destinations in the ten fastest growing countries

India
Bangladesh
Vietnam
Pakistan
China
Indonesia
Philippines
Kazakhstan
Angola
Nigeria

Number of direct flights to the top ten fastest growing cities

Surat
Ahmedabad
Ho Chi Minh City
Hà Nội
Delhi
Bengaluru
Hyderabad (India)
Kinshasa
Dhaka
Lagos

Arrivals by continent, number of passengers (000s)

North America and Asia-Pacific are the largest sources of arrivals to the United Kingdom after Europe. In 2014, 15.7 million passengers arrived to the United Kingdom from North America (8.4 percent of the total) and 13.8 million passengers arrived from Asia-Pacific (7.4 percent).

[1] Fastest growing countries are Ranked by Oxford Economics’ forecasted real GDP growth 2015-2030, with a threshold of >US $100 million GDP. Fastest growing cities are ranked by Oxford Economics’ forecasted real GDP growth 2015-2030, with a minimum city size of 5 million.
Ease of travel, cost competitiveness, and infrastructure are vitally important

Survey evidence of infrastructure and ease of travel

Executives surveyed by the World Economic Forum suggest that the United Kingdom’s air transport infrastructure quality ranks 4th out of 42 countries included in the survey in Europe and 5th globally. The United Kingdom ranks 38th out of 42 in Europe for visa openness and 42nd for cost competitiveness.

Key infrastructure facts about UK’s air transport

Around 2 million aircraft land or take off from the United Kingdom every year. The country has 4 airports that are in the top 100 in the world (ranked by passenger numbers). Heathrow airport carried the most passengers - 70.6 million - in 2014.

Number of passengers travelling annually through the five busiest airports in the country (000s)

1. **Heathrow**: 70,600
2. **Gatwick**: 34,000
3. **Stansted**: 19,400
4. **Manchester Airport**: 18,000
5. **Luton International**: 10,000

Number of airports among the top 100 in the world: 91
Number of operating airlines: 170
2 M landings and takeoffs

* Entry visa requirements for a tourism visit from worldwide source markets (10 = no visa required for visitors from all source markets, 0 = traditional visa required for visitors from every source market).
* Based on ticket taxes, airport charges, and VAT (10 = low cost, 0 = high cost).

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Oxford Economics prepared this report with IATA’s support.

This report is one of several that examine the air transport sector’s importance around the world. Access them all from IATA’s website.

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Sources: IATA, Oxford Economics, International Monetary Fund, and national statistics.