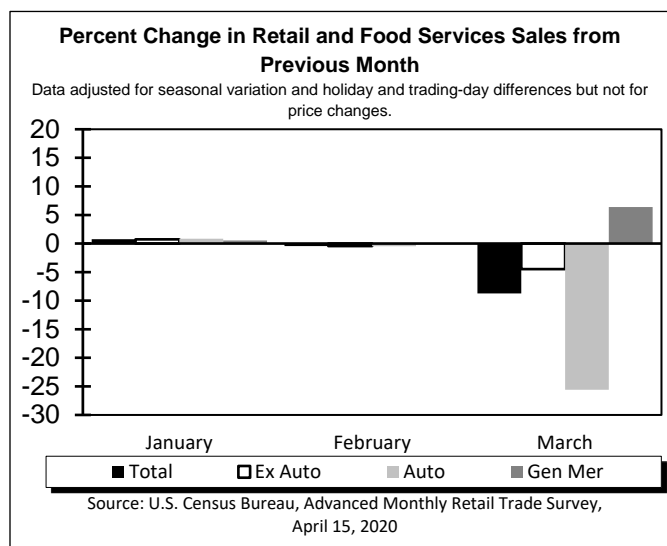# ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, MARCH 2020

Release Number: CB20-56

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Impact: Due to recent events surrounding COVID-19, many businesses are operating on a limited capacity or have ceased operations completely. The Census Bureau has monitored response and data quality and determined estimates in this release meet publication standards. For more information on the compilation of this month's report, see <COVID-19 FAQs>.

April 15, 2020 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March 2020:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES</td></tr>
<tr><td>March 2020</td><td>$483.1 billion</td><td>-8.7%</td></tr>
<tr><td>February 2020 (revised)</td><td>$529.3 billion</td><td>-0.4%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Next release: May 15, 2020</td></tr>
</table>

* 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, April 15, 2020.

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, April 15, 2020

Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $483.1 billion, a decrease of 8.7 percent (±0.4 percent) from the previous month, and 6.2 percent (±0.7 percent) below March 2019. Total sales for the January 2020 through March 2020 period were up 1.1 percent (±0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The January 2020 to February 2020 percent change was revised from down 0.5 percent (±0.4 percent) to down 0.4 percent (±0.2 percent).

Retail trade sales were down 6.2 percent (±0.4 percent) from February 2020, and 3.8 percent (±0.7 percent) below last year. Food and beverage stores were up 28.0 percent (±0.9 percent) from March 2019, while clothing and clothing accessories stores were down 50.7 percent (±1.8 percent) from last year.

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General Information

The April 2020 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on May 15, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. EDT. View the full schedule in the Economic Briefing Room: <www.census.gov/economic-indicators/>. The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

Intention to Revise: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2018 Annual Retail Trade Survey and the Service Annual Survey. Revised not adjusted estimates and corresponding adjusted estimates are scheduled for release on April 27, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. EDT.

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.

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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.

Weather Information

For information on the impact of weather events on the compilation of this report, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website at:
<www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html>

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

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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.

<center>###</center>

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from 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]				
		3 Month Total		2020			2019		2020			2019	
		2020	% Chg. 2019	Mar.[3] (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar.[3] (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail & food services, total	**1,446,683**	**1.7**	**481,912**	**481,035**	**483,736**	**518,304**	**444,794**	**483,066**	**529,262**	**531,643**	**514,813**	**505,901**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1,169,077	3.2	397,856	382,133	389,088	407,194	354,645	403,764	422,691	424,566	410,939	405,167
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	1,334,577	2.0	447,504	443,554	443,519	476,395	409,470	447,740	486,621	487,738	471,741	464,343
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	1,056,971	3.7	363,448	344,652	348,871	365,285	319,321	368,438	380,050	380,661	367,867	363,609
	Retail	1,272,333	2.5	431,702	418,272	422,359	451,740	387,672	434,507	463,196	465,433	451,779	443,336
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	96,744	94,620	106,406	91,058	(*)	109,499	110,112	108,733	107,248
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**277,606**	**-4.1**	**84,056**	**98,902**	**94,648**	**111,110**	**90,149**	**79,302**	**106,571**	**107,077**	**103,874**	**100,734**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	255,237	-4.5	76,403	91,716	87,118	102,820	83,110	71,943	98,726	98,998	95,825	92,860
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	75,938	73,745	84,205	68,721	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,186	7,530	8,290	7,039	(*)	7,845	8,079	8,049	7,874
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**25,616**	**-4.3**	**7,322**	**9,073**	**9,221**	**9,793**	**8,382**	**7,337**	**10,025**	**10,111**	**9,735**	**9,579**
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,251	5,124	5,555	4,616	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	4,097	4,238	3,766	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**21,492**	**-4.6**	**6,499**	**7,261**	**7,732**	**7,754**	**7,047**	**6,870**	**8,095**	**8,165**	**8,171**	**8,109**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**.......................	**88,140**	**6.9**	**33,630**	**26,948**	**27,562**	**30,546**	**24,646**	**33,829**	**33,380**	**33,443**	**31,428**	**31,234**
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,980	24,632	26,810	21,900	(*)	29,752	29,677	27,927	27,686
445	**Food & beverage stores**........................	**206,976**	**12.2**	**80,344**	**61,988**	**64,644**	**63,912**	**57,260**	**82,099**	**65,377**	**65,437**	**64,136**	**62,974**
4451	Grocery stores	187,651	12.6	73,052	55,850	58,749	57,515	51,566	74,164	58,421	58,573	57,343	56,233
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,526	4,388	4,674	4,117	(*)	5,137	5,114	4,946	4,907
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**89,104**	**3.2**	**31,207**	**28,216**	**29,681**	**29,579**	**27,440**	**30,807**	**29,546**	**29,651**	**29,549**	**29,505**
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,443	24,891	24,241	22,929	(*)	24,394	24,403	24,486	24,471
447	**Gasoline stations**	**112,106**	**-1.2**	**34,408**	**37,481**	**40,217**	**41,909**	**35,324**	**35,326**	**42,641**	**43,905**	**43,072**	**41,558**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**46,548**	**-17.8**	**10,603**	**19,086**	**16,859**	**22,093**	**18,134**	**11,088**	**22,389**	**22,761**	**22,508**	**22,178**
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	597	624	731	585	(*)	731	750	759	738
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,725	2,453	3,589	2,680	(*)	3,319	3,342	3,464	3,380
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,500	6,856	8,993	6,906	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,903	2,366	3,426	2,821	(*)	3,180	3,268	3,257	3,217
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**15,703**	**-6.4**	**4,638**	**5,366**	**5,699**	**6,132**	**5,090**	**4,982**	**6,496**	**6,506**	**6,448**	**6,427**
452	**General merchandise stores**...................	**168,598**	**5.2**	**61,756**	**53,888**	**52,954**	**58,421**	**50,406**	**63,781**	**59,946**	**60,016**	**59,341**	**58,454**
4521	Department stores	25,568	-11.1	8,010	9,108	8,450	10,717	9,263	8,779	10,936	10,953	11,536	11,610
4529	Other general merch. stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	44,780	44,504	47,704	41,143	(*)	49,010	49,063	47,805	46,844
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters...................................	(*)	(*)	(*)	38,344	38,272	40,734	35,024	(*)	41,906	41,965	40,693	39,891
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,436	6,232	6,970	6,119	(*)	7,104	7,098	7,112	6,953
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**30,853**	**8.0**	**9,698**	**10,530**	**10,625**	**10,229**	**9,055**	**10,299**	**12,018**	**12,102**	**10,830**	**10,635**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**189,591**	**9.2**	**67,541**	**59,533**	**62,517**	**60,262**	**54,739**	**68,787**	**66,712**	**66,259**	**62,687**	**61,949**
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	51,891	54,382	52,539	47,057	(*)	59,576	59,304	55,479	54,845
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**174,350**	**-3.5**	**50,210**	**62,763**	**61,377**	**66,564**	**57,122**	**48,559**	**66,066**	**66,210**	**63,034**	**62,565**

(*) 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, April 15, 2020. 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]					
		Mar. 2020 Advance from --		Feb. 2020 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2020 through Mar. 2020 from --	
		Feb. 2020 (p)	Mar. 2019 (r)	Jan. 2020 (r)	Feb. 2019 (r)	Oct. 2019 through Dec. 2019	Jan. 2019 through Mar. 2019
	Retail & food services, total	**-8.7**	**-6.2**	**-0.4**	**4.6**	**-2.4**	**1.1**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-4.5	-1.7	-0.4	4.3	-0.8	2.4
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	-8.0	-5.1	-0.2	4.8	-2.0	1.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-3.1	0.2	-0.2	4.5	-0.1	2.9
	Retail	-6.2	-3.8	-0.5	4.5	-1.6	1.8
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**-25.6**	**-23.7**	**-0.5**	**5.8**	**-8.6**	**-3.9**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	-27.1	-24.9	-0.3	6.3	-9.0	-4.1
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**-26.8**	**-24.6**	**-0.9**	**4.7**	**-6.4**	**-4.5**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**-15.1**	**-15.9**	**-0.9**	**-0.2**	**-4.7**	**-5.6**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**..	**1.3**	**7.6**	**-0.2**	**6.9**	**5.4**	**5.3**
445	**Food & beverage stores**............................	**25.6**	**28.0**	**-0.1**	**3.8**	**8.5**	**11.1**
4451	Grocery stores	26.9	29.3	-0.3	3.9	8.9	11.6
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**4.3**	**4.3**	**-0.4**	**0.1**	**1.9**	**1.8**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**-17.2**	**-18.0**	**-2.9**	**2.6**	**-7.0**	**-2.0**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**-50.5**	**-50.7**	**-1.6**	**1.0**	**-17.1**	**-16.0**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**-23.3**	**-22.7**	**-0.2**	**1.1**	**-7.2**	**-6.5**
452	**General merchandise stores**...................	**6.4**	**7.5**	**-0.1**	**2.6**	**2.7**	**3.9**
4521	Department stores	-19.7	-23.9	-0.2	-5.8	-7.3	-11.7
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**-14.3**	**-4.9**	**-0.7**	**13.0**	**-1.4**	**7.5**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**3.1**	**9.7**	**0.7**	**7.7**	**1.4**	**8.5**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**-26.5**	**-23.0**	**-0.2**	**5.6**	**-7.7**	**-3.6**

(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, April 15, 2020. 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 Mar. 2020

(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	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Retail, total	**0.5**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.4**	**0.1**	**0.2**
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**1.4**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**1.1**	**0.3**	**0.5**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.4	0.9	0.5	1.2	0.3	0.5
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**................	**2.4**	**1.1**	**0.7**	**1.6**	**0.0**	**0.4**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**1.2**	**0.6**	**0.5**	**0.8**	**-0.1**	**0.3**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**....................................	**1.4**	**0.7**	**0.4**	**1.0**	**0.3**	**0.8**
445	**Food & beverage stores**..........................	**0.7**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.5**	**0.1**	**0.3**
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.3
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**1.9**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**0.0**	**0.3**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**1.4**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.7**	**-0.1**	**0.4**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**1.8**	**0.7**	**0.6**	**1.0**	**0.2**	**0.5**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**1.8**	**0.7**	**0.9**	**2.6**	**-0.3**	**0.7**
452	**General merchandise stores**...................	**0.8**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**0.1**
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.1
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**4.2**	**1.8**	**1.6**	**3.3**	**0.5**	**1.6**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**1.2**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.8**	**-0.1**	**0.4**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**3.1**	**0.9**	**0.6**	**1.9**	**0.2**	**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 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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, April 15, 2020. 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>.