NEWSLETTER
ATLANTIC TIRE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

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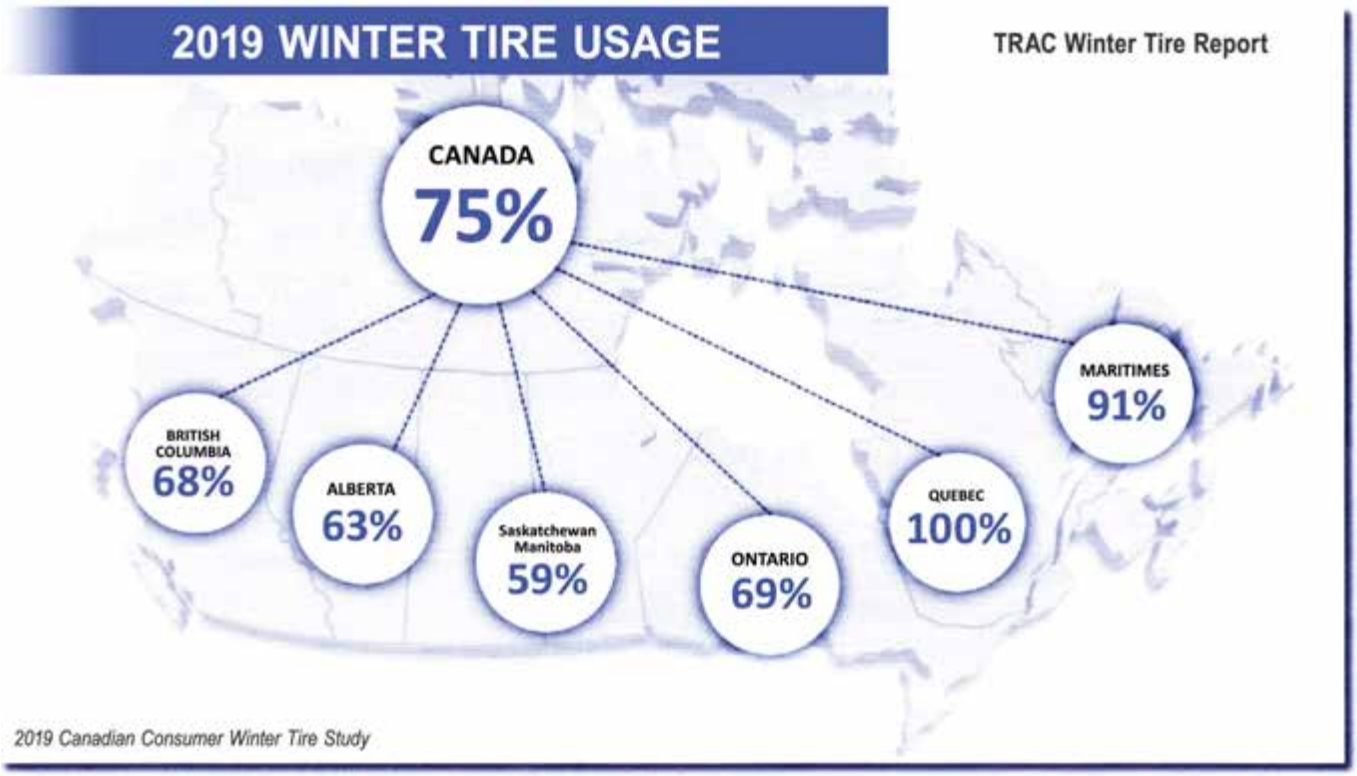
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TRAC 2019 Canadian Consumer Winter Tire Study

Winter Tire Usage in Canada

Only 35 per cent of Canadian drivers used winter tires in 1998. That figure has more than doubled in 2019. TRAC's *2019 Canadian Consumer Winter Tire Study* shows that winter tire usage had grown to 75 per cent in comparison to 2017 at 66 per cent, and 2014 at 58 per cent. Excluding Quebec, where the winter tires are mandatory, 70 per cent of the Canadian drivers will use winter tires in the 2019/2020 winter season.

Winter Tire Use by Region:



Winter Tire Usage: Year / Province	2019 (%)	2018 (%)	2017 (%)	2016 (%)	2014 (%)
National	75	76	66	68	58
Atlantic Canada	91	94	83	81	73
Quebec*	100	100	100	100	100
Ontario	69	69	59	65	56
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	59	60	48	50	39
Alberta	63	70	57	55	45
British Columbia	68	64	60	49	38

** Mandatory winter tire usage since 2008*

Winter tire laws, public education, and financial incentives such as lower auto insurance premiums and low interest loans on winter tire purchases play significant part in motivating drivers to use winter tires and make Canadian wintertime roadways safer. Advice from family and friends also represents a major driver, and the increases in winter tire use link directly with drivers sharing their positive experience with winter tires:

- **Winter tire laws (34%),**
- **Advice from friends and family (17%),**
- **Lower auto insurance premiums (11%),**
- **Media coverage (7%).**

(TRAC: *2018 Canadian Consumer Winter Tire Study*)

Canadians are on board when it comes to choosing winter tires as the logical choice for driving in Canada's harsh Nordic climate. We continue to work with the stakeholders and seek new ways to reach the public and educate Canadian drivers about the advantages of winter tires and how to drive confidently on winter roads."

- Andy Robinson
Region General Manager, Bridgestone Canada Inc.

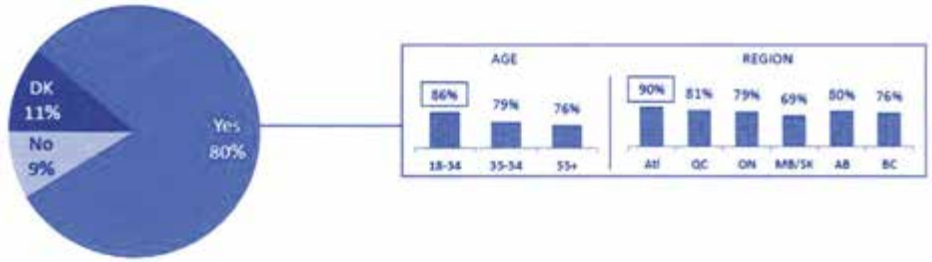
While we are seeing strong trend in utilization of winter tires, three-in-ten motorists outside Quebec still resist winter tires. Top reasons for not owning winter tires are:

Top reasons for not owning winter tires:	Total*	Atlantic	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
All-season tires are good enough	51%	43%	47%	59%	55%	57%
I don't drive much in winter	18%	32	17%	10%	21%	21%
Too expensive	17%	7%	22%	11%	10%	18%
I have no place to store off-season tires	4%	19%	4%	8%	3%	-
Other	9%	-	10%	12%	12%	3%
Don't know/prefer not to answer	1%	-	1%	-	-	-

**Excluding Quebec*

Driver Perception of Winter Tires

Eighty per cent of Canadian drivers who drive a car equipped with winter tires say that their winter tires have saved them from being involved in a potentially hazardous driving situation. Quebecers are more likely to believe that winter tires on their vehicle have saved them from being involved in a collision, and 11 per cent of Canadians "Don't Know".



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**Is there a tire sales and service company in your area that is not a member of The Atlantic Tire Dealers Association?
If so, please advise the executive director. Also, we would appreciate it if you would contact such companies to advise them of the advantages of becoming a member.**

Atlantic Tire Dealers Association

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MODERN TIRE DEALER

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

MARKET SHARE, SHIPMENTS, PRICING AND MORE: MTD'S FACTS ISSUE DETAILS THE STATE OF OUR INDUSTRY AS 2020 BEGINS

By Mike Manges

May you live in interesting times" isn't just an old expression. It aptly sums up the state of the North American tire industry at the dealer, wholesale-distribution and manufacturer levels as 2020 begins.

DEALERS: MORE M&A

Last year was marked by intensified merger and acquisition activity at the independent tire dealer level, which remains the strongest tire distribution channel, representing 63% of all consumer tire retail sales.

Monro Inc. continued to aggressively expand its footprint with the acquisition of 14 locations in Nevada, nine locations in California and four locations in Idaho, all of which bring an estimated $45 million in annualized sales to the Rochester, N.Y.-based chain and are expected to close during the third quarter of Monro's fiscal 2020 year. Monro also closed on the acquisition of eight locations in Louisiana, giving it 20 locations in that state.

Greenbriar Equity Group LP acquired 18 stores in Texas that operated under the Lamb's Tire & Automotive Service banner, giving Greenbriar more than 80 outlets in the southwestern U.S. Over the last two years, the firm has acquired Evans Tire & Service Centers (18 stores); Ramona Tire Inc. (17 stores); Tire Works Total Car Care (15 stores); and other chains.

Leeds West Groups boosted its footprint with the acquisition of six stores in New Mexico. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. made headlines when it acquired Evansville, Ind.-based Raben Tire Co. from private equity group Palladium Partners LLC for an undisclosed sum. The deal gives Goodyear nine retail-only stores, 10 commercial-only outlets, 11 combined retail/commercial stores, three retread plants and two wholesale-distribution facilities that all operate under the Raben Tire banner.

And in one of the most significant developments to hit the independent tire dealer channel in several years, the board of Les Schwab Tire Centers Inc. put the 492-location dealership up for sale. Gold-

U.S REPLACEMENT TIRE SALES, 2019-2016
(IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

In 2019, the U.S. replacement tire market was worth $43.2 billion.

Tires	2019	2018	2017	2016
Passenger	$28.2	$26.9	$25.5	$24.9
Light truck	$5.7	$5.4	$5.3	$5.1
Truck	$6.9	$7.5	$6.8	$6.3
OTR	$1.8	$1.8	$1.7	$1.6
Farm	$.592	$.622	$.535	$.512

U.S. TIRE SALES MARGINS

Tire segment	2019	2018	2017
Retail passenger	30.0%	24.2%	24.8%
Retail light truck	25.3%	22.8%	24.6%
Commercial light truck	21.3%	21.2%	20.5%
Medium/heavy truck	15.4%	15.6%	16.8%
Wholesale passenger	13.5%	12.2%	11.7%
Wholesale truck	8.8%	11.3%	19.4%

All figures in this 16-page Facts Section are Modern Tire Dealer figures unless otherwise noted.

man Sachs Group Inc. has been hired to find a buyer for the chain, which operates throughout 10 western states and is the fifth largest independent tire dealership in the U.S., according to the 2019 Modern Tire Dealer 100.

The reported asking price? At least $3 billion. (Les Schwab generated $1.8 billion in retail sales as of September 2019.)

More merger and acquisition activity is expected in 2020, according to John Healy, author of MTD's monthly Marketplace column and managing director and research analyst with Cleveland, Ohio-based Northcoast Research Holdings LLC.

"Independent tire dealers, in our view, remain unique strategic assets," Healy states in his exclusive look at what's to come in 2020, which starts on page 20 of this issue of MTD. "We expect acquisitions of dealers will continue to remain at a robust level as we believe private equity buyers look to expand and fill in geographical gaps as they build out scale."

WHOLESALE: HOLDING STEADY

The independent wholesale-distribution channel continues to evolve.

TireHub LLC, the joint venture that Bridgestone Americas Inc. and Goodyear established in 2018, entered two new markets last year: Minnesota and South Carolina.

Meanwhile, Michelin North America Inc. and Sumitomo Corporation of Americas continued to shore up their National Tire Wholesale joint venture, which also was formed in 2018.

And American Tire Distributors Inc. (ATD) began its road to recovery, which included a mid-2019 senior leadership realignment, after emerging from bankruptcy. "The situation at ATD has gone from critical to stable, and to now improving," Healy notes.

TIRE MAKERS: BACK TO THE U.S.A.

Tire manufacturers Continental AG, Nokian Tyres plc and Toyo Tire USA Corp. announced significant investments in their U.S.-based manufacturing capabilities that will come to fruition in 2020.

Continental is investing $1.4 billion in what will be its "first new plant dedicated to truck tires in the world" in Mississippi. The facility will start making truck and bus tires for the U.S. market later this year. In a bid to double its North American sales over the next several years, Nokian will soon begin production at a new plant in Tennessee that will ultimately manufacture four million passenger and light truck tires a year when operating at full capacity.

And Toyo is expanding annual production at its plant in Georgia by more than one million tires. Target capacity for the facility will be between 12.5 and 13 million tires a year, mostly light truck tires.

Not all tire makers are following suit, however. Balkrishna Industries Ltd. has put its plans for a U.S. OTR tire plant on hold due to sufficient, existing capacity at the company's other factories. Goodyear is trimming its Gadsden, Ala., plant workforce by nearly 750 employees as part of the firm's plan to curtail production of tires for declining segments of the market.

OTHER TRENDS

Continental is on the move. Tire manufacturers continue to jockey for position on a global scale. Bridgestone Corp. and Groupe Michelin maintained the number one and number two positions, respectively, on MTD's World Leaders in New Tire Sales list (page 32), with estimated, full-year global sales of $26.7 billion for Bridgestone versus $27.4 billion in 2018, and an estimated $25.3 billion in sales for Michelin, up from $24.6 billion the previous year.

For the first time, Continental AG's estimated total global sales ($12.9 billion) could eclipse Goodyear's estimated total global sales ($12.5 billion) if the two companies' year-end 2019 sales totals match MTD's projections.

Rounding out the global "top five," Sumitomo Rubber Industries Ltd.'s estimated annual sales for 2019 will have remained flat at $6.9 billion, according to MTD projections.

Chinese imports plummet. Aggressive tariff actions by the U.S. government contributed to a massive 94% decline in the number of passenger and light truck tire imports from China. As offshore tire manufacturers have shifted production to other low-cost Asian countries, Thailand has climbed to the top of the U.S. Consumer Tire Importer list (page 30.)

Slightly more than 45 million consumer tire units were shipped from Thailand in 2019, up from 40.5 million units during the preceding year and a 10-million unit jump from 2017.

Consumer tire imports from Mexico, Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, Chile and Brazil also increased. Countries that saw declines in total imports to the U.S. from 2018 to 2019 include Canada and Indonesia. Imports from South Korea stayed flat at 19.3 million units.

Price hikes are holding. Several tire manufacturers announced price increases, which "were largely achieved," according to Healy. "From our perspective, given the healthy levels of demand, dealers were able to pass these price hikes along to the customer without meaningful erosion, in terms of demand. It appears the industry continues toward working to achieve better profits on a per-tire basis."

In 2019, the average price for a replacement passenger tire in the U.S. was $124.23.

THE REST OF THE WORLD

This edition of MTD's annual Facts Issue also includes two never-before-seen pages: one that is an extension of our traditional Automotive Service section and provides detailed automotive aftermarket shop demographics, and another that provides shipment numbers and brand market share breakdowns for three regions outside of North America: Europe, the Middle East and Africa; Central and South America; and the Asia-Pacific region, including China and India. ■

NEW P-METRIC AND LT TIRE SIZES/SKUS IN 2020

(NOT INCLUDING TEMPORARY SPARES)

P155/65R13 XL	195/50R17	265/60R20
315/60R20	305/55R22	265/50R22 XL
315/45R22	315/45R24	LT275/80R18 LRE
LT255/60R18 LRC/D/E	LT265/50R20 LRE	LT295/50R22 LRD/E
34x11.50R20LT LRE	33x13.50R20LT LRF	42x13.50R20LT LRC
33x12.50R24LT LRE/F	35x12.50R24LT LRE/F	38x13.50R24LT LRE/F

SOURCE: TIRE & RIM ASSOCIATION

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2019 U.S. REPLACEMENT

PASSENGER TIRE BRAND SHARES

(BASED ON 222.7 MILLION UNITS)

Brand	2019
Goodyear	12.0%
Michelin	9.5%
Bridgestone	7.0%
Firestone	7.0%
BFGoodrich	4.5%
Continental	4.5%
Cooper	4.5%
Falken	3.5%
Hankook	3.5%
Yokohama	3.5%
General	3.0%
Kumho	3.0%
Multi-Mile	2.5%
Nexen	2.5%
Pirelli	2.5%
Toyo	2.5%
Sumitomo	2.0%
Uniroyal	2.0%
GT Radial	1.5%
Hercules	1.5%
Kelly	1.5%
Nitto	1.5%
Primewell	1.5%
Sailun	1.5%
Big O	1.0%
Cordovan	1.0%
Dunlop	1.0%
Mastercraft	1.0%
Sentury	1.0%
Sigma	1.0%
Others	6.5%

Because numbers are rounded to the nearest one-half percent, the total may not equal 100%. Brands must have at least 1% of the market in shipment numbers to be listed at 1%.

LT TIRE BRAND SHARES

(BASED ON 32 MILLION UNITS)

Brand	2019
Goodyear	11.0%
BFGoodrich	8.0%
Michelin	7.0%
Bridgestone	6.5%
Firestone	6.5%
Cooper	5.5%
General	5.5%
Toyo	5.0%
Yokohama	5.0%
Hankook	4.0%
Multi-Mile	3.5%
Falken	3.0%
Kumho	2.5%
Pirelli	2.5%
Continental	2.0%
Hercules	2.0%
Maxxis	2.0%
Uniroyal	2.0%
Cordovan	1.5%
Kelly	1.5%
Nexen	1.5%
Sailun	1.5%
Big O	1.0%
Dunlop	1.0%
GT Radial	1.0%
Kenda	1.0%
Mastercraft	1.0%
Nitto	1.0%
Others	6.5%

Because numbers are rounded to the nearest one-half percent, the total may not equal 100%. Brands must have at least 1% of the market in shipment numbers to be listed at 1%.

WORLD LEADERS IN NEW TIRE SALES

(FISCAL YEAR 2019; IN BILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS)

Tire company	2019	2018
Bridgestone Corp.	$26.7	$27.4
Groupe Michelin	$25.3	$24.6
Continental AG	$12.9	$13.4
Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.	$12.5	$13.1
Sumitomo Rubber Industries Ltd.	$6.9	$6.9
Pirelli & Cie SpA	$6.0	$6.1
Hankook Tire Co.	$5.9	$6.1
Yokohama Rubber Co.	$4.5	$4.7
Zhongce Rubber Group Co. Ltd.	$4.0	$3.8
Cheng Shin Rubber Ind. Co. Ltd.[1]	$3.5	$3.6
Giti Tire Pte. Ltd.	$3.4	$3.2
Toyo Tire & Rubber Co. Ltd.	$3.0	$3.0
Cooper Tire & Rubber Co.	$2.6	$2.8
Kumho Tire Co. Inc.	$2.1	$2.3

[1]Cheng Shin does business as Maxxis International.

2019 BRANDS LISTED BY THE MTD 100

(TOTAL OUTLETS: 6,833)

Rank by number of dealers	Dealers/ outlets	2018 ranking
1. Michelin	83/5,826	1
2. Continental	78/5,997	3
3. BFGoodrich	75/5,571	2
4. Goodyear	75/5,474	4
5. Bridgestone	68/5,892	5
6. General	62/5,130	7
7. Firestone	61/3,353	8
8. Yokohama	59/4,365	6
9. Uniroyal	59/3,273	10
10. Cooper	54/5,007	9
11. Hankook	50/5,307	11
12. Dunlop	43/4,610	12
13. Pirelli	41/4,950	13
14. Kelly	38/2,731	14
15. Kumho	36/3,630	16

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ÉQUIPEMENTS ET ACCESSOIRES POUR PNEUS
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2019 U.S./CANADIAN OE CONSUMER TIRE MARKET SHARE

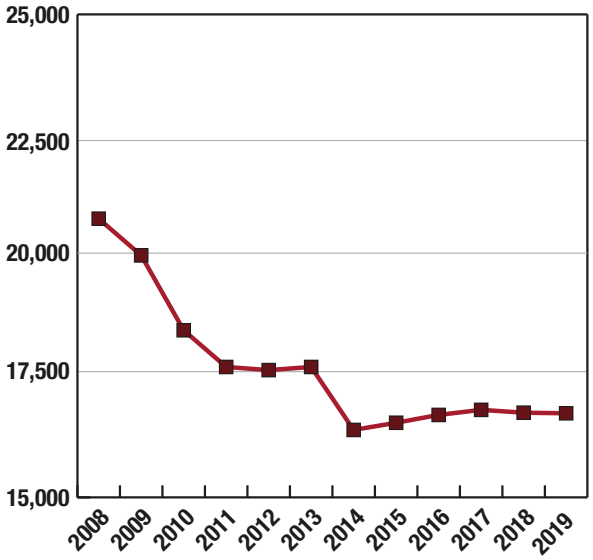
(BASED ON 59 MILLION CONSUMER TIRE UNITS, EXCLUDING IMPORTED VEHICLES)

Brand	2019
Goodyear	23.1%
Michelin	19.6%
Continental	15.0%
Bridgestone	13.2%
Hankook	7.6%
Pirelli	4.4%
Firestone	3.6%

Brand	2019
General	2.5%
BFGoodrich	2.1%
Kumho	1.9%
Yokohama	1.8%
Dunlop	1.4%
Nexen	1.4%
Others*	2.4%

* "OTHERS" REFERS TO FALKEN (1.2%), TOYO (1.2%) AND COOPER.

U.S. NEW-CAR FRANCHISES



SOURCE: NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

2019 U.S./CANADIAN OE CONSUMER TIRE BRAND SHARE BY VEHICLE MODEL

(EXCLUDING IMPORTED VEHICLES)

BMW
Pirelli 34%
Continental..... 26%
Bridgestone..... 25%
Dunlop 8%
Michelin..... 5%
Hankook 1%
Yokohama 1%

FCA (FIAT CHRYSLER AUTOMOBILES)
Goodyear 37%
Michelin..... 14%
Bridgestone..... 13%
Firestone 7%
Continental..... 5%
Yokohama 5%
Falken..... 4%
BFGoodrich..... 3%
General..... 3%
Nexen 3%
Hankook 2%
Kumho 2%
Pirelli 2%

FORD
Goodyear 24%
Michelin..... 24%
Continental..... 20%
Hankook 10%
Pirelli 8%
General..... 7%
BFGoodrich..... 4%
Bridgestone..... 2%
Toyo..... 1%

GENERAL MOTORS
Goodyear 38%
Michelin..... 22%
Bridgestone..... 14%
Firestone 12%
Continental..... 6%
Hankook 4%
General..... 2%
Pirelli 2%

HONDA
Goodyear 25%
Michelin..... 25%
Bridgestone..... 17%
Continental..... 17%
Hankook 9%
Yokohama 4%
Firestone 3%

HYUNDAI/KIA
Hankook 41%
Kumho 30%
Nexen 19%
Continental..... 10%

MERCEDES-BENZ
Continental..... 32%
Pirelli 26%
Bridgestone..... 14%
Michelin..... 11%
Dunlop 8%
Goodyear 8%
Cooper 1%

NISSAN
Continental..... 29%
Michelin..... 28%
Goodyear 18%
Falken..... 6%
Bridgestone..... 5%
Toyo..... 5%
BFGoodrich..... 4%
Hankook 2%
Dunlop 1%
General..... 1%
Kumho 1%

SUBARU
Bridgestone..... 57%
Continental..... 27%
Goodyear 8%
Falken..... 6%
Yokohama 2%

TESLA
Continental..... 40%
Michelin..... 25%
Goodyear 20%
Pirelli 10%
Hankook 5%

TOYOTA
Bridgestone..... 25%
Michelin..... 25%
Goodyear 12%
Dunlop 7%
Continental..... 6%
Hankook 6%
BFGoodrich..... 5%
Toyo..... 5%
Yokohama 4%
Firestone 3%
General..... 2%

VOLKSWAGEN
Continental..... 46%
Goodyear 15%
Kumho 14%
Hankook 11%
Falken..... 9%
Bridgestone..... 5%

VOLVO
Pirelli 50%
Continental..... 30%
Michelin..... 20%

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AVAILABLE PASSENGER CAR SIZES BY RIM DIAMETER

12-inch: 1	13-inch: 14	14-inch: 26
15-inch: 55	16-inch: 61	17-inch: 60
18-inch: 65	19-inch: 28	20-inch: 33
21-inch: 2	22-inch: 10	23-inch: 2
24-inch: 7	26-inch: 1	

One 17-inch size, two 20-inch sizes, three 22-inch sizes and one 24-inch size were added for 2020. Total P-metric/metric sizes: 365.

SOURCE: TIRE & RIM ASSOCIATION

AVAILABLE LT-METRIC SIZES BY RIM DIAMETER

14-inch: 6	15-inch: 18	16-inch: 37
17-inch: 30	18-inch: 32	20-inch: 23
22-inch: 17	24-inch: 8	26-inch: 3

Two 18-inch sizes, one 20-inch size and one 22-inch size were added for 2020. Total LT-metric sizes: 174.

SOURCE: TIRE & RIM ASSOCIATION

AVAILABLE LT HIGH FLOTATION SIZES BY RIM DIAMETER

14-inch: 1	15-inch: 21	17-inch: 16
18-inch: 15	20-inch: 20	22-inch: 7
24-inch: 8	26-inch: 3	28-inch: 2

Three 20-inch sizes and three 24-inch sizes were added for 2020. Total LT high flotation sizes: 93.

SOURCE: TIRE & RIM ASSOCIATION

MOST POPULAR DOMESTIC OE PASSENGER AND LT TIRE SIZES

2018 OE P-METRIC/METRIC

Size	% of total
225/65R17	4.1%
235/60R18	3.8%
275/55R20	3.5%
235/45R18	3.3%
235/40R19	3.0%

2018 OE LIGHT TRUCK (LT)

Size	% of total
LT245/75R17	13.1%
235/65R16 LRC	11.8%
LT275/70R18	10.3%
LT275/65R18	8.6%
LT225/75R16	8.3%

2017 OE P-METRIC/METRIC

Size	% of total
225/65R17	3.4%
235/60R18	3.3%
P215/55R17	2.8%
275/55R20	2.7%
275/65R18	2.7%

2017 OE LIGHT TRUCK (LT)

Size	% of total
LT245/75R17	14.7%
LT225/75R16	9.3%
LT275/70R18	8.8%
LT265/70R18	8.0%
LT265/70R17	7.8%

2016 OE P-METRIC/METRIC

Size	% of total
P215/55R17	4.0%
P265/70R17	3.5%
225/65R17	2.9%
P275/65R18	2.8%
215/55R17	2.4%

2016 OE LIGHT TRUCK (LT)

Size	% of total
LT245/75R17	15.9%
LT225/75R16	9.7%
235/65R16	8.8%
LT265/70R18	8.6%
LT265/60R20	7.8%

2015 OE P-METRIC/METRIC

Size	% of total
P215/55R17	4.1%
P265/70R17	3.4%
P215/60R16	3.2%
225/65R17	2.8%
215/55R17	2.8%

2015 OE LIGHT TRUCK (LT)

Size	% of total
LT245/75R17	18.6%
LT225/75R16	9.8%
LT265/70R18	9.7%
LT275/70R18	7.9%
LT245/75R16	7.6%

P-metric/metric: The top passenger tire size, 225/65R17, did not enter USTMA's top 10 most popular OE sizes list until 2014, when it debuted in sixth place. In the succeeding years it moved to fourth, third and then first. Light truck: LT245/75R17 has been the No. 1 OE size for the last seven years. It was only the fourth most popular LT replacement size in 2019, however.

SOURCE: USTMA

TOP U.S. REPLACEMENT PASSENGER TIRE SIZES, 2019

1. 225/65R17	6. 275/55R20
2. 205/55R16	7. 265/70R17
3. 215/55R17	8. 225/50R17
4. 215/60R16	9. 235/60R18
5. 195/65R15	10. 235/65R17

Three sizes dropped out of the top 10: 225/60R16, 225/55R17 and 225/60R17.

TOP U.S. REPLACEMENT LIGHT TRUCK TIRE SIZES, 2019

1. LT245/75R16	6. LT265/75R16
2. LT265/70R17	7. LT235/80R17
3. LT225/75R16	8. LT285/70R17
4. LT245/75R17	9. LT235/85R16
5. LT275/70R18	10. LT275/65R18

One size, 35x12.50R20LT, nearly made the top 10.

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Innovations in Safety

Recent advances in rubber compound formulations have led to a new generation of winter tires that provide the security of cold weather traction without impacting the tire's lifespan. — **STEVE PAWLETT**

Today's winter tires are designed with softer materials and advanced tread patterns that better grip road surfaces covered by snow, ice and slush. These rubber compounds also drive better on wet, cold, and dry road surfaces.

Tire manufacturers are continually working to improve winter tire performance and durability. As a result, there have been many innovations in the last decade. By experimenting with new materials, tread patterns, and technology, the winter tires available today perform much better than those bought only a few years ago.

First and foremost, winter tires are all about safety. The most dangerous situation that drivers will get into is ice—specifically, wet ice.

Improved safety

Tire manufacturers use various compounds to wick away water and improve traction in icy conditions. "We have a three-pronged approach with our new studless radial IG52C winter tire," explains Greg Cressman, Technical Service Director, Yokohama. "We use what we call micro bubbles in our compound and we use an absorbent silicon compound in a honeycomb construction pattern. We also use absorbent carbon flakes that create a capillary action to wick away the water."

Similarly, Toyo's GSI 6HP also uses high levels of silica along with a new high-grip polymer blended in the rubber compound to keep the tire pliable during colder temperatures, while also improving grip on slippery surfaces.

Michelin's third generation X-ICE winter tire features cross Z sipes, micro-pumps, and its FleX-Ice compound.

"The purpose of the winter tire is for winter safety mobility, both from a mechanical and a molecular standpoint to provide optimal performance and safety in winter conditions," says Ron Margadonna, Senior Technical Marketing Manager, Michelin, North America.

"Mechanically we know how to maximize the grip in terms of biting edges—all those little cuts in the tread in the siping. From a molecular standpoint, we have the ability to specialize and really drill down on that molecular compound and formulate the elasticity to grip the road surface in winter conditions," he adds.

"We continue to look at new materials that come on the market—new polymers, and the use of silica. All of those have tractive benefits, so when you look at the evolution of the winter tire, we have really improved the winter dynamic molecularly, and we will continue to do so as new compounds are developed."

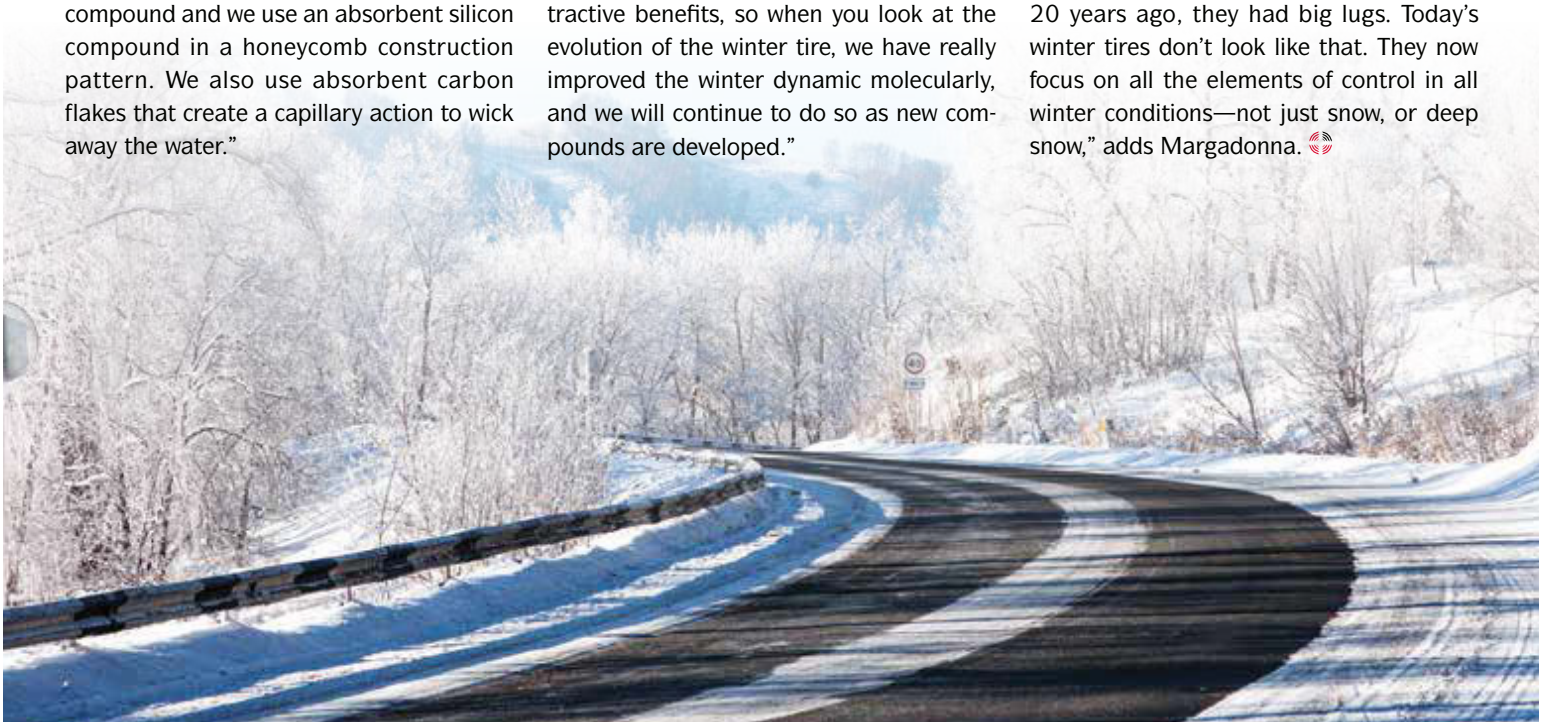
New compounds

In the past, the pliability of winter tire compounds came at the cost of tire life and fuel economy. "However, new advances in silica compounding are changing this and allowing for a new generation of winter tires to provide the security of cold weather traction without impacting the tire's lifespan," explains Dave Scheklesky, Toyo Tires' Senior Director of Marketing.

Another advanced feature of today's snow tires is the use of 3-D sipes. This new design provides water wicking capabilities and increased traction while remaining firm for cornering and acceleration.

The soft, versatile compounds used in today's winter tires are mixed at a very high density to extend the life of the tire and keep the sipes and tread patterns stable, while ensuring the tire wears evenly, allowing the consumer to get the most life out of the winter tire. From a drive performance perspective, these new compounds also provide a quieter ride.

"When you look at snow tires from 20 years ago, they had big lugs. Today's winter tires don't look like that. They now focus on all the elements of control in all winter conditions—not just snow, or deep snow," adds Margadonna.



Speed & Load Ratings

Your customers need to know about safety and durability when making a buying decision. — **JIL MCINTOSH**

At one time, you'd only talk about tire speed ratings with customers who owned high-performance sports cars. Today, it's a conversation you could have with someone who drives a family sedan.

And with the ever-increasing popularity of light trucks and SUVs, it's also important to communicate tire load ratings and what they need to know.

Speed ratings can be a tough sell just by the name, especially since almost all of them are well above the legal speed limits in Canada. Customers need to know that it isn't about how fast the tire can go, but about its construction: that it's built to withstand heat and stress for long periods at sustained speeds. Heat cuts into tire life, and a tire that's better able to dissipate heat can be expected to be more durable.

Customers need to know that it isn't about how fast the tire can go, but about its construction.

It isn't just about speed

That still doesn't necessarily mean it's a performance tire, and customers need to know that. Even though a tire may meet the speed rating for the vehicle, it isn't automatically the best for handling. For those who want something that'll grip better in the corners on their sportier cars, you're still going to have to guide them to the best tire overall, not just with the right speed rating. And they'll also have to be aware that the better it performs in spirited driving, then just as with an aggressive winter tire, there will be less of a lifespan that can be expected from its tread. There will always be some compromise.

Selling the overall benefits

Automakers look at numerous attributes when selecting tires for new vehicles, and speed rating might not be the primary reason those tires were fitted to that particular vehicle. But by focusing on the benefit of speed rating—the heat dissipation and durability—you can work with your customer for replacement recommendations that meet the automaker's original specifications. Customers need to see the overall benefits, so you don't end up with them wanting to downgrade simply because "I'll never drive my car that fast."

You can have a bit more leeway with speed ratings, but customers need guidance with load ratings. A tire that's below the load index rating for the vehicle can suffer damage on rough roads, or even present a safety issue.

Family vehicles and load index

Many customers may think load rating only matters on work vehicles, but they're important for all vehicles and especially for SUVs, minivans and light trucks with high capacity. The customer may be sticking with the same tire size, but different tires in that size could have different ratings. And when there's a switch in size, such as when moving over to winter wheels, the load index has to match the original equipment.

It's also getting more difficult with vehicles that can have different tires, depending on the trim. You can't count on "one size fits all." On the Chevrolet Silverado, as an example, the truck can have either P-metric or LT tires on the same-sized wheels. If no one double-checks, the customer might end up with tires that are below the recommended load rating.

Staff should always walk a customer through load ratings when determining replacement, especially with those who shop primarily with price in mind. It isn't enough for the tire to fit. It needs to be up to the job as well.



Do your customers understand speed ratings?

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