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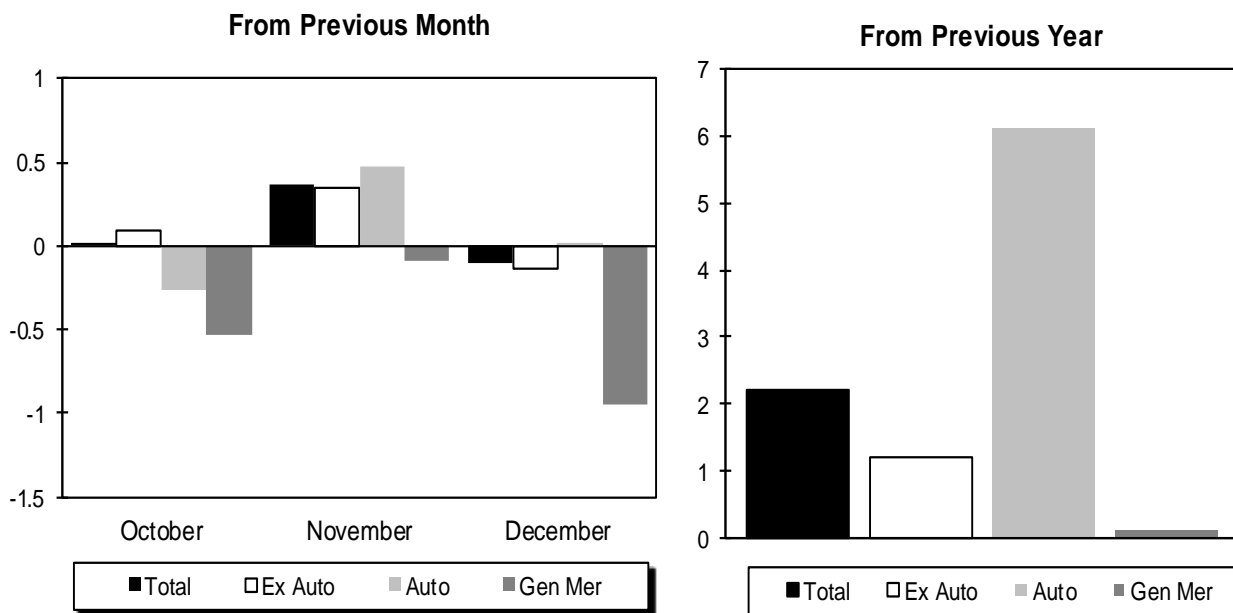## ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES
DECEMBER 2015

The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $448.1 billion, a decrease of 0.1 percent (±0.5%)* from the previous month, and 2.2 percent (±0.7%) above December 2014. Total sales for the 12 months of 2015 were up 2.1 percent (±0.4%) from 2014. Total sales for the October 2015 through December 2015 period were up 1.8 percent (±0.5%) from the same period a year ago. The October 2015 to November 2015 percent change was revised from up 0.2 percent (±0.5%)* to up 0.4 percent (±0.2%).

Retail trade sales were down 0.2 percent (±0.5%)* from November 2015, but up 1.6 percent (±0.5%) from last year. Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores were up 7.6% (±2.1%) from December 2014 and nonstore retailers were up 7.1 percent (±1.2%) from last year.

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 4,700 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.   For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.

Percent Change in Retail and Food Services Sales

(Estimates adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

The Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services for January is scheduled to be released February 12, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. EST.

For customized retail time series estimates by industry, visit the Census Bureau's web site at www.census.gov/timeseries.

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 www.census.gov/developers.

For additional survey information, visit www.census.gov/retail.

* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. The Census Bureau does not have sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different than 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]				
		12 Month Total		2015			2014		2015			2014	
		2015	% Chg. 2014	Dec.[3] (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec.	Nov.	Dec.[3] (a)	Nov. (p)	Oct. (r)	Dec. (r)	Nov. (r)
	Retail & food services, total	5,318,808	2.1	513,757	444,581	444,932	499,976	437,196	448,086	448,580	446,929	438,421	441,553
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	4,212,662	0.9	420,242	359,734	353,708	412,103	357,040	353,524	354,036	352,829	349,320	351,833
	Retail	4,696,172	1.4	459,258	394,212	390,938	449,272	389,581	394,392	395,336	394,200	388,119	391,799
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	115,528	103,333	146,974	115,295	(*)	105,601	105,301	104,037	104,419
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	1,106,146	7.0	93,515	84,847	91,224	87,873	80,156	94,562	94,544	94,100	89,101	89,720
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1,019,146	7.5	86,595	77,857	83,672	81,267	73,128	87,293	87,186	86,887	82,088	82,259
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	67,477	71,482	70,992	63,290	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores......	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,990	7,552	6,606	7,028	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	103,952	5.8	10,751	9,260	8,820	10,063	8,767	8,937	8,853	8,847	8,435	8,334
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,877	4,819	4,751	4,673	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,383	4,001	5,312	4,094	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	103,576	-2.4	13,177	10,342	8,136	13,650	10,857	8,521	8,541	8,589	8,862	8,991
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.................	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,248	5,898	9,597	7,794	(*)	6,190	6,241	6,476	6,633
44312	Computer & software stores.......	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(*)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**.....................	331,571	4.0	25,786	26,493	28,551	24,613	25,345	28,200	27,998	27,975	27,056	27,300
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,361	25,043	21,171	22,044	(*)	24,309	24,149	23,265	23,426
445	**Food & beverage stores**...............	680,702	2.7	61,874	56,701	57,233	60,610	56,263	57,032	57,208	56,784	56,378	55,996
4451	Grocery stores	606,490	2.5	53,377	50,499	51,065	52,109	50,178	50,884	50,958	50,559	50,250	49,928
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,252	4,293	5,610	4,137	(*)	4,282	4,255	4,140	4,108
446	**Health & personal care stores**	315,206	4.3	30,466	25,819	26,904	29,448	24,518	26,819	26,755	26,690	25,877	25,700
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,487	22,696	24,137	20,285	(*)	22,266	22,317	21,609	21,285
447	**Gasoline stations**	432,463	-19.4	31,260	31,898	35,918	36,515	39,730	33,868	34,262	34,703	39,647	42,813
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	253,960	2.1	32,796	23,012	20,550	32,350	23,300	21,168	21,357	21,067	21,043	21,269
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	814	806	1,169	880	(*)	780	771	798	819
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,171	3,878	5,606	4,365	(*)	3,809	3,798	4,039	3,950
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,460	8,270	11,850	9,478	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,825	2,663	3,762	2,864	(*)	2,862	2,860	2,807	2,824
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores**..........................	88,864	5.9	12,864	8,091	6,738	11,935	7,740	7,662	7,590	7,528	7,121	7,213
452	**General merchandise stores**..........	672,977	0.8	75,423	62,174	56,153	75,421	62,077	55,978	56,515	56,567	55,914	55,945
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)........	165,512	-2.0	23,482	16,430	12,998	23,988	16,997	13,721	13,686	13,729	14,010	14,083
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.)[5]......	(*)	(*)	(*)	16,775	13,153	24,462	17,320	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.... ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	45,744	43,155	51,433	45,080	(*)	42,829	42,838	41,904	41,862
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....................	(*)	(*)	(*)	39,731	37,352	44,200	39,281	(*)	37,097	37,092	36,349	36,371
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores......	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,013	5,803	7,233	5,799	(*)	5,732	5,746	5,555	5,491
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	119,962	4.1	11,367	9,780	10,634	11,240	9,290	9,983	10,189	9,957	9,798	9,720
454	**Nonstore retailers**	486,793	6.3	59,979	45,795	40,077	55,554	41,538	41,662	41,524	41,393	38,887	38,798
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	40,355	34,547	48,266	34,966	(*)	36,225	35,837	32,723	32,286
722	**Food services & drinking places** ...	622,636	8.1	54,499	50,369	53,994	50,704	47,615	53,694	53,244	52,729	50,302	49,754

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

(5) Estimates include data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line are not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

Note: Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and sample design, and definitions may be found at http://www.census.gov/retail

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. 2015 Advance from --		Nov. 2015 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2015 through Dec. 2015 from --	
		Nov. 2015 (p)	Dec. 2014 (r)	Oct. 2015 (r)	Nov. 2014 (r)	Jul. 2015 through Sep. 2015	Oct. 2014 through Dec. 2014
	Retail & food services, total ………………………..	-0.1	2.2	0.4	1.6	0.2	1.8
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ….	-0.1	1.2	0.3	0.6	-0.1	0.7
	Retail ………………..…………..	-0.2	1.6	0.3	0.9	0.0	1.2
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers ……..**	0.0	6.1	0.5	5.4	1.1	6.0
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	0.1	6.3	0.3	6.0	1.2	6.5
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores ……..**	0.9	6.0	0.1	6.2	2.1	6.3
443	**Electronics & appliance stores ……**	-0.2	-3.8	-0.6	-5.0	-1.0	-4.5
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers………………………**	0.7	4.2	0.1	2.6	0.6	3.7
445	**Food & beverage stores……………**	-0.3	1.2	0.7	2.2	0.1	1.6
4451	Grocery stores ……………………..	-0.1	1.3	0.8	2.1	0.3	1.5
446	**Health & personal care stores ……..**	0.2	3.6	0.2	4.1	1.2	4.1
447	**Gasoline stations …………………….**	-1.1	-14.6	-1.3	-20.0	-6.2	-18.4
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores …………………….………**	-0.9	0.6	1.4	0.4	-0.7	0.6
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores………………………**	0.9	7.6	0.8	5.2	2.0	5.7
452	**General merchandise stores……….**	-1.0	0.1	-0.1	1.0	-0.5	0.8
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)………	0.3	-2.1	-0.3	-2.8	-0.8	-2.2
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers ……..**	-2.0	1.9	2.3	4.8	-0.9	2.4
454	**Nonstore retailers …………………..**	0.3	7.1	0.3	7.0	2.0	7.1
722	**Food services & drinking places ….**	0.8	6.7	1.0	7.0	2.0	6.7

(p) Preliminary estimate   (r) Revised estimate

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

Note: 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 http://www.census.gov/retail.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Survey Description.

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the   Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey (MARTS) 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 4,700 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS). Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator.   The change in sales from the previous month is estimated using only units that   have   reported   data for both the current   and previous month. There is no imputation or adjustment for nonrespondents in MARTS.   The total sales estimate is derived by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS sample). Detailed industry estimates are summed to derive total estimates at broad industry levels.   The monthly estimates are adjusted using annual survey estimates and for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: http://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.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Dec. 2015

(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 …………………..………………..	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.1
	Retail ………………………………..	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers** ……..	1.4	1.0	0.5	1.5	0.2	0.3
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1.4	1.1	0.6	1.6	0.2	0.2
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**…….	2.5	1.3	0.7	1.6	0.4	0.5
443	**Electronics & appliance stores** …..	2.6	0.6	0.5	1.3	-0.1	0.3
444	**Building material & garden eq. &…. supplies dealers**……………………..	1.9	1.1	0.8	1.3	0.2	0.5
445	**Food & beverage stores**…………….	1.4	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.2
4451	Grocery stores ……………………	1.5	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	**Health & personal care stores** ……	2.3	0.5	0.5	1.1	0.1	0.2
447	**Gasoline stations** ………………….	1.8	0.5	0.4	0.9	-0.1	0.6
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores** ……………………………….	2.1	0.5	0.5	1.0	-0.1	0.3
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores**………………………….	2.3	0.6	0.9	1.2	-0.1	0.4
452	**General merchandise stores**……….	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.)……	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers** ……..	2.5	1.9	1.1	2.4	0.0	1.6
454	**Nonstore retailers** …………………	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.3
722	**Food services & drinking places** ..	2.1	1.0	0.8	2.1	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.

Note: Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at http://www.census.gov/retail