

The Business of Expansion

How international businesses are harnessing growth and building resilience in an uncertain world

HSBC's report **'The Business of Expansion: How international businesses are balancing resilience and ambition in an uncertain world'** shows firms are still pushing international growth despite trade, tariff and geopolitical uncertainty. Based on a survey of **2,700 financial decision-makers** across **18 markets** (Dec 2025–Jan 2026), **77%** plan to expand overseas in the next two years and **48%** say tariffs have accelerated their plans. Growth (**38%**) and supply chain resilience (**35%**) lead the drivers, while economic conditions (**35%**), regulation / trade policy (**34%**) and political factors are the biggest barriers. Read the full report to learn more.

Key findings

Expansion intent:

72% of European HQ international enterprises (UK, FR and DE) intend to expand overseas in the next two years

Tariffs accelerating plans:

32% of international enterprises reported accelerating overseas expansion due to tariff changes

In 2026, UK and Continental European (France & Germany) financial decision-makers' international expansion is driven by demand and strategic growth intent. The top triggers are expecting overseas demand (**37%**) and growth aligned to broader international ambitions (**37%**), with financial support / funding and confidence the sector will grow also important (**35%**).

Market selection prioritises stability and customer dynamics: economic stability (**26%**), consumer demand and behaviour (**25%**), and political stability / risk (**24%**). Inbound interest is strongest from other European nations, followed by the US (**27%**) and India (**24%**). Outbound interest focuses on the US & Canada (**18%**), Singapore (**16%**), and China (**14%**).

Key barriers are economic (**37%**), political (**36%**), and financial (**32%**) factors, underscoring the need for robust funding and risk planning.

Top triggers for international expansion

37%

Growth in line with overall International ambitions

37%

Expecting overseas demand

35%

Financial support and funding

35%

Sector is expected to grow

33%

Operational support (Supply chain management)

Top considerations for market selection

Economic stability

26%

Consumer demand and behaviour

25%

Political stability and risk

24%

Key corridors

Inbound*

(International enterprises plan to expand to UK / FR / DE)

27%
US

24%
IN

22%
UAE

20%
MX

18%
JP

Outbound

(To expand into)

18%
US

18%
CA

16%
SG

14%
CN

12%
AU

*UK, FR, DE are excluded from inbound / outbound figures

Barriers to international expansion for organisations

Economic factors

37%

Political factors

36%

Financial barriers

32%

Regulatory and trade agreements

31%

Low knowledge of the local market

31%

Bank and banking operations

30%

Local labour availability

29%

Technological barriers

26%

Access to raw materials

24%

Cultural factors

23%

Financial barriers (top mentions)

Cost of credit

High collateral requirements

Long time to get loans

Regulatory barriers (top mentions)

Focused attention on particular sectors

Lack of coordination between different lines of ministry

Bureaucratic approval process

Technological barriers (top mentions)

Lack of local technology

Lack of R&D and manufacturing capabilities

This study, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, was conducted over a period of 18 months across 18 markets, concluding in Q1 2026, with over 2,700 mid-market companies. This study is not a product of HSBC Global Investment Research.

Copyright HSBC BANK PLC, 2026. All Rights Reserved. HSBC Bank plc ("HSBC") is incorporated in England and Wales (no: 14259) with its registered office at 8 Canada Square, London E14 5HQ and is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Registration Number 114216). Whilst every effort has been made in the preparation of this factsheet to ensure accuracy of the statistical and other content, HSBC does not accept any liability in respect of any error or omissions or for any losses or consequential losses arising from such errors or omissions.