

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Wednesday October 14, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES  
September 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for September adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$224.9 billion, an increase of 0.3 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the previous month and up 4.3 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from September 1997. Total sales for the third quarter were up 4.1 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) from the same quarter a year ago. The July to August percent change was revised from +0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) to unchanged ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

Durable goods increased 0.6 percent ( $\pm 1.4\%$ ) from August and were 5.7 percent above last year. Building materials were up 9.3 percent from September a year ago, while furniture sales were up 8.7 percent during the same period.

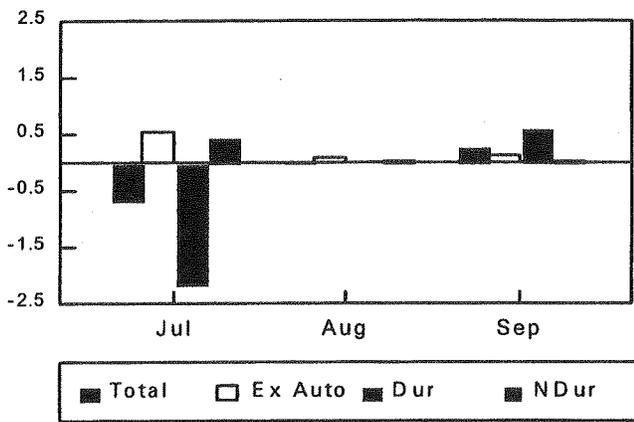
Nondurable goods increased 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.6\%$ ) from last month and were 3.4 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 6.1 percent from September a year ago while food sales were up 3.8 percent during the same period.

*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.*

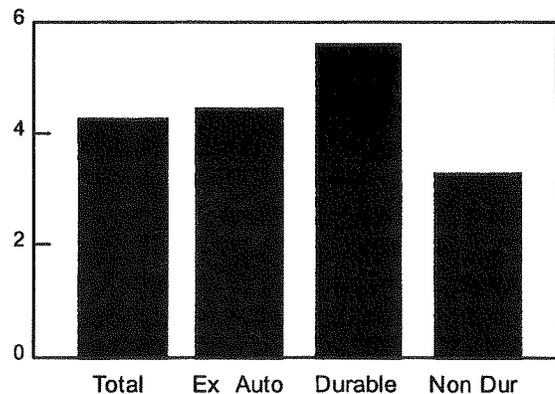
**Percent Change in Retail Sales**

(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 October is scheduled to be released November 13, 1998 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Service Sector Statistics 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 <sup>1</sup>				
		1998			1997		1998			1997	
		Sept. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept.	Aug.	Sept. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept. (r)	Aug. (r)
	<b>Retail trade, total.....</b>	<b>218,305</b>	<b>227,551</b>	<b>228,618</b>	<b>208,727</b>	<b>221,896</b>	<b>224,935</b>	<b>224,247</b>	<b>224,153</b>	<b>215,599</b>	<b>216,391</b>
	Total (excl. auto group).....	163,893	172,050	170,877	156,289	166,154	170,571	170,377	170,239	163,166	162,883
	<b>Durable goods, total.....</b>	<b>93,101</b>	<b>95,424</b>	<b>97,948</b>	<b>88,159</b>	<b>92,552</b>	<b>93,774</b>	<b>93,214</b>	<b>93,235</b>	<b>88,711</b>	<b>89,612</b>
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	14,631	14,429	15,495	13,449	13,141	13,829	13,772	13,810	12,657	12,498
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	11,154	12,027	10,455	10,191	(*)	10,563	10,606	9,771	9,623
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,328	1,373	1,225	1,280	(*)	1,296	1,270	1,254	1,248
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	54,412	55,501	57,741	52,438	55,742	54,364	53,870	53,914	52,433	53,508
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	51,155	52,040	54,152	49,229	52,287	51,155	50,623	50,657	49,278	50,276
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	44,215	45,481	42,724	45,094	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,481	3,589	3,209	3,455	(*)	3,247	3,257	3,155	3,232
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	12,843	13,434	13,022	11,908	12,453	13,378	13,402	13,399	12,307	12,424
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	6,399	6,396	5,946	6,223	(*)	6,267	6,364	6,006	6,077
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	6,103	5,779	5,101	5,349	(*)	6,158	6,070	5,364	5,430
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	924	1,006	823	882	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>125,204</b>	<b>132,127</b>	<b>130,672</b>	<b>120,568</b>	<b>129,344</b>	<b>131,161</b>	<b>131,033</b>	<b>130,918</b>	<b>126,888</b>	<b>126,779</b>
53	General merchandise group stores....	26,513	29,070	27,374	24,753	27,989	29,557	29,365	29,332	27,869	27,987
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	20,732	22,985	21,346	19,399	22,099	23,294	23,194	23,152	21,945	22,055
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	23,392	21,717	19,763	22,531	(*)	23,628	23,568	22,248	22,490
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	928	933	914	1,008	(*)	951	970	1,018	1,021
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	5,157	5,095	4,440	4,882	(*)	5,220	5,210	4,906	4,911
54	Food stores.....	36,578	37,753	38,694	34,792	36,940	37,400	37,288	37,027	36,024	35,924
541	Grocery stores.....	34,309	35,407	36,295	32,616	34,631	35,009	34,918	34,633	33,729	33,622
554	Gasoline service stations.....	12,269	13,207	13,583	13,390	14,138	12,343	12,448	12,694	13,390	13,250
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	9,934	11,199	9,887	9,375	10,874	10,348	10,480	10,520	9,867	10,057
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	957	852	803	889	(*)	1,015	994	903	931
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,562	2,452	2,476	2,603	(*)	2,614	2,686	2,595	2,643
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	4,395	3,935	3,540	4,188	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	2,144	1,763	1,620	2,096	(*)	1,772	1,761	1,677	1,712
58	Eating and drinking places.....	20,252	21,706	21,603	19,522	21,339	20,581	20,420	20,419	19,880	19,813
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,396	8,629	8,661	7,885	7,960	8,913	8,923	8,838	8,353	8,206
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	2,084	2,169	1,885	2,075	(*)	2,057	2,039	2,001	1,993
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,025	4,140	4,188	3,527	(*)	4,686	4,748	4,322	4,135
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	61,643	57,693	52,995	58,895	(*)	61,458	61,558	57,853	58,210

\* 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-98-08.
- (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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Sept. 1998 Advance from --		Aug. 1998 Preliminary from --		July 1998 through Sept. 1998 from --	
		Aug. 1998 (p)	Sept. 1997 (r)	July 1998 (r)	Aug. 1997 (r)	Apr. 1998 through June 1998	July 1997 through Sept. 1997
	<b>Retail trade, total .....</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>4.1</b>
	Total (excl. automotive group) .....	0.1	4.5	0.1	4.6	1.0	4.7
	<b>Durable goods, total .....</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>-1.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers ....	0.4	9.3	-0.3	10.2	0.2	9.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	0.9	3.7	-0.1	0.7	-3.2	2.3
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	1.1	3.8	-0.1	0.7	-3.4	2.4
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.2	8.7	0.0	7.9	2.6	8.7
	<b>Nondurable goods, total.....</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>3.4</b>
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.7	6.1	0.1	4.9	0.0	5.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.4	6.1	0.2	5.2	-0.2	5.7
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) <sup>2</sup> .....	(NA)	(NA)	0.3	5.1	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.3	3.8	0.7	3.8	1.3	3.7
541	Grocery stores.....	0.3	3.8	0.8	3.9	1.4	3.7
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.8	-7.8	-1.9	-6.1	0.2	-5.7
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-1.3	4.9	-0.4	4.2	0.4	4.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	3.5	0.0	3.1	0.3	3.3
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.1	6.7	1.0	8.7	1.9	7.6

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 <sup>1</sup> for Current M o. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error <sup>1</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>2</sup>	
			Current M o. to Previous M o.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current M o. to Current M o. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail trade, total</b> .....	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	0.4
	<b>Durable goods, total</b> .....	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores .....	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and m isc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores .....	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	<b>Nondurable goods, total</b> .....	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.).....	0.4	0.5	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	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations .....	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores .....	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places .....	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores .....	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	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.