

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday September 14, 1999

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
AUGUST 1999**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for August adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$252.4 billion, an increase of 1.2 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 10.6 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from August 1998. Total sales for the June through August period were up 9.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The June to July 1999 percent change was revised from +0.7 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +1.0 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods increased 1.8 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from July and were 14.1 percent above last year. Automotive sales were up 19.3 percent from August a year ago, while building materials sales were up 10.8 percent during the same period.

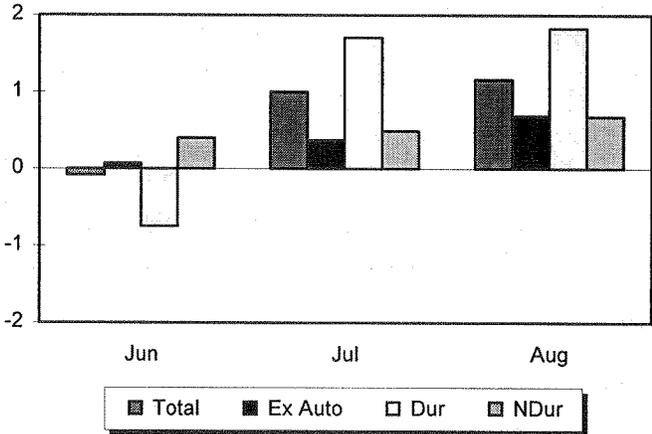
Nondurable goods increased 0.7 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from July and were up 8.1 percent from August 1998. Gasoline sales were up 14.2 percent from August a year ago.

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.

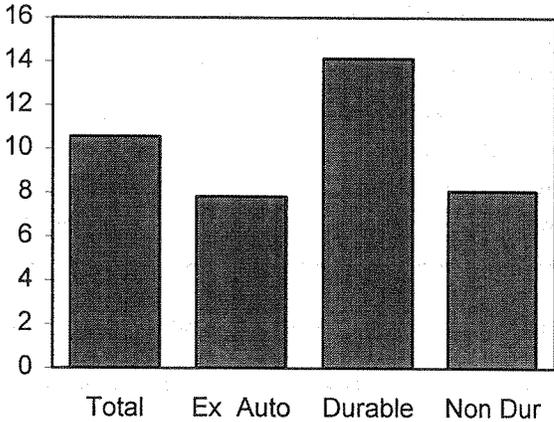
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(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 September is scheduled to be released October 14, 1999 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Pienycoski, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 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 and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted						Adjusted ¹					
		8 month total		1999			1998		1999			1998	
		1999	Change from 1998	Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug.	July	Aug. ² (a)	July (p)	June (r)	Aug. (r)	July (r)
	Retail trade, total	1,926,457	8.6	256,098	254,770	252,188	231,685	232,611	252,390	249,498	247,028	228,277	228,067
	Total (excl. auto dealers).....	1,422,576	7.6	188,359	187,851	184,583	175,613	174,451	187,588	186,307	185,617	173,975	173,609
	Durable goods, total	824,649	10.3	110,493	109,621	110,911	95,851	98,245	106,784	104,870	103,109	93,559	93,616
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.	122,129	11.6	16,017	16,789	17,538	14,329	15,448	15,168	15,005	14,976	13,684	13,778
521.3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	12,848	12,997	10,918	11,784	(*)	11,340	11,341	10,368	10,401
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,387	1,447	1,273	1,316	(*)	1,275	1,277	1,240	1,214
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	503,881	11.5	67,739	66,919	67,605	56,072	58,160	64,802	63,191	61,411	54,302	54,458
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	478,308	11.9	64,362	63,473	64,185	52,787	54,745	61,649	60,050	58,244	51,200	51,356
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)...	(*)	(*)	(*)	54,257	54,569	45,304	46,590	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,446	3,420	3,285	3,415	(*)	3,141	3,167	3,102	3,102
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	101,664	7.4	13,686	13,262	12,934	12,813	12,413	13,631	13,537	13,572	12,783	12,713
571	Furniture and home furnishings	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,242	6,194	5,992	5,978	(*)	6,205	6,276	5,892	5,960
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,106	5,827	5,844	5,547	(*)	6,295	6,272	5,867	5,742
5722	Household appliance stores.	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,148	1,056	946	1,030	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total	1,101,808	7.3	145,605	145,149	141,277	135,834	134,366	145,606	144,628	143,919	134,718	134,451
53	General merchandise group stores.	229,265	8.6	30,862	29,620	30,182	28,903	27,217	31,857	31,755	31,591	29,354	29,183
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)..	178,363	7.8	24,061	22,893	23,344	22,830	21,193	24,882	24,857	24,729	23,131	22,986
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³ ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,334	23,829	23,311	21,633	(*)	25,290	25,162	23,536	23,491
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,082	1,085	893	899	(*)	1,132	1,155	937	941
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,645	5,753	5,180	5,125	(*)	5,766	5,707	5,286	5,256
54	Food stores.....	301,454	4.7	38,465	40,303	38,001	37,336	38,293	38,416	38,305	38,152	36,875	36,626
541	Grocery stores.....	285,788	4.9	36,490	38,290	35,989	35,396	36,300	36,417	36,294	36,134	34,907	34,637
554	Gasoline service stations.....	115,268	6.0	16,367	16,189	15,171	14,288	14,716	15,339	15,018	14,435	13,429	13,689
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	82,466	6.7	12,011	10,772	10,568	11,423	10,119	11,417	11,274	11,374	10,627	10,710
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	858	931	907	812	(*)	967	988	938	928
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,819	2,941	2,783	2,668	(*)	3,041	3,064	2,834	2,913
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,314	4,042	4,452	3,986	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,805	1,788	2,164	1,793	(*)	1,773	1,795	1,788	1,789
58	Eating and drinking places.....	188,994	7.2	25,089	25,445	24,231	23,460	23,314	23,826	23,803	23,663	22,153	22,078
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	76,873	11.5	9,646	9,656	9,766	8,718	8,743	9,975	9,883	9,965	9,006	8,931
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,416	2,230	2,092	2,177	(*)	2,247	2,241	2,080	2,062
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,311	6,507	5,438	5,517	(*)	7,155	7,279	6,243	6,220
53,56,57, 594	GAF ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	61,400	61,584	61,032	57,088	(*)	65,221	65,161	60,943	60,824

* 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-99-07.

(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					
		Aug. 1999 Advance from --		July 1999 Preliminary from --		June 1999 through Aug. 1999 from --	
		July 1999 (p)	Aug. 1998 (r)	June 1999 (r)	July 1998 (r)	Mar. 1999 through May 1999	June 1998 through Aug. 1998
	Retail trade, total	1.2	10.6	1.0	9.4	1.8	9.1
	Total (excl. automotive dealers)	0.7	7.8	0.4	7.3	1.0	7.6
	Durable goods, total	1.8	14.1	1.7	12.0	2.2	11.1
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1.1	10.8	0.2	8.9	-1.2	9.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	2.5	19.3	2.9	16.0	4.3	14.1
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	2.7	20.4	3.1	16.9	4.6	14.8
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	0.7	6.6	-0.3	6.5	1.1	7.1
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.7	8.1	0.5	7.6	1.6	7.7
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.3	8.5	0.5	8.8	1.2	8.4
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.1	7.6	0.5	8.1	1.1	7.7
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.5	7.7	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.3	4.2	0.4	4.6	0.8	4.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.3	4.3	0.4	4.8	0.9	4.6
554	Gasoline service stations.....	2.1	14.2	4.0	9.7	4.5	10.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.3	7.4	-0.9	5.3	0.1	6.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.1	7.6	0.6	7.8	1.2	7.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	0.9	10.8	-0.8	10.7	1.8	11.5

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.....	7.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. auto dealers)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.3
	Durable goods, total	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	0.3	1.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.1	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.1	0.5
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	0.6
	Nondurable goods, total.....	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.3
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.5	1.0
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	-0.1	0.9
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.0	0.3



(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 are based on the latest 12 months of data.