



THE UNITED STATES – 2023

Key findings

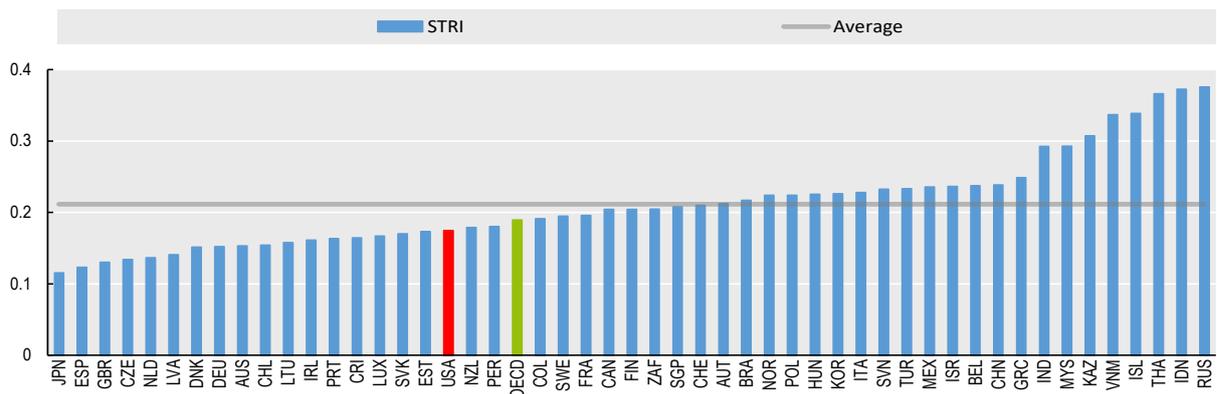
- The 2023 STRI of the United States of America is below the OECD average and low compared to other countries, indicating an open regulatory environment for trade in services.
- The United States' regulatory environment for services has been stable over the past years with relatively few changes affecting services trade.
- Rail freight transport is the most open services sector in the United States while maritime transport is the most restricted, relative to the sectoral averages.

Recommendation

- Trade in services strengthens resilience across supply chains, facilitating environmental sustainability and promoting greater inclusiveness. To ensure the benefits of open markets and a rules-based international trading system, national and multilateral action is needed to lower barriers and reduce trade costs, promote greater regulatory interoperability, and facilitate the digital transformation of economies

The 2023 STRI of the United States is below the OECD average, and relatively low compared to other countries in the STRI sample (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average STRI across countries, 2023ⁱ



OECD (2023). STRI and TIVA databases.

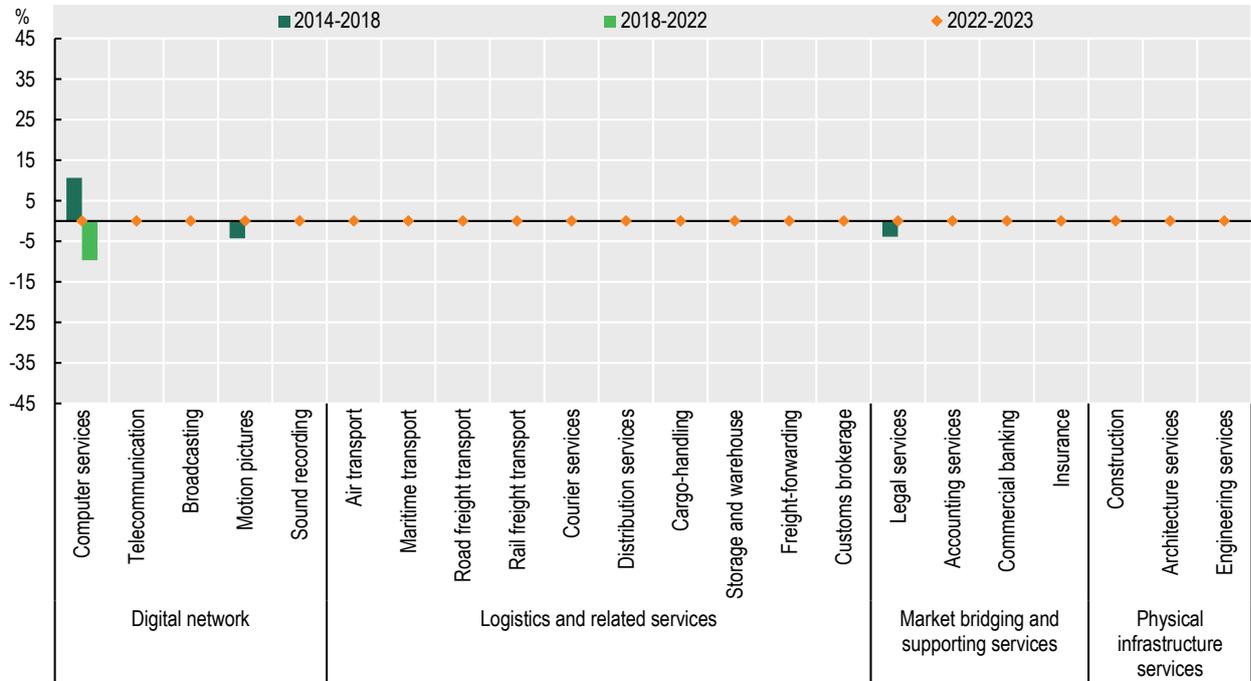
A general regulation that contributes to the STRI in all sectors is the quota restricting the number of contractual and independent services suppliers who may enter the country annually. However, the United States has a liberal policy regarding their duration of stay, which can be up to 36 months on the first entry permit. Moreover, the United States' procurement market is open only to members of the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement and partners in regional trade agreements, with the possibility of granting exceptions for developing countries. Overall, the United States is one of the

countries where the government interferes least with private suppliers through state ownership: aside from the postal operator, no major firm is owned by the federal government in the sectors included.

The regulatory environment for services trade in the United States has been relatively stable in recent years with only moderate changes in some sectors (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Evolution of STRI indices by sector in the United States

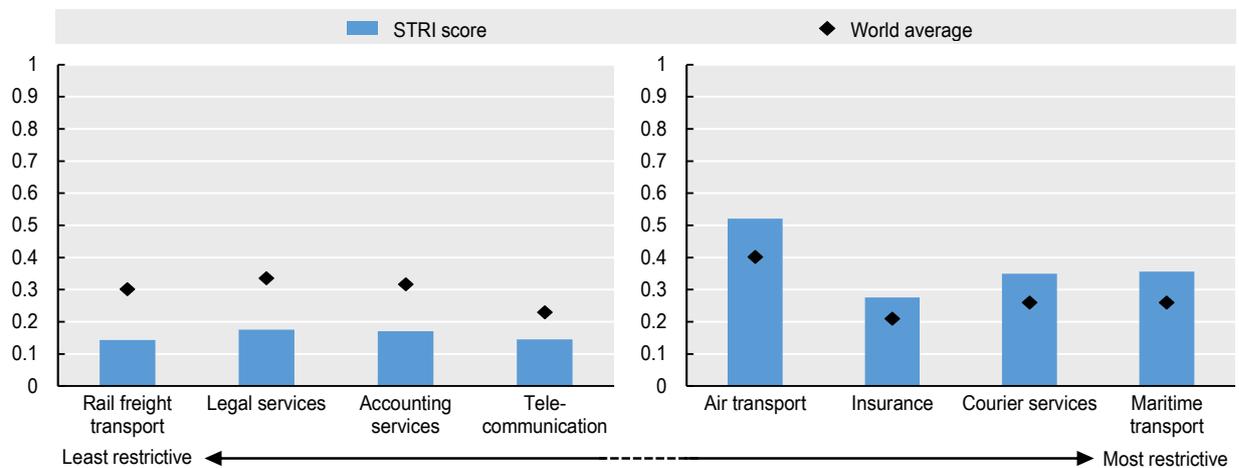
Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, percentage change over the period 2014-2018, 2018-2022 and 2022-2023



OECD (2023). STRI database.

Figure 3 ranks the United States' sectors relative to the respective sector's world average. Rail freight transport, legal services, accounting services and telecommunication are the sectors with relatively lowest scores. Conversely, air transport, insurance, courier services, and maritime transport are the sectors with relatively highest scores.

Figure 3. Sectoral breakdown - The least and most restricted sectors in the United States compared to world average



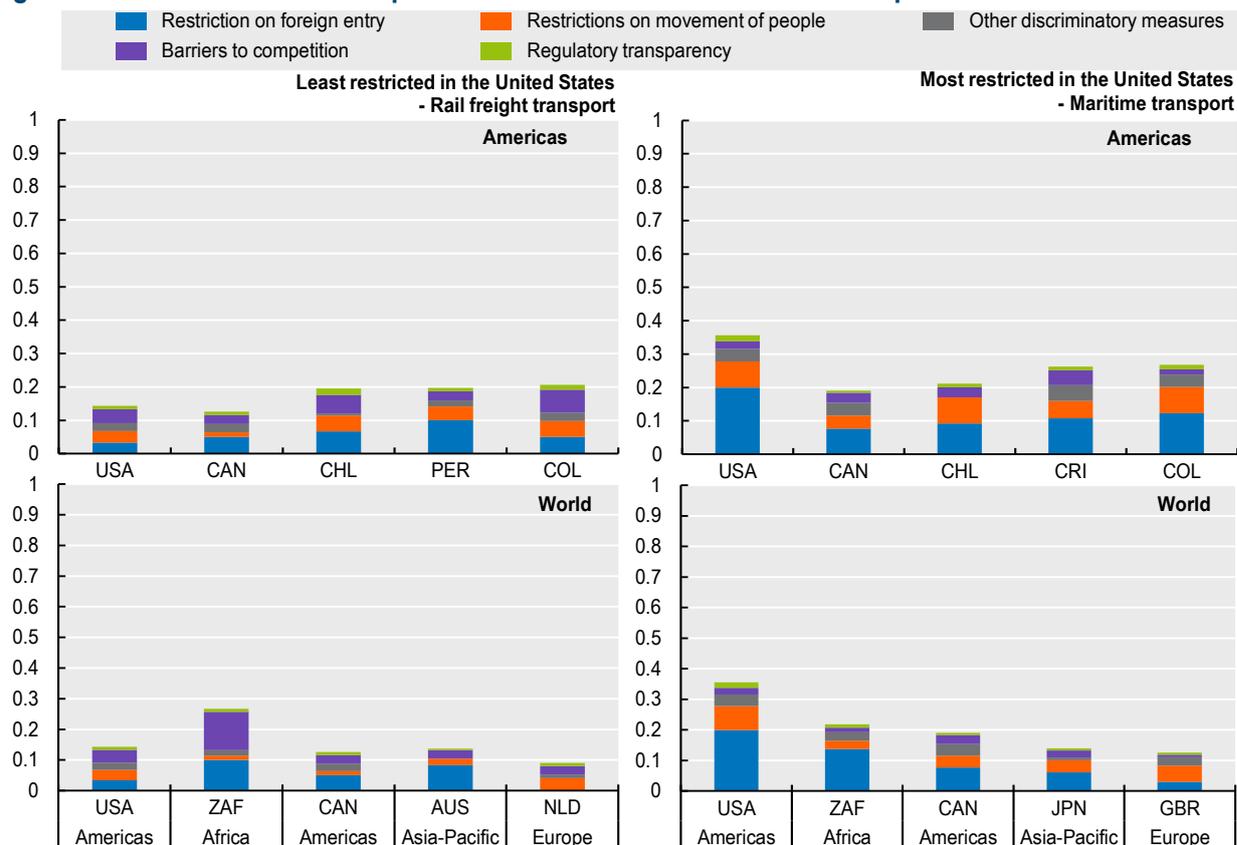
Note: Selection was made based on how far the sectors' score were from the world average score, as a percentage difference

i.e. $(STR I_{country, sector} - STR I_{world average, sector}) / STR I_{world average, sector}$

Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Rail freight transport services are the least restricted in the United States compared to the Americas. The composition of the scores indicates that barriers to competition were the main contributor to the scores. Nonetheless, the sector is characterised by an open regulatory framework for foreign investment and access rights are granted for international rail transport, except for the domestic legs. Maritime transport services are the most restricted services in the United States compared to other countries in the Americas and elsewhere. Barriers to foreign entry contribute the most, including measures such as requirements for companies owning vessels to be incorporated under the laws of the United States; the CEO, the chairman of the board of directors and majority of directors must be U.S. citizens. The cabotage market is not open to foreign firms (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The United States compared to the Americas and World's best performers



Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Recent policy changes

As of February 2021, requirements for H-1B visas for entry-level computer programmers have been eased by allowing applicants to qualify as a position in a specialty occupation as required for H-1B visas. In the context of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, entry into the United States through H-1B visas was suspended temporarily between June 2020 and March 2021.

More information

- » Access all country notes, sector notes, and interactive STRI tools at <http://oe.cd/stri>
- » Read more about [Services Trade Policies and the Global Economy](#)
- » More information about measuring the regulatory environment for services trade in the APEC region: <https://apecservicesindex.org/>
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at stri.contact@oecd.org

ⁱNote: The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive. The STRI database records measures on a Most Favoured Nation basis. Air transport and road freight cover only commercial establishment (with accompanying movement of people). The indices are based on laws and regulations in force on 31 October 2023. The STRI regulatory database covers the 38 OECD Members, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and Viet Nam. The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.