

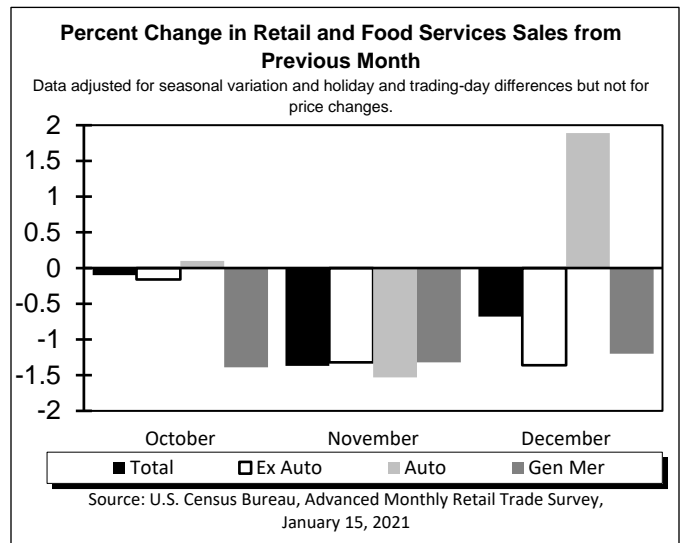
ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, DECEMBER 2020

Release Number: CB21-05

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Impact: The Census Bureau continues to monitor response and data quality and has determined that estimates in this release meet publication standards. For more information, see [COVID-19 FAQs](#).

January 15, 2021 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2020:

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
December 2020	\$540.9 billion	-0.7%
November 2020 (revised)	\$544.6 billion	-1.4%
Next release: February 17, 2021		
<small>* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero. Data adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, January 15, 2021.</small>		



Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$540.9 billion, a decrease of 0.7 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the previous month, but 2.9 percent (± 0.7 percent) above December 2019. Total sales for the 12 months of 2020 were up 0.6 percent (± 0.4 percent) from 2019. Total sales for the October 2020 through December 2020 period were up 4.0 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The October 2020 to November 2020 percent change was revised from down 1.1 percent (± 0.5 percent) to down 1.4 percent (± 0.2 percent).

Retail trade sales were down 0.3 percent (± 0.5 percent)* from November 2020, but 6.3 percent (± 0.7 percent) above last year. Nonstore retailers were up 19.2 percent (± 1.6 percent) from December 2019, while food services and drinking places were down 21.2 percent (± 3.7 percent) from last year.

Data Inquiries

Economic Indicators Division, Retail Indicator Branch
301-763-2713
eid.retail.indicator.branch@census.gov

Media Inquiries

Public Information Office
301-763-3030
pio@census.gov



General Information

The January 2021 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on February 17, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. EST. View the full schedule in the Economic Briefing Room: <www.census.gov/economic-indicators/>. The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,500 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms.

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,500 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. For each detailed industry, we compute a ratio of current-to-previous month weighted sales using data from units for which we have obtained usable responses for both the current and previous month. For each detailed industry, the advance total sales estimates for the current month is computed by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS) at the appropriate industry level. Total estimates for broader industries are computed as the sum of the detailed industry estimates. The link relative estimate is used because imputation is not performed for most nonrespondents in MARTS. For a limited number of nonresponding companies that have influential effects on the estimates, sales may be estimated based on historical performance of that company. The monthly estimates are benchmarked to the annual survey estimates from the Annual Retail Trade Survey once available. The estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <www.census.gov/retail/>.

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors

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and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.753 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.6 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.4 percent to +2.8 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.753 \times CV \times$ (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

Weather Information

For information on the impact of weather events on the compilation of this report, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website at:

www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html

RESOURCES

API

The Census Bureau's application programming interface lets developers create custom apps to reach new users and makes key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics more accessible than ever before. www.census.gov/developers/

FRED Mobile App



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Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED App <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/> for both Apple and

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Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators.

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* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.

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Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Total sales estimates are shown in millions of dollars and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted ²				
		12 Month Total		2020			2019		2020			2019	
		2020	% Chg. 2019	Dec. ³ (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. ³ (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	6,258,194	0.6	620,036	546,082	555,823	591,380	535,352	540,915	544,641	552,193	525,657	525,327
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	5,007,070	0.5	502,489	442,431	440,624	487,917	434,251	425,693	431,556	437,350	421,015	418,510
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	5,836,699	2.1	584,402	512,338	518,422	551,177	494,622	503,127	509,196	516,161	482,659	482,988
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	4,585,575	2.4	466,855	408,687	403,223	447,714	393,521	387,905	396,111	401,318	378,017	376,171
	Retail	5,641,410	3.5	568,615	495,521	498,957	526,295	473,026	489,750	491,081	496,660	460,767	461,073
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	116,108	109,786	147,511	121,326	(*)	106,762	109,940	109,316	108,463
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1,251,124	1.1	117,547	103,651	115,199	103,463	101,101	115,222	113,085	114,843	104,642	106,817
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1,153,522	1.0	109,600	95,720	106,474	96,073	93,242	106,927	104,841	106,581	96,653	98,773
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	78,997	87,285	82,445	78,496	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,931	8,725	7,390	7,859	(*)	8,244	8,262	7,989	8,044
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	111,436	-5.4	11,585	10,677	10,662	11,003	10,782	10,109	10,169	10,382	9,807	9,946
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,574	5,779	5,163	5,523	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	5,840	5,259	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	82,830	-14.6	9,963	8,694	7,303	11,807	9,985	6,736	7,080	7,720	8,076	8,046
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	438,187	14.0	35,951	35,689	38,769	29,493	30,731	38,399	38,067	37,768	32,816	32,283
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	31,584	34,103	25,787	27,087	(*)	33,316	32,982	28,652	28,099
445	Food & beverage stores	853,305	11.5	76,405	70,924	71,050	68,992	65,442	70,309	71,306	70,279	64,535	64,363
4451	Grocery stores	759,303	11.2	65,544	62,782	62,915	59,812	58,185	62,186	63,288	62,292	57,622	57,438
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,088	6,050	6,630	5,312	(*)	6,016	5,955	5,065	5,040
446	Health & personal care stores	364,935	1.7	35,619	30,288	31,896	33,194	29,312	31,493	31,160	31,271	29,770	29,910
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	25,629	27,423	26,509	23,964	(*)	26,394	26,496	24,500	24,528
447	Gasoline stations	421,495	-15.9	35,634	33,744	37,401	40,203	40,730	37,788	35,445	36,032	42,998	42,339
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	196,465	-26.4	30,360	20,221	19,187	34,541	24,928	19,020	18,578	19,779	22,650	22,036
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	863	714	(*)	(S)	(S)	656	663
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,794	2,690	4,496	3,850	(*)	2,510	2,635	3,365	3,365
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,806	8,402	14,517	11,269	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,380	2,435	4,296	3,265	(*)	2,371	2,653	3,187	3,139
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	84,411	5.7	11,141	8,202	7,492	9,506	7,289	7,626	7,687	7,820	6,620	6,508
452	General merchandise stores	732,599	2.7	77,073	66,406	62,480	77,648	66,027	60,466	61,200	62,019	59,798	59,533
4521	Department stores	110,525	-18.1	14,244	10,754	9,361	18,403	13,401	8,656	9,000	9,741	11,012	11,101
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	55,652	53,119	59,245	52,626	(*)	52,200	52,278	48,786	48,432
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	47,515	45,184	50,606	45,257	(*)	44,531	44,429	41,962	41,558
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,137	7,935	8,639	7,369	(*)	7,669	7,849	6,824	6,874
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	133,069	-1.2	13,428	11,885	12,430	12,525	11,882	12,024	11,818	11,829	11,487	11,622
454	Nonstore retailers	971,554	22.1	113,909	95,140	85,088	93,920	74,817	80,558	85,486	86,918	67,568	67,670
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	87,552	76,800	85,217	67,037	(*)	78,102	78,931	60,054	60,123
722	Food services & drinking places	616,784	-19.5	51,421	50,561	56,866	65,085	62,326	51,165	53,560	55,533	64,890	64,254

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

(NA) Not available (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(S) Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability (coefficient of variation is greater than 30%), poor response quality (total quantity response rate is less than 50%), or other concerns about the estimate's quality.

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics>

(2) Estimates are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variation and for holiday and trading day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-13ARIMA-SEATS program. The factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted estimates shown in this table. Year-to-date seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated. Adjustment factors and explanatory material can be found on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/retail>

(3) Advance estimates are based on early reports obtained from a small sample of firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) sample. All other estimates are from the MRTS sample.

(4) GAFO represents firms which specialize in department store types of merchandise and is comprised of furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances (443), clothing & accessories (448), sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, and book (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, January 15, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Dec. 2020 Advance from --		Nov. 2020 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2020 through Dec. 2020 from --	
		Nov. 2020 (p)	Dec. 2019 (r)	Oct. 2020 (r)	Nov. 2019 (r)	Jul. 2020 through Sep. 2020	Oct. 2019 through Dec. 2019
	Retail & food services,						
	total	-0.7	2.9	-1.4	3.7	0.3	4.0
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-1.4	1.1	-1.3	3.1	-0.1	2.8
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	-1.2	4.2	-1.3	5.4	0.2	5.6
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-2.1	2.6	-1.3	5.3	-0.4	4.7
	Retail	-0.3	6.3	-1.1	6.5	0.5	7.0
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.9	10.1	-1.5	5.9	2.1	8.8
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	2.0	10.6	-1.6	6.1	2.6	9.3
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-0.6	3.1	-2.1	2.2	-0.9	3.5
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-4.9	-16.6	-8.3	-12.0	-6.7	-11.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	0.9	17.0	0.8	17.9	1.9	17.6
445	Food & beverage stores	-1.4	8.9	1.5	10.8	-0.7	9.8
4451	Grocery stores	-1.7	7.9	1.6	10.2	-0.7	9.0
446	Health & personal care stores	1.1	5.8	-0.4	4.2	0.4	4.5
447	Gasoline stations	6.6	-12.1	-1.6	-16.3	2.6	-14.3
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	2.4	-16.0	-6.1	-15.7	3.2	-14.2
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	-0.8	15.2	-1.7	18.1	0.1	16.4
452	General merchandise stores	-1.2	1.1	-1.3	2.8	-0.7	2.6
4521	Department stores	-3.8	-21.4	-7.6	-18.9	-6.4	-17.6
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	1.7	4.7	-0.1	1.7	1.7	2.8
454	Nonstore retailers	-5.8	19.2	-1.6	26.3	-1.0	24.3
722	Food services & drinking places	-4.5	-21.2	-3.6	-16.6	-1.3	-17.4

(p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, January 15, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability.

Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at

www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Dec. 2020

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Median CV Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.3
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.3
	Retail, total	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.5	1.1	0.6	1.3	0.6	0.5
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.6	1.2	0.7	1.3	0.6	0.6
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.0	1.2	0.9	1.8	1.2	1.0
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.5	1.0	0.6	1.2	0.2	1.2
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	1.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.3	1.1
445	Food & beverage stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	2.5	0.6	0.4	1.2	0.5	0.8
447	Gasoline stations	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	-1.1	1.7
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	3.0	0.8	1.2	2.4	0.3	1.6
452	General merchandise stores	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.1
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	4.4	3.9	1.8	4.8	0.4	1.5
454	Nonstore retailers	1.6	0.5	0.4	0.9	-0.5	0.5
722	Food services & drinking places	3.5	1.3	0.8	2.1	0.0	0.4

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading day variation. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

(2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median revisions are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, January 15, 2021. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.