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MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES September 2012

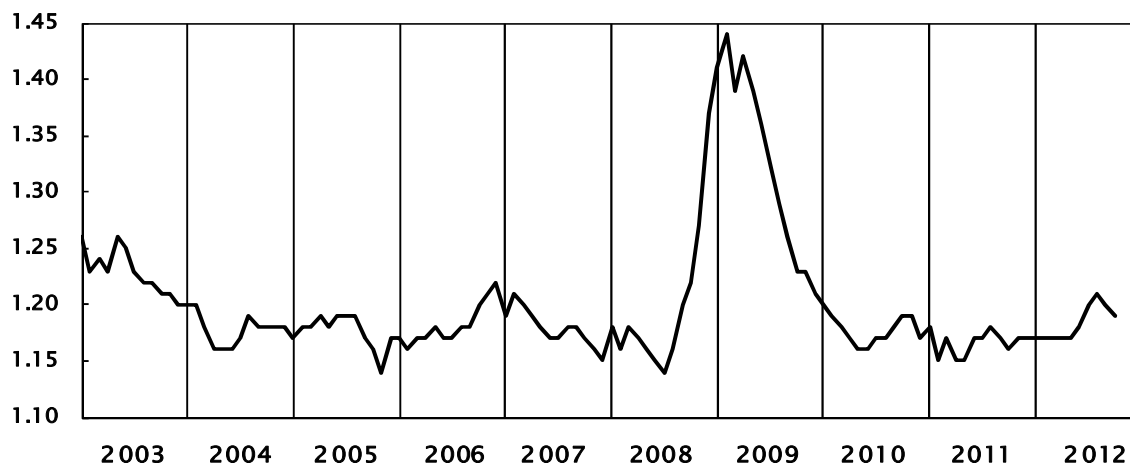
Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that September 2012 sales of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$414.0 billion, up 2.0 percent (+/-0.7) from the revised August level and were up 4.4 percent (+/-0.9%) from the September 2011 level. The August preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.5 billion or 0.1 percent. September sales of durable goods were up 1.2 percent (+/-0.9%) from last month and were up 2.8 percent (+/-1.2%) from a year ago. Sales of electrical and electronic goods were up 3.7 percent from last month and sales of metals and minerals, except petroleum were up 2.5 percent. Sales of nondurable goods were up 2.7 percent (+/-0.9%) from August and were up 5.7 percent (+/-1.2%) from last September. Sales of petroleum and petroleum products were up 8.3 percent from last month.

Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$494.2 billion at the end of September, up 1.1 percent (+/-0.4%) from the revised August level and were up 7.5 percent (+/-1.2%) from the September 2011 level. The August preliminary estimate was revised upward \$1.3 billion or 0.3 percent. September inventories of durable goods were up 0.9 percent (+/-0.4%) from last month and were up 8.2 percent (+/-1.1%) from a year ago. Inventories of metals and minerals, except petroleum were up 1.9 percent from last month and inventories of machinery, equipment, and supplies were up 1.5 percent. Inventories of nondurable goods were up 1.4 percent (+/-0.5%) from August and were up 6.5 percent (+/-2.6%) from last September. Inventories of farm product raw materials were up 7.3 percent from last month and inventories of petroleum and petroleum products were up 5.5 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The September inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.19. The September 2011 ratio was 1.16.

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/wholesale/www/how_surveys_are_collected/monthly_methodology.html>.

**Monthly Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers, Except Manufacturers'
Sales Branches and Offices: 2003 to 2012**
(Estimates adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for October is scheduled to be released December 11, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. EST.

For customized wholesale time series estimates by industry visit the Census Bureau's website at <<http://www.census.gov/timeseries>>.

To receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators, download the America's Economy app for Apple and Android smartphones and tablets.

For additional survey information visit <<http://www.census.gov/wholesale>>.

* 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 inventories 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		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Sep. 2012 (p)	Aug. 2012 (r)	Sep. 2011 (r)	Sep./ Aug.	Aug./ Jul.	Sep. 12/ Sep. 11	Sep. 2012 (p)	Aug. 2012 (r)	Sep. 2011 (r)	Sep./ Aug.	Aug./ Jul.	Sep. 12/ Sep. 11	Sep. 2012 (p)	Aug. 2012 (r)	Sep. 2011 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	413,972	405,897	396,544	2.0	1.0	4.4	494,154	488,787	459,782	1.1	0.8	7.5	1.19	1.20	1.16
423	.Durable	184,826	182,695	179,790	1.2	0.9	2.8	291,281	288,720	269,321	0.9	0.2	8.2	1.58	1.58	1.50
4231	..Automotive	34,689	34,659	29,064	0.1	1.9	19.4	45,601	45,988	43,026	-0.8	-0.4	6.0	1.31	1.33	1.48
4232	..Furniture	4,384	4,378	4,289	0.1	0.4	2.2	7,246	7,147	7,085	1.4	-0.1	2.3	1.65	1.63	1.65
4233	..Lumber	9,354	9,138	8,288	2.4	0.6	12.9	13,126	12,986	12,051	1.1	0.7	8.9	1.40	1.42	1.45
4234	..Prof. equip.	31,642	31,545	31,791	0.3	-0.1	-0.5	32,355	32,229	31,867	0.4	-1.5	1.5	1.02	1.02	1.00
42343	...Comp. equip.	16,004	15,977	16,370	0.2	-0.3	-2.2	12,275	12,172	12,343	0.8	-5.0	-0.6	0.77	0.76	0.75
4235	..Metals	12,489	12,188	12,564	2.5	0.0	-0.6	27,141	26,623	24,610	1.9	1.4	10.3	2.17	2.18	1.96
4236	..Electrical	32,047	30,889	31,511	3.7	0.2	1.7	41,240	40,914	40,489	0.8	0.1	1.9	1.29	1.32	1.28
4237	..Hardware	9,007	9,096	8,652	-1.0	-0.1	4.1	18,533	18,490	17,413	0.2	0.8	6.4	2.06	2.03	2.01
4238	..Machinery	31,539	31,401	30,692	0.4	0.3	2.8	81,431	80,191	68,680	1.5	1.8	18.6	2.58	2.55	2.24
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,675	19,401	22,939	1.4	3.8	-14.2	24,608	24,152	24,100	1.9	-3.5	2.1	1.25	1.24	1.05
424	.Nondurable	229,146	223,202	216,754	2.7	1.1	5.7	202,873	200,067	190,461	1.4	1.7	6.5	0.89	0.90	0.88
4241	..Paper ³	7,269	7,109	7,005	2.3	-0.5	3.8	7,489	7,562	7,183	-1.0	-1.8	4.3	1.03	1.06	1.03
4242	..Drugs	34,453	34,617	36,212	-0.5	-2.7	-4.9	35,233	36,049	33,285	-2.3	1.3	5.9	1.02	1.04	0.92
4243	..Apparel	12,155	11,979	11,238	1.5	-1.9	8.2	21,086	21,183	22,028	-0.5	-1.0	-4.3	1.73	1.77	1.96
4244	..Groceries	47,370	48,169	46,865	-1.7	-0.5	1.1	34,653	34,375	33,982	0.8	-1.2	2.0	0.73	0.71	0.73
4245	..Farm products	19,386	18,903	16,358	2.6	1.9	18.5	24,716	23,039	18,968	7.3	5.1	30.3	1.27	1.22	1.16
4246	..Chemicals ³	9,995	9,911	9,946	0.8	-2.4	0.5	11,884	11,744	11,507	1.2	-0.6	3.3	1.19	1.18	1.16
4247	..Petroleum	68,570	63,296	60,609	8.3	6.5	13.1	27,581	26,148	24,654	5.5	10.2	11.9	0.40	0.41	0.41
4248	..Alcohol	10,310	10,298	9,937	0.1	0.9	3.8	13,952	13,792	12,218	1.2	0.2	14.2	1.35	1.34	1.23
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	19,638	18,920	18,584	3.8	-1.0	5.7	26,279	26,175	26,636	0.4	0.4	-1.3	1.34	1.38	1.43
Not Adjusted														Sales to date		
														2012	2011	
42	U.S. Total	396,523	424,186	402,955	-6.5	6.9	-1.6	490,002	480,023	457,333	2.1	-0.5	7.1	3,666,112	3,484,408	
423	.Durable	180,367	193,737	187,199	-6.9	8.7	-3.6	292,325	288,872	270,679	1.2	-0.8	8.0	1,645,621	1,549,054	
4231	..Automotive	32,087	36,565	28,192	-12.2	10.4	13.8	44,643	43,459	42,122	2.7	-5.3	6.0	298,018	239,445	
4232	..Furniture	4,358	4,719	4,533	-7.6	9.4	-3.9	7,442	7,390	7,276	0.7	0.5	2.3	39,523	38,687	
4233	..Lumber	9,382	10,737	8,976	-12.6	9.3	4.5	13,008	13,129	11,943	-0.9	-1.3	8.9	83,738	73,554	
4234	..Prof. equip.	32,433	32,144	34,716	0.9	6.4	-6.6	32,646	32,777	32,186	-0.4	-1.5	1.4	282,474	278,091	
42343	...Comp. equip.	16,820	15,673	18,220	7.3	3.1	-7.7	12,570	12,464	12,664	0.9	-6.1	-0.7	142,810	144,296	
4235	..Metals	11,765	13,114	12,740	-10.3	5.4	-7.7	27,060	26,729	24,610	1.2	0.7	10.0	117,027	110,863	
4236	..Electrical	32,079	32,588	33,181	-1.6	7.4	-3.3	42,395	41,773	41,663	1.5	0.5	1.8	277,729	275,171	
4237	..Hardware	8,665	9,996	8,894	-13.3	3.2	-2.6	18,607	18,693	17,517	-0.5	1.0	6.2	82,299	76,682	
4238	..Machinery	30,120	34,007	31,766	-11.4	10.6	-5.2	81,350	80,432	68,611	1.1	0.8	18.6	287,259	259,849	
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,478	19,867	24,201	-2.0	13.4	-19.5	25,174	24,490	24,751	2.8	-2.7	1.7	177,554	196,712	
424	.Nondurable	216,156	230,449	215,756	-6.2	5.5	0.2	197,677	191,151	186,654	3.4	0.0	5.9	2,020,491	1,935,354	
4241	..Paper	7,204	7,763	7,411	-7.2	11.6	-2.8	7,489	7,562	7,183	-1.0	-1.8	4.3	63,539	63,409	
4242	..Drugs	32,661	35,898	37,117	-9.0	2.9	-12.0	35,691	35,544	33,718	0.4	-0.2	5.9	316,916	315,927	
4243	..Apparel	12,362	13,884	12,036	-11.0	9.5	2.7	22,414	22,623	23,438	-0.9	0.2	-4.4	107,426	101,404	
4244	..Groceries	45,523	50,192	46,724	-9.3	4.1	-2.6	34,757	34,169	34,084	1.7	-0.8	2.0	432,223	404,680	
4245	..Farm products	17,312	16,899	15,229	2.4	4.3	13.7	20,638	17,072	15,876	20.9	1.7	30.0	157,539	163,524	
4246	..Chemicals	9,595	10,585	10,205	-9.4	2.2	-6.0	11,884	11,744	11,507	1.2	-0.6	3.3	91,270	87,250	
4247	..Petroleum	64,387	65,195	59,579	-1.2	8.7	8.1	26,064	24,448	23,372	6.6	2.4	11.5	581,269	544,689	
4248	..Alcohol	9,516	11,245	10,116	-15.4	13.0	-5.9	13,854	13,751	12,145	0.7	-1.7	14.1	89,359	85,049	
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	17,596	18,788	17,339	-6.3	-2.4	1.5	24,886	24,238	25,331	2.7	-0.6	-1.8	180,950	169,422	

Footnotes:

^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 Except where indicated, sales and inventories estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation. Estimates of sales are also adjusted for trading-day differences and moving holidays. See Table 3 for the combined adjustment factors. Adjusted sales-to-date estimates are not tabulated.

³ No discernible seasonal pattern for this NAICS code was detected in the latest annual review of the seasonal adjustment for inventories. Consequently, the "Adjusted" inventories estimates are equal to the "Not Adjusted" estimates.

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/wholesale/www/how_surveys_are_collected/monthly_methodology.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	Coefficient of variation for monthly total				Standard error for monthly total				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 to previous year sales to date
		Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Sales	Inv.	Current year	Previous year	
42	U.S. Total	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.7	1.2	1.0	0.4
423	..Durable	1.4	1.7	1.3	1.8	0.5	0.2	0.7	0.6	1.3	1.4	0.4
4231	..Automotive	4.1	5.0	4.0	5.0	0.4	0.5	1.0	0.8	4.2	4.2	1.0
4232	..Furniture	7.1	7.8	6.5	7.7	1.5	0.9	3.1	2.4	6.5	4.7	3.4
4233	..Lumber	5.5	8.3	5.7	8.1	0.7	0.4	2.4	2.1	5.7	5.7	2.0
4234	..Prof. equip.	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.5	1.5	0.6	1.3	1.8	3.9	4.7	1.2
42343	...Comp. equip.	7.1	6.2	6.8	6.8	1.7	1.0	1.7	2.0	7.0	8.1	1.6
4235	..Metals	6.7	5.3	6.1	5.1	1.2	0.5	2.0	1.2	6.1	6.0	1.7
4236	..Electrical	3.9	4.4	3.5	4.3	1.4	0.3	1.2	1.0	3.6	3.6	1.1
4237	..Hardware	5.1	5.3	5.0	5.1	0.9	0.5	2.1	1.2	5.2	4.9	1.8
4238	..Machinery	3.4	4.9	3.4	4.9	1.1	0.4	1.4	2.0	3.4	3.2	1.8
4239	..Misc. Durable	7.5	6.3	6.8	6.1	1.4	0.9	2.4	3.4	6.9	6.5	1.9
424	..Nondurable	1.7	2.3	1.8	2.3	0.5	0.3	0.7	1.5	1.6	1.4	0.5
4241	..Paper	8.1	6.9	7.7	6.9	1.4	0.6	2.0	2.6	7.9	7.7	1.6
4242	..Drugs	5.3	5.3	5.0	5.3	0.5	0.7	1.7	2.6	4.7	4.8	1.7
4243	..Apparel	4.7	7.0	5.1	7.1	1.7	1.0	2.9	3.4	4.6	4.6	3.6
4244	..Groceries	5.9	9.0	5.6	9.2	0.9	1.2	1.7	2.2	5.5	5.6	1.4
4245	..Farm products	7.2	7.0	7.4	6.8	2.2	2.7	4.8	4.7	7.0	6.0	3.1
4246	..Chemicals	5.2	6.8	4.8	7.1	1.0	0.9	3.3	3.2	5.2	5.6	2.1
4247	..Petroleum	4.3	5.2	4.4	5.4	1.0	0.3	1.3	2.7	4.2	4.1	0.9
4248	..Alcohol	4.3	4.5	4.8	4.5	1.2	0.9	1.3	2.4	4.3	4.7	1.2
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	6.0	7.5	6.4	7.9	0.6	0.7	1.7	1.8	5.5	5.3	1.1

Note:

Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation, trading-day differences, or moving holidays. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at http://www.census.gov/wholesale/www/how_surveys_are_collected/monthly_methodology.html.

Reliability of the 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 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 can be used to construct a 90-percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.8 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.753 \times 0.8$ percent or ± 1.4 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is 1.2 ± 1.4 or -0.2 percent to 2.6 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the actual change is different from zero. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. For a monthly total, the estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated monthly total $\pm 1.753 \times CV \times$ (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 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. Combined¹ Adjustment Factors for Monthly Wholesale Sales and Inventory Estimates

[Combined adjustment factors are computed using the Census Bureau's X-13 ARIMA-SEATS program and are based on data from the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey.]

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories					
		2012					2011	2012					2011
		Oct.	Sep.r	Aug.r	Jul.	Jun.	Sep.r	Oct.	Sep.r	Aug.r	Jul.	Jun.	Sep.r
42	U.S. Total²	1.062	0.957	1.046	0.987	1.020	1.013	1.009	0.992	0.983	0.996	0.990	0.992
423	..Durable	1.075	0.978	1.058	0.983	1.030	1.039	1.011	1.005	1.001	1.011	1.000	1.005
4231	..Automotive	1.072	0.925	1.055	0.974	0.996	0.970	1.010	0.979	0.945	0.994	0.987	0.979
4232	..Furniture	1.121	0.994	1.078	0.989	0.996	1.057	1.017	1.027	1.034	1.027	0.999	1.027
4233	..Lumber	1.109	1.003	1.175	1.082	1.121	1.083	0.955	0.991	1.011	1.031	1.033	0.991
4234	..Prof. equip.	1.056	1.025	1.019	0.957	1.065	1.092	1.032	1.009	1.017	1.017	0.991	1.010
42343	...Comp. equip.	1.045	1.051	0.981	0.949	1.106	1.113	1.064	1.024	1.024	1.036	0.991	1.026
4235	..Metals	1.033	0.942	1.076	1.021	1.053	1.014	0.986	0.997	1.004	1.011	1.013	1.000
4236	..Electrical	1.106	1.001	1.055	0.985	1.017	1.053	1.030	1.028	1.021	1.017	0.996	1.029
4237	..Hardware	1.076	0.962	1.099	1.064	1.078	1.028	0.994	1.004	1.011	1.009	1.009	1.006
4238	..Machinery	1.053	0.955	1.083	0.982	1.026	1.035	1.003	0.999	1.003	1.013	1.012	0.999
4239	..Misc. Durable	1.134	0.990	1.024	0.937	1.003	1.055	1.029	1.023	1.014	1.005	0.994	1.027
424	..Nondurable	1.047	0.941	1.026	0.984	1.006	0.987	1.001	0.970	0.954	0.971	0.975	0.972
4241	..Paper ³	1.111	0.991	1.092	0.973	1.001	1.058	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4242	..Drugs	1.101	0.948	1.037	0.980	0.958	1.025	0.997	1.013	0.986	1.001	0.989	1.013
4243	..Apparel	1.193	1.017	1.159	1.039	0.965	1.071	1.013	1.063	1.068	1.055	1.013	1.064
4244	..Groceries	1.017	0.961	1.042	0.996	1.007	0.997	1.026	1.003	0.994	0.990	0.992	1.003
4245	..Farm products	1.149	0.893	0.894	0.873	0.915	0.931	1.091	0.835	0.741	0.766	0.772	0.837
4246	..Chemicals ³	1.032	0.960	1.068	1.020	1.048	1.026	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4247	..Petroleum	1.010	0.939	1.030	1.009	1.011	0.983	0.938	0.945	0.935	1.006	1.026	0.948
4248	..Alcohol	1.068	0.923	1.092	0.975	1.109	1.018	1.035	0.993	0.997	1.016	1.011	0.994
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	0.983	0.896	0.993	1.008	1.117	0.933	0.952	0.947	0.926	0.935	0.970	0.951

Footnotes:

¹ Revised factors.

¹ Combined factors for sales include the effects of seasonal variation, trading day differences, and moving holidays. Combined factors for inventories include only the effects of seasonal variation.

² Adjusted sales and inventories estimates for detailed kind-of-business levels in Table 1 are computed by dividing each "Not Adjusted" estimate by the combined 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. Combined 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.

³ No discernible seasonal pattern for this NAICS code was detected in the latest annual review of the seasonal adjustment for inventories. Therefore, the combined adjustment factors for inventories are set to one for this NAICS code.

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-13 ARIMA-SEATS program may be found at <http://www.census.gov/srd/www/x13as/>.

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 inventories-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. Approximately 73% of those mailed provided data for this reporting period. Data for nonresponding firms are imputed based on data for similar-sized firms classified in the same kind of business. Approximately 32% of the total sales estimate and 30% of the total end-of-month inventories estimate is based on imputed data.

Monthly sales and inventories 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/wholesale>.