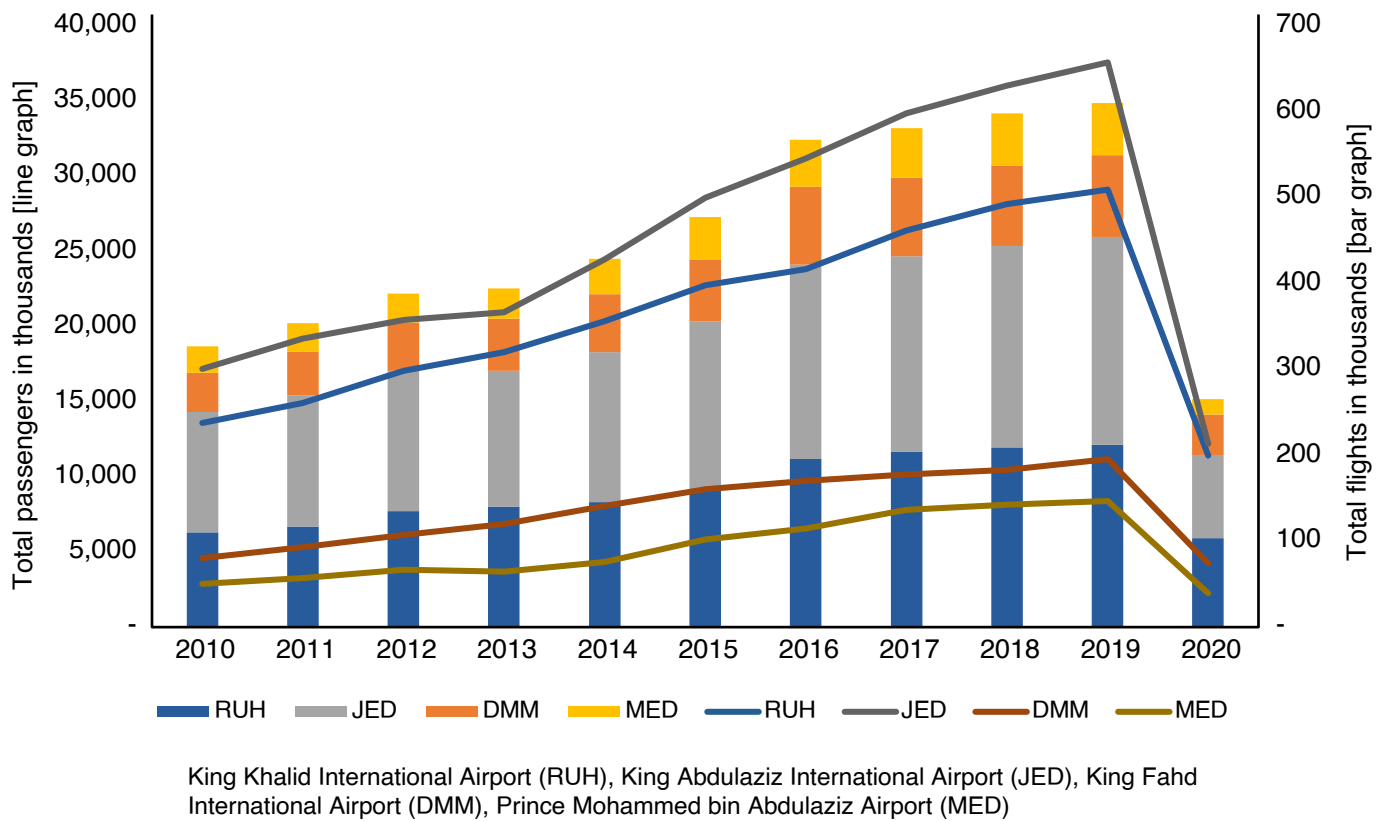


# Data Insight

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## Flight and Passenger Flows in Saudi Arabia

**Figure 1.** Flight and passenger volumes in KSA’s major airports, 2010-2020.



Source: General Authority for Civil Aviation.

- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has four major international airports. They are King Khalid International Airport (RUH), King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED), King Fahd International Airport (DMM) and Prince Muhammed Bin Abdulaziz International Airport (MED). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, they were growing steadily, with average annual growth rates of 9.46% and 7.17% for annual passenger volume and flights, respectively. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), terminals at both JED and RUH were experiencing congestion owing to infrastructure limitations.
- However, the pandemic has majorly disrupted the global economy, particularly the transport sector. The aviation industry was hit the hardest given the virus's nature and ease of transmission and the global preventative measures taken to slow its spread. In March 2021, the pandemic's anniversary month, Airports Council International noted that the ongoing pandemic has caused a full-scale global transportation crisis. Global passenger traffic declined by 64.6% in KSA. The four major airports of RUH, JED, DMM and MED saw their flight volumes decline by 50% to 70%.
- Prior to the pandemic, it was estimated that the growth in air traffic would continue or even surpass initial projections. KSA had introduced new initiatives to increase domestic tourism by increasing the number of religious tourism visas granted and introducing leisure tourism visas. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aimed to attract an estimated 30 million pilgrims per year through religious tourism visas (i.e., Hajj and Umrah visas). The leisure tourism visa program, launched in September 2019, grants e-visas upon arrival to travelers from 51 countries and territories. However, the pandemic has caused severe declines in flights and passenger volumes in KSA's major airports. Notably, MED, which primarily serves as a religious gateway airport, saw estimated declines of 70% and 73% in flights and passenger volumes, respectively.
- Saudi Arabia's aviation industry appeared to be moving from a hub-and-spoke to a point-to-point model. Several low-cost carriers serving domestic and regional routes have been introduced.

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- This KAPSARC data insight primarily uses the General Authority for Civil Aviation's statistics for 2010 – 2020.
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Access [this](#) and related [datasets](#) from the KAPSARC data portal for further analysis and visualization.

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**Sources:**

- Schengen visa info.
  - IATA airport capacity map.
  - Airports Council Authority.
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