

# advance monthly RETAIL SALES

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## MAY 1972

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in May were estimated at \$37.8 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$36.8 billion, about 2½ percent above April and about 10 percent above May sales last year. Adjusted total March-through-May sales averaged about 4 percent above the prior 3 months and 9 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for April was about \$0.1 billion more than the \$35.9 billion published earlier in the April Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released May 10, 1972. The seasonally adjusted sales for April as revised were about 1½ percent below March.

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting, by a small subsample of the Census Bureau's retail survey panel, of sales figures for the weeks and part-weeks comprising the month. Because retailers' weekly records often differ

from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability between sub-sample and later full-sample results can be a cause of difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimate, prior to publication, on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in advance and full-sample estimates of total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.4 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.8 percent for the general merchandise group to 2.2 percent for the Lumber group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

### MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES

(Data ADJUSTED for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)

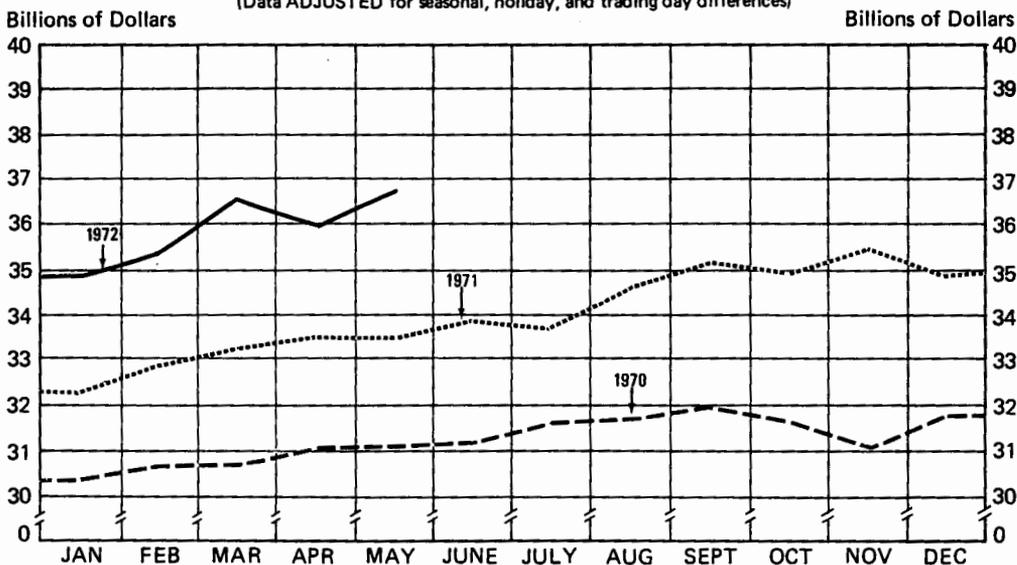


Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1972		1971
	May <sup>1</sup>	April <sup>2</sup>	May
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	37,787	35,080	34,199
Total (excluding automotive group).....	29,661	27,768	27,358
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	13,215	11,953	11,174
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	24,572	23,127	23,025
Food group.....	7,779	7,489	7,548
Grocery stores.....	7,222	6,984	6,996
Eating and drinking places.....	2,829	2,676	2,705
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	6,007	5,498	5,319
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	5,500	5,037	4,853
Department stores.....	3,647	3,328	3,270
Apparel group.....	1,777	1,632	1,679
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,700	1,572	1,442
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	2,298	2,119	1,995
Automotive group.....	8,126	7,312	6,841
Gasoline service stations.....	2,586	2,467	2,435
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,173	1,114	1,128

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales <sup>f</sup> (millions of dollars)					Percentage change April 1972 from--	
	1972			1971		Mar. 1972	Apr. 1971
	May <sup>1</sup>	Apr. <sup>2</sup>	Mar.	May	Apr.		
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	36,787	35,975	36,450	33,502	33,578	-1	+7
Total (excluding automotive group).....	29,519	28,965	29,377	27,183	27,115	-1	+7
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	12,215	11,829	12,087	10,576	10,747	-2	+10
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	24,572	24,146	24,363	22,926	22,831	-1	+6
Food group.....		7,696	7,720	7,492	7,431	0	+4
Eating and drinking places.....		2,739	2,814	2,584	2,538	-3	+8
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		6,027	6,088	5,546	5,526	-1	+9
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		5,533	5,546	5,092	5,076	0	+9
Apparel group.....		1,797	1,767	1,750	1,712	+2	+5
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,718	1,780	1,505	1,533	-3	+12
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....		2,041	2,200	1,841	1,826	-7	+12
Automotive group.....		7,010	7,073	6,319	6,463	-1	+8
Gasoline service stations.....		2,499	2,534	2,362	2,343	-1	+7
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,176	1,178	1,135	1,143	0	+3

<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.

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	May 1972 from--		March 1972 through May 1972 from--	
	Apr. 1972	May 1971	December 1971 through February 1972	March 1971 through April 1971
	Total, retail stores.....	+2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	+10	+4
Total (excluding automotive group).....	+2	+8 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	+3	+8
Durable goods stores, total.....	+3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	+15 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	+5	+13
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+2	+7	+3	+7

Source: Bureau of the Census