

Retail trade, December 2018

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Retail sales edged down 0.1% to \$50.4 billion in December. Lower sales at gasoline stations (-3.6%) were partly offset by higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers (+1.0%). Excluding gasoline stations, retail sales increased 0.4%.

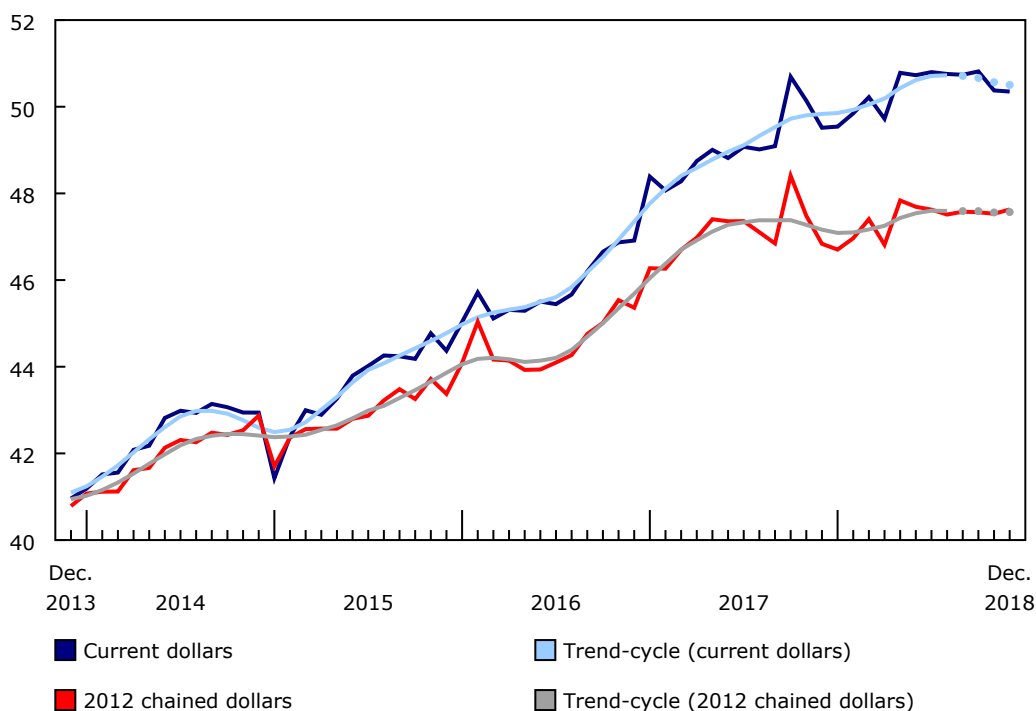
After removing the effects of price changes, retail sales in volume terms increased 0.2%.

Retail sales declined 0.5% in the fourth quarter of 2018, following a 0.7% increase in the third quarter. In volume terms, retail sales were relatively unchanged in the fourth quarter.

Retail sales in 2018 totalled \$605 billion, up 2.7% from 2017.

Chart 1
Retail sales edge down in December

billions of dollars



Source(s): Tables [20-10-0008-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

Lower sales at gasoline stations

Sales at gasoline stations (-3.6%) declined for the second month in a row in December, largely due to lower prices at the pump. In volume terms, sales decreased 0.3%.

Following a 2.1% gain in November, sales at electronics and appliance stores decreased 4.0% in December.

Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers (+1.0%) increased for the fourth time in five months, led by higher sales at new car dealers (+1.2%).



Receipts at food and beverage stores (+0.9%) were up for the third time in four months, on the strength of higher sales at supermarkets and other grocery stores (+1.2%).

Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers (+3.1%) reported their first increase in six months.

Sales down in four provinces

In Ontario (-0.5%), retail sales were down for the second month in a row, mainly due to lower sales at gasoline stations. Sales in the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Toronto decreased 0.9%.

Retail sales in Quebec decreased by 0.2% on lower sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers and sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores. Sales in the CMA of Montréal were up 0.6%.

Following a weather related 5.7% decline in November, sales in Nova Scotia increased 5.2% in December.

Sales in Manitoba (+1.3%) increased for the first time in three months, on the strength of higher sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers.

E-commerce sales by Canadian retailers

The figures in the sections below are based on unadjusted (that is, not seasonally adjusted) estimates.

On an unadjusted basis, retail e-commerce sales were \$2.0 billion in December, accounting for 3.7% of total retail trade. On a year-over-year basis, retail e-commerce increased 4.6% in December, while total unadjusted retail sales decreased 0.4%.

For information on related indicators, refer to [Latest statistics](#).

Retail sales in 2018

Canadian store retailers generated sales of \$605 billion in 2018, up 2.7% from 2017. The increase was largely attributable to higher prices, as sales in volume terms were up 0.7%. Provincially, retail sales were up in eight provinces, with Ontario (+3.9%) leading the way. Following declines in 2015 and 2016, retail sales in Alberta (+1.7%) rose for the second year in a row.

Gasoline stations lead increase

Higher prices at the pump were the main contributor to the 7.9% gain at gasoline stations. Removing the effects of price changes, sales at gasoline stations in volume terms were down 3.2%. According to the Consumer Price Index, the annual average price of gasoline was 12.6% higher in 2018 than in 2017.

After a record setting year in 2017, when over two million new motor vehicles were sold, unit sales of new motor vehicles were down 2.0% in 2018. The decrease in units came from lower sales of passenger cars (-10.6%), which more than offset higher sales of trucks (+1.9%).

Receipts at food and beverage stores rose 1.9%, with gains reported in every province in 2018.

Cannabis stores enter retail landscape

Following the legalization of cannabis in October 2018, retail sales at cannabis stores totalled \$151.5 million in the fourth quarter. Differences in retail structures in each province and territory affected the availability of cannabis products across the country.

Online sales continue to grow

Retail e-commerce, including sales from both store and non-store retailers, rose 14.7% to \$18.0 billion in 2018. Retail e-commerce represented 2.9% of total retail sales, compared with 2.6% in 2017. During the November and December holiday shopping season, retail e-commerce accounted for 3.9% of total retail sales, up from 3.5% in 2017, in part due to strong retail e-commerce sales in November 2018. Approximately one-quarter of retail e-commerce sales took place during the 2018 holiday shopping season.

Note to readers

As of October 17, 2018, the date of legalization, the monthly retail trade survey now collects and disseminates sales of licensed cannabis stores. This includes both in-store and Internet-based sales.

For more information regarding cannabis statistics, consult the [Cannabis Stats Hub](#).

Seasonally adjusted estimates for cannabis store retailers are presented in unadjusted form as there is no seasonal pattern 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.

All data in this release are seasonally adjusted and expressed in current dollars, unless otherwise noted. For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

Statistics Canada's retail e-commerce figures include the electronic sales of two distinct types of retailers. The first type do not have a storefront. These businesses are commonly referred to as 'pure-play' Internet retailers and are classified to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 45411—Electronic Shopping and Mail Order Houses. The second type have a storefront and are commonly referred to as 'brick and mortar' retailers. If the online operations of a brick and mortar retailer are separately managed, they too are classified to NAICS 45411.

Common electronic commerce transactions, such as travel and accommodation bookings, ticket purchases and financial transactions are not included in Canadian retail sales figures.

For more information on retail e-commerce in Canada, see [Retail E-Commerce in Canada](#).

Total retail sales expressed in volume terms are calculated by deflating current dollar values using consumer price indexes. The retail sales series in chained (2012) dollars is a chained Fisher volume index with 2012 as the reference year. For more information, see [Calculation of Volume of Retail Trade Sales](#).

For information on trend-cycle data, see the [StatCan Blog](#) and [Trend-cycle estimates – Frequently asked questions](#).

Real-time tables

Real-time tables 20-10-0054-01 and 20-10-0079-01 will be updated on March 4.

Next release

Data on retail trade for January will be released on March 22.

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

	December 2017	November 2018 ^r	December 2018 ^p	November to December 2018	December 2017 to December 2018
	millions of dollars			% change	
Canada	49,515	50,376	50,350	-0.1	1.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	768	736	755	2.6	-1.7
Prince Edward Island	202	201	202	0.4	-0.1
Nova Scotia	1,347	1,272	1,338	5.2	-0.7
New Brunswick	1,082	1,071	1,080	0.8	-0.2
Quebec	10,701	10,791	10,764	-0.2	0.6
Montréal	4,822	5,060	5,090	0.6	5.6
Ontario	18,103	18,900	18,803	-0.5	3.9
Toronto	7,509	7,859	7,791	-0.9	3.8
Manitoba	1,695	1,684	1,707	1.3	0.7
Saskatchewan	1,645	1,592	1,593	0.1	-3.2
Alberta	6,678	6,779	6,777	-0.0	1.5
British Columbia	7,121	7,177	7,164	-0.2	0.6
Vancouver	3,383	3,395	3,372	-0.7	-0.3
Yukon	73	69	68	-0.7	-6.6
Northwest Territories	67	66	63	-3.9	-5.2
Nunavut	34	39	38	-3.5	10.7

^r revised

^p preliminary

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

Source(s): Table [20-10-0008-01](#).

Table 2
Retail sales by industry – Seasonally adjusted

	December 2017	November 2018 ^r	December 2018 ^p	November to December 2018 ^p	December 2017 to December 2018 ^p
	millions of dollars			% change	
Total retail trade (current dollars)	49,515	50,376	50,350	-0.1	1.7
Total retail trade (2012 chained dollars)	46,836	47,530	47,629	0.2	1.7
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	36,058	36,805	36,638	-0.5	1.6
Total (current dollars) excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers and gasoline stations	30,480	31,512	31,537	0.1	3.5
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	13,456	13,570	13,712	1.0	1.9
New car dealers	10,850	10,879	11,007	1.2	1.5
Used car dealers	912	1,009	1,023	1.4	12.2
Other motor vehicle dealers	878	866	853	-1.5	-2.9
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	817	816	829	1.6	1.5
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,487	1,532	1,534	0.1	3.1
Furniture stores	930	958	960	0.3	3.3
Home furnishings stores	558	575	573	-0.3	2.8
Electronics and appliance stores	1,350	1,393	1,338	-4.0	-0.9
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	3,124	3,058	3,152	3.1	0.9
Food and beverage stores	10,245	10,449	10,545	0.9	2.9
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	7,000	7,062	7,145	1.2	2.1
Convenience stores	666	711	709	-0.2	6.6
Specialty food stores	648	687	704	2.6	8.7
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,931	1,990	1,987	-0.2	2.9
Health and personal care stores	3,717	3,863	3,821	-1.1	2.8
Gasoline stations	5,578	5,293	5,101	-3.6	-8.6
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,726	2,892	2,864	-1.0	5.1
Clothing stores	2,097	2,223	2,225	0.1	6.1
Shoe stores	349	358	347	-3.2	-0.5
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	280	311	292	-6.2	4.2
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	1,061	1,039	1,025	-1.3	-3.4
General merchandise stores	5,548	5,920	5,912	-0.1	6.6
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,222	1,366	1,345	-1.6	10.1
Cannabis stores ¹		53	55	3.7	

^r revised

^p 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 [20-10-0008-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

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

	December 2018 ^P	October to November 2018	November 2017 to November 2018	November to December 2018	December 2017 to December 2018
	millions of dollars	% change			
Total retail trade at 2012 constant prices¹	47,657	-0.0	0.0	0.1	1.7
Total excluding motor vehicle and parts dealers	35,559	0.5	-0.5	-0.1	1.8
Total excluding motor vehicles and parts dealers and gasoline stations	30,135	0.4	-0.3	-0.1	2.9
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	12,098	-1.4	1.7	1.0	1.3
New car dealers	9,672	-1.5	2.1	1.2	1.0
Used car dealers	889	0.2	7.9	0.7	11.5
Other motor vehicle dealers	747	3.0	-7.2	-1.2	-3.2
Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	791	-6.7	-0.5	1.5	0.1
Furniture and home furnishings stores	1,484	1.8	-0.9	0.5	4.7
Furniture stores	931	3.5	0.5	0.6	5.3
Home furnishings stores	553	-0.9	-3.5	0.2	3.4
Electronics and appliance stores	1,551	2.7	-7.9	-3.0	1.2
Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	2,901	-0.2	-3.9	3.6	0.1
Food and beverage stores	9,464	-1.1	1.9	0.3	0.7
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores	6,450	-1.4	1.3	0.3	-0.0
Convenience stores	580	1.0	1.4	-1.2	1.4
Specialty food stores	622	0.5	6.7	2.3	6.9
Beer, wine and liquor stores	1,812	-1.1	2.4	0.2	1.3
Health and personal care stores	3,985	-0.1	-1.0	-1.5	3.6
Gasoline stations	5,424	1.0	-1.9	-0.3	-3.9
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	2,804	0.6	1.2	-1.1	4.8
Clothing stores	2,193	0.2	1.1	-0.1	5.4
Shoe stores	345	2.6	-1.4	-2.8	0.3
Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	267	0.7	5.9	-6.3	6.0
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	996	-0.1	-9.0	-1.0	-3.6
General merchandise stores	5,678	2.2	-0.6	-0.1	6.7
Miscellaneous store retailers	1,272	1.7	13.1	-1.5	9.5
Cannabis stores ²	54	23.0		2.2	

^P preliminary

1. Using 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 20-10-0078-01.

Table 4
Retail e-commerce sales – Unadjusted

	December 2017	November 2018	December 2018	December 2018
	millions of dollars			% change
Retail trade sales (44-453)	53,622	52,149	53,279	-0.6
Electronic shopping and mail-order houses sales (45411)	1,221	1,460	1,360	11.4
Retail e-commerce ¹	1,921	2,263	2,009	4.6
Retail e-commerce ¹ (% of total retail trade)	3.50	4.22	3.68	...

... not applicable

1. Retail e-commerce includes e-sales from both store retailers included in the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) 44-453 and non-store retailers included in electronic shopping and mail order houses (NAICS 45411).

Note(s): For more information on retail e-commerce, see [Retail E-Commerce in Canada](#).

Source(s): Table [20-10-0072-01](#).

Available tables: [20-10-0008-01](#), [20-10-0072-01](#) and [20-10-0078-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [2406](#) and [2408](#).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Sandra Andric (613-951-0027; sandra.andric@canada.ca), Retail and Service Industries Division.