



# Competitors restricting access to import statistics

# What are confidential import statistics?

The Australian import statistics are collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and they operate under Government Legislation that require them to collect information but also prohibits them from releasing information where activities of individuals or firms can be identified. The way the ABS balances these two conflicting objectives is to first release trade information and then restrict data where a firm/individual can demonstrate that the release of the data would be likely to enable their identification.

It is often the case in Australia that competitors seek to restrict release of import statistics to limit competitors assessing their activities

**An example - Australian imports of Code 7210700066 - Flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel, of a width of 600 mm or more, not in coils, not further worked than hot-rolled; of a thickness of 4.75 mm or more but not exceeding 10 mm**

Since September 2018, imports from China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand have confidential restrictions applied to them. These imports are summed into a new country called “No Country Details”. The chart below shows Australian import statistics, and these confidential imports comprise the vast majority of imports into Australia. There is no identification of the restricted countries available in Australian import statistics

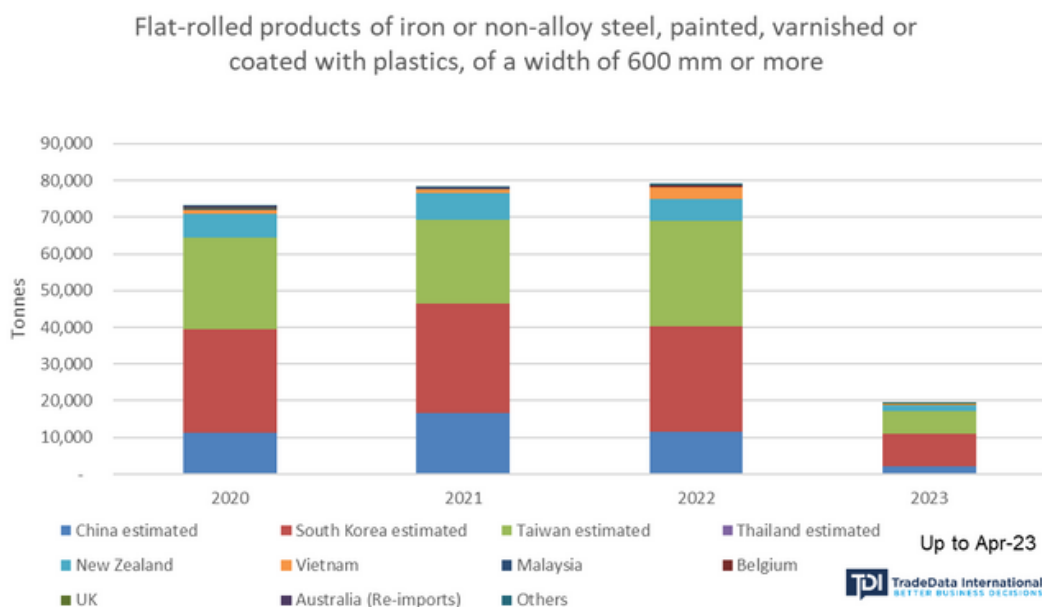


# Use of exports to Australia statistics to estimate Australian imports

Exports to Australia statistics from the four restricted countries can be analysed in conjunction with Australian import statistics and adjusted for:

- Changes in code definitions between Australian import codes and overseas export codes
- Changes in currencies and unit of quantity measurements
- Timing differences between month of export and month of import in Australia.

The result are estimates as shown in the chart below which estimates imports into Australia from China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand based on those country's exports to Australia statistics.



# Additional details and Improved publication times

In this example, China, South Korea and particularly Taiwan provides more defined product details than Australian import statistics. Australia has a single import code whereas China and South Korea have two export codes, and Taiwan has 5 export codes. The chart below lists these details each month from January 2018.



Exports from these 4 countries also have a shorter publication lag than Australian import statistics. Thus, by monitoring exports to Australia, firms have quicker access to the estimates than if the data was available in Australian import statistics.

## Insights

There are many instances where confidentiality restrictions are placed on Australian import statistics.

Australian importers and manufacturers apply for confidentiality restrictions to limit competitors assessing their activities. However, these restrictions cannot be placed on overseas country's export to Australia statistics.

Thus, reliable estimates for Australian imports can usually be deduced with careful analysis allowing Australian firms to measure competitors and their performance.