

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE • Social and Economic Statistics Administration • BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in February were estimated at \$30.6 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this Advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$34.9 billion, virtually unchanged from January but about 6 percent above the February sales last year. Adjusted total December-through-February sales averaged about 1 percent below the prior 3 months but about 8 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. unadjusted sales for January were estimated at \$30.7 billion. The seasonally adjusted sales for January were little changed from December.

RESUMPTION OF THE "ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES" SERIES

Effective with the release of this publication, the Bureau of the Census has resumed publishing an Advance estimate of Monthly Retail Sales. The Advance estimate is based on the sum of early week and part-week reports received from a subsample of the Bureau of the Census' monthly retail survey panel. The Advance estimate is scheduled for release on or about the 10th of the month following the end of the data month. Publication of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales was suspended after the February 1970 publication because the Advance estimate had not provided a satisfactory forecast of the later full-sample results. This was largely the result of a change in sample design of the monthly retail survey introduced in September 1968, which resulted in a modification of the

past relationship between the Advance sample data and the full-sample data thus making accurate forecasts more difficult. During the period of suspension, the Bureau of the Census continued to compile the Advance monthly retail sales data and provided these on request as unofficial estimates. Sufficient experience has been gained under the new design to renew publication of Advance estimates.

Nevertheless, the sales figures for the Advance estimates can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers because retailers' weekly records often differ from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns). Additionally, sampling variability between subsample and later full-sample results can be a cause of difference. For many months, such differences are reduced by modifying the Advance estimate on the basis of the relationship between the Advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in Advance and full-sample estimates of total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.4 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.7 percent for the general merchandise group to 2.5 percent for the furniture group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

**MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES**

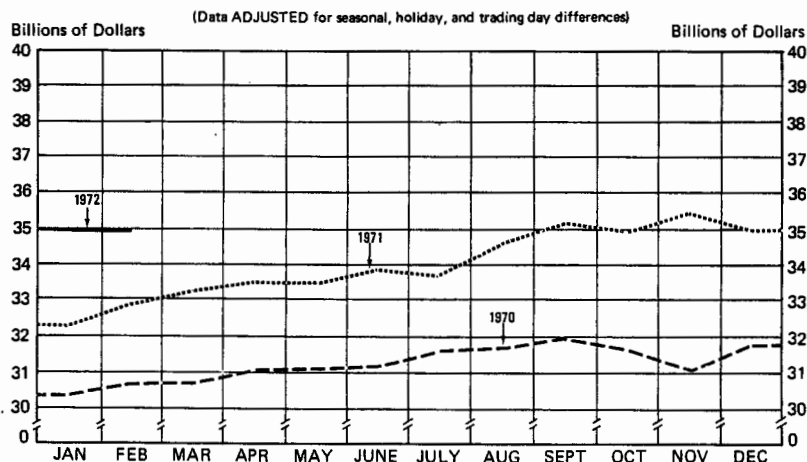


Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1972		1971
	February <sup>1</sup>	January <sup>2</sup>	February
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	30,648 ±	30,668	27,932
Total (excluding automotive group).....	24,590	24,884	22,487
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	10,085	9,680	8,794
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	20,563	20,988	19,138
Food group.....	6,931	7,112	6,712
Grocery stores.....	6,451	6,624	6,219
Eating and drinking places.....	2,424	2,447	2,175
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	4,505	4,462	3,990
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	4,036	4,037	3,563
Department stores.....	2,646	2,711	2,343
Apparel group.....	1,292	1,435	1,240
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,565	1,575	1,299
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	1,651	1,532	1,309
Automotive group.....	6,058	5,784	5,445
Gasoline service stations.....	2,292	2,397	2,075
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,085	1,110	1,070

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change January 1972 from--	
	1972		1971			Dec. 1971	Jan. 1971
	Feb. <sup>1</sup>	Jan. <sup>2</sup>	Dec.	Feb.	Jan.		
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	34,904	34,958	34,896	32,850	32,290	0	+6
Total (excluding automotive group).....	28,459	28,348	28,257	26,757	26,535	0	+6
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	11,263	11,490	11,334	10,240	10,003	+1	+12
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	23,641	23,468	23,562	22,610	22,287	0	+4
Food group.....		7,399	7,523	7,387	7,271	-2	0
Eating and drinking places.....		2,737	2,746	2,535	2,528	0	+8
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		5,923	5,756	5,471	5,330	+3	+8
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		5,421	5,261	4,982	4,906	+3	+9
Apparel group.....		1,729	1,773	1,707	1,689	-2	+1
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,758	1,651	1,502	1,504	+6	+17
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....		2,176	2,067	1,752	1,835	+5	+24
Automotive group.....		6,610	6,639	6,093	5,755	0	+8
Gasoline service stations.....		2,515	2,523	2,361	2,343	0	+7
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,142	1,165	1,163	1,136	-2	-2

<sup>1</sup>Advance sample estimates. <sup>2</sup>Preliminary estimates of full sample. <sup>3</sup>Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	February 1972 from--		December 1971 through February 1972 from--	
	Jan. 1972	Feb. 1971	September 1971 through November 1971	December 1970 through February 1971
Total, retail stores.....	0	+6	-1	+8
Total (excluding automotive group).....	+½	+6½	+1	+6
Durable goods stores, total.....	-2	+10	-4	+16
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+½	+4½	0	+5

Source: Bureau of the Census