10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

A DECADE OF INSIGHTS

AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS IN ASEAN

Survey 2026

AustCham ASEAN
Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce

SUPPORTED BY RMIT UNIVERSITY

AustCham ASEAN
Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce

RMIT UNIVERSITY

2026 Edition

Australian Business in ASEAN **Survey**

Contents

Foreword

Minister for Trade and Tourism

For ten years, this survey has provided valuable insights into the successes, challenges and ambitions of Australian businesses across Southeast Asia. It helps governments and businesses identify emerging opportunities, understand barriers to growth, and focus efforts where they can have the greatest impact.

Our economic relationship with the region is substantial, it supports around half a million Australian jobs and continues to grow. In 2025, two-way trade between Australia and Southeast Asia reached a record $197.5 billion, while two-way investment increased to $296.2 billion.

The Albanese Government is building on this strong foundation through *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040.* Invested has delivered:

- Almost $4.3 billion in new Australian investment has been facilitated since it was launched in 2023.
- Our Investment Deal Teams continue to help Australian investors explore and enter Southeast Asian markets and progress a pipeline of investment opportunities.
- Export Finance Australia has made three investments, totalling around $330 million, which are helping to mobilise private capital for public infrastructure and clean energy projects across the region.
- Twenty-six business and investment missions have visited 10 Southeast Asian countries, supporting Australian businesses to build connections, identify opportunities and navigate new markets.
- Landing Pads in Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City and Singapore are supporting Australian tech scale-ups, over 240 Australian companies, and have achieved over $35 million in commercial outcomes.

Strong commercial relationships also depend on open markets and clear, predictable and fair trading rules. The ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area provides tariff-free access on the majority of goods, and greater certainty for services suppliers and investors. In addition, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement by members' combined GDP, helps Australian businesses access markets, join regional supply chains and do business more easily across the Indo-Pacific.

These partnerships are especially important amid global economic uncertainty, trade tensions and pressure on supply chains. Expanding and diversifying Australia's trade and investment relationships strengthens our economic resilience while creating new opportunities for Australian exporters, investors and workers.

The survey shows Australian businesses are responding to this environment with confidence.

I thank AustCham ASEAN and its members for their leadership in strengthening Australia's commercial relationships across Southeast Asia. By combining business experience and initiative with practical government action, we can create jobs, strengthen economic resilience and build shared prosperity for Australia and the region.

SENATOR THE HON DON FARRELL

Minister for Trade and Tourism

Special Minister of State

Foreword

Australian Ambassador to ASEAN

As Australia and ASEAN mark the fifth anniversary of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2026, we are working alongside ASEAN to advance our shared economic and strategic priorities. A peaceful, stable and prosperous ASEAN is crucial for Australia's prosperity and security.

At a time of heightened economic uncertainty, ASEAN's continued commitment to open markets, deeper regional economic integration and closer cooperation with partners, including Australia, has helped sustain business confidence and reinforce the region's importance as a centre of growth.

Digital transformation and the green energy transition will be key drivers of future economic growth and commercial cooperation between ASEAN and Australia. ASEAN's ambition to develop a more integrated digital economy through the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), alongside regional efforts to strengthen energy connectivity through the ASEAN Power Grid (APG), will create new opportunities for Australian businesses to contribute expertise, technology and investment across the region.

Through the Aus4ASEAN Futures and Regional Trade for Development initiatives, Australia is committed to supporting ASEAN to realise the opportunities that open, free and rules-based trade and investment provide in our shared region. Our $6.9 million ASEAN-Australia Energy Cooperation Program, delivered in partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Energy, is supporting ASEAN's energy security priorities, with a focus on operationalising the APG. Our support also extends to ASEAN digital transformation initiatives, including DEFA and digital trade standards.

Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040 builds on our long history of economic cooperation with ASEAN and provides practical recommendations to deepen two-way trade and investment. The Strategy aligns closely with the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* and the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030, reflecting our shared commitment to a more connected, innovative, sustainable and resilient regional economy. By focusing on priority sectors such as clean energy, the digital economy, infrastructure and education, *Invested* complements ASEAN's long-term economic ambition while helping unlock new opportunities for businesses and investors across our region.

I welcome the valuable insights from this year's AustCham ASEAN survey, produced in partnership with RMIT University. Now in its tenth edition, the survey provides a timely and trusted source of insights from Australian businesses operating in Southeast Asia. It provides important reflections from those already operating in the region and those considering investment in Southeast Asia.

The findings underscore both the enduring attractiveness of Southeast Asia as an investment destination and the resilience of Australian businesses operating in the region, with strong long-term growth expectations despite a more challenging operating environment, governance constraints and heightened global uncertainty.

Deepening Australia's relationship with ASEAN remains a top priority and matters more than ever. Better understanding the views of the Australian business community is an important part of that effort. I thank AustCham ASEAN and RMIT University for their continued partnership and for their valuable contribution to strengthening dialogue between government and the private sector.

H.E. TIFFANY MCDONALD

Australian Ambassador to ASEAN

Executive Summary President of AustCham ASEAN

AustCham ASEAN is proud to present the tenth edition of the Australian Business in ASEAN Survey. Launched in 2016, the survey records the views of people with Australian business interests across Southeast Asia.

This edition closed with a record number of responses, up on the 341 received in 2025, with increased participation from Timor-Leste, Lao PDR and Cambodia. Because the mix of respondents has changed, comparisons with earlier editions should be read as observed differences rather than measured trends. It is a particular honour to mark this milestone during the Philippines' year as ASEAN Chair.

As regional leaders gather in Manila for the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, the survey tells the story of a confident business community navigating a tougher year. 59% of respondents are very or extremely confident of sustaining or growing their business in Southeast Asia, 76% expect their revenue from the region to grow over the next five years, and 74% say they are likely or very likely to recommend investing or doing business here to others. At the same time, a larger share than in 2025 described the past six months as worse than expected. The backdrop is a decade of expanding ties: two-way trade between Australia and ASEAN more than doubled between 2016 and 2025, from A$93 billion to A$197.5 billion.

Among the key findings:

- Artificial intelligence is the most selected growth driver for the next three to ten years, named by 52% of respondents and narrowly ahead of economic conditions in the host country.
- Global political instability remains the top-rated risk, and global political uncertainty and governance challenges are the most cited challenges of the past two years. Government bureaucracy remains the constraint respondents feel most acutely, and management talent remains the hardest to hire.
- Awareness of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) is markedly higher among this year's respondents, sixteen years after the agreement entered into force and following its recent upgrade. Yet 56% report using no free trade agreement at all.
- 72% of respondents consider ASEAN economic integration important to doing business in the region, and 81% agree that Southeast Asia should remain an important priority for Australia.
- Vietnam is the most prospective market for expansion, named by 45% of respondents, followed by Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

With AANZFTA upgraded and the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement moving towards implementation, AustCham ASEAN will work with its member chambers to help businesses close the gap between awareness of these agreements and their use, and to prepare for digital trade. We will continue to bring the survey's actionable findings to the region's official economic forums, in support of *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040*. The agreements are in place or arriving. What this survey will keep measuring is how fully business uses them.

AustCham ASEAN is grateful to RMIT University and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose partnership and support have made this tenth edition possible, and to our member chambers, who carried the survey to their communities. Most of all, we thank the respondents who gave their time and candour. Their voices are the survey.

BENJ ROMUALDEZ

President of AustCham ASEAN
Chairman, Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (Philippines)

About AustCham ASEAN

AustCham ASEAN is a 'chamber of chambers' with its Foundation Members consisting of the officially registered Australian chambers and business councils from across ASEAN — Australian Chamber of Commerce, Cambodia, Indonesia Australia Business Council, The Australia Chamber of Commerce Lao PDR, Malaysia-Australia Business Council, The Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (Philippines), Australian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce, Timor-Leste – Australia Business Council and The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam.

With advocacy as its key focus, AustCham ASEAN is committed to helping Australian business achieve success through:

1. Informing Australian business on regional integration developments and the business landscape, with a particular focus on an annual business survey;
2. Explaining the contribution of Australian business to ASEAN markets; and
3. Advocating for policies, rules and regulations that support Australian business activities in ASEAN, including organising sector roundtables in key areas of interest for Australian business.

A key AustCham ASEAN activity, on behalf of its Foundation Members, involves an annual survey of Australian business activity in ASEAN. This survey in an enhanced form was a focal point of the ASEAN Australia Special Summit in March 2018. The 2026 AustCham ASEAN business survey is the 10th edition of the survey and continues to provide insights into Australian business activities in the region. AustCham ASEAN is the sole Australian business organisation officially recognised as a Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ABAC) and is a member of its Joint Business Committee. ABAC is the apex private sector body of ASEAN and was established with the mandate to provide private sector feedback and guidance to boost ASEAN's efforts towards economic integration.

The Presidency of AustCham ASEAN rotates annually in alphabetical order of ASEAN Member States' English names, aligning with the ASEAN Host Country. As the Philippines serves as this year's Host Country, Benj Romualdez, Chairman of The Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (Philippines), holds the position of President of AustCham ASEAN.

With special thanks to the survey production team:

Timothy Lawler, Ashton De Silva, Bhagya Gunawardena — RMIT University

Nicholas Whillas — AustCham ASEAN

Justin Ebbels — Graphic Design

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Generate Insight

Produce research, analysis and inform perspectives

Influence Outcomes

Shape policy, priorities and future leaders

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2. Regenerative Future
3. Digital & Inclusive Development
4. Asia Intelligence (AQ)

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Survey Background

This annual business survey, now in its 10th edition, was first launched by AustCham ASEAN in 2016. Since the 2023-24 edition, AustCham ASEAN has partnered with RMIT University, a collaboration that continues in the 2026 survey. This survey provides current and comprehensive insights into Australian business activity in Southeast Asia. It aligns with the Australian Government's priority of deepening economic engagement with the region, including through *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040.*

The respondents: The survey is open to individual respondents who are either (a) part of an Australian business doing business in the ASEAN region, or (b) based in the ASEAN region and doing business with some connection to Australia. Eligibility is intentionally broad,[1] and this is reflected in the respondent base: Figure 43 shows that half of 2026 respondents (50%) work for Australian-owned, partially Australian-owned, or Australian-listed companies, while the remaining 50% work for organisations with no Australian ownership but with business ties or partnerships to Australia, or other connections to the Australian business community. Respondents also bring deep regional experience: the large majority (61%) have personally worked in Southeast Asia for more than ten years, and 73% for five years or more.

The survey is distributed as widely as possible through AustCham ASEAN's member chambers, with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Austrade, to capture as many informed responses as possible from across this fluid and evolving business community.[2]

1 There is no single, authoritative list of every company doing business between Australia and ASEAN, so the survey does not draw from a fixed sampling frame or target a predetermined population.

2 This is a survey of individuals, not of companies or organisations. Results reflect the views of the person who responded and should not be interpreted as representing the position of their employer or any other entity. More than one individual from the same company may respond in a given year.

The 2026 survey: This year the survey was open from April to July and received over 350 responses, an increase on the 2025 survey. As shown on Figure 42, responses were distributed across the region, with Vietnam having the largest proportion of respondents (15%). Notably, smaller markets featured more prominently than in 2025 — Lao PDR (11%, up from 4%) and Timor-Leste (8%, up from 0%) both recorded a stronger showing this year, reflecting broader participation from Foundation Member chambers across the region.

The survey comprises a set of questions providing a comprehensive account of the business environment in Southeast Asia and the outlook for Australian businesses in the region. It accords respondents flexibility to skip questions as needed, ensuring ease of completion.[3]

Economists at RMIT's College of Business and Law assist in recalibrating parts of the survey where needed, to ensure its findings remain insightful and relevant in a rapidly changing international trading environment, and provide guidance during analysis and final reporting.[4] The research team reviews the data to remove invalid responses and ensure the reliability of findings.[5] See the limitations section at the end of the survey for a more in-depth breakdown of survey methodology.

3 As a result, the number of responses (N) varies by question and is stated individually alongside each figure.
4 The survey also received ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at RMIT University.
5 See Survey Limitations section.

Key Findings

Business Conditions in Southeast Asia

New insights in 2026 emerge from questions measuring business sentiment. Responses to these questions show many are confident in the business conditions in the region and recommend doing business there.

- Confidence sustaining/growing business in Southeast Asia – 59% of respondents describe themselves as very or extremely confident.
- Three-quarters of respondents (74%) say they are likely or very likely to recommend investing or doing business in Southeast Asia to others, with 40% very likely to do so.
- Leading challenge of the past two years – Global political uncertainty (32%) and governance challenges (29%) are the most cited challenges, followed closely by regulatory uncertainty (27%).
- Leading risk to business – Political instability globally, rated a high or very high impact by half of respondents (50%).

Major challenges identified unsurprisingly are consistent with last year's results, namely governance challenges and political instability featured as leading concerns.

ASEAN Integration & Trade

Respondents continue to consider ASEAN economic integration important to doing business in the region. Vietnam remains the most prospective market for expansion, with Malaysia rising further up the list. A new question this year also finds a strong majority believe Southeast Asia should remain a priority for Australia.

- ASEAN economic integration importance – 72% of respondents consider ASEAN economic integration important to helping their company do business in the region, a marked increase from 43% in 2023-24.
- Most prospective market for expansion – Vietnam (45%), Malaysia (36%), Singapore (35%) and Indonesia (35%).
- 81% agree that Southeast Asia should remain an important priority for Australia (65% strongly agree).

Doing Business in Southeast Asia

Findings show long-term optimism for doing business in Southeast Asia is holding, but also that the last six months have been more challenging than expected. A higher share of respondents now expects significant growth of more than 10% per annum (39%, up from 33% in 2025) and 44% expect 2026 to be more profitable than 2025 (a modest improvement on the 41% recorded in 2025). However, 41% describe market conditions over the last six months as in line with expectations, down from 51% last year, with more respondents now reporting conditions worse than expected (35%, up from 28%).

- Revenue outlook – 76% of respondents expect Southeast Asia-derived revenue to increase over the next five years (39% by more than 10%).
- Profitability – 44% of respondents expect 2026 to be more or much more profitable than 2025.
- Market expectations – 41% of respondents describe market conditions over the last six months as in line with expectations.

Free Trade Agreements

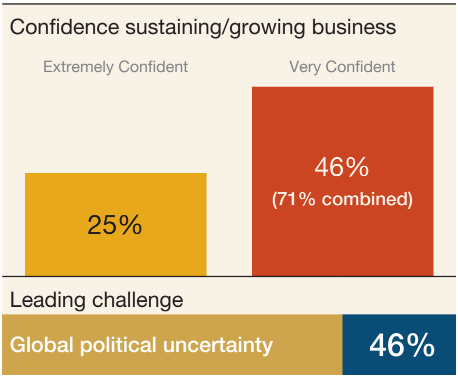
Awareness of FTAs has risen sharply since 2025, led by a significant jump in recognition of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA), as well as smaller gains for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). But as in 2025, most respondents still aren't using an FTA.

- Awareness of FTAs – AANZFTA is the most widely recognised agreement (69% of respondents).
- FTAs in Use – AANZFTA is also the most widely used FTA among those that use FTAs, though 56% of respondents stated that they were not using an FTA.
- Business decisions regarding FTAs – Decisions on FTAs are commonly made internally by company management (51% of respondents).

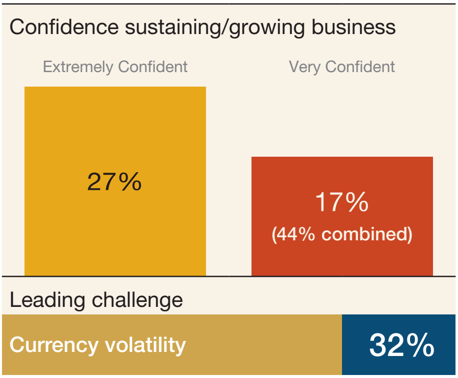
Country Breakdown

Confidence in sustaining or growing business varies by market, from a high of 71% in Cambodia and Vietnam to a low of 43% in Timor-Leste. Global political uncertainty is the most common leading challenge across the region, topping the list in five of the nine countries profiled, though several markets report other pressures.

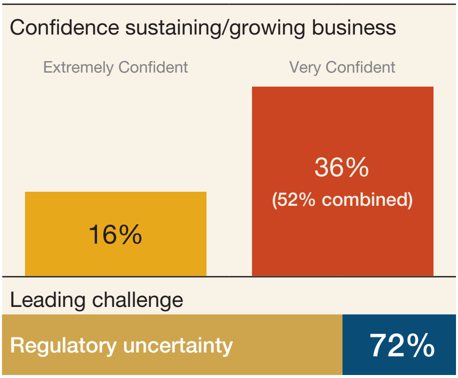
Cambodia



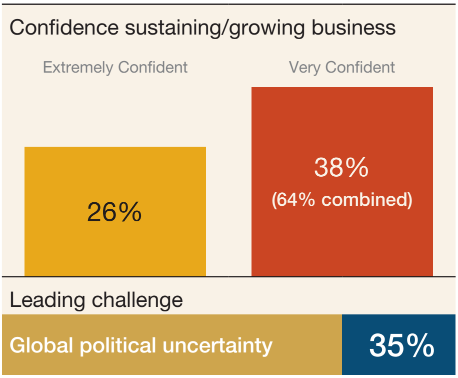
Lao PDR



Indonesia

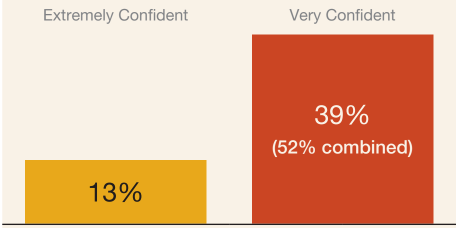


Malaysia



Thailand

Confidence sustaining/growing business

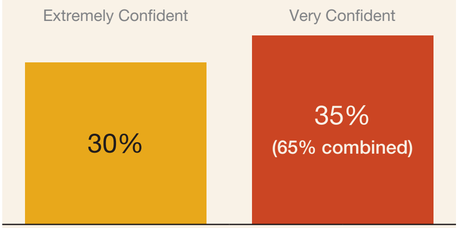


Leading challenge

Global political uncertainty / Barriers to ownership and investment	35% (tied)

Philippines

Confidence sustaining/growing business

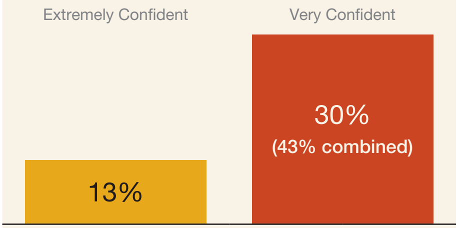


Leading challenge

Governance challenges	46%

Timor-Leste

Confidence sustaining/growing business

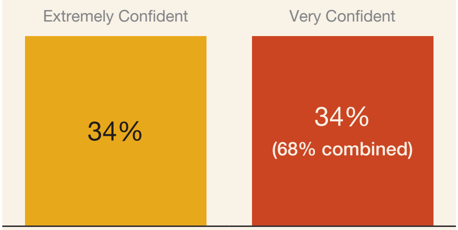


Leading challenge

Lack of access to skilled labour / Barriers to ownership and investment	32% (tied)

Singapore

Confidence sustaining/growing business

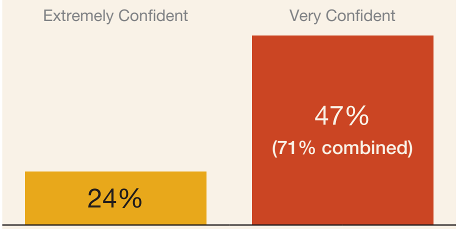


Leading challenge

Global political uncertainty / Brand awareness	41% (tied)

Vietnam

Confidence sustaining/growing business



Leading challenge

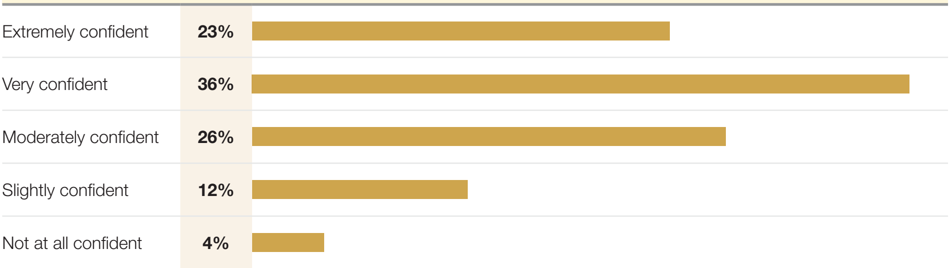
Global political uncertainty	33%

Business Conditions in Southeast Asia

Overall, a substantial proportion of respondents express confidence in business conditions in Southeast Asia. Major challenges include global political instability, governance, and regulatory uncertainty. Artificial intelligence (AI) is listed as a key growth driver over the next three to ten years.

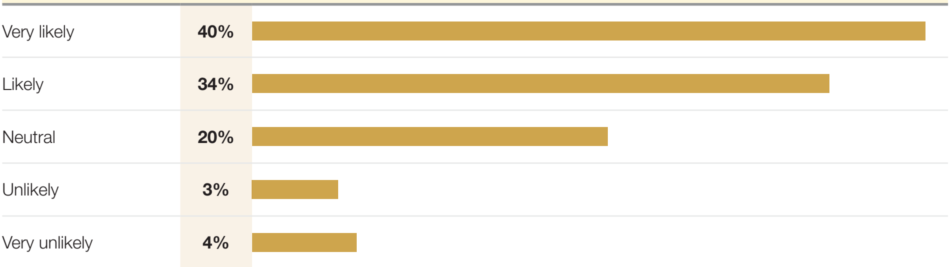
59% of respondents describe themselves as very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business interests in Southeast Asia, with only 4% not at all confident.[6] This is a new question for the 2026 survey and provides a fresh confidence benchmark for future editions.

Figure 1: Confidence of sustaining/growing business interests within Southeast Asia



Three-quarters of respondents (74%) say they are likely or very likely to recommend investing or doing business in Southeast Asia to others, with 40% very likely to do so and only 7% unlikely or very unlikely – indicating broadly positive sentiment across respondents.[7]

Figure 2: Likelihood to recommend investing or doing business in Southeast Asia



6 N=371.
7 N=371.

Global political uncertainty (32%) and governance challenges (29%) are the most cited challenges of the past two years, followed closely by regulatory uncertainty (27%).[8] This marks a shift from the 2025 survey, where growing domestic or regional competition and regulatory uncertainty were the leading challenges (each 33%) – global political uncertainty has now moved to the top of the list.

Figure 3: Greatest challenges over the last two years

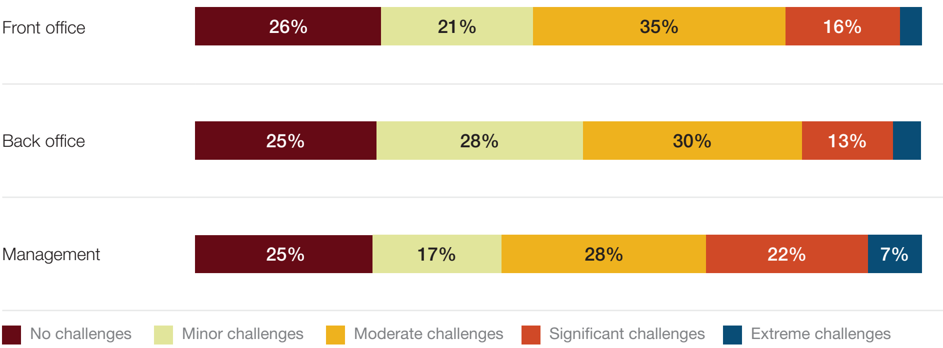
Global political uncertainty	**32%**
Governance challenges	**29%**
Regulatory uncertainty	**27%**
Changes in customer demands/sales	**22%**
Barriers to ownership and investment	**22%**
Lack of access to skilled labour	**21%**
Brand awareness	**21%**
Growing domestic or regional competition	**18%**
Cash flow difficulties	**16%**
Currency volatility	**15%**
Local political uncertainty	**13%**
Taxation	**12%**
Lack of quality and ease of banking services	**11%**
Infrastructure gaps	**10%**
Supply chain and logistics disruptions	**9%**
Increased demand for online business processes	**8%**
Staff losses and redundancies	**7%**
Information/cyber security	**7%**
Other (please specify)	**5%**
Restrictions on minerals and resource exploitation	**4%**
New HR processes	**4%**
Challenges to public health	**3%**
Temporary cessation of operations	**2%**

Percentage of Responses

8 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=337.

For the most part, respondents do not report significant or extreme challenges with hiring talent. Hiring management talent remains the greatest people challenge, with 29% of respondents rating it a significant or extreme challenge, compared with 18% for front office and 17% for back-office roles.[9] This mirrors results from the 2025 survey, where management hiring was also the most challenging hiring category.

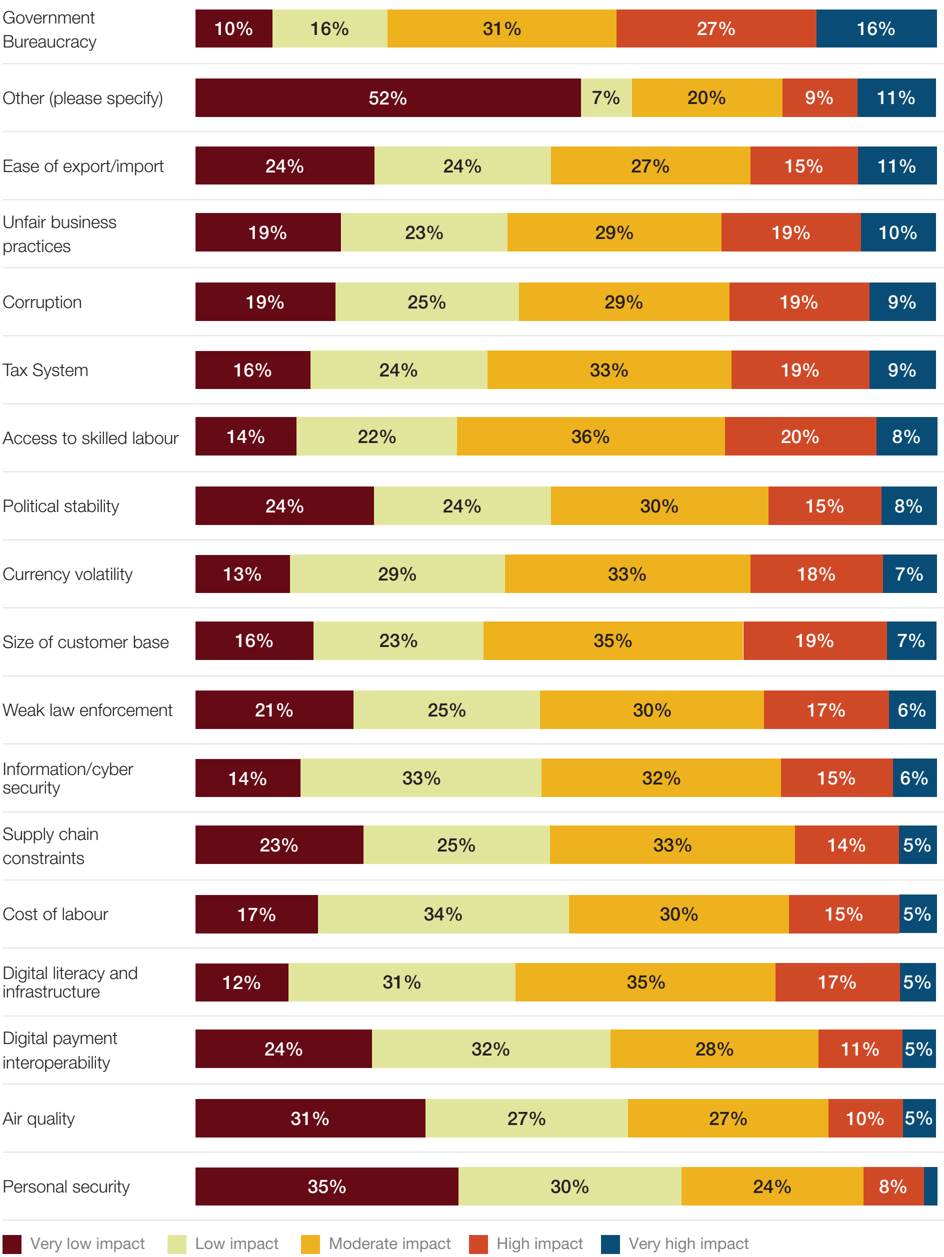
Figure 4: Difficulty hiring talent (front office / back office / management)



In terms of general business constraints, government bureaucracy remains the constraint respondents feel most acutely, with 43% rating its impact high or very high, ahead of unfair business practices (29%), corruption (28%), and the tax system (28%).[10] This is consistent with the 2025 survey, where government bureaucracy was also the top-rated constraint.

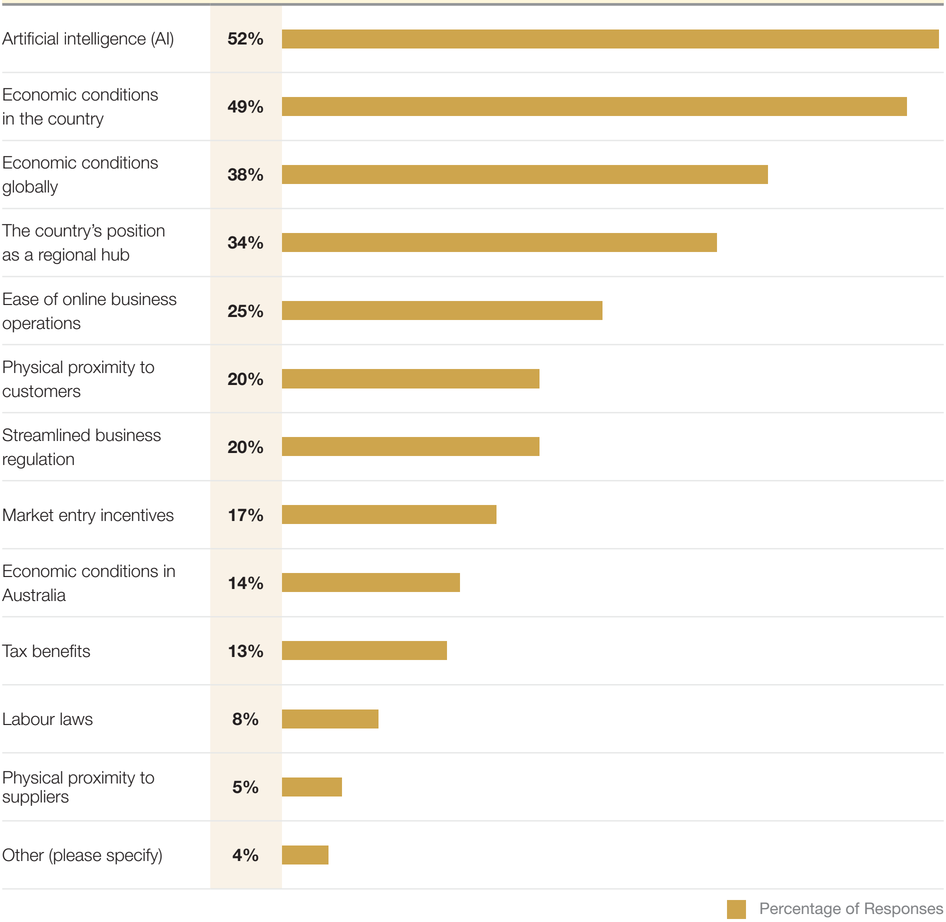
9 N=337.
10 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=336.

Figure 5: Business constraints



For the first time, artificial intelligence has emerged as the leading growth driver (52%), narrowly ahead of economic conditions in the country (49%), which topped this question in the 2025 survey at 70%.[11] This marks a shift in how respondents see the drivers of growth over the next decade, with AI now rivalling, and slightly exceeding, traditional macroeconomic and market-access factors.

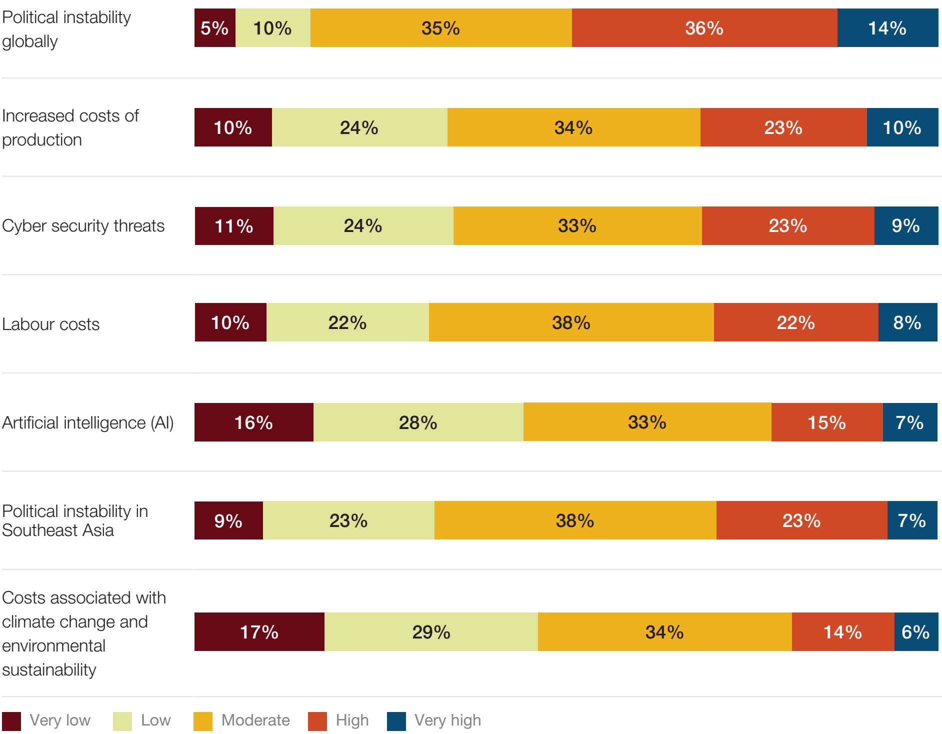
Figure 6: Top three growth drivers over the next three to ten years



11 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=333.

Political instability globally remains the most significant risk factor for business, with 50% of respondents rating its impact high or very high, consistent with its position as the top risk in the 2025 survey (42% citing it among their top three most significant risks).[12] Increased costs of production (33%) and cyber security threats (32%) round out the next most significant risks.

Figure 7: Risks to business



12 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=368.

ASEAN Integration & Trade

Respondents have a high level of appreciation of the importance of doing business in ASEAN markets. Trade and investment in ASEAN are increasing, with respondents ranking ASEAN market integration and global economic conditions as among the key factors likely to drive future investment. Understanding of ASEAN integration has also increased from 2025.

Responses indicated that Vietnam remains the most prospective market for expansion (45%), continuing its position as the top choice identified in the 2025 survey (44%).[13] Malaysia (36%), Singapore (35%) and Indonesia (35%) round out the next tier of markets attracting expansion interest.

Figure 8: Markets planning to expand trade/investment into

	Percentage of Responses
Vietnam	45%
Malaysia	36%
Singapore	35%
Indonesia	35%
Thailand	31%
Philippines	30%
Cambodia	21%
Lao PDR	18%
Timor-Leste	11%
Brunei Darussalam	7%
Myanmar	7%

13 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=310.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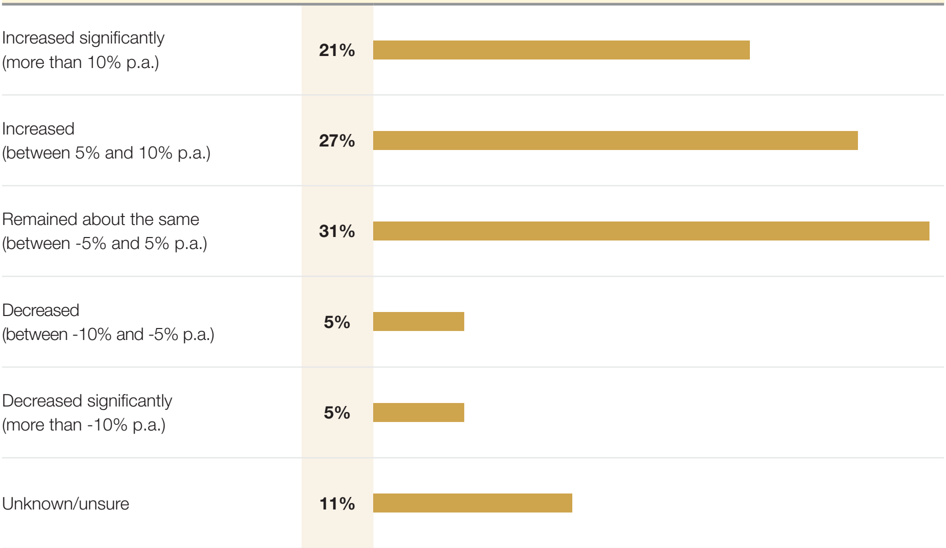
Trade and investment in ASEAN are increasing. Just under half of respondents (48%) report they have increased their trade or investment in Southeast Asia over the past two years, with 10% reporting a decrease and 31% reporting levels holding steady – a broadly similar growth trend as recorded in the 2025 survey.[14]

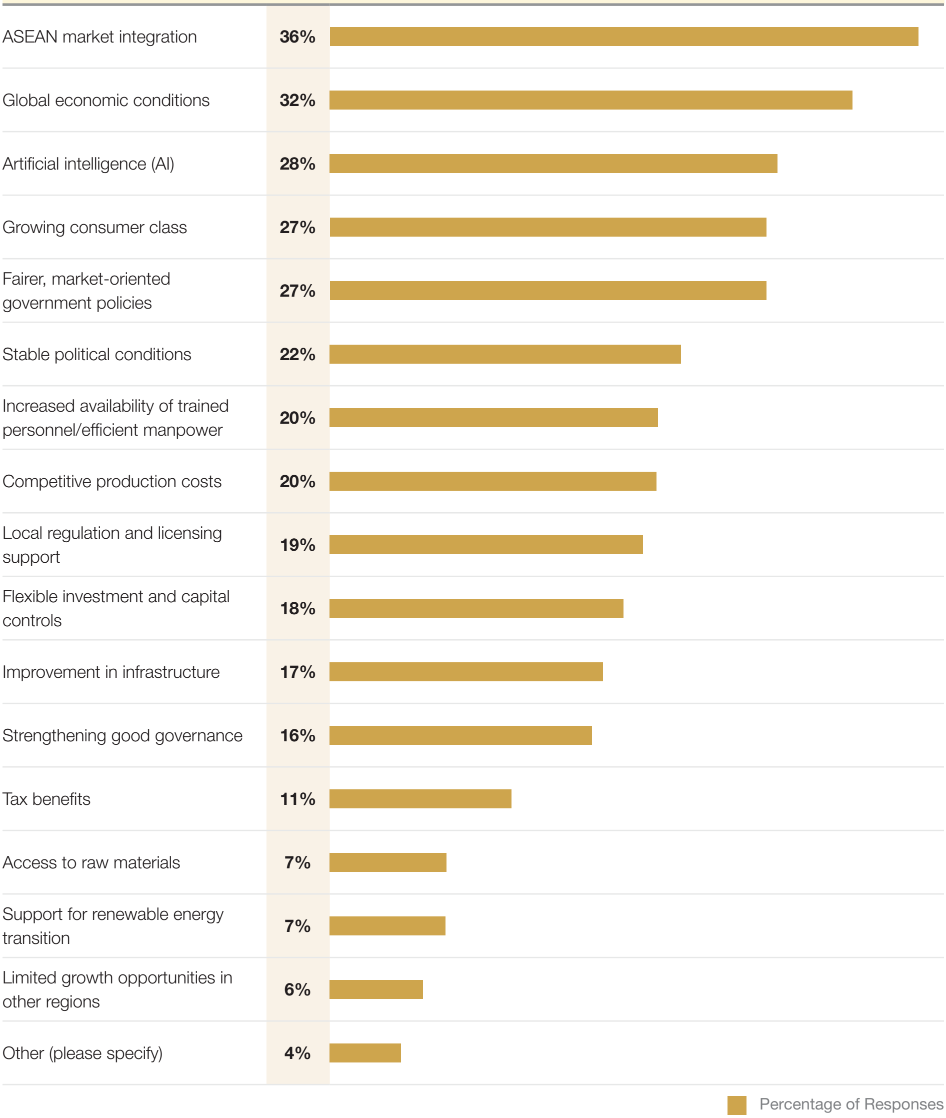
Figure 9: Change in trade/investment in Southeast Asia over the past two years



14 N=318.

ASEAN market integration remains the leading factor respondents expect to increase trade and investment (36%). AI now ranks among the top three factors (28%), a new response option in the 2026 survey.[15]

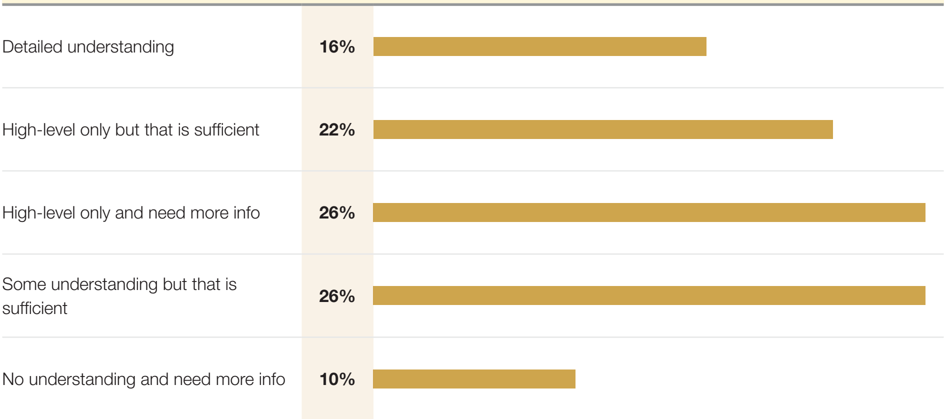
Figure 10: Factors most likely to increase trade/investment within Southeast Asia



15 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=320.

64% of respondents report a sufficient or detailed understanding of what ASEAN integration means for their business, up from 49% in 2025, while the proportion of respondents that need more information has fallen from 52% to 36%.[16]

Figure 11: Understanding of ASEAN integration and what it means for the business



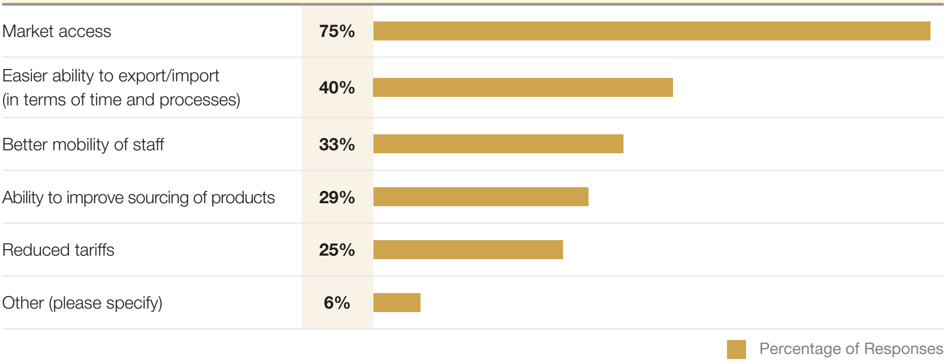
72% of respondents consider ASEAN economic integration important to helping their company do business in the region, a further improvement on the 70% recorded in the 2025 survey and continuing the marked increase from 43% in 2023-24.[17]

Figure 12: Importance of ASEAN economic integration to doing business in the region

16 N=351.
17 N=352.

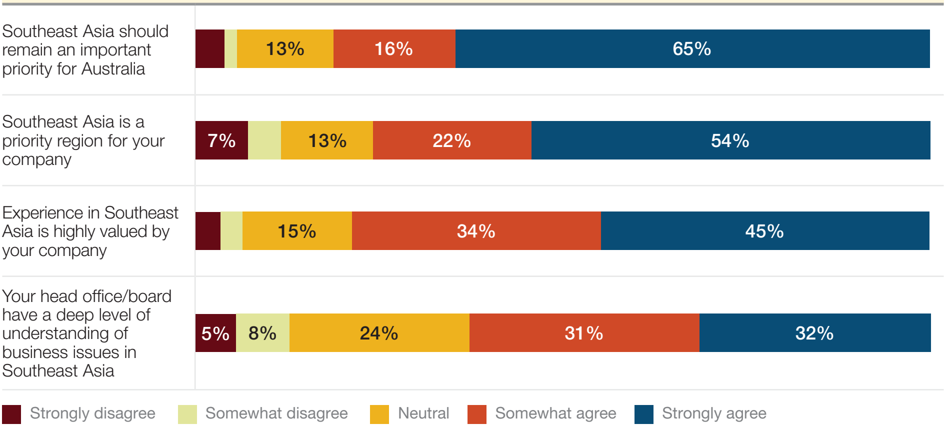
Market access remains by far the most valued benefit of ASEAN economic integration (75%), consistent with the 2025 survey (76%), followed by easier import/export processes (40%) and better staff mobility (33%).[18]

Figure 13: Major areas of benefit from ASEAN economic integration



Respondents show strong overall support for Australia's continued engagement with the region, with 65% strongly agreeing that Southeast Asia should remain an important priority for Australia – the strongest agreement of any statement tested and evidence of support for the business relationship.[19] 54% strongly agree Southeast Asia is a priority region for their business (down from 59% in 2025) and 32% strongly agree their head office/board has a deep understanding of business issues in the region (down from 42% in 2025), suggesting sentiment has become somewhat more moderate at the organisational level even as strategic support for the region remains high.

Figure 14: Agreement with statements on Southeast Asia as a priority region



18 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=249.

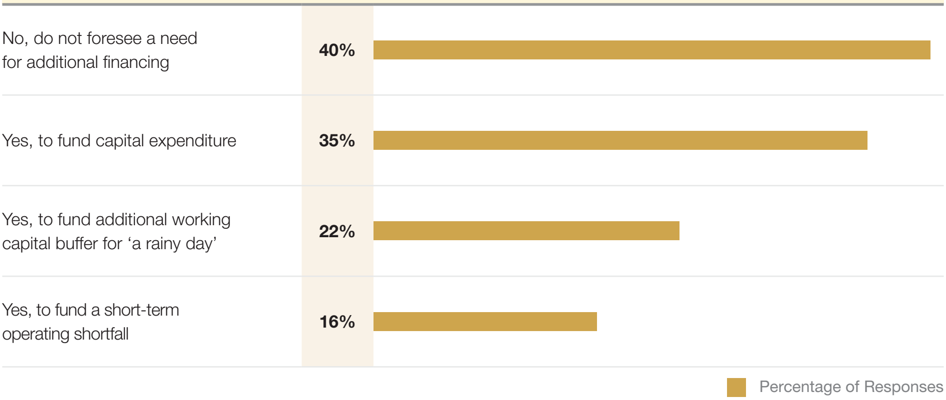
19 N=346.

Doing Business in Southeast Asia

A large proportion of respondents don't foresee the need for additional financing, and a majority expect revenue to improve over the coming year and beyond. Slightly over one in three expect to take on additional financing to fund capital expenditure which is consistent with the positive outlook noted earlier.

40% of respondents do not foresee a need for additional financing over the next 12 months, slightly more than the 37% recorded in 2025, while 35% expect to need financing to fund capital expenditure, up from 30% in 2025.[20]

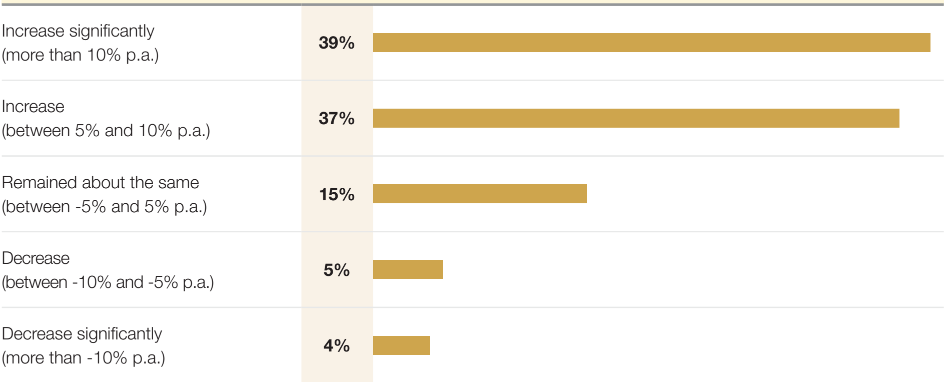
Figure 15: Additional finance needed over the next 12 months



20 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=271.

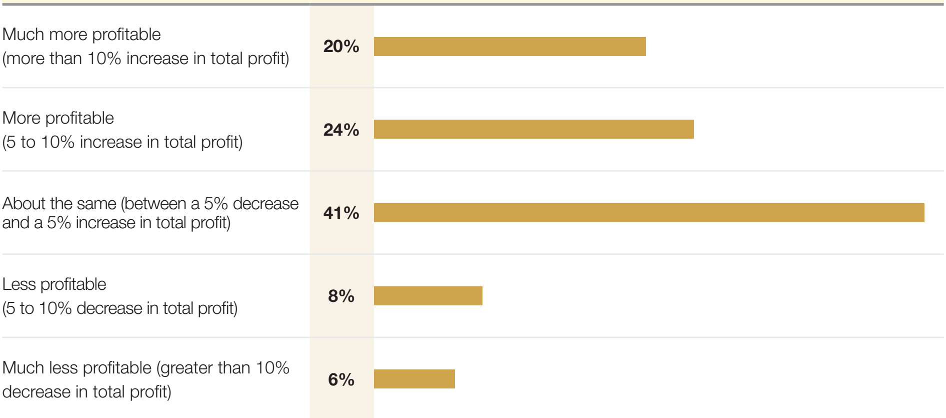
Confidence in revenue growth remains high, with 76% of respondents expecting Southeast Asia-derived revenue to increase over the next five years - in line with 77% in the 2025 survey.[21] Notably, a higher share now expects significant growth of more than 10% per annum (39%, up from 33% in 2025).

Figure 16: Expected change in Southeast Asia–derived revenue over the next five years



44% of respondents expect 2026 to be more or much more profitable than 2025, a modest improvement on the 41% recorded for the equivalent 2025-vs-2024 comparison, with the share expecting a much more profitable year rising to 20% from 14%.[22]

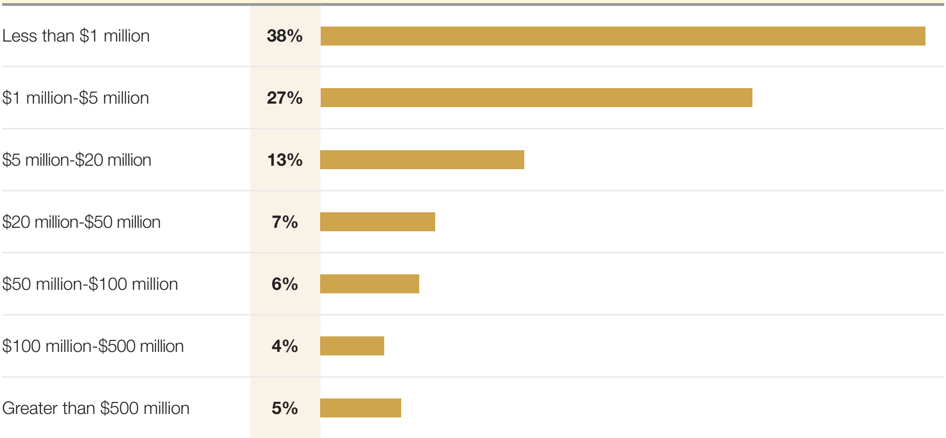
Figure 17: Year-to-date profitability, 2026 vs 2025



21 N=271.
22 N=266.

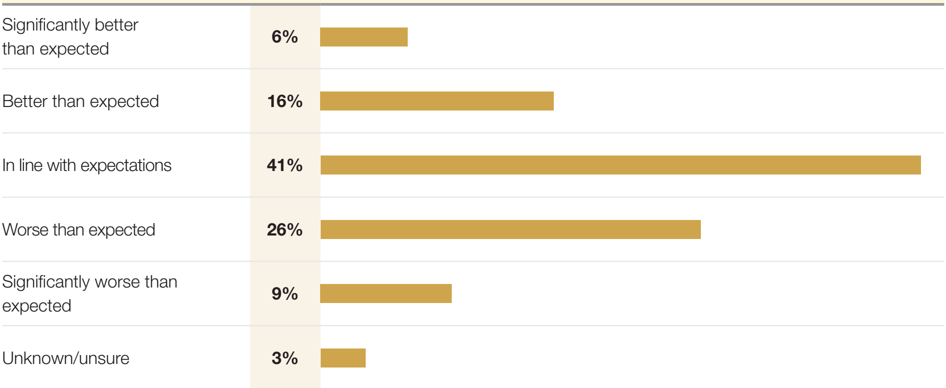
Local operation revenue remains skewed toward smaller businesses, with 38% of respondents reporting revenue under $1 million (AUD) for the previous 12 months and a further 27% reporting revenue between $1 million and $5 million – broadly consistent with the distribution recorded in the 2025 survey.[23]

Figure 18: Local operation's revenue for the previous 12 months (AUD)



41% of respondents describe market conditions over the last six months as in line with expectations, down from 51% in the 2025 survey, with a larger combined share now reporting conditions worse or significantly worse than expected (35%, up from 28% in 2025) – pointing to a somewhat more challenging trading environment this year.[24]

Figure 19: Market conditions in the last six months



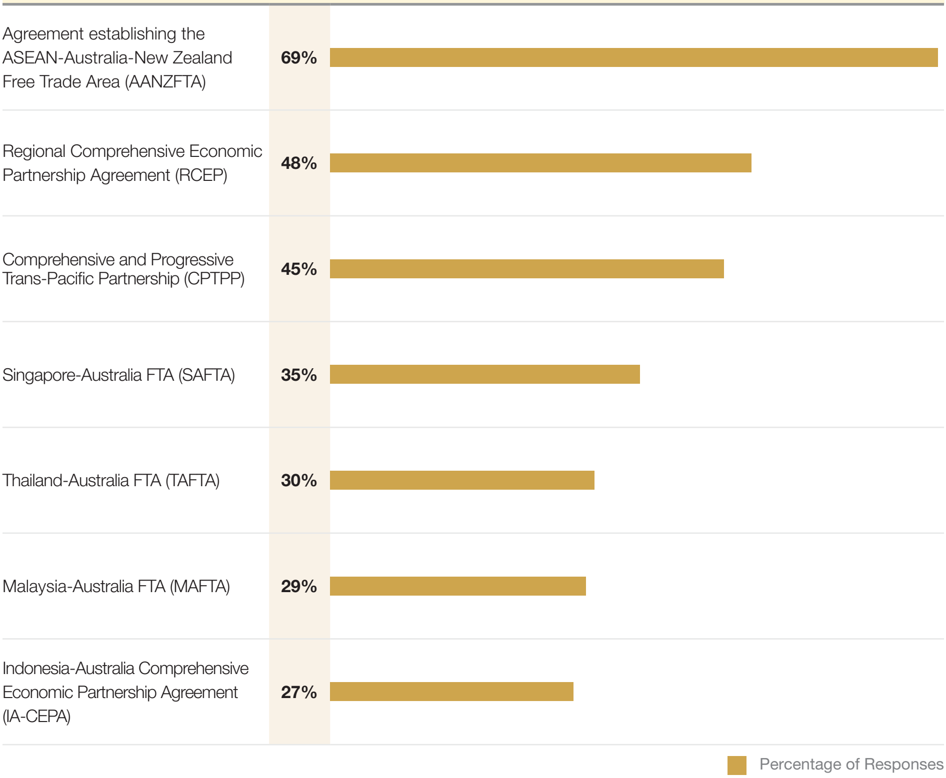
23 Unless otherwise stated, dollar figures throughout this report are in Australian dollars (AUD). The exception is GDP per capita in the Country Profiles section, which is shown in US dollars (USD). N=260.

24 N=269.

Free Trade Agreements

Awareness of the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) has risen sharply to 69%, up from 49% in the 2025 survey, perhaps reflecting the AANZFTA Upgrade Protocol entering into force in 2025.[25] AANZFTA is also now the most widely used FTA among respondents that use FTAs.

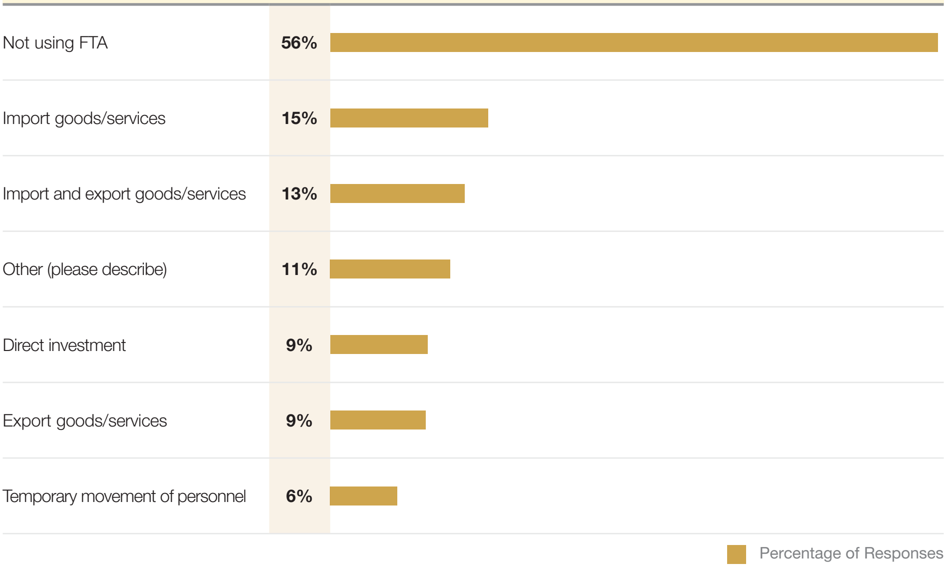
Figure 20: Awareness of FTAs (AANZFTA, RCEP, CPTPP and bilateral agreements)



25 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=222.

Despite strong awareness of ASEAN's trade agreements, the majority of respondents (56%) report they are not currently using an FTA for their cross-border business, pointing to a continued gap between awareness of, and perceived importance of, ASEAN integration and practical uptake of the agreements available.[26] 37% reported using an FTA to import or export goods or services.

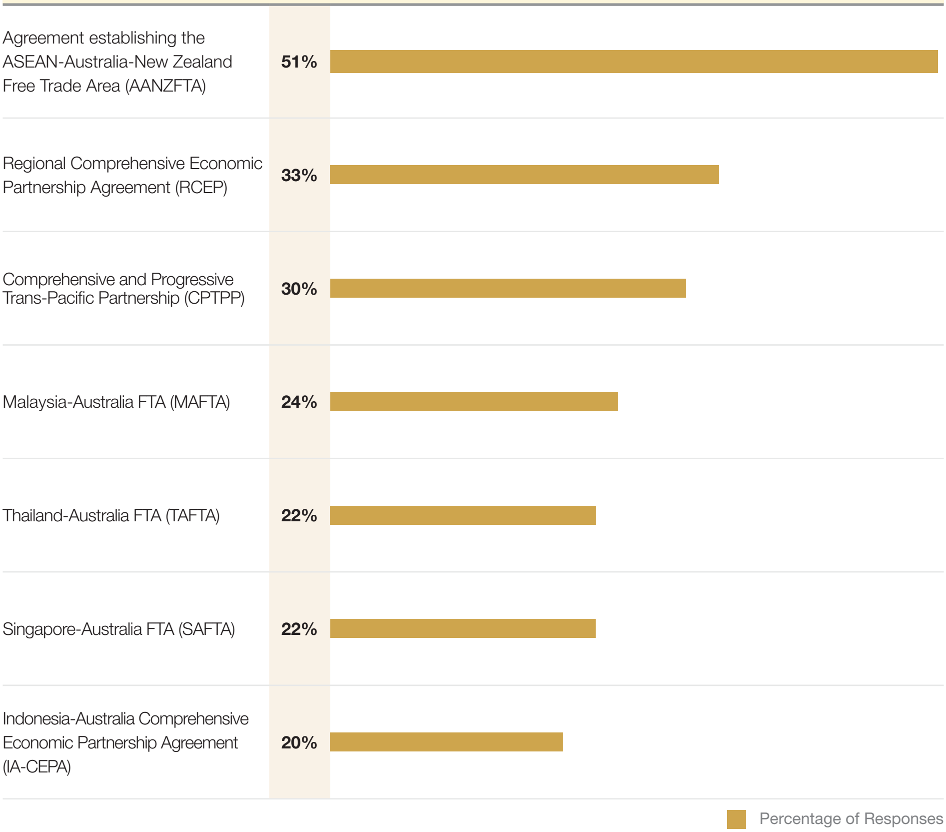
Figure 21: How FTAs are being used



26 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=296.

AANZFTA is now the most widely used FTA among respondents that use FTAs, above the 33% usage recorded in the 2025 survey, again consistent with heightened awareness following the Upgrade Protocol.[27] RCEP (33%) remains the second most used agreement.

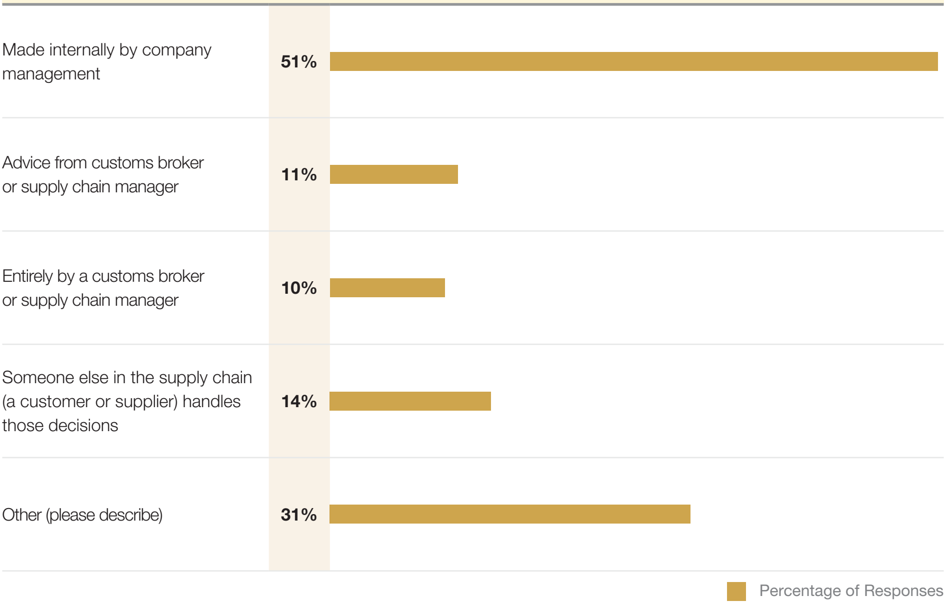
Figure 22: FTAs currently in use



27 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=107.

Decisions on FTA use are most commonly made internally by company management (51%), rather than delegated to customs brokers or supply chain partners, suggesting FTA utilisation is primarily a strategic rather than purely operational decision for most respondents.[28] This is a new question for the 2026 survey.[29]

Figure 23: How decisions about using FTAs are made within the business



28 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=272.

29 The majority of respondents that selected "other" stated that they were not using an FTA or that this question was not relevant to them.

Country Profiles

Cambodia

Cambodia has been one of the fastest-growing economies in Southeast Asia over the past decade, with tourism, agriculture, garments and construction as key sectors.

Economic Indicators[30]

Population	**18.05 million**	Inflation rate	**3%**
GDP per capita	**$2,900 USD**	Unemployment rate	**n/a**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Cambodia

24 survey respondents live in Cambodia (6% of overall respondents), spread equally across business sectors, including education and training, financial / professional services, and property / construction.

71% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business (25% extremely confident), with global political uncertainty the most commonly cited challenge (46%).

30 Economic indicator data for each country profile is sourced from the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook (WEO) database (April 2026 edition), which provides internationally comparable estimates for population, GDP per capita, inflation and unemployment across IMF member economies. Because the WEO's most recent confirmed actual data point varies by country, the 2026 figures shown in this report are IMF staff estimates/projections rather than final outturns, and may be revised in subsequent WEO releases. GDP per capita figures are shown in USD, consistent with standard IMF reporting conventions. All other dollar figures in this report, including trade data, are in AUD unless otherwise stated.

Figure 24: Business confidence, Cambodia

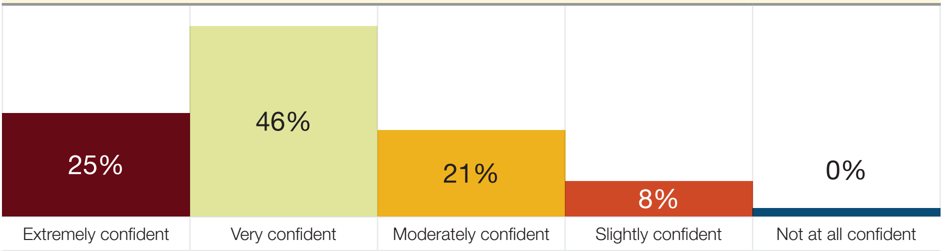
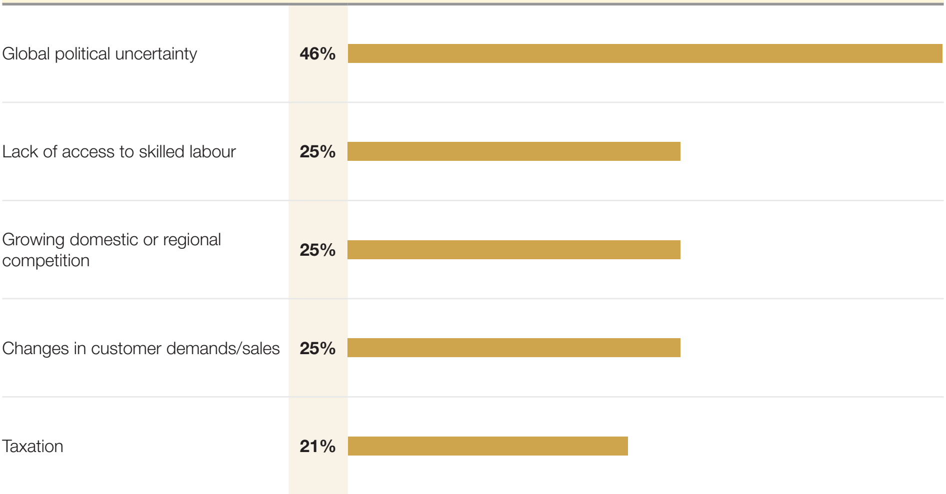


Figure 25: Greatest challenges, Cambodia



Indonesia

Southeast Asia's largest economy by population and GDP, Indonesia has been driven by strong domestic consumption, abundant natural resources and a rapidly growing digital economy, with manufacturing, agriculture, mining and financial services as key sectors.

Economic Indicators

Population	**287.2 million**	Inflation rate	**3%**
GDP per capita	**$5,360 USD**	Unemployment rate	**4.9%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Indonesia

25 survey respondents live in Indonesia (7% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are professional services (32% of respondents) and energy / resources (20% of respondents).

52% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, though regulatory uncertainty stands out as a particularly acute challenge, cited by 72% of respondents.

Figure 26: Business confidence, Indonesia

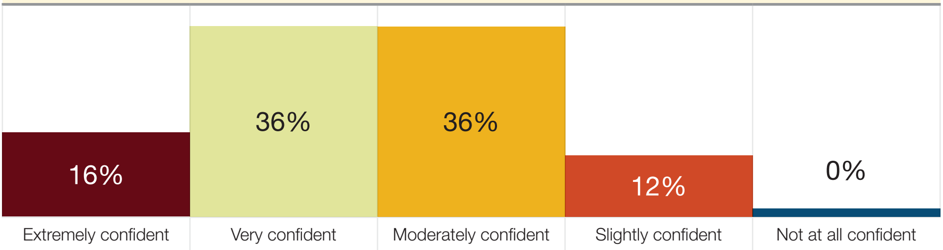
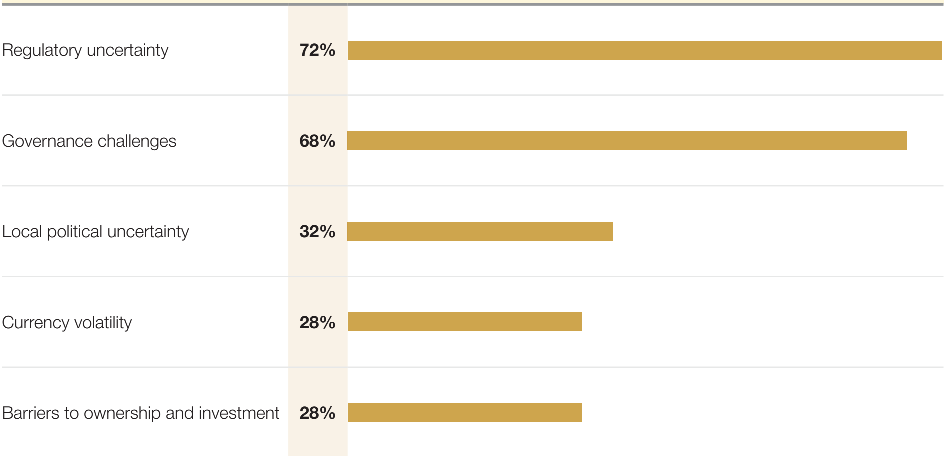


Figure 27: Greatest challenges, Indonesia



Lao PDR

Lao PDR is a developing, land-linked economy at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, seeking to transform its economy through ASEAN integration, natural resource exports and growing regional connectivity.

Economic Indicators

Population	**7.89 million**	Inflation rate	**9.6%**
GDP per capita	**$2,400 USD**	Unemployment rate	**n/a**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Lao PDR

41 survey respondents live in Lao PDR (11% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are education and training (20% of respondents) and energy / resources (15% of respondents).	**44% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with currency volatility the leading challenge (32%).**

Figure 28: Business confidence, Lao PDR

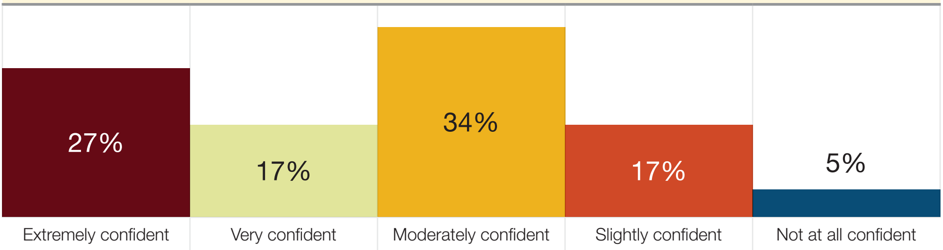
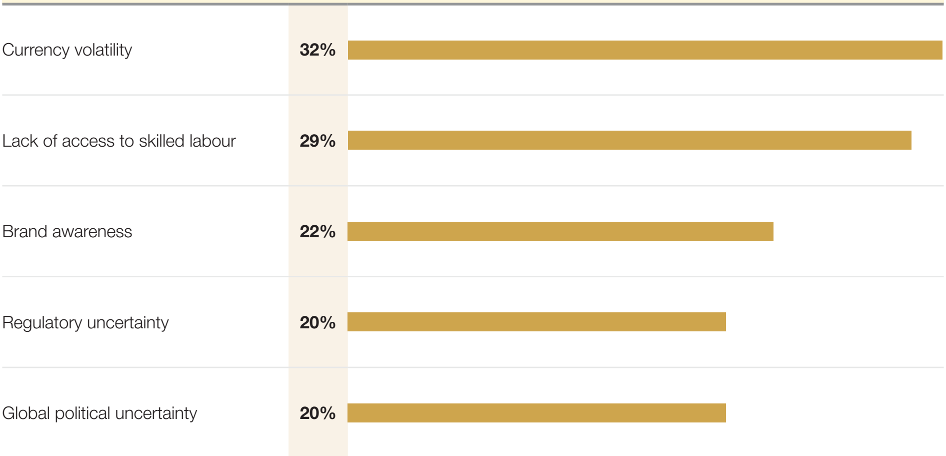


Figure 29: Greatest challenges, Lao PDR



Malaysia

Malaysia has a diversified, competitive economy anchored by manufacturing, high-tech exports (including semiconductors), and palm oil and energy.

Economic Indicators

Population	**34.23 million**	Inflation rate	**1.9%**
GDP per capita	**$15,900 USD**	Unemployment rate	**3%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Malaysia

34 survey respondents live in Malaysia (9% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are professional services (26% of respondents) and property / construction (18% of respondents).

64% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with global political uncertainty the most commonly cited challenge (35%).

Figure 30: Business confidence, Malaysia

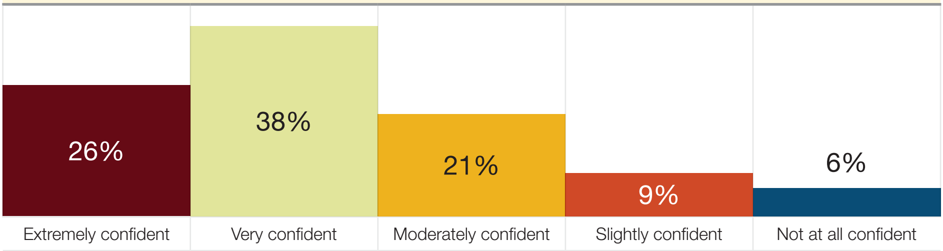
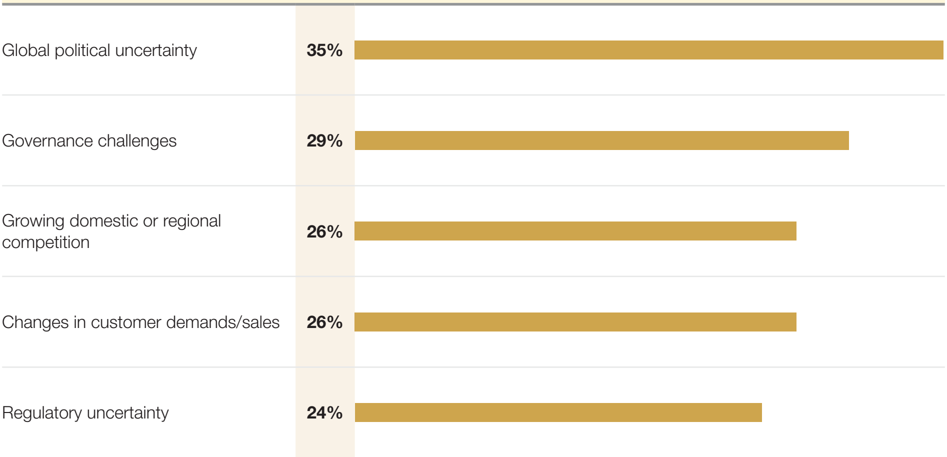


Figure 31: Greatest challenges, Malaysia



The Philippines

One of the fastest-growing economies in Asia over the past decade, the Philippines has been powered by business process outsourcing, remittances from its large overseas workforce, and a young, English-speaking population, alongside construction and manufacturing.

Economic Indicators

Population	**115.3 million**	Inflation rate	**4.3%**
GDP per capita	**$4,440 USD**	Unemployment rate	**4.7%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in the Philippines

46 survey respondents live in the Philippines (12% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are other services (24% of respondents), professional services (15% of respondents), and ICT (15% of respondents).

65% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, while governance remains the leading challenge, cited by 46%.

Figure 32: Business confidence, the Philippines

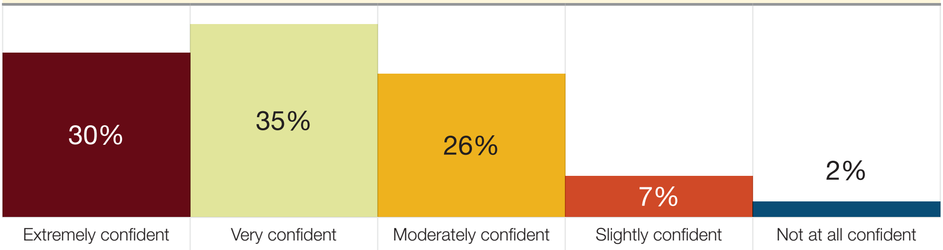
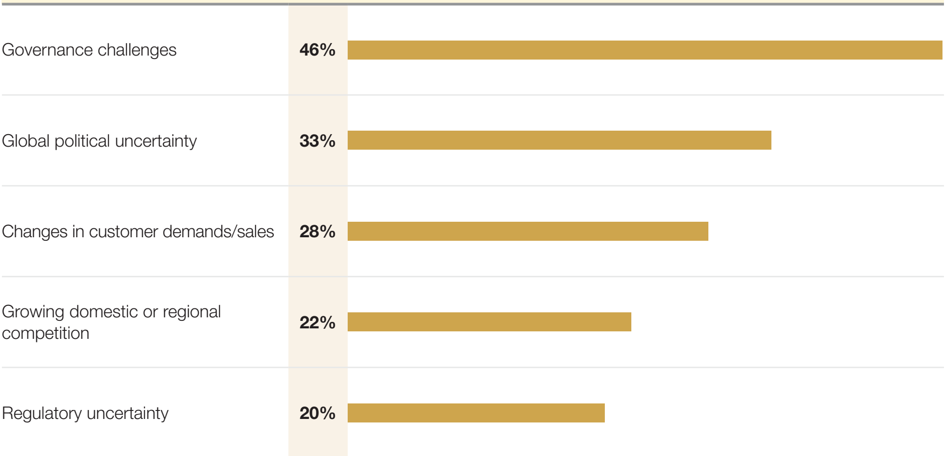


Figure 33: Greatest challenges, the Philippines



Singapore

A global trade, finance and logistics hub, Singapore's economy is built on financial services, advanced manufacturing, technology and its role as a regional headquarters location for multinational businesses.

Economic Indicators

Population	**6.12 million**
GDP per capita	**$107,760 USD**

Inflation rate	**2.3%**
Unemployment rate	**2%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Singapore

32 survey respondents live in Singapore (9% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are financial services (25% of respondents) and ICT (16% of respondents).

68% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with global political uncertainty and brand awareness tied as the leading challenges (41% each).

Figure 34: Business confidence, Singapore

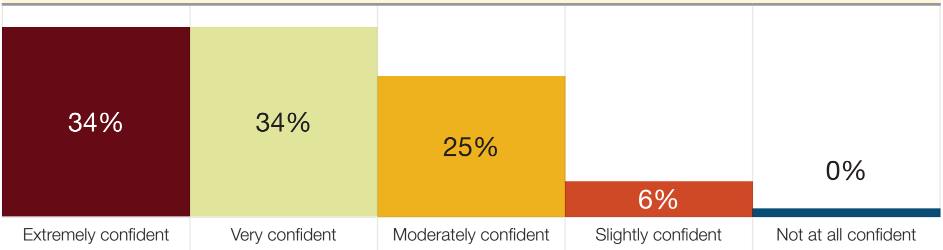
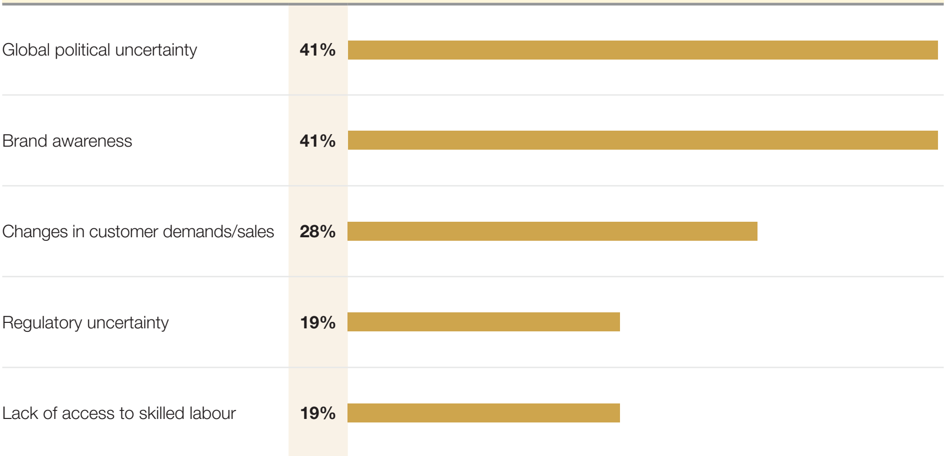


Figure 35: Greatest challenges, Singapore



Thailand

An upper-middle-income, export-oriented economy, Thailand has long relied on manufacturing (particularly automotive and electronics), tourism and agriculture as its core economic pillars.

Economic Indicators

Population	**71.56 million**	Inflation rate	**0.9%**
GDP per capita	**$8,110 USD**	Unemployment rate	**1%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Thailand

31 survey respondents live in Thailand (8% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sector of business operations is professional services (35% of respondents).

52% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with global political uncertainty and barriers to ownership and investment tied as the leading challenges (35% each).

Figure 36: Business confidence, Thailand

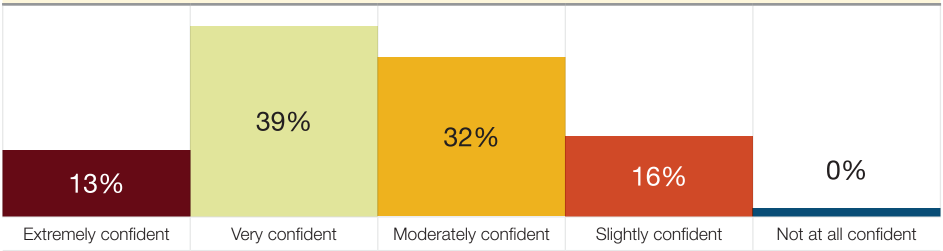
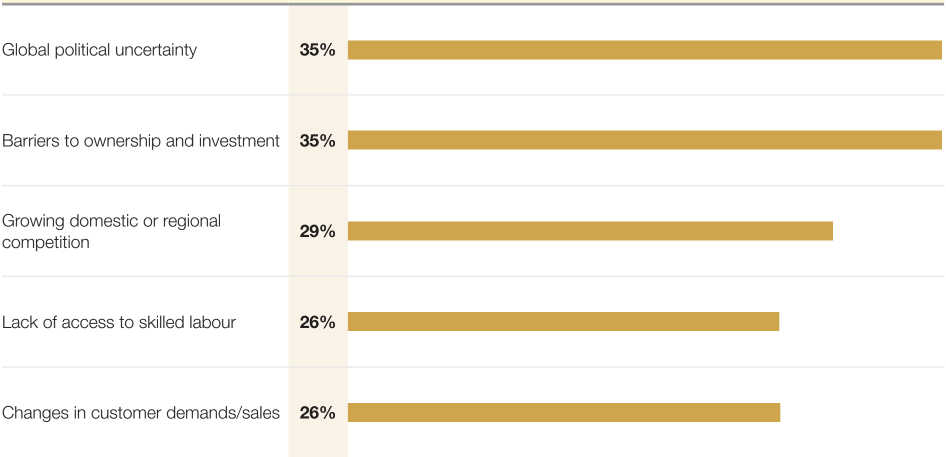


Figure 37: Greatest challenges, Thailand



Timor-Leste[31]

One of the newest and smallest economies in the region, Timor-Leste remains heavily reliant on oil and gas revenue, with agriculture, coffee exports and a developing tourism sector as key areas of diversification.

Economic Indicators

Population	**1.43 million**	Inflation rate	**2.1%**
GDP per capita	**$1,520 USD**	Unemployment rate	**n/a**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Timor-Leste

31 survey respondents live in Timor-Leste (8% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sector of business operations is agriculture (26% of respondents).

43% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with lack of access to skilled labour and barriers to ownership and investment tied as the leading challenges (32% each).

31 Timor-Leste officially acceded to ASEAN as its 11th member state on 26 October 2025, following observer status held since 2022. As such, Timor-Leste was a full ASEAN member throughout this survey's data-reference period and is treated as such in this report's ASEAN aggregates.

Figure 38: Business confidence, Timor-Leste

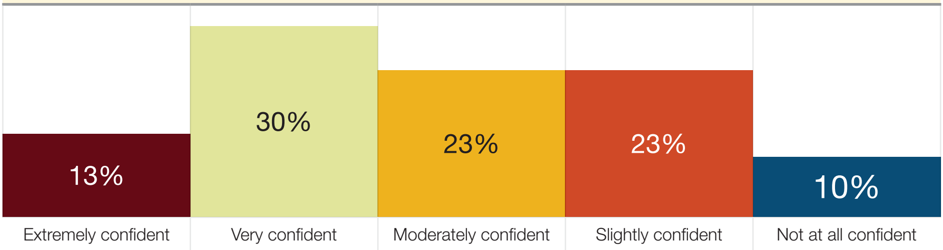
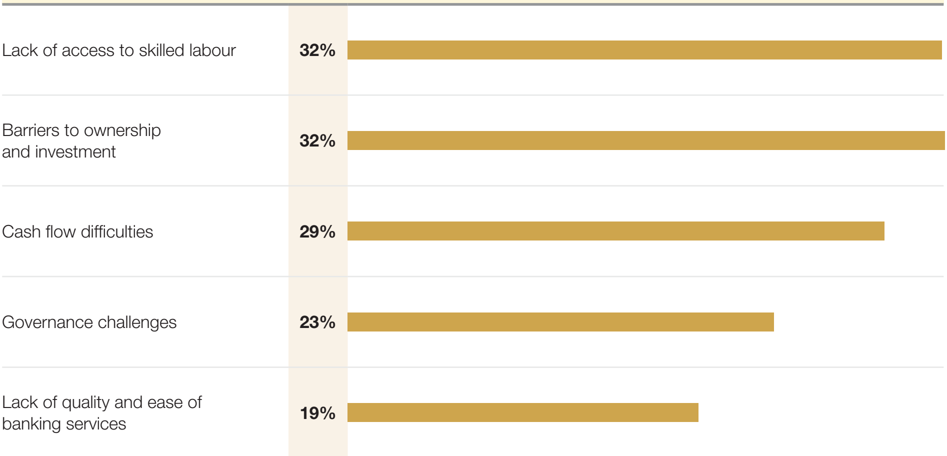


Figure 39: Greatest challenges, Timor-Leste



Vietnam

Vietnam is the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia, driven by export-oriented manufacturing, foreign direct investment and strong domestic demand.

Economic Indicators

Population	**103.8 million**	Inflation rate	**4.9%**
GDP per capita	**$5,120 USD**	Unemployment rate	**2.1%**

Survey Insights: Respondents Living in Vietnam

55 survey respondents live in Vietnam (15% of overall respondents). The highest recorded sectors of business operations are education and training (15% of respondents), professional services (15% of respondents), and other services (13% of respondents).

71% of respondents are very or extremely confident in sustaining or growing their business, with global political uncertainty the most commonly cited challenge (33%).

Figure 40: Business confidence, Vietnam

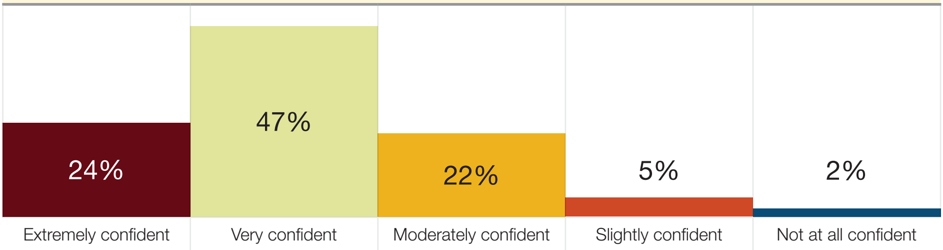
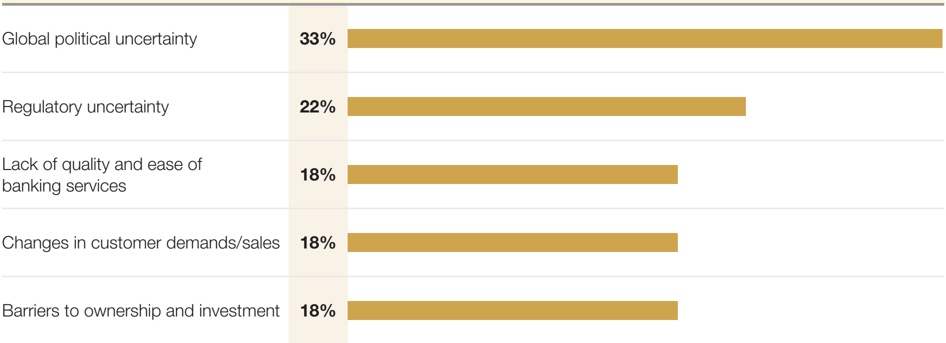


Figure 41: Greatest challenges, Vietnam



Brunei Darussalam

A small, high-income economy, Brunei remains heavily dependent on oil and gas, which account for roughly half of GDP and the large majority of exports. Under its Wawasan Brunei 2035 strategy, the government is pursuing diversification into downstream oil and gas processing, ICT, food security, tourism and services, though progress has been gradual and hydrocarbon reliance remains the central feature of the economy.

Economic Indicators

Population	**470,000**	Inflation rate	**1.6%**
GDP per capita	**$36,290 USD**	Unemployment rate	**4.7%**

AustCham ASEAN is expanding its activity in Brunei and hopes to receive more survey responses from Brunei in future survey editions.

Business Profiles

This section provides a brief overview of the respondents who were surveyed. Responses reflect a broad coverage across location, business type, and size of the firm.

Responses are most heavily weighted toward Vietnam (15%), Australia (13%) and the Philippines (12%), with Lao PDR and Timor-Leste recording a notably stronger share of responses than in the 2025 survey.[32] Overall, the spread across twelve markets indicates a broad cross-section of the Australian business community operating in or connected to Southeast Asia.

Figure 42: Countries respondents live in

Vietnam	15%
Australia	13%
Philippines	12%
Lao PDR	11%
Malaysia	9%
Singapore	9%
Timor-Leste	8%
Thailand	8%
Indonesia	7%
Cambodia	6%
Myanmar	1%
Other	0%
Brunei Darussalam	0%

More than a third of respondents (36%) have no Australian ownership but maintain business ties or partnerships with Australian entities, while 29% are 100% Australian privately owned.[33] This mix of ownership structures is broadly consistent with the 2025 survey, reflecting the diversity of the AustCham ASEAN membership base.[34]

Figure 43: Company ownership structure

No Australian ownership, but has business ties or partnerships with Australian entities	36%
100% Australian privately owned (directly or indirectly)	29%
Partially Australian owned (directly or indirectly)	13%
Australian-listed company	8%
Other (please specify)	13%

32 N=372.

33 N=372.

34 Respondents in the "other" category cited organisations such as non-profits, locally-based companies, and other regional partnership entities.

Most respondents work primarily out of a single country operation (41%), followed by a large share operating across multiple countries (34%).[35]

Figure 44: Primary work location

Single country operation	41%
Multi country operation	34%
Regional HQ, Southeast Asia	11%
Regional HQ, Asia Pacific	5%
Global HQ	6%
Other (please specify)	3%

Professional services remain the largest single sector (16%), though this year's responses are spread more evenly across a wider range of industries, with other services and education and training each accounting for 10%.[36]

Figure 45: Sector of business operations

Professional Services	16%
Other Services	10%
Education and Training	10%
Financial Services	8%
Property / Construction / Infrastructure	8%
Agriculture	8%
Travel / Hospitality / Entertainment	7%
Industrial / Manufacturing	7%
ICT	6%
Energy / Resources	6%
Transport / Logistics	5%
Marketing / Media / Communications	3%
Consumer Goods	3%
Healthcare	3%
Environment Services	1%

35 N=372.
36 N=372.

A third of respondents (33%) work for companies that have been operating in their market for more than 20 years, with a further 22% operating for 10 to 20 years – underlining the continued depth of Australian business experience in Southeast Asia, consistent with the 2025 findings.[37]

Figure 46: Length of time of company operating in Southeast Asia

More than 20 Years	**33%**
10 – <20 Years	**22%**
5 – <10 Years	**18%**
2 – <5 Years	**17%**
Less than 2 Years	**10%**

The large majority of respondents (61%) have personally worked in Southeast Asia for more than ten years, reaffirming the deep, long-standing regional experience that continues to characterise the survey's respondent base. [38]

Figure 47: Length of time of individual working in Southeast Asia

More than 10 Years	**61%**
5 – <10 Years	**12%**
2 – <5 Years	**14%**
1 – <2 Years	**7%**
Less than 1 Year	**7%**

More than a third of respondents (37%) work at operations with 1-10 employees in-country, while 22% work at operations of more than 200 employees locally – reflecting a spread from small in-market teams through to larger established operations.[39]

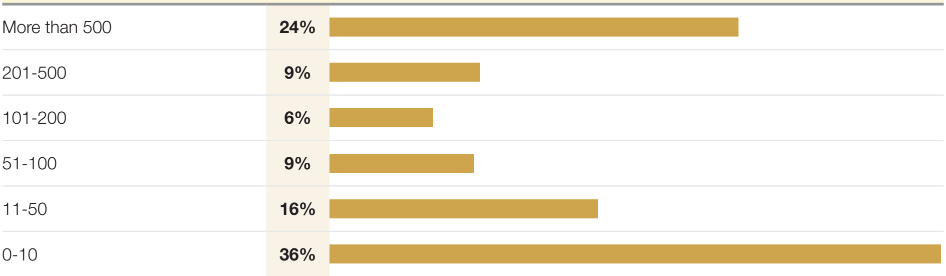
Figure 48: Employees in country

More than 200	**22%**
101-200	**8%**
51-100	**10%**
11-50	**21%**
1-10	**37%**
0	**2%**

37 N=372.
38 N=337.
39 N=372.

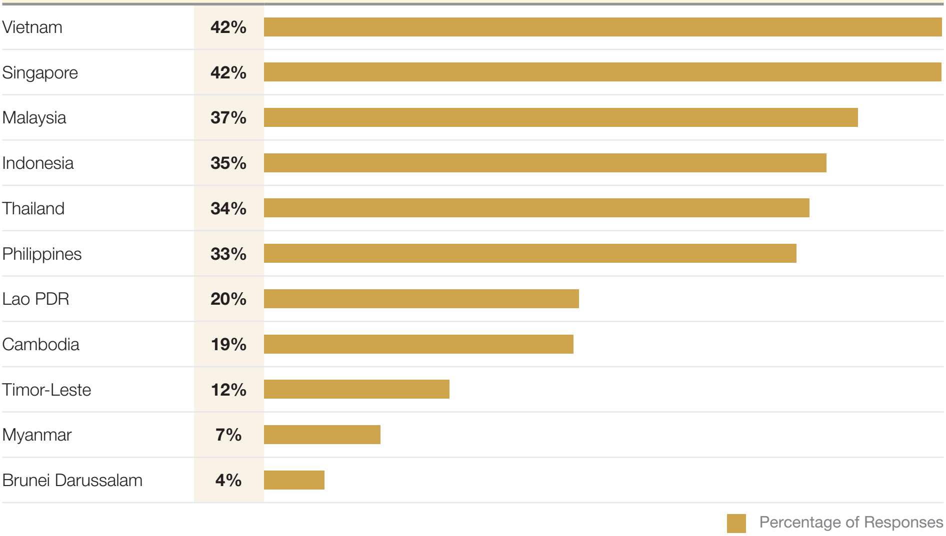
New this year, respondents were also asked about worldwide headcount: 36% work for organisations with 0-10 employees globally, while almost a quarter (24%) work for organisations with more than 500 employees worldwide, highlighting that a meaningful share of respondents' in-country teams sit within much larger global organisations.[40]

Figure 49: Worldwide employees



Vietnam and Singapore are tied as the most common markets of operation (42% each), followed by Malaysia (37%), Indonesia (35%) and Thailand (34%).[41] This continues to reflect a balance between advanced economies and emerging markets, similar to the pattern seen in the 2025 survey.

Figure 50: Countries where company operates in Southeast Asia



40 N=371.

41 Respondents could select more than one answer for this question. N=337.

Survey Limitations

This survey is designed to capture the views of individuals connected to Australian business activity in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian business environment is constantly changing, providing both transient and non-transient opportunities.

The survey is therefore deliberately administered in a way to capture the views of as many individuals as possible – rather than limiting it to a defined segment of the business community. Thus, the information in the preceding pages captures a rich diversity of businesses pursuing various types of commercial interests during the data collection phase – this is a strength of the survey, namely providing current, unqualified and authentic insights. It also means there are several qualifications that should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Sampling approach and response rate:

There is no complete, authoritative list of every business operating between Australia and ASEAN from which a fixed sample could be drawn. Because of this, the survey does not use a defined sampling frame or target population, and no response rate can be meaningfully calculated. Instead, the survey is distributed as an open invitation through AustCham ASEAN's member chambers and government partners, with the aim of reaching and capturing as many eligible respondents as possible each year. Respondents are screened for eligibility (see Survey Background), but the survey should be understood as a broad-reach, self-selecting survey of an open and fluid business community.

Unit of analysis:

Results represent the views of individual respondents, not companies. Multiple individuals from the same organisation may respond in the same year; where this occurs, each response is retained and treated as an independent individual perspective, rather than being capped, merged, or weighted at the company level.

Weighting:

All results presented in this report are unweighted. They have not been adjusted or weighted to reflect business types or environments, i.e., no adjustment for country of operation(s), sector or company-size has been made. By not weighting the responses we are assuming that respondents (in any given year) are broadly representative of employees working for Australian businesses engaged within various sectors of ASEAN. Given that the number of respondents varies across sectors as well as from year to year readers need to determine for themselves to what extent this assumption holds.

Variable bases and multiple-response questions:

Apart from the introductory questions, respondents may skip questions, so the number of responses (the "base," or N) varies by question. Percentages presented throughout this report are calculated independently for each response option and rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, totals for some questions may not sum to exactly 100% (typically ranging between 99% and 101%), due to rounding and, where noted, questions that permitted more than one response per respondent.

Country mix and year-on-year comparisons:

The proportion of respondents from each country varies from year to year, reflecting changes in chamber outreach and response patterns rather than necessarily representing changes in the underlying business population. Where this report compares aggregate, region-wide results across survey editions (for example, 2025 to 2026), readers should note that shifts in the country composition of respondents may contribute to observed changes, separately from any shift in sentiment or conditions.

Data validation:

Prior to analysis, all responses were reviewed and screened for both eligibility and data quality. Responses were removed where they: were duplicate submissions from the same individual; answered only introductory or background-information questions without proceeding further; did not provide sufficient identifying detail to confirm eligibility; came from individuals with no connection to Australian business in the ASEAN region; or were otherwise clearly invalid. Each response was screened accordingly before being included in the final dataset.

AustCham ASEAN Members

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Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce

Australian Chamber of Commerce, Cambodia

Malaysia-Australia Business Council

The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam

Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce

Australian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore

Indonesia Australia Business Council

The Australia Chamber of Commerce Lao PDR

The Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (Philippines)

Timor-Leste – Australia Business Council

AustCham ASEAN contact details

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