

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Wednesday, October 15, 2003

**ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES  
SEPTEMBER 2003**

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, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$320.6 billion, a decrease of 0.2 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from the previous month, but up 7.5 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from September 2002. Total sales for the July through September 2003 period were up 6.4 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The July to August 2003 percent change was revised from +0.6 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) to +1.2 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

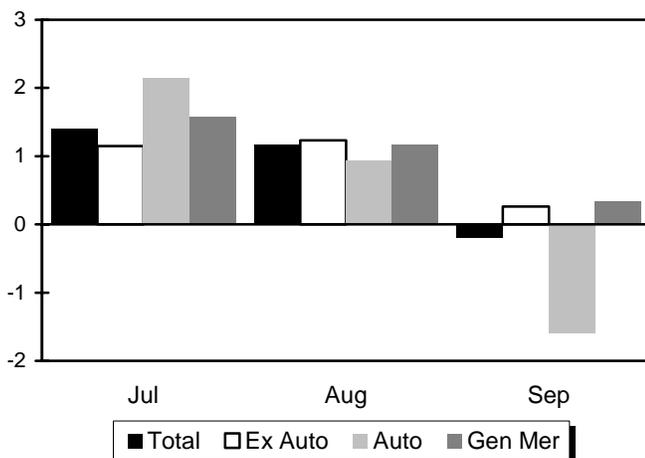
Retail trade sales were down 0.1 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from August, but were 7.4 percent ( $\pm 1.1\%$ ) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 11.4 percent ( $\pm 2.3\%$ ) from September 2002 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 9.6 percent ( $\pm 4.3\%$ ) from last year.

*The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the 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.*

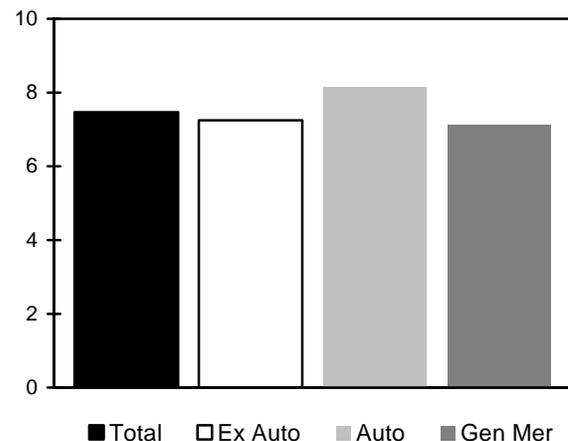
**Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales**

(Data adjusted for seasonal, 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 October is scheduled to be released November 14, 2003 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 Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted						Adjusted <sup>1</sup>					
		9 Month Total		2003			2002		2003			2002	
		2003	% Chg. 2002	Sept. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept.	Aug.	Sept. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Aug. (p)	July (r)	Sept. (r)	Aug. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	2,771,258	5.3	309,877	332,251	325,085	283,660	318,526	320,584	321,200	317,512	298,313	302,449
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,079,572	5.1	233,366	248,681	240,641	215,364	235,568	243,923	243,302	240,335	227,436	227,829
	Retail .....	2,504,682	5.2	280,432	299,571	293,701	256,479	288,562	290,477	290,658	287,565	270,435	274,576
	GAFO <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	84,386	76,573	70,194	79,999	(*)	82,555	81,709	77,631	77,878
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	691,686	6.0	76,511	83,570	84,444	68,296	82,958	76,661	77,898	77,177	70,877	74,620
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	632,849	6.3	69,787	76,638	77,293	62,169	76,061	69,997	71,358	70,652	64,625	68,339
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	65,071	65,020	53,763	66,132	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,932	7,151	6,127	6,897	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	71,573	4.3	8,192	8,743	8,409	7,547	8,270	8,454	8,472	8,417	7,936	7,891
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,748	4,473	4,174	4,498	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,995	3,936	3,373	3,772	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	64,912	3.7	7,457	8,163	7,503	6,821	7,489	8,060	8,085	7,977	7,469	7,373
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,900	5,416	4,831	5,338	(*)	5,871	5,780	5,440	5,301
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,263	2,087	1,990	2,151	(*)	2,214	2,197	2,029	2,072
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	242,405	6.0	28,550	27,933	30,002	24,760	26,412	27,919	27,409	27,271	25,052	25,136
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	25,122	26,267	22,499	23,881	(*)	23,926	23,793	22,123	22,030
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	376,026	3.5	41,331	43,771	44,109	39,234	42,196	42,961	42,852	42,650	40,906	40,913
4451	Grocery stores .....	340,195	3.3	37,264	39,350	39,773	35,546	38,064	38,616	38,541	38,428	36,912	36,919
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,848	2,789	2,419	2,726	(*)	2,752	2,708	2,609	2,606
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	140,411	5.7	15,689	15,912	15,950	14,434	15,111	16,241	16,171	16,079	15,242	15,096
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,460	13,529	12,293	12,723	(*)	13,763	13,693	13,036	12,813
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	198,625	10.6	22,420	23,902	22,970	20,413	22,111	22,308	22,234	21,487	20,413	20,323
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	120,708	3.3	13,664	15,428	13,760	12,418	15,002	15,145	14,934	14,984	13,932	14,200
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	913	741	741	851	(*)	867	845	810	812
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,806	2,645	2,620	2,806	(*)	2,890	2,939	2,793	2,814
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,466	5,044	4,328	5,387	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,356	1,806	1,586	2,285	(*)	1,851	1,821	1,751	1,770
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	55,597	-0.3	6,465	7,531	6,051	6,322	7,243	6,914	7,051	6,814	6,879	6,807
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	329,935	4.3	35,817	40,800	37,749	33,847	38,308	40,691	40,557	40,088	37,978	38,179
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	148,032	-4.2	15,912	18,459	16,638	16,231	18,759	18,581	18,477	18,477	18,630	18,868
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	18,749	16,909	16,492	19,065	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	22,341	21,111	17,616	19,549	(*)	21,976	21,611	19,348	19,311
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	19,100	17,913	14,892	16,572	(*)	18,652	18,297	16,311	16,279
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,241	3,198	2,724	2,977	(*)	3,324	3,314	3,037	3,032
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	76,000	-0.1	8,567	9,060	8,544	8,373	9,259	8,764	8,835	8,706	8,826	8,843
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	136,804	7.0	15,769	14,758	14,210	14,014	14,203	16,359	16,160	15,915	14,925	15,195
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,736	9,573	9,242	9,454	(*)	10,324	10,294	9,637	9,827
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	266,576	6.4	29,445	32,680	31,384	27,181	29,964	30,107	30,542	29,947	27,878	27,873

(\*) Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these business classifications.

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

Note: Totals include data for business classifications not shown separately.

(1) Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, 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 and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are released on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

(2) Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

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

(4) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

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

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change <sup>1</sup>					
		Sept. 2003 Advance from --		Aug. 2003 Preliminary from --		July 2003 through Sept. 2003 from --	
		Aug. 2003 (p)	Sept. 2002 (r)	July 2003 (r)	Aug. 2002 (r)	Apr. 2003 through Jun. 2003	July 2002 through Sept. 2002
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	-0.2	7.5	1.2	6.2	2.9	6.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ....	0.3	7.2	1.2	6.8	3.0	6.6
	Retail .....	-0.1	7.4	1.1	5.9	3.0	6.2
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	-1.6	8.2	0.9	4.4	2.7	5.9
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-1.9	8.3	1.0	4.4	2.8	6.0
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	-0.2	6.5	0.7	7.4	2.3	7.5
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	-0.3	7.9	1.4	9.7	4.0	8.2
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	1.9	11.4	0.5	9.0	5.0	10.0
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.3	5.0	0.5	4.7	1.9	4.6
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.2	4.6	0.3	4.4	1.7	4.3
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.4	6.6	0.6	7.1	3.0	6.9
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	0.3	9.3	3.5	9.4	3.6	7.8
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	1.4	8.7	-0.3	5.2	2.9	6.7
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	-1.9	0.5	3.5	3.6	2.7	1.4
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.3	7.1	1.2	6.2	3.4	6.3
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	-0.3	0.6	-1.5	2.6	-1.3
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	-0.8	-0.7	1.5	-0.1	0.5	-0.3
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.2	9.6	1.5	6.4	3.4	6.7
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	-1.4	8.0	2.0	9.6	2.3	8.3

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### Source of Data and Reliability of Estimates

**Source of Data:** The Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey each month to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey is a voluntary survey of a sub-sample of about 5,000 firms selected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Firms responding to this survey account for approximately 65% of the dollar volume estimate.

**Reliability of Estimates:** The reliability of the estimates is a function of sampling and nonsampling errors. The margin of sampling error, as included on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence

interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +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). Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. Nonsampling error, on the other hand, can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling error. Additional survey information is available at <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

**Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend**

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Median CV <sup>(2)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Trend (percent change): Median standard error <sup>(2)</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>(1)</sup>	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.2
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.4
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	2.0	1.6	0.7	1.9	0.7	1.2
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	2.2	1.7	0.8	2.1	0.8	1.3
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	3.7	1.8	1.1	2.5	0.3	0.8
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.6	0.6	0.4	1.1	0.1	0.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; ..</b>						
	supplies dealers.....	2.0	1.2	0.7	1.4	-0.1	0.6
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	2.9	0.6	0.4	1.2	0.0	0.2
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.4	0.4	0.5
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	stores .....	1.5	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.7	0.8
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp;</b>						
	music stores.....	2.4	1.7	1.4	2.1	0.0	0.7
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	-0.1	0.2
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.3
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	3.4	3.1	1.7	3.3	0.3	0.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	4.9	2.4	0.9	2.6	0.0	0.9
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	2.1	0.8	0.8	1.6	0.3	0.6



(1) These columns measure the difference between the estimates of trend for the same pair of data months, i.e. the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates. Revisions are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.  
 (2) Medians are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.