

AUSTRALIAN RETAIL COUNCIL

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Love is in the air, but fewer Australians are spending this Valentine's Day

Fewer Australians are planning to celebrate Valentine's Day in 2026, but those who do are still finding room to treat their special someone according to new research from the Australia Retail Council (ARC) & Roy Morgan.

The ARC–Roy Morgan survey shows 12% of Australians aged 18 and over — around 3 million people — plan to buy a Valentine's Day gift, down four percentage points on last year as cost-of-living pressures continue to affect discretionary spending.

While around 800,000 fewer Australians plan to spoil their partner compared to last year, romance has not been cancelled with an average Valentine's Day spend of \$152 per person.

ARC Chief Industry Engagement Officer Fleur Brown said the results reflect a familiar pattern seen across recent retail events with a more subdued response reflecting the pressure many households remain under.

"Valentine's Day is showing a narrowing of participation as households make careful choices about non-essential spending," Ms Brown said. "But many couples are still finding ways to say 'I'm thinking of you' and are still keen to mark the occasion — they're just doing it in a more considered way."

"Australians still value moments of connection, for many Australians, it really is the thought that counts," she said. "A small gesture, a shared experience or a simple night out can still feel special."

Among Australians planning to buy a Valentine's Day gift:

- 28% say they will spend more than last year.
- 62% expect to spend about the same.
- Only 10% plan to spend less.

Flowers (40%), chocolates and alcohol (33%) and jewellery (16%) remain the most popular Valentine's Day purchases in 2026. Experiences such as dinners or trips away also feature strongly, alongside cosmetics, cards and smaller, inexpensive items.

Men (16%) are twice as likely as women (8%) to be purchasing a Valentine's Day gift this year. Among those taking part, men plan to spend an average of \$171, compared with \$123 for women.

Western Australia (15%) and Tasmania (14%) are the most romantic states, recording the highest participation rates, while Valentine's Day gift buying is slightly more common in capital cities (13%) than regional areas (11%).

For those celebrating, two-thirds (66%) plan to mark Valentine's Day with a meal, either at home or at a restaurant. Dining out is most popular in Queensland (58%) and South Australia (49%), while Tasmanians are more likely to celebrate at home. Younger Australians aged 18–34 are the most likely to book a table at a restaurant (62%), compared with around 39 to 40% of Australians aged 35 and over.

"Australians still value moments of connection, and that doesn't have to come with a big price tag," Ms Brown said. "Flowers, a shared meal or a small surprise can all be meaningful ways to show someone you care."

Overall, Australians are expected to spend \$550 million on Valentine's Day gifts, a modest 2.8% increase on 2025.

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This ARC-Roy Morgan Snap SMS survey was conducted with an Australian-wide cross-section of 6,479 Australians aged 18+ on Thursday January 15 – Friday January 23, 2025, including 758 who plan on buying gifts for Valentine's Day.

About the Australian Retail Council (ARC)

The Australian Retail Council (ARC) represents a \$444 billion sector that employs 1.4 million Australians across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities – making retail the largest private sector employer in the country and a significant contributor to the Australian economy. Our membership spans the full spectrum of Australian retail, from family-owned small & independent retailers that make up 95% of our membership, through to our largest national & international retailers that employ thousands of Australians and support both metropolitan and regional communities every day.

About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 80 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers. To learn more visit www.roymorgan.com.