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Mining/Materials ▾

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Earth Sciences ▾

Hazards ▾

Explosives ▾

Clean Growth ▾

Climate Change ▾

[Home](#) → [Mining/Materials](#) → [Minerals and Metals Facts](#) → Lead facts

Mining/Materials

[Mining](#)[Materials](#)[Mining/Materials Resources](#)[Minerals and Metals Facts](#)

Lead facts



Lead is a soft, malleable, ductile, dense metallic element, extracted chiefly from the mineral galena and found in ore that also contains zinc, silver and copper. The chemical properties of lead mean that its principal use today is for power storage and delivery applications.

Q Key facts

- In 2016, Canada ranked eighth in world production of refined lead.
- The primary use of lead is in lead-acid batteries for automobiles and other vehicles.
- Over 95% of the lead contained in batteries is recovered and recycled for use in new batteries.

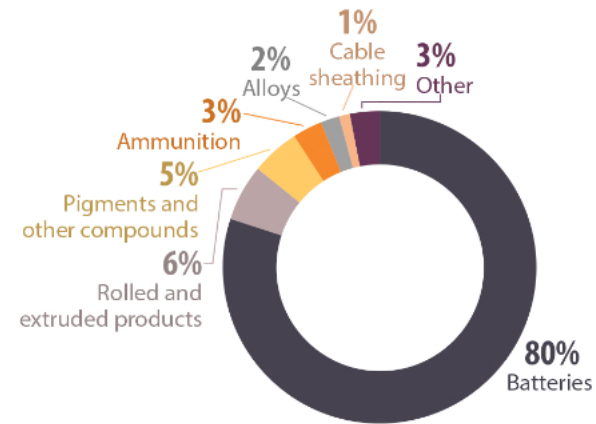
Learn more about lead

[Uses](#)[Trade](#)[Production](#)[Prices](#)[International context](#)[Recycling](#)

Uses

The primary use of lead is in lead-acid batteries for motor vehicles (80% of total use), but it is also used in a variety of different applications, such as stationary batteries (for backup power), pigments and ammunition.

Lead, global uses, 2016



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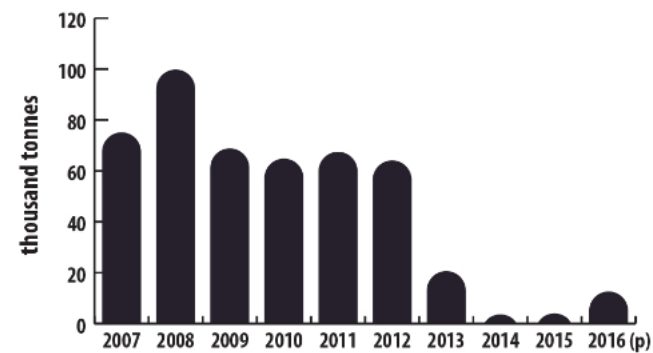


Production

In 2016, Canadian mines produced an estimated 12 thousand tonnes of lead in concentrate, 3 times more than in 2015.

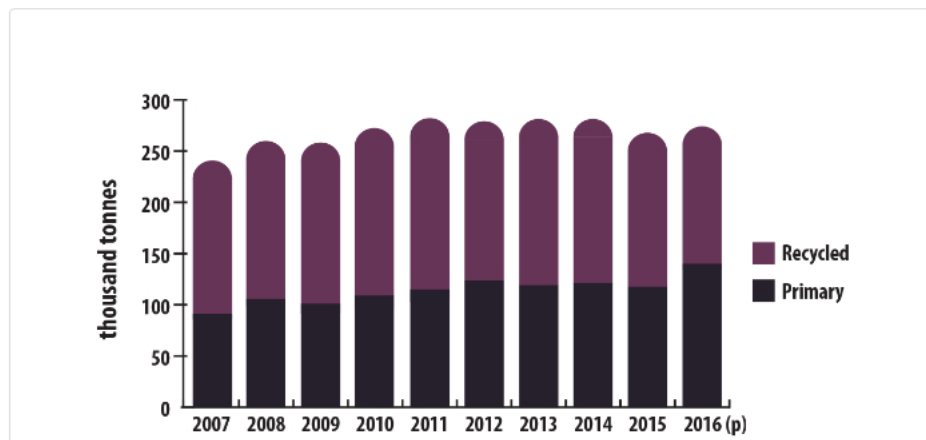
Canada operates 2 primary lead and 4 recycled lead smelters. Because of the significant recycling of lead-acid batteries, recycled lead comprised 48% of Canada's total refined lead production in 2016.

Canadian mine production of lead, 2007–2016 (p)



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Canadian refined production (primary and recycled) of lead, 2007–2016 (p)



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International context

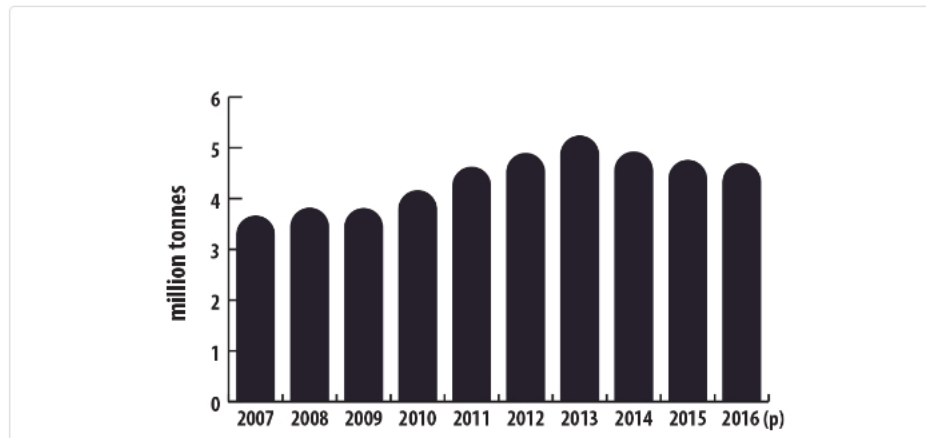
In 2016, Canada ranked eighth in world production of refined lead, which reached 11 million tonnes globally. China was the largest producer with 4.7 million tonnes of refined lead, which accounted for over 40% of the global production.

Find out more about global mined and refined lead production:

World mine production of lead, by country, 2016 (p)

Ranking	Country	Thousand tonnes	Percentage of total
1	China	2,340	49.7%
2	Australia	456	9.7%
3	United States	340	7.2%
4	Peru	314	6.7%
5	Mexico	232	4.9%
6	Russia	193	4.1%
7	Other countries	829	17.6%
-	Total	4,704	100.0%

World mine production of lead, 2007–2016 (p)



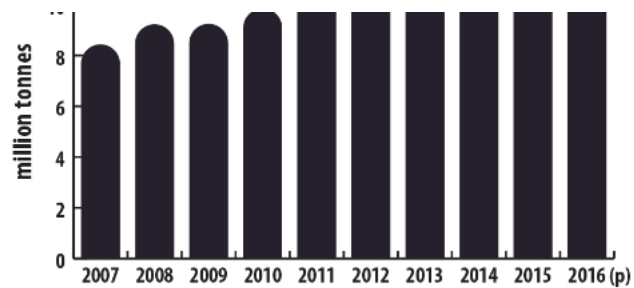
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World refined production of lead, by country, 2016 (p)

Ranking	Country	Thousand tonnes	Percentage of total
1	China	4,665	42.1%
2	United States	1,099	9.9%
3	South Korea	820	7.4%
4	India	510	4.6%
5	Germany	347	3.1%
6	Mexico	338	3.0%
7	United Kingdom	310	2.8%
8	Canada	272	2.5%
9	Japan	240	2.2%
10	Other countries	2,492	22.5%
-	Total	11,093	100.0%

World refined production of lead, 2007–2016 (p)





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World reserves

In 2016, total world lead reserves, as calculated by the U.S. Geological Survey, were an estimated 88 million tonnes.

World reserves of lead, by country, 2016 (p)

Ranking	Country	Million tonnes	Percentage of total
1	Australia	35.0	39.8%
2	China	17.0	19.3%
3	Russia	6.4	7.3%
4	Peru	6.3	7.2%
5	Mexico	5.6	6.4%
-	Other countries	17.7	20.1%
-	Total	88.0	100.0%



Trade

Exports

- Total exports of lead and lead products from Canada were valued at \$799.5 million in 2016.
- Canada exported 273,000 tonnes of unwrought lead metal in 2016, an increase of 14,000 tonnes compared to 259,000 tonnes in 2015. The majority of these exports went to the United States, with minor amounts shipped to China and Japan.

Imports

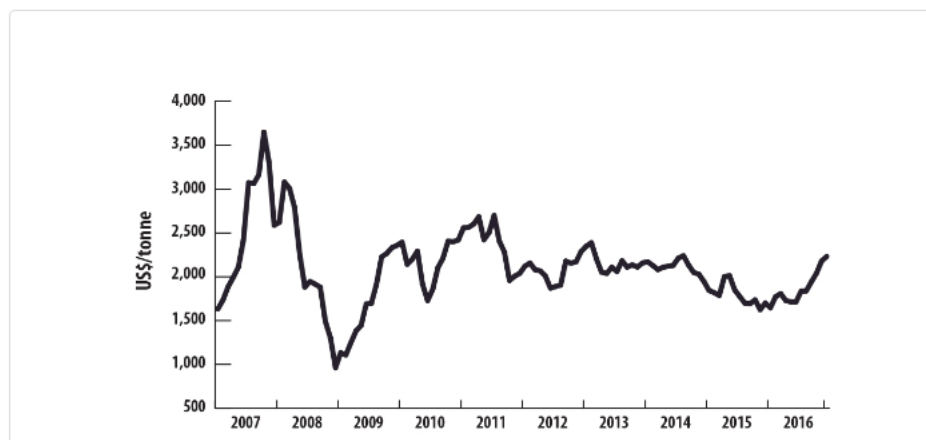
- Total imports of lead and lead products were valued at \$459.5 million in 2016.
- Canadian lead smelters imported 120,000 tonnes of lead in concentrates in 2016, an increase of 2,000 tonnes compared to 118,000 tonnes in 2015. Concentrates were imported mainly from the United States, Peru, Mexico

compared to 118,000 tonnes in 2015. Concentrates were imported mainly from the United States, Peru, Mexico and Australia.

Prices

Prices in 2016 rose from a low of US\$1,598 per tonne in January to US\$2,475 per tonne in November. The price of lead over the past decade peaked in October 2007 at US\$3,880 per tonne and reached its lowest point of US\$875 per tonne in December 2008.

Lead, monthly average prices, 2007–2016



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Recycling

Lead from lead-acid batteries is one of the most recycled metals in the world. Over 95% of the lead contained in batteries is recovered and recycled for use in new batteries.

Canada has 4 secondary lead processing plants, 1 in British Columbia, 1 in Ontario and 2 in Quebec. In addition, secondary lead is processed at Canada's 2 primary smelters located in British Columbia and New Brunswick.

In 2016, 132,000 tonnes of secondary lead metal (produced from recycled lead) was produced in Canada, down slightly from 142,000 tonnes in 2015.

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