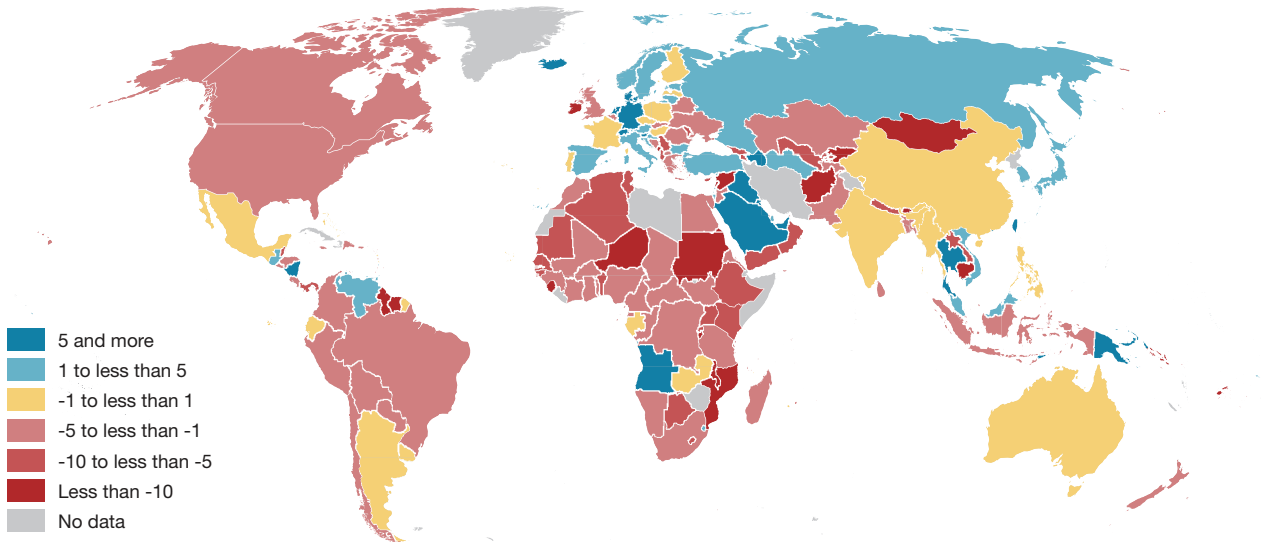


# Fact sheet #8: Current account

Map 1 | Current account balance as per cent of gross domestic product, 2019



## Concepts and definitions

The current account, within the balance of payments, displays the transactions between residents and non-residents of a reporting economy, involving economic values, namely the cross-national exchange of goods and services as well as cross-national transfers of primary and secondary income.

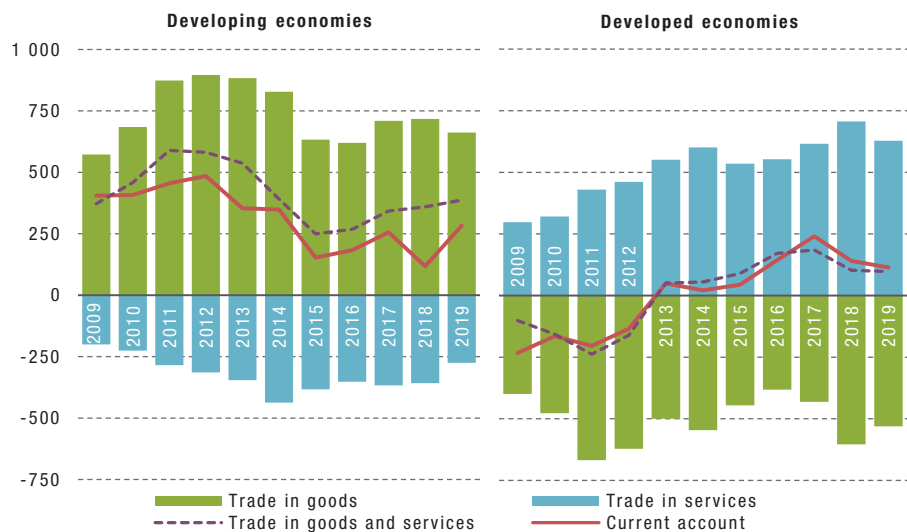
The current account balance shows the difference between the sum of exports and income receivable and the sum of imports and income payable, where exports and imports refer to both goods and services, while income refers to both primary and secondary income. A surplus in the current account is recorded when receipts exceed expenditures; a deficit is recorded when expenditures exceed receipts.

The current account data in this section correspond to the latest reporting standard, known as BPM6, defined by the International Monetary Fund (2009).

## Current account imbalances across the world

Receipts earned by economies from transactions with other economies often differ significantly from payments made. In 2019, for most economies in America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, payments exceeded receipts, leading to negative current account balances. High surpluses were found mainly in petroleum exporting economies. In Central and Western Europe, Southern and Eastern Asia and Oceania, accounts were generally more balanced.

Figure 1 | Balances in the current account (Billions of United States dollars)



Note: Current account deficits and surpluses do not add up to zero at the world level, due to imperfect geographic coverage and cross-country differences in compilation methods.



Kiribati recorded a current account surplus half as high as its GDP in 2019. Macao SAR enjoyed a surplus of 33 per cent and Tuvalu of 27 per cent. High deficits relative to GDP were observed in several small island states, such as Anguilla (41 per cent), Guyana (41 per cent), Dominica (28 per cent), and the Maldives (26 per cent).

In absolute terms, the United States of America (US\$480 billion) and the United Kingdom (US\$113 billion) ran the world's largest current account deficits. Germany (US\$275 billion) had the largest absolute surplus, followed by Japan (US\$185 billion) and China (US\$141 billion).

### Recent developments

In 2019, the current account surplus of developing economies more than doubled (US\$283 billion) compared with 2018 (US\$118 billion), although their surplus of trade in goods and services showed only a modest increase (from US\$359 million to US\$387 million). Geographically, the increase in the current account balance can largely be attributed to a growing surplus in Asian developing economies (from US\$313 billion to US\$462 billion, including Oceania), combined with a shrinking deficit in developing economies in America (from US\$128 billion to US\$88 billion). The current account surplus of developed economies stood at US\$114 billion in 2019, almost 20 per cent lower than in 2018.

**Figure 2** Balances in least developed countries' current accounts  
(Billions of United States dollars)

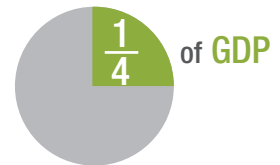


### Modest balance improvement in least developed countries

After five years of continuous decline, the current account balance of LDCs shows a slightly increasing trend since 2015, resulting in a reduction of their deficit from US\$59 billion to US\$40 billion. The trade balance has nevertheless remained almost unchanged since 2016, at slightly below -US\$90 billion.

The high relative current account deficit, accounting for 3.6 per cent of GDP in 2019, distinguishes LDCs from other developing economies, which, as a group, ran a surplus of only 0.9 per cent of GDP. Higher deficits relative to GDP were registered for the groups of the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) (5.2 per cent) and the LLDCs (3.7 per cent). In small island developing States (SIDS), the deficit was 2.9 per cent of GDP.

Current account deficits larger than



in several SIDS

United States of America had world's



largest deficit in 2019: US\$480 billion

Developing economies' surplus up by 140% from 2018 to 2019



LDCs' deficit reduced to



US\$40 billion


**Table 1** Current account balance by group of economies

Group of economies	Value			Ratio to GDP		
	(Billions of US\$)			(Percentage)		
	2015–2019 <sup>a</sup>	2018	2019	2015–2019 <sup>a</sup>	2018	2019
Developing economies	199	118	283	0.6	0.3	0.8
Developing economies: Africa	-103	-72	-96	-4.5	-3.0	-3.8
Developing economies: America	-114	-128	-88	-2.1	-2.3	-1.6
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	416	318	466	1.7	1.2	1.7
Transition economies	43	104	46	1.9	4.4	1.9
Developed economies	137	141	114	0.3	0.3	0.2
<b>Selected groups</b>						
Developing economies excluding China	25	92	141	0.1	0.5	0.7
Developing economies excluding LDCs	247	163	323	0.8	0.5	0.9
LDCs	-48	-46	-40	-4.7	-4.2	-3.6
LLDCs	-34	-26	-34	-4.3	-3.3	-3.7
SIDS (UNCTAD)	-4	-4	-3	-3.8	-4.3	-2.9
HIPCs (IMF)	-42	-40	-37	-6.6	-5.8	-5.2
BRICS	153	21	117	0.9	0.1	0.6
G20	202	116	195	0.3	0.2	0.3

Note: Current account deficits and surpluses do not add up to zero at the world level, due to imperfect geographic coverage and cross-country differences in compilation methods.

<sup>a</sup> Annual average.

**Table 2** Current account balance in largest surplus and deficit economies

Economy (Ranked by 2019 value)	2015–2019 <sup>a</sup>		2018		2019	
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Ratio to GDP
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)
Germany	288	7.9	293	7.4	275	7.2
Japan	179	3.7	176	3.5	185	3.6
China	174	1.5	25	0.2	141	1.0
Netherlands	78	9.2	99	10.8	90	10.0
Switzerland, Liechtenstein	66	9.5	58	8.1	86	12.1
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
Canada	-45	-2.8	-43	-2.5	-35	-2.0
Ireland	-4	-1.0	23	6.0	-45	-11.7
Brazil	-37	-2.0	-42	-2.2	-49	-2.7
United Kingdom	-120	-4.3	-110	-3.9	-113	-4.0
United States of America	-419	-2.1	-450	-2.2	-480	-2.2

<sup>a</sup> Annual average.

**Table 3** Current accounts of leading exporters (goods and services) by group of economies, 2019

Developing economies: Africa

Economy (Ranked by export share)	Current account balance		Trade balance <sup>a</sup>	Exports <sup>a</sup>	Imports <sup>a</sup>
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Share in world	Share in world
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
South Africa	-11	-3.0	2	0.4	0.4
Nigeria	-17	-3.6	(e) -31	(e) 0.3	(e) 0.4
Egypt	-10	-3.2	(e) -25	(e) 0.2	(e) 0.3
Morocco	-5	-4.2	-11	0.2	0.2
Algeria	-16	-9.3	-	-	-
<b>Developing Africa</b>	<b>-96</b>	<b>-3.8</b>	<b>-126</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Goods and services.



## Developing economies: America

Economy (Ranked by export share)	Current account balance		Trade balance <sup>a</sup>	Exports <sup>a</sup>	Imports <sup>a</sup>
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Share in world	Share in world
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
Mexico	-4	-0.3	(e) -1	(e) 2.0	(e) 2.0
Brazil	-49	-2.7	6	1.1	1.1
Chile	-11	-3.9	(e) 0	(e) 0.3	(e) 0.3
Argentina	-4	-0.9	13	0.3	0.3
Peru	(e) -3	(e) -1.4	(e) 4	(e) 0.2	(e) 0.2
<b>Developing America</b>	<b>-88</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>

<sup>a</sup> Goods and services.

## Developing economies: Asia and Oceania

Economy (Ranked by export share)	Current account balance		Trade balance <sup>a</sup>	Exports <sup>a</sup>	Imports <sup>a</sup>
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Share in world	Share in world
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
China	141	1.0	208	10.8	10.3
Korea, Republic of	60	3.6	(e) 53	(e) 2.7	(e) 2.5
China, Hong Kong SAR	22	6.1	6	2.6	2.7
Singapore	63	17.5	104	2.6	2.2
India	-30	-1.0	(e) -119	2.2	(e) 2.8
<b>Developing Asia and Oceania</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>32.3</b>

<sup>a</sup> Goods and services.

## Transition economies

Economy (Ranked by export share)	Current account balance		Trade balance <sup>a</sup>	Exports <sup>a</sup>	Imports <sup>a</sup>
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Share in world	Share in world
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
Russian Federation	65	3.8	(e) 128	(e) 1.9	(e) 1.5
Kazakhstan	-6	-3.7	16	0.3	0.2
Ukraine	-4	-2.7	-12	0.3	0.3
Belarus	-1	-1.9	0	0.2	0.2
Serbia	-4	-6.0	-4	0.1	0.1
<b>Transition economies</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.8</b>

<sup>a</sup> Goods and services.

## Developed economies

Economy (Ranked by export share)	Current account balance		Trade balance <sup>a</sup>	Exports <sup>a</sup>	Imports <sup>a</sup>
	Value	Ratio to GDP	Value	Share in world	Share in world
	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
United States of America	-480	-2.2	-577	10.2	12.9
Germany	275	7.2	(e) 224	(e) 7.3	(e) 6.6
Japan	185	3.6	(e) 5	(e) 3.6	(e) 3.7
United Kingdom	-113	-4.0	-33	3.6	3.8
France	-18	-0.7	(e) -27	(e) 3.6	(e) 3.8
<b>Developed economies</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>56.7</b>

<sup>a</sup> Goods and services.