

For Wire Transmission 10:00 a.m. E.T. December 11, 2001

BW/01-10

MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES OCTOBER 2001

Sales. October 2001 sales of merchant wholesalers, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$223.1 billion, down 1.4 percent (+/-0.6%) from the revised September level and were down 4.3 percent (+/-1.5%) from the October 2000 level. The September preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.1 billion or 0.03 percent. Among durable goods, sales of machinery, equipment, and supplies decreased 5.2 percent from September, while motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies increased 3.5 percent. October sales of nondurable goods decreased 2.0 percent (+/-0.7%) from last month and were 0.9 percent (+/-1.7%) below October 2000. Compared to last month, sales of petroleum and petroleum products fell 16.1 percent, while drugs and druggists' sundries increased 2.3 percent.

Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$294.2 billion at the end of October, down 1.0 percent (+/-0.3%) from last month, and were down 2.9 percent (+/-2.4%) from a year ago. The September preliminary estimate was revised

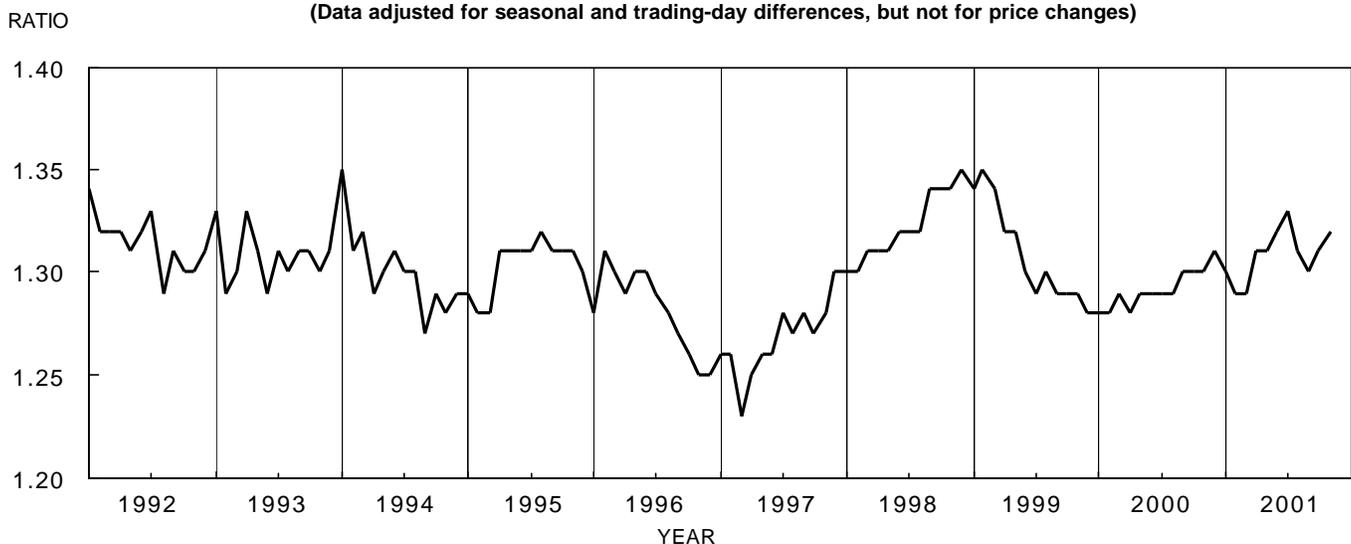
downward \$0.8 billion or 0.3 percent. End-of-month inventories for durable goods were down 0.5 percent (+/-0.4%) for October and were down 6.9 percent (+/-2.2%) from a year ago. Among durable goods, computer and computer peripheral equipment and software declined 3.2 percent from last month and professional and commercial equipment and supplies were down 2.2 percent. End-of-month inventories of nondurable goods decreased 1.8 percent (+/-0.6%) from last month, but were 4.3 percent (+/-4.8%) above last October. Compared to last month, inventories of farm product raw materials decreased 8.0 percent and groceries and related products fell 3.3 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The October inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.32. The October 2000 ratio was 1.30.

Data in this report are based on a sample and, therefore, are subject to sampling and nonsampling variability. A discussion of the reliability of the data and general survey methodology appears in BW/00-A Current Business Reports.

Monthly Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers: 1992 to 2001

(Data adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for November is scheduled to be released January 10, 2002 at 10:00 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233, or call Scott Scheleur, (301) 457-2747 or (301) 457-2764. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

This report is available on day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board (202-482-1986). The data are also available on the internet - <http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/mwts.html>.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales, Inventories, and Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers: 2001 and 2000

[In millions of dollars]

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories						Inventories/Sales		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Oct. 2001 (p)	Sep. 2001 (r)	Oct. 2000 (r)	Oct./ Sep.	Sep./ Aug.	Oct. 01 Oct. 00	Oct. 2001 (p)	Sep. 2001 (r)	Oct. 2000 (r)	Oct./ Sep.	Sep./ Aug.	Oct. 01 Oct. 00	Oct. 2001 (p)	Sep. 2001 (r)	Oct. 2000 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	223,143	226,207	233,088	-1.4	-1.2	-4.3	294,212	297,162	302,994	-1.0	-0.4	-2.9	1.32	1.31	1.30
421	Durable	111,555	112,355	120,518	-0.7	-2.6	-7.4	180,689	181,513	194,123	-0.5	-0.6	-6.9	1.62	1.62	1.61
4211	Automotive	16,486	15,934	16,294	3.5	-7.4	1.2	25,438	25,355	26,215	0.3	2.4	-3.0	1.54	1.59	1.61
4212	Furniture	3,566	3,452	3,892	3.3	-5.6	-8.4	5,493	5,538	5,895	-0.8	0.9	-6.8	1.54	1.60	1.51
4213	Lumber	6,227	6,186	5,850	0.7	-0.8	6.4	6,769	6,699	6,644	1.0	0.8	1.9	1.09	1.08	1.14
4214	Prof. equip.	21,194	21,747	23,755	-2.5	-0.2	-10.8	23,755	24,291	27,418	-2.2	-3.2	-13.4	1.12	1.12	1.15
42143	Comp. equip.	11,806	12,262	13,818	-3.7	3.1	-14.6	9,178	9,486	12,275	-3.2	-5.3	-25.2	0.78	0.77	0.89
4215	Metals	7,625	7,761	8,471	-1.8	-3.9	-10.0	12,613	12,721	14,908	-0.8	-1.7	-15.4	1.65	1.64	1.76
4216	Electrical	17,406	16,983	20,077	2.5	-1.0	-13.3	26,646	26,913	29,972	-1.0	-0.7	-11.1	1.53	1.58	1.49
4217	Hardware	5,228	5,183	5,454	0.9	0.0	-4.1	10,704	10,690	10,799	0.1	0.2	-0.9	2.05	2.06	1.98
4218	Machinery	21,104	22,266	22,199	-5.2	-1.7	-4.9	48,411	48,471	49,387	-0.1	-0.5	-2.0	2.29	2.18	2.22
4219	Misc. Durable	12,719	12,843	14,526	-1.0	-4.3	-12.4	20,860	20,835	22,885	0.1	-1.7	-8.8	1.64	1.62	1.58
422	Nondurable	111,588	113,852	112,570	-2.0	0.2	-0.9	113,523	115,649	108,871	-1.8	0.0	4.3	1.02	1.02	0.97
4221	Paper	5,986	5,899	6,605	1.5	-5.4	-9.4	6,338	6,379	6,941	-0.6	-0.4	-8.7	1.06	1.08	1.05
4222	Drugs	17,227	16,841	14,212	2.3	5.2	21.2	26,808	27,243	21,365	-1.6	5.0	25.5	1.56	1.62	1.50
4223	Apparel	7,045	7,005	7,845	0.6	-2.4	-10.2	12,846	12,941	12,601	-0.7	-0.7	1.9	1.82	1.85	1.61
4224	Groceries	34,153	34,262	32,771	-0.3	0.0	4.2	20,818	21,537	21,936	-3.3	-1.8	-5.1	0.61	0.63	0.67
4225	Farm products	8,520	8,627	8,992	-1.2	-3.4	-5.2	9,867	10,727	10,577	-8.0	-4.0	-6.7	1.16	1.24	1.18
4226	Chemicals	4,795	4,833	5,123	-0.8	-0.9	-6.4	5,923	5,890	5,775	0.6	1.9	2.6	1.24	1.22	1.13
4227	Petroleum	11,999	14,301	15,305	-16.1	5.9	-21.6	4,170	4,138	4,275	0.8	-1.3	-2.5	0.35	0.29	0.28
4228	Alcohol	6,083	5,954	6,118	2.2	-4.9	-0.6	6,767	6,807	6,540	-0.6	0.2	3.5	1.11	1.14	1.07
4229	Misc. Nondur.	15,780	16,130	15,599	-2.2	-1.3	1.2	19,986	19,987	18,861	0.0	-2.3	6.0	1.27	1.24	1.21
Not Adjusted																
Sales to date																
2001																
2000																
42	U.S. Total	238,363	219,032	243,072	8.8	-8.0	-1.9	295,557	292,528	304,687	1.0	-0.1	-3.0	2,289,827	2,298,264	
421	Durable	120,113	110,877	127,004	8.3	-8.6	-5.4	179,320	180,025	192,909	-0.4	-1.3	-7.0	1,158,379	1,203,394	
4211	Automotive	17,096	15,074	16,815	13.4	-14.4	1.7	25,336	24,746	26,110	2.4	3.9	-3.0	166,108	163,206	
4212	Furniture	3,948	3,462	4,258	14.0	-11.2	-7.3	5,575	5,693	5,989	-2.1	0.7	-6.9	36,621	38,928	
4213	Lumber	6,893	6,050	6,236	13.9	-15.5	10.5	6,559	6,652	6,431	-1.4	-0.1	2.0	62,893	61,058	
4214	Prof. equip.	22,635	22,486	24,468	0.7	-2.1	-7.5	24,040	24,048	27,747	0.0	-3.1	-13.4	222,887	234,147	
42143	Comp. equip.	12,644	13,022	14,302	-2.9	4.3	-11.6	9,325	9,363	12,459	-0.4	-4.5	-25.2	124,225	138,468	
4215	Metals	7,976	7,482	8,683	6.6	-13.3	-8.1	12,411	12,645	14,655	-1.9	-3.0	-15.3	80,335	87,624	
4216	Electrical	19,356	17,170	21,763	12.7	-5.5	-11.1	26,380	26,832	29,672	-1.7	-1.9	-11.1	180,784	200,185	
4217	Hardware	5,782	5,012	5,896	15.4	-9.7	-1.9	10,501	10,594	10,594	-0.9	-1.8	-0.9	52,737	55,570	
4218	Machinery	22,054	21,041	22,732	4.8	-9.8	-3.0	47,491	47,792	48,597	-0.6	-2.1	-2.3	222,451	215,958	
4219	Misc. Durable	14,373	13,100	16,153	9.7	-6.4	-11.0	21,027	21,023	23,114	0.0	-2.4	-9.0	133,563	146,718	
422	Nondurable	118,250	108,155	116,068	9.3	-7.4	1.9	116,237	112,503	111,778	3.3	2.0	4.0	1,131,448	1,094,870	
4221	Paper	6,489	5,805	6,988	11.8	-13.5	-7.1	6,319	6,283	6,913	0.6	-0.4	-8.6	63,431	66,155	
4222	Drugs	18,622	15,915	14,880	17.0	-2.5	25.1	27,451	27,025	21,878	1.6	8.5	25.5	157,144	135,952	
4223	Apparel	8,053	7,271	8,700	10.8	-10.1	-7.4	12,666	13,109	12,437	-3.4	-2.2	1.8	74,300	80,550	
4224	Groceries	35,656	32,720	33,295	9.0	-7.9	7.1	21,672	21,623	22,857	0.2	0.3	-5.2	339,626	320,959	
4225	Farm products	9,807	7,730	10,026	26.9	-7.3	-2.2	11,485	8,678	12,449	32.3	6.7	-7.7	88,279	86,764	
4226	Chemicals	5,088	4,538	5,261	12.1	-12.4	-3.3	5,781	5,784	5,636	-0.1	0.2	2.6	50,149	50,486	
4227	Petroleum	12,491	13,429	15,580	-7.0	-3.0	-19.8	4,283	4,175	4,403	2.6	-1.2	-2.7	139,561	141,423	
4228	Alcohol	6,564	5,585	6,332	17.5	-18.5	3.7	7,234	7,018	6,985	3.1	3.5	3.6	60,945	58,543	
4229	Misc. Nondur.	15,480	15,162	15,006	2.1	-5.1	3.2	19,346	18,808	18,220	2.9	-1.9	6.2	158,013	154,038	

p Preliminary estimate. r Revised.

1 For a full description of the NAICS codes shown above, see the "1997 North American Industry Classification System" or the Current Business Reports

"Annual Benchmark Report for Wholesale Trade" publication.

2 Data adjusted for seasonal variations and, in the case of sales, also for trading-day differences. See Table 3 for seasonal adjustment factors used.

Table 2. Coefficients of Variation and Standard Errors for Sales and Inventories Estimates

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Median coefficients of variation for level (%)				Median standard errors for trend				Coefficients of variation for level (%)		Standard errors for trend
		Preliminary estimates		Final estimates		Ratio of two consecutive months		Year-to-year estimates		Cumulative sales estimates		Current year cumulative
		Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Current year	Previous year	to previous year cumulative
42	U.S. Total	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	0.3	0.2	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.0	0.9
421	Durable	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.9	0.6	0.3	1.5	1.3	1.9	0.7	1.3
4211	Automotive	4.2	4.7	4.2	4.9	0.9	0.7	3.3	5.2	4.2	2.3	3.1
4212	Furniture	4.1	6.4	4.1	6.4	1.7	0.7	3.9	2.9	3.8	3.2	3.3
4213	Lumber	3.8	5.9	3.8	6.0	1.1	0.7	2.2	4.5	3.6	4.0	1.9
4214	Prof. equip.	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6	1.1	0.7	3.6	2.2	4.3	2.5	3.4
42143	Comp. equip.	7.5	6.2	7.6	6.2	1.8	1.3	5.4	2.5	7.4	4.2	5.1
4215	Metals	8.1	8.8	8.1	8.8	1.3	0.6	5.6	3.8	8.0	3.7	5.0
4216	Electrical	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.5	1.2	0.6	2.6	3.4	4.1	2.6	2.6
4217	Hardware	7.4	9.8	7.5	9.8	1.3	0.6	4.3	3.8	7.4	4.3	4.2
4218	Machinery	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.5	1.5	0.6	2.6	3.1	3.6	2.6	2.5
4219	Misc. Durable	4.8	7.7	4.8	8.0	1.8	0.9	2.7	2.5	5.1	4.4	2.4
422	Nondurable	1.7	2.7	1.8	2.7	0.4	0.3	1.0	2.9	1.7	1.8	0.8
4221	Paper	4.8	3.6	4.8	3.6	1.1	0.6	2.0	1.5	4.8	4.4	1.8
4222	Drugs	4.2	5.7	4.2	5.7	0.7	0.5	2.6	6.2	4.2	4.2	2.2
4223	Apparel	4.7	5.1	4.5	5.3	1.7	0.8	3.3	5.5	4.5	3.7	3.0
4224	Groceries	2.5	5.1	2.5	5.2	0.7	0.6	2.1	4.4	2.3	3.2	2.2
4225	Farm products	5.1	11.4	5.1	11.6	2.0	1.7	4.5	7.0	5.0	4.6	4.0
4226	Chemicals	4.5	6.9	4.5	6.8	1.2	0.8	3.2	4.1	4.6	4.2	2.9
4227	Petroleum	5.6	6.7	5.5	6.6	0.7	0.9	2.4	3.4	5.6	4.6	2.4
4228	Alcohol	3.7	4.0	3.9	4.0	1.1	0.8	2.2	6.6	3.7	4.5	2.1
4229	Misc. Nondur.	7.5	7.9	7.6	7.7	2.2	1.0	3.4	6.8	7.0	6.6	2.5

Note: Medians are based on data from the period January 2001 to present.

Reliability of Estimates

There are two types of errors possible in an estimate based on a sample survey: sampling and nonsampling.

Sampling errors occur because observations are made on a sample, not on the entire population, and different samples could have led to different estimates. Standard errors and coefficients of variation, as calculated for this report, are measures of sampling variation. 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 up 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).

Nonsampling errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of wholesale businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and response errors. Imputed data accounts for approximately 28% of the sales estimates and 31% of the inventories estimates. Additionally, estimates of sales and inventories prior to March 2001 have been restated from SIC-based estimates. The restatement methodology may have introduced additional nonsampling error. The calculated median standard errors of year-to-year change estimates may also be influenced by the methodology used to impute historical data for units in the NAICS sample. The effect of this historic imputation methodology on published estimates will decrease as more data from the NAICS sample is accumulated. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

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Table 3. Seasonal Adjustment Factors for Sales and Inventories of Merchant Wholesalers

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories					
		2001					2000	2001					2000
		Nov.	Oct.r	Sep.r	Aug.	Jul.	Oct.r	Nov.	Oct.r	Sep.r	Aug.	Jul.	Oct.r
42	U.S. Total¹	0.996	1.071	0.971	1.040	0.983	1.045	1.009	1.007	0.984	0.982	0.993	1.007
421	Durable	0.994	1.084	0.986	1.050	0.987	1.058	0.992	0.993	0.991	0.998	1.010	0.994
4211	Automotive	1.009	1.037	0.946	1.023	0.996	1.032	1.008	0.996	0.976	0.962	0.986	0.996
4212	Furniture	1.052	1.107	1.003	1.066	0.969	1.094	0.988	1.015	1.028	1.030	1.035	1.016
4213	Lumber	0.964	1.107	0.978	1.148	1.063	1.066	0.964	0.969	0.993	1.002	1.023	0.968
4214	Prof. equip.	0.966	1.068	1.034	1.054	0.974	1.030	1.024	1.012	0.990	0.989	0.999	1.012
42143	Comp. equip.	0.955	1.071	1.062	1.050	0.959	1.035	1.039	1.016	0.987	0.979	0.994	1.015
4215	Metals	0.967	1.046	0.964	1.068	0.977	1.025	0.984	0.984	0.994	1.007	1.010	0.983
4216	Electrical	1.015	1.112	1.011	1.059	0.984	1.084	0.995	0.990	0.997	1.009	1.019	0.990
4217	Hardware	0.990	1.106	0.967	1.071	1.038	1.081	0.984	0.981	0.991	1.012	1.011	0.981
4218	Machinery	0.963	1.045	0.945	1.030	0.980	1.024	0.979	0.981	0.986	1.002	1.019	0.984
4219	Misc. Durable	1.070	1.130	1.020	1.042	0.960	1.112	0.989	1.008	1.009	1.016	1.011	1.010
422	Nondurable	1.002	1.062	0.958	1.031	0.982	1.033	1.039	1.030	0.973	0.954	0.959	1.031
4221	Paper	0.990	1.084	0.984	1.076	0.978	1.058	1.001	0.997	0.985	0.985	0.993	0.996
4222	Drugs	1.018	1.081	0.945	1.020	0.973	1.047	1.004	1.024	0.992	0.960	0.997	1.024
4223	Apparel	0.953	1.143	1.038	1.126	1.002	1.109	0.959	0.986	1.013	1.029	1.034	0.987
4224	Groceries	1.005	1.044	0.955	1.037	1.012	1.016	1.044	1.041	1.004	0.983	0.980	1.042
4225	Farm products	1.053	1.151	0.896	0.934	0.896	1.115	1.246	1.164	0.809	0.728	0.725	1.177
4226	Chemicals	0.962	1.061	0.939	1.062	0.998	1.027	0.988	0.976	0.982	0.998	1.017	0.976
4227	Petroleum	0.999	1.041	0.939	1.025	0.972	1.018	1.046	1.027	1.009	1.008	0.997	1.030
4228	Alcohol	1.073	1.079	0.938	1.094	0.997	1.035	1.048	1.069	1.031	0.998	1.013	1.068
4229	Misc. Nondur.	0.945	0.981	0.940	0.977	0.952	0.962	1.015	0.968	0.941	0.937	0.926	0.966

r Revised



1 Adjusted sales and inventories data shown in Table 1 are obtained by dividing the unadjusted data by the adjustment factors shown above for the corresponding group. Adjusted data for the totals are obtained by adding the durable and nondurable goods. Seasonal factors shown for the totals will provide an approximation of the adjusted estimates, but may show small differences from the published data.

Note: The seasonal factors shown have been computed based on monthly estimates through the current month preliminary estimates.