

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday August 13, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
July 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for July adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$224.7 billion, a decrease of 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month but up 4.4 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from July 1997. Total sales for the May through July period were up 5.9 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The May to June percent change was unrevised from the +0.1 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$) reported last month.

Durable goods decreased 1.4 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from June but were 6.2 percent above last year. Automotive dealers were up 4.6 percent from July 1997.

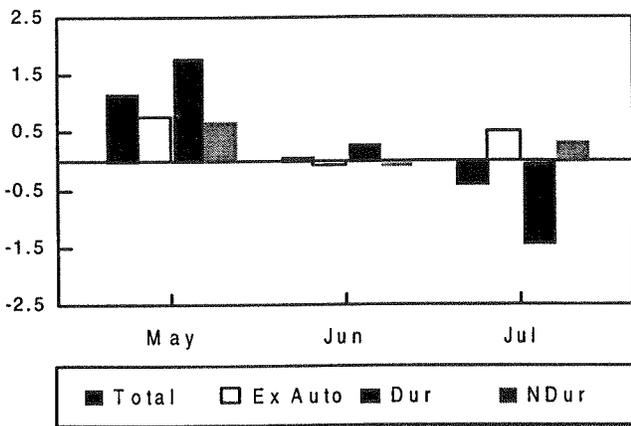
Nondurable goods increased 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 3.1 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 6.3 percent from July a year ago while food sales were up 3.1 percent during the same period.

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.

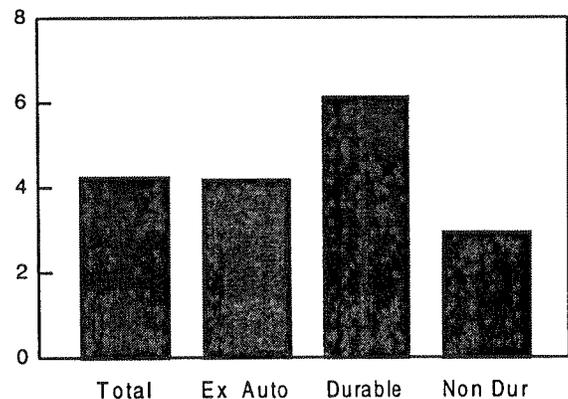
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 August is scheduled to be released September 15, 1998 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Service Sector Statistics 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)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1998			1997		1998			1997	
		July ² (a)	June (p)	May (r)	July	June	July ² (a)	June (p)	May (r)	July (r)	June (r)
	Retail trade, total	229,214	230,696	232,369	218,017	213,929	224,739	225,611	225,370	215,363	212,343
	Total (excl. auto group).....	170,191	167,970	172,197	161,859	158,721	169,848	169,005	169,109	162,869	161,092
	Durable goods, total	99,106	103,262	100,113	92,904	91,512	94,164	95,510	95,187	88,655	86,968
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	15,402	16,094	16,158	14,175	14,211	13,776	13,627	13,849	12,634	12,539
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	12,066	11,700	11,032	10,711	(*)	10,393	10,419	9,746	9,624
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,449	1,445	1,336	1,363	(*)	1,273	1,264	1,249	1,224
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	59,023	62,726	60,172	56,158	55,208	54,891	56,606	56,261	52,494	51,251
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	55,490	59,221	56,828	52,623	51,883	51,667	53,352	53,011	49,272	48,084
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	50,399	48,222	45,069	44,166	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,505	3,344	3,535	3,325	(*)	3,254	3,250	3,222	3,167
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	12,874	12,572	12,298	11,869	11,386	13,300	13,140	13,063	12,379	12,106
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	6,185	6,157	5,958	5,729	(*)	6,273	6,276	5,958	5,931
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	5,507	5,260	5,126	4,870	(*)	5,877	5,812	5,524	5,293
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	965	895	964	911	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total	130,108	127,434	132,256	125,113	122,417	130,575	130,101	130,183	126,708	125,375
53	General merchandise group stores....	27,604	27,789	29,373	25,691	26,220	29,530	29,479	29,484	27,777	27,535
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	21,523	21,653	23,193	19,935	20,479	23,319	23,258	23,333	21,859	21,694
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	22,040	23,617	20,313	20,874	(*)	23,635	23,740	22,254	22,148
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	899	956	925	878	(*)	984	974	978	949
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	5,237	5,224	4,831	4,863	(*)	5,237	5,177	4,940	4,892
54	Food stores.....	38,529	36,521	37,981	37,054	35,170	36,898	36,796	36,779	35,795	35,541
541	Grocery stores.....	36,065	34,152	35,566	34,831	32,980	34,446	34,393	34,397	33,556	33,313
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,296	13,217	13,171	13,896	13,639	12,532	12,481	12,520	13,159	13,027
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,692	9,587	10,152	9,208	9,111	10,366	10,299	10,412	9,986	9,862
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	903	927	772	827	(*)	969	959	927	877
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,500	2,752	2,374	2,505	(*)	2,583	2,651	2,647	2,629
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,670	3,791	3,582	3,404	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,722	1,822	1,689	1,686	(*)	1,717	1,747	1,720	1,710
58	Eating and drinking places.....	21,567	21,020	21,700	20,801	20,111	20,404	20,487	20,414	19,773	19,640
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,622	8,571	8,765	8,023	7,929	8,807	8,755	8,730	8,237	8,208
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	2,020	2,097	2,093	1,997	(*)	2,010	2,056	1,999	2,019
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,010	4,185	3,581	3,579	(*)	4,536	4,702	4,198	4,211
53,56,57,594	GAF(4).....	(*)	57,667	59,544	53,663	53,669	(*)	61,447	61,453	57,889	57,323

* 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-98-06.

(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					
		July 1998 Advance from --		June 1998 Preliminary from --		May 1998 through July 1998 from --	
		June 1998 (p)	July 1997 (r)	May 1998 (r)	June 1997 (r)	Feb. 1998 through Apr. 1998	May 1997 through July 1997
	Retail trade, total	-0.4	4.4	0.1	6.2	1.7	5.9
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.5	4.3	-0.1	4.9	1.3	4.9
	Durable goods, total	-1.4	6.2	0.3	9.8	2.2	8.9
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.1	9.0	-1.6	8.7	0.9	9.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-3.0	4.6	0.6	10.4	2.9	8.8
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-3.2	4.9	0.6	11.0	3.0	9.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.2	7.4	0.6	8.5	0.9	8.0
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.4	3.1	-0.1	3.8	1.3	3.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.2	6.3	0.0	7.1	1.2	7.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.3	6.7	-0.3	7.2	1.1	7.6
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	-0.4	6.7	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.3	3.1	0.0	3.5	1.2	3.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	2.7	0.0	3.2	1.2	2.9
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.4	-4.8	-0.3	-4.2	0.7	-4.2
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.7	3.8	-1.1	4.4	-0.3	5.2
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.4	3.2	0.4	4.3	0.8	3.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.6	6.9	0.3	6.7	2.0	7.2

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 M o. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current M o. to Previous M o.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current M o. to Current M o. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total.....	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and m isc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	0.5



- (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.