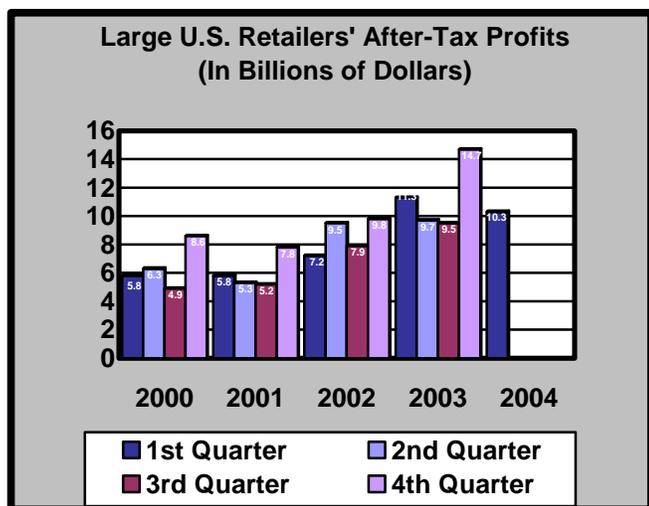


U.S. Census Bureau Contact:

Yolando St. George (301) 763-6600
John Seabold (301) 763-3386
e-mail: csd.qfr@census.gov

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**FIRST QUARTER 2004 ADVANCE DATA FROM THE QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT
LARGE U.S. RETAIL TRADE CORPORATIONS**



EXPLANATORY NOTES:

These data are based on quarterly financial reports obtained from approximately 500 corporations. More detailed information on the retail trade sector for the first quarter 2004 will be published in the Quarterly Financial Report for Manufacturing, Mining, and Trade Corporations - Second Quarter 2004, scheduled for release on September 13, 2004.

SAMPLING

The data presented in this report are estimated from a sample survey and therefore are subject to sampling variability as well as nonsampling variability such as response error, nonreporting, and coverage errors. Estimates of sampling variability are presented in the publication. A statement such as "up 2.5 (± 0.2) cents," appearing in the text, indicates the range (+2.3 to +2.7 cents) in which the actual change is likely to have occurred. The range given for the change is a 90 percent confidence interval that accounts only for sampling variability. If the range had contained zero (0), it would have been uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease; that is, the change would not have been statistically significant. For any comparison cited without a confidence interval, the change is statistically significant. The quarterly publication includes more detailed explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability, along with additional measures of sampling variability.

DATA AVAILABILITY

This press release can be viewed today in page image format (.pdf) at the internet website <http://www.census.gov/csd/qfr/>. More detailed information on U.S. Manufacturing, Mining, and Wholesale and Retail Trade Corporations is available for downloading at our website under "QFR Products: Publication". The publication includes statements of income and retained earnings, balance sheets, and related financial and operating ratios. Data presented are classified by industry and asset size. The publication is available for sale from the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954 (202-512-1800). Fax orders to (202) 512-2250 or phone orders to (202) 512-1800 (8am-4:30pm EDT). The cost for an annual subscription is \$58 domestic and \$81.20 foreign. Data are also available on 3.5inch diskettes from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau (MS0801), P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943 (301-763-INFO/301-763-4636). The cost for an annual subscription is \$80 domestic and \$105 foreign. The cost for a single diskette is \$50. All remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by draft on a U.S. bank.

For the first quarter of 2004, large retail corporations with assets of \$50 million and over reported after-tax profits of \$10.3 billion, down \$4.4 (± 0.1) billion from the preceding quarter, and down \$1.0 (± 0.1) billion from the same quarter a year ago, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau reported. Sales in the first quarter 2004, at \$393.0 billion, were down \$25.4 (± 1.3) billion or 6.1 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$) from last quarter, but up \$38.7 (± 1.2) billion or 10.9 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$) from the first quarter of 2003. These data are not adjusted for seasonality.

After-tax profits for these corporations averaged 2.6 cents per dollar of sales for the first quarter of 2004 down 0.9 (± 0.1) cents from the 3.5 cents of the preceding quarter and 0.6 (± 0.1) cents from the 3.2 cents recorded in the first quarter of 2003.

The annual rate of after-tax profit on stockholders' equity was 13.7 percent down 6.1 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$) from the 19.8 percent of the fourth quarter of 2003 and 2.6 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$) from the 16.3 percent of the first quarter of 2003.

This report is available on the day of issue on the Department of Commerce's Internet website at <http://www.census.gov/csd/qfr/>

Table 1. Income Statement For U.S. Retail Trade Corporations - Assets \$50 Million And Over

Item	1Q 2004	4Q 2003 ¹	1Q 2003 ¹
	(million dollars)		
Net sales, receipts, and operating revenues	393,033	418,463	354,328
Less: Depreciation, depletion, and amortization.....	7,360	7,391	7,172
Less: All other operating costs and expenses	365,821	387,949	331,754
Income (or loss) from operations	19,852	23,123	15,402
Interest expense	3,571	3,726	3,152
Net nonoperating income (expense)	246	5,568	3,731
Income (or loss) before income taxes	16,526	24,965	15,981
Less: Provision for current and deferred domestic income taxes.....	6,220	10,293	4,698
Income (or loss) after income taxes	10,307	14,672	11,283
Cash dividends charged to retained earnings in current quarter.....	2,745	2,115	1,706
Net income retained in business	7,562	12,556	9,577
Retained earnings at beginning of quarter	211,234	204,482	186,449
Other direct credits (or charges) to retained earnings (net)	(4,519)	(7,844)	(2,414)
Retained earnings at end of quarter	214,277	209,195	193,612

Table 2. Income Statement Ratios For U.S. Retail Trade Corporations - Assets \$50 Million And Over

Item	1Q 2004	4Q 2003 ¹	1Q 2003 ¹
	(cents)		
Net sales, receipts, and operating revenues	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less: Depreciation, depletion, and amortization	1.9	1.8	2.0
Less: All other operating costs and expenses	93.1	92.7	93.6
Income (or loss) from operations	5.1	5.5	4.3
Interest expense	0.9	0.9	0.9
Net nonoperating income (expense)	0.1	1.3	1.1
Income (or loss) before income taxes	4.2	6.0	4.5
Less: Provision for current and deferred domestic income taxes.....	1.6	2.5	1.3
Income (or loss) after income taxes	2.6	3.5	3.2

Table 3. Operating Ratios For U.S. Retail Trade Corporations - Assets \$50 Million And Over

Item	1Q 2004	4Q 2003 ¹	1Q 2003 ¹
	(percent)		
Annual rate of profit on stockholders' equity at end of period:			
Before income taxes	22.02	33.66	23.10
After income taxes	13.73	19.78	16.31
Annual rate of profit on total assets:			
Before income taxes	8.77	13.40	9.04
After income taxes	5.47	7.87	6.39

¹Revised.