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FOURTH QUARTER 2008 DATA FROM THE QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT LARGE U.S. RETAIL TRADE CORPORATIONS

After-Tax Profits and Sales, Fourth Quarter 2008 - Not Seasonally Adjusted

In the fourth quarter of 2008, **after-tax profits** of U.S. retail corporations with assets of \$50 million and over totaled \$6.1 billion, down \$2.2 (± 0.1) billion, or 26.8 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$), from the \$8.4 billion recorded in third quarter 2008, and down \$11.5 (± 0.1) billion, or 65.3 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$), from the \$17.6 billion recorded in the fourth quarter of 2007.

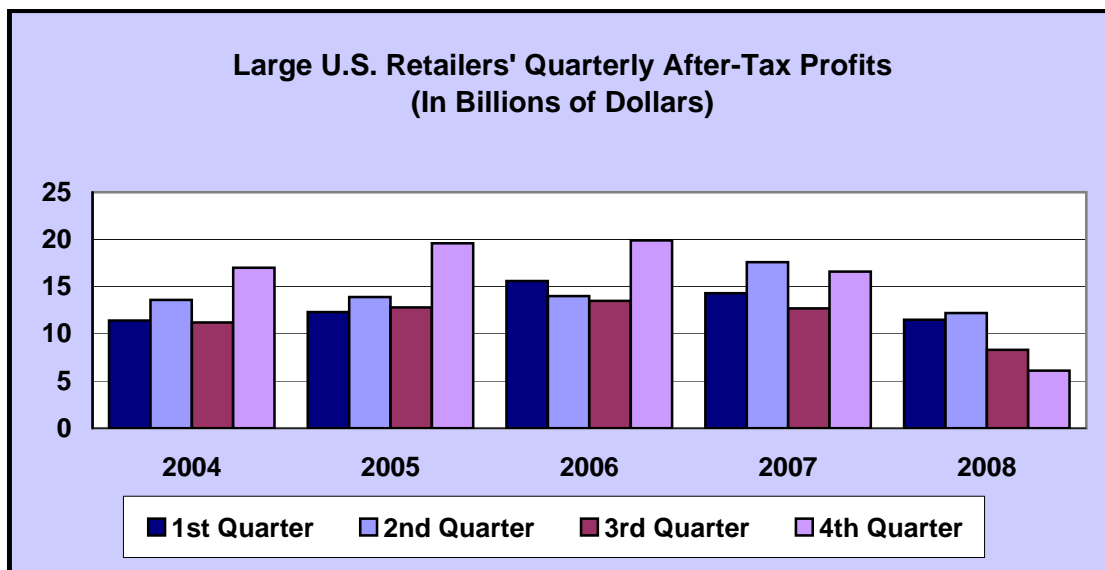
Sales in the fourth quarter of 2008, at \$527.8 billion, were up \$9.7 (± 6.3) billion, or 1.9 percent ($\pm 1.2\%$), from the \$518.1 billion recorded in the third quarter of 2008, but down \$23.2 (± 4.1) billion, or 4.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$), from the \$551.0 billion recorded in the fourth quarter of 2007.

After-tax profits for these corporations averaged 1.2 cents per dollar of sales for the fourth quarter of 2008, down 0.5 (± 0.1) cents from the 1.6 cents recorded in the third quarter of 2008, and down 2.0 (± 0.1) cents from the 3.2 cents recorded in the fourth quarter of 2007.

The annual rate of after-tax profits on stockholders' equity in the fourth quarter of 2008 was 6.2 percent, down 2.2 percent ($\pm 0.1\%$) from the 8.4 percent recorded in the third quarter of 2008, and down 11.5 percent ($\pm 0.1\%$) from the 17.7 percent recorded in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Retail Trade Corporations After-Tax Profits, 2004-2008 – Not Seasonally Adjusted

Fourth quarter 2008 after-tax profits of U.S. retail trade corporations with assets of \$50 million and over (not seasonally adjusted) were down from third quarter 2008, the lowest of any quarter during the 2004 - 2008 period.



ACCESS TO QFR DATA

This press release can be viewed today in portable document format (.pdf) at our QFR internet website http://www.census.gov/csd/qfr/view/qfr_rt.pdf. Data in the release are drawn from a more comprehensive data set published in the *Quarterly Financial Report for Manufacturing, Mining, and Trade Corporations – Fourth quarter 2008* (QFR-08-Q4). This quarterly publication is available for downloading at our QFR internet website <http://www.census.gov/csd/qfr/pub.html>. The quarterly publication includes summary statements of income and retained earnings, balance sheets, and related financial and operating ratios for manufacturing, mining, and trade corporations. Data presented are classified by industry and asset size.

RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES

Data in this press release are based on quarterly financial reports from approximately 630 U.S. corporations. The data are estimated from a sample survey and are subject to sampling and nonsampling errors. Sampling error occurs because only a subset of the entire population is measured. Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a survey, including response errors, nonresponse, and coverage errors. Although no direct measures of nonsampling error are available, precautionary steps were taken in all phases of the collection, processing and tabulation of the data in an effort to minimize their influence.

Statements of change appearing in this report include 90% confidence intervals based on estimates of sampling variability. A statement such as “up \$2.5 (± 0.2) billion,” appearing in the text, indicates the range (+\$2.3 billion to +\$2.7 billion) in which the actual change is likely to have occurred. If the range contained zero (0), then it is uncertain whether there is an increase or decrease; that is, the change is not statistically different from zero (0). For any comparison cited without a confidence interval, the change is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. The quarterly publication, *Quarterly Financial Report for Manufacturing, Mining, and Trade Corporations – Fourth quarter 2008* (QFR-08-Q4), includes more detailed explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability, along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Schedule of Release Dates		
Reference Quarter	Manufacturing, Mining, and Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade
First Quarter 2009	June 15, 2009	June 22, 2009
Second Quarter 2009	September 14, 2009	September 21, 2009
Third Quarter 2009	December 14, 2009	December 21, 2009

Table 1. U.S. Retail Trade Corporations, Assets \$50 Million and Over - Income Statement¹

Item	4Q 2008	3Q 2008 ²	4Q 2007 ²
	(million dollars)		
Net sales, receipts, and operating revenues	527,791	518,132	550,966
Less: Depreciation, depletion, and amortization	10,453	10,245	10,012
Less: All other operating costs and expenses	499,132	489,665	513,573
Income (or loss) from operations	18,207	18,222	27,380
Interest expense	4,486	4,370	4,657
Net nonoperating income (expense)	-2,392	-283	4,067
Income (or loss) before income taxes	11,329	13,568	26,790
Less: Provision for current and deferred domestic income taxes	5,210	5,208	9,178
Income (or loss) after income taxes	6,119	8,360	17,612
Cash dividends charged to retained earnings in current quarter	2,798	2,830	2,603
Net income retained in business	3,321	5,530	15,010
Retained earnings at beginning of quarter	290,848	284,609	297,261
Other direct credits (or charges) to retained earnings (net)	-2,152	-2,438	-31,528
Retained earnings at end of quarter	292,017	287,700	280,743

¹Retail Trade data are the quarterly results of companies within that division with total assets of \$50 million and over at the time of sample selection.

²Revised.

Table 2. U.S. Retail Trade Corporations, Assets \$50 Million and Over - Income Statement Ratios¹

Item	4Q 2008	3Q 2008 ²	4Q 2007 ²
	(cents per dollar of sales)		
Net sales, receipts, and operating revenues	100.00	100.00	100.00
Less: Depreciation, depletion, and amortization	1.98	1.98	1.82
Less: All other operating costs and expenses	94.57	94.51	93.21
Income (or loss) from operations	3.45	3.52	4.97
Interest expense	0.85	0.84	0.85
Net nonoperating income (expense)	(0.45)	(0.05)	0.74
Income (or loss) before income taxes	2.15	2.62	4.86
Less: Provision for current and deferred domestic income taxes	0.99	1.01	1.67
Income (or loss) after income taxes	1.16	1.61	3.20

¹Retail Trade data are the quarterly results of companies within that division with total assets of \$50 million and over at the time of sample selection.

²Revised.

Table 3. U.S. Retail Trade Corporations, Assets \$50 Million and Over - Operating Ratios¹

Item	4Q 2008	3Q 2008 ²	4Q 2007 ²
	(percent)		
Annual rate of profit on stockholders' equity at end of period:			
Before income taxes	11.48	13.63	26.96
After income taxes	6.20	8.40	17.73
Annual rate of profit on total assets:			
Before income taxes	4.54	5.33	10.78
After income taxes	2.45	3.29	7.08

¹Retail Trade data are the quarterly results of companies within that division with total assets of \$50 million and over at the time of sample selection.

²Revised.