

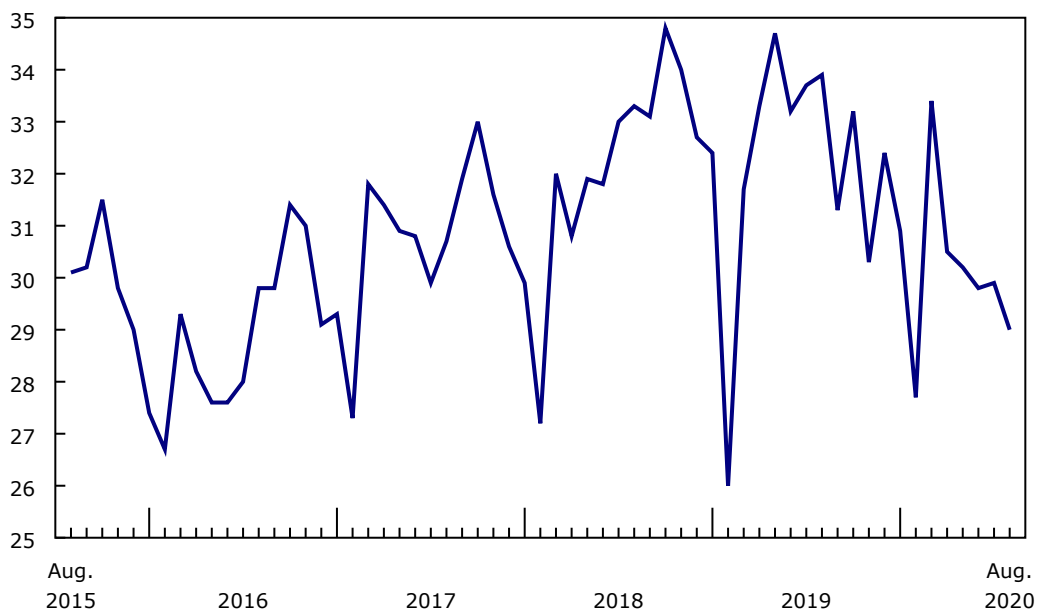
Railway carloadings, August 2020

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, October 28, 2020

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to dampen the volume of cargo carried by rail. In August, Canadian railways carried 29.0 million tonnes of freight, down 14.7% from August 2019. This was the fifth consecutive monthly decline and the biggest year-over-year drop since March.

Chart 1
Railway carloadings, total tonnage

millions of tonnes



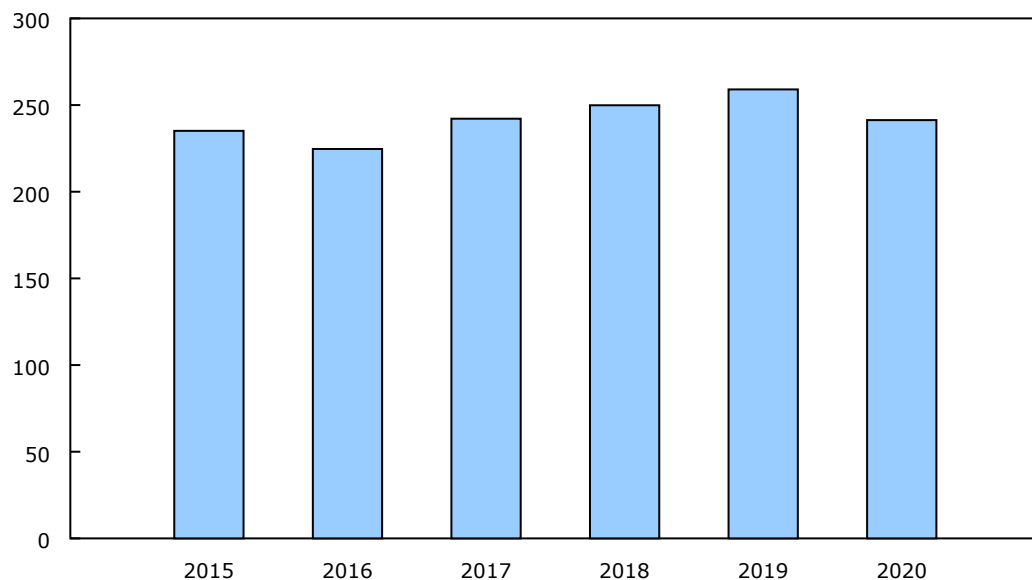
Source(s): Table [23-10-0216-01](#).

The total year-to-date carloadings (from January to August) reveal that the freight tonnage moved by rail in 2020 was the lowest eight-month cumulative total since 2016.



Chart 2
Railway carloadings, total traffic carried, January to August, 2015 to 2020

millions of tonnes



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

The tonnage of non-intermodal freight posted a sharp year-over-year decline, falling 14.1% to 23.0 million tonnes in August. While the drop reflects a widespread dip in many commodities, it was driven by considerable tonnage declines in hydrocarbons, which accounted for 72.7% of the total decrease in non-intermodal freight.

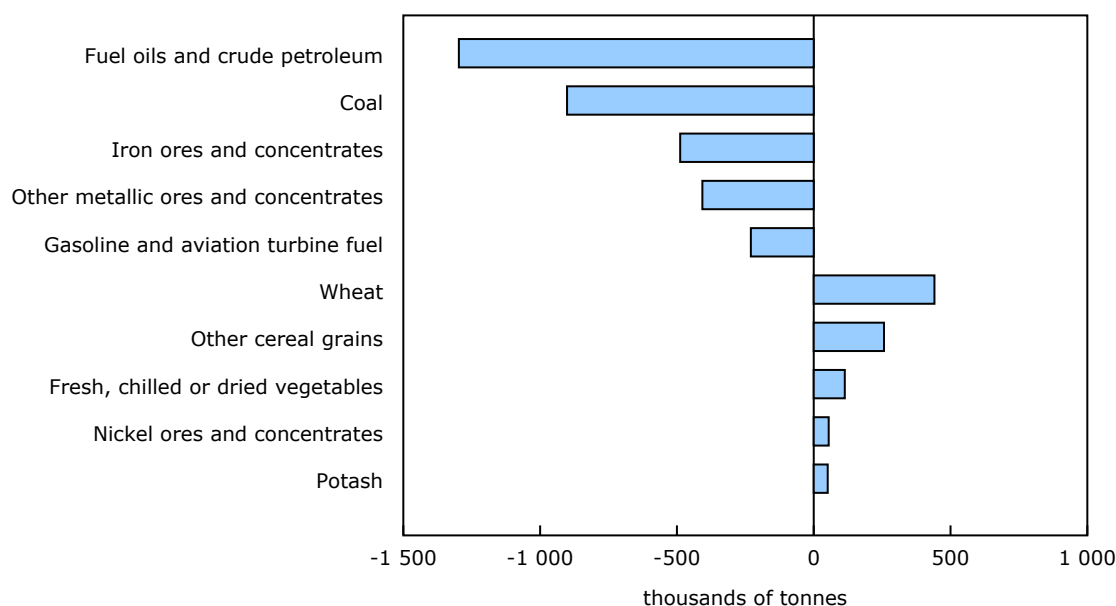
Loadings of fuel oils and crude petroleum have declined year over year for five straight months, slumping 67.5% (-1 297 000 tonnes) in August. This drop followed similar year-over-year declines in June (-69.4%) and July (-67.1%).

Gasoline and aviation turbine fuel loadings, which have fallen each month since March, dropped 68.0% (-230 000 tonnes) in August from the same month in 2019. Travel restrictions in general, and limited air travel in particular, led to weaker global demand for these fuels.

Similarly, coal loadings dipped 26.2% (-902 000 tonnes) year over year in August, a fourth consecutive month of decline. Due to a decrease in electricity consumption by industries in many countries on account of the pandemic, energy demand is down.

The overall decline in railway carloadings mirrors the August decrease in Canadian exports of energy products, as reported in the [Canadian international merchandise trade](#) release earlier this month.

Chart 3
Railway carloadings, by product, difference from August 2019 to August 2020



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

Loadings of certain mineral products also posted large year-over-year decreases in tonnage. Iron ore and concentrate loadings were down 9.2% (-488 000 tonnes), the largest drop since April. Moreover, loadings of other metallic ores and concentrates fell sharply (-56.7% or -407 000 tonnes) from a year ago, following a similar decline (-55.0%) in July.

Despite the downturn in total non-intermodal loadings in August, several agricultural and food products registered strong gains. Wheat loadings posted a year-over-year increase for a fourth consecutive month, albeit smaller, rising 24.8% (+441 000 tonnes) from August 2019. Other cereal grains rose 148.4% (+257 000 tonnes) year over year, while fresh, chilled or dried vegetables were up 28.5% (+114 000 tonnes).

Intermodal freight loadings totalled just over 3.0 million tonnes in August, down 5.8% from August 2019. This year-over-year decline—the smallest since April—coincided with a 12.8% drop in Eastern Canada. It is difficult to tell whether the source of this decline was the almost two-week work stoppage at the Port of Montréal, which has extensive connections to rail networks in Eastern Canada, or the economic conditions triggered by the pandemic.

Finally, freight traffic from the United States fell 25.6% to 2.9 million tonnes in August.

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).