



NAB ONLINE RETAIL SALES INDEX APRIL 2019

NAB Group Economics

- The NAB Online Retail Sales Index contracted -3.8% in April on a month-on-month, seasonally adjusted basis. This follows an upwardly revised March result (+2.4%, was +1.7% mom, s.a.). While not of the same magnitude, the April result is consistent with the broader retail sales weakness we have identified in our Cashless Retail ABS forecast for April (-0.5%).
- In year-on-year terms, the NAB Online Retail Sales Index remains positive, up 1.7% (y/y, s.a.) in April. However, this result is compared to April 2018, which was one of the strongest months recorded for online retail sales.
- After a strong March, all eight online retail categories recorded a contraction in month-on-month sales growth, with the largest sales category, Homewares and appliances (-6.9% mom, s.a.), the second weakest in the month behind takeaway food (-8.6%). In year-on-year terms, five of the eight NAB Online Retail Sales Index categories were lower compared to April 2018. Department and variety stores remains the fastest growing category in year-on-year terms (26.1% y/y). Games and toys performed best, albeit contracting, in month-on-month terms (-0.2% mom, s.a.). For more detail, see Charts 3, 5, 7 & 8 below.
- In month-on-month terms, all states and territories recorded a contraction in growth, led by Tasmania (-6.4%). The two largest online sales states, NSW (+0.5% yoy, s.a.) and Victoria (+1.6%), recorded considerably weak year-on-year growth in April.
- At +0.7%, international online retailers performed better in month-on-month terms relative to domestic competitors (-4.4% mom, s.a.). However, in year-on-year terms, from our series, considerable weakness in international online sales remains. See charts 13 and 14, and table 3 for category growth and share.
- We estimate that in the 12 months to April, Australians spent \$28.98 billion on online retail, a level that is close to around 9% of the traditional bricks and mortar retail sector (March 2019, Australian Bureau of Statistics), and about 17% higher than the 12 months to April 2018.
- See comments from NAB's Chief Economist, Alan Oster, on page 2.

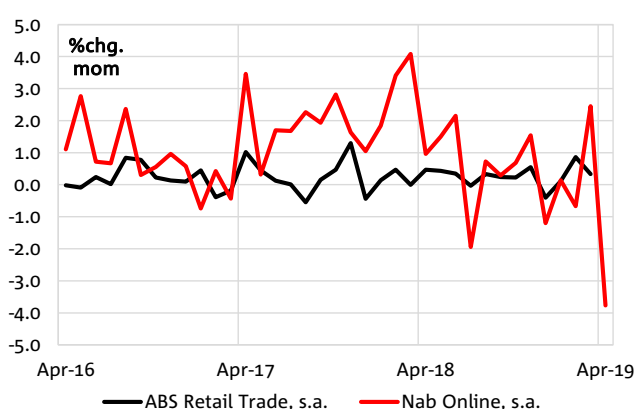
	Year-on-year growth (% s.a.)		
	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19
NAB Online Index	8.4	6.7	1.7
ABS Traditional Retail	3.2	3.5	

	Month-on-month growth (% s.a.)		
	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19
NAB Online Index	-0.7	2.4	-3.8
ABS Traditional Retail	0.9	0.3	

Sources: NAB, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). *Data seasonally adjusted (s.a.) using TRAMO/SEATS (incl. trading-day & Easter adjustment.)

Chart 1: Online retail sales

Chart 2: NAB Online retail trade data, s.a.



NAB Chief Economist, Alan Oster commented:

Our NAB Online retail sales index data indicates considerable weakness in online retail sales for April 2019. The online retail sales, tends to be more volatile than broader retail, experiencing far greater monthly fluctuations. This month, both online retail and broader cashless retail series indicated very weak retail conditions. While year-on-year growth in online sales has also slowed considerably in recent months, these comparisons are made to a period of elevated sales in 2018, with major new merchants to Australia, and also pre-GST exemption effects.

By category, department stores continued to lead year-on-year growth. In the month, all categories experienced a contraction in sales, with a drop in sales for Games and Toys the most mild. In month-on-month terms, Takeaway food (-8.6% mom, s.a.) was the worst performer. This result may indicate structural change in this sector given recent high profile exits and consolidation. The largest spend share category, homewares and appliances, recorded the second worst growth rate in the month, and also contracted in year-on-year terms. The Cashless retail indicator also pointed to weakness in this key retail sector in April. While department stores continue to record the strongest growth, this category has slowed from high double digits post the introduction of the GST on all goods in July 2018.

Tasmania, with about 2% of online retail sales, was weakest in April, after leading growth in March. New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland represent over three quarters of the online market in Australia by sales value. Of these larger sales states, Queensland was strongest over the year.

By merchant location, domestic online retailers continue to outpace their offshore counterparts, with international slowing in year-on-year terms. However, domestic retail sales contracted in the month, while their international counterparts recorded mild growth.

It is worth noting here that our definition of a domestic online retailer can include those merchants whose parent organisation might be overseas with an Australian Subsidiary. Using GST as a key defining characteristic of domestic and international is no longer appropriate given changes made in July 2018.

Chart 3: Online retail sales by industry, yoy,s.a.

Chart 4: Online retail sales by state, yoy s.a.

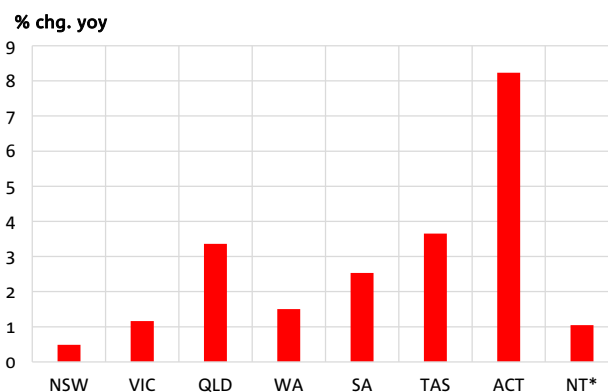
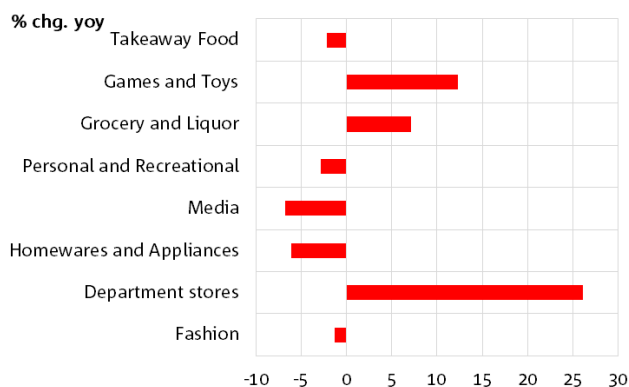
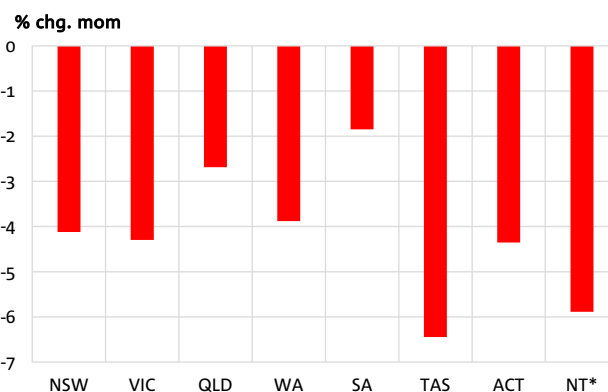
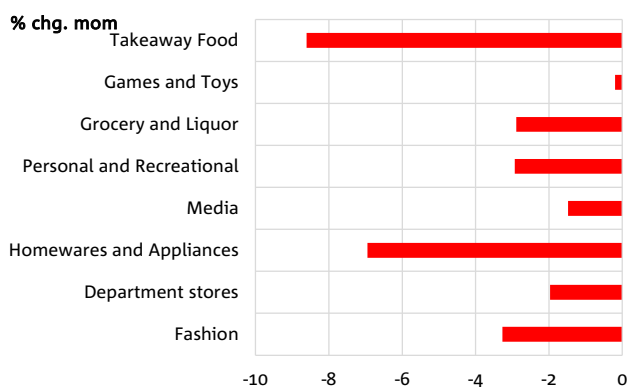


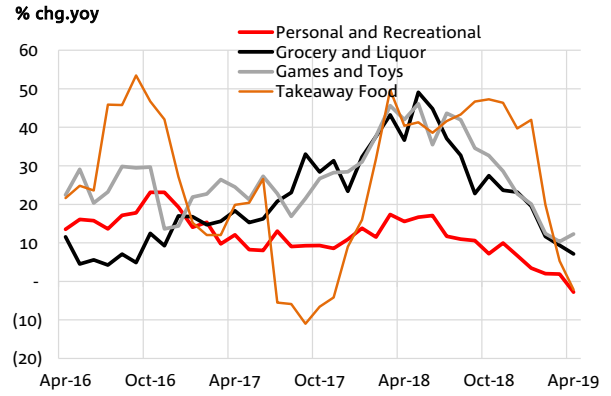
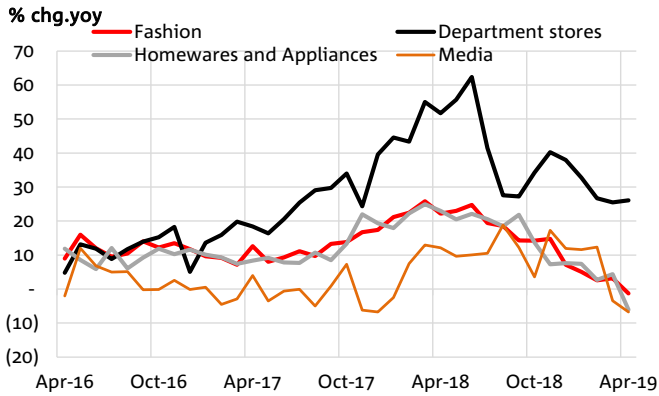
Chart 5: Online retail sales by industry, mom s.a.

Chart 6: Online retail sales by state, mom s.a.

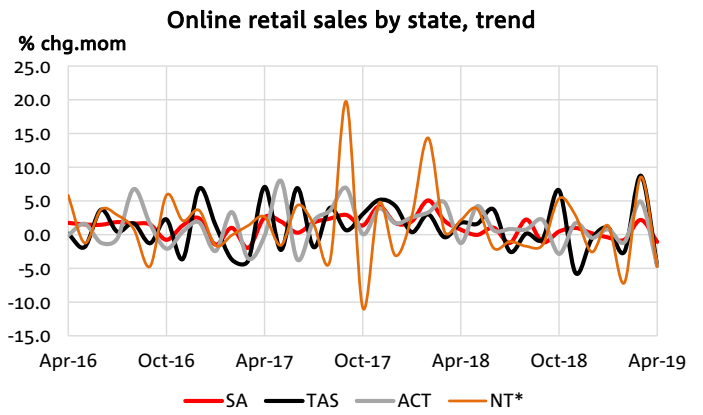
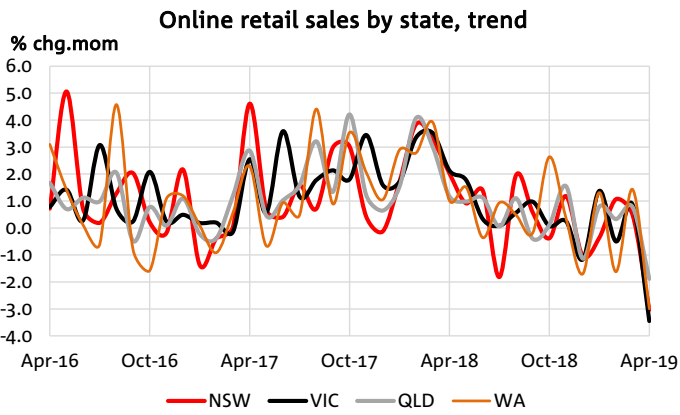


* Note Northern Territory series is highly variable, use with caution

Charts 7 & 8: Online sales by category, seasonally adjusted

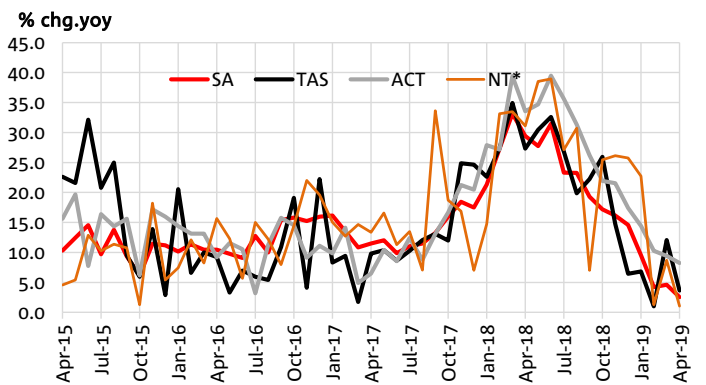
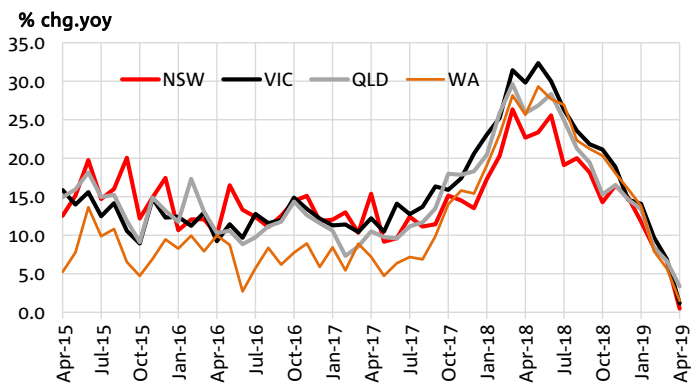


Charts 9 & 10: Online sales by state, trend



*Note that the series representing Northern Territory is highly variable and should be used with caution.

Charts 11 & 12: Online sales by state, yoy, s.a.



APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The NAB Online Retail Sales Index is now sourced in-house and is produced by Group Economics. We have made some significant changes to the NAB online series (for more details see Appendix). Importantly, we have merged SME and Corporate Online into a single index, and provide more detail by region and industry on a monthly basis.

It is derived from NAB transactions data that have been assigned from particular merchant codes to retail industries by state. To keep the series reasonably consistent with past series, we have left these category descriptions broadly unchanged, albeit we now include new entrants to the Australian market. Against that, we have however removed the standalone previously reported category of 'Daily Deals', as this category was considerably volatile and caused statistical issues with indirect seasonal adjustment.

The NAB Online Retail Sales Index measures all Online Retail spending by consumers using various electronic payment methods such as credit cards, BPAY, and Paypal. We have made adjustments for where merchants appear to be wholesaling goods as opposed for final household consumption, and also incorporate new standards involving purchases using stored customer details. The index is derived from personal transaction data from NAB platforms and is scaled up to be representative of the economy by using scalars including ABS Estimated Resident Population, and RBA payments data.

NAB electronic transactions data for the compilation of this series is collected in real time at event record level, which allows significant flexibility to segment the data by age, time, location and merchant type. In future months, we plan to expand the data provided from the series as we bed-in acceptable seasonal adjustment factors for the new series. Transactions included in these data may incorporate purchases by Card, BPAY, Bank Transfers, Direct Debits and Paypal services where available, and include transactions with Australian and international merchants. Spending represented here includes transactions we have identified as online. NAB's estimate of the online retail market is larger than that of the official ABS measure of Online retail trade as it covers businesses that may not be within the remit of the ABS business register, such as overseas online retailers.

In the previously published series, we were using online retail sales by merchants with turnover greater than \$2.5m ('Corporate') as a proxy for online sales growth of the whole online market. This was due to the shorter time series of the previous market estimate and associated seasonal adjustment issues. With the new extract, we now have sufficient time series, and the growth rates represented are for the total market – i.e. Corporate and SME combined in a single series.

The data captures electronic retail online transactions and is therefore subject to the changing nature and take-up rate of electronic payment methods. Hence, change in growth in the overall transaction value may be attributable to either an increased preference towards a payment type by consumers (such as buy now pay later schemes), or a change in the level of spending across the economy by consumers, i.e. a pick-up in nominal online sales. We continue to work to isolate these effects.

Customer spending is based on where the customer lives, which may or may not be where the actual spending activity occurs. Customers without an Australian residential address are excluded.

These estimates are developed from transaction micro level data are then aggregated to higher level categories based on transaction attributes. The data is made representative of national sales activity by applying both demographic attributes to customer location using the ABS Estimated resident population, and comparing NAB transaction data to RBA payments system data.

The industry and state data have been seasonally adjusted using Tramo-SEATS with a trading day and Easter adjustment. Given the relatively short time frame for the data, this seasonal adjustment process should be regarded as provisional: estimates are likely to change as a longer run of data becomes available, and can be revised from month-to-month given the concurrent process. The trends have been extracted from the same process. Note that the NORSI series prior to December 2018 was using Census Bureau Seasonal adjustment, and a Henderson 13 was applied for trend.

Our aim is to have a data series that is as reflective as possible of online retail spend. As such, each month we will revise previous data to take into account changes in payment processing such as chargebacks and delayed

payments. Given these attributes, typically, larger revisions occur to the most recent months, and diminish as the data ages, but the latter effect cannot be excluded.

Our data differs to that of the ABS series as the NAB series covers a broader spectrum of online retailers – overseas merchants selling to Australian residents for example, and categories that substitute for previously retail purchased goods. Categories such as music and book retailing, and electronic games form part of the current online estimate. These are now substitutes for what may have been purchased in-store, but are now provided by online media streaming companies. While these may not fit the strict retail trade definition, our data reveals that they are increasingly being used by customers who previously purchased media in-store. We incorporate these companies into our estimate of online retail sales.

As part of the continual improvement of the series, this month we have revised our total market estimates. We have identified and removed potential wholesale trade transactions made on personal accounts. We have also identified more transactions that are made using a 'stored credentials' technique of online purchases. This technique is increasing in popularity as consumers opt for convenience especially with purchases made using mobile apps. Finally, in March 2018 the RBA made changes to its Payments System Data which we use as an input into our estimate of online total market size. These revisions are retrofitted to the series history.

Group Economics

Alan Oster
Group Chief Economist
+(61 3) 8634 2927

Dean Pearson
Head of Behavioural & Industry
Economics
+(61 3) 8634 2331

John Sharma
Economist
+(61 3) 8634 4514

Jacqui Brand
Executive Assistant
+(61 3) 8634 2181

Australian Economics and Commodities

Gareth Spence
Senior Economist
+(61 0) 436 606 175

Phin Ziebell
Economist – Australia
+(61 0) 475 940 662

Behavioural & Industry Economics

Robert De Iure
Senior Economist – Behavioural &
Industry Economics
+(61 3) 8634 4611

Brien McDonald
Senior Economist – Behavioural &
Industry Economics
+(61 3) 8634 3837

Steven Wu
Economist – Behavioural &
Industry Economics
+(61 3) 9208 2929

International Economics

Tony Kelly
Senior Economist
+(61 3) 9208 5049

Gerard Burg
Senior Economist – International
+(61 3) 8634 2788

Global Markets Research

Ivan Colhoun
Global Head of Research
+(61 2) 9237 1836

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