

Most Popular



The psychology behind why some leaders are resisting a hybrid work model



PAID CONTENT
The origin story of Fortune CONNECT
FROM 3PILLAR



Southern loggers are pushing wood production to a 13-year high. So why is the price of lumber up 288%?



Brooke Bal leaders are tyranny of

HEALTH • VACCINE PASSPORT

Vaccine passports are here—so why are there still so many travel restrictions?

BY GRADY MCGREGOR

June 9, 2021 6:18 PM GMT+8



Vaccine passports are here, but governments will need to trust them—and one another—to facilitate the safe restart of global travel.

As of Wednesday, countries had distributed nearly [2.2 billion COVID-19 vaccine](#) doses globally. Reported COVID-19 infections are falling in places with high vaccination rates, like the U.S., U.K., and Israel.

But borders are locked and in-bound quarantine rules remain in place around much of the globe, even though public health bodies like the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) say that quarantine-free travel for fully vaccinated individuals poses few health risks for travelers and the destinations they visit. That's not due to a lack of tools to facilitate travel for vaccinated people.

PAID CONTENT

Why action is more important than theory for leadership



FROM INDIGGO

[Subscribe to Eastworld](#) for weekly insight on what's dominating business in Asia, delivered free to your inbox.

"It's not technology that's the missing piece," Nick Careen, senior vice president of airport, passenger, cargo, and security at the International Air Transport Association, said Tuesday on a [Fortune Global Tech Forum](#) virtual conversation. Fifty-eight airlines are using IATA's platform, which verifies COVID tests and vaccination records. "It is mutual recognition between countries that takes time," Careen said. "And we hope it happens faster."

Developing global vaccine passport standards has been a slow process. The World Health Organization (WHO) has mulled various proposals since last December under a Smart Vaccination Certificate working group. But after issuing initial draft recommendations [in March](#), the WHO has not provided any concrete standards.

"We are not too far from block zero. I mean, that's the reality," said Fabio Vacirca, CEO of [Accenture](#) Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa. "Two-hundred governments is a very big number of potential agreements that need to be in place to mutually recognize [vaccine passports], whatever standards will be adopted."

Jennifer Zhu Scott, executive chairman of the Commons Project, a digital services nonprofit that has developed a vaccine verification platform called Common Pass, agrees that the likelihood of all countries adopting a shared standard is low.

"Even with all the vaccines and fast [COVID-19] testing, we still rely on old methods [like quarantines] because country A can never trust country B," she says.

Full resumption of global travel may be months—if not years—away, but pockets of international travel may restart soon.

Blocs like [the European Union](#) and [the G7](#) are creating their own standards for recognizing vaccinated travelers, while [China](#) and [Japan](#) are developing stand-alone vaccine passport platforms and want to negotiate travel corridors with other nations on a bilateral basis.

"We've already seen travel in Europe...North America won't be far behind, and [Asia] will probably be last, unfortunately," said Careen. The U.S. and Europe are reopening their economies amid speedy vaccine rollouts, while some countries in Asia appear to be more cautious about unlocking their borders, he said.

Resumption of international travel may be further off for poor countries that are unable to secure vaccines. For now, a nation's ability to procure and distribute vaccines remains closely tied to its wealth. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [said this week](#) that high-income nations have gobbled up 44% of the world's COVID-19 vaccine supplies, leaving just 0.4% of the vaccines for low-income countries.

"The vaccine distribution to the global south is particularly problematic," says Zhu Scott. But she argues that rather than exacerbate inequalities, platforms like Common Pass can help normalize travel and other everyday activities until the world gets COVID-19 under control.

"We've built a digital infrastructure to enable people and our society to coexist with the pandemic before we can exit the global pandemic," she said.

More [health care](#) and [Big Pharma coverage](#) from Fortune:

- "Business as usual" will only [bring us more pandemics](#), this Oxford economist says
- Vaccine passports are here—so why are there still [so many travel restrictions](#)?
- Where have all the [surrogates](#) gone?
- A new \$4 billion investment from the USDA [aims to make the U.S. food system more resilient](#)
- After 600 emergency use authorizations for COVID, [experts worry the FDA has gone too far](#)

Related Articles

INTERNATIONAL

Like it or not, vaccine passports are coming soon to an airport near you

March 19, 2021

BY GRADY MCGREGOR



TRAVEL