CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

September 1984

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Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for September, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were $108.5 billion, up 1.6 percent from the revised level of $106.8 billion in August and 9.0 percent above a year ago. Although September sales increased strongly, they follow declines of 1.7 percent in July and 0.6 in August and remain below the record June level. Third quarter sales were 0.7 percent lower than the second quarter, but 8.8 above the same period last year. Excluding the automotive group, September was 1.7 percent above August and 8.0 above a year ago.

Durable goods rose 0.6 percent from August and were 12.1 above September 1983. After two monthly declines, the automotive group increased 1.3 percent from the previous month and 13.3 above last year. Building materials dealers and furniture stores both showed slight declines from August, down 0.1 and 0.4 percent respectively; however, building materials dealers increased 15.2 percent from last year while furniture stores rose 9.2.

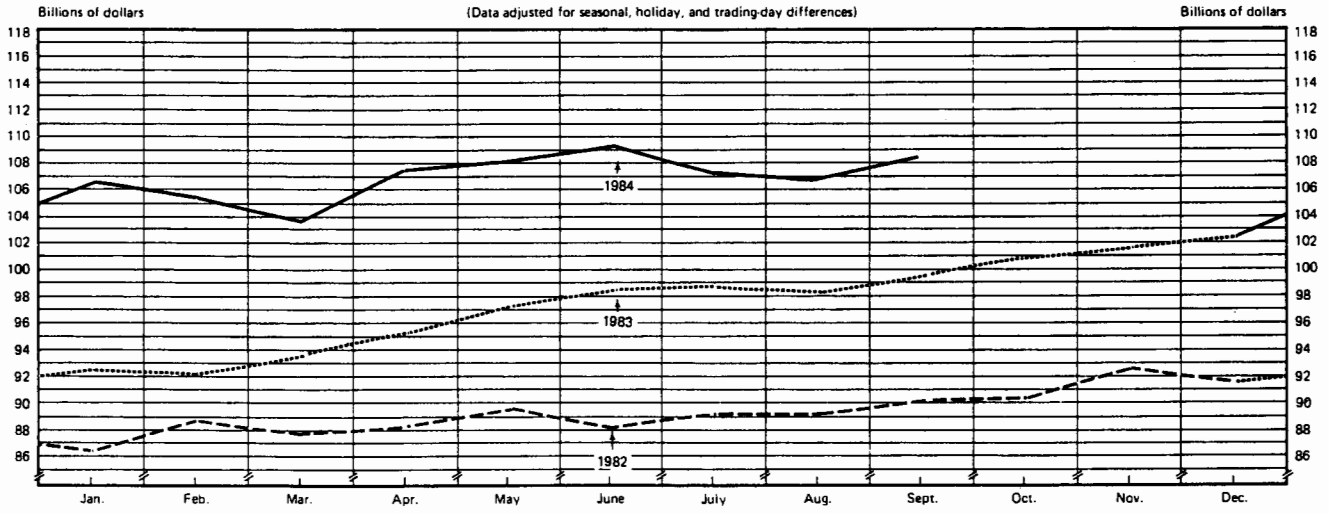
The nondurable goods group climbed in September, up 2.1 percent, and was 7.5 above last year. The general merchandise group rose for the fifth time in six months, up 1.9 percent from the previous month, and was 9.8 above September 1983. After a decline of 1.1 percent in August, food stores gained 2.6 percent in September, the largest increase since January of this year, and rose 7.2 when compared to a year ago. The apparel group rebounded 5.2 percent in September after large declines in July and August. Gasoline service stations increased 2.8 percent from August and were 1.2 percent above the previous year. This is the first year-to-year gain in three months and was largely due to firmer prices at the pump. Drug stores and eating and drinking establishments both showed increases from August, up 2.7 and 1.0 percent respectively.

For a description of the sample design and reliability of the data, see back page.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for October is scheduled to be released November 14, 1984, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

January 1982-September 1984



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U.S. Department of Commerce
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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at $39 per year. Add $9.75 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales report are for sale by Subscriber Services (Publications), Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at $1.75 each.

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

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted[1]				
		1984			1983		1984			1983	
		Sept.[2] adv.	Aug. prel.	July final	Sept.	Aug.	Sept.[2] adv.	Aug. prel.	July final	Sept.	Aug.
	Retail trade, total.....	104,284	110,839	106,553	97,926	100,131	108,520	106,808	107,442	99,537	98,277
	Total (excl. auto group)..	84,068	88,123	83,560	79,267	80,924	87,160	85,731	85,426	80,680	80,224
	Durable goods, total.....	35,551	38,907	38,497	32,769	33,587	36,877	36,655	37,452	32,905	31,951
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	6,132	6,441	6,391	5,446	5,660	5,807	5,810	5,808	5,042	5,094
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	4,814	4,760	4,064	4,198	(*)	4,212	4,227	3,638	3,676
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	886	893	786	818	(*)	878	861	809	812
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	20,216	22,716	22,993	18,659	19,207	21,360	21,077	22,016	18,857	18,053
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	18,251	20,599	20,924	16,796	17,244	19,395	19,144	20,081	17,034	16,237
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	18,260	18,577	15,083	15,225	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,117	2,069	1,863	1,963	(*)	1,933	1,935	1,823	1,816
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	4,678	4,993	4,701	4,342	4,544	4,818	4,838	4,822	4,413	4,408
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	2,978	2,777	2,606	2,742	(*)	2,847	2,857	2,638	2,621
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	1,689	1,611	1,393	1,477	(*)	1,662	1,609	1,444	1,454
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	739	747	622	665	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	68,733	71,932	68,056	65,157	66,544	71,643	70,153	69,990	66,632	66,326
53	General merchandise group stores..	12,040	12,808	11,243	11,199	11,521	13,175	12,924	12,784	12,001	11,878
531	Department stores.....	9,918	10,529	9,257	9,187	9,447	10,780	10,603	10,519	9,784	9,709
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	809	725	687	772	(*)	795	797	781	774
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,470	1,261	1,325	1,302	(*)	1,526	1,468	1.436	1,395
54	Food stores.....	22,848	23,900	23,376	21,878	21,921	23,528	22,924	23,177	21,943	21,819
541	Grocery stores.....	21,499	22,512	22,010	20,611	20,608	22,096	21,543	21,835	20,611	20,505
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,869	9,153	9,106	8,839	9,356	8,869	8,627	8,526	8,760	8,851
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	4,841	5,001	4,296	4,312	4,555	5,048	4,800	4,891	4,451	4,430
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	637	581	608	615	(*)	670	688	659	657
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,971	1,789	1,705	1,711	(*)	1,930	1,997	1,734	1,706
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	1,197	984	927	1,091	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	856	690	803	809	(*)	805	801	783	768
58	Eating and drinking places.....	10,894	11,627	11,159	9,941	10,420	10,808	10,696	10,488	9,833	9,729
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	3,375	3,541	3,366	3,134	3,201	3,668	3,573	3,521	3,306	3,273
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,763	1,734	1,611	1,656	(*)	1,720	1,722	1,675	1,646
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	408	324	378	378	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57 594	GAF[3].....	(*)	26,425	23,436	22,877	23,713	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.
NA Not available.
[1]Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-08).
[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]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					
		Sept. 1984 advance from--		Aug. 1984 preliminary from--		July 1984 through Sept. 1984	
		Aug. 1984 prelim.	Sept. 1983 final	July 1984 final	Aug. 1983 final	Apr. 1984 through June 1984	July 1983 through Sept.1983
	Retail trade, total.....	+1.6	+9.0	-0.6	+8.7	-0.7	+8.8
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+1.7	+8.0	+0.4	+6.9	+0.3	+7.3
	Durable goods total,.....	+0.6	+12.1	-2.1	+14.7	-2.7	+13.9
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-0.1	+15.2	0.0	+14.1	+0.6	+14.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+1.3	+13.3	-4.3	+16.8	-4.5	+15.5
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	+1.3	+13.9	-4.7	+17.9	-5.0	+16.4
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.4	+9.2	+0.3	+9.8	-1.0	+10.0
	Nondurable goods total,.....	+2.1	+7.5	+0.2	+5.8	+0.4	+6.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+1.9	+9.8	+1.1	+8.8	-0.7	+8.8
531	Department stores.....	+1.7	+10.2	+0.8	+9.2	-0.8	+9.4
54	Food stores.....	+2.6	+7.2	-1.1	+5.1	+1.3	+6.0
541	Grocery stores.....	+2.6	+7.2	-1.3	+5.1	+1.4	+6.1
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+2.8	+1.2	+1.2	-2.5	-2.3	-1.2
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+5.2	+13.4	-1.9	+8.4	-2.6	+10.4
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+1.0	+9.9	+2.0	+9.9	+3.7	+9.2
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+2.7	+10.9	+1.5	+9.2	+2.3	+9.5

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted[1]		
		Aug. 1984 prelim.	July 1984 final	Aug. 1983	Aug. 1984 prelim.	July 1984 final	Aug. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	37,699	35,132	34,458	37,083	37,131	34,752
53	General merchandise group stores.....	11,573	10,117	10,411	11,673	11,525	10,721
531	Department stores.....	10,101	8,873	9,055	10,152	10,072	9,287
533	Variety stores.....	620	549	598	613	609	605
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.	852	695	758	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	12,682	12,341	11,734	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	12,530	12,192	11,587	12,118	12,353	11,704
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	2,177	1,776	1,926	2,014	2,064	1,815
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	902	806	782	858	887	762
566	Shoe stores.....	456	347	424	422	423	395
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,020	1,916	1,760	2,063	2,004	1,824

[1]Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-08).

Note: The 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).

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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 +1.1 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 August 1984 and final estimates for July 1984 based on the full sample will be published late this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for August (BR-84-08). 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 complete report will include 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 advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range[1]		Median	Range[2]		Mean	Average of absolute difference
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total	0.7	0.9	0.7	-1.1	+1.1	0.0	0.5
	Total (excl. autmotive group)	0.6	1.0	0.7	-0.8	+1.3	0.0	0.6
	Durable goods stores, total	1.0	2.2	1.4	-1.4	+3.2	+0.4	1.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.9	3.1	2.7	-1.5	+5.1	+1.3	2.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers	1.4	2.2	1.8	-1.0	+4.2	+0.6	1.1
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers	0.9	1.9	1.3	-1.3	+4.8	+0.7	1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores	1.2	4.1	2.4	-3.5	+2.5	-0.5	1.5
	Nondurable goods stores, total	0.5	0.8	0.6	-0.6	+1.2	0.0	0.4
53	General merchandise group stores	0.4	0.9	0.5	-1.3	+1.0	+0.1	0.5
531	Department stores	0.1	0.6	0.3	-1.1	+1.0	+0.2	0.5
54	Food stores	0.7	1.1	0.9	-0.9	+1.3	-0.2	0.5
541	Grocery stores	0.2	0.7	0.5	-0.8	+1.1	-0.2	0.5
554	Gasoline service stations	0.6	1.1	1.0	-3.8	+3.0	-0.1	1.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.6	3.7	2.0	-3.0	+2.1	0.0	1.4
58	Eating and drinking places	0.6	1.4	1.1	-2.4	+3.0	-0.1	1.2
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores	0.4	1.6	0.9	-2.1	+1.5	-0.4	0.7

[1]The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January-December 1983.

[2]The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, September 1983-August 1984. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period March 1983-February 1984.

Note: See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.