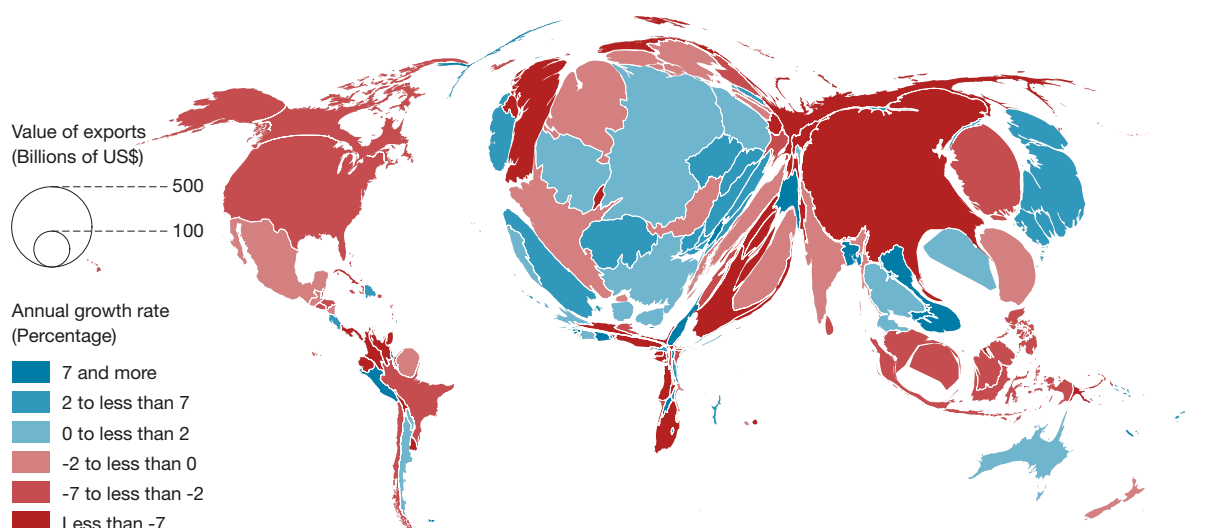




Fact sheet #1: Total merchandise trade

Map 1 | Total merchandise exports, 2016



Concepts and definitions

The figures on international merchandise trade in this chapter measure the value of goods which add or subtract from the stock of material resources of an economy by entering or leaving its territory (United Nations, 2011). This definition is slightly different from the definition of trade in goods in the balance-of-payments framework (see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2017, chapter 3.2).

The value of exports is mostly recorded as the free-on-board (FOB) value, whereas the value of imports includes cost (for clearance), insurance and freight (CIF).

The trade balance is calculated as the difference between the values of exports and imports.

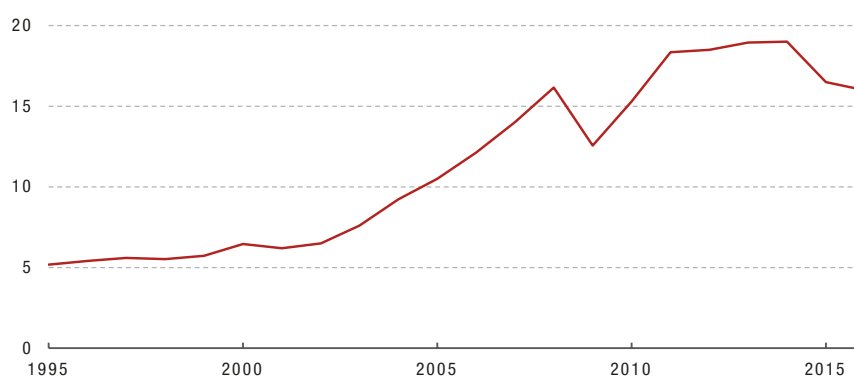
Global trends and patterns

In 2016, world merchandise trade valued in United States dollars decreased for the second year in a row. Global exports of US\$16.0 trillion were recorded, that is, US\$502 billion (3 per cent) less than in 2015. World exports thus fell below 2008 levels (US\$16.1 trillion), the year of the outbreak of the global financial crisis.

China (US\$2.1 trillion), the United States of America (US\$1.5 trillion) and Germany (US\$1.3 trillion) were the world's largest exporting economies. In general, exports were dominated by developed economies. Exports of many developing economies in Africa and America were low relative to their size.

In spite of the global decline in trade, many large exporters in Europe as well as in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia increased their sales of goods on the world market in 2016.

Figure 1 | World merchandise exports
(Trillions of United States dollars)

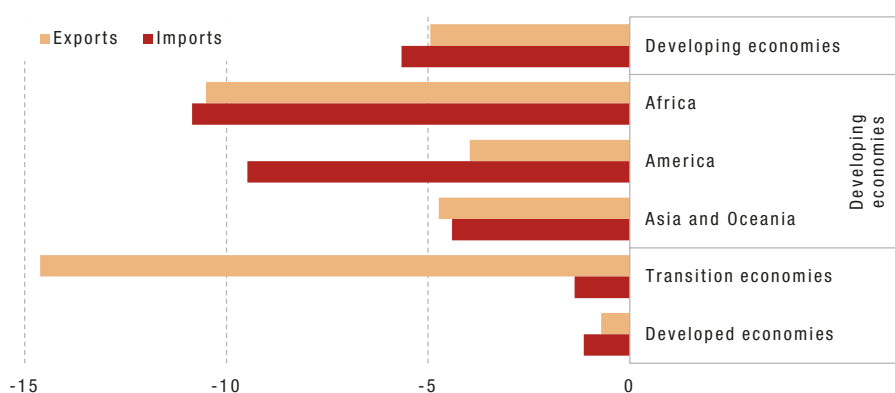




Different exposure to the decline in trade

Transition economies recorded a particularly steep decrease (-15 per cent) in merchandise exports. The fact that imports decreased much less (-1 per cent) had a negative effect on their aggregate trade balance. Developing economies in Africa were also relatively strongly affected by the decline in trade, both for exports (-11 per cent) and imports (-11 per cent). Developing economies in America experienced a sizeable drop (-9 per cent) in their imports and a smaller decrease in exports (-4%).

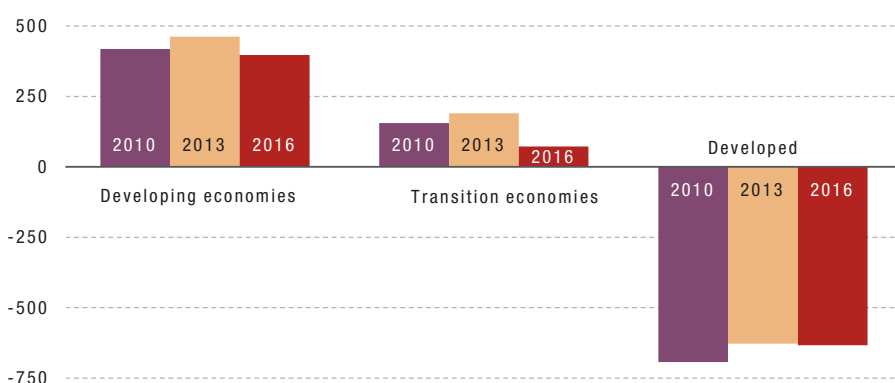
Figure 2 | Merchandise trade annual growth rates, 2016
(Percentage)



Trade imbalances decreasing

In 2016, as in the past, developing and transition economies recorded merchandise trade surpluses and developed economies a merchandise trade deficit. The surpluses of developing and transition economies were lower than was the case three years earlier. The surplus for developing economies totaled US\$397 billion, accounting for 6 per cent of their merchandise imports. Excluding China, the result would be a deficit equivalent to 2 per cent. For least developed countries (LDCs), the deficit amounted to 33 per cent of imports.

Figure 3 | Merchandise trade balance*
(Billions of United States dollars)



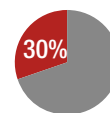
*Sum of the trade balances of individual economies, including intra-group trade.

For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2017, annex 6.4.

World trade
declines
two years in a row



China, the United States of America and Germany
account for
30%
of global exports



Transition economies' exports
down by
15% in
2016



The trade surpluses
of developing and
transition economies
declined
over the last
three years

