



National Travel and Tourism Office: Components of International Travel Trade

Key Terms:

International Travel Trade: International travel trade consists of transactions involving goods and services acquired by nonresidents while visiting another country. Non-U.S. residents purchasing goods and services while in the United States is export income for the U.S. economy. U.S. residents purchasing goods or services while outside the United States is export income for another country and a U.S. import.

Components of International Travel Trade: There are two main components of international travel transactions involving goods and services acquired by nonresidents while visiting another country: (1) spending on international air travel (passenger fares) between a source country and a destination country and (2) spending within the destination country.

- (1) *Passenger Fare Receipts:* Expenditures by foreign residents on international flights of U.S. air carriers are travel exports for the U.S. economy; expenditures by U.S. residents on international flights of foreign carriers are travel imports for the U.S. economy.

Note: Spending by U.S. residents on international flights of U.S. air carriers is not counted as an export or an import. Similarly, spending by foreign residents on international flights of non-U.S. air carriers is not counted as an export or an import.

- (2) *Spending within the Destination Country:* Expenditures by foreign residents while traveling in the United States are travel exports for the U.S. economy; expenditures by U.S. residents while traveling in other countries are travel imports for the U.S. economy. This spending is divided into two parts, business travel and personal travel, each of which have multiple subcomponents.

Business Travel:

Expenditures by border, seasonal, and other short-term workers: expenditures on goods and services by foreign residents who commute to work in the United States, other foreign workers temporarily employed in the United States (travel exports); and U.S. residents employed temporarily abroad (travel imports).

Other business travel: expenditures on goods and services by foreign residents visiting the United States for business purposes such as meetings and consultations, attending conventions and conferences, negotiating contracts, etc. (travel exports); and by U.S. residents visiting other countries for business purposes (travel imports).

Personal Travel:

Health-related travel: expenditures by foreign residents for medical treatment in the United States (travel exports); and by U.S. residents who travel abroad for medical purposes (travel imports).

Education-related travel: expenditures by foreign residents at post-secondary educational institutions in the U.S. covering student tuition, room and board, and living expenses (travel exports); and U.S. resident educational expenses abroad (travel imports).

Other personal travel: expenditures by foreign residents in the United States for personal travel other than health-related and education-related such as visiting cities, attractions, national parks, etc. (travel exports); and similar expenditures by U.S. residents abroad (travel imports).

Composition of Travel Exports

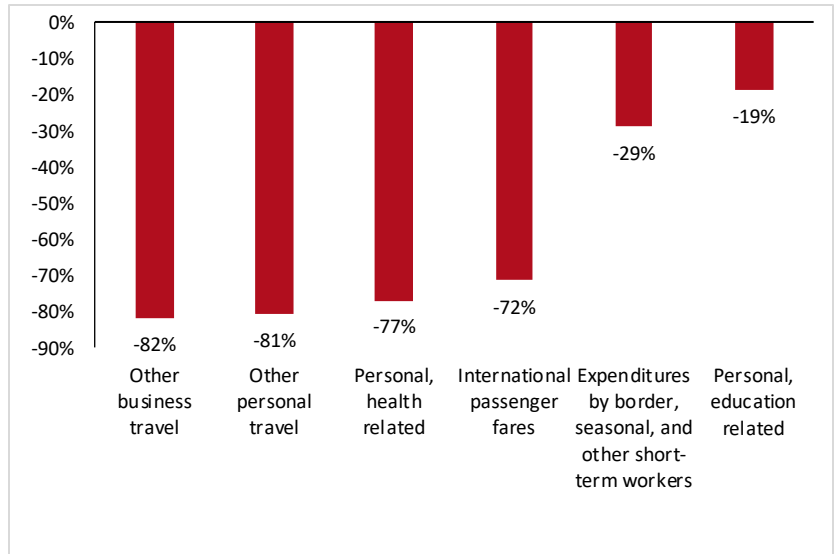
Composition of U.S. Travel Exports:

After growing at an average annual rate of 1.5 percent from 2015 to 2019, U.S. travel exports declined 64.8 percent in 2020. While every component of travel exports declined in 2020, *Other business travel* (-82 percent) and *Other personal travel* (-81 percent) declined the most, while *Expenditures by border, seasonal and other short-term workers* (-29 percent) and *Personal education related travel* (-19 percent) declined the least (see Chart 1).

Change in Travel Exports:

Since *Other business travel* (-82 percent), *Other personal travel* (-81 percent), *Personal health related* (-77 percent) and *International passenger fares* (-72 percent) all declined more than the 65 percent decline in overall travel exports in 2020, these components became smaller shares of travel exports in 2020 compared to 2019.

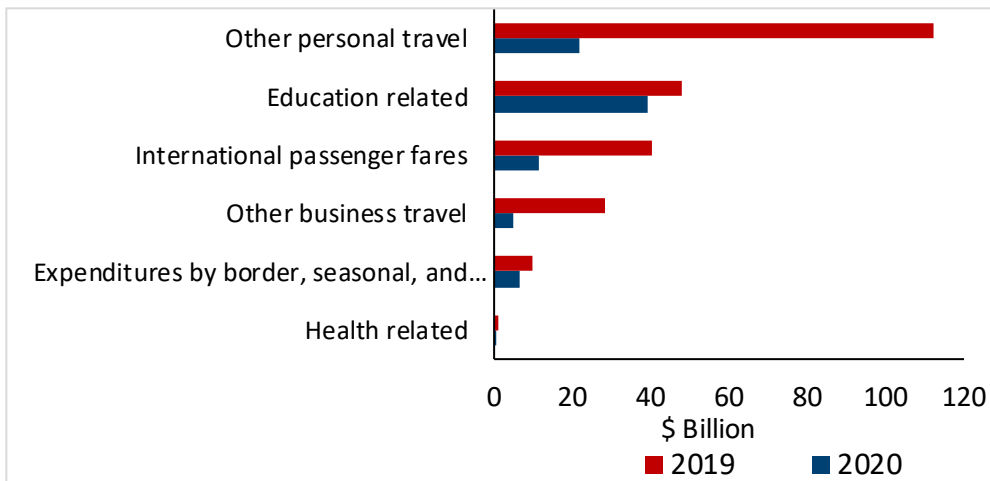
Chart 1: Percent Change in Travel Exports by Component (2019 to 2020)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of Economic Analysis

Meanwhile, because of more moderate declines, *Personal education related* (-19 percent) and *Expenditures by border, seasonal and other short-term workers* (-29 percent) increased as a share of total travel exports in 2020 compared to 2019 (see Chart 2 and Table 1).

Chart 2 and Table 1: Composition of Travel Exports (2019 vs 2020)



	2019		2020	
	Billions	Share	Billions	Share
Other personal travel	112.4	47%	21.6	26%
Education related	47.9	20%	39.0	46%
International passenger fares	40.1	17%	11.4	14%
Other business travel	28.4	12%	5.2	6%
Expenditures by border, seasonal, and other short-term workers	9.5	4%	6.8	8%
Health related	1.2	0%	0.3	0%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce/ Bureau of Economic Analysis

Travel Trade Balance by Category

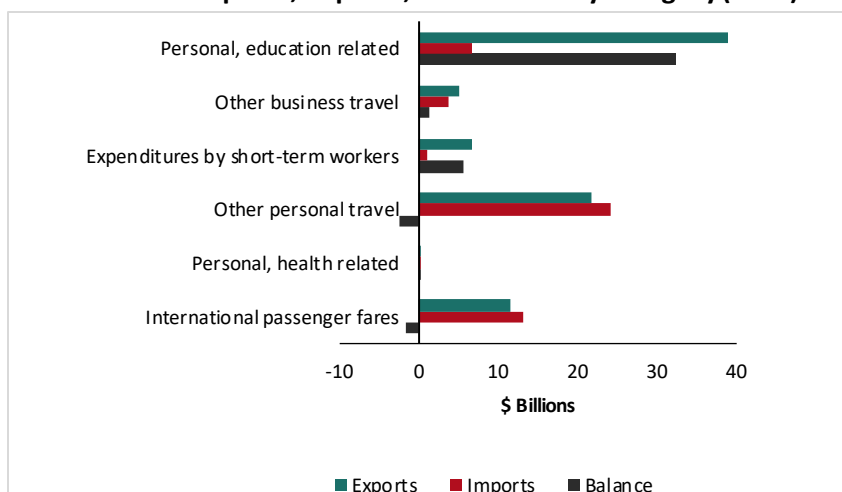
Travel Exports, Imports and Trade Balance by Category:

U.S. travel exports (\$84.2 billion) minus U.S. travel imports (\$48.8 billion) yielded a U.S. travel trade surplus of \$35.4 billion in 2020. Personal travel generated a \$29.9 billion trade surplus; Business travel generated a \$7.1 billion trade surplus; International passenger fares generated a \$1.6 billion trade deficit.

Within business travel, the \$5.7 billion trade surplus in Expenditures by border, seasonal and other short-term workers accounted for 81 percent of the trade surplus. Within personal travel trade, the \$32.3 billion surplus *Personal education related travel* more than offset a 2.4 deficit in *Other personal travel* (see Chart 3).

2020 was the first year since 2007 that *Other personal travel* generated a trade deficit.

Chart 3: Travel Exports, Imports, and Balance by Category (2020)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce/ Bureau of Economic Analysis

Top Travel Category Exports, Imports, Trade Surplus, and Deficit by Country (2020):

Other Personal Travel, or Visitor Spending

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus			Top 5 Deficit		
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions		
Canada	3.8	17.6%	Mexico	6.8	28.3%	Canada	3.1	Mexico	-4.2		
Mexico	2.6	12.2%	Dominican Republic	1.7	7.1%	Brazil	1.0	Dominican Republic	-1.4		
United Kingdom	1.4	6.4%	United Kingdom	0.8	3.1%	China	0.7	UK Islands, Caribbean	-0.4		
Brazil	1.2	5.8%	Canada	0.7	3.1%	South Korea	0.6	Italy	-0.3		
Australia	0.9	4.3%	Italy	0.6	2.4%	Australia	0.6	Costa Rica	-0.3		

Top 5 Exports account for **46.2 percent of visitor spending** in the United States

Top 5 Imports countries account for **44.0 percent of U.S. visitor spending** abroad

Education-Related Spending

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus			Top 5 Deficit		
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions		
China	14.4	36.8%	United Kingdom	0.8	12.6%	China	14.2	United Kingdom	-0.4		
India	6.2	15.9%	Mexico	0.7	10.9%	India	6.1	Mexico	-0.3		
South Korea	2.0	5.1%	Canada	0.4	5.3%	South Korea	1.9	Guatemala	-0.1		
Canada	1.2	3.1%	Germany	0.3	4.4%	Saudi Arabia	1.0	Nicaragua	-0.1		
Saudi Arabia	1.0	2.7%	France	0.2	3.7%	Vietnam	0.9	Ireland	-0.1		

Top 5 Exports account for **63.6 percent of non-U.S. resident education-related spending** in the United States

Top 5 Imports countries account for **36.9 percent of U.S. resident education-related spending** abroad

Health-Related Spending

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus			Top 5 Deficit		
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions		
China	0.04	15.1%	Mexico	0.08	34.9%	China	0.04	Mexico	-0.06		
Canada	0.02	7.0%	Colombia	0.01	5.5%	Canada	0.01	Colombia	-0.01		
Mexico	0.02	6.6%	Costa Rica	0.01	3.8%	Australia	0.01	Costa Rica	-0.01		
United Kingdom	0.01	4.8%	Germany	0.01	3.4%	Israel	0.01	India	0.00		
Australia	0.01	4.1%	Canada	0.01	3.0%	United Kingdom	0.01	Thailand	0.00		

Top 5 Exports account for **37.6 percent of non-U.S. resident health-related spending** in the United States

Top 5 Imports account for **50.6 percent of U.S. resident health-related spending** abroad

Short-Term Worker Spending:

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus		Top 5 Deficit	
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions
Mexico	5.4	80.0%	Canada	0.2	14.6%	Mexico	5.4	Canada	-0.11
India	0.4	5.4%	United Kingdom	0.1	6.6%	India	0.4	Germany	-0.05
United Kingdom	0.1	1.9%	Germany	0.1	5.6%	South Africa	0.1	Russia	-0.04
South Africa	0.1	1.7%	Japan	0.1	5.3%	Guatemala	0.1	Japan	-0.04
Guatemala	0.1	1.0%	Russia	0.0	4.4%	United Kingdom	0.1	Thailand	-0.03

Top 5 Exports account for **89.9 percent of non-U.S. resident short-term worker spending** in the United States

Top 5 Imports account for **36.5 percent of U.S. resident short-term worker spending** abroad

Other Business

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus		Top 5 Deficit	
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions
Japan	0.6	12.5%	Mexico	1.2	30.4%	Japan	0.5	Mexico	-0.72
Canada	0.6	11.9%	United Kingdom	0.2	6.4%	India	0.5	Israel	-0.04
India	0.6	11.4%	Canada	0.2	4.9%	Canada	0.4	Dominican Republic	-0.03
Mexico	0.4	8.5%	Germany	0.1	3.8%	China	0.2	Portugal	-0.02
China	0.3	5.7%	Japan	0.1	3.8%	Brazil	0.1	United Kingdom	-0.01

Top 5 Exports account for **49.9 percent of non-U.S. resident other business spending** in the United States

Top 5 Imports countries account for **49.2 percent of U.S. resident other business spending** abroad

Passenger Fares

Top 5 Exports			Top 5 Imports			Top 5 Surplus		Top 5 Deficit	
Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Share of Total	Country	\$ Billions	Country	\$ Billions
Mexico	1.0	8.7%	Mexico	1.7	13.2%	Canada	2.9	United Kingdom	-0.8
Japan	0.9	8.1%	United Kingdom	1.5	11.7%	Japan	1.3	Mexico	-0.7
Canada	0.8	7.2%	Germany	0.9	6.6%	Brazil	1.3	Germany	-0.4
United Kingdom	0.7	6.5%	Japan	0.8	6.1%	China	1.1	Chile	-0.4
South Korea	0.6	5.4%	Colombia	0.6	4.3%	Dominican Republic	0.7	Colombia	-0.3

Top 5 Exports account for **36 percent of non-U.S. resident international passenger fares on U.S. carriers.**

Top 5 Imports countries account for **41.9 percent of U.S. resident international passenger fares on foreign carriers.**

If you have questions or would like more information regarding the data in this fact sheet, please contact David Huether (David.Huether@trade.gov).