

China's zero-COVID policy to hit Asia aviation recovery: IATA

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China's zero-COVID policy will hold back a full air travel recovery in the Asia-Pacific region, a top airline industry group warned Tuesday,

adding to calls for Beijing to ease its hardline stance.

The world's second-biggest economy is seeking to stamp out the coronavirus entirely, with rapid lockdowns and mass testing, and the measures have hammered both domestic and international air [travel](#).

The aviation sector's recovery in Asia was already relatively slow, and Willie Walsh, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) chief, warned Beijing's approach made the picture bleaker.

"It has been a brutal two years for airlines. But we are seeing signs of recovery now," he told an aviation conference in Singapore.

"Unfortunately, (the) Asia-Pacific [region](#) will lag this [recovery](#) as China continues to pursue zero-COVID."

In 2021 in Asia, international travel was only seven percent of what it was in 2019, compared with a worldwide figure of 25 percent, he said.

While the picture had improved at the start of this year, there was still a "long way to go", he added.

China's decision to stick with zero-COVID has put it at odds with many Asian governments, which have started reopening borders and dropping quarantine and testing requirements in recent months.

"The science supports these initiatives," Walsh told the Changi Aviation Summit, attended by top industry officials.

IATA is "convinced that this science supports the removal of testing and quarantine for unvaccinated travellers from areas of high population immunity, including many parts of this region," he said.

China, the last major economy still closed off to the world, is facing mounting calls to drop the zero-COVID policy which has left millions in Shanghai locked down for weeks.

Last week, the World Health Organization said the approach was unsustainable.

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