



German- Southern African Business Outlook 2025



Foreword

Dear readers,

Southern Africa stands at a critical juncture as it faces significant challenges and opportunities that will shape its future trajectory.

For the purpose of this study, Southern Africa includes the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The AHK Southern Africa represents the following countries: Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Angola is represented by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Angola, while Tanzania falls under the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce for Eastern Africa.

Within the region, South Africa is by far the largest and most important economy and serves as the gateway to the region. The country's political landscape shifted recently with the May 2024 election of a new government committed to

market-oriented reforms. These reforms aim to attract foreign investors and address severe challenges.

The survey respondents are cautiously optimistic about future developments, with most expressing confidence in their business prospects and the anticipated impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Most companies surveyed hope for increased political stability, along with measures to tackle corruption and crime, as essential factors for supporting business in South Africa.

The lack of infrastructure investments over the past decade has led to regular load shedding and problems with the supply of electricity, water, and transportation, resulting in higher costs and lower productivity. The deterioration of public services and state-owned enterprises has only exacerbated the situation.

Despite these challenges, South Africa remains a focal point for international foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa, often serving as a hub for southern Africa.

We are confident that this study will be a valuable resource for your operations in southern Africa, and for those considering entering the southern African market.

We would like to thank the companies in Germany and Southern Africa that contributed to the 2025 German-Southern African Business Outlook.

Yours truly,



Andreas Glunz
Managing Partner
International Business,
KPMG in Germany



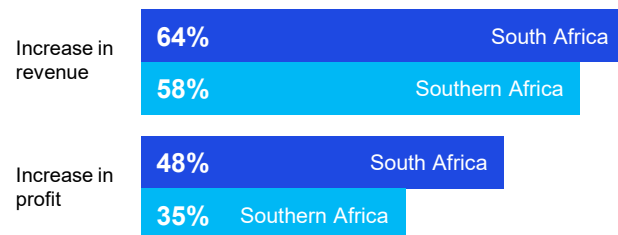
Simone Pohl
CEO,
Southern African-
German Chamber of
Commerce and Industry



Executive Summary (1/2)

Revenues and profits expected to grow

German companies in South Africa and Southern Africa (excl. South Africa) expect their revenues and profits to increase in 2025. While many companies expect no change, only a few anticipate a decline.



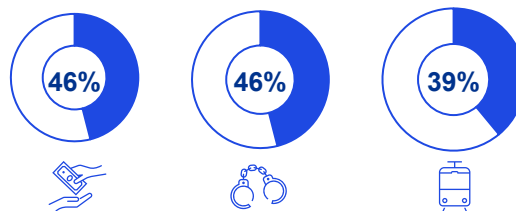
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025

New administration must tackle corruption and crime and improve infrastructure

More than three quarters of the companies surveyed (77%) expect the economic situation in South Africa to improve under the new government.

For nearly half of the companies (46% in each case), fighting corruption and crime are the most important tasks of the new South African administration.

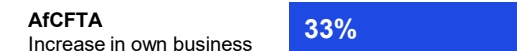
Similarly, the expansion and modernisation of infrastructure is a key concern for 39% of respondents.



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025

African Free Trade Area and US trade agreement positively impact businesses

A third of the companies surveyed (33%) expect the free trade zone AfCFTA to have a positive impact on their business in Southern Africa. 28% report positive or even very positive effects of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025

“After the parliamentary elections in South Africa in May 2024, the new Government of National Unity was formed. The respondents of the survey are cautiously optimistic that reforms will be introduced and their business will increase in 2025. However, infrastructure deficits, corruption and crime remain the biggest challenges.

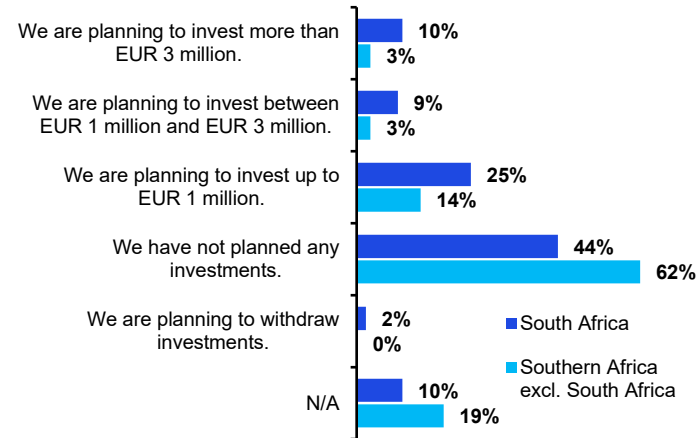


Andreas Glunz
Managing Partner
International Business,
KPMG in Germany

Executive Summary (2/2)

Investments mainly planned for South Africa

44% of respondents stated that they are planning to invest in South Africa over the next three years, 10% even plan to invest more than EUR 3 million.

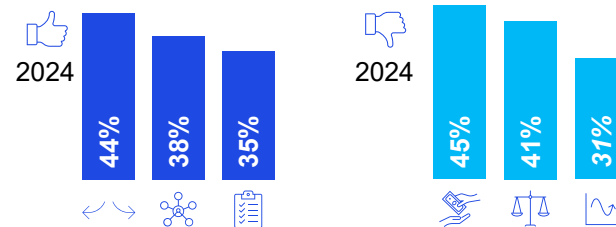


Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025

Location advantages, but also significant challenges

South Africa's three best-rated location factors cited by German companies are the country's access to other sub-Saharan markets (44%), the supplier network and reliable business partners (38%), and the regulatory and business environment (35%).

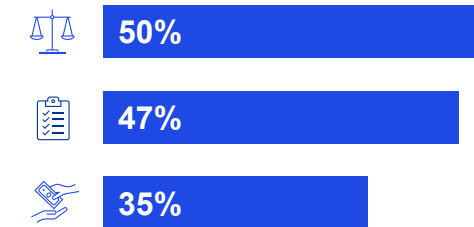
The high level of corruption (45%), political uncertainty (41%), the limited availability of skilled workers and market uncertainty (31% in each case) pose the biggest challenges for German companies in South Africa.



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025

More political stability and less bureaucracy desired

More stable political conditions (50%), less bureaucracy (reducing red tape) (47%) and anti-corruption regulations are the top 3 factors that would support German companies' businesses in South Africa.



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025



South Africa is not only an important trading partner for the German economy, but many German companies are already successfully operating there. While obstacles do exist, there are considerable opportunities to do business in the country, particularly due to its role as a springboard into the wider region. The new government's approach to reforms will be key in shaping the business environment.



Simone Pohl
CEO,
AHK Southern Africa

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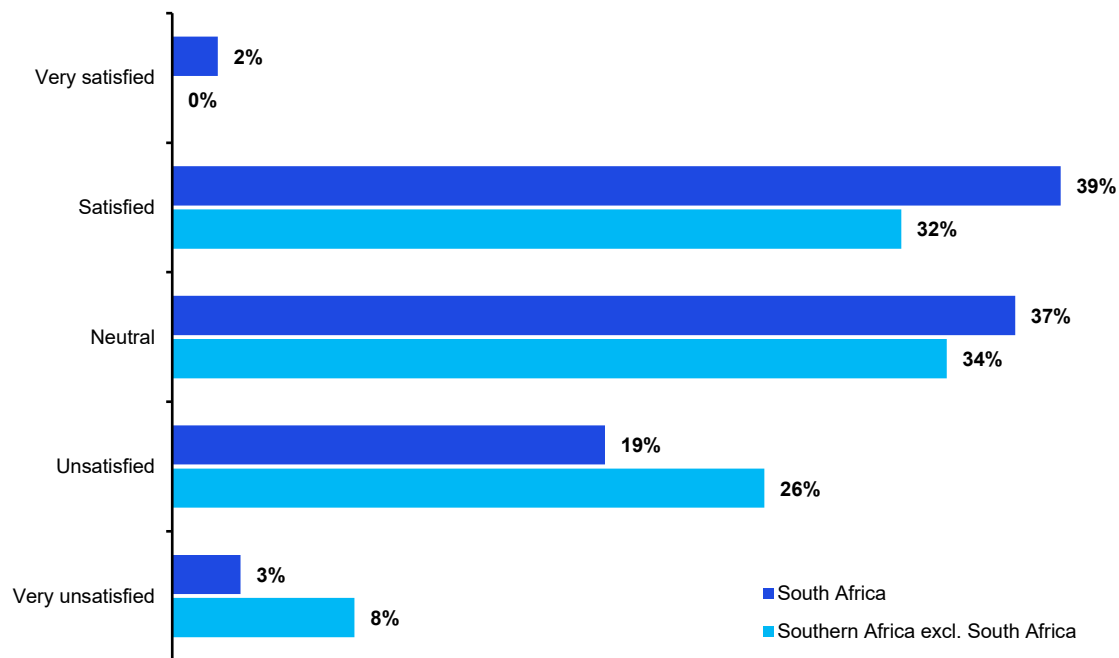
01

Business development and future expectations



Business sentiment varies widely

Figure 1: How satisfied are you with your current business situation in South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?



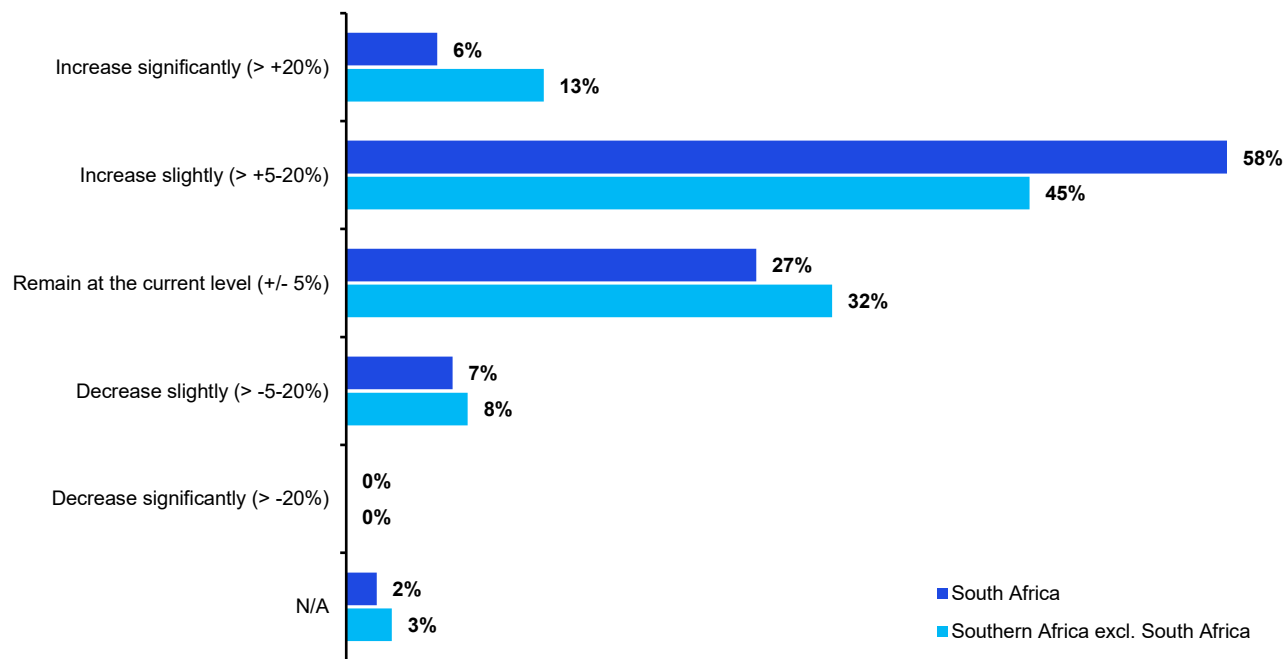
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=90; Southern Africa: n=39); rounding differences possible



- In South Africa, 41% of the companies surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with their business. However, 37% rate their business situation as neutral, and slightly more than one in five companies (22%) are dissatisfied or even very dissatisfied.
- The sentiment is slightly more negative for Southern Africa (excluding South Africa). 32% rate their business situation in southern Africa as positive, none as very positive. However, 34% of businesses are dissatisfied with their local business, of which 8% being very dissatisfied.

Revenue growth expected

Figure 2: How do you expect your revenue to develop over the next 12 months in South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?



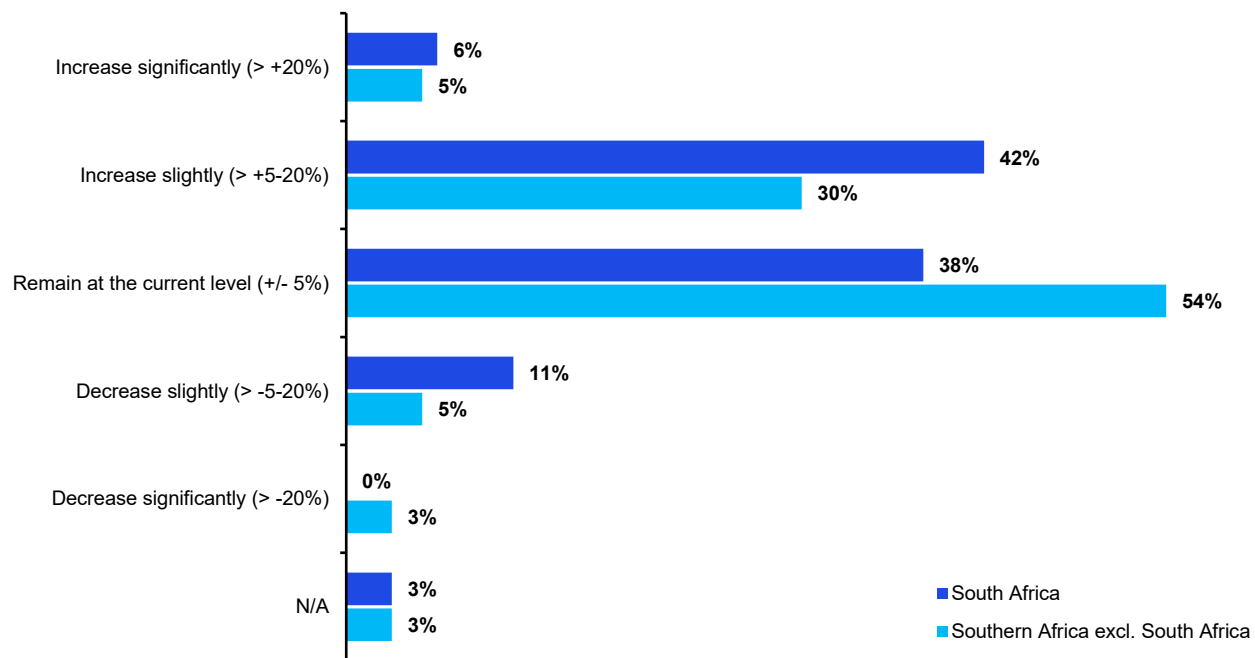
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=89; Southern Africa: n=38); rounding differences possible

- Looking ahead to the next 12 months, the majority of companies surveyed expects rising revenue, both for South Africa and the wider Southern Africa region.
- For South Africa, almost two thirds of the companies surveyed (64%) expect revenue growth of at least 5% in 2025. 6% even expect an increase of more than 20%.
- Around a quarter (27%) expect their revenue to remain the same, while only 7% anticipate a decline.
- The outlook for the wider region of Southern Africa (excluding South Africa) is also positive. More than half of the companies (58%) expect revenue to increase here too. As many as 13% expect revenue growth of more than 20%.
- Around a third (32%) expect their revenue in Southern Africa to remain unchanged in 2025, while 8% anticipate a decline.



Earnings outlook is also positive

Figure 3: How do you expect your profit before taxes to develop over the next 12 months in South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=88; Southern Africa: n=37); rounding differences possible



- The profit outlook for 2025 is also largely positive. However, companies are more optimistic about their profitability in South Africa than in the rest of the region.
- For South Africa, almost half of the companies surveyed (48%) expect their pre-tax profit to increase by at least 5%. 6% even expect an increase of more than 20%.
- A good third (38%) expect profits to remain the same, while just over one in ten companies (11%) anticipate a slight decline.
- In Southern Africa (excluding South Africa), the majority, i.e. more than half of the companies surveyed (54%), expect profits to remain unchanged. Slightly more than one in three companies (35%) expect profits to increase, 5% even by more than 20%.
- Only 8% of companies anticipate a fall in pre-tax profits.

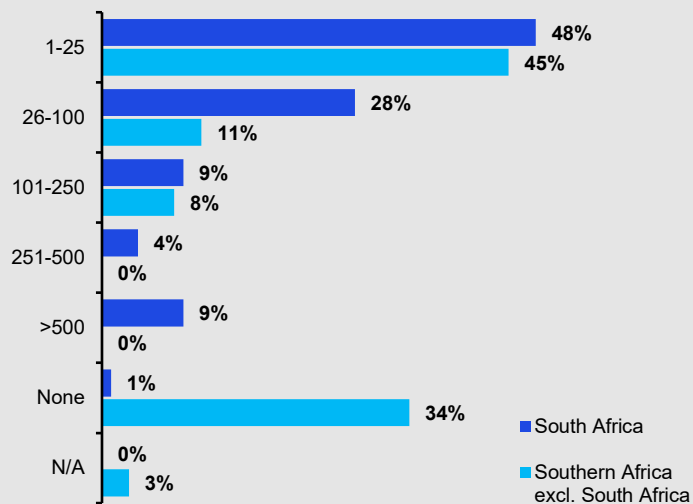
Slight upward trend in employment

- While almost all of the companies surveyed (99%) employ staff in South Africa, two thirds (64%) of companies in Southern Africa (excluding South Africa) do so.

- The majority of the companies surveyed employ fewer than 100 people locally (South Africa: 76%; Southern Africa: 56%).
- Most companies expect the number of employees in both South Africa (53%) and Southern Africa (50%) to remain

- the same in 2025. However, 41% of companies in South Africa and 29% of companies in the rest of Southern Africa are planning to increase their staff.
- Hardly any companies expect to cut jobs.

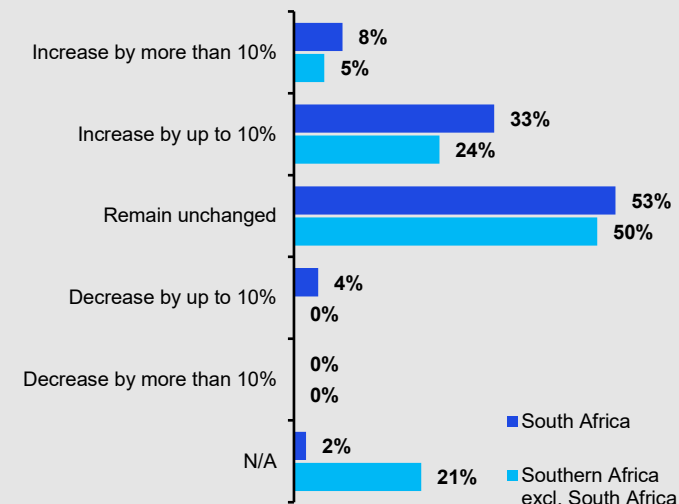
Figure 4: How many employees do you have in South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=89; Southern Africa: n=38); rounding differences possible



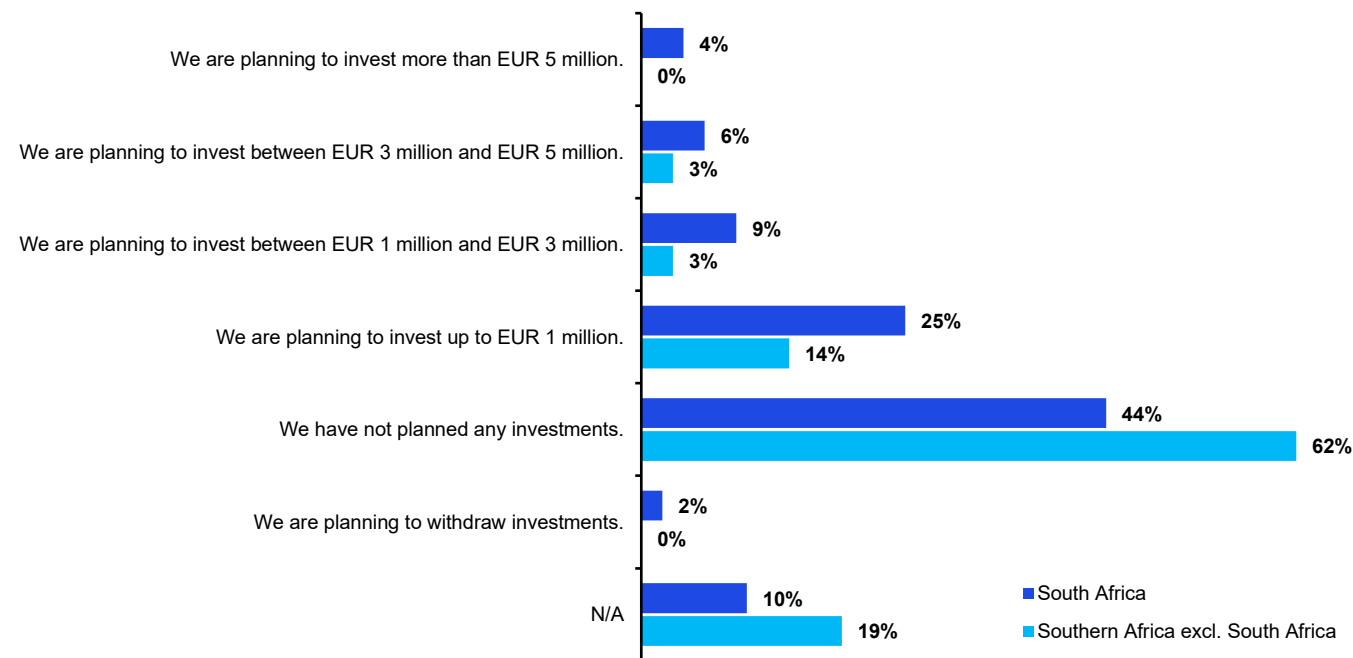
Figure 5: How do you expect your company's number of employees to develop over the next 12 months?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=89; Southern Africa: n=38); rounding differences possible

Investments mainly planned for South Africa

Figure 6: **What are your investment plans in the next 3 years for South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?**



- Of the companies surveyed, just under half (44%) plan to invest during the next three years. One in ten companies even plan to invest more than EUR 3 million. Investments are mainly planned in South Africa.
- However, an equally large proportion of companies (44%) have no investment plans for South Africa for the next three years.
- For the Southern Africa region (excluding South Africa), only one in five of the companies surveyed (20%) are planning investments. However, the majority (62%) do not expect to invest further in the region.
- Hardly any of the companies are planning to withdraw existing investments.

Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=89; Southern Africa: n=37); rounding differences possible

02

Focus on South Africa



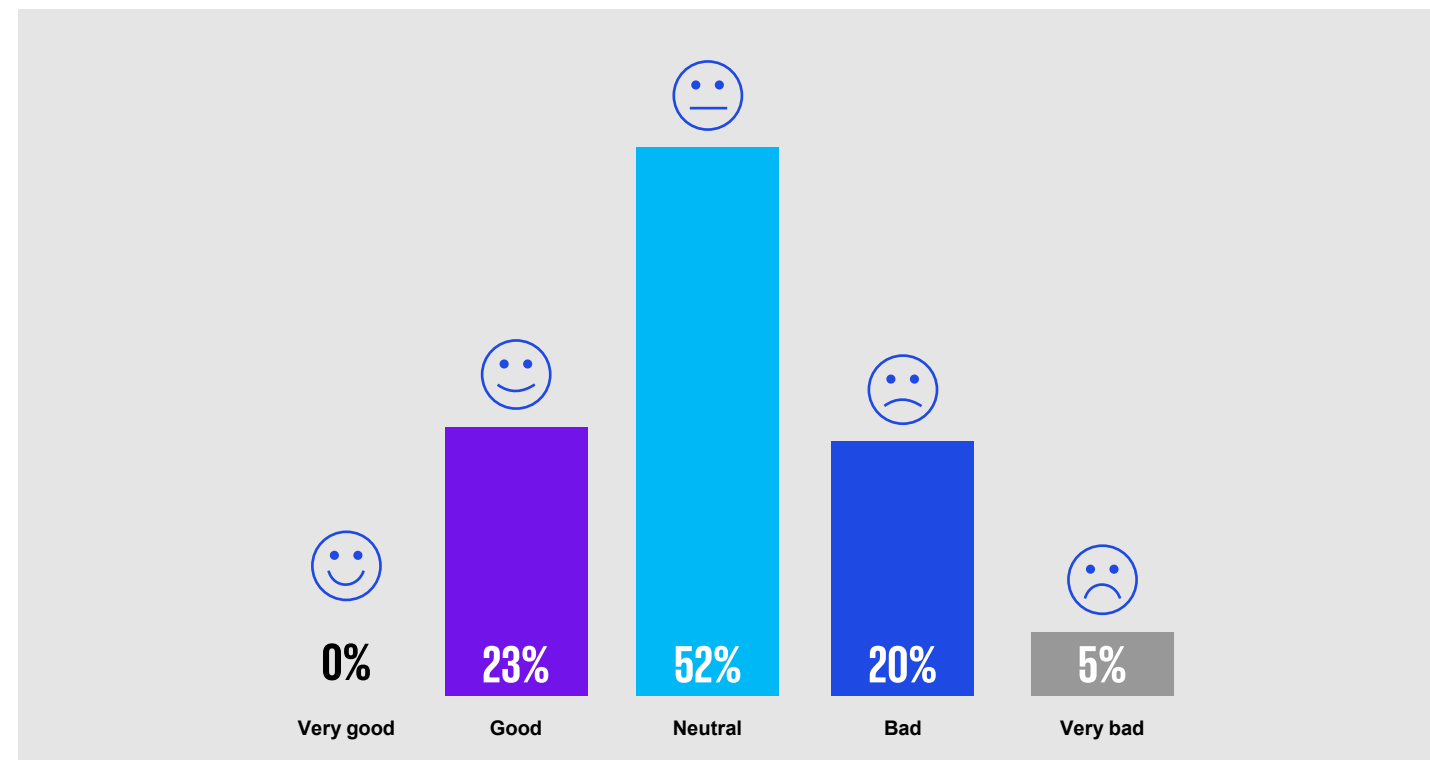
Balanced assessment of economic climate in South Africa

- The economic climate in South Africa is perceived as balanced by the companies surveyed. Around half (52%) of the companies rate the economic situation as neutral, just under a quarter rate (23%) it as good, while a further quarter (20%) rate it as poor or even very poor (5%).
- In 2023, the South African economy only recorded a small increase of 0.7%, and the International Monetary Fund is only forecasting slight growth of 1.1% for 2024 and 1.5% for 2025.¹



Note: ¹ IMF, Oct. 2024

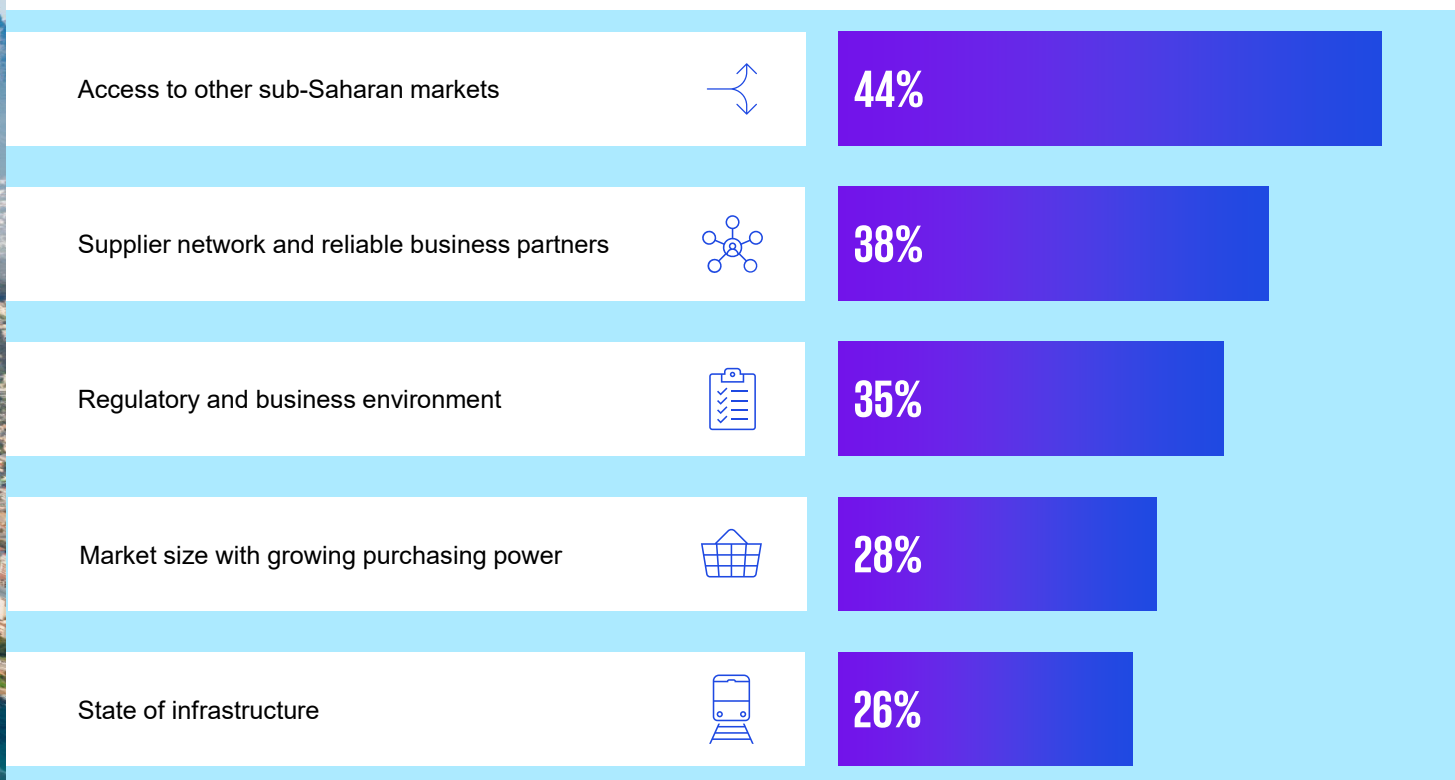
Figure 7: How do you rate the current economic climate in South Africa?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=95); rounding differences possible

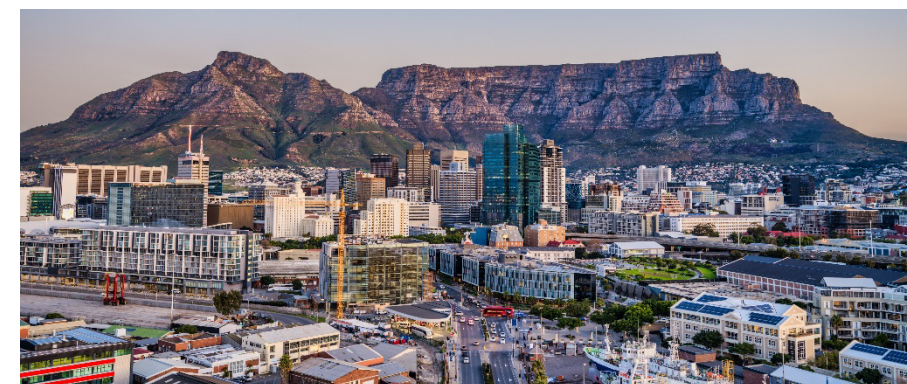
South Africa serves as the main gateway to the region

Figure 8: Please select the top 3 opportunities for your business in South Africa today.



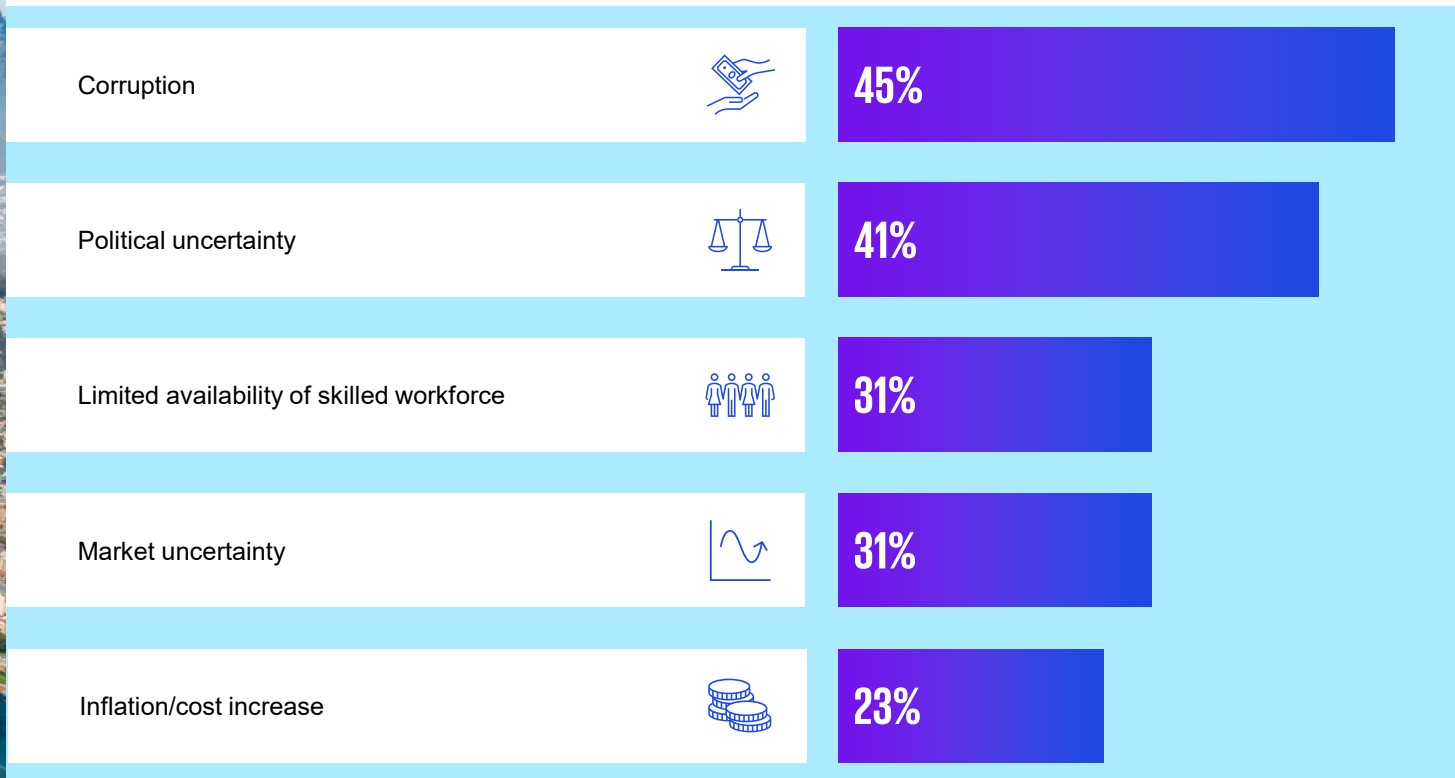
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=93); three answers possible

- South Africa is a strategic gateway to the region for most companies. In particular, access to other sub-Saharan markets is one of the three biggest business opportunities in South Africa for 44% of the companies surveyed.
- 38% particularly value the supplier network and reliable local business partners.
- Just over a third (35%) of the companies surveyed perceive the regulatory and business environment as one of the three most decisive business opportunities in South Africa.
- South Africa's market size with its growing purchasing power (28%) and the state of the country's infrastructure (e.g. transport, telecommunication; 26%) occupy 4th and 5th place.



Corruption and political uncertainty are the biggest pain points

Figure 9: Please select the top 3 obstacles for your business in South Africa today.



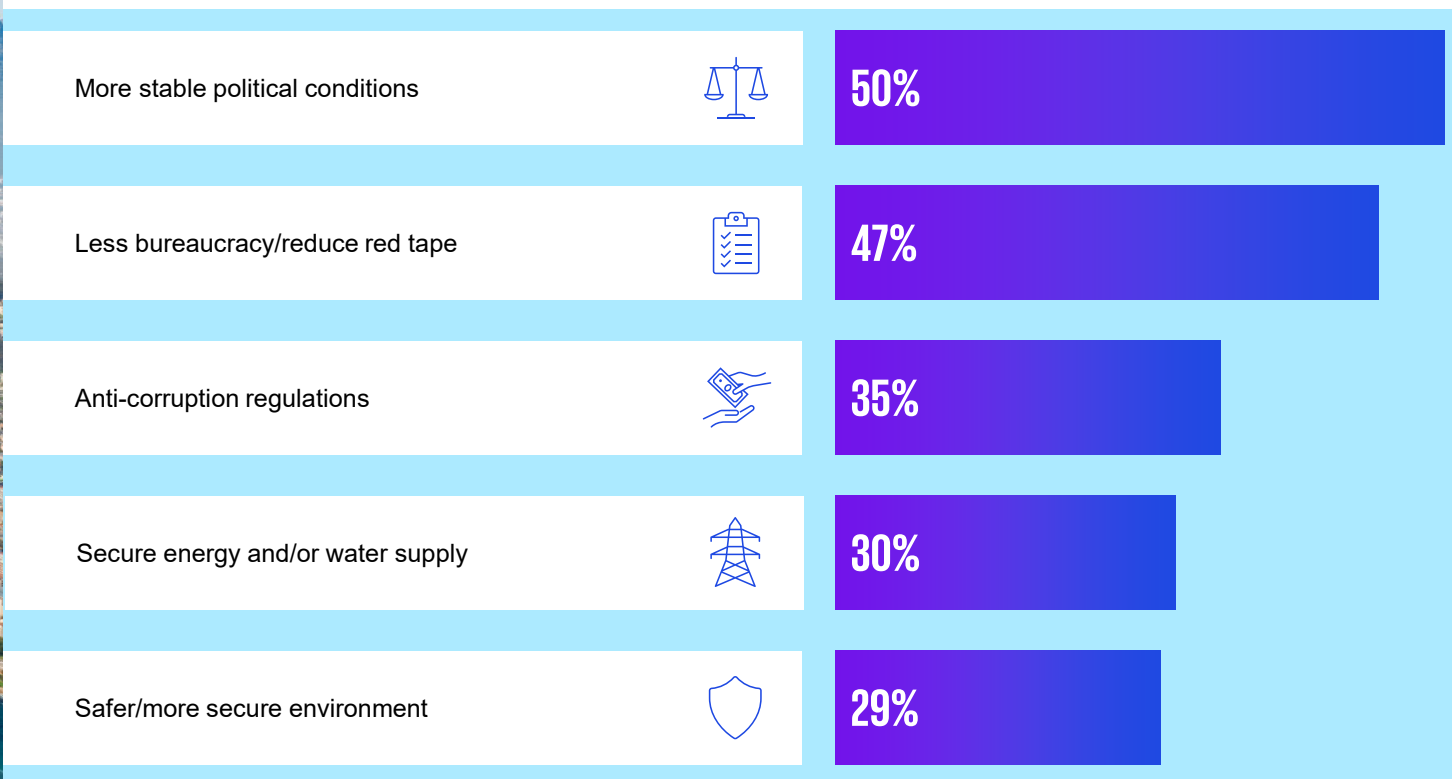
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=93); three answers possible



- Corruption is the biggest challenge for almost half of the companies surveyed (45%) when doing business in South Africa.
- The political uncertainty in the country is the second biggest obstacle for 41% of companies, even after the parliamentary elections in May 2024.
- The third biggest obstacle is the limited availability of skilled workers and the uncertainty of the local market (31% in each case).
- Inflation and price increases are also a challenge for almost one in four companies (23%) in South Africa.

Companies want more political stability and less bureaucracy

Figure 10: Please select the top 3 factors that would support your business in South Africa.



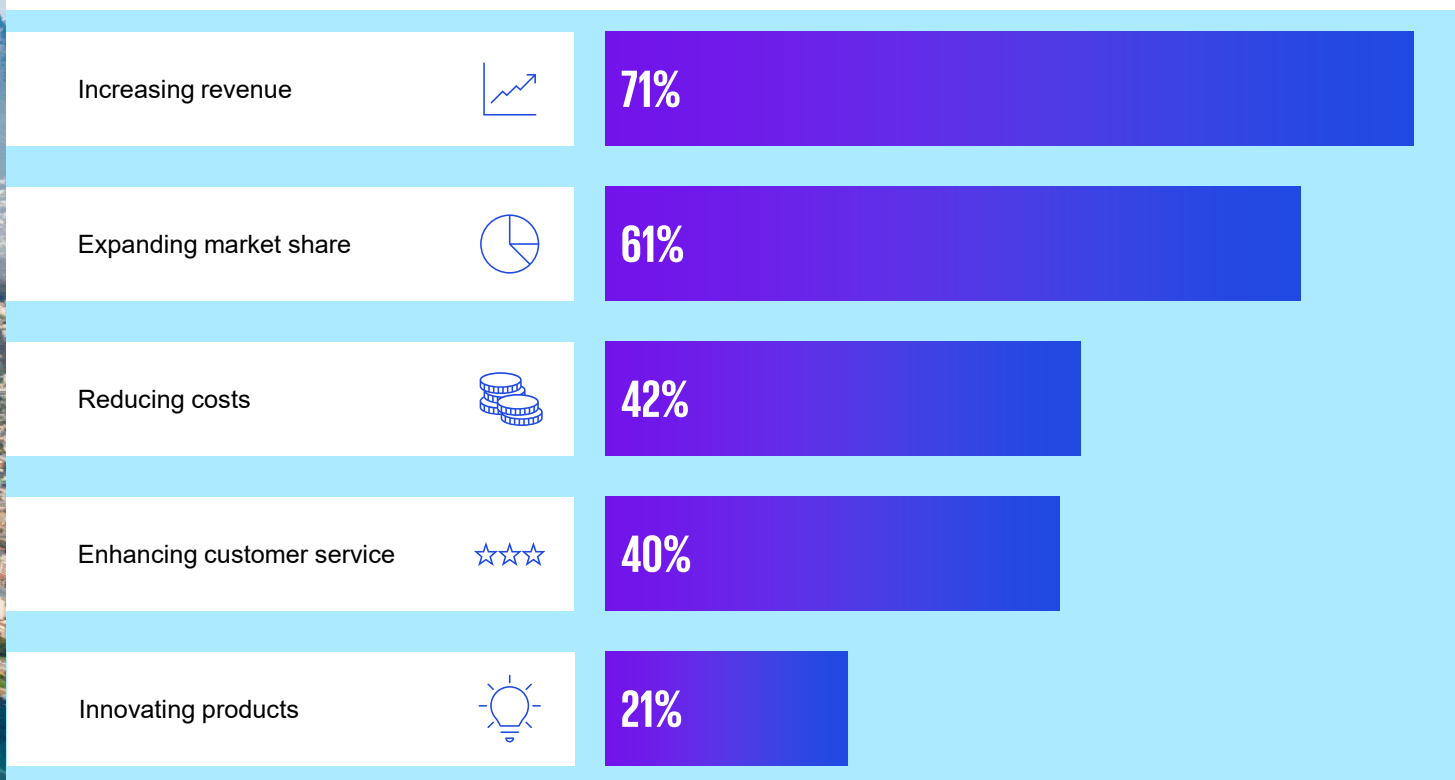
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); three answers possible

- For half of the companies surveyed (50%), a more stable political conditions is one of the three most important factors that would support their business in South Africa.
- A similarly important factor for 47% of the companies is the reduction of bureaucracy ("red tape").
- More than one in three companies (35%) also see anti-corruption measures as essential in order to be able to operate better in South Africa in the future.
- A secured energy and/or water supply (30%) and a safer and more secure environment (29%) rank 4th and 5th, respectively.



Increasing revenue is the most important short-term goal

Figure 11: **What are your company's top 3 priorities for the South African market for the next 12 months?**



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); three answers possible



- For 2025, growing revenue is the top priority for the companies surveyed. Almost three quarters (71%) rank this goal as one of the top priorities for this period.
- Expanding their market share in South Africa is also one of the top priorities for 61% of the companies surveyed.
- Rounding out the top 3 priorities for 2025 is the reduction of costs (42%).
- Improving customer service is also an important priority for 40% of companies, followed at some distance by product innovation (21%).

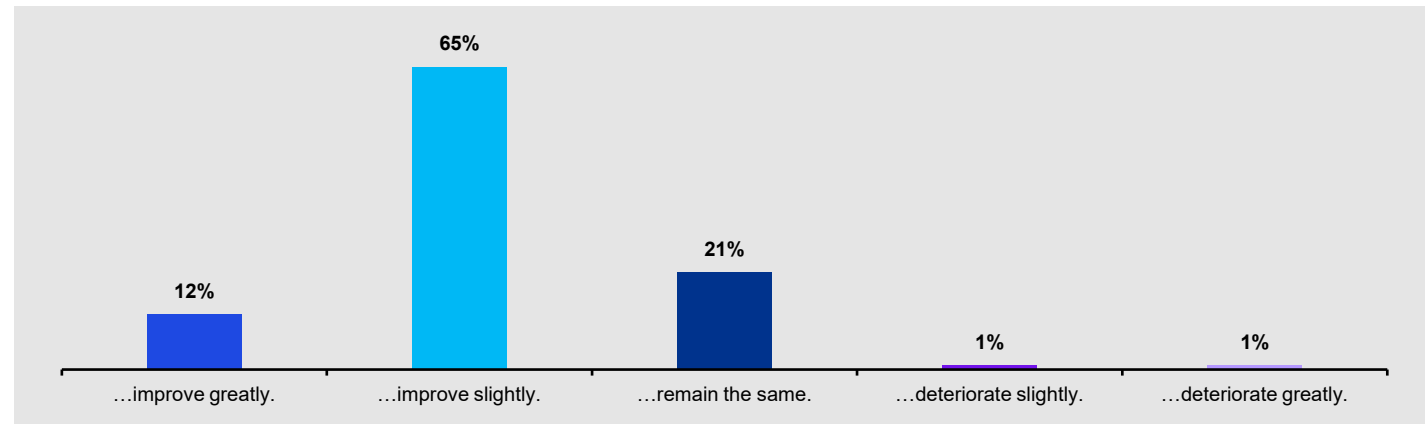
High economic hopes for new government



- With regard to their hopes for an improvement in the country's economic climate, companies are pinning their hopes on the new administration elected in May 2024.
- More than three quarters of the companies surveyed (77%) expect the economic situation in South Africa to improve, but 65% are cautiously optimistic.
- One in five companies (21%) expect no change, and hardly any companies expect the economic situation to deteriorate.

Figure 12: How has your assessment of the economic climate in South Africa changed due to the recent election results?

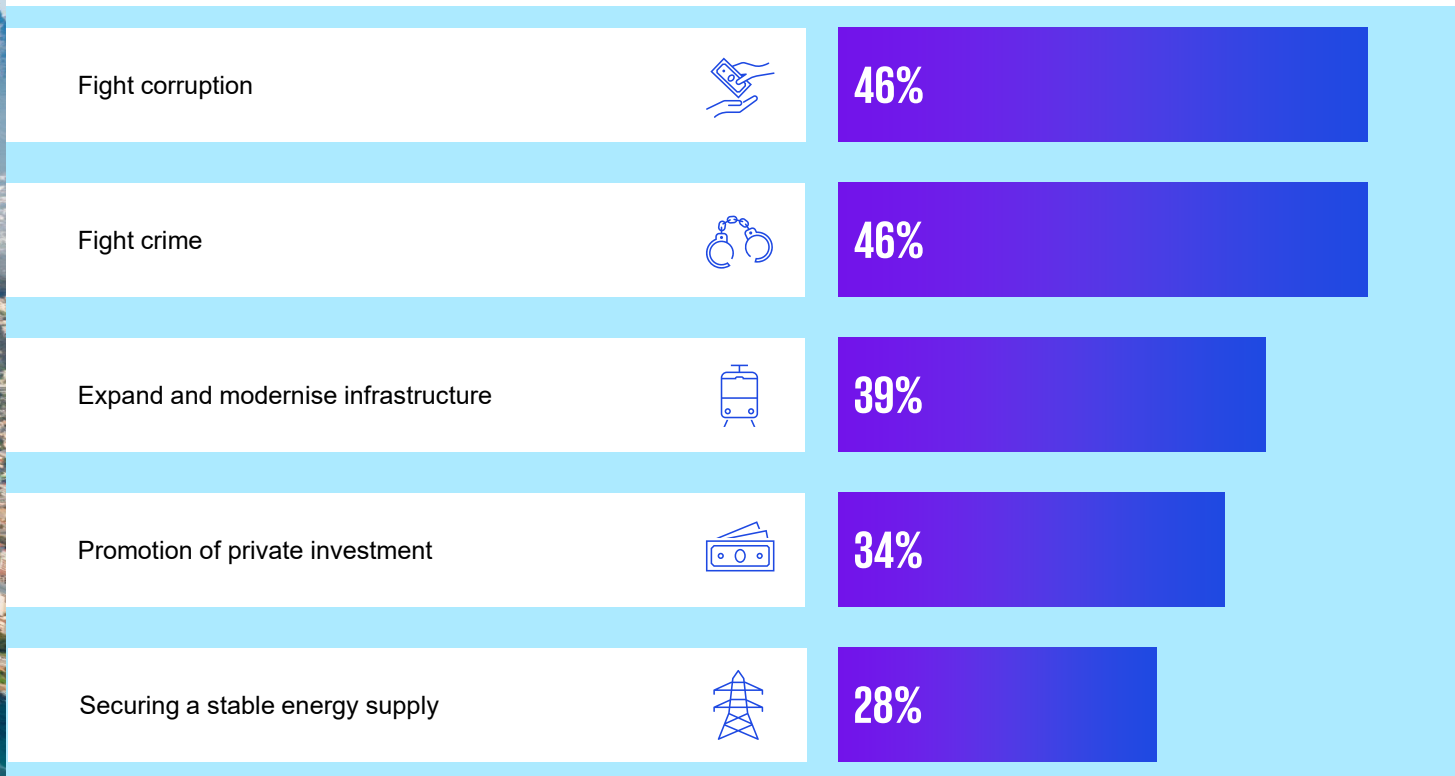
I now expect the economic climate in South Africa to...



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); rounding differences possible

New administration must tackle corruption and crime and improve infrastructure

Figure 13: What are your top 3 demands of the new South African government?



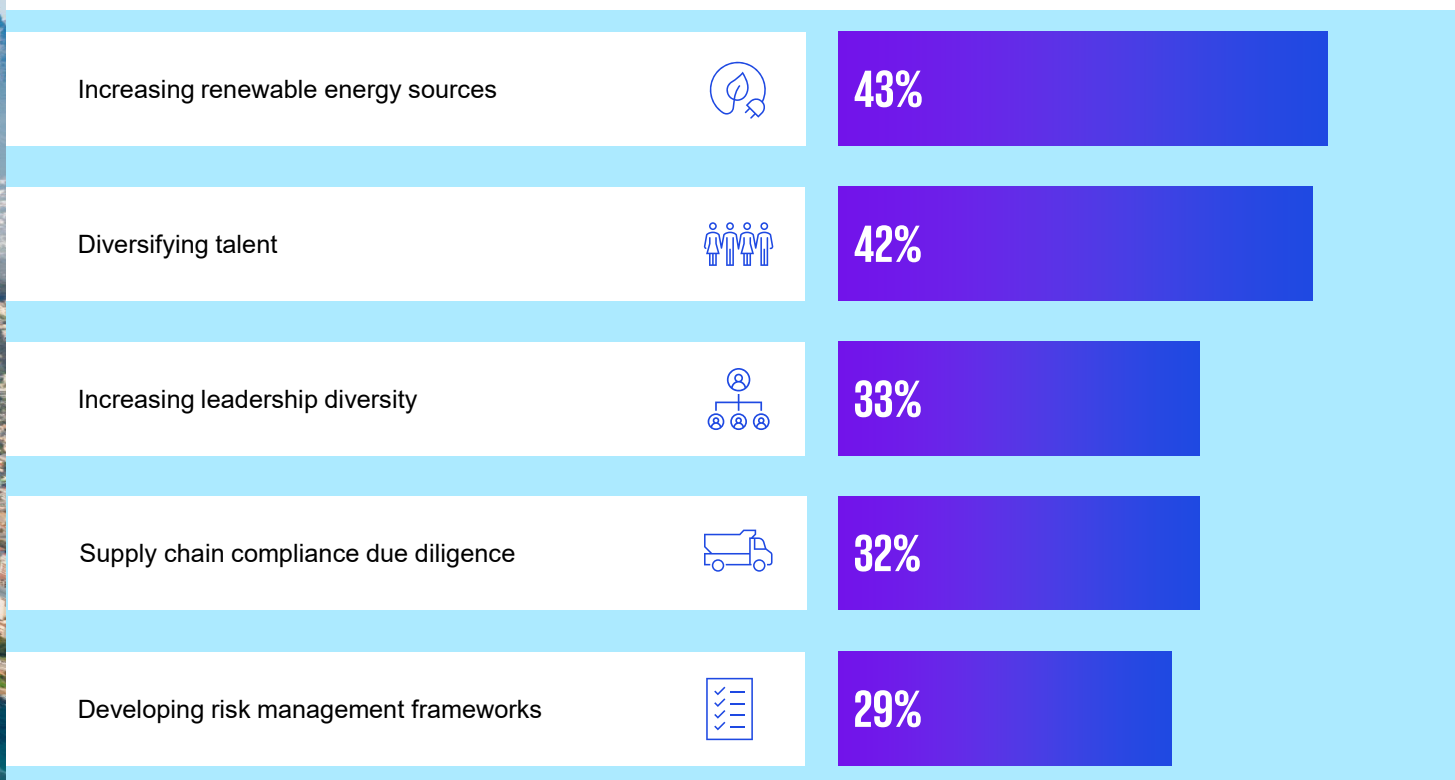
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); three answers possible

- For nearly half of the companies surveyed, fighting corruption (46%) and crime (46%) is one of the most important tasks of the new administration.
- Likewise, 39% see the expansion and modernisation of infrastructure (roads, ports, rail transport, electricity grids and water supply) as a priority.
- Companies also consider the promotion of private investment in South Africa (34%) and ensuring a stable energy supply (28%) to be relevant.

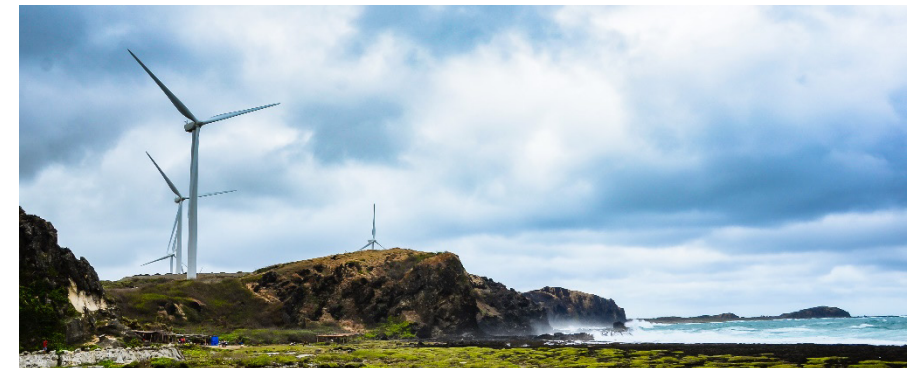


Renewable energies and more diversity are at the top of the ESG agenda

Figure 14: Which are the top 3 ESG topics most important for your company in South Africa?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); three answers possible



- The increased use of renewable energy sources and greater diversification of their local talent are seen by 43% and 42% of companies, respectively, as one of the most important ESG issues for their business in South Africa.
- More diversity in leadership positions is also high on the ESG agenda for a third of companies (33%).
- These topics are followed closely by supply chain compliance due diligence (32%) and the development of a risk management framework (29%).
- Further ESG topics are also seen as similarly relevant by the companies. These include an increased use of recycling practices (28%), a lower energy consumption (25%) and the implementation of whistleblower policies (23%).

03

Topics across Southern Africa



African Free Trade Area has a positive impact for a third of the companies

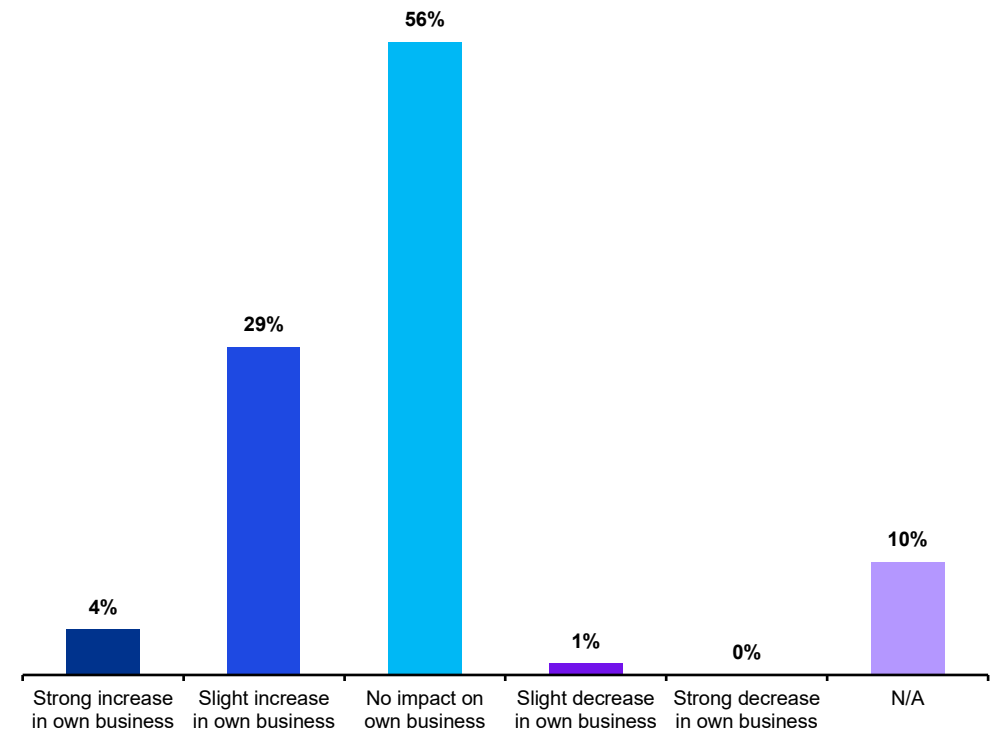
The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** is the world's largest free trade area, bringing together the 55 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately USD 3.4 trillion.¹

The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Union's long-term development strategy for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse.

- A third of the companies surveyed (33%) expect the free trade zone to have a positive impact and thus grow their business in Southern Africa.
- However, the majority does not expect any effects on their business in the region. Hardly any companies anticipate a deterioration.



Figure 15: To what extent will the AfCFTA impact your business operations in South Africa and/or Southern Africa?



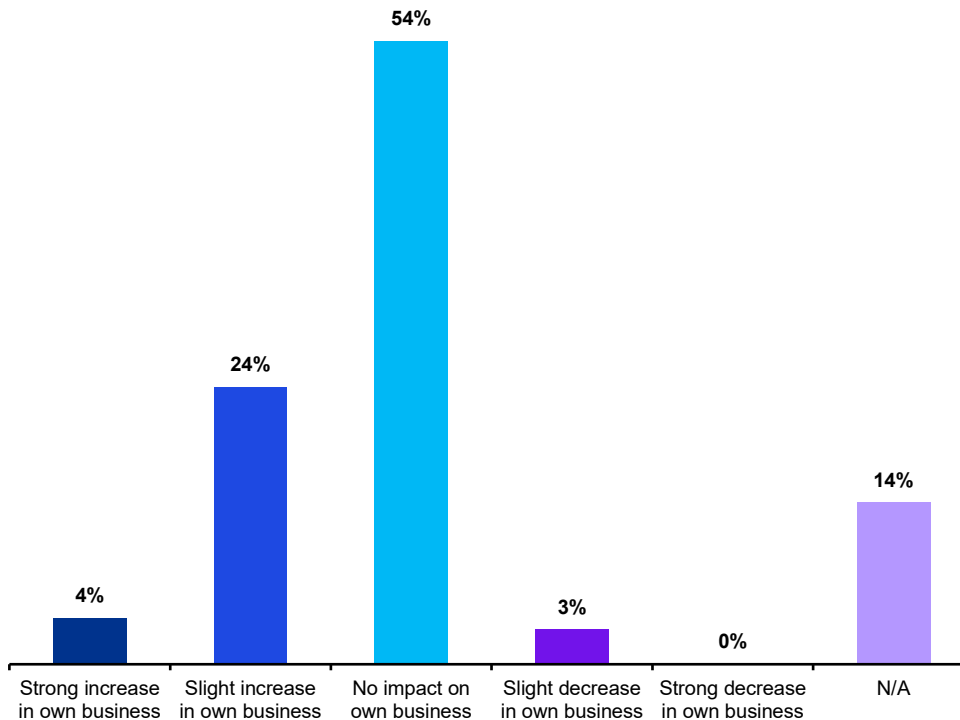
Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=94); rounding differences possible

Note: ¹ AfCFTA

AGOA also has a positive impact for 28% of respondents



Figure 16: To what extent will the continuation of the AGOA impact your business operations in South Africa and/or Southern Africa?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=92); rounding differences possible

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a United States TRADE ACT enacted on 18 May 2000 as public law.¹

The legislation significantly enhances market access to the US for qualifying sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries by allocating a special programme indicator to approximately 6,800 tariff lines in the US tariff schedule. This allows US importers to clear such goods – sourced from eligible African countries – duty-free under AGOA.

The program ends in September 2025. It remains to be seen whether and how the new US President Trump will continue the programme.

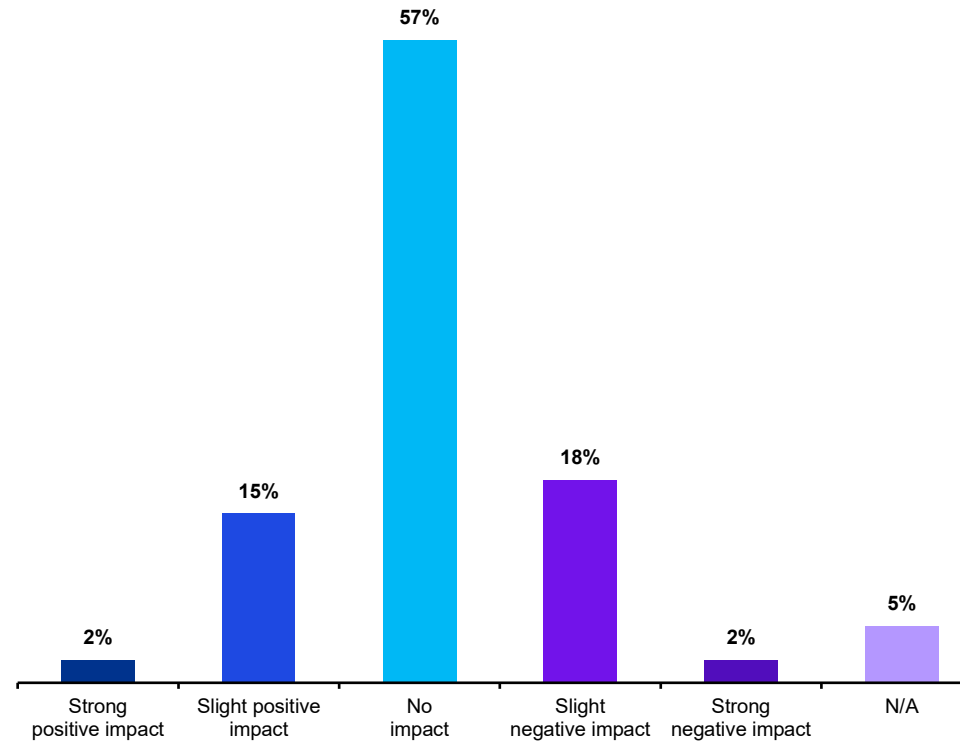
- Slightly more than one in four companies (28%) report positive or even very positive effects of the AGOA on their business in South Africa and/or Southern Africa.
- However, more than half of the companies (54%) report that the Act had no impact on them. Hardly any companies perceive a negative impact.

Note: ¹ AGOA

ESG laws have only a minor impact on surveyed businesses in Southern Africa

- ESG laws passed at German or EU level, such as the Supply Chain Act, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), have no impact on businesses in South Africa and/or Southern Africa for the majority of the companies surveyed (57%).
- While 17% expect positive effects, one in five companies (20%) assume that the ESG laws will have a negative impact on their local business.

Figure 17: To what extent do the new ESG laws that have recently been passed at German and EU level affect your business in South Africa and/or Southern Africa?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=94); rounding differences possible



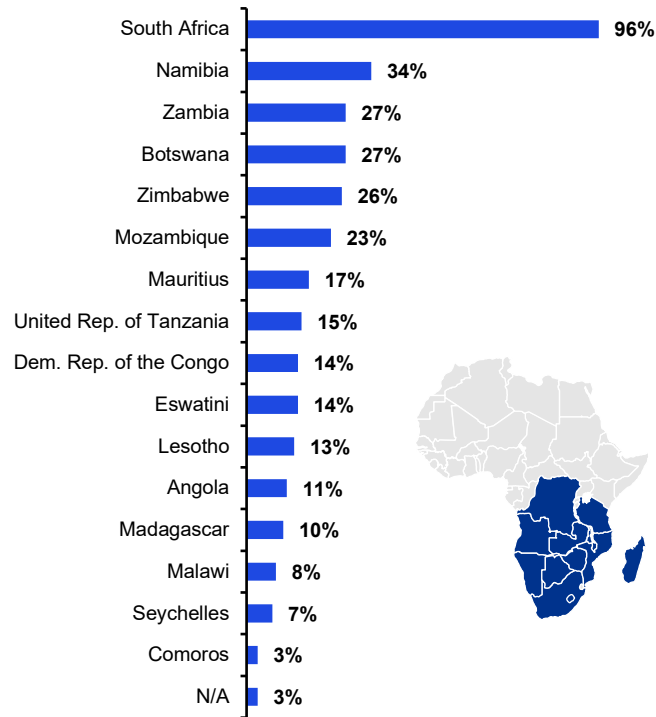
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Profile of the companies surveyed



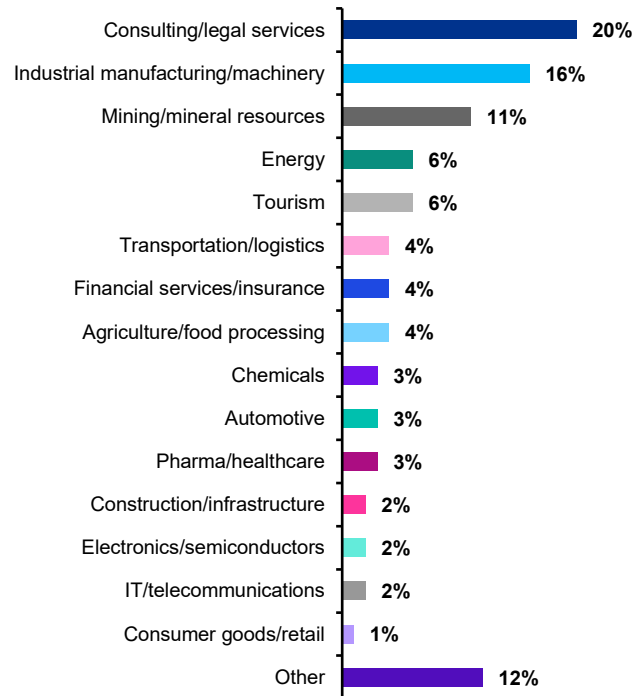
Profile of the companies surveyed

Figure 18: In which Southern African countries does your company operate?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=98); multiple answers possible

Figure 19: In which industry does your company conduct most of its business?

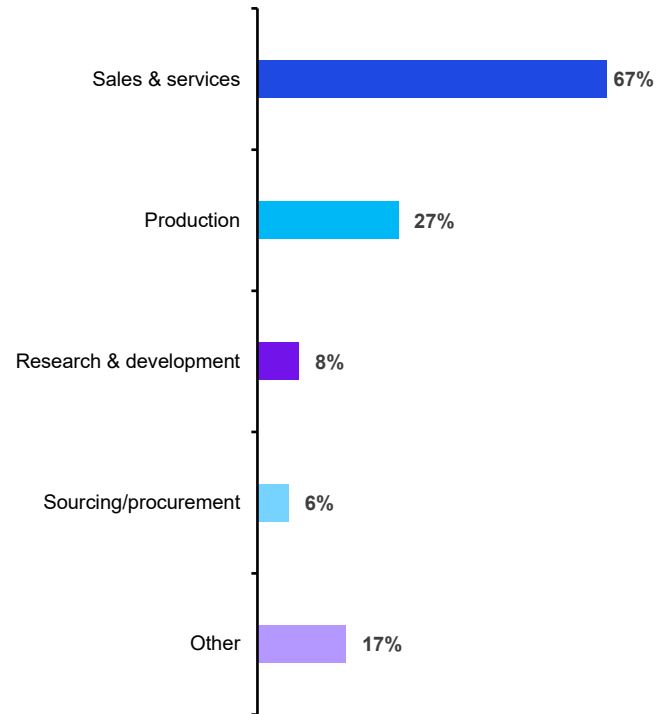


Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=95); rounding differences possible

- For the “German-Southern African Business Outlook 2025” KPMG in Germany and the AHK Southern Africa surveyed member companies with business activities in South Africa and the Southern African region. A total of 98 companies participated in the survey, which was conducted between 11 November and 31 December 2024.
- The questions focused on the economic outlook for German companies in Southern Africa and South Africa in particular and the challenges and opportunities for their businesses.
- For the purposes of this study, the 16 countries listed in Figure 18 were assigned to the Southern Africa region. The AHK Southern Africa represents the following countries: Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Angola is represented by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Angola, while Tanzania falls under the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce for Eastern Africa.
- If only South Africa was selected in the first question about the countries in which the respective company operates in the region, only the questions about South Africa were posed in the further course of the survey in Chapter 01 “Business development and future expectations”. If at least one other country was selected, the same questions were also displayed for the Southern Africa region (excluding South Africa).
- As all but one of the companies that are also active in another Southern African country are also active in South Africa, the sample for the questions on South Africa is significantly larger than for the questions on Southern Africa excluding South Africa.

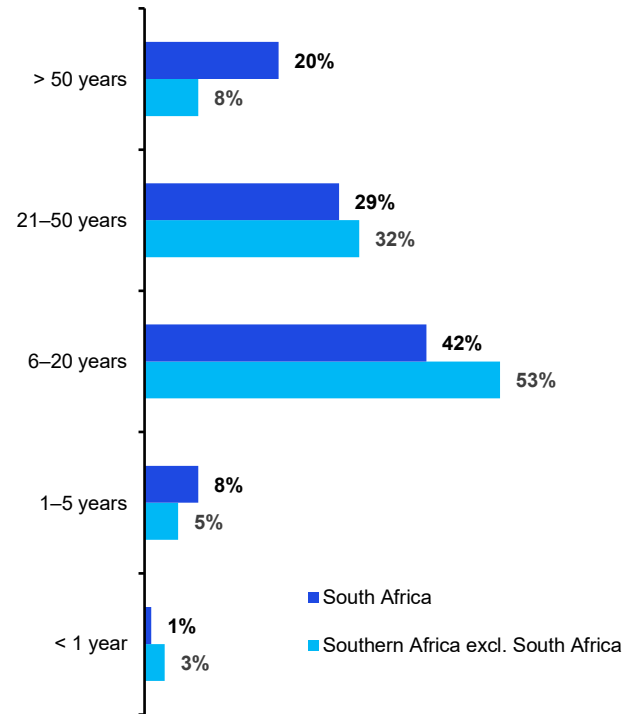
Profile of the companies surveyed

Figure 20: Please indicate your company's main business activities.



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (n=95); rounding differences possible

Figure 21: How many years has your company been operating in South Africa/Southern Africa (excl. South Africa)?



Source: KPMG in Germany and AHK Southern Africa, 2025; (South Africa: n=90; Southern Africa: n=38); rounding differences possible



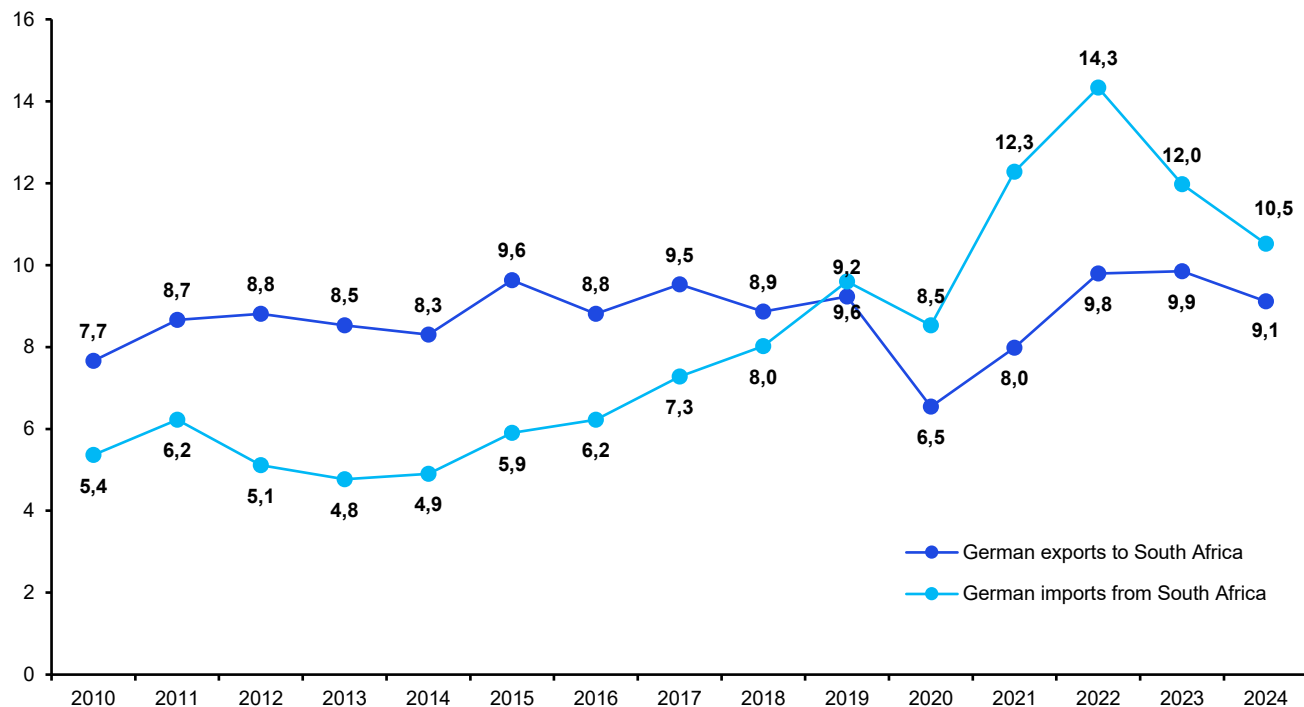
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Macroeconomic overview



Bilateral trade in favour of South Africa

Figure 22: Foreign trade (in EUR billion)



Source: Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)



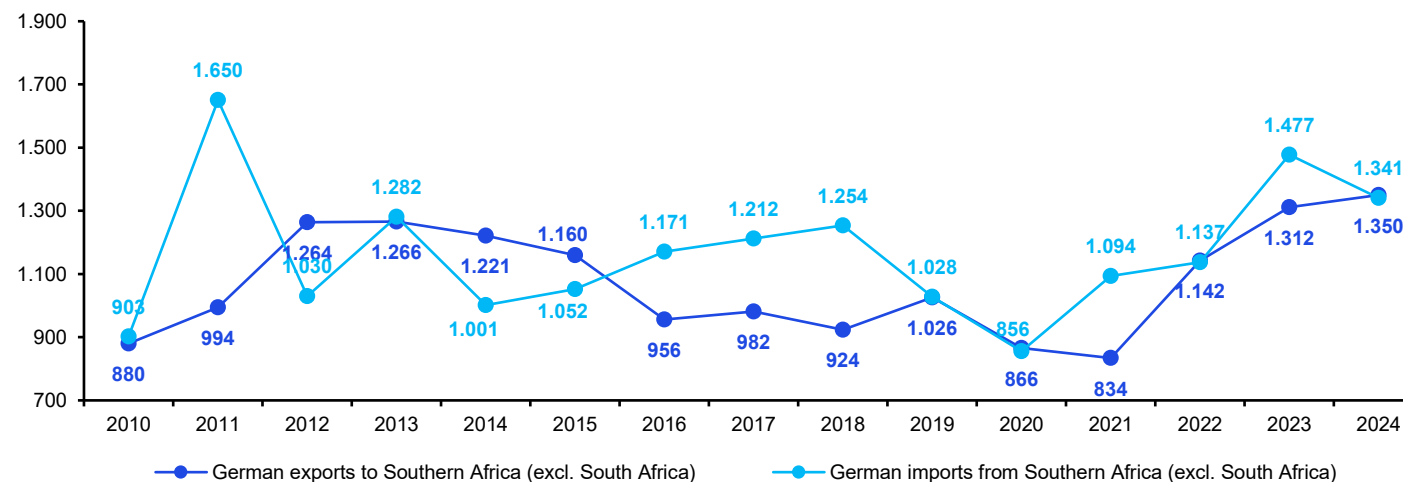
- The most important export market for German companies in Africa - the Republic of South Africa - has been stagnating for several years, with the exception of the slump during the pandemic. In 2024, exports declined by 8.1% to EUR 9.1 billion.
- Imports also fell significantly by 12.5% to EUR 10.5 billion. This is attributable primarily to the significant decline in commodity prices in 2023.
- 2019 marked a turning point in German-South African foreign trade. While the trade balance had previously been in Germany's favour, imported goods from South Africa have since then exceeded exports to the country.
- The bilateral trade volume peaked in 2022 at EUR 24.1 billion.
- In 2024, the trade volume between Germany and South Africa reached a value of EUR 19.6 billion.

Foreign trade between Germany and Southern Africa (excl. South Africa) very volatile and much smaller than with South Africa

- Foreign trade between Germany and Southern Africa (excluding South Africa) has been very volatile in recent years. The balance of trade has sometimes been in Germany's favour, sometimes in Southern Africa's favour.
- The total trade volume between Germany and Southern Africa excluding South Africa amounted to EUR 2.7 billion in 2024. Of this, Germany exported goods worth EUR 1.4 billion to the region and imported goods worth EUR 1.3 billion.
- The trade volume between Germany and South Africa is more than 7 times the trade volume of Germany between Southern Africa excluding South Africa.
- The most important trading partner for Germany in terms of total foreign trade volume of the 15 countries under review (see Fig. 18) in 2024 was Angola (EUR 468 million), followed by the United Republic of Tanzania (EUR 422 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUR 391 million).



Figure 23: Foreign trade (in EUR million)



Source: Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)

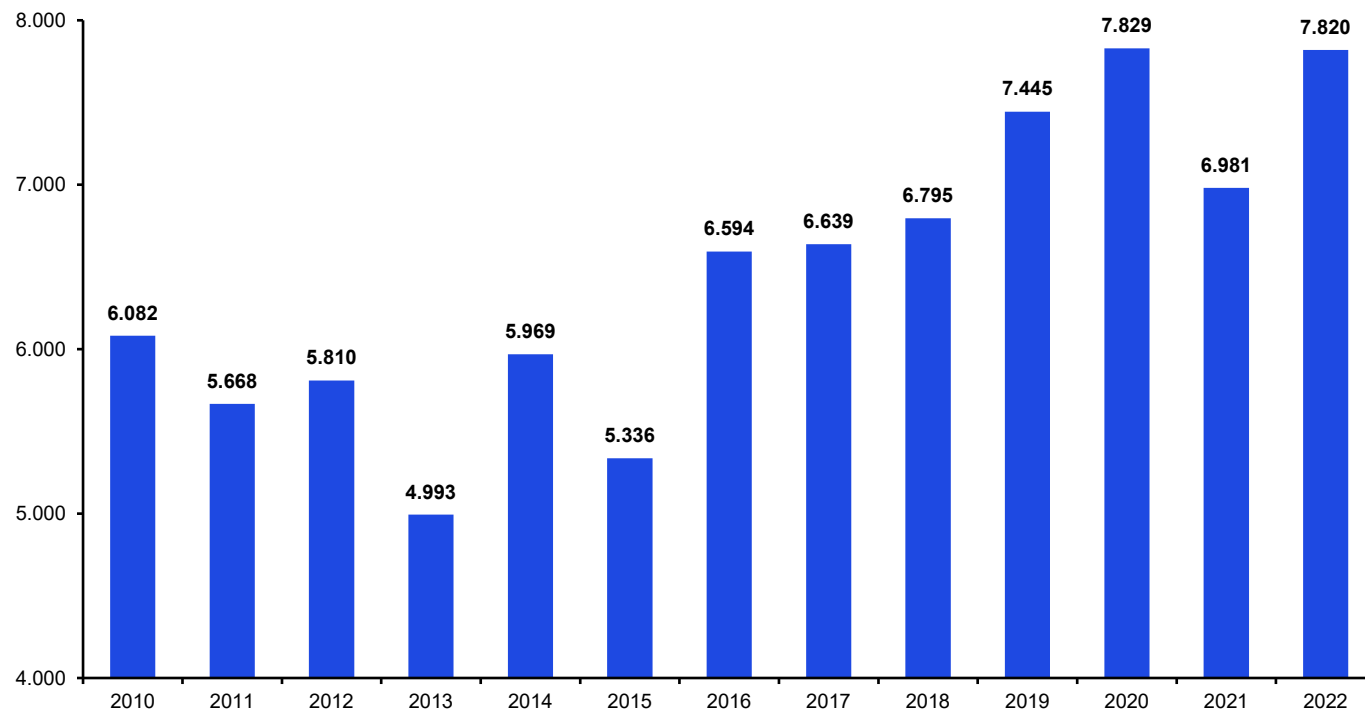
Investment in South Africa is growing



- The net stock of German direct and indirect direct investment in South Africa rose to EUR 7.82 billion in 2022.
- While German investment stocks in South Africa generally increased between 2010 and 2022, the trend was volatile, with sharp declines in 2013, 2015 and 2021.
- While the economic challenges of recent years, including weak economic growth, high inflation and the energy crisis, have caused problems for German companies, South Africa remains the most attractive location for German businesses in Southern Africa. Many German companies are focusing on the medium-term prospects and the potential in the country.^(a)

Source: ^(a) GTAI

Figure 24: Direct and indirect investment stocks of German companies in South Africa (netted¹; in EUR million)














Notes: ¹ Receivables-payables most recent figures available for 2022 only

Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

South Africa is by far the largest economy in Southern Africa

Figure 24: Southern Africa's five largest economies – a comparison against Germany (data for 2024)

	 South Africa	 Tanzania	 Dem. Rep. of the Congo	 Zimbabwe	 Zambia	 Germany
 GDP (in USD billion)	403.05	79.87	72.48	35.92	25.91	4,710.03
 GDP per capita (in USD)	6,377	1,224	702	2,114	1,226	55,521
 Population (in millions)	63.2	65.2	103.2	17.0	21.1	84.8
 Inflation rate	4.7%	3.2%	17.8%	635.3%	14.6%	2.4%
 General government gross debt (% of GDP)	75.0%	47.3%	11.5%	70.3%	no data	62.7%

Source: IMF



- South Africa is by far the largest economy in Southern Africa. The country also has the highest GDP per capita.
- In terms of population, however, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is significantly larger with 103 million people in 2024.
- According to the IMF, Zimbabwe had the highest inflation in the world in 2024. In April 2024, Zimbabwe rolled out a new gold-backed currency called the ZiG, or Zimbabwe Gold, in an effort to mitigate the currency instability and hyperinflation that has plagued the country for decades.
- At 11.5% of GDP, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had the lowest national debt in 2024, while South Africa had the highest at 75.0%.

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KPMG in Germany has set up country practices for all relevant business corridors between Germany and other countries/regions. All country practices are staffed by country experts who know the special characteristics and the regulatory environment of these markets, regularly work in these countries and provide German and global multinational companies with advice on their country/corridor-related questions on a daily basis.



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The Southern African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Southern Africa)

The AHK Southern Africa is part of the worldwide network of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK) with 150 locations in 93 countries. The umbrella organization of the IHKs is the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), which also coordinates and supports the AHK network.

The AHK Southern Africa was founded in 1952 and represents German business interests across 12 of the Southern African countries: Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Angola is represented by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Angola (<https://angola.ahk.de/>), while Tanzania falls under the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce for Eastern Africa (<https://kenia.ahk.de/en/regional-presence/tanzania>).

Since its inception, AHK Southern Africa has served as a vital platform for bilateral economic exchange, supporting companies in their international business ventures. It continues to grow and currently represents more than 550 member companies.



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Contact

KPMG in Germany

Andreas Glunz

Managing Partner

International Business

aglunz@kpmg.com

T +49 211 475-7127

Benedikt Herles

Director

Head of Country Practice Africa

bherles@kpmg.com

T +49 89 9282-6559

Southern African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Simone Pohl

CEO

spohl@germanchamber.co.za

T +27 (0)11 486 2775

Nikitta Vogl

Head of Competence Centre

Events, Marketing and
Membership

nvogl@germanchamber.co.za

T +27 (0)11 486 2775

Dambisa Dube

Manager of Executive

Communications, Government
Affairs & Strategic Projects

ddube@germanchamber.co.za

T +27 (0)11 486 2775



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