

Retail Trade Analysis

Fiscal Year 2024

Hamilton County

report created: 06/28/2026

Overview

This report examines local retail sales and related economic trends using a variety of historical and peer-based performance measures.

The retail measures are based on sales of goods and services that are subject to Iowa's statewide sales tax, as reported in the Iowa Department of Revenue Annual Sales and Use Tax Report.

Retail sales data have been adjusted for inflation and are stated in Fiscal Year 2024 dollar equivalents, unless otherwise noted. The 2024 fiscal year began July 1, 2023, and ended June 30, 2024.

Overview, 1-4

Key retail indicators
Historical statistics
Population trends

Peer group comparisons, 5-7

Neighbor area sales
Regional competition

Data Notes, 8-13

Tax reporting notes
Notable exclusions
Definitions
Frequently asked questions
Peer group listings
Acknowledgements

<https://indicators.extension.iastate.edu/Indicators/Retail>

Table 1. Hamilton County Key Retail Indicators

	2023	2024	% Change
Real total taxable sales	\$157,541,303	\$142,611,652	-9.5% ▼
Estimated population ¹	14,766	14,729	-0.3% ►
Annual average sales per capita	\$10,669	\$9,682	-9.3% ▼
Monthly average number of sales tax return filings ²	305	328	8% ▲

1) The population estimate describes the average number of residents in households, dormitories, nursing homes, correctional institutions, and other group quarters during the fiscal year.

2) The required filing frequency for sales tax returns increased to a monthly basis for most firms beginning in FY24.

10-Year Summary of Taxable Retail Sales Statistics

Figure 1 shows the dollar amount of total taxable retail sales reported by local businesses, measured in millions of real (i.e. inflation-adjusted) dollars.

Figure 1. Real Total Taxable Sales (in \$ millions)

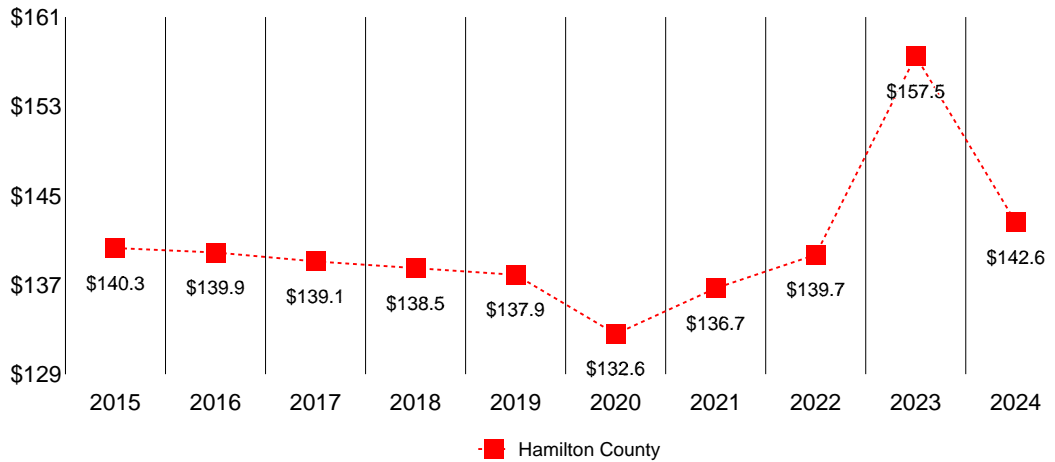
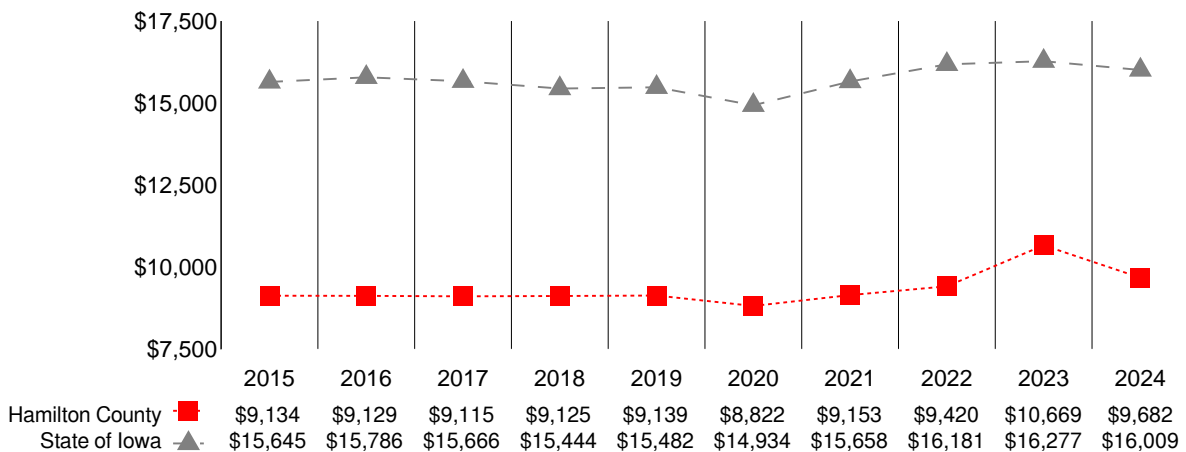


Figure 2 measures local taxable sales on a per capita basis, with comparisons to statewide averages by year. The per capita averages are expressed in real dollars.

Figure 2. Real Per Capita Taxable Sales



Historical Trends in Taxable Retail Sales

Table 2. Historical Statistics for Hamilton County

Fiscal Year	Total Returns Filed	Total Taxable Sales (\$)		Estimated Population	Real Sales Per Capita (\$)	Statewide Sales Per Capita (\$)
		Nominal	Real			
2025	4,178	142,395,918	142,395,918	0	0	0
2024	3,933	138,956,477	142,611,652	14,729	9,682	16,009
2023	3,655	149,589,787	157,541,303	14,766	10,669	16,277
2022	1,861	127,809,162	139,721,378	14,833	9,420	16,181
2021	1,914	117,347,505	136,705,516	14,936	9,153	15,658
2020	1,944	109,377,771	132,642,666	15,035	8,822	14,934
2019	1,900	112,486,195	137,923,605	15,092	9,139	15,482
2018	1,836	111,402,344	138,548,305	15,183	9,125	15,444
2017	1,808	109,568,448	139,059,080	15,256	9,115	15,666
2016	1,824	108,302,165	139,850,855	15,320	9,129	15,786
2015	1,812	107,536,724	140,266,445	15,356	9,134	15,645
2014	1,816	102,403,175	133,815,954	15,390	8,695	15,054
2013	1,904	96,877,715	128,366,671	15,410	8,330	14,913
2012	1,968	97,131,631	130,399,506	15,440	8,446	15,075
2011	1,960	95,015,229	129,936,480	15,566	8,347	14,704
2010	2,032	94,302,021	132,225,736	15,686	8,430	14,723
2009	2,048	97,067,456	138,538,515	15,799	8,769	15,831
2008	2,024	97,695,179	139,044,284	15,924	8,732	15,653
2007	2,028	94,222,065	138,076,093	16,065	8,595	15,502
2006	1,916	92,110,857	138,445,280	16,202	8,545	15,722
2005	1,944	86,713,394	134,007,217	16,272	8,235	15,564
2004	1,896	87,409,904	138,976,392	16,325	8,513	15,693
2003	1,928	88,371,298	143,990,109	16,351	8,806	15,918
2002	2,064	90,625,507	150,762,454	16,287	9,257	16,133
2001	2,144	93,488,720	157,562,601	16,330	9,649	16,338
2000	2,192	89,663,837	154,155,308	16,388	9,407	16,226
1999	2,232	88,159,305	155,405,503	16,363	9,497	16,219
1998	2,316	85,858,280	153,547,112	16,358	9,387	15,643
1997	2,320	85,288,420	153,741,208	16,336	9,411	15,328
1996	2,360	88,121,404	161,615,229	16,386	9,863	15,025
1995	2,408	84,412,956	158,123,261	16,327	9,685	14,722
1994	2,448	82,563,733	157,918,445	16,190	9,754	14,417
1993	2,432	80,018,835	156,244,529	16,191	9,650	14,100
1992	2,360	78,336,948	156,772,720	16,148	9,708	13,906
1991	2,368	80,892,682	166,195,263	16,061	10,348	13,783
1990	2,412	76,527,624	162,477,932	16,140	10,067	13,686
1989	2,460	75,320,249	166,947,076	16,328	10,225	13,520
1988	2,480	73,383,701	169,766,986	16,502	10,288	13,325
1987	2,512	71,243,520	171,252,843	16,677	10,269	13,269
1986	2,548	68,967,727	170,897,493	16,854	10,140	12,914
1985	2,560	71,253,848	180,412,513	17,033	10,592	12,913
1984	2,628	73,077,496	191,485,264	17,214	11,124	12,969
1983	2,684	74,433,265	202,429,291	17,397	11,636	13,048
1982	2,680	71,708,643	203,296,766	17,582	11,563	13,143
1981	2,748	70,898,706	212,134,485	17,768	11,939	13,477
1980	2,768	74,908,504	244,225,884	17,888	13,653	14,694
1979	2,752	67,736,661	244,646,001	17,939	13,638	14,865
1978	2,744	59,144,117	232,614,648	17,991	12,930	14,417
1977	2,664	55,692,206	234,264,170	18,043	12,984	14,148
1976	2,664	53,820,234	241,116,662	18,005	13,325	13,420

Population Trends

Population change is a key factor influencing local retail sales performance. Population gains or losses from year to year directly impact the number of potential shoppers in the region.

In the longer term, population trends also reflect the region's general economic climate. Population growth or stability suggests a more favorable retail environment than population decline, which may signify erosion in the region's economic vitality.

Figure 3. Population Trends for Hamilton County

Figure 3 shows annual population estimates for the county and state, expressed as percentages of baseline values from 10 years ago.

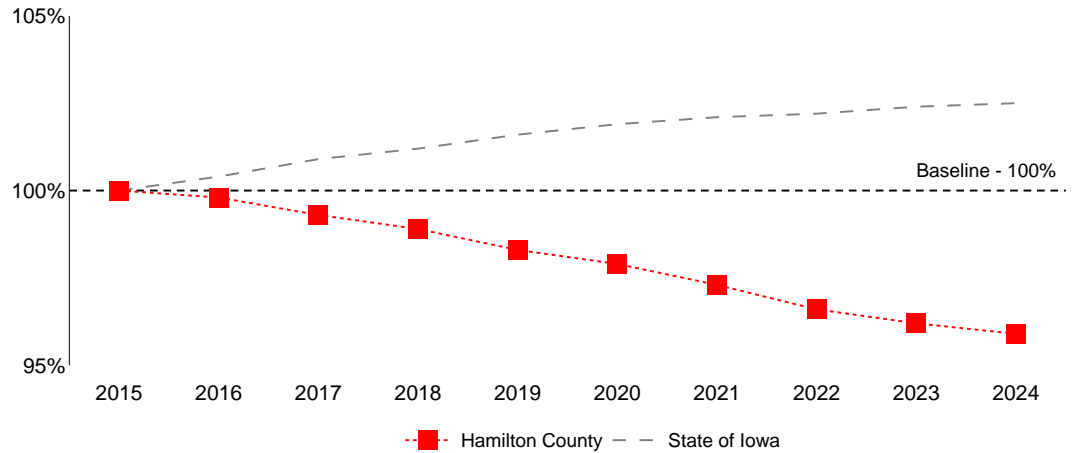
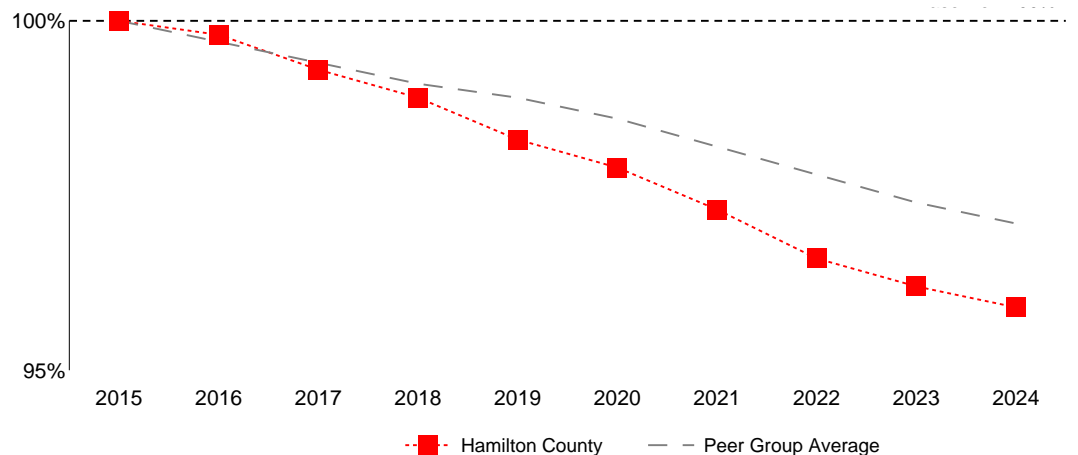


Figure 4. Population Trends for Group 3 Counties

Figure 4 compares the local population trend to the average experience for similarly-sized counties in Iowa. See **Table 3** for peer group definitions and **Table 7** for a list of Iowa counties by peer group.



Peer Group Comparisons

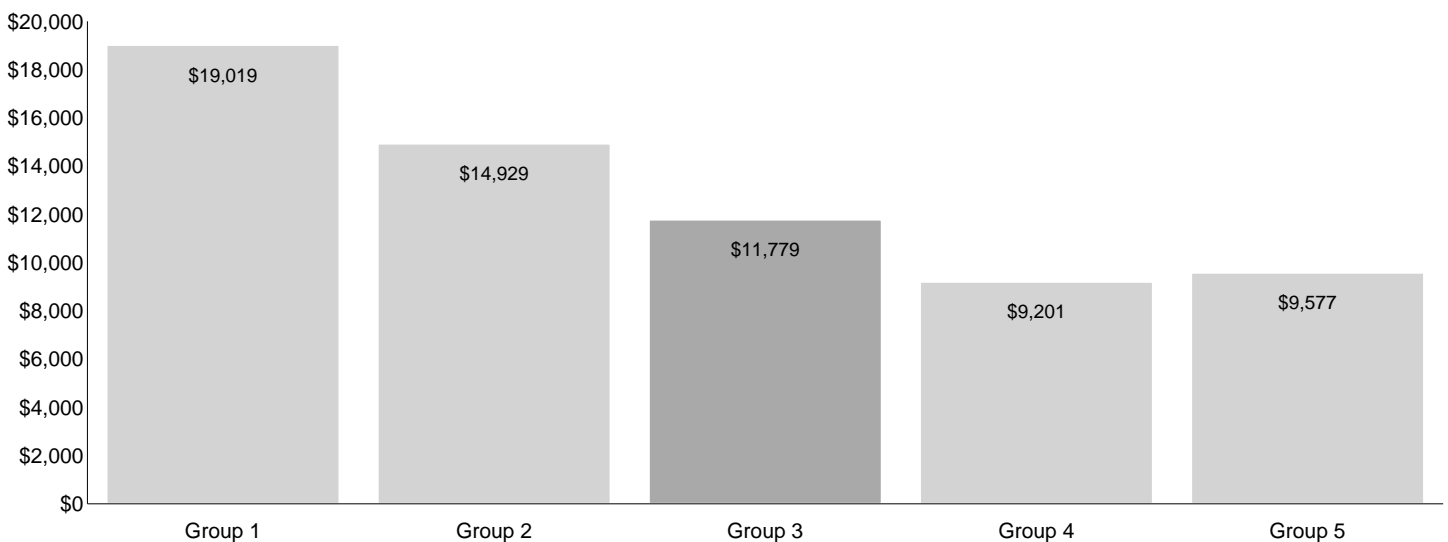
Iowa's 99 counties and their trade centers vary in the level and types of retail activity they can support. In general, retail sector size and diversity tend to increase with community size. Other determining factors include the proximity and size of competing trade centers in neighboring counties and the overall population density in the region. Counties that are similar across these dimensions serve as useful benchmarks for gauging local retail performance.

This report assigns all counties in Iowa to peer groups based on their population size and urbanization characteristics. **Table 3** contains peer group definitions. The relevant peer group for the county is highlighted in bold (see **Table 12** for a complete list of counties by peer group). **Figure 5** compares the average sales performance of all county peer groups during the most recent fiscal year.

Table 3. Peer Group Definitions

Group	Metropolitan or Micropolitan Status	Number of Counties	% of State Taxable Sales
Group 1	Core county of a metropolitan statistical area	10	64.8%
Group 2	Core county of a micropolitan statistical area	15	14.0%
Group 3	Non-metro county whose largest city is between 5,000 to 10,000 in population	23	8.6%
Group 4	Outlying (non-core) county in a metropolitan statistical area	12	5.2%
Group 5	Non-metro county whose largest city is less than 5,000 in population	39	7.3%

Figure 5. Average Sales Per Capita by County Peer Group



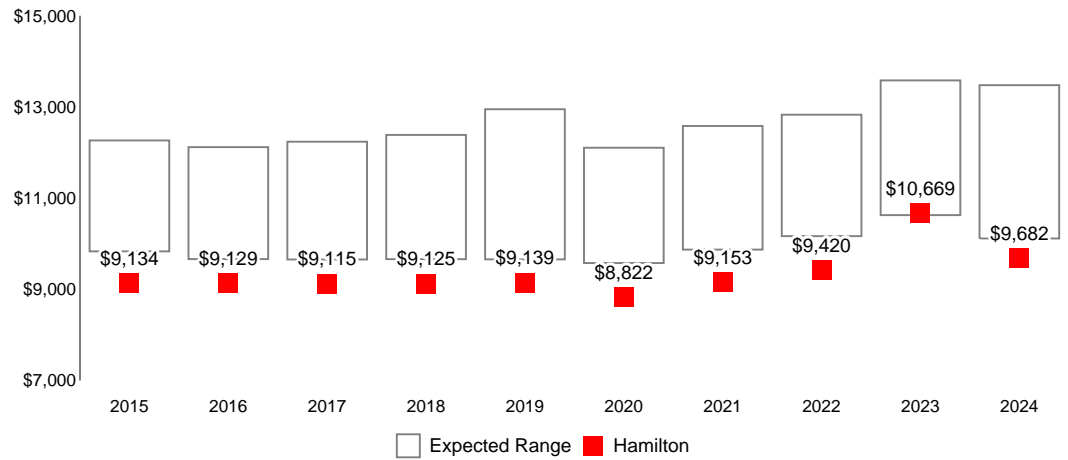
Peer Group Comparisons

Expected Sales

Using peer group data to describe an expected sales range, this benchmark helps determine whether local sales have been higher than, lower than, or typical for counties of similar size and urbanization characteristics. **Figure 6** illustrates whether recent local sales trends align with peer group expectations.

Figure 6. Expected and Actual Sales Per Capita

Figure 6 compares local sales with typical values for peer counties. The gray rectangles illustrate the 25th to the 75th percentile range of values for the peer group. The solid red squares show actual local per capita sales.



Regional Competition

This section explores broadly regional trade patterns competitive forces at work within the region. **Figure 7** compares county per capita sales to averages in neighboring counties. **Table 5** lists cities within the county that reported taxable sales activity during the most recent fiscal year.

Figure 7. Per Capita Retail Sales for Nearby Counties

Figure 7 shows the five nearest counties as measured from the center of each county. The counties are listed in descending order by their average per capita sales.

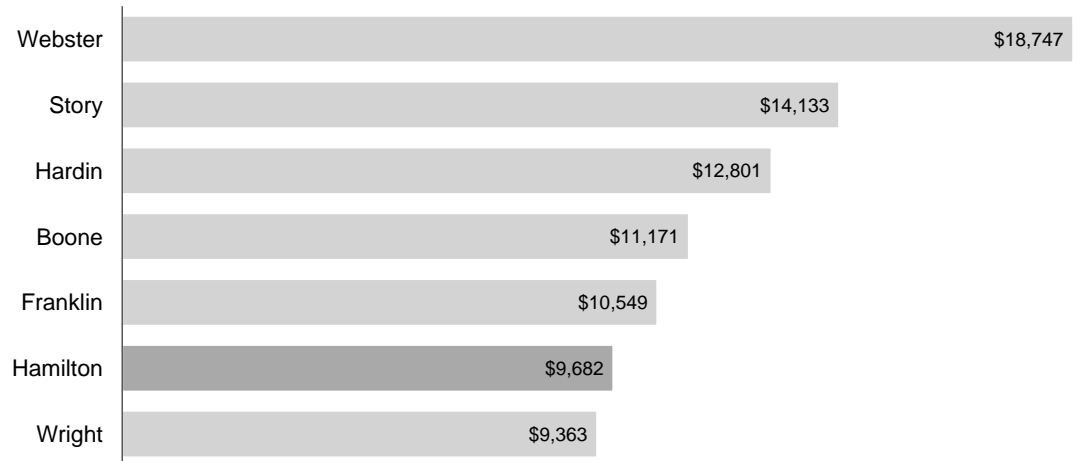


Table 4. Reporting Jurisdictions in Hamilton County

Values for unincorporated areas and for cities with 10 or fewer sales tax permit-holders are suppressed; however, sales data for those localities are included within the county totals.

Area Name	Population	Total Returns	Sales \$ millions
Hamilton County Total	14,729	3,933	142.6
Blairsburg	176	89	0.9
Ellsworth	492	267	15.3
Kamrar	176	90	1.6
Stanhope	353	92	2.0
Stratford*	682	335	4.3
Webster City	7,713	2,260	103.5
Williams	298	113	6.4

Values for any cities marked with an asterisk (*) include neighboring county residents who fall within the city limits; consequently, the sum of values for all cities listed in **Table 6** may exceed reported totals for the county.

Iowa's Retail Sales Tax Reporting

The state of Iowa imposes a six percent tax on the gross receipts from sales of taxable tangible personal property and taxable services.

Retailers file sales tax returns to the Iowa Department of Revenue on a semi monthly, monthly, quarterly, or annual basis depending on their amount of sales.

The Department of Revenue compiles the data from sales tax returns and publishes quarterly and annual retail sales tax reports that provide the primary source of data for this report.

The state's reporting does not include retail transactions that are exempt from the statewide sales tax. Consequently, this report describes only taxable, not total, retail sales. Several types of exempt activity are listed on the following page.

Occasional anomalies may arise in retail sales data reported at the local level. For example, the locations of specific firms may not precisely align with the administrative jurisdictions used for tax reporting purposes. Such discrepancies may result in under statement or over statement of actual local retail sales activity.

When analyzing trends, users should note that changes in Iowa's retail sales tax laws or changes in administrative or accounting practices may affect the comparability of taxable sales data over time.

Other cautions for using taxable sales data to analyze local retail performance are listed at right. Users seeking more detailed information are encouraged to consult the Iowa Department of Revenue's website at <https://tax.iowa.gov>

Cautions and Limitations for Interpreting Reported Sales Data

- **Non Taxable Goods & Services.** Because certain goods and services are exempt from the statewide sales tax, the sales information presented in this report provides only a partial picture of retail and service sector activity in Iowa's communities.
- **E-commerce Sales.** Neither the volume of e-commerce purchases by Iowa residents nor e-commerce sales by Iowa retailers are currently measurable.
- **Large Public Institutions.** The presence of large public institutions such as correctional facilities or universities may distort local sales measures, as their institutional purchases are excluded from taxable sales but their residents are included in local population estimates.
- **Sales or Service Territories.** Sales levels in some cities may be inflated by the administrative presence of firms serving a much larger geographic service territory, such as rural telecommunications and other cable or internet service providers.
- **Non-Disclosure Rules.** To avoid disclosing information traceable to specific firms, the Iowa Department of Revenue only reports data from localities with 10 or more tax returns filed per quarter or 40 returns per year. Sales data for areas below this threshold are grouped into a "remainder of county" value.

Notable Exclusions from Iowa's Retail Sales Tax

The retail data analyzed for this report only capture transactions that are subject to Iowa's statewide sales tax. In general, merchandise goods are taxable unless specifically exempted, whereas services are exempted from the tax unless specifically enumerated by the state.

Following are several types of sales activity that are **not** covered by this report.

Exempt or Excluded Goods. Some of the goods not subject to the sales tax include:

- Certain foods for home consumption
- Prescription drugs and medical devices
- New or used cars and other vehicles, as they are taxed separately under the state's one time registration fee.
- Gasoline, which is subject to a separate fuel tax

Exempt Services. Unlike tangible goods, services are exempt from tax unless specifically enumerated. Many professional services such as medical and legal services are exempt from the sales tax.

Sales to Tax Exempt Organizations. Local and state government entities are exempt from the sales tax. Sales to private nonprofit educational institutions for educational purposes are also exempt. Sales from fund raising activities are exempt from sales tax if the proceeds are used for educational, religious, or charitable purposes.

Internet/Catalog Sales. Prior to 2019, many out of state purchases by Iowa residents were untaxed. Iowa implemented regulatory changes on July 1, 2019, to require collection of sales taxes on residents' purchases from firms without a physical presence in Iowa but who generate \$100,000 or more in gross revenues from Iowa sales.

Sales to Agriculture. Sales tax exemptions for agriculture apply to the purchase of feed, seed, fertilizer, farm machinery and equipment, fuels and utilities, and some services.

Utilities. The state has phased out taxes on sales of metered gas, electricity, and fuel used as energy in residential dwellings, apartment units and condominiums. This phase out was completed by 2006. Specific exemptions for utilities may also apply to certain businesses and industries.

Sales to Manufacturing and Other Industries. The state exempts sales of many goods and services that are used as inputs to industrial processes. Exemptions to manufacturing include purchases of tangible inputs that become an integral part of manufactured goods ultimately sold at retail; fuels, chemicals, and other inputs that are consumed during production processes; industrial machinery, equipment, and some computer equipment; and many services.

The state has created additional exemptions targeted toward specific industries such as wind energy and information technology. See the Iowa Department of Revenue Web site for more detailed information.

More detailed information about Iowa's sales tax is available from the Iowa Department of Revenue at <http://tax.iowa.gov/iowa-sales-and-use-tax-guide>.

Definitions of Retail Measures

Retail Sales. This term refers to the reported sales of goods and services that are subject to Iowa’s retail sales tax. Iowa’s current sales tax rate is 6 percent.

Fiscal Year. Iowa’s annual sales tax reports reflect a July 1 June 30 fiscal year period.

Reporting Firms. This value reflects the average number of tax returns filed each quarter during the year, and it serves as a proxy for the number of local retail firms.

Nominal Sales. Nominal sales are the dollar amounts as reported in the year the transactions actually took place. These values have not been adjusted for inflation.

Real Sales. “Real” dollar values have been standardized to reflect the purchasing power of a dollar in the current fiscal year, thus removing the effects of price inflation.

Sales Per Firm. Per firm sales are calculated by dividing the annual dollar value of sales by the average number of reporting firms in that year.

Sales Per Capita. Per capita (or “per person”) sales are calculated by dividing the dollar value of sales by the estimated population for the subject place. No distinctions are made among residents of households, educational institutions, nursing homes, or other group quarters in the calculation of per capita sales and related indicators.

Population: Population values in this report describe the estimated, average number of residents during a given fiscal year. The estimates are based on data released annually through the Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau’s published estimates, which reflect the population on July 1 st of each year, may differ from the average values appearing in this report.

With each of its annual data releases, the U.S. Census Bureau may revise its estimates from prior years. This report incorporates the most recently available estimates and revisions. As a consequence, population based statistics published in this report may not reconcile with those appearing in earlier retail trade analysis reports. In most cases, the discrepancies are minor.

City to County Assignments: The incorporated territory of many Iowa cities crosses the boundaries of two or more counties. For this report, all cities are assigned to the county that contained the greatest percentage of its population in the 2020 Decennial Census.

Price Deflators: Except where otherwise noted in this report, the dollar values for all retail sales and personal income data have been adjusted for inflation using the Implicit Price Deflator for Personal Consumption Expenditures published by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are business group sales data available at the city or county level? Subject to disclosure limitations to protect the confidentiality of local firms, local data for up to 12 business groups may be available upon request from the Iowa Department of Revenue.

Are the retail sales statistics fully comparable over time? No. Changes to Iowa's statewide sales tax laws have redefined the mix of goods and services comprising taxable sales transactions over time.

Why do historical data in this report differ from previously-published ISU retail reports? The underlying population and income data used in this report are subject to backward revision by the U.S. Census Bureau and sister agencies, meaning that historical data are revised as new information becomes available. Any revisions to population and income estimates may result in re-statement of per capita retail sales, pull factors, and related measures for prior years. This report incorporates the most recently-revised statistics, and no effort is made to reconcile the historical data with prior versions of the ISU Retail Trade Analysis reports.

Data Notes (continued)

Table 5. Peer County Groupings and 2020 Population (page 1 of 2)

	2020 Population	Metropolitan or Micropolitan Area	
Group 1	Black Hawk	130,471	Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Dallas	111,092	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Dubuque	98,887	Dubuque, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Johnson	157,528	Iowa City, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Linn	228,972	Cedar Rapids, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Polk	505,255	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Pottawattamie	93,179	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Scott	174,270	Davenport-Moline-Rock Island, IA-IL, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Story	98,566	Ames, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
	Woodbury	105,951	Sioux City, IA-NE-SD, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Group 2	Buena Vista	20,567	Storm Lake, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Carroll	20,522	Carroll, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Cerro Gordo	42,406	Mason City, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Clay	16,511	Spencer, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Clinton	46,158	Clinton, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Des Moines	38,253	Burlington, IA-IL, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Dickinson	18,056	Spirit Lake, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Lee	32,565	Fort Madison-Keokuk, IA-IL-MO, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Mahaska	21,874	Oskaloosa, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Marion	33,770	Pella, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Marshall	40,014	Marshalltown, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Muscatine	42,218	Muscatine, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Plymouth	25,722	None
	Wapello	35,166	Ottumwa, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Webster	36,485	Fort Dodge, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
Group 3	Appanoose	12,119	None (not part of a metropolitan or micropolitan area)
	Buchanan	20,691	None
	Cass	13,130	None
	Clarke	9,588	None
	Crawford	16,013	None
	Emmet	9,229	None
	Fayette	19,210	None
	Floyd	15,326	None
	Hamilton	14,729	None
	Hardin	16,463	None
	Henry	19,547	None
	Humboldt	9,500	None
	Jackson	19,342	None
	Jefferson	15,440	Fairfield, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
	Kossuth	14,396	None
	Montgomery	10,139	None
	O'Brien	14,012	None
	Page	15,014	None
	Poweshiek	18,453	None
	Sioux	36,246	None
Tama	16,833	None	
Union	11,906	None	
Winneshiek	19,815	None	

Data Notes (continued)

Table 5. Peer County Groupings and 2020 Population (page 2 of 2)

	2020 Population	Metropolitan or Micropolitan Area
Group 4		
Benton	25,796	Cedar Rapids, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Boone	26,590	Ames, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Bremer	25,307	Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Grundy	12,384	Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Guthrie	10,722	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Harrison	14,670	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Jasper	37,919	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Jones	20,900	Cedar Rapids, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Madison	16,971	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Mills	14,633	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Warren	55,205	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Washington	22,560	Iowa City, IA, Metropolitan Statistical Area
Group 5		
Adair	7,389	None
Adams	3,544	None
Allamakee	14,074	None
Audubon	5,534	None
Butler	14,172	None
Calhoun	9,763	None
Cedar	18,302	None
Cherokee	11,605	None
Chickasaw	11,658	None
Clayton	16,969	None
Davis	9,169	None
Decatur	7,665	None
Delaware	17,600	None
Franklin	9,875	None
Fremont	6,458	None
Greene	8,584	None
Hancock	10,615	None
Howard	9,376	None
Ida	6,833	None
Iowa	16,381	None
Keokuk	9,914	None
Louisa	10,513	None
Lucas	8,747	None
Lyon	12,324	None
Mitchell	10,518	None
Monona	8,493	None
Monroe	7,504	None
Osceola	5,978	None
Palo Alto	8,810	None
Pocahontas	6,976	None
Ringgold	4,642	None
Sac	9,686	None
Shelby	11,806	None
Taylor	5,924	None
Van Buren	7,266	None
Wayne	6,557	None
Winnebago	10,571	None
Worth	7,297	Mason City, IA, Micropolitan Statistical Area
Wright	12,656	None

**Iowa State University
Department of Economics**

For more information about
this report, please contact:

Liesl Eathington
175 Heady Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

Phone: (515) 294-2954
E-mail: leathing@iastate.edu

Find these retail reports and other
economic and demographic profiles
of Iowa's communities online at:

[https://indicators.extension.iastate.edu/
Indicators/Retail](https://indicators.extension.iastate.edu/Indicators/Retail)

Acknowledgments

This project was supported with funding from the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station, the research program directed by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University.

In producing this report, we acknowledge the pioneering work of Kenneth E. Stone, now Professor Emeritus, in applied analysis of retail trade patterns in Iowa's cities and counties.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling 866-632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or Fax: 833-256-1665 or 202-690-7442; or Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/legal>.