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Printed By Tomer Raanan

# US east and Gulf coast volumes rise in December despite Panama Canal disruptions

*Descartes' December report finds east and US Gulf coast ports volumes increased in December despite restrictions in the Panama Canal*

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US imports rose slightly in December from November, according to logistics and software provider Descartes. Despite restrictions and congestion in the Panama Canal, major east and US Gulf coast ports made gains, while west coast ports saw volumes fall sequentially



A GROWTH IN US IMPORTS IN DECEMBER FAVOURED ITS EAST AND US GULF COAST PORTS, BUT JANUARY VOLUMES WILL LIKELY SHOW THE IMPACT OF THE RED SEA CHAOS AS CARRIERS AVOID THE SUEZ CANAL.

Source: Port of Houston Authority

US IMPORTS grew 9.2% year on year in December and 10.6% from the same period in pre-pandemic 2019, according to a report from logistics and software provider Descartes which tallies total inbound volumes to the US.

For the full year, imports nationwide were down 11.7% from last year but up 4.6% from 2019, the report said.

“December was a solid month and it’s fair to say that US import container volume over the year was beyond what the market anticipated last January,” said Descartes executive vice-president Chris Jones.

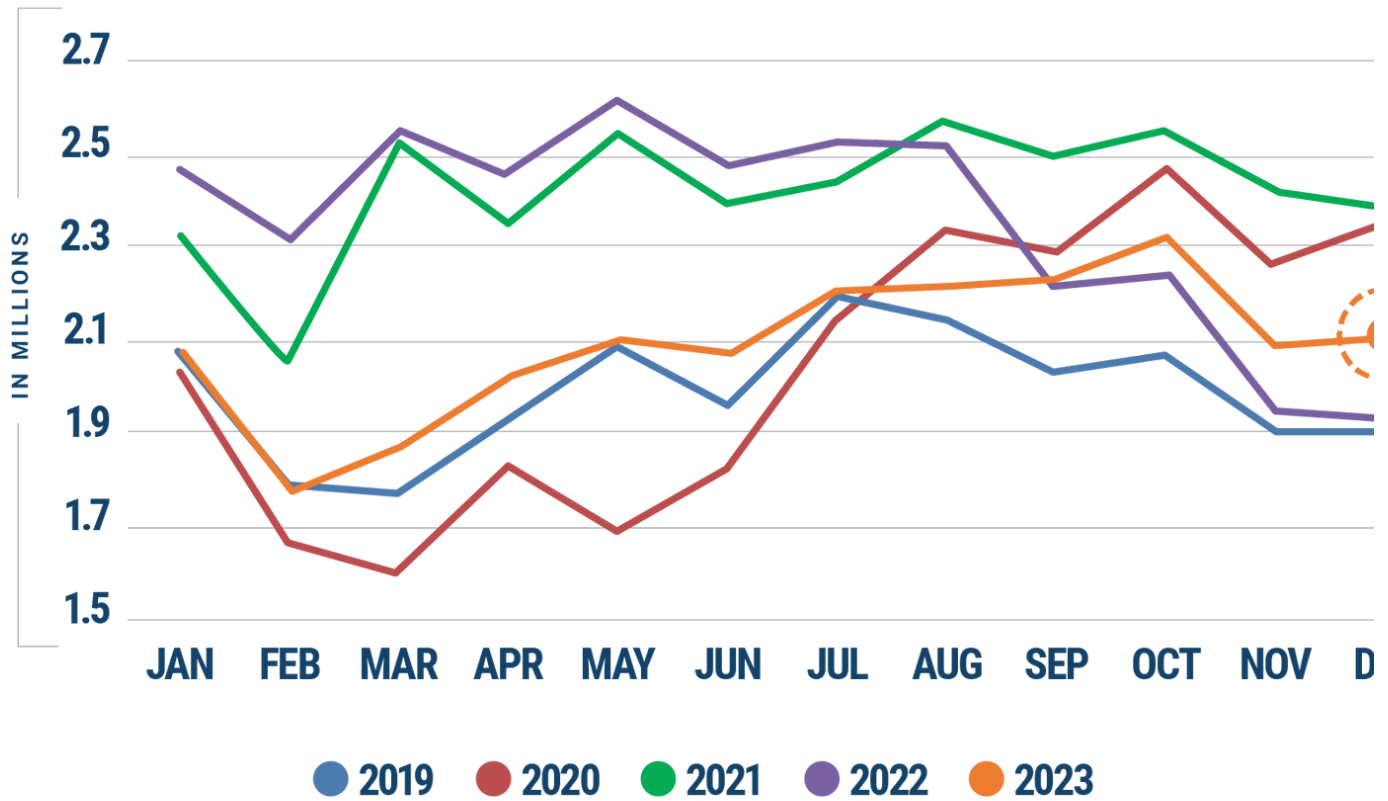
A 0.4% rise from November to 2.1m teu favoured the nation’s east and US Gulf coast ports, while west coast inbound volume fell. This is despite increasing restrictions and delays in the Panama Canal that were expected to bring about a shift of discretionary cargo going to the Pacific ports, which have also enjoyed some tailwinds since the ratification of a labour deal in August.

However, January east and Gulf coast volumes will likely show the impact of the Red Sea chaos as carriers avoid the Suez Canal and take longer journeys around the Cape of Good Hope.

“The impact of the drought in Panama did not appear to impact US Gulf coast ports volumes in December, but transit times did grow considerably in the region,” Jones said.

“Now we have the conflict in the Middle East affecting transit through the Suez Canal and US import container import volumes could be impacted starting in January.”

## 2019-2023 U.S. CONTAINER IMPORT VOLUME (TEUs)



Source: Descartes Datamyne



The Panama Canal Authority said October was the region’s driest on record and had planned further restrictions, but better than expected rainfall in November allowed it to change course.

The authority had planned to limit daily transits to 20 in January and 18 in February, but instead increased them from 22 in December to 24 as of January 1, seven through the neopanamax locks and 17 through the panamax locks. This is still two thirds below the “regular scenario” of 36 daily transits.