

INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES. The annual revision of the monthly retail sales estimates will be published in the press release the week of April 27. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 1998, while corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through March 1998.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday April 14, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
March 1998**

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 \$218.4 billion, a decrease of 0.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month but up 3.1 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from March 1997. Total sales for the first quarter were up 3.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same quarter a year ago. The January to February 1998 percent change was revised from +0.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.7 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

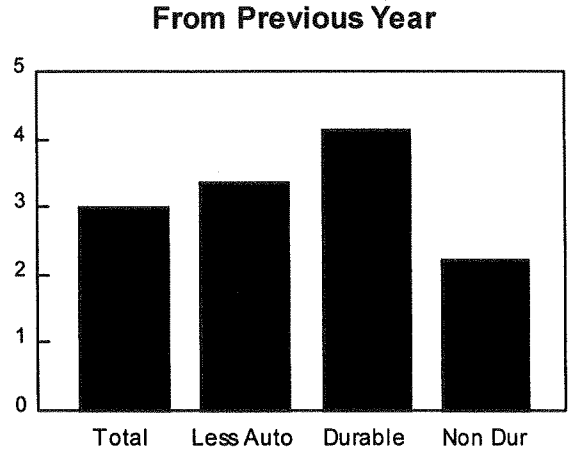
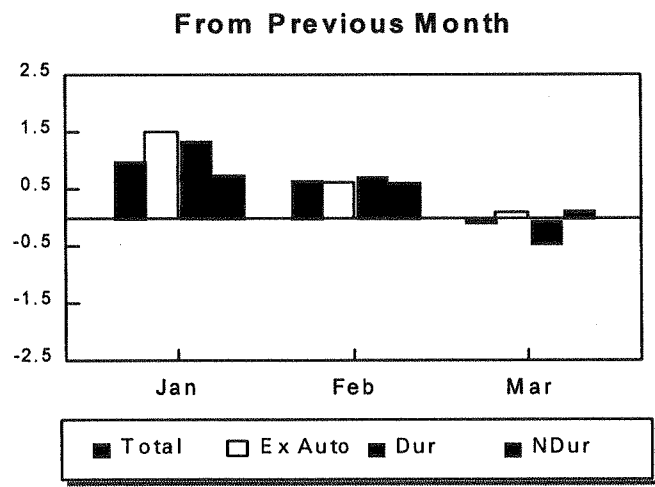
Durable goods decreased 0.4 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from February but were 4.2 percent above last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.2 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 2.3 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 April is scheduled to be released May 13, 1998 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienckoski, 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/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				
		1998			1997		1998			1997	
		Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	214,305	189,133	192,808	209,973	183,530	218,380	218,589	217,102	211,914	212,151
	Total (excl. auto group).....	157,892	141,184	145,997	155,319	136,278	165,493	165,338	164,308	160,056	159,619
	Durable goods, total.....	90,967	78,341	77,996	86,718	75,424	90,516	90,925	90,247	86,885	87,520
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	11,848	9,478	9,497	11,081	8,870	12,645	12,723	12,516	12,044	11,871
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	7,369	7,378	8,645	6,964	(*)	9,633	9,508	9,266	9,115
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	992	1,064	1,143	978	(*)	1,304	1,243	1,273	1,287
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	56,413	47,949	46,811	54,654	47,252	52,887	53,251	52,794	51,858	52,532
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	53,416	45,422	44,244	51,707	44,758	49,875	50,246	49,880	48,872	49,566
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	39,398	39,096	44,931	39,122	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,527	2,567	2,947	2,494	(*)	3,005	2,914	2,986	2,966
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,956	11,019	11,720	10,949	9,933	12,585	12,659	12,661	11,502	11,464
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	5,548	5,787	5,629	5,000	(*)	6,459	6,352	5,857	5,841
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,680	5,083	4,500	4,179	(*)	5,282	5,367	4,777	4,749
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	740	799	777	692	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	123,338	110,792	114,812	123,255	108,106	127,864	127,664	126,855	125,029	124,631
53	General merchandise group stores....	26,271	22,905	21,994	25,452	21,355	28,931	28,881	28,495	27,263	27,181
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	20,733	17,982	17,066	20,061	16,588	22,859	22,907	22,574	21,433	21,349
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	18,245	17,295	20,378	16,831	(*)	23,239	22,863	21,855	21,625
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	621	556	740	621	(*)	766	753	764	770
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,302	4,372	4,651	4,146	(*)	5,208	5,168	5,066	5,062
54	Food stores.....	35,647	32,642	35,656	36,404	32,328	36,251	36,185	36,043	36,138	35,834
541	Grocery stores.....	33,585	30,727	33,713	34,323	30,501	34,096	34,028	33,882	34,051	33,777
554	Gasoline service stations.....	11,922	10,828	11,711	12,970	11,723	12,128	12,305	12,472	13,194	13,306
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,338	7,604	7,404	9,348	7,202	10,295	10,152	10,027	9,598	9,625
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	731	816	808	686	(*)	941	940	893	885
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,089	2,075	2,699	2,136	(*)	2,749	2,800	2,743	2,814
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,761	2,687	3,379	2,532	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,360	1,227	1,729	1,299	(*)	1,739	1,672	1,634	1,665
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,822	18,792	19,183	20,402	18,277	20,864	20,903	20,649	20,321	20,353
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,493	8,005	8,455	8,281	7,565	8,485	8,516	8,540	8,095	8,048
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,743	1,830	1,854	1,620	(*)	2,100	2,022	1,952	1,952
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,000	4,398	4,215	3,432	(*)	4,884	4,734	4,391	4,201
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	48,221	47,750	52,549	44,884	(*)	60,273	59,463	56,497	56,478

* 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-98-02.
- (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					
		Mar. 1998 Advance from --		Feb. 1998 Preliminary from --		Jan. 1998 through Mar. 1998 from --	
		Feb. 1998 (p)	Mar. 1997 (r)	Jan. 1998 (r)	Feb. 1997 (r)	Oct 1997 through Dec. 1997	Jan. 1997 through Mar. 1997
	Retail trade, total	-0.1	3.1	0.7	3.0	1.8	3.3
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.1	3.4	0.6	3.6	1.9	3.6
	Durable goods, total	-0.4	4.2	0.8	3.9	3.1	4.7
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.6	5.0	1.7	7.2	5.5	6.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.7	2.0	0.9	1.4	1.8	2.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.7	2.1	0.7	1.4	1.7	2.6
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.6	9.4	0.0	10.4	5.1	10.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.2	2.3	0.6	2.4	1.0	2.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.2	6.1	1.4	6.3	3.1	5.9
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.2	6.7	1.5	7.3	3.2	6.7
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	1.6	7.5	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.2	0.3	0.4	1.0	-0.3	0.6
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.7	-0.3	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.4	-8.1	-1.3	-7.5	-4.9	-7.5
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.4	7.3	1.2	5.5	3.8	5.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.2	2.7	1.2	2.7	1.8	2.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.4	4.8	-0.3	5.8	1.7	6.2

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 Mb. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mb. to Previous Mb.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mb. to Current Mb. 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.

