

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

April 1988

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Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$131.6 billion, a decrease of 0.6 percent (+1.0%) from the previous month and 5.4 percent (+1.6%) above April 1987. The revised March sales were 1.7 percent (+0.5%) above February. (In the past when Easter was in early April, March showed a large month-to-month increase followed by a much smaller change in April. For example, in 1983 when Easter fell on April 3, March sales increased 2.6 percent and April sales increased only 0.4 percent. A contributing factor is that many firms report on a 4-or 5-week period basis rather than for a calendar month making adjustment to calendar month sales difficult for March and April.) Total sales in the February through April period were 2.5 percent (+1.7%) above the prior three months and were 6.0 percent (+1.7%) above the same period a year ago.

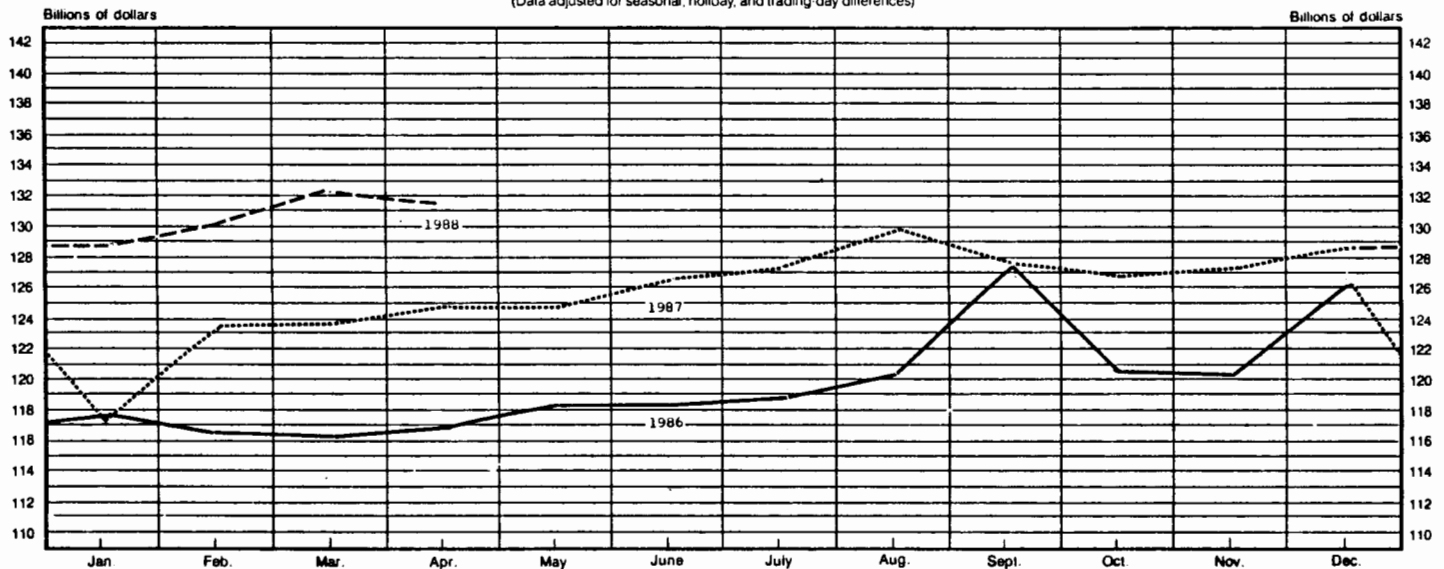
Durable goods decreased 0.6 percent (+2.8%) from the previous month but were 9.0 percent (+4.3%) above the previous year. Automotive sales were up 10.2 percent from April a year ago. Building materials were up 10.5 percent and furniture stores were up 6.6 percent from the previous year.

Nondurable goods declined 0.6 percent (+0.8%) from March but were up 3.3 percent (+1.4%) from the previous year. General merchandise stores were up 3.4 percent from April a year ago while food stores were up 3.0 percent in the same period.

The Advance Monthly Sales Report for May is scheduled to be released June 15, 1988 at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES January 1986-April 1988

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)



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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. 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 ²				
		1988			1987		1988			1987	
		Apr. ¹ adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. ¹ adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr. ¹	Mar. ¹
	Retail trade, total.....	130,595	131,791	115,101	124,739	119,818	131,583	132,398	130,121	124,792	123,680
	Total (excl. auto group)..	99,293	99,532	87,679	95,717	91,905	101,859	102,363	100,598	97,825	97,029
	Durable goods, total.....	50,901	51,463	44,126	47,370	45,283	50,258	50,573	49,708	46,096	45,598
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	7,397	6,569	5,214	6,787	6,001	7,018	6,949	6,817	6,353	6,490
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	4,916	3,910	4,846	4,382	(*)	5,169	5,045	4,651	4,722
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,139	929	1,244	1,094	(*)	1,204	1,196	1,183	1,184
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	31,302	32,259	27,422	29,022	27,913	29,724	30,035	29,523	26,967	26,651
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	28,826	29,841	25,389	26,805	25,846	27,297	27,529	27,038	24,796	24,452
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	26,625	23,032	23,403	22,905	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	2,418	2,033	2,217	2,067	(*)	2,506	2,485	2,171	2,199
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	6,945	7,227	6,457	6,470	6,598	7,508	7,526	7,348	7,043	7,017
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	3,852	3,387	3,564	3,582	(*)	3,879	3,797	3,732	3,681
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	2,928	2,641	2,505	2,608	(*)	3,176	3,071	2,873	2,895
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	825	742	797	794	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	79,694	80,328	70,975	77,369	74,535	81,325	81,825	80,413	78,696	78,082
53	General merchandise group stores..	13,961	13,750	10,662	13,722	12,566	14,874	14,955	14,650	14,389	14,289
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	11,642	11,527	8,846	11,364	10,501	12,425	12,502	12,252	11,937	11,866
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	11,958	9,185	11,805	10,917	(*)	12,984	12,704	12,400	12,350
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	684	551	746	634	(*)	694	693	707	701
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,539	1,265	1,612	1,431	(*)	1,759	1,705	1,745	1,722
54	Food stores.....	26,810	26,974	24,693	25,745	25,219	26,926	27,013	26,612	26,139	25,948
541	Grocery stores.....	25,299	25,426	23,267	24,226	23,791	25,401	25,477	25,072	24,645	24,476
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,812	8,751	8,018	8,469	8,088	8,919	9,040	8,715	8,581	8,390
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	6,597	6,657	4,952	6,592	6,041	6,752	6,703	6,537	6,487	6,626
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	670	554	723	614	(*)	774	767	737	751
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	2,603	2,033	2,572	2,395	(*)	2,621	2,606	2,572	2,589
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,581	1,140	1,580	1,439	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,370	908	1,341	1,210	(*)	1,240	1,163	1,184	1,241
58	Eating and drinking places.....	12,669	12,593	11,347	12,262	11,898	12,482	12,682	12,636	12,153	12,067
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	4,858	4,967	4,642	4,535	4,387	5,003	4,962	4,891	4,585	4,523
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,465	1,348	1,504	1,439	(*)	1,585	1,578	1,614	1,594
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	290	234	297	279	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF.....	(*)	31,959	26,135	30,745	28,933	(*)	34,231	33,565	32,493	32,434

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

NA Not available. [†]Revised

¹Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-88-03.

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.

³Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

⁴GAF 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					
		Apr. 1988 advance from--		Mar. 1988 preliminary from--		Feb. 1988 through Apr. 1988	
		Mar. 1988 prelim.	Apr. 1987 final	Feb. 1988 final	Mar. 1987 final	Nov. 1987 through Jan. 1988	Feb. 1987 through Apr. 1987
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.6	+5.4	+1.7	+7.0	+2.5	+6.0
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	-0.5	+4.1	+1.8	+5.5	+1.6	+4.3
	Durable goods, total.....	-0.6	+9.0	+1.7	+10.9	+4.7	+10.2
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+1.0	+10.5	+1.9	+7.1	+5.3	+7.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-1.0	+10.2	+1.7	+12.7	+5.5	+12.5
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous auto- motive dealers.....	-0.8	+10.1	+1.8	+12.6	+5.5	+12.4
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.2	+6.6	+2.4	+7.3	+6.0	+6.5
	Nondurable goods, total.....	-0.6	+3.3	+1.8	+4.8	+1.1	+3.6
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.5	+3.4	+2.1	+4.7	-0.7	+2.8
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.6	+4.1	+2.0	+5.4	-0.8	+3.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	(NA)	(NA)	+2.2	+5.1	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.3	+3.0	+1.5	+4.1	+2.3	+3.2
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.3	+3.1	+1.6	+4.1	+2.4	+3.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.3	+3.9	+3.7	+7.7	+1.8	+6.0
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+0.7	+4.1	+2.5	+1.2	+0.9	+1.6
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-1.6	+2.7	+0.4	+5.1	-0.4	+3.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+0.8	+9.1	+1.5	+9.7	+3.2	+8.9

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		
		Mar. 1988 prelim.	Feb. 1988 final	Mar. 1987	Mar. 1988 prelim.	Feb. 1988 final	Mar. 1987
	Retail trade, total.....	47,597	40,583	43,839	48,945	48,288	46,699
53	General merchandise group stores.....	12,716	9,845	11,601	13,848	13,564	13,163
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	11,167	8,570	10,207	12,125	11,853	11,520
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	11,576	8,893	10,597	12,555	12,300	11,960
533	Variety stores.....	530	413	495	538	532	548
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.	1,019	862	899	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	15,569	14,257	14,448	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	15,342	14,042	14,230	15,175	15,050	14,595
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	3,606	2,506	3,226	3,570	3,492	3,563
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,403	1,046	1,302	1,397	1,402	1,418
566	Shoe stores.....	881	529	744	783	712	785
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,931	2,696	2,570	2,955	2,911	2,685

NA Not available. [†] Revised

¹ Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, 8R-88-03.

² Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

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 -0.8 percent to +1.0 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.5 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 March 1988 and final estimates for February 1988 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for March (BR-88-3). 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.

Whenever a statement such as "up 0.8 percent (+1.0%)" appears in the text, this indicates a range from -0.2 percent to +1.8 percent. All ranges given are 90 percent confidence intervals. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with 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.....	0.7	0.9	0.8	-0.8	+1.0	+0.1	0.5
	Total (excl. automotive group)...	0.8	0.9	0.8	-0.7	+0.6	0.0	0.4
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.3	1.7	1.6	-2.1	+0.8	-0.3	0.7
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	0.9	2.0	1.3	-2.6	+4.2	+0.5	1.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.5	2.2	1.7	-2.6	+1.7	-0.5	1.1
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.9	1.6	1.2	-2.6	+1.7	-0.5	1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.8	2.5	2.1	-3.4	+2.7	+0.1	1.5
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.5	0.7	0.6	-0.7	+0.8	0.0	0.3
53	General merchandise group stores, total...	0.5	1.0	0.6	-0.6	+1.1	+0.1	0.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	0.2	0.5	0.2	-0.7	+0.6	+0.1	0.3
54	Food stores.....	1.0	1.2	1.0	-0.6	+0.5	-0.1	0.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.3	0.5	0.4	-0.7	+0.5	-0.1	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.6	1.3	0.9	-5.2	+3.1	-0.5	1.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.1	3.1	1.7	-1.3	+2.2	+0.6	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	1.3	0.9	-2.1	+1.5	0.0	1.0
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.3	1.8	0.6	-0.8	+1.2	+0.2	0.6

¹ The 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.

² The 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, April 1987 - March 1988. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period August 1985 - July 1986.

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

