

Advance Monthly Retail Sales



U.S. Department of Commerce
ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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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 \$149.6 billion, a decrease of 0.8 percent ($\pm 1.8\%$) from the previous month and were 0.2 percent ($\pm 1.6\%$) below March 1990. Total sales in the first quarter were 0.7 percent ($\pm 1.6\%$) below the same quarter a year ago.

Durable goods decreased 0.9 percent ($\pm 4.5\%$) from the previous month and were 4.8 percent below March last year. Building material dealers decreased 4.4 percent from February and were 7.0 percent below March 1990. Automotive dealers sales were down 5.6 percent from a year ago.

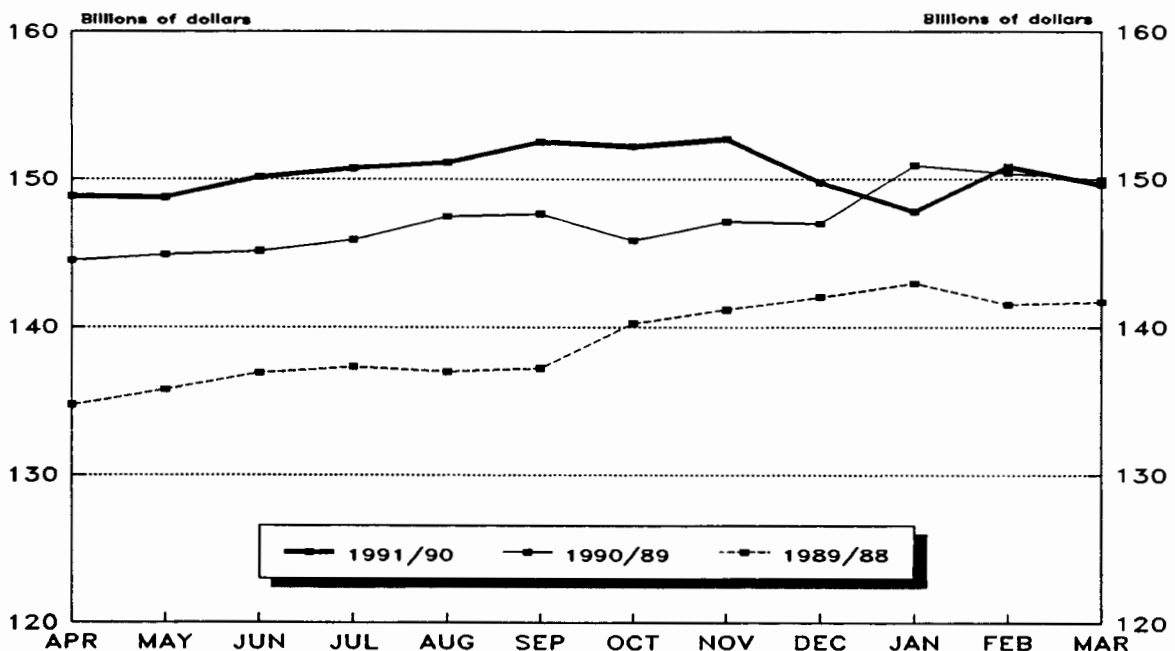
Nondurable goods decreased 0.8 percent ($\pm 1.1\%$) from the previous month but were 2.4 percent above last year. General merchandise stores decreased 2.2 percent from February while apparel sales decreased 4.9 percent in the same period.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 14, 1991 at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

April 1988 - March 1991

(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				
		1991			1990		1991			1990	
		Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar. ¹	Feb. ¹
	Retail trade, total.....	147,448	128,433	130,903	149,192	128,033	149,602	150,822	147,803	149,942	150,388
	Total (excl. auto group)...	116,296	101,488	105,247	115,192	99,695	119,400	120,352	118,617	117,937	118,342
	Durable goods, total.....	51,719	45,269	43,954	55,759	47,400	52,546	53,024	50,897	55,175	55,563
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	6,795	5,705	5,626	7,427	5,907	7,314	7,650	7,270	7,867	7,945
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	4,091	4,097	5,395	4,390	(*)	5,404	5,141	5,721	5,815
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	863	891	1,064	832	(*)	1,146	1,085	1,125	1,105
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	31,152	26,945	25,656	34,000	28,338	30,202	30,470	29,186	32,005	32,046
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	28,806	24,876	23,457	31,397	26,191	27,751	27,919	26,656	29,343	29,395
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	21,671	20,760	27,344	22,988	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,069	2,199	2,603	2,147	(*)	2,551	2,530	2,662	2,651
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	7,258	6,533	6,705	7,727	6,862	7,568	7,527	7,303	7,956	7,926
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	3,631	3,667	4,401	3,860	(*)	4,140	4,012	4,414	4,411
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	2,287	2,422	2,652	2,369	(*)	2,691	2,616	2,818	2,797
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	654	706	800	695	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	95,729	83,164	86,949	93,433	80,633	97,056	97,798	96,906	94,767	94,825
53	General merchandise group stores.....	16,389	12,919	12,335	16,350	12,809	17,680	18,085	17,484	17,807	17,934
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	13,439	10,499	10,007	13,299	10,144	14,435	14,829	14,255	14,377	14,348
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	10,857	10,310	13,740	10,523	(*)	15,292	14,666	14,870	14,842
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	454	433	559	476	(*)	592	582	605	620
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,966	1,895	2,492	2,189	(*)	2,664	2,647	2,825	2,966
54	Food stores.....	31,007	27,289	29,451	30,499	26,903	30,701	30,338	30,650	29,852	29,910
541	Grocery stores.....	28,937	25,518	27,676	28,523	25,119	28,707	28,385	28,680	27,909	27,941
554	Gasoline service stations.....	10,268	9,490	10,667	10,014	9,003	10,707	10,871	11,409	10,302	10,301
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,701	5,790	5,641	7,587	5,684	7,632	8,027	7,475	7,995	7,856
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	558	611	718	568	(*)	789	749	835	802
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,978	1,966	2,710	2,044	(*)	2,666	2,470	2,835	2,747
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,716	1,531	2,112	1,575	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,138	1,120	1,518	1,089	(*)	1,532	1,430	1,503	1,462
58	Eating and drinking places.....	15,555	13,901	13,927	15,221	13,252	15,555	15,833	15,304	15,191	15,093
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	6,191	5,633	5,771	5,429	5,043	6,172	6,103	5,925	5,445	5,470
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,593	1,629	1,606	1,421	(*)	1,903	1,826	1,719	1,698
5961 (pt)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	289	312	388	297	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF ⁴	(*)	29,680	29,126	36,540	29,933	(*)	39,152	37,709	39,468	39,410

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

NA Not available.

¹Revised.

¹Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustments use 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-91-02.

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

³Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

⁴GAF 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. 1991 advance from--		Feb. 1991 preliminary from--		Jan. 1991 through Mar. 1991 from--	
		Feb. 1991 prelim.	Mar. 1990 final	Jan. 1991 final	Feb. 1990 final	Oct. 1990 through Dec. 1990	Jan. 1990 through Mar. 1990
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.8	-0.2	+2.0	+0.3	-1.4	-0.7
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	-0.8	+1.2	+1.5	+1.7	-0.6	+1.5
	Durable goods, total.....	-0.9	-4.8	+4.2	-4.6	-2.8	-6.8
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-4.4	-7.0	+5.2	-3.7	-1.3	-5.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.9	-5.6	+4.4	-4.9	-4.6	-8.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.6	-5.4	+4.7	-5.0	-4.9	-8.8
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+0.5	-4.9	+3.1	-5.0	-0.9	-6.0
	Nondurable goods, total.....	-0.8	+2.4	+0.9	+3.1	-0.7	+3.0
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-2.2	-0.7	+3.4	+0.8	+1.0	-0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.) ²	-2.7	+0.4	+4.0	+3.4	+2.2	+1.4
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	(NA)	(NA)	+4.3	+3.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+1.2	+2.8	-1.0	+1.4	-0.2	+2.8
541	Grocery stores.....	+1.1	+2.9	-1.0	+1.6	-0.2	+2.9
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.5	+3.9	-4.7	+5.5	-9.9	+6.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-4.9	-4.5	+7.4	+2.2	-0.8	-2.0
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-1.8	+2.4	+3.5	+4.9	+2.5	+3.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+1.1	+13.4	+3.0	+11.6	+2.4	+10.5

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

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Feb. 1991 prelim.	Jan. 1991 final	Feb. 1990	Feb. 1991 prelim.	Jan. 1991 final	Feb. ² 1990
	Retail trade, total.....	47,757	49,228	46,241	58,370	57,630	56,616
53	General merchandise group stores.....	11,883	11,275	11,749	16,639	16,064	16,456
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	10,212	9,724	9,844	14,403	13,872	13,904
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	10,559	10,015	10,213	15,106	14,206	14,611
533	Variety stores.....	345	320	368	466	451	497
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	1,326	1,231	1,537	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	15,614	17,034	15,159	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	15,371	16,820	14,933	16,910	17,093	16,428
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	3,224	3,039	3,027	4,663	4,361	4,375
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,131	1,127	1,080	1,580	1,538	1,506
566	Shoe stores.....	679	655	653	967	896	929
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	3,435	3,450	3,005	3,762	3,531	3,299

NA Not available. ¹Revised.

¹Data 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-91-02.

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

Note: The large (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).

Official 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 -1.1 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 1991 and final estimates for January 1991 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-91-02). 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 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is -0.4 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	Avg. of absolute diff.	
		Range ¹		Median	Median	Median	Median	Range ²		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.
		From	To					From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0	-1.1	+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
	Nondurable goods, 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 accessory 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 places.....	0.4	1.9	0.8	2.7	2.3	2.6	-1.3	+1.6	-0.2	0.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.6	1.8	0.7	2.5	1.9	2.1	-1.7	+2.1	+0.3	0.7

¹The 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.

²The 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 1990 - February 1991. 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 of the measures of sampling variability.

