

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Friday June 11, 1999

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
 MAY 1999**

INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES. Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 1997 Annual Retail Trade Survey, which reflects the preliminary 1997 Census of Retail Trade data. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through June 1999, while the corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through June 1999. Revised data are scheduled for release the week of July 26.

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 \$242.2 billion, an increase of 1.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 7.8 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from May 1998. Total sales for the March through May period were up 8.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The March to April 1999 percent change was revised from +0.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.4 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods increased 1.8 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from April and were 8.9 percent above last year. Building materials were up 11.6 percent from May a year ago, while furniture sales were up 9.1 percent during the same period.

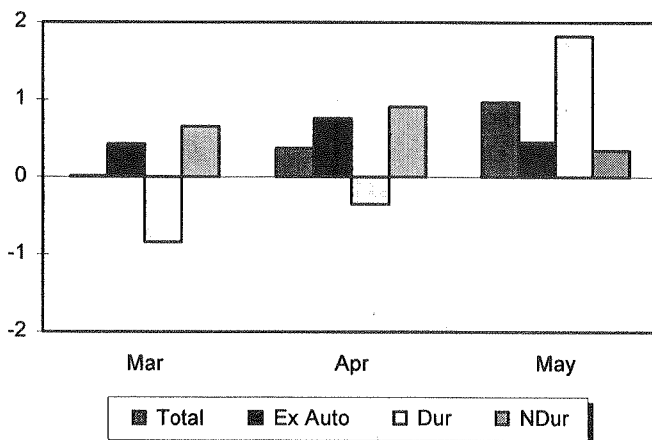
Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were up 6.9 percent from May 1998. Drug store sales were up 11.8 percent from May a year ago.

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.

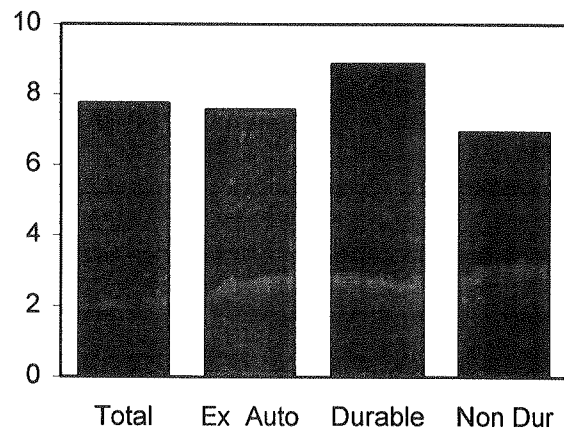
Percent Change in Retail Sales

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

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for June is scheduled to be released July 14, 1999 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, 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/advttable.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				
		5 month total		1999			1998		1999			1998	
		1999	Change from 1998	May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May	Apr.	May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May (r)	Apr. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	1,140,738	8.1	249,018	238,086	239,909	232,369	221,166	242,239	239,918	239,026	224,801	222,739
	Total (excl. auto group).....	843,545	7.6	184,426	175,677	174,624	172,197	163,229	181,786	180,968	179,609	168,981	167,615
	Durable goods, total.....	490,481	9.6	108,228	103,591	105,007	100,113	95,261	103,145	101,297	101,652	94,737	93,686
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.	72,056	12.8	17,845	16,979	14,586	16,158	14,903	15,397	15,477	15,241	13,794	13,702
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	12,714	11,402	11,700	11,070	(*)	11,849	11,755	10,391	10,424
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,474	1,258	1,445	1,345	(*)	1,396	1,385	1,261	1,279
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	297,193	9.4	64,592	62,409	65,285	60,172	57,937	60,453	58,950	59,417	55,820	55,124
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	281,051	9.6	61,091	58,911	61,870	56,828	54,672	57,041	55,524	56,042	52,570	51,920
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)...	(*)	(*)	(*)	49,427	52,629	48,222	46,383	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,498	3,415	3,344	3,265	(*)	3,426	3,375	3,250	3,204
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	65,098	8.1	13,430	12,827	13,677	12,298	11,787	14,242	14,088	14,090	13,059	12,952
571	Furniture and home furnishings	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,308	6,597	6,157	5,932	(*)	6,675	6,704	6,270	6,291
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,673	6,160	5,260	5,012	(*)	6,439	6,403	5,819	5,689
5722	Household appliance stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	868	884	895	817	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	650,257	7.0	140,790	134,495	134,902	132,256	125,905	139,094	138,621	137,374	130,064	129,053
53	General merchandise group stores.	139,720	9.1	31,761	29,222	29,336	29,373	27,565	31,781	31,505	31,608	29,312	29,191
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)..	108,900	8.2	24,784	22,885	22,910	23,193	21,778	24,859	24,661	24,794	23,170	23,070
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³ ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,249	23,255	23,617	22,197	(*)	25,032	25,171	23,571	23,513
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,082	1,097	956	922	(*)	1,157	1,139	970	951
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,255	5,329	5,224	4,865	(*)	5,687	5,675	5,172	5,170
54	Food stores.....	186,129	4.7	39,305	37,422	38,107	37,981	36,152	38,360	38,090	38,262	36,795	36,649
541	Grocery stores.....	174,463	4.8	36,817	34,997	35,686	35,566	33,745	35,884	35,638	35,829	34,430	34,259
554	Gasoline service stations.....	62,322	3.3	13,897	13,388	12,550	13,171	12,283	13,350	13,455	12,806	12,556	12,420
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	47,951	7.0	10,937	10,577	10,330	10,152	10,127	11,183	11,124	10,917	10,382	10,412
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	991	858	927	930	(*)	1,050	979	958	974
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,842	2,720	2,752	2,694	(*)	2,897	2,845	2,646	2,678
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,970	3,923	3,791	3,723	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,764	1,754	1,822	1,818	(*)	1,764	1,725	1,744	1,733
58	Eating and drinking places.....	105,741	6.8	22,893	21,991	21,612	21,700	20,178	21,824	21,816	21,569	20,452	20,218
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	47,400	11.7	9,830	9,609	9,888	8,765	8,670	9,762	9,706	9,609	8,730	8,670
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,157	2,033	2,097	1,925	(*)	2,259	2,188	2,056	2,039
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,843	5,157	4,185	4,141	(*)	5,169	5,026	4,671	4,491
53,56,57, 594	GAF ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	59,993	60,794	59,544	56,527	(*)	65,425	65,360	61,182	60,818

* 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-99-04.
- (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					
		May 1999 Advance from --		Apr. 1999 Preliminary from --		Mar. 1999 through May 1999 from --	
		Apr. 1999 (p)	May 1998 (r)	Mar. 1999 (r)	Apr. 1998 (r)	Dec. 1998 through Feb. 1999	Mar. 1998 through May 1998
	Retail trade, total	1.0	7.8	0.4	7.7	2.2	8.0
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.5	7.6	0.8	8.0	2.4	7.8
	Durable goods, total	1.8	8.9	-0.3	8.1	1.7	9.1
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.5	11.6	1.5	13.0	2.4	12.3
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	2.5	8.3	-0.8	6.9	1.3	8.6
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	2.7	8.5	-0.9	6.9	1.3	8.7
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.1	9.1	0.0	8.8	2.1	8.6
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.3	6.9	0.9	7.4	2.5	7.2
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.9	8.4	-0.3	7.9	2.3	8.7
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.8	7.3	-0.5	6.9	1.9	7.7
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	-0.6	6.5	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.7	4.3	-0.4	3.9	0.7	4.5
541	Grocery stores.....	0.7	4.2	-0.5	4.0	0.6	4.6
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.8	6.3	5.1	8.3	6.1	6.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.5	7.7	1.9	6.8	3.3	6.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.0	6.7	1.1	7.9	1.3	7.1
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.6	11.8	1.0	11.9	4.0	12.1

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	7.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.3
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.5	1.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.0	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	-0.1	0.5
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.6
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
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	0.0	0.2
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	0.3	0.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	-0.1	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	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.