A REPORT BY PEXA

Settlement Scams Index

Property settlement scam awareness, behaviours and attitudes in Australia, 2026

REPORT In collaboration with Nature Research — Aug 2026

Foreword from The Hon Anoulack Chanthivong, New South Wales Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading

For many Australians, buying a home is one of the biggest purchases they'll make, representing years of hard work, sacrifice and planning. It should be one of life's most rewarding milestones. Yet for a growing number of people, buying a home is becoming a time of heightened vulnerability to increasingly sophisticated scams and an opportunity for scammers to target life's biggest financial transaction.

The findings in this report show that the threat of property settlement scams is not only real but evolving. While awareness of scams has increased, confidence in identifying them is declining. At the same time, new technologies like artificial intelligence are enabling criminals to create increasingly convincing scams that can catch even the most vigilant consumers off guard.

Behind every scam statistic is a real person, whether a first-home buyer who's spent years saving for a deposit, a family planning their next chapter, or a retiree looking to invest and secure their future. The financial loss can be devastating, but the emotional toll, stress, and loss of confidence can be just as significant.

Addressing this challenge requires a shared commitment. Governments, regulators and industry must continue working together to strengthen safeguards, improve awareness and build trust in the systems that support property transactions.

Awareness remains one of our strongest defenses. The simple message: Stop, Check, Protect, urges consumers to take the time to verify information and question unexpected requests, as it can make all the difference.

I commend PEXA for its leadership in highlighting the risks of property settlement scams and for contributing valuable insights that support evidence-based action. Together, we can strengthen consumer confidence, reduce the harm caused by scams and ensure Australians can pursue the dream of home ownership with greater security and peace of mind.

The Hon Anoulack Chanthivong

Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading
Minister for Industry and Trade
Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology
Minister for Building
Minister for Correction

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How prepared are Australians to avoid property fund transfer scams?

For most Australians, buying a property is the biggest transaction they'll ever make.

The movement of large amounts of money makes buyers an attractive target for sophisticated scammers attempting to take advantage of a stressful, complex and unfamiliar process.

Building on our 2025 research, this year's study reveals how attitudes and behaviours are changing over time.

For Scams Awareness Week 2026, PEXA commissioned research to understand property settlement scam awareness and behaviour among those who have recently bought or intend to buy property. Our research looked at:

- how confident people feel spotting scams
- and what they would do if targeted

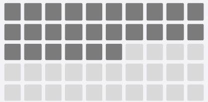
Four key findings from this research

#1

Australian homebuyers are less confident about spotting scams

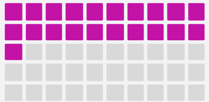
Compared with last year, Australian property buyers' overall confidence that they can identify a scam has dropped from 51% in 2025 to 41% in 2026. It's a sign of greater recognition of how sophisticated and convincing today's scams can be.

2025



51% ▼

2026

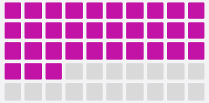


41%

#2

As scam awareness grows, human verification matters more than ever

Checking in with a real, known person – whether face to face or over the phone – remains the top choice for avoiding scams and safely sharing sensitive information, with those intending to buy even more likely to seek human verification.

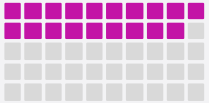


66% **of Australians would meet in person before sharing their bank account details**

#3

Australians are more alert, but still struggle to spot scams

Although Australians are increasingly seeking human verification during property transactions, many remain susceptible to scams. A third would still transfer funds after receiving a scam email, and four in ten failed to identify any scam markers, even after being told the email was fraudulent.

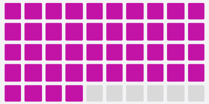


38% **of buyers would transfer funds after receiving a scam email**

#4

Buying a property is considered one of life's most stressful events

Almost nine in ten Australians consider buying a property one of life's most stressful events, alongside moving cities or countries and getting divorced. Greater sophistication in property scams is adding further pressure to an already stressful experience.



87% **of Australians find property purchases stressful**

01

Attitudes to scams

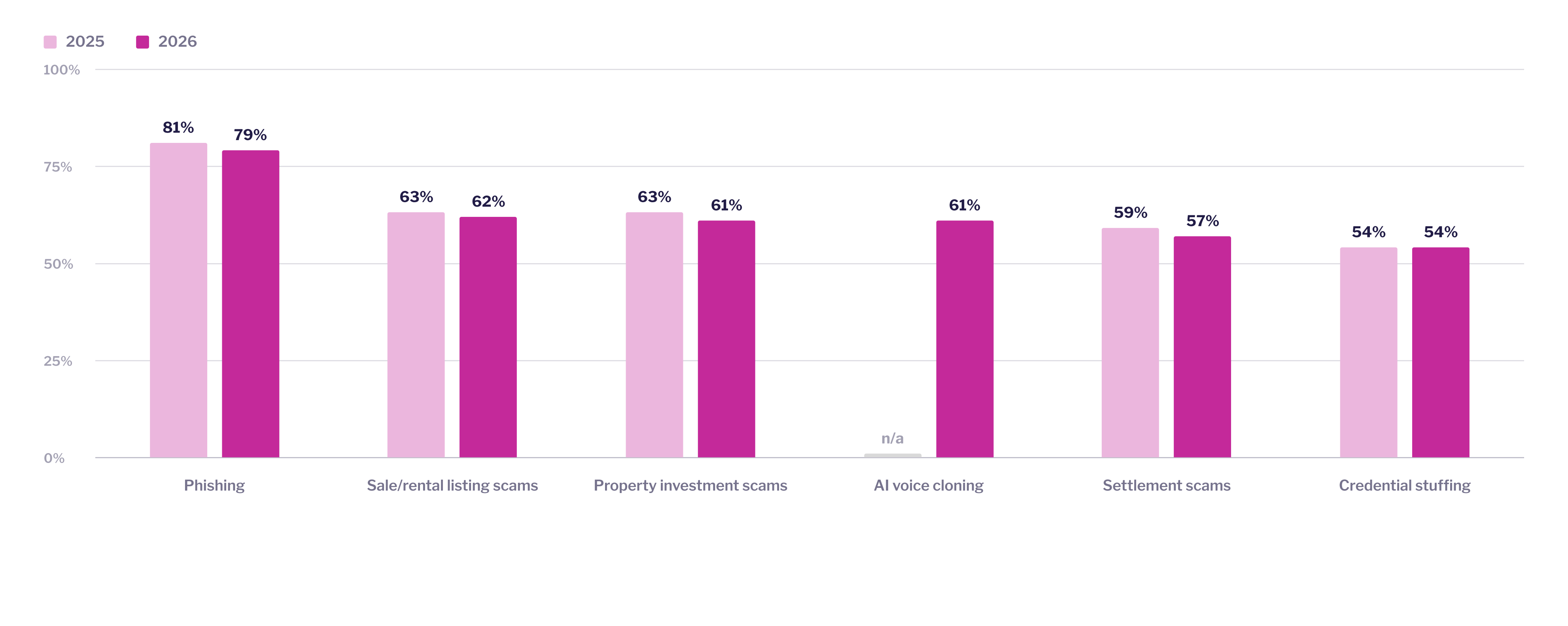
Scam type awareness, confidence in identifying scams, concern about AI voice cloning, and the stress of buying a property.

Scam type awareness

Most Australians are aware of at least one type of scam, with phishing scams still the most familiar, followed by fake sale/rental listings and property investment scams.

92% are aware of at least one scam type

No change from 2025 (91%)

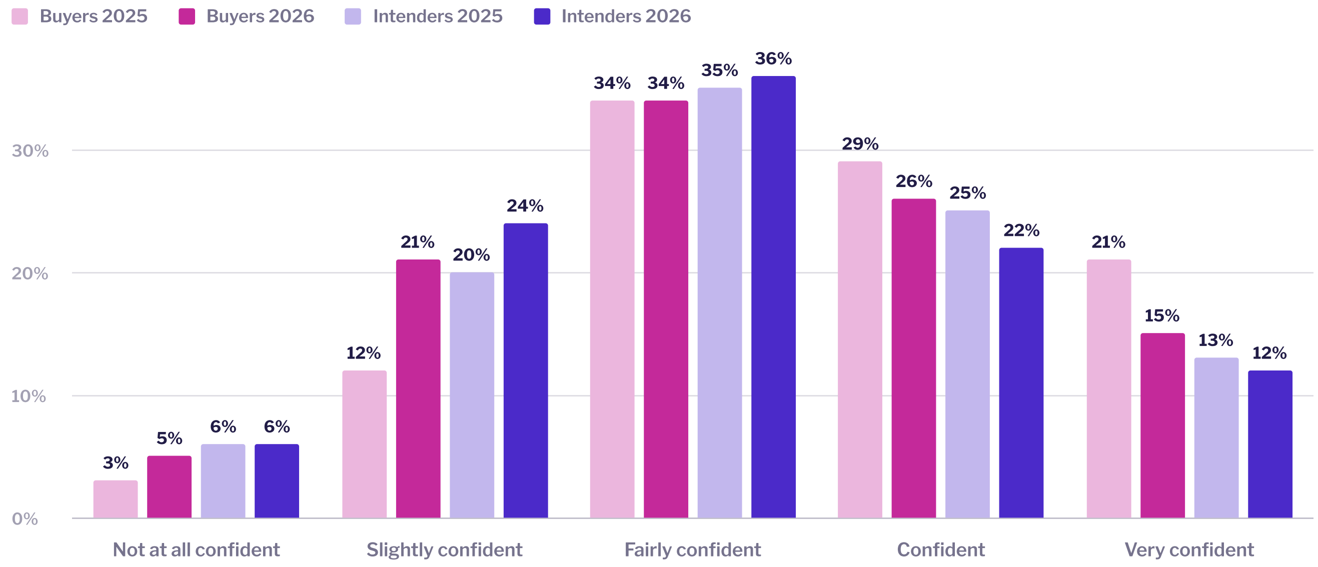


Confidence in identifying scams

Buyers are feeling less confident about spotting property scams, highlighting growing concern about how sophisticated scams have become.

Buyer confidence has dropped 20% since 2025

41% of buyers are confident they can spot a scam in 2026, down from 51% in 2025



BUYERS, NET CONFIDENT

Where scam identification confidence has decreased most

Under 55 years old	45% ▼ **36%**
NSW/ACT residents	43% ▼ **36%**
VIC/TAS residents	46% ▼ **34%**
Investment property purchasers	50% ▼ **40%**

Figures show 2025 followed by 2026.

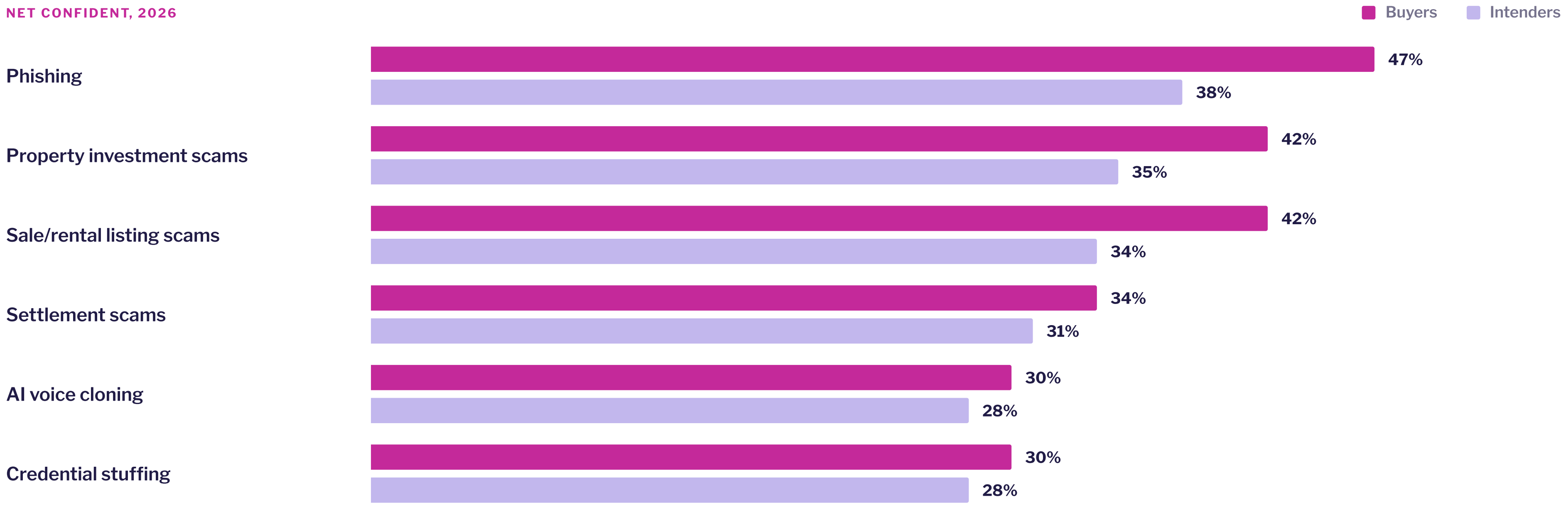
Confidence by scam type

While those who recently bought property feel more confident than those intending to buy, overall confidence in spotting property scams remains low across all scam types.

70% are not confident they can detect AI voice cloning scams

More than half of all buyers are not confident they could spot a phishing scam

NET CONFIDENT, 2026

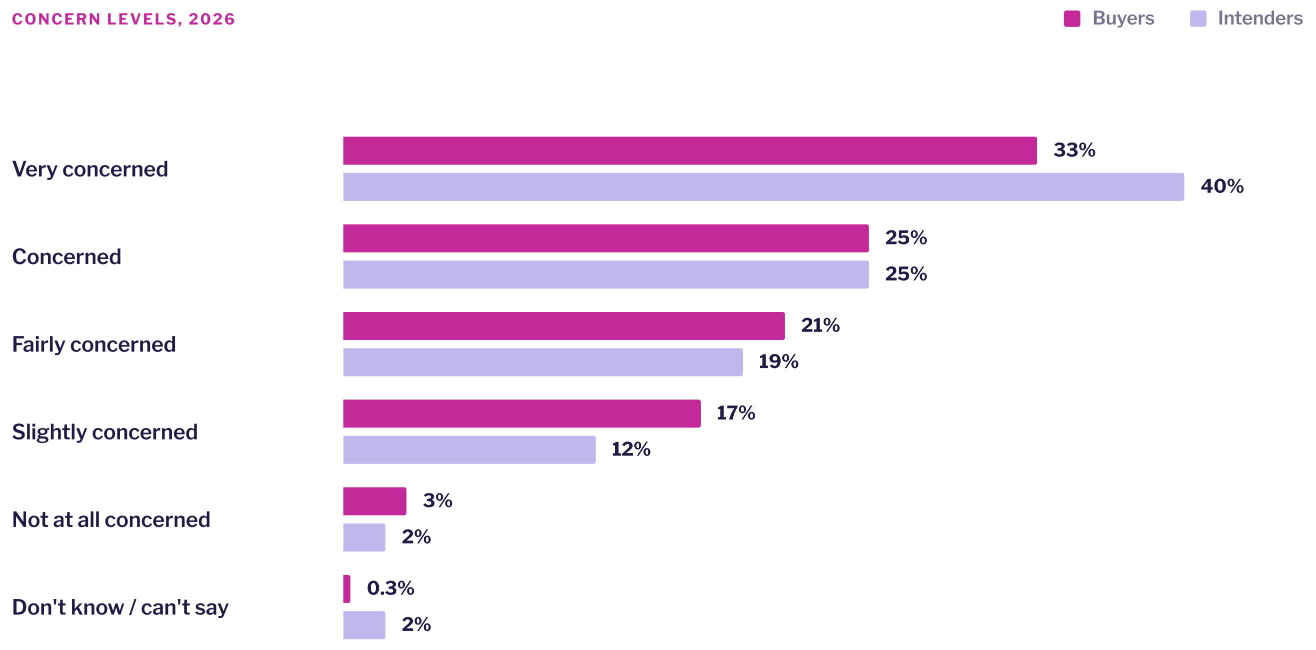


Total sample net confidence (2026): 41%, 38%, 37%, 32%, 29%, 29% respectively.

AI voice cloning concern

Awareness of voice cloning scams is relativity high, with six in ten Australians aware of these types of scams. Those intending to purchase in the next 12 months are especially concerned about their potential impact.

CONCERN LEVELS, 2026



61%

are aware of AI voice cloning scams

Who's most concerned about voice cloning scams?

Intenders over 55 years old

70% vs 61% under 55

Life events & stress

Buying a property is considered by most to be one of life's most stressful experiences – more stressful than moving cities or countries, or getting a divorce.

87% of Australians find property purchases stressful

LIFE EVENTS

Stressful life events experienced by Australians

02

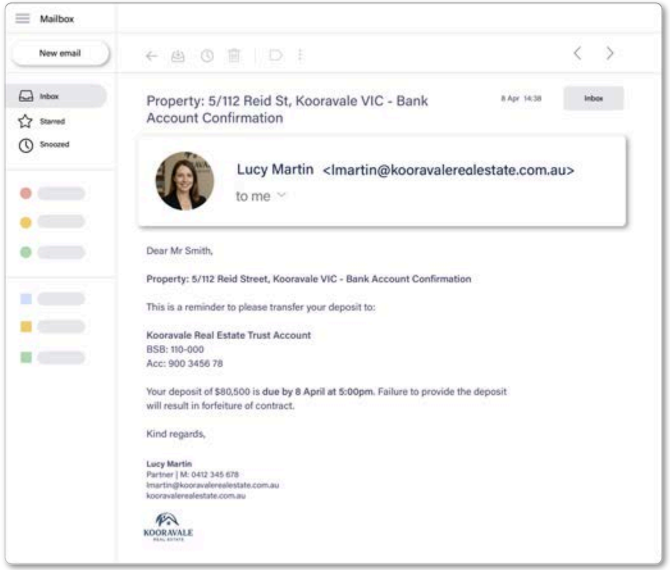
Scam identification

What happens when Australians are shown a real scam email, and which markers they can and cannot see.

Can Australians spot a scam?

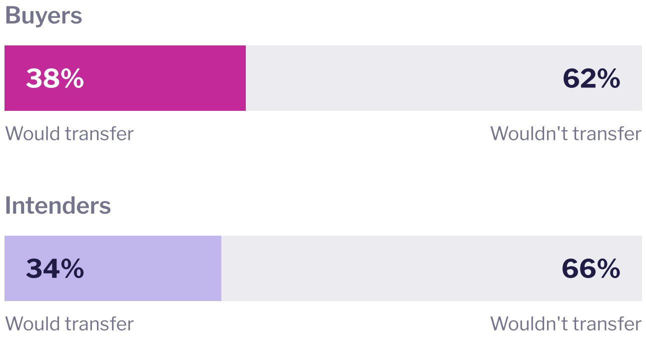
A mock scam email highlighted gaps in scam detection for over a third of those surveyed. When shown this scam email asking for funds to be transferred to a scammer's account, a third of buyers and potential buyers said they would transfer the funds requested – potentially falling victim to fraud. For those who wouldn't transfer the funds immediately, most still didn't spot the scam – they were simply relying on human verification.

THE MOCK SCAM EMAIL SHOWN TO RESPONDENTS



THE SCAM EMAIL TEST

How would Australians handle a convincing scam email?



38%

of buyers would transfer funds after receiving a scam email

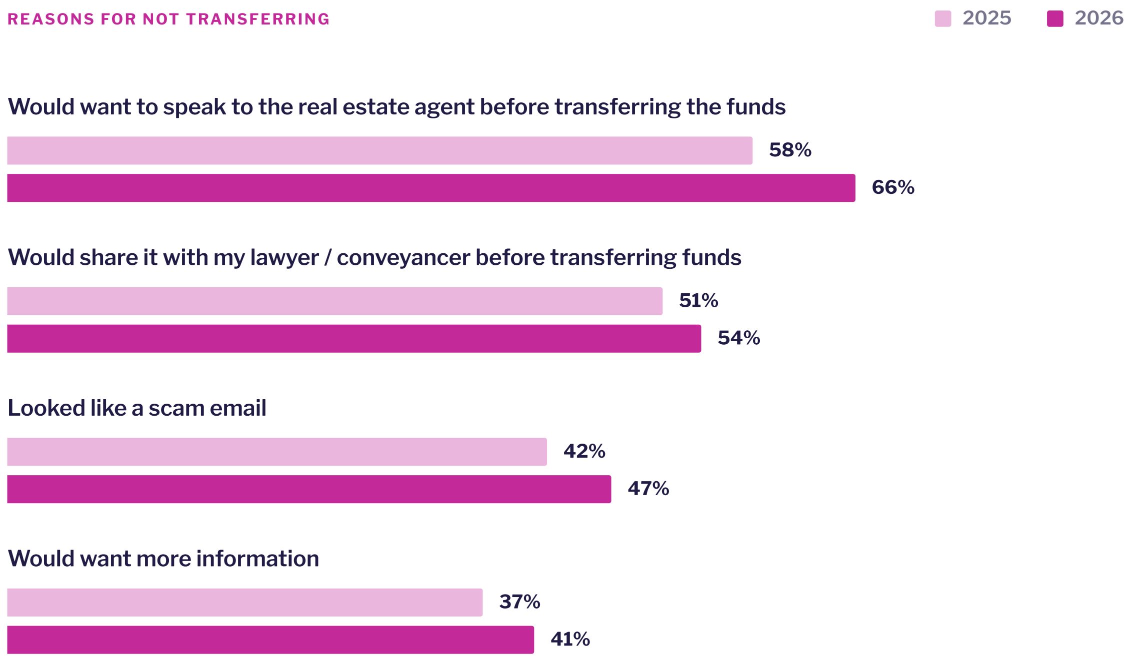
41%

of buyers who wouldn't transfer funds thought it looked like a scam email

Why the funds weren't transferred

Human verification, not detection, is what stops the transfer. Wanting to speak to the real estate agent is the most common reason, and it has grown since 2025.

REASONS FOR NOT TRANSFERRING



TOTAL SAMPLE 2026

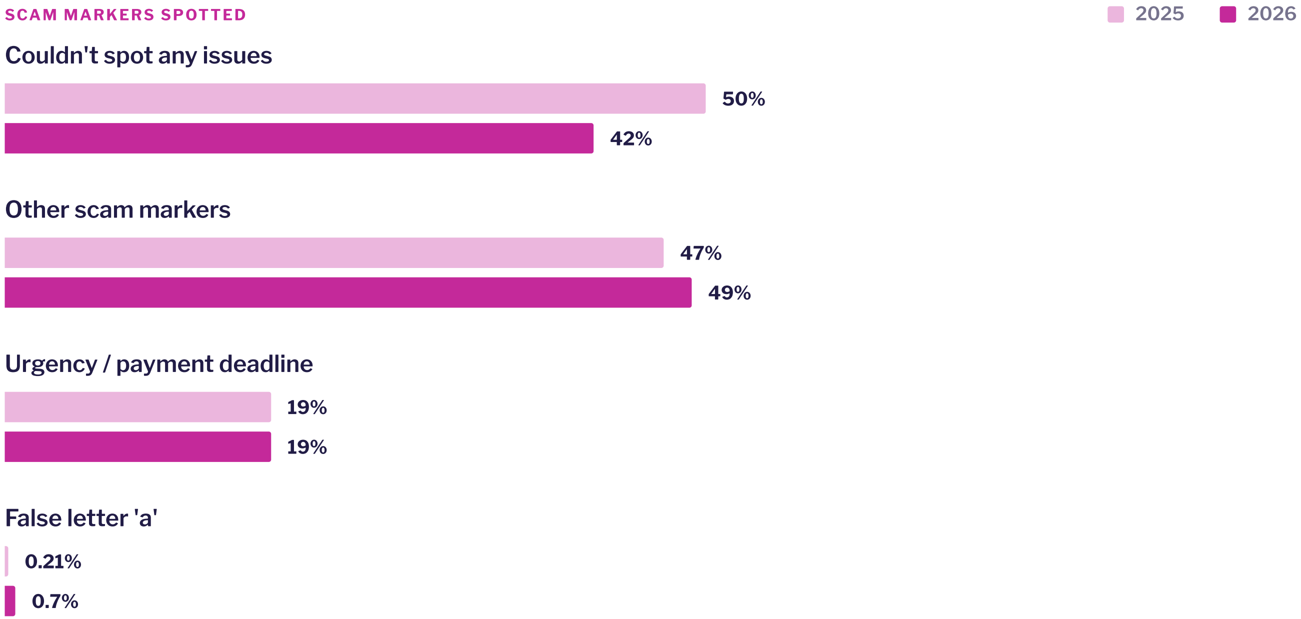
Main scam warning signs identified

Funds transfer should not be asked over email	32%
Email looks unprofessional or illegitimate	19%
General distrust or suspicion / wanting to verify the email first	14%
This is not how a property transaction would happen / work	14%

Spotting scam red flags

Subtle scam markers proved to be too difficult for most Australians to pick up. When told there were two issues with the scam email example, less than 1% could spot both, with nearly half admitting they were unable to see any issues at all. The two telltale signs were the urgency of the request – a common tactic that uses fear to drive action before a victim can realise their mistake – and a false letter 'a' in the email address.

SCAM MARKERS SPOTTED



Column n: 1,030 (2025); 1,028 (2026).

7

people – less than 1% of participants – noticed the false letter 'a' in the scam email, up from 3 in 2025

17%

of buyers saw the urgency of the scam email as a red flag

About half of all respondents believed they had spotted 'other' scam markers, demonstrating potential gaps in understanding of scam tactics.

03

Scam behaviours & actions

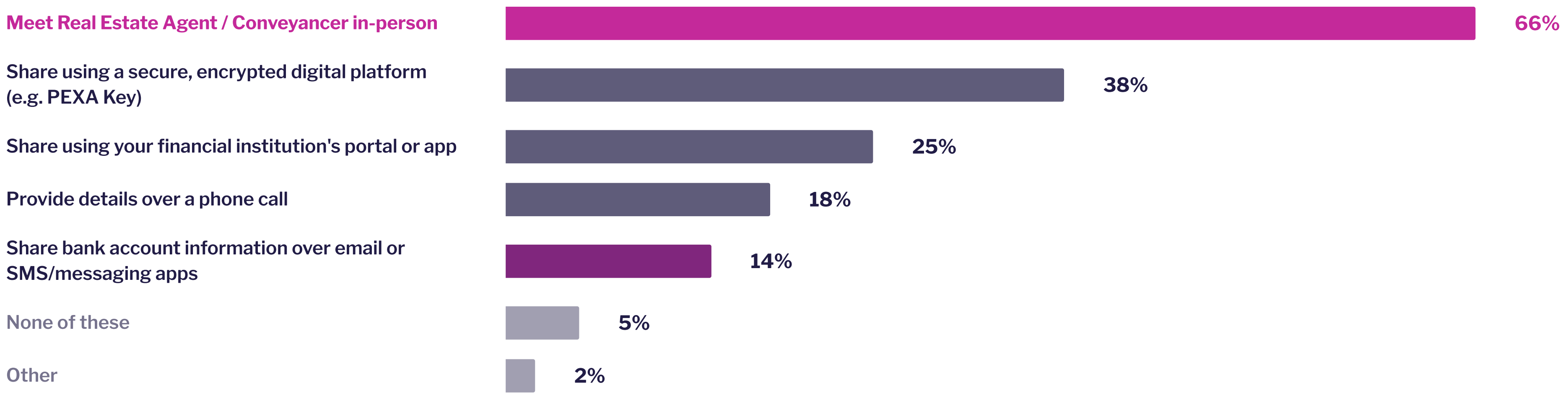
How Australians share and verify sensitive information, use secure tools, and respond to a suspicious payment request.

How Aussies share sensitive information

Aussies prefer meeting in person first before sharing sensitive information like bank details with a real estate agent or conveyancer, highlighting the growing importance of human checks in scam prevention. Nearly half of buyers would trust a secure digital platform such as PEXA Key, while 16% are willing to share sensitive details through less secure channels like email or messaging apps.

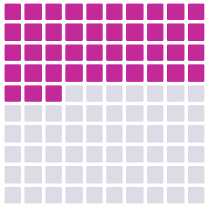
66% of Australians would meet in person before sharing their bank account details

How would you share your bank account details during a property transfer?



Secure tool usage among property buyers

While most recent property buyers (59%) were offered a secure tool such as PEXA Key to share payment or settlement information during their property purchase, a quarter chose not to use it. Only 43% of Australian buyers overall showed interest in using a secure encrypted platform to share sensitive information. When offered a tool during their purchase, 74% of buyers did choose to use it, showing that familiarity and trusted recommendations increase confidence in sharing sensitive information securely.

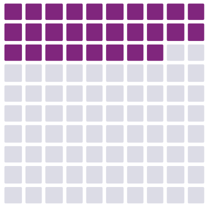


43%

of buyers would use a secure, encrypted platform to share sensitive information

74%

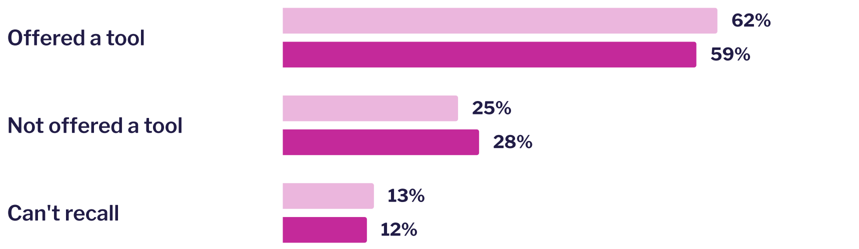
of buyers offered a secure tool chose to use it in 2026



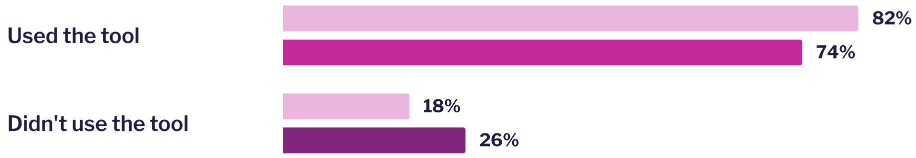
28%

of buyers were not offered a secure tool to share sensitive information in 2026

Buyers offered a secure tool



Buyers who used the tool offered



Opt-outs rose 8 points year on year.

How buyers verify sensitive information

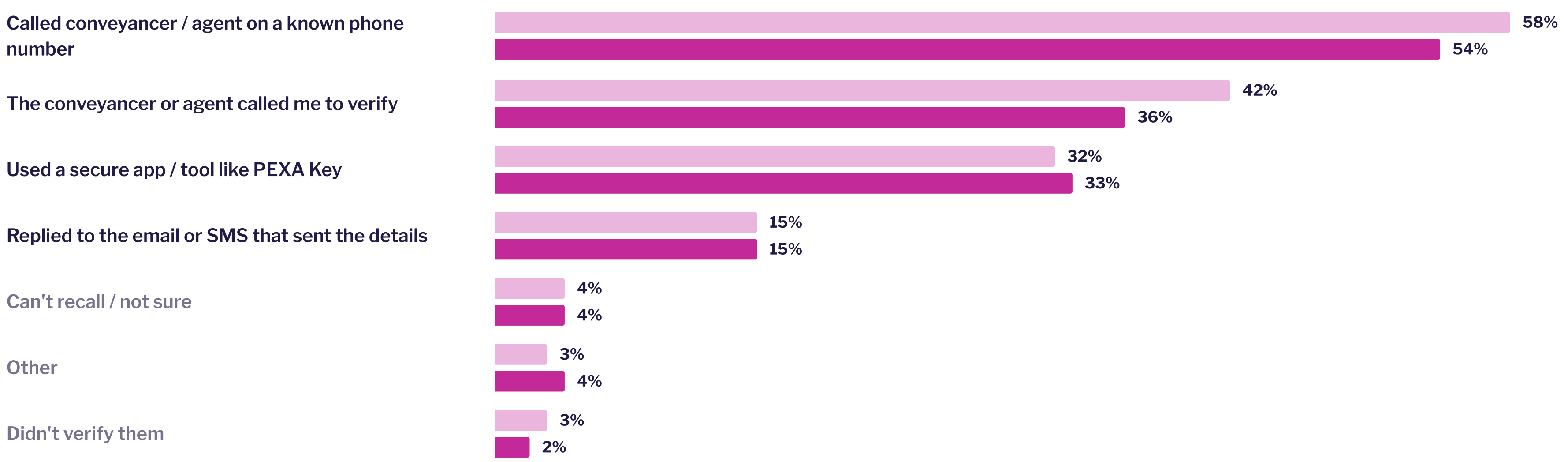
Checking with a human and using secure, encrypted tools like PEXA Key are the top ways that recent property buyers verified sensitive data like bank account details during a property transaction.

54%
called the conveyancer or agent on a known phone number

2%
of property buyers didn't verify the bank account details they were given

VERIFICATION METHODS USED, 2025 VS 2026

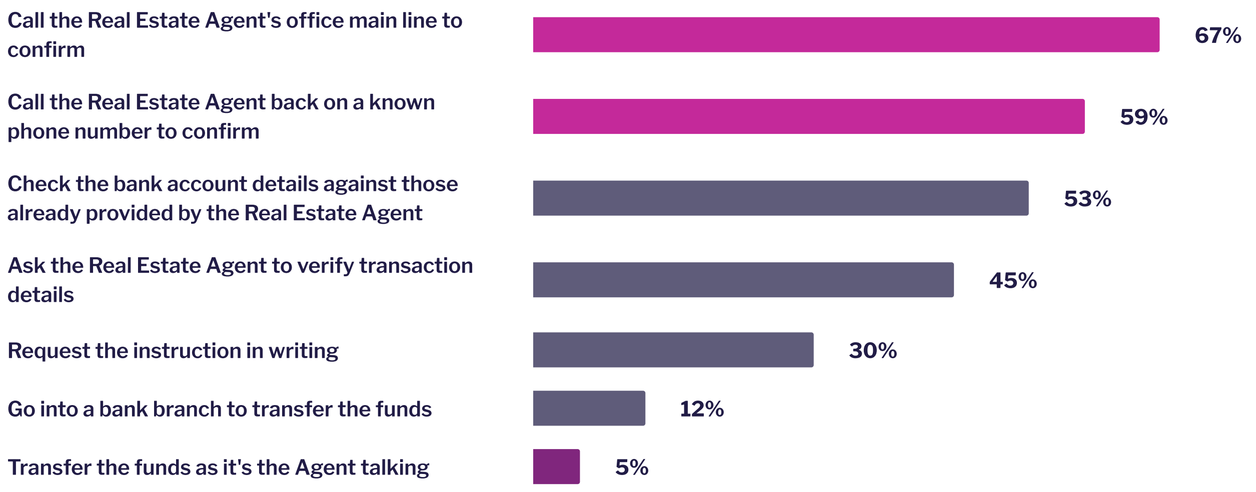
2025 2026



AI voice cloning scam avoidance

When presented with an AI voice cloning scam scenario, most Australians believe that making a phone call to a known or trusted number is the best action to take. Most Australians are wary of accepting calls from unknown numbers and are aware of the correct 'process' for transferring money during a property sale, which is shown by two thirds of respondents calling the agent back on a verified number to confirm before making the transfer. After getting a phone call from an unrecognised number and speaking to a voice they recognise as their agent, 5% of people think it's ok to transfer the funds requested.

How Australians would respond to a suspicious payment request made by an agent via voice call



5%

of Australians would not verify a transfer request if the caller sounded like their real estate agent.

Two thirds would call the agent back on a verified number to confirm before making the transfer.

04

Background & methodology

Why and how we conducted this research, who we surveyed, and how the data was collected.

Why and how we conducted this research

Ahead of Scams Awareness Week 2026, PEXA sought insights into Australians' awareness of property fund transfer scams. This research builds on findings from our 2025 study, allowing us to track how attitudes and behaviours have changed.

What are Australian property buyers and intenders' behaviours and attitudes towards property scams?

2026 Consumer Research Report by Nature

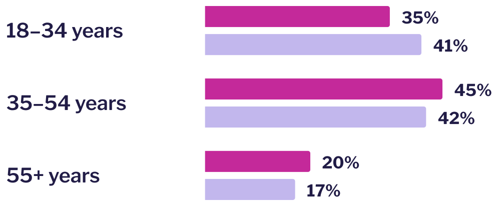
KEY TOPICS FOR 2026

- How people respond to common scam scenarios
- Awareness of different scam types and confidence in spotting them
- Scam behaviours, including sharing and verifying sensitive information, and actions they'd take in the event of a scam
- Awareness and concerns around AI voice cloning scams

Who we surveyed

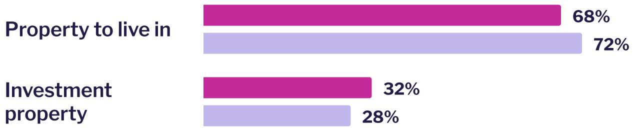
Buyers (n=500) Intenders (n=528)

AGE GROUP

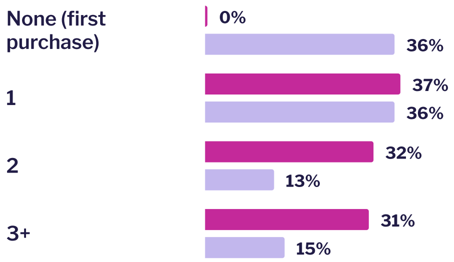


GENDER

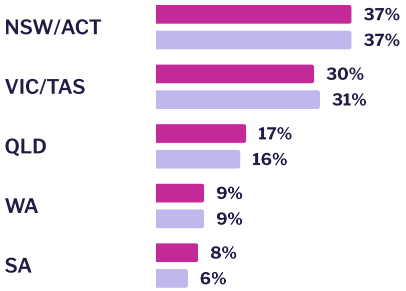
PROPERTY TYPE



NUMBER OF PROPERTIES



LOCATION



ACT 2%, TAS 2% (included in combined figures).

TOTAL SAMPLE

1,028

Australian property buyers (last 12 months, n=500) and intending buyers (next 12 months, n=528).

Methodology

WHAT	7 minute online quantitative survey
WHEN	Fieldwork was conducted in July 2026
WHO	The 2026 study includes responses from n=1,028 Australian property buyers (last 12 months, n=500) or intending buyers (next 12 months, n=528). All respondents must be either a main or joint decision maker regarding the property purchase or the funds for the purchase. The data is nationally representative for age / gender / location and has been post weighted to reflect L12M buyer / N12M intender incidence in the population.

This research was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2019 and ISO 27001:2013.

CONTACT

Get in touch

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