

International Overview

Houston's status as an international center is reflected in the breadth and depth of the city's international representation.

- Houston is the fourth most populous city and fifth most populous metro area in the nation.
- More than 1.5 million Houstonians—about one in four—are foreign-born.
- Ninety-one countries have official government representation in Houston – the third most among U.S. cities.
- Houston has 18 sister-city relationships promoting business opportunities across the world: Europe (7), Asia (6), Americas (2), Middle East (2) and Africa (1).
- Fifteen foreign governments maintain trade and commercial offices, and the metro area has 38 active international chambers of commerce or trade associations.
- Texas is the nation's largest exporter, ahead of second place California and significantly ahead of Washington, New York and Illinois.
- Among U.S. seaports, the Port of Houston has ranked first in foreign tonnage for the 21st consecutive year and first in import tonnage for the 26th consecutive year.
- In '17, the Houston/Galveston customs district ranked as the seventh largest district by dollar value with \$192.2 billion in total trade, behind Los Angeles, New York City, Laredo, Detroit, Chicago and New Orleans.
- Houston global trade in '17 increased 19.1 percent from '16 by value, driven by increases in oil and gas trade. Mexico retained its top spot among Houston's foreign trade partners, slightly edging China. Trade values grew between Houston and 142 of 221 countries. Of Houston's top 20 trading partners, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela were the only countries in which trade fell in '17.
- Mexico was the Houston/Galveston customs district's largest trading partner at \$20.1 billion, followed by China (\$18.8 billion), Brazil (\$12.6 billion), Germany (\$9.6 billion), Netherlands (\$8.6 billion), South Korea (\$6.8 billion), Japan (\$6.4 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$5.7 billion), the United Kingdom (\$5.6 billion) and Colombia (\$5.1 billion). Thirty-seven countries logged more than \$1 billion in trade through the customs district in '17, up from 34 countries the prior year. Houston's 10 largest trade partners accounted for 51.7 percent of all trade.
- Approximately 100 steamship lines provide service between Houston and over 1,000 ports around the world. More than 8,000 ships call on the Port of Houston annually.
- Among Gulf of Mexico ports, the Port of Houston is the leader in container cargo, handling more than two-thirds of Gulf coast container traffic. The Port of Houston is the largest Texas port, handling 96 percent of Texas container traffic.
- Two major railroads and approximately 100 trucking lines connect the Port to the balance of the continental United States, Canada and Mexico.
- The Houston Airport System handled approximately 54.1 million air passengers in '17, a 1.0 percent decline from the previous year. Domestic volume totaled 42.9 million passengers, which was unchanged from '16; international traffic fell 4.5 percent, to 11.2 million passengers.
- Scheduled and charter passenger and cargo carriers fly directly to approximately 114 domestic and 68 international destinations in 37 countries from Houston.

- The Houston Airport System is constantly expanding their service. In March '18, they announced an additional daily flight between George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and Guanajuato International Airport near Leon, Mexico. Additionally, pending government approval, the U.S. Department of Transportation granted approval to increase to a daily service between IAH and Havana, which is now Saturday-only.
- In March '18, IAH has been awarded a four-star rating by Skytrax, the leading global air transport rating organization. Hobby Airport earned the four-star rating for the third straight year, making Houston the only city in the U.S. that has two airports with a four-star rating.
- Houston is the base of operations for the international oil and gas exploration and production industry and for many of the nation's largest international engineering and construction firms.
- Houston is home to 39 of the nation's 138 publicly traded oil and gas exploration and production firms, including 11 of the top 25; seven more among the top 25 have subsidiaries, major divisions or other significant operations in Houston.
- Houston, a major corporate center, headquarters 20 firms on the 2017 *Fortune* 500 list and 26 on the 2017 *Forbes* Global 2000 list. Many other firms ranked on these lists maintain U.S. offices in Houston.
- A center for international finance, Houston leads the Southwest with 20 foreign banks from 10 nations.
- More than 5,000 Houston area firms, foreign government offices and nonprofit organizations are involved in international business, according to Greater Houston Partnership Research. Over 900 foreign companies from 66 countries operate 1,500 subsidiaries in the Houston area. Houston-based firms operate nearly 3,000 subsidiaries in 116 countries.