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APRIL 1972

The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in April were estimated at \$35.0 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 \$35.9 billion, about 1½ percent below March but about 7 percent above April sales last year. Adjusted total February-through-April sales averaged about 2 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 March was about \$0.4 billion more than the \$36.0 billion published earlier in the March Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released April 10, 1972. The seasonally adjusted sales for March as revised were about 3 percent above February.

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 0.8 percent for the general merchandise group to percent for the Lumber 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)

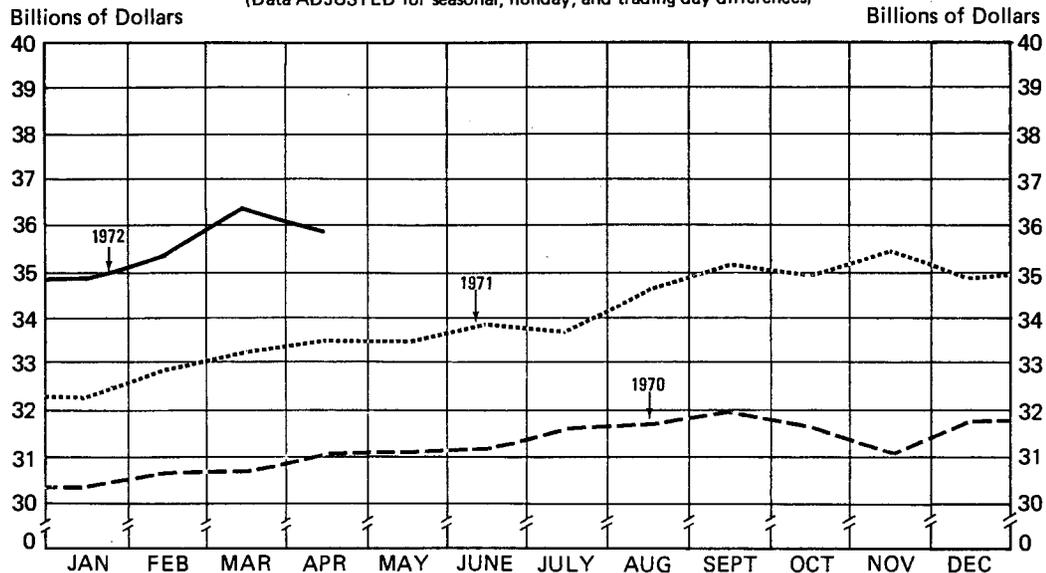


Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

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

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1972		1971
	April ¹	March ²	April
Total, retail stores ³	34,972	36,162	33,965
Total (excluding automotive group).....	27,783	28,638	27,021
Durable goods stores, total ³	11,836	12,208	11,175
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	23,136	23,954	22,790
Food group.....	7,434	7,891	7,469
Grocery stores.....	6,962	7,354	6,925
Eating and drinking places.....	2,709	2,676	2,482
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	5,527	5,716	5,367
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	5,011	5,190	4,915
Department stores.....	3,337	3,407	3,317
Apparel group.....	1,582	1,722	1,767
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,555	1,669	1,420
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	2,199	2,090	1,960
Automotive group.....	7,189	7,524	6,944
Gasoline service stations.....	2,441	2,443	2,338
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,103	1,163	1,105

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change March 1972 from--	
	1972			1971		Feb. 1972	Mar. 1971
	Apr ¹	Mar ²	Feb.	Apr.	Mar.		
Total, retail stores ³	35,853	36,402	35,345	33,578	33,274	+3	+9
Total (excluding automotive group).....	28,960	29,380	28,656	27,115	26,937	+3	+9
Durable goods stores, total ³	11,712	12,044	11,457	10,747	10,613	+5	+13
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	24,141	24,358	23,888	22,831	22,661	+2	+7
Food group.....		7,741	7,665	7,431	7,372	+1	+5
Eating and drinking places.....		2,796	2,714	2,538	2,565	+3	+9
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		6,135	5,965	5,526	5,501	+3	+12
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		5,589	5,486	5,076	4,987	+2	+12
Apparel group.....		1,756	1,741	1,712	1,709	+1	+3
Furniture and appliance group.....		1,776	1,728	1,533	1,569	+3	+13
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....		2,231	2,083	1,826	1,803	+7	+24
Automotive group.....		7,022	6,689	6,463	6,337	+5	+11
Gasoline service stations.....		2,488	2,493	2,343	2,353	0	+6
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,184	1,155	1,143	1,151	+3	+3

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	April 1972 from--		February 1972 through April 1972 from--	
	Mar. 1972	Apr. 1971	November 1971 through January 1972	February 1971 through April 1971
Total, retail stores.....	-1 ¹ / ₂	+7	+2	+8
Total (excluding automotive group).....	-1 ¹ / ₂	+7	+2	+8
Durable goods stores, total.....	-3		+1	+11
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	-1	+5 ¹ / ₂	+2	+6

Source: Bureau of the Census