

# What Companies are Doing to Tackle Escalating Global Supply Chain Challenges

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Descartes Supply Chain Intelligence Benchmark Survey 2024 Results



## Introduction

Organizations have had to reprioritize their supply chain strategies in recent years to ensure continued growth as new and growing challenges trigger major economic turbulence. These challenges are detailed in a Descartes-commissioned study, Escalating Challenges for Global Supply Chains. Traditional issues revolving around the process of doing business are still with us, but other problems have jumped to the forefront, including rising tariffs and trade barriers, growing geopolitical instability, increasing concerns about new supply chain disruptions, and emerging compliance requirements, especially Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) regulations.

But how are organizations planning to address the issues? Descartes worked with SAPIO Research to find out by surveying **978 supply chain leaders** in Europe, North and South America, and Asia-Pacific. All survey respondents are members of their companies' leadership teams, holding positions from the level of senior management to Chief Executive Officer or owner. This white paper presents findings on what companies are doing to overcome the challenges and keep them on a growth path.

## Top Level Findings



**36%** view global trade data as crucial to rapidly identify new suppliers, markets, and customers.



**39%** see supply chain intelligence as a customer service differentiator.



**74%** consider technology as fundamental or highly important to their growth strategy.



**40%** plan on investing in technology.



**50%** of fast-growing companies emphasize technology investments.



*Business leaders need an understanding of the strategies, tactics and technologies being deployed to address supply chain challenges.*

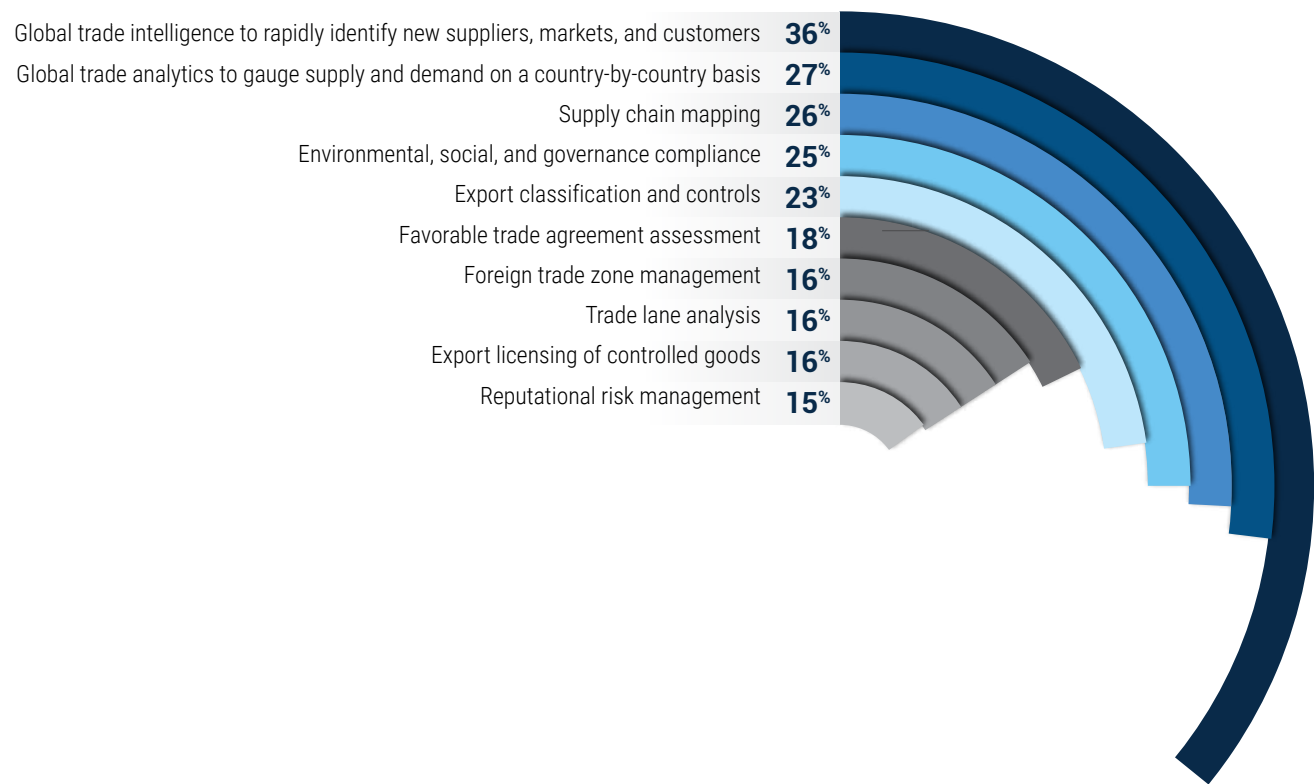
# Reliance on Global Trade Intelligence

Keeping supply chains agile and ready for rapid change is now more important than ever before. The imposition of higher tariffs in one country, labor strife in another or widening regional geopolitical instability are examples of why organizations engaged in international trade need to have contingency plans to be able to quickly find suppliers and customers in alternative markets, spot supply and demand shifts, and optimize trade lanes.

It comes as no surprise then that most respondents pointed to global trade intelligence as the main capability they need today to deliver the greatest business value in the next two years. Just over a third, or **36%**, said that this was crucial to rapidly identify new suppliers and customers to overcome setbacks in existing markets (see Figure 1).

Meanwhile, **27%** gave high importance to global trade analytics to help them with gauging supply and demand potential on a country-by-country basis. About a quarter selected supply chain mapping and Environmental, Social, and Governance compliance, which are, respectively, related to regulations aimed at identifying and removing forced labor from supply chains and addressing emerging rules on how organizations manage their business from the ESG perspectives.

Figure 1: Main capability required to deliver the greatest business value in the next 2 years.

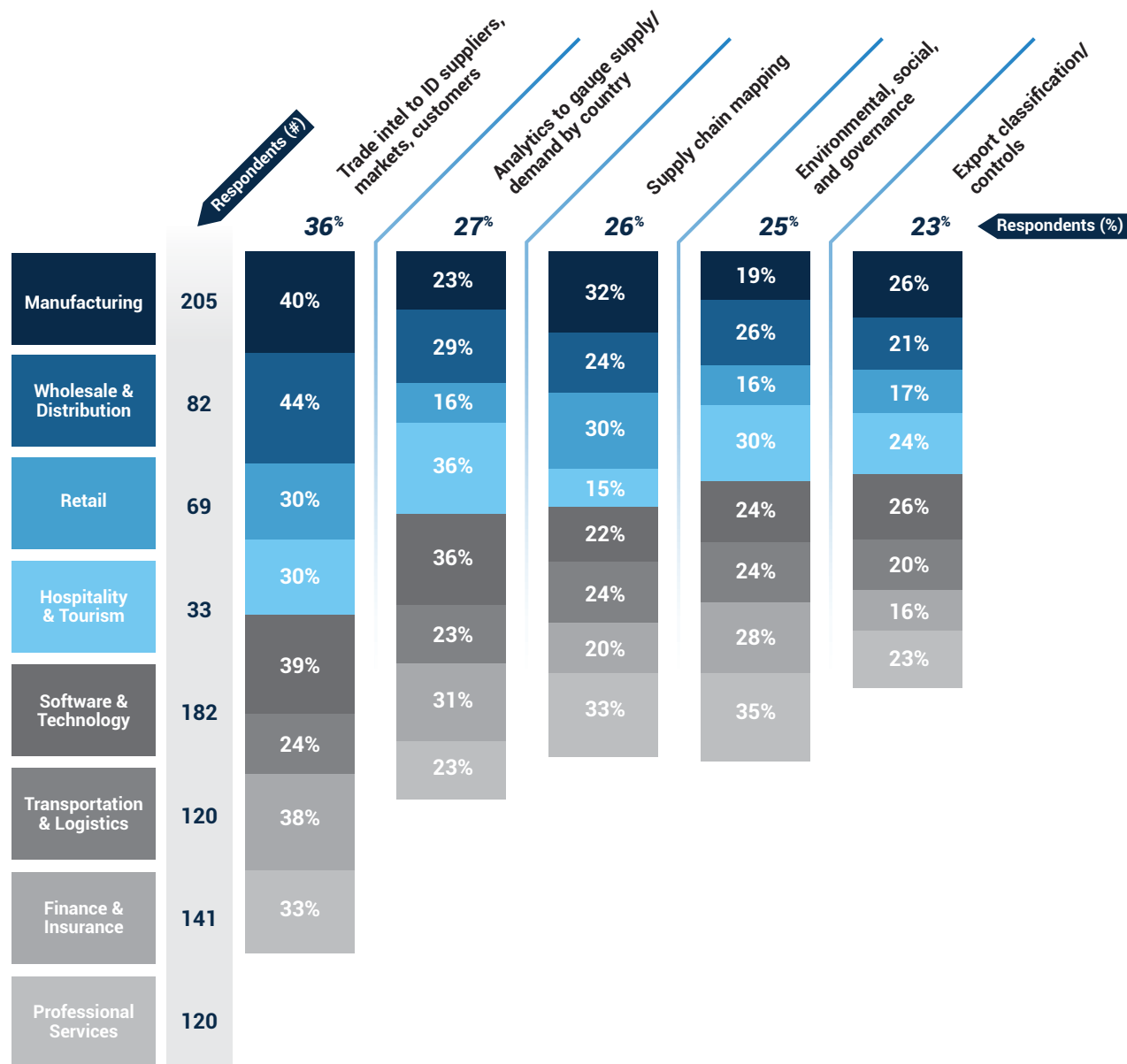


*Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.*

*Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research*

Major industries across the board said that global trade intelligence was important to their future growth, although there was variability in other capabilities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Top 5 trade capabilities delivering the most value.



Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.

Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research



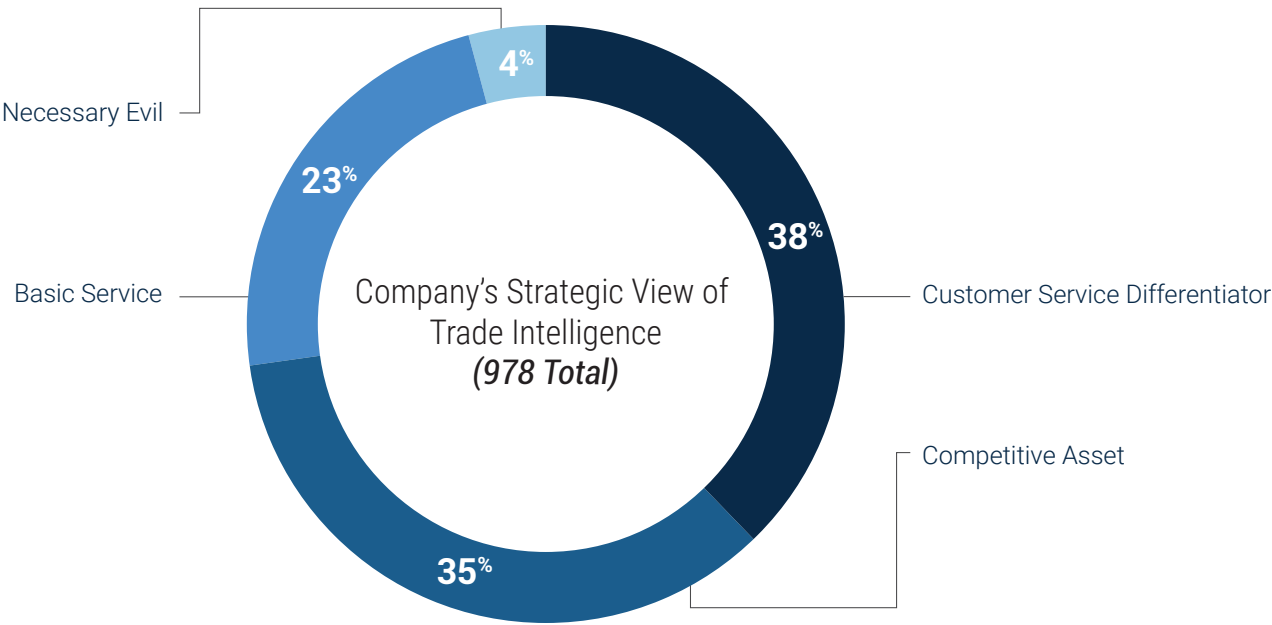
Organizations engaged in international trade see global trade intelligence and analytics as vital to help ensure growth in the next two years.

# Emphasis on Customer Service and Competitive Differentiation

Superior customer service can be described as the ability to deliver goods and services to a customer to the agreed-to specifications, and on time and on budget. Getting the variables consistently correct can mean the difference between business success and failure.

With that target in mind, a clear majority of respondents view supply chain intelligence as being a capability that will give them a market edge. Fully 38% of respondents look to supply chain intelligence capabilities to distinguish their customer service in the marketplace, while 35% view this as a competitive asset (see Figure 3). This intel gives organizations the ability to find the best suppliers and optimize their cost structure.

Figure 3: Strategic view of trade intelligence.



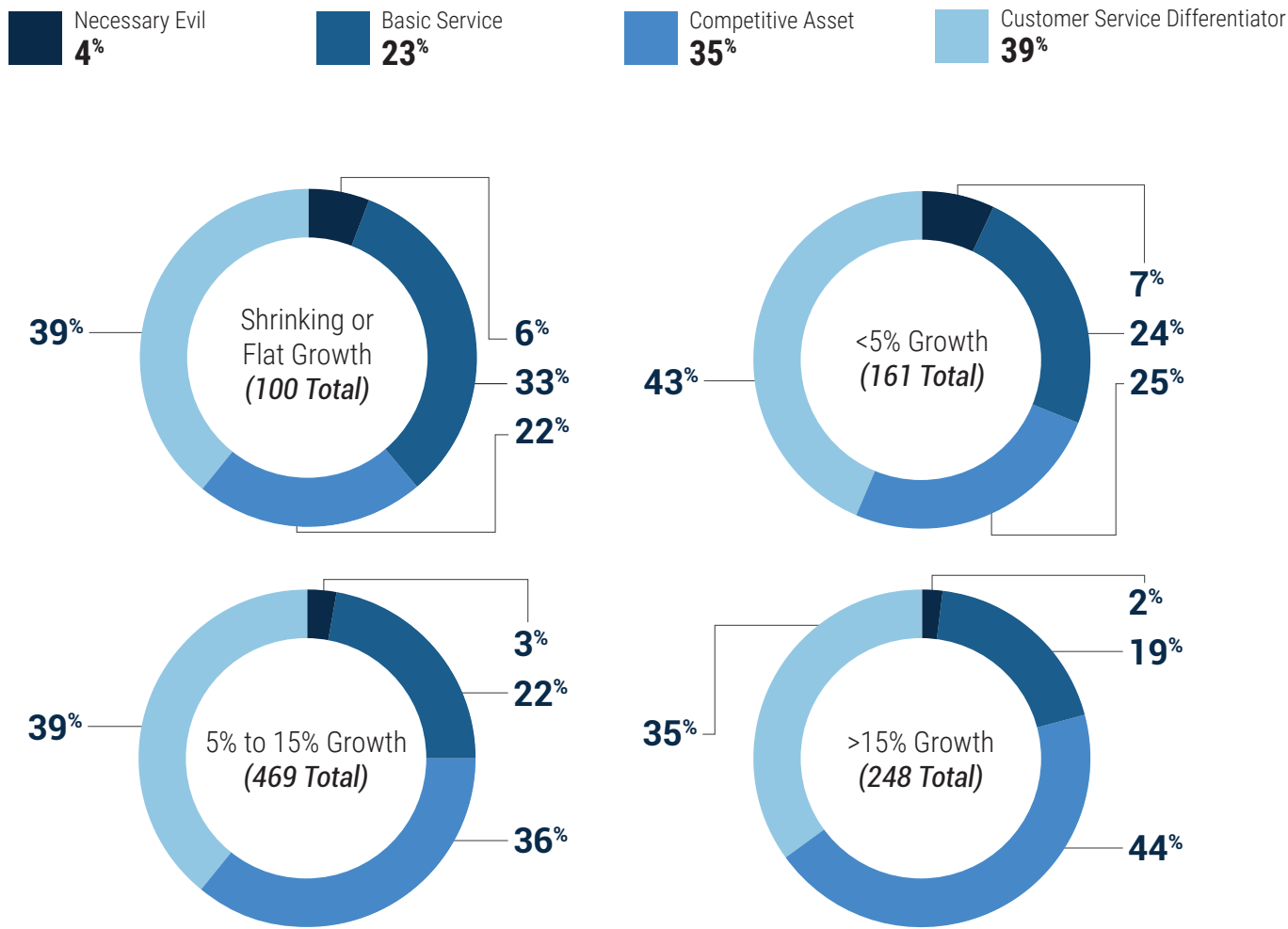
Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.  
Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research



*The business of doing business is more challenging because of rising trade barriers, growing geopolitical instability, and emerging compliance regulations.*

The survey revealed a marked tendency among high-growth companies to view global trade intelligence as giving them a competitive advantage (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Strategic perspective on trade intelligence.



Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.

Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research



*Supply chain intelligence is viewed as a customer service differentiator as well as a competitive advantage.*

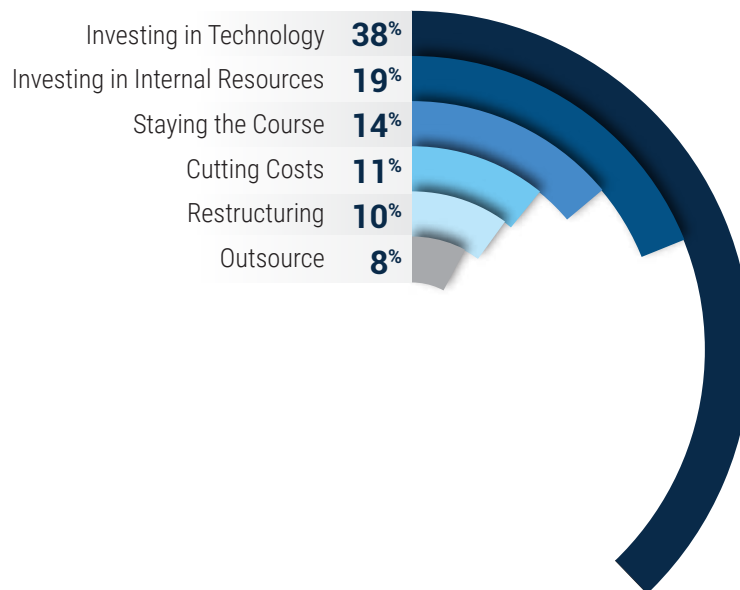




## Focus on Technology Investments

Nearly **40%** of respondents say they plan to invest in technology and **19%** aim to invest in internal resources to ensure continued growth (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Growth strategies.

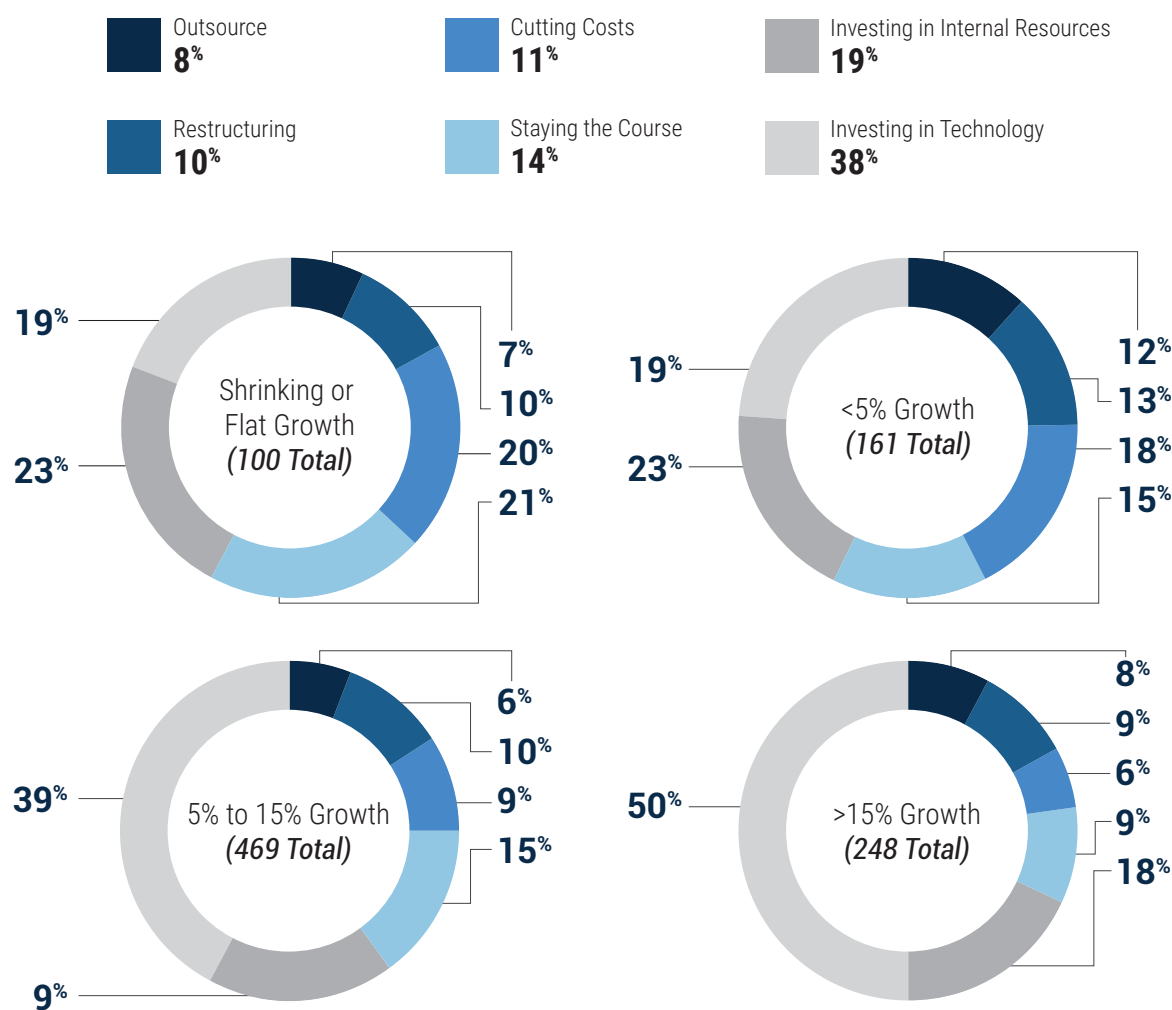


*Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.*

*Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research*

There is a striking correlation between strategies and business growth outlook. Fast-growing companies, for instance, emphasize technology investments because they place great importance in first mover advantage when responding to market challenges or competitive pressures (see Figure 6). Speed is key when it comes to the complex research required for accurately strategizing alternative international trade plans. This is where technology, and artificial intelligence in particular, can help with number crunching, automation and visibility.

Figure 6: Plans for meeting trade challenges to ensure growth.



We also asked survey respondents to assess the importance of technology to their organizations’ competitive strategies (see Figure 7). Only 1% say technology is not important. The rest say technology is important to company strategy to varying degrees, with 35% saying tech is very important, 24% calling it extremely important, and 16% somewhat important to their companies’ competitive plans.

We followed up by asking how our respondents would characterize their companies’ approaches to strategic technology planning. While 3% described their companies as laggards in adopting new technologies, 43% report being fast followers and 30% say they are early adopters (see Figure 8). The middle of the pack on tech adoption accounts for 24%.



Figure 7: Organizational importance of technology among respondents.

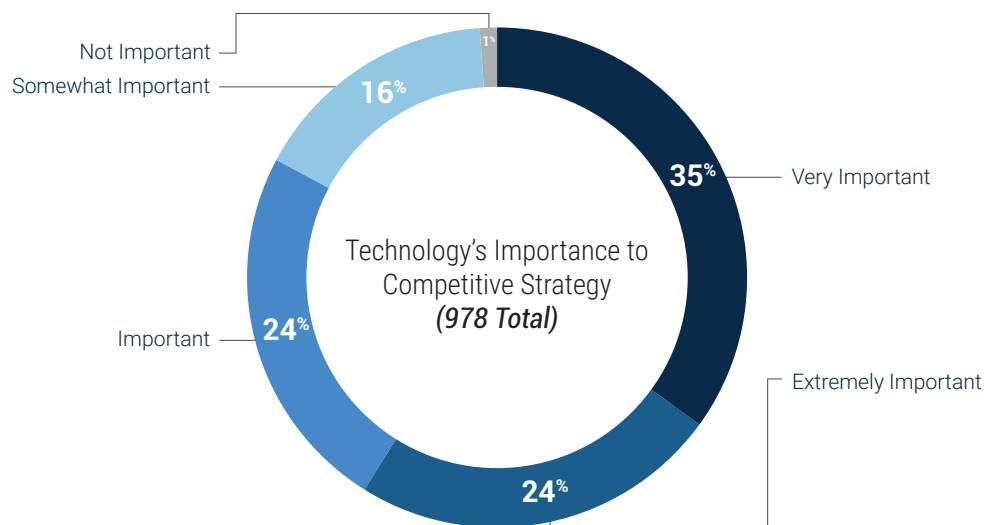
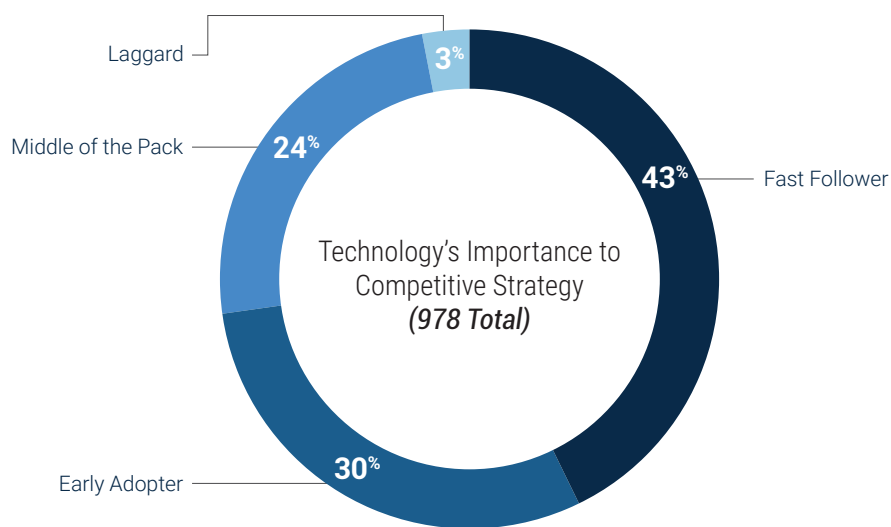


Figure 8: Organizational approaches to technology adoption.

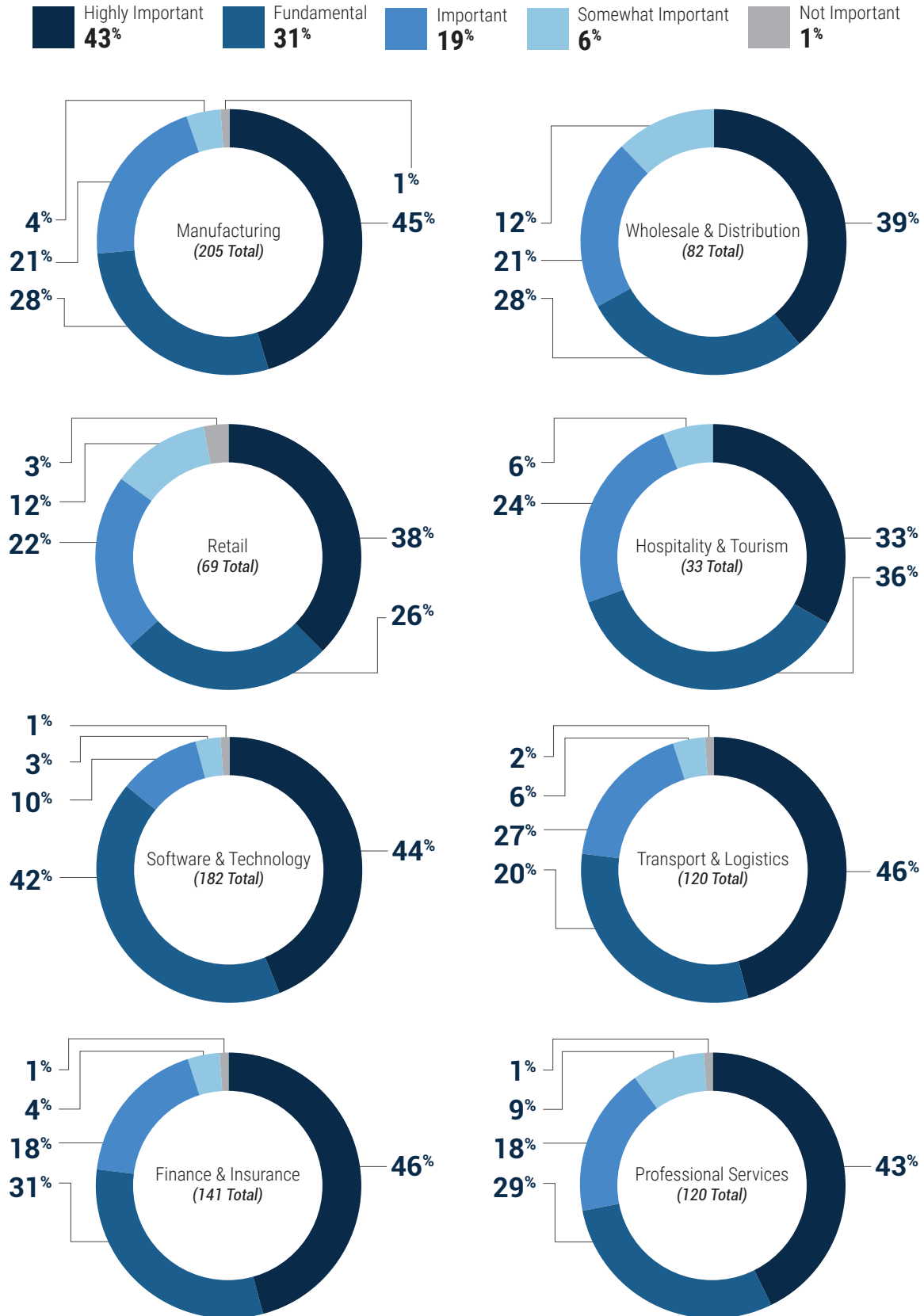


While there are slim, fractional, or (in the case of the wholesale & distribution industry) non-existent shares of respondents who rate technology as not at all important, the view that tech is “highly important” predominates across industries (see Figure 9).

The distribution of responses on tech’s importance by the reported outlook on business growth underscores the connection between an appreciation of technology’s strategic role and a positive growth outlook.

The study shows that 74% of the supply chain and logistics leaders surveyed view technology as fundamental or highly important to their organization’s growth strategy in the face of rising global trade challenges, such as tariffs and trade barriers, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical instability. This number jumps to 88% for companies expecting greater than 15% growth over the next two years.

Figure 9: The importance of technology by industry.



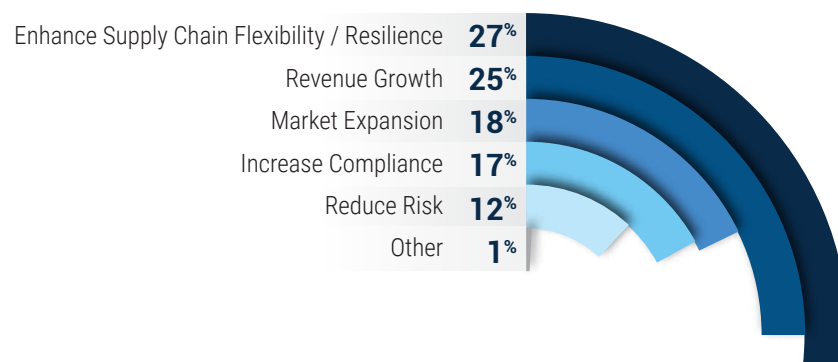


## Drive Business ROIs for Technology Investments

Amongst supply chain intelligence decision makers, **27%** rated enhanced supply chain flexibility / resilience as the main business return used to measure the success of technology investments (see Figure 10). At **25%**, revenue growth came in a close second.

The survey result implies that the top two metrics are considered equally important when selecting a solutions vendor.

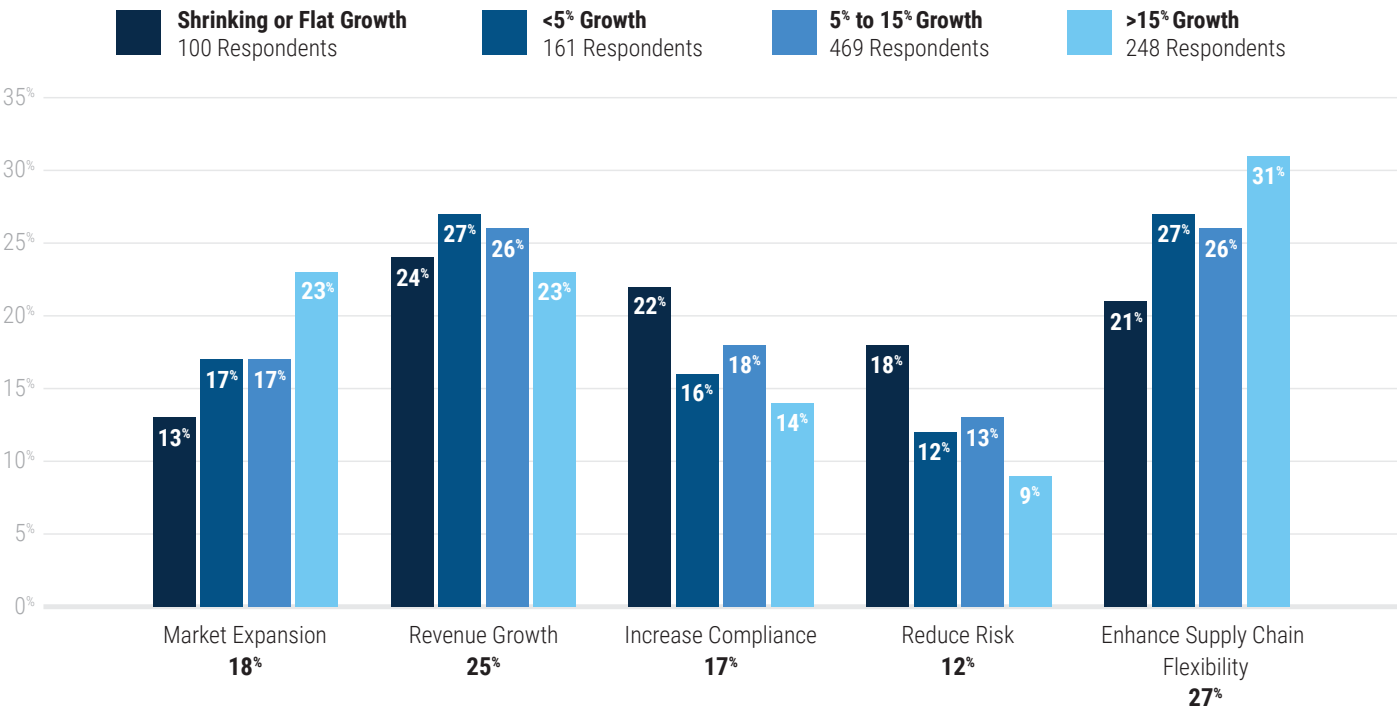
Figure 10: Metrics used to measure the success of technology investments.



*Top technology investments for ROI include enhancing supply chain resilience and growing market revenue.*

However, the metrics for successful technology investments vary as they relate to growth outlook, but generally respondents still lean towards enhancing supply chain flexibility and resilience and revenue growth (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Preferred metrics for calculating ROI in trade intelligence and compliance.



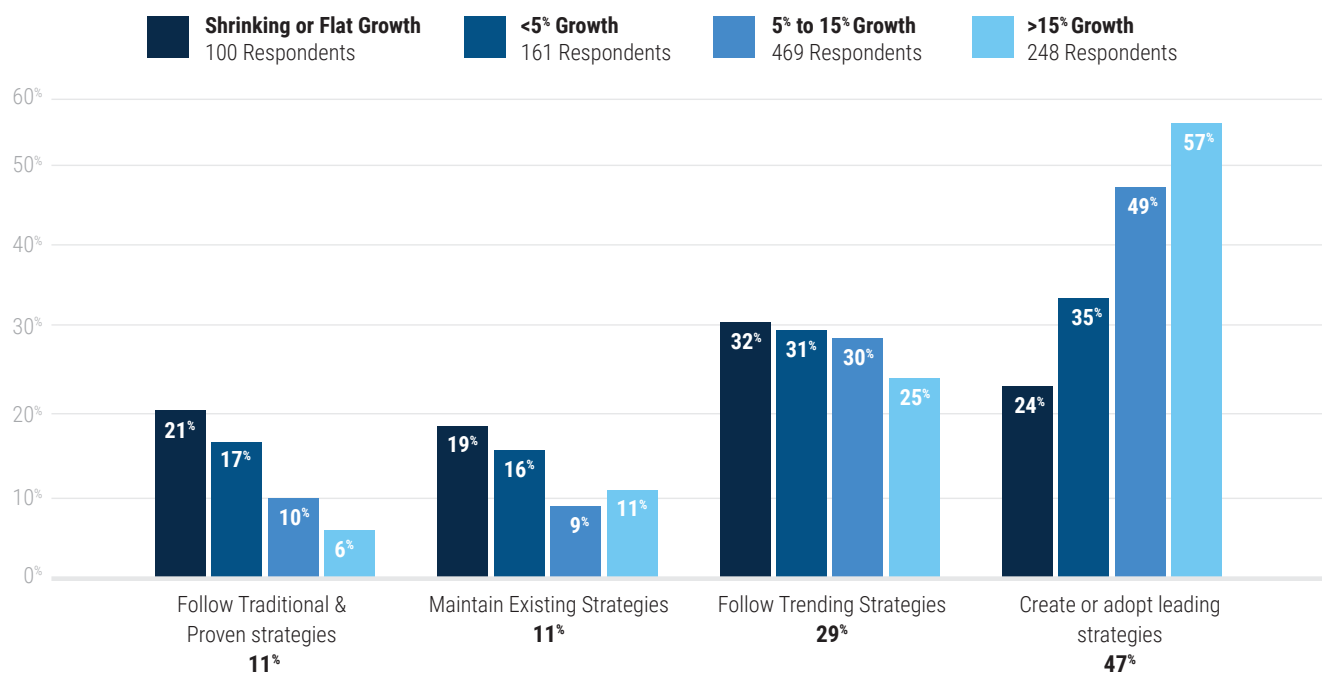
*Top technology investments for ROI include enhancing supply chain resilience and growing market revenue.*

## Adopt Leading-Edge Strategies

We have highlighted several key strategies that organizations are using to strengthen their supply chain resilience and enhance their competitive edge. But one point that cannot be over emphasized is that fully utilizing all the individual strategies, along with the associated technologies and tools, is a must to get the planned benefits.

Most companies strive to keep this in mind. However, fast-growing companies take this a step further – the survey shows that most of this category (**49%-57%** of organizations expecting to grow **5%** to more than **15%**) are more proactive in creating or adopting leading-edge strategies to try to go one-up over the competition (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Approaches to trade strategies.



Note: Respondents were asked to select multiple capabilities that deliver business value in the next two years.

Source: Descartes / SAPIO Research



*Fast-growing companies know that strategies working in unison can further enhance their competitive edge.*





## Conclusion

The findings of the 2024 Descartes Global Trade Intelligence Benchmark Survey shows that international trade has become far more complex with the advent of new challenges over and above business operations issues. These include rising tariffs and trade barriers, growing geopolitical instability, increasing concerns about new supply chain disruptions, and emerging compliance issues, especially, Environmental, Social, and Governance regulations.

In light of that, organizations need to be able to effectively tackle these challenges head-on to ensure continued growth.

With insights from 978 global business leaders, the 2024 study reveals that companies are placing great importance on global trade intelligence to help them develop alternative plans to mitigate further supply chain risk. Survey respondents also see this intel as a customer service differentiator and as something that gives them a competitive advantage.

With the margin of error so slim and the requirement for speed-to-market so important, organizations are turning to technology to help them strengthen their supply chain resilience and generate revenue growth.

As the international trade landscape grows more complex, companies are adapting by focusing on building resilience through compliance, technology, and strategic planning. The 2024 survey sets a benchmark for monitoring these trends and will serve as a valuable resource for understanding how leading companies navigate the global trade environment.

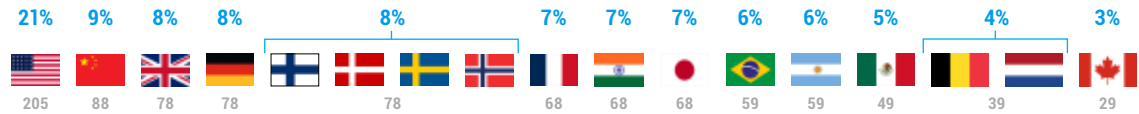
## Appendix: Respondent Profile

Total Respondents: 978



### Country of Residence

Respondents are located in key trading nations across Asia-Pacific, Europe, and North and South America.



### Respondent Accountabilities

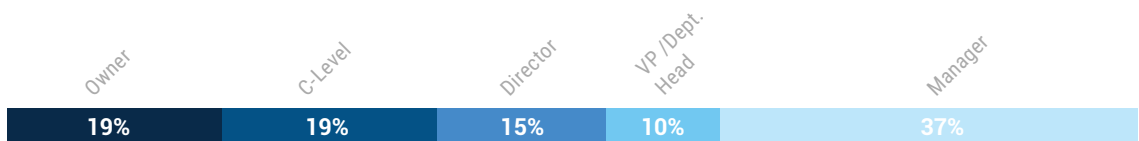
Respondents report multiple functional accountabilities within their companies.

- 37% of respondents have shipping/logistics accountabilities
- 33% of respondents have purchasing/procurement accountabilities
- 33% of respondents have c-suite/executive accountabilities
- 29% of respondents have export compliance accountabilities
- 28% of respondents have international trade analysis accountabilities
- 26% of respondents have import compliance accountabilities
- 26% of respondents have accounting/finance accountabilities
- 25% of respondents have ethics, sustainability, and supply chain accountabilities
- 23% of respondents have sales and marketing accountabilities
- 7% of respondents have legal counsel accountabilities



### Role Type

Respondents are members of company leadership teams, from the management level to Chief Executive Officer or owner.



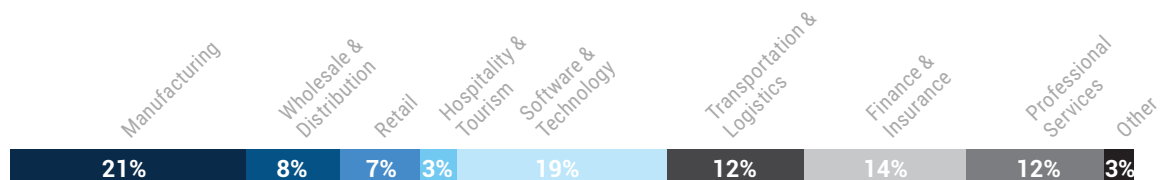
### Size of Company

Respondents represent industries whose operations encompass cross-border trade in merchandise, commodities,



### Industry Type

Respondent industries encompass cross-border trade in merchandise, commodities, and services.



## About Descartes Datamyne

With a comprehensive database of accurate, up-to-date import-export information, Descartes Datamyne delivers in-depth business intelligence for market research, sales insight, supply chain management, enhanced security and competitive strategy. The solution is powered by the world's largest searchable trade database, covering the global commerce of 180+ countries.

Manufacturers, shippers, wholesalers, transport and logistics service providers, management consultants, legal practitioners, industry analysts and more use our exceptionally accurate and granular data to initiate growth strategies, explore new markets, benchmark performance, monitor commodity volumes and values, simplify trade data research, discover buyer seller relationships and refine sourcing strategies.

Discover more at [www.datamyne.com](http://www.datamyne.com).

## About Descartes Systems Group

Descartes (Nasdaq:DSGX) (TSX:DSG) is the global leader in providing on-demand, software-as-a-service solutions focused on improving the productivity, security, and sustainability of logistics-intensive businesses. Customers use our modular, software-as-a-service solutions to route, track and help improve the safety, performance, and compliance of delivery resources; plan, allocate and execute shipments; rate, audit and pay transportation invoices; access global trade data; file customs and security documents for imports and exports; and complete numerous other logistics processes by participating in the world's largest, collaborative multimodal logistics community. Our headquarters are in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and we have offices and partners around the world.

Learn more at [www.descartes.com](http://www.descartes.com) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

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