

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



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ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION  
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The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$151.5 billion, a decrease of 0.1 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month but were 1.7 percent ( $\pm 1.8\%$ ) above April 1990. Total sales in the February through April period were 1.1 percent ( $\pm 1.7\%$ ) above the same period a year ago.

Durable goods increased 0.6 percent ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) from the previous month. Building materials dealers increased 3.5 percent from March.

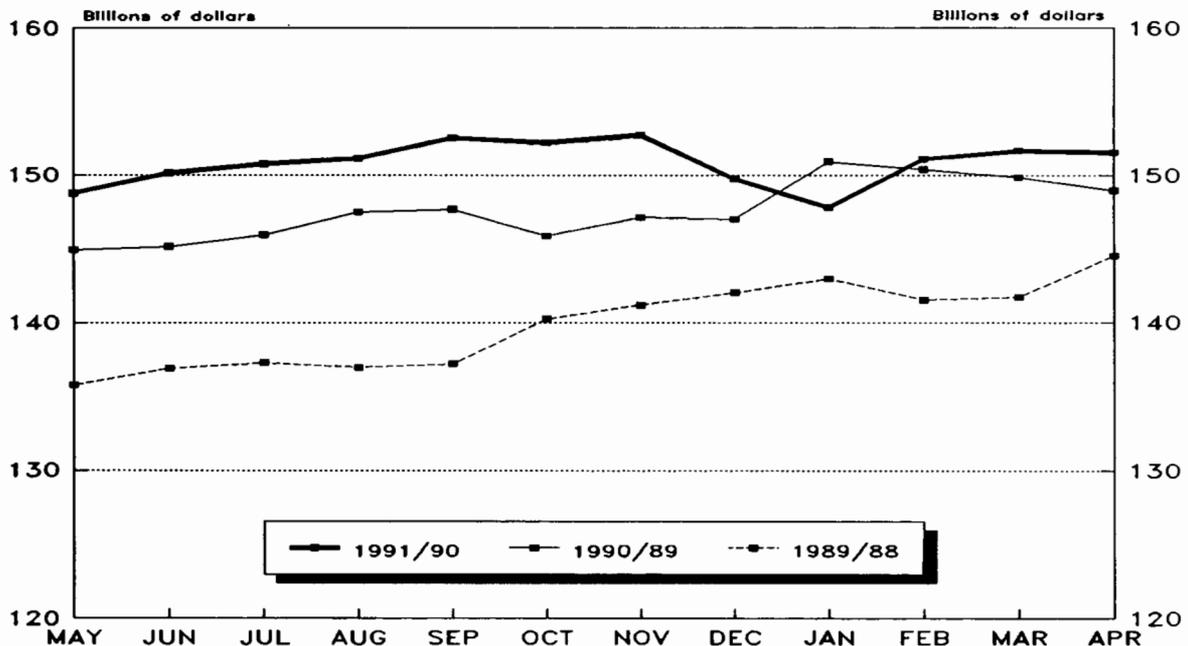
Nondurable goods decreased 0.5 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month but were 2.9 percent above last year. General merchandise stores were up 3.0 percent from April 1990 while drug stores were up 9.8 percent in the same period.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for May is scheduled to be released June 13, 1991 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

May 1988 - April 1991

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences)



Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, Business Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233.  
Telephone: (301) 763-5294 or (301) 763-7561.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call (202) 377-1986. The data are also available through the Census Bureau's online information service - CENDATA. CENDATA is available from Dialog Information Services, INC. (1-800-334-2564) and CompuServe (1-800-848-8199). The CENDATA staff at the Bureau of the Census (301-763-2074) can provide content information and general guidance.

**Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, By Kind of Business**

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		1991			1990		1991			1990	
		Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr. <sup>1</sup>	Mar. <sup>1</sup>
	Retail trade, total.....	149,556	149,628	128,589	145,803	149,192	151,539	151,662	151,092	148,956	149,850
	Total (excl. auto group)...	115,578	117,302	101,477	112,884	115,192	120,148	120,365	120,334	117,420	117,889
	Durable goods, total.....	56,367	53,184	45,320	54,665	55,759	54,264	53,944	53,235	54,430	55,099
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	8,559	6,925	5,683	7,997	7,427	7,753	7,488	7,645	7,625	7,858
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	4,949	4,097	5,677	5,395	(*)	5,344	5,419	5,571	5,703
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,014	852	1,144	1,064	(*)	1,106	1,133	1,099	1,130
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	33,978	32,326	27,112	32,919	34,000	31,391	31,297	30,758	31,536	31,961
551.2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	31,259	29,856	25,024	30,340	31,397	28,731	28,735	28,180	28,923	29,316
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	25,840	21,832	26,175	27,344	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,470	2,088	2,579	2,603	(*)	2,562	2,578	2,613	2,645
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	7,295	7,324	6,495	7,317	7,727	7,736	7,597	7,487	7,935	7,917
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	4,037	3,612	4,190	4,401	(*)	4,086	4,105	4,369	4,401
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	2,561	2,273	2,495	2,652	(*)	2,727	2,690	2,851	2,797
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	798	660	792	800	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	93,189	96,444	83,269	91,138	93,433	97,275	97,718	97,857	94,526	94,751
53	General merchandise group stores.....	16,234	16,695	12,965	16,114	16,350	17,984	17,981	18,109	17,464	17,800
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	13,440	13,742	10,504	13,046	13,299	14,802	14,713	14,815	14,089	14,362
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	14,196	10,863	13,475	13,740	(*)	15,150	15,430	14,443	14,806
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	580	454	602	559	(*)	584	593	607	606
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	2,373	2,007	2,466	2,492	(*)	2,684	2,701	2,768	2,832
54	Food stores.....	29,473	31,267	27,452	29,064	30,499	30,564	30,870	30,483	30,156	29,852
541	Grocery stores.....	27,506	29,231	25,658	27,058	28,523	28,563	28,884	28,509	28,156	27,882
554	Gasoline service stations.....	10,424	10,270	9,484	10,046	10,014	10,403	10,698	10,926	10,158	10,302
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	7,447	7,906	5,784	7,660	7,587	7,982	7,815	8,002	7,764	7,977
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	707	554	751	718	(*)	778	782	781	826
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	2,690	2,000	2,752	2,710	(*)	2,698	2,685	2,817	2,826
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,308	1,693	2,052	2,112	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,617	1,140	1,568	1,518	(*)	1,450	1,532	1,444	1,503
58	Eating and drinking places.....	15,586	15,617	13,809	15,034	15,221	15,696	15,617	15,710	15,110	15,191
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,965	6,240	5,686	5,489	5,429	6,188	6,209	6,154	5,636	5,429
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,761	1,537	1,575	1,606	(*)	1,887	1,845	1,708	1,714
5961 (pt)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	370	289	370	388	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	36,761	29,700	35,765	36,540	(*)	38,977	39,147	38,774	39,364

\*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Revised.

<sup>1</sup>Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-91-03.

<sup>2</sup>Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

<sup>3</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

<sup>4</sup>GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

**Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business**

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Apr. 1991 advance from--		Mar. 1991 preliminary from--		Feb. 1991 through Apr. 1991 from--	
		Mar. 1991 prelim.	Apr. 1990 final	Feb. 1991 final	Mar. 1990 final	Nov. 1990 through Jan. 1991	Feb. 1990 through Apr. 1990
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.1	+1.7	+0.4	+1.2	+0.9	+1.1
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	-0.2	+2.3	0.0	+2.1	+0.6	+2.0
	Durable goods, total.....	+0.6	-0.3	+1.3	-2.1	+2.5	-2.2
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+3.5	+1.7	-2.1	-4.7	+2.9	-2.3
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+0.3	-0.5	+1.8	-2.1	+2.1	-2.2
551, 2.5, 6, 7, 9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.0	-0.7	+2.0	-2.0	+2.1	-2.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+1.8	-2.5	+1.5	-4.0	+2.7	-4.0
	Nondurable goods, total.....	-0.5	+2.9	-0.1	+3.1	0.0	+3.1
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.0	+3.0	-0.7	+1.0	+2.8	+1.6
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	+0.6	+5.1	-0.7	+2.4	+3.9	+3.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.).....	(NA)	(NA)	-1.8	+2.3	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	-1.0	+1.4	+1.3	+3.4	-0.1	+2.2
541	Grocery stores.....	-1.1	+1.4	+1.3	+3.6	-0.1	+2.4
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-2.8	+2.4	-2.1	+3.8	-10.6	+4.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+2.1	+2.8	-2.3	-2.0	+3.6	+0.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+0.5	+3.9	-0.6	+2.8	+2.9	+3.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.3	+9.8	+0.9	+14.4	+4.5	+12.2

**Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Large (Group II) Companies, by Kind of Business**

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted <sup>1</sup>		
		Mar. 1991 prelim.	Feb. 1991 final	Mar. 1990	Mar. 1991 prelim.	Feb. 1991 final	Mar. <sup>2</sup> 1990
	Retail trade, total.....	57,260	47,817	55,211	58,626	58,497	56,676
53	General merchandise group stores.....	15,332	11,903	15,027	16,500	16,701	16,342
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	13,342	10,219	12,874	14,285	14,454	13,903
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	13,781	10,567	13,302	14,818	15,117	14,334
533	Variety stores.....	450	344	439	455	465	478
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	1,540	1,340	1,714	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	17,864	15,629	17,233	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	17,588	15,386	16,986	17,243	16,945	16,427
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	4,620	3,217	4,269	4,507	4,647	4,504
562, 3, 8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,613	1,140	1,487	1,602	1,594	1,564
566	Shoe stores.....	1,030	680	981	892	971	990
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	3,862	3,457	3,273	3,847	3,786	3,326

NA Not available.

<sup>2</sup>Revised.

<sup>1</sup>Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-91-03.

<sup>2</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: The large (Group II) component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

Official Business

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## Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -1.1 percent to +1.2 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.5 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for March 1991 and final estimates for February 1991 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for March (BR-91-03). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is -0.4 percent to +2.0 percent. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated Coefficient of variation in percent of the						Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Advance-to-preliminary ratio		Ratio to same month a year ago	Dollar volume sales est.	Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.	
		Range <sup>1</sup>		Median	Median	Median	Median	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.
		From	To				From	To			
	Retail trade, total.....	0.8	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	-1.1	+1.2	+0.2	0.5
	Total (excl. auto).....	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.9	-0.7	+1.3	+0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total.....	1.8	2.8	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.3	-2.5	+2.2	+0.2	0.7
52	Building materials, group stores.....	1.2	2.0	1.7	3.3	2.5	2.5	-3.4	+4.0	+0.4	2.0
55 ex. 554 551,2,5, 6,7,9	Automotive dealers.....	2.2	4.1	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.3	-3.0	+2.6	+0.5	1.0
	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.6	4.1	2.9	4.8	3.9	3.5	-3.2	+2.6	+0.5	1.1
57	Furniture, home furn., and equipment stores.....	1.8	4.3	2.4	4.5	4.2	3.1	-2.5	+2.3	-0.2	1.2
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.9	-0.6	+0.9	+0.2	0.4
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.2	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	-1.4	+1.7	+0.1	0.7
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	-1.7	+1.6	+0.1	0.8
54	Food stores.....	0.9	1.5	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.5	-0.5	+0.6	0.0	0.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.9	0.3	1.8	1.3	1.5	-0.5	+0.7	0.0	0.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	1.1	4.7	1.3	3.3	2.6	2.8	-1.4	+1.9	+0.3	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.1	2.9	2.0	3.0	2.6	2.0	-2.7	+4.8	+0.5	1.5
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.6	1.3	0.9	3.1	2.7	2.7	-0.9	+2.3	+0.3	0.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.5	3.2	0.8	2.4	1.7	2.0	-3.7	+1.1	+0.1	1.0

<sup>1</sup>The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of November 1990 - March 1991.

<sup>2</sup>The ranges shown are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, April 1990 - March 1991.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion of the measures of sampling variability.

