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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES September 2008

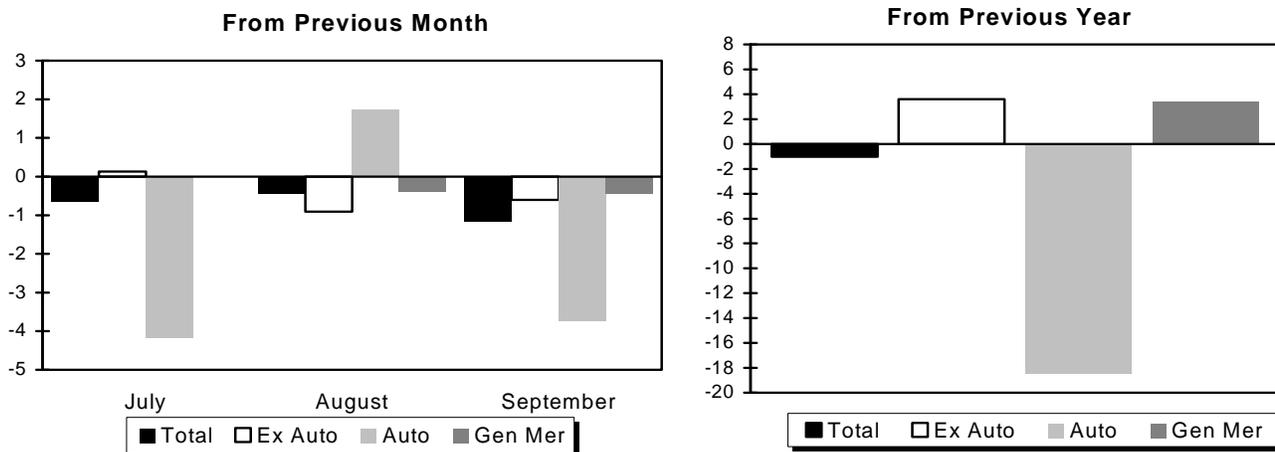
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for September, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$375.5 billion, a decrease of 1.2 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the previous month and 1.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) below September 2007. Total sales for the July through September 2008 period were up 0.8 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The July to August 2008 percent change was revised from -0.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$)* to -0.4 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

Retail trade sales were down 1.2 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from August 2008 and were 1.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) below last year. Gasoline station sales were up 17.8 percent ($\pm 1.7\%$) from September 2007 and sales of food and beverage stores were up 5.1 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) 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)



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for October is scheduled to be released November 14, 2008 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/retail>. This report is also available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's STAT-USA (202-482-1986).

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different than zero.

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		2008			2007		2008			2007	
		2008	% Chg. 2007	Sep. ³ (a)	Aug. (p)	Jul. (r)	Sep.	Aug.	Sep. ³ (a)	Aug. (p)	Jul. (r)	Sep. (r)	Aug. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	3,380,599	2.5	357,296	390,525	391,683	357,452	392,108	375,473	379,876	381,578	379,370	374,253
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,734,014	5.4	294,745	318,664	319,776	283,135	306,475	310,543	312,413	315,275	299,713	297,009
	Retail	3,035,951	2.3	320,380	349,644	351,701	320,887	353,308	337,218	341,418	343,097	341,944	337,195
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	100,929	95,039	89,132	99,584	(*)	98,970	99,475	97,706	97,504
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	646,585	-8.4	62,551	71,861	71,907	74,317	85,633	64,930	67,463	66,303	79,657	77,244
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	588,141	-9.3	56,098	65,118	64,932	68,157	78,697	58,496	61,029	59,845	73,287	70,898
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,434	50,281	55,373	63,508	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,743	6,975	6,160	6,936	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	81,580	-6.2	8,666	9,461	9,429	9,541	10,605	8,843	9,054	9,253	9,908	9,967
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,158	4,911	5,190	5,548	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,303	4,518	4,351	5,057	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	78,499	2.5	8,172	9,163	8,948	8,347	9,243	9,167	9,303	9,497	9,357	9,276
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,413	7,213	6,596	7,354	(*)	7,541	7,682	7,462	7,428
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,750	1,735	1,751	1,889	(*)	1,762	1,815	1,895	1,848
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	251,644	-2.3	26,981	27,399	30,879	26,494	29,663	27,196	27,366	27,938	27,984	27,966
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,946	26,364	23,705	26,789	(*)	23,092	23,687	24,413	24,577
445	Food & beverage stores	437,647	5.9	47,559	50,918	51,077	45,860	47,856	49,598	49,844	49,527	47,197	46,687
4451	Grocery stores	393,367	6.1	42,643	45,510	45,625	41,074	42,817	44,374	44,530	44,253	42,170	41,732
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,741	3,775	3,190	3,427	(*)	3,611	3,578	3,333	3,318
446	Health & personal care stores	182,777	3.9	19,984	20,247	20,396	18,796	20,127	20,687	20,597	20,581	20,017	19,987
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,642	16,833	15,606	16,637	(*)	16,999	16,986	16,620	16,604
447	Gasoline stations	396,583	20.5	43,835	47,543	50,341	37,126	39,799	44,011	43,981	45,352	37,350	36,214
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	156,763	1.4	16,680	19,518	17,722	17,016	19,091	18,801	19,244	19,151	18,868	18,791
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	800	751	794	769	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,157	2,991	3,203	3,232	(*)	3,334	3,327	3,415	3,399
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,805	7,156	6,492	7,540	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,868	2,191	2,005	2,737	(*)	2,322	2,282	2,191	2,236
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	62,608	3.0	6,931	8,592	6,986	6,862	8,323	7,469	7,550	7,504	7,402	7,385
452	General merchandise stores	423,610	4.6	44,244	50,337	48,567	43,796	48,156	50,081	50,306	50,503	48,426	48,346
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	137,931	-3.4	14,052	16,550	15,518	15,306	17,304	16,517	16,766	17,031	17,443	17,528
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,009	15,937	15,730	17,781	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	33,787	33,049	28,490	30,852	(*)	33,540	33,472	30,983	30,818
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	30,220	29,393	25,221	27,383	(*)	29,773	29,660	27,355	27,193
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,567	3,656	3,269	3,469	(*)	3,767	3,812	3,628	3,625
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	88,042	1.1	9,844	10,132	10,431	9,685	10,412	9,990	10,046	10,302	10,118	10,065
454	Nonstore retailers	229,613	6.4	24,933	24,473	25,018	23,047	24,400	26,445	26,664	27,186	25,660	25,267
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,309	17,708	16,238	17,512	(*)	18,239	18,312	17,864	17,653
722	Food services & drinking places ...	344,648	4.2	36,916	40,881	39,982	36,565	38,800	38,255	38,458	38,481	37,426	37,058

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

(NA) Not available. (S) Suppressed. (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/mrts/www/mrts.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. 2008 Advance from --		Aug. 2008 Preliminary from --		Jul. 2008 through Sep. 2008 from --	
		Aug. 2008 (p)	Sep. 2007 (r)	Jul. 2008 (r)	Aug. 2007 (r)	Apr. 2008 through Jun. 2008	Jul. 2007 through Sep. 2007
	Retail & food services, total	-1.2	-1.0	-0.4	1.5	-1.0	0.8
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	-0.6	3.6	-0.9	5.2	0.2	4.8
	Retail	-1.2	-1.4	-0.5	1.3	-1.2	0.5
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-3.8	-18.5	1.7	-12.7	-6.3	-14.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-4.2	-20.2	2.0	-13.9	-6.9	-16.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-2.3	-10.7	-2.2	-9.2	-4.0	-9.1
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-1.5	-2.0	-2.0	0.3	-2.6	0.5
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	-0.6	-2.8	-2.0	-2.1	-0.8	-1.9
445	Food & beverage stores.....	-0.5	5.1	0.6	6.8	1.2	5.7
4451	Grocery stores	-0.4	5.2	0.6	6.7	1.0	5.7
446	Health & personal care stores	0.4	3.3	0.1	3.1	0.8	3.2
447	Gasoline stations	0.1	17.8	-3.0	21.4	1.1	20.9
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-2.3	-0.4	0.5	2.4	0.1	1.1
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	-1.1	0.9	0.6	2.2	0.1	1.1
452	General merchandise stores.....	-0.4	3.4	-0.4	4.1	0.3	4.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.5	-5.3	-1.6	-4.3	-1.9	-4.2
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-0.6	-1.3	-2.5	-0.2	1.4	0.5
454	Nonstore retailers	-0.8	3.1	-1.9	5.5	-1.0	4.7
722	Food services & drinking places	-0.5	2.2	-0.1	3.8	0.3	3.2

(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/mrts/www/mrts.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

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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 a 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 change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. 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	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Retail	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.8	1.2	0.6	1.4	-0.2	0.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.0	1.3	0.7	1.5	-0.2	0.7
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	2.6	1.5	0.7	2.0	-0.5	0.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.4	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.0	0.7
444	Building material & garden eq. &... supplies dealers.....	2.4	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.2	0.5
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	1.6	0.4	0.5	1.1	-0.2	0.2
447	Gasoline stations	2.0	0.5	0.3	1.0	0.4	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.0	0.7
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	2.3	1.5	1.1	1.7	0.1	0.5
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.4	2.6	1.5	3.2	0.2	0.7
454	Nonstore retailers	1.7	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.5
722	Food services & drinking places ..	1.9	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.2	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 revisions 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>