

# Mineral Industry Surveys

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## IRON ORE IN DECEMBER 2014

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in December 2014 were 4.77 million metric tons (Mt) and 5.63 Mt, respectively. Average daily production was 154,000 metric tons (t), 4% less than that of November 2014 and 23% more than that of December 2013. Average daily shipments were 182,000, 6% greater than those of November and 21% more than those of December 2013. Mine stocks at the end of December 2014 were 14% less than those held in November and 47% more than those in December 2013.

U.S. imports of iron ore were 901,000 t in December 2014, 22% greater than those in November 2014 and more than four times greater than those of December 2013. U.S. exports of iron ore were 336,000 t in December 2014, 26% greater than those in November 2014 and 70% less than those of December 2013.

### Annual Review

On an annual basis for 2014, preliminary iron ore production for the United States totaled 54.3 Mt, a 6.5% increase from a preliminary production of 51 Mt in 2013. Preliminary iron ore shipments for the United States totaled 54.1 Mt in 2014, a 4.4% increase from preliminary shipments of 51.8 Mt in 2013. Stocks at yearend 2014 were 47% greater than those at yearend 2013, owing to increased production and reduced shipping potential in early 2014. Preliminary data do not include information for iron metallics, including direct-reduced iron and iron nuggets.

Preliminary domestic exports for 2014 totaled 12.2 Mt, a 10% increase from 11.0 Mt of exports in 2013. Exports fell in the last quarter of 2014 owing to the idling of CML Metals in Utah, an exporter of iron ore to China with a 2-million-metric-ton-per-year (Mt/yr) production capacity. Preliminary domestic imports for 2014 totaled 5.1 Mt in 2014, a 61% increase from imports in 2013, but in line with 5-year averages. Imports rose, in part,

because Nucor Steel Louisiana LLC needed iron ore to supply its 2.5-Mt/yr direct-reduced iron plant.

### Industry News

African Minerals Ltd. announced it would idle its Tonkolilli Mine in Sierra Leone. In the third quarter of 2014, the operation exported 4.4 Mt of iron ore at an average direct cash cost of \$36 per metric ton (African Minerals Ltd., 2014). This was the fourth large-scale iron ore mine or project to idle operations in the fourth quarter of 2014 owing to low iron ore prices and regional impacts from an Ebola outbreak.

Mild weather on the Great Lakes in December allowed for increased shipments. Monthly shipments totaled 5.7 Mt, a 24% increase from shipments in December 2013. Annual shipments in 2014 totaled 54 Mt, a 2.2% increase over shipments in 2013 (Lake Carriers' Association, 2015).

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### References Cited

- African Minerals Ltd., 2014, Financing and operations update: London, United Kingdom, African Minerals Ltd. press release, December 1. (Accessed March 4, 2015, at <http://www.african-minerals.com/media/press-releases/financing-and-operations-update>.)
- Lake Carriers' Association, 2015, Less ice means more ore ships on Lakes in December: Rocky River, OH, Lake Carriers' Association news release, January 22. (Accessed March 26, 2015, at <http://www.lcaships.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/glore1214-text.pdf>.)

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)

Period	Production		Shipments <sup>3</sup>		Stocks <sup>4</sup>
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2013, December	3,870	51,000	4,660	51,800	3,690
2014:					
January	3,930	3,930	2,410	2,410	6,530
February	3,370	7,300	724	3,130	9,240
March	4,440	11,700	1,310	4,440	12,400
April	3,930	15,700	2,690	7,130	13,600
May	4,740	20,400	5,880	13,000	12,500
June	4,690	25,100	5,940	19,000	11,300
July	4,930	30,000	6,490	25,400	9,770
August	4,790	34,800	6,370	31,800	8,190
September	4,860	39,700	5,780	37,600	7,320
October	5,050	44,700	5,770	43,400	6,600
November	4,810	49,500	5,130	48,500	6,290
December	4,770	54,300	5,630	54,100	5,430

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

<sup>2</sup>Excludes byproduct ores.

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

<sup>4</sup>Includes usable (marketable) material at mines, concentrators, pelletizing plants, and loading docks. Excludes stocks of crude ore at mine and concentrates at agglomerating complexes.

TABLE 2  
CANADA: SHIPMENTS OF IRON ORE<sup>1,2</sup>

(Thousand dry metric tons)

Period	Newfoundland and Labrador	Quebec	Total
2013:			
December	1,390	2,440	3,830
January–December	18,900	22,900	41,800
2014:			
January	1,010	1,570	2,580
February	919	2,380	3,300
March	821	1,680	2,510
April	1,250	2,560	3,810
May	1,250	2,680	3,930
June	1,250	2,550	3,800
July	1,400	2,780	4,180
August	1,400	2,330	3,720
September	1,400	2,430	3,830
October	1,290 <sup>r</sup>	2,500	3,790 <sup>r</sup>
November	1,290 <sup>r</sup>	2,370	3,660 <sup>r</sup>
December	1,290	2,350	3,640
January–December	14,600	28,200	42,700

<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>Includes production from steel plant waste oxides.

Source: Natural Resources Canada.

TABLE 3  
U.S. PRODUCTION OF PIG IRON AND RAW STEEL, BY TYPE OF FURNACE<sup>1</sup>

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Pig iron production, blast furnace		Raw steel production			
	Monthly	Year to date	Basic oxygen furnace		Electric furnace	
			Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2013, December	2,780	34,200	2,380	30,300	4,340	52,600
2014:						
January	2,430	2,430	2,680	2,680	4,650	4,650
February	2,450	4,880	2,580	5,250	4,230	8,880
March	2,820	7,700	2,490	7,740	4,690	13,600
April	2,580	10,300	2,120	9,860	4,580	18,100
May	2,710	13,000	2,380	12,200	4,740	22,900
June	2,760	15,800	2,500	14,700	4,590	27,500
July	2,930	18,700	2,630	17,400	4,760	32,200
August	2,920	21,600	2,600	20,000	4,840	37,100
September	2,740	24,300	2,550	22,500	4,560	41,600
October	2,690	27,000	2,340	24,900	4,700	46,300
November	2,740	29,800	2,400	27,300	4,480	50,800
December	2,860	32,600	2,490	29,700	4,350	55,200

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

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

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

Country of origin and type of product	2013			2014		
	January–December		December	January–December		
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons		Thousand metric tons	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Value <sup>3, 4</sup> (dollars per ton)
Canada	6,080	730	\$83,200	8,630	\$1,030,000	\$119.33
China	2,750	48	5,460	1,710	153,000	89.18
Japan	89	28	2,390	122	13,000	106.29
Mexico	1,130	96	6,890	1,600	124,000	77.26
Other	990	(5)	17	78	6,960	89.19
Total	11,000	901	98,000	12,100	1,330,000	109.20
Concentrates	2,390	20	2,290	1,460	137,000	93.32
Fine ores	382	76	7,880	171	18,700	109.39
Pellets	7,790	753	84,700	9,650	1,100,000	114.30
Other	479	53	3,160	858	67,700	78.93
Total	11,000	901	98,000	12,100	1,330,000	109.20

<sup>1</sup>Data, with the exception of the dollars per ton column, 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 of report included in "Other."

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

<sup>4</sup>Values are calculated and may not reflect actual price per ton.

<sup>5</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

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

Country of origin and type of product	2013			2014		
	January–December		December	January–December		
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons		Thousand metric tons	Value <sup>3</sup> (thousand dollars)	Value <sup>3, 4</sup> (dollars per ton)
Argentina	137	27	\$2,220	98	\$12,000	\$122.34
Brazil	630	73	4,130	1,730	225,000	129.73
Canada	2,090	190	18,700	2,860	395,000	138.34
Peru	12	5	356	35	4,150	118.63
South Africa	95	11	1,260	29	3,360	115.79
Sweden	49	31	2,280	154	18,000	116.79
Other	160	(5)	3	192	18,200	108.95
Total	3,170	336	29,000	5,100	676,000	132.58
Concentrates	491	111	6,890	731	58,400	79.87
Fine ores	573	64	5,080	421	50,800	120.77
Pellets	2,060	135	15,200	3,870	560,000	144.64
Other	46	26	1,840	71	6,220	101.67
Total	3,170	336	29,000	5,100	676,000	132.58

<sup>1</sup>Data, with the exception of the dollars per ton column, 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 of report included in "Other."

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

<sup>4</sup>Values are calculated and may not reflect actual price per ton.

<sup>5</sup>Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6  
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
	2013	2014		2013	2014	
Chicago, IL (39)	--	158	19	528	947	158
Cleveland, OH (41)	1,550	896	116	1,560	896	116
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	44	44	--	44	49	5
Mobile, AL (19)	--	211	--	18	247	31
New Orleans, LA (20)	463	2,280	--	1,000	2,650	27
Other	--	282	--	28	315	1
Total	2,060	3,870	135	3,170	5,100	336

-- 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 total per month of report included in "Other."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.