

Retail trade, September 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, November 19, 2021

Retail sales were down 0.6% to \$56.6 billion in September. The decline was led by lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers (-1.6%) as new car dealer sales (-2.8%) continued to struggle amid global supply shortages for semiconductor chips.

Sales decreased in 7 of 11 subsectors, representing 63.5% of retail trade.

Core retail sales, which exclude gasoline stations and motor vehicle and parts dealers, decreased 0.3%.

In volume terms, retail sales decreased 1.1% in September.

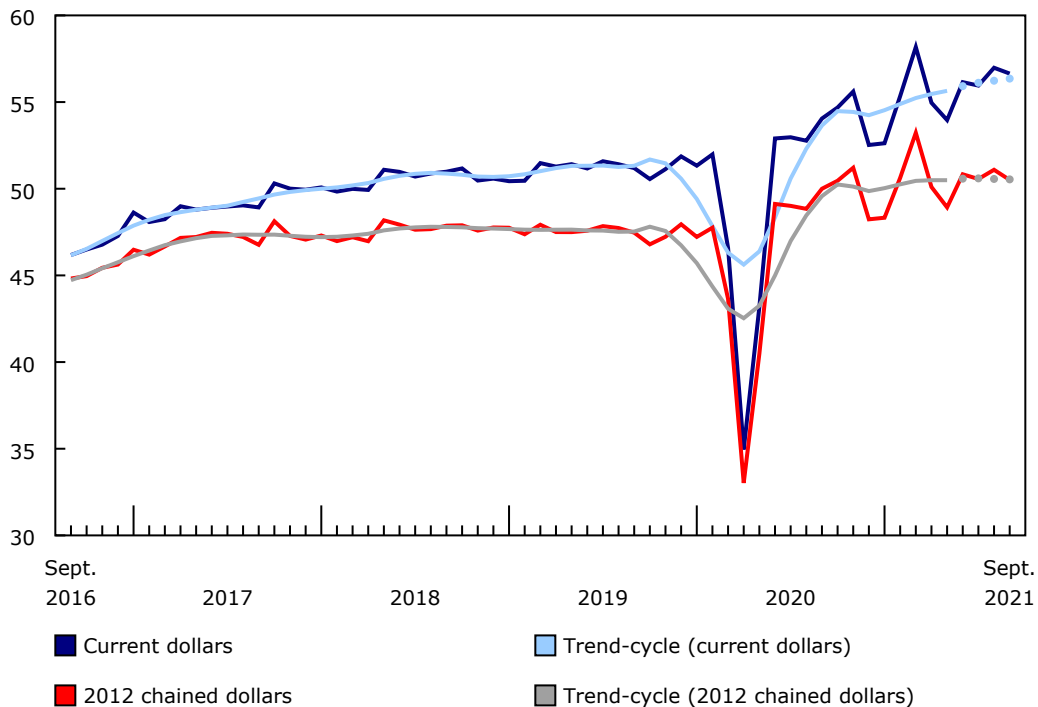
Retail sales were up 2.7% in the third quarter, the largest increase since the third quarter of 2020. In volume terms, quarterly sales were up 1.5%.

Based on respondent feedback, 0.5% of retailers were closed at some point in September, compared with approximately 0.6% in August. This is the third straight month that less than 1% of retailers experienced closures.

Given the rapidly evolving economic situation, Statistics Canada is providing an advance estimate of retail sales, which suggests that sales increased 1.0% in October. Owing to its early nature, this figure will be revised. This unofficial estimate was calculated based on responses received from 50.3% of companies surveyed. The average final response rate for the survey over the previous 12 months has been 89.5%.

Chart 1 Retail sales decrease 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 previous three months. For more information, see the Note to readers.

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

Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers fall while gasoline station receipts rise for a fifth consecutive month

Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers declined 1.6% in September. The decrease was largest at new car dealers (-2.8%) as semiconductor shortages continued to impact supply. This was the largest decline at new car dealers since sales declined 11.1% in December 2020. Higher sales at used car dealers (+6.3%) slightly offset the declines at new car dealers.

The [New Motor Vehicle Sales Survey](#) noted a 19% decline in unit sales of new motor vehicles compared with September 2020. This was primarily driven by a decline to light trucks and SUVs where unit sales fell 23% from the year prior. Total unit sales were down 17% compared with September 2019 levels, before the pandemic.

Receipts at gasoline stations increased 0.2% in September, up for the fifth consecutive month. In volume terms, sales were down 0.7%.

Core retail sales decline on lower sales at clothing stores

Core retail sales decreased 0.3% in September. This comes as the Bank of Canada's quarterly monetary policy report noted that as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic recede and confidence rises, spending on services such as travel and accommodation is expected to continue to strengthen, while growth in demand for goods may moderate.

The largest decline to core retail came from clothing and clothing accessories stores, where sales decreased 5.9% in September. The decline was entirely due to lower sales at clothing stores (-7.9%), which posted its largest decline since sales fell 31.1% in April 2021. Higher sales were reported at jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores (+2.6%), as well as shoe stores (+0.4%).

Also contributing to the decline were lower sales at miscellaneous store retailers (-2.8%).

Higher sales were reported at food and beverage stores (+1.3%), with gains recorded across all four store types. Receipts increased for a second consecutive month at both supermarkets and other grocery stores (+1.5%) and beer, wine and liquor stores (+1.4%). [Food prices continued to rise in September](#), up 3.9% from September 2020, with higher prices for meat products being a primary driver.

Higher sales were also recorded at furniture and home furnishings stores (+1.3%).

Chart 2 Sales decrease in 7 of 11 subsectors in September



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

Sales up in all provinces except Ontario

Sales were up in every province except Ontario (-4.4%) in September. The decrease in Ontario was largely driven by lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers. Sales were down 6.0% in the Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA).

Quebec (+2.0%) posted the largest provincial increase with sales up for a second consecutive month. In the Montréal CMA, sales were up 1.4%.

Retail e-commerce in Canada

On a seasonally adjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales rose 5.1% in September.

On an unadjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales were up 1.8% year over year to \$3.2 billion in September, accounting for 5.3% of total retail trade. The share of e-commerce sales out of total retail sales increased 0.4 percentage points in September compared with August and was down 0.2 percentage points from September 2020.

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.

Variations between advance estimate response rates and preliminary estimate response rates have on average been 29%. As a result, larger differences are observed between the unofficial advance estimate and the official estimates.

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 the Bank of Canada Monetary Policy Report, please consult their release at [Bank of Canada Monetary Policy Report](#).

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.

Find more statistics on [retail trade](#).

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 21, 2021.

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

	September 2020	August 2021 ^r	September 2021 ^p	August to September 2021	September 2020 to September 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	54,049	56,979	56,643	-0.6	4.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	783	831	862	3.7	10.1
Prince Edward Island	230	249	253	1.5	10.0
Nova Scotia	1,409	1,553	1,608	3.5	14.1
New Brunswick	1,225	1,269	1,281	0.9	4.6
Quebec	11,900	12,542	12,790	2.0	7.5
Montréal	5,636	5,892	5,976	1.4	6.0
Ontario	19,815	21,069	20,137	-4.4	1.6
Toronto	8,005	8,718	8,192	-6.0	2.3
Manitoba	1,888	1,971	1,993	1.1	5.6
Saskatchewan	1,676	1,784	1,796	0.7	7.2
Alberta	7,146	7,304	7,425	1.7	3.9
British Columbia	7,780	8,211	8,303	1.1	6.7
Vancouver	3,505	3,892	3,867	-0.6	10.3
Yukon	75	78	79	1.2	4.5
Northwest Territories	74	73	71	-2.3	-3.3
Nunavut	47	45	46	1.9	-2.9

^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

	September 2020	August 2021 ^r	September 2021 ^p	August to September 2021	September 2020 to September 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade (current dollars)	54,049	56,979	56,643	-0.6	4.8
Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)	49,998	51,093	50,508	-1.1	1.0
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	39,635	42,128	42,032	-0.2	6.0
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	35,129	36,426	36,321	-0.3	3.4
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	14,414	14,851	14,611	-1.6	1.4
New car dealers	11,332	11,640	11,310	-2.8	-0.2
Used car dealers	1,111	1,162	1,234	6.3	11.1
Other motor vehicle dealers	1,041	1,028	1,063	3.4	2.1
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	931	1,022	1,003	-1.8	7.8
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,751	1,817	1,840	1.3	5.1
Furniture stores	1,135	1,160	1,182	1.9	4.1
Home furnishings stores	616	658	659	0.1	6.9
Electronics and appliance stores	1,310	1,231	1,222	-0.7	-6.7
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,805	3,751	3,742	-0.2	-1.6
Food and beverage stores	11,802	11,876	12,033	1.3	2.0
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	8,204	8,224	8,347	1.5	1.7
Convenience stores	694	692	695	0.4	0.1
Specialty food stores	710	736	736	0.1	3.8
Beer, wine and liquor stores	2,194	2,225	2,255	1.4	2.8
Health and personal care stores	4,193	4,325	4,305	-0.5	2.7
Gasoline stations	4,505	5,701	5,712	0.2	26.8
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,652	3,200	3,011	-5.9	13.6
Clothing stores	2,040	2,506	2,307	-7.9	13.1
Shoe stores	312	346	347	0.4	11.2
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	300	349	358	2.6	19.4
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,016	1,059	1,064	0.5	4.7
General merchandise stores	6,885	7,228	7,218	-0.1	4.8
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,716	1,940	1,885	-2.8	9.8
Cannabis stores ¹	257	354	355	0.2	38.2

^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, at 2012 constant prices, by industry – Seasonally adjusted

	September 2020	August 2021 ^r	September 2021 ^p	August to September 2021	September 2020 to September 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices¹	50,044	51,272	50,689	-1.1	1.3
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	37,907	39,015	38,718	-0.8	2.1
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	32,889	33,414	33,156	-0.8	0.8
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	12,137	12,257	11,971	-2.3	-1.4
New car dealers	9,504	9,509	9,170	-3.6	-3.5
Used car dealers	920	943	994	5.4	8.0
Other motor vehicle dealers	857	881	900	2.2	5.0
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	857	925	907	-1.9	5.8
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,673	1,665	1,683	1.1	0.6
Furniture stores	1,107	1,075	1,093	1.7	-1.3
Home furnishings stores	566	590	590	0.0	4.2
Electronics and appliance stores	1,599	1,542	1,526	-1.0	-4.6
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,301	2,976	2,958	-0.6	-10.4
Food and beverage stores	10,236	10,103	10,158	0.5	-0.8
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,151	7,038	7,054	0.2	-1.4
Convenience stores	532	522	525	0.6	-1.3
Specialty food stores	593	600	593	-1.2	0.0
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,960	1,943	1,987	2.3	1.4
Health and personal care stores	4,395	4,530	4,516	-0.3	2.8
Gasoline stations	5,018	5,601	5,562	-0.7	10.8
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,653	3,090	2,901	-6.1	9.3
Clothing stores	2,078	2,476	2,281	-7.9	9.8
Shoe stores	319	344	346	0.6	8.5
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	256	270	274	1.5	7.0
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	998	1,037	1,046	0.9	4.8
General merchandise stores	6,458	6,719	6,667	-0.8	3.2
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,576	1,753	1,701	-3.0	7.9
Cannabis stores ²	267	409	410	0.2	53.6

^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

	September 2020	August 2021	September 2021	September 2021
	millions of dollars			year-over-year change (%)
Retail trade sales (44-453)	55,474	58,829	57,722	4.1
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	2,227	1,997	2,199	-1.3
Retail e-commerce ¹	3,148	2,977	3,205	1.8
Retail e-commerce ¹ (% of total retail trade)	5.5	4.9	5.3	...

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