

# Services Trade Restrictiveness Index: Australia

## Key findings

- The 2025 STRI of Australia is just below the OECD average and relatively low compared to all countries in the STRI sample. The index has remained stable compared to 2024.
- Legal services are the most open services sector in Australia compared to the average sectoral STRI across all countries, while courier services are the most restricted.
- Despite the overall favourable environment for services trade in Australia, economy-wide restrictive policies are present related to the movement of natural persons and the government procurement framework.

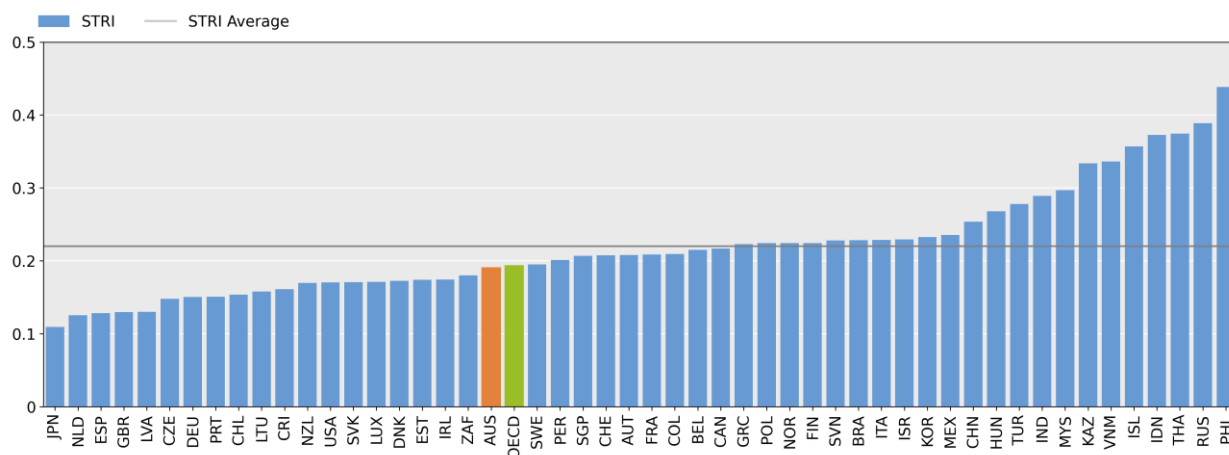
## Recommendation

- Governments should reinvigorate services trade reform to avoid falling behind in an increasingly AI driven global economy, where outdated regulatory frameworks and persistent asymmetries risk constraining competitiveness, innovation and inclusive growth. Improved market access conditions, more transparent licensing, and lower barriers to the movement of people, supported by efforts to reduce digital trade frictions, will enable economies to harness productivity and competitiveness gains, expand opportunities for cross-border services, and ensure a more level global playing field.

This note highlights key country-specific findings and trends identified in the 2025 update of the OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI).

The 2025 STRI of Australia is below the OECD average, and relatively low compared to other countries in the STRI sample (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Average STRI across countries, 2025**



Source: OECD (2025). STRI and TiVA databases.

The index is explained in large part by a favourable general regulatory landscape, but economy-wide restrictions remain related to the movement of natural persons and the government procurement framework.

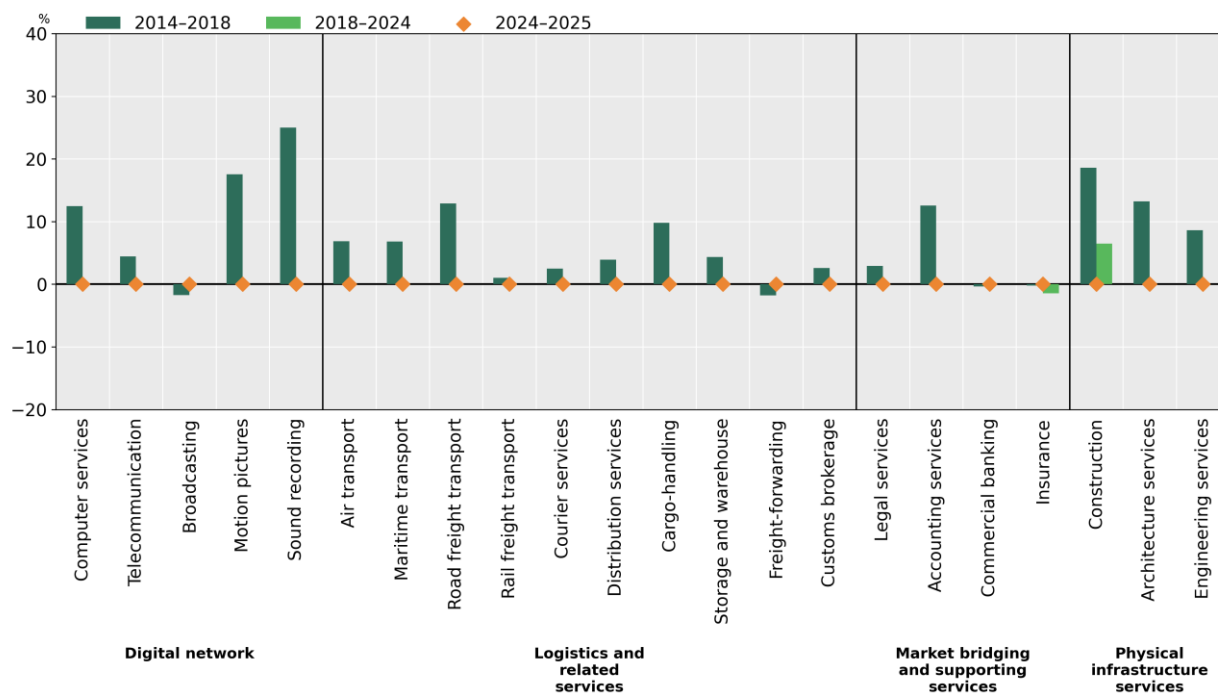
Australia applies labour market tests for workers seeking to provide services in the country on a temporary basis as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers, or independent services suppliers. Australia also has burdensome procedures related to obtaining a business visa, compared to best practice among countries covered in the STRI.

Though the Australian government's procurement framework is non-discriminatory, other policies must be observed in tenders issued by Commonwealth government agencies. Among these policies, the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) sets annual targets for the volume and value of contracts awarded to indigenous enterprises and a mandatory set aside that requires procuring officials to give indigenous SMEs priority to demonstrate value for money for procurements delivered in remote areas and for those wholly delivered within Australia valued between AUD 80,000–200,000. Additionally, mandatory minimum requirements apply to contracts wholly delivered in Australia valued at AUD 7.5 million or more in 19 specified categories, obliging suppliers to ensure minimum 4% indigenous employment or indigenous supplier use (or a combination of both) at the contract level or 3% at the organisational level.

In 2025, the STRI indices remained unchanged across all sectors compared to 2024. In the period 2014-2018, the aforementioned restrictive measures were implemented to the public procurement framework in 2015, but the restrictive effect of these was partially or completely offset by the introduction of the Temporary Skill Shortage visa (TSS; subclass 482) in March 2018. The TSS visa eased the conditions of entry of natural persons providing services on a temporary basis by allowing them to stay in the country for up to four years, compared to three years under the old 457 visa. Changes that affected the indices between 2018-2024 include the introduction of a license to practice as a construction engineer requiring foreign construction engineers to take a local examination (2021) and a process for recognising foreign qualifications in insurance (from 2020) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Evolution of STRI indices by sector in Australia**

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, percentage change over the period 2014-2018, 2018-2024 and 2024-2025



Source: OECD (2025). STRI database.

Figure 3 ranks the sectors of Australia relative to the respective sector's world average. Legal services, rail freight transport, road freight transport and accounting services are the sectors with the lowest relative score. Conversely, construction, sound recording, architecture services and courier services are the sectors with the highest relative score.

**Figure 3. Sectoral breakdown: the least and most restricted sectors in Australia compared to world average**



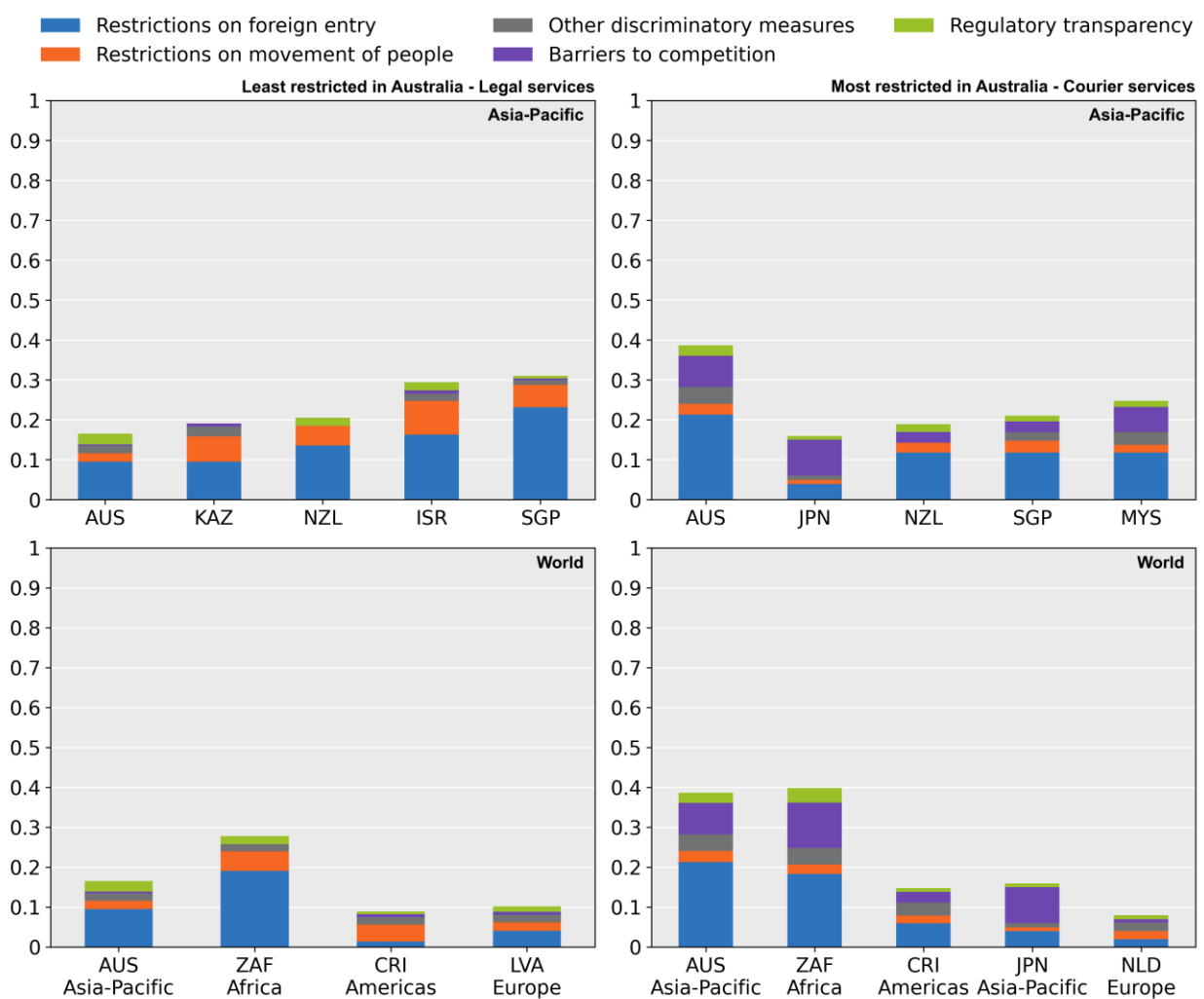
Note: Selection was made based on how far the sectors' score were from the world average score, as a percentage difference i.e.  $(STRI_{country, sector} - STRI_{world average, sector}) / STRI_{world average, sector}$

Source: OECD (2025). STRI database.

Legal services are the least restricted services sector in Australia compared to the average sectoral STRI across all countries. The composition of Australia’s index for legal services is low in restrictions on foreign entry and restrictions to the movement of people, compared to the lowest scoring legal services sectors in other Asia-Pacific countries. The good practices that contributed to this score include the absence of equity restrictions applied to individuals who are not licensed lawyers and a favourable regime regarding the recognition of foreign lawyers’ qualifications.

On the other hand, courier services are the most restricted services sector in Australia compared to the average sectoral STRI across all countries. The restrictions on foreign entry are significant compared to best performers both in the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world (Figure 4). The difference is primarily driven by the monopoly of Australia Post on the carriage of addressed letters weighing up to 250 grammes.

**Figure 4. Australia compared to Asia-Pacific and world's best performers**



Source: OECD (2025). STRI database.

**Recent policy changes**

In 2025, the average processing time of a business visa application increased slightly from 14 to 19 days, which is back on par with the 2023 value of 18 days. In 2024, the cost to obtain a business visa increased from AUD 150 to AUD 190.

From 11 December 2023, the conditions of labour market testing under the Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) applicable to intra-corporate transferees were eased by reducing the number of required job advertisements from three to two.

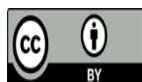
## More information

- » Access all country notes, sector notes, and interactive STRI tools at [oe.cd/servicestrade](https://oe.cd/servicestrade).
- » Discover the Digital STRI that measures cross-cutting barriers to trade in digitally enabled services: [oe.cd/DigitalSTRI](https://oe.cd/DigitalSTRI)
- » Learn more about the Intra-EEA STRI that covers barriers within the European Economic Area: [oe.cd/EEASTRI](https://oe.cd/EEASTRI)
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- » Read more on evidence from ten years of monitoring services trade policies through the STRI in [Revitalising Services Trade for Global Growth](#).
- » Learn more about current services trade issues on the [OECD website](#).
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at [stri.contact@oecd.org](mailto:stri.contact@oecd.org).

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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 made public by 31 October 2025 and in force on 31 December 2025. The STRI regulatory database covers the 38 OECD Members, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, the 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

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