

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday, January 15, 2004

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

**Intention to Revise Retail Estimates:** Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2002 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted data are scheduled for release on March 30.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$325.0 billion, an increase of 0.5 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) from the previous month and up 6.7 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from December 2002. Total sales for the 12 months of 2003 were up 5.6 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ) from 2002. Total sales for the October through December 2003 period were up 6.9 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The October to November 2003 percent change was revised from 0.9 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) to 1.2 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

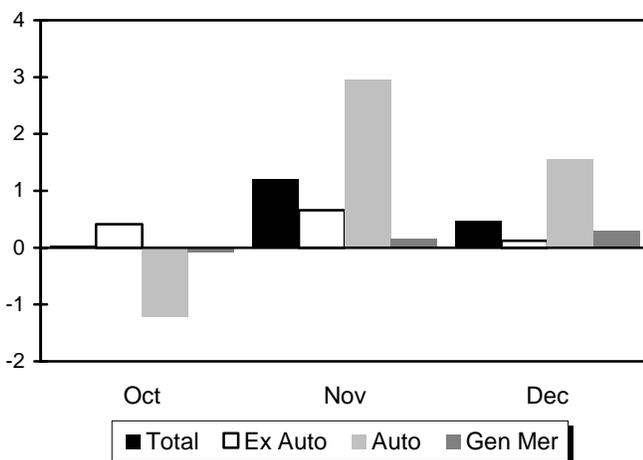
Retail trade sales were up 0.5 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from November and were 6.5 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 11.9 percent ( $\pm 2.1\%$ ) from December 2002 and sales of electronics and appliance stores were up 10.8 percent ( $\pm 2.3\%$ ) from last year.

The scheduled release dates for 2004 are as follows: January 15, February 12, March 11, April 13, May 13, June 14, July 14, August 12, September 14, October 15, November 12, December 13.

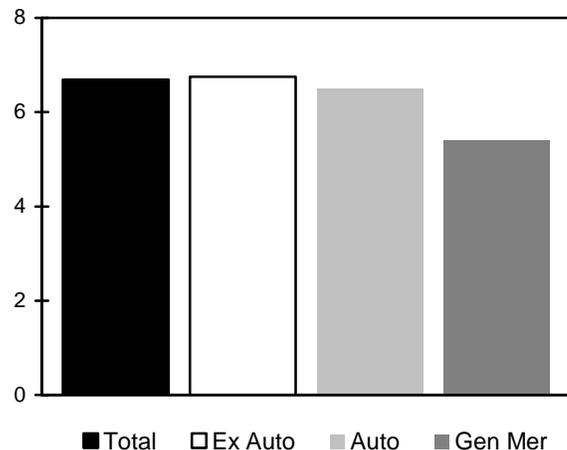
*The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three 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**

**From Previous Month**



**From Previous Year**



(Data adjusted for seasonal, 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, 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 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>					
		12 Month Total		2003			2002		2003			2002	
		2003	% Chg. 2002	Dec. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	3,781,874	5.6	375,726	316,231	319,795	348,445	301,391	325,036	323,541	319,705	304,659	301,469
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	2,876,411	5.5	302,129	249,272	246,002	281,503	237,574	246,282	245,997	244,393	230,712	230,126
	Retail .....	3,423,067	5.5	344,562	286,294	288,599	319,815	274,014	293,778	292,421	288,940	275,943	273,390
	<b>GAFO<sup>3</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	91,397	79,756	123,179	87,844	(*)	82,704	82,400	78,621	78,567
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	905,463	6.2	73,597	66,959	73,793	66,942	63,817	78,754	77,544	75,312	73,947	71,343
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	826,941	6.3	67,211	60,698	66,781	61,190	57,870	71,960	70,826	68,634	67,688	65,096
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,964	56,618	53,540	49,872	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,261	7,012	5,752	5,947	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	100,242	5.5	10,416	9,342	8,744	9,481	8,909	8,637	8,634	8,615	8,001	8,055
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,919	4,623	4,678	4,835	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,423	4,121	4,803	4,074	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	95,474	6.0	13,649	9,104	7,713	12,144	8,310	8,340	8,309	8,233	7,525	7,500
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,786	5,417	9,429	6,267	(*)	5,989	5,946	5,460	5,445
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,318	2,296	2,715	2,043	(*)	2,320	2,287	2,065	2,055
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	322,407	7.1	24,876	25,684	29,842	21,814	23,771	28,125	28,208	28,090	25,135	25,336
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,277	26,924	19,669	21,476	(*)	24,842	24,701	22,026	22,255
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	508,632	3.6	46,769	42,920	42,912	44,693	41,917	42,620	42,923	42,811	41,125	41,388
4451	Grocery stores .....	457,864	3.4	40,555	38,550	38,557	38,999	37,784	38,259	38,550	38,403	37,071	37,373
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,823	2,816	3,682	2,747	(*)	2,768	2,796	2,630	2,599
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	191,606	6.3	18,941	15,745	16,510	17,120	14,875	16,528	16,487	16,347	15,137	15,241
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,546	14,225	14,584	12,753	(*)	14,110	14,042	12,872	13,000
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	263,222	9.3	21,272	20,875	22,549	20,030	19,993	22,135	22,231	21,786	21,129	20,826
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	178,684	4.0	26,915	16,530	14,606	25,296	15,816	15,274	15,266	15,116	14,512	14,355
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	964	874	1,364	932	(*)	855	851	822	818
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,191	3,027	4,373	3,016	(*)	3,074	3,015	2,941	2,853
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,198	5,293	8,637	6,008	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,829	1,764	2,326	1,761	(*)	1,889	1,879	1,803	1,797
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	81,621	-0.5	12,498	7,571	6,080	12,232	7,901	6,833	6,778	6,786	6,792	6,919
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	476,118	4.5	61,443	45,475	39,281	58,883	43,428	40,478	40,358	40,298	38,405	38,406
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	217,831	-3.6	31,210	21,085	17,541	31,854	21,598	17,967	17,981	18,128	18,317	18,390
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,406	17,817	32,359	21,944	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,390	21,740	27,029	21,830	(*)	22,377	22,170	20,088	20,016
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	20,620	18,376	22,352	18,375	(*)	18,987	18,789	17,011	16,920
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,770	3,364	4,677	3,455	(*)	3,390	3,381	3,077	3,096
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	105,256	0.7	11,645	8,656	9,005	10,944	8,567	8,977	8,960	8,873	8,588	8,548
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	194,342	7.5	22,541	17,433	17,564	20,236	16,710	17,077	16,723	16,673	15,647	15,473
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,188	11,057	13,471	10,821	(*)	10,585	10,571	9,869	9,864
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	358,807	7.2	31,164	29,937	31,196	28,630	27,377	31,258	31,120	30,765	28,716	28,079

(\*) 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>					
		Dec. 2003 Advance from --		Nov. 2003 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2003 through Dec. 2003 from --	
		Nov. 2003 (p)	Dec. 2002 (r)	Oct. 2003 (r)	Nov. 2002 (r)	Jul. 2003 through Sept. 2003	Oct. 2002 through Dec. 2002
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	0.5	6.7	1.2	7.3	1.1	6.9
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ....	0.1	6.7	0.7	6.9	1.4	6.7
	Retail .....	0.5	6.5	1.2	7.0	0.9	6.5
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	1.6	6.5	3.0	8.7	0.3	7.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	1.6	6.3	3.2	8.8	0.1	7.3
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	0.0	7.9	0.2	7.2	1.3	8.0
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	0.4	10.8	0.9	10.8	2.3	10.0
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	-0.3	11.9	0.4	11.3	2.5	11.7
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	-0.7	3.6	0.3	3.7	0.0	3.9
4451	Grocery stores .....	-0.8	3.2	0.4	3.1	-0.2	3.3
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.2	9.2	0.9	8.2	1.7	8.1
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-0.4	4.8	2.0	6.7	0.4	5.2
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	0.1	5.3	1.0	6.3	1.4	5.2
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	0.8	0.6	-0.1	-2.0	-1.1	-1.0
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.3	5.4	0.1	5.1	0.2	5.0
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.1	-1.9	-0.8	-2.2	-2.1	-2.8
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	0.2	4.5	1.0	4.8	2.1	3.7
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	2.1	9.1	0.3	8.1	4.2	9.0
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.4	8.9	1.2	10.8	2.9	10.2

(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 .....	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	2.0	1.5	0.7	1.7	0.6	1.0
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	2.1	1.6	0.8	1.9	0.6	1.1
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	3.7	1.7	1.2	2.0	0.3	0.9
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores ....</b>	1.7	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.2	0.6
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; ..</b>						
	supplies dealers.....	2.1	1.1	0.8	1.3	0.1	0.5
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	2.9	0.5	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.2
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.8	0.7	0.5	1.3	0.4	0.5
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	stores .....	1.5	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.5	0.7
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp;</b>						
	music stores.....	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.8	0.1	0.8
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.2	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	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	3.5	3.2	1.8	3.4	0.5	0.8
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	4.5	2.2	0.9	2.6	0.1	0.9
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	2.2	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.