

Air travel could beat pre-pandemic level by 2023: IATA

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"When that happens, people are going to want to travel."

Walsh pressed governments to move faster on measures to help air travel reopen.

In total the passenger shortfall from the coronavirus crisis will have cost the industry two to three years of growth over the decade, IATA added.

The industry body expects average annual growth in passenger numbers of 3.2 percent between 2019 and 2039.

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Global air passenger numbers could rebound from the coronavirus pandemic to top 2019 levels by 2023, the International Air Transport Association predicted on Wednesday.

With much of the world still suffering from the spread of the virus and [travel restrictions](#), travellers are expected to number just 52 percent of the pre-crisis level this year, IATA forecast, rising to 88 percent next year.

But after surging past pre-pandemic numbers in 2023, the end of the decade could see annual levels of 5.6 billion [air passengers](#), the industry body said.

At 1.8 billion, the number for 2020 was around the same as in 2003, according to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

"We are in the deepest and gravest crisis in our history. But the rapidly growing vaccinated population and advancements in testing will return the freedom to fly in the months ahead," said IATA director general Willie Walsh.

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