



For release  
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MARCH 1968

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The U.S. Department of Commerce announced today that total sales of retail stores in March were estimated at \$26.9 billion; this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$28.0 billion. The advance estimate, after adjustment, was about 2 percent above February sales and about 9 percent above March sales last year. Adjusted January-through-March sales averaged about 5 percent above the prior 3 months and 7 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment, sales of both durable goods stores and nondurable goods stores were up 2 percent from February to March. Increases were reported for all major kinds of business with larger than average increases for automobile dealers and the general merchandise and apparel groups. Average monthly sales for durable goods stores during the January-March period were about 6 percent above the average for the prior 3 months, and the average for nondurable goods stores for the comparable period increased 4 percent. The year-to-year gain in the 3 month average for nondurable goods stores was about 7 percent and about 8 percent for durable goods stores.

Based on the full sample the total U.S. unadjusted sales estimate for February was \$24.2 billion, unchanged from the \$24.2 billion published earlier in the February Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released on March 11, 1968. The seasonally adjusted sales for February as revised were about 2 percent above January.

The March sales figures are based on advance reporting of a small sub-sample of the Census Bureau's panel of retail firms. Beginning with the October 1967 report, the advance figures have been modified on the basis of the relationship between the advance estimates and full sample estimates. 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 0.9 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups revisions have been greater, ranging on the average from 1.1 percent for food stores to 4.0 percent for the furniture and appliance 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)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES FOR MARCH 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
	March <sup>1</sup>	February <sup>2</sup>	March
Retail stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	26,943	24,232	25,679
Durable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	8,772	7,791	8,234
Nondurable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	18,171	16,441	17,445
Food group.....	6,369	5,860	6,096
Grocery stores.....	5,870	5,380	5,596
Eating and drinking places.....	2,181	1,988	1,940
General merchandise group.....	3,325	2,761	3,197
Department stores.....	2,193	1,806	2,077
Apparel group.....	1,418	1,162	1,512
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,273	1,232	1,192
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group	1,427	1,194	1,381
Automotive group.....	5,412	4,718	4,989
Gasoline service stations.....	2,050	1,924	1,901
Drug and proprietary stores.....	912	882	893

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, Mar. 1968 from--		Sales (millions of dollars)				Percentage change, Feb. 1968 from--	
	Feb. 1968	Mar. 1967	1968		1967		Jan. 1968	Feb. 1967
			Mar. <sup>1</sup>	Feb. <sup>2</sup>	Jan.	Feb.		
Retail stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	+2	+9	28,009	27,482	27,065	25,470	+2	+8
Durable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> ..	+2	+9	8,919	8,760	8,523	7,955	+3	+10
Nondurable-goods stores, total <sup>3</sup>	+2	+9	19,090	18,722	18,542	17,515	+1	+7
Food group.....				6,191	6,249	5,942	-1	+4
Eating and drinking places.....				2,254	2,173	2,026	+4	+11
General merchandise group.....				3,720	3,610	3,361	+3	+11
Apparel group.....				1,588	1,548	1,476	+3	+8
Furniture and appliance group.....				1,394	1,360	1,308	+3	+7
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group....				1,580	1,473	1,541	+7	+3
Automotive group.....				5,049	4,892	4,394	+3	+15
Gasoline service stations.....				2,117	2,095	1,968	+1	+8
Drug and proprietary stores.....				926	954	883	-3	+5

<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.