

See how the port strike will snarl shipments of bananas, beer, cars and more

The port closures will lead to delays and backlog for the global shipping industry.

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By [Luis Melgar](#) and [Rachel Lerman](#)

October 2, 2024 at 6:15 a.m. EDT

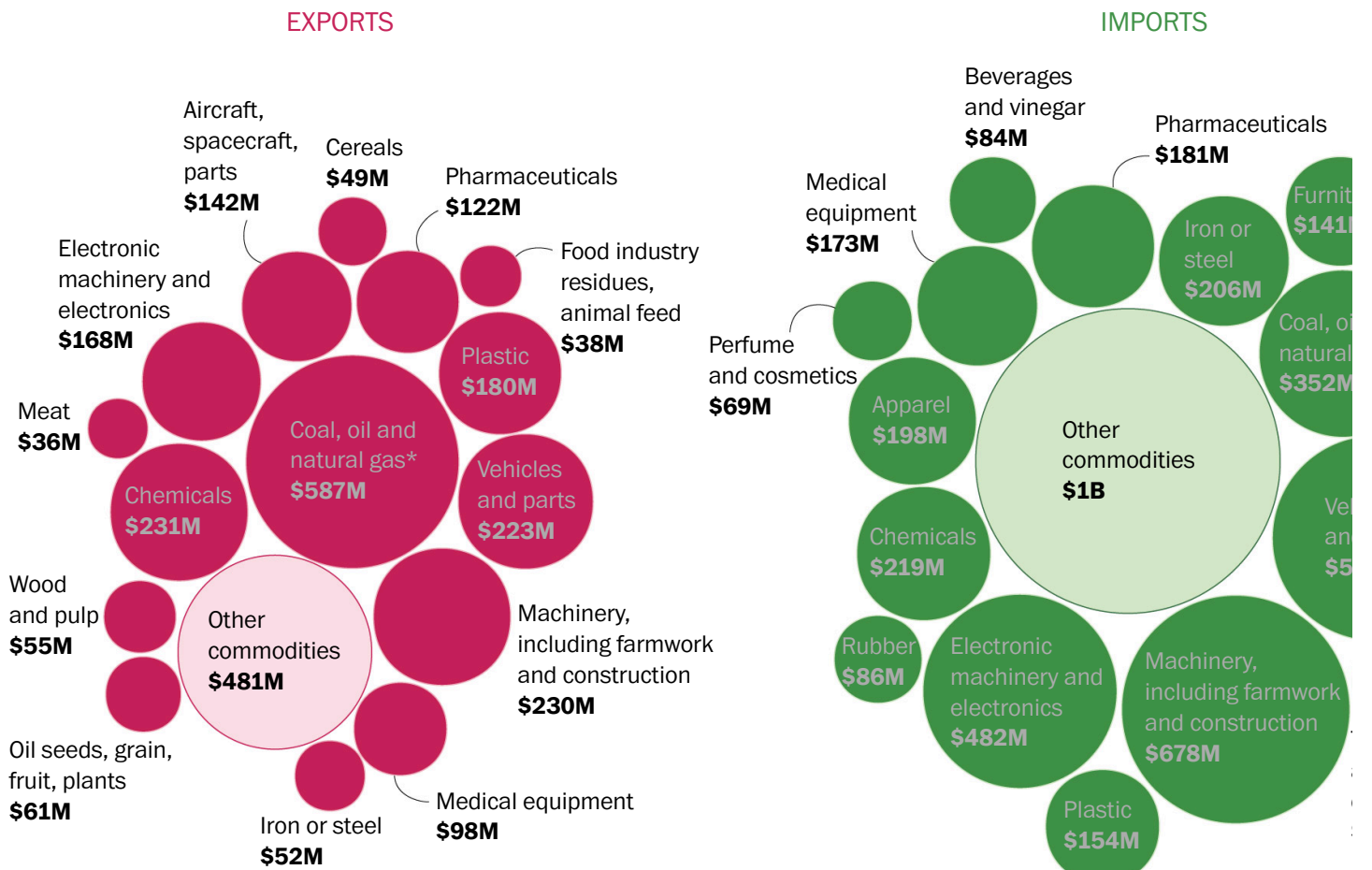
The longshoremen’s strike is halting operations at ports across the East and Gulf coasts — threatening critical supply chains and potentially leading to delay and disruption of goods from fresh produce to automobiles.

The dozens of sites affected from Maine to Texas handle shipments of car parts, machinery, pharmaceuticals and food, among other goods. Some will be stuck while the ports remain closed. Members of the union, who work to load and unload ships and maintain equipment, are on strike to fight for higher wages and restrictions on automation at the ports.

“When you interrupt the unloading of the ships, you interrupt the entirety of the flow,” said Douglas Kent, an executive at the Association for Shipbrokers and Management. That means shipments of clothes, furniture and electronics could be stuck at sea or in warehouses while the strike continues.

See which goods are handled by more than a dozen major East and Gulf coast ports

Average monthly value of goods from August 2023 to July 2024



*Oil and gas won't be impacted by the strike.

Source: Census Bureau

Oil and gas shipments won't be affected by the strike, the Department of Energy said in a statement Tuesday, noting that other workers handle materials. The Department of Agriculture also said it does not expect near-term shortages for most foods because of domestic agricultural prod that exports of non-containerized bulk export shipments like grain wouldn't be affected.

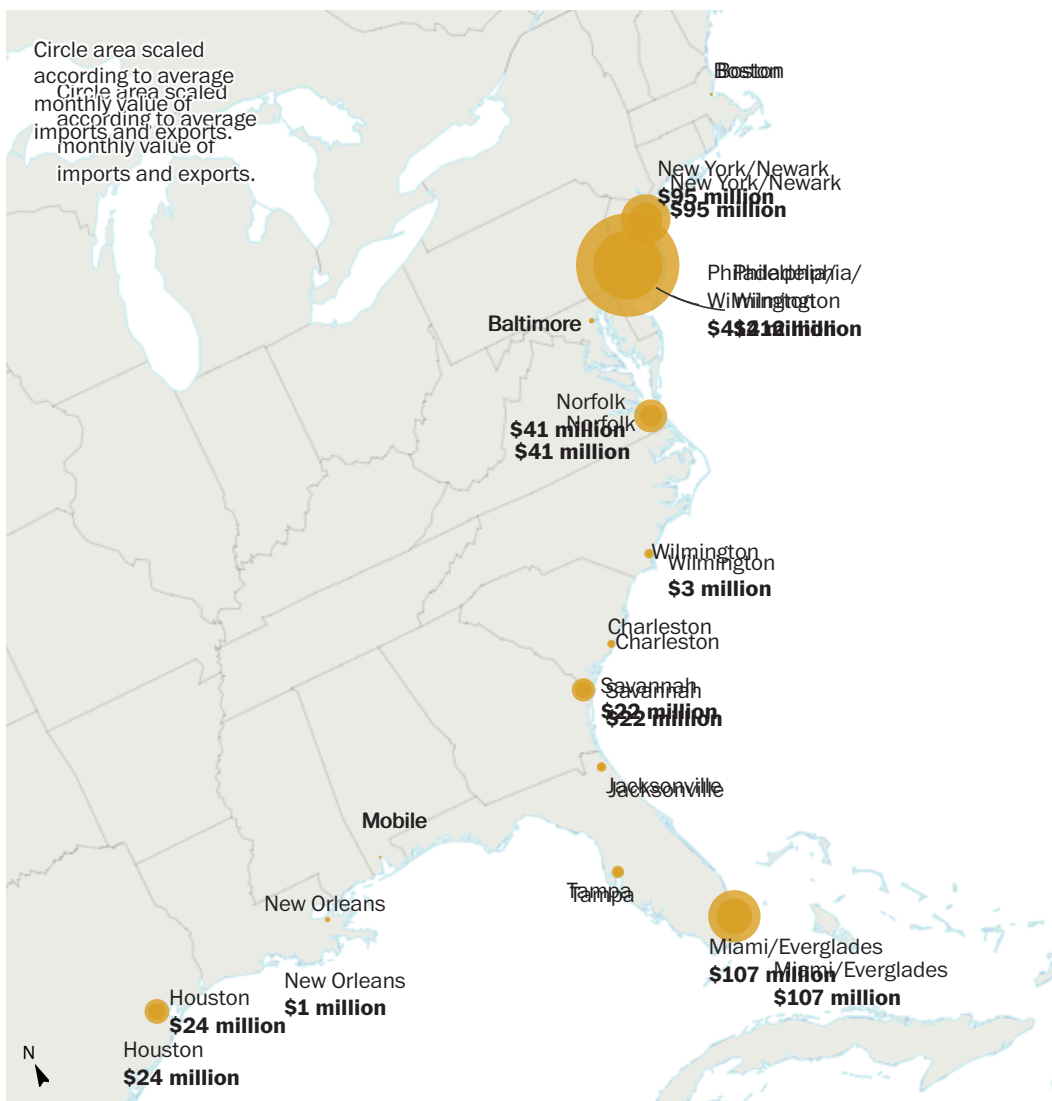
Large retailers have been preparing for a possible shutdown for months by stocking up on holiday shipments early and rerouting some goods to But if the strike persists, consumers could start to see delays.

About three-quarters of all U.S. imports of bananas come through East and Gulf coast ports, said Anna Nagurney, a professor of supply chain r at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Bananas are the most consumed fresh fruit in the country and are often shipped in from Centra America.

“With the delays of loading and unloading, there are going to be immense losses in terms of fresh produce,” Nagurney said.

On the east coast, fruit and nuts mainly go through Philadelphia/Wilmington ports

Value of fruit and nut shipments at major ports affected by the strike



Source: Census Bureau

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Other food and beverage products could also be affected by the port strike, said the American Farm Bureau Federation. About 80 percent of wine, whiskey and scotch comes through the ports, according to the industry group.

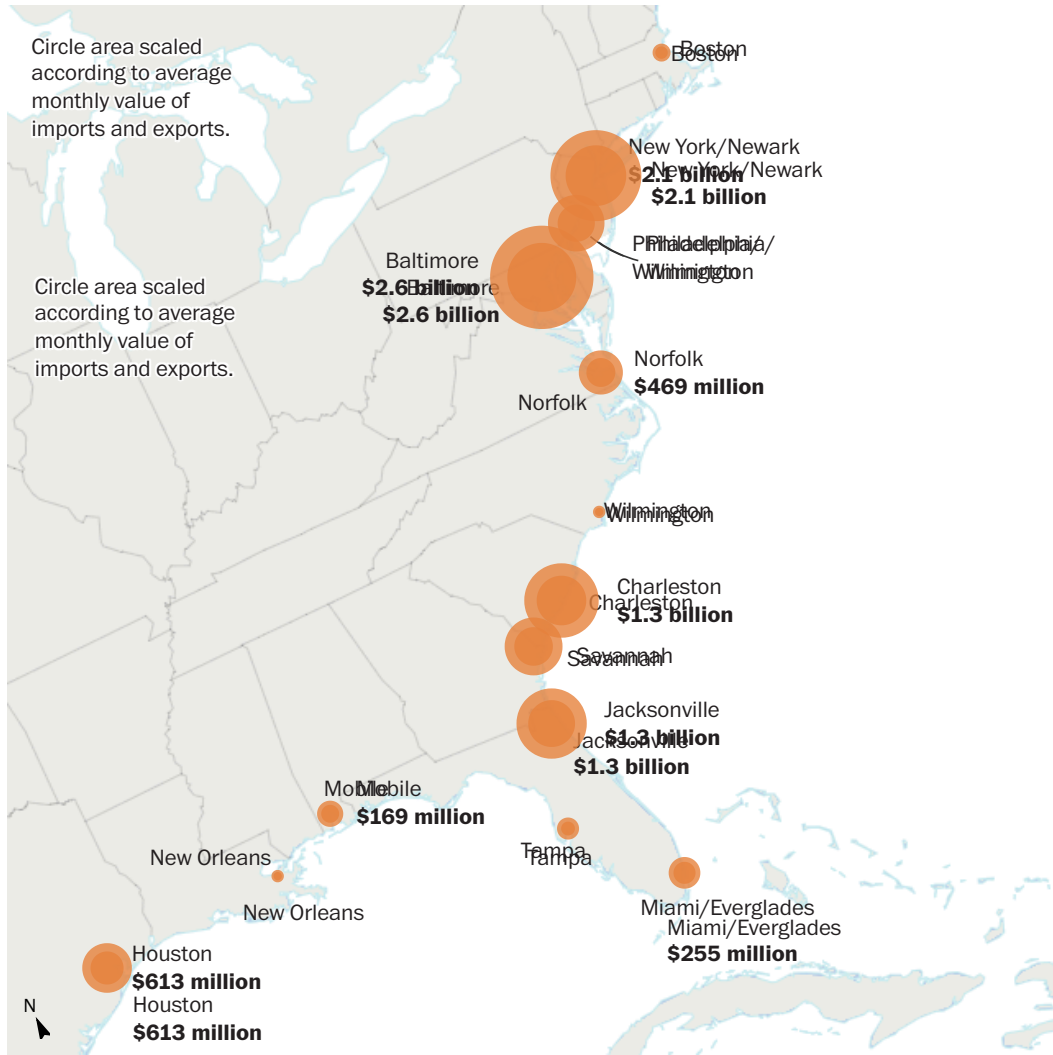
And the automobile industry, which already faced an upset earlier this year when the Key Bridge in Baltimore collapsed, could again face disruption.

Last year, ports on the East and Gulf coasts handled about 40 percent of the country's motor vehicle and parts trade, according to the Alliance for Automotive Innovation.

"A protracted strike will be debilitating to the auto supply chain and set off economic and national security ripples across the country — harming communities and consumers," John Bozzella, the alliance's president and chief executive, said in a statement.

Baltimore is the top port for cars

Value of automobile shipments at major ports affected by the strike



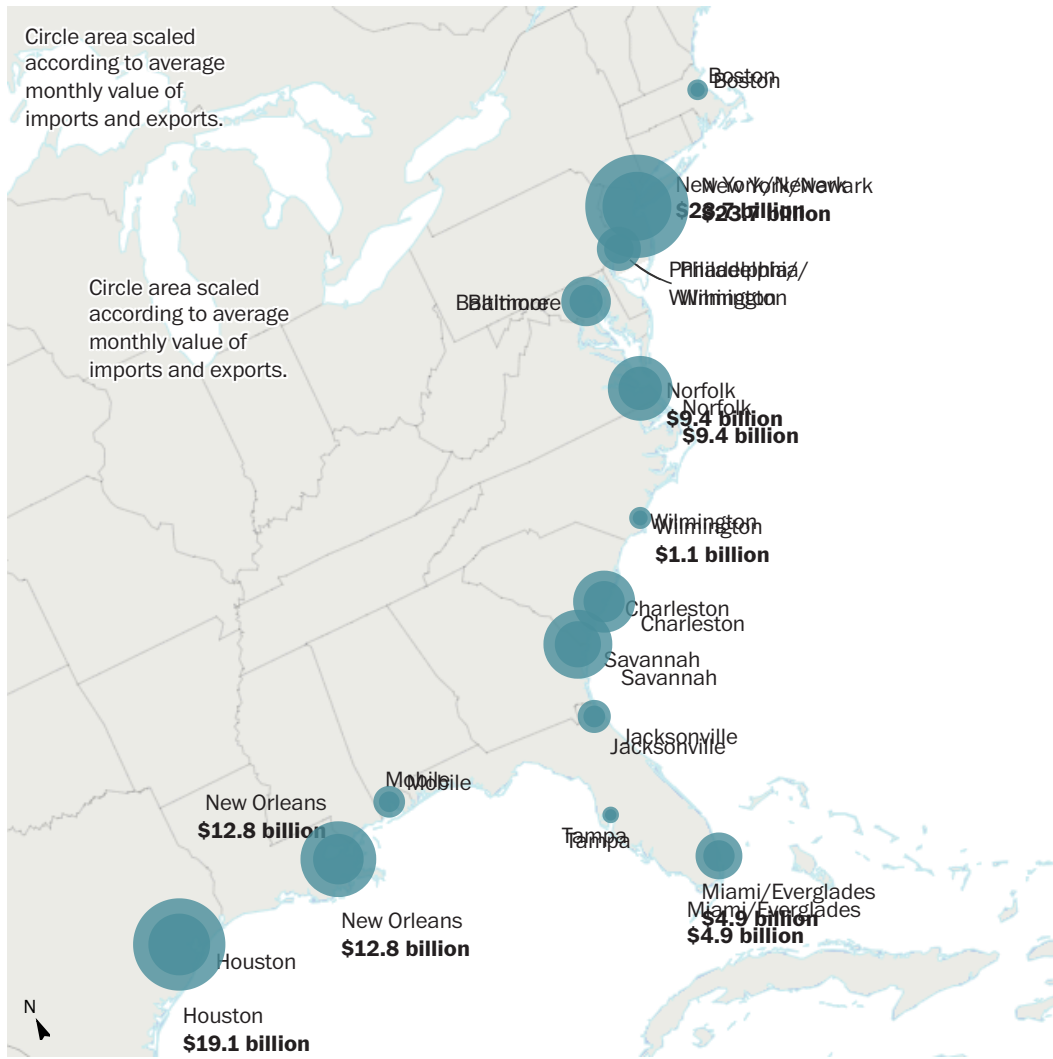
Source: Census Bureau

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Dozens of trade organizations and business groups, including the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, signed a joint letter to President Joe Biden last month calling for the administration to help negotiate a deal between the longshoremen's union and port operators.

East and Gulf coast ports handle a significant amount of trade for the country — making up more than half of imports traveling by sea in container ships as of Aug. 1, according to data from S&P Global Market Intelligence. The largest locations handled about \$4.9 billion of exports and close to \$2.7 billion of imports per month from August 2023 to July 2024.

Value of shipments at major striking ports



Source: Census Bureau

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The expected supply chain snarls from the strike are on top of recent global shipping challenges, including a prolonged drought that affected the Canal and Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. And the closures are coming at a key time for retailers to receive inventory for holiday shopping. If it continues, smaller businesses in particular could feel pain because they lack the buying power to significantly change their shipping operations.

“It creates a staggering amount of additional cost and transportation for small and medium-size and large companies,” said Paul Brashier, global chain vice president at ITS Logistics. “That trickles all the way down to the consumer, and that’s where inflationary pressure comes from.”

The shutdowns will back up shipping around the world, said Campbell University maritime historian Sal Mercogliano, who also runs a YouTube called “What is Going on With Shipping?”

“If you have a four-lane road and all of a sudden you shut one of the lanes, that’s going to cause congestion,” he said.

Jaelyn Peiser contributed to this report. Editing by Kate Rabinowitz and Karly Domb Sadof.