

# Retail trade, August 2021

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Retail sales were up 2.1% to \$57.2 billion in August, led by higher sales at food and beverage stores (+4.8%), gasoline stations (+3.8%), and clothing and clothing accessories stores (+3.9%).

Sales increased in 9 of 11 subsectors, representing 94.6% of retail trade.

Core retail sales—which exclude gasoline stations and motor vehicle and parts dealers—were up 2.7%.

In volume terms, retail sales increased 1.4% in August.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, provincial governments eased public health restrictions in several regions across the country, which directly affected the retail sector. In light of evolving restrictions, both retailers and consumers have adapted to changing business conditions.

Based on respondent feedback, 0.6% of retailers were closed at some point in August, compared with approximately 0.5% of retailers that were closed in July.

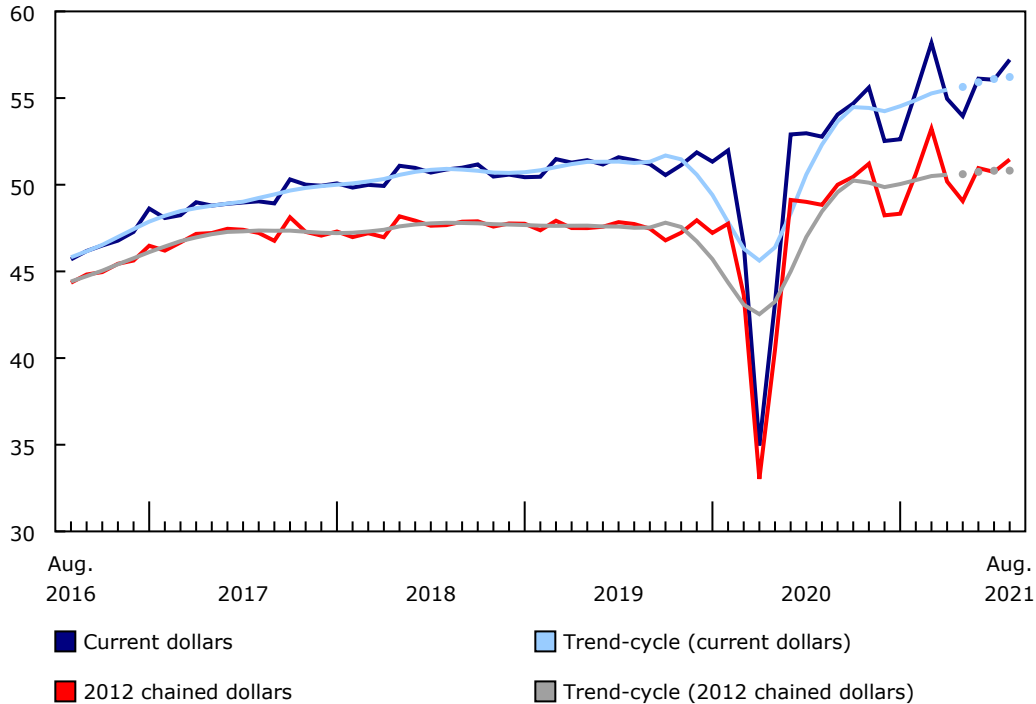
Despite these challenging times, most respondents reported their sales figures, and Statistics Canada thanks them for their continued collaboration.

Given the rapidly evolving economic situation, Statistics Canada is providing an advance estimate of retail sales, which suggests that sales decreased 1.9% in September. Owing to its preliminary nature, this figure will be revised. This unofficial estimate was calculated based on responses received from 54.0% of companies surveyed. The average final response rate for the survey over the previous 12 months has been 90.5%.



**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 previous three months. For more information, see the Note to readers.  
**Source(s):** Tables [20-10-0008-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

## Core retail rises on higher sales at food and beverage stores and clothing and clothing accessories stores

Core retail sales were up 2.7% in August, led by higher sales at food and beverage stores (+4.8%), which recorded its first increase in three months. The increase in sales at food and beverage stores was seen across all four store types, with higher sales at supermarkets and other grocery stores (+4.5%) leading the growth.

Surpassing pre-pandemic levels for the second month in a row, sales at clothing and clothing accessories stores rose 3.9% in August to reach its highest level on record. The increase coincided with fewer restrictions on in-person shopping and recreational activities and was led by higher receipts at clothing stores (+5.2%). Shoe stores (-2.0%) were the only store type within this subsector to see a decrease.

Higher sales at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers (+2.8%) also contributed to the growth in core retail. The increase in this subsector was the first since the record-breaking level recorded in March 2021 and followed four consecutive months of declines.

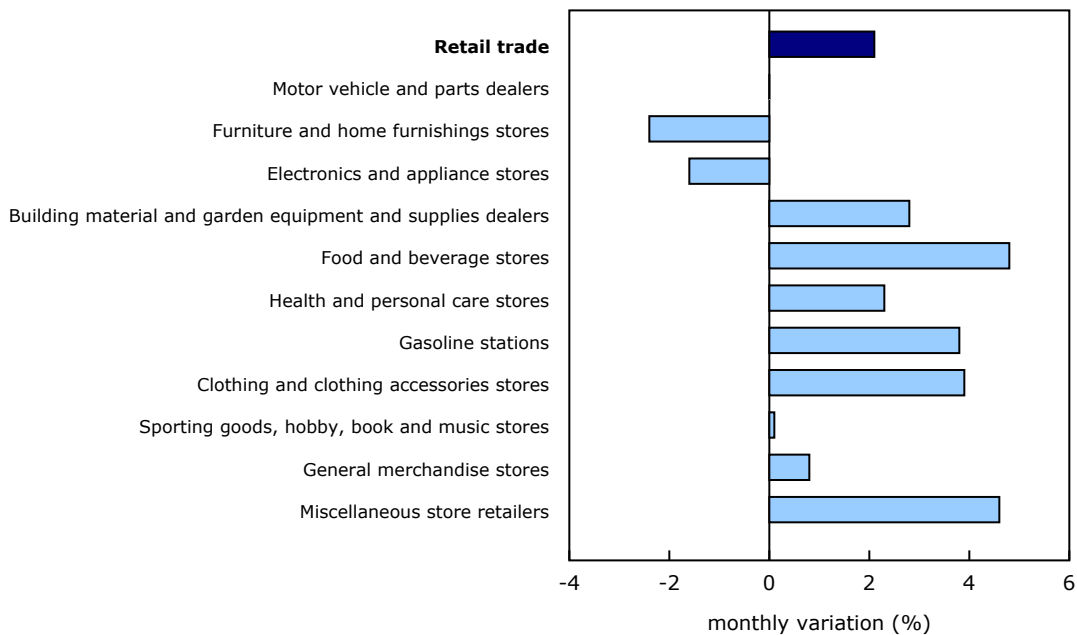
Lower sales were reported at furniture and home furnishings stores (-2.4%). The decrease was the largest among all subsectors and was driven by lower sales at furniture stores (-2.7%), which coincided with supply constraints on retailers within this subsector.

## Sales at gasoline stations rise for the fourth consecutive month, while sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers are unchanged

Recording its fourth consecutive increase, sales at gasoline stations were up 3.8% in August, coinciding with higher gas prices. In volume terms, sales were up 1.8%.

Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers were flat in August. Lower sales at other motor vehicle dealers (-4.2%) were partially offset by gains at automotive parts, accessories, and tire stores (+4.7%). Sales at new car dealers were also flat amid lower inventories due to the global semiconductor chip shortage. In contrast, sales at used car dealers edged up 0.2%, a third consecutive monthly increase.

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



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

## Sales up in all provinces, led by Ontario and Quebec

Sales were up in every province in August, largely the result of gains in the food and beverage stores and gasoline stations subsectors. This marks the first time sales have been up in every province since June 2020.

Retail sales in Ontario were up 2.6% in August, a third consecutive monthly increase. The increase in sales was largest at food and beverage stores. Sales were up 4.5% in the Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA).

Quebec (+2.6%) posted the second-largest provincial increase. In the Montréal CMA, sales were up 2.9%.

## Retail e-commerce in Canada

On a seasonally adjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales rose 3.2% in August.

On an unadjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales were down 2.9% year over year to \$3.0 billion in August, accounting for 4.9% of total retail trade. The share of e-commerce sales out of total retail sales increased 0.3 percentage points in August compared with July.

### 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 advance estimate of 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 exactly the same as those outlined on 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 extensive and could even lead to a reversal of movement, especially for the reference months near the end of the series or during periods of economic disruption.

Seasonally adjusted estimates for cannabis store retailers are presented in unadjusted form since 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 does not have a storefront. These businesses are commonly referred to as pure-play Internet retailers and are classified under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 45411—electronic shopping and mail-order houses. The second type has a storefront and is commonly referred to as a brick-and-mortar retailer. If the online operations of a brick-and-mortar retailer are separately managed, they, too, are classified under NAICS code 45411.

Some common e-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 September will be released on November 19, 2021.

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

	August 2020	July 2021 <sup>r</sup>	August 2021 <sup>p</sup>	July to August 2021	August 2020 to August 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Canada</b>	<b>52,771</b>	<b>56,056</b>	<b>57,211</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	789	813	827	1.7	4.7
Prince Edward Island	219	237	251	5.9	14.4
Nova Scotia	1,421	1,524	1,563	2.5	10.0
New Brunswick	1,170	1,250	1,278	2.2	9.3
Quebec	11,916	12,355	12,673	2.6	6.4
Montréal	5,595	5,785	5,955	2.9	6.4
Ontario	19,466	20,475	21,008	2.6	7.9
Toronto	7,709	8,277	8,649	4.5	12.2
Manitoba	1,853	1,968	1,989	1.1	7.3
Saskatchewan	1,681	1,733	1,807	4.2	7.5
Alberta	6,501	7,306	7,332	0.4	12.8
British Columbia	7,559	8,197	8,283	1.1	9.6
Vancouver	3,386	3,829	3,934	2.7	16.2
Yukon	74	76	79	3.5	6.7
Northwest Territories	75	75	75	-0.0	-0.8
Nunavut	47	46	45	-1.4	-4.4

<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**

	August 2020	July 2021 <sup>r</sup>	August 2021 <sup>p</sup>	July to August 2021	August 2020 to August 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade (current dollars)</b>	<b>52,771</b>	<b>56,056</b>	<b>57,211</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)</b>	<b>48,840</b>	<b>50,737</b>	<b>51,457</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.4</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>39,036</b>	<b>41,097</b>	<b>42,250</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>8.2</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations</b>	<b>34,519</b>	<b>35,589</b>	<b>36,533</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	13,734	14,959	14,961	0.0	8.9
New car dealers	10,670	11,724	11,725	0.0	9.9
Used car dealers	1,107	1,146	1,147	0.2	3.7
Other motor vehicle dealers	1,017	1,110	1,063	-4.2	4.5
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	941	980	1,026	4.7	9.1
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,608	1,880	1,835	-2.4	14.1
Furniture stores	1,015	1,196	1,164	-2.7	14.6
Home furnishings stores	593	684	671	-1.8	13.2
Electronics and appliance stores	1,280	1,264	1,244	-1.6	-2.8
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,763	3,653	3,755	2.8	-0.2
Food and beverage stores	11,750	11,385	11,929	4.8	1.5
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	8,207	7,846	8,198	4.5	-0.1
Convenience stores	687	649	696	7.2	1.3
Specialty food stores	717	702	765	8.9	6.6
Beer, wine and liquor stores	2,139	2,187	2,271	3.8	6.2
Health and personal care stores	4,125	4,286	4,384	2.3	6.3
Gasoline stations	4,518	5,508	5,717	3.8	26.5
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,624	3,021	3,138	3.9	19.6
Clothing stores	2,020	2,326	2,447	5.2	21.1
Shoe stores	298	350	343	-2.0	15.3
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	307	345	348	0.9	13.3
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,046	1,057	1,058	0.1	1.1
General merchandise stores	6,643	7,165	7,225	0.8	8.8
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,680	1,878	1,964	4.6	17.0
Cannabis stores <sup>1</sup>	248	339	357	5.2	43.8

<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, at 2012 constant prices, by industry – Seasonally adjusted**

	August 2020	July 2021 <sup>r</sup>	August 2021 <sup>P</sup>	July to August 2021	August 2020 to August 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>48,908</b>	<b>50,932</b>	<b>51,662</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>37,299</b>	<b>38,473</b>	<b>39,279</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations</b>	<b>32,277</b>	<b>32,974</b>	<b>33,683</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	11,609	12,459	12,383	-0.6	6.7
New car dealers	8,983	9,671	9,606	-0.7	6.9
Used car dealers	920	937	934	-0.3	1.5
Other motor vehicle dealers	840	962	914	-5.0	8.8
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	866	889	930	4.6	7.4
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,544	1,748	1,708	-2.3	10.6
Furniture stores	997	1,132	1,103	-2.6	10.6
Home furnishings stores	547	617	605	-1.9	10.6
Electronics and appliance stores	1,560	1,620	1,602	-1.1	2.7
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,286	2,889	2,956	2.3	-10.0
Food and beverage stores	10,195	9,821	10,179	3.6	-0.2
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,145	6,804	7,020	3.2	-1.7
Convenience stores	529	494	525	6.3	-0.8
Specialty food stores	601	582	626	7.6	4.2
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,920	1,942	2,007	3.3	4.5
Health and personal care stores	4,312	4,571	4,688	2.6	8.7
Gasoline stations	5,022	5,499	5,596	1.8	11.4
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,590	2,908	3,029	4.2	16.9
Clothing stores	2,029	2,289	2,412	5.4	18.9
Shoe stores	300	351	345	-1.7	15.0
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	261	267	272	1.9	4.2
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,025	1,024	1,025	0.1	0.0
General merchandise stores	6,227	6,686	6,706	0.3	7.7
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,539	1,708	1,790	4.8	16.3
Cannabis stores <sup>2</sup>	251	388	412	6.2	64.1

<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**

	August 2020	July 2021	August 2021	August 2021
	millions of dollars			year-over-year change (%)
<b>Retail trade sales (44-453)</b>	<b>54,430</b>	<b>60,103</b>	<b>59,057</b>	<b>8.5</b>
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	2,095	1,842	1,988	-5.1
Retail e-commerce <sup>1</sup>	3,070	2,835	2,983	-2.9
Retail e-commerce <sup>1</sup> (% of total retail trade)	5.4	4.6	4.9	...

... not applicable

1. Retail e-commerce includes e-sales from both store retailers included in North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes 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)).