

Spending Momentum Index



Australia

Spending momentum picks up despite stubborn cost-of-living pressures in May

Visa's Australia Spending Momentum Index (SMI) gained 4.1 points in May to reach 97.3, as the share of Australian cardholders who increased their spending grew by 2.1 percentage points. Despite the improvement, the index remains below 100, implying that most Australians are still spending less than last year amidst the high inflationary and interest rate environment.

Spending momentum for the discretionary, non-discretionary and fuel segments picked up while the restaurant segment declined. In a change in trend, fuel spending momentum rose, which suggests that consumers could no longer cut back their driving enough to offset higher petrol prices. At the same time, both the discretionary and non-discretionary segments rose by 1.6 points and 5.1 points respectively. Notably, the discretionary segment rose above the 100-mark, indicating that more Australians increased spending on non-essential goods and services. This can be attributed to seasonal retail promotions and other sales events such as "Click Frenzy Mayhem 2024" that aimed to capitalise on Australians' demand for bargains to cope with higher costs of living. However, consumers are still cautious, as reflected by the decline in restaurant spending momentum. While more Australians dined out at restaurants, according to data from OpenTable, they nonetheless spent less during each visit. The uptick in the non-discretionary segment suggests that they could be cooking more at home instead.

Looking ahead, consumption may improve after the energy rebates and the planned Stage 3 tax cuts take effect on 1 July.

20 June 2024

May SMI at a glance

Latest index reading

Nationwide momentum:
Change from previous month

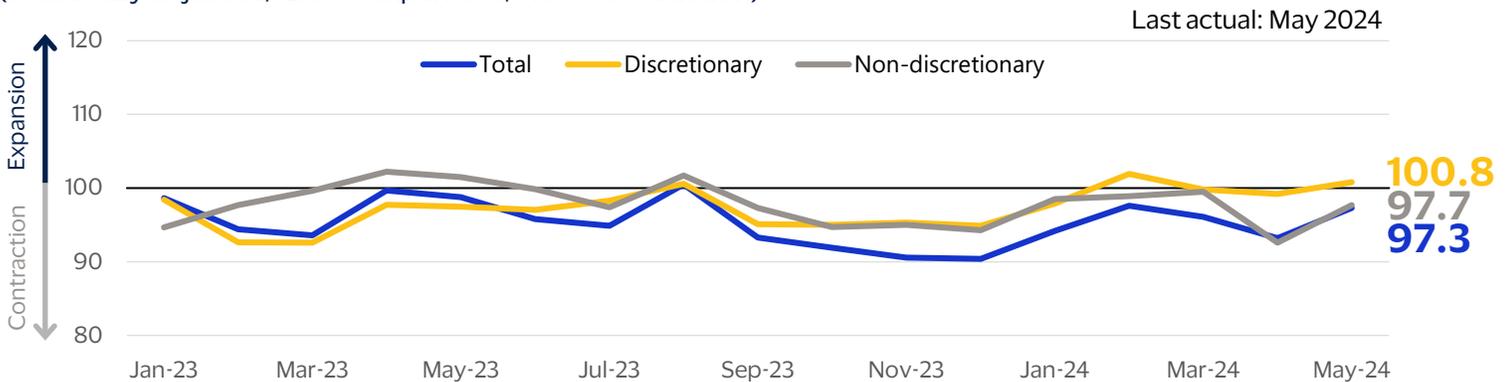
Total
+4.1

Discretionary
+1.6

Non-discretionary
+5.1

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(Seasonally adjusted, * ≥100 = expansion, <100 = contraction)



*The discretionary and non-discretionary categories exclude restaurant and fuel spending; both restaurant and fuel are included in the total SMI. See additional definitions of spending categories on page 3. Source: Visa Business and Economic Insights. The Visa Australia SMI measures the current month relative to the same month last year. The national readings of the index are based on year-over-year (YoY) changes in consumer spending with Visa bankcards.





About the Visa Australia Spending Momentum Index

First released in August 2021, the Visa SMI is an economic indicator to gauge the health of consumer spending. The Visa SMI delivers insight into what drives upturns and downturns in spending by measuring the breadth of the momentum supporting these trends.

Currently available in eight countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Italy, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States), the SMI provides a consistent method across countries to measure global spending trends.



A sample pulled from the Visa network

The SMI leverages the power of the Visa network utilising a sample of depersonalised and aggregated spending data from Visa-branded credit and debit credentials. This makes it a timelier read on consumer spending compared to other consumer spending measures (e.g. retail sales and personal consumption expenditures).



Tracks upturns and downturns in consumer spending

The resulting sample data is then aggregated using a diffusion index framework where index values are scored from 0 to 200. When the Visa SMI rises above 100, the consumer spending momentum is strengthening and when it falls below 100, the spending momentum is weakening as fewer consumers are spending more relative to the previous year.



A better way to track the economic recovery

SMI has correlation with key macroeconomic indicators, including retail sales, unemployment and household income. The SMI does not take into account the volume of payments nor does it rely on all Visa credentials, and therefore does not reflect Visa's operational or financial performance. The SMI can assess the variation in spend down to a geographic (national, state, city and county) and industry vertical level.



Spending Categories*:

Discretionary (airlines, lodging, auto rental, appliance retail, computer retail, fashion retail, florist, general department store, home goods retail, leisure goods retail, luxury goods retail, repurposed goods retail, sporting goods retail, attractions & amusements, duty free, entertainment, gambling, marina services, sport & recreation, transportation, travel agencies, construction services, electric goods repair, home repair services, personal services, professional services, spa/beauty services, telecommunication, charity, direct marketing, membership clubs).

Non-discretionary (medical/health services, pharmacy, food retail, supermarkets, postal/courier, utilities, education, tolls/fees, wholesale).

Methodology

The Visa Spending Momentum Index (SMI) measures the breadth of year-over-year change in household spending within an economy, including the share of households with increased spending compared with those where spending was stable or declined. The index is generated using proprietary techniques that extract economic signals from business-related noise inherent in VisaNet transaction data, such as portfolio flips, routing changes, or evolving acceptance across geographies or merchant segments. Regional and national aggregates are population-weighted averages.

The resulting sample data is then aggregated using a diffusion index framework in which index values are scored from 0 to 200. Values above 100 indicate broad-based net acceleration in economic momentum. Values below 100 indicate contraction on an annual basis. To ensure compliance with Visa's confidentiality obligations and with applicable laws, any market or competitor data that does not meet Visa Inc.'s minimum benchmarking requirements will not be shared.

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