

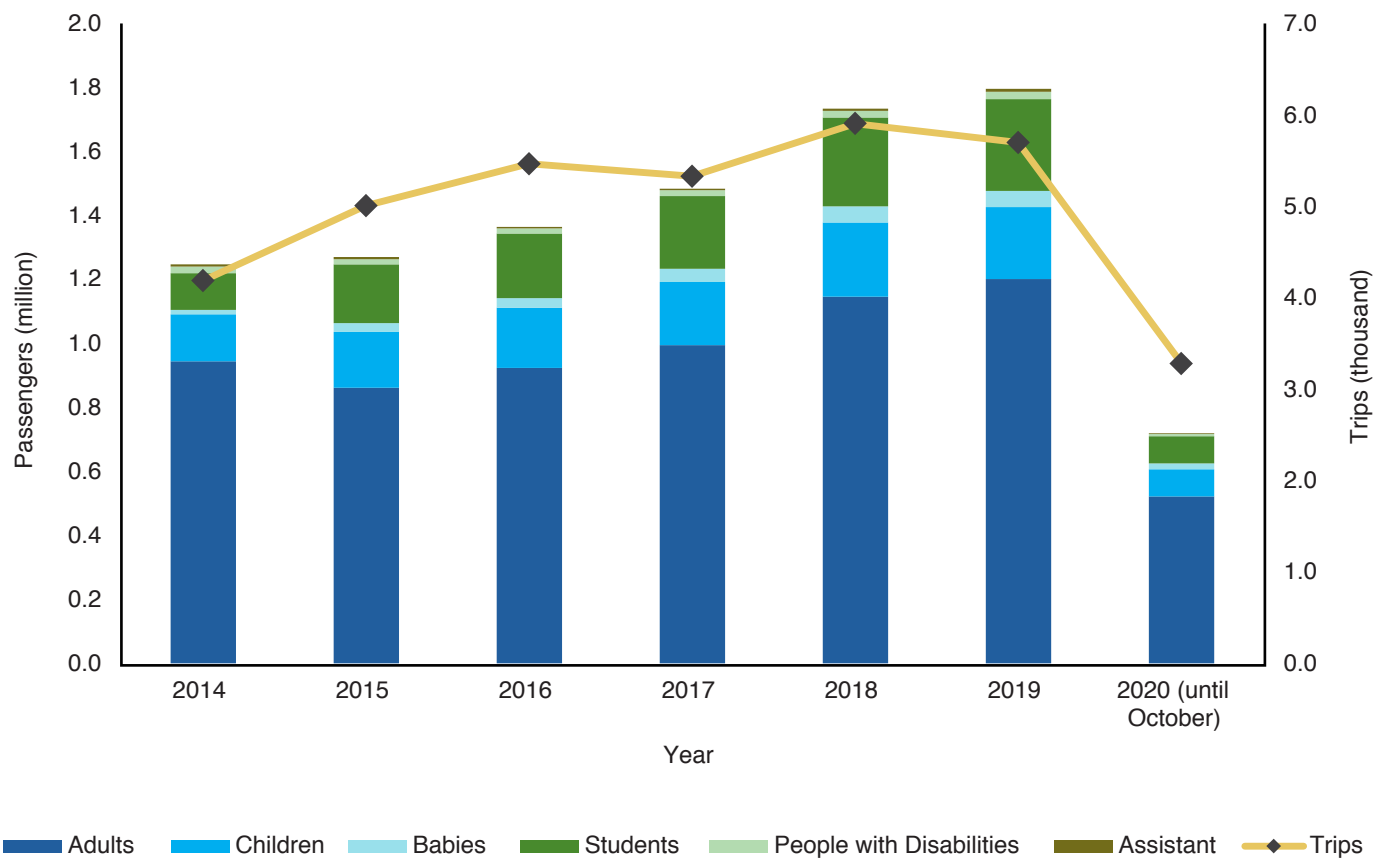
Data Insight

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Impact of COVID-19 on Passenger Railway Demand in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Railways Organization (SRO) operates a network of approximately 1,400 kilometers (km). This network links the Eastern Province with Riyadh, where more than 40% of the country’s population and economic activities are located. A passenger line connects Riyadh with Dammam through Alhassa and Abqaiq. Figure 1 shows passenger demand and the number of trips taken from January 2014 to October 2020.

Figure 1. Total passengers and trips taken from January 2014 until October 2020 on the Riyadh to Dammam line.



Source: Saudi Railways Organization (SRO).

Key insight

- Saudi Arabia took early measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures impacted passenger railway demand and trips taken in 2020.
- Since 2014, rail passenger demand has risen rapidly at an average rate of 8% per year, from 1.25 million passengers in 2014 to around 1.8 million in 2019.
- SRO's rail demand peaked at around 1.8 million passengers in 2018 and 2019. However, rail demand dropped by 60% in 2020 to 0.7 million passengers. This reduction in rail passenger demand was due to the early measures introduced by the Saudi government to combat the spread of COVID-19.
- Trips per year shows a similar trend as passenger demand. From 2014 to 2019, the number of trips increased at an average rate of 6%, before falling by 45% in 2020 year-on-year.
- Adults comprise 70% of total rail passengers, followed by children (13%) and students (14%). Notably, only 1% of the users have disabilities. The accessibility of the stations for disabled passengers on the Riyadh-Dammam line should be investigated further to increase the share of people with disabilities using the line.

Source

- Saudi Railways Organization (SRO).
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