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advance monthly RETAIL SALES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE • Social and Economic Statistics Administration • BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in March were estimated at \$41.6 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$42.3 billion, about 2 percent above February and about 16 percent above March sales last year. Adjusted total January-through-March sales averaged about 6 percent above the prior 3 months and 17 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for February was about \$1.2 billion more than the \$40.1 billion published earlier in the February Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released March 9, 1973. The seasonally adjusted sales for February as revised were more than 1 percent above January.

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting, by a small subsample of the Census Bureau's retail survey panel, of sales figures for the weeks and part-weeks comprising the month. Because retailers' weekly records often differ

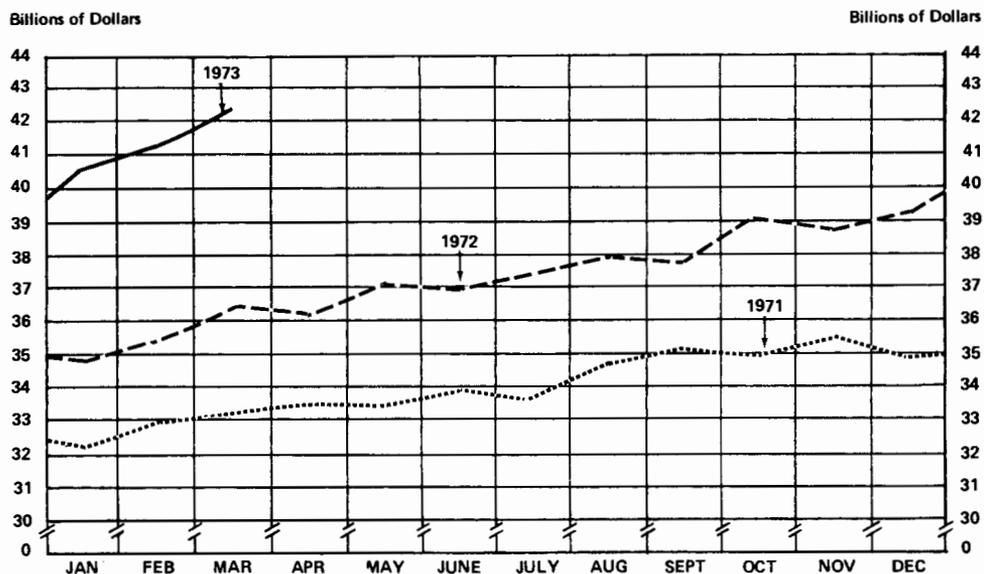
from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability between sub-sample and later full sample results can be a cause of difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimate, prior to publication, on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in advance and full-sample estimates for total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.7 percent. For individual kind of business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.7 percent for the Food group to 2.5 percent for the Building materials group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES

(Data ADJUSTED for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)



Annual subscription to current retail trade reports are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (Weekly Retail Sales Report, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Report, Monthly Retail Trade Report, and Annual Retail Trade Report sold as a single subscription.) Price: \$13.00. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report are available only from the Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at 15 cents each.

Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1973		1972
	March ¹	February ²	March
Total, retail stores ³	41,596	35,037	36,220
Total (excluding automotive group).....	32,100	27,428	28,638
Durable goods stores, total ³	15,106	12,275	12,258
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	26,490	22,762	23,962
Food group.....	8,837	7,670	7,870
Grocery stores.....	8,196	7,139	7,334
Eating and drinking places.....	3,006	2,644	2,693
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	6,184	4,931	5,673
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	5,640	4,466	5,151
Department stores.....	3,778	2,958	3,367
Apparel group.....	1,780	1,457	1,734
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,954	1,750	1,673
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....	2,572	1,940	2,061
Automotive group.....	9,496	7,609	7,582
Gasoline service stations.....	2,801	2,479	2,488
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,241	1,148	1,157

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change February 1973 from--	
	1973		1972		January 1973	February 1972	
	March ¹	February ²	January	March			February
Total, retail stores ³	42,274	41,305	40,707	36,450	35,345	+1	+17
Total (excluding automotive group).....	33,383	32,733	32,200	29,377	28,656	+2	+14
Durable goods stores, total ³	14,871	14,392	14,234	12,087	11,457	+1	+26
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	27,403	26,913	26,473	24,363	23,888	+2	+13
Food group.....		8,435	8,476	7,720	7,665	0	+10
Eating and drinking places.....		3,082	3,057	2,814	2,714	+1	+14
General merchandise group with nonstores.....		6,751	6,590	6,088	5,965	+2	+13
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....		6,220	6,095	5,546	5,486	+2	+13
Apparel group.....		2,008	1,949	1,767	1,741	+3	+15
Furniture and appliance group.....		2,016	1,962	1,780	1,728	+3	+17
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip. group.....		2,617	2,585	2,200	2,083	+1	+26
Automotive group.....		8,572	8,507	7,073	6,889	+1	+28
Gasoline service stations.....		2,827	2,714	2,534	2,493	+4	+13
Drug and proprietary stores.....		1,251	1,246	1,178	1,155	0	+8

¹Advance sample estimates.

²Preliminary estimates of full sample.

³Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	March 1973 from--		January 1973 through March 1973 from--	
	February 1973	March 1972	October 1972 through December 1972	January 1972 through March 1972
Total, retail stores.....	+2	+16	-6	+17
Total (excluding automotive group).....	+2	+14	+5	+14
Durable goods stores, total.....	+3	+23	+9	+24
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+2	+12	+5	+13

Source: Bureau of the Census