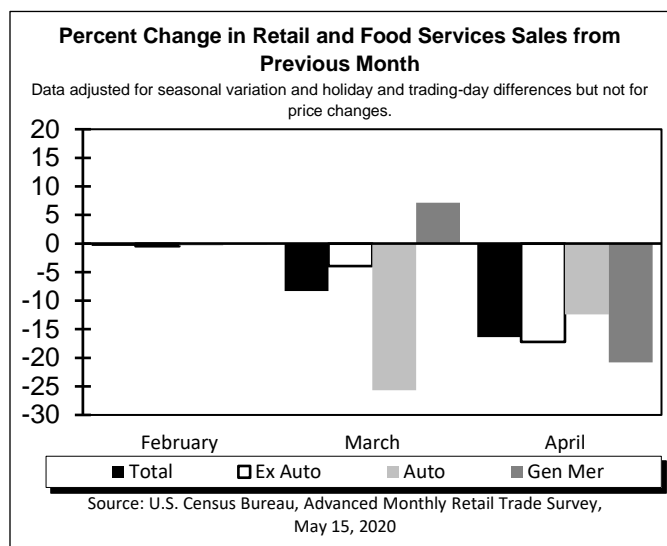# ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, APRIL 2020

Release Number: CB20-69

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>.

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

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
April 2020	**$403.9 billion**	**-16.4%**
March 2020 (revised)	**$483.5 billion**	**-8.3%**
Next release: June 16, 2020		

* 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, May 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, May 15, 2020

Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $403.9 billion, a decrease of 16.4 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the previous month, and 21.6 percent (± 0.7 percent) below April 2019. Total sales for the February 2020 through April 2020 period were down 7.7 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The February 2020 to March 2020 percent change was revised from down 8.4 percent (± 0.4 percent) to down 8.3 percent (± 0.3 percent).

Retail trade sales were down 15.1 percent (± 0.4 percent) from March 2020, and 17.8 percent (± 0.7 percent) below last year. Clothing and clothing accessories stores were down 89.3 percent (± 1.8 percent) from April 2019, while nonstore retailers were up 21.6 percent (± 1.4 percent) from last year.

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General Information

The May 2020 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on June 16, 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/>.

Notice of Revision: Monthly retail sales estimates were revised on April 27, 2020 based on the results of the 2018 Annual Retail Trade Survey and the Service Annual Survey. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised estimates can be found on our website at </https://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/www/benchmark/2020/html/annrev20.html/>.

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>.

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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.

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>

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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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* 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 4 Month Total 2020	% Chg. 2019	Not Adjusted 2020 Apr.[3] (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	2019 Apr.	Mar.	Adjusted[2] 2020 Apr.[3] (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	2019 Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	**1,844,720**	**-4.3**	**401,451**	**481,539**	**479,868**	**509,413**	**515,694**	**403,946**	**483,476**	**527,273**	**515,296**	**512,602**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1,500,701	-2.4	331,453	398,645	382,009	406,257	405,849	335,414	405,274	422,044	413,217	409,909
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	1,711,183	-3.5	376,681	447,975	443,605	466,269	474,734	379,373	448,981	485,971	472,324	470,505
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	1,367,164	-1.2	306,683	365,081	345,746	363,113	364,889	310,841	370,779	380,742	370,245	367,812
	Retail	1,641,880	-2.5	368,993	434,017	417,777	445,959	449,507	371,585	437,561	461,914	452,220	449,925
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	94,468	96,592	102,862	106,558	(*)	97,909	109,360	109,035	108,742
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers ....**	**344,019**	**-11.6**	**69,998**	**82,894**	**97,859**	**103,156**	**109,845**	**68,532**	**78,202**	**105,229**	**102,079**	**102,693**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	315,132	-12.1	63,146	75,462	90,701	95,035	101,593	61,847	71,056	97,423	94,094	94,681
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	59,473	74,033	76,429	82,023	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,432	7,158	8,121	8,252	(*)	7,146	7,806	7,985	8,012
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores ....**	**29,585**	**-18.5**	**3,159**	**7,978**	**9,191**	**9,360**	**9,846**	**3,301**	**7,994**	**10,133**	**9,853**	**9,787**
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,322	5,035	4,863	5,325	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	4,156	4,497	4,521	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	**Electronics & appliance stores ....**	**24,149**	**-17.4**	**2,428**	**6,767**	**7,218**	**6,900**	**7,675**	**2,827**	**7,168**	**8,056**	**8,042**	**8,105**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers..................**	**123,718**	**4.4**	**35,548**	**33,119**	**27,164**	**35,122**	**30,900**	**31,996**	**33,148**	**33,314**	**31,884**	**31,654**
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	28,860	23,883	30,152	26,709	(*)	29,122	29,233	28,127	27,678
445	**Food & beverage stores........................**	**274,454**	**12.7**	**69,984**	**79,897**	**60,983**	**61,781**	**62,935**	**70,953**	**81,650**	**64,329**	**63,326**	**63,158**
4451	Grocery stores	248,411	13.4	63,318	72,612	54,814	55,315	56,503	63,958	73,718	57,337	56,502	56,334
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,562	4,533	4,580	4,673	(*)	6,065	5,145	4,925	4,945
446	**Health & personal care stores ....**	**117,231**	**0.1**	**26,470**	**31,968**	**28,746**	**29,671**	**29,997**	**26,710**	**31,496**	**30,006**	**29,820**	**29,907**
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,814	23,934	24,806	24,577	(*)	27,676	24,802	24,707	24,775
447	**Gasoline stations ....**	**133,537**	**-13.3**	**24,770**	**33,564**	**36,263**	**43,144**	**40,960**	**24,573**	**34,495**	**41,302**	**42,972**	**42,097**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores ....**	**48,409**	**-37.5**	**2,300**	**10,684**	**18,813**	**21,416**	**21,953**	**2,371**	**11,209**	**22,135**	**22,246**	**22,338**
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	266	527	737	642	(*)	282	644	675	667
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,588	2,797	3,604	3,585	(*)	1,566	3,399	3,426	3,474
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,122	7,557	8,770	9,070	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,726	2,873	3,243	3,552	(*)	1,687	3,161	3,313	3,376
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores ....**	**19,725**	**-15.5**	**3,176**	**5,169**	**5,573**	**6,191**	**6,305**	**3,422**	**5,517**	**6,714**	**6,700**	**6,588**
452	**General merchandise stores..................**	**217,846**	**0.2**	**48,948**	**62,202**	**53,811**	**56,815**	**58,619**	**50,834**	**64,159**	**59,895**	**59,746**	**59,467**
4521	Department stores	31,156	-19.9	5,708	7,830	9,139	10,456	10,645	6,085	8,563	11,013	11,478	11,438
4529	Other general merch. stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	54,372	44,672	46,359	47,974	(*)	55,596	48,882	48,268	48,029
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters................................	(*)	(*)	(*)	46,450	38,426	39,548	41,241	(*)	47,446	41,996	41,325	41,159
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,922	6,246	6,811	6,733	(*)	8,150	6,886	6,943	6,870
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers ....**	**38,219**	**-3.0**	**7,464**	**9,734**	**10,469**	**10,736**	**10,236**	**7,683**	**10,208**	**11,877**	**11,077**	**10,825**
454	**Nonstore retailers ....**	**270,988**	**13.8**	**74,748**	**70,041**	**61,687**	**61,667**	**60,236**	**78,383**	**72,315**	**68,924**	**64,475**	**63,306**
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	62,550	53,979	54,612	52,458	(*)	65,292	61,620	57,185	55,985
722	**Food services & drinking places ....**	**202,840**	**-16.6**	**32,458**	**47,522**	**62,091**	**63,454**	**66,187**	**32,361**	**45,915**	**65,359**	**63,076**	**62,677**

(*) 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, May 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]					
		Apr. 2020 Advance from --		Mar. 2020 Preliminary from --		Feb. 2020 through Apr. 2020 from --	
		Mar. 2020 (p)	Apr. 2019 (r)	Feb. 2020 (r)	Mar. 2019 (r)	Nov. 2019 through Jan. 2020	Feb. 2019 through Apr. 2019
	Retail & food services, total	**-16.4**	**-21.6**	**-8.3**	**-5.7**	**-10.5**	**-7.7**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-17.2	-18.8	-4.0	-1.1	-7.9	-5.4
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	-15.5	-19.7	-7.6	-4.6	-9.5	-6.6
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-16.2	-16.0	-2.6	0.8	-6.4	-3.7
	Retail	-15.1	-17.8	-5.3	-2.7	-8.2	-5.5
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**-12.4**	**-32.9**	**-25.7**	**-23.8**	**-20.5**	**-17.2**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	-13.0	-34.3	-27.1	-25.0	-21.4	-17.8
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**-58.7**	**-66.5**	**-21.1**	**-18.3**	**-28.1**	**-26.8**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**-60.6**	**-64.8**	**-11.0**	**-11.6**	**-25.8**	**-25.3**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**............................	**-3.5**	**0.4**	**-0.5**	**4.7**	**-0.6**	**3.5**
445	**Food & beverage stores**...........................	**-13.1**	**12.0**	**26.9**	**29.3**	**12.2**	**15.1**
4451	Grocery stores	-13.2	13.2	28.6	30.9	13.0	16.0
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**-15.2**	**-10.4**	**5.0**	**5.3**	**-1.6**	**-1.6**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**-28.8**	**-42.8**	**-16.5**	**-18.1**	**-21.4**	**-20.2**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**-78.8**	**-89.3**	**-49.4**	**-49.8**	**-46.8**	**-46.3**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**-38.0**	**-48.9**	**-17.8**	**-16.3**	**-21.2**	**-21.2**
452	**General merchandise stores**...................	**-20.8**	**-14.9**	**7.1**	**7.9**	**-2.4**	**-1.6**
4521	Department stores	-28.9	-47.0	-22.2	-25.1	-22.6	-25.4
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**-24.7**	**-30.6**	**-14.1**	**-5.7**	**-15.2**	**-8.6**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**8.4**	**21.6**	**4.9**	**14.2**	**8.0**	**14.8**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**-29.5**	**-48.7**	**-29.7**	**-26.7**	**-26.3**	**-23.6**

(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, May 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 Apr. 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	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	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	0.0	0.1
	Retail, total	**0.6**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.4**	**0.1**	**0.2**
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**1.4**	**1.0**	**0.5**	**1.1**	**0.2**	**0.4**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.4	1.0	0.5	1.2	0.2	0.4
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**2.5**	**1.2**	**0.8**	**1.6**	**0.5**	**0.3**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**1.3**	**0.6**	**0.5**	**0.8**	**0.3**	**0.4**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**	**1.5**	**0.7**	**0.4**	**1.0**	**0.0**	**0.8**
445	**Food & beverage stores**	**0.8**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.5**	**0.2**	**0.3**
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**1.9**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**0.0**	**0.4**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**1.4**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.7**	**0.0**	**0.5**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**2.0**	**0.7**	**0.6**	**1.0**	**0.3**	**0.6**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**1.8**	**0.8**	**1.0**	**2.6**	**0.1**	**0.8**
452	**General merchandise stores**	**0.8**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.3**	**0.1**	**0.1**
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	0.1
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**4.3**	**2.5**	**1.6**	**3.4**	**0.3**	**1.5**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**1.3**	**0.5**	**0.4**	**0.8**	**-0.2**	**0.3**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**3.1**	**1.0**	**0.7**	**1.9**	**-0.1**	**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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, May 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>.