

Retail trade, August 2020

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Retail sales rose 0.4% to \$53.2 billion in August—the fourth consecutive monthly increase since the record decline in April. Core retail sales—which exclude gasoline stations and motor vehicle and parts dealers—rose 0.4% on higher sales at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers and food and beverage stores.

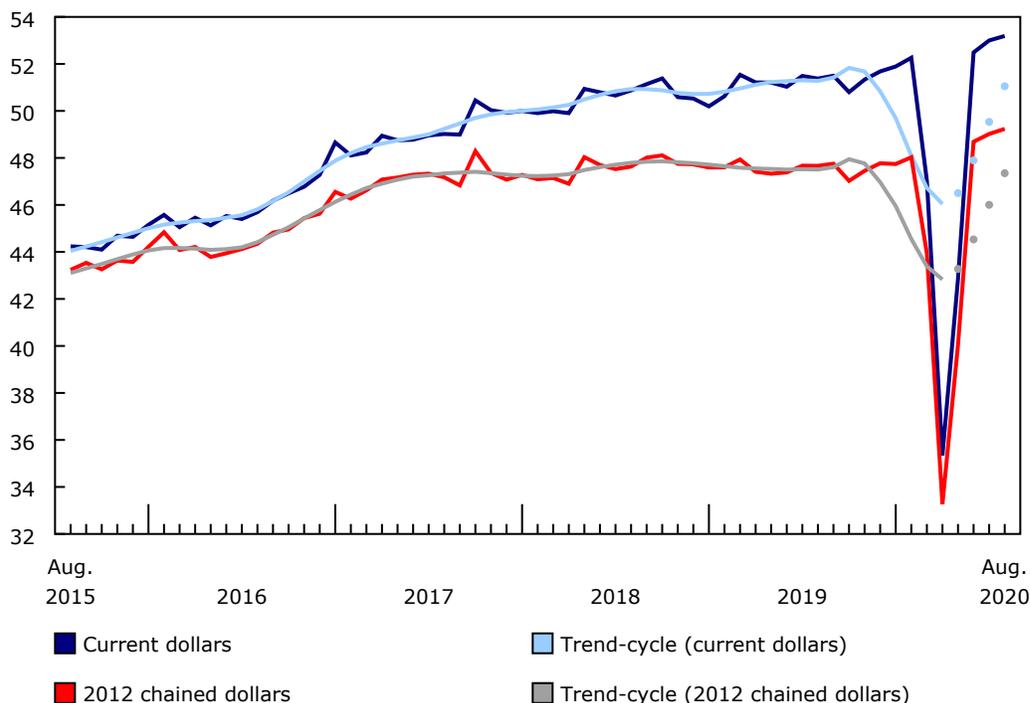
Retail sales in volume terms were up 0.4% in August.

Given the rapidly evolving economic situation, Statistics Canada is providing an advance estimate of retail sales, which suggests that sales were relatively unchanged in September. Owing to its preliminary nature, this figure will be revised.

This unofficial estimate was calculated based on responses received from 42.7% of companies surveyed. The average final response rate for the survey over the previous 12 months has been 88.7%.

Chart 1
Retail sales increase in August

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](#).

Core retail sales bolstered by higher sales at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers and food and beverage stores

Core retail sales increased 0.4% in August after decreasing 0.8% in July. The increase was led by higher sales at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers (+4.5%), which rose for the third time in four months.



Statistics Canada
Statistique Canada

Canada

Sales at food and beverage stores (+0.8%) rose for the second time since the stockpile-driven increase in March, after falling 2.1% in July.

Sales at clothing and clothing accessories stores were relatively unchanged in August following three consecutive monthly increases, which were related to brick-and-mortar store re-openings. Nevertheless, sales at clothing and clothing accessories stores were 11.8% below pre-pandemic levels.

Sales were down at sporting goods, hobby, book and music (-3.7%) and general merchandise (-0.7%) stores.

Sales at furniture and home furnishing stores fell 0.4% in August, the first decline in four months. From May to July, Canadians directed a greater portion of their [expenditures on household operations and furnishings and equipment](#) while working from home and spending more time indoors.

Sales rise at gasoline stations and edge down at motor vehicle and parts dealers

Sales at gasoline stations (+1.2%) rose for the fourth consecutive month in August. In volume terms, sales at gasoline stations increased 1.1% as more businesses resumed activities and more Canadians travelled domestically.

Following three consecutive monthly increases, sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers edged down 0.1% in August (seasonally adjusted) and were 0.7% below February levels. According to the [New Motor Vehicle Sales Survey](#), the value of new motor vehicle sales (not seasonally adjusted) declined 4.9% year over year in August. Within this segment, sales of trucks, an aggregate group which includes light trucks, heavy trucks and buses, decreased 2.8% year over year while passenger car sales declined 15.3%.

Sales up in seven provinces, while three provinces remain below pre-pandemic sales levels

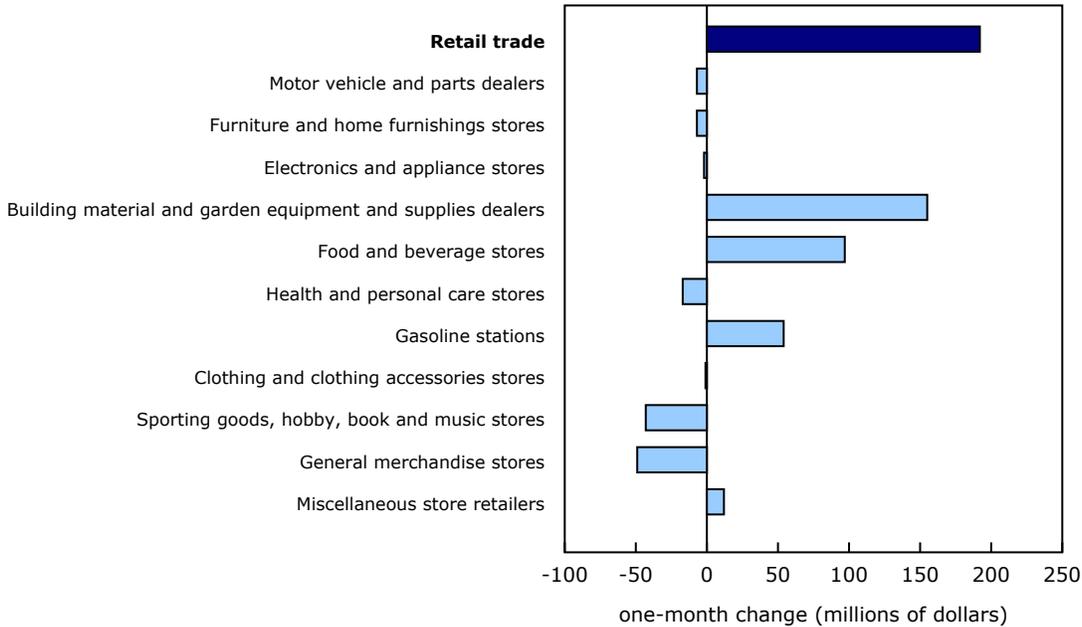
Sales in Quebec were up 1.6% in August, led by higher sales at motor vehicle and parts and building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers. In the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Montréal, sales edged up 0.2%.

Higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers also drove the sales growth in Nova Scotia (+4.4%).

In British Columbia, sales rose 0.5% in August on higher sales at food and beverage stores and building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers. Sales in the CMA of Vancouver were up 2.7%.

In Ontario, sales edged up 0.1% in August. Although sales have increased every month since May, they were 0.6% below their pre-pandemic level in February. Sales in the CMA of Toronto were also up 0.1%.

Chart 2
Sales up in 4 of 11 subsectors



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

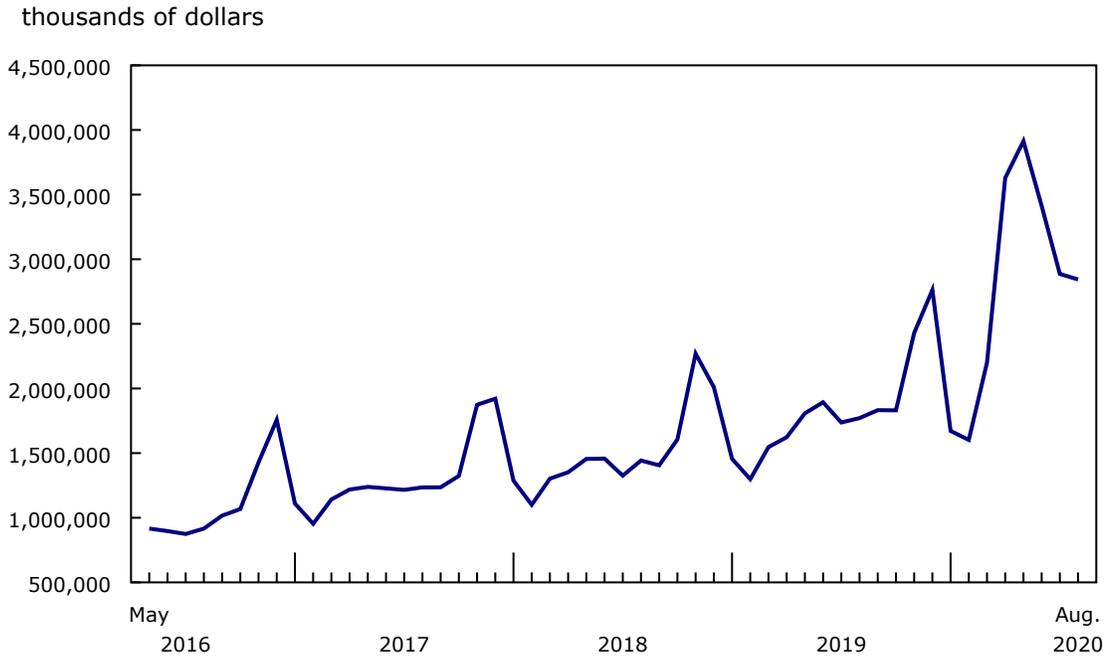
Retail e-commerce sales in Canada

On an unadjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales reached \$2.8 billion in August, accounting for 5.0% of total retail trade. The share of e-commerce sales as a percentage of total retail sales edged up from July despite more retailers expanding in-person shopping in accordance with public health measures. The share of retail e-commerce sales as a portion of total retail trade in August was up 1.8 percentage points year over year.

Retail e-commerce sales rose 60.6% year over year, while total unadjusted retail sales increased 1.9%.

When adjusted for basic seasonal effects, retail e-commerce was down 2.0% in August.

Chart 3
Retail e-commerce decreases in August



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

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](#).

The percentage change for the advanced estimate for retail sales is calculated using seasonally adjusted data and is expressed in current dollars.

This early indicator is a special product being provided in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to offer Canadians timely information on the retail sector. The data sources and methodology used are the exact same as those outlined in the [Monthly Retail Trade Survey](#) information page.

The official estimate of retail sales for the month of September, which will be based on a more complete set of survey and administrative data, is scheduled for official release and publication on November 20, 2020.

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.

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 September will be released on November 20.

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

	August 2019	July 2020 ^r	August 2020 ^p	July to August 2020	August 2019 to August 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	51,376	52,997	53,189	0.4	3.5
Newfoundland and Labrador	754	807	799	-0.9	5.9
Prince Edward Island	214	202	216	6.9	0.6
Nova Scotia	1,357	1,363	1,423	4.4	4.8
New Brunswick	1,120	1,167	1,174	0.6	4.9
Quebec	10,955	11,561	11,751	1.6	7.3
Montréal	5,358	5,545	5,556	0.2	3.7
Ontario	19,425	19,690	19,709	0.1	1.5
Toronto	8,009	8,064	8,068	0.1	0.7
Manitoba	1,735	1,912	1,880	-1.6	8.4
Saskatchewan	1,635	1,686	1,693	0.4	3.6
Alberta	6,782	6,854	6,743	-1.6	-0.6
British Columbia	7,219	7,560	7,601	0.5	5.3
Vancouver	3,325	3,422	3,516	2.7	5.7
Yukon	74	74	76	2.4	2.7
Northwest Territories	65	76	78	2.4	20.0
Nunavut	40	47	47	0.2	15.5

^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

	August 2019	July 2020 ^r	August 2020 ^p	July to August 2020	August 2019 to August 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade (current dollars)	51,376	52,997	53,189	0.4	3.5
Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)	47,664	49,018	49,236	0.4	3.3
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	37,472	38,922	39,121	0.5	4.4
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	32,184	34,394	34,540	0.4	7.3
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	13,904	14,075	14,068	-0.1	1.2
New car dealers	11,188	10,812	11,102	2.7	-0.8
Used car dealers	977	1,083	1,077	-0.6	10.3
Other motor vehicle dealers	890	1,267	987	-22.1	10.9
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	849	913	901	-1.4	6.1
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,595	1,667	1,661	-0.4	4.1
Furniture stores	997	1,094	1,086	-0.7	8.9
Home furnishings stores	597	573	574	0.2	-3.9
Electronics and appliance stores	1,174	1,267	1,265	-0.2	7.7
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,106	3,483	3,638	4.5	17.1
Food and beverage stores	10,746	11,726	11,823	0.8	10.0
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,390	8,117	8,236	1.5	11.4
Convenience stores	643	704	696	-1.1	8.4
Specialty food stores	697	738	741	0.5	6.3
Beer, wine and liquor stores	2,016	2,168	2,149	-0.9	6.6
Health and personal care stores	4,041	4,183	4,166	-0.4	3.1
Gasoline stations	5,288	4,528	4,582	1.2	-13.4
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,957	2,603	2,602	-0.0	-12.0
Clothing stores	2,289	1,985	1,978	-0.4	-13.6
Shoe stores	352	320	309	-3.4	-12.2
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	316	298	315	5.8	-0.2
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,032	1,144	1,101	-3.7	6.7
General merchandise stores	6,074	6,692	6,644	-0.7	9.4
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,459	1,628	1,640	0.7	12.4
Cannabis stores ¹	126	233	245	5.2	94.4

^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

	August 2019	July 2020 ^r	August 2020 ^P	July to August 2020	August 2019 to August 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices¹	47,721	49,068	49,270	0.4	3.2
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	35,779	37,232	37,408	0.5	4.6
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	30,346	32,217	32,339	0.4	6.6
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	11,942	11,836	11,862	0.2	-0.7
New car dealers	9,583	9,053	9,330	3.1	-2.6
Used car dealers	829	896	892	-0.4	7.6
Other motor vehicle dealers	735	1,045	810	-22.5	10.2
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	795	842	830	-1.4	4.4
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,541	1,607	1,591	-1.0	3.2
Furniture stores	979	1,077	1,060	-1.6	8.3
Home furnishings stores	563	530	531	0.2	-5.7
Electronics and appliance stores	1,406	1,563	1,561	-0.1	11.0
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	2,773	3,062	3,193	4.3	15.1
Food and beverage stores	9,456	10,137	10,272	1.3	8.6
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	6,530	7,031	7,181	2.1	10.0
Convenience stores	510	547	538	-1.6	5.5
Specialty food stores	598	610	622	2.0	4.0
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,818	1,949	1,930	-1.0	6.2
Health and personal care stores	4,216	4,360	4,322	-0.9	2.5
Gasoline stations	5,433	5,015	5,069	1.1	-6.7
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,865	2,567	2,549	-0.7	-11.0
Clothing stores	2,236	1,977	1,969	-0.4	-11.9
Shoe stores	346	324	310	-4.3	-10.4
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	284	266	270	1.5	-4.9
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,007	1,120	1,075	-4.0	6.8
General merchandise stores	5,744	6,300	6,256	-0.7	8.9
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,338	1,500	1,520	1.3	13.6
Cannabis stores ²	114	233	248	6.4	117.5

^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

	August 2019	July 2020	August 2020	August 2020
	millions of dollars			year-over-year % change
Retail trade sales (44-453)	54,567	57,254	55,078	0.9
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	1,338	1,871	1,867	39.5
Retail e-commerce ¹	1,771	2,886	2,843	60.6
Retail e-commerce ¹ (% of total retail trade)	3.17	4.88	4.99	...

... 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).