



THE OHIO VALLEY DIGITAL REPORT

How Ohio Valley businesses look on Google · Belmont, Ohio & Marshall County, West Virginia · Willow Creek Group, LLC · Edition 1

Both sides of the river earn the same reviews. Not the same attention.

We ran the same checks a customer's eyes run on 117 active independent businesses on both sides of the Ohio River: 74 in Belmont County, Ohio, and 43 in Ohio and Marshall Counties, West Virginia. Ratings are effectively identical, 4.63 stars in Ohio and 4.60 in West Virginia. Visibility is not. The Ohio side carries a median of 41 reviews per business against 54 on the West Virginia side, and nearly one in four Ohio listings sits below ten reviews, the level where Google stops treating a business as an established local answer. Across the whole valley, 14 businesses out of 117 hold half of all 11,201 reviews.

HOW THIS WAS MEASURED (AND WHAT WE THREW OUT)

Sample: 117 independent businesses, 74 in Belmont County, Ohio (St. Clairsville, Martins Ferry, Bellaire, Bridgeport, Barnesville, Shadyside, Powhatan Point, Belmont) and 43 in Ohio and Marshall Counties, West Virginia (Wheeling, Benwood, McMechen, Moundsville, Glen Dale), across 13 categories, drawn from public Google Business Profile data in July 2026.

Excluded, and why: 16 listings outside the valley that surfaced in category searches, including one in Barnesville, Georgia and one in Wheeling, Illinois; 5 national chain locations, whose listings are corporate-managed and would flatter the results; 2 listings we could not verify as operating (a phone number with no hours and no reviews, and a listing with a single review and nothing else); and 1 listing whose recent reviews report a disconnected phone and a dark storefront during posted hours. Closed and dormant listings are exactly what would inflate every problem number in a report like this, so they are held out rather than counted. Limits of this edition: the West Virginia sample is smaller than the Ohio one and its category mix leans slightly more toward coffee shops and salons, so cross-river figures are indicative rather

4.6

average star rating,
both sides of the river

14

businesses hold half
of all 11,201 reviews

41 vs 54

median reviews:
Ohio side vs WV side

21%

have fewer than
ten reviews

THE VISIBILITY GAP

The ten best-known businesses in the sample hold 42 percent of every review counted, led by businesses with 696, 648 and 574. This is not a quality gap, it is a visibility gap: the highest-rated businesses we found include shops with four, six and seven reviews, meaning excellent local operators are effectively invisible next to neighbors with hundreds.

The gap is sharpest in the trades and on the Ohio side. Contractors have a median of four reviews, the lowest of any category, despite averaging 4.4 stars. And 24 percent of Ohio-side listings fall below ten reviews against 14 percent in West Virginia, even though the two sides rate within three hundredths of a star of each other.

THE OHIO VALLEY DIGITAL REPORT · THE NUMBERS

TABLE 1 — ACROSS THE RIVER

MEASURE	BELMONT CO., OH	OHIO & MARSHALL, WV	VALLEY
Businesses measured	74	43	117
Average star rating	4.63	4.60	4.62
Median reviews per business	41	54	43
Under ten reviews	24%	14%	21%
No hours posted	11%	9%	10%
No phone number	3%	7%	4%
Rated below 4.0 stars	4%	2%	3%

TABLE 2 — WHAT WE FOUND, BY CATEGORY (VALLEY-WIDE)

CATEGORY	BUSINESSES	AVG RATING	MEDIAN REVIEWS	NO HOURS LIST
Restaurants	22	4.4	152	1
Salons	15	4.8	56	4
Auto repair	13	4.6	55	0
Coffee shops	13	4.6	39	0
Pet grooming	11	4.8	24	1
Barbershops	9	4.7	41	3
Florists	9	4.5	29	1
Hardware / rental	6	4.7	93	0
Heating & cooling	5	4.7	37	0
Retail / gift	5	4.8	51	0
Contractors	4	4.4	4	2
Insurance	3	4.8	4	0
Bakeries	2	4.8	385	0

THREE THINGS WE ALSO FOUND

- Two listings in the sample show impossible hours, including one that closes eleven hours before it

CHECK YOUR OWN BUSINESS, FREE

Willow Creek Group built the free tool behind this report. Scan the code and it runs the same checks on your listing in about twenty seconds, then shows you what customers see.
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WHAT AN OWNER CAN FIX THIS WEEK, FOR FREE

— Post your hours, including holiday hours, and correct them everywhere at once