

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
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**ECONOMICS
AND
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ADMINISTRATION**

**BUREAU OF THE
CENSUS**

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INTENTION TO REVISE ESTIMATES. The annual revision of the monthly retail sales estimates will be published in the press release the week of April 28. The estimates will be revised for the months of January 1997 through March 1997.

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EDT, Friday, April 11, 1997

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
March 1997**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$215.6 billion, an increase of 0.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 5.7 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from March 1996. Total sales for the first quarter were 6.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above the same quarter a year ago. The January 1997 to February 1997 percent change was revised from +0.8 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +1.5 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$).

Durable goods increased 0.1 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from February and were 6.4 percent above March 1996.

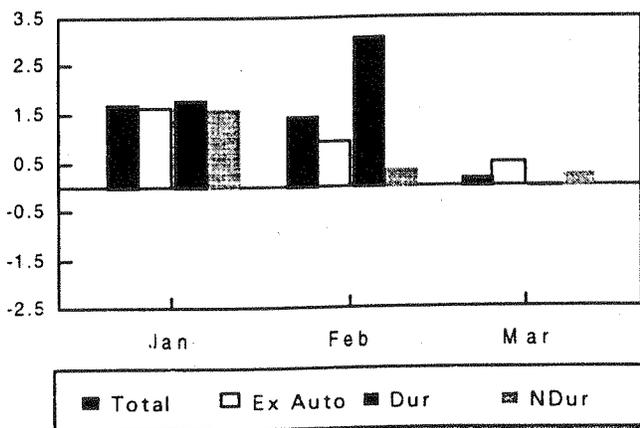
Nondurable goods increased 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from February and were 5.3 percent above March 1996.

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.

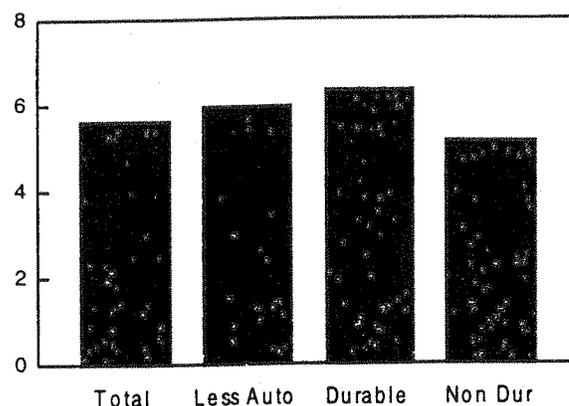
Percent Change in Retail Sales

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

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 13, 1997 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

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 on the internet - <http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

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

(In Millions of Dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1997			1996		1997			1996	
		Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail trade, total	212,867	185,606	187,656	201,334	181,901	215,569	215,136	211,957	203,869	202,425
	Total (excl. auto group)...	156,698	137,025	141,224	147,447	134,156	162,014	161,247	159,789	152,794	151,689
	Durable goods, total.....	88,948	76,934	75,056	83,755	74,500	89,276	89,225	86,517	83,887	82,752
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	10,995	8,747	8,771	9,671	8,151	11,861	11,670	11,416	10,560	10,442
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores.....	(*)	6,960	6,875	7,574	6,440	(*)	9,051	8,769	8,197	8,000
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	934	1,056	1,048	934	(*)	1,247	1,257	1,137	1,197
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	56,169	48,581	46,432	53,887	47,745	53,555	53,889	52,168	51,075	50,736
551.2.5, 6.7.9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	53,247	46,022	43,704	50,884	45,079	50,567	50,853	49,106	48,004	47,703
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	39,642	38,398	44,162	39,527	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	2,559	2,728	3,003	2,666	(*)	3,036	3,062	3,071	3,033
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	11,414	10,255	10,652	10,883	9,891	11,927	11,904	11,517	11,409	11,076
571	Furniture and home furnishings....	(*)	5,142	5,299	5,420	4,826	(*)	6,028	5,868	5,634	5,453
5722.31.4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	4,382	4,583	4,583	4,247	(*)	5,025	4,799	4,845	4,708
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	632	673	664	593	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	123,919	108,672	112,600	117,579	107,401	126,293	125,911	125,440	119,982	119,673
53	General merchandise group stores...	25,316	21,147	20,547	23,129	20,413	27,490	27,408	27,060	25,316	25,382
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	19,887	16,422	15,792	17,949	15,706	21,640	21,495	21,169	19,659	19,756
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	16,671	16,031	18,326	16,037	(*)	21,632	21,354	20,017	20,019
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	608	540	628	555	(*)	773	732	688	665
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,117	4,215	4,552	4,152	(*)	5,140	5,159	4,969	4,961
54	Food stores.....	36,297	32,477	35,233	35,079	32,674	36,168	35,971	35,930	34,924	34,805
541	Grocery stores.....	34,329	30,678	33,442	33,269	31,000	34,158	33,936	33,951	33,071	32,979
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,988	11,850	12,737	12,660	11,435	13,390	13,497	13,652	12,985	12,580
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,477	7,158	6,911	8,796	7,352	9,730	9,668	9,643	9,245	9,536
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	673	737	742	684	(*)	866	889	829	849
562.3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,100	1,992	2,557	2,194	(*)	2,781	2,806	2,625	2,798
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	2,563	2,512	3,221	2,646	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,298	1,158	1,587	1,279	(*)	1,697	1,597	1,587	1,595
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,490	18,278	18,724	20,106	18,347	20,470	20,491	20,508	19,789	19,813
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,167	7,458	7,743	7,355	6,961	8,015	7,951	7,829	7,311	7,154
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,686	1,747	1,860	1,674	(*)	2,026	1,981	1,956	1,938
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	3,409	3,790	3,749	3,388	(*)	4,117	4,011	3,909	3,963
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	45,118	44,633	49,331	43,827	(*)	57,442	56,446	53,839	53,679

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

NA Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) 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-97-02.

(2) 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.

(3) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

(4) 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 ¹					
		Mar. 1997 Advance from --		Feb. 1997 Preliminary from --		Jan. 1997 through Mar. 1997 from --	
		Feb. 1997 (p)	Mar. 1996 (r)	Jan. 1997 (r)	Feb. 1996 (r)	Oct. 1996 through Dec. 1996	Jan. 1996 through Mar. 1996
	Retail trade, total	0.2	5.7	1.5	6.3	3.1	6.2
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.5	6.0	0.9	6.3	2.7	6.2
	Durable goods, total	0.1	6.4	3.1	7.8	4.2	7.2
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.6	12.3	2.2	11.8	4.2	11.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-0.6	4.9	3.3	6.2	4.5	5.9
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-0.6	5.3	3.6	6.6	4.9	6.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.2	4.5	3.4	7.5	3.1	5.8
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.3	5.3	0.4	5.2	2.4	5.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.3	8.6	1.3	8.0	4.9	8.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.7	10.1	1.5	8.8	5.0	9.3
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	1.3	8.1	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.5	3.6	0.1	3.4	0.7	3.2
541	Grocery stores.....	0.7	3.3	0.0	2.9	0.4	2.9
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.8	3.1	-1.1	7.3	1.5	6.3
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.6	5.2	0.3	1.4	3.6	3.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.1	3.4	-0.1	3.4	1.9	3.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.8	9.6	1.6	11.1	3.6	10.3

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

(2) 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

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 each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$ or $\pm 1.5\%$, and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value).

Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average difference

between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total.....	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.3
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.4	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.8	1.1	2.7	0.7	1.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.1	0.9	1.6	0.5	0.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.5	0.6
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	1.9	1.0	0.7	1.6	0.0	0.4
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.2
554	Gasoline service stations	2.1	1.1	1.4	1.1	0.2	0.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores	2.2	1.8	0.7	1.8	0.4	1.0
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	1.0	2.2	0.1	0.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.7	0.4	1.1	0.3	0.5

- (1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.
- (2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.

