



Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

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Read more: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/export-nation>.

Exports Continue to Lead the Way Out of the Recession

Exports Have Accounted for More than Half of Post-Recession Growth in the Largest Metros

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Strong export performance over the past several years has played a central role in the ongoing economic recovery in the United States, particularly in the largest metro areas. Despite this impressive growth, however, U.S. metros are not fulfilling their export potential, according to *Export Nation 2013*, a report released today by the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program as part of the Global Cities Initiative.

The U.S. economy is driven more by global trade than ever before and metropolitan regions power export growth. The top 100 metro areas alone account for 64 percent of the nation's total exports. Exports accounted for 54 percent of post-recession output growth in the 100 largest metros, compared to 37 percent for the nation as a whole. All but one of the top 100 metros saw an increase in exports from 2003 to 2012.

While growth has been strong, the United States is more than \$200 billion below the administration's National Export Initiative goal to double exports in five years. Only 12 of the top 100 metro areas have maintained the 15 percent annual growth rate required to double exports. Two-thirds of the largest 100 metro areas underperform the United States as a whole on export intensity, suggesting that there is significant potential for the expansion of exports at the metro level.

To reach export potential, metropolitan leaders should be more intentional about their export planning.

"Exports have been a critical driver of the post-recession recovery in the U.S. and its metro areas," said Brad McDearman, director of the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Export Initiative and co-author of the report. "Metro leaders that make boosting exports an economic development priority are better positioning their regions for success in the more globally-connected 21st century economy."

Export Nation 2013 provides data to help metropolitan leaders understand their unique qualities, including industry specializations. Manufacturing has led growth for most metros, and contributed more than 90 percent of export growth since the recession in 18 of the 100 largest metros. Services drove at least half of export growth in 11 of the 100 largest metros, despite collectively only comprising 34 percent of metro exports.

The report finds that the three metro industries that contributed most to post-recession growth are transportation equipment, petroleum and coal products, and computers and electronics. These three industries accounted for 48 percent of post-recession export growth in the 100 largest metros. Services accounted for 13 percent of export growth, especially insurance, financial services, engineering, and IT services.

“Metropolitan regions drive the national economy,” said McDearman. “Policymakers should continue to empower metro areas to undertake customized, data-driven approaches to getting more parts of their economy, particularly middle-market firms, into the export game.”

This is the third edition of *Export Nation*, which updates and builds upon the results of the previous two analyses to examine changes across the metropolitan export landscape. This is the first of several new research products the Brookings Institution will release this fall that will focus on building export potential at the metropolitan level. Future releases will focus on goods exports from and among U.S. metro areas and the wider North American export platform.

The release of this data also coincides with an update to [The Metropolitan Revolution](#) iPad app, which features the story of how the Portland metro area focuses on growing their exports through intentional planning efforts. Download the iPad app here to learn more: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id655057510>.

*Launched in 2012, the **Global Cities Initiative** is a five-year joint project of Brookings and JPMorgan Chase aimed at helping U.S. city and metropolitan leaders become more globally fluent by providing an in-depth and data-driven look at their regional standing on crucial global economic measures, highlighting best policy and practice innovations from around the world, and creating an international network of leaders who ultimately trade and grow together. For more information please visit <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/global-cities.aspx>.*

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