

Mineral Industry Surveys

For information, contact:

Christopher Candice 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 MAY 2021

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. mine production and shipments of iron ore in May 2021 were estimated to be 3.73 million metric tons (Mt) and 4.33 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 120,000 metric tons (t), a 16% increase from that in April and more than double that of May 2020. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 140,000 t, a 5% increase from those in April 2021 and a 10% increase from those in May 2020. Mine stocks were estimated to be 10.9 Mt at the end of May 2021, a 5% decrease from those held at the end of April and a 58% increase from those held in May 2020 (fig. 1, table 1). Production and shipments were substantially higher than those in May 2020 because the industry has recovered to some extent from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

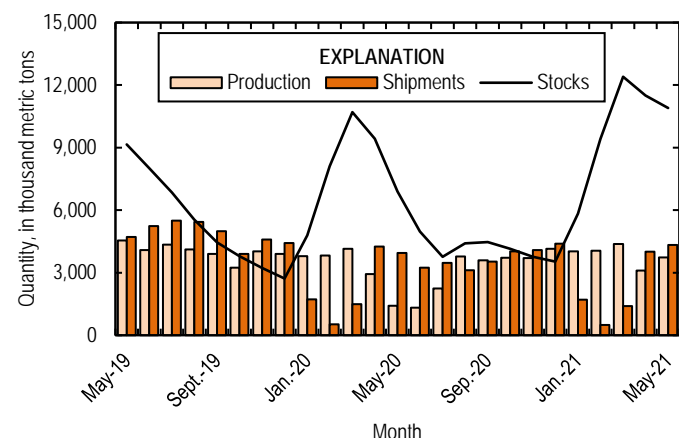


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from May 2019 through May 2021.

U.S. exports of iron ore were 1.29 Mt in May 2021, 6% less than those in April and a 12% decrease from those in May 2020

(fig. 2, tables 3, 6). U.S. imports of iron ore were 95,000 t in May, an 80% decrease from those in April and a 22% increase from those in May 2020 (fig. 2, tables 4, 6).

The spot price for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight, at Tianjin Port, China, was \$207.72 per dry metric ton in May 2021, a 16% increase from \$179.83 per dry metric ton in April and more than double the \$93.65 in May 2020 (fig. 2).

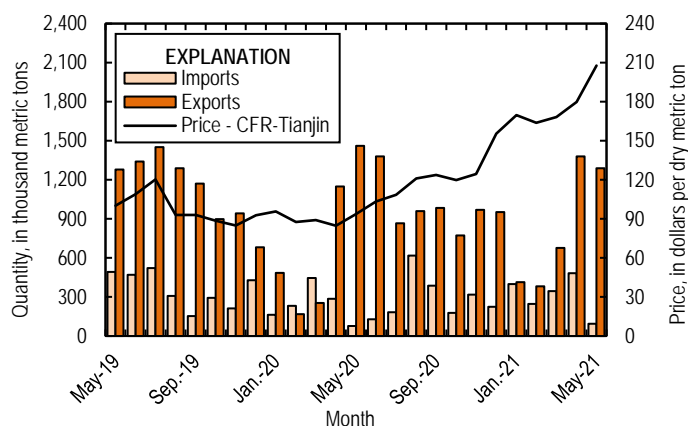


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight (CFR), at Tianjin Port, China, from May 2019 through May 2021. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and IndexMundi, undated.

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TABLE 1
U.S. PRODUCTION, SHIPMENTS, AND STOCKS OF IRON ORE^{1, 2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 5% or more of manganese)

(Thousand metric tons, usable ore)

Period	Production		Shipments ³		Stocks
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2020:					
May	1,420	16,100	3,940	11,900	6,900
June	1,320	17,400	3,240	15,200	4,980
July	2,250	19,700	3,470	18,600	3,760
August	3,780	23,400	3,120	21,700	4,410
September	3,600	27,000	3,540	25,300	4,470
October	3,720	30,800	4,030	29,300	4,150
November	3,700	34,500	4,080	33,400	3,770
December	4,140	38,600	4,390	37,800	3,530
2021: ^{e, 4}					
January	4,020	4,020	1,710	1,710	5,840
February	4,060	8,080	490	2,200	9,410
March	4,380	12,500	1,400	3,600	12,400
April	3,110	15,600	4,010	7,610	11,500
May	3,730	19,300	4,330	11,900	10,900

^eEstimated.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Excludes byproduct ores and iron metallics.

³Includes rail and vessel.

⁴Data are estimated based on historical ratios. In 2021, market consolidation prevented disclosing reported data owing to proprietary data restrictions.

TABLE 2
U.S. PRODUCTION OF PIG IRON AND RAW STEEL, BY TYPE OF FURNACE¹

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Pig iron production		Raw steel production	
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2020:				
May	949	7,570	4,910	31,500
June	1,170	8,740	4,920	36,400
July	1,310	10,000	5,420	41,800
August	1,520	11,600	5,930	47,700
September	1,610	13,200	5,980	53,700
October	1,700	14,900	6,230	59,900
November	1,700	16,600	6,300	66,200
December ^e	1,660	18,200	6,470	72,700
2021: ^{e, 2}				
January	1,880	1,880	6,960	6,960
February	1,450	3,330	6,300	13,300
March	1,350	4,680	7,090	20,400
April	1,350	6,030	7,120	27,500
May	1,320	7,350	7,370	34,900

^eEstimated.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Pig iron data are estimated based on historical ratios. In 2021, market consolidation prevented disclosing reported data owing to proprietary data restrictions.

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 3
U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY AND TYPE ^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality and type of product	2020	2021				
	January–May	May		January–May		
	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Unit value ³ (dollars per ton)
Canada	2,420	756	65,100	1,870	171,000	91.95
China	--	136	18,200	631	78,200	123.90
Japan	792	53	3,100	446	26,400	59.14
Mexico	1	176	8,130	367	20,100	54.77
Slovakia	168	30	2,000	264	17,400	65.72
Spain	--	61	6,100	181	18,100	100.01
Turkey	--	61	4,290	61	4,290	70.33
United Kingdom	104	21	2,100	162	10,300	63.57
Other	36 ^r	(4)	34	164	14,900	90.90
Total	3,520	1,290	109,000	4,140	361,000	87.20
Concentrates	1	137	18,300	668	83,900	125.65
Fine ores	1	(4)	26	(4)	159	334.36
Pellets	3,420	1,080	88,200	3,250	267,000	82.34
Other	104	73	2,560	226	9,620	42.55
Total	3,520	1,290	109,000	4,140	361,000	87.20

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²All countries receiving less than 5,000 metric tons of U.S. exports per month included in "Other."

³Free alongside ship (FAS) value.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY AND TYPE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality of origin and type of product	2020	2021				
	January–May	May		January–May		
	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Unit value ³ (dollars per ton)
Brazil	548	83	17,600	1,010	165,000	163.85
Canada	366	7	1,010	256	38,900	152.10
Ukraine	--	4	630	4	630	157.50
Other	292 ^r	1	113	300	46,900	156.49
Total	1,210 ^r	95	19,300	1,570	252,000	160.41
Concentrates	32	(4)	16	36	5,770	160.25
Fine Ores	124 ^r	(4)	54	105	13,200	125.47
Pellets	1,040	95	19,200	1,420	232,000	163.56
Other	6	--	--	10	966	96.60
Total	1,210 ^r	95	19,300	1,570	252,000	160.41

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²All countries shipping less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month to the United States included in "Other."

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY CUSTOMS DISTRICT^{1, 2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Customs district (code no.)	Pellets			Total, all products		
	January–May		May	January–May		May
	2020	2021		2020	2021	
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	127	60	12	149	70	12
New Orleans, LA (20)	892	1,360	83	976 ^r	1,450	83
Other	26	--	(3)	82 ^r	46	(3)
Total	1,040	1,420	95	1,210 ^r	1,570	96

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²Customs Districts with less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month included in "Other."

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6
U.S. IRON ORE TRADE SUMMARY¹

(Thousand metric tons and thousand dollars)

Period	Exports		Imports	
	Quantity	Value ²	Quantity	Value ³
2020:				
January–May	3,520	275,000	1,210 ^r	143,000
May	1,460	110,000	78	7,150
June	1,380	101,000	129	15,700
July	867	72,000	183	21,500
August	960	73,200	617	67,900
September	983	78,900	387	46,800
October	772	67,900	179	21,700
November	969	87,200	318	42,100
December	953	88,000	225	30,200
January–December	10,400	842,000	3,240	389,000
2021:				
January	414	37,400	400	53,300
February	382	44,200	246	39,900
March	676	61,400	345	56,500
April	1,380	109,000	482	82,700
May	1,290	109,000	95	19,300
January–May	4,140	361,000	1,570	252,000

^rRevised.

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

²Free alongside ship (FAS) value.

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.