

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Friday, October 15, 2004

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

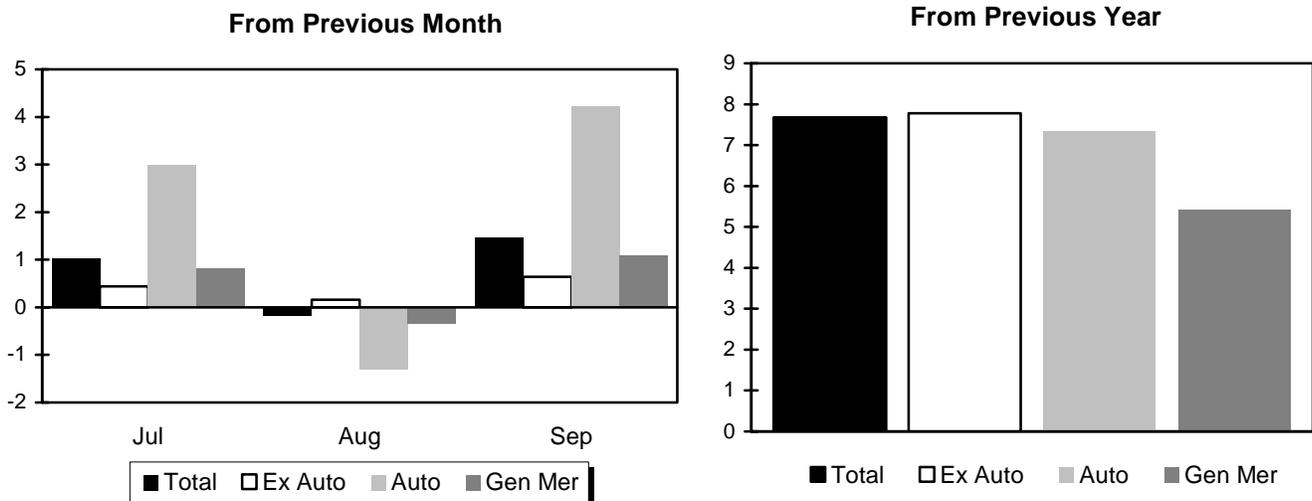
The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for September, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$341.3 billion, an increase of 1.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 7.7 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) from September 2003. Total sales for the July through September 2004 period were up 6.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The July to August 2004 percent change was revised from -0.3 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) to -0.2 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

Retail trade sales were up 1.5 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from August 2004 and were 7.5 percent ($\pm 1.0\%$) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 15.1 percent ($\pm 2.1\%$) from September 2003 and sales of building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 14.4 percent ($\pm 2.3\%$) 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)



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for October is scheduled to be released November 12, 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				
		9 Month Total		2004			2003		2004			2003	
		2004	% Chg. 2003	Sep. ³ (a)	Aug. (p)	Jul. (r)	Sep.	Aug.	Sep. ³ (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sep. (r)	Aug. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	2,968,496	7.8	331,968	345,103	346,770	306,836	330,313	341,273	336,354	336,944	316,937	320,843
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,253,038	8.9	251,464	262,154	261,241	231,710	247,428	260,895	259,238	258,811	242,057	242,428
	Retail	2,676,887	7.6	300,091	311,191	311,900	277,707	297,743	308,612	303,933	304,355	287,092	290,318
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	84,598	81,123	74,079	83,421	(*)	84,612	85,059	81,543	81,881
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	715,458	4.6	80,504	82,949	85,529	75,126	82,885	80,378	77,116	78,133	74,880	78,415
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	651,559	4.5	73,370	75,463	78,015	68,160	75,698	73,370	70,133	71,117	67,956	71,616
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	63,151	64,939	57,831	63,981	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,486	7,514	6,966	7,187	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	75,412	7.5	8,440	8,931	8,947	8,186	8,527	8,701	8,739	8,867	8,413	8,303
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,854	4,937	4,305	4,572	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,077	4,010	3,881	3,955	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	70,442	9.2	7,825	8,407	8,012	7,498	8,095	8,496	8,456	8,522	8,133	8,080
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,003	5,715	5,142	5,758	(*)	6,101	6,086	5,758	5,775
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,404	2,297	2,356	2,337	(*)	2,355	2,436	2,375	2,305
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	278,158	15.7	31,974	32,346	32,800	28,039	27,820	31,480	31,032	30,814	27,527	27,405
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	29,555	29,453	25,645	25,206	(*)	27,673	27,552	24,377	24,190
445	Food & beverage stores	390,790	4.4	43,521	43,974	45,957	41,093	43,468	44,346	44,136	43,731	42,615	42,535
4451	Grocery stores	351,856	3.9	39,243	39,480	41,118	37,038	39,071	39,800	39,559	39,160	38,262	38,230
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,747	2,995	2,597	2,809	(*)	2,809	2,810	2,760	2,730
446	Health & personal care stores	150,257	6.7	16,459	16,778	16,698	15,721	15,981	17,127	17,051	16,935	16,325	16,291
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,166	14,122	13,497	13,465	(*)	14,544	14,425	13,958	13,824
447	Gasoline stations	231,507	14.5	26,462	27,738	28,293	22,879	24,338	26,097	26,070	26,101	22,675	22,577
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	128,898	7.0	14,239	15,553	14,611	13,544	15,466	15,682	15,559	15,665	15,081	15,092
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	977	864	797	938	(*)	951	950	898	889
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,744	2,681	2,720	2,691	(*)	2,954	2,976	2,881	2,833
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,709	5,438	4,846	5,557	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,234	1,913	1,754	2,406	(*)	1,854	1,898	1,917	1,940
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	55,794	3.2	6,421	7,272	6,270	6,226	7,341	6,875	6,906	6,875	6,659	6,874
452	General merchandise stores	350,092	7.3	38,226	40,872	40,266	35,454	40,347	42,122	41,669	41,810	39,958	40,153
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	144,995	-0.3	15,930	17,093	16,339	15,619	18,125	17,706	17,550	17,672	17,948	18,125
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,270	16,525	15,812	18,338	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,779	23,927	19,835	22,222	(*)	24,119	24,138	22,010	22,028
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,519	20,589	16,843	19,000	(*)	20,684	20,672	18,652	18,682
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,260	3,338	2,992	3,222	(*)	3,435	3,466	3,358	3,346
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	80,203	5.6	8,860	9,410	8,952	8,517	9,043	9,154	9,111	9,128	8,766	8,846
454	Nonstore retailers	149,876	12.0	17,160	16,961	15,565	15,424	14,432	18,154	18,088	17,774	16,060	15,747
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,113	10,335	10,111	9,569	(*)	11,398	11,258	10,328	10,094
722	Food services & drinking places ...	291,609	9.9	31,877	33,912	34,870	29,129	32,570	32,661	32,421	32,589	29,845	30,525

(*) 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. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/econ/www/retmenu.html>

Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly 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					
		Sep. 2004 Advance from --		Aug. 2004 Preliminary from --		Jul. 2004 through Sep. 2004 from --	
		Aug. 2004 (p)	Sep. 2003 (r)	Jul. 2004 (r)	Aug. 2003 (r)	Apr. 2004 through Jun. 2004	Jul. 2003 through Sep. 2003
	Retail & food services,						
	total	1.5	7.7	-0.2	4.8	1.4	6.5
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.6	7.8	0.2	6.9	1.2	7.6
	Retail	1.5	7.5	-0.1	4.7	1.4	6.3
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	4.2	7.3	-1.3	-1.7	2.1	2.8
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	4.6	8.0	-1.4	-2.1	2.3	2.8
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-0.4	3.4	-1.4	5.3	2.2	5.4
443	Electronics & appliance stores	0.5	4.5	-0.8	4.7	0.4	5.4
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	1.4	14.4	0.7	13.2	1.3	13.5
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.5	4.1	0.9	3.8	0.8	3.7
4451	Grocery stores	0.6	4.0	1.0	3.5	0.8	3.4
446	Health & personal care stores	0.4	4.9	0.7	4.7	0.9	4.8
447	Gasoline stations	0.1	15.1	-0.1	15.5	1.5	16.7
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	0.8	4.0	-0.7	3.1	-0.2	3.7
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	-0.4	3.2	0.5	0.5	2.2	2.7
452	General merchandise stores.....	1.1	5.4	-0.3	3.8	0.9	5.0
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.9	-1.3	-0.7	-3.2	-0.2	-2.1
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	0.5	4.4	-0.2	3.0	-1.3	4.0
454	Nonstore retailers	0.4	13.0	1.8	14.9	4.6	13.9
722	Food services & drinking places	0.7	9.4	-0.5	6.2	1.3	8.2

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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/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	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.2
	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	0.1	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	0.8	1.8	0.1	0.4
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.8	1.3	1.8	2.0	0.2	0.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.9	0.6	0.5	1.8	0.1	0.2
444	Building material & garden eq. &						
	supplies dealers	1.9	1.0	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.4
445	Food & beverage stores	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.1	0.3
447	Gasoline stations	1.6	0.7	0.4	1.3	0.5	0.4
448	Clothing & clothing accessories						
	stores	1.4	0.7	0.4	1.0	-0.1	0.3
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	2.8	1.8	1.5	2.0	0.0	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	3.3	1.1	3.9	0.2	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	3.9	1.8	0.8	2.2	0.4	0.6
722	Food services & drinking places ..	2.4	0.7	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.3

(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>

