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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES August 2008

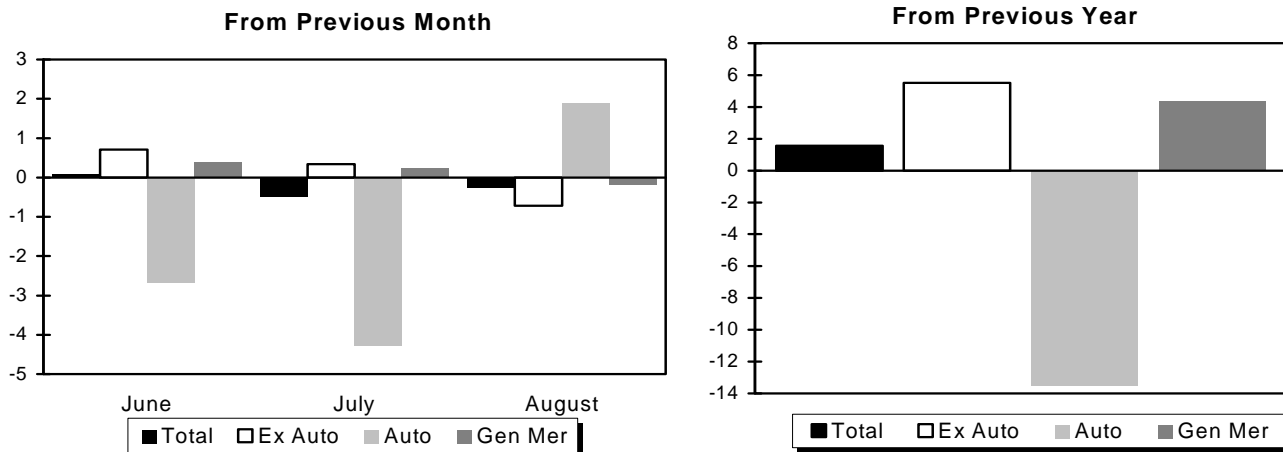
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$381.2 billion, a decrease of 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$)* from the previous month, but 1.6 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above August 2007. Total sales for the June through August 2008 period were up 2.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The June to July 2008 percent change was revised from -0.1 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$)* to -0.5 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Retail trade sales were down 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$)* from July 2008, but were 1.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 22.5 percent ($\pm 1.8\%$) from August 2007 and sales of food and beverage stores were up 6.9 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) 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 September is scheduled to be released October 15, 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 ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted ²				
		8 Month Total		2008			2007		2008			2007	
		2008	% Chg. 2007	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug.	Jul.	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug. (r)	Jul. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	3,022,996	2.8	390,393	391,508	385,737	392,108	376,319	381,169	382,190	384,069	375,303	374,270
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,439,884	5.6	319,494	319,561	314,258	306,475	296,300	313,659	315,942	314,864	297,237	298,470
	Retail	2,715,097	2.6	349,358	351,513	346,727	353,308	337,869	342,530	343,622	345,636	338,245	337,120
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	94,931	94,384	99,584	91,434	(*)	99,727	99,542	97,692	97,543
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	583,112	-7.7	70,899	71,947	71,479	85,633	80,019	67,510	66,248	69,205	78,066	75,800
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	531,019	-8.5	64,041	64,985	64,647	78,697	73,433	60,991	59,784	62,642	71,738	69,473
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	50,344	49,488	63,508	58,903	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,962	6,832	6,936	6,586	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	73,072	-5.6	9,720	9,328	8,942	10,605	9,839	9,284	9,282	9,315	9,958	10,009
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,904	4,670	5,548	5,164	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,424	4,272	5,057	4,675	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	70,378	3.1	9,215	8,947	8,778	9,243	8,501	9,423	9,551	9,548	9,312	9,190
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,211	7,070	7,354	6,796	(*)	7,712	7,685	7,451	7,339
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,736	1,708	1,889	1,705	(*)	1,839	1,863	1,861	1,851
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	224,435	-2.9	27,209	30,841	31,597	29,663	29,948	27,313	27,929	27,840	28,063	28,125
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,325	26,091	26,789	26,644	(*)	23,716	23,719	24,600	24,808
445	Food & beverage stores	390,208	6.2	50,939	51,176	48,876	47,856	47,536	49,945	49,613	49,405	46,737	46,996
4451	Grocery stores	350,858	6.4	45,543	45,726	43,702	42,817	42,479	44,650	44,351	44,188	41,773	42,017
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,776	3,516	3,427	3,450	(*)	3,569	3,527	3,324	3,346
446	Health & personal care stores	162,830	3.7	20,279	20,401	20,076	20,127	19,418	20,630	20,586	20,570	19,987	19,916
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,836	16,495	16,637	16,208	(*)	17,006	17,005	16,587	16,658
447	Gasoline stations	353,303	21.1	48,061	50,378	48,825	39,799	40,167	44,296	45,427	45,334	36,148	36,716
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	139,771	1.6	19,213	17,715	17,344	19,091	17,123	19,088	19,152	19,071	18,862	18,928
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	765	860	769	760	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,952	3,230	3,232	2,981	(*)	3,313	3,351	3,427	3,391
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,152	6,582	7,540	6,785	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,197	2,092	2,737	2,107	(*)	2,284	2,286	2,240	2,227
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	55,668	3.3	8,588	6,981	6,940	8,323	6,858	7,567	7,531	7,543	7,398	7,495
452	General merchandise stores	379,413	5.1	50,385	48,566	49,273	48,156	45,636	50,531	50,626	50,508	48,434	48,173
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	123,869	-2.9	16,540	15,518	16,014	17,304	15,671	16,840	17,091	17,131	17,577	17,533
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,937	16,445	17,781	16,110	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	33,048	33,259	30,852	29,965	(*)	33,535	33,377	30,857	30,640
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	29,392	29,574	27,383	26,589	(*)	29,719	29,574	27,247	27,049
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,656	3,685	3,469	3,376	(*)	3,816	3,803	3,610	3,591
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	78,234	1.1	10,265	10,334	10,144	10,412	9,805	10,136	10,241	10,092	10,011	10,000
454	Nonstore retailers	204,673	6.2	24,585	24,899	24,453	24,400	23,019	26,807	27,436	27,205	25,269	25,772
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,562	17,283	17,512	16,733	(*)	18,564	18,504	17,653	18,129
722	Food services & drinking places ...	307,899	4.7	41,035	39,995	39,010	38,800	38,450	38,639	38,568	38,433	37,058	37,150

(*) 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 ¹					
		Aug. 2008 Advance from --		Jul. 2008 Preliminary from --		Jun. 2008 through Aug. 2008 from --	
		Jul. 2008 (p)	Aug. 2007 (r)	Jun. 2008 (r)	Jul. 2007 (r)	Mar. 2008 through May 2008	Jun. 2007 through Aug. 2007
	Retail & food services, total	-0.3	1.6	-0.5	2.1	0.2	2.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	-0.7	5.5	0.3	5.9	1.8	5.8
	Retail	-0.3	1.3	-0.6	1.9	0.1	2.0
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.9	-13.5	-4.3	-12.6	-6.4	-11.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	2.0	-15.0	-4.6	-13.9	-7.2	-13.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	0.0	-6.8	-0.4	-7.3	-1.9	-6.7
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-1.3	1.2	0.0	3.9	0.0	3.3
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	-2.2	-2.7	0.3	-0.7	1.2	-1.4
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.7	6.9	0.4	5.6	1.7	6.1
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	6.9	0.4	5.6	1.5	6.2
446	Health & personal care stores	0.2	3.2	0.1	3.4	1.1	3.6
447	Gasoline stations	-2.5	22.5	0.2	23.7	4.9	22.9
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-0.3	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.7	1.4
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	0.5	2.3	-0.2	0.5	1.2	1.8
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.2	4.3	0.2	5.1	1.6	5.0
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.5	-4.2	-0.2	-2.5	-0.1	-2.7
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-1.0	1.2	1.5	2.4	2.8	0.9
454	Nonstore retailers	-2.3	6.1	0.8	6.5	1.7	6.8
722	Food services & drinking places	0.2	4.3	0.4	3.8	1.4	4.1

(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

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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 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	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Retail	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.7	1.2	0.6	1.4	-0.2	0.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1.9	1.3	0.6	1.5	-0.2	0.7
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	2.5	1.5	0.7	2.0	-0.4	0.6
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.3	0.1	0.7
444	Building material & garden eq. &... supplies dealers.....	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.1	0.5
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	1.6	0.4	0.4	1.1	-0.2	0.2
447	Gasoline stations	2.0	0.5	0.3	1.1	0.4	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.0	-0.1	0.6
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	2.3	1.5	1.1	1.7	0.0	0.5
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.3	2.4	1.5	2.9	0.4	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	1.6	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.1	0.5
722	Food services & drinking places ..	1.9	0.8	0.7	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>