

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Tuesday, September 14, 2004

**ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES
August 2004**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$335.2 billion, a decrease of 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month, but up 4.9 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from August 2003. Total sales for the June through August 2004 period were up 6.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The June to July 2004 percent change was revised from +0.7 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) to +0.8 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

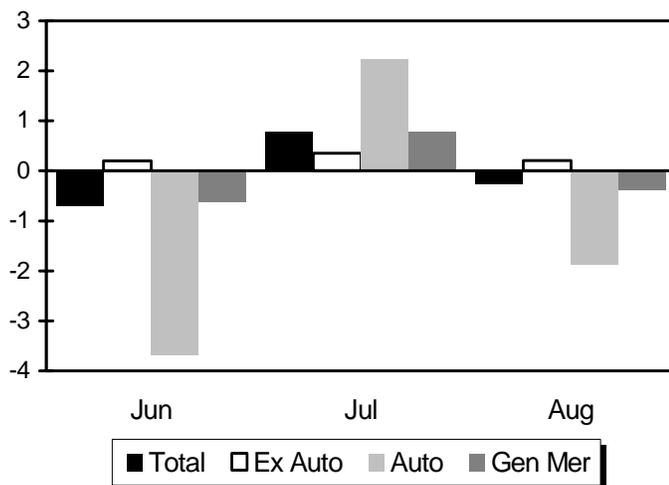
Retail trade sales were down 0.3 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from July 2004, but were 4.7 percent ($\pm 1.2\%$) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 15.8 percent ($\pm 2.1\%$) from August 2003 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 14.5 percent ($\pm 3.8\%$) from last year.

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.

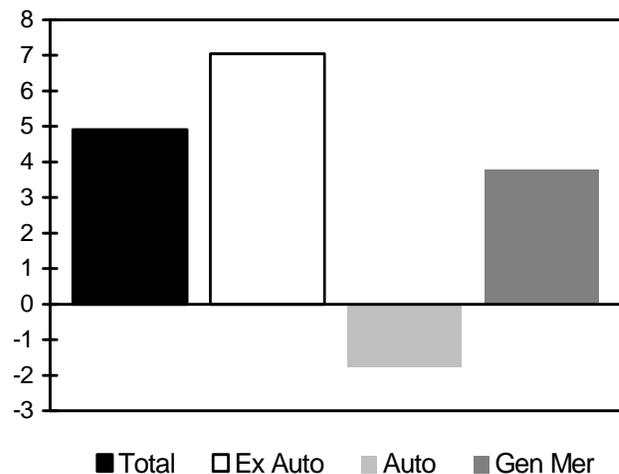
Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

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

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for September is scheduled to be released October 15, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-763-2713.

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/retail>.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Total sales estimates are shown in millions of dollars and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted ²				
		8 Month Total		2004			2003		2004			2003	
		2004	% Chg. 2003	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug.	Jul.	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug. (r)	Jul. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	2,637,028	7.8	345,573	346,800	339,295	330,313	323,056	335,239	336,137	333,543	319,550	315,123
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,001,977	9.0	262,602	261,196	257,603	247,428	239,460	259,124	258,572	257,672	242,064	239,216
	Retail	2,377,181	7.6	311,543	311,933	306,413	297,743	291,792	302,737	303,551	301,306	289,025	285,205
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	81,101	79,347	83,421	75,707	(*)	85,071	84,377	81,664	80,642
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	635,051	4.3	82,971	85,604	81,692	82,885	83,596	76,115	77,565	75,871	77,486	75,907
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	578,282	4.2	75,488	78,083	74,227	75,698	76,199	69,128	70,536	68,920	70,680	69,146
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	65,005	61,091	63,981	63,916	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,521	7,465	7,187	7,397	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	67,016	8.1	8,979	8,943	8,533	8,527	8,225	8,794	8,872	8,698	8,303	8,233
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,930	4,661	4,572	4,319	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,013	3,872	3,955	3,906	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	62,735	10.0	8,519	8,018	7,968	8,095	7,437	8,531	8,524	8,490	8,054	7,955
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,721	5,712	5,758	5,290	(*)	6,093	6,135	5,752	5,676
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,297	2,256	2,337	2,147	(*)	2,431	2,355	2,302	2,279
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	245,831	15.8	32,077	32,716	35,571	27,820	29,820	30,688	30,570	30,769	27,347	27,300
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	29,368	30,996	25,206	26,346	(*)	27,345	27,601	24,167	24,038
445	Food & beverage stores	347,299	4.2	43,929	46,032	43,752	43,468	43,847	43,997	43,727	43,802	42,492	42,358
4451	Grocery stores	312,659	3.7	39,457	41,187	39,203	39,071	39,523	39,457	39,151	39,242	38,193	38,150
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,999	2,764	2,809	2,758	(*)	2,813	2,803	2,725	2,680
446	Health & personal care stores	133,955	7.0	16,900	16,733	16,752	15,981	15,955	17,140	16,971	16,990	16,274	16,165
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,157	14,229	13,465	13,484	(*)	14,461	14,490	13,810	13,759
447	Gasoline stations	205,115	14.3	27,853	28,248	27,415	24,338	23,408	26,104	26,035	26,134	22,535	21,836
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	114,500	7.1	15,407	14,598	14,219	15,466	13,766	15,436	15,654	15,627	15,071	15,054
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	860	885	938	762	(*)	956	941	893	868
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,683	2,870	2,691	2,539	(*)	2,952	2,993	2,827	2,843
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,430	4,956	5,557	5,097	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,916	1,795	2,406	1,859	(*)	1,901	1,897	1,939	1,893
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	49,658	3.8	7,558	6,269	6,147	7,341	5,897	7,011	6,912	6,785	6,760	6,589
452	General merchandise stores	311,914	7.2	40,920	40,266	39,541	40,347	37,350	41,626	41,790	41,467	40,105	39,471
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	129,080	-0.6	17,108	16,339	16,187	18,125	16,344	17,482	17,628	17,608	18,084	17,972
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,525	16,389	18,338	16,544	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,927	23,354	22,222	21,006	(*)	24,162	23,859	22,021	21,499
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,589	20,027	19,000	17,820	(*)	20,692	20,415	18,682	18,184
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,338	3,327	3,222	3,186	(*)	3,470	3,444	3,339	3,315
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	71,464	6.0	9,523	8,960	9,085	9,043	8,540	9,229	9,160	9,122	8,822	8,725
454	Nonstore retailers	132,643	12.0	16,907	15,546	15,738	14,432	13,951	18,066	17,771	17,551	15,776	15,612
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	10,317	10,453	9,569	9,446	(*)	11,300	11,216	10,137	10,124
722	Food services & drinking places ...	259,847	10.0	34,030	34,867	32,882	32,570	31,264	32,502	32,586	32,237	30,525	29,918

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

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

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html>

(2) Estimates are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variation and for holiday and trading day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-12 ARIMA program. The factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted estimates shown in this table. Year-to-date seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated. Adjustment factors and explanatory material can be found on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>

(3) Advance estimates are based on early reports obtained from a small sample of firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) sample. All other estimates are from the MRTS sample.

(4) GAFO represents firms which specialize in department store types of merchandise and is comprised of furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances (443), clothing & accessories(448), sporting goods, hobby, book, and music (451), general merchandise(452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores(4532).

(5) Estimates include data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line are not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Individuals who use estimates in this report to create new estimates should cite the Census Bureau as the source of only the original estimates. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>

Table 2. Estimated Change in Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Aug. 2004 Advance from --		Jul. 2004 Preliminary from --		Jun. 2004 through Aug. 2004 from --	
		Jul. 2004 (p)	Aug. 2003 (r)	Jun. 2004 (r)	Jul. 2003 (r)	Mar. 2004 through May 2004	Jun. 2003 through Aug. 2003
	Retail & food services, total	-0.3	4.9	0.8	6.7	0.4	6.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.2	7.0	0.3	8.1	1.0	8.0
	Retail	-0.3	4.7	0.7	6.4	0.3	5.9
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-1.9	-1.8	2.2	2.2	-1.6	0.2
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-2.0	-2.2	2.3	2.0	-1.7	-0.1
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-0.9	5.9	2.0	7.8	2.5	6.5
443	Electronics & appliance stores	0.1	5.9	0.4	7.2	1.0	7.2
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	0.4	12.2	-0.6	12.0	-0.4	13.2
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.6	3.5	-0.2	3.2	0.5	3.6
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	3.3	-0.2	2.6	0.5	3.1
446	Health & personal care stores	1.0	5.3	-0.1	5.0	1.1	5.7
447	Gasoline stations	0.3	15.8	-0.4	19.2	3.1	19.0
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-1.4	2.4	0.2	4.0	-1.2	3.8
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	1.4	3.7	1.9	4.9	2.6	3.4
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.4	3.8	0.8	5.9	0.1	5.3
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.8	-3.3	0.1	-1.9	-1.4	-2.2
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	0.8	4.6	0.4	5.0	-0.5	4.6
454	Nonstore retailers	1.7	14.5	1.3	13.8	5.1	13.8
722	Food services & drinking places	-0.3	6.5	1.1	8.9	1.1	7.9

(p) Preliminary estimates. (r) Revised estimates.

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Individuals who use estimates in this report to create new estimates should cite the Census Bureau as the source of only the original estimates. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,000 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Firms responding to MARTS account for approximately 65% of the total national sales estimate. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. The change in sales from the previous month is estimated using only units that have reported

data for both the current and previous month. There is no imputation or adjustment for nonrespondents in MARTS. The total sales estimate is derived by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS sample). Detailed industry estimates are summed to derive total estimates at broad industry levels. The monthly estimates are adjusted using annual survey estimates and for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <http://www.census.gov/econ/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is 90-percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.5 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.3 percent to +2.7 percent. If the interval contains 0, then

one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the estimated change is different from zero. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of business	Median CV ⁽¹⁾ for Current Mo.	Median standard error ⁽¹⁾ for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change ⁽²⁾	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Retail	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.7	1.4	0.7	1.7	0.1	0.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1.9	1.5	0.7	1.8	0.1	0.4
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.8	1.3	1.1	2.0	0.2	0.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.8	0.6	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.2
444	Building material & garden eq. &....						
	supplies dealers	2.0	1.0	0.8	1.4	0.3	0.4
445	Food & beverage stores	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.4	0.4	1.2	0.2	0.2
447	Gasoline stations	1.6	0.7	0.5	1.3	0.6	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories						
	stores	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.1	-0.1	0.3
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	2.8	1.8	1.3	2.0	0.2	0.5
452	General merchandise stores	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.7	3.4	1.8	3.9	0.4	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	3.8	1.7	1.0	2.3	0.6	0.7
722	Food services & drinking places ..	2.4	0.7	0.7	1.4	0.4	0.4



- (1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading-day differences. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.
- (2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median differences are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

Note: Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts/html>