

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



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

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The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for May adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$205.5 billion, an increase of 0.8 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month and up 5.5 percent ( $\pm 1.9\%$ ) from May 1995. Total sales for the March through May period were 5.9 percent ( $\pm 1.7\%$ ) above the same period a year ago. The March to April 1996 percent change was revised from -0.3 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) to -0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ).

Durable goods increased 1.9 percent ( $\pm 2.5$ ) from April and were up 8.8 percent from last year. Automotive sales were up 8.4 percent from May 1995.

Nondurable goods were unchanged ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from last month but were up 3.4 percent from last year. General merchandise sales increased 1.2 percent from April and were 4.9 percent above May 1995.

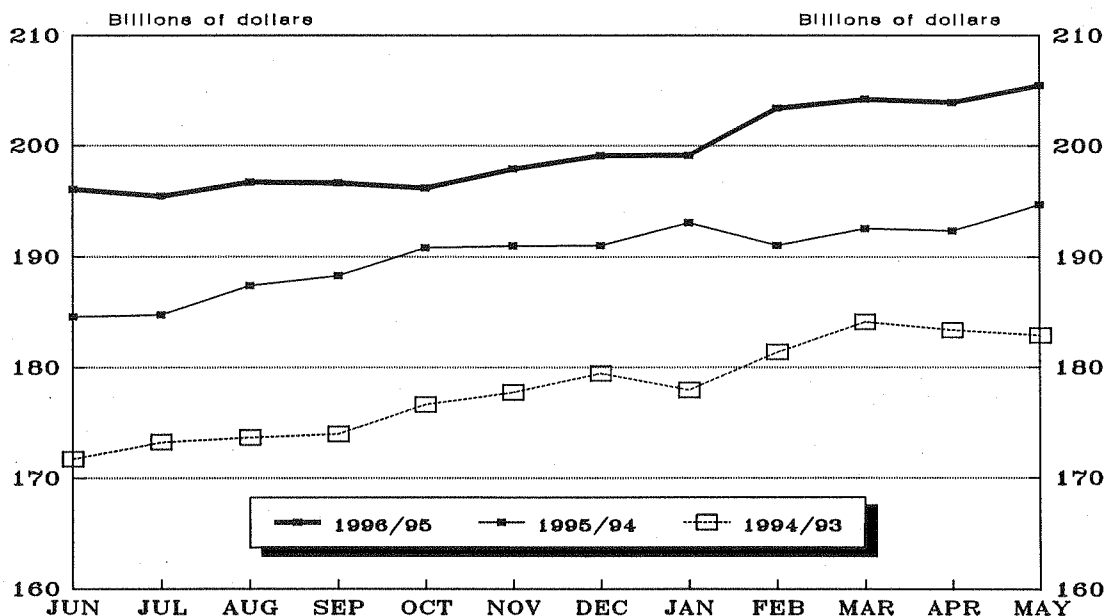
*The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.*

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for June is scheduled to be released July 12, 1996 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

June 1993 - May 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/svsd/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	
		May <sup>2</sup> adv.	Apr. prel.	Mar. final	May	Apr.	May <sup>2</sup> adv.	Apr. prel.	Mar. final	May <sup>2</sup>	Apr. <sup>2</sup>
	Retail trade, total.....	214,980	200,347	201,334	201,372	187,534	205,478	203,928	204,228	194,725	192,372
	Total (excl. auto group)...	158,967	148,189	147,447	150,236	141,182	155,108	154,581	152,951	148,276	146,951
	Durable goods, total.....	91,446	84,049	83,755	83,389	75,039	84,189	82,588	84,108	77,400	76,062
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	13,406	11,832	9,671	12,293	10,606	11,107	10,841	10,511	10,210	10,235
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	8,889	7,574	9,039	7,952	(*)	8,292	8,162	7,840	7,850
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,268	1,048	1,333	1,150	(*)	1,218	1,137	1,134	1,119
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	56,013	52,158	53,887	51,136	46,352	50,370	49,347	51,277	46,449	45,421
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	52,840	49,062	50,884	48,123	43,509	47,348	46,329	48,231	43,590	42,572
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	42,150	44,162	41,811	37,682	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,096	3,003	3,013	2,843	(*)	3,018	3,046	2,859	2,849
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,045	10,332	10,883	10,142	9,401	11,529	11,347	11,375	10,619	10,418
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	5,265	5,420	5,273	4,896	(*)	5,571	5,611	5,284	5,231
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,266	4,583	4,122	3,770	(*)	4,853	4,839	4,480	4,353
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	676	664	728	645	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	123,534	116,298	117,579	117,983	112,495	121,289	121,340	120,120	117,325	116,310
53	General merchandise group stores.....	25,638	23,221	23,129	23,911	22,743	25,982	25,671	25,317	24,760	24,564
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	19,799	18,081	17,949	18,380	17,637	20,224	20,023	19,659	19,166	19,067
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	18,462	18,326	18,715	17,972	(*)	20,282	20,010	19,474	19,324
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	632	628	622	607	(*)	672	689	635	623
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,508	4,552	4,909	4,499	(*)	4,976	4,969	4,959	4,874
54	Food stores.....	36,490	34,181	35,079	34,880	33,452	35,072	35,240	34,956	34,136	34,031
541	Grocery stores.....	34,575	32,343	33,269	33,122	31,682	33,213	33,378	33,103	32,409	32,263
554	Gasoline service stations.....	14,079	13,207	12,660	13,152	11,998	13,499	13,449	13,025	12,574	12,369
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,324	8,974	8,796	8,890	8,827	9,485	9,473	9,318	9,174	9,010
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	764	742	783	790	(*)	833	828	822	828
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,692	2,557	3,041	2,890	(*)	2,739	2,658	2,941	2,899
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,220	3,221	2,864	2,864	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,662	1,587	1,628	1,679	(*)	1,631	1,605	1,604	1,566
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,404	19,432	20,106	20,306	19,485	19,451	19,608	19,750	19,600	19,446
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	7,574	7,297	7,355	7,155	6,847	7,411	7,348	7,318	7,028	6,973
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,836	1,860	1,846	1,733	(*)	1,964	1,960	1,844	1,846
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,743	3,749	3,442	3,247	(*)	3,999	3,897	3,799	3,673
53,56,57 594	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	49,181	49,331	49,657	46,988	(*)	54,356	53,888	51,843	51,121

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

NA Not available.

<sup>1</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-96-04.

<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					
		May 1996 advance from—		Apr. 1996 preliminary from—		Mar. 1996 through May 1996 from—	
		Apr. 1996 prelim.	May 1995 final	Mar. 1996 final	Apr. 1995 final	Dec. 1995 through Feb. 1996	Mar. 1995 through May 1995
	Retail trade, total.....	+0.8	+5.5	-0.1	+6.0	+2.0	+5.9
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.3	+4.6	+1.1	+5.2	+2.2	+4.7
	Durable goods, total.....	+1.9	+8.8	-1.8	+8.6	+2.5	+9.1
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+2.5	+8.8	+3.1	+5.9	+3.8	+4.8
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+2.1	+8.4	-3.8	+8.6	+1.3	+9.7
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	+2.2	+8.6	-3.9	+8.8	+1.4	+10.0
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+1.6	+8.6	-0.2	+8.9	+2.6	+8.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.0	+3.4	+1.0	+4.3	+1.6	+3.7
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+1.2	+4.9	+1.4	+4.5	+2.3	+4.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	+1.0	+5.5	+1.9	+5.0	+2.0	+4.7
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>1</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	+1.4	+5.0	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.5	+2.7	+0.8	+3.6	+0.6	+3.2
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.5	+2.5	+0.8	+3.5	+0.6	+3.0
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+0.4	+7.4	+3.3	+8.7	+7.0	+6.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+0.1	+3.4	+1.7	+5.1	+1.0	+3.0
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.8	-0.8	-0.7	+0.8	-0.1	+0.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+0.9	+5.4	+0.4	+5.4	+2.9	+5.5

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 April 1996 and final estimates for March 1996 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for April (BR-96-04). 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	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	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	3.2	2.1	3.4	2.6	3.1	-1.3	+2.2	+0.6	1.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	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, May 1995 - April 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.

