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## STATISTICAL RELEASE

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# Wholesale trade sales (Preliminary)

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**Sales at constant 2019 prices: results for March 2023**

**Table A – Key growth rates in wholesale trade sales at constant 2019 prices**

|  | Oct-22 | Nov-22 | Dec-22 | Jan-23 | Feb-23 | Mar-23 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Year-on-year % change, unadjusted            | -1,0   | -0,7   | -2,2   | -2,9   | -0,2   | -1,4   |
| Month-on-month % change, seasonally adjusted | -1,4   | 0,9    | -3,9   | 1,2    | 2,1    | -0,6   |
| 3-month % change, seasonally adjusted 1/     | 1,3    | 1,9    | -0,6   | -1,5   | -2,3   | 0,1    |

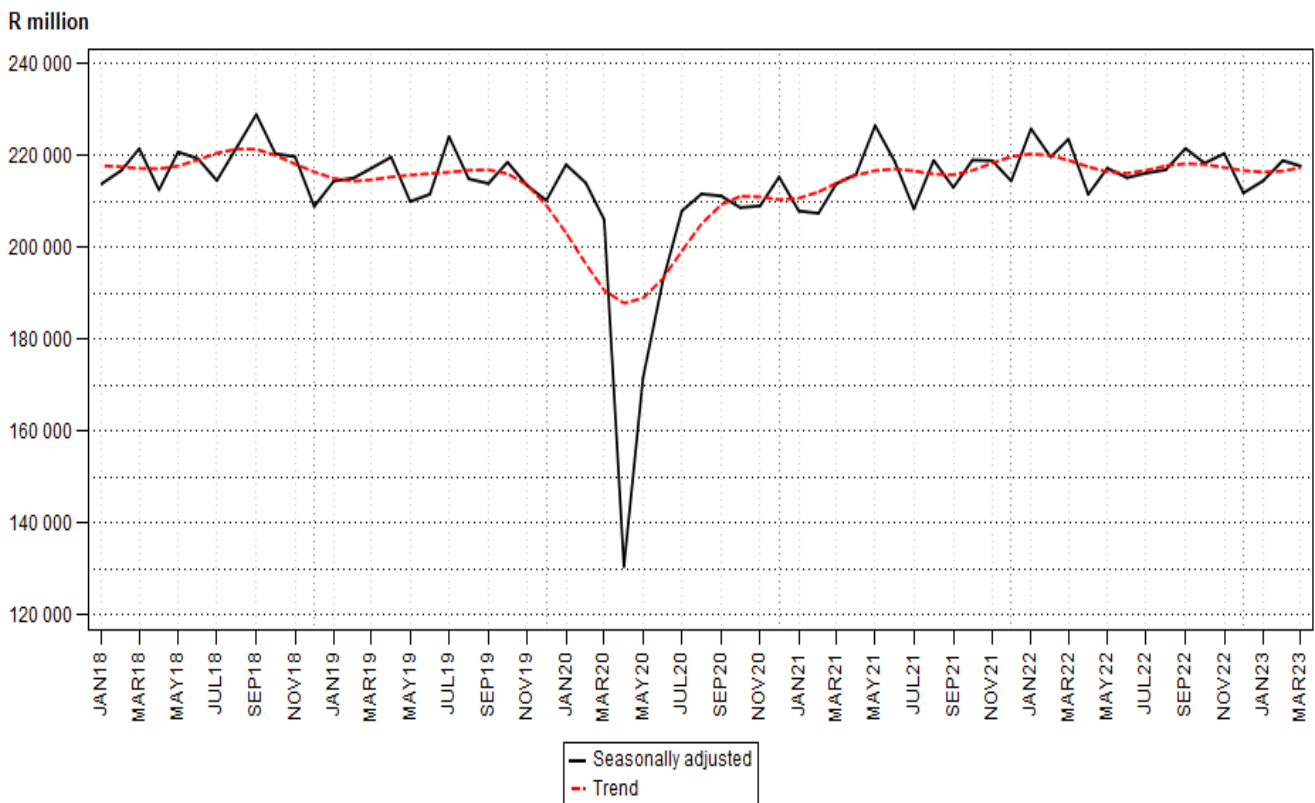
1/ Percentage change between the previous 3 months and the 3 months ending in the month indicated.

Measured in real terms (constant 2019 prices), wholesale trade sales decreased by 1,4% in March 2023 compared with March 2022.

Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales decreased by 0,6% in March 2023 compared with February 2023. This followed month-on-month changes of 2,1% in February 2023 and 1,2% in January 2023.

In the first quarter of 2023, seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales increased by 0,1% compared with the fourth quarter of 2022.

**Figure 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2019 prices**



## Sales at current prices: results for March 2023

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

|  | Oct-22 | Nov-22 | Dec-22 | Jan-23 | Feb-23 | Mar-23 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Year-on-year % change, unadjusted            | 19,6   | 17,0   | 14,1   | 11,3   | 12,8   | 8,3    |
| Month-on-month % change, seasonally adjusted | -1,5   | 0,8    | -3,4   | 0,3    | 3,5    | -2,1   |
| 3-month % change, seasonally adjusted 1/     | 4,2    | 4,3    | 0,4    | -1,0   | -2,1   | -0,2   |

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 8,3% in March 2023 compared with March 2022. The main contributors were dealers in:

- machinery, equipment and supplies (35,9% and contributing 4,3 percentage points);
- agricultural raw materials and livestock (26,3% and contributing 1,6 percentage points);
- food, beverages and tobacco (7,0% and contributing 1,1 percentage points); and
- 'other' goods (12,8% and contributing 1,0 percentage point) – 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 2022<br>(R million) | Weight (%)   | Jan – Mar 2023<br>(R million) | % change between Jan – Mar 2022 and Jan – Mar 2023 | Contribution (% points) to the total % change |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Fee or contract basis                                | 17 926                        | 2,4          | 21 681                        | 20,9   | 0,5   |
| Agricultural raw materials and livestock             | 45 577                        | 6,0          | 61 124                        | 34,1   | 2,0   |
| Food, beverages and tobacco                          | 118 005                       | 15,5         | 128 040                       | 8,5  | 1,3   |
| Textiles, clothing and footwear                      | 14 661                        | 1,9          | 16 950                        | 15,6   | 0,3   |
| Other household goods except precious stones         | 79 447                        | 10,4         | 84 593                        | 6,5  | 0,7   |
| Precious stones, jewellery and silverware            | 20 306                        | 2,7          | 14 378                        | -29,2  | -0,8  |
| Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products | 200 215                       | 26,3         | 215 024                       | 7,4  | 1,9   |
| Metals and metal ores                                | 23 201                        | 3,0          | 25 091                        | 8,1  | 0,2   |
| Construction and building materials                  | 35 315                        | 4,6          | 39 116                        | 10,8   | 0,5   |
| Other intermediate products, waste and scrap         | 49 193                        | 6,5          | 44 773                        | -9,0   | -0,6  |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies                    | 101 345                       | 13,3         | 124 911                       | 23,3   | 3,1   |
| Other goods  | 56 832                        | 7,5          | 67 703                        | 19,1   | 1,4   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>762 022</b>                | <b>100,0</b> | <b>843 384</b>                | <b>10,7</b>  | <b>10,7</b>                                   |

Wholesale trade sales increased by 10,7% in the first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter of 2022. The main contributors were dealers in:

- machinery, equipment and supplies (23,3% and contributing 3,1 percentage points);
- agricultural raw materials and livestock (34,1% and contributing 2,0 percentage points);
- solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products (7,4% and contributing 1,9 percentage points); and
- 'other' goods (19,1% and contributing 1,4 percentage points) – see Table C.

**Risenga Maluleke**  
Statistician-General

## Tables

**Table 1 – Wholesale trade sales at constant 2019 prices (R million)**

| Month        | 2017             | 2018             | 2019             | 2020             | 2021             | 2022             | 2023 1/ |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Jan          | 196 359          | 191 784          | 190 022          | 194 937          | 179 861          | 194 441          | 188 787 |
| Feb          | 204 200          | 206 190          | 204 536          | 207 027          | 197 647          | 209 024          | 208 594 |
| Mar          | 226 932          | 227 707          | 219 017          | 210 519          | 221 554          | 229 679          | 226 397 |
| Apr          | 200 998          | 194 667          | 204 372          | 117 669          | 197 773          | 190 186          |         |
| May          | 216 833          | 221 461          | 214 021          | 169 936          | 224 174          | 220 463          |         |
| Jun          | 224 709          | 220 959          | 206 634          | 198 698          | 222 296          | 217 774          |         |
| Jul          | 215 725          | 214 670          | 228 532          | 213 876          | 212 647          | 215 395          |         |
| Aug          | 222 964          | 227 202          | 218 154          | 208 070          | 220 053          | 220 999          |         |
| Sep          | 217 809          | 228 338          | 218 892          | 219 828          | 221 524          | 235 525          |         |
| Oct          | 234 477          | 241 801          | 239 168          | 229 512          | 236 243          | 233 921          |         |
| Nov          | 248 065          | 245 274          | 233 031          | 224 952          | 241 799          | 240 190          |         |
| Dec          | 214 175          | 199 957          | 205 051          | 208 940          | 209 793          | 205 171          |         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2 623 246</b> | <b>2 620 010</b> | <b>2 581 430</b> | <b>2 403 964</b> | <b>2 585 364</b> | <b>2 612 768</b> |         |

1/ Figures for the latest month are preliminary.

**Table 2 – Year-on-year percentage change in wholesale trade sales at constant 2019 prices**

| Month        | 2018        | 2019        | 2020        | 2021       | 2022       | 2023 | 2023 year-to-date |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------|-------------------|
| Jan          | -2,3        | -0,9        | 2,6         | -7,7       | 8,1        | -2,9 | -2,9              |
| Feb          | 1,0         | -0,8        | 1,2         | -4,5       | 5,8        | -0,2 | -1,5              |
| Mar          | 0,3         | -3,8        | -3,9        | 5,2        | 3,7        | -1,4 | -1,5              |
| Apr          | -3,1        | 5,0         | -42,4       | 68,1       | -3,8       |      |                   |
| May          | 2,1         | -3,4        | -20,6       | 31,9       | -1,7       |      |                   |
| Jun          | -1,7        | -6,5        | -3,8        | 11,9       | -2,0       |      |                   |
| Jul          | -0,5        | 6,5         | -6,4        | -0,6       | 1,3        |      |                   |
| Aug          | 1,9         | -4,0        | -4,6        | 5,8        | 0,4        |      |                   |
| Sep          | 4,8         | -4,1        | 0,4         | 0,8        | 6,3        |      |                   |
| Oct          | 3,1         | -1,1        | -4,0        | 2,9        | -1,0       |      |                   |
| Nov          | -1,1        | -5,0        | -3,5        | 7,5        | -0,7       |      |                   |
| Dec          | -6,6        | 2,5         | 1,9         | 0,4        | -2,2       |      |                   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>-0,1</b> | <b>-1,5</b> | <b>-6,9</b> | <b>7,5</b> | <b>1,1</b> |      |                   |

**Table 3 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at constant 2019 prices**

| Month | R million |         |         |         | Month-on-month % change |      |      |      |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|------|------|------|
|       | 2020      | 2021    | 2022    | 2023    | 2020                    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Jan   | 218 038   | 207 941 | 225 847 | 214 507 | 3,7                     | -3,4 | 5,3  | 1,2  |
| Feb   | 214 070   | 207 448 | 219 689 | 218 921 | -1,8                    | -0,2 | -2,7 | 2,1  |
| Mar   | 206 052   | 213 878 | 223 583 | 217 714 | -3,7                    | 3,1  | 1,8  | -0,6 |
| Apr   | 130 549   | 215 933 | 211 565 |         | -36,6                   | 1,0  | -5,4 |      |
| May   | 171 592   | 226 546 | 217 254 |         | 31,4                    | 4,9  | 2,7  |      |
| Jun   | 192 587   | 218 665 | 215 190 |         | 12,2                    | -3,5 | -1,0 |      |
| Jul   | 207 958   | 208 373 | 216 197 |         | 8,0                     | -4,7 | 0,5  |      |
| Aug   | 211 652   | 218 971 | 216 911 |         | 1,8                     | 5,1  | 0,3  |      |
| Sep   | 211 206   | 213 066 | 221 556 |         | -0,2                    | -2,7 | 2,1  |      |
| Oct   | 208 686   | 219 020 | 218 370 |         | -1,2                    | 2,8  | -1,4 |      |
| Nov   | 209 043   | 218 904 | 220 440 |         | 0,2                     | -0,1 | 0,9  |      |
| Dec   | 215 348   | 214 470 | 211 872 |         | 3,0                     | -2,0 | -3,9 |      |

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

| Month        | 2017             | 2018             | 2019             | 2020             | 2021             | 2022             | 2023 1/ |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Jan          | 171 527          | 178 058          | 183 631          | 197 732          | 185 748          | 228 997          | 254 763 |
| Feb          | 180 829          | 190 533          | 197 880          | 210 007          | 207 142          | 249 449          | 281 424 |
| Mar          | 201 421          | 208 035          | 214 863          | 212 675          | 235 239          | 283 576          | 307 197 |
| Apr          | 177 582          | 180 571          | 204 583          | 116 718          | 212 428          | 239 766          |         |
| May          | 193 708          | 208 465          | 215 628          | 166 140          | 241 537          | 285 346          |         |
| Jun          | 200 003          | 211 230          | 209 144          | 195 987          | 241 178          | 287 778          |         |
| Jul          | 191 834          | 207 460          | 229 989          | 214 925          | 233 100          | 291 330          |         |
| Aug          | 198 955          | 220 454          | 219 608          | 211 461          | 243 331          | 295 960          |         |
| Sep          | 197 100          | 222 633          | 220 702          | 223 402          | 247 984          | 317 870          |         |
| Oct          | 214 093          | 241 135          | 242 269          | 234 583          | 266 917          | 319 131          |         |
| Nov          | 228 926          | 245 534          | 235 480          | 229 852          | 278 620          | 326 103          |         |
| Dec          | 199 775          | 196 828          | 207 653          | 213 581          | 245 993          | 280 591          |         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2 355 753</b> | <b>2 510 936</b> | <b>2 581 430</b> | <b>2 427 063</b> | <b>2 839 217</b> | <b>3 405 897</b> |         |

1/ Figures for the latest month are preliminary.

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

| Month        | 2018       | 2019       | 2020        | 2021        | 2022        | 2023 | 2023 year-to-date |
|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|-------------------|
| Jan          | 3,8        | 3,1        | 7,7         | -6,1        | 23,3        | 11,3 | 11,3              |
| Feb          | 5,4        | 3,9        | 6,1         | -1,4        | 20,4        | 12,8 | 12,1              |
| Mar          | 3,3        | 3,3        | -1,0        | 10,6        | 20,5        | 8,3  | 10,7              |
| Apr          | 1,7        | 13,3       | -42,9       | 82,0        | 12,9        |      |                   |
| May          | 7,6        | 3,4        | -23,0       | 45,4        | 18,1        |      |                   |
| Jun          | 5,6        | -1,0       | -6,3        | 23,1        | 19,3        |      |                   |
| Jul          | 8,1        | 10,9       | -6,5        | 8,5         | 25,0        |      |                   |
| Aug          | 10,8       | -0,4       | -3,7        | 15,1        | 21,6        |      |                   |
| Sep          | 13,0       | -0,9       | 1,2         | 11,0        | 28,2        |      |                   |
| Oct          | 12,6       | 0,5        | -3,2        | 13,8        | 19,6        |      |                   |
| Nov          | 7,3        | -4,1       | -2,4        | 21,2        | 17,0        |      |                   |
| Dec          | -1,5       | 5,5        | 2,9         | 15,2        | 14,1        |      |                   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>6,6</b> | <b>2,8</b> | <b>-6,0</b> | <b>17,0</b> | <b>20,0</b> |      |                   |

**Table 6 – Seasonally adjusted wholesale trade sales at current prices**

| Month | R million |         |         |         | Month-on-month % change |      |      |      |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|------|------|------|
|       | 2020      | 2021    | 2022    | 2023    | 2020                    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Jan   | 223 539   | 215 857 | 263 280 | 290 588 | 5,0                     | -1,7 | 4,2  | 0,3  |
| Feb   | 223 162   | 221 527 | 267 058 | 300 685 | -0,2                    | 2,6  | 1,4  | 3,5  |
| Mar   | 206 023   | 226 796 | 272 349 | 294 350 | -7,7                    | 2,4  | 2,0  | -2,1 |
| Apr   | 128 572   | 229 292 | 263 400 |         | -37,6                   | 1,1  | -3,3 |      |
| May   | 168 230   | 241 081 | 280 389 |         | 30,8                    | 5,1  | 6,4  |      |
| Jun   | 190 645   | 236 426 | 281 076 |         | 13,3                    | -1,9 | 0,2  |      |
| Jul   | 210 688   | 229 546 | 291 931 |         | 10,5                    | -2,9 | 3,9  |      |
| Aug   | 211 080   | 240 177 | 289 760 |         | 0,2                     | 4,6  | -0,7 |      |
| Sep   | 213 586   | 236 660 | 302 179 |         | 1,2                     | -1,5 | 4,3  |      |
| Oct   | 214 409   | 248 848 | 297 651 |         | 0,4                     | 5,2  | -1,5 |      |
| Nov   | 211 646   | 253 425 | 300 157 |         | -1,3                    | 1,8  | 0,8  |      |
| Dec   | 219 663   | 252 579 | 289 812 |         | 3,8                     | -0,3 | -3,4 |      |

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

| Type of dealer                                       | Oct-22         | Nov-22         | Dec-22         | Jan-23         | Feb-23         | Mar-23 1/      |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Fee or contract basis                                | 9 907          | 10 095         | 7 483          | 5 841          | 7 900          | 7 940          |
| Agricultural raw materials and livestock             | 20 813         | 26 822         | 21 336         | 17 602         | 21 628         | 21 894         |
| Food, beverages and tobacco                          | 43 522         | 47 566         | 50 892         | 38 427         | 41 359         | 48 254         |
| Textiles, clothing and footwear                      | 7 673          | 7 001          | 3 779          | 4 091          | 6 279          | 6 580          |
| Other household goods except precious stones         | 30 200         | 32 243         | 25 246         | 26 654         | 28 378         | 29 561         |
| Precious stones, jewellery and silverware            | 5 579          | 4 988          | 4 768          | 2 463          | 4 572          | 7 343          |
| Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products | 93 169         | 76 196         | 76 385         | 71 904         | 68 262         | 74 858         |
| Metals and metal ores                                | 9 528          | 9 915          | 5 161          | 6 814          | 8 438          | 9 839          |
| Construction and building materials                  | 14 306         | 16 033         | 10 442         | 11 057         | 13 000         | 15 059         |
| Other intermediate products, waste and scrap         | 21 280         | 21 540         | 15 872         | 14 937         | 15 042         | 14 794         |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies                    | 37 958         | 45 891         | 36 271         | 35 357         | 42 793         | 46 761         |
| Other goods  | 25 195         | 27 812         | 22 957         | 19 616         | 23 773         | 24 314         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>319 131</b> | <b>326 103</b> | <b>280 591</b> | <b>254 763</b> | <b>281 424</b> | <b>307 197</b> |

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-22      | Nov-22      | Dec-22      | Jan-23      | Feb-23      | Mar-23     |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Fee or contract basis                                | 4,1         | 1,9         | -13,9       | 20,7        | 19,3        | 22,9       |
| Agricultural raw materials and livestock             | 30,4        | 40,5        | 3,6         | 41,3        | 37,0        | 26,3       |
| Food, beverages and tobacco                          | 8,0         | 10,8        | 9,0         | 7,6         | 11,2        | 7,0        |
| Textiles, clothing and footwear                      | 13,4        | 22,6        | 17,1        | 5,1         | 22,6        | 16,5       |
| Other household goods except precious stones         | 7,9         | 4,9         | -4,7        | 5,8         | 15,5        | -0,5       |
| Precious stones, jewellery and silverware            | -37,7       | -25,2       | -33,8       | -61,6       | -11,4       | -15,8      |
| Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products | 45,5        | 32,9        | 48,2        | 18,4        | 6,9         | -1,0       |
| Metals and metal ores                                | 43,0        | 8,6         | -0,3        | 7,7         | 14,4        | 3,6        |
| Construction and building materials                  | 19,4        | 16,1        | 27,3        | 25,5        | -2,3        | 14,1       |
| Other intermediate products, waste and scrap         | 6,7         | -1,5        | -0,1        | -9,1        | -8,6        | -9,2       |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies                    | 9,9         | 16,1        | 10,3        | 11,9        | 21,1        | 35,9       |
| Other goods  | 24,2        | 27,0        | 18,2        | 18,1        | 27,4        | 12,8       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>19,6</b> | <b>17,0</b> | <b>14,1</b> | <b>11,3</b> | <b>12,8</b> | <b>8,3</b> |

**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-22      | Nov-22      | Dec-22      | Jan-23      | Feb-23      | Mar-23     |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Fee or contract basis                                | 0,1         | 0,1         | -0,5        | 0,4         | 0,5         | 0,5        |
| Agricultural raw materials and livestock             | 1,8         | 2,8         | 0,3         | 2,2         | 2,3         | 1,6        |
| Food, beverages and tobacco                          | 1,2         | 1,7         | 1,7         | 1,2         | 1,7         | 1,1        |
| Textiles, clothing and footwear                      | 0,3         | 0,5         | 0,2         | 0,1         | 0,5         | 0,3        |
| Other household goods except precious stones         | 0,8         | 0,5         | -0,5        | 0,6         | 1,5         | -0,1       |
| Precious stones, jewellery and silverware            | -1,3        | -0,6        | -1,0        | -1,7        | -0,2        | -0,5       |
| Solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and related products | 10,9        | 6,8         | 10,1        | 4,9         | 1,8         | -0,3       |
| Metals and metal ores                                | 1,1         | 0,3         | 0,0         | 0,2         | 0,4         | 0,1        |
| Construction and building materials                  | 0,9         | 0,8         | 0,9         | 1,0         | -0,1        | 0,7        |
| Other intermediate products, waste and scrap         | 0,5         | -0,1        | 0,0         | -0,7        | -0,6        | -0,5       |
| Machinery, equipment and supplies                    | 1,3         | 2,3         | 1,4         | 1,6         | 3,0         | 4,3        |
| Other goods  | 1,8         | 2,1         | 1,4         | 1,3         | 2,1         | 1,0        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>19,6</b> | <b>17,0</b> | <b>14,1</b> | <b>11,3</b> | <b>12,8</b> | <b>8,3</b> |

## Survey information

- Introduction**
- 1 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) conducts a monthly survey covering enterprises in the wholesale trade industry (see point four below). This survey is based on a sample drawn from Stats SA's 2022 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 group (four digits) level.
- Collection rate**
- 6 The preliminary collection rate for the survey on wholesale trade sales for March 2023 was 71,6%. The improved collection rate for February 2023 was 73,0%.



|                                |           |   |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Statistical unit</b>        | <b>7</b>  | 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. |
| <b>Revised figures</b>         | <b>8</b>  | 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.  |
| <b>Related publications</b>    | <b>9</b>  | Users may also refer to the following publication available from Stats SA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Stats in Brief</i> issued annually.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Rounding-off of figures</b> | <b>10</b> | Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.  |
| <b>Historical data</b>         | <b>11</b> | Historical wholesale trade sales data are available on the Stats SA website. To access the data electronically, use the following link:<br><a href="#">Click to download historical data</a>  |
| <b>Past publications</b>       | <b>12</b> | Past wholesale trade sales releases are available on the Stats SA website. To access the releases electronically, use the following link:<br><a href="#">Click to download past releases</a>  |

**Technical notes**

**Survey methodology and design**

- 1 The survey is conducted monthly. Questionnaires are sent to a sample of 1 645 enterprises from a population of 19 390 enterprises. Completed questionnaires are required to be returned to Stats SA within ten 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 2022 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 three 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 limit | Upper limit |
|-----------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Very small      | 4          | 3 266 056   | 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 United States Census Bureau. 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 February 2022](#)

**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. From 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.

- Relative standard error** 10 One measure is the standard error (SE), which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of enterprises was used. The relative standard error (RSE) provides an immediate indication of the percentage errors likely to have occurred due to sampling, and thus avoids the need to refer to the size of the estimate.

**Estimates of total wholesale trade sales within 95% confidence limits – March 2023**

|                       | Lower limit<br>(R million) | Sales<br>(R million) | Upper limit<br>(R million) | Relative<br>standard<br>error (RSE)<br>% |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Wholesale trade sales | 295 344                    | 307 197              | 319 051                    | 1,9                                      |

- Month-on-month percentage change** 11 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** 12 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)** 13 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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Stats SA publishes approximately 300 different statistical releases each year. It is not economically viable to produce them in more than one of South Africa's 11 official languages. Since the releases are used extensively, not only locally but also by international economic and social-scientific communities. Stats SA releases are published in English only.

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