

Distribution of goods and services from producer to consumer, principally through wholesale and retail businesses in Canada's marketing process and through the channels of international trade, can be measured to show trends in vital aspects of Canada's economy. The federal departments of consumer and corporate affairs and industry, trade and commerce, the Export Development Corporation and Statistics Canada all play their part in these processes.

## Merchandising and service trades

19.1

Merchandising industries include wholesaling and warehousing which exist in a variety of forms: wholesale merchants, agents and brokers, primary products dealers, manufacturers sales branches, petroleum bulk tank plants and truck distributors. Retailing encompasses all sales activities related to transmitting goods to consumers for household or personal use, both through traditional store locations and such facilities as direct selling and machine vending.

Statistics on merchandising and service industries are gathered by Statistics Canada through periodic business censuses as well as monthly, annual and occasional surveys. In recent years, considerable interest has been focused on the service trades, resulting in expanded statistical coverage.

### Retail trade

19.1.1

Retail trade statistics are collected by Statistics Canada from monthly surveys of all retail chains (four or more stores in the same kind of business under one owner), and of a sample of independent retailers.

Table 19.1 shows retail trade sales by kind of business and province from 1975 to 1978, the percentage change in sales and their percentage distribution in 1978. Over a decade retail sales grew at an average annual rate of 10.4% from \$25.7 billion in 1968 to \$68.9 billion in 1978. During the first three years of this period and again in 1977 retail sales expanded at annual rates below 10.4% but in the other six years they increased at annual rates above this average, particularly in 1974 when they rose by 16.3% and in 1975 by 14.9%.

Retail sales through food stores, department stores, and stores related to automobile purchases accounted for almost the same proportion of all retail sales in 1978, two-thirds, as they did in 1968, when the earlier series are adjusted for closer comparability by omitting fuel dealer sales and adjusting department store sales. Provincially, over this same period, sales in the Atlantic region held at the same percentage of total sales, a little over 8%, but the increase in sales in the western region from 27.7% in 1968 to 30.4% in 1978 has been at the expense of the central provinces, confirming an overall shift in the population westward.

**Chain and independent stores.** A retail chain is an organization operating four or more retail stores in the same kind of business under the same legal ownership. All department stores are classified as chains even if they do not meet this definition. An independent retailer is one who operates one to three stores, even if he is a member of a voluntary group organization.

Table 19.2 provides data on the retail sales of chain and independent stores by kind of business in 1977 and 1978 with percentage changes over the year. Chain stores play a dominant role in retailing by particular groups of stores such as combination (groceries and meat) stores, department, general merchandise and variety stores. The independent type of store tends to predominate in other kinds of business such as grocery, confectionery and sundries stores, general stores, motor vehicle dealers, service