

Data extracted in April 2023.

Planned article update: October 2024.

" Cars - exports to countries outside the EU reached a peak of € 158 billion in 2022. "

" Cars - 46 % of exports in Slovakia to countries outside the EU in 2022 were cars. "

" Cars - € 92 billion, 59 % of EU total made Germany the largest exporter in 2022. "

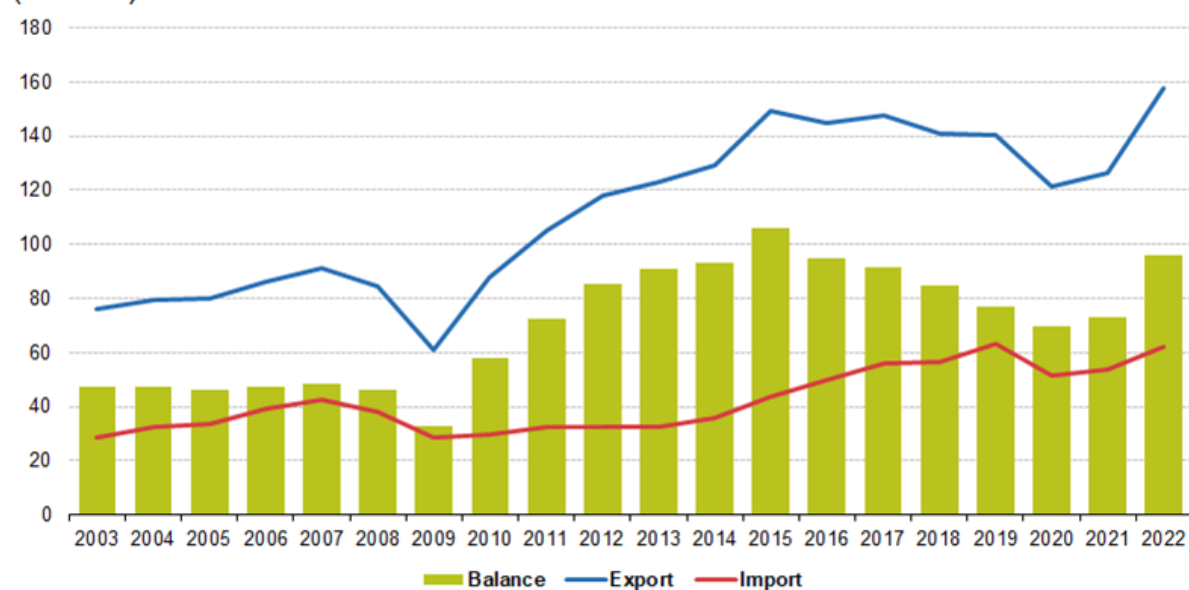
This article describes the development of trade in cars. The car industry is of prime importance to the economy of the [European Union](#) (EU) and plays a major role in international trade. This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main products traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

Car exports peaked in 2022

In 2022, the EU [exported](#) € 158 billion worth of cars, which was € 8 billion more than the previous peak of € 150 billion in 2015. [Imports](#) in 2022 amounted to € 62 billion, giving the EU a trade surplus of € 96 billion (Figure 1). The value of extra-EU trade in cars increased by an average of 3.8 % per year between 2002 and 2022 with imports (4.4 %) growing faster than exports (3.6 %).

EU exports, imports and trade balance in motor cars, 2002-2022

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

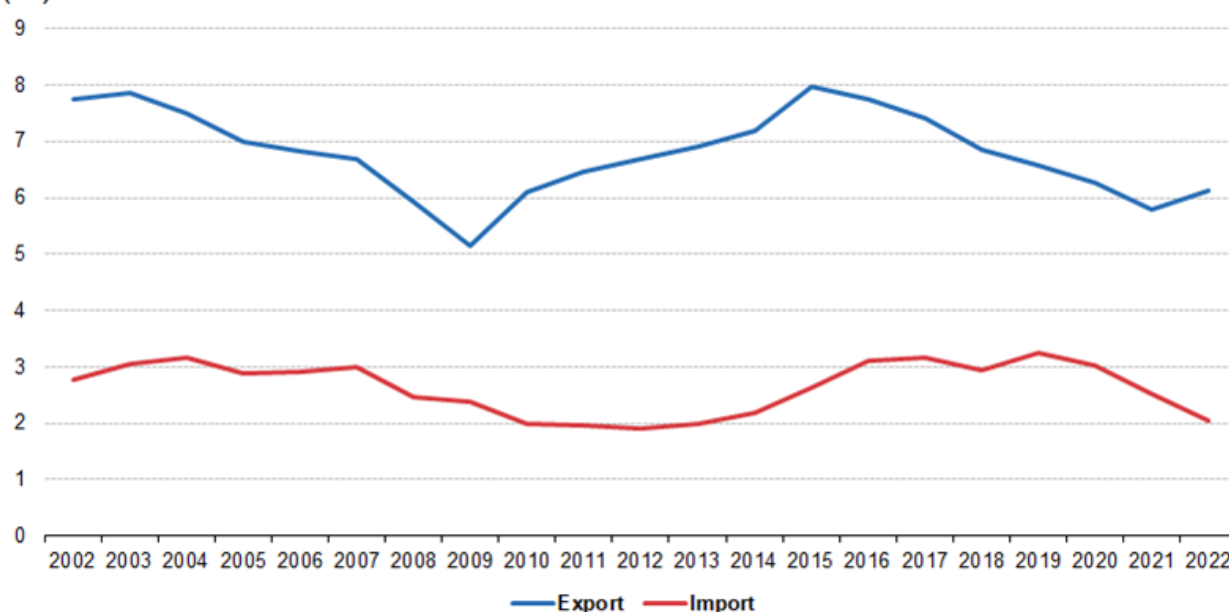
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Figure 1: EU exports, imports and trade balance in cars, 2002-2022 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

In 2002, the share of cars in total extra-EU exports of goods was 7.7 % (Figure 2). This share dropped to 5.2 % in 2009 and peaked at 8.0 % in 2015 and then dropped to 6.1 % in 2022. The share of cars in total extra-EU imports of goods was 2.8 % in 2002. It dropped to 1.9 % in 2012 and reached a peak of 3.3 % in 2019 before falling to 2.1 % in 2022.

Share of motor cars in total extra EU trade, 2002-2022

(%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 2: Share of cars in total extra-EU trade, 2002-2022 (%) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

The United Kingdom and the United States were the EU's biggest partners in trade of cars in 2022

In 2022, the United States was the main export destination of EU's cars (23 % of the total), ahead of the United Kingdom (17 %), China (15 %), South Korea, Switzerland (both 5 %), Japan and Türkiye (both 4 %). These seven partners made up almost three-quarters of extra-EU exports of cars.

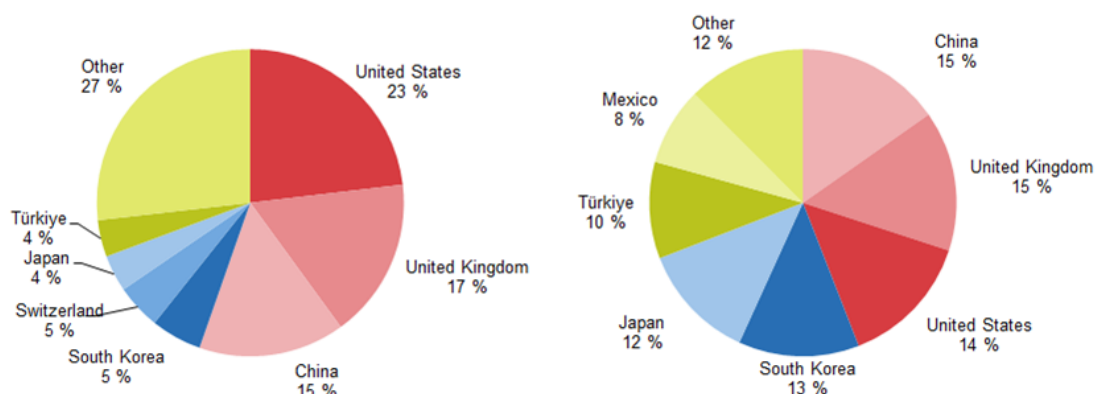
China and the United Kingdom (both 15 %) were the main origin of extra-EU imports, ahead of the United States (14 %), South Korea (13 %), Japan (12 %), Türkiye (10 %) and Mexico (8 %). Together the top seven made up 88 % of all extra-EU imports of cars. It should be noted that exports and imports relate to production within the corresponding country, regardless of the nationality of the factory.

Main extra EU partners for exports and imports of motor cars, 2022

(%)

Exports

Imports



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 3: Main extra-EU partners for exports and imports of cars, 2022 (%) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

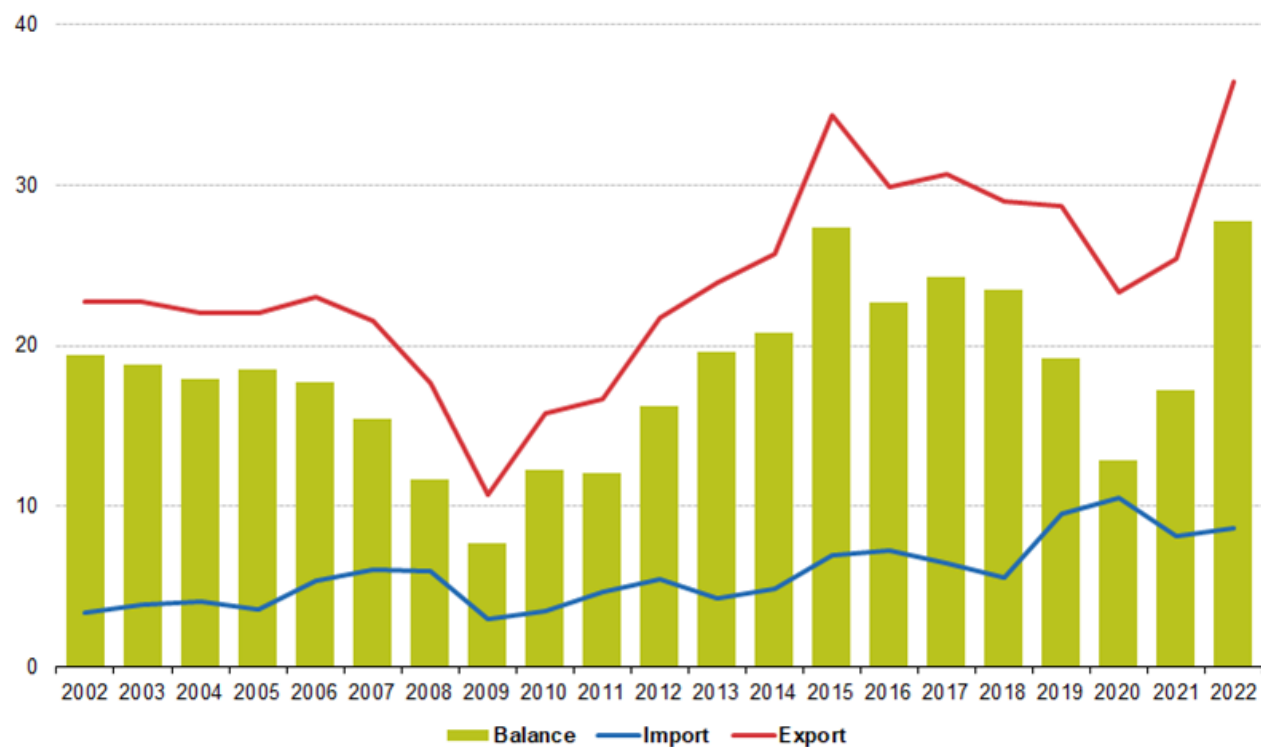
Between 2002 and 2008, exports of cars to the United States had already fallen from € 23 billion to € 18 billion (Figure 4). In 2009 they declined to € 11 billion, losing € 7 billion in only one year. However, there was a strong resurgence of exports, peaking at € 36 billion in 2022.

Imports from the United States grew from € 3 billion in 2002 to € 6 billion in 2008 but then halved in 2009. They peaked in 2020 at € 11 billion then dropped to € 9 billion in 2022.

During the whole period, the EU had a trade surplus for cars with the United States. It was lowest in 2009 (€ 8 billion) and highest in 2022 (€ 28 billion).

EU trade with the United States in motor cars, 2002-2022

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 4: EU trade with the United States in cars, 2002-2022 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

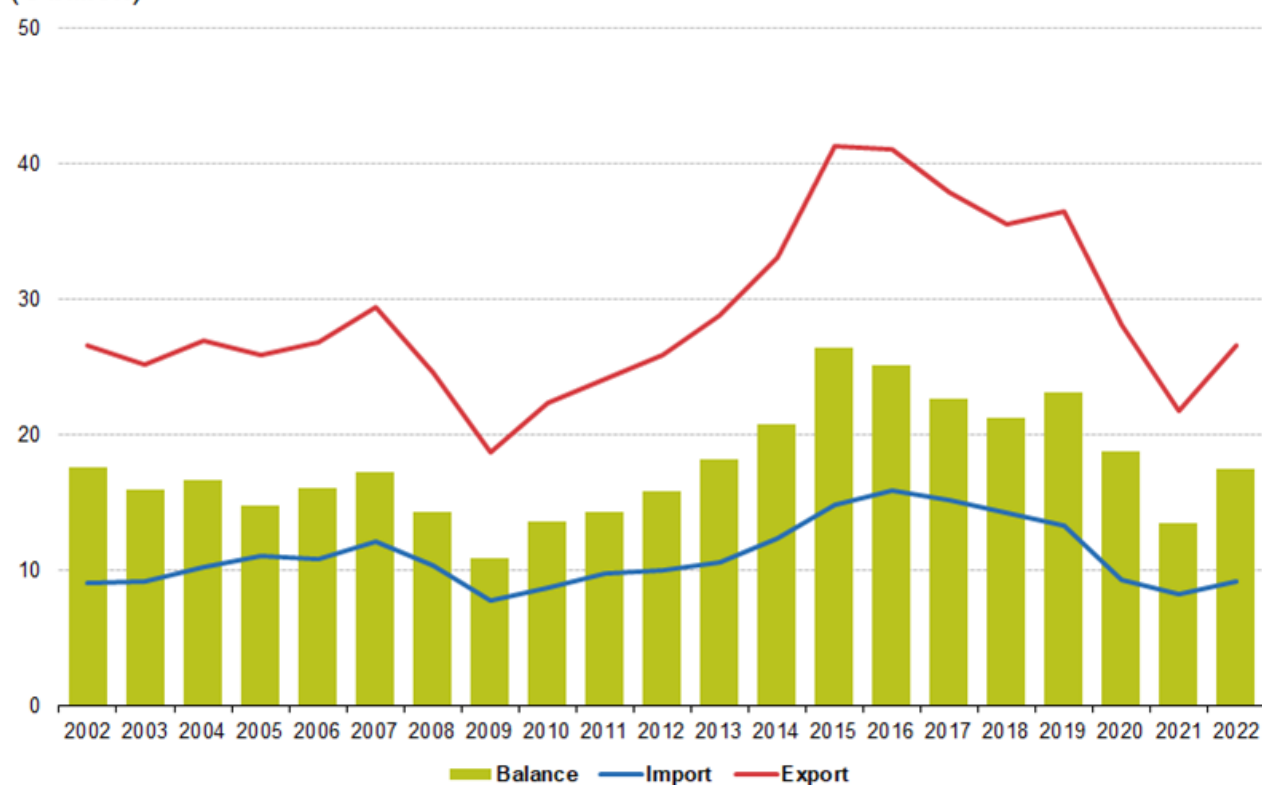
In 2002, exports of cars to the United Kingdom amounted to € 27 billion, which after some fluctuations dropped to € 19 billion in 2009 (Figure 5). After that, they increased to € 41 billion in 2015 and 2016, but dropped to € 27 billion in 2022.

Imports from the United Kingdom were € 9 billion in 2002, and remained between € 8 billion and € 12 billion until 2014. They increased to € 16 billion in 2016 after which they gradually fell to € 9 billion in 2022.

Between 2002 and 2022, the EU had a trade surplus for cars with the United Kingdom which peaked at € 26 billion in 2015. It dropped to € 17 billion in 2022.

EU trade with the United Kingdom in motor cars, 2002-2022

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

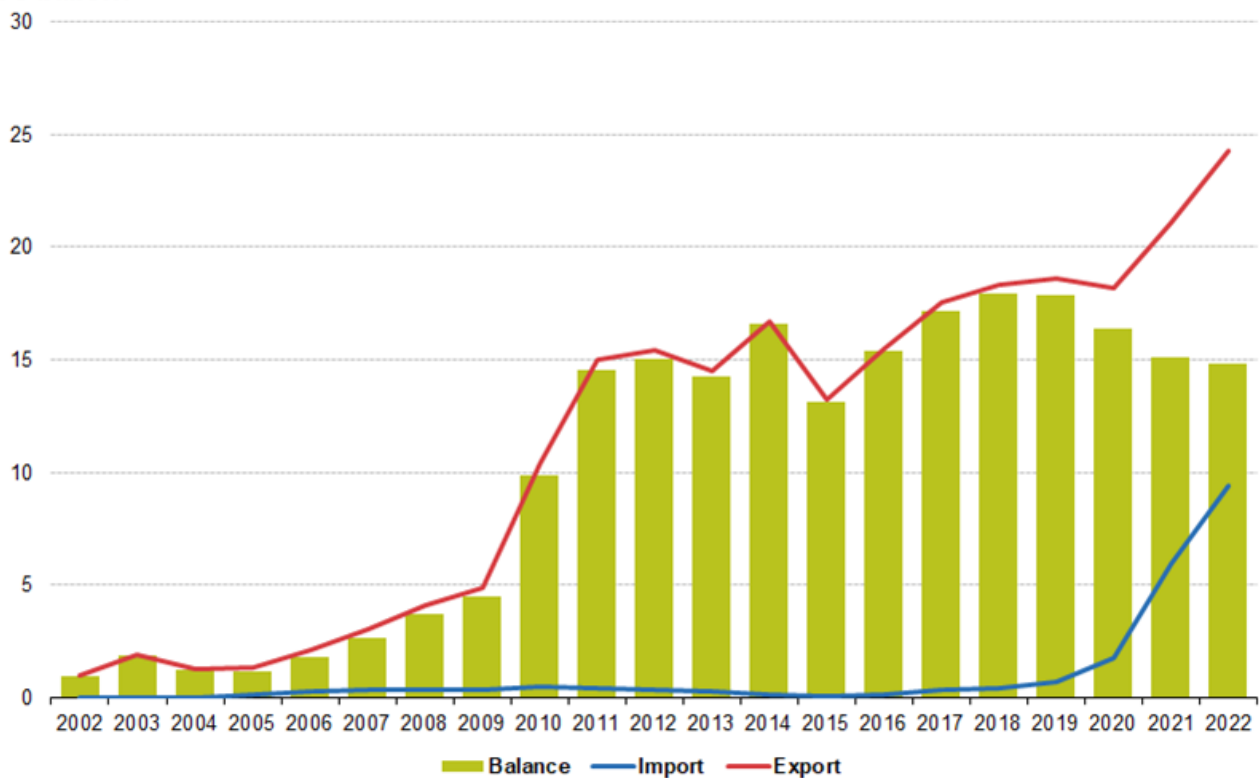
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Figure 5: EU trade with the United Kingdom in motor cars, 2002-2022 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

In 2002, exports of cars to China amounted to € 1 billion, increasing to € 5 billion in 2009 (Figure 6). After that, growth accelerated to peak at € 24 billion in 2022. There were few imports of cars from China until 2019, but the growth in recent years reached € 9 billion in 2022.

EU trade with China in motor cars, 2002-2022

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

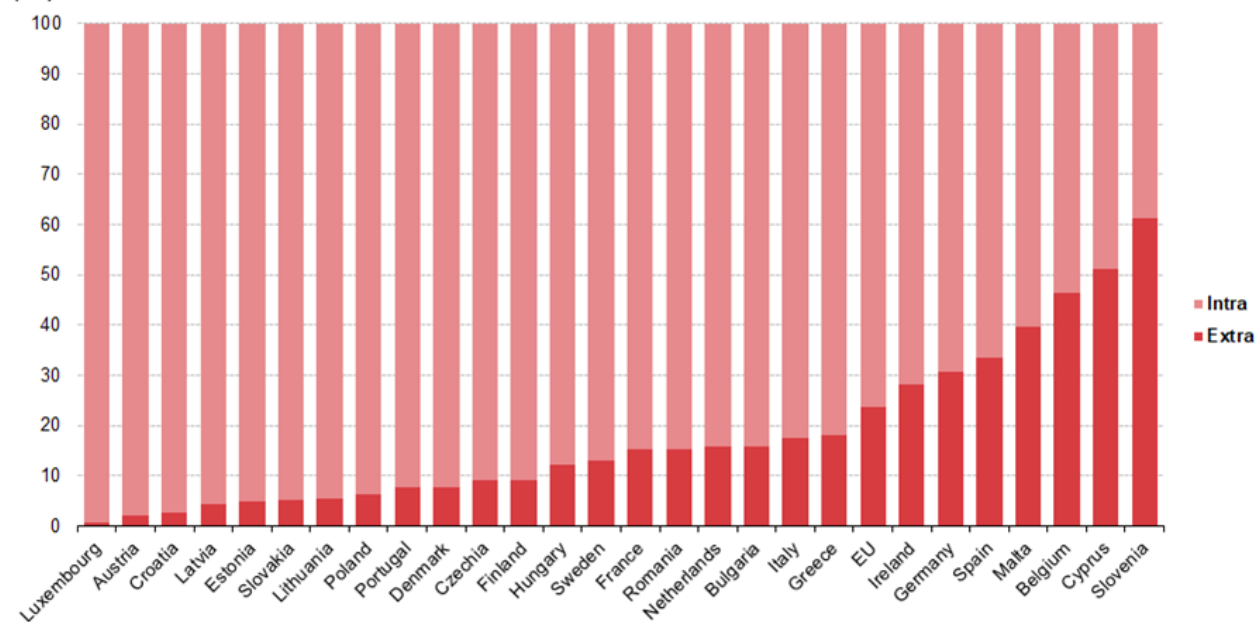
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Figure 6: EU trade with China in cars, 2002-2022 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

The share of intra- and extra-EU imports of cars varied greatly between EU Member States (Figure 7). The share for extra-EU imports was above 40 % in Slovenia (61 %), Cyprus (51 %) and Belgium (46 %), and below 5 % in Luxembourg (1 %), Austria (2 %), Croatia (3 %), Latvia (4 %) and Estonia (5 %).

Extra and intra EU imports of motor cars by Member State, 2022

(%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 7: Extra- and intra-EU imports of motor cars, 2022 (%) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

The share of intra- and extra-EU exports of cars varied even more than for imports. The share for extra-EU exports was above 90 % in Cyprus (100 %), Ireland (96 %) and Malta (95 %) and below 5 % in Luxembourg (3 %).

Extra and intra EU exports of motor cars by Member State, 2022

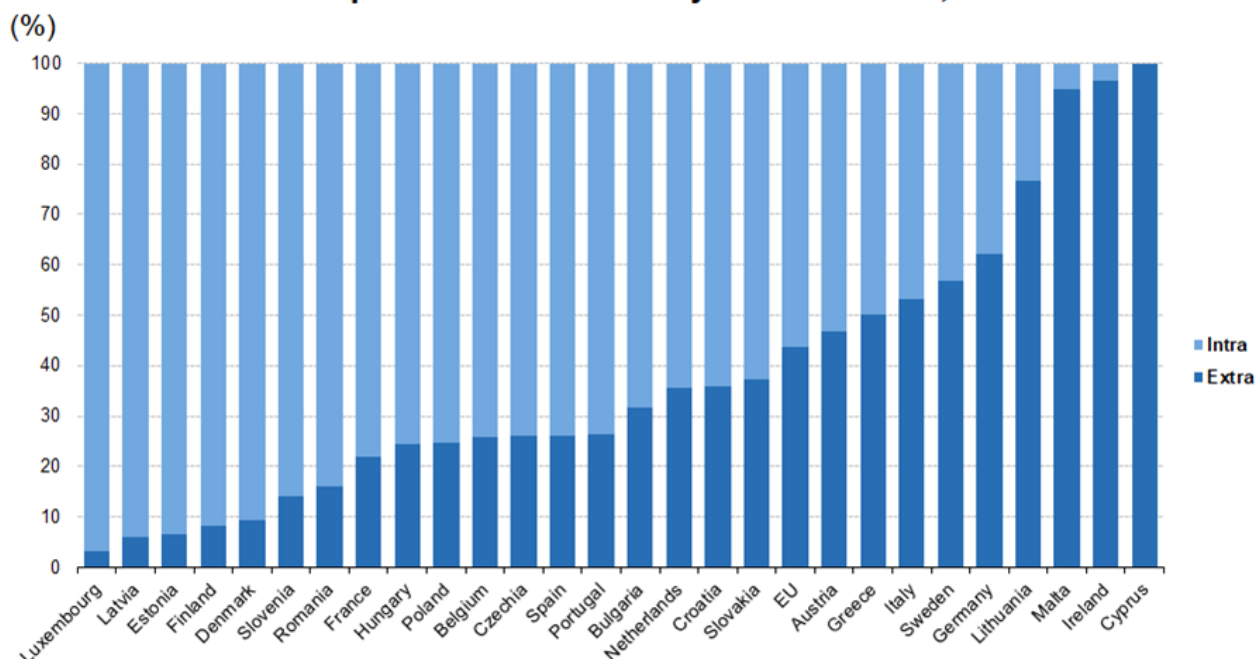


Figure 8: Extra- and intra-EU exports of motor cars, 2022 (%) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

Germany is the EU's largest exporter of cars

Looking at the trade in cars by individual EU Member States, Germany alone was responsible for almost three-fifths of the EU total exports in 2022 (Table 1). In relative terms, i.e. compared with their total extra-EU exports, cars represented 12.9 % of Germany's total exports. This share was surpassed only by Slovakia (45.6 %) and Czechia (14.9 %) which were the only other EU Member States whose share of cars in total exports of goods was higher than 10 %.

With a value of € 19.9 billion in 2022, Germany's share in total EU imports of cars (32.1 %) was the highest of the EU imports, followed by Belgium (24.6 %). For most EU Member States imports of cars made up less than 5 % of their total imports of goods. The only three countries with higher shares were Slovenia (9.1 %), Belgium (6.2 %) and Cyprus (5.1 %). 13 EU Member States had deficits for trade in cars in 2022. It was highest in Belgium (€ 6.9 billion), Slovenia (€ 2.0 billion) and France (€ 1.0 billion). The remaining 14 EU Member States had surpluses, which were highest in Germany (€ 72.3 billion) and Slovakia (€ 9.1 billion).

Extra EU trade in motor cars by Member State, 2022

(€ million and %)

	Extra EU trade (EUR million)			Share in extra EU trade of cars		Share in total extra EU trade	
	Export	Import	Balance	Export	Import	Export	Import
EU	157 670	61 882	95 788	100.0	100.0	6.1	2.1
Belgium	8 305	15 222	-6 917	5.3	24.6	4.3	6.2
Bulgaria	57	190	-133	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.8
Czechia	6 300	448	5 852	4.0	0.7	14.9	0.7
Denmark	164	403	-239	0.1	0.7	0.3	1.0
Germany	92 244	19 879	72 365	58.5	32.1	12.9	3.4
Estonia	40	61	-21	0.0	0.1	0.6	1.1
Ireland	36	832	-796	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.9
Greece	24	395	-372	0.0	0.6	0.1	0.7
Spain	8 198	5 512	2 685	5.2	8.9	5.6	2.4
France	4 356	5 379	-1 023	2.8	8.7	1.7	1.8
Croatia	60	35	25	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.3
Italy	8 090	4 216	3 874	5.1	6.8	2.7	1.3
Cyprus	6	235	-228	0.0	0.4	0.2	5.1
Latvia	17	33	-16	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.5
Lithuania	842	96	745	0.5	0.2	5.0	0.5
Luxembourg	21	15	6	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6
Hungary	2 251	405	1 847	1.4	0.7	7.2	0.8
Malta	2	66	-64	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.9
Netherlands	3 008	2 211	798	1.9	3.6	1.1	0.4
Austria	3 519	173	3 345	2.2	0.3	5.8	0.3
Poland	1 351	677	674	0.9	1.1	1.6	0.5
Portugal	1 061	362	700	0.7	0.6	4.6	1.1
Romania	944	500	444	0.6	0.8	3.7	1.4
Slovenia	842	2 890	-2 048	0.5	4.7	3.4	9.1
Slovakia	9 200	141	9 059	5.8	0.2	45.6	0.6
Finland	187	315	-128	0.1	0.5	0.5	1.0
Sweden	6 546	1 195	5 352	4.2	1.9	7.6	1.7

Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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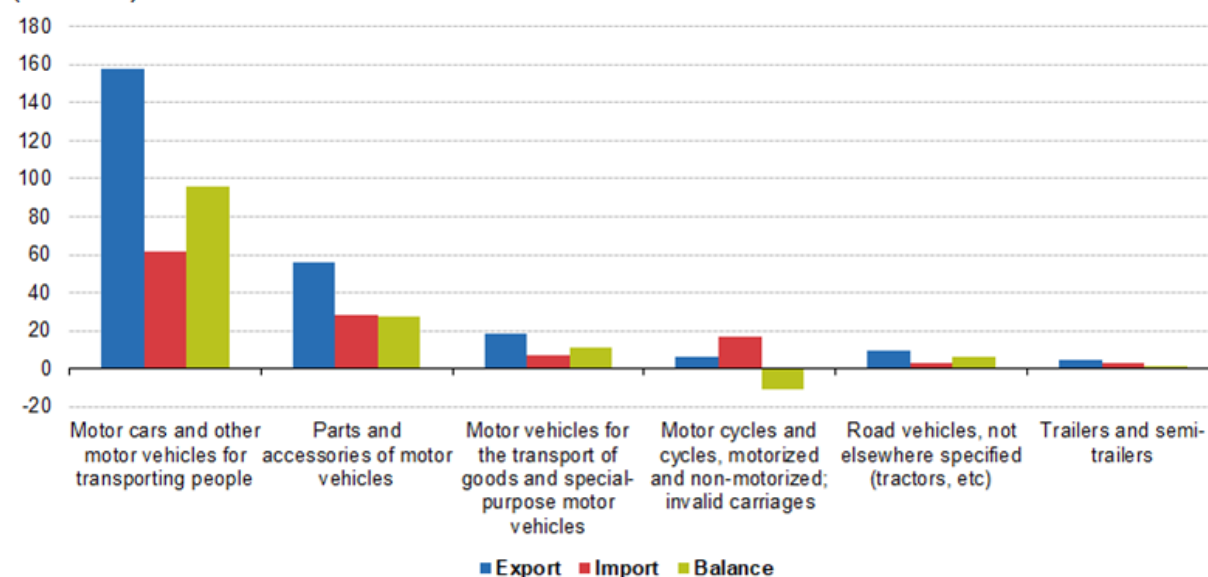
Table 1: Extra-EU trade in cars, 2022 (€ million and %) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

Cars dominate trade in road vehicles and related products

The subcategory 'motor cars and other motor vehicles for transporting persons', described above as cars, is one of the six subcategories that make up the category road vehicles. Total exports of road vehicles in 2022 were worth € 252.3 billion and their imports were worth € 120.6 billion. Exports of cars (€ 157.7 billion) made up 62 % of road vehicles, while the share for imports of cars (€ 61.9 billion) was 51 % (Figure 9). 'Parts and accessories of motor vehicles' followed with exports of € 55.9 billion (22 %) and imports of € 28.5 billion (24 %). 'Motor vehicles for the transport of goods and special-purpose motor vehicles' had exports of € 18.9 billion (7 %) and imports of € 7.5 billion (6 %). 'Motor cycles and cycles, motorized and non-motorized; invalid carriages' is the only subcategory where the EU had a trade deficit which amounted to € 10.6 billion in 2022.

Extra EU trade in road vehicles by category, 2022

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

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Figure 9: Extra-EU trade in road vehicles by category, 2022 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-018995)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [International trade in motor cars.xlsx](#)



Data source

EU data comes from [Eurostat](#) 's [COMEXT](#) database.

COMEXT is the Eurostat reference database for international trade in goods. It provides access not only to both recent and historical data from the [EU Member States](#) but also to statistics of a significant number of non-EU countries. International trade aggregated and detailed statistics disseminated from the Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process. Because COMEXT is updated on a daily basis, data published on the website may differ from data stored in COMEXT in case of recent revisions.

European statistics on international trade in goods are compiled according to the EU concepts and definitions and may, therefore, differ from national data published by Member States.

The United Kingdom is considered as an extra-EU partner country for the EU for the whole period covered by this article. However, the United Kingdom was still part of the internal market until the end of the transitory period (31 December 2020), meaning that data on trade with the United Kingdom are still based on statistical concepts applicable to trade between the EU Member States. Consequently, while imports from any other extra-EU trade partner are grouped by country of origin, the United Kingdom data reflect the country of consignment. In practice this means that the goods imported by the EU from the United Kingdom were physically transported from the United Kingdom but part of these goods could have been of other origin than the United Kingdom. For this reason, data on

trade with the United Kingdom are not fully comparable with data on trade with other extra-EU trade partners.

Product classification Products of the road vehicles sector are defined according to the fourth revision of the [Standard international trade classification](#) . They include the divisions 781 *motor cars and other motor vehicles for transporting persons* ; 782 *Motor vehicles for the transport of goods and special-purpose motor vehicles* ; 783 *Road motor vehicles, not elsewhere specified* (tractors, etc); 784 *Parts and accessories of motor vehicles* ; 785 *Motor cycles and cycles, motorized and non-motorized; invalid carriages* ; and 786 *Trailers and semi-trailers* .

Unit of measure Trade values are expressed in millions of euros. They correspond to the statistical value, i.e. to the amount which would be invoiced in case of sale or purchase at the national border of the reporting country. It is called a [FOB](#) value (free on board) for exports and a [CIF](#) value (cost, insurance, freight) for imports.

Context

Trade is an important indicator of Europe's prosperity and place in the world. The bloc is deeply integrated into global markets both for the products it sources and the exports it sells. The EU trade policy is one of the main pillars of the EU's relations with the rest of the world.

Because the 27 EU Member States share a single market and a single external border, they also have a single trade policy. EU Member States speak and negotiate collectively, both in the [World Trade Organisation](#) , where the rules of international trade are agreed and enforced, and with individual trading partners. This common policy enables them to speak with one voice in trade negotiations, maximising their impact in such negotiations. This is even more important in a globalised world in which economies tend to cluster together in regional groups.

The openness of the EU's trade regime has meant that the EU is the biggest player on the global trading scene and remains a good region to do business with. Thanks to the ease of modern transport and communications, it is now easier to produce, buy and sell goods around the world which gives European companies of every size the potential to trade outside Europe.

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