

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday June 11, 1998

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
May 1998**

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for May adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$224.6 billion, an increase of 0.9 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 6.6 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from May 1997. Total sales for the March through May period were up 5.0 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The March to April percent change was revised from +0.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +0.7 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods increased 1.7 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from April and were 10.4 percent above last year. Automotive dealers increased 2.4 percent from April and were 11.2 percent above May 1997.

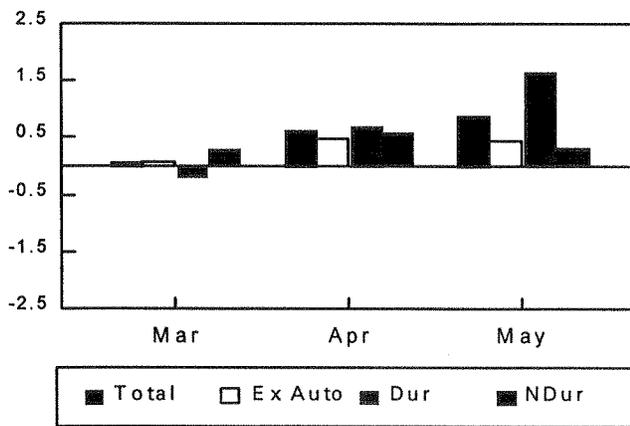
Nondurable goods increased 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from last month and were 4.0 percent above last year. General merchandise sales were up 8.1 percent from May a year ago while food sales were up 3.0 percent during the same period.

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

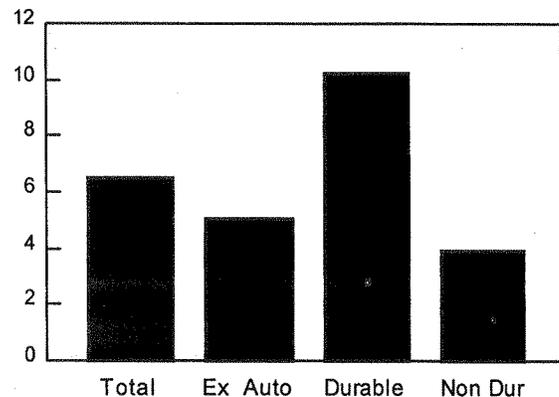
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for June is scheduled to be released July 14, 1998 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Ronald Piencykoski, Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. Telephone: (301) 457-2713 or (301) 457-2666.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call (202) 482-1986. The data are also available on the internet - <http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, By Kind of Business

(In Millions of Dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1998			1997		1998			1997	
		May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May	Apr.	May ² (a)	Apr. (p)	Mar. (r)	May (r)	Apr. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	231,493	221,169	216,181	220,869	206,666	224,623	222,580	221,105	210,657	211,018
	Total (excl. auto group).....	171,373	163,286	158,636	165,219	152,760	168,501	167,755	166,953	160,187	159,952
	Durable goods, total.....	99,796	95,113	92,819	92,679	88,202	94,872	93,293	92,607	85,925	86,788
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers....	15,969	14,883	12,676	14,852	13,503	13,814	13,827	13,568	12,485	12,550
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores....	(*)	11,072	9,700	11,286	10,290	(*)	10,525	10,254	9,746	9,735
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	1,346	1,128	1,401	1,258	(*)	1,283	1,263	1,196	1,203
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	60,120	57,883	57,545	55,650	53,906	56,122	54,825	54,152	50,470	51,066
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	56,802	54,617	54,383	52,335	50,705	52,888	51,623	50,968	47,319	47,925
551	Motor vehicle (franchised).....	(*)	46,343	46,522	44,607	43,055	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	3,266	3,162	3,315	3,201	(*)	3,202	3,184	3,151	3,141
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	12,354	11,811	12,421	11,620	11,045	13,073	12,882	13,067	12,098	12,044
571	Furniture and home furnishings.....	(*)	5,951	6,052	5,932	5,550	(*)	6,344	6,331	5,926	5,885
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	5,018	5,488	4,866	4,724	(*)	5,576	5,789	5,266	5,266
5722	Household appliance stores.....	(*)	815	834	832	781	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	131,697	126,056	123,362	128,190	118,464	129,751	129,287	128,498	124,732	124,230
53	General merchandise group stores....	29,340	27,581	26,027	27,349	24,328	29,530	29,342	29,085	27,306	26,895
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts).....	23,105	21,797	20,459	21,417	19,048	23,338	23,213	22,962	21,481	21,094
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³	(*)	22,216	20,832	21,826	19,419	(*)	23,604	23,305	21,963	21,430
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	921	872	931	809	(*)	956	968	922	925
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	4,863	4,696	5,001	4,471	(*)	5,173	5,155	4,903	4,876
54	Food stores.....	37,840	36,183	35,583	37,263	34,335	36,704	36,618	36,395	35,645	35,557
541	Grocery stores.....	35,400	33,779	33,324	35,015	32,256	34,302	34,224	34,039	33,443	33,391
554	Gasoline service stations.....	13,301	12,373	12,007	13,767	13,084	12,548	12,460	12,417	12,903	13,190
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	10,213	10,132	9,327	9,696	8,675	10,486	10,490	10,360	9,711	9,597
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	937	807	841	741	(*)	1,006	947	863	839
562,3	Women's clothing, specialty stores.....	(*)	2,693	2,385	2,744	2,471	(*)	2,701	2,638	2,591	2,604
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	3,722	3,477	3,545	3,152	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	1,819	1,669	1,799	1,582	(*)	1,731	1,751	1,680	1,672
58	Eating and drinking places.....	21,443	20,210	20,293	20,883	19,479	20,229	20,251	20,273	19,608	19,577
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8,674	8,665	8,548	8,261	7,846	8,648	8,674	8,548	8,083	8,089
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,931	1,859	2,054	1,810	(*)	2,059	2,038	1,977	1,963
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	4,118	4,434	3,704	3,812	(*)	4,505	4,465	4,116	4,117
53,56,57, 594	GAF(4).....	(*)	56,476	54,533	55,771	50,603	(*)	60,902	60,743	56,822	56,396

* Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

- (1) Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-98-04.
- (2) Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.
- (3) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.
- (4) GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change ¹					
		May 1998 Advance from --		Apr. 1998 Preliminary from --		Mar. 1998 through May 1998 from --	
		Apr. 1998 (p)	May 1997 (r)	Mar. 1998 (r)	Apr. 1997 (r)	Dec. 1997 through Feb. 1998	Mar. 1997 through May 1997
	Retail trade, total	0.9	6.6	0.7	5.5	1.8	5.0
	Total (excl. automotive group)	0.4	5.2	0.5	4.9	1.6	4.4
	Durable goods, total	1.7	10.4	0.7	7.5	1.8	7.4
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	-0.1	10.6	1.9	10.2	4.0	9.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	2.4	11.2	1.2	7.4	2.4	7.0
551,2,5,6, 7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	2.5	11.8	1.3	7.7	2.4	7.3
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.5	8.1	-1.4	7.0	-0.2	8.1
	Nondurable goods, total.....	0.4	4.0	0.6	4.1	1.7	3.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.6	8.1	0.9	9.1	2.7	7.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.5	8.6	1.1	10.0	2.5	8.0
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	1.3	10.1	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.2	3.0	0.6	3.0	1.6	2.3
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	2.6	0.5	2.5	1.5	1.9
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.7	-2.8	0.3	-5.5	-1.7	-5.5
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	0.0	8.0	1.3	9.3	3.0	7.9
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-0.1	3.2	-0.1	3.4	1.0	3.2
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.3	7.0	1.5	7.2	2.0	6.6

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

(2) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Data

The Advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the Advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the Advance and because of sampling variability present in each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$ or $\pm 1.5\%$, and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value).

Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average difference

between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2
	Total (excl. auto)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	-0.1	0.4
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.4
52	Building materials, group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	0.1	0.7
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.4	0.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.4
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.1	1.0
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
53	General merch. group, total	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.) ...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
54	Food stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	-0.2	0.8
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	-0.1	0.4
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.2	0.5



- (1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.
- (2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions for Retail trade total are based on the latest 12 months of data while all other kinds of business are based on the preceding 12 months.