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The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, June 21, 2000
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

OTHER RELEASES

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

MAJOR RELEASES

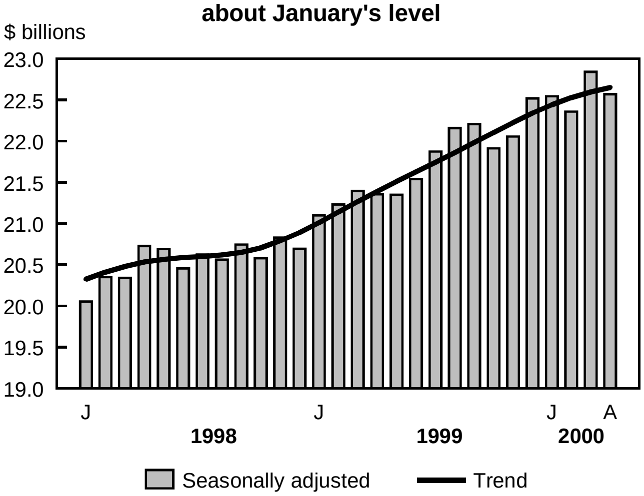
Retail trade
April 2000

Lower sales in the autmotive sector and in stores selling mostly seasonal products pushed down total retail sales by 1.2% to $22.6 billion. April’s decline cancelled about half the 2.2% gain posted in March. At constant prices, retail sales were down 0.5%.

In addition to the 3.4% decline in the automotive sector, sales were also down in the clothing sector (-3.2%) and in retail stores classified in the "other" category (-0.9%), which includes lawn and garden centres, hardware stores and sporting goods stores. Cool weather in April may have dampened sales of spring and summer clothing as well as other seasonal products.

The strong growth of retail sales observed in 1999 seems to have been slowing down since the beginning of the year. In April, retail sales were at about the same level as in January 2000. However, despite the decline, April sales were 5.7% higher than those in April 1999.

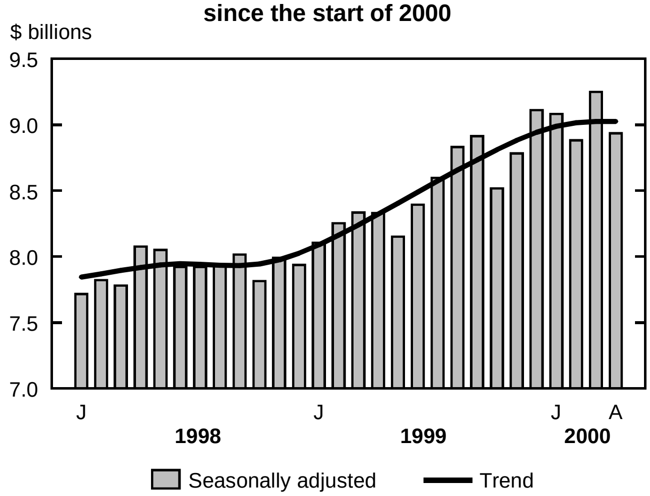
April's decline pushed down sales to about January's level



Widespread sales declines in the automotive sector

Sales in the automotive sector dropped 3.4% in April, cancelling most of the 4.1% gain observed in March. After advancing by an average of 1.2% each month in 1999, sales in this sector have slowed down this year. April sales were 1.9% lower than those in December 1999.

Sales in the automotive sector have slowed since the start of 2000



Within the automotive sector, automotive parts and services stores (-5.3%) saw the largest decline in sales. However, April’s decline in these stores is compared with a very strong March (+4.6%). Sales in automotive parts and services stores had generally been rising since the fall of 1997 before a slump set in at the end of 1999.

Motor and recreational vehicle dealers posted a 3.2% decline in sales in April, following a 4.8% rise in March. The weaker sales growth seen by motor and recreational vehicle dealers since the start of 2000 has been largely responsible for the recent slowdown observed in the overall automotive sector.

After a year of strong sales increases, gasoline service stations posted a decline in April (-2.6%). This reflected a temporary reduction in gasoline prices in April (-5.6%) due to an increase in oil supply on international markets. In May, gasoline prices resumed their rise that began in the spring of 1999 with a 1.9% increase from April.

Sales setback in clothing stores

Cool weather in April may have caused consumers to delay buying spring and summer fashions. Lower sales in shoe stores (-8.8%), women’s clothing stores (-5.8%) and men’s clothing stores (-3.9%) led to a 3.2% decline in the clothing sector. April’s decline in sales by clothing retailers is also compared with a strong March (+2.9%). Sales in the clothing sector have followed an upward movement since the fall of 1999.

Higher sales in drug stores (+1.8%) in April ended a string of four months of weak results. This gain pushed sales up almost to the peak reached in November 1999. Sales in drug stores generally advanced throughout 1999, after a year of declines in 1998.

Consumers continued in April to increase spending in furniture stores (+1.3%), adding to the strong sales gains observed since the spring of 1996. Food stores posted their third consecutive monthly rise (+1.0%); sales have generally been advancing since early 1996.

General merchandise stores posted a 0.8% gain in April, making up about one-third of the losses reported in the previous two months. Sales were down 0.4% in March and 2.0% in February. April's gain came entirely from rising sales in department stores (+1.5%). Overall, the general merchandise sector sales have been flat since the summer of 1999.

Retail sales were down in most provinces

In April, New Brunswick (-3.6%), Quebec (-2.9%) and Saskatchewan (-2.4%) posted the largest drops in retail sales. The weak performance in these provinces originated from sizeable declines in the automotive sector. After advancing throughout 1999, retail sales in the three provinces have been slowing down since the start of 2000.

Sales advances were reported by retailers in Prince Edward Island (+2.9%), Alberta (+0.9%), British Columbia (+0.2%) and Newfoundland (+0.2%) in April. Retail sales in Prince Edward Island, Alberta and British Columbia have been generally increasing since the fall of 1998. In Newfoundland, retail sales have generally been rising since the summer of 1998.

Related indicators for May

Total employment advanced 0.3% in May from April, pushing the unemployment rate down to 6.6%, the lowest level of the last 24 years. However, the number of housing starts (-10.4%), fell for a third consecutive month in May, most likely affected by the third interest rate hike since the start of 2000. Preliminary figures from the auto industry indicate a decline in the number of new motor vehicles sold in May, representing a fourth monthly decline so far this year.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2399-2400 (main matrices), 2299, 2397, 2398, 2401-2416 and 2418-2420.

The April 2000 issue of *Retail trade* (63-005-XPB, $21/$206; 63-005-XIB, $16/$155) will be available soon. See *How to order publications*.

Retail sales estimates for May will be released on July 21.

To order data, or for general information, contact the Client Services Unit (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; *retailinfo@statcan.ca*). For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; *gratpau@statcan.ca*), Distributive Trades Division. □

Retail sales

	April 1999	Jan. 2000r	Feb. 2000r	March 2000r	April 2000p	March to April 2000	April 1999 to April 2000
	seasonally adjusted						
	$ millions					% change	
Food	**4,882**	**4,867**	**4,981**	**5,018**	**5,066**	**1.0**	**3.8**
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,520	4,496	4,609	4,643	4,686	0.9	3.7
All other food stores	362	371	373	375	380	1.3	5.2
Drug and patent medicine stores	**1,096**	**1,121**	**1,111**	**1,109**	**1,129**	**1.8**	**3.0**
Clothing	**1,194**	**1,237**	**1,224**	**1,259**	**1,219**	**-3.2**	**2.1**
Shoe stores	141	138	138	144	131	-8.8	-6.7
Men's clothing stores	127	128	130	132	126	-3.9	-0.3
Women's clothing stores	372	385	377	391	368	-5.8	-0.9
Other clothing stores	555	586	579	593	593	-	6.8
Furniture	**1,074**	**1,223**	**1,218**	**1,243**	**1,260**	**1.3**	**17.3**
Household furniture and appliance stores	864	999	988	1,013	1,029	1.6	19.0
Household furnishings stores	209	225	230	230	231	0.4	10.2
Automotive	**8,330**	**9,082**	**8,881**	**9,248**	**8,935**	**-3.4**	**7.3**
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	5,655	6,147	5,831	6,110	5,916	-3.2	4.6
Gasoline service stations	1,451	1,667	1,780	1,810	1,762	-2.6	21.4
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,224	1,268	1,270	1,328	1,258	-5.3	2.7
General merchandise stores	**2,452**	**2,596**	**2,544**	**2,535**	**2,555**	**0.8**	**4.2**
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	**2,326**	**2,418**	**2,397**	**2,426**	**2,405**	**-0.9**	**3.4**
Other semi-durable goods stores	702	745	705	728	717	-1.6	2.1
Other durable goods stores	586	607	613	606	590	-2.6	0.8
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,038	1,067	1,079	1,092	1,098	0.6	5.7
Total, retail sales	**21,354**	**22,545**	**22,356**	**22,839**	**22,569**	**-1.2**	**5.7**
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	**15,699**	**16,398**	**16,525**	**16,729**	**16,654**	**-0.5**	**6.1**
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland	343	365	362	373	373	0.2	8.8
Prince Edward Island	92	99	102	101	104	2.9	13.9
Nova Scotia	650	673	698	707	696	-1.5	7.1
New Brunswick	541	567	555	591	569	-3.6	5.3
Quebec	5,024	5,240	5,127	5,313	5,160	-2.9	2.7
Ontario	8,090	8,606	8,514	8,688	8,602	-1.0	6.3
Manitoba	743	770	776	782	767	-1.8	3.2
Saskatchewan	637	666	666	678	662	-2.4	3.9
Alberta	2,368	2,582	2,573	2,608	2,631	0.9	11.1
British Columbia	2,797	2,901	2,908	2,920	2,927	0.2	4.7
Yukon	27	28	29	29	29	0.7	7.0
Northwest Territories	28	32	32	34	33	-3.7	18.1
Nunavut	15	15	15	16	15	-4.6	-2.5

r *Revised figures.*
p *Preliminary figures.*
\- *Nil or zero.*

Retail sales

	April 1999	March 2000[r]	April 2000[p]	April 1999 to April 2000
	unadjusted			
	$ millions			% change
Food	**4,866**	**4,967**	**5,021**	**3.2**
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,511	4,612	4,637	2.8
All other food stores	355	355	385	8.2
Drug and patent medicine stores	**1,078**	**1,101**	**1,079**	**0.1**
Clothing	**1,119**	**1,064**	**1,123**	**0.4**
Shoe stores	142	117	132	-7.5
Men's clothing stores	115	102	111	-3.4
Women's clothing stores	362	332	353	-2.6
Other clothing stores	499	513	528	5.8
Furniture	**971**	**1,127**	**1,114**	**14.7**
Household furniture and appliance stores	777	913	908	16.8
Household furnishings stores	194	214	207	6.7
Automotive	**9,110**	**9,547**	**9,189**	**0.9**
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	6,482	6,600	6,346	-2.1
Gasoline service stations	1,400	1,746	1,635	16.8
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,229	1,202	1,207	-1.7
General merchandise stores	**2,274**	**2,224**	**2,359**	**3.8**
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	**2,135**	**2,046**	**2,179**	**2.1**
Other semi-durable goods stores	631	570	640	1.4
Other durable goods stores	536	498	529	-1.5
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	967	978	1,011	4.5
Total, retail sales	**21,552**	**22,076**	**22,065**	**2.4**
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	**15,070**	**15,476**	**15,719**	**4.3**
Provinces and territories				
Newfoundland	342	358	358	4.9
Prince Edward Island	85	88	94	11.2
Nova Scotia	658	667	671	1.9
New Brunswick	539	553	550	2.1
Quebec	5,311	5,199	5,251	-1.1
Ontario	8,028	8,350	8,279	3.1
Manitoba	749	766	747	-0.3
Saskatchewan	633	639	640	1.0
Alberta	2,361	2,532	2,555	8.2
British Columbia	2,776	2,847	2,846	2.5
Yukon	26	27	27	4.1
Northwest Territories	28	35	32	15.0
Nunavut	16	15	15	-1.9

[r] *Revised figures.*
[p] *Preliminary figures.*

■

Composite Index

May 2000

The growth of the leading indicator continued to moderate, from a revised gain of 1.1% in March to 0.9% in April to 0.7% in May. This slowdown largely reflects gyrations in the stock market, which soared in March before retrenching in April and May. Excluding the TSE 300 stock price index, the Composite Index would have grown steadily by about the 0.6% monthly average it has posted over the past year. Eight of the nine other components continued to expand, reflecting the underlying strength in demand.

The trend of new orders for durable goods turned up after a one-month drop, while the ratio of shipments to inventories posted their first gain in six months. Manufacturers could no longer meet their manpower needs by lengthening the work week, turning instead to more hiring in May.

The outlook for exports remains bright, based on continued growth in the American leading indicator. Consumer confidence bounced back, although it remains below the peak it hit in January of this year.

In Canada, furniture and appliances sales remained strong, and the trend for other durable goods rebounded. Services employment continued to expand gradually. The housing index dipped 0.1% in May, pulled down by a drop in housing starts. However, starts remained steady outside of Ontario, where growth was hampered by strikes in Toronto.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 193.

For more information on the economy, the June 2000 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, $23/$227) will be available soon. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group.

Composite Index

	Dec. 1999	Jan. 2000	Feb. 2000	March 2000	April 2000	May 2000	Last month of data available
							% change
Composite leading indicator (1992=100)	**155.7**	**156.7**	**158.3**	**160.1**	**161.5**	**162.7**	**0.7**
Housing index (1992=100)[1]	98.1	97.7	98.3	100.3	100.2	100.1	-0.1
Business and personal services employment ('000)	2,359	2,365	2,373	2,381	2,388	2,395	0.3
TSE 300 stock price index (1975=1,000)	7,424	7,726	8,161	8,602	8,967	9,134	1.9
Money supply, M1 ($ millions 1992)[2]	82,016	82,780	83,964	85,882	88,098	89,554	1.7
U.S. composite leading indicator (1992=100)[3]	107.9	108.0	108.2	108.3	108.4	108.5	0.1
Manufacturing							
Average work week (hours)	38.7	38.7	38.8	38.9	39.0	39.0	0.0
New orders, durables ($ millions 1992)[4]	21,361	21,584	21,840	21,973	21,956	22,254	1.4
Shipments/inventories of finished goods[4]	1.91	1.91	1.91	1.91	1.91	1.92	0.01[5]
Retail trade							
Furniture and appliance sales ($ millions 1992)[4]	1,418	1,416	1,421	1,435	1,445	1,450	0.4
Other durable goods sales ($ millions 1992)[4]	6,574	6,601	6,650	6,694	6,676	6,773	1.5
Unsmoothed composite	158.3	160.0	162.6	163.6	162.8	164.3	0.9

1 *Composite index of housing starts (units) and house sales (multiple listing service).*
2 *Deflated by the Consumer Price Index for all items.*
3 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the month immediately preceding.*
4 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for two preceding months.*
5 *Difference from previous month.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Employment Insurance

April 2000 (preliminary)

The estimated number of Canadians who received regular Employment Insurance benefits in April decreased by 1.3% to 465,470. Nova Scotia (-4.1%) and Northwest Territories and Nunavut (-3.6%) recorded the largest monthly declines. Compared with April 1999, the number of beneficiaries across Canada receiving regular benefits was 9.5% lower.

Regular benefit payments decreased by 5.1% between March and April to $583.9 million; the number of claims received fell by 5.0% to 203,440.

Number of beneficiaries receiving regular benefits

	April 2000[p]	March to April 2000	April 1999 to April 2000
	seasonally adjusted		
		% change	
Canada	**465,470**	**-1.3**	**-9.5**
Newfoundland	32,410	-3.4	-10.6
Prince Edward Island	8,010	0.6	-2.1
Nova Scotia	26,470	-4.1	1.1
New Brunswick	31,220	-1.5	-8.4
Quebec	168,120	-1.1	-3.4
Ontario	95,610	0.2	-4.1
Manitoba	13,370	1.2	1.8
Saskatchewan	11,340	-0.1	-10.2
Alberta	25,810	-0.5	-34.8
British Columbia	51,460	-2.0	-21.3
Yukon	850	9.0	-8.6
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	1,080	-3.6	22.7
	unadjusted		
Northwest Territories	922	-1.5	..
Nunavut	340	9.3	..

[p] *Preliminary figures.*
. . *Data not available.*

Employment Insurance statistics

	April 1999	March 2000	April 2000	March to April 2000	April 1999 to April 2000
	seasonally adjusted				
				% change	
Regular beneficiaries ('000)	514,590	471,430[p]	465,470[p]	-1.3	-9.5
Regular benefits paid ($ millions)	670.0	615.3	583.9	-5.1	-12.8
Claims received ('000)	216.2	214.1	203.4	-5.0	-5.9
	unadjusted				
				% change	
All beneficiaries ('000)	795.6	819.9[p]	737.3[p]	-10.1	-7.3
Regular beneficiaries ('000)	601.0	619.8[p]	545.0[p]	-12.1	-9.3
Claims received ('000)	172.2	186.8	159.1	-14.8	-7.6
Payments ($ millions)	1,257.7	1,101.6	1,247.7	13.3	-0.8
	year-to-date				
			1999	2000	1999 to 2000
					% change
Claims received ('000)			871.8	827.7	-5.1
Payments ($ millions)			4,978.7	4,687.6	-5.8

[p] *Preliminary figures.*
Note: *All beneficiaries includes all claimants receiving regular benefits (e.g., due to layoff) or special benefits (e.g., due to illness).*

Note: The number of beneficiaries is a measure of all persons who were in receipt of EI benefits for the week containing the 15th day of the month. The regular benefit payments series measures the total of all monies received by individuals for the entire month. These different reference periods must be taken into consideration when comparisons are done between the series. The *Employment Insurance Act* allows each province or administrative region of Human Resources Development Canada to have certain autonomy in the application of administrative procedures regarding renewal claims. Data users must take into consideration that movements in levels from month to month may be affected by different administrative procedures regarding renewal claims from one province or region to another.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 26 (series 1.6), 5700-5717, 5735 and 5736.

For more information, or to enquire about concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Robert Keay (613-951-4090, fax: 613-951-4087; *labour@statcan.ca*), Labour Statistics Division. ■

Railway carloadings

Seven-day period ending May 21, 2000

Non-intermodal traffic loaded during the seven-day period ending May 21 decreased 0.8 % to 4.7 million tonnes compared with the same period in 1999. The number of cars loaded increased 2.2 %.

Intermodal traffic tonnage totalled 436 000 tonnes, an 11.3 % advance from the same period of 1999. The year-to-date figures were up 16.3%.

Total traffic rose 0.1 % during the period. This brought the year-to-date total to 106.3 million tonnes, an increase of 8.1% from the same period of 1999.

All year-to-date figures have been revised.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Robert Larocque (613-951-2486; fax: 613-951-0009; *laroque@statcan.ca*), Transportation Division. ■

Monthly railway carloadings

April 2000

The freight loaded by railways totalled 20.6 million metric tonnes (excluding intermodal traffic). This represented an increase of 2.3% compared to April 1999. The intermodal tonnage, represented by "container-on-flat-cars" and "trailer-on-flat-cars," increased by 7.9% from April 1999 to 2.1 million metric tonnes.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 1430.

The April 2000 issue of *Railway carloadings* (52-001-XIE, $8/$77) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact J.R. Larocque (613-951-2486; fax: 613-951-0009; *laroque@statcan.ca*, Transportation Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Railway carloadings, April 2000
Catalogue number 52-001-XIE ($8/$77).

Cable television, 1998
Catalogue number 56-205-XIB ($30).

All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.

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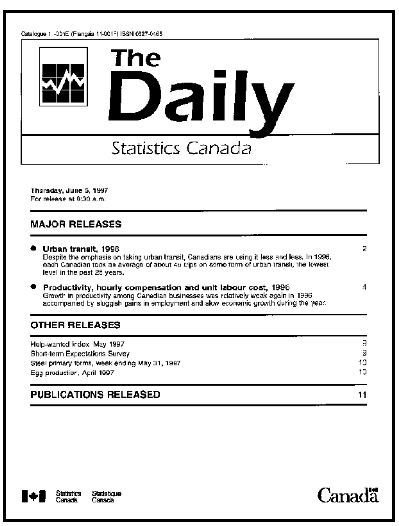
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The Daily

Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 5, 1997
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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1996** — 2
  Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 45 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1996** — 4
  Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

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Editor: Tom Vradenburg (613-951-1103, vradtom@statcan.ca)
Head of Official Release: Madeleine Simard (613-951-1088), simamad@statcan.ca