

A MUSHIN BENCHMARK · OCTOBER 2026

Before the first call

How 4,687 Sydney accounting firms look to a new client online

An anonymised study of the web presence of Sydney accounting firms, and the ways potential clients find and judge them online.

2

Google reviews for the median Sydney accounting firm we found on Google Maps. 78% of rated firms have 4.5 stars or more, and the review count is what tells them apart.

Most new clients still come by referral or word of mouth. Many will look the firm up before they call.

Seven in 10 Australian small businesses found their current accountant through a referral or word of mouth (Intuit QuickBooks, SMB Navigator Report 2025).

We looked at the 4,687 Greater Sydney accounting practices on the Tax Practitioners Board register that meet our definition, read their websites and email settings, and looked up a random sample on Google Maps. No firm is named. How we checked is on page 12.

IN BRIEF

2

Google reviews for the median firm we found on Google Maps. 78% of rated firms have 4.5 stars or more, and the review count is what tells them apart.

4–5 in 10

Sydney practices have no working website, by our two estimates.

79%

of firm website domains don't tell Gmail or Outlook to reject or quarantine mail faked from that domain.

3 in 4

firm home pages don't say what kind of client the firm is for before you scroll.

12

firms' news pages carried the same post, "Check out the largest castles by country".

Get your firm's scorecard: [page 11](#), or [mushin.com.au/benchmark](#)

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The median firm we found on Google Maps has 2 reviews.

A client comparing three firms on Google Maps sees the review counts before anything else.

We looked up a random 956 firms by name and suburb and found 502. These are the more visible firms. The rest may trade under another name, or have no listing.

78%

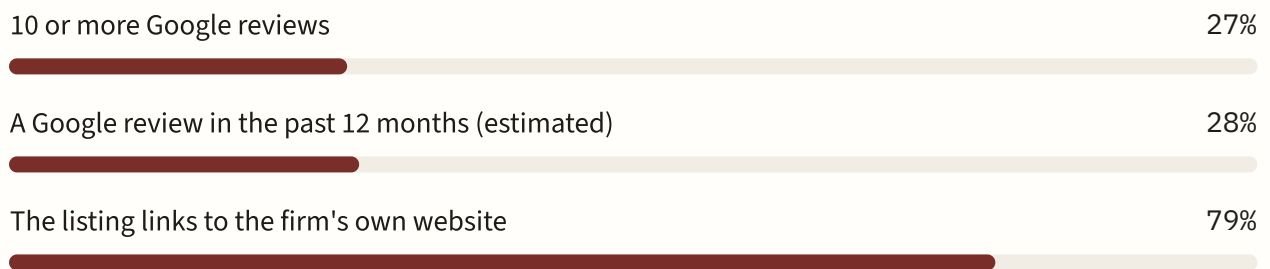
of rated firms have 4.5 stars or more. The review count is what tells them apart.

47%

of sampled firms we couldn't find on Google Maps under their registered name

Firms found on Google Maps passing each check

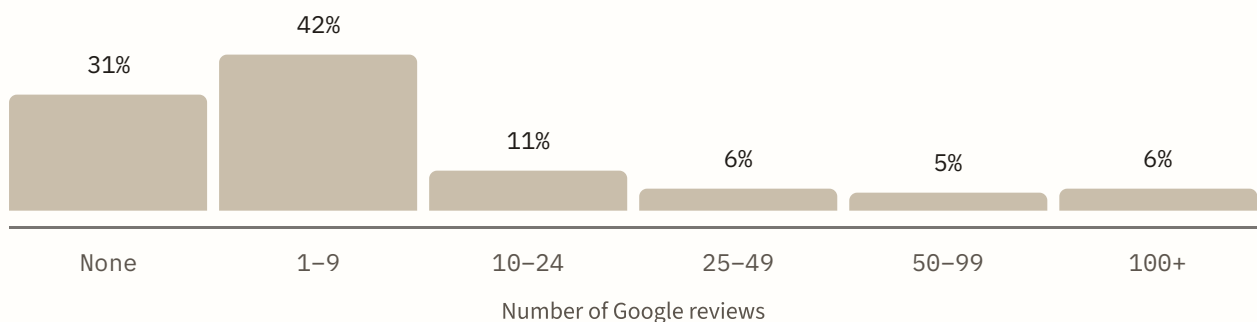
Share of the 481 firms found with review data.



Firms found on Google Maps, by number of reviews

Share of the 481 firms found with review data.

Share of firms found on Google Maps

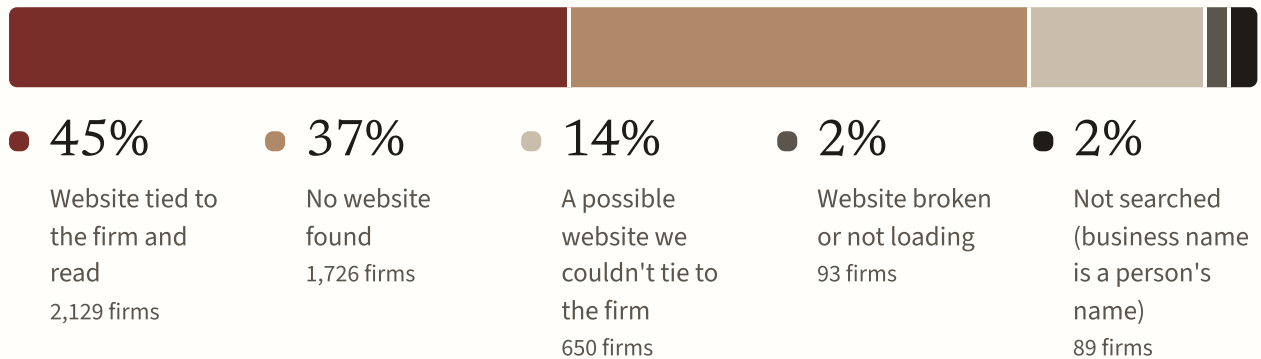


Between 4 and 5 in 10 Sydney practices have no working website.

A client who looks one of these firms up won't find a website of the firm's own.

Did we find a website? All 4,687 practices

Share of practices, with the number of firms.



2,129 practices have a website we could tie to the firm through its address, tax agent number or name on the site. Some practices share one, so that is 2,041 distinct sites. If we couldn't tie a site to a firm, we didn't score it. Counting the firms with no website at all takes two estimates. In the random sample we looked up on Google Maps, where a listing's website link catches sites our search missed, 40% have no working website. Working from the whole list gives 45%. Our search found no website for 37% of practices. A hand check showed it had missed a site for one in eight of those, which brings the 37% down to about 32%. Then add the 2% whose website is broken, and most of the 14% with a possible website, because about three in four of those turned out not to be the firm's.

The 89 practices whose business name is a person's name are in the study but weren't searched, to keep personal names off search services. Some practices on the register are one-person companies that may not want new clients.

No website yet

1. Claim the firm's Google listing and fill it in: hours, services, a phone number and a photo of the office.
2. Ask the next ten happy clients for a Google review.
3. A one-page site that says who the firm is for, with a call link and the address, is enough to start.

About 6 in 10 firm websites have no news page, and many that do have stopped posting.

A news page whose last post is from 2022 tells a visitor nobody has updated the site since.

Of the firm news pages we could date, about 4 in 10 had nothing new in the past year and about 3 in 10 nothing in two years. On the home page, 17% are titled just “Home”, which Google may show in its results, and 41% have no main heading.

4 in 10

firm websites have a news or articles page with posts on it

4 in 10

dated news pages have had no new post in the past year

One post, 12 firms

“Check out the largest castles by country”

On 12 Sydney firms’ sites, posted September 2026

Some firms fill their news page from a content service, so the same posts appear on many firms’ sites.

This one is a single embedded video, an animated ranking of castles from a YouTube channel that makes country-by-country ranking videos. Nothing in it is about tax, accounting or the firm.

Google generally shows one copy of a page and leaves out the rest. Copies like this do little for any of these firms in search.

Some clients now ask ChatGPT as well as Google. In a Pew Research study of US users, Google searches that showed an AI summary led to a click on a result about half as often as searches that didn’t (2025). Of the firm sites whose settings file we could read, fewer than 1% tell ChatGPT’s or Perplexity’s search to stay away.

Few home pages say what kind of client the firm is for.

On a phone, the first screen is all a visitor sees before deciding whether to scroll.

We loaded every home page at phone size and read the first screen. About 3 in 4 don't name a type of client or industry there, such as tradies, medical practices or small businesses. "Individuals and businesses" doesn't count. Most firms do show who works there and what they're qualified in. About 7 in 10 sites name the people at the firm, and about 8 in 10 name a qualification such as CA, CPA or registered tax agent.

12%

still show a copyright year of 2022 or earlier

1 in 3

show something out of date, such as an old copyright year, a COVID notice or a stale news page

What first screens say

Accounting and tax services for individuals and businesses

Professional, personal service with over 30 years' experience

Accountants for tradies and small builders in Western Sydney

Typical first lines, in our words. Only the last names a type of client.

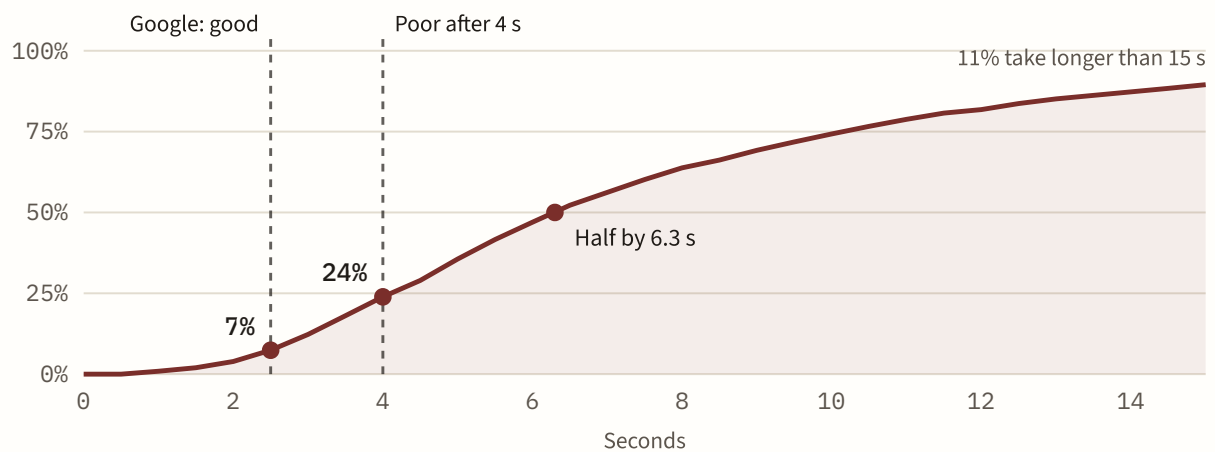
Most firm websites are slow on Google's phone test. 76% take longer than 4 seconds.

Until the main content shows, a visitor on a phone is looking at a blank or half-built page.

We ran every home page through Google's PageSpeed test three times and took the middle result.* Google calls a real visit poor if the main content takes longer than 4 seconds to appear. On its simulated phone test, 76% of firm websites take longer than that.

The median home page asks a phone to download 1.8 MB. The page's own HTML, its words and structure, is 2% of that. The rest is images, code and fonts. Google's own research on mobile sites, mostly shops and publishers in 2016 and 2017, found people leave sooner the longer a page takes to load.

How soon firm websites show their main content on a phone



Share of the 1,986 firm websites showing their main content by then, on Google's phone test.

7%

show their main content in under 2.5 seconds, Google's mark for a good page

17%

have pages that move about while loading, on Google's layout-shift measure

* A simulated mid-range phone on a slow 4G connection, the same for every site. Real visits on a new phone or good wifi are faster. See the notes.

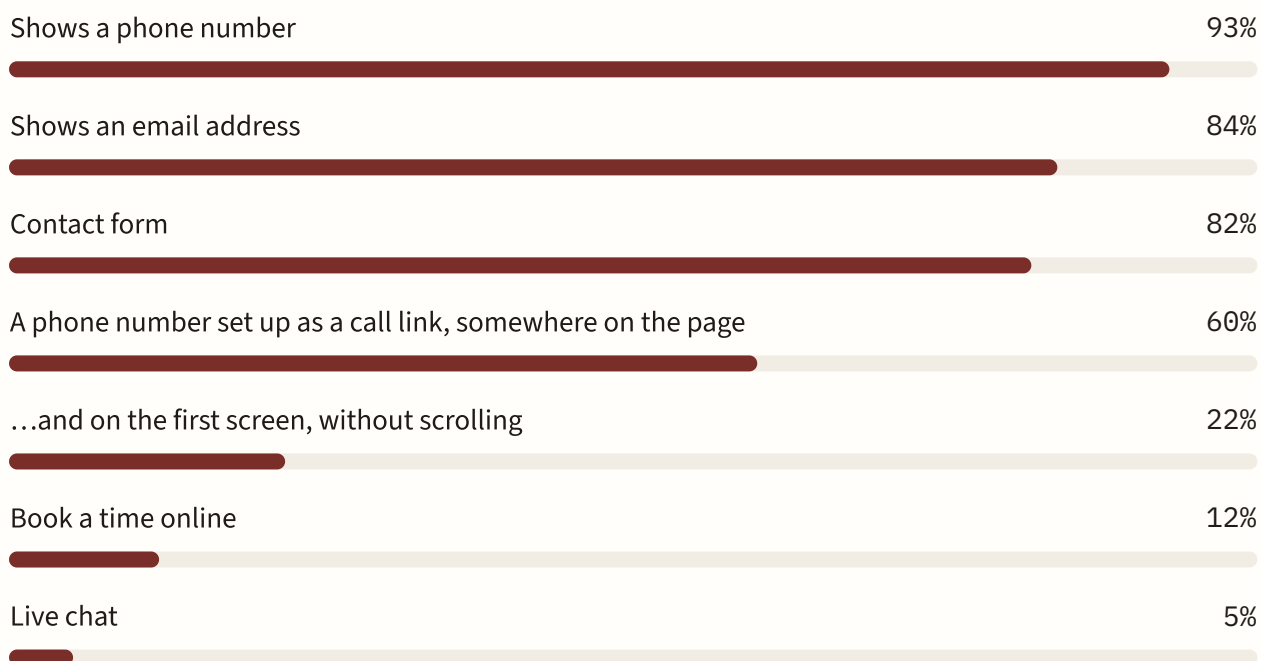
Few firm websites show a price.

Without a price, a client has to ask before they can compare firms.

About 8 in 10 firm websites show no prices or fees, only about 1 in 8 let you book a time online, and about 1 in 6 link to a client portal or secure upload. These figures cover only what the website shows. A firm may use a portal and never mention it.

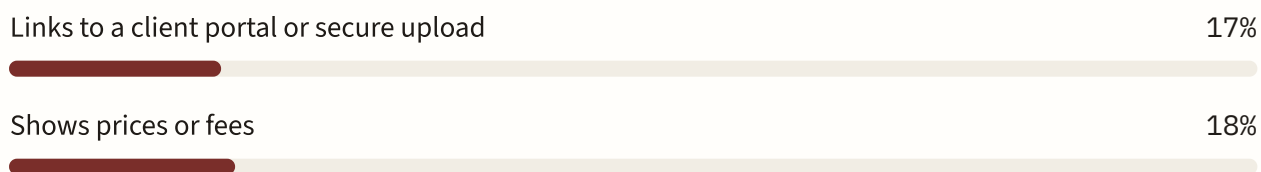
Ways firm websites offer to get in touch

Share of firm websites. Booking is an estimate (see page 12). A call link works on every phone. A plain number written on the page works on an iPhone, which makes most numbers tappable on its own, but not on most Android phones.



Prices and documents on firm websites

Estimates (see page 12).



Only 21% of firm website domains tell mail providers to reject or quarantine fakes.

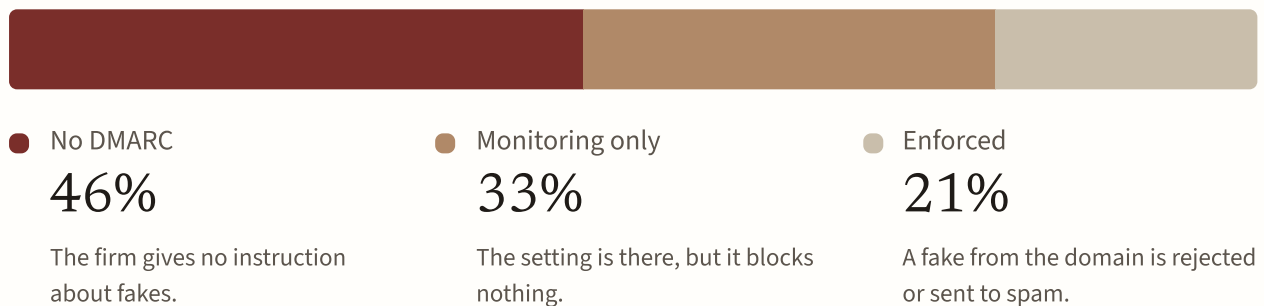
A client who gets a fake invoice from what looks like the firm's own address has no easy way to tell.

DMARC is a setting on a firm's email domain. It tells Gmail and Outlook what to do with mail that claims to come from that domain but didn't. Without it the firm gives them no instruction, and a fake may get through.

Accountants ask clients for documents and bank details by email all the time, and scammers copy exactly those emails.

DMARC setting on firm website domains

Share of 2,039 domains.



“Monitoring only” tells providers to deliver the mail anyway. It's the right first step, and a third of these domains have stopped there. We read the setting on the domains of the 2,039 firm websites, which most firms also use for email. DMARC doesn't cover a fake sent from a look-alike domain.

Region makes little difference outside the City.

The City has the highest share of practices with a website we could tie to the firm, and the lowest median review count. Elsewhere the figures sit close together.

Region	Practices	Website tied to firm	Within 4 s on a phone	Call link on first screen	DMARC enforced	Median Google reviews
City and CBD fringe	796	55%	19%	19%	26%	1
Inner west, east and south Sydney	346	46%	26%	18%	19%	3
North Shore, northern beaches and Ryde	1,082	43%	27%	23%	22%	2
Parramatta, the Hills and Blacktown	1,114	45%	22%	26%	19%	3
South-west, Bankstown and Canterbury	701	42%	24%	23%	16%	3
St George and Sutherland	477	46%	27%	21%	25%	5
Penrith and outer west	171	41%	26%	24%	20%	4

Regions by postcode. Website tied to firm is a share of practices; the next three are shares of firm websites and their domains; median reviews are for the sampled firms found on Google Maps, from 17 firms in Penrith to 123 in Parramatta, so read small differences loosely.

What a firm's scorecard checks.

A firm's scorecard has 8 checks, each counting the same, and 3 choices that are up to the firm and get no pass or fail.

Checks	Share of	Pass	Margin
1 10 or more Google reviews	firms found on Google Maps (481)	27%	±4
2 A Google review in the past 12 months (estimated)	firms found on Google Maps (481)	28%	±9
3 The listing links to the firm's own website	firms found on Google Maps (481)	79%	±4
4 Nothing out of date (old copyright year, dead links, COVID-era notices, stale news)	firm websites (1,950)	65%	±13
5 Main content shows within 4 seconds on Google's phone test	firm websites timed (1,986)	24%	–
6 A phone number set up as a call link on the first screen	firm websites (1,950)	22%	–
7 Links to a client portal or secure upload	firm websites (1,950)	17%	±8
8 DMARC enforced on the firm's website domain	website domains (2,039)	21%	–
Choices (no pass or fail)	Share of	Pass	Margin
9 First screen names a type of client or industry	firm websites (1,950)	23%	±8
10 Shows prices or fees	firm websites (1,950)	18%	±7
11 Book a time online	firm websites (1,950)	12%	±5

Margin: how far an estimate could be out, 19 times in 20. A dash means a count read from every site, with nothing estimated.

What a firm can do this month

None of it needs a new website. The firm, or whoever looks after its website and email, can start any of it now.

Google listing

73% of firms we found on Google Maps have fewer than 10 reviews.

- Ask clients for a review after good work, with the direct link to the listing in a text or email.
- Check the listing links to the firm's own website and shows current hours.

Home page

78% of firm websites have no call link on the first screen.

- Make the phone number in the header a call link.
- If the firm has a focus, say so in the first line a visitor sees.
- Compress the large photos on the home page.

Email

79% of firm website domains don't tell mail providers to reject or quarantine fakes.

- Ask whoever runs the firm's email to add a DMARC record set to monitor.
- Read the reports for two or three weeks, then move it to quarantine, and later to reject.

News page

About 4 in 10 dated news pages have had nothing new in a year.

- Take down bought posts that have nothing to do with the firm.
- One short, dated post a quarter about a question clients actually ask is enough to show someone is there.

We build and look after websites for accounting firms. A firm's scorecard shows which of these to do first.

Get your firm's scorecard

It shows how your Google reviews compare with the ten firms nearest you, and where your firm stands on each check here. Jesse Jenkins, who runs Mushin, will email it within one business day. It's free, and nobody will ring you to sell anything.

mushin.com.au/benchmark • info@mushin.com.au

Who's in it, how we checked, and sources

The list comes from the Tax Practitioners Board's public register. We took every registered tax agent in Greater Sydney that is a company or trades under a business name, and merged registrations that belong to the same practice. Franchises, networks, the large national firms, BAS agents, people trading under their own name, and register entries that aren't accounting practices are left out. That leaves 4,687 practices.

We read each firm's website the way a phone shows it, about ten pages per site, and looked up a random sample of firms on Google Maps. Speed is Google's PageSpeed test. Email security is read from the public settings on each firm's website domain.

Of the 4,687 practices, 2,129 have a website we could tie to the firm. They share 2,041 distinct sites: 2,039 had their email settings read, 1,986 were speed-tested and 1,950 could be read in full. On Google Maps we looked up 956 firms at random and found 502, 481 of them with review data.

Each website figure was checked against a second, slower reading of a fresh random sample of 65 sites, in which AI reviewers read each site in full and opened the live pages. We corrected the figures for the errors they found. They are estimates, and the table of checks gives each one's margin. Simple counts, such as whether a site shows a phone number, weren't corrected. Sites were read on 6 and 7 October 2026.

A news page here is any page reached from the menu or the home page that lists posts, whatever it's called. We dated each from its newest post, using the site's feed or the date published on the posts. Pages with no dates anywhere aren't counted either way.

We sell websites, automation and AI to accounting firms, so we have an interest in these findings.

The firm list

Tax Practitioners Board, register of tax and BAS agents, October 2026, published on data.gov.au under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence.

Speed

Google PageSpeed Insights on its mobile settings, three tests per home page, middle result. PageSpeed simulates the same mid-range phone on a slow 4G connection for every site, which lets sites be compared fairly. Most real visits are faster than this. Google's own ratings of live sites come from real visits.

Research cited

Seven in 10 Australian small businesses found their current accountant through a referral or word of mouth (Intuit QuickBooks, SMB Navigator Report 2025). Google DoubleClick, The Need for Mobile Speed (2016); Google/SOASTA research, Think with Google (2017). Pew Research Center, "Google users are less likely to click on links when an AI summary appears in the results" (US, July 2025).

The Google checks

956 firms drawn at random and looked up on Google Maps by name and suburb in early October 2026, with doubtful matches checked by hand. We found 502. A firm whose listing uses another name may not have been found. Review dates were collected for part of the sample, so the recent-review figure is an estimate.

AI search settings

We read each site's robots.txt file. A site can also block AI tools elsewhere, for example at its host, which this doesn't show.

This edition

October 2026. Once final, the figures in this edition won't change. The next edition is due in April 2027. No firm is named, and each firm's results go only to that firm. If you think we got something wrong about yours, email info@mushin.com.au and we'll check it.