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ADVANCE REPORT ON RETAIL TRADE, MAY 1956

Total sales of retail stores in May were \$16.2 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal factors and trading day differences, was 1 percent above April of this year, and about 3 percent above May a year ago.

The May 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 after adjustment for seasonal variation sales of the nondurable goods group rose in May to a new high; sales of durable goods stores were little changed from April to May.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES REPORT--PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES FOR MAY 1956

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		May 1955
	May	April	
Retail stores, total ¹	16,152	15,029	15,468
Food group.....	3,752	3,532	3,514
Grocery stores.....	3,193	3,006	2,950
Eating and drinking places.....	1,212	1,134	1,137
General merchandise group.....	1,692	1,515	1,584
Department stores ²	955	853	866
Apparel group.....	952	833	879
Furniture and appliance group.....	891	787	809
Lumber, building, hardware group ³	1,309	1,156	1,262
Automotive group.....	3,175	3,058	3,409
Gasoline service stations.....	1,141	1,090	1,046
Drug and proprietary stores.....	469	446	419

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, April 1956 from--	
	1956		April 1955	March 1956	April 1955
	April	March			
Retail stores, total ¹	15,541	15,740	15,251	-1	+2
Durable goods stores, total ¹	5,303	5,466	5,522	-3	-4
Nondurable goods stores, total ¹ ..	10,238	10,274	9,729	0	+5
Food group.....	3,702	3,756	3,525	-1	+5
Eating and drinking places.....	1,200	1,192	1,141	+1	+5
General merchandise group.....	1,702	1,702	1,677	0	+1
Apparel group.....	921	916	889	+1	+4
Furniture and appliance group.....	895	877	837	+2	+7
Lumber, building, hardware group ³ ..	1,155	1,119	1,122	+3	+3
Automotive group.....	2,867	3,049	3,202	-6	-10
Gasoline service stations.....	1,130	1,154	1,023	-2	+10
Drug and proprietary stores.....	467	485	427	-4	+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.