

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

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CB-79-70

MARCH 1979

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in March, after adjusting for seasonal variations and trading day differences, but not for price changes were estimated at \$71.8 billion. This adjusted figure was about 1 percent above February 1979 and 12 percent greater than March a year ago. The adjusted March estimate, excluding the automotive group was about 1 percent above February and 11 percent above March last year.

Adjusted sales of durable goods stores were 3 percent above February while sales of nondurable goods stores were virtually unchanged. Compared with sales for March 1978, durable goods stores increased 17 percent, and nondurable goods stores increased 9 percent.

The revised estimate of retail sales for February, based on preliminary results from the full sample of retail stores, was about \$71.1 billion, \$0.4 billion below the February Advance estimate published earlier. Seasonally adjusted preliminary sales for February were little changed from January 1979 estimates, but were 13 percent above the February 1978 sales. Excluding the automotive group, retail sales were about 1 percent above January and 12 percent over February 1978. For nondurable goods stores, adjusted February sales increased about 1 percent from the previous month and 11 percent above the same month a year earlier. For durable goods stores, adjusted sales for February were 1 percent below January but were 17 percent higher than February 1978.

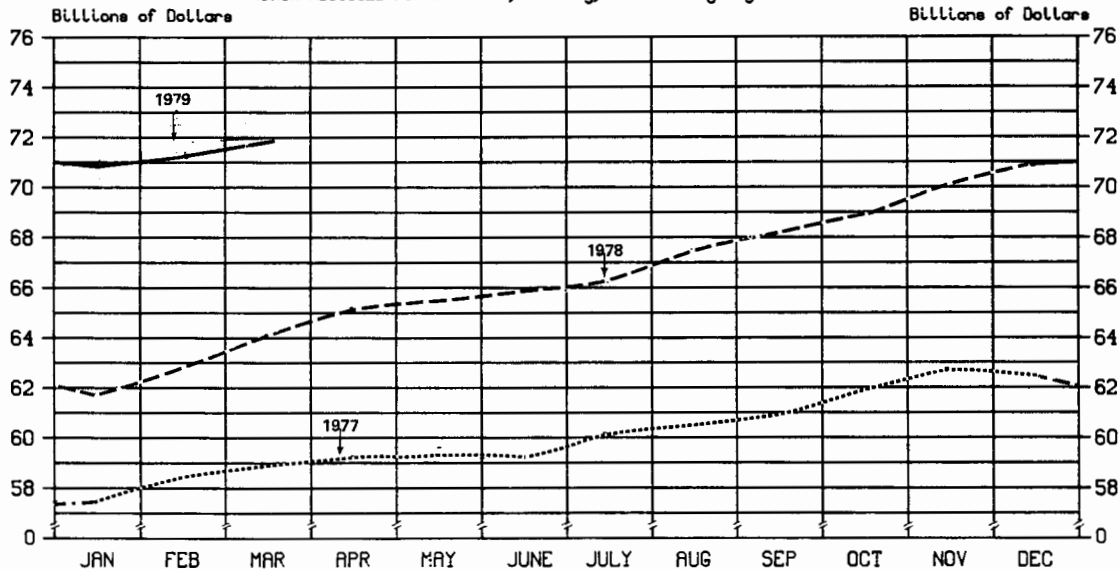
The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the sub-sample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimates prior to publication on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

In the past, differences between advance and full-sample estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have averaged less than 1 percent. However, most modifications being applied to the current advance monthly estimates are based on the relationship between the advance and the redesigned full-sample data for only the months since June 1977. The differences now, therefore, may vary from the past experience.

Preliminary estimates for February 1979 and final estimates for January 1979 based on the full sample will also be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade report for February (BR-79-2). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of the sample design, the basis and methodology used in developing revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates. In addition, the complete report will include approximate measures of sampling variability.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES FOR THE UNITED STATES JANUARY 1977 - MARCH 1979

(DATA ADJUSTED FOR SEASONAL, holiday, and trading day differences)



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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at \$25 per year. Add \$6.25 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales report are for sale by Subscriber Services (Publications) Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at 70 cents each.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales by Kind of Business for the United States

(Sales in millions of dollars)

1972 SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1979			1978		1979			1978	
		Mar. ² advance	Feb. prelim.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² advance	Feb. prelim.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.
	Retail trade, total.....	71,933	60,607	61,878	64,764	53,612	71,821	71,097	70,855	64,075	62,898
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	55,545	47,667	49,073	50,204	42,493	56,703	56,344	55,844	50,943	50,209
	Durable goods stores, total.....	26,226	21,043	21,100	22,777	17,936	25,620	24,949	25,250	21,813	21,244
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	3,580	2,720	2,873	3,170	2,461	3,895	3,694	3,956	3,397	3,324
521,3	Building materials and supply stores.....	(*)	1,799	1,925	2,114	1,644	(*)	2,392	2,577	2,251	2,183
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	449	496	504	388	(*)	604	667	545	521
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	16,388	12,940	12,805	14,560	11,119	15,118	14,753	15,011	13,132	12,689
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous auto- motive dealers.....	(*)	11,918	11,703	13,462	10,257	(*)	13,467	13,736	12,030	11,603
551	Motor vehicle dealers (franchised).....	(*)	10,541	10,582	11,622	9,061	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	1,022	1,102	1,098	862	(*)	1,286	1,275	1,102	1,086
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	3,351	2,877	2,959	2,902	2,539	3,430	3,326	3,337	2,924	2,934
571	Furniture and home furnishings stores....	(*)	1,812	1,833	1,758	1,537	(*)	2,080	2,067	1,734	1,763
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores	(*)	815	851	852	738	(*)	964	966	883	872
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	389	411	390	337	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	45,707	39,564	40,778	41,987	35,676	46,201	46,148	45,605	42,262	41,654
53	General merchandise group stores.....	7,704	5,921	5,946	7,366	5,524	8,442	8,370	8,402	7,952	7,815
531	Department stores.....	6,132	4,682	4,747	5,894	4,424	6,753	6,708	6,791	6,420	6,338
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	493	476	611	458	(*)	673	685	622	627
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.	(*)	746	723	861	642	(*)	989	926	910	850
54	Food stores.....	16,180	14,206	14,944	14,529	12,792	15,581	15,630	15,659	14,177	14,070
541	Grocery stores.....	14,780	13,024	13,769	13,482	11,892	14,198	14,296	14,358	13,153	13,054
554	Gasoline service stations.....	5,358	4,912	5,059	4,906	4,404	5,434	5,582	5,353	4,996	5,005
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	3,082	2,402	2,689	2,940	2,151	3,365	3,195	3,273	2,983	2,862
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	452	561	532	421	(*)	612	635	581	570
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	949	996	1,143	836	(*)	1,236	1,228	1,169	1,089
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	449	495	521	392	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	401	478	570	374	(*)	532	580	528	496
58	Eating and drinking places.....	6,364	5,414	5,389	5,579	4,734	6,554	6,362	6,041	5,787	5,563
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,253	2,059	2,139	2,070	1,847	2,264	2,258	2,278	2,050	2,023
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,052	1,061	1,038	922	(*)	1,257	1,225	1,110	1,102
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise) ³	(*)	393	439	594	434	(*)	506	604	571	558

NOTE: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available.

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-79-2).²Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.³Includes sales made by mail-order catalog desks located within department stores of some mail-order firms.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales by Kind of Business for the United States

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

1972 SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Mar. 1979 advance from--		Feb. 1979 preliminary from--		Jan. 1979 through Mar. 1979 from--	
		Feb. 1979 preliminary	Mar. 1978 final	Jan. 1979 final	Feb. 1978 final	Oct. 1978 through Dec. 1978	Jan. 1978 through Mar. 1978
	Retail trade, total.....	+1	+12	0	+13	-2	+13
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+1	+11	+1	+12	+1	+12
	Durable goods stores, total.....	+3	+17	-1	+17	+2	+19
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+5	+15	-7	+11	-3	+15
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+2	+15	-2	+16	+4	+17
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+3	+17	0	+13	+2	+16
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0	+9	+1	+11	+2	+10
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+1	+6	0	+7	-2	+7
531	Department stores.....	+1	+5	-1	+6	-1	+6
54	Food stores.....	0	+10	0	+11	+3	+11
541	Grocery stores.....	-1	+8	0	+10	+2	+10
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-3	+9	+4	+12	+4	+10
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+5	+13	-2	+12	-2	+13
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+3	+13	+5	+14	+4	+13
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0	+10	-1	+12	+2	+12

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies by Kind of Business for the United States: FEBRUARY 1979

(Sales in millions of dollars)

1972 SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Feb. 1979 preliminary	Jan. 1979 final	Feb. 1978	Feb. 1979 preliminary	Jan. 1979 final	Feb. 1978
	Retail trade, total.....	19,154	19,863	17,477	23,288	23,414	21,291
53	General merchandise group stores.....	5,219	5,246	4,875	7,429	7,368	6,942
531	Department stores.....	4,438	4,492	4,183	6,358	6,309	5,993
533	Variety stores.....	404	388	359	559	576	497
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.	377	366	333	(s)	(s)	(s)
54	Food stores.....	7,590	8,026	6,877	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	7,494	7,945	6,792	8,172	8,233	7,407
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	742	804	673	1,085	1,097	984
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	316	325	287	464	453	421
566	Shoe stores.....	184	211	163	260	272	230
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	964	1,007	825	1,100	1,118	943

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-79-2).

NA Not available.

(S) Suppressed - Estimates do not meet Bureau of the Census standard for publication.