



UNCTAD/GDS/DSI/MISC/2021/2

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES Q4 2020

International trade in services dropped by 20% in 2020. This represents an unprecedented downturn in decades at the world level. Expectedly, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the travel sector hardest: international travel receipts – excluding passengers transport – declined severely, by 63%.

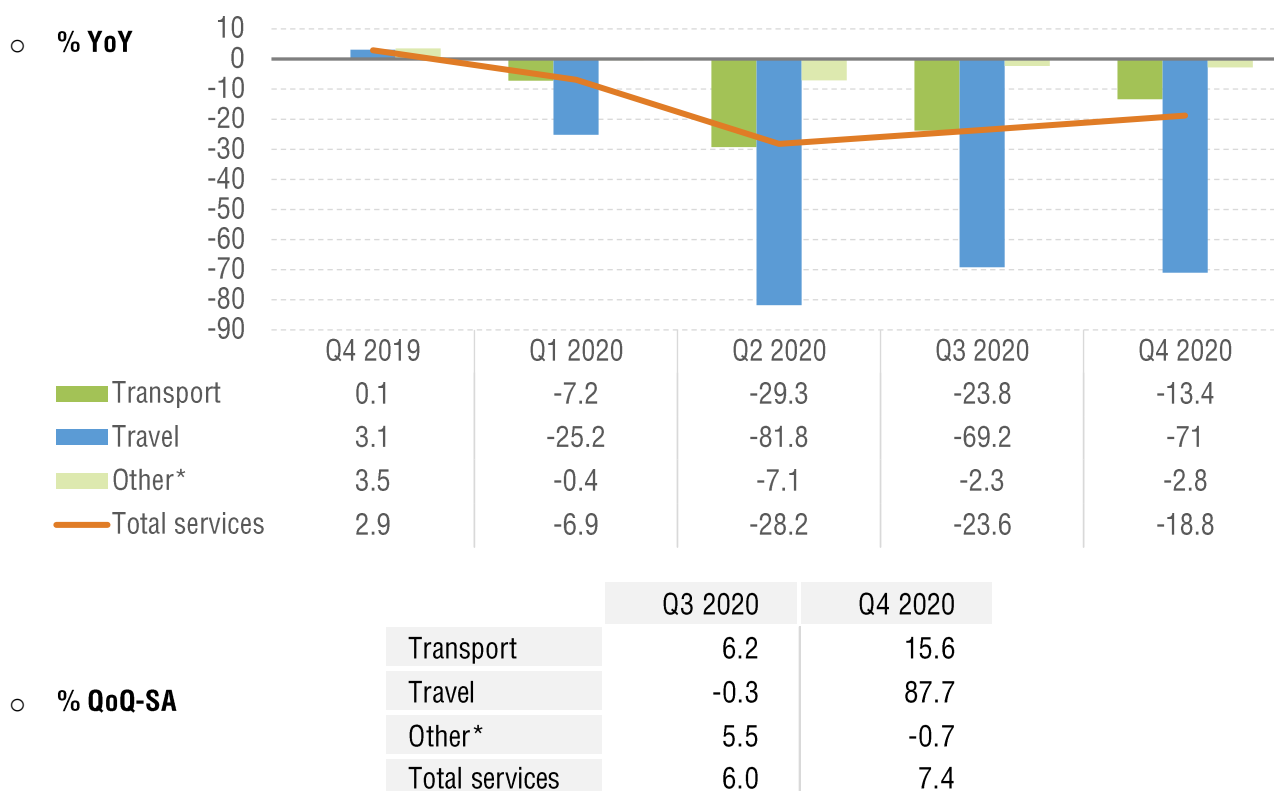
In the last quarter of 2020, total services trade fell by 19%, travel by 71%, and transport by 13%, year-on-year (YoY). Other services, many of which can be traded remotely, marked a 3% decline (YoY).

Seasonally adjusted quarter-on-quarter growth suggests that, in Q3 and Q4 2020, total services trade regained 6% and 7%, respectively, following the abrupt downturn observed in Q2.

Global services exports  
Year 2020  
(estimates) **-20%**

Q4 2020  
YoY **-18.8%**

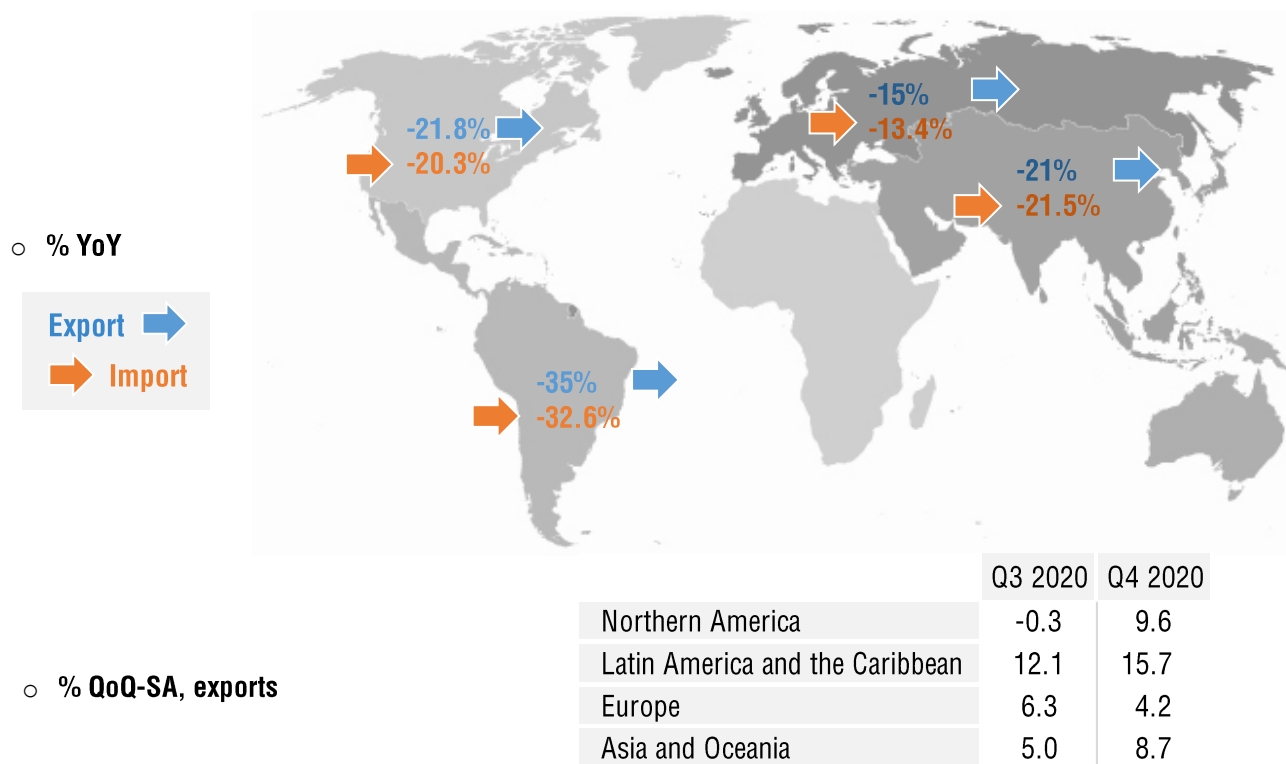
**Figure 1. Global services exports growth rate**



## Regional developments



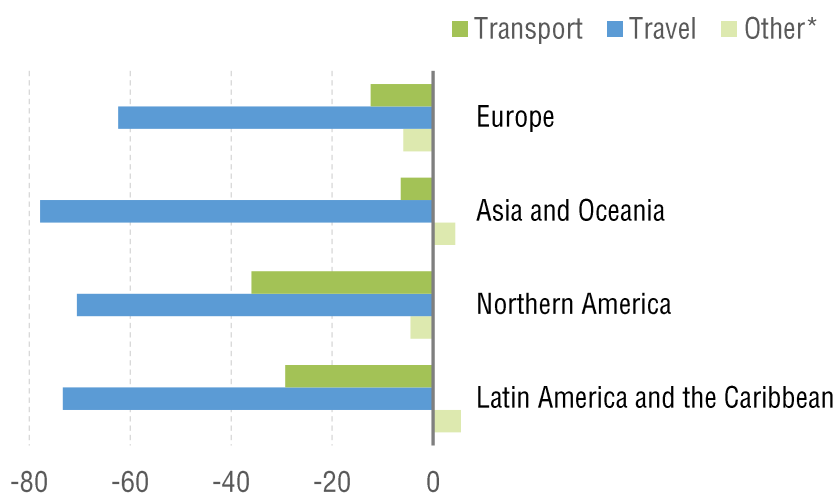
**Figure 2. Growth rate of total services trade by region, Q4 2020**



From a regional perspective, Q4 YoY growth was negative everywhere, with highest relative losses observed in Latin America and the Caribbean: of over 30% in both exports and imports. The lowest downturn in total services trade was recorded for Europe, remaining below 15% for exports and imports.

All regions lost over 60% of international travel receipts in Q4 2020, YoY. The drop in travel exports recorded for Asia and Oceania reached almost 80%. Heavy declines in transport exports were observed in Q4 for Northern America (-36%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (-30%). Services other than transport and travel had a negative YoY growth in Europe and Northern America in the last quarter of 2020. Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and Oceania exported more of those services than in Q4 2019, both regions recording a YoY rise of some 5%.

**Figure 3. Services exports growth rates by region, Q4 2020 (% YoY)**



Note: Regions with insufficient data coverage are not presented.

## Leading exporters in Q4 2020



Developing economies	Billions of US\$	% change YoY	% change QoQ-SA
China	80	5.5	4.3
India	-	-	-
Singapore	49	-12.7	5.9
Korea, Republic of	26	-2.5	12.2
China, Hong Kong SAR	16	-28.3	-5.3
China, Taiwan Province of	11	-16.9	0.9
Turkey	11	-34.0	160.3
Philippines	8	-25.0	5.0
Brazil	7	-16.9	7.8
Thailand	-	-	-

Developed economies	Billions of US\$	% change YoY	% change QoQ-SA
United States of America	176	-22.5	7.4
Germany	87	-8.1	4.4
France	69	-5.3	6.7
Netherlands	69	-7.4	-0.4
United Kingdom	-	-	-
Ireland	-	-	-
Japan	38	-25.7	0.7
Belgium	32	-8.2	-1.9
Luxembourg	31	6.1	6.5
Switzerland	-	-	-

## Leading importers in Q4 2020



Developing economies	Billions of US\$	% change YoY	% change QoQ-SA
China	96	-20.9	0.6
Singapore	44	-17.9	3.4
India	-	-	-
Korea, Republic of	28	-14.9	5.1
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	-	-	-
China, Hong Kong SAR	13	-33.7	2.1
Brazil	12	-32.8	0.0
Thailand	-	-	-
China, Taiwan Province of	10	-32.3	14.0
Malaysia	8	-24.3	3.7

Developed economies	Billions of US\$	% change YoY	% change QoQ-SA
United States of America	118	-18.7	13.5
Ireland	-	-	-
Germany	82	-17.2	4.7
France	64	-4.7	9.9
Netherlands	64	-11.0	2.0
Japan	47	-6.4	1.1
United Kingdom	-	-	-
Belgium	33	-3.9	1.4
Switzerland	-	-	-
Italy	25	-22.3	6.7

Note: Non-publishable preliminary estimates are represented by a hyphen ("-").



The trade in services statistics included follow the IMF Balance of Payments Manual 6 (BPM6, 2009) classification.

Quarterly estimates are based on the statistics available in national and international sources for some 150 economies, representing over 85% of total international services trade.

\* *Other* represents a heterogeneous group of products dominated by various business services, telecommunications and computer services, intellectual-property, insurance and financial services. They are further comprised of construction, personal, cultural and recreational services, and government goods and services (n.i.e.). For this presentation, manufacturing, processing and repair services are also included under *other*.

The seasonally adjusted figures are UNCTAD secretariat's estimates compiled for a selection of main services items, using the X-11 seasonal adjustment method. Each series was adjusted based on its values in current US\$. Consequently, the seasonally adjusted total services do not represent the exact sum of relevant seasonally adjusted sub-categories. In the same way, the seasonally adjusted series for groups of economies do not represent the exact sum of the seasonally adjusted country-level series.

Due to the confinement measures in response to the outbreak of COVID-19, several data providers and compilers declared they could not apply the usual level of diligence in the compilation of the data for 2020. This should be considered in the analysis and interpretation of these data.

YoY            year-on-year  
QoQ-SA        quarter-on-quarter, seasonally adjusted

Source: UNCTAD-WTO-ITC data set on international trade in services.

Source, seasonal adjustment: UNCTAD

Find the underlying data on [UNCTADstat](https://unctadstat.unctad.org/)