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MONTHLY WHOLESALE TRADE: SALES AND INVENTORIES December 2010

Intention to Revise: Monthly Wholesale sales, inventories, and inventories/sales ratios will be revised based on results of the 2009 Annual Wholesale Trade Survey and the final results of the 2007 Economic Census. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted estimates are scheduled to be released on our website on March 31, 2011.

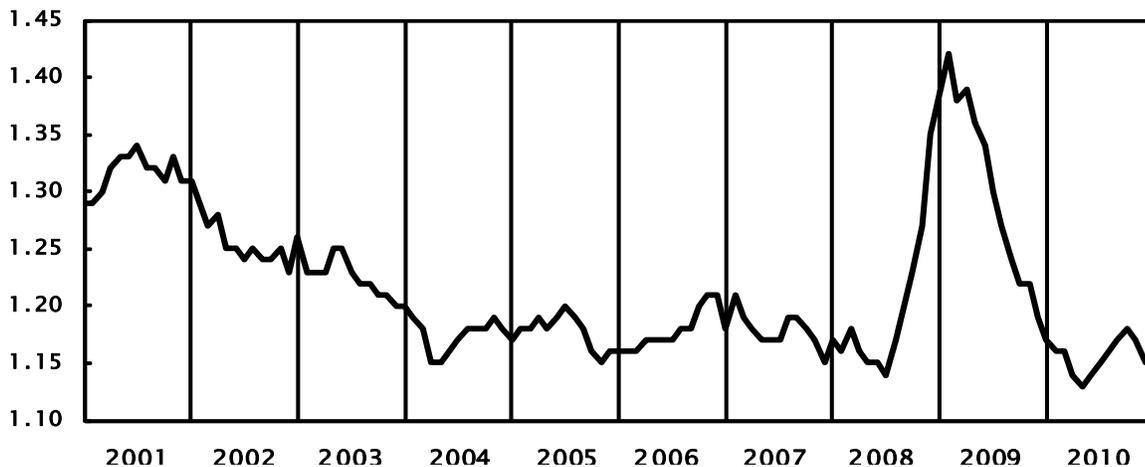
Sales. The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that December 2010 sales of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$371.5 billion, up 0.4 percent (+/-0.7%)* from the revised November level and were up 11.6 percent (+/-1.8%) from the December 2009 level. The November preliminary estimate was revised downward \$0.1 billion. December sales of durable goods were up 1.3 percent (+/-1.6%)* from last month and were up 11.6 percent (+/-2.3%) from a year ago. Compared to last month, sales of motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies were up 2.3 percent. Sales of nondurable goods were down 0.3 percent (+/-0.9%)* from last month, but were up 11.7 percent (+/-2.1%) from last year. Sales of farm product raw materials were down 6.1 percent from last month, while sales of petroleum and petroleum products were up 3.0 percent.

Inventories. Total inventories of merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, after adjustment for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were \$430.5 billion at the end of December, up 1.0 percent (+/-0.4%) from the revised November level and were up 10.5 percent (+/-1.4%) from a year ago. The November preliminary estimate was revised upward \$0.8 billion or 0.2 percent. End-of-month inventories of durable goods were up 0.8 percent (+/-0.5%) from last month and were up 7.8 percent (+/-1.4%) from last December. Inventories of motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies were up 1.6 percent and inventories of professional and commercial equipment and supplies were up 1.2 percent from last month. End-of-month inventories of nondurable goods increased 1.2 percent (+/-0.7%) from November and were up 14.5 percent (+/-2.5%) compared to last December. Inventories of beer, wine, and distilled alcoholic beverages were up 3.6 percent from last month and inventories of drugs and druggists' sundries were up 2.7 percent.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The December inventories/sales ratio for merchant wholesalers, except manufacturers' sales branches and offices, based on seasonally adjusted data, was 1.16. The December 2009 ratio was 1.17.

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 January is scheduled to be released March 9, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. EST.

For information, visit the Census Bureau's Web site at <<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		
		Dec. 2010 (p)	Nov. 2010 (r)	Dec. 2009 (r)	Dec./ Nov.	Nov./ Oct.	Dec. 10/ Dec. 09	Dec. 2010 (p)	Nov. 2010 (r)	Dec. 2009 (r)	Dec./ Nov.	Nov./ Oct.	Dec. 10/ Dec. 09	Dec. 2010 (p)	Nov. 2010 (r)	Dec. 2009 (r)
Adjusted²																
42	U.S. Total	371,486	369,981	332,757	0.4	1.9	11.6	430,538	426,353	389,499	1.0	0.0	10.5	1.16	1.15	1.17
423	.Durable	170,359	168,173	152,666	1.3	1.8	11.6	250,369	248,329	232,153	0.8	0.4	7.8	1.47	1.48	1.52
4231	..Automotive	23,601	23,077	22,799	2.3	-3.7	3.5	37,096	36,517	33,944	1.6	2.5	9.3	1.57	1.58	1.49
4232	..Furniture	5,170	5,069	4,719	2.0	2.0	9.6	7,212	7,257	6,661	-0.6	0.3	8.3	1.39	1.43	1.41
4233	..Lumber	7,495	7,715	6,934	-2.9	0.5	8.1	11,762	11,668	11,235	0.8	0.4	4.7	1.57	1.51	1.62
4234	..Prof. equip.	30,840	30,619	29,703	0.7	2.0	3.8	30,487	30,127	28,431	1.2	0.6	7.2	0.99	0.98	0.96
42343	...Comp. equip.	16,315	16,527	15,663	-1.3	2.0	4.2	11,354	11,270	10,037	0.7	-1.8	13.1	0.70	0.68	0.64
4235	..Metals	11,260	10,999	8,697	2.4	2.7	29.5	20,247	20,562	17,358	-1.5	-0.1	16.6	1.80	1.87	2.00
4236	..Electrical	32,805	33,132	29,140	-1.0	2.5	12.6	37,924	37,528	33,365	1.1	-0.8	13.7	1.16	1.13	1.14
4237	..Hardware	8,535	8,402	7,466	1.6	6.1	14.3	16,124	16,010	15,394	0.7	0.5	4.7	1.89	1.91	2.06
4238	..Machinery	30,864	29,699	25,251	3.9	2.3	22.2	64,262	64,074	62,309	0.3	0.2	3.1	2.08	2.16	2.47
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,789	19,461	17,957	1.7	5.0	10.2	25,255	24,586	23,456	2.7	-0.1	7.7	1.28	1.26	1.31
424	.Nondurable	201,127	201,808	180,091	-0.3	1.9	11.7	180,169	178,024	157,346	1.2	-0.6	14.5	0.90	0.88	0.87
4241	..Paper ³	7,079	7,132	6,896	-0.7	1.3	2.7	6,871	6,777	6,381	1.4	-0.1	7.7	0.97	0.95	0.93
4242	..Drugs	32,332	32,445	31,115	-0.3	2.9	3.9	34,070	33,171	32,594	2.7	-0.5	4.5	1.05	1.02	1.05
4243	..Apparel	11,917	12,281	11,687	-3.0	1.7	2.0	19,575	19,802	16,285	-1.1	1.7	20.2	1.64	1.61	1.39
4244	..Groceries	44,659	44,579	40,506	0.2	-0.6	10.3	28,941	28,366	26,187	2.0	-1.0	10.5	0.65	0.64	0.65
4245	..Farm products	19,975	21,276	15,061	-6.1	-0.1	32.6	25,157	25,304	16,752	-0.6	-6.4	50.2	1.26	1.19	1.11
4246	..Chemicals ³	8,975	9,106	8,440	-1.4	1.4	6.3	9,713	9,512	8,501	2.1	0.3	14.3	1.08	1.04	1.01
4247	..Petroleum	48,846	47,422	39,821	3.0	6.7	22.7	21,849	21,598	19,157	1.2	0.4	14.1	0.45	0.46	0.48
4248	..Alcohol	9,566	9,441	8,953	1.3	-0.5	6.8	12,129	11,711	11,057	3.6	1.5	9.7	1.27	1.24	1.24
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	17,778	18,126	17,612	-1.9	-1.5	0.9	21,864	21,783	20,432	0.4	2.4	7.0	1.23	1.20	1.16
														Sales to date		
														2010		2009
42	U.S. Total	377,499	369,495	338,259	2.2	0.5	11.6	437,821	431,426	394,105	1.5	0.4	11.1	4,244,398	3,758,089	
423	.Durable	174,044	167,391	156,349	4.0	-0.9	11.3	248,124	249,717	229,889	-0.6	0.0	7.9	1,945,231	1,713,723	
4231	..Automotive	24,899	23,446	24,190	6.2	-4.1	2.9	37,949	37,868	34,657	0.2	5.9	9.5	284,399	248,233	
4232	..Furniture	5,030	5,211	4,620	-3.5	-0.4	8.9	7,190	7,228	6,648	-0.5	-2.0	8.2	60,321	54,886	
4233	..Lumber	6,011	7,322	5,582	-17.9	-7.2	7.7	11,092	10,921	10,628	1.6	-2.1	4.4	91,570	86,295	
4234	..Prof. equip.	35,558	30,527	34,159	16.5	0.7	4.1	30,213	30,790	28,147	-1.9	-0.1	7.3	362,965	337,488	
42343	...Comp. equip.	20,230	16,560	19,360	22.2	2.0	4.5	11,297	11,664	9,967	-3.1	-3.6	13.3	194,143	168,021	
4235	..Metals	9,976	10,229	7,688	-2.5	-4.9	29.8	20,652	20,603	17,688	0.2	1.1	16.8	124,534	102,037	
4236	..Electrical	32,510	34,855	28,878	-6.7	3.1	12.6	37,621	37,791	33,098	-0.4	-3.2	13.7	379,051	321,377	
4237	..Hardware	7,827	8,049	6,891	-2.8	-1.7	13.6	15,995	15,866	15,286	0.8	-0.3	4.6	97,283	90,236	
4238	..Machinery	32,345	27,590	26,312	17.2	-3.6	22.9	63,041	63,818	61,125	-1.2	0.0	3.1	325,815	291,085	
4239	..Misc. Durable	19,888	20,162	18,029	-1.4	2.6	10.3	24,371	24,832	22,612	-1.9	-2.7	7.8	219,293	182,086	
424	.Nondurable	203,455	202,104	181,910	0.7	1.6	11.8	189,697	181,709	164,216	4.4	1.0	15.5	2,299,167	2,044,366	
4241	..Paper	7,114	7,096	6,896	0.3	-2.8	3.2	6,871	6,777	6,381	1.4	-0.1	7.7	84,199	83,305	
4242	..Drugs	33,722	33,191	32,546	1.6	3.6	3.6	36,387	32,972	34,745	10.4	-1.5	4.7	381,983	375,623	
4243	..Apparel	10,010	12,453	9,992	-19.6	-6.3	0.2	19,027	19,347	15,845	-1.7	-2.6	20.1	141,558	134,353	
4244	..Groceries	44,748	43,955	40,830	1.8	0.0	9.6	29,722	29,217	26,920	1.7	-0.5	10.4	526,473	481,380	
4245	..Farm products	22,712	23,893	17,335	-4.9	5.9	31.0	31,547	29,252	20,672	7.8	6.4	52.6	204,576	166,400	
4246	..Chemicals	8,598	8,642	8,094	-0.5	-0.7	6.2	9,713	9,512	8,501	2.1	0.3	14.3	106,245	92,441	
4247	..Petroleum	49,334	46,568	39,463	5.9	4.7	25.0	23,400	21,015	20,536	11.3	1.2	13.9	525,481	394,757	
4248	..Alcohol	11,537	9,866	10,833	16.9	4.5	6.5	11,341	12,226	10,327	-7.2	2.5	9.8	111,531	108,019	
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	15,680	16,440	15,921	-4.6	-3.9	-1.5	21,689	21,391	20,289	1.4	3.2	6.9	217,121	208,088	

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	1.2	1.4	0.4	0.2	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.7
423	.Durable	1.3	1.8	1.1	1.8	0.9	0.3	1.3	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.8
4231	..Automotive	3.7	5.6	3.6	5.1	0.5	0.7	1.3	1.2	3.4	3.0	0.8
4232	..Furniture	5.8	7.6	6.3	7.7	1.8	0.7	3.3	3.4	5.2	4.5	3.1
4233	..Lumber	5.0	9.4	6.1	9.1	1.3	0.8	2.4	2.7	5.6	5.5	1.2
4234	..Prof. equip.	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.2	1.3	0.6	2.2	2.1	4.2	4.2	1.6
42343	...Comp. equip.	7.5	6.5	7.2	6.0	2.1	0.8	3.2	4.1	7.3	7.3	2.2
4235	..Metals	6.0	5.0	5.4	4.7	1.6	0.7	4.5	3.1	5.5	5.5	3.2
4236	..Electrical	3.4	3.7	3.0	3.8	0.8	0.4	1.6	1.6	3.1	2.7	1.7
4237	..Hardware	5.0	4.8	5.7	4.8	1.4	0.8	2.0	2.8	5.4	5.0	1.9
4238	..Machinery	3.8	4.9	3.5	4.8	2.6	1.0	3.3	2.0	3.5	3.3	2.1
4239	..Misc. Durable	6.7	4.7	5.9	4.4	1.7	0.9	3.2	3.3	5.6	5.0	2.9
424	.Nondurable	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.9	0.5	0.4	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.7	0.9
4241	..Paper	7.4	8.0	7.3	7.3	1.0	1.3	2.8	3.0	7.3	7.7	2.9
4242	..Drugs	4.4	4.7	4.4	5.0	0.8	1.1	2.3	1.9	3.7	3.5	1.5
4243	..Apparel	4.6	5.7	4.6	5.9	1.8	1.4	3.9	3.2	4.0	3.8	2.7
4244	..Groceries	4.8	6.8	5.2	6.7	1.1	0.8	1.9	3.9	5.1	4.9	1.7
4245	..Farm products	6.7	6.6	7.2	7.0	2.1	0.9	3.3	3.5	5.7	4.4	2.8
4246	..Chemicals	5.4	8.0	6.6	8.4	1.9	0.6	3.6	1.9	6.6	6.3	2.3
4247	..Petroleum	4.3	3.5	3.9	2.9	1.3	1.2	2.7	3.2	4.1	4.3	2.5
4248	..Alcohol	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.5	1.3	1.2	2.2	2.0	5.1	6.2	2.1
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	6.0	7.0	5.6	6.6	1.2	2.4	2.2	5.6	5.0	5.6	2.1

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/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 \pm 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					
		2011	2010				2009	2011	2010				2009
		Jan.	Dec.r	Nov.r	Oct.	Sep.	Dec.r	Jan.	Dec.r	Nov.r	Oct.	Sep.	Dec.r
42	U.S. Total²	0.908	1.021	1.005	1.008	1.017	1.022	1.014	1.008	1.007	1.006	0.992	1.007
423	.Durable	0.887	1.020	1.000	1.018	1.037	1.023	0.999	0.989	1.004	1.011	1.004	0.989
4231	..Automotive	0.870	1.055	1.016	1.020	0.967	1.061	1.025	1.023	1.037	1.003	0.978	1.021
4232	..Furniture	0.903	0.973	1.028	1.053	1.069	0.979	0.998	0.997	0.996	1.019	1.026	0.998
4233	..Lumber	0.782	0.802	0.949	1.028	1.084	0.805	0.980	0.943	0.936	0.960	0.992	0.946
4234	..Prof. equip.	0.881	1.153	0.997	1.010	1.105	1.150	1.004	0.991	1.022	1.030	1.010	0.990
42343	...Comp. equip.	0.869	1.240	1.002	1.002	1.137	1.236	0.994	0.995	1.035	1.054	1.013	0.993
4235	..Metals	0.950	0.886	0.930	1.004	1.031	0.884	1.003	1.020	1.002	0.990	0.995	1.019
4236	..Electrical	0.887	0.991	1.052	1.046	1.060	0.991	0.992	0.992	1.007	1.032	1.027	0.992
4237	..Hardware	0.882	0.917	0.958	1.034	1.045	0.923	0.985	0.992	0.991	0.999	1.009	0.993
4238	..Machinery	0.875	1.048	0.929	0.985	1.038	1.042	0.988	0.981	0.996	0.998	0.993	0.981
4239	..Misc. Durable	0.897	1.005	1.036	1.061	1.024	1.004	0.990	0.965	1.010	1.037	1.036	0.964
424	.Nondurable	0.939	1.015	1.006	0.998	0.995	1.016	1.033	1.040	1.008	1.001	0.975	1.037
4241	..Paper ³	0.927	1.005	0.995	1.037	1.055	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4242	..Drugs	0.950	1.043	1.023	1.016	1.050	1.046	0.991	1.068	0.994	1.004	1.011	1.066
4243	..Apparel	0.854	0.840	1.014	1.101	1.099	0.855	1.025	0.972	0.977	1.020	1.067	0.973
4244	..Groceries	0.954	1.002	0.986	0.980	0.996	1.008	1.001	1.027	1.030	1.025	1.000	1.028
4245	..Farm products	1.050	1.137	1.123	1.060	0.950	1.151	1.298	1.254	1.156	1.017	0.730	1.234
4246	..Chemicals ³	0.984	0.958	0.949	0.970	1.010	0.959	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
4247	..Petroleum	0.961	1.010	0.982	1.000	0.997	0.991	1.012	1.071	0.973	0.965	0.966	1.072
4248	..Alcohol	0.730	1.206	1.045	0.995	1.026	1.210	0.972	0.935	1.044	1.034	1.006	0.934
4249	..Misc. Nondur.	0.843	0.882	0.907	0.930	0.956	0.904	1.034	0.992	0.982	0.974	0.979	0.993

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 73% 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 32% 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>.