

INTENTION TO REVISE. We are changing the sample base and the sample design for the survey that produces the preliminary and final monthly retail sales estimates. The seasonally adjusted May, April and March 1997 estimates along with the May and April 1996 estimates will be revised the week of June 23. The not seasonally adjusted May and April 1997 estimates will also be revised.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT, Thursday, June 12, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
MAY 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for May adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$210.3 billion, a decrease of 0.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month but up 3.0 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from May 1996. Total sales for the March through May period were 4.1 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) above the same period a year ago. The March to April 1997 percent change was revised from -0.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to -0.9 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$).

Durable goods decreased 0.3 percent ($\pm 1.3\%$) from April but were 3.1 percent above May 1996.

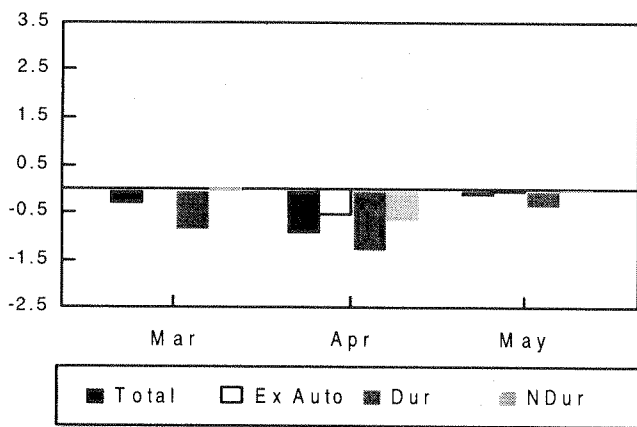
Nondurable goods were unchanged ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month but were 3.0 percent above last year.

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.

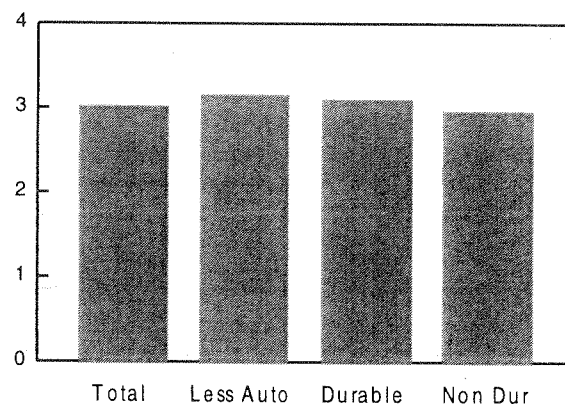
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 June is scheduled to be released July 15, 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/svsd/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	
		May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May	Apr.	May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May (r)	Apr. (r)
	Retail trade, total	220,532	205,543	209,973	213,754	198,610	210,296	210,521	212,397	204,073	202,443
	Total (excl. auto group)...	164,519	151,939	155,319	158,666	147,447	159,560	159,658	160,498	154,637	153,980
	Durable goods, total.....	92,495	87,100	86,718	90,210	82,958	85,745	86,004	87,079	83,135	81,613
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	14,214	12,782	11,081	13,348	11,936	11,955	12,024	12,060	11,153	11,070
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	9,848	8,645	9,830	8,817	(*)	9,406	9,286	8,563	8,318
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,316	1,143	1,479	1,347	(*)	1,267	1,266	1,266	1,284
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	56,013	53,604	54,654	55,088	51,163	50,736	50,863	51,899	49,436	48,463
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	52,927	50,648	51,707	51,891	48,107	47,811	47,962	48,919	46,414	45,470
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	43,334	44,931	45,430	41,745	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,956	2,947	3,197	3,056	(*)	2,901	2,980	3,022	2,993
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,153	10,562	10,949	10,639	10,143	11,654	11,581	11,493	11,172	11,114
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	5,599	5,629	5,489	5,209	(*)	5,944	5,864	5,533	5,524
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,245	4,500	4,323	4,140	(*)	4,797	4,762	4,714	4,662
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	754	777	792	742	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	128,037	118,443	123,255	123,544	115,652	124,551	124,517	125,318	120,938	120,830
53	General merchandise group stores...	27,214	24,247	25,452	25,904	23,479	27,287	27,108	27,385	26,127	26,122
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	21,280	19,000	20,061	20,098	18,311	21,452	21,300	21,548	20,404	20,414
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	19,312	20,378	20,475	18,689	(*)	21,626	21,859	20,759	20,680
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	635	740	705	641	(*)	717	754	687	689
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,612	4,651	5,101	4,527	(*)	5,091	5,083	5,036	5,019
54	Food stores.....	37,706	34,683	36,404	36,348	34,031	36,028	35,968	36,169	35,008	35,092
541	Grocery stores.....	35,583	32,735	34,323	34,399	32,177	33,953	33,922	34,084	33,108	33,206
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,866	12,911	12,970	14,039	12,887	13,032	13,121	13,289	13,282	13,070
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,720	8,648	9,348	9,435	9,026	9,614	9,534	9,586	9,577	9,592
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	775	808	826	765	(*)	888	888	860	847
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,601	2,699	2,967	2,732	(*)	2,744	2,748	2,842	2,834
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,139	3,379	3,278	3,170	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,491	1,729	1,706	1,680	(*)	1,571	1,622	1,634	1,649
58	Eating and drinking places.....	21,198	19,979	20,402	20,742	19,489	19,886	20,079	20,341	19,642	19,666
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,228	7,836	8,281	7,651	7,329	8,090	8,070	8,119	7,479	7,403
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,825	1,854	1,927	1,772	(*)	1,982	1,954	1,900	1,897
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,239	4,215	3,582	3,645	(*)	4,558	4,414	3,984	3,932
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	50,335	52,549	53,126	49,134	(*)	56,460	56,637	54,604	54,522

* 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-97-04.

(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					
		May 1997 Advance from --		Apr. 1997 Preliminary from --		Mar. 1997 through May 1997 from --	
		Apr. 1997 (p)	May 1996 (r)	Mar. 1997 (r)	Apr. 1996 (r)	Dec. 1996 through Feb. 1997	Mar. 1996 through May 1996
	Retail trade, total	-0.1	3.0	-0.9	4.0	0.5	4.1
	Total (excl. automotive group)	-0.1	3.2	-0.5	3.7	0.7	4.2
	Durable goods, total	-0.3	3.1	-1.2	5.4	0.7	4.6
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.6	7.2	-0.3	8.6	3.6	9.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.2	2.6	-2.0	5.0	-0.1	3.8
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.3	3.0	-2.0	5.5	0.0	4.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.6	4.3	0.8	4.2	2.3	3.9
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.0	3.0	-0.6	3.1	0.3	3.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.7	4.4	-1.0	3.8	0.3	5.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.7	5.1	-1.2	4.3	0.2	6.4
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	-1.1	4.6	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.2	2.9	-0.6	2.5	0.7	3.1
541	Grocery stores.....	0.1	2.6	-0.5	2.2	0.5	2.7
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.7	-1.9	-1.3	0.4	-1.5	0.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.8	0.4	-0.5	-0.6	-0.2	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-1.0	1.2	-1.3	2.1	-0.8	2.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.2	8.2	-0.6	9.0	2.0	9.1

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	0.6	0.0	0.3
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.4
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.6	1.8	1.1	2.7	0.4	0.8
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.1	0.8	1.5	0.3	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.2	0.9	1.5	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.1	1.5	0.8	1.8	0.1	1.1
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.3	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	0.9	1.3	1.3	-0.1	0.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores	2.2	1.5	0.7	1.7	0.1	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	0.9	0.9	2.1	0.0	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.7	0.4	1.2	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.

