

US Retail Sales Slip in Seasonal Lull



US retail sales fell in February as the industry experienced a regular slowdown for the time of year.

Revenue slipped 0.4% versus the previous month to \$697.9 billion million — adjusted for seasonal variation — compared with a rise of 3.2% in January, according to data the US Census Bureau released Wednesday. The decrease also reflected challenges in the financial markets that created uncertainty.

“February is typically the slowest month of the year, so monthly fluctuations are expected,” said National Retail Federation (NRF) chief economist Jack Kleinhenz.

Sales climbed 5.4% from a year earlier, but growth was still down from January’s 7.7% year-on-year increase, the NRF noted.

“February’s retail sales growth...is continuing to reflect consumers’ ability and willingness to spend thoughtfully on household priorities,” said NRF president Matthew Shay. “While recent volatility in banking and financial markets is adding to economic uncertainty, the underlying fundamentals in the consumer economy remain on solid footing as jobs and wages are growing and inflation is trending down.”

In February, sales advanced year on year in eight of the nine categories the US Census Bureau monitors. The clothing and accessories segment — which includes jewelry — increased 4.1% but dropped 0.8% from January. Online sales across all products grew 8.5% relative to a year ago and gained 1.6% compared with the previous month.

Image: People shopping at a mall. (Shutterstock)