

Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

B2B payment practices trends Germany 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 **Germany**.

The survey was conducted between the end of Q1 and the beginning of Q2 2026 and remained open for a few days after the onset of the Middle East geopolitical tensions, allowing respondents 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

Tighter bank credit raises credit risk across German B2B trade

Bank lending conditions have tightened across Western Europe in the past few years, driven by higher perceived credit risk. Germany feels this pressure more acutely, as its businesses rely heavily on bank financing. As bank credit becomes harder to access, companies struggle to secure funding for working capital and day-to-day operations. As a result, businesses turn to alternative sources of short-term financing. Supplier credit has expanded as the main substitute for bank loans and now plays a more central role in corporate finance in Germany.

Most German companies selling on credit in business-to-business (B2B) trade offer payment terms within a 30-day window, reflecting the pattern seen across Western Europe. Longer terms of up to two months or more are far less common. Suppliers in Germany remain more risk averse and prioritise protecting their own liquidity. This limits customers' ability to ease cash flow pressures, reflecting a cautious approach to credit risk in German B2B trade. This approach also means fewer suppliers in Germany than in Western Europe offer trade credit in B2B sales. About 52% of B2B sales are made on credit across the region, while in Germany the figure falls to just 35%. Buyers must therefore deploy their own cash earlier, increasing pressure on working capital and weakening liquidity positions.

This has driven a clear deterioration in customer payment behaviour. Late payments are now more widespread in Germany than across Western Europe, with 87% of German companies reporting B2B delays, compared with 77% regionally. Longer cash conversion cycles have pushed Days Sales Outstanding higher across several sectors, undermining reliable cash flow planning. As liquidity stress intensifies, vulnerability to insolvency risk increases. This may explain the increase in bad debts across multiple sectors in Germany, with SMEs and highly leveraged firms remaining particularly exposed. Many more companies in Germany than regionally report bad debts clustered around 5 percent of total B2B invoices. At this level, bad debts steadily erode working capital and weigh on business profitability.

Survey data reveal contrasting approaches to payment risk management in Germany compared with Western Europe. German businesses show stronger reliance on internal credit controls, more often absorbing risk internally through active credit management, automated collections, and loss provisions. Western European firms more frequently limit risk at the point of sale through upfront or partial payments, protecting liquidity at an earlier stage. Slightly below the regional average, around one in four German companies surveyed report using credit insurance. They view it as a complement to internal credit controls, transferring part of the loss risk externally. When late payments rise and economic uncertainty increases, and suppliers absorb most of the risk, credit insurance helps make this model more resilient.

[Key insights on the next page](#)



Key insights

Germany

Payment behaviour of B2B customers (12 months)

Exposure clusters: reported level of B2B invoices paid late by percentage of respondents

0%
B2B invoices paid late
13%
Respondents

1% - 30%
B2B invoices paid late
55%
Respondents

31% - 60%
B2B invoices paid late
22%
Respondents

61% - 100%
B2B invoices paid late
10%
Respondents

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

Top 4 reasons B2B customers pay invoices late

% of respondents - multiple response

Customer cash flow issues
50%

Internal approval delays
33%

Banking delays
28%

Complex payment process
18%

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

Breakdown of past due payments

% of past due invoices by payment timing

<30 days
71%
Respondents

31-60 days
16%
Respondents

61-90 days
9%
Respondents

> 90 days
4%
Respondents

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

Reported bad debts

% of respondents - bad debts levels

<1% bad debts
59%
Respondents

1% - 2% bad debts
20%
Respondents

2% - 5% bad debts
11%
Respondents

> 5% bad debts
10%
Respondents

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

Top 4 impacts of customer payment risk on working capital

% of respondents - multiple response

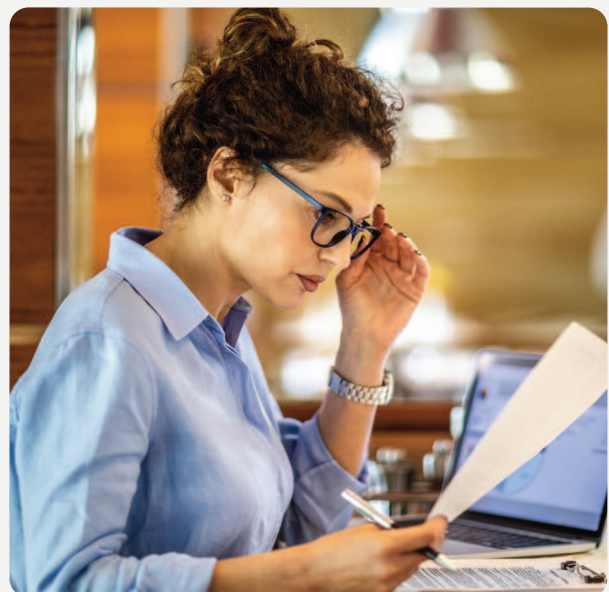
Reduced liquidity headroom
43%

Struggle with cash flow planning
29%

Higher financing needs
28%

Delay payments to suppliers
21%

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





Looking ahead

Economic uncertainty undermines confidence among German firms

As late payments are now more widespread in Germany than across Western Europe, businesses show little confidence in a short-term improvement in B2B payment behaviour. Pessimism is strongest among German manufacturers and trading companies. Many expect the liquidity squeeze to intensify in the coming months. Ongoing geopolitical tensions, including sudden trade policy shifts and conflicts, add another layer of uncertainty, especially for export exposed firms.

Against this backdrop, customer payment risk is expected to remain elevated across both Germany and Western Europe, with no clear signs that the pace of deterioration is easing. Germany faces significant strain, as high insolvency levels continue to weigh on the business environment. Concern over a further rise in company failures in the short term intensify pressure along supply chains. This would reduce the ability of weaker firms to absorb late payments, reinforcing the need for tighter cash management. German companies remain pessimistic about short term profitability, with sentiment lagging behind Western Europe. Economic and trade uncertainty continues to limit scope for margin recovery, even as demand shows tentative signs of stabilising. Slightly stronger optimism across western Europe suggests firms there feel better positioned to protect margins under current conditions.

The risk landscape in Germany broadly mirrors that in Western Europe but appears more acute across several dimensions. Heightened geopolitical uncertainty and higher energy prices are set to push inflation higher this year. This weighs on real incomes and weakens purchasing power. This may explain why economic contraction is the dominant concern for more than three quarters of German businesses, a higher share than the regional average. Downside risks have increased further. Rising energy costs and ongoing uncertainty linked to the conflict in the Middle East threaten Germany's already fragile growth prospects, particularly if energy prices remain elevated for longer.

Sector specific risks pose a significant downside to the German economy. Global trade unpredictability affects German firms more severely due to their deep exposure to international markets and complex supply chains. This amplifies vulnerability to external shocks and disrupts revenue visibility. At the same time, macroeconomic weakness, persistent cost pressures, and rising insolvencies compress liquidity buffers, further restricting financial flexibility. Together, these factors intensify liquidity stress and reduce firms' capacity to absorb additional shocks, increasing reliance on disciplined cash management and active payment risk mitigation.

[Key insights on the next page](#)



Key insights

Germany

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

% of respondents - multiple response

#1 | Economic slowdown

#2 | Cost pressures on business

#3 | Geopolitical instability

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Germany – 2026



Expected insolvency risk outlook (next 12 months)

% of respondents

Stay elevated
52%

Rise further
34%

Not sure
14%

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Germany – 2026

Germany remains in a restrictive credit environment, with bank lending acting as a constraint on corporate liquidity. Heightened concern over economic contraction, driven by rising energy prices and persistent geopolitical uncertainty, helps explain why German firms currently feel greater pressure on cash flow and working capital management than many Western European peers.



Survey design

Sample overview – Total interviews = 210

Business sector	% of respondents
Manufacturing	16%
Construction	22%
Trade	8%
Services	54%
TOTAL	100

Business size	% of respondents
Micro <10 employees	83%
SME 10-49 employees	14%
SME 50-249 employees	2%
Large 250 or more employees	1%
TOTAL	100

Survey methodology

We updated our panel to better reflect the market structure across activities and size classes. For this edition, comparisons with previous reports are not possible, with annual variation captured only through respondent feedback.

Survey scope

Population: Companies in Germany were surveyed, with interviews conducted with the appropriate contacts responsible for accounts receivable management.

Sample design: The Strategic Sampling Plan enabled analysis of Germany 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 between the end of Q1 and the beginning of Q2 2026.

This report and the regional statistical appendix form part of the 2026 Atradius Payment Practices Barometer series, both available for download in [Knowledge and research](#)



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

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