



UNCTAD/GDS/DSI/MISC/2020/4

# INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES

## 2019

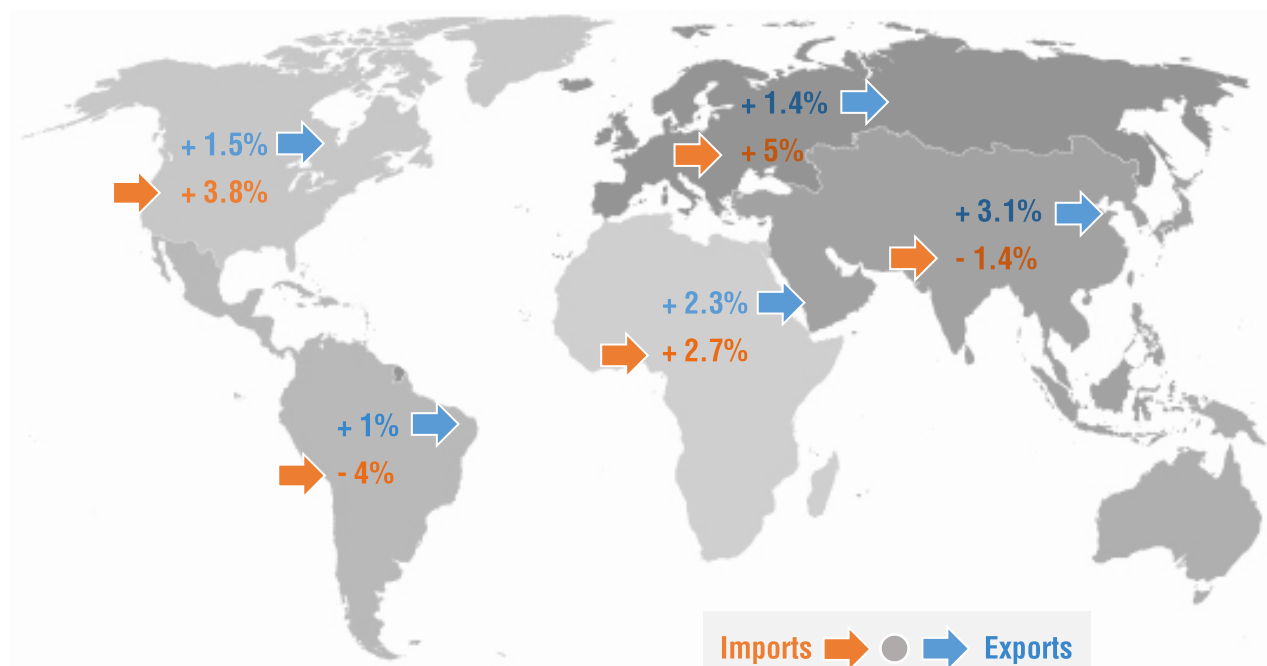
World services trade reached US\$6.2 trillion in 2019, representing 24% of total international trade in both goods and services. Measured in current US\$, global trade in services rose modestly by 2%. Most regions witnessed relatively comparable export growth, the highest recorded in Asia and Oceania (3.1%). On the imports side, the growth reported was more uneven. In 2019, Europe's imports went 5% up, while those of Latin America and the Caribbean dropped by 4%. Asia and Oceania also imported less, by 1.4%.

	World trade in services Trillions of US\$			% of total trade in goods and services in 2019 *
	2018	2019	Growth %	
Exports	6.027	6.144	1.9	24.8
Imports	5.708	5.826	2.1	24.2

\* Estimates

**US\$6.1 trillion**  
**World services exports**  
**+1.9%**

**Figure 1. Annual growth rate of total services exports and imports by region, 2019 (percentages)**

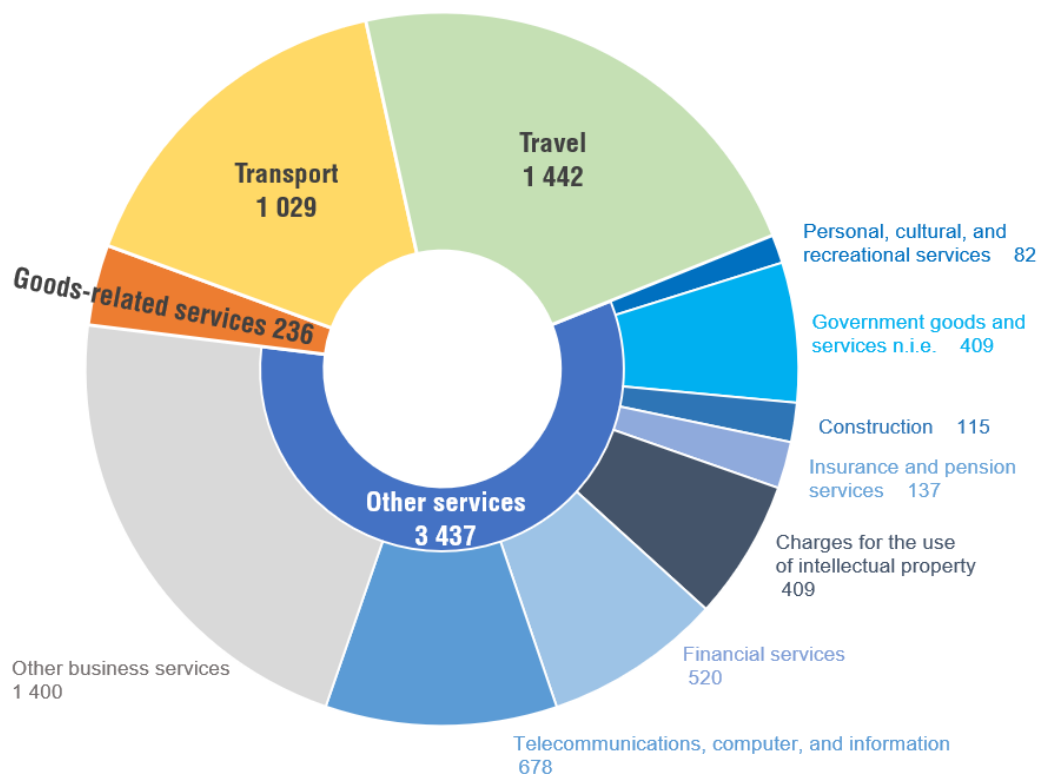


## Structure of world services exports

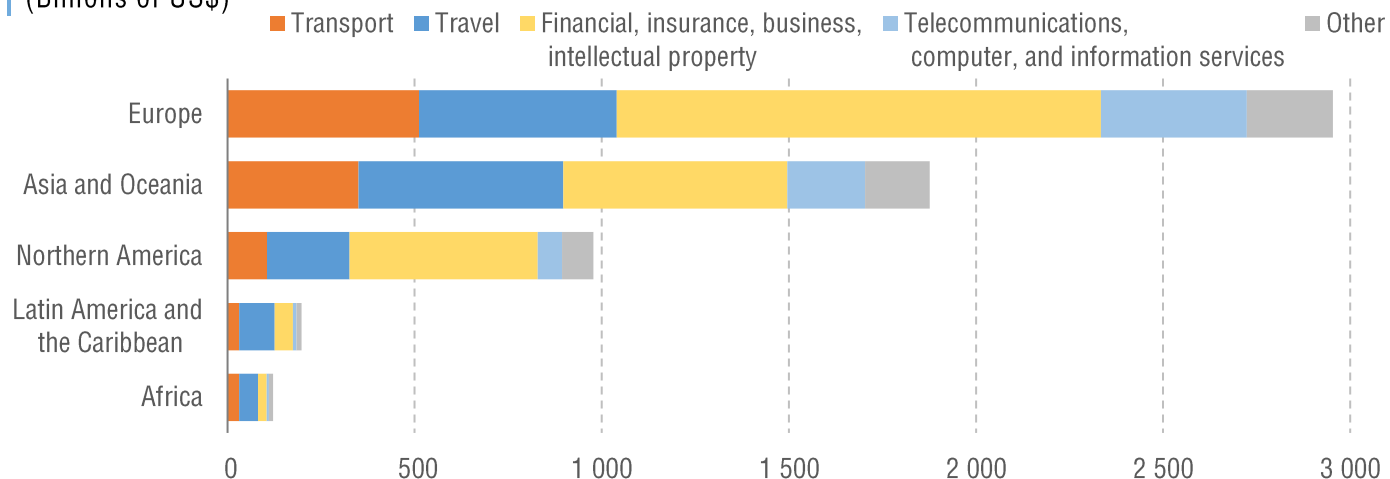
At US\$1.4 trillion and 24% of global services exports, travel was the most traded service in 2019. At 23%, various business services came second, while transport was third, taking 17%.

In regions mainly comprised of developed countries, the services sector is dominated by various business and intellectual property services and financial and insurance services. This is the case in Europe and Northern America. In Asia and Oceania, those services represent 32% of total exports of the sector. African and Latin American services exports are dominated by travel, representing 42% and 48% of the total, respectively.

**Figure 2. World services exports by service-category, 2019**  
(Billions of US\$)



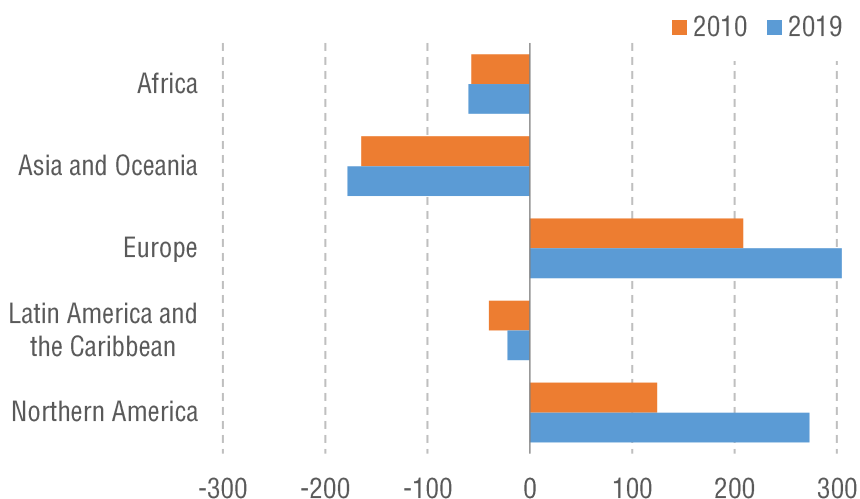
**Figure 3. Exports of services by region and service-category, 2019**  
(Billions of US\$)



## Regional trade balance

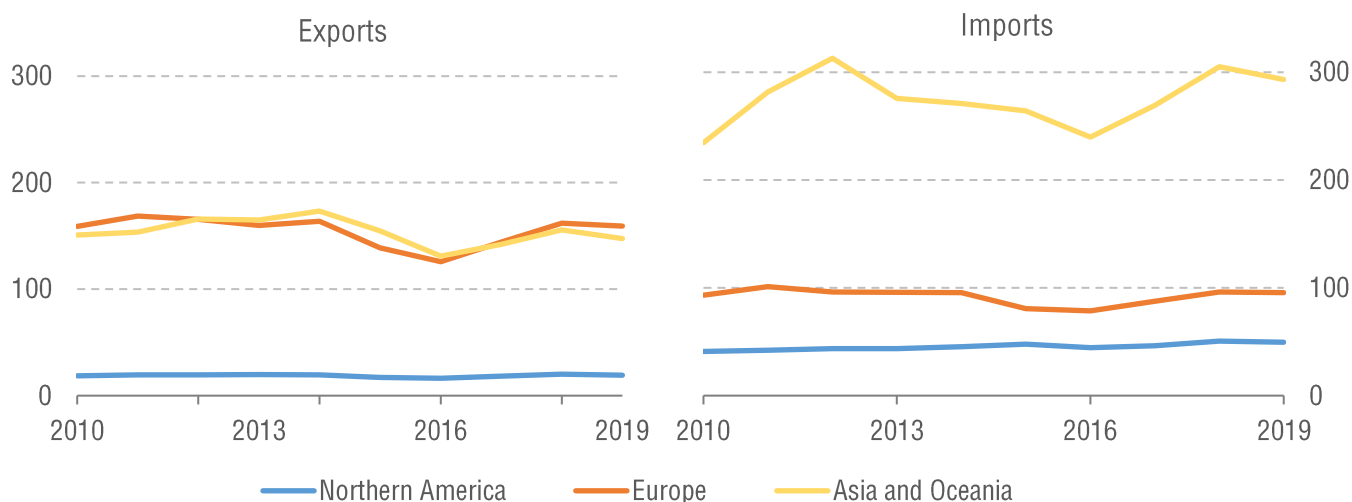
In services trade, Europe and Northern America have for years been running substantial and growing surpluses. On the other side, Asia and Oceania have been recording increasing deficits. Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have also run persistent, although much smaller deficits.

**Figure 4. Services trade balance by region**  
(Billions of US\$)



Freight accounted for some 50% of total transport services supplied internationally in 2019. After two years on the rise, freight trade slowed down in all leading trade regions. Europe and Asia and Oceania both recorded about US\$150 billion worth of maritime and air freight exports in 2019. At the same time, Asia and Oceania's imports stood at US\$293 billion, while Europe reported US\$95 billion. Northern America is a net importer of maritime and air freight. At US\$50 billion, its imports represented more than twice its exports, the latter recorded at US\$19 billion for 2019.

**Figure 5. Maritime and air freight services trade by selected regions**  
(Billions of US\$)



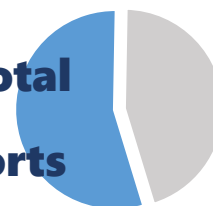
## Leading exporters and importers in 2019

Economic groupings	Leading exporters	Billions of US\$	Annual % change	Leading importers	Billions of US\$	Annual % change
Developing economies	China	283	4.3	China	501	-4.7
	India	214	4.6	Singapore	199	-0.7
	Singapore	205	1.1	India	179	1.8
	Korea, Republic of	102	3.4	Korea, Republic of	126	-1.8
	China, Hong Kong SAR	101	-10.5	China, Hong Kong SAR	79	-3.2
	Thailand	82	5.9	Saudi Arabia	75	-10.6
	United Arab Emirates	73	2.3	United Arab Emirates	74	2.4
	Turkey	65	10	Brazil	69	-2.9
	China, Taiwan Province of	52	3.2	Thailand	59	7
	China, Macao SAR	43	-1.2	China, Taiwan Province of	57	0.3
Developed economies	United States of America	876	1.6	United States of America	588	4.7
	United Kingdom	416	1.7	Germany	365	-0.8
	Germany	341	-0.7	Ireland	321	46.5
	France	288	-2.3	United Kingdom	284	7.8
	Netherlands	264	6.4	France	263	-1.3
	Ireland	239	12.4	Netherlands	246	0.6
	Japan	205	6	Japan	204	1.4
	Spain	158	1.1	Italy	124	-1.8
	Italy	122	-1.1	Belgium	120	-2.6
	Switzerland, Liechtenstein	122	-4.1	Canada	115	-0.2
Transition economies	Russian Federation	63	-3	Russian Federation	99	4.5
	Ukraine	17	9.6	Ukraine	15	6.3
	Serbia	10	7.8	Kazakhstan	11	-4.6
	Belarus	10	8.8	Serbia	7	9.8
	Kazakhstan	8	6.2	Azerbaijan	6	-5.6



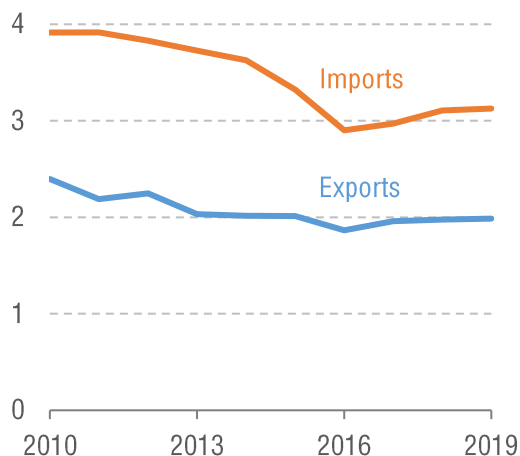
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**55% world total services exports**

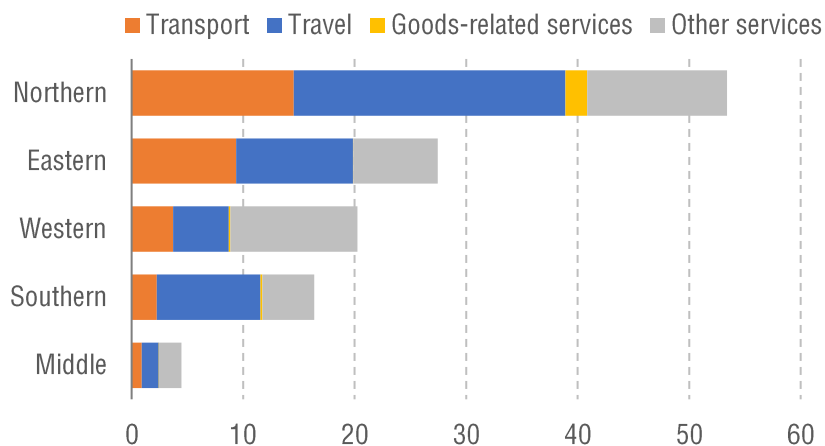


## Africa

**Figure 6. Share of Africa in the world services trade (percentage)**



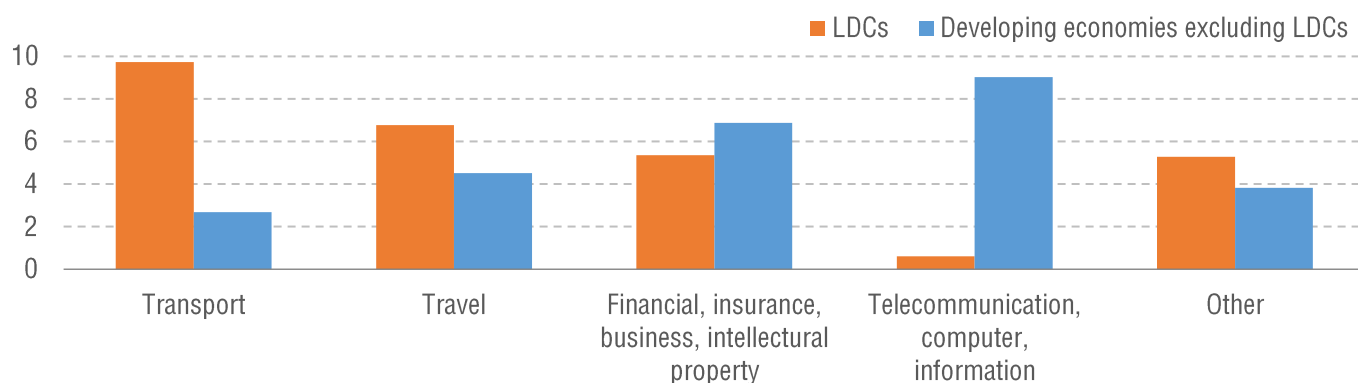
**Figure 7. Services exports in Africa by region and service-category, 2019 (billions of US\$)**



From 2010 to 2016, Africa's already low share in world services trade has been on the decline. Over the last three years, the trend has been reversed and the continent's participation in international services trade has slightly increased. Travel and transport represent significant shares in African services exports. Only in Western Africa other services have a more prominent role, covering over 55% of exports.

## Least developed countries (LDCs)

**Figure 8. Annual average growth rate of exports by service-category, 2010-2019 (percentage)**



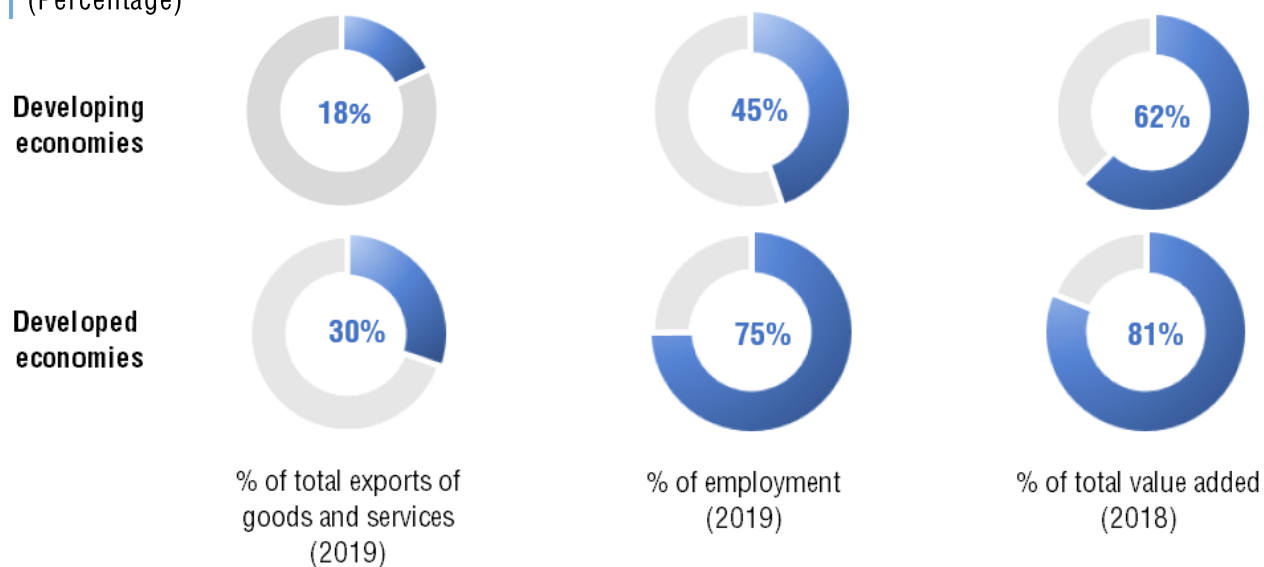
In 2019, LDCs accounted for a modest 1% of global services trade. However, in many service categories, exports from LDCs were growing much faster than those of other developing economies over the last decade. This is particularly true for transport and travel. In financial, insurance, and business services, LDCs are catching up with the average growth achieved by the developing world. Available statistics indicate that it has been more difficult for LDCs to sell telecommunications or computer services abroad.

## Services trade by partner: selected economies and top 5 partners, 2018

Economies	Exports to	Billions of US\$	Share %	Imports from	Billions of US\$	Share %
Malaysia	World	40	100	World	45	100
	Singapore	10	24.7	Singapore	9	20.6
	United States of America	5	12.7	China	6	13.4
	China	4	9.9	United States of America	5	10.4
	Indonesia	3	8.0	United Kingdom	3	6.0
	United Kingdom	2	4.8	Japan	3	5.8
	World	127	100	World	106	100
Switzerland, Liechtenstein	United States of America	19	15.3	United States of America	25	23.9
	Germany	15	11.6	Germany	16	15.2
	United Kingdom	11	8.3	United Kingdom	9	8.8
	France	8	6.0	France	7	6.2
	Italy	6	4.8	Italy	5	5.1

## Why are services important?

**Figure 9. Contribution of the services sector to economy**  
(Percentage)



Sources: UNCTAD (trade), UNCTAD calculations based on ILO data (employment) and UNSD (value added)

## Notes

The definition of services follows the IMF *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, Sixth Edition (BPM6)* classification. It reads as follows: “Services are the result of a production activity that changes the conditions of the consuming units or facilitates the exchange of products or financial assets. Services are not generally separate items over which ownership rights can be established and cannot generally be separated from their production.”

The BPM6 services include 12 main sub-categories: manufacturing services; maintenance and repair; transport; travel; construction; insurance and pension services; financial services; intellectual property charges; telecommunications, computer and information; other business services; personal, cultural and recreational services; and government goods and services n.i.e. For this presentation, some categories have been grouped.

Goods-related services consist of manufacturing services on physical inputs owned by others, and of maintenance and repair services.

Unless otherwise specified, the figures are sourced from the joint UNCTAD and WTO dataset on international trade in services, produced in cooperation with ITC and UNSD.

*Disclaimer: The publication has not been formally edited*