

“building **excellence**  
in materials supply”

# Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index



**Quarter 1 2021**

(Published 26 May 2021)

A Builders Merchant Building Index Publication

# Building the Industry & Building Brands from Knowledge



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# Introduction:

## Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index



This Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index (PHMI) report contains data from GfK's ground-breaking Plumbing & Heating Merchants Panel, which analyses data from over 80% of Plumbing & Heating merchants' sales throughout Great Britain, accounting for about £3bn. There is no overlap or double counting between PHMI and Builders Merchant Building Index (BMBI).

GfK's Plumbing & Heating Point of Sale Tracking Data is a gold standard in reliable market trends. Unlike data from sources based on relatively small samples or estimates, or sales from suppliers to the supply chain, this up-to-date data is based on actual sales from specialist plumbing & heating merchants. It is, in effect, the market.

PHMI trend data is indexed on the 12 months of 2019. Currently, data is available by total monthly value sales and the series tracks what is happening in the plumbing and heating market month by month. This trend series gives the industry access to far more accurate insights than has been available. MRA Research produces the Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index, a brand of the BMF, to provide reliable data, and a platform and voice for this important industry and for leading plumbing and heating brands to communicate to the wider market.

### PHMI Experts

Plumbing & Heating brands who are interested in becoming PHMI Experts, speaking for their markets and building their brands, should contact Ralph Sutcliffe: [Ralph@mra-research.co.uk](mailto:Ralph@mra-research.co.uk) or Tom Rigby: [Tom@mra-research.co.uk](mailto:Tom@mra-research.co.uk)

### More data available

This PHMI report provides valuable top-level indices but there's considerably more data available. GfK insights go much deeper and can quantify market values and drill down into contributing categories, tracing product group performance, to focus on aspects that are critical to you.

GfK can produce like-for-like market comparability tailored to the requirements of an individual business. Merchants or suppliers who are interested in acquiring data or getting involved should contact Emile van der Ryst at [emile.van-der-ryst@gfk.com](mailto:emile.van-der-ryst@gfk.com).

## Strong March for plumbing and heating merchants contributes to positive first quarter

March 2021 plumbing and heating product sales, representing data from over 80% of Plumbing & Heating merchants' sales, were up 26.0% on March 2020, with one more trading day this year. (See [page 11](#)). Average sales a day, which take trading day differences into account, were 20.5% higher than in March 2020.

Comparisons with March last year will have been affected by merchants closing branches at the start of Covid-19 'Lockdown 1', which took effect from 24 March. Consequently, year-on-year comparisons with that period will show significant gains. Taken on face value these gains could be considerable but, with last year being so weak, it will be difficult to assess just how good this year's figures really are. By also looking back over two years, it is possible to see how well the market performed – by benchmarking 2021 against more normal trading conditions and validating the strength of this year's trading. March 2021 was 13.7% higher than March 2019, with two more trading days this year. Average sales a day were up 3.8%.

Value sales in March 2021 were 15.5% higher than in February 2021 ([page 13](#)), helped by three more trading days this month. Average sales a day in March were flat (+0.4%) compared with February.

Quarter 1 2021 saw sales 6.8% higher than in Quarter 1 2020, with one less trading day this year. Average sales a day in Q1 were up 8.5% compared with Q1 last year. ([Page 8](#)). Looking back over two years, sales in the first quarter of 2021 were 3.5% higher than the same period in 2019, with no difference in trading days.

Sales in Quarter 1 2021 were 3.1% higher than in Quarter 4 2020. ([Page 9](#)). However there were three more trading days in the most recent quarter and when taking these into account, average sales a day were 1.8% lower than in Q4 2020.

The PHMI Index for March 2021, which contrasts sales with the base period of January to December 2019, was 118.2, helped by two more trading days – see the table on [page 6](#) and the chart on [page 10](#). The table also shows the PHMI Index for Quarter 1 2021 was a little weaker, at 106.0.

March 2021 plumbing and heating product sales, representing data from over 80% of Plumbing & Heating merchants' sales, were up 26.0% on March 2020.

# Indices: Monthly and quarterly

April 2020 to March 2021

(Indexed on January to December 2019)

<b>Apr 20</b>	<b>May 20</b>	<b>Jun 20</b>	<b>Three months</b>
34.8	46.0	73.4	51.4
<b>Jul 20</b>	<b>Aug 20</b>	<b>Sep 20</b>	<b>Three months</b>
88.3	85.9	103.0	92.4
<b>Oct 20</b>	<b>Nov 20</b>	<b>Dec 20</b>	<b>Three months</b>
115.2	111.1	83.9	103.4
<b>Jan 21</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	<b>Mar 21</b>	<b>Three months</b>
99.4	102.4	118.2	106.6

Indices are a measure that express sales values relative to a fixed base, enabling rapid performance comparisons to be made. The Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index uses total sales in 2019 to create monthly and quarterly base periods. These represent average performance.

The figures above express how the periods compare with the 2019 base:

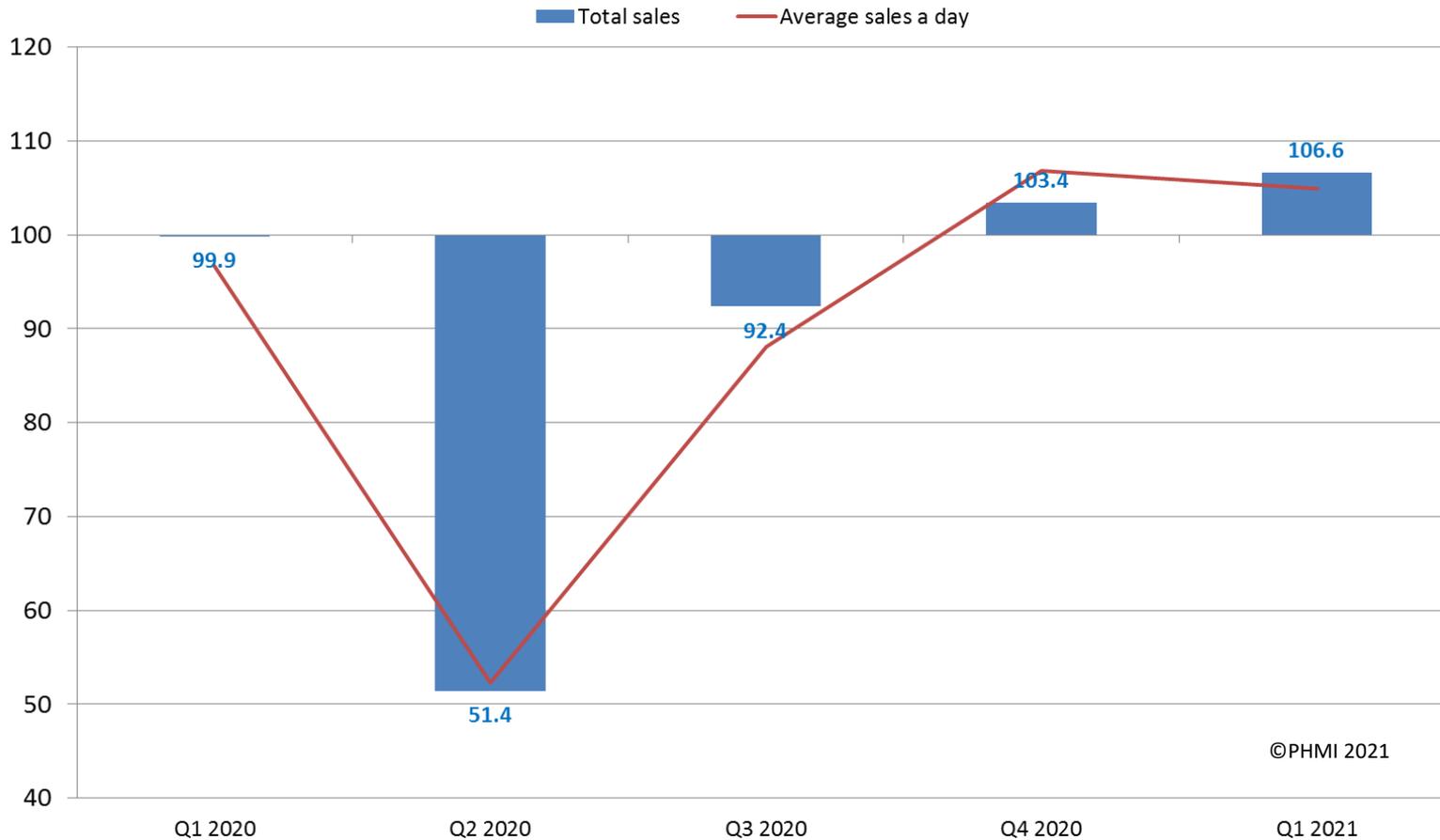
- If turnover was exactly the same, the Index would be 100.
- Values over 100 indicate higher turnover in that period. For example, March's index of 118.2 means turnover was 18.2% above the base period.
- Values below 100 indicate lower turnover in that period. December's Index of 83.9 means turnover was 16.1% lower than the base period.

 **Source:** GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

# Quarterly: Index

Adjusted and unadjusted for trading days

## Indices: Q1 2020 to Q1 2021



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

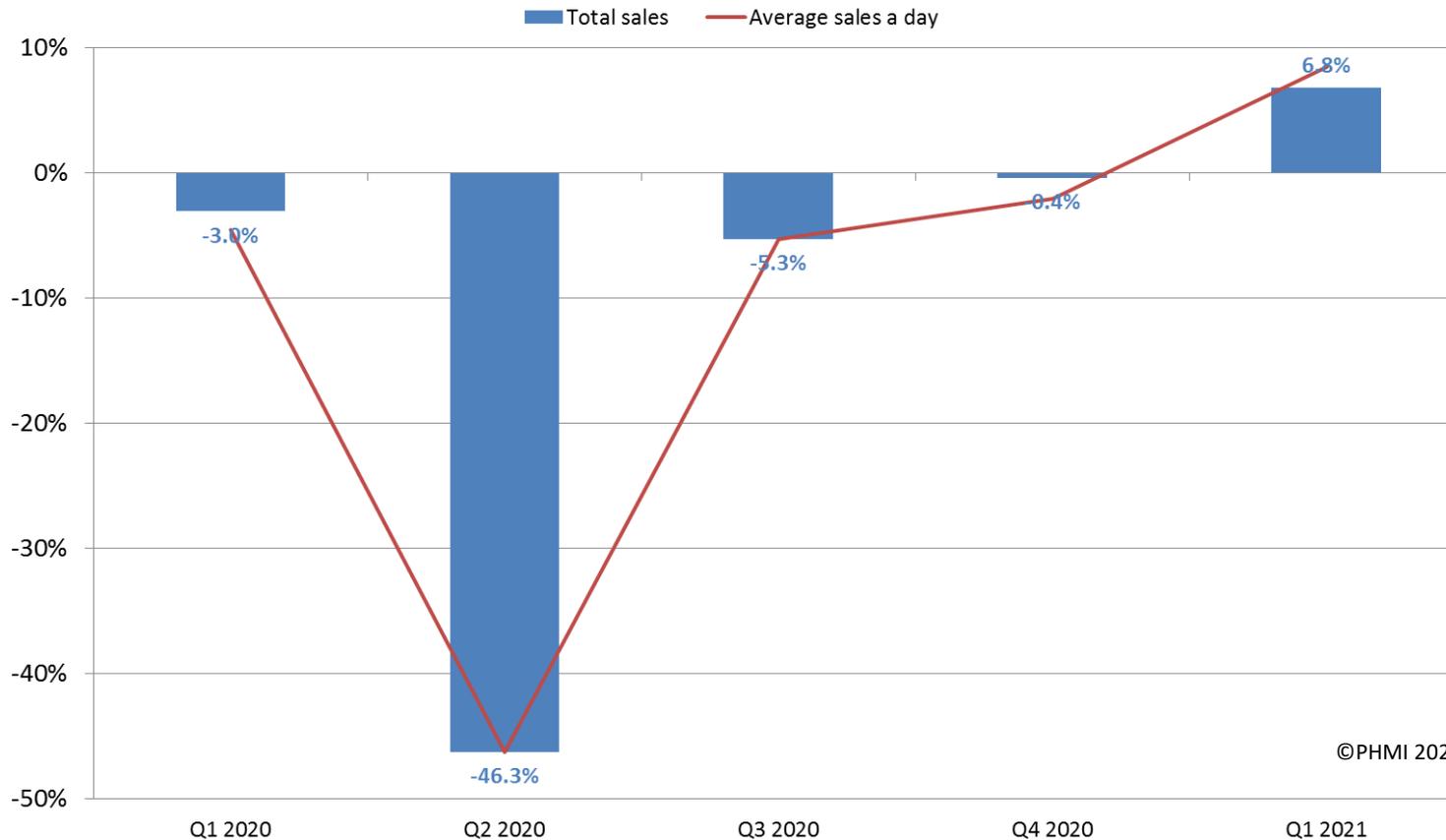
©PHMI 2021

 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

# Quarterly: This Year v Last Year

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days\*

## Quarter: year on year



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

©PHMI 2021

 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

\*Some merchants temporarily closed branches between March and May 2020 and this will have affected trading day comparisons.

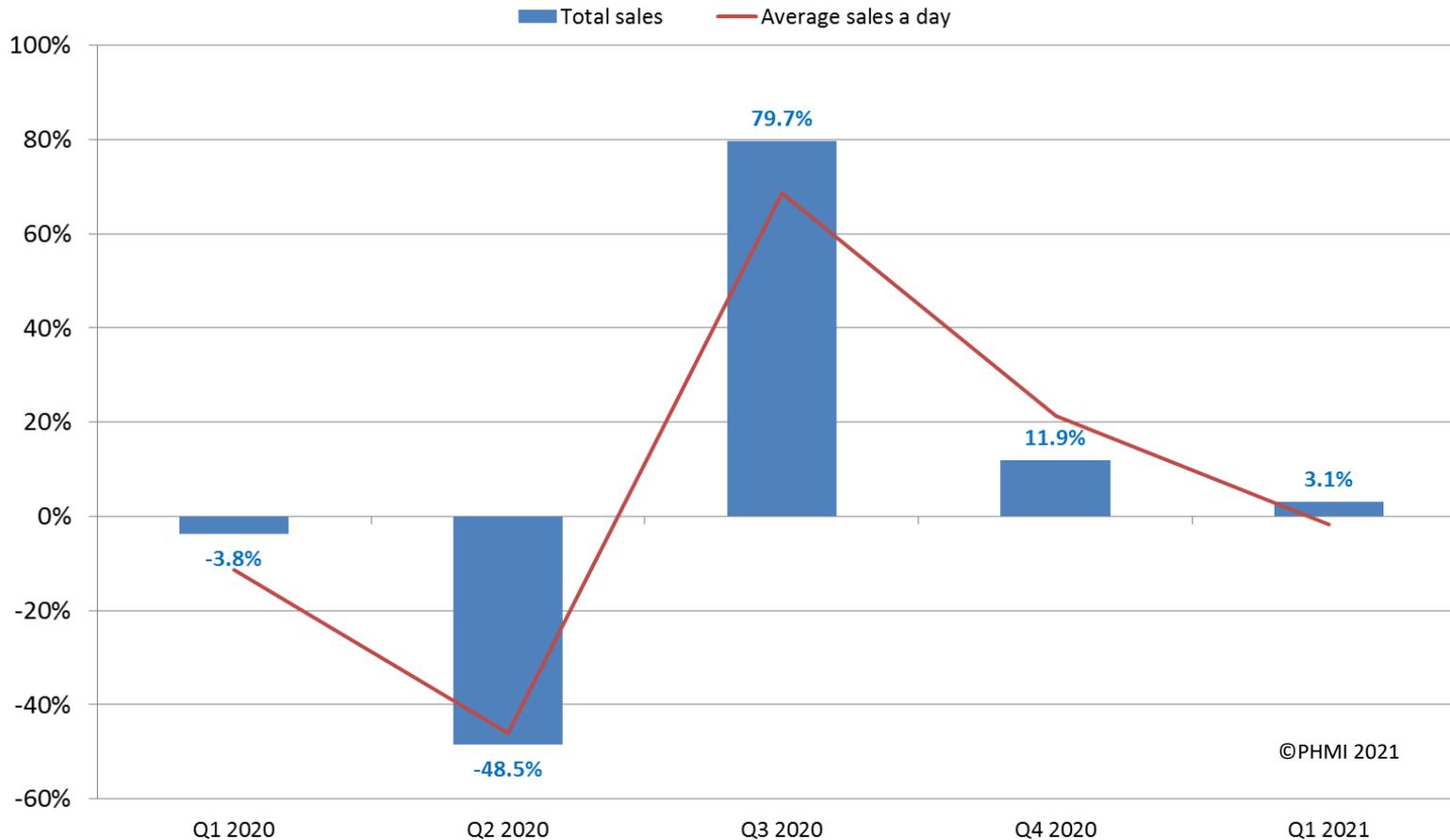
# Quarterly: Quarter v previous quarter

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days

Plumbing & Heating  
Merchant Index



## Quarter v previous quarter



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

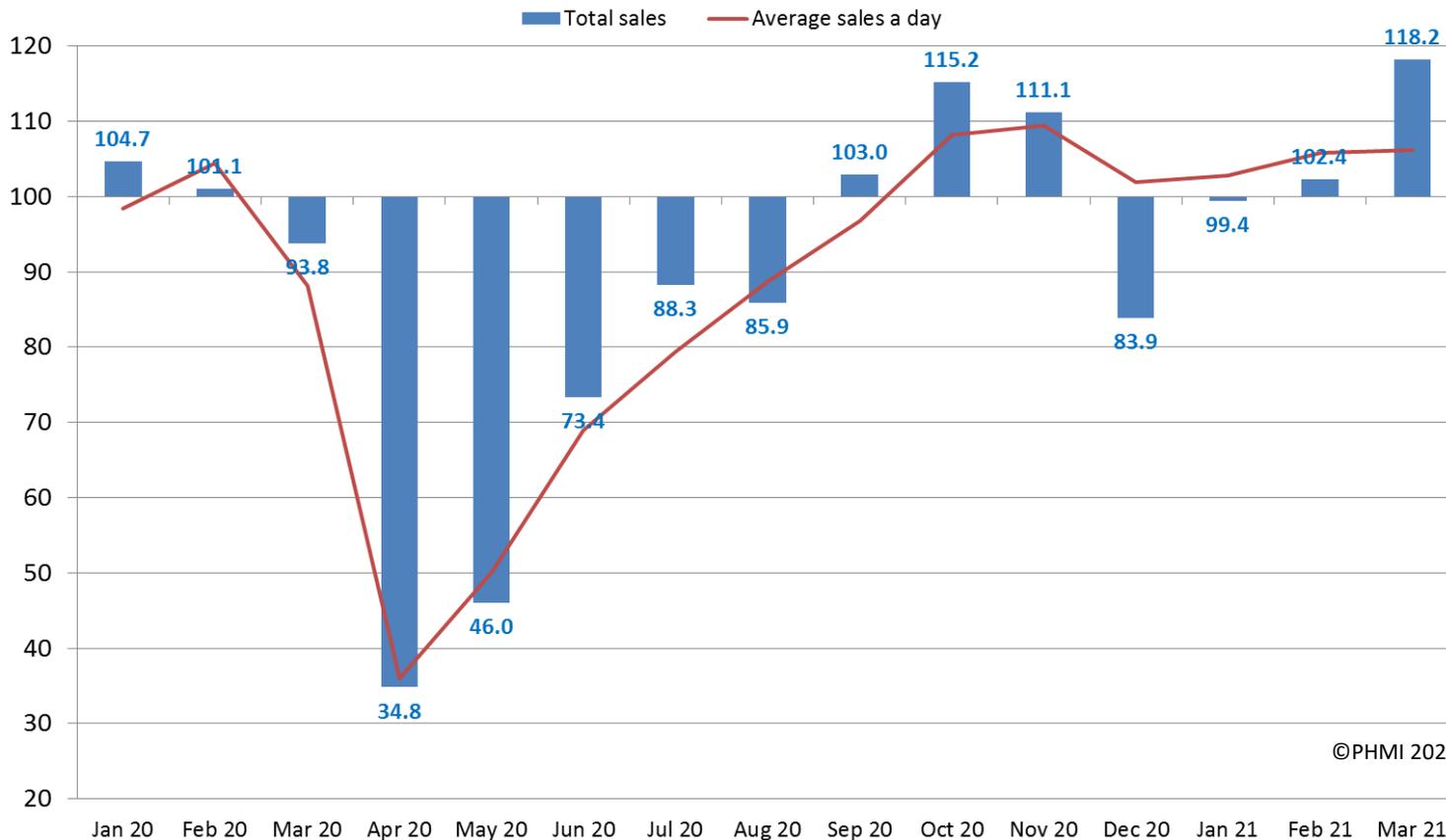
©PHMI 2021

**GfK** Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

# Monthly: Index

Adjusted and unadjusted for trading days\*

## Indices: January 2020 to March 2021



Value figures shown for Total sales

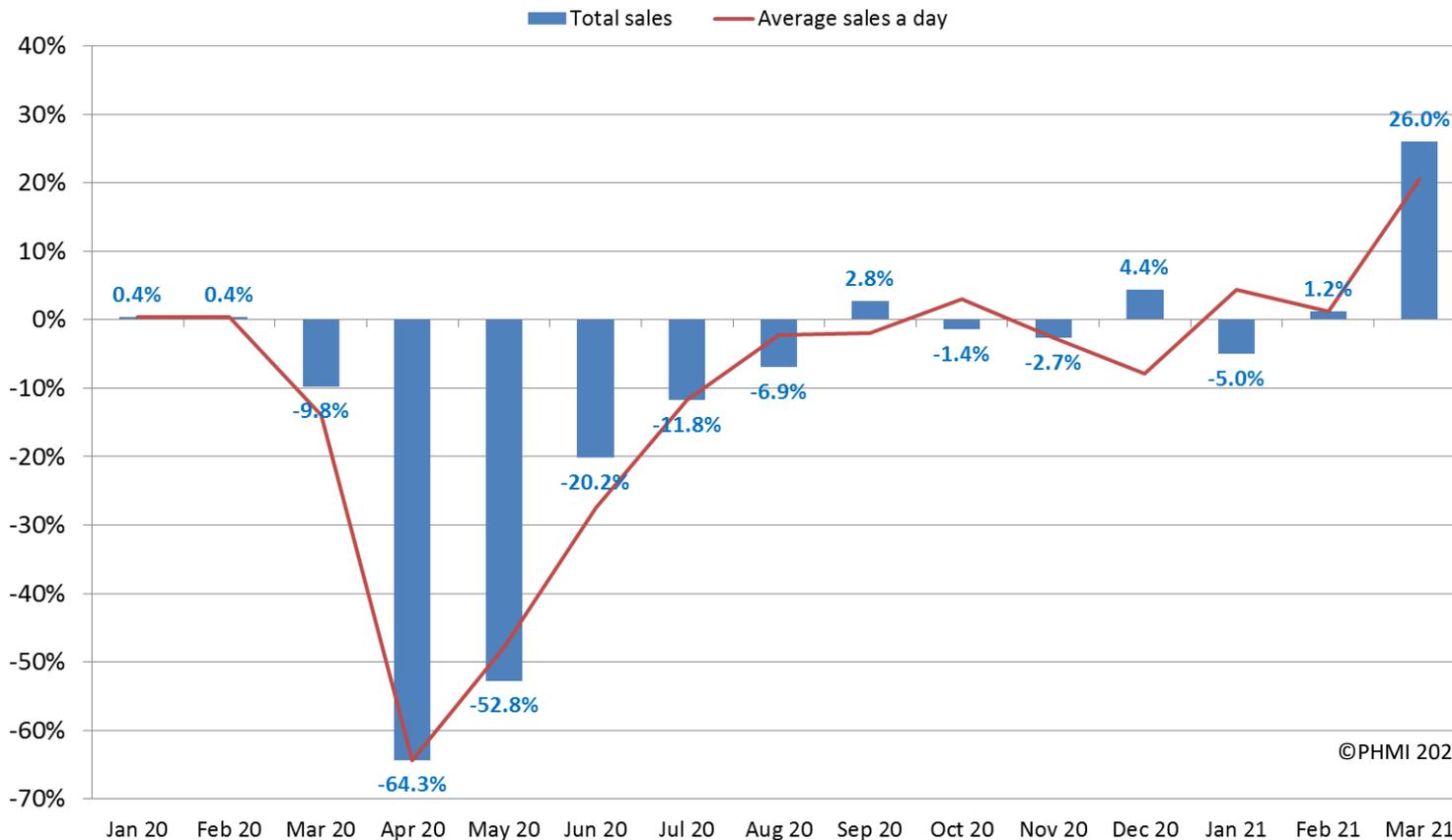
©PHMI 2021

 Source: GfK's Plumbing & Heating Point of Sale Tracking Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

# Monthly: This Year v Last Year

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days\*

## Month: year on year



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

©PHMI 2021

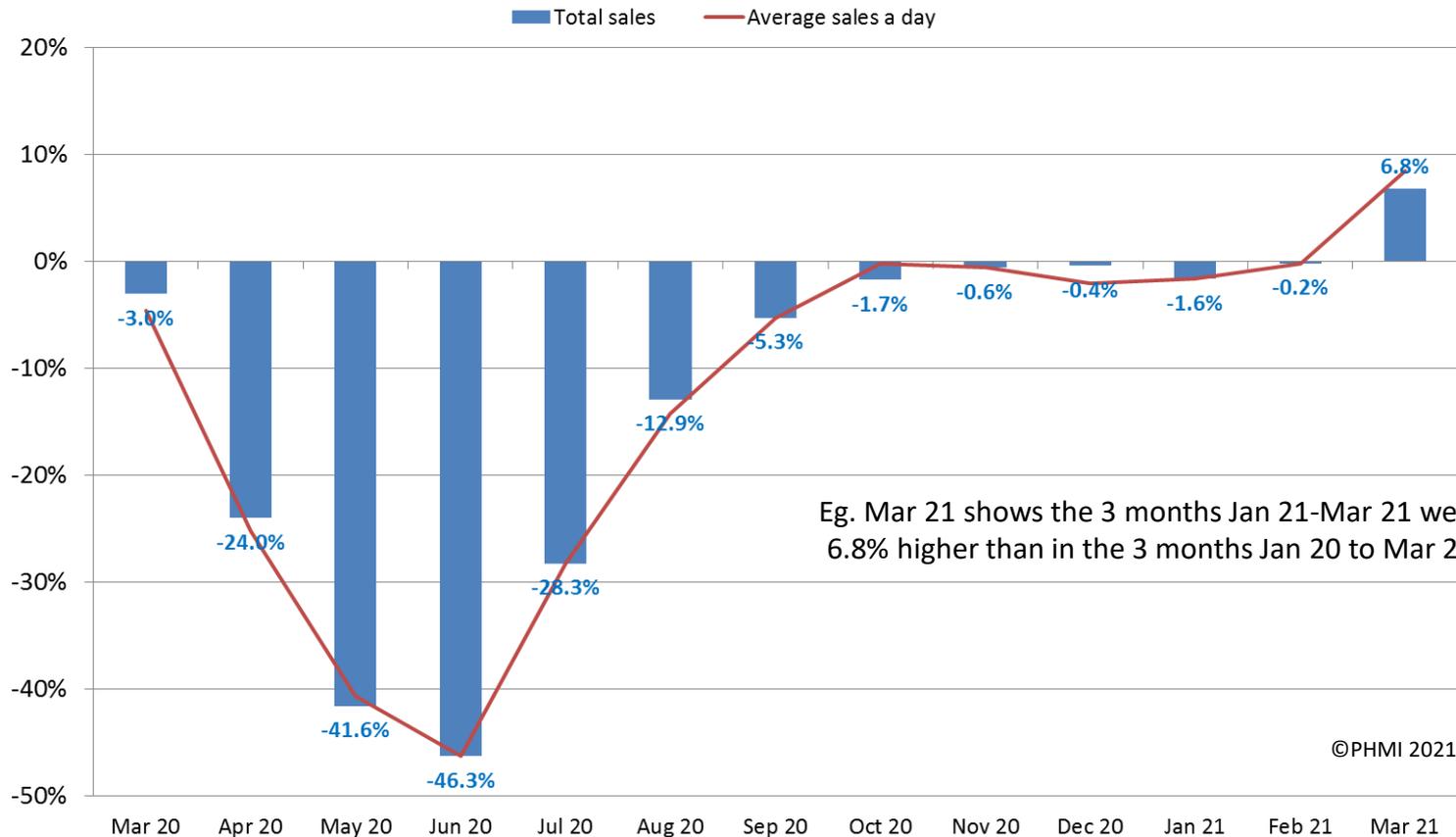
 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

\*Some merchants temporarily closed branches between March and May 2020 and this will have affected trading day comparisons.

# Rolling 3-months: This year v last year

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days\*

## Rolling 3 months: year on year



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

Eg. Mar 21 shows the 3 months Jan 21-Mar 21 were 6.8% higher than in the 3 months Jan 20 to Mar 20

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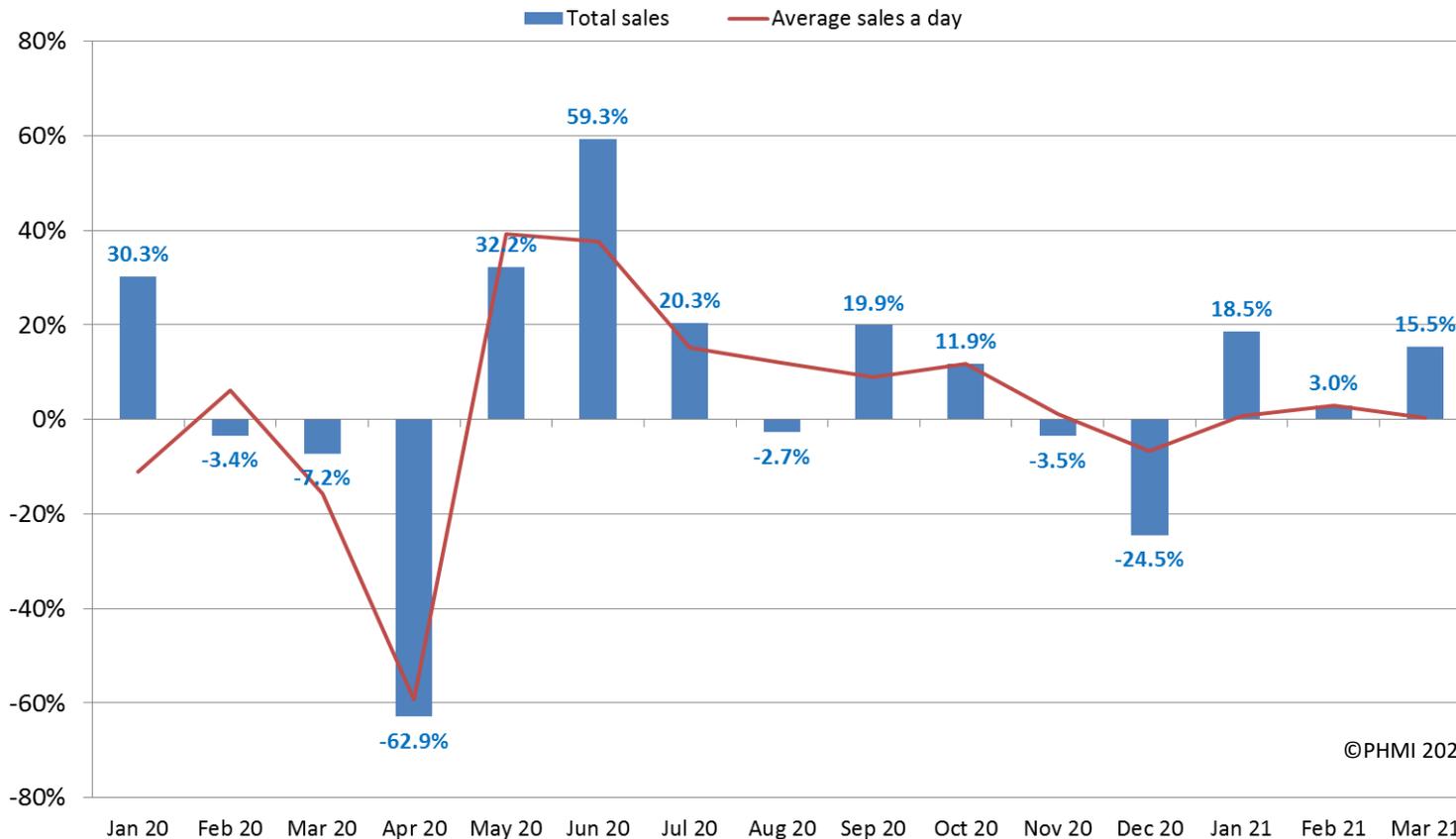
 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

\*Some merchants temporarily closed branches between March and May 2020 and this will have affected trading day comparisons.

# Monthly: Month v previous month

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days\*

## Month v previous month



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

©PHMI 2021

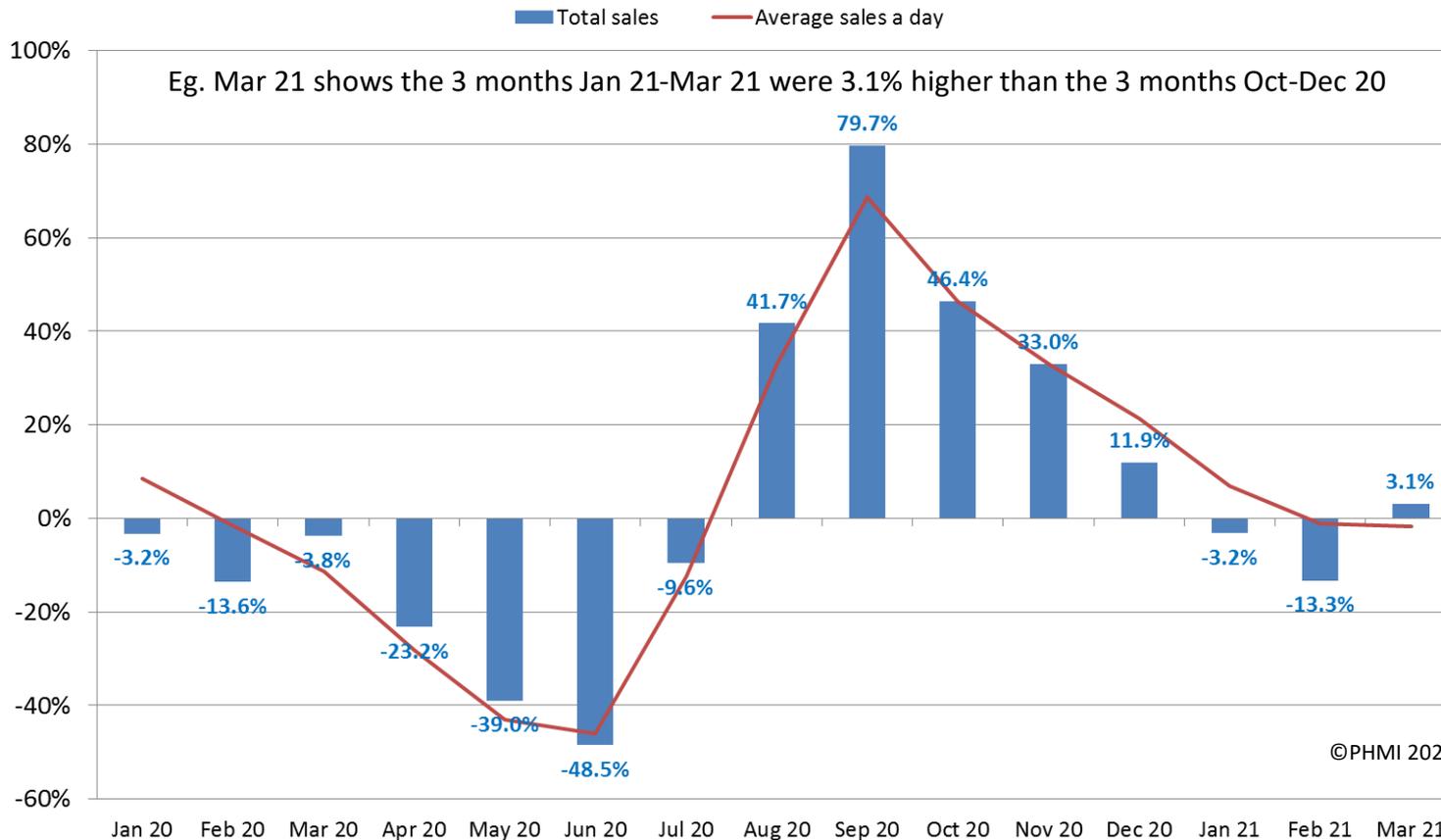
 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

\*Some merchants temporarily closed branches between March and May 2020 and this will have affected trading day comparisons.

# Rolling 3-months: v previous 3 months

Sales indices, adjusted and unadjusted  
for trading days\*

## Rolling 3 months v previous 3 months



Value figures  
shown for Total  
sales

\*Some merchants temporarily closed branches between March and May 2020 and this will have affected trading day comparisons.

 Source: GfK's  
Plumbing & Heating  
Point of Sale Tracking  
Data, Jan 2019 to Mar 2021

# PHMI Trading Days

## Monthly

Index: 20.8

2020											
Jan	Feb	Mar*	Apr*	May*	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
22	20	22	20	19	22	23	20	22	22	21	17
2021											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
20	20	23									

## Quarterly

Index: 62.3

2020			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
64	61	65	60
2021			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
63			

## Half Year

2020	
H1	H2
125	125
2021	
H1	H2

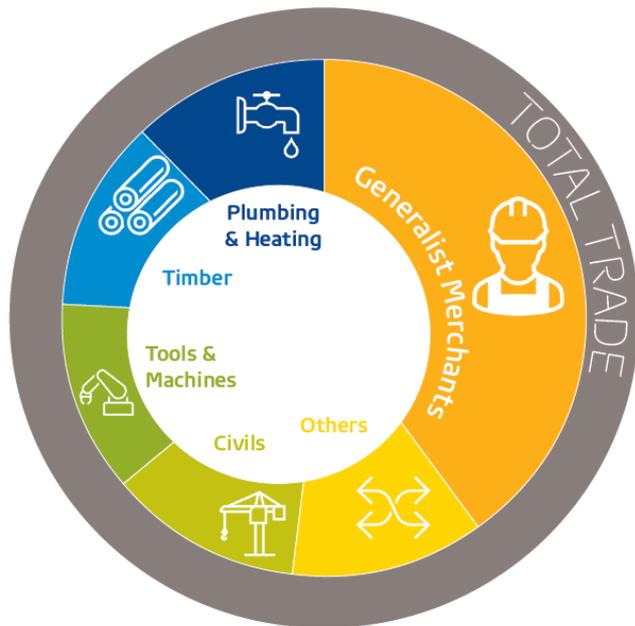
## Full Year

2020
250
2021

\*Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some merchants temporarily closed branches in the period March to May 2020, hence their trading days may have differed from the standard numbers shown above.

# Plumbing & Heating channel definition and merchants

## Plumbing & Heating Merchant Index



### Plumbing Specialists

Plumbing & Hardware Specialists are small outlets handling nails, hardware products, pipes, ironware, paint, faucets, sanitary products, bathroom accessories, ceramic tiles and heating equipment such as boilers, radiators & heating controls.

Their main turnover is generated with product groups such as installation, paint & plumbing/hardware product groups (e.g. nails, saws, scissors, keys).

### Plumbing Merchants

Large outlets handling nails, hardware products, pipes, ironware, paint, faucets, sanitary products, bathroom accessories & kitchen, bathroom furniture, bath tubs and heating equipment such as boilers, radiators & heating controls. Compared with Plumbing Specialists they are bigger & generate a higher turnover.

Their main turnover is generated with bath/kitchen faucets, sanitary & complementary products, bathroom accessories, tiles and bath tubs and bathroom furniture.

Turnover is generated with professional end users (B2B) as well as private end users (B2C).

Merchant partners include:



Plumbing Trade Supplies



# Contacting PHMI

## PHMI Experts

Plumbing & Heating brands who are interested in becoming PHMI Experts and speaking for their markets and building their brands should contact Tom Rigby or Ralph Sutcliffe:



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