

# Retail trade, September 2020

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Retail sales rose 1.1% to \$53.9 billion in September—the fifth consecutive monthly increase since the record decline in April. Core retail sales—which excludes gasoline stations and motor vehicle and parts dealers—also rose 1.1%, on higher sales at general merchandise stores and food and beverage stores.

Retail sales were up in 9 of 11 subsectors, representing 93.2% of retail trade. In volume terms, sales were up 1.1% in September.

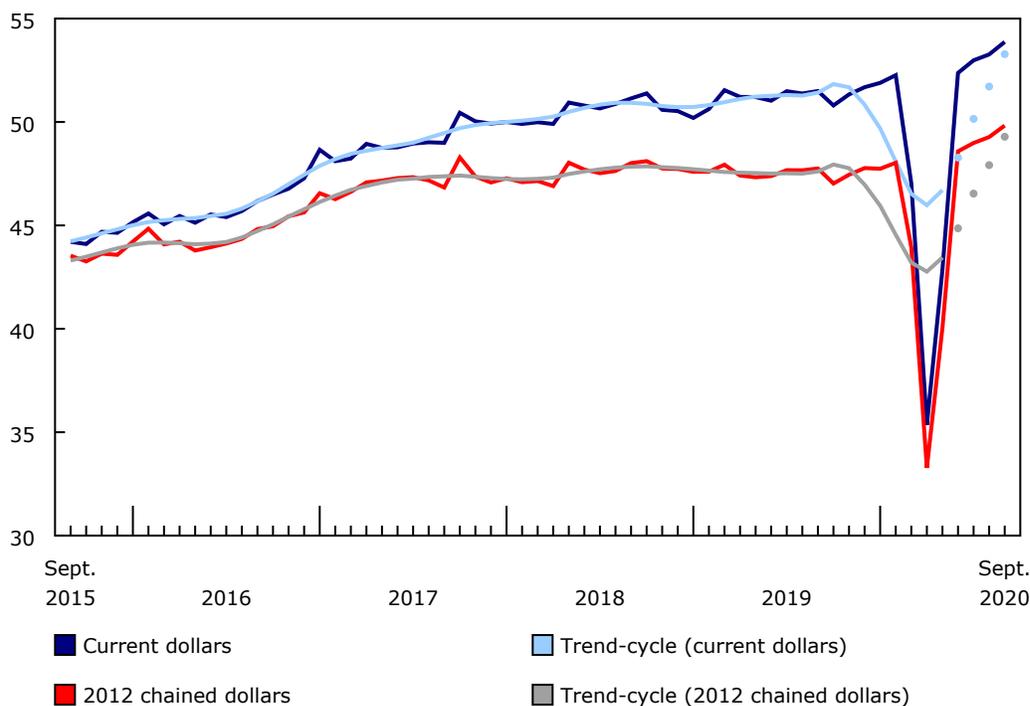
Rounding out the third quarter, retail sales were up 22.6% compared with the second quarter. In volume terms, retail sales rose 21.5%.

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

This unofficial estimate was calculated based on responses received from 50% of companies surveyed. The average final response rate for the survey over the previous 12 months has been 88.5%.

**Chart 1**  
**Retail sales increase in September**

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 rise on higher sales at general merchandise and food and beverage stores

Core retail sales rose at almost three times the pace (+1.1%) in September compared with August (+0.4%), led by the first increase at general merchandise stores (+1.8%) in three months.

Sales at food and beverage stores (+0.9%) rose for the second consecutive month, partially due to [higher prices for meat, fish and dairy products](#).

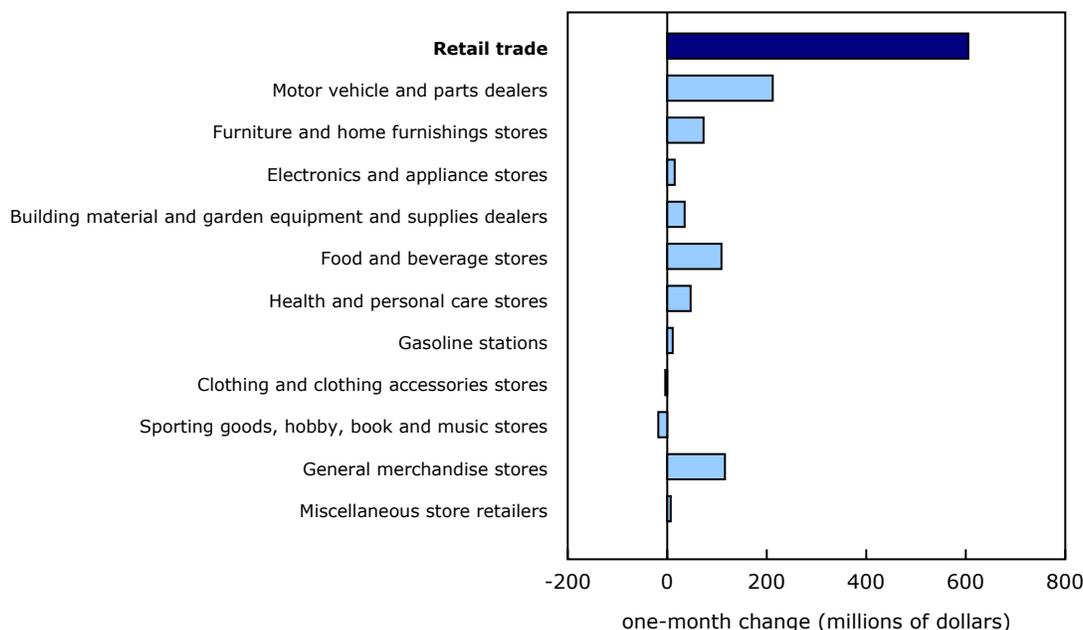
Retail sales bounced back at furniture and home furnishings stores (+4.5%) following a 2.0% decrease in August.

## Higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations

Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers increased for the fifth consecutive month, up 1.5% in September (seasonally adjusted) and 1.7% above February levels. For the first time since the onset of the pandemic, [new motor vehicle sales](#) were up 2.5% year over year in dollar terms in September. Sales of trucks, an aggregate group which includes light trucks, heavy trucks and buses, increased 5.7% year over year, while passenger car sales declined 12.5%. New motor vehicle sales exceeded the pre-pandemic level (February 2020) by over one-third (+36.9%) in September.

Sales at gasoline stations (+0.2%) rose for the fifth consecutive month in September. In volume terms, sales were up 0.6%.

### Chart 2 Sales up in 9 of 11 subsectors



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

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## Sales up in eight provinces

In Ontario, sales rose 1.0% with general merchandise stores leading the growth. In the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Toronto, sales increased 1.2%.

In Alberta, retail sales were up 2.5% in September, led by higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers.

Higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers also drove the sales growth in British Columbia (+1.7%). In the CMA of Vancouver, sales rose 0.9%.

Sales in Quebec rose for the fifth consecutive month, edging up 0.2% in September. In the CMA of Montréal, sales were up 0.4%.

## Retail e-commerce sales in Canada up by three-quarters year over year

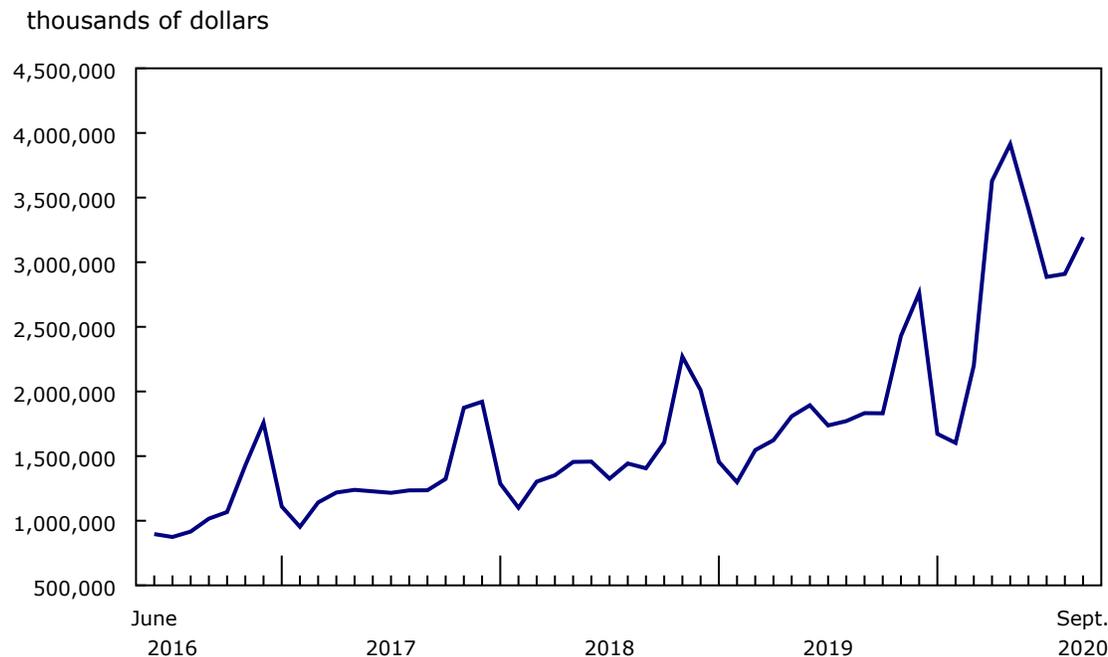
On an unadjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales reached \$3.2 billion in September, accounting for 5.6% of total retail trade. The share of e-commerce sales out of total retail sales rose 0.5 percentage points from August—despite more retailers expanding in-person shopping in accordance with public health measures—and was up 2.1 percentage points year over year.

Retail e-commerce sales were up 74.3% year over year in September, while total unadjusted retail sales increased 9.3%.

When adjusted for basic seasonal effects, retail e-commerce rose 8.1%.

**Chart 3**  
**Retail e-commerce increases in September**

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

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## 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.

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.

### 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 October will be released on December 18.

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

	September 2019	August 2020 <sup>r</sup>	September 2020 <sup>p</sup>	August to September 2020	September 2019 to September 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Canada</b>	<b>51,497</b>	<b>53,266</b>	<b>53,871</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	753	790	795	0.6	5.5
Prince Edward Island	212	218	227	4.4	7.2
Nova Scotia	1,374	1,412	1,407	-0.4	2.3
New Brunswick	1,098	1,175	1,219	3.8	11.1
Quebec	11,023	11,774	11,801	0.2	7.1
Montréal	5,360	5,566	5,587	0.4	4.2
Ontario	19,599	19,697	19,899	1.0	1.5
Toronto	8,182	7,991	8,086	1.2	-1.2
Manitoba	1,725	1,878	1,899	1.1	10.1
Saskatchewan	1,634	1,695	1,695	-0.0	3.7
Alberta	6,689	6,775	6,944	2.5	3.8
British Columbia	7,212	7,655	7,786	1.7	8.0
Vancouver	3,364	3,524	3,556	0.9	5.7
Yukon	73	74	76	1.9	3.8
Northwest Territories	66	76	75	-1.5	13.6
Nunavut	39	47	48	1.4	20.6

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> 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**

	September 2019	August 2020 <sup>r</sup>	September 2020 <sup>p</sup>	August to September 2020	September 2019 to September 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade (current dollars)</b>	<b>51,497</b>	<b>53,266</b>	<b>53,871</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)</b>	<b>47,753</b>	<b>49,272</b>	<b>49,827</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>37,555</b>	<b>39,059</b>	<b>39,451</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations</b>	<b>32,342</b>	<b>34,525</b>	<b>34,907</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>7.9</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	13,942	14,208	14,420	1.5	3.4
New car dealers	11,148	11,184	11,379	1.7	2.1
Used car dealers	1,036	1,090	1,096	0.6	5.8
Other motor vehicle dealers	874	1,017	1,038	2.0	18.7
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	884	916	906	-1.0	2.5
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,566	1,640	1,714	4.5	9.4
Furniture stores	991	1,057	1,118	5.7	12.7
Home furnishings stores	574	583	596	2.2	3.7
Electronics and appliance stores	1,152	1,280	1,296	1.2	12.4
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,197	3,785	3,820	0.9	19.5
Food and beverage stores	10,848	11,776	11,885	0.9	9.6
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,485	8,224	8,187	-0.5	9.4
Convenience stores	645	700	706	0.8	9.4
Specialty food stores	677	691	728	5.3	7.6
Beer, wine and liquor stores	2,041	2,161	2,264	4.8	11.0
Health and personal care stores	4,050	4,180	4,227	1.1	4.4
Gasoline stations	5,213	4,534	4,544	0.2	-12.8
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,963	2,598	2,594	-0.1	-12.5
Clothing stores	2,304	1,973	1,967	-0.3	-14.7
Shoe stores	351	309	320	3.7	-8.9
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	307	316	307	-2.7	-0.1
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,033	1,093	1,075	-1.6	4.1
General merchandise stores	6,086	6,477	6,593	1.8	8.3
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,447	1,696	1,703	0.4	17.7
Cannabis stores <sup>1</sup>	123	252	256	1.8	108.5

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> 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**

	September 2019	August 2020 <sup>r</sup>	September 2020 <sup>p</sup>	August to September 2020	September 2019 to September 2020
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>47,795</b>	<b>49,287</b>	<b>49,842</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>35,803</b>	<b>37,306</b>	<b>37,726</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations</b>	<b>30,377</b>	<b>32,284</b>	<b>32,672</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>7.6</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	11,992	11,981	12,116	1.1	1.0
New car dealers	9,562	9,395	9,519	1.3	-0.4
Used car dealers	879	903	904	0.1	2.8
Other motor vehicle dealers	725	840	859	2.3	18.5
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	826	843	834	-1.1	1.0
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,501	1,574	1,636	3.9	9.0
Furniture stores	964	1,035	1,088	5.1	12.9
Home furnishings stores	538	538	548	1.9	1.9
Electronics and appliance stores	1,387	1,563	1,582	1.2	14.1
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	2,851	3,320	3,330	0.3	16.8
Food and beverage stores	9,527	10,203	10,301	1.0	8.1
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	6,590	7,148	7,124	-0.3	8.1
Convenience stores	510	538	538	0.0	5.5
Specialty food stores	576	577	613	6.2	6.4
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,852	1,940	2,026	4.4	9.4
Health and personal care stores	4,210	4,365	4,392	0.6	4.3
Gasoline stations	5,426	5,022	5,054	0.6	-6.9
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,835	2,554	2,587	1.3	-8.7
Clothing stores	2,214	1,971	1,997	1.3	-9.8
Shoe stores	346	310	324	4.5	-6.4
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	275	273	266	-2.6	-3.3
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	999	1,069	1,044	-2.3	4.5
General merchandise stores	5,741	6,103	6,226	2.0	8.4
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,325	1,535	1,575	2.6	18.9
Cannabis stores <sup>2</sup>	112	255	267	4.7	138.4

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> 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**

	September 2019	August 2020	September 2020	September 2020
	millions of dollars			year-over-year % change
<b>Retail trade sales (44-453)</b>	<b>51,074</b>	<b>55,128</b>	<b>55,166</b>	<b>8.0</b>
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	1,458	1,909	2,239	53.6
Retail e-commerce <sup>1</sup>	1,832	2,909	3,194	74.3
Retail e-commerce <sup>1</sup> (% of total retail trade)	3.49	5.10	5.56	...

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