

# Retail trade, March 2023

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, May 19, 2023

Retail sales decreased 1.4% to \$65.3 billion in March. Sales decreased in 5 of the 9 subsectors, representing 55.5% of retail trade, led by decreases at motor vehicle and parts dealers (-4.4%) and gasoline stations and fuel vendors (-3.9%).

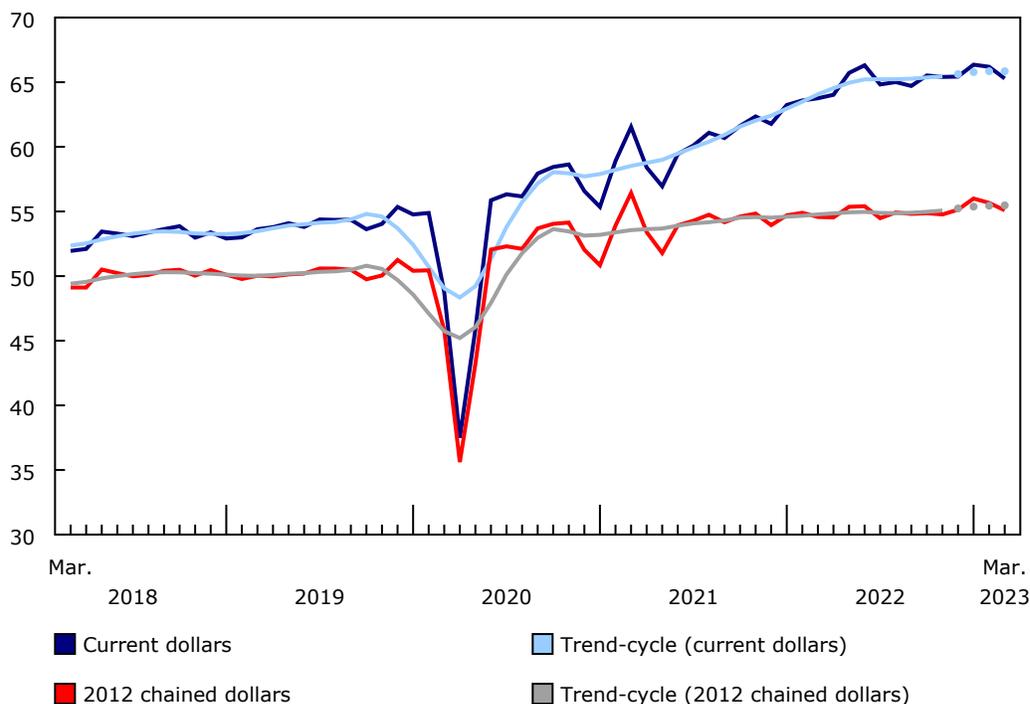
Core retail sales—which exclude gasoline stations and fuel vendors and motor vehicle and parts dealers—increased 0.3% in March.

In volume terms, retail sales decreased 1.0% in March.

Retail sales were up 0.7% in the first quarter of 2023. In volume terms, retail sales were up 1.2%.

**Chart 1**  
**Retail sales decrease in March**

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 [20-10-0056-01](#) and [20-10-0067-01](#).

## Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers fall for the first time in eight months

The decrease in retail sales in March was led by lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers (-4.4%), their first decline in eight months. Lower sales at new car dealers (-4.8%) led the decrease, followed by other motor vehicle dealers (-11.4%). Used car dealers (+2.6%) were the only store type in this subsector to increase in March.

Lower sales at gasoline stations and fuel vendors (-3.9%) also contributed to the decrease in retail sales in March. In volume terms, sales at gasoline stations and fuel vendors decreased 1.3%.



Statistics Canada  
Statistique Canada

Canada

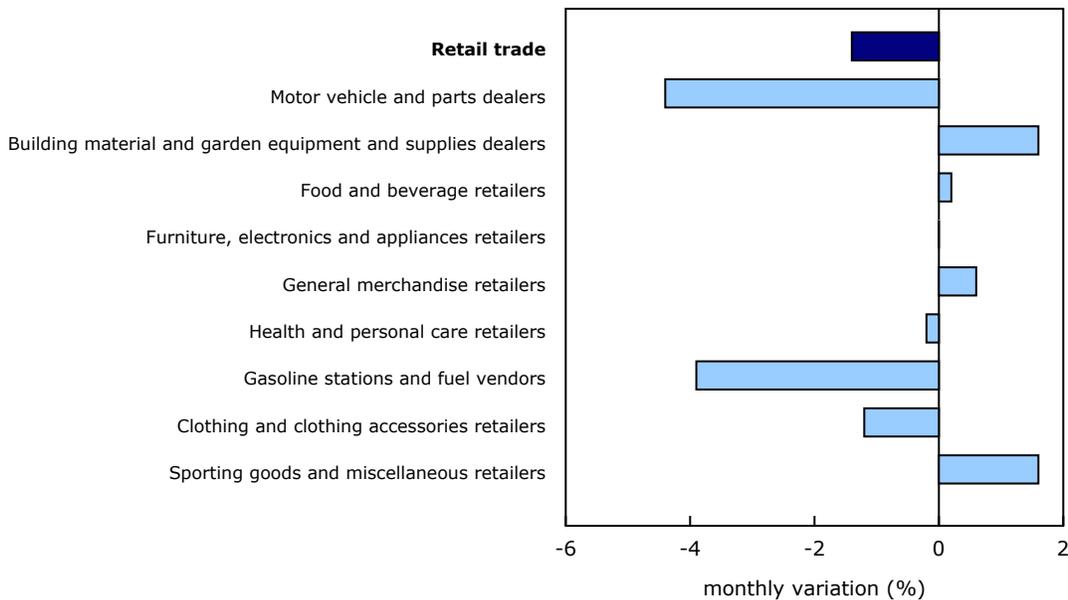
## Core retail sales increase on gains at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers

Core retail sales increased 0.3% in March, posting its fourth consecutive increase. The gain was led by higher sales at building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers (+1.6%).

Higher sales were also recorded at sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, book, and miscellaneous retailers (+1.6%).

The largest decrease to core retail sales came from clothing, clothing accessories, shoes, jewelry, luggage and leather goods retailers (-1.2%). Sales were down in two of the three store types, led by lower sales at clothing and clothing accessories retailers (-1.0%).

### Chart 2 Sales decrease in 5 of 9 subsectors in March



Source(s): Table 20-10-0056-01.

## Sales down in nine provinces

Retail sales decreased in nine provinces in March. Ontario (-1.7%) had the largest provincial decrease, led by lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers. In the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Toronto, retail sales were down 1.2%.

In New Brunswick, retail sales decreased 10.7%, led by lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers.

British Columbia (+0.9%) was the only province to record an increase in retail sales. The increase was driven by higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers. In the CMA of Vancouver, retail sales were up 2.0%.

## **Retail e-commerce sales in Canada**

On a seasonally adjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales in March were up 2.2% to \$3.8 billion, accounting for 5.9% of total retail trade, compared with 5.7% in February.

## **Advance retail indicator**

Statistics Canada is providing an advance estimate of retail sales, which suggests that sales increased 0.2% in April. Owing to its early nature, this figure will be revised. This unofficial estimate was calculated based on responses received from 38.2% of companies surveyed. The average final response rate for the survey over the previous 12 months was 89.4%.

## Note to readers

As of the January 2023 reference period, Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) figures are based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2022 classification structure. This new classification structure has, in effect, broadened the scope of the MRTS results.

Table 20-10-0008 has been archived. Seasonally adjusted estimates in NAICS 2022 are now available in table 20-10-0056 starting in 2017. Unadjusted estimates starting in 2017 are now available in table 20-10-0056.

Table 20-10-0078 has also been archived. Volume estimates and indexes in NAICS 2022 starting in 2017 are now available in table 20-10-0067.

Seasonal adjustment specifications and factors were reviewed and updated based on the NAICS 2022 classification structure. Regular annual revisions from 2022 were also included in the new data series. The data have been revised using historical linkage factors designed to preserve the continuity of the time series. This linkage method leads to larger revisions for more recent periods.

The overarching theme of the update is the digital economy. Online-only retailers are now classified in the same industrial groupings as their non-digital counterparts. This means that some industries have been reclassified to reflect both physical and online-only retailers, creating a change in how some industry groups are measured and a shift in some of the time series. In other cases, industries with the same definition will have different categorization numbers due to the overall changes to the classification.

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 unofficial estimate 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 the same as those outlined on the [Monthly Retail Trade Survey](#) information page.

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, as no seasonal pattern has been 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.

Some common e-commerce transactions, such as travel and accommodation bookings, ticket purchases and financial transactions, are not included in Canadian retail sales figures.

Total retail sales expressed in volume terms are calculated by deflating current-dollar values using consumer price indexes.

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

## Next release

Data on retail trade for April will be released on June 21.

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

	March 2022	February 2023 <sup>r</sup>	March 2023 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2023	March 2022 to March 2023
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Canada</b>	<b>63,758</b>	<b>66,192</b>	<b>65,285</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	916	972	925	-4.8	1.1
Prince Edward Island	268	303	287	-5.2	7.0
Nova Scotia	1,679	1,762	1,704	-3.3	1.5
New Brunswick	1,342	1,487	1,329	-10.7	-1.0
Quebec	13,895	14,846	14,717	-0.9	5.9
Montréal	6,834	7,333	7,368	0.5	7.8
Ontario	24,450	24,973	24,544	-1.7	0.4
Toronto	11,116	11,176	11,047	-1.2	-0.6
Manitoba	2,162	2,232	2,220	-0.5	2.7
Saskatchewan	2,025	2,117	2,101	-0.8	3.8
Alberta	7,970	8,485	8,374	-1.3	5.1
British Columbia	8,841	8,791	8,866	0.9	0.3
Vancouver	4,414	4,306	4,392	2.0	-0.5
Yukon	89	94	92	-2.0	4.0
Northwest Territories	75	79	75	-5.1	-0.6
Nunavut	47	51	50	-2.3	6.5

<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 [20-10-0056-01](#).

**Table 2**  
**Retail sales, by industry – Seasonally adjusted**

	March 2022	February 2023 <sup>r</sup>	March 2023 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2023	March 2022 to March 2023
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade (current dollars)</b>	<b>63,758</b>	<b>66,192</b>	<b>65,285</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Retail e-commerce</b>	<b>3,338</b>	<b>3,746</b>	<b>3,830</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<b>Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)</b>	<b>54,574</b>	<b>55,664</b>	<b>55,091</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>48,056</b>	<b>48,408</b>	<b>48,279</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations and fuel vendors</b>	<b>40,654</b>	<b>41,537</b>	<b>41,677</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	15,702	17,784	17,006	-4.4	8.3
New car dealers	12,132	13,944	13,273	-4.8	9.4
Used car dealers	1,317	1,379	1,416	2.6	7.5
Other motor vehicle dealers	1,122	1,209	1,071	-11.4	-4.6
Automotive parts, accessories and tire retailers	1,130	1,252	1,246	-0.5	10.3
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	4,580	3,880	3,942	1.6	-13.9
Food and beverage retailers	12,193	12,535	12,558	0.2	3.0
Supermarkets and other grocery retailers (except convenience)	8,410	8,744	8,750	0.1	4.0
Convenience retailers and vending machine operators	694	741	754	1.8	8.7
Specialty food retailers	858	807	818	1.4	-4.6
Beer, wine and liquor retailers	2,231	2,243	2,236	-0.3	0.2
Furniture, home furnishings, electronics and appliances retailers	3,746	3,707	3,706	-0.0	-1.1
Furniture retailers	1,315	1,255	1,239	-1.3	-5.8
Floor covering, window treatment and other home furnishing retailers	775	733	721	-1.7	-7.0
Electronics and appliances retailers	1,655	1,718	1,746	1.6	5.5
General merchandise retailers	8,097	8,652	8,703	0.6	7.5
Health and personal care retailers	4,797	5,290	5,280	-0.2	10.1
Gasoline stations and fuel vendors	7,403	6,871	6,602	-3.9	-10.8
Clothing, clothing accessories, shoes, jewellery, luggage and leather goods retailers	3,396	3,675	3,631	-1.2	6.9
Clothing and clothing accessories retailers	2,641	2,868	2,839	-1.0	7.5
Shoe retailers	349	408	392	-4.0	12.5
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods retailers	407	399	399	0.1	-1.8
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, book, and miscellaneous retailers	3,846	3,798	3,857	1.6	0.3
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book retailers and news dealers	1,379	1,428	1,405	-1.6	1.9
Miscellaneous store retailers	2,467	2,370	2,452	3.5	-0.6
Cannabis retailers <sup>1</sup>	359	364	406	11.3	12.9

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> 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 [20-10-0056-01](#) and [20-10-0067-01](#).

**Table 3**  
**Retail sales at 2012 constant prices, by industry – Seasonally adjusted**

	March 2022	February 2023 <sup>r</sup>	March 2023 <sup>p</sup>	February to March 2023	March 2022 to March 2023
	millions of dollars			% change	
<b>Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>54,783</b>	<b>56,006</b>	<b>55,460</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers</b>	<b>42,217</b>	<b>41,876</b>	<b>41,895</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-0.8</b>
<b>Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations and fuel vendors</b>	<b>36,186</b>	<b>35,796</b>	<b>35,897</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>-0.8</b>
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	12,566	14,130	13,565	-4.0	8.0
New car dealers	9,643	10,975	10,504	-4.3	8.9
Used car dealers	1,037	1,075	1,109	3.2	6.9
Other motor vehicle dealers	899	1,056	937	-11.3	4.2
Automotive parts, accessories and tire retailers	988	1,023	1,014	-0.9	2.6
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,561	3,377	3,449	2.1	-3.1
Food and beverage retailers	9,920	9,413	9,385	-0.3	-5.4
Supermarkets and other grocery retailers (except convenience retailers)	6,803	6,581	6,558	-0.3	-3.6
Convenience retailers and vending machine operators	521	503	511	1.6	-1.9
Specialty food retailers	661	584	589	0.9	-10.9
Beer, wine and liquor retailers	1,934	1,745	1,728	-1.0	-10.7
Furniture, home furnishings, electronics and appliances retailers	3,789	3,702	3,710	0.2	-2.1
Furniture retailers	1,103	1,008	993	-1.5	-10.0
Floor covering, window treatment and other home furnishing retailers	673	646	633	-2.0	-5.9
Electronics and appliances retailers	2,012	2,048	2,083	1.7	3.5
General merchandise retailers	7,158	7,073	7,187	1.6	0.4
Health and personal care retailers	4,901	5,268	5,233	-0.7	6.8
Gasoline stations and fuel vendors	6,031	6,080	5,998	-1.3	-0.5
Clothing, clothing accessories, shoes, jewellery, luggage and leather goods retailers	3,365	3,641	3,583	-1.6	6.5
Clothing and clothing accessories retailers	2,681	2,921	2,882	-1.3	7.5
Shoe retailers	374	427	408	-4.4	9.1
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods retailers	311	293	293	0.0	-5.8
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, book and miscellaneous retailers	3,492	3,322	3,351	0.9	-4.0
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book retailers and news dealers	1,296	1,286	1,244	-3.3	-4.0
Miscellaneous store retailers	2,195	2,036	2,107	3.5	-4.0
Cannabis retailers <sup>2</sup>	424	442	490	10.9	15.6

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>p</sup> 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 20-10-0067-01.

---

**Available tables:** [20-10-0056-01](#) and [20-10-0067-01](#).

**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; [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)).