

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, Thursday, December 12, 1996

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
November 1996**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for November adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$206.1 billion, a decrease of 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month but up 4.0 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from November 1995. Total sales for the September through November period were 4.7 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above the same period a year ago. The September to October 1996 percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.3 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Durable goods decreased 1.1 percent ($\pm 1.3\%$) from October but were 3.9 percent above last year. Automotive sales decreased 2.6 percent from last month but were 2.5 percent ($\pm 3.0\%$) above November 1995.

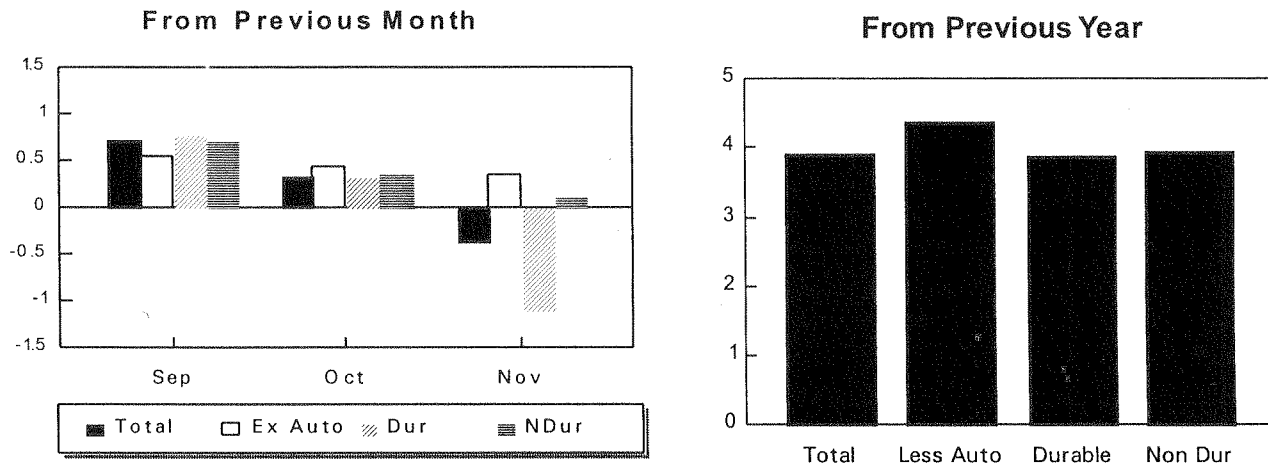
Nondurable goods increased 0.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from last month and were up 4.0 percent from last year. General merchandise sales were up 4.3 percent from last year.

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 scheduled release dates for 1997 are as follows: January 14, February 13, March 13, April 11, May 13, June 12, July 15, August 13, September 12, October 15, November 14, and December 11.

Percent Change in Retail Sales

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



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for December is scheduled to be released January 14, 1997 at 8:30 a.m.

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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/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1996			1995		1996			1995	
		Nov. ² (a)	Oct. (p)	Sept. (r)	Nov.	Oct.	Nov. ² (a)	Oct. (p)	Sept. (r)	Nov. (r)	Oct. (r)
	Retail trade, total	210,817	208,549	197,365	202,359	193,987	206,063	206,842	206,127	198,211	196,225
	Total (excl. auto group)...	165,761	156,656	147,999	157,990	147,165	156,600	156,069	155,406	149,965	148,756
	Durable goods, total.....	80,817	85,587	81,618	77,921	77,791	83,525	84,456	84,189	80,381	79,059
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	10,897	12,148	11,508	10,213	11,058	11,199	11,204	11,227	10,566	10,465
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	9,472	8,916	7,879	8,695	(*)	8,564	8,631	8,064	8,058
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,228	1,128	1,191	1,135	(*)	1,199	1,181	1,195	1,132
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	45,056	51,893	49,366	44,369	46,822	49,463	50,773	50,721	48,246	47,469
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	41,956	48,560	46,324	41,365	43,749	46,360	47,655	47,658	45,257	44,506
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	42,685	40,637	36,724	38,347	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,333	3,042	3,004	3,073	(*)	3,118	3,063	2,989	2,963
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	13,019	11,450	10,990	12,485	10,857	11,603	11,469	11,522	11,232	11,076
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	5,897	5,518	6,255	5,567	(*)	5,676	5,631	5,600	5,485
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,764	4,663	5,255	4,483	(*)	4,921	5,019	4,726	4,699
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	726	692	768	691	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	130,000	122,962	115,747	124,438	116,196	122,538	122,386	121,938	117,830	117,166
53	General merchandise group stores...	30,755	25,656	23,553	29,817	23,969	25,844	25,990	25,897	24,772	24,621
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	24,368	19,892	18,382	23,584	18,617	20,172	20,257	20,200	19,363	19,173
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	20,250	18,714	24,017	18,939	(*)	20,670	20,582	19,831	19,539
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	699	610	732	619	(*)	698	679	638	638
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	5,065	4,561	5,501	4,733	(*)	5,035	5,018	4,771	4,810
54	Food stores.....	35,972	35,524	34,174	34,297	33,634	35,679	35,748	35,705	34,563	34,457
541	Grocery stores.....	34,086	33,649	32,418	32,481	31,837	33,815	33,886	33,839	32,743	32,653
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,143	13,508	12,935	11,872	12,389	13,384	13,230	13,026	12,139	12,170
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	10,865	9,506	9,008	10,616	8,880	9,374	9,458	9,519	9,237	9,053
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	831	777	975	817	(*)	845	861	852	839
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,745	2,598	3,111	2,784	(*)	2,707	2,738	2,773	2,804
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,741	3,395	4,189	3,207	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,475	1,508	1,618	1,430	(*)	1,551	1,550	1,586	1,546
58	Eating and drinking places.....	19,048	19,946	19,416	18,750	19,766	19,637	19,709	19,752	19,592	19,590
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,534	7,542	6,989	7,037	6,922	7,696	7,634	7,507	7,173	7,092
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,915	1,804	1,919	1,828	(*)	1,952	1,929	1,919	1,900
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,492	3,716	5,332	4,330	(*)	3,993	4,009	3,958	3,919
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	53,840	50,575	61,382	50,240	(*)	54,930	54,956	52,839	52,175

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

NA Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

- (1) 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-96-10.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.
- (4) 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 ¹					
		Nov. 1996 Advance from --		Oct. 1996 Preliminary from --		Sept. 1996 through Nov. 1996 from --	
		Oct. 1996 (p)	Nov. 1995 (r)	Sept. 1996 (r)	Oct. 1995 (r)	June 1996 through Aug. 1996	Sept. 1995 through Nov. 1995
	Retail trade, total	-0.4	4.0	0.3	5.4	0.9	4.7
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.3	4.4	0.4	4.9	0.8	4.5
	Durable goods, total	-1.1	3.9	0.3	6.8	0.6	5.9
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	0.0	6.0	-0.2	7.1	-1.0	7.1
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-2.6	2.5	0.1	7.0	1.1	5.6
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-2.7	2.4	0.0	7.1	1.1	5.7
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.2	3.3	-0.5	3.5	1.0	3.7
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.1	4.0	0.4	4.5	1.0	4.0
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.6	4.3	0.4	5.6	0.5	4.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.4	4.2	0.3	5.7	0.8	4.5
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.4	5.8	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.2	3.2	0.1	3.7	1.3	3.7
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.2	3.3	0.1	3.8	1.4	3.8
554	Gasoline service stations.....	1.2	10.3	1.6	8.7	1.1	8.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-0.9	1.5	-0.6	4.5	0.1	2.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.4	0.2	-0.2	0.6	0.2	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.8	7.3	1.7	7.6	2.6	6.9

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

(2) 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

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 each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$ or $\pm 1.5\%$, and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value).

Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average

difference between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total.....	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.2
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.0	0.3	0.3
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	2.2	1.2	2.8	0.5	1.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.9	1.3	0.9	1.8	0.4	0.8
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	2.1	1.5	0.9	1.9	0.4	0.9
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.0	0.7	1.5	0.1	0.2
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.2
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.6	-0.1	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	-0.2	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations	2.1	0.7	1.4	1.2	0.2	0.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.6	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	4.7	1.1	1.1	2.3	-0.2	0.7
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.6	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.2	0.4



(1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.

(2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.