



CURRENT BUSINESS REPORTS

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

APRIL 1984

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Advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for April, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$106.4 billion, up 2.9 percent from the revised March level of \$103.4 billion and 11.8 percent above year-ago sales. This strong monthly increase follows declines of 2.0 percent in March and 1.1 percent in February, placing the April sales slightly below the record level of \$106.6 billion set in January 1984. The February through April sales were 1.4 percent above the prior 3 months sales and 12.1 percent above the same period a year ago. Excluding the automotive group, total sales increased 2.0 percent above March and were 9.4 percent above year earlier sales.

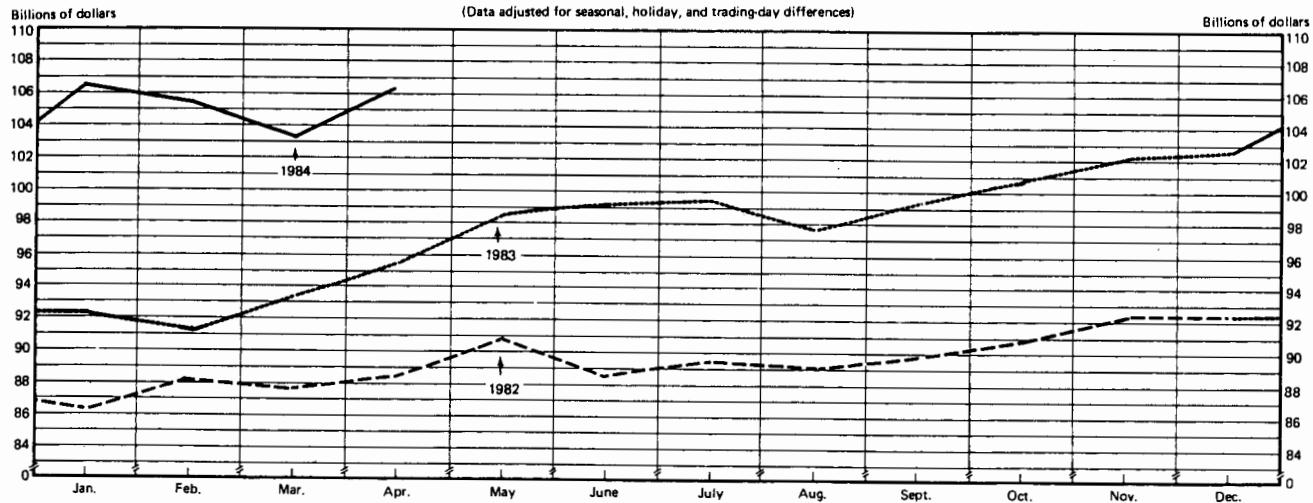
Sales of durable goods rose 5.2 percent above March and 19.8 percent above April 1983, with all major groups showing significant gains. Automotive group sales were up 6.4 percent from March and 22.6 percent above year ago sales. Although March sales declined 7.3 percent from February, automotive group sales for the 3 months ending in April were 0.9 percent above the prior 3 months and 25.1 percent above the February through April 1983 period. Building materials sales increased 2.0 percent in April, which is the sixth increase in the last seven months, while furniture group sales were up 3.6 percent from March for the largest gain since December 1982.

Nondurable goods sales increased 1.8 percent in April after declines of 0.2 percent in March and 1.3 percent in February. All of the nondurable goods categories showed gains from the previous month except for eating and drinking places. General merchandise group sales rebounded 3.6 percent from the depressed sales in March which were down 3.2 percent from February. Sales of apparel group stores rose 3.9 percent from the previous month for the sixth increase in the last seven months and the year-to-year gain of 12.0 percent is the largest since March 1981. Drug store sales were up 3.8 percent in April while sales of gasoline service stations and food stores both gained 1.2 percent.

For a description of the sample design and reliability of the data, see back page.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for May is scheduled to be released June 13, 1984, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES January 1982-April 1984



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U.S. Department of Commerce
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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at \$39 per year. Add \$9.75 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales report are for sale by Subscriber Services (Publications), Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at \$1.75 each.

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

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted						Adjusted ¹			
		1984			1983		1984			1983	
		Apr. ² adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. ² adv.	Mar. prel.	Feb. final	Apr.	Mar.
	Retail trade, total.....	103,251	103,796	93,686	93,856	93,740	106,382	103,377	105,482	95,125	93,804
	Total (excl. auto group) ..	80,791	81,130	73,079	75,402	74,442	84,691	82,994	83,499	77,436	76,635
	Durable goods stores, total.	36,630	36,308	32,931	30,826	31,307	36,750	34,945	36,909	30,671	29,986
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	5,615	5,000	4,329	4,823	4,319	5,554	5,447	5,630	4,798	4,673
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	3,703	3,241	3,381	3,131	(*)	4,051	4,215	3,486	3,396
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	750	652	803	707	(*)	806	830	767	765
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	22,460	22,666	20,607	18,454	19,298	21,691	20,383	21,983	17,689	17,169
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	20,588	20,880	19,017	16,734	17,641	19,815	18,544	20,060	16,013	15,475
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	18,667	17,237	14,478	15,672	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	1,786	1,590	1,720	1,657	(*)	1,839	1,923	1,676	1,694
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	4,312	4,529	4,129	3,912	4,010	4,759	4,595	4,644	4,143	4,078
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	2,705	2,431	2,357	2,456	(*)	2,681	2,707	2,427	2,432
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	1,492	1,379	1,259	1,255	(*)	1,569	1,592	1,382	1,334
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	604	562	548	545	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods total.....	66,621	67,488	60,755	63,030	62,433	69,632	68,432	68,573	64,454	63,818
53	General merchandise group stores..	11,746	11,180	9,150	10,591	10,342	12,819	12,379	12,786	11,415	11,400
531	Department stores.....	9,671	9,219	7,458	8,652	8,479	10,546	10,164	10,489	9,313	9,328
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	741	627	719	713	(*)	808	830	751	749
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,220	1,065	1,220	1,150	(*)	1,407	1,467	1,351	1,323
54	Food stores.....	21,677	22,920	20,845	21,392	21,162	22,641	22,381	22,266	21,326	21,215
541	Grocery stores.....	20,328	21,557	19,596	20,129	19,865	21,308	21,011	20,958	20,069	19,945
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,632	8,521	7,948	8,227	7,983	8,881	8,775	8,667	8,395	8,230
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	4,847	4,410	3,630	4,266	4,118	4,982	4,793	4,747	4,447	4,285
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	592	504	619	560	(*)	711	678	687	660
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,840	1,507	1,681	1,650	(*)	1,945	1,955	1,719	1,698
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	930	751	887	842	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	759	628	779	779	(*)	797	807	767	740
58	Eating and drinking places.....	9,896	10,129	9,232	9,582	9,363	9,936	10,079	10,281	9,468	9,448
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	3,445	3,411	3,231	3,094	3,187	3,559	3,428	3,405	3,183	3,190
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,554	1,404	1,530	1,486	(*)	1,634	1,583	1,604	1,594
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	377	310	325	375	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57 594	GAF.....	(*)	23,026	19,676	21,542	21,199	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

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

NA Not available.

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-03).

²Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

³GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

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)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Apr. 1984 advance from--		Mar. 1984 preliminary from--		Feb. 1984 through Apr. 1984	
		Mar. 1984 prelim.	Apr. 1983 final	Feb. 1984 final	Mar. 1983 final	Nov. 1983 through Jan. 1984	Feb. 1983 through Apr. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	+2.9	+11.8	-2.0	+10.2	+1.4	+12.1
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	+2.0	+9.4	-0.6	+8.3	+1.5	+9.2
	Durable goods stores, total.....	+5.2	+19.8	-5.3	+16.5	+1.2	+21.3
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	+2.0	+15.8	-3.3	+16.6	+4.1	+18.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	+6.4	+22.6	-7.3	+18.7	+0.9	+25.1
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automobile dealers.....	+6.9	+23.7	-7.6	+19.8	+1.4	+26.6
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+3.6	+14.9	-1.1	+12.7	+0.5	+14.8
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+1.8	+8.0	-0.2	+7.2	+1.5	+7.8
53	General merchandise group stores.....	+3.6	+12.3	-3.2	+8.6	+1.3	+11.4
531	Department stores.....	+3.8	+13.2	-3.1	+9.0	+1.9	+12.2
54	Food stores.....	+1.2	+6.2	+0.5	+5.5	+1.6	+5.8
541	Grocery stores.....	+1.4	+6.2	+0.3	+5.3	+1.7	+5.8
554	Gasoline service stations.....	+1.2	+5.8	+1.2	+6.6	+0.5	+6.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	+3.9	+12.0	+1.0	+11.9	+3.4	+11.8
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-1.4	+4.9	-2.0	+6.7	+1.1	+6.9
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	+3.8	+11.8	+0.7	+7.5	+3.9	+8.8

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Mar. 1984 prelim.	Feb. 1984 final	Mar. 1983	Mar. 1984 prelim.	Feb. 1984 final	Mar. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	35,418	30,871	32,536	36,251	36,803	33,599
53	General merchandise group stores.....	10,140	8,253	9,323	11,197	11,622	10,259
531	Department stores.....	8,835	7,143	8,111	9,719	10,061	8,903
533	Variety stores.....	574	481	561	627	651	595
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.	731	629	651	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	12,679	11,486	11,704	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	12,525	11,331	11,540	11,986	12,093	11,483
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1,848	1,440	1,717	2,032	2,035	1,760
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	832	645	750	890	896	767
566	Shoe stores.....	401	320	412	418	428	377
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	1,909	1,785	1,727	1,936	1,938	1,743

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-03).

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -0.7 percent to +1.1 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.4 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for March 1984 and final estimates for February 1984 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-84-03). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates. The complete report will include additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated coefficient of variation in percent of the advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range ¹		Median	Range ²		Mean	
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.7	0.9	0.7	-0.7	+1.1	0.0	0.4
	Total (excl. automotive group).....	0.6	1.0	0.7	-0.8	+1.3	0.0	0.6
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.0	2.2	1.4	-1.4	+3.2	+0.4	1.0
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	1.9	3.1	2.7	-1.5	+5.1	+1.3	2.0
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.4	2.2	1.8	-1.0	+4.2	+0.6	1.1
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automobile dealers.....	0.9	1.9	1.3	-1.3	+4.8	+0.7	1.2
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.2	4.1	2.4	-3.5	+2.5	-0.5	1.5
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.5	0.8	0.6	-0.6	+1.2	0.0	0.4
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.4	0.9	0.5	-1.3	+1.0	+0.1	0.5
531	Department stores.....	0.1	0.6	0.3	-1.1	+1.0	+0.2	0.5
54	Food stores.....	0.7	1.1	0.9	-0.9	+1.3	-0.2	0.5
541	Grocery stores.....	0.2	0.7	0.5	-0.8	+1.1	-0.2	0.5
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.6	1.1	1.0	-3.8	+3.0	-0.1	1.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.6	3.7	2.0	-3.0	+2.1	0.0	1.4
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.6	1.4	1.1	-2.4	+3.0	-0.1	1.2
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.4	1.6	0.9	-2.1	+1.5	-0.4	0.7

¹The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January–December 1983.

²The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, April 1983–March 1984. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period March 1983–February 1984.