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## ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES APRIL 2012

**Notice of Revision:** Monthly retail sales and inventories were revised based on the results of the 2010 Annual Retail Trade Survey. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised estimates can be found on our website at <http://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/www/benchmark/2012/html/annrev12.html>.

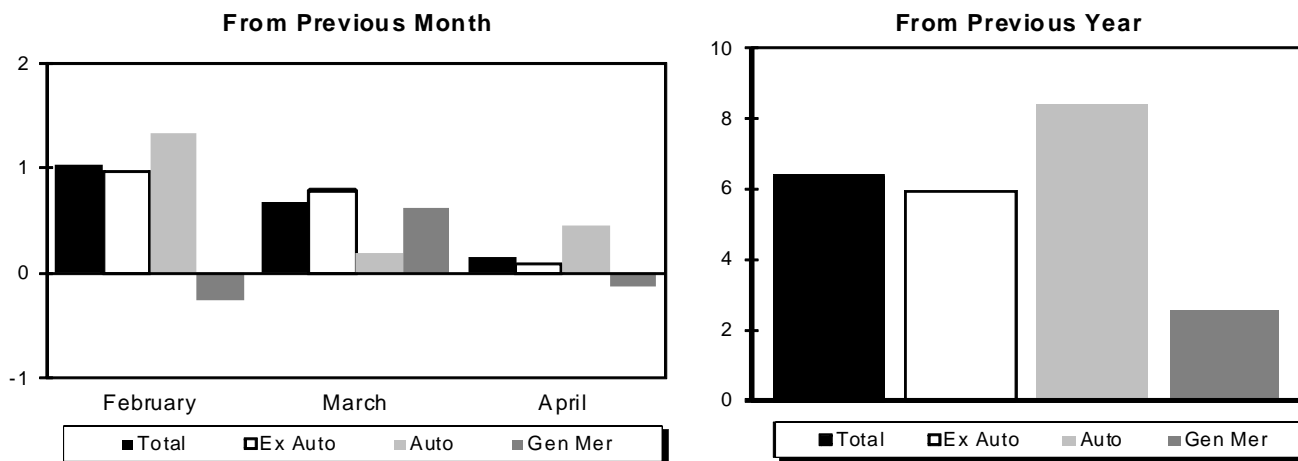
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$408.0 billion, an increase of 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ )\* from the previous month and 6.4 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) above April 2011. Total sales for the February through April 2012 period were up 6.6 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The February to March 2012 percent change was revised from 0.8 percent ( $\pm 0.5$ ) to 0.7 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ).

Retail trade sales were up 0.1 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ )\* from March 2012 and 6.1 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) above last year. Nonstore retailers sales were up 11.0 percent ( $\pm 3.1\%$ ) from April 2011 and building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers were up 10.3 percent ( $\pm 2.8\%$ ) 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 May is scheduled to be released June 13, 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](http://www.census.gov/timeseries)>. For additional survey information, visit <[www.census.gov/retail](http://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 <sup>1</sup> code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted <sup>2</sup>				
		4 Month Total		2012			2011		2012			2011	
		2012	% Chg. 2011	Apr. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. <sup>3</sup> (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	1,558,711	7.2	401,627	420,017	376,652	384,506	390,622	408,039	407,446	404,692	383,639	382,115
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1,268,110	7.1	326,995	337,908	305,549	313,654	314,066	334,475	334,220	331,602	315,778	313,991
	Retail .....	1,387,553	7.0	357,575	374,034	335,404	342,996	348,836	364,163	363,736	361,364	343,220	341,428
	<b>GAFO<sup>4</sup></b> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	99,314	91,461	92,521	93,171	(*)	100,502	100,056	96,728	96,531
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	290,601	7.7	74,632	82,109	71,103	70,852	76,556	73,564	73,226	73,090	67,861	68,124
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	263,438	7.8	67,636	74,837	64,465	64,173	69,413	66,440	66,227	65,983	61,175	61,373
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	61,420	52,960	52,534	56,717	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,272	6,638	6,679	7,143	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	29,856	8.8	7,300	8,049	7,424	6,960	7,605	7,892	7,837	7,839	7,334	7,471
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,524	4,436	3,912	4,316	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,525	2,988	3,048	3,289	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	30,891	1.4	7,250	8,157	7,949	7,214	8,092	8,428	8,408	8,309	8,290	8,452
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,932	6,047	5,509	6,072	(*)	6,277	6,228	6,339	6,487
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,225	1,902	1,705	2,020	(*)	2,131	2,081	1,951	1,965
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	91,034	12.7	27,703	25,323	19,280	25,222	22,643	25,147	25,598	24,931	22,803	22,507
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,056	16,812	20,464	19,145	(*)	21,398	20,963	19,360	19,088
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	203,734	4.2	51,287	53,066	49,208	50,985	50,069	52,709	52,536	52,195	51,090	50,484
4451	Grocery stores .....	184,160	4.0	46,160	47,834	44,437	45,888	45,327	47,295	47,081	46,776	45,934	45,372
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,608	3,248	3,429	3,308	(*)	3,727	3,712	3,546	3,546
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	92,349	3.3	22,902	24,057	22,618	22,250	23,625	23,251	23,110	23,056	22,272	22,651
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	19,895	18,823	18,808	19,913	(*)	19,185	19,207	18,903	19,166
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	177,290	8.7	47,385	47,623	41,540	45,268	43,860	46,639	46,781	46,310	44,207	43,555
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	71,006	7.5	18,805	20,087	17,831	18,498	18,117	19,736	19,879	19,904	18,728	18,588
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	664	583	749	650	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,771	2,999	3,448	3,327	(*)	3,485	3,447	3,146	3,178
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,943	6,564	7,117	7,060	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,519	2,365	2,280	2,245	(*)	2,411	2,448	2,218	2,234
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	26,658	6.5	6,587	7,171	6,131	6,401	6,574	7,502	7,447	7,396	6,996	7,046
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	199,740	4.4	51,344	52,903	49,130	50,733	49,927	53,696	53,765	53,431	52,350	51,915
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	53,998	0.4	14,013	14,784	13,482	14,598	14,264	15,280	15,492	15,451	15,681	15,420
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>5</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,025	13,702	14,839	14,502	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	38,119	35,648	36,135	35,663	(*)	38,273	37,980	36,669	36,495
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	33,079	31,147	31,749	31,322	(*)	33,312	33,135	32,265	32,158
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,040	4,501	4,386	4,341	(*)	4,961	4,845	4,404	4,337
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	37,164	9.4	9,463	9,768	9,347	8,944	8,937	10,135	10,057	10,041	9,344	9,147
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	137,230	10.7	32,917	35,721	33,843	29,669	32,831	35,464	35,092	34,862	31,945	31,488
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses ....	(*)	(*)	(*)	26,962	24,885	22,545	24,199	(*)	27,207	26,990	24,294	23,888
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	171,158	8.9	44,052	45,983	41,248	41,510	41,786	43,876	43,710	43,328	40,419	40,687

(\*) 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-13ARIMA-SEATS 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 <sup>1</sup>					
		Apr. 2012 Advance from --		Mar. 2012 Preliminary from --		Feb. 2012 through Apr. 2012 from --	
		Mar. 2012 (p)	Apr. 2011 (r)	Feb. 2012 (r)	Mar. 2011 (r)	Nov. 2011 through Jan. 2012	Feb. 2011 through Apr. 2011
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	0.1	6.4	0.7	6.6	2.0	6.6
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ....	0.1	5.9	0.8	6.4	2.1	6.4
	Retail .....	0.1	6.1	0.7	6.5	1.9	6.4
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	0.5	8.4	0.2	7.5	1.3	7.6
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	0.3	8.6	0.4	7.9	1.4	7.8
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	0.7	7.6	0.0	4.9	1.8	6.9
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	0.2	1.7	1.2	-0.5	-0.2	0.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	-1.8	10.3	2.7	13.7	3.0	12.2
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.3	3.2	0.7	4.1	1.3	3.6
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.5	3.0	0.7	3.8	1.3	3.4
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.6	4.4	0.2	2.0	0.9	3.0
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-0.3	5.5	1.0	7.4	4.2	7.6
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	-0.7	5.4	-0.1	6.9	2.7	6.9
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	0.7	7.2	0.7	5.7	4.8	6.2
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	-0.1	2.6	0.6	3.6	0.8	3.0
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-1.4	-2.6	0.3	0.5	0.2	-0.9
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	0.8	8.5	0.2	9.9	3.7	9.0
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	1.1	11.0	0.7	11.4	1.9	11.3
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.4	8.6	0.9	7.4	2.5	7.9

(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

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## 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  $\pm 1.5$  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 Apr. 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 <sup>(1)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error <sup>(1)</sup> for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change <sup>(2)</sup>	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	<b>Retail</b> .....	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	2.5	1.0	0.5	1.3	0.0	0.5
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	2.6	1.1	0.6	1.5	0.0	0.7
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	3.1	1.4	0.8	1.7	0.4	0.3
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	1.5	0.6	0.4	0.9	-0.4	0.5
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; ...</b>						
	<b>supplies dealers</b> .....	3.5	1.7	1.2	1.7	0.1	0.4
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.1
4451	Grocery stores .....	1.3	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	1.7	0.4	0.3	1.1	0.0	0.3
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	2.5	0.5	0.4	1.0	-0.1	0.5
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	<b>stores</b> .....	2.8	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.0	0.4
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	4.1	1.6	1.4	1.9	0.2	0.9
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	-0.1	0.1
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.) .....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.2
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	3.9	2.4	1.5	3.3	0.4	0.9
454	<b>No-store retailers</b> .....	2.1	1.0	0.8	1.9	0.1	0.4
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ..	2.1	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.4

(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.