

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday, March 13, 2003.

CB-03-46

**ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL TRADE AND FOOD SERVICES
FEBRUARY 2003**

Intention to Revise Retail Estimates: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2001 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted data are scheduled for release on April 30.

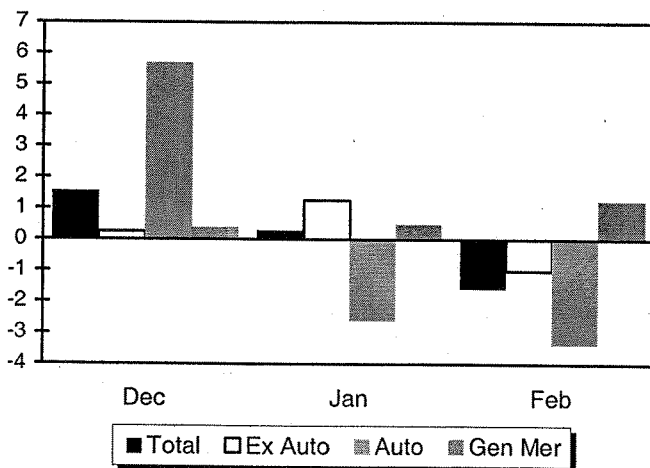
The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for February, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$304.1 billion, a decrease of 1.6 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from the previous month, but up 2.6 percent ($\pm 1.1\%$) from February 2002. Total sales for the December 2002 through February 2003 period were up 1.7 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The December 2002 to January 2003 percent change was revised from -0.9 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) to +0.3 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Retail trade sales were down 1.7 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from January, but were 2.5 percent ($\pm 1.1\%$) above last year. Gasoline stations sales were up 23.9 percent ($\pm 2.3\%$) from February 2002 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 9.3 percent ($\pm 6.7\%$) from last year.

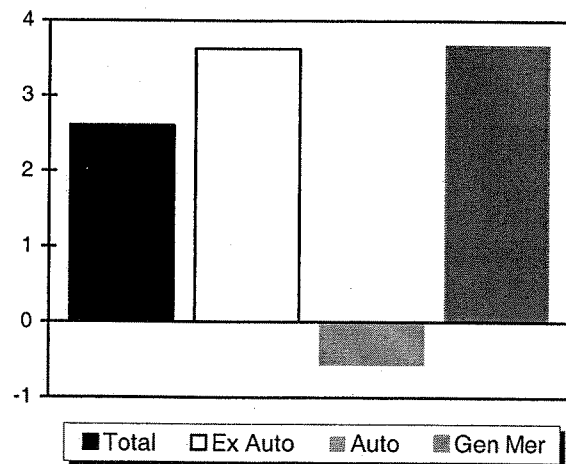
The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.

Percent Change in Retail Sales and Food Services 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 March is scheduled to be released April 11, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-763-2713.

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/retail>.

Table 1. Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

| NAICS code | Kind of Business | Not Adjusted | | | | | | Adjusted ¹ | | | | | |
|------------|--|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | 2 month total | | 2003 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2002 | | | |
| | | 2003 | % Chg. 2002 | Feb. ² (a) | Jan. (p) | Dec. (r) | Feb. | Jan. | Feb. ² (a) | Jan. (p) | Dec. (r) | Feb. (r) | Jan. (r) |
| | Retail & food services, | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | total | 549,858 | 4.2 | 269,378 | 280,480 | 351,144 | 262,575 | 264,922 | 304,092 | 308,967 | 308,061 | 296,371 | 294,130 |
| | Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ... | 416,516 | 5.0 | 203,549 | 212,967 | 282,728 | 195,975 | 200,789 | 232,458 | 234,838 | 231,940 | 224,326 | 223,542 |
| | Retail | 496,631 | 4.2 | 243,047 | 253,584 | 321,913 | 237,126 | 239,523 | 275,125 | 279,859 | 278,830 | 268,374 | 266,402 |
| | GAFO ³ | (*) | (*) | (*) | 68,359 | 125,752 | 66,693 | 65,976 | (*) | 80,428 | 80,302 | 79,188 | 78,558 |
| 441 | Motor vehicle & parts dealers | 133,342 | 2.0 | 65,829 | 67,513 | 68,416 | 66,600 | 64,133 | 71,634 | 74,129 | 76,121 | 72,045 | 70,588 |
| 4411, 4412 | Auto & other motor veh. dealers .. | 122,264 | 2.2 | 60,441 | 61,823 | 62,744 | 61,147 | 58,504 | 65,483 | 67,937 | 69,949 | 65,820 | 64,503 |
| 44111 | New car dealers | (*) | (*) | (*) | 52,251 | 54,200 | 51,645 | 50,120 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 4413 | Auto parts, acc. & tire stores..... | (*) | (*) | (*) | 5,690 | 5,672 | 5,453 | 5,629 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 442 | Furniture & home furn. stores | 14,361 | 0.5 | 7,000 | 7,361 | 9,518 | 7,126 | 7,170 | 7,830 | 7,958 | 7,972 | 7,953 | 7,819 |
| 4421 | Furniture stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 4,167 | 4,661 | 4,158 | 4,130 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 4422 | Home furnishings stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 3,194 | 4,857 | 2,968 | 3,040 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 443 | Electronics & appliance stores | 14,196 | -0.7 | 6,832 | 7,364 | 12,500 | 6,942 | 7,350 | 7,659 | 7,695 | 7,782 | 7,724 | 7,672 |
| 44311, 13 | Appl., T.V. & camera..... | (*) | (*) | (*) | 5,233 | 9,626 | 4,874 | 5,090 | (*) | 5,549 | 5,593 | 5,507 | 5,421 |
| 44312 | Computer & software stores..... | (*) | (*) | (*) | 2,131 | 2,874 | 2,068 | 2,260 | (*) | 2,146 | 2,189 | 2,217 | 2,251 |
| 444 | Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers | 41,510 | 1.4 | 19,584 | 21,926 | 22,727 | 20,152 | 20,787 | 24,906 | 26,934 | 26,266 | 25,399 | 25,352 |
| 4441 | Building mat. & sup. dealers | (*) | (*) | (*) | 19,662 | 20,221 | 18,096 | 18,701 | (*) | 23,352 | 22,746 | 22,176 | 22,158 |
| 445 | Food & beverage stores | 77,129 | 3.0 | 36,911 | 40,218 | 43,903 | 36,216 | 38,651 | 40,832 | 41,221 | 40,195 | 40,052 | 40,079 |
| 4451 | Grocery stores | 69,994 | 2.9 | 33,367 | 36,627 | 38,030 | 32,768 | 35,270 | 36,667 | 37,034 | 35,979 | 36,009 | 36,063 |
| 4453 | Beer, wine & liquor stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 2,276 | 3,724 | 2,215 | 2,216 | (*) | 2,634 | 2,691 | 2,631 | 2,619 |
| 446 | Health & personal care stores | 30,707 | 5.4 | 14,976 | 15,731 | 17,459 | 14,300 | 14,843 | 15,764 | 15,747 | 15,533 | 15,084 | 14,978 |
| 44611 | Pharmacies & drug stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 13,526 | 14,790 | 12,058 | 12,651 | (*) | 13,366 | 13,100 | 12,653 | 12,638 |
| 447 | Gasoline stations | 38,950 | 22.0 | 19,298 | 19,652 | 19,370 | 15,576 | 16,358 | 22,182 | 21,596 | 20,806 | 17,903 | 18,075 |
| 448 | Clothing & clothing accessories stores | 22,618 | 1.1 | 11,642 | 10,976 | 25,783 | 11,887 | 10,494 | 14,372 | 14,903 | 14,858 | 14,597 | 14,529 |
| 44811 | Men's clothing stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 681 | 1,416 | 676 | 683 | (*) | 845 | 857 | 876 | 857 |
| 44812 | Women's clothing stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 2,220 | 4,337 | 2,328 | 2,123 | (*) | 2,925 | 2,966 | 2,871 | 2,885 |
| 44814 | Family clothing stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 3,640 | 8,738 | 3,615 | 3,382 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 4482 | Shoe stores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 1,343 | 2,333 | 1,530 | 1,361 | (*) | 1,786 | 1,814 | 1,859 | 1,829 |
| 451 | Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores | 12,706 | 0.3 | 5,762 | 6,944 | 13,214 | 5,813 | 6,856 | 7,359 | 7,475 | 7,419 | 7,396 | 7,460 |
| 452 | General merchandise stores | 65,029 | 4.9 | 32,908 | 32,121 | 58,972 | 31,444 | 30,550 | 39,161 | 38,687 | 38,502 | 37,775 | 37,413 |
| 4521 | Department stores (ex. L.D.)..... | 28,905 | -4.3 | 14,662 | 14,243 | 31,845 | 15,408 | 14,789 | 18,295 | 18,241 | 18,281 | 19,264 | 19,282 |
| 4521 | Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁴ | (*) | (*) | (*) | 14,503 | 32,431 | 15,703 | 15,074 | (*) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| 4529 | Other general merch. stores..... | (*) | (*) | (*) | 17,878 | 27,127 | 16,036 | 15,761 | (*) | 20,446 | 20,221 | 18,511 | 18,131 |
| 45291 | Warehouse clubs & superstores | (*) | (*) | (*) | 15,186 | 22,184 | 13,435 | 13,197 | (*) | 17,179 | 16,973 | 15,407 | 14,997 |
| 45299 | All oth. gen. merch. stores..... | (*) | (*) | (*) | 2,692 | 4,943 | 2,601 | 2,564 | (*) | 3,267 | 3,248 | 3,104 | 3,134 |
| 453 | Miscellaneous store retailers | 17,070 | -1.4 | 8,434 | 8,636 | 11,900 | 8,727 | 8,580 | 9,153 | 9,429 | 9,350 | 9,387 | 9,338 |
| 454 | Nonstore retailers | 29,013 | 11.2 | 13,871 | 15,142 | 18,151 | 12,343 | 13,751 | 14,273 | 14,085 | 14,026 | 13,059 | 13,099 |
| 4541 | Elect. shopping & m/o houses | (*) | (*) | (*) | 9,460 | 12,875 | 8,203 | 9,087 | (*) | 9,585 | 9,523 | 9,290 | 9,254 |
| 722 | Food services & drinking places ... | 53,227 | 4.7 | 26,331 | 26,896 | 29,231 | 25,449 | 25,399 | 28,967 | 29,108 | 29,231 | 27,997 | 27,728 |

(*) Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these business classifications.

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

Note: Totals include data for business classifications not shown separately.

(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-12-ARIMA 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 released on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

(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) GAFO represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances(443), clothing & accessories(448), sporting goods, hobby, book, music (451), general merchandise(452), office supplies, stationery, and gift stores(4532)).

(4) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

| NAICS code | Kind of Business | Percent Change ¹ | | | | | |
|------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | Feb. 2003 Advance from -- | | Jan. 2003 Preliminary from -- | | Dec. 2002 through Feb. 2003 from -- | |
| | | Jan. 2003 (p) | Feb. 2002 (r) | Dec. 2002 (r) | Jan. 2002 (r) | Sept. 2002 through Nov. 2002 | Dec. 2001 through Feb. 2002 |
| | Retail & food services, total | -1.6 | 2.6 | 0.3 | 5.0 | 1.7 | 3.9 |
| | Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) | -1.0 | 3.6 | 1.2 | 5.1 | 1.3 | 4.4 |
| | Retail | -1.7 | 2.5 | 0.4 | 5.1 | 1.6 | 3.9 |
| 441 | Motor vehicle & parts dealers | -3.4 | -0.6 | -2.6 | 5.0 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| 4411, 4412 | Auto & other motor veh. dealers .. | -3.6 | -0.5 | -2.9 | 5.3 | 3.0 | 2.6 |
| 442 | Furniture & home furn. stores | -1.6 | -1.5 | -0.2 | 1.8 | -1.2 | 0.8 |
| 443 | Electronics & appliance stores | -0.5 | -0.8 | -1.1 | 0.3 | -1.4 | -0.3 |
| 444 | Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers..... | -7.5 | -1.9 | 2.5 | 6.2 | -1.7 | 3.2 |
| 445 | Food & beverage stores..... | -0.9 | 1.9 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 1.1 | 1.7 |
| 4451 | Grocery stores | -1.0 | 1.8 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 1.5 |
| 446 | Health & personal care stores | 0.1 | 4.5 | 1.4 | 5.1 | 0.6 | 5.1 |
| 447 | Gasoline stations | 2.7 | 23.9 | 3.8 | 19.5 | 7.4 | 20.3 |
| 448 | Clothing & clothing accessories stores | -3.6 | -1.5 | 0.3 | 2.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 451 | Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores..... | -1.6 | -0.5 | 0.8 | 0.2 | -0.9 | 0.3 |
| 452 | General merchandise stores..... | 1.2 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 3.4 | 0.9 | 3.3 |
| 4521 | Department stores (ex. L.D.)..... | 0.3 | -5.0 | -0.2 | -5.4 | -2.1 | -5.2 |
| 453 | Miscellaneous store retailers | -2.9 | -2.5 | 0.8 | 1.0 | -1.3 | -0.3 |
| 454 | Nonstore retailers | 1.3 | 9.3 | 0.4 | 7.5 | 4.4 | 9.6 |
| 722 | Food services & drinking places | -0.5 | 3.5 | -0.4 | 5.0 | 2.5 | 4.4 |

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Source of Data and Reliability of Estimates

Source of Data: The Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey each month to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey is a voluntary survey of a sub-sample of about 5,000 firms selected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Firms responding to this survey account for approximately 65% of the dollar volume estimate.

Reliability of Estimates: The reliability of the estimates is a function of sampling and nonsampling errors. The margin of sampling error, as included on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence

interval. If for example, the trend estimated 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. Nonsampling error, on the other hand, can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling error. Additional survey information is available at www.census.gov/retail.

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

| NAICS Code | Kind of Business | Level of sales: Median CV ⁽²⁾ for Current Mo. (%) | Trend (percent change): Median standard error ⁽²⁾ for | | | Revision for month- to-month change ⁽¹⁾ | |
|------------|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|
| | | | Current Mo. to Previous Mo. | Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr. | Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr. | Average revision | Median absolute revision |
| | Retail & food services, | | | | | | |
| | total | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| | Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) .. | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| | Retail | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| 441 | Motor vehicle & parts dealers | 1.9 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| 4411, 4412 | Auto & other motor veh. dealers | 2.0 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 1.9 | 0.8 | 1.3 |
| 442 | Furniture & home furn. stores..... | 4.0 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 0.7 |
| 443 | Electronics & appliance stores | 1.6 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| 444 | Building material & garden eq. &... supplies dealers..... | 1.8 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 1.4 | -0.1 | -0.5 |
| 445 | Food & beverage stores..... | 0.7 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.2 |
| 4451 | Grocery stores | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.2 |
| 446 | Health & personal care stores | 2.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 1.4 | -0.1 | 0.3 |
| 447 | Gasoline stations | 1.9 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| 448 | Clothing & clothing accessories stores | 1.5 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| 451 | Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores..... | 2.6 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 2.5 | -0.2 | 0.6 |
| 452 | General merchandise stores..... | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | -0.1 | 0.2 |
| 4521 | Department stores (ex. L.D.)..... | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -0.2 | 0.3 |
| 453 | Miscellaneous store retailers | 3.1 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 3.3 | 0.1 | 0.8 |
| 454 | Nonstore retailers | 7.2 | 3.7 | 1.3 | 4.1 | -0.4 | 0.9 |
| 722 | Food services & drinking places .. | 2.1 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 1.8 | -0.1 | 0.7 |



(1) These columns measure the difference between the estimates of trend for the same pair of data months, i.e. the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates. Revisions are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.
 (2) Medians are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.