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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES September 2008

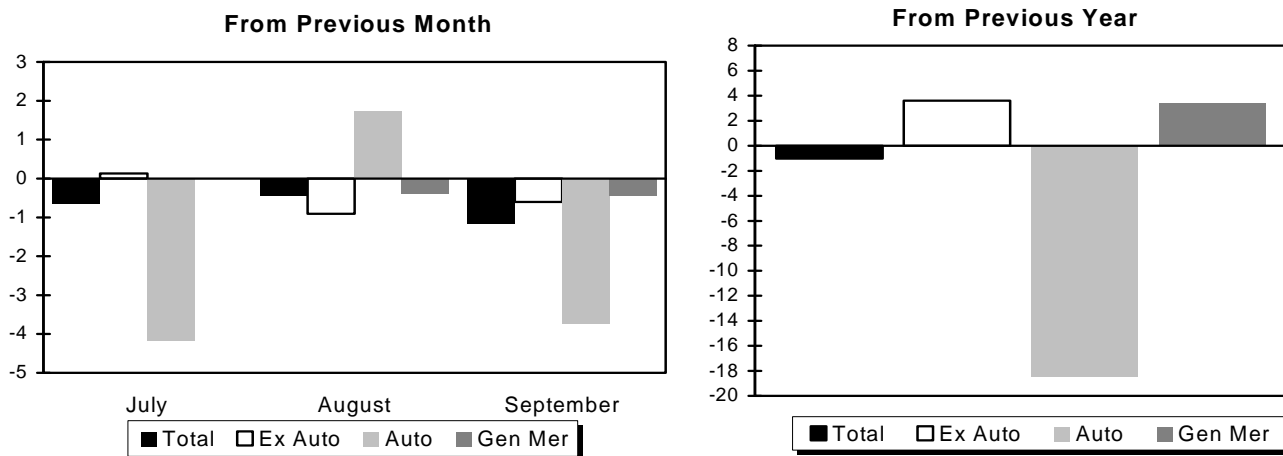
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for September, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$375.5 billion, a decrease of 1.2 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the previous month and 1.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) below September 2007. Total sales for the July through September 2008 period were up 0.8 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The July to August 2008 percent change was revised from -0.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$)* to -0.4 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

Retail trade sales were down 1.2 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from August 2008 and were 1.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) below last year. Gasoline station sales were up 17.8 percent ($\pm 1.7\%$) from September 2007 and sales of food and beverage stores were up 5.1 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from last year.

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.

Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

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



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for October is scheduled to be released November 14, 2008 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/retail>. This report is also available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's STAT-USA (202-482-1986).

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different than zero.

Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Sep. 2008 Advance from --		Aug. 2008 Preliminary from --		Jul. 2008 through Sep. 2008 from --	
		Aug. 2008 (p)	Sep. 2007 (r)	Jul. 2008 (r)	Aug. 2007 (r)	Apr. 2008 through Jun. 2008	Jul. 2007 through Sep. 2007
	Retail & food services, total	-1.2	-1.0	-0.4	1.5	-1.0	0.8
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	-0.6	3.6	-0.9	5.2	0.2	4.8
	Retail	-1.2	-1.4	-0.5	1.3	-1.2	0.5
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-3.8	-18.5	1.7	-12.7	-6.3	-14.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-4.2	-20.2	2.0	-13.9	-6.9	-16.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-2.3	-10.7	-2.2	-9.2	-4.0	-9.1
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-1.5	-2.0	-2.0	0.3	-2.6	0.5
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	-0.6	-2.8	-2.0	-2.1	-0.8	-1.9
445	Food & beverage stores.....	-0.5	5.1	0.6	6.8	1.2	5.7
4451	Grocery stores	-0.4	5.2	0.6	6.7	1.0	5.7
446	Health & personal care stores	0.4	3.3	0.1	3.1	0.8	3.2
447	Gasoline stations	0.1	17.8	-3.0	21.4	1.1	20.9
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-2.3	-0.4	0.5	2.4	0.1	1.1
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	-1.1	0.9	0.6	2.2	0.1	1.1
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.4	3.4	-0.4	4.1	0.3	4.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.5	-5.3	-1.6	-4.3	-1.9	-4.2
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-0.6	-1.3	-2.5	-0.2	1.4	0.5
454	Nonstore retailers	-0.8	3.1	-1.9	5.5	-1.0	4.7
722	Food services & drinking places	-0.5	2.2	-0.1	3.8	0.3	3.2

(p) Preliminary estimates (r) Revised estimates

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,000 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Firms responding to MARTS account for approximately 65% of the total national sales estimate. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. The change in sales from the previous month is estimated using only units that have reported data for both the current and

previous month. There is no imputation or adjustment for nonrespondents in MARTS. The total sales estimate is derived by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS sample). Detailed industry estimates are summed to derive total estimates at broad industry levels. The monthly estimates are adjusted using annual survey estimates and for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.5 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.3 percent to +2.7 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent

confidence level that the change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Median CV ⁽¹⁾ for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error ⁽¹⁾ for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change ⁽²⁾	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Retail	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.8	1.2	0.6	1.4	-0.2	0.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.0	1.3	0.7	1.5	-0.2	0.7
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	2.6	1.5	0.7	2.0	-0.5	0.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.4	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.0	0.7
444	Building material & garden eq. &... supplies dealers.....	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.2	0.5
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	1.6	0.4	0.5	1.1	-0.2	0.2
447	Gasoline stations	2.0	0.5	0.3	1.0	0.4	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.0	0.7
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	2.3	1.5	1.1	1.7	0.1	0.5
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.4	2.6	1.5	3.2	0.2	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	1.7	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.5
722	Food services & drinking places ..	1.9	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.2	0.3



- (1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading-day differences. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.
- (2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median revisions are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

Note: Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>