

# Wholesale trade, March 2022

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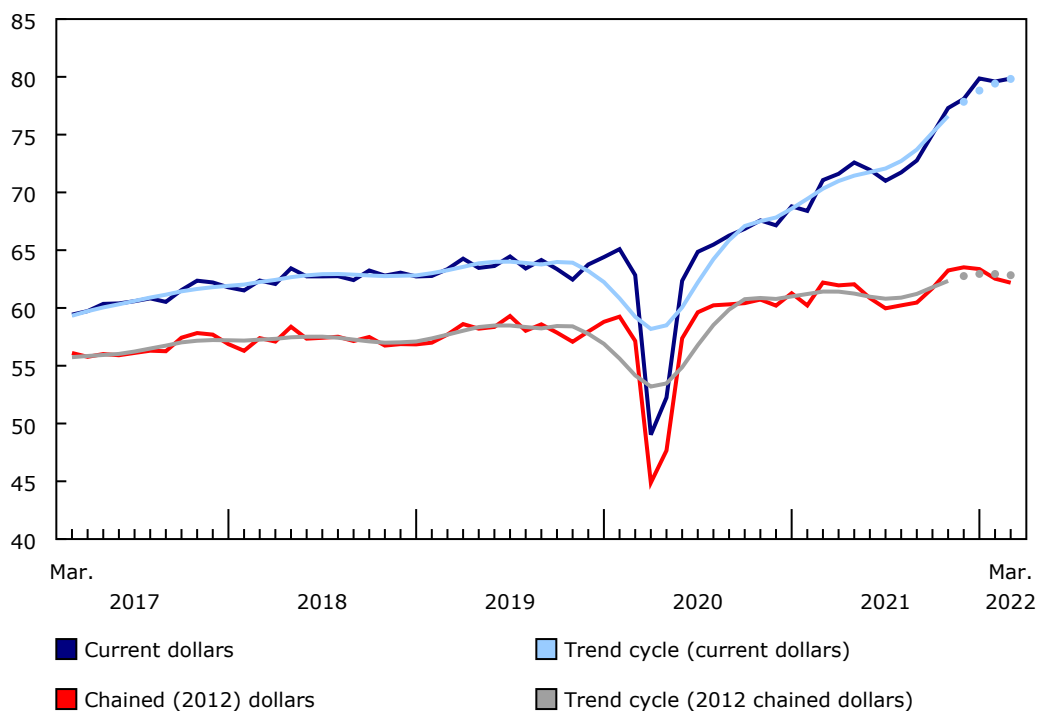
## Wholesale sales rise slightly

Wholesale sales rose 0.3% in March to \$79.8 billion, with the largest increases coming in the building material and supplies and the motor vehicle accessories and parts subsectors. This was the seventh increase in the past eight months. Sales rose in four of seven subsectors, representing 64% of the total wholesale sector.

Constant dollar sales fell 0.6%.

**Chart 1**  
**Wholesale sales increase in March**

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](#).

## Building material and supplies sales lead gains

Sales of building material and supplies rose 3.8% in March to \$14.1 billion, the fifth increase in the past six months. The gains in the subsector reflect ongoing strength in the housing industry in the United States. Housing starts in the United States rose 0.3% in March to their highest level in more than five years ([US Census Bureau Report](#)), providing a boost to Canadian exports of forestry products and building and packaging materials, which together rose 2.9% in March.



Motor vehicle and motor vehicle accessory and parts sales grew 2.6% in March, the first increase after two months of declines. Both imports (+9.9%) and exports (+7.9%) in the motor vehicle sector grew in March. Notwithstanding the small increase, automobile manufacturers across North America are not working at full capacity, with sporadic shutdowns having been required at a number of facilities across the continent in March. These sporadic shutdowns continued into April as semiconductor chip supplies have not yet returned to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Partially offsetting the increases was a 4.0% decline in sales of machinery, equipment and supplies, which was the largest movement (higher or lower) of any wholesale subsector in March. This was the first decline after six consecutive increases in the subsector. Lower sales came mostly from the computer and communications equipment and supplies industry, which fell 8.6% after reaching a historic high in February.

Overall, sales in the wholesale sector rose 3.9% in the first quarter of 2022 to \$239.3 billion. Nearly half of the growth in the sector came from a 21.3% jump in sales from the lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies industry, as demand for housing and lumber prices both remained at high levels. Six of the seven subsectors reported gains in the first quarter of 2022, with the only decline coming in the motor vehicle and motor vehicle accessories and parts subsector, where sales fell 3.1% due to ongoing supply chain issues.

## **Ontario leads provincial gains**

Six provinces reported higher wholesale sales in March, accounting for 64% of national sales, led by Ontario.

Sales in Ontario rose 1.5% to \$40.4 billion in March, with higher sales in five of the seven subsectors. The miscellaneous subsector led the gains with a 7.4% increase to \$5.3 billion. Sales in all component industries rose, with almost half of the growth coming from the recyclable material industry, up 24.4% to \$0.9 billion. Higher sales in the personal and household goods and the motor vehicle and motor vehicles parts and accessories subsectors also contributed to higher sales in Ontario. Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories sales were up 3.2% to \$8.1 billion, while sales of personal and household goods grew 3.3% to \$6.4 billion. The gains of these two subsectors were offset by lower sales in the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector, which fell 5.4% to \$8.3 billion. Excluding this subsector, sales in Ontario would have been up 3.4%.

With most provinces and territories having relatively tempered monthly movements, the next largest change was a downward movement in Saskatchewan. In the province, following six consecutive months of growth, sales decreased 9.0% to \$3.3 billion. While five of seven subsectors had lower sales, over three-quarters of the decline was due to a 12.1% fall in the miscellaneous subsector, which accounted for 58% of the province's sales.

In the first quarter of 2022, nine provinces and one territory had higher sales than in the fourth quarter of 2021. Together, they represented 98% of national quarterly sales. While contributing to almost 11% of the quarterly national sales, leading the gains was British Columbia. In the province, sales reached \$25.0 billion, an 11.6% increase compared with the fourth quarter of 2021. This increase was largely on the strength of the building material and supply subsector. Quarterly wholesale sales increased 1.7% to \$120.6 billion in Ontario, 4.5% to \$45.4 billion in Quebec, and 6.0% to \$25.2 billion in Alberta. Together with British Columbia, these four provinces accounted for 90% of national sales.

## **Inventories increase in March**

Inventories rose 0.4% to \$108.7 billion in March, the second consecutive monthly increase. Four of seven subsectors reported increased inventories, representing 42.3% of the total value.

Inventories in the personal and household goods subsector increased by 5.6% in March. Inventories grew in all component industries in the subsector, with textile, clothing, and footwear merchant wholesalers and pharmaceuticals, toiletries, cosmetics and sundries merchant wholesalers reporting the most growth. Also contributing to the increase were higher inventories in the miscellaneous subsector, which grew 2.2% to \$15.4 billion, and the food, beverage and tobacco merchant subsector, which grew 2.8% to \$11.6 billion.

Overall, inventory growth in March was partially offset by decreases of machinery, equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers, the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers, and the building material and supplies merchant wholesalers.

Wholesale inventories increased by 1.1% in the first quarter of 2022. This increase was led by quarterly growth in stocks of machinery, equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers, up 2.1%, and the miscellaneous merchant wholesalers, which grew 3.4%. Inventory growth in the first quarter of 2022 was mainly mitigated by the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories merchant wholesalers, which shrank by 6.7%.

The inventory-to-sales ratio stayed at 1.36 in March. 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**

	March 2021	February 2022 <sup>r</sup>	March 2022 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2022	March 2021 to March 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total, wholesale sales (current dollars)</b>	<b>71,065</b>	<b>79,595</b>	<b>79,849</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>12.4</b>
<b>Total, wholesale sales (2012 chained dollars)</b>	<b>62,198</b>	<b>62,535</b>	<b>62,183</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-0.0</b>
<b>Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts</b>	<b>60,171</b>	<b>68,131</b>	<b>68,087</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>13.2</b>
Farm product	983	1,118	1,099	-1.7	11.8
Food, beverage and tobacco	12,652	13,644	13,741	0.7	8.6
Food	10,951	11,996	12,138	1.2	10.8
Beverage	823	862	818	-5.1	-0.7
Cigarette and tobacco product	706	605	571	-5.7	-19.2
Cannabis	172	180	215	18.9	24.9
Personal and household goods	10,216	11,364	11,203	-1.4	9.7
Textile, clothing and footwear	1,117	1,197	1,348	12.6	20.6
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	907	915	941	2.8	3.7
Home furnishings	748	861	760	-11.7	1.5
Personal goods	1,036	1,135	1,169	3.0	12.9
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	5,401	6,168	5,894	-4.4	9.1
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	1,007	1,088	1,092	0.3	8.4
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	10,894	11,464	11,761	2.6	8.0
Motor vehicle	8,545	8,736	9,124	4.5	6.8
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	2,275	2,664	2,538	-4.7	11.5
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	73	64	99 <sup>E</sup>	55.3	34.9
Building material and supplies	11,653	13,536	14,054	3.8	20.6
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	3,097	3,700	3,681	-0.5	18.8
Metal service centres	1,863	2,603	2,675	2.8	43.5
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	6,692	7,234	7,699	6.4	15.0
Machinery, equipment and supplies	15,239	16,902	16,223	-4.0	6.5
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	2,175	1,875	1,859	-0.9	-14.5
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	4,496	5,580	5,597	0.3	24.5
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	4,898	5,480	5,007	-8.6	2.2
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,669	3,967	3,761	-5.2	2.5
Miscellaneous	9,428	11,567	11,767	1.7	24.8
Recyclable material	1,242	1,350	1,537	13.9	23.8
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	1,070	1,225	1,200	-2.0	12.2
Agricultural supplies	2,696	4,177	3,886	-7.0	44.1
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,649	2,003	2,186	9.1	32.6
Other miscellaneous	2,771	2,812	2,957	5.2	6.7

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> preliminary

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

**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**

	March 2021	February 2022 <sup>r</sup>	March 2022 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2022	March 2021 to March 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Canada</b>	<b>71,065</b>	<b>79,595</b>	<b>79,849</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>12.4</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	390	370	464	25.2	18.9
Prince Edward Island	112	124	134	8.2	19.2
Nova Scotia	1,107	1,124	1,140	1.4	3.0
New Brunswick	697	769	796	3.5	14.3
Quebec	14,064	15,115	14,991	-0.8	6.6
Ontario	35,923	39,817	40,395	1.5	12.4
Manitoba	1,657	1,828	1,818	-0.5	9.7
Saskatchewan	2,525	3,577	3,255	-9.0	28.9
Alberta	7,063	8,334	8,425	1.1	19.3
British Columbia	7,467	8,480	8,383	-1.1	12.3
Yukon	17	17	15	-11.7	-14.2
Northwest Territories	26	26	25	-5.0	-3.4
Nunavut	16	14	7	-48.6	-55.3

<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 [20-10-0074-01](#).

**Table 3**  
**Wholesale merchants' inventories by industry – Seasonally adjusted**

	March 2021	February 2022 <sup>r</sup>	March 2022 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2022	March 2021 to March 2022
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total, wholesale inventories</b>	<b>92,674</b>	<b>108,354</b>	<b>108,741</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>17.3</b>
Farm product	227	269	273	1.4	20.3
Food, beverage and tobacco	10,541	11,333	11,648	2.8	10.5
Food	9,257	9,994	10,296	3.0	11.2
Beverage	709	755	749	-0.8	5.6
Cigarette and tobacco product	359	376	401	6.4	11.7
Cannabis	215	207	202	-2.1	-6.0
Personal and household goods	16,368	17,738	18,737	5.6	14.5
Textile, clothing and footwear	3,626	3,317	3,883 <sup>E</sup>	17.1	7.1
Home entertainment equipment and household appliance	867	1,214	1,259	3.8	45.3
Home furnishings	1,377	1,705 <sup>E</sup>	1,745	2.3	26.7
Personal goods	1,953	2,470	2,512	1.7	28.6
Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies	7,448	7,852	8,141	3.7	9.3
Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries	1,097	1,181	1,197	1.4	9.1
Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories	11,582	12,511	12,115	-3.2	4.6
Motor vehicle	6,807	6,712	6,593	-1.8	-3.2
New motor vehicle parts and accessories	4,675	5,679	5,370	-5.5	14.8
Used motor vehicle parts and accessories	F	F	F	F	F
Building material and supplies	14,975	21,219	21,010	-1.0	40.3
Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies	4,171	5,980	5,967	-0.2	43.1
Metal service centres	3,540	5,853	5,681	-2.9	60.5
Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies	7,265	9,386	9,362	-0.3	28.9
Machinery, equipment and supplies	26,756	30,218	29,569	-2.1	10.5
Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment	5,703	5,642	5,560	-1.5	-2.5
Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies	11,838	13,898	13,560	-2.4	14.6
Computer and communications equipment and supplies	3,008	4,011	3,909	-2.5	30.0
Other machinery, equipment and supplies	6,208	6,667	6,539	-1.9	5.3
Miscellaneous	12,225	15,065	15,389	2.2	25.9
Recyclable material	1,309	1,305	1,414 <sup>E</sup>	8.4	8.1
Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product	1,057	1,260	1,246	-1.1	17.9
Agricultural supplies	4,766	6,603	6,732	1.9	41.2
Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product	1,440	1,788	1,779	-0.5	23.5
Other miscellaneous	3,653	4,109	4,219	2.7	15.5

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> preliminary

<sup>E</sup> 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

This release incorporates annual revisions. Unadjusted monthly wholesale data were revised back to January 2021, while seasonally adjusted data were revised back to January 2018. Factors influencing revisions include the late receipt of respondent information; the correction of information in the data provided; the replacement of estimated figures with actual values (once available); the reclassification of companies within, into and out of the wholesale trade sector; and updates to seasonal factors.

Data in volume terms were revised back to January 2018.

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 [Section 2: Issues related to analysis and interpretation](#).

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 (see [Section 1: Concepts and definitions](#)) 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 April 2022 will be released on June 16, 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](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).