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ADVANCE REPORT ON RETAIL TRADE, MARCH 1956

Total sales of retail stores in March were \$15.8 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal factors and trading day differences, was 2 percent above February of this year, and about 4 percent above March a year ago.

The March 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.

The preliminary Census figures are shown in table 1 on the reverse side. The Office of Business Economics commented that retail store sales from February to March, after adjustment for seasonal variation, were up for most major kinds of business, to offset the decline previously shown from January to February.

(more)

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)		
	1956		March 1955
	March	February	
Retail stores, total ¹	15,803	13,686	14,703
Food group.....	3,986	3,446	3,527
Grocery stores.....	3,407	2,927	2,983
Eating and drinking places.....	1,101	1,041	1,026
General merchandise group.....	1,614	1,271	1,464
Department stores ²	848	668	796
Apparel group.....	1,028	667	796
Furniture and appliance group.....	816	757	761
Lumber, building, hardware group ³	1,009	849	1,048
Automotive group.....	3,186	2,812	3,305
Gasoline service stations.....	1,051	983	944
Drug and proprietary stores.....	472	451	409

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, February 1956 from--	
	1956		February 1955	January 1956	February 1955
	February	January			
Retail stores, total ¹	15,346	15,658	14,765	-2	+4
Durable goods stores, total ¹	5,354	5,456	5,209	-2	+3
Nondurable goods stores, total ¹ ..	9,992	10,202	9,556	-2	+5
Food group.....	3,680	3,747	3,577	-2	+3
Eating and drinking places.....	1,152	1,171	1,085	-2	+6
General merchandise group.....	1,645	1,714	1,584	-4	+4
Apparel group.....	924	927	870	0	+6
Furniture and appliance group.....	859	869	810	-1	+6
Lumber, building, hardware group ³ ..	1,064	1,135	1,043	-6	+2
Automotive group.....	3,008	3,020	2,990	0	+1
Gasoline service stations.....	1,088	1,082	998	+1	+9
Drug and proprietary stores.....	455	465	412	-2	+10

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.