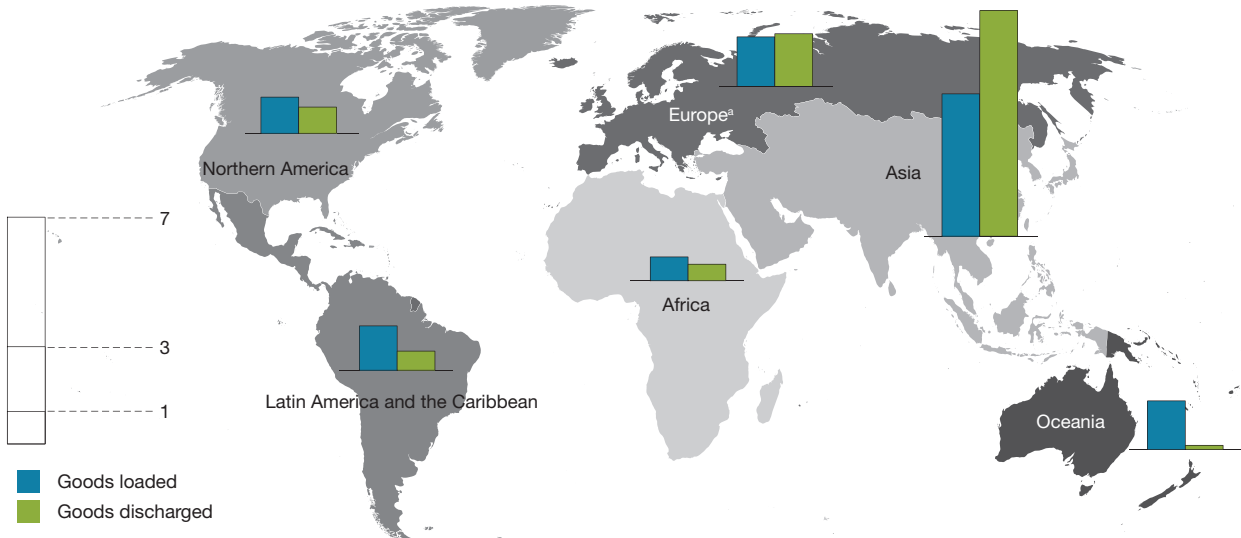




Fact sheet #13: World seaborne trade

Map 1 | Tonnage loaded and discharged, 2020
(Billions of tons)



^a Including the Russian Federation and the French overseas departments.

Concepts and definitions

The figures on seaborne trade in this section measure the volumes of international shipments, in metric tons, of goods loaded and discharged in the world's seaports. Cabotage and transshipments are not included.

Goods loaded for international shipment are assumed to be exports, while goods discharged from ships are assumed to be imports. The seaborne trade balance measures the difference between the volumes of loaded and discharged goods.

Dry cargo refers to cargo that is usually not carried in tankers, such as dry bulks (e.g., coal, ores, grains), pallets, bags, crates, and containers. "Other" tanker trade refers to tanker trade, excluding crude oil. It includes refined petroleum products, gas and chemicals.

The data presented in this section have been compiled from various sources, including country reports as well as port industry and other specialist websites (see UNCTAD 2021d).

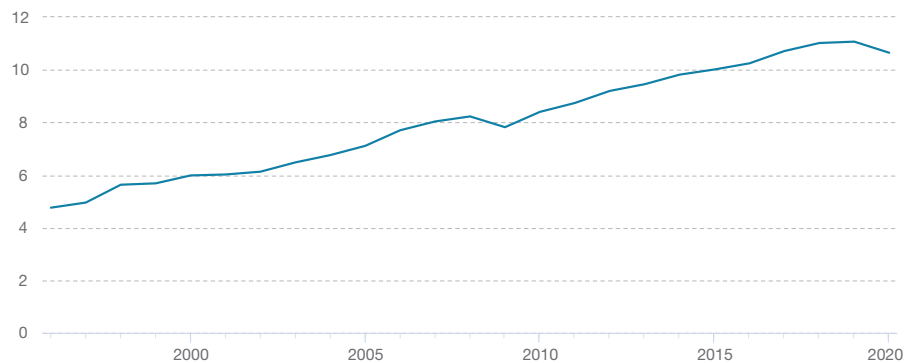
Trends and geography of world seaborne trade in 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic weighed on international maritime trade while disrupting operations and causing supply chain pressures. The volume of maritime trade slumped by 3.8 per cent in 2020 to a total of 10.6 billion tons.

The predominance of Asia as a leading maritime freight area continued unabated. In 2020, Asian ports, including developed and developing regions, loaded around 4.4 billion tons of goods, amounting to over 41.3 per cent of total goods loaded in ports worldwide. About 7.0 billion tons equivalent to 65.5 per cent of total goods discharged worldwide, were received by Asian ports in 2020.

Of the total freight shipped internationally in 2020, 7.7 billion tons, or 72 per cent, was dry cargo. Over time, dry cargo has expanded its share, now accounting for nearly three quarters of total maritime trade volumes. A decade ago, this share was closer to two thirds.

Figure 1 | Goods loaded worldwide
(Billions of tons)

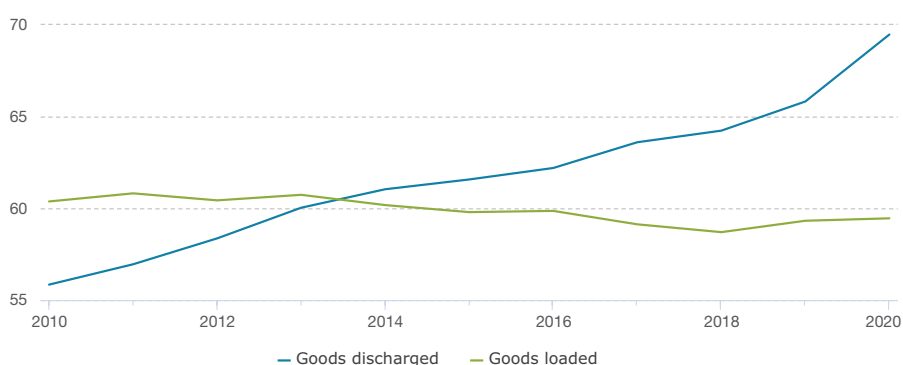




Contribution of developing economies

In 2020, developing economies still accounted for the largest share of global seaborne trade, both in terms of exports and imports. They loaded 59.5 per cent and discharged 69.5 per cent of the world total. Asian and Oceanian developing economies contributed most to those shares. While developing economies remain the main maritime trade centres, the structure of their trade has changed over the years with their share of world seaborne imports increasingly surpassing their share of exports since 2013.

Figure 2 | Seaborne trade of developing economies
(Percentage of corresponding world tonnage)

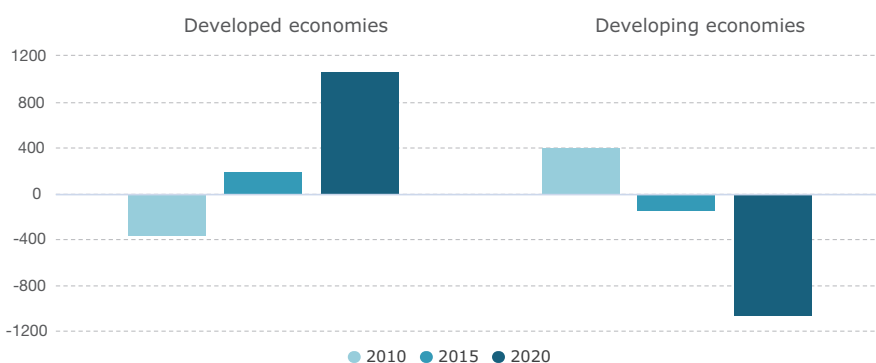


Developments in seaborne trade balances

The structural shift in the composition of economies' maritime trade and total imports and exports is reflected in the widening maritime trade deficit for developing economies and surplus for developed economies. Developing economies loaded 401 million tons more goods in 2010 than they discharged. This compared to a deficit of 149 million tons in 2015, which deepened to 1 055 million tons in 2020. This development was mainly driven by a widening deficit in Asian developing economies. Much of the deficit increase in 2020 reflects the active role of Eastern Asia and especially continued import demand in China. On the other hand, the surplus for developed economies increased in 2020, expressing a decline in import demand largely induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, among other issues.¹

¹ For further analyses on this topic, see UNCTAD (2021d).

Figure 3 | Seaborne trade balance
(Millions of tons)



Seaborne trade growth slumped

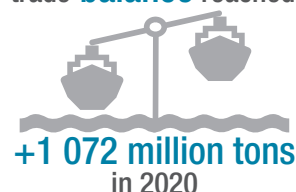


Developing economies' share of seaborne trade imports rose to

69.5% in 2020



Developed economies' seaborne trade balance reached



**Table 1** Total seaborne trade by group of economies

Group of economies	Loaded			Discharged			Balance	
	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume	
	(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)	
	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020
World^a	10 013	10 648	-3.8	9 965	10 631	-3.8	48	17
Developed economies	4 026	4 317	-4.1	3 829	3 245	-14.1	197	1 072
Developing economies	5 987	6 331	-3.6	6 136	7 386	1.5	-149	-1 055
Developing economies: Africa	715	735	-9.7	475	510	-4.4	240	225
Developing economies: America	1 352	1 369	-2.7	590	590	-5.0	762	779
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	3 921	4 226	-2.8	5 071	6 286	2.7	-1 151	-2 059

^a Annual world totals of goods loaded and discharged are not necessarily the same, given bilateral asymmetries in international merchandise trade statistics and that goods loaded in one calendar year may reach their port of destination in the next calendar year.

Table 2 Seaborne trade by cargo type and group of economies

Crude oil

Group of economies	Loaded			Discharged			Balance	
	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume	
	(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)	
	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020
World^a	1 761	1 716	-7.8	1 910	1 864	-7.9	-149	-148
Developed economies	294	426	-6.1	995	732	-18.8	-701	-307
Developing economies	1 467	1 290	-8.3	915	1 131	0.9	551	159
Developing economies: Africa	294	236	-22.0	39	31	-13.4	254	206
Developing economies: America	223	200	-9.7	66	40	-12.0	158	161
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	950	854	-3.2	810	1 061	2.0	139	-207

^a Annual world totals of goods loaded and discharged are not necessarily the same, given bilateral asymmetries in international merchandise trade statistics and that goods loaded in one calendar year may reach their port of destination in the next calendar year.

Other tanker trade

Group of economies	Loaded			Discharged			Balance	
	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume	
	(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)			(Millions of tons)	
	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020
World^a	1 178	1 202	-7.7	1 175	1 222	-7.5	3	-20
Developed economies	510	430	-9.8	535	370	-20.1	-24	60
Developing economies	668	772	-6.5	641	852	-0.6	27	-80
Developing economies: Africa	59	83	-9.0	72	108	-4.8	-14	-25
Developing economies: America	84	76	-7.0	102	130	-9.6	-18	-54
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	525	613	-6.1	467	614	2.3	59	-1

^a Annual world totals of goods loaded and discharged are not necessarily the same, given bilateral asymmetries in international merchandise trade statistics and that goods loaded in one calendar year may reach their port of destination in the next calendar year.



Dry cargo

Group of economies	Loaded			Discharged			Balance	
	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume		Annual growth rate	Volume	
	(Millions of tons)		(Percentage)	(Millions of tons)		(Percentage)	(Millions of tons)	
	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020	2020	2015	2020
World^a	7 074	7 730	-2.2	6 879	7 545	-2.2	195	185
Developed economies	3 222	3 461	-3.1	2 300	2 142	-11.2	922	1 319
Developing economies	3 853	4 269	-1.5	4 579	5 403	2.0	-727	-1 134
Developing economies: Africa	363	416	-0.9	364	372	-3.5	-1	44
Developing economies: America	1 044	1 093	-0.9	422	420	-2.8	623	673
Developing economies: Asia and Oceania	2 446	2 760	-1.9	3 794	4 611	2.9	-1 348	-1 851

^a Annual world totals of goods loaded and discharged are not necessarily the same, given bilateral asymmetries in international merchandise trade statistics and that goods loaded in one calendar year may reach their port of destination in the next calendar year.

Table 3 | **Development of goods loaded worldwide by type of cargo**
(Millions of tons)

Year	Total goods	Crude oil	Other tanker trade	Dry cargo
1975	3 072	1 364	280	1 428
1980	3 704	1 527	344	1 833
1985	3 330	1 049	410	1 895
1990	4 008	1 287	468	2 253
1995	4 651	1 532	518	2 601
2000	5 984	1 605	558	3 821
2005	7 109	1 857	565	4 687
2010	8 401	1 785	968	5 649
2015	10 013	1 761	1 178	7 074
2020	10 648	1 716	1 202	7 730