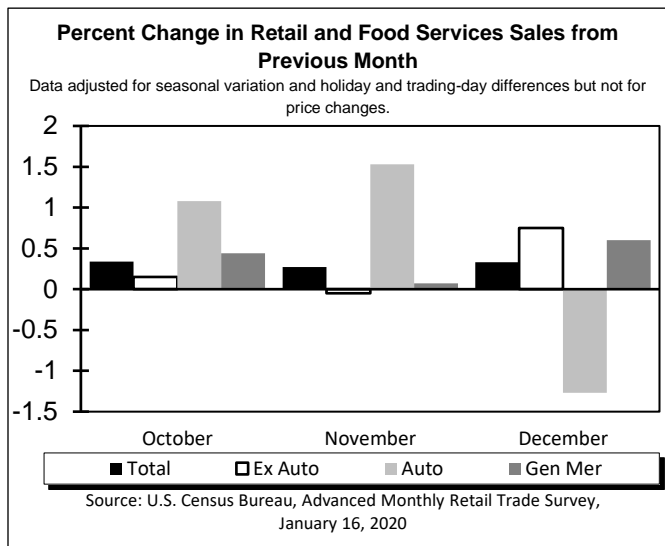# ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, DECEMBER 2019

Release Number: CB20-06

January 16, 2020 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2019:

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
December 2019	**$529.6 billion**	**0.3%***
November 2019 (revised)	**$527.8 billion**	**0.3%***
Next release: February 14, 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, January 16, 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, January 16, 2020

Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December 2019, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $529.6 billion, an increase of 0.3 percent (±0.4 percent)* from the previous month, and 5.8 percent (±0.7 percent) above December 2018. Total sales for the 12 months of 2019 were up 3.6 percent (±0.4 percent) from 2018. Total sales for the October 2019 through December 2019 period were up 4.1 percent (±0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The October 2019 to November 2019 percent change was revised from up 0.2 percent (±0.4 percent)* to up 0.3 percent (±0.3 percent)*.

Retail trade sales were up 0.4 percent (±0.4 percent)* from November 2019, and 6.0 percent (±0.5 percent) above last year. Nonstore retailers were up 19.2 percent (±1.4 percent) from December 2018, and gasoline stations were up 11.3 percent (±1.2 percent) from last year.

General Information

The January 2020 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on February 14, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. EST. 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/>.

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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.

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

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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

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.

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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	12 Month Total 2019	% Chg. 2018	Not Adjusted 2019 Dec.[3] (a)	Not Adjusted 2019 Nov. (p)	Not Adjusted 2019 Oct. (r)	Not Adjusted 2018 Dec.	Not Adjusted 2018 Nov.	Adjusted[2] 2019 Dec.[3] (a)	Adjusted[2] 2019 Nov. (p)	Adjusted[2] 2019 Oct. (r)	Adjusted[2] 2018 Dec. (r)	Adjusted[2] 2018 Nov. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	**6,237,557**	**3.6**	**597,347**	**537,635**	**525,967**	**563,497**	**522,804**	**529,606**	**527,841**	**526,420**	**500,455**	**510,826**
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	4,984,267	3.5	491,725	435,027	420,729	461,535	427,005	422,967	419,828	420,038	397,980	409,518
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	5,723,503	3.9	555,274	495,771	481,261	525,663	481,131	484,560	484,004	483,016	459,991	467,371
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	4,470,213	3.8	449,652	393,163	376,023	423,701	385,332	377,921	375,991	376,634	357,516	366,063
	Retail	5,467,580	3.5	532,322	474,626	460,267	500,260	463,403	464,516	462,883	461,047	438,397	448,756
	GAFO[4]	(*)	(*)	(*)	121,367	106,401	147,712	122,433	(*)	108,711	109,018	107,802	109,723
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**1,253,290**	**4.0**	**105,622**	**102,608**	**105,238**	**101,962**	**95,799**	**106,639**	**108,013**	**106,382**	**102,475**	**101,308**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	1,157,153	4.0	98,155	94,681	96,607	94,861	88,071	98,549	99,874	98,278	94,672	93,494
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	80,739	81,615	82,315	74,948	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,927	8,631	7,101	7,728	(*)	8,139	8,104	7,803	7,814
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**	**117,397**	**0.7**	**11,309**	**10,730**	**9,920**	**10,937**	**10,550**	**9,885**	**9,871**	**9,841**	**9,577**	**9,661**
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,780	5,417	5,444	5,530	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,950	4,503	5,493	5,020	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**97,638**	**-3.5**	**11,884**	**10,013**	**7,612**	**11,961**	**10,388**	**8,134**	**8,082**	**8,106**	**8,192**	**8,330**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**..................................	**379,935**	**0.6**	**29,206**	**30,214**	**33,310**	**28,181**	**30,658**	**32,086**	**31,656**	**31,609**	**31,449**	**31,466**
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,089	29,761	24,892	27,444	(*)	28,101	28,024	27,843	27,834
445	**Food & beverage stores**........................	**777,042**	**3.0**	**70,045**	**66,469**	**65,059**	**68,541**	**64,068**	**65,695**	**65,434**	**65,176**	**63,377**	**63,599**
4451	Grocery stores	695,168	3.1	60,825	59,226	58,300	59,536	56,922	58,768	58,524	58,300	56,647	56,808
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,298	4,913	6,446	5,181	(*)	5,022	4,988	4,902	4,902
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**354,733**	**3.1**	**32,975**	**28,824**	**30,468**	**31,436**	**29,389**	**29,468**	**29,352**	**29,725**	**28,397**	**29,537**
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	23,555	25,515	25,273	24,226	(*)	24,110	24,534	23,444	24,471
447	**Gasoline stations**	**514,054**	**0.5**	**42,073**	**41,864**	**44,706**	**37,834**	**41,673**	**45,046**	**43,837**	**43,404**	**40,464**	**43,455**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**268,735**	**-0.6**	**34,383**	**25,202**	**21,369**	**34,706**	**25,831**	**22,654**	**22,287**	**22,406**	**22,623**	**22,981**
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	802	766	1,023	851	(*)	749	756	766	798
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,776	3,266	4,472	4,055	(*)	3,312	3,309	3,320	3,579
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	11,151	9,227	13,628	10,847	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,263	2,818	4,415	3,409	(*)	3,144	3,145	3,206	3,294
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**77,686**	**-2.2**	**9,111**	**7,017**	**6,190**	**9,111**	**7,078**	**6,403**	**6,344**	**6,550**	**6,292**	**6,411**
452	**General merchandise stores**..................	**713,092**	**1.3**	**78,535**	**65,970**	**58,253**	**77,853**	**66,046**	**59,995**	**59,639**	**59,597**	**58,675**	**59,767**
4521	Department stores	135,144	-5.5	18,306	13,270	10,414	19,398	14,646	10,936	11,019	11,105	11,571	11,891
4529	Other general merch. stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	52,700	47,839	58,455	51,400	(*)	48,620	48,492	47,104	47,876
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters...............................	(*)	(*)	(*)	45,082	40,669	49,492	43,478	(*)	41,474	41,372	40,074	40,520
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores............	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,618	7,170	8,963	7,922	(*)	7,146	7,120	7,030	7,356
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**135,604**	**3.9**	**13,010**	**12,086**	**12,328**	**11,860**	**11,356**	**11,746**	**11,733**	**11,598**	**10,867**	**10,961**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**778,374**	**13.1**	**94,169**	**73,629**	**65,814**	**75,878**	**70,567**	**66,765**	**66,635**	**66,653**	**56,009**	**61,280**
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	65,920	58,225	67,709	62,847	(*)	59,068	59,172	48,817	53,992
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**769,977**	**4.4**	**65,025**	**63,009**	**65,700**	**63,237**	**59,401**	**65,090**	**64,958**	**65,373**	**62,058**	**62,070**

(*) 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, January 16, 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]					
		Dec. 2019 Advance from --		Nov. 2019 Preliminary from --		Oct. 2019 through Dec. 2019 from --	
		Nov. 2019 (p)	Dec. 2018 (r)	Oct. 2019 (r)	Nov. 2018 (r)	Jul. 2019 through Sep. 2019	Oct. 2018 through Dec. 2018
	Retail & food services, total	0.3	5.8	0.3	3.3	0.5	4.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.7	6.3	0.0	2.5	0.3	3.8
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.1	5.3	0.2	3.6	0.3	4.2
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.5	5.7	-0.2	2.7	-0.1	3.9
	Retail	0.4	6.0	0.4	3.1	0.6	4.0
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-1.3	4.1	1.5	6.6	1.6	5.3
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	-1.3	4.1	1.6	6.8	1.6	5.5
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	0.1	3.2	0.3	2.2	0.3	2.3
443	Electronics & appliance stores	0.6	-0.7	-0.3	-3.0	-0.7	-2.5
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....................................	1.4	2.0	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.3
445	Food & beverage stores...........................	0.4	3.7	0.4	2.9	0.0	3.0
4451	Grocery stores	0.4	3.7	0.4	3.0	-0.1	3.2
446	Health & personal care stores	0.4	3.8	-1.3	-0.6	-0.5	1.6
447	Gasoline stations	2.8	11.3	1.0	0.9	3.2	2.4
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	1.6	0.1	-0.5	-3.0	-0.3	-1.6
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	0.9	1.8	-3.1	-1.0	-1.7	1.2
452	General merchandise stores....................	0.6	2.2	0.1	-0.2	0.0	0.8
4521	Department stores	-0.8	-5.5	-0.8	-7.3	-2.4	-6.7
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	0.1	8.1	1.2	7.0	2.3	7.0
454	Nonstore retailers	0.2	19.2	0.0	8.7	-0.3	13.2
722	Food services & drinking places	0.2	4.9	-0.6	4.7	0.0	4.8

(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, January 16, 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 Dec. 2019

(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	0.2	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**	**0.1**	**0.3**	**0.1**	**0.1**
441	**Motor vehicle & parts dealers**	**1.3**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**1.1**	**0.2**	**0.5**
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.4	0.9	0.5	1.2	0.2	0.5
442	**Furniture & home furn. stores**................	**2.4**	**1.2**	**0.8**	**1.6**	**0.1**	**0.4**
443	**Electronics & appliance stores**	**1.2**	**0.5**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**-0.1**	**0.3**
444	**Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers**....................................	**1.3**	**0.7**	**0.4**	**1.0**	**0.2**	**0.8**
445	**Food & beverage stores**..........................	**0.7**	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.4**	**0.1**	**0.3**
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.3
446	**Health & personal care stores**	**1.9**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**1.0**	**0.1**	**0.2**
447	**Gasoline stations**	**1.4**	**0.3**	**0.3**	**0.7**	**0.3**	**0.5**
448	**Clothing & clothing accessories stores**	**1.8**	**0.6**	**0.6**	**0.9**	**-0.1**	**0.5**
451	**Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores**	**1.9**	**0.8**	**1.0**	**2.1**	**-0.2**	**0.6**
452	**General merchandise stores**...................	**0.8**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.0**	**0.1**
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.1
453	**Miscellaneous store retailers**	**4.0**	**1.8**	**1.5**	**2.7**	**0.7**	**1.0**
454	**Nonstore retailers**	**1.2**	**0.4**	**0.4**	**0.8**	**0.1**	**0.5**
722	**Food services & drinking places**	**3.3**	**0.9**	**0.7**	**1.9**	**0.1**	**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, January 16, 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>.