

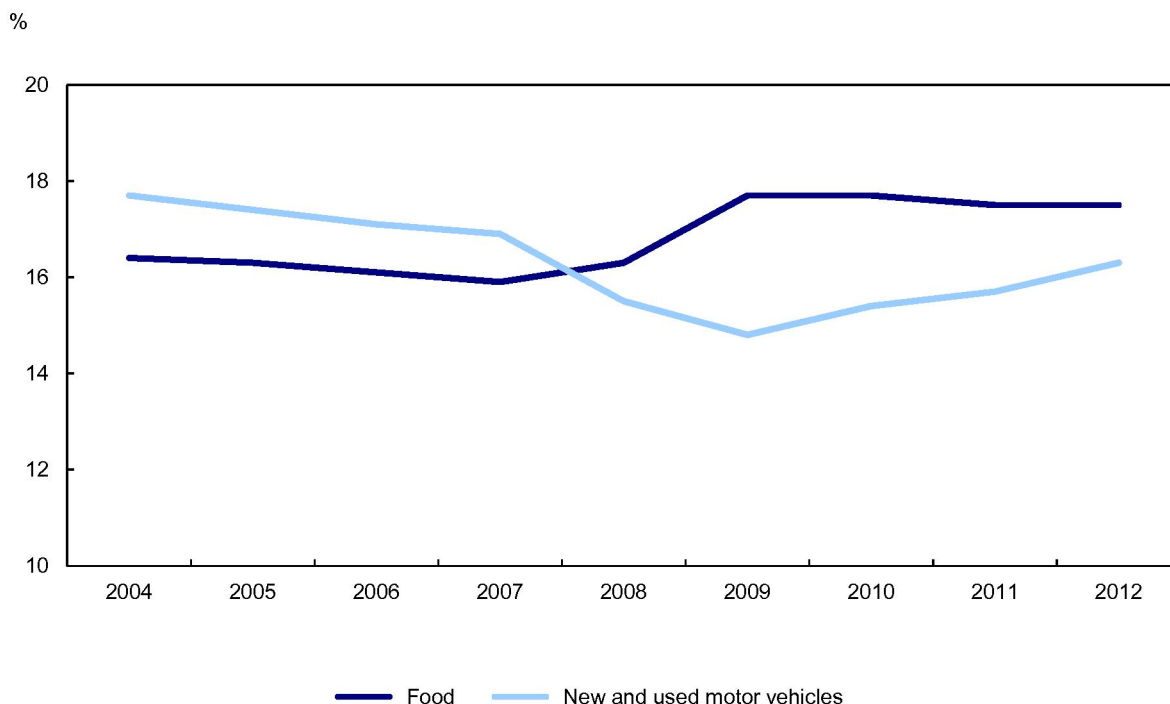
Retail at a glance, 2004 to 2012

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Food and new and used motor vehicles are the commodities that account for the largest shares of retail spending in Canada. In recent years there have been changes in the share of these products within total retail sales. As well, there has been a shift in the type of store where food is being purchased.

From 2004 to 2007, the share of retail spending for motor vehicles sales was about one percentage point higher than that of food. This changed in 2008, as a larger share of the retail dollar was spent on frequently purchased goods, such as food, and less on big ticket items, like motor vehicles.

Chart 1
Canada's most purchased commodities at retail stores



Purchases of consumer durable goods, such as motor vehicles, are generally easier to postpone or bring forward in response to economic conditions than are purchases of non-durable goods, such as food. The difference between the shares of food sales and motor vehicles sales peaked in 2009 at 2.9 percentage points, as fewer consumers purchased motor vehicles during the economic downturn.

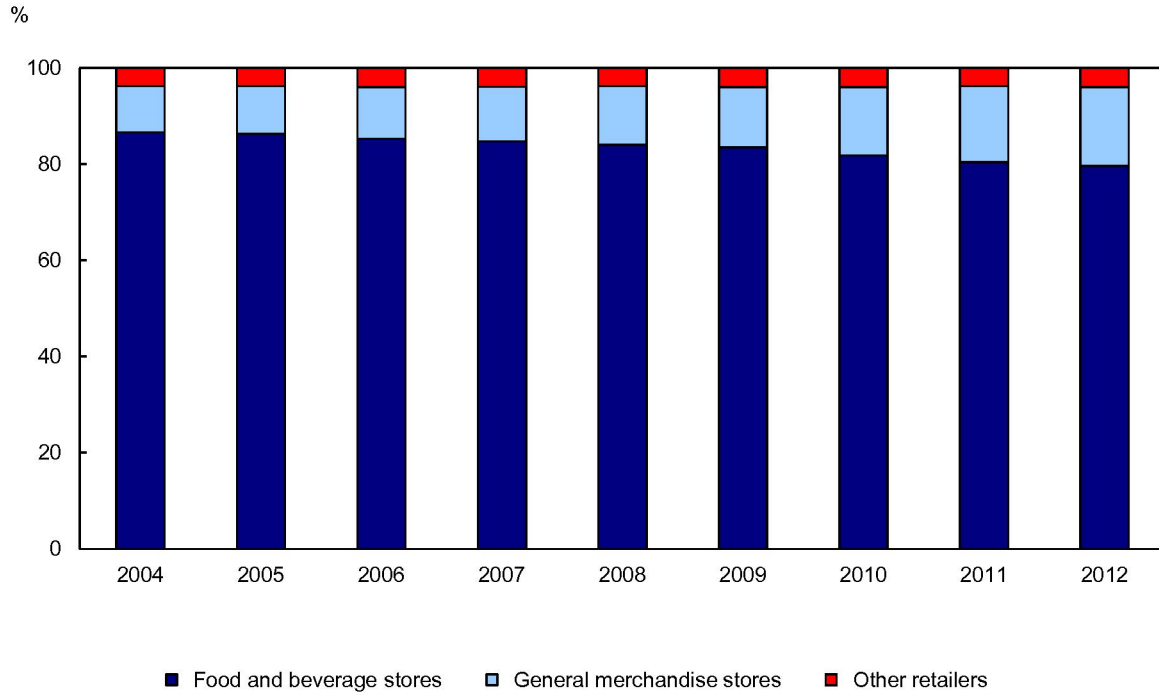
The gap has narrowed each year since 2010. Motor vehicle sales fell, on average, \$4.1 billion in 2008 and 2009, while food sales increased by \$4.2 billion over this two-year period. From 2010 to 2012, sales of new motor vehicles increased, on average, \$4.9 billion a year outpacing the growth in food sales, which averaged \$2.7 billion a year over the same time span.



General merchandise stores compete for food sales

In 2012, food sales at retail stores totalled \$82.2 billion. This translates into 17.5 cents of every retail dollar being spent on food products. From 2004 to 2012, 96 cents of every dollar spent on food was purchased at two types of stores: food and beverage stores and general merchandise stores. Since 2004, there has been a shift in the type of store where food is being purchased, as general merchandise stores have increased the variety of food products they offer to customers.

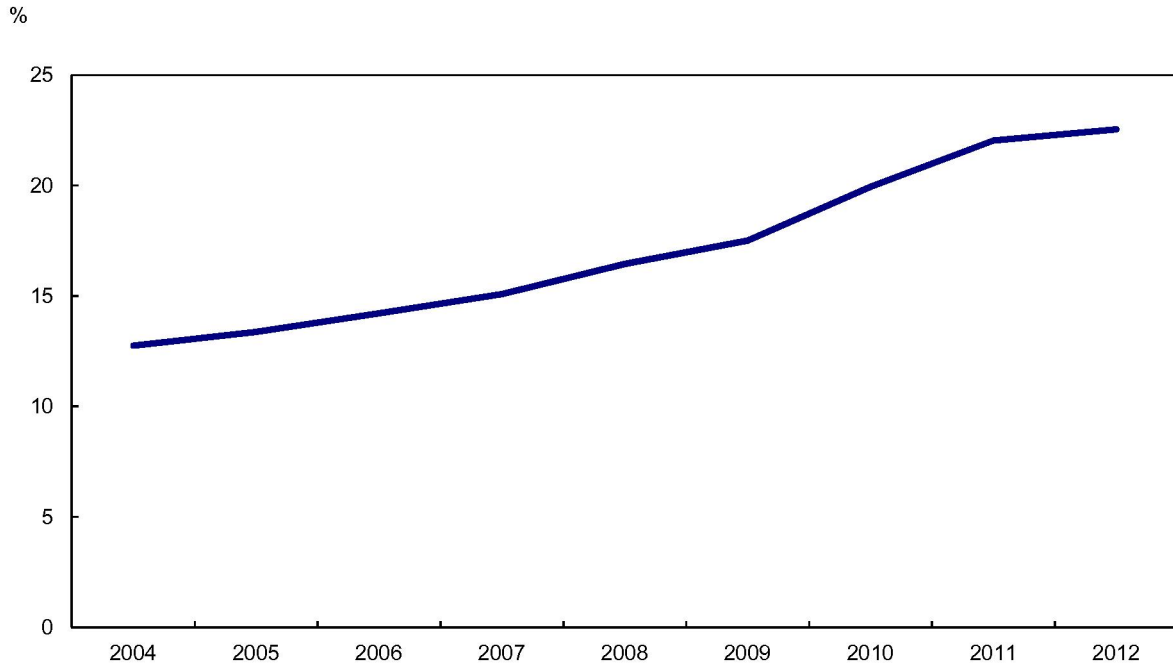
Chart 2
Share of food purchases by store type



In 2012, general merchandise stores accounted for 16.4 cents of every dollar spent on food sales, a 6.8 cent increase from their share in 2004. Conversely, sales at food and beverage stores accounted for 79.6 cents of every food dollar spent in 2012, a decrease of 7.0 cents over the last eight years.

Food sales account for an increasing share of total spending at general merchandise stores. Food purchases represented 22.5 cents of every dollar spent in general merchandise stores in 2012, a 9.8 cent increase from 2004.

Chart 3
Share of food sales at general merchandise stores



Note to readers

This article is referring to two groupings of commodities from the Retail Commodity Survey: Food, excluding pet food, meals and lunches (A1000); and new and used motor vehicles, excluding converted vans (V1000 and V2000).

For a description of the commodities included in these groupings please refer to the [Retail Commodity Survey – Index A](#).

This article examines two subsectors of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS): food and beverage store (NAICS 445) and general merchandise stores (NAICS 452). A full listing of the different store types included in these subsectors can be found in online [NAICS 2012](#).

Available in CANSIM: table 080-0022.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2008.

For more information, or to order data, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca).

For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Mark Switzer (613-951-7137; mark.switzer@statcan.gc.ca), Distributive Trades Division.