

US airport traffic drops in Jan amid Covid surge, slow vaccine rollouts

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Dhaka: Almost 16 million passengers passed through the US Transportation Security Administration security checkpoints the first 21 days of the new year, three million shies of the total screened over the Christmas and New Year holiday rush and 63 per cent fewer than the same time period year over year as the pandemic continues to ravage air travel demand.

Hopes of the availability of coronavirus vaccines alleviating fears of travelling during the pandemic and leading to a heightened travel recovery have not yet come to fruition. Covid-19 case numbers continue to rise in the US and around the world, as new strains of the virus emerge.

Reports stated TSA throughout the month of January was down 59.8 per cent, versus 62.4 per cent down in December.

January travel trends are historically slow after the year-end holidays. Traffic tends to spike over the [Martin Luther King Jr \(MLK\)](#) three-day holiday in the US, which this year was January 18.

However, this year MLK's 3.3 million throughput numbers were the fewest screened in

recent years. Last year, 8 million passengers went through TSA checkpoints. In addition, increased security measures following the US Capitol riots on January 6 may have dissuaded passengers from travelling so close to the January 20 presidential inauguration.

“Business travel can start to recover as quarantine rules dissipate, but even that is likely to be a 2022 event,” said Cowen airline analyst Helane Becker. “Business travel from large corporations is likely to take longer to recover than from small and medium-sized companies who need to travel to maximise sales.”

[Travellers are still concerned](#) about the lack of things to do at their destinations given increased restrictions, but an increase in vaccinations would enable more things to safely reopen, Becker said.