

Wholesale trade, January 2022

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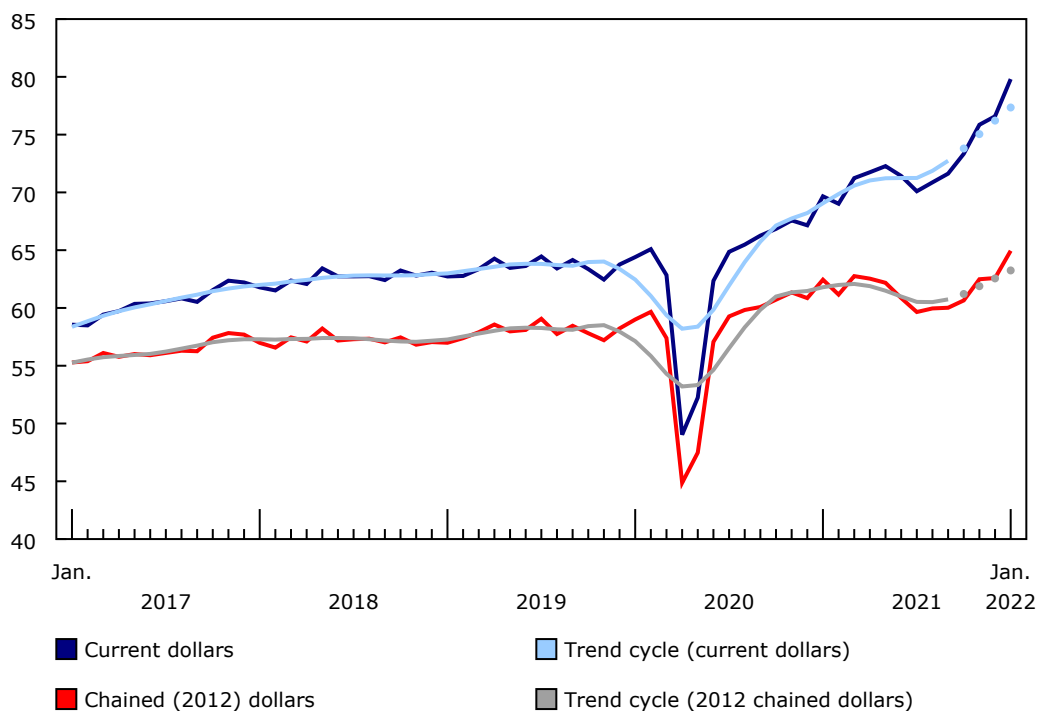
Wholesale sales increase for a sixth consecutive month

Sales in the wholesale sector rose 4.2% in January to \$79.8 billion. January's increase marks the six consecutive month of growth in the sector, and was the largest since June 2020. Gains were widespread in the sector, with five of seven subsectors that represent 72% of total wholesale sales reporting higher sales.

Sales volumes rose 3.8% in January.

Chart 1
Wholesale sales increase in January

billions of dollars



Note(s): The higher variability associated with the trend-cycle estimates is indicated on the chart with a dotted line for the current reference month and the previous three months. For more information, see the note to readers.

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

Three subsectors post large gains

Sales in three subsectors jumped more than \$1 billion each in January: building material and supplies, personal and household goods, and machinery, equipment and supplies.

Growth for the month was led by building material and supplies, which rose 14.0% to \$14.1 billion, the sixth consecutive monthly increase for the subsector. The strong increase for the month reflects higher sales to export markets, as exports of lumber and sawmill products jumped 16.3% and exports of plastic and foam building and



construction materials rose 20.1%. Notably, the price of lumber and other wood products—as measured by the Industrial Product Price Index—rose 11.8% in January, indicating that the increased level of nominal sales in the building material and supplies wholesale subsector had both a price and volume component.

Personal and household goods sales rose for the third consecutive month, up 10.6% to \$12.2 billion. Sales topped \$11 billion for the first time in December 2021, and promptly grew to more than \$12 billion in January. More than 80% of the gains in January came from the pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies subsector, particularly companies whose products are being used directly in the fight against COVID-19.

Sales in the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector rose 6.6% to \$16.8 billion, the fifth consecutive monthly increase. Three of the four industries in the subsector reported higher sales in January, led by the construction, forestry, mining and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies industry which posted a 15.2% gain. The increase in the subsector was driven by domestic demand, given that exports of industrial machinery equipment and parts fell 0.8% in January.

The largest decline in the sector came in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector, which fell 5.8% to \$11.1 billion in January. Prior to this month's decline, sales had increased 18.6% over the three months making up the fourth quarter of 2021. January's decline reflects lower exports and imports of motor vehicles in the month as supply chain issues continue to plague the subsector.

Higher sales in nine provinces

Wholesale sales increased in nine provinces and two territories in January, accounting for 98% of national sales. Ontario, Alberta, and Quebec led the increase, posting record high sales. Their growth accounted for 81% of national gains.

In Ontario, sales rose for the seventh consecutive month, up 3.0% to \$40.1 billion. The building material and supplies subsector led the province with sales of \$6.0 billion, a 13.5% increase from December. All component industries saw gains in January. Over half of the subsector's increase came from the lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies industry. Higher sales in the personal and household goods (+6.1%) and machinery, equipment and supplies (+5.1%) subsectors also contributed to Ontario's overall gains. Only the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector reported declining sales, falling 6.6% to \$7.4 billion after posting three months of gains.

Sales in Alberta grew 8.0% to \$8.4 billion in January. Six of the seven subsectors reported higher sales, led by the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector, which rose 13.6% to \$2.6 billion. Sales of construction, forestry, mining and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies accounted for over two-thirds of the subsector's growth. The building material and supplies subsector also contributed to the province's growth with a jump of 13.8% in sales for a monthly total of \$1.5 billion.

Rounding out the top three, Quebec saw gains of 5.4% in sales, reaching \$15.6 billion. While four of the seven subsectors reported lower sales, the strength of the personal and household goods and the building material and supplies subsectors more than made up the difference. Sales in the personal and household goods subsector have increased in 9 of the last 11 months and expanded another 20.0% to \$4.0 billion. As in all the other provinces, the building material and supplies subsector grew in Quebec as well, rising 20.3% to \$2.9 billion.

Inventories decline

Wholesalers' inventories shrank 0.8% to \$105.9 billion, following eight consecutive months of growth and a record high in December 2021. Inventories were 16.2% higher at the end of January 2022 than at the end of January 2021. Inventories decreased in five subsectors, comprising 52% of the sector's monthly inventories.

The largest change was among motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers, whose inventories fell 9.6% to \$11.6 billion. All industries in the subsector had smaller inventories in January, with motor vehicle wholesalers reporting a 13.5% decrease to \$6.4 billion. The motor vehicle industry holds 55% of the subsector's inventories, but accounted for 81% of the decrease in the sector. Manufacturer sales in the automotive

assembly and automotive parts industry decreased in January while unfilled orders increased, meaning new orders received in January outpaced the ability of Canadian assembly plants to fill them, which resulted in wholesale inventories being pulled downward.

Personal and household goods inventories fell 3.5% to \$17.5 billion. Inventories of pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies decreased 5.9% to \$8.0 billion. The industry's inventories comprised 45% of inventories in the subsector. The Omicron wave of the COVID-19 pandemic began in late December and peaked in late January. The Government of Canada announced [agreements to acquire oral antiviral medications to treat COVID-19 in December](#) and announced the [receipt of some antiviral medications in January](#). Textile, clothing and footwear inventories decreased 7.9% to \$3.2 billion. Inventories in the home entertainment equipment and household appliance; personal goods; and toiletries, cosmetics and sundries industries were up.

Machinery, equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers' inventories grew 2.8% to \$29.6 billion. A 8.0% increase in construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies to \$13.9 billion more than offset decreases in all the sector's other component industries. Roughly half of inventories in the subsector are in the construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies industry.

The inventory-to-sales ratio decreased from 1.39 in December to 1.33 in January. 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

	January 2021	December 2021 ^r	January 2022 ^p	December 2021 to January 2022	January 2021 to January 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total, wholesale sales (current dollars)	69,660	76,587	79,807	4.2	14.6
Total, wholesale sales (2012 chained dollars)	62,448	62,588	64,950	3.8	4.0
Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts	58,884	64,759	68,661	6.0	16.6
Farm product	926	1,025	1,073	4.7	15.9
Food, beverage and tobacco	12,302	13,239	13,480	1.8	9.6
Food	10,698	11,613	11,766	1.3	10.0
Beverage	815	838	867	3.5	6.3
Cigarette and tobacco product	660	593	657	10.9	-0.5
Cannabis	128	196	190	-3.3	48.7
Personal and household goods	9,862	11,019	12,192	10.6	23.6
Textile, clothing and footwear	1,150	1,534	1,382	-9.9	20.2
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	993	898	1,022	13.8	2.9
Home furnishings	663	714	766	7.4	15.6
Personal goods	1,005	981	1,093	11.4	8.7
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	5,089	5,815	6,791	16.8	33.4
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	963	1,078	1,139	5.6	18.2
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	10,776	11,829	11,146	-5.8	3.4
Motor vehicle	8,565	9,210	8,601	-6.6	0.4
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	2,152	2,552	2,479	-2.9	15.2
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	58	67	66	-0.7	13.7
Building material and supplies	11,796	12,350	14,080	14.0	19.4
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	3,041	3,432	3,677	7.1	20.9
Metal service centres	1,713	2,559	2,592	1.3	51.3
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	7,043	6,360	7,811	22.8	10.9
Machinery, equipment and supplies	15,218	15,796	16,833	6.6	10.6
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	1,912	2,043	1,960	-4.1	2.5
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	4,325	5,158	5,944	15.2	37.4
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	5,422	5,076	5,285	4.1	-2.5
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,559	3,520	3,645	3.5	2.4
Miscellaneous	8,780	11,328	11,003	-2.9	25.3
Recyclable material	1,068	1,591	1,418	-10.9	32.8
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	1,034	1,198	1,160	-3.2	12.2
Agricultural supplies	2,579	3,758	3,624	-3.6	40.5
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,539	1,838	1,820	-1.0	18.2
Other miscellaneous	2,560	2,943	2,981	1.3	16.4

^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

	January 2021	December 2021 ^r	January 2022 ^p	December 2021 to January 2022	January 2021 to January 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	69,660	76,587	79,807	4.2	14.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	367	368	386	4.9	5.0
Prince Edward Island	114	112	115	2.8	1.3
Nova Scotia	1,048	1,154	1,166	1.0	11.2
New Brunswick	671	708	779	10.0	16.1
Quebec	13,261	14,842	15,641	5.4	17.9
Ontario	35,685	38,932	40,108	3.0	12.4
Manitoba	1,645	1,784	1,735	-2.7	5.5
Saskatchewan	2,477	3,255	3,336	2.5	34.7
Alberta	6,882	7,766	8,389	8.0	21.9
British Columbia	7,455	7,616	8,096	6.3	8.6
Yukon	15	14	19	42.0	27.1
Northwest Territories	22	23	24	1.6	8.8
Nunavut	17	15	14	-11.9	-20.2

^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

	January 2021	December 2021 ^r	January 2022 ^p	December 2021 to January 2022	January 2021 to January 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total, wholesale inventories	91,125	106,693	105,853	-0.8	16.2
Farm product	220	276	275	-0.1	25.3
Food, beverage and tobacco	10,296	11,119	11,042	-0.7	7.2
Food	9,072	9,712	9,607	-1.1	5.9
Beverage	628	760	782	2.9	24.6
Cigarette and tobacco product	372	418	434	3.8	16.6
Cannabis	225	229	219	-4.5	-2.8
Personal and household goods	16,143	18,187	17,544	-3.5	8.7
Textile, clothing and footwear	3,678	3,490	3,216 ^E	-7.9	-12.6
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	900	1,142	1,185	3.8	31.6
Home furnishings	1,311	1,807	1,797	-0.6	37.0
Personal goods	1,946 ^E	2,212	2,261	2.2	16.2
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	7,235	8,451	7,953	-5.9	9.9
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	1,072	1,085	1,133	4.4	5.7
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	11,838	12,870	11,635	-9.6	-1.7
Motor vehicle	7,034	7,435	6,429	-13.5	-8.6
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	4,715	5,321	5,096	-4.2	8.1
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	88 ^E	F	F	F	F
Building material and supplies	14,822	20,601	21,175	2.8	42.9
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	4,163	5,380	5,442	1.2	30.7
Metal service centres	3,558	6,152	6,402	4.1	79.9
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	7,101	9,069	9,331	2.9	31.4
Machinery, equipment and supplies	25,818	28,793	29,604	2.8	14.7
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	5,789	5,730	5,650	-1.4	-2.4
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	11,576	12,882	13,916	8.0	20.2
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	2,938	3,878	3,847	-0.8	30.9
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	5,515	6,303	6,191	-1.8	12.3
Miscellaneous	11,987	14,848	14,577	-1.8	21.6
Recyclable material	1,077	1,376	1,347	-2.1	25.0
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	1,073	1,173	1,173	-0.0	9.3
Agricultural supplies	4,720	6,555	6,472	-1.3	37.1
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,368	1,662	1,655	-0.4	21.0
Other miscellaneous	3,748	4,082	3,931	-3.7	4.9

^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 February 2022 will be released on April 14, 2022.

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

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

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, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).