

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Wednesday May 13, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
April 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$222.0 billion, an increase of 0.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 5.2 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from April 1997. Total sales for the February through April period were up 3.8 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The February to March percent change was unrevised from the 0.0 percent reported last month.

Durable goods increased 0.5 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from March and were 7.0 percent above last year. Automotive dealers were 6.4 percent above April 1997.

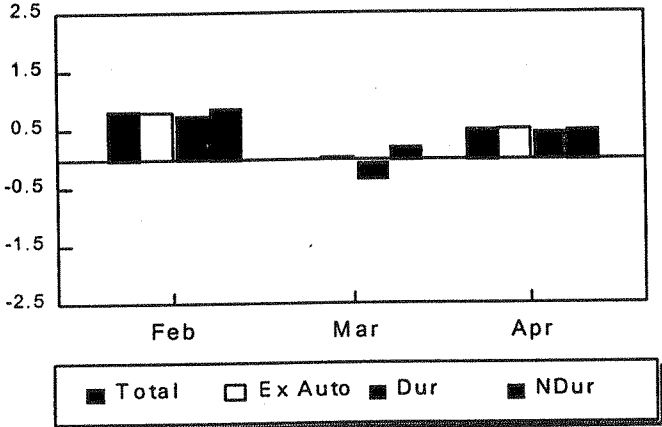
Nondurable goods increased 0.6 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 3.9 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 8.9 percent from April a year ago while food sales were up 2.5 percent during the same period.

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.

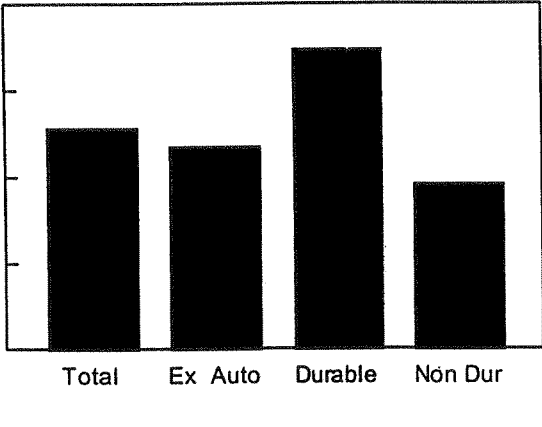
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 May is scheduled to be released June 11, 1998 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				
		1998			1997		1998			1997	
		Apr. ² (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. ² (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	220,796	216,124	191,274	206,666	211,725	222,019	220,837	220,866	211,074	214,516
	Total (excl. auto group).....	163,301	158,571	142,668	152,760	156,422	167,653	166,828	166,823	160,002	161,699
	Durable goods, total.....	94,673	92,770	79,948	88,202	88,108	92,921	92,447	92,778	86,828	88,697
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	14,686	12,595	10,044	13,503	11,568	13,700	13,486	13,485	12,578	12,610
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	9,694	7,854	10,290	9,021	(*)	10,226	10,253	9,772	9,690
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,128	921	1,258	1,073	(*)	1,256	1,212	1,208	1,184
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	57,495	57,553	48,606	53,906	55,303	54,366	54,009	54,043	51,072	52,817
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	54,268	54,377	45,920	50,705	52,163	51,196	50,820	50,853	47,925	49,632
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	46,538	39,302	43,055	44,851	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,176	2,686	3,201	3,140	(*)	3,189	3,190	3,147	3,185
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,911	12,433	11,503	11,045	11,380	13,046	13,104	13,172	12,050	11,953
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	6,086	5,521	5,550	5,606	(*)	6,373	6,405	5,879	5,834
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	5,466	5,154	4,724	4,918	(*)	5,784	5,811	5,278	5,210
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	832	754	781	794	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	126,123	123,354	111,326	118,464	123,617	129,098	128,390	128,088	124,246	125,819
53	General merchandise group stores....	27,584	26,022	22,977	24,328	25,545	29,294	29,055	29,010	26,897	27,619
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	21,806	20,456	18,033	19,048	20,102	23,173	22,958	22,972	21,071	21,779
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	20,830	18,348	19,419	20,480	(*)	23,184	23,364	21,721	22,083
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	870	792	809	944	(*)	970	975	918	976
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,696	4,152	4,471	4,499	(*)	5,127	5,063	4,908	4,864
54	Food stores.....	36,021	35,592	32,574	34,335	36,219	36,449	36,317	36,131	35,570	36,048
541	Grocery stores.....	33,749	33,349	30,491	32,256	34,022	34,159	33,995	33,804	33,391	33,853
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,299	11,976	10,997	13,084	13,166	12,336	12,321	12,482	13,163	13,531
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	10,112	9,303	7,748	8,675	9,445	10,457	10,326	10,324	9,602	9,722
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	809	703	741	770	(*)	942	909	846	851
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,385	2,012	2,471	2,589	(*)	2,624	2,630	2,609	2,672
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,466	2,808	3,152	3,411	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,669	1,430	1,582	1,809	(*)	1,766	1,815	1,665	1,711
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,497	20,314	18,255	19,479	19,764	20,518	20,355	20,306	19,577	19,666
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,602	8,542	8,049	7,846	8,283	8,637	8,533	8,554	8,097	8,097
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,858	1,738	1,810	1,843	(*)	2,035	2,086	1,965	1,950
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,463	3,724	3,812	3,886	(*)	4,485	4,498	4,121	4,040
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	54,554	48,754	50,603	52,933	(*)	60,773	60,905	56,409	57,135

* 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-98-03.

(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					
		Apr. 1998 Advance from --		Mar. 1998 Preliminary from --		Feb. 1998 through Apr. 1998 from --	
		Mar. 1998 (p)	Apr. 1997 (r)	Feb. 1998 (r)	Mar. 1997 (r)	Nov. 1997 through Jan. 1998	Feb. 1997 through Apr. 1997
	Retail trade, total	0.5	5.2	0.0	2.9	1.8	3.8
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.5	4.8	0.0	3.2	1.9	3.9
	Durable goods, total	0.5	7.0	-0.4	4.2	2.1	5.1
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.6	8.9	0.0	6.9	4.8	8.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.7	6.4	-0.1	2.3	1.7	3.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.7	6.8	-0.1	2.4	1.6	3.6
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.4	8.3	-0.5	9.6	2.2	9.6
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.6	3.9	0.2	2.0	1.6	2.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.8	8.9	0.2	5.2	3.1	6.8
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.9	10.0	-0.1	5.4	3.1	7.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	-0.8	5.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.4	2.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.5
541	Grocery stores.....	0.5	2.3	0.6	0.4	0.8	1.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.1	-6.3	-1.3	-8.9	-4.1	-7.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.3	8.9	0.0	6.2	3.7	7.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	4.8	0.2	3.5	2.9	3.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	1.2	6.7	-0.2	5.4	2.1	6.1

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.....	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.