

U.S. Census Bureau News

U.S. Department of Commerce • Washington, D.C. 20233

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2010 AT 10:00 A.M. EDT

CB10-51

John Miller /William Abriatis
Service Sector Statistics Division
(301) 763-2703

MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES February 2010

Notice of Revised Wholesale Data: Monthly Wholesale sales, inventories, and inventories/sales ratios were revised based on the results of the 2008 Annual Wholesale Trade Survey and the preliminary results of the 2007 Economic Census. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted estimates were released on our website on March 31, 2010.

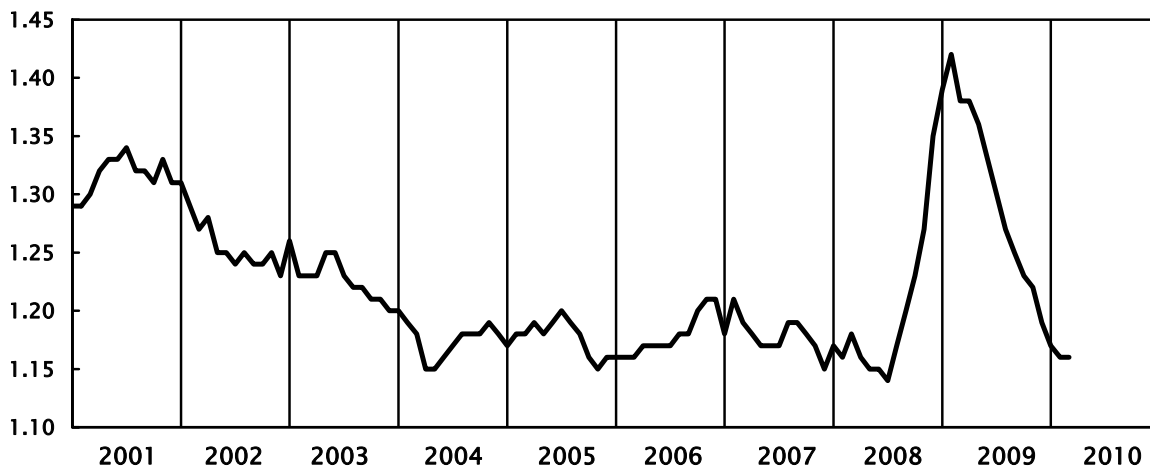
Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that February 2010 sales of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$338.7 billion, up 0.8 percent (+/-0.7%) from the revised January level and were up 9.8 percent (+/-1.2%) from the February 2009 level. The January preliminary estimate was revised downward \$1.0 billion or 0.3 percent. February sales of durable goods were up 0.2 percent (+/-0.9%)* from last month and were up 6.5 percent (+/-1.4%) from a year ago. Compared to last month, sales of motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies were up 2.4 percent, while sales of hardware, and plumbing and heating equipment and supplies were down 3.1 percent. Sales of nondurable goods were up 1.4 percent (+/-1.1%) from last month and were up 12.6 percent (+/-1.8%) from last year. Sales of petroleum and petroleum products were up 3.7 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 \$393.5 billion at the end of February, up 0.6 percent (+/-0.5%) from the revised January level, but were down 7.4 percent (+/-1.1%) from a year ago. The January preliminary estimate was revised upward \$1.0 billion or 0.3 percent. End-of-month inventories of durable goods were up 0.5 percent (+/-0.7%)* from last month, but were down 12.3 percent (+/-1.2%) from last February. Inventories of computer and computer peripheral equipment and software were up 2.5 percent from last month and inventories of lumber and other construction materials were up 2.0 percent. End-of-month inventories of nondurable goods increased 0.8 percent (+/-0.5%) from January and were up 0.7 percent (+/-1.8%)* compared to last February. Inventories of petroleum and petroleum products were up 3.1 percent from last month and inventories of chemicals and allied products were up 2.9 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The February inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.16. The February 2009 ratio was 1.38.

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/011340.html>.

**Monthly Inventories/Sales Ratios of Merchant Wholesalers, Except Manufacturers'
Sales Branches and Offices: 2001 to 2010**
(Estimates adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)



Monthly Wholesale Trade for March is scheduled to be released May 11, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. EDT.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://www.census.gov/wholesale>>. This report is also available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's STAT-USA (202-482-1986).

* 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		
		Monthly			Percent change			Monthly			Percent change			Ratios		
		Feb. 2010 (p)	Jan. 2010 (r)	Feb. 2009 (r)	Feb./ Jan.	Jan./ Dec.	Feb. 10/ Feb. 09	Feb. 2010 (p)	Jan. 2010 (r)	Feb. 2009 (r)	Feb./ Jan.	Jan./ Dec.	Feb. 10/ Feb. 09	Feb. 2010 (p)	Jan. 2010 (r)	Feb. 2009 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	338,659	335,870	308,505	0.8	0.9	9.8	393,479	391,038	425,041	0.6	0.1	-7.4	1.16	1.16	1.38
423	.Durable	152,509	152,258	143,165	0.2	-0.6	6.5	232,730	231,639	265,488	0.5	-0.2	-12.3	1.53	1.52	1.85
4231	..Automotive	23,510	22,966	19,197	2.4	1.3	22.5	33,864	33,793	40,363	0.2	-1.1	-16.1	1.44	1.47	2.10
4232	..Furniture	4,844	4,822	4,630	0.5	2.6	4.6	6,582	6,613	7,780	-0.5	-0.7	-15.4	1.36	1.37	1.68
4233	..Lumber	6,813	6,774	7,538	0.6	-0.1	-9.6	11,559	11,330	12,981	2.0	1.8	-11.0	1.70	1.67	1.72
4234	..Prof. equip.	29,501	29,841	27,477	-1.1	0.1	7.4	28,160	28,169	30,130	0.0	-0.9	-6.5	0.95	0.94	1.10
42343	...Comp. equip.	15,530	15,720	13,112	-1.2	0.6	18.4	10,002	9,761	9,622	2.5	-1.9	3.9	0.64	0.62	0.73
4235	..Metals	8,853	8,926	9,711	-0.8	3.3	-8.8	18,459	18,314	24,899	0.8	6.2	-25.9	2.09	2.05	2.56
4236	..Electrical	29,440	28,887	26,748	1.9	-0.5	10.1	33,688	33,470	36,396	0.7	0.5	-7.4	1.14	1.16	1.36
4237	..Hardware	7,516	7,758	7,825	-3.1	4.0	-3.9	15,420	15,439	16,985	-0.1	0.1	-9.2	2.05	1.99	2.17
4238	..Machinery	24,422	23,934	24,944	2.0	-6.8	-2.1	60,986	61,313	70,959	-0.5	-1.5	-14.1	2.50	2.56	2.84
4239	..Misc. Durable	17,610	18,350	15,095	-4.0	-0.5	16.7	24,012	23,198	24,995	3.5	-1.1	-3.9	1.36	1.26	1.66
424	.Nondurable	186,150	183,612	165,340	1.4	2.2	12.6	160,749	159,399	159,553	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.86	0.87	0.96
4241	..Paper ³	6,968	6,975	7,018	-0.1	1.2	-0.7	6,325	6,381	7,035	-0.9	0.0	-10.1	0.91	0.91	1.00
4242	..Drugs	30,694	31,097	31,154	-1.3	0.5	-1.5	32,432	32,505	33,077	-0.2	-0.7	-1.9	1.06	1.05	1.06
4243	..Apparel	11,447	11,401	11,304	0.4	-1.2	1.3	16,539	16,466	20,272	0.4	1.0	-18.4	1.44	1.44	1.79
4244	..Groceries	41,811	41,015	41,009	1.9	2.1	2.0	26,914	26,245	27,520	2.5	0.5	-2.2	0.64	0.64	0.67
4245	..Farm products	16,084	15,924	13,184	1.0	3.8	22.0	16,757	16,685	14,154	0.4	-5.2	18.4	1.04	1.05	1.07
4246	..Chemicals ³	8,669	8,637	7,451	0.4	2.6	16.3	8,841	8,590	9,606	2.9	1.0	-8.0	1.02	0.99	1.29
4247	..Petroleum	43,380	41,818	27,969	3.7	4.3	55.1	20,637	20,021	13,066	3.1	5.0	57.9	0.48	0.48	0.47
4248	..Alcohol	9,141	8,932	9,007	2.3	0.0	1.5	11,355	11,419	11,797	-0.6	2.4	-3.7	1.24	1.28	1.31
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	17,956	17,813	17,244	0.8	2.6	4.1	20,949	21,087	23,026	-0.7	2.7	-9.0	1.17	1.18	1.34
													Sales to date			
													2010		2009	
42	U.S. Total	305,105	306,730	277,745	-0.5	-9.3	9.9	397,641	395,053	428,793	0.7	0.2	-7.3	611,835	564,660	
423	.Durable	135,866	135,159	127,358	0.5	-13.6	6.7	234,245	231,114	267,067	1.4	0.5	-12.3	271,025	256,113	
4231	..Automotive	21,606	20,279	17,623	6.5	-16.2	22.6	35,625	34,536	42,341	3.2	-0.3	-15.9	41,885	34,612	
4232	..Furniture	4,379	4,383	4,176	-0.1	-5.1	4.9	6,503	6,620	7,679	-1.8	-0.4	-15.3	8,762	8,477	
4233	..Lumber	5,607	5,494	6,234	2.1	-1.6	-10.1	11,917	11,126	13,344	7.1	4.7	-10.7	11,101	12,503	
4234	..Prof. equip.	25,253	26,230	23,575	-3.7	-23.2	7.1	28,188	28,338	30,130	-0.5	0.7	-6.4	51,483	48,123	
42343	...Comp. equip.	12,859	13,676	10,896	-6.0	-29.4	18.0	9,792	9,810	9,410	-0.2	-1.6	4.1	26,535	22,132	
4235	..Metals	8,375	8,721	9,138	-4.0	13.4	-8.3	18,496	18,424	24,849	0.4	4.2	-25.6	17,096	19,251	
4236	..Electrical	26,525	25,883	24,073	2.5	-10.4	10.2	33,250	33,336	35,886	-0.3	0.7	-7.3	52,408	48,281	
4237	..Hardware	6,659	6,866	6,941	-3.0	-0.4	-4.1	15,297	15,146	16,883	1.0	-0.9	-9.4	13,525	14,073	
4238	..Machinery	22,053	20,990	22,450	5.1	-20.2	-1.8	61,413	60,761	71,385	1.1	-0.6	-14.0	43,043	45,021	
4239	..Misc. Durable	15,409	16,313	13,148	-5.5	-9.5	17.2	23,556	22,827	24,570	3.2	1.0	-4.1	31,722	25,772	
424	.Nondurable	169,239	171,571	150,387	-1.4	-5.7	12.5	163,396	163,939	161,726	-0.3	-0.2	1.0	340,810	308,547	
4241	..Paper	6,292	6,487	6,344	-3.0	-5.9	-0.8	6,325	6,381	7,035	-0.9	0.0	-10.1	12,779	13,052	
4242	..Drugs	28,453	29,729	28,942	-4.3	-8.7	-1.7	31,524	32,212	32,085	-2.1	-7.3	-1.7	58,182	59,519	
4243	..Apparel	11,218	9,862	11,067	13.7	-1.3	1.4	16,556	16,878	20,292	-1.9	6.5	-18.4	21,080	20,877	
4244	..Groceries	38,717	39,292	37,851	-1.5	-3.8	2.3	26,726	26,297	27,300	1.6	-2.3	-2.1	78,009	78,282	
4245	..Farm products	15,425	16,354	12,578	-5.7	-5.7	22.6	20,025	20,789	16,928	-3.7	0.6	18.3	31,779	26,204	
4246	..Chemicals	8,062	8,559	6,907	-5.8	5.7	16.7	8,841	8,590	9,606	2.9	1.0	-8.0	16,621	14,652	
4247	..Petroleum	38,044	39,894	24,361	-4.6	1.1	56.2	20,389	20,041	12,883	1.7	-2.4	58.3	77,938	51,559	
4248	..Alcohol	7,514	6,520	7,404	15.2	-39.8	1.5	11,014	11,031	11,443	-0.2	6.8	-3.7	14,034	14,481	
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	15,514	14,874	14,933	4.3	-6.6	3.9	21,996	21,720	24,154	1.3	7.1	-8.9	30,388	29,921	

Footnotes:

^p Preliminary estimate.

^r Revised estimate.

¹ For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see the 2002 NAICS manual or <http://www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naicod02.htm#N42>.

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/011340.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	1.4	1.1	1.4	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.2	0.7
423	..Durable	1.0	1.9	1.2	1.9	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.9
4231	..Automotive	3.2	5.4	3.7	5.4	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.8	3.4	3.0	1.5
4232	..Furniture	5.2	7.2	6.1	6.9	3.2	0.5	3.9	2.0	5.3	4.4	3.9
4233	..Lumber	5.5	9.4	4.9	9.5	1.2	1.0	2.3	2.4	5.2	4.7	2.3
4234	..Prof. equip.	4.2	3.8	4.4	3.8	1.0	0.4	2.1	1.4	4.3	4.7	2.3
42343	...Comp. equip.	7.9	6.7	8.2	6.6	0.9	0.8	3.0	1.9	8.0	7.8	2.9
4235	..Metals	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.1	1.5	0.9	3.2	2.0	5.2	6.5	2.8
4236	..Electrical	3.3	3.9	3.5	3.9	0.9	0.4	1.3	1.2	3.4	3.0	1.3
4237	..Hardware	5.2	5.6	5.8	5.6	1.3	0.3	1.7	4.5	5.5	5.2	1.8
4238	..Machinery	3.6	5.0	3.6	4.8	2.0	0.5	2.4	1.5	3.4	3.2	2.4
4239	..Misc. Durable	5.1	4.6	5.4	4.5	1.5	1.2	3.5	1.9	5.2	4.8	3.3
424	..Nondurable	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.7	0.6	0.3	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	0.8
4241	..Paper	8.0	6.4	7.3	6.5	1.0	0.7	3.1	2.4	7.6	7.8	3.1
4242	..Drugs	3.3	5.0	3.1	5.1	1.0	0.5	1.6	1.6	3.2	3.5	1.5
4243	..Apparel	4.0	7.0	3.3	6.7	2.8	0.9	3.4	1.9	3.5	4.0	3.4
4244	..Groceries	5.0	7.3	5.1	8.1	1.3	1.7	1.4	3.9	5.0	4.2	1.7
4245	..Farm products	5.9	6.5	6.0	6.3	1.2	0.8	5.0	4.7	5.9	4.2	4.6
4246	..Chemicals	7.7	8.8	7.0	7.7	1.9	1.5	3.3	1.9	7.3	5.6	2.8
4247	..Petroleum	4.0	3.0	4.4	2.9	1.9	1.6	3.0	4.3	4.1	4.1	2.0
4248	..Alcohol	5.4	4.7	5.1	4.4	1.8	1.8	3.1	2.7	5.2	6.5	3.1
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	5.4	5.7	5.7	5.8	1.1	0.8	1.7	2.1	5.5	6.1	1.6

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/011340.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-12 ARIMA program and are based on data from the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey.]

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Sales						Inventories					
		2010			2009			2010			2009		
		Mar.	Feb.r	Jan.r	Dec.	Nov.	Feb.r	Mar.	Feb.r	Jan.r	Dec.	Nov.	Feb.r
42	U.S. Total²	1.061	0.905	0.908	1.020	0.971	0.903	1.002	1.010	1.010	1.006	1.007	1.010
423	.Durable	1.075	0.896	0.893	1.020	0.970	0.895	0.995	1.005	1.000	0.992	1.008	1.005
4231	..Automotive	1.131	0.919	0.883	1.067	0.994	0.918	1.018	1.052	1.022	1.014	1.035	1.049
4232	..Furniture	1.034	0.904	0.909	0.983	1.007	0.902	0.979	0.988	1.001	0.998	0.991	0.987
4233	..Lumber	1.008	0.823	0.811	0.823	0.912	0.827	1.040	1.031	0.982	0.955	0.953	1.028
4234	..Prof. equip.	1.092	0.856	0.879	1.146	0.963	0.858	0.974	1.001	1.006	0.990	1.024	1.000
42343	...Comp. equip.	1.107	0.828	0.870	1.239	0.965	0.831	0.966	0.979	1.005	1.002	1.044	0.978
4235	..Metals	1.063	0.946	0.977	0.890	0.904	0.941	0.987	1.002	1.006	1.026	1.001	0.998
4236	..Electrical	1.063	0.901	0.896	0.995	1.005	0.900	0.977	0.987	0.996	0.994	1.011	0.986
4237	..Hardware	1.027	0.886	0.885	0.924	0.924	0.887	1.001	0.992	0.981	0.991	0.989	0.994
4238	..Machinery	1.115	0.903	0.877	1.025	0.898	0.900	1.015	1.007	0.991	0.982	0.992	1.006
4239	..Misc. Durable	1.039	0.875	0.889	0.978	0.981	0.871	0.973	0.981	0.984	0.964	1.015	0.983
424	.Nondurable	1.045	0.916	0.937	1.014	0.970	0.914	1.012	1.019	1.026	1.030	1.006	1.017
4241	..Paper ³	1.057	0.903	0.930	1.001	0.960	0.904	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4242	..Drugs	1.072	0.927	0.956	1.052	0.975	0.929	1.000	0.972	0.991	1.061	1.003	0.970
4243	..Apparel	1.068	0.980	0.865	0.866	0.960	0.979	0.961	1.001	1.025	0.972	0.963	1.001
4244	..Groceries	1.077	0.926	0.958	1.016	0.969	0.923	0.991	0.993	1.002	1.031	1.035	0.992
4245	..Farm products	1.082	0.959	1.027	1.130	1.033	0.954	1.137	1.195	1.246	1.175	1.089	1.196
4246	..Chemicals ³	1.045	0.930	0.991	0.961	0.906	0.927	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4247	..Petroleum	0.955	0.877	0.954	0.984	0.962	0.871	0.974	0.988	1.001	1.077	0.983	0.986
4248	..Alcohol	0.996	0.822	0.730	1.213	1.002	0.822	0.999	0.970	0.966	0.926	1.041	0.970
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	1.054	0.864	0.835	0.917	0.891	0.866	1.064	1.050	1.030	0.988	0.977	1.049

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-12 ARIMA program may be found at <http://www.census.gov/srd/www/x12a/>.

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 4,500. Approximately 75% 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 29% of the total sales estimate and 27% 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>.