

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF **COMMERCE**

Office of the Secretary

SINCLAIR WEEKS, SECRETARY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

For immediate release
March 9, 1956

G-651

ADVANCE REPORT ON RETAIL TRADE, FEBRUARY 1956

Total sales of retail stores in February were \$13.7 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal factors and trading day differences, was 2 percent below January of this year, but about 4 percent above February a year ago.

The February sales figures are based on the Advance Report on Retail Trade, a monthly survey of the Bureau of the Census conducted in cooperation with a representative cross-section of about 1,700 retail firms which, in total, operate some 35,000 stores in the United States. The firms which are cooperating in the early reporting of sales are part of a larger group which furnishes figures at a later date. Therefore, the advance estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

The preliminary Census figures are shown in table 1 on the reverse side. The Office of Business Economics noted that February sales after adjustments for seasonal influences, were somewhat lower than January among both durable and nondurable goods stores, with the lumber and building materials, general merchandise, and apparel groups all contributing to the decline.

(more)

Table 1.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP
(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

| Kind-of-business group | Sales (millions of dollars) | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|
| | 1956 | | February 1955 |
| | February | January | |
| Retail stores, total ¹ | 13,709 | 13,866 | 12,764 |
| Food group..... | 3,462 | 3,517 | 3,253 |
| Grocery stores..... | 2,950 | 2,986 | 2,742 |
| Eating and drinking places..... | 1,045 | 1,084 | 950 |
| General merchandise group..... | 1,272 | 1,278 | 1,171 |
| Department stores ² | 679 | 693 | 611 |
| Apparel group..... | 629 | 721 | 602 |
| Furniture and appliance group..... | 751 | 761 | 682 |
| Lumber, building, hardware group ³ | 889 | 835 | 822 |
| Automotive group..... | 2,782 | 2,744 | 2,707 |
| Gasoline service stations..... | 972 | 1,013 | 873 |
| Drug and proprietary stores..... | 454 | 459 | 394 |

See footnotes below table 2.

Source: Bureau of the Census

Table 2.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP
(ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

| Kind-of-business group | Sales (millions of dollars) | | | Percent change, January 1956 from-- | |
|--|-----------------------------|----------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| | January 1956 | 1955 | | December 1955 | January 1955 |
| | | December | January | | |
| Retail stores, total ¹ | 15,657 | 15,795 | 14,864 | -1 | +5 |
| Durable goods stores, total ¹ | 5,456 | 5,677 | 5,143 | -4 | +6 |
| Nondurable goods stores, total ¹ .. | 10,201 | 10,118 | 9,722 | +1 | +5 |
| Food group..... | 3,747 | 3,726 | 3,560 | +1 | +5 |
| Eating and drinking places..... | 1,171 | 1,158 | 1,092 | +1 | +7 |
| General merchandise group..... | 1,714 | 1,672 | 1,654 | +3 | +4 |
| Apparel group..... | 926 | 912 | 889 | +2 | +4 |
| Furniture and appliance group..... | 869 | 873 | 805 | 0 | +8 |
| Lumber, building, hardware group ³ .. | 1,135 | 1,132 | 1,102 | 0 | +3 |
| Automotive group..... | 3,020 | 3,233 | 2,844 | -7 | +6 |
| Gasoline service stations..... | 1,082 | 1,083 | 1,023 | 0 | +6 |
| Drug and proprietary stores..... | 465 | 459 | 425 | +1 | +9 |

Source: Office of Business Economics

- ¹ Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.
- ² Based on preliminary estimates supplied by Federal Reserve Board.
- ³ Includes farm equipment dealers.