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William Abriatis/ Nicole Davis
Service Sector Statistics Division
(301) 763-2703

MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES October 2013

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

Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that October 2013 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 \$435.3 billion, up 1.0 percent (+/-0.5%) from the revised September level and were up 6.4 percent (+/-3.2%) from the October 2012 level. The September preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.6 billion or 0.1 percent. October sales of durable goods were virtually unchanged (+/-1.1%)* from last month, but were up 7.5 percent (+/-4.2%) from a year ago. Sales of machinery, equipment, and supplies were up 3.8 percent from last month, while sales of motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies were down 4.5 percent. Sales of nondurable goods were up 1.8 percent (+/-1.1%) from September and were up 5.5 percent (+/-4.6%) from last October. Sales of petroleum and petroleum products were up 3.6 percent from last month.

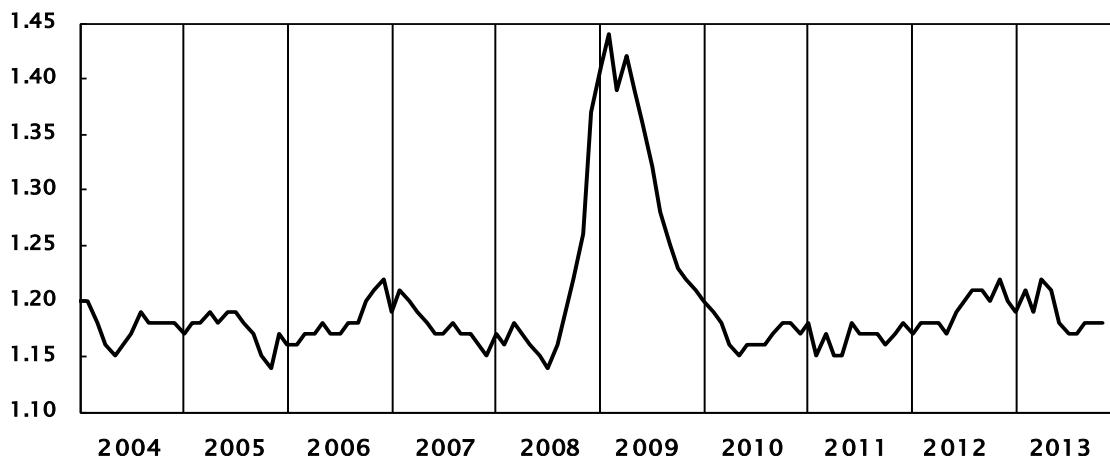
Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$514.1 billion at the end of October, up 1.4 percent (+/-0.4%) from the revised September level and were up 3.3 percent (+/-4.7%)* from the October 2012 level. The September preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.7 billion or 0.1 percent. October inventories of durable goods were up 0.4 percent (+/-0.5%)* from last month and were up 4.1 percent (+/-5.6%)* from a year ago. Inventories of motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies were up 2.7 percent from last month, while inventories of computer and computer peripheral equipment and software were down 5.7 percent. Inventories of nondurable goods were up 3.0 percent (+/-0.7%) from September and were up 2.2 percent (+/-6.0%)* from last October. Inventories of farm product raw materials were up 17.0 percent from last month and inventories of drugs and druggists' sundries were up 3.6 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The October inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.18. The October 2012 ratio was 1.22.

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: 2004 to 2013
(Estimates adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for November is scheduled to be released January 10, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. EST.

For customized wholesale time series estimates by industry, visit the Census Bureau's web site 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 inventory 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 Ratios		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Oct. 2013 (p)	Sep. 2013 (r)	Oct. 2012 (r)	Oct./ Sep.	Sep./ Aug.	Oct. 13/ Oct. 12	Oct. 2013 (p)	Sep. 2013 (r)	Oct. 2012 (r)	Oct./ Sep.	Sep./ Aug.	Oct. 13/ Oct. 12	Oct. 2013 (p)	Sep. 2013 (r)	Oct. 2012 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	435,287	431,033	408,958	1.0	0.8	6.4	514,075	506,984	497,475	1.4	0.5	3.3	1.18	1.18	1.22
423	.Durable	201,418	201,396	187,364	0.0	2.1	7.5	313,249	311,977	300,876	0.4	0.0	4.1	1.56	1.55	1.61
4231	..Automotive	34,261	35,869	32,858	-4.5	8.7	4.3	49,845	48,557	49,096	2.7	-3.2	1.5	1.45	1.35	1.49
4232	..Furniture	5,060	5,066	4,686	-0.1	0.4	8.0	8,585	8,477	7,939	1.3	2.2	8.1	1.70	1.67	1.69
4233	..Lumber	10,665	10,452	9,272	2.0	-0.2	15.0	14,999	14,931	13,822	0.5	-0.3	8.5	1.41	1.43	1.49
4234	..Prof. equip.	40,778	41,063	38,904	-0.7	0.0	4.8	37,539	38,076	36,141	-1.4	0.7	3.9	0.92	0.93	0.93
42343	...Comp. equip.	24,203	23,887	22,546	1.3	-3.0	7.3	15,908	16,867	15,957	-5.7	2.3	-0.3	0.66	0.71	0.71
4235	..Metals	14,137	13,751	13,538	2.8	2.6	4.4	25,677	25,541	26,882	0.5	-0.8	-4.5	1.82	1.86	1.99
4236	..Electrical	31,977	31,994	30,266	-0.1	2.3	5.7	37,883	38,204	36,147	-0.8	0.5	4.8	1.18	1.19	1.19
4237	..Hardware	9,859	9,796	9,116	0.6	-0.2	8.2	19,193	19,128	18,603	0.3	0.4	3.2	1.95	1.95	2.04
4238	..Machinery	37,002	35,655	30,530	3.8	1.0	21.2	90,801	90,229	84,316	0.6	1.1	7.7	2.45	2.53	2.76
4239	..Misc. Durable	17,679	17,750	18,194	-0.4	-1.0	-2.8	28,727	28,834	27,930	-0.4	0.5	2.9	1.62	1.62	1.54
424	.Nondurable	233,869	229,637	221,594	1.8	-0.3	5.5	200,826	195,007	196,599	3.0	1.4	2.2	0.86	0.85	0.89
4241	..Paper ³	7,543	7,462	7,077	1.1	-0.1	6.6	7,311	7,086	7,267	3.2	-1.7	0.6	0.97	0.95	1.03
4242	..Drugs	35,707	35,447	32,745	0.7	-2.0	9.0	39,103	37,751	33,695	3.6	0.3	16.0	1.10	1.06	1.03
4243	..Apparel	12,264	12,454	11,782	-1.5	3.3	4.1	22,407	22,448	21,364	-0.2	0.1	4.9	1.83	1.80	1.81
4244	..Groceries	51,395	50,320	46,699	2.1	1.6	10.1	34,604	34,596	32,062	0.0	1.9	7.9	0.67	0.69	0.69
4245	..Farm products	19,412	19,415	21,207	0.0	-2.9	-8.5	23,597	20,169	30,565	17.0	8.5	-22.8	1.22	1.04	1.44
4246	..Chemicals ³	10,688	10,592	10,167	0.9	-1.4	5.1	12,166	12,152	11,700	0.1	0.6	4.0	1.14	1.15	1.15
4247	..Petroleum	64,856	62,623	60,753	3.6	-2.1	6.8	23,523	23,245	22,987	1.2	-1.8	2.3	0.36	0.37	0.38
4248	..Alcohol	10,235	10,350	10,050	-1.1	0.9	1.8	14,013	14,090	13,151	-0.5	1.4	6.6	1.37	1.36	1.31
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	21,769	20,974	21,114	3.8	3.6	3.1	24,102	23,470	23,808	2.7	2.9	1.2	1.11	1.12	1.13
													Sales to date			
													2013	2012		
42	U.S. Total	462,477	422,582	434,531	9.4	-3.1	6.4	519,079	503,497	503,314	3.1	1.4	3.1	4,257,227	4,098,901	
423	.Durable	216,669	202,483	201,583	7.0	-0.3	7.5	316,565	313,332	304,159	1.0	0.5	4.1	1,965,495	1,885,464	
4231	..Automotive	36,419	34,255	34,961	6.3	0.9	4.2	50,692	47,537	49,882	6.6	-0.8	1.6	338,276	327,648	
4232	..Furniture	5,697	5,198	5,239	9.6	-2.5	8.7	8,765	8,731	8,090	0.4	2.0	8.3	49,652	47,980	
4233	..Lumber	11,796	10,703	10,208	10.2	-9.3	15.6	14,204	14,588	13,103	-2.6	-3.1	8.4	106,086	92,107	
4234	..Prof. equip.	43,551	42,952	41,627	1.4	5.7	4.6	38,590	38,381	37,189	0.5	1.0	3.8	398,804	387,831	
42343	...Comp. equip.	26,188	25,105	24,508	4.3	6.2	6.9	16,815	17,154	16,914	-2.0	3.1	-0.6	232,370	227,018	
4235	..Metals	14,872	13,297	14,079	11.8	-3.9	5.6	25,343	25,592	26,506	-1.0	-1.0	-4.4	137,340	141,723	
4236	..Electrical	35,430	33,050	33,505	7.2	3.4	5.7	38,906	39,274	37,195	-0.9	1.5	4.6	310,761	296,630	
4237	..Hardware	10,539	9,678	9,754	8.9	-8.2	8.0	18,982	19,109	18,436	-0.7	-0.4	3.0	98,531	92,695	
4238	..Machinery	38,741	35,263	32,087	9.9	-4.9	20.7	91,437	90,680	84,906	0.8	1.6	7.7	347,292	311,921	
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,624	18,087	20,123	8.5	0.1	-2.5	29,646	29,440	28,852	0.7	0.9	2.8	178,753	186,929	
424	.Nondurable	245,808	220,099	232,948	11.7	-5.5	5.5	202,514	190,165	199,155	6.5	2.9	1.7	2,291,732	2,213,437	
4241	..Paper	8,282	7,581	7,820	9.2	-4.0	5.9	7,311	7,086	7,267	3.2	-1.7	0.6	74,413	71,832	
4242	..Drugs	38,456	34,738	35,528	10.7	-4.0	8.2	39,103	38,280	33,729	2.1	1.3	15.9	352,814	335,529	
4243	..Apparel	14,680	13,027	13,926	12.7	-3.3	5.4	22,497	23,862	21,492	-5.7	-0.3	4.7	123,890	123,149	
4244	..Groceries	52,526	48,961	47,773	7.3	-3.8	9.9	35,434	34,734	32,864	2.0	3.7	7.8	492,942	468,608	
4245	..Farm products	22,906	17,046	24,876	34.4	-2.4	-7.9	26,806	15,833	34,722	69.3	17.3	-22.8	197,600	191,594	
4246	..Chemicals	11,051	10,359	10,482	6.7	-8.2	5.4	12,166	12,152	11,700	0.1	0.6	4.0	106,563	101,968	
4247	..Petroleum	65,245	59,993	61,057	8.8	-8.6	6.9	22,088	22,362	21,493	-1.2	-0.7	2.8	621,042	610,509	
4248	..Alcohol	10,849	9,874	10,583	9.9	-8.9	2.5	14,405	14,076	13,532	2.3	1.9	6.5	100,735	98,767	
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	21,813	18,520	20,903	17.8	-3.5	4.4	22,704	21,780	22,356	4.2	6.0	1.6	221,733	211,481	

Footnotes:

^p Preliminary estimate.

^r Revised estimate.

¹ For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see the 2007 NAICS manual or <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics>.

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	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.5	0.3	0.2	1.8	2.7	0.9	1.2	1.6
423	.Durable	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.7	0.6	0.3	2.4	3.2	1.1	1.3	2.0
4231	..Automotive	2.3	4.0	2.2	4.2	1.2	1.2	5.6	9.2	2.1	4.2	5.1
4232	..Furniture	5.3	5.6	5.1	5.6	1.8	0.5	11.8	11.8	4.3	6.6	12.8
4233	..Lumber	3.9	5.8	3.8	5.6	0.9	0.5	7.2	13.2	3.9	5.7	7.7
4234	..Prof. equip.	2.5	4.2	2.7	4.3	1.4	0.7	8.3	7.4	2.5	4.0	7.0
42343	...Comp. equip.	2.6	3.5	2.3	3.4	1.7	0.4	14.0	10.9	2.0	7.0	13.2
4235	..Metals	5.0	8.4	4.9	8.2	0.9	0.5	8.6	10.4	4.6	5.9	8.3
4236	..Electrical	2.2	3.3	2.3	3.4	0.9	0.4	6.3	7.2	2.4	3.6	6.2
4237	..Hardware	2.8	5.0	2.4	5.0	1.1	0.2	9.0	9.2	2.2	5.2	7.9
4238	..Machinery	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4	1.6	0.6	7.2	8.5	3.2	3.5	5.5
4239	..Misc. Durable	4.1	5.6	4.2	5.6	1.3	0.5	9.9	11.5	3.9	6.8	9.3
424	.Nondurable	1.7	2.2	1.7	2.1	0.6	0.4	2.6	3.4	1.6	1.6	2.2
4241	..Paper	3.9	6.1	3.3	6.4	1.9	0.5	11.0	10.5	3.3	7.9	10.3
4242	..Drugs	2.9	4.8	2.6	5.2	0.6	0.4	5.9	8.8	2.8	4.8	5.1
4243	..Apparel	6.1	4.6	6.1	4.6	1.5	1.1	10.4	11.6	5.3	4.6	11.0
4244	..Groceries	3.8	6.4	3.7	6.0	1.4	1.1	6.1	9.8	3.4	5.6	5.5
4245	..Farm products	2.3	3.9	3.3	4.6	3.3	3.7	7.2	6.0	2.2	7.0	7.7
4246	..Chemicals	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.5	1.5	0.8	8.6	8.4	4.4	5.1	8.4
4247	..Petroleum	4.1	3.8	4.0	3.4	0.5	1.0	7.1	7.3	3.4	4.2	6.0
4248	..Alcohol	3.7	4.7	3.7	5.0	1.3	0.7	5.3	6.5	3.6	4.3	4.5
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	4.7	6.0	4.4	6.1	2.0	1.3	5.2	7.4	4.0	5.5	5.1

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					
		2013					2012	2013					2012
		Nov.	Oct.r	Sep.r	Aug.	Jul.	Oct.r	Nov.	Oct.r	Sep.r	Aug.	Jul.	Oct.r
42	U.S. Total²	0.972	1.063	0.981	1.017	1.011	1.062	1.009	1.012	0.990	0.982	0.990	1.012
423	.Durable	0.969	1.077	1.007	1.027	1.010	1.073	1.002	1.012	1.005	1.002	1.009	1.012
4231	..Automotive	0.973	1.063	0.955	1.028	0.996	1.064	1.044	1.017	0.979	0.955	0.993	1.016
4232	..Furniture	0.985	1.126	1.026	1.056	1.027	1.118	0.999	1.021	1.030	1.032	1.026	1.019
4233	..Lumber	0.907	1.106	1.024	1.127	1.111	1.101	0.925	0.947	0.977	1.005	1.026	0.948
4234	..Prof. equip.	0.971	1.068	1.046	0.989	1.007	1.070	1.011	1.028	1.008	1.005	1.014	1.029
42343	...Comp. equip.	0.991	1.082	1.051	0.960	1.016	1.087	1.020	1.057	1.017	1.009	1.033	1.060
4235	..Metals	0.909	1.052	0.967	1.033	1.035	1.040	0.981	0.987	1.002	1.004	1.005	0.986
4236	..Electrical	1.048	1.108	1.033	1.022	1.008	1.107	1.004	1.027	1.028	1.018	1.010	1.029
4237	..Hardware	0.912	1.069	0.988	1.074	1.093	1.070	0.981	0.989	0.999	1.007	1.009	0.991
4238	..Machinery	0.889	1.047	0.989	1.050	1.002	1.051	1.001	1.007	1.005	1.000	1.012	1.007
4239	..Misc. Durable	1.024	1.110	1.019	1.007	0.947	1.106	0.996	1.032	1.021	1.017	1.004	1.033
424	.Nondurable	0.972	1.050	0.960	1.007	1.008	1.048	1.021	1.012	0.967	0.950	0.958	1.009
4241	..Paper ³	0.968	1.098	1.016	1.057	1.010	1.105	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4242	..Drugs	0.977	1.077	0.980	1.000	1.018	1.085	1.007	1.000	1.014	1.004	1.008	1.001
4243	..Apparel	0.992	1.197	1.046	1.117	1.078	1.182	0.961	1.004	1.063	1.067	1.053	1.006
4244	..Groceries	0.968	1.022	0.973	1.028	1.020	1.023	1.029	1.024	1.004	0.986	0.986	1.025
4245	..Farm products	1.073	1.180	0.878	0.873	0.907	1.173	1.223	1.136	0.785	0.726	0.734	1.136
4246	..Chemicals ³	0.927	1.034	0.978	1.050	1.049	1.031	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4247	..Petroleum	0.953	1.006	0.958	1.026	1.022	1.005	0.954	0.939	0.962	0.951	1.005	0.935
4248	..Alcohol	1.011	1.060	0.954	1.056	1.021	1.053	1.029	1.028	0.999	0.994	1.018	1.029
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	0.895	1.002	0.883	0.948	1.009	0.990	0.959	0.942	0.928	0.901	0.907	0.939

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 4,200. Approximately 72% 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 28% of the total sales estimate and 29% 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>.