Consumer spending was up in early July but flat by month's end

AUCKLAND, 6 August 2026 – Consumer spending transacted through Paymark's payments network was higher in July overall compared to the same month last year, but the spending lift seen in the early weeks was flattening by the end of the month.

Consumer spending processed through all Core Retail merchants in Paymark's payments network during July 2026 reached $3.787B, which is up +1.7% on July 2025, following adjustments for merchants coming and going from the network.

Paymark's Chief Sales Officer, Bruce Proffit, says the higher spending this July was partly a result of there being five Fridays in the month, the weekday on which spending is typically higher.

However, he adds that the more telling picture of the month's results was seen in the higher spending recorded early in the month, which then tailed off in the last two weeks of July.

"Consumer spending on any Friday is typically around 10-20% higher than a Tuesday, for example, hence the number of Fridays in July this year added around 0.5% to the annual growth rate – which contributed to the monthly spending being up on last year," says Proffit.

"Looking at the pattern within the month, spending was up in the early weeks, including +4.7% above the same time a year ago in the week ending Sunday 19 July, which was the second week of the school holiday period. It was then only up +0.01% in the last seven days of the month."

"It is also noteworthy that petrol prices were declining early in the month and both petrol prices and interest rates increased over the second half of July," he says.

Proffit notes that as well as petrol and interest rate pressures on budgets, variations in holiday periods and weather conditions year-to-year had different impacts across the country in July.

"For instance, the largest annual percentage growth in spending was seen on Thursday 9 July, just before the Matariki public holiday, which included a small bump in Hospitality / Accommodation spending from people's travel around the long weekend. Another sharp increase was seen on Tuesday 28 July, when comparatively, the same date in 2025 saw a high-impact weather event."

(Core Retail spending through Paymark's network on 9 July 2026 was $140.3m, up +14.2% on 10 July 2025, while spending on 28 July 2026 was $114.3m, up +9.3% on 29 July 2025.)

"All in all, this shows that merchants continue to face challenging conditions for retailing in the depths of winter in 2026."

Regionally, the annual growth rates for Core Retail spending through Paymark's payments network in July 2026 were highest in Whanganui (+4.7%), Waikato (+3.7%) and Palmerston North (+3.7%), while spending declines were seen in Marlborough (-6.1%), Wairarapa (-1.0%), Wellington (-0.8%) and Otago (-0.3%).

"Wet weather events during July contributed to some of these regional spending declines, such as in Marlborough, which for Paymark's figures includes Kaikoura and Blenheim, and Otago, which includes Waitaki – both of which experienced flooding early in July," says Proffit.

PAYMARK All Cards underlying* spending for CORE RETAIL merchants for July 2026		
Region	Value transactions $millions	Underlying value* Annual % change on 2025
Auckland/Northland	1,404	1.9%
Waikato	323	3.7%
BOP	257	2.1%
Gisborne	34	1.2%
Taranaki	90	1.1%
Hawke's Bay	136	3.3%
Whanganui	55	4.7%
Palmerston North	122	3.7%
Wairarapa	43	-1.0%
Wellington	321	-0.8%
Nelson	75	2.7%
Marlborough	43	-6.1%
West Coast	27	2.8%
Canterbury	462	2.3%
South Canterbury	62	2.1%
Otago	239	-0.3%
Southland	90	1.4%
New Zealand	**3,787**	**1.7%**

Figure 1: All Cards NZ underlying* spending through Paymark in July 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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