

# U.S. Census Bureau News

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## ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES March 2008

**Notice of Revision:** Monthly retail sales and inventories were revised based on the results of the 2006 Annual Retail Trade Survey. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised data can be found on our website at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/annrev08.html>.

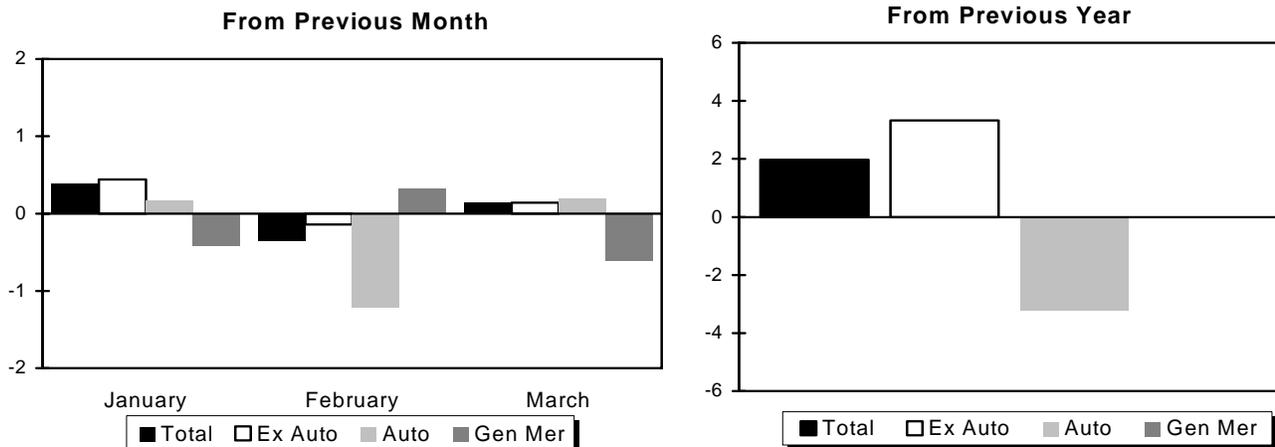
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$381.4 billion, an increase of 0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ )\* from the previous month and 2.0 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) above March 2007. Total sales for the January through March 2008 period were up 2.9 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The January 2008 to February 2008 percent change was revised from -0.6 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) to -0.4 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ).

Retail trade sales were up 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ )\* from February 2008 and were 1.8 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 18.9 percent ( $\pm 2.6\%$ ) from March 2007 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 8.7 percent ( $\pm 2.0\%$ ) 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 April is scheduled to be released May 13, 2008 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 than 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 <sup>1</sup> code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted <sup>2</sup>				
		3 Month Total		2008			2007		2008			2007	
		2008	% Chg. 2007	Mar. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	1,080,037	3.8	380,177	351,048	348,812	379,742	327,624	381,416	380,830	382,189	374,033	370,030
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	863,259	5.6	301,119	280,492	281,648	294,878	257,427	306,151	305,717	306,149	296,273	292,423
	Retail .....	968,705	3.6	340,881	314,663	313,161	341,277	294,356	343,003	342,530	343,813	337,047	333,512
	<b>GAFO<sup>4</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	87,981	85,492	94,161	83,015	(*)	97,993	98,249	98,522	96,373
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	216,778	-2.5	79,058	70,556	67,164	84,864	70,197	75,265	75,113	76,040	77,760	77,607
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	198,810	-2.8	72,679	64,688	61,443	78,256	64,671	68,955	68,817	69,822	71,467	71,460
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	52,151	50,363	63,804	53,428	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,868	5,721	6,608	5,526	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	27,522	-5.9	9,309	9,020	9,193	10,362	9,249	9,697	9,730	9,853	10,435	10,380
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,178	5,187	5,641	5,324	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,842	4,006	4,721	3,925	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	26,413	1.7	8,604	8,916	8,893	8,691	8,449	9,334	9,372	9,369	9,220	9,266
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,241	7,192	6,901	6,783	(*)	7,590	7,619	7,428	7,429
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,675	1,701	1,790	1,666	(*)	1,782	1,750	1,792	1,837
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	72,966	-4.8	27,070	22,930	22,966	29,956	22,771	27,916	28,372	28,413	29,982	29,293
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,078	20,510	25,728	20,479	(*)	24,190	24,243	26,067	25,695
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	143,225	6.3	49,200	46,145	47,880	47,224	42,535	49,123	48,938	48,956	47,103	46,895
4451	Grocery stores .....	129,242	6.6	44,207	41,509	43,526	42,286	38,194	43,856	43,740	43,789	41,909	41,788
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,049	2,904	3,176	2,748	(*)	3,473	3,465	3,343	3,291
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	61,222	5.1	20,811	20,127	20,284	20,254	18,450	20,244	20,269	20,163	19,550	19,380
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,800	17,088	17,024	15,631	(*)	16,918	16,835	16,464	16,402
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	111,837	22.2	39,612	35,654	36,571	33,817	28,292	40,545	40,106	40,321	34,090	33,207
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	48,356	1.4	17,883	16,050	14,423	18,250	15,307	18,605	18,702	18,870	18,903	18,548
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	698	708	802	691	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,776	2,592	3,452	2,665	(*)	3,341	3,319	3,414	3,340
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,781	5,419	7,260	5,457	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,045	1,785	2,359	1,913	(*)	2,277	2,262	2,304	2,219
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	20,365	5.3	6,971	6,184	7,210	6,868	5,647	7,694	7,588	7,622	7,425	7,249
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	132,888	3.9	46,544	44,249	42,095	46,243	40,844	48,474	48,771	48,611	48,486	46,982
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	43,874	-2.5	16,063	14,443	13,368	16,493	14,426	16,988	16,988	16,970	17,722	17,574
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>5</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,815	13,717	16,934	14,806	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	29,806	28,727	29,750	26,418	(*)	31,783	31,641	30,764	29,408
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,557	25,631	26,305	23,438	(*)	28,132	27,920	27,175	25,927
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,249	3,096	3,445	2,980	(*)	3,651	3,721	3,589	3,481
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	28,415	2.1	9,482	9,350	9,583	9,866	8,849	10,190	10,190	10,316	10,243	10,024
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	78,718	7.6	26,337	25,482	26,899	24,882	23,766	25,916	25,379	25,279	23,850	24,681
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,705	16,573	16,106	14,400	(*)	16,960	16,894	16,138	16,162
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	111,332	5.5	39,296	36,385	35,651	38,465	33,268	38,413	38,300	38,376	36,986	36,518

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

(NA) Not available. (S) Suppressed. (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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Mar. 2008 Advance from --		Feb. 2008 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2008 through Mar. 2008 from --	
		Feb. 2008 (p)	Mar. 2007 (r)	Jan. 2008 (r)	Feb. 2007 (r)	Oct. 2007 through Dec. 2007	Jan. 2007 through Mar. 2007
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	<b>total</b> .....	0.2	2.0	-0.4	2.9	0.0	2.9
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	0.1	3.3	-0.1	4.5	0.6	4.4
	Retail .....	0.1	1.8	-0.4	2.7	0.0	2.8
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	0.2	-3.2	-1.2	-3.2	-2.2	-2.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	0.2	-3.5	-1.4	-3.7	-2.3	-2.7
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	-0.3	-7.1	-1.2	-6.3	-3.6	-6.1
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	-0.4	1.2	0.0	1.1	-1.5	1.0
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	-1.6	-6.9	-0.1	-3.1	-2.8	-4.6
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	0.4	4.3	0.0	4.4	0.6	4.7
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.3	4.6	-0.1	4.7	1.1	5.0
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	-0.1	3.5	0.5	4.6	1.4	4.1
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	1.1	18.9	-0.5	20.8	5.0	21.4
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	-0.5	-1.6	-0.9	0.8	0.0	-0.1
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	1.4	3.6	-0.4	4.7	1.6	4.7
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	-0.6	0.0	0.3	3.8	0.0	1.8
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	-4.1	0.1	-3.3	-1.6	-4.2
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	0.0	-0.5	-1.2	1.7	0.0	1.6
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	2.1	8.7	0.4	2.8	1.2	6.7
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ....	0.3	3.9	-0.2	4.9	0.4	4.5

(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  $\pm 1.5$  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 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 <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 .....	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.1
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	1.8	1.3	0.6	1.6	-0.1	0.5
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.0	1.5	0.6	1.7	-0.1	0.5
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	2.0	1.3	0.8	1.8	-0.2	0.8
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.2	0.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;... supplies dealers.....</b>	2.3	1.2	0.8	1.3	0.3	0.5
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	1.7	0.4	0.4	1.3	-0.2	0.4
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.9	0.5	0.3	1.6	0.5	0.3
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	1.8	0.6	0.5	1.0	-0.1	0.4
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	2.1	1.4	1.1	1.8	0.3	0.5
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	3.0	2.3	1.5	2.9	0.8	1.1
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.7	1.0	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.6
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	1.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.2	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 revisions 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>