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" The EU, the United States and China together accounted for 45% of imports and 44% of exports of goods globally in 2021. "

" Machinery and vehicles were the most traded goods in 2021 for the EU, the United States and China. "

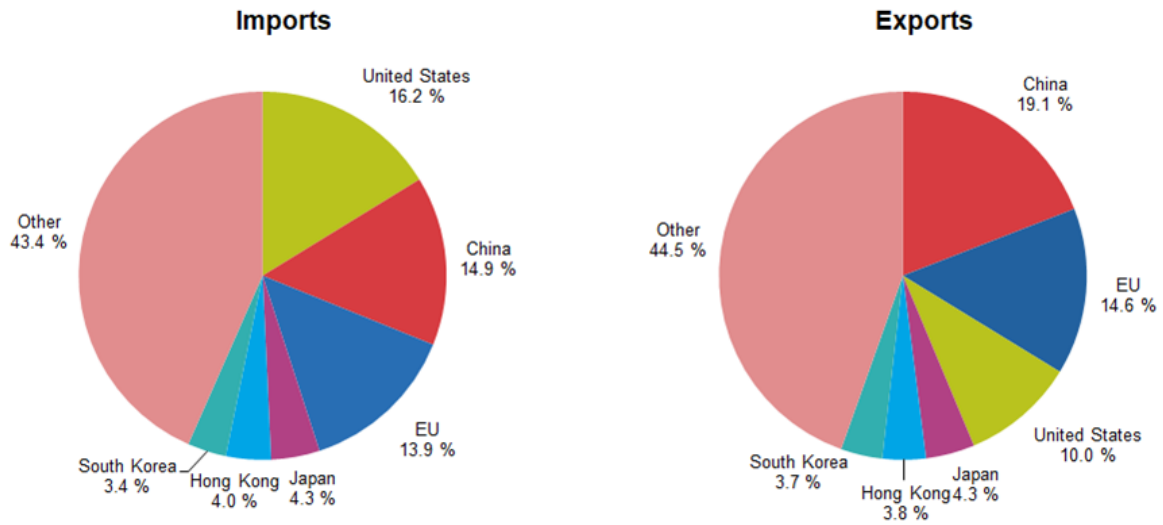
International trade — especially the size and evolution of [imports](#) and [exports](#) — is an important indicator of a country's economic performance, showing its status on the international stage. This article takes a closer look at recent trends in the imports and exports of goods by several of the world's largest economies, focusing on key trade statistics for goods and giving an insight into EU trading patterns compared to the world's major economies. The article only deals with [extra-EU](#) trade, and does not consider trade between [EU Member States](#) ([intra-EU](#) trade). This article is part of the online publication [International trade in goods - a statistical picture](#) which provides 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.

Main world traders: EU, USA and China

In 2021, the [EU](#) , the United States and China recorded by far the world's highest trade in goods values. Together, these countries accounted for around 45 % of global imports and 44 % of global exports of goods (see Figure 1).

Import and export shares for main trading countries, 2021

(%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

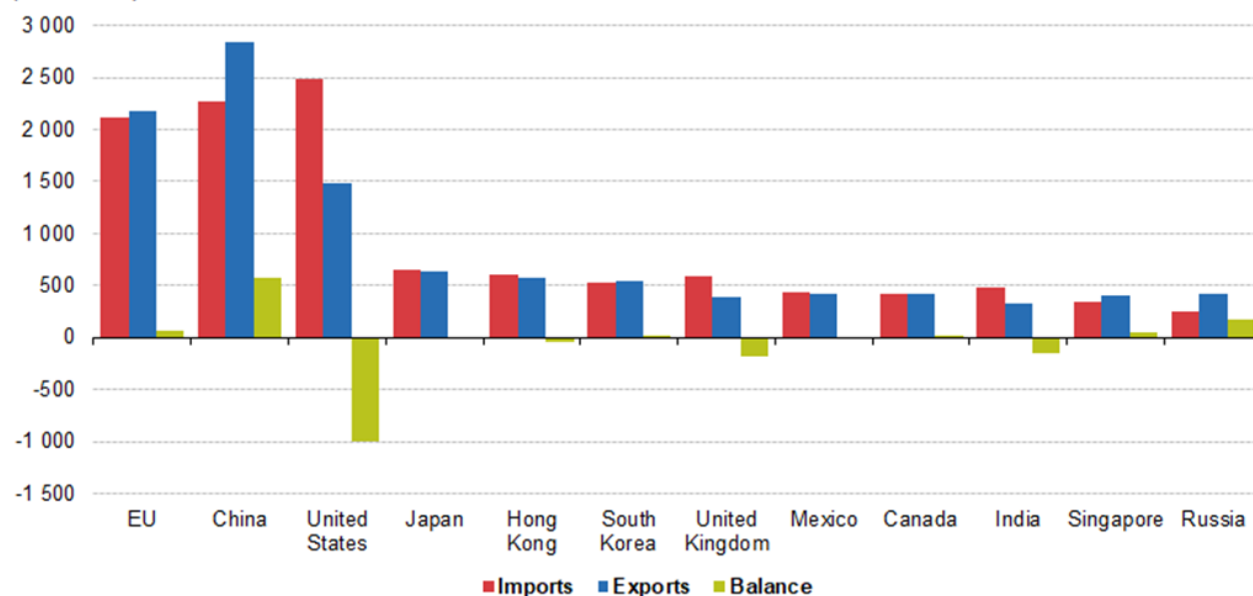
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Figure 1: Import and export of goods shares for main trading countries, 2021 (%) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021) and UNCTAD

In 2021, China recorded the world's highest export values at € 2 843 billion, followed by the EU and the United States, with values of € 2 181 billion and € 1 482 billion respectively (see Figure 2). Looking at imports by value, the United States had a higher value (€ 2 480 billion) than China (€ 2 270 billion) and the EU (€ 2 118 billion). The United States also recorded the highest trade deficit (€ 998 billion), followed by the United Kingdom (€ 186 billion), India (€ 148 billion), Hong Kong (€ 36 billion), Japan (€ 13 billion) and Mexico (€ 10 billion). The largest [trade surpluses](#) were recorded by China (€ 573 billion), followed by Russia (€ 174 billion), the EU (€ 63 billion), Singapore (€ 56 billion), South Korea (€ 25 billion) and Canada (€ 10 billion).

Imports, exports and trade balance by country, 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

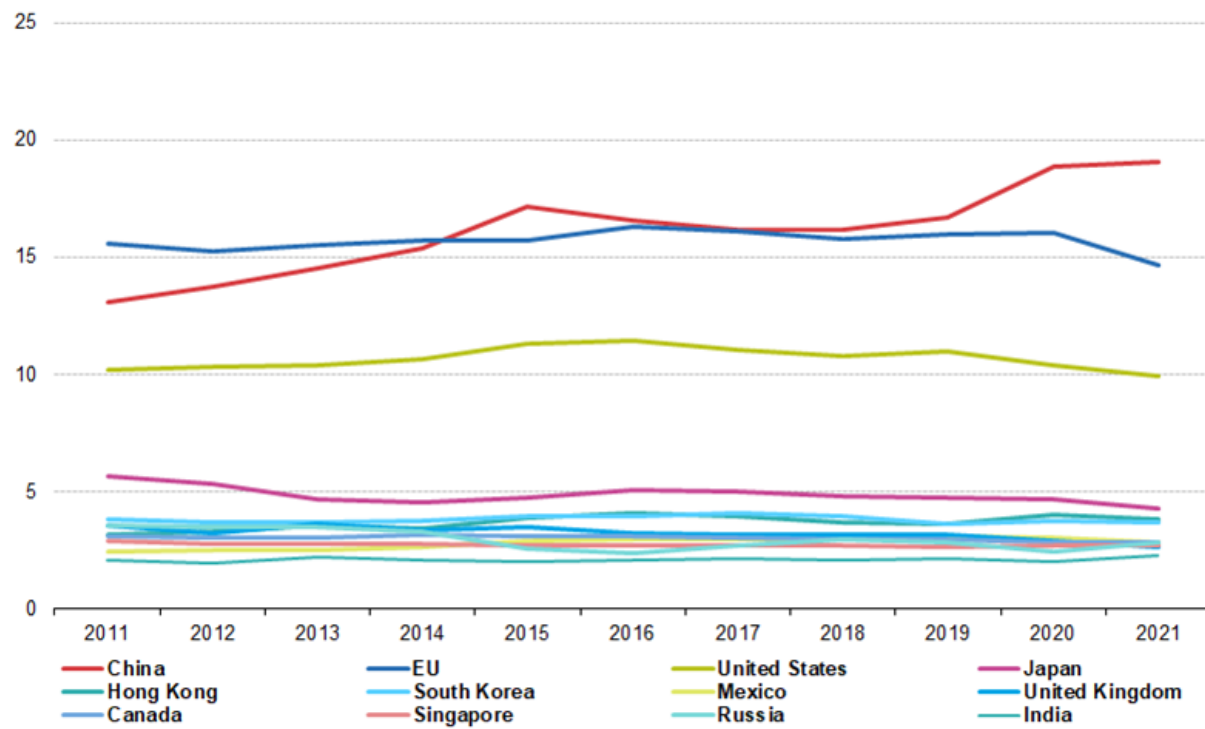
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Figure 2: Imports, exports and trade balance in goods by country, 2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021) and UNCTAD

The United States has traditionally been a major exporting economy, but its significance was already smaller than that of the EU and China in 2011 (see Figure 3a). The United States' share in total exports increased slightly from 10.2 % in 2011 to 11.5 % in 2016 but decreased to 10.0 % in 2021. The steady growth of China's exports saw it overtaking the EU in 2015, reaching a peak of 19.1 % in 2021. The EU had a share of 15.6 % in 2011 which did not change much until 2020, but dropped to 14.6 % in 2021. The national export shares of the other main traders are shown separately in Figure 3b to give some more detail.

Share of national exports in world exports, 2021

(€ billion)



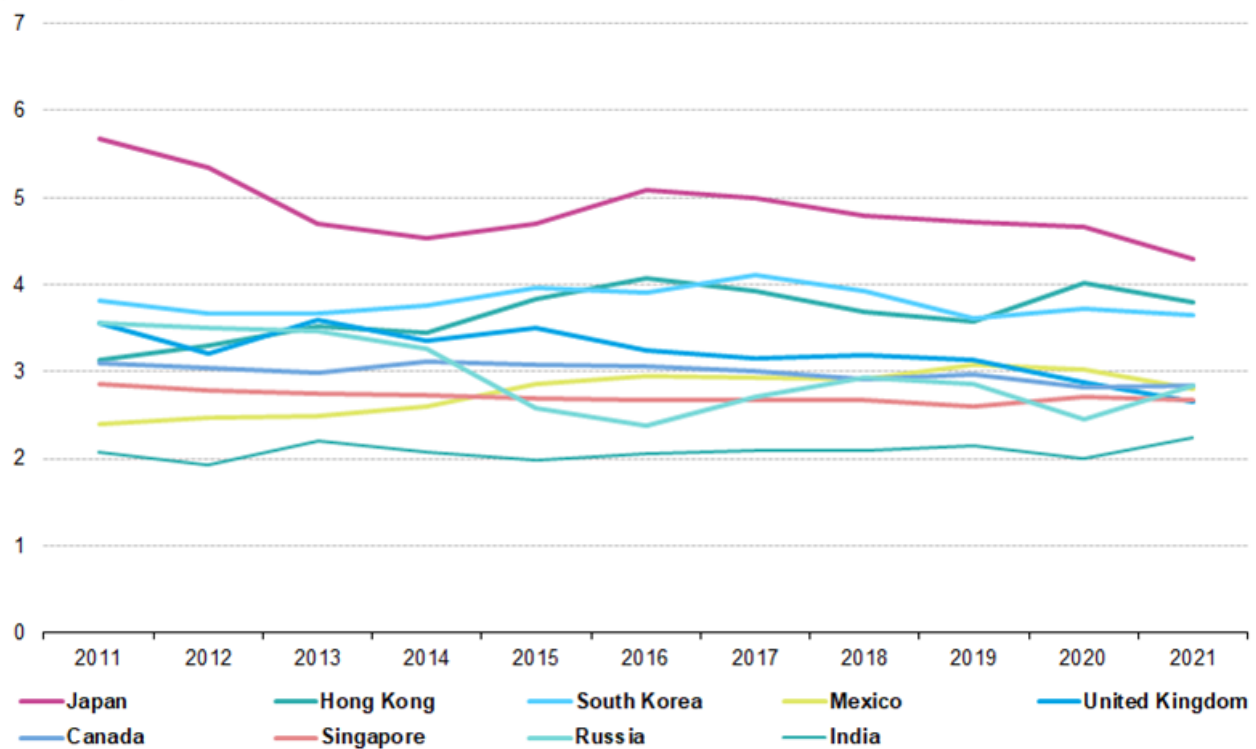
Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

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Figure 3a: Share of national exports in world exports of goods, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021) and UNCTAD

Share of national exports in world exports - details, 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

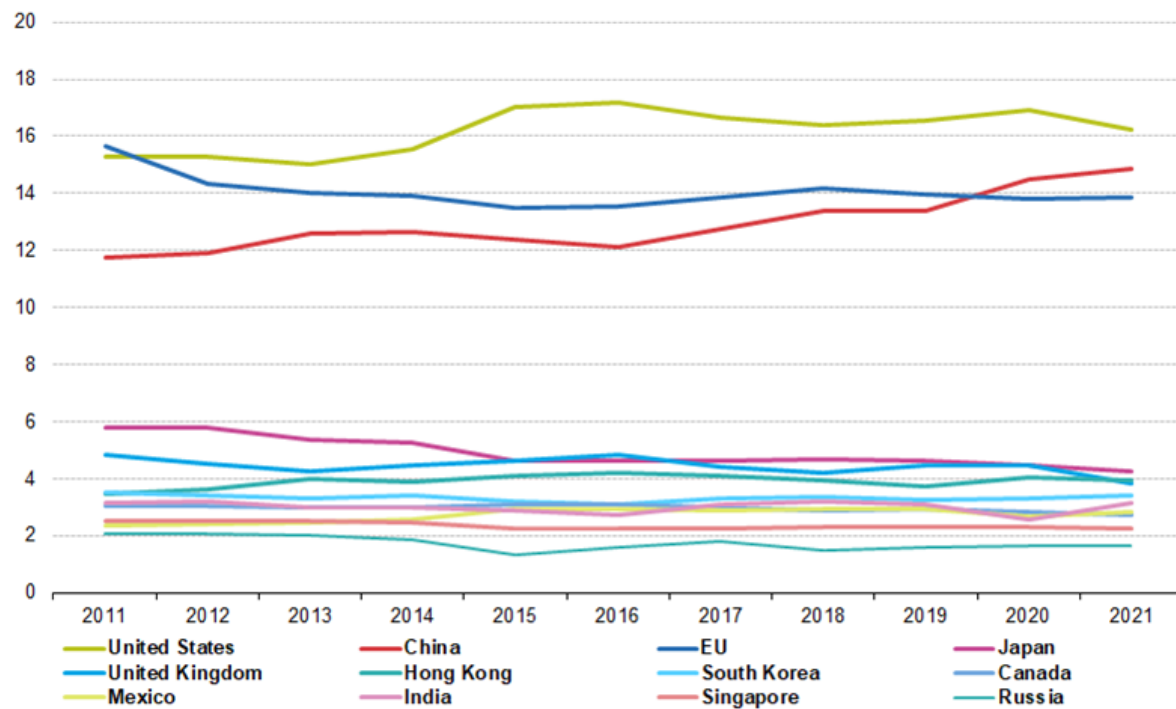
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Figure 3b: Share of national exports in world exports of goods, details, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021)

China's share in world imports has also increased, from 11.8 % in 2011 to 14.9 % in 2021, overtaking the EU (see Figure 4a). The United States remains the largest importer of goods, its share rising from 15.3 % in 2011 to 16.2 % in 2021. The EU saw a large reduction from 15.7 % in 2011 to 13.9 % in 2021. The import shares of the other main traders are shown separately in Figure 4b to give some more details.

Share of national imports in world imports, 2021

(€ billion)



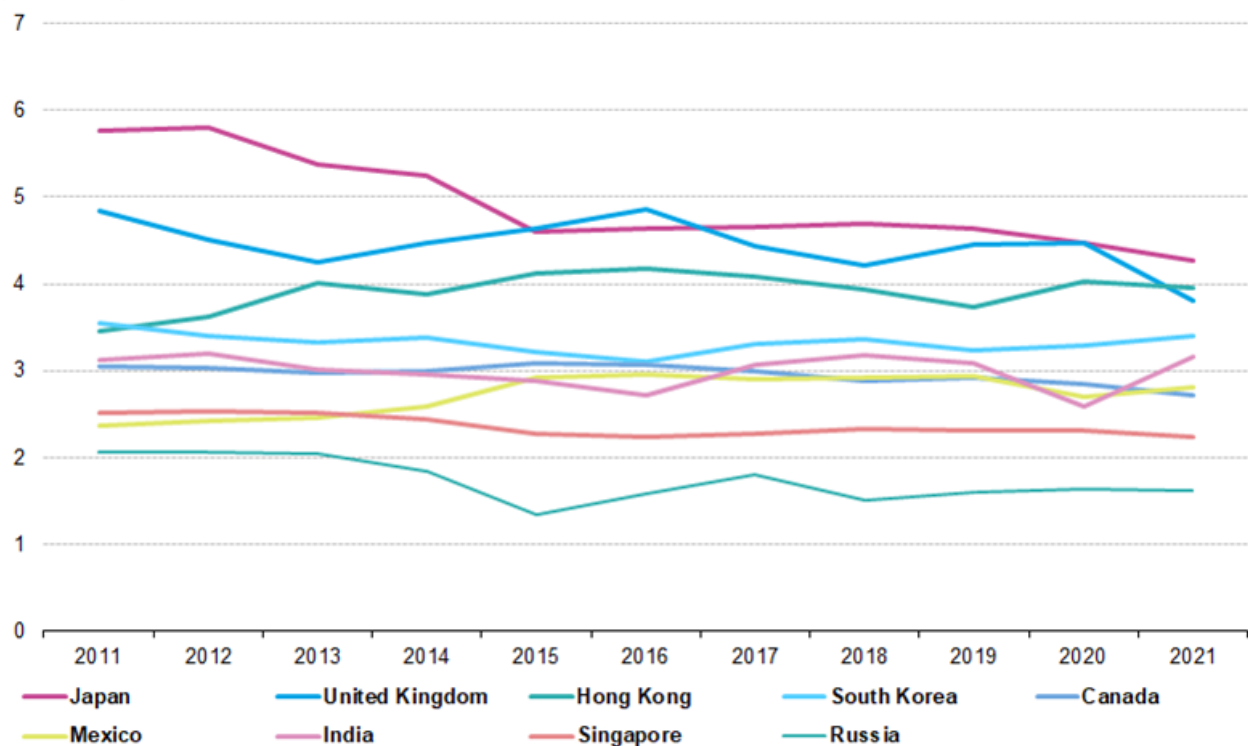
Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD



Figure 4a: Share of national imports in world imports of goods, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021) and UNCTAD

Share of national imports in world imports - details, 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

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Figure 4b: Share of national imports in world imports of goods, details, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021) and UNCTAD

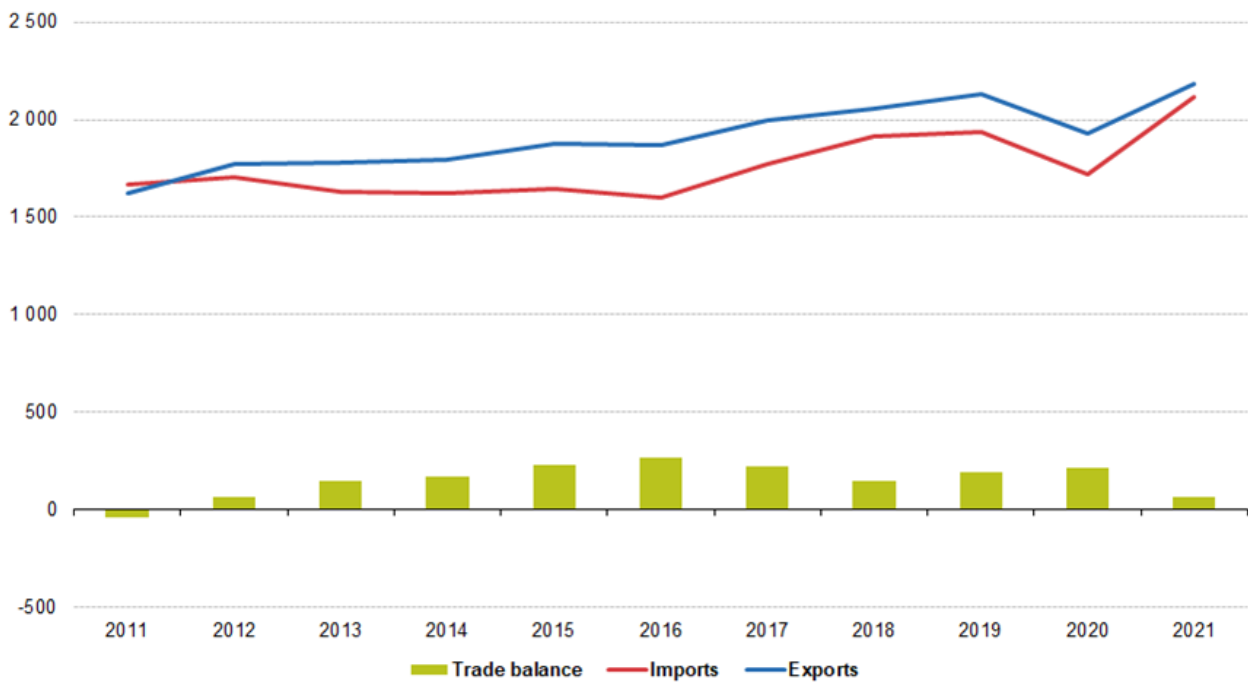
EU trade over time and by product group

Trade over time in the EU

In 2011 the EU had a trade in goods deficit of € 42 billion (see Figure 5). The average annual growth rate of EU exports was 3.0 % between 2011 and 2021. The corresponding growth of imports was 2.4 %. This resulted in a trade surplus of € 63 billion in 2021.

Imports, exports and trade balance EU, 2011-2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020)

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Figure 5: Imports, exports and trade balance EU, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021)

Trade by product group in the EU

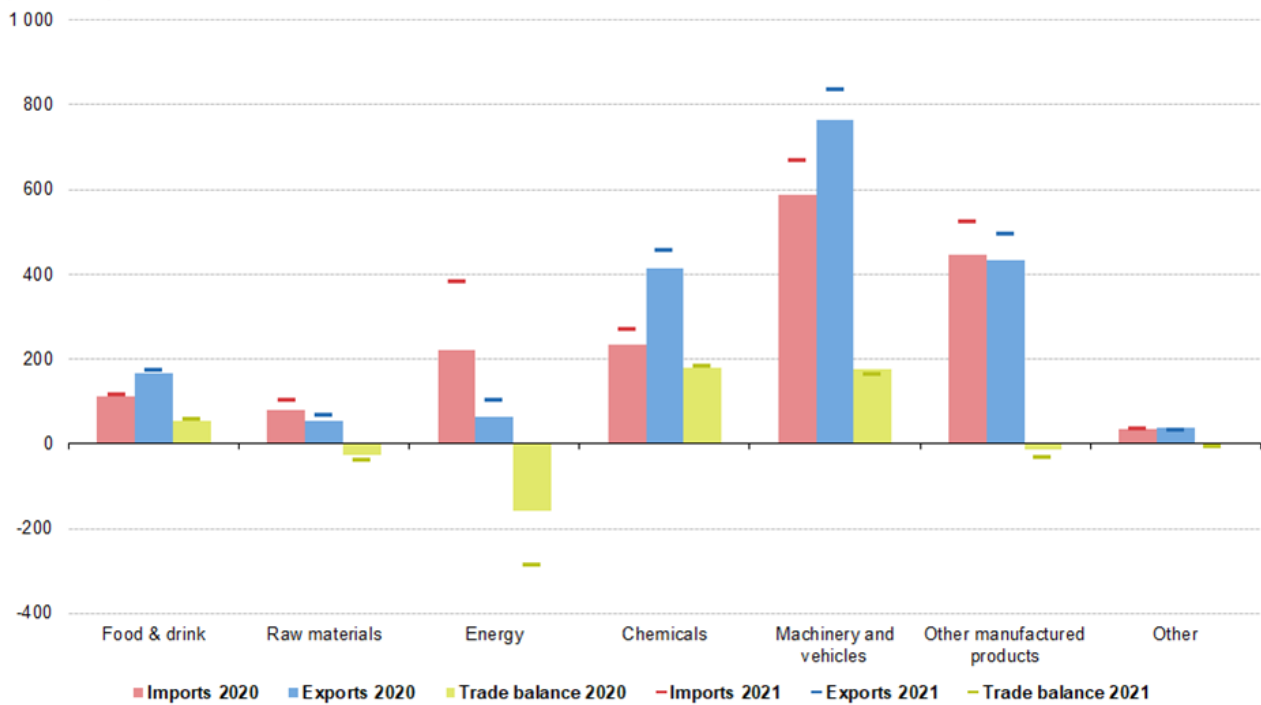
In 2021, machinery and vehicles was the EU's most exported product group (€ 837 billion) and made up 38 % of total exports (see Figure 6), while other manufactured products (€ 499 billion) accounted for 23 % and chemicals (€ 459 billion) for 21 %. The combined share of manufactured goods was 82 % of total EU exports in 2021.

Manufactured products (chemicals, machinery and vehicles and other manufactured products) also made up the majority of EU imports (69 %) in 2021. The share of other manufactured products (25 %) was 2 [percentage points](#) higher in imports than in exports. Import shares in machinery and vehicles (32 %) as well as chemicals (13 %) were smaller than the corresponding export shares. The EU was a large importer of energy (18 % worth € 386 billion).

In 2021, the EU had a trade deficit in primary goods and a trade surplus in manufactured products (chemicals, machinery and vehicles and other manufactured products). The deficit in primary goods was largely due to the deficit in energy (€ 282 billion) and to a much lesser extent in raw materials (€ 35 billion), while recording a surplus in food & drink (€ 59 billion). The surplus in manufactured goods came from machinery and vehicles (€ 166 billion) and chemicals (€ 187 billion) while recording a trade deficit in other manufactured goods (€ 28 billion).

Trade by product group, EU, 2020 and 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_introeu27_2020)

eurostat

Figure 6: Trade by product group, EU, 2020 and 2021.png (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2021)

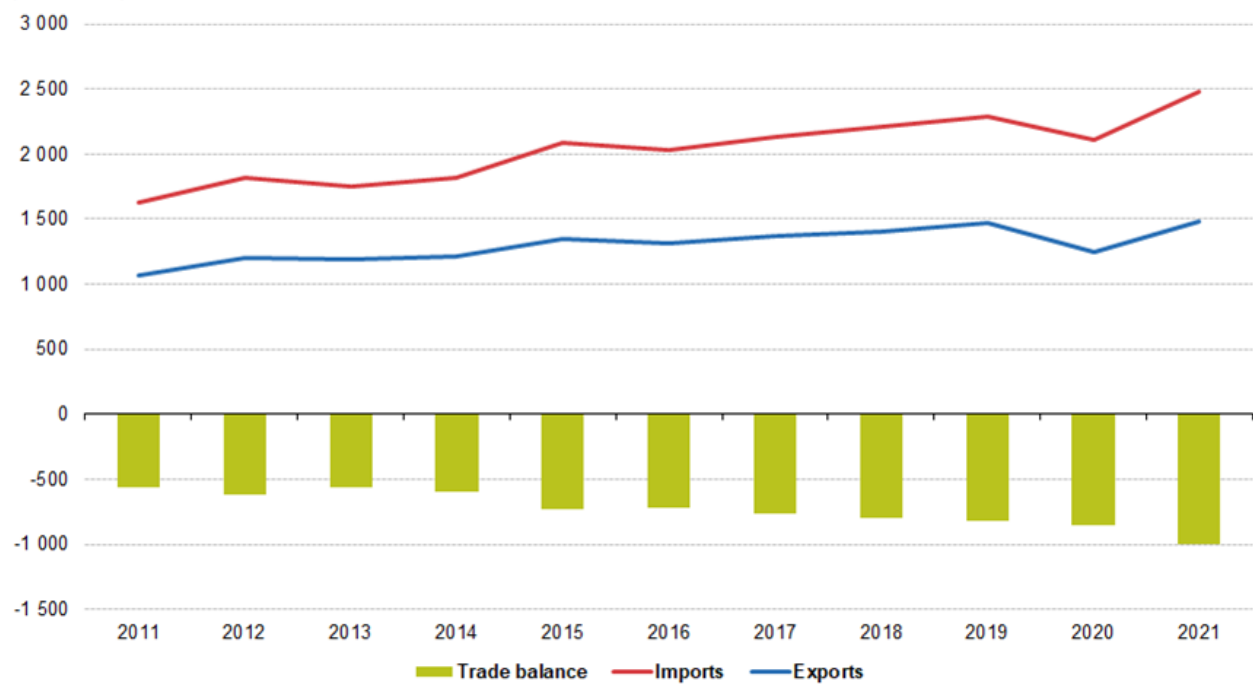
United States trade over time and by product group

Trade over time in the United States

In 2011, the United States had a trade in goods deficit of € 562 billion (see Figure 7). The average annual growth rate of its exports was 3.4 % between 2011 and 2021. The corresponding growth rate of imports was 4.3 %. This caused the trade deficit to grow to € 998 billion in 2021.

Imports, exports and trade balance United States, 2011-2021

(€ billion)



Source: UNCTAD

eurostat 

Figure 7: Imports, exports and trade balance United States, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_it_introeu27_2021)

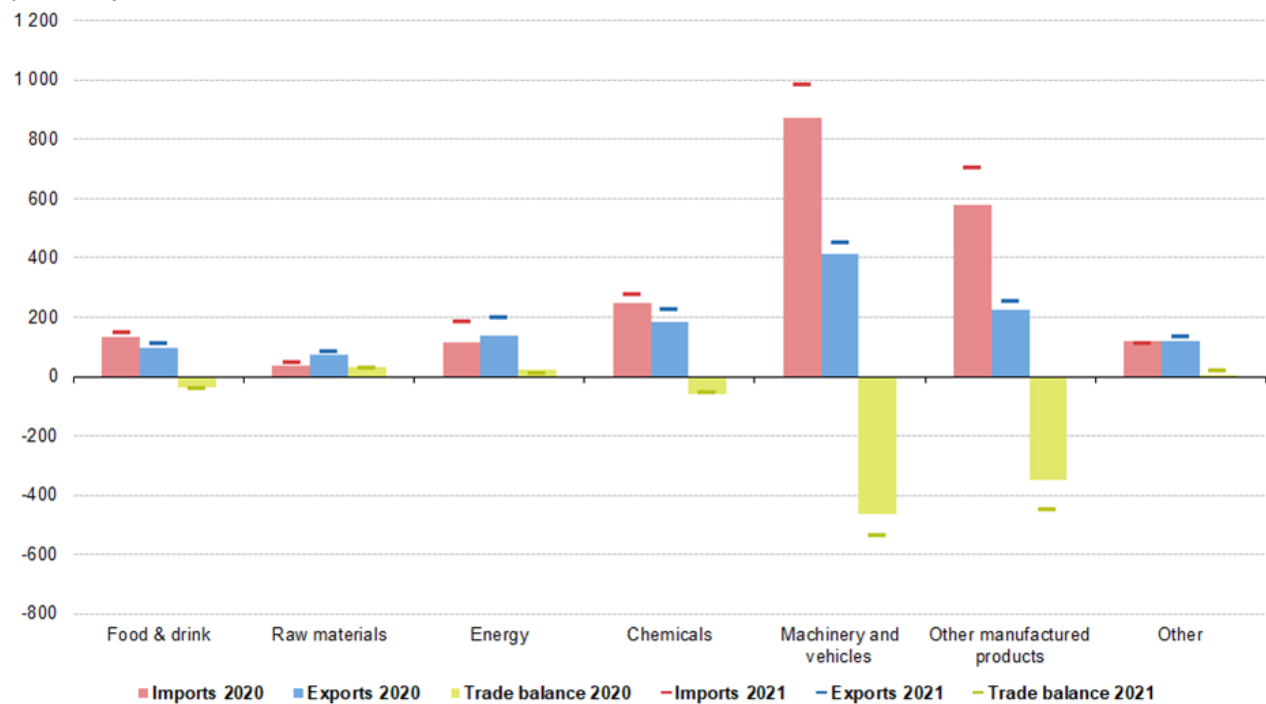
Trade by product group in the United States

In the United States in 2021, machinery and vehicles (€ 455 billion), other manufactured products (€ 259 billion) and chemicals (€ 228 billion) were the most exported products (see Figure 8). Combined, they accounted for 64 % of all exports. The same products were also the top three in imports, where combined machinery and vehicles (€ 986 billion), other manufactured products (€ 705 billion) and chemicals (€ 278 billion) accounted for 79 % of all imports.

In 2021 the United States had trade deficits for food & drink (€ 38 billion) and chemicals (€ 50 billion), however there were much larger deficits for machinery and vehicles (€ 531 billion) and for other manufactured products (€ 446 billion) as shown in Figure 8. The United States had a trade surplus in raw materials (€ 33 billion) and energy (€ 13 billion).

Trade by product group, United States, 2020 and 2021

(€ billion)



Source: UNCTAD

eurostat

Figure 8: Trade by product group, United States, 2020 and 2021 (€ billion) Source: UNCTAD

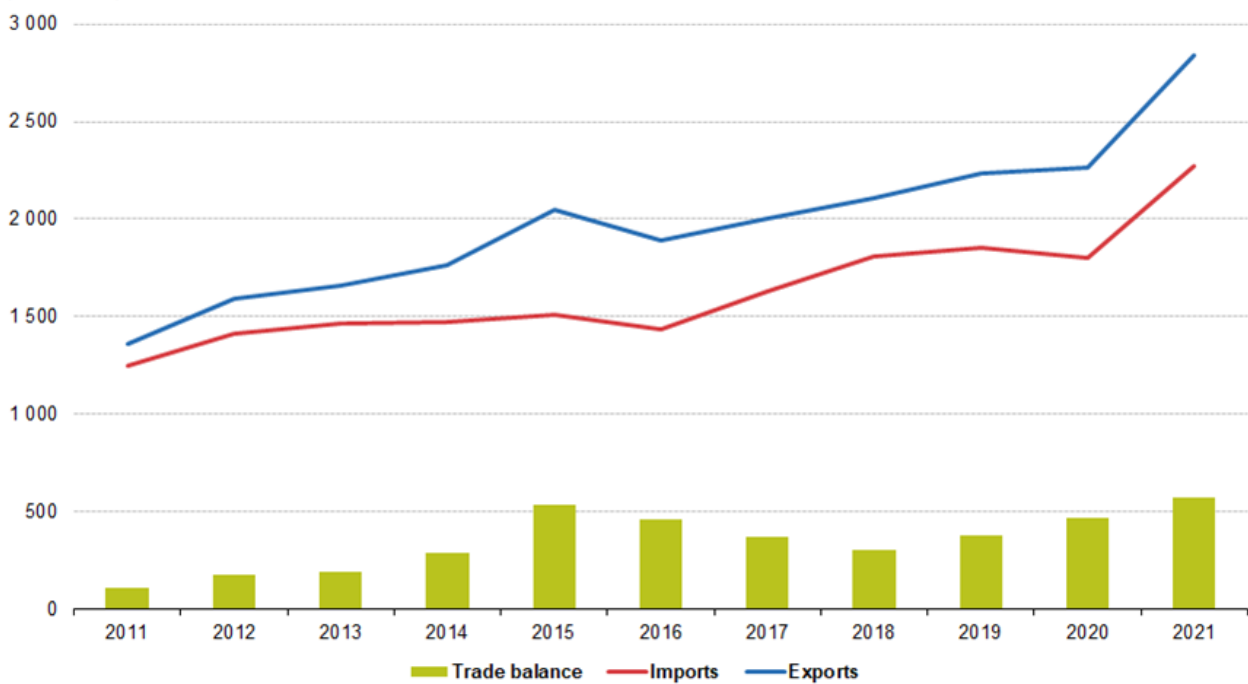
China trade over time and by product group

Trade over time in China

In 2011 China had a trade in goods surplus of € 111 billion (see Figure 9). The average annual growth rate of its exports was 7.6 % between 2011 and 2021. The corresponding growth of imports was 6.1 %. This increased the surplus to € 573 billion in 2021.

Imports, exports and trade balance China, 2011-2021

(€ billion)



Source: UNCTAD

eurostat 

Figure 9: Imports, exports and trade balance China, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: UNCTAD

Trade by product group in China

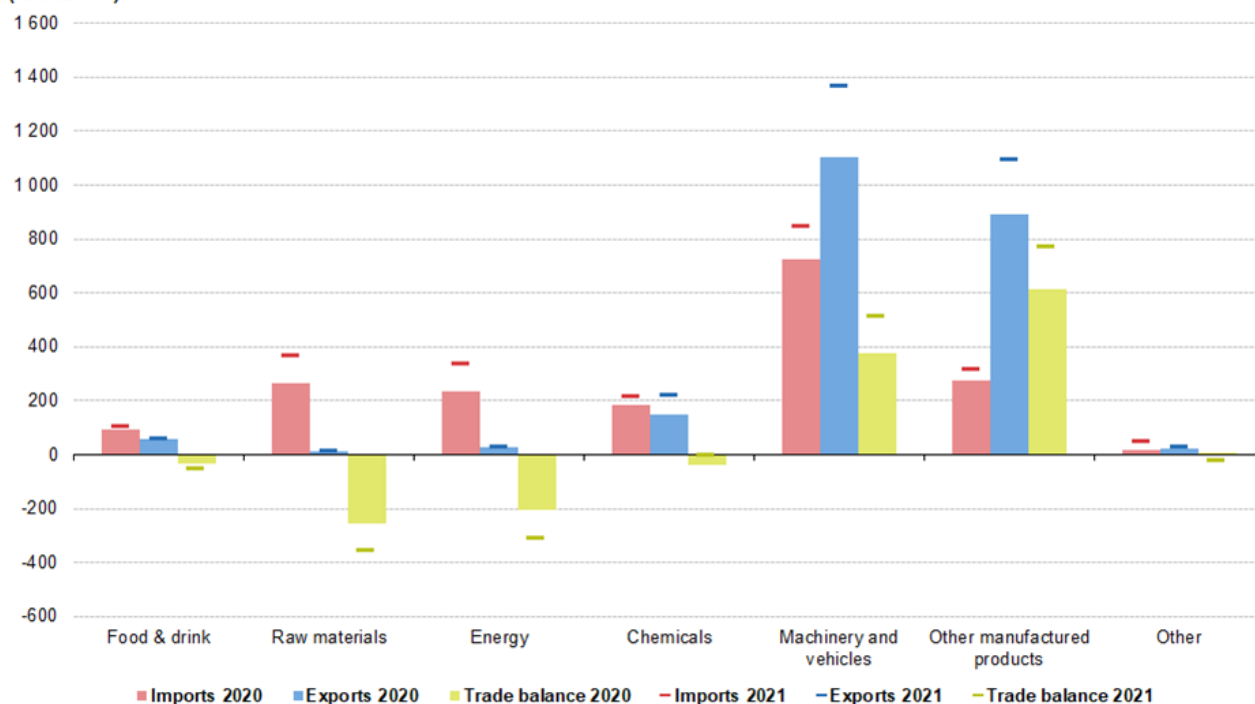
Approximately 95 % of China's exports in 2021 were concentrated in manufactured goods. Machinery and vehicles (€ 1 371 billion, 48 %) was the largest group, followed by other manufactured products (€ 1 097 billion, 39 %) and chemicals (€ 223 billion, 8 %) as shown in Figure 10.

China's largest imports were also in machinery and vehicles (€ 852 billion, 38 % of total imports) followed by raw materials (€ 374 billion, 16 %), other manufactured products (€ 321 billion, 14 %), energy (€ 340 billion, 13 %) and chemicals (€ 221 billion, 10 %).

China registered large trade surpluses in machinery and vehicles (€ 519 billion) and especially in other manufactured products (€ 776 billion). The largest trade deficits were recorded for raw materials (€ 353 billion) and energy (€ 305 billion).

Trade by product group, China, 2020 and 2021

(€ billion)



Source: UNCTAD

eurostat

Figure 10: Trade by product group, China, 2020 and 2021 (€ billion) Source: UNCTAD

Source data for tables and graphs

- [EU_and_main_world_traders](#) Excel file

Data sources

EU data is taken from Eurostat's COMEXT database. COMEXT is the 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 via the Eurostat website are compiled from COMEXT data according to a monthly process.

Data are collected by the competent national authorities of the EU Member States and compiled according to a harmonised methodology established by EU regulations before transmission to Eurostat. For extra-EU trade, the statistical information is mainly provided by the traders on the basis of customs declarations.

EU data are compiled according to community guidelines and may, therefore, differ from national data published by the EU Member States. Statistics on extra-EU trade are calculated as the sum of trade of each of the 27 EU Member States with countries outside the EU. In other words, the EU is considered as a single trading entity and trade flows are measured into and out of the area, but not within it.

Data for the other major traders are taken from the UNCTAD database of the United Nations. For the calculation of shares the world trade is defined as the sum of EU trade with non-EU countries (source: Eurostat) plus the international trade of non-EU countries (source: UNCTAD).

Methodology According to the EU concept and definitions, extra-EU trade statistics (trade between EU Member States and non-EU countries) do not record exchanges involving goods in transit, placed in a customs warehouse or given temporary admission (for trade fairs, temporary exhibitions, tests, etc.). This is known as 'special trade'. The partner is the country of final destination of the goods for exports and the country of origin for imports.

Product classification

Information on commodities exported and imported is presented according to the [Standard international trade classification \(SITC\)](#) . A full description is available from Eurostat's classification server [RAMON](#) .

Unit of measure

Trade values are expressed in billions (109) 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 block 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 Organization](#) , 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.

Other articles

- [International trade in goods](#)
- [Extra-EU trade in goods](#)

Main tables

- [International trade in goods \(t_ext_go\)](#), see:

[International trade in goods - long-term indicators \(t_ext_go_lti\)](#)

[International trade in goods - short-term indicators \(t_ext_go_sti\)](#)

Database

- [International trade in goods \(ext_go\)](#), see:

[International trade in goods - aggregated data \(ext_go_agg\)](#)

[International trade in goods - long-term indicators \(ext_go_lti\)](#)

[International trade in goods - short-term indicators \(ext_go_sti\)](#)

[International trade in goods - detailed data \(detail\)](#)

Dedicated section

- [International trade in goods](#)

Methodology

- [International trade in goods statistics - background](#)
- [International trade in goods](#) (ESMS metadata file — ext_go_agg_esms)
- [User guide on European statistics on international trade in goods](#)

Visualisations

- [Top 5 partners in trade in goods](#)
- [My Country in a bubble](#)

External links

- [European Commission](#)
- [Globalisation](#)
 - [Trade](#)