TG-eCOM update 2025

WG-ECDE

4 December 2025

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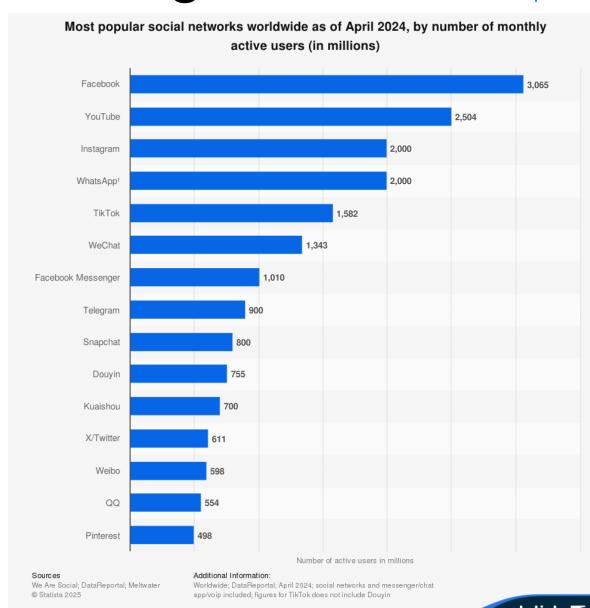


> 2025/1 Social media and selling online



What is social media?

- No agreed definition
- Emphasis on communication, communities, user creation, content and sharing
- Main debate is over whether messaging apps are "social media"
- Doesn't *really* matter for identifying e-commerce



statista 🗸



What roles does social media play in online selling?



- 1. Drive traffic to e-commerce sites through:
 - Business profile pages
 - Content about products
 - Advertising products in / alongside content?

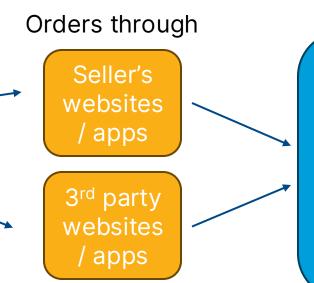
Essentially amounts to "advertising".

All forms of social media can be used for this.

Many platforms offer integrations with e-commerce management tools (e.g. to manage links to products, show only products that are available in inventory)

Ultimately, the order is placed outside the social media platform

In principle, these sales should already be captured by e-commerce statistics



Order placed
i) over computer
networks, and
ii) using methods
specifically designed
for the purpose of
receiving and
placing orders
= e-commerce



What roles does social media play in online selling?



1. Drive traffic to e-commerce sites through:

- Business profile pages
- Content about products
- Advertising products in / alongside content
- 2. Handle the full ordering process
 - Products can be listed for purchase and ordered through the social media platform itself
 - Not all platforms offer this. Examples include Facebook/Instagram shops, TikTokShop, WeChat shops

Seller's websites / apps

Orders through

3rd party websites / apps Order placed
 i) over computer
 networks, and
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What roles does social media play in online selling?



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Seller's websites / apps

Orders through

3rd party websites / apps

Including orders
placed through Social
Media platforms

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 - = e-commerce

placing orders

When the Social Media platform facilitates the full shopping and ordering process, it's not clear that this is materially different to an order placed through any 3rd party e-commerce platform

This suggests that these sales should already be captured by e-commerce statistics

A thought exercise:

If Amazon Marketplace had "social features" such as feeds of posts, user creation of content, communication between users, reactions...
would that make it a Social Network?

It already has all of these

>

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3. Facilitate ordering via manually typed messaging

Seller's websites /apps 3rd party websites /apps Including orders placed through Social Media platforms Manually

typed

messaging

Orders through

Order placed
i) over computer
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Order placedi) over computer networks= not e-commercebut another form of "online selling"

Manually typed orders



- Policymakers, compilers state ordering via messaging and social media apps / platforms is widespread in some economies
- BUT often not clear if they are referring to sales via manually typed messages or built-in e-commerce features
- Services such as WhatsApp for business etc. have much higher barriers to entry than selling through basic messaging
- → Manually typed orders likely an important channel for selling online, especially for MSMEs
- → The lack of a name for these orders hampers understanding and discussion, this issue should be addressed in the Guidelines and Recommendations

How to set up a WhatsApp eCommerce store

Let's check out how to set up an eCommerce store on your WhatsApp channel so customers can get a single unified shopping experience every time.

- Set up a WhatsApp Business Account. Create a professional business presence by registering your Business App account or onboarding to the Business Platform via a provider.
- 2. Customize your profile with a brand name, logo and description.
- 3. Optional: Verify your WhatsApp channel.
- 4. Set up easy access entry points to your WhatsApp channel. Use click to chat links and QR codes across packaging, emails, and socials to capture demand wherever it happens.
- Design and deploy a WhatsApp chatbot for eCommerce that can answer FAQs, recommend products, qualify leads, and hand off to agents when needed.
- 6. Enable core messaging features like quick replies, greeting and away messages, and labels to keep chats tidy. For larger stores, integrate the WhatsApp API with your stack to automate order confirmations, shipping updates with tracking, invoices, payment status, cancellations, returns, and pickup alerts.
- 7. Set up promotional catalogs and product messages in WhatsApp. Add your product catalog with images, descriptions, pricing, variants, and inventory status so customers can browse quickly.
- 8. Send payment requests over WhatsApp.
- 9. Set up re-engagement campaigns.
- 10. Ask for feedback.





Digitally ordered trade

→ ICT surveys have successfully been adapted to measure digitally ordered trade as well as further relevant details (e.g. digital delivery). Transactions through DIPs generally require further work to delineate.

Business e-commerce purchasing

→ Though measuring e-commerce sales is the highest priority and most straightforward, there are examples of efforts to measure business e-commerce purchases. However, while some countries have good quality figures, others face challenges because purchasing is distributed across departments within the enterprise.

EDI e-commerce

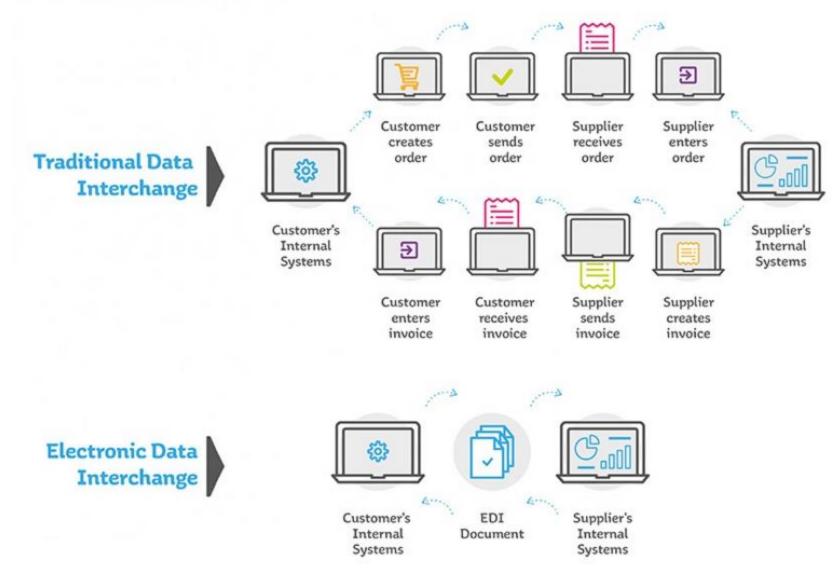
→ EDI-type ordering may be less well understood by statistical compilers and respondents, so poses some challenges compared to Web Sales. Nevertheless, it is often the larger component of e-commerce and is crucial to cover in e-commerce statistics.



EDI makes business purchasing more efficient



- For businesses, managing orders to ensure sufficient inventory of inputs can be (human) resourceintensive
- "Traditional": multiple steps
 where humans are needed at
 both the customer and supplier
 firms to create / receive /
 interpret / translate / process
 information sent by email (or
 even by phone / post)
- EDI: replaces humans in most (if not all) of these steps with software
- Automated? Order may still be human-initiated and humanread/approved at the seller end







- EDI relies on agreed standards for messages between buying businesses and their suppliers
- This enables automated processing of messages
- Various standards exist, often tailored to specific industries
- "EDI translator" software used to map data between humanreadable format and EDI standard format

	ompany ain Streer		PO Nun	nber: 4768
	ay, CA 9416	58	PO Date	e: 9/30/2020
Item No.	Quantity	Unit of Measure	Price	Product ID
1	100	EA	29.99	331896.42
Total	items: 1		Total Q	uantity: 100

Paper Purchace Order

ST*850*540001

BEG*00*SA*4768*65*20120930

N1*SO*XYZ Company

N3*123 Main Street

N4*Fairway*CA*94168

PO1*1*100*EA*27.65**VN*331896-42

CTT*1*100

SE*8*54001

ANSI EDI Purchase Order

UNH+SSDD1+ORDERS:D:03B:UN:EAN008'

BGM+220+4768+9'

DTM+137:20120930:102'

NAD+BY+5412345000176::9++XYZ'

Company+123 Main

Street+Fairway+CA+94168+US'

LIN+1+1+331896-42:VN'

QTY+1:100:EA'

PRI+AAA:27.65'

UNS+S'

CNT+2:1'

UNT+10+SSDD1'



Respondents may not know they use EDI



- EDI is now a feature integrated in ERP software
- → It may be unclear to respondents whether they are using EDI or not

→ Guidelines and recommendations related to EDI e-commerce (e.g. "case study)





> In-person meeting, 2-3 December, WTO Geneva



Packed agenda, very active participation



Formal opening

H.E. Eiman Al Mutairi, Vice Minister of Commerce and CEO of the National Competitiveness Center, Saudi Arabia → highlighted the importance of e-commerce statistics, collaboration with UNCTAD to develop Saudi Arabian e-commerce statistics, and Saudi Arabia's support for the TG-eCOM.

- **Analysis, contextualisation, and dissemination of e-commerce statistics**
- Presentations by 12 countries / IOs: Malaysia, Singapore, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Canada, Eurostat, Slovenia, Hungary, United Kingdom, Mexico, UNECLAC.
- Flash recommendations:
 - Multiple forms of dissemination suited to different user groups (data tables, infographics, data insights, reports...)
 - Microdata (preferably linked) dissemination encouraged
 - Metadata and clear methodological documentation is important
 - Importance of contextualising with appropriate denominators e.g. turnover, GDP

> 2. Online orders not meeting the definition of e-commerce



- Presentations by Jamaica, Indonesia, UN Trade and Development
- Participants supported the centrality of the e-commerce concept, but also complementing and contextualising it within a broader framework → gives names to orders placed online but through channels excluded from e-commerce
- NOT an expansion of the concept of e-commerce

Online ordering: order	s for goods or services placed ov	er computer networks
	+	
by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders	by manually typed messages or other methods not specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders.	by on-premises mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes)
	=	
E-commerce	Other remote online ordering	On-premises online ordering

Room for further feedback and improvement



> 3. Draft Guidelines and Recommendations for the measurement of e-commerce value

> Purpose



- 1. To guide countries starting to develop e-commerce value statistics
- 2. To promote harmonisation of e-commerce statistics across countries

- Align with and build upon existing foundations:
 - OECD Definition of E-commerce and accompanying guidelines, model survey module
 - UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy guidance on implementing survey of ICT usage in business
 - European community survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises model survey and accompanying compiler's guide
 - Compiler experiences

> Structure (i)



I. Introduction

II. Measurement needs

 Key users for e-commerce value statistics and their needs in terms of break downs, frequency, timeliness, etc.

III. Scope of e-commerce

- Overview of the OECD definition of e-commerce (2009; 2025) and accompanying guidelines
- Additional explanations to aid interpretation

IV. Valuation of e-commerce transactions

- Discussion of what should be included in the "value" of an e-commerce transaction.
- Recommendation to record net of VAT, discounts, returns aligned with the IFRS definition
 of "revenue from contracts with customers" and "turnover" in structural business statistics.





- V. Applying the definition of e-commerce and identifying the value to be recorded
 - Sections looking at application in a wide range of specific activities and situations
 - TG-eCOM proposed additional cases for inclusion

VI. Complementing the e-commerce concept

 Introduces a wider framework to complement the central concept of e-commerce and give names to other types of orders placed through computer networks

VII. Coverage of statistics on the value of business e-commerce

- E-commerce is a means of taking orders which cuts across economic activities and products
 → e-commerce value statistics should ideally cover all e-commerce
- However, sometimes it is necessary to limit coverage (e.g. due to resources, statistical regulation, etc.) → section outlines factors to be considered

> Structure (iii)



V. Data collection and compilation

- Survey sources
 - Surveys of ICT usage in business, surveys of e-commerce operators, other business surveys
 - Proposed guidance on factors affecting quality:
 - Targeting the right respondent within the business
 - Response: mandatory vs voluntary, incentives
 - Ensuring good answers: cognitive testing of questions, "training" respondents
 - Managing non-response
 - Grossing up to derive representative monetary values
 - Managing non-disclosure
 - Cognitive testing of questions
 - Product breakdowns
- Non-survey sources
 - card payment data identified as particularly promising, but has important limitations
- VI. Dissemination of statistics on e-commerce value
- VII. Recommendations





Written
feedback
on current
draft

Revisions and additions \rightarrow full draft

Circulate to TG and WG members for review

Further revisions

Publish first edition

Seek UNSC endorsement

An international database on e-commerce value

TG-eCOM
2 December 2025

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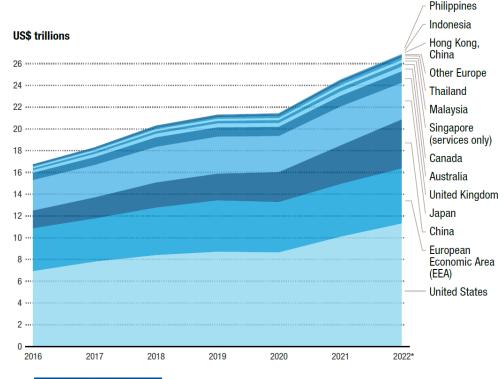
- TG-eCOM work is on-going
- There are still areas of divergent practice that affect comparability

• True, but:

- TG-eCOM Guidelines and Recommendations will take time to implement
- There is demand for insights on e-commerce now, even with limitations → this database has grown out of collections and analysis UNCTAD did previously
- This is not the first international database on e-commerce value; the Eurostat database launched in 2023, was a huge step forward and major foundation for this initiative
- An "analytical" database such as this can be a tool for better understanding differences in e-commerce statistics across economies

E-commerce sales by businesses, 2016–2022

Businesses in 43 developed and developing economies generating around three quarters of global GDP





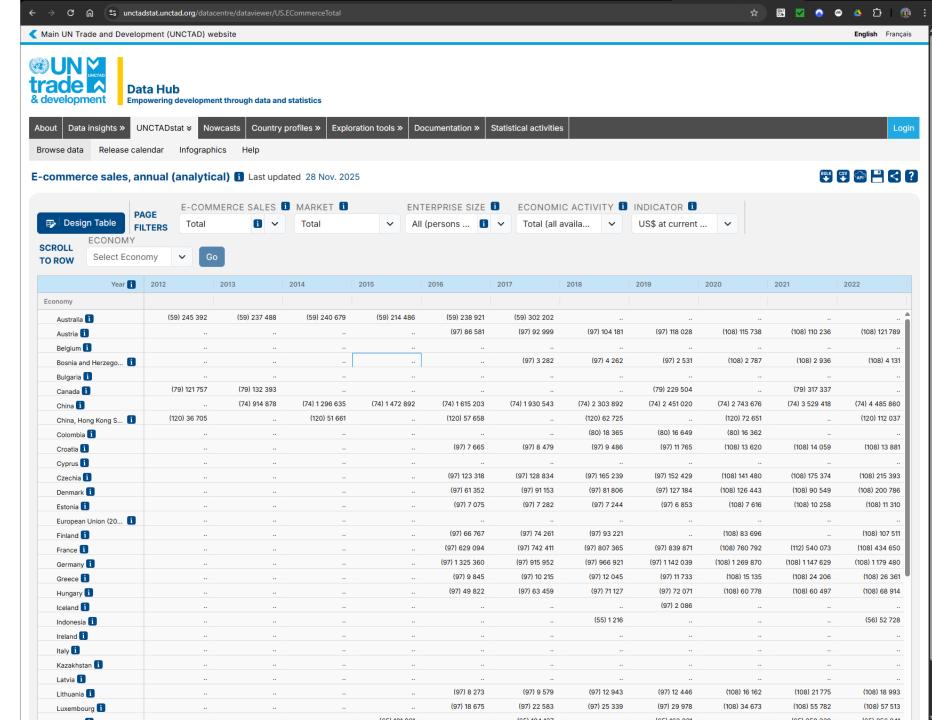
Source: UNCTAD (2024) "Business e-commerce sales and the role of online platforms"; based on Eurostat digital economy and society database, Eurostat Structural Business Statistics database, and national statistical agencies (see report)

Note: * estimated. Other Europe = Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia. For further notes and explanation see report.

Where do these numbers come from?

- E-commerce values published by NSOs (or other competent agencies) in national currency (converted to millions) and / or % turnover
- Conversion to USD with IMF exchange rates
- Aggregation of components where relevant
- Apportionment where necessary and information available (e.g. where breakdowns published as % shares)

NO imputation for missing values!





Coverage and dimensions



- 36 developing and developed economies accounting for 2/3 of global GDP
- 2012 2024
- Availability varies between years

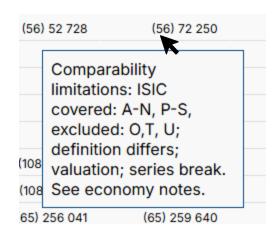
E-commerce sales	Market	Enterprise size	Economic activity	Indicator
Total	Total	All (persons employed)*	Total (all available)*	US\$ millions, current prices
B2C	Domestic	Micro (0-9)	ISIC Sections (some divisions)	National currency millions, current prices
B2B+G	International	SML (10+)	Select aggregations to	% in total turnover
B2B		Small (10-49)	maximise figures included and support comparisons	
B2G		Medium (50-249)	across economies	
EDI-type sales		Large (250+)	(D-E; G-I; L-N+S.951; L+N77; M-N; P-Q; R-S)	
Web sales		SMEs (10-249)		
-via own websites / apps				
via e-commerce marketplaces				

Availability / coverage varies across economies and years

* totals reflect all e-commerce measured in the given economy and year → more complete measure of the full extent of e-commerce but may impact trends between periods in some cases

Comparability limitations





Extensive explanation of comparability limitations known to UNCTAD

- Cell notes:
 - For Economic Activity = Total: ISIC covered and excluded
 - "economic activity coverage" → indicates some deviation from the ISIC indicated (e.g. exclusion of certain ISIC sub-components)
 - "enterprise size coverage" → indicates deviation from the size indicated (e.g. due to implementation of employment or revenue thresholds; different thresholds for M/S/M/L)
 - "definition differs" → most often indicates email orders are included (orders via manually typed messages do not meet the OECD definition of e-commerce)
 - "valuation" → most often indicates VAT or other sales tax is included in the value shown
 - "reporting period" → accounting rather than calendar years
 - "series break"
 - "Derived by UNCTAD" → figure was aggregated from available components or apportioned based on details published by economy source
 - "Provisional" → source indicates figure (or share used to derive it) is provisional
 - "Use with caution" → source indicates figure (or share used to derive it) is of limited quality
- "See <u>economy notes</u>" → for extensive details



> "economy notes" provide full details



• Excel file providing detailed information on availability / coverage / comparability limitations

UN trade & E-commerce and digitally ordered trade database - Economy note development C		Legend:	Available /		es with limitations cated	\$: available as monetary value		as percentage of turnover										
Use toggles on the left to expand sections			applies	China, Hong		Eurostat	Indonesia	Indonesia		Korea (Rep.)					_			United
	Australia	Canada	China	Kong	Colombia	source"	(2018)	(2022-)	Kazakhstan		(2012-)	Malaysia	Mexico			Switzerland		Kingdom Un , loeland, Ireland, Ital
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Total e-commerce turnover B2B and B2G		\$%"		\$%		\$%				\$		\$	%		\$%		\$	\$
Total e-commerce turnover B2B				\$%			\$			\$		\$					\$	
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Turnover from EDI-type sales				\$%		\$%												\$
Turnover from web sales				\$%		\$%			\$		\$					%		\$
Turnover from sales via own websites or apps				\$%		\$%			\$								\$	\$
Turnover from sales via e-commerce marketplaces				\$%		\$%		\$	\$									\$
Domestic / international split		\$%"			\$%	\$%					\$	\$					\$	\$%
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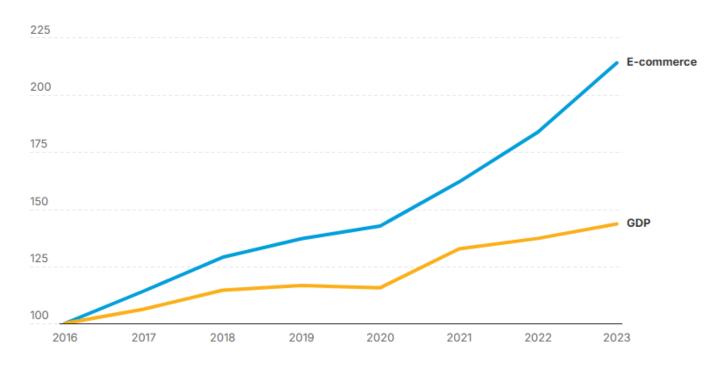
Data insights (i)





E-commerce sales by businesses are growing rapidly

Business e-commerce sales value and GDP, in current prices (indices, 2016=100)



Source: UN Trade and Development, UNCTADstat.

Note: Indices represent the same 36 developed and developing economies which account for two thirds of global GDP.

See metadata.

The Internet offers businesses a new form of "shop window" that is visible Worldwide and can be open for orders 24/7. Their customers - including businesses, consumers, and government entities increasingly embrace the convenience, choice, and price advantages offered by e-commerce ordering for both goods and services. As a result, the value of businesses' e-commerce sales has grown rapidly, based on the statistics available across 36 developed and developing economies which account for two thirds of global GDP.

This trend accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023), when both businesses and their customers turned to e-commerce to mitigate disruption to other sales channels, including in-store sales and business-to-business sales made in-person.

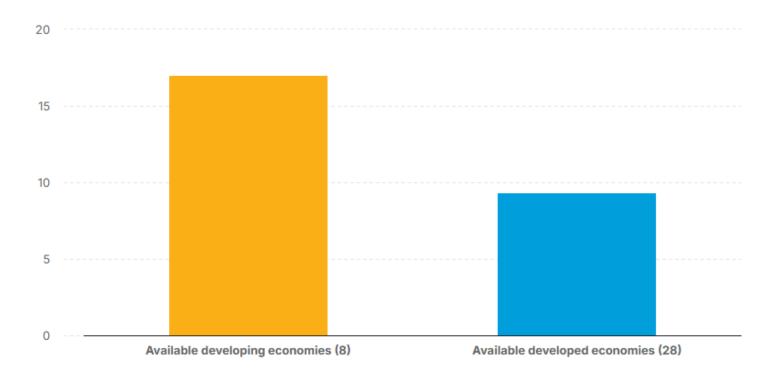
> Data insights (ii)





The fastest growth of e-commerce is in developing economies

Annual average growth in business e-commerce sales value, 2016-2023



Source: UN Trade and Development, UNCTADstat.

See metadata.

E-commerce ordering is relatively widely offered as a sales channel by businesses in many developed economies. Although adoption and the value of e-commerce sales are still increasing (with the latter also affected by changes in prices for goods and services sold), digital ordering will have already been implemented by many of the businesses for which it is most suited.

By contrast, many developing economies are experiencing rapid digitalisation, including of ordering processes. Over 2016-2023, the average annual growth rate of e-commerce sales across the developing economies for which figures are available was almost double that of developed economies.



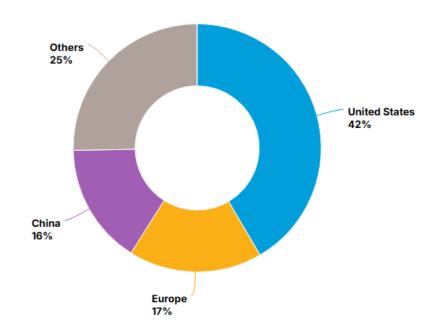
Data insights (iii)





The United States, Europe, and China are the largest e-commerce markets

Share in total observed e-commerce sales (average 2021-2023)



Source: UN Trade and Development, UNCTADstat.

See metadata.

Based on the limited e-commerce data available, covering 36 economies, the United States of America, Europe, and China are the largest e-commerce markets. Consumer demand for goods and services is one important factor. However, in most economies for which details are available, business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce sales account for the majority of e-commerce sales by value. The total number and value of e-commerce transactions within an economy includes these B2B sales of goods and services for use as intermediate inputs by businesses, as well as e-commerce sales of the products they are used as inputs for. The existence within the United States, Europe, and China of highly integrated, complex, and digitalized supply chains for manufacturing, retail, and other business activities, as well as these economies' integration in global value chains, is therefore a key driver for the extent of e-commerce observed.



Digitally ordered exports



International e-commerce sales - digitally ordered trade, by partner economy, annual (analytical) 1 Last updated 28 Nov. 2025

BULK CSV APP - C ?

- A second table collates figures on international e-commerce.
- Including detail on trading partners, where available.
- Considerable variation in the partners reported by different economies.

NO imputation for missing values!

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Thank you to all who work to produce e-commerce value statistics, without which this initiative would not be possible!

Feedback is very welcome.

- E-commerce sales, annual (analytical): https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.ECommerceTotal
- International e-commerce sales digitally ordered trade, by partner economy, annual (analytical): https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.ECommerceInternational
- E-commerce data insight: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/260
- Full economy notes: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/UnctadStatMetadata/Documentation/E-commerce_EconomyNotes.xlsx