

For Wire Transmission 10:00 a.m. E.T. April 6, 2001

BW/01-02

**MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES
FEBRUARY 2001**

Special Notice: On June 7 with the release of the monthly wholesale estimates for April 2001, we will begin using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) in place of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. In addition, we will restate the unadjusted and adjusted data series on a NAICS basis beginning with January 1992 through March 2001. These data series will also be revised based on the results of the 1999 Annual Trade Survey, which was conducted on a NAICS basis, and will be released on June 1, 2001. For further information on NAICS, including publication stubs for the new release, see our web site at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/naics.html>.

Sales. February 2001 sales of merchant wholesalers, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$252.8 billion, down 0.2 percent (+/-0.2%) from the revised January level, but were 3.7 percent (+/-1.0%) above the February 2000 level. The January preliminary estimate was revised downward \$0.3 billion or 0.1 percent. Among durable goods, sales of machinery, equipment and supplies were up 2.2 percent from last month, while electrical goods were down 2.6 percent. February sales of nondurable goods decreased 0.4 percent (+/-0.3%) from last month, but were up 7.7 percent (+/-1.6%) from last year. Compared to last month, sales of chemicals and allied products increased 2.6 percent, while petroleum and petroleum products fell 4.2 percent.

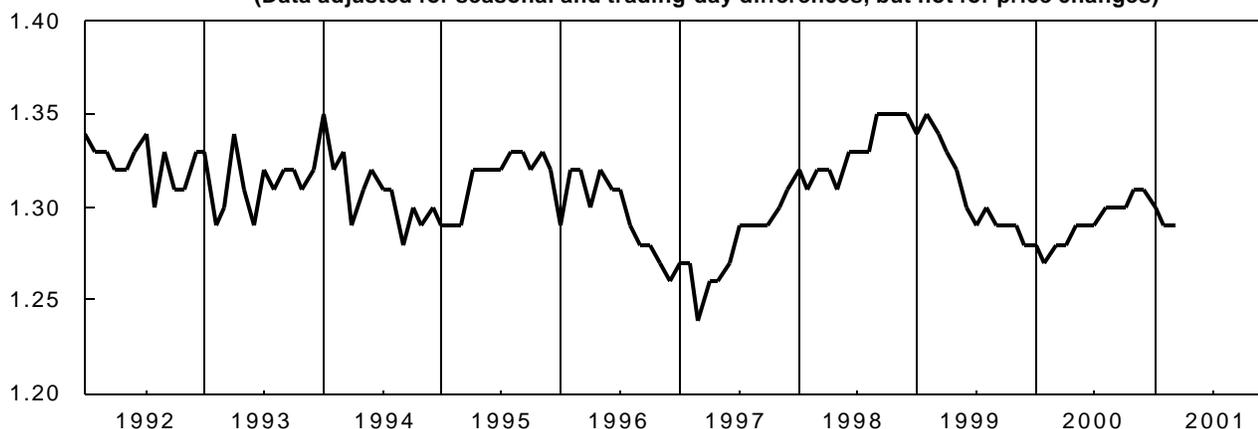
Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$327.0 billion at the end of February, down 0.1 percent (+/-0.2%) from last month, but were 4.5 percent (+/-1.0%) above a year ago. The January preliminary estimate was

revised downward \$0.4 billion or 0.1 percent. End-of-month inventories of durable goods decreased 0.4 percent (+/-0.2%) from last month, but were up 3.2 percent (+/-1.1%) from February 2000. Compared to last month, inventories of hardware, plumbing and heating equipment decreased 1.0 percent and electrical goods fell 0.8 percent. End-of-month inventories of nondurable goods increased 0.6 percent (+/-0.3%) from January 2001, and were up 6.9 percent (+/-1.3%) from last year. Inventories of paper and paper products increased 2.1 percent from last month, while chemicals and allied products decreased 1.3 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The February inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.29. The February 2000 ratio was 1.28.

Data in this report are based on a sample and, therefore, are subject to sampling and nonsampling variability. A discussion of the reliability of the data and general survey methodology appears in BW/99-A Current Business Reports.

Monthly Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers: 1992 to 2001
(Data adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for March is scheduled to be released May 8, 2001 at 10:00 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233, or call Scott Scheleur, (301) 457-2747 or (301) 457-2764. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

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

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales, Inventories, and Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers: 2001 and 2000

[In millions of dollars]

SIC ¹ code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories						Inventories/Sales Ratios		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Feb. 2001 (p)	Jan. 2001 (r)	Feb. 2000 (r)	Feb./ Jan.	Jan./ Dec.	Feb. 01 Feb. 00	Feb. 2001 (p)	Jan. 2001 (r)	Feb. 2000 (r)	Feb./ Jan.	Jan./ Dec.	Feb. 01 Feb. 00	Feb. 2001 (p)	Jan. 2001 (r)	Feb. 2000 (r)
Adjusted²																
	U.S. Total	252,813	253,294	243,720	-0.2	0.1	3.7	327,037	327,276	312,996	-0.1	-0.4	4.5	1.29	1.29	1.28
50	Durable	130,208	130,147	129,880	0.0	0.3	0.3	212,197	213,154	205,589	-0.4	0.0	3.2	1.63	1.64	1.58
501	Automotive	19,400	19,442	19,036	-0.2	1.2	1.9	30,134	30,161	29,794	-0.1	-2.1	1.1	1.55	1.55	1.57
502	Furniture	4,496	4,535	4,524	-0.9	2.9	-0.6	7,166	7,192	6,623	-0.4	1.1	8.2	1.59	1.59	1.46
503	Lumber	9,166	9,034	9,221	1.5	2.7	-0.6	9,342	9,376	9,558	-0.4	-1.2	-2.3	1.02	1.04	1.04
504	Prof. equip.	23,417	23,323	24,094	0.4	1.4	-2.8	26,821	26,941	27,634	-0.4	-1.1	-2.9	1.15	1.16	1.15
505	Metals	7,963	7,879	8,558	1.1	-4.1	-7.0	13,037	13,206	13,757	-1.3	-1.5	-5.2	1.64	1.68	1.61
506	Electrical	21,854	22,443	21,746	-2.6	-1.3	0.5	33,932	34,211	30,254	-0.8	0.7	12.2	1.55	1.52	1.39
507	Hardware	7,023	7,017	7,131	0.1	-0.1	-1.5	14,187	14,329	13,593	-1.0	-0.4	4.4	2.02	2.04	1.91
508	Machinery	22,697	22,201	20,965	2.2	0.4	8.3	53,464	53,261	52,142	0.4	1.3	2.5	2.36	2.40	2.49
509	Other Durable	14,192	14,273	14,605	-0.6	0.4	-2.8	24,114	24,477	22,234	-1.5	1.0	8.5	1.70	1.71	1.52
51	Nondurable	122,605	123,147	113,840	-0.4	-0.1	7.7	114,840	114,122	107,407	0.6	-1.2	6.9	0.94	0.93	0.94
511	Paper	8,650	8,646	8,610	0.0	-2.5	0.5	10,845	10,620	10,226	2.1	-2.8	6.1	1.25	1.23	1.19
512	Drugs	15,228	15,096	12,938	0.9	1.9	17.7	20,968	21,056	18,213	-0.4	-3.2	15.1	1.38	1.39	1.41
513	Apparel	8,217	8,424	8,496	-2.5	-3.6	-3.3	11,658	11,557	11,725	0.9	0.2	-0.6	1.42	1.37	1.38
514	Groceries	33,528	33,447	31,581	0.2	-1.5	6.2	19,627	19,747	19,432	-0.6	-0.6	1.0	0.59	0.59	0.62
515	Farm-products	9,466	9,262	8,312	2.2	0.9	13.9	12,020	11,898	11,313	1.0	-1.3	6.2	1.27	1.28	1.36
516	Chemicals	4,906	4,780	4,456	2.6	-1.7	10.1	4,667	4,727	4,903	-1.3	-1.6	-4.8	0.95	0.99	1.10
517	Petroleum	16,604	17,335	15,350	-4.2	0.8	8.2	4,462	4,412	4,187	1.1	-5.4	6.6	0.27	0.25	0.27
518	Alcohol	6,261	6,214	5,781	0.8	1.2	8.3	6,920	7,002	6,552	-1.2	0.2	5.6	1.11	1.13	1.13
519	Other Nondur.	19,745	19,943	18,316	-1.0	2.2	7.8	23,673	23,103	20,856	2.5	1.0	13.5	1.20	1.16	1.14
Not Adjusted																
		Sales to date														
		2001 2000														
	U.S. Total	229,475	242,659	231,576	-5.4	-0.4	-0.9	329,843	331,912	315,696	-0.6	0.5	4.5	472,134	452,104	
50	Durable	116,996	121,228	122,483	-3.5	-1.7	-4.5	211,920	211,821	205,421	0.0	1.0	3.2	238,224	237,957	
501	Automotive	17,576	17,653	18,217	-0.4	-6.0	-3.5	31,219	30,463	30,867	2.5	1.1	1.1	35,229	34,894	
502	Furniture	4,001	4,122	4,207	-2.9	0.2	-4.9	6,951	7,048	6,424	-1.4	1.8	8.2	8,123	8,055	
503	Lumber	7,764	7,941	8,170	-2.2	8.5	-5.0	9,239	9,132	9,453	1.2	1.4	-2.3	15,705	15,996	
504	Prof. equip.	20,771	21,970	22,407	-5.5	-6.4	-7.3	26,821	27,157	27,606	-1.2	-0.3	-2.8	42,741	44,027	
505	Metals	7,557	7,918	8,524	-4.6	6.7	-11.3	12,985	13,219	13,743	-1.8	-2.1	-5.5	15,475	16,796	
506	Electrical	19,756	21,119	20,550	-6.5	-1.5	-3.9	33,864	34,348	30,193	-1.4	2.1	12.2	40,875	40,057	
507	Hardware	6,166	6,505	6,589	-5.2	6.6	-6.4	14,116	14,014	13,525	0.7	-0.7	4.4	12,671	12,763	
508	Machinery	20,632	21,069	20,105	-2.1	0.2	2.6	52,876	52,036	51,621	1.6	0.9	2.4	41,701	39,073	
509	Other Durable	12,773	12,931	13,714	-1.2	-5.0	-6.9	23,849	24,404	21,989	-2.3	3.8	8.5	25,704	26,296	
51	Nondurable	112,479	121,431	109,093	-7.4	0.9	3.1	117,923	120,091	110,275	-1.8	-0.4	6.9	233,910	214,147	
511	Paper	8,053	9,001	8,395	-10.5	5.5	-4.1	10,661	10,652	10,083	0.1	-4.4	5.7	17,054	16,870	
512	Drugs	14,040	16,077	12,615	-12.7	9.2	11.3	20,989	22,509	18,249	-6.8	0.9	15.0	30,117	25,033	
513	Apparel	8,266	7,986	9,057	3.5	19.8	-8.7	11,775	12,077	11,831	-2.5	4.1	-0.5	16,252	16,407	
514	Groceries	30,242	32,343	29,560	-6.5	-3.8	2.3	19,215	19,668	19,024	-2.3	-2.4	1.0	62,585	58,993	
515	Farm-products	9,068	10,235	8,420	-11.4	4.5	7.7	13,823	14,861	13,089	-7.0	-0.6	5.6	19,303	16,790	
516	Chemicals	4,543	4,756	4,362	-4.5	8.4	4.1	4,681	4,732	4,923	-1.1	-1.9	-4.9	9,299	8,656	
517	Petroleum	15,342	17,630	14,721	-13.0	2.6	4.2	4,368	4,350	4,095	0.4	-9.5	6.7	32,972	28,430	
518	Alcohol	5,115	4,996	4,966	2.4	-24.4	3.0	6,678	6,568	6,310	1.7	2.1	5.8	10,111	9,216	
519	Other Nondur.	17,810	18,407	16,997	-3.2	-2.0	4.8	25,733	24,674	22,671	4.3	1.2	13.5	36,217	33,752	

p Preliminary estimate. r Revised.

1 For a full description of the SIC codes shown above, see the "1987 Standard Industrial Classification Manual" or the Current Business Reports

"Annual Benchmark Report for Wholesale Trade" publication.

2 Data adjusted for seasonal variations and, in the case of sales, also for trading-day differences. See Table 3 for seasonal adjustment factors used.

Table 2. Coefficients of Variation and Standard Errors for Sales and Inventories Estimates

SIC code	Kind of Business	Coefficients of variation for level (x 100)				Standard error for trend				Coefficients of variation for level (x 100)		Standard error for trend
		Preliminary estimates		Final estimates		Ratio of two consecutive months		Year-to-year estimates		Cumulative sales estimates		Current year cumulative
		Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Current year	Previous year	to previous year cumulative
		Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median			
	U.S. Total	1.4	2.0	1.4	2.0	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.7	1.7	1.5	0.6
50	Durable	2.0	3.2	2.0	3.2	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.9	2.0	2.1	0.5
501	Automotive	4.4	5.3	4.4	5.3	0.8	0.6	1.4	2.3	4.6	4.8	1.1
502	Furniture	6.1	9.4	6.1	9.4	1.4	0.8	3.0	2.5	5.8	6.1	2.9
503	Lumber	5.8	6.8	5.9	6.8	0.9	0.7	1.7	2.2	5.8	5.7	2.9
504	Prof. equip.	7.0	6.9	7.0	6.9	0.9	0.6	1.6	1.6	6.5	6.3	1.2
505	Metals	5.6	10.3	5.6	10.3	1.2	1.0	3.1	2.4	6.2	5.0	4.2
506	Electrical	5.6	7.6	5.6	7.6	1.1	0.6	2.3	1.3	6.2	6.2	2.2
507	Hardware	6.5	6.8	6.5	6.8	1.0	0.5	1.6	1.2	6.6	6.9	1.3
508	Machinery	5.8	6.8	5.8	6.8	1.3	0.6	2.5	2.1	5.7	5.5	1.5
509	Other Durable	6.6	10.4	6.6	10.4	1.3	0.8	2.2	1.8	7.8	7.4	1.7
51	Nondurable	2.6	3.0	2.6	3.0	0.4	0.3	0.8	1.1	2.7	2.4	0.9
511	Paper	6.5	4.9	6.6	5.0	0.8	0.3	1.5	1.3	6.4	7.1	1.3
512	Drugs	6.1	5.2	6.1	5.2	0.5	0.3	1.5	1.3	6.4	6.0	1.3
513	Apparel	5.8	6.4	5.9	6.4	1.5	0.7	3.7	2.5	6.3	6.7	2.8
514	Groceries	3.5	4.5	3.5	4.9	0.6	0.5	1.5	1.4	3.1	3.8	1.6
515	Farm-products	7.6	9.0	7.7	8.8	1.9	1.3	2.7	2.7	7.7	7.6	2.7
516	Chemicals	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.9	0.6	1.7	1.7	5.6	5.4	1.7
517	Petroleum	5.6	13.9	5.5	13.8	0.6	0.8	1.5	2.0	5.6	5.3	1.0
518	Alcohol	6.2	6.1	6.2	6.2	1.1	0.9	1.4	2.8	6.7	6.9	1.4
519	Other Nondur.	8.5	12.7	8.5	12.7	1.3	0.9	2.1	4.6	9.1	8.9	1.8

Note: The median measures of variability are based on the most recent 12 months of data.

Reliability of Data

There are two types of errors possible in an estimate based on a sample survey: sampling and nonsampling.

Sampling errors occur because observations are made on a sample, not on the entire population, and different samples could have led to different estimates. Standard errors and coefficients of variation, as calculated for this report, are measures of sampling variation. 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 up 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 cannot be stated with certainty 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).

Nonsampling errors are usually attributed to many possible sources: (1) coverage error - failure to accurately represent all population units in the sample, (2) inability to obtain information about all sample cases, (3) response

errors, possibly due to definitional difficulties or misreporting, (4) mistakes in recording or coding the data obtained, and (5) other errors of collection or processing, or in imputing for missing or inconsistent data. Coverage error has an effect on the accuracy of estimates for this survey to the extent that the administrative records system, which forms the basis of our survey universe frame, does not contain all legal businesses. A major source of nonsampling error in the published estimates is due to the need to impute data for nonrespondents and for late and inconsistent reports. For all kinds of businesses combined, imputed data amount to about 31 percent of the total monthly wholesale sales estimates and 32 percent of the total monthly wholesale inventories estimates.

Nonsampling errors also occur in complete censuses. Although no direct measures of these errors have been obtained, precautionary steps were taken in all phases of the collection, processing, and tabulation of the data to minimize their influence.

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Table 3. Seasonal Adjustment Factors for Sales and Inventories of Merchant Wholesalers

SIC code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories					
		2001			2000		2000	2001			2000		2000
		Mar.	Feb.r	Jan.r	Dec.	Nov.	Feb.r	Mar.	Feb.r	Jan.r	Dec.	Nov.	Feb.r
	U.S. Total¹	1.049	0.908	0.959	0.964	0.995	0.950	1.005	1.010	1.016	1.005	1.011	1.011
50	Durable	1.055	0.903	0.934	0.948	0.988	0.948	0.998	0.999	0.995	0.985	0.993	1.000
501	Automotive	1.091	0.906	0.908	0.978	0.999	0.957	1.020	1.036	1.010	0.978	1.001	1.036
502	Furniture	1.030	0.890	0.909	0.933	1.038	0.930	0.968	0.970	0.980	0.973	0.988	0.970
503	Lumber	1.009	0.847	0.879	0.832	0.964	0.886	1.026	0.989	0.974	0.949	0.950	0.989
504	Prof. equip.	1.065	0.887	0.942	1.020	0.971	0.930	0.996	1.000	1.008	1.000	1.022	0.999
505	Metals	1.066	0.949	1.005	0.903	0.961	0.996	0.998	0.996	1.001	1.007	0.981	0.999
506	Electrical	1.037	0.904	0.941	0.943	1.002	0.945	0.978	0.998	1.004	0.990	0.997	0.998
507	Hardware	0.996	0.878	0.927	0.869	0.966	0.924	1.003	0.995	0.978	0.981	0.980	0.995
508	Machinery	1.077	0.909	0.949	0.951	0.953	0.959	1.007	0.989	0.977	0.981	0.984	0.990
509	Other Durable	1.041	0.900	0.906	0.958	1.067	0.939	0.975	0.989	0.997	0.970	0.993	0.989
51	Nondurable	1.041	0.917	0.986	0.980	1.006	0.957	1.016	1.027	1.051	1.043	1.044	1.028
511	Paper	1.030	0.931	1.041	0.962	0.984	0.975	0.994	0.983	1.003	1.019	1.029	0.986
512	Drugs	1.038	0.922	1.065	0.994	1.007	0.975	0.997	1.001	1.069	1.025	0.997	1.002
513	Apparel	1.137	1.006	0.948	0.763	0.962	1.066	0.962	1.010	1.045	1.006	0.969	1.009
514	Groceries	1.030	0.902	0.967	0.990	1.015	0.936	0.987	0.979	0.996	1.014	1.049	0.979
515	Farm-products	1.022	0.958	1.105	1.067	1.079	1.013	1.090	1.150	1.249	1.240	1.260	1.157
516	Chemicals	1.041	0.926	0.995	0.902	0.968	0.979	1.009	1.003	1.001	1.004	0.987	1.004
517	Petroleum	0.996	0.924	1.017	0.999	0.986	0.959	0.974	0.979	0.986	1.031	1.035	0.978
518	Alcohol	0.992	0.817	0.804	1.076	1.081	0.859	0.994	0.965	0.938	0.921	1.052	0.963
519	Other Nondur.	1.082	0.902	0.923	0.962	0.958	0.928	1.070	1.087	1.068	1.065	1.019	1.087

r Revised



1 Adjusted sales and inventories data shown in Table 1 are obtained by dividing the unadjusted data by the adjustment factors shown above for the corresponding group. Adjusted data for the totals are obtained by adding the durable and nondurable goods. Seasonal factors shown for the totals will provide an approximation of the adjusted estimates, but may show small differences from the published data.

Note: The seasonal factors shown have been computed based on monthly estimates through the current month preliminary estimates.