

Retail Commodity Survey, July 2020

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Retail sales reached \$57.2 billion dollars in July, up 4.8% compared with the same month a year prior. This marked the second consecutive increase in year-over-year sales for the sector, as COVID-19 restrictions eased and regions across the country continued to reopen. Higher sales were reported in 12 of the 19 commodity categories.

Looking ahead to August, the advance estimate provided by the [Monthly Retail Trade Survey](#) suggests that unadjusted total retail sales increased by 1.7%. Owing to its preliminary nature, this figure should be expected to be revised.

Essential goods eat into total retail spending

Even with COVID-19 restrictions easing across the country, Canadians continued to eat at home more, with sales of food showing the largest year-over-year increase (+12.1%) for the fifth consecutive month. Food and beverage sales accounted for just over one-quarter (25.9%) of all retail receipts in July, up from 24.1% the previous year. While food and beverage sales continue to represent a larger than normal share of consumer spending in the sector, this share has declined considerably from the record high seen in April (38.0%). The largest gains in the product category came from fresh fruit and vegetables (+14.5%), fresh meat and poultry (+14.7%) and eggs and dairy products (+14.4%). Growth in these product categories was buoyed in part by higher prices compared with the same month the previous year, as prices continue to adjust following supply shocks earlier this year.

Increasing sales in beverages (+14.8%), were led by alcohol, up 14.3% from a year earlier.

Sales at the pump

For the second consecutive month, the sale of automotive and household fuels represented the largest decline in the sector, down 22.4% from the previous year in July. This decline was primarily due to automotive fuels, with sales at the pump down \$1.1 billion on a year-over-year basis. With restrictions continuing to ease and consumers travelling locally, increasing demand and prices resulted in shrinking declines in sales of automotive fuels when compared with the previous three months.

Although consumer spending has rebounded above pre-COVID-19 levels, the sale of motor vehicles continued to trail in July, down 1.3% from a year prior. New motor vehicle sales continued to impede growth in the category, with sales decreasing 4.9%. This was the fifth straight month of negative growth for the category compared with the same month a year prior, marking the longest period of negative growth since the series began in 2012. Consumers continued to turn to the lower cost alternative, as used car sales continued to bolster the product category—marking the second consecutive month of positive growth (+13.1% in June and +4.6% in July).

Non-essential spending soars

With many travel restrictions still in place for the month of July, consumers sought out local substitutes for travel and recreation. Enjoying the summer weather, consumers had higher than normal spending on products to be enjoyed outdoors, including recreational vehicles (+47.3%) and sporting and leisure categories (+29.8%). Leading the increase in these categories were new recreational boats (+58.2%), new motor homes, travel trailers and truck campers (+47.4%), and hunting, fishing and camping equipment (+40.2%).

In July, consumers continued to spend on items around the house, led by strong growth in sales of hardware and renovation supplies not elsewhere classified (+83.3%), major home appliances (+20.2%) and small home appliances (+41.3%).



Table 1
Sales by type of commodity, all retail stores – Seasonally unadjusted

	July 2019 ^r	June 2020 ^r	July 2020 ^p	July 2019 to July 2020
	millions of dollars			% change
Total commodities, retail trade commissions and miscellaneous services	54,614	56,342	57,246	4.8
Food	9,296	10,187	10,423	12.1
Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages	3,468	3,619	3,980	14.8
Cannabis products	106	201	232	118.4
Clothing	2,498	2,082	2,186	-12.5
Footwear	597	583	583	-2.4
Jewellery and watches, luggage and briefcases	385	267	355	-7.7
Home furniture, furnishings, housewares, appliances and electronics	4,390	4,901	5,001	13.9
Sporting and leisure products (except publications, audio and video recordings, and game software)	952	1,329	1,235	29.8
Publications	240	199	207	-14.1
Audio and video recordings, and game software	75	55	65	-13.2
Motor vehicles	11,702	11,141	11,548	-1.3
Recreational vehicles	1,027	1,621	1,512	47.3
Motor vehicle parts, accessories and supplies	1,822	2,047	1,982	8.8
Automotive and household fuels	4,833	3,352	3,752	-22.4
Home health products	3,324	3,319	3,507	5.5
Infant care, personal and beauty products	1,210	1,269	1,291	6.7
Hardware, tools, and renovation and lawn and garden products	4,490	5,691	4,811	7.1
Miscellaneous products	2,562	2,832	2,883	12.6
Total retail trade commissions and miscellaneous services	1,638	1,645	1,692	3.3

^r revised

^p preliminary

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

Source(s): Table [20-10-0017-01](#).

Note to readers

The Retail Commodity Survey collects national-level retail sales data by commodity, from the same businesses surveyed in the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. No data have been seasonally adjusted. All percentage changes are year over year.

New retail commodity data for e-commerce now available!

Estimates from the [Retail Commodity Survey](#) are now available for the electronic shopping and mail-order houses industry (North American Industry Classification System code 454110). Preliminary quarterly estimates of sales revenue by commodity at a national level are now available from the first quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020.

New Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey data visualization tool

Check out the latest Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey estimates in a new interactive way. The new [Retail Commodity Survey Data Visualization Tool](#) allows users to view, customize and interpret quarterly sales data more easily.

Available tables: [20-10-0016-01](#) and [20-10-0017-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2008](#).

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).