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MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES September 2015

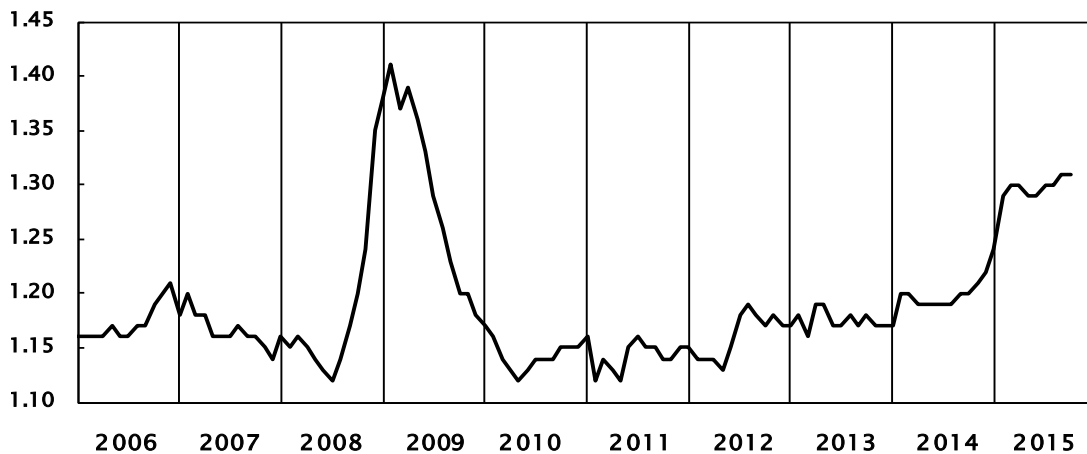
Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that September 2015 sales of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$448.0 billion, up 0.5 percent (+/-0.7%)* from the revised August level, but were down 3.9 percent (+/-1.2%) from the September 2014 level. The August preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.5 billion or 0.1 percent. September sales of durable goods were up 0.7 percent (+/-1.1%)* from last month, but were down 0.8 percent (+/-1.8%)* from a year ago. Sales of computer and computer peripheral equipment and software were up 3.8 percent from last month and sales of electrical and electronic goods were up 2.8 percent. Sales of nondurable goods were up 0.3 percent (+/-0.9%)* from August, but were down 6.7 percent (+/-1.6%) from last September. Sales of drugs and druggists' sundries were up 1.7 percent from last month, while sales of petroleum and petroleum products were down 4.6 percent.

Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$588.1 billion at the end of September, up 0.5 percent (+/-0.4%) from the revised August level and were up 4.7 percent (+/-1.6%) from the September 2014 level. The August preliminary estimate was revised upward \$1.3 billion or 0.2 percent. September inventories of durable goods were down 0.4 percent (+/-0.4%)* from last month, but were up 2.8 percent (+/-1.9%) from a year ago. Inventories of metals and minerals, except petroleum were down 2.2 percent from last month. Inventories of nondurable goods were up 1.9 percent (+/-0.5%) from August and were up 7.7 percent (+/-2.3%) from last September. Inventories of farm product raw materials were up 6.7 percent from last month and inventories of drugs and druggists' sundries were up 4.4 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The September inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.31. The September 2014 ratio was 1.20.

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: 2006 to 2015
(Estimates adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for October is scheduled to be released December 9, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. EST.

For additional survey information, including customizable time series by industry, visit <<http://www.census.gov/wholesale>>.

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 <<http://www.census.gov/developers>>.

* 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 inventories 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		
		Sep. 2015 (p)	Aug. 2015 (r)	Sep. 2014 (r)	Sep./ Aug.	Aug./ Jul.	Sep. 15/ Sep. 14	Sep. 2015 (p)	Aug. 2015 (r)	Sep. 2014 (r)	Sep./ Aug.	Aug./ Jul.	Sep. 15/ Sep. 14	Sep. 2015 (p)	Aug. 2015 (r)	Sep. 2014 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	448,004	445,911	466,332	0.5	-0.9	-3.9	588,120	585,198	561,881	0.5	0.3	4.7	1.31	1.31	1.20
423	..Durable	217,269	215,802	219,124	0.7	-0.8	-0.8	358,425	359,871	348,597	-0.4	0.2	2.8	1.65	1.67	1.59
4231	..Automotive	36,941	36,127	35,164	2.3	-2.0	5.1	64,023	63,704	56,807	0.5	0.1	12.7	1.73	1.76	1.62
4232	..Furniture	6,692	6,880	6,386	-2.7	2.4	4.8	11,243	11,094	10,370	1.3	0.2	8.4	1.68	1.61	1.62
4233	..Lumber	9,486	9,422	9,352	0.7	0.3	1.4	14,623	14,656	14,411	-0.2	0.4	1.5	1.54	1.56	1.54
4234	..Prof. equip.	37,145	36,865	37,468	0.8	-2.2	-0.9	39,539	39,911	39,970	-0.9	0.2	-1.1	1.06	1.08	1.07
42343	...Comp. equip.	19,406	18,704	19,521	3.8	-4.1	-0.6	15,728	16,003	16,032	-1.7	1.8	-1.9	0.81	0.86	0.82
4235	..Metals	12,583	12,915	16,407	-2.6	0.6	-23.3	29,027	29,670	31,576	-2.2	-2.0	-8.1	2.31	2.30	1.92
4236	..Electrical	49,451	48,126	46,663	2.8	1.9	6.0	48,105	48,259	45,598	-0.3	0.8	5.5	0.97	1.00	0.98
4237	..Hardware	10,720	10,759	10,464	-0.4	0.6	2.4	22,980	22,857	21,089	0.5	0.6	9.0	2.14	2.12	2.02
4238	..Machinery	35,687	35,607	36,556	0.2	-2.9	-2.4	102,147	103,115	100,747	-0.9	0.2	1.4	2.86	2.90	2.76
4239	..Misc. Durable	18,564	19,101	20,664	-2.8	-1.6	-10.2	26,738	26,605	28,029	0.5	1.2	-4.6	1.44	1.39	1.36
424	..Nondurable	230,735	230,109	247,208	0.3	-0.9	-6.7	229,695	225,327	213,284	1.9	0.5	7.7	1.00	0.98	0.86
4241	..Paper ³	7,968	7,967	7,657	0.0	-1.2	4.1	7,590	7,582	7,496	0.1	-2.6	1.3	0.95	0.95	0.98
4242	..Drugs	53,505	52,635	46,717	1.7	1.2	14.5	56,967	54,586	49,872	4.4	-0.9	14.2	1.06	1.04	1.07
4243	..Apparel	15,120	14,845	14,568	1.9	2.3	3.8	30,846	30,156	26,970	2.3	1.9	14.4	2.04	2.03	1.85
4244	..Groceries	51,891	51,193	51,258	1.4	0.8	1.2	33,833	34,085	31,763	-0.7	0.5	6.5	0.65	0.67	0.62
4245	..Farm products	18,933	18,274	19,115	3.6	-2.7	-1.0	24,475	22,937	20,338	6.7	2.4	20.3	1.29	1.26	1.06
4246	..Chemicals ³	10,550	10,498	10,868	0.5	-2.2	-2.9	12,877	13,088	12,381	-1.6	1.4	4.0	1.22	1.25	1.14
4247	..Petroleum	39,618	41,545	65,253	-4.6	-6.2	-39.3	17,984	18,084	21,995	-0.6	-1.4	-18.2	0.45	0.44	0.34
4248	..Alcohol	11,513	11,443	10,731	0.6	1.0	7.3	15,571	15,637	14,952	-0.4	1.5	4.1	1.35	1.37	1.39
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	21,637	21,709	21,041	-0.3	-0.1	2.8	29,552	29,172	27,517	1.3	1.3	7.4	1.37	1.34	1.31
Not Adjusted																
Sales to date																
2015 2014																
42	U.S. Total	457,641	439,706	474,909	4.1	-3.5	-3.6	582,786	574,610	557,582	1.4	-0.6	4.5	3,996,612	4,139,024	
423	..Durable	227,139	214,103	229,501	6.1	-2.1	-1.0	359,323	359,944	349,734	-0.2	-0.4	2.7	1,930,557	1,907,927	
4231	..Automotive	36,682	36,127	34,637	1.5	-3.0	5.9	62,807	61,220	55,671	2.6	-4.3	12.8	324,904	306,043	
4232	..Furniture	7,033	6,997	6,724	0.5	2.6	4.6	11,670	11,438	10,764	2.0	0.9	8.4	59,193	54,859	
4233	..Lumber	10,150	10,166	9,997	-0.2	-4.0	1.5	14,404	14,788	14,152	-2.6	-0.9	1.8	86,022	83,065	
4234	..Prof. equip.	40,042	34,911	40,465	14.7	-8.9	-1.0	39,934	40,190	40,370	-0.6	0.9	-1.1	328,467	326,854	
42343	...Comp. equip.	20,997	17,245	21,102	21.8	-15.1	-0.5	16,043	16,051	16,385	0.0	1.3	-2.1	168,267	170,559	
4235	..Metals	12,961	12,941	16,834	0.2	-1.5	-23.0	28,940	29,729	31,513	-2.7	-2.4	-8.2	123,694	139,350	
4236	..Electrical	52,913	46,827	49,883	13.0	2.6	6.1	49,356	49,562	46,829	-0.4	2.6	5.4	422,267	399,589	
4237	..Hardware	11,149	11,211	10,903	-0.6	-2.8	2.3	22,934	22,971	21,047	-0.2	0.1	9.0	96,068	91,146	
4238	..Machinery	36,401	36,070	37,762	0.9	-1.3	-3.6	101,738	102,909	100,546	-1.1	-0.4	1.2	320,984	322,510	
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,808	18,853	22,296	5.1	-0.6	-11.2	27,540	27,137	28,842	1.5	2.4	-4.5	168,958	184,511	
424	..Nondurable	230,502	225,603	245,408	2.2	-4.8	-6.1	223,463	214,666	207,848	1.1	-0.8	7.5	2,066,055	2,231,097	
4241	..Paper	8,303	8,150	7,986	1.9	-0.6	4.0	7,590	7,582	7,496	0.1	-2.6	1.3	71,393	69,499	
4242	..Drugs	54,468	50,898	47,558	7.0	-4.1	14.5	57,309	54,477	50,221	5.2	-1.8	14.1	456,901	398,909	
4243	..Apparel	17,237	16,018	16,214	7.6	4.4	6.3	33,098	32,237	28,912	2.7	2.6	14.5	129,697	124,448	
4244	..Groceries	52,306	51,500	51,719	1.6	-1.2	1.1	34,171	33,642	32,049	1.6	0.3	6.6	455,920	451,028	
4245	..Farm products	17,172	15,186	17,165	13.1	-11.5	0.0	17,842	14,152	14,806	26.1	-8.6	20.5	164,156	185,466	
4246	..Chemicals	10,655	10,613	10,977	0.4	-5.7	-2.9	12,877	13,088	12,381	-1.6	1.4	4.0	97,064	100,649	
4247	..Petroleum	38,865	42,542	63,817	-8.6	-9.1	-39.1	17,696	17,939	21,643	-1.4	-5.0	-18.2	393,919	619,008	
4248	..Alcohol	11,893	11,180	10,656	6.4	-5.2	11.6	15,633	15,528	14,997	0.7	-0.6	4.2	98,360	93,010	
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	19,603	19,516	19,316	0.4	-8.3	1.5	27,247	26,021	25,343	4.7	2.6	7.5	198,645	189,080	

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 significant 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	1.5	1.0	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.7
423	..Durable	1.4	1.9	1.1	2.0	0.6	0.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.7
4231	..Automotive	2.8	4.4	2.9	4.6	0.6	0.5	1.3	2.0	3.0	2.4	1.3
4232	..Furniture	7.3	6.6	6.8	6.6	1.8	0.9	4.4	5.7	6.8	5.2	4.2
4233	..Lumber	5.5	5.6	5.9	5.5	0.7	0.4	2.1	1.1	5.2	4.3	1.6
4234	..Prof. equip.	4.0	4.4	3.1	4.4	1.6	0.5	2.5	2.0	3.4	3.4	1.9
42343	...Comp. equip.	4.9	6.4	4.0	6.8	1.4	0.5	2.6	1.8	4.0	3.5	2.3
4235	..Metals	4.5	8.5	5.5	8.6	1.3	0.5	2.3	2.0	4.8	5.6	1.7
4236	..Electrical	2.9	4.1	2.7	4.1	1.2	0.4	2.0	1.9	2.5	1.6	1.6
4237	..Hardware	2.6	3.9	2.6	3.8	1.2	0.4	1.8	3.6	2.4	2.2	2.1
4238	..Machinery	2.9	4.3	3.3	4.3	1.8	0.5	3.0	2.1	2.8	2.9	1.5
4239	..Misc. Durable	4.3	5.4	5.1	5.4	1.5	0.8	4.1	3.3	3.9	3.9	3.3
424	..Nondurable	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.6	0.5	0.3	0.9	1.3	1.7	2.1	0.9
4241	..Paper	4.6	6.6	4.7	6.6	0.7	0.3	1.3	1.9	4.6	4.2	1.4
4242	..Drugs	2.9	3.5	2.9	3.6	0.2	0.3	1.6	2.6	2.9	3.0	1.5
4243	..Apparel	7.9	6.8	8.0	6.5	3.1	1.1	3.5	2.6	7.0	5.4	3.3
4244	..Groceries	3.7	5.5	3.3	5.6	0.7	0.5	1.8	3.2	3.3	3.9	1.4
4245	..Farm products	4.3	5.9	2.6	5.1	2.7	1.9	3.2	3.4	2.7	2.2	1.8
4246	..Chemicals	3.8	5.3	4.1	5.1	1.2	0.7	1.8	3.3	3.9	4.3	2.0
4247	..Petroleum	5.7	4.5	6.1	4.5	0.4	0.4	1.2	2.6	6.1	5.9	1.1
4248	..Alcohol	4.8	5.4	4.9	5.3	1.1	0.7	1.5	1.7	4.8	3.8	1.8
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	3.8	6.0	4.0	6.0	1.4	0.5	3.2	2.7	3.6	4.2	3.5

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					
		2015					2014	2015					2014
		Oct.	Sep.r	Aug.r	Jul.	Jun.	Sep.r	Oct.	Sep.r	Aug.r	Jul.	Jun.	Sep.r
42	U.S. Total²	1.043	1.018	0.987	1.016	1.049	1.019	1.010	0.991	0.982	0.990	0.986	0.991
423	.Durable	1.060	1.047	0.992	1.006	1.061	1.048	1.006	1.004	1.002	1.007	1.000	1.004
4231	..Automotive	1.030	0.993	1.000	1.010	1.042	0.985	1.011	0.981	0.961	1.005	0.998	0.980
4232	..Furniture	1.099	1.051	1.017	1.015	1.032	1.053	1.025	1.038	1.031	1.024	0.996	1.038
4233	..Lumber	1.081	1.070	1.079	1.128	1.160	1.069	0.952	0.985	1.009	1.022	1.035	0.982
4234	..Prof. equip.	1.062	1.078	0.947	1.017	1.100	1.080	1.015	1.010	1.007	1.000	0.994	1.010
42343	...Comp. equip.	1.104	1.082	0.922	1.042	1.124	1.081	1.021	1.020	1.003	1.008	1.012	1.022
4235	..Metals	1.048	1.030	1.002	1.024	1.058	1.026	0.981	0.997	1.002	1.006	1.005	0.998
4236	..Electrical	1.090	1.070	0.973	0.966	1.045	1.069	1.024	1.026	1.027	1.009	0.995	1.027
4237	..Hardware	1.053	1.040	1.042	1.078	1.129	1.042	0.988	0.998	1.005	1.010	1.010	0.998
4238	..Machinery	1.027	1.020	1.013	0.997	1.065	1.033	0.996	0.996	0.998	1.004	1.001	0.998
4239	..Misc. Durable	1.091	1.067	0.987	0.977	1.020	1.079	1.040	1.030	1.020	1.008	0.990	1.029
424	.Nondurable	1.030	0.994	0.984	1.023	1.033	0.993	1.020	0.970	0.950	0.961	0.965	0.970
4241	..Paper ³	1.053	1.042	1.023	1.017	1.042	1.043	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4242	..Drugs	1.019	1.018	0.967	1.020	1.027	1.018	1.005	1.006	0.998	1.007	0.992	1.007
4243	..Apparel	1.156	1.140	1.079	1.058	0.969	1.113	1.012	1.073	1.069	1.061	1.019	1.072
4244	..Groceries	1.033	1.008	1.006	1.027	1.015	1.009	1.037	1.010	0.987	0.988	0.983	1.009
4245	..Farm products	1.114	0.907	0.831	0.913	0.944	0.898	1.155	0.729	0.617	0.691	0.748	0.728
4246	..Chemicals ³	1.009	1.010	1.011	1.049	1.063	1.010	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4247	..Petroleum	0.988	0.981	1.024	1.056	1.023	0.978	0.979	0.984	0.992	1.030	1.047	0.984
4248	..Alcohol	1.031	1.033	0.977	1.041	1.136	0.993	1.030	1.004	0.993	1.014	1.015	1.003
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	0.980	0.906	0.899	0.979	1.157	0.918	0.953	0.922	0.892	0.881	0.918	0.921

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 68% 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 31% of the total sales estimate and 32% 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>.