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The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in February were estimated at \$41.0 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$1.2 billion, about 1 percent below January but about 11 percent above February sales last year. Adjusted total December-through-February sales averaged about 1 percent above the prior 3 months and 11 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for January was about \$40.1 billion more than the \$10.5 billion published earlier in the January Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released February 9, 1973. The seasonally adjusted sales for January as revised were about 3 percent above December.

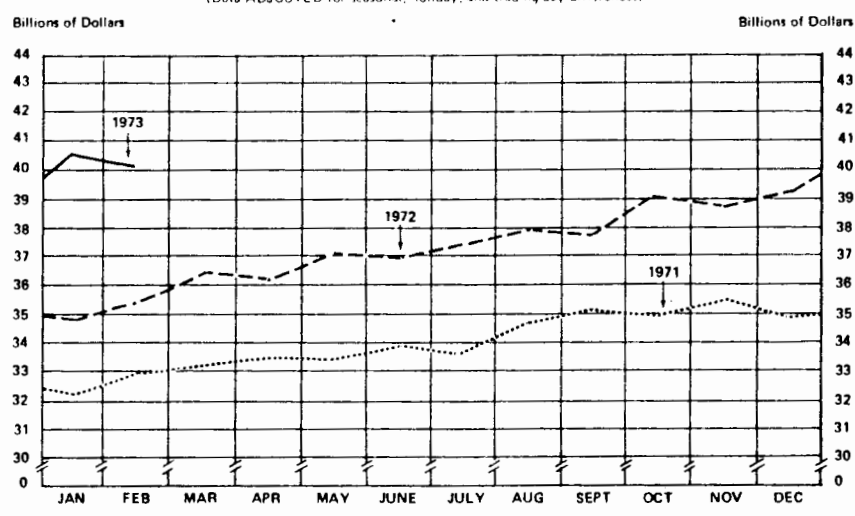
The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting, by a small subsample of the Census Bureau's retail survey panel, of sales figures for the weeks and part-weeks comprising the month. Because retailers' weekly records often differ

from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability between sub-sample and later full sample results can be a cause of difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimate, prior to publication, on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in advance and full-sample estimates for total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.5 percent. For individual kind of business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.8 percent for the Food group to 2.1 percent for the Building materials group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES (Data ADJUSTED for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)



Annual subscription to current retail trade reports are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. (Weekly Retail Sales Report, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Report, Monthly Retail Trade Report, and Annual Retail Trade Report sold as a single subscription.) Price: \$13.00. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report are available only from the Bureau of the Census, Washington, D. C. 20233, at 15 cents each.

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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)		
	1973		1972
	February ¹	January ²	January
Total, retail stores ³	34,018	35,668	30,987
Total (excluding automotive group).....	26,763	28,118	24,795
Durable goods stores, total ³	11,768	12,555	10,181
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	22,280	23,513	20,806
Food group.....	7,613	7,991	7,105
Grocery stores.....	7,111	7,460	6,619
Eating and drinking places.....	2,598	2,678	2,402
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	4,803	4,942	4,512
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	4,356	4,510	4,064
Department stores.....	2,865	3,022	2,646
Apparel group.....	1,438	1,616	1,309
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,682	1,777	1,550
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....	1,825	1,842	1,616
Automotive group.....	7,285	7,550	6,192
Gasoline service stations.....	2,366	2,580	2,264
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,147	1,216	1,101

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change January 1973 from--	
	1973		1972			December 1972	January 1972
	February ¹	January ²	December	February	January		
Total, retail stores ³	40,162	40,571	39,417	35,345	34,886	+3	+16
Total (excluding automotive group).....	31,949	32,012	31,117	28,656	28,308	+3	+13
Durable goods stores, total ³	13,804	14,222	13,640	11,457	11,475	+4	+21
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	26,358	26,349	25,777	23,888	23,411	+2	+13
Food group.....		8,475	8,071	7,665	7,387	+5	+15
Eating and drinking places.....		3,016	2,957	2,714	2,745	+2	+10
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		6,516	6,362	5,965	5,874	+2	+11
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		6,015	5,884	5,486	5,376	+2	+12
Apparel group.....		1,959	1,899	1,741	1,732	+3	+13
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,948	1,808	1,728	1,741	+8	+12
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....		2,534	2,390	2,083	2,192	+6	+16
Automotive group.....		8,559	8,300	6,689	6,578	+3	+30
Gasoline service stations.....		2,704	2,713	2,493	2,506	0	+8
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,257	1,236	1,155	1,137	+2	+11

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 1973 from--		December 1972 through February 1973 from--	
	January 1973	February 1972	September 1972 through November 1972	December 1971 through February 1972
	Total, retail stores.....	-1	+14	+4
Total (excluding automotive group).....	0	+11	+3	+11
Durable goods stores, total.....	-3	+20	+7	+22
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0	+10	+2	+11

Source: Bureau of the Census.

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