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The U.S. Department of Commerce announced today that total sales of retail stores in January were estimated at \$24.4 billion; this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$27.2 billion. The advance estimate, after adjustment, was about 3 percent above December sales and about 6 percent above January sales last year. Adjusted November-through-January sales averaged about 1 percent above the prior 3 months and 4 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment, sales of durable goods stores rose 4 percent from December to January paced by a substantial increase in automobile dealers' sales. Nondurable goods stores sales rose 3 percent from December to January with most of the major kinds of business contributing to the increase. Average monthly sales for durable goods stores during the November-January period were about 1 percent below the average for the prior 3 months, while the average for nondurable goods stores for the comparable period increased 2 percent. The year-to-year gain in the 3 month average for nondurable goods stores was about 5 percent and about 3 percent for durable goods stores.

Based on the full sample the total U.S. unadjusted sales estimate for December was \$32.5 billion, little changed from the \$32.4 billion published earlier in the December Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released on January 10, 1968. The seasonally adjusted sales for December as revised were virtually unchanged from November.

The January sales figures are based on advance reporting of a small subsample of the Census Bureau's panel of retail firms. The advance estimates are subject to revision by estimates subsequently derived from the full sample.

The revision of the total seldom exceeds 1.5 percent and for the past year has averaged 1.1 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups revisions have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.9 percent for food stores to 4.0 percent for the lumber group.

It should be noted that even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements between individual pairs of months tend to be relatively irregular. Data for several months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

(more)

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Annual subscription to Current Retail Trade Reports (Weekly Retail Sales Report, Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report, Monthly Retail Trade Report, and Annual Retail Trade Report sold as a single subscription) \$6.00. Single copies, available only from the Bureau of the Census, 10¢ each.

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES FOR JANUARY 1968

Table 1. SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1968	1967	
	January <sup>1</sup>	December <sup>2</sup>	January
Retail stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	24,391	32,507	22,567
Durable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	7,659	8,969	7,018
Nondurable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	16,732	23,538	15,549
Food group.....	6,065	6,812	5,548
Grocery stores.....	5,570	6,241	5,092
Eating and drinking places.....	1,956	2,127	1,845
General merchandise group.....	2,706	6,381	2,511
Department stores.....	1,793	4,224	1,658
Apparel group.....	1,278	2,615	1,224
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,109	1,786	1,136
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group	1,127	1,384	1,066
Automotive group.....	4,739	4,531	4,197
Gasoline service stations.....	1,960	2,069	1,827
Drug and proprietary stores.....	924	1,254	837

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 variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Percentage change, Jan. 1968 from--		Sales (millions of dollars)				Percentage change, Dec. 1967 from--	
	Dec. 1967	Jan. 1967	1968	1967		1966	Nov. 1967	Dec. 1966
			Jan. <sup>1</sup>	Dec. <sup>2</sup>	Nov.	Dec.		
Retail stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	+3	+6	27,176	26,402	26,411	25,368	0	+4
Durable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> ..	+4	+5	8,637	8,329	8,221	8,156	+1	+2
Nondurable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup>	+3	+6	18,539	18,073	18,190	17,212	-1	+5
Food group.....				6,146	6,095	5,861	+1	+5
Eating and drinking places.....				2,108	2,133	2,019	-1	+4
General merchandise group.....				3,582	3,613	3,311	-1	+8
Apparel group.....				1,475	1,515	1,386	-3	+6
Furniture and appliance group.....				1,359	1,331	1,270	+2	+7
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group....				1,480	1,412	1,405	+5	+5
Automotive group.....				4,706	4,692	4,745	0	-1
Gasoline service stations.....				2,019	2,064	1,915	-2	+5
Drug and proprietary stores.....				944	928	892	+2	

<sup>1</sup>Advance sample estimates.

<sup>2</sup>Preliminary estimates of full sample.

<sup>3</sup>Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.