



# Cutting through competition

C-suite barometer: outlook 2025

UK insights

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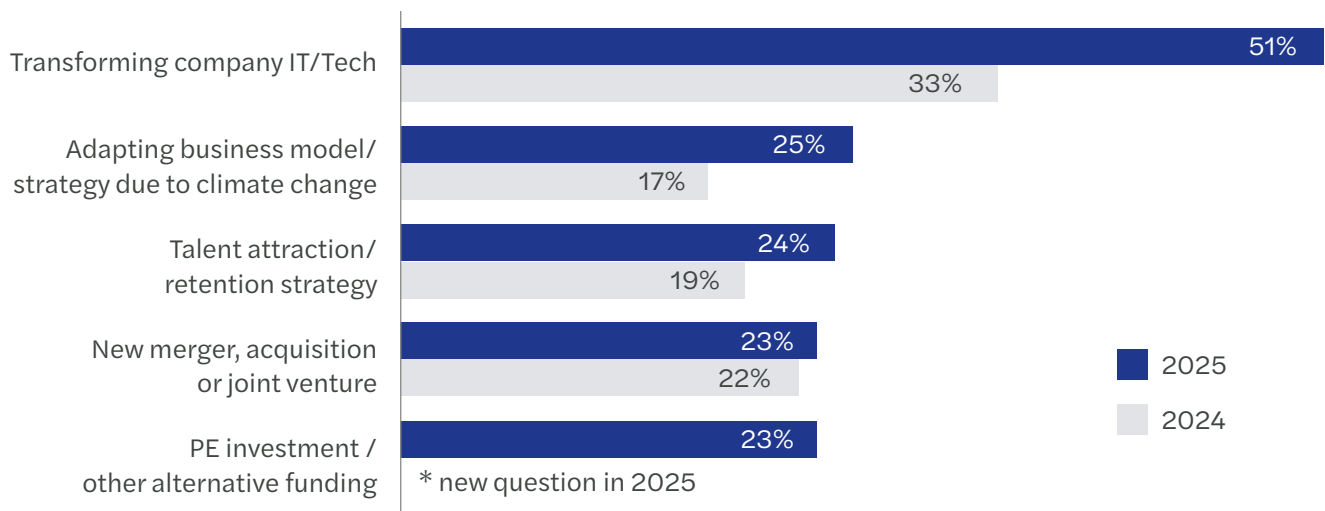
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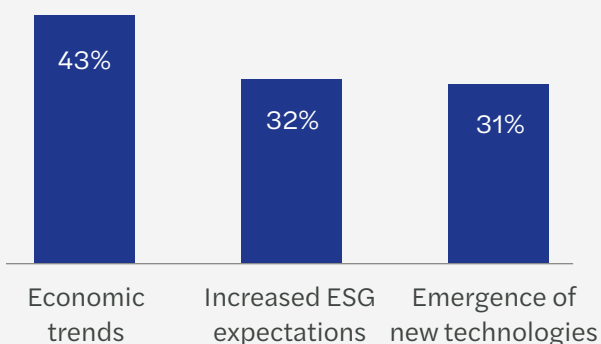
## Key findings in the UK

Drawing on insights from C-suite leaders across more than 35 countries, our latest study highlights the global forces shaping business—and how UK executives are setting strategic priorities to drive growth in a rapidly changing landscape.

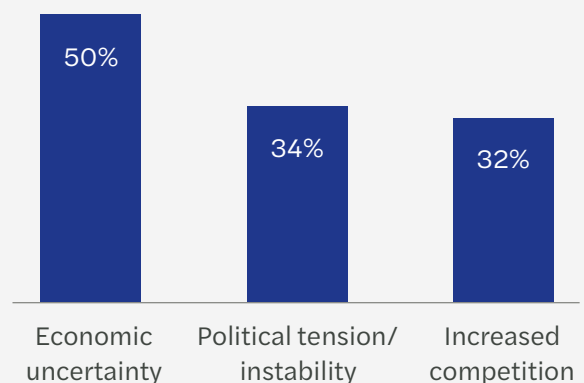
### Top five priorities



### Biggest trends affecting UK companies



### Top factors holding back growth



### UK Confidence Index

2023	2024	2025
37%	42%	37%

Those “very confident” their organisation is prepared to manage key trends.

### UK Investment Index

2023	2024	2025
61%	66%	66%

Average percent increasing investment across all fields.

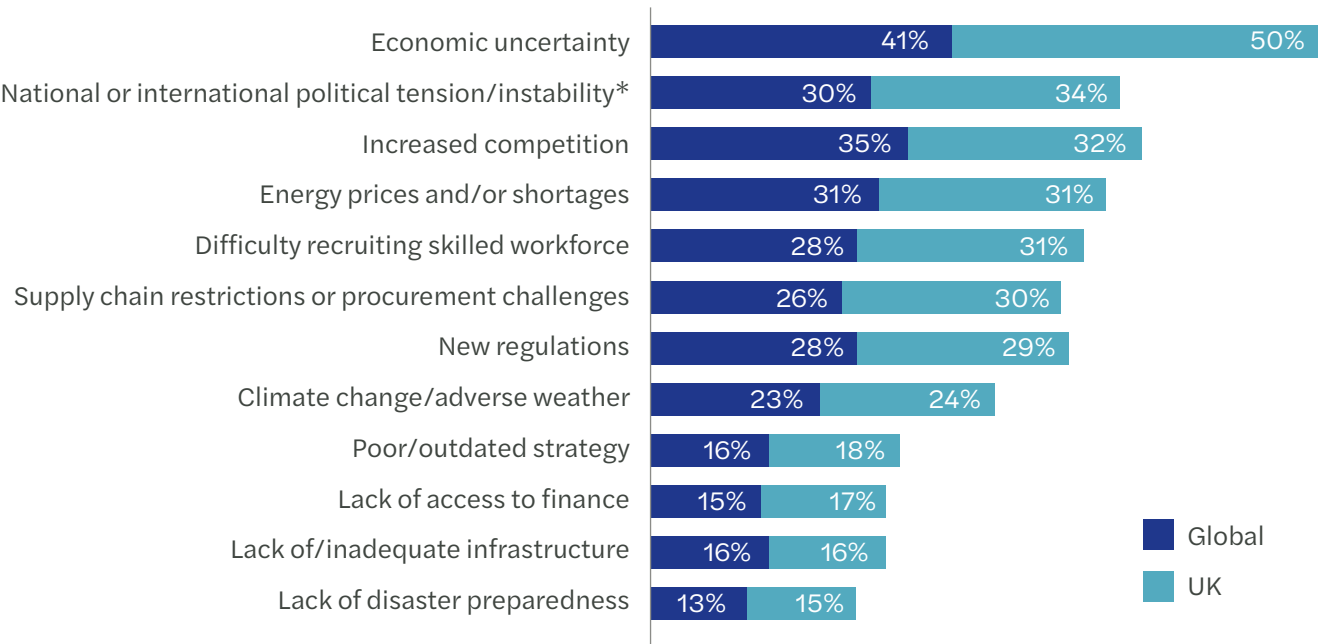
Confidence in business growth remains high amongst UK C-suite leaders, with 92% expecting growth in 2025—slightly down from 98% in 2024 and broadly in line with the global figure of 93%.

While UK executives remain focused on growth, several risks could impede progress. Economic uncertainty is the most anticipated barrier, noted by 50% of UK leaders - significantly higher than the global average - followed by political tension and instability. Other key concerns include rising competition, challenges recruiting skilled talent and energy costs. Notably, supply chain and procurement issues, though just outside the top five, remain a persistent concern.

92%

C-suite executives have a positive, yet challenging, growth outlook for their organisation in 2025.

Factors most likely to hold back growth



\* Previous wording was “Geopolitical tension/instability”

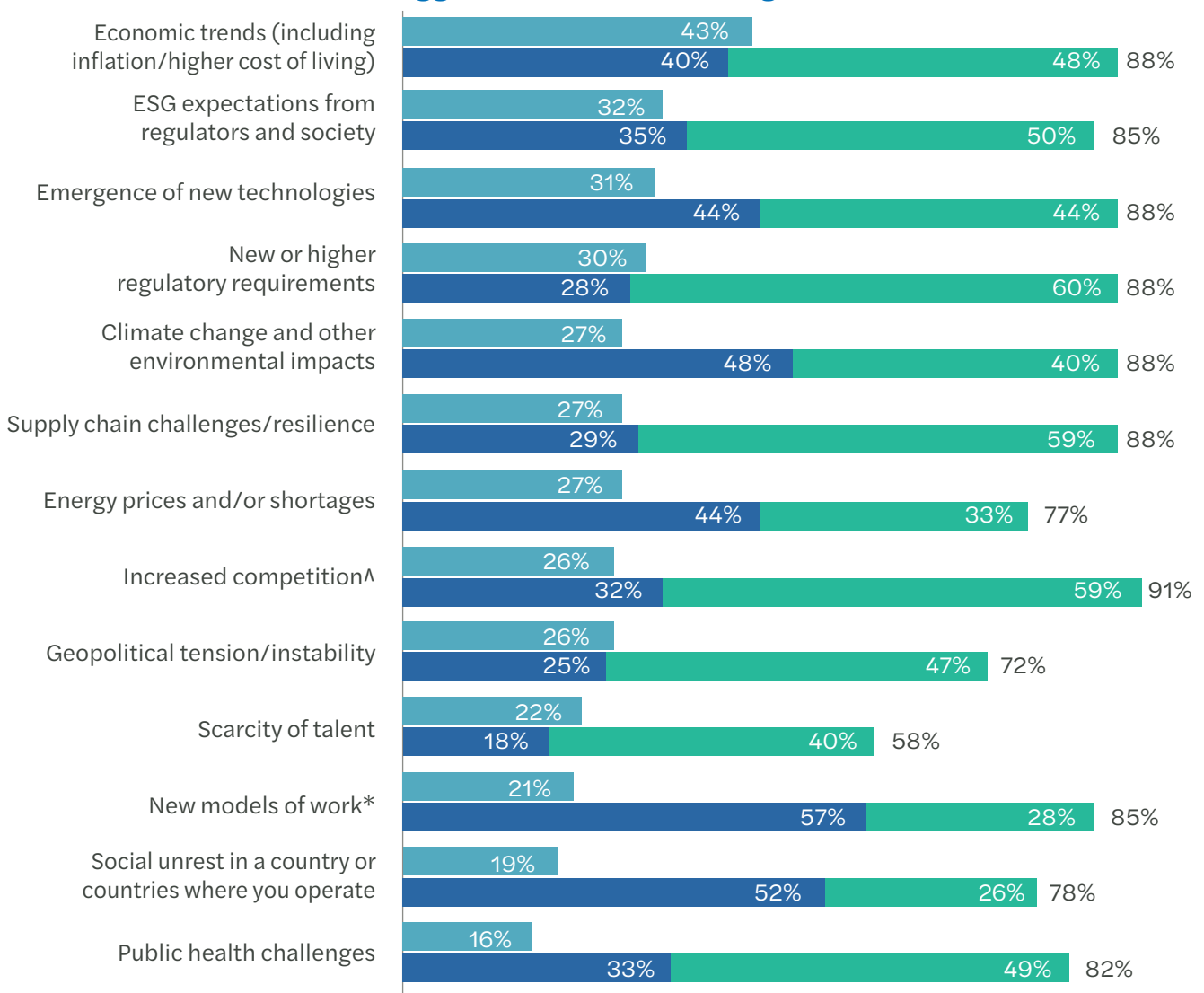
## UK trends and challenges

### UK executives identify economic factors as the most significant influence on their business outlook, followed by rising ESG expectations, the emergence of new technologies, and evolving regulatory demands.

Confidence in navigating these market trends has declined slightly, with executives expressing the greatest concern over talent scarcity, geopolitical

instability, and energy costs or shortages. This cautious outlook is reflected in a drop in the confidence index, falling from 42% in 2024 to 37% in 2025.

#### Biggest trends and challenges



\* Previous wording was "New models of work such as flexible and remote working"

Λ Previous wording was "Increased competition in your industry"

Key trends expected to have biggest impact on business in next 12 months

Level of confidence in preparedness for key trends:

Very confident Fairly confident

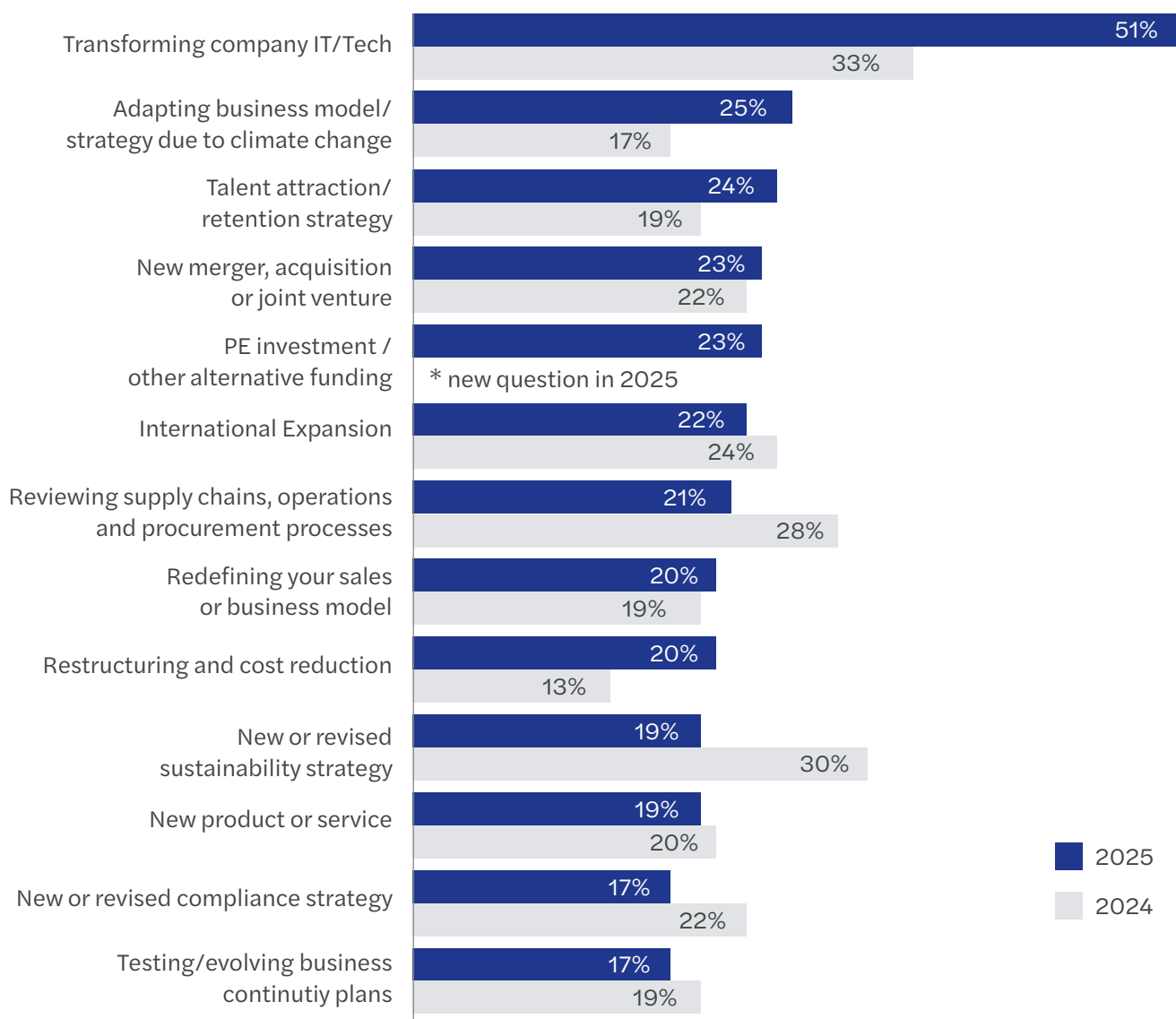
## Topping the C-suite agenda

**UK C-suite leaders are prioritising tech transformation, climate adaptation, and talent retention in 2025. These top three have gained momentum since 2024, while private equity investment debuts as a key focus—reflecting a shift toward scalable, future-facing growth strategies amid evolving economic and environmental pressures.**

While supply chains have moved down the strategic priority list for UK business leaders—from third place in 2024 to seventh in 2025—these remain a significant area of focus for UK executives. Thirty

percent of UK leaders cite procurement and supply chain constraints as likely impediments to business growth in 2025, underlining the enduring relevance of robust supply chain strategies.

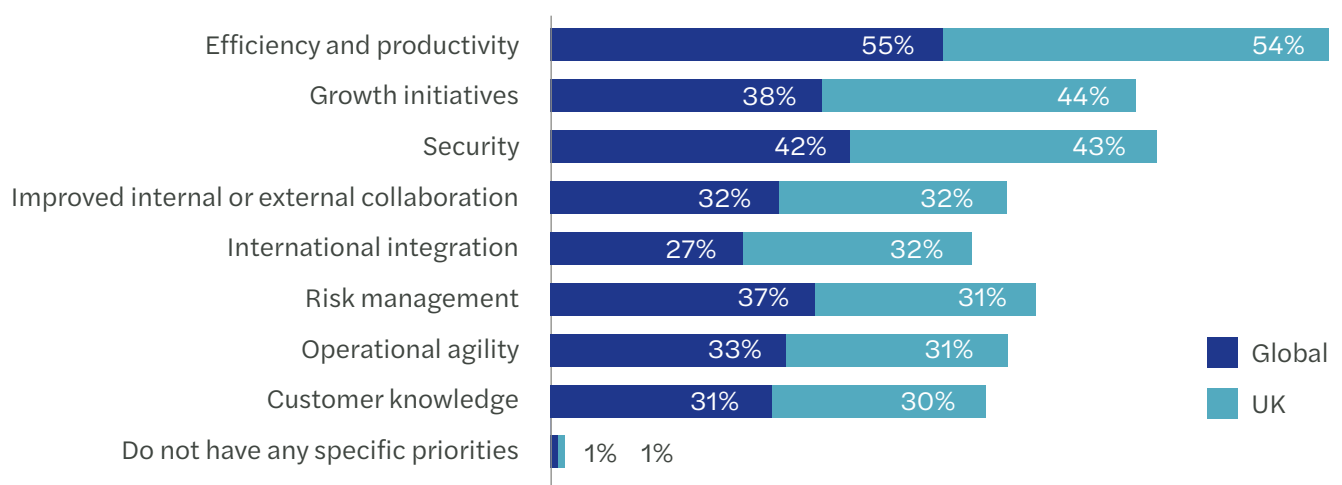
### Top strategic priorities



## Digital agility and data-powered transformation

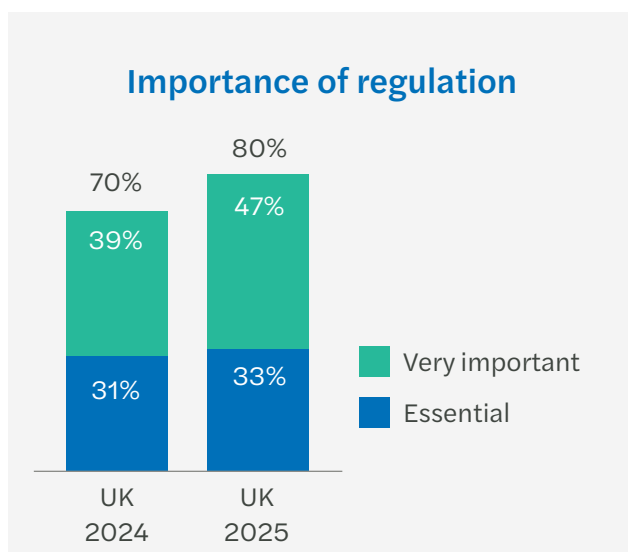
**UK business leaders continue to prioritise digital transformation, with a strong emphasis on efficiency, growth, and security—closely aligned with global trends. Yet, a lower focus on risk management could indicate a strategic gap, particularly as AI adoption and its organisational impact grow.**

### Top digital transformation priorities of businesses

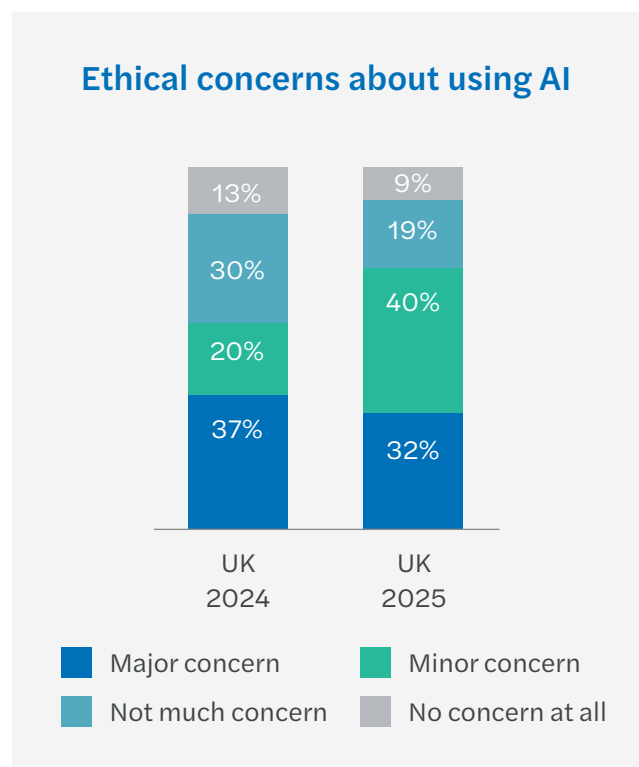


While UK leaders are more likely than their global peers to see AI as having a major impact, rising ethical concerns and calls for regulation (54% vs 49%) suggest increasing awareness of the risks and responsibilities that come with it.

### Importance of regulation



### Ethical concerns about using AI



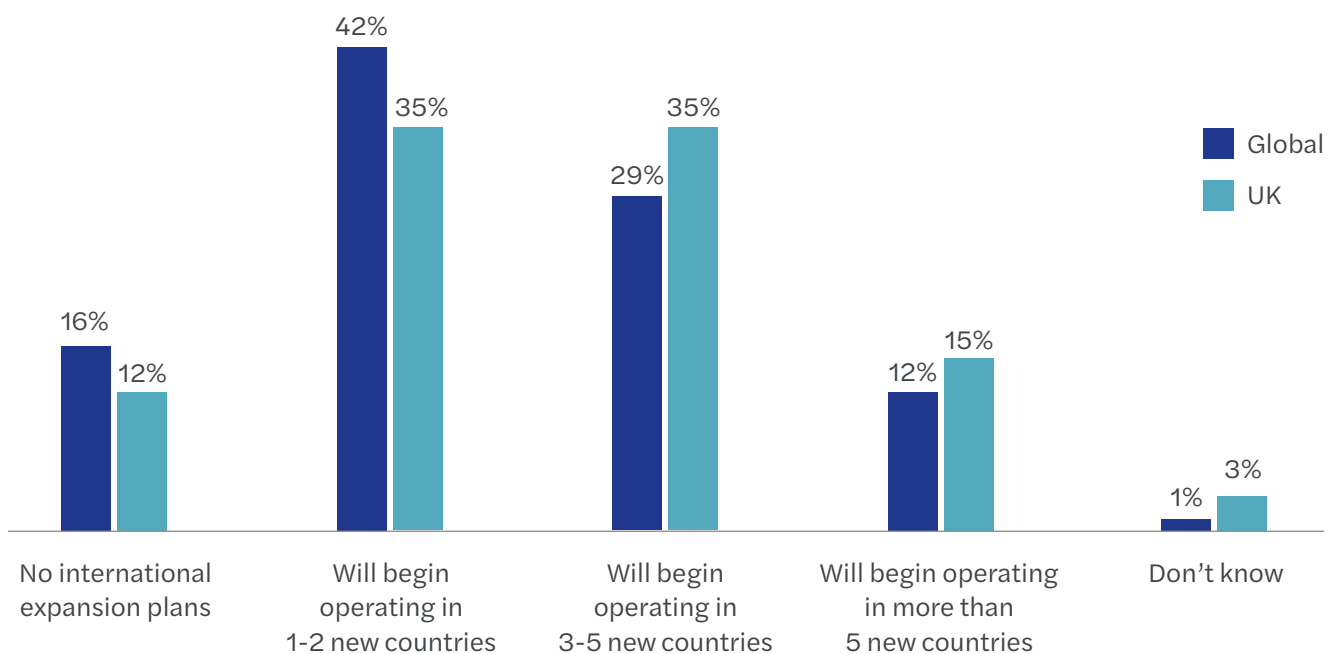


## International expansion

**International expansion has declined slightly in strategic priority for UK businesses, dropping from fourth to sixth place this year. Despite this, a strong 85% still plan to expand internationally within the next five years.**

When setting up abroad, the main challenges cited include navigating complex local regulations and managing political tensions in target markets.

### International expansion plans



### Biggest challenges in setting up operations in new countries





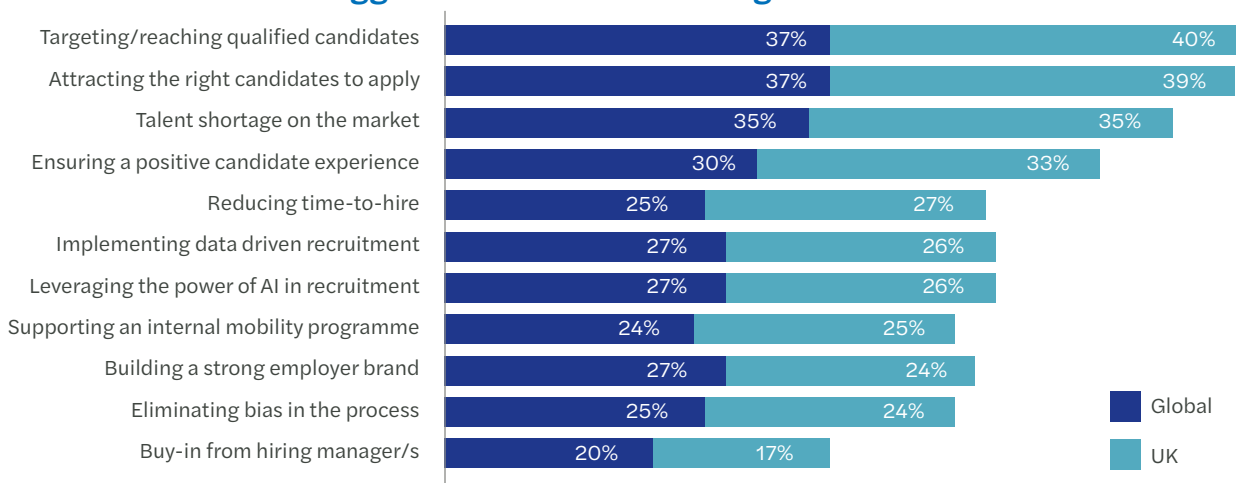
## Talent and leadership

**Talent strategy has become a growing priority for UK executives, rising from 19% in 2024 to 24% in 2025. This shift reflects ongoing challenges in recruitment, particularly in attracting and reaching suitable candidates, amid a broader talent shortage – trends consistent with global patterns.**

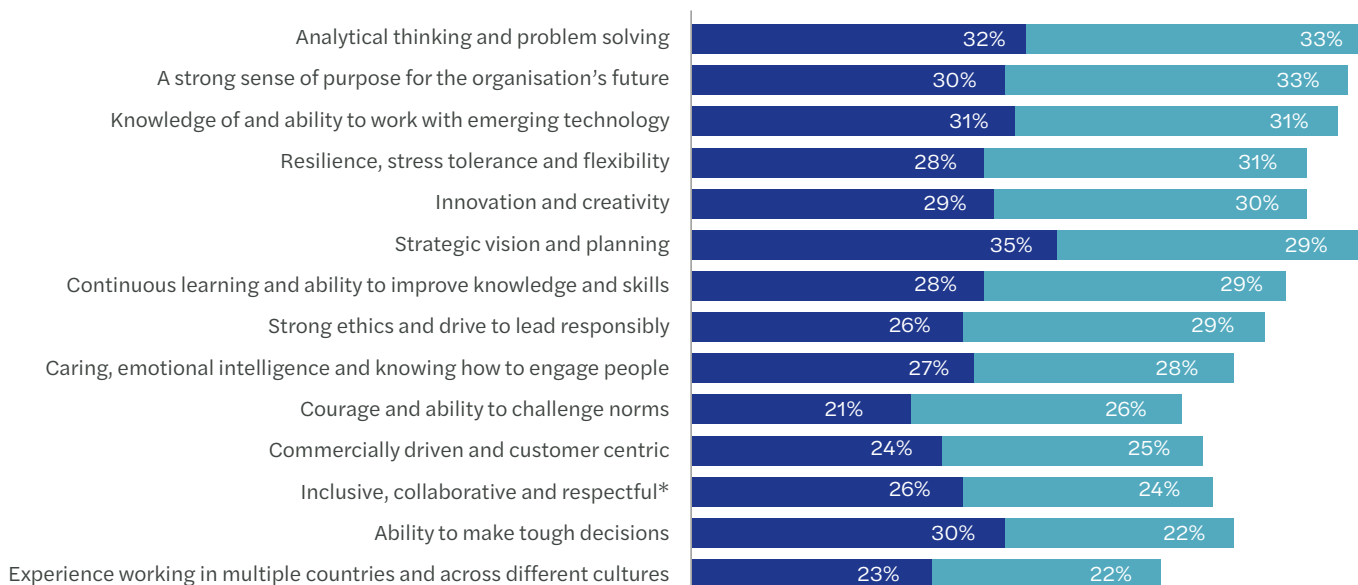
Flexible and hybrid working models remain top priorities for UK business leaders, mirroring global preferences. The primary objective of hybrid working is to provide greater flexibility for employees.

In preparing for the year ahead, UK C-suite leaders emphasise the importance of analytical thinking and a strong sense of purpose, along with technological knowledge and resilience, as key leadership qualities.

### Biggest recruitment challenges



### Leadership qualities needed to respond to anticipated challenges



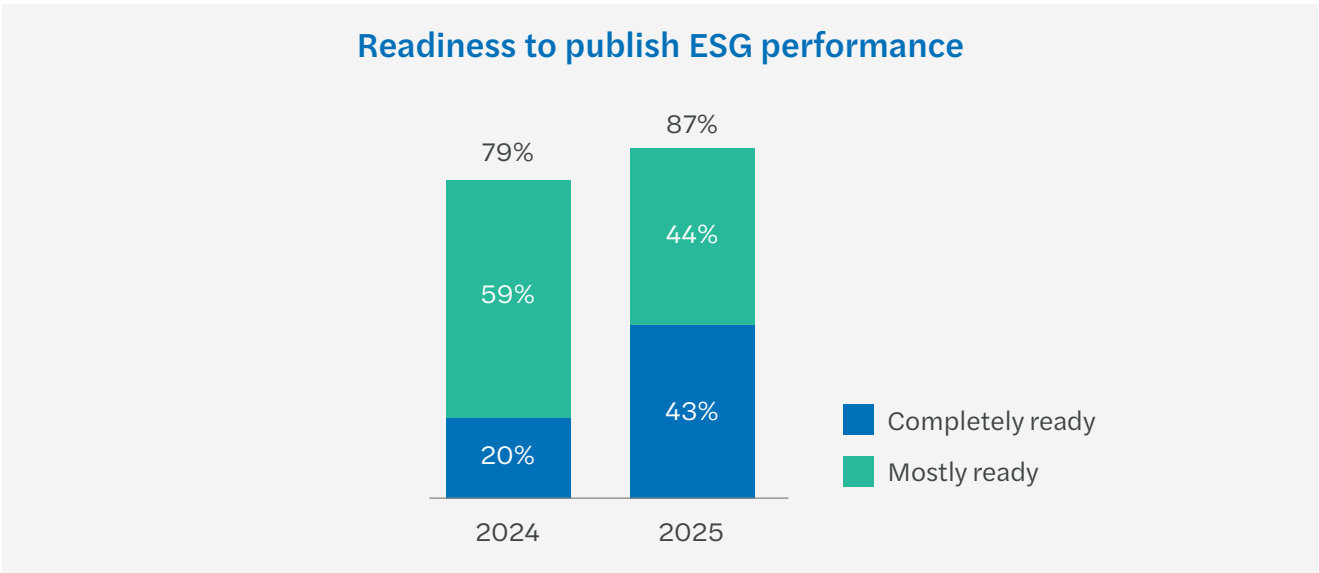
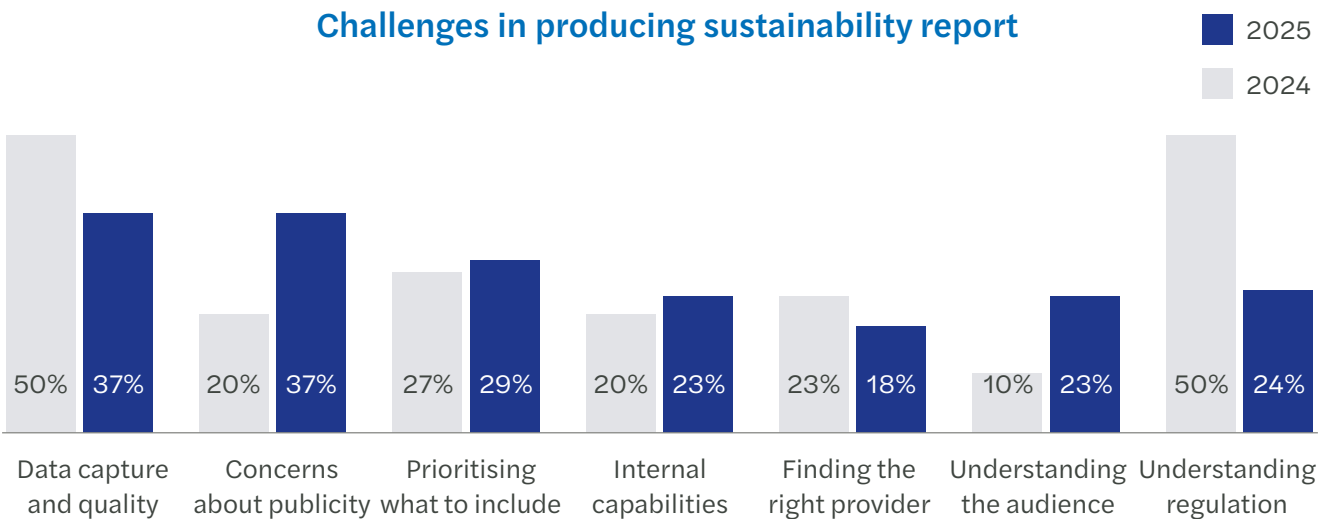
# Responsibility for sustainability

The data reflects a clear evolution in how UK businesses approach sustainability. CEOs are shifting focus from strategy development to action, with more adapting business models in response to climate change.

ESG reporting readiness has more than doubled, with 43% now fully prepared to publish performance compared to 20% last year. This is despite many seeing reporting as a cost (57%) rather than an opportunity. Compared to last year, challenges around data capture are easing, and understanding of regulation has improved significantly. However,

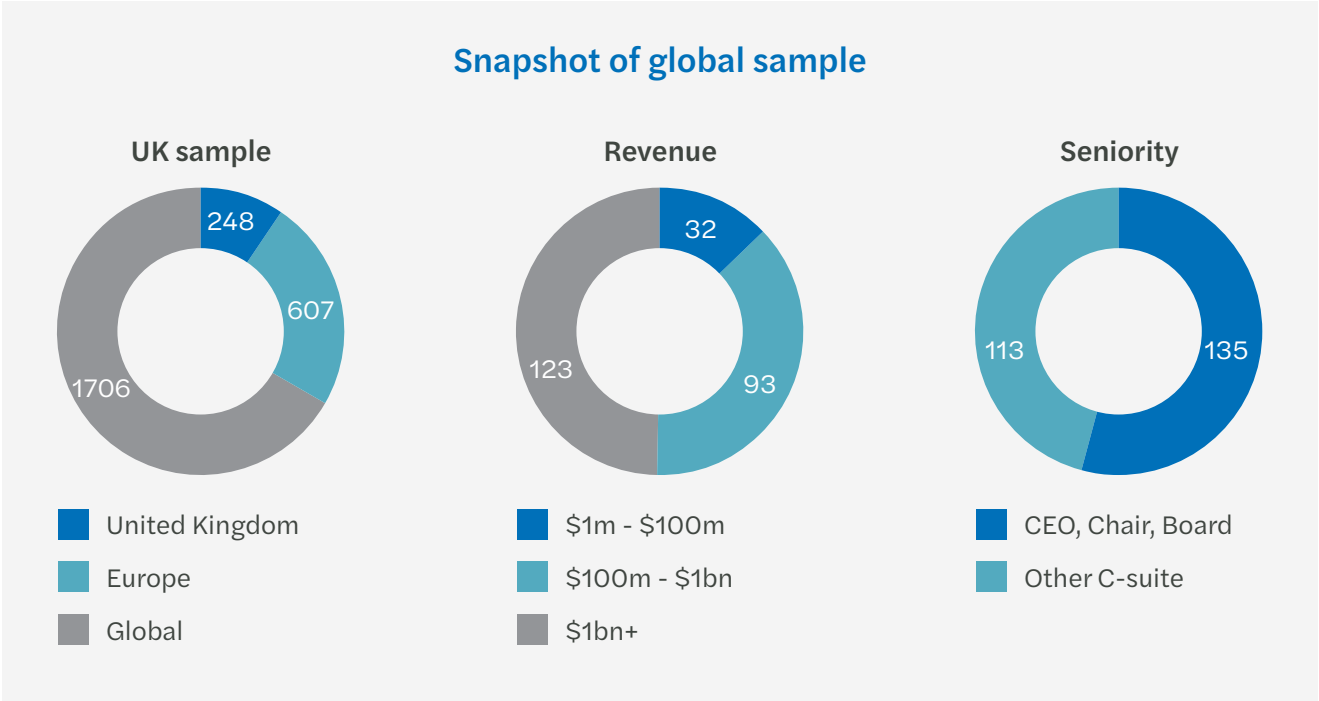
concern about disclosing areas for improvement has risen sharply, suggesting greater sensitivity to reputational risk as transparency becomes a growing expectation.

Overall, UK firms are moving from intention to implementation.



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Methodology



Research methodology

Fifth edition of Forvis Mazars’ annual global survey of C-suite executives.

**Sourced via:** online panel and Forvis Mazars’ invitee link.

**Participant criteria:** C-suite executives at for-profit organisations with annual revenues of \$1m+.

**Fieldwork:** 28 September – 23 October, 2024.

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