HSBC

News Release

BUSINESS LEADERS AND INVESTORS LOOK TO ASIA AND AI AMID VOLATILITY, FINDS HSBC SURVEY

- 93% plan to increase cross-border trade or investment over the next five years
- 88% have recalibrated their capital allocation approach as a reaction to increased volatility
- 51% cite strong Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data-related infrastructure and attractive energy costs as an important driver when deciding to increase exposure to individual markets

Senior leaders and institutional investors are prioritising Asia, and mainland China in particular, as they reposition for growth. This is according to a new independent survey from HSBC ahead of its annual HSBC Global Investment Summit *.

The survey of 3,000 international businesses and institutional investors in 10 markets shows that, after a decade of cumulative global shocks, companies are adapting and still investing. The survey was conducted in mid-March against the backdrop of recent world events.

Ninety-four per cent of respondents continue to see strong opportunities for international growth, while 87% say they are more willing to take calculated risks than they were five years ago. Nearly three in four (72%) anticipate moderate to significant repositioning of their businesses over the next three years, as they reassess where they operate and how they invest.

AI and technology drive strategic decisions

AI and technology are now among the leading drivers influencing international expansion and capital deployment strategies. Technology is now central to the global investment decisions of business leaders and institutional investors. Access to AI, critical technologies and infrastructure will be the most important influence on respondents' international strategies over the next three years (50%), on par with market growth and client demand (49%).

Having strong AI and data-related infrastructure and attractive energy costs is also one of the most important drivers when deciding to increase exposure to individual markets (51%), just behind strong growth prospects and customer demand (52%).

Respondents believe that the most significant potential benefits of AI over the next three years will be improved productivity and workforce efficiency (56%). Forecasting and modelling (48%), and increased innovation, ideas and operational cost savings (46%) were also significant. That said, a meaningful 32% expect AI to play a more strategic role in three years' time by fundamentally reshaping their core business model. This indicates an anticipated shift in not just how work gets done, but what products and services are offered, how they're delivered, and how value is created.

According to the report, 49% of institutional investors cite increasing exposure to AI and technology themes as their most common strategy for positioning client portfolios in 2026 in response to the current economic climate. This is the primary focus for portfolio repositioning. Only 14% expect to make no material changes to their overall approach.

Volatility: businesses are recalibrating

Volatility is no longer viewed as a temporary disruption but as a feature of the global economy, a view held by 95% of respondents. In response, 88% of respondents said that they have recalibrated their capital allocation approach as a reaction to increased volatility.

Organisations are also extending their investment timeframes to align with a more complex landscape. More than half (53%) said that their investment horizons have lengthened compared to three years ago, signalling a shift towards longer-term positioning despite ongoing uncertainty. This trend is evident across major markets including the UK (69%), the US (68%) and mainland China (78%), with respondents saying their organisation holds more liquidity compared with three years ago.

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Respondents in Saudi Arabia and the UAE appear to be steadfast on their medium-term strategies despite the current situation in the Middle East, with their strong responses on the opportunities for growth in the short and longer term being in line with other markets surveyed. The survey showed that businesses and investors in the UAE (95%) and Saudi Arabia (98%) are turning to supply chain reconfiguration, with 94% of respondents stating that cross border trade and investment will become more regional in pattern.

Trade and investment are regionalising - mainland China becomes the focal point

The survey points to globalisation becoming more regional in structure, with 93% of organisations planning to increase cross-border trade or investment over the next five years, and 91% expecting those flows to concentrate more heavily within regional networks.

Respondents identified mainland China as the market expected to grow most in importance to their economic relationships over the next five years, cited by 41% of decision-makers - more than any other region globally. This growing emphasis on Asia sits within a broader reshaping of global trade.

The survey also highlights that established markets continue to play a critical role in global strategies. Continental Europe and the UK were each identified by 38% of respondents as key to their future economic relationships over the next five years, underlining that, while Asia is rising in prominence, traditional economic centres remain integral to global growth and connectivity.

Even amid market uncertainty, businesses and investors are leaning into growth opportunities. The survey shows that 89% are actively increasing capital deployment in high-growth markets, reflecting a strong conviction in long-term returns despite volatility.

Michael Roberts, CEO, HSBC Bank plc and CEO, Corporate and Institutional Banking, said: “Our Global Investment Summit survey highlights a structural transformation in the global economy. Trade and investment flows are becoming more regional, Asia is growing in strategic importance, and technology is reshaping how and where capital is deployed.

“Business leaders and institutional investors are recalibrating where they operate, invest and allocate capital as complexity rises.”

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*The independently commissioned survey was conducted in mid-March 2026, ahead of the annual HSBC Global Investment Summit The full report is available here**:** HSBC: New networks of capital - The world rewired

Methodology

The HSBC GIS survey is based on insights from 3,000 Senior Business Decision Makers and 500 Global Institutional Investors, commissioned by HSBC and conducted by British Polling accredited Savanta. Responses were collected from 9-16 March 2026 across 10 markets: UK, France, Hong Kong, Germany, mainland China, Singapore, USA, India, UAE, & Saudi Arabia. The sample comprised 250 Senior Business Decision Makers and 50 Global Institutional Investors in each market. Of the 3,000 corporate respondents, 726 reported global turnover of over USD2 billion in the past 12 months, 900 turned over between USD500 million and USD2 billion, and 874 had turnover of USD50 million to USD500 million. Of the 500 Global Institutional Investors, 164 reported that their company manages $10bn+ in AUM, 128 managed between $1bn to $9bn AUM, and 208 manage less than $1bn AUM.

HSBC Holdings plc

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