

# Advance Monthly Retail Sales



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The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$192.6 billion, a decrease of 0.4 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) from the previous month but an increase of 5.0 percent ( $\pm 1.9\%$ ) from April 1994. Total sales in the February through April period were 5.3 percent ( $\pm 1.7\%$ ) above the same period a year ago. The February to March 1995 percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ( $\pm 1.3\%$ ) to +0.8 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ).

Durable goods decreased 1.5 percent ( $\pm 2.3\%$ ) from March but were 5.2 percent above April 1994. Furniture store sales were up 9.3 percent from last year.

Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) from last month and were 4.8 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 5.1 percent from April 1994 while gasoline sales were up 7.6 percent during the same period.

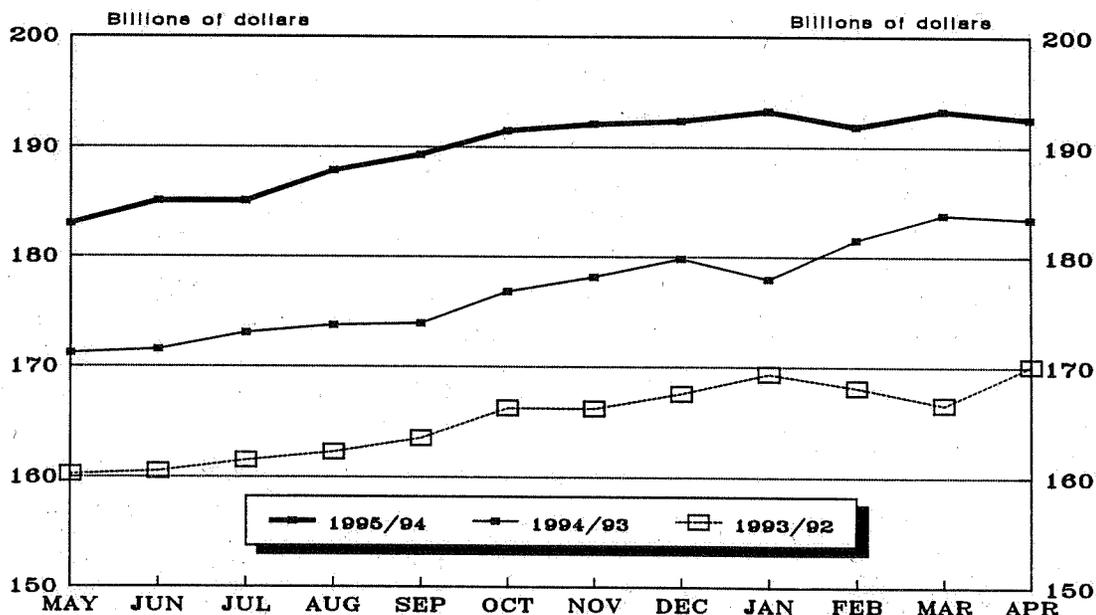
*The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.*

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for May is scheduled to be released June 13, 1995 at 8:30 a.m.

## ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES

May 1992 - April 1995

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



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This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call (202) 482-1986. The data are also available through the Census Bureau's online information service - CENDATA. CENDATA is available from Dialog Information Services, INC. (1-800-334-2564) and CompuServe (1-800-848-8199). The CENDATA staff at the Bureau of the Census (301-457-1214) can provide content information and general guidance.

**Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, By Kind of Business**

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted <sup>1</sup>				
		1995			1994		1995			1994	
		Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. <sup>2</sup> adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr. <sup>1</sup>	Mar. <sup>1</sup>
	Retail trade, total.....	188,209	193,133	164,410	181,772	184,213	192,576	193,332	191,868	183,492	183,882
	Total (excl. auto group)...	141,699	142,461	123,885	135,558	136,878	147,214	147,048	146,178	140,160	140,406
	Durable goods, total.....	75,137	79,211	64,937	73,910	73,996	75,848	76,998	76,138	72,077	71,953
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	10,710	10,009	7,774	10,842	9,543	10,328	10,583	10,427	10,077	9,976
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	7,730	6,172	7,960	7,279	(*)	8,145	8,036	7,646	7,551
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,046	845	1,268	1,083	(*)	1,127	1,118	1,188	1,160
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	46,510	50,672	40,525	46,214	47,335	45,362	46,284	45,690	43,332	43,476
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	43,673	47,835	38,189	43,441	44,553	42,525	43,447	42,909	40,637	40,688
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	41,350	33,380	38,011	39,528	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,837	2,336	2,773	2,782	(*)	2,837	2,781	2,695	2,788
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	9,501	10,183	9,033	8,878	9,229	10,395	10,537	10,527	9,511	9,506
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	4,994	4,388	4,705	4,789	(*)	5,117	5,126	4,876	4,877
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,337	3,874	3,414	3,665	(*)	4,537	4,520	3,798	3,818
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	801	669	712	726	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	113,072	113,922	99,473	107,862	110,217	116,728	116,334	115,730	111,415	111,929
53	General merchandise group stores.....	22,602	22,260	18,416	21,186	21,493	24,371	24,274	24,198	23,193	23,155
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	17,561	17,284	14,150	16,246	16,525	18,985	18,828	18,816	17,775	17,807
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	17,559	14,380	16,578	16,849	(*)	19,215	19,134	18,070	18,162
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	537	463	637	643	(*)	595	604	684	682
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,439	3,803	4,303	4,325	(*)	4,851	4,778	4,734	4,666
54	Food stores.....	33,482	33,860	30,515	32,292	33,105	33,985	33,712	33,865	32,572	32,985
541	Grocery stores.....	31,713	32,098	28,881	30,594	31,384	32,196	31,907	32,019	30,841	31,259
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,130	12,142	10,815	11,351	11,326	12,544	12,505	12,290	11,654	11,725
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,109	8,545	6,607	8,611	8,767	9,192	9,307	9,083	8,981	9,037
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	864	768	916	892	(*)	997	1,023	968	990
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,784	2,121	2,877	2,885	(*)	2,912	2,878	2,897	2,923
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,804	2,185	2,737	2,806	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,488	1,076	1,509	1,587	(*)	1,576	1,418	1,507	1,519
58	Eating and drinking places.....	19,639	20,040	17,478	18,953	18,890	19,698	19,802	19,594	18,877	18,815
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	6,984	7,062	6,542	6,596	6,901	7,083	6,992	7,004	6,676	6,759
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,705	1,499	1,735	1,694	(*)	1,816	1,795	1,811	1,802
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,999	3,186	3,513	3,782	(*)	3,932	3,839	3,873	3,752
53,56,57,594	GAF <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	46,784	39,327	44,241	45,024	(*)	50,985	50,592	48,264	48,202

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

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Revised.

<sup>1</sup>Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-95-03.

<sup>2</sup>Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

<sup>3</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

<sup>4</sup>GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

Note: 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, but not for price changes)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Apr. 1995 advance from--		Mar. 1995 preliminary from--		Feb. 1995 through Apr. 1995 from--	
		Mar. 1995 prelim.	Apr. 1994 final	Feb. 1995 final	Mar. 1994 final	Nov. 1994 through Jan. 1995	Feb. 1994 through Apr. 1994
	Retail trade, total.....	-0.4	+5.0	+0.8	+5.1	0.0	+5.3
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	+0.1	+5.0	+0.6	+4.7	+0.3	+5.0
	Durable goods, total.....	-1.5	+5.2	+1.1	+7.0	-0.8	+6.8
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-2.4	+2.5	+1.5	+6.1	-0.8	+6.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-2.0	+4.7	+1.3	+6.5	-1.1	+6.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-2.1	+4.6	+1.3	+6.8	-1.2	+6.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-1.3	+9.3	+0.1	+10.8	-1.7	+10.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	+0.3	+4.8	+0.5	+3.9	+0.5	+4.3
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+0.4	+5.1	+0.3	+4.8	+0.6	+4.9
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	+0.8	+6.8	+0.1	+5.7	+0.9	+6.3
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>1</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	+0.4	+5.8	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	+0.8	+4.3	-0.5	+2.2	-0.1	+3.2
541	Grocery stores.....	+0.9	+4.4	-0.3	+2.1	+0.1	+3.1
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+0.3	+7.6	+1.7	+6.7	+2.4	+6.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-1.2	+2.3	+2.5	+3.0	-0.2	+1.7
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.5	+4.3	+1.1	+5.2	+0.6	+5.0
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+1.3	+6.1	-0.2	+3.4	+1.5	+5.2

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

## Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

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 -1.0 percent to +0.6 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 March 1995 and final estimates for February 1995 based on the full sample are published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for March (BR-95-03). 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 margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, indicates a range about the estimate which corresponds to a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the estimate is up 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is 1.2 percentage points above or below the estimate, then the indicated range is -0.4 percent to +2.0 percent. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The Monthly Retail Trade Report includes explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability along with additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 3. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated Coefficient of variation in percent of the						Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the Advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Advance-to-preliminary ratio		Ratio to same month a year ago	Dollar volume sales est.	Ratio of current quarter to prev. quarter	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.	
		Range <sup>1</sup>		Median	Median	Median	Median	Range <sup>2</sup>		Mean	Avg. of absolute diff.
		From	To					From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.5	1.3	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.0	-1.0	+0.6	0.0	0.4
	Total (excl. auto).....	0.5	0.9	0.7	1.1	0.8	1.0	-1.6	+0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total.....	1.2	3.4	1.4	2.2	1.7	2.2	-0.9	+1.1	+0.2	0.5
52	Building materials, group stores.....	0.9	2.6	1.6	4.1	2.9	3.4	-4.2	+2.5	-0.4	1.4
55 ex. 554 551,2,5, 6,7,9	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	3.2	2.1	3.4	2.6	3.1	-1.3	+2.2	+0.6	1.1
	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.2	3.0	1.5	4.0	2.8	3.2	-1.5	+2.3	+0.5	1.1
57	Furniture, home furn., and equipment stores.....	1.3	3.6	2.1	4.6	3.4	4.1	-3.4	+2.3	-0.1	1.5
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.4	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.8	1.1	-1.1	+0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5	-0.3	+0.7	+0.1	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.4	+0.6	-0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	0.6	1.0	0.7	1.7	0.9	1.7	-0.5	+0.8	+0.1	0.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.1	0.8	0.3	1.8	0.9	1.7	-0.6	+0.5	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.5	1.9	0.9	2.7	1.8	3.0	-1.4	+1.2	-0.4	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.8	3.4	1.4	3.3	2.8	2.6	-2.4	+1.3	-0.4	1.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	2.0	1.2	4.6	4.0	3.9	-3.6	+2.4	0.0	1.0
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.4	1.8	1.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	-1.0	+1.3	+0.2	0.6

<sup>1</sup>The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of April 1993 - March 1994.

<sup>2</sup>The 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, April 1994 - March 1995. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the period April 1993 - February 1994.

Note: Coefficients of variation for the ratio of current quarter to current quarter a-year-ago estimates are approximately the same as those for the ratio of current quarter to previous quarter. See appendix B, Reliability of Data in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion of the measures of sampling variability.

