

Mineral Industry Surveys

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COBALT IN AUGUST 2021

The amount of cobalt contained in U.S. imports of cobalt metals and chemicals in August 2021 was 87% more than that imported in August 2020. For the first 8 months of 2021, the amount of cobalt contained in imports was 13% 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 August 2021 was slightly more than that exported in August 2020. During the first 8 months of 2021, exports were 31% more than those during the same period in 2020 (table 4).

Prices

In the first 8 months of 2021, the cobalt market experienced higher prices and lower London Metal Exchange (LME) stocks compared with those in 2020 (fig. 1, table 1). In August, the monthly average U.S. spot cobalt price decreased slightly from that in July and was 59% higher than that in August 2020. The monthly average LME cash mean price was essentially

unchanged from that in July and was 57% higher than that in August 2020. The following listed prices are for cobalt metal in August, in dollars per pound.

Type	Price range	Average price
U.S. spot ¹	23.50–25.00	24.20
LME cash mean ²	22.72–23.77	23.46

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

²London 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).

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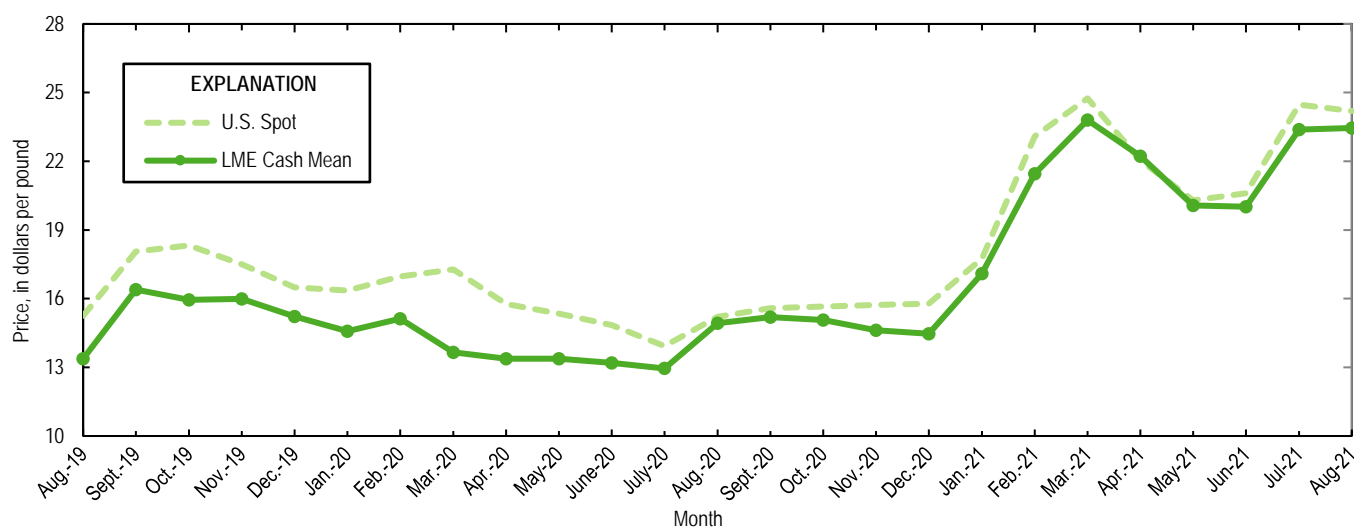


Figure 1. Average U.S. spot prices and LME cash mean prices for August 2019 through August 2021. Sources: S&P Global Platts Metals Week and London Metal Exchange.

TABLE 1
REPORTED STOCKS OF COBALT METAL, END OF PERIOD

(Metric tons, contained cobalt)

Period	U.S. Government ²	LME ¹		Total
		U.S. warehouse	Non-U.S. warehouse	
2020:				
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
April	302	50	244	294
May	302	50	247	297
June	302	50	241	291
July	302	50	236	286
August	302	50	236	286

¹London Metal Exchange.

²Data from Defense Logistics Agency Strategic Materials.

TABLE 2
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF COBALT, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY¹

Period and country or locality of origin	Metals ²		Oxides and hydroxides		Salts and compounds ³		Total cobalt content for the period ⁵ (metric tons)	Cobalt content, year to date ^{5,6} (metric tons)
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)		
2020:								
August	450	\$13,100	30	\$737	168	\$2,220	536	7,650
September	325	10,100	175	3,570	235	2,910	535	8,190
October	263	9,130	61	1,320	167	1,660	359	8,540
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–August	6,560	227,000	837	21,000	1,460 ⁷	16,700	7,650	XX
January–December	8,140	282,000	1,260	30,600	2,070	23,500	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	1,000	39,900	176	5,300	269	2,740	1,210	2,290
April	784	32,300	159	5,540	298	3,860	985	3,280
May	508	21,800	172	6,370	335	4,430	722	4,000
June	740	31,200	236	7,410	392	4,130	1,020	5,020
July	437	20,700	202	6,600	330	3,320	675	5,690
August:								
Australia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	125
Belgium	6	305	66	2,430	4	114	55	337
Brazil	--	--	--	--	121	787	34	124
Canada	64	2,770	--	--	(7)	3	65	499
China	10	197	--	--	1	20	10	92
Finland	73	3,340	69	2,450	43	783	139	1,020
Germany	11	605	--	--	--	--	11	79
Italy	3	119	(7)	3	--	--	3	9
Japan	96	3,740	--	--	11	57	99	962
Korea, Republic of	(7)	7	3	92	--	--	2	12
Madagascar	21	1,130	--	--	--	--	21	36
Mexico	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	68
Morocco	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	142
Norway	403	19,800	--	--	--	--	403	2,190
Russia	103	5,190	--	--	--	--	103	447
South Africa	1	101	--	--	--	--	1	33
Taiwan	--	--	--	--	18	269	4	129
United Kingdom	9	495	49	1,640	18	269	48	384
Other	(7)	25	--	--	--	--	(7)	8
Total	801	37,800	187	6,620	216	2,300	1,000	6,690
January–August	5,000	209,000	1,440	45,600	2,220	25,300	6,690	XX

¹Revised. XX Not applicable. -- Zero.

²Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

³Unwrought cobalt, excluding alloys; includes cobalt cathode and cobalt metal powder; may include intermediate products of cobalt metallurgy.

⁴Includes cobalt acetates, cobalt carbonates, cobalt chlorides, and cobalt sulfates.

⁵Customs value.

⁶Estimated from gross weights.

⁷May include revisions to previously published data.

⁸Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF ADDITIONAL COBALT MATERIALS, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY¹

Period and country or locality of origin	Unwrought cobalt alloys		Cobalt waste and scrap		Wrought cobalt and cobalt articles	
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ² (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ² (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ² (thousands)
2020:						
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–August	193	9,320	1,090	11,500 ^r	225	30,500
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	15	749	127	1,210	16	3,370
April	4	232	108	1,400	37	3,040
May	3	166	145	1,840	9	3,270
June	11	546	149	1,480	22	3,530
July	13	649	136	1,870	25	4,220
August:						
Austria	--	--	--	--	2	201
Belgium	--	--	4	85	--	--
Canada	1	45	39	504	5	788
China	(3)	3	--	--	2	584
France	--	--	31	698	3	723
Germany	--	--	--	--	2	312
Ireland	--	--	31	86	(3)	30
Japan	--	--	7	96	--	--
Madagascar	--	--	--	--	4	203
Russia	--	--	--	--	24	904
Tunisia	--	--	9	97	--	--
United Kingdom	2	74	6	113	8	717
Other	--	--	1	3	1	106
Total	3	123	128	1,680	51	4,570
January–August	132	5,920	973	12,000	197	27,500

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²Customs value.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF COBALT MATERIALS¹

Period	Unwrought cobalt, powders, matte, waste and scrap ²		Oxides and hydroxides		Salts and compounds ³		Total cobalt content for the period ⁵ (metric tons)	Cobalt content, year to date ^{5,6} (metric tons)
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ⁴ (thousands)		
2020:								
August	271	\$6,610	11	\$262	9	\$23	281	2,540
September	231	6,300	3	131	31	232	240	2,790
October	269	8,650	2	86	20	52	275	3,060
November	157	6,680	(7)	11	38	254	166	3,230
December	213	6,090	1	31	--	--	213	3,440
January–August	2,430 [†]	70,000 [†]	68	2,370	287	3,290	2,540 [†]	XX
January–December	3,300	97,700	74	2,630	376	3,830	3,440	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
April	569	14,000	1	28	(7)	4	570	1,940
May	439	14,300	3	68	--	--	441	2,380
June	295	8,020	3	106	1	18	298	2,680
July	367	13,100	1	25	1	32	368	3,050
August	285	9,810	2	79	6	58	288	3,340
January–August	3,310	91,400	36	750	9	122	3,340	XX

[†]Revised. XX Not applicable. -- Zero.

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

²May include other intermediate products of cobalt metallurgy and unwrought cobalt alloys.

³Cobalt acetates and cobalt chlorides.

⁴Free alongside ship (f.a.s.) value.

⁵Estimated from gross weights.

⁶May include revisions to previously published data.

⁷Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5
U.S. EXPORTS OF WROUGHT COBALT, COBALT ORE,
AND CONCENTRATES¹

Period	Wrought cobalt and cobalt articles		Cobalt ore and concentrates	
	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ² (thousands)	Gross weight (metric tons)	Value ² (thousands)
2020:				
August	100	\$9,650	--	--
September	108	10,400	--	--
October	167	14,300	--	--
November	112	10,700	--	--
December	135	12,600	--	--
January–August	857 ^r	94,100 ^r	150	\$521
January–December	1,380	142,000	150	521
2021:				
January	87	10,100	--	--
February	113	14,400	--	--
March	151	13,500	--	--
April	116	12,100	2	14
May	105	11,000	--	--
June	114	12,000	--	--
July	213	17,700	--	--
August	192	16,200	--	--
January–August	1,090	107,000	2	14

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²Free alongside ship (f.a.s.) value.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.