

# Mineral Industry Surveys

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## IRON ORE IN MARCH 2020

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in March 2020 were 4.14 million metric tons (Mt) and 1.49 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 133,000 metric tons (t), essentially unchanged from that of February 2020 and a 11% increase from that of March 2019. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 47,900 t, nearly triple those in February and a 14% increase from those in March 2019. Mine stocks were 10.7 Mt at the end of March 2020, a 33% increase from stocks held at the end of February and a 9% increase to those held in March 2019 (fig. 1, table 1).

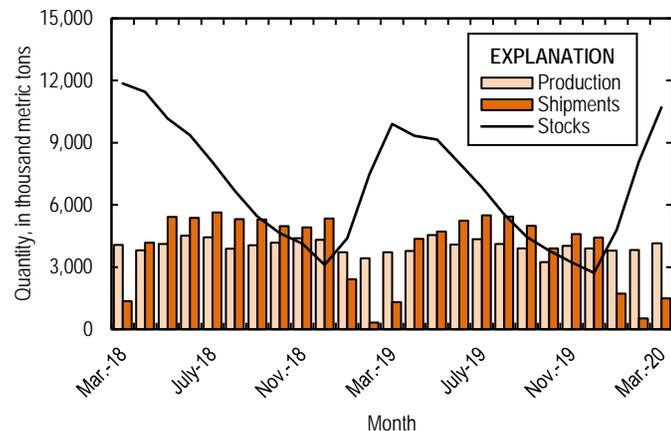


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from March 2018 through March 2020.

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 254,000 t in March 2020, a 51% increase from those in February and a 33% increase from those in March 2019 (fig. 2, tables 3, 6). U.S. imports of iron ore were 446,000 t in March 2020, nearly double those in February 2020 and March 2019 (fig. 2, tables 4, 6). The spot price for imported

iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight, at Tianjin Port, China, was \$88.99 per dry metric ton in March 2020, a slight increase from \$87.68 per dry metric ton in February 2020 (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.

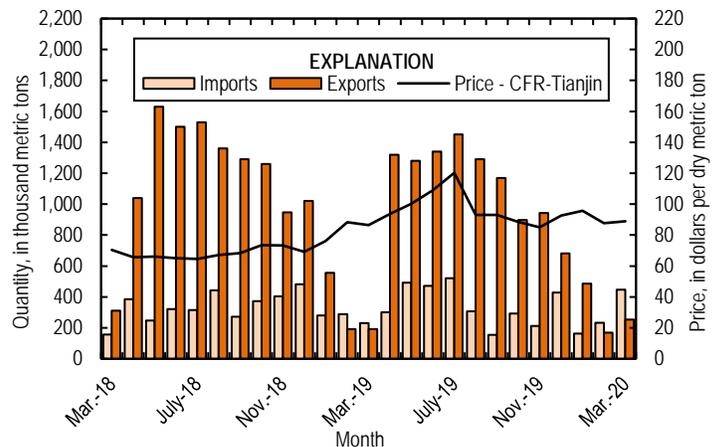


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight (CFR), at Tianjin Port, China, from March 2018 through March 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

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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
2019:					
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
2020:					
January	3,790	3,790	1,720	1,720	4,790
February	3,830	7,620	520	2,240	8,097
March	4,140	11,800	1,490	3,720	10,700

<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.

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
2019:						
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
2020:						
January	1,680	1,680	2,270	2,270	5,380	5,380
February	1,920	3,600	2,270	4,540	4,800	10,200
March	1,910	5,510	2,230	6,770	4,770	14,900

<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	2019		2020			
	January–March	March		January–March		
	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	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)
Austria	--	36	3,930	36	3,930	109.11
Canada	835	163	12,900	767	68,100	88.79
United Kingdom	103	55	1,930	104	3,650	35.06
Other	(4) <sup>†</sup>	(4)	92	1	240	240.00
Total	938	254	18,800	908	75,900	83.61
Concentrates	12	(4)	41	(4)	160	40.00
Fine ores	(4)	(4)	30	(4)	115	28.75
Pellets	883	199	16,800	803	72,000	89.62
Other	43	55	1,960	104	3,680	35.34
Total	938	254	18,800	908	75,900	86.61

<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>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	2019		2020			
	January–March	March		January–March		
	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	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	397	256	30,000	414	51,800	125.21
Canada	214	190	22,200	264	32,700	123.92
Other	188 <sup>†</sup>	(4)	14	163	21,900	134.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>52,300</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>126.76</b>
Concentrates	70	(4)	3	5	790	158.00
Fine Ores	(4)	(4)	11	8	3,080	384.38
Pellets	729	446	52,200	827	103,000	124.08
Other	(4)	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>52,300</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>126.76</b>

<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>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.

<sup>4</sup>Less than ½ unit.

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–March		March	January–March		March
	2019	2020	2020	2019	2020	2020
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	--	100	65	19	106	65
Mobile, AL (19)	3	18	18	3	18	18
New Orleans, LA (20)	726	709	362	776	716	362
Other	(3) <sup>3</sup>	(3)	--	(3) <sup>3</sup>	(3)	(3)
Total	729	827	446	799	840	446

<sup>1</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."

<sup>3</sup>Less than ½ unit.

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>
2019:				
January–March	938	79,100	799	104,000
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
2020:				
January	486	45,900	162	21,500
February	168	11,200	233	32,700
March	254	18,800	446	52,300
January–March	908	75,900	840	106,000

<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.