

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

March 1990



U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT., Thursday, April 12, 1990

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$ 148.6 billion, a decrease of 0.6 percent ($\pm 1.1\%$) from the previous month, but 5.1 percent above March 1989. Total sales in the first quarter were 5.5 percent above the same quarter a year ago.

Durable goods decreased 0.8 percent ($\pm 3.2\%$) from the previous month. Building material dealers were up 7.9 percent above March last year.

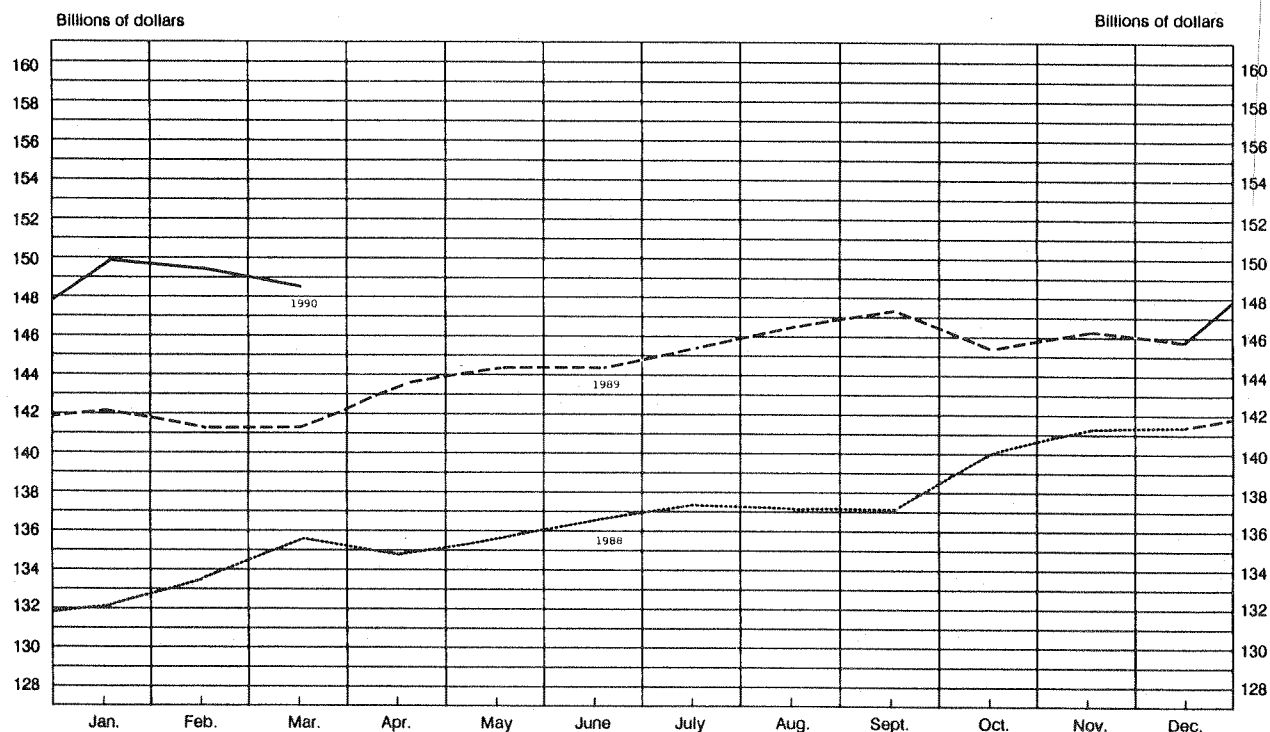
Nondurable goods decreased 0.5 percent ($\pm 1.1\%$) from the previous month but were 6.3 percent above last year. General merchandise stores decreased 1.0 percent from February but were 7.9 percent above March 1989. Gasoline service stations were down 1.7 percent from last month.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 11, 1990, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

January 1988-March 1990

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences)



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This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board (N-8-1) (202-377-3870) and through the Census Bureau's online information service-CENDATA. CENDATA is available from Dialog Information Services, INC. (1-800-334-2464) and CompuServe (1-800-848-8199). The CENDATA staff at the Bureau of the Census (301-763-2074) can provide content information and general guidance.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1990			1989		1990			1989	
		Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar. ^r	Feb. ^r
	Retail trade, total.....	147,123	126,953	132,560	141,371	120,111	148,554	149,461	149,877	141,349	141,179
	Total (excl. auto group)..	114,817	99,440	102,645	107,961	92,792	117,874	118,347	116,603	110,341	110,342
	Durable goods, total.....	54,310	46,493	49,283	53,569	44,938	54,286	54,724	56,217	52,628	52,802
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	7,513	5,897	6,065	6,966	5,621	7,967	8,032	7,839	7,385	7,659
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	4,406	4,595	5,100	4,205	(*)	5,946	5,794	5,414	5,675
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	801	845	891	734	(*)	1,071	1,038	957	980
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	32,306	27,513	29,915	33,410	27,319	30,680	31,114	33,274	31,008	30,837
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	29,658	25,284	27,541	30,982	25,347	27,953	28,345	30,533	28,502	28,384
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	22,284	24,492	27,283	22,479	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,229	2,374	2,428	1,972	(*)	2,769	2,741	2,506	2,453
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	7,578	6,748	7,150	7,118	6,410	7,845	7,852	7,682	7,394	7,475
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	3,671	3,926	4,022	3,599	(*)	4,244	4,235	4,059	4,166
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	2,412	2,573	2,494	2,235	(*)	2,854	2,743	2,690	2,654
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	600	660	648	558	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	92,813	80,460	83,277	87,802	75,173	94,268	94,737	93,660	88,721	88,377
53	General merchandise group stores..	16,195	12,656	12,069	15,165	11,549	17,769	17,954	17,526	16,466	16,380
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	13,248	10,113	9,701	12,328	9,228	14,416	14,530	14,162	13,342	13,259
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts.)	(*)	10,468	10,011	12,714	9,534	(*)	15,062	14,509	13,745	13,698
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	464	440	581	441	(*)	607	590	572	577
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	2,079	1,928	2,256	1,880	(*)	2,817	2,774	2,552	2,544
54	Food stores.....	30,777	27,159	28,470	29,005	25,732	30,195	30,139	29,864	28,576	28,558
541	Grocery stores.....	28,950	25,507	26,855	27,275	24,244	28,355	28,310	28,062	26,898	26,908
554	Gasoline service stations.....	9,488	8,729	9,427	9,093	8,088	9,802	9,976	10,061	9,403	9,233
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,378	5,667	5,802	7,251	5,291	7,742	7,784	7,651	7,232	7,251
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	565	657	691	555	(*)	800	807	782	786
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	2,028	2,131	2,602	1,978	(*)	2,690	2,691	2,634	2,623
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,552	1,482	1,881	1,362	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,063	1,107	1,468	971	(*)	1,425	1,405	1,291	1,296
58	Eating and drinking places.....	15,066	13,333	13,478	14,293	12,514	15,081	15,308	14,779	14,365	14,367
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,246	4,853	5,254	5,100	4,666	5,236	5,281	5,400	5,010	5,077
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,439	1,478	1,536	1,368	(*)	1,723	1,663	1,661	1,638
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	280	291	357	280	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF.....	(*)	29,602	29,600	34,032	27,360	(*)	39,297	38,526	36,298	36,289

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available. ^rRevised

¹ Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 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 contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-90-02.

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

⁴ GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Mar. 1990 advance from--		Feb. 1990 preliminary from--		Jan. 1990 through Mar. 1990	
		Feb. 1990 prelim.	Mar. 1989 final	Jan. 1990 final	Feb. 1989 final	Oct. 1989 through Dec. 1989	Jan. 1989 through Mar. 1989
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.6	+5.1	-0.3	+5.9	+2.4	+5.5
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	-0.4	+6.8	+1.5	+7.3	+2.4	+6.5
	Durable goods, total.....	-0.8	+3.2	-2.7	+3.6	+3.2	+3.9
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-0.8	+7.9	+2.5	+4.9	+3.5	+3.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-1.4	-1.1	-6.5	+0.9	+2.5	+2.0
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-1.4	-1.9	-7.2	-0.1	+2.5	+1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.1	+6.1	+2.2	+5.0	+3.2	+4.2
	Nondurable goods, total.....	-0.5	+6.3	+1.1	+7.2	+1.9	+6.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-1.0	+7.9	+2.4	+9.6	+3.1	+7.6
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.8	+8.0	+2.6	+9.6	+3.4	+7.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	+3.8	+10.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+0.2	+5.7	+0.9	+5.5	+1.2	+5.4
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.2	+5.4	+0.9	+5.2	+0.9	+5.1
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.7	+4.2	-0.8	+8.0	+1.5	+7.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-0.5	+7.1	+1.7	+7.4	0.0	+5.6
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-1.5	+5.0	+3.6	+6.5	+3.3	+4.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.9	+4.5	-2.2	+4.0	+0.9	+5.8

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Feb. 1990 prelim.	Jan. 1990 final	Feb. 1989	Feb. 1990 prelim.	Jan. 1990 final	Feb. 1989 ²
	Retail trade, total.....	46,443	47,395	42,904	57,218	56,277	52,736
53	General merchandise group stores.....	11,646	11,046	10,609	16,608	16,082	15,113
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	9,812	9,393	8,931	14,138	13,692	12,850
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	10,159	9,692	9,226	14,596	14,067	13,237
533	Variety stores.....	356	331	334	486	468	454
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	1,478	1,322	1,344	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	15,508	16,308	14,630	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	15,290	16,103	14,435	16,821	16,601	15,880
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	3,009	2,951	2,726	4,361	4,221	3,940
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,059	1,071	1,024	1,469	1,475	1,418
566	Shoe stores.....	638	655	574	910	876	815
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,908	3,136	2,779	3,217	3,220	3,078

NA Not available. ² Revised

¹ Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 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 contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-90-02.

² Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).



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Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately - 0.4 percent to + 1.2 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.4 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for February 1990 and final estimates for January 1990 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-90-02). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up .8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is - .4 percent to +2.0 percent. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of Business	Estimated coefficient of Variation in percent of the						Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Advance-to-preliminary ratio		Ratio to same month a year ago	Dollar volume sales est.	Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter	Range ²		Mean	Aver. of absolute diff.	
		Range ¹		Median	Median	Median	Median	From	To		
		From	To								
	Retail trade, total.....	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0	-0.4	+1.2	+0.1	0.4
	Total (excl. auto).	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.9	-0.3	+0.5	+0.1	0.2
	Durable goods, total..	1.4	2.0	1.6	2.3	1.8	2.2	-0.9	+1.7	-0.1	0.7
52	Building materials, group stores.....	1.1	3.0	1.7	3.8	3.2	3.1	-1.9	+3.1	0.0	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	2.4	2.0	3.2	2.6	3.0	-2.1	+2.9	-0.1	0.9
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.3	2.0	1.6	4.0	2.8	3.3	-2.5	+3.3	-0.1	1.0
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores.....	1.3	3.8	2.1	4.2	3.9	3.1	-1.9	+5.0	+0.5	1.5
	Nondur. stores, total...	0.5	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.9	-0.2	+0.7	+0.1	0.2
53	General merch. group, total.	0.2	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	-0.9	+1.3	0.0	0.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	-0.5	+1.2	+0.1	0.4
54	Food stores.....	0.8	1.3	1.0	1.7	1.3	1.6	-0.4	+1.5	+0.2	0.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.5	0.3	1.8	1.3	1.6	-0.5	+1.3	+0.2	0.4
554	Gasoline service stations...	0.6	1.0	0.9	2.9	2.1	2.7	-1.8	+1.9	0.0	0.7
56	Apparel and acc. stores....	1.1	3.6	1.7	2.5	2.0	1.9	-3.9	+3.8	+0.2	1.4
58	Eating and drinking	0.4	1.9	0.8	2.7	2.3	2.6	-1.3	+1.6	+0.2	0.8
591	Drug and proprietary	0.6	1.8	0.7	2.5	1.9	2.1	-1.7	+2.1	+0.3	0.7

¹ The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of November 1988 - October 1989.

² The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, March 1989 - February 1990. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period October 1988 - September 1989.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.