

Provisional statistics of retail sales for March 2021

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (May 4).

The value of total retail sales in March 2021, provisionally estimated at \$27.6 billion, increased by 20.1% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of the combined value of total retail sales in January and February 2021 increased by 2.7% compared with the same period a year earlier. For the first quarter of 2021, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 7.5% compared with the same period in 2020.

Of the total retail sales value in March 2021, online sales accounted for 7.7%. The value of online retail sales in that month, provisionally estimated at \$2.1 billion, increased by 43.3% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of the combined value of online retail sales in January and February 2021 increased by 74.6% compared with the same period a year earlier. For the first quarter of 2021, it was provisionally estimated that the value of online retail sales increased by 62.6% compared with the same period in 2020.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in March 2021 increased by 19.8% compared with a year earlier. The revised estimate of the combined volume of total retail sales in January and February 2021 increased by 2.5% compared with the same period a year earlier. For the first quarter of 2021, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 7.2% in volume compared with the same period in 2020.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing March 2021 with March 2020, the value of sales of other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified increased by 35.2%. This was followed by sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified (+44.8% in value); jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts (+81.0%); wearing apparel (+77.4%); commodities in department stores (+2.2%); medicines and cosmetics (+18.0%); motor vehicles and parts (+23.1%); fuels (+18.8%); furniture and fixtures (+12.5%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+64.1%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+19.2%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+27.7%); and optical shops (+29.1%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 16.1% in March 2021 over a year earlier. This was followed by sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-1.8% in value).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimates of the value and volume of total retail sales both decreased by 2.2% in the

first quarter of 2021 compared with the preceding quarter.

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 retail sales registered a notable year-on-year increase in March, mainly due to an exceptionally low base of comparison last year. For the first quarter as a whole, retail sales volume rose by 7.2% over a year earlier, but was still far below that in the first quarter of 2019 by 32.5%.

Looking ahead, the spokesman pointed out that while local consumption sentiment saw some improvement following the gradual relaxation of social distancing measures since mid-February, the near-term outlook for the retail trade is still challenging as inbound tourism remains in the doldrums. To attain a stronger revival of the retail trade and a broader-based economic recovery, it is essential for the community to work together to keep the epidemic under control and to actively participate in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

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 February 2021 as well as the provisional figures for March 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 first quarter of 2021 are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on value of online retail sales for February 2021 as well as the provisional figures for March 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first quarter 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 February 2021 as well as the provisional figures for March 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first quarter 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 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 the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 is 101.2 (down 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date : May 4, 2021
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2118
Issue date : May 5, 2021
Maturity date : August 4, 2021
Amount applied : HK\$133,520 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$36,952 MN
Average yield accepted : 0.02 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 0.02 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 69 PCT
Average tender yield : 0.03 PCT

Tender date : May 4, 2021
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2147
Issue date : May 5, 2021
Maturity date : November 3, 2021
Amount applied : HK\$81,715 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$15,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 0.04 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 0.04 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 44 PCT
Average tender yield : 0.05 PCT

*"Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning May 10, 2021:

Tender date : May 11, 2021
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2119
Issue date : May 12, 2021
Maturity date : August 11, 2021

Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$40,806 MN

Tender date : May 11, 2021
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2148
Issue date : May 12, 2021
Maturity date : November 10, 2021
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$15,000 MN

Tender date : May 11, 2021
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y2189
Issue date : May 12, 2021
Maturity date : May 11, 2022
Tenor : 364 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$3,000 MN

Cluster of Rhinovirus and Enterovirus cases in Caritas Medical Centre

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Caritas Medical Centre made the following announcement today (May 4):

Five patients (two boys and three girls, aged 1 to 13) and one staff member in a paediatric ward presented with upper respiratory tract symptoms since April 25. The hospital arranged clinical specimen testing for the five patients and the test results were positive for Rhinovirus/Enterovirus. Apart from one patient who has been discharged, the remaining patients are being treated under isolation with stable condition.

Following the activation of Emergency Response Level in public hospitals, visiting arrangements for the ward have been suspended. The ward concerned has adopted the following enhanced infection control measures according to prevailing guidelines:

1. Admission to the ward has been suspended to conduct thorough cleaning and disinfection;
2. Application of stringent droplet and contact precautions; and

3. Enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients.

The hospital will closely monitor the situation of the ward concerned. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

An unseasonably warm and dry April

With relatively less cold air intrusion from the north in April 2021, local weather continued to be much warmer than usual. The monthly mean minimum temperature of 22.4 degrees, the monthly mean maximum temperature of 27.0 degrees and the monthly mean temperature of 24.1 degrees were 1.3 degrees, 1.4 degrees and 1.1 degrees above their corresponding normal figures (or 1.6 degrees, 2.0 degrees and 1.5 degrees above their corresponding 1981-2010 normal figures) respectively, making them the fifth, the seventh and the ninth highest on record for April respectively. With the dominance of an upper-air anticyclone over southern China for most of the time in the month, the month was also much drier than usual with a total rainfall of only 32.5 millimetres, about 21 per cent of the normal of 153.0mm (or about 19 per cent of the 1981-2010 normal of 174.7mm). The accumulated rainfall recorded in the first four months of the year was 98.1mm, a decrease of about 67 per cent compared to the corresponding normal of 300.4mm (or about 71 per cent below the 1981-2010 normal of 336.1mm), making it the 10th lowest on record for the same period.

With the establishment of an anticyclone aloft and the departure of the cloud band from the South China coast, the weather of Hong Kong was generally fine with hot afternoons from April 1 to 3. Under the influence of a fresh to strong easterly airstream, local weather became mainly cloudy and slightly cooler with a few rain patches from April 4 to 5.

Affected by an anticyclone aloft southern China, local weather improved with sunny periods from April 6 to 7. Under the influence of an easterly airstream, the weather became cloudier on April 8. With the strengthening of the easterly airstream and affected by the upper-air disturbance, local weather was cloudy and cooler with a few showers on April 9. More than 5mm of rainfall were recorded over most parts of the territory. The temperature recorded at the Hong Kong Observatory dropped to 19.7 degrees under the rain in that morning, the lowest of the month.

With the setting in of a relatively dry easterly airstream, the weather of Hong Kong turned generally fine and dry during the day from April 10 to 11. Under the influence of an anticyclone aloft, the weather remained generally fine and hot during the day from April 12 to 13. Affected by a fresh to strong easterly airstream, local weather became cloudier with a few

rain patches on April 14. With a trough of low pressure edging towards the coast of Guangdong, it was cloudy with some showers in Hong Kong from April 15 to 17.

Under the influence of a strong easterly airstream, the weather of Hong Kong was mainly cloudy with sunny intervals from April 18 to 20. With the moderation of the easterly airstream and the dominance of an anticyclone aloft, local weather became generally fine from April 21 to 23. With plenty of sunshine, the temperature recorded at the Hong Kong Observatory soared to a maximum of 32.6 degrees on the afternoon of April 23, the highest of the month. The onset of an easterly airstream brought cloudier weather and a few rain patches to Hong Kong on April 24. With a trough of low pressure edging closer to the coastal areas of Guangdong, the weather of Hong Kong was cloudy with some showers from April 25 to 28. More than 5mm of rainfall were generally recorded over the territory on April 27. With the departure of the trough of low pressure and the setting in of a dry continental airstream, local weather improved with sunny periods on April 29 and became generally fine and hot during the day on the last day of the month.

One tropical cyclone occurred over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in April 2021.

Details of the issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in April are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for April are tabulated in Table 2.