# Consumers Continue to Struggle

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Advance retail sales were mostly weaker than expected in February, continuing to indicate a pullback in consumption and overall economic growth to start the year. Headline retail sales, expected to bounce back after a weather-impacted January, climbed by just +0.2% in February, well below the +0.6% median forecast. The previously reported January sales decline was revised even lower, from -0.9% to -1.2%.

Weakness was broad-based as sales in seven of thirteen major categories were lower last month, most notably motor vehicles, gas stations, and restaurants and bars. Sales at non-store retailers (e-commerce) were the primary positive driver last month, adding +0.4 to the overall increase, while food services and drinking establishments subtracted -0.2.

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