

## U.S. Jewelry Store Sales +7% to \$2B

Department Store Sales -7%

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**RAPAPORT...** U.S. jewelry store sales rose 6.9 percent year on year in August to \$2.389 billion. The pace of growth was down from 9 percent in July. And while the consumer price index (CPI) for jewelry rose just 2.5 percent year on year in August, it was flirting with the record high of 183 points. Jewelry store sales for the first eight months of 2013 have risen 9.2 percent year on year to \$19.652 billion.

Meanwhile, advanced estimates for retail sales at U.S. department stores in September fell 6.7 percent year on year to \$12.686 billion. Total retail and food services sales rose 3.5 percent to \$425.9 billion. Nonstore retail sales increased 8.9 percent and retail trade sales increased 3.1 percent.

Lindsey Piegza, the chief economist with Sterne Agee, explained that U.S. consumers "gobbled up autos" during the first half of the year, but they compensated by cutting back elsewhere. "This month, as consumers cut back on autos, they increased their purchases of other nondurable, discretionary goods."



Sterne Agee cited sales strength for furniture, electronics, health and personal care products and sporting goods.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) concluded that September recorded broad sales gains in most retail sectors.

"Retailers witnessed a solid sales performance in September, with marked gains in all sectors, excluding clothing," said NRF's president Matthew Shay. "The American consumer remains ever-cautious and value-driven but continues to spend. Only time will tell if and when the government shutdown and debt ceiling debacle will impact retailers and consumers this fall and winter. The true economic impact of Washington's inability to enact policies that enhance and sustain economic growth and certainty remains to be seen."

The NRF's chief economist, Jack Kleinhenz, added, "Falling gas prices combined with rising housing and stock prices continue to support consumer spending, and the

broader economy. While far from robust, consumers are shopping, but they are spending both discriminately and moderately. Volatility still persists in various retail sectors but spending has somewhat stabilized heading into the all-important holiday shopping season.”

Clothing and clothing accessories stores' sales rose only 0.7 percent year on year in September and general merchandise stores' sales fell 0.2 percent, according to the NRF.

Source : Rapaport news