

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday May 13, 1999

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES  
 APRIL 1999**

**INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES.** Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 1997 Annual Retail Trade Survey, which reflects the preliminary 1997 Census of Retail Trade data. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through June 1999, while the corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through June 1999. Revised data are scheduled for release the week of July 26.

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 \$239.3 billion, an increase of 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the previous month and up 7.5 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from April 1998. Total sales for the February through April period were up 8.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The February to March 1999 percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) to +0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.4\%$ ).

Durable goods decreased 0.3 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from March but were 8.6 percent above last year. Building materials were up 11.2 percent from April a year ago, while furniture sales were up 11.0 percent during the same period.

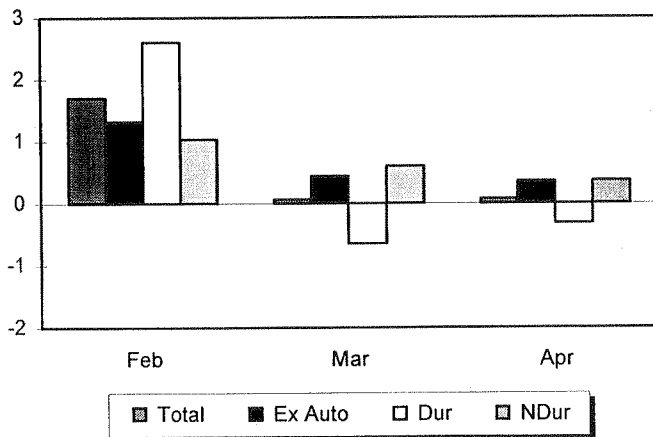
Nondurable goods increased 0.4 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ) from last month and were up 6.7 percent from April 1998. General merchandise sales were up 7.9 percent from April a year ago.

*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.*

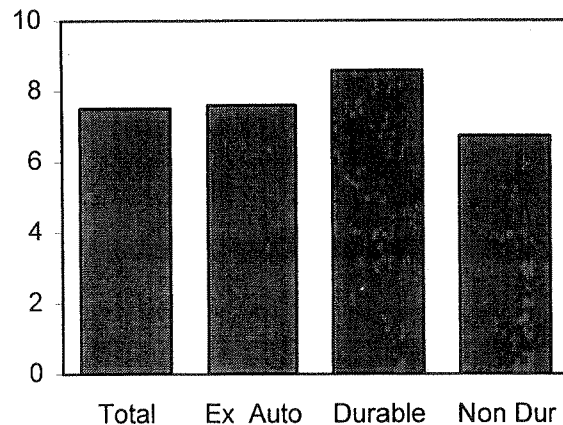
**Percent Change in Retail Sales**

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

**From Previous Month**



**From Previous Year**



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for May is scheduled to be released June 11, 1999 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Service Sector Statistics 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 and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted						Adjusted <sup>1</sup>					
		4 month total		1999			1998		1999			1998	
		1999	Change from 1998	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>891,427</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>237,667</b>	<b>240,035</b>	<b>208,483</b>	<b>221,166</b>	<b>216,181</b>	<b>239,332</b>	<b>239,156</b>	<b>238,999</b>	<b>222,613</b>	<b>220,219</b>
	Total (excl. auto group).....	658,495	7.7	174,974	174,703	153,754	163,229	158,636	180,279	179,639	178,847	167,544	166,436
	<b>Durable goods, total.....</b>	<b>382,735</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>104,022</b>	<b>105,058</b>	<b>89,458</b>	<b>95,261</b>	<b>92,819</b>	<b>101,529</b>	<b>101,855</b>	<b>102,518</b>	<b>93,501</b>	<b>92,165</b>
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	53,966	13.1	16,739	14,581	11,705	14,903	12,676	15,273	15,245	15,501	13,736	13,570
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,414	9,121	11,070	9,700	(*)	11,779	11,815	10,453	10,254
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,267	1,044	1,345	1,128	(*)	1,395	1,383	1,279	1,272
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	232,932	10.1	62,693	65,332	54,729	57,937	57,545	59,053	59,517	60,152	55,069	53,783
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	220,215	10.3	59,125	61,911	51,892	54,672	54,383	55,569	56,130	56,775	51,871	50,589
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)...	(*)	(*)	(*)	52,675	44,239	46,383	46,522	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,421	2,837	3,265	3,162	(*)	3,387	3,377	3,198	3,194
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	51,840	8.1	12,996	13,680	12,374	11,787	12,421	14,234	14,138	14,018	12,828	13,033
571	Furniture and home furnishings	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,587	5,849	5,932	6,052	(*)	6,701	6,662	6,284	6,285
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,168	5,665	5,012	5,488	(*)	6,452	6,372	5,575	5,801
5722	Household appliance stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	886	766	817	834	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>508,692</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>133,645</b>	<b>134,977</b>	<b>119,025</b>	<b>125,905</b>	<b>123,362</b>	<b>137,803</b>	<b>137,301</b>	<b>136,481</b>	<b>129,112</b>	<b>128,054</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.	107,950	9.4	29,204	29,345	25,168	27,565	26,027	31,479	31,613	31,343	29,179	28,831
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)..	84,183	8.8	22,954	22,908	19,605	21,778	20,459	24,708	24,792	24,598	23,046	22,758
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,252	19,892	22,197	20,832	(*)	25,287	25,028	23,489	23,097
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,097	949	922	872	(*)	1,140	1,132	952	952
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,340	4,614	4,865	4,696	(*)	5,681	5,613	5,181	5,121
54	Food stores.....	146,906	5.1	37,520	38,091	34,505	36,152	35,583	38,167	38,275	38,309	36,621	36,317
541	Grocery stores.....	137,770	5.2	35,136	35,671	32,330	33,745	33,324	35,744	35,850	35,882	34,224	33,969
554	Gasoline service stations.....	48,142	2.0	13,073	12,582	10,923	12,283	12,007	13,112	12,800	12,483	12,407	12,366
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	36,931	6.5	10,474	10,350	8,252	10,127	9,327	11,014	10,919	10,901	10,454	10,315
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	862	736	930	807	(*)	976	953	1,005	939
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,720	2,146	2,694	2,385	(*)	2,842	2,791	2,686	2,627
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,933	3,115	3,723	3,477	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,763	1,426	1,818	1,669	(*)	1,725	1,769	1,731	1,759
58	Eating and drinking places.....	82,616	6.9	21,761	21,610	19,602	20,178	20,293	21,631	21,524	21,612	20,239	20,232
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	37,523	11.4	9,567	9,883	8,988	8,670	8,548	9,693	9,595	9,511	8,687	8,539
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,033	1,842	1,925	1,859	(*)	2,174	2,188	2,048	2,034
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,170	4,325	4,141	4,434	(*)	5,024	5,076	4,501	4,465
53,56,57, 594	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	60,838	52,793	56,527	54,533	(*)	65,429	65,077	60,733	60,390

\* 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-99-03.

(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. 1999 Advance from --		Mar. 1999 Preliminary from --		Feb. 1999 through Apr. 1999 from --	
		Mar. 1999 (p)	Apr. 1998 (r)	Feb. 1999 (r)	Mar. 1998 (r)	Nov. 1998 through Jan. 1999	Feb. 1998 through Apr. 1998
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>
	Total (excl. automotive group) .....	0.4	7.6	0.4	7.9	2.9	7.7
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers .....	0.2	11.2	-1.7	12.3	5.0	13.1
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.8	7.2	-1.1	10.7	3.3	9.9
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-1.0	7.1	-1.1	11.0	3.3	10.1
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.7	11.0	0.9	8.5	3.3	8.8
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>6.9</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.4	7.9	0.9	9.6	3.1	8.7
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.3	7.2	0.8	8.9	2.9	8.0
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	1.0	9.5	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.3	4.2	-0.1	5.4	1.4	5.2
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.3	4.4	-0.1	5.5	1.4	5.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	2.4	5.7	2.5	3.5	3.2	2.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.9	5.4	0.2	5.9	3.6	5.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.5	6.9	-0.4	6.4	1.2	6.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	1.0	11.6	0.9	12.4	4.5	11.8

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>7.0</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	0.2	0.3
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>
52	Building materials, group stores .....	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.4	0.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.0	0.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.0	0.5
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores .....	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.6
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.1	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
541	Grocery stores .....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations .....	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.1	0.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores .....	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	-0.2	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places .....	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.4	0.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores .....	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	0.3



- (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 are based on the latest 12 months of data.