

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



U.S. Department of Commerce  
ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$191.7 billion, an increase of 0.2 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month and an increase of 3.8 percent ( $\pm 1.9\%$ ) from March 1994. Total sales in the first quarter 1995 were 5.9 percent ( $\pm 1.7\%$ ) above the same quarter a year ago. The January to February 1995 percent change was revised from -0.4 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) to -1.0 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ).

Durable goods increased 0.4 percent ( $\pm 2.5\%$ ) from February and were 5.2 percent above March 1994. Furniture store sales were up 11.6 percent from last year.

Nondurable goods were unchanged from last month but were up 3.0 percent from last year. General Merchandise sales were 5.2 percent above March 1994.

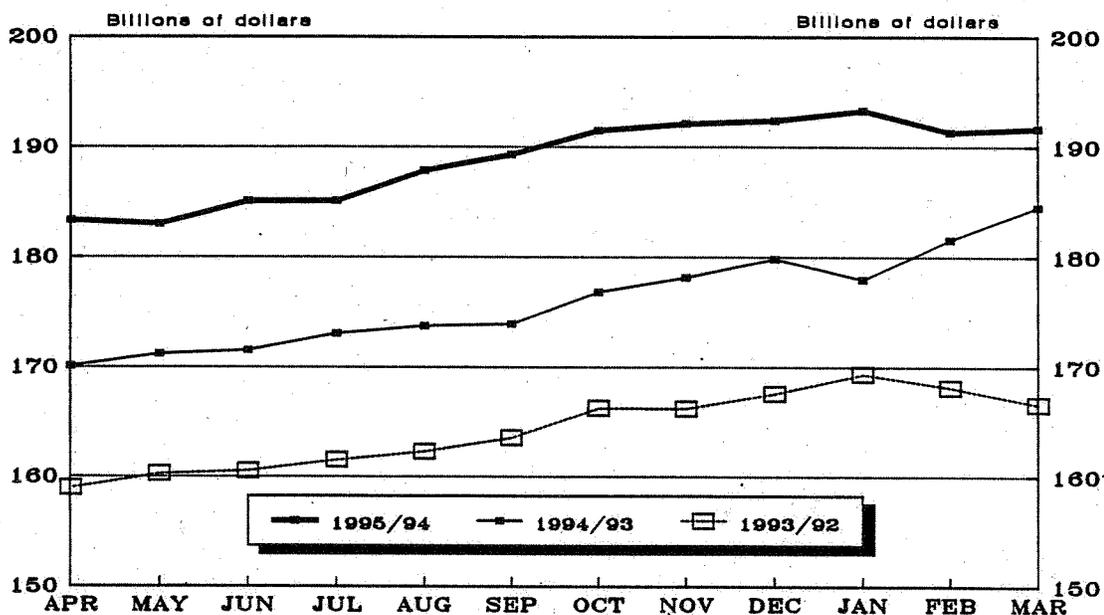
*The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.*

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 11, 1995 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

April 1992 - March 1995

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



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This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call (202) 482-1986. The data are also available through the Census Bureau's online information service - CENDATA. CENDATA is available from Dialog Information Services, INC. (1-800-334-2564) and CompuServe (1-800-848-8199). The CENDATA staff at the Bureau of the Census (301-457-1214) can provide content information and general guidance.

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**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>  |            |            |                        |                   |
|-----------------|--|------------------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|------------------------|------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------|
|                 |  | 1995                   |            |            | 1994    |         | 1995                   |            |            | 1994                   |                   |
|                 |  | Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv. | Feb. prel. | Jan. final | Mar.    | Feb.    | Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv. | Feb. prel. | Jan. final | Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv. | Feb. <sup>2</sup> |
|                 | Retail trade, total.....   | 190,732                | 164,112    | 167,495    | 184,213 | 155,807 | 191,658                | 191,317    | 193,299    | 184,556                | 181,563           |
|                 | Total (excl. auto group)...  | 141,484                | 123,568    | 128,005    | 136,878 | 117,940 | 146,065                | 145,717    | 147,119    | 140,691                | 138,959           |
|                 | Durable goods, total.....  | 77,700                 | 64,776     | 64,892     | 73,996  | 60,161  | 76,178                 | 75,838     | 76,775     | 72,393                 | 70,362            |
| 52              | Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..... | 9,917                  | 7,760      | 8,011      | 9,543   | 7,070   | 10,516                 | 10,371     | 10,397     | 10,050                 | 9,466             |
| 521,3           | Building mat. and supply stores.....                                 | (*)                    | 6,172      | 6,390      | 7,279   | 5,529   | (*)                    | 8,036      | 8,109      | 7,567                  | 7,199             |
| 525             | Hardware stores.....   | (*)                    | 830        | 876        | 1,083   | 892     | (*)                    | 1,099      | 1,067      | 1,162                  | 1,181             |
| 55 ex. 554      | Automotive dealers.....  | 49,248                 | 40,544     | 39,490     | 47,335  | 37,867  | 45,593                 | 45,600     | 46,180     | 43,865                 | 42,604            |
| 551,2,5,6,7,9   | Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....              | 46,469                 | 38,183     | 37,053     | 44,553  | 35,581  | 42,789                 | 42,806     | 43,286     | 41,063                 | 39,889            |
| 551             | Motor vehicle (franchised).....                                      | (*)                    | 33,234     | 32,742     | 39,528  | 31,774  | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)                   | (NA)              |
| 553             | Auto and home supply stores.....                                     | (*)                    | 2,361      | 2,437      | 2,782   | 2,286   | (*)                    | 2,794      | 2,894      | 2,802                  | 2,715             |
| 57              | Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....               | 10,248                 | 8,974      | 9,723      | 9,229   | 8,067   | 10,587                 | 10,483     | 10,661     | 9,483                  | 9,368             |
| 571             | Furniture and home furnishings.....                                  | (*)                    | 4,385      | 4,644      | 4,789   | 4,124   | (*)                    | 5,129      | 5,218      | 4,862                  | 4,784             |
| 5722,31,4       | Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....              | (*)                    | 3,859      | 4,244      | 3,665   | 3,245   | (*)                    | 4,513      | 4,534      | 3,810                  | 3,786             |
| 5722            | Household appliance stores.....                                      | (*)                    | 674        | 757        | 726     | 618     | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)                   | (NA)              |
|                 | Nondurable goods, total.....   | 113,032                | 99,336     | 102,603    | 110,217 | 95,646  | 115,480                | 115,479    | 116,524    | 112,163                | 111,201           |
| 53              | General merchandise group stores.....                                | 22,342                 | 18,426     | 18,251     | 21,493  | 17,540  | 24,353                 | 24,224     | 24,517     | 23,143                 | 23,091            |
| 531             | Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....                                 | 17,343                 | 14,146     | 13,792     | 16,525  | 13,253  | 18,872                 | 18,836     | 18,971     | 17,788                 | 17,694            |
| 531             | Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....                   | (*)                    | 14,375     | 14,013     | 16,849  | 13,525  | (*)                    | 19,146     | 19,240     | 18,077                 | 18,007            |
| 533             | Variety stores.....  | (*)                    | 481        | 491        | 643     | 529     | (*)                    | 627        | 689        | 674                    | 688               |
| 539             | Misc. general mdse. stores.....                                      | (*)                    | 3,799      | 3,968      | 4,325   | 3,758   | (*)                    | 4,761      | 4,857      | 4,681                  | 4,709             |
| 54              | Food stores.....   | 33,811                 | 30,393     | 32,509     | 33,105  | 29,589  | 33,604                 | 33,732     | 34,334     | 32,983                 | 32,869            |
| 541             | Grocery stores.....  | 32,039                 | 28,760     | 30,867     | 31,384  | 28,076  | 31,785                 | 31,885     | 32,457     | 31,259                 | 31,161            |
| 554             | Gasoline service stations.....                                       | 11,749                 | 10,730     | 11,341     | 11,326  | 10,234  | 12,137                 | 12,166     | 12,261     | 11,749                 | 11,630            |
| 56              | Apparel and accessory stores.....                                    | 8,415                  | 6,590      | 6,481      | 8,767   | 6,649   | 9,167                  | 9,033      | 9,131      | 9,069                  | 9,099             |
| 561             | Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....                 | (*)                    | 772        | 835        | 892     | 734     | (*)                    | 1,029      | 1,026      | 987                    | 984               |
| 562,3           | Women's clothing specialty stores.....                               | (*)                    | 2,108      | 2,013      | 2,885   | 2,252   | (*)                    | 2,826      | 2,808      | 2,941                  | 3,023             |
| 565             | Family clothing stores.....  | (*)                    | 2,183      | 2,117      | 2,806   | 2,076   | (*)                    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)                   | (NA)              |
| 566             | Shoe stores.....   | (*)                    | 1,069      | 1,069      | 1,587   | 1,154   | (*)                    | 1,416      | 1,441      | 1,517                  | 1,528             |
| 58              | Eating and drinking places.....                                      | 19,826                 | 17,483     | 17,830     | 18,890  | 16,597  | 19,727                 | 19,578     | 19,572     | 18,928                 | 18,586            |
| 591             | Drug and proprietary stores.....                                     | 7,083                  | 6,583      | 6,761      | 6,901   | 6,184   | 6,999                  | 7,026      | 7,035      | 6,766                  | 6,600             |
| 592             | Liquor stores.....   | (*)                    | 1,513      | 1,551      | 1,694   | 1,490   | (*)                    | 1,808      | 1,816      | 1,804                  | 1,778             |
| 5961            | Total mail-order.....  | (*)                    | 3,162      | 3,823      | 3,782   | 3,010   | (*)                    | 3,810      | 3,925      | 3,741                  | 3,609             |
| 53,56,57<br>594 | GAF <sup>4</sup> .....   | (*)                    | 39,197     | 39,844     | 45,024  | 37,307  | (*)                    | 50,450     | 51,209     | 48,184                 | 48,042            |

\*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, but not for price changes. 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-95-02.

<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 (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

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, but not for price changes)

| SIC code      | Kind of business  | Percent change           |                 |                              |                 |                                    |                             |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|               |   | Mar. 1995 advance from-- |                 | Feb. 1995 preliminary from-- |                 | Jan. 1995 through Mar. 1995 from-- |                             |
|               |   | Feb. 1995 prelim.        | Mar. 1994 final | Jan. 1995 final              | Feb. 1994 final | Oct. 1994 through Dec. 1994        | Jan. 1994 through Mar. 1994 |
|               | Retail trade, total.....  | +0.2                     | +3.8            | -1.0                         | +5.4            | 0.0                                | +5.9                        |
|               | Total (excl. automotive group).....                                       | +0.2                     | +3.8            | -1.0                         | +4.9            | +0.4                               | +5.5                        |
|               | Durable goods, total.....   | +0.4                     | +5.2            | -1.2                         | +7.8            | -1.0                               | +8.1                        |
| 52            | Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..... | +1.4                     | +4.6            | -0.3                         | +9.6            | -1.5                               | +7.5                        |
| 55 ex. 554    | Automotive dealers.....   | 0.0                      | +3.9            | -1.3                         | +7.0            | -1.2                               | +7.3                        |
| 551,2,5,6,7,9 | Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....                   | 0.0                      | +4.2            | -1.1                         | +7.3            | -1.4                               | +7.6                        |
| 57            | Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....                    | +1.0                     | +11.6           | -1.7                         | +11.9           | -0.3                               | +14.0                       |
|               | Nondurable goods, total.....  | 0.0                      | +3.0            | -0.9                         | +3.8            | +0.7                               | +4.6                        |
| 53            | General merchandise group stores.....                                     | +0.5                     | +5.2            | -1.2                         | +4.9            | +1.8                               | +6.2                        |
| 531           | Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....                                      | +0.2                     | +6.1            | -0.7                         | +6.5            | +1.8                               | +7.3                        |
| 531           | Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>1</sup> .....                        | (NA)                     | (NA)            | -0.5                         | +6.3            | (NA)                               | (NA)                        |
| 54            | Food stores.....  | -0.4                     | +1.9            | -1.8                         | +2.6            | +0.8                               | +3.2                        |
| 541           | Grocery stores.....   | -0.3                     | +1.7            | -1.8                         | +2.3            | +1.0                               | +3.0                        |
| 554           | Gasoline service stations.....  | -0.2                     | +3.3            | -0.8                         | +4.6            | +1.1                               | +5.2                        |
| 56            | Apparel and accessory stores.....   | +1.5                     | +1.1            | -1.1                         | -0.7            | -1.6                               | +1.6                        |
| 58            | Eating and drinking places.....   | +0.8                     | +4.2            | 0.0                          | +5.3            | +0.5                               | +6.9                        |
| 591           | Drug and proprietary stores.....  | -0.4                     | +3.4            | -0.1                         | +6.5            | +2.0                               | +4.6                        |

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

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 -1.0 percent to +1.3 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 February 1995 and final estimates for January 1995 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-95-02). 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 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is -0.4 percent 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 3. 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 | Avg. of absolute diff. |     |
|                                 |  | Range <sup>1</sup>                                   |     | Median                         | Median                   | Median                                    | Median             | From  | To   |                        |     |
|                                 |  | From   | To  |                                |                          |   |                    |   |      |                        |     |
|                                 | Retail trade, total.....                         | 0.5  | 1.3 | 0.7                            | 1.0                      | 0.8                                       | 1.0                | -1.0  | +1.3 | 0.0                    | 0.4 |
|                                 | Total (excl. auto).....                          | 0.5  | 0.9 | 0.7                            | 1.1                      | 0.8                                       | 1.0                | -1.6  | +0.7 | -0.1                   | 0.4 |
|                                 | Durable goods, total.....                        | 1.2  | 3.4 | 1.4                            | 2.2                      | 1.7                                       | 2.2                | -0.9  | +1.1 | +0.2                   | 0.5 |
| 52                              | Building materials, group stores.....            | 0.9  | 2.6 | 1.6                            | 4.1                      | 2.9                                       | 3.4                | -4.2  | +2.5 | -0.4                   | 1.4 |
| 55 ex. 554<br>551,2,5,<br>6,7,9 | Automotive dealers.....                          | 1.6  | 3.2 | 2.1                            | 3.4                      | 2.6                                       | 3.1                | -1.3  | +2.2 | +0.6                   | 1.1 |
|                                 | Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....  | 1.2  | 3.0 | 1.5                            | 4.0                      | 2.8                                       | 3.2                | -1.5  | +2.3 | +0.5                   | 1.1 |
| 57                              | Furniture, home furn., and equipment stores..... | 1.3  | 3.6 | 2.1                            | 4.6                      | 3.4                                       | 4.1                | -3.4  | +2.3 | -0.1                   | 1.5 |
|                                 | Nondurable goods, total.....                     | 0.4  | 0.8 | 0.6                            | 1.1                      | 0.8                                       | 1.1                | -1.1  | +0.5 | 0.0                    | 0.3 |
| 53                              | General merch. group, total.....                 | 0.2  | 0.4 | 0.3                            | 0.4                      | 0.3                                       | 0.5                | -0.3  | +0.7 | +0.1                   | 0.2 |
| 531                             | Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....            | 0.0  | 0.2 | 0.0                            | 0.1                      | 0.0                                       | 0.1                | -0.4  | +0.6 | -0.1                   | 0.2 |
| 54                              | Food stores.....                                 | 0.6  | 1.0 | 0.7                            | 1.7                      | 0.9                                       | 1.7                | -0.5  | +0.8 | +0.1                   | 0.3 |
| 541                             | Grocery stores.....                              | 0.1  | 0.8 | 0.3                            | 1.8                      | 0.9                                       | 1.7                | -0.6  | +0.5 | 0.0                    | 0.2 |
| 554                             | Gasoline service stations.....                   | 0.5  | 1.9 | 0.9                            | 2.7                      | 1.8                                       | 3.0                | -1.4  | +1.2 | -0.4                   | 0.8 |
| 56                              | Apparel and accessory stores.....                | 0.8  | 3.4 | 1.4                            | 3.3                      | 2.8                                       | 2.6                | -2.4  | +1.3 | -0.4                   | 1.1 |
| 58                              | Eating and drinking places.....                  | 0.8  | 2.0 | 1.2                            | 4.6                      | 4.0                                       | 3.9                | -3.6  | +2.4 | 0.0                    | 1.0 |
| 591                             | Drug and proprietary stores.....                 | 0.4  | 1.8 | 1.0                            | 2.5                      | 1.5                                       | 2.5                | -1.0  | +1.3 | +0.2                   | 0.6 |

<sup>1</sup>The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of April 1993 - March 1994.

<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, March 1994 - February 1995. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the period April 1993 - February 1994.

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 of the measures of sampling variability.

