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ADVANCE REPORT ON RETAIL TRADE, DECEMBER 1955

Record sales of approximately \$19.4 billion in December 1955 brought total annual sales for all retail stores in 1955 to almost \$186 billion, about 9 percent above annual sales for 1954, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. December 1955 sales, adjusted for seasonal factors and trading day differences, were about 5 percent higher than December 1954 and 1 percent above November 1955.

The December sales figures are based on the Advance Report on Retail Trade, a monthly survey of the Bureau of the Census conducted in cooperation with a representative cross-section of about 1,700 retail firms which, in total, operate some 35,000 stores in the United States. The firms which are cooperating in the early reporting of sales are part of a larger group which furnishes figures at a later date. Therefore, the advance estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

Annual sales for 1955 for all the major kind-of-business groups in retail trade increased over 1954 sales, with the automotive group showing the largest increase--21 percent. All other major groups showed increases between 6 and 10 percent except the food group and eating and drinking places which reported increases of 5 and 4 percent respectively.

The preliminary Bureau of the Census figures for December 1955 and the full year 1955 are shown in table 1 on the reverse side. The Office of Business Economics noted that after allowance for seasonal variation, sales by most lines of trade contributed to moderate increases between November and December 1955 in the durable and nondurable goods sectors.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES REPORT--PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES FOR
DECEMBER 1955

Table 1.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP
(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (Millions of dollars)				
	12 months		December 1955 (Advance estimate)	November 1955	December 1954
	1955	1954			
Retail stores, total ¹	185,685	170,675	19,401	15,895	17,872
Food group.....	43,682	41,634	4,212	3,648	3,920
Grocery stores.....	36,951	34,995	3,574	3,078	3,304
Eating and drinking places.....	13,658	13,131	1,177	1,126	1,114
General merchandise group.....	20,127	18,858	3,035	1,957	2,851
Department stores ²	10,868	10,272	1,603	1,076	1,555
Apparel group.....	10,792	10,148	1,600	988	1,448
Furniture and appliance group.....	10,020	9,082	1,128	927	1,025
Lumber, building, hardware group ³ ..	13,843	13,034	1,104	1,140	1,085
Automotive group.....	38,400	31,666	3,224	3,039	2,823
Gasoline service stations.....	12,406	11,445	1,098	1,085	1,008
Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,234	4,941	591	432	530

See footnotes below table 2.

Source: Bureau of the Census

Table 2.--SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP
(ADJUSTED for seasonal factors and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)			Percent change, Nov. 1955 from--	
	1955		November 1954	October 1955	November 1954
	November	October			
Retail stores, total ¹	15,808	15,777	14,361	0	+10
Durable goods stores, total ¹	5,689	5,764	4,948	-1	+15
Nondurable goods stores, total ¹ ..	10,119	10,013	9,412	+1	+8
Food group.....	3,728	3,686	3,494	+1	+7
Eating and drinking places.....	1,164	1,159	1,070	0	+9
General merchandise group.....	1,700	1,693	1,570	0	+8
Apparel group.....	916	908	823	+1	+11
Furniture and appliance group.....	838	849	744	-1	+13
Lumber, building, hardware group ³ ..	1,164	1,206	1,150	-3	+1
Automotive group.....	3,261	3,280	2,685	-1	+21
Gasoline service stations.....	1,078	1,042	985	+3	+9
Drug and proprietary stores.....	447	447	411	0	+9

Source: Office of Business Economics

¹ Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

² Based on preliminary estimates supplied by Federal Reserve Board.

³ Includes farm equipment dealers.