



# Fact sheet #2: Trade structure by partner

**Map 1** | **Main world import flows, 2018**  
(Billions of United States dollars)



Note: Bilateral imports of US\$125 billion or more are shown.

## Concepts and definitions

Intra-trade is the trade between economies belonging to the same group. Extra-trade is the trade of economies of the same group with all economies outside the group. It represents the difference between a group's total trade and intra-trade.

In theory, the exports from an economy A to an economy B, should equal the imports of economy B from economy A recorded FOB. In practice, however, the values of both flows are often different. The reasons for these trade asymmetries comprise: different times of recording, different treatment of transit trade, underreporting, measurement errors and mis-pricing or mis-invoicing.

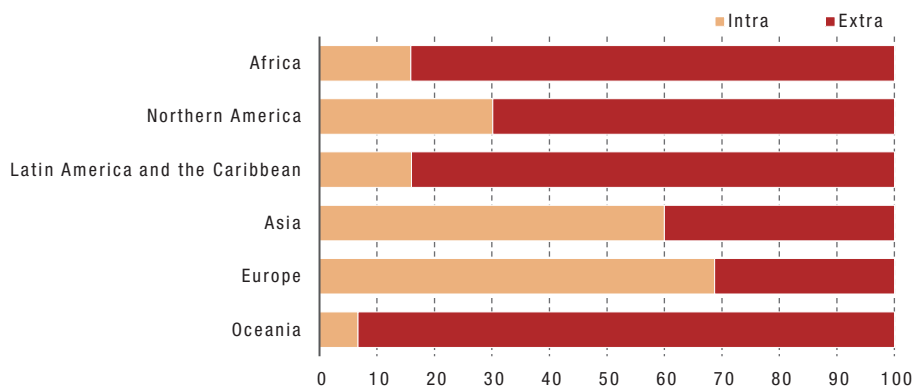
The exports to (imports from) all economies of the world do not always exactly add up to total exports (imports). The difference is caused by ship stores, bunkers and other exports of minor importance.

## Main global trade patterns

The world's largest bilateral flows of merchandise trade run between China and the United States of America, and between their respective neighboring economies. In 2018, goods worth US\$563 billion were imported by the United States from China. Goods worth US\$168 billion also travelled in the opposite direction. China's trade – exports and imports – with Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Japan, Taiwan, Province of China, and the Republic of Korea totaled US\$1.2 trillion. The United States' trade with Mexico and Canada was worth almost the same amount (US\$1.1 trillion).

Intra-regional trade was most pronounced in Europe. In 2018, 69 per cent of all European exports were to trading partners on the same continent. In Asia, this rate was 60 per cent. By contrast, in Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Northern America, most trade was extra-regional.

**Figure 1** | **Intra- and extra-regional exports, 2018**  
(Percentage of total exports)

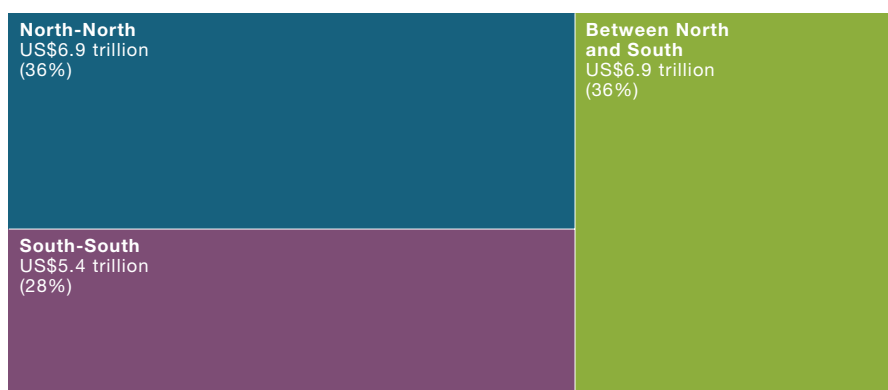




### Trade within and between 'hemispheres'

In 2018, goods worth US\$6.9 trillion were exchanged between developed economies (North-North trade), whereas merchandise trade among developing and transition economies (South-South trade) amounted to US\$5.4 trillion. Exports from developed to developing economies and vice-versa (North-South, and South-North trade) totaled US\$6.9 trillion. Thus, for developed economies, trade with developing economies was as important as trade with developed.

**Figure 2** | Global trade flows, 2018



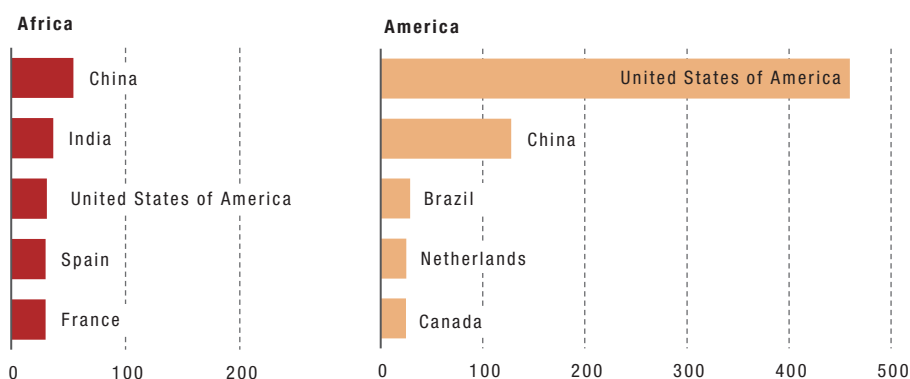
Note: North refers to developed economies, South to developing and transition economies; trade is measured from the export side; deliveries to ship stores and bunkers as well as minor and special-category exports with unspecified destination are not included.

### With whom do developing economies mainly trade?

In 2018, developing economies shipped most of their exports to the United States of America (US\$1.4 trillion), followed by China (US\$1.1 trillion) and other Asian economies. They also sourced most of their imports from the same economies.

Exports from American developing economies were more oriented towards America, especially to the United States of America (US\$460 billion), than exports from Africa. For African developing economies, more important export markets were in Asia and Europe, with China (US\$54 billion) and India (US\$37 billion) as main target economies.

**Figure 3** | Developing economies' main export destinations, 2018  
(Billions of United States dollars)



United States of America imported goods exceeding  $\frac{1}{2}$  trillion US\$ from China in 2018



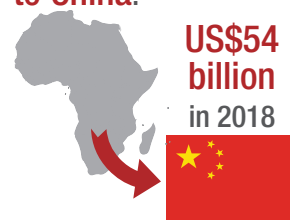
60% of Asia's trade is intra-regional



North traded as much with the South as with the North:



Africa's exports to China:



**Table 1 Exports by origin and destination, 2018**  
(Billions of United States dollars)

Origin	Destination						
	World	Total	Africa	America	Asia and Oceania	Transition economies	Developed economies
<b>World</b>	<b>19 414</b> (100)	<b>8 064</b> (42)	<b>591</b> (3)	<b>1 076</b> (6)	<b>6 397</b> (33)	<b>474</b> (2)	<b>10 729</b> (55)
Developing economies	8 649 (100)	4 981 (58)	342 (4)	434 (5)	4 205 (49)	143 (2)	3 480 (40)
Developing economies: Africa	487 (100)	250 (51)	77 (16)	12 (2)	161 (33)	3 (1)	227 (46)
Developing economies: America	1 084 (100)	415 (38)	16 (1)	173 (16)	226 (21)	8 (1)	631 (58)
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	7 077 (100)	4 316 (61)	249 (4)	249 (4)	3 818 (54)	133 (2)	2 622 (37)
Transition economies	682 (100)	207 (30)	23 (3)	10 (1)	174 (26)	112 (16)	360 (53)
Developed economies	10 083 (100)	2 876 (29)	226 (2)	632 (6)	2 018 (20)	219 (2)	6 888 (68)

Note: Percentage of exports to the whole world in parentheses.

**Table 2 Exports by origin and destination, selected years**  
(Billions of United States dollars)

Origin	Year	Destination						
		World	Total	Africa	America	Asia and Oceania	Transition economies	Developed economies
<b>World</b>	2008	16 135	5 517	481	866	4 169	564	9 959
	2013	18 997	8 025	640	1 126	6 260	595	10 121
	2018	19 414	8 064	591	1 076	6 397	474	10 729
Developing economies	2008	6 274	3 184	236	373	2 575	123	2 941
	2013	8 454	4 952	359	485	4 109	159	3 285
	2018	8 649	4 981	342	434	4 205	143	3 480
Developing economies: Africa	2008	550	186	55	18	113	3	357
	2013	587	274	86	21	166	3	300
	2018	487	250	77	12	161	3	227
Developing economies: America	2008	910	322	19	199	104	10	569
	2013	1 117	463	20	219	224	10	634
	2018	1 084	415	16	173	226	8	631
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2008	4 814	2 675	162	156	2 358	111	2 015
	2013	6 750	4 216	253	244	3 719	146	2 351
	2018	7 077	4 316	249	249	3 818	133	2 622
Transition economies	2008	721	138	12	11	115	144	438
	2013	810	187	14	10	163	137	419
	2018	682	207	23	10	174	112	360
Developed economies	2008	9 140	2 194	233	482	1 479	296	6 579
	2013	9 732	2 886	267	630	1 988	300	6 417
	2018	10 083	2 876	226	632	2 018	219	6 888

**Table 3** | Top destinations of developing economies' exports

Destination (Ranked by value of exports)	Rank		2018		
	2018	2013	Value	Share in total exports	Cumulative share
			(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
United States of America	1	1	1 416	16.4	16.4
China	2	2	1 142	13.2	29.6
China, Hong Kong SAR	3	3	526	6.1	35.7
Japan	4	4	463	5.4	41.0
India	5	5	350	4.0	45.1
Korea, Republic of	6	6	304	3.5	48.6
Singapore	7	7	222	2.6	51.1
Viet Nam	8	17	215	2.5	53.6
Germany	9	9	212	2.5	56.1
Netherlands	10	10	202	2.3	58.4
China, Taiwan Province of	11	8	166	1.9	60.3
Malaysia	12	11	163	1.9	62.2
Thailand	13	15	158	1.8	64.0
United Kingdom	14	12	155	1.8	65.8
United Arab Emirates	15	13	147	1.7	67.5
<b>Rest of the world</b>	-	-	<b>2 808</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>World</b>	-	-	<b>8 649</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Table 4** | Top origins of developing economies' imports

Origin (Ranked by value of imports)	Rank		2018		
	2018	2013	Value	Share in total imports	Cumulative share
			(Billions of US\$)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)
China	1	1	1 269	15.4	15.4
United States of America	2	2	892	10.8	26.2
Japan	3	3	549	6.7	32.8
Korea, Republic of	4	4	461	5.6	38.4
China, Taiwan Province of	5	6	362	4.4	42.8
Germany	6	5	325	3.9	46.7
Malaysia	7	10	226	2.7	49.5
Singapore	8	9	213	2.6	52.1
Australia	9	11	209	2.5	54.6
India	10	12	194	2.4	56.9
Saudi Arabia	11	7	188	2.3	59.2
Brazil	12	14	186	2.3	61.5
Thailand	13	15	178	2.2	63.6
United Arab Emirates	14	13	162	2.0	65.6
Russian Federation	15	19	160	1.9	67.5
<b>Rest of the world</b>	-	-	<b>2 679</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>World</b>	-	-	<b>8 253</b>	<b>100.0</b>	