

# UNCTAD activities on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

2021-22 update

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UNCTAD Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (WG-ECDE)  
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# A strengthened mandate

UNCTAD15  
3–7 October  
2021

*"[UNCTAD should] strengthen the work on assisting developing countries to systematically **assess their state-of-play, readiness to engage and integrate into the digital economy**, thus contributing to the closing of the digital divide. In doing so it is important to **support the strengthening of the collection and processing of available data in order to produce statistics** and policy analysis in relation to the opportunities and challenges of digital economy."* (para 127 (gg))

Extract from the Bridgetown Covenant

UNCTAD 15th quadrennial conference, October 2021 (Barbados)

[https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/td-l-435\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/td-l-435_en.pdf)





## Research and analysis

- Statistical databases
- Analytical notes
- In-depth research on measurement issues (e.g., measuring e-commerce)
- Digital Economy Reports



## Technical assistance

- Manual for the production of statistics on the Digital Economy
- Guidelines on surveys of digitally delivered exports
- Training and support
- Guidelines for measuring e-commerce value



## Consensus building

- Working group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy
- Collaboration with other International Organisations
  - *Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development*

# Manual

## for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy

2020

Revised Edition



- Revised in 2020 with input and oversight from the Working Group
- Key foundation for technical assistance and capacity building, it sets out:
  - **Core indicators**, as established by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development
  - **Data collection and compilation guidance**, notably on implementing surveys of ICT use in business
  - **Country examples and experiences**
- Available in **English**
- **NOW available in French, Spanish, and Portuguese** (with support from cetic.br)
- Arabic and Russian planned for 2023

<https://unctad.org/webflyer/manual-production-statistics-digital-economy-2020>

# Training in the Pacific on the Manual: online

## ONLINE TRAINING ON THE MANUAL FOR THE PRODUCTION OF STATISTICS ON THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

16-hour online training 20 June – 15 July + webinar 19 July 2022



Pacific Community  
Communauté du Pacifique



38 participants from 14 countries or areas in the Pacific



25  
women (66%)



58  
post exchanges in the forum

Participants had access to multimedia presentations, tests, surveys, forum and a webinar

71%  
average score

90%  
satisfaction rate

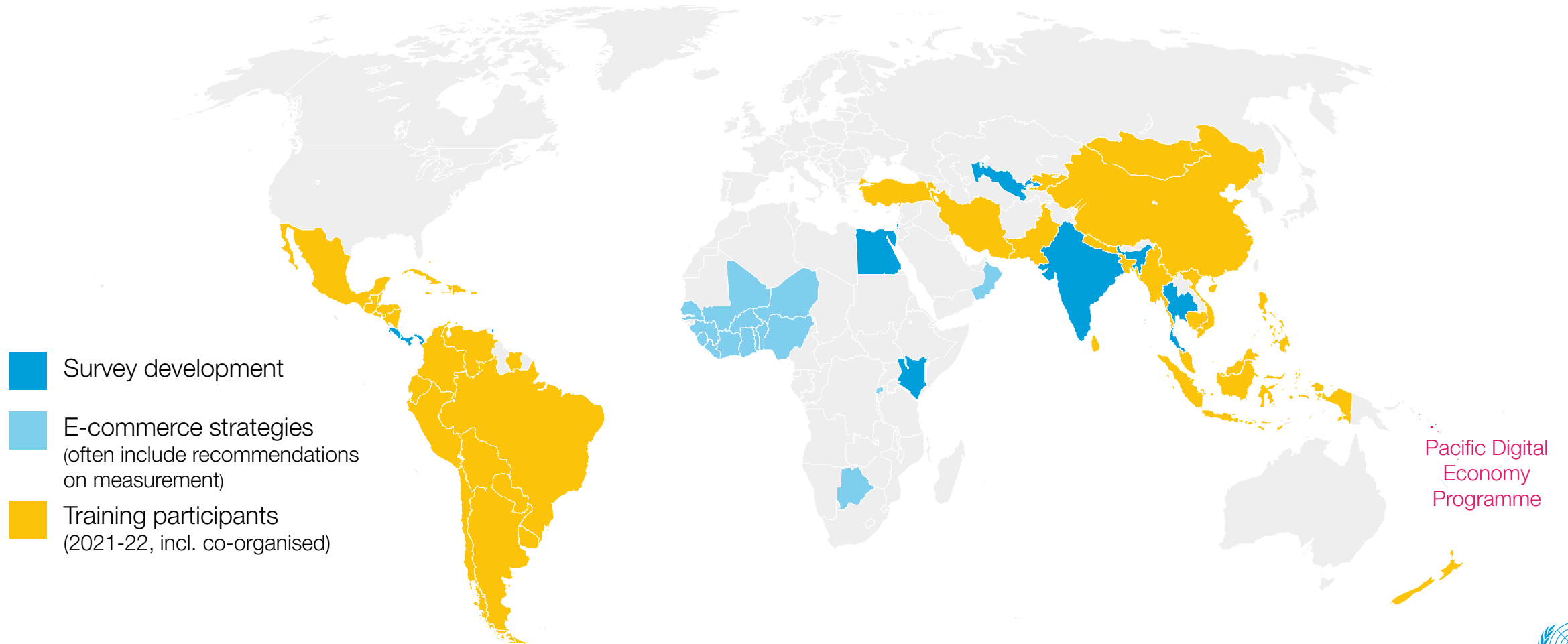
27  
certificates granted



*"I wish to share this with my colleagues to improve the work we do at the Statistics office"*

*"This course will assist me in collating or creating ways to capture data on digital trade"*

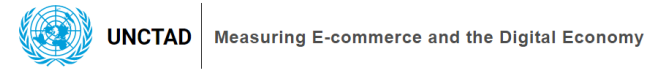
# Technical assistance on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

# Modernising the UNCTAD core indicators collection

- Regular collection of core indicators on business ICT usage and ICT sector
- New system replaces Excel with online interface for submission of indicators and metadata
- Secure access through user accounts
- Real-time validation checks support users in entering data
- Metadata + notes can be imported from previous submissions to save time
- **Volunteers needed for pilot testing**



Indicator Submission | About | User Management

### Indicator Submission

Country: Jamaica | Reference Year: 2022

- ICT Usage Indicators by Enterprise Size [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]
- ICT Usage Indicators by Urban/Rural [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]
- ICT Usage Indicators by Economic Activity (ISIC Rev. 4) [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]
- ICT Usage Indicators by Economic Activity (ISIC Rev. 3.1) [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]
- ICT sector workforce and value added (ISIC Rev. 4) [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]
- ICT sector workforce and value added (ISIC Rev. 3.1) [Edit metadata] [Edit data] [Submit]

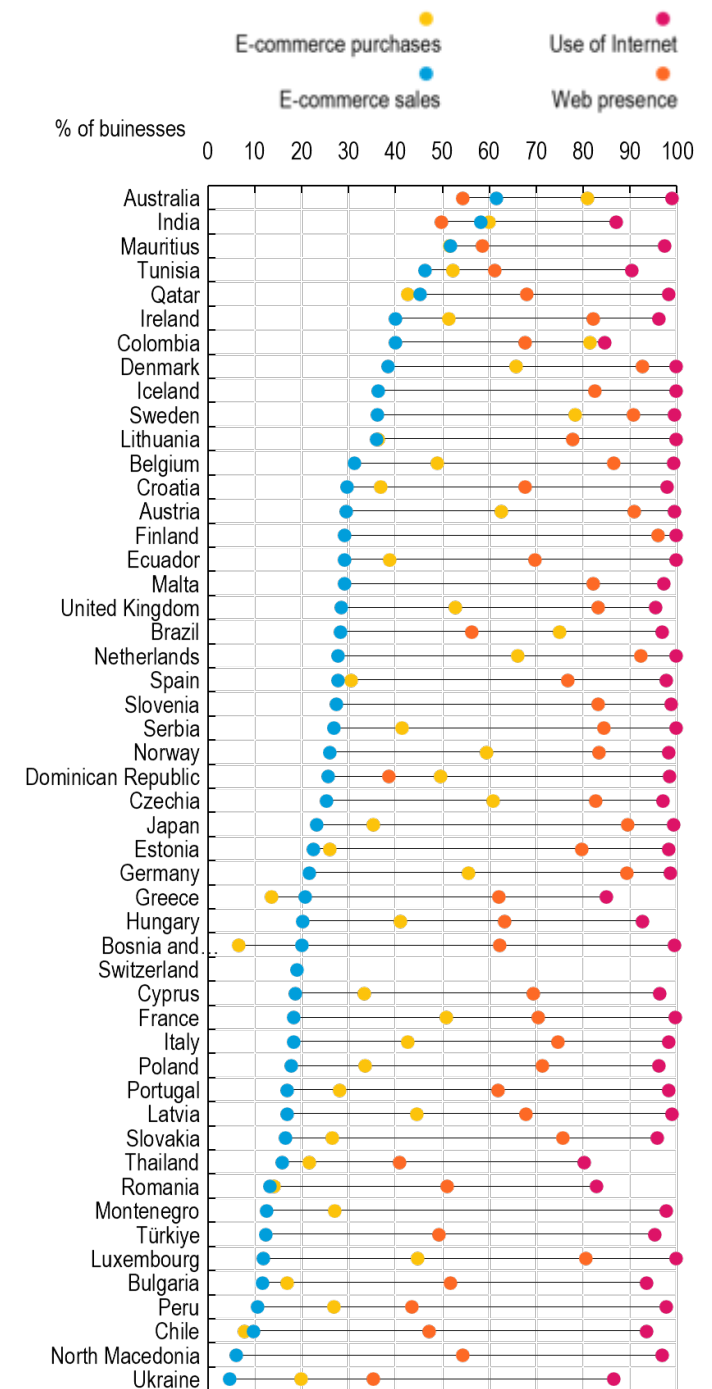
Columns

No.	Indicators (in total numbers)	Notes			Geographic scope		Total
		N1	N2	N3	Urban	Rural	
TNETP	Total number of enterprises in the target population	Data refer to the sample ar	Provisional	add note ...	0	0	0
TNPETP	Total number of persons employed in the target population	The survey did not cover a	Other	add note ...	0	0	0
B1	Number of enterprises using computers	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B2	Number of persons employed using computers	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B3	Number of enterprises using the Internet	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B4	Number of persons employed using the Internet	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B5	Number of enterprises with a website (or web presence where the business has control over the content)	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B6	Number of enterprises with an intranet	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B7	Number of enterprises receiving orders over the Internet	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0
B8	Number of enterprises placing orders over the Internet	add note ...	add note ...	add note ...	0	0	0

# Analysing the results

ICT use in business, selected indicators, 2021 or latest

- Business use of ICT varies greatly between countries, with the share of businesses selling by e-commerce ranging from around 10% to 60%
- As important is what's missing: relatively few non-EU/OECD countries submit data to international collections
- Please respond to our 2023 questionnaire to ensure that your ICT usage indicators are featured in the UNCTAD statistics portal!



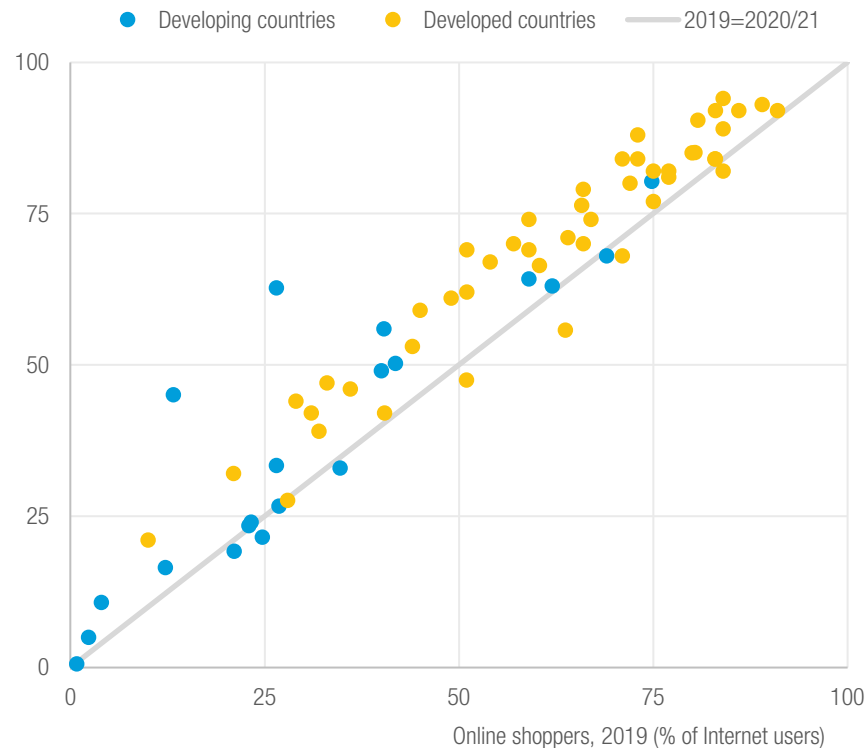
Source: <https://unctad.org/news/unctad-data-highlights-need-strengthen-business-ict-statistics>

Note: Businesses with 10+ persons employed. For each country and variable, if 2021 data is not available the latest available observation (2018 or later) is used. For e-commerce sales and web presence, the most common reporting year is 2021. For internet use it's 2019, for e-commerce purchases it's 2018. Data for India represent manufacturing only and the year 2018.



# The pandemic led more people to shop online

Online shoppers,  
2020/21  
(% of Internet users)



The greatest rises in the share of Internet users shopping online occurred in developing countries:

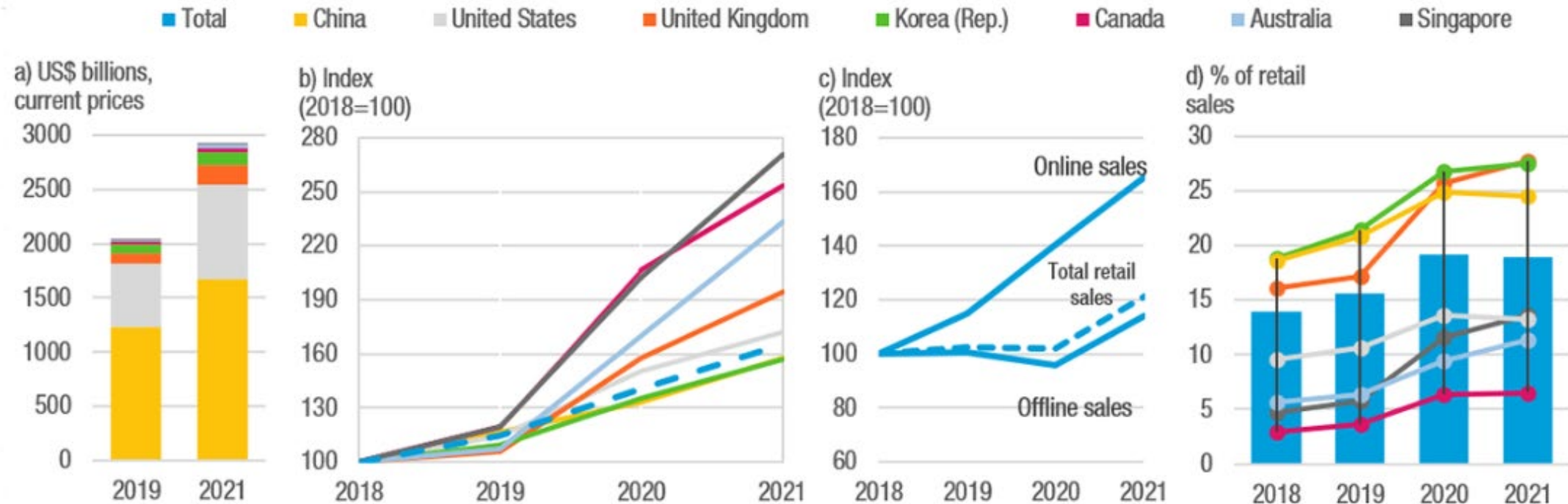
- UAE: 27% in 2019 to 63% in 2020
- Bahrain: tripled to reaching 45% in 2020
- Uzbekistan: from 4% in 2018 to 11% in 2020
- Thailand: for the first time more than half (56%) shopped online in 2020

Source: UNCTAD (2022), "COVID-19 boost to e-commerce sustained into 2021, new UNCTAD figures show" (<https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-boost-e-commerce-sustained-2021-new-unctad-figures-show>), based on urostat Digital Economy and Society Statistics database, OECD ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals database, ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database), Argentina CACE, Australia Post, China Network Information Center, DANE Colombia, IMDA Singapore

Note: For most European/OECD countries, data relate to individuals aged 16-74 years who used the internet/shopped online in the 12 months prior to survey. For other countries, wider age ranges and different recall periods may apply. 2021 figures used when available (y-axis) but for a significant minority of countries (29 of 66 countries presented), and especially for developing countries (17 of 19 countries), the latest data relate to 2020.

# Online retail sales boosted during the pandemic

**Figure 2. Online retail sales, seven countries, 2018-2021**  
Value (US\$ billions, current prices), Indices (2018=100) and percentage of retail sales

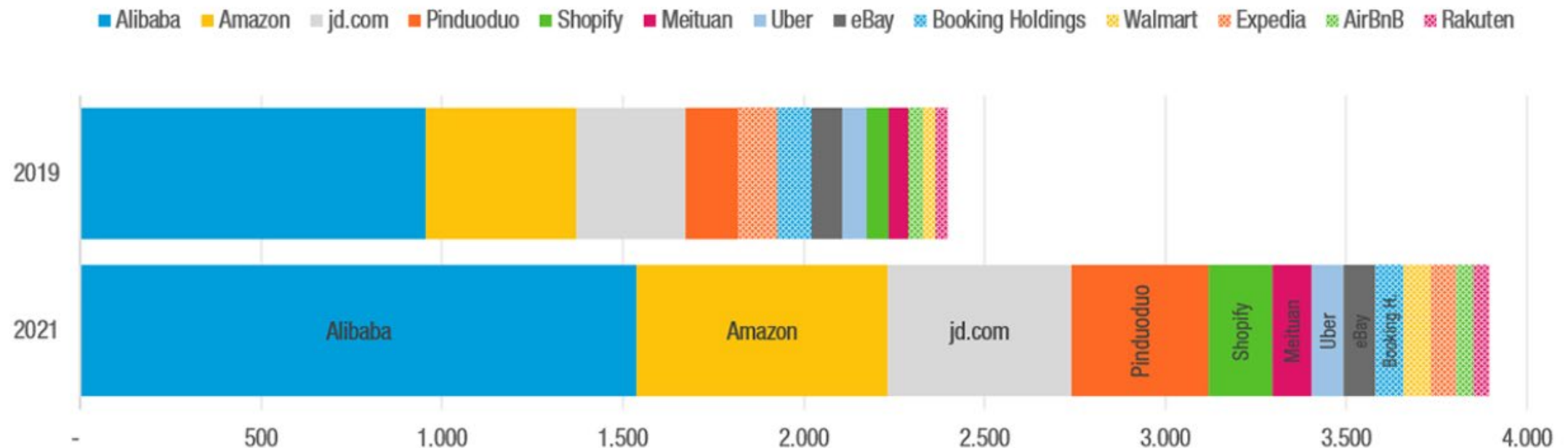


Source: UNCTAD (2022), "COVID-19 boost to e-commerce sustained into 2021, new UNCTAD figures show" (<https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-boost-e-commerce-sustained-2021-new-unctad-figures-show>), based on national sources; and UNCTAD currency exchange rates (<https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/ReportFolders/reportFolders.aspx>)

Note: There may be some differences in the coverage of retail trade statistics across countries. Indexes calculated based on US\$ values in current prices.

# The biggest online platforms benefitted most

Figure 3. Sales by major consumer-focused e-commerce businesses before and during the pandemic  
\$ billions, current prices



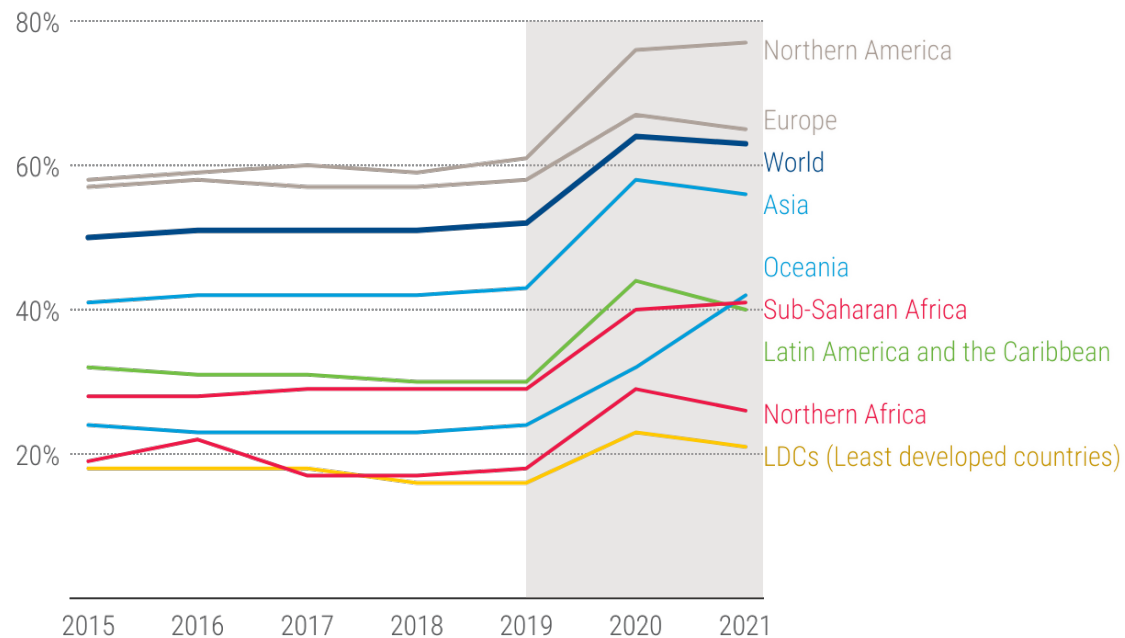
Source: UNCTAD (2022), "COVID-19 boost to e-commerce sustained into 2021, new UNCTAD figures show" (<https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-boost-e-commerce-sustained-2021-new-unctad-figures-show>), based on company reports.

Note: These figures reflect the gross value of goods and services sold by/through these companies; only a portion of this accrues to the e-commerce business and goes toward profits. These businesses are primarily focussed on sales to consumers. However, businesses and other organisations may also make purchases from them, and these sales may not be excluded. Rakuten refers to "domestic e-commerce" only. 2021 figure for Amazon estimated. 2020 figure for WalMart estimated.

# Digital delivery has played a crucial role in supporting trade in services

## Digitally deliverable services

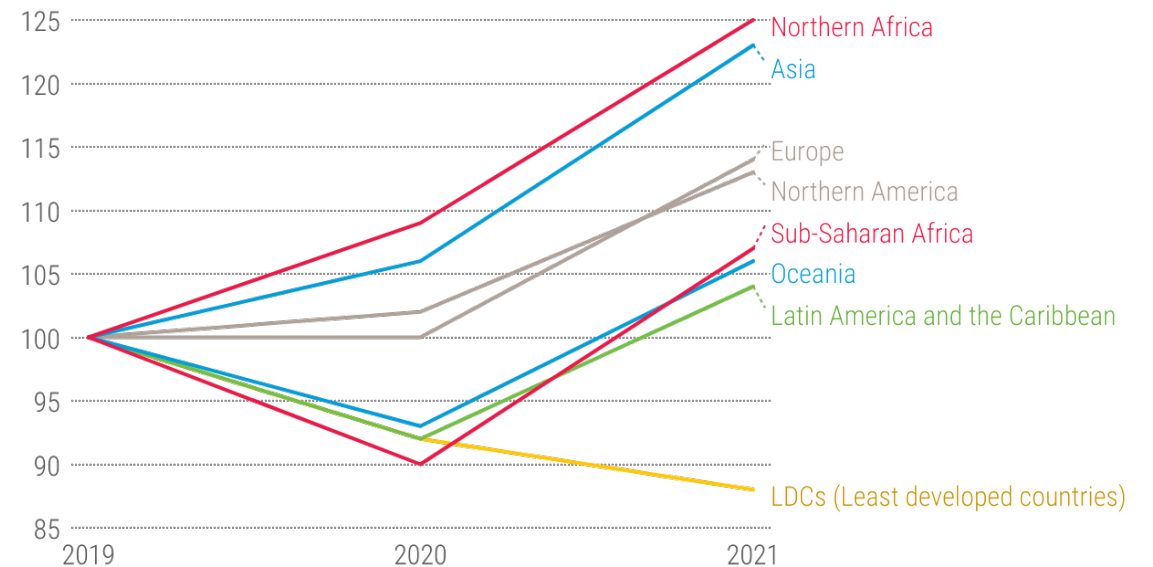
Share of total services exports, 2015-2021



Source: UNCTAD digital economy database

## Digitally deliverable services exports

Index: 2019=100



Note: index based on export value in current prices

Source: UNCTAD digital economy database

# Take-aways

- Covid-19 showed the importance of e-commerce and the digital economy for recovery and resilience
- But also raised awareness of the digital and data divides
- Both triggered interest in technical assistance for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy
- Still a need to strengthen the availability of core indicators on ICT use by business and the ICT sector,
- Also need to think on what else to measure and how to do it, to guide digital economy policy in developing countries
- This Working Group rare opportunity to progress on this work

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