



130,000 vacancies in Travel & Tourism threaten UK economic recovery says WTTC in new report

Aviation, hotels, and entertainment venues among the worst hit

London, UK: The World Travel & Tourism Council ([WTTC](#)) warns the Travel & Tourism sector's recovery is at serious risk as nearly 130,000 jobs go unfilled across the UK.

According to the global tourism body, the UK is expected to see a shortfall of 128,000 jobs, with one in 14 job openings expected to remain vacant. Restaurants and hotels are struggling to find staff but the UK government, unlike countries like Portugal, are refusing to allow in temporary workers in from overseas.

The UK's hotel, entertainment, and aviation industries are forecast to be the worst affected, facing unfulfilled vacancies of 18% (one in six), 12% (one in eight), and 11% (one in nine), respectively.

Critical staff shortages are now acute within transportation - particularly across the aviation industry - which is struggling to cope with the post-pandemic travel demand.

Before the pandemic in 2019, 1.8 million people were employed in Travel & Tourism in the UK by 2020 over 200,000 had lost their jobs* .

Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO said: "The UK recovery is at risk. The government is not using the flexibility in the visa system to attract workers to the UK. Travel & Tourism contributed by nearly £235 billion to the economy and employed almost two million people.

"Now visitors are arriving to find restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues without staff, and we will lose these travellers and their dollars to other countries.

"Big brands cannot understand why countries in Europe are bringing in skilled workers like chefs, but the UK Home Office is not deploying the flexible 'point system' visas they

promised.

“The sector was one of the hardest hit in the pandemic, losing 50% of its value, it needs Government action now.”

“In retail, UK stores are still reeling from the decision by the UK Government to axe VAT Refunds for visitors. It means tourists can save 20% on goods by choosing Paris instead of London. The Chancellor of the Exchequer needs to look at this urgently.”

Despite the UK government’s furlough scheme, which provided much needed relief to the sector, WTTC says more support is needed to fill these vacancies, which will in turn boost the economy through its contribution to the country’s GDP.

During the second half of 2022, data indicates that labour supply will continue to fall short of demand - with the gap projected to further increase in the third quarter of 2022 as demand approaches pre-pandemic levels.

Last week WTTC revealed that up to 1.2 million jobs across the EU will remain unfulfilled, with hospitality, air transport, and travel agencies being the most affected.

Some of the key measures identified in the report for both governments and the private sector to address the talent gap are:

1. Facilitate **labour mobility** across international borders, with more favourable visa policies
2. Enable **flexible and remote working** where feasible – allowing part time or contractor-based opportunities, where possible
3. Ensure **decent work** and competitive employee benefits and average pay increases across the sector
4. **Attract talent** by improving the perception of jobs and promoting viable career paths with growth opportunities
5. **Develop and support a skilled workforce** through comprehensive educational programs, as well as upskilling and reskilling current talent
6. Adopt **innovative technological and digital solutions** to alleviate pressure on staff, improve daily operations and an enhanced customer experience

The global tourism body believes by implementing these measures, Travel & Tourism businesses will be able to attract more workers.

This in turn would enable the sector to meet the ever-growing consumer demand and further

speed up its recovery, which is the backbone to generating economic well-being across the country.

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Notes to editor:

* Refers to total DIRECT employment