

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday, April 13, 2004

## ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES MARCH 2004

**Notice of Revision:** Monthly retail sales estimates were revised based on the results of the 2002 Annual Retail Trade Survey. The Annual Benchmark Report for Retail Trade showing revised unadjusted and adjusted data can be found on our website at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/data/pdf/annpub03.pdf>

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$333.0 billion, an increase of 1.8 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from the previous month and up 8.2 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from March 2003. Total sales for the January through March 2004 period were up 7.7 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The January to February 2004 percent change was revised from 0.7 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) to 1.0 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

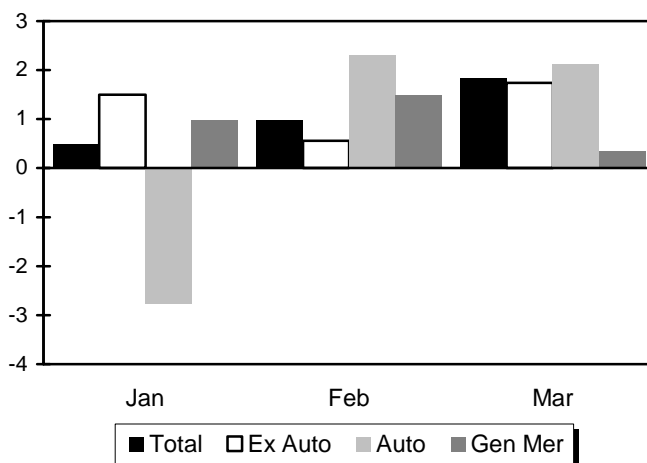
Retail trade sales were up 2.0 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from February 2004 and were 7.9 percent ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 20.8 percent ( $\pm 2.3\%$ ) from March 2003 and sales of food services and drinking places were up 11.1 percent ( $\pm 2.3\%$ ) from last year.

*The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.*

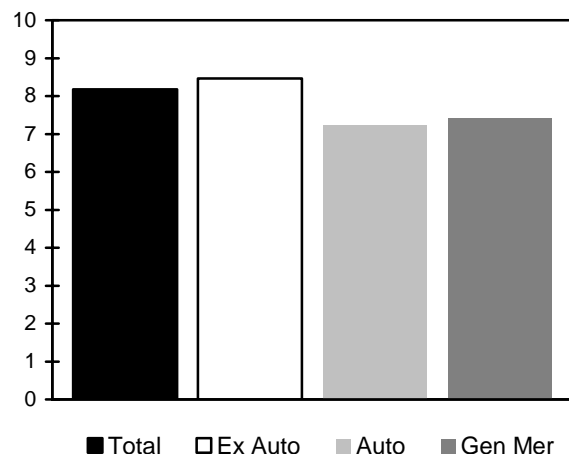
### Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for April is scheduled to be released May 13, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-763-2713.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call 202-482-1986. The data are also available on the Internet - <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

**Table 1. Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted						Adjusted <sup>1</sup>					
		3 Month Total		2004			2003		2004			2003	
		2004	% Chg. 2003	Mar. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	925,764	9.0	334,723	296,244	294,797	303,875	267,895	333,012	327,038	323,918	307,844	301,347
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	704,499	9.4	250,066	225,701	228,732	228,072	203,518	254,953	250,592	249,201	235,056	231,532
	Retail .....	833,489	8.6	302,206	266,219	265,064	274,312	241,996	300,785	294,994	292,253	278,832	272,887
	<b>GAFO<sup>3</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	73,739	71,941	73,170	65,593	(*)	84,175	83,402	78,364	77,445
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	221,265	7.7	84,657	70,543	66,065	75,803	64,377	78,059	76,446	74,717	72,788	69,815
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	201,260	7.6	77,230	64,184	59,846	69,163	58,524	70,918	69,388	67,776	66,121	63,201
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	53,672	50,665	57,802	49,206	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,359	6,219	6,640	5,853	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	24,207	11.6	8,631	7,783	7,793	7,702	6,769	8,666	8,562	8,517	7,891	7,563
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,414	4,436	4,295	3,832	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,369	3,357	3,407	2,937	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	23,221	12.3	7,787	7,580	7,854	6,993	6,585	8,305	8,288	8,261	7,489	7,357
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,420	5,533	4,811	4,611	(*)	5,950	5,880	5,346	5,204
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,160	2,321	2,182	1,974	(*)	2,338	2,381	2,143	2,153
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	75,768	17.8	30,927	22,376	22,465	24,272	19,042	31,360	28,365	28,161	25,957	24,307
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,477	20,623	21,320	17,316	(*)	24,881	24,787	22,876	21,247
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	125,368	4.7	42,633	39,833	42,902	41,130	37,734	43,351	42,990	43,282	41,766	41,706
4451	Grocery stores .....	113,696	4.1	38,620	36,026	39,050	37,391	34,361	38,931	38,572	38,856	37,693	37,718
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,325	2,406	2,395	2,153	(*)	2,751	2,750	2,612	2,582
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	49,621	7.9	17,202	15,884	16,535	15,781	14,719	16,733	16,546	16,601	15,702	15,609
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,507	14,177	13,409	12,625	(*)	14,011	14,092	13,409	13,346
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	68,322	6.2	24,459	21,761	22,102	23,297	20,349	24,265	24,072	23,689	23,344	23,177
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	39,764	10.9	14,732	13,259	11,773	13,399	11,672	16,017	15,711	15,668	14,618	14,243
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	741	756	756	625	(*)	925	922	848	811
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,475	2,343	2,733	2,183	(*)	2,986	2,989	2,744	2,695
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,275	3,972	4,695	3,656	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,622	1,492	1,851	1,547	(*)	1,910	1,940	1,910	1,864
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	18,098	5.7	6,047	5,550	6,501	5,711	5,114	6,787	6,835	6,800	6,446	6,449
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	109,874	9.2	38,791	36,358	34,725	36,432	32,426	41,548	41,409	40,803	38,678	38,584
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	45,473	1.6	16,388	15,104	13,981	16,390	14,388	18,069	18,222	17,945	17,794	18,027
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,290	14,139	16,624	14,582	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,254	20,744	20,042	18,038	(*)	23,187	22,858	20,884	20,557
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	18,191	17,932	17,053	15,396	(*)	19,666	19,386	17,708	17,397
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,063	2,812	2,989	2,642	(*)	3,521	3,472	3,176	3,160
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	25,145	4.7	8,456	8,264	8,425	7,995	7,899	8,859	8,834	8,974	8,593	8,520
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	52,836	11.0	17,884	17,028	17,924	15,797	15,310	16,835	16,936	16,780	15,560	15,557
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,862	10,577	9,462	8,798	(*)	10,755	10,738	9,815	9,819
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	92,275	12.7	32,517	30,025	29,733	29,563	25,899	32,227	32,044	31,665	29,012	28,460

(\*) Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these business classifications.

(NA) Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

Note: Totals include data for business classifications not shown separately.

(1) Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-12-ARIMA program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are released on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

(2) Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

(3) GAFO represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances(443), clothing & accessories(448), sporting goods, hobby, book, music (451), general merchandise(452), office supplies, stationery, and gift stores(4532)).

(4) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

**Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change <sup>1</sup>					
		Mar. 2004 Advance from --		Feb. 2004 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2004 through Mar. 2004 from --	
		Feb. 2004 (p)	Mar. 2003 (r)	Jan. 2004 (r)	Feb. 2003 (r)	Oct. 2003 through Dec. 2003	Jan. 2003 through Mar. 2003
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	1.8	8.2	1.0	8.5	2.3	7.7
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1.7	8.5	0.6	8.2	2.8	8.1
	Retail .....	2.0	7.9	0.9	8.1	2.2	7.3
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	2.1	7.2	2.3	9.5	0.6	6.2
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	2.2	7.3	2.4	9.8	0.5	6.2
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	1.2	9.8	0.5	13.2	2.0	10.4
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	0.2	10.9	0.3	12.7	0.9	11.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	10.6	20.8	0.7	16.7	4.6	15.7
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.8	3.8	-0.7	3.1	1.4	3.6
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.9	3.3	-0.7	2.3	1.4	2.9
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	1.1	6.6	-0.3	6.0	1.0	6.6
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	0.8	3.9	1.6	3.9	5.5	4.9
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	1.9	9.6	0.3	10.3	3.6	9.1
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	-0.7	5.3	0.5	6.0	2.6	4.5
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.3	7.4	1.5	7.3	2.6	7.7
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.8	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	0.9
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	0.3	3.1	-1.6	3.7	-0.1	3.3
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	-0.6	8.2	0.9	8.9	2.9	9.2
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.6	11.1	1.2	12.6	3.3	11.6

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### Source of Data and Reliability of Estimates

**Source of Data:** The Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey each month to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey is a voluntary survey of a sub-sample of about 5,000 firms selected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Firms responding to this survey account for approximately 65% of the dollar volume estimate.

**Reliability of Estimates:** The reliability of the estimates is a function of sampling and nonsampling errors. The margin of sampling error, as included on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence

interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$  or  $\pm 1.5\%$ , and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly levels, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value  $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$  (the estimated value). Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. Nonsampling error, on the other hand, can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling error. Additional survey information is available at <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

**Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend**

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Median CV <sup>(2)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Trend (percent change): Median standard error <sup>(2)</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>(1)</sup>	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
	<b>Retail</b> .....	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.2
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	2.0	1.5	0.7	1.8	-0.1	0.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.2	1.6	0.8	1.9	-0.1	0.6
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	3.7	1.3	1.1	1.9	0.6	0.9
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	1.7	0.6	0.5	1.7	0.1	0.6
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;...</b>						
	<b>supplies dealers</b> .....	2.0	1.0	0.7	1.4	0.0	0.4
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.3
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	3.1	0.5	0.4	1.1	0.1	0.3
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	1.8	0.6	0.6	1.2	0.5	0.6
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	<b>stores</b> .....	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.1	0.2	0.6
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp;</b>						
	<b>music stores</b> .....	2.4	1.7	1.2	1.9	0.3	0.9
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	3.6	3.7	2.0	3.6	0.3	0.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	4.3	2.1	1.0	2.6	0.3	0.9
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ..	2.2	0.8	0.8	1.4	0.4	0.5



(1) These columns measure the difference between the estimates of trend for the same pair of data months, i.e. the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates. Revisions are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.  
 (2) Medians are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.