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ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES
SEPTEMBER 2015

SPECIAL NOTICE: Beginning with the December 11, 2015 release for the November 2015 data, the estimates will be based on a new sample. A new sample for the Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey is selected about once every two and a half to three years. For further information on the sample revision, see our website at http://www.census.gov/retail/marts_sample_revision_faqs.html.

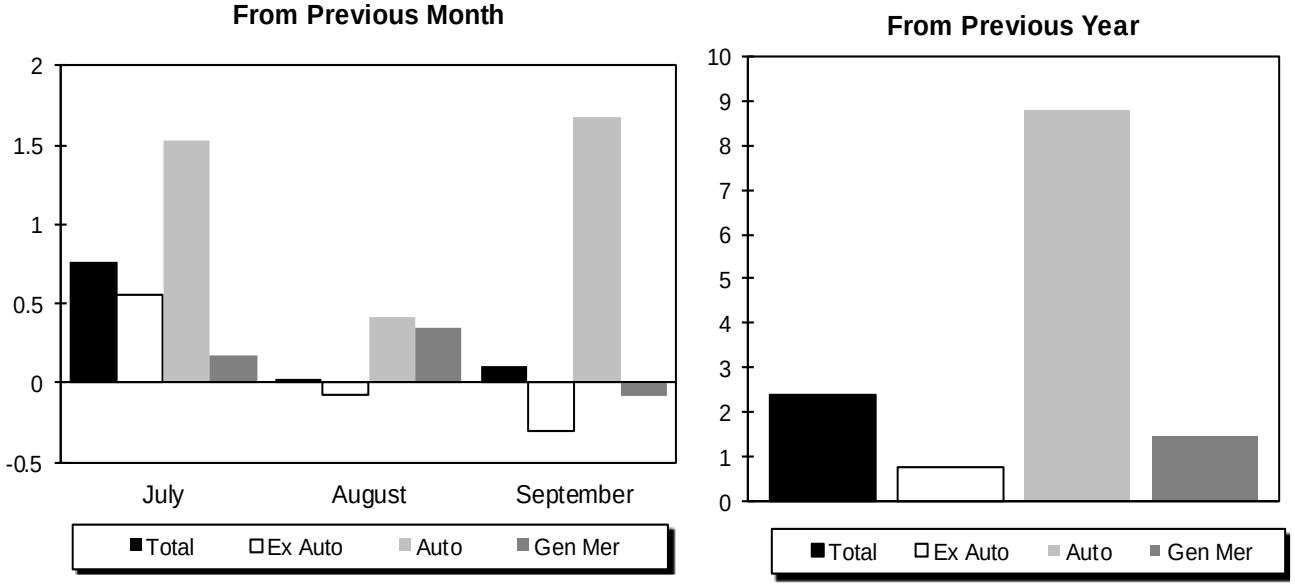
The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for September, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $447.7 billion, an increase of 0.1 percent (±0.5%)* from the previous month, and 2.4 percent (±0.7%) above September 2014. Total sales for the July 2015 through September 2015 period were up 2.3 percent (±0.5%) from the same period a year ago. The July 2015 to August 2015 percent change was revised from +0.2 percent (±0.5%)* to virtually unchanged (±0.2%)*.

Retail trade sales were virtually unchanged (±0.5%)* from August 2015, and 1.7 percent (±0.7%) above last year. Motor vehicle and parts dealers were up 8.8 percent (±2.6%) from last year and food services and drinking places were up 7.9 percent (±3.5%) from September 2014.

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 4,900 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 60% 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 October is scheduled to be released November 13, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

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

To learn more about this release and the other indicators the U.S. Census Bureau publishes, join us for the Investigating Economic Indicators Webinar Series. For more information, visit http://www.census.gov/econ/webinar.

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.

The U.S. Census Bureau updated its Application Programming Interface (API) with monthly and quarterly economic indicators. The API allows developers to combine Census Bureau statistics with other data sets to create tools for research on a variety of topics. For more information, visit www.census.gov/developers.

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]				
		9 Month Total		2015			2014		2015			2014	
		2015	% Chg. 2014	Sep.[3] (a)	Aug. (p)	Jul. (r)	Sep.	Aug.	Sep.[3] (a)	Aug. (p)	Jul. (r)	Sep. (r)	Aug. (r)
	Retail & food services, total	3,916,392	2.1	430,925	456,513	457,195	420,516	450,365	447,686	447,219	447,097	437,374	438,281
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	3,079,476	0.8	338,909	357,546	358,251	335,829	356,572	353,002	354,088	354,345	350,316	349,982
	Retail	3,452,202	1.3	379,867	403,383	404,158	373,426	400,267	394,995	394,874	395,100	388,525	389,924
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	107,860	101,980	95,340	107,249	(*)	105,398	105,204	103,509	103,853
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	836,916	7.3	92,016	98,967	98,944	84,687	93,793	94,684	93,131	92,752	87,058	88,299
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	771,309	7.8	84,725	91,481	91,112	77,580	86,374	87,436	85,898	85,391	79,979	81,179
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	77,943	76,847	65,320	73,352	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,486	7,832	7,107	7,419	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	74,985	5.4	8,680	8,848	8,834	8,203	8,591	8,680	8,632	8,669	8,244	8,276
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,830	4,745	4,544	4,667	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,018	4,089	3,659	3,924	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	71,752	-1.9	8,067	8,247	8,004	8,509	8,519	8,582	8,599	8,587	9,106	8,857
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,271	6,069	6,265	6,475	(*)	6,309	6,283	6,729	6,494
44312	Computer & software stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**	250,734	4.1	27,404	27,928	30,740	26,617	26,852	27,708	27,799	28,156	26,790	26,800
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,703	26,957	23,737	23,866	(*)	23,937	24,264	23,135	23,104
445	**Food & beverage stores**	504,776	3.0	55,219	57,372	58,724	53,633	56,553	56,861	57,041	56,829	55,763	55,505
4451	Grocery stores	451,452	2.8	49,281	51,174	52,204	48,034	50,468	50,597	50,768	50,585	49,776	49,527
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,251	4,526	3,861	4,223	(*)	4,260	4,250	4,090	4,072
446	**Health & personal care stores**	232,048	4.4	25,954	26,137	26,084	25,077	25,107	26,511	26,508	26,321	25,615	25,463
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,755	21,845	20,785	20,707	(*)	22,154	21,955	21,253	21,151
447	**Gasoline stations**	333,903	-19.7	36,060	39,889	41,615	45,062	48,302	35,738	36,934	37,695	44,528	44,724
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	178,039	2.9	19,485	22,180	20,441	18,564	21,855	21,620	21,432	21,392	20,654	20,923
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	776	719	766	762	(*)	828	811	805	812
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,799	3,565	3,664	3,894	(*)	3,877	3,850	3,869	3,945
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,520	8,207	7,132	8,198	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,612	2,847	2,485	3,645	(*)	2,844	2,858	2,789	2,843
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores**	61,132	5.8	7,079	8,169	7,026	6,652	8,050	7,444	7,379	7,435	7,054	7,111
452	**General merchandise stores**	478,793	0.7	51,778	57,309	54,941	50,691	57,071	56,542	56,590	56,401	55,726	55,945
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)	112,898	-1.6	12,378	13,724	12,691	12,140	14,156	13,923	13,866	13,876	13,901	14,118
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.)[5]	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,914	12,835	12,334	14,440	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	43,585	42,250	38,551	42,915	(*)	42,724	42,525	41,825	41,827
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters	(*)	(*)	(*)	38,066	36,643	33,472	37,598	(*)	36,957	36,827	36,304	36,362
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,519	5,607	5,079	5,317	(*)	5,767	5,698	5,521	5,465
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	88,430	5.0	10,245	10,581	10,464	9,724	10,186	10,149	10,278	10,180	9,681	9,798
454	**Nonstore retailers**	340,694	5.5	37,880	37,756	38,341	36,007	35,388	40,476	40,551	40,683	38,306	38,223
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	33,102	33,383	30,207	29,785	(*)	35,066	34,993	31,664	31,485
722	**Food services & drinking places**	464,190	8.5	51,058	53,130	53,037	47,090	50,098	52,691	52,345	51,997	48,849	48,357

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business. (NA) Not available (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(S) Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability (coefficient of variation is greater than 30%), poor response quality (total quantity response rate is less than 50%), or other concerns about the estimate's quality.

(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[1]					
		Sep. 2015 Advance from --		Aug. 2015 Preliminary from --		Jul. 2015 through Sep. 2015 from --	
		Aug. 2015 (p)	Sep. 2014 (r)	Jul. 2015 (r)	Aug. 2014 (r)	Apr. 2015 through Jun. 2015	Jul. 2014 through Sep. 2014
	Retail & food services, total	0.1	2.4	0.0	2.0	1.2	2.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-0.3	0.8	-0.1	1.2	1.0	1.2
	Retail	0.0	1.7	-0.1	1.3	1.2	1.6
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	1.7	8.8	0.4	5.5	1.9	7.1
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.8	9.3	0.6	5.8	2.1	7.4
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	0.6	5.3	-0.4	4.3	0.6	5.4
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	-0.2	-5.8	0.1	-2.9	-0.8	-3.8
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**	-0.3	3.4	-1.3	3.7	2.6	4.4
445	**Food & beverage stores**	-0.3	2.0	0.4	2.8	0.4	2.5
4451	Grocery stores	-0.3	1.6	0.4	2.5	0.4	2.2
446	**Health & personal care stores**	0.0	3.5	0.7	4.1	1.7	3.8
447	**Gasoline stations**	-3.2	-19.7	-2.0	-17.4	-1.3	-18.0
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	0.9	4.7	0.2	2.4	0.8	3.3
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores**	0.9	5.5	-0.8	3.8	1.0	5.3
452	**General merchandise stores**	-0.1	1.5	0.3	1.2	1.3	1.2
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)	0.4	0.2	-0.1	-1.8	0.5	-1.2
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	-1.3	4.8	1.0	4.9	2.1	5.2
454	**Nonstore retailers**	-0.2	5.7	-0.3	6.1	1.7	6.2
722	**Food services & drinking places**	0.7	7.9	0.7	8.2	1.4	8.1

(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 4,900 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Firms responding to MARTS account for approximately 60% 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.

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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 ±1.753 x 0.9 percent or ±1.6 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is –0.4 percent to +2.8 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 ±1.753 x CV x (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 Sep. 2015

(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	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	Retail	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	1.5	1.1	0.6	1.5	0.1	0.3
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.5	1.2	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.4
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	2.4	1.2	0.7	1.7	0.5	0.6
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	2.5	0.5	0.5	1.3	0.0	0.3
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**	2.0	1.4	0.8	1.4	0.2	0.6
445	**Food & beverage stores**	1.4	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.2
4451	Grocery stores	1.5	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.1	0.2
446	**Health & personal care stores**	2.2	0.4	0.5	1.0	0.0	0.3
447	**Gasoline stations**	1.8	0.5	0.4	0.9	-0.1	0.7
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	2.1	0.5	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.2
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores**	2.3	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.0	0.5
452	**General merchandise stores**	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	2.6	1.8	1.2	2.6	0.2	1.2
454	**Nonstore retailers**	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.3
722	**Food services & drinking places**	2.3	1.0	0.8	2.0	0.2	0.4

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

Note: Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at http://www.census.gov/retail