

**INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES.** The annual revision of the monthly retail sales estimates will be published in the press release the week of April 27. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 1998, while corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through March 1998.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. E.T., Thursday, March 12, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES  
FEBRUARY 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for February adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$218.1 billion, an increase of 0.5 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the previous month and up 2.5 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from February 1997. Total sales for the December through February period were up 3.4 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The December to January 1998 percent change was revised from +0.1 ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) to +1.0 percent ( $\pm 0.4\%$ ).

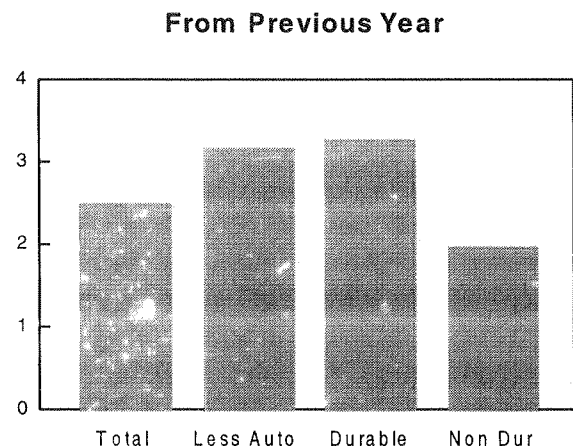
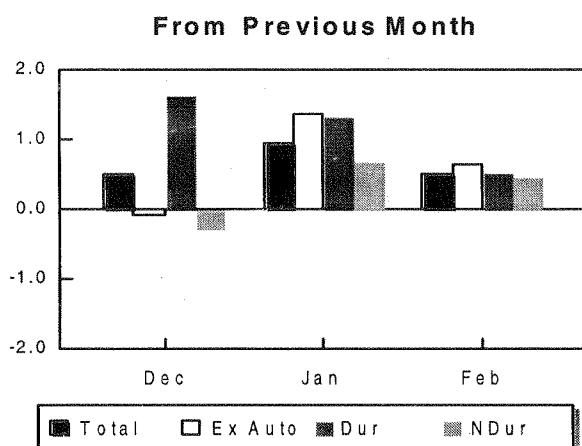
Durable goods increased 0.5 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from January and were 3.3 percent above last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.5 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ) from last month and were 2.0 percent above last year.

*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)



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for March is scheduled to be released April 14, 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)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		1998		1997			1998		1997		
		Feb. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>188,639</b>	<b>192,854</b>	<b>257,020</b>	<b>183,530</b>	<b>186,064</b>	<b>218,051</b>	<b>216,955</b>	<b>214,898</b>	<b>212,655</b>	<b>209,307</b>
	Total (excl. auto group).....	141,109	145,890	209,406	136,278	140,539	165,105	164,051	161,870	159,962	158,468
	<b>Durable goods, total.....</b>	<b>78,055</b>	<b>78,078</b>	<b>97,673</b>	<b>75,424</b>	<b>74,051</b>	<b>90,708</b>	<b>90,228</b>	<b>89,031</b>	<b>87,813</b>	<b>85,061</b>
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	9,505	9,515	11,078	8,870	8,859	12,741	12,490	12,053	11,932	11,595
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	7,393	8,328	6,964	6,862	(*)	9,503	9,305	9,151	8,843
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,066	1,310	978	1,113	(*)	1,238	1,229	1,295	1,311
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	47,530	46,964	47,614	47,252	45,525	52,946	52,904	53,028	52,693	50,839
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	45,036	44,414	44,872	44,758	42,853	49,984	50,016	50,136	49,731	47,827
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	39,247	39,820	39,122	38,051	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,550	2,742	2,494	2,672	(*)	2,888	2,892	2,962	3,012
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	10,920	11,692	17,275	9,933	10,390	12,552	12,603	12,198	11,593	11,244
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	5,772	7,606	5,000	5,227	(*)	6,308	6,265	5,896	5,750
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	5,072	7,936	4,179	4,398	(*)	5,350	5,007	4,826	4,644
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	800	1,031	692	740	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>110,584</b>	<b>114,776</b>	<b>159,347</b>	<b>108,106</b>	<b>112,013</b>	<b>127,343</b>	<b>126,727</b>	<b>125,867</b>	<b>124,842</b>	<b>124,246</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	22,949	22,111	46,635	21,355	20,783	28,908	28,545	27,921	27,215	27,056
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	18,015	17,157	37,890	16,588	15,994	22,920	22,635	22,171	21,321	21,269
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	17,389	38,432	16,831	16,229	(*)	22,802	22,524	21,780	21,534
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	555	1,206	621	545	(*)	747	704	788	735
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,399	7,539	4,146	4,244	(*)	5,163	5,046	5,106	5,052
54	Food stores.....	32,551	35,606	38,964	32,328	35,132	36,072	35,996	36,166	35,825	35,841
541	Grocery stores.....	30,599	33,662	36,161	30,501	33,317	33,886	33,831	34,018	33,777	33,824
554	Gasoline service stations.....	10,868	11,699	12,581	11,723	12,529	12,322	12,459	12,708	13,291	13,400
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,587	7,402	15,929	7,202	6,957	10,116	9,986	9,784	9,729	9,566
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	821	1,645	686	751	(*)	944	889	886	882
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,065	4,515	2,136	2,030	(*)	2,798	2,763	2,811	2,800
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,674	6,578	2,532	2,480	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,240	2,156	1,299	1,161	(*)	1,669	1,664	1,716	1,595
58	Eating and drinking places.....	18,503	19,134	20,351	18,277	18,576	20,651	20,574	20,536	20,421	20,213
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,027	8,388	10,347	7,565	7,827	8,530	8,498	8,351	8,048	7,906
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,849	2,816	1,620	1,702	(*)	2,043	2,097	1,952	1,925
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,396	6,704	3,432	3,804	(*)	4,712	4,345	4,216	4,047
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	47,803	97,292	44,884	44,565	(*)	59,361	57,957	56,797	55,910

\* 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-98-01.
- (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>					
		Feb. 1998 Advance from --		Jan. 1998 Preliminary from --		Dec. 1997 through Feb. 1998 from --	
		Jan. 1998 (p)	Feb. 1997 (r)	Dec. 1997 (r)	Jan. 1997 (r)	Sep. 1997 through Nov. 1997	Dec. 1996 through Feb. 1997
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>
	Total (excl. automotive group) .....	0.6	3.2	1.3	3.5	1.0	3.3
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>5.3</b>
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers .....	2.0	6.8	3.6	7.7	4.3	6.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.1	0.5	-0.2	4.1	2.4	3.7
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.1	0.5	-0.2	4.6	2.6	4.0
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.4	8.3	3.3	12.1	4.7	9.9
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>2.1</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	1.3	6.2	2.2	5.5	2.2	5.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	1.3	7.5	2.1	6.4	2.7	6.4
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	1.2	5.9	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.2	0.7	-0.5	0.4	-0.7	0.8
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.3	-0.5	0.0	-0.7	0.4
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.1	-7.3	-2.0	-7.0	-4.5	-6.2
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.3	4.0	2.1	4.4	1.9	4.2
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.4	1.1	0.2	1.8	0.6	1.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.4	6.0	1.8	7.5	1.1	6.8

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 businesses are based on the preceding 12 months.