dun & bradstreet

Global Business Optimism Insights

Q3 2025

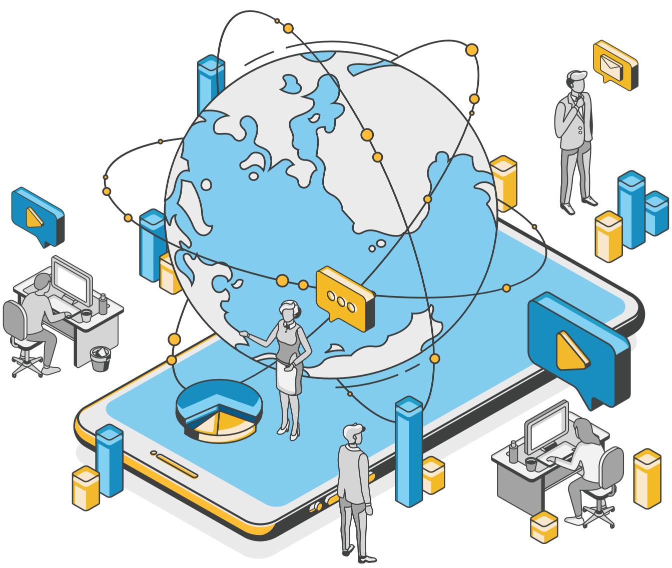
Dun & Bradstreet® Global Business Optimism Insights

Introduction

Dun & Bradstreet's Global Business Optimism Insights (GBOI) is a quarterly report that aims to gauge the optimism levels of businesses globally and provides a unique and comprehensive view into the thinking behind the growth, operational, and investment expectations of business leaders.

The GBOI is an amalgamation of five indices: Global Business Optimism Index, Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index, Global Business Financial Confidence Index, Global Business Investment Confidence Index, and Global Business ESG Index. The first four indices capture business expectations for the coming quarter, while the ESG index captures the sentiments on key ESG attributes in the current quarter.

All five indices are constructed for 32 economies across 17 sectors and 3 business sizes, synthesized from a survey of approximately 10,000 businesses. The findings from the survey are supplemented with insights from Dun & Bradstreet's proprietary data and economic expertise. An index reading above 100 indicates an improvement in optimism relative to the base year (Q3 2023-Q2 2024), while a reading below 100 signifies a deterioration.



Key Findings

Business sentiment across global economies weakened for Q3 2025, with financial and investment confidence falling sharply amid persistent macroeconomic uncertainty. While many central banks have begun cutting interest rates, this has yet to translate into better financial conditions – especially for small and mid-sized businesses. Businesses surveyed in May 2025 were already cautious about capital spending, hiring, and long-term planning amid supply chain vulnerabilities and geopolitical risks. The subsequent escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict and the growing threat of disruption to key trade routes such as the Strait of Hormuz are likely to further heighten these concerns.

The downturn in optimism was broad-based but uneven, with advanced economies experiencing sharper and more synchronized declines across indices tracking financial, investment, and operating sentiment. Germany, France, and Japan saw some of the sharpest drops, with business confidence faltering as concerns over supply chain disruptions in Asia persisted, and despite aggressive rate cuts in Europe. In contrast, a few emerging economies – such as India, Nigeria, and Türkiye – recorded relative gains in optimism, particularly regarding financial conditions and sustainability-related activities. The U.K. was a notable outlier among advanced economies, with confidence improving across multiple indices, supported by early rate cuts, progress on trade agreements, and stronger-than-expected domestic demand. However, even in these bright spots, confidence remains below year-ago levels, signaling a global outlook defined more by cautious recalibration than by recovery.

In response to this uncertain environment, businesses should look to accelerate strategic shifts in their supply chains. Trade frictions, tariff risks, and regulatory volatility are reinforcing the case for friendshoring, nearshoring, and multi-sourcing as essential risk-mitigation strategies. At the same time, businesses are reassessing credit exposure and working capital cycles, with rising payment delays and tighter liquidity underscoring the need for vigilant financial management. Agility – backed by timely data on capital structure, payment behavior, and supplier dependencies – will be key to navigating the turbulence ahead.

The **Global Business Optimism Index** declined 6.5% q/q for Q3 2025, amid slowing trade, tariff uncertainty, and softening sales. Emerging economies showed stronger domestic confidence than advanced economies, while sectors tied to U.S. trade – such as metals and automotives – saw steep declines. Businesses are pivoting to local markets or diversifying away from the U.S., though tariff-exempt partners such as Mexico and Canada remain resilient amid escalating trade tensions.

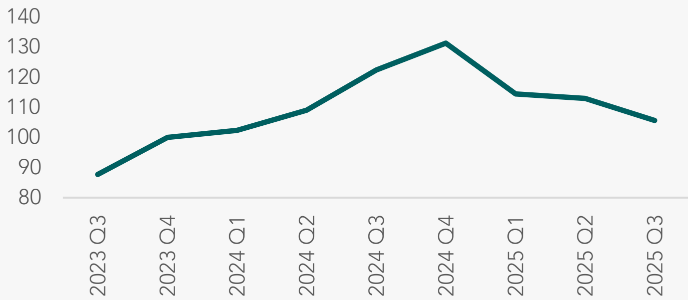
The **Global Business Investment Confidence Index** fell 13.1% q/q for Q3 2025, the sharpest decline since the survey started in 2023. Businesses cite the disruption to supply chains caused by tariffs, rather than the threat to trade itself, as the key factor determining their investment over the next quarter. Further, the rolling back of investment plans appears to be becoming more entrenched, with almost half of businesses expecting not to raise long-term funding during Q3 2025.

The **Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index** saw a 9.7% q/q decline for Q3 2025. This drop nullified the marginal 0.7% improvement observed for Q2 and marked a continuation of the negative trend initiated by the 10.4% decline for Q1. The widespread nature of this downturn suggests that underlying systemic issues are persistently challenging global supply chain stability. Both advanced economies (-9.7%) and emerging economies (-9.8%) registered substantial declines, reversing the Q2 divergence when emerging economies experienced a slight recovery (+8.8%) and advanced economies continued their downward trend (-1.6%). This synchronized contraction highlights a broad-based erosion of optimism.

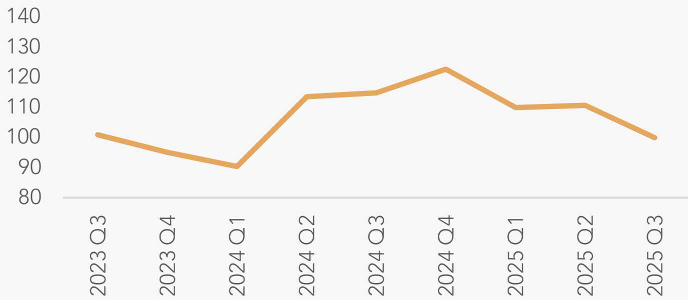
The **Global Business ESG Index** held steady in Q2 2025, but sharp contrasts emerged. Medium-sized businesses, particularly in emerging economies, posted strong ESG gains, while large businesses in advanced economies saw declines – likely reflecting compliance strain and evolving disclosure mandates. With trade-linked ESG scrutiny rising, adaptability is emerging as a key differentiator in global sustainability performance.

The **Global Business Financial Confidence Index** deteriorated 3.4% q/q for Q3 2025, reflecting a worsening macroeconomic environment as intensifying trade policy uncertainty, persistent inflation, and weakening global growth strain business viability. Of the economies surveyed, 60.0% indicated a fall in financial confidence, with the largest declines in France and Germany, while the U.K. registered the biggest improvement on the back of strong GDP growth and easing trade tension following negotiations with the U.S.

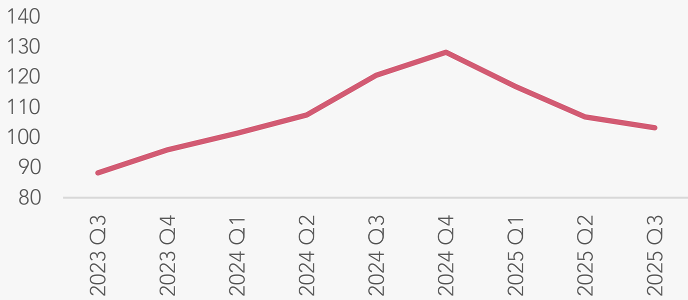
Global Business Optimism Index



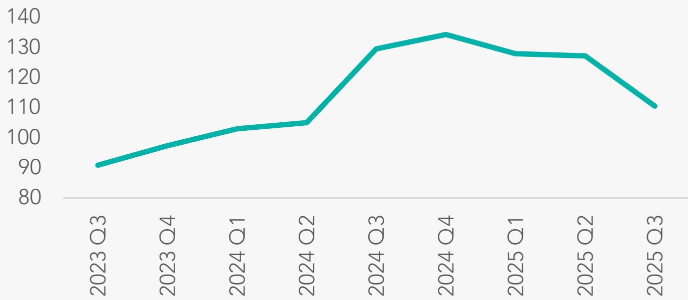
Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index



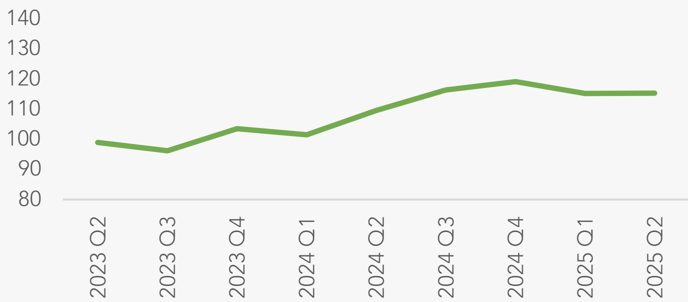
Global Business Financial Confidence Index



Global Business Investment Confidence Index



Global Business ESG Index



By Sector

Sector	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
Accommodation and food service activities	106	102	102	115	119
Construction	107	103	104	114	116
Financial and insurance activities	102	86	103	109	115
Information and communication	103	100	102	112	117
Mfg.: automotive	100	87	96	101	106
Mfg.: capital goods	104	82	92	98	109
Mfg.: chemicals, rubber, plastics, and pharma	114	104	109	116	118
Mfg.: electricals, electronics, and hardware	103	96	98	101	110
Mfg.: food, beverages, and tobacco	105	99	106	106	114
Mfg.: metals	99	92	100	103	104
Mfg.: textiles, wood, paper, and leather	104	99	100	106	109
Mining	104	98	102	108	110
Other services – professional and administrative	100	99	104	107	117
Real estate activities	111	112	111	121	123
Transportation and storage	109	102	99	111	117
Utilities	107	112	106	116	125
Wholesale and retail trade	111	110	106	116	118

Note: (A) Global Business Optimism Index; (B) Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index; (C) Global Business Financial Confidence Index; (D) Global Business Investment Confidence Index; (E) Global Business ESG Index

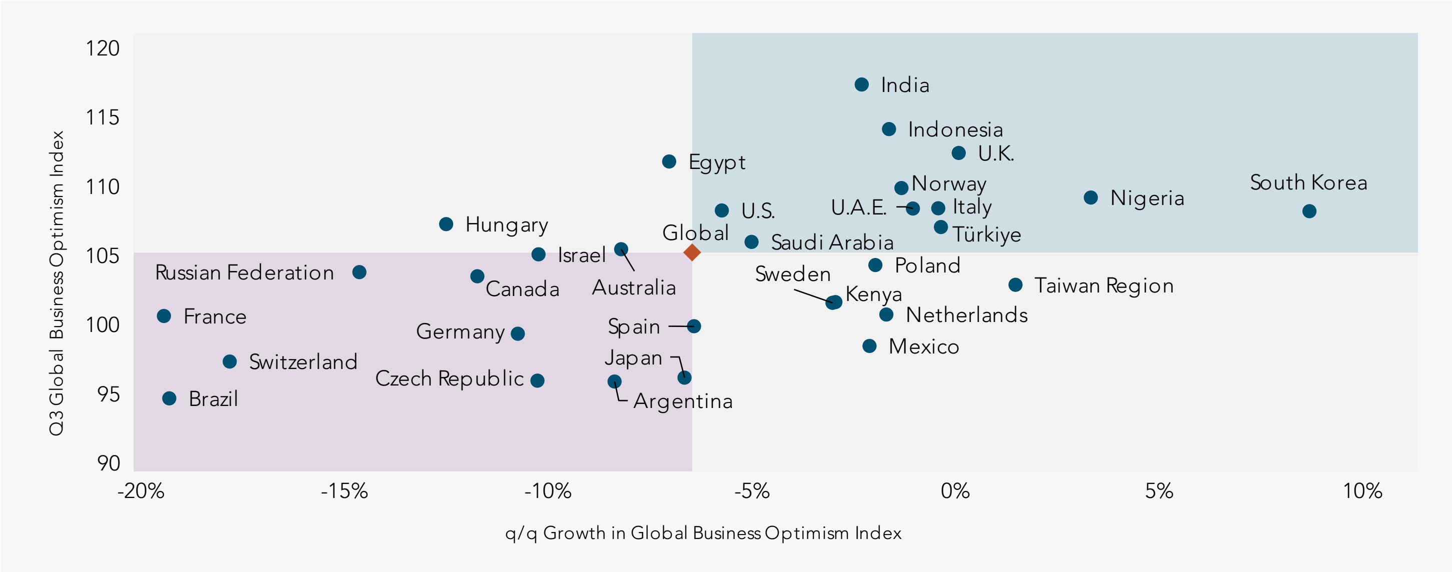
D&B Global Business Optimism Index

D&B Global Business Optimism Index

Key Findings

- The Global Business Optimism Index declined for the third consecutive quarter, registering a 6.5% q/q drop for Q3 2025 (a 19.6% decline since the start of the year). This continued downward trend points to growing caution among businesses, likely influenced by concerns about a softer global economic outlook and persistent trade-related and supply chain uncertainties.
- The latest reading mirrors the pessimistic tone seen in Q1 2025, which was followed by a more measured decline in Q2, when there was a sense that businesses were beginning to adjust to the changing trade environment. At the time, it appeared that businesses had started factoring ongoing tariff and trade policy risks into their strategic plans. However, the renewed dip in Q3 suggests that businesses continue to grapple with a challenging external environment and may be adopting a more cautious stance as a result.
- Optimism fell across the board, with both advanced and emerging economies reporting similar declines – of 6.5% and 6.4%, respectively. Only 4 of the 32 economies surveyed saw an improvement in sentiment: South Korea (+8.7%); Nigeria (+3.3%); Taiwan Region (+1.5%); and the U.K. (though at just +0.1%, sentiment in the U.K. was essentially flat). On the other end of the spectrum, France (-19.5%), Brazil (-19.3%), and Switzerland (-17.8%) recorded the steepest declines.
- Sector-wise, the decline was more pronounced in manufacturing (-8.3%) than in services (-5.4%). The most affected segments were metal manufacturing (-14.6%), automotives (-12.5%), and capital goods (-11.1%) – which are more exposed to shifts in trade policy and global supply chain dependencies.
- The survey also highlighted a notable divergence in expectations around the direction of global trade policy. Of the 10,000 businesses surveyed, 54% expected trade tensions to either remain unchanged or escalate further, while 46% were more optimistic, anticipating some form of de-escalation – whether through formal agreements or informal arrangements.
- In response to the current environment, over half of the businesses surveyed outside the U.S. said they were actively seeking alternative international markets or partners beyond America. The EU, at 29%, and Asia – excluding the Chinese Mainland – at 15%, emerged as the preferred alternatives, reflecting a mix of market potential and perceived policy stability. Notably, only 5% of businesses identified the Chinese Mainland as their top fallback for growth opportunities, suggesting that geopolitical considerations are now a significant factor in market selection decisions.

Quadrant of Optimism – Global Business Optimism Index

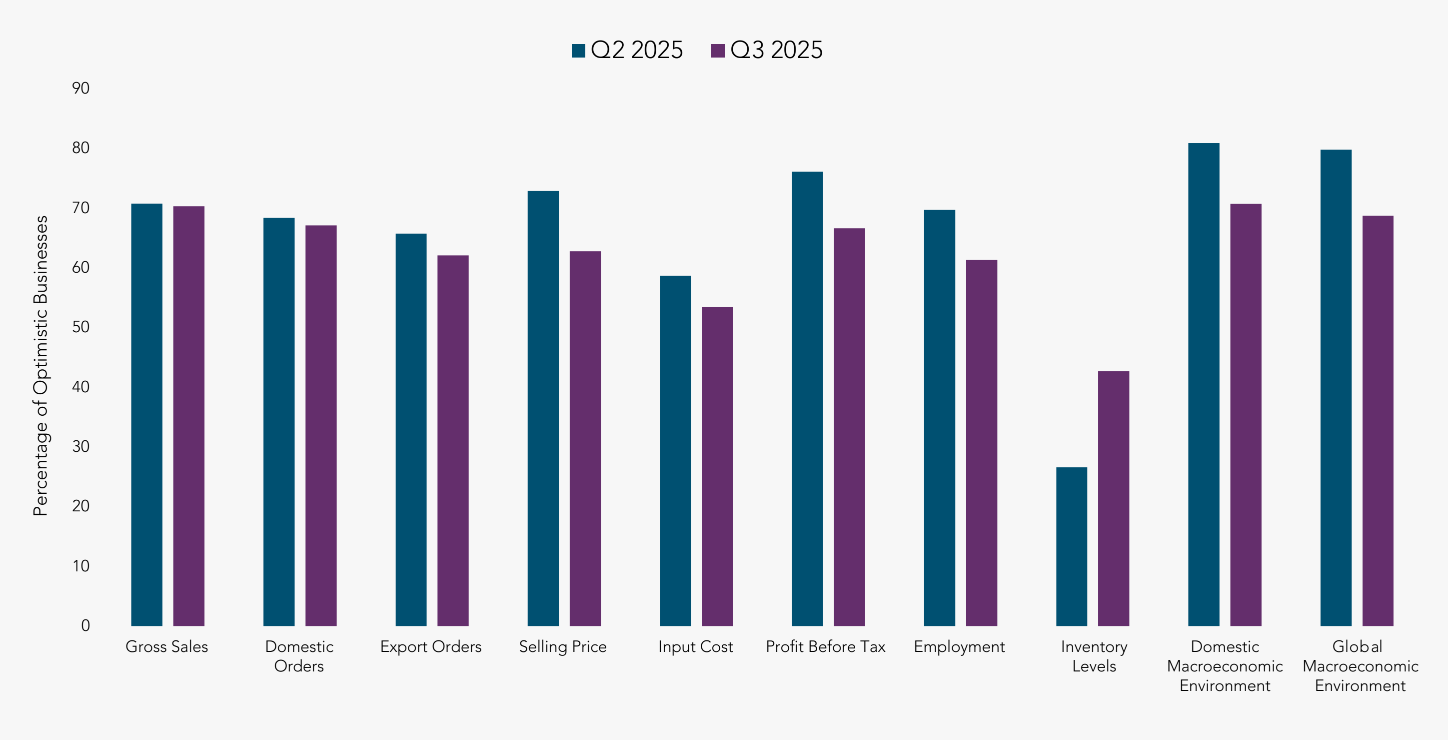


Firm Size – Global Business Optimism Index

Period	Small	Medium	Large
Q4 2024	138.5	134.7	120.9
Q1 2025	120.1	104.5	118.7
Q2 2025	113.6	112.7	112.5
Q3 2025	103.9	106.1	106.8

The Global Business Optimism Index for Q3 2025 signaled a broad-based moderation in sentiment, with optimism slipping in most economies. The downturn echoes the IMF's April World Economic Outlook, which sharply revised its 2025 world trade volume forecast down from 3.2% to 1.7%, including a steep cut in emerging economies' export growth from 5.0% to just 1.6%. The survey data corroborates this weak trade outlook, with export expectations falling across the board, and more sharply in emerging economies, which saw a 5.1 percentage point (pps) decline to 61.9%, than in advanced economies (-2.9pps to 62.1%). However, sentiment around domestic demand tells a different story: optimism on domestic orders rose slightly in emerging economies (+0.8pps to 69.8%) even as it fell in advanced economies (-1.7pps to 66.3%), pointing to firmer confidence in domestic economic conditions across much of the developing world. Faced with weaker global demand and rising tariff risks, businesses in both emerging and advanced economies are increasingly turning to their domestic markets as a buffer. Roughly a third of businesses outside the U.S. identified local demand as their fallback should trade tensions escalate. Many are also pursuing diversification beyond the U.S. – with the EU and Asia (excluding the Chinese Mainland) emerging as preferred destinations – but this seems to be more of a complementary strategy than a dominant shift. The Chinese Mainland remains among the least cited targets, reinforcing the ongoing 'China Plus One' recalibration. Overall, 54.0% of businesses expect U.S. trade policy to either remain restrictive or become more so, highlighting just how deeply uncertainty has shaped the global corporate outlook – and why many businesses are betting on domestic resilience to carry them through. Macroeconomic sentiment reflects this ambiguity. Optimism about the global economy declined by similar margins in both regions (-10.2pps in emerging economies and -11.0pps in advanced economies). However, confidence in domestic economic conditions fell less sharply in emerging economies (-5.5pps to 67.8%) than in advanced economies (-11.5pps to 69.0%), indicating relatively greater confidence in local fundamentals among developing nations. Finally, when asked about factors influencing trade and investment reorientation, cost-competitiveness stood out as the top priority across regions. Trade policy alignment, by contrast, was the least cited – revealing a widespread belief that trade policies, particularly those of the U.S., remain too volatile to serve as reliable planning anchors.

Sub-indices – Global Business Optimism Index



The metals sector was particularly hit hard. Even before the U.S. formally doubled tariffs on steel and aluminum from 25.0% to 50.0% in June, market expectations had already begun to weigh on sentiment. In India, where metals exports to the U.S. are significant, optimism among businesses in the sector dropped 23.4%. Businesses in Brazil, another major exporter, saw a 19.6% decline. West European metals businesses – long under pressure from U.S. tariffs – also reported a drop in optimism on average, though by a lower 6.6%. These declines reflect not only the burden of existing tariffs but also rising uncertainty about what the U.S. might do next. In contrast, businesses in countries with trade protections or exemptions have fared better. Mexico has remained relatively insulated, thanks to the U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement, which maintains preferential access for key sectors. Optimism in Mexico's automotive parts and electronics sectors rose slightly, by 2.2% and 1.1%, respectively. Similarly, Canada's deep integration with U.S. supply chains and negotiated carve-outs have supported sentiment. The electrical machinery sector in Canada posted a 13.4% quarterly gain, the only major manufacturing segment to show improvement. Meanwhile, Germany, a top exporter of capital goods and automobiles, saw sharp declines. Optimism in its capital goods sector fell 14.1% q/q, while automotive sentiment plunged 23.1%. These figures likely reflect the unresolved U.S.–EU trade tensions, where talks around industrial goods have stalled and the risk of new tariffs remains high.

The survey data suggests that the sectoral divide in business sentiment is no longer merely cyclical and has become increasingly geopolitical. Export-dependent industrial sectors, especially those tied to the U.S. market, are growing more cautious as tariff risks compound business uncertainty. Meanwhile, economies and sectors that enjoy policy clarity through trade agreements or exemptions are showing greater resilience – at least for now. With nearly half of global businesses expecting no change or further escalation in U.S. trade policy over the next six months, the divergence in sentiment is likely to persist unless there is a marked improvement in global trade diplomacy.

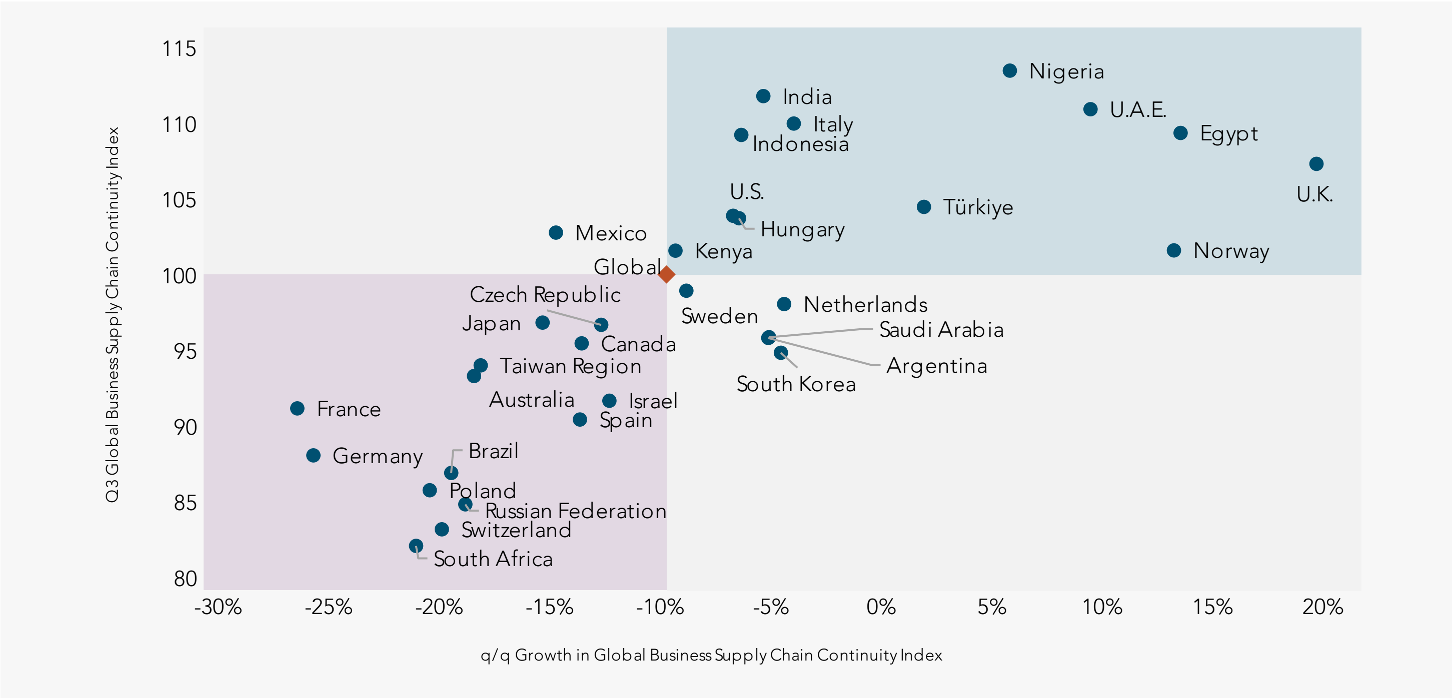
D&B Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index

D&B Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index

Key Findings

- The Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index experienced a 9.7% q/q downturn for Q3 2025 (an 18.6% decline since the start of the year), highlighting a persistent and deepening pessimism about global supply chain continuity.
- Optimism for Q3 2025 mirrored the broad-based downturn in optimism across most regions observed for Q1 and was unlike Q2, when divergence between regions emerged. Latin America led the slide, with an average 15.5% q/q drop in optimism for Q3 2025, indicating vulnerability to renewed external pressures. Europe (-11.4%), Asia Pacific (-11.1%), North America (-7.3%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (-6.6%) also posted negative results, underscoring a global erosion in optimism.
- Advanced (-9.7%) and emerging (-9.8%) economies registered notable declines, reversing the Q2 divergence when emerging economies experienced a slight recovery (+8.8%) and advanced economies continued their downward trend (-1.6%). This synchronized contraction suggests a more systemic and pervasive set of challenges are impacting global supply chains, rather than localized issues.
- Although both the services and manufacturing sectors experienced significant declines in the Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index for Q3 2025, manufacturing suffered a noticeably steeper fall. For global manufacturers, the index plummeted 13.6% q/q, as compared with a 7.5% q/q decline for services sector businesses. This suggests that the manufacturing sector is bracing for increasingly severe supply chain disruptions for Q3.
- This generalized retreat in the index is consistent with a global environment characterized by intensified trade protectionism and trade war dynamics, at a time when global GDP growth rates are expected to moderate throughout 2025, with Q1 showing contractions in major economies such as Japan and the U.S.
- The only region to show a positive movement was the Nordics (+1.2%). The region's modest rise supports the observation that some economies and regions are looking to domestic and closer-to-home markets to weather a more uncertain global environment, largely underpinned by the region's strong and extensive trade relationships within the EU.
- Another striking observation for Q3 2025 is the stark performance of the North American manufacturing sector, which recorded a significant 17.4% decline in the Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index. This marks its steepest drop of the year, following no change in Q2 and a 12.2% decline in Q1, indicating a rapidly deteriorating outlook for manufacturing supply chains in the region. This severe downturn could be particularly indicative of the impact of ongoing U.S. tariff policies and trade disputes directly affecting North American production and sourcing.
- Survey results for Q3 2025 point to a growing preference among global businesses for resilience over cost in supply chain planning, with geopolitical risk now ranked as the second most important criterion for supplier selection. Amid rising tariff pressures, businesses are prioritizing domestic markets and diversifying beyond the Chinese Mainland and the U.S., favoring risk audits and regional fallback plans over abrupt disengagement.

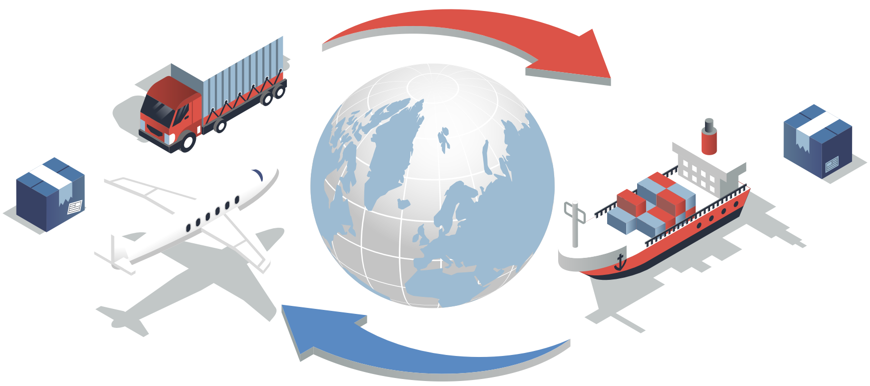
Quadrant of Optimism – Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index



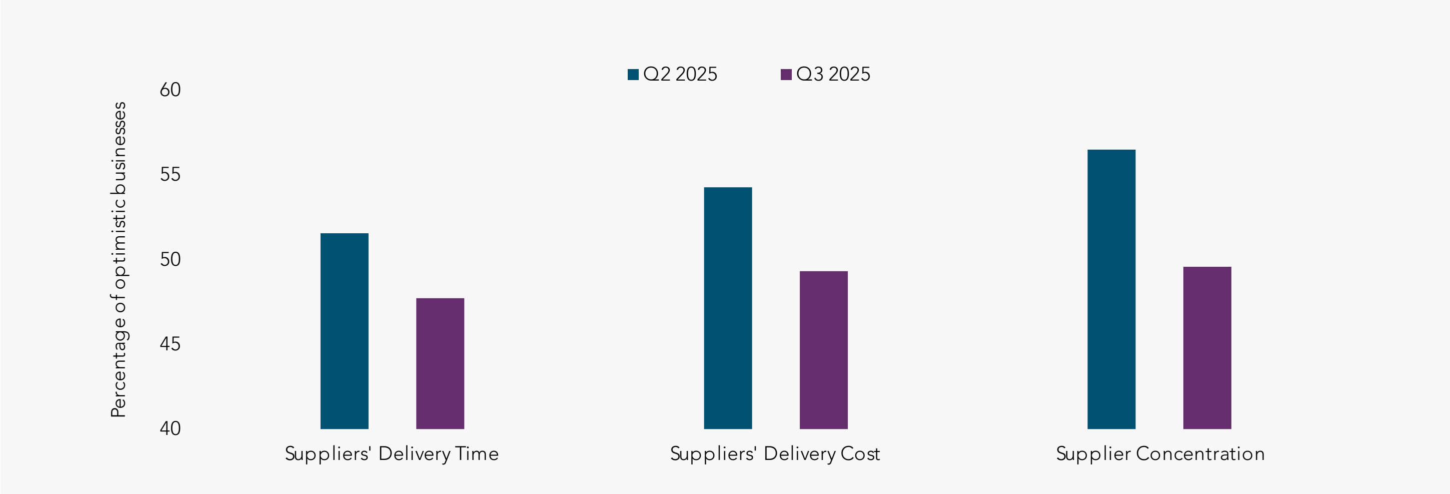
Firm Size – Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index

Period	Small	Medium	Large
Q4 2024	130.0	126.7	111.1
Q1 2025	125.5	81.1	122.9
Q2 2025	120.0	94.1	117.7
Q3 2025	101.5	96.5	101.6

The Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index saw a sharp reversal for Q3 2025, undoing prior modest improvements for Q2 and reinforcing a deepening sense of instability. The decline was widespread, affecting nearly all major regions, with Asia Pacific notably losing momentum after a strong recovery in the previous quarter. Overall, the data underscores a renewed fragility in global supply chains amid ongoing external pressures. Optimism across key supply chain metrics – delivery lead time, supplier cost, and supplier concentration – also retreated significantly for Q3 2025 after a modest recovery for Q2. This widespread decline indicates a deepening concern among businesses about the predictability and cost-effectiveness of their supply chains, as well as their ability to manage risk effectively. Advanced economies experienced larger declines across all three metrics than emerging economies, reflecting the lingering impact of previously elevated interest rates, inflationary pressures, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainties in advanced economies.



Sub-indices – Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index



Country-level data for Q3 2025 also reveals a broad-based deterioration in supply chain continuity sentiment, with 26 of the 32 economies tracked registering declines – underscoring the near-universal impact of shifting geopolitical dynamics and trade policy recalibrations.
The supply chain continuity indices for France (-26.5%), Germany (-25.7%), and Poland (-20.5%) registered some of the steepest declines in Europe. This likely reflects the continued strain from slow economic growth, the impact of the EU's carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), and concerns over potential U.S. tariffs. Switzerland (-19.9%), Brazil (-19.5%), the Russian Federation (-18.9%), Australia (-18.5%), Taiwan Region (-18.2%), Japan (-15.4%), Mexico (-14.8%), Spain (-13.7%), Canada (-13.6%), the Czech Republic (-12.7%), and Israel (-12.4%) also experienced a sharp downward trend in optimism for Q3.

Among the countries showing signs of resilience, the U.K. registered a remarkable surge in optimism for Q3 (19.7%), reversing its substantial decline in Q2 (-23.7%). This strong rebound is likely fueled by the conclusion of significant trade agreements in May 2025, particularly its free trade agreement with India, its Economic Prosperity Deal with the U.S., and its new wide-ranging agreement with the EU. These agreements, aimed at reducing tariffs and streamlining trade, are providing businesses with increased market access and a more predictable trade environment, thereby boosting confidence in supply chain resilience and global connectivity. Egypt (13.5%) and the U.A.E. (9.4%) in MENA showed notable improvements in optimism. This could be attributed to their ability to navigate Red Sea disruptions. Norway (13.2%) stands out with a significant positive shift in sentiment for Q3, making it a key exception in the generally declining Nordic and European landscape. This improvement may be attributable to the country's critical and increasingly well-established role as a stable energy supplier to Europe. In the wake of geopolitical disruptions to traditional energy sources (such as Russian gas), Norway has stepped up to become Europe's largest oil and gas producer and a key supplier of natural gas since 2024.

The Q3 2025 data also reveals a significant shift in optimism across different business sizes. Large businesses saw a substantial 13.7% decline in optimism for Q3, reversing the resilience exhibited in Q1 (10.7%) and surpassing their Q2 decline (-4.2%). This suggests that the cumulative impact of complex globalized supply chains, persistent geopolitical tensions, and rising operational costs is increasingly weighing on larger businesses. Their extensive networks, while offering diversification, also present greater complexity and exposure to widespread disruptions. Small businesses experienced an even sharper drop in optimism of 15.4%, for Q3. Having already faced challenges in Q1 (-3.5%) and Q2 (-4.4%), their limited resources and flexibility make them highly vulnerable to escalating trade frictions, increased costs, and broader economic instability. Conversely, medium-sized businesses proved surprisingly resilient in Q3, posting a 2.5% improvement in optimism, albeit at a slower pace than their impressive 16.1% rebound in Q2. Their ability to balance localized sourcing with selective international engagement appears to be a key factor in their relatively better performance.

Both the services and manufacturing sectors experienced significant declines in the Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index for Q3 2025. However, manufacturing suffered a noticeably steeper fall, plummeting 13.6% q/q globally, compared with a more moderate 7.5% q/q decline for global service providers. This marks a further acceleration of the negative trend for manufacturing, following a 2.0% improvement in Q2 that briefly interrupted the 12.1% decline in Q1. The decline suggests that the manufacturing sector is expecting more pronounced and worsening supply chain challenges for Q3, likely due to its direct reliance on global raw material flows, complex production networks, and exposure to tariffs and trade barriers. The sharp 17.4% decline in optimism for North American manufacturers is a stark illustration of this vulnerability.

Among manufacturing sectors globally, capital goods manufacturers saw the steepest decline in optimism this quarter, down 23.7% q/q – the sharpest drop across all sectors tracked. Optimism deteriorated across all key supply chain dimensions, with only 4 in 10 global businesses expressing optimism in delivery lead times, supplier costs, or supplier concentration risks for Q3 2025 – down from nearly 6 in 10 in Q2 – high-lighting widespread concerns over delays, cost pressures, and sourcing vulnerabilities. Automotive manufacturers reflected a similarly downbeat outlook, posting a 20.4% decline, also marked by similar subdued sentiment across the same key supply chain stress points. Other manufacturing sectors – including food (-12.9%), textiles (-12.8%), and metals (-11.3%) – also experienced notable declines in optimism. Standing out as the sole bright spot amid broad-based sectoral pessimism, the utility sector registered a positive score of 6.1%. This sector also boasts the highest optimism levels across the board, with nearly 6 in 10 businesses expressing optimism across the key supply chain dimensions for Q3. This is potentially driven by structural tailwinds such as policy support, stable demand, and resilient infrastructure investments, as noted in reports by the World Bank and the International Energy Agency.

Global businesses are fundamentally rethinking their trade and supply chain strategies in response to escalating uncertainties. When selecting international suppliers, cost competitiveness (25% of surveyed businesses) remains the leading criterion, but geopolitical risk profile (18%) has become the second most prioritized factor, signaling a clear shift toward resilience over pure cost-saving. This prioritization is evident across regions. In the face of potential tariff escalations, the overwhelming top fallback strategy for market growth is the domestic market (34%), highlighting a growing trend toward localization and regionalization. Beyond domestic focus, the EU and Asia, excluding the Chinese Mainland, emerge as the next preferred international fallback regions, at 20% and 13%, respectively, suggesting a strategic move away from a singular reliance on the Chinese Mainland. Finally, the U.S.'s new tariff regime has undeniably triggered significant strategic shifts globally. The most actively considered actions among businesses are investing more in non-U.S. markets (56%), exploring new international partners (54%), entering new international markets (52%), and conducting a formal supply chain risk audit (51%). Although businesses are actively looking for alternative markets away from U.S.-centric supply chains and investments, directly reducing trade with U.S. businesses (30%) is a less common immediate response. This indicates a proactive move toward de-risking and building alternative capacities rather than disrupting established U.S. trade relationships.

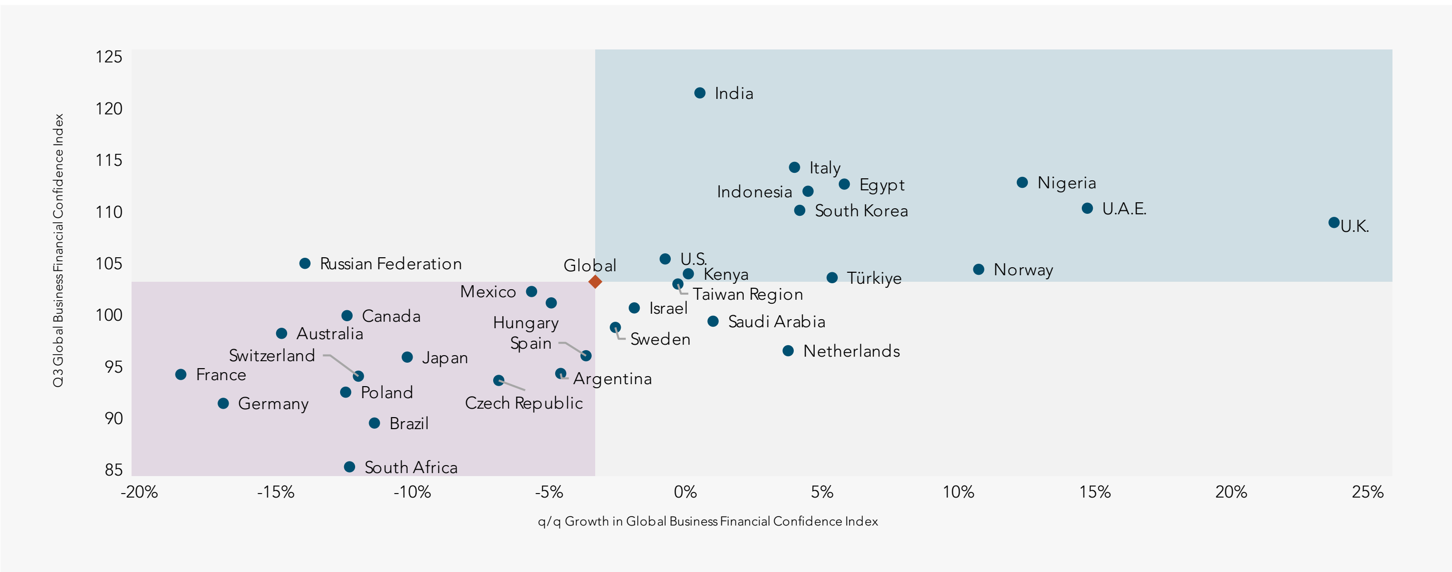
Global Business Financial Confidence Index

D&B Global Business Financial Confidence Index

Key Findings

- The Global Business Financial Confidence Index deteriorated 3.4% q/q for Q3 2025, reflecting a worsening in the macroeconomic environment due to rising trade policy uncertainty, persistent inflation, weakening global growth, and increasing debt burdens.
- The Global Business Financial Confidence indices deteriorated for advanced (-3.4%) and emerging (-3.2%) economies, illustrating the widespread fall in sentiment. Of all surveyed economies, 60% indicated a fall in financial confidence, with the largest declines in France (-18.5%), Germany (-17.0%), and Australia (-14.8%).
- The U.K. (+23.7%) posted the largest gain in optimism in financial conditions, followed by the U.A.E. (+14.7%) and Nigeria (+12.3%).
- At the global level, the largest dip in financial confidence was among small businesses (-9.7%), with large businesses also reporting a decline in sentiment, of -4.0%. Globally, medium-sized businesses recorded an improvement of 4.9%.
- The deterioration of the Global Business Financial Confidence Index for Q3 2025 was widespread, with 80% of sectors reporting a decline. The largest dip in confidence was among manufacturers of capital goods (-13.4%), followed by producers of automotives (-10.7%) and transportation and storage businesses (-7.8%).
- Globally, optimism about financial risk and risk appetite among businesses fell to 59% and 64%, respectively, in Q3, from 64% and 69% respectively in Q2. Businesses in France recorded the largest q/q drop in optimism for financial risk for Q3 2025, with a decline from 75% in Q2 to 50%, despite the ECB cutting interest rates for the seventh consecutive time at the end of April (and, at the time of the survey, expectations for an eighth cut in June).
- At the global level, expectations for lower borrowing costs deteriorated 13.6% for Q3 2025. In Q2, almost 70% of businesses globally reported optimism about the future cost of borrowing; however, market adjustments to expectations of more persistent inflation have dented sentiment, and in Q3, 60% of businesses demonstrated favorable sentiment about cheaper borrowing costs.

Quadrant of Optimism – Global Business Financial Confidence Index



Firm Size – Global Business Financial Confidence Index

Period	Small	Medium	Large
Q4 2024	139.6	134.4	110.9
Q1 2025	124.5	101.4	124.9
Q2 2025	114.9	96.2	109.4
Q3 2025	103.8	100.9	105.1

The Global Business Financial Confidence Index deteriorated for Q3 2025 in 60% of the economies covered, with the survey period marked by growing financial uncertainty and caution across a range of sectors, markets, and business sizes. Factors weighing on financial confidence include: the still-high cost of capital (the share of businesses optimistic about the cost of raising capital fell to 58%, from 69% in Q2 2025); deteriorating operating margins (a decline to 67%, from 71% in Q2); and falling optimism about financial risk (dropping to 64% of businesses, from 74% the quarter before). Financial confidence among businesses is falling not due to crisis, but because of cumulative pressures and uncertainty, which are inhibiting forward-looking decision-making.

The largest fall in business financial confidence for Q3 2025 was in Europe, with expectations deteriorating in France (-18.5%), Germany (-17.0%), and Poland (-12.5%). The Eurozone economy continues to remain sluggish, with GDP growth forecasts revised lower by the IMF and the World Bank. In Q3 2025, industrial production in Germany fell for the fourth consecutive quarter, impacting profitability across automotive and engineering businesses. In addition, despite the ECB signaling further interest rate cuts, banks remain conservative in lending. Confidence also fell in key emerging economies, including Brazil (-11.4%) and South Africa (-12.3%). In Brazil, domestic policy uncertainty, domestic currency volatility, and still-high interest rates are particularly affecting interest-rate-sensitive sectors, such as automotive manufacturing (-23.6%).

The largest rise in business financial confidence for Q3 2025 was in the U.K. (+23.7%), following both external and internal momentum. The Bank of England's interest rate cut in May has reduced borrowing costs for businesses and strong Q1 GDP growth has reinforced confidence among business leaders in the country, while easing trade pressures with the U.S. following tariff negotiations have restored optimism among exporters.

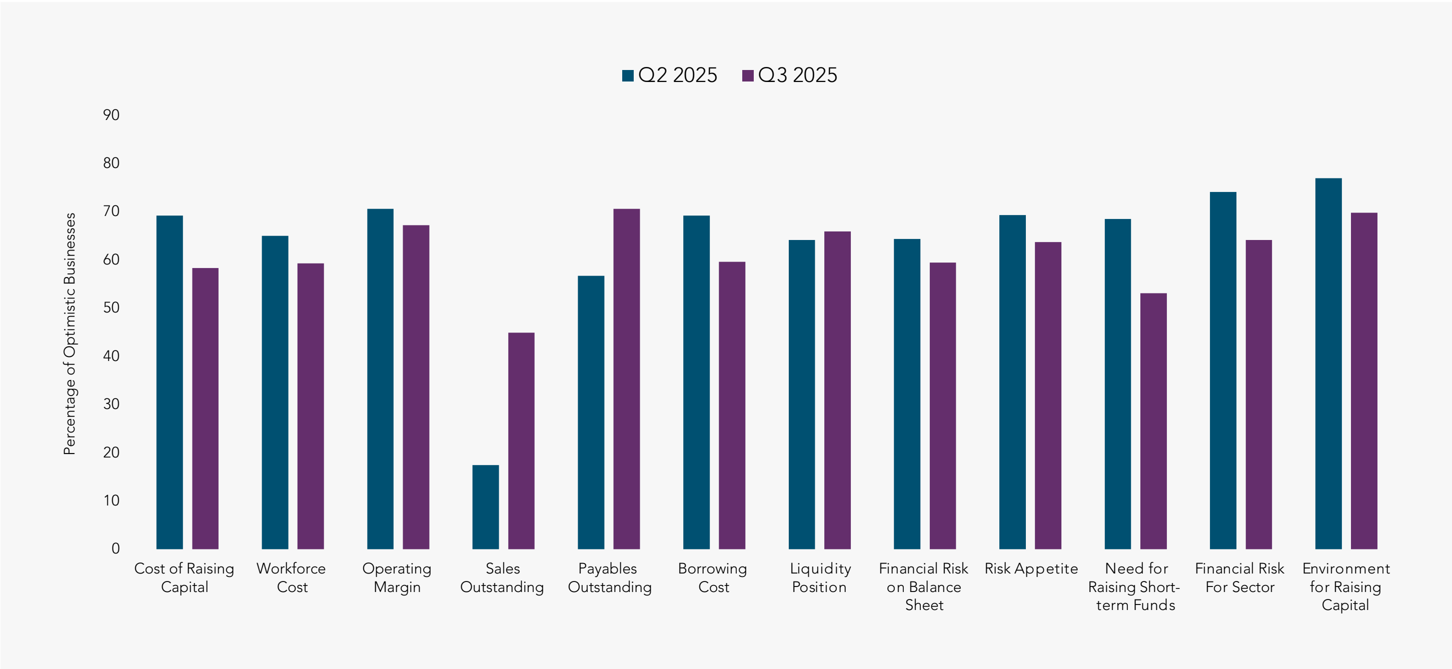
Despite central banks in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe signaling further potential rate cuts, monetary easing has not yet translated into tangible improvements in borrowing conditions for many businesses. There are differences in access to capital markets, but small businesses appear to be less optimistic. Globally, for Q3 2025, 60% of surveyed small businesses reported optimistic expectations for borrowing costs, a decline from 76% in Q2 2025. While large businesses also reported a deterioration, they are still more readily able to access capital markets, unlike small businesses that continue to struggle with limited access to traditional lending channels. Expectations for the cost of raising capital have deteriorated for Q3 2025, with the share of businesses globally reporting favorably falling to 70%, from 77% in Q2 2025. For small businesses, the share dropped from 85% to 68%.

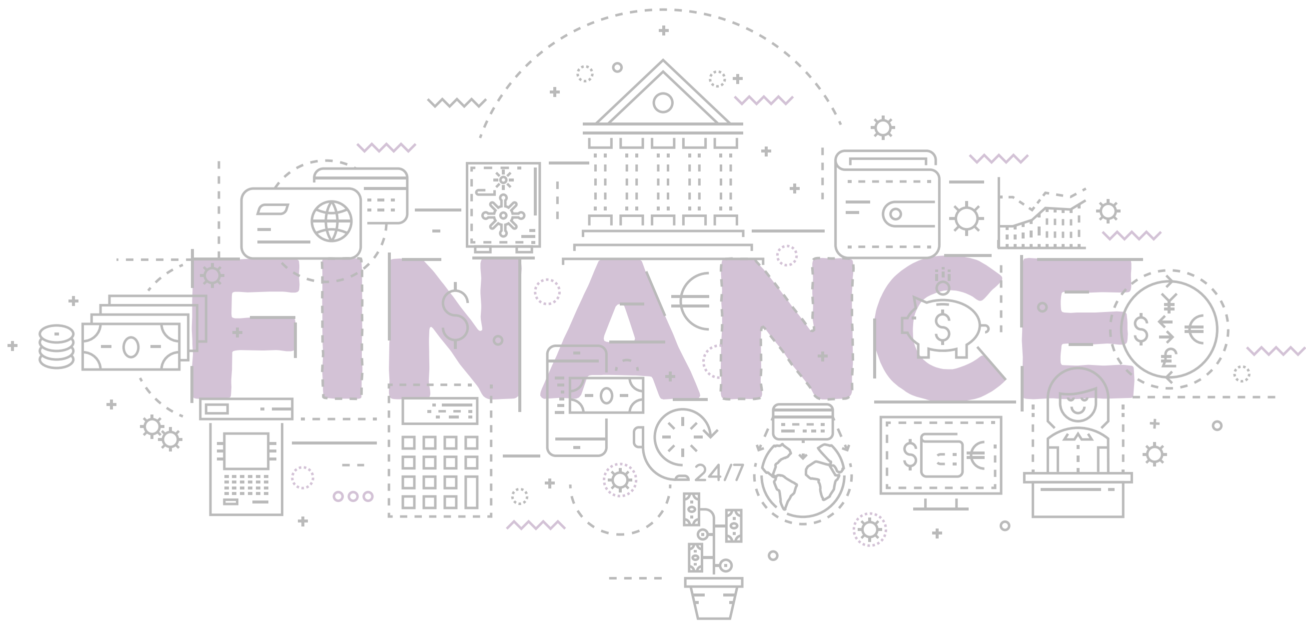
Across many sectors, businesses are grappling with margin compression because of a mix of slowing demand and elevated input costs. Raising prices to protect margins appear to be reaching a ceiling as a strategy, with consumers becoming more price sensitive. Globally, manufacturers of discretionary spending goods, such as textiles (-17.0% q/q), electricals (-15.0% q/q), metals (-12.7%), and automotives (-9.7%), were among the businesses reporting the largest quarterly declines in optimism about operating margins for Q3 2025. Manufacturers of autos and auto parts face the prospect of higher-cost imported components and logistics costs related to tariffs arising from the Adjusting Imports of Automobiles and Automobile Parts into the United States legislation. Financial confidence among auto manufacturers in Germany, a major contributor to the country's industrial output, dropped 32.4% q/q.

Liquidity remains a persistent concern, especially for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), where only 65% are optimistic about liquidity expectations for Q3 2025, compared with 68% of large businesses, signaling declining confidence in near-term financial stability. Many companies are still facing working capital pressures, made worse by late payments. Globally, only 42% of service businesses and 44% of manufacturers were optimistic about expectations of receiving timely payment for services and goods delivered or invoiced – implying that more businesses appear to be delaying outflows to manage working capital more tightly, in part because of squeezed margins. Recent periods of currency instability, including the falling U.S. dollar and political risk in some regions, are likely to have contributed to making payment cycles more volatile.

The overarching risk environment for Q3 2025 is expected to remain volatile. Geopolitical instability in the Middle East, persistent trade frictions, and concerns about slowing global demand have contributed to a significant shift in business risk appetite. Globally, risk aversion is particularly evident in sectors such as capital goods manufacturing; these producers of machinery, industrial equipment, and large-scale production systems are relatively more exposed to policy shifts, long investment cycles, and financing costs.

Sub-indices – Global Business Financial Confidence Index





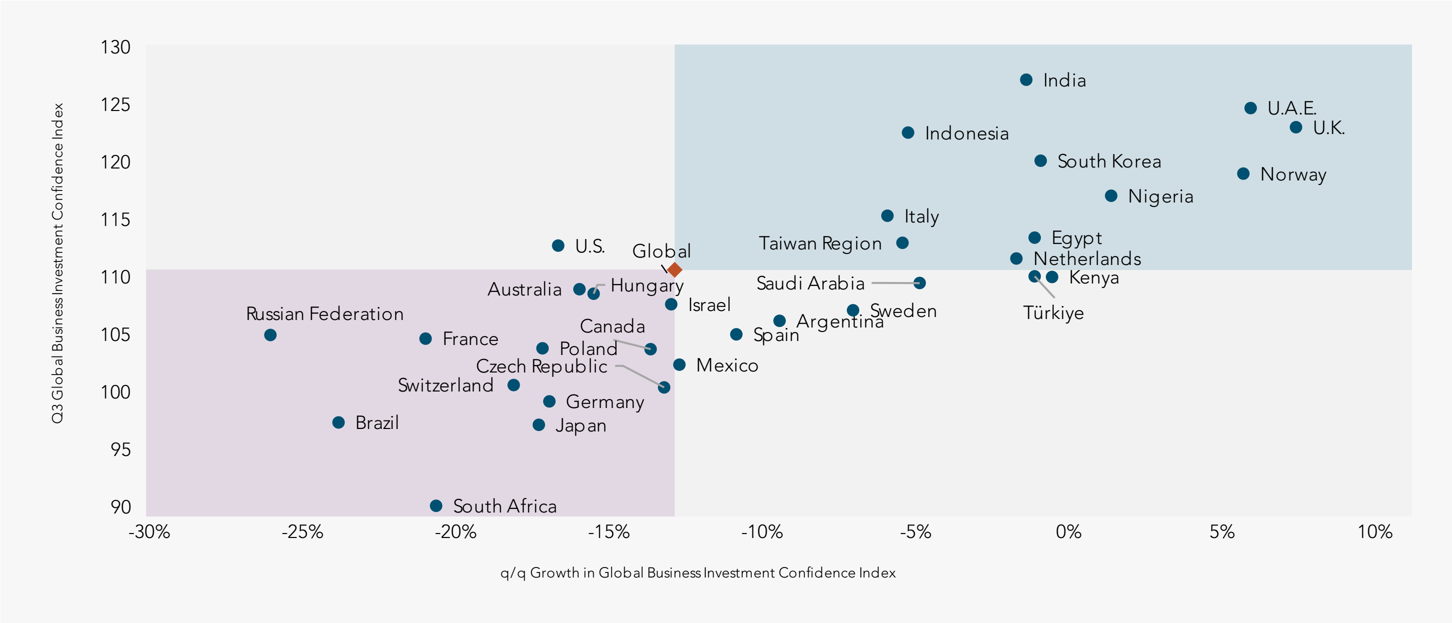
D&B Global Business Investment Confidence Index

D&B Global Business Investment Confidence Index

Key Findings

- The Global Business Investment Confidence Index fell 13.1% q/q for Q3 2025, the third consecutive quarter of contraction.
- The drop in confidence is broad-based, with businesses reporting sharp declines in all five sub-indices, compared with Q2 2025, when only the amount of capital expenditure and the size of the workforce were expected to decline.
- Nearly half of businesses (46.8%) reported supply chain stability as very important to determining investments for Q3 2025, while tariff uncertainty was the lowest rated determining factor, similar to domestic interest rates. This aligns with the findings reported earlier in this report; the Global Supply Chain Continuity Index is the lowest of all our indices, at 99.9 for Q3.
- Investment confidence fell more in advanced economies than in emerging economies. Even after excluding the U.S., which has the largest weight and fell 16.7% q/q, confidence in advanced economies fell more than in emerging economies. France, Japan, Germany, and Spain recorded the largest falls in advanced economies, reversing improvements made in Q2.
- Among emerging economies, the largest q/q falls were recorded by the Russian Federation (-26.1%), Brazil (-23.9%), and South Africa (-20.7%). The Central Bank of Brazil has aggressively increased the Selic rate by 425bps since last year, heavily dampening capital expenditure plans. The U.S. is South Africa's third-largest market for automobile exports, so businesses in South Africa are greatly exposed to 25% tariffs. This sector reported the second-largest decline in investment confidence in South Africa, of 29.4% q/q, marginally better than the services sector at 31.8%. On average, 44.0% of South African businesses reported tariff uncertainty as very important to their investment decisions this quarter, compared with a global average of 31.0%. Despite falling 1.4% q/q, confidence in India remains the highest y/y out of the 32 economies surveyed for Q3 2025, at 12.6%.
- The manufacturing sector recorded a larger drop (-17.2%) in investment confidence than the services sector (-10.8%) for Q3 2025. The biggest declines were the manufacturers of capital goods (-33.1%), food (-26.9%), and automotives (-26.4%). Of the manufacturing sub-sectors, the manufacturing of chemicals reported the smallest drop in confidence, of -14.8%, albeit still a significant decline. This may reflect the exemptions to new U.S. tariffs, particularly those related to pharmaceutical products.
- Positively, for Q3 2025, businesses reported an expected capacity utilization of 68.9% for the services sector and 69.3% for the manufacturing sector, the first q/q increase since Q1 2024. Though this is a positive signal for future capital expenditure, the level remains below the 2024 averages of 73.9% and 74.1% for services and manufacturing, respectively.

Quadrant of Optimism – Global Business Investment Confidence Index



Firm Size – Global Business Investment Confidence Index

Period	Small	Medium	Large
Q4 2024	144.2	138.4	120.1
Q1 2025	139.2	103.9	140.5
Q2 2025	137.6	109.0	134.7
Q3 2025	107.9	112.1	111.3

Despite many major central banks lowering interest rates so far this year, a significant increase in uncertainty for global trade, supply chains, and geopolitics has dominated business capital expenditure decisions, pushing confidence 14.7% lower than a year earlier, the first y/y decline in investment confidence since the survey began. This brings the annual growth rate in line with the growth rate of other indices: the Global Business Optimism Index, -13.7% y/y; the Global Business Financial Confidence Index, -14.4% y/y; and the Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index, -13.0% y/y, reversing the over-performance of investment confidence in previous quarters, reflecting the huge uncertainty for trade routes and supply chains following a wave of tariff announcements.

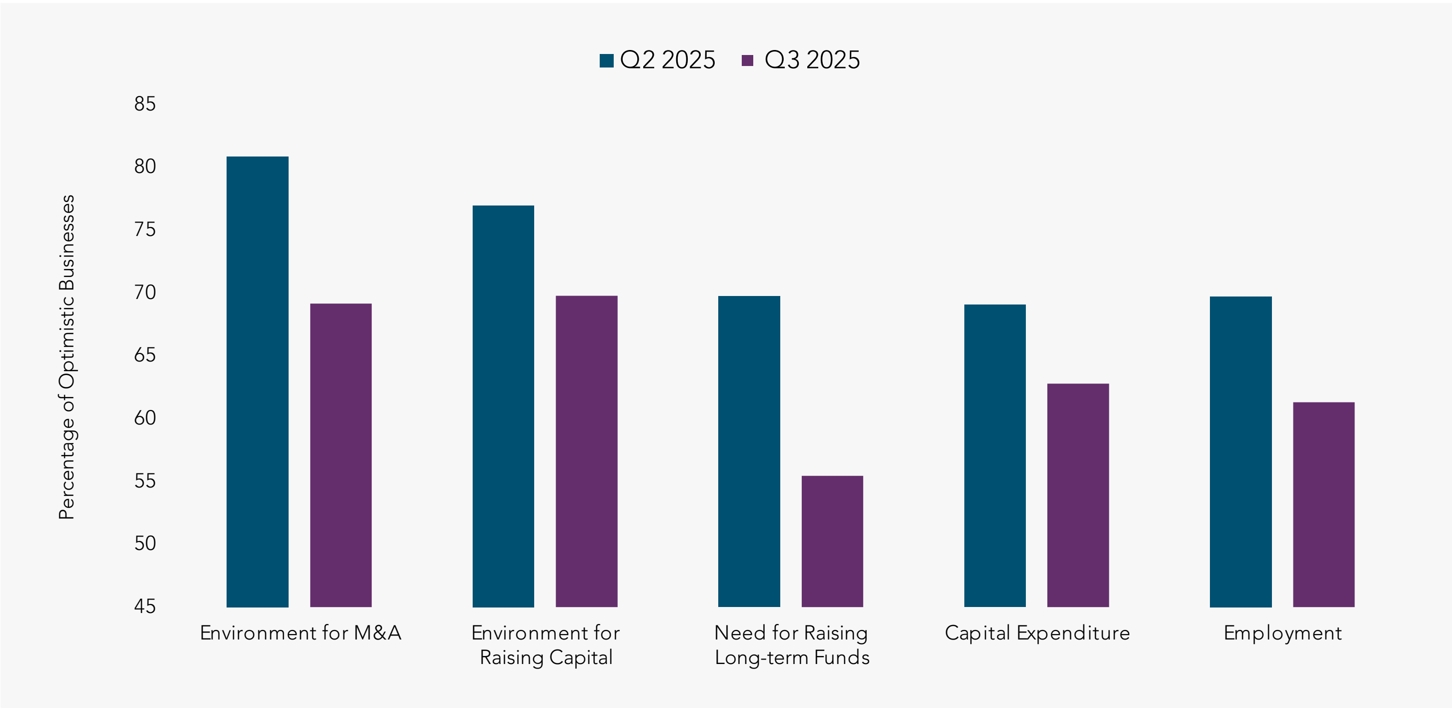
While some countries have agreed to bilateral trade deals with the U.S, such as the U.K. and the Chinese Mainland, the survey found businesses highly polarized on whether they expect new trade deals to be secured. An easing of trade tensions would bring stability to supply chains and trade routes; businesses have cited supply chains as more important for investment decisions than trade uncertainty. Should the uncertainty dissipate, it is expected that investment confidence would return robustly, given strong foundations. Prior to the recent flare-up in conflict in the Middle East, there was optimism that pressure on global supply chains had been easing. Between January and April, Dun & Bradstreet's Country Insight Group upgraded the supply environment risk rating for 19 economies, compared with 6 downgrades; this goes some way to offsetting the net 7 downgrades in 2024.

German businesses saw an increase of investment confidence for Q2 2025 following the February election, but this has been completely reversed for Q3 2025, with the country achieving its lowest Investment Confidence Index level in eight quarters. Further, investment confidence in France for Q3 2025 fell the most of any advanced economy (-21.0% q/q). The poor performance of these two large European economies comes despite 235bps of interest rate cuts by the European Central Bank since the start of last year, way ahead of the Bank of England and the U.S. Federal Reserve, both of which have cut rates by 100bps since July 2024.

Conversely, the Bank of Japan has increased interest rates, and investment confidence among businesses in Japan also fell sharply (-17.3% q/q), reinforcing our survey findings that businesses are more concerned about the impact of supply chain disruption on their investment planning rather than domestic policy rates, since wildly diverging monetary policy paths have resulted in a similar deterioration in investment confidence. Businesses in four economies recorded increased confidence in investment plans for Q3 2025: the U.K. (+7.4% q/q); the U.A.E. (+5.9%); Norway (+5.7%); and Nigeria (+1.4%). Despite this increase, confidence remains below the year-earlier level, following declines for Q1 and Q2 this year.

In the Q2 survey, only two of the five sub-indices fell: expected capital expenditure and hiring of labor. In the Q3 2025 survey, all five sub-indices fell substantially. For Q3, only 55.4% of businesses reported confidence about the need to raise long-term funds, the lowest share since the first survey in Q3 2023. This is seen as a substantial downward shift in sentiment among businesses, as they are not only delaying capital expenditures but are also adjusting their balance sheets by deleveraging in preparation for long-term disruption to business operations. This correction has been the sharpest in Brazil and Hungary; the central bank of the former has been tightening interest rates aggressively, and there are expectations that the latter will begin a period of tightening monetary policy soon. The confidence shown for U.S. M&A activity in Q2 2025 in anticipation of President Donald Trump's pro-domestic business agenda has been quickly reversed, with business confidence declining from 87.2% for Q2 2025 to 70.5% for Q3 2025.

Sub-indices – Global Business Investment Confidence Index



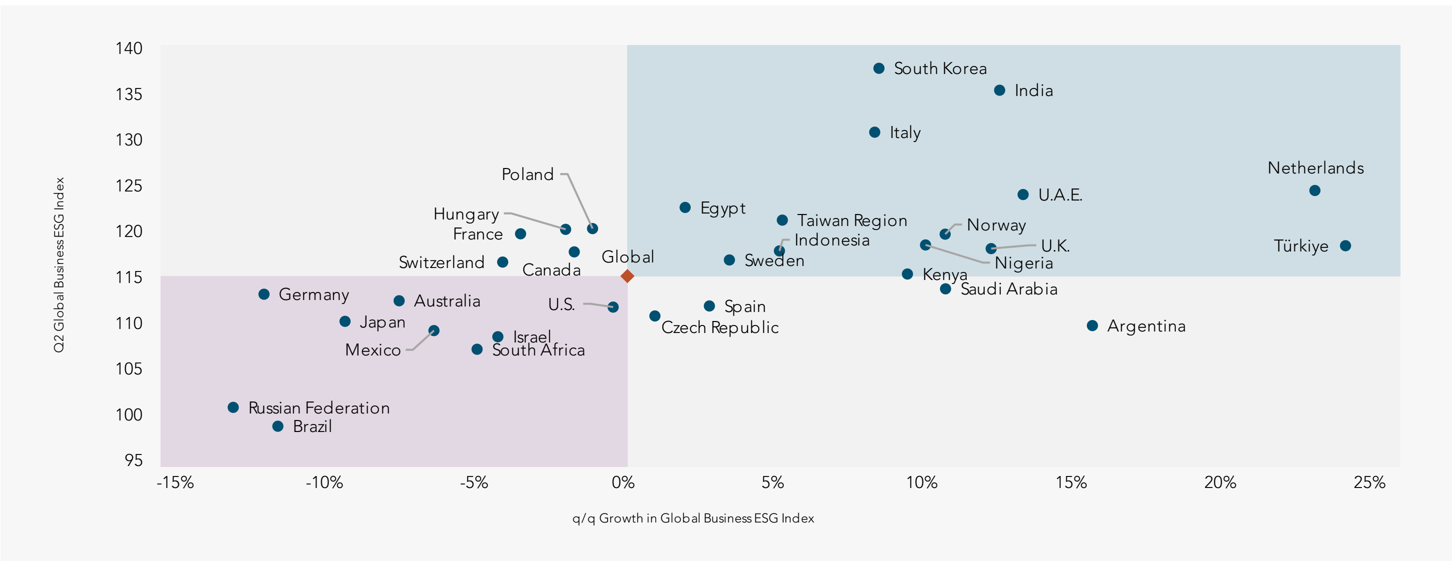
D&B Global Business ESG Index

D&B Global Business ESG Index

Key Findings

- The Global Business ESG Index remained broadly flat in Q2 2025, inching up by just 0.1%.
- Emerging economies drove the modest upturn, with sustainability-related activities rising 2.6%, even as advanced economies registered a 0.7% contraction – signaling a divergence in ESG adoption trajectories.
- Business size played a defining role in ESG performance. Large businesses in emerging economies made only marginal gains (+0.2%), but those in advanced economies saw a steep 8.4% drop, possibly reflecting regulatory fatigue or cost pressures. Medium-sized businesses emerged as key ESG accelerators, with double-digit growth in both emerging (+15.3%) and advanced (+25.0%) economies. Small businesses pulled back sharply, particularly in advanced economies (-12.9%), underlining persistent resource and compliance constraints.
- The services sector gained ESG ground in Q2 2025, with activity rising 3.2% globally; only construction bucked the trend, with a 4.2% drop. In contrast, manufacturing saw a broad-based ESG retreat (-5.2%), led by steep declines in metals (-14.9%) and automotives (-10.2%), likely linked to cost and supply chain stress.
- Regional performance was highly polarized: 44.0% of surveyed economies posted ESG declines. Top gainers included Türkiye (+24.2%) and the Netherlands (+23.1%), while the Russian Federation (-13.1%) and Germany (-12.1%) saw the sharpest contractions, illustrating the geopolitical and regulatory volatility shaping ESG priorities.
- More businesses, especially in emerging economies, are embedding ESG deeper into core operations, with rising integration into decision-making and risk frameworks. However, the perceived value of ESG, especially environmental and governance aspects, declined, particularly in advanced economies, where the share of businesses affirming ESG impact dropped 7.5pps to 64.5%.
- More than one in five European businesses on average ranked ESG compliance among their top two criteria when selecting international suppliers, reflecting rising expectations for sustainable sourcing. Globally, one in six businesses placed ESG at the core of supplier selection, though it still trails more traditional concerns such as cost competitiveness and geopolitical risk profile as primary decision drivers.

Quadrant of Optimism – Global Business ESG Index



Firm Size – Global Business ESG Index

Period	Small	Medium	Large
Q3 2024	127.9	123.8	97.1
Q4 2024	122.6	104.4	130.1
Q1 2025	127.6	94.8	123.1
Q2 2025	113.9	116.5	115.4

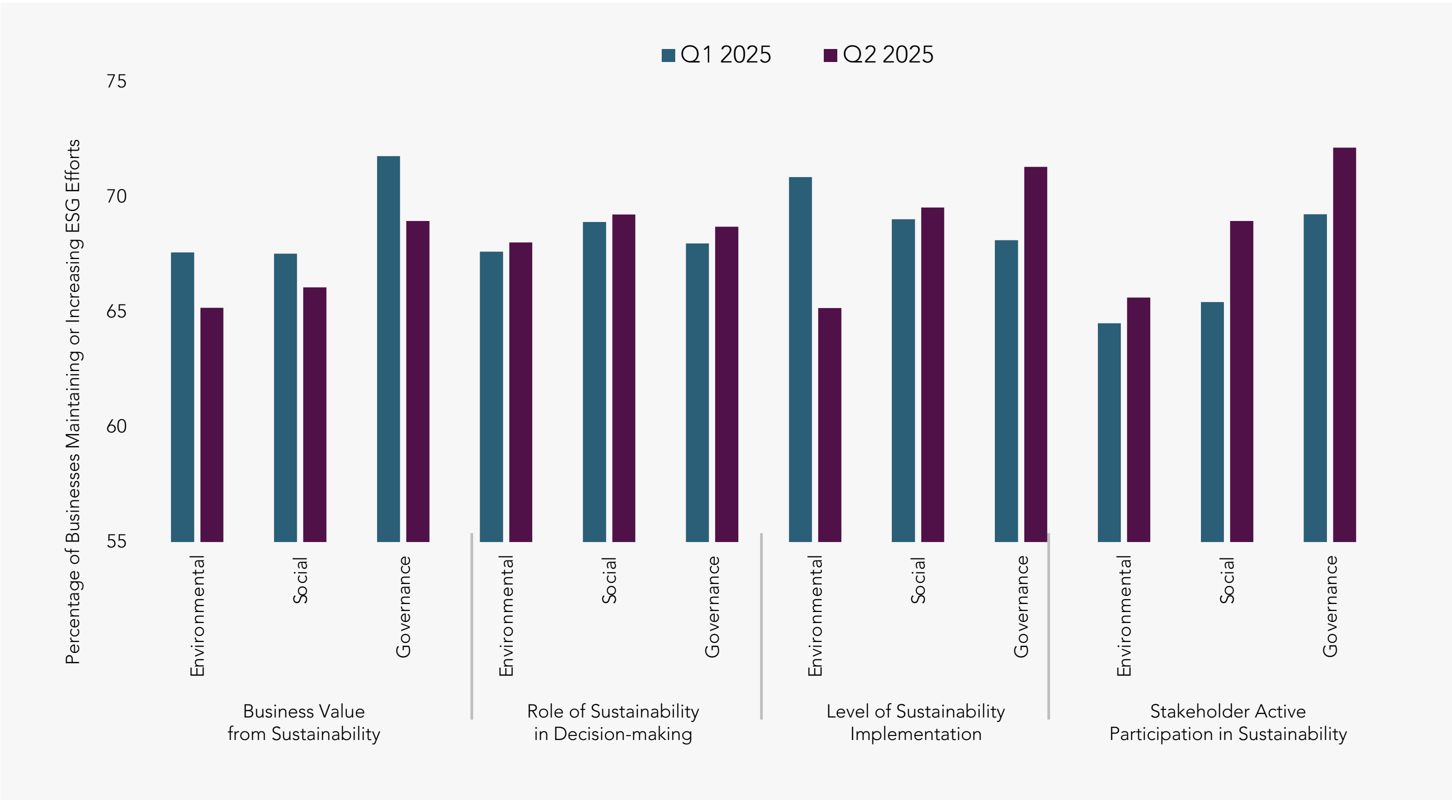
One of the clearer patterns to emerge from the Q2 2025 ESG data is the diverging performance between large and medium-sized businesses in several EU economies – those where the next phase of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) is being operationalized. Under the EU's CSRD, large businesses are at the forefront of expanded ESG disclosure. Companies previously covered under the Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD), such as listed businesses, banks, and insurers with more than 500 employees, began applying CSRD rules in 2024 and are due to publish their first sustainability reports in 2025. Starting in 2025, the CSRD has narrowed the reporting requirements to include large undertakings that meet at least two of the following revised thresholds: more than 1,000 employees; a net turnover exceeding EUR50m; or a balance sheet total over EUR25m. These companies must collect ESG data throughout 2025 in preparation for mandatory disclosures in 2026. In contrast, listed SMBs, which were originally expected to begin reporting for financial year 2026, have now been granted a two-year optional deferral, with CSRD obligations taking effect from 2028. This delay aims to reduce compliance pressure on smaller businesses while the EU finalizes simplified reporting standards tailored to SMBs. Early signs suggest the compliance burden may already be affecting performance trends across business sizes in Europe. For instance, in Spain, sustainability-related performance among large businesses fell 10.4% in Q2 2025, while medium-sized businesses recorded a sharp 28.5% gain. A similar divergence was observed in the Netherlands. These trends may reflect a growing disparity in regulatory preparedness: many medium-sized businesses may now benefit from regulatory breathing space, while large businesses must quickly align with the more rigorous CSRD framework. A study commissioned by the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) in April 2025 further indicates that many large businesses remain unclear about the CSRD's technical requirements, particularly around applying the double materiality principle and establishing reliable data collection systems.

The U.S. also presents an interesting pattern. Optimism among large businesses declined significantly in Q2 2025, by 18.4%, while optimism in medium-sized businesses rose 49.6%. Although the U.S. is not governed by the CSRD, the regulatory discourse around ESG has become highly polarized, with several state-level legal challenges and anti-ESG sentiment potentially slowing momentum for larger corporations. A driver may have been the perceived pushback against ESG mandates in some states and sectors, leading to reduced diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) investments. Businesses may have opted to delay new initiatives or scale down ESG-linked hiring and spending, choosing instead to consolidate existing programs. Medium-sized businesses, in contrast, may have found room to strengthen their ESG initiatives as part of competitive positioning, particularly in sectors such as technology, retail, and professional services, where ESG branding, and supplier attractiveness can carry tangible advantages.

Regulations are not only influencing sustainability activities within different business sizes but may also possibly be leading to geographical disparities. Another story that emerges from the survey is the divergence in ESG performance between emerging and advanced economies. In Q2 2025, several emerging economies recorded substantial gains in their ESG indices, contrasting with the broader weakness observed in advanced economies. This trend may reflect differentiated exposure to domestic regulatory burdens, as well as the evolving expectations of international trade partners, particularly the EU. More than one in five European businesses on average ranked ESG compliance among their top two criteria when selecting international suppliers, reflecting rising expectations for sustainable sourcing. Businesses in countries such as Türkiye (+24.2%), India (+12.6%), Nigeria (+10.1%), and Indonesia (+5.2%) stood out for notable ESG gains, especially among medium-sized businesses. These economies are closely integrated with EU supply chains, exporting across sectors where sustainability standards are becoming more stringent. For example, sustainability-related activity for Turkish businesses dealing in plastics (+29.5%), machinery (+22.9%), and apparel (+20.3%) – key exports to the EU – rose because goods that enter EU supply chains are increasingly subject to enhanced traceability and environmental compliance expectations. Similarly, activity for Indian suppliers to the EU in textiles (+10.9%), pharmaceuticals (+7.3%), and automotive components (+31.5%) rose, as all these sectors are under increased ESG scrutiny because of due diligence requirements and sectoral materiality thresholds. Similarly, Nigeria, while still developing its ESG ecosystem, has seen improvements in activity for sectors such as light manufacturing (+21.2%) and agro-processing (+17.8%), likely encouraged by foreign buyers tightening procurement conditions. In many of these cases, it is likely to be not domestic regulation alone but external scrutiny — via investor standards, buyer requirements, or carbon-linked tariffs — that is accelerating ESG alignment. Medium-sized businesses may be better positioned to respond flexibly to such demands, often lacking the legacy structures or disclosure of fatigue that large businesses in advanced economies currently face. The result is a more adaptive ESG performance profile, particularly in export-facing sectors aligned with EU sustainability priorities.

The Q2 2025 results thus reflect a maturing, but uneven, ESG landscape. Although global interest in sustainability remains strong, practical barriers — ranging from regulatory overload to geopolitical uncertainty — are reshaping the pace and direction of ESG progress. The divergence between emerging and advanced economies suggests that near-term ESG momentum will be shaped not only by domestic policies, but also by the interaction between global compliance regimes and business-level adaptability. As regulatory frameworks tighten and capital flows become more ESG-selective, businesses that can link sustainability with operational efficiency may be best placed to navigate the next phase of the transition.

Sub-indices – Global Business ESG Index



Key Recommendations

In an environment of global uncertainty, businesses should recalibrate growth strategies with a sharper focus on cross-border diversification. Economic growth is diverging, with resilience seen in some emerging economies, while advanced economies experience persistent strain. Businesses should map their corporate footprint – subsidiaries, affiliates, suppliers, and customers – against macro-economic conditions across regions to identify insulated growth opportunities or hidden vulnerabilities.

Given the rise in trade frictions and geopolitical instability, businesses must urgently reassess supply chain risk. The threat of further disruption – especially from the Israel-Iran conflict and chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz – amplifies the case for multi-sourcing, reshoring, or nearshoring where feasible. Businesses should prioritize flexibility, not just cost efficiency, in their procurement and logistics decisions.

Liquidity and financial risk have worsened significantly, especially for SMBs. Businesses should return to fundamentals: proactively managing credit risk by applying the 5Cs – Capacity, Capital, Character, Collateral, and Conditions – with updated real-time data across global partners. Late payments and margin compression are increasingly common, requiring greater scrutiny of counterparty financial health and prioritization of collections.

Finally, defensive positioning through dynamic data analytics will be key. Working with trusted partners to monitor shifts in capital structure, liquidity availability, and payment behavior across global portfolios can help businesses act quickly to mitigate financial exposure and adapt to changing conditions. Businesses must now treat risk resilience as a strategic imperative, not an operational afterthought.

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business Optimism Index: Appendix

Dun & Bradstreet conducted a survey of business leaders in their operating markets. The survey was conducted on a stratified random sample of around 10,000 businesses, from varying sector and size segments. Responses pertain to businesses' own operating markets. A diffusion index is calculated for each parameter and normalized against base year values (Q3 2023 to Q2 2024). An index reading above 100 indicates an improvement in optimism relative to the base year, while an index reading below 100 signifies a deterioration. The composite index at size and sector level is calculated using factor-weighted averages of the parameter-level indices. Economy-level indices are weighted averages of sector-level indices by their contribution to GDP. Global indices are weighted averages of economy-level indices with their GDP weights.

Economies covered in the survey			
Argentina	Indonesia	Russia	United Kingdom (U.K.)
Australia	Israel	Saudi Arabia	United States of America (U.S.)
Brazil	Italy	South Africa	
Canada	Japan	South Korea	
Czech Republic	Kenya	Spain	
Egypt	Mexico	Sweden	
France	Netherlands	Switzerland	
Germany	Nigeria	Taiwan Region	
Hungary	Norway	Türkiye	
India	Poland	United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.)	

The Indices

INDEX	LEADING INDICATOR FOR
Global Business Optimism Index	Economic output (GDP)
Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index	Time and cost of supplier deliveries
Global Business Financial Confidence Index	Business bankruptcies
Global Business Investment Confidence Index	Business investment
Global Business ESG Index	ESG initiatives

Indices Explained

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business Optimism Index provides valuable insights on the global growth cycle. It serves as a tool to identify turning points in the global economy.

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business Supply Chain Continuity Index monitors the efficiency of suppliers' deliveries in terms of both time and cost. The index enables businesses to optimize their supply chain management by identifying potential bottlenecks, streamlining operations, and mitigating risks.

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business Financial Confidence Index serves as an early warning signal for bankruptcies, enabling stakeholders to anticipate financial distress in various sectors of the economy.

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business Investment Confidence Index provides vital cues about investment rates across different industries and regions. By tracking this index, stakeholders can gain insights on the sentiments and willingness of businesses to invest in new projects, expand operations, and drive growth.

Dun & Bradstreet Global Business ESG Index provides a comprehensive assessment of companies' performance in implementing ESG initiatives. By tracking the ESG index, investors, regulators, and the public can evaluate the sustainability efforts of organizations, encourage responsible business practices, and promote transparency and accountability.

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Our experienced country-intelligence specialists use Dun & Bradstreet's proprietary data, supplemented by secondary data from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other multilateral organizations, to provide unique analysis to drive sound business decisions.

Updated frequently – and monthly for our most requested countries – our data and analysis are presented in a format that facilitates the comparison of economic, political and commercial conditions on a country, regional and global level.

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