

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales

## CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

April 1989

CB-89-78

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT., Thursday, May 11, 1989

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading - day differences but not for price changes were \$139.9 billion, 5.0 percent above April 1988. Total sales in the February through April period were unchanged from the prior three months but were 5.0 percent above the same period a year ago.

Durable goods were 1.2 percent above the previous year. Furniture stores were up 5.7 percent from April of last year.

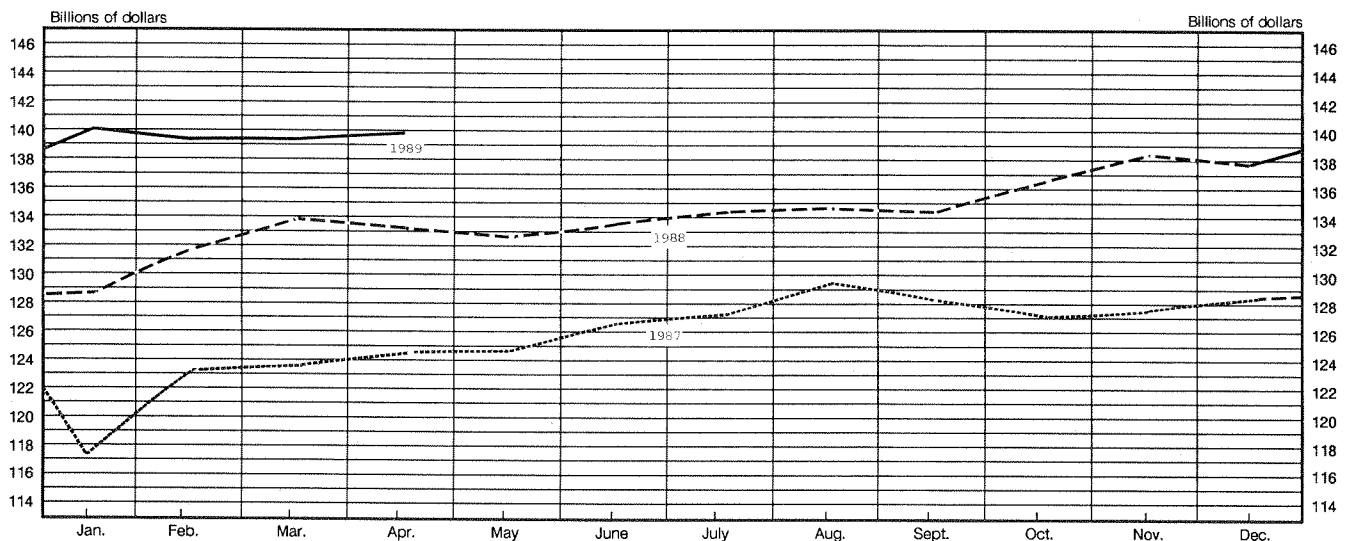
Nondurable goods were 7.5 percent above the previous year. General merchandise stores were up 7.6 percent above April last year, while food stores were up 8.2 percent in the same period. Gasoline service stations increased 2.2 percent from March and were up 7.9 percent from last year. Apparel increased 3.6 percent from the previous month and were 10.2 percent above April 1988.

**Note:** Since this survey is based on a sample, the estimates will differ from the universe values due to both sampling and nonsampling error. For the month-to-month, year-to-year, and quarter-to-quarter percent changes shown at the total, durable, and nondurable levels, the margins of sampling error range from .8 to 4.0 percentage points above and below the estimate. See page 4 for a more complete description.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for May is scheduled to be released June 13, 1989 at 8:30 a.m.

### ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES January 1987-April 1989

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



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U.S. Department of Commerce  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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 <sup>1</sup>  |            |            |                   |                   |
|---------------|---|------------------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|               |   | 1989                   |            |            | 1988    |         | 1989                   |            |            | 1988              |                   |
|               |   | Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv. | Mar. prel. | Feb. final | Apr.    | Mar.    | Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv. | Mar. prel. | Feb. final | Apr. <sup>1</sup> | Mar. <sup>1</sup> |
|               | Retail trade, total.....  | 136,221                | 139,691    | 118,891    | 132,374 | 133,127 | 139,931                | 139,361    | 139,428    | 133,217           | 133,797           |
|               | Total (excl. auto group)..  | 104,467                | 106,733    | 91,690     | 100,186 | 99,990  | 109,121                | 108,878    | 108,785    | 102,784           | 102,820           |
|               | Durable goods, total.....   | 52,357                 | 53,531     | 45,146     | 52,897  | 52,995  | 52,635                 | 52,606     | 53,071     | 51,993            | 52,259            |
| 52            | Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.. | 7,615                  | 6,854      | 5,491      | 7,884   | 6,986   | 7,259                  | 7,292      | 7,483      | 7,425             | 7,382             |
| 521,3         | Building mat. and supply stores.                                  | (*)                    | 4,869      | 3,992      | 5,372   | 4,921   | (*)                    | 5,219      | 5,409      | 5,231             | 5,213             |
| 525           | Hardware stores.....  | (*)                    | 1,042      | 865        | 1,264   | 1,071   | (*)                    | 1,109      | 1,149      | 1,178             | 1,136             |
| 55 ex. 554    | Automotive dealers.....   | 31,754                 | 32,958     | 27,201     | 32,188  | 33,137  | 30,810                 | 30,483     | 30,643     | 30,433            | 30,977            |
| 551,2,5,6,7,9 | Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....           | 29,312                 | 30,533     | 25,216     | 29,641  | 30,679  | 28,348                 | 27,986     | 28,174     | 27,911            | 28,459            |
| 551           | Motor vehicle (franchised)....                                    | (*)                    | 27,315     | 22,696     | 26,206  | 27,424  | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)              | (NA)              |
| 553           | Auto and home supply stores.....                                  | (*)                    | 2,425      | 1,985      | 2,547   | 2,458   | (*)                    | 2,497      | 2,469      | 2,522             | 2,518             |
| 57            | Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....            | 7,408                  | 7,864      | 7,054      | 7,148   | 7,259   | 8,123                  | 8,223      | 8,287      | 7,684             | 7,572             |
| 571           | Furniture and home furnishings..                                  | (*)                    | 3,887      | 3,471      | 3,683   | 3,725   | (*)                    | 3,938      | 4,031      | 3,793             | 3,778             |
| 5722,32       | Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....                    | (*)                    | 3,437      | 3,075      | 2,992   | 3,064   | (*)                    | 3,704      | 3,665      | 3,369             | 3,291             |
| 5722          | Household appliance stores....                                    | (*)                    | 767        | 654        | 789     | 757     | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)              | (NA)              |
|               | Nondurable goods, total.....                                      | 83,864                 | 86,160     | 73,745     | 79,477  | 80,132  | 87,296                 | 86,755     | 86,357     | 81,224            | 81,538            |
| 53            | General merchandise group stores..                                | 14,710                 | 14,547     | 11,025     | 13,818  | 13,747  | 15,933                 | 15,768     | 15,755     | 14,803            | 14,959            |
| 531           | Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)                                  | 12,369                 | 12,247     | 9,161      | 11,580  | 11,508  | 13,386                 | 13,254     | 13,238     | 12,398            | 12,495            |
| 531           | Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup>                      | (*)                    | 12,665     | 9,487      | 12,033  | 11,965  | (*)                    | 13,662     | 13,670     | 12,870            | 12,963            |
| 533           | Variety stores.....   | (*)                    | 671        | 500        | 636     | 658     | (*)                    | 654        | 654        | 643               | 665               |
| 539           | Misc. general mdse. stores.....                                   | (*)                    | 1,629      | 1,364      | 1,602   | 1,581   | (*)                    | 1,860      | 1,863      | 1,762             | 1,799             |
| 54            | Food stores.....  | 28,300                 | 29,473     | 26,125     | 26,813  | 27,022  | 29,228                 | 29,021     | 29,016     | 27,021            | 27,021            |
| 541           | Grocery stores.....   | 26,550                 | 27,599     | 24,501     | 25,118  | 25,339  | 27,399                 | 27,164     | 27,193     | 25,295            | 25,339            |
| 554           | Gasoline service stations.....                                    | 8,924                  | 8,597      | 7,649      | 8,338   | 8,236   | 9,032                  | 8,836      | 8,633      | 8,371             | 8,447             |
| 56            | Apparel and accessory stores.....                                 | 6,720                  | 7,007      | 5,103      | 6,333   | 6,527   | 7,195                  | 6,942      | 6,978      | 6,530             | 6,609             |
| 561           | Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....              | (*)                    | 671        | 547        | 726     | 673     | (*)                    | 764        | 776        | 761               | 774               |
| 562,3,8       | Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....                 | (*)                    | 2,720      | 2,044      | 2,482   | 2,521   | (*)                    | 2,728      | 2,707      | 2,569             | 2,565             |
| 565           | Family clothing stores.....                                       | (*)                    | 1,650      | 1,199      | 1,537   | 1,561   | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)              | (NA)              |
| 566           | Shoe stores.....  | (*)                    | 1,385      | 907        | 1,188   | 1,305   | (*)                    | 1,215      | 1,209      | 1,159             | 1,177             |
| 58            | Eating and drinking places.....                                   | 13,609                 | 13,636     | 11,885     | 12,893  | 12,553  | 13,541                 | 13,663     | 13,677     | 12,715            | 12,693            |
| 591           | Drug and proprietary stores.....                                  | 4,921                  | 5,309      | 4,778      | 4,748   | 4,883   | 5,169                  | 5,251      | 5,199      | 4,875             | 4,864             |
| 592           | Liquor stores.....  | (*)                    | 1,507      | 1,335      | 1,524   | 1,457   | (*)                    | 1,627      | 1,614      | 1,614             | 1,589             |
| 5961 (pt.)    | Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....             | (*)                    | 275        | 216        | 280     | 278     | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)              | (NA)              |
| 53,56,57      | GAF <sup>4</sup> .....  | (*)                    | 33,951     | 27,304     | 31,474  | 31,707  | (*)                    | 36,198     | 36,291     | 33,952            | 34,045            |

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

NA Not available. <sup>1</sup> Revised

<sup>1</sup>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, RR-89-03.

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

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

<sup>4</sup>GAF 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. 1989 advance from-- |                 | Mar. 1989 preliminary from-- |                 | Feb. 1989 through Apr. 1989 |                             |
|               |   | Mar. 1989 prelim.        | Apr. 1988 final | Feb. 1989 final              | Mar. 1988 final | Nov. 1988 through Jan. 1989 | Feb. 1988 through Apr. 1988 |
|               | Retail trade, total.....  | +0.4                     | +5.0            | 0.0                          | +4.2            | 0.0                         | +5.0                        |
|               | Total (excl. automotive group).....                                       | +0.2                     | +6.2            | +0.1                         | +5.9            | +0.9                        | +6.5                        |
|               | Durable goods, total.....   | +0.1                     | +1.2            | -0.9                         | +0.7            | -2.2                        | +1.7                        |
| 52            | Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..... | -0.5                     | -2.2            | -2.6                         | -1.2            | -5.0                        | -0.1                        |
| 55 ex. 554    | Automotive dealers.....   | +1.1                     | +1.2            | -0.5                         | -1.6            | -3.0                        | 0.0                         |
| 551,2,5,6,7,9 | Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....                   | +1.3                     | +1.6            | -0.7                         | -1.7            | -3.4                        | +0.2                        |
| 57            | Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....                    | -1.2                     | +5.7            | -0.8                         | +8.6            | +1.8                        | +8.7                        |
|               | Nondurable goods, total.....  | +0.6                     | +7.5            | +0.5                         | +6.4            | +1.4                        | +7.1                        |
| 53            | General merchandise group stores.....                                     | +1.0                     | +7.6            | +0.1                         | +5.4            | 0.0                         | +6.6                        |
| 531           | Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....                                      | +1.0                     | +8.0            | +0.1                         | +6.1            | +0.2                        | +7.1                        |
| 531           | Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....                                      | (NA)                     | (NA)            | -0.1                         | +5.4            | (NA)                        | (NA)                        |
| 54            | Food stores.....  | +0.7                     | +8.2            | 0.0                          | +7.4            | +2.5                        | +8.1                        |
| 541           | Grocery stores.....   | +0.9                     | +8.3            | -0.1                         | +7.2            | +2.4                        | +8.2                        |
| 554           | Gasoline service stations.....  | +2.2                     | +7.9            | +2.4                         | +4.6            | +4.3                        | +5.7                        |
| 56            | Apparel and accessory stores.....   | +3.6                     | +10.2           | -0.5                         | +5.0            | -0.9                        | +7.6                        |
| 58            | Eating and drinking places.....   | -0.9                     | +6.5            | -0.1                         | +7.6            | -0.6                        | +7.5                        |
| 591           | Drug and proprietary stores.....  | -1.6                     | +6.0            | +1.0                         | +8.0            | +4.0                        | +7.7                        |

**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 <sup>1</sup> |                 |                        |
|----------|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
|          |   | Mar. 1989 prelim. | Feb. 1989 final | Mar. 1988 | Mar. 1989 prelim.     | Feb. 1989 final | Mar. 1988 <sup>r</sup> |
|          | Retail trade, total.....                          | 50,684            | 42,223          | 47,446    | 51,627                | 51,858          | 48,775                 |
| 53       | General merchandise group stores.....             | 13,491            | 10,218          | 12,716    | 14,619                | 14,637          | 13,832                 |
| 531      | Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....              | 11,825            | 8,864           | 11,145    | 12,784                | 12,791          | 12,088                 |
| 531      | Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....              | 12,229            | 9,178           | 11,581    | 13,192                | 13,206          | 12,547                 |
| 533      | Variety stores.....                               | 529               | 379             | 520       | 518                   | 514             | 528                    |
| 539      | Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....     | 1,137             | 975             | 1,051     | (NA)                  | (NA)            | (NA)                   |
| 54       | Food stores.....                                  | 16,685            | 14,813          | 15,514    | (NA)                  | (NA)            | (NA)                   |
| 541      | Grocery stores.....                               | 16,420            | 14,587          | 15,279    | 15,973                | 16,083          | 15,128                 |
| 56       | Apparel and accessory stores.....                 | 3,829             | 2,625           | 3,552     | 3,738                 | 3,779           | 3,533                  |
| 562,3,8  | Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers..... | 1,495             | 1,069           | 1,360     | 1,483                 | 1,472           | 1,372                  |
| 566      | Shoe stores.....                                  | 870               | 536             | 839       | 742                   | 751             | 738                    |
| 591      | Drug stores and proprietary stores.....           | 3,162             | 2,846           | 2,869     | 3,106                 | 3,159           | 2,869                  |

NA Not available. <sup>r</sup> Revised

<sup>1</sup>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, BR-89-03.

<sup>2</sup>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 -0.3 percent to +0.7 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.2 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 1989 and final estimates for February 1989 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for March (BR-89-03). 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 margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up .8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is down .4 percent up to 2.0 percent. 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 |     |                                |                          |   |                    | Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change |      |                         |     |
|--------------------|---|--|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------|---|------|-------------------------|-----|
|                    |   | Advance-to-preliminary ratio                         |     | Ratio to same month a year ago | Dollar volume sales est. | Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter | Range <sup>2</sup> |   | Mean | Aver. of absolute diff. |     |
|                    |   | From   | To  | Median                         | Median                   | Median                                    | Median             | From  | To   |                         |     |
|                    | Retail trade, total.....                        | 0.6  | 0.7 | 0.7                            | 0.9                      | 0.8                                       | 1.0                | -0.3  | +0.7 | 0.0                     | 0.2 |
|                    | Total (excl. auto).....                         | 0.5  | 0.7 | 0.6                            | 0.8                      | 0.7                                       | 0.9                | -1.0  | +1.8 | 0.0                     | 0.4 |
|                    | Durable goods, total..                          | 1.4  | 1.7 | 1.6                            | 2.3                      | 1.7                                       | 2.2                | -1.6  | +1.8 | +0.3                    | 1.0 |
| 52                 | Building materials, group stores.....           | 0.6  | 3.6 | 1.6                            | 3.9                      | 3.3                                       | 3.1                | -5.2  | +1.5 | -0.9                    | 1.6 |
| 55 ex. 554         | Automotive dealers.....                         | 1.7  | 2.2 | 1.9                            | 3.1                      | 2.3                                       | 3.0                | -2.1  | +2.7 | +0.4                    | 1.2 |
| 551, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9 | Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers..... | 1.2  | 2.2 | 1.5                            | 3.7                      | 2.4                                       | 3.2                | -2.5  | +2.8 | +0.3                    | 1.2 |
| 57                 | Furniture, home furn. and equipment stores..... | 1.6  | 2.3 | 1.9                            | 3.7                      | 3.3                                       | 2.7                | -3.3  | +4.4 | +0.5                    | 1.5 |
|                    | Nondur. stores, total...                        | 0.5  | 0.7 | 0.6                            | 1.0                      | 0.7                                       | 0.9                | -0.8  | +0.7 | 0.0                     | 0.4 |
| 53                 | General merch. group, total.                    | 0.2  | 0.5 | 0.3                            | 0.4                      | 0.3                                       | 0.5                | -2.6  | +1.8 | -0.2                    | 0.8 |
| 531                | Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....           | 0.0  | 0.3 | 0.1                            | 0.2                      | 0.1                                       | 0.1                | -2.1  | +2.0 | -0.2                    | 0.8 |
| 54                 | Food stores.....                                | 0.8  | 1.4 | 1.0                            | 1.6                      | 1.3                                       | 1.6                | -0.9  | +0.8 | +0.1                    | 0.3 |
| 541                | Grocery stores.....                             | 0.3  | 1.1 | 0.5                            | 1.8                      | 1.4                                       | 1.6                | -0.8  | +0.9 | +0.1                    | 0.3 |
| 554                | Gasoline service stations...                    | 0.7  | 1.2 | 0.8                            | 3.0                      | 2.2                                       | 2.8                | -1.4  | +2.3 | -0.1                    | 1.0 |
| 56                 | Apparel and acc. stores.....                    | 1.2  | 3.4 | 1.5                            | 2.4                      | 1.8                                       | 1.8                | -2.8  | +2.2 | -0.5                    | 1.3 |
| 58                 | Eating and drinking.....                        | 0.8  | 1.3 | 1.1                            | 2.7                      | 2.3                                       | 2.6                | -1.7  | +1.8 | +0.3                    | 0.9 |
| 591                | Drug and proprietary.....                       | 0.4  | 0.7 | 0.5                            | 2.3                      | 1.7                                       | 2.1                | -1.6  | +1.3 | -0.1                    | 0.7 |

<sup>1</sup> 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 March - July 1988.

<sup>2</sup> 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 1988 - March 1989. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period May 1987-April 1988.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.

