

Japan-EU – international trade in goods statistics

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in February 2022
Planned article update March 2023*

This article provides a picture of the international trade in goods between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and Japan. It analyses the type of goods exchanged between the two economies and the shares of each EU Member State in those exchanges.

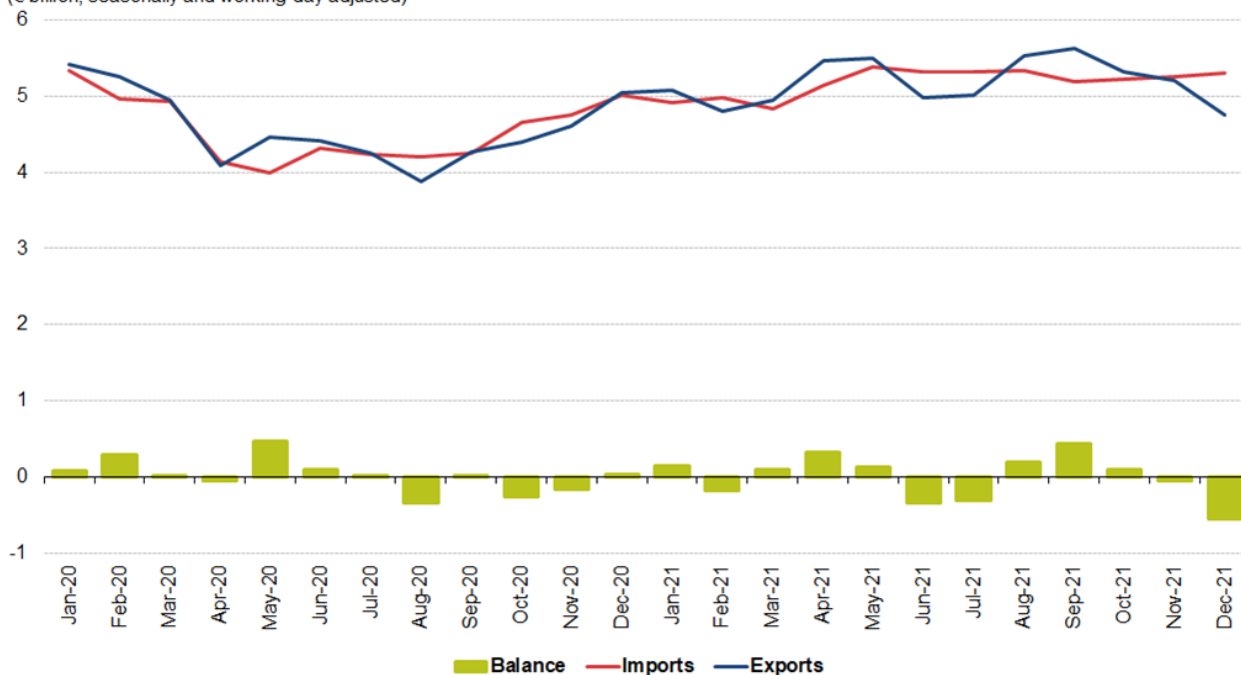
This article is part of an [online publication](#) providing recent statistics on international trade in goods, covering information on the EU's main partners, main goods traded, specific characteristics of trade as well as background information.

Recent developments

The COVID-19 crisis caused both exports and imports between the EU and Japan to fall in 2020, as shown in Figure 1. Imports reached a minimum of € 4.0 billion in May 2020. By December 2021 they had recovered to € 5.3 billion. Exports reached a minimum of € 3.9 billion in August 2020. By December 2021 they had recovered to € 4.8 billion.

EU trade in goods with Japan, 2020-2021

(€ billion, seasonally and working-day adjusted)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc)

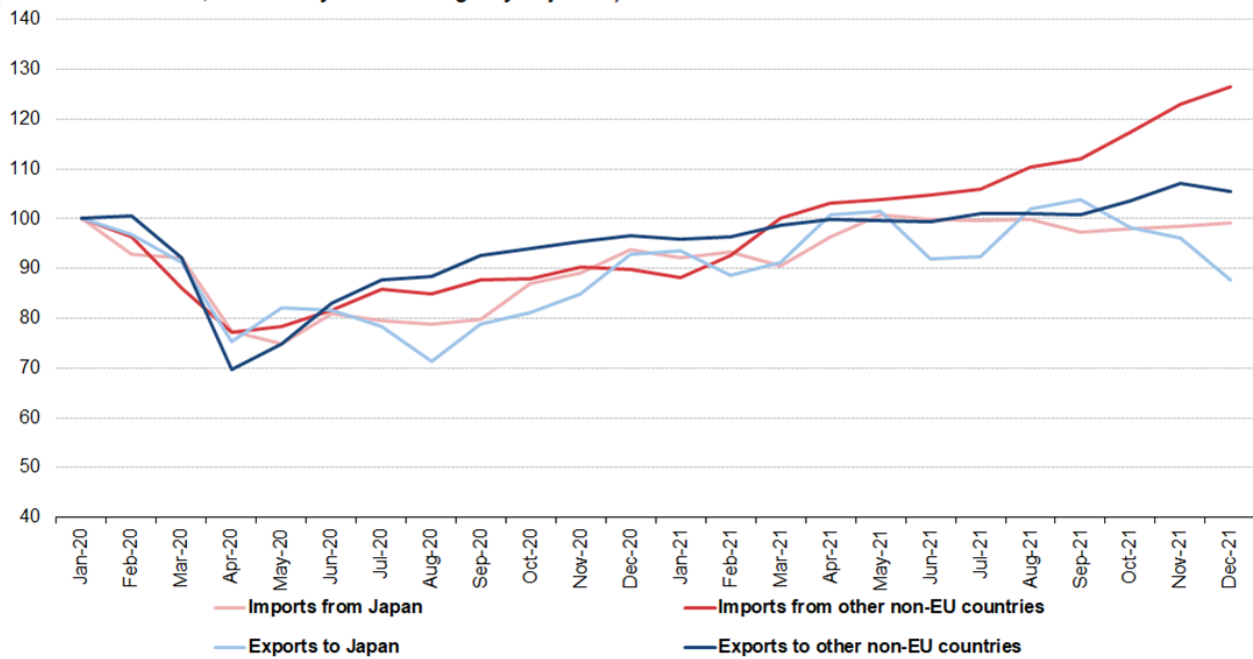
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Figure 1: EU trade in goods with Japan, 2020-2021 (€ billion, seasonally and working-day adjusted) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc)

Figure 2 compares EU trade with Japan to EU trade with other non-EU countries. Between January 2020 and December 2021, EU imports from Japan decreased by 0.8 % while imports from other non-EU countries increased by 26.4 %. EU exports to Japan decreased by 12.3 % while exports to other non-EU countries increased by 5.5 %.

EU trade in goods with Japan and other non-EU countries, 2020-2021

(Jan 2020 = 100 %, seasonally and working-day adjusted)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc)

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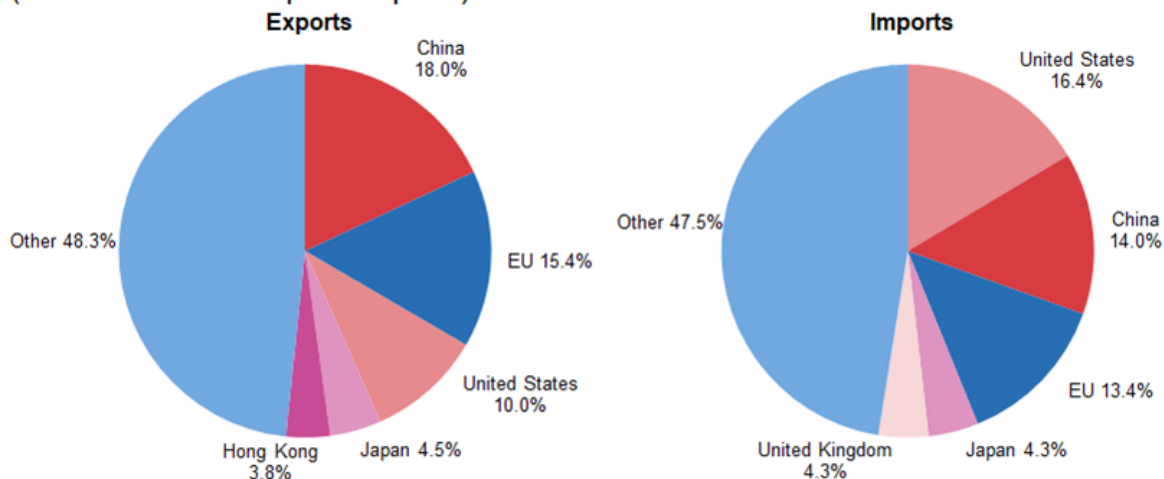
Figure 2: EU trade in goods with Japan and other non-EU countries, 2020-2021 (Jan 2019 = 100 %, seasonally and working-day adjusted) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc)

EU and Japan in world trade in goods

Figure 3 shows the world's largest traders of goods. Japan (€ 561 Billion, 4.5 %) was the fourth largest exporter in the world, preceded by China (€ 2 268 billion, 18.0 %), the EU (€ 1 933 billion, 15.4 %) and the United States (€ 1 253 billion, 10.0 %) and followed by Hong Kong (€ 480 billion, 3.8 %). Japan (€ 556 Billion, 4.3 %) also was the fourth largest importer in the world, preceded by the United States (€ 2 108 billion, 16.4 %), China (€ 1 801 billion, 14.0 %) and the EU (€ 1 717 billion, 13.4 %) and followed by the United Kingdom (€ 556 billion, 4.3 %).

Japan among the world's largest traders of goods, 2020

(% share of world exports/imports)



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

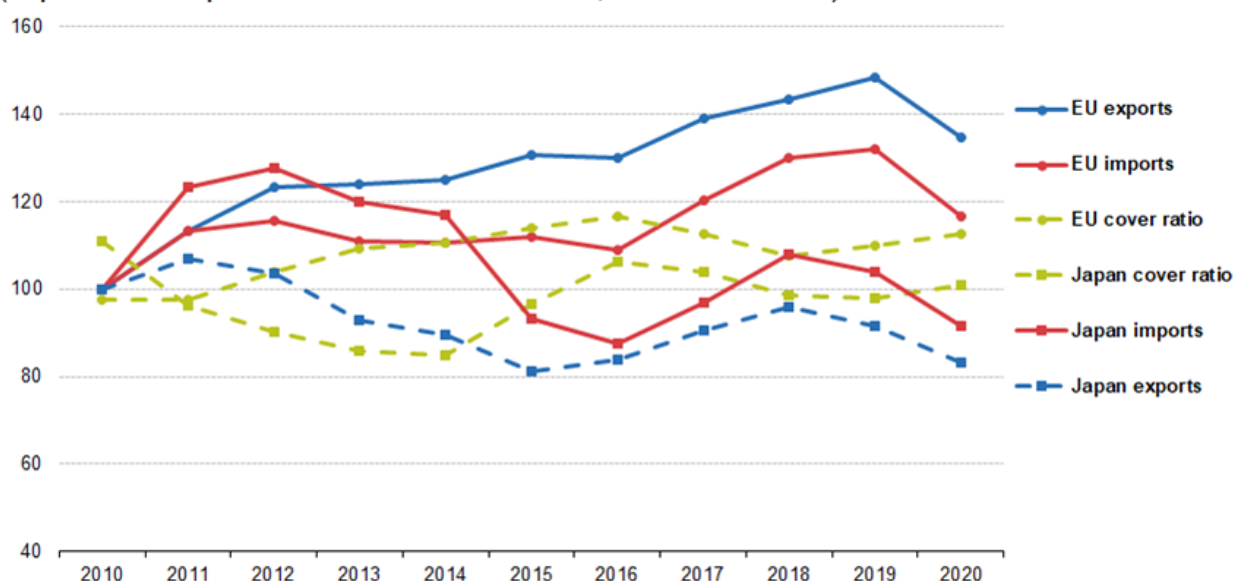
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Figure 3: Japan among the world's largest traders of goods, 2020 (% share of world exports/imports) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

The imports and exports of goods of the EU and Japan indexed at 100 in 2010 for the period to 2020 are shown in Figure 4. It also shows the cover ratio (exports / imports) for this period. Exports from the EU were lowest in 2010 (100) and highest in 2019 (149) and were 135 in 2020. Imports to the EU were lowest in 2010 (100) and highest in 2019 (132) and were 117 in 2020. The cover ratio for the EU was lowest in 2011 (97 %) and highest in 2016 (116 %) and was 113 % in 2020. Exports from Japan were lowest in 2015 (81) and highest in 2011 (107) and were 83 in 2020. Imports to Japan were lowest in 2016 (88) and highest in 2012 (128) and were 92 in 2020. The cover ratio for Japan was lowest in 2014 (85 %) and highest in 2010 (111 %) and was 101 % in 2020.

Trade in goods of the EU and Japan, 2010-2020

(exports and imports indexed at 100 in 2010, cover ratio in %)



Notes:

- While the trade balance provides information on the absolute value of trading positions, the cover ratio provides a relative measure that is based on the ratio (expressed in percentage terms) between the value of exports and the value of imports; if exports are higher than imports then the cover ratio will be above 100.

- Exports and imports are indexed at 100 in 2010

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

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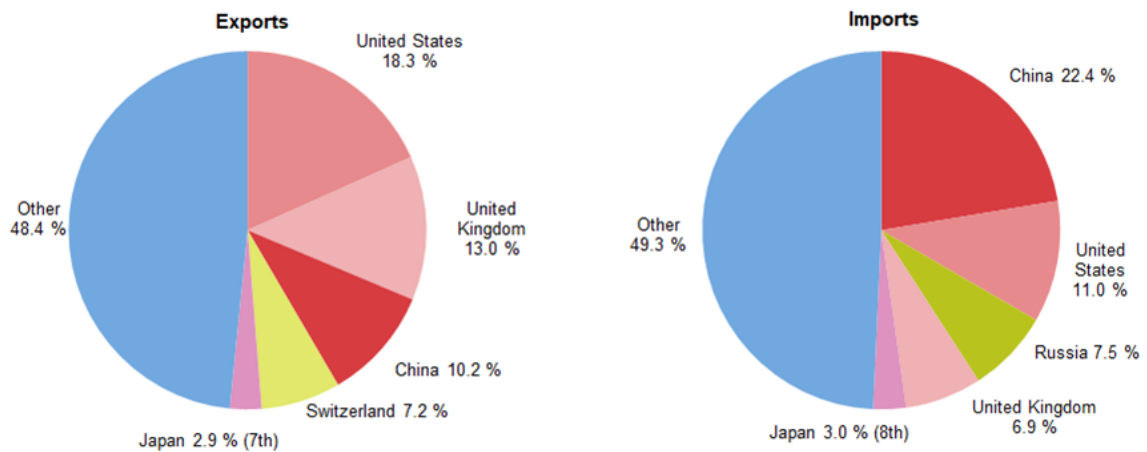
Figure 4: Trade in goods of the EU and Japan, 2010-2020 (exports and imports indexed at 100 in 2010, cover ratio in %) Source: Eurostat (ext_lt_introeu27_2020) and UNCTAD

Both exports to and imports from Japan increased between 2011 and 2021.

The position of Japan among the largest trade partners of the EU in 2021 can be seen in Figure 5a. The four largest export partners of the EU were the United States (18.3 %), the United Kingdom (13.0 %), China (10.2 %) and Switzerland (7.2 %). The four largest import partners of the EU were China (22.4 %), the United States (11.0 %), Russia (7.5 %) and the United Kingdom (6.9 %). Figure 5b has some more details. It shows that Japan (€ 62 billion, 2.9 %) was the seventh largest export partner of the EU, between Turkey (€ 79 billion, 3.6 %) and Norway (€ 57 billion, 2.6 %). In imports Japan (€ 62 billion, 3.0 %) was the eighth largest partner of the EU, between Norway (€ 75 billion, 3.5 %) and South Korea (€ 55 billion, 2.6 %).

Japan among the EU's main partners for trade in goods, 2021

(% share of extra-EU exports/imports)



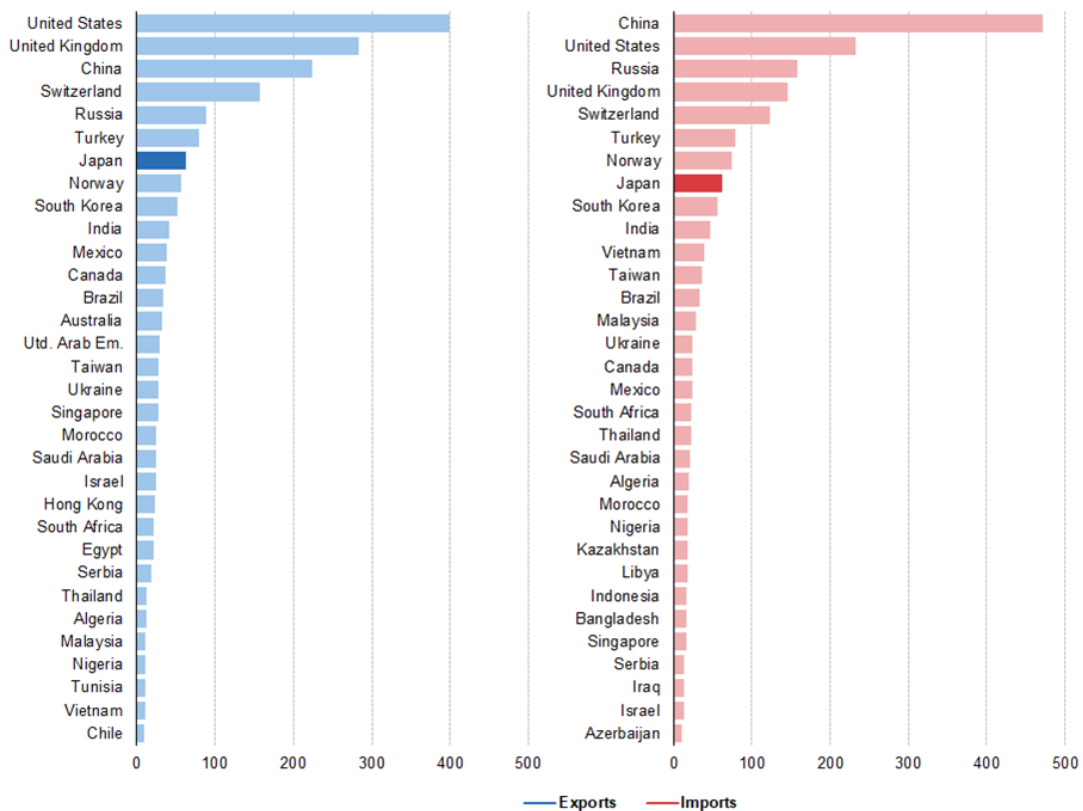
Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)

eurostat

Figure 5a: Japan among the EU's main partners for trade in goods, 2021 (% share of extra-EU exports/imports) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

Top trade in goods partners of the EU with a focus on Japan, 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)

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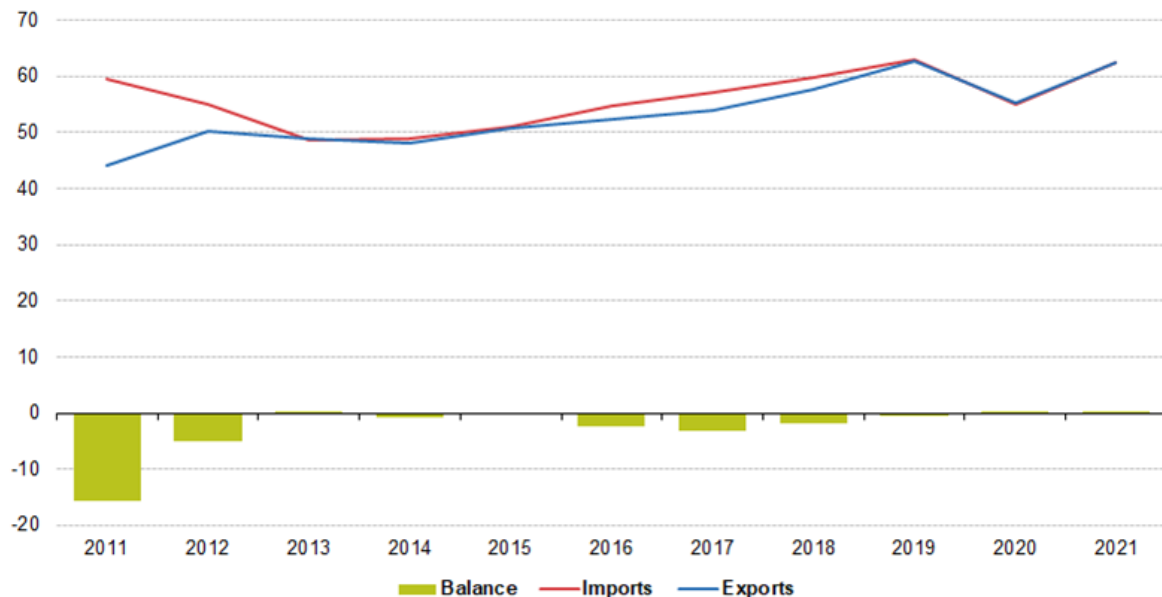
Figure 5b: Top trade in goods partners of the EU with a focus on Japan, 2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

Figure 6 shows the exports, imports and trade balance between the EU and Japan from 2011 to 2021. In 2011, the

EU had a trade deficit with Japan of € 16 billion. This changed more than once during the whole period. In 2021 the surplus was very small. Both exports to and imports from Japan increased between 2011 and 2021. EU exports to Japan were highest in 2019 (€ 63 billion) and lowest in 2011 (€ 44 billion). EU imports from Japan were highest in 2019 (€ 63 billion) and lowest in 2013 (€ 49 billion).

EU trade in goods with Japan, 2011-2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)

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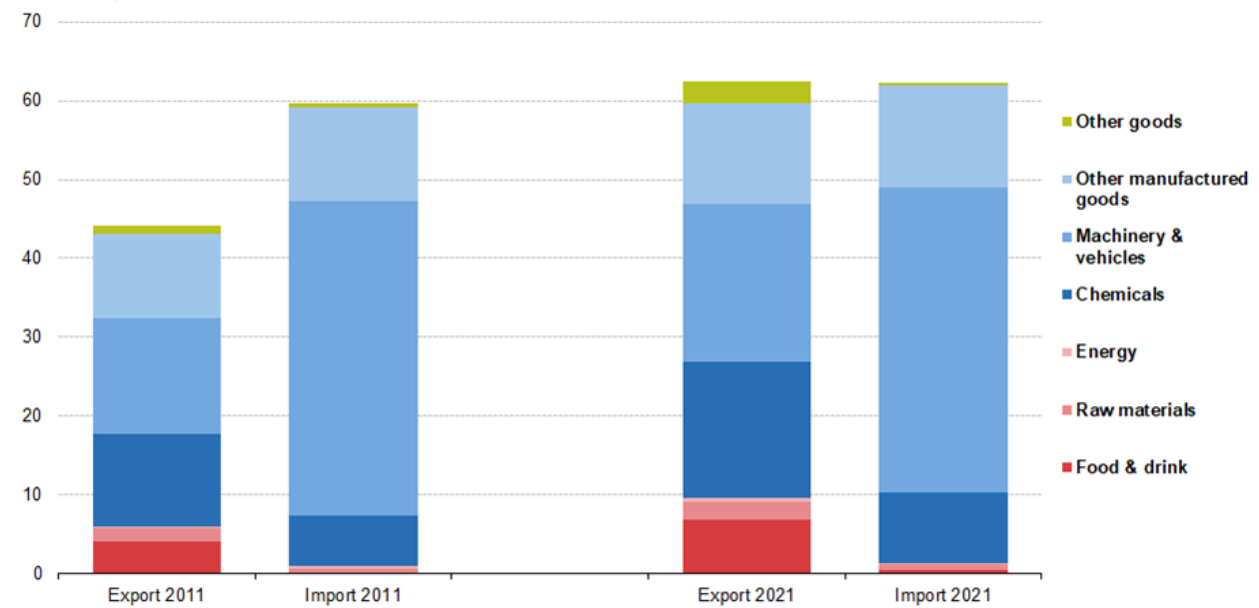
Figure 6: EU trade in goods with Japan, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

EU-Japan trade by type of goods

The breakdown of EU trade with Japan by SITC groups is shown in Figure 7. The red shades denote the primary goods: food & drink, raw materials and energy, while the blue shades show the manufactured goods: chemicals, machinery & vehicles and other manufactured goods. Finally, other goods are shown in green. In 2021, EU exports of manufactured goods (80 %) had a higher share than primary goods (15 %). The most exported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (32 %), followed by chemicals (28 %) and other manufactured goods (21 %). In 2021, EU imports of manufactured goods (97 %) also had a higher share than primary goods (2 %). The most imported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (62 %), followed by other manufactured goods (21 %) and chemicals (15 %).

EU trade with Japan by product group, 2011 and 2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)

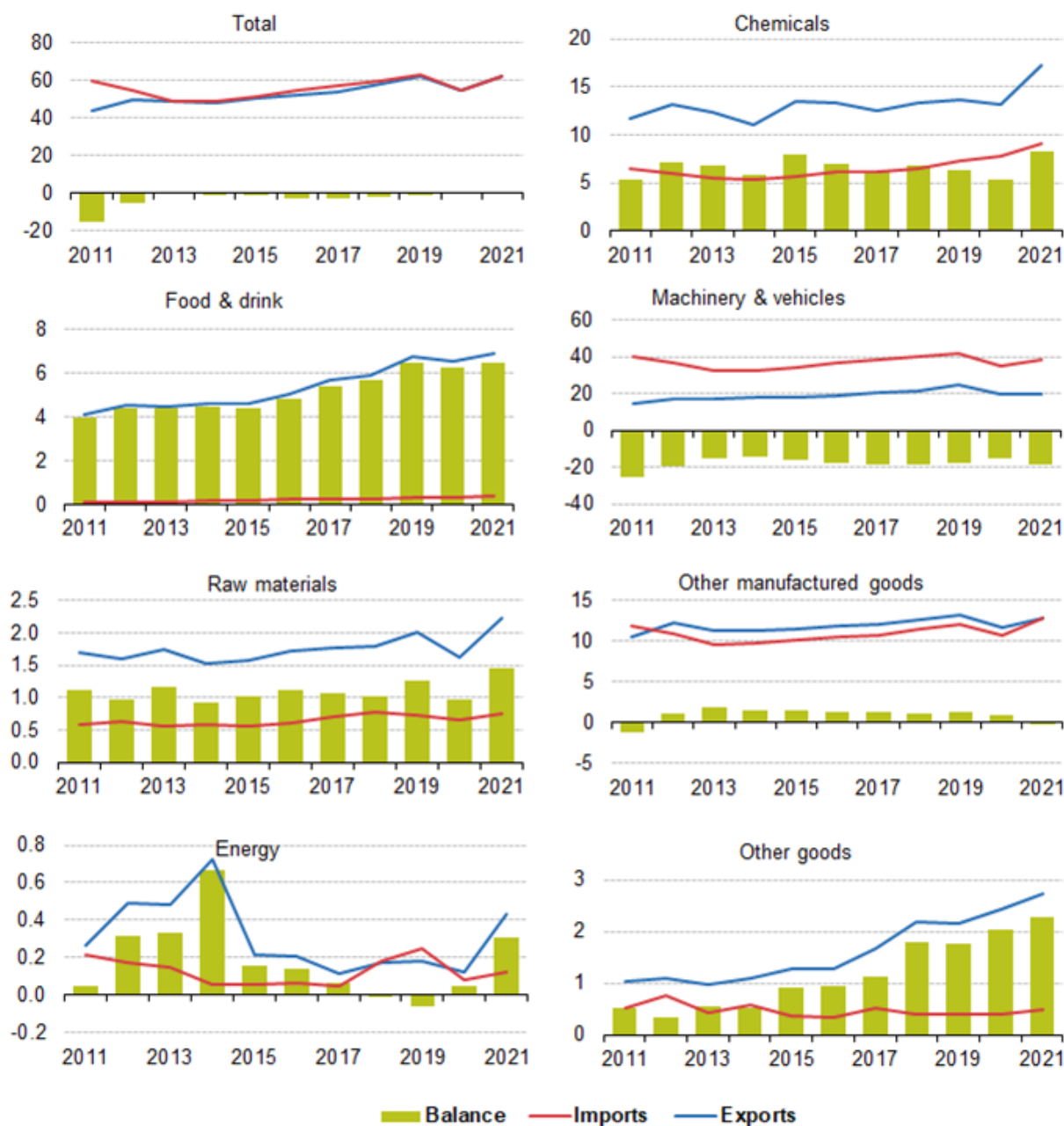
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Figure 7: EU trade with Japan by product group, 2011 and 2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

Figure 8 shows the evolution of EU imports and exports by SITC group since 2011. In 2021, the EU had trade surpluses in chemicals (€ 8.3 billion), food & drink (€ 6.5 billion), other goods (€ 2.3 billion), raw materials (€ 1.5 billion) and energy (€ 0.3 billion). The EU had trade deficits in other manufactured goods (€ 0.1 billion) and machinery & vehicles (€ 18.7 billion).

EU trade with Japan by group, 2011-2021

(€ billion)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)



Figure 8: EU trade with Japan by group, 2011-2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

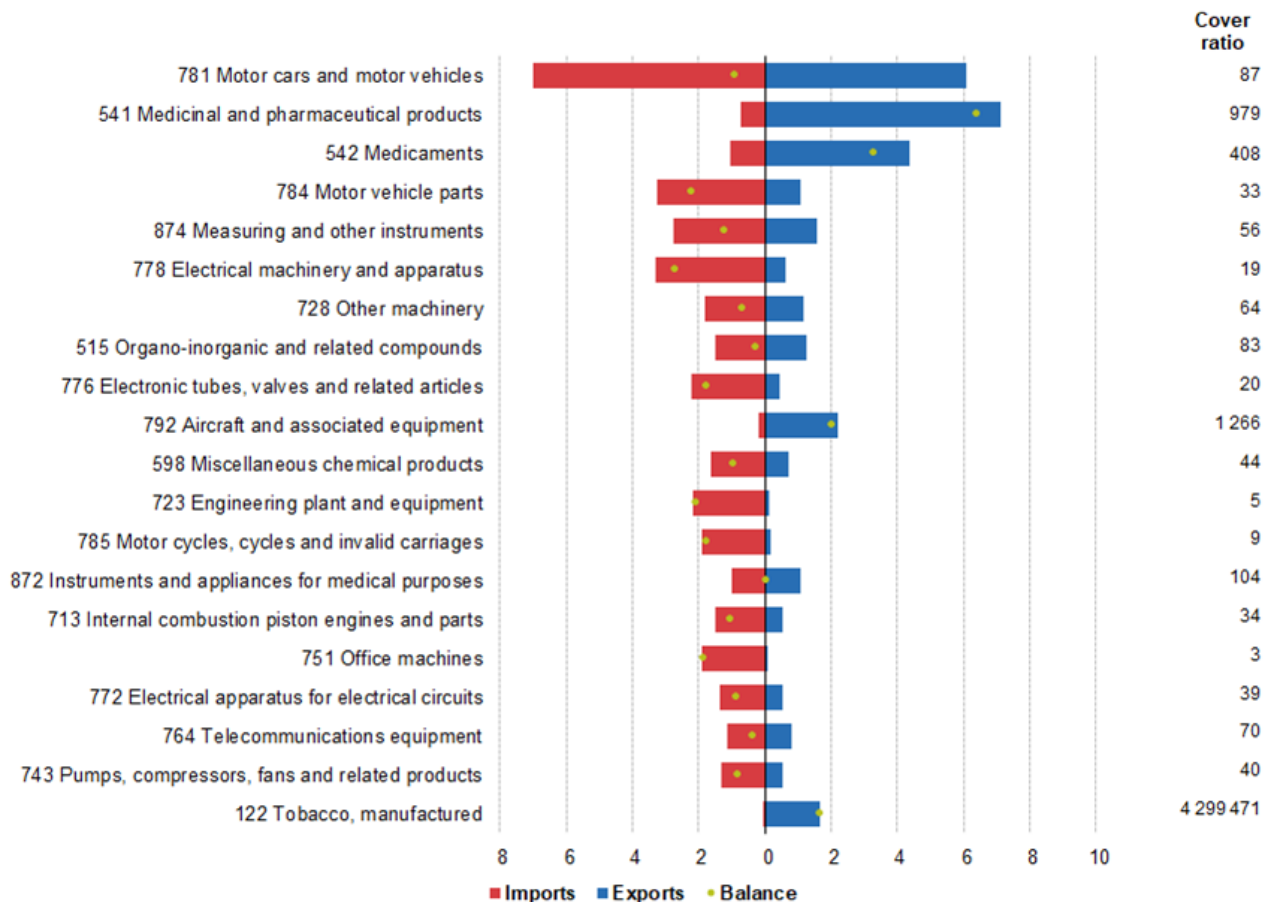
EU-Japan most traded goods

More detail about the goods exchanged between the EU and Japan is given in Figure 9, showing the 20 most traded goods at SITC-3 level. These top 20 goods covered 63 % of total trade in goods in 2021. 13 belonged to machinery and vehicles, four to chemicals, two to other manufactured goods and one to food and drink. The most traded group of goods at this level was motor cars and motor vehicles. Another interesting way to look at the data is to investigate the cover ratio (exports / imports) of traded goods, showing the direction of the trade flows between the two economies. These ratios can be found in the right-hand margin of Figure 9. Ten products were below 50 %,

indicating EU imports from Japan were more than twice as large as EU exports to Japan. Four products were above 200 %, indicating EU exports to Japan were more than twice as large as EU imports from Japan. Six products were between 50 % and 200 %, showing more balanced trade.

Most traded goods between EU and Japan, 2021

(€ billion)



Note: While the trade balance provides information on the absolute value of trading positions, the cover ratio provides a relative measure that is based on the ratio (expressed in percentage terms) between the value of exports and the value of imports; if exports are higher than imports then the cover ratio will be above 100.

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



Figure 9: Most traded goods between EU and Japan, 2021 (€ billion) Source: Eurostat DS-018995

Trade with Japan by Member State

Table 1a shows the imports of goods from Japan by Member State. The three largest importers from Japan in the EU were Germany (€ 17 323 million), the Netherlands (€ 11 248 million) and Belgium (€ 9 308 million). Luxembourg (15.4 %) had the highest share for Japan in its extra-EU imports.

EU imports of goods from Japan, 2021

	€ million	% of Japan in extra EU imports
Germany	17 323	4.0
Netherlands	11 248	3.0
Belgium	9 308	5.6
France	5 844	2.9
Italy	4 455	2.2
Spain	2 297	1.4
Poland	2 231	2.3
Czechia	2 011	4.3
Hungary	1 372	4.0
Austria	1 217	2.8
Sweden	1 031	2.0
Ireland	974	1.6
Portugal	602	2.8
Denmark	392	1.2
Luxembourg	371	15.4
Romania	358	1.3
Finland	298	1.3
Bulgaria	205	1.3
Greece	168	0.5
Slovakia	132	0.7
Slovenia	120	0.6
Cyprus	93	3.1
Lithuania	88	0.7
Estonia	76	1.4
Malta	71	2.9
Croatia	34	0.5
Latvia	24	0.4

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)



Table 1a: EU imports of goods from Japan, 2021 Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

Table 1b shows the exports of goods to Japan by Member State. The three largest exporters to Japan in the EU were Germany (€ 18 515 million), Belgium (€ 7 629 million) and Italy (€ 7 555 million). Malta (10.8 %) had the highest share for Japan in its extra-EU exports.

EU exports of goods to Japan, 2021

	€ million	% of Japan in extra EU exports
Germany	18 515	2.9
Belgium	7 629	4.9
Italy	7 555	3.1
France	6 568	2.9
Netherlands	4 318	2.0
Spain	2 935	2.4
Ireland	2 675	2.7
Sweden	2 413	3.3
Denmark	2 118	4.2
Austria	1 726	3.3
Finland	1 649	5.4
Czechia	1 202	3.2
Poland	734	1.0
Hungary	520	2.0
Romania	360	1.8
Portugal	297	1.6
Greece	248	1.3
Slovakia	204	1.2
Malta	145	10.8
Estonia	117	1.9
Slovenia	93	0.6
Luxembourg	88	3.3
Lithuania	78	0.5
Latvia	76	1.2
Bulgaria	53	0.5
Croatia	38	0.6
Cyprus	1	0.1

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)



Table 1b: EU exports of goods to Japan, 2021 Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

The trade in goods balance between the EU Member States and Japan is shown in Table 1c. It shows that 16 Member States had a trade surplus with Japan. The largest surplus was held by Italy (€ 3 100 million), followed by Denmark (€ 1 726 million) and Ireland (€ 1 702 million). There were eleven Member States that had a trade deficit with Japan. The largest deficit was held by the Netherlands (€ 6 930 million), followed by Belgium (€ 1 679 million) and Poland (€ 1 497 million).

EU trade balance of goods with Japan, 2021 (€ million)

	€ million
Italy	3 100
Denmark	1 726
Ireland	1 702
Sweden	1 382
Finland	1 352
Germany	1 191
France	724
Spain	638
Austria	509
Greece	80
Malta	74
Slovakia	72
Latvia	51
Estonia	42
Croatia	4
Romania	1
Lithuania	-10
Slovenia	-27
Cyprus	-92
Bulgaria	-152
Luxembourg	-283
Portugal	-305
Czechia	-809
Hungary	-852
Poland	-1 497
Belgium	-1 679
Netherlands	-6 930

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_st_eu27_2020sitc and DS-018995)



Table 1c: EU trade balance of goods with Japan, 2021 Source: Eurostat (ext_st_eu27_2020sitc) and Comext DS-018995

Source data for tables and graphs

- [EU - Japan international trade in goods statistics - graphs and tables](#)

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 third 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 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 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.

The United Kingdom is considered as an extra-EU partner country for the EU-27 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-27 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-27 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-27 trade partners.

Data for the non EU-27 countries used in figures 1-3 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 EU concepts 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 millions or 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 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 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)

- [Full access to detailed statistics on international trade in goods \(Comext\)](#) , see:

EU trade since 1988 by SITC (DS-018995)

Dedicated section

- [International trade in goods](#)

Data visualisations

- [Top 5 partners in 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](#)

External links

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