



THE GLOBAL
OPPORTUNITY
MAP

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WELCOME AND FOREWORD

At Lightspeed, we've spent nearly 25 years partnering with visionary founders to navigate the changing landscape of global business. This year, we turn our focus to two powerful and intersecting forces: the rise of AI and the growing regionalization of global politics. At the same time that AI is reshaping industries and redefining competitive advantage, the fragmentation of global trade and the increase of protectionist policies are challenging the flows of capital, talent, and resources needed to fully realize its potential.

How are business leaders assessing the risks and opportunities of the present moment, and what decisions are they making in response? We surveyed nearly 1,000 C-level executives at companies with at least 100 employees in 11 markets around the world. The responses reveal that technology is now about much more than efficiency, the imperatives of globalization are giving way to a new era of regional opportunity, and investing in resilience is no longer optional.

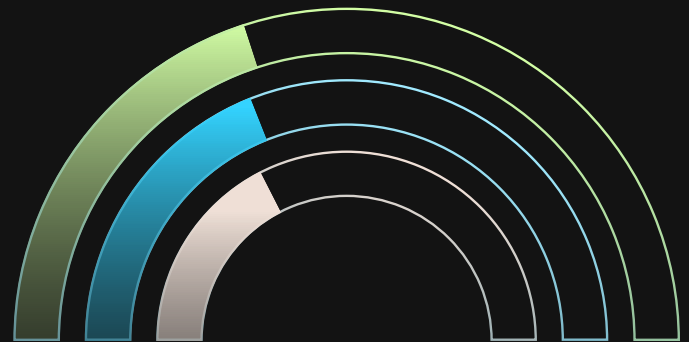
While the pace of technological and geopolitical upheaval has accelerated, Lightspeed's commitment to working with the world's most dynamic entrepreneurs and businesses remains constant. We hope this report provides insights that will help builders of all sorts shape the future of global business.

THE WORLD AT AN INFLECTION POINT: A NEW ERA OF GLOBAL BUSINESS

Global business is undergoing a profound rewiring. For decades, growth and globalization were paramount. Today, the new watchwords are resilience and regionalization.

The dual forces of AI transformation and geopolitical regionalization are reshaping business strategies, forcing companies to balance scale with resilience. Geopolitical change is driving innovation in strategic sectors and accelerating technological transformation—particularly where regional or sovereign interests intersect with commercial potential. This was reflected in executives' assessment of key drivers propelling innovation and growth.

- 40% cite business opportunities arising from geopolitical risk, including in defense tech, biotech, and AI
- 38% highlight the adoption of AI and automation
- 35% point to shifts in the global balance of power, such as the dynamics between the G20 and BRICS nations



After a decade of incremental progress, the rate of technological advancement has become exponential. Adapting to this change—in parallel with significant geopolitical shifts—will require a new blend of strategic foresight and operational resilience.



KEY MARKET

BRAZIL



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Brazilian business leaders demonstrate acute awareness of shifting geopolitical dynamics and their implications for business operations. Their perspectives reflect strong concerns about the fragmentation of the international financial system, with over 70% anticipating the emergence of competing payment networks between allied trade blocs like G20 and BRICS. This expected financial realignment coincides with their reports of greater difficulty in securing international government contracts, suggesting a more complex landscape for cross-border business relationships is emerging.

In response to these geopolitical transitions, Brazilian businesses are undertaking bold operational transformations. Notably, 50% of leaders are planning to relocate production facilities in 2025 – second-highest among all global respondents – signaling a major realignment of supply chains and manufacturing strategies. Their embrace of

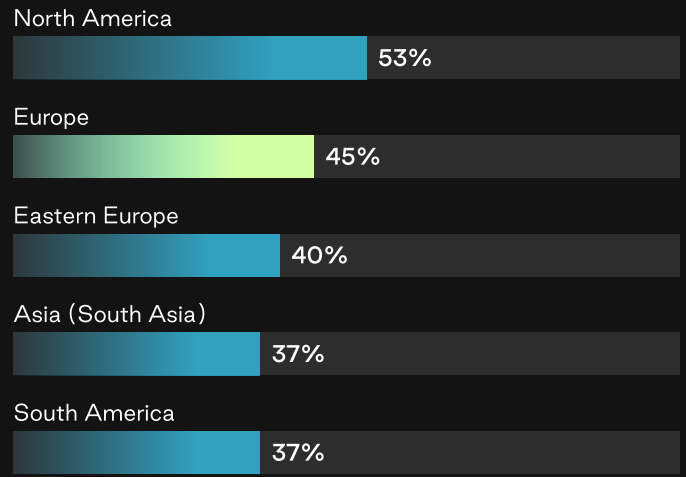
technological transformation is equally decisive, with 46% planning to completely automate entire departments – the highest percentage among all surveyed countries. This operational repositioning reflects Brazilians’ awareness of their need to aggressively reshape business fundamentals.

These insights paint a picture of Brazilian business leadership that is proactively adapting to a world of increasing complexity, where geopolitical considerations and technological advancement are becoming increasingly intertwined with core business strategy.

OVERVIEW

53%

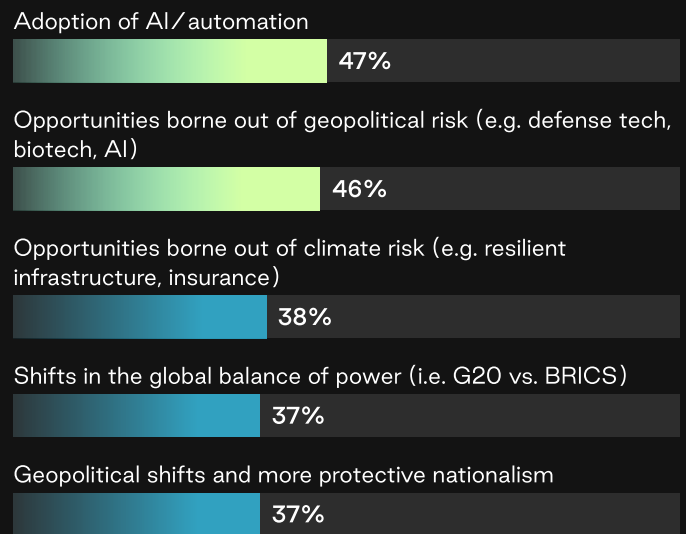
Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

47%

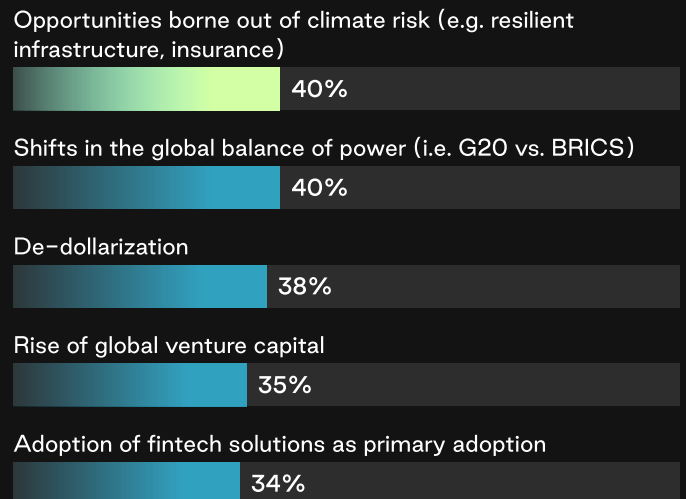
Thinking about the following potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five do you think will have the most significant impact on fostering innovation and growth?



OVERVIEW

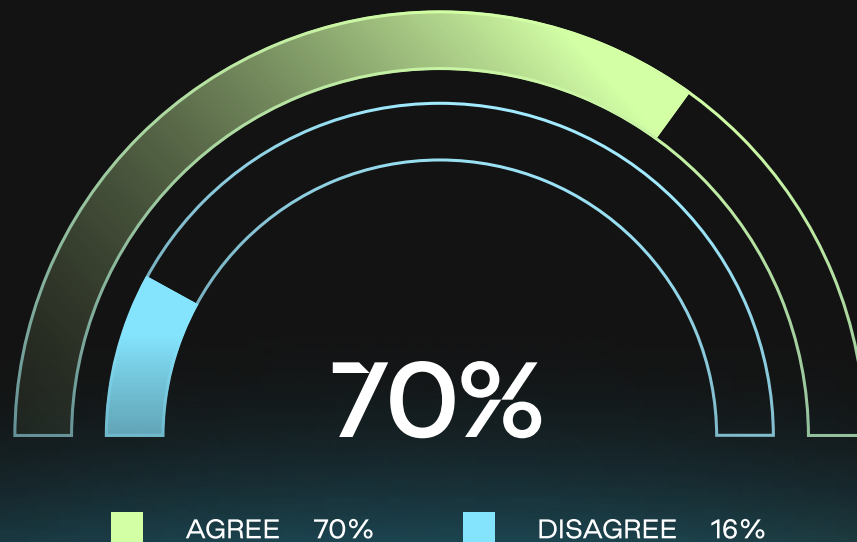
40%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

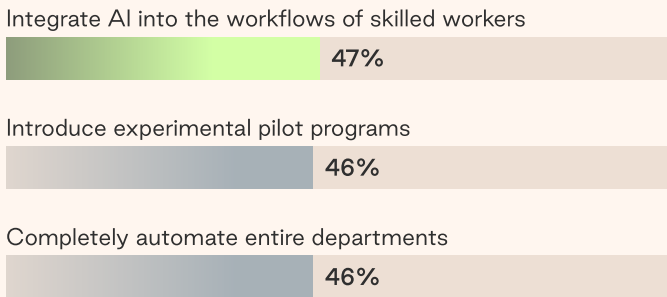
Governments are increasingly becoming more protectionist in their business policy (i.e. cross-border data sharing, onshoring of chip manufacturing). Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



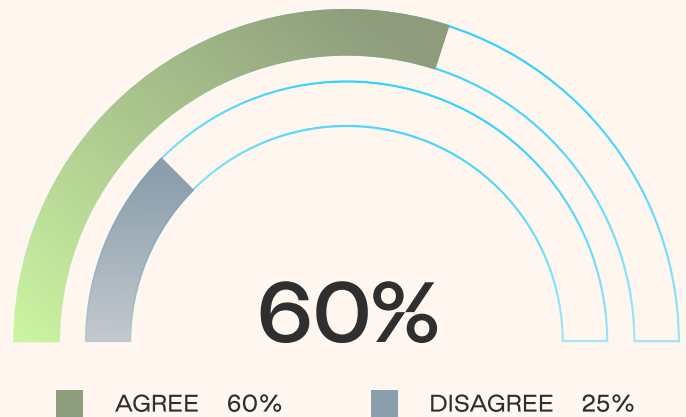
71% OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT ALLIED TRADE BLOCS WILL INCREASINGLY CREATE THEIR OWN PAYMENT NETWORKS (I.E. G20 VS. BRICS), EFFECTIVELY FRAGMENTING THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM INTO COMPETING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

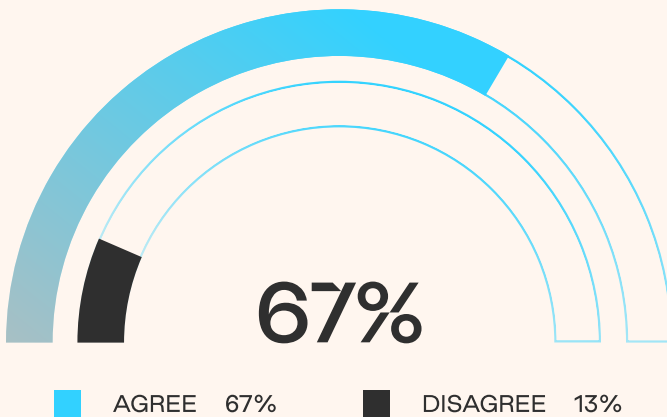
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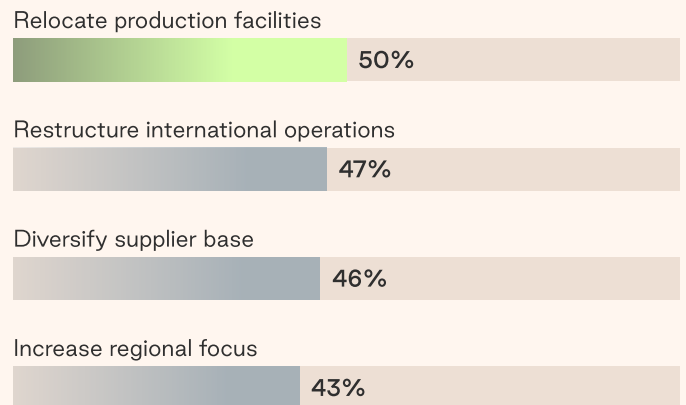
AI will collapse traditional career paths and make long-term workforce planning impossible for business leaders. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



Supply chain resilience will take priority over cost optimization. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

FINLAND



FINLAND

Globalization stalwart
embracing careful
economic evolution

KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

As global business leaders contemplate significant shifts in the international order, Finnish executives stand out for their markedly traditional perspective on globalization and measured approach to technological disruption.

From a geopolitical perspective, Finnish respondents emerge as strong defenders of existing global economic structures, consistently rejecting predictions of a more fragmented international system. Only 45% believe regional trade blocs will replace globalization – among the lowest of all respondents and one of only two countries where this view failed to gain majority support. This commitment to traditional international structures extends to their views on talent mobility, with less than half expecting a slowdown in the movement of skilled talent to developed nations – the lowest level of agreement among all surveyed nations.

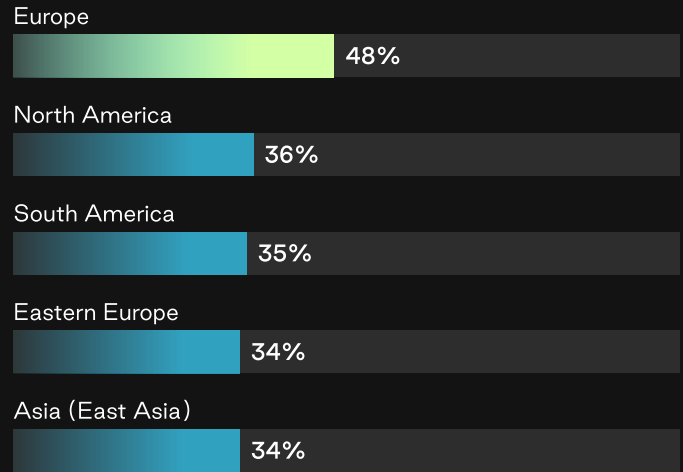
On the business front, Finnish leaders are taking a balanced approach to technological transformation. While half are actively integrating AI into skilled worker workflows, they demonstrate the highest level of skepticism among all respondents that AI will make long-term workforce planning impossible. This suggests a pragmatic view that acknowledges AI's potential to enhance rather than disrupt existing business structures and career paths.

These perspectives paint a picture of Finnish business leadership that favors measured evolution over radical transformation, maintaining faith in established global systems while preparing thoughtfully for technological change.

OVERVIEW

48%

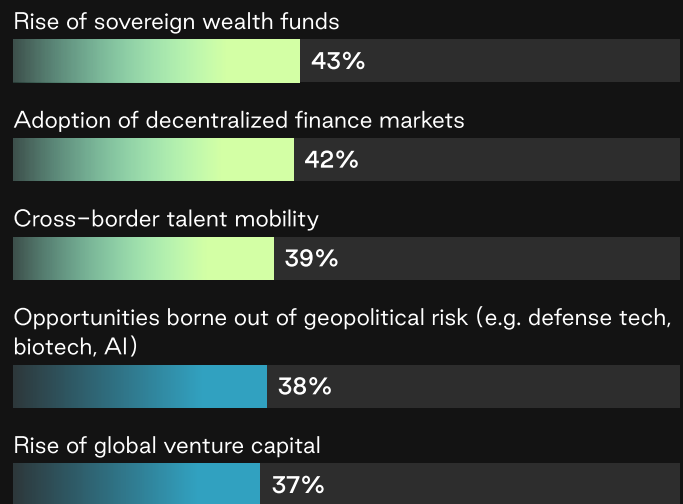
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OVERVIEW

43%

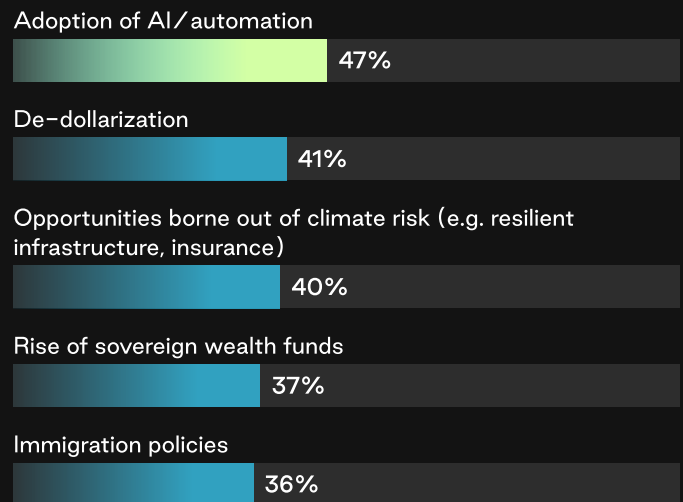
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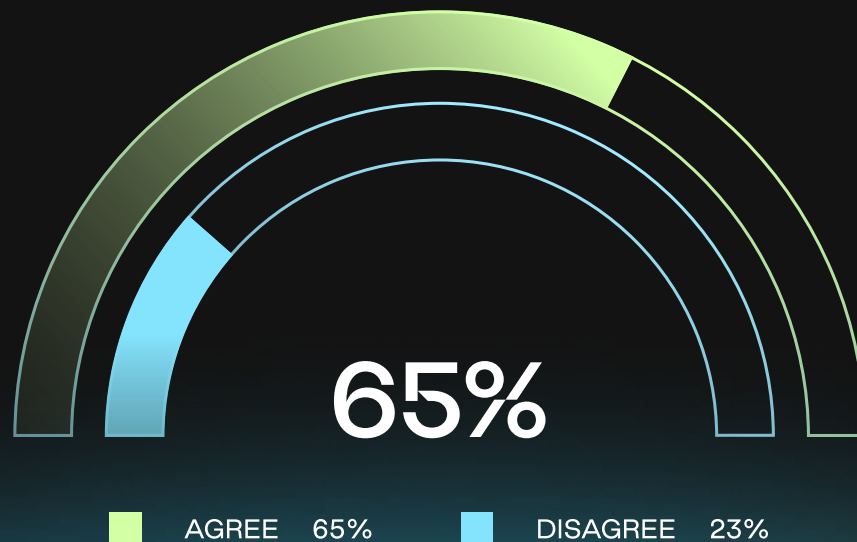
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GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

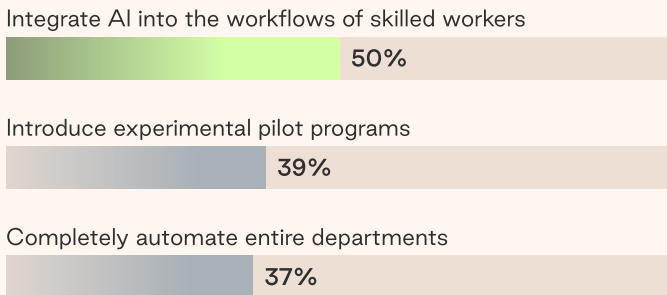
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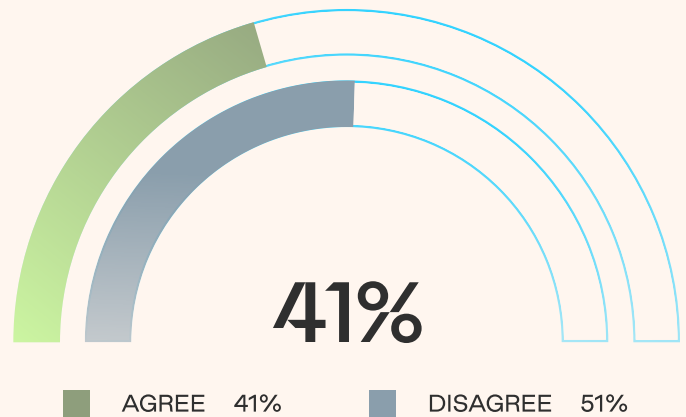
33% OF FINNISH RESPONDENTS DISAGREED THAT SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE WILL TAKE PRIORITY OVER COST OPTIMIZATION - THE HIGHEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

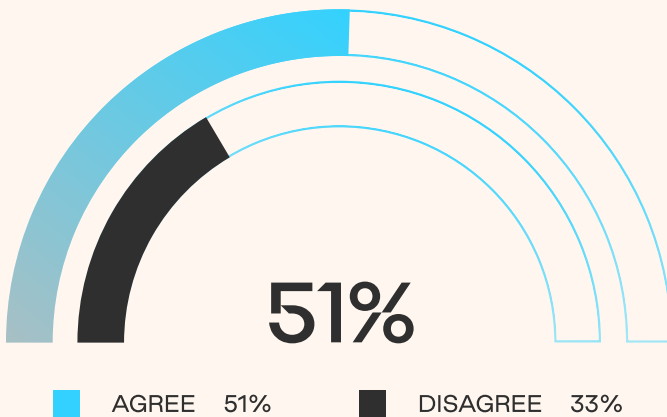
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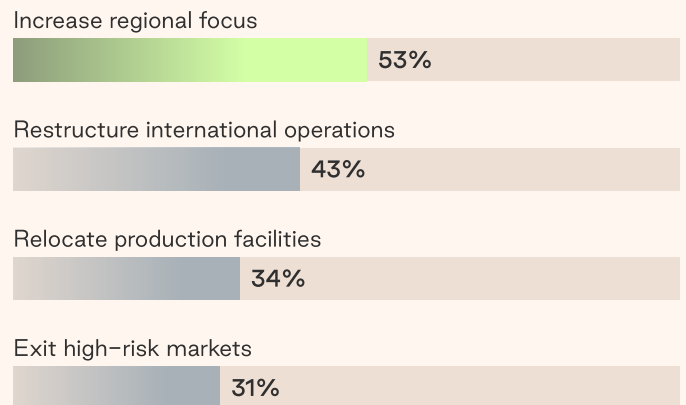
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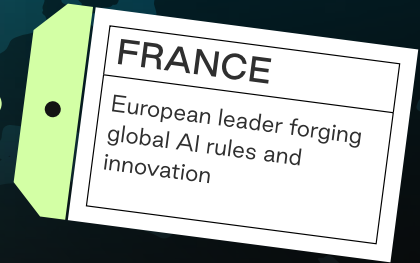
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KEY MARKET

FRANCE



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

French business leaders demonstrate a complex relationship with geopolitical dynamics heading into 2025. While acknowledging the significance of shifting global power structures and concern over immigration policies, nearly one in three French business leaders also report they don't intend to adjust their day-to-day business operations due to geopolitical tension or conflict – the highest among all respondents.

Unlike their 'wait and see' approach to the geopolitical landscape, French leaders are positioning themselves at the forefront of technological and regulatory transformation in the business realm. Their organizations are particularly aggressive in embracing AI-driven change, with 45% of business leaders planning to automate entire departments – among the highest rates globally.

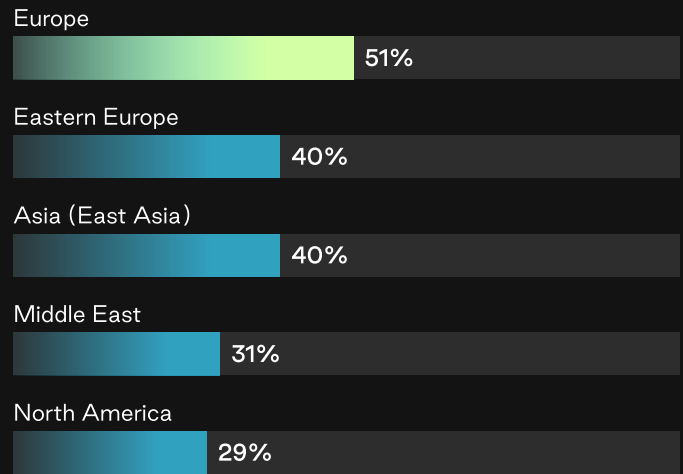
Respondents also reflected a uniquely pro-regulatory stance in comparison to France's global peers – it was the only nation where a majority of business leaders did not agree heavy-handed regulations will lead to more industry consolidation, rather than prevent it.

This balanced approach of bold technological adoption and pro-regulatory perspectives – paired with apparent uncertainty over how to respond to the current geopolitical tides – suggests French business leaders are charting their own course, embracing innovation while maintaining traditional French perspectives on market and geopolitical dynamics.

OVERVIEW

51%

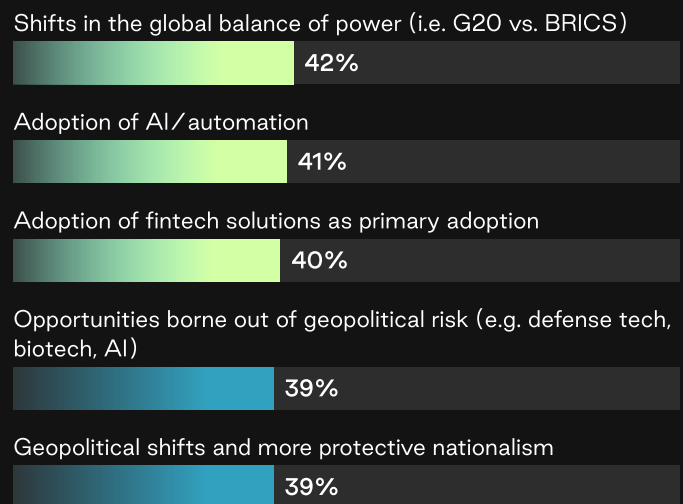
Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

42%

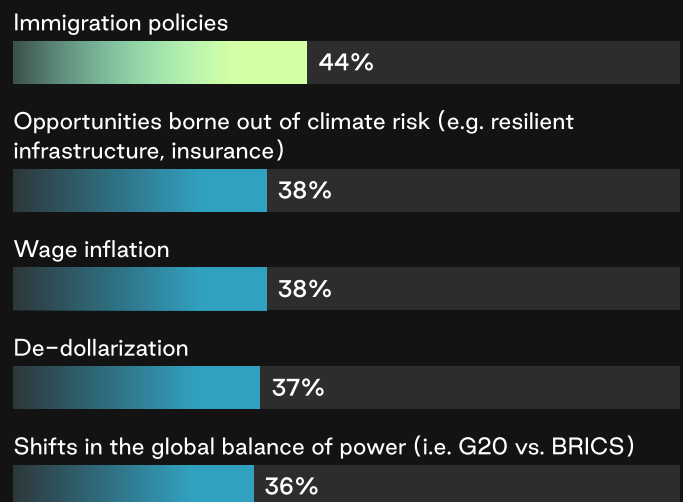
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OVERVIEW

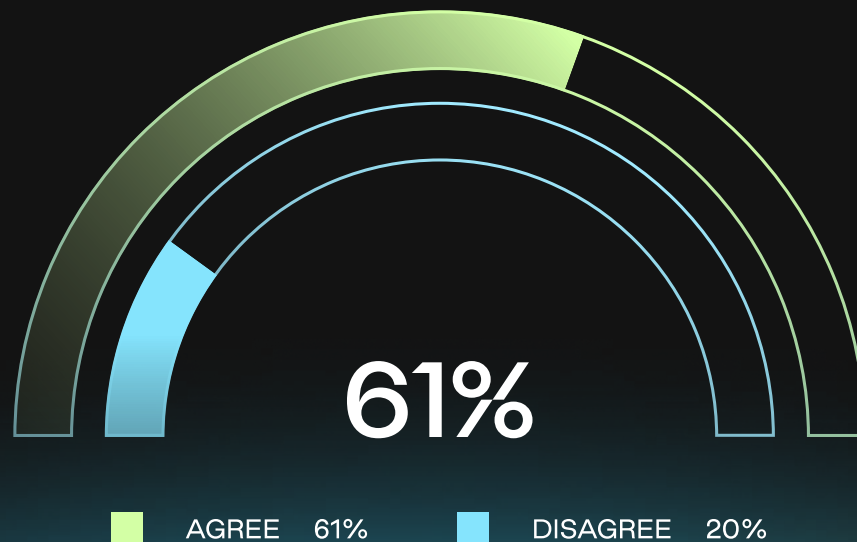
44%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

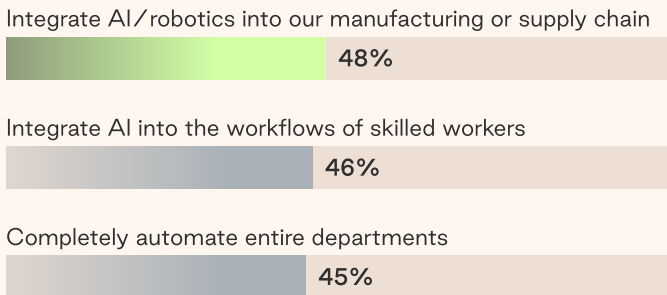
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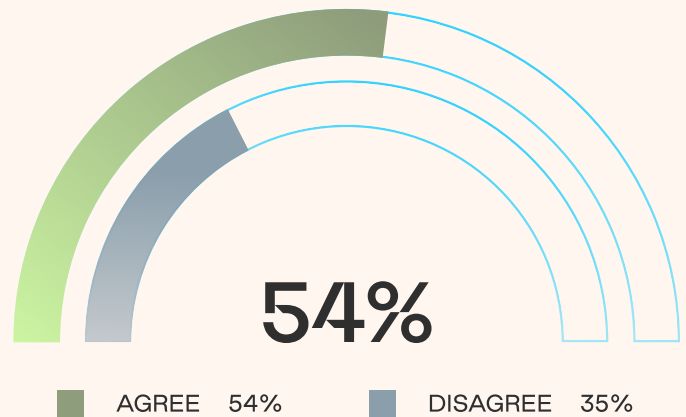
40% OF FRENCH RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THE ADOPTION OF FINTECH SOLUTIONS AS A PRIMARY FINANCIAL OPTION IS ONE OF THE TOP FIVE MOST SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS LANDSCAPE SHIFTS THAT WILL HAVE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON FOSTERING INNOVATION AND GROWTH – ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

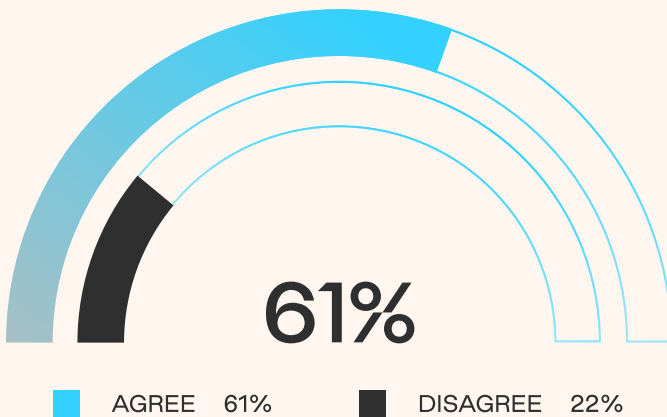
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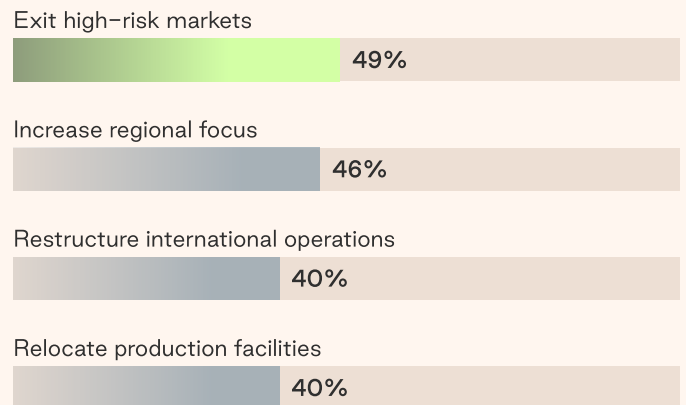
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Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

GERMANY



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

German business leaders stand at a crossroads in 2025, navigating complex shifts in the global order while seeking to maintain their country's economic dynamism.

In the geopolitical sphere, German executives display a fascinating paradox: while they identify shifts in global power dynamics (43%) and rising protectionism (43%) as key drivers of innovation and growth, they simultaneously rank these same factors as their greatest concerns (41% and 45% respectively). This duality reflects Germany's unique position as a major economic power deeply integrated in established global networks, but intrigued by the potential opportunities introduced by incoming shifts.

On the business front, German leaders demonstrate strong interest in venture capital —over a third (36%) cited the rise of global VC as an exciting catalyst for innovation,

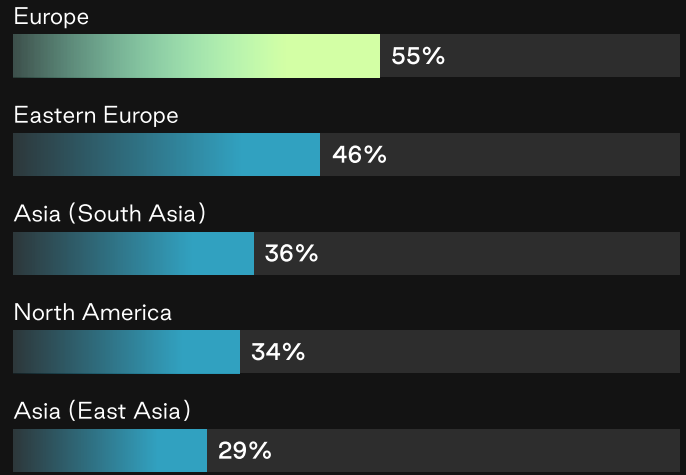
punctuating the growth opportunities in one of Europe's strongest economic markets. However, German leaders also report mounting operational challenges, with 32% citing international regulatory compliance as a shift that has become more arduous for businesses — the second highest percentage globally. Moreover, German executives take a notably different stance on regulatory impact than their European counterparts, with 67% believing that heavy-handed regulations will drive industry consolidation rather than prevent it — 10–15 percentage points higher than peers in France, Sweden, and Finland.

This nuanced outlook suggests German businesses are strategically positioning themselves for a more fragmented, yet opportunity-rich global landscape.

OVERVIEW

55%

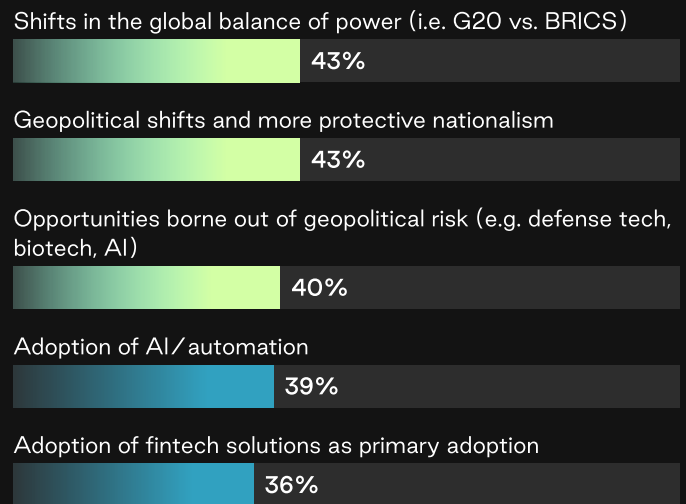
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OVERVIEW

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OVERVIEW

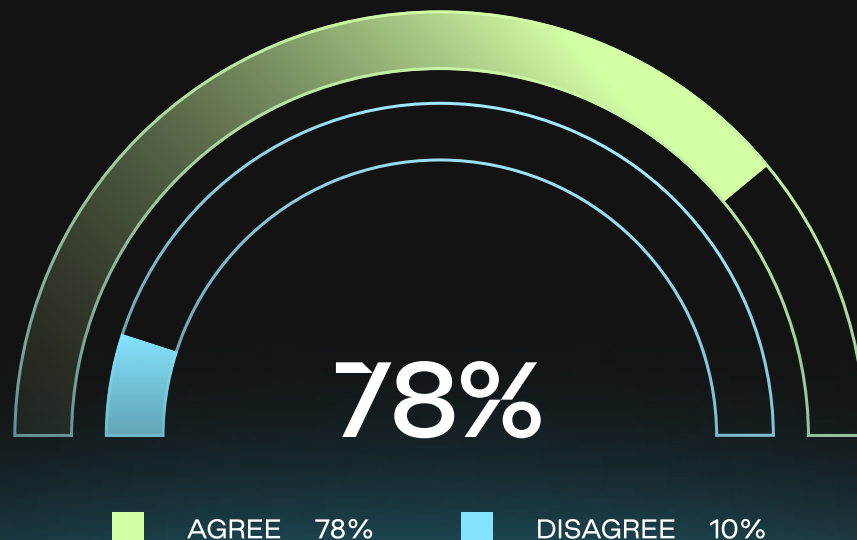
45%

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GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

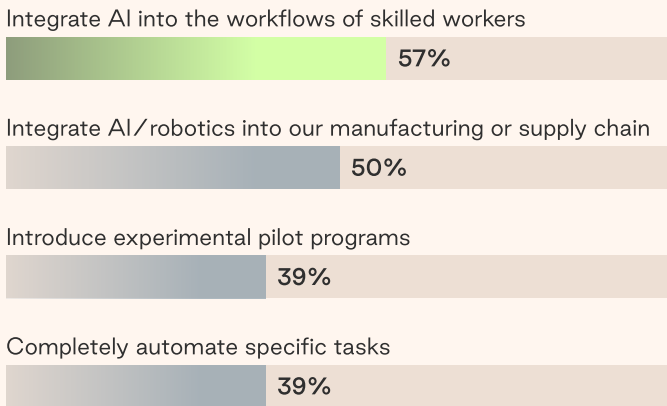
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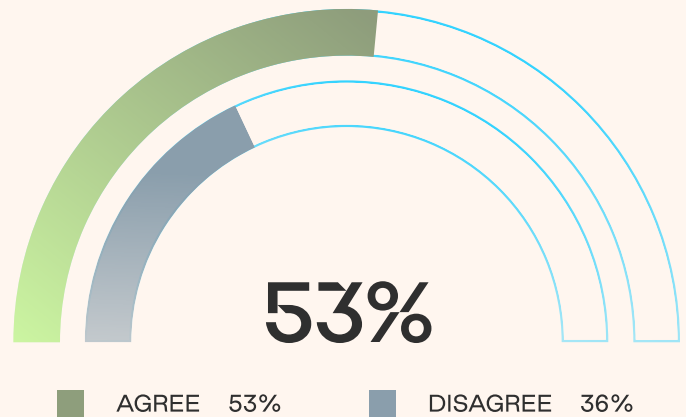
45% OF GERMAN RESPONDENTS NOTED THAT GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS AND MORE PROTECTIVE NATIONALISM ARE IN THEIR TOP FIVE CONCERNS WHEN IT COMES TO SHIFTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE – THE HIGHEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

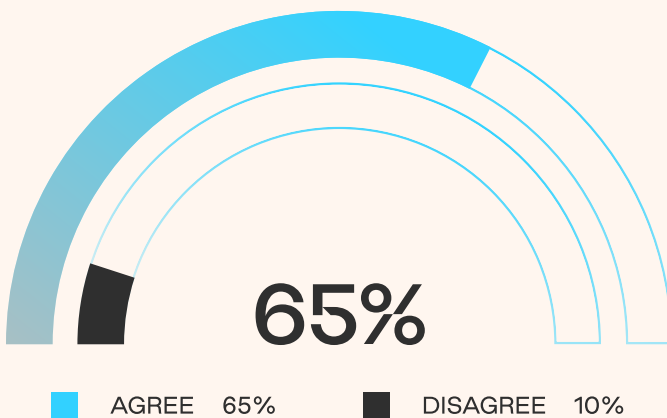
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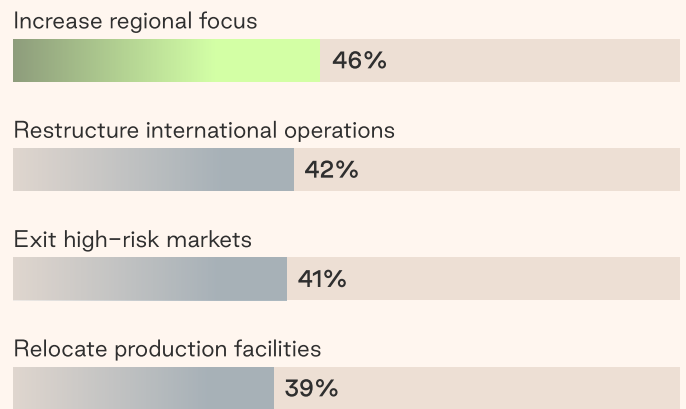
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Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

INDIA

INDIA

Rising tech giant who's redefining global tech influence

KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Indian business leaders emerge as both pragmatic realists and strategic opportunists as they assess the political and economic dynamics reshaping global markets in 2025.

Their geopolitical outlook anticipates fundamental changes in the international order, with 78% believing regional blocs will replace globalization, and 89% expecting allied trade blocs to create separate payment networks, effectively fragmenting the global financial system. Their strategic response to this shifting landscape is decisive: they're preparing through substantial operational changes, with over half planning to restructure international operations and diversify their supplier base. Notably, they strongly believe supply chain resilience will increasingly take precedence over cost optimization.

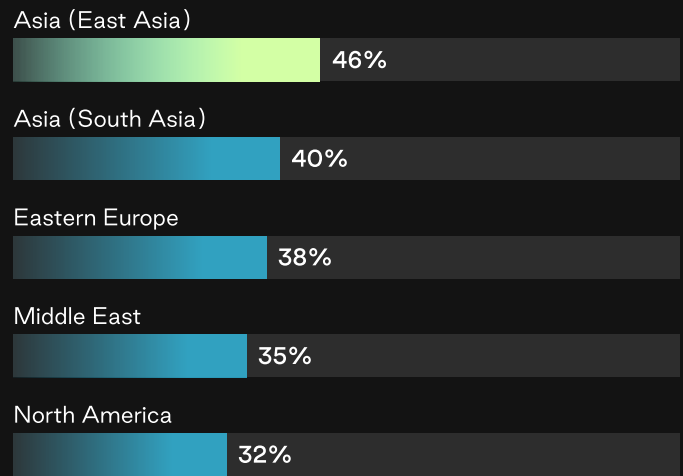
On the business front, these same leaders are embracing transformative change. While actively planning for widespread task automation, they recognize AI's potential to fundamentally reshape traditional career paths. Yet, they remain uniquely optimistic about talent retention, showing the highest confidence among global respondents (76%) that the 'brain drain' from developing to developed nations will slow. Interestingly, they view heavy-handed regulations as a catalyst for industry consolidation—rather than an effective control measure.

These perspectives reflect a business community that not only anticipates the fragmentation of traditional global systems but is actively positioning itself to thrive within new power structures and technological paradigms.

OVERVIEW

46%

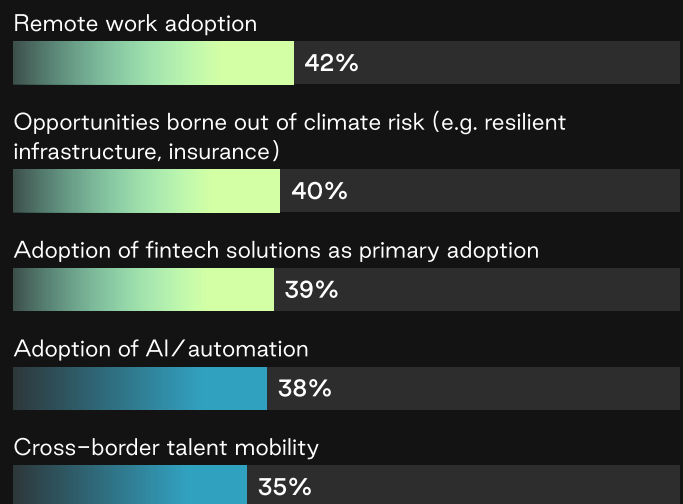
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OVERVIEW

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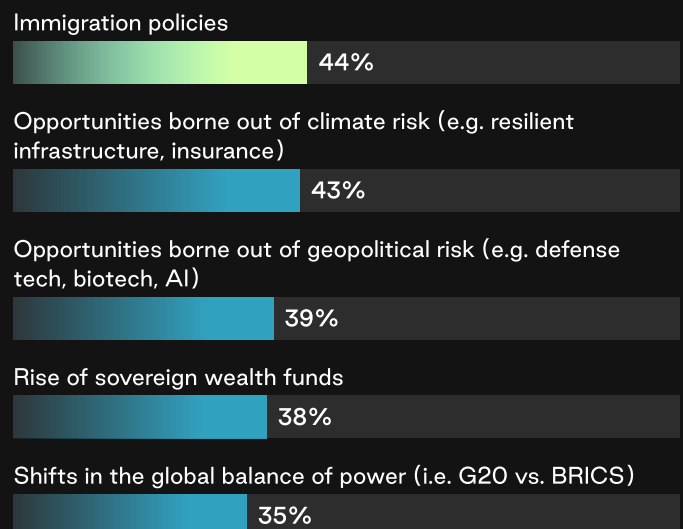
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OVERVIEW

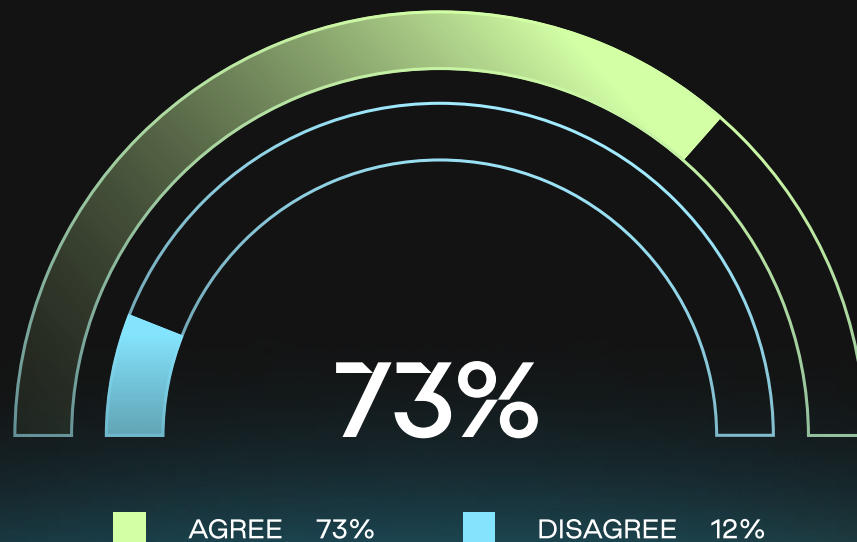
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GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

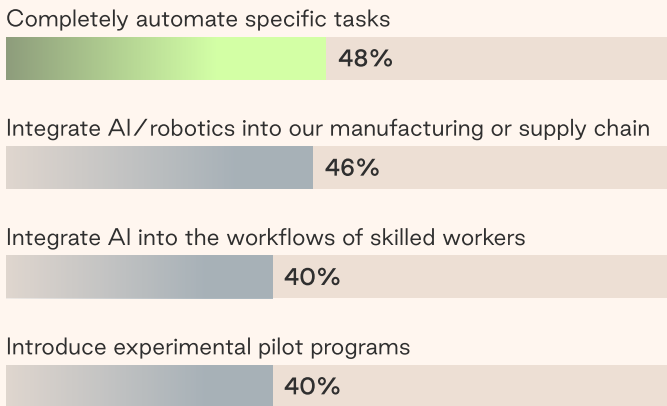
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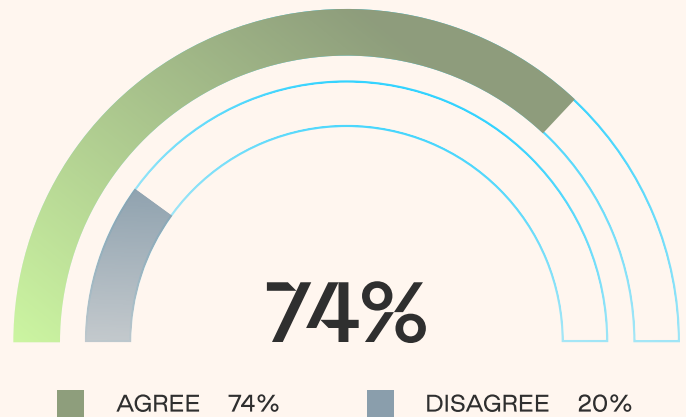
76% OF INDIAN RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT THE 'BRAIN DRAIN' OF HIGHLY SKILLED TALENT MIGRATING TO DEVELOPED MARKETS WILL SLOW DOWN - THE HIGHEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

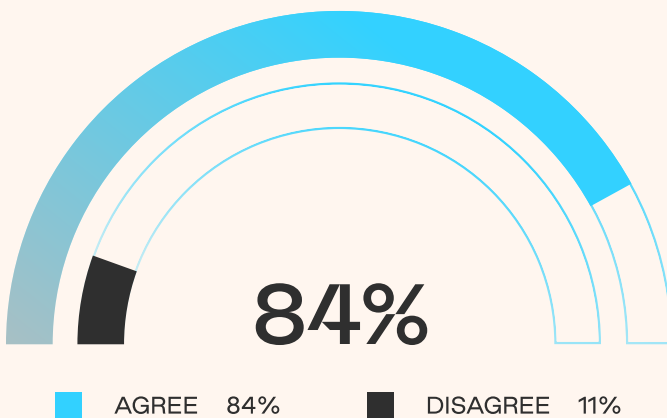
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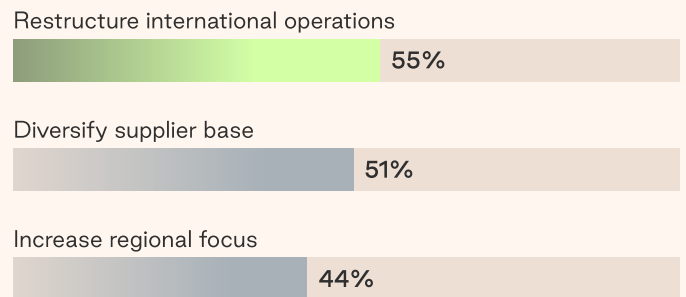
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KEY MARKET

MEXICO



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Mexican business leaders present a nuanced view of the evolving global landscape, notably diverging from global peers in their perspective on international trade and power dynamics. While “shifts in the global balance of power” was tied as leaders’ top concern, Mexican executives stand apart in their continued faith in globalization’s future. They show markedly lower agreement (52%) than global counterparts that regional trade blocs will replace globalization, and over a fourth (27%) actively disagreed. Their perspective on talent mobility further reinforces this international outlook, with only 29% – the second-highest level of disagreement globally – expecting a slowdown in the migration of highly skilled talent to developed markets.

This traditional perspective extends into their business outlook. 39% of Mexican business leaders cite wage inflation as a top concern – the highest among all respondents – and they’re more likely than peers to maintain

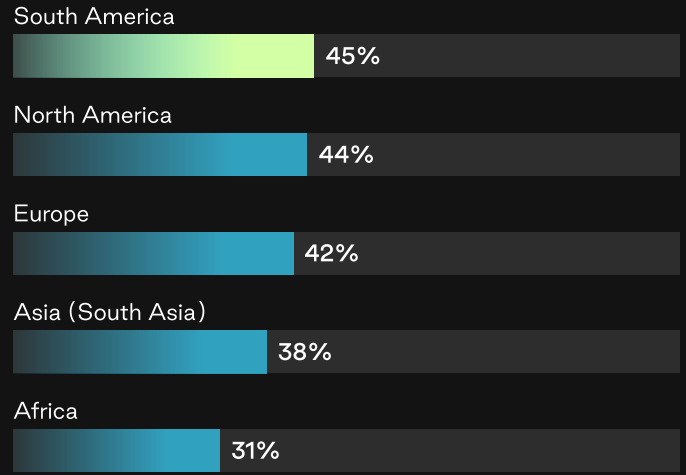
focus on cost optimization versus supply chain resilience. Mexican executives also display striking optimism about the role of artificial intelligence in workforce planning – with 42% disagreeing with the notion that AI will disrupt traditional career paths. This was among the highest rates of all respondents.

This measured response to both geopolitical and operational challenges positions Mexican business leaders as notably levelheaded in their approach to 2025’s evolving business landscape, maintaining optimism about globalization while preparing practically for structural changes ahead.

OVERVIEW

45%

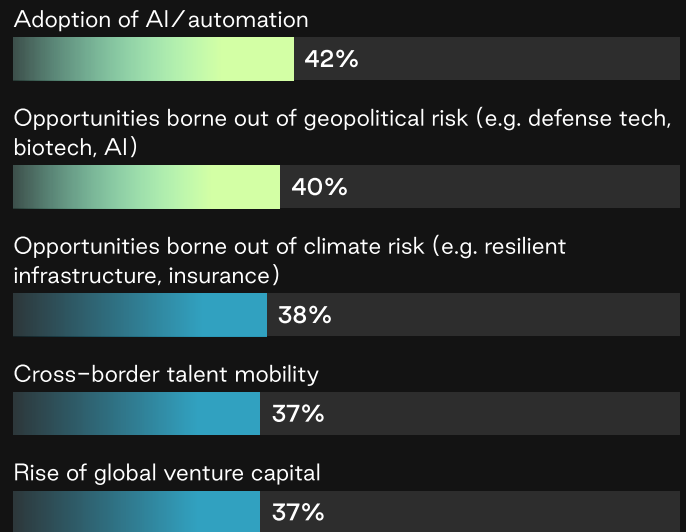
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OVERVIEW

42%

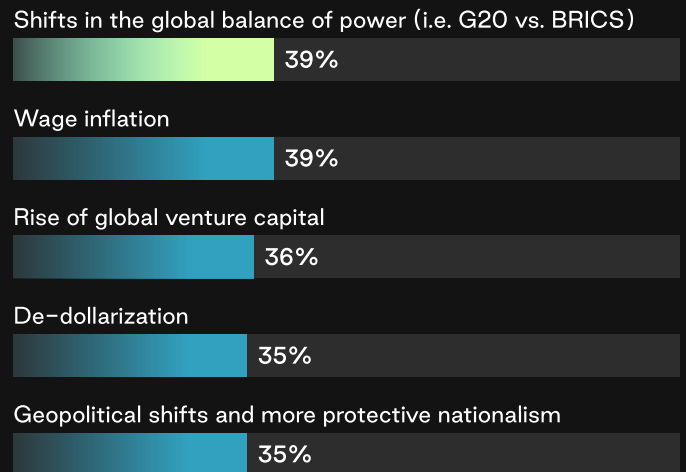
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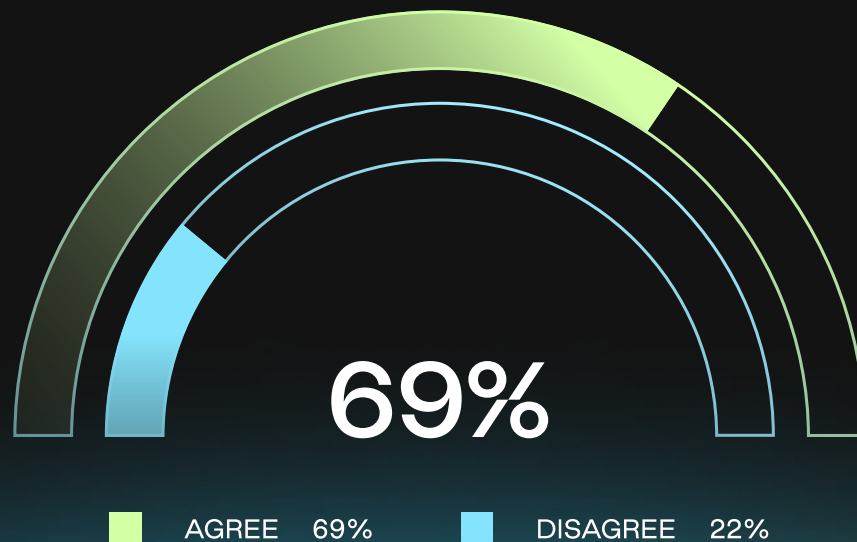
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GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

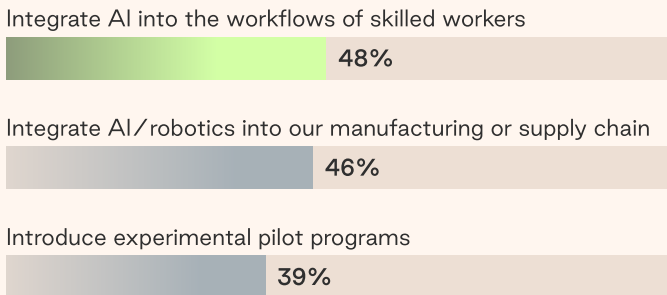
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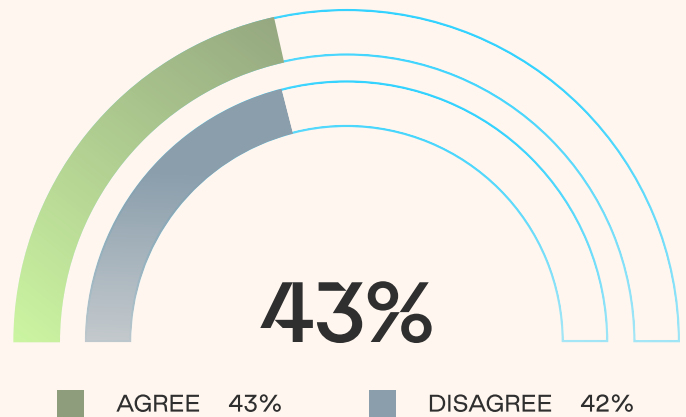
52% OF MEXICAN RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT INSULAR, REGIONAL TRADE BLOCS WILL REPLACE THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION - AMONG THE LOWEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

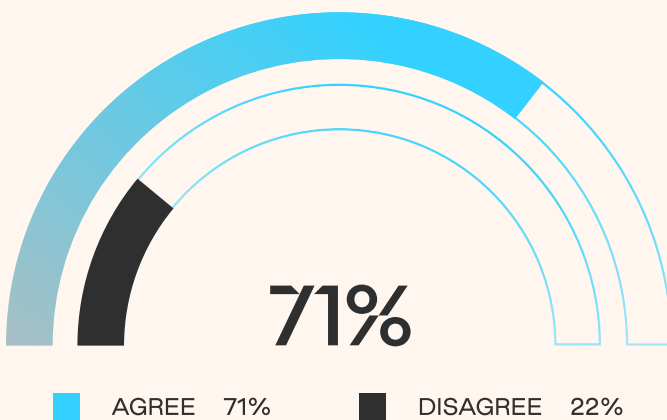
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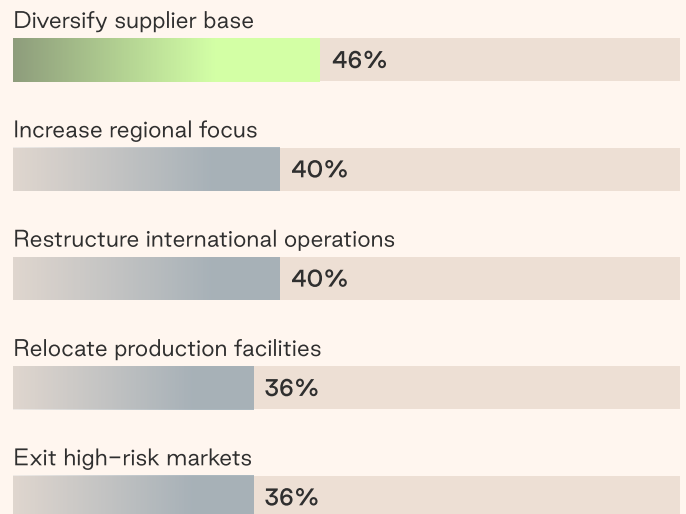
AI will collapse traditional career paths and make long-term workforce planning impossible for business leaders. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



Supply chain resilience will take priority over cost optimization. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

SAUDI ARABIA



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

As their nation's global influence grows, Saudi business leaders express particularly decisive views about the economic and geopolitical transitions shaping 2025.

Geopolitically, Saudi respondents expressed the most concrete perspectives among global business leaders about the fragmenting international landscape. An overwhelming 91% believe regional trade blocs will supersede globalization, while 89% anticipate the emergence of competing financial systems between allied blocs—a view that likely stems from Saudi Arabia's strategic position at the intersection of emerging coalitions.

On the business front, Saudi leaders are rapidly and proactively positioning for this new reality, with a strong focus on AI adoption and operational resilience. Reflecting this shift away from traditional economic hierarchies, 71% anticipate a slowdown in the 'brain drain'

to traditional economic powers, suggesting preparation for a more regionalized economic future is ongoing.

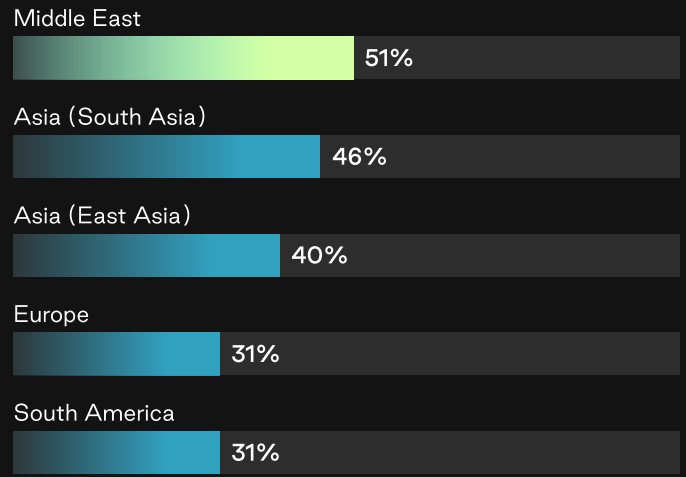
This transformation of established patterns extends to their sector-specific outlooks. Among all Saudi respondents, "shifts in the energy market" was cited as the top expected driver of innovation in 2025. This optimism around energy stands in contrast to their outlook on fintech, where Saudi executives expressed the highest level of concern among global respondents about both the adoption of decentralized finance markets and fintech solutions.

These clear-eyed perspectives on both geopolitical and business trends reveal Saudi leaders' strategic preparation for a fundamentally transformed global economy in 2025.

OVERVIEW

51%

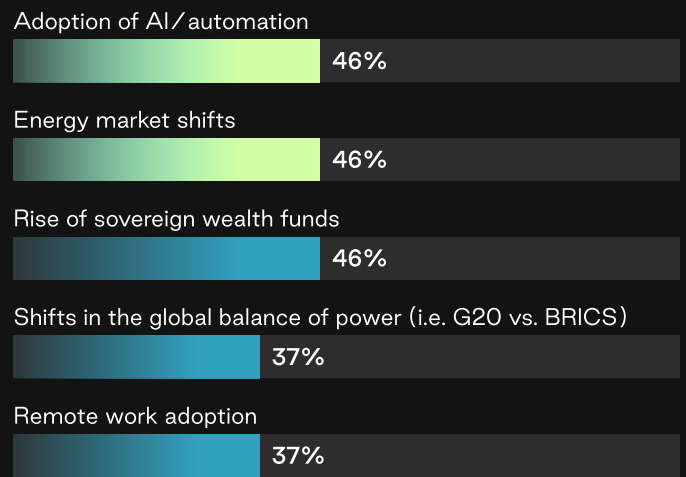
Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

46%

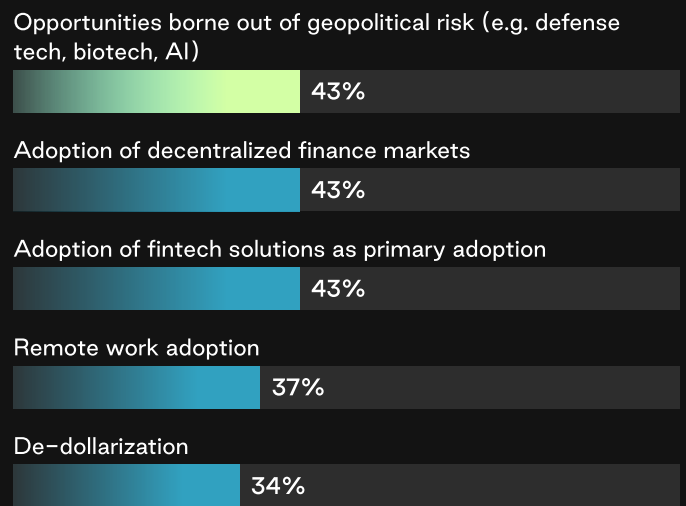
Thinking about the following potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five do you think will have the most significant impact on fostering innovation and growth?



OVERVIEW

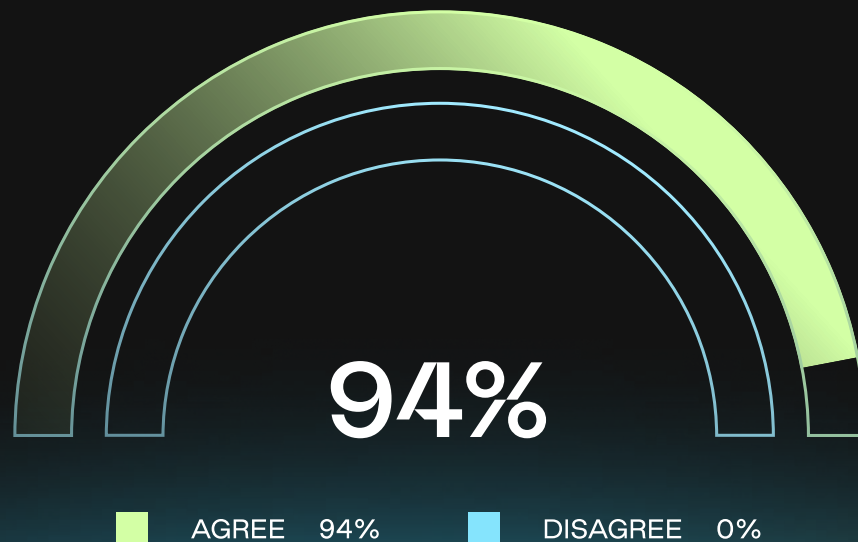
43%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

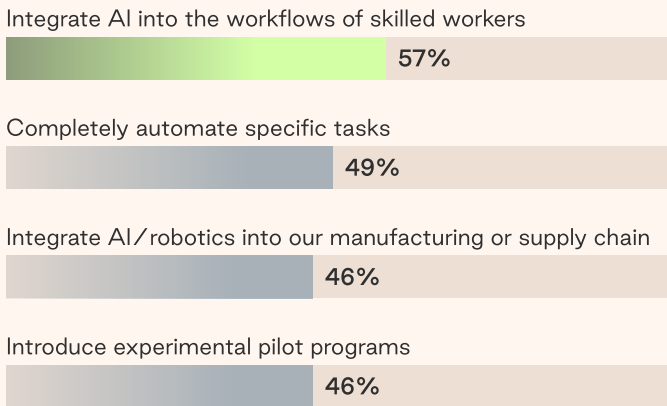
Governments are increasingly becoming more protectionist in their business policy (i.e. cross-border data sharing, onshoring of chip manufacturing). Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



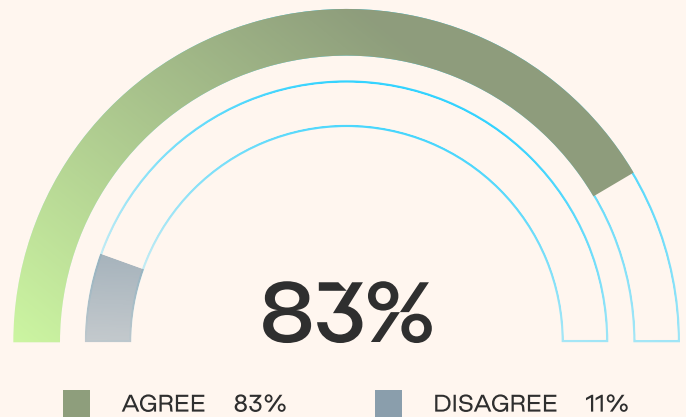
46% OF SAUDI ARABIA RESPONDENTS CITED ENERGY MARKET SHIFTS AS HAVING THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON FOSTERING INNOVATION AND GROWTH - THE HIGHEST RATE OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

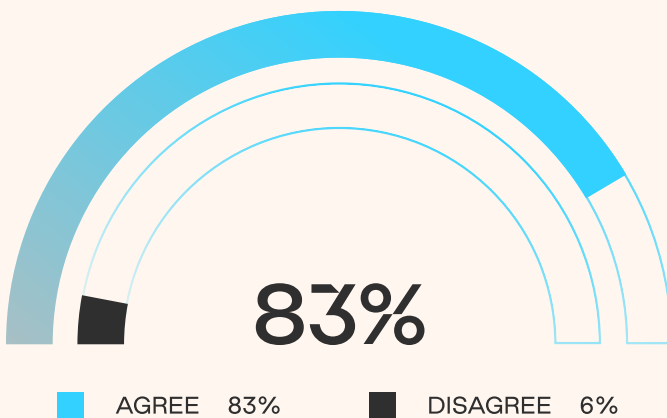
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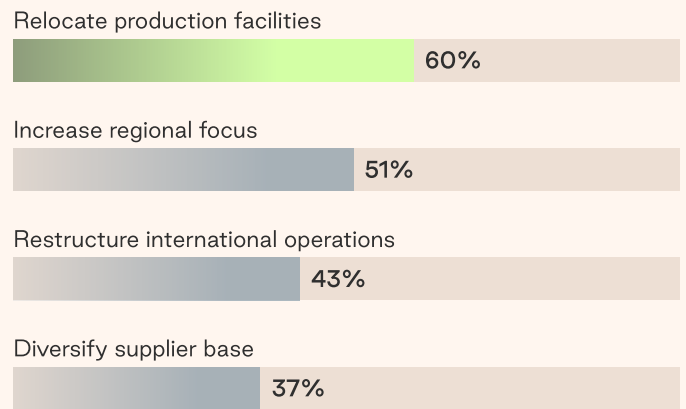
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Supply chain resilience will take priority over cost optimization. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

SINGAPORE



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

As global tensions mount heading into 2025, Singapore's business community stands apart in its ability to identify opportunity within disruption. While 84% of Singaporean business leaders – the highest among global respondents – agree that geopolitical tensions will meaningfully influence operations, 47% cite geopolitical shifts as a catalyst for potential innovation in defense technology, biotechnology, and AI. This industrious approach extends to climate change, where they again led all respondents with 46% seeing opportunity in addressing climate risk and 42% citing opportunity within the energy transition.

In the business landscape, Singapore's status as an island nation-state and major financial hub for Southeast Asia is reflected in their responses. Singaporean business leaders cite fintech adoption (42%), de-dollarization (39%), and decentralized financial markets (37%) as three of their biggest concerns –

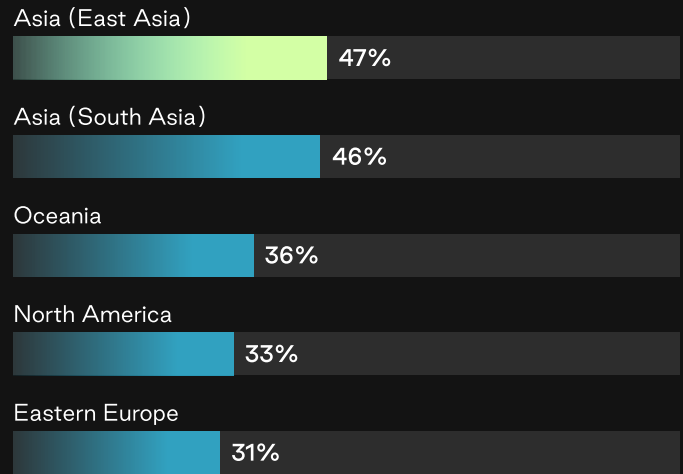
among the highest in the global respondent pool for each. This focus on shifts in the financial markets aligns with operational shifts leaders are considering, as an overwhelming 90% agreed that supply chain resilience will increasingly take precedence over cost optimization. Most interestingly, Singapore ranked among the lowest when it came to active AI adoption, and 65% of leaders believe AI will impede long-term workforce planning.

Singapore's business leaders exhibit a uniquely opportunistic mindset toward global challenges while remaining pragmatic about protecting their nation's strategic advantages – a dual approach that mirrors the city-state's historical success in turning constraints into competitive edges.

OVERVIEW

47%

Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

47%

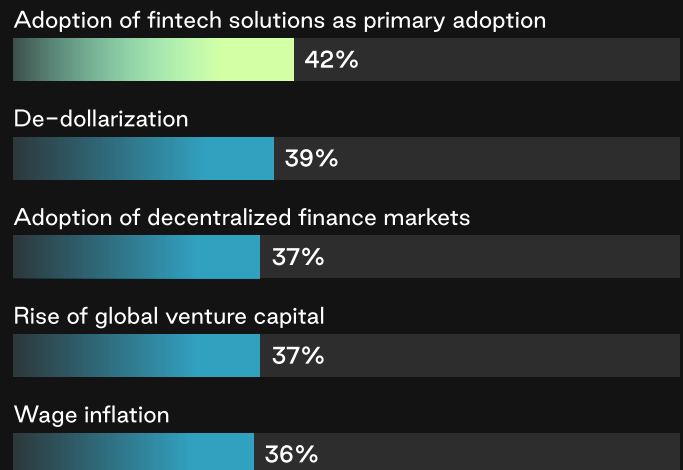
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OVERVIEW

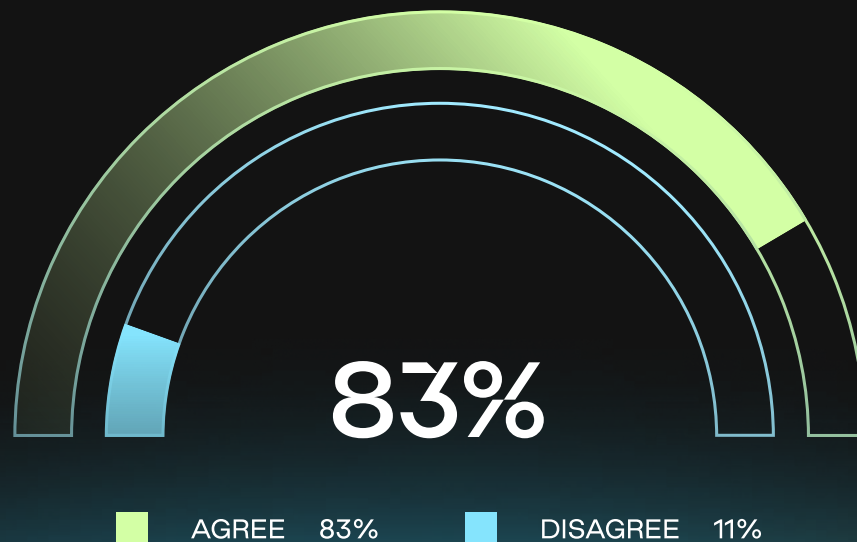
42%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

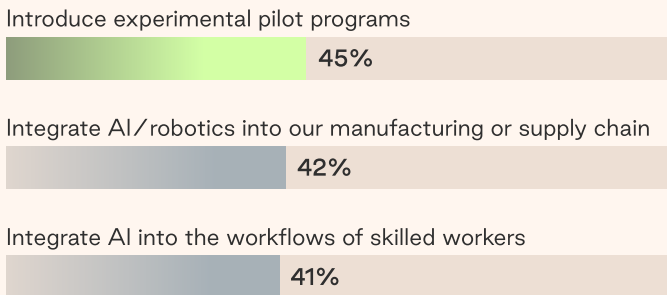
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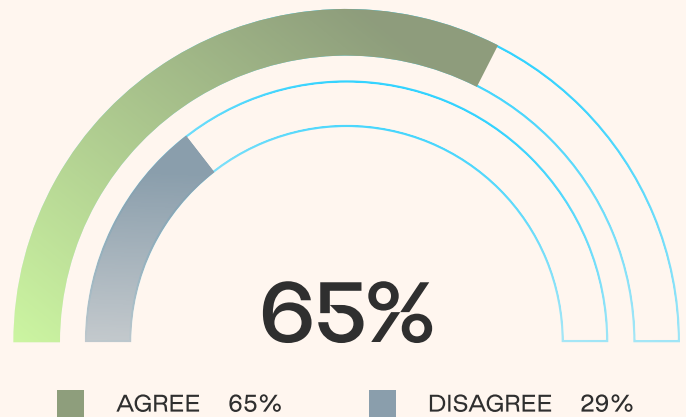
84% OF SINGAPOREAN RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS AND/OR TENSIONS WILL MEANINGFULLY INFLUENCE HOW WE OPERATE - THE HIGHEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

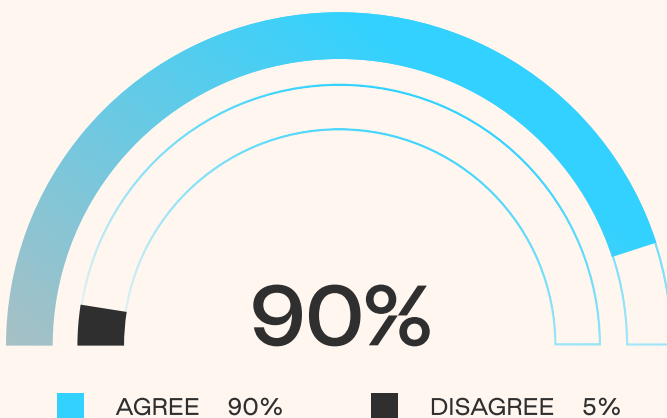
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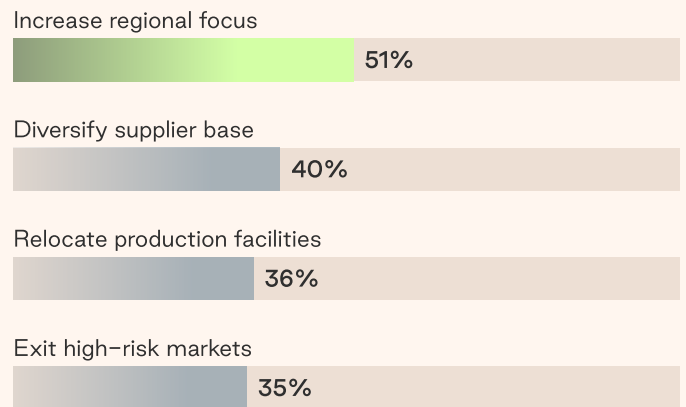
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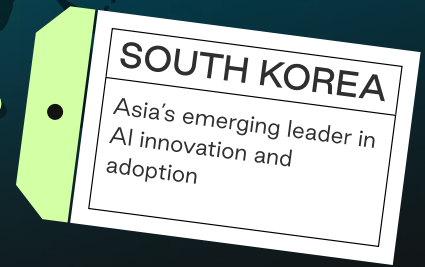
Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

SOUTH KOREA



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Korean business leaders demonstrate a nuanced and cautious outlook on the geopolitical and business landscape heading into 2025, often expressing measured rather than decisive views on major global shifts.

While Korean executives generally align with global peers on geopolitical matters—with 55% acknowledging an increase in protectionist business policies—their responses betray higher levels of uncertainty about future global dynamics. This is particularly evident in their views on trade bloc fragmentation, where 60% agree but the vast majority only “somewhat agreed,” and they report the highest proportion of neutral responses (24%) among all countries. Interestingly, Korean business leaders distinguish themselves from global peers in their acute focus on climate risk, with 47% citing climate-related opportunities as a key concern – the highest among all respondents

and particularly striking given their characteristically measured responses to other trends.

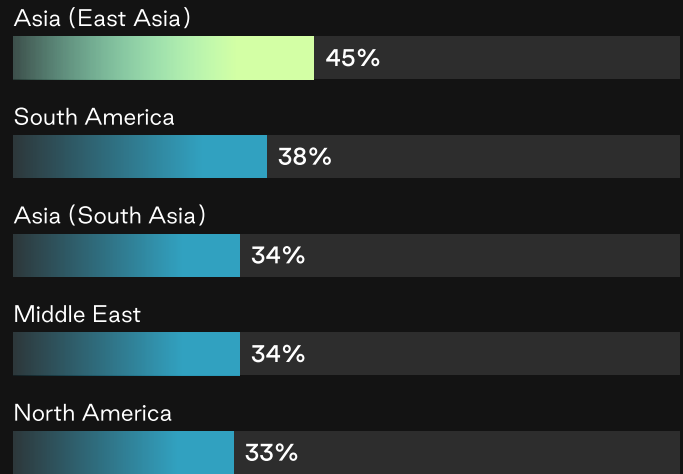
In the business realm, this pattern of cautious assessment continues. While Korean leaders are actively planning operational changes—including aggressive AI integration—they report greater uncertainty than their peers about AI’s long-term business impact on workforce planning. Their views on industry consolidation and supply chain priorities similarly reflect this pattern, with Korea consistently showing the highest proportion of neutral stances (28% and 24% respectively) among all surveyed nations.

This measured approach suggests Korean leaders are carefully evaluating the complex dynamics shaping the 2025 landscape across both geopolitics and business innovation.

OVERVIEW

45%

Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

40%

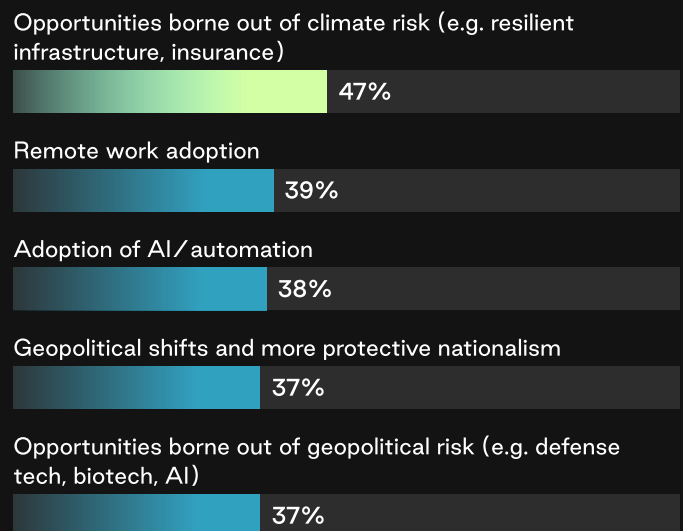
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OVERVIEW

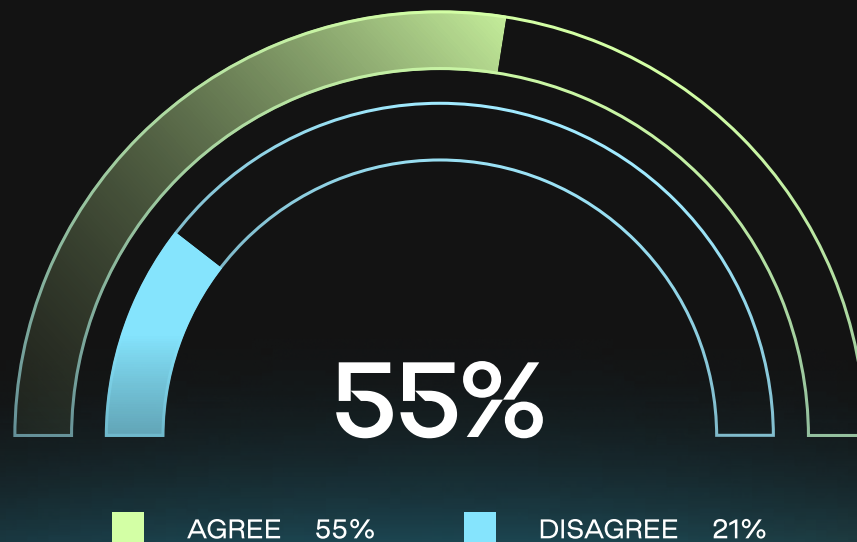
47%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

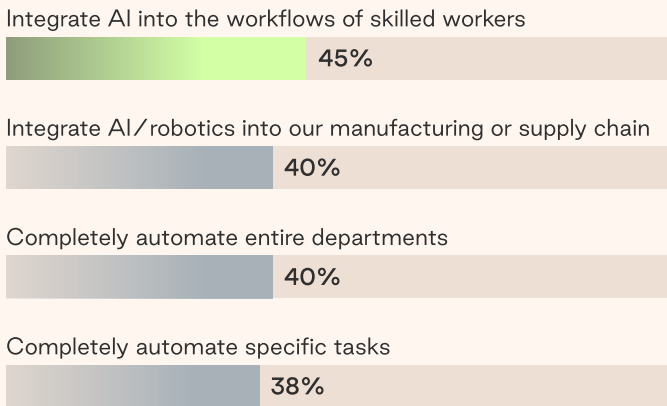
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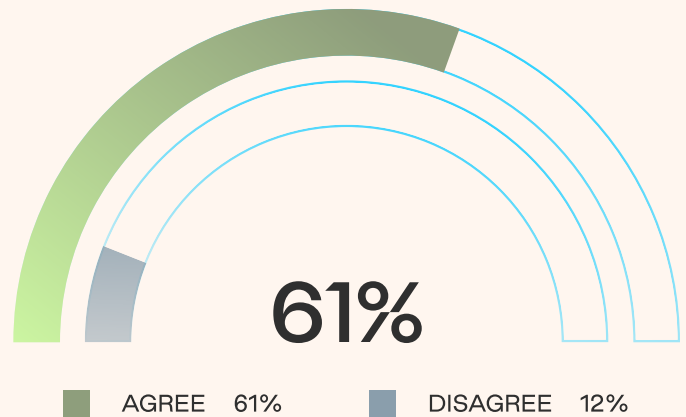
47% OF SOUTH KOREAN RESPONDENTS MARKED OPPORTUNITIES BORNE OUT OF CLIMATE RISK (E.G. RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, INSURANCE) IN THEIR TOP FIVE CONCERNING SHIFTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE – THE HIGHEST RATE OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

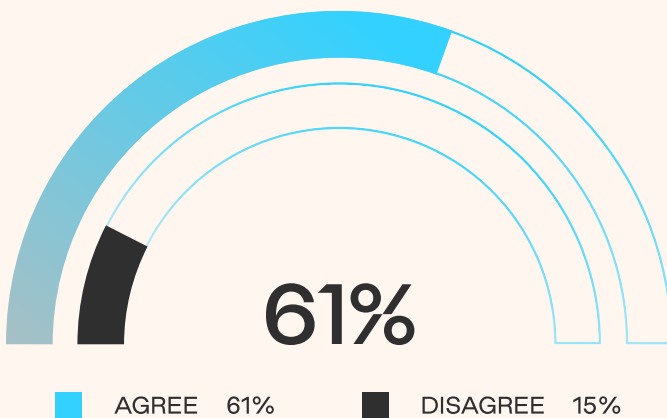
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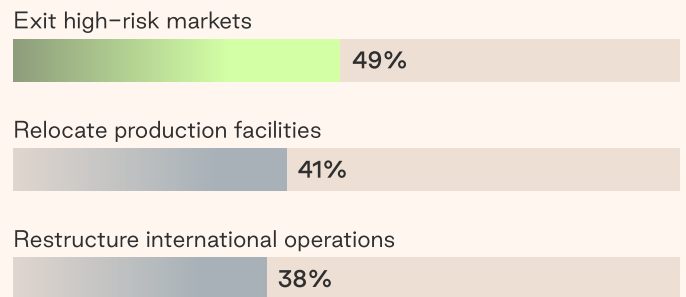
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Supply chain resilience will take priority over cost optimization. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?



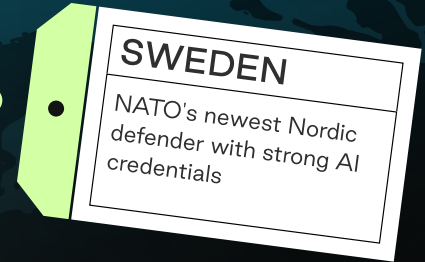
Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

SWEDEN



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Swedish business leaders demonstrate a measured understanding of the evolving geopolitical and business landscape in 2025, balancing recognition of significant shifts with notable uncertainty about their long-term implications.

From a geopolitical perspective, Swedish leaders show a measured stance on the future of geopolitics. While Swedish executives acknowledge shifts in the landscape, only 38% believe regional trade blocs will replace globalization – the lowest among all respondents. Notably, nearly a third (28%) neither agreed nor disagreed a shift would occur—the highest among all respondents by a substantial amount—suggesting potential uncertainty among our respondents about the future of global power dynamics. This recognition of ongoing change, coupled with uncertainty of its effects, manifests in cautious operational responses that align with global averages.

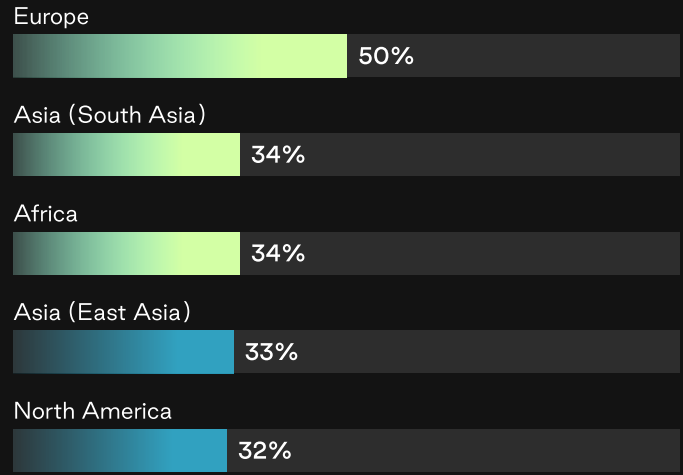
While Swedish leaders may be uncertain about geopolitical shifts, they have clear positions on technological transformation and regulation. They are among the most aggressive in planning AI integration across tasks, workflows, and supply chains (45%). However, they resist sweeping predictions about AI's disruptive power – 43% disagree that AI will make long-term workforce planning impossible, second highest among all respondents. This balanced view of technology contrasts with their perspective on regulation, where Swedish leaders stand out as the most likely (32%) to reject the notion that regulations will force industry consolidation.

Together, this data portrays Swedish leadership as embracing technological change while maintaining a cautious outlook on geopolitical shifts and regulatory impacts.

OVERVIEW

50%

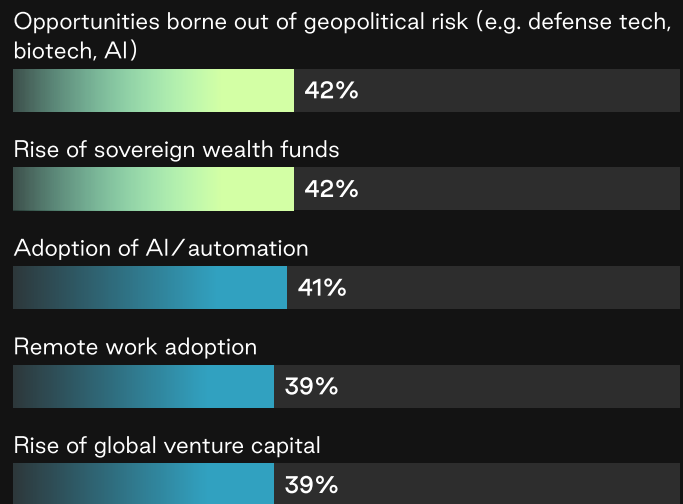
Which regions present the strongest new business opportunities for your organization in 2025?



OVERVIEW

42%

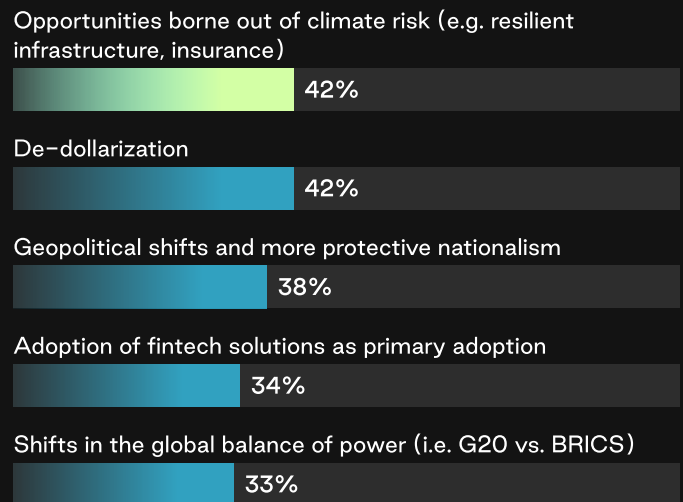
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OVERVIEW

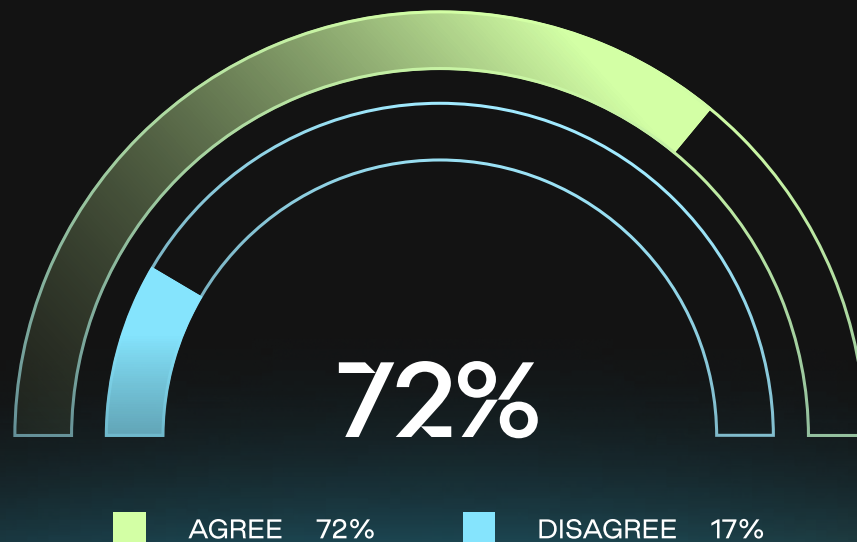
42%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

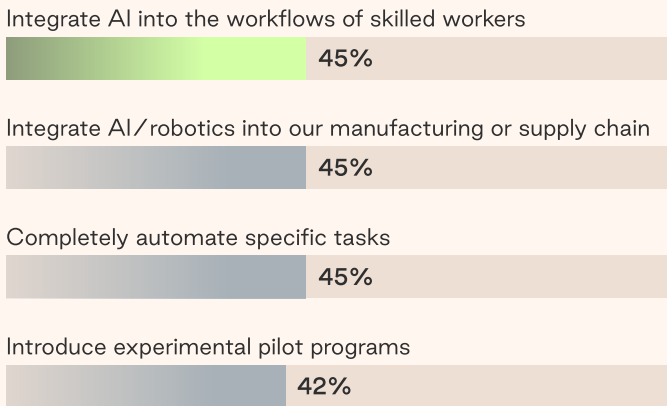
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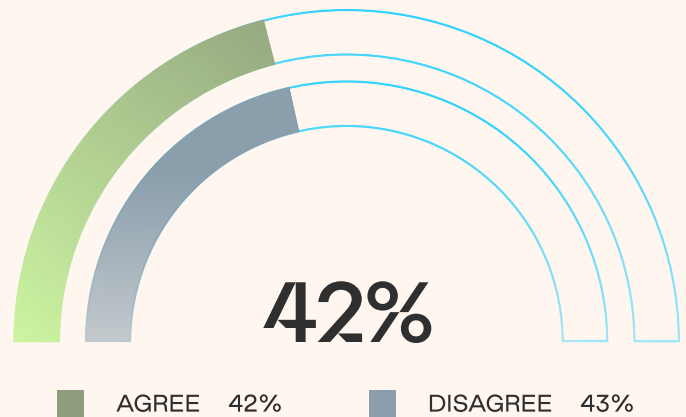
ONLY 38% OF SWEDISH RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT INSULAR, REGIONAL TRADE BLOCS WILL REPLACE THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION – THE LOWEST RATE ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

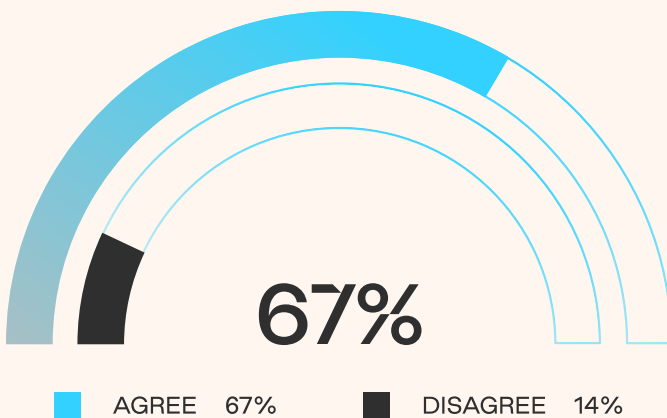
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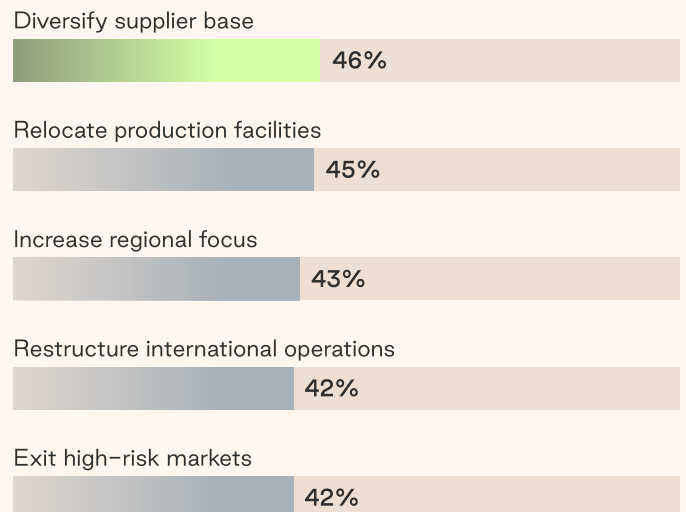
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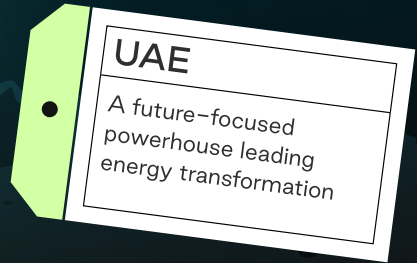
Which of the following operational changes is your organization planning to make in 2025?





KEY MARKET

UAE



KEY MARKET

EXPLORE DATA

Emirati business leaders anticipate significant geopolitical realignment in 2025, with a striking 80% saying geopolitical tensions will meaningfully influence their operations and 77% expecting the eventual fragmentation of global financial systems into competing trade blocs. Moreover, these dynamics appear to already be bearing fruit, as leaders report increased difficulties in securing international government contracts (40%) and moving data across borders (37%)—both ranking among the highest globally for these challenges. This expected shift in the landscape is further reflected in their operational strategies, with 57% planning to increase regional focus and 43% restructuring international operations—highest and second highest respectively among all respondents.

In contrast to their aggressive shifts on the geopolitical front, Emirati leaders appear to be taking a more guarded approach in the business realm. While they lead globally in

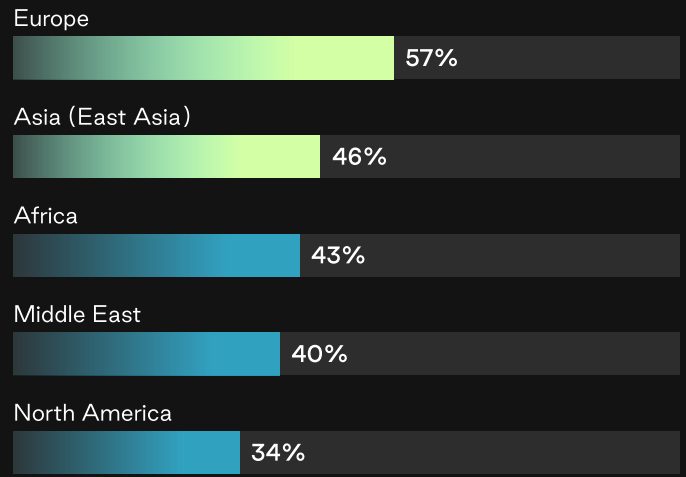
implementing AI pilot programs (51%), they score on the low end of respondents when it comes to the full-scale implementation of AI in workflows, particularly end-to-end automation of tasks or whole departments. Further, over two-thirds (69%) report concerns that AI will disrupt traditional workforce planning. This cautious approach occurs against a backdrop of changing talent dynamics—Emiratis report strong optimism about attracting and retaining skilled talent, with 74% expecting a slowdown in brain drain to developed markets.

These interconnected trends suggest Emirati business leaders are preparing for a more regionalized future while taking a measured, strategic approach to technological transformation – balancing innovation with stability in an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

OVERVIEW

57%

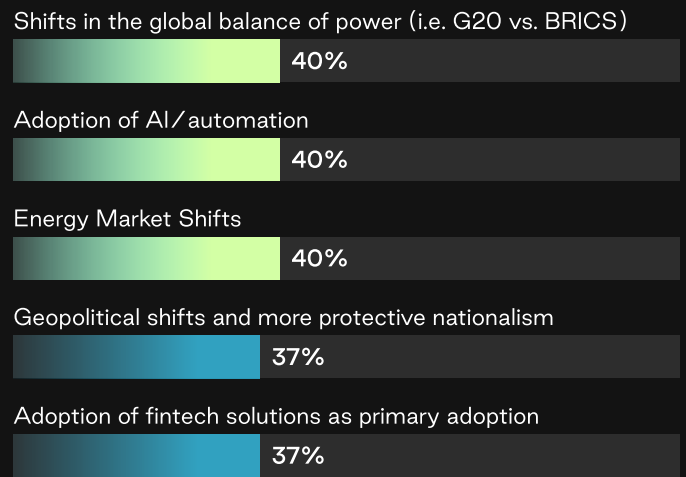
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OVERVIEW

40%

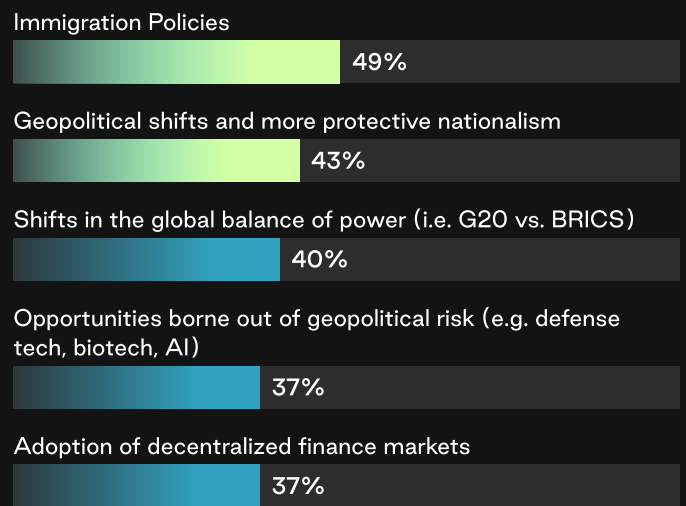
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OVERVIEW

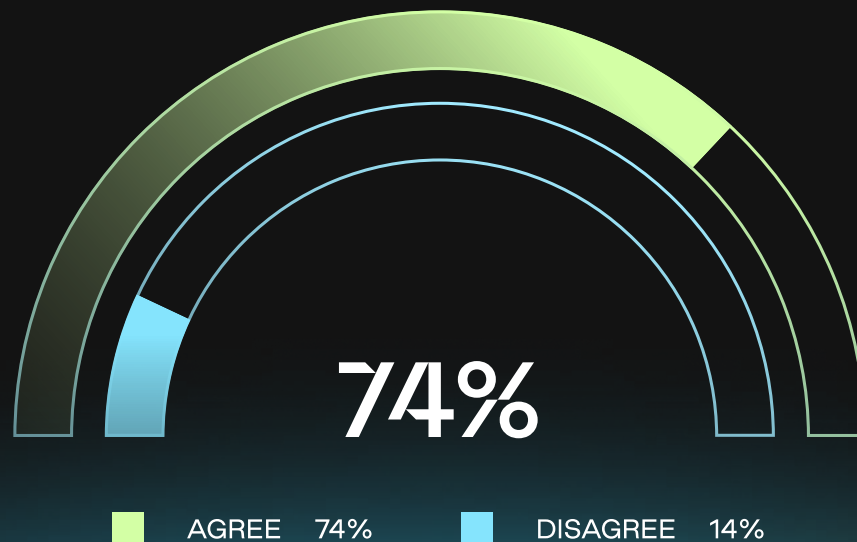
49%

Thinking about the same list of potential shifts in the international business landscape, which five are you most concerned about?



GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

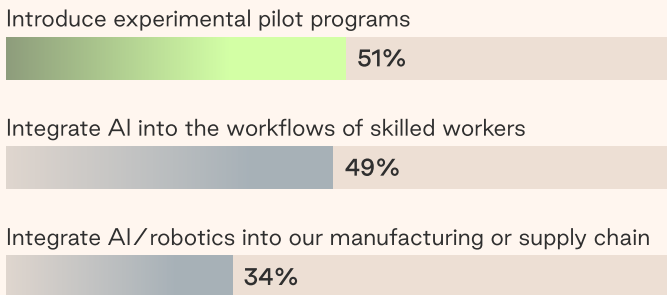
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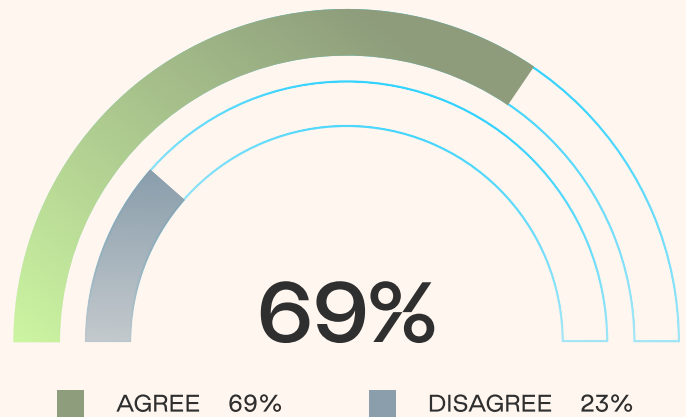
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BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

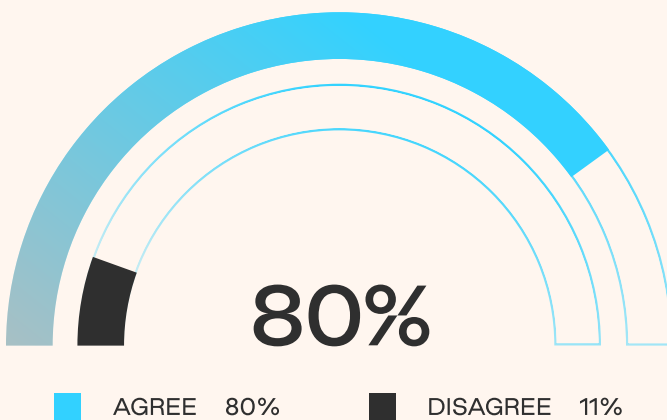
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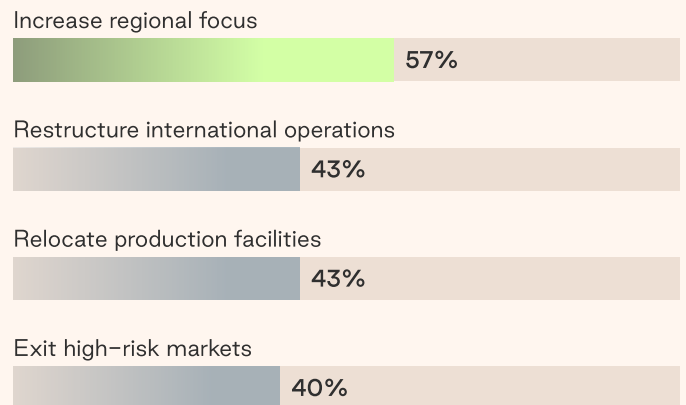
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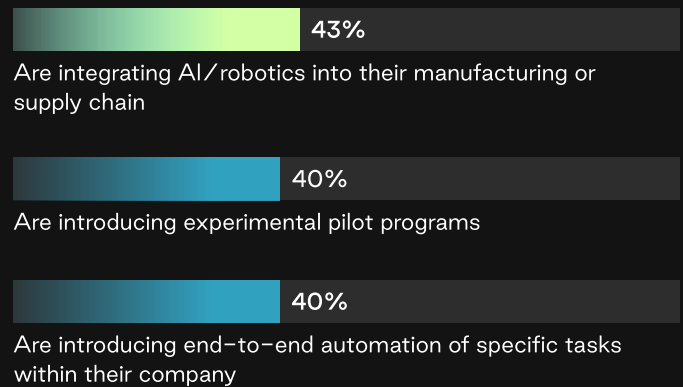
Too often VC only scratches the surface. Continually consuming until there's a basic understanding of everything, and expertise in nothing. Lightspeed takes a different approach.



MAKE WAY FOR A NEW INNOVATION

While AI promises unprecedented efficiency and innovation, it's also disrupting the foundations of how businesses organize and plan their workforce.

Companies are adapting to a rapidly changing business landscape by making strategic investments and operational shifts for 2025—putting substantial resources towards experimentation or implementation of AI.



Most notably, 39% of business leaders intend to automate away entire departments.

This swift integration of AI is also forcing executives to reimagine traditional organizational structures.

58%

of executives agree AI will collapse traditional career paths and make long-term workforce planning difficult.

19%

More alarming, nearly one in five executives (19%) strongly agree AI has the potential to introduce substantial challenges for traditional workforce planning.

AI IN A REGIONALIZING WORLD

AI investments are being made amidst a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment—one with broad implications for how the technology is built and deployed.

Governments around the world are increasingly adopting protectionist policies including restrictions on cross-border data sharing and the onshoring of critical industries like chip manufacturing. When asked about their opinions:

71%

of C-level executives agree that governments are becoming more protectionist (with restrictions on cross-border data sharing and onshoring of chip manufacturing).

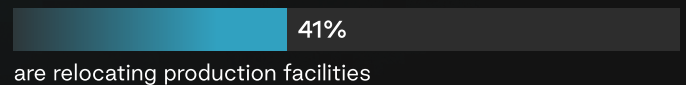
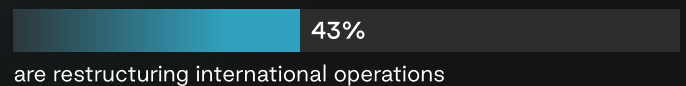
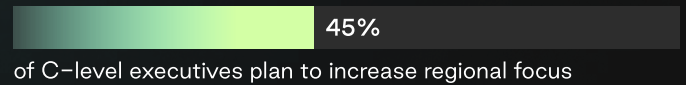
71%

agree that allied trade blocs will create competing payment networks, leading to the fragmentation of the global financial system into competing spheres of influence.

62%

agree that regional trade blocs could replace globalization in the future.

In response, executives are restructuring international operations and relocating production facilities. These changes are about more than just mitigating risks—they're part of a proactive strategy to harden vulnerabilities across technology, supply chains, and regulatory compliance.



The rise of protectionist policies may also have implications beyond trade and company operations. While the global competition for AI expertise is relentless, 61% of executives believe the “brain drain” of highly skilled talent migrating to mature markets will slow as regional hubs develop their own AI ecosystems.

This decentralization of talent is creating new opportunities for regions to establish themselves as innovation leaders, reducing dependence on traditional tech centers.

THE REGULATORY BURDEN INTENSIFIES

Geopolitical fracturing is making the business operating environment more complex.

With regionalization on the rise, business leaders reported that operating and scaling internationally is more complicated than ever.



These changes are having a surprising effect: 65% of C-level executives agree that the operating environment—and in particular, heavy-handed regulation—will drive rather than hinder industry consolidation. Business leaders see scale as the best way to meet the unique challenges and opportunities posed by the AI imperative and geopolitical regionalization.

IDENTIFYING REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Success in the new global economy requires understanding how local regulatory frameworks, infrastructure demands, and security requirements are reshaping each market.

WHEN ASSESSING WHAT MAKES A MARKET ATTRACTIVE FOR INVESTMENT AND EXPANSION, BUSINESS LEADERS EMPHASIZED THREE KEY FACTORS.

24%

Customer demand

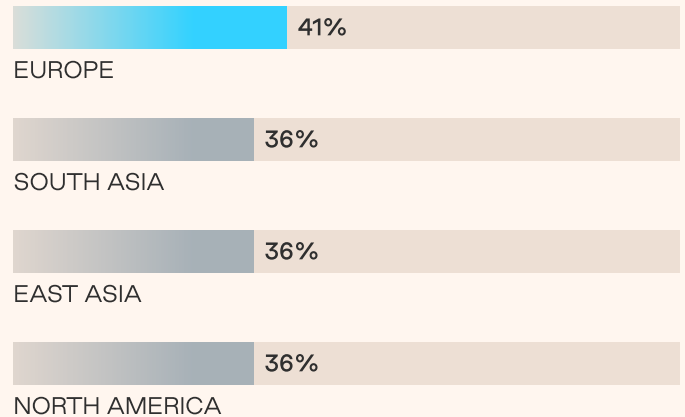
23%

Market size and growth potential

22%

Infrastructure quality

With these priorities in mind, executives identified the regions with the strongest mix of new business opportunities in 2025. Regions with large growth potential, combined with the technological infrastructure and regulatory framework to support AI investments, came out on top.



HOW BUILDERS CAN RESPOND

The path to resilient growth requires understanding four critical transformations reshaping the global business landscape:

GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENT

→ The world is moving from efficiency-first globalization to resilience-first regionalization, with business opportunities increasingly defined by local infrastructure.

STRATEGIC ADAPTATION

→ Success now requires the ability to operate effectively within and across regional centers, balancing global connectivity with local strategic engagement.

OPERATIONAL HARDENING

→ Companies are proactively restructuring global operations, diversifying supply chains, and building robust regional foundations to navigate increasing geopolitical uncertainty.

TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION

→ Concerns about AI, semiconductors, and digital infrastructure security are driving business investment.

Lightspeed has witnessed this transformation firsthand through our global expansion across three continents. Our experience building regional expertise has shown us how local nuances and geopolitics shape business opportunities.

Are you a builder capitalizing on the opportunities presented by this new business landscape? Email generativeai@lsvp.com to learn more about working with Lightspeed.

METHODOLOGY

The Lightspeed Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 970 C-level executives, working at companies with a minimum of 100 employees, in Germany, France, Finland, India, Singapore, Brazil, UAE, Mexico, Sweden, Korea, and Saudi Arabia, between November 25th and December 8th, 2024, using an email invitation and an online survey. Quotas were set for 100 respondents per market, with the exception of UAE (35) and KSA (35).

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points in the global sample and 9.8 percentage points in all markets – with the exception of 16.6 percentage points in UAE and KSA – from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

ABOUT LIGHTSPEED

SERVING THE BOLD BUILDERS OF THE FUTURE.

For over twenty years Lightspeed has been the first investor and an early backer of some of the most innovative companies in the world, dedicated to serving bold Founders with big ideas. We stand behind our Founders with high conviction, from Seed to Series F and beyond. We pursue opportunities based on their merits, regardless of where the Founder resides, because the future is global and so are we, with offices in 13 locations across 7 countries, comprising one Lightspeed community.

Visit us at LSVP.COM to learn more.