

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT A**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**U.S. Census Bureau**  
**Monthly Retail Surveys (MRS)**  
**OMB Control No. 0607-0717**

**Abstract**

The U.S. Census Bureau requests an extension of the Monthly Retail Surveys (MRS). The MRS is comprised of two surveys known as the Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) and the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MARTS). MRS are administered monthly to a sample of employer firms (i.e., businesses with paid employees) with establishments located in the United States and classified in retail trade and/or food services sectors as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

The MRTS provides estimates of monthly retail sales, end-of-month merchandise inventories, and quarterly e-commerce sales of retailers in the United States. In addition, the survey also provides an estimate of monthly sales at food service establishments and drinking places.

The MARTS, a subsample of MRTS, began in 1953 as a monthly survey for activity taking place during the previous month. The MARTS was developed in response to requests by government, business, and other users to provide an early indication of current retail trade activity in the United States. Retail sales are one of the primary measures of consumer demand for both durable and non-durable goods. The MARTS also provides an estimate of monthly sales at food service establishments and drinking places.

The estimates produced in the MRS are critical to the accurate measurement of total economic activity.

**Justification**

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

Sales, inventories, and e-commerce data provide a current statistical picture of the retail portion of consumer activity. The sales and inventories estimates in the MRTS measure current trends of economic activity that occur in the United States. The survey estimates provide valuable information for economic policy decisions and actions by the government and are widely used by private businesses, trade organizations, professional associations, and others for market research and analysis. The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses these data in determining the consumption portion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The MRS estimates of retail sales represent all operating receipts, including receipts from wholesale sales made at retail locations and services rendered as part of the sale of the goods, by businesses that primarily sell at retail. The sales estimates include sales made on credit as well as on a cash basis, but exclude receipts from sales taxes and interest charges from credit sales. Also excluded is non-operating income from such services as investments and real estate.

The estimates of merchandise inventories owned by retailers represent all merchandise located in retail stores, warehouses, offices, or in transit for distribution to retail establishments. The estimates of merchandise inventories exclude fixtures and supplies not held for sale, as well as merchandise held on consignment owned by others. The BEA use inventories data to determine the investment portion of the GDP. We publish retail sales and inventories estimates based on the NAICS.

Retail e-commerce sales are estimated from the same sample used to estimate preliminary and final U.S. retail sales. For coverage of the universe of e-commerce retailers, research was conducted to ensure that retail firms selected in the MRTS sample engaged in e-commerce. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts these voluntary surveys under the authority of Title 13, Sections 131 and 182 of the United States Code.

2. **Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

Sales data for select industries are released in the press release “Advance Monthly Sales for Retail Trade and Food Services,” approximately 15 days after the close of the reference month, which also includes more detailed estimates for the prior month. Advance inventory estimates for 3 aggregate levels are released in the “Advance Economic Indicator Report” approximately 27 days after the close of the reference month and the preliminary estimates for inventories data are released in the “Manufacturing and Trade Inventories and Sales” approximately 40 days after the reference month. E-commerce sales estimates are released quarterly as part of the “Quarterly Retail Ecommerce Sales” report, approximately 50 days following the reference period. Copies of the June 2025 releases mentioned above are included in Attachment 1. The MRTS and MARTS results are published on the Census Bureau’s website, <http://www.census.gov/retail>

Below are the retail form numbers along with a description of each form.

#### **MRTS Forms**

##### **Series**

##### **Description**

SM-4417S

Store/Sales Only/WO E-Commerce

SM-4417SE

Store/Sales Only W E-Commerce

SM-4417SS

Store/Sales Only/Screeners

SM-4417B

Store/Sales and Inventory/WO E-Commerce

SM-4417BE	Store/Sales and Inventory/ W E-Commerce
SM-4417BS	Store/Sales and Inventory/ Screener
SM-7217S	Food Services/Sales Only/ WO E-Commerce
SM-2017I	Inventory Only

#### **MARTS Forms**

<b>Series</b>	<b>Description</b>
SM-4417A	Store/Sales Only/ WO E-Commerce
SM-4417AE	Store/Sales Only W E-Commerce
SM-4417AS	Store/Sales Only/ Screener
SM-7217A	Food Services/Sales Only/ WO E-Commerce

Each MRS form has two versions; one with an “E” suffix and one with an “A” Suffix. The forms are identical, except that those with the “E” suffix are sent to smaller firms (which we refer to internally as “EINs”), while those with the “A” suffix are sent to larger firms, which we refer to internally as “alphas”. Thus, there are a total of 24 variants of forms that can be found at [https://www.census.gov/retail/get\\_forms.html](https://www.census.gov/retail/get_forms.html). Although we have stopped mailing forms, Centurion offers respondents the capability to download the appropriate fillable form.

The U.S. Census Bureau tabulates the collected data to provide, with measured reliability, statistics on United States retail sales. These estimates are especially valued by data users because of their timeliness.

The sales estimates are used by the BEA, Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), Federal Reserve Board (FRB), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and other government agencies, as well as business users in formulating economic decisions.

BEA is the primary Federal user of data collected in the Monthly Retail Surveys. BEA uses the information in its preparation of the National Income and Products Accounts (NIPA), and its benchmark and annual input-output tables. Data on retail sales are used to prepare monthly estimates of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) component of gross domestic product for all PCE goods categories, except tobacco, prescription drugs, motor vehicles, and gasoline and other motor fuel. These estimates are also published each month in the Personal Income and Outlays press release. If the survey were not conducted, BEA would lack comprehensive data from the retail sector. This would adversely affect the reliability of the NIPA and GDP. Production of the NIPA figures also require inventory figures in order to publish the monthly inventory to sales ratios. Additionally, they use MRS inventory figures to measure changes in inventories for estimates of gross output in the annual Input-Output Accounts tables, as well as for computing annual and quarterly GDP-by-industry statistics.

The BLS uses the data as input to their Producer Price Indexes and in developing productivity measurements. The data are also used for gauging current economic trends of the economy. BLS uses the estimates to develop consumer price indexes used in inflation and cost of living calculations.

CEA, other government agencies, and businesses use the survey results to formulate and make decisions. CEA reports the retail data, one of the principal federal economic indicators, to the President each month for awareness on the current picture on the “state of the economy”. In addition, CEA’s Macroeconomic Forecaster uses the retail sales data, one of the key monthly data releases each month, to keep track of real economic growth in the current quarter. Policymakers such as the FRB need to have the timeliest estimates in order to anticipate economic trends and act accordingly.

Private businesses use the retail sales and inventories data to compute business activity indexes. The private sector also uses retail sales as a reliable indicator of consumer activity. In addition, businesses use the estimates to measure how they are performing and predict future demand for their products.

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of the information disseminated by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau’s Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to the information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

The Census Bureau offers and encourages electronic submission of responses via the Internet by using its Centurion instrument. Responding via the Internet provides companies with a convenient reporting method and reduces respondent burden. This method of data collection also reduces the amount of data that has to be keyed; therefore, reducing data capture costs. No additional software is needed by the respondent. In addition, all data submitted through Centurion are encrypted. A letter is mailed with instructions for reporting online (see Attachment 4).

We continue to use other options such as telephone and email messaging to retrieve data from our respondents as well as other Census Bureau technologies, such as automated check-in to collect and process data. The National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, Indiana, performs telephone follow-up for all firms that have not responded by the due date, as well as those firms that have reported incomplete or questionable data. NPC will call from the third working day to the eighth working day of each month for MARTS and will call during the latter 2 weeks of the month for MRTS. Similarly, an email reminder which includes instructions for online reporting is sent to those firms that have not responded by the due date.

An automated system for check-in of returned questionnaires allows for timely identification of responses and removal from the delinquent workload. The automated telephone follow-up call

scheduling system ensures that firms are contacted when the data are likely to be available, based on past experience with each firm. The email follow-up encourages allows the firms to access the reminder during at their convenience and limits ignored calls. This process decreases the number of phone calls necessary to obtain data from respondents. Those businesses that historically responded by mail would receive a paper form, but paper forms are no longer included in the mailings as of Fall 2025. Businesses that historically report online will be directed to the electronic instrument for their response.

Below you will find a table indicating the percentage of response by each method:

Month	Survey	MRTS Check-In (%) by Type of Receipt (details may not equal total due to rounding)			
		Mail	Internet	Clerk/Fax/Analyst	Total %
Jun-25	MRTS	3%	88%	9%	100%
May-25	MRTS	3%	88%	10%	100%
Apr-25	MRTS	2%	88%	10%	100%
Mar-25	MRTS	3%	87%	11%	100%
Feb-25	MRTS	2%	87%	11%	100%
Jan-25	MRTS	2%	87%	11%	100%
<b>6 Mos Avg</b>	<b>MRTS</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Month	Survey	MARTS Check-In (%) by Type of Receipt (details may not equal total due to rounding)			
		Mail	Internet	Clerk/Fax/Analyst	Total %
Jun-25	MARTS	1%	92%	7%	100%
May-25	MARTS	2%	91%	8%	100%
Apr-25	MARTS	1%	91%	7%	100%
Mar-25	MARTS	1%	92%	7%	100%
Feb-25	MARTS	1%	92%	8%	100%
Jan-25	MARTS	1%	92%	7%	100%
<b>6 Mos Avg</b>	<b>MARTS</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2.

Consultations with other governmental agencies, trade associations (including the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and the National Retail Federation (NRF)) and government and private sector data users via telephone conversations, meetings, trade journal articles, and written correspondence indicate that these data are not available from other sources on an ongoing timely basis.

Annual sales and inventories by retailers are collected in the Annual Integrated Economic Survey AIES (OMB Control Number 0607-1024), and retail sales are collected in the quinquennial Economic Census. The Annual Retail Trade Survey (ARTS) transitioned to AIES, and the data formerly collected for ARTS will now be collected as part of the AIES, which began data collection in March 2024. While the annual and quinquennial census data provide levels of sales for retail trade, they do not provide the data, on a timely basis, needed to monitor the current state of the economy. The latest data available from ARTS is for statistical year 2022. The monthly estimates are the only available data source for use as a trend series for evaluating current business conditions.

The MARTS sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a subsample of firms in MRTS. Rather than burdening the entire MRTS sample to report early enough to produce an advance estimate, we select a subset to produce the MARTS. Firms that report to the MARTS survey are not required to provide sales and ecommerce sales information for MRTS. Rather, sales and ecommerce data collected for MARTS are transferred into the database used for MRTS. This ensures that respondents do not have to provide duplicate responses. In addition, if companies have their end-of-month inventory estimates available during the MARTS collection, they can provide those figures at the same time.

**5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

The MARTS is a subsample of approximately 4,800 firms in the MRTS which in total contains approximately 13,000 firms. Rather than burdening the entire MRTS sample to report early enough to produce an advance estimate, we select a subset to produce the MARTS. The design used to select the samples for both MARTS and MRTS use the least number of sampling units required to produce national level estimates with the desired level of reliability, thus minimizing respondent burden. Sales data are collected from the largest firms and from a sample of small and medium-sized firms. The selection of a new MRTS sample approximately every five- to-seven years replaces about 98 percent of the small and medium-sized firms that participate in the survey, thus minimizing respondent burden by redistributing reporting burden. Typically, the selection of a new MARTS sample occurs approximately every two and one-half to three years replacing a portion of the small and medium-sized firms that participate in the earlier survey, thus redistributing the earlier response date burden. The current sample of retailers was introduced in April 2018 for MRTS and the new sample was introduced in November 2022 for MARTS. Currently, there is not a scheduled reselection of the MRTS and MARTS samples, although it is anticipated to be late 2026.

The Census Bureau accepts data prepared on a company's own form. This relieves the respondent of the burden of posting data to a report form.

Furthermore, firms are not required to maintain additional records. The data requested are generally maintained in existing company records. Carefully prepared estimates are

acceptable if book figures are not available. Finally, interviewers use computers with online edits of response data to conduct follow-up and delinquent interviews, thus reducing the number of callbacks to respondents.

**6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

Estimates from the MRTS and MARTS are used extensively by government and private economists and others to evaluate current economic conditions. The monthly retail sales and inventories estimates are important economic indicators and provide timely input for BEA's computation of the National Income and Product Accounts. Less frequent data collection would create a serious gap in the economic information available to evaluate current economic conditions and to formulate economic policy. Moreover, these statistics provide current-to-previous month and year-to-year trend data that are essential for evaluating current conditions and for formulating economic policy.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**

- requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;
- in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

The collection of these data is consistent with each of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines above.

**8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments.**

**Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

**Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.**

A pre-submission notice was placed in the Federal Register on August 5, 2025, Volume 90, Number 148, (pages 37468-37469), inviting the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on the information collection.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) submitted a letter supporting the MRS. This letter can be found at Attachment 2.

There is an ongoing effort to request feedback from respondents in the online reporting instrument, Centurion, which is located within the burden statement in Attachment 5.

**9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

The Census Bureau does not provide any payment or gifts to respondents for participating in either the MARTS or the MRTS.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.**

Data collected in these surveys are confidential under Title 13, Section 9 of the United States Code. We inform respondents of the voluntary and confidential nature of this survey in the initial mailing letter that we send to our contacts. This letter is available to respondents on our website at [http://www.census.gov/retail/marts/get\\_forms.html](http://www.census.gov/retail/marts/get_forms.html). The initial mailing letter is included in Attachment 3 and a monthly letter is included in Attachment 4. On a monthly basis, we inform respondents of the voluntary and confidential nature of this survey on the questionnaires/forms we provide as well as on our website. Screenshots of our electronic reporting instrument can be found in Attachment 5. The survey questionnaires/forms are included as Attachments 6 and 7. As mentioned above in Section 1: Necessity of Information Collection, please note that since each MRS form has two versions; one with an "E" suffix and one with an "A" suffix, which are identical, we have included only the "A" suffix versions of the form in the attachments.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.**



The monthly retail surveys request only routine business information that is generally available from existing company records and is not of a sensitive nature.

**12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.**

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**
- **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.**
- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included under 'Annual Cost to Federal Government' (Item #14).**

Approximately 13,000 retail businesses are requested to report in the MRTS each month, which includes the MARTS subset of approximately 4,800.

According to responses given by a sample of respondents, we computed an average of five minutes per response for MARTS and seven minutes per response for MRTS. However, it should be noted that to eliminate duplication, firms that report to the MARTS survey are not required to provide sales and ecommerce sales information for MRTS, as previously referenced in Section 5: Minimizing Burden.

This results in an annual burden of 18,200 hours (see chart).

<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Annual Responses</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Total Burden Hours</b>
13,000	12	156,000	0.11666 (7 min)	18,200

We used the MRTS sample size and burden hours to estimate the overall burden for the MRS since the MARTS sample is a subsample of MRTS. The MRTS survey has the maximum number of questions for any given survey respondent as well as the longest estimated burden (at 7 min).

The annual cost to respondents is estimated to be \$714,714 based on the median hourly salary of \$39.27 for accountants and auditors. (Occupational Employment Statistics- Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2024 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, \$39.27 represents the median hourly wage of the full-time wage and salary earnings of accountants and auditors SOC code 13-2011). <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>

**13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).**

We do not expect respondents to incur any costs other than that of their time to respond. The information requested is of the type and scope normally maintained in company records and no special hardware or accounting software or system is necessary to provide answers for this information collection. Therefore, respondents are not expected to incur any capital and start-up costs or system maintenance costs in responding. Furthermore, purchasing of outside accounting or information collection services, if performed by the respondent, is part of usual business practices and not specifically required for this information collection.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

The total cost to the Federal Government for the Monthly Retail Surveys (MARTS and MRTS combined) is expected to be relatively fixed over the upcoming three years at approximately \$4.9 million per year, all borne by the Census Bureau. This estimate includes the cost for such things as data collection, processing, review of tabulated data, publication, equipment, overhead, printing, support staff, etc.

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.**

There are no changes to the information collection since the last OMB approval.

**16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.**

The Census Bureau mails the MARTS letters to the respondents roughly 6 business days prior to the end of the reference month and mails the MRTS forms to the respondents on the last workday of the reference month. The return date requested is the second business day after the close of the reference month for MARTS and the 8th business days following the close of the reference month for MRTS.

An automated system screens the questionnaires for completeness and consistency when the data are keyed. Data are tabulated and edited, summary estimates are analyzed, and data tables are prepared.

Sales data for select industries are released in the press release "Advance Monthly Sales for Retail

Trade and Food Services,” approximately 15 days after the close of the reference month, which also includes more detailed estimates for the prior month. Advance inventory estimates for 3 aggregate levels are released in the “Advance Economic Indicator Report” approximately 27 days after the close of the reference month and the preliminary estimates for inventories data are released in the “Manufacturing and Trade Inventories and Sales” approximately 40 days after the reference month. E-commerce sales estimates are released quarterly as part of the “Quarterly Retail Ecommerce Sales” report, approximately 50 days following the reference period.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

We wish to continue to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”**

The agency certifies compliance with 5 CFR 1320.9 and the related provisions of 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3).