

# U.S. Census Bureau News

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

**Notice of Revision:** Monthly retail sales and inventories were revised based on the results of the 2006 Annual Retail Trade Survey. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised data can be found on our website at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/annrev08.html>.

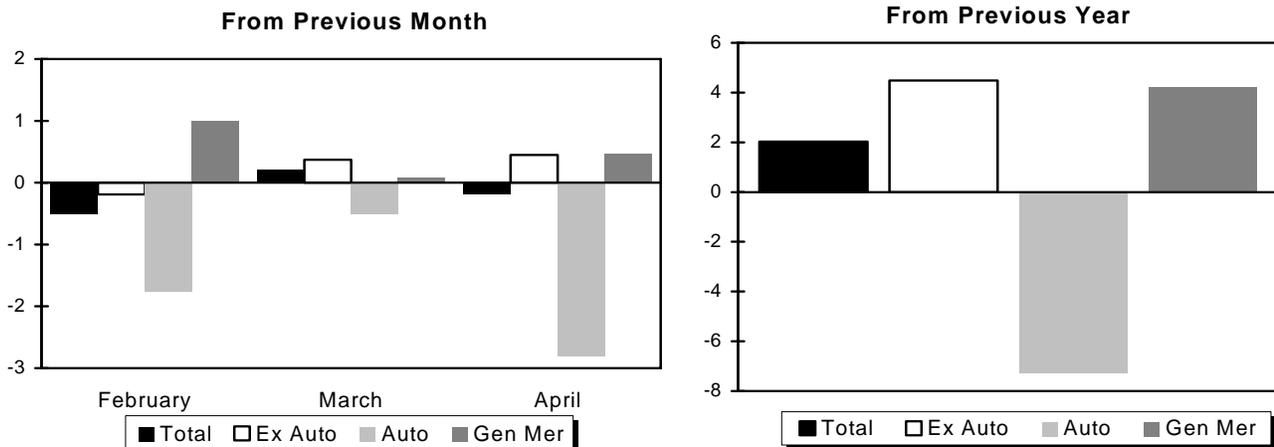
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$378.1 billion, a decrease of 0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ )\* from the previous month and 2.0 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) above April 2007. Total sales for the February through April 2008 period were up 2.2 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The February to March 2008 percent change was unrevised from 0.2 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ )\*.

Retail trade sales were down 0.3 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ )\* from March 2008, but were 1.8 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) above last year. Gasoline station sales were up 16.3 percent ( $\pm 2.6\%$ ) from April 2007 and sales of food and beverage stores were up 5.7 percent ( $\pm 0.8\%$ ) 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 May is scheduled to be released June 12, 2008 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 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>				
		4 Month Total		2008			2007		2008			2007	
		2008	% Chg. 2007	Apr. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	1,446,158	3.5	371,567	378,764	348,876	362,087	377,547	378,148	378,852	378,106	370,636	371,322
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1,156,542	5.3	297,199	300,596	278,636	284,152	293,112	306,191	304,815	303,690	293,041	294,134
	Retail .....	1,299,272	3.4	333,752	340,256	313,244	325,816	339,574	340,219	341,247	340,599	334,219	334,880
	<b>GAFO<sup>4</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	93,800	87,385	88,362	93,296	(*)	97,827	97,551	95,920	97,276
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	289,616	-3.2	74,368	78,168	70,240	77,935	84,435	71,957	74,037	74,416	77,595	77,188
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	265,030	-3.6	67,925	71,738	64,304	71,751	77,793	65,628	67,677	68,047	71,323	70,850
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	56,900	51,188	57,059	62,783	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,430	5,936	6,184	6,642	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	35,710	-4.3	8,859	9,171	8,822	9,107	9,997	9,505	9,494	9,476	10,019	10,037
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,109	5,063	4,925	5,443	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,062	3,759	4,182	4,554	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	34,508	2.9	8,157	8,662	8,857	7,759	8,630	9,511	9,377	9,372	9,142	9,161
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,885	7,146	6,103	6,800	(*)	7,549	7,538	7,300	7,335
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,777	1,711	1,656	1,830	(*)	1,828	1,834	1,842	1,826
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	100,167	-3.5	30,780	25,698	21,783	30,415	28,657	27,126	26,608	27,020	27,686	28,765
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,810	19,264	25,730	24,848	(*)	22,862	23,238	24,575	25,175
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	187,556	6.1	46,646	48,578	45,351	44,512	46,184	48,784	48,546	48,179	46,151	45,997
4451	Grocery stores .....	169,793	6.5	42,135	43,845	40,970	39,956	41,511	43,799	43,540	43,217	41,277	41,059
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,166	2,976	2,959	3,095	(*)	3,423	3,397	3,216	3,254
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	80,972	4.1	19,901	20,774	20,078	19,296	20,308	20,286	20,208	20,220	19,710	19,602
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,183	16,712	16,267	16,998	(*)	16,764	16,796	16,548	16,471
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	158,280	20.8	42,345	41,232	36,789	36,181	35,077	41,719	41,902	41,243	35,858	35,218
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	66,151	1.7	17,445	18,119	16,128	17,363	18,244	19,020	18,892	18,752	18,458	19,008
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	825	722	874	807	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,400	2,785	3,440	3,421	(*)	3,343	3,359	3,305	3,377
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,743	5,680	6,545	7,150	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,285	1,999	2,228	2,304	(*)	2,195	2,224	2,165	2,274
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	26,146	4.5	6,403	6,670	6,024	6,116	6,697	7,428	7,395	7,346	7,229	7,295
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	179,824	4.2	45,613	47,954	44,205	44,836	46,215	49,327	49,103	49,065	47,323	47,950
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	59,158	-3.4	15,239	16,017	14,490	16,122	16,547	16,968	16,989	17,050	17,363	17,807
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>5</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,471	14,891	16,576	17,021	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	31,937	29,715	28,714	29,668	(*)	32,114	32,015	29,960	30,143
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	28,442	26,426	25,303	26,175	(*)	28,470	28,324	26,385	26,493
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,495	3,289	3,411	3,493	(*)	3,644	3,691	3,575	3,650
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	36,366	1.2	8,902	9,186	9,025	8,963	9,542	9,679	9,796	9,762	9,775	9,950
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	103,976	5.5	24,333	26,044	25,942	23,333	25,588	25,877	25,889	25,748	25,273	24,709
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,904	16,401	16,103	17,150	(*)	17,701	17,673	17,334	17,306
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	146,886	4.6	37,815	38,508	35,632	36,271	37,973	37,929	37,605	37,507	36,417	36,442

(\*) 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>					
		Apr. 2008 Advance from --		Mar. 2008 Preliminary from --		Feb. 2008 through Apr. 2008 from --	
		Mar. 2008 (p)	Apr. 2007 (r)	Feb. 2008 (r)	Mar. 2007 (r)	Nov. 2007 through Jan. 2008	Feb. 2007 through Apr. 2007
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	-0.2	2.0	0.2	2.0	-0.4	2.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	0.5	4.5	0.4	3.6	0.4	4.2
	Retail .....	-0.3	1.8	0.2	1.9	-0.4	2.1
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	-2.8	-7.3	-0.5	-4.1	-3.3	-5.0
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	-3.0	-8.0	-0.5	-4.5	-3.6	-5.6
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	0.1	-5.1	0.2	-5.4	-1.3	-5.3
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.4	4.0	0.1	2.4	-0.2	2.8
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	1.9	-2.0	-1.5	-7.5	-1.7	-4.3
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.5	5.7	0.8	5.5	1.3	5.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.6	6.1	0.7	6.0	1.5	5.6
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.4	2.9	-0.1	3.1	1.2	3.3
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-0.4	16.3	1.6	19.0	0.7	18.4
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	0.7	3.0	0.7	-0.6	0.6	1.1
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	0.4	2.8	0.7	1.4	0.3	2.7
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.5	4.2	0.1	2.4	1.2	3.7
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.1	-2.3	-0.4	-4.6	-1.2	-3.4
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	-1.2	-1.0	0.3	-1.5	-1.2	-0.6
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	0.0	2.4	0.5	4.8	-0.4	2.8
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.9	4.2	0.3	3.2	0.3	3.8

(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

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## 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 .....	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	1.8	1.3	0.6	1.5	-0.1	0.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.0	1.5	0.7	1.6	-0.1	0.6
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	2.1	1.3	0.8	1.8	-0.2	1.0
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.1	0.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;... supplies dealers.....</b>	2.3	1.2	0.8	1.3	0.3	0.5
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	1.6	0.4	0.4	1.2	-0.3	0.4
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.9	0.5	0.3	1.6	0.5	0.3
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	1.8	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.0	0.6
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	2.1	1.5	1.1	1.8	0.0	0.4
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	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>	3.2	2.4	1.5	2.9	0.6	0.9
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.6	1.0	0.6	1.2	0.0	0.6
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	1.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.1	0.3



- (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>