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Record High Hydrogen Storage Capacity in the Metal–Organic Framework Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) at Near-Ambient Temperatures

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Abstract

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Author Contributions

M.T.K. and J.R.L. formulated the project. M.T.K. synthesized the compounds. M.T.K., K.E.H., P.A.P., and T.G. collected and analyzed isotherm data. K.E.H. and T.G. collected temperature-programmed desorption data. T.R., J.D.T., A.A., and C.M.B. collected powder neutron diffraction data and solved crystal structures. T.R., H.Z.H.J., and S.A.F. collected and analyzed infrared spectra. M.T.K. and J.R.L. wrote the paper, and all authors contributed to revising it. All authors have given approval to the final version of the manuscript.

Supporting Information

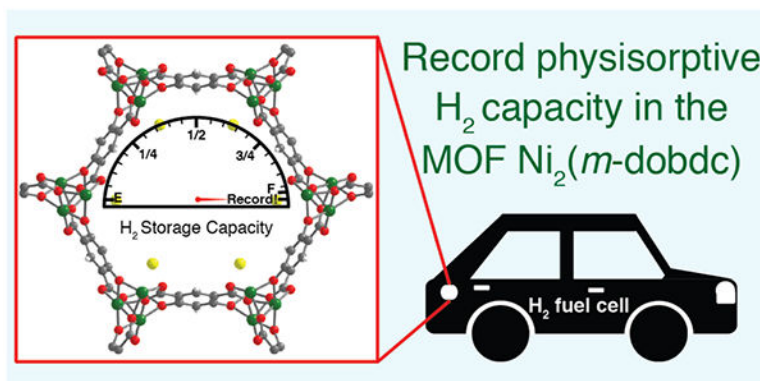
The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the [ACS Publications website](https://pubs.acs.org) at DOI: [10.1021/acs.chemma-ter.8b03276](https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.chemma-ter.8b03276). Additional experimental data, H₂ adsorption isotherms, powder neutron diffraction structures, H₂-dosed infrared spectroscopy data, and other data ([PDF](#))

Crystallographic information files ([ZIP](#))

The authors declare the following competing financial interest(s): J.R.L. has a financial interest in Mosaic Materials, Inc., a startup company working to commercialize metal-organic frameworks, including the M2(*m*-dobdc) materials. The University of California, Berkeley has applied for a patent on some of the materials discussed herein, on which J.R.L. and M.T.K. are listed as inventors.

Hydrogen holds promise as a clean alternative automobile fuel, but its on-board storage presents significant challenges due to the low temperatures and/or high pressures required to achieve a sufficient energy density. The opportunity to significantly reduce the required pressure for high density H₂ storage persists for metal–organic frameworks due to their modular structures and large internal surface areas. The measurement of H₂ adsorption in such materials under conditions most relevant to on-board storage is crucial to understanding how these materials would perform in actual applications, although such data have to date been lacking. In the present work, the metal–organic frameworks M₂(*m*-dobdc) (M = Co, Ni; *m*-dobdc⁴⁻ = 4,6-dioxido-1,3-benzenedicarboxylate) and the isomeric frameworks M₂(dobdc) (M = Co, Ni; dobdc⁴⁻ = 1,4-dioxido-1,3-benzenedicarboxylate), which are known to have open metal cation sites that strongly interact with H₂, were evaluated for their usable volumetric H₂ storage capacities over a range of near-ambient temperatures relevant to on-board storage. Based upon adsorption isotherm data, Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) was found to be the top-performing physisorptive storage material with a usable volumetric capacity between 100 and 5 bar of 11.0 g/L at 25 °C and 23.0 g/L with a temperature swing between –75 and 25 °C. Additional neutron diffraction and infrared spectroscopy experiments performed with *in situ* dosing of D₂ or H₂ were used to probe the hydrogen storage properties of these materials under the relevant conditions. The results provide benchmark characteristics for comparison with future attempts to achieve improved adsorbents for mobile hydrogen storage applications.

Graphical Abstract



INTRODUCTION

Molecular hydrogen (H₂) holds significant promise as a transportation fuel and is already used in some motor vehicles and for certain specialty applications such as forklifts. Because water is the only byproduct of the fuel cell cycle, hydrogen fuel cell vehicles could, in principle, provide zero-emission transportation.¹ An economy can be envisioned in which solar energy is used to inexpensively produce hydrogen and oxygen from water; these products are then consumed in fuel cells to produce water and electricity that power the vehicle and close the cycle. Achieving such an economy, however, requires the successful development of each aspect of this process to both efficiently produce H₂ for use in fuel cells and consume H₂ in the production of electricity.

Significant investment in infrastructure supporting hydrogen fuel cell vehicles is underway around the world. As of 2017, the United States has 34 publicly accessible hydrogen fueling stations, with 31 of these in California.² The “California Hydrogen Highway” is a planned expansion of the current distribution network to 100 hydrogen fueling stations in California, primarily linking San Diego, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area.³ Other countries including Japan, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have made significant investments in hydrogen infrastructure both in anticipation of and to help bring about the wider use of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.⁴ Public–private partnerships further these efforts and provide a basis for the future of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles to provide a clean alternative to traditional fossil-fuel-based transportation.⁵ In addition to infrastructure developments, further scientific advances are imperative to realize the widespread adoption of hydrogen as a commercial fuel. Notable among such desired advances is the development of efficient hydrogen storage systems.⁶ While containing 2.6–3 times more energy per unit mass than gasoline,^{7,8} hydrogen poses challenges in the pursuit of storage at high volumetric densities. Hydrogen is a weakly interacting gas at ambient temperature and pressure and thus requires cooling and/or compression for storage at densities sufficient for acceptable driving ranges in automobiles. However, cryogenic storage requires the use of large, expensive, and well-insulated systems to maintain a low temperature.^{6,9} Similarly, compression of H₂ at high pressures, typically up to 700 bar, is costly and requires heavy, expensive, and bulky storage tanks.^{10,11} Both of these solutions therefore add to the price of the vehicle in addition to providing significant engineering challenges given the wide operating temperature range for passenger vehicles (–40 to 60 °C). Furthermore, compression to 700 bar results in a hydrogen volumetric energy density of only 5.6 MJ/L at 298 K, significantly lower than the 32.4 MJ/L for gasoline.⁸ While the use of a metal or chemical hydride as a storage medium could mitigate the need for low temperature or high pressure storage vessels, these materials tend to suffer from either capacity limitations or problems arising from large activation energies and reversibility issues.^{12–15}

An alternative to either cryogenic or compressive storage involves the use of an adsorbent material such as a zeolite¹⁶ or activated carbon¹⁷ to boost the hydrogen density in a tank under more ambient conditions. With just two electrons and a low polarizability, H₂ is capable of engaging in only weak van der Waals interactions, leading to an adsorption enthalpy that is typically on the order of –5 kJ/mol. Accordingly, adsorption sites capable of strongly polarizing H₂ must be introduced to achieve sufficient densification and a reasonable driving range. Cryo-adsorption, which entails a combination of adsorption and cryogenic storage, is one possible strategy to yield high capacities.^{18,19} However, the ideal situation would involve adsorption under ambient temperature conditions with a relatively low fill pressure of 100 bar or lower. Such a system would be expected to lower costs significantly because a conformable, lightweight storage vessel could potentially be used, and no on-board cooling system would be required.

Metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) are a class of materials with great potential for hydrogen storage, among other applications related to gas storage and separations.²⁰ The inherent synthetic tunability of these structures has led to a wide range of interesting properties such as high surface areas,²¹ negative gas adsorption,²² and precisely engineered pore environments.²³ Such tunability can be used to improve their properties for a desired

application, including hydrogen storage,^{24–27} and has made MOFs one of the most intensely studied fields in modern inorganic chemistry. For example, it is possible to create MOFs featuring pore surfaces with a high concentration of strong H₂ adsorption sites, a feature less readily achieved in zeolites and activated carbon adsorbents. Computationally predicted hydrogen adsorption isotherms in MOFs have shown high hydrogen capacities at near-ambient temperatures, but these materials have yet to be evaluated experimentally.^{28–31} MOFs can thus, in principle, be designed to exhibit H₂ binding enthalpies in the optimal range of –15 to –20 kJ/mol,³² leading to a high storage capacity under conditions relevant to light-duty fuel cell vehicles.³³ The appeal of this approach is apparent in the many studies of MOFs for H₂ storage that have often focused on materials containing coordinatively unsaturated (open) metal sites.³⁴ These exposed positive charges are able to polarize H₂ more strongly than the typical surfaces available for physisorption in most storage materials.^{35–38} Thus far, however, no MOFs have been shown to achieve the necessary binding enthalpies or the capacity metrics set forth by the United States Department of Energy (US DOE).³³

The most promising metal–organic framework identified to date for H₂ storage is Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) (*m*-dobdc^{4–} = 4,6-dioxido-1,3-benzenedicarboxylate), which was shown previously to display an H₂ binding enthalpy of –13.7 kJ/mol, as measured by variable-temperature infrared spectroscopy and representing the largest value yet observed in a MOF by this method.³⁹ Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) is a structural isomer of Ni₂(dobdc) (dobdc^{4–} = 2,5-dioxido-1,4-benzenedicarboxylate; Ni-MOF-74), and its record binding enthalpy is largely a result of a higher charge density at its coordinatively unsaturated Ni²⁺ centers. These sites strongly polarize H₂, providing the primary binding sites for H₂ within the pores of the material and leading to a high gravimetric storage capacity of greater than 11 mmol/g (2.2 wt %) at 77 K and 1 bar. Recent reports have shown that the material Cu(I)-MFU-4l exhibits an H₂ isosteric heat of adsorption of –32 kJ/mol;⁴⁰ however, the volumetric density of these open metal coordination sites in this material is about 10% of that in Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), rendering it perhaps more suitable for H₂/D₂ separations than H₂ storage.⁴¹

In this work, we investigated the hydrogen storage properties of Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) and other related top-performing MOFs, specifically Co₂(*m*-dobdc), Co₂(dobdc), and Ni₂(dobdc), under more practical conditions. Adsorption isotherms at multiple temperatures in the range of 198 to 373 K were measured to determine capacities at pressure up to 100 bar, while *in situ* powder neutron diffraction and infrared spectroscopy experiments were employed to probe the nature of the interactions of hydrogen within the pores of the materials.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

General Synthesis.

The compounds M₂(*m*-dobdc) (M = Co, Ni) were synthesized and activated according to modified versions of the large-scale literature procedure.³⁹

Synthesis of H₄(*m*-dobdc).

Resorcinol (1,3-dihydroxybenzene; 37.6 g, 0.341 mol) was pulverized and dried under vacuum. KHCO₃ (100 g, 0.99 mmol) was separately pulverized and dried under reduced pressure. The two powders were mixed together thoroughly and placed in a glass jar, which was sealed in a Parr reaction bomb equipped with an internal thermocouple and a pressure gauge. The reaction bomb was evacuated under vacuum, and then CO₂ was dosed to a pressure of 40 bar. The bomb was heated to 250 °C (as measured by the internal thermocouple) in a sand bath for 24 h and then slowly cooled to room temperature. The pressure was vented; 1 L of water was added to the solid, which was broken up mechanically, and the mixture was sonicated. The resulting suspension was filtered, and the filtrate was acidified with 12 M HCl until a pH < 2 was achieved and a white solid had precipitated. This solid was collected by filtration and dried in air to yield 53.2 g (79%) of product. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 9.22 (br, 4H), 8.28 (s, 1H), 6.22 (s, 1H); ¹³C NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 172.0, 167.7, 134.3, 107.3, 103.0.

Synthesis of Co₂(*m*-dobdc).

Aliquots of 310 mL of methanol and 310 mL of *N,N*-dimethylformamide (DMF) were added to a 1-L three-neck round-bottom flask equipped with a reflux condenser and sparged with N₂ with stirring for 1 h. The solids H₄(*m*-dobdc) (2.00 g, 10.1 mmol) and CoCl₂ (3.27 g, 25.2 mmol) were added under N₂ pressure, and the reaction mixture was vigorously stirred and heated at 120 °C for 18 h. The mixture was then cooled to ambient temperature and filtered, affording a pink microcrystalline powder. The powder was soaked in 500 mL of DMF for 24 h, then soaked in three successive aliquots of 500 mL of methanol for 24 h each. The resulting pink powder was collected by filtration and heated at 180 °C under dynamic vacuum until the outgas rate was <1 μbar/min, yielding 1.71 g (54.3%) of activated product.

Synthesis of Ni₂(*m*-dobdc).

An identical procedure was used as for Co₂(*m*-dobdc) above, except that the solvent consisted of 220 mL of methanol and 405 mL DMF, and NiCl₂ (3.27 g, 25.2 mmol) was used in place of CoCl₂. The reaction yielded 1.69 g (54.4%) of activated product.

Synthesis of M₂(dobdc) (M = Co, Ni).

These materials were synthesized using identical procedures to their M₂(*m*-dobdc) congeners above, with the substitution of like amounts of the isomeric H₄(dobdc) ligand for the H₄(*m*-dobdc) ligand. These reactions yielded 2.06 g (65.4%) of activated Co₂(dobdc) and 2.25 g (80.1%) of activated Ni₂(dobdc).

Synthesis of MOF-5.

The synthesis of MOF-5 was carried out according to a previously published procedure.^{42,43}

Measurement of Gas Adsorption Isotherms.

All gas adsorption isotherms in the range 198 to 373 K were measured on a Particulate Systems HPVA II instrument. The sample holder was custom-built using a Swagelok valve

connected to a sample holder. Typically, 1.0–2.0 g of sample was used for each measurement to ensure that measurement and mass errors were minimized. These samples were activated in standard glass sample tubes as loose powders on a Micromeritics ASAP 2420 instrument and transferred to the custom HPVA sample holder in a drybox. Once the sample holder was connected to the HPVA instrument, the sample was immersed in a recirculating fluid bath connected to a Julabo FP89-HL/TK filled with Dow Syltherm fluid. During the data collection, a portion of the sample holder was exposed above the fluid in the temperature bath but below the temperature-controlled dosing manifold of the HPVA-II instrument. The resulting existence of three temperature zones leads to challenges in performing the required volume calibrations, which are essential to properly determining the gas uptake of a sample. The volume of each temperature zone was therefore experimentally determined based on He measurements at multiple temperatures, and the results were applied in obtaining corrected adsorption data. A more complete discussion of this calibration method can be found in a similar paper discussing the measurement of methane adsorption in MOFs.⁴²

Importantly, the background adsorption of H₂ within the sample in an empty sample holder should be close to zero at all pressures, assuming the proper calibrations are in place. While this is true for isotherms being measured at close to ambient temperature (at which the temperatures of the two parts of the sample holder are very similar, resulting in a minimal temperature gradient), isotherms measured at temperatures further from ambient will see a larger temperature gradient and a commensurate deviation from null adsorption. To account for this deviation, background adsorption measurements for H₂ were repeated three times at each temperature and fit using a third-order polynomial, which was then used to perform a background correction on all subsequently collected data at each temperature. The uptake in these background adsorption isotherms was typically on the order of 10 v/v (volume of H₂ per volume of MOF), and the measured values were subtracted from the total adsorption isotherms of the metal–organic frameworks. Such error primarily stems from minor temperature fluctuations in the three-zone experimental setup as well as small valve volumes. Pore volumes were determined experimentally using N₂ adsorption isotherm data. Pore volumes were determined to be 0.53, 0.56, 0.52, and 0.54 cm³/g for Co₂(*m*-dobdc), Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), Co₂(dobdc), and Ni₂(dobdc), respectively. Crystallographic densities were used in all calculations to obtain volumetric capacities.

Adsorption isotherms at 77 and 100 K (Figures S2 and S3) were collected on a custom-built volumetric adsorption apparatus at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), details of which can be found in the Supporting Information.

Temperature-Programmed Desorption.

The temperature-programmed desorption (TPD) data were collected on a custom-built NREL TPD apparatus that allows for identification and quantification of effluent gases, as described elsewhere.⁴⁴ In summary, calibrated adsorption capacities and desorption activation energies and kinetics can be investigated using the system, in which it is possible to heat or cool samples in vacuum to temperatures between 77 and 1200 K. Samples may be exposed to hydrogen (99.9999%) at pressures up to ~1000 Torr, and the system can achieve pressures as low as 10⁻⁹ Torr. The TPD system is equipped with a mass spectrometer with

detection range of 0–100 atomic mass units to detect impurities present in materials both during degas and after hydrogen exposures.

Powder Neutron Diffraction Measurements.

Powder neutron diffraction data were collected on the high resolution neutron powder diffractometer, BT-1, at the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST) Center for Neutron Research (NCNR), with a Ge-(311) monochromator using an in-pile 60' collimator corresponding to a wavelength of 2.077 Å. Measurements were performed on 1.11 g of activated $\text{Co}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$. The activated sample was transferred into a He-purged glovebox equipped with oxygen and water monitors. The sample was loaded into an aluminum can equipped with a valve for gas loading up to pressures of 100 bar and loaded into a top-loading closed-cycle refrigerator. Data collection was performed at 77 and 198 K for the activated sample. At 77 K, one loading of 78 bar of D_2 was measured. At 198 K, the sample was initially exposed to 79 bar of D_2 and allowed to reach equilibrium. Additional measurements were performed at reduced pressures of 54 and 36 bar of D_2 . Aluminum Bragg peaks were removed from the data during analysis.

***In situ* Infrared Spectroscopy.**

Infrared spectra were acquired using a Bomem DA3 Michelson interferometer equipped with a quartz-halogen source, a CaF_2 beamsplitter, and a liquid nitrogen-cooled mercury–cadmium–telluride detector. A cutoff filter above 9000 cm^{-1} was used to prevent unwanted sample heating from the IR source. A custom-built diffuse reflectance system with a sample chamber that allows both the temperature and atmosphere of the material to be controlled was utilized for all experiments.⁴⁵ Activated powder samples (~10 mg) were transferred to a Cu sample holder within an Ar-purged glovebox. The samples were sealed within a dome containing sapphire windows and a valve for gas loading. Seals were achieved using either indium or Teflon gaskets depending on the pressure and temperature of the specific experiment. The dome was bolted to a copper slab providing thermal contact to a coldfinger cryostat (Janis ST-300T). The sample temperature was monitored by a Si-diode thermometer bolted directly to the copper slab. A reference infrared spectrum was obtained at each temperature. Hydrogen gas was introduced from a dosing manifold to a desired pressure while maintaining the sample at constant temperature. Multiple infrared spectra were obtained at each pressure step up to a maximum pressure of 100 bar. These spectra were then referenced to the initial spectrum without H_2 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Considerations for H_2 Storage in Adsorbents.

As introduced earlier, adsorbent materials have the potential to store H_2 at reduced pressures and temperatures relative to cryogenic or high-pressure technologies and therefore offer a more energetically and financially promising solution. The US DOE has released guidelines for hydrogen storage in light-duty and specialty vehicles (e.g., passenger vehicles, forklifts, golf carts, and specialized airport vehicles, among others). A subset of the system-based targets associated with these guidelines and relevant to adsorbent-based storage is reproduced in Table 1.

To date, no adsorbents have been produced that satisfy the 2020 target capacity requirements of 4.5 wt % and 30 g/L H₂. The trade-off between volumetric and gravimetric H₂ density in MOFs has been previously studied, however, showing maximization of both to be difficult.^{46,47} While pressure ranges are not explicitly given, operating pressures below 100 bar have the potential to reduce storage vessel and compression costs while maintaining reasonable capacities. Importantly, these target capacity requirements are full system capacities. Therefore, potential adsorbent materials must actually exceed target capacities, as the full system will involve more mass and volume than that of the adsorbent alone.

The volumetric capacity is the primary consideration when evaluating MOF materials for H₂ storage, because in light-duty vehicles, the available volume for a tank for adsorbent-based storage of H₂ is the limiting factor in determining the driving range of a vehicle. This concept has been discussed in detail elsewhere for natural gas storage,⁴² and the same principles will apply to H₂ storage. For example, a given percent increase in volumetric storage capacity will yield a commensurate percent increase in driving range assuming a fixed-volume tank. In contrast, the same percent increase in gravimetric capacity will yield only a small percent increase in driving range due to the savings in weight of the adsorbent in the fuel tank; therefore, targeting materials based on their total volumetric capacity is a more useful means of identifying candidate materials for H₂ storage. Crystallographic densities are used herein to calculate volumetric capacities as an upper bound of storage capacity, as these represent an intrinsic property of each material and allow for the comparative evaluation of materials across multiple studies without needing to account for sample preparation or measurement of other densities. The actual storage capacity in a system, however, will depend on the bulk density, shaping, and packing of the storage material, which is outside the scope of this report.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the volumetric usable capacity is the most important consideration when evaluating adsorbents for hydrogen storage. For the purposes of this work, usable capacity is defined as the total amount of H₂ adsorbed between 5 and 100 bar in the total adsorption isotherm (Figure 1). The total adsorption isotherm is calculated by accounting for the excess capacity plus the amount of bulk H₂ present under the conditions at which the isotherm was measured. The total adsorption thus gives the total amount of gas contained within the volume of a crystal of the adsorbent. A minimum pressure of 5 bar is assumed to be necessary for the fuel injector in the vehicle, such that any H₂ stored below 5 bar is inaccessible as fuel. Thus, all H₂ uptake would ideally occur after 5 bar, and the total capacity would be equal to the usable capacity.⁴⁹ In practice, however, materials that strongly bind H₂ typically adsorb large quantities of H₂ at lower pressures, which are then inaccessible to use in the fuel cell.

There are many considerations when measuring adsorption isotherms at high pressures that are crucial for properly evaluating materials for their H₂ adsorption properties. For example, it is important to use a large mass of material to minimize mass errors that may significantly affect the gas uptake. Furthermore, all volumes must be carefully calibrated to ensure reproducibility and accuracy of measurements. Maintaining isothermal control is also essential; regardless of the number of temperature zones in the measurement, consistent

volumes at consistent temperatures must be maintained to ensure accuracy across multiple isotherm collections.

The adsorbent cost, which impacts the entire system cost, is another important metric, as the H₂ storage system must be economically competitive with gasoline storage tanks. This necessity is quite challenging, owing to the relative difficulty of containing a compressed gas versus a liquid fuel. Further, the complexity of synthesis and high precursor expenses for many metal–organic frameworks can render them costly to prepare, limiting their industrial application in gas storage, gas separations, and catalysis. Zeolites currently used in such applications are generally less expensive based on their aluminosilicate composition, although a recent report shows that alternative synthetic routes for MOFs can significantly reduce their cost, making some competitive with zeolites.⁵⁰ Furthermore, among MOFs, the M₂(*m*-dobdc) series of materials is particularly poised as a low-cost adsorbent with useful gas adsorption properties. The cost of the H₄(*m*-dobdc) linker is low, as it can be formed in a one-step reaction from cheaply available resorcinol, potassium bicarbonate, and CO₂, with no solvent needed other than water during isolation of the product. The overall cost of M₂(*m*-dobdc) itself is thus largely dependent on the metal salt but can be as low as ~\$3/kg for raw materials for the Mg₂(*m*-dobdc) analogue. Such economic considerations are paramount to the successful deployment of MOFs in gas storage applications.

High-Pressure H₂ Adsorption Isotherms.

Structural characterization and low-pressure H₂ adsorption isotherms of Co₂(*m*-dobdc), Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), Co₂(dobdc), Ni₂(dobdc), and MOF-5 have been reported previously.^{20,37,39,43} In this study, the high-pressure H₂ adsorption isotherms of these 5 materials were measured between 0 and 100 bar at temperatures of –75, –50, –40, –25, 0, 25, 50, 75, and 100 °C. Increments of 25 °C were chosen to provide a wide range of conditions for considering temperature swings when determining the volumetric usable capacity of these materials; –40 °C was also measured because it is the temperature at which hydrogen is stored at and dispensed from fueling stations.⁵¹ These isotherms for Co₂(*m*-dobdc), Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), Co₂(dobdc), and Ni₂(dobdc) materials are shown in Figure 2 and for MOF-5 in Figure S1.

Among the five measured materials, Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) exhibits the highest adsorption capacities at all temperatures and pressures, and all isotherms in this material at 75 °C and below exhibit a H₂ capacity higher than that of pure compressed H₂ at 25 °C. At 25 °C and 100 bar, Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) takes up 11.9 g of H₂ per L of crystal, which is the highest among the MOFs measured in this study and, to our knowledge, the highest for any known adsorbent. The usable capacity under these conditions is slightly reduced to 11.0 g/L, however, due to the uptake of 0.9 g/L at 5 bar. This still outperforms compressed hydrogen, which would require compression to over 150 bar to obtain the same total volumetric usable capacity at 25 °C. At 100 bar and the lowest measured temperature of –75 °C, Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) takes up a total of 23.8 g/L H₂, corresponding to a total usable capacity of 19.0 g/L. Notably, H₂ adsorption data collected at 75.6 K exhibit a total capacity of 57.3 g/L at 105 bar (Figure S2), a value that exceeds the DOE system capacity target, albeit at cryogenic temperatures. Furthermore, data collected at 100 K show capacities at the DOE system capacity targets at 100 bar, which

is notable given that measured sample densities were used in calculating the capacity (Figure S3). It is important to note for all of these capacities for $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ and the other materials discussed later that the targets are whole system targets using a material's actual density, while the data presented here is for crystallographic density (except the 100 K isotherm in Figure S3) and simply the material capacity and not the whole system capacity, which is estimated to require 1.2–2 times the target capacities, depending on the material and system design.⁵² However, a recent report outlined the synthesis of a high-density HKUST-1 monolith with improved CH_4 storage capacity relative to that of the bulk material; such a strategy could potentially be applied to $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ as well to retain H_2 storage capacity in a real system.⁵³

If it is possible to use a temperature swing in a storage system through application of active cooling at high filling levels, the usable capacities attained with $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ are even higher. For example, adsorption at $-40\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ with desorption at $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ affords a usable capacity of 18.2 g/L . An even more extreme temperature swing from adsorption at $-75\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ to desorption at $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ gives a usable capacity of 23.0 g/L . This enhanced usable capacity represents 77% of the DOE system target of 30 g/L , which is the highest H_2 volumetric usable capacity achieved to date for an adsorbent operating in this temperature range. It is relevant to note that increasing the desorption temperature to $100\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ offers only an additional 0.4 g/L of usable capacity over desorption at $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, which is not likely to be worthwhile given the additional system complexity required to heat the MOF above ambient temperature.

The related MOFs $\text{Co}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$, $\text{Co}_2(\text{dobdc})$, and $\text{Ni}_2(\text{dobdc})$ were also evaluated for their H_2 storage performance under various temperature swings, and the results are summarized in Table 2. As the best known adsorbent for cryogenic hydrogen storage, MOF-5 was also measured for comparison (Figure S1), and the data agree well with a previous measurement performed at $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.⁴³ From the results in Table 2, $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ is clearly the top-performing material for all of the considered temperature swings. This superiority arises from it having the highest capacity under all conditions, which is a consequence of the greater charge density at its open metal coordination sites compared to the other materials. Volumetrically, MOF-5 is inferior to the $\text{M}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ and $\text{M}_2(\text{dobdc})$ adsorbents due to a lack of strong adsorption sites within its pores. While cycling experiments were not completed, we would expect the hydrogen storage capacity to be retained in all of these materials over many cycles, as seen previously in MOF-5.⁵⁴

It is important to understand the benefits that an adsorbent can offer over compression of pure H_2 . To that end, a comparison of volumetric H_2 storage capacities at all of the measured temperatures shows that $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ imparts a clear enhancement in capacity relative to the compressed gas (Figure 3). Furthermore, this advantage increases substantially with decreasing temperature. Even at $100\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, the volumetric H_2 capacity of a crystal of $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ is 121% of the capacity of pure H_2 . This advantage increases to 155% at $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ and 209% at $-75\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, highlighting the utility of $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ for increasing the density of hydrogen in a storage cylinder filled at 100 bar.

Temperature-Programmed Desorption of H₂.

Physisorptive storage of H₂ (such as in MOFs) has the advantage over chemisorptive storage (such as in metal hydrides) in that the gas is accessible without large energy inputs. As an illustration of this accessibility and the stronger binding in the M₂(*m*-dobdc) series, we carried out temperature-programmed desorption (TPD) experiments on samples of Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) and Ni₂(dobdc) loaded with H₂.

The results of the TPD measurements indicate that Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) binds H₂ more strongly, given the shift in the desorption profile of H₂ as compared with Ni₂(dobdc) (Figure 4). These desorption peaks, centered at -165 and -175 °C for Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) and Ni₂(dobdc), respectively, appear to indicate that both materials polarize H₂ strongly enough that it desorbs above liquid nitrogen temperature (-198 °C at the NREL altitude). Empirical differences in desorption temperature between materials typically arise due to differences in pore shape or size, which impact the diffusion of hydrogen through the pores. However, due to the similar pore shapes and sizes exhibited by these two MOFs, the higher desorption temperature for Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) is indicative of a stronger H₂ binding at the open Ni²⁺ sites.

In situ Powder Neutron Diffraction.

Powder neutron diffraction experiments were undertaken at high pressures to further understand hydrogen adsorption in the M₂(*m*-dobdc) frameworks. The measurements were performed on Co₂(*m*-dobdc), as its greater degree of crystallinity allowed for structure solutions of the D₂-dosed samples and the refinement of the D₂ adsorption positions within the pores. While not a direct measure of the performance of Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), the similar structure and adsorption behavior of Co₂(*m*-dobdc) should provide a representative example of the Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) material. Additionally, D₂ and H₂ have previously been shown to behave nearly identically in powder neutron diffraction experiments.³⁹ Samples were measured at 198 K at pressures of 36, 54, and 79 bar, as well as at 77 K at a pressure of 78 bar to most closely simulate the adsorption isotherm conditions while retaining the ability to crystallographically locate each D₂ binding site within the pores.

At 77 K, the sample of Co₂(*m*-dobdc) loaded with D₂ at 78 bar revealed 7 distinct adsorption sites (Figure 5). At site 1, the strongest adsorption site, the D₂ is bound to the open Co²⁺ coordination site with a Co...D₂(centroid) separation of 2.25(7) Å. The D₂ at site 2 is directly adjacent, interacting with both the D₂ bound at site 1 as well as ligand O atoms from a hydroxide and a carboxylate. Site 3 occupies a position above the center of the aromatic ring of the *m*-dobdc⁴⁻ linker, while site 4 lies adjacent to this. These first four adsorption sites were previously observed in neutron diffraction experiments carried out on Co₂(*m*-dobdc) at 4 K and pressures below 1 bar.³⁹ Adsorption sites 5–7, which become occupied only at the higher D₂ pressures measured here, could likely have been located in the previous study if higher dosings were used. Sites 5 and 6 lie at the center of the hexagonal channels of the framework, while site 7 resides 3.10(3) Å from the D₂ located at site 5 and primarily relies on D₂...D₂ interactions for stabilization. At 77 K and 78 bar, sites 1–6 show full occupancy of D₂, and site 7 shows approximately half occupancy. Importantly, a comparison of the adsorption isotherm data collected at 198 K and the D₂ loadings

observed by powder neutron diffraction at the same temperature reveal a quantitative agreement between the two methods for measuring storage capacity (Figure S4).

Notably, the $D_2 \cdots D_2$ distances (Table 3) measured for certain sites within the pores of $Co_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ are very short. For example, the distance between the D_2 molecules at sites 1 and 2 is only 2.86(3) Å. This is significantly shorter than the $H_2 \cdots H_2$ separation of 3.21 Å in solid hydrogen,⁵⁵ and is approaching the $H_2 \cdots H_2$ distance of 2.656 Å in solid H_2 pressurized to 54 kbar at 300 K.⁵⁶ These comparisons to solid hydrogen powerfully illustrate the ability of materials in the $M_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ series to densify hydrogen within their pores. Other notably short $D_2 \cdots D_2$ distances within $Co_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ can be seen in Table 3, further illustrating this principle.⁵⁷ Significantly, the high charge density on the metals not only strongly polarizes D_2 bound at the coordinatively unsaturated Co^{2+} center, but additionally impacts D_2 bound in more weakly physisorbing secondary sites as well, leading to a high hydrogen packing density within the adsorbent.

***In situ* Infrared Spectroscopy.**

High-pressure H_2 -dosed *in situ* infrared spectroscopy was used to further understand H_2 loading in $Ni_2(m\text{-dobdc})$. Spectra were collected in the pressure range 10–90 bar at multiple temperatures ranging from 198 K (Figure 6) to 298 K (Figures S11–S19). Adsorbed H_2 in MOFs has been shown to exhibit a vibrational frequency that is lower than that of free gaseous H_2 (4161 cm^{-1}) and generally correlates with the H_2 binding energy at a given site.⁵⁸ In Figure 6, the peak at $\sim 4035\text{ cm}^{-1}$ corresponds to H_2 bound to the open Ni^{2+} sites in the framework, while the peak at $\sim 4125\text{ cm}^{-1}$ corresponds to H_2 adsorbed at more weakly interacting secondary sites within the pores. At lower pressures, the peak area of the Ni^{2+} -bound H_2 is significantly larger than that of the peak area at the secondary sites, indicating a substantially higher H_2 binding enthalpy.

As the gas pressure is increased, the area of the secondary site peak grows with the corresponding increase in adsorbed H_2 within the pores. A commensurate increase is not seen for the Ni^{2+} -bound H_2 , as saturation of these sites prior to the occupation of secondary sites is likely. A comparison of the peak areas calculated from these spectra, which should be proportional to the H_2 loading, shows good agreement with the isotherm data when a single linear scaling factor (used to compare absolute adsorption from isotherms to the relative adsorption determined by infrared spectroscopy) is applied to the peaks areas at each temperature (Figures S11–S19), especially at pressures below 60 bar. The small standard deviations for the observed scaling factors (<0.8 for all temperatures and <0.3 for 198 and 233 K) support the validity of this method (Table S6).

Figure 7 displays infrared spectra collected for $Ni_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ at approximately equivalent H_2 loadings at various temperatures and pressures. The results illustrate how the loading of each of the two types of adsorption sites (Ni^{2+} centers at 4035 cm^{-1} and more weakly physisorbing sites at 4125 cm^{-1}) changes as a function of temperature. At 273 K and 70 bar, the area under the peaks for each binding site are approximately equal, indicating an even distribution of bound H_2 between the open Ni^{2+} sites and other sites within the pores. As the temperature is decreased, the pressure drops as more H_2 adsorbs in the material, and the peak at 4035 cm^{-1} begins to grow while the peak at 4125 cm^{-1} shrinks, indicating a shift

toward more adsorption at the open Ni²⁺ sites. At 198 K and 10 bar, most of the adsorbed H₂ is bound to the open metal sites. This confirmation of the temperature dependence of the binding site population, while expected, is quite interesting and illustrates the importance of operating conditions when considering the use of an adsorbent in a hydrogen storage system.

CONCLUSIONS

Selected high-performance metal–organic frameworks were evaluated for their H₂ adsorption properties under conditions relevant to on-board storage in motor vehicles. Adsorption isotherms in the pressure range of 0–100 bar were measured for the materials Co₂(*m*-dobdc), Ni₂(*m*-dobdc), Co₂(dobdc), and Ni₂(dobdc), which contain a high density of coordinatively unsaturated metal sites, as well as for MOF-5, which does not. Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) is the top-performing material with respect to the critical metric of usable volumetric H₂ capacity at pressures between 5 and 100 bar and near-ambient temperatures. To our knowledge, this compound displays the highest physisorptive hydrogen storage capacity of any known adsorbent under these conditions. Its high capacity is attributable to the presence of highly polarizing Ni²⁺ adsorption sites, which lead to large binding enthalpies and a dense packing of H₂ within the material. This conclusion is supported by the results of temperature-programmed desorption, *in situ* powder neutron diffraction, and *in situ* infrared spectroscopy experiments performed under relevant conditions. The results provide benchmark data for comparison with future generations of adsorbents designed for hydrogen storage. In particular, efforts are underway to create new metal–organic frameworks with low-coordinate metal cations capable of binding multiple H₂ molecules at enthalpies in the optimal range of –15 to –20 kJ/mol. Lastly, this study highlights the importance of adsorption conditions in the evaluation of materials and the superior performance of metal–organic frameworks containing open metal coordination sites for physisorptive H₂ storage.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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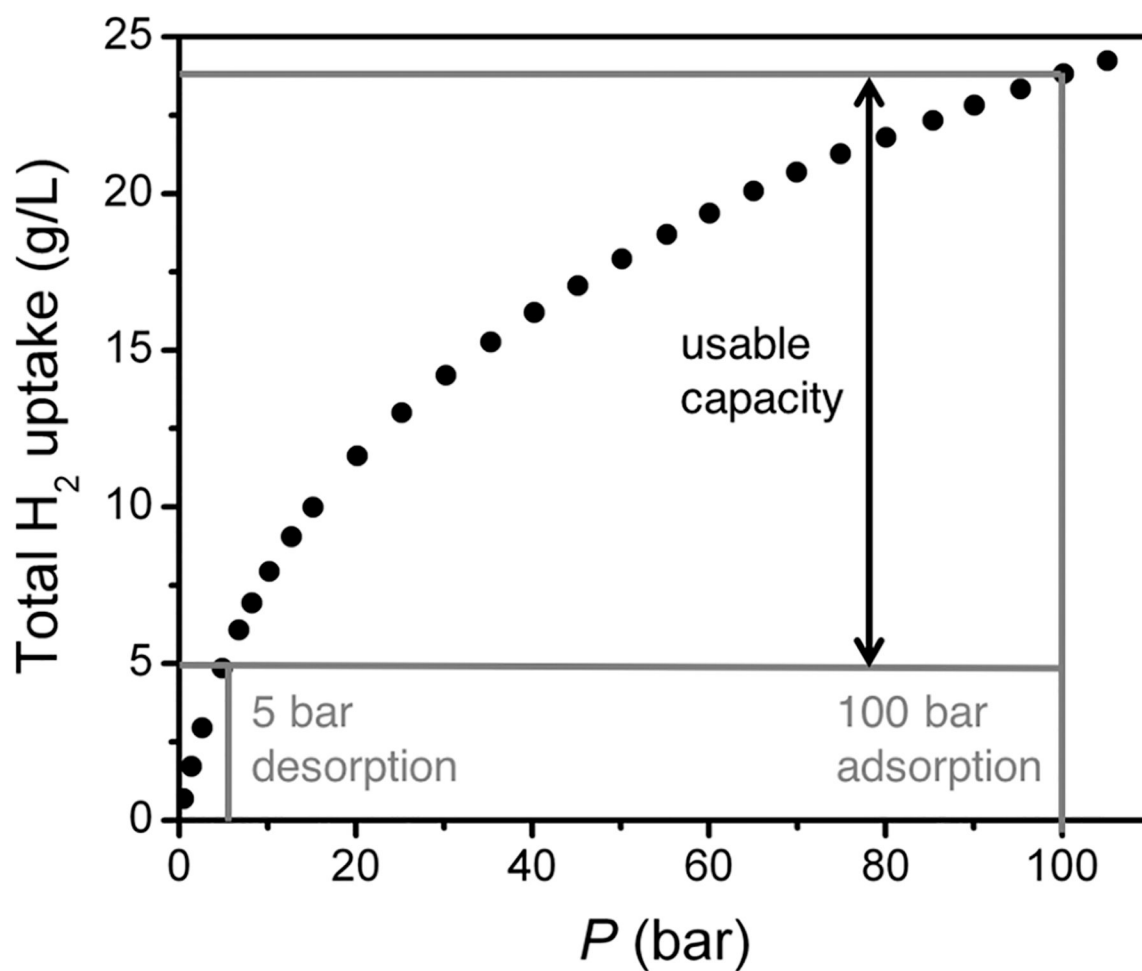


Figure 1.

An illustration of how usable capacity is calculated, considering adsorption at 100 bar and desorption at 5 bar. For MOFs, usable volumetric capacity is determined from the total uptake and crystallographic density of the material for easy comparison across multiple studies.

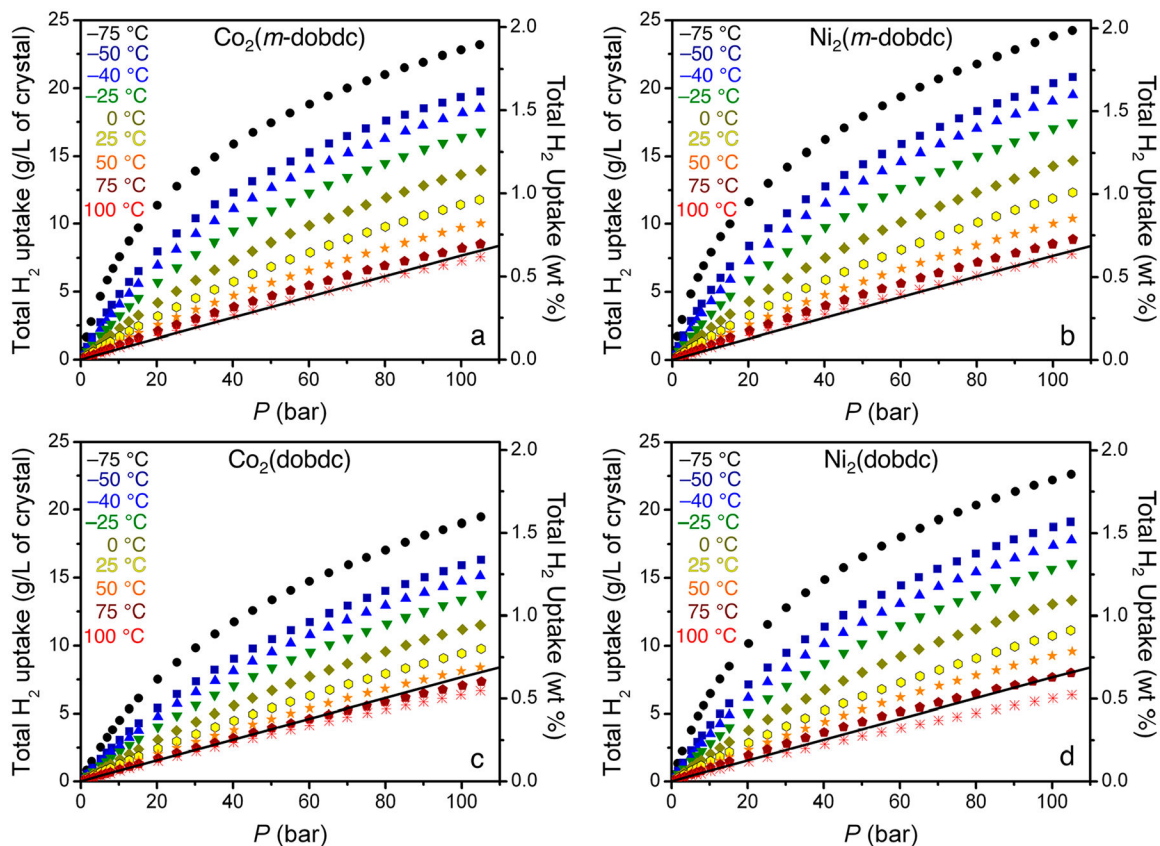


Figure 2.

Hydrogen adsorption isotherms for (a) $\text{Co}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$, (b) $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$, (c) $\text{Co}_2(\text{dobdc})$, and (d) $\text{Ni}_2(\text{dobdc})$ at -75 (black circles), -50 (navy squares), -40 (blue triangles), -25 (green upside-down triangles), 0 (gold diamonds), 25 (yellow hexagons), 50 (orange stars), 75 (dark red pentagons), and 100 °C (bright red crosses) measured between 0 and 100 bar and plotted in terms of total volumetric and gravimetric capacity. The black line in each plot represents the volumetric density of pure compressed H_2 at 25 °C.

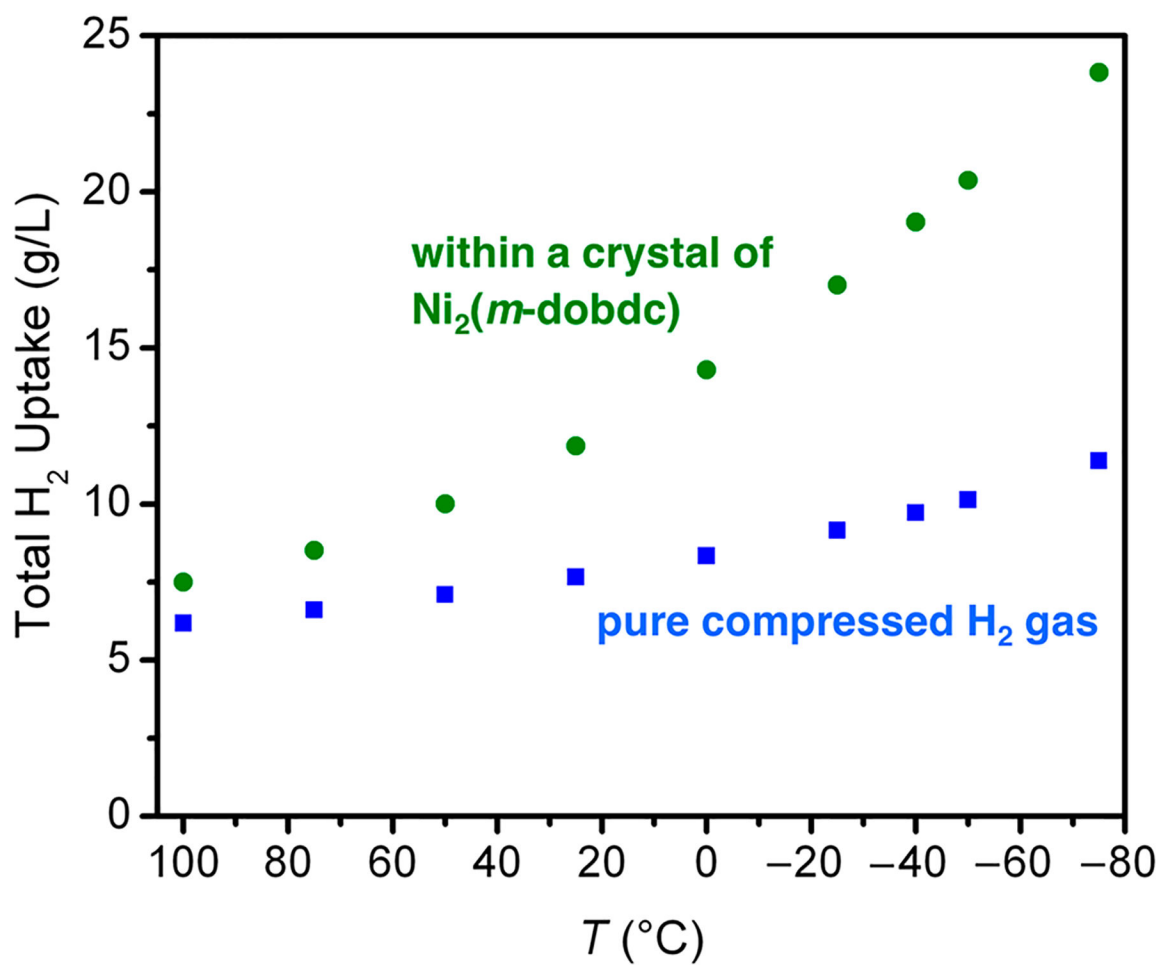


Figure 3. Comparison of the total volumetric capacities of $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ (green circles) and pure compressed H_2 (blue squares), both at 100 bar. Decreasing temperature leads to an increase in the advantage $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ has over pure H_2 in terms of total volumetric capacity.

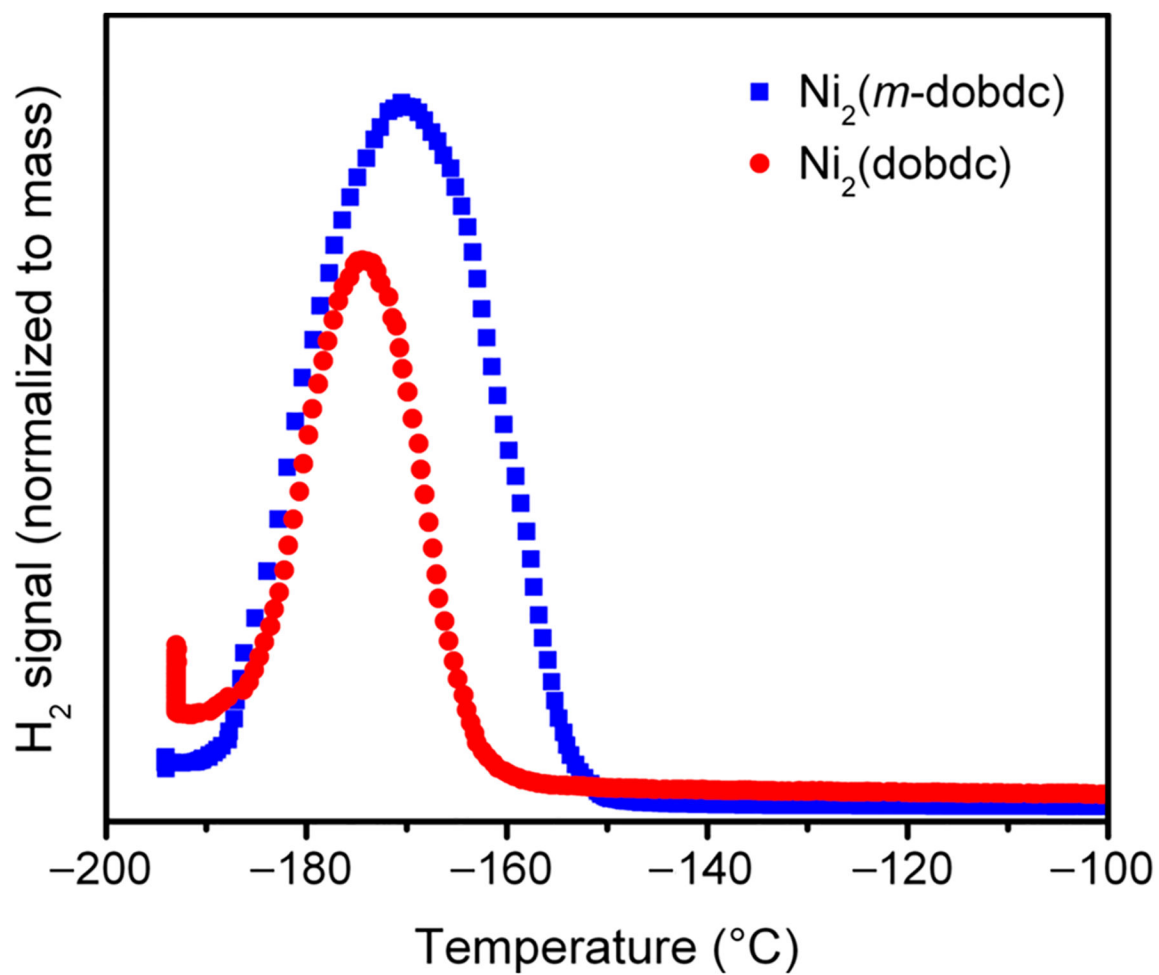


Figure 4. Temperature-programmed desorption of H₂ in Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) and Ni₂(dobdc). Note the difference in desorption temperature between Ni₂(*m*-dobdc) and Ni₂(dobdc).

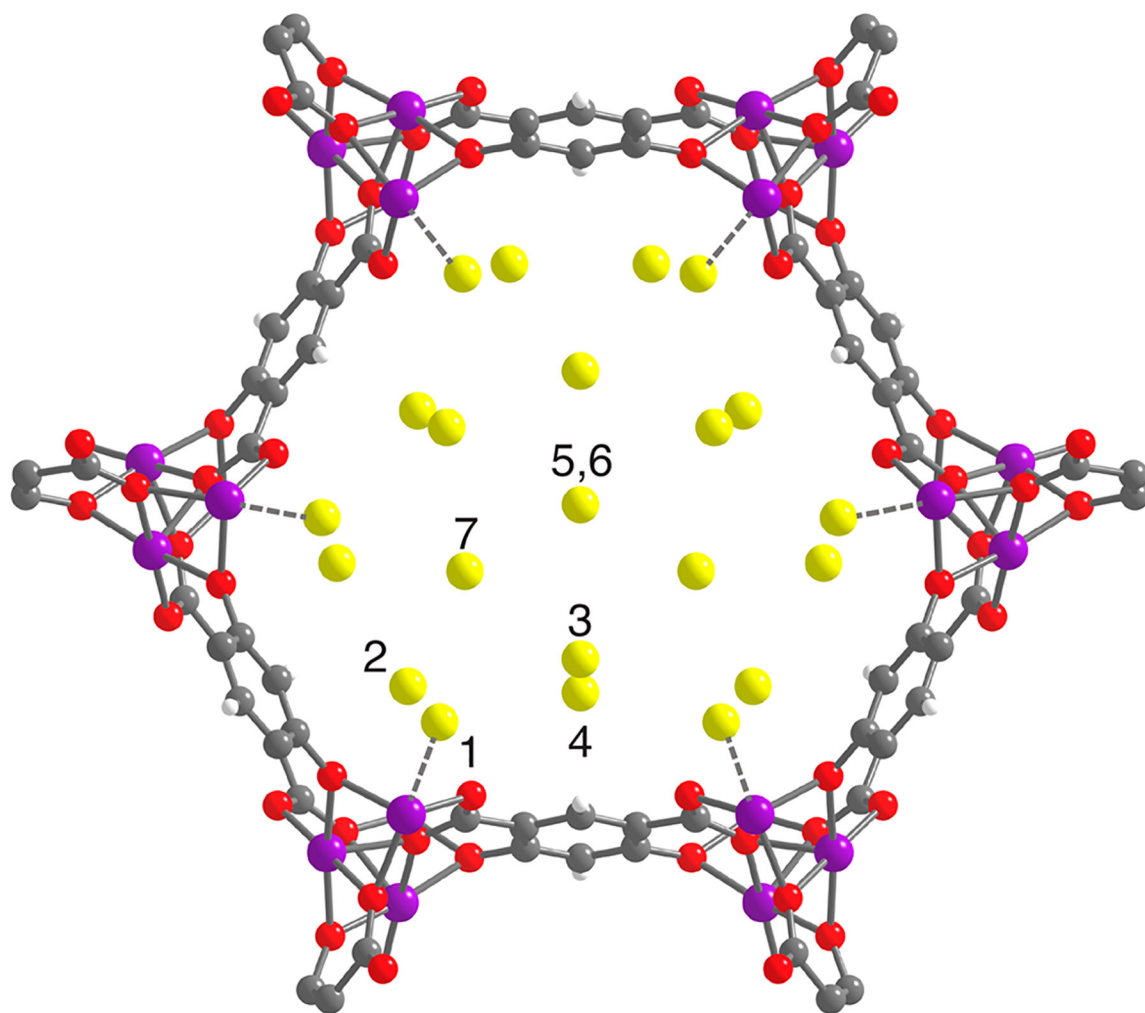


Figure 5.
A single pore of $\text{Co}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ showing the seven distinct D_2 binding sites as determined from neutron diffraction data. Purple, red, gray, white, and yellow spheres represent Co, O, C, and H atoms and D_2 molecules, respectively.

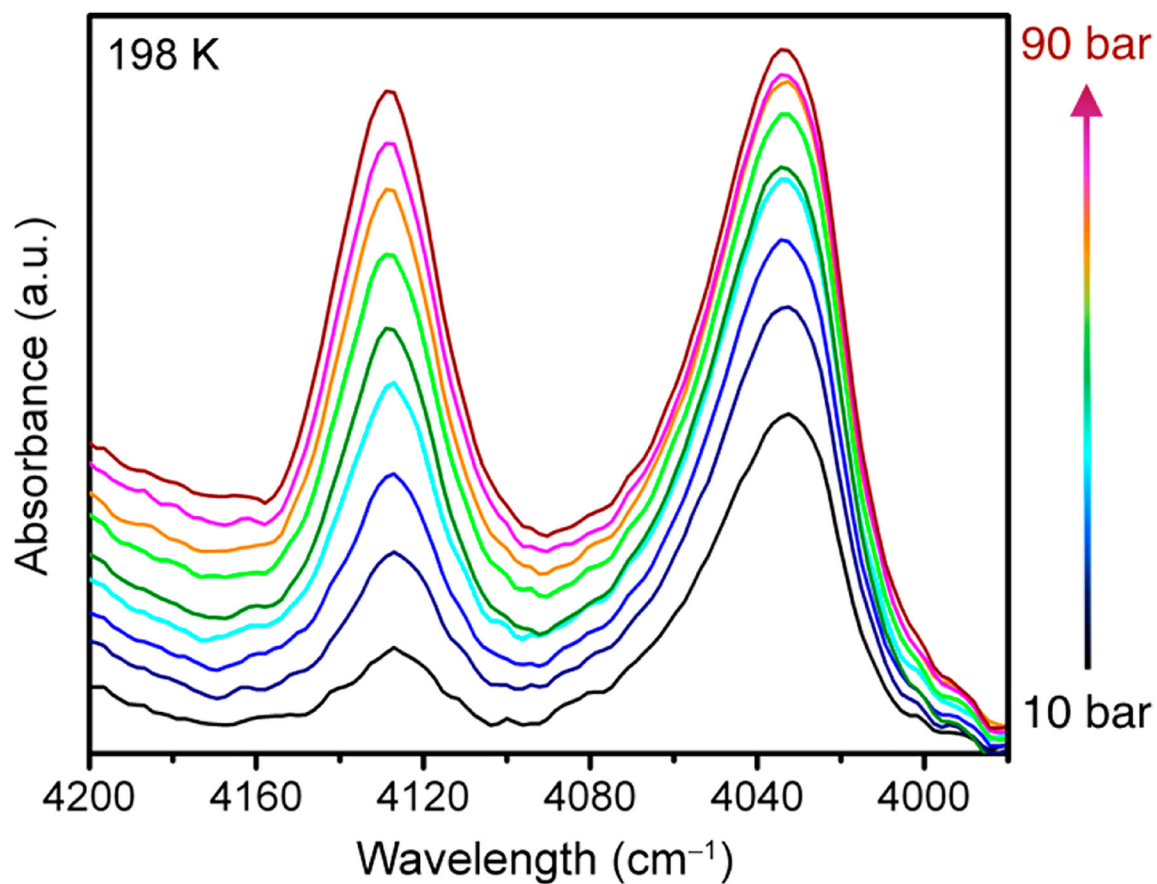


Figure 6. *In situ* H_2 -dosed infrared spectroscopy of $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ at 198 K with H_2 pressure between 10 and 90 bar. Note that the spectra have been offset for clarity. The peak on the right corresponds to H_2 bound to the open Ni^{2+} site, and the peak on the left corresponds to H_2 bound at secondary sites within the pores.

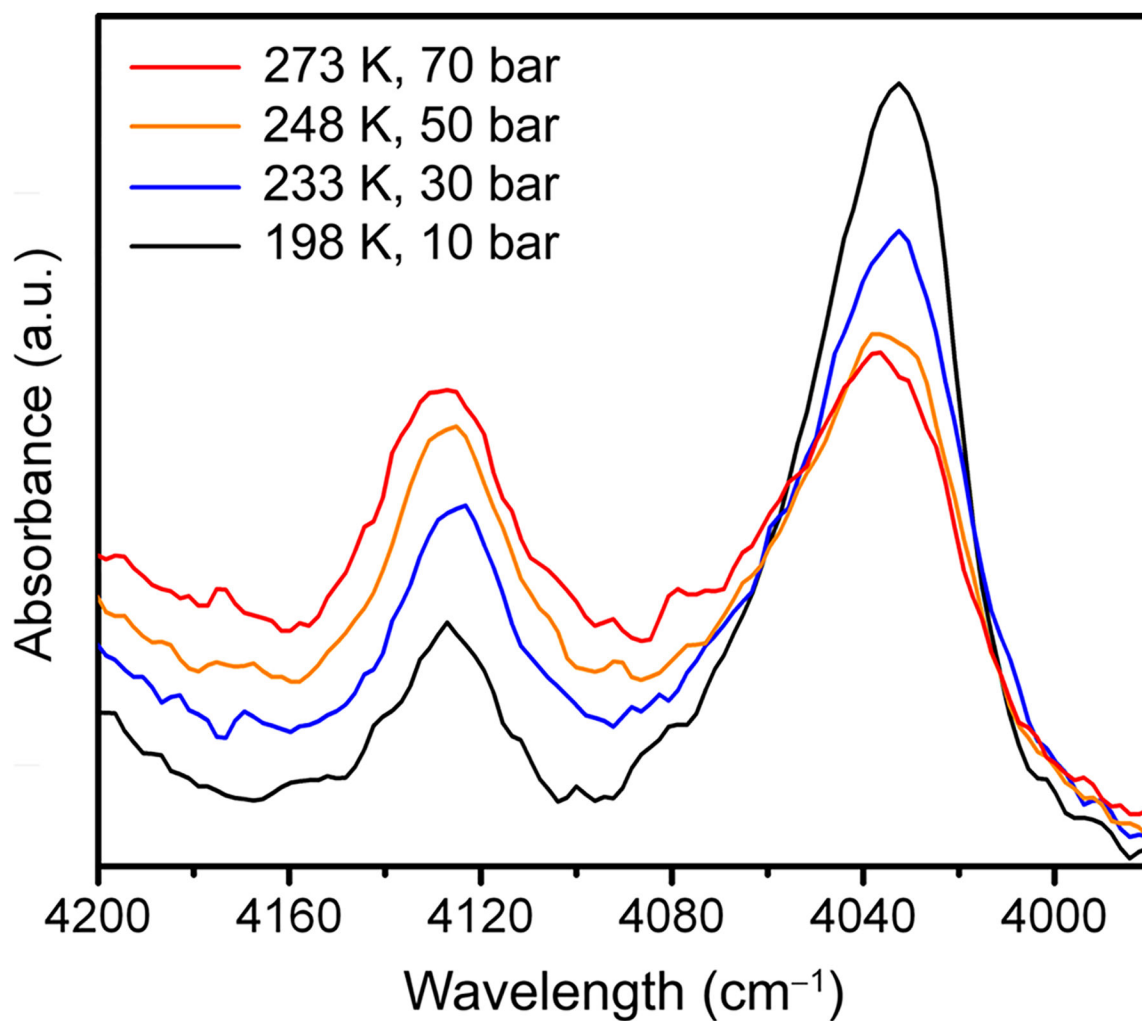


Figure 7. Comparison of infrared spectra with approximately constant adsorption of H_2 in $\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$ based on total peak area for each spectrum. Note the change in relative peak areas from approximately equal loading of open Ni^{2+} sites ($\sim 4035 \text{ cm}^{-1}$) and other sites ($\sim 4125 \text{ cm}^{-1}$) at 273 K and 70 bar to a much higher concentration of H_2 bound to the open Ni^{2+} sites at 198 K and 10 bar.

Table 1.Selected US DOE Targets for the Onboard Storage of Hydrogen in Light-Duty Fuel Cell Vehicles³³

storage parameter	units	2020	ultimate
system gravimetric H ₂ capacity	kg H ₂ /kg system, kWh/kg	0.045, 1.5	0.065, 2.2
system volumetric H ₂ capacity	g H ₂ /L system, kWh/L	30, 1.0	50, 1.7
storage system cost	\$/kg H ₂ stored, \$/gge at pump	333, 4	266, 4
operating ambient temperature	°C	−40 to 60	−40 to 60
min/max delivery temperature	°C	−40 to 85	−40 to 85
operational cycle life (¼ tank to full)	cycles	1500	1500
min delivery pressure from storage system	bar (abs)	5	5
max delivery pressure from storage system	bar (abs)	12	12
system fill time (5 kg)	min	3–5	3–5

Table 2.

Comparison of the Volumetric Usable Capacities in g/L for Selected Temperature Swings

	$\text{Co}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$	$\text{Ni}_2(m\text{-dobdc})$	$\text{Co}_2(\text{dobdc})$	$\text{Ni}_2(\text{dobdc})$	MOF-5
25 °C, no swing	10.5	11.0	8.8	9.9	8.8
-75 °C, no swing	18.2	19.0	16.5	18.4	15.8
-40 to 25 °C	17.3	18.2	14.0	16.6	12.8
-75 to 25 °C	21.9	23.0	18.3	21.4	16.5
-75 to 100 °C	22.3	23.4	18.6	21.8	16.7

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Table 3.

Selected D₂···D₂ Distances within Co₂(*m*-dobdc) as Determined from Powder Neutron Diffraction Collected at 77 K and 78 bar^a

D ₂ ···D ₂ interaction	distance (Å)
1···2	2.86(3)
2···2	3.08(3)
3···4	3.12(5)
4···5	3.41(3)
solid H ₂ ⁵⁵	3.21

^aNumbers in parentheses indicate one standard deviation in the value.