

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. The MSA ranks fourth nationally in number of Hispanics and seventh in number of Asians.
- Ninety-one countries have official government representation in Houston ranking Houston as one of the top three cities in the nation in the number of consular offices.
- Houston has 17 sister-city relationships promoting business opportunities across five continents: Africa (1), Asia (6), Australia (1), Europe (7), and the Americas (2).
- Fourteen foreign governments maintain trade and commercial offices, and the metro area has 32 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 19 consecutive years as of '15, and first in import tonnage for 24 consecutive years.
- In 2015, the Houston/Galveston customs district ranked as the seventh largest district by dollar value with \$196.4 billion in total trade, behind Los Angeles, New York City, Laredo, Detroit, Chicago, and New Orleans.
- Houston global trade in '15 was down 22.2 percent from '14 by value, driven by lower oil prices. Trade with China increased 11.6 percent from '14 to '15, moving China from second in '14 to first in '15. Of Houston's top 20 trading partners, the UAE had the strongest growth in trade with Houston increasing more than 23.8 percent in '15.
- China was the Houston/Galveston customs district's largest trading partner at \$18.5 billion, followed by Mexico (\$17.7 billion), Brazil (\$10.5 billion), Germany (\$10.0 billion), Netherlands (\$8.4 billion), Venezuela (\$7.9 billion), Colombia (\$7.2 billion), South Korea (\$6.5 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$6.2 billion), and the United Kingdom (\$5.5 billion). Thirty-nine countries logged more than \$1 billion in trade through the customs district in '15. Houston's 10 largest trade partners accounted for 50.1 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 67 percent 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 55.1 million air passengers in 2015, a record for HAS. Domestic traffic rose 2.3 percent to 44.4 million passengers; international traffic rose 9.5 percent, to 10.7 million passengers.
- Scheduled and charter passenger and cargo carriers fly directly to approximately 124 domestic and 74 international destinations in 41 countries from Houston.

- In September 2013, HOU broke ground on a new international terminal, a \$156 million project. Once completed, the five-gate facility will accommodate regional international flights for Southwest Airlines, with service reaching 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.
- Ten of the 25 largest publicly traded oil and gas exploration and production firms are headquartered in Houston; nine more among the top 25 have subsidiaries, major divisions or other significant operations here.
- Houston, a major corporate center, headquarters 24 firms on the 2016 *Fortune* 500 list, seven on the 2016 *Fortune* Global 500 list and 26 on the 2016 *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.
- GHP's database lists more than 5,700 Houston area firms, foreign government offices and nonprofit organizations involved in international business. In the Houston area more than 430 companies report having offices abroad in 144 countries and more than 800 firms in Houston report foreign ownership.