

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS**
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**ECONOMICS
AND
STATISTICS
ADMINISTRATION**

**BUREAU OF THE
CENSUS**

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INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES. The annual revision of the monthly retail sales estimates will be published in the press release the week of April 26. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 1999, while corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through March 1999.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday March 11, 1999

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
FEBRUARY 1999**

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 \$236.5 billion, an increase of 0.9 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 7.3 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from February 1998. Total sales for the December through February period were up 7.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The December to January percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +1.0 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

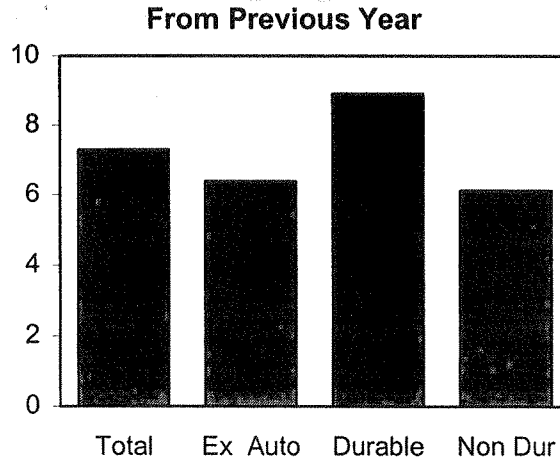
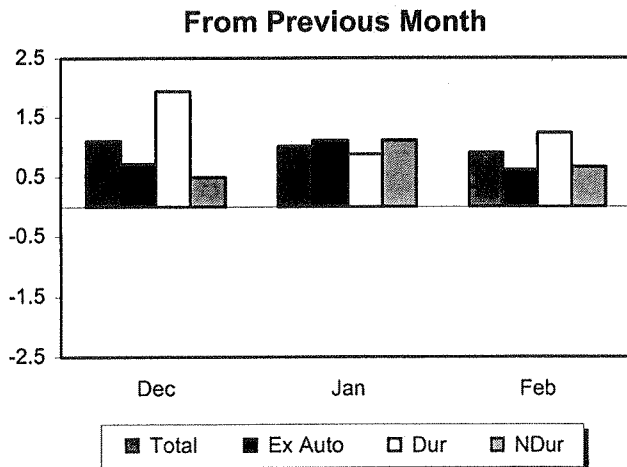
Durable goods increased 1.2 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from January and were 8.9 percent above last year. Building materials were up 11.1 percent from February a year ago, while automotive sales were up 10.1 percent during the same period.

Nondurable goods increased 0.7 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were up 6.1 percent from February 1998. General merchandise sales were up 8.3 percent from February a year ago.

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 13, 1999 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Service Sector Statistics 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 ¹				
		2 month total		1999			1998		1999		1998		
		1999	Change from 1998	Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ² (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	411,038	6.6	205,990	205,048	276,589	191,274	194,449	236,469	234,348	231,997	220,401	218,377
	Total (excl. auto group).....	307,284	6.1	152,357	154,927	224,188	142,668	147,052	177,089	176,000	174,069	166,460	164,931
	Durable goods, total.....	171,548	7.5	87,442	84,106	107,731	79,948	79,575	100,732	99,505	98,639	92,499	91,646
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.	22,141	10.0	11,250	10,891	13,391	10,044	10,076	15,000	14,829	14,591	13,502	13,321
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,543	10,110	7,854	7,874	(*)	11,406	11,283	10,253	10,173
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,122	1,396	921	999	(*)	1,345	1,317	1,223	1,177
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	103,754	8.1	53,633	50,121	52,401	48,606	47,397	59,380	58,348	57,928	53,941	53,446
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	98,052	8.2	50,821	47,231	49,253	45,920	44,662	56,032	54,984	54,604	50,740	50,352
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)...	(*)	(*)	(*)	41,071	43,111	39,302	39,026	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,890	3,148	2,686	2,735	(*)	3,364	3,324	3,201	3,094
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	25,045	5.5	12,267	12,778	19,305	11,503	12,237	13,892	13,748	13,725	13,154	13,008
571	Furniture and home furnishings	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,825	7,953	5,521	5,764	(*)	6,472	6,562	6,383	6,286
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,118	9,592	5,154	5,585	(*)	6,353	6,233	5,817	5,746
5722	Household appliance stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	794	1056	754	817	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	239,490	5.9	118,548	120,942	168,858	111,326	114,874	135,737	134,843	133,358	127,902	126,731
53	General merchandise group stores.	49,344	9.5	25,139	24,205	50,148	22,977	22,077	31,234	31,075	30,286	28,839	28,429
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)...	38,275	8.8	19,577	18,698	40,440	18,033	17,138	24,533	24,442	23,844	22,798	22,491
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³ ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	18,962	41,076	18,348	17,420	(*)	24,752	24,271	23,352	22,844
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	799	1763	792	710	(*)	1,081	1041	965	945
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,708	7,945	4,152	4,229	(*)	5,552	5,401	5,076	4,993
54	Food stores.....	71,201	4.6	34,394	36,807	41,203	32,574	35,464	38,144	37,803	37,819	36,129	35,969
541	Grocery stores.....	66,836	4.6	32,188	34,648	38,142	30,491	33,405	35,685	35,391	35,448	33,804	33,674
554	Gasoline service stations.....	22,551	-1.5	11,004	11,547	12,274	10,997	11,888	12,505	12,403	12,436	12,497	12,660
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	16,116	5.8	8,266	7,850	16,757	7,748	7,479	10,919	10,810	10,420	10,328	10,085
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	819	1652	703	778	(*)	957	939	907	903
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,050	4,401	2,012	1,999	(*)	2,785	2,697	2,634	2,669
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,923	7,190	2,808	2,712	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,312	2,290	1,430	1,284	(*)	1,812	1,764	1,817	1,726
58	Eating and drinking places.....	39,110	6.2	19,437	19,673	21,381	18,255	18,563	21,477	21,314	21,445	20,194	20,003
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	17,809	8.2	8,819	8,990	11,128	8,049	8,405	9,352	9,230	9,106	8,545	8,498
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,888	3,026	1,738	1,819	(*)	2,143	2,230	2,079	2,028
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,378	6,832	3,724	3,948	(*)	4,843	4,651	4,525	4,277
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,721	103,931	48,754	48,294	(*)	64,200	62,693	60,720	59,508

* 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-99-1.

(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 ¹					
		Feb. 1999 Advance from --		Jan. 1999 Preliminary from --		Dec. 1998 through Feb. 1999 from --	
		Jan. 1999 (p)	Feb. 1998 (r)	Dec. 1998 (r)	Jan. 1998 (r)	Sept. 1998 through Nov. 1998	Dec. 1997 through Feb. 1998
	Retail trade, total	0.9	7.3	1.0	7.3	3.0	7.2
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.6	6.4	1.1	6.7	2.3	6.6
	Durable goods, total	1.2	8.9	0.9	8.6	4.2	8.7
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.2	11.1	1.6	11.3	5.3	12.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.8	10.1	0.7	9.2	4.9	9.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	1.9	10.4	0.7	9.2	5.1	9.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.0	5.6	0.2	5.7	2.7	6.4
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.7	6.1	1.1	6.4	2.1	6.1
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.5	8.3	2.6	9.3	3.4	8.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.4	7.6	2.5	8.7	3.5	7.8
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	2.0	8.4	(NA)	
54	Food stores.....	0.9	5.6	0.0	5.1	1.5	5.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.8	5.6	-0.2	5.1	1.5	5.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.8	0.1	-0.3	-2.0	0.6	-1.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.0	5.7	3.7	7.2	4.3	5.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	6.4	-0.6	6.6	1.9	7.0
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	1.3	9.4	1.4	8.6	2.2	9.0

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



- (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 are based on the latest 12 months of data.