

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, FEBRUARY 2021

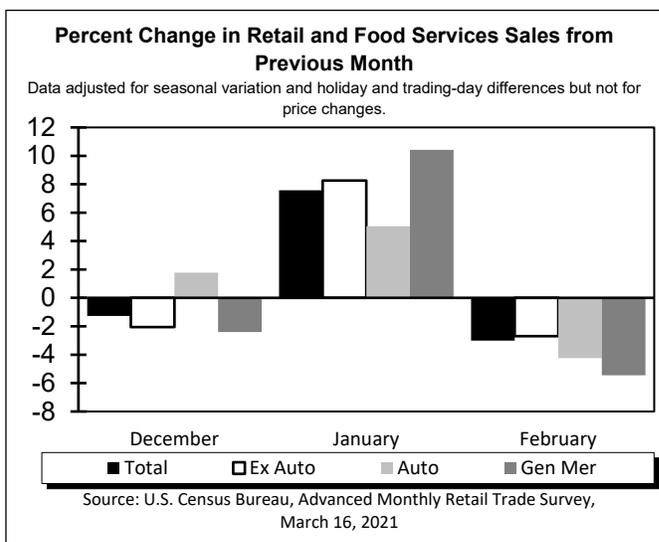
Release Number: CB21-36

Intention to Revise: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2019 Annual Retail Trade Survey and the Service Annual Survey. Revised not adjusted estimates and corresponding adjusted estimates are scheduled for release on April 26, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. EDT.

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](#).

March 16, 2021 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for February 2021:

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
February 2021	\$561.7 billion	-3.0%
January 2021 (revised)	\$579.1 billion	7.6%
Next release: April 15, 2021		
<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, March 16, 2021.</small>		



Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for February 2021, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$561.7 billion, a decrease of 3.0 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the previous month, and 6.3 percent (± 0.7 percent) above February 2020. Total sales for the December 2020 through February 2021 period were up 6.0 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The December 2020 to January 2021 percent change was revised from up 5.3 percent (± 0.5 percent) to up 7.6 percent (± 0.3 percent).

Data Inquiries

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Retail trade sales were down 3.1 percent (± 0.5 percent) from January 2021, and up 9.5 percent (± 0.7 percent) above last year. Nonstore retailers were up 25.9 percent (± 1.8 percent) from February 2020, while food services and drinking places were down 17.0 percent (± 3.2 percent) from last year.

General Information

The March 2021 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on April 15, 2021 at 8:30 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.

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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 $\pm 1.753 \times 0.9$ 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).

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The fourth quarter 2020 Quarterly Services Report was released on March 12, 2021 at 10:00 AM. Learn about historical revenue trends for certain industries going back 15 years and other data, such as inpatient days and discharges for hospitals, by visiting <<https://www.census.gov/services/index.html>>

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				
		2 Month Total		2021		2020			2021		2020		
		2021	% Chg. 2020	Feb. ³ (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb.	Jan.	Feb. ³ (a)	Jan. (p)	Dec. (r)	Feb. (r)	Jan. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	1,010,944	5.1	491,356	519,588	614,863	479,868	481,862	561,685	579,123	538,338	528,541	528,822
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	803,933	4.3	389,000	414,933	498,027	382,009	388,594	446,019	458,333	423,345	422,637	423,554
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	938,909	5.9	455,813	483,096	578,952	443,605	442,922	519,919	538,800	500,256	487,333	486,218
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	731,898	5.2	353,457	378,441	462,116	345,746	349,654	404,253	418,010	385,263	381,429	380,950
	Retail	909,490	8.4	441,983	467,507	563,663	417,777	421,093	507,489	523,540	487,393	463,251	463,338
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	100,716	141,897	96,592	94,367	(*)	116,128	105,478	109,349	110,025
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	207,011	8.3	102,356	104,655	116,836	97,859	93,268	115,666	120,790	114,993	105,904	105,268
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	191,932	8.7	94,990	96,942	108,945	90,701	85,823	107,333	112,201	106,704	98,055	97,305
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	79,684	92,059	74,033	71,757	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,713	7,891	7,158	7,445	(*)	8,589	8,289	7,849	7,963
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	19,869	7.7	9,659	10,210	11,636	9,191	9,257	11,014	11,446	10,136	10,111	10,161
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,755	5,859	5,035	4,904	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	4,156	4,353	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	14,293	-4.4	6,737	7,556	10,076	7,218	7,736	7,762	7,912	6,781	8,011	8,075
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	62,277	13.1	30,260	32,017	35,528	27,164	27,887	38,856	40,062	38,189	34,023	33,420
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	28,013	31,028	23,883	24,555	(*)	34,842	33,292	29,854	29,197
445	Food & beverage stores.....	136,283	9.4	65,396	70,887	76,181	60,983	63,590	71,889	71,887	70,208	64,341	64,343
4451	Grocery stores	122,236	8.7	58,472	63,764	65,773	54,814	57,667	63,695	63,637	62,403	57,337	57,495
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,320	7,739	4,533	4,388	(*)	6,208	5,832	5,145	5,114
446	Health & personal care stores	60,789	3.4	29,422	31,367	35,387	28,746	30,047	31,773	32,204	31,483	30,132	30,017
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	29,181	23,934	25,209	(*)	(S)	26,552	24,776	24,715
447	Gasoline stations	72,035	-4.2	35,543	36,492	35,911	36,263	38,940	41,766	40,323	38,082	41,208	42,604
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	30,889	-12.8	16,005	14,884	30,427	18,813	16,612	19,629	20,185	19,046	22,136	22,512
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	323	520	527	550	(*)	386	390	644	663
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,099	3,520	2,797	2,532	(*)	2,833	2,619	3,399	3,426
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,714	11,889	7,557	6,953	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,019	3,498	2,873	2,293	(*)	2,808	2,544	3,161	3,211
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	13,407	17.8	6,186	7,221	11,015	5,573	5,807	7,694	8,319	7,539	6,666	6,667
452	General merchandise stores.....	112,838	5.8	53,792	59,046	76,033	53,811	52,885	62,496	66,096	59,857	59,987	60,158
4521	Department stores	15,526	-11.9	7,525	8,001	14,013	9,139	8,479	9,412	10,277	8,521	11,013	11,041
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,045	62,020	44,672	44,406	(*)	55,819	51,336	48,974	49,117
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	44,019	52,592	38,426	38,360	(*)	47,743	44,010	42,088	42,247
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,026	9,428	6,246	6,046	(*)	8,076	7,326	6,886	6,870
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	21,539	2.5	10,456	11,083	13,945	10,469	10,552	12,207	12,636	12,577	11,829	11,815
454	Nonstore retailers	158,260	25.4	76,171	82,089	110,688	61,687	64,512	86,737	91,680	78,502	68,903	68,298
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	73,761	102,127	53,979	56,350	(*)	83,819	71,169	61,620	61,117
722	Food services & drinking places	101,454	-17.4	49,373	52,081	51,200	62,091	60,769	54,196	55,583	50,945	65,290	65,484

(*) 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, March 16, 2021. 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					
		Feb. 2021 Advance from --		Jan. 2021 Preliminary from --		Dec. 2020 through Feb. 2021 from --	
		Jan. 2021 (p)	Feb. 2020 (r)	Dec. 2020 (r)	Jan. 2020 (r)	Sep. 2020 through Nov. 2020	Dec. 2019 through Feb. 2020
	Retail & food services,						
	total	-3.0	6.3	7.6	9.5	1.8	6.0
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-2.7	5.5	8.3	8.2	1.5	4.8
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	-3.5	6.7	7.7	10.8	1.1	7.0
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-3.3	6.0	8.5	9.7	0.6	5.9
	Retail	-3.1	9.5	7.4	13.0	2.2	9.4
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-4.2	9.2	5.0	14.7	2.6	11.1
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	-4.3	9.5	5.2	15.3	2.8	11.6
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-3.8	8.9	12.9	12.6	5.2	8.4
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-1.9	-3.1	16.7	-2.0	-0.6	-7.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	-3.0	14.2	4.9	19.9	2.8	16.6
445	Food & beverage stores	0.0	11.7	2.4	11.7	0.7	10.7
4451	Grocery stores	0.1	11.1	2.0	10.7	0.8	10.0
446	Health & personal care stores	-1.3	5.4	2.3	7.3	1.7	6.0
447	Gasoline stations	3.6	1.4	5.9	-5.4	11.8	-5.2
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-2.8	-11.3	6.0	-10.3	0.0	-12.5
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	-7.5	15.4	10.3	24.8	0.7	18.0
452	General merchandise stores	-5.4	4.2	10.4	9.9	1.2	4.7
4521	Department stores	-8.4	-14.5	20.6	-6.9	-2.7	-14.7
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-3.4	3.2	0.5	6.9	5.2	6.7
454	Nonstore retailers	-5.4	25.9	16.8	34.2	-0.3	25.4
722	Food services & drinking places	-2.5	-17.0	9.1	-15.1	-2.5	-17.9

(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, March 16, 2021. 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 Feb. 2021

(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 Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change	
			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	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4
	Retail, total	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.5	1.0	0.6	1.3	0.6	0.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.6	1.0	0.7	1.3	0.7	0.4
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.0	1.1	0.9	1.7	1.1	1.0
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.7	1.0	0.7	1.3	0.1	2.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	1.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.1	0.7
445	Food & beverage stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.2
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	2.6	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.5	0.8
447	Gasoline stations	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.7
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	3.1	1.1	1.0	1.3	-1.1	1.5
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	3.0	0.8	1.2	2.2	0.4	2.2
452	General merchandise stores	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.0	0.5
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.5	0.8
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	5.0	3.7	1.8	4.5	0.7	1.3
454	Nonstore retailers	1.6	0.5	0.4	1.0	-0.1	1.1
722	Food services & drinking places	3.5	1.3	0.8	1.8	0.2	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, March 16, 2021. 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>.