# CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions
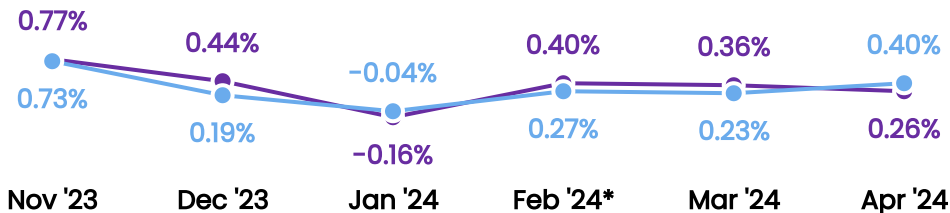# April 2024

About the Retail Monitor

The CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor provides a first look at how retail sales perform each month. The Retail Monitor leverages Affinity Solutions' data from more than 140 million credit and debit cards, with nearly nine billion transactions totaling more than $500 billion in annual spending, to measure the monthly and annual change in U.S. retail sales.
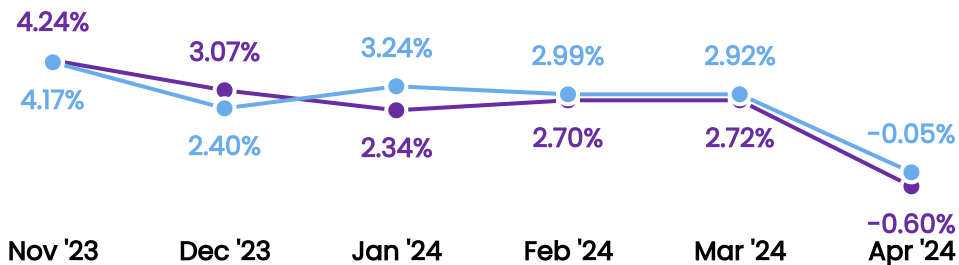
Learn more at: NRF | CNBC Retail Monitor

● Total retail sales (excl. gas & auto)
● Core retail sales (excl. gas, auto & restaurants)
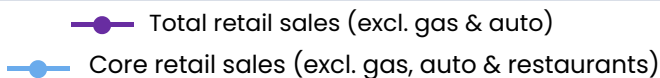
Monthly growth, seasonally adjusted.
*Month-over-month numbers are based on the first 28 days in February.

	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24	Feb '24*	Mar '24	Apr '24
Total retail sales	0.77%	0.44%	−0.16%	0.40%	0.36%	0.26%
Core retail sales	0.73%	0.19%	−0.04%	0.27%	0.23%	0.40%

Yearly growth, not seasonally adjusted.

	Nov '23	Dec '23	Jan '24	Feb '24	Mar '24	Apr '24
Total retail sales	4.24%	3.07%	2.34%	2.70%	2.72%	−0.60%
Core retail sales	4.17%	2.40%	3.24%	2.99%	2.92%	−0.05%

The year-over-year decline appeared to be an anomaly reflecting that Easter fell in April last year but came in March this year, and April had two fewer weekend days this year. Despite the drop, total sales were up 1.82% year over year for the first four months of the year and core sales were up 2.31%.

Sector Insights: Month-Over-Month Change in Retail Sales

*Month-over-month numbers are based on the first 28 days in February.

	Feb. 2024* M/M change	Mar. 2024 M/M change	Apr. 2024 M/M change
Total Retail (ex. auto and gas)	0.40%	0.36%	0.26%
Core Retail	0.27%	0.23%	0.40%
Building & Garden Supplies	−0.79%	−2.13%	4.39%
Clothing & Accessories	−0.19%	−0.01%	0.46%
Electronics & Appliances	−0.06%	−2.27%	2.14%
Food Services & Drinking Places	0.95%	0.92%	−0.32%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	−0.23%	−1.46%	1.67%
General Merchandise	0.09%	0.13%	0.26%
Grocery & Beverage	0.37%	1.17%	−1.11%
Health & Personal Care	0.14%	0.03%	0.85%
Non-store Retailers	−0.12%	2.48%	1.18%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Book Stores	1.66%	0.86%	0.26%

Sector Insights: Year-Over-Year Change in Retail Sales

	Feb. 2024 Y/Y change	Mar. 2024 Y/Y change	Apr. 2024 Y/Y change
Total Retail (ex. auto and gas)	2.70%	2.72%	−0.60%
Core Retail	2.99%	2.92%	−0.05%
Building & Garden Supplies	−1.51%	−3.97%	4.41%
Clothing & Accessories	4.17%	2.13%	2.08%
Electronics & Appliances	−2.64%	−5.92%	−1.55%
Food Services & Drinking Places	1.50%	1.91%	−2.86%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	−5.01%	−5.28%	−3.28%
General Merchandise	0.02%	3.38%	0.69%
Grocery & Beverage	1.91%	4.22%	−4.46%
Health & Personal Care	6.86%	4.5%	5.26%
Non-store Retailers	13.04%	15.47%	13.88%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Book Stores	9.67%	8.33%	−0.38%

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions?

The CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions (also Retail Monitor), is a monthly measure of retail sales created in collaboration with CNBC and the National Retail Federation, and powered by Affinity Solutions. All information produced by Affinity Solutions is anonymized and aggregated and does not include any personal identifiable information of an individual consumer.

The Retail Monitor will be released approximately one week prior to the U.S. Census Bureau's Retail Sales figures, offering an accurate, timelier and more in-depth look at consumer spending across the modern retail industry and consumer economy.

How accurate is the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions?

The CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions, uses the same seasonalization approach as the U.S. Census Bureau and has been shown to be highly correlated with Census' revised retail sales — the adjusted numbers published after the initial MRTS release as new data is collected and numbers are refined. Unlike MRTS, the Retail Monitor is not revised after its initial release.

CNBC, NRF and Affinity Solutions collaborated with leading economists and retail experts to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the Retail Monitor's methodology. The Retail Monitor has been shown to have a correlation of over 98% with MRTS. In addition, the Affinity Solutions data set has been fire-tested and reviewed by academics and financial firms that attest to the accuracy of the data in predicting and tracking retail sales.

The Retail Monitor will add significant new data to the conversation to better help markets, analysts and economists gauge the state of the retail industry and the consumer and provide unique insights into the retail economy.

How is the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions, different from the U.S. Census Bureau's monthly retail sales release?

The U.S. Census Bureau's Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) relies on a survey of a subsample of businesses to create an estimate of broad-based retail trade activity. Typically released nine working days into each month, the MRTS numbers are later revised multiple times as new data from surveyed firms comes in.

While MRTS has long been an established resource for measuring the retail industry, the emergence of new sources of data and the blurring of traditional channels means it is time to re-evaluate how retail sales are tracked and measured.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont'd)

Over the past few years, high frequency transaction data sets have achieved enough scale, accuracy and reliability to serve as a legitimate tool for calculating retail sales. Using data from Affinity Solutions on actual consumer spending, the Retail Monitor can deliver near real-time views of retail sales while also bypassing the revision process that is required for survey-based tools.

How is the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions, calculated?

The Retail Monitor leverages Comet™, Affinity Solutions' insights platform to analyze retail sales across the United States. Comet™ provides dynamic and accurate consumer spending insights by ingesting, segmenting and processing data from over 140 million permissioned credit and debit card transactions.

All metrics referenced are calculated based on Affinity's full comprehensive dataset and are seasonally adjusted where specified. Seasonal adjustments align our process with the established methods of the U.S. Census Bureau, promoting consistency and reliability. With this approach, the Retail Monitor delivers a timely, data-driven snapshot of retail health that resonates with the Census' own revised retail data. All information produced by Affinity Solutions is anonymized and aggregated and does not include any personal identifiable information of an individual consumer.