

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales

CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

March 1988

CB 88-62

The sales comparisons shown in this report are based on revised data. For further description of the revisions, see the January 1988 Monthly Retail Trade Report.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, April 13, 1988

Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$130.7 billion, an increase of 0.8 percent (+ 1.0%) from the previous month and 5.3 percent (+ 1.4%) above March 1987. Total sales in the first quarter were 1.7 percent (+ 1.7%) above the fourth quarter and were 6.7 percent (+ 1.8%) above the first quarter a year ago.

Durable goods increased 0.5 percent (+3.0%) from the previous month and were 9.0 percent (+ 4.3%) above the previous year. Automotive sales were up 11.5 percent from March a year ago.

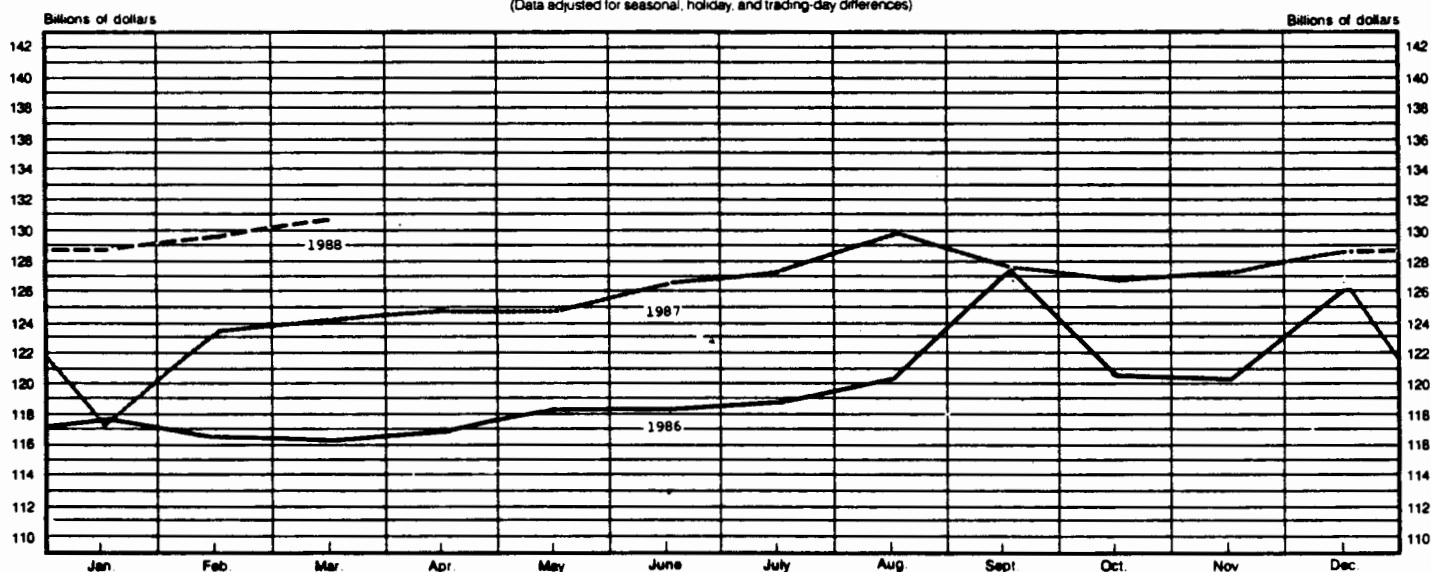
Nondurable goods increased 1.0 percent (+ 0.8%) from February and were 3.1 percent (+ 1.4%) above the previous year. General merchandise stores increased 1.6 percent from February and were up 3.3 percent from the previous year.

Data in this report are based on a sample and, therefore, are subject to sampling as well as nonsampling errors. A discussion of the reliability of the data is on page 4.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for April is scheduled to be released May 12, 1988 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES January 1986-March 1988

(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. This report is available electronically in CENDATA, the Bureau's on-line information service, through a commercial vendor. For further information, contact Customer Services, DUSD, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, or call (301) 763-4100 or (301) 763-7561.

**Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business**

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		1988			1987		1988			1987	
		Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.
	Retail trade, total.....	129,664	114,785	113,639	119,818	105,093	130,660	129,579	128,769	124,105	123,292
	Total (excl. auto group)..	97,761	87,337	88,697	91,905	82,157	100,868	100,066	99,834	97,388	97,532
	Durable goods, total.....	50,601	44,181	41,293	45,283	38,199	49,902	49,649	48,689	45,785	44,883
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	6,398	5,197	4,852	6,001	4,739	6,785	6,753	6,558	6,543	6,454
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	3,884	3,573	4,382	3,502	(*)	4,967	4,841	4,758	4,713
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	925	961	1,094	871	(*)	1,190	1,152	1,200	1,157
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	31,903	27,448	24,942	27,913	22,936	29,792	29,513	28,935	26,717	25,760
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	29,611	25,439	22,894	25,846	21,195	27,392	27,063	26,528	24,499	23,576
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	23,089	21,047	22,905	18,967	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	2,009	2,048	2,067	1,741	(*)	2,450	2,407	2,218	2,184
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	6,931	6,545	6,577	6,598	5,946	7,258	7,406	7,194	7,041	6,961
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	3,429	3,385	3,582	3,160	(*)	3,810	3,744	3,700	3,649
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	2,684	2,750	2,608	2,406	(*)	3,110	2,963	2,904	2,871
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	744	776	794	729	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	79,063	70,604	72,346	74,535	66,894	80,758	79,930	80,080	78,320	78,409
53	General merchandise group stores..	13,600	10,610	10,318	12,566	10,301	14,807	14,568	14,953	14,328	14,597
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	11,466	8,820	8,618	10,501	8,467	12,477	12,199	12,526	11,892	12,096
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts.)	(*)	9,170	8,964	10,917	8,804	(*)	12,701	13,010	12,350	12,577
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	548	521	634	557	(*)	695	693	704	732
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,242	1,179	1,431	1,277	(*)	1,674	1,734	1,732	1,769
54	Food stores.....	26,570	24,434	25,682	25,219	23,380	26,633	26,336	26,169	25,999	25,989
541	Grocery stores.....	25,026	23,023	24,302	23,791	22,033	25,101	24,809	24,622	24,527	24,481
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,457	7,956	8,316	8,088	7,283	8,773	8,648	8,754	8,407	8,192
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	6,363	4,887	5,103	6,041	4,837	6,473	6,451	6,514	6,702	6,565
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	559	625	614	526	(*)	772	783	752	753
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,971	2,068	2,395	1,990	(*)	2,537	2,582	2,600	2,632
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,126	1,135	1,439	1,084	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	915	955	1,210	926	(*)	1,169	1,175	1,275	1,212
58	Eating and drinking places.....	12,328	11,331	11,518	11,898	10,715	12,503	12,576	12,547	12,104	12,302
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,052	4,713	4,619	4,387	4,145	5,052	4,972	4,832	4,523	4,540
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,387	1,443	1,439	1,357	(*)	1,622	1,589	1,597	1,627
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	234	213	279	220	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF.....	(*)	26,032	25,935	28,933	24,667	(*)	33,394	33,638	32,568	32,746

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

NA Not available. † Revised

<sup>1</sup> Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. 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-88-02.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

<sup>4</sup> GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

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)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Mar. 1988 advance from--		Feb. 1988 preliminary from--		Jan. 1988 through Mar. 1988	
		Feb. 1988 prelim.	Mar. 1987 final	Jan. 1988 final	Feb. 1987 final	Oct. 1987 through Dec. 1987	Jan. 1987 through Mar. 1987
	Retail trade, total.....	+0.8	+5.3	+0.6	+5.1	+1.7	+6.7
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.8	+3.6	+0.2	+2.6	+0.5	+3.8
	Durable goods, total.....	+0.5	+9.0	+2.0	+10.6	+4.4	+12.4
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+0.5	+3.7	+3.0	+4.6	+1.5	+3.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+0.9	+11.5	+2.0	+14.6	+5.8	+17.8
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	+1.2	+11.8	+2.0	+14.8	+6.0	+18.5
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-2.0	+3.1	+2.9	+6.4	+4.8	+4.6
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+1.0	+3.1	-0.2	+1.9	0.0	+3.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+1.6	+3.3	-2.6	-0.2	-0.6	+3.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	+2.3	+4.9	-2.6	+0.9	-0.2	+4.5
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	(NA)	(NA)	-2.4	+1.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+1.1	+2.4	+0.6	+1.3	+0.3	+2.1
541	Grocery stores.....	+1.2	+2.3	+0.8	+1.3	+0.3	+2.0
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+1.4	+4.4	-1.2	+5.6	-0.3	+7.0
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+0.3	-3.4	-1.0	-1.7	-2.5	-0.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.6	+3.3	+0.2	+2.2	-0.3	+3.1
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+1.6	+11.7	+2.9	+9.5	+3.6	+9.5

**Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business**

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted <sup>1</sup>		
		Feb. 1988 prelim.	Jan. 1988 final	Feb. 1987	Feb. 1988 prelim.	Jan. 1988 final	Feb. <sup>2</sup> 1987
	Retail trade, total.....	40,483	41,161	38,084	48,156	48,504	46,767
53	General merchandise group stores.....	9,815	9,510	9,457	13,545	13,874	13,446
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	8,548	8,332	8,226	11,839	12,128	11,751
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	8,879	8,657	8,540	12,298	12,583	12,200
533	Variety stores.....	412	391	417	532	544	557
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	855	787	814	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	14,262	15,064	13,358	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	14,047	14,862	13,139	15,024	14,922	14,470
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	2,469	2,537	2,440	3,445	3,531	3,494
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,005	1,045	1,035	1,358	1,420	1,430
566	Shoe stores.....	534	555	532	713	720	727
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,736	2,724	2,401	2,942	2,904	2,683

NA Not available. <sup>2</sup>Revised

<sup>1</sup>Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. 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-88-02.

<sup>2</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

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).

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### Sample Design and Reliability of Data

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 subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -0.8 percent to +1.0 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.4 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for February 1988 and final estimates for January 1988 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-88-2). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates.

Whenever a statement such as "up 0.8 percent (+ 1.0%)" appears in the text, this indicates a range from -0.2 percent to +1.8 percent. All ranges given are 90 percent confidence intervals. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated coefficient of variation in percent of the advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range <sup>1</sup>		Median	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Average of absolute difference
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.7	0.9	0.8	-0.8	+1.0	+0.1	0.4
	Total (excl. automotive group)...	0.8	0.9	0.8	-0.7	+0.6	0.0	0.4
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.3	1.7	1.6	-2.1	+0.8	-0.3	0.7
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	0.9	2.0	1.3	-2.6	+4.2	+0.5	1.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.5	2.2	1.7	-2.6	+1.7	-0.5	1.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.9	1.6	1.2	-2.6	+1.7	-0.5	1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.8	2.5	2.1	-3.4	+2.7	+0.1	1.5
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.5	0.7	0.6	-0.7	+0.8	0.0	0.3
53	General merchandise group stores, total...	0.5	1.0	0.6	-0.6	+1.1	+0.1	0.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	0.2	0.5	0.2	-0.7	+0.6	+0.1	0.3
54	Food stores.....	1.0	1.2	1.0	-0.6	+0.5	-0.1	0.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.3	0.5	0.4	-0.7	+0.5	-0.1	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.6	1.3	0.9	-5.2	+3.1	-0.5	1.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.1	3.1	1.7	-1.3	+2.2	+0.6	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	1.3	0.9	-2.1	+1.5	0.0	1.0
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.3	1.8	0.6	-0.8	+1.2	+0.2	0.6

<sup>1</sup> The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January - December 1983.  
 The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, March 1987- February 1988. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period August 1985 - July 1986.

Note: See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.

