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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES MARCH 2012

Intention to Revise Retail Estimates: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2010 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Revised not adjusted estimates and corresponding adjusted estimates are scheduled for release on April 30, 2012.

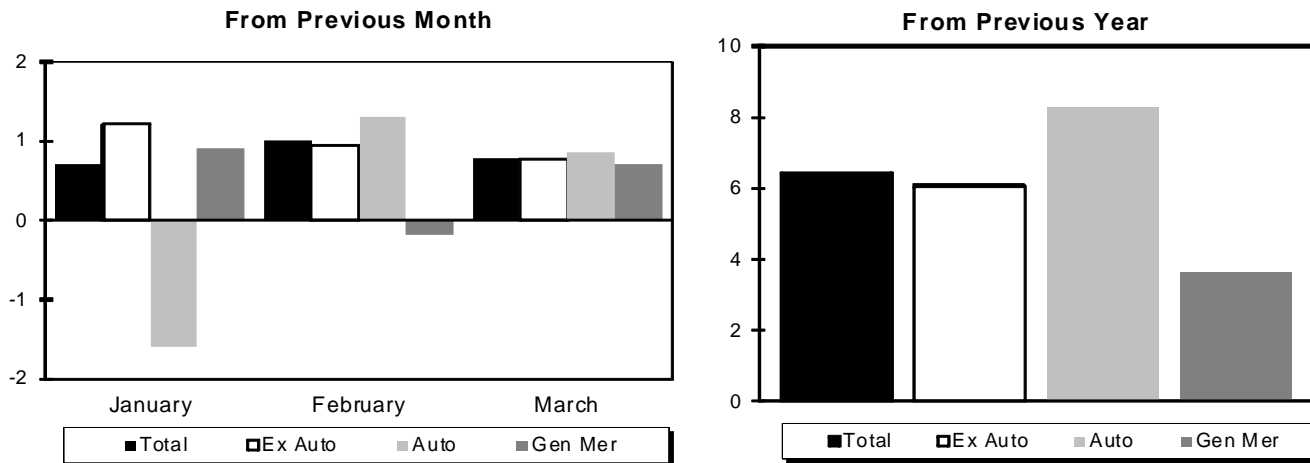
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$411.1 billion, an increase of 0.8 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the previous month and 6.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above March 2011. Total sales for the January through March 2012 period were up 6.4 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from the same period a year ago. The January to February 2012 percent change was revised from 1.1 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) to 1.0 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$).

Retail trade sales were up 0.8 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) from February 2012 and 6.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) above last year. Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers sales were up 14.1 percent ($\pm 2.6\%$) from March 2011 and nonstore retailers were up 9.3 percent ($\pm 3.0\%$) from last year.

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 5,000 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. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.

Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

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



The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for April is scheduled to be released May 15, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. EDT.

For customized retail time series estimates by industry, visit the Census Bureau's web site at <www.census.gov/timeseries>. For additional survey information, visit <www.census.gov/retail>.

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

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				
		3 Month Total		2012			2011		2012			2011	
		2012	% Chg. 2011	Mar. ³ (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ³ (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	1,166,084	7.9	424,121	379,160	362,803	394,861	343,955	411,069	407,872	403,828	386,149	383,197
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	951,564	7.7	341,971	308,847	300,746	318,879	280,777	338,104	335,536	332,423	318,752	315,308
	Retail	1,039,574	7.7	378,572	338,014	322,988	353,036	306,748	367,771	364,697	360,878	345,424	343,017
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	92,081	85,553	93,875	85,219	(*)	100,581	100,131	97,198	96,484
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	214,520	8.7	82,150	70,313	62,057	75,982	63,178	72,965	72,336	71,405	67,397	67,889
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	194,596	8.8	74,954	63,765	55,877	68,923	57,265	66,039	65,333	64,374	60,725	61,312
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	52,237	46,848	56,083	46,391	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,548	6,180	7,059	5,913	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	22,960	10.7	8,310	7,466	7,184	7,705	6,638	8,014	7,926	8,009	7,517	7,319
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,424	4,027	4,360	3,924	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,042	3,157	3,345	2,714	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	23,614	-0.6	8,128	8,008	7,478	8,260	7,887	8,312	8,228	8,199	8,575	8,399
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,222	5,782	6,264	6,191	(*)	6,330	6,319	6,692	6,537
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,786	1,696	1,996	1,696	(*)	1,898	1,880	1,883	1,862
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	67,965	13.7	27,578	20,487	19,900	24,543	17,618	27,758	26,941	26,743	24,334	23,958
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,259	16,789	19,636	14,723	(*)	21,709	21,497	19,616	19,196
445	Food & beverage stores	152,354	5.1	52,923	49,259	50,172	50,159	46,008	52,362	52,135	52,150	50,597	50,550
4451	Grocery stores	137,622	4.8	47,579	44,383	45,660	45,355	41,477	46,784	46,621	46,639	45,400	45,231
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,291	3,086	3,353	3,104	(*)	3,761	3,759	3,609	3,673
446	Health & personal care stores	69,985	3.3	24,140	22,860	22,985	23,848	21,483	23,189	23,232	23,147	22,887	22,685
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	18,779	19,135	19,858	17,966	(*)	19,182	19,231	19,076	19,032
447	Gasoline stations	131,725	10.3	48,345	42,112	41,268	44,427	36,767	47,631	47,105	45,449	44,250	42,653
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	52,538	10.5	20,343	17,871	14,324	18,086	15,799	20,093	19,922	19,459	18,618	18,305
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	579	560	646	536	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,906	2,478	3,243	2,601	(*)	3,395	3,349	3,139	3,164
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,596	5,268	7,083	5,949	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,372	1,721	2,250	2,078	(*)	2,455	2,338	2,232	2,239
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	21,141	8.2	7,524	6,482	7,135	6,910	5,862	7,773	7,735	7,599	7,375	7,318
452	General merchandise stores	148,924	5.5	53,084	49,306	46,534	50,089	46,293	54,026	53,646	53,745	52,116	52,143
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	39,808	2.0	14,724	13,419	11,665	14,197	12,806	15,509	15,470	15,309	15,396	15,447
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) ⁵	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,672	11,887	14,467	13,044	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	35,887	34,869	35,892	33,487	(*)	38,176	38,436	36,720	36,696
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	31,221	30,695	31,367	29,436	(*)	33,143	33,364	32,204	32,170
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,666	4,174	4,525	4,051	(*)	5,033	5,072	4,516	4,526
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	29,269	10.3	10,225	9,929	9,115	9,516	8,833	10,614	10,704	10,609	9,712	9,836
454	Nonstore retailers	104,579	8.5	35,822	33,921	34,836	33,511	30,382	35,034	34,787	34,364	32,046	31,962
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,732	25,526	24,693	21,645	(*)	26,680	26,370	24,352	24,239
722	Food services & drinking places ...	126,510	9.2	45,549	41,146	39,815	41,825	37,207	43,298	43,175	42,950	40,725	40,180

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

(NA) Not available (S) Suppressed (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(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-12 ARIMA 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, book, and music (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

(5) Estimates include data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line are not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: 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 <http://www.census.gov/retail>

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					
		Mar. 2012 Advance from --		Feb. 2012 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2012 through Mar. 2012 from --	
		Feb. 2012 (p)	Mar. 2011 (r)	Jan. 2012 (r)	Feb. 2011 (r)	Oct. 2011 through Dec. 2011	Jan. 2011 through Mar. 2011
	Retail & food services, total	0.8	6.5	1.0	6.4	1.9	6.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.8	6.1	0.9	6.4	2.0	6.3
	Retail	0.8	6.5	1.1	6.3	1.9	6.3
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	0.9	8.3	1.3	6.6	1.5	6.9
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	1.1	8.8	1.5	6.6	1.5	7.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	1.1	6.6	-1.0	8.3	3.9	8.9
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.0	-3.1	0.4	-2.0	-2.7	-2.1
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	3.0	14.1	0.7	12.5	5.1	12.5
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.4	3.5	0.0	3.1	0.8	3.6
4451	Grocery stores	0.3	3.0	0.0	3.1	0.7	3.3
446	Health & personal care stores	-0.2	1.3	0.4	2.4	0.3	1.8
447	Gasoline stations	1.1	7.6	3.6	10.4	3.7	8.8
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	0.9	7.9	2.4	8.8	3.8	7.9
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores.....	0.5	5.4	1.8	5.7	3.5	6.0
452	General merchandise stores.....	0.7	3.7	-0.2	2.9	1.0	3.9
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.3	0.7	1.1	0.1	1.1	0.4
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-0.8	9.3	0.9	8.8	4.0	9.5
454	Nonstore retailers	0.7	9.3	1.2	8.8	0.9	8.0
722	Food services & drinking places	0.3	6.3	0.5	7.5	2.1	7.6

(p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Note: 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 <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) 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 5,000 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Firms responding to MARTS account for approximately 65% of the total national sales estimate. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. The change in sales from the previous month is estimated using only units that have reported data for both the current and

previous month. There is no imputation or adjustment for nonrespondents in MARTS. The total sales estimate is derived by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS sample). Detailed industry estimates are summed to derive total estimates at broad industry levels. The monthly estimates are adjusted using annual survey estimates and for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they 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 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 $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9$ 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 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 $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (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.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Mar. 2012

(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 ⁽¹⁾ for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error ⁽¹⁾ for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change ⁽²⁾	
			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	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Retail	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	2.4	1.0	0.5	1.3	0.2	0.5
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.6	1.1	0.6	1.5	0.1	0.6
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.1	1.4	0.8	1.7	0.4	0.3
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.5	0.6	0.4	0.9	-0.3	0.6
444	Building material & garden eq. & ... supplies dealers	3.6	1.7	1.1	1.6	0.1	0.4
445	Food & beverage stores	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
4451	Grocery stores	1.3	0.1	0.2	0.5	-0.1	0.2
446	Health & personal care stores	1.7	0.4	0.3	1.1	0.0	0.3
447	Gasoline stations	2.5	0.5	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.5
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	2.7	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.1	0.3
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores	4.0	1.7	1.3	1.9	0.2	0.9
452	General merchandise stores	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.1
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	3.9	2.4	1.4	3.0	0.3	0.9
454	No-store retailers	2.2	1.0	0.8	1.8	0.2	0.4
722	Food services & drinking places ..	2.0	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.3

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading-day differences. 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.