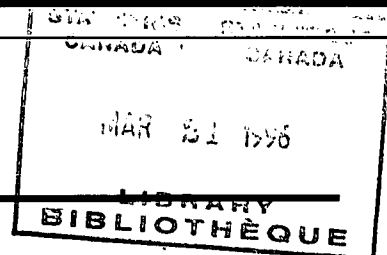




The Daily

Statistics Canada

Thursday, March 21, 1996
For release at 8:30 a.m.



MAJOR RELEASES

- **Wholesale trade, January 1996** 2
The economy continued to stumble along in January as wholesalers whittled away at their inventories.

OTHER RELEASES

Mental health statistics, 1993/94	5
Hospital morbidity and surgical procedures, 1993/94	5
Railway carloadings, eight-day period ending February 29, 1996	6
Steel primary forms, week ending March 16, 1996	6
Construction type plywood, January 1996	6
Industrial monitor, March 1996	6
Industrial organization and concentration in manufacturing industries	6

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 7



Canadian economic observer March 1996

The March 1996 issue of *Canadian economic observer*, Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, carries a monthly summary of current economic conditions and a feature article that looks back at 50 years of the Labour Force Survey and the changes it has tracked in the labour market.

A separate statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

The March 1996 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$22/\$220) is now available. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Dominique Pérusse (613-951-1789, the Internet: ceo@statcan.ca), Current Analysis Group.



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MAJOR RELEASES

Wholesale trade

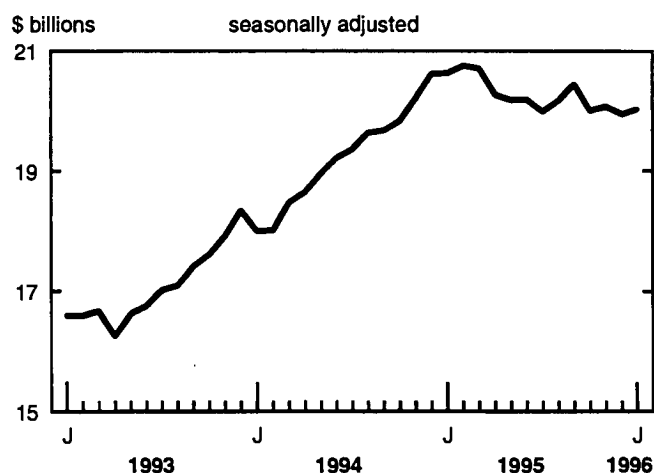
January 1996 (preliminary)

Because of weak demand and a buildup of inventories, manufacturers slowed production and wholesalers used part of their inventories to supply clients. After increasing steadily for almost two years, wholesalers' inventories decreased for a second consecutive month in January. That decrease, combined with a 0.4% increase in sales, lowered the inventories-to-sales ratio to 1.57.

Moderate increase in sales

In January, wholesalers' sales continued the moderate seesaw pattern that began in mid-1995. Sales grew in January for 6 of the 11 trade groups, accounting for 58% of total sales in the month. After an annual increase of more than 13% in 1995, wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies saw their sales climb 6.6% in January. As well, wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories increased their sales by 2.9%. Sales of motor vehicles manufactured by foreign companies in Canada accounted for most of this increase.

Wholesalers' sales have been edging up and down in a seesaw pattern



Despite repeated drops in interest rates, the construction industry remained depressed in January, as illustrated by a 2.9% decrease in the wholesale sales of lumber and building materials. This fourth consecutive monthly decrease furthered 1995's decline of more than 22% in annual sales (compared with 1994). Compounding a sluggish domestic market that helped pull down lumber prices were exports of lumber to the United States, which possibly suffered because of a dispute between American and Canadian producers that made headlines in January.

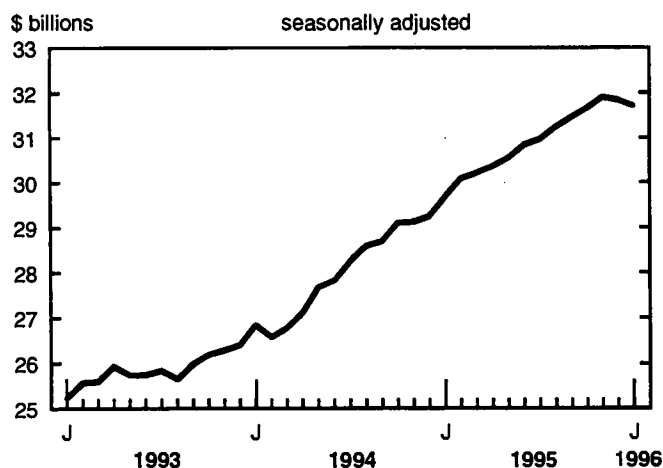
Sales by wholesalers of industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies dropped 2.1% (-\$65 million). Sales of computers, machinery and related equipment, and packaged software slipped 0.2% (-\$3 million), the third decrease in four months. This compares with weaker-than-expected financial performances in the fourth quarter of 1995 for a number of businesses in the informatics sector.

Trend toward climbing inventories is reversed

After edging down 0.2% in December 1995, inventories in January shrank another 0.4%. The last drop before January's occurred in February 1994. Faced with persistent sluggishness in the economy, it appears that wholesalers have concluded that they should reduce inventories. Certain pulp, paper and motor vehicle manufacturers also went along with this move by reducing production and temporarily closing some plants. The greatest stock reduction (-2.8% or -\$120 million) was by wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories. Lumber and building materials wholesalers reduced their inventories by 1.6%, in response to weaker demand, especially in the domestic market.

This inventory downsizing trend appears to be generalized. Even in those trade groups with increased inventories, growth is minimal and usually less than the growth in sales.

Wholesalers are clearing their inventories



diminished in November, December and January in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Even though sales increased in Manitoba and British Columbia, sales have been more or less stable in these two provinces for several months. The Western provinces are more dependant on the strength of exports, which have been growing very slowly since the fall of 1995.

In January, Ontario's wholesalers increased sales 0.6%, while sales were unchanged in Quebec, thus dictating a moderate upward movement for the whole country.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649.

The January 1996 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XPB, \$18/\$180) will be available shortly. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Gilles Simard (613-951-3541) or Catherine Mamay (613-951-9683), Industry Division. □

Sales slowdown in the West

The growth in sales in the Western provinces seems to have slowed in recent months. In fact, sales

Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	Jan. 1995	Oct. 1995 ^r	Nov. 1995 ^r	Dec. 1995 ^r	Jan. 1996 ^p	Dec. 1995 to Jan. 1996	Jan. 1995 to Jan. 1996
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	20,619	20,000	20,070	19,941	20,027	0.4	-2.9
Food products	3,539	3,470	3,529	3,527	3,553	0.8	0.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,132	1,213	1,238	1,241	1,279	3.0	13.0
Apparel and dry goods	464	431	441	430	422	-2.0	-9.0
Household goods	644	605	615	624	641	2.8	-0.4
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	2,318	2,073	2,149	2,157	2,219	2.9	-4.3
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,619	1,593	1,613	1,570	1,540	-1.9	-4.8
Lumber and building materials	1,999	1,652	1,620	1,598	1,552	-2.9	-22.4
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	502	529	455	532	566	6.6	12.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,107	3,074	3,059	3,101	3,036	-2.1	-2.3
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	1,732	1,787	1,854	1,837	1,834	-0.2	5.9
Other products	3,563	3,574	3,496	3,323	3,384	1.8	-5.0
Newfoundland	165	187	182	183	180	-1.6	9.4
Prince Edward Island	42	46	49	46	49	6.4	17.6
Nova Scotia	427	454	472	466	456	-2.0	6.9
New Brunswick	281	286	285	289	290	0.5	3.3
Quebec	4,647	4,362	4,448	4,526	4,527	0.0	-2.6
Ontario	8,864	8,773	8,801	8,678	8,731	0.6	-1.5
Manitoba	678	694	685	682	718	5.2	5.9
Saskatchewan	722	665	644	640	615	-3.9	-14.8
Alberta	1,981	1,982	1,847	1,806	1,785	-1.2	-9.9
British Columbia	2,790	2,527	2,631	2,602	2,652	1.9	-4.9
Yukon	8	11	10	9	8	-13.8	-5.8
Northwest Territories	15	13	15	14	15	11.1	3.8
Inventories, all trade groups	29,682	31,656	31,901	31,844	31,708	-0.4	6.8
Food products	2,387	2,301	2,351	2,381	2,372	-0.4	-0.6
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,343	1,439	1,468	1,491	1,523	2.1	13.4
Apparel and dry goods	1,054	1,073	1,046	1,043	1,060	1.7	0.6
Household goods	1,480	1,539	1,519	1,501	1,498	-0.2	1.2
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	3,881	4,198	4,272	4,301	4,181	-2.8	7.7
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,753	2,893	2,882	2,835	2,801	-1.2	1.7
Lumber and building materials	3,102	3,218	3,182	3,099	3,049	-1.6	-1.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	1,570	1,549	1,598	1,585	1,586	0.0	1.0
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	6,253	6,915	7,026	7,037	7,057	0.3	12.9
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	1,743	1,827	1,859	1,809	1,815	0.3	4.1
Other products	4,117	4,704	4,697	4,761	4,767	0.1	15.8

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

OTHER RELEASES

Mental health statistics

1993/94

Most of the mental disorders that require hospitalization are treated in general hospitals. Moreover, since the early 1980s this has increasingly been the case. The data presented below on separations from hospitals are counts of cases and not patients; for example, one patient admitted and separated three times during the reporting year would be counted as three separations. A separation is defined as the discharge or death of an inpatient.

Between the 1983/84 and 1993/94 fiscal years, the number of separations for mental disorders from general hospitals rose 9% from 158,800 to 173,200, while separations from psychiatric hospitals fell 7% from 33,700 to 31,400. By 1993/94, general hospitals accounted for 85% of all separations for mental disorders, up from 82% in 1983/84.

Calculated per 100,000 population, separations for mental disorders from both types of institution have fallen. The rate for general hospitals in 1993/94 was 598 per 100,000 population, down from 638 in 1983/84. At the same time, separation rates from psychiatric hospitals fell from 146 to 116 per 100,000.

Rates did not decline in all provinces over the decade. In fact, general hospital separation rates for mental disorders rose in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Quebec. For psychiatric hospitals, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Alberta recorded rising rates. These provincial differences may be attributable to factors such as the availability of alternative treatment facilities, such as residential care institutions for the psychiatrically disabled, community mental health clinics, and hospital psychiatric outpatient departments. Separation rates are also affected by provincial policies and practices for inpatient hospitalization of the mentally ill.

Mental health statistics, 1993/94 (83-245, \$40 paper version, \$35 microfiche version) is now available. This report presents statistical information on the medical and demographic characteristics of psychiatric patients separated from psychiatric hospitals and general hospitals during the fiscal year. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact the Information Requests Unit (613-951-1746) or Rod Riley (613-951-1641), Health Statistics Division. ■

Hospital morbidity and surgical procedures

1993/94

In the 1993/94 fiscal year, the decline in hospital separations continued as general and allied special hospitals reported 3.5 million separations. These separations refer to inpatient events only and exclude patients treated on an outpatient basis (such as emergency wards) and day surgery. Separations were down 1.6% from a year earlier and a 5.3% decrease since 1983/84.

The hospital separation rate (calculated per 100,000 population) declined more steeply than the total number of separations. In 1993/94, this rate was 12,100 per 100,000, a 7% drop from 13,000 the previous year and a 17% decline from 14,600 in 1983/84.

Just as the hospital separation rate declined over the last decade, so did the number of patient-days per 100,000 population. By 1993/94, the number of patient-days per 100,000 population was 134,000, an 18% decrease from 1983/84. Total days of care fell 5% from 40.8 million to 38.8 million, partly because of a decline in the average length of stay (from 11.3 to 11.1 days).

These declines in hospital separations, patient-days and length of stay were paralleled by a decrease in inpatient surgical procedures. In 1993/94, hospital separations involving surgery numbered 1.7 million, down 4% from a year earlier and an 8% drop since 1983/84. In relation to the population, this was a 21% decline over the decade, from 7,320 to 5,780 per 100,000 population.

Many factors relate to the decline in hospital separations. There has been a shift toward greater use of day surgery and ambulatory care over the last decade. As well, new medical techniques and pharmaceuticals have reduced the need for surgery.

In 1993/94, for the first time, the Northwest Territories reported hospital data: 9,639 separations and 49,281 days of care.

Hospital morbidity and surgical procedures, 1993/94 (82-216, \$40 paper version, \$35 microfiche version) will be available shortly. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact the Information Requests Unit (613-951-1746) or Rod Riley (613-951-1641), Health Statistics Division. ■

Railway carloadings

Eight-day period ending February 29, 1996

Carloadings of freight (excluding intermodal traffic) during the eight-day period ending February 29, 1996 increased 11.5% from the same period last year, to 5.1 million tonnes; the number of cars loaded increased 9.4%.

Intermodal (piggyback) traffic totalled 320 000 tonnes, an 8.7% increase from the same eight-day period of 1995. The year-to-date figures showed a decrease of 8.1% from last year.

Total traffic (carloadings of freight and intermodal traffic) increased 11.3% from a year earlier during the eight days. This brought the 1996 year-to-date total to 38.8 million tonnes, a 4.0% decrease from the previous year.

All year-to-date figures have been revised.

For further information on this release, contact Angus MacLean (613-951-2528, fax: 613-951-0579), Surface Transport Unit, Transportation Division. ■

Steel primary forms

Week ending March 16, 1996 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending March 16, 1996 totalled 288 124 tonnes, up 0.2% from 287 647 tonnes a week earlier and up 2.8% from 280 212 tonnes a year earlier.

The year-to-date total at the end of the week was 2 993 908 tonnes, a 1.0% decrease from 3 025 054 tonnes for the same period in 1995.

For further information on this release, contact Greg Milsom (613-951-9827), Industry Division. ■

Construction type plywood

January 1996

Manufacturers made 157 439 cubic metres of construction type plywood in January, a 4.9% increase from 150 140 cubic metres in January 1995.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 122 (level 1).

The January 1996 issue of the *Construction type plywood* (35-001-XPB, \$6/\$60) will be available shortly. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Ted Brown (604-666-3694), Pacific Region. ■

Industrial monitor

March 1996

The March 1996 edition of *Industrial monitor* is now available. Its tables present up-to-date statistics on 165 manufacturing industries in 22 sectors.

You can purchase the *Industrial monitor* in three packages: the totals of the manufacturing industries only; by industrial sector; or as a full package of 22 sectors. The annual subscription for the totals of the manufacturing industries (15F0017XPE) costs \$50. The annual subscription per industrial sector is \$200. The full 22-sector package (1500115XPE) is priced at \$3,000. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact the client services representative (613-951-9060), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. ■

Industrial organization and concentration in manufacturing industries

Concentration measures are now available for the manufacturing industries. These ratios are presented in a time series table with updates for the period 1987 through 1992. The table is available in printed and electronic formats (31SC0024, \$350).

Concentration statistics summarize the size distribution of units within an industry. Numerous measures have been used for various purposes. This report presents data for the two most common: concentration ratios and Herfindahl indexes for the years 1965 to 1992. These ratios and indexes emphasize different aspects of the size distribution. The concentration ratios measure the importance of the largest enterprises directly, whereas the Herfindahl indexes take the entire size distribution of enterprises into account. These statistics are classified at the Canada level by the four-digit 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

For further information on this release, contact Brenda Hutchinson (613-951-3502), Industry Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Canadian economic observer, March 1996

Catalogue number 11-010-XPB

(Canada: \$22/\$220; United States: US\$27/US\$264; other countries: US\$31/US\$308).

Primary iron and steel, January 1996

Catalogue number 41-001-XPB

(Canada: \$6/\$60; United States: US\$8/US\$72; other countries: US\$9/US\$84).

Consumer prices and price indexes,

October-December 1995

Catalogue number 62-010-XPB

(Canada: \$24/\$80; United States: US\$29/US\$96; other countries: US\$34/US\$112).

Touriscope: International travel, advance information, January 1996, vol. 12, no. 1

Catalogue number 66-001-PPB

(Canada: \$7/\$70; United States: US\$9/US\$84; other countries: US\$10/US\$98).

The labour force, February 1996

Catalogue number 71-001-XPB

(Canada: \$23/\$230; United States: US\$28/US\$276; other countries: US\$33/US\$322).

Mental health statistics, 1993/94, microfiche version

Catalogue number 83-245-XMB

(Canada: \$35; United States: US\$42; other countries: US\$49).

Mental health statistics, 1993/94, paper version

Catalogue number 83-245-XPB

(Canada: \$40; United States: US\$48; other countries: US\$56).

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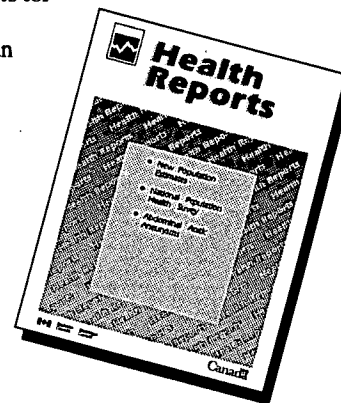
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