

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-two countries have official government representation in Houston – the third most among U.S. cities.
- Houston has 18 sister-city relationships promoting business opportunities across five continents: Africa (1), Asia (7), Australia (1), Europe (7), and the Americas (2).
- Fifteen foreign governments maintain trade and commercial offices, and the metro area has 35 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 20 consecutive years as of '16, and first in import tonnage for 25 consecutive years.
- In '16, the Houston/Galveston customs district ranked as the seventh largest district by dollar value with \$161.4 billion in total trade, behind Los Angeles, New York City, Laredo, Detroit, Chicago, and New Orleans.
- Houston global trade in '16 was down 17.4 percent from '15 by value, driven by lower oil prices. China retained its top spot among Houston's foreign trade partners, slightly edging Mexico. Trade values fell between Houston and 139 of 218 countries. Of Houston's top 20 trading partners, Saudi Arabia was the only country in which trade grew in '16.
- China was the Houston/Galveston customs district's largest trading partner at \$14.7 billion, followed by Mexico (\$14.7 billion), Brazil (\$10.2 billion), Germany (\$9.3 billion), Netherlands (\$7.7 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$6.3 billion), Venezuela (\$5.5 billion), South Korea (\$5.1 billion), Colombia (\$5.0 billion), and Japan (\$4.6 billion). Thirty-three countries logged more than \$1 billion in trade through the customs district in '16, down from 39 countries the prior year. Houston's 10 largest trade partners accounted for 51.5 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 nearly two-thirds of Gulf coast container traffic. The Port of Houston is the largest Texas port, handling 95 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 54.5 million air passengers in '16, a 1.0 percent decline from the previous year. Domestic traffic fell 3.3 percent to 43.0 million passengers; international traffic rose 8.3 percent, to 11.6 million passengers.
- Scheduled and charter passenger and cargo carriers fly directly to approximately 119 domestic and 71 international destinations in 38 countries from Houston.

- In '15, Hobby Airport completed a \$156 million construction project adding an international terminal to the airport. The five-gate facility accommodates regional international flights for Southwest Airlines. In '16, more than 800,000 travelers moved through the terminal to and from destinations in the Caribbean, Mexico and the northern cities of South America.
- The Houston Airport System has recently added state-of-the-art temperature-and-time-sensitive facilities at George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) to support cool-chain providers in the U.S. and abroad.
- 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.
- Eleven of the 25 largest U.S. oil and gas exploration and production firms are headquartered in Houston; seven more among the top 25 have subsidiaries, major divisions or other significant operations here.
- Houston, a major corporate center, headquarters 20 firms on the 2017 *Fortune* 500 list, seven on the 2016 *Fortune* Global 500 list and 24 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 19 foreign banks from 9 nations.
- Nearly 5,000 Houston area firms, foreign government offices and nonprofit organizations are involved in international business, according to the GHP database. In the Houston area at least 116 companies operate more than 3,000 subsidiaries in 116 countries and more than 1,000 firms in Houston report foreign ownership.