

# African airlines report 1.4% fall in cargo demand

The International Air Transport Association's (Iata) latest data for global air freight markets shows that 2022 full-year demand for air cargo took a significant step back from 2021 levels but was close to 2019 performance.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Global full-year demand in 2022, measured in cargo tonne-kilometres, was down 8.0% compared to 2021 (-8.2% for international operations). Compared to 2019, it was down 1.6% (both global and international). Capacity in 2022, measured in available cargo tonne-kilometres (ACTKs), was 3.0% above 2021 (+4.5% for international operations). Compared to 2019 (pre-Covid) levels, capacity declined by 8.2% (-9.0% for international operations).

December saw a softening in performance: global demand was 15.3% below 2021 levels (-15.8% for international operations). Monthly cargo demand tracked below 2021 levels from March 2022. Global capacity was 2.2% below 2021 levels (-0.5% for international operations). This was the tenth consecutive monthly contraction compared to 2021 performance.

**2022 ended with mixed signals:**

- Global new export orders, a leading indicator of cargo demand, have stayed at the same level since October. For major economies, new export orders are shrinking except in Germany, the US, and Japan, where they grew.
- Global goods trade decreased by 1.5% in November, down from a 3.4% increase in October.
- The Consumer Price Index for G7 countries indicated inflation tracking at 6.8% for December. The 0.6 percentage point drop compared to November (7.4%) was the largest over the course of year. Inflation in producer (input) prices reduced to 12.7% in October, its lowest level so far in 2022.

"In the face of significant political and economic uncertainties, air cargo performance declined compared to the extraordinary levels of 2021. That brought air cargo demand to 1.6% below 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels. The continuing measures by key governments to fight inflation by cooling economies are expected to result in a further decline in cargo volumes in 2023 to -5.6% compared to 2019.

"It will, however, take time for these measures to bite into cargo rates. So, the good news for air cargo is that average yields and total revenue for 2023 should remain well above what they were pre-pandemic. That should provide some respite in what is likely to be a challenging trading environment in the year ahead," says Willie Walsh, Iata's director general.

## 2022 regional performance

**African airlines** reported a decrease in demand of 1.4% for global and international demand in 2022 compared to 2021 and an increase in capacity of 0.3% (-0.2% for international operations).

Compared to 2019 (pre-Covid levels), demand was 8.3% above (+9.4% for international operations) and capacity was down 15.3% (-14.2% for international operations).

In December, airlines in the region posted a 10.0% decrease in demand for both global and international operations compared to 2021. Capacity grew 1.3% (+0.2% for international operations) during the same period.

**Asia-Pacific airlines** posted an 8.8% decrease in demand in 2022 compared to 2021 (-7.4% for international operations) and a capacity increase of 0.5% (+5.8% for international operations). Compared to 2019 (pre-Covid levels), demand was 7.8% below (-3.9% for international operations) and capacity was down 17.2% (-12.2% for international operations).

In December, Asia-Pacific airlines recorded the worst performance of all regions, posting a 21.2% decrease in demand (-20.4% for international operations) compared to 2021. Capacity fell 3.9% (-1.4% for international operations) during the same period. Airlines in the region continue to be impacted by lower levels of trade and manufacturing activity and disruptions in supply chains due to China's rising Covid cases.

**North American carriers** reported a 5.1% decrease in demand in 2022 compared to 2021 (-6.3% for international operations) and a capacity increase of 4.2% (+4.9% for international operations).

Compared to 2019 (pre-COVID levels), demand was 13.7% above (+12.7% for international operations) and capacity was up 8.2% (5.1% for international operations). In December, airlines in the region reported an 8.5% decrease in demand for both global and international operations, compared to 2021. Capacity fell 2.9% (+1.8% for international operations) during the same period.

**European carriers** posted the worst year-on-year performance of all regions, with an 11.5% decrease in demand in 2022 compared to 2021 (-11.8% for international operations). During the same period, airlines posted a capacity increase of 0.5% for both global and international operations.

Compared to 2019 (pre-Covid levels), demand was 8.7% below (-9.1% for international operations) and capacity was down 16.5% (-17.3% for international operations).

In December, airlines in the region posted a 17.4% decrease in demand (-17.9% for international operations) compared to 2021. Capacity fell 7.0% (-7.4% for international operations) during the same period. Airlines in the region continue to be most affected by the war in Ukraine.

**Middle Eastern carriers** reported a decrease of 10.7% for global and international demand in 2022 compared to 2021 and an increase in capacity of 4.3% (+4.5% for international operations).

Compared to 2019 (pre-Covid levels), demand was 1.6% below for global and international operations and capacity was down 6.3% (-6.1% for international operations).

In December airlines in the region posted a 14.4% decrease in demand for both global and international operations compared to 2021. Capacity increased 2.8% (+3.0% for international operations) during the same period.

**Latin American carriers** posted the strongest year-on-year performance of all regions, with an 13.1% increase in demand in 2022 compared to 2021 (+15.0% for international operations).

During the same period, airlines posted a capacity increase of 27.1% (+27.8% for international operations). Compared to 2019 (pre-COVID levels), demand was 4.3% below (-2.6% for international operations) and capacity was down 14.3% (-10.8% for international operations).

In December airlines in the region posted stagnant growth in demand (+2.3% for international operations) compared to 2021. Capacity grew 27.6% (+32.7% for international operations) during the same period.

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