

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE

Lewis L. Strauss, Secretary

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ADVANCE REPORT ON RETAIL TRADE, MARCH 1959

Total sales of retail stores in March were \$17.0 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal factors and trading day differences was about 1 percent above February and about 10 percent above March 1958.

The March sales figures are based on the Advance Report on Retail Trade, a monthly survey of the Bureau of the Census conducted in cooperation with a representative cross-section of about 1,700 retail firms which, in total, operate some 35,000 stores in the United States. The firms which are cooperating in the early reporting of sales are part of a larger group which furnishes figures at a later date. The advance estimates are preliminary and subject to revision, but the revision of the total seldom exceeds 1½ percent.

The preliminary Census figures for March are shown in table 1 of this release. The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment for seasonal factors and trading day differences, March sales reached a new high. Most lines of trade reported small sales gains from February to March. General merchandise and apparel stores, which are primarily affected by the Easter trade, showed up somewhat stronger. Final estimates for February indicate that seasonally adjusted retail sales were about 1 percent above January.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES REPORT--PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES FOR MARCH 1959
 Table 1.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (million of dollars)		
	1959		1958
	March	February	March
Retail stores, total ¹	16,957	14,946	15,549
Durable-goods stores, total ¹	5,705	4,927	4,851
Nondurable-goods stores, total ¹	11,252	10,019	10,698
Food group.....	4,075	3,869	4,103
Grocery stores.....	3,620	3,445	3,636
Eating and drinking places.....	1,133	1,070	1,124
General merchandise group.....	1,726	1,344	1,553
Department stores.....	980	759	905
Apparel group.....	1,112	750	958
Furniture and appliance group.....	806	746	772
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group..	1,115	892	936
Automotive group.....	3,334	2,899	2,789
Gasoline service stations.....	1,305	1,197	1,214
Drug and proprietary stores.....	572	534	534

See footnotes below table 2.

Source: Bureau of the Census

Table 2.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Percentage change, Mar. 1959 from--		Sales (millions of dollars)				Percentage change Feb. 1959 from--	
	Feb. 1959	Mar. 1959	1959		1958	Jan. 1959	Feb. 1958	
			Mar.	Feb.	Jan.			Feb.
Retail stores, total ¹	+0.8	+10.1	17,692	17,552	17,454	16,039	+1	+9
Durable-goods stores, total ¹	+1.1	+18.1	5,930	5,863	5,836	5,055	+1	+16
Nondurable-goods stores, total ¹	+0.7	+6.5	11,762	11,684	11,618	11,033	+1	+6
Food group.....				4,274	4,244	4,167	+1	+3
Eating and drinking places.....				1,242	1,263	1,186	-2	+5
General merchandise group.....				1,835	1,824	1,640	+1	+12
Apparel group.....				1,082	1,032	1,004	+5	+8
Furniture and appliance group.....				890	880	852	+1	+4
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group...				1,250	1,208	1,030	+3	+21
Automotive group.....				3,248	3,257	2,741	0	+18
Gasoline service stations.....				1,368	1,367	1,282	0	+7
Drug and proprietary stores.....				568	579	540	-2	

Source: Office of Business Economics

¹ Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

² Based on preliminary estimates supplied by Federal Reserve Board.