



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE / Bureau of the Census

For release March 10, 1970

FEBRUARY 1970

CB-70-322

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in February were estimated at \$25.0 billion. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$29.4 billion, about 1/2 percent above both January 1970 and February 1969 sales. Adjusted total December-through-February sales averaged about the same as the prior 3 months but 2 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. unadjusted sales estimate for January was about \$0.2 billion more than the \$26.6 billion published earlier in the January Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released February 10, 1970. The seasonally adjusted sales for January as revised were under December 1969 sales by less than 1/2 of 1 percent.

Following this release, publication of the series "Advance Monthly Retail Sales" will be suspended for an indefinite period.

In recent months, the advance release, based on week and part-week reports from a subsample of the Bureau of the Census' retail survey panel, has not provided a satisfactory forecast of the later full sample results based on monthly data. A change in sample design of the retail survey, introduced in September 1968, which resulted in a modification of the past relationship between the subsample and

the full sample data, has interfered with the derivation of accurate forecasts.

Further experience reflecting operation of the subsample under the new sample design is needed to determine the relationship between the subsample and full sample results. Official publication of advance estimates of monthly retail sales has been suspended until the reliability of the estimates meet Census Bureau standards.

As part of its ongoing program to improve statistical series, the Bureau of the Census will continue to compile the weekly and part-week data on retail sales now received, to adjust the totals for seasonal and trading day differences, and to incorporate in the adjusted data the results of the limited experience now available on the relationship between the subsample weekly data and the full sample monthly data. Although these results do not now meet statistical standards of the Bureau of the Census for public release, agencies or persons who would like to have access to such data on a summary basis may obtain them from the Bureau upon request. These results will be available about 10 days after the close of the month to which they refer.

The present "Weekly Retail Sales" reports will continue to be released each Thursday and the first report of monthly retail sales, based on the full sample reporting panel, will continue to be issued as a press release approximately 35 days after the reference month.

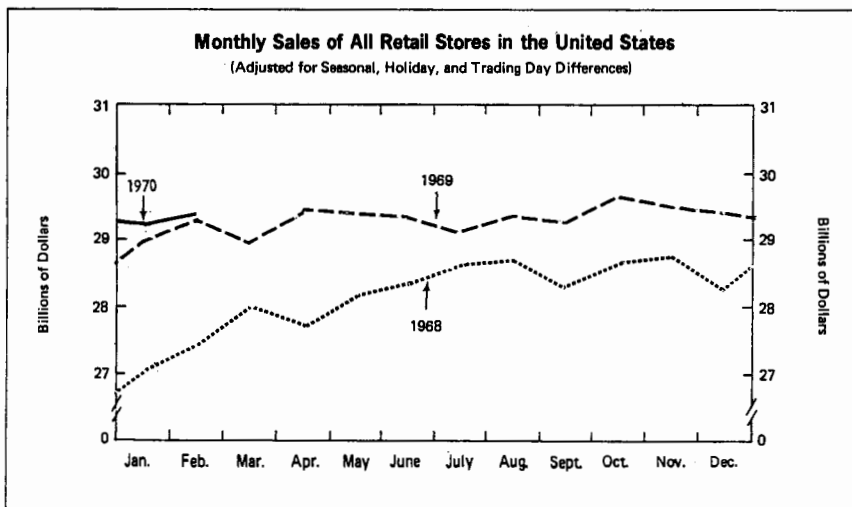


Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group
Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1970		1969
	February ¹	January ²	February
Retail stores, total ³	24,973	26,801	24,812
Durable goods stores, total ³	7,577	7,783	8,245
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	17,396	19,018	16,567
Food group.....	6,005	6,747	5,726
Grocery stores.....	5,620	6,336	5,369
Eating and drinking places.....	1,859	1,949	1,817
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	3,715	3,970	3,410
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	3,295	3,546	3,040
Department stores.....	2,186	2,423	2,041
Apparel group.....	1,196	1,420	1,214
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,219	1,307	1,216
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	1,111	1,109	1,255
Automotive group.....	4,591	4,657	5,058
Gasoline service stations.....	1,864	2,029	1,836
Drug and proprietary stores.....	962	1,009	884

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change, January 1970 from--	
	1970		1969			Dec. 1969	Jan. 1969
	Feb. ¹	Jan. ²	Dec.	Feb.	Jan.		
Retail stores, total ³	29,418	29,304	29,419	29,257	28,955	0	+1
Durable goods stores, total ³	8,790	8,852	9,275	9,597	9,446	-5	-6
Nondurable goods stores, total ³ ..	20,628	20,452	20,144	19,660	19,509	+2	+5
Food group.....		6,606	6,436	6,314	6,281	+3	+5
Eating and drinking places.....		2,125	2,137	2,123	2,094	-1	+1
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		5,061	4,998	4,694	4,601	+1	+10
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		4,602	4,554	4,273	4,176	+1	+10
Apparel group.....		1,624	1,681	1,702	1,640	-3	-1
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,435	1,399	1,434	1,402	+3	+2
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....		1,486	1,603	1,693	1,593	-7	-7
Automotive group.....		5,106	5,453	5,607	5,574	-6	-8
Gasoline service stations.....		2,131	2,097	2,091	2,097	+2	+2
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,029	1,000	959	979	+3	+5

¹Advance sample estimates.

²Preliminary estimates of full sample.

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

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales
(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	February 1970 from--		December 1969 through February 1970 from--	
	Jan. 1970	Feb. 1969	September 1969 through November 1969	December 1968 through February 1969
Retail stores, total ¹	+½	+½	0	+2
Durable goods stores, total.....	-1	-8	-4	-5
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+1	+5	+1	+5

¹Percent changes for total Advance sales are rounded to the nearest half percent, others are rounded to a whole percent.

Source: Bureau of the Census