

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



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ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION  
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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 \$203.9 billion, a decrease of 0.3 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month and up 6.0 percent ( $\pm 2.0\%$ ) from April 1995. Total sales for the February through April period were 6.2 percent ( $\pm 1.8\%$ ) above the same period a year ago. The February to March 1996 percent change was revised from +0.1 ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) to +0.5 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ).

Durable goods decreased 2.1 percent ( $\pm 2.4\%$ ) from March but were 8.5 percent above April 1995. Automotive sales were up 10.6 percent from last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.9 percent ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) from last month and were up 4.4 percent from last year. Gasoline sales increased 3.3 percent from March and were up 8.8 percent from April 1995.

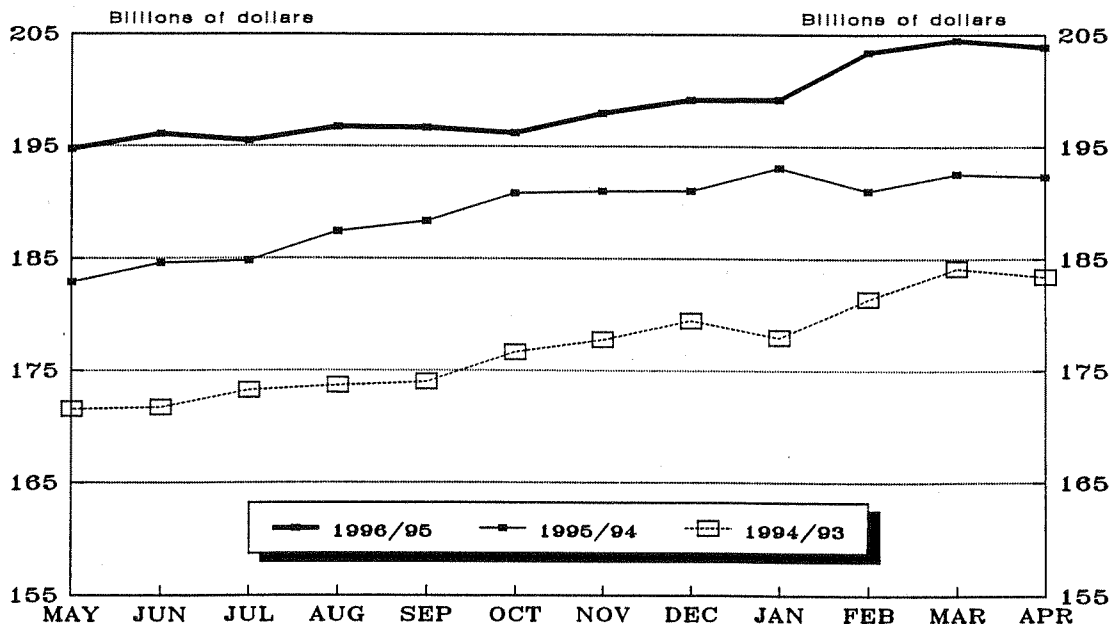
*The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.*

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released June 13, 1996 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

May 1993 - April 1996

(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 on the internet - <http://www.census.gov/ftp/pub/svsd/www/fullpub.html>, or 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 (301-457-1242) can provide content information and general guidance.

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>				
		1996			1995		1996			1995	
		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.....	200,115	201,813	181,901	187,534	192,131	203,877	204,492	203,392	192,337	192,574
	Total (excl. auto group)...	146,943	147,682	134,156	141,182	142,223	153,586	152,922	152,191	146,883	146,846
	Durable goods, total.....	83,927	84,034	74,500	75,039	78,537	82,569	84,302	83,285	76,110	76,454
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	11,189	9,637	8,151	10,606	10,006	10,351	10,415	10,421	10,290	10,520
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	7,557	6,440	7,952	7,725	(*)	8,100	8,000	7,889	8,055
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,046	934	1,150	1,057	(*)	1,136	1,191	1,124	1,144
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	53,172	54,131	47,745	46,352	49,908	50,291	51,570	51,201	45,454	45,728
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	49,990	51,115	45,079	43,509	47,016	47,205	48,496	48,161	42,614	42,859
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	44,377	39,527	37,682	40,882	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,016	2,666	2,843	2,892	(*)	3,074	3,040	2,840	2,869
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	10,164	10,882	9,891	9,401	10,114	11,194	11,367	11,153	10,366	10,437
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	5,385	4,826	4,896	5,093	(*)	5,575	5,484	5,225	5,213
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,586	4,247	3,770	4,221	(*)	4,843	4,756	4,309	4,392
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	666	593	645	715	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	116,188	117,779	107,401	112,495	113,594	121,308	120,190	120,107	116,227	116,120
53	General merchandise group stores.....	22,876	23,121	20,413	22,743	22,341	25,348	25,171	25,636	24,515	24,490
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	17,858	17,948	15,706	17,637	17,341	19,754	19,509	20,008	19,026	18,993
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	18,325	16,037	17,972	17,661	(*)	19,951	20,164	19,375	19,392
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	622	555	607	563	(*)	688	667	620	621
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,551	4,152	4,499	4,437	(*)	4,974	4,961	4,869	4,876
54	Food stores.....	34,115	35,057	32,674	33,452	34,018	35,211	34,910	34,807	34,037	33,847
541	Grocery stores.....	32,307	33,272	31,000	31,682	32,330	33,375	33,074	32,979	32,263	32,105
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,208	12,700	11,435	11,998	12,097	13,491	13,066	12,566	12,395	12,433
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,177	8,833	7,352	8,827	8,547	9,609	9,359	9,615	8,947	9,279
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	742	684	790	733	(*)	830	859	826	843
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,556	2,194	2,890	2,840	(*)	2,643	2,835	2,905	2,986
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,248	2,646	2,864	2,807	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,591	1,279	1,679	1,537	(*)	1,604	1,603	1,569	1,618
58	Eating and drinking places.....	19,818	20,326	18,347	19,485	19,421	20,038	19,986	19,856	19,446	19,267
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,197	7,255	6,961	6,847	7,033	7,233	7,241	7,191	6,973	6,929
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,847	1,674	1,733	1,758	(*)	1,948	1,942	1,842	1,868
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,787	3,388	3,247	3,676	(*)	3,904	3,977	3,686	3,661
53,56,57	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	49,369	43,827	46,988	46,883	(*)	53,778	54,099	50,966	51,249
594											

\*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-96-03.

<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 (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					
		Apr. 1996 advance from—		Mar. 1996 preliminary from—		Feb. 1996 through Apr. 1996 from—	
		Mar. 1996 prelim.	Apr. 1995 final	Feb. 1996 final	Mar. 1995 final	Nov. 1995 through Jan. 1996	Feb. 1995 through Apr. 1995
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.3	+6.0	+0.5	+6.2	+2.6	+6.2
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.4	+4.6	+0.5	+4.1	+1.9	+4.3
	Durable goods, total.....	-2.1	+8.5	+1.2	+10.3	+3.5	+9.6
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-0.6	+0.6	-0.1	-1.0	-0.8	-0.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-2.5	+10.6	+0.7	+12.8	+4.9	+12.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-2.7	+10.8	+0.7	+13.2	+5.1	+12.8
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-1.5	+8.0	+1.9	+8.9	+0.7	+7.7
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+0.9	+4.4	+0.1	+3.5	+2.0	+4.0
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+0.7	+3.4	-1.8	+2.8	+2.4	+4.1
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	+1.3	+3.8	-2.5	+2.7	+2.1	+4.3
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>1</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	-1.1	+2.9	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+0.9	+3.4	+0.3	+3.1	+0.5	+3.0
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.9	+3.4	+0.3	+3.0	+0.6	+3.0
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+3.3	+8.8	+4.0	+5.1	+6.3	+5.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+2.7	+7.4	-2.7	+0.9	+3.4	+4.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+0.3	+3.0	+0.7	+3.7	+2.2	+3.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.1	+3.7	+0.7	+4.5	+1.0	+3.7

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 -0.3 percent to +1.1 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.3 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 3 below.

Preliminary estimates for March 1996 and final estimates for February 1996 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for March (BR-96-03). 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 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	-0.3	+1.1	+0.2	0.3
	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. 554 551,2,5, 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, April 1995 - March 1996. 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.

