

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT, Wednesday, October 15, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
SEPTEMBER 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for September adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$215.5 billion, an increase of 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and 5.2 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) above September 1996. Total sales for the third quarter were 5.4 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) above the same quarter a year ago. The July to August 1997 percent change was revised from +0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.6 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Durable goods increased 0.2 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from August and were 6.4 percent above last year. Automotive dealers sales were up 6.9 percent from September 1996.

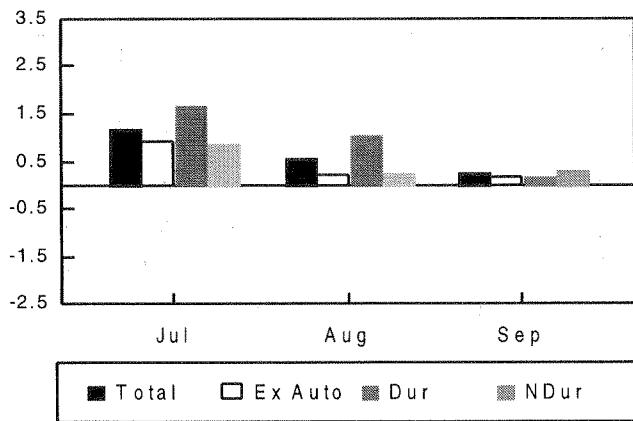
Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 4.4 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 5.0 percent from September 1996 while food sales were up 2.6 percent in the same period.

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.

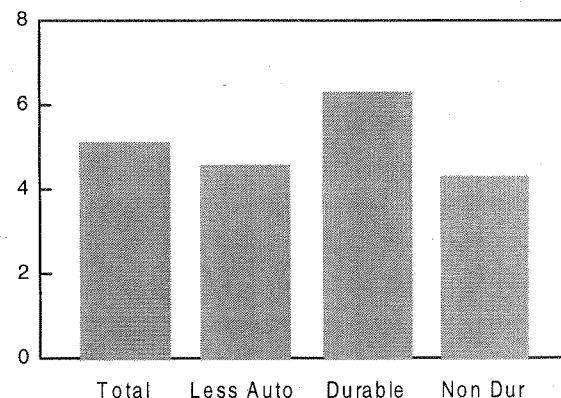
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 October is scheduled to be released November 14, 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	
		Sept. ² (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept.	Aug.	Sept. ² (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept. (r)	Aug. (r)
	Retail trade, total	208,408	220,625	216,161	195,749	212,247	215,510	214,888	213,549	204,880	203,087
	Total (excl. auto group)...	155,272	165,609	160,679	147,371	159,851	162,295	161,999	161,656	155,089	154,172
	Durable goods, total.....	87,838	91,054	91,355	80,509	87,258	88,388	88,194	87,228	83,108	82,386
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	12,578	12,553	13,518	11,634	12,300	11,866	11,929	12,070	11,340	11,310
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	9,733	10,509	8,898	9,454	(*)	9,165	9,292	8,614	8,595
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,355	1,424	1,188	1,298	(*)	1,338	1,330	1,245	1,248
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	53,136	55,016	55,482	48,378	52,396	53,215	52,889	51,893	49,791	48,915
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	49,990	51,749	52,164	45,399	49,142	50,140	49,807	48,843	46,803	45,927
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	44,938	45,150	40,270	42,970	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,267	3,318	2,979	3,254	(*)	3,082	3,050	2,988	2,988
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,865	12,107	11,445	10,721	11,326	12,144	12,077	11,924	11,234	11,167
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	6,285	5,995	5,443	5,793	(*)	6,126	5,995	5,560	5,549
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,979	4,698	4,474	4,669	(*)	5,091	5,079	4,806	4,730
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	867	943	760	832	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	120,570	129,571	124,806	115,240	124,989	127,122	126,694	126,321	121,772	120,701
53	General merchandise group stores...	24,689	27,919	25,586	23,819	26,416	27,711	27,873	27,768	26,396	26,175
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	19,258	22,060	19,866	18,611	20,640	21,736	21,928	21,831	20,656	20,395
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	22,424	20,182	18,938	21,016	(*)	22,397	22,209	20,923	20,777
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	787	725	616	699	(*)	806	777	688	698
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	5,072	4,995	4,592	5,077	(*)	5,139	5,160	5,052	5,082
54	Food stores.....	35,089	37,105	37,239	34,096	36,716	36,525	36,019	36,003	35,602	35,207
541	Grocery stores.....	33,096	34,948	35,130	32,314	34,803	34,403	33,864	33,877	33,696	33,304
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,286	14,030	13,688	12,724	13,795	13,286	13,088	12,913	12,853	12,773
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,576	10,747	9,114	9,052	10,366	9,985	10,053	9,933	9,591	9,463
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	918	810	791	809	(*)	982	969	886	857
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,723	2,471	2,638	2,764	(*)	2,748	2,761	2,792	2,739
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	4,165	3,547	3,352	3,871	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	2,011	1,614	1,511	2,009	(*)	1,662	1,647	1,548	1,603
58	Eating and drinking places.....	19,796	22,045	21,468	19,278	21,250	20,283	20,355	20,387	19,712	19,585
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,833	8,026	8,020	7,114	7,526	8,315	8,249	8,268	7,633	7,633
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	2,107	2,106	1,757	2,032	(*)	2,028	2,011	1,879	1,919
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,944	3,877	3,731	3,508	(*)	4,624	4,615	3,978	3,986
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	58,505	53,269	50,464	56,095	(*)	57,885	57,603	55,030	54,816

* 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-97-08.

(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					
		Sept. 1997 Advance from --		Aug. 1997 Preliminary from --		July 1997 through Sept. 1997 from --	
		Aug. 1997 (p)	Sept. 1996 (r)	July 1997 (r)	Aug. 1996 (r)	Apr. 1997 through June 1997	July 1996 through Sept. 1996
	Retail trade, total	0.3	5.2	0.6	5.8	2.2	5.4
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.2	4.6	0.2	5.1	1.4	4.8
	Durable goods, total	0.2	6.4	1.1	7.0	3.1	6.4
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.5	4.6	-1.2	5.5	-0.7	5.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.6	6.9	1.9	8.1	4.5	7.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.7	7.1	2.0	8.4	4.6	7.5
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.6	8.1	1.3	8.1	3.2	7.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.3	4.4	0.3	5.0	1.6	4.7
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.6	5.0	0.4	6.5	1.5	6.1
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.9	5.2	0.4	7.5	1.3	6.8
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.8	7.8	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	1.4	2.6	0.0	2.3	1.2	2.2
541	Grocery stores.....	1.6	2.1	0.0	1.7	1.1	1.7
554	Gasoline service stations.....	1.5	3.4	1.4	2.5	1.5	2.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-0.7	4.1	1.2	6.2	3.7	5.2
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.4	2.9	-0.2	3.9	0.5	3.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.8	8.9	-0.2	8.1	1.9	8.7

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.....	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	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.