

Mineral Industry Surveys

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U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES IN THE SECOND QUARTER 2021

U.S. mine and plant production data for 14 selected mineral commodities are provided on a monthly (or quarterly) basis by the U.S. Geological Survey to the Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System (FRS), for use in preparing its index of industrial production and the related capacity indexes and capacity utilization rates. These measures cover manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities, and they are among the key economic indicators monitored by the FRS for guidance in determining national monetary policy.

Industry Update

Many mining industries have shown recovery in the first six months of 2021 compared with production levels in 2020 owing to measures imposed to limit the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The base metals sector was hit especially hard in the second quarter of 2020 but production in 2021 has increased.

Construction Materials

The combined production of construction-related materials (cement, construction sand and gravel, crushed stone, and gypsum) in the second quarter of 2021 increased by 47% compared with that in the first quarter of 2021, and the combined production of construction-related materials in the second quarter of 2021 was 7% higher than that in the second quarter of 2020 (tables 1, 2). Production of cement was 3% higher, construction sand and gravel was 9% higher, crushed stone was 3% higher, and gypsum was 12% higher in the first 6 months of 2021 compared with those in the first 6 months of 2020 (fig. 1, table 1).

Base Metals

Production of copper, iron ore, lead, and zinc increased in the second quarter of 2021 compared with that in the first quarter of 2021, and production of secondary aluminum was unchanged (fig. 2, table 1). The following describes each base metal production change in the second quarter of 2021 compared with those in the first quarter of 2021: copper production increased slightly, iron ore production increased by 3%, lead production increased slightly, secondary aluminum production was

unchanged, and zinc production increased by 17%. Comparing production in the first 6 months of 2021 with that in the first 6 months of 2020, the largest increases in production were iron ore (31%), secondary aluminum (17%), zinc (15%), and lead (7%). Copper was the only base metal to not increase in production during the specified time period (fig. 2, table 1).

Precious Metals

During the second quarter of 2021, gold production was essentially unchanged and silver production increased slightly compared with production in the first quarter of 2021. Gold production in the first 6 months of 2021 was 6% lower than production in the first 6 months of 2020. Silver production in the first 6 months of 2021 was 14% higher than production in the first 6 months of 2020 (fig. 3, table 1).

Other Mineral Materials

Molybdenum production was 29% lower in the second quarter of 2021 than that in the first quarter of 2021 and was 12% lower in the first 6 months of 2021 compared with that of the first 6 months of 2020. Phosphate rock production was 6% higher in the second quarter of 2021 than that in the first quarter of 2021 but was 12% lower in the first 6 months of 2021 compared with that of the first 6 months of 2020. Soda ash production was 6% lower in the second quarter of 2021 compared with that of the first quarter of 2021 but was 17% higher in the first 6 months of 2021 compared with that of the first 6 months of 2020 (table 1).

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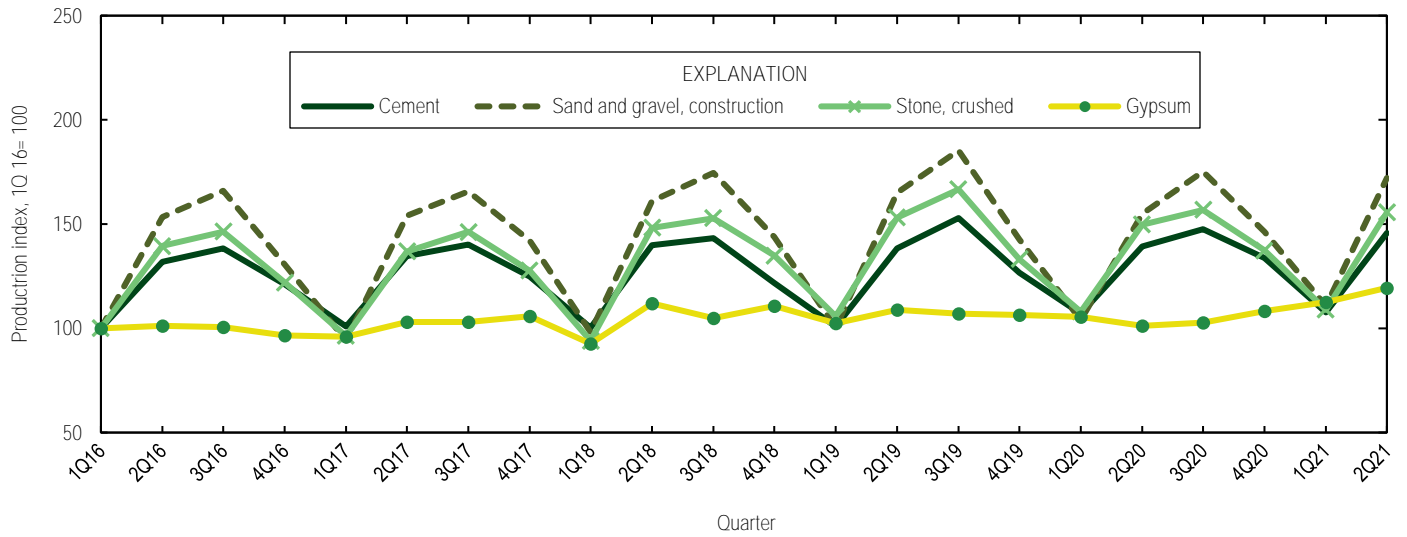


Figure 1. U.S. production of selected construction-related mineral commodities from the first quarter of 2016 through the second quarter of 2021, indexed to the first quarter of 2016.

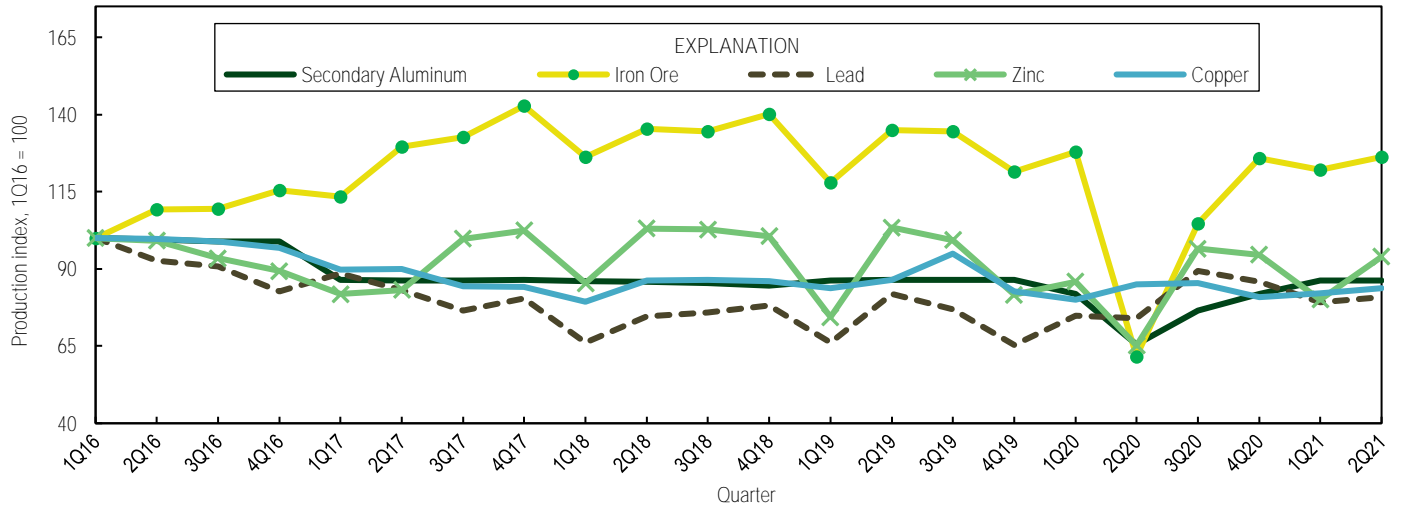


Figure 2. U.S. production of selected base metals from the first quarter of 2016 through the second quarter of 2021, indexed to the first quarter of 2016.

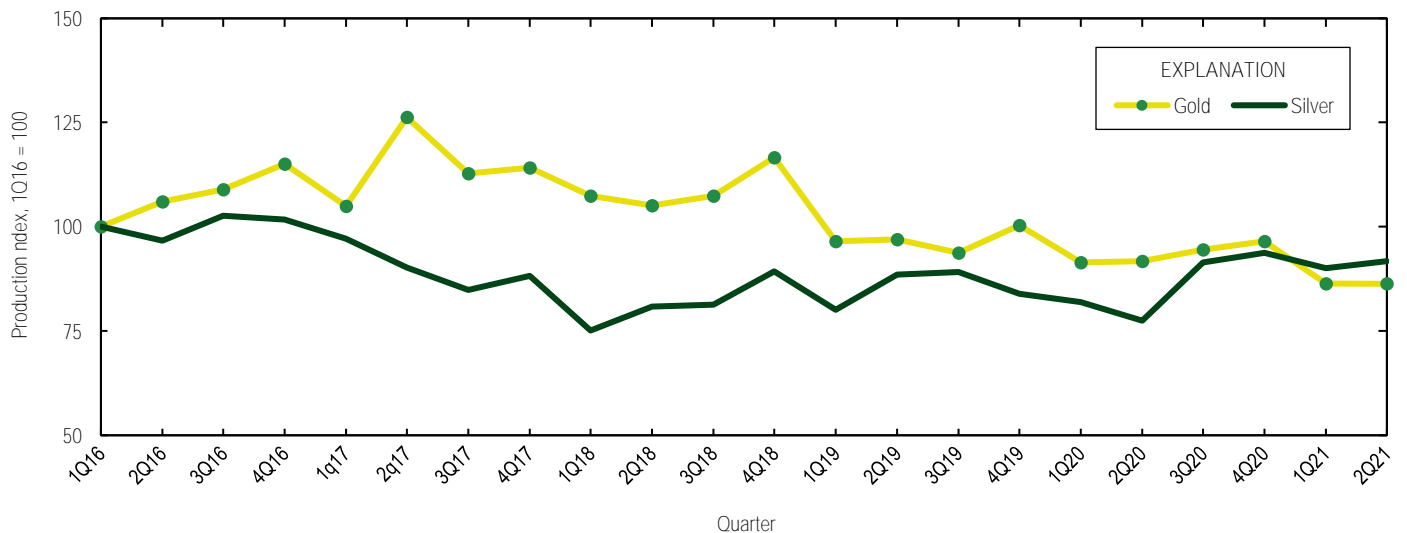


Figure 3. U.S. mine production of gold and silver from the first quarter of 2016 through the second quarter of 2021, indexed to the first quarter of 2016.

TABLE 1
PRODUCTION TRENDS FOR SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES¹

Mineral commodity	Percent change, 2d quarter 2021 vs. 1st quarter 2021	Percent change, 2d quarter 2021 vs. 2d quarter 2020
Aluminum (secondary)	--	17
Cement	35	3
Copper	2	(2)
Gold	(2)	-6
Gypsum	6	12
Iron ore	NA	NA
Lead	2	7
Molybdenum	-29	-12
Phosphate rock	6	-12
Sand and gravel, construction	55	9
Silver	2	14
Soda ash	-6	17
Stone, crushed	43	3
Zinc	17	15

NA Not available. -- Zero.

¹Based on data available through September 2, 2021.

²Less than 0.5 percent

TABLE 2
U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES, BY QUARTER^{1,2}

Commodity		2020					1st quarter– 4th quarter	2021		1st quarter– 2d quarter	
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter		2d quarter	2020	2021	
Aluminum ^{e,3}	thousand metric tons	199	159	185	199	742	209 ^r	209	358	418	
Cement ⁴	million metric tons	18.0	23.4	24.8	22.5	88.8	18.1 ^e	24.5 ^e	41.4	42.6 ^e	
Copper ⁵	thousand metric tons	290	307	309	292 ^r	1,200	297	303	597	600	
Gold ⁵	metric tons	47.3 ^r	47.4 ^r	48.8 ^r	49.8 ^r	193 ^r	44.6 ^r	44.6	94.7	89.2	
Gypsum ⁶	million metric tons	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.5	17.2	4.6	4.9	8.5	9.6	
Iron ore ⁷	do.	11.8	5.7	9.6	11.6	38.6	12.5 ^{r,e}	NA	17.4	12.46	
Lead ⁵	thousand metric tons	68.8	67.9	82.0	78.8	297	72.6 ^r	74.2	136.7	146.8	
Molybdenum ⁵	do.	13.2 ^r	11.6 ^r	12.9 ^r	13.3	51.1 ^r	12.7	9.1	24.8	21.8	
Phosphate rock, marketable	million metric tons	5.7	6.4	5.9	5.5	23.4	5.2	5.5	12.1	10.7	
Sand and gravel, construction ⁸	do.	169	252 ^r	284	237	942 ^r	180 ^r	279	420	459	
Silver ^{p,5}	metric tons	234	222	262	268	986	257 ^r	263	456	520	
Soda ash ⁷	million metric tons	2.9	2.1	2.3	2.7	10.0	3.0	2.8	5.0	5.8	
Stone, crushed ⁸	do.	289 ^r	400	419	367	1,470	291 ^r	415	689	706	
Zinc ⁵	thousand metric tons	175	133	197	193	697	163	191	308	355	

^eEstimated. ^pPreliminary. ^rRevised. do. Ditto. NA not available.

¹Based on data available through September 2, 2021.

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

³Aluminum alloys produced at secondary smelters in the United States, less primary aluminum consumed, primary silicon consumed, and other alloying ingredients consumed.

⁴Shipments of domestically produced portland and blended cement, including cement made from imported clinker, as a proxy for actual domestic cement production.

⁵Recoverable mine production.

⁶Calcined production.

⁷Mine production.

⁸Sold or used; quarterly survey based on sample survey. Includes all 50 States.