

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Wednesday, January 14, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES  
DECEMBER 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales in December adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$215.6 billion, an increase of 0.7 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the previous month and up 4.4 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from December 1996. Total sales for the 12 months of 1997 were 2.5 trillion, up 4.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the 1996 total. The October to November 1997 percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) to +0.3 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

Durable goods increased 1.9 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from November and were 7.1 percent above last year. Automotive dealers increased 6.8 percent from last year while furniture sales were up 9.2 percent in the same period.

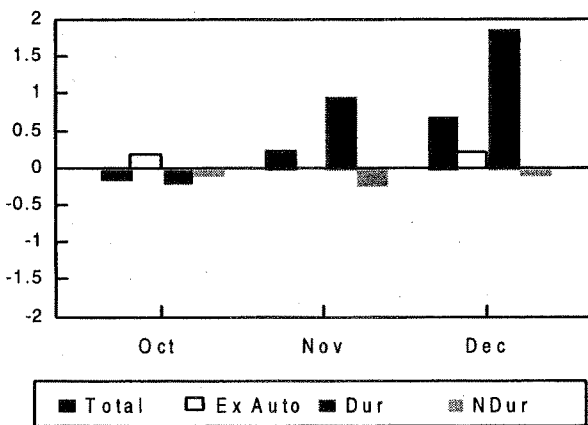
Nondurable goods decreased 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ) from last month but were 2.6 percent above last year. General merchandise and drug store sales were up 4.8 percent and 8.1 percent, respectively, from December 1996.

*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.*

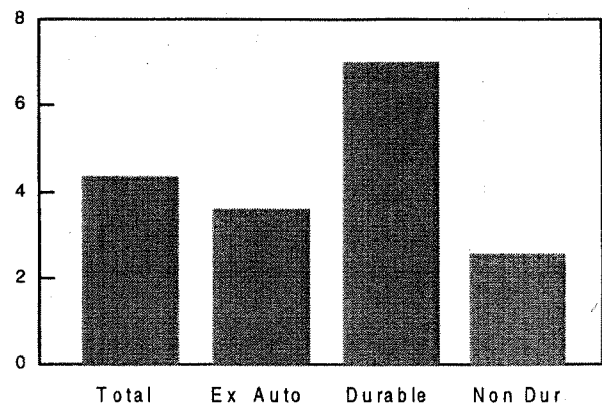
**Percent Change in Retail Sales**

(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 January is scheduled to be released February 12, 1998 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

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/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted							Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		12 month total		1997			1996		1997			1996	
		1997	Change from 1996	Dec. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>2,548,505</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>259,381</b>	<b>214,383</b>	<b>215,742</b>	<b>244,719</b>	<b>210,236</b>	<b>215,637</b>	<b>214,093</b>	<b>213,517</b>	<b>206,528</b>	<b>205,966</b>
	Total (excl. auto group)...	1,929,921	4.2	211,591	168,575	163,314	201,187	164,872	162,534	162,174	162,200	156,801	156,392
	<b>Durable goods, total.....</b>	<b>1,042,216</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>99,077</b>	<b>82,429</b>	<b>87,828</b>	<b>90,163</b>	<b>80,826</b>	<b>89,382</b>	<b>87,712</b>	<b>86,863</b>	<b>83,495</b>	<b>83,561</b>
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers...	143,061	6.4	10,966	11,054	12,852	10,350	10,921	11,855	11,833	11,971	11,373	11,372
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores...	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,562	10,019	7,608	8,403	(*)	9,118	9,175	8,636	8,672
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,263	1,385	1,359	1,299	(*)	1,264	1,350	1,291	1,266
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	618,584	4.3	47,790	45,808	52,428	43,532	45,364	53,103	51,919	51,317	49,727	49,574
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	582,914	4.7	45,030	42,968	49,277	40,761	42,420	50,201	48,994	48,358	46,744	46,615
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	38,002	43,325	36,237	37,578	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,840	3,151	2,771	2,944	(*)	2,925	2,959	2,983	2,959
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	141,419	5.9	17,386	13,211	11,838	15,608	12,483	12,192	11,999	11,857	11,160	11,153
571	Furniture and home furnishings...	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,808	6,255	6,720	6,347	(*)	6,133	6,055	5,657	5,622
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,474	4,744	7,263	5,205	(*)	4,985	4,896	4,629	4,660
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	873	834	1,031	882	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>1,506,289</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>160,304</b>	<b>131,954</b>	<b>127,914</b>	<b>154,556</b>	<b>129,410</b>	<b>126,255</b>	<b>126,381</b>	<b>126,654</b>	<b>123,033</b>	<b>122,405</b>
53	General merchandise group stores..	330,970	5.8	47,084	32,809	27,680	44,935	31,075	27,931	27,865	27,898	26,659	26,240
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)....	260,865	6.7	38,072	26,293	21,787	36,188	24,614	22,109	22,003	22,029	21,052	20,444
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,709	22,122	36,701	25,069	(*)	22,485	22,412	21,381	20,965
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	853	773	1,218	776	(*)	783	764	705	702
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,663	5,120	7,529	5,685	(*)	5,079	5,105	4,902	5,094
54	Food stores.....	432,099	2.1	39,029	36,173	36,407	38,008	35,880	36,247	36,409	36,254	35,730	35,571
541	Grocery stores.....	406,756	1.6	36,211	34,065	34,235	35,463	33,924	34,097	34,271	34,099	33,774	33,621
554	Gasoline service stations.....	156,432	0.9	12,652	12,428	13,437	12,990	12,807	12,832	12,973	13,174	13,269	13,162
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	116,995	2.9	16,125	11,090	9,895	15,130	10,777	9,899	9,819	9,785	9,395	9,360
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,106	967	1,514	977	(*)	969	972	810	850
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,910	2,708	4,406	3,048	(*)	2,670	2,665	2,762	2,736
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,634	3,908	6,234	4,366	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,647	1,536	2,017	1,606	(*)	1,631	1,622	1,587	1,556
58	Eating and drinking places.....	244,181	3.2	20,235	19,627	20,835	19,822	19,622	20,419	20,318	20,467	19,942	20,125
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	98,504	8.6	10,510	8,135	8,295	9,602	7,613	8,442	8,448	8,328	7,813	7,768
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,085	2,053	2,525	1,970	(*)	2,071	2,084	1,911	1,891
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,298	5,054	6,203	5,223	(*)	4,218	4,508	4,044	3,972
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	66,168	56,689	92,927	63,380	(*)	57,903	57,624	55,303	54,779

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

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

- (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-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-97-11.
- (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) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.
- (4) 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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Dec. 1997 Advance from --		Nov. 1997 Preliminary from --		Oct. 1997 through Dec. 1997 from --	
		Nov. 1997 (p)	Dec. 1996 (r)	Oct. 1997 (r)	Nov. 1996 (r)	July 1997 through Sept. 1997	Oct. 1996 through Dec. 1996
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>
	Total (excl. automotive group) .....	0.2	3.7	0.0	3.7	0.4	3.7
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>5.1</b>
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers .....	0.2	4.2	-1.2	4.1	-0.6	4.6
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	2.3	6.8	1.2	4.7	-0.2	4.5
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	2.5	7.4	1.3	5.1	0.0	5.0
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.6	9.2	1.2	7.6	1.0	7.4
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>-0.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.2	4.8	-0.1	6.2	0.4	5.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.5	5.0	-0.1	7.6	0.8	6.2
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	0.3	7.3	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-0.4	1.4	0.4	2.4	0.5	1.8
541	Grocery stores.....	-0.5	1.0	0.5	1.9	0.5	1.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.1	-3.3	-1.5	-1.4	-0.3	-1.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.8	5.4	0.3	4.9	-0.6	4.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.5	2.4	-0.7	1.0	-0.4	2.1
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.1	8.1	1.4	8.8	1.6	7.9

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

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

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### 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 each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate 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. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average difference

between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

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

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV <sup>1</sup> for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error <sup>1</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>2</sup>	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail trade, total.....</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>
	Total (excl. auto) .....	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	-0.1	0.4
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>
52	Building materials, group stores .....	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores .....	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	<b>Nondurable goods, total .....</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores .....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations .....	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores .....	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places .....	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores .....	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	0.5



- (1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.
- (2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.