



2024 CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor Year in Review



The CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, powered by Affinity Solutions, measures retail sales every month using our aggregated, permissioned, privacy-compliant consumer purchase data.

It offers a “month-over-month” look at retail sales performance as well as “year-over-year” figures for the following:

- Total retail sales (excluding auto, gas)
- Core retail sales (excluding auto, gas, and restaurants)
- 12 distinct retail sectors

The CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor is highly correlated with the U.S. Census Bureau’s revised retail sales numbers but offers a more timely, accurate, and in-depth look at consumer spending across the modern retail industry and consumer economy.

2024 Retail Monitor Year in Review

With the December numbers in and strategies for 2025 underway, we are looking back at retail performance throughout the year.

By understanding broad macro trends in retail sales, brands, retailers, and advertisers can better identify and capitalize on growth opportunities, address potential challenges proactively, and make data-driven decisions that drive success.

The retail categories covered in this report include:

- Furniture & Home Furnishing Stores
- Electronics & Appliances Stores
- Building & Garden Supplies
- Food & Beverage (which includes grocery and package stores)
- Health & Personal Care Stores
- Clothing & Accessories Stores
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Book Stores
- General Merchandise Stores (which includes department and discount stores)
- Miscellaneous Store Retailers (which includes florists, stationary and gift shops, wholesale clubs and others)
- Nonstore Retailers (which includes digital goods)
- Food Services & Drinking Places
- Gasoline Stations

CEO Perspectives Recap



Overall, 2024 was a year of moderate growth in retail sales. Total sales for the 12 months of 2024 were up 3.0% from 2023 indicating a steady increase in consumer spending.

Although inflation slowed in 2024, the price of most consumer goods – notably groceries – remained stubbornly high. To combat higher prices, some consumers cut back on discretionary spending or chose to “trade down” from expensive products to more affordable ones where possible which is in line with the moderate, though not spectacular, retail growth.

With inflation moderating, we also saw interest rates come down during the year. This, coupled with a strong labor market and wage growth

in the latter half of the year, encouraged consumer spending through the busy holiday season from October through December.

This year, Thanksgiving fell on the latest date possible, pushing part of the critical holiday weekend into December. However, the cumulative holiday season (October through December) saw a stronger growth of 3.7% compared to the same period in 2023 suggesting that consumers were willing to spend during key shopping events.

Looking Ahead

With a new president and administration, 2025 could be a year that brings both risk and new opportunities. Top of mind for many retailers is the impact of new tariffs and how to manage supply chains and production costs, while providing value to wary consumers.

However, in the context of the broader macroeconomic picture, retailers should feel optimistic about 2025. The unemployment rate is still fairly low and wage growth continues to exceed the rate of inflation. Combined with 2024 ending on a high note with a YoY increase of 2.58% for Total Retail and 2.84% for Core Retail, this year looks promising.



JONATHAN SILVER
CEO and Founder

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2025 will be a pivotal year for retail. With a new president and administration, retailers must monitor macroeconomic trends and policies including new tariffs, changes to interest rates, and overall consumer confidence.

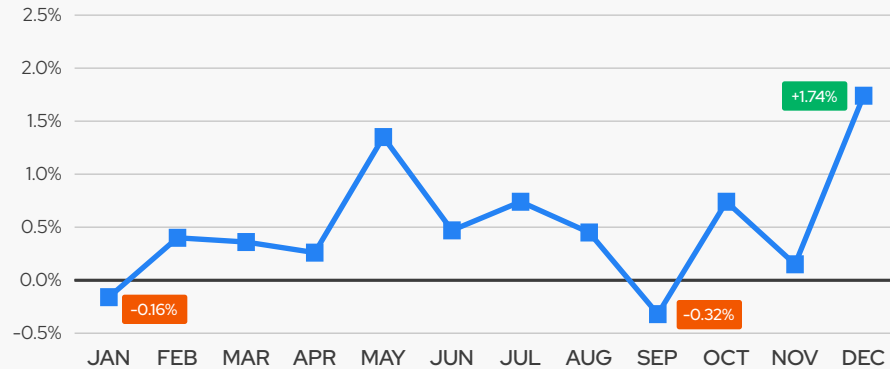
Tracking spending trends monthly and yearly helps retailers strategically target customers with the right messages at the right time driving optimal outcomes.

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Total and Core Sales

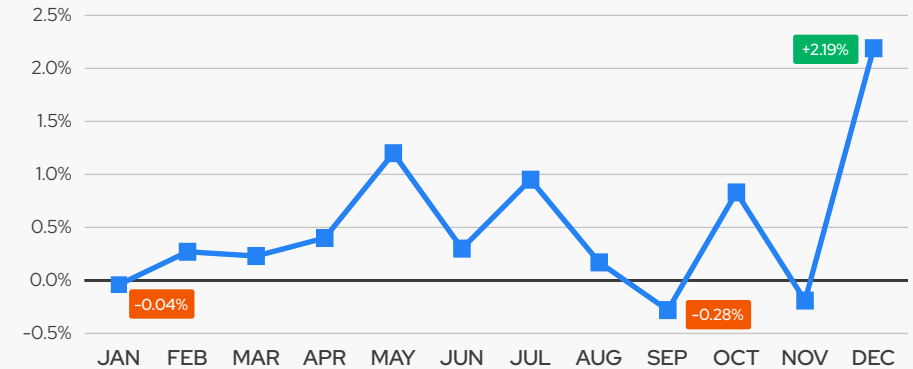
2024 Total Retail Sales

MoM Change Seasonally Adjusted



2024 Core Retail Sales

MoM Change Seasonally Adjusted



MoM Total and Core Sales Winner: December

- Total Retail Sales, which includes retail and restaurants but excludes auto and gas, was up 1.74%.
- Core Retail Sales, including retail but excluding restaurants, auto, and gas, were up 2.19%.

MoM Total and Core Sales Underperformers: January and September*

January and September were the only months that saw declines in MoM total sales and core sales.

- Total Retail Sales: January (-0.16%) and September (-0.32%)
- Core Retail Sales: January (-0.04%) and September (-0.28%)

*November had a slight 0.19% decline in core sales but a 0.15% increase in total sales.

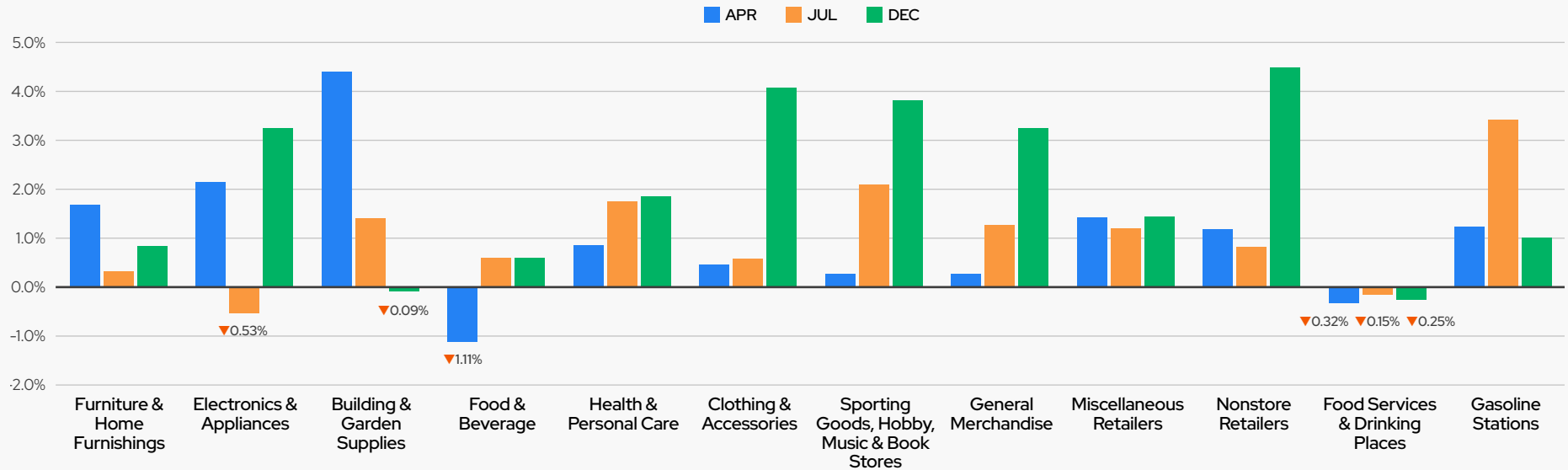


KEY TAKEAWAY

Although many retailers are introducing Black Friday sales earlier and extending them well past Cyber Monday, most holiday shopping still happens in December. With the holidays in full swing, December is a perennial strong month for retail sales.

Monthly Growth

Months With Strongest MoM Growth Across Categories



MoM Winners: April, July, and December

April, July, and December saw most categories increase in MoM growth, with declines in two categories each month. Those were:

- **April:** Food & Beverage (-1.11%) and Food Services & Drinking Places (-0.32%)
- **July:** Electronics & Appliances (-0.53%) and Food Services & Drinking Places (-0.15%)
- **December:** Building & Garden Supplies (-0.09%) and Food Services & Drinking Places (-0.25%)



KEY TAKEAWAY

In addition to December, April and July showed strong growth this year. Retailers should keep an eye on spring and summer travel when consumers might be more likely to spend on clothing, sporting goods, and gas for their vacations to capitalize on these opportunities.

Monthly Growth

MoM Underperformer: September

September struggled with 9 out of 12 categories declining in MoM sales. Those were:

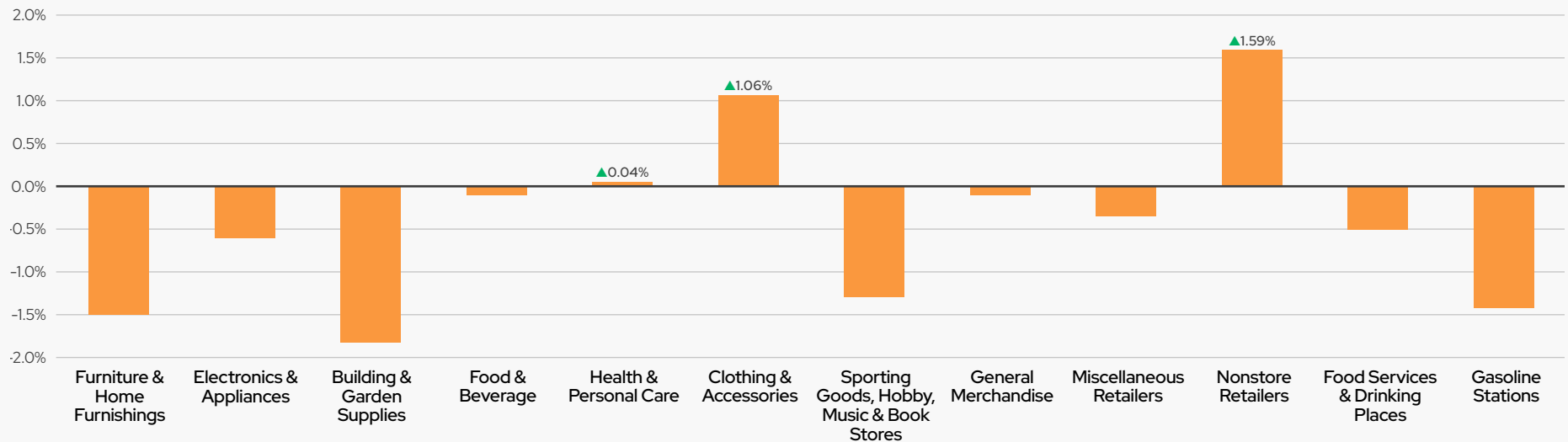
- Furniture & Home Furnishings
- Electronics & Appliances
- Building & Garden Supplies
- Food & Beverage
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Book Stores
- General Merchandise
- Miscellaneous Retailers
- Food Services & Drinking Places
- Gasoline Stations

September did see three categories with MoM increases:

- Health & Personal Care (+0.04%)
- Clothing & Accessories (+1.06%)
- Nonstore Retailers (+1.59%)

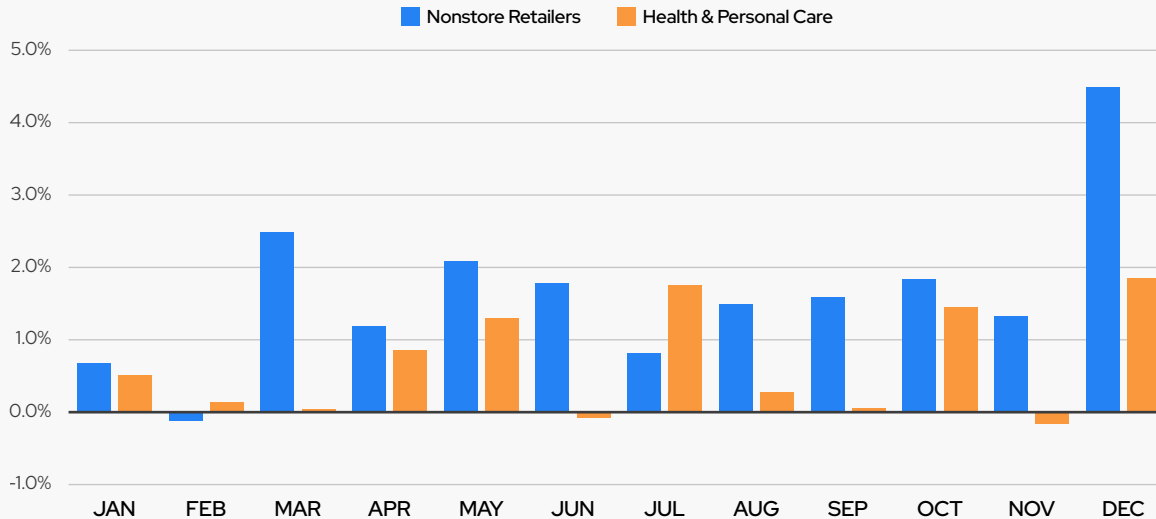


September Saw the Most MoM Declines Across Categories



Recap By Category

Categories With the Most MoM Increases



Focusing on categories, there were some clear winners and others that struggled for much of 2024.

MoM Category Winners: Nonstore Retailers and Health & Personal Care

- February was the only month Nonstore Retailers saw a MoM decline (-0.12%)
- Health & Personal Care saw two months with MoM decline – June (-0.04%) and November (-0.16%)

MoM Category Underperformers: Electronics & Appliances

It was a challenging year for Electronics & Appliances, with only three months of MoM growth (January, April, and December).

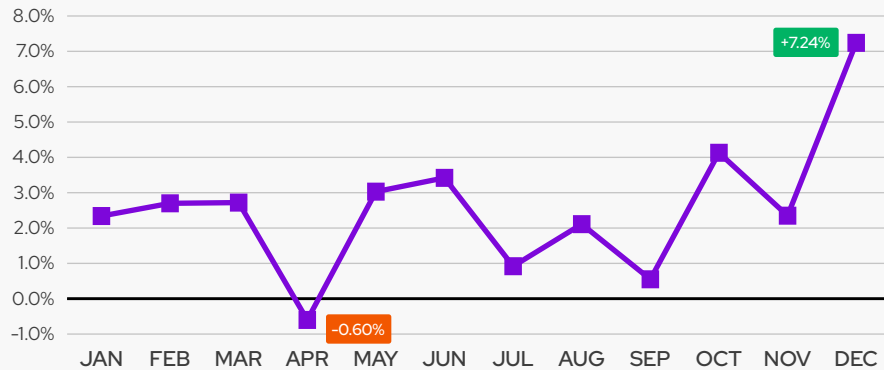


KEY TAKEAWAY

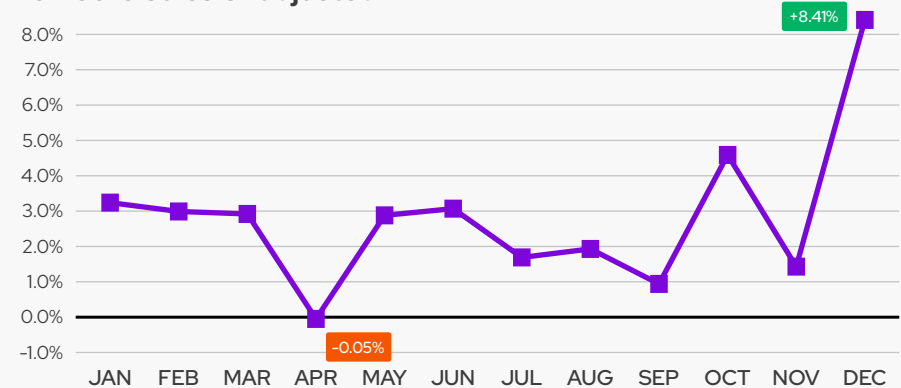
During the pandemic, health, wellness, and personal care became popular with many people stuck at home. This trend continues in part due to the growth of social media sites and accounts focused on wellness. TikTok, notably, has helped drive cosmetics sales through viral trends and content. On the other hand, durable goods, like electronics and appliances, benefited from folks at home eager to tackle renovation projects and upgrade home electronics. These categories have not yet seen a rebound but as new products and innovations continue to flood the market, this coming year could spark renewed consumer demand for durable goods.

Total and Core Sales

YoY Total Sales Unadjusted



YoY Core Sales Unadjusted



YoY Total and Core Sales Winner: December

- Total Retail Sales which includes retail and restaurants but excludes auto and gas was up 7.24%.
- Core Retail Sales which includes retail but excludes restaurants, auto and gas was up 8.41%.

YoY Total and Core Sales Underperformer: April

April was the only month in 2024 that saw a YoY decline in total sales and core sales.

- April Total Retail Sales (-0.60%)
- April Core Retail Sales (-0.05%)



KEY TAKEAWAY

Retailers should be encouraged by the consistent strong YoY growth in 2024. With a new administration taking over in Washington, D.C., this year, the first several months of 2025 could be pivotal. Purchase metrics are the most accurate measure of consumer responses to the economic climate, making them crucial for guiding business and marketing strategies.

Monthly Growth

YoY Winner: December

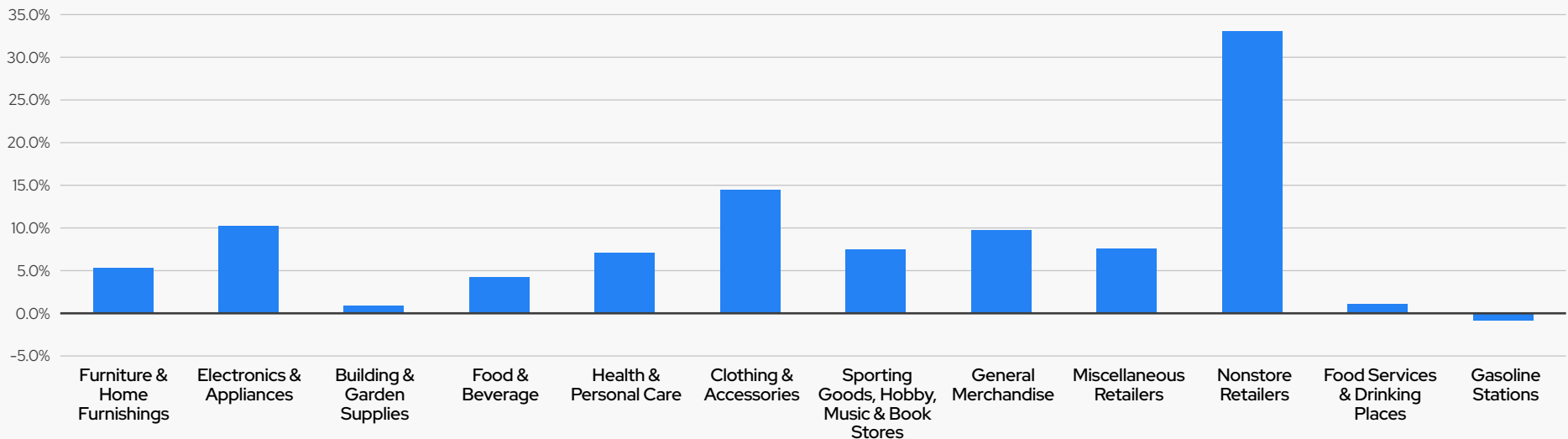
- **December** saw 11 of 12 categories with YoY increases. (Gasoline Stations was the only category to decline at -0.84%)
- **October** was another month with strong YoY growth across categories, with only three categories showing YoY declines (Electronics & Appliances, Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Books, and Gasoline Stations).



KEY TAKEAWAY

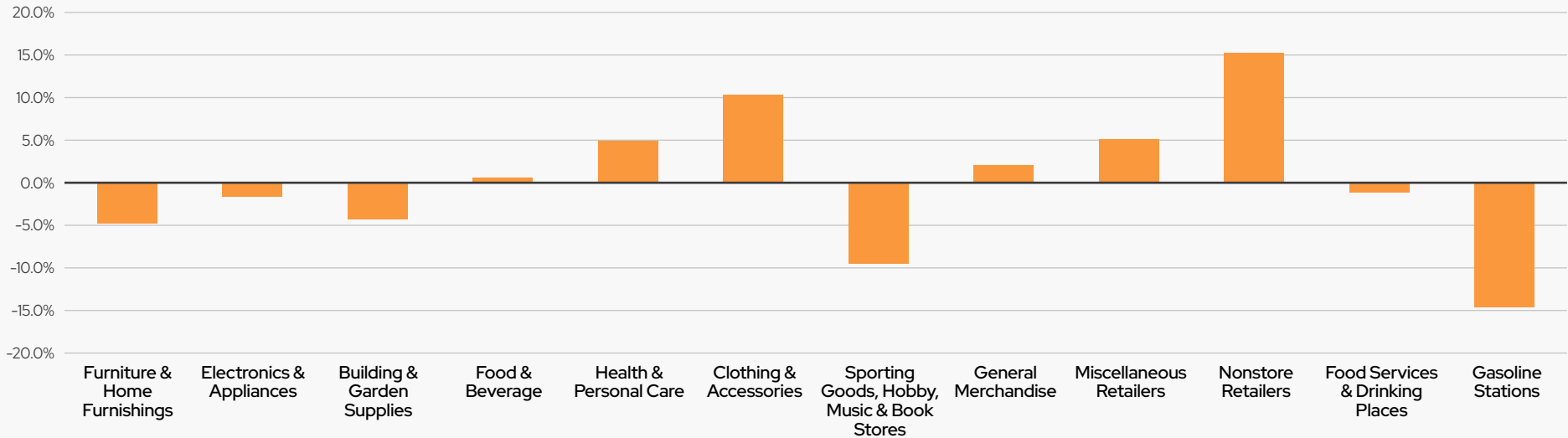
December retail sales saw a boost thanks to a late Thanksgiving that pushed Cyber Monday into the month, along with strategic discounting and a likely boost from interest rate cuts. Electronics and appliances saw a significant rebound, while furniture and home furnishings also experienced positive growth due to end-of-year deals. Clothing sales saw high-end retailers thriving while discount and department stores saw more sluggish growth underscoring importance of truly understanding how your customers are purchasing both in your store and at competitors.

YoY Category Increases in December



Monthly Growth

September Was a Mixed Bag for YoY Growth



YoY Underperformer: September

Six of twelve categories saw YoY declines in September:

- Furniture & Home Furnishings (-4.80%)
- Electronics & Appliances (-1.63%)
- Building & Garden Supplies (-4.25%)
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Books (-9.46%)
- Food Services & Drinking Places (-1.13%)
- Gasoline Stations (-14.60%)

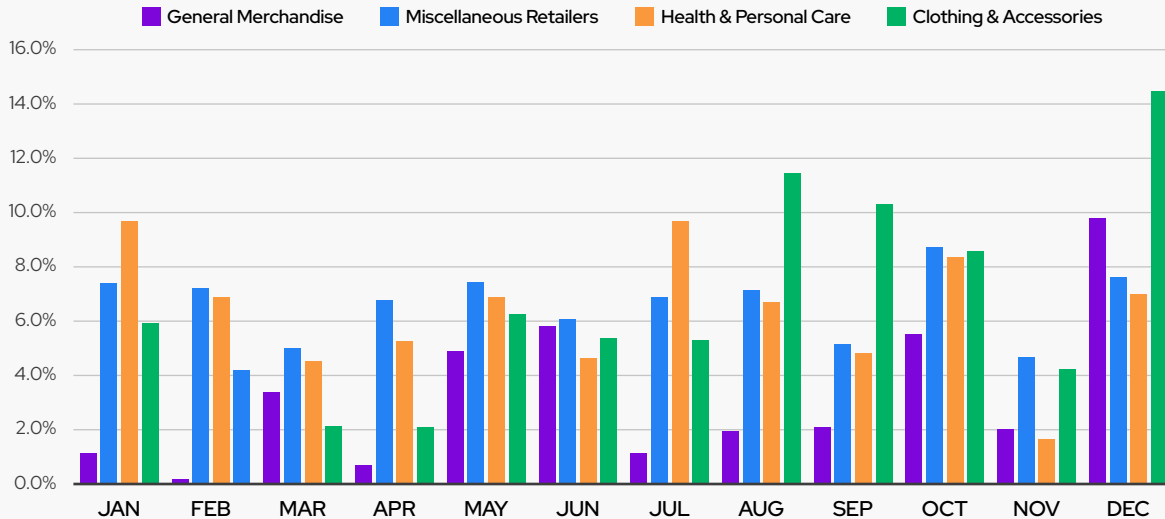


KEY TAKEAWAY

While clothing saw a boost likely due to lingering back-to-school shopping and early holiday promotions, durable goods categories like furniture and electronics struggled, potentially due to consumer reluctance on big-ticket items and market saturation. Even food spending was uneven, with restaurant spending down while grocery saw a slight increase, reflecting ongoing price sensitivity among consumers.

Category View

Categories with YoY Increases Every Month of 2024



When looking at the data year over year, there were multiple categories with positive growth throughout 2024.

YoY Category Winners: Multiple

Five of twelve categories were up every month:

- **Health & Personal Care** saw the biggest gains in January (9.66%) and July (+9.68%).
- **Clothing & Accessories** saw the biggest gains in August (+11.44%) and December (+14.47%).
- **General Merchandise** saw the biggest gains in June (+5.79%) and December (+9.77%).
- **Miscellaneous Retailers** saw the biggest gains in October (+8.70%) and December (+7.60%).
- **Nonstore Retailers** saw the biggest gains in January (+25.47%) and December (+33.05%).

Three of twelve categories struggled in terms of YoY growth:

- **Electronics & Appliances** were down YoY for 11 consecutive months but strongly rebounded in December (+10.23%).
- **Gasoline Stations** were down YoY for 11 of 12 months with the only gain in May (+0.79%).
- **Furniture & Home Furnishings** were down YoY for 10 out of 12 months. October and December were the only months with YoY growth (+1.87% and +5.34% respectively).



KEY TAKEAWAY

These findings track with larger trends and analysis about sales pre- and post-pandemic. While stuck at home, people invested in home improvement, purchasing large ticket items including new furniture and appliances. Post-pandemic, this has resulted in sluggish sales across these categories while essentials like clothing have remained steady. Strong December sales may be signaling stronger growth to come as updates to electronics or appliances become available and home furnishings may need updating.

What This Means for Retailers

By understanding macro trends and insights, retailers can get a broad understanding of the entire retail landscape to make informed decisions, navigate future challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

The competitive landscape matters. Understanding the performance of 12 distinct retail sectors allows businesses to clearly see the competitive landscape, identify emerging categories, and tailor their strategies accordingly.

Targeting the right audience is critical. These insights can help identify high-growth consumer segments so retailers can tailor marketing messages more precisely.

Macro-trend awareness helps businesses understand broader economic and consumer trends influencing retail sales, enabling proactive responses to challenges and the agility to seize new opportunities.

Understanding broad spending trends enables:

- **Optimized timing:** Adjust marketing campaigns to align with seasonal trends and capitalize on peak sales periods.
- **Improved campaign effectiveness:** Measure the impact of marketing campaigns against real-time sales data and make necessary adjustments.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Leveraging data analytics to gain insights into consumer behavior and market trends is essential.





Retail's Next Chapter is Here.

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