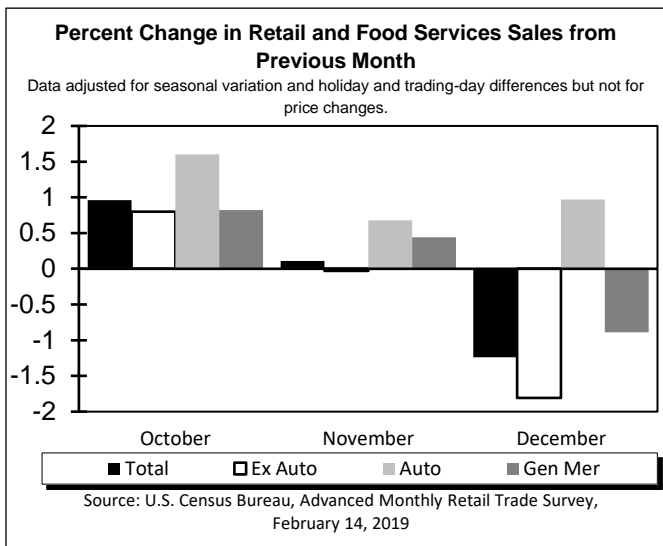# ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, DECEMBER 2018

Release Number: CB19-08

February 14, 2019 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2018:

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
December 2018	**$505.8 billion**	**-1.2%**
November 2018 (revised)	**$512.2 billion**	**0.1%***
	Next release: TBD	

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.
Data adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, February 14, 2019.

Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales from Previous Month
Data adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, February 14, 2019

Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2018, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $505.8 billion, a decrease of 1.2 percent (±0.5 percent) from the previous month, but 2.3 percent (±0.5 percent) above December 2017. Total sales for the 12 months of 2018 were up 5.0 percent (±1.4 percent) from 2017. Total sales for the October 2018 through December 2018 period were up 3.7 percent (±0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The October 2018 to November 2018 percent change was revised from up 0.2 percent (±0.5 percent)* to up 0.1 percent (±0.4 percent)*.

Retail trade sales were down 1.3 percent (±0.5 percent) from November 2018, but 2.1 percent (±0.5 percent) above last year. Clothing and clothing accessories stores were up 4.7 percent (±1.4 percent) from December 2017, while food services and drinking places were up 4.0 percent (±2.5 percent) from last year.

General Information

Data collection and processing were delayed for this indicator release due to the lapse in federal funding from December 22, 2018 through January 25, 2019. Processing and data quality were monitored throughout and response rates were at or above normal levels for this release.

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The U.S. Census Bureau is updating its 2019 economic indicator release calendar in coordination with other agencies and the Office of Management and Budget to address the impacts of the recent lapse in federal funding. Please refer to <www.census.gov/economic-indicators> for the latest information on the rescheduled release dates.

The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES
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 5,500 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.

Survey Description
The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey 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 5,500 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. For each detailed industry, we compute a ratio of current-to-previous month weighted sales using data from units for which we have obtained usable responses for both the current and previous month. For each detailed industry, the advance total sales estimates for the current month is computed by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS) at the appropriate industry level. Total estimates for broader industries are computed as the sum of the detailed industry estimates. The link relative estimate is used because imputation is not performed for most nonrespondents in MARTS. For a limited number of nonresponding companies that have influential effects on the estimates, sales may be estimated based on historical performance of that company. The monthly estimates are benchmarked to the annual survey estimates from the Annual Retail Trade Survey once available. The estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <www.census.gov/retail>.

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.

RESOURCES

API
The Census Bureau's application programming interface lets developers create custom apps to reach new users and makes key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics more accessible than ever before. <www.census.gov/developers/>

FRED Mobile App

Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED App <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/> for both Apple and Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators.

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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 12 Month Total 2018	% Chg. 2017	Not Adjusted 2018 Dec.[3] (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	2017 Dec.	Nov.	Adjusted[2] 2018 Dec.[3] (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	2017 Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	Retail & food services, total	6,036,420	5.0	569,523	524,525	506,963	561,418	499,833	505,826	512,200	511,616	494,578	491,795
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	4,807,302	5.5	465,088	426,923	405,661	460,243	404,231	400,552	407,940	408,056	392,753	389,662
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	5,521,386	4.3	531,031	482,686	460,021	522,772	461,047	464,614	468,753	466,174	453,290	451,309
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	4,292,268	4.6	426,596	385,084	358,719	421,597	365,445	359,340	364,493	362,614	351,465	349,176
	Retail	5,320,118	4.9	508,508	466,746	446,615	501,921	445,632	446,066	452,014	451,026	437,093	434,561
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	123,764	106,623	151,702	119,830	(*)	111,021	110,719	108,167	108,400
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1,229,118	3.0	104,435	97,602	101,302	101,175	95,602	105,274	104,260	103,560	101,825	102,133
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1,137,998	3.1	97,408	89,981	93,151	94,085	88,164	97,603	96,546	95,834	94,085	94,597
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	76,237	78,347	80,990	74,822	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,621	8,151	7,090	7,438	(*)	7,714	7,726	7,740	7,536
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	121,434	3.5	11,425	11,135	10,120	11,636	10,915	10,013	10,150	10,100	10,031	10,078
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,711	5,372	5,471	5,513	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,424	4,748	6,165	5,402	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	98,851	1.9	12,092	10,212	7,649	12,053	10,203	8,215	8,222	8,234	8,155	8,248
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers	390,149	3.5	29,400	32,064	34,490	28,901	31,588	32,950	32,851	33,341	32,511	32,329
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	28,463	30,362	25,122	27,845	(*)	28,664	28,834	28,132	28,041
445	Food & beverage stores	742,517	3.4	67,422	63,064	61,986	66,958	61,121	62,243	62,520	62,472	61,357	60,773
4451	Grocery stores	660,647	3.4	58,039	55,807	55,230	57,847	54,191	55,328	55,585	55,563	54,728	54,029
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,137	4,737	6,241	4,846	(*)	4,869	4,819	4,630	4,687
446	Health & personal care stores	345,338	3.6	31,575	29,263	29,500	31,178	28,111	28,731	29,322	28,950	28,267	28,366
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	24,059	24,751	25,142	23,277	(*)	24,302	24,030	23,388	23,608
447	Gasoline stations	515,034	13.1	38,492	41,839	46,942	38,646	38,786	41,212	43,447	45,442	41,288	40,486
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	274,657	4.8	35,434	26,303	21,809	34,399	24,828	23,094	23,265	23,172	22,063	22,252
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	908	827	1,015	773	(*)	866	849	740	738
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,134	3,471	4,629	3,714	(*)	3,548	3,499	3,340	3,287
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,060	9,094	13,742	10,717	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,408	2,861	4,076	3,027	(*)	3,258	3,207	2,911	2,947
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	78,432	-5.8	9,019	6,972	5,881	10,776	7,706	6,001	6,310	6,399	6,899	7,076
452	General merchandise stores	714,306	3.2	80,217	66,626	58,439	79,710	63,884	60,016	60,553	60,287	58,706	58,392
4521	Department stores	148,964	-0.9	20,683	15,224	11,536	21,616	15,231	12,140	12,558	12,485	12,484	12,562
4529	Other general merch. stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,402	46,903	58,094	48,653	(*)	47,995	47,802	46,222	45,830
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters	(*)	(*)	(*)	43,441	39,820	49,371	41,527	(*)	40,637	40,633	39,465	39,176
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,961	7,083	8,723	7,126	(*)	7,358	7,169	6,757	6,654
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	131,496	4.3	12,037	11,861	11,586	11,870	10,955	11,066	11,539	11,097	10,797	10,809
454	Nonstore retailers	678,786	9.6	76,960	69,805	56,911	74,619	61,933	57,251	59,575	57,972	55,194	53,619
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	62,545	50,157	66,981	55,156	(*)	52,692	51,233	48,327	47,142
722	Food services & drinking places	716,302	5.9	61,015	57,779	60,348	59,497	54,201	59,760	60,186	60,590	57,485	57,234

(*) 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, musical instrument, and book (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, February 14, 2019. 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 <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.

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]					
		Dec. 2018 Advance from --		Nov. 2018 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2018 through Dec. 2018 from --	
		Nov. 2018 (p)	Dec. 2017 (r)	Oct. 2018 (r)	Nov. 2017 (r)	Jul. 2018 through Sep. 2018	Oct. 2017 through Dec. 2017
	Retail & food services, total	**-1.2**	**2.3**	**0.1**	**4.1**	**0.4**	**3.7**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-1.8	2.0	0.0	4.7	0.0	4.1
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	-0.9	2.5	0.6	3.9	0.6	3.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-1.4	2.2	0.5	4.4	0.1	3.7
	Retail	-1.3	2.1	0.2	4.0	0.7	3.5
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**1.0**	**3.4**	**0.7**	**2.1**	**2.1**	**1.9**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	1.1	3.7	0.7	2.1	2.2	1.9
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**-1.3**	**-0.2**	**0.5**	**0.7**	**-1.0**	**0.3**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**-0.1**	**0.7**	**-0.1**	**-0.3**	**-0.9**	**0.5**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**.............................	**0.3**	**1.4**	**-1.5**	**1.6**	**0.8**	**2.3**
445	**Food & beverage stores**...........................	**-0.4**	**1.4**	**0.1**	**2.9**	**0.4**	**2.4**
4451	Grocery stores	-0.5	1.1	0.0	2.9	0.2	2.3
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**-2.0**	**1.6**	**1.3**	**3.4**	**-0.4**	**2.1**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**-5.1**	**-0.2**	**-4.4**	**7.3**	**-0.9**	**7.7**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**-0.7**	**4.7**	**0.4**	**4.6**	**0.6**	**4.7**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**-4.9**	**-13.0**	**-1.4**	**-10.8**	**-4.6**	**-11.0**
452	**General merchandise stores**....................	**-0.9**	**2.2**	**0.4**	**3.7**	**0.5**	**3.1**
4521	Department stores	-3.3	-2.8	0.6	0.0	-0.4	-1.1
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**-4.1**	**2.5**	**4.0**	**6.8**	**4.7**	**4.6**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**-3.9**	**3.7**	**2.8**	**11.1**	**1.1**	**8.4**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**-0.7**	**4.0**	**-0.7**	**5.2**	**-1.6**	**5.3**

(p) Preliminary estimate   (r) Revised estimate

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, February 14, 2019. 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
<www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Dec. 2018

(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	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Retail, total	**0.5**	**0.3**	**0.2**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**0.1**
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers ....**	**1.1**	**1.0**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**0.0**	**0.4**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.1	1.0	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.4
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores................**	**2.1**	**1.2**	**0.8**	**1.3**	**0.2**	**0.5**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores ....**	**1.5**	**0.6**	**0.6**	**1.3**	**-0.2**	**0.8**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers......................................**	**1.7**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**1.3**	**-0.1**	**0.4**
445	**Food & beverage stores..........................**	**0.8**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.4**	**0.1**	**0.2**
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	**Health & personal care stores ....**	**1.6**	**0.4**	**0.5**	**1.3**	**0.1**	**0.4**
447	**Gasoline stations ....**	**1.7**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**0.0**	**0.5**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores ....**	**1.6**	**0.6**	**0.7**	**0.8**	**0.3**	**0.8**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores ....**	**3.1**	**0.7**	**0.9**	**1.3**	**-0.2**	**0.8**
452	**General merchandise stores...................**	**0.6**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.0**	**0.1**
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers ....**	**3.6**	**2.7**	**1.5**	**2.4**	**-0.2**	**1.6**
454	**Nonstore retailers ....**	**1.2**	**0.6**	**0.3**	**0.8**	**0.1**	**0.4**
722	**Food services & drinking places ....**	**3.4**	**0.9**	**0.8**	**1.4**	**0.4**	**0.3**

(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 period January 2018 - present. For measures of sampling variability where there are not enough months collected on the new sample basis to calculate medians, the last available medians from the prior sample are provided.

(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 with exception to the following: Total (excl. gasoline stations), Total (excl. motor vehicles & parts & gasoline stations), Electronics & appliance stores, and Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores which are based on estimates from April 2018 to present until we have 12 months of revisions.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, February 14, 2019. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.