

Provisional statistics of retail sales for December 2021 and for the whole year of 2021

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (January 31).

The value of total retail sales in December 2021, provisionally estimated at \$33.3 billion, increased by 6.2% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in November 2021 increased by 7.1% compared with a year earlier.

Of the total retail sales value in December 2021, online sales accounted for 10.8%. The value of online retail sales in that month, provisionally estimated at \$3.6 billion, increased by 31.5% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of online retail sales in November 2021 increased by 28.2% compared with a year earlier.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in December 2021 increased by 3.4% compared with a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in November 2021 increased by 4.3% compared with a year earlier.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing December 2021 with December 2020, the value of sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified increased by 5.5%. This was followed by sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts (+24.0% in value); other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+10.8%); commodities in department stores (+2.5%); wearing apparel (+12.0%); medicines and cosmetics (+9.7%); motor vehicles and parts (+8.7%); fuels (+18.4%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+15.5%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+4.7%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+7.8%); and optical shops (+25.1%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 6.8% in December 2021 over a year earlier. This was followed by sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-3.0% in value); and furniture and fixtures (-4.1%).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales increased by 3.6% in the fourth quarter of 2021 compared with the preceding quarter, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales increased by 2.4%.

For 2021 as a whole, the value of total retail sales was provisionally estimated at \$353.0 billion, increased by 8.1% in value and 6.5% in volume

over 2020. The value of online retail sales was provisionally estimated at \$28.6 billion, increased by 39.0% over 2020.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing the whole year of 2021 with the whole year of 2020, the value of sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified increased by 19.1%. This was followed by sales of other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+20.6% in value); jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts (+27.3%); wearing apparel (+22.6%); medicines and cosmetics (+3.0%); motor vehicles and parts (+13.7%); fuels (+12.7%); furniture and fixtures (+5.3%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+14.2%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+5.4%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+5.0%); and optical shops (+14.4%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 8.4% in 2021 compared with 2020. This was followed by sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-2.7% in value); and commodities in department stores (-3.3%).

These retail sales statistics measure the sales receipts in respect of goods sold by local retail establishments and are primarily intended for gauging the short-term business performance of the local retail sector. Data on retail sales are collected from local retail establishments through the Monthly Survey of Retail Sales (MRS). Local retail establishments with and without physical shops are covered in MRS and their sales, both through conventional shops and online channels, are included in the retail sales statistics. Starting from January 2020, data on online retail sales have been collected in MRS. The relevant results were first published in the January 2021 issue of the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales".

The retail sales statistics cover consumer spending on goods but not on services (such as those on housing, catering, medical care and health services, transport and communication, financial services, education and entertainment) which account for over 50% of the overall consumer spending. Moreover, they include spending on goods in Hong Kong by visitors but exclude spending outside Hong Kong by Hong Kong residents. Hence they should not be regarded as indicators for measuring overall consumer spending.

Users interested in the trend of overall consumer spending should refer to the data series of private consumption expenditure (PCE), which is a major component of the Gross Domestic Product published at quarterly intervals. Compiled from a wide range of data sources, PCE covers consumer spending on both goods (including goods purchased from all channels) and services by Hong Kong residents whether locally or abroad. Please refer to the C&SD publication "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly)" for more details.

Commentary

A government spokesman said that the value of total retail sales increased further by 6.2% year-on-year in December 2021 along with the continued economic recovery, though the growth pace moderated somewhat from

the preceding month. For 2021 as a whole, total retail sales value rose by 8.1%, but was still 27.2% below the level in 2018 before the recession as tourism stayed at a standstill.

Looking ahead, the spokesman pointed out that the latest wave of local epidemic and the tightened anti-epidemic measures have weighed on consumption sentiment and posed renewed pressures on the retail sector. It is essential for the community to work together with the Government to contain the epidemic as soon as possible, so as to create conditions for the continued revival of retail business and the overall economy.

Further information

Table 1 presents the revised figures on value index and value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for November 2021 as well as the provisional figures for December 2021. The provisional figures on the value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet as well as the corresponding year-on-year changes for the whole year of 2021 are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on value of online retail sales for November 2021 as well as the provisional figures for December 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the whole year of 2021 are also shown.

Table 3 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for November 2021 as well as the provisional figures for December 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the whole year of 2021 are also shown.

Table 4 shows the movements of the value and volume of total retail sales in terms of the year-on-year rate of change for a month compared with the same month in the preceding year based on the original series, and in terms of the rate of change for a three-month period compared with the preceding three-month period based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The classification of retail establishments follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales". Users can download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1080003&scode=530). Alternatively, the historical series of retail sales statistics can be downloaded in the form of a statistical table at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=D5600089&scode=530).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact the Distribution Services Statistics Section of C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).