

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT, Friday, September 12, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
AUGUST 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for August adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$213.7 billion, an increase of 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and 5.3 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from August 1996. Total sales for the June through August period were 4.7 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above the same period a year ago. The June to July 1997 percent change was revised from +0.6 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.9 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

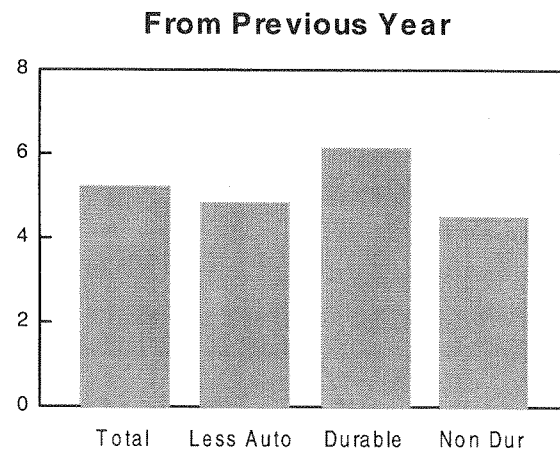
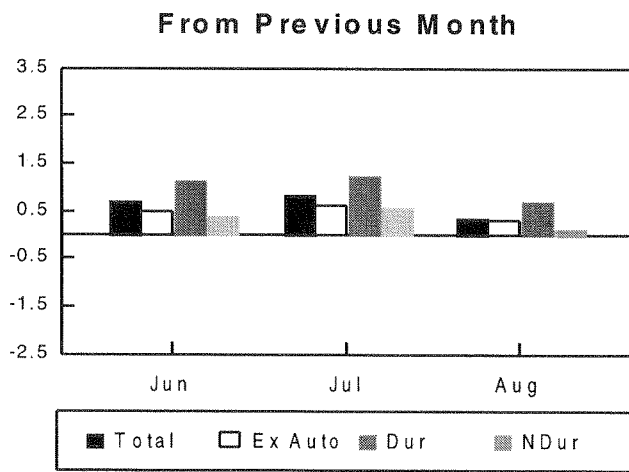
Durable goods increased 0.7 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from July and were 6.2 percent above August 1996. Automotive dealers sales were up 6.4 percent from last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.2 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 4.6 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 6.9 percent from August 1996 while food sales were up 1.6 percent in the same period.

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 September is scheduled to be released October 15, 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				
		1997			1996		1997			1996	
		Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug.	July	Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug. (r)	July (r)
	Retail trade, total	219,527	215,509	212,251	212,247	204,817	213,679	212,825	210,940	202,970	203,090
	Total (excl. auto group)...	165,318	160,130	157,726	159,851	152,803	161,617	161,154	160,192	154,058	154,338
	Durable goods, total.....	90,473	91,092	90,015	87,258	86,024	87,518	86,868	85,762	82,384	82,383
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	12,902	13,482	13,587	12,300	12,718	12,160	12,069	12,037	11,283	11,457
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	10,497	10,258	9,454	9,758	(*)	9,314	9,241	8,563	8,697
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,451	1,453	1,298	1,353	(*)	1,349	1,304	1,249	1,256
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	54,209	55,379	54,525	52,396	52,014	52,062	51,671	50,748	48,912	48,752
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	50,982	52,129	51,405	49,142	48,753	49,021	48,673	47,774	45,927	45,735
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	45,168	44,245	42,970	42,789	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,250	3,120	3,254	3,261	(*)	2,998	2,974	2,985	3,017
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,899	11,419	10,971	11,326	10,686	11,935	11,842	11,695	11,216	11,115
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	6,014	5,756	5,793	5,590	(*)	5,990	5,971	5,570	5,568
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,650	4,462	4,669	4,306	(*)	5,005	4,882	4,750	4,650
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	923	891	832	790	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	129,054	124,417	122,236	124,989	118,793	126,161	125,957	125,178	120,586	120,707
53	General merchandise group stores...	28,064	25,566	26,131	26,416	23,695	27,990	27,810	27,576	26,174	26,011
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	22,165	19,861	20,415	20,640	18,265	22,055	21,897	21,718	20,395	20,272
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	20,177	20,748	21,016	18,582	(*)	22,179	22,005	20,806	20,631
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	707	688	699	646	(*)	755	733	707	709
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,998	5,028	5,077	4,784	(*)	5,158	5,125	5,072	5,030
54	Food stores.....	36,842	37,035	35,338	36,716	36,289	35,703	35,776	35,642	35,146	35,373
541	Grocery stores.....	34,708	34,953	33,263	34,803	34,411	33,567	33,673	33,531	33,241	33,474
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,924	13,718	13,436	13,795	13,629	12,977	12,917	12,821	12,761	12,761
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	10,531	9,063	9,041	10,366	8,616	9,916	9,855	9,773	9,470	9,435
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	791	868	809	701	(*)	946	920	860	845
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,458	2,607	2,764	2,453	(*)	2,746	2,733	2,734	2,741
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,537	3,370	3,871	3,206	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,609	1,611	2,009	1,566	(*)	1,637	1,641	1,605	1,614
58	Eating and drinking places.....	22,007	21,345	20,803	21,250	20,470	20,339	20,290	20,276	19,585	19,607
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,083	8,043	7,927	7,526	7,381	8,299	8,292	8,198	7,625	7,578
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	2,153	2,009	2,032	2,002	(*)	2,037	2,029	1,930	1,905
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,837	3,893	3,508	3,440	(*)	4,668	4,613	3,964	4,140
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	53,117	53,336	56,095	50,048	(*)	57,450	57,099	54,847	54,457

* 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-97-07.

(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					
		Aug. 1997 Advance from --		July 1997 Preliminary from --		June 1997 through Aug. 1997 from --	
		July 1997 (p)	Aug. 1996 (r)	June 1997 (r)	July 1996 (r)	Mar. 1997 through May 1997	June 1996 through Aug. 1996
	Retail trade, total	0.4	5.3	0.9	4.8	0.9	4.7
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.3	4.9	0.6	4.4	0.7	4.4
	Durable goods, total	0.7	6.2	1.3	5.4	1.1	5.3
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	0.8	7.8	0.3	5.3	0.3	5.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.8	6.4	1.8	6.0	1.5	5.6
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.7	6.7	1.9	6.4	1.5	5.9
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.8	6.4	1.3	6.5	1.8	6.0
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.2	4.6	0.6	4.3	0.8	4.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.6	6.9	0.8	6.9	1.8	6.7
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.7	8.1	0.8	8.0	1.8	7.9
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.8	7.5	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.2	1.6	0.4	1.1	-0.6	1.4
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.3	1.0	0.4	0.6	-0.8	0.9
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.5	1.7	0.7	1.2	-1.2	0.5
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.6	4.7	0.8	4.5	3.0	4.0
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.2	3.8	0.1	3.5	0.1	3.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.1	8.8	1.1	9.4	2.1	9.3

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)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	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.