

QUARTERLY ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

INCLUDING TOURISM
RELATED SECTORS //
MARCH 2026 QUARTER

REPORT

CEDA
CENTRAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

 **MANAWATŪ**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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NORTH
CITY

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MANAWATŪ

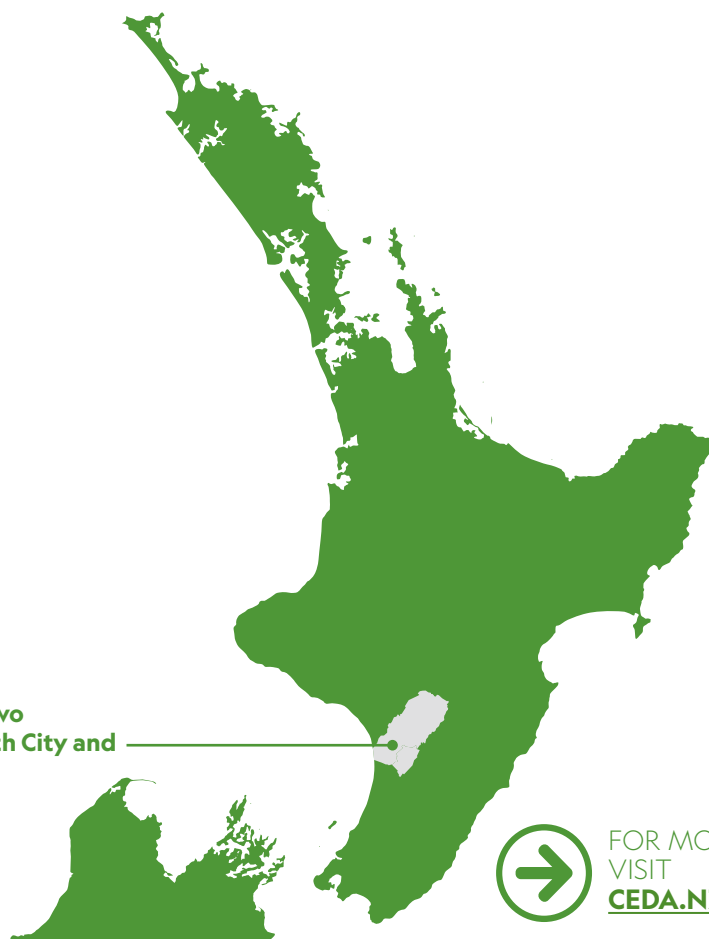

MANAWATŪ REGION QUARTERLY ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

This report presents analysis of electronic card retail spending (i.e., total value of electronic card transactions made in person) in the Manawatū region. The data is obtained from Marketview and is based on information from Worldline (formerly known as Paymark) the largest electronic card payment network in New Zealand. Analysis covers eight retail sectors consisting of:

- >> accommodation
- >> apparel & personal
- >> arts, recreation & visitor transport
- >> cafes, restaurants, bars & takeaways
- >> fuel & automotive
- >> groceries & liquor
- >> home & recreational retail
- >> other consumer spending

See retail sector classification on page 13.

This Retail Report captures data from the Manawatū region, which consists of Palmerston North city and Manawatū district.



Manawatū comprises the two councils of Palmerston North City and Manawatū District



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OVERVIEW

Retail card spending in the region increased by 2.1% in the March 2026 quarter compared with the previous March quarter. This was ahead of the New Zealand average over the same period, which saw a slight increase of 0.4%.

Four precincts posted growth in annual spending between 0.4% to 2% in the March 2026 quarter. This marks a positive shift from the December 2025 quarter, when Feilding was the only precinct to see growth, up 0.9%. The combined lift across these four precincts pushed overall annual spending in the region back into positive territory, albeit just 0.1%. This is the first annual increase since August 2024.

Across retail sectors, all categories declined except 'groceries and liquor,' which increased by 3%. With annual inflation at 3.1% over the same period, this indicates that consumer spending remains subdued, with households continuing to feel pressure on purchasing power. For more details, refer to the Retail sectors table on [page 12](#).



ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

\$437M

in the region March quarter 2026



2.1%

Increase in the region compared to the March 2025 quarter



0.4%

Increase nationally compared to the same period last year

MARCH 2026 QUARTER

For the quarter ending March 2026, total electronic card spending in the region was \$437 million, which was a 2.1% increase from the March quarter 2025. This is higher than the national average increase of 0.4%.

The breakdown is as follows:

>> **Palmerston North city: \$367 million**
2.5% increase

>> **Manawatū district: \$71 million**
0.1% increase

YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026

For the year to March 2026, annual electronic card retail spending in the region was \$1,787 million, an increase of 0.1% compared to the year to March 2025. This is higher than the growth in national retail spending, which decreased by 0.3%.

The breakdown of annual spending for the region is as follows:

>> **Palmerston North city: \$1,501 million**

0.1% increase

>> **Manawatū district: \$286 million**

No change

ANNUAL ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

\$1,787M

in the region YE March 2026



0.1%

Increase in the
region compared
to the same period
last year.



0.3%

Decrease nationally
compared to the
same period last
year.

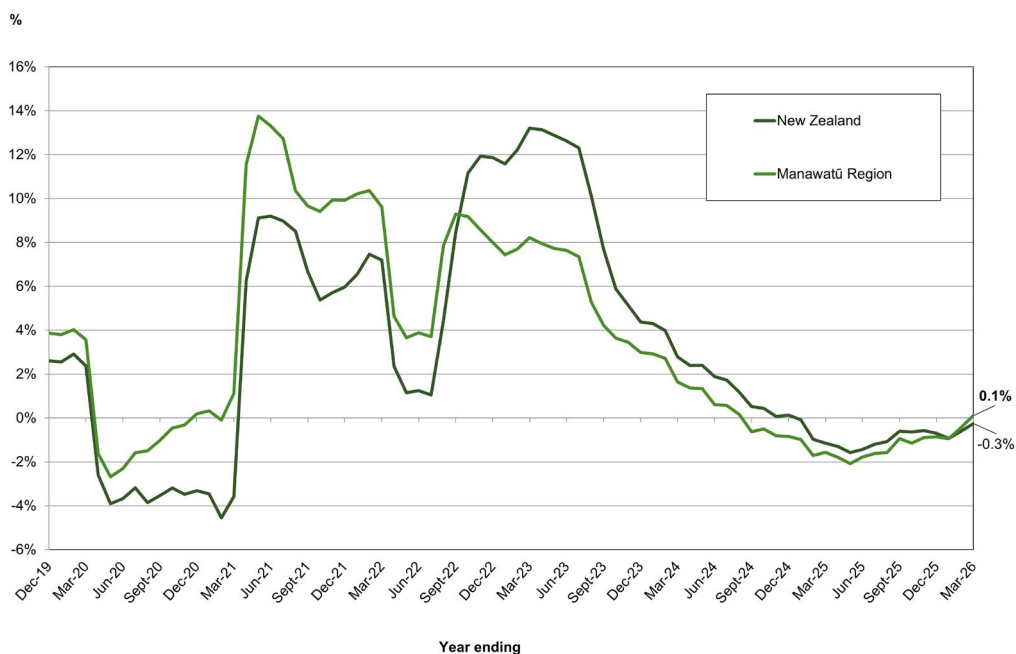


The following chart shows the annual percentage change in electronic card retail spending (on a rolling 12-month basis), compared with the previous year. For the period ending March 2026, annual growth returned to positive territory, with a 0.1% increase. This is the first increase since August 2024. It was also the first time since September 2022 that the region outperformed the New Zealand average, which declined 0.3% over the same period.

Toward the end of February 2026, the US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the subsequent closure of the Strait of Hormuz triggered a sharp escalation in global oil prices. As 2026 unfolds, the full impact of this shock on regional and national annual electronic card spending is still emerging, but early data already points to a broad-based pullback in consumer activity. In March, higher fuel costs contributed to a month-on-month increase of 17.9% in the region's 'fuel and automotive' category, and 16% nationally. However, these pressures have not yet flowed through to annual spending measures, which continue to show contraction.

Prior to October 2022, the region consistently outperformed the national average, supported by the structure of the local economy and its lower exposure to border closures and reduced international tourism during the pandemic. As international tourism resumed, national spending growth accelerated and overtook regional growth from October 2022 onward. From April 2023, increasingly challenging economic conditions contributed to a nationwide slowdown in spending. Since September 2024, the region has recorded consecutive months of negative annual growth, making the latest result the first annual increase since that time.

ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING ANNUAL CHANGE (%)



CUSTOMER ORIGIN

For the year ending March 2026, 76.4% of retail spending in the Manawatū region was from locals, totalling \$1,365 million. Spending from locals decreased by 0.2% compared to the same period in the previous year. The visitor share (i.e. consisting of domestic and international visitors) of spend in Manawatū accounted for 23.6% of total spending. Annual spending from international visitors hit \$39 million in the year to March 2026, which accounts for 2.2% of the total spending in region – and is an increase of 26.4% year on year.

The top five spenders into our region from across New Zealand for the year ending March 2026 contributed 14.9% of total annual spending, and were:

- >> Horowhenua district
- >> Tararua district
- >> Rangitikei district
- >> Wellington region
- >> Auckland region

This reinforces our key drive-time markets, and our key visitor markets of Wellington and Auckland who travel for business, conferences, education, health services, retail and leisure.

Cardholder origin	MARCH 2026 QUARTER		YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026		
	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	% share of spending
Local	334	2.1	1,365	-0.2	76.4
Horowhenua district	16	1.7	68	-4	3.8
Tararua district	14	8.7	59	-1.9	3.3
Rangitikei district	14	5	55	-2.3	3.1
Wellington region	13	-6.9	53	-0.8	3
Auckland region	7	-2.7	30	7.9	1.7
Whanganui district	6	8.4	27	3	1.5
Ruapehu district	1	-13.4	5	-8.6	0.3
Rest of New Zealand	21	-4	86	-0.7	4.8
International	11	17	39	26.4	2.2
Total	437	2.1	1,787	0.1	100



RETAIL PRECINCTS

For the March 2026 quarter, four precincts posted growth in annual spending between 0.4% and 2%. This is a notable improvement from the December 2025 quarter, when only one precinct, Feilding, recorded growth of 0.9%.

The combined lift across these four precincts pushed overall annual spending in the region back into positive territory, although only to 0.1%. This result is significant because it marks the first annual increase since August 2024.

In the year to March 2026, the precincts of Palmerston North Inner CBD and the Rest of Manawatū district continued to experience annual declines, however, their

contractions were smaller than those recorded in the December 2025 quarter.

The breakdown of annual spending for the region by Palmerston North city and Manawatū district is as follows:

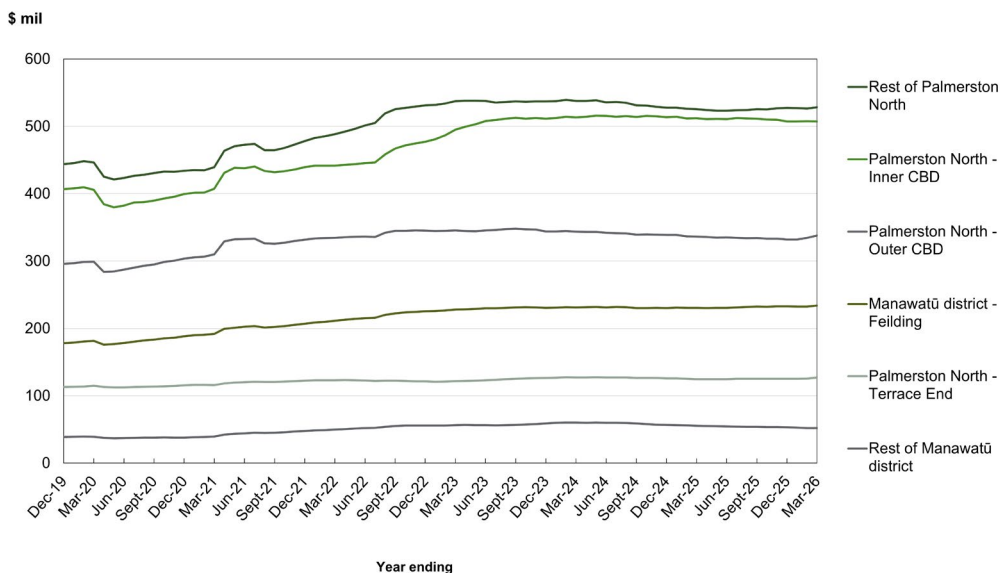
>> **Palmerston North city \$1,501 million, an increase of 0.1%**

>> **Manawatū district \$286 million, no change compared to the December 2025 quarter**

The table below outlines quarterly and annual spending by precinct.

Merchant Location	MARCH QUARTER 2026		YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026		
	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	Precinct share (%)
Palmerston North Inner CBD	121	-0.1	507	-0.9	28.4
Palmerston North Outer CBD	85	7.7	338	0.4	18.9
Palmerston North Terrace End	31	6.4	127	2	7.1
Rest of Palmerston North	130	0.8	528	0.5	29.6
Palmerston North	367	2.5	1,501	0.1	84
Feilding	57	2	234	1.5	13.1
Rest of Manawatū district	13	-7.3	52	-6.2	2.9
Manawatū district	71	0.1	286	0	16
Total Manawatū region	437	2.1	1,787	0.1	100.0

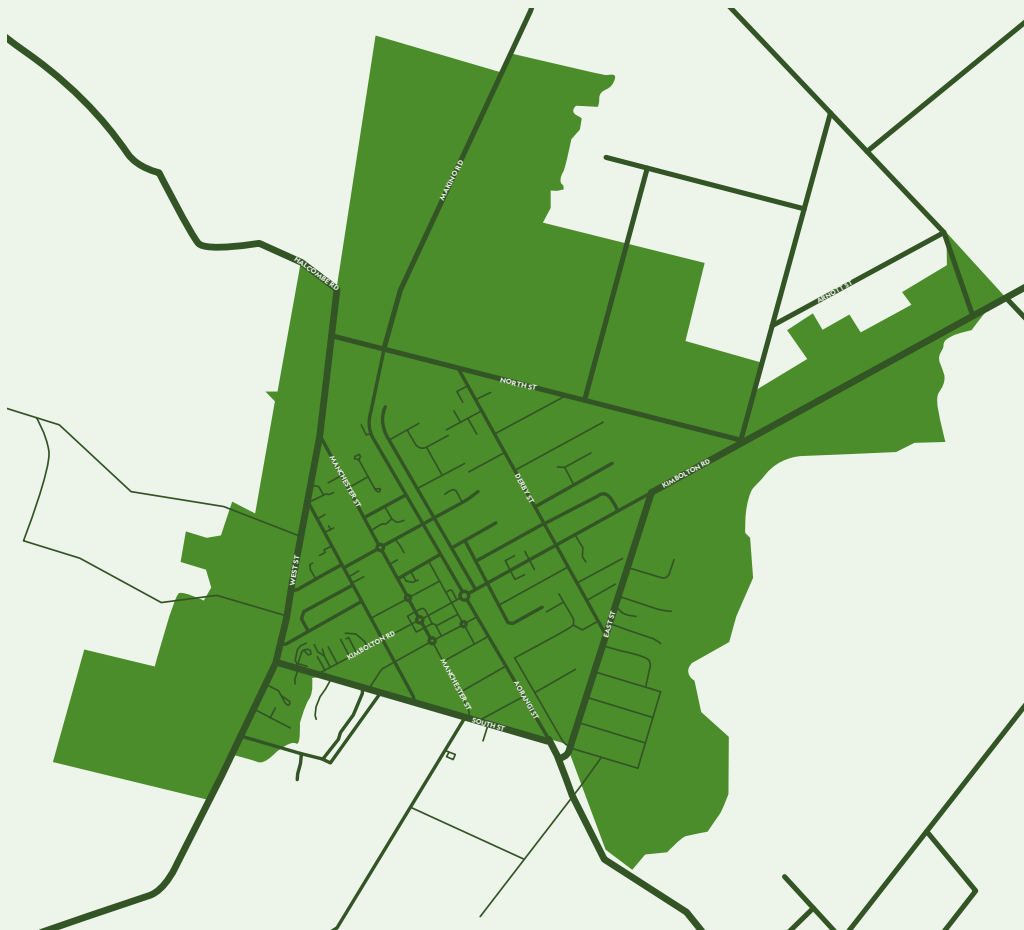
MANAWATŪ REGION: RETAIL PRECINCTS ANNUAL ELECTRONIC CARD SPENDING (\$ MILLION)



PALMERSTON NORTH RETAIL PRECINCTS



FEILDING RETAIL PRECINCT



RETAIL FLOW

For the year ending March 2026, Manawatū residents spent \$271 million outside of our region, a 3.9% decrease compared to the previous year. In total, residents spent \$1,636 million across New Zealand, down 0.8% year-on-year. This suggests a modest shift toward keeping spending local and supporting the regional economy.

Visitor spending in the region reached \$422 million, a 1.1% increase from the previous year. This total includes \$383 million from domestic visitors and \$39 million from international visitors.

The region recorded a net gain of \$151 million in spending, as visitor expenditure within Manawatū exceeded residents' out-of-region spending. This net gain increased by 11.4% year-on-year.

The region's annual loyalty rate, defined as the proportion of resident spending retained within the region, reached 83.4%, the highest level recorded in the past five years, comparing favourably with the five-year annual average of 82.8%.

Retail Flow	MARCH QUARTER 2026		YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026	
	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)
Resident spending locally [a]	334	2.1	1,365	-0.2
Visitor spending [b]	104	2	422	1.1
Total spending at Manawatū region merchants [c]	437	2.1	1,787	0.1

Resident spending outside* region [d]	73	-4.4	271	-3.9
Total resident spending [e] = [a]+[d]	407	0.9	1,636	-0.8
Net gain in spending for region [b]-[d]	31	21.3	151	11.4
Manawatū region loyalty rate **	82.1		83.4	

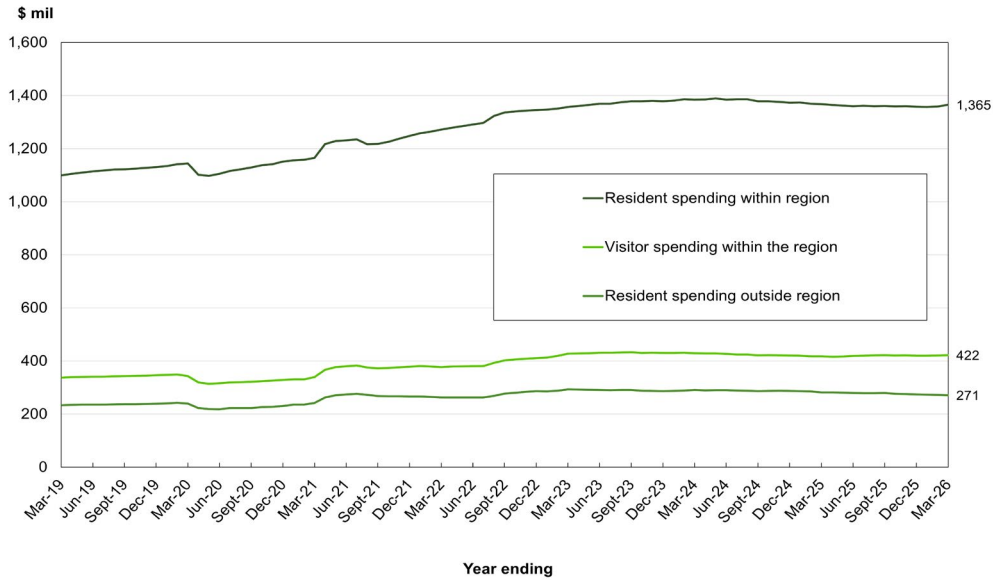
* There is no information available on resident spending overseas

**Percentage of Manawatū region resident spending at Manawatū retailers (i.e., [a]/[e])



MANAWATŪ REGION: RETAIL FLOWS FROM ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

(\$mil)



DAILY & WEEKLY SPENDING

In the March 2026 quarter, the highest spending days were usually on Thursdays and Fridays. There was fierce competition for the busiest day, which was recorded on Thursday 5th February, the eve of Waitangi Day, when spending reached \$6.47 million across the region. Spending on Friday 20th March during the Central Districts Field Days (19-21 March) came very close at \$6.4 million.

It was also interesting to note that daily spending in Palmerston North's City Centre (inner and outer CBD) was highest on February 14th, which was Valentine's Day, at \$3.14 million, closely followed by Friday 20th March at \$3.13 million on the Friday of Central Districts Field Days.

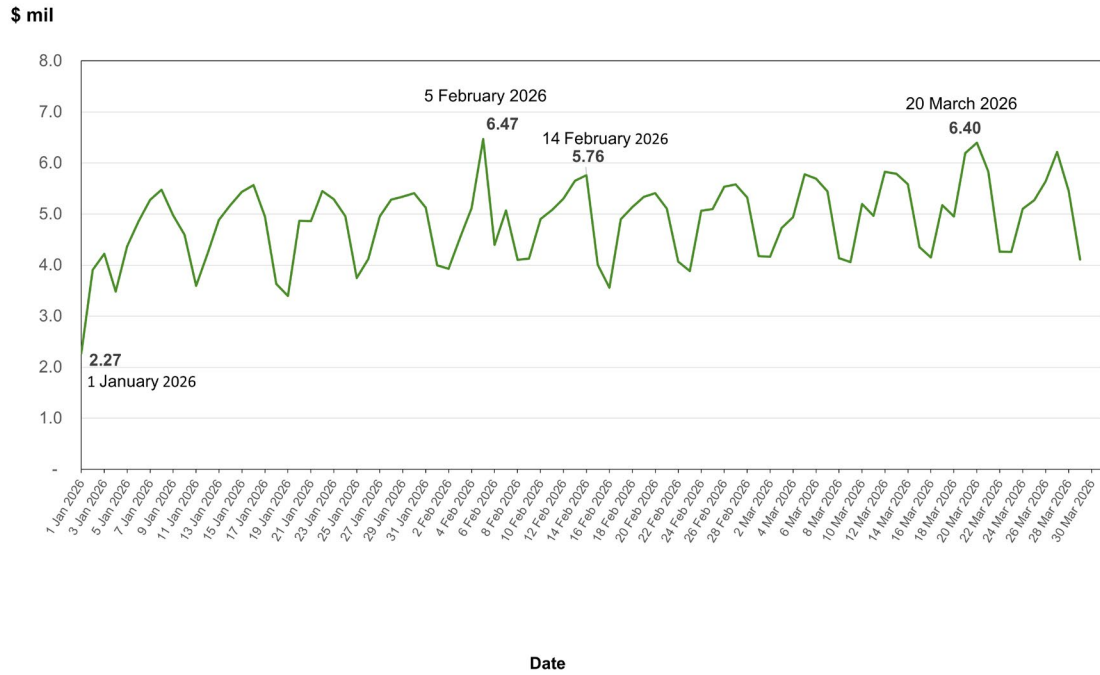
In contrast, the lowest spending day was New Year's Day, with only \$0.5 million in transactions, which could be attributed to the number of businesses that closed for the public holiday.

The average weekly spending for the March 2026 quarter was \$34 million with the highest weekly spend of \$37 million observed over the week ending 22nd March 2026 (the week of Central Districts Field Days). The lowest weekly spend of \$28.5 million was observed over the week ending 4th January 2026.



MANAWATŪ REGION: DAILY ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

March quarter 2026 (\$ million)



MANAWATŪ REGION: WEEKLY ELECTRONIC CARD RETAIL SPENDING

March quarter 2026 (\$ million)

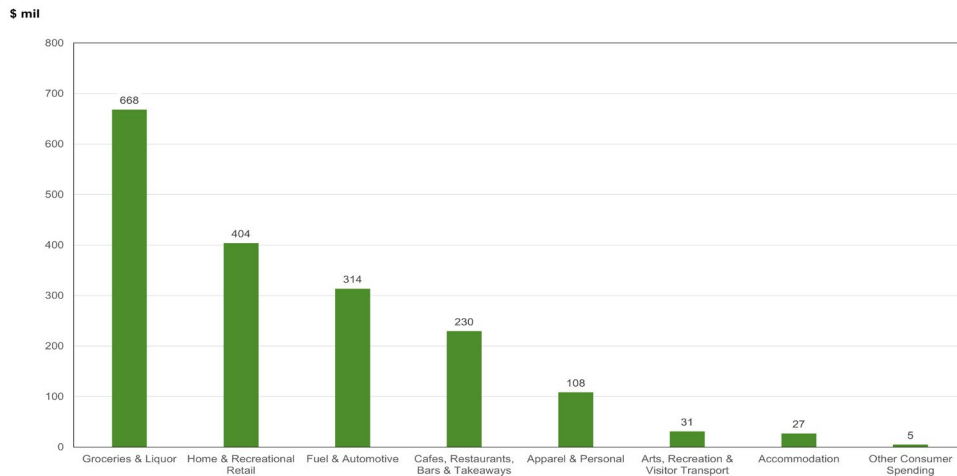


RETAIL SECTORS

Retail Sectors	MANAWATŪ REGION YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026		NEW ZEALAND YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026		Manawatū region share of New Zealand
	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	Spending (\$m)	Change from last year (%)	
Accommodation	27	-3.7	1,697	-2	1.6
Apparel & personal	108	-3.4	4,617	-2.1	2.3
Arts, recreation & visitor transport	31	-1	2,159	-4.6	1.4
Cafes, restaurants, bars & takeaways	230	-2.3	11,474	-0.8	2
Fuel & automotive	314	-0.5	12,816	-1.5	2.4
Groceries & liquor	668	3	29,382	3.6	2.3
Home & recreational retail	404	-1.4	15,509	-4.4	2.6
Other consumer spending	5	-0.5	405	1.9	1.2
Total	1,787	0.1	78,059	-0.3	2.3

MANAWATŪ REGION: ELECTRONIC CARD SPENDING BY RETAIL SECTOR

Year ending March 2026 (\$ mil)



In terms of the share of annual spending for year ending March 2026, the top three categories were:

>> **groceries and liquor \$668 million**

>> **home and recreational retail \$404 million**

>> **fuel and automotive \$314 million**

These three categories consistently add up to about 78% of annual electronic card retail spending. Only groceries and liquor experienced positive annual growth up 3%, increasing to a total of \$668 million. However, this growth was below annual price inflation in the food group at

3.4% and only slightly above the 1% increase in alcoholic beverages, indicating that real spending remained weak.

The sharp rise in fuel prices in March, following the late February disruption in global oil markets, has not yet appeared in annual spending data for the fuel and automotive category. On a month-to-month basis, however, spending in this category increased 17.9% in the region and 16% nationally compared with the March 2025 quarter, signalling early pressure on household budgets that is likely to become more visible in annual figures over the coming months.

RETAIL SECTOR CLASSIFICATION

Accommodation

- >> Accommodation

Apparel & personal

- >> Clothing retailing
- >> Footwear retailing
- >> Watch & jewellery retailing
- >> Other personal accessory retailing
- >> Hairdressing & beauty services

Arts, recreation & visitor transport

- >> Interurban & rural bus transport
- >> Urban bus transport (including tramway)
- >> Taxi & other road transport
- >> Rail passenger transport
- >> Water passenger transport
- >> Air & space transport
- >> Scenic & sightseeing transport
- >> Passenger car rental & hiring
- >> Other motor vehicle & transport equipment rental & hire
- >> Travel agency & tour arrangement services
- >> Museum operation
- >> Zoological & botanical gardens operation
- >> Nature reserves & conservation parks operation
- >> Performing arts operation
- >> Creative artists, musicians, writers & performers
- >> Performing arts venue operation
- >> Health & fitness centres & gymnasias operation
- >> Sport & physical recreation clubs & sports professionals
- >> Sports & physical recreation venues, grounds & facilities
- >> Sport & physical recreation admin & track operation
- >> Horse & dog racing administration & track operation
- >> Other horse & dog racing activities
- >> Amusement parks & centres operation
- >> Amusement & other recreation activities n.e.c
- >> Casino operation
- >> Lottery operation
- >> Other gambling activities

Cafes, restaurants, bars & takeaways

- >> Cafes & restaurants
- >> Takeaway food services
- >> Catering services
- >> Pubs, taverns & bars
- >> Clubs (hospitality)

Fuel & automotive

- >> Motor vehicle parts retailing
- >> Tyre retailing
- >> Fuel retailing
- >> Other automotive repair & maintenance

Groceries & liquor

- >> Supermarket & grocery stores
- >> Fresh meat, fish & poultry retailing
- >> Fruit & vegetable retailing
- >> Liquor retailing
- >> Other specialised food retailing

Home & recreational retail

- >> Sport & camping equipment
- >> Entertainment media retailing
- >> Toy & game retailing
- >> Newspaper & book retailing
- >> Marine equipment retailing
- >> Department stores
- >> Pharmaceutical, cosmetic & toiletry goods
- >> Stationery goods retailing
- >> Antique & used goods retailing
- >> Flower retailing
- >> Other store-based retailing n.e.c.
- >> Furniture retailing
- >> Floor coverings retailing
- >> Houseware retailing
- >> Manchester & other textile goods retailing
- >> Electrical, electronic & gas appliance retailing
- >> Computer & computer peripheral retailing
- >> Other electrical & electronic goods retailing
- >> Hardware & building supplies retailing
- >> Garden supplies retailing

Other consumer spending

- >> Car retailing
- >> Motorcycle retailing
- >> Trailer & other motor vehicle retailing
- >> Retail commission-based buying & selling



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