

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



U.S. Department of Commerce  
ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

MARCH 1996

CB-96-60

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT., Friday, April 12, 1996

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 \$203.0 billion, an increase of 0.1 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from the previous month and up 5.2 percent ( $\pm 1.9\%$ ) from March 1995. Total sales for the first quarter of 1996 were 4.8 percent ( $\pm 1.8\%$ ) above the same quarter a year ago. The January to February 1996 percent change was revised from +0.8 ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) to +1.9 percent ( $\pm 0.4\%$ ).

Durable goods were unchanged from February but were 8.1 percent above March 1995. Automotive sales were up 10.9 percent from last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.2 percent ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) from last month and were up 3.3 percent from last year. General merchandise sales were 3.9 percent above March 1995.

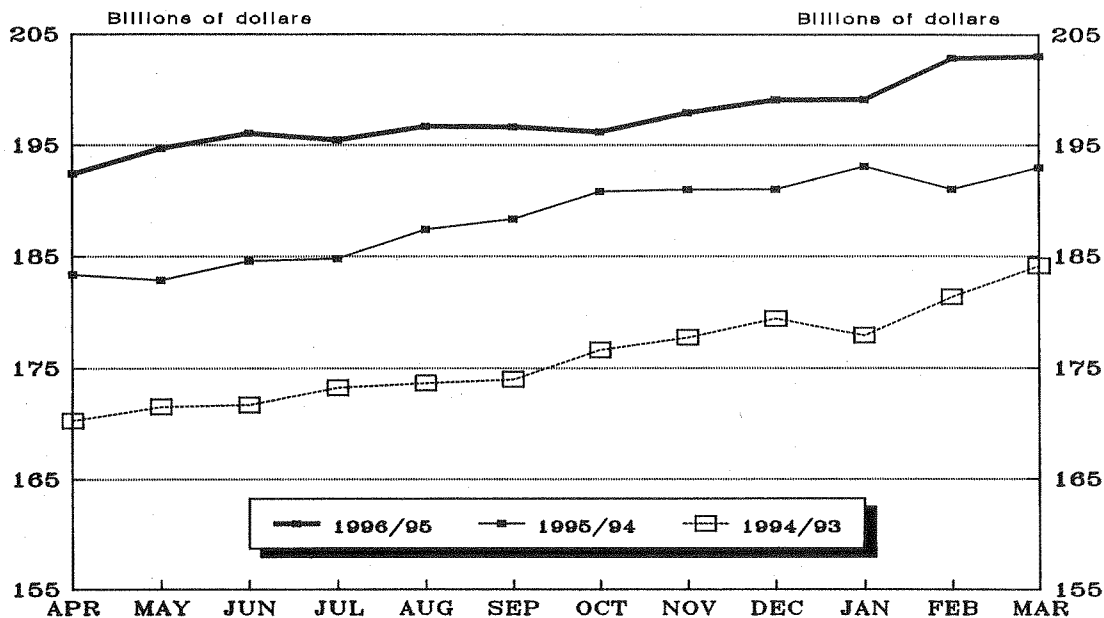
*The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.*

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 14, 1996 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

April 1993 - March 1996

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



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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/ftp/pub/svsvd/www/fullpub.html>, or through the Census Bureau's online information service - CENDATA. CENDATA is available from Dialog Information Services, INC. (1-800-334-2564) and CompuServe (1-800-848-8199). The CENDATA staff at the Bureau of the Census (301-457-1242) can provide content information and general guidance.

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>				
		1996			1995		1996			1995	
		Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Feb. <sup>2</sup> prel.
	Retail trade, total.....	199,878	181,732	174,839	192,131	163,989	203,044	202,894	199,129	192,980	191,035
	Total (excl. auto group)...	146,803	133,880	131,644	142,223	124,000	152,046	151,642	150,040	147,000	146,196
	Durable goods, total.....	82,169	74,397	69,646	78,537	64,613	83,045	83,078	80,623	76,845	75,629
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	9,397	8,108	7,983	10,006	7,800	10,203	10,378	10,241	10,550	10,450
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	6,427	6,246	7,725	6,191	(*)	7,994	7,866	8,097	8,061
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	926	986	1,057	847	(*)	1,184	1,178	1,141	1,125
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	53,075	47,852	43,195	49,908	39,989	50,998	51,252	49,089	45,980	44,839
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	50,131	45,163	40,538	47,016	37,634	47,972	48,200	46,066	43,094	42,049
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	39,517	35,894	40,882	33,010	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,689	2,657	2,892	2,355	(*)	3,052	3,023	2,886	2,790
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	10,746	9,841	10,153	10,114	9,006	11,264	11,054	10,989	10,478	10,494
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	4,851	4,826	5,093	4,466	(*)	5,475	5,410	5,234	5,236
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,192	4,531	4,221	3,804	(*)	4,694	4,705	4,406	4,413
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	598	636	715	606	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	117,709	107,335	105,193	113,594	99,376	119,999	119,816	118,506	116,135	115,406
53	General merchandise group stores.....	23,420	20,386	18,514	22,341	18,465	25,374	25,461	24,834	24,426	24,146
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	18,235	15,706	14,144	17,341	14,190	19,714	19,881	19,402	18,911	18,795
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	16,038	14,413	17,661	14,455	(*)	20,243	19,865	19,332	19,081
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	542	458	563	479	(*)	654	650	618	612
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,138	3,912	4,437	3,796	(*)	4,926	4,782	4,897	4,739
54	Food stores.....	34,962	32,672	33,681	34,018	30,664	34,822	34,804	35,020	33,849	33,960
541	Grocery stores.....	33,203	31,002	32,054	32,330	29,103	33,005	32,981	33,182	32,105	32,194
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,361	11,372	11,678	12,097	10,836	12,717	12,483	12,517	12,433	12,314
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	8,941	7,329	6,472	8,547	6,627	9,431	9,589	9,212	9,256	9,042
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	687	675	733	659	(*)	862	830	841	865
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,230	1,892	2,840	2,200	(*)	2,877	2,691	2,974	2,953
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,593	2,272	2,807	2,192	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,273	1,129	1,537	1,104	(*)	1,597	1,566	1,609	1,456
58	Eating and drinking places.....	19,999	18,297	17,583	19,421	17,012	19,781	19,759	19,537	19,363	19,072
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,242	6,997	6,995	7,033	6,526	7,228	7,206	7,138	6,929	6,987
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,705	1,705	1,758	1,527	(*)	1,971	1,971	1,868	1,833
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,316	3,716	3,676	2,960	(*)	3,920	3,815	3,654	3,619
53,56,57 594	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	43,574	41,171	46,883	39,542	(*)	53,627	52,613	51,212	50,716

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

NA Not available.

<sup>†</sup>Revised.

<sup>1</sup>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-96-02.

<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 (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					
		Mar. 1996 advance from—		Feb. 1996 preliminary from—		Jan. 1996 through Mar. 1996 from—	
		Feb. 1996 prelim.	Mar. 1995 final	Jan. 1996 final	Feb. 1995 final	Oct. 1995 through Dec. 1995	Jan. 1995 through Mar. 1995
	Retail trade, total.....	+0.1	+5.2	+1.9	+6.2	+2.0	+4.8
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.3	+3.4	+1.1	+3.7	+1.1	+2.9
	Durable goods, total.....	0.0	+8.1	+3.0	+9.8	+2.7	+7.7
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-1.7	-3.3	+1.3	-0.7	-2.8	-2.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.5	+10.9	+4.4	+14.3	+4.8	+11.0
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.5	+11.3	+4.6	+14.6	+5.0	+11.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+1.9	+7.5	+0.6	+5.3	-0.9	+5.3
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+0.2	+3.3	+1.1	+3.8	+1.5	+2.9
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-0.3	+3.9	+2.5	+5.4	+2.1	+3.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	-0.8	+4.2	+2.5	+5.8	+2.1	+3.9
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>1</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	+1.9	+6.1	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+0.1	+2.9	-0.6	+2.5	+0.7	+2.4
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.1	+2.8	-0.6	+2.4	+0.8	+2.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+1.9	+2.3	-0.3	+1.4	+3.7	+1.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-1.6	+1.9	+4.1	+6.0	+2.7	+2.3
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+0.1	+2.2	+1.1	+3.6	+0.8	+2.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+0.3	+4.3	+1.0	+3.1	+0.7	+3.2

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
 POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
 CENSUS  
 PERMIT No. G-58

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### Sample Design and 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 both surveys.

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 -0.3 percent to +1.1 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 3 below.

Preliminary estimates for February 1996 and final estimates for January 1996 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-96-02). 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.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is -0.4 percent to +2.0 percent. 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 3. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated Coefficient of variation in percent of the						Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Advance-to- preliminary ratio		Ratio to same month a year ago	Dollar volume sales est.	Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.	
		Range <sup>1</sup>		Median	Median	Median	Median	Range <sup>2</sup>			
		From	To					From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.5	1.3	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.0	-0.3	+1.1	+0.2	0.4
	Total (excl. auto).....	0.5	0.9	0.7	1.1	0.8	1.0	-1.6	+0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total.....	1.2	3.4	1.4	2.2	1.7	2.2	-0.9	+1.1	+0.2	0.5
52	Building materials, group stores.....	0.9	2.6	1.6	4.1	2.9	3.4	-4.2	+2.5	-0.4	1.4
55 ex. 554 551,2,5, 6,7,9	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	3.2	2.1	3.4	2.6	3.1	-1.3	+2.2	+0.6	1.1
	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.2	3.0	1.5	4.0	2.8	3.2	-1.5	+2.3	+0.5	1.1
57	Furniture, home furn., and equipment stores.....	1.3	3.6	2.1	4.6	3.4	4.1	-3.4	+2.3	-0.1	1.5
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.4	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.8	1.1	-1.1	+0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5	-0.3	+0.7	+0.1	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.4	+0.6	-0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	0.6	1.0	0.7	1.7	0.9	1.7	-0.5	+0.8	+0.1	0.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.1	0.8	0.3	1.8	0.9	1.7	-0.6	+0.5	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.5	1.9	0.9	2.7	1.8	3.0	-1.4	+1.2	-0.4	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.8	3.4	1.4	3.3	2.8	2.6	-2.4	+1.3	-0.4	1.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	2.0	1.2	4.6	4.0	3.9	-3.6	+2.4	0.0	1.0
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.4	1.8	1.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	-1.0	+1.3	+0.2	0.6

<sup>1</sup>The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of April 1993 - March 1994.

<sup>2</sup>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 1995 - February 1996. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the period April 1993 - February 1994.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion of the measures of sampling variability.

