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Timothy Winters / Aneta Erdie  
Service Sector Statistics Division  
(301) 763-2713

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## ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES December 2008

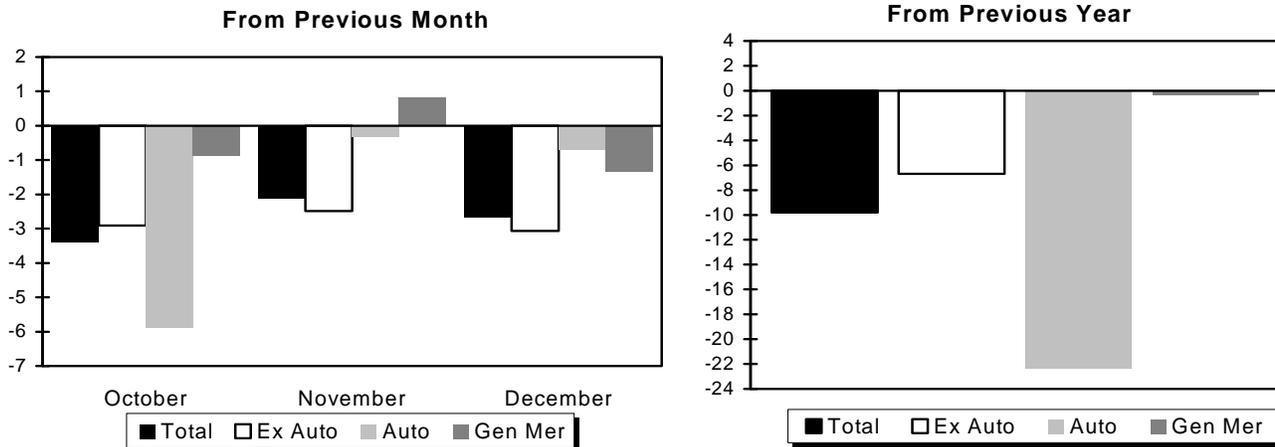
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$343.2 billion, a decrease of 2.7 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the previous month and 9.8 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) below December 2007. Total sales for the 12 months of 2008 were down 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.4\%$ )\* from 2007. Total sales for the October through December 2008 period were down 7.7 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The October to November 2008 percent change was revised from  $-1.8$  percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) to  $-2.1$  percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

Retail trade sales were down 2.7 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from November 2008 and were 10.8 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) below last year. Gasoline stations sales were down 35.5 percent ( $\pm 1.5\%$ ) from December 2007 and motor vehicle and parts dealers sales were down 22.4 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 January is scheduled to be released February 12, 2009 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 <sup>1</sup> code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted <sup>2</sup>				
		12 Month Total		2008			2007		2008			2007	
		2008	% Chg. 2007	Dec. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	4,478,360	-0.1	396,150	343,733	357,686	429,953	381,344	343,242	352,627	360,296	380,592	384,163
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	3,668,624	3.0	340,045	293,597	300,652	360,089	313,157	284,232	293,200	300,673	304,577	306,483
	Retail .....	4,019,557	-0.5	358,305	306,811	318,895	391,457	345,596	305,397	313,925	321,965	342,552	346,809
	<b>GAFO<sup>4</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	104,037	91,213	146,167	108,704	(*)	95,709	95,170	97,951	98,487
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	809,736	-11.9	56,105	50,136	57,034	69,864	68,187	59,010	59,427	59,623	76,015	77,680
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	731,885	-13.2	49,851	43,950	50,132	63,997	61,957	52,475	52,825	53,106	69,638	71,297
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	34,694	39,391	53,038	50,912	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,186	6,902	5,867	6,230	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	109,180	-8.0	9,839	9,144	8,675	11,172	10,737	8,431	8,586	8,658	9,715	9,797
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,642	4,503	5,329	5,416	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,502	4,172	5,843	5,321	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	111,512	0.1	14,803	10,247	7,949	15,292	11,095	8,982	9,073	8,935	9,378	9,718
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,234	6,267	12,430	8,993	(*)	7,248	7,122	7,520	7,834
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,013	1,682	2,862	2,102	(*)	1,825	1,813	1,858	1,884
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	325,181	-3.6	22,147	23,417	27,865	23,429	27,226	25,056	25,816	26,571	27,517	28,316
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,006	24,088	20,780	23,764	(*)	21,605	22,407	23,913	24,224
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	589,512	5.1	52,819	49,259	49,540	52,470	48,040	48,694	49,369	49,422	48,089	47,813
4451	Grocery stores .....	527,395	5.3	45,653	43,939	44,238	45,463	42,859	43,479	44,071	44,106	43,011	42,773
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,631	3,597	4,611	3,450	(*)	3,606	3,611	3,378	3,333
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	247,022	4.0	23,498	19,880	20,865	21,839	19,610	20,924	20,839	20,741	19,890	19,969
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,449	17,441	17,951	16,296	(*)	17,206	17,149	16,575	16,578
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	489,252	9.9	24,878	28,661	39,155	38,358	39,111	26,243	31,187	38,163	40,677	41,830
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	220,795	-1.7	28,296	19,184	17,165	31,235	20,888	17,351	17,793	17,776	18,687	19,125
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	868	807	1,491	969	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,307	3,091	4,904	3,665	(*)	3,123	3,103	3,380	3,409
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,975	6,757	11,283	8,385	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,150	2,050	2,936	2,242	(*)	2,156	2,142	2,236	2,238
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	88,327	1.1	12,159	7,484	6,223	12,072	7,961	7,220	7,252	7,104	7,330	7,440
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	595,536	3.3	69,593	54,745	47,675	71,346	54,156	49,058	49,725	49,323	49,250	48,707
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	200,437	-4.5	27,380	19,622	15,539	29,700	20,965	16,081	16,465	16,189	17,336	17,367
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>5</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,181	15,971	30,490	21,538	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	35,123	32,136	41,646	33,191	(*)	33,260	33,134	31,914	31,340
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	31,140	28,458	36,266	29,092	(*)	29,629	29,460	28,267	27,680
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,983	3,678	5,380	4,099	(*)	3,631	3,674	3,647	3,660
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	119,120	0.2	11,812	9,197	10,143	11,687	9,989	9,666	9,616	9,905	9,847	9,922
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	314,384	3.6	32,356	25,457	26,606	32,693	28,596	24,762	25,242	25,744	26,157	26,492
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,956	18,425	23,030	19,898	(*)	17,761	17,871	17,908	18,373
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	458,803	3.7	37,845	36,922	38,791	38,496	35,748	37,845	38,702	38,331	38,040	37,354

(\*) 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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Dec. 2008 Advance from --		Nov. 2008 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2008 through Dec. 2008 from --	
		Nov. 2008 (p)	Dec. 2007 (r)	Oct. 2008 (r)	Nov. 2007 (r)	Jul. 2008 through Sep. 2008	Oct. 2007 through Dec. 2007
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	-2.7	-9.8	-2.1	-8.2	-6.8	-7.7
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	-3.1	-6.7	-2.5	-4.3	-6.3	-3.7
	Retail .....	-2.7	-10.8	-2.5	-9.5	-7.5	-8.7
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	-0.7	-22.4	-0.3	-23.5	-9.6	-23.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-0.7	-24.6	-0.5	-25.9	-10.7	-25.9
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	-1.8	-13.2	-0.8	-12.4	-5.0	-12.6
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	-1.0	-4.2	1.5	-6.6	-3.3	-5.4
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	-2.9	-8.9	-2.8	-8.8	-6.1	-7.2
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	-1.4	1.3	-0.1	3.3	-1.0	2.8
4451	Grocery stores .....	-1.3	1.1	-0.1	3.0	-1.1	2.6
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.4	5.2	0.5	4.4	1.0	4.4
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-15.9	-35.5	-18.3	-25.4	-28.3	-20.7
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	-2.5	-7.1	0.1	-7.0	-6.2	-6.7
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	-0.4	-1.5	2.1	-2.5	-3.4	-2.8
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	-1.3	-0.4	0.8	2.1	-1.5	1.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-2.3	-7.2	1.7	-5.2	-2.8	-6.5
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	0.5	-1.8	-2.9	-3.1	-3.3	-1.8
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	-1.9	-5.3	-1.9	-4.7	-5.5	-3.2
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	-2.2	-0.5	1.0	3.6	-0.7	1.8

(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

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 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  $\pm 1.5$  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 <sup>(1)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error <sup>(1)</sup> for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change <sup>(2)</sup>	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	-0.1	0.2
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	2.0	1.3	0.7	1.4	-0.1	0.8
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.1	1.4	0.7	1.5	0.0	0.8
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	2.6	1.5	0.8	2.1	-0.4	0.8
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.5	0.7	0.5	1.1	-0.2	0.7
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;... supplies dealers.....</b>	2.4	1.3	0.8	1.6	0.1	0.5
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	1.6	0.4	0.4	1.1	-0.1	0.1
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	2.0	0.6	0.4	0.9	-0.2	0.6
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	2.0	0.7	0.6	1.0	-0.2	0.7
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	2.3	1.4	1.1	1.6	-0.1	0.5
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	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	-0.1	0.2
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	3.8	2.6	1.5	3.3	0.0	0.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.6	0.9	0.7	1.3	0.1	0.6
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	1.9	0.9	0.7	1.4	0.3	0.5

- (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>

