

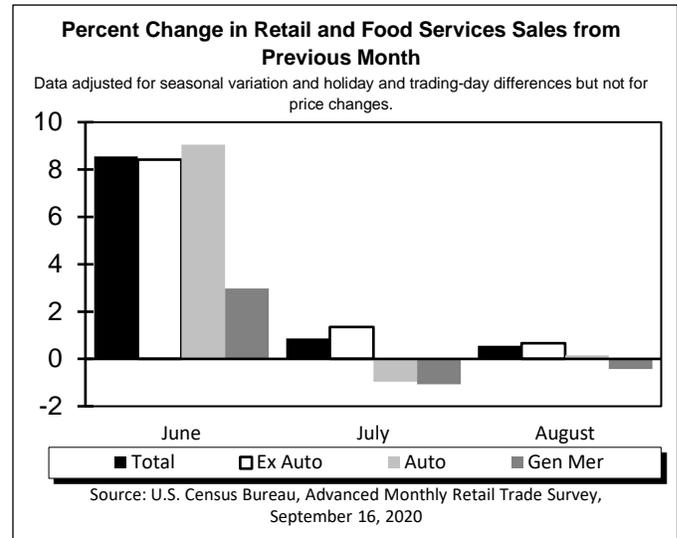
ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, AUGUST 2020

Release Number: CB20-136

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Impact: The Census Bureau continues to monitor response and data quality and has determined that estimates in this release meet publication standards. For more information, see [COVID-19 FAQs](#).

September 16, 2020 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August 2020:

 ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
August 2020	\$537.5 billion	0.6%
July 2020 (revised)	\$534.6 billion	0.9%
Next release: October 16, 2020		
<small>* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero. Data adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2020.</small>		



Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$537.5 billion, an increase of 0.6 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the previous month, and 2.6 percent (± 0.7 percent) above August 2019. Total sales for the June 2020 through August 2020 period were up 2.4 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The June 2020 to July 2020 percent change was revised from up 1.2 percent (± 0.5 percent) to up 0.9 percent (± 0.2 percent).

Retail trade sales were up 0.1 percent (± 0.5 percent)* from July 2020, and 5.1 percent (± 0.7 percent) above last year. Nonstore retailers were up 22.4 percent (± 1.4 percent) from August 2019, while clothing and clothing accessories stores were down 20.4 percent (± 1.9 percent) from last year.

General Information

The September 2020 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on October 16, 2020 at 8:30

Data Inquiries

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a.m. EDT. View the full schedule in the Economic Briefing Room: <www.census.gov/economic-indicators/>. The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

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 5,500 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.

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey 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 5,500 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. For each detailed industry, we compute a ratio of current-to-previous month weighted sales using data from units for which we have obtained usable responses for both the current and previous month. For each detailed industry, the advance total sales estimates for the current month is computed by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS) at the appropriate industry level. Total estimates for broader industries are computed as the sum of the detailed industry estimates. The link relative estimate is used because imputation is not performed for most nonrespondents in MARTS. For a limited number of nonresponding companies that have influential effects on the estimates, sales may be estimated based on historical performance of that company. The monthly estimates are benchmarked to the annual survey estimates from the Annual Retail Trade Survey once available. The estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <www.census.gov/retail/>.

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.

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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 $\pm 1.753 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.6 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.4 percent to +2.8 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 $\pm 1.753 \times CV \times$ (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.

Weather Information

For information on the impact of weather events on the compilation of this report, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website at:

www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html

RESOURCES

The Rest of the Consumer Spending Story

Retail and services together represent what's commonly referred to as consumer spending. Quarterly Services Survey (QSS) revenue comprises roughly 2/3 of the personal consumption expenditures component of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The second quarter 2020 Quarterly Services Report was released on September 11, 2020. Learn about historical revenue trends for certain industries going back 15 years and other data, such as in-patient days and discharges for hospitals, by visiting <https://www.census.gov/services/index.html>

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API

The Census Bureau's application programming interface lets developers create custom apps to reach new users and makes key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics more accessible than ever before. <www.census.gov/developers/>

FRED Mobile App



Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED App <<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/>> for both Apple and Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators.

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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				
		8 Month Total		2020			2019		2020			2019	
		2020	% Chg. 2019	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug.	Jul.	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug. (r)	Jul. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	3,995,662	-1.8	545,890	550,941	537,022	545,247	532,103	537,526	534,558	529,962	524,058	521,831
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	3,194,645	-1.4	429,437	433,678	421,725	430,588	422,834	427,694	424,894	419,239	418,933	418,702
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	3,717,702	-0.5	508,138	512,846	501,411	500,204	486,653	502,342	499,512	496,398	482,467	479,670
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	2,916,685	0.4	391,685	395,583	386,114	385,545	377,384	392,510	389,848	385,675	377,342	376,541
	Retail	3,591,768	0.9	489,771	496,876	485,930	477,537	466,160	482,882	482,372	479,823	459,449	457,118
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	104,596	101,064	113,908	106,940	(*)	105,491	104,611	109,219	109,686
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	801,017	-3.4	116,453	117,263	115,297	114,659	109,269	109,832	109,664	110,723	105,125	103,129
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	736,527	-3.8	107,425	108,144	106,167	106,073	100,916	101,058	101,069	101,986	97,048	95,204
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	84,509	81,358	87,792	82,192	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,119	9,130	8,586	8,353	(*)	8,595	8,737	8,077	7,925
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	67,610	-11.3	10,386	10,192	9,702	10,345	9,944	10,233	10,022	9,930	9,862	9,895
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,635	5,449	5,452	5,259	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,557	4,253	4,893	4,685	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	49,890	-16.8	7,763	7,306	6,051	8,038	7,669	7,897	7,831	6,486	8,095	8,237
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	289,219	11.4	37,417	40,418	43,165	33,434	34,755	37,259	36,526	37,406	32,274	31,660
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	35,748	37,309	29,887	30,901	(*)	31,861	32,641	28,329	27,739
445	Food & beverage stores	566,563	12.2	71,634	74,216	70,808	66,165	65,690	71,046	71,896	71,502	64,596	64,571
4451	Grocery stores	507,503	12.2	63,534	65,770	62,756	59,028	58,557	62,905	63,916	63,454	57,701	57,692
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,421	6,078	5,270	5,245	(*)	5,995	6,054	5,024	4,995
446	Health & personal care stores	236,769	0.1	30,972	30,787	29,726	29,973	29,508	31,380	31,129	29,786	29,706	29,836
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,360	25,841	24,710	24,531	(*)	26,573	26,076	24,685	24,704
447	Gasoline stations	277,960	-16.9	37,752	38,095	35,611	45,043	45,450	35,184	35,046	33,564	41,591	42,161
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	108,616	-34.9	18,155	16,906	15,645	23,743	21,650	17,733	17,234	16,857	22,278	22,407
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	350	254	617	581	(*)	395	262	657	667
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,414	2,068	3,325	3,261	(*)	2,499	2,165	3,376	3,444
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,828	6,728	10,067	9,264	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,481	2,446	4,280	3,361	(*)	2,365	2,721	3,272	3,298
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	50,087	-0.7	8,105	7,771	8,117	7,504	6,549	7,429	7,881	8,325	6,688	6,703
452	General merchandise stores	467,022	2.2	61,353	60,349	59,864	61,460	58,487	60,344	60,600	61,256	59,861	59,939
4521	Department stores	67,278	-18.9	9,626	9,266	8,747	11,550	10,630	9,402	9,627	9,441	11,318	11,423
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,083	51,117	49,910	47,857	(*)	50,973	51,815	48,543	48,516
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	43,316	43,108	43,098	41,138	(*)	43,143	43,676	41,641	41,596
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,767	8,009	6,812	6,719	(*)	7,830	8,139	6,902	6,920
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	83,094	-4.5	11,484	11,833	11,587	11,998	11,545	11,405	11,426	11,088	11,469	11,224
454	Nonstore retailers	593,921	19.6	78,297	81,740	80,357	65,175	65,644	83,140	83,117	82,900	67,904	67,356
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	74,803	74,335	58,181	58,814	(*)	75,712	76,398	60,229	59,770
722	Food services & drinking places	403,894	-20.9	56,119	54,065	51,092	67,710	65,943	54,644	52,186	50,139	64,609	64,713

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business. (NA) Not available (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(S) Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability (coefficient of variation is greater than 30%), poor response quality (total quantity response rate is less than 50%), or other concerns about the estimate's quality.

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics>

(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-13ARIMA-SEATS 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/retail>

(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, musical instrument, and book (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2020. 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 www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.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					
		Aug. 2020 Advance from --		Jul. 2020 Preliminary from --		Jun. 2020 through Aug. 2020 from --	
		Jul. 2020 (p)	Aug. 2019 (r)	Jun. 2020 (r)	Jul. 2019 (r)	Mar. 2020 through May 2020	Jun. 2019 through Aug. 2019
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.6	2.6	0.9	2.4	15.7	2.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.7	2.1	1.3	1.5	11.9	1.5
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.6	4.1	0.6	4.1	15.7	4.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.7	4.0	1.1	3.5	11.5	3.5
	Retail	0.1	5.1	0.5	5.5	13.8	5.4
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	0.2	4.5	-1.0	6.3	33.2	6.3
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	0.0	4.1	-0.9	6.2	34.6	6.1
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	2.1	3.8	0.9	1.3	58.3	1.8
443	Electronics & appliance stores	0.8	-2.4	20.7	-4.9	47.3	-9.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	2.0	15.4	-2.4	15.4	7.6	16.8
445	Food & beverage stores	-1.2	10.0	0.6	11.3	-4.9	11.1
4451	Grocery stores	-1.6	9.0	0.7	10.8	-5.9	10.4
446	Health & personal care stores	0.8	5.6	4.5	4.3	7.0	3.1
447	Gasoline stations	0.4	-15.4	4.4	-16.9	15.7	-17.2
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	2.9	-20.4	2.2	-23.1	127.1	-22.6
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	-5.7	11.1	-5.3	17.6	50.2	16.8
452	General merchandise stores	-0.4	0.8	-1.1	1.1	0.9	1.6
4521	Department stores	-2.3	-16.9	2.0	-15.7	22.6	-16.4
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-0.2	-0.6	3.0	1.8	26.0	-0.1
454	Nonstore retailers	0.0	22.4	0.3	23.4	5.2	23.2
722	Food services & drinking places	4.7	-15.4	4.1	-19.4	36.3	-19.0

(p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2020. 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 www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates August 2020

(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	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2
	Retail, total	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.4	1.1	0.5	1.2	0.7	0.5
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.5	1.2	0.5	1.3	0.8	0.4
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	2.8	1.3	0.8	1.7	1.1	1.7
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.5	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.5	1.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	1.5	0.7	0.4	1.2	0.4	1.1
445	Food & beverage stores	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.3
4451	Grocery stores	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	2.1	0.5	0.4	1.2	0.6	0.8
447	Gasoline stations	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.2	0.6
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	2.5	0.9	0.7	1.1	-1.3	1.4
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	2.6	1.0	1.0	2.6	-0.2	1.0
452	General merchandise stores	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.2
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	4.3	3.9	1.7	3.7	0.2	1.6
454	Nonstore retailers	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.8	-0.1	0.4
722	Food services & drinking places	3.4	1.4	0.7	2.1	0.1	1.0

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading day variation. 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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2020. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.