



Engineering Services 2021

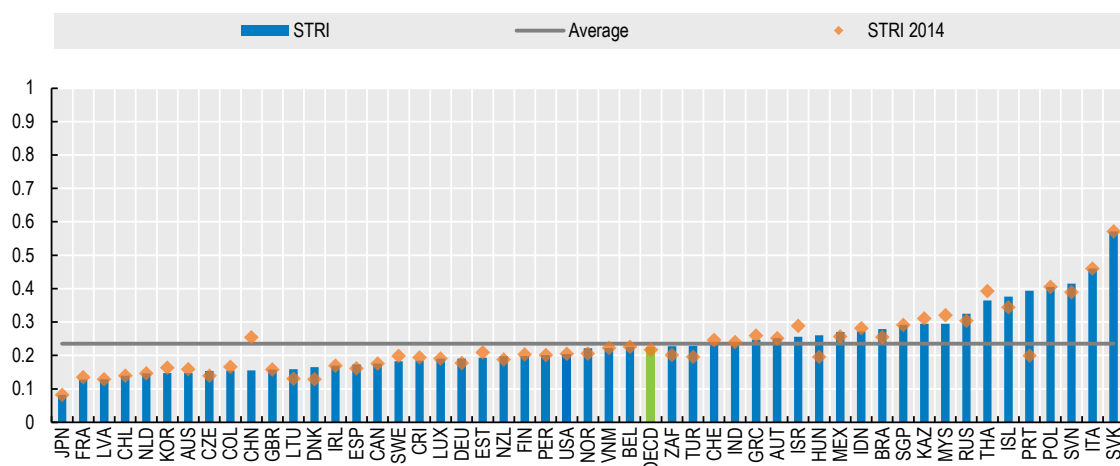
Key findings

- The average 2021 STRI in the engineering services sector is 0.24 out of a maximum of 1 (most trade restricted) indicating a relatively low overall level of restrictiveness. However, individual country scores diverge considerably, ranging between 0.08 and 0.57.
- The best performing countries in the sector are Japan, Latvia and France. Most regulatory changes of 2021 were recorded in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.
- Restriction to the movement of people are the main drivers of trade restrictiveness in the sector, with contributions to the total index values of 55% in OECD economies and 44% in non-OECD economies.
- OECD estimates suggest that halving the distance to best practice in this sector is associated with a reduction in the costs of cross-border trade in engineering services between 5% and 13% for the average country included in the STRI database.

The definition of engineering services (ISIC Rev 4, code 71) covers several related activities, such as engineering and integrated engineering services, and engineering related scientific and technical consulting services. Engineering services constitute the backbone of construction and provide essential inputs for the economy.

The 2021 STRIs in the engineering services sector range between 0.08 and 0.57, with a sample average of 0.24 (Figure 1). There are 31 countries below and 19 countries above the average. The best performing countries in the sector are Japan, Latvia and France. There are no countries that are fully closed to trade in this sector.

Figure 1. STRI in engineering services services, 2021



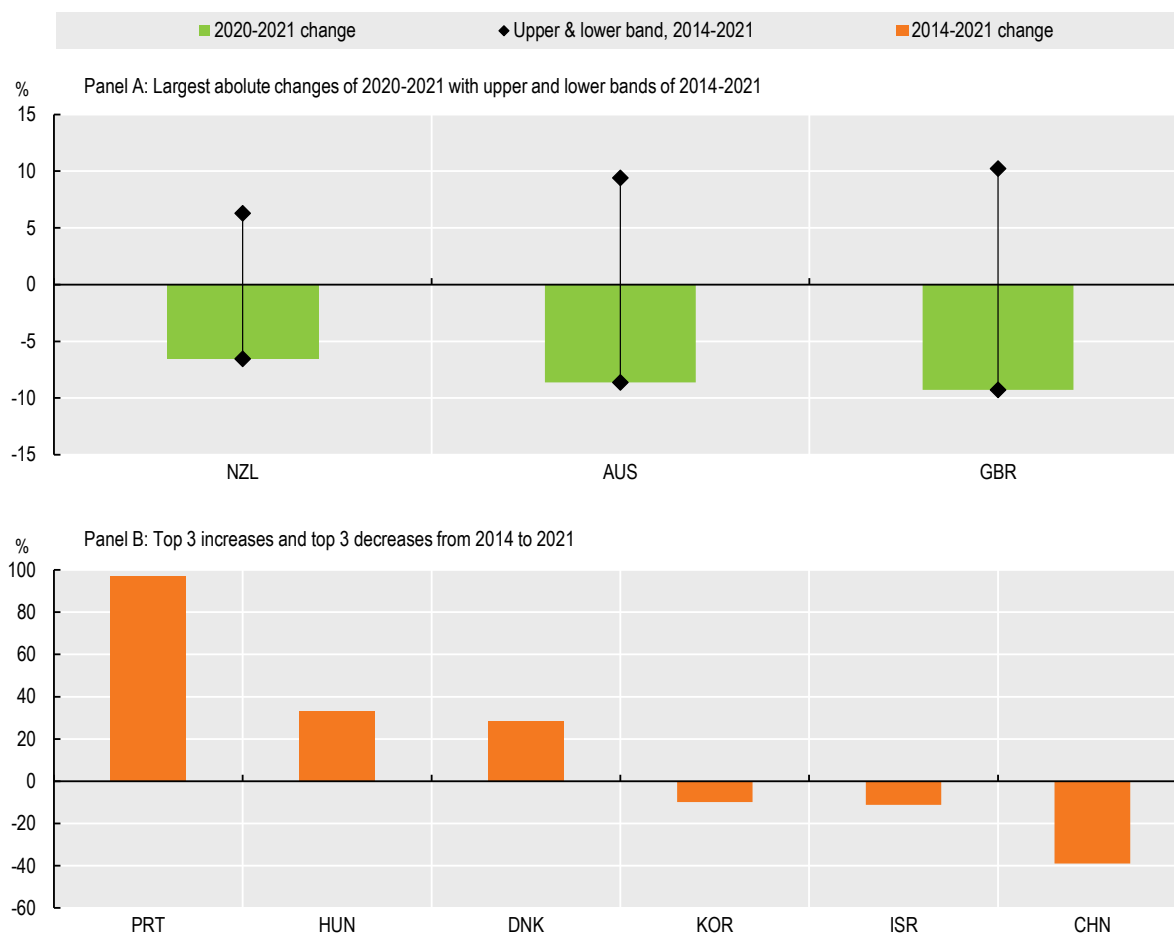
Note: The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive. The indices are based on laws and regulations in force on 31 October 2021. The definition of engineering services (ISIC Rev 4, code 71) covers several related activities, such as engineering and integrated engineering services, and engineering related scientific and technical consulting services. The STRI regulatory database covers the 38 OECD countries, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, Russian Federation, 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.

Source: OECD STRI database (2021).

Several countries introduced regulatory changes affecting the STRIs in 2021 and more so since 2014 (Figure 2). In 2021, the STRIs in this sector saw the biggest changes in New Zealand (-7%), Australia (-9%), and the United Kingdom (-9%). Since 2014, on the one hand, we have observed countries that have had the strongest restrictive trends such as Portugal (97%), Hungary (33%) and Denmark (28%). On the other hand, we have strong liberalising trends in Korea (-10%), Israel (-11%), and China (-39%).

Figure 2. Change since 2014 and change in the last year, by country

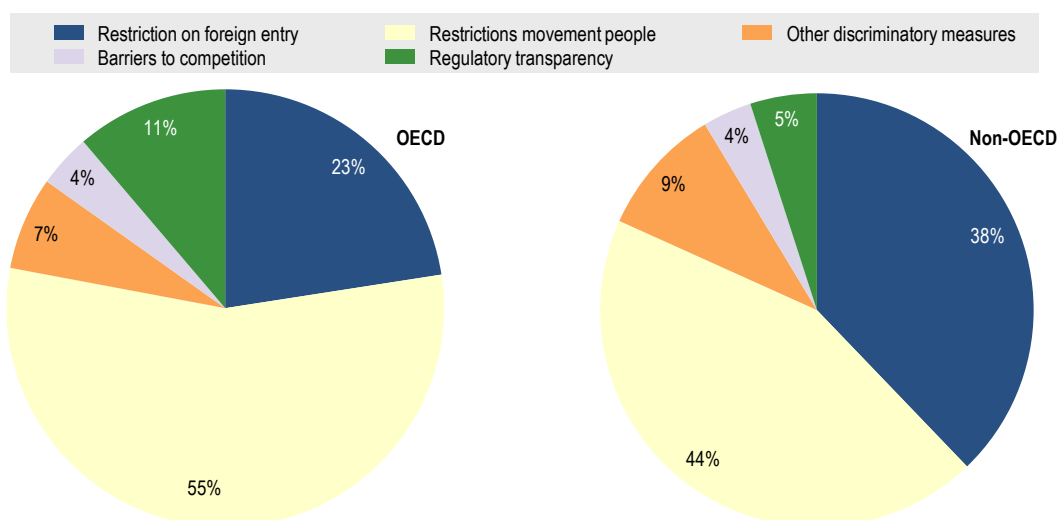


Note: Selection criteria for Panel A was based on largest absolute changes since 2020. Panel B selection is the three largest increases, and the three largest decreases in the STRI since 2014.

Source: OECD STRI database (2021).

The measures in the STRI database are organised under five policy areas (Figure 3). Restrictions on foreign entry include barriers related to establishing and operating companies such as foreign equity limits or requirements on board of directors and cross-border data flows. Restrictions on the movement of people cover barriers that affect the temporary entry of foreign services providers through quotas, labour market tests and short durations of stay. Other discriminatory measures include discrimination of foreign services suppliers as far as taxes, subsidies and public procurement are concerned. Barriers to competition include information on anti-trust policy, government ownership of major firms and the extent to which government-owned enterprises are exempt from competition laws. Regulatory transparency includes information on consultations and dissemination prior to laws and regulations entering into force. It also records information on obtaining a license or a visa. In this sector, barriers related to restrictions on movement of people are most prominent and amount to 55% in OECD economies and 44% in non-OECD economies.

Figure 3. STRI policy areas for engineering services by OECD and non-OECD economies, 2021



Source: OECD STRI database (2021).

Engineers participate in the construction of key infrastructure, such as buildings and roads. They also play a significant role in the development of production processes and the adoption of new technologies. An important feature is the regulatory complementarity between engineering, architecture and construction services. Often, engineering and architectural activities are combined into projects offered by one company, and are sometimes subsumed in the building and construction sector.

Table 1 lists the most common restrictions identified in each policy area. Restrictions to the movement of people are the most prominent barrier in this sector. These restrictions include labour market tests for services suppliers coupled with short durations of stay. As a regulated profession in 33 countries, licenses and/or authorizations are required to practice. Other burdensome requirements such as domicile or prior or permanent residence in the countries are present in over 15 countries

Under restrictions on foreign entry, common impediments relate to limitations to the acquisition and use of land and real estate, screening of foreign investments, local presence requirements for cross-border supply of engineering services as well as restrictions to cross-border data flows. License requirements for management and executive bodies are also common requirements.

Under other discriminatory measures, explicit preference for foreign suppliers or non-prohibition of discrimination of foreign suppliers in public tenders are the most common challenges. Minimum capital for new companies is required for more than half of the countries in the STRI sample. Fee setting and restrictions on advertisers are also present in seven and six countries respectively.

Under barriers related to regulatory transparency, cumbersome visa conditions for engineers and other related professions, and procedural hurdles related to business visas, are the most common challenges in this sector. In addition, the public consultation process for new legislative instruments falls short of best practice in 11 countries.

Table 1. Top 5 most relevant measures by policy area, 2021

Policy area	Measure	Countries having a restriction ¹
Restrictions on foreign entry	Acquisition and use of land and real estate by foreigners is restricted	34
	Screening exists without exclusion of economic interests	22
	Local presence is required for cross-border supply	18
	Board of directors: at least one must be resident	18
	Manager must be a licensed professional	13
Restrictions to movement of people	Limitation on duration of stay for contractual services suppliers (months)	40
	Labour market tests: intra-corporate transferees and or contractual services suppliers	39
	Memo: Licence or authorisation is required to practice	33
	A temporary licensing system is in place	21
	Foreign professionals are required to take a local examination	20
Other discriminatory measures	Public procurement: Procurement regulation explicitly prohibits discrimination of foreign suppliers	43
	Public procurement: The procurement process affects the conditions of competition in favour of local firms	24
	Public procurement: Explicit preferences for local suppliers	24
	Memo: The procurement process below the value thresholds affects the conditions of competition in favour of local firms	20
	Foreign suppliers are treated less favourably regarding taxes and eligibility to subsidies	3
Barriers to competition	Minimum capital requirements	29
	Fee-setting: recommended minimum and/or maximum fees	7
	Fee-setting: mandatory minimum and/or maximum fees	6
	Restrictions on advertising	6
	Other restrictions in barriers to competition	0
Regulatory transparency	Range of visa processing time (days)	27
	Number of documents needed to obtain a business visa	25
	There is an adequate public comment procedure open to interested persons, including foreign suppliers	11
	Cost to obtain a business visa	8
	There is a legal obligation to communicate regulations to the public within a reasonable time prior to entry into force	8

Notes

1. The count for “memo” type of measures, which are not scored in the STRI, indicate the number of positive answers recorded for that measure across the 50 countries covered

Top most relevant measures are selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) most restricted horizontal measures (i.e. same answer across sectors), (2) most restricted sector-specific measures, (3) key measures or (4) memos affecting the score of other measures through hierarchy rules.

Source: OECD STRI database (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 their impacts in [Services Trade Policies and the Global Economy](#).
- » Benz, S. and A. Jaax (2020), "The costs of regulatory barriers to trade in services: New estimates of *ad valorem* tariff equivalents", *OECD Trade Policy Papers*, No. 238, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bae97f98-en>.
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at stri.contact@oecd.org.