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MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES April 2007

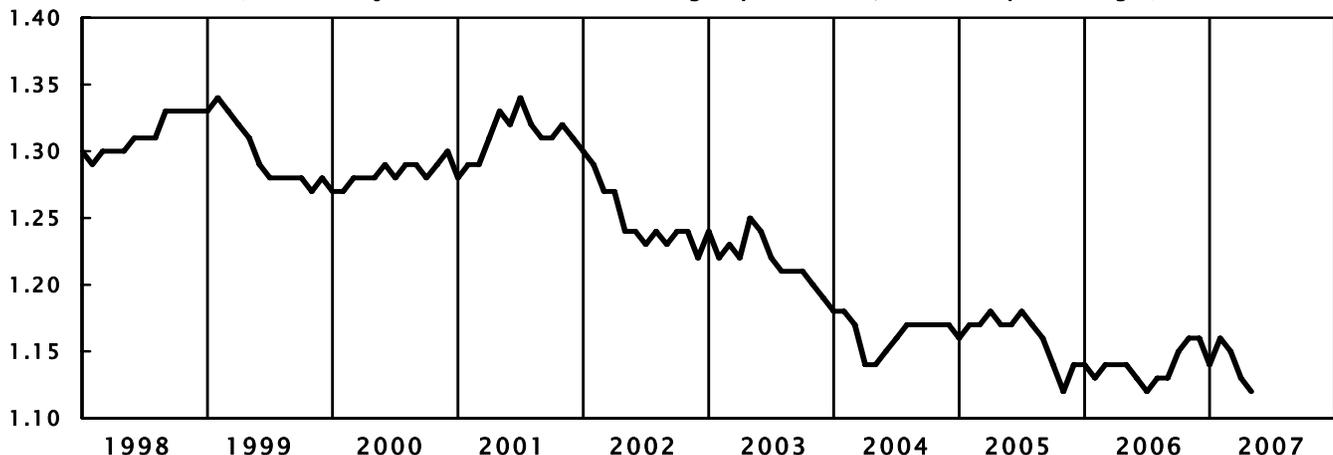
Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that April 2007 sales of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$351.9 billion, up 1.3 percent (+/-0.5%) from the revised March level and were up 8.8 percent (+/-1.3%) from the April 2006 level. The March preliminary estimate was revised upward \$1.1 billion or 0.3 percent. April sales of durable goods were up 0.8 percent (+/-1.0%)* from last month and were up 7.8 percent (+/-2.0%) from a year ago. Compared to last month, sales of hardware, and plumbing and heating equipment and supplies were up 2.7 percent. April sales of nondurable goods were up 1.8 percent (+/-0.7%) from last month and were up 9.7 percent (+/-2.0%) from last year. Compared to last month, sales of petroleum and petroleum products increased 6.7 percent.

Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$394.5 billion at the end of April, up 0.3 percent (+/-0.3%)* from last month and were up 7.1 percent (+/-1.8%) from a year ago. The March preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.2 billion or 0.1 percent. End-of-month inventories of durable goods decreased 0.5 percent (+/- 0.3%) from last month, but were up 5.2 percent (+/-2.3%) from last April. Inventories of lumber and other construction materials decreased 1.8 percent from last month and inventories of electrical and electronic goods decreased 0.8 percent. End-of-month inventories of nondurable goods increased 1.6 percent (+/-0.5%) from March and were up 10.4 percent (+/-3.5%) compared to last April. Inventories of petroleum and petroleum products were up 6.3 percent from last month and inventories of drug and druggists' sundries were up 2.5 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The April inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.12. The April 2006 ratio was 1.14.

Data in this report are based on a sample and, therefore, are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. A discussion of the reliability of the estimates and general survey methodology can be found at <<http://www.census.gov/mwts/www/mwtsreliability.html>>.

Monthly Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers, Except Manufacturers' Sales Branches and Offices: 1998 to 2007
(Estimates adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for May is scheduled to be released July 10, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. EDT.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://www.census.gov/whl>>. This report is also available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's STAT-USA (202-482-1986).

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.

Table 1. Estimates of Monthly Sales, Inventories, and Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers, Except Manufacturers' Sales Branches and Offices

[Total sales and inventory estimates are shown in millions of dollars. Estimates are based on data from the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey.]

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories						Inventories/Sales Ratios		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Apr. 2007 (p)	Mar. 2007 (r)	Apr. 2006 (r)	Apr./Mar.	Mar./Feb.	Apr. 07/ Apr. 06	Apr. 2007 (p)	Mar. 2007 (r)	Apr. 2006 (r)	Apr./Mar.	Mar./Feb.	Apr. 07/ Apr. 06	Apr. 2007 (p)	Mar. 2007 (r)	Apr. 2006 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	351,925	347,383	323,579	1.3	2.1	8.8	394,544	393,461	368,409	0.3	0.4	7.1	1.12	1.13	1.14
423	Durable	170,156	168,800	157,914	0.8	2.2	7.8	249,104	250,259	236,682	-0.5	-0.1	5.2	1.46	1.48	1.50
4231	Automotive	28,383	27,972	26,116	1.5	1.2	8.7	36,607	37,954	39,625	-3.5	-0.2	-7.6	1.29	1.36	1.52
4232	Furniture	6,139	6,130	5,498	0.1	1.8	11.7	7,943	7,957	7,053	-0.2	2.9	12.6	1.29	1.30	1.28
4233	Lumber	11,010	11,042	12,570	-0.3	5.8	-12.4	14,510	14,780	15,033	-1.8	-1.1	-3.5	1.32	1.34	1.20
4234	Prof. equip.	29,261	29,187	27,148	0.3	1.1	7.8	32,073	31,958	28,778	0.4	0.6	11.4	1.10	1.09	1.06
42343	Comp. equip.	14,901	15,842	14,138	-5.9	7.7	5.4	11,847	11,660	10,715	1.6	0.3	10.6	0.80	0.74	0.76
4235	Metals	14,203	14,032	12,462	1.2	2.0	14.0	23,995	24,225	20,565	-0.9	-1.1	16.7	1.69	1.73	1.65
4236	Electrical	25,195	25,375	23,197	-0.7	-0.4	8.6	31,983	32,227	30,097	-0.8	0.1	6.3	1.27	1.27	1.30
4237	Hardware	7,865	7,659	7,732	2.7	-0.5	1.7	15,234	14,748	14,320	3.3	2.2	6.4	1.94	1.93	1.85
4238	Machinery	28,068	28,204	26,565	-0.5	3.1	5.7	63,256	63,198	58,710	0.1	-1.3	7.7	2.25	2.24	2.21
4239	Misc. Durable	20,032	19,199	16,626	4.3	7.6	20.5	23,503	23,212	22,501	1.3	1.6	4.5	1.17	1.21	1.35
424	Nondurable	181,769	178,583	165,665	1.8	2.0	9.7	145,440	143,202	131,727	1.6	1.1	10.4	0.80	0.80	0.80
4241	Paper	8,077	8,047	7,800	0.4	-0.3	3.6	6,621	6,580	6,313	0.6	0.9	4.9	0.82	0.82	0.81
4242	Drugs	32,751	32,491	30,757	0.8	1.8	6.5	31,263	30,491	30,080	2.5	-0.5	3.9	0.95	0.94	0.98
4243	Apparel	10,475	10,402	9,974	0.7	-3.1	5.0	14,933	15,167	14,476	-1.5	-1.1	3.2	1.43	1.46	1.45
4244	Groceries	42,850	42,330	37,168	1.2	1.6	15.3	26,745	26,599	22,834	0.5	2.1	17.1	0.62	0.63	0.61
4245	Farm products	13,177	13,353	10,809	-1.3	2.2	21.9	14,460	14,422	10,306	0.3	-0.3	40.3	1.10	1.08	0.95
4246	Chemicals	8,334	8,285	7,570	0.6	2.5	10.1	8,896	8,942	8,597	-0.5	-0.2	3.5	1.07	1.08	1.14
4247	Petroleum	39,234	36,776	35,909	6.7	1.7	9.3	13,212	12,425	12,618	6.3	4.8	4.7	0.34	0.34	0.35
4248	Alcohol	8,360	8,351	7,839	0.1	3.9	6.6	10,273	10,022	9,137	2.5	0.6	12.4	1.23	1.20	1.17
4249	Misc. Nondur.	18,511	18,548	17,839	-0.2	7.4	3.8	19,037	18,554	17,366	2.6	4.1	9.6	1.03	1.00	0.97
													Sales to date			
													2007		2006	
42	U.S. Total	350,146	363,618	313,121	-3.7	17.7	11.8	394,052	394,934	367,946	-0.2	0.1	7.1	1,347,469	1,244,569	
423	Durable	167,569	178,771	151,183	-6.3	20.7	10.8	249,499	249,892	237,470	-0.2	-0.4	5.1	651,953	610,109	
4231	Automotive	28,582	29,986	25,750	-4.7	19.6	11.0	36,790	38,675	39,902	-4.9	-0.9	-7.8	109,419	103,135	
4232	Furniture	5,973	6,332	5,157	-5.7	17.2	15.8	7,760	7,790	6,898	-0.4	2.3	12.5	23,507	20,896	
4233	Lumber	11,208	11,351	12,369	-1.3	24.6	-9.4	14,916	15,209	15,469	-1.9	0.4	-3.6	41,799	49,739	
4234	Prof. equip.	26,686	31,960	24,243	-16.5	26.1	10.1	31,816	31,127	28,519	2.2	-1.9	11.6	110,979	102,799	
42343	Comp. equip.	13,232	17,315	12,357	-23.6	36.4	7.1	11,823	11,392	10,704	3.8	-0.9	10.5	57,069	52,601	
4235	Metals	14,388	14,635	12,300	-1.7	14.0	17.0	23,899	24,201	20,544	-1.2	-0.4	16.3	55,593	48,831	
4236	Electrical	23,734	26,238	21,480	-9.5	14.4	10.5	31,791	31,615	29,977	0.6	-0.5	6.1	97,894	88,314	
4237	Hardware	7,920	7,651	7,523	3.5	10.8	5.3	15,341	14,851	14,435	3.3	2.4	6.3	29,539	29,022	
4238	Machinery	28,826	30,094	26,034	-4.2	23.8	10.7	63,636	63,514	59,180	0.2	-0.7	7.5	109,589	102,153	
4239	Misc. Durable	20,252	20,524	16,327	-1.3	26.7	24.0	23,550	22,910	22,546	2.8	0.4	4.5	73,634	65,220	
424	Nondurable	182,577	184,847	161,938	-1.2	15.0	12.7	144,553	145,042	130,476	-0.3	0.9	10.8	695,516	634,460	
4241	Paper	7,730	8,329	7,184	-7.2	11.9	7.6	6,634	6,462	6,300	2.7	-0.2	5.3	31,515	30,146	
4242	Drugs	31,899	33,921	28,881	-6.0	14.6	10.4	30,982	30,582	29,779	1.3	2.8	4.0	128,273	119,534	
4243	Apparel	9,396	10,943	8,847	-14.1	2.3	6.2	14,142	14,515	13,709	-2.6	-4.5	3.2	40,840	38,346	
4244	Groceries	42,593	43,981	36,202	-3.2	15.6	17.7	26,478	26,599	22,583	-0.5	2.3	17.2	164,437	143,922	
4245	Farm products	12,993	13,994	10,323	-7.2	10.4	25.9	14,865	16,542	10,625	-10.1	-4.6	39.9	53,278	41,990	
4246	Chemicals	8,142	8,708	7,229	-6.5	15.8	12.6	8,976	9,014	8,657	-0.4	0.1	3.7	32,873	29,745	
4247	Petroleum	41,235	37,033	36,627	11.3	14.7	12.6	12,261	12,114	11,684	1.2	1.5	4.9	142,618	133,817	
4248	Alcohol	7,875	8,092	7,165	-2.7	22.0	9.9	10,550	9,862	9,356	7.0	1.9	12.8	29,150	27,317	
4249	Misc. Nondur.	20,714	19,846	19,480	4.4	25.3	6.3	19,665	19,352	17,783	1.6	5.0	10.6	72,532	69,643	

^p Preliminary estimate. ^r Revised estimate.

¹ For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see the 2002 NAICS manual or <http://www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naicod02.htm#N42>.

² Estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and, in the case of sales, also for trading-day differences. See Table 3 for the seasonal adjustment factors used. Cumulative seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated.

Note: Estimates have not been adjusted for price changes. Table 2 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mwts/www/mwtsreliability.html>

Table 2. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability of Monthly Wholesale Sales and Inventory Estimates

[Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey.]

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Median coefficient of variation for monthly total				Median standard error for percent change				Coefficient of variation for total		Standard error for percent change
		Preliminary estimates		Final estimates		Ratio of two consecutive months		Current month to current month last year		Sales to date		Current year sales to date
		Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Current year	Previous year	to previous year sales to date
42	U.S. Total	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.3	0.3	0.2	0.8	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.8
423	Durable	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	0.6	0.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3
4231	Automotive	2.8	4.6	2.7	4.6	1.2	0.7	2.0	5.3	3.3	2.3	2.4
4232	Furniture	3.2	4.4	3.2	4.4	1.7	0.9	3.2	6.1	3.5	3.2	3.1
4233	Lumber	4.1	7.6	4.1	7.5	1.1	0.9	2.8	5.9	3.8	5.1	3.0
4234	Prof. equip.	3.8	4.7	3.8	4.6	1.4	0.6	2.5	4.1	3.8	2.8	2.7
42343	Comp. equip.	6.1	7.3	5.8	7.3	2.4	1.0	5.4	9.5	6.5	4.2	5.8
4235	Metals	3.7	5.5	3.5	5.5	1.4	0.6	2.9	5.4	3.8	2.5	3.0
4236	Electrical	3.3	3.0	3.3	2.8	0.8	0.4	3.3	2.4	3.5	2.9	2.8
4237	Hardware	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.9	1.4	0.7	4.7	4.7	5.2	2.6	4.3
4238	Machinery	3.1	2.5	3.1	2.4	1.9	0.6	3.1	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.2
4239	Misc. Durable	4.8	5.4	5.0	5.4	1.6	0.9	5.9	3.6	6.3	3.0	7.3
424	Nondurable	1.3	2.0	1.3	2.0	0.4	0.3	1.2	2.1	1.2	0.9	1.3
4241	Paper	7.0	6.3	6.9	6.2	1.1	0.9	5.2	3.6	8.0	4.5	6.1
4242	Drugs	3.3	5.3	3.1	5.2	0.7	0.6	2.8	6.2	3.8	2.3	3.1
4243	Apparel	4.2	5.2	4.1	5.0	2.2	1.0	3.3	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.7
4244	Groceries	3.3	7.0	3.3	6.8	0.9	0.7	2.2	7.1	3.2	3.5	2.2
4245	Farm products	4.6	7.9	4.5	7.9	1.6	1.3	3.8	4.9	4.2	4.7	3.4
4246	Chemicals	6.6	6.5	6.7	6.4	1.5	0.8	6.7	8.0	6.4	5.4	7.0
4247	Petroleum	3.4	4.0	3.3	3.9	1.2	1.1	3.5	4.8	3.4	2.3	2.9
4248	Alcohol	7.6	3.7	7.5	3.7	1.1	1.2	2.2	3.3	7.3	7.5	2.1
4249	Misc. Nondur.	4.4	5.1	4.4	5.0	1.2	0.8	3.9	5.4	4.0	2.0	3.9

Note: Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or trading-day differences and are derived from estimates for the period July 2006 to present. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <http://www.census.gov/mwts/www/mwtsreliability.html>.

Reliability of the Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they may 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 2 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 $\pm 1.645 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.5 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.3 percent to +2.7 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient statistical 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 (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.645 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value). 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 wholesale businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, model error, 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.

Table 3. Seasonal Adjustment Factors for Monthly Wholesale Sales and Inventory Estimates

[Seasonal adjustment factors are computed using the Census Bureau's X-12 ARIMA program and are based on data from the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey.]

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories					
		2007					2006	2007					2006
		May	Apr.r	Mar.r	Feb.	Jan.	Apr.r	May	Apr.r	Mar.r	Feb.	Jan.	Apr.r
42	U.S. Total ¹	1.044	0.992	1.044	0.908	0.963	0.966	0.988	0.999	1.003	1.006	1.008	0.999
423	Durable	1.037	0.985	1.056	0.902	0.947	0.958	1.002	1.007	1.002	1.003	0.995	1.007
4231	Automotive	1.039	1.007	1.072	0.907	0.929	0.986	0.993	1.005	1.019	1.026	1.012	1.007
4232	Furniture	1.017	0.973	1.033	0.897	0.950	0.938	0.997	0.977	0.979	0.984	0.994	0.978
4233	Lumber	1.094	1.018	1.028	0.873	0.938	0.984	1.035	1.028	1.029	1.013	0.976	1.029
4234	Prof. equip.	0.987	0.912	1.095	0.878	0.935	0.893	0.983	0.992	0.974	0.999	1.008	0.991
42343	Comp. equip.	0.959	0.888	1.093	0.863	0.936	0.874	0.974	0.998	0.977	0.989	1.012	0.999
4235	Metals	1.074	1.013	1.043	0.933	0.996	0.987	0.998	0.996	0.999	0.992	1.000	0.999
4236	Electrical	1.007	0.942	1.034	0.900	0.958	0.926	1.000	0.994	0.981	0.987	0.985	0.996
4237	Hardware	1.084	1.007	0.999	0.897	0.920	0.973	1.017	1.007	1.007	1.005	0.988	1.008
4238	Machinery	1.060	1.027	1.067	0.889	0.947	0.980	1.004	1.006	1.005	0.999	0.982	1.008
4239	Misc. Durable	1.052	1.011	1.069	0.908	0.949	0.982	0.992	1.002	0.987	0.999	1.014	1.002
424	Nondurable	1.050	1.001	1.035	0.919	0.981	0.975	0.969	0.991	1.008	1.011	1.030	0.990
4241	Paper	1.019	0.957	1.035	0.922	1.004	0.921	1.003	1.002	0.982	0.993	1.005	0.998
4242	Drugs	1.032	0.974	1.044	0.927	1.027	0.939	0.964	0.991	1.003	0.971	1.010	0.990
4243	Apparel	0.945	0.897	1.052	0.996	0.930	0.887	0.962	0.947	0.957	0.991	1.023	0.947
4244	Groceries	1.058	0.994	1.039	0.913	0.976	0.974	0.977	0.990	1.000	0.998	1.007	0.989
4245	Farm products	1.002	0.986	1.048	0.970	1.114	0.955	0.898	1.028	1.147	1.198	1.206	1.031
4246	Chemicals	1.038	0.977	1.051	0.930	1.031	0.955	1.010	1.009	1.008	1.005	0.997	1.007
4247	Petroleum	1.053	1.051	1.007	0.893	0.965	1.020	0.954	0.928	0.975	1.006	1.038	0.926
4248	Alcohol	1.114	0.942	0.969	0.825	0.800	0.914	1.010	1.027	0.984	0.971	0.963	1.024
4249	Misc. Nondur.	1.135	1.119	1.070	0.917	0.945	1.092	0.986	1.033	1.043	1.034	1.045	1.024

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¹Adjusted sales and inventory estimates for detailed kind-of-business levels in Table 1 are computed by dividing each unadjusted estimate by the seasonal adjustment factor for the corresponding kind of business and month. Adjusted estimates for broad kind-of-business levels are obtained by summing adjusted estimates at the appropriate detailed levels. Seasonal factors shown for broad kind-of-business levels may be used to approximate adjusted estimates at these levels, but the resulting estimates may differ slightly from the published estimates.

Note: The seasonal adjustment factors shown are estimates derived from a model that uses sample survey data as input. Therefore, these estimates may contain sampling error and nonsampling error. Additional information on the general form of the model and the X-12 ARIMA program may be found at <http://www.census.gov/srd/www/x12a/>.

Description of the Survey

The Census Bureau conducts the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey (MWTS) to provide national estimates of monthly sales, end-of-month inventories, and inventory-to-sales ratios by kind of business for wholesale firms located in the United States. Specifically, the MWTS covers wholesale merchants who sell goods on their own account and include such businesses as wholesale merchants or jobbers, industrial distributors, exporters, and importers. Sales offices and branches maintained by manufacturing, refining, or mining firms for the purpose of marketing their products are not covered in this report. Also excluded is NAICS Industry Group 4251: Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers.

The MWTS sample was selected using a stratified, one-stage design with strata defined by kind of business (e.g., Automotive, Furniture, Lumber, etc.) and annual sales size. The sample includes firms of all sizes and is updated on a quarterly basis to account for new wholesale firms, deaths, and other changes to the wholesale universe. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to employer firms selected in a probability sample of approximately 4,500. Data for nonresponding firms are imputed based on data for similar-sized firms classified in the same kind of business. Approximately 25% of the total sales estimate and 28% of the total end-of-month inventory estimate is based on imputed data. Monthly sales and inventory estimates are obtained by summing weighted data (either reported or imputed). The monthly estimates are benchmarked to annual survey estimates and are adjusted for seasonal variation and trading-day differences. Individuals who use estimates in this report to create new estimates should cite the Census Bureau as the source of only the original estimates. Additional information on the MWTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <http://www.census.gov/whl>.