

NAB Online Retail Sales Index

August 2024



NAB Group Economics

Key Points

- **On a month-on-month, seasonally adjusted basis, the index remained unchanged in August (0.0%),** following a slight upward revision to July's contraction (-2.5%, was -2.6%).
- **Growth accelerated marginally in year-on-year terms (9.8% y/y),** with July revised down slightly (9.3%, was 9.4% previously published).
- **By category, growth was mixed in August, with most categories except takeaway food and department stores improving on their July result. Having said that, a contraction in the two largest sales categories, homewares and appliances, and department stores, netted growth in most other categories.** Despite the monthly contraction, department stores continued to record strong growth in year-on-year terms, well beyond all other categories. For more detail, see charts 3, 5, 7 & 8 and table 3 below.
- **Growth was also mixed by state, so while growth for most states improved in August, a further contraction in VIC, along with ACT, netted growth from all other states, assisted by the near flat result for NSW.** The biggest drag on growth for both NSW and VIC was homewares and appliances and department stores, but NSW recorded a larger increase for mid-sized categories like grocery and liquor, and personal and rec goods, which were either more moderate or contracting in VIC. See charts 4, 6, 9-14, and table 3 for more detail.
- **Weakness in the two largest sales states this month was from results for metro areas. By contrast regional areas for NSW recorded strong growth, and for VIC, slight growth.** In year-on-year terms, however, metro growth continues to outpace regional in all states except VIC and QLD. See Charts 15 and 16 for more detail.
- **International retailers recorded growth in the month, but this was offset by a mild contraction for domestic retailers.** While in year-on-year terms, domestic continues to outpace international, growth was flat for the former, while the latter rebounded. See charts 13 and 14, and table 4 for category growth and share.
- **NAB estimates that in the 12 months to August, Australians spent \$58.02 billion on online retail,** a level that is around 13.5% of the total retail trade estimate (July 2024, Series 8501, Australian Bureau of Statistics), with growth (7.5%) slightly slower relative to the month prior.

Year-on-year growth (% s.a.)			
	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
NAB Online Index	13.1	9.3	9.8
ABS Retail Trade	2.9	2.3	-

Month-on-month growth (% s.a.)			
	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
NAB Online Index	2.5	-2.5	0.0
ABS Retail Trade	0.5	0.0	-

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 and ABS retail sales

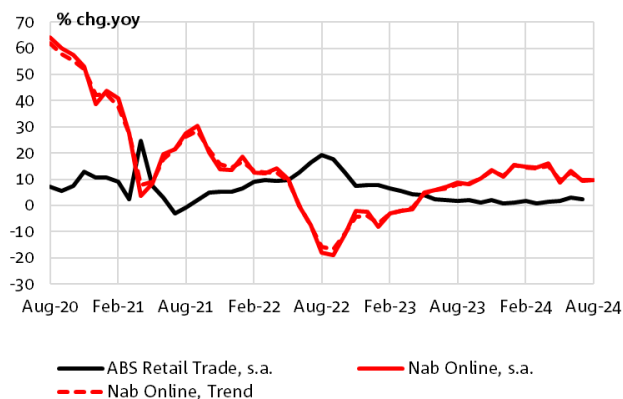
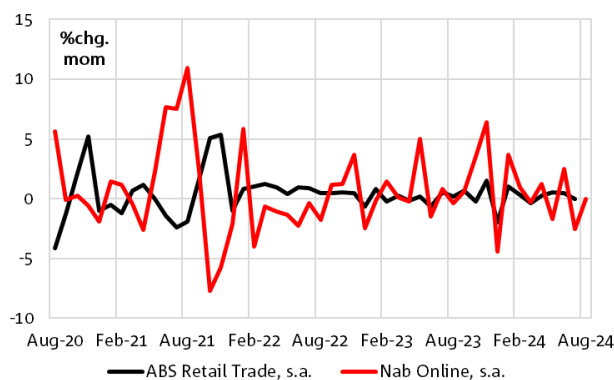


Chart 2: NAB Online retail trade data (mom, s.a.)



Comments from NAB Chief Economist Alan Oster

In month on month, seasonally adjusted terms, growth was flat for online retail sales in August. The headline figure masks results by category and state, where there was general improvement from the July contraction. There were of course some exceptions to this, with WA slowing, and department stores reversing strong growth recorded in July. Even within the department stores category, by location, international retailers recorded growth in the month.

Also noticeable again this month is the continuation of a pattern where online sales of takeaway food, and grocery and liquor, have not moved in the same direction since April. Takeaway food, which had rebounded in July after a weak June, slowed considerably in August, albeit recording slight growth, while grocery and liquor rebounded after contracting in July. Given that we have observed a recent plateauing in the growth in their respective share of the index, it may be the case that direct substitution between these categories is occurring.

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

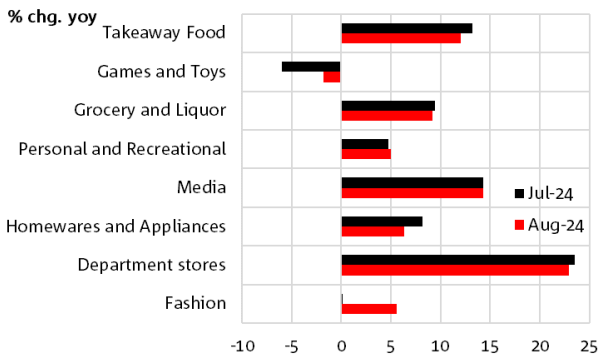


Chart 4: Online retail sales by state, yoy s.a.

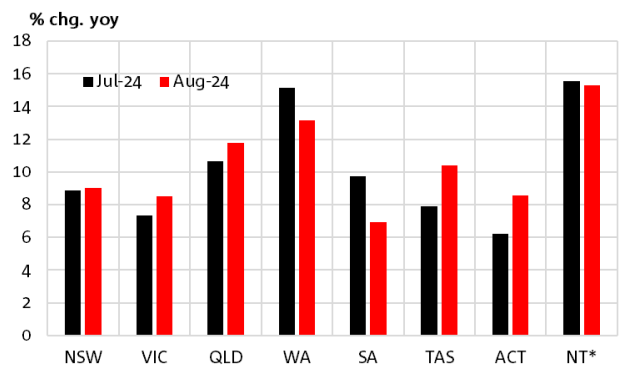


Chart 5: Online retail sales by category, mom s.a.

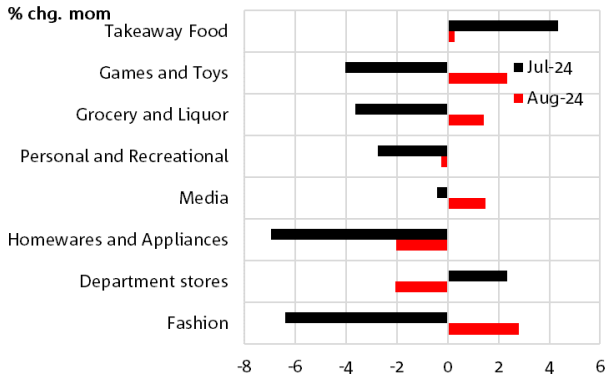
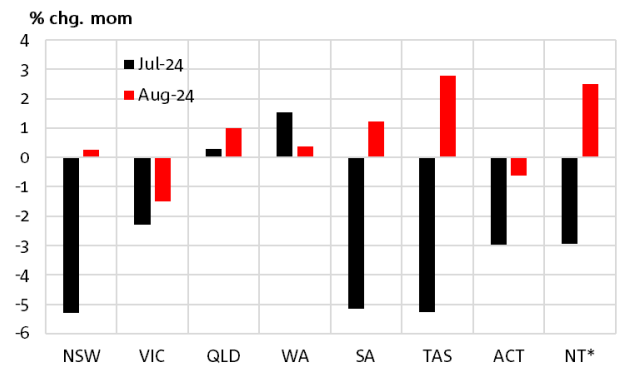
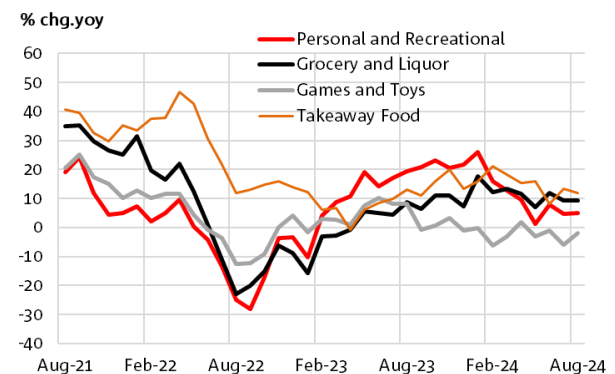
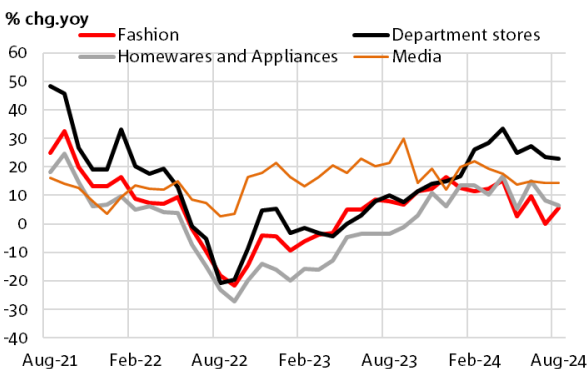


Chart 6: Online retail sales by state, mom s.a.

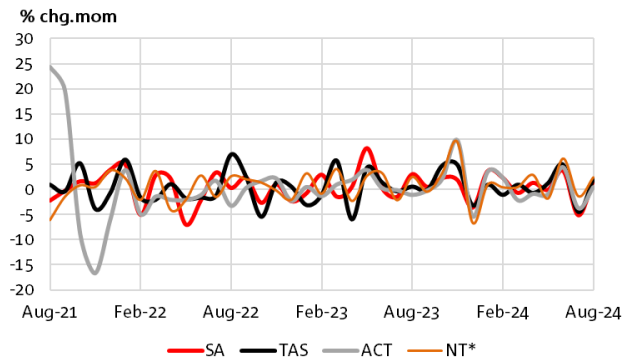
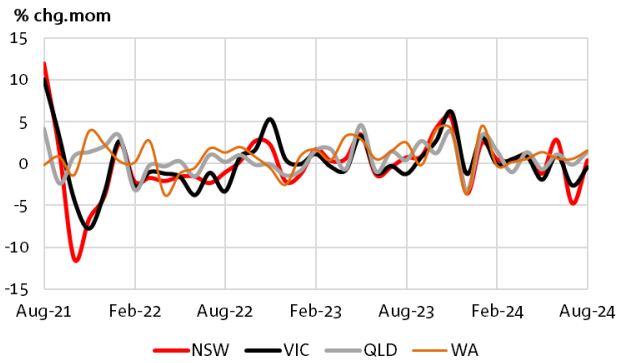


* Note that the series representing Northern Territory is highly variable and should be used with caution.

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

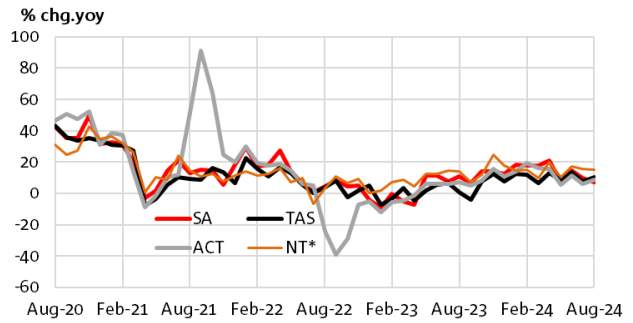
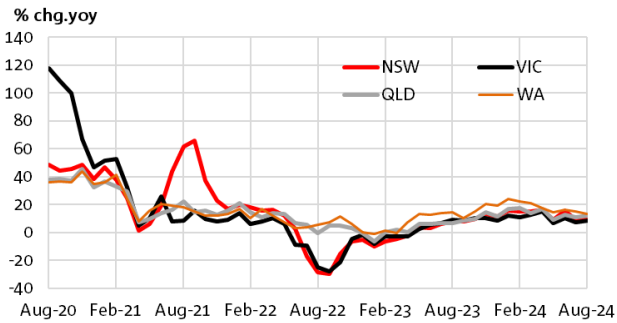


Charts 9 & 10: Online sales by state, trend

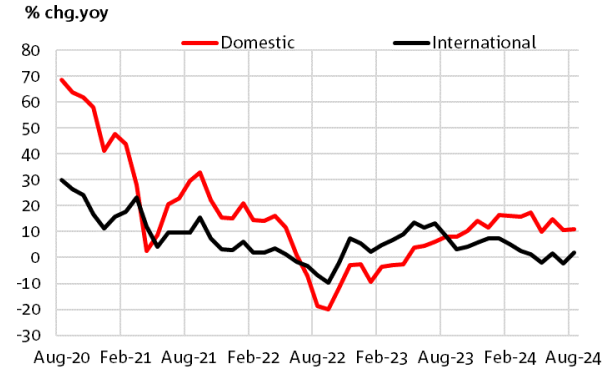
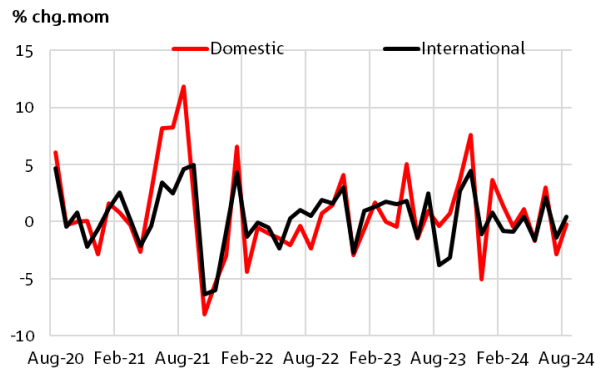


*Note that the series representing Northern Territory is highly variable and should be used with caution.

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



Charts 13 & 14: Online sales by merchant location, mom and yoy



Charts 15 & 16: Online retail sales growth by region and state, yoy s.a.

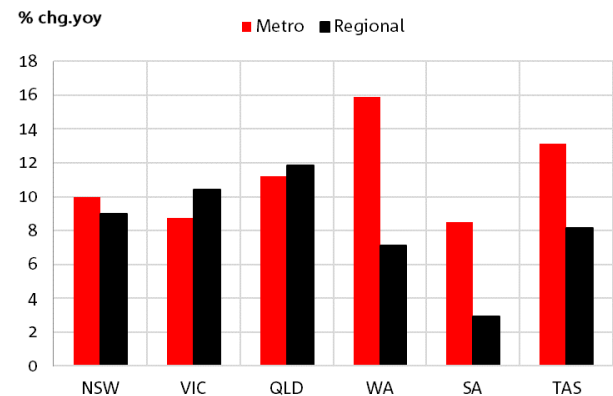
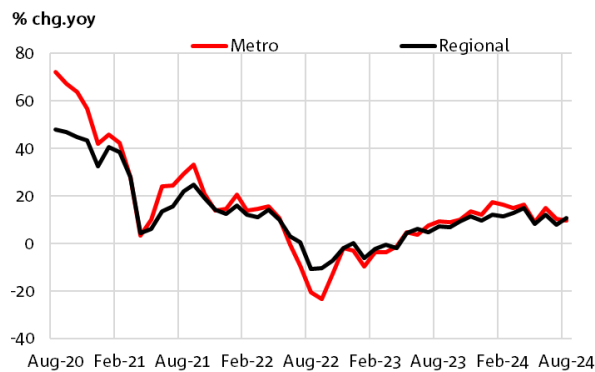


Table 3: Online sales by category and state

% (mom,s.a.)	Fashion	Dep't stores	Home & appliances	Media	Personal and Rec.	Grocery and Liquor	Games and Toys	T'away Food	Total
ACT	6.4	-3.9	-4.2	3.6	-1.9	-4.9	6.4	4.7	-0.6
NSW	1.7	-1.8	-4.3	1.3	1.1	6.0	2.7	-0.9	0.3
NT	15.3	-2.3	-1.2	7.5	7.1	-21.8	17.2	20.7	2.5
QLD	4.7	-0.2	0.4	2.1	1.1	-2.2	5.1	3.3	1.0
SA	7.4	-1.1	-0.6	2.6	0.4	-0.3	10.7	-3.2	1.2
TAS	1.0	1.7	1.0	2.1	6.8	7.1	-3.6	3.0	2.8
VIC	1.5	-3.6	-2.9	0.7	-3.0	0.9	-1.7	-1.1	-1.5
WA	3.0	-2.8	1.5	1.6	-0.8	0.1	1.9	2.2	0.4
Total	2.8	-2.1	-2.0	1.5	-0.3	1.4	2.3	0.3	0.0

Table 4: Online sales by category and merchant location- Domestic, International (Int'l)

%	Monthly growth – Domestic	Monthly growth – Int'l.	Annual growth – Domestic	Annual growth – Int'l.	Domestic Share of Category Spend	Int'l Share of Category Spend	Overall Category Spend Share
Fashion	3.1	2.1	8.3	-1.8	84.5	15.5	10.4
Department stores	-3.6	0.4	24.3	-10.5	93.9	6.1	18.3
Homewares and appliances	-2.5	-6.1	6.6	10.5	95.5	4.5	19.3
Media	1.9	-0.4	14.8	6.5	92.8	7.2	8.2
Personal and Recreational	-2.3	2.0	4.1	7.0	89.9	10.1	12.1
Grocery and Liquor	2.2	-0.6	9.9	-4.0	96.7	3.3	15.4
Games and Toys	3.5	0.3	-2.8	5.3	78.8	21.2	8.1
Takeaway Food	-0.0	5.6	11.6	19.5	98.5	1.5	8.3
All categories	-0.2	0.4	10.8	1.9	92.2	7.8	100

About this report

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. 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 most recent ABS Estimated Resident Population, and comparing NAB transaction data to RBA payments system data. Changes in these data are reflected in the NORSI market size estimate timeseries.

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.

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.

We have also added a comparison based on metropolitan and regional areas. The definition of these geographical areas is based on the ABS geographical concordance tables, specifically the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSAs).

Group Economics

Alan Oster
Group Chief Economist
+(61 0) 414 444 652

Jacqui Brand
Executive Assistant
+(61 0) 477 716 540

Dean Pearson
Head of Behavioural &
Industry Economics
+(61 0) 457 517 342

Australian Economics and Commodities

Gareth Spence
Senior Economist
+(61 0) 422 081 046

Brody Viney
Senior Economist
+(61 0) 452 673 400

Behavioural & Industry Economics

Robert De lure
Senior Economist –
Behavioural & Industry
Economics
+(61 0) 477 723 769

Brien McDonald
Senior Economist –
Behavioural & Industry
Economics
+(61 0) 455 052 520

Thao Nguyen
Economist – Data &
Analytics
+(61 0) 451 203 008

International Economics

Tony Kelly
Senior Economist
+(61 0) 477 746 237

Gerard Burg
Senior Economist –
International
+(61 0) 477 723 768

Global Markets Research

Skye Masters
Head of Research
Corporate & Institutional
Banking
+(61 2) 9295 1196

Important notice

This document has been prepared by National Australia Bank Limited ABN 12 004 044 937 AFSL 230686 ("NAB"). Any advice contained in this document has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on any advice in this document, NAB recommends that you consider whether the advice is appropriate for your circumstances.

NAB recommends that you obtain and consider the relevant Product Disclosure Statement or other disclosure document, before making any decision about a product including whether to acquire or to continue to hold it.

Please click [here](#) to view our disclaimer and terms of use.