



## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – 2022

### Key findings

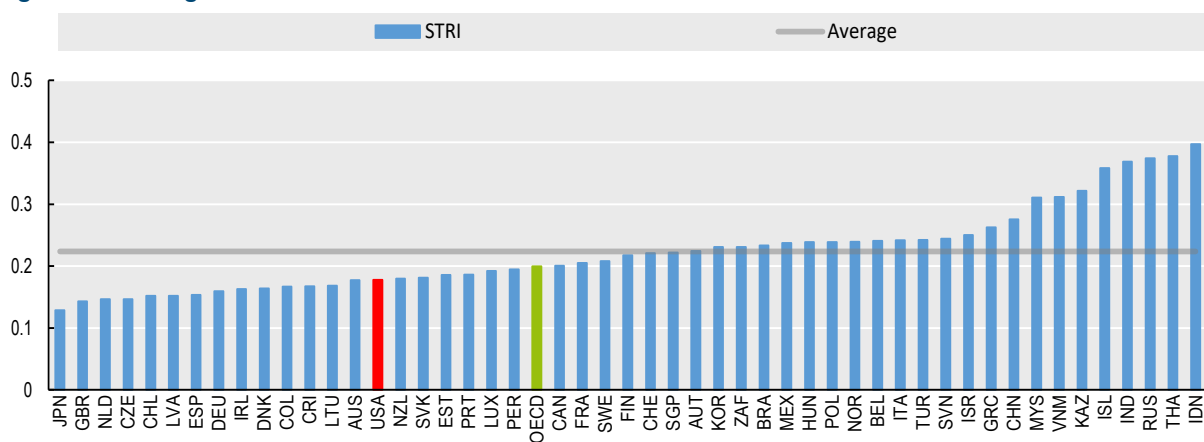
- The 2022 STRI of the United States of America is below the OECD average and low compared to other countries, indicating an open regulatory environment for trade in services.
- The United States’ regulatory environment for services has been stable over the past years with relatively few changes affecting services trade.
- Rail freight transport is the most open services sector in the United States while maritime transport is the most restricted.

### Recommendation

- Open and well-regulated services markets are essential to facilitate economic recovery, strengthen resilience to future shocks, and promote a more sustainable trading system. To ensure that the benefits of open markets and a rules-based international trading system are preserved, policy makers should focus on minimising barriers that increase trade costs for services providers, weaken the gains from digital transformation and undermine competitiveness.

The 2022 STRI of the United States of America is relatively low compared to other countries in the STRI sample (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average STRI across countries, 2022



Note: 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 2022. 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. Source: OECD (2022). 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 of America**

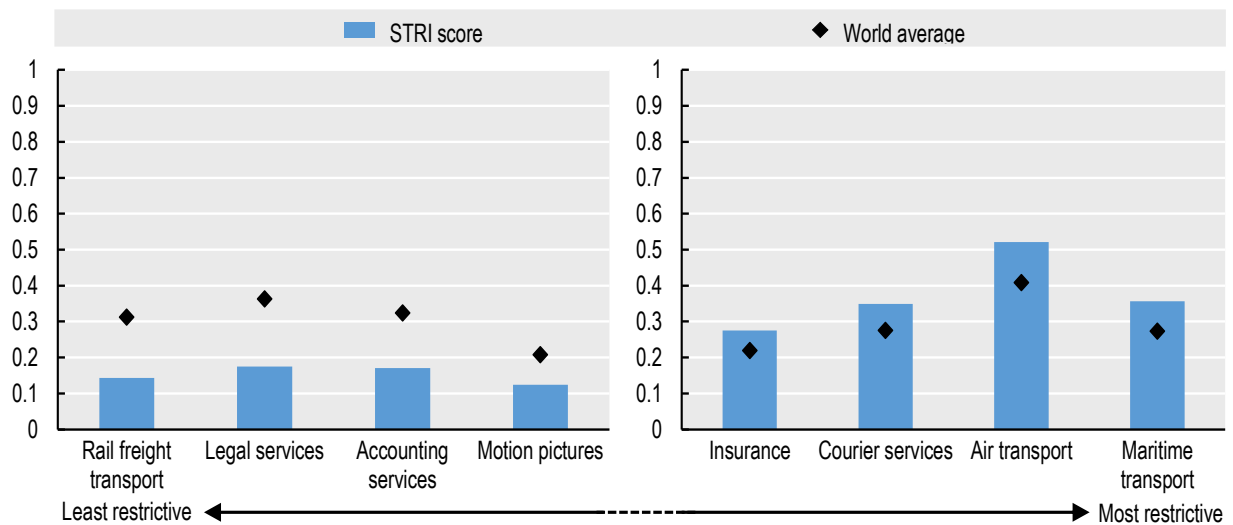
Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, percentage change over the period 2014-2018, 2018-2021 and 2021-2022



OECD (2022). STRI database.

Rail freight transport, legal services, accounting services and motion pictures are the sectors with the lowest score relative to the average STRI across all countries (Figure 3). Insurance, courier services, air transport and maritime transport are the sectors with the highest score relative to the average STRI across all countries.

**Figure 3. Sectoral breakdown - The least and most restricted sectors in the United States of America**



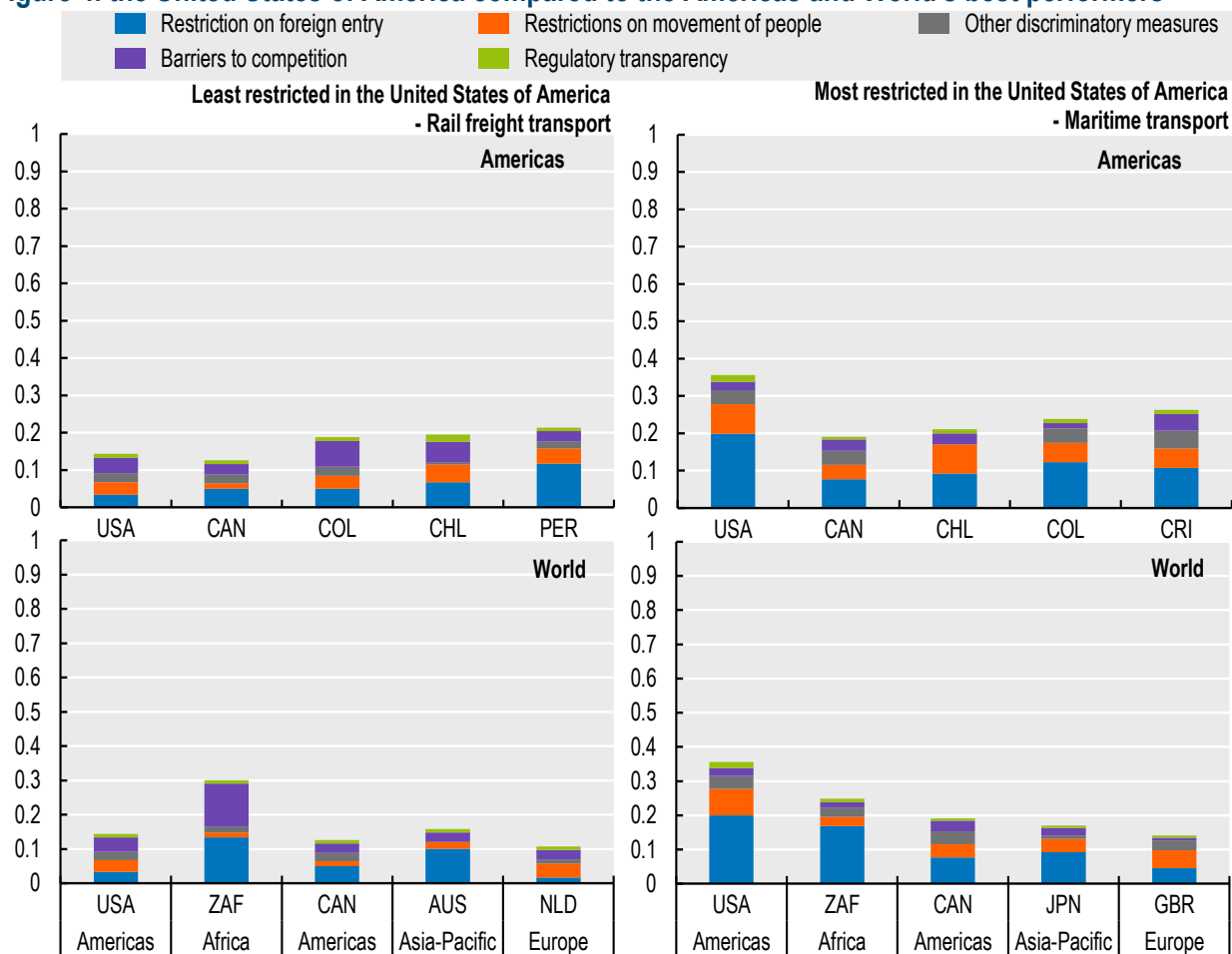
Note: Selection was made based on how far the sectors' score were from the world average score, as a percentage difference

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

Source: OECD (2022). 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 sector 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 a majority of directors must be U.S. citizens. The cabotage market is not open to foreign firms (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. the United States of America compared to the Americas and World's best performers**



Source: OECD (2022). 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 their impacts in [Services Trade Policies and the Global Economy](#)
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at [stri.contact@oecd.org](mailto:stri.contact@oecd.org)
- » More information about measuring the regulatory environment for services trade in the APEC region: <https://apecservicesindex.org/>