

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday September 15, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
August 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for August adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$224.8 billion, an increase of 0.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 3.9 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from August 1997. Total sales for the June through August period were up 4.8 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The June to July percent change was revised from -0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to -0.6 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods were unchanged ($\pm 1.4\%$) from July but were 4.1 percent above last year. Building materials were up 10.2 percent from August a year ago, while furniture sales were up 8.4 percent during the same period.

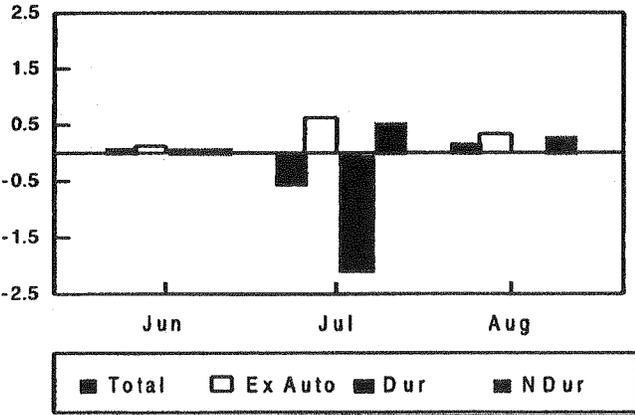
Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 3.8 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 5.2 percent from August a year ago while food sales were up 3.7 percent during the same period.

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.

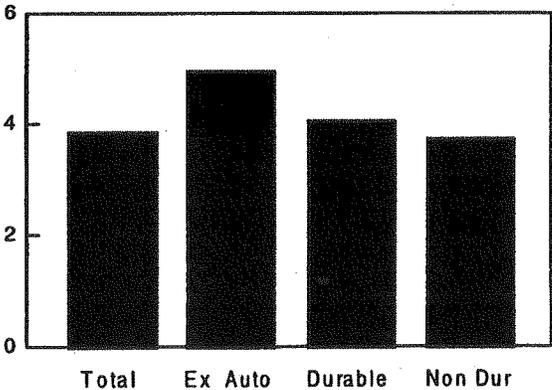
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 September is scheduled to be released October 14, 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	
		Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug.	July	Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug. (r)	July (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	227,846	228,893	230,837	221,896	218,017	224,817	224,372	225,625	216,328	214,935
	Total (excl. auto group).....	172,408	171,074	168,105	166,154	161,859	170,931	170,385	169,302	162,796	162,353
	Durable goods, total.....	95,334	98,040	103,255	92,552	92,904	93,300	93,285	95,284	89,607	88,589
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	14,327	15,489	16,103	13,141	14,175	13,750	13,825	13,643	12,474	12,591
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	12,026	12,068	10,191	11,032	(*)	10,614	10,421	9,605	9,694
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,371	1,445	1,280	1,336	(*)	1,267	1,266	1,252	1,247
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	55,438	57,819	62,732	55,742	56,158	53,886	53,987	56,323	53,532	52,582
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	52,007	54,230	59,220	52,287	52,623	50,640	50,730	53,065	50,276	49,365
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	45,531	50,402	45,094	45,069	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,589	3,512	3,455	3,535	(*)	3,257	3,258	3,256	3,217
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	13,514	13,032	12,564	12,453	11,869	13,487	13,349	13,195	12,441	12,233
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	6,398	6,201	6,223	5,958	(*)	6,360	6,302	6,065	5,952
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	5,787	5,497	5,349	5,126	(*)	6,028	5,917	5,458	5,379
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	1,007	967	882	964	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	132,512	130,853	127,582	129,344	125,113	131,517	131,087	130,341	126,721	126,346
53	General merchandise group stores....	29,165	27,368	27,793	27,989	25,691	29,442	29,355	29,431	27,983	27,826
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	23,043	21,336	21,653	22,099	19,935	23,252	23,166	23,208	22,055	21,907
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	21,708	22,040	22,531	20,313	(*)	23,588	23,583	22,405	22,339
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	934	903	1,008	925	(*)	976	986	1,017	979
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	5,098	5,237	4,882	4,831	(*)	5,213	5,237	4,911	4,940
54	Food stores.....	37,479	38,753	36,599	36,940	37,054	37,188	37,050	36,899	35,859	35,765
541	Grocery stores.....	35,153	36,353	34,239	34,631	34,831	34,839	34,655	34,515	33,557	33,524
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,372	13,589	13,210	14,138	13,896	12,615	12,724	12,509	13,263	13,109
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	11,371	9,845	9,611	10,874	9,208	10,597	10,476	10,338	10,076	9,959
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	856	911	889	772	(*)	997	974	954	913
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,442	2,493	2,603	2,374	(*)	2,681	2,594	2,629	2,641
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,895	3,680	4,188	3,582	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,765	1,715	2,096	1,689	(*)	1,754	1,717	1,718	1,713
58	Eating and drinking places.....	21,731	21,688	21,088	21,339	20,801	20,443	20,480	20,534	19,795	19,754
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,611	8,637	8,570	7,960	8,023	8,923	8,822	8,763	8,215	8,229
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	2,174	2,020	2,075	2,093	(*)	2,037	2,014	2,001	1,995
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,231	4,014	3,527	3,581	(*)	4,830	4,572	4,120	4,145
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	57,665	57,644	58,895	53,663	(*)	61,536	61,427	58,194	57,791

* 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-98-07.
- (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					
		Aug. 1998 Advance from --		July 1998 Preliminary from --		June 1998 through Aug. 1998 from --	
		July 1998 (p)	Aug. 1997 (r)	June 1998 (r)	July 1997 (r)	Mar. 1998 through May 1998	June 1997 through Aug. 1997
	Retail trade, total	0.2	3.9	-0.6	4.4	0.8	4.8
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.3	5.0	0.6	4.9	1.3	5.0
	Durable goods, total	0.0	4.1	-2.1	5.3	0.2	6.3
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.5	10.2	1.3	9.8	0.0	9.6
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.2	0.7	-4.1	2.7	-0.7	4.3
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.2	0.7	-4.4	2.8	-0.8	4.5
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.0	8.4	1.2	9.1	2.5	8.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.3	3.8	0.6	3.8	1.3	3.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.3	5.2	-0.3	5.5	0.4	5.9
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.4	5.4	-0.2	5.7	0.2	6.0
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.0	5.6	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.4	3.7	0.4	3.6	1.3	3.7
541	Grocery stores.....	0.5	3.8	0.4	3.4	1.3	3.6
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.9	-4.9	1.7	-2.9	1.4	-3.9
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.2	5.2	1.3	5.2	0.5	5.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.2	3.3	-0.3	3.7	0.8	3.8
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	1.1	8.6	0.7	7.2	2.1	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 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	0.1	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.