



Tariffs - Is the world treating USA unfairly?: Data and Society report

By: Isaac Goldin

What's the Question?

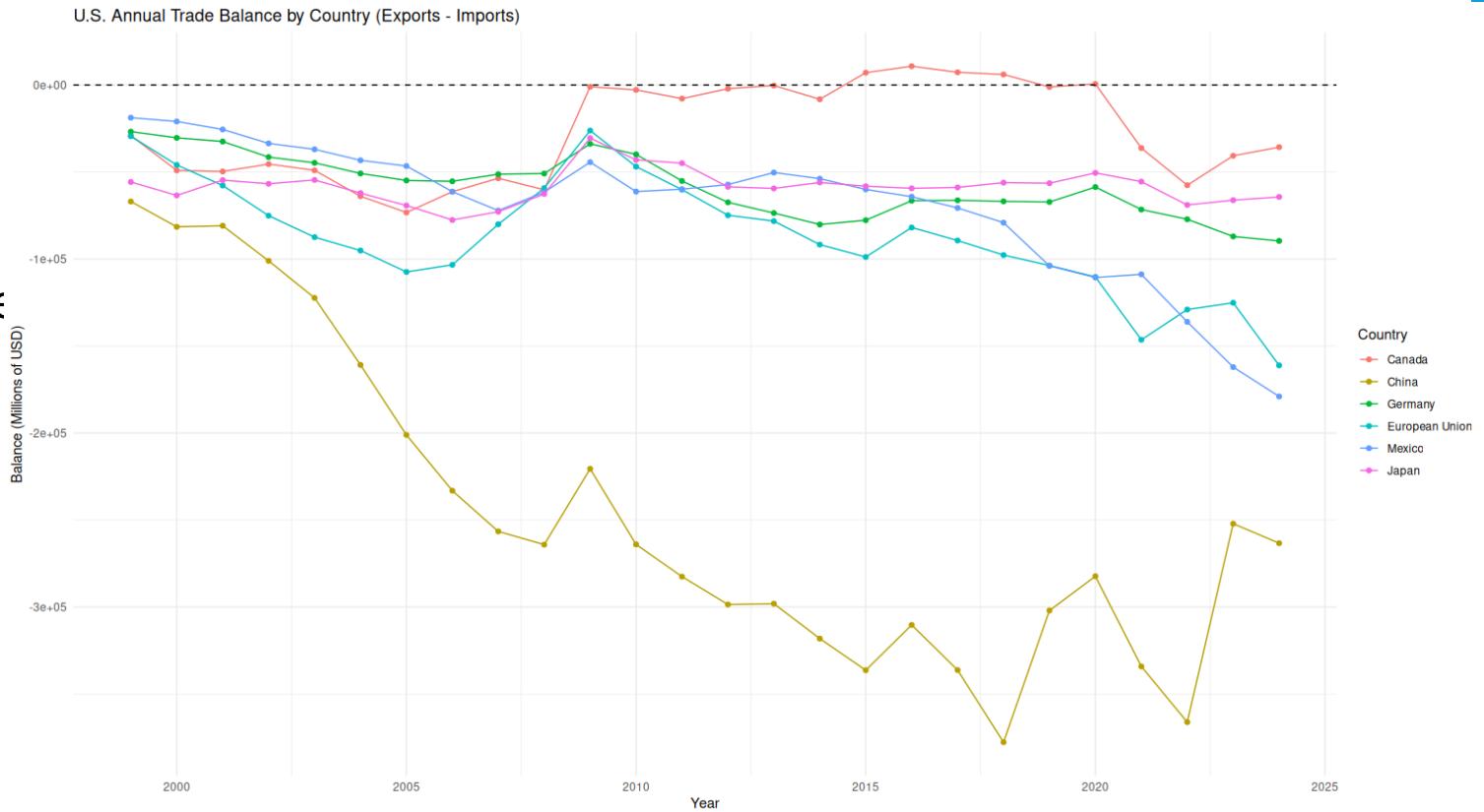
President Trump and others have claimed the U.S. is treated unfairly in global trade.

This presentation investigates that claim using real-world trade data from the WTO, U.S. Census Bureau, and Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

- **We'll explore:**
 - Tariff rates
 - Duty-free access
 - Trade deficits
 - Export-import trends

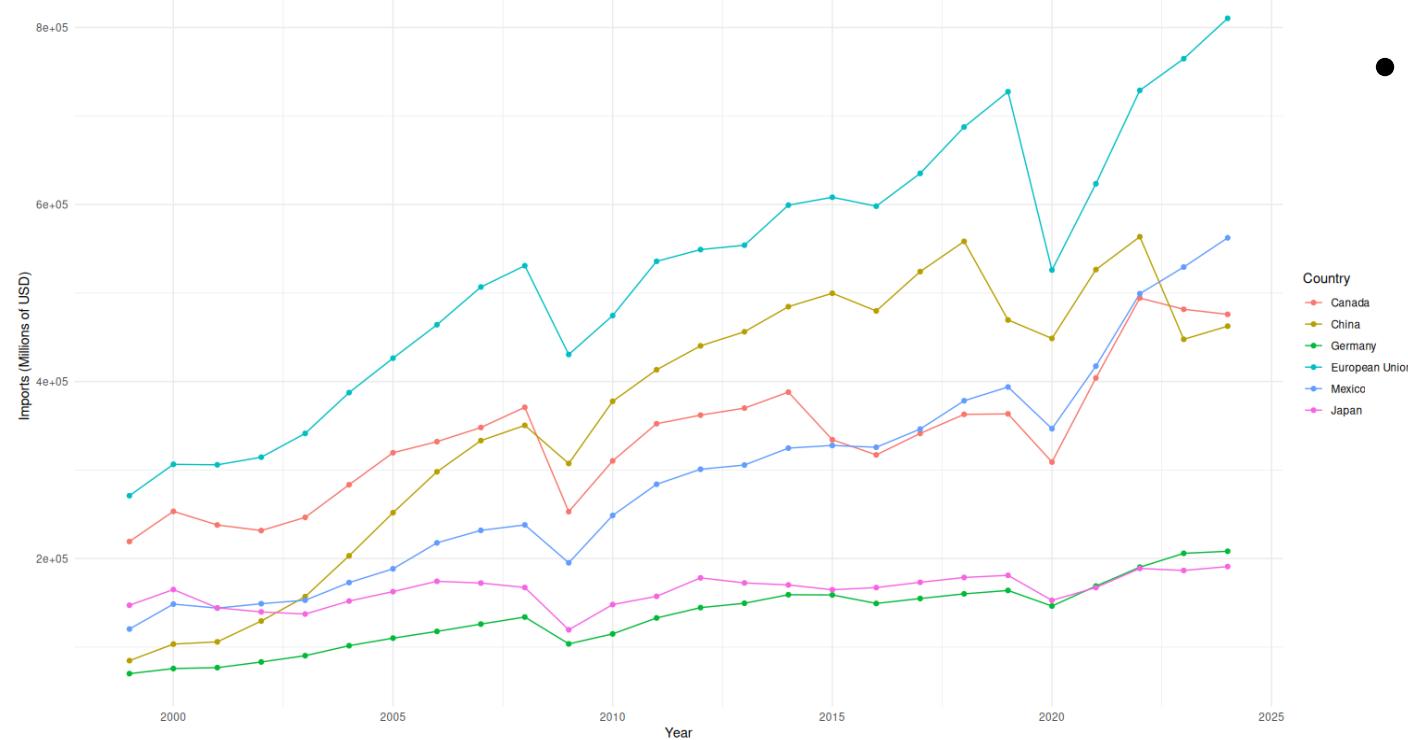
Trade Balance Over Time

- Deficits with China, the EU, and Mexico have steadily increased since the early 2000s.
Only Canada maintains a nearly even trade balance with the U.S.



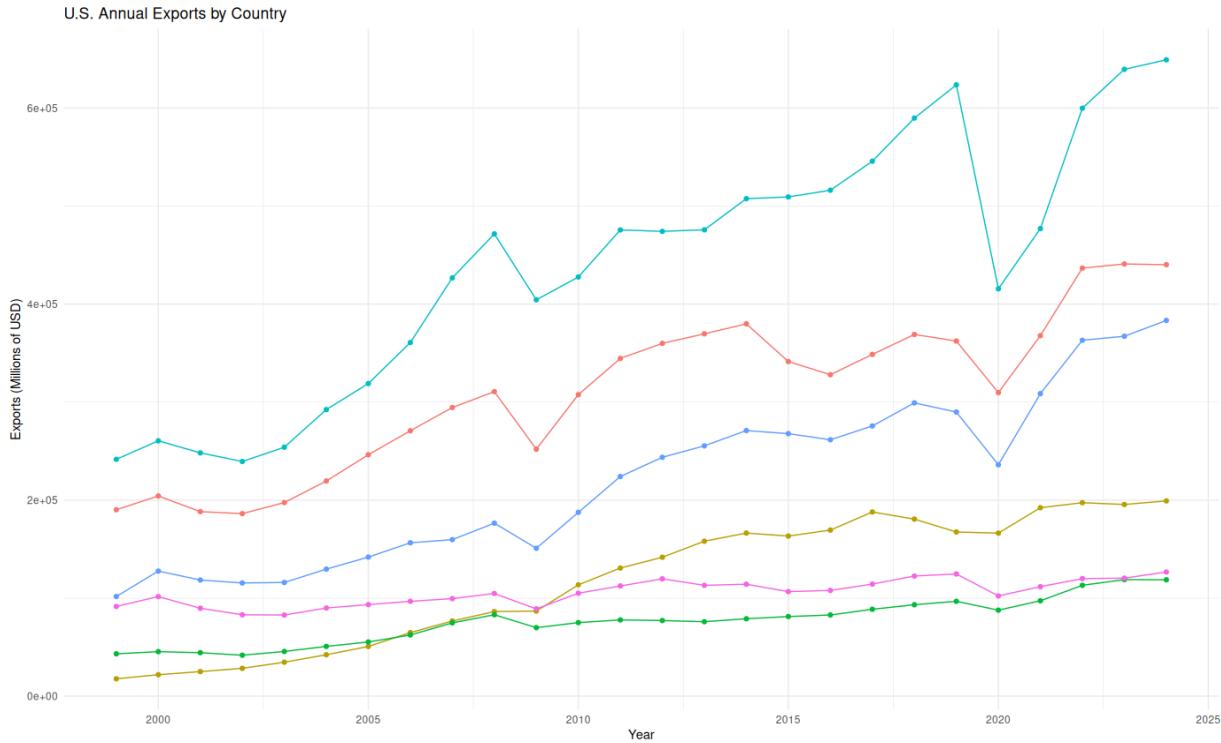
U.S. Imports Over Time

U.S. Annual Imports by Country



- U.S. imports from all major partners — especially China and the EU — have grown sharply.
We're buying more and more from others.

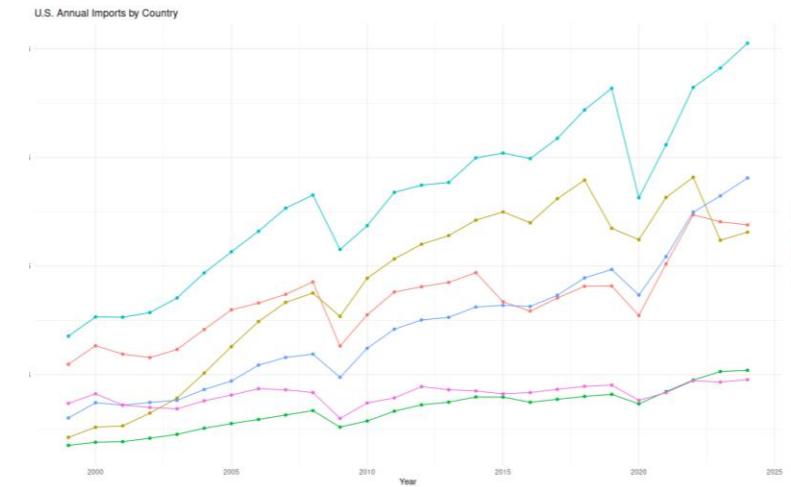
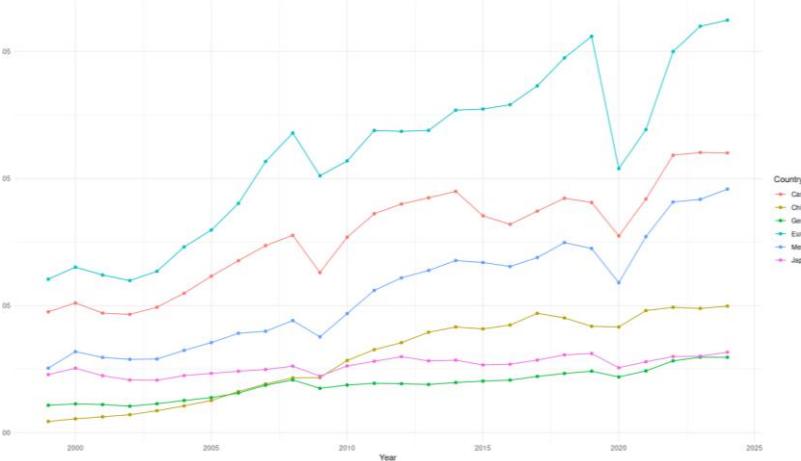
U.S. Exports Over Time



- U.S. exports have also grown but at a much **slower rate** than imports.
- This creates consistent deficits — a sign of unequal trade relationships.**

U.S. Trade Deficits

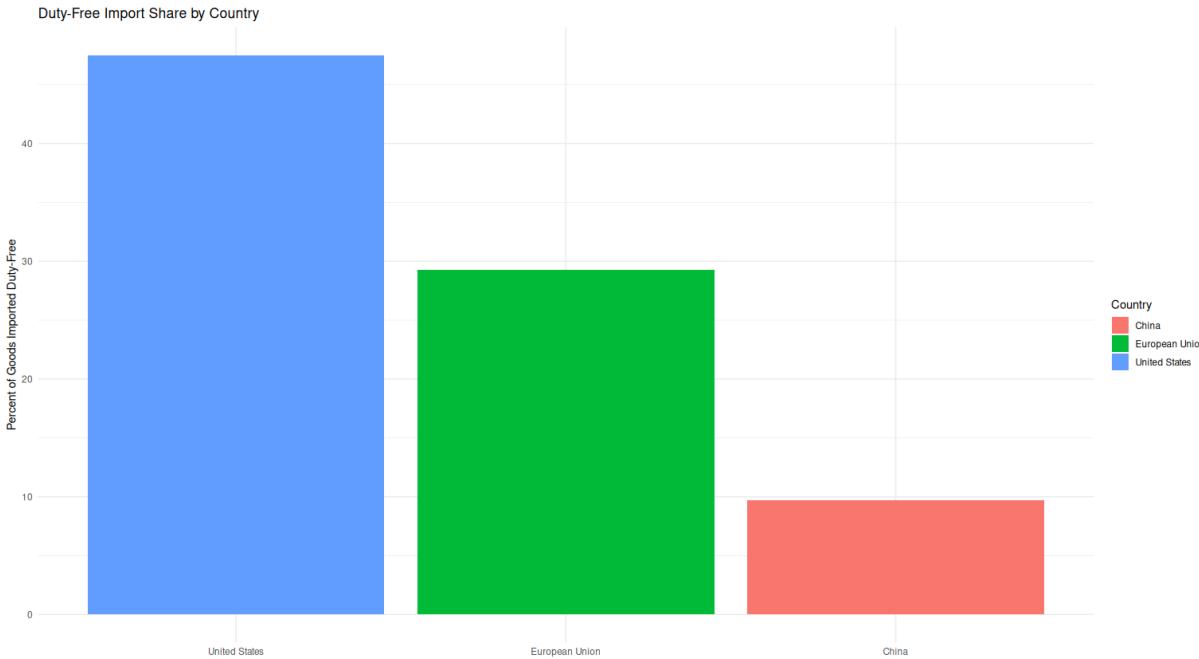
- You can visually see that our imports outweigh our exports, making the US in a Trade Deficit



- The biggest trade deficits are with China, the EU. This shows that we are in large trade negatives with these countries and result are in a general trade deficit.

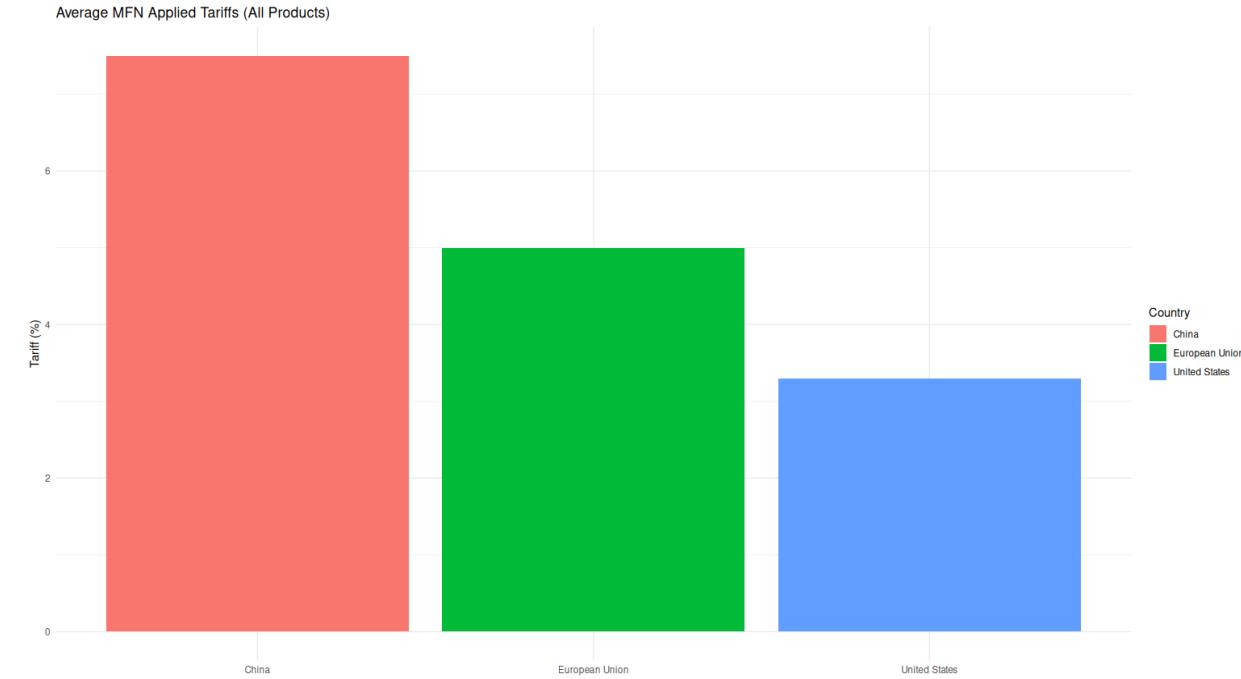
Duty-Free Import Share

- The U.S. allows nearly 48% of goods to enter duty-free, far more than the EU (29%) and China (9.7%). This shows the U.S. has one of the most open trade policies in the world.





Average MFN Tariffs

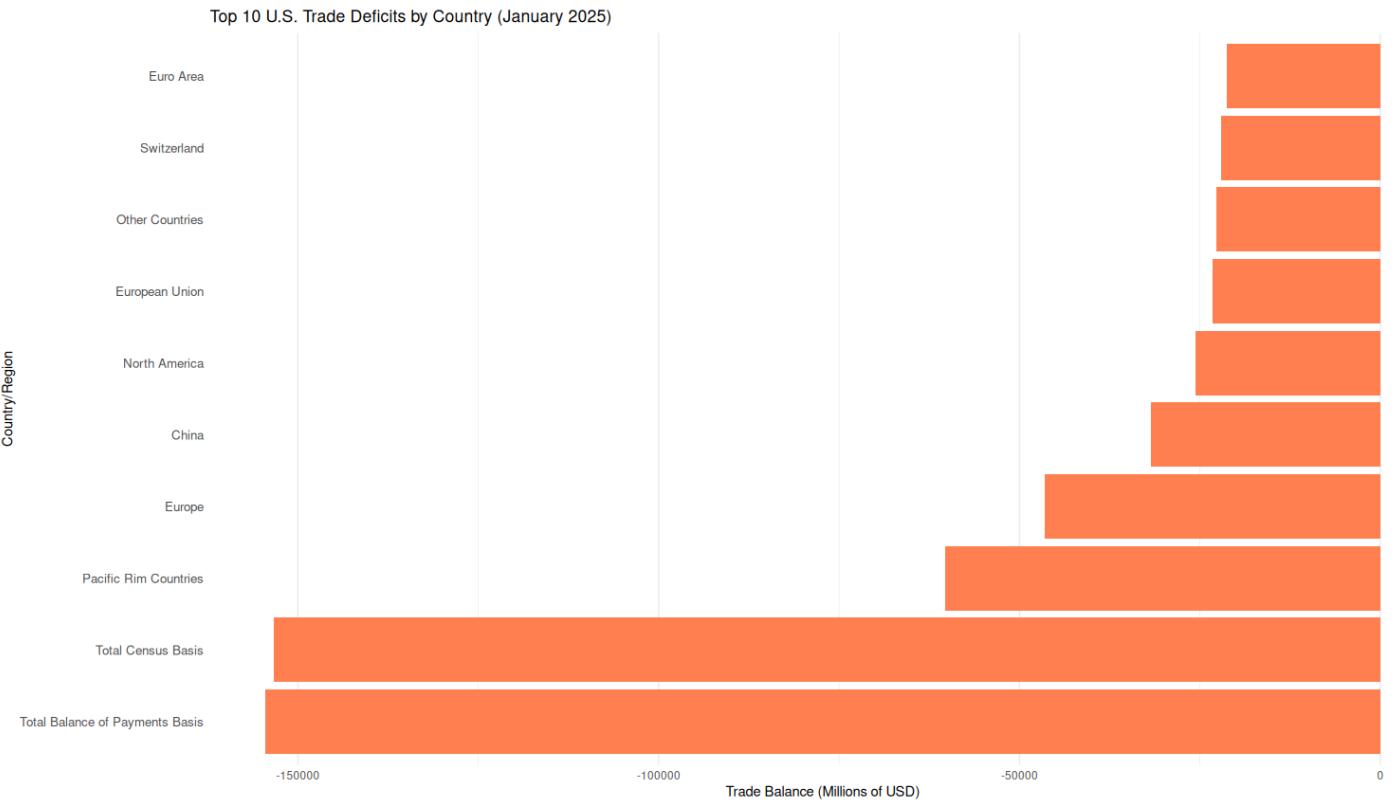


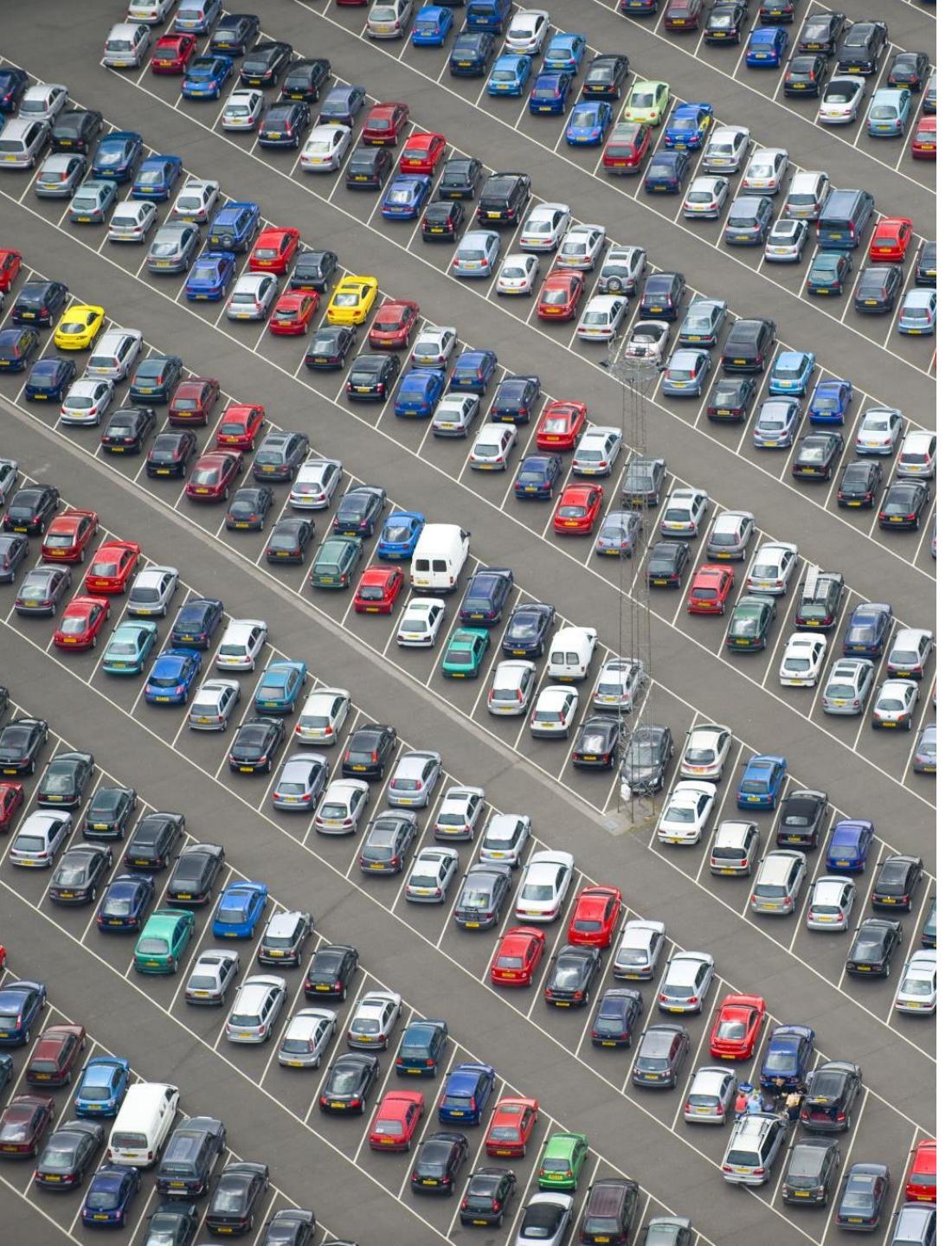
- The U.S. applies the lowest average tariff (3.3%) compared to the EU (5%) and China (7.5%).
- Yet American exports often face higher barriers abroad.**

January 2025 – Top U.S. Trade Deficits

- The biggest trade deficits are with China, the EU, and the Pacific Rim.

The U.S. consistently imports far more than it exports to these areas.





Who & What – Most Affected Products and Countries

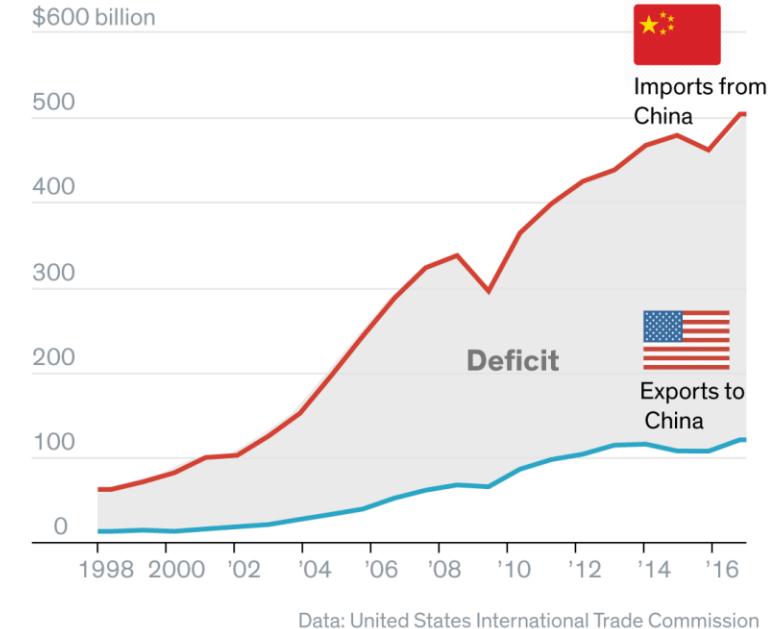
- **Most Affected Products:**
 - **Electronics & Machinery**
 - The U.S. imports massive amounts of electronics from **China** with high trade deficits.
 - **Vehicles & Auto Parts**
 - Major deficit with **Germany** and the **EU** due to car imports and limited U.S. auto exports.
 - **Apparel & Textiles**
 - High volume of imports from **China**, **Vietnam**, and **Bangladesh**, with very little exported.
 - **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Equipment**
 - The U.S. relies on **Switzerland**, **Germany**, and **India** for these critical goods.
- **Countries Driving the Imbalance:**
 - **China:** Largest contributor to the U.S. trade deficit, especially in electronics, furniture, and clothing.
 - **European Union (Germany in particular):** Major exporter of cars and industrial equipment to the U.S.
 - **Mexico:** High trade volume in automotive and manufacturing sectors.
 - **Vietnam:** Surging exporter of clothing, electronics, and footwear to the U.S.
- **Summary:**

The U.S. imports large volumes of high-value finished goods, while exporting mostly raw materials or agricultural products. This mismatch in product types worsens the trade imbalance with key partners.

Analysis towards one country: China

- Analyzing the trade relationship between the United States and China provides insight into tariff imbalances and their implications.
- Trade Overview (2022):**
 - U.S. Imports from China:** \$536.3 billion [Trading Economics](#)
 - U.S. Exports to China:** \$150.4 billion [United States Trade Representative](#)
 - Trade Deficit:** \$385.9 billion [Tax Foundation](#)
- Tariff Rates:**
 - U.S. Tariffs on Chinese Goods:** As of March 4, 2025, the U.S. increased tariffs on Chinese imports from 10% to 20%. [Wikipedia](#)
 - Chinese Tariffs on U.S. Goods:** China imposed retaliatory tariffs ranging from 10% to 15% on U.S. agricultural exports and other products. [Wikipedia](#)

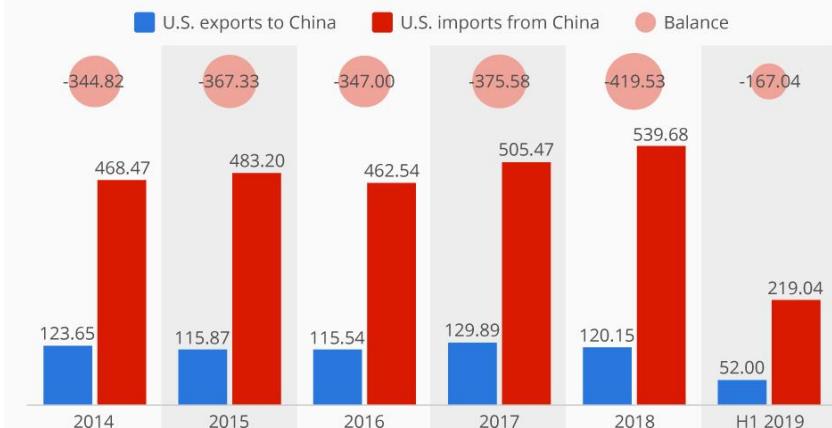
The widening trade gap



Data: United States International Trade Commission

The U.S.-China Trade Deficit is Growing

U.S. trade balance with China from 2014 to July 2019 (in billion U.S. dollars)



Top Imported and Exported Products from China

Top Imported Products from China (2022):

- **Electrical Machinery and Equipment:** Approximately \$150 billion [USAFacts](#)
- **Machinery (including computers):** Approximately \$110 billion
- **Furniture and Bedding:** Approximately \$35 billion [New York Post+2WSJ+2Latest news & breaking headlines+2](#)
- **Toys and Sports Equipment:** Approximately \$30 billion
- **Plastics and Plastic Articles:** Approximately \$20 billion

Top Exported Products to China (2022):

- **Aircraft and Aircraft Parts:** Approximately \$18 billion
- **Soybeans:** Approximately \$15 billion
- **Automobiles:** Approximately \$10 billion [Trading Economics+1Investor's Business Daily+1](#)
- **Semiconductors:** Approximately \$9 billion
- **Crude Oil:** Approximately \$8 billion

Note: The figures are approximate and based on available data.

Conclusion

- **Is the U.S. getting cheated in global trade?**
The data suggests: Yes — in some ways.
- The U.S. offers **more open access** through low tariffs and generous duty-free rules.
- In return, American goods face **higher tariffs and more restrictions** in other markets.
- The growing **trade deficit** highlights how this imbalance plays out over time.
- However: The U.S. is also a highly self-sufficient country
 - It has strong domestic production, agriculture, technology, and natural resources.
 - The U.S. could withstand global trade shocks better than many other countries.
- From this perspective, the U.S. collects a higher percentage of tariffs relative to its imports from China compared to what China collects from U.S. exports. However, it's essential to consider the broader context, including trade balances, economic impact, and the specific industries affected by these tariffs.
- **Final Thought:**
It's not about “cheating” in every case — but the data supports the claim that the U.S. receives more than it gives in many global trade relationships.