

Wholesale trade, March 2019

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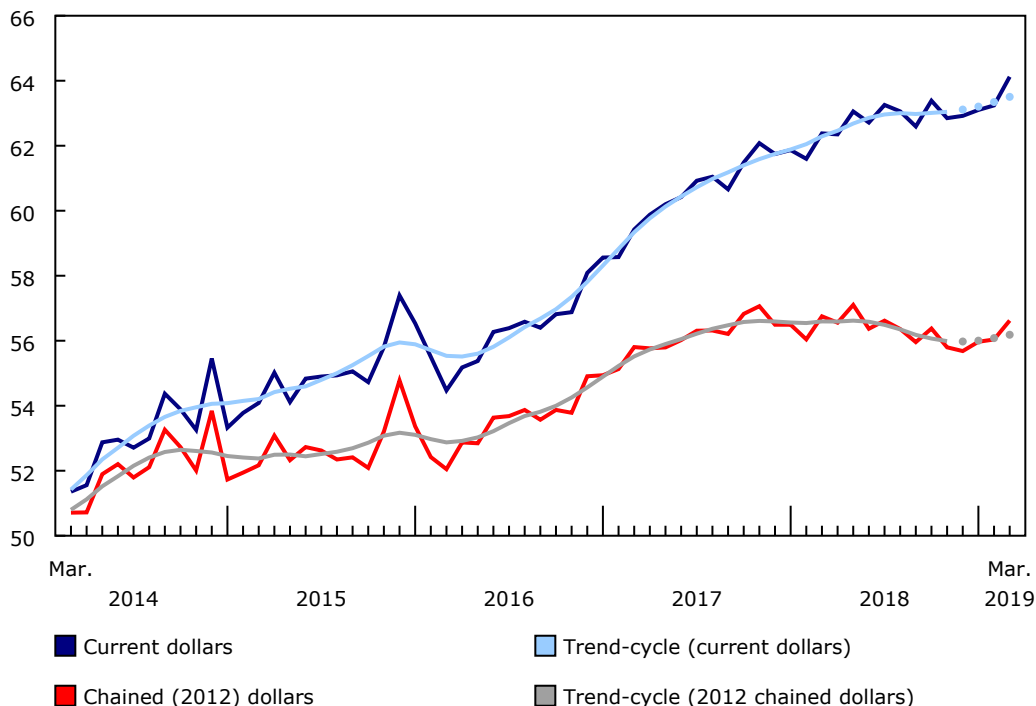
Wholesale sales rose for the fourth consecutive month, up 1.4% to \$64.1 billion in March. Higher sales were recorded in six subsectors, accounting for 82% of total wholesale sales. The motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector was the lone subsector to decline. Excluding this subsector, wholesale sales were up 2.2% in March.

On a quarterly basis, wholesale sales increased 0.7% in the first quarter, on the strength of higher sales in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector in February.

In volume terms, wholesale sales increased 1.0% from February to March.

Chart 1
Wholesale sales increase in March

billions of dollars



Source(s): Tables [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0003-01](#).

The building material and supplies and the machinery, equipment and supplies subsectors lead gains in March

Following a 5.0% decline in February, the building material and supplies subsector was up 4.5% to \$9.0 billion in March on the strength of higher sales in the lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies (+6.7% to \$4.3 billion) and the electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies (+5.3% to \$2.9 billion) industries. Exports of lumber and other sawmill and millwork products were up 5.2% in March. In volume terms, sales in this subsector increased 3.8%. In the first quarter, sales in this subsector declined 1.5%, the third consecutive quarterly decline.



In dollar terms, the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector reported the second largest increase in March (+2.9% to \$13.5 billion), more than offsetting a 1.8% decline in February. Higher sales in the construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies (+5.7% to \$4.3 billion) and the computer and communications equipment and supplies (+5.4% to \$4.3 billion) industries contributed the most to the gain. On a quarterly basis, this subsector was up 0.2%, the sixth consecutive quarterly increase.

Sales in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector decreased 2.0% to \$11.3 billion as all three industries declined in March. Lower sales in the motor vehicle and parts industry (-2.0% to \$9.0 billion) contributed the most to the decrease. On a quarterly basis, following four consecutive quarterly declines, sales in this subsector rose 5.3% in the first quarter, due to higher sales (+9.3% to a record \$11.6 billion) in February.

Higher sales in eight provinces

Wholesale sales rose in eight provinces in March, which together represented 48% of total wholesale sales in Canada. Alberta posted the highest increase in sales, followed by British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec.

Following three consecutive monthly declines, sales in Alberta increased 4.6% to \$6.7 billion in March. Sales were up in six of seven subsectors, led by the machinery, equipment and supplies (+5.9%) and the miscellaneous (+8.4%) subsectors.

In British Columbia, sales increased for the first time in 2019, up 2.9% to \$6.4 billion in March. Five of seven subsectors recorded gains in March, with the building, materials and supplies (+6.5%) and the machinery, equipment and supplies (+6.3%) subsectors contributing the most.

Sales in Manitoba rose 10.9% to \$1.8 billion in March with five subsectors reporting higher sales, including the miscellaneous (+28.7%), the building material and supplies (+17.8%) and the machinery, equipment and supplies (+10.8%) subsectors.

In Quebec, sales rose 1.3% to \$11.8 billion, with higher sales in five of seven subsectors. The personal and household goods (+3.4%) and the building material and supplies (+3.1%) subsectors contributed the most to the gain in March.

Sales in Ontario edged down 0.1% to \$33.0 billion in March. Lower sales in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories (-2.0%), the miscellaneous (-1.7%) and the food, beverage and tobacco (-0.4%) subsectors more than offset higher sales elsewhere.

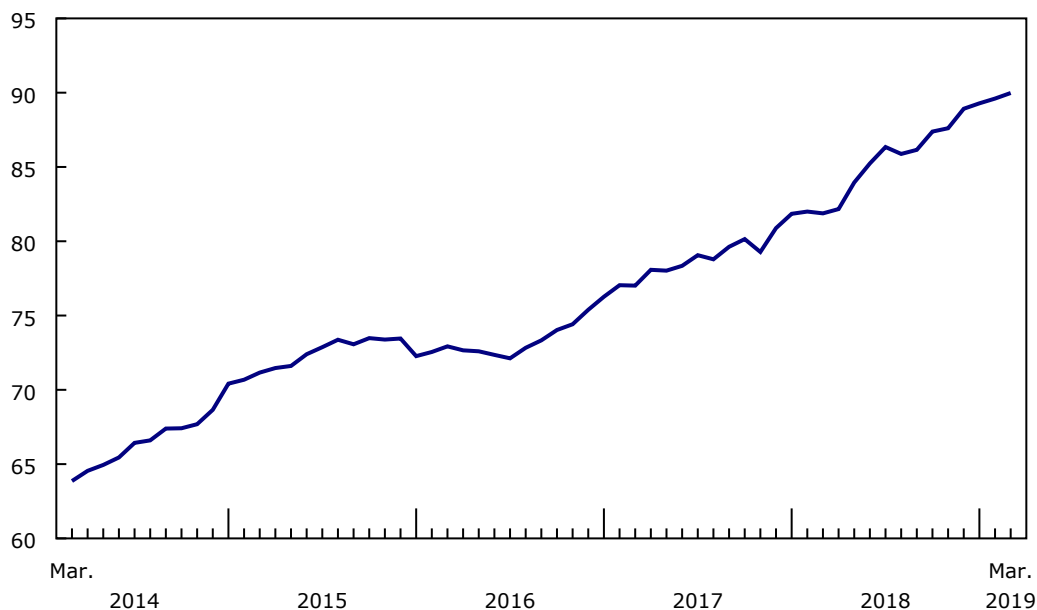
In the first quarter, seven provinces recorded higher sales, led by Ontario, which increased 1.3% from the fourth quarter of 2018. Meanwhile, Alberta (-1.9%) posted the largest quarter-over-quarter decline, followed by British Columbia (-1.3%).

Inventories rise in March

Wholesale inventories increased for the seventh consecutive month, up 0.4% to \$90.0 billion in March. Gains were recorded in four of seven subsectors, which together represented 73% of total wholesale inventories.

Chart 2 Inventories rise in March

billions of dollars



Source(s): Table [20-10-0076-01](#).

Inventories in the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector increased for the second consecutive month, up 1.2% to \$26.3 billion, led by the construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies industry (+2.0%).

In the personal and household goods subsector, inventories rose for the fourth consecutive month, up 2.1% to \$15.4 billion in March. Higher inventories were recorded in three of six industries.

Following two consecutive monthly increases, inventories in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector declined 2.5% to \$12.6 billion in March. The new motor vehicle parts and accessories industry (-5.3%) contributed the most to the decline.

Inventories in the miscellaneous subsector decreased for a second time in three months, down 0.8% to \$11.2 billion. The paper, paper product and disposable plastic product (-6.0%) and the agricultural supplies (-0.7%) industries led the decline.

The inventory-to-sales ratio decreased from 1.42 in February to 1.40 in March. This ratio is a measure of the time in months required to exhaust inventories if sales were to remain at their current level.

Table 1
Wholesale merchants' sales by industry – Seasonally adjusted

| | March 2018 ^r | February 2019 ^r | March 2019 ^p | February to March 2019 | March 2018 to March 2019 |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Total, wholesale sales (current dollars) | 62,380 | 63,241 | 64,122 | 1.4 | 2.8 |
| Total, wholesale sales (2012 chained dollars) | 56,751 | 56,038 | 56,621 | 1.0 | -0.2 |
| Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts | 50,822 | 51,660 | 52,777 | 2.2 | 3.8 |
| Farm product | 816 | 793 | 815 | 2.8 | -0.1 |
| Food, beverage and tobacco | 11,618 | 11,869 | 11,917 | 0.4 | 2.6 |
| Food | 10,393 | 10,597 | 10,703 | 1.0 | 3.0 |
| Beverage | 640 | 658 | 645 | -2.1 | 0.8 |
| Cigarette and tobacco product | 585 | 614 | 569 | -7.3 | -2.8 |
| Personal and household goods | 8,756 | 8,792 | 8,979 | 2.1 | 2.6 |
| Textile, clothing and footwear | 1,154 | 1,131 | 1,135 | 0.3 | -1.6 |
| Home entertainment equipment and household appliance | 782 | 677 | 743 | 9.7 | -5.0 |
| Home furnishings | 600 | 553 | 555 | 0.3 | -7.4 |
| Personal goods | 791 | 920 | 930 | 1.0 | 17.6 |
| Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies | 4,635 | 4,733 | 4,745 | 0.3 | 2.4 |
| Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries | 795 | 777 | 871 | 12.1 | 9.5 |
| Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories | 11,558 | 11,580 | 11,345 | -2.0 | -1.8 |
| Motor vehicle | 9,390 | 9,196 | 9,010 | -2.0 | -4.0 |
| New motor vehicle parts and accessories | 2,110 | 2,314 | 2,268 | -2.0 | 7.5 |
| Used motor vehicle parts and accessories | 57 | 70 | 66 | -5.8 | 16.2 |
| Building material and supplies | 9,262 | 8,615 | 9,004 | 4.5 | -2.8 |
| Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies | 2,778 | 2,778 | 2,925 | 5.3 | 5.3 |
| Metal service centres | 1,882 | 1,793 | 1,764 | -1.6 | -6.3 |
| Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies | 4,601 | 4,044 | 4,314 | 6.7 | -6.2 |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies | 12,708 | 13,088 | 13,469 | 2.9 | 6.0 |
| Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment | 1,821 | 1,687 | 1,703 | 1.0 | -6.5 |
| Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies | 3,927 | 4,093 | 4,326 | 5.7 | 10.2 |
| Computer and communications equipment and supplies | 3,817 | 4,064 | 4,283 | 5.4 | 12.2 |
| Other machinery, equipment and supplies | 3,143 | 3,244 | 3,157 | -2.7 | 0.4 |
| Miscellaneous | 7,662 | 8,504 | 8,593 | 1.0 | 12.1 |
| Recyclable material | 987 | 892 | 992 | 11.2 | 0.6 |
| Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product | 1,081 | 1,063 | 1,051 | -1.1 | -2.7 |
| Agricultural supplies | 1,999 | 2,383 | 2,454 | 3.0 | 22.8 |
| Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product | 1,459 | 1,522 | 1,537 | 0.9 | 5.3 |
| Other miscellaneous | 2,137 | 2,644 | 2,559 | -3.2 | 19.7 |

^r revised

^p preliminary

Note(s): Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Source(s): Tables [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0003-01](#).

Table 2
Wholesale merchants' sales by province and territory – Seasonally adjusted

| | March 2018 ^r | February 2019 ^r | March 2019 ^p | February to March 2019 | March 2018 to March 2019 |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Canada | 62,380 | 63,241 | 64,122 | 1.4 | 2.8 |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 349 | 380 | 380 | 0.2 | 8.8 |
| Prince Edward Island | 67 | 82 | 82 | -0.3 | 22.2 |
| Nova Scotia | 845 | 844 | 884 | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| New Brunswick | 524 | 554 | 605 | 9.2 | 15.4 |
| Quebec | 11,126 | 11,647 | 11,794 | 1.3 | 6.0 |
| Ontario | 32,478 | 32,991 | 32,961 | -0.1 | 1.5 |
| Manitoba | 1,585 | 1,587 | 1,761 | 10.9 | 11.1 |
| Saskatchewan | 2,092 | 2,439 | 2,454 | 0.6 | 17.3 |
| Alberta | 6,739 | 6,421 | 6,718 | 4.6 | -0.3 |
| British Columbia | 6,490 | 6,224 | 6,403 | 2.9 | -1.3 |
| Yukon | 16 | 10 | 16 | 63.8 | -0.5 |
| Northwest Territories | 59 | 51 | 50 | -1.5 | -15.3 |
| Nunavut | 11 | 11 | 15 | 32.3 | 37.7 |

^r revised

^p preliminary

Note(s): Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Source(s): Table [20-10-0074-01](#).

Table 3
Wholesale merchants' inventories by industry – Seasonally adjusted

| | March 2018 ^r | February 2019 ^r | March 2019 ^p | February to March 2019 | March 2018 to March 2019 |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Total, wholesale inventories | 81,877 | 89,604 | 89,979 | 0.4 | 9.9 |
| Farm product | 192 | 157 | 156 | -1.0 | -18.6 |
| Food, beverage and tobacco | 8,223 | 8,947 | 9,025 | 0.9 | 9.8 |
| Food | 7,462 | 8,039 | 8,134 | 1.2 | 9.0 |
| Beverage | 478 | 589 | 581 | -1.3 | 21.6 |
| Cigarette and tobacco product | 283 | 320 | 309 | -3.2 | 9.4 |
| Personal and household goods | 13,997 | 15,081 | 15,392 | 2.1 | 10.0 |
| Textile, clothing and footwear | 2,582 | 3,037 | 3,204 | 5.5 | 24.1 |
| Home entertainment equipment and household appliance | 1,004 | 1,026 | 1,020 | -0.6 | 1.6 |
| Home furnishings | 1,399 | 1,439 | 1,444 | 0.4 | 3.2 |
| Personal goods | 1,847 | 2,095 | 2,014 | -3.9 | 9.0 |
| Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies | 6,147 | 6,501 | 6,658 | 2.4 | 8.3 |
| Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries | 1,018 | 984 | 1,052 | 7.0 | 3.4 |
| Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories | 11,866 | 12,918 | 12,597 | -2.5 | 6.2 |
| Motor vehicle | 6,866 | 7,462 | 7,425 | -0.5 | 8.2 |
| New motor vehicle parts and accessories | 4,920 | 5,373 | 5,087 | -5.3 | 3.4 |
| Used motor vehicle parts and accessories | 81 | 83 | 85 | 2.2 | 5.3 |
| Building material and supplies | 13,845 | 15,248 | 15,326 | 0.5 | 10.7 |
| Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies | 3,957 | 4,177 | 4,261 | 2.0 | 7.7 |
| Metal service centres | 3,912 | 4,779 | 4,644 | -2.8 | 18.7 |
| Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies | 5,976 | 6,292 | 6,421 | 2.1 | 7.4 |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies | 23,581 | 25,975 | 26,299 | 1.2 | 11.5 |
| Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment | 6,665 | 6,907 | 6,900 | -0.1 | 3.5 |
| Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies | 10,327 | 11,897 | 12,135 | 2.0 | 17.5 |
| Computer and communications equipment and supplies | 2,229 | 2,525 | 2,548 | 0.9 | 14.3 |
| Other machinery, equipment and supplies | 4,359 | 4,647 | 4,715 | 1.5 | 8.2 |
| Miscellaneous | 10,172 | 11,276 | 11,185 | -0.8 | 10.0 |
| Recyclable material | 954 | 820 | 860 | 4.8 | -9.9 |
| Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product | 782 | 888 | 834 | -6.0 | 6.7 |
| Agricultural supplies | 4,153 | 4,760 | 4,726 | -0.7 | 13.8 |
| Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product | 1,375 | 1,526 | 1,511 | -1.0 | 9.9 |
| Other miscellaneous | 2,908 | 3,282 | 3,253 | -0.9 | 11.9 |

^r revised

^p preliminary

Note(s): Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Source(s): Table 20-10-0076-01.

Note to readers

This release incorporates annual revisions. Unadjusted monthly wholesale data were revised back to January 2012, while seasonally adjusted data were revised back to January 2009. Factors influencing revisions include the late receipt of respondent information, the correction of information in the data provided, the replacement of estimated figures with actual values (once available), the re-classification of companies within, into and out of the wholesale trade sector and updates to seasonal factors.

Data in volume terms were revised back to January 2004.

The data have been revised using historical linkage factors designed to preserve the continuity of the time series. The linkage method leads to larger revisions for more recent periods.

All data in this release are seasonally adjusted and expressed in current dollars, unless otherwise noted. For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

The Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey covers all industries within the wholesale trade sector as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), with the exception of oilseed and grain merchant wholesalers (NAICS 4112), petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers (NAICS 412) and business-to-business electronic markets, and agents and brokers (NAICS 419).

For information on trend-cycle data, see the [StatCan Blog](#) and [Trend-cycle estimates – Frequently asked questions](#).

Real-time data tables

Real-time data tables 20-10-0019-01, 20-10-0020-01 and 20-10-0005-01 will be updated on June 3.

Next release

Wholesale trade data for April will be released on June 25.

Available tables: [20-10-0003-01](#), [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0076-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2401](#).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca). For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Farzana Choudhury (613-218-0349; farzana.choudhury@canada.ca), Mining, Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade Division.