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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES March 2006

Notice of Revision: Monthly retail sales and inventories were revised based on the results of the 2004 Annual Retail Trade Survey and results from the 2002 Census of Retail Trade. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised unadjusted and adjusted data was released on March 30, 2006 and can be found on our website at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.

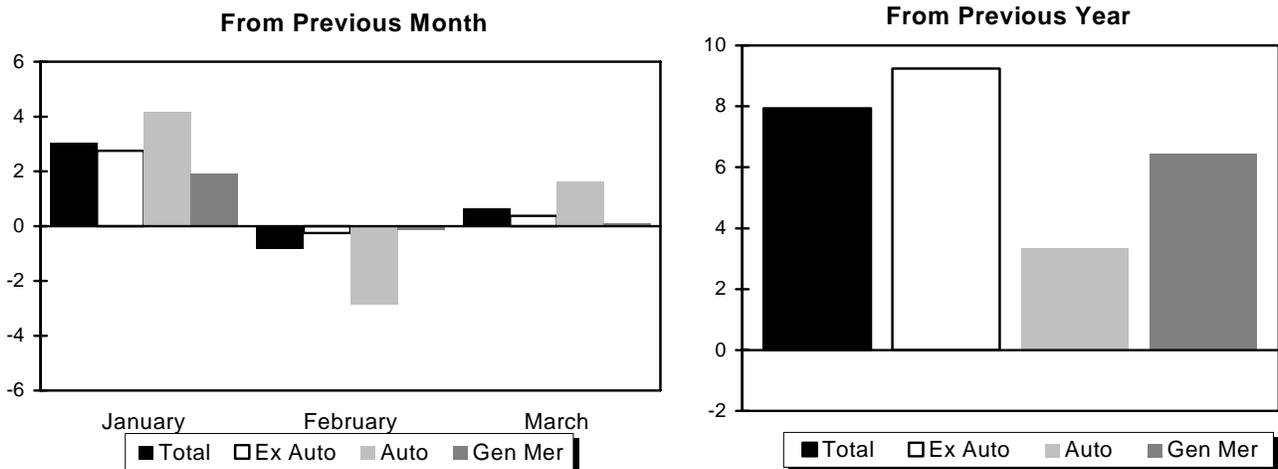
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$361.0 billion, an increase of 0.6 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$)* from the previous month and up 7.9 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) from March 2005. Total sales for the January through March 2006 period were up 8.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The January 2006 to February 2006 percent change was revised from -1.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to -0.8 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$).

Retail trade sales were up 0.7 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$)* from February and were 7.9 percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 17.9 percent ($\pm 2.0\%$) from March 2005 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 14.1 percent ($\pm 4.0\%$) 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 April is scheduled to be released May 11, 2006 at 8:30 a.m. EDT.

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 from 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					
		3 Month Total		2006			2005		2006			2005	
		2006	% Chg. 2005	Mar. ³ (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ³ (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	1,006,937	8.2	366,445	318,270	322,222	340,568	296,367	361,046	358,797	361,743	334,522	333,908
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	788,571	9.4	282,284	250,280	256,007	259,413	229,102	284,548	283,510	284,263	260,491	259,494
	Retail	906,769	8.1	330,804	286,362	289,603	307,927	266,743	326,172	324,001	326,403	302,332	301,567
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	79,720	79,023	82,785	74,916	(*)	92,193	93,001	86,568	87,032
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	218,366	3.7	84,161	67,990	66,215	81,155	67,265	76,498	75,287	77,480	74,031	74,414
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	200,192	3.4	77,489	62,268	60,435	74,914	61,852	70,126	68,957	71,100	68,104	68,420
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	50,443	49,726	60,468	50,165	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,722	5,780	6,241	5,413	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	27,643	10.5	9,870	8,844	8,929	8,910	8,081	9,880	9,827	10,067	8,982	9,009
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,878	4,854	4,856	4,581	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,966	4,075	4,054	3,500	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	24,441	6.8	8,172	7,869	8,400	7,827	7,483	8,631	8,727	9,040	8,301	8,348
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,444	6,848	6,102	6,011	(*)	7,120	7,411	6,647	6,701
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,425	1,552	1,725	1,472	(*)	1,607	1,629	1,654	1,647
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	79,304	18.6	30,914	24,009	24,381	26,326	20,279	31,124	30,766	30,634	26,402	26,006
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,913	22,406	23,221	18,429	(*)	27,255	27,126	23,408	22,865
445	Food & beverage stores	127,258	3.9	44,404	40,531	42,323	42,860	38,414	44,670	44,690	44,291	42,487	42,384
4451	Grocery stores	114,053	3.0	39,688	36,212	38,153	38,620	34,635	39,648	39,663	39,292	38,049	37,977
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,671	2,562	2,613	2,386	(*)	3,139	3,105	2,822	2,810
446	Health & personal care stores	54,035	6.2	18,935	17,229	17,871	17,876	16,289	18,207	18,060	17,997	17,025	17,074
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,372	14,904	14,985	13,665	(*)	15,002	14,949	14,312	14,264
447	Gasoline stations	95,383	17.5	34,273	29,725	31,385	29,949	25,388	34,376	34,404	35,028	30,252	29,249
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	43,791	4.9	16,288	14,533	12,970	15,763	13,905	17,369	17,375	17,571	16,299	16,708
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	606	620	752	619	(*)	783	787	797	802
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,541	2,536	3,065	2,422	(*)	3,145	3,251	2,939	2,994
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,046	4,699	6,081	4,888	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,870	1,681	2,031	1,804	(*)	2,149	2,221	1,968	2,083
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	19,247	7.9	6,615	5,744	6,888	6,130	5,389	7,167	7,127	7,168	6,744	6,719
452	General merchandise stores	121,220	6.2	43,249	39,430	38,541	41,027	36,977	45,637	45,604	45,659	42,872	42,946
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	45,358	-0.6	16,575	14,777	14,006	16,561	14,906	17,902	17,923	18,079	17,827	18,097
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,136	14,337	16,995	15,308	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,653	24,535	24,466	22,071	(*)	27,681	27,580	25,045	24,849
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,699	21,692	21,246	19,213	(*)	24,218	24,022	21,746	21,491
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,954	2,843	3,220	2,858	(*)	3,463	3,558	3,299	3,358
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	27,638	10.3	9,649	8,988	9,001	8,754	8,264	9,937	9,816	9,824	9,063	9,036
454	Nonstore retailers	68,443	12.9	24,274	21,470	22,699	21,350	19,009	22,676	22,318	21,644	19,874	19,674
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,154	14,347	13,142	11,465	(*)	14,681	14,521	12,809	12,753
722	Food services & drinking places ...	100,168	9.0	35,641	31,908	32,619	32,641	29,624	34,874	34,796	35,340	32,190	32,341

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

(NA) Not available. (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					
		Mar. 2006 Advance from --		Feb. 2006 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2006 through Mar. 2006 from --	
		Feb. 2006 (p)	Mar. 2005 (r)	Jan. 2006 (r)	Feb. 2005 (r)	Oct. 2005 through Dec. 2005	Jan. 2005 through Mar. 2005
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.6	7.9	-0.8	7.5	3.2	8.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	0.4	9.2	-0.3	9.3	2.7	9.7
	Retail	0.7	7.9	-0.7	7.4	3.2	8.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.6	3.3	-2.8	1.2	5.2	3.3
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	1.7	3.0	-3.0	0.8	5.6	3.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	0.5	10.0	-2.4	9.1	4.8	10.2
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-1.1	4.0	-3.5	4.5	3.5	6.5
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	1.2	17.9	0.4	18.3	8.0	17.8
445	Food & beverage stores	0.0	5.1	0.9	5.4	1.1	5.1
4451	Grocery stores	0.0	4.2	0.9	4.4	0.7	4.0
446	Health & personal care stores	0.8	6.9	0.4	5.8	1.6	6.3
447	Gasoline stations	-0.1	13.6	-1.8	17.6	1.0	17.8
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	0.0	6.6	-1.1	4.0	1.6	6.3
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	0.6	6.3	-0.6	6.1	3.9	6.8
452	General merchandise stores	0.1	6.4	-0.1	6.2	1.9	6.6
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.1	0.4	-0.9	-1.0	0.3	0.0
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	1.2	9.6	-0.1	8.6	4.3	9.5
454	Nonstore retailers	1.6	14.1	3.1	13.4	2.0	12.6
722	Food services & drinking places	0.2	8.3	-1.5	7.6	2.9	8.9

(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 ± 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 statistical 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	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Retail	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	2.1	1.4	0.6	1.4	0.5	0.8
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.2	1.5	0.7	1.5	0.6	0.9
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	4.1	1.4	1.0	1.9	0.5	0.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.9	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.3
444	Building material & garden eq. &....						
	supplies dealers.....	2.4	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.4	0.3
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.1
4451	Grocery stores	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.5	0.4	0.9	-0.1	0.1
447	Gasoline stations	1.8	0.7	0.5	1.5	0.1	0.3
448	Clothing & clothing accessories						
	stores	1.5	0.6	0.5	0.8	-0.1	0.3
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book &						
	music stores.....	2.8	1.9	1.2	2.1	0.0	0.3
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.8	3.4	1.5	3.8	0.5	0.6
454	Nonstore retailers	4.4	2.2	0.9	2.4	0.4	0.4
722	Food services & drinking places ..	3.0	0.7	0.6	1.6	0.2	0.1

(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 differences 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>

