

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday, May 13, 2004

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES APRIL 2004

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$331.8 billion, a decrease of 0.5 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from the previous month, but up 8.0 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from April 2003. Total sales for the February through April 2004 period were up 8.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The February to March 2004 percent change was revised from +1.8 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) to 2.0 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

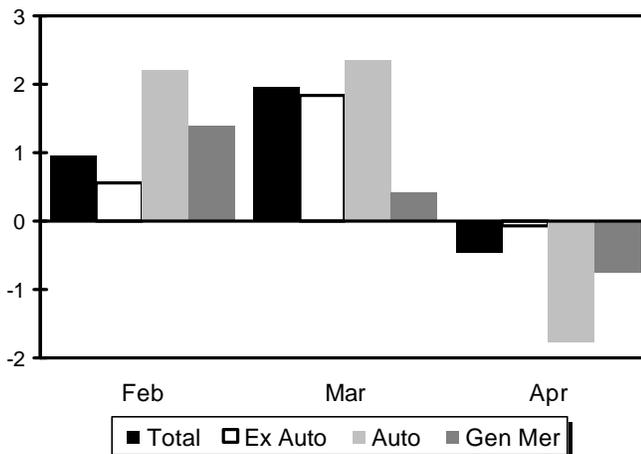
Retail trade sales were down 0.5 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from March 2004, but were 7.6 percent ($\pm 1.2\%$) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 20.4 percent ($\pm 2.3\%$) from April 2003 and sales of electronics and appliance stores were up 12.4 percent ($\pm 3.0\%$) from last year.

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the 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.

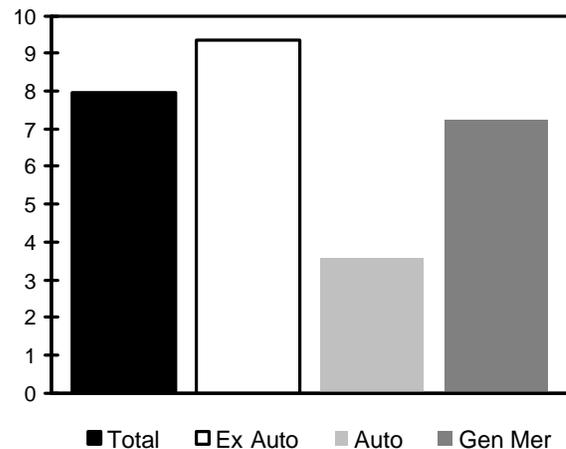
Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

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

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for May is scheduled to be released June 14, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-763-2713.

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/retail>.

Table 1. Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted						Adjusted ¹					
		4 Month Total		2004			2003		2004			2003	
		2004	% Chg. 2003	Apr. ² (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. ² (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	1,260,567	9.2	333,473	335,854	296,443	305,435	303,875	331,842	333,399	326,996	307,389	307,262
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	958,710	9.9	253,392	250,708	225,878	228,849	228,072	255,041	255,216	250,617	233,224	234,719
	Retail	1,135,992	8.8	301,163	303,316	266,449	276,733	274,312	299,693	301,215	295,019	278,397	278,335
	GAFO³	(*)	(*)	(*)	79,157	73,823	72,364	73,170	(*)	84,691	84,299	78,235	78,309
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	301,857	7.0	80,081	85,146	70,565	76,586	75,803	76,801	78,183	76,379	74,165	72,543
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	274,578	7.0	72,830	77,709	64,193	69,734	69,163	69,761	71,032	69,323	67,506	65,870
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	64,507	53,670	57,671	57,802	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,437	6,372	6,852	6,640	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	32,456	11.3	8,235	8,650	7,778	7,467	7,702	8,742	8,685	8,566	7,961	7,891
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,705	4,411	4,007	4,295	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,945	3,367	3,460	3,407	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	30,602	12.8	7,244	7,921	7,583	6,448	6,993	8,483	8,414	8,332	7,544	7,470
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,493	5,423	4,470	4,811	(*)	6,043	5,992	5,373	5,322
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,428	2,160	1,978	2,182	(*)	2,371	2,340	2,171	2,148
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	110,585	18.3	34,916	30,853	22,351	29,129	24,272	31,155	31,367	28,266	25,879	25,983
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,235	20,452	24,039	21,320	(*)	27,848	24,881	22,807	22,876
445	Food & beverage stores	168,690	5.0	43,223	42,625	39,940	40,915	41,130	43,601	43,387	43,068	41,837	41,802
4451	Grocery stores	152,512	4.3	38,800	38,530	36,132	36,993	37,391	39,074	38,919	38,644	37,709	37,731
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,516	2,324	2,460	2,395	(*)	2,750	2,747	2,665	2,615
446	Health & personal care stores	66,658	8.1	16,808	17,436	15,879	15,674	15,781	16,808	16,830	16,523	15,737	15,609
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,729	13,520	13,349	13,409	(*)	14,328	14,039	13,362	13,369
447	Gasoline stations	93,828	8.3	25,190	24,720	21,816	22,294	23,297	24,385	24,331	24,053	21,986	23,204
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	54,863	10.8	15,052	14,694	13,344	13,650	13,399	15,623	15,943	15,816	14,439	14,508
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	846	741	794	756	(*)	944	929	853	834
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,016	2,473	2,836	2,733	(*)	2,995	2,976	2,719	2,733
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,220	4,274	4,714	4,695	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,949	1,708	1,911	1,851	(*)	1,983	1,979	1,827	1,875
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	24,029	5.4	5,958	6,016	5,554	5,679	5,711	6,848	6,775	6,840	6,543	6,460
452	General merchandise stores	149,299	9.1	39,446	38,773	36,355	36,201	36,432	41,241	41,553	41,380	38,460	38,731
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	62,050	1.5	16,592	16,373	15,104	16,380	16,390	17,669	17,974	18,162	17,693	17,750
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,569	15,290	16,601	16,624	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	22,400	21,251	19,821	20,042	(*)	23,579	23,218	20,767	20,981
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores	(*)	(*)	(*)	19,018	18,191	16,673	17,053	(*)	19,977	19,709	17,532	17,764
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,382	3,060	3,148	2,989	(*)	3,602	3,509	3,235	3,217
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	34,108	6.0	8,678	8,726	8,279	8,148	7,995	9,084	8,998	8,892	8,599	8,560
454	Nonstore retailers	69,017	11.1	16,332	17,756	17,005	14,542	15,797	16,922	16,749	16,904	15,247	15,574
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,059	9,862	9,423	9,462	(*)	10,863	10,731	9,867	9,805
722	Food services & drinking places ...	124,575	12.7	32,310	32,538	29,994	28,702	29,563	32,149	32,184	31,977	28,992	28,927

(*) Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these business classifications.

(NA) Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

Note: Totals include data for business classifications not shown separately.

(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-12-ARIMA 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 released on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

(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) GAFO represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances(443), clothing & accessories(448), sporting goods, hobby, book, music (451), general merchandise(452), office supplies, stationery, and gift stores(453)).

(4) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

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

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Apr. 2004 Advance from --		Mar. 2004 Preliminary from --		Feb. 2004 through Apr. 2004 from --	
		Mar. 2004 (p)	Apr. 2003 (r)	Feb. 2004 (r)	Mar. 2003 (r)	Nov. 2003 through Jan. 2004	Feb. 2003 through Apr. 2003
	Retail & food services, total	-0.5	8.0	2.0	8.5	2.5	8.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-0.1	9.4	1.8	8.7	2.8	8.8
	Retail	-0.5	7.6	2.1	8.2	2.5	8.0
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-1.8	3.6	2.4	7.8	1.4	6.9
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-1.8	3.3	2.5	7.8	1.4	6.9
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	0.7	9.8	1.4	10.1	2.5	11.0
443	Electronics & appliance stores	0.8	12.4	1.0	12.6	1.9	12.8
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	-0.7	20.4	11.0	20.7	7.8	19.2
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.5	4.2	0.7	3.8	1.2	3.8
4451	Grocery stores	0.4	3.6	0.7	3.1	1.1	3.1
446	Health & personal care stores	-0.1	6.8	1.9	7.8	1.1	6.8
447	Gasoline stations	0.2	10.9	1.2	4.9	4.6	6.4
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-2.0	8.2	0.8	9.9	2.3	9.7
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	1.1	4.7	-1.0	4.9	1.9	5.2
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.8	7.2	0.4	7.3	2.2	7.3
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.7	-0.1	-1.0	1.3	0.6	0.6
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	1.0	5.6	1.2	5.1	0.6	5.0
454	Nonstore retailers	1.0	11.0	-0.9	7.5	1.9	9.0
722	Food services & drinking places	-0.1	10.9	0.6	11.3	2.7	11.5

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Source of Data and Reliability of Estimates

Source of Data: The Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey each month to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey is a voluntary survey of a sub-sample of about 5,000 firms selected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Firms responding to this survey account for approximately 65% of the dollar volume estimate.

Reliability of Estimates: The reliability of the estimates is a function of sampling and nonsampling errors. The margin of sampling error, as included 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 levels, 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. Nonsampling error, on the other hand, can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling error. Additional survey information is available at <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Median CV ⁽²⁾ for Current Mo. (%)	Trend (percent change): Median standard error ⁽²⁾ for			Revision for month- to-month change ⁽¹⁾	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2
	Retail	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.7	-0.1	0.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.1	1.6	0.8	1.8	-0.1	0.6
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	3.7	1.3	1.1	1.9	0.4	0.6
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.8	0.6	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.7
444	Building material & garden eq. &....						
	supplies dealers.....	1.9	1.0	0.7	1.4	0.1	0.4
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.5	0.4	1.1	0.1	0.3
447	Gasoline stations	1.8	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.4	0.5
448	Clothing & clothing accessories						
	stores	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.1	0.1	0.6
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book &						
	music stores.....	2.5	1.7	1.2	1.9	0.3	0.9
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	4.3	3.4	2.0	3.9	0.4	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	4.4	2.1	1.0	2.6	0.3	0.9
722	Food services & drinking places ..	2.3	0.8	0.8	1.4	0.3	0.4



(1) These columns measure the difference between the estimates of trend for the same pair of data months, i.e. the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates. Revisions are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.

(2) Medians are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.