



FedEx Small Business Trade Index

Conducted and Prepared by Morning Consult

May 2026

Methodology

- This poll was conducted between **April 2nd and April 8th, 2026.**
- The poll was conducted among small business decision makers, which are defined as those who work for companies with less than 500 employees and hold a position of manager or higher. **1,000 small business decision makers were interviewed in the US.**
- Interviews were conducted **online** using a panel of respondents.
- These data are **not weighted**, though basic stratification parameters for gender and region were in place during the sampling process.
- Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus **3 percentage points.**

Key Findings

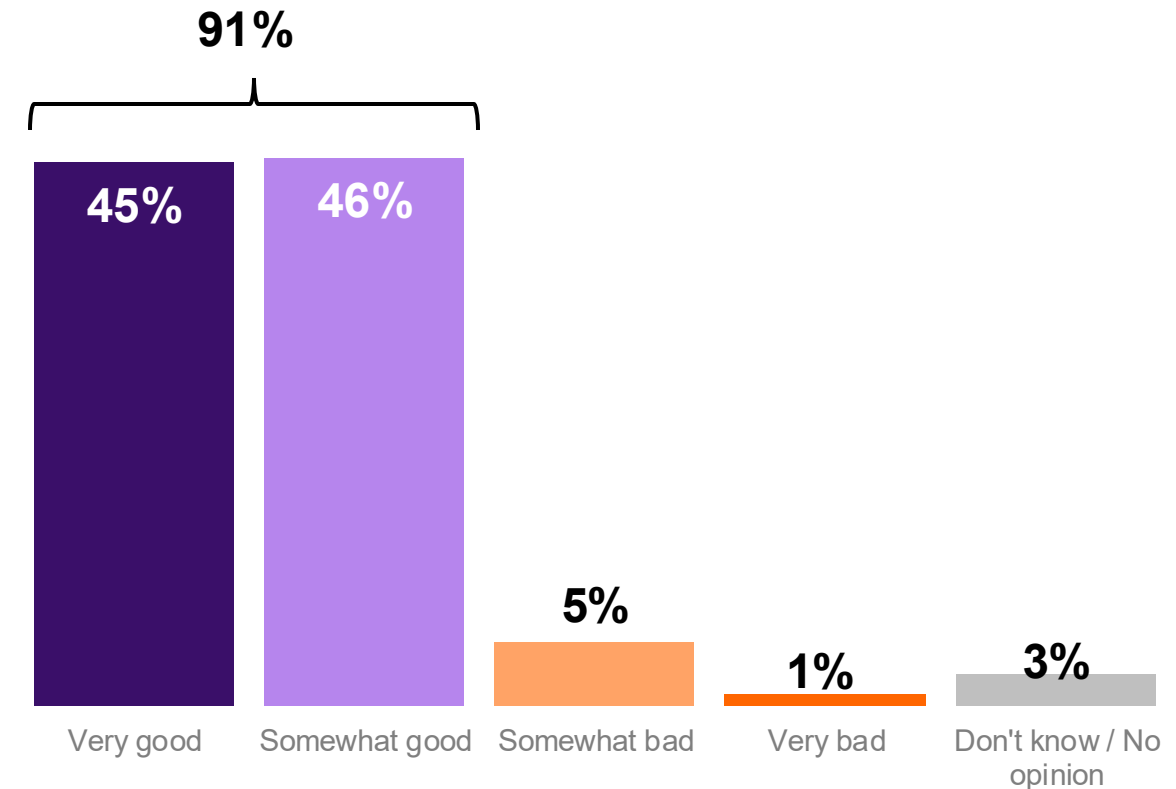
- **Support for global trade is overwhelming and strengthening.** 91% say expanding trade is a good thing, and 87–88% agree it creates jobs, improves business prospects, and boosts the economy.
- **Tariff complexity is the top pain point, and it's costing small- and medium-sized businesses revenue.** 68% regularly see customers surprised by duties at delivery, and 60% lose revenue through refunds or abandoned purchases. Businesses are responding with transparency (48% already display landed costs), and a planning pipeline (45–53%) signals much more action ahead.
- **Supply chains are being diversified on multiple fronts simultaneously.** Businesses are holding more inventory (44%), multi-sourcing (40%), nearshoring (36%), reshoring (36%), and seeking alternative transport (36%), with 45–50% more planning each strategy. This breadth signals a structural reshuffling, not a single-tactic response.
- **Technology is seen as a clear positive, and there is an appetite for AI.** 84–87% agree tech advances are making trade more efficient, and 79–83% rate innovations like real-time tracking and digital customs as valuable.

Opinions Surrounding Global Trade

Nine-in-ten respondents view expanding trade between the U.S. and other countries as a good thing, with nearly half saying it is *very good*.

In general, do you think expanding trade and business opportunities between the United States and customers in other countries is a good or bad thing?

PERCEPTIONS OF EXPANDING TRADE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES



Opinions Surrounding Global Trade

Strong majorities agree that expanding trade will create jobs, improve business prospects, and promote the economy overall.

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements...

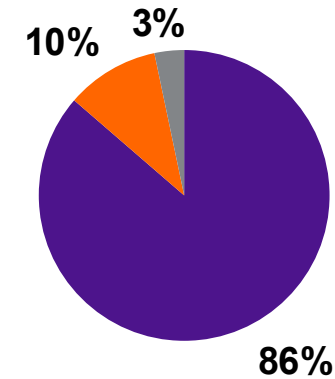
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Don't know / No opinion
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly disagree



Opinions Surrounding Global Trade

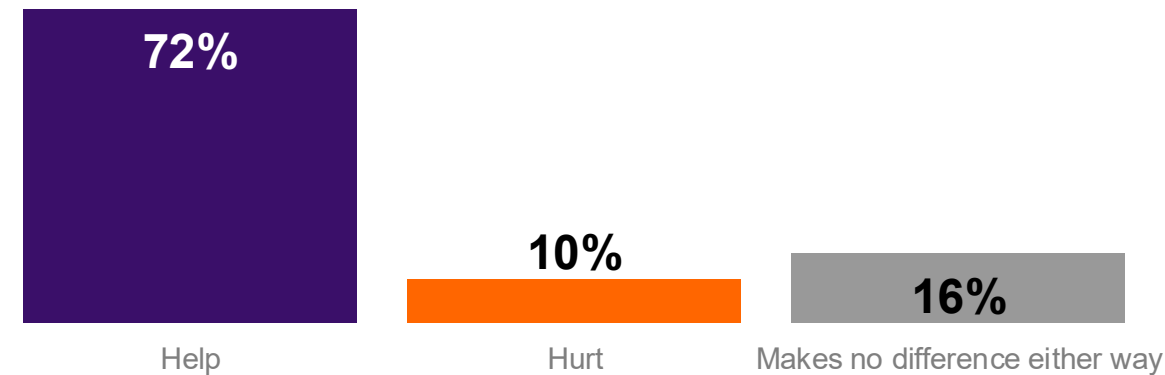
Small business decision-makers are over eight times as likely to believe that trade is key to growing the U.S. economy overall, and seven times as likely to think it will help their own business.

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



- Trade is key to growing and expanding the U.S. economy
- Trade is NOT key to growing and expanding the U.S. economy
- Don't know / No opinion

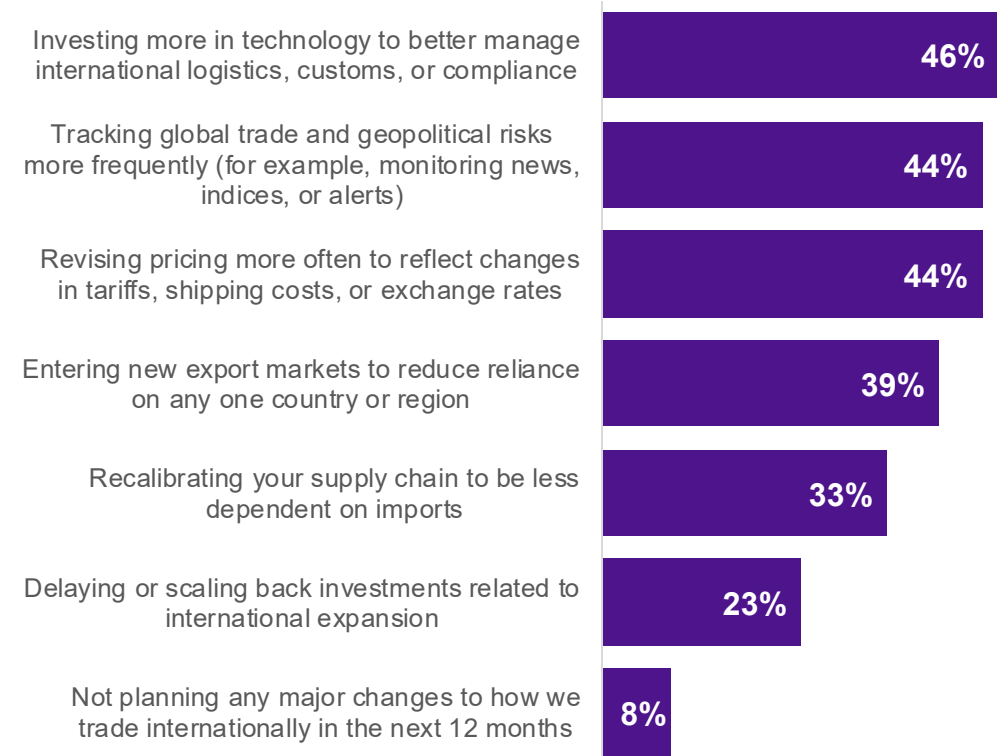
Do you think increasing the amount of trade between the United States and other countries will help, hurt, or make no difference either way for your business or company?



Opinions Surrounding Global Trade

Nearly half of small business decision makers are looking to invest in technology to manage logistics, customs, or compliance in the next year. Many are also keeping a close eye on geopolitical risks or revising their pricing in response to changes in tariffs, shipping costs, or exchange rates.

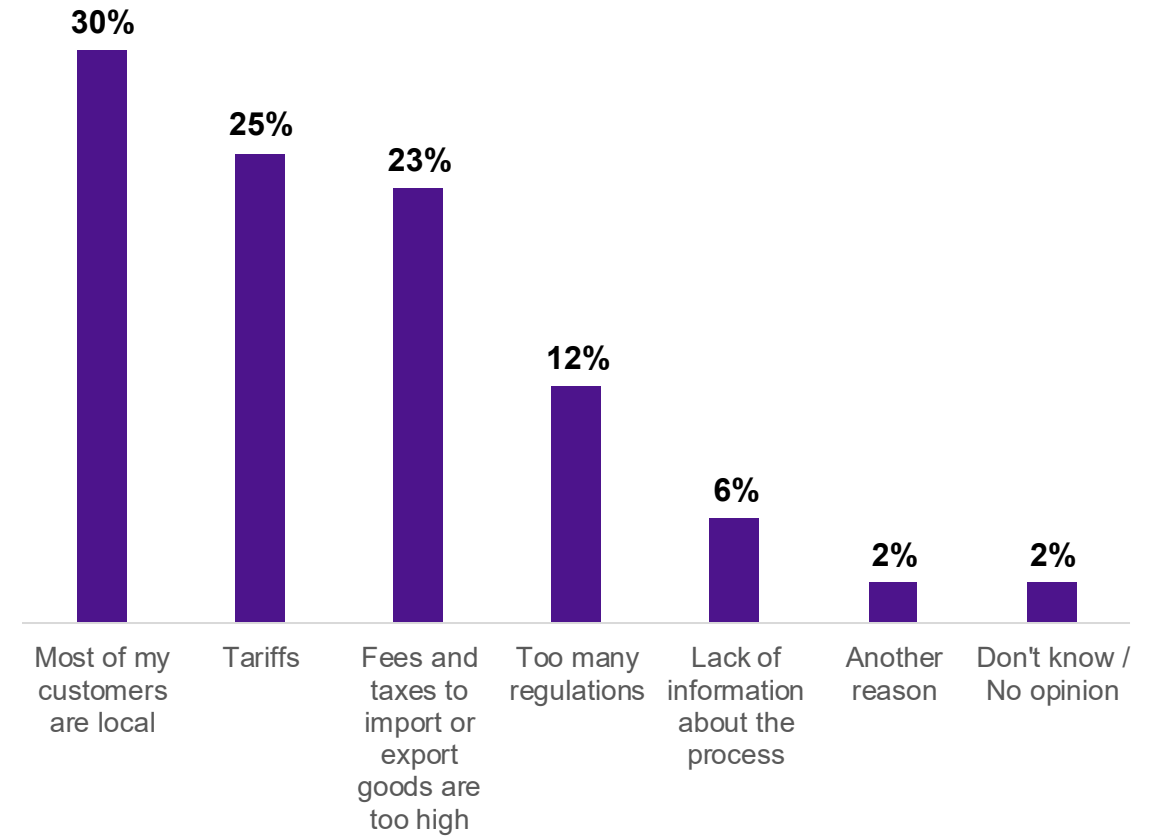
Looking ahead to the next 12 months, which of the following changes are you most likely to make in how your business manages global trade?



Export Barriers

One-third of small business decision makers say most of their customers are local. Other barriers include tariffs, and high fees and taxes.

What is the main reason why your business does not export goods or services to another country or import goods or services from another country?

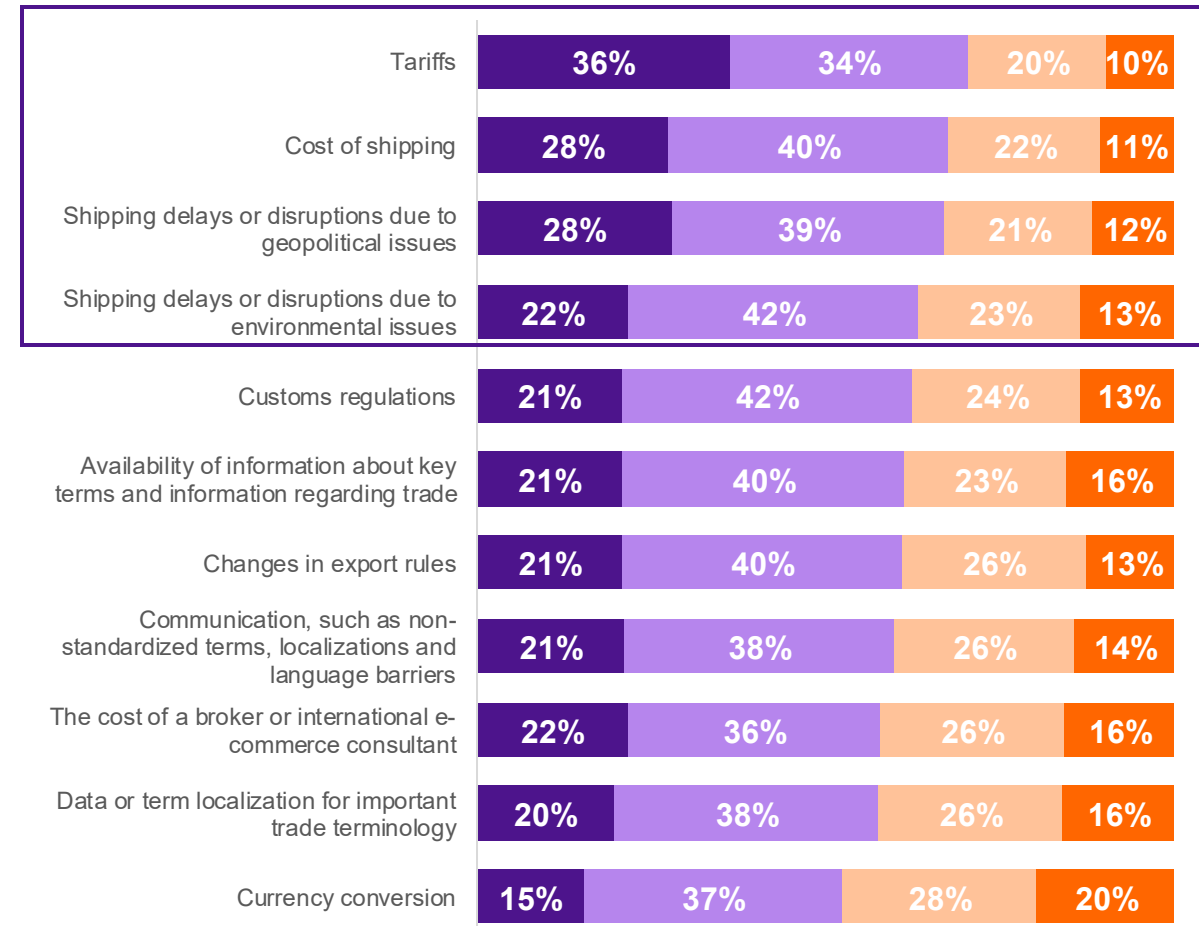


Business Barriers

Tariffs, cost of shipping, and shipping disruptions are cited as the most significant barriers to doing business internationally.

Please indicate how much each of the following has been a barrier to your business internationally.

■ A large barrier ■ Somewhat of a barrier
 ■ Not too much of a barrier ■ Not a barrier at all



Combating Customer Confusion

Small business decision makers are prioritizing transparency to combat customer confusion. Though few businesses are currently electing customers to pay these duties or tariffs, over half are considering passing these costs on in the future.

Which of the following steps, if any, are you taking or considering to reduce customer confusion or negative reactions about tariffs, duties, and fees?

Already Doing	Planning / Considering
48% Display estimated landed costs before checkout	45% 31% plan 14% considering
43% Work with logistics partners to simplify tariff handling	48% 31% plan 17% considering
42% Explain tariffs, duties, and fees on website/checkout	47% 31% plan 16% considering
42% Absorb duties and fees into prices	46% 27% plan 19% considering
34% Avoid/limit sales to complex tariff countries	50% 29% plan 21% considering
31% Elect customers to pay duties and fees	53% 31% plan 22% considering

Managing Global Disruptions

Some small business decision makers say they have begun to hold more inventory in response to global disruptions. Around half of these respondents are still in the planning or considering stage.

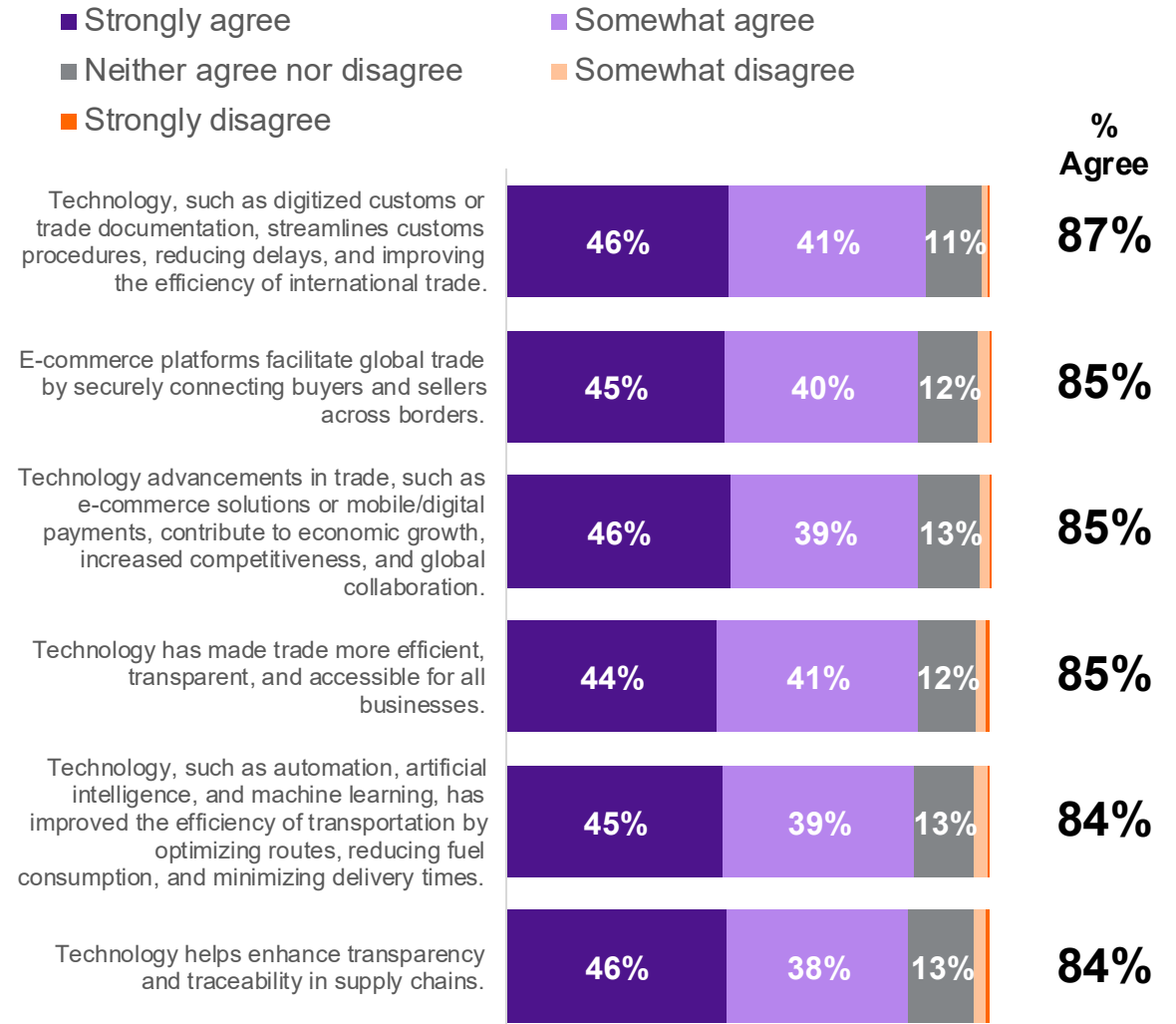
Which steps are you taking to make your international supply chain more resilient to global disruptions?

Strategy	Already Doing	Planning / Considering	T2B Financial Impact
Hold more inventory or safety stock	44%	45%	69%
Use multiple suppliers in different countries	40%	49%	67%
Alternative transportation routes or modes	36%	50%	68%
Shift production / sourcing closer to U.S.	36%	47%	68%
Move production / sourcing back to U.S.	36%	46%	70%

Opinions Surrounding Technology

Small business decision makers broadly agree that technology advancements, from e-commerce platforms to automation, are reshaping trade and creating new opportunities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



AI and Innovation in Trade

There is an appetite for utilizing technology among small business decision makers, as 81% see trade-related innovations as valuable to their business, led by real time shipment tracking.

Looking ahead over the next 3 years, how valuable do you think each of the following trade-related innovations could be for your business, if at all?

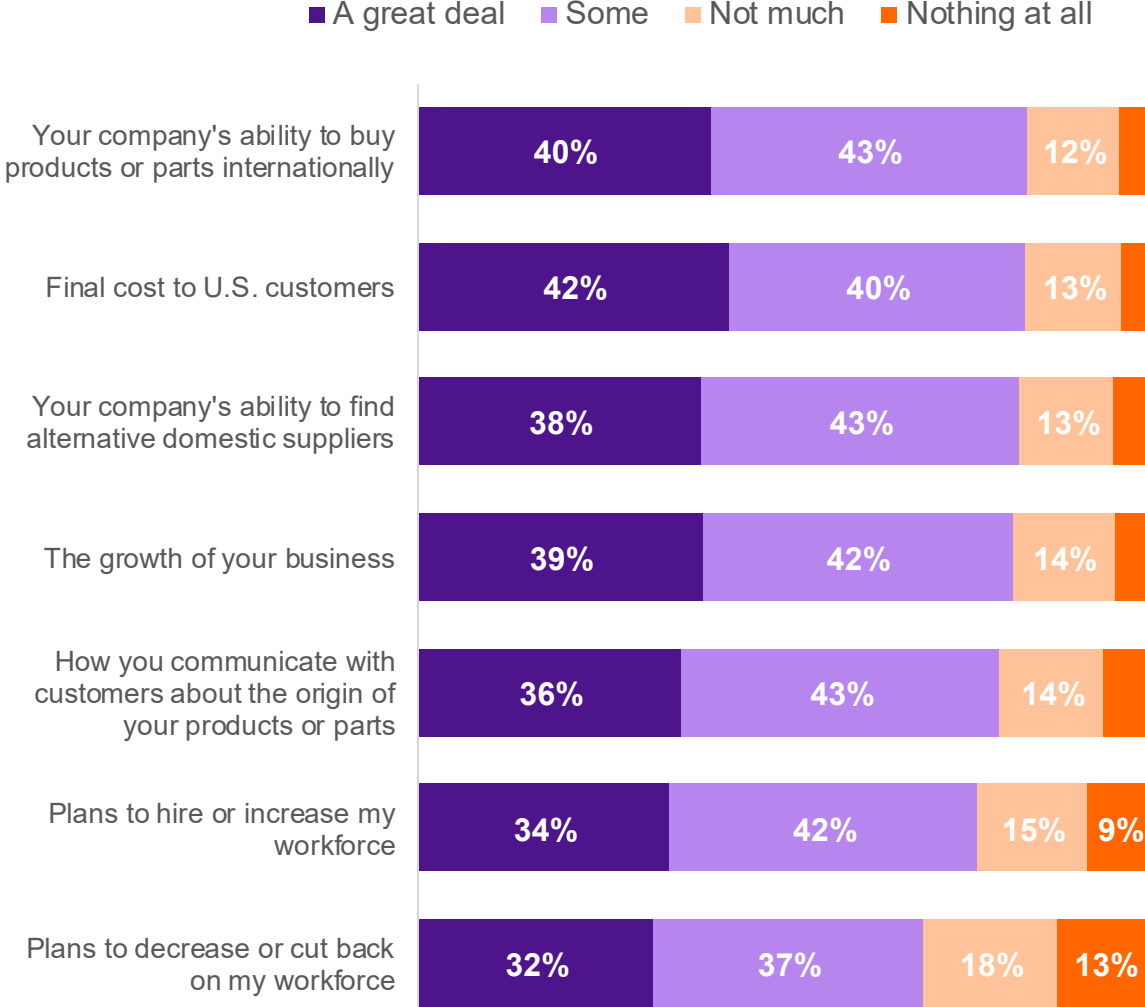
Future Innovation	T2B
Real-time shipment tracking	83%
Shipping cost comparison tools	82%
Digital marketplace matching	80%
Digital customs pre-clearance	79%
Integrated trade finance	79%

~81% see innovations
as valuable

Impact of Fees and Tariffs

Fees and tariffs are felt broadly across business operations, affecting procurement, pricing, growth of businesses, customer communications, etc.

How much of an impact have fees and tariffs had on the following?



Impact of Fees and Tariffs

Customers of small businesses are often confused when presented with the impact of tariffs, and businesses feel the impact of that through refunds or abandoned purchases. Clarity around the cost impact of tariffs could ease that friction across the board.

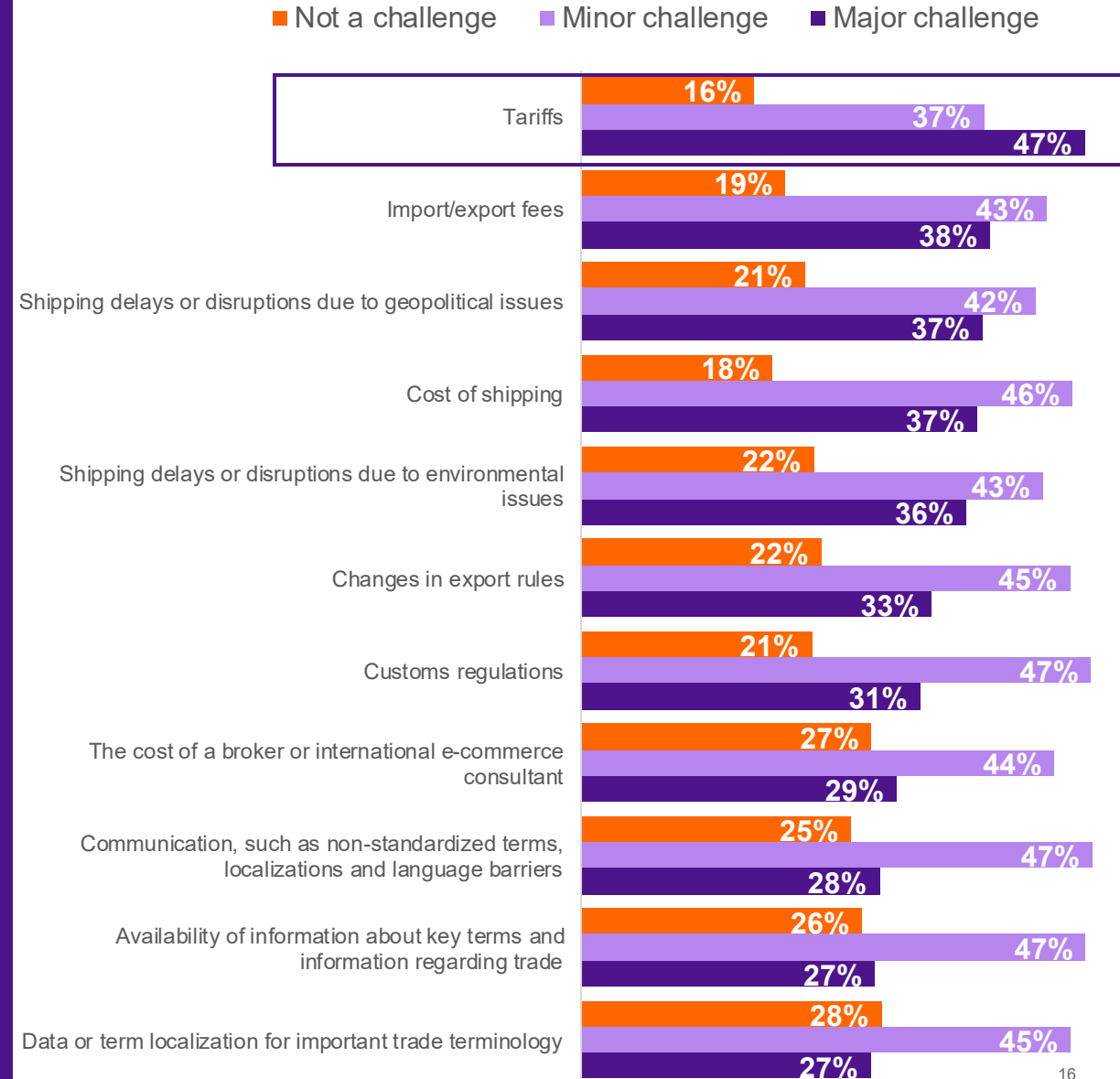
When selling to customers, how often, if at all, do you experience each of the following related to tariffs, duties, and fees?

	All the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Customers contact your business about how tariffs/duties/fees are calculated	26%	40%	19%	12%	2%
Customers surprised by additional duties, taxes, or fees at delivery	24%	44%	21%	9%	2%
You issue refunds or credits due to tariff/duty/fee misunderstandings	24%	36%	24%	14%	2%
Customers abandon purchases when they see estimated duties/taxes/fees	21%	39%	23%	16%	1%
You receive complaints or negative reviews about unexpected charges	21%	38%	23%	16%	2%

Challenges Surrounding Foreign Commerce

Tariffs and import/export fees rank as the top challenges when it comes to foreign commerce, with nearly half of small business decision-makers citing tariffs as a major challenge.

Thinking about importing or exporting goods to and from different countries, how much of a challenge, if at all, have each of the following been to your business?



Priorities and Opinions Surrounding Imported Goods

A majority agree that job retraining and domestic production should be priorities while also believing that imported goods or low-value imports support business growth. This reflects a desire to balance trade openness with a strong domestic supply chain.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

