

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
DECEMBER 1996**

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, Tuesday, January 14, 1997

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for December adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$208.2 billion, an increase of 0.6 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 4.5 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from December 1995. Total sales for the 12 months of 1996 were 2.5 trillion, up 5.3 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from the 1995 total. The October to November 1996 percent change was revised from -0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to -0.2 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Durable goods increased 0.5 percent ($\pm 1.3\%$) from November and were 5.2 percent above last year. Automotive dealers were up 4.5 percent from a year ago.

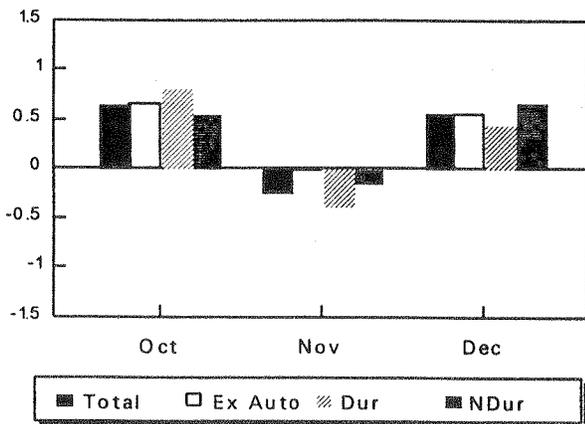
Nondurable goods increased 0.7 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from last month and were up 4.0 percent from December 1995. General merchandise sales were up 4.7 percent from last year while gasoline service stations were up 7.7 percent in the same period.

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

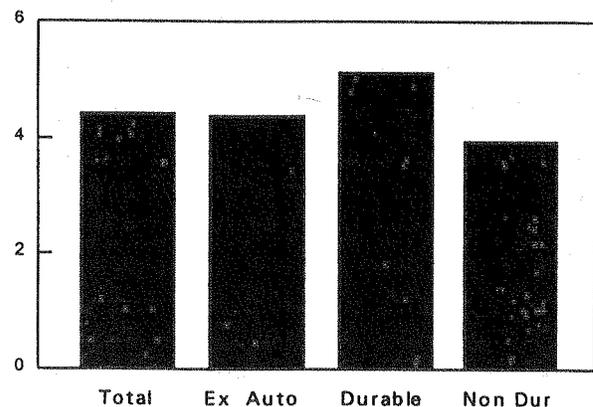
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for January is scheduled to be released February 13, 1997 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call (202) 482-1986. The data are also available on the internet - <http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted							Adjusted ¹				
		12 month total		1996			1995		1996			1995	
		1996	Change from 1995	Dec. ² (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. ² (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	Retail trade, total	2,465,835	5.3	247,337	211,385	209,238	237,994	202,359	208,185	206,972	207,487	199,305	198,159
	Total (excl. auto group)...	1,860,671	4.5	202,984	165,106	157,133	195,690	157,990	157,299	156,423	156,436	150,617	150,012
	Durable goods, total.....	1,007,753	7.6	92,189	81,790	85,967	87,086	77,921	84,948	84,559	84,881	80,778	80,264
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	132,613	6.4	9,989	10,764	12,181	9,578	10,213	10,953	11,130	11,211	10,550	10,539
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,381	9,498	7,154	7,879	(*)	8,596	8,580	8,167	8,056
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,245	1,239	1,244	1,191	(*)	1,202	1,211	1,168	1,183
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	605,164	7.9	44,353	46,279	52,105	42,304	44,369	50,886	50,549	51,051	48,688	48,147
551.2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	568,361	8.1	41,552	43,238	48,763	39,530	41,365	47,871	47,514	47,901	45,699	45,158
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	37,909	42,810	35,063	36,724	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,041	3,342	2,774	3,004	(*)	3,035	3,150	2,989	2,989
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	136,971	5.4	16,212	12,806	11,493	15,896	12,485	11,465	11,453	11,485	11,198	11,211
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,491	5,905	6,676	6,255	(*)	5,729	5,694	5,554	5,565
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,405	4,798	7,540	5,255	(*)	4,874	4,921	4,763	4,739
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	810	727	877	768	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	1,458,082	3.8	155,148	129,595	123,271	150,908	124,438	123,237	122,413	122,606	118,527	117,895
53	General merchandise group stores...	309,226	4.2	44,279	30,732	25,669	42,780	29,817	26,022	25,884	26,022	24,845	24,838
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	241,085	4.4	35,373	24,311	19,917	34,014	23,584	20,364	20,175	20,303	19,359	19,411
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,773	20,277	34,541	24,017	(*)	20,609	20,638	19,762	19,873
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	782	702	1,156	732	(*)	683	699	654	639
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,659	5,050	7,610	5,501	(*)	5,026	5,020	4,832	4,788
54	Food stores.....	424,366	3.4	38,073	36,028	35,577	38,048	34,297	35,843	35,729	35,769	34,792	34,561
541	Grocery stores.....	401,939	3.3	35,644	34,109	33,693	35,626	32,481	33,979	33,838	33,896	32,957	32,743
554	Gasoline service stations.....	157,321	6.2	13,076	12,934	13,484	12,130	11,872	13,329	13,225	13,194	12,378	12,164
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	113,306	3.0	15,248	10,761	9,522	15,180	10,616	9,430	9,287	9,449	9,204	9,241
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	954	828	1,579	975	(*)	832	840	834	851
562.3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,985	2,760	4,533	3,111	(*)	2,658	2,714	2,802	2,778
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,470	3,729	6,124	4,189	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,595	1,491	2,044	1,618	(*)	1,537	1,560	1,554	1,586
58	Eating and drinking places.....	237,787	1.8	19,747	19,436	20,219	19,852	18,750	19,906	19,975	19,940	19,617	19,572
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	89,287	6.0	9,527	7,478	7,580	8,797	7,037	7,702	7,646	7,657	7,129	7,173
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,027	1,886	2,651	1,919	(*)	1,938	1,928	1,928	1,917
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,114	4,473	5,954	5,332	(*)	3,831	3,955	3,967	3,970
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	83,488	53,998	90,250	81,382	(*)	54,787	55,056	52,861	52,881

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

NA Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

- (1) Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. 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-96-11.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.
- (4) GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

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, but not for price changes)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change ¹					
		Dec. 1996 Advance from --		Nov. 1996 Preliminary from --		Oct. 1996 through Dec. 1996 from --	
		Nov. 1996 (p)	Dec. 1995 (r)	Oct. 1996 (r)	Nov. 1995 (r)	July 1996 through Sept. 1996	Oct. 1995 through Dec. 1995
	Retail trade, total	0.6	4.5	-0.2	4.4	1.2	4.9
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.6	4.4	0.0	4.3	1.1	4.6
	Durable goods, total	0.5	5.2	-0.4	5.4	1.2	6.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-1.6	3.8	-0.7	5.6	-1.4	5.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.7	4.5	-1.0	5.0	1.3	5.7
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.8	4.8	-0.8	5.2	1.4	5.9
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.1	2.4	-0.3	2.2	-0.1	2.7
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.7	4.0	-0.2	3.8	1.1	4.1
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.5	4.7	-0.5	4.2	0.5	4.9
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.9	5.2	-0.6	3.9	0.8	5.0
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	-0.1	3.7	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.3	3.0	-0.1	3.4	0.9	3.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.4	3.1	-0.2	3.3	0.9	3.4
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.8	7.7	0.2	8.7	2.0	8.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.5	2.5	-1.7	0.5	-0.6	2.4
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.3	1.5	0.2	2.1	1.2	1.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.7	8.0	-0.1	6.6	2.5	7.5

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

(2) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Data

The Advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the Advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the Advance and because of sampling variability present in each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$ or $\pm 1.5\%$, and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value).

Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average

difference between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total.....	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.2
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.0	0.3	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.4	2.0	1.2	2.8	0.3	1.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.2	0.9	1.7	0.5	0.6
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	2.0	1.3	0.9	1.9	0.5	0.7
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	1.9	1.0	0.7	1.5	0.1	0.2
	Nondurable goods, total	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.6	-0.1	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	-0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.2
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations	2.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	0.3	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.6	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	4.8	1.1	1.0	2.2	-0.2	0.7
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.6	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.4

(1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.

(2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates - i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.

