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Kentucky's International Trade Relationships

This *District Data Brief* is part of a four-report series examining the international trade relationships of the US states that are either partially or entirely contained within the Fourth District of the Federal Reserve System [↗](#): Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.¹

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Topics [State and local economies](#)

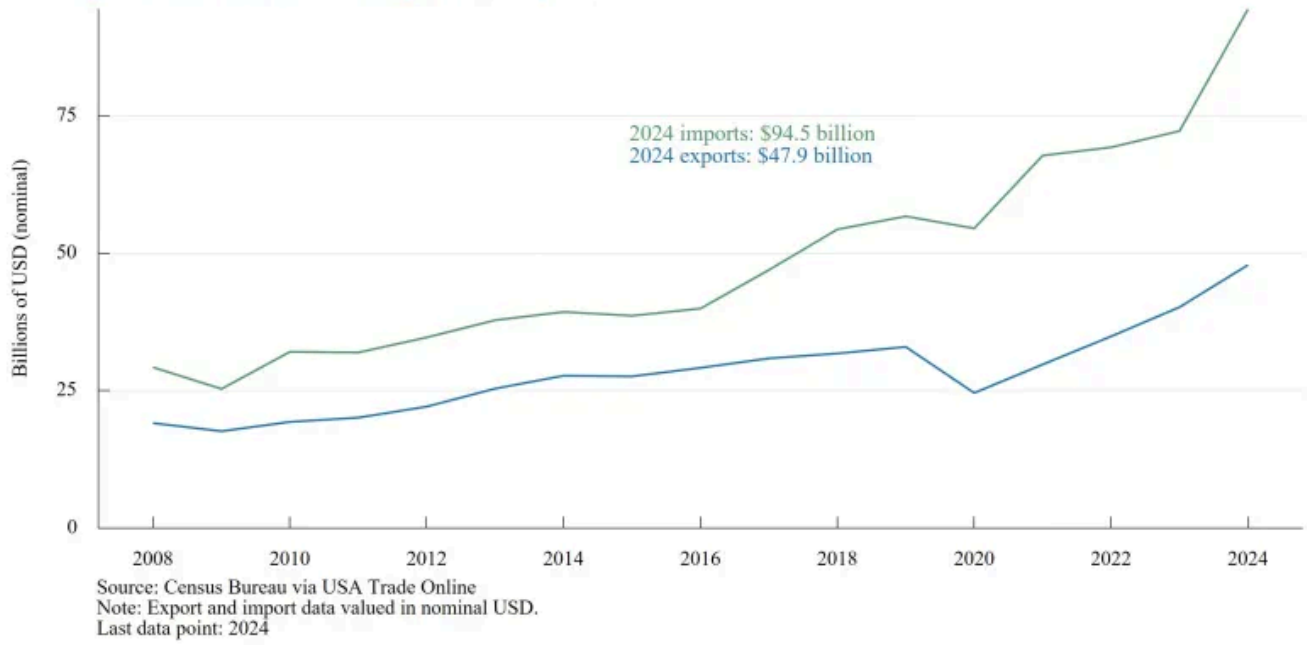
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Overview: Kentucky's Product Imports and Exports

The value of Kentucky's product imports and exports grew during most years from 2008 through 2024 (Figure 1). In 2024, Kentucky imported \$94.5 billion worth of products from other countries, while it exported \$47.9 billion worth of products.² The Commonwealth is a net importer because it imports more than it exports.³

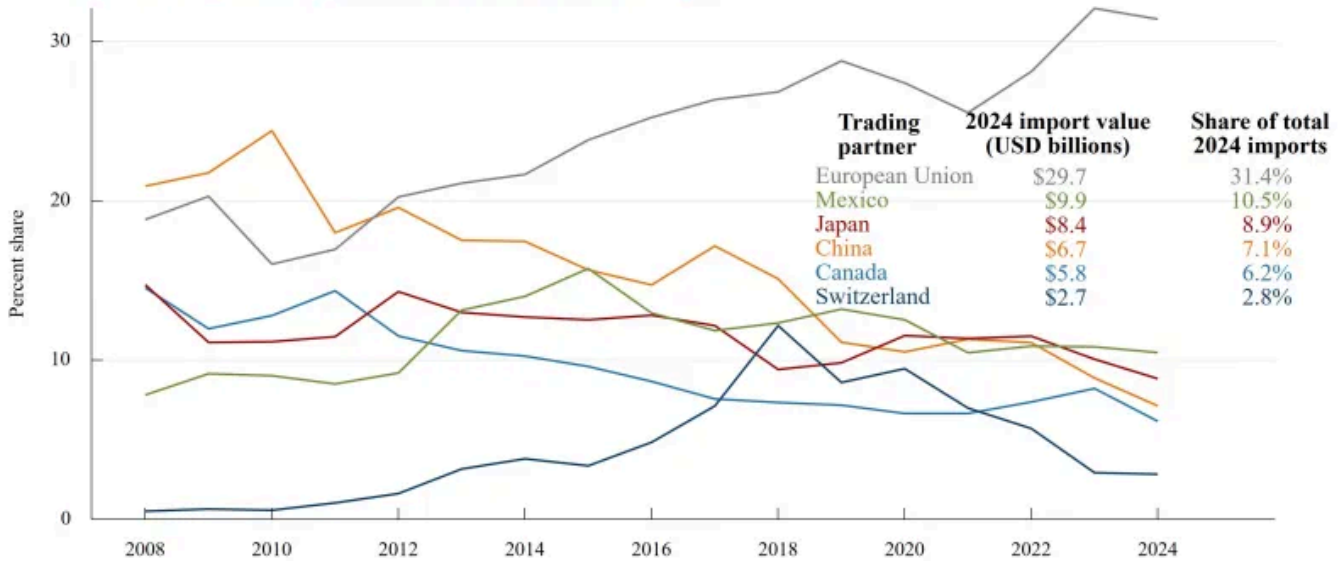
Figure 1. Kentucky's Annual Imports and Exports



Where Do Kentuckians Import Products from, and What Are They Buying?

Figure 2 shows the percentage of imported goods coming into Kentucky by trading partner of origin from 2008 through 2024. The figure's inset table provides information on the US dollar value and percentage share of Kentucky's total imports by trading partner of origin in 2024. Both the figure and corresponding inset table are filtered to include only the top six places of origin. By value, the largest share (31.4 percent) of total imported goods came from the European Union in 2024, and around a quarter of these imports were from Ireland. Mexico accounted for the second-largest share (slightly more than 10 percent) of imported goods in 2024; 37 percent of these imported goods were motor vehicle parts, and 14 percent were engines, turbines, and power transmission equipment. Although slightly more than 7 percent of Kentucky's imports came from China in 2024, this share has declined substantially since 2010, when almost a quarter (24.4 percent) originated in China.

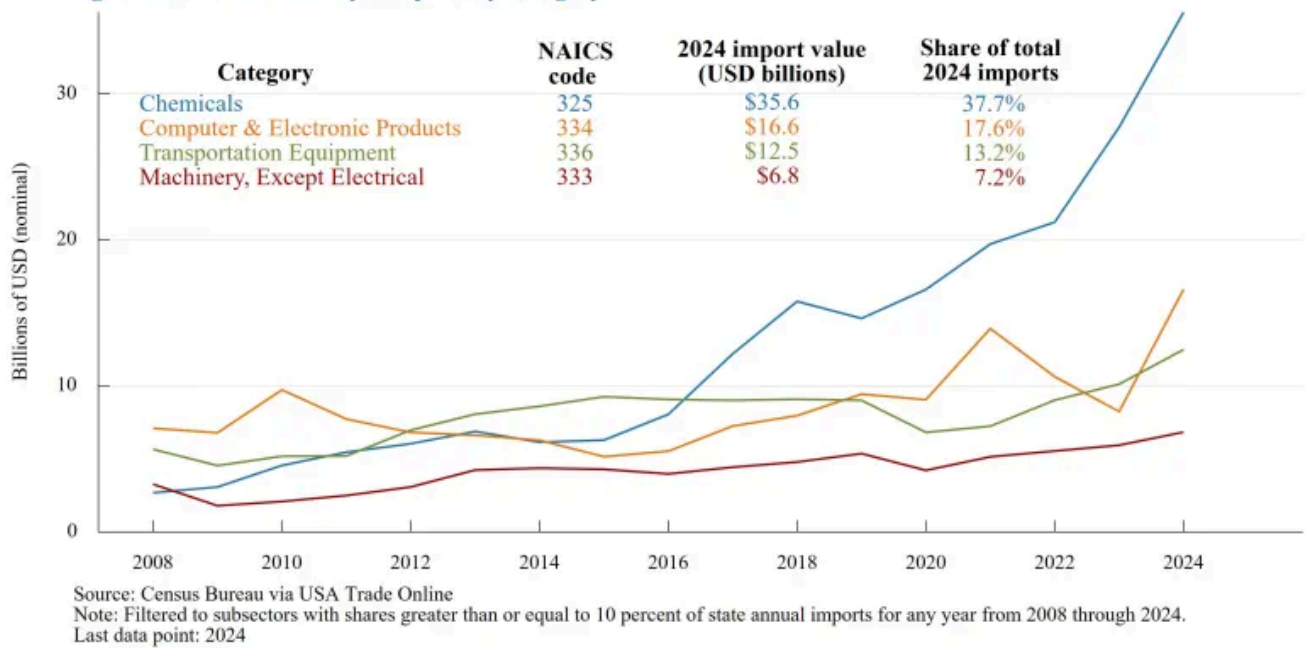
Figure 2. Largest Trading Partners' Share of Kentucky's Imports



Source: Census Bureau via USA Trade Online
 Note: Filtered to trading partners with shares greater than or equal to 10 percent of state annual imports for any year from 2008 through 2024.
 Last data point: 2024

Figure 3 shows the dollar value of Kentucky's imported products from the largest [North American Industry Classification System](#) categories over time. Chemicals accounted for the largest share (almost 38 percent) of Kentucky's imports in 2024, amounting to \$35.6 billion. Within this category, imports of pharmaceuticals and medicines from Singapore and Ireland increased significantly beginning in 2017. Kentucky also imported \$16.6 billion worth of computer and electronic products (including semiconductors and communications equipment) in 2024, making this its second-largest category of imports. Additionally, Kentuckians purchased \$7.7 billion worth of motor vehicles and parts and \$4.7 billion worth of aerospace products and parts from other countries in 2024. Those two categories accounted for virtually all of the Commonwealth's imports of transportation equipment, its third-largest 2024 import category.

Figure 3. Value of Kentucky's Imports by Category



Where Do Kentucky's Exports Go, and What Products Does the Commonwealth Sell?

Figure 4 shows that from 2008 through 2024, Kentucky's largest export markets were the European Union and Canada. In 2024, more than 40 percent of the Commonwealth's exports were shipped to one of these two destinations, while just over 10 percent were shipped to the United Kingdom. More than half of the state's 2024 exports to Canada were transportation equipment, mainly motor vehicles and parts. Aerospace products and parts—also in the transportation equipment category—accounted for 46 percent of exports to the European Union and almost 74 percent of exports to the United Kingdom in 2024.

Figure 4. Largest Trading Partners' Share of Kentucky's Exports

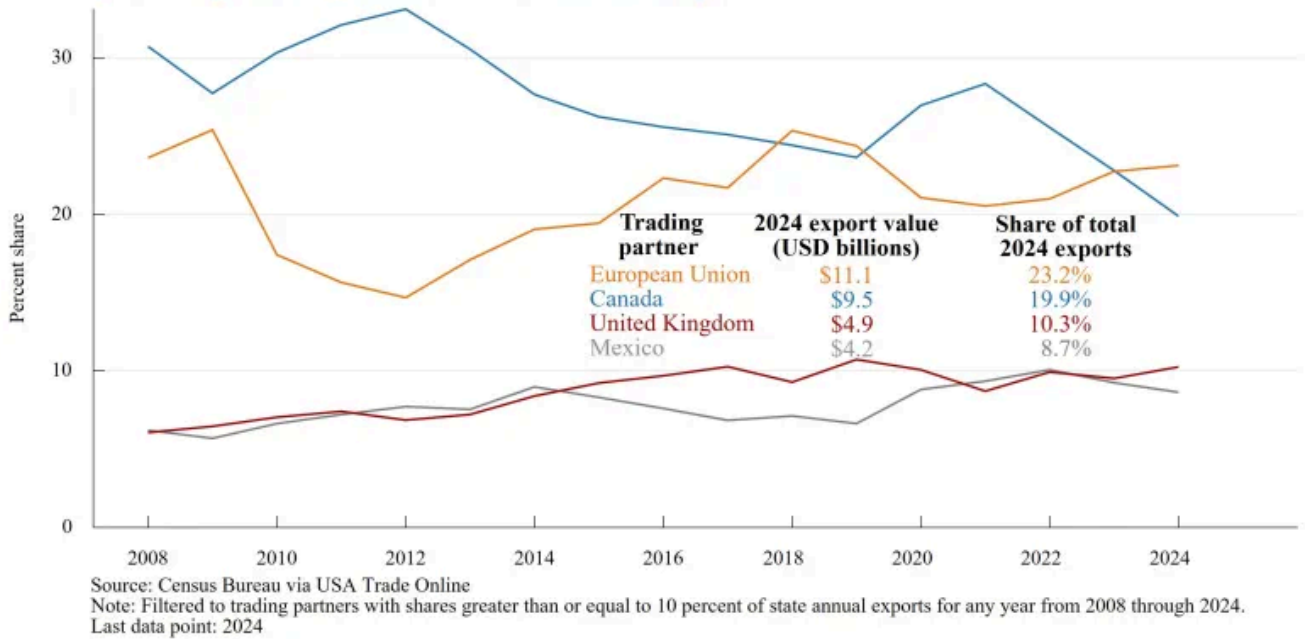
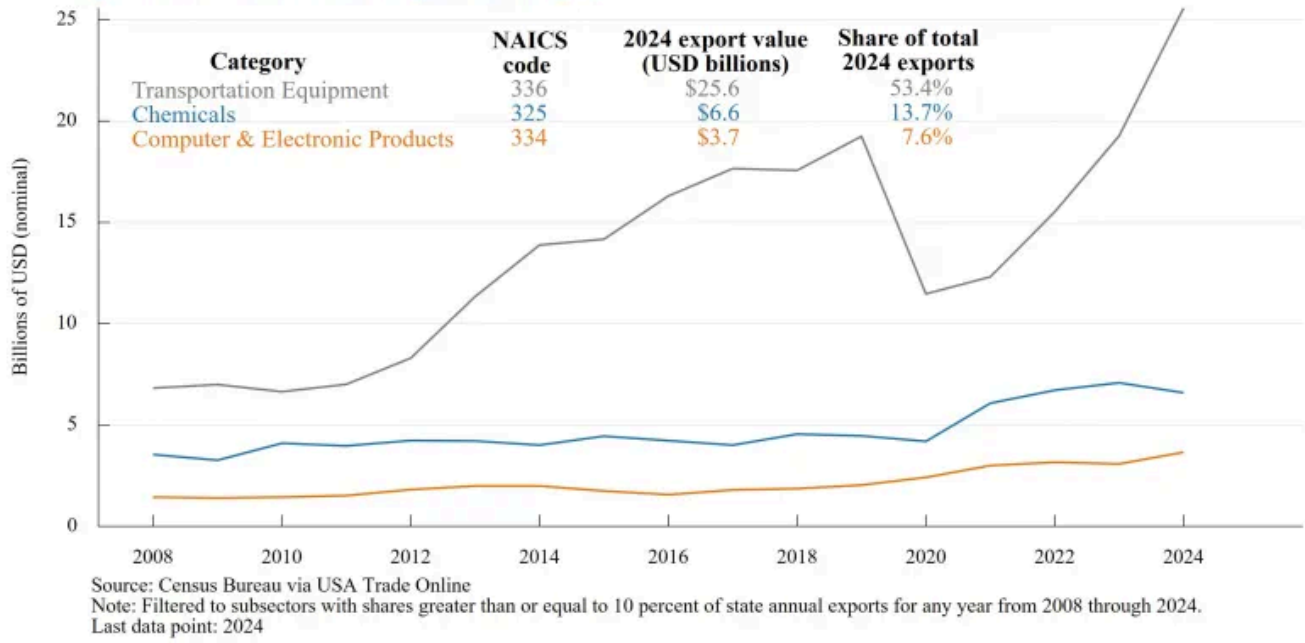


Figure 5 shows that from 2008 through 2024, Kentucky's largest export category was transportation equipment. Although the state's transportation equipment exports dipped during the COVID-19 pandemic, as of 2024, these exports had bounced back and eclipsed prepandemic levels, accounting for more than half of the Commonwealth's total exports during that year. Nearly three-quarters of these exports were aerospace products and parts; growth in this category is the primary reason that Kentucky's transportation equipment exports have more than doubled since 2013. Some other prominent export categories are chemicals (including pharmaceuticals and medicines) and computer and electronic products, which represented the state's second- and third-largest export categories in 2024, respectively.

Figure 5. Value of Kentucky's Exports by Category



Conclusion

Kentucky is a net importer and trades goods with several other countries. Prominent among its international trade relationships are those with the European Union, Mexico, and Canada. The share of Kentucky's imports coming from China declined substantially from 2008 through 2024, while the share coming from the European Union saw a robust increase. Chemicals account for a large share of imports, and there is significant cross-border trade in transportation equipment. More than half of Kentucky's exports were transportation equipment in 2024.

Footnotes

1. The Fourth District covers Ohio, the eastern half of Kentucky, parts of western Pennsylvania, and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. [Return to 1](#)
2. The data collected for this *District Data Brief* were sourced from the Census USA Trade Online data tool, which is subject to revisions. The data contained in the figures' inset tables have been rounded. [Return to 2](#)
3. Whether something is classified as an import depends on where the product is manufactured or where it undergoes "substantial transformation," not where the company is headquartered. For example, when a pharmaceutical company that is headquartered in the United States manufactures products in Ireland or Singapore and then ships those products to the United States, those products would be considered imports from Ireland or Singapore. [Return to 3](#)

Appendix

Table A1. Top Categories and Industry Groups for Kentucky's Imports in 2024

		2024 import value (USD billions)
Chemicals	Basic Chemicals	0.58
	Resin, Synthetic Rubber, and Artificial and Synthetic Fibers and Filaments	0.42
	Pesticides, Fertilizers, and Other Agricultural Chemicals	0.01
	Pharmaceuticals and Medicines	34.01
	Paints, Coatings, and Adhesives	0.11
	Soaps, Cleaning Compounds, and Toilet Preparations	0.19
	Other Chemical Products and Preparations	0.28
	Total	35.62
Machinery, Except Electrical	Agriculture, Construction, and Machinery	0.55
	Industrial Machinery	0.62
	Commercial and Service Industry Machinery	0.27

	Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning, and Commercial Refrigeration Equipment	0.24
	Metalworking Machinery	1.14
	Engines, Turbines, and Power Transmission Equipment	2.49
	Other General Purpose Machinery	1.54
	Total	6.84
Computer and Electronic Products	Computer Equipment	2.20
	Communications Equipment	2.58
	Audio and Video Equipment	1.20
	Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components	7.57
	Navigational, Measuring, Medical, and Control Instruments	2.32
	Magnetic and Optical Media	0.74
	Total	16.61
Transportation Equipment	Motor Vehicles	0.06

	Motor Vehicle Bodies and Trailers	0.02
	Motor Vehicle Parts	7.69
	Aerospace Products and Parts	4.71
	Railroad Rolling Stock	0.02
	Ships and Boats	0.00*
	Transportation Equipment, Not Elsewhere Specified or Included	0.02
	Total	12.50

Source: Census Bureau via USA Trade Online

Note: Subsector totals may not sum to sector totals due to rounding.

*Number is too small to be displayed due to rounding.

Table A2. Top Categories and Industry Groups for Kentucky's Exports in 2024

		2024 export value (USD billions)
Chemicals	Basic Chemicals	0.81
	Resin, Synthetic Rubber, and Artificial and Synthetic Fibers and Filaments	1.17
	Pesticides, Fertilizers, and Other Agricultural Chemicals	0.02

	Pharmaceuticals and Medicines	3.72
	Paints, Coatings, and Adhesives	0.27
	Soaps, Cleaning Compounds, and Toilet Preparations	0.25
	Other Chemical Products and Preparations	0.35
	Total	6.59
Computer and Electronic Products	Computer Equipment	1.49
	Communications Equipment	0.80
	Audio and Video Equipment	0.29
	Semiconductors and Other Electronic Components	0.19
	Navigational, Measuring, Medical, and Control Instruments	0.76
	Magnetic and Optical Media	0.12
	Total	3.65
Transportation Equipment	Motor Vehicles	4.45
	Motor Vehicle Bodies and Trailers	0.17

	Motor Vehicle Parts	2.00
	Aerospace Products and Parts	18.94
	Railroad Rolling Stock	0.01
	Ships and Boats	0.00*
	Transportation Equipment, Not Elsewhere Specified or Included	0.02
	Total	25.59

Source: Census Bureau via USA Trade Online

Note: Subsector totals may not sum to sector totals due to rounding.

*Number is too small to be displayed due to rounding.

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