

Wholesale trade, October 2021

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, December 16, 2021

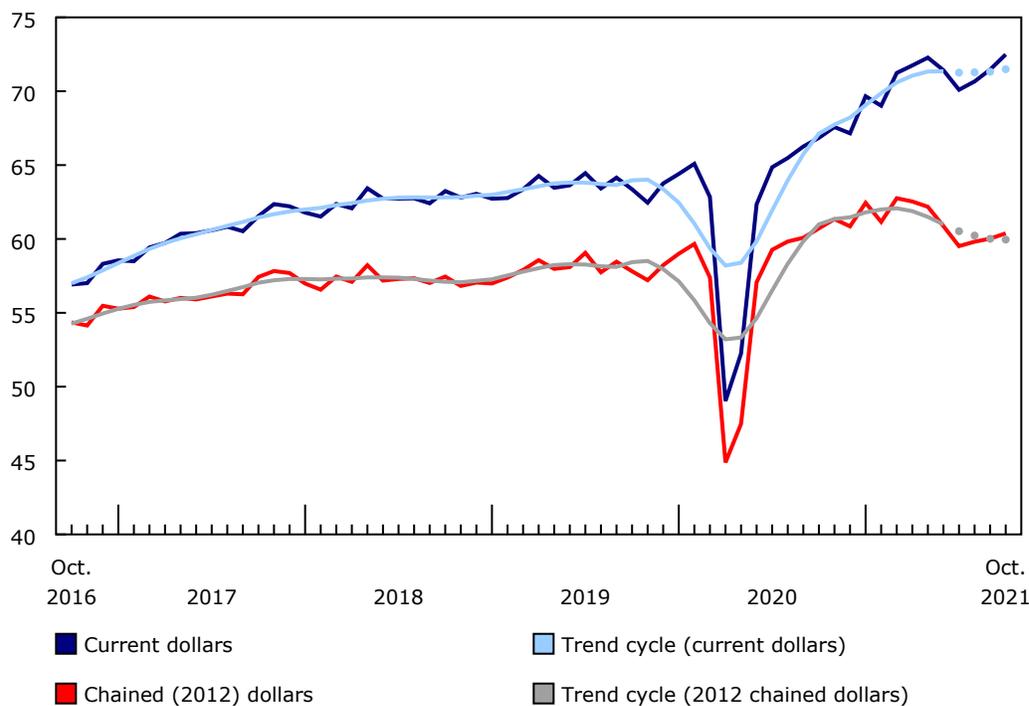
Wholesale sales reach all-time high

Wholesale sales rose 1.4% in October to \$72.5 billion, the highest level on record. This was the sixth increase in the past eight months, and wholesale sales in October were 11.4% higher than pre-pandemic levels in February 2020. The growth was largely due to a 7.1% increase in the sales of motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts and accessories. Overall, five of seven subsectors posted higher sales in October, representing 61% of sales in the sector.

Constant dollar sales grew 0.6% in October.

Chart 1
Wholesale sales rise in October

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 [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0003-01](#).

Motor vehicle sales rebound

Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories posted its largest increase since July 2020, as sales rose 7.1% to \$10.8 billion in October 2021. The increase reflected the fact that a number of motor vehicle manufacturers were able to secure supplies of semiconductor chips in October. Semiconductor chips are expected to be in short supply for the foreseeable future and to improve around mid-2022 as more supplies become available and chip manufacturers operate at a higher capacity. Notwithstanding the large increase in October, there were still significant shutdowns among assembly plants in North America, and sales remained below pre-pandemic levels.



Sales of building material and supplies rose 1.9% in October to \$11.4 billion on higher sales of lumber and other building materials. The increase in the lumber and other building materials industry came as the price of lumber at the sawmill gate rose 6.2%, according to the Industrial Product Price Index. This was the first price increase after four months of declines.

Sales in the miscellaneous product subsector rose 1.9% to \$10.6 billion in October, the fourth increase in the past five months, pushing sales to their highest level on record. Higher sales of agricultural supplies and minerals, ores, and precious metals generated the increase.

Ontario leads provincial gains

Five provinces and one territory reported higher wholesale sales in October. Together, they represented 68% of national wholesale sales.

Sales grew the most in Ontario, where a 2.1% increase brought sales to \$37.2 billion, the highest total on record. October was the fourth consecutive month of growth. Four subsectors reported lower sales, but the three subsectors that grew contributed 57% of sales for the sector.

Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers recorded the largest increase in sales in Ontario, reporting 9.9% growth to \$7.3 billion in October. Higher sales in the subsector occurred in concert with a 30.8% increase in exports of motor vehicles and parts. Wholesale food, beverage, and tobacco sales increased 5.5% to \$6.1 billion, while sales of personal and household goods decreased 4.8% to \$6.1 billion.

Wholesale sales in Saskatchewan were up 6.8% in October, to \$2.9 billion, another provincial record level. Six subsectors comprising more than 99% of sales in the sector reported higher sales. A 9.0% increase in miscellaneous wholesale was the largest change by far, with monthly sales of \$1.5 billion. That subsector represented 52% of wholesale sales in Saskatchewan, and agricultural supplies specifically contributed 86% of the subsector's sales.

Sales in British Columbia grew 2.5% to \$7.3 billion. The sales by subsector were mixed, with three subsectors accounting for 50% of the sector reporting an increase in sales. Personal and household goods sales led the increase, adding 22.3% to \$0.8 billion. Sales of building materials and supplies increased 4.4% to \$2.2 billion.

Sales decreased the most in Nova Scotia, finishing 7.7% lower than in September at \$1.0 billion. The four subsectors that reported lower sales accounted for 62% of the sector in October. Food, beverage and tobacco merchant wholesalers reported a 21.4% decrease in monthly sales for a total of \$0.4 billion. Although all component industries saw lower sales, the food industry comprises 99% of the provincial subsector and accounted for virtually all of the change in October because of the fish and seafood product industry. Sales in the food wholesale industry were down across the Atlantic region, including a 29.5% drop in food sales in Prince Edward Island.

Inventories increase for the sixth consecutive month in October

The value of wholesale inventories rose 1.1% in October to \$99.2 billion, the 10th increase in the past 11 months. Increased inventories were reported in five of seven subsectors, representing 65% of total inventories.

Following four months of decline, inventories in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector rose 6.5% to \$11.0 billion in October. This subsector accounted for 63% of the growth of wholesale inventories. All component industries had higher inventories, but the subsector's inventory levels were largely driven by the motor vehicle industry, which saw an 11.4% increase to \$5.8 billion.

The remaining increase to wholesale inventories in October was mainly due to increases in the miscellaneous subsector (+2.4%), and in the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector (+1.1%). Inventory growth in the miscellaneous subsector was almost entirely due to continued higher inventories of agricultural supplies, up 5.7% to a record high of \$6.2 billion. Higher inventories in the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector reflected larger stocks of construction, forestry, mining and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies, and computer and communications equipment and supplies.

Inventories of personal and household goods declined for the fourth consecutive month, down 1.6% to \$16.1 billion. A 5.0% fall in pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies' inventories accounted for virtually all of the monthly decrease in the subsector. Excluding this subsector, total wholesale inventories increased 1.6%.

The inventory-to-sales ratio remained at 1.37 in October. This ratio is a measure of the time (in months) required to exhaust inventories if sales were to remain at their levels.

Table 1
Wholesale merchants' sales by industry – Seasonally adjusted

	October 2020	September 2021 ^r	October 2021 ^p	September to October 2021	October 2020 to October 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total, wholesale sales (current dollars)	66,844	71,467	72,488	1.4	8.4
Total, wholesale sales (2012 chained dollars)	60,715	60,022	60,378	0.6	-0.6
Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts	55,608	61,394	61,703	0.5	11.0
Farm product	917	1,023	1,060	3.6	15.6
Food, beverage and tobacco	12,259	13,403	13,226	-1.3	7.9
Food	10,705	11,742	11,586	-1.3	8.2
Beverage	828	824	838	1.7	1.2
Cigarette and tobacco product	602	642	637	-0.9	5.8
Cannabis	125	194	166	-14.6	33.1
Personal and household goods	9,841	10,468	10,527	0.6	7.0
Textile, clothing and footwear	1,181	1,241	1,460	17.6	23.7
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	895	781	765	-1.9	-14.5
Home furnishings	657	686	648	-5.5	-1.4
Personal goods	1,012	1,077	1,099	2.1	8.6
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	4,941	5,620	5,428	-3.4	9.9
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	1,154	1,064	1,126	5.8	-2.4
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	11,236	10,073	10,785	7.1	-4.0
Motor vehicle	8,978	7,656	8,310	8.5	-7.4
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	2,202	2,334	2,406	3.1	9.3
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	56	82	68	-16.7	22.8
Building material and supplies	10,012	11,231	11,446	1.9	14.3
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	2,963	3,314	3,304	-0.3	11.5
Metal service centres	1,482	2,242	2,298	2.5	55.0
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	5,566	5,674	5,844	3.0	5.0
Machinery, equipment and supplies	13,932	14,833	14,810	-0.2	6.3
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	1,588	1,880	1,904	1.3	19.9
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	4,219	4,817	4,756	-1.3	12.7
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	4,736	4,694	4,638	-1.2	-2.1
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,389	3,442	3,512	2.0	3.6
Miscellaneous	8,647	10,436	10,634	1.9	23.0
Recyclable material	937	1,552	1,533	-1.2	63.7
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	1,015	1,135	1,142	0.7	12.5
Agricultural supplies	2,558	3,233	3,443	6.5	34.6
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,496	1,816	1,731	-4.7	15.7
Other miscellaneous	2,642	2,701	2,785	3.1	5.4

^r revised

^p preliminary

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

Source(s): Tables [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0003-01](#).

Table 2
Wholesale merchants' sales by province and territory – Seasonally adjusted

	October 2020	September 2021 ^r	October 2021 ^p	September to October 2021	October 2020 to October 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	66,844	71,467	72,488	1.4	8.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	359	379	394	4.0	9.8
Prince Edward Island	91	132	118	-10.3	30.5
Nova Scotia	957	1,123	1,037	-7.7	8.4
New Brunswick	628	765	738	-3.6	17.5
Quebec	12,438	13,821	13,796	-0.2	10.9
Ontario	34,906	36,489	37,249	2.1	6.7
Manitoba	1,549	1,591	1,698	6.7	9.6
Saskatchewan	2,412	2,702	2,886	6.8	19.7
Alberta	6,467	7,291	7,221	-1.0	11.7
British Columbia	6,991	7,118	7,295	2.5	4.4
Yukon	13	16	19	19.3	42.8
Northwest Territories	22	26	23	-8.2	5.3
Nunavut	12	14	14	-1.5	8.6

^r revised

^p preliminary

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

Source(s): Table [20-10-0074-01](#).

Table 3
Wholesale merchants' inventories by industry – Seasonally adjusted

	October 2020	September 2021 ^r	October 2021 ^p	September to October 2021	October 2020 to October 2021
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total, wholesale inventories	90,842	98,121	99,191	1.1	9.2
Farm product	220	259	264	2.0	20.0
Food, beverage and tobacco	10,327	11,347	11,386	0.3	10.3
Food	9,147	10,021	10,059	0.4	10.0
Beverage	590	729	737	1.1	25.0
Cigarette and tobacco product	403	400	384	-4.0	-4.7
Cannabis	187	197	207	4.7	10.4
Personal and household goods	16,045	16,323	16,058	-1.6	0.1
Textile, clothing and footwear	3,714	3,335	3,461	3.8	-6.8
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	746	999	992	-0.7	33.1
Home furnishings	1,357	1,494	1,491	-0.2	9.9
Personal goods	1,894	2,182	2,175	-0.3	14.8
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	7,227	7,188	6,829	-5.0	-5.5
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	1,107	1,125	1,109	-1.4	0.3
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	11,479	10,371	11,040	6.5	-3.8
Motor vehicle	6,852	5,231	5,829	11.4	-14.9
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	4,542	5,019	5,085	1.3	11.9
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	85 ^E	F	F	F	F
Building material and supplies	14,131	18,359	18,347	-0.1	29.8
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	4,002	4,928	4,944	0.3	23.5
Metal service centres	3,465	4,764	5,172	8.6	49.3
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	6,664	8,667	8,230	-5.0	23.5
Machinery, equipment and supplies	27,028	27,613	27,919	1.1	3.3
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	5,496	5,828	5,854	0.4	6.5
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	12,786	12,200	12,360	1.3	-3.3
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	2,895	3,571	3,688	3.3	27.4
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	5,850	6,015	6,018	0.0	2.9
Miscellaneous	11,614	13,850	14,178	2.4	22.1
Recyclable material	934	1,312	1,326	1.1	41.9
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	999	1,150	1,173	1.9	17.4
Agricultural supplies	4,732	5,829	6,161	5.7	30.2
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,401	1,661	1,613	-2.9	15.2
Other miscellaneous	3,547	3,899	3,904	0.2	10.1

^r revised

^p preliminary

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

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

Source(s): Table 20-10-0076-01.

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](#).

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.

Total wholesale sales expressed in volume are calculated by deflating current dollar values using relevant price indexes. The wholesale sales series in chained (2012) dollars is a chained Fisher volume index, with 2012 as the reference year. For more information, see [Deflation of wholesale sales](#).

The Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey covers all industries within the wholesale trade sector, as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), with the exception of oilseed and grain merchant wholesalers (NAICS 41112), petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers (NAICS 412) and business-to-business electronic markets, and agents and brokers (NAICS 419).

Real-time data tables

Real-time data tables 20-10-0019-01, 20-10-0020-01 and 20-10-0005-01 will be updated soon.

Next release

Wholesale trade data for November 2021 will be released on January 19, 2022.

Available tables: [20-10-0003-01](#), [20-10-0074-01](#) and [20-10-0076-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2401](#).

Please note that the tables available on the [website](#) represent a subset of the data available with this release. The full dataset is available upon request by contacting Jeff Paul (jeff.paul@statcan.gc.ca).

The product "[Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey: Interactive Tool](#)" ([71-607-X](#)) is available online. This product is based on the data published in the tables of the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey: 20-10-0074-01, 20-10-0076-01 and 20-10-0003-01.

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Jeff Paul (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca), Mining, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade Division.