

**INTENTION TO REVISE.** We are changing the sample base and the sample design for the survey that produces the preliminary and final monthly retail sales estimates. The estimates for April and May 1997 and 1996 will be revised the week of June 23.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT, Tuesday, May 13, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES  
APRIL 1997**

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 \$212.2 billion, a decrease of 0.3 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the previous month but up 4.9 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from April 1996. Total sales for the February through April period were 5.5 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) above the same period a year ago. The February to March 1997 percent change was revised from +0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) to unchanged ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ).

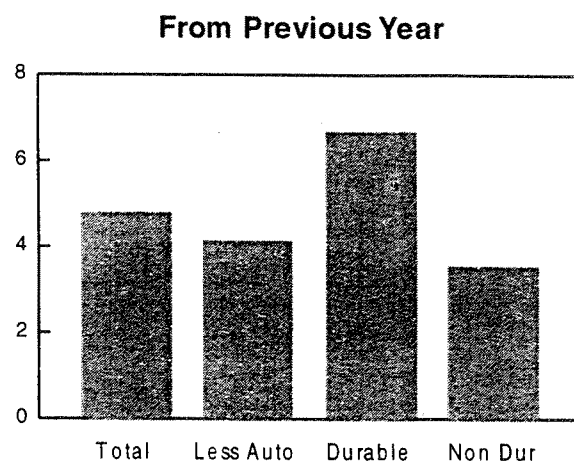
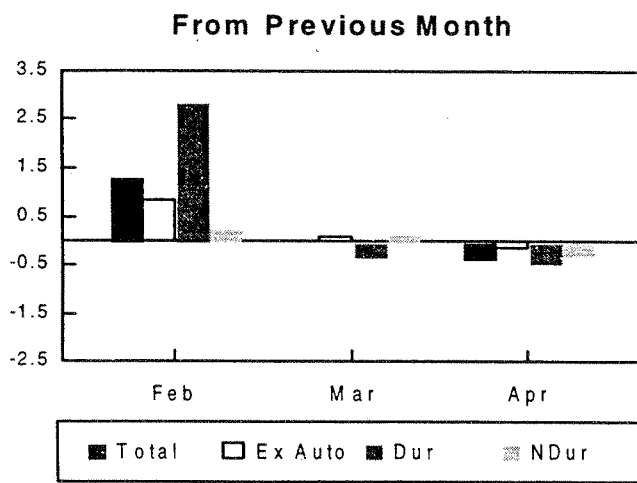
Durable goods decreased 0.5 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from March but were 6.8 percent above April 1996.

Nondurable goods decreased 0.3 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ) from last month but were 3.6 percent above 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.*

**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 May is scheduled to be released June 12, 1997 at 8:30 a.m.**

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

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/advttable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		1997			1996		1997			1996	
		Apr. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>207,390</b>	<b>210,155</b>	<b>183,530</b>	<b>198,610</b>	<b>199,413</b>	<b>212,241</b>	<b>212,965</b>	<b>213,022</b>	<b>202,375</b>	<b>201,685</b>
	Total (excl. auto group)...	152,724	155,175	136,278	147,447	146,628	160,377	160,609	160,483	153,915	151,765
	<b>Durable goods, total.....</b>	<b>88,260</b>	<b>86,954</b>	<b>75,424</b>	<b>82,958</b>	<b>82,506</b>	<b>87,090</b>	<b>87,500</b>	<b>87,786</b>	<b>81,580</b>	<b>82,641</b>
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	12,875	11,014	8,870	11,936	9,776	12,021	12,022	11,901	11,048	10,683
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	8,622	6,964	8,817	7,559	(*)	9,241	9,091	8,326	8,137
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,138	978	1,347	1,104	(*)	1,279	1,295	1,283	1,239
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	54,666	54,980	47,252	51,163	52,785	51,864	52,356	52,539	48,460	49,920
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	51,680	52,044	44,758	48,107	49,845	48,939	49,378	49,566	45,470	46,935
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	45,242	39,122	41,745	43,763	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,936	2,494	3,056	2,940	(*)	2,978	2,973	2,990	2,985
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	10,317	10,929	9,933	10,143	10,617	11,425	11,458	11,591	11,118	11,128
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	5,567	5,000	5,209	5,347	(*)	5,811	5,889	5,524	5,570
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,529	4,179	4,140	4,396	(*)	4,762	4,826	4,673	4,637
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	779	692	742	727	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>119,130</b>	<b>123,201</b>	<b>108,106</b>	<b>115,652</b>	<b>116,907</b>	<b>125,151</b>	<b>125,465</b>	<b>125,236</b>	<b>120,795</b>	<b>119,044</b>
53	General merchandise group stores...	24,343	25,474	21,355	23,479	23,358	27,234	27,491	27,507	26,074	25,284
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	19,126	20,090	16,588	18,311	18,141	21,418	21,625	21,599	20,391	19,591
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	20,406	16,831	18,689	18,514	(*)	22,106	21,947	20,539	20,102
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	740	621	641	635	(*)	768	789	681	680
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,644	4,146	4,527	4,582	(*)	5,098	5,119	5,002	5,013
54	Food stores.....	34,618	36,233	32,328	34,031	34,982	35,881	36,056	35,841	35,092	34,823
541	Grocery stores.....	32,604	34,176	30,501	32,177	33,147	33,787	33,972	33,777	33,206	32,949
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,101	12,920	11,723	12,887	12,454	13,260	13,279	13,352	13,057	12,747
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	8,709	9,324	7,202	9,026	8,843	9,560	9,616	9,709	9,565	9,322
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	808	686	765	756	(*)	888	886	840	846
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,677	2,136	2,732	2,597	(*)	2,748	2,814	2,822	2,686
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,394	2,532	3,170	3,181	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,717	1,299	1,680	1,591	(*)	1,641	1,700	1,645	1,588
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,539	20,539	18,277	19,489	19,940	20,601	20,498	20,467	19,646	19,607
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,869	8,292	7,565	7,329	7,417	8,129	8,137	8,082	7,411	7,380
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,844	1,620	1,772	1,811	(*)	1,943	1,952	1,901	1,902
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,261	3,432	3,645	3,763	(*)	4,330	4,196	3,975	3,820
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	52,488	44,884	49,134	49,179	(*)	56,721	57,079	54,451	53,444

\* 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-97-03.

(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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Apr. 1997 Advance from --		Mar. 1997 Preliminary from --		Feb. 1997 through Apr. 1997 from --	
		Mar. 1997 (p)	Apr. 1996 (r)	Feb. 1997 (r)	Mar. 1996 (r)	Nov. 1996 through Jan. 1997	Feb. 1996 through Apr. 1996
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>
	Total (excl. automotive group) .....	-0.1	4.2	0.1	5.8	1.9	5.4
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers .....	0.0	8.8	1.0	12.5	5.1	11.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.9	7.0	-0.3	4.9	4.1	5.7
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.9	7.6	-0.4	5.2	4.4	6.1
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.3	2.8	-1.1	3.0	2.9	4.3
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.9	4.4	-0.1	8.7	2.4	6.9
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-1.0	5.0	0.1	10.4	2.6	7.9
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	0.7	10.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.5	2.2	0.6	3.5	0.5	3.0
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.5	1.7	0.6	3.1	0.2	2.6
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.1	1.6	-0.5	4.2	0.3	4.4
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-0.6	-0.1	-1.0	3.2	1.6	1.5
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.5	4.9	0.2	4.5	1.9	4.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.1	9.7	0.7	10.3	3.7	10.1

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 <sup>1</sup> for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error <sup>1</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>2</sup>	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail trade, total.....</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>
	Total (excl. auto) .....	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.3
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.4</b>
52	Building materials, group stores .....	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.6	1.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.6
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores .....	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.7
	<b>Nondurable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	-0.1	0.3
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2
541	Grocery stores .....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations .....	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.1	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores .....	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places .....	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.0	0.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores .....	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.4	0.5



- (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.