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In February, strong demand for trucks caused overall sales of new motor vehicles to advance 7.7%, a second consecutive increase. According to preliminary figures from the auto industry, the first quarter of 2004 will be bolstered by a sales increase of approximately 3% in March.

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MAJOR RELEASES

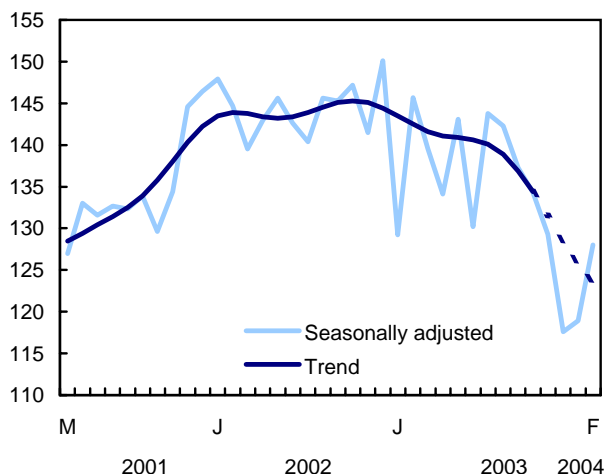
New Motor Vehicle Sales

February 2004

In February, strong demand for trucks caused overall sales of new motor vehicles to advance 7.7%, a second consecutive increase. In all, 128,043 new motor vehicles were purchased, an increase of 9,171 units compared with January. According to preliminary figures for the auto industry, the first quarter of 2004 will be bolstered by a sales increase of approximately 3% in March.

New motor vehicle sales up sharply in February

'000 units



The last few trend points could be subject to revisions when more data are added. This is indicated by the dashed line.

The increases in January and February were not enough to offset the cumulative effect of declines observed in the second half of 2003. In fact, the sales level for February 2004 was 12.1% below the February 2003 level. Previously, new motor vehicle sales had remained at record levels throughout 2002, following a period of sustained growth in 2001.

Increased demand for new trucks

In February, boosted by incentives designed to stimulate sales (among other factors), both categories of new vehicles posted gains. However, consumers had their hearts set on trucks. In fact, trucks accounted for

Note to readers

Seasonally adjusted estimates of new motor vehicle sales have been revised for 2003 to reflect an update in seasonal factors. Because of the constant evolution of seasonal factors, revisions can be more significant for some months of the year. However, the annual sum of unadjusted figures corresponds to the annual sum of adjusted estimates.

All data in this release are adjusted for seasonality. Seasonally adjusted provincial data back to January 1991 are available on CANSIM.

Passenger cars include those used for personal and commercial purposes, such as taxis or rental cars. **Trucks** include minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans and buses.

North American-built new motor vehicles include vehicles manufactured or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico. All other new motor vehicles are considered to have been manufactured overseas.

For reasons of confidentiality, data for Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are included with those for British Columbia.

more than 80% of the increase of 9,171 units sold in February. Trucks include minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans and buses.

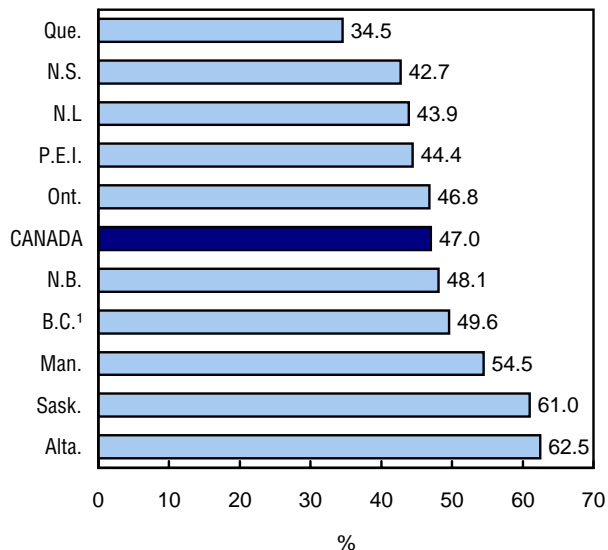
In all, the number of new trucks sold in February was up 13.8% from January at 62,334. For the same period, 65,709 passenger cars were sold, up 2.5%. This latter increase is entirely attributable to North American-built cars, which accounted for three-fourths of all passenger cars sold in February.

The increases observed in January and February followed an extended period of weaker sales. This situation has prevailed since the fall of 2002 for passenger cars, whereas for trucks, which have not shown as much weakness, the decline began much later, in the fall of 2003. Previously, sales of both categories of vehicles had stabilized during 2002, following an upward movement that began at the start of 2001.

Trucks remain popular out West

Trucks have continued to be popular in western Canada. In 2003, Alberta led the western provinces with trucks occupying 63% of the vehicles sold there. By contrast, trucks were least popular in Quebec, where they accounted for only 35% of sales during the same period.

Market share of trucks by province in 2003



¹ Includes the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Sales up in nearly all provinces

The number of new motor vehicles sold in February advanced in all provinces except Nova Scotia (-4.8%)

and Newfoundland and Labrador (-0.8%). For most provinces, the increase followed lacklustre sales in the latter part of 2003 that have not yet been offset.

In February, Saskatchewan posted the strongest gain (+29.3%) compared with January, a month when sales dropped sharply (-16.6%).

Ontario, Alberta, Quebec and New Brunswick reported back-to-back increases in January and February. Manitoba and the region formed by British Columbia and the three territories also posted an increase, although for the latter region it was minimal.

Available on CANSIM: tables 079-0001 and 079-0002.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2402.

The February 2004 issue of *New Motor Vehicle Sales* (63-007-XIB, \$14/\$133) will soon be available.

Data on new motor vehicle sales for March 2004 will be released on May 13.

For general information or to order data, contact Client Services (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Cl rance Kimanyi (613-951-6363), Distributive Trades Division.

□

New motor vehicle sales

	February 2003 ^f	January 2004 ^f	February 2004 ^p	February 2003 to February 2004	January to February 2004
seasonally adjusted					
	number of vehicles			% change	
New motor vehicles	145,689	118,872	128,043	-12.1	7.7
Passenger cars	79,352	64,117	65,709	-17.2	2.5
North American ¹	54,791	43,585	45,359	-17.2	4.1
Overseas	24,561	20,532	20,350	-17.1	-0.9
Trucks, vans and buses	66,337	54,755	62,334	-6.0	13.8
New motor vehicles					
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,130	1,828	1,814	-14.8	-0.8
Prince Edward Island	419	337	378	-9.8	12.2
Nova Scotia	3,992	3,510	3,341	-16.3	-4.8
New Brunswick	3,394	2,853	2,916	-14.1	2.2
Quebec	36,927	31,113	32,991	-10.7	6.0
Ontario	58,354	45,181	49,824	-14.6	10.3
Manitoba	3,980	3,297	3,751	-5.8	13.8
Saskatchewan	3,585	2,670	3,451	-3.7	29.3
Alberta	17,109	14,778	16,209	-5.3	9.7
British Columbia ²	15,800	13,305	13,367	-15.4	0.5
	February 2003	January 2004	February 2004 ^p	February 2003 to February 2004	
unadjusted					
	number of vehicles			% change	
New motor vehicles	105,391	85,238	94,778	-10.1	
Passenger cars	54,638	43,142	46,029	-15.8	
North American ¹	37,734	30,151	31,676	-16.1	
Overseas	16,904	12,991	14,353	-15.1	
Trucks, vans and buses	50,753	42,096	48,749	-3.9	
New motor vehicles					
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,371	971	1,111	-19.0	
Prince Edward Island	248	205	231	-6.9	
Nova Scotia	2,727	2,245	2,257	-17.2	
New Brunswick	2,330	1,884	2,052	-11.9	
Quebec	25,540	19,906	23,007	-9.9	
Ontario	41,456	33,402	36,564	-11.8	
Manitoba	2,892	2,403	2,814	-2.7	
Saskatchewan	2,516	2,026	2,451	-2.6	
Alberta	12,575	11,302	12,395	-1.4	
British Columbia ²	13,736	10,894	11,896	-13.4	

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

¹ Manufactured or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico.

² Includes Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

■

OTHER RELEASES

Births

2002

Canada's crude birth rate (the number of live births for every 1,000 people in the population) fell to its all-time low in 2002 in the wake of another decline in the number of live births.

The crude birth rate dropped to 10.5 live births for every 1,000 population, the lowest since vital statistics began to be produced nationally in 1921. The rate has dropped 25.4% in the last 10 years alone.

In total, 328,802 babies were born in 2002, down 1.5% from the previous year. It was the 11th decline in the past 12 years.

Total fertility rate¹ 2002

	per woman aged 15 to 49
Canada²	1.50
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.31
Prince Edward Island	1.47
Nova Scotia	1.37
New Brunswick	1.39
Quebec	1.46
Ontario	1.47
Manitoba	1.80
Saskatchewan	1.82
Alberta	1.69
British Columbia	1.38
Yukon	1.56
Northwest Territories ³	1.89
Nunavut ³	3.04
Selected industrialized countries	
United States	2.0
France	1.9
Australia	1.7
United Kingdom	1.6
Canada	1.5
Germany	1.4
Japan	1.3
Italy	1.2

¹ Total fertility rate is an estimate of the average number of children women aged 15 to 49 will have in their lifetime.

² Canada total includes births with unknown province or territory of residence of mother.

³ Data for Nunavut are excluded from the Northwest Territories.

The fertility rate, an entirely different measure, estimates the average number of children women aged 15 to 49 will have in their lifetime. It fell slightly from 1.51 per woman in 2001 to 1.50 per woman in 2002, which was only marginally above the record low of 1.49 set in 2000.

Internationally, fertility in Canada falls more or less midway between industrialized nations such as France,

Australia and the United Kingdom, which have higher fertility rates, and Italy, Japan and Germany, which have lower rates.

The United States stands out from other industrialized countries, with a fertility rate of at least two children per woman in each year since 1989.

Nunavut stood apart with a fertility rate of 3.04, while among the provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest fertility rate (1.82). In contrast, Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest fertility rate, at 1.31 per woman.

In Saskatchewan, the number of live births fell 4.2% to 11,761, the biggest decline among the provinces and territories.

On the other hand, women in Alberta had 38,691 babies, up 2.8%, the biggest gain. Alberta has recorded increases in the number of births in four of the last five years.

The biggest impact on the national statistics came from declines in live births in Ontario (-2.4%) and Quebec (-1.7%). Combined, these two provinces accounted for almost 4,400 fewer live births in 2002, representing 89% of the net decrease for the entire country.

Births¹

	2001	2002	% change	2001 to 2002 increase/decrease
Canada²	333,744	328,802	-1.5	-4,942
Newfoundland and Labrador	4,716	4,651	-1.4	-65
Prince Edward Island	1,380	1,328	-3.8	-52
Nova Scotia	8,909	8,663	-2.8	-246
New Brunswick	7,195	7,046	-2.1	-149
Quebec	73,695	72,477	-1.7	-1,218
Ontario	131,709	128,528	-2.4	-3,181
Manitoba	14,002	13,888	-0.8	-114
Saskatchewan	12,275	11,761	-4.2	-514
Alberta	37,619	38,691	2.8	1,072
British Columbia	40,575	40,065	-1.3	-510
Yukon	344	339	-1.5	-5
Northwest Territories ³	613	635	3.6	22
Nunavut ³	710	726	2.3	16

¹ Excludes births to non-residents of Canada and stillbirths.

² Canada total includes births with unknown province or territory of residence of mother.

³ Data for Nunavut are excluded from the Northwest Territories.

Ontario and Quebec have experienced declines in the number of births in four of the last five years. British Columbia has incurred declines in all five years.

The average age of mothers in 2002 was 29.5 years, up a full year from 1992, when the average age was 28.4. On average, Nunavut mothers were the youngest among the three territories at 25.1 years old, while Saskatchewan mothers were the youngest on average among the provinces at 27.5 years.

On the other hand, at 30.3 years, Ontario mothers were the oldest on average among the provinces. Yukon mothers were the oldest on average among the territories at 29.0 years old.

Among the territories, by far the youngest first-time mothers were those in Nunavut, with an average age of 21.5 years in 2002. This age is over six years younger than the national average age of first-time mothers, 27.7 years. Among the provinces, first-time mothers in Saskatchewan were youngest, with an average age of 25.2. At 28.5 years, first-time mothers in British Columbia and Ontario were the oldest.

Twenty years ago, the majority of live births in Canada were to mothers aged 20 to 29 years. Mothers in their 20s gave birth to 66.2% of babies in 1982. Only 47.9% of births were to mothers in this age group in 2002.

Since that time, the proportion of births to mothers in their 30s has grown, particularly for mothers in their early 30s. By 2002, 44.8% of births were to mothers aged 30 to 39, up from only 23.0% of births in 1982.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3231.

The publication *Births, 2002* (84F0210XIE, free), which contains tables on live births and stillbirths, is now available. From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Health*.

For general information or to order custom tabulations, contact Client Services (613-951-1746; hd-ds@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Patricia Tully (613-951-1759; patricia.tully@statcan.ca) or Leslie Geran (613-951-5243; leslie.geran@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division. ■

Stillbirths 2002

The number of stillbirths with a gestational age of 28 weeks or more, known as late fetal deaths, dropped to its lowest level ever in 2002.

Canada registered 1,028 stillbirths at 28 weeks or more in 2002, down 6.3% from 2001.

In 2002, there were 3.1 late fetal deaths for every 1,000 total births (live births plus stillbirths of 28 weeks or longer gestation). This was a slight decrease from 2001, when there were 3.3 such deaths for every 1,000 total births.

Late fetal death rates have remained below four deaths for every 1,000 total births since 1990.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3234.

The publication *Births, 2002* (84F0210XIE, free), which contains tables on live births and stillbirths, is now available. From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Health*.

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Study: Birth outcomes in British Columbia 1981 to 2000

Babies born to parents living in wealthy neighbourhoods in British Columbia had higher birth weights and lower rates of mortality than those born to parents living in lower income neighbourhoods, according to a new study.

This study, published by the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, is a descriptive profile of birth outcomes in British Columbia between 1981 and 2000 by neighbourhood income quintiles and other socio-demographic indicators.

The study found that from 37 to 42 weeks of gestation, median birth weights in British Columbia were clearly graded by neighbourhood income. The highest birth weights were in the richest income groups, and the lowest weights in the poorest.

Overall, differences in birth weights were relatively small, but consistent, across diverse demographic, socio-economic, cultural, geographic and ethnic groups in the province.

The report provides clear and easily-interpreted graphics showing the percentile distribution of births not only by income, but also for five regional health authorities; births to First Nations parents; and births to immigrants of European, Chinese, and South Asian origins. Birth weight distributions at each week of gestation help identify infants in need of special care.

This study resulted from a collaboration of the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, the province's Ministry of Children and Family Development, Statistics Canada, McGill University, the University of Ottawa and the University of British Columbia.

The report *Charting Birth Outcome in British Columbia: Determinants of Optimal Health and Ultimate Risk – An Expansion and Update* is available free, in English only, on

the Government of British Columbia website (<http://www.vs.gov.bc.ca/stats/features/index.html>). The document consists of the report and two appendices.

For more information about the concepts, methods or data quality of the report, or to obtain a copy, contact Russell Wilkins (613-951-5305; russell.wilkins@statcan.ca) Health Analysis and Measurement Group. ■

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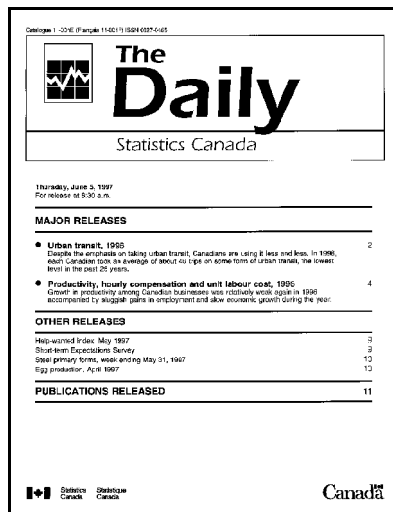
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