

INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES. The annual revision of the monthly retail sales estimates will be published in the press release the week of April 28. The estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 1997.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST., Thursday, March 13, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
FEBRUARY 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for February adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$213.2 billion, an increase of 0.8 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 5.1 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from February 1996. Total sales for the December through February period were 5.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above the same period a year ago. The December 1996 to January 1997 percent change was revised from +0.6 ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +1.5 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Durable goods increased 1.6 percent ($\pm 1.3\%$) from January and were 5.5 percent above February 1996.

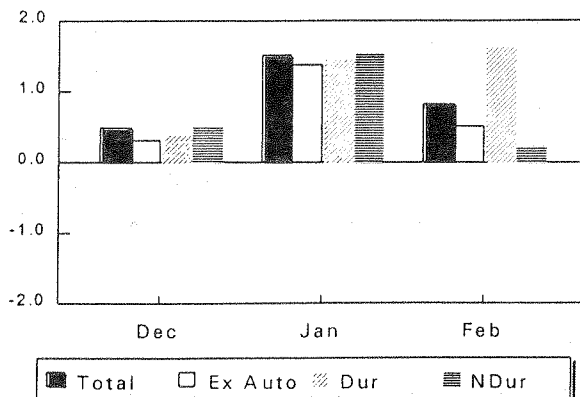
Nondurable goods increased 0.2 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from January and were 4.8 percent above February 1996.

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

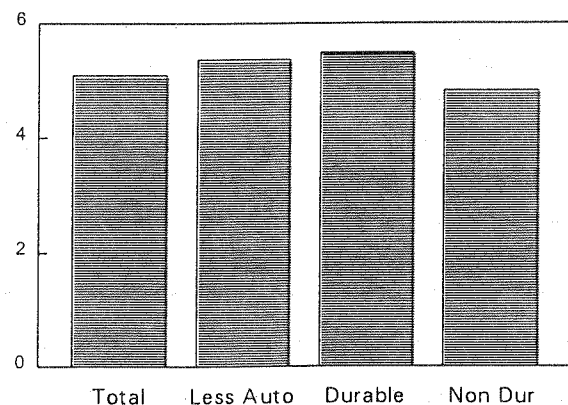
Percent Change in Retail Sales

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

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for March is scheduled to be released April 11, 1997 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

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/svds/www/advtable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1997		1996			1997		1996		
		Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	Retail trade, total	183,653	187,555	246,423	181,901	174,839	213,175	211,456	208,319	202,840	199,132
	Total (excl. auto group)...	135,989	141,044	202,020	134,156	131,644	160,183	159,359	157,218	152,000	150,165
	Durable goods, total.....	75,270	75,016	91,505	74,500	69,646	87,595	86,179	84,945	83,043	80,556
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	8,606	8,746	10,211	8,151	7,983	11,583	11,330	11,154	10,519	10,275
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	6,887	7,623	6,440	6,246	(*)	8,718	8,565	8,070	7,857
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,052	1,290	934	986	(*)	1,255	1,232	1,194	1,175
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	47,664	46,511	44,403	47,745	43,195	52,992	52,097	51,101	50,840	48,967
551.2.5, 6.7.9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	45,026	43,800	41,573	45,079	40,538	49,863	49,048	48,061	47,804	45,961
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	38,536	36,568	39,527	35,894	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,711	2,830	2,666	2,657	(*)	3,049	3,040	3,036	3,006
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	9,814	10,621	16,049	9,891	10,153	11,465	11,429	11,381	11,161	10,933
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	5,286	6,849	4,826	4,826	(*)	5,815	5,731	5,497	5,321
5722.31.4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,566	7,564	4,247	4,531	(*)	4,766	4,778	4,751	4,720
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	679	937	593	636	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	108,383	112,539	154,918	107,401	105,193	125,580	125,277	123,374	119,797	118,576
53	General merchandise group stores....	21,297	20,539	44,492	20,413	18,514	27,488	27,015	26,235	25,340	24,898
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	16,549	15,791	35,813	15,706	14,144	21,604	21,168	20,713	19,706	19,402
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	15,997	36,333	16,037	14,413	(*)	21,278	21,059	20,170	19,591
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	540	1,204	555	458	(*)	722	696	667	642
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,208	7,475	4,152	3,912	(*)	5,125	4,826	4,967	4,854
54	Food stores.....	32,420	35,306	38,104	32,674	33,681	35,908	35,989	35,852	34,805	34,957
541	Grocery stores.....	30,689	33,503	35,598	31,000	32,054	33,948	33,979	33,935	32,979	33,114
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,003	12,783	13,205	11,435	11,678	13,702	13,730	13,461	12,594	12,571
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,155	6,906	15,051	7,352	6,472	9,630	9,589	9,327	9,608	9,166
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	746	1,487	684	675	(*)	898	793	858	827
562.3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	1,982	4,321	2,194	1,892	(*)	2,792	2,711	2,806	2,691
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,512	6,313	2,646	2,272	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,148	2,012	1,279	1,129	(*)	1,577	1,574	1,609	1,572
58	Eating and drinking places.....	17,997	18,554	19,943	18,347	17,583	20,221	20,344	20,104	19,856	19,537
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,362	7,733	9,433	6,961	6,995	7,857	7,811	7,663	7,162	7,116
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,786	2,592	1,674	1,705	(*)	2,025	1,956	1,940	1,962
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,785	6,178	3,388	3,716	(*)	3,963	3,991	3,995	3,839
53.56.57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	44,517	93,241	43,827	41,171	(*)	56,158	55,206	53,804	52,632

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

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

(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-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-97-01.

(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 (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

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, but not for price changes)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change ¹					
		Feb. 1997 Advance from --		Jan. 1997 Preliminary from --		Dec. 1996 through Feb. 1997 from --	
		Jan. 1997 (p)	Feb. 1996 (r)	Dec. 1996 (r)	Jan. 1996 (r)	Sep. 1996 through Nov. 1996	Dec. 1995 through Feb. 1996
	Retail trade, total	0.8	5.1	1.5	6.2	1.9	5.2
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.5	5.4	1.4	6.1	1.7	5.3
	Durable goods, total	1.6	5.5	1.5	7.0	2.0	5.8
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	2.2	10.1	1.6	10.3	1.4	8.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.7	4.2	1.9	6.4	2.5	5.2
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous auto- motive dealers.....	1.7	4.3	2.1	6.7	2.7	5.4
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.3	2.7	0.4	4.5	-0.4	2.9
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.2	4.8	1.5	5.7	1.9	4.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	1.8	8.5	3.0	8.5	3.7	7.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	2.1	9.6	2.2	9.1	4.5	8.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	1.0	8.6	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.2	3.2	0.4	3.0	0.6	3.0
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.1	2.9	0.1	2.6	0.3	2.8
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.2	8.8	2.0	9.2	3.5	8.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.4	0.2	2.8	4.6	1.2	2.0
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.6	1.8	1.2	4.1	1.2	2.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.6	9.7	1.9	9.8	2.3	9.0

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

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

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Data

The Advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the Advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the Advance and because of sampling variability present in each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used 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 level, 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. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average

difference between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

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

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total.....	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.3
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.3	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	2.0	1.1	2.8	0.4	1.3
55 ex 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.1	0.9	1.6	0.5	0.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.9	1.3	0.9	1.7	0.5	0.6
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.3	0.8	1.7	-0.1	0.7
	Nondurable goods, total	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.5	-0.1	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	-0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations	2.1	1.1	1.4	1.1	0.2	0.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.5	0.1	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places	5.0	1.0	1.1	2.2	-0.1	0.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.6	0.7	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.5

- (1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.
- (2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.

