IATA Economics' Chart of the Week
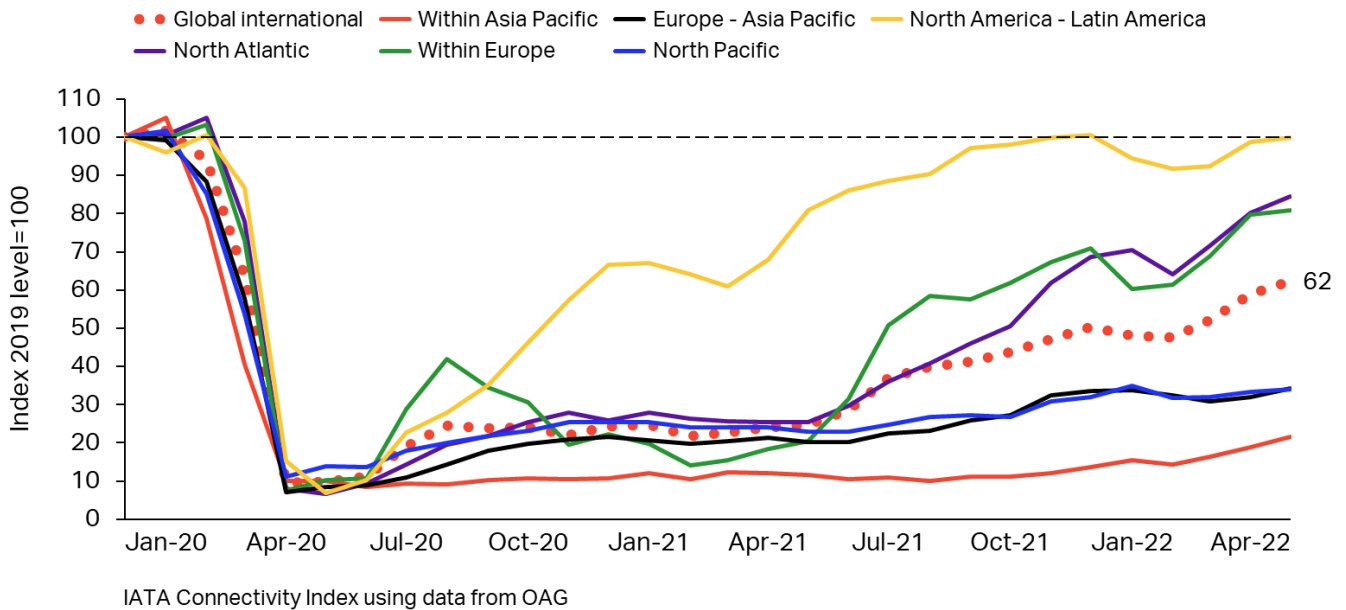
Asia Pacific lags behind international connectivity recovery

IATA International Air Connectivity Index for selected route areas, monthly Jan 2020-May 2022

IATA Connectivity Index using data from OAG

- International air connectivity recovery among regions and different key markets is uneven, recovery paces diverge between Asia Pacific and the rest of the world. While the air transport industry is a key contributor to the tourism sector, restoring air connectivity in this region could support economic recovery.

- By May 2022, international connectivity globally had recovered to 62% of its pre-pandemic level, this has largely been driven by significant reestablishment of connectivity in the Americas and Europe as well as across the North Atlantic as travel restrictions have lifted. Despite a dip earlier this year caused by the Omicron wave and concerns over the Russia-Ukraine war, international connectivity across these three major route areas has reached at least 80% of pre-crisis levels as of May 2022.

- In contrast, international air connectivity between countries within Asia Pacific is still at only 22% of its level in 2019. While this is an improvement on the ~10% level seen for most of 2021, more substantial recovery is still being impeded by lingering travel restrictions, notably in China which is still effectively closed to international travel. Long haul connectivity linking Asia to economies in Europe and across the North Pacific to North America is also still heavily suppressed at about a third of pre-pandemic levels.

- The speedy restoration of international air connectivity will help support the recovery of economic benefits of countries heavily affected by the pandemic. It is particularly vital for regions that are highly dependent on international tourism receipts and trade. WTTC analysis indicates that international visitor spending fell by 88% to just US$71 billion in Asia Pacific in 2021 compared to US$575 billion in 2019. International trade is also affected given ongoing capacity shortages on cargo routes.

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