



Advance Monthly Retail Sales

December 1984

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, Tuesday, January 15, 1985

CB-85-10

Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for December, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$110.8 billion, down 0.1 percent from the revised level of \$110.9 billion in November, but up 8.2 percent above a year ago. This slight decrease follows a 2.0 percent increase in November. Excluding the automotive group, total sales rose 0.5 percent in December and 8.7 percent above the previous year. The fourth quarter sales were 2.5 percent higher than the third quarter and 8.3 percent above the comparable year ago period. Total sales for the 12 months of 1984 were estimated to be \$1,295.8 billion, up 10.4 percent above the 1983 total.

Durable goods declined 0.9 percent in December primarily due to a 2.3 percent drop in the automotive group. This is the first decline in the automotive group in four months, however, compared to a year ago, sales rose 6.1 percent. The furniture group grew 2.8 percent in December, which is the fifth consecutive monthly gain. Strong holiday sales of electronics, which are included in this group, contributed to the increase. Building materials rose 2.1 percent after a revised 6.6 percent gain in November. These back-to-back increases follow four monthly declines.

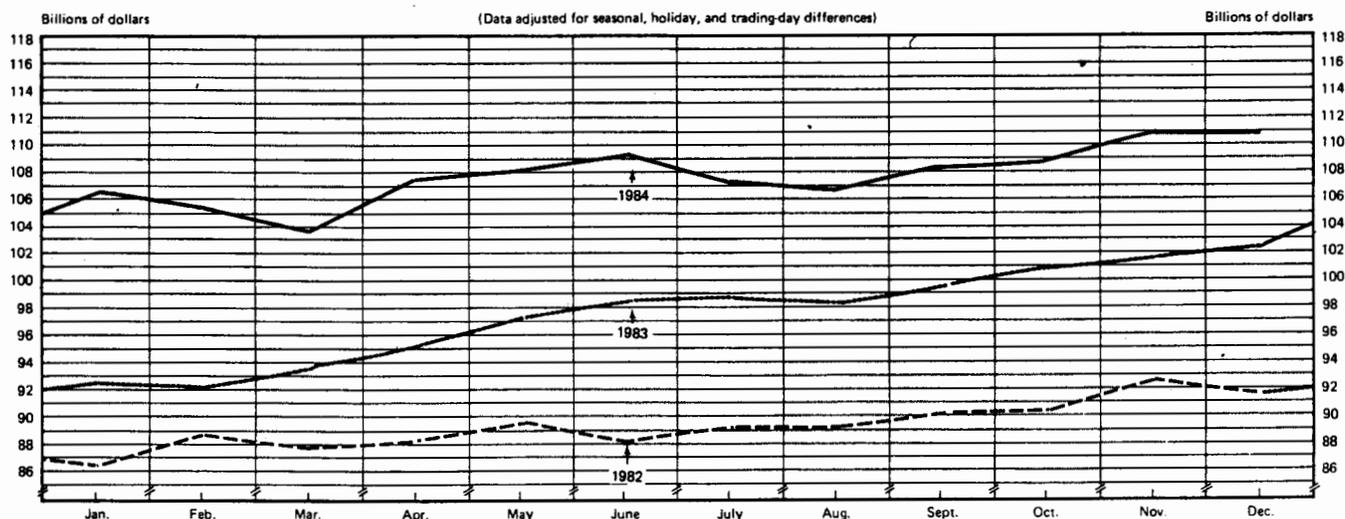
The nondurable goods group went up 0.4 percent in December and 7.4 percent above the previous year. The general merchandise group gained 1.6 percent after a revised 3.4 percent increase in November and was 11.2 above December 1983. Food store sales declined 0.9 percent in December following a gain of 1.4 percent in the previous month. Both apparel and eating and drinking increased about 1 percent in December and approximately 11 percent when compared to a year ago. Gasoline service stations declined 1.4 percent from the previous month and 0.6 percent from last year. This is the only major group showing a decline from the previous year, reflecting lower pump prices.

For a description of the sample design and reliability of the data, see back page.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for January is scheduled to be released February 13, 1985, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

January 1982-December 1984



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U.S. Department of Commerce
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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at \$37 per year. Add \$9.25 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales report are for sale by Subscriber Services (Publications), Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at 75 cents each.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted						Adjusted ¹					
		12 month total		1984			1983		1984			1983	
		1984	Percent change from 1983	Dec. advance	Nov. prelim.	Oct. final	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. advance	Nov. prelim.	Oct. final	Dec.	Nov.
	Retail trade, total.....	1,295,818	+10.4	132,965	113,784	109,229	125,759	103,865	110,815	110,900	108,733	102,438	101,896
	Total (excl. auto group)..	1,031,613	+8.3	113,310	92,418	86,560	106,849	84,829	88,350	87,895	86,211	81,274	81,610
	Durable goods, total.....	451,693	+17.3	41,171	38,392	38,880	38,188	34,002	38,934	39,294	38,413	35,532	34,641
	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	69,041	+15.3	5,483	5,839	6,175	4,863	5,103	6,099	5,975	5,604	5,293	5,188
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,366	4,676	3,294	3,740	(*)	4,406	4,120	3,826	3,751
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	862	854	1,016	832	(*)	866	837	843	826
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	264,205	+19.2	19,655	21,366	22,669	18,910	19,036	22,465	23,005	22,522	21,164	20,286
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	241,307	+20.5	17,837	19,430	20,629	16,916	17,064	20,621	21,143	20,608	19,201	18,388
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,671	18,696	15,546	15,569	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,936	2,040	1,994	1,972	(*)	1,862	1,914	1,963	1,898
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	59,360	+14.7	6,924	5,575	5,167	6,207	4,899	5,318	5,175	5,124	4,629	4,510
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,199	3,032	3,208	2,926	(*)	2,957	2,961	2,737	2,684
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,016	1,798	2,426	1,640	(*)	1,867	1,814	1,557	1,500
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	785	711	862	690	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	844,125	+7.0	91,794	75,392	70,349	87,571	69,863	71,881	71,606	70,320	66,906	67,255
53	General merchandise group stores..	157,420	+10.1	25,152	16,505	12,932	23,492	14,755	13,711	13,490	13,042	12,330	12,317
531	Department stores.....	129,384	+10.9	20,607	13,495	10,656	18,980	12,001	11,335	11,080	10,731	10,042	10,026
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	936	768	1,530	854	(*)	878	798	786	804
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,074	1,508	2,982	1,900	(*)	1,532	1,513	1,502	1,487
54	Food stores.....	275,296	+6.1	25,181	23,299	22,860	24,304	21,501	23,277	23,477	23,155	21,754	21,978
541	Grocery stores.....	258,765	+6.1	23,438	21,946	21,521	22,675	20,229	21,823	22,056	21,760	20,410	20,642
554	Gasoline service stations.....	105,002	+1.8	8,752	8,761	8,881	8,917	8,569	8,708	8,832	8,698	8,759	8,673
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	59,425	+10.0	8,459	5,700	4,889	7,910	5,169	5,177	5,125	4,859	4,665	4,676
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	901	704	1,330	810	(*)	766	702	685	696
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,345	2,038	3,100	2,081	(*)	2,116	1,986	1,888	1,895
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,309	1,073	1,985	1,154	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	850	805	1,107	836	(*)	815	785	788	793
58	Eating and drinking places.....	125,468	+8.4	10,770	10,238	10,527	9,724	9,494	10,835	10,709	10,412	9,714	9,983
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	42,461	+9.5	4,875	3,657	3,501	4,428	3,251	3,679	3,690	3,598	3,258	3,258
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,721	1,630	2,470	1,689	(*)	1,704	1,698	1,699	1,699
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	(*)	(*)	590	519	485	532	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAP ³	(*)	(*)	(*)	32,079	26,455	44,572	28,487	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

¹Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available.

²Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, ER-64-11).

³Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

⁴GAP represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Notes: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Dec. 1984 advance from--		Nov. 1984 preliminary from--		Oct. 1984 through Dec. 1984	
		Nov. 1984 prelim.	Dec. 1983 final	Oct. 1984 final	Nov. 1983 final	July 1984 through Sep. 1984	Oct. 1983 through Dec. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.1	+8.2	+2.0	+8.8	+2.5	+8.3
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+0.5	+8.7	+2.0	+7.7	+1.8	+7.5
	Durable goods, totals.....	-0.9	+9.6	+2.3	+13.4	+4.8	+12.1
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+2.1	+15.2	+6.6	+15.2	+2.1	+13.4
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-2.3	+6.1	+2.1	+13.4	+5.5	+11.3
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-2.5	+7.4	+2.6	+15.0	+6.2	+12.6
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+2.8	+14.9	+1.0	+14.7	+5.3	+14.7
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+0.4	+7.4	+1.8	+6.5	+1.3	+6.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+1.6	+11.2	+3.4	+9.5	+3.1	+9.5
531	Department stores.....	+2.3	+12.9	+3.3	+10.5	+3.3	+10.6
54	Food stores.....	-0.9	+7.0	+1.4	+6.8	+0.7	+6.4
541	Grocery stores.....	-1.1	+6.9	+1.4	+6.9	+0.4	+6.3
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-1.4	-0.6	+1.5	+1.8	+2.0	+0.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+1.0	+11.0	+5.5	+9.6	+3.5	+9.0
58	Eating and drinking places.....	+1.2	+11.5	+2.9	+7.3	+0.8	+7.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.3	+12.9	+2.6	+11.4	+2.7	+11.2

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Nov. 1984 prelim.	Oct. 1984 final	Nov. 1983	Nov. 1984 prelim.	Oct. 1984 final	Nov. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	42,125	37,336	38,368	38,415	37,551	35,648
53	General merchandise group stores.....	15,000	11,656	13,366	12,220	11,770	11,093
531	Department stores.....	12,910	10,201	11,478	10,591	10,263	9,589
533	Variety stores.....	724	583	671	667	611	622
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	1,366	872	1,217	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	12,708	12,298	11,803	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	12,543	12,144	11,648	12,505	12,404	11,874
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	2,499	2,067	2,193	2,195	2,056	1,935
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	1,095	911	939	972	894	837
566	Shoe stores.....	462	422	442	435	422	414
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	2,136	1,970	1,844	2,153	2,089	1,893

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-11).

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

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Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -1.1 percent to +1.1 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.4 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for November 1984 and final estimates for October 1984 based on the full sample will be published late this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for November (BR-84-11). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates. The complete report will include additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated coefficient of variation in percent of the advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range ¹		Median	Range ²		Mean	Average of absolute difference
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.7	0.9	0.7	-1.1	+1.1	0.0	0.4
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	0.6	1.0	0.7	-0.8	+1.3	0.0	0.6
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.0	2.2	1.4	-1.4	+3.2	+0.4	1.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	1.9	3.1	2.7	-1.5	+5.1	+1.3	2.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.4	2.2	1.8	-1.0	+4.2	+0.6	1.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	0.9	1.9	1.3	-1.3	+4.8	+0.7	1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.2	4.1	2.4	-3.5	+2.5	-0.5	1.5
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.5	0.8	0.6	-0.6	+1.2	0.0	0.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.4	0.9	0.5	-1.3	+1.0	+0.1	0.5
531	Department stores.....	0.1	0.6	0.3	-1.1	+1.0	+0.2	0.5
54	Food stores.....	0.7	1.1	0.9	-0.9	+1.3	-0.2	0.5
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.7	0.5	-0.8	+1.1	-0.2	0.5
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.6	1.1	1.0	-3.8	+3.0	-0.1	1.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.6	3.7	2.0	-3.0	+2.1	0.0	1.4
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.6	1.4	1.1	-2.4	+3.0	-0.1	1.2
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.4	1.6	0.9	-2.1	+1.5	-0.4	0.7

¹The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January-December 1983.

²The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, December 1983-November 1984. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period March 1983-February 1984.

Note: See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.