

# Mineral Industry Surveys

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## IRON ORE IN DECEMBER 2019

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in December 2019 were 3.90 million metric tons (Mt) and 4.42 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 126,000 metric tons (t), a 6% decrease from that of November and a 10% decrease from that of December 2018. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 142,000 t, a 7% decrease from those in November and a 17% decrease from those in December 2018. Mine stocks were 2.8 Mt at the end of December 2019, a 16% decrease from revised stocks held at the end of November 2019 and an 11% decrease from those held in December 2018 (fig. 1, table 1). Stocks, as well as annual totals for production and shipments were revised based on annual surveys received (table 1).

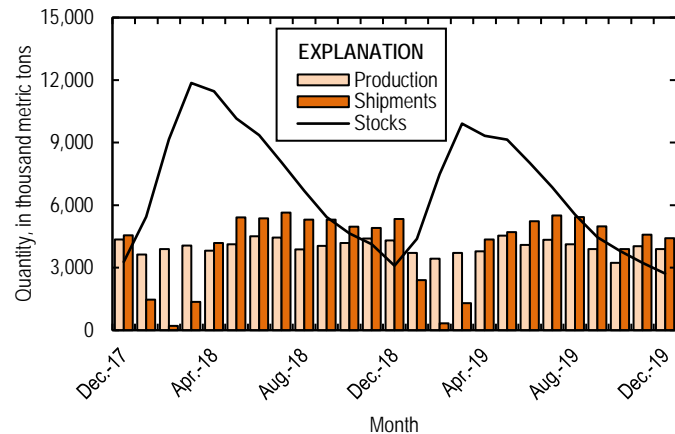


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from December 2017 through December 2019.

Monthly iron ore data are reported as gross weight unless otherwise noted and do not include iron metallics such as pig iron, direct-reduced iron, hot-briquetted iron, or iron nuggets.

U.S. exports of iron ore were 682,000 t in December 2019, a 28% decrease from those in November 2019 and a 33% decrease from those in December 2018 (fig. 2, tables 3, 6). U.S. imports of iron ore were 428,000 t in December 2019, double

those in November and an 11% decrease from those in December 2018 (fig. 2, tables 4, 6). The spot price for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight, at Tianjin Port, China, was \$92.65 per dry metric ton in December 2019, a 9% increase from \$84.98 per dry metric ton in November (fig. 2).

Seasonal variations of exports, imports, shipments, and stocks during the winter months are attributed to freezing of waterways and the closing of the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, MI, which are used to transport iron ore in the Great Lakes region through the St. Lawrence Seaway.

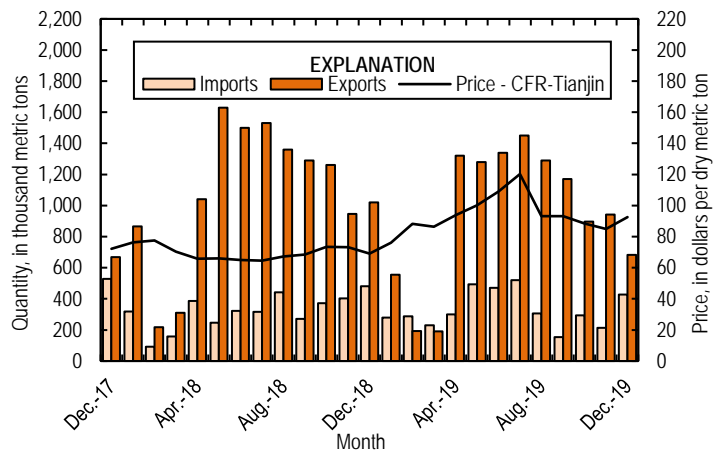


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight (CFR), at Tianjin Port, China, from December 2017 through December 2019. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

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TABLE 1  
U.S. PRODUCTION, SHIPMENTS, AND STOCKS OF IRON ORE<sup>1, 2</sup>  
(Exclusive of ore containing 5% or more of manganese)

(Thousand metric tons, usable ore)

Period	Production		Shipments <sup>3</sup>		Stocks
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2018:					
December	4,310	49,500 <sup>4</sup>	5,340	50,400 <sup>4</sup>	3,100
2019:					
January	3,710	3,710	2,410	2,410	4,390
February	3,430	7,130	326	2,740	7,490
March	3,710	10,800	1,300	4,040	9,910
April	3,780	14,600	4,360	8,400	9,330
May	4,540	19,200	4,710	13,100	9,150
June	4,090	23,300	5,230	18,300	8,020
July	4,340	27,600	5,500	23,800	6,850
August	4,120	31,700	5,430	29,300	5,550
September	3,900	35,600	4,990	34,300	4,460
October	3,240	38,900	3,900	38,200	3,800
November	4,030	42,900	4,590	42,700	3,230
December	3,900	46,800	4,420	47,200	2,720

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

<sup>2</sup>Excludes byproduct ores and iron metallics.

<sup>3</sup>Includes rail and vessel.

<sup>4</sup>May include revisions to previously published data.

TABLE 2  
U.S. PRODUCTION OF PIG IRON AND RAW STEEL, BY TYPE OF FURNACE<sup>1</sup>

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Pig iron production		Raw steel production			
	Basic oxygen furnace		Blast furnace		Electric furnace	
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2018:						
December	2,100	24,100	2,490	27,700	4,990	58,900
2019:						
January	1,880	1,880	2,330	2,330	5,190	5,190
February	1,840	3,720	2,140	4,470	4,810	10,000
March	2,080	5,800	2,390	6,870	5,290	15,300
April	1,860	7,670	2,170	9,040	5,190	20,500
May	1,930	9,600	2,430	11,500	5,120	25,600
June	1,900	11,500	2,380	13,900	4,870	30,500
July	1,830	13,300	2,190	16,000	5,230	35,700
August	1,840	15,200	2,180	18,200	5,220	40,900
September	1,870	17,000	2,150	20,400	4,850	45,800
October	1,700	18,700	2,120	22,500	5,130	50,900
November	1,720	20,500	1,970	24,500	5,120	56,000
December	1,850	22,300	2,140	26,600	5,160	61,200

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 3  
U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY AND TYPE <sup>1,2</sup>  
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality and type of product	2018		2019			
	January–December Quantity (thousand metric tons)	December		January–December		
		Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Value <sup>3</sup> (dollars per ton)
Canada	10,100 <sup>f</sup>	598	62,300	8,420	780,000	92.60
Japan	2,160 <sup>f</sup>	85	5,250	2,450	151,000	61.61
Other	758 <sup>f</sup>	(4)	50	431	52,700	122.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,000 <sup>f</sup></b>	<b>682</b>	<b>67,600</b>	<b>11,300</b>	<b>983,000</b>	<b>87.02</b>
Concentrates	68 <sup>f</sup>	2	405	200	43,300	216.31
Fine ores	1	(4)	22	39	3,150	9.25
Pellets	12,700 <sup>f</sup>	680	67,100	10,900	930,000	85.53
Other	230 <sup>f</sup>	--	--	187	6,820	36.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,000 <sup>f</sup></b>	<b>682</b>	<b>67,600</b>	<b>11,300</b>	<b>983,000</b>	<b>87.02</b>

<sup>f</sup>Revised. -- Zero.

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of exports per month included in "Other."

<sup>3</sup>Free alongside ship (FAS) value.

<sup>4</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4  
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY AND TYPE<sup>1,2</sup>  
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality of origin and type of product	2018		2019			
	January–December Quantity (thousand metric tons)	December		January–December		
		Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Value <sup>3</sup> (dollars per ton)
Brazil	2,370 <sup>r</sup>	308	44,200	2,190	279,000	127.32
Canada	853	9	1,230	839	113,000	134.61
Other	579 <sup>r</sup>	111	13,100	953	107,000	112.79
Total	3,810	428	58,500	3,980	499,000	125.38
Concentrates	1,090 <sup>r</sup>	17	2,400	925	78,200	84.52
Fine Ores	229	34	3,040	225	19,900	22.00
Pellets	2,470	367	52,000	2,820	400,000	141.93
Other	13	10	1,030	16	1,330	83.31
Total	3,810	428	58,500	3,980	499,000	125.38

<sup>r</sup>Revised.

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month included in "Other."

<sup>3</sup>Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5  
 U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY CUSTOMS DISTRICT<sup>1,2</sup>  
 (Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Customs district (code no.)	Pellets			Total, all products		
	January–December		December	January–December		December
	2018	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019
Chicago, IL (39)	28	45	--	924	582	--
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	22	9	--	153 <sup>†</sup>	228	17
New Orleans, LA (20)	2,420	2,730	367	2,620	3,070	401
Other	--	32	--	104	101	10
Total	2,470	2,820	367	3,810	3,980	428

<sup>†</sup>Revised. -- Zero.

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>Customs Districts with less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month included in "Other."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6  
U.S. IRON ORE TRADE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

(Thousand metric tons and thousand dollars)

Period	Exports		Imports	
	Quantity	Value <sup>2</sup>	Quantity	Value <sup>3</sup>
2018:				
December	1,020	82,900	482	50,400
January–December	13,000	972,000	3,810	388,000
2019:				
January	556	48,600	280	33,300
February	192	14,400	288	38,700
March	191	16,200	231	32,100
April	1,320	108,000	301	37,300
May	1,280	128,000	493	61,500
June	1,340	109,000	471	49,200
July	1,450	121,000	521	60,800
August	1,290	103,000	307	35,900
September	1,170	105,000	154	20,900
October	897	83,700	293	42,900
November	942	79,500	213	27,900
December	682	67,600	428	58,500
January–December	11,300	983,000	3,980	499,000

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>Free alongside ship (FAS) value.

<sup>3</sup>Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.