



10 JANUARY 2025

# WESTPAC-DATAx CARD TRACKER

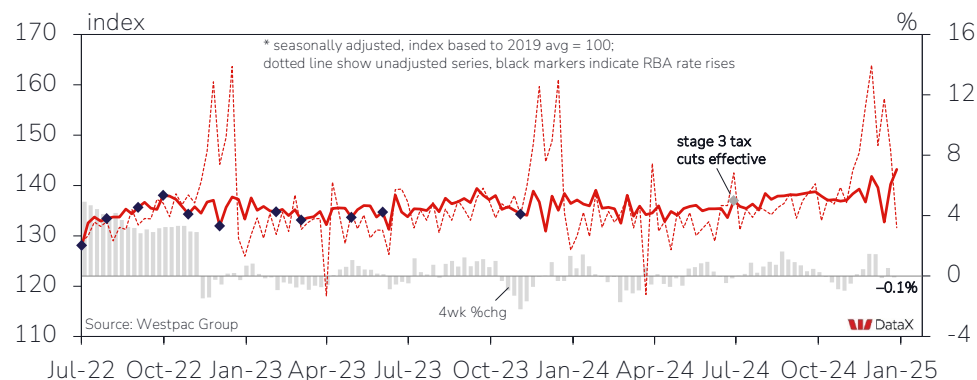
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# Card activity running ‘hot and cold’

- The **Westpac Card Tracker Index\*** has seen a very choppy performance through the Christmas-New Year period. While stronger-than-usual card activity over the Boxing day and New Year weeks has lifted the index to a new high, this followed a steep drop in the week just prior to Christmas. At 143.2, the latest index read is 1.4pts above the peak seen at the start of Dec.
- As always, extra caution needs to be applied when interpreting estimates over the volatile Christmas-New Year period. While our indexes are adjusted for regular seasonal volatility, these adjustments are less precise when seasonal patterns are changing and face additional challenges when there are shifts in the timing of weeks relative to major sales and holiday events.
- Quarterly gauges of momentum are less affected by these issues. These show the positive growth pulse that emerged in Q3 quarter carried into Q4 but at a more moderate pace – slowing from around 1%qtr to 0.4%qtr. The latest weekly reads remain consistent with this slower pace. While growth is not strong, the positive performance since mid-2024 marks the longest period of sustained gains since 2022.
- The detail shows a more nuanced picture with discretionary goods posting relatively solid gains through the Christmas New Year period but a significant cooling in services segments. Almost all of current momentum is coming from durables with activity across discretionary services essentially stalling flat over the last quarter. By state, the moderation has centred on NSW and Vic, where quarterly growth in broader card activity has stalled flat. Growth has been more resilient across other states, Qld in particular.
- Looking at the Christmas-related spending, total non-food discretionary card activity for the six weeks as a whole was up 4.8% on the same period last year. Strong showings at the start of Black Friday and during the Boxing Day week were offset by a poor Super Saturday turnout and so-so performances in other weeks.

**Strong showings at the start of Black Friday and ... Boxing Day week ... offset by a poor Super Saturday turnout ...**

## 1. Westpac Card Tracker Index\*



\* see p9 or more details on the Index construction.

The **Westpac Card Tracker** presents indicators based on the millions of credit and debit card transactions processed by Westpac every day. The measures are a timely guide to shifts in spending. See p9 for a detailed explanation.

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 This issue was finalised on 10 January 2025.

If you would like more insights on your sector or business from this and other Westpac data please visit **Westpac DataX** or contact [datax@westpac.com.au](mailto:datax@westpac.com.au).

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. The forecasts given above are predictive in character. Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure that the assumptions on which the forecasts are based are reasonable, the forecasts may be affected by incorrect assumptions or by known or unknown risks and uncertainties. The results ultimately achieved may differ substantially from these forecasts.



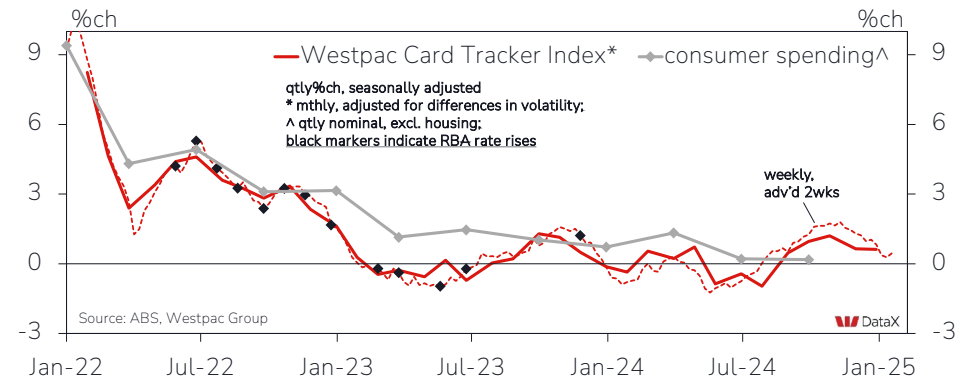
# Momentum remains positive

- The quarterly pulse remains positive but has continued to moderate over the last four weeks. Growth peaked at 1.2%qtr in Oct, easing to 0.7%qtr in Nov and 0.4%qtr in Dec holding at 0.5%qtr in the first week of Jan. While growth is hardly 'shooting the lights out', the last six months do mark the longest period of sustained gains since 2022.
- Chart 3 compares growth in the **Westpac Card Tracker** with the ABS household spending indicator and the consumer-related sectors covered in the ABS business turnover indicator. The household spending indicator for Nov showed a 0.4%<sup>mth</sup> rise, lifting quarterly growth to 0.8%qtr.
- The Nov update for the ABS monthly business turnover indicator will be released on Jan 24. The Dec update for the household spending indicator will be released on Feb 4 while the Dec update for the business turnover indicator will be released on Feb 10.
- Stepping back, and to provide some wider perspective, total card activity over the full 2024 calendar year was up just 0.9%<sup>yr</sup> on calendar 2023. This is a marked slowdown on the 4%<sup>yr</sup> gain between 2022 and 2023 and comparable to the dismal performance seen in the first year of the COVID pandemic when growth in card activity came in at just 0.8%<sup>yr</sup>.

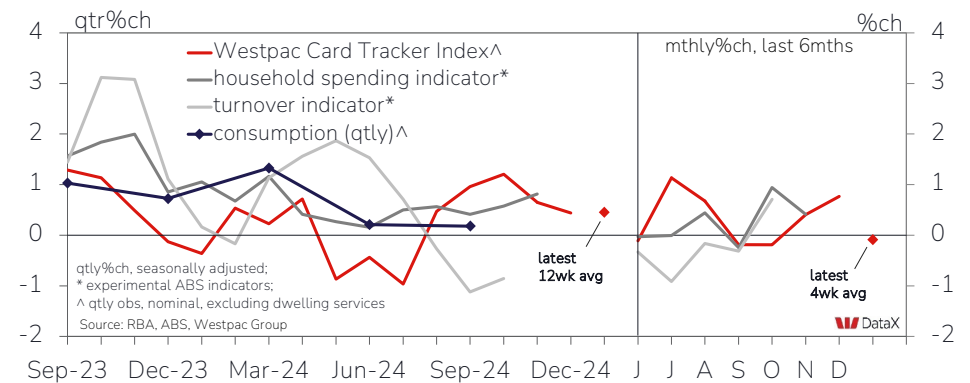
qtrly%ch	Q2	Q3	Q4	latest
<b>Westpac Card Tracker*</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Other indicators (nominal)</b>				
Household spending*	0.2	0.4	n.a.	0.8
Turnover*	1.5	-1.1	n.a.	-0.9
<b>Consumer spending (qtrly)#</b>				
Nominal	0.2	0.2	n.a.	n.a.
Real	-0.5	-0.1	n.a.	n.a.

All series are seasonally adjusted, latest is latest weekly obs (12wks %ch on previous 12wks) or latest monthly obs (3mths %ch on previous 3mths). See p9 for more details.  
 \*ABS experimental measures. Household spending indicator based on bank transaction data (seasonally adjusted by Westpac). Turnover based on BAS returns for consumer-sector businesses;  
 #Consumer spending excludes housing costs.  
 Sources: ABS, Westpac Group

## 2. Card activity and spending: growth momentum



## 3. Consumer spending: selected indicators



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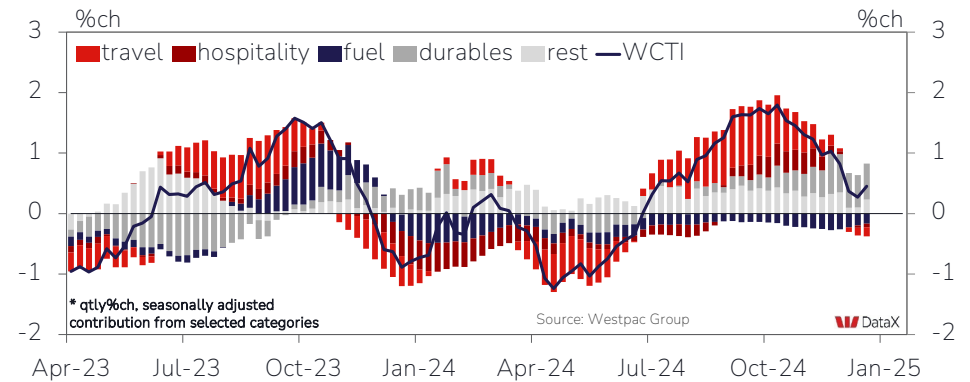
# Solid gains for durables but discretionary services spend stalls

- Charts 4 and 5 respectively illustrate the category and state contributions to the quarterly growth pulse of card activity.
- By category, the trends evident in mid-Dec have extended through year-end with the waning growth in the hospitality and travel segments turning to a slight dip and fuel continuing to exert a slight drag. Durables are now almost single-handedly driving growth, card activity growing at 2%qtr in this segment compared to a 0.5%qtr contraction across all other segments combined. Note that all of this is over and above regular seasonal variations which are typically a large positive for this segment in the December quarter.
- By state, the growth pace has dipped into negative in Vic and cooled noticeably in NSW but strengthened in Qld, SA and WA. The combined contribution from NSW and Vic is now flat with all of the 0.5%qtr gain coming from other states.
- The wash-up for 2024 as a whole shows markedly weaker conditions in Vic which recorded a 0.6%yr decline for the calendar year. That compares to a 0.8%yr gain in NSW, slightly better 1.7%yr and 2.1%yr rises for SA and Qld respectively, and a robust 3.2%yr increase in WA. The figures imply a large per capita decline in Vic (-3%yr), a material fall in NSW (-1%yr), a near-steady performance in Qld and small gains in SA and WA.

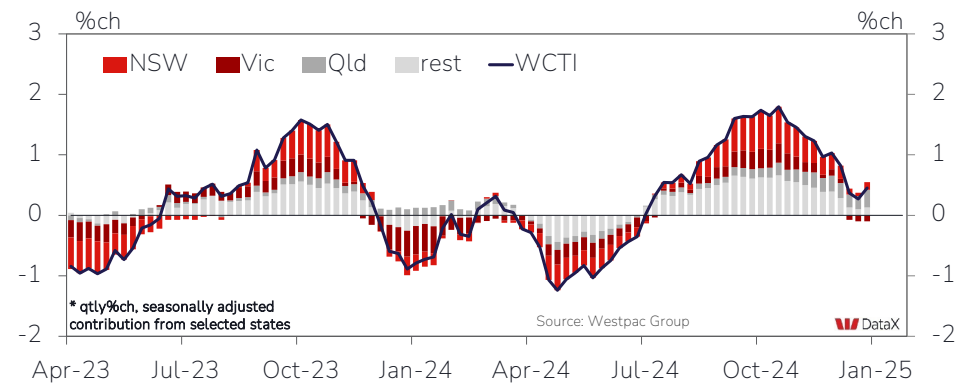
	Oct	Nov	Dec	4/1
<b>Westpac Card Tracker</b>	<b>137.1</b>	<b>137.7</b>	<b>138.7</b>	<b>143.2</b>
<b>By category</b>				
– discretionary	138.2	138.4	139.2	144.3
– essential	132.9	133.4	133.5	137.7
<b>By state</b>				
– NSW	132.0	132.3	134.5	136.8
– Vic	132.8	133.2	134.7	136.7
– Qld	148.9	150.3	151.2	157.6
– WA	148.6	149.7	150.5	152.4
– SA	145.9	146.9	147.9	149.1

All indexes based on the value of spending-related transactions, seasonally adjusted, 2019 avg=100, see p9 for more details including classifications.  
Sources: ABS, Westpac Group

## 4. Card activity: major categories



## 5. Card activity: states



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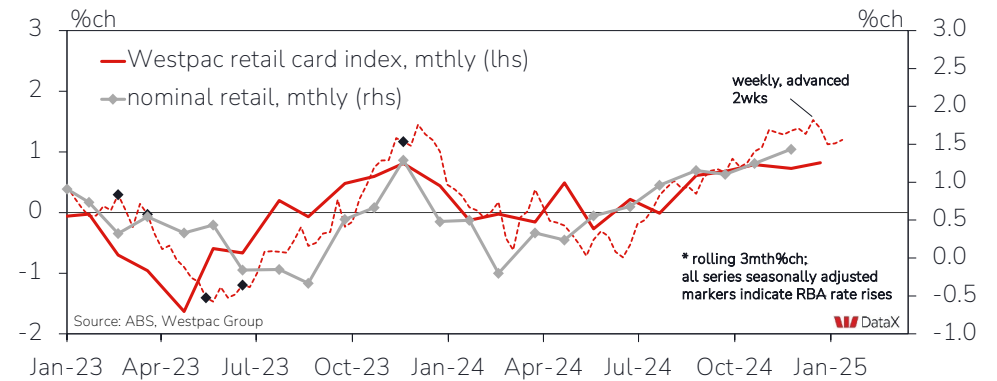
# Retail enjoying a sustained lift after a torrid two years

- Our 'retail' measure covers a narrower subset of card activity that aligns more closely to the ABS retail survey. This measure has been notably stronger than wider card activity through the Christmas-New Year period, reflecting the strength in discretionary goods segments. At just over 1%qtr, the quarterly growth pulse in the retail index is running twice as fast as wider card activity.
- The details show growth running at closer to 2%qtr for non-food retail segments, around 0.8%qtr for basic food and contracting at around 0.5%qtr for hospitality retail segments – the latter tracking close to the current pace seen across non-retail segments.
- The ABS retail sales measure showed a 0.8%qtr gain in Nov, lifting the quarterly growth pace to 1.4%qtr, up from 0.7%qtr in Jun (see [here](#) for more details). This is broadly consistent with the signal from our 'retail' index, which suggests Dec will see similarly robust momentum for retail sales.
- While Black Friday related spending looks to be giving a bigger boost to retail this year, the official ABS sales results for Nov likely understate strength slightly. The late-timing of sales in 2024 mean Nov only captures part of the boost which would have been fully captured in Nov in previous years. See p6 for more details on these timing effects.

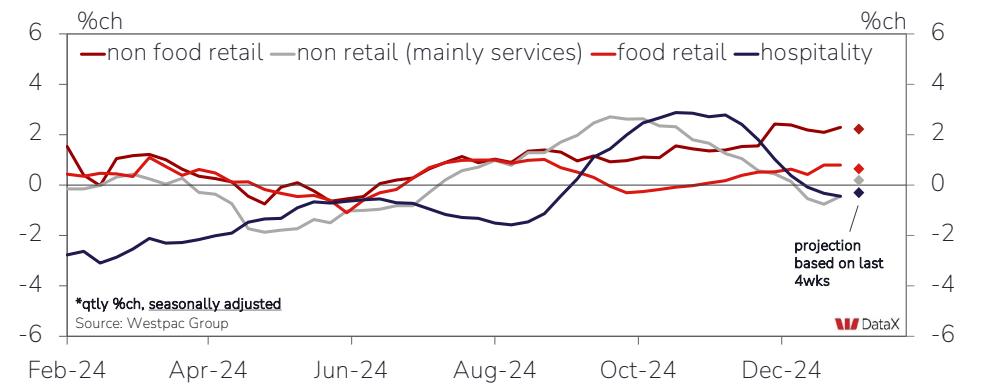
	Oct	Nov	Dec	4/1
<b>By retail/non retail</b>				
<b>Retail card index</b>	143.4	143.6	144.8	149.4
– qtly%ch	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.2
– qtly, ann%ch	1.1	1.0	1.6	2.1
<b>Non-retail card index</b>	130.1	131.1	131.9	137.0
<b>ABS retail sales</b>				
– %ch	0.5	0.8	n.a.	n.a.
– ann%ch	3.5	3.0	n.a.	n.a.
– qtly%ch	1.2	1.4	n.a.	n.a.
– qtly ann%ch	3.0	3.0	n.a.	n.a.

All indexes based on the value of spending-related transactions, seasonally adjusted. 2019 avg=100, see p9 for more details. Sources: ABS, Westpac Group

## 6. Card activity: retail



## 7. Card activity: broad retail and non-retail groups

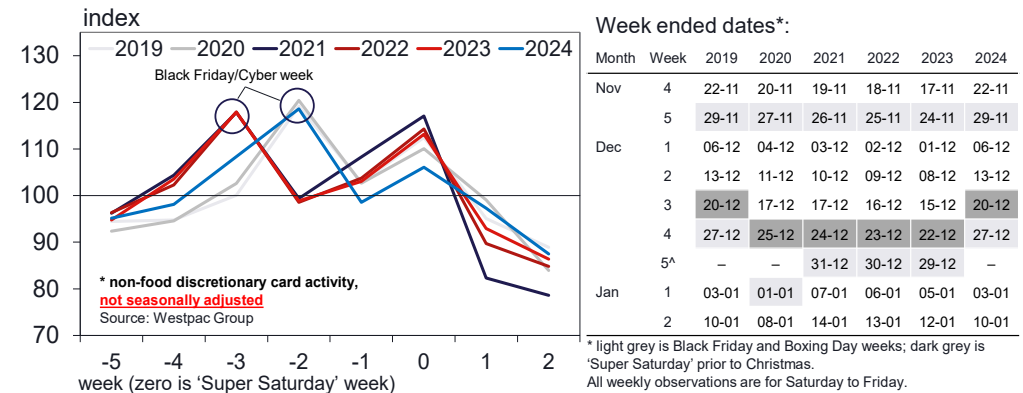


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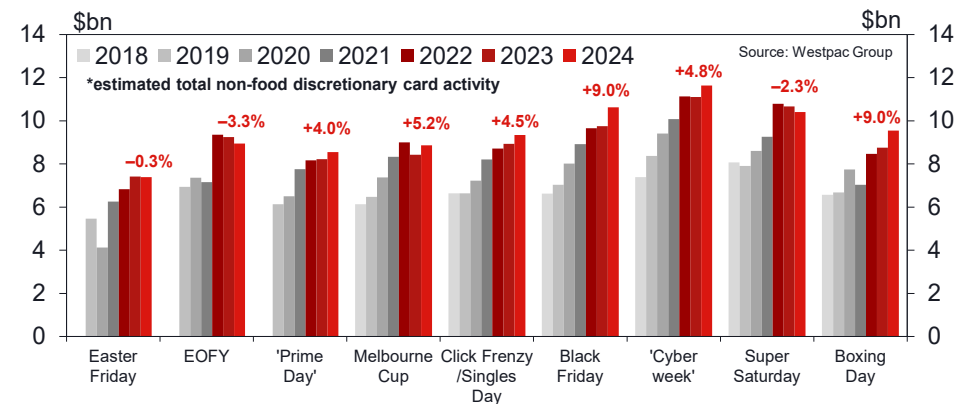
# Christmas wash-up: hits and misses

- We now have a more complete picture of activity over the Christmas-New Year Period. The results show a relatively strong performance over the seven weeks as a whole but with some clear highs and lows. All commentary and figures below relate to the non-food discretionary segments that are most affected by the Christmas high season spend.
- In non-seasonally adjusted terms, card activity showed a robust 4% gain on the same period in 2023, a clear improvement on the weak 0.4% gain seen in the previous year but some way short of the 9-11% gains seen in 2020-22.
- Note that precise timing of sales events and holidays may be affecting these comparisons. As highlighted in Chart 8, Black Friday sales began a week later in 2024, meaning there was a shorter break between these and the 'Super Saturday' peak the week before Christmas. Similarly, the post-Christmas taper depends on the extent to which the first week of Jan captures New Year's Eve activity (e.g. 2021 saw a particularly steep drop as all of the week was in Jan). The main takeaway here is that some caution should still be applied when comparing 'sales event weeks' across different years.
- Even with these caveats, the results in 2024 are fairly clear. 'Black Friday' was a roaring success, activity in the first week up 9% on the same period in 2023 and a solid 4.8% gain in the 'cyber week' that followed. This was despite a clear 'jump start' to this year's sales. Activity in the week prior to the Black Friday week were up 7.8% on last year.
- However, this strong start partly 'cannibalised' activity in other periods, the 'Super Saturday' week in particular. Card activity in this week was down 2.3% on last year. While some of this is an ongoing structural shift – activity in this week declined 1.2% over the previous two years – the bigger decline in 2024 is consistent with consumers 'economising', timing their purchases to make the most of discounts.
- That pattern came to the fore again with the 'Boxing Day' week which saw a strong out-turn, activity up 9%yr. The detail shows these 'hot and cold' patterns are even more pronounced for discretionary goods.
- As seen more generally, the state performances show more subdued gains for Vic and NSW, with Qld and WA outperforming by 3-4ppts vs 2023 results for the period as a whole.

## 8. Weekly card activity: Christmas period

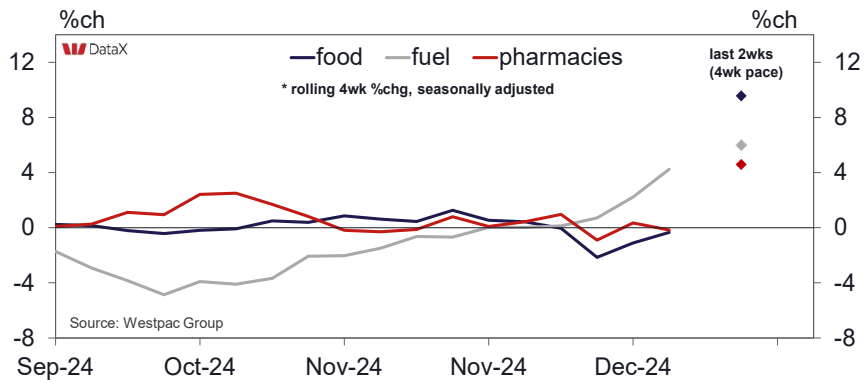


## 9. Black Friday: discretionary goods segment

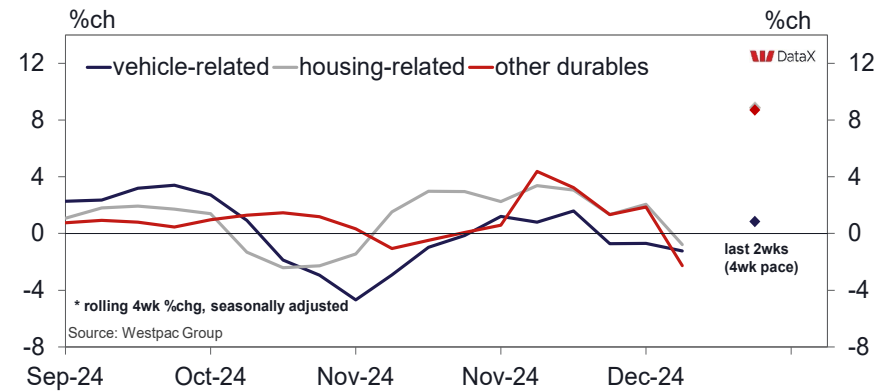


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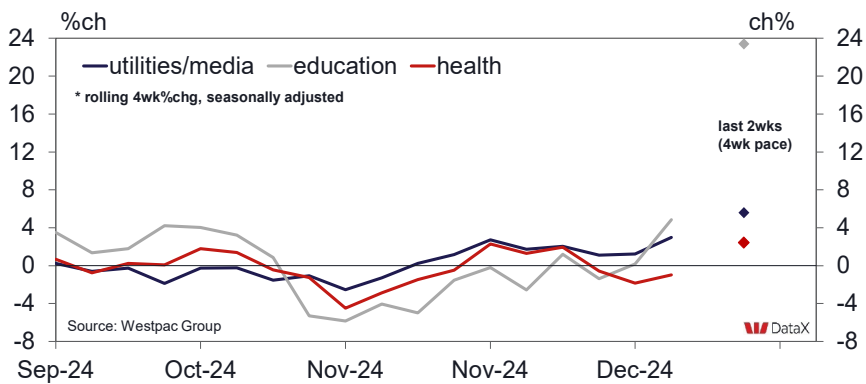
### 10. Card activity: essential goods



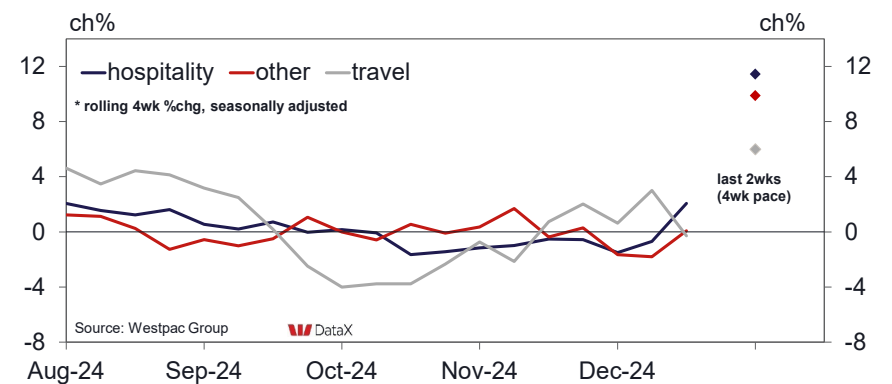
### 11. Card activity: discretionary goods



### 12. Card activity: essential services

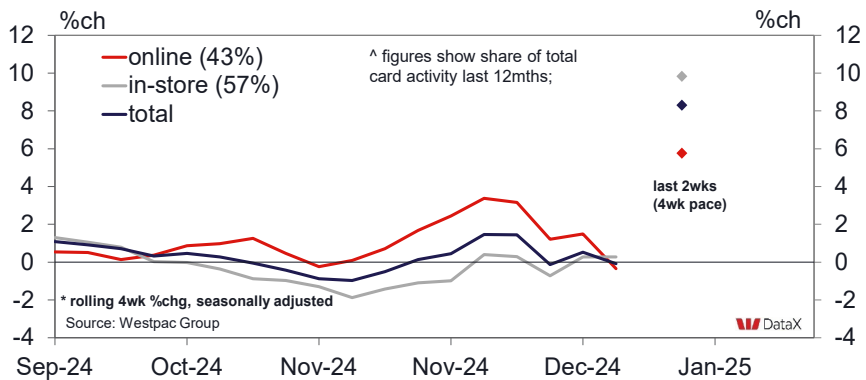


### 13. Card activity: discretionary services

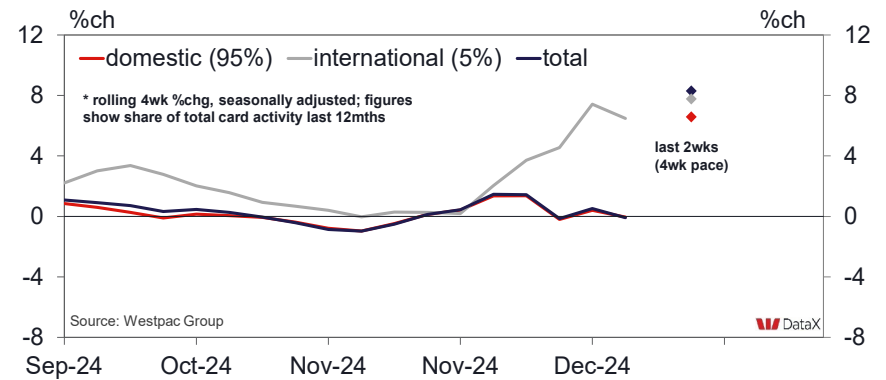


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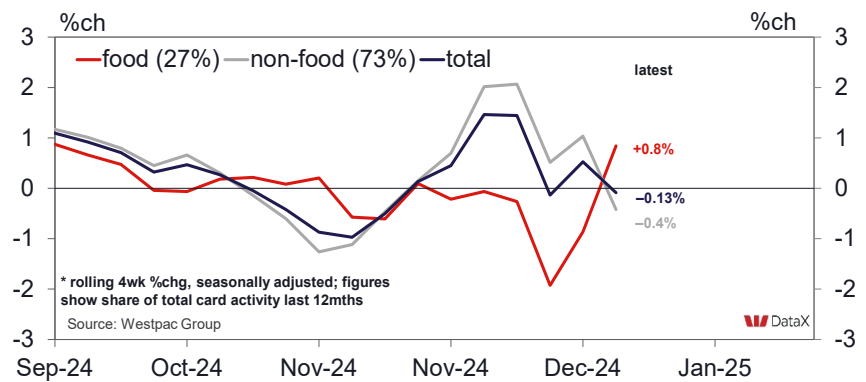
### 14. Card activity: online and in-store



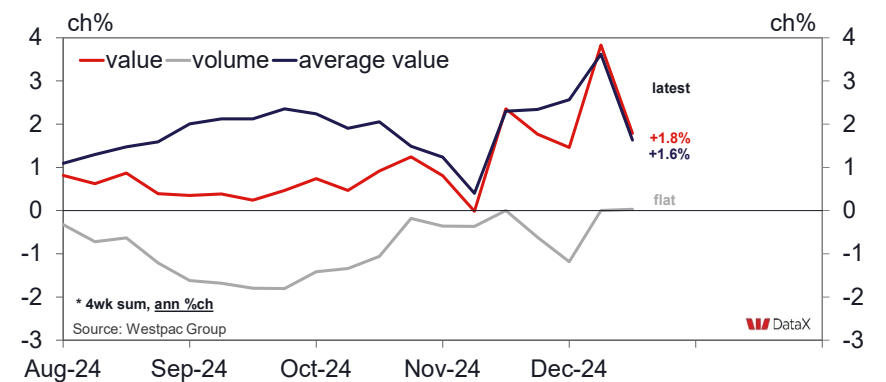
### 15. Card activity: domestic and international



### 16. Card activity: food and non-food



### 17. Card activity: value and volume



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	2023				2024				week ending:						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Oct	Nov	Dec	14/12	21/12	28/12	4/1
<b>Westpac Card Tracker Index</b>	<b>135.6</b>	<b>134.7</b>	<b>136.4</b>	<b>136.2</b>	<b>136.5</b>	<b>135.9</b>	<b>137.2</b>	<b>137.8</b>	<b>137.1</b>	<b>137.7</b>	<b>138.7</b>	<b>139.6</b>	<b>132.7</b>	<b>140.2</b>	<b>143.2</b>
qtly%ch	-0.3	-0.7	1.3	-0.1	0.2	-0.4	1.0	0.4	1.2	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.5
qtly, ann%ch	10.5	4.0	1.9	0.2	0.7	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.9
<b>By category</b>															
– discretionary	135.8	134.9	137.3	135.8	135.7	134.9	137.6	138.6	138.2	138.4	139.2	140.2	132.3	139.9	144.3
– essential	132.6	132.3	133.2	134.4	135.5	135.6	134.3	133.3	132.9	133.4	133.5	135.2	130.0	137.7	137.7
services	130.4	130.8	134.0	131.6	132.9	131.7	134.5	134.5	134.3	134.5	134.8	137.1	129.1	136.3	141.3
– discretionary services	131.8	132.1	135.5	131.9	133.2	130.8	134.6	135.3	135.2	135.0	135.6	137.2	129.2	136.6	142.2
– essential services	125.8	127.1	129.6	130.5	131.5	134.7	134.4	132.4	131.8	132.9	132.5	136.9	128.7	135.5	138.6
goods	137.8	137.1	137.3	138.4	137.8	138.3	138.0	138.6	137.9	138.1	139.8	139.5	133.6	141.5	142.5
– discretionary goods	139.6	139.0	138.8	139.7	138.4	140.1	140.8	142.3	141.4	141.6	144.0	143.6	135.9	143.7	146.7
– essential goods	135.3	134.6	135.0	136.9	136.9	136.0	134.3	134.3	134.0	134.4	134.5	134.4	130.7	138.8	137.3
retail*	141.4	140.4	141.1	141.7	141.5	141.8	142.8	143.9	143.4	143.6	144.8	144.3	138.6	146.9	149.4
qtly%ch	-1.0	-0.7	0.5	0.4	-0.2	0.2	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.2
qtly, ann%ch	6.2	2.0	-0.7	-0.7	0.1	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.1	1.0	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.1
<b>By state</b>															
– NSW	130.3	129.8	130.6	130.9	131.0	130.5	131.6	132.9	132.0	132.3	134.5	133.6	127.2	134.1	136.8
– Vic	134.3	133.8	135.3	133.4	134.1	132.6	133.4	133.6	132.8	133.2	134.7	133.4	126.7	133.9	136.7
– Qld	144.1	144.6	146.1	146.3	147.3	147.5	148.6	150.1	148.9	150.3	151.2	151.1	143.6	152.7	157.6
– WA	141.4	141.8	143.2	145.5	146.0	146.4	147.9	149.6	148.6	149.7	150.5	149.7	142.7	150.7	152.4
– SA	141.9	141.4	143.1	144.5	144.0	144.6	144.9	146.9	145.9	146.9	147.9	150.5	139.1	147.1	149.1

All indexes based on the value of spending-related transactions, seasonally adjusted by Westpac, 2019 avg=100. See p10 for more details.

\* composite based on transactions in retail categories; seasonal adjustment and rounding may result in small revisions to previously published estimates.

Sources: ABS, Westpac Group



# About the Westpac card data indicators

The indicators presented in this report are based on the millions of credit and debit card transactions processed by Westpac every day. Transactions covering over ten million merchants are classified into over 700 categories. These are in turn grouped into higher level aggregates that provide a timely guide to wider economic trends.

The main focus of these indicators is consumer spending. Where possible, we have sought to exclude 'non spending' transactions such as: money transfers; tax payments; loan repayments; charitable donations; and superannuation contributions.

It should also be noted that these indicators will also be affected by shifts between card and non card transactions. This may be a significant factor during the COVID-19 pandemic – health concerns about the use of physical cash are likely seeing higher use of cards, particularly where contact-less transactions are available. Transaction flows also include reversals/refunds which have been a significant phenomenon in areas such as travel.

All transaction data is compiled at a highly aggregated level so that individual customer or merchant data is never revealed.

## Index construction

The key metrics used in this report are indexes of spending-related card activity where the base of 100 is average activity in 2019. As an example, if transaction flows are 5% above their average level in 2019, the index read for the period is 105. If flows in a subsequent period are 8% above the average level in 2019, the index read for this period is 108. Growth between the two periods can be calculated simply as the change between the two index reads, i.e. 2.9%.

All measures are adjusted for regular seasonality. Weekly estimates are generated using the US Bureau of Labor's MoveReg weekly seasonal adjustment program. Note that in some cases, high levels of volatility during the COVID period mean it is not possible to produce seasonally adjusted estimates for some historical periods.

Also, note that previous versions of this report used different approaches to seasonal adjustment and measurement more generally. This means Index reads will not be comparable. See the 'About the Westpac card data indicators' sections from earlier reports to view detail.

## Classifications

Note that the measures and classifications used for card data and this report do not align completely with those used in official ABS statistics on retail sales and consumer spending. There are a range of differences including around both coverage and classification. As such, the card data should be treated as broadly indicative.

The transaction data is grouped into 29 categories that are then combined into four main as follows:

**Discretionary goods:** durable goods, clothing and vehicle-related.

**Discretionary services:** recreation, gambling, professional services, hotels, restaurants and cafes, airlines, car rental, travel agencies and transport.

**Essential goods:** food, fuel and pharmacies.

**Essential services:** utilities, education and healthcare.

The report also uses two additional classifications:

**Retail/non retail:** based on the extent to which categories cover sales that are in scope for the ABS retail survey.

**COVID group:** based on a classification Westpac developed to assess the impact of the Coronavirus (see here for more). 'Most exposed' is travel, tourism, hospitality and recreational services; 'big ticket' is vehicles and major household items; 'stock-piling' is food, pharmaceuticals and healthcare; 'residual' is all other categories combined.



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