

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday, January 13, 2005

**ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES  
December 2004**

**Intention to Revise Retail Estimates:** Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2003 Annual Retail Trade Survey and the preliminary results of the 2002 Census of Retail Trade. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted data are scheduled for release on March 31, 2005.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$349.4 billion, an increase of 1.2 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) from the previous month and up 8.7 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from December 2003. Total sales for the 12 months of 2004 were up 8.0 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ) from 2003. Total sales for the October through December 2004 period were up 8.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The October to November 2004 percent change was unrevised from +0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ).

Retail trade sales were up 1.3 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) from November 2004 and were 8.8 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 21.8 percent ( $\pm 2.5\%$ ) from December 2003 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 14.3 percent ( $\pm 3.6\%$ ) from last year.

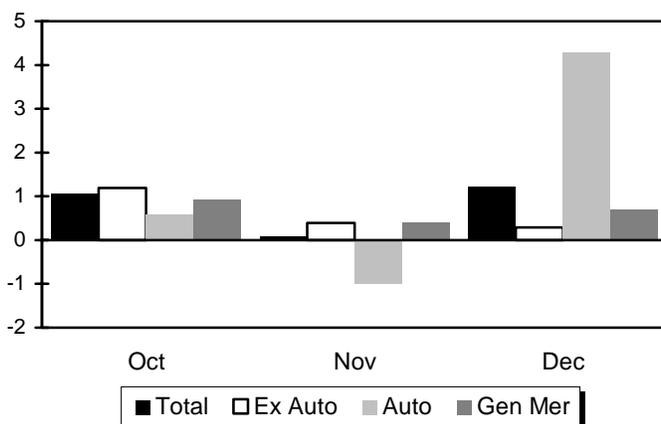
The scheduled release dates for 2005 are as follows: January 13, February 15, March 15, April 13, May 12, June 14, July 14, August 11, September 14, October 14, November 15, December 13.

*The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.*

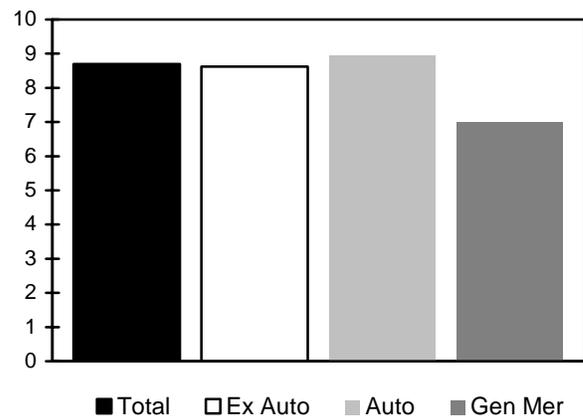
**Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales**

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

**From Previous Month**



**From Previous Year**



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for January is scheduled to be released February 15, 2005 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: 301-763-2713.

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/retail>.

# Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Total sales estimates are shown in millions of dollars and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS <sup>1</sup> code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted <sup>2</sup>				
		12 Month Total		2004			2003		2004			2003	
		2004	% Chg. 2003	Dec. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	4,055,793	8.0	406,403	342,189	338,441	371,745	314,234	349,436	345,259	345,033	321,470	321,973
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	3,115,303	8.9	327,418	270,832	263,435	299,880	247,816	266,658	265,874	264,844	245,488	244,999
	Retail .....	3,664,750	7.8	372,618	310,585	304,563	340,752	284,444	316,052	312,027	311,819	290,477	290,909
	<b>GAFO<sup>4</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	94,272	83,358	128,415	90,264	(*)	86,345	86,365	82,422	82,134
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	940,490	5.0	78,985	71,357	75,006	71,865	66,418	82,778	79,385	80,189	75,982	76,974
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	855,223	5.0	71,796	64,323	67,812	65,299	59,942	75,258	72,111	72,995	69,026	70,026
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	54,089	56,710	56,208	51,058	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,034	7,194	6,566	6,476	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	104,800	7.0	10,915	9,608	8,808	10,182	9,105	8,954	8,758	8,843	8,415	8,438
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,083	4,757	4,981	4,753	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,525	4,051	5,201	4,352	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	101,867	7.7	13,994	9,490	7,848	13,403	8,994	8,578	8,594	8,503	8,302	8,232
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,976	5,525	10,085	6,623	(*)	6,163	6,118	5,860	5,861
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,514	2,323	3,318	2,371	(*)	2,431	2,385	2,442	2,371
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	368,264	14.7	28,792	30,142	31,417	25,425	25,578	31,738	31,354	31,178	28,040	28,163
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,507	28,499	23,055	23,343	(*)	27,869	27,696	24,711	25,046
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	529,670	4.7	49,968	44,389	44,458	46,347	42,592	45,016	44,844	44,644	42,604	42,589
4451	Grocery stores .....	474,610	4.2	43,124	39,746	39,922	40,279	38,235	40,303	40,188	40,002	38,288	38,235
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,912	2,863	3,849	2,803	(*)	2,847	2,857	2,740	2,737
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	203,613	5.9	19,703	16,869	16,852	19,002	15,776	17,208	17,178	17,109	16,610	16,519
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,398	14,450	16,188	13,527	(*)	14,632	14,581	14,064	14,076
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	314,653	17.2	27,028	27,137	28,774	21,786	21,405	27,580	28,150	27,828	22,647	22,532
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	189,758	6.3	28,228	17,198	15,525	26,890	16,522	15,899	15,991	16,116	15,385	15,301
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,116	992	1,530	1,001	(*)	1,020	988	906	892
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,181	3,079	4,465	3,052	(*)	3,038	3,098	2,975	2,943
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,614	5,810	9,052	6,262	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,833	1,861	2,519	1,881	(*)	1,917	1,978	1,944	1,951
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	82,003	3.2	12,638	7,532	6,115	12,126	7,350	6,880	6,816	6,855	6,670	6,664
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	504,635	7.1	65,578	47,096	41,869	60,817	45,000	43,195	42,902	42,734	40,366	40,214
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	214,638	0.2	31,686	20,633	17,339	30,735	20,729	17,927	17,899	17,913	17,705	17,711
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>5</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,851	17,521	31,138	20,967	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,463	24,530	30,082	24,271	(*)	25,003	24,821	22,661	22,503
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	22,530	21,055	24,912	20,514	(*)	21,437	21,289	19,237	19,118
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,933	3,475	5,170	3,757	(*)	3,566	3,532	3,424	3,385
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	110,951	5.8	11,814	9,564	9,207	11,263	8,674	9,302	9,480	9,371	8,894	8,907
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	214,046	12.8	24,975	20,203	18,684	21,646	17,030	18,924	18,575	18,449	16,562	16,376
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	12,594	11,566	14,427	10,945	(*)	11,501	11,566	10,585	10,434
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	391,043	9.5	33,785	31,604	33,878	30,993	29,790	33,384	33,232	33,214	30,993	31,064

(\*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

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

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html>

(2) Estimates are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variation and for holiday and trading day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-12 ARIMA program. The factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted estimates shown in this table. Year-to-date seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated. Adjustment factors and explanatory material can be found on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>

(3) Advance estimates are based on early reports obtained from a small sample of firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) sample. All other estimates are from the MRTS sample

(4) GAFO represents firms which specialize in department store types of merchandise and is comprised of furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances (443), clothing & accessories (448), sporting goods, hobby, book, and music (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

(5) Estimates include data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line are not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/econ/www/retmenu.html>

**Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change <sup>1</sup>					
		Dec. 2004 Advance from –		Nov. 2004 Preliminary from –		Oct. 2004 through Dec. 2004 from –	
		Nov. 2004 (p)	Dec. 2003 (r)	Oct. 2004 (r)	Nov. 2003 (r)	Jul. 2004 through Sep. 2004	Oct. 2003 through Dec. 2003
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	1.2	8.7	0.1	7.2	2.5	8.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	0.3	8.6	0.4	8.5	2.2	8.7
	Retail .....	1.3	8.8	0.1	7.3	2.5	8.3
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	4.3	8.9	-1.0	3.1	3.4	6.9
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	4.4	9.0	-1.2	3.0	3.3	7.0
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	2.2	6.4	-1.0	3.8	0.8	5.1
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	-0.2	3.3	1.1	4.4	0.6	3.9
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	1.2	13.2	0.6	11.3	1.4	11.7
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.4	5.7	0.4	5.3	1.6	5.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.3	5.3	0.5	5.1	1.6	5.0
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.2	3.6	0.4	4.0	1.0	4.0
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-2.0	21.8	1.2	24.9	6.1	24.1
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	-0.6	3.3	-0.8	4.5	2.3	4.9
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	0.9	3.1	-0.6	2.3	-0.2	3.1
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.7	7.0	0.4	6.7	2.3	7.0
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.2	1.3	-0.1	1.1	1.3	1.0
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	-1.9	4.6	1.2	6.4	2.3	5.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.9	14.3	0.7	13.4	3.0	13.7
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.5	7.7	0.1	7.0	2.0	7.6

(p) Preliminary estimates. (r) Revised estimates.

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/econ/www/retmenu.html>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,000 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Firms responding to MARTS account for approximately 65% of the total national sales estimate. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. The change in sales from the previous month is estimated using only units that have reported data for both the current and

previous month. There is no imputation or adjustment for nonrespondents in MARTS. The total sales estimate is derived by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS sample). Detailed industry estimates are summed to derive total estimates at broad industry levels. The monthly estimates are adjusted using annual survey estimates and for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

## Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is 90-percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9$  percent or  $\pm 1.5$  percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.3 percent to +2.7 percent. If the interval contains 0, then

one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the estimated change is different from zero. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value  $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$  (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

**Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates**

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Median CV <sup>(1)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error <sup>(1)</sup> for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change <sup>(2)</sup>	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.2
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	1.7	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.3	0.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1.9	1.5	0.8	1.9	0.3	0.4
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	3.8	1.3	1.1	1.9	0.2	0.7
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores ....</b>	2.0	0.6	0.4	1.3	0.1	0.2
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;....</b>						
	<b>supplies dealers.....</b>	1.9	1.0	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.4
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	3.1	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.1	0.3
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.6	0.7	0.6	1.5	0.6	0.5
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	<b>stores .....</b>	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.9	-0.1	0.4
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp;</b>						
	<b>music stores.....</b>	2.8	1.8	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.3
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	3.6	3.2	1.9	3.9	0.2	0.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	4.3	1.9	0.9	2.2	0.2	0.6
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	2.4	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.3	0.3

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading-day differences. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

(2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median differences are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

Note: Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>

