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Total sales of retail stores in February were \$18.5 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading day differences, but not for price changes, was 1 percent above January 1964 and 4 percent above February 1963.

The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading day differences, the increase in sales from January to February was attributable primarily to durable goods, and more particularly to the automotive and lumber groups. Nondurable goods sales were little changed from the record January rate as gains at general merchandise stores and eating and drinking places were about offset by declines in most other major lines of trade. Based on the full sample, seasonally adjusted sales of all retail stores in January were virtually unchanged from December.

The February sales figures are based on a monthly survey of the Bureau of the Census conducted in cooperation with a representative cross-section of about 2,000 retail firms which, in total, operate some 40,000 stores in the United States. The firms which are cooperating in the early reporting of sales are part of a larger sample group which furnishes figures at a later date. The advance estimates are subject to revision by the estimates subsequently derived from the full sample.

The revision of the total seldom exceeds 1.5 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.7 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups, revisions have been greater, ranging on the average from 1.0 percent for the food group to 2.7 percent for the lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES FOR FEBRUARY 1964

Table 1. SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1964		1963
	February ¹	January ²	February
Retail stores, total ³	18,469	19,137	17,087
Durable-goods stores, total ³	5,871	6,010	5,432
Nondurable-goods stores, total ³	12,598	13,127	11,655
Food group.....	4,838	5,004	4,467
Grocery stores.....	4,392	4,537	4,048
Eating and drinking places.....	1,418	1,441	1,254
General merchandise group.....	1,843	1,865	1,626
Department stores.....	1,044	1,081	905
Apparel group.....	885	1,031	826
Furniture and appliance group.....	871	914	781
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group.....	951	932	886
Automotive group.....	3,529	3,646	3,309
Gasoline service stations.....	1,461	1,563	1,395
Drug and proprietary stores.....	685	683	641

See footnotes below table 2.

Table 2. SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Percentage change, Feb. 1964 from--		Sales (millions of dollars ⁴)				Percentage change, Jan. 1964 from--	
	Jan. 1964	Feb. 1963	1964		1963		Dec. 1963	Jan. 1963
			Feb. ¹	Jan. ²	Dec.	Jan.		
Retail stores, total ³	+1	+4	21,174	20,980	20,908	20,387	0	+3
Durable-goods stores, total ³ ...	+2	+5	6,983	6,832	6,781	6,624	+1	+3
Nondurable-goods stores, total ³	0	+3	14,191	14,148	14,127	13,763	0	+3
Food group.....				5,016	4,966	4,924	+1	+2
Eating and drinking places.....				1,586	1,521	1,480	+4	+7
General merchandise group.....				2,470	2,468	2,308	0	+7
Apparel group.....				1,257	1,243	1,222	+1	+3
Furniture and appliance group.....				1,028	1,010	938	+2	+10
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....				1,263	1,283	1,278	-2	-1
Automotive group.....				3,919	3,906	3,854	0	+2
Gasoline service stations.....				1,635	1,677	1,627	-3	0
Drug and proprietary stores.....				706	689	670	+2	+5

¹ Advance sample estimates.

² Preliminary estimates of full sample.

³ Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

⁴ Data adjusted for seasonal variations and trading day differences have been derived by a new method.