

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday, March 14, 2000.

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
February 2000**

Intention to Revise Retail Estimates: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 1998 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 2000, while corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through March 2000. Revised data are scheduled for release the week of April 24.

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 \$265.7 billion, an increase of 1.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 9.4 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from February 1999. Total sales for the December through February period were up 10.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The December 1999 to January 2000 percent change was revised from +0.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.4 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods increased 0.7 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from January and were 10.2 percent above last year. Automotive sales were up 13.4 percent from February a year ago, while furniture sales were up 8.8 percent from last year.

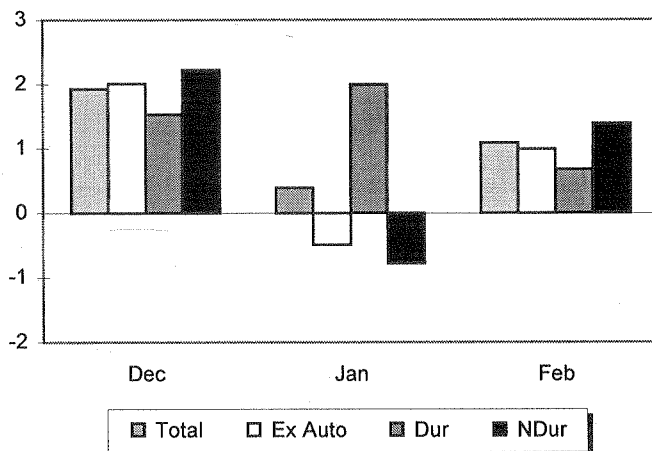
Nondurable goods increased 1.4 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from January and were up 8.8 percent from February 1999. Gasoline sales were up 26.6 percent from February a year ago, while drug store sales were up 6.1 percent from last year.

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.

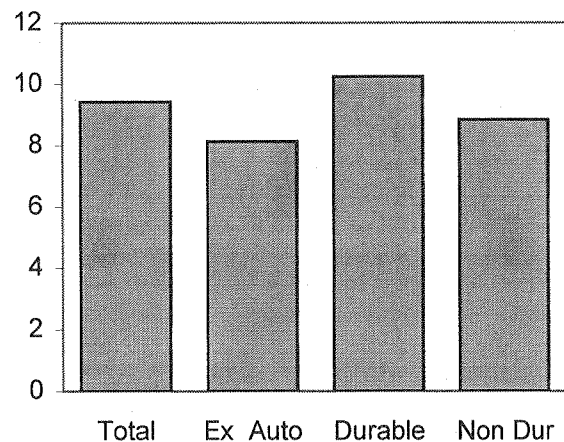
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 March is scheduled to be released April 13, 2000 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 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 and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted							Adjusted ¹				
		2 month total		2000		1999			2000		1999		
		2000	Change from 1999	Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	471,643	11.8	241,928	229,715	312,700	212,492	209,407	265,687	262,824	261,812	242,783	239,089
	Total (excl. auto dealers).....	347,958	10.3	176,103	171,855	253,362	157,085	158,474	197,244	195,301	196,258	182,418	179,987
	Durable goods, total.....	198,816	13.8	104,091	94,725	120,254	89,961	84,709	112,933	112,171	109,976	102,438	100,117
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.	23,852	5.8	12,335	11,517	14,360	11,665	10,879	15,516	15,644	15,827	15,458	14,845
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,219	10,971	8,919	8,419	(*)	12,259	12,341	11,508	11,210
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,034	1,350	1,000	1,091	(*)	1,259	1,275	1,319	1,319
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	123,685	16.3	65,825	57,860	59,338	55,407	50,933	68,443	67,523	65,554	60,365	59,102
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	117,745	16.7	62,801	54,944	56,125	52,707	48,182	65,011	64,112	62,154	57,166	55,896
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	(*)	(*)	47,529	48,866	45,269	42,123	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,916	3,213	2,700	2,751	(*)	3,411	3,400	3,199	3,206
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	26,802	12.0	13,354	13,448	20,084	11,773	12,164	14,468	14,367	14,106	13,302	13,049
571	Furniture and home furnishings.	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,992	8,004	5,461	5,415	(*)	6,665	6,523	6,206	6,030
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,556	10,168	5,410	5,833	(*)	6,690	6,556	6,065	6,001
5722	Household appliance stores.	(*)	(*)	(*)	896	1,200	784	813	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	272,827	10.4	137,837	134,990	192,446	122,531	124,698	152,754	150,653	151,836	140,345	138,972
53	General merchandise group stores.	53,185	8.2	27,509	25,676	54,582	25,028	24,132	33,201	32,987	32,699	31,077	30,990
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)..	41,037	7.6	21,193	19,844	43,462	19,496	18,640	25,814	25,738	25,461	24,370	24,239
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³ ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,212	44,284	19,849	18,995	(*)	26,223	26,007	24,862	24,748
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	918	2,048	913	767	(*)	1,264	1,226	1,088	1,044
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,914	9,072	4,619	4,725	(*)	5,985	6,012	5,619	5,707
54	Food stores.....	74,128	5.1	36,657	37,471	44,602	34,138	36,424	39,440	38,754	40,648	37,807	37,417
541	Grocery stores.....	70,199	4.8	34,619	35,580	41,833	32,331	34,640	37,265	36,605	38,520	35,804	35,419
554	Gasoline service stations.....	30,679	25.9	15,514	15,165	16,622	11,833	12,526	17,238	16,520	16,622	13,617	13,512
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	17,067	3.5	8,897	8,170	18,130	8,449	8,034	11,406	11,287	11,192	11,147	11,055
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	775	1,607	701	780	(*)	929	919	918	922
562,3	Women's clothing, accessory stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,142	4,872	2,331	2,220	(*)	2,902	2,955	3,023	3,020
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,130	7,840	3,157	2,974	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,307	2,317	1,450	1,335	(*)	1,786	1,755	1,801	1,821
58	Eating and drinking places.....	46,572	9.9	23,619	22,953	24,874	21,169	21,225	25,073	25,085	24,775	23,288	22,971
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	19,871	8.9	9,985	9,886	12,664	9,081	9,174	10,189	10,181	10,330	9,599	9,448
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,984	3,419	1,848	1,897	(*)	2,299	2,461	2,200	2,163
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,378	11,029	5,779	5,882	(*)	8,117	7,627	6,767	6,521
53,56,57, 594	GAF ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	54,289	112,259	52,149	51,097	(*)	67,529	67,008	64,215	63,595

* 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-00-01.
- (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. 2000 Advance from --		Jan. 2000 Preliminary from --		Dec. 1999 through Feb. 2000 from --	
		Jan. 2000 (p)	Feb. 1999 (r)	Dec. 1999 (r)	Jan. 1999 (r)	Sept. 1999 through Nov. 1999	Dec. 1998 through Feb. 1999
	Retail trade, total	1.1	9.4	0.4	9.9	3.6	10.0
	Total (excl. automotive dealers)	1.0	8.1	-0.5	8.5	2.9	9.0
	Durable goods, total	0.7	10.2	2.0	12.0	4.7	11.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.8	0.4	-1.2	5.4	2.3	4.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.4	13.4	3.0	14.2	5.6	13.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	1.4	13.7	3.2	14.7	5.7	13.4
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.7	8.8	1.9	10.1	2.9	8.9
	Nondurable goods, total.....	1.4	8.8	-0.8	8.4	2.7	9.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.6	6.8	0.9	6.4	2.3	7.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.3	5.9	1.1	6.2	2.3	6.5
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.8	6.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	1.8	4.3	-4.7	3.6	1.7	5.6
541	Grocery stores.....	1.8	4.1	-5.0	3.3	1.4	5.4
554	Gasoline service stations.....	4.3	26.6	-0.6	22.3	5.8	24.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.1	2.3	0.8	2.1	0.5	2.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.0	7.7	1.3	9.2	2.4	8.0
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.1	6.1	-1.4	7.8	1.2	8.6

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	7.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. auto dealers)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.3
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.3	0.5
52	Building materials group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.0	1.3
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.3	0.6
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.5	0.7
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.6
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
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	0.6
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.6
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.5	1.0
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	-0.4	0.6
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	-0.1	0.4



- (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 are based on the latest 12 months of data.