

Retail trade, April 2020

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Retail sales were down by just over one-quarter (-26.4%) in April to \$34.7 billion and have fallen by one-third (-33.6%) since physical distancing measures were implemented in mid-March. Motor vehicle and parts dealers took the largest hit in April, while online sales surged to a record high, representing 9.5% of the total retail market.

By way of comparison, retail sales (-17.1%) fell in the United States in April and like Canada, sales were down in all 11 comparable subsectors (see Note to readers).

While essential retailers such as supermarkets and other grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, gasoline stations and beer, wine and liquor stores remained open with reduced hours, most Canadian retailers did not offer in-store shopping in April. Nevertheless, many retailers started or expanded their online presence and curbside pick-up services in response to the closures.

Based on respondent feedback, approximately one-third of retailers were closed during April. The average length of shutdown was eight business days. In the clothing and clothing accessories stores subsector, 70.1% of retailers were closed in April for an average of 20 days. Despite these challenging times, many retailers reported their sales figures and Statistics Canada thanks them for their continued collaboration.

Sales were down in all 11 subsectors in April. Motor vehicle and parts dealers, food and beverage stores and gasoline stations were the main contributors to the decrease in April. Over the course of the month, motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations surpassed their record declines in March.

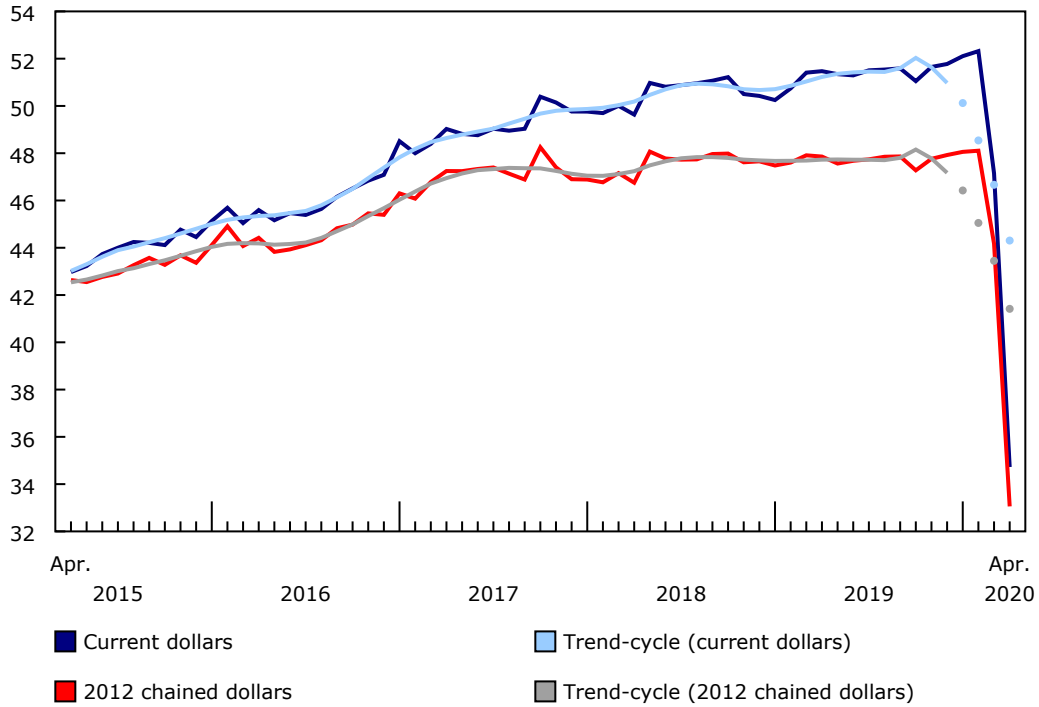
Retail sales in volume terms were down a record 25.2% in April, following an 8.2% decline in March, bringing total sales down by almost one-third (-31.3%) since the onset of the pandemic.

Given the rapidly evolving economic situation, Statistics Canada is providing an advance estimate of May sales. Early estimates suggest that retail sales increased by 19.1% in May. Owing to its preliminary nature, this figure should be expected to be revised.



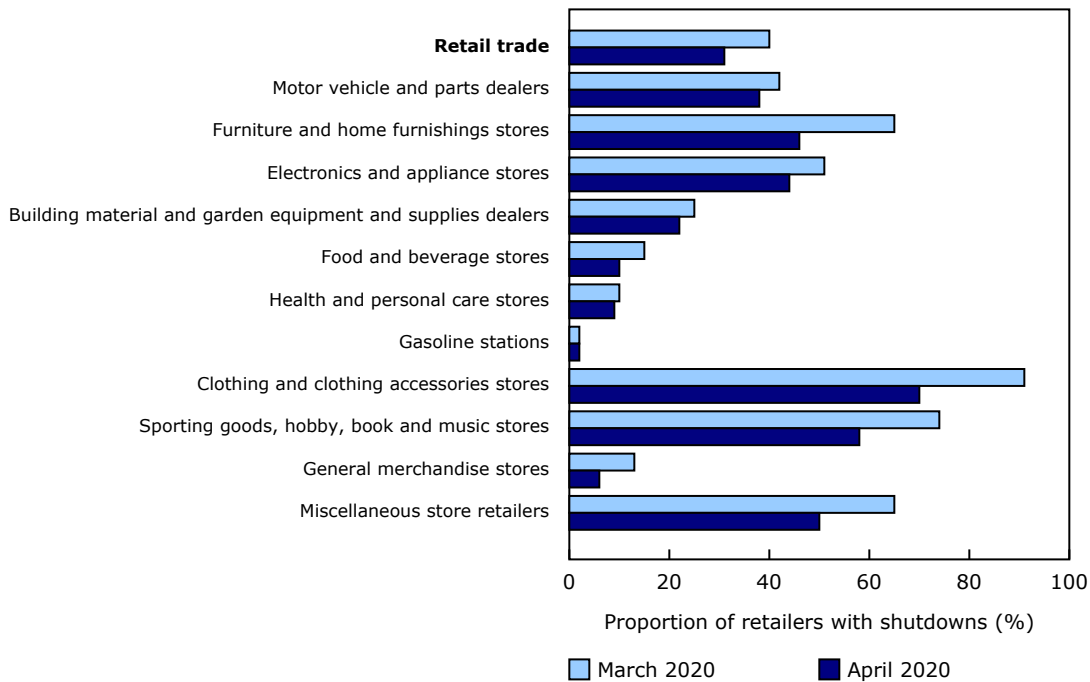
Chart 1
Retail sales decrease in April

billions of dollars



Note(s): The higher variability associated with the trend-cycle estimates is indicated with a dotted line on the chart for the current reference month and the three previous months. For more information, see the note to readers.
Source(s): Tables [20-10-0008-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

Chart 2
Canadian retailers continue to experience shutdowns in April



Source(s): Monthly Retail Trade Survey (2406).

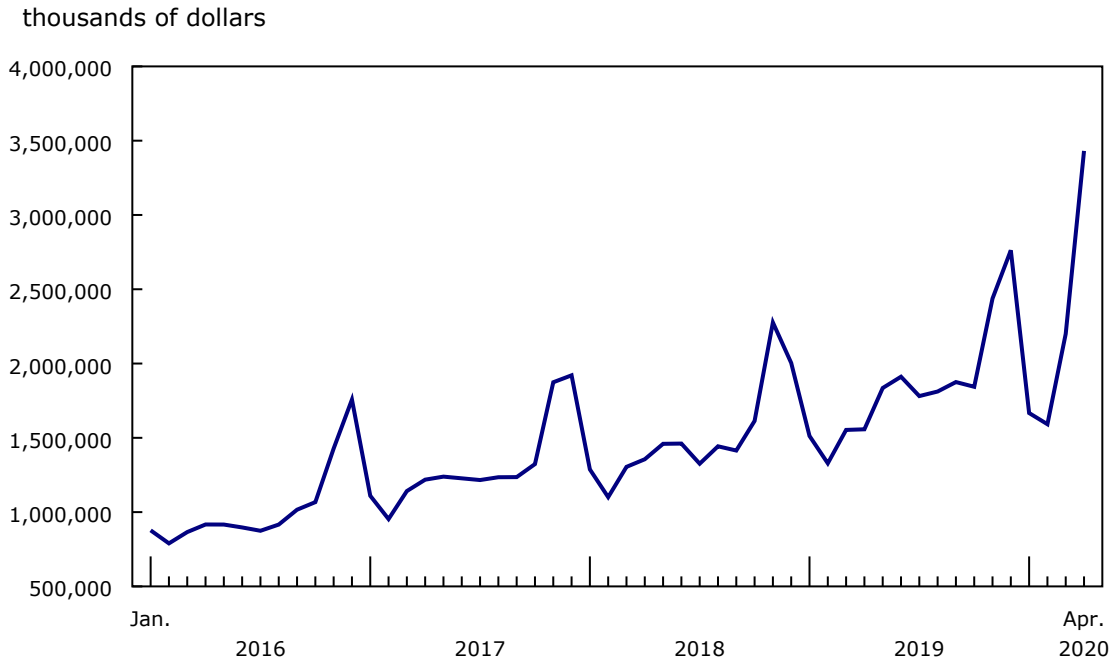
Retail E-commerce sales continue to shine

The COVID-19 pandemic led many Canadian retailers to start or expand their e-commerce platforms in April in response to physical distancing measures and brick and mortar store closures.

On an unadjusted basis (that is, not seasonally adjusted) retail e-commerce sales accounted for a record high of 9.5% (\$3.4 billion) of total retail trade in April. On a year-over-year basis, retail e-commerce more than doubled (+120.3%), while total unadjusted retail sales were down by close to one-third (-30.5%).

When adjusted for basic seasonal effects, retail e-commerce grew 56.0%.

Chart 3
Retail E-commerce sales continue to rise



Source(s): Monthly Retail Trade Survey (2406).

Sales down in every subsector

Retail sales were down in every subsector for the first time in 27 years (May 1993), with many retailers deemed non-essential in March remaining closed throughout April.

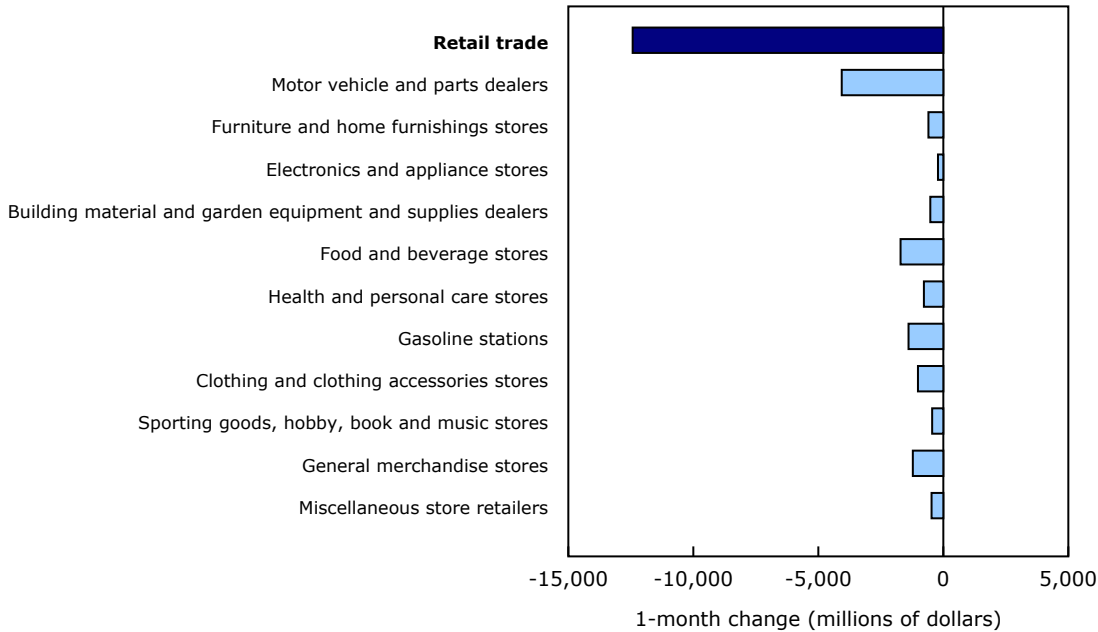
Despite being deemed an essential service, the motor vehicle and parts dealers subsector (-44.3%) contributed the most to the sales decline in April, largely due to low consumer demand. Sales were down at all four store types within the subsector, led by new car dealers (-47.0%).

Sales at food and beverage stores (-12.7%) were down in April, returning close to levels seen pre-COVID-19. This was the only subsector with sales above its February level (+7.8%). Within the subsector, sales at convenience stores (+6.5%) increased, the only store type to do so.

Sales at the pump were down by nearly one-third (-32.2%), the largest decline on record, while the volume of gasoline sold decreased 18.9%. Crude oil prices continued to decline in April in the wake of the global economic slowdown, while Canadians drove less due to physical distancing measures.

Clothing and clothing accessories (-84.8%), sporting goods, hobby, book and music (-66.7%) and motor vehicle and parts dealers (-64.2%) stores reported the largest percentage declines from February to April.

Chart 4
Sales down in all 11 subsectors



Source(s): Table 20-10-0008-01.

Sales down in every province, led by Ontario and Quebec

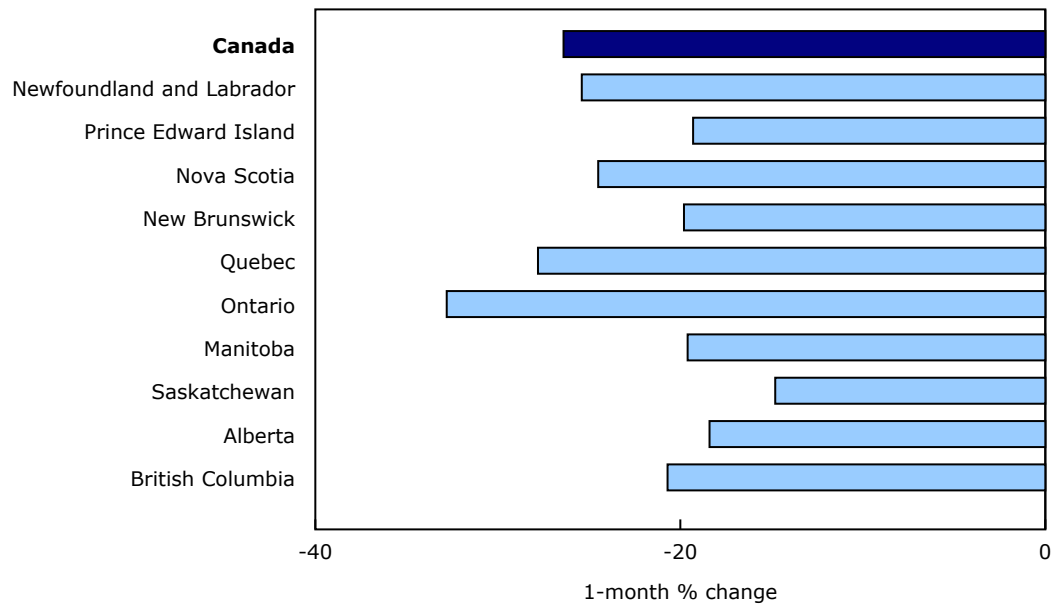
Sales were down in every province for the second consecutive month in April, with both monthly declines largely attributable to the motor vehicle and parts dealers and food and beverage stores. The largest declines occurred in Ontario and Quebec—the provinces reporting the most COVID-19 cases in April.

Retail sales were down by almost one-third (-32.8%) in Ontario, following an 8.5% decrease in March. Sales in the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Toronto were down 35.6%.

Sales decreased by 27.8% in Quebec, led by the CMA of Montréal (-31.3%).

In British Columbia, sales were down by one-fifth (-20.7%) following a 3.7% decline in March. Sales in the CMA of Vancouver were down 23.9%.

Chart 5
Retail sales decline in all provinces



Source(s): Table [20-10-0008-01](#).

Note to readers

All data in this release are seasonally adjusted and expressed in current dollars, unless otherwise noted.

Seasonally adjusted data are data that have been modified to eliminate the effect of seasonal and calendar influences to allow for more meaningful comparisons of economic conditions from period to period. For more information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

Trend-cycle estimates are included in selected charts as a complement to the seasonally adjusted series. These data represent a smoothed version of the seasonally adjusted time series and provide information on longer-term movements including changes in direction underlying the series. For information on trend-cycle data, see [Trend-cycle estimates – Frequently asked questions](#).

Both seasonally adjusted data and trend-cycle estimates are subject to revision as additional observations become available. These revisions could be large and could even lead to a reversal of movement, especially for reference months near the end of the series or during periods of economic disruptions.

For information regarding cannabis statistics, consult the [Cannabis Stats Hub](#).

Seasonally adjusted estimates for cannabis store retailers are presented in unadjusted form as there is no seasonal pattern established by official statistics yet. Establishing such a pattern requires several months of observed data. In the interim, the seasonally adjusted estimates for cannabis store retailers will be identical to the unadjusted figures.

Statistics Canada's retail e-commerce figures include the electronic sales of two distinct types of retailers. The first type do not have a storefront. These businesses are commonly referred to as pure-play Internet retailers and are classified to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 45411—Electronic Shopping and Mail Order Houses. The second type have a storefront and are commonly referred to as brick-and-mortar retailers. If the online operations of a brick-and-mortar retailer are separately managed, they too are classified to NAICS 45411.

Some common electronic commerce transactions, such as travel and accommodation bookings, ticket purchases, and financial transactions, are not included in Canadian retail sales figures.

For more information on retail e-commerce in Canada, see "[Retail E-Commerce in Canada](#)."

Total retail sales expressed in volume terms are calculated by deflating current dollar values using consumer price indexes. The retail sales series in chained (2012) dollars is a chained Fisher volume index with 2012 as the reference year.

Canadian seasonally adjusted retail trade statistics measure monthly sales in industries 441 through 453 of NAICS. US total retail sales have been adjusted to match this industrial composition.

Real-time tables

Real-time tables 20-10-0054-01 and 20-10-0079-01 will be updated soon.

Next release

Data on retail trade for May will be released on July 21.

Table 1
Retail sales by province, territory and census metropolitan area – Seasonally adjusted

	April 2019	March 2020 ^r	April 2020 ^p	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	51,471	47,152	34,724	-26.4	-32.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	730	750	559	-25.4	-23.4
Prince Edward Island	211	196	158	-19.3	-25.0
Nova Scotia	1,365	1,239	935	-24.5	-31.5
New Brunswick	1,112	1,030	827	-19.8	-25.6
Quebec	10,939	9,444	6,817	-27.8	-37.7
Montréal	5,360	4,425	3,038	-31.3	-43.3
Ontario	19,318	18,194	12,225	-32.8	-36.7
Toronto	8,062	7,424	4,779	-35.6	-40.7
Manitoba	1,798	1,631	1,312	-19.6	-27.0
Saskatchewan	1,655	1,482	1,262	-14.8	-23.7
Alberta	6,952	5,921	4,833	-18.4	-30.5
British Columbia	7,212	7,082	5,616	-20.7	-22.1
Vancouver	3,310	3,243	2,468	-23.9	-25.4
Yukon	73	74	66	-11.2	-9.7
Northwest Territories	67	67	62	-8.5	-7.3
Nunavut	40	41	52	28.4	31.9

^r revised

^p preliminary

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

Source(s): Table [20-10-0008-01](#).

Table 2
Retail sales by industry – Seasonally adjusted

	April 2019	March 2020 ^r	April 2020 ^p	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade (current dollars)	51,471	47,152	34,724	-26.4	-32.5
Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)	47,858	44,172	33,058	-25.2	-30.9
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	37,621	37,977	29,614	-22.0	-21.3
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	32,070	33,649	26,678	-20.7	-16.8
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	13,850	9,174	5,110	-44.3	-63.1
New car dealers	11,073	7,040	3,733	-47.0	-66.3
Used car dealers	1,046	675	343	-49.2	-67.2
Other motor vehicle dealers	854	665	412	-38.0	-51.7
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	878	794	622	-21.6	-29.1
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,645	1,177	582	-50.6	-64.6
Furniture stores	1,022	739	349	-52.8	-65.9
Home furnishings stores	622	439	233	-46.9	-62.6
Electronics and appliance stores	1,170	1,115	902	-19.1	-22.9
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,144	3,324	2,803	-15.7	-10.8
Food and beverage stores	10,738	13,455	11,745	-12.7	9.4
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,349	9,642	8,488	-12.0	15.5
Convenience stores	667	681	726	6.5	8.8
Specialty food stores	671	764	644	-15.7	-4.0
Beer, wine and liquor stores	2,052	2,368	1,887	-20.3	-8.0
Health and personal care stores	4,012	4,292	3,515	-18.1	-12.4
Gasoline stations	5,551	4,328	2,936	-32.2	-47.1
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,946	1,460	444	-69.5	-84.9
Clothing stores	2,288	1,121	305	-72.8	-86.7
Shoe stores	337	159	70	-56.1	-79.3
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	321	179	70	-61.0	-78.2
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,049	807	360	-55.4	-65.7
General merchandise stores	5,995	6,522	5,302	-18.7	-11.6
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,371	1,497	1,026	-31.4	-25.2
Cannabis stores ¹	75	181	180	-0.6	141.5

^r revised

^p preliminary

1. Data for this Canadian industry are presented in unadjusted form as there is no seasonal pattern established by official statistics yet.

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

Source(s): Tables [20-10-0008-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

Table 3
Retail sales by industry at 2012 constant prices – Seasonally adjusted

	April 2019	March 2020 ^r	April 2020 ^p	March to April 2020	April 2019 to April 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices¹	47,897	44,366	33,335	-24.9	-30.4
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	35,862	36,479	28,943	-20.7	-19.3
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	30,405	31,293	24,735	-21.0	-18.6
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	12,035	7,887	4,392	-44.3	-63.5
New car dealers	9,600	6,020	3,177	-47.2	-66.9
Used car dealers	898	569	288	-49.4	-67.9
Other motor vehicle dealers	714	563	352	-37.5	-50.7
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	823	734	575	-21.7	-30.1
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,579	1,129	558	-50.6	-64.7
Furniture stores	993	722	343	-52.5	-65.5
Home furnishings stores	586	407	215	-47.2	-63.3
Electronics and appliance stores	1,383	1,363	1,132	-16.9	-18.1
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	2,826	2,931	2,466	-15.9	-12.7
Food and beverage stores	9,557	11,760	10,174	-13.5	6.5
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	6,569	8,455	7,370	-12.8	12.2
Convenience stores	542	525	560	6.7	3.3
Specialty food stores	583	642	541	-15.7	-7.2
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,862	2,139	1,703	-20.4	-8.5
Health and personal care stores	4,203	4,448	3,615	-18.7	-14.0
Gasoline stations	5,457	5,186	4,208	-18.9	-22.9
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,869	1,380	446	-67.7	-84.5
Clothing stores	2,248	1,064	311	-70.8	-86.2
Shoe stores	329	156	72	-53.8	-78.1
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	293	161	63	-60.9	-78.5
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,016	781	348	-55.4	-65.7
General merchandise stores	5,709	6,127	5,052	-17.5	-11.5
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,262	1,374	944	-31.3	-25.2
Cannabis stores ²	67	182	180	-1.1	168.7

^r revised

^p preliminary

1. Calculated using the Laspeyres method.

2. Data for this Canadian industry are presented in unadjusted form as there is no seasonal pattern established by official statistics yet.

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

Source(s): Table 20-10-0078-01.

Table 4
Retail e-commerce sales – Unadjusted

	April 2019	March 2020	April 2020	April 2020
	millions of dollars			year-over-year % change
Retail trade sales (44-453)	50,994	43,590	34,276	-32.8
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	1,154	1,611	1,951	69.1
Retail e-commerce ¹	1,557	2,200	3,431	120.3
Retail e-commerce ¹ (% of total retail trade)	2.99	4.87	9.47	...

... not applicable

1. Retail e-commerce includes e-sales from both store retailers included in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 44-453 and non-store retailers included in electronic shopping and mail order houses (NAICS 45411).

Note(s): For more information on retail e-commerce, see "[Retail E-Commerce in Canada](#)."

Source(s): Table [20-10-0072-01](#).

Available tables: [20-10-0008-01](#), [20-10-0072-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [2406](#) and [2408](#).

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; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).