



For release
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MARCH 1964

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Total sales of retail stores in March were \$20.4 billion, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today. This advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal, trading day, and Easter date differences, but not for price changes, was about 4 percent above March 1963 but 1 percent below February 1964.

The Office of Business Economics noted that after adjustment, the decline in sales from February to March occurred at durable goods stores and more particularly at automotive and lumber-building materials dealers. Nondurable goods in March held at their record February level as higher sales at food stores offset reductions at apparel and department stores. Based on the full sample, seasonally adjusted sales of all retail stores in February were about 2 percent above the January level.

The March sales figures are based on a monthly survey of the Bureau of the Census conducted in cooperation with a representative cross-section of about 2,000 retail firms which, in total, operate some 40,000 stores in the United States. The firms which are cooperating in the early reporting of sales are part of a larger sample group which furnishes figures at a later date. The advance estimates are subject to revision by the estimates subsequently derived from the full sample.

The revision of the total seldom exceeds 1.5 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.7 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups, revisions have been greater, ranging on the average from 1.0 percent for the food group to 2.7 percent for the lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.

(more)

ADVANCE RETAIL SALES FOR MARCH 1964

Table 1. SALES OF RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY KIND-OF-BUSINESS GROUP

(NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1964		1963
	March ¹	February ²	March
Retail stores, total	20,404	18,693	19,653
Durable-goods stores, total	6,663	6,058	6,383
Nondurable-goods stores, total	13,741	12,635	13,270
Food group.....	4,929	4,865	4,976
Grocery stores.....	4,437	4,415	4,531
Eating and drinking places.....	1,488	1,402	1,421
General merchandise group.....	2,319	1,858	2,075
Department stores.....	1,316	1,059	1,205
Apparel group.....	1,199	911	1,081
Furniture and appliance group.....	999	910	838
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equip. group	1,064	947	1,128
Automotive group.....	4,018	3,659	3,926
Gasoline service stations.....	1,582	1,473	1,543
Drug and proprietary stores.....	681	659	667

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 variations and trading day differences ⁴)

Kind-of-business group	Percentage change, March 1964 from--		Sales (millions of dollars)				Percentage change, Feb. 1964 from--	
	Feb. 1964	Mar. 1963	1964		1963		Jan. 1964	Feb. 1963
			March ¹	Feb. ²	Jan.	Feb.		
Retail stores, total ³	-1	+4	21,134	21,440	21,000	20,374	+2	+5
Durable-goods stores, total ³ ...	-4	+4	6,867	7,183	6,855	6,624	+5	+8
Nondurable-goods stores, total ³	0	+4	14,267	14,257	14,145	13,750	+1	+4
Food group.....				5,007	5,031	4,894	0	+2
Eating and drinking places.....				1,611	1,580	1,496	+2	+8
General merchandise group.....				2,568	2,481	2,332	+4	+10
Apparel group.....				1,268	1,250	1,209	+1	+5
Furniture and appliance group.....				1,061	1,019	953	+4	+11
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....				1,335	1,269	1,273	+5	+5
Automotive group.....				4,133	3,951	3,820	+5	+8
Gasoline service stations.....				1,634	1,638	1,611	0	+1
Drug and proprietary stores.....				669	694	683	-4	-2

¹ Advance sample estimates.

² Preliminary estimates of full sample.

³ Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

⁴ Data adjusted for seasonal variations and trading day differences have been derived by a new method.