



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE • Social and Economic Statistics Administration • BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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MARCH 1972

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in March were estimated at \$35.8 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$36.0 billion, about 2½ percent above February and about 8 percent above March sales last year. Adjusted total January-through-March sales averaged about ½ percent above the prior 3 months and 8 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for February was about \$0.2 billion more than the \$34.9 billion published earlier in the February Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released March 10, 1972. The seasonally adjusted sales for February as revised were about 1 percent above January.

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting, by a small subsample of the Census Bureau's retail survey panel, of sales figures for the weeks and part-weeks comprising the month. Because retailers' weekly records often differ

from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability between sub-sample and later full sample results can be a cause of difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimate, prior to publication, on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in advance and full-sample estimates of total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.4 percent. For individual kind-of-business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.7 percent for the general merchandise group to 2.1 percent for the furniture group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES

(Data ADJUSTED for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)

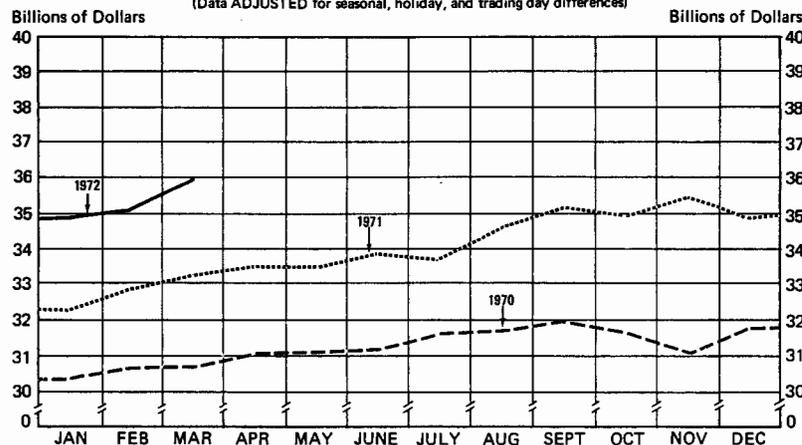


Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1972		1971
	March ¹	February ²	March
Total, retail stores ³	35,793	30,787	32,105
Total (excluding automotive group).....	28,375	24,687	25,362
Durable goods stores, total ³	12,044	10,079	10,705
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	23,749	20,708	21,400
Food group.....	7,860	7,036	7,149
Grocery stores.....	7,302	6,559	6,632
Eating and drinking places.....	2,602	2,391	2,416
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	5,633	4,516	4,880
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	5,143	4,062	4,386
Department stores.....	3,384	2,632	2,916
Apparel group.....	1,726	1,296	1,502
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,687	1,555	1,467
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	2,064	1,619	1,674
Automotive group.....	7,418	6,100	6,743
Gasoline service stations.....	2,489	2,280	2,301
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,147	1,089	1,111

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change February 1972 from--	
	1972		1971			Jan. 1972	Feb. 1971
	Mar. ¹	Feb. ²	Jan.	Mar.	Feb.		
Total, retail stores ³	35,996	35,127	34,886	33,274	32,850	+1	+7
Total (excluding automotive group).....	29,083	28,537	28,308	26,937	26,757	+1	+7
Durable goods stores, total ³	11,873	11,346	11,475	10,613	10,240	-1	+11
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	24,123	23,781	23,411	22,661	22,610	+2	+5
Food group.....		7,590	7,387	7,372	7,387	+3	+3
Eating and drinking places.....		2,702	2,745	2,565	2,535	-2	+7
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		5,968	5,874	5,501	5,471	+2	+9
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		5,482	5,376	4,987	4,982	+2	+10
Apparel group.....		1,724	1,732	1,709	1,707	0	+1
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,734	1,741	1,569	1,502	0	+15
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....		2,086	2,192	1,803	1,752	-5	+19
Automotive group.....		6,590	6,578	6,337	6,093	0	+8
Gasoline service stations.....		2,511	2,506	2,353	2,361	0	+6
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,143	1,137	1,151	1,163	+1	-2

¹Advance sample estimates.

²Preliminary estimates of full sample.

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

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	March 1972 from--		January 1972 through March 1972 from--	
	Feb. 1972	Mar. 1971	October 1971 through December 1971	January 1971 through March 1971
	Total, retail stores.....	+2½	+8	+½
Total (excluding automotive group).....	+2	+5	+2	+7
Durable goods stores, total.....	+4½	+12	-½	+12
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+1½	+6½	+1	+6

Source: Bureau of the Census