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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES February 2006

Intention to Revise Retail Estimates: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the 2004 Annual Retail Trade Survey and the results of the 2002 Census of Retail Trade. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted data are scheduled for release on March 30, 2006.

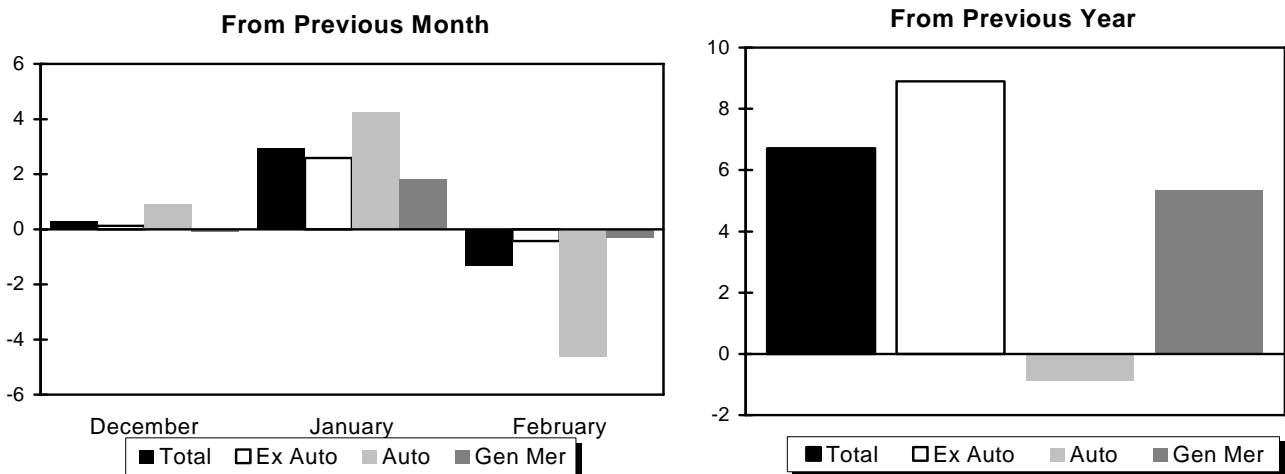
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for February, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$362.3 billion, a decrease of 1.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month, but up 6.7 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from February 2005. Total sales for the December 2005 through February 2006 period were up 7.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The December 2005 to January 2006 percent change was revised from +2.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +2.9 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Retail trade sales were down 1.3 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from January 2006, but were 6.7 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 20.5 percent ($\pm 2.0\%$) from February 2005 and sales of gasoline stations were up 17.7 percent ($\pm 3.0\%$) from last year.

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)



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for March is scheduled to be released April 13, 2006 at 8:30 a.m. EDT.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://www.census.gov/retail>>. This report is also available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's STAT-USA (202-482-1986).

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.

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 ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted ²				
		2 Month Total		2006		2005			2006		2005		
		2006	% Chg. 2005	Feb. ³ (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ³ (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	648,432	8.0	321,002	327,430	415,304	301,281	299,014	362,294	367,182	356,710	339,524	335,754
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	512,714	9.6	252,929	259,785	342,544	232,531	235,486	286,888	288,135	280,878	263,447	260,904
	Retail	582,510	8.0	288,509	294,001	379,236	270,872	268,560	326,744	330,925	321,590	306,254	302,973
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	79,118	140,871	75,107	73,268	(*)	92,976	90,531	87,577	86,018
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	135,718	2.6	68,073	67,645	72,760	68,750	63,528	75,406	79,047	75,832	76,077	74,850
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	124,267	2.2	62,423	61,844	66,709	63,348	58,211	69,128	72,672	69,489	70,075	68,889
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,483	56,699	52,020	48,779	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,801	6,051	5,402	5,317	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	17,216	9.0	8,477	8,739	11,333	7,932	7,863	9,450	9,841	9,244	8,853	8,845
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,845	5,501	4,605	4,482	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,894	5,832	3,327	3,381	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	16,155	7.9	7,770	8,385	13,795	7,425	7,541	8,678	8,859	8,468	8,321	8,031
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,902	11,610	6,018	6,104	(*)	7,311	6,898	6,747	6,528
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,483	2,185	1,407	1,437	(*)	1,548	1,570	1,574	1,503
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	49,695	20.4	24,904	24,791	25,959	20,644	20,640	31,714	31,249	29,118	26,317	26,566
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	22,823	23,419	18,796	18,941	(*)	27,631	25,595	23,262	23,471
445	Food & beverage stores	83,368	4.1	40,809	42,559	49,544	38,659	41,416	44,995	44,517	44,442	42,699	42,609
4451	Grocery stores	74,894	3.1	36,487	38,407	42,691	34,883	37,794	39,964	39,554	39,639	38,249	38,331
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,493	4,254	2,333	2,230	(*)	3,011	2,956	2,791	2,648
446	Health & personal care stores	36,994	7.6	18,177	18,817	21,069	16,965	17,426	19,053	18,988	18,745	17,783	17,691
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,034	17,800	14,501	14,957	(*)	16,115	15,850	15,216	15,078
447	Gasoline stations	61,084	19.4	29,743	31,341	31,930	25,355	25,793	34,345	34,901	33,470	29,177	28,595
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	26,994	3.8	14,026	12,968	30,410	13,904	12,090	16,963	17,542	17,131	16,691	16,223
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	649	1,427	651	649	(*)	822	820	850	807
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,577	4,823	2,461	2,347	(*)	3,291	3,165	3,053	2,994
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,636	11,114	4,802	4,335	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,643	2,856	1,797	1,509	(*)	2,191	2,105	2,097	1,986
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	12,366	7.0	5,657	6,709	12,421	5,340	6,214	7,045	7,040	6,904	6,683	6,548
452	General merchandise stores	78,763	6.2	39,688	39,075	67,917	37,515	36,623	46,139	46,290	45,458	43,798	43,214
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	28,515	-2.0	14,524	13,991	31,054	14,915	14,169	17,800	18,048	17,801	18,313	17,979
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,091	31,312	15,071	14,317	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	25,084	36,863	22,600	22,454	(*)	28,242	27,657	25,485	25,235
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	22,216	31,533	19,686	19,813	(*)	24,657	24,200	22,045	21,917
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,868	5,330	2,914	2,641	(*)	3,585	3,457	3,440	3,318
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	17,955	7.4	8,688	9,267	11,926	8,462	8,256	9,689	10,113	9,616	9,317	9,197
454	Nonstore retailers	46,202	12.4	22,497	23,705	30,172	19,921	21,170	23,267	22,538	23,162	20,538	20,604
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,508	19,554	11,591	12,443	(*)	14,566	14,474	12,936	12,935
722	Food services & drinking places ...	65,922	8.3	32,493	33,429	36,068	30,409	30,454	35,550	36,257	35,120	33,270	32,781

(*) 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/mrts/www/mrts.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 ¹					
		Feb. 2006 Advance from --		Jan. 2006 Preliminary from --		Dec. 2005 through Feb. 2006 from --	
		Jan. 2006 (p)	Feb. 2005 (r)	Dec. 2005 (r)	Jan. 2005 (r)	Sept. 2005 through Nov. 2005	Dec. 2004 through Feb. 2005
	Retail & food services, total	-1.3	6.7	2.9	9.4	2.5	7.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	-0.4	8.9	2.6	10.4	1.7	9.1
	Retail	-1.3	6.7	2.9	9.2	2.4	7.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-4.6	-0.9	4.2	5.6	5.2	0.9
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-4.9	-1.4	4.6	5.5	5.5	0.4
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-4.0	6.7	6.5	11.3	2.2	7.7
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-2.0	4.3	4.6	10.3	1.8	6.9
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	1.5	20.5	7.3	17.6	6.6	16.0
445	Food & beverage stores.....	1.1	5.4	0.2	4.5	1.1	5.0
4451	Grocery stores	1.0	4.5	-0.2	3.2	0.8	3.9
446	Health & personal care stores	0.3	7.1	1.3	7.3	2.1	7.3
447	Gasoline stations	-1.6	17.7	4.3	22.1	-2.6	18.7
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-3.3	1.6	2.4	8.1	1.0	5.4
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	0.1	5.4	2.0	7.5	3.0	5.7
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.3	5.3	1.8	7.1	1.5	5.9
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.4	-2.8	1.4	0.4	0.0	-1.5
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-4.2	4.0	5.2	10.0	1.2	6.1
454	Nonstore retailers	3.2	13.3	-2.7	9.4	2.2	12.0
722	Food services & drinking places	-1.9	6.9	3.2	10.6	2.9	8.1

(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/mrts/www/mrts.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 a 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 ± 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 statistical evidence to conclude at the 90

percent confidence level that the change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. 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 ⁽¹⁾ for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error ⁽¹⁾ for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change ⁽²⁾	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Retail	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	2.1	1.5	0.6	1.5	0.4	0.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.2	1.6	0.7	1.7	0.4	0.7
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	4.1	1.4	1.0	1.9	0.3	0.5
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.9	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.3
444	Building material & garden eq. &... supplies dealers	2.3	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.5	0.3
445	Food & beverage stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.1
4451	Grocery stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.5	0.4	0.9	-0.1	0.1
447	Gasoline stations	1.8	0.7	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.3
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	1.5	0.6	0.5	0.7	-0.2	0.2
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	2.8	1.9	1.2	2.0	0.1	0.4
452	General merchandise stores	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	4.1	3.6	1.5	4.0	0.2	0.6
454	Nonstore retailers	4.0	2.3	0.9	2.3	0.3	0.4
722	Food services & drinking places ..	3.0	0.7	0.7	1.6	0.2	0.1

(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>

