

# Mineral Industry Surveys

## For information, contact:

Candice C. Tuck, Iron Ore Commodity Specialist  
National Minerals Information Center  
U.S. Geological Survey  
989 National Center  
Reston, VA 20192  
Telephone: (703) 648-4912, Fax: (703) 648-7757  
Email: ctuck@usgs.gov

Hoa P. Phamdang (Data)  
Telephone: (703) 648-7965  
Fax: (703) 648-7975  
Email: hphamdan@usgs.gov

**Internet:** <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/nmic>

## IRON ORE IN APRIL 2020

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in April 2020 were 2.93 million metric tons (Mt) and 4.25 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 97,800 metric tons (t), a 27% decrease from that of March 2020 and a 22% decrease from that of April 2019. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 142,000 t, nearly triple those in March and a slight decrease from those in April 2019. Mine stocks were 9.43 Mt at the end of April 2020, a 12% decrease from stocks held at the end of March and a slight increase from those held in April 2019 (fig. 1, table 1).

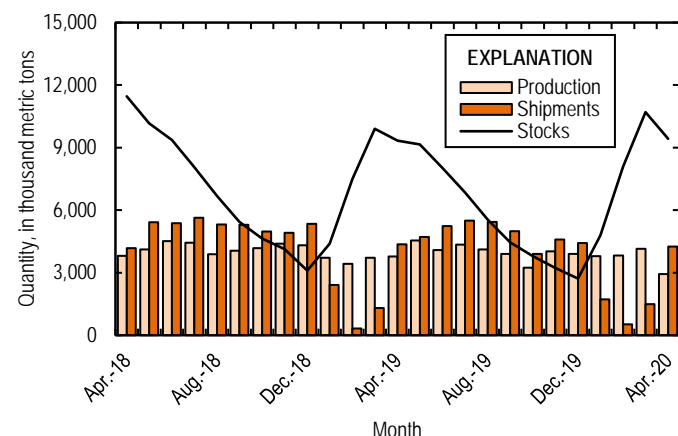


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from April 2018 through April 2020.

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

U.S. exports of iron ore were 1.15 Mt in April 2020, more than quadruple those in March and a 13% decrease from those in April 2019 (fig. 2, tables 3, 6). U.S. imports of iron ore were 286,000 t in April 2020, a 36% decrease from those in March 2020 and a 5% decrease from those in April 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 \$84.73 per

dry metric ton in April 2020, a 5% decrease from \$88.99 per dry metric ton in March 2020 (fig. 2).

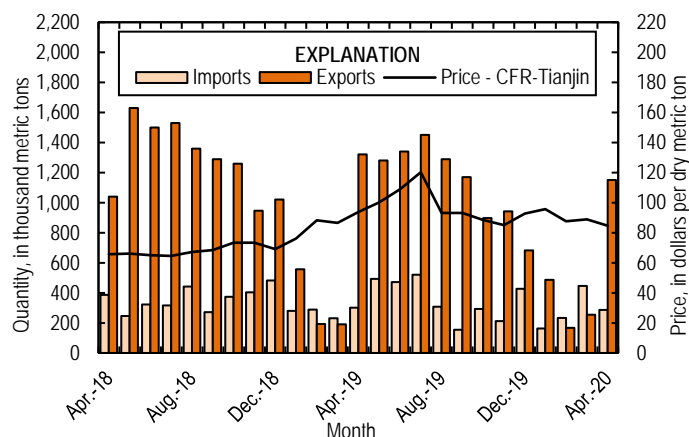


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight (CFR), at Tianjin Port, China, from April 2018 through April 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

## Industry News

In Minnesota, ArcelorMittal USA announced in April that the Hibbing Taconite iron ore mine would shut down starting in early May, laying off 650 employees. U.S. Steel announced plans to reduce production at the Minntac Mine and an indefinite idling of the Keetac Mine by the end of May, both located in Minnesota. Cleveland-Cliffs announced it would idle the Northshore Mine in Minnesota in mid-April and restart the Tilden Mine in Michigan earlier than expected in August (Johnson, 2020). These closures are owing to reduced consumption of steel in downstream industries as a result of COVID-19's larger economic impacts.

## Reference Cited

Johnson, Brooks., 2020, Iron Range companies extend mine closures, layoffs as pandemic disruption continues: Minneapolis, MN, Star Tribune, June 18. (Accessed July 7, 2020, at <https://www.startribune.com/iron-range->

[companies-extend-mine-closures-layoffs-as-pandemic-disruption-continues/571331282.\)](#)

*List services and web feed subscribers are the first to receive notification of USGS minerals information publications and data releases. For information on how to subscribe, go to*  
<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/nmic/minerals-information-publication-list-services>

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:					
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	8,100
March	4,140	11,800	1,490	3,720	10,750
April	2,930	14,700	4,250	7,980	9,430

<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:						
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
April	1,110	6,620	1,240	8,010	3,580	18,500

<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–April	April		January–April		
	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)
Canada	1,770	782	64,100	1,550	132,000	85.37
Japan	372 <sup>r</sup>	371	24,800	371	24,800	66.78
Other	128 <sup>r</sup>	(4)	65	141	7,880	55.88
Total	2,270 <sup>r</sup>	1,150	89,000	2,060	165,000	80.00
Concentrates	18	(4)	32	(4)	193	48.25
Fine ores	(4)	(4)	40	1	155	155.00
Pellets	2,160 <sup>r</sup>	1,150	88,900	1,960	161,000	82.24
Other	92	--	--	104	3,680	35.34
Total	2,270 <sup>r</sup>	1,150	89,000	2,060	165,000	80.00

<sup>r</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–April	April		January–April		
	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	503	134	15,900	548	67,800	123.67
Canada	310	95	9,170	359	41,900	116.67
Mexico	--	45	3,160	45	3,160	70.16
South Africa	(4)	6	463	6	466	77.67
Sweden	13	6	682	84	10,300	122.42
Other	274 <sup>†</sup>	(4)	35	85	12,400	145.40
Total	1,100	286	29,400	1,130	136,000	120.61
Concentrates	165	27	1,880	32	2,670	83.31
Fine Ores	(4)	45	3,190	53	6,270	118.25
Pellets	930	209	23,900	1,040	127,000	122.13
Other	5	6	463	6	463	77.17
Total	1,100	286	29,400	1,130	136,000	120.61

<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 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–April		April 2020	January–April		April 2020
	2019	2020		2019	2020	
Chicago, IL (39)	--	--	--	34	27	27
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	--	118	18	66	135	34
Los Angeles, CA (27)	11 <sup>r</sup>	--	--	11 <sup>r</sup>	11	11
Mobile, AL (19)	9 <sup>r</sup>	26	8	9 <sup>r</sup>	26	8
New Orleans, LA (20)	909 <sup>r</sup>	892	183	980	923	206
Other	(3) <sup>r</sup>	(3)	--	(3) <sup>r</sup>	6	(3)
Total	930 <sup>r</sup>	1,036	209	1,100	1,127	286

<sup>r</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–April	2,260	187,000	1,100	141,000
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
April	1,150	89,000	286	29,400
January–April	2,060	165,000	1,130	136,000

<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.