Retail spending remains subdued ahead of Christmas

AUCKLAND, 10 November 2026 – Consumer spending in October continued the mixed but overall tough environment for retailers seen in recent months.

Spending across Paymark's core retail merchants reached $3.682B during October 2026. However, retail spending remained subdued, with spending through Paymark's network down -1.0% compared with the same month last year, after adjusting for merchants moving to or from the network.

Paymark Chief Sales Officer Bruce Proffit says the figures reflect the challenging conditions retailers have faced for much of the year.

"Spending on groceries and petrol remained ahead of last year, but spending across most other retail categories was lower than in October 2025," said Proffit.

"With the busy Christmas period approaching, retailers will be hoping that events such as Black Friday help bring more shoppers through their physical and digital doors."

Looking at spending regionally, Gisborne recorded the strongest annual core retail spending growth in October, up +1.9%, followed by Palmerston North at +1.7% and Wairarapa at +1.6%.

The largest declines were recorded in Marlborough (down -9.4%), Bay of Plenty (down -3.3%), and Canterbury (down -2.4%).

For the first time, Paymark is also including Online EFTPOS spending in its monthly update, providing another view of how New Zealanders are paying online.

Online EFTPOS allows shoppers to pay directly from their bank account when making a purchase, without needing to use a debit or credit card.

Spending through Online EFTPOS reached $33.4m in October, up +6.8% from October 2025.

"We're continuing to see growth in digital payment channels as more New Zealanders shop online and look for simple ways to pay," says Proffit.

"Online EFTPOS gives consumers the option to pay directly from their bank account, while offering merchants a lower-cost alternative to card payments.

"We expect activity across online channels to increase as we head into Black Friday and the Christmas shopping period."

PAYMARK All Cards underlying* spending for CORE RETAIL merchants for October 2026

Region	Value transactions $millions	Underlying value* Annual % change on 2025
Auckland/Northland	1,373	-0.6%
Waikato	313	-0.9%
BOP	247	-3.3%

Gisborne	34	1.9%
Taranaki	84	-2.3%
Hawke's Bay	137	0.7%
Whanganui	52	0.8%
Palmerston North	114	1.7%
Wairarapa	44	1.6%
Wellington	308	-0.4%
Nelson	75	-1.5%
Marlborough	43	-9.4%
West Coast	28	0.0%
Canterbury	449	-2.4%
South Canterbury	61	-1.1%
Otago	226	-1.2%
Southland	91	0.8%
New Zealand	**3,682**	**-1.0%**

Figure 1: All Cards NZ underlying* spending through Paymark in October 2026 for core retail merchants (* Underlying excludes large clients moving to or from Paymark)

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ABOUT CUSCAL PAYMARK

Cuscal Paymark has long been a leader in local payments, since we launched EFTPOS in 1989. We've been an important part of New Zealand's growth as an economy, providing a trusted service for almost every Kiwi consumer. Today we sit at the heart of Aotearoa's payments infrastructure with products being built using open banking technology and providing retailers with easy access to data about their own customers' habits. Our platform lets tech start-ups and banking giants come together to provide better service to businesses and consumers. As New Zealand's leading payments innovator, we specialise in payment solutions, that help businesses grow – in-store, online and via mobile. We provide digital payments solutions for New Zealand businesses who need safe and secure payments, in turn giving Kiwi shoppers seamless payment options.

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