



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE • Social and Economic Statistics Administration • BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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## DECEMBER 1972

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in December were estimated at \$46.6 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 \$38.9 billion, little changed from November but about 12 percent above December sales last year. Adjusted total October-through-December sales averaged about 3 percent above the prior 3 months and 10 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for November was about \$0.2 billion less than the \$39.0 billion published earlier in the November Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released December 11, 1972. The seasonally adjusted sales for November as revised were about 1 percent below October.

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

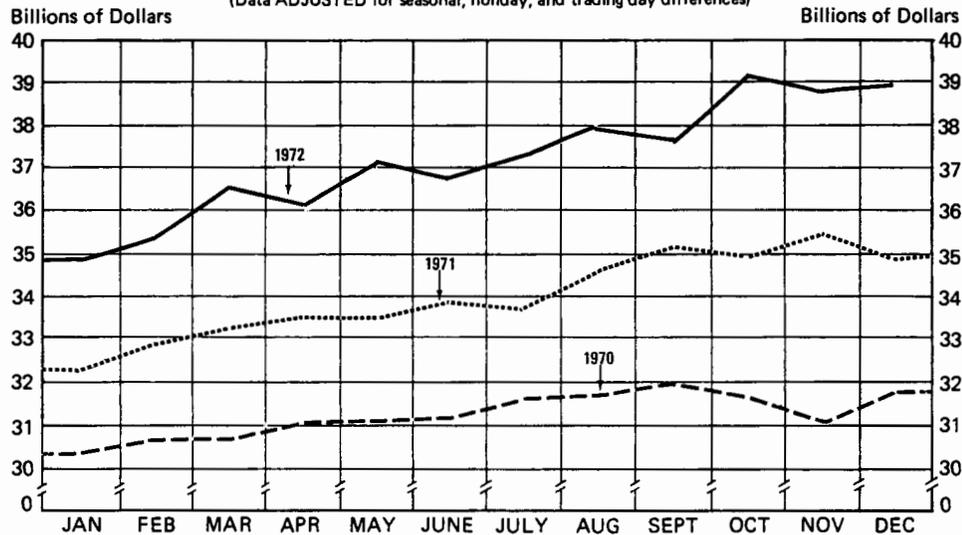
from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability 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 for total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.5 percent. For individual kind of business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.9 percent for the food group to 2.4 percent for the Building materials 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)



Annual subscription to current retail trade reports are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (Weekly Retail Sales Report, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Report, Monthly Retail Trade Report, and Annual Retail Trade Report sold as a single subscription.) Price: \$6.00. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report are available only from the Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at 10 cents each.

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

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)				
	1972		1971	12-month total	
	Dec. <sup>1</sup>	Nov. <sup>2</sup>	Dec.	1972	% changes 1972/1971
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	46,603	39,901	42,572	448,089	+10
Total (excluding automotive group).....	39,573	32,092	36,423	359,687	+9
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	13,502	13,311	11,931	149,520	+13
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	33,101	26,580	30,641	298,569	+8
Food group.....	8,888	8,038	8,300	95,007	+6
Grocery stores.....	8,288	7,484	7,707	88,350	+7
Eating and drinking places.....	2,901	2,799	2,688	33,899	+9
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	10,635	7,472	9,904	74,768	+10
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	10,078	6,872	9,361	68,756	+10
Department stores.....	7,040	4,627	6,518	46,249	+10
Apparel group.....	3,121	2,027	3,001	21,907	+5
Furniture and appliance group.....	2,359	1,971	2,173	21,358	+15
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....	2,208	2,332	1,988	26,708	+16
Automotive group.....	7,030	7,809	6,149	88,402	+12
Gasoline service stations.....	2,680	2,631	2,528	30,963	+6
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,712	1,215	1,565	14,581	+6

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change November 1972 from--	
	1972			1971		October 1972	November 1971
	December <sup>1</sup>	November <sup>2</sup>	October	December	November		
Total, retail stores <sup>3</sup> .....	38,944	38,828	39,106	34,896	35,574	-1	+9
Total (excluding automotive group).....	30,955	30,970	31,252	28,257	28,326	-1	+9
Durable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	13,313	13,255	13,168	11,334	11,885	+1	+12
Nondurable goods stores, total <sup>3</sup> .....	25,631	25,573	25,938	23,562	23,689	-1	+8
Food group.....		8,181	8,209	7,523	7,474	0	+9
Eating and drinking places.....		2,931	2,873	2,746	2,677	+2	+9
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		6,339	6,548	5,756	5,954	-3	+6
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		5,818	6,065	5,261	5,387	-4	+8
Apparel group.....		1,866	1,947	1,773	1,775	-4	+5
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,858	1,846	1,651	1,575	+1	+18
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....		2,383	2,340	2,067	2,122	+2	+12
Automotive group <sup>4</sup> .....		7,858	7,854	6,639	7,248	0	+8
Gasoline service stations.....		2,644	2,686	2,523	2,521	-2	+5
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,264	1,226	1,165	1,141	+3	+11

<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. <sup>4</sup>During months of model changeover, seasonal adjustment factors are less reliable than in other months.

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales  
(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	December 1972 from--		October 1972 through December 1972 from--	
	November 1972	December 1971	July 1972 through September 1972	October 1971 through December 1971
Total, retail stores.....	+1/2	+11 1/2	+3	+11
Total (excluding automotive group).....	0	+9 1/2	+3	+10
Durable goods stores, total.....	+1/2	+17 1/2	+5	+14
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0	+9	+3	+9

Source: Bureau of the Census