

Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

B2B payment practices trends Australia 2026



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About the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

The Atradius Payment Practices Barometer is an annual survey of business-to-business (B2B) payment practices in markets across the world.

Our survey gives you the opportunity to hear directly from businesses trading on credit with B2B customers about how they are coping with evolving trends in customer payment behaviour. Staying informed about these trends is vital because it helps to identify emerging shifts in customer payment habits, allowing businesses to address potential liquidity pressure and maintain smooth operations.

Businesses operating in – or planning to enter – the markets and industries covered by our survey can gain valuable insights from our reports, which also shed light on the challenges and risks companies anticipate in the coming months, as well as their expectations for future growth.

This report presents the survey results for **Australia**.

The survey was conducted during Q1 2026 and remained open for a few days after the onset of Middle East geopolitical tensions, allowing respondents time to reflect on potential impacts as they completed the questionnaire. The findings should therefore be viewed with this context in mind.



B2B payment practices trends

Payment risk hotspots weigh on working capital across Australia's B2B landscape

The economy is growing steadily as Australia enters the second quarter of 2026. However, uncertainty in global trade is expected to keep commodity prices contained and weigh on exports. Inflation remains above the central bank's target, adding pressure on business costs. Interest rates are higher than in recent years, making borrowing more expensive. Access to finance has tightened as banks lend more cautiously, which may explain why Australian companies increasingly rely on trade credit.

An upward trend in the use of trade credit is clear in B2B sales. Nearly 60% of transactions are made on terms, which means most B2B trade in Australia is now financed by suppliers. This increases exposure to customer payment risk until invoices are settled. When payments slow, or customers request longer credit windows, it signals that cash-flow pressure is building. With borrowing expensive and the outlook uncertain, most Australian companies have a lower appetite for risk and shorten payment terms to less than 30 days. Many also encourage quicker invoice settlement by offering discounts. Larger companies often pressure smaller suppliers to accept longer payment terms, so SMEs pay out faster but wait longer to be paid. This creates cash-flow pressure on smaller firms and can threaten their survival.

Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) figures reveal that most B2B payments align with agreed terms. Fewer than one in five B2B invoices are overdue, with bad debts contained for most businesses. However, this apparent payment discipline hides how stricter payment terms drive change in customer payment behaviour. As suppliers shorten terms to protect their cash flow, customers adjust how they manage theirs. Customers hold on to cash, review who to pay first, and prioritise suppliers they cannot afford to lose. Non-essential suppliers wait longer. This selective pattern does not show up in headline overdue rates, but points to pressure on cash flow. Real time credit data makes delays visible at once, allowing suppliers to tighten credit quickly. Firms that pay on time keep their credit lines open and protect their position in the supply chain.

Clear risk hotspots of uneven customer payment behaviour are emerging in specific business segments. These pockets of pressure sit beneath a steady headline picture and highlight where cash-flow strain may intensify. This is mainly in the construction sector, export-exposed industries, and SMEs under pressure from large buyers. Tax instalments add strain for many small and mid-sized companies and often trigger short periods of liquidity stress, during which payment risk can cluster. In response to this uneven payment pressure our survey shows that more businesses now view credit insurance as a strategic tool to protect cash flow and maintain financial stability.

[Key insights on the next page](#)



Key insights

Australia

Payment behaviour of B2B customers (12 months)

% of all B2B invoices by payment timing

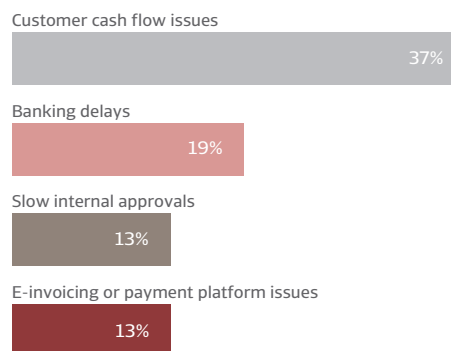


The year-long data shows strong payment discipline, with the majority of invoices settled on time. However, a sizeable overdue share signals underlying credit risk, and businesses expect customer payment behaviour to weaken in the months ahead.

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026

Top 4 reasons B2B customers pay invoices late

% of respondents - multiple response



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026

Breakdown of past due payments (18% past due)

% of past due invoices by payment timing



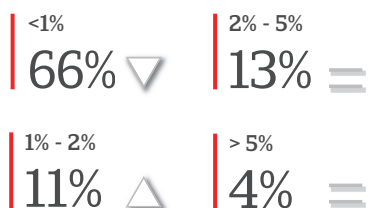
75% of past due B2B invoices are paid within 30 days of the due date, indicating that late-paying B2B customers generally follow a predictable pattern, which helps in managing credit risk.

The remaining share is settled after 30 days and can extend much further, forming a clear credit-risk hotspot, because the likelihood of non-payment increases as invoices age. These call for closer monitoring.

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026

Reported bad debts

% of respondents - bad debts levels

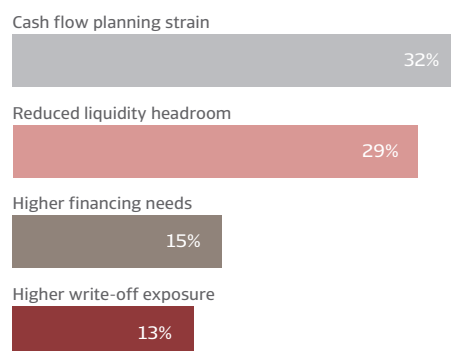


Most respondents report very low bad debt. A smaller group shows moderate levels linked to longer delays. Only a few face high bad debt that reflects write-offs. A minority (6%) remains unsure due to limited visibility.

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026

Top 4 impacts of customer payment risk on working capital

% of respondents - multiple response



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026



Looking ahead

Geopolitical turmoil fuels concern among businesses in Australia amid rising uncertainty

Australian companies report growing concern about volatile global markets as the current geopolitical turmoil is disrupting trade flows significantly. Uncertainty about how the situation will evolve is adding further pressure on supply chains. Businesses anticipate that disruption along key trade routes will continue to lengthen delivery times and strain supply chains. These developments are likely to feed directly into operating expenses and influence how businesses prioritise payments. Many companies anticipate a clear shift in B2B payment behaviour during the coming months as customers assess their own liquidity and adjust payment schedules accordingly.

Rising transport and energy costs are expected to further tighten liquidity across a wide range of sectors, prompting businesses to conserve cash, reassess budgets and prioritise payments to key suppliers. Selective payment practices are becoming increasingly common as companies safeguard working capital and maintain operational resilience. This behaviour is most evident in sectors already exposed to elevated input costs and limited financial flexibility. It signals mounting strain in areas of the economy with little resilience.

Profit margins are expected to come under sustained pressure. Current evidence indicates that the sharpest margin compression will be experienced across several areas. These include fuel-intensive sectors, construction, export-oriented industries, transport and logistics, retail and consumer goods supply chains, and smaller firms reliant on a small number of large customers.

Higher freight charges, rising energy costs, and slower payments from clients will weigh directly on returns, reducing available capital for reinvestment and growth. Elevated interest rates compound the challenge, making borrowing more expensive, increasing financing costs and widening the gap between businesses with strong cash discipline and those struggling with higher costs, rising inputs and softer demand.

Economic slowdown remains a key concern for Australian businesses, particularly in the context of volatile global markets and persistent inflationary pressures. Robust credit control, timely invoicing, and close monitoring of customer behaviour are essential to maintaining cash flow and operational stability. Firms must also plan for potential further disruptions to transport and energy markets, which could exacerbate liquidity constraints.

Disciplined liquidity management, rigorous cost control, and proactive risk assessment will remain crucial for businesses to navigate an unpredictable operating landscape, ensuring they are prepared to respond effectively to evolving economic and trading conditions.

Key insights on the next page



Key insights

Australia

Top 3 risks businesses expect to shape B2B payments (next 12 months)

% of respondents - multiple response

#1

Geopolitical
turmoil

#2

Capital cost
pressure

#3

Global economic
slowdown

Geopolitical tensions, high capital costs and a slowing economy are key concerns for Australian businesses in the months ahead. These pressures add uncertainty

to planning and weigh on confidence, as companies brace for tighter financial conditions and a more challenging economic and trading environment.

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026

Expected insolvency risk outlook (next 12 months)

% of respondents

Stay elevated

60%

Rise further

19%

Not sure

21%

Most Australian businesses surveyed expect insolvency risk among their B2B customers to stay elevated over the next 12 months. A smaller portion anticipates the risk will increase, while some remain uncertain.

These results indicate that concern is widespread, though a meaningful share of businesses remain confident or cautious about the outlook.

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Australia – 2026





Survey design

Sample overview – Total interviews = 210

Business sector	% of respondents
Manufacturing	8%
Construction	33%
Trade	6%
Services	53%
TOTAL	100

Business size	% of respondents
Micro	84%
SMEs - small	12%
SMEs - medium	3%
Large	1%
TOTAL	100

Survey methodology

We updated our panel to achieve full market representation across activities and size classes. Therefore, for this edition, comparisons with previous reports are not possible and annual variation appears only in respondent feedback.

Survey scope

Population: Australian companies were surveyed, with interviews conducted with the appropriate contacts responsible for accounts receivable management.

Sample design: The Strategic Sampling Plan enabled analysis of Australian data by sector and company size.

Selection process: Companies were contacted via an international internet panel, and respondents were screened for role and quota control at the start of the interview.

Sample: A total of 210 businesses participated, with quotas maintained across four company size categories.

Interview method: Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), each lasting approximately 15 minutes.

Timing: The survey was conducted at the end of Q1 2026; findings should be viewed in the context of this timing.

This report is part of the 2026 edition of the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer available at [Knowledge and research](#)



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To find out more about B2B receivables collection practices in Australia and worldwide, please visit atradiuscollections.com.

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