

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Effects of Hurricane Florence on the September 2018
Advance Monthly Sales for Retail & Food Services Report

How much do the areas that had the biggest impact from Hurricane Florence typically represent of the nation's retail and food services sales?

The monthly retail trade programs are not designed to measure retail and food services activity at specific geographic levels, so current estimates of spending in those areas are unavailable.

For data from other Census Bureau sources on the areas impacted by Hurricane Florence, please see the Census Bureau's Emergency Preparedness page at <https://www.census.gov/topics/preparedness.html>.

Does the Census Bureau produce monthly retail and food services sales estimates for the affected sample areas?

No. We cannot isolate the effect of Hurricane Florence on the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) estimates since the sample is designed to measure retail and food services activity at the national level and not at specific geographic areas.

Even though we cannot isolate the effect, we did receive indications from the companies that the hurricanes had both positive and negative effects on their sales data while others indicated they were not impacted at all. Some firms reported a drop in sales due to permanent or temporary store closures and stores having reduced business due to damage, shipment delays, etc. For companies impacted by Hurricane Florence, we review their contribution to the estimates to ensure accurate representation to the overall industry estimates.

Were there any estimates withheld or delayed because of data collection problems?

No. All estimates were released as scheduled on October 15, 2018.

As a result of Hurricane Florence, did the Census Bureau modify its usual weighting or estimation methods used to produce advance monthly sales estimates for September 2018?

No. Because the advance sample is designed to measure retail and food services sales at the national level and not at specific geographic areas; there is not sufficient evidence to support a change.

Has the reliability of the advance monthly sales estimates changed because of Hurricane Florence?

No, the reliability of the advance estimates as measured by the coefficient of variation for monthly totals and the standard error for month-to-month change has not changed substantially. For the published industries, reported sales for September 2018 exhibited variation similar to that for prior months. While a few individual firms reported large increases or decreases in their sales because of the effects of the hurricane, this additional variation was not large enough to substantially affect the reliability of the published estimates.

Did the Census Bureau alter the procedures for developing seasonally adjusted estimates for the Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services?

No. The monthly review process of the seasonal adjustment output and diagnostics did not indicate that adjustments to the parameters were necessary for September.

Source: U. S. Census Bureau
Economic Indicators Division

Last Revised: October 15, 2018