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Wholesale Trade

February 2004



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Statistics Canada
Wholesale Trade

Wholesale Trade

February 2004

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Symbols

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- P preliminary
- r revised
- x confidential to meet secrecy requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

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Highlights

- In February, wholesale sales edged down slightly 0.3% to \$35.7 billion in goods and services. This is the third decrease for wholesalers in the past four months. As in the previous month, February's decline was largely attributable to the motor vehicles, parts and accessories sector. Excluding that sector, sales rose 0.4%.

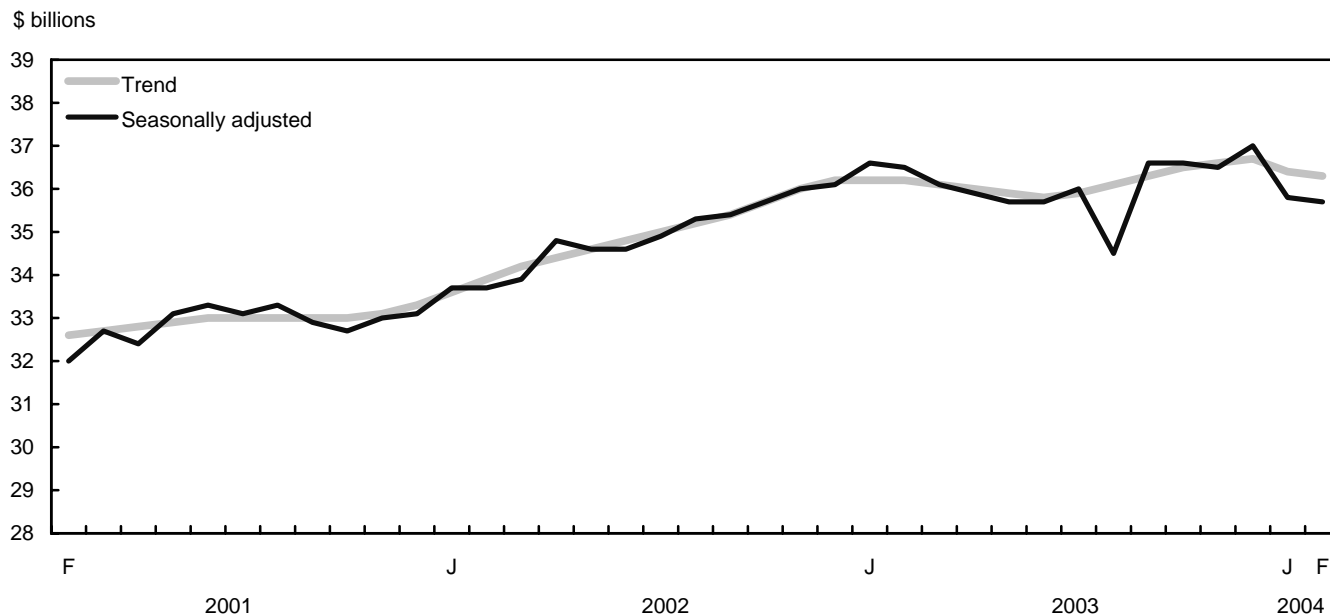
Analysis

In February, wholesale sales edged down slightly 0.3% to \$35.7 billion in goods and services. This is the third decrease for wholesalers in the past four months. As in the previous month, February's decline was largely attributable to the motor vehicles, parts and accessories sector. Excluding that sector, sales rose 0.4%.

Since February 2003, wholesale sales have generally been declining, with much of the decrease attributable to the automotive sector. Excluding that sector, the average growth of total sales was 0.2% for the last 12 months.

Chart 1

Wholesale sales



In February, 6 of the 11 trade groups, representing approximately 66% of total sales, registered a decline. In addition to the automotive sector (-3.6%), sectors contributing the most to the decrease in value terms were computers, software and other electronic equipment (-3.1%) and beverage, drug and tobacco products (-1.7%).

Note to readers

Estimates from the monthly Wholesale Trade Survey are based on the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

The decreased sales of these trade groups were offset in part by increased sales of lumber and building materials (+4.0%), industrial machinery (+2.2%) and metals and hardware (+3.8%).

In constant dollars, wholesale sales fell 0.7% in February.

Wholesale sales in the automotive sector post second consecutive decline

Sales in the automotive sector fell again in February (-3.6%). This decline followed the one recorded in January (-12.2%). Just as in the previous month, the high level of dealers' inventories continued to affect wholesale sales.

Sales of computers and electronics down

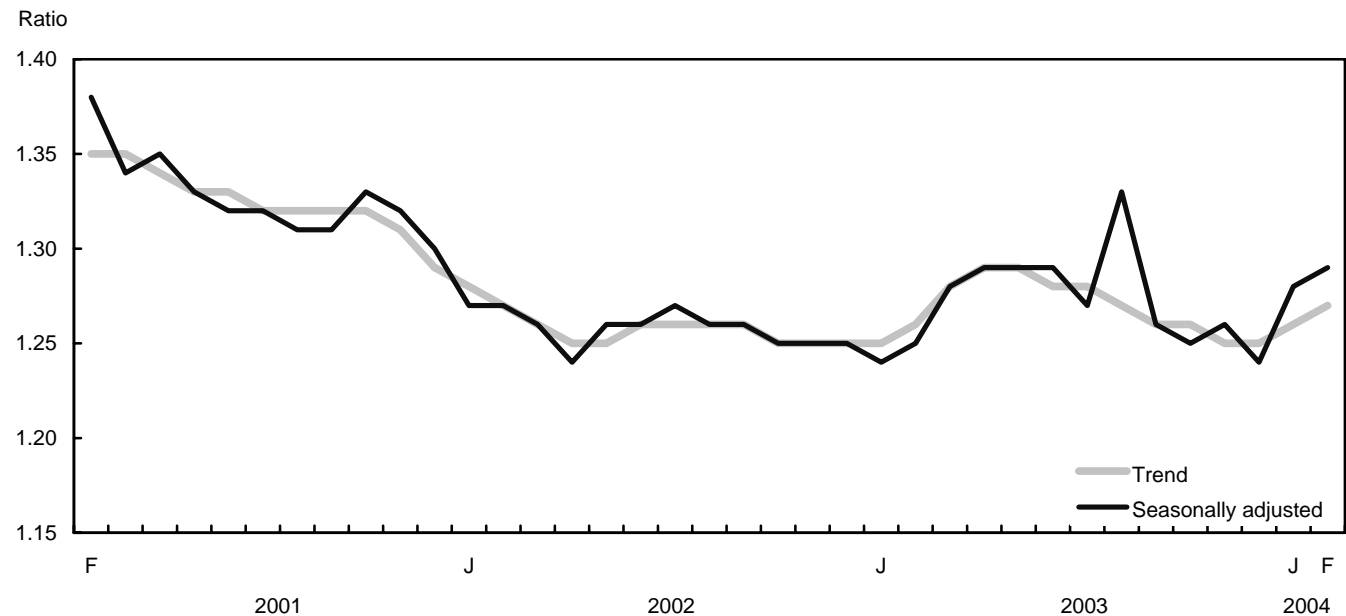
Sales of computers and electronics fell 3.1% after remaining stable in January (+0.1%). This was the second drop in the past three months. In fact, 2003 was a good year for wholesalers of these products-it was their first year-over-year increase in sales in four years. The growth of sales in 2003 was partly because of the launching of new products, declining prices and some recovery in the demand for computers.

Despite February's increase in industrial machinery sales, the trend weakened

Industrial machinery wholesalers saw their sales rise 2.2%. However, since November 2003, sales have begun to show signs of weakness, following a practically uninterrupted rise that began in the summer of 2002 and ended in October 2003. The second and third quarters of 2003 were especially favourable to wholesalers because companies substantially boosted their spending on industrial machinery, in part because of low interest rates. These, combined with a strong Canadian dollar, favoured investment in imported machinery.

Chart 2

Inventory-to-sales ratio



Wholesale sales linked to the housing market up in February

Sales of metals and hardware again rose in February (+3.8%). This rise followed on the growth registered in January (+1.1%). There were also increases in the lumber and building materials sector (+4.0%).

In February, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts rose nearly 10%. Also, the Canadian Real Estate Association announced the first increase in the home resale market since October 2003.

Dip in wholesale sales affects half the provinces

In February, five provinces posted a decrease in wholesale sales. The largest declines were registered in Saskatchewan (-3.1%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-2.9%) and New Brunswick (-1.2%). As in the previous two months, the drop in wholesale sales in Saskatchewan was largely attributable to the "other products" category that includes chemicals and other agricultural supplies.

Wholesalers in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as New Brunswick, reported declines in both the automotive sector and the beverage, drug and tobacco products sector.

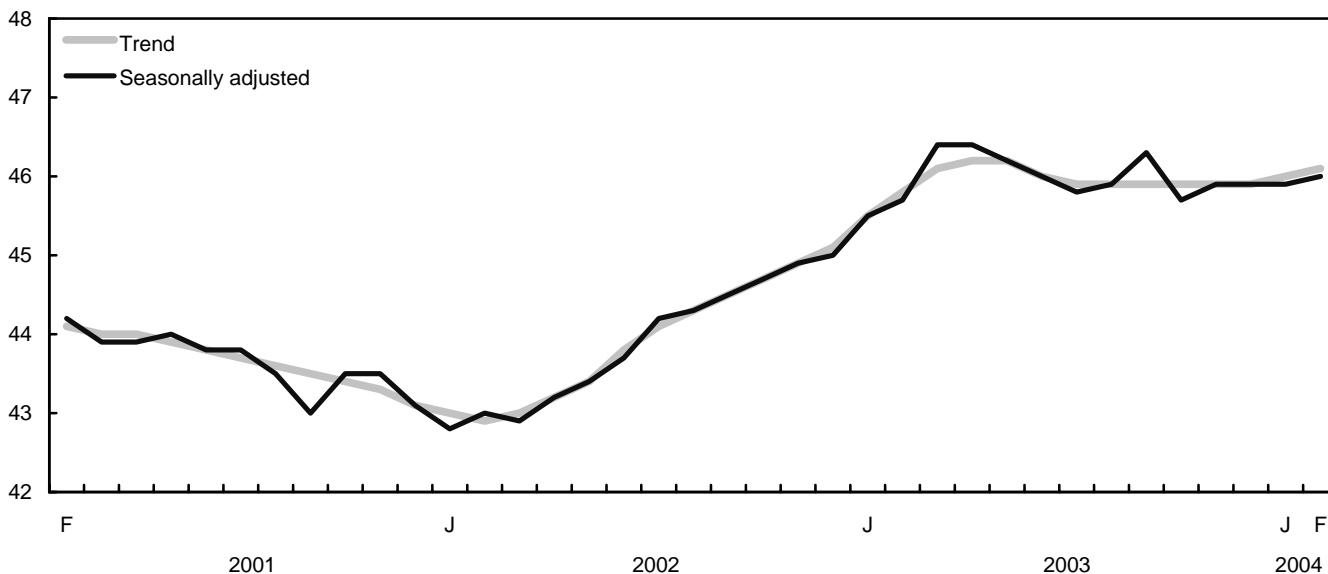
The decrease in the sales by Ontario wholesalers (-1.1%) was largely attributable to the automotive sector. More than 75% of the motor vehicles, parts and accessories trade group is concentrated in this province.

The strong increase observed in Nova Scotia (+3.4%) was partly because of increased sales of food products and computers and electronic products. This increase completely offset the 2.7% drop recorded in January. Despite the increased sales in February, wholesale sales in Nova Scotia have generally been trending downward since September 2003. Previously, sales had experienced a period of healthy growth starting in January 2002.

Chart 3

Inventories

\$ billions



Inventory-to-sales ratio up for second consecutive month

In February, the inventory-to-sales ratio edged up to 1.29, compared with 1.28 in January. Excluding the effects of August's power blackout, which caused problems in delivery, this ratio is the highest since June 2003. The increase in the ratio over the past two months is partly attributable to the automotive sector, which has had difficulty moving its inventories through to retailers.

In February, inventories rose 0.3%, primarily because of increases registered in the automotive and industrial machinery sectors. These two sectors tend to have the largest inventories in terms of value.

Related products

Selected CANSIM tables from Statistics Canada

081-0001	Wholesale trade, inventories by trade group
081-0002	Wholesale trade, sales by trade group

Note on CANSIM

All current and historical statistics on Wholesale Trade (tables 0810001-0810002) as well as many other series are available to the public from Statistics Canada's computerized data bank CANSIM (Canadian Socio-Economic Information Management System) via terminal, on computer printouts, or in machine readable form

For further information, please visit CANSIM.

Selected surveys from Statistics Canada

2401	Wholesale Trade Survey (Monthly)
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Selected tables of Canadian statistics from Statistics Canada

- *Canadian Statistics - Wholesale merchants' sales*
- *Canadian Statistics - Wholesale merchants' inventories*
- *Canadian Statistics - Wholesale sales*
- *Canadian Statistics - Wholesale sales, Canada, the provinces and territories*
- *Canadian Statistics - Wholesale inventories*

Statistical Tables

Table 1-1

Wholesale merchant sales, by trade group and region, seasonally adjusted - Sales

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003	Year-to-date 2004
	millions of dollars				
Trade Group - Canada					
Food products	5,679	5,699	5,620	5,718	11,378
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	3,553	3,615	3,566	3,481	7,168
Apparel and dry goods	601	609	649	632	1,210
Household goods	1,022	1,022	1,031	1,043	2,044
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,928	6,153	7,008	6,653	12,081
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,264	2,181	2,158	2,098	4,445
Lumber and building materials	3,143	3,022	3,129	3,069	6,165
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	663	646	661	675	1,309
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	5,018	4,909	5,066	5,103	9,927
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,724	2,812	2,810	2,840	5,536
Other products	5,150	5,174	5,269	5,231	10,323
Total, all trade groups	35,744	35,841	36,967	36,542	71,585
Regions					
Newfoundland and Labrador	223	230	236	232	453
Prince Edward Island	60	59	60	59	119
Nova Scotia	616	596	613	627	1,212
New Brunswick	447	453	446	455	900
Quebec	7,442	7,397	7,526	7,446	14,838
Ontario	17,518	17,708	18,450	18,173	35,227
Manitoba	1,048	1,034	1,027	1,041	2,082
Saskatchewan	941	972	995	1,079	1,913
Alberta	4,015	3,949	3,974	3,908	7,964
British Columbia	3,406	3,416	3,611	3,494	6,822
Yukon Territory	10	10	10	9	20
Northwest Territories	15	17	19	16	32
Nunavut	1	1	1	1	2

Table 1-2

Wholesale merchant sales, by trade group and region, seasonally adjusted - % change from previous month

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	-0.4	1.4	-1.7	0.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	-1.7	1.4	2.5	-0.7
Apparel and dry goods	-1.3	-6.1	2.7	-3.6
Household goods	0.0	-0.9	-1.1	-0.1
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	-3.6	-12.2	5.3	-0.5
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3.8	1.1	2.9	1.1
Lumber and building materials	4.0	-3.4	2.0	-0.6
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2.6	-2.3	-2.1	3.1
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	2.2	-3.1	-0.7	0.3
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-3.1	0.1	-1.1	0.9
Other products	-0.5	-1.8	0.7	-1.6
Total, all trade groups	-0.3	-3.0	1.2	-0.2
Regions				
Newfoundland and Labrador	-2.9	-2.7	1.6	1.1
Prince Edward Island	2.1	-1.7	1.7	-6.7
Nova Scotia	3.4	-2.7	-2.3	-2.1
New Brunswick	-1.2	1.6	-2.0	-0.1
Quebec	0.6	-1.7	1.1	-0.6
Ontario	-1.1	-4.0	1.5	-0.3
Manitoba	1.3	0.7	-1.3	3.0
Saskatchewan	-3.1	-2.4	-7.8	4.9
Alberta	1.7	-0.6	1.7	-0.8
British Columbia	-0.3	-5.4	3.3	-0.7
Yukon Territory	9.2	0.2	3.5	-5.7
Northwest Territories	-8.3	-12.8	16.1	-9.6
Nunavut	-8.9	28.6	-18.3	4.1

Table 1-3

Wholesale merchant sales, by trade group and region, seasonally adjusted - % change from previous year

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003	Year-to-date 2004
	percentage				
Trade Group - Canada					
Food products	-1.9	-2.1	-3.3	-0.3	-2.0
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	14.5	17.3	19.6	16.2	15.9
Apparel and dry goods	-3.0	-10.1	-1.4	-3.0	-6.7
Household goods	0.8	-3.7	-3.2	2.0	-1.5
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	-17.5	-16.1	-2.7	-9.5	-16.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	4.3	-1.6	0.6	-2.7	1.3
Lumber and building materials	9.6	3.7	8.1	9.1	6.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	-9.7	-11.0	-8.4	-2.7	-10.4
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	2.6	-0.2	3.8	4.9	1.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-8.4	-0.6	5.7	5.6	-4.6
Other products	0.0	2.2	3.7	4.5	1.1
Total, all trade groups	-2.1	-2.2	2.4	1.6	-2.1
Regions					
Newfoundland and Labrador	5.7	8.2	9.7	9.5	6.9
Prince Edward Island	2.1	10.6	7.6	5.8	6.2
Nova Scotia	-2.6	-6.5	-1.9	-1.5	-4.6
New Brunswick	-0.8	0.3	0.5	0.1	-0.3
Quebec	2.8	-0.3	4.8	4.3	1.3
Ontario	-4.9	-4.0	1.5	-0.8	-4.5
Manitoba	0.0	3.4	-1.1	2.7	1.7
Saskatchewan	-12.2	-7.8	-8.2	4.2	-10.0
Alberta	6.4	6.0	5.6	8.2	6.2
British Columbia	-4.2	-5.4	3.7	0.9	-4.8
Yukon Territory	5.7	-12.8	0.5	-11.3	-4.0
Northwest Territories	15.4	-5.4	8.1	-21.8	3.6
Nunavut	-33.9	-39.5	-49.0	-48.4	-36.9

Table 2-1

Wholesale merchants sales, by trade group and region, not seasonally adjusted - Sales

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003	Year-to-date 2004
	millions of dollars				
Trade Group - Canada					
Food products	5,044	5,310	6,200	5,652	10,353
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	3,170	3,312	3,677	3,537	6,482
Apparel and dry goods	625	478	421	571	1,103
Household goods	810	799	1,091	1,275	1,609
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,814	5,312	5,880	6,745	11,126
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,081	1,911	1,834	2,126	3,991
Lumber and building materials	2,406	2,257	2,508	2,921	4,663
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	467	422	575	504	889
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,742	4,511	5,272	5,005	9,254
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,529	2,677	3,435	2,819	5,205
Other products	4,617	4,473	4,764	5,146	9,090
Total, all trade groups	32,304	31,463	35,657	36,302	63,766
Regions					
Newfoundland and Labrador	173	186	223	232	359
Prince Edward Island	42	45	56	52	87
Nova Scotia	492	492	668	596	983
New Brunswick	367	373	420	440	740
Quebec	6,730	6,428	7,087	7,491	13,158
Ontario	16,192	15,646	17,839	18,516	31,838
Manitoba	857	846	943	955	1,703
Saskatchewan	731	783	883	846	1,514
Alberta	3,550	3,537	4,122	3,732	7,087
British Columbia	3,145	3,105	3,390	3,419	6,250
Yukon Territory	7	7	8	9	14
Northwest Territories	17	13	16	13	31
Nunavut	1	1	1	1	2

Table 2-2

Wholesale merchants sales, by trade group and region, not seasonally adjusted - % change from previous year

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003	Year-to-date 2004
	percentage				
Trade Group - Canada					
Food products	-0.6	-2.3	0.0	-3.2	-1.5
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	16.1	14.5	22.1	11.7	15.3
Apparel and dry goods	-3.6	-10.5	1.7	-7.6	-6.7
Household goods	1.4	-6.4	-0.8	0.7	-2.6
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	-17.1	-18.3	-0.5	-9.9	-17.7
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	7.7	-4.8	4.7	-4.8	1.3
Lumber and building materials	11.9	1.2	12.3	4.1	6.5
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	-6.9	-13.6	-7.7	-6.8	-10.2
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4.9	-3.3	7.4	1.4	0.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-7.9	-0.2	8.5	1.3	-4.1
Other products	1.6	0.4	7.6	2.5	1.0
Total, all trade groups	-1.1	-3.9	5.7	-1.1	-2.5
Regions					
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.9	6.5	11.9	6.3	5.7
Prince Edward Island	2.5	6.0	4.9	-3.9	4.2
Nova Scotia	-0.5	-7.9	-1.5	-2.8	-4.4
New Brunswick	0.2	-2.0	0.5	-2.9	-0.9
Quebec	4.4	-1.9	7.0	1.1	1.2
Ontario	-4.2	-5.6	5.5	-2.7	-4.9
Manitoba	1.5	0.5	0.2	-0.7	1.0
Saskatchewan	-13.5	-12.2	-6.5	-3.0	-12.8
Alberta	8.3	4.3	9.3	4.1	6.2
British Columbia	-2.9	-6.9	6.3	-1.4	-4.9
Yukon Territory	11.4	-11.8	-1.0	-18.0	-0.8
Northwest Territories	3.1	-5.2	25.8	-23.8	-0.7
Nunavut	-28.3	-33.2	-27.9	-36.7	-30.8

Table 3-1

Wholesale merchants sample, weighted response rate (current periods)

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	93.5	94.2	94.7	93.7
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	94.0	95.5	95.3	95.5
Apparel and dry goods	84.6	86.3	87.4	87.6
Household goods	95.7	96.5	96.1	96.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	97.5	97.9	96.1	98.5
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	91.0	93.6	91.8	90.1
Lumber and building materials	88.5	90.0	90.8	95.6
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	82.3	85.5	83.7	81.7
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	85.4	81.5	79.7	88.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	90.6	92.3	89.7	90.3
Other products	87.6	89.3	90.3	91.4
Total, all trade groups	91.2	91.8	91.1	93.2
Regions				
Newfoundland and Labrador	88.2	90.8	86.3	89.4
Prince Edward Island	76.1	76.8	79.6	93.2
Nova Scotia	89.3	89.8	89.6	91.4
New Brunswick	92.1	93.2	90.9	92.6
Quebec	91.2	92.8	92.6	93.7
Ontario	92.5	92.8	91.9	93.9
Manitoba	84.9	87.5	88.0	91.1
Saskatchewan	86.6	86.3	84.5	88.1
Alberta	90.4	90.3	90.4	92.8
British Columbia	89.1	88.9	87.9	91.6
Yukon Territory	93.6	85.7	85.3	80.6
Northwest Territories	89.8	85.6	85.2	86.9
Nunavut	64.0	74.2	68.6	98.9

Table 3-2

Wholesale merchants sample, coefficient of variation (current periods)

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2.4	1.8	1.9	2.0
Apparel and dry goods	8.6	10.0	7.6	7.3
Household goods	6.3	6.3	5.1	4.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.5
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	5.9	5.3	5.5	5.3
Lumber and building materials	4.8	4.0	3.8	4.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	5.4	5.2	5.2	4.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3.3	3.1	2.9	3.0
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.4
Other products	4.3	3.9	3.6	3.9
Total, all trade groups	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Regions				
Newfoundland and Labrador	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.4
Prince Edward Island	10.1	10.7	7.7	6.4
Nova Scotia	5.8	4.8	8.4	6.3
New Brunswick	2.6	2.1	2.9	3.0
Quebec	3.6	3.2	3.0	3.1
Ontario	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2
Manitoba	4.3	4.2	4.5	3.6
Saskatchewan	4.6	6.6	5.7	8.9
Alberta	3.3	3.0	2.5	2.8
British Columbia	4.3	4.8	4.5	4.6
Yukon Territory	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.5
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 4-1

Wholesale merchants inventories, by trade group, seasonally adjusted - Inventories

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003
	millions of dollars			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	3,657	3,670	3,682	3,701
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	3,780	3,786	3,804	3,645
Apparel and dry goods	1,276	1,293	1,304	1,326
Household goods	1,702	1,744	1,753	1,755
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	6,954	6,872	6,917	7,085
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,749	3,726	3,649	3,590
Lumber and building materials	4,774	4,712	4,658	4,620
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,099	2,076	2,073	2,071
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	10,003	9,919	9,904	9,967
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	1,814	1,847	1,936	1,936
Other products	6,216	6,246	6,261	6,201
Total, all trade groups	46,024	45,891	45,941	45,897

Table 4-2

Wholesale merchants inventories, by trade group, seasonally adjusted - % change from previous month

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	-0.3	-0.3	-0.5	0.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	-0.2	-0.5	4.4	-0.4
Apparel and dry goods	-1.4	-0.8	-1.7	-1.8
Household goods	-2.4	-0.5	-0.1	1.8
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	1.2	-0.6	-2.4	0.5
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	0.6	2.1	1.6	1.0
Lumber and building materials	1.3	1.2	0.8	2.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	1.1	0.1	0.1	2.0
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	0.8	0.2	-0.6	-0.9
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-1.8	-4.6	0.0	2.6
Other products	-0.5	-0.2	1.0	0.3
Total, all trade groups	0.3	-0.1	0.1	0.4

Table 4-3

Wholesale merchants inventories, by trade group, seasonally adjusted - % change from previous year

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	7.6	8.8	8.0	7.9
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	5.8	7.8	11.4	5.9
Apparel and dry goods	-3.2	-6.1	-2.0	1.9
Household goods	-1.3	2.5	0.7	0.4
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	1.7	-1.4	3.9	5.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	-1.1	-1.4	-3.3	-4.1
Lumber and building materials	4.2	3.7	4.5	4.4
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	9.2	9.2	11.2	11.5
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	-0.7	-2.0	-2.8	-2.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-7.3	-6.7	-7.3	-4.8
Other products	-4.1	0.3	2.3	4.5
Total, all trade groups	0.8	0.9	2.0	2.3

Table 5-1

Wholesale merchants inventories, by trade group, not seasonally adjusted - Inventories

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	millions of dollars			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	3,577	3,627	3,868	3,844
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	3,758	3,711	3,856	3,700
Apparel and dry goods	1,317	1,307	1,242	1,215
Household goods	1,671	1,644	1,669	1,781
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	7,352	6,963	6,691	6,810
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,768	3,710	3,602	3,500
Lumber and building materials	4,801	4,547	4,428	4,373
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,132	2,003	1,957	1,944
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,989	9,822	9,737	9,871
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	1,869	1,916	1,991	2,032
Other products	6,385	6,234	6,088	6,019
Total, all trade groups	46,619	45,484	45,128	45,091

Table 5-2

Wholesale merchants inventories, by trade group, not seasonally adjusted - % change from previous year

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	7.3	8.9	8.0	8.3
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	5.6	7.9	12.9	5.1
Apparel and dry goods	-5.4	-5.7	-2.6	1.6
Household goods	-0.4	3.0	1.0	1.4
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	1.8	-1.7	2.5	6.4
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	-1.6	-1.4	-3.5	-4.9
Lumber and building materials	5.0	3.7	4.3	4.1
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	10.4	8.8	10.6	11.6
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	-1.6	-2.2	-3.2	-2.8
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	-7.4	-6.6	-6.1	-4.0
Other products	-1.6	0.9	2.8	4.4
Total, all trade groups	1.0	0.8	1.9	2.3

Table 6-1

Wholesale merchants, inventories/sales ratio, seasonally adjusted, by trade group

	Inventories/sales ratio			
	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December ^r 2003	November ^r 2003
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	0.64	0.64	0.66	0.65
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1.06	1.05	1.07	1.05
Apparel and dry goods	2.12	2.12	2.01	2.10
Household goods	1.67	1.71	1.70	1.68
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	1.17	1.12	0.99	1.06
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1.66	1.71	1.69	1.71
Lumber and building materials	1.52	1.56	1.49	1.51
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	3.17	3.21	3.14	3.07
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	1.99	2.02	1.95	1.95
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	0.67	0.66	0.69	0.68
Other products	1.21	1.21	1.19	1.19
Total, all trade groups	1.29	1.28	1.24	1.26

Table 6-2

Wholesale merchants, inventories/sales ratio, seasonally adjusted, by trade group

	Inventories/sales ratio			
	February 2003	January 2003	December 2002	November 2002
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	0.59	0.58	0.59	0.60
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1.15	1.14	1.15	1.15
Apparel and dry goods	2.13	2.03	2.02	2.00
Household goods	1.70	1.60	1.63	1.71
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	0.95	0.95	0.92	0.91
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1.75	1.70	1.76	1.74
Lumber and building materials	1.60	1.56	1.54	1.57
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2.62	2.62	2.58	2.68
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	2.06	2.06	2.09	2.11
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	0.66	0.70	0.79	0.76
Other products	1.26	1.23	1.20	1.19
Total, all trade groups	1.25	1.24	1.25	1.25

Table 7-1

Wholesale merchants sample, weighted response rate for inventories (current periods)

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	85.4	82.9	83.9	79.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	90.6	93.2	93.7	94.0
Apparel and dry goods	63.4	69.3	70.8	64.1
Household goods	89.0	90.2	89.4	91.2
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	90.2	90.5	90.1	93.1
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	90.6	90.8	89.6	85.9
Lumber and building materials	78.6	81.5	80.8	78.8
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	72.9	73.2	74.6	72.1
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	75.9	77.6	76.5	78.6
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	71.3	67.1	74.1	75.1
Other products	75.2	75.7	79.5	77.0
Total, all trade groups	81.2	82.1	82.6	82.2

Table 7-2

Wholesale merchants sample, coefficient of variation for inventories (current periods)

	February ^p 2004	January ^r 2004	December 2003	November 2003
	percentage			
Trade Group - Canada				
Food products	5.8	7.0	6.8	6.6
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.5
Apparel and dry goods	6.5	6.3	6.4	6.2
Household goods	9.4	9.4	9.9	5.0
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5.3	5.5	5.6	5.2
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	6.5	7.1	7.3	7.0
Lumber and building materials	6.8	6.6	6.3	6.1
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	8.6	8.8	8.3	7.5
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	8.1	7.8	7.9	7.9
Other products	4.6	5.0	4.9	5.0
Total, all trade groups	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8

Introduction

This publication presents estimates of monthly sales by wholesale merchant establishments for Canada, each province and territory. In addition to total sales, sales and inventories, as well as inventories to sales ratios appear for major trade groups based on the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

Sales figures are on a net basis (gross sales less returns, adjustments and discounts) whether on cash or credit, and exclude any taxes collected. Also included are commissions earned by wholesalers also acting as agents, while the sales of goods owned by others are excluded.

Inventory figures are the value of the goods owned and held for resale. Inventory in transit or on consignment is also included. Goods owned and held in inventory abroad, and inventories held on consignment from others are excluded.

The estimates contained in this publication are derived from a redesigned monthly survey which incorporates a revised list of wholesale businesses.

Establishments in wholesale trade are primarily engaged in selling merchandise to retailers, to industrial, commercial, institutional and professional users, to farmers for use in farm production, and for export; or acting as agents or brokers in buying or selling merchandise to such persons or organizations on a commission basis.

However, under the 1980 classification, sales to end-users of certain commodities (usually capital or investment goods) such as computer equipment, feed, seed or other farm supplies, lumber and building materials, trucks and commercial vehicles, and all types of machinery and equipment, are always classified to wholesale trade. A complete review of definitions and concepts appears in *Data quality, concepts and methodology — Definitions and concepts*.

Users should note that each month, unless otherwise indicated, this publication will contain preliminary estimates for the current month and revised estimates for the preceding month for the unadjusted series. The estimates of the seasonally adjusted series are revised for the preceding three months.

Definitions and concepts

The **establishment** is a statistical unit based primarily on the system of accounting used in the business. It is the smallest unit that is a separate operating entity capable of reporting those elements of input and output necessary for the calculation of gross margin, as well as employment, wages and salaries.

The **trading location** is defined as the physical outlet in which the business activity takes place. It is not necessarily dependent upon the availability of accounting-based data but must be capable of providing a limited range of statistics even though these may, in some instances, have to be estimated by the respondent. Where accounting records are available to measure the detailed business activity of the single location then the location will coincide with the establishment, otherwise two or more locations would belong to an establishment. The establishment can be an individual or a partnership, if unincorporated, or a single corporation or group of associated companies, and sometimes, the wholesaling divisions of retailing, manufacturing or other organizations.

Wholesalers may also be classified by type of operation, but this classification is independent of the industrial classification. The two main types of operations are: wholesale merchants and agents and brokers. Wholesalers primarily engaged in buying and/or selling merchandise on account of others on a commission basis (agents and brokers) as well as wholesale merchants of grain and petroleum products are excluded from this survey.

Wholesale merchants are establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise to which they have title on their own account. In addition, they may perform one or more of the following related functions: breaking bulk, providing delivery service to customers, operating warehouse facilities for storage of the goods they sell. Included in this category are wholesalers known as: drop shippers or desk jobbers, export merchants, import merchants, mail order wholesalers, rack jobbers or voluntary general wholesale distributors. Wholesale merchants also include other wholesale operations sometimes known as assemblers of primary products which are primarily engaged in selling products from farmers, loggers, fishermen and trappers.

Agents and brokers are establishments primarily engaged in buying and/or selling, on a commission basis, products owned by others. They may be known as an auction company, commission merchant, import agent or broker, export agent or broker, manufacturers' agent, purchasing agent or resident buyer and selling agent, and may deal in any type of product including primary and petroleum products. Agricultural marketing boards engaged in the direct purchase of farm products are included as wholesalers.

Coverage. This current monthly survey covers wholesale merchant establishments. For purposes of industrial classification, wholesale merchants are classified by industry according to the principal lines of commodities sold. A description of each industry included in the accompanying statistical data is shown in Appendix I. As most businesses sell several kinds of commodities, the trade group code assigned generally reflects either the individual commodity or the commodity group which is the primary source of the establishment's receipts, or some mixture of commodities which characterizes the establishment's business. Sales to end-users of certain commodities (usually capital or investment goods) such as office furniture and computers, feed, seed or other farm supplies, lumber and building materials, trucks and commercial vehicles, fuel oil, and all types of machinery and equipment are always classified to wholesale trade.

The estimates shown for provincial sales are based on the locations operated by the wholesaler. Establishments provide a sales breakdown by province and for each territory along with the number of trading locations whereas inventories are reported for as a Canada total.

Survey methodology

The sample of the monthly wholesale trade survey is drawn from Statistics Canada's Central Frame Data Base (CFDB), part of which comprises businesses engaged in wholesale activity.

The target population is all wholesale merchant establishments, excluding those engaged in the wholesaling of grain and petroleum products. The sampling unit is the statistical company.

In December 1997, the sample design of the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey was reviewed and changes were made to improve the efficiency of the sample. The first step was to exclude from the frame businesses that were no longer in operation in wholesale trade. The stratification of the businesses was revised in a manner that reflected the most up-to-date information available from Statistic Canada's Central Frame Data Base. Each stratum is first defined by the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification and geographic region. Each combination of industry and geography is divided into three substrata according to their size. The first substratum includes both large and complex businesses and is self-representing as businesses are included in the sample with certainty (a census) while the other two strata are only partially sampled. Some thresholds that separate the substrata were modified to reflect economic growth since the last survey redesign in 1988. It was ensured that the sampling rates would be sufficient to attain the desired precision for the estimates. A new sample was selected in order to maximize overlap with the old sample. Effective April 1998, estimates for the monthly wholesale trade survey were produced using this new sample. These improvements to the sample design look to provide a series of estimates for wholesale sales of higher quality.

In addition, the opportunity to incorporate historical revisions was also taken during the sample review and update. Consequently, monthly estimates were revised back to January 1993. Annual revisions were introduced with the January 1999 publication, and are now an on-going process.

Respondents are sent either a questionnaire or contacted by telephone to obtain their monthly sales. New entities to the survey are included in the New Entrant Survey, and are contacted by telephone to obtain information along with sales data.

Staff within Statistics Canada's five Regional Offices perform the telephone interviews, data capture activities, and follow-up of non-respondents. As well, preliminary editing of the captured data, and subsequent telephone follow-ups which may result due to edit failures, are performed within the Regional Offices. The edited data are transmitted regularly to the head office in Ottawa.

Further edits are performed at a more aggregate level (trade group by geographic level) to detect records which deviate from the expected, either by exhibiting large month-to-month change, or differing significantly from the remaining companies. All data failing these edits are subject to manual inspection and possible corrective action.

Once these edits are complete, imputation is applied to missing records. A variety of imputation methods are available. The imputation system automatically selects the appropriate method depending on the availability of the data. Possible imputation methods may be month-to-month trends, year-to-year trends, historical data, annual data, etc.

Reported or imputed data are then weighted to reflect the population. The weights applied to the survey data are equal to the ratio of the population and sample counts at the sample selection level. The selection level for the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey is trade group by geographic area by size.

Domain estimation is used to produce the survey estimates. A domain is defined by the most recent classification data available from the frame (CFDB) for the statistical entity and reference period. Therefore, these domains may differ from the original sampling characteristics because records may have changed industry, location or size. These changes are reflected in the estimates as they occur on the CFDB. After the estimates are produced, a listing of the

top contributors to the estimates is produced. Individual records that make up a large proportion of the estimates are checked for consistency. Following validation and correction, the database is created.

Two sets of estimates are produced each month to incorporate late responses. Preliminary estimates are usually available 45 days following the reference month. Revised estimates are published the following month.

Data reliability

This publication presents estimates derived from a sample survey; as in any survey, they are subject to errors. The following section describes the sources of errors that may occur in a survey and is intended to assist the reader in the interpretation of the estimates.

Sources of errors

When a survey is conducted, numerous errors may affect the quality of the estimates obtained. These errors fall into two categories: sampling errors and non-sampling errors. The accuracy of the estimates obtained will depend on the combined effect of these two sources of errors.

Sampling errors

Sampling errors occur because data are collected for a part of the population only as opposed to the whole population, as would be the case in a census. The results derived from this survey will therefore likely be different than if a complete census had been taken under the same general survey conditions.

Sampling errors depend on factors such as the size of the sample, variability in the population, sample design and estimation method. For example, for a given size of sample, the sampling error will depend on the choice of sampling units, the stratification method, the allocation of the sample and the selection method.

Non-sampling errors

These errors are present whether a sample or a complete census of the population is taken. Non-sampling errors stem from several sources, the most important of which are described below.

Coverage error. This error stems from an incomplete sampling frame which results in inadequate coverage of the target population. For example, a unit that is missing from the list of wholesale merchants will not be represented in the sample.

Response error. This error may be due to questionnaire design and the characteristics of the question, inability or unwillingness of the respondent to provide correct information. It may also stem from misinterpretation of the questions because of definitional difficulties and the tendency of interviewers to explain questions or interpret responses differently.

Non-Response error. Some respondents may refuse to answer questions, some are unable to respond, while others may be too late in responding. The gaps left in the estimate by these non-respondents are filled by the assignment of an approximate response. The procedure used to assign these approximate values to units which do not respond and to units whose response was deemed unacceptable is called imputation. The data are imputed from earlier data provided by respondents. The extent of error due to imputation is usually unknown and is very much dependent on any characteristic differences between the respondent group and the imputed units in the survey. This error generally increases with the non-response rate and attempts are therefore made to obtain as high a response rate as possible.

Processing error. This error may occur at the various stages of processing such as coding, data entry, editing, etc.

Non-sampling errors are difficult to measure. Within the limitations of the budget and the human resources available, all attempts have been made to minimize this type of error in calculating the estimates contained in this publication. Units have been defined using the most up-to-date listing; the questionnaires have been designed so as to minimize differences of interpretation; testing has been carried out for the different stages of editing and processing. Moreover, non-respondents are followed up in order to reduce the non-response rate.

Measures of sampling and non-sampling error

Sampling error measure

The particular sample used in this survey is one of a large number of possible samples of the same size that could have been selected using the same sample design under the same conditions.

Coefficient of variation (CV) is a common measure which takes into account variation among estimates from all possible sample combinations. The CV is defined as the standard error expressed as a percentage of the estimate. By applying the CV of interest from Table 3-2, it is possible, through derivation of a confidence interval to predict, with a known probability, the range that the estimate would cover taking into account all possible samples. This range or interval is expected to cover the unknown value being estimated with the predicted probability.

For example, to establish a 95% confidence interval for not seasonally adjusted sales in Ontario one would use:

1. The provincial sales from Table 2-1; and
2. The coefficient of variation for the estimate from Table 3-2.

A 95% confidence interval is then constructed by adding or subtracting twice the value represented by applying the CV to the estimate, for example:

$$12,829,900 + \frac{(2 \times 1.5 (12,829,900))}{100}$$

or

$$12,829,900 - \frac{(2 \times 1.5 (12,829,900))}{100}$$

Thus, the confidence interval for this example would be:

\$12,445,003 to \$13,214,797.

Summarizing these findings, the best estimate for not seasonally adjusted sales in Ontario will be found in Table 2-1. One can be 95% confident that the unknown true value of sales lies in the interval between \$12,445,003 and \$13,214,797.

Non-sampling error measures

One source of non-sampling error is the non-response error. There are several measures that can help the user evaluate this type of error, among others; the response rate and the response fraction.

The **response rate** is a measure of the proportion of those sample units which have responded in time for inclusion in the estimate. To calculate the response rate, one should exclude from the sample, deaths as well as seasonal establishments closed during the month in question.

The **response fraction**, which is a measure of the data response rate, is the proportion of the estimate which is based upon actual reported data.

An example illustrates the two above measures. For example, a cell with 20 active sample units in which 10 respond for a particular month would have a response rate of 50%. However, if the 10 reporting units represented \$9 million out of a total of \$12 million, the response fraction would be 75%. Thus 25% of the estimate came from imputed data.

Joint interpretation of measures of error

The two measures of non-response error as well as the coefficient of variation must be considered jointly to have an overview of the quality of the estimates. A lower coefficient of variation combined with a higher response rate and response fraction, will result in a better estimate.

Response fractions and coefficients of variation associated with each estimate appear in Table 3-2 and Table 7-2.

Other survey related issues

Seasonal adjustment

Socio-economic time series contain four basic components: the trend-cycle, the seasonal, the trading-day and the irregular components. The component of interest is usually the trend-cycle, which reflects the more fundamental evolution of the series (e.g. the business cycle), whereas the other components reflect short-term transient movements. Seasonal variations are caused by the direct and indirect effects of climatic and institutional seasons (e.g. Christmas); they tend to repeat from year to year. Trading-day variations originate from the fact that the relative importance of the days vary systematically within the week and that the number of each day in a given month varies from year to year. For instance, Sundays is typically less active than other days, and the number of Sundays, Mondays, etc., in July (say) changes from year to year. Finally, the irregular component is a residual which captures measurement errors and events which occur in an irregular manner.

Thus the seasonal, trading-day and irregular components all conceal the fundamental trend-cycle component of the series. Seasonal adjustment consists of removing the seasonal and the trading-day components from the series. Seasonal adjustment thus helps reveal the trend-cycle. However, one must bear in mind that the seasonally adjusted series contains not only the trend-cycle but also the irregular component (which is technically difficult to isolate for the current months). The month-to-month comparisons of the seasonally adjusted series are thus affected by the irregular fluctuations.

Many users of time series data view same-month comparisons as a substitute for seasonal adjustment. They should be aware of the limitations of such comparisons, especially in the presence of trading-day variations. A fall between October 1993 and October 1994, for instance, may entirely be due to the fact that October 1993 contained five of the more active days and four of the less active days of the week; and October 1994, four of the more active days of the week and five of the less active days. In the absence of trading-day variations (which is the case if all 7 days have same importance), same-month comparisons are still of limited value, because they measure the average movement over the 12-month period and not the most recent movements. For instance, same-month comparisons may indicate a continuing growth of activity, while in fact the trend-cycle has been falling for the last few months (which seasonal adjustment would reveal).

In order to seasonally adjust its time series, Statistics Canada uses the X-11-ARIMA method. The method is a combination of the ARIMA forecasting method and of the X-11 seasonal adjustment method, which is a ratio-to-moving average method.

During the transition period between the old and the new survey introduced in January 1989, the seasonally adjusted series obtained from the X-11-ARIMA method were smoothed by a three-month moving average. The need for such smoothing, which aimed at eliminating the disruptions introduced by the new survey design and methodology, has now disappeared. In 1991, the practice was discontinued, both for the current and the past estimates.

January 1999 introduced a re-examined and modified seasonally adjusted series. Improvements to the basis of the time series were introduced, as well as adjustments in the calculation of the Canada grand total series.

Wholesale Trade forms a system of 25 series: the Canada grand total, the 11 trade groups totals, and the 13 provincial / territorial totals. For non-seasonally adjusted series, the eleven trade group totals are summed to a Canada grand total for each month. Unfortunately, seasonal adjustment removes the additivity of a system of series; small discrepancies, which generally vary between -1% and 1%, are observed between the sum of the seasonally adjusted components and the seasonally adjusted grand total. Responding to the need of the series users, Statistics Canada now applies an harmonization process to the seasonally adjusted Wholesale Trade series, in order to restore their additivity. The process is such:

- (a) that the components are modified as little as possible in percentage;
- (b) that the components add to the grand total for each month and;
- (c) that, for each component, the monthly values add up to the yearly totals of the non-adjusted series.

As the seasonally adjusted grand total is obtained indirectly, i.e. by summing up the seasonally adjusted trade group series, the additivity is retained along this breakdown by definition. However, the seasonally adjusted provincial totals do not add to this grand total and they need to be harmonized (raked) to restore additivity.

Comparison to other sources

In December 1997, the sample design was reviewed and changes were made to improve the efficiency of the sample and the accuracy and reliability of the estimates.

The survey design is described in *Data quality, concepts and methodology — Survey methodology*. Notable improvements include the updating of the sample size and allocation, originally determined in 1988, to take into account the most up-to-date information on the characteristics of wholesale trade businesses. A parallel production of four months with the new sample indicated a change in the level of estimates. To avoid a break in the series, wholesale estimates were adjusted at the trade group by province level back to January 1993.

Also, from January 1993 to date, revisions have been made to the monthly wholesale trade micro data for a variety of reasons including: anomalies detected in the data, questionnaires received after the monthly deadline, retroactive information about the status of the business, and reconciliation between various sources of data.

Annual revisions were also introduced with the January 1999 publication, and continue as an on-going process.

From 1981 to the present, CANSIM contains converted monthly trade group and geographical data. Wholesale trade data can be found in tables 081-0001 and 081-0002.

Appendix I

Trade group coverage

011 Food Products

- 5211 Confectionery
- 5212 Frozen Foods (Packaged)
- 5213 Dairy Products
- 5214 Poultry and Eggs
- 5215 Fish and Seafood
- 5216 Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- 5217 Meat and Meat Products
- 5219 Other Foods

012 Beverage, Drug and Tobacco Products

- 5221 Non-Alcoholic Beverages
- 5222 Alcoholic Beverages
- 5231 Drugs
- 5232 Toilet Soaps and Preparations
- 5239 Drug Sundries and Other Drugs and Toilet Preparations
- 5241 Tobacco Products

020 Apparel and Dry Goods

- 5311 Men's and Boy's Clothing and Furnishings
- 5312 Women's, Misses' and Children's Outerwear
- 5313 Women's, Misses' and Children's Hosiery, Underwear and Apparel Accessories
- 5314 Footwear
- 5319 Other Apparel
- 5321 Piece Goods
- 5329 Notions and Other Dry Goods

030 Household Goods

- 5411 Electrical Household Appliances
- 5412 Electronic Household Appliances
- 5421 Household Furniture
- 5431 China, Glassware, Crockery and Pottery
- 5432 Floor Coverings
- 5433 Linens, Draperies and Other Textile Furnishings
- 5439 Other Household Furnishings

040 Motor Vehicles, Parts and Accessories

- 5511 Automobiles
- 5512 Truck and Buses
- 5519 Other Motor Vehicles and Trailers
- 5521 Tires and Tubes
- 5529 Other Motor Vehicle Parts and Accessories

050	Metals, Hardware, Plumbing and Heating Equipment and Supplies
5611	Iron and Steel Primary Forms and Structural Shapes
5612	Other Iron and Steel Products
5613	Non-Ferrous Metal and Metal Products
5619	Combination Metal and Metal Products
5621	Hardware
5622	Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning Equipment and Supplies
060	Lumber and Building Materials
5631	Lumber, Plywood and Millwork
5632	Paint, Glass and Wallpaper
5639	Other Building Materials
070	Farm Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5711	Farm Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
081	Industrial and Other Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5721	Construction and Forestry Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5722	Mining Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5731	Industrial Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5741	Electrical Wiring Supplies and Electrical Construction Material
5742	Electrical Generating and Transmission Equipment and Supplies
5749	Other Electrical and Electronic Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5791	Office and Store Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5792	Service Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5793	Professional Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
5799	Other Machinery, Equipment and Supplies n.e.c.
082	Computers, Packaged Software and Other Electronic Machinery
5743	Electronic Machinery, Equipment and Supplies (except computer and related equipment)
5744	Computer and Related Machinery, Equipment and Packaged Software
090	Other Products
5011	Livestock
5019	Other Farm Products
5911	Automobile Wrecking
5919	Other Waste Materials
5921	Newsprint
5922	Stationery and Office Supplies
5929	Other Paper and Paper Products
5931	Agricultural Feeds
5932	Seeds and Seed Processing
5939	Agricultural Chemical and Other Farm Supplies
5941	Toys, Novelties and Fireworks
5942	Amusement and Sporting Goods
5951	Photographic Equipment and Supplies
5952	Musical Instruments and Accessories
5961	Jewellery and Watches
5971	Industrial and Household Chemicals
5981	General Merchandise
5991	Books, Periodicals and Newspapers
5992	Second-Hand Goods (except Machinery and Automotive)
5993	Forest Products
5999	Other Products n.e.c.