



Adapting in uncertainty

Africa C-suite barometer: outlook 2026

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Forward

Adapting with confidence in a changing world

In 2026, leaders in Africa are navigating a world defined by volatility, shifting trade dynamics, and rapid technological change. Yet, what stands out in this year's C-suite barometer is the confidence of leaders in their ability to achieve growth across our continent.

An overwhelming 93% of executives in Africa anticipate growth in the year ahead. This optimism reflects the resilience and adaptability that have long characterised African enterprise. It reflects a commitment to transformation, innovation, and adaptable qualities that have become essential for success. Leaders are not waiting for clarity but confidently creating it to activate growth. They are transforming their organisations through technology, embracing artificial intelligence, reassessing international expansion, and recalibrating strategies to manage competition and tariffs. This report goes beyond the numbers, exploring how decision-makers are balancing short-term pressures with long-term ambition, and how innovation, responsible AI adoption and strategic agility are becoming critical enablers of sustainable growth.

At Forvis Mazars, we work alongside organisations across Africa and globally. The insights here reflect the conversations we are having in boardrooms today focused on turning uncertainty into opportunity. At Forvis Mazars, we are proud to stand alongside these leaders, providing guidance and solutions that enable sustainable growth.

As you explore this year's findings, I encourage you to consider how adaptability, innovation, and collaboration can shape your own strategies for the future.

“Together, we can turn uncertainty into a competitive advantage, leveraging deep insights to help you prepare for what's next with confidence and clarity.”



Anoop Ninan
Chairman, African Regional Committee
Forvis Mazars Group

Executive summary

Adapting in uncertainty

C-suite leaders in Africa confirmed a positive growth outlook for 2026 amid ongoing economic, geopolitical, and operational uncertainty. While 93%* expect business growth, revenue expectations are slightly lower for 2026. Competition, tariffs, and economic volatility remain significant challenges.

Digital maturity, data resilience, and AI adoption are no longer optional, they are core drivers of competitiveness and profitability. While not all organisations have formal strategies in place, intent is clear: most plan to accelerate investment in the near term. Artificial intelligence is moving rapidly from experimentation to execution. Organisations are restructuring teams, redefining roles, and investing in AI to improve decision-making, optimise operations, and future-proof their businesses.

Ethical concerns persist but are diminishing, signaling growing confidence in responsible implementation.

Leaders in Africa are also navigating a complex global trade environment. Tariffs and competitive pressures are prompting leaders to adapt supply chains, refine pricing strategies, and invest in operational efficiency.

International expansion remains firmly on the agenda, though plans are being reassessed considering geopolitical instability and rising costs.

The outlook for 2026 is one of pragmatic optimism. Organisations that combine strategic agility with disciplined investment in technology and people will be best positioned to succeed.

This year's regional analysis is grounded in a dedicated sample of 200 senior leaders across Africa, with a heavy concentration of decision-making power: respondents are CEOs, Chairpersons, or Board Members. Our findings capture the pulse of the continent's most influential markets, including countries such as South Africa, Morocco, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Senegal, and Kenya.

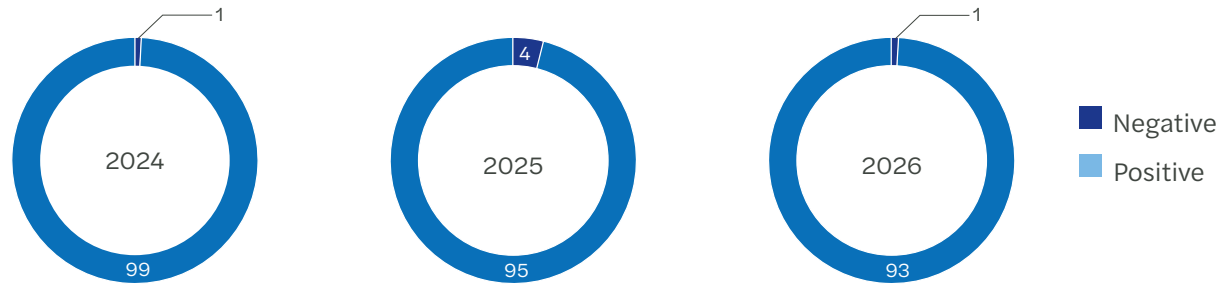
* Leaders in Africa are significantly more ambitious than their global peers: 31% plan to expand into more than 5 new countries over the next five years, triple the global average of 10%.

Executive summary

Adapting in uncertainty

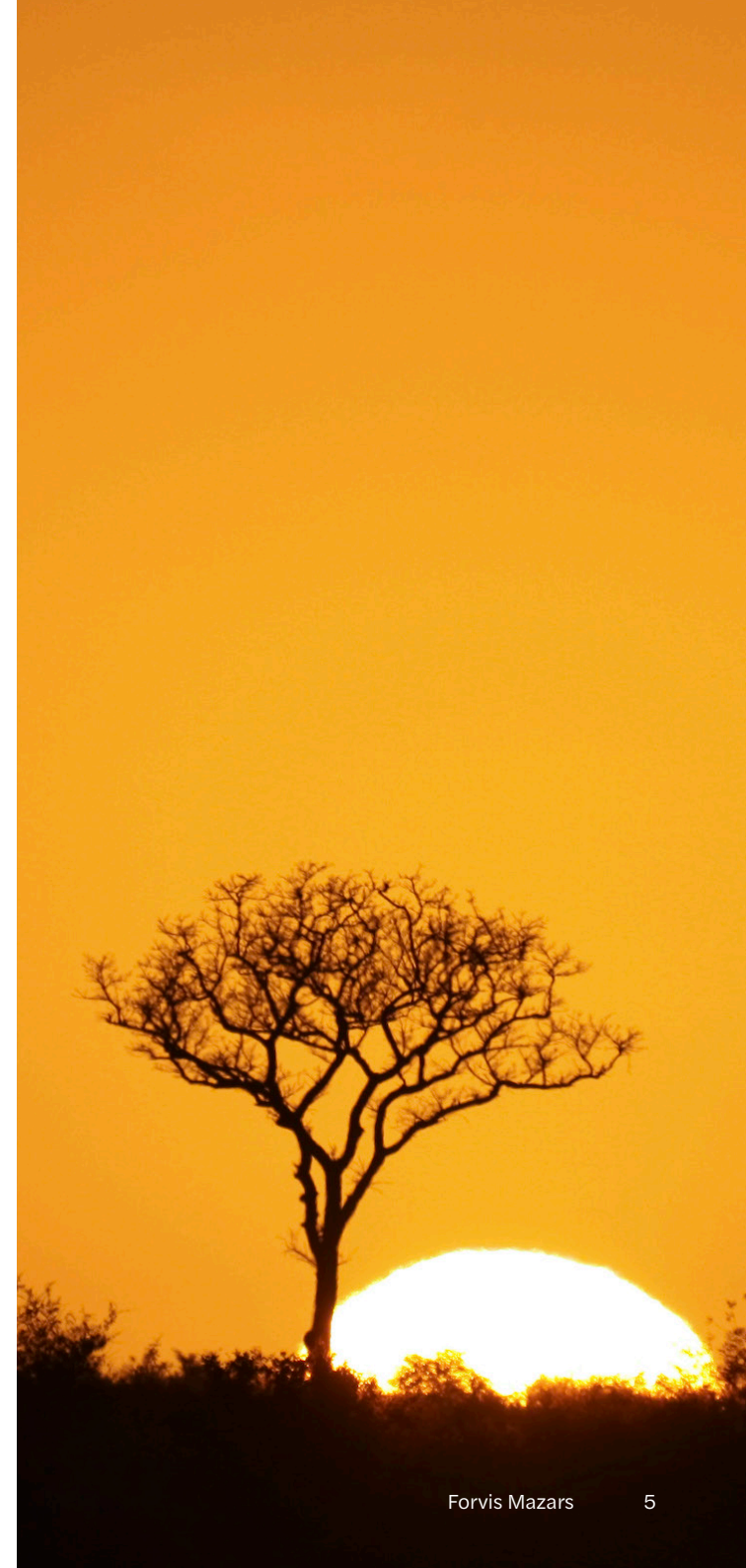
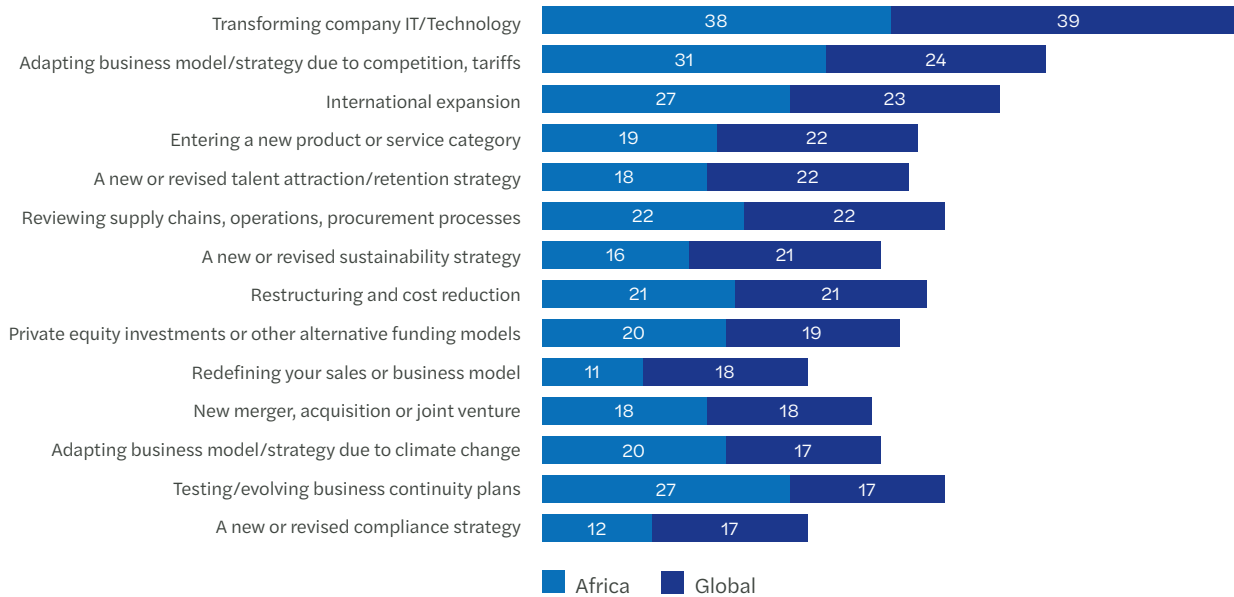
Tracking: next year's growth outlook

Percent of Africa respondents



Top strategic priorities : Africa vs Global

Percent of respondents



Executive summary

Adapting in uncertainty

Strategic priorities

The top three priorities for African executives mirror global trends:

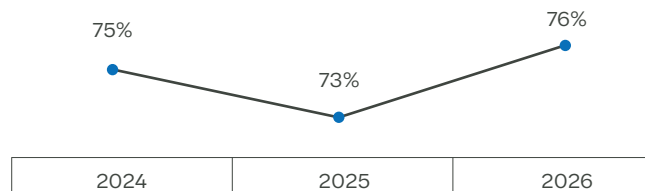
1. Transforming technology
2. Adapting to competition and tariffs
3. International expansion and business continuity

78% Plan to boost human capital investment.

76% Plan to increase financial investment, both above global averages.

Africa investment index

Average % increasing investment across all fields



Transformation through technology

Technology transformation remains central to boardroom agendas. Three-quarters of businesses in Africa have a technology transformation strategy, down 11 points from 2025, reflecting a shift from planning to execution, with leaders prioritising targeted investments that deliver measurable value.

Artificial intelligence, data infrastructure, and cybersecurity are emerging as the most influential factors in successful transformation. Executives outline profitability/revenue growth as the top investment priority for tech transformation strategies in Africa, followed by data infrastructure, AI and operational agility. Confidence in ROI is strongest where technology enables better insight, faster decision-making, and scalable growth.

Ethical considerations remain part of the conversation, particularly around AI governance and data use. Encouragingly, major ethical concerns have declined, suggesting stronger frameworks for responsible adoption.

Key drivers of success

Executives cite AI (50%), data security/ infrastructure (42%), and profitability/revenue growth (31%) as the biggest factors influencing tech transformation success.

Technology investment priorities

- 44%** Profitability/revenue growth
- 39%** Data infrastructure and security
- 31%** Artificial intelligence
- 31%** Operational agility

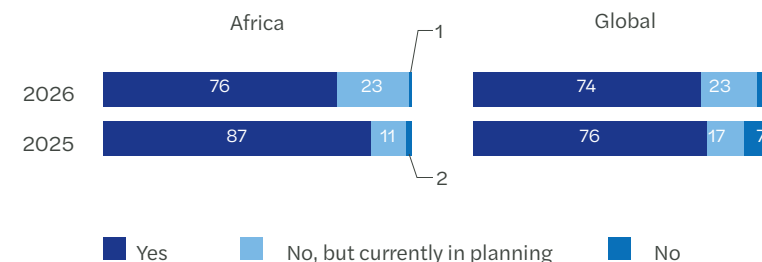
Confidence in ROI is highest for AI and data connectivity, signaling a clear focus on advanced analytics and automation.

Ethical concerns

Three-quarters of leaders report ethical concerns about AI, but major concerns have dropped significantly from 63% in 2024 to 39% in 2026, indicating growing comfort with responsible AI adoption.

Dedicated technology transformation strategy

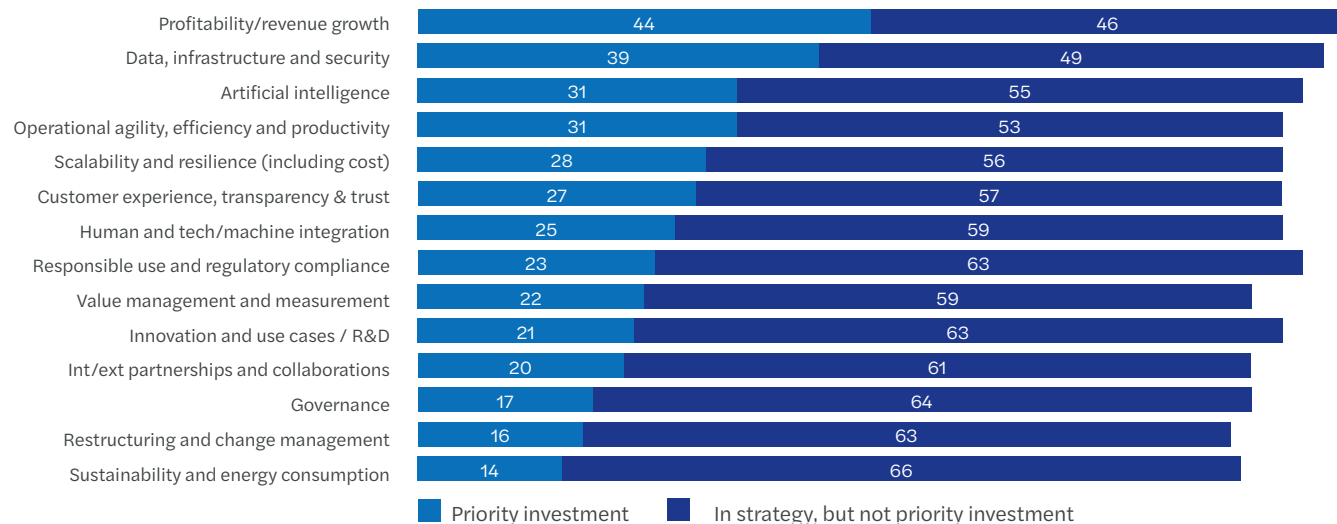
Percent of respondents



Transformation through technology

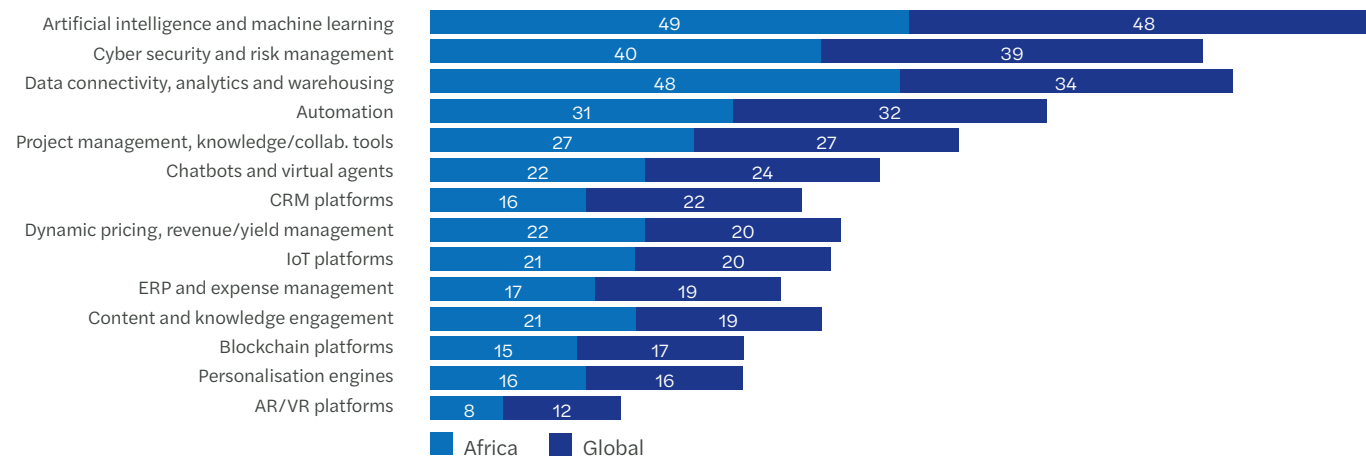
Investment priorities in tech transformation strategies

Percent of respondents



Confidence in ROI for technology transformation investments

Percent of respondents



The race to implement AI

More than half of leaders report that AI is already having a major impact. AI adoption across Africa has accelerated significantly. For many organisations, AI is no longer confined to pilots but is influencing core business functions.

This shift is reshaping the workforce. While some roles are being replaced or redefined, many organisations report the creation of new positions, particularly in data, analytics, and digital strategy.

Investment levels vary, but the strategic intent is clear: AI is seen as a critical enabler of smarter decision-making, competitive advantage, and operational optimisation.

The most advanced organisations are integrating AI into forecasting, planning, customer experience, and creative processes embedding intelligence across operations rather than treating it as a standalone tool.

- **51%** report AI having a major impact on their organization.
- **80%** have restructured teams to implement AI.
- Workforce impact: **26%** report job replacement, while **43%** say AI has created new roles.

Budget allocation

- **15%** of organizations invest more than **20%** of their budget in AI, while **43%** spend less than **10%**.

Top AI applications

Forecasting and planning, customer experience, and creative production lead the way, with strong uptake across multiple business functions.

The race to implement AI

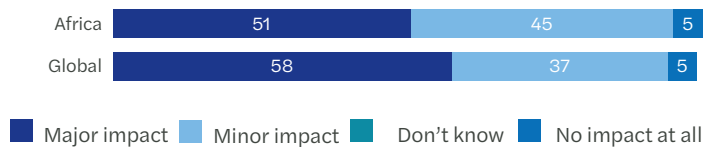
Key insight

Organisations often prioritise AI for internal processes (back-office) where data is more structured and accessible. Implementing AI for Lead Generation requires mature external data ecosystems and integrated CRM platforms, which many firms are still developing as part of their broader digital roadmap.

81% of executives in Africa have restructured their teams in the last year to support AI.

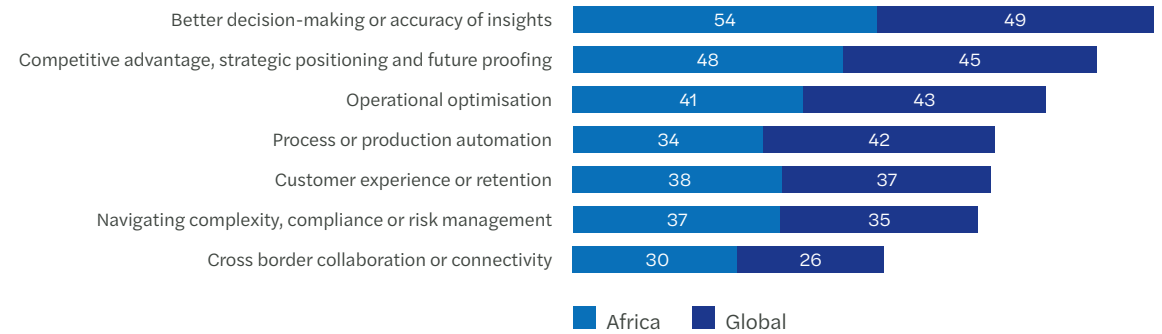
Impact of AI on organisations

Percent of respondents



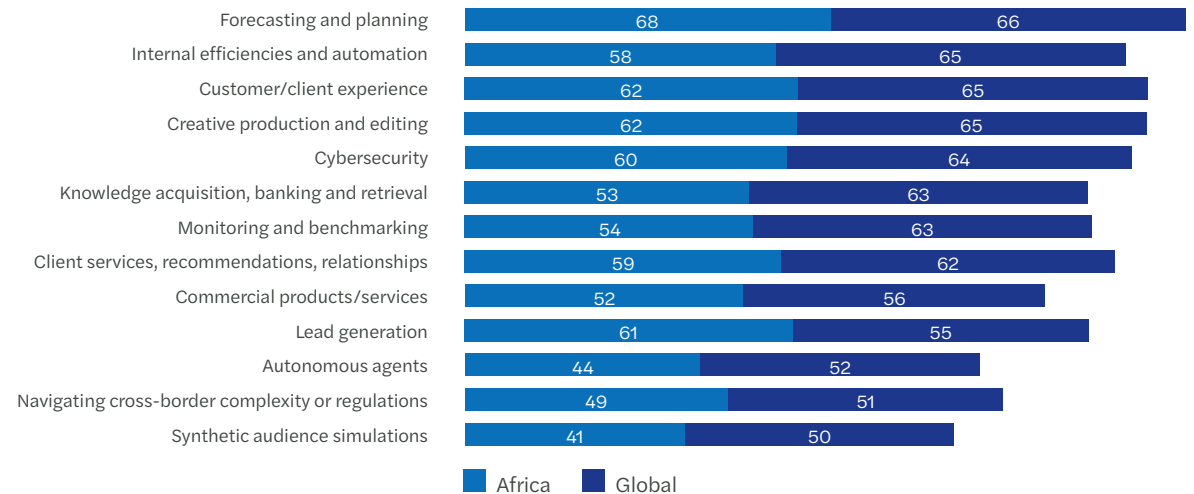
Motivations for using AI

Percent of respondents whose organisation uses some AI



AI use cases

Percent of respondents



Adapting to competition and tariffs

Leaders in Africa are adapting their business models as a result of increasing competition and tariff changes worldwide: they are responding proactively by improving efficiency, adjusting pricing models, introducing new offerings and revisiting expansion strategies.

Supply chain resilience has become an imperative. Investment is increasingly directed towards technology-enabled integration, visibility, and optimisation, allowing organisations to respond more effectively to disruption. These adaptations underscore a broader shift towards flexibility and cost discipline.

86% Are confident in their ability to manage supply chain

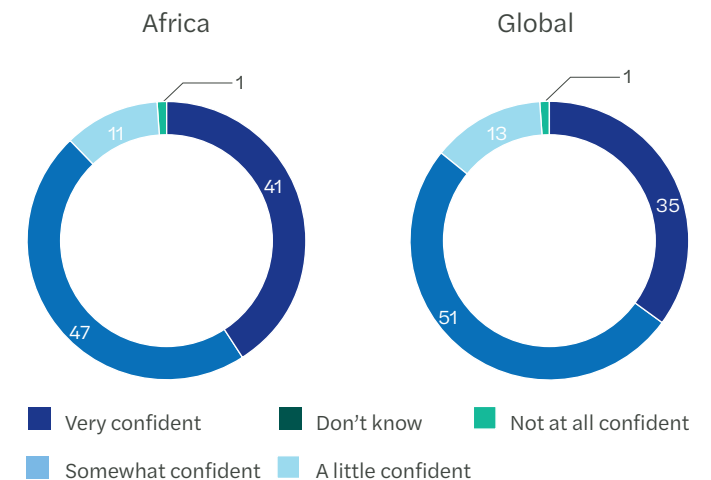
Supply chain investment priorities include **integration of new technologies (41%)** and **growth in existing markets (37%)**, reflecting a focus on resilience and efficiency.

Operational adjustments as a result of increasing competition and tariff pressures

- 40%** Developed new efficiencies
- 37%** Introduced new offerings
- 37%** Increased prices
- 36%** Adapted expansion plans

Confidence in managing tariff-driven costs

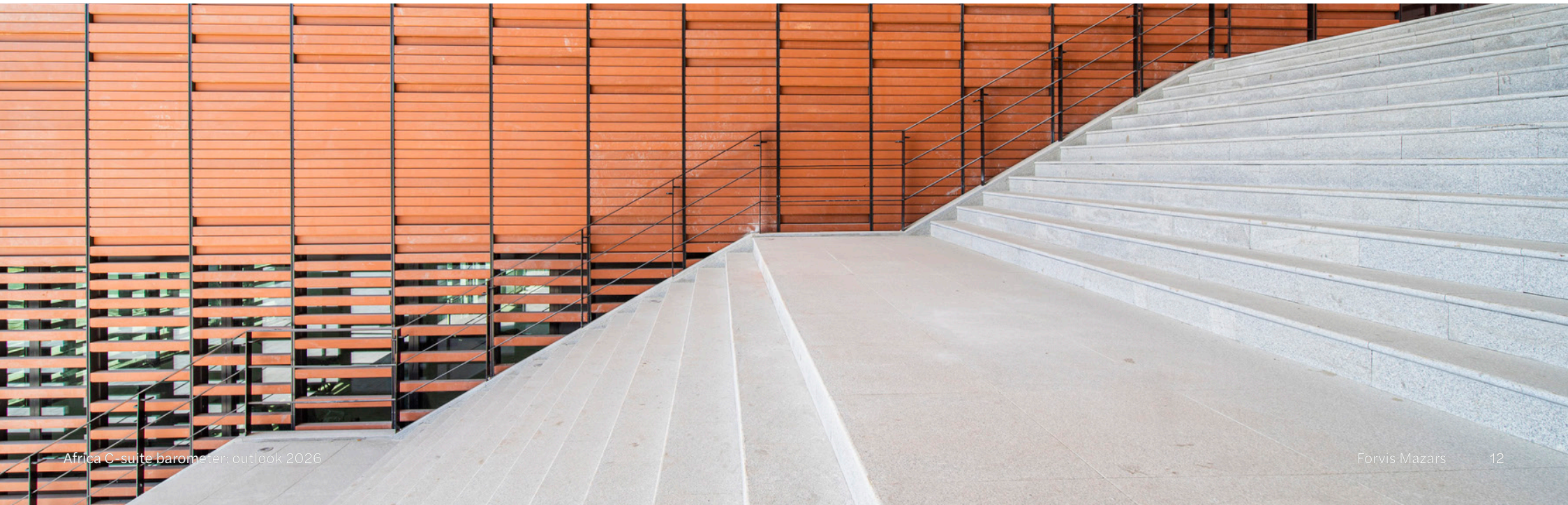
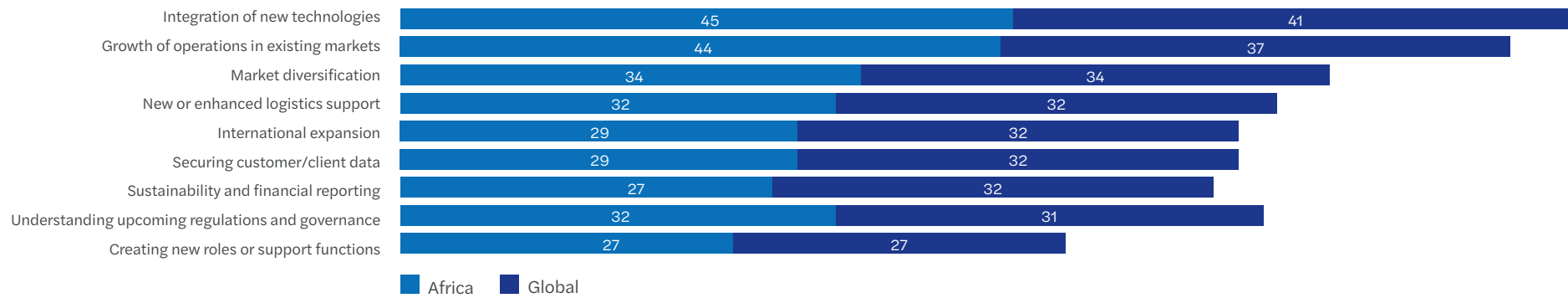
Percent of respondents



Adapting to competition and tariffs

Supply chain investment priorities

Percent of respondents



Revising international expansion plans



Despite global volatility, 75% of leaders in Africa plan to expand to at least one new country in the next five years. While international expansion remains a key growth lever, businesses in Africa are taking a more selective approach and becoming increasingly risk-aware. Geopolitical instability, tariffs, and operational complexity are prompting leaders to reassess where and how they expand.

Rather than retreating from global ambition, many organisations are diversifying target markets and strengthening local partnerships. Success increasingly depends on understanding regulatory environments, securing skilled local talent, and building adaptable operating models.

53% have added extra target countries.

Top countries targeted for expansion

Percent of respondents whose organisation is planning expansion



61% Geopolitical instability/social unrest

57% Trade and tariffs

Top international expansion challenges

38% Trade and tariff pressures

37% Geopolitical & domestic tensions

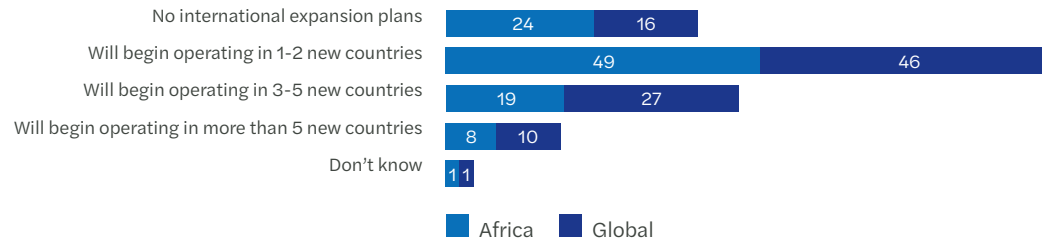
34% Local workforce gaps

38% Operational set-up & licensing



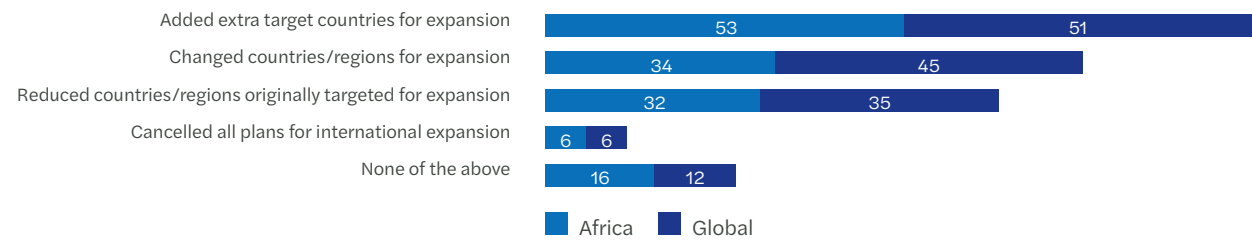
International expansion plans

Percent of respondents



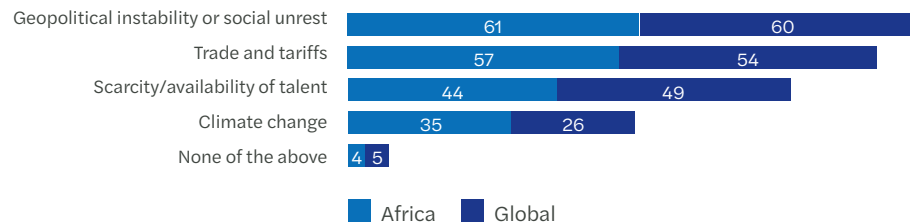
Changes in international expansion plans

Percent of respondents



Factors influencing expansion plan changes

Percent of respondents



Closing

The outlook for leaders in Africa in 2026 is defined by confident adaptability. Success in 2026 will hinge on adaptability, technology investment, and strategic agility. Leaders recognise that uncertainty is not temporary but structural. Organisations that invest in technology, embrace AI responsibly, and maintain strategic agility will be best placed to thrive.

Ultimately, the 2026 African success story is also one of human-centric innovation. A resounding 78% of organisations plan to increase their investment in human capital outpacing the global average of 69% and proving that for the African C-suite, technology is an enabler of talent, not a replacement for it.

As this year's C-suite barometer demonstrates, executives in Africa are not waiting for clarity, they are forging ahead through decisive action, innovation, and resilience.

Access global insights from our C-suite barometer [here](#).



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