

Railway carloadings, January 2022

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Highlights

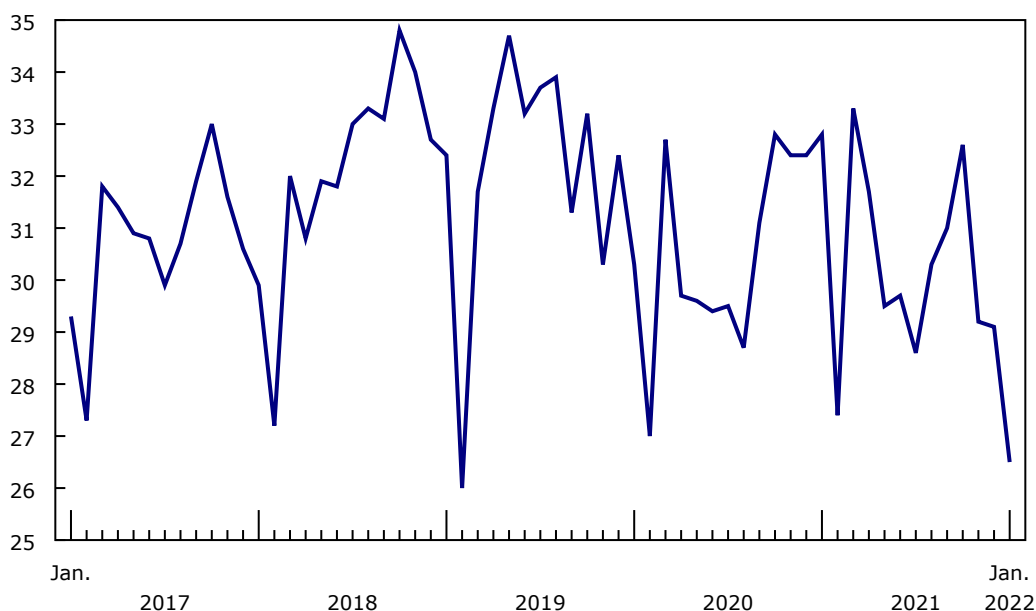
In January, Canadian railways transported 26.5 million tonnes of freight, down 19.1% from January 2021. This marked the fifth straight month of year-over-year declines and the steepest percentage drop in more than a decade.

While rail freight transport typically slows down during the winter months, the volume of cargo carried in January 2022 was at its lowest level since 2014.

To further explore current and historical data in an interactive format, please visit the [Monthly Railway Carloadings: Interactive Dashboard](#).

Chart 1 Railway carloadings, total tonnage

millions of tonnes



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

Grain loadings continue to slide

January's drop was attributable to widespread volume declines in freight loadings in both domestic non-intermodal (mainly commodities) and intermodal (mainly containers) operations.

The tonnage of non-intermodal freight loadings posted a sharp year-over-year decline, dropping 22.6% to 20.2 million tonnes in January, marking a fifth consecutive month of year-over-year decreases. While the drop reflects broad-based declines for many commodities, it was led by ongoing large decreases in some agricultural and food products—notably grain.

Loadings of wheat declined year over year for the ninth consecutive month, down 49.6% (-1 113 000 tonnes) in January. This drop followed similar year-over-year decreases in November (-49.6%) and December (-47.0%) 2021.



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Similarly, loadings of other cereal grains have declined year over year for four straight months, slumping 71.0% (-524 000 tonnes) in January—the largest drop ever recorded.

Loadings of canola, which have fallen each month since March 2021, dropped a further 53.7% (-515 000 tonnes) in January compared with the same month in 2021. This was their 11th consecutive month of year-over-year declines in tonnage.

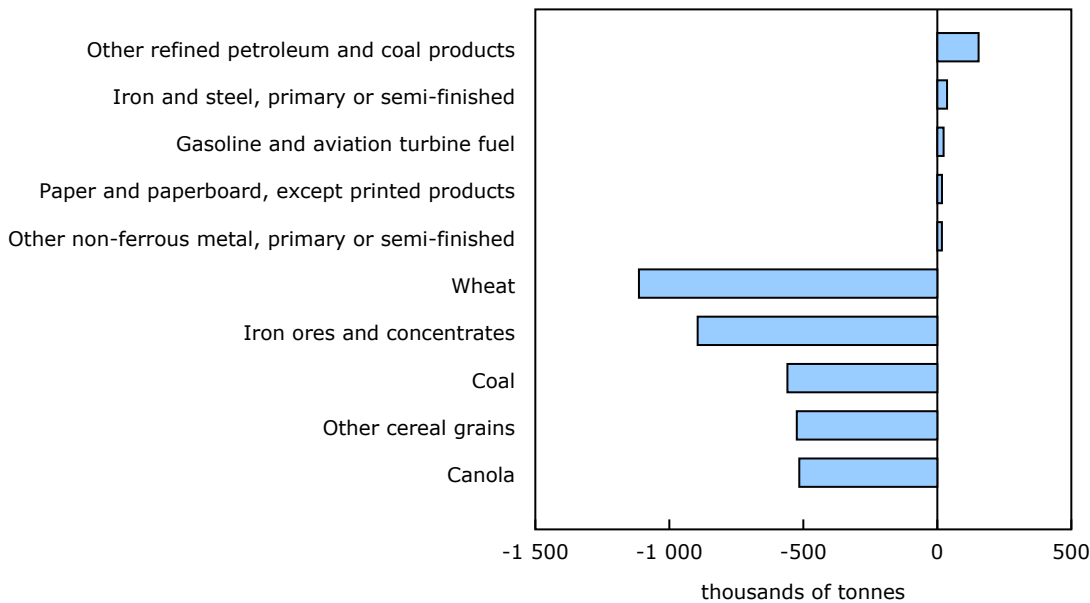
January's decline in grain traffic reflected several factors, including the ongoing depletion of stocks and [lower grain crop production](#) because of drought conditions across the Prairies in summer 2021. There were also some residual impacts from other weather-related events in 2021, such as the November [flooding and landslides in British Columbia](#).

These declines mirror the January decrease in Canada's exports of farm, fishing and intermediate food products, as reported in the [Canadian international merchandise trade](#) release earlier in March 2022.

In terms of railway transportation, other significant decreases were reported for iron ores and concentrates, with loadings falling 17.9% (-894 000 tonnes) compared with January 2021.

Finally, loadings of coal dipped 18.0% (-559 000 tonnes) year over year in January, a third consecutive month of decline.

Chart 2
Railway carloadings, largest commodity differences, January 2021 to January 2022



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

Some commodities remain up

Several commodities registered increases, partly offsetting the sharp downturns in loadings noted above. With the increasing demand for energy, loadings of refined petroleum and coal products (for example, butane and propane) grew 42.4% (+154 000 tonnes) in January from the same month in 2021, marking the 10th consecutive month of year-over-year increases in tonnage.

Similarly, loadings of gasoline and aviation turbine fuel, which have increased year over year since April 2021, rose 15.7% (+23 000 tonnes) in January compared with the same month in 2021, after posting strong gains in November (+28.8%) and December (+41.5%) 2021.

Loadings of primary or semi-finished iron and steel products posted a year-over-year increase for the 12th consecutive month, rising 9.1% (+36 000 tonnes) compared with January 2021. Loadings of primary or semi-finished other non-ferrous metal were up 37.3% (+17 000 tonnes), their fourth straight month of year-over-year increases. According to data from the [Monthly Survey of Manufacturing](#), sales in the primary metal manufacturing industry continued to rise in January, up 24.0% year over year.

Loadings of paper and paperboard increased for the fifth month in a row, up 13.2% (+17 000 tonnes) in January compared with the same month a year earlier.

Intermodal traffic continues to drop

In January, domestic intermodal shipments—mainly containers—continued their downward trend, dipping 12.8% year over year to 2.7 million tonnes. This was the fifth consecutive month of declines.

American freight continues to increase

Freight traffic from US rail connections grew year over year for the 11th consecutive month in January, rising 1.5% to 3.5 million tonnes. This was the second-highest volume ever recorded for a month of January.

Note to readers

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.

Cargo loadings from Armstrong, Ontario, to the Atlantic coast are classified to the eastern division (eastern Canada), while loadings from Thunder Bay, Ontario, to the Pacific coast are classified to the western division (western Canada).

Survey data are revised on a monthly basis to reflect new information.

The data in this release are not seasonally adjusted.

The [Transportation Data and Information Hub](#) 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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).