

# Mineral Industry Surveys

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## COBALT IN MARCH 2021

The amount of cobalt contained in U.S. imports of cobalt metals and chemicals in March 2021 was 4% less than that imported in March 2020. For the first 3 months of 2021, the amount of cobalt contained in imports was 42% less than that imported during the same period in 2020 (table 2). The amount of cobalt contained in U.S. exports of unwrought cobalt and chemicals in March 2021 was 80% more than that exported in March 2020 and during the first 3 months of 2021, the amount exported was 48% more than that exported during the same period in 2020 (table 4).

following listed prices are for cobalt metal in March, in dollars per pound.

Type	Price range	Average price
U.S. spot <sup>1</sup>	23.00–26.25	24.75
LME cash mean <sup>2</sup>	22.96–23.95	23.80

<sup>1</sup>Source: S&P Global Platts Metals Week, minimum 99.8% cobalt cathode.

<sup>2</sup>London Metal Exchange, mean of the cash buyer and cash seller price, minimum 99.3% cobalt briquettes, cathode, ingot, or rounds (converted from dollars per metric ton and rounded to the nearest cent).

**Prices**

In March, the monthly average U.S. spot cobalt price increased by 7% from that in February and was 43% higher than that in March 2020. The monthly average London Metal Exchange (LME) cash mean price increased by 11% from that in February and was 74% higher than that in March 2020. The

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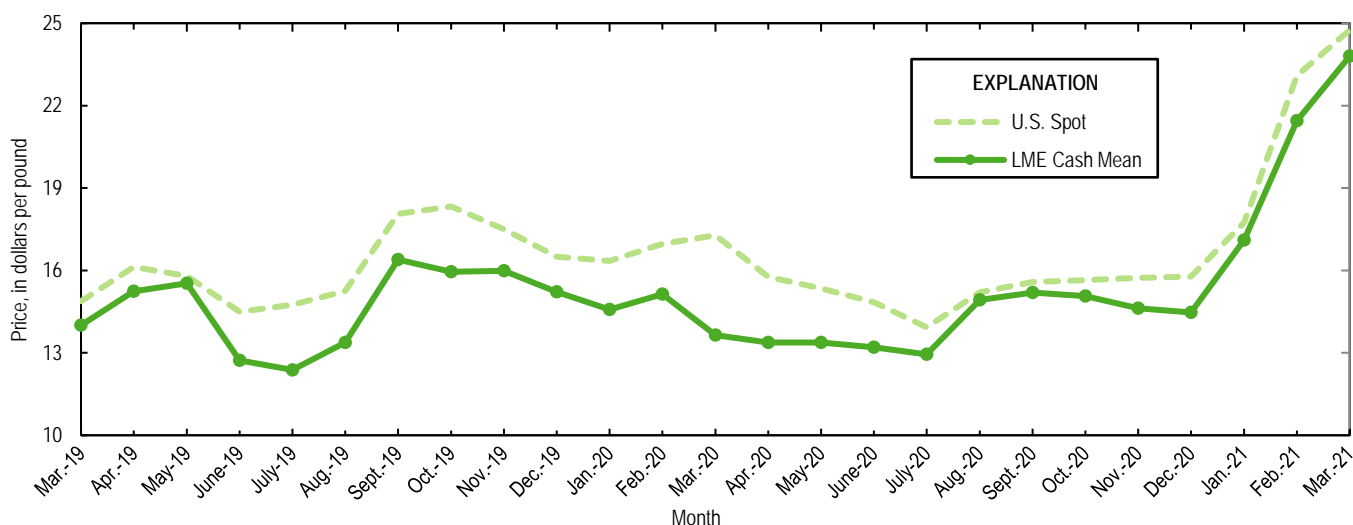


Figure 1. Average U.S. spot prices and LME cash mean prices for March 2019 through March 2021. Sources: S&P Global Platts Metals Week and London Metal Exchange.

TABLE 1  
REPORTED STOCKS OF COBALT METAL, END OF PERIOD

(Metric tons, contained cobalt)

Period	U.S. Government <sup>2</sup>	LME <sup>1</sup>		Total
		U.S. warehouse	Non-U.S. warehouse	
2020:				
March	302	92	551	643
April	302	91	513	604
May	302	89	513	602
June	302	89	513	602
July	302	82	513	595
August	302	82	373	455
September	302	82	369	451
October	302	82	369	451
November	302	82	369	451
December	302	82	369	451
2021:				
January	302	73	353	426
February	302	73	254	327
March	302	50	244	294

<sup>1</sup>London Metal Exchange.

<sup>2</sup>Data from Defense Logistics Agency Strategic Materials.

TABLE 2  
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF COBALT, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY<sup>1</sup>

Period and country or locality of origin	Metals <sup>2</sup>		Oxides and hydroxides		Salts and compounds <sup>3</sup>		Total cobalt content for the period <sup>5</sup> (metric tons)	Cobalt content, year to date <sup>5,6</sup> (metric tons)
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)		
2020:								
March	1,080	\$40,600	160	\$3,810	203	\$2,360	1,260	3,980
April	927	32,200	103	2,780	279	2,880	1,090	5,070
May	459	15,000	128	3,310	317	4,010	665	5,740
June	446	13,400	60	1,460	164	1,770	539	6,280
July	725	22,800	103	2,530	112	1,410	838	7,120
August	450	13,100	30	737	168	2,220	536	7,650
September	325	10,100	175	3,570	244	2,960	537	8,190
October	263	9,130	61	1,320	157	1,610	357	8,550
November	446	14,100	91	2,270	129	1,370	552	9,100
December	546	22,100	100	2,370	84	875	642	9,740
January–March	3,550	130,000	413	10,200	427	4,450	3,980	XX
January–December	8,140	282,000	1,260	30,600	2,080	23,600	9,740	XX
2021:								
January	507	16,900	137	3,600	204	2,370	674	674
February	223	7,880	175	4,170	179	2,170	409	1,080
March:								
Australia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4
Belgium	--	--	70	2,320	--	--	51	121
Brazil	--	--	23	645	20	104	22	53
Canada	77	3,000	--	--	1	20	77	201
China	5	107	4	97	--	--	8	10
Finland	44	1,820	8	268	228	2,350	121	363
Germany	8	409	1	43	--	--	9	18
Japan	155	5,590	--	--	--	--	155	373
Madagascar	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	15
Morocco	60	2,180	--	--	--	--	60	102
Norway	630	25,900	--	--	--	--	630	838
Russia	20	666	--	--	--	--	20	33
South Africa	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	19
Taiwan	--	--	18	499	--	--	13	27
United Kingdom	3	182	47	1,350	21	263	43	111
Other	--	--	4	82	--	--	3	8
Total	1,000	39,900	176	5,300	269	2,740	1,210	2,290
January–March	1,730	64,700	488	13,100	651	7,280	2,290	XX

XX Not applicable. -- Zero.

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

<sup>2</sup>Unwrought cobalt, excluding alloys; includes cobalt cathode and cobalt metal powder; may include intermediate products of cobalt metallurgy.

<sup>3</sup>Includes cobalt acetates, cobalt carbonates, cobalt chlorides, and cobalt sulfates.

<sup>4</sup>Customs value.

<sup>5</sup>Estimated from gross weights.

<sup>6</sup>May include revisions to previously published data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 3  
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF ADDITIONAL COBALT MATERIALS, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY<sup>1</sup>

Period and country or locality of origin	Unwrought cobalt alloys		Cobalt waste and scrap		Wrought cobalt and cobalt articles	
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>2</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>2</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>2</sup> (thousands)
2020:						
March	40	\$1,890	248	\$2,240	49	\$5,880
April	49	2,570	167	1,830	31	4,230
May	30	1,390	146	1,640	22	3,660
June	3	146	65	288	20	3,230
July	10	460	88	1,250	21	3,430
August	12	472	128	1,800	14	2,150
September	22	937	39	509	31	3,640
October	1	46	52	544	22	3,210
November	10	421	116	1,620	23	3,380
December	46	2,100	132	1,100	18	3,670
January–March	89	4,270	497	4,620	117	13,800
January–December	272	12,800	1,430	15,200	319	44,400
2021:						
January	53	2,230	84	1,330	20	2,530
February	30	1,230	96	1,170	17	2,990
March:						
Belgium	7	321	3	130	--	--
Canada	7	414	28	252	2	725
China	--	--	1	4	2	432
France	--	--	12	186	1	949
Germany	--	--	--	--	2	376
Ireland	--	--	42	114	(3)	4
Singapore	--	--	10	147	--	--
Tunisia	--	--	15	161	--	--
United Kingdom	(3)	14	16	212	6	654
Other	--	--	--	--	3	225
Total	15	749	127	1,210	16	3,370
January–March	98	4,200	307	3,700	53	8,880

-- Zero.

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

<sup>2</sup>Customs value.

<sup>3</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4  
U.S. EXPORTS OF COBALT MATERIALS<sup>1</sup>

Period	Unwrought cobalt, powders, matte, waste and scrap <sup>2</sup>		Oxides and hydroxides		Salts and compounds <sup>3</sup>		Total cobalt content for the period <sup>5</sup> (metric tons)	Cobalt content, year to date <sup>5,6</sup> (metric tons)
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>4</sup> (thousands)		
2020:								
March	248	\$8,320	7	\$249	65	\$292	268	928
April	351	8,700	3	109	39	340	363	1,290
May	260	9,310	9	380	51	2,060	279	1,570
June	398	8,350	8	329	29	174	411	1,980
July	248	7,250	8	230	59	266	268	2,250
August	271	6,610	11	262	9	23	281	2,530
September	231	6,300	3	131	31	232	240	2,770
October	269	8,650	2	86	20	52	275	3,050
November	157	6,680	(7)	11	38	254	166	3,210
December	213	6,090	1	31	--	--	213	3,420
January–March	884	29,200	29	1,060	100	425	928	XX
January–December	3,280	97,100	74	2,630	376	3,830	3,420	XX
2021:								
January	403	11,200	1	29	--	--	403	403
February	470	11,300	21	222	(7)	4	485	889
March	481	9,650	5	192	(7)	6	484	1,370
January–March	1,350	32,200	26	443	(7)	11	1,370	XX

XX Not applicable. -- Zero.

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

<sup>2</sup>May include other intermediate products of cobalt metallurgy and unwrought cobalt alloys.

<sup>3</sup>Cobalt acetates and cobalt chlorides.

<sup>4</sup>Free alongside ship (f.a.s.) value.

<sup>5</sup>Estimated from gross weights.

<sup>6</sup>May include revisions to previously published data.

<sup>7</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5  
U.S. EXPORTS OF WROUGHT COBALT, COBALT ORE,  
AND CONCENTRATES<sup>1</sup>

Period	Wrought cobalt and cobalt articles		Cobalt ore and concentrates	
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>2</sup> (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value <sup>2</sup> (thousands)
2020:				
March	123	\$13,700	--	--
April	100	10,600	(3)	\$6
May	109	11,500	--	--
June	97	11,000	--	--
July	96	11,200	--	--
August	100	9,650	--	--
September	108	10,400	--	--
October	167	14,300	--	--
November	112	10,700	--	--
December	135	12,600	--	--
January–March	358	40,400	150	515
January–December	1,380	143,000	150	521
2021:				
January	87	10,100	--	--
February	113	14,400	--	--
March	151	13,500	--	--
January–March	350	38,000	--	--

-- Zero.

<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 (f.a.s.) value.

<sup>3</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.