

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

February 1985

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, Wednesday, March 13, 1985

CB-85-50

The unadjusted and adjusted monthly retail sales estimates will be revised utilizing the results from the 1982 Census of Retail Trade and 1983 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Revised estimates for the period January 1977 through February 1985 along with the previously published estimates for the same period are scheduled for release during the week of March 18th.

Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for February, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$112.1 billion, up 1.4 percent from the revised level of \$110.6 billion in January and 6.3 percent above a year ago. Excluding the automotive group, total sales increased 1.7 percent in February, the largest gain since September 1984. December through February sales were 1.6 percent higher than the prior 3 months and 5.8 percent above the same period last year.

Durable goods sales rose 0.9 percent in February and were 8.3 percent above the previous year. The automotive group showed a gain of 0.4 percent from the previous month after a revised increase of 4.1 percent in January. This is the fifth monthly increase in the last six months. Building materials declined 1.5 percent during February, and were only 1.9 percent above a year ago. Following last month's drop of 3.4 percent, furniture group sales increased 2.3 percent.

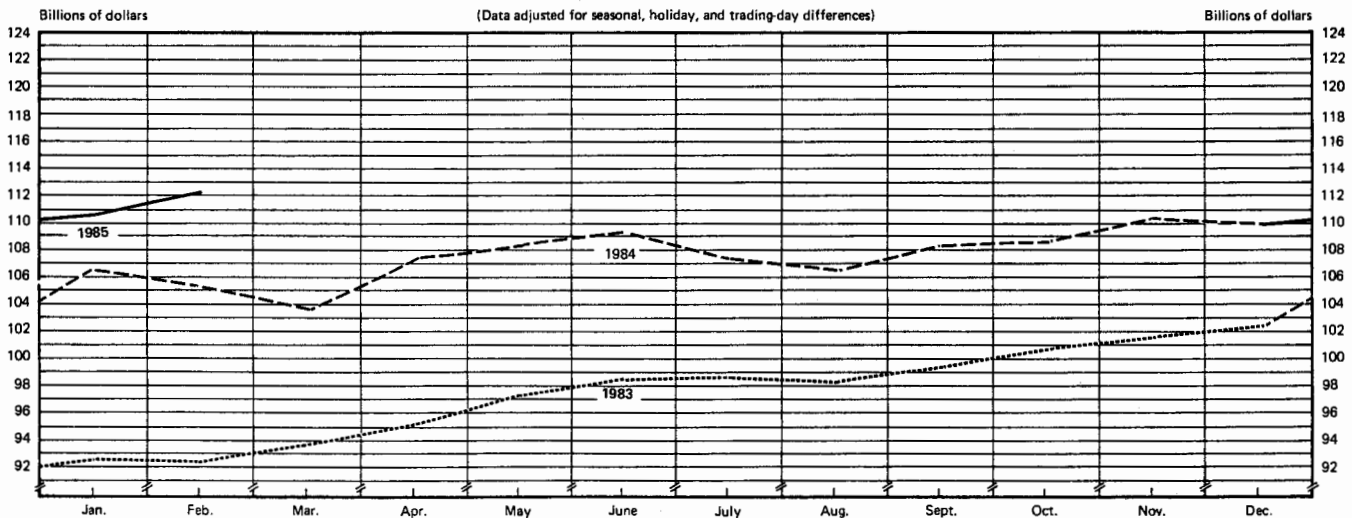
The nondurable goods group gained 1.7 percent from last month and was 5.2 percent above the February 1984 level. This is the largest monthly increase since September 1984. After a decline of 3.8 percent in January, general merchandise rose 4.3 percent and was 7.0 percent above sales last year. Sales of food stores and eating and drinking places were up 0.4 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively, during the month. The apparel group increased 2.9 percent in February after a 6.7 percent decline in January, the largest drop on record. Drug store sales rose 0.9 percent from the previous month and were 10.4 percent above a year ago, the largest year-to-year increase in the nondurable goods group. Gasoline service stations sales were down 0.2 from January and were 1.0 percent below the previous year.

For a description of the sample design and reliability of the data, see back page.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for March is scheduled to be released April 11, 1985, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

January 1983-February 1985



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U.S. Department of Commerce
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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at \$37 per year. Add \$9.25 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. This report is available electronically in CENDATA, the Bureau's on-line information service, through a commercial vendor. For further information, contact Customer Services, DUSD, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, or call (301) 763-4100 or (301) 763-7561.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1985		1984			1985		1984		
		Feb. ² adv.	Jan. prel.	Dec. final	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ² adv.	Jan. prel.	Dec. final	Feb.	Jan.
	Retail trade, total.....	95,806	98,666	131,790	93,686	93,089	112,125	110,588	110,042	105,482	106,602
	Total (excl. auto group)..	74,490	77,867	111,847	73,079	74,297	88,308	86,865	87,253	83,499	84,569
	Durable goods, total.....	34,147	34,232	41,217	32,931	31,170	39,963	39,620	39,074	36,909	37,127
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	4,216	4,476	5,329	4,329	4,141	5,736	5,825	5,978	5,630	5,494
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	3,311	3,760	3,241	3,068	(*)	4,294	4,492	4,215	4,042
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	740	991	652	687	(*)	897	846	830	874
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	21,316	20,799	19,943	20,607	18,792	23,817	23,723	22,789	21,983	22,033
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	19,795	19,181	18,065	19,017	17,135	21,897	21,846	20,884	20,060	20,041
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	17,714	16,459	17,237	15,667	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	1,618	1,878	1,590	1,657	(*)	1,877	1,905	1,923	1,992
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	4,461	4,721	6,899	4,129	4,279	5,230	5,112	5,290	4,644	4,791
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	2,686	3,412	2,431	2,543	(*)	2,876	3,001	2,707	2,829
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	1,701	2,899	1,379	1,427	(*)	1,867	1,938	1,592	1,622
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	646	978	562	591	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total....	61,659	64,434	90,573	60,755	61,919	72,162	70,968	70,968	68,573	69,475
53	General merchandise group stores..	9,494	9,284	24,992	9,150	8,853	13,676	13,116	13,630	12,786	12,835
531	Department stores.....	7,705	7,621	20,325	7,458	7,266	11,167	10,764	11,180	10,489	10,546
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	587	1,550	627	592	(*)	799	819	830	836
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,076	3,117	1,065	995	(*)	1,553	1,631	1,467	1,453
54	Food stores.....	21,332	22,738	24,828	20,845	21,110	23,672	23,574	22,962	22,266	22,468
541	Grocery stores.....	20,046	21,486	23,223	19,596	19,918	22,273	22,242	21,623	20,958	21,189
554	Gasoline service stations.....	7,656	8,250	8,550	7,948	8,340	8,583	8,603	8,507	8,667	8,751
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	3,613	3,902	8,367	3,630	3,765	4,909	4,769	5,110	4,747	4,704
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	572	1,406	504	563	(*)	699	734	678	698
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,577	3,288	1,507	1,513	(*)	1,928	2,082	1,955	1,901
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	837	2,190	751	770	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	684	1,118	628	677	(*)	799	822	807	814
58	Eating and drinking places.....	9,490	9,605	10,664	9,232	9,210	10,896	10,649	10,728	10,281	10,268
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	3,446	3,586	4,910	3,231	3,249	3,758	3,724	3,706	3,405	3,434
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,492	2,366	1,404	1,481	(*)	1,656	1,663	1,583	1,689
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	349	521	310	332	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	³ GAP.....	(*)	20,980	48,016	19,676	19,712	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available.

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-85-01).

²Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

³GAP represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Feb. 1985 advance from--		Jan. 1985 preliminary from--		Dec. 1984 through Feb. 1985	
		Jan. 1985 prelim.	Feb. 1984 final	Dec. 1984 final	Jan. 1984 final	Sep. 1984 through Nov. 1984	Dec. 1983 through Feb. 1984
	Retail trade, total.....	+1.4	+6.3	+0.5	+3.7	+1.6	+5.8
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+1.7	+5.8	-0.4	+2.7	+0.7	+5.2
	Durable goods, total.....	+0.9	+8.3	+1.4	+6.7	+3.5	+8.3
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-1.5	+1.9	-2.6	+6.0	+1.9	+6.8
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+0.4	+8.3	+4.1	+7.7	+5.3	+7.9
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	+0.2	+9.2	+4.6	+9.0	+5.7	+9.0
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+2.3	+12.6	-3.4	+6.7	+1.3	+11.1
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+1.7	+5.2	0.0	+2.1	+0.6	+4.5
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+4.3	+7.0	-3.8	+2.2	+1.3	+6.5
531	Department stores.....	+3.7	+6.5	-3.7	+2.1	+0.9	+6.5
54	Food stores.....	+0.4	+6.3	+2.7	+4.9	+0.4	+5.6
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.1	+6.3	+2.9	+5.0	+0.6	+5.7
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.2	-1.0	+1.1	-1.7	-1.4	-1.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+2.9	+3.4	-6.7	+1.4	-1.1	+4.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+2.3	+6.0	-0.7	+3.7	+2.1	+6.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+0.9	+10.4	+0.5	+8.4	+2.9	+10.8

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Jan. 1985 prelim.	Dec. 1984 final	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985 prelim.	Dec. 1984 final	Jan. 1984
	Retail trade, total.....	32,722	54,891	30,668	38,401	38,678	37,047
53	General merchandise group stores.....	8,349	22,725	7,952	11,918	12,354	11,688
531	Department stores.....	7,302	19,425	6,948	10,328	10,714	10,099
533	Variety stores.....	448	1,246	448	629	644	650
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	599	2,054	556	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	12,688	13,834	11,584	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	12,508	13,554	11,439	12,816	12,344	12,143
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1,544	3,890	1,429	2,159	2,245	2,050
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	665	1,634	616	947	971	907
566	Shoe stores.....	336	631	332	430	440	436
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,021	3,135	1,781	2,159	2,165	1,930

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-85-01).

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

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Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -1.1 percent to +0.4 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.4 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for January 1985 and final estimates for December 1984 based on the full sample will be published late this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for January (BR-85-01). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates. The complete report will include additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated coefficient of variation in percent of the advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range ¹		Median	Range ²		Mean	Average of absolute difference
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.6	0.8	0.7	-1.1	+0.4	-0.1	0.4
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	0.6	0.9	0.7	-0.9	+1.0	0.0	0.4
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.0	1.7	1.4	-2.0	+2.7	0.0	1.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	1.3	3.6	2.0	-2.4	+5.0	+0.6	1.6
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.5	2.4	1.8	-2.0	+2.4	+0.1	1.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	1.2	2.2	1.4	-2.4	+2.9	+0.2	1.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.3	3.3	2.5	-4.6	+3.4	-0.4	1.6
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.4	0.7	0.5	-0.6	+0.7	0.0	0.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.4	0.6	0.5	-1.3	+1.6	+0.2	0.6
531	Department stores.....	0.1	0.5	0.2	-1.1	+1.9	+0.3	0.7
54	Food stores.....	0.8	1.1	1.0	-1.0	+0.6	+0.1	0.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.5	0.4	-1.2	+0.6	0.0	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.6	1.3	0.9	-3.8	+3.0	-0.4	1.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.1	3.7	2.1	-1.7	+2.2	0.0	1.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.5	1.2	0.9	-2.5	+3.2	+0.1	1.4
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.5	1.4	0.6	-2.1	+2.2	-0.1	0.9

¹The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January-December 1983.

²The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, February 1984-January 1985. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period December 1983-November 1984.

Note: See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.