



The U.S. Department of Commerce announced today that total sales of retail stores in March were estimated at \$26.2 billion; this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not price changes, was \$26.5 billion. The advance estimate, after adjustment was about 3 percent above February and 4 percent above March sales last year. Adjusted January-through-March sales averaged about 2 percent above the prior three months and 3 percent above the comparable period in 1966.

The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment, sales of nondurable and durable goods retailers were up 3 and 4 percent respectively from February to March, with most major kinds of business sharing in the advance. Average monthly sales for durable goods stores during the January-March period were virtually unchanged from the average for the prior 3 months, while the average for nondurable goods stores for the comparable period increased 3 percent. The year-to-year gain in the three month average for nondurable goods stores was about 6 percent, while durable goods stores declined 3 percent.

Based on the full sample the total U.S. unadjusted sales estimate for February was \$21.8 billion, slightly higher than the \$21.5 billion published earlier in the February Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report released on March 10, 1967. The seasonally adjusted sales for February as revised were virtually unchanged from January.

The March sales figures are based on advance reporting of a small subsample of the Census Bureau's panel of retail firms. The advance estimates are subject to revision by estimates subsequently derived from the full sample.

The revision of the total seldom exceeds 1.5 percent and for the past year has averaged 1.0 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups revisions have been greater, ranging on the average from 1.0 percent for food stores to 3.4 percent for the apparel group.

It should be noted that even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements between individual pairs of months tend to be relatively irregular. Data for several months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES FOR MARCH 1967

Table 1. SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1967		1966
	March ¹	February ²	March
Retail stores, total ³	26,239	21,789	24,712
Durable-goods stores, total ³	8,277	6,835	8,606
Nondurable-goods stores, total ³	17,962	14,954	16,106
Food group.....	6,184	5,433	5,808
Grocery stores.....	5,662	4,984	5,297
Eating and drinking places.....	2,066	1,767	1,809
General merchandise group.....	3,196	2,396	2,887
Department stores.....	2,037	1,529	1,892
Apparel group.....	1,593	1,050	1,277
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,241	1,102	1,150
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group	1,443	1,117	1,374
Automotive group.....	4,956	4,013	5,430
Gasoline service stations.....	1,972	1,727	1,827
Drug and proprietary stores.....	913	818	798

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 variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Percentage change, Mar. 1967 from		Sales (millions of dollars)				Percentage change, Feb. 1967 from	
	Feb. 1967	Mar. 1966	1967			1966	Jan. 1967	Feb. 1966
			Mar. ¹	Feb. ²	Jan.	Feb.		
Retail stores, total ³	+3	+4	26,474	25,636	25,687	25,049	0	+2
Durable-goods stores, total ³ ..	+4	-4	8,302	8,001	8,200	8,185	-2	-2
Nondurable-goods stores, total ³	+3	+8	18,172	17,635	17,487	16,864	+1	+5
Food group.....				5,970	5,911	5,879	+1	+2
Eating and drinking places.....				2,074	2,036	1,915	+2	+8
General merchandise group.....				3,355	3,419	3,225	-2	+4
Apparel group.....				1,488	1,514	1,450	-2	+3
Furniture and appliance group.....				1,309	1,312	1,220	0	+7
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group....				1,574	1,516	1,444	+4	+9
Automotive group.....				4,398	4,604	4,781	-4	-8
Gasoline service stations.....				1,974	1,931	1,907	+2	
Drug and proprietary stores.....				883	877	806	+1	+10

¹Advance sample estimates.

²Preliminary estimates of full sample.

³Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.