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Wholesale trade sales (Preliminary)

March 2021

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Contents

Sales at constant 2015 prices: results for March 2021	2
Table A – Key growth rates in wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices	2
Figure 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices.....	2
Sales at current prices: results for March 2021	3
Table B – Key growth rates in wholesale trade sales at current prices.....	3
Table C – Wholesale trade sales at current prices for the latest three months by type of dealer	3
Tables	4
Table 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices (R million).....	4
Table 2 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices.....	4
Table 3 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices	4
Table 4 – Wholesale trade sales at current prices (R million)	5
Table 5 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices	5
Table 6 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at current prices.....	5
Table 7 – Wholesale trade sales at current prices by type of dealer (R million)	6
Table 8 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices by type of dealer	6
Table 9 – Contribution of type of dealer to the year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices	6
Survey information.....	7
Technical notes	9
Glossary.....	11
Technical enquiries.....	11
General information	12

Sales at constant 2015 prices: results for March 2021

Table A – Key growth rates in wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices

	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Year-on-year % change, unadjusted	-4,6	-3,9	1,8	-6,4	-3,0	4,9
Month-on-month % change, seasonally adjusted	-2,0	0,0	2,3	0,7	0,9	0,4
3-month % change, seasonally adjusted 1/	7,8	1,2	-1,5	0,4	2,4	3,0

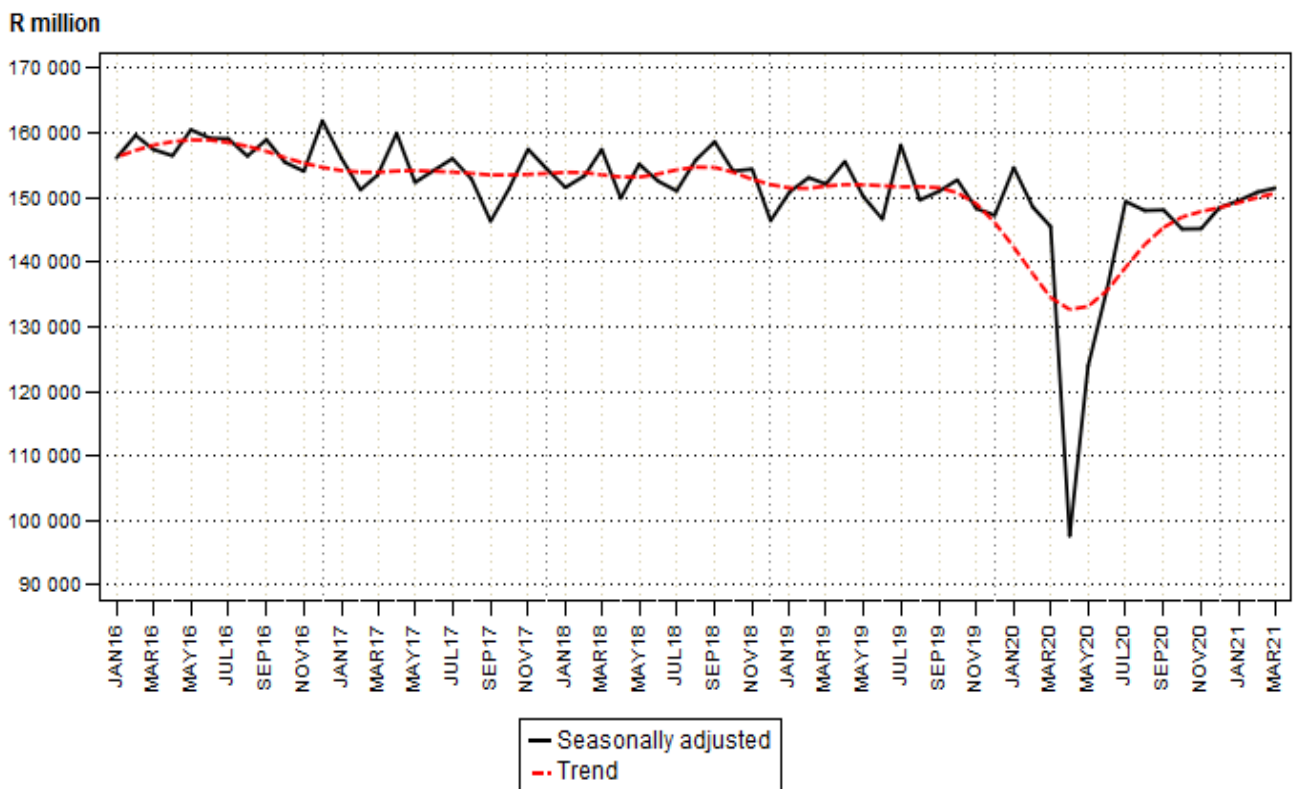
1/ Percentage change between the previous 3 months and the 3 months ending in the month indicated.

Measured in real terms (constant 2015 prices), wholesale trade sales increased by 4,9% in March 2021 compared with March 2020.

Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales increased by 0,4% in March 2021 compared with February 2021. This followed month-on-month changes of 0,9% in February 2021 and 0,7% in January 2021.

In the first quarter of 2021, seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales increased by 3,0% compared with the fourth quarter of 2020.

Figure 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices



Sales at current prices: results for March 2021

Table B – Key growth rates in wholesale trade sales at current prices

	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Year-on-year % change, unadjusted	-3,8	-2,9	2,5	-4,9	0,0	10,6
Month-on-month % change, seasonally adjusted	-0,3	-1,2	3,6	0,6	2,2	1,6
3-month % change, seasonally adjusted 1/	10,6	3,2	0,7	1,5	3,8	4,7

1/ Percentage change between the previous 3 months and the 3 months ending in the month indicated.

Measured in nominal terms (current prices), wholesale trade sales increased by 10,6% in March 2021 compared with March 2020. The main contributors were dealers in:

- solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products (18,6% and contributing 3,9 percentage points);
- construction and building materials (38,6% and contributing 1,9 percentage points);
- 'other' household goods except precious stones (12,0% and contributing 1,6 percentage points); and
- agricultural raw materials and livestock (20,8% and contributing 1,4 percentage points) – see Tables 8 and 9.

Table C – Wholesale trade sales at current prices for the latest three months by type of dealer

Type of dealer	Jan – Mar 2020 (R million)	Weight	Jan – Mar 2021 (R million)	% change between Jan – Mar 2020 and Jan – Mar 2021	Contribution (% points) to the total % change
Fee or contract basis	20 274	3,7	19 899	-1,8	-0,1
Agricultural raw materials and livestock	37 988	7,0	43 126	13,5	0,9
Food, beverages and tobacco	87 917	16,2	87 490	-0,5	-0,1
Textiles, clothing and footwear	9 718	1,8	8 152	-16,1	-0,3
Other household goods except precious stones	64 053	11,8	80 207	25,2	3,0
Precious stones, jewellery and silverware	15 094	2,8	7 680	-49,1	-1,4
Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products	133 425	24,6	119 482	-10,5	-2,6
Metals and metal ores	11 725	2,2	12 973	10,6	0,2
Construction and building materials	25 095	4,6	33 996	35,5	1,6
Other intermediate products, waste and scrap	27 109	5,0	30 011	10,7	0,5
Machinery, equipment and supplies	73 280	13,5	72 011	-1,7	-0,2
Other goods	36 136	6,7	37 937	5,0	0,3
Total	541 813	100,0	552 961	2,1	2,1

Wholesale trade sales increased by 2,1% in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020. The main contributor was dealers in 'other' household goods except precious stones (25,2% and contributing 3,0 percentage points) – see Table C.

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

Tables

Table 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices (R million)

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 1/
Jan	140 072	136 357	137 680	134 431	133 237	136 671	127 923
Feb	152 922	161 677	143 550	144 651	143 661	145 705	141 290
Mar	162 436	160 352	159 717	159 536	153 783	148 743	155 995
Apr	139 052	145 691	140 879	136 514	143 745	83 339	
May	149 704	158 174	152 460	155 382	150 487	120 608	
Jun	154 044	159 454	158 058	155 273	145 369	141 209	
Jul	155 319	154 867	151 509	150 834	160 884	152 909	
Aug	151 976	159 571	156 465	159 676	153 354	147 477	
Sep	161 670	167 498	152 801	160 136	154 279	154 247	
Oct	166 035	164 736	164 298	169 544	168 419	160 755	
Nov	169 476	172 520	174 022	172 804	164 061	157 671	
Dec	155 912	161 392	150 131	140 494	144 045	146 670	
Total	1 858 618	1 902 289	1 841 570	1 839 275	1 815 324	1 696 004	

1/ Figures for latest month are preliminary.

Table 2 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices

Month	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2021 year-to-date
Jan	-2,7	1,0	-2,4	-0,9	2,6	-6,4	-6,4
Feb	5,7	-11,2	0,8	-0,7	1,4	-3,0	-4,7
Mar	-1,3	-0,4	-0,1	-3,6	-3,3	4,9	-1,4
Apr	4,8	-3,3	-3,1	5,3	-42,0		
May	5,7	-3,6	1,9	-3,2	-19,9		
Jun	3,5	-0,9	-1,8	-6,4	-2,9		
Jul	-0,3	-2,2	-0,4	6,7	-5,0		
Aug	5,0	-1,9	2,1	-4,0	-3,8		
Sep	3,6	-8,8	4,8	-3,7	0,0		
Oct	-0,8	-0,3	3,2	-0,7	-4,6		
Nov	1,8	0,9	-0,7	-5,1	-3,9		
Dec	3,5	-7,0	-6,4	2,5	1,8		
Total	2,3	-3,2	-0,1	-1,3	-6,6		

Table 3 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at constant 2015 prices

Month	R million				Month-on-month % change			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jan	151 567	150 881	154 626	149 515	-1,9	3,0	5,0	0,7
Feb	153 386	153 099	148 530	150 851	1,2	1,5	-3,9	0,9
Mar	157 440	152 096	145 514	151 456	2,6	-0,7	-2,0	0,4
Apr	149 908	155 587	97 633		-4,8	2,3	-32,9	
May	155 181	150 161	123 937		3,5	-3,5	26,9	
Jun	152 527	146 666	135 891		-1,7	-2,3	9,6	
Jul	151 041	158 131	149 410		-1,0	7,8	9,9	
Aug	155 814	149 628	147 997		3,2	-5,4	-0,9	
Sep	158 636	150 965	148 079		1,8	0,9	0,1	
Oct	154 109	152 731	145 134		-2,9	1,2	-2,0	
Nov	154 402	148 319	145 174		0,2	-2,9	0,0	
Dec	146 418	147 259	148 460		-5,2	-0,7	2,3	

Table 4 – Wholesale trade sales at current prices (R million)

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 1/
Jan	132 824	140 664	149 796	155 500	160 366	172 681	164 248
Feb	145 340	167 909	157 920	166 393	172 810	183 401	183 363
Mar	159 202	166 178	175 902	181 678	187 642	185 731	205 350
Apr	138 746	153 668	155 084	157 693	178 663	101 674	
May	150 562	167 088	169 166	182 054	188 309	145 181	
Jun	156 371	170 734	174 665	184 468	182 647	171 324	
Jul	158 135	167 361	167 530	181 177	200 851	189 865	
Aug	153 293	170 398	173 748	192 524	191 785	185 335	
Sep	162 769	177 849	172 129	194 427	192 740	193 996	
Oct	169 187	176 422	186 969	210 584	211 576	203 441	
Nov	172 870	187 122	199 923	214 427	205 646	199 672	
Dec	159 318	175 335	174 465	171 892	181 345	185 882	
Total	1 858 617	2 020 728	2 057 297	2 192 817	2 254 380	2 118 183	

1/ Figures for latest month are preliminary.

Table 5 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices

Month	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2021 year-to-date
Jan	5,9	6,5	3,8	3,1	7,7	-4,9	-4,9
Feb	15,5	-5,9	5,4	3,9	6,1	0,0	-2,4
Mar	4,4	5,9	3,3	3,3	-1,0	10,6	2,1
Apr	10,8	0,9	1,7	13,3	-43,1		
May	11,0	1,2	7,6	3,4	-22,9		
Jun	9,2	2,3	5,6	-1,0	-6,2		
Jul	5,8	0,1	8,1	10,9	-5,5		
Aug	11,2	2,0	10,8	-0,4	-3,4		
Sep	9,3	-3,2	13,0	-0,9	0,7		
Oct	4,3	6,0	12,6	0,5	-3,8		
Nov	8,2	6,8	7,3	-4,1	-2,9		
Dec	10,1	-0,5	-1,5	5,5	2,5		
Total	8,7	1,8	6,6	2,8	-6,0		

Table 6 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at current prices

Month	R million				Month-on-month % change			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jan	176 803	182 947	196 511	191 024	-0,5	3,3	6,6	0,6
Feb	176 716	184 175	192 937	195 271	0,0	0,7	-1,8	2,2
Mar	180 747	184 305	180 192	198 438	2,3	0,1	-6,6	1,6
Apr	169 345	193 544	112 334		-6,3	5,0	-37,7	
May	181 672	187 434	148 989		7,3	-3,2	32,6	
Jun	183 893	185 893	168 774		1,2	-0,8	13,3	
Jul	179 441	196 392	184 675		-2,4	5,6	9,4	
Aug	187 640	187 102	184 084		4,6	-4,7	-0,3	
Sep	191 483	186 371	186 051		2,0	-0,4	1,1	
Oct	192 796	193 348	185 574		0,7	3,7	-0,3	
Nov	192 950	188 331	183 278		0,1	-2,6	-1,2	
Dec	177 153	184 371	189 825		-8,2	-2,1	3,6	

Table 7 – Wholesale trade sales at current prices by type of dealer (R million)

Type of dealer	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21 1/
Fee or contract basis	14 035	10 415	7 885	4 372	7 335	8 192
Agricultural raw materials and livestock	14 612	16 527	17 068	12 767	14 796	15 563
Food, beverages and tobacco	32 195	31 896	34 120	23 511	30 892	33 087
Textiles, clothing and footwear	4 085	4 040	2 409	1 922	2 683	3 547
Other household goods except precious stones	28 167	30 759	27 865	27 977	24 413	27 817
Precious stones, jewellery and silverware	4 664	3 845	450	1 650	1 896	4 134
Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products	35 841	36 040	37 975	36 698	36 784	46 000
Metals and metal ores	4 653	4 708	3 081	3 446	4 266	5 261
Construction and building materials	11 983	11 710	8 878	10 895	10 829	12 272
Other intermediate products, waste and scrap	12 893	11 997	10 870	9 115	10 667	10 229
Machinery, equipment and supplies	26 258	23 841	22 185	20 749	24 990	26 272
Other goods	14 054	13 894	13 094	11 147	13 814	12 976
Total	203 441	199 672	185 882	164 248	183 363	205 350

1/ Figures are preliminary.

Table 8 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices by type of dealer

Type of dealer	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Fee or contract basis	46,5	16,2	14,0	-31,0	10,5	12,3
Agricultural raw materials and livestock	9,9	11,5	19,3	8,4	11,0	20,8
Food, beverages and tobacco	-2,6	-2,5	-4,9	-16,5	9,1	5,3
Textiles, clothing and footwear	-17,2	-0,4	-1,1	-25,3	-26,2	1,1
Other household goods except precious stones	20,0	22,2	29,0	46,4	21,5	12,0
Precious stones, jewellery and silverware	-28,9	-24,0	-88,0	-65,2	-69,0	-2,3
Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products	-26,3	-24,8	-20,0	-24,3	-20,3	18,6
Metals and metal ores	0,9	8,2	30,2	-2,0	4,8	27,1
Construction and building materials	7,2	6,5	23,6	51,2	19,9	38,6
Other intermediate products, waste and scrap	2,4	7,0	43,2	3,3	16,6	12,0
Machinery, equipment and supplies	-4,9	-4,3	16,0	0,3	1,4	-6,0
Other goods	-12,3	-10,3	2,8	-0,8	13,2	2,2
Total	-3,8	-2,9	2,5	-4,9	0,0	10,6

Table 9 – Contribution of type of dealer to the year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at current prices

Type of dealer	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Fee or contract basis	2,1	0,7	0,5	-1,1	0,4	0,5
Agricultural raw materials and livestock	0,6	0,8	1,5	0,6	0,8	1,4
Food, beverages and tobacco	-0,4	-0,4	-1,0	-2,7	1,4	0,9
Textiles, clothing and footwear	-0,4	0,0	0,0	-0,4	-0,5	0,0
Other household goods except precious stones	2,2	2,7	3,5	5,2	2,4	1,6
Precious stones, jewellery and silverware	-0,9	-0,6	-1,8	-1,8	-2,3	-0,1
Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products	-6,0	-5,8	-5,2	-6,8	-5,1	3,9
Metals and metal ores	0,0	0,2	0,4	0,0	0,1	0,6
Construction and building materials	0,4	0,3	0,9	2,2	1,0	1,9
Other intermediate products, waste and scrap	0,1	0,4	1,8	0,2	0,8	0,6
Machinery, equipment and supplies	-0,6	-0,5	1,7	0,0	0,2	-0,9
Other goods	-0,9	-0,8	0,2	-0,1	0,9	0,1
Total	-3,8	-2,9	2,5	-4,9	0,0	10,6

Survey information

- Introduction**
- 1 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) conducts a monthly survey covering enterprises in the wholesale trade industry (see 4 below). This survey is based on a sample drawn from Stats SA's 2019 business sampling frame (BSF) that contains businesses registered at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) for value added tax (VAT) and income tax (IT). Stats SA continuously updates its BSF, which is linked to the SARS administrative data.
 - 2 In order to improve timeliness, some information for the latest month had to be estimated due to late response. These estimates will be revised in future statistical releases as soon as information becomes available. Published wholesale trade sales estimates exclude VAT.
- Purpose of the survey**
- 3 The results of the monthly wholesale trade sales survey are used to compile estimates of the gross domestic product (GDP) and its components, which are used in monitoring the state of the economy and formulation of economic policy. These statistics are also used in the analysis of comparative business and industry performance.
- Scope of the survey**
- 4 This survey covers wholesale enterprises according to the following types of dealers:
 - Wholesale trade on a fee or contract basis – sales by commission agents, commodity brokers, auctioneers and 'other' wholesale trade on a fee or contract basis;
 - Wholesale trade in agricultural raw materials and livestock;
 - Wholesale trade in food, beverages and tobacco;
 - Wholesale trade in textiles, clothing and footwear;
 - Wholesale trade in 'other' household goods except precious stones. This group includes wholesale trade in household furniture, requisites and appliances, wholesale trade in books and stationery, wholesale trade in pharmaceuticals and toiletries and wholesale trade in 'other' household goods not elsewhere classified;
 - Wholesale trade in precious stones, jewellery and silverware;
 - Wholesale trade in solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products;
 - Wholesale trade in metals and metal ores;
 - Wholesale trade in construction materials, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies;
 - Wholesale trade in 'other' intermediate products, waste and scrap;
 - Wholesale trade in machinery, equipment and supplies; and
 - Wholesale trade in 'other' goods. This group covers general wholesale trade and 'other' wholesale trade not classified elsewhere.
- Classification**
- 5 The 1993 edition of the *Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities* (SIC), Fifth Edition, Report No. 09-90-02, was used to classify the statistical units in the survey. The SIC is based on the 1990 *International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities* (ISIC) with suitable adaptations for local conditions. Each enterprise is classified to the industry which reflects its predominant activity. Statistics in this publication are presented at SIC four digit level.
- Collection rate**
- 6 The preliminary collection rate for the survey on wholesale trade sales for March 2021 was 77,4%. The improved collection rate for February 2021 was 82,9%.

Statistical unit	7	The statistical unit for which information is compiled and published is the enterprise, defined as a legal unit or a combination of legal units that includes and directly controls all functions necessary to carry out its sales activities. The statistical units are derived from and linked to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) administrative data.
Revised figures	8	Revised figures are mainly due to late submission of data to Stats SA, or respondents reporting revisions or corrections to their figures. Preliminary figures, as indicated in the relevant tables, are subject to change and when revised will not be indicated as such.
Related publications	9	Users may also refer to the following publication available from Stats SA: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Stats in Brief</i> issued annually.
Rounding-off of figures	10	Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.
Historical data	11	Historical wholesale trade sales data are available on the Stats SA website. To access the data electronically, use the following link: Click to download historical data
Past publications	12	Past wholesale trade sales releases are available on the Stats SA website. To access the releases electronically, use the following link: Click to download past releases

Technical notes

Survey methodology and design

- 1 The survey is conducted monthly. Questionnaires are sent to a sample of 1 423 enterprises from a population of 19 570 enterprises. Completed questionnaires are required to be returned to Stats SA within 10 days after the end of the reference month. Email, fax and telephone reminders are used to follow up on non-respondents.
- 2 A stratified random sample was drawn at the SIC four-digit level in April 2019 from Stats SA's business sampling frame (BSF). Strata were formed using a combination of Standard Industrial Classification and the measure of size classes for enterprises (see point 3 below). The Neyman optimal allocation formula given below was used to allocate samples to each stratum:

$$n_h = n * (N_h * S_h) / [\sum (N_i * S_i)].$$

Neyman allocation formula not only allocates sample sizes to each stratum but also calculates the relative precision for each stratum as well as the relative precision for all strata. The relative precision for these strata was 5,8%.

Class limits

- 3 The wholesale sampling frame is divided into four size groups. All large enterprises (size group one) are completely enumerated. Simple random sampling is applied to the remaining size groups (medium, small and very small). The total value of sales of the large enterprises (size group one) is added to the weighted totals of size group two, three and four to reflect the total value of sales.

Measure of size classes (Rand)

Enterprise size	Size group	Lower limits	Upper limits
Very small	4	2 656 495	27 000 000
Small	3	27 000 001	144 000 000
Medium	2	144 000 001	288 000 000
Large	1	288 000 001	

Sample weighting

- 4 For those strata not completely enumerated, the weights to produce estimates are the inverse ratio of the sampling fraction, modified to take account of non-response in the survey. Stratum estimates are calculated and then aggregated with the completely enumerated stratum to form group estimates. These procedures are consistent with international best practice.

Seasonal adjustment

- 5 Seasonally adjusted estimates are generated each month using the X-12-ARIMA Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by the US Bureau of the Census. Seasonal adjustment is a means of removing the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation from the series so that the effects of other influences on the series can be more clearly recognised. Seasonal adjustment does not aim to remove irregular or non-seasonal influences which may be present in any particular month. Influences that are volatile or unsystematic can still make it difficult to interpret the movement of the series even after adjustment for seasonal variations. Therefore, the month-to-month movements of seasonally adjusted estimates may not be reliable indicators of trend behaviour. The X-12-ARIMA procedure for wholesale trade sales is described in more detail on the Stats SA website:

[Click to download seasonal adjustment wholesale trade sales August 2017](#)

Note: Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, a transitory change adjustment was applied to April 2020. Transitory (temporary) change describes a temporary effect on the level of a series after a certain point in time.

- Trend cycle** 6 The trend is the long-term pattern or movement of a time series. The X-12-ARIMA Seasonal Adjustment Program is used for smoothing seasonally adjusted estimates to estimates of the underlying trend cycle.
- Constant prices** 7 Stats SA compiles its monthly estimates of wholesale trade sales at current prices from a survey of wholesalers in the formal sector. For January 1998 to December 2011, wholesale trade sales at constant prices were calculated using the 'all groups' PPI for domestic output, but excluding electricity and other utilities.
- From January 2012, wholesale trade sales at constant prices are compiled as follows:
- (1) Deflate sales of dealers in agricultural raw materials and livestock using the PPI for agriculture.
 - (2) Deflate sales of dealers in food, beverages and tobacco using the final manufacturing PPI for food products, beverages and tobacco.
 - (3) Deflate sales of dealers in textiles, clothing and footwear using the final manufacturing PPI for textiles, clothing and footwear.
 - (4) Deflate sales of dealers in solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products using the final manufacturing PPI for coal and petroleum products.
 - (5) Deflate sales of dealers in machinery, equipment and supplies using the final manufacturing PPIs for general and special purpose machinery; household appliances and office machinery; and electrical machinery and communication and metering equipment.
 - (6) Deflate the remaining wholesale trade sales using the headline PPI (final manufacturing) excluding the PPIs for food products, beverages and tobacco; textiles, clothing and footwear; coal and petroleum products; general and special purpose machinery; household appliances and office machinery; electrical machinery and communication and metering equipment; and transport equipment. The PPI for transport equipment is excluded because it measures producer prices of motor vehicles, which are not included in wholesale trade.
- Total wholesale trade sales at constant prices is obtained by aggregating (1) to (6).
- Reliability of estimates** 8 Data presented in this publication are based on information obtained from a sample and are, therefore, subject to sampling variability; that is, they may differ from the figures that would have been produced if the data had been obtained from all enterprises in the wholesale industry in South Africa. Estimates are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors.
- 9 Inaccuracies may occur because of imperfections in reporting by enterprises and errors made in the collection and processing of the data. Inaccuracies of this kind are referred to as non-sampling errors. Every effort is made to minimise non-sampling errors by careful design of questionnaires, testing them in pilot studies, editing reported data and implementing efficient operating procedures. Fluctuations may occur in consecutive months as a result of seasonal and economic factors.
- Month-on-month percentage change** 10 The month-on-month percentage change in a variable for any given month is the change between that month and the previous month, expressed as a percentage of the latter.
- Year-on-year percentage change** 11 The year-on-year percentage change in a variable for any given period is the change between that period and the corresponding period of the previous year, expressed as a percentage of the latter.

Contribution (percentage points) **12** The contribution (percentage points) to the year-on-year percentage change is calculated by multiplying the percentage change of each type of wholesaler by its corresponding weight, divided by 100. The weight is the percentage contribution of each type of wholesaler to total wholesale trade sales in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Glossary

Enterprise An enterprise is a legal entity or a combination of legal units that includes and directly controls all functions necessary to carry out its sales activities.

Industry An industry is made up of enterprises engaged in the same or similar kinds of economic activity. Industries are defined in the *System of National Accounts (SNA)* in the same way as in the *Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (SIC)*, Fifth Edition, Report No. 09-90-02 of January 1993.

Symbols and abbreviations

BSF	Business sampling frame
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities
SARS	South African Revenue Service
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
VAT	Value added tax

Wholesale trade Wholesale trade includes the resale (sale without transformation) of new and used goods and products to other wholesalers, retailers, agricultural, industrial, commercial, institutional and professional users either directly or through agents on a fee or contract basis.

Wholesaler A wholesaler is an enterprise deriving 50% or more of its turnover from sales of goods to other businesses and institutions.

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