

Wholesale trade, March 2023

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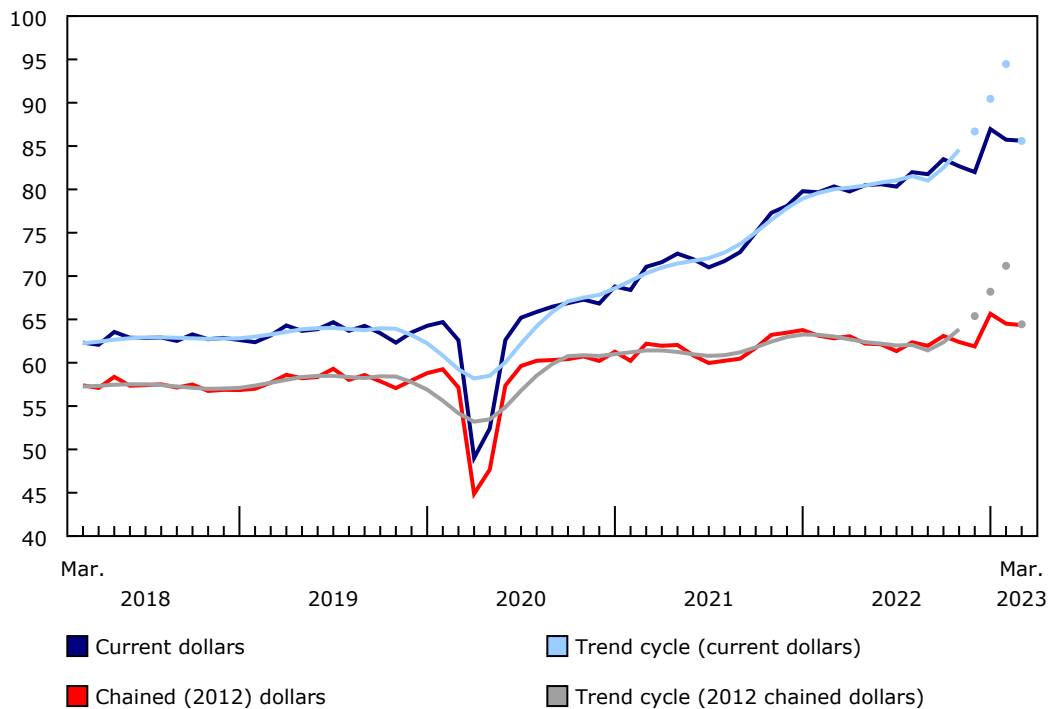
Wholesale sales excluding petroleum fell 0.1% to \$85.6 billion in March. Sales fell in four of the seven subsectors. The decrease in sales was mainly led by the miscellaneous subsector and the machinery equipment and supplies subsector. Despite the monthly decrease in the sector, wholesale sales (excluding oilseeds, grains and petroleum) were higher (+6.9%) than in March 2022.

Starting with this release, petroleum products data will be available within data tables, but the analytical text excludes the petroleum subsector for comparison purposes with the previous month. Next month's release will be reported with petroleum analysis.

Constant dollar sales excluding petroleum fell 0.3% in March 2023.

Chart 1 Wholesale sales (excluding petroleum) decrease in March

billions of dollars



Note(s): Data for oilseed and grain merchant wholesalers have been included since January 2023, while those for petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons merchant wholesalers were included from March 2023. However, this chart excludes the petroleum subsector for comparison purposes with the previous month. 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](#).

Lower sales in the miscellaneous subsector leads the decline in March

Sales in the miscellaneous subsector fell 6.1% to \$11.4 billion in March. Despite the majority of industry groups reporting a monthly increase, lower sales of the agricultural supplies industry group (-15.5% to \$4.1 billion) led the subsector to an overall decline. This is both the first monthly decline in the year and the first monthly decline since December 2022 for this industry group.

The machinery, equipment and supplies subsector also contributed to the wholesale sector decline, down 2.0% to \$18.0 billion in March. The decline of the computer and communications equipment and supplies industry group (-9.2% to \$4.9 billion) influenced the drop of the overall subsector. Month over month, there has been a slowdown of sales in this industry, and this trend is also seen with [lower imports of electronic and electrical equipment and computers and computer peripherals](#).

Partially offsetting the decline in the wholesale sector was higher sales from the farm product subsector, reporting an increase of 19.1% to \$4.7 billion in March.

Sales from Quebec lead provincial increase

Sales increased in the majority of provinces in March, led by higher sales in Quebec, followed by Ontario and British Columbia.

Wholesale sales in Quebec rose 7.0% to \$16.0 billion in March. Sales grew in all seven subsectors, with the largest increase coming from the food, beverage and tobacco subsector (+8.7% to \$3.7 billion), followed by the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector (+7.0% to \$2.6 billion).

Sales in Ontario increased by 1.5% to \$43.7 billion in March, with the building material and supplies subsector taking the lead (+5.1% to \$5.4 billion). Additionally, sales from the personal and household goods subsector contributed to Ontario's increase, up by 3.0% to \$7.2 billion.

Inventories continue to grow in March

Wholesale inventories rose 0.7% to \$131.9 billion in March, the fourth consecutive monthly increase. Increased inventories were reported in three of the seven subsectors, led by the motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories subsector (+5.9%), machinery, equipment and supplies subsector (+2.2%) and the building material and supplies subsector (+2.5%).

The inventory-to-sales ratio increase from 1.52 in February to 1.54 in March. This ratio is a measure of the time (in months) required to exhaust inventories if sales were to remain at their current levels.

Wholesale sales experience slower growth in the first quarter of 2023

In the first quarter of 2023, wholesale sales (excluding oilseeds and grains, and petroleum) increased 0.5% to \$249.4 billion, reporting slower growth due to lower sales in February and March 2023. The [Canadian survey on business conditions reporting on the first quarter of 2023](#) indicated that businesses in wholesale trade were the most likely to expect supply chain challenges in the first three months of the year.

The largest growth in quarterly sales came from the machinery, equipment and supplies subsector (+3.7% to \$54.3 billion) and the personal and household goods subsector (+4.1% to \$35.7 billion). On an annual basis, quarterly sales grew 4.6% in the first quarter of 2023 when compared with the same quarter of 2022.

Table 1
Wholesale merchants' sales by industry—seasonally adjusted

| | March 2022 | February 2023 ^f | March 2023 ^p | February to March 2023 | March 2022 to March 2023 |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Total, wholesale sales (current dollars) | 80,341 | 85,735 | 125,148 | 46.0 | 55.8 |
| Total, wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding oilseed and grain | .. | 83,054 | 121,779 | 46.6 | .. |
| Total, wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons | .. | 85,735 | 85,617 | -0.1 | .. |
| Total, wholesale sales, excluding petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons (2012 chained dollars) | 62,815 | 64,510 | 64,339 | -0.3 | 2.4 |
| Total wholesale sales (current dollars), excluding motor vehicle and parts | 68,549 | 73,338 | 112,846 | 53.9 | 64.6 |
| Farm product | 1,125 | 3,941 | 4,693 | 19.1 | 316.9 |
| Oilseed and grain merchant | .. | 2,681 | 3,369 | 25.6 | .. |
| Petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons | .. | .. | 39,531 | .. | .. |
| Food, beverage and tobacco | 13,880 | 15,133 | 15,122 | -0.1 | 8.9 |
| Food | 12,133 | 13,492 | 13,484 | -0.1 | 11.1 |
| Beverage | 962 | 923 | 902 | -2.3 | -6.3 |
| Cigarette and tobacco product | 569 | 518 | 503 | -2.8 | -11.5 |
| Cannabis | 215 | 200 | 233 | 16.3 | 8.0 |
| Personal and household goods | 11,245 | 11,853 | 12,003 | 1.3 | 6.7 |
| Textile, clothing and footwear | 1,408 | 1,676 | 1,773 | 5.8 | 25.9 |
| Home entertainment equipment and household appliance | 961 | 836 | 908 | 8.6 | -5.6 |
| Home furnishings | 785 | 746 | 684 | -8.3 | -12.9 |
| Personal goods | 1,177 | 1,050 | 1,079 | 2.7 | -8.3 |
| Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies | 6,915 | 7,545 | 7,560 | 0.2 | 9.3 |
| Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries | 1,117 | 1,145 | 1,178 | 2.9 | 5.4 |
| Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories | 11,791 | 12,397 | 12,302 | -0.8 | 4.3 |
| Motor vehicle | 9,130 | 9,804 | 9,748 | -0.6 | 6.8 |
| New motor vehicle parts and accessories | 2,562 | 2,521 | 2,477 | -1.7 | -3.3 |
| Used motor vehicle parts and accessories | 100 ^E | 73 | 76 | 4.5 | -23.5 |
| Building material and supplies | 14,113 | 11,868 | 12,061 | 1.6 | -14.5 |
| Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies | 3,711 | 3,747 | 3,843 | 2.6 | 3.6 |
| Metal service centres | 2,691 | 2,319 | 2,399 | 3.5 | -10.9 |
| Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies | 7,711 | 5,802 | 5,819 | 0.3 | -24.5 |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies | 16,310 | 18,378 | 18,008 | -2.0 | 10.4 |

Table 1 - continued
Wholesale merchants' sales by industry—seasonally adjusted

| | March 2022 | February 2023 ^r | March 2023 ^p | February to March 2023 | March 2022 to March 2023 |
|--|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment | 1,938 | 2,388 | 2,448 | 2.5 | 26.3 |
| Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies | 5,565 | 6,069 | 6,098 | 0.5 | 9.6 |
| Computer and communications equipment and supplies | 5,007 | 5,411 | 4,913 | -9.2 | -1.9 |
| Other machinery, equipment and supplies | 3,799 | 4,510 | 4,550 | 0.9 | 19.8 |
| Miscellaneous | 11,876 | 12,166 | 11,428 | -6.1 | -3.8 |
| Recyclable material | 1,599 | 1,350 | 1,232 | -8.7 | -22.9 |
| Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product | 1,210 | 1,240 | 1,270 | 2.4 | 4.9 |
| Agricultural supplies | 3,890 | 4,865 | 4,113 | -15.5 | 5.7 |
| Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product | 2,211 | 1,918 | 1,919 | 0.0 | -13.2 |
| Mineral, ore and precious metal | .. | 539 | 648 | 20.3 | .. |
| Log, wood chips, and other wood products | .. | 107 | 131 | 22.3 | .. |
| Other miscellaneous | 2,965 | 2,147 | 2,116 | -1.4 | -28.6 |

^r revised

^p preliminary

.. not available for a specific reference period

E use with caution

Note(s):

Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Data for oilseeds and grain merchant wholesales have been included since January 2023, while those for petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons merchant wholesalers were included from March 2023.

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

Table 2
Wholesale merchants' sales by province and territory—seasonally adjusted

| | March 2022 | February 2023 ^r | March 2023 ^p | February to March 2023 | March 2022 to March 2023 |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Canada | 80,111 | 85,735 | 85,617 | -0.1 | 6.9 |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 421 | 401 | 471 | 17.5 | 11.9 |
| Prince Edward Island | 130 | 125 | 121 | -3.7 | -7.2 |
| Nova Scotia | 1,176 | 1,172 | 1,220 | 4.1 | 3.8 |
| New Brunswick | 784 | 805 | 844 | 4.9 | 7.6 |
| Quebec | 14,966 | 14,972 | 16,025 | 7.0 | 7.1 |
| Ontario | 40,457 | 43,038 | 43,684 | 1.5 | 8.0 |
| Manitoba | 1,821 | 2,488 | 2,567 | 3.2 | 40.9 |
| Saskatchewan | 3,355 | 4,875 | 4,376 | -10.2 | 30.4 |
| Alberta | 8,568 | 10,198 | 8,456 | -17.1 | -1.3 |
| British Columbia | 8,384 | 7,589 | 7,796 | 2.7 | -7.0 |
| Yukon | x | x | x | x | x |
| Northwest Territories | 27 | 36 | 31 | -14.6 | 14.5 |
| Nunavut | x | x | x | x | x |

^r revised

^p preliminary

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

Note(s):

Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Data for the year 2023 includes the oilseed and grain merchant wholesalers industry, while the year 2022 excludes it.

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

Table 3
Wholesale merchants' inventories by industry—seasonally adjusted

| | March 2022 | February 2023 ^r | March 2023 ^p | February to March 2023 | March 2022 to March 2023 |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | millions of dollars | | | % change | |
| Total, wholesale inventories | 110,038 | 130,939 | 173,433 | 32.5 | 57.6 |
| Total, wholesale inventories (excluding Petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons) | 110,038 | 130,939 | 131,919 | 0.7 | 19.9 |
| Farm product | 267 | 2,316 | 2,209 | -4.6 | 726.2 |
| Petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons | .. | .. | 41,514 | .. | .. |
| Food, beverage and tobacco | 12,104 | 14,354 | 13,974 | -2.7 | 15.4 |
| Food | 10,559 | 12,721 | 12,278 | -3.5 | 16.3 |
| Beverage | 929 | 859 | 886 | 3.1 | -4.7 |
| Cigarette and tobacco product | 414 | 507 | 530 | 4.5 | 28.0 |
| Cannabis | 202 | 268 | 281 | 4.9 | 38.7 |
| Personal and household goods | 18,866 | 22,428 | 22,181 | -1.1 | 17.6 |
| Textile, clothing and footwear | 3,838 | 5,589 | 5,340 | -4.4 | 39.2 |
| Home entertainment equipment and household appliance | 1,286 | 1,511 | 1,490 | -1.4 | 15.9 |
| Home furnishings | 1,745 | 2,203 | 2,124 | -3.6 | 21.7 |
| Personal goods | 2,565 | 3,053 | 3,106 | 1.7 | 21.1 |
| Pharmaceuticals and pharmacy supplies | 8,248 | 8,901 | 8,950 | 0.5 | 8.5 |
| Toiletries, cosmetics and sundries | 1,185 | 1,171 | 1,172 | 0.0 | -1.2 |
| Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and accessories | 12,176 | 14,328 | 15,168 | 5.9 | 24.6 |
| Motor vehicle | 6,569 | 8,291 | 9,101 | 9.8 | 38.6 |
| New motor vehicle parts and accessories | 5,447 | 5,869 | 5,924 | 0.9 | 8.8 |
| Used motor vehicle parts and accessories | F | F | F | F | F |
| Building material and supplies | 21,068 | 23,986 | 24,579 | 2.5 | 16.7 |
| Electrical, plumbing, heating and air-conditioning equipment and supplies | 6,045 | 6,921 | 7,256 | 4.8 | 20.0 |
| Metal service centres | 5,654 | 6,153 | 6,419 | 4.3 | 13.5 |
| Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies | 9,369 | 10,912 | 10,904 | -0.1 | 16.4 |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies | 29,843 | 35,928 | 36,722 | 2.2 | 23.0 |
| Farm, lawn and garden machinery and equipment | 5,626 | 6,918 | 7,178 | 3.8 | 27.6 |
| Construction, forestry, mining, and industrial machinery, equipment and supplies | 13,641 | 16,745 | 17,220 | 2.8 | 26.2 |
| Computer and communications equipment and supplies | 3,978 | 4,244 | 4,211 | -0.8 | 5.8 |
| Other machinery, equipment and supplies | 6,598 | 8,020 | 8,113 | 1.2 | 23.0 |
| Miscellaneous | 15,712 | 17,598 | 17,087 | -2.9 | 8.7 |
| Recyclable material | 1,415 ^E | 1,060 ^E | 979 ^E | -7.6 | -30.8 |
| Paper, paper product and disposable plastic product | 1,263 | 1,522 | 1,587 | 4.3 | 25.6 |
| Agricultural supplies | 6,904 | 8,334 | 7,791 | -6.5 | 12.9 |
| Chemical (except agricultural) and allied product | 1,788 | 1,942 | 1,966 | 1.3 | 10.0 |
| Mineral, ore and precious metal | .. | 233 | 275 | 17.8 | .. |
| Log, wood chips, and other wood | .. | 111 | 108 | -2.9 | .. |
| Other miscellaneous | 4,342 | 4,397 | 4,380 | -0.4 | 0.9 |

^r revised

^p preliminary

.. not available for a specific reference period

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

Note(s):

Figures may not add up to totals as a result of rounding.

Data for oilseeds and grain merchant wholesales have been included since January 2023, while those for petroleum, petroleum products, and other hydrocarbons merchant wholesalers were included from March 2023.

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 [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 underlying changes in direction in 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 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 will be released on June 16.

Correction note

An update of this release was required to adjust its content due to the addition of the data on the petroleum subsector in March 2023. This correction allows for better comparison with historical data.

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).