

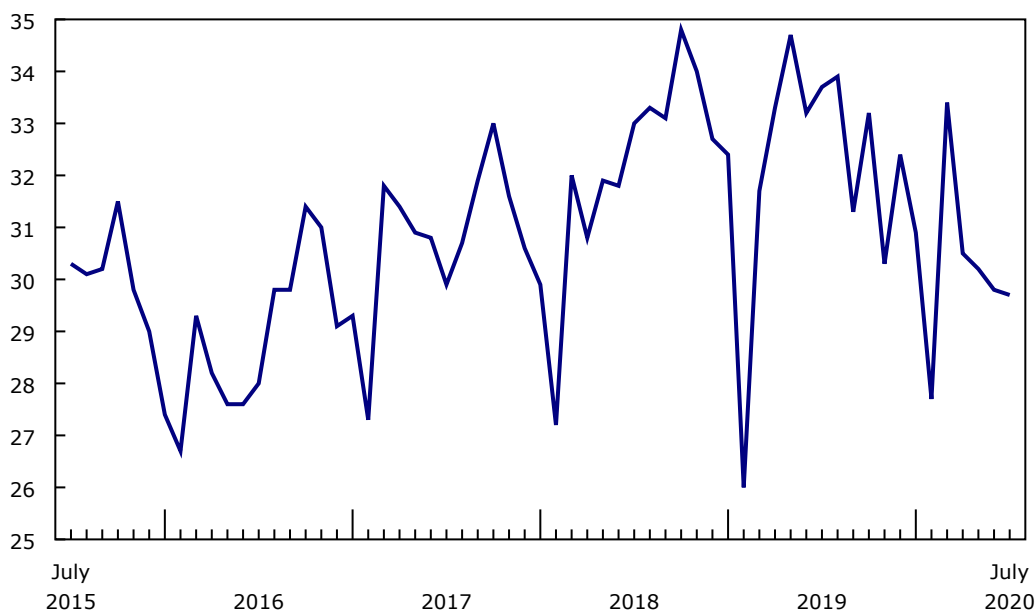
Railway carloadings, July 2020

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Despite the rebound in trade with the United States, railway carloadings remained below pre-pandemic levels in July, falling short of a full recovery. The volume of freight transported by Canadian railways posted year-over-year declines for the fifth consecutive month since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canadian railways carried 29.7 million tonnes of freight in July, a decrease of 11.8% compared with July 2019. Low demand for raw minerals and hydrocarbon freight was responsible for this decline.

Chart 1
Railway carloadings, total tonnage

millions of tonnes



Source(s): Table 23-10-0216-01.

The lingering effects of the pandemic contributed to the dampening demand for energy products, as loadings of fuel oils and crude petroleum saw the largest decline in July, dropping 67.1% (-1.4 million tonnes) compared with the same month in 2019, despite stronger crude oil exports in July. Similarly, coal loadings dipped 23.0% (-764 000 tonnes) year over year in July. Fuel oils, crude petroleum and coal products accounted for over half (53.7%) of the total year-over-year drop in tonnage.

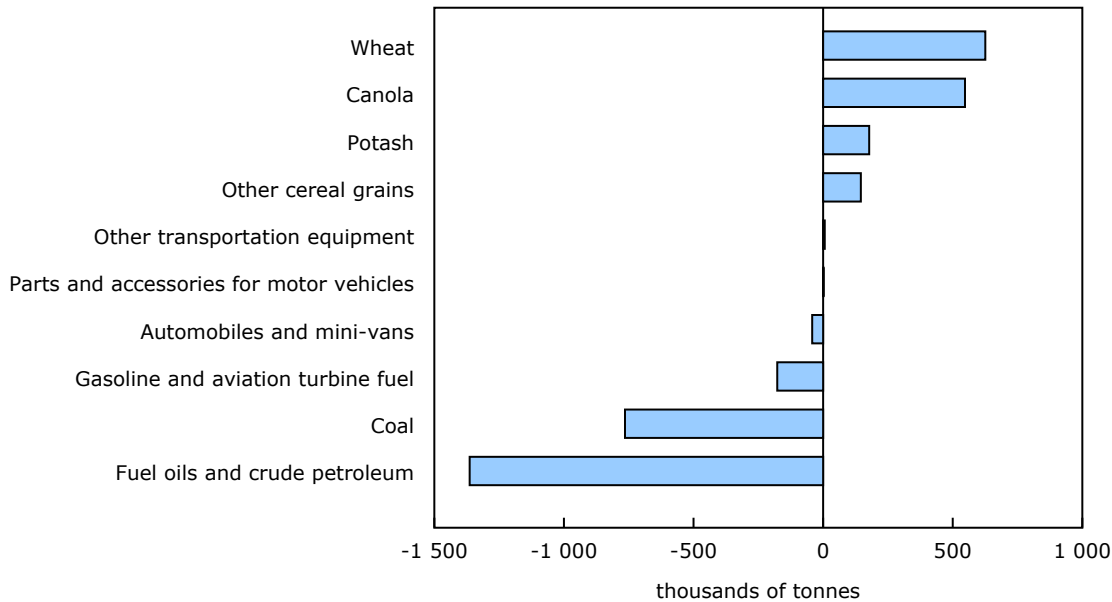
As border closures and travel restrictions remained in effect in many jurisdictions, gasoline and aviation turbine fuel loadings saw a decline of 55.4% (-177 000 tonnes) year over year in July. This decrease reflected weaker demand for these fuels during the summer driving and air travel season.

According to [Canadian international merchandise trade](#) data for July 2020, there was a second consecutive month of growth in exports and imports, led mostly by motor vehicles and parts. Although automobile and mini-van carloadings fell 29.7% (-42 000 tonnes) in July, motor vehicle parts and accessories saw a year-over-year increase (+12.8% or +2 000 tonnes). Other transportation equipment also rose (+39.3% or +6 000 tonnes), with assembly plants ramping up production as the economy began to reopen.



Following the economic lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19, loadings of agriculture and food products—deemed essential commodities—were up, and this continued into July, with larger year-over-year increases in carloadings of wheat (+34.6% or +626 000 tonnes), canola (+82.3% or +547 000 tonnes) and other cereal grains (+69.8% or +146 000 tonnes). Lower farm stocks for canola and wheat as of July 31, as shown in the [Stocks of grain and oilseeds](#) table, attest to the increase in grain movement. Furthermore, potash loadings also increased year over year in July (+9.9% or +178 000 tonnes).

Chart 2
Railway carloadings, by product, difference from July 2019 to July 2020



Source(s): Table 23-10-0216-02.

According to data in the [Weekly performance indicators of grain transportation by rail](#) table, the average number of cars loaded and billed in August was 59,512, up from 48,596 in August 2019. Similarly, the [Weekly rail system performance by type of rail car](#) table reveals that the monthly average of the number of intermodal cars on line for August 2020 was similar to the average for August 2019, pointing to a bigger recovery in the volume of rail traffic. However, expectations of higher freight volumes in August 2020 may be dampened by the labour dispute at the Port of Montréal, which has connections to major rail networks on the East Coast. Moreover, low demand may persist for exports of certain key commodities moved by rail.

Note to readers

Data from January 2020 to the month preceding the reference period have been revised. The data in this release are not seasonally adjusted.

The Monthly Railway Carloadings Survey collects data on the number of rail cars, tonnage, units and 20-foot equivalent units from railway transporters operating in Canada that provide for-hire freight services.

The [Transportation Data and Information Hub](#), a web portal developed jointly by Statistics Canada and Transport Canada, provides Canadians with online access to comprehensive statistics and measures on the country's transportation sector.

Available tables: table [23-10-0216-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2732](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).