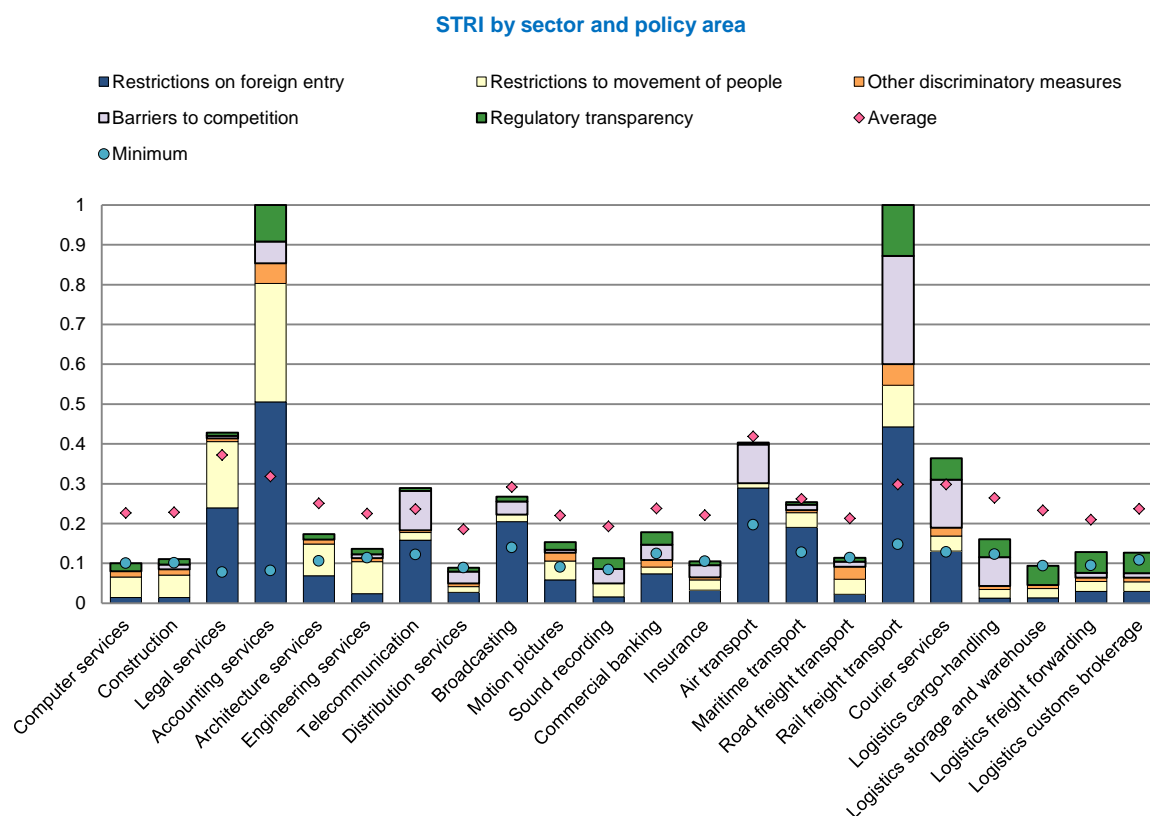


OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI): Korea

Korea exported services worth USD 98 billion and its services imports amounted to USD 114 billion in 2015. The largest services exporting sector is transport with maritime freight the main export, followed by construction and other business services.

Korea's score on the STRI index in the 22 sectors covered by the STRI project is shown below along with the average and the lowest score among the 44 countries included in the STRI database for each sector.



Note: The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive. They are calculated on the basis of the STRI regulatory database which contains information on regulation for the 35 OECD Members, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Russia and South Africa. The STRI database records measures on a Most Favoured Nations basis. Preferential trade agreements are not taken into account. Air transport and road freight cover only commercial establishment (with accompanying movement of people).

Horizontal policy measures

Korea has a lower STRI score than the average in 17 out of 22 sectors. Horizontal trade restricting regulations are few and relate to movement of people, public procurement and commercial presence requirements. Natural persons seeking to provide services in the country on a temporary basis as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers or independent services suppliers may stay in the country for up to 24 months on their first entry permit. Public procurement regulation does not grant national treatment for foreign suppliers on a most favoured nation basis. Korea also requires commercial presence to provide services in the local market. Finally, Korea has relatively costly procedures to register companies.

The sectors with the relatively lowest STRI scores

Computer services, insurance and logistics storage and warehouse are the three sectors with the lowest score relative to the average in Korea. The computer services sector is not subject to sector-specific regulation and the score reflects the horizontal measures. The sector-specific trade restricting regulation in the insurance sector include reservation of export credit insurance services for a local insurer, and Korea

Post is a state owned enterprise which is a significant supplier of insurance services. Finally, measures guaranteeing the independence of the supervisory authority are not fully in place. The logistics sector is subject to individual licensing for each activity (warehousing, freight forwarding and customs brokerage services), and is otherwise not subject to further sector-specific trade restricting regulations.

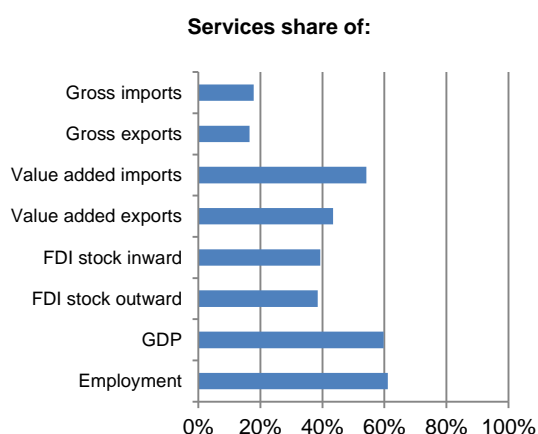
The sectors with the relatively highest STRI scores

Courier services, accounting services and rail freight transport are the three sectors with the highest score relative to the average in Korea. In the case of courier services, there is a postal monopoly for letters and parcels below a certain weight threshold and not all the required pro-competitive regulations are in place. Auditing and accounting are regulated professions where a local license is required to provide services and to own shares in auditing or accounting firms. To obtain a license auditors and accountants must have the required qualification from a Korean university. Recognition of foreign qualification is only available to RTA partners. There is no temporary licensing in place, which means that the market is effectively closed to third country services providers. In the rail sector only the government-owned Korail has been licensed to operate rail freight transport services.

Recent policy changes

The requirement that foreign investors shall transfer stocks to Korean national(s) within 6 months in cases where their registration is cancelled was lifted in 2015. Restrictions on internet banking were also lifted. Conversely, a requirement that only licensed architects may found an architect firm was introduced.

Efficient services sectors matter



Services account for almost 17% of Korea's gross exports, but for 43% of its value added exports, indicating that Korea's exports of goods rely intensively on services inputs. Cost effective state of the art services are therefore of utmost importance for the competitiveness of the Korean industrial sector. In Korea's case, services account for a notably higher share in employment than in GDP, reflecting lower labour productivity in services. Korea could further improve the efficiency of its economy by prioritising reforms that enhance competition in services markets, particularly by focusing on those sectors where a higher STRI is observed.

More information

- » Access all of the country notes, sector notes and interactive STRI tools on the OECD website at <http://oe.cd/stri>
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at stri.contact@oecd.org