Stanbic Bank

ISSUE 5

AFRICA TRADE BAROMETER

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT CROSS-BORDER TRADE LANDSCAPE OF AFRICA.

ZAMBIA

FOREWORD

Global trade is undergoing a profound realignment, one in which Africa's role is being redefined.

For decades, those seeking to understand and unlock African trade have relied on fragmented or externally produced data, often shaped by institutions and multinational perspectives that do not fully reflect the realities of businesses operating across the continent. The Standard Bank (also trading as Stanbic Bank) Africa Trade Barometer was created to address that gap. It provides reliable, contemporary, Africa-centric insight into the conditions under which businesses trade across ten key markets representing 68% of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP.

By combining quantitative indicators with direct business sentiment, this Barometer equips policymakers, investors and corporates with the clarity required to make informed decisions in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

This fifth edition arrives at a pivotal moment for global trade and Africa's place within it. Global trade flows are being reshaped by geopolitical realignment, tariff adjustments, supply chain diversification and renewed industrial policy. While volatility defines the present landscape, it also presents opportunity. For Africa, long positioned at the periphery of global trade architecture, this recalibration offers a rare window to move beyond participation and become a strategic architect within global value chains.

The findings in this edition reflect growing resilience across African markets, even as global complexity intensifies. Businesses are diversifying supplier networks, expanding export destinations and leveraging emerging trade corridors. Across our client base, we see increasing sophistication in how African enterprises are positioning themselves for long-term competitiveness.

Our Africa–China Trade Solutions, enabled by our strategic partnership with ICBC, are helping African manufacturers and agro-processors to access advanced technology, capital equipment and new markets at scale. At the same time, intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) continues to strengthen supply chain resilience and deepen continental integration.

Africa's transformation is unfolding on multiple fronts. Agricultural commodities are increasingly processed at source, unlocking greater value retention and industrial growth. Renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture and water technologies are becoming central to resilience. Critical minerals are anchoring the continent within emerging global industrial supply chains. And a young, dynamic workforce continues to drive productivity, innovation and market expansion.

Trade remains the connective tissue across all these developments.

As global systems evolve, Africa now has the opportunity to shape, rather than simply respond to, the next era of international trade. Realising this potential will require disciplined execution, coordinated reform and sustained investment in competitive infrastructure and value addition.

The Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer is our contribution to that journey: enabling better decisions through better insight and supporting Africa's transition into a more influential and strategic participant in global trade.

We are committed to supporting that transformation.

Philip Myburgh

Executive Sponsor: Standard Bank Africa Trade Barometer
Group Head: Trade, Business & Commercial Banking

BEHIND THE BAROMETER

Enabling Insight. Shaping Impact.

Behind every credible trade index lies not only data, but design, discipline and deliberate execution. This is the story behind the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer.

The Africa Trade Barometer is more than a publication. It is a proprietary intelligence platform built to deepen understanding of trade dynamics across ten of Africa's most influential markets. From a marketing and technical perspective, our role has been to transform complex economic signals into accessible, strategic insight, ensuring that this Barometer serves as a trusted tool for the bank, its clients, policymakers and academia.

At its core, the Barometer integrates multiple layers of intelligence. It combines reliable macroeconomic and financial data, sourced from institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Trade Centre, country central banks and the Stanbic Bank Economics Unit, with expert economic analysis and qualitative insights drawn directly from market participants.

Crucially, the research goes beyond publicly available economic indicators. Through comprehensive quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews with traders, decision-makers and industry stakeholders across diverse regions, the Barometer captures the lived realities of domestic and cross-border trade. On average, approximately 65% of surveyed businesses are small enterprises, ensuring that the perspectives of those who form the backbone of Africa's commercial ecosystem are meaningfully represented.

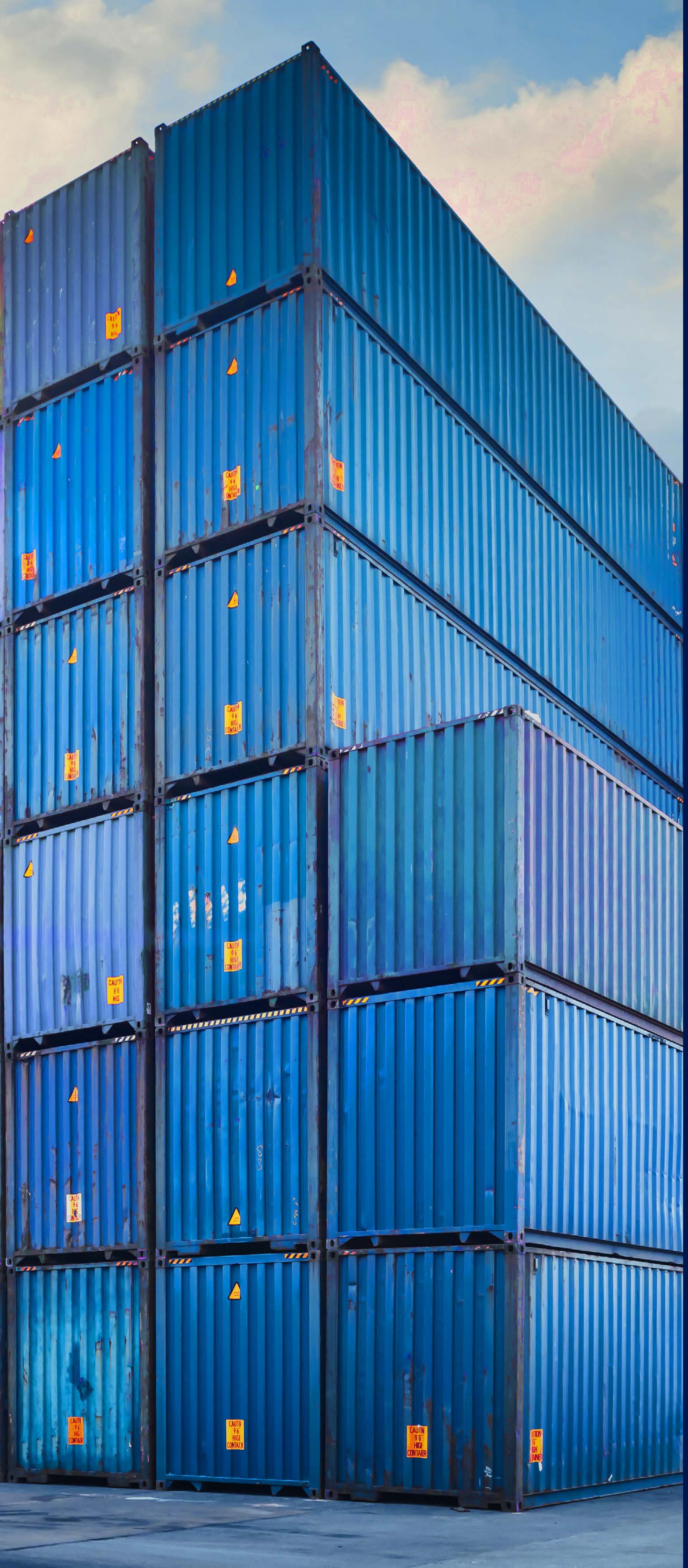
By engaging traders in regions where trade activity is most dynamic, the research provides a genuine pulse of business conditions, reflecting not only performance metrics, but sentiment, constraints and opportunity.

Our mandate has been to ensure that this intelligence is rigorous, accurate and strategically presented, translating economic complexity into insight that informs decision-making and strengthens Stanbic Bank's leadership in enabling trade across the continent.

The Africa Trade Barometer stands as a reflection of that commitment: insight with integrity, relevance and impact.

Italia Matlala

Executive Group Head: Brand & Marketing
Standard Bank Business and Commercial Banking



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Being Africa's largest bank, Standard Bank (trading in Zambia as Stanbic Bank) has leveraged its presence and expertise across the continent to create the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB).

REPORT KEYS

Arrows indicate statistically significant increase/decrease from the previous survey

The SB ATB was launched in 2022 with the intent of creating Africa's leading trade index to address the information vacuum of reliable African trade data and to support and enable the growth of intra-African trade. Availability of trade data remains a challenge across Africa, and the SB ATB aims to fill part of this data gap through up-to-date survey data on the views of African businesses on the environment they operate in, their trade behaviour, trading activities and their perceptions on trade.

This is Issue 5 of the SB ATB. The SB ATB focuses on 10 countries: Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

In order to construct the SB ATB index rankings, seven broad thematic categories of data are collected from both primary and secondary data sources. These thematic categories are trade openness, access to finance, macroeconomic stability, infrastructure, foreign trade, governance & economy, and traders' financial behaviour. These are the seven variables on which the Trade Barometer scores for each country are constructed.

From a primary data perspective, the Stanbic Bank Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB) is constructed. The SB STB scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the data collected only from the primary research surveys conducted with 2 218 firms across the 10 countries of interest.

From a secondary research perspective, the Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) is constructed. The SB QTB scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the selected indicators collected only from existing secondary data sources.

The SB ATB is an aggregate of the SB QTB and the SB STB.

This is the country report for Zambia.

It contains an analysis of the primary and secondary data gathered specifically for Zambia between September and October 2025 and showcases trends and opportunities in trade within the country.

Zambia's position in the overall SB ATB ranking fell from position 8 in August 2024 to position 10 in this iteration of the survey. With regards to the SB QTB, its ranking also declined, falling from 6th place to 8th. Furthermore, Zambia remained at 10th place in SB STB. Therefore, the decline in the SB QTB and the consistently low performance in the SB STB led to a drop in its overall SB ATB position in relation to the other markets. It is important to note that the SB ATB ranking of countries is relative to the 10 countries themselves. In other words, countries are ranked against each other, i.e., relative scores to each other.

Zambia fell in the overall SB ATB ranking from position 8 in August 2024 to position 10.

The table below shows Zambia's relative performance in the seven broad thematic categories of the SB ATB.

SB STB performance for Zambia across seven thematic areas

Note: All (with the exception of the ease of trade) indicators have an index score ranging from 0 to 100, where 0 represents a low score and 100 the highest score. For the ease of trade indicator, 0 represents a high score and 100 a low score.

October 2025
August 2024

Zambia's macroeconomic environment is showing signs of recovery and resilience. In 2025, the economy rebounded with real GDP growth estimated at 6%, having recovered from 4% in 2024 following the drought. This recovery was underpinned by a resurgence in mining, where copper production rose by 18% in the second quarter of 2025 and improved energy generation. Inflation decelerated to 11.9% in October 2025, allowing the Bank of Zambia to cut the policy rate to 14.25%. Furthermore, the successful restructuring of approximately 94% of external debt restored international financial credibility, prompting S&P Global to upgrade the country's credit rating to 'CCC+' in November 2025.

Zambia's business confidence index fell to 52 from 55 in August 2024, reflecting a slight decline in optimism among surveyed businesses. This sentiment was influenced by the lingering effects of the 2024 drought and energy shortages, although the intensity of these risks began to ease in late 2025. While 80% of surveyed businesses expressed concern over the contraction of the wider economy, they also noted signs of stabilisation. The government's aggressive push into solar energy, including the commissioning of the 100 MW Chisamba solar plant in July 2025, signals a strategic move toward grid stability, which may help restore confidence in future.

Zambia's government support index for trade fell to 47 from 52 in August 2024, signalling that surveyed businesses perceive the government as less supportive of cross-border trade. This decline was driven largely by surveyed small businesses who felt the impact of new fiscal measures such as the 1% Minimum Alternative Tax and the mandatory Smart Invoice system effective 1 January 2025. However, the government is implementing reforms to address these concerns, including the Zambia Border Development Strategy 2025–2029, launched in April 2025 to streamline operations. Additionally, the modernisation of the Nakonde One-Stop Border Post made progress in 2025, with Phase 1 reported at 90% completion as of July 2025.

Surveyed businesses indicated a rise in the quality of trade-related infrastructure, with the index score rising to 34 from 30 in August 2024. This improvement was defined by significant investments in transport and digital networks, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation's launch of the USD 315 million Roads and Access Project in January 2025. The power supply rating notably improved after the government fast-tracked projects like the 100 MW Kabwe Solar Project, which launched in May 2025. Furthermore, the telecommunications sector saw growth with the deployment of 152 new towers in a partnership with Airtel Zambia and IHS Towers initiated in April 2025.

Access to credit for surveyed Zambian businesses' index score has risen to 35 from 33 in August 2024, suggesting a slight easing in the difficulty of obtaining finance. This shift occurred as the Bank of Zambia lowered the policy rate in October 2025, though 54% of surveyed businesses still perceived access as difficult. The banking sector faced tight liquidity conditions earlier in the year, which raised the cost of traditional credit. Despite this, the launch of the ZK 5 billion (USD 251 million) Stability and Resilience Facility in March 2025 aimed to de-risk the private sector and help businesses navigate liquidity shocks.

The ease of trade index score remained unchanged at 40 among surveyed businesses, matching the score in August 2024. This stagnation reflects mixed perceptions where trading with the rest of the world became easier due to technological advancements, while trading with the rest of Africa became more challenging. The disruption of trade with the Democratic Republic of Congo throughout 2025 caused logistical bottlenecks at the Kasumbalesa border, which increased transport costs. However, the government has sought to improve regional flows by upgrading the Nakonde border post to reduce truck processing times significantly.

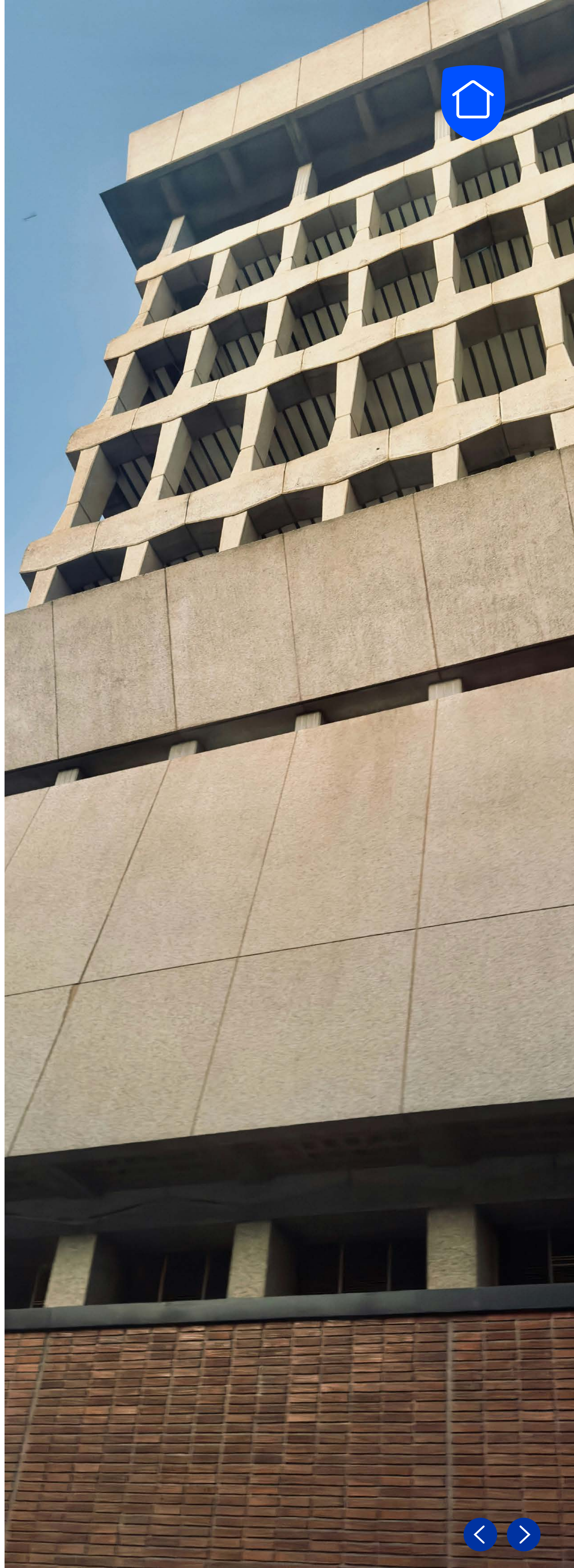
Zambia's trade openness index score fell to 55 from 58 in August 2024 among surveyed businesses, reflecting shifting trade patterns and regional challenges. Surveyed importers shifted their primary source of inputs to Southern Africa from Asia in this iteration of the survey. Exports to the Democratic Republic of Congo declined significantly as South Africa and Zimbabwe became the primary export destinations. Despite the decline in the score, the government gazetted essential trade protocols for the African Continental Free Trade Area in February 2025 to enable businesses to trade under preferential terms.

In conclusion, Zambia's trade landscape in 2025 is defined by a gradual recovery as the country navigates significant short-term impediments. Although the country dropped to 10th place in the overall ranking, this position reflects being outpaced by regional peers rather than a complete deterioration of domestic conditions. The macroeconomic foundation has strengthened following the debt restructuring and the rebound in copper production in the second quarter of 2025. As Zambia leverages its status as a critical logistics hub through projects like the TAZARA railway revamp signed in September 2025, the gap between policy successes and operational realities for surveyed businesses may begin to close.

The government's aggressive push into solar energy, signals a strategic move toward grid stability.

Exports to the Democratic Republic of Congo declined significantly as South Africa and Zimbabwe became the primary export destinations.

As Zambia leverages its status as a critical logistics hub the gap between policy successes and operational realities for surveyed businesses may begin to close.



1 INTRODUCTION

Africa's largest bank, Standard Bank (trading in Zambia as Stanbic Bank), has leveraged its presence and expertise across the continent to create the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB).

The SB ATB was conceived with the intent of creating Africa's leading trade index to address the information vacuum of reliable African trade data and to support and enable the growth of intra-African trade.

Trade—in the context of the SB ATB—should be understood as the process of production and transfer of goods and services that is enabled by solutions that effectively connect the supply chain domestically and internationally to create economic value.

Launched in 2022, this is Issue 5 of the SB ATB. Issues 1, 2, 3 and 4 were published in June 2022, September 2022, May 2023 and August 2024, respectively. The SB ATB focuses on 10 countries: Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The objective of the SB ATB is to provide dynamic and insightful analysis that can intelligently inform and grow Africa's trade ecosystem.

Updated annually, the data enables stakeholders to take the pulse of African trade in near real-time to measure improvements or declines in business confidence, track operational challenges, and identify shifts in overall tradability.

The SB ATB is based on primary and secondary data sources. Primary research is gathered through a survey of over 2 218 businesses representing small businesses, big businesses, and corporates across the 10 countries. The survey is augmented by in-depth interviews with select thought leaders in respective countries, and secondary data from sources such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and central banks of the respective countries.

To complement the individual country reports, a consolidated report will be published, serving as a cornerstone of the Trade Barometer. This overarching document will synthesise the data from the various country analyses to offer a comparative perspective of the factors enabling and impeding trade across the 10 African markets surveyed.

This is the country report for Zambia. It contains an analysis of the primary and secondary data gathered specifically for Zambia and showcases trends and opportunities in trade within the country. Primary and secondary data were gathered in Zambia between September 2025 and October 2025 for this fifth issue of the SB ATB.

A total of 219 businesses were surveyed in Zambia.

The surveyed businesses in Zambia were located in the following cities or towns: Lusaka, Kitwe, Ndola, Kabwe and Chingola. To be representative, the majority of these (71%) were small businesses (see **Figure 1**), as most businesses in the country fall into this category. There were three in-depth interviews conducted in Zambia as part of this issue. These were with representatives from the National Milling Corporation of Zambia, Zambia Revenue Authority, and the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.

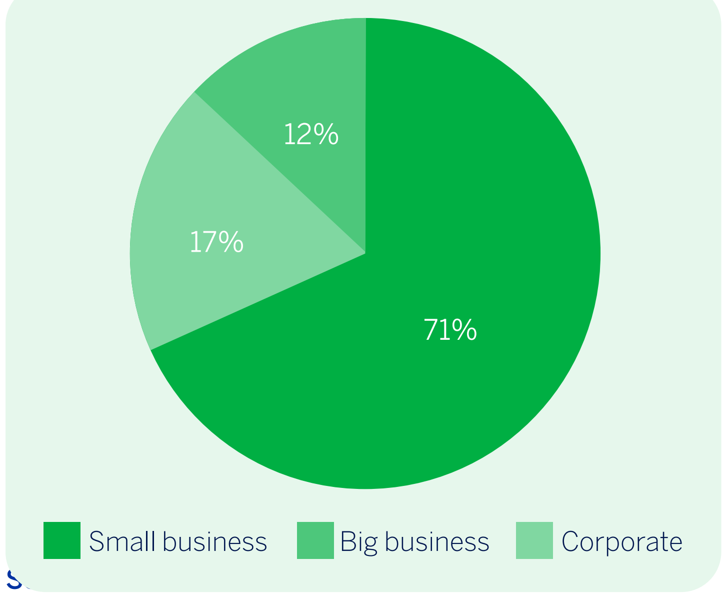
The fact that the majority of surveyed businesses were small businesses is one of the key value adds of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB). Conventionally, aggregate trade data and information on the African continent are skewed by large businesses that trade specific commodities in large volumes. The trading activities and behaviour of small businesses are therefore often not adequately represented.

Skewness towards small businesses of SB ATB

The emphasis and findings in the SB ATB relate to small businesses, their trade behaviour, trading activities and their perceptions on trade. The SB ATB also makes a contribution in understanding the trade perceptions of small businesses in Africa that do not necessarily engage in cross-border trade. Understanding the trade perceptions of all small businesses is key, as it aids in Africa's journey from a disjointed trading landscape to a more cohesive one where an extensive range of economic participants actively engage in trade with one another.

Notes: Certain survey findings in this report may differ from data at the aggregate level because data at the aggregate level is skewed by a few large businesses that trade large volumes of specific commodities. This is pointed out in the report as relevant.

Figure 1: Breakdown of surveyed businesses in Zambia by business segment



2 STANBIC BANK AFRICA TRADE BAROMETER ISSUE 5 COUNTRY RANKINGS

Zambia dropped from 8th to 10th position in the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer ranking.

In order to construct the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB) index rankings, seven broad thematic categories of data are collected from both primary and secondary data sources. These thematic categories are macroeconomic environment, macroeconomic stability, government support, infrastructure constraints and enablers, trade openness, traders' financial behaviour and access to finance, and foreign trade and trading in Africa.

The SB ATB consists of the following two trade rankings:

- **The Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB)** is constructed from a secondary research perspective. The SB QTB scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the selected indicators collected from existing secondary data sources and reports.
- **The Stanbic Bank Firm Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB)** is constructed from a primary data perspective. The SB STB scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the survey data collected from 2 218 businesses.

The SB ATB is an aggregate of the SB QTB and the SB STB. Changes in a country's ranking on the three indices (SB ATB, SB QTB and SB STB) are driven by changes in both the aggregate score for that country, as well as its relative ranking against the other countries included. Changes in the SB ATB rankings over the past year are driven mostly by the changes in the SB STB scores.

The SB ATB ranking of countries is relative as countries are ranked against each other, i.e., relative scores to each other. This is pegged on a scale of 0 - 100. When indexed between this range, Mozambique has the highest Tradability Index, while Zambia has the lowest. This does not imply that one cannot trade in Zambia or that Mozambique is perfect; it only implies that on a common starting point of 0 and a maximum point of 100, this is how the two markets fared.

Zambia dropped two positions to 10th in this iteration of the SB ATB rankings (see **Figure 2**). This was largely driven by its SB QTB ranking, which also dropped two positions, falling to 8th place from 6th in August 2024. Furthermore, Zambia's SB STB remained constant at 10th place, a position it has held since the May 2023 survey.

Zambia dropped to the bottom of the SB ATB rankings due to declining perceptions of exporter tariff regulations, client credit terms, credit access, and transport infrastructure, all of which ranked 10th. Additionally, its drop in the SB QTB rankings reflects its position 9 in FDI net inflows and 8th in air transport, lending interest rate, and current GDP.

Figure 2: ATB, QTB and STB ranking, by country

1 = High tradability score — 10 = Low tradability score

ATB										
Oct '25	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aug '24	3	1	2	4	5	7	6	10	9	8
May '23	3	1	2	7	4	5	6	10	8	9

QTB										
Oct '25	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aug '24	3	1	2	4	8	5	5	6	9	10
May '23	3	1	2	4	5	6	8	7	9	10

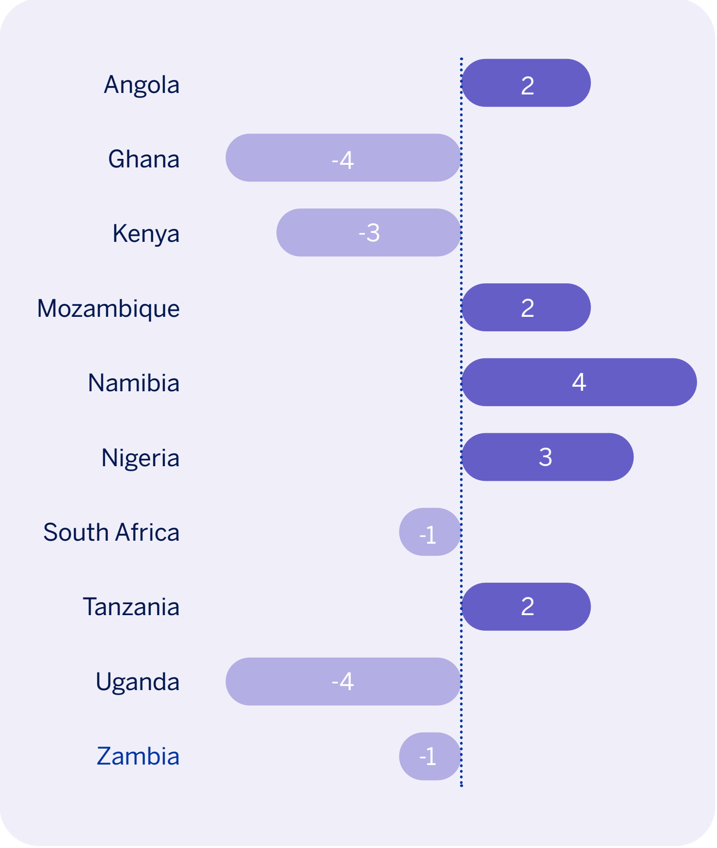
STB										
Oct '25	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aug '24	1	3	2	4	7	5	8	6	9	10
May '23	2	1	4	3	8	7	5	9	6	10

Improved in ranking — Remained in the same ranking — Declined in ranking

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Notes: All values are shown so that a higher value is 'better' for trade, with the best to least ranking economies being ranked 1, 2, 3, etc., and how this has changed over time. Red border indicates that the country has declined in the relevant ranking from August 2024, Green border indicates that the country has improved in ranking from August 2024, while Grey border indicates that the country has remained in the same position as in August 2024.

Figure 3: Big movers across all five iterations of the SB ATB (June 2022 – October 2025)



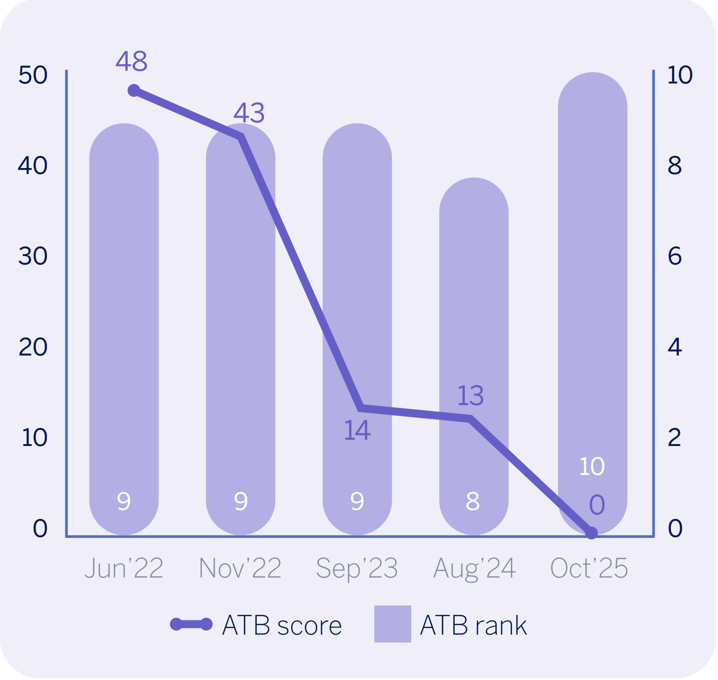
Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Zambia is tied with South Africa as the country with the third-largest negative movement across all five iterations of the SB ATB, from June 2022 to October 2025 (see **Figure 3**). Zambia was placed 9th in June 2022, dropping to 10th in October 2025. Only Ghana, Uganda, and Kenya have recorded larger negative movements across all five iterations of the survey.

Zambia's SB ATB score dropped from 48 in June 2022 to zero in this iteration of survey, driven by the nature of the index (see **Figure 4**). This, in turn, led to a drop to position 10 in the SB ATB ranking, from 9 in the same time period. This decline was largely driven by its SB QTB ranking, which fell to 8th place, and the SB STB, which has remained at 10th place since May 2023.

Despite this drop in sentiment, Zambia's economic trajectory is underpinned by a resilient recovery from the 2024 drought and substantial progress in debt restructuring. This moment is partly anchored by an easing inflationary environment and a resurgent mining sector, where copper production reached 439,644 metric tonnes in the second quarter of 2025, an 18% year-on-year increase driven by revitalised operations at Konkola and Mopani Copper Mines. Furthermore, Zambia's successful restructuring of approximately 94% of its external debt restored international financial credibility, prompting S&P Global to upgrade the country's credit rating to 'CCC+' in November 2025. It will be interesting to track whether these positive developments affect Zambia's ranking in future iterations of the SB ATB.

Figure 4: Zambia's SB ATB score and ranking (June 2022 – October 2025)

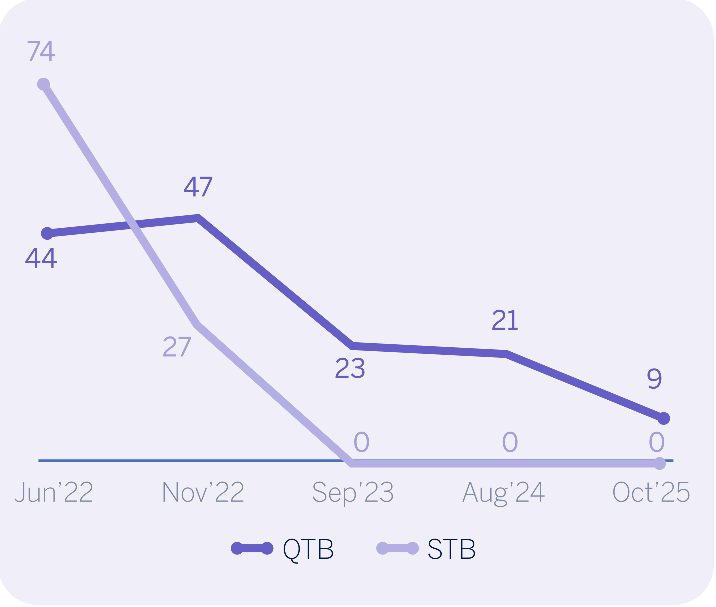


Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Zambia dropped to 8th place in the SB QTB rankings, falling from 6th position in August 2024. However, this current standing remains an improvement over its 9th-place ranking recorded in June 2022. This recent decline is reflected in the country's 9th-place ranking for both tariff rates and lending interest rates in this iteration of the survey. Despite these immediate challenges, Zambia has demonstrated significant structural trade resilience over the past three years, consistently ranking 3rd among the 10 participating countries in several key indicators, including merchandise trade as well as imports and exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP. This underlying structural strength is further enhanced by a robust pipeline of developmental initiatives and policy reforms designed to modernise the trading landscape. The government's Zambia Border Development Strategy 2025–2029 is set to eliminate redundant checks through a coordinated border management approach, while the modernisation of the Nakonde One-Stop Border Post is projected to reduce truck processing times from 64 hours to just 10 hours. Furthermore, the government has fast-tracked major energy projects, such as the 100 MW Chisamba solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, and launched the USD 100 million Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP) to build secure platforms for regional trade. With international financial credibility restored following the successful restructuring of approximately 94% of external debt and a subsequent credit rating upgrade to 'CCC+' by S&P Global in November 2025, Zambia is strategically pivoting from survival toward building a modern, climate-resilient logistics backbone. These efforts, combined with landmark agreements like the USD 1.4 billion TAZARA railway revamp and the US-backed Lobito Corridor project, partly present a positive trajectory for Zambia's future tradability and economic integration, which could potentially have a positive effect on the country's SB ATB performance in future.

Zambia remains in the bottom 50% of the SB STB rankings, a direct reflection of its SB STB score, which has remained at zero from May 2023 through to October 2025 (see **Figure 5**). This positioning is driven by below-average performance across several critical indicators, including import growth prospects, where Zambia scored 61% against a 10-country average of 68%, and business confidence, where it recorded 52% compared to the 65% average. Furthermore, the country scored just 27% in credit terms advanced by clients to surveyed businesses against a 50% average, and 28% regarding tariff regulations aimed at exporters, falling short of the 38% average. Consequently, Zambia ranked 10th across all these dimensions in the October 2025 survey.

Figure 5: Zambia's SB QTB and SB STB scores (June 2022 – October 2025)



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

The rest of this report unpacks Zambia's performance in the Standard Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5 from both a primary and secondary research perspective, in line with the seven broad thematic areas referenced earlier.

3 MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Zambia's improving macroeconomic fundamentals strengthen its tradability outlook despite lingering structural vulnerabilities.

A country's macroeconomic environment is a crucial factor in determining its attractiveness for trade and business. Some factors that increase a country's trade and investment attractiveness are high GDP (indicating a strong production of goods and services); high GDP per capita (suggesting strong consumer purchasing power); low inflation (ensuring the local currency remains favourable for importers); high foreign direct investment (FDI) (indicating a generally business-friendly environment) and high merchandise trade as a percentage of GDP (reflecting substantial imports and exports).

Zambia's GDP forecasts for 2026 show promising signs for business performance and tradability. Following a significant slowdown in 2024, when real GDP growth was recorded at 4% due to the El Niño-induced drought, economic activity rebounded strongly to an estimated 6% in 2025 (see **Table 1**). This recovery was supported, in part, by a rebound in agricultural output, improved energy generation, and increased mining production. The rebound was also underpinned by stable fiscal policy and progress under the IMF's Extended Credit Facility program, which continues to anchor macroeconomic reforms. Beyond this recovery, nominal GDP was estimated to rise to USD 32 billion in 2025, up from USD 26 billion in 2024, leading to a notable increase in GDP per capita, estimated at USD 1,460. This trajectory points to a strengthening macroeconomic environment and tradability attractiveness.

The agricultural sector showed strong signs of recovery in 2025, underpinning Zambia's broader economic rebound. The return to normal rainfall under La Niña conditions has strengthened agricultural performance, particularly in the northeastern and eastern provinces, where above-average precipitation has supported improved agricultural production. As a result, Zambia recorded a bumper harvest of 3.7 million tonnes (mt) of maize in 2025, more than doubling the previous season's 1.5mt, and 289,000mt of soya beans compared to 169,000mt in 2024.[1,2,3] This turnaround eased the food shortages experienced in 2024 and stabilised incomes around the country. The government's continued prioritisation of agricultural recovery through timely input distribution, irrigation support, and targeted relief programs has further strengthened resilience in the sector. Central to this effort, in February 2025, the government mobilised over ZMW 1.1 billion (USD 56.2 billion) through the Sustainable Agriculture Financing Facility (SAFF) to support climate-smart agriculture.[4,5,6] This initiative allowed smallholder farmers to access credit-guaranteed loans with longer tenors and lower interest rates (capped at 12%), specifically designed to facilitate the procurement of irrigation equipment and mechanisation. While this record-

1 IMF, 2025. Available here.
2 The Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, 2024. Available here.
3 ZAMSTATS, 2025. Available here.
4 Parliament of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
5 Zanaco, 2025. Available here.
6 Ministry of Agriculture, 2025. Available here.

Table 1: Select macroeconomic indicators for Zambia

Indicator	Unit	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025e	2026f
Nominal GDP	USD, billions	18.1	21.6	28.7	27.6	26.4	32.0	38.7
GDP per capita	USD	983	1 108	1 437	1 338	1 240	1 440	2 022
Real GDP growth rate	%	-2.80	3.60	4.24	5.40	4.00	5.10	6.20
Inflation rate pa	%	15.7	22.1	11.1	10.9	15	14	8.2
Policy interest rate pa	%	9.7	8.5	9.0	9.8	13.1	14.4	13.3
Merchandise trade	% of GDP	72.8	81.4	70.8	74.5	85.1	N/A	N/A
Exchange rate stability pa	USD per ZMW	18.4	19.6	17.2	20.2	26.1	26.2	25.2
FDI	USD, billions	0.3	-0.6	-0.3	0.5	1.8	0.8	1.5
Trade (exports and imports as % of GDP)	%	79.2	86.2	69.3	79.9	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Standard Bank African Markets Revealed Report; World Bank Development Indicators

Note: Information collected is up to January 2026, and forecasts could have been revised by the time of publication.

Note: '**' represents forecasted figures; 'e' represents estimated figures; 'pa' refers to period average.

breaking output effectively reverses the contractions of the previous season and restores national food self-sufficiency, it also serves as a strategic pivot point. By bridging the gap between subsistence and commercialised farming through these targeted investments, Zambia is transitioning from a cycle of climate-induced recovery toward a more permanent status as a regional breadbasket, leveraging its improved yield potential to drive sustainable export growth.

The energy sector's performance in 2025 marked a crucial turnaround from the supply constraints of the previous years. In 2024, the El Niño drought sharply reduced hydroelectric output, forcing the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (ZESCO) to impose 12- to 21-hour rolling blackouts nationwide. However, reservoir levels have since improved significantly, and the recommissioning of the Ndola Energy Power Plant and ongoing diversification into thermal and solar energy sources have stabilised national supply.[7,8,9] The Ministry of Energy reports that the total generation capacity in early 2025 rose above 1,800 megawatts (MW), compared to just 1,225 MW at the peak of the drought.[10] In June 2025, the Ministry of Energy and the Energy Regulation Board finalised the version 3.0 Open Access guidelines, which allow private power producers to use ZESCO transmission lines to sell electricity directly to large consumers and facilitate petroleum transport transparency.[11,12] These improvements have provided relief to small and medium-sized enterprises that were previously constrained by power rationing, thereby supporting a stronger recovery in the manufacturing and retail sectors.

Monetary policy is shifting toward a more accommodative stance as the Bank of Zambia responds to a sustained decline in inflationary pressures. Following the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) assessment in October 2025, the Bank of Zambia opted to pivot from its tight stance, enacting a 25-basis point cut to the policy rate, bringing it down to 14.25%.[13] Headline inflation was estimated to average 13.8% in 2025, down from the previous forecast of 15%, reflecting a six-month decelerating trend that saw inflation fall to 11.9% in October 2025.[14] This moderation is primarily driven by easing food prices following the agricultural sector's recovery and a significantly stronger Kwacha, which appreciated by over 20% year-to-date due to robust copper export inflows and finalised debt restructuring.[15] Domestic credit to the private sector continues to show resilience, and the recent easing of the policy rate is expected to further support credit expansion into 2026. By balancing this modest rate reduction with a continued commitment to price stability, the Bank of Zambia aims to anchor inflation within the 6–8% target band by early 2026 while fostering a conducive environment for private-sector financing and broader economic recovery.

FAST FACT:
Copper remains dominant, but diversification into agriculture and manufacturing is underway.

The exchange rate and external balances reflect Zambia's improving resilience amid stronger performance. Following an appreciation of 4% against the US Dollar through early June 2025, the currency stabilised as seasonal foreign exchange supply increased and debt restructuring progressed.[16] The renewed investor confidence is further evidenced by Net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows reaching 4.8% of GDP in 2025.[17] Nonetheless, the external position remains exposed to commodity-price and climate-related shocks, reinforcing the importance of a flexible exchange-rate regime and prudent reserve accumulation to sustain resilience.

Zambia's debt restructuring and fiscal reforms will anchor macroeconomic stability into 2026. The country's successful completion of the Eurobond exchange in 2024 and its adherence to the IMF Extended Credit Facility have unlocked additional concessional support from multilateral lenders. External debt as a share of GDP was projected to decline to 45.9% in 2025 from 56.7% in 2024, while domestic debt is forecast to ease to 28.8% of GDP. The government also sought to extend its IMF program beyond its expiration in October 2025 to qualify for the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), which will focus on climate resilience and sustainable investment. According to the IMF, Zambia's fiscal stance in 2025 remained aligned with program goals, though emerging spending pressures, particularly from arrears clearance and fuel obligations, underscore the need for stronger domestic revenue mobilisation and tighter expenditure control. While 2024 fiscal performance exceeded expectations, sustaining fiscal consolidation in 2026 and beyond will require broadening the tax base, reducing exemptions, and improving compliance and audit practices to protect development spending and debt sustainability.[18]

The external sector continued to strengthen in 2025, supported by robust copper exports and improving terms of trade. The current-account balance was estimated to shift into a 0.5% surplus of GDP, compared to a 1.9% deficit in 2024. Copper prices remain around 10% higher in 2025, benefiting from resilient global demand despite ongoing trade tensions. Increased output from Konkola Copper Mines and Mopani Copper Mines, both under renewed operational frameworks, continues to bolster export volumes, while the mining sector benefits from fiscal incentives announced in the 2025 Budget. The government's continued efforts to attract private investment through regulatory reforms and power-supply stabilisation are likely to enhance Zambia's position as one of Africa's leading copper producers.

Zambia's medium-term outlook is broadly positive, anchored by improving macroeconomic fundamentals and structural reform momentum. Real GDP growth is projected to average 5.5% between 2025 and 2026, while inflation is forecast to moderate toward single digits by 2027. However, risks remain, including potential fiscal slippages ahead of the 2026 elections and climate-related vulnerabilities. Sustained policy discipline, debt and energy reform implementation, and export diversification will be critical to ensuring that Zambia's 2025 recovery evolves into durable and inclusive growth.

7 The Guardian, 2024. Available here.
8 GL Energy Africa, 2024. Available here.
9 The UNDP, 2025. Available here.
10 Ibid
11 Energy Regulation Board, 2025. Available here.
12 Route3 Energy, 2025. Available here.
13 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
14 ZAMSTATS, 2025. Available here.
15 International Monetary Fund, 2025. Available here.
16 IMF, 2025. Available here.
17 The World Bank, 2025. Available here.
18 The IMF, 2025. Available here.

4 MACROECONOMIC STABILITY

Surveyed Zambian businesses reported a slight decline in their confidence in the performance of the economy, even though the economy has shown signs of recovery from the challenges of 2024.

ZAMBIA'S BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX SCORE

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Business confidence can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates an extreme lack of confidence, 50 neutrality and 100 extreme confidence. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, Zambia's business confidence index score fell to 52 from 55 in August 2024.

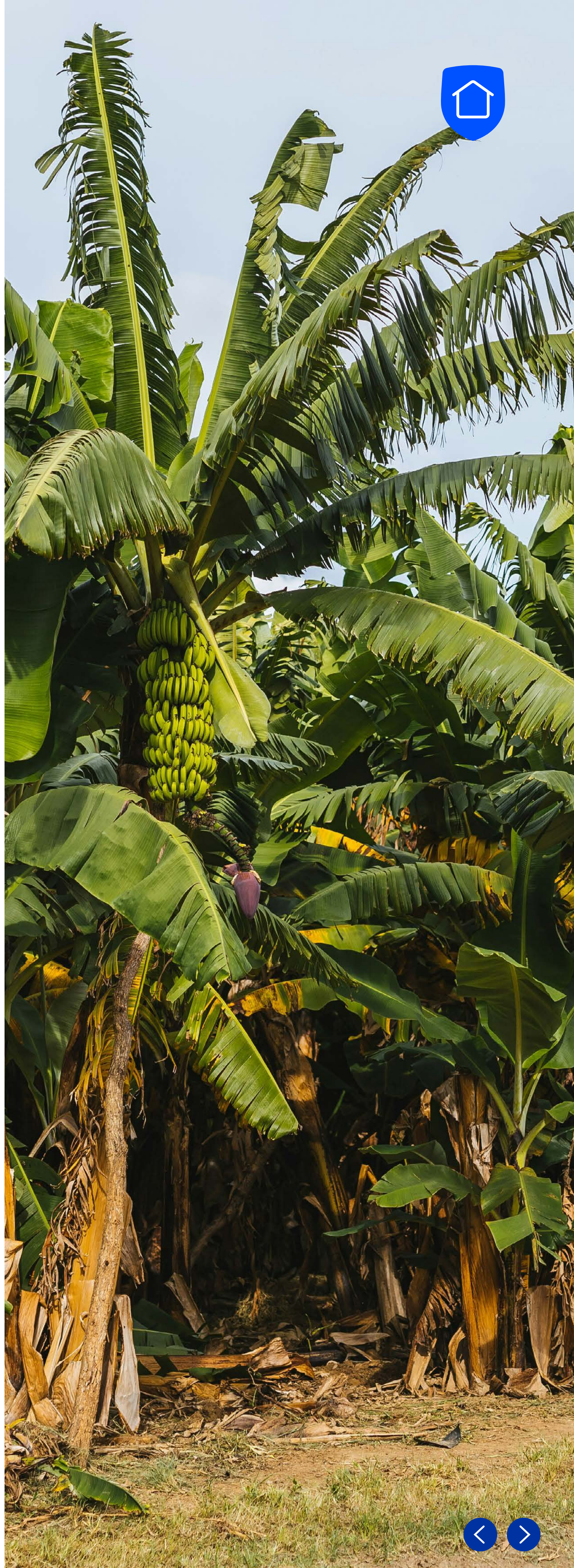
The share of surveyed businesses that were very optimistic or extremely optimistic about the economy's performance in relation to business in the next 3 years decreased by 1-percentage point from 38% in August 2024 to 37% in this iteration of the survey (see **Figure 6**). However, the share of surveyed businesses that were either not very optimistic or not at all optimistic slightly increased by 5-percentage points to 29% in this iteration of the survey, from 24% in August 2024. Overall, as illustrated in **Figure 6**, a small share of surveyed businesses that were either optimistic or neutral became pessimistic on the performance of the economy in relation to business.

Various reasons drive surveyed businesses' pessimistic outlook on business confidence. 63% of surveyed businesses pointed to the poor economy, as 34% cited high taxation. Additionally, 32% called out high prices on products, with 29% pointing to high inflation. Poor government policies were cited by 23% of surveyed businesses, with a further 18% pointing to political instability.

Figure 6: Surveyed Zambian businesses' outlook on the performance of the economy in relation to business

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

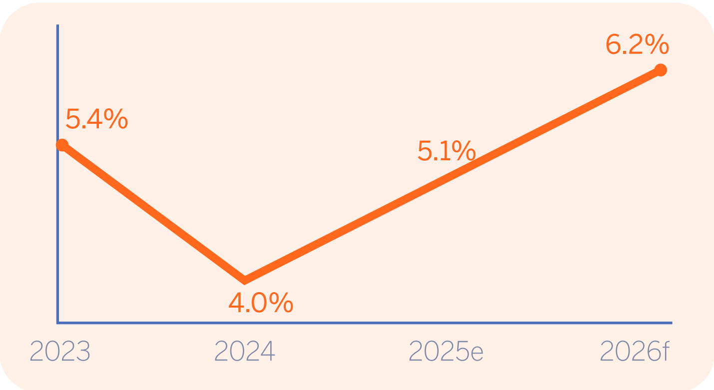
Despite the slight decline in optimism, Zambia's economic trajectory is underpinned by resilient recovery from the 2024 drought and substantial progress in debt restructuring. Real GDP growth was estimated to rebound in 2025 (see **Figure 7**). This momentum is anchored by an easing inflationary environment, with headline inflation slowing to 11.9% in October 2025 from a 16.8% high in February 2025.[19] This downward trend helps preserve consumer purchasing power and creates a more predictable environment for business planning. The mining sector has also rebounded, with copper production reaching 439,644 metric tonnes in the second quarter of 2025, an 18% year-on-year increase, driven by the revitalised operations at Konkola and Mopani Copper Mines.[20] Furthermore, Zambia's successful restructuring of almost all (94%) of its external debt has restored international financial credibility, prompting S&P Global to upgrade the country's credit rating to 'CCC+' in November 2025.[21,22] While energy supply remains a challenge, the government's aggressive push into solar energy, including the commissioning of parts of the 50MW Mansa solar plant and the launch of the 100MW Siavonga project, signals a strategic move toward grid stability.[23] These combined factors suggest that while immediate sentiment is cautious, the structural foundations for a stable and competitive investment landscape are strengthening. Hence, it will be interesting to track whether business confidence improves in future iterations of the survey, given these developments at the macro-level.



19 Zambia Statistics Agency, 2025. Available here.

20 ZNBC, 2025. Available here.
21 Bloomberg, 2025. Available here.
22 World Bank, 2025. Available here.
23 EcoFin Agency, 2026. Available here.

Figure 7: Zambian Real GDP Growth (%)



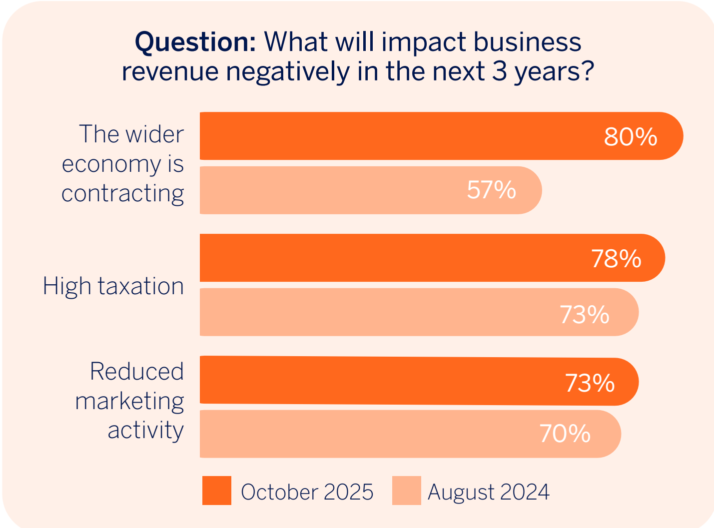
Source: Standard Bank, 2026. African Markets Revealed January 2026

Note: 'f' represents a forecasted data point, and 'e' represents an estimated data point.

In line with the slight increase in pessimistic sentiments highlighted above, surveyed businesses reported a decrease in all key factors that they expect will positively impact their business performance. 73% cited the presence of financial stability, a significant 6-percentage point decrease relative to August 2024. 72% pointed to an increase in sales, capital availability, and the growth of the wider economy. This represented a decrease from 78%, 77%, and 76% in August 2024, respectively. Furthermore, 70% of surveyed businesses pointed to increased production and investment spending, all significantly decreasing from 79% and 78% in August 2024.

Surveyed businesses also reported mixed sentiments on perceived downside risks to their revenues over the next three years (see **Figure 8**)**.** 80% of surveyed businesses expressed concerns over the contraction of the wider economy, increasing from 74% in August 2024. High taxation was cited by 79% of surveyed businesses, decreasing from 84% in August 2024. Furthermore, 75% cited increased operating costs, similar to August 2024, while operational challenges were reported by a similar share in October 2025, a 1-percentage point decrease.

Figure 8: Reasons for pessimism among surveyed Zambian businesses concerning business revenue in the next 3 years



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Climate change is increasingly impacting the environment in which Zambian businesses operate, negatively affecting their performance. Changes in customer behaviour was cited by 32% of surveyed businesses, while 28% pointed to loss of productivity. A further 24% decried increased operational costs, as 20% pointed to physical damage to assets.

In response to these climate-induced challenges, the government of Zambia has accelerated the implementation of a robust legal and financial architecture aimed at building systemic resilience.

The Green Economy and Climate Change Act No. 18 of 2024 became fully operational in 2025 to establish the Climate Change Fund for financing low-emission technologies and climate-smart agricultural practices.[24] This legislation also domesticates the Paris Agreement to provide a regulatory framework for carbon markets that helps industries offset their footprints and access global green value chains. To further de-risk the private sector, the Bank of Zambia launched the ZK 5 billion (USD 251 million) Stability and Resilience Facility (SRF) in March 2025, specifically designed to help businesses navigate the liquidity shocks caused by the 2024 drought.[25] This was followed by the December 2025 unveiling of the Zambia Green Finance Taxonomy (ZGFT), a science-based rulebook developed with the UNDP that reduces the cost of capital by providing the transparency required to issue green bonds and secure sustainability-linked loans.[26] These efforts culminated in August 2025 when Lusaka hosted the Global National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Expo, where the government launched updated technical guidelines to integrate AI-driven climate forecasting into business planning.[27] These structural reforms directly address the operational costs and productivity losses cited by surveyed businesses, signalling a strategic transition toward a more predictable and climate-resilient economy.

24 National Assembly of Zambia, 2024. Available here.
25 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
26 United Nations Development Programme, 2025. Available here.
27 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2025. Available here.

5 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Surveyed businesses have consistently perceived the government as less supportive of cross-border trade over the past four iterations of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer.

ZAMBIA'S GOVERNMENT SUPPORT ON TRADE

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Government support index can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates an extreme lack of government support, 50 neutrality and 100 extreme government support. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, Zambia's government support index score declined to 47 from 52 in August 2024. This means that compared to the August 2024 survey, surveyed businesses in Zambia feel the government has been less supportive of cross-border trade activities in this iteration.

Surveyed businesses that perceived the government as not supportive (either not very supportive or not at all supportive) significantly increased to 36% from 24% in August 2024 (see **Figure 9**). This trend was mostly driven by surveyed small businesses that increased significantly to 28% from 9% in August 2024. Similarly, those who perceived the government as supportive (either extremely supportive or somewhat supportive) declined to 26% from 33% in August 2024.

Figure 9: Perception of government support for cross-border trade

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: Numbers may not add up to exactly 100% due to "don't know" and "refused" responses not being included.

This negative trend is evident across the past four iterations of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (see **Figure 10**). Since September 2022, surveyed businesses have consistently perceived the government to be less supportive of cross-border trade in every subsequent survey.

36% of surveyed businesses perceive the government as not supportive of cross-border trade compared to 24% in August 2024.

There are a few factors that could be driving this negative trend. For one, severe electricity load shedding in early to mid 2025 significantly undermined industrial productivity and business confidence.[28] The unprecedented drought during the 2023–2024 season led to daily power outages that persisted into 2025, whereby households and businesses faced up to 20 hours of load shedding per day.[29] SMEs that power Zambia's economy, representing 97% of all firms, experienced marathon blackouts, which grounded many of these businesses to a halt, with manufacturers wasting raw materials when machines shut down mid-process. The financial burden of load shedding was compounded by a tenfold increase in energy costs for firms using alternative power.[30] To address the deficit, the government fast-tracked the 100-megawatt (MW) Chisamba solar PV project, the largest grid-connected solar development in Zambian history.[31] The Ministry of Energy has also reduced the approval period for solar project applications from over six months to just 48 hours to fast-track private sector investment.[32] However, the immediate reality for many surveyed businesses remained one of severe operational disruption despite these long-term infrastructure projects.

28 Energy For Growth Hub, 2025. Available here.
29 Center For Investigative Journalism, 2025. Available here.
30 M&J, 2025. Available here.
31 African Law & Business, 2025. Available here.
32 Ministry of Energy, 2025. Available here.

> "Government support for trade has technically declined because the severe drought forced the administration to divert funds originally intended for trade initiatives—such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and micro-finance—toward food security, thereby suspending support for many potential trade beneficiaries."
>
> Representative from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry

Figure 10: Trend on government support for cross-border trade among surveyed Zambian businesses

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Reducing business taxes remained the primary intervention identified by surveyed businesses to support their cross-border trade (see **Figure 11**). 77% of the surveyed businesses identified business tax relief as a critical requirement for improving the cross-border trade environment in this iteration of the survey. However, emphasis was also placed on the perceived importance of enhancing regional trade at 75%. Surveyed businesses also identified addressing administrative challenges as important intervention areas, including reducing time taken for customs clearance (76%), clarity on customs duties payable (76%), and lowering customs duties (75%).

Figure 11: Perceptions of how the government can support cross-border trading activities

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Despite the demand for enhanced regional trade, Zambia formalised its commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by gazetting essential trade protocols. In February 2025, Zambia finalised the gazetting of its PSTC through Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 92 of 30th December 2024, enabling Zambian businesses to trade under preferential terms. The government domesticated its tariff commitments, demonstrating its resolve to leverage the AfCFTA as a catalyst for economic development, job creation, and sustainable growth. This also showed the country's commitment to regional economic integration and the advancement of intra-African trade. The agreement allowed Zambia's export industries, especially in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, to become more competitive and expand their footprint across the continent.[33]

The sentiments around tax relief were to be expected given that the Zambian government enacted significant tax reforms through the Income Tax (Amendment) Act and the Customs and Excise (Amendment) Act of 2025. These amendments increased the income tax rate on profits from non-traditional exports and the value addition to copper cathodes to 20% from 15%, raising the fiscal burden on diversified trade.[34] The introduction of the 1% Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) signalled a shift toward taxing gross revenue rather than just profit. Under the Income Tax (Amendment) Act of 2025, companies with high annual turnover but low profitability are now liable for a 1% tax on their total turnover.[35] This measure excludes small businesses under the presumptive or turnover tax regimes.[36] However, it may create a new fiscal hurdle for larger enterprises operating on narrow margins. For these firms, the MAT may act as a mandatory cost that must be paid regardless of actual financial loss, thereby constraining cash flow and reinvestment capacity.

33 Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, 2025. Available here.
34 PWC, 2025. Available here.
35 Zambian Lii, 2025. Available here.
36 PWC, 2025. Available here.

> Severe load shedding forces businesses to rely on alternative energy, but since the Energy Regulation Board frequently fluctuates fuel prices, businesses struggle to plan financially, leading to a situation where production slows down significantly in key sectors like mining and manufacturing.
>
> Representative from the National Milling Corporation of Zambia

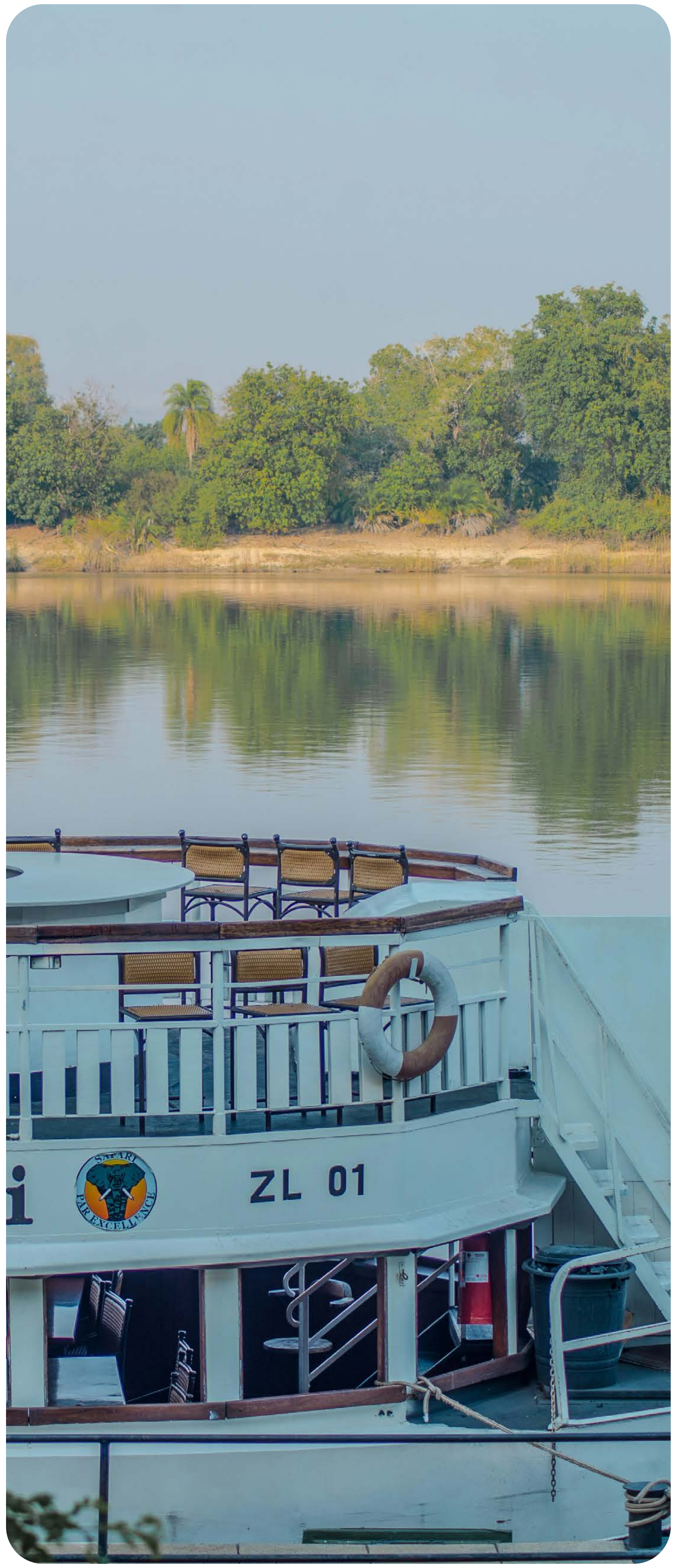
75% of surveyed businesses in Zambia perceived enhancing regional trade as an important government intervention to support their cross-border trading activities.

Furthermore, the mandatory use of the Smart Invoice system for input VAT claims introduced a substantial compliance burden. Effective 1 January 2025, businesses can generally only claim input VAT deductions on invoices issued via the Zambia Revenue Authority's (ZRA's) electronic Smart Invoice platform.[37] The shift from the previous physical Electronic Fiscal Devices (EFDs) was part of a broader digital transformation aimed at reducing tax evasion and streamlining revenue collection. The technical requirements of the Smart Invoice system may have presented a high hurdle for many small enterprises. Additionally, for businesses that were not fully integrated or that dealt with suppliers operating outside the digital system, the inability to claim VAT refunds due to supplier non-compliance acted as an additional cost, disrupting supply chains and slowing trade activity. Furthermore, a 15% advance income tax (AIT) was introduced on export transactions and bank remittances exceeding USD 2,000 if they are not accompanied by a valid Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC).[38] This measure aimed to curb illicit financial flows by harmonising the requirements for exports with the existing rules for imports. However, the increased reliance on a dynamic electronic TCC meant that any real-time lapse in compliance could trigger the 15% tax at the point of transaction. This means that if a business has an outstanding return, an unpaid penalty, or even a minor administrative mismatch in their tax account, the system flags them as non-compliant instantly. For cross-border sales, this results in the immediate application of a 15% Withholding Tax (WHT) at the point of payment, thereby changing the risk profile for cross-border traders.

37 Zambia Revenue Authority, 2025. Available here. LINK NOT WORKING
38 Dentons, 2025. Available here.

Despite the declining perceptions of government support for trade, the government is implementing various reforms that might improve perceptions in future. For instance, the Zambia Border Development Strategy 2025–2029—launched in April 2025 by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI)—aimed at addressing customs clearance delays by implementing a coordinated border management approach.[39] The Zambia Border Development Strategy 2025–2029 mandates that all border agencies, including the Zambia Revenue Authority and the Department of Immigration, synchronise their operations to eliminate redundant checks.[40] The modernisation of the Nakonde border post was central to the government's strategy by constructing additional office buildings and warehouses to accommodate multiple regulatory agencies under one roof.[41] The project made significant progress in 2025, with Phase 1 reported to be at 90% completion as of July 2025.[42] The plan also included upgrading road infrastructure within the parking yards. This physical expansion was coupled with the digitisation of clearance processes through the installation of digital systems and smart gates to streamline border processes, which automated entry and exit and reduced the need for manual inspections. These investments are expected to deliver significant long-term savings for traders by reducing clearance delays, improving compliance, and facilitating faster movement of goods across borders.[43]

39 Zambia Monitor, 2025. Available here.
40 Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, 2025. Available here.
41 The Presidential Delivery Unit, 2025. Available here.
42 Trade Mark Africa, 2025. Available here.
43 Trademark Africa, 2025. Available here.



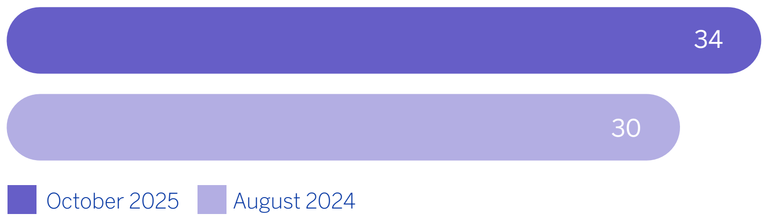
"Taxation acts as a major hindrance to business profitability, observing that import taxes and duties keep changing and are often so stretching, sometimes reaching 20% to 30%, that after compliance, a business owner is often left with zero profit."

Representative from the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)

6 INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLERS

Surveyed Zambian businesses perceive growing efficiency and reliability as the government and development partners continue to make significant infrastructure investments.

ZAMBIA'S TRANSPORT-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE INDEX SCORE



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

The quality of transport-related infrastructure index can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates poor quality, 50 indicates fair quality, and 100 indicates excellent quality. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, Zambia's quality of trade-related infrastructure index score slightly improved to 34 from 30 in August 2024.

Surveyed businesses perceived the quality of infrastructure to be better across the majority of infrastructural aspects in this iteration of the survey relative to August 2024 (see **Figure 12**). These improved perceptions suggest that public investment and maintenance are improving service reliability.

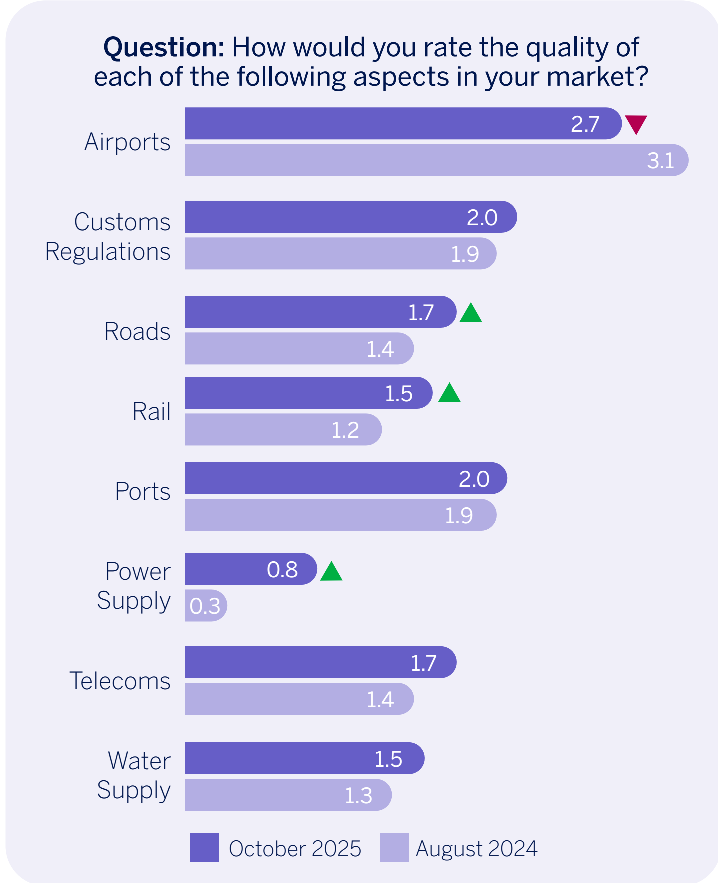
On average, surveyed businesses rated road infrastructure at 1.7 on a 5-point scale, a significant increase from 1.4 in August 2024. This upward trend is driven, in part, by the government's aggressive shift toward Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which have secured billions in road sector investments. In January 2025, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) bolstered this momentum by launching the USD 315 million Roads and Access Project under the Farm-to-Market Compact, aiming to rehabilitate 338 km of roads to reduce transportation costs for the agricultural sector.[44] By its critical Phase 1 milestone on March 31, 2025, the Nakonde One-Stop Border Post upgrade successfully deployed new cargo scanners and parking infrastructure, on track to slash truck processing times from 64 hours to just 10 hours and ease Northern Corridor congestion.[45] Additionally, mid-year progress reports in July 2025 revealed that the landmark Lusaka-Ndola Dual Carriageway reached 36% completion, with 110 km of new asphalt already laid to transform the Copperbelt's primary trade link.[46] In July 2025, the Road Development Agency confirmed that the rehabilitation of the Ndola to Mufulira road reached a major benchmark with the first 17 km stretch and the Tom Mtine Toll Plaza being substantially completed to improve the flow of mineral exports.[47] By August 2025, official updates on the Kasumbalesa One-Stop Border Post indicated that while construction of modern parking facilities progressed, the site remained a focus of high-level SADC technical meetings to resolve non-tariff barriers that still extended clearance times for the 700 trucks crossing daily.[48] In September 2025, the government further expanded this trade strategy by announcing the development of the Kisanya One-Stop Border Post as a vital secondary gateway to the Democratic Republic of Congo to alleviate pressure from the main corridors and facilitate smoother regional commerce.[49] The 2025 National Budget also saw a 44% increase in road infrastructure allocation, rising to ZK 12 billion (USD 602 million), to provide "blended finance" for large-scale connectivity.[50] By September 2025, the government reported that the Mazabuka-Monze road had reached 70% completion, a vital link for the southern agricultural circuit.[51]

On average, surveyed businesses rated telecommunications infrastructure at 1.7 on a 5-point scale, increasing from 1.4 in August 2024. This notable improvement may be, in part, due to a coordinated acceleration of rural tower deployment and the aggressive adoption of satellite-based high-speed internet. In April 2025, the government partnered with Airtel Zambia and IHS Towers in a USD 14 million investment to construct 152 new communication towers, a project that reached a major milestone in September 2025 with nearly 40% of the sites operational, significantly boosting network coverage.52 This momentum was further bolstered by the USD 100 million Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP), which in July 2025 began the rollout of 300 additional towers funded by the World Bank to provide reliable 4G and 5G connectivity

44 Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2025. Available here.
45 Ministry of Infrastructure, 2025. Available here.
46 Road Development Agency, 2025. Available here.
47 Road Development Agency, 2025. Available here.
48 SADC, 2025. Available here.

49 Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, 2025. Available here.
50 UNICEF, 2025. Available here.
51 Zambia News and Information Services, 2025. Available here.
52 EcoFin Agency, 2025. Available here.

Figure 12: The perceived quality of various infrastructural aspects by businesses



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Notes: Rating is on a 5-point scale, where 5 = excellent quality and 1 = poor quality. Arrows denote whether the value of the variable is significantly higher / lower than in the previous survey.

to previously underserved agricultural hubs.53 To stabilise these gains, Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) issued a series of binding directives in November 2025 requiring all mobile network operators to equip hub sites with robust solar and hybrid backup systems, aimed at mitigating the service disruptions caused by national power fluctuations.54 These structural improvements were complemented by a strategic Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2025 between Smart Zambia and ZESCO, which leverages the national electricity utility's Fibrecom backbone to extend high-capacity fibre-optic connectivity to schools and health facilities nationwide.55 Collectively, these developments represent a shift toward a more resilient digital ecosystem, promising to enhance the operational efficiency of Zambia's manufacturing and financial sectors into 2026.

On average, surveyed businesses rated rail infrastructure at 1.5 on a 5-point scale, increasing from 1.2 in August 2024. This modest but positive shift may be, in part, due to a massive influx of geopolitical investment and the government's strategic push to move 30% of bulk cargo from road to rail by 2026.56 In September 2025, a landmark USD 1.4 billion agreement was signed between Zambia, Tanzania, and China to revamp the TAZARA railway, an initiative projected to increase annual freight capacity from 100,000 tonnes to 2.4 million tonnes.57 Simultaneously, the U.S. and EU-supported Lobito Corridor reached a new peak in momentum; the Africa Finance Corporation began soliciting bids for the Zambian greenfield extension, aiming to establish a direct, seven-day transit route between the Copperbelt and the Atlantic.58,59 Further supporting this recovery, the government released ZK 100 million (USD 5 million) in December 2025 for the immediate modernisation of Zambia Railways Limited (ZRL), specifically targeting the renewal of ageing rolling stock and track rehabilitation.60 Additionally, in September 2025, Zambia received a EUR 50 million grant from the European Union, which is being utilised to remove temporary speed restrictions and upgrade signalling systems on the main line.61 While the score by surveyed Zambia businesses remains low, these multi-billion dollar proclamations and the commissioning of critical assets signal a transition from "survival mode" to a modern logistics backbone for the mining sector.

On average, surveyed businesses rated airport infrastructure at 2.7 on a 5-point scale, significantly decreasing from 3.1 in August 2024. This notable decline may be, in part, due to a period of operational transition and localised infrastructure vulnerabilities that emerged early in the year. Following a sector review, the Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL) addressed critical operational risks in January 2025 by initiating remedial gully erosion works at Solwezi Airport while identifying land for a new greenfield facility later in July 2025.[62,63,64] In April 2025, concerns over the transparency of cleaning and maintenance contracts led the Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL) to migrate all tender processes to the Electronic government Procurement (eGP) platform by June 2025, ensuring full public visibility of bid evaluations to restore stakeholder trust.[65] The government has further accelerated the modernisation of projects to transform the aviation sector, aiming to reverse these perceptions through high-capacity infrastructure. In February 2025, the government awarded a ZK 2.8 billion contract for the new Greenfield Airport in Nakonde and ZK 2 billion (USD 140.6 million) for the comprehensive upgrade of Mfuwe International Airport, targeting a significant boost in cross-border trade and tourism arrivals.66 A significant milestone was reached in October 2025 when Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe International Airport located in Ndola, commissioned its first-ever Passenger Boarding Bridges, a development that will optimise aircraft turnaround times, drastically improving passenger safety.[67] This was followed in October 2025 by ZACL's launch of a high-level engagement to develop modern cargo infrastructure at Kenneth Kaunda International Airport (KKIA) in Lusaka, a strategic move to stabilise declining outbound freight volumes and position Zambia as a vital SADC logistics hub.[68] Collectively, while initial maintenance and administrative setbacks may have impacted the opinions of surveyed Zambian businesses, the rollout of advanced technology and new regional airports suggests that the sector is pivoting toward becoming a competitive regional aviation hub.

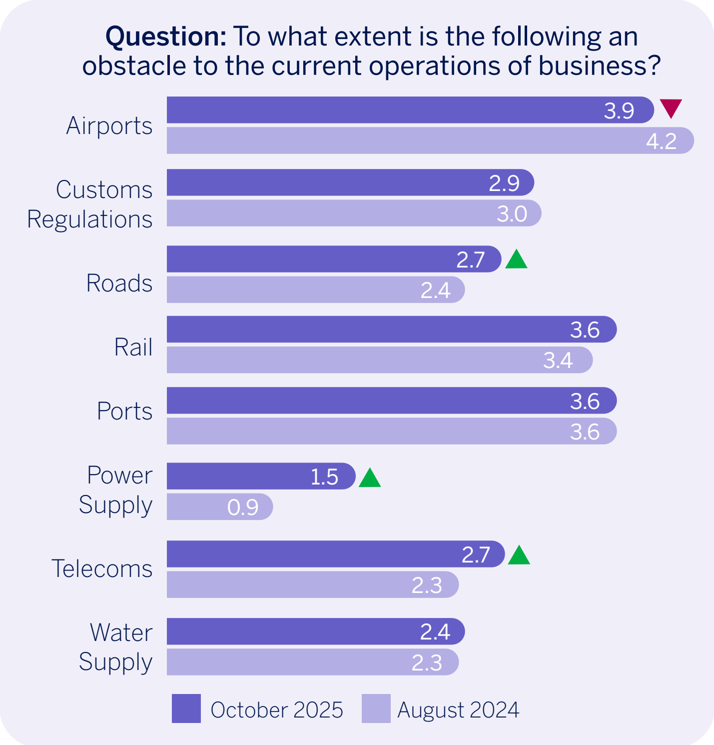
On average, surveyed businesses rated power supply infrastructure at 0.8 on a 5-point scale, significantly increasing from 0.3 in August 2024. This modest but notable improvement may be, in part, due to a strategic shift toward non-hydro renewable energy and the rapid expansion of coal-fired baseload capacity to mitigate the effects of historic droughts. In January 2025, the government officially launched the National Energy Compact, a roadmap to mobilise USD 9.5 billion in private investment and add 3,000 MW of solar capacity by 2030 to reduce the nation's 85% dependency on hydropower.[69] To streamline these investments, the Ministry of Energy announced a reform in April 2025, reducing solar project approval times to just 48 hours, drastically lowering entry barriers for independent power producers.[70] The impact of this policy shift was further realised in May 2025 with the launch of the 100 MW Kabwe Solar Project, Zambia's largest single photovoltaic plant by PowerChina, which began delivering 180 million kWh of clean electricity annually to approximately 150,000 households.[71,72] This was followed in July 2025 by the commissioning of the 100 MW Chisamba Solar Plant, a USD 100 million facility that marked a critical milestone in the "Mission 300" goal to provide universal electricity access.[73] However, the sector still faced severe "stress" through mid-2025, with load-shedding reaching up to 17 hours per day in some districts due to usable water storage at Lake Kariba dropping to record lows of 2.48%.[74] To provide a more stable baseload, Zambia Sugar announced in October 2025 a roadmap to increase its own generation capacity to 100 MW, planning to feed surplus power back into the national grid.75 Finally, in October 2025,

53 World Bank, 2025. Available here.
54 Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority, 2025. Available here.
55 Smart Zambia Institute, 2025. Available here.
56 Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2022. Available here.
57 CNBC Africa, 2025. Available here.
58 Discovery Alert, 2025. Available here.
59 US Department of State, 2025. Available here.
60 TechAfrica, 3035. Available here.
61 Zambia Railways Limited, 2025. Available here.
62 African Pilot, 2025. Available here.
63 Zambia Airports Corporations Limited, 2025. Available here.
64 ZNBC News, 2025. Available here.
65 Zambia Airports Corporation Limited, 2025. Available here.
66 Lusaka Provincial Administration, 2025. Available here.
67 African Pilot, Available here.
68 Zambia Airports Corporation Limited, 2025. Available here.
69 World Bank, 2025. Available here.
70 SolarFinanced Africa, 2025. Available here.
71 PowerChina, 2025. Available here.
72 PowerChina is a global Fortune 500 leader in renewable energy infrastructure that specializes in the design and construction of power and water projects.
73 Xinhua, 2025. Available here.
74 Radio Phoenix FM, 2025. Available here.
75 SolarQuarter, 2025. Available here.

the African Development Bank (AfDB) approved USD 14.5 million for the Garneton North Solar Project, expected to provide reliable power to the Copperbelt's mining hubs.[76]

Surveyed businesses also perceived significant reductions in most obstacles to their operations arising from most infrastructural sectors in this iteration of the survey (see **Figure 13**). This pattern reflects, in part, gradual improvements in infrastructure and service reliability, alongside rising expectations associated with a broad pipeline of planned and ongoing infrastructure investments across Zambia.

Figure 13: Degree of perceived obstacles impacting businesses



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Notes: Rating is on a 5-point scale, where 5 = no obstacle and 1 = severe obstacle. Arrows denote whether the value of the variable is significantly higher / lower than in the previous survey.

Zambia's commitment to reinforcing its economic foundation against environmental shocks is accelerating through large-scale climate-resilient infrastructure investments and policy reforms. Zambia's acceleration of large-scale climate-resilient infrastructure was evidenced in March 2025 by the performance review of the USD 103.5 million Green Climate Fund project, which successfully implemented sustainable water management and agricultural reforms across five provinces to mitigate environmental shocks for over 900,000 beneficiaries.[77,78] To further safeguard essential services, the World Bank in April 2025 approved a USD 33 million grant for the Water Supply and Sanitation Services in Growth Centers Program, a move intended to, in part, modernise billing systems and upgrade physical infrastructure to make water utilities in the Western and North-Western provinces resilient to climate-induced droughts.[79] Mainstreaming these efforts into urban planning, the Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development in September 2025 partnered with the UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre to officially adopt a policy brief on Urban Nature-Based Solutions, which ensures that future municipal infrastructure, such as permeable pavements and bio-retention basins, is in part designed to manage Lusaka's flash floods and heat island effects.[80] Institutionalising these safeguards at a national scale, the World Bank approved the USD 137 million Transforming Landscapes for Resilience and Development (TRALARD II) project in September 2025, which is expected to support the construction of climate-resilient embankments, irrigation canals, and modernised hydromet stations across the Miombo ecoregion.[81] Concurrently, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment finalised the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) framework in October 2025, a strategy that partly mandates the expansion of solar-powered irrigation systems and the integration of climate-informed early warning systems for critical trade corridors.[82] Finally, in November 2025, Zambia signed its third bilateral agreement under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement at COP30, a milestone intended to attract increased international investment for high-quality carbon-mitigation infrastructure projects.[83]

STANBIC BANK'S INITIATIVE

Safeguarding National Productivity and Community Livelihoods Through Energy Security Financing

Stanbic Bank is playing a pivotal role in stabilising Zambia's power supply during a period of climate driven energy shortages. Through a combined **USD 206 million** financing package for **FQM Trident** and **GreenCo Zambia**, the Bank is enabling the importation and distribution of additional electricity to support mining operations and reinforce the national utility, ZESCO. This intervention is vital for mining communities, where thousands of jobs depend on uninterrupted operations, and where power stability directly sustains household incomes and local economic activity.

By bolstering ZESCO's capacity, the financing also helps reduce loadshedding for schools, clinics, SMEs and households nationwide—strengthening social and economic resilience. Stanbic Bank's support safeguards revenue from Zambia's largest export earning industry while ensuring power access for essential services. The Bank's actions demonstrate its commitment to climate adaptive infrastructure, national productivity, and community well being in the face of increasingly volatile hydropower conditions.

76 African Development Bank, 2025. Available here.

77 Green Climate Fund, 2025. Available here.
78 The project targets vulnerable smallholder farmers across the Eastern, Lusaka, Muchinga, Southern, and Western provinces.
79 World Bank, 2025. Available here.
80 United Nations Environmental Programme, 2025. Available here.
81 World Bank, 2025. Available here.
82 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2025. Available here.
83 Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, 2025. Available here.

7 TRADE OPENNESS

Surveyed businesses reported shifting import sources and growing optimism about future trade expansion, reflecting evolving trade patterns and opportunities in key sectors.

ZAMBIA'S TRADE OPENNESS INDEX SCORE

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

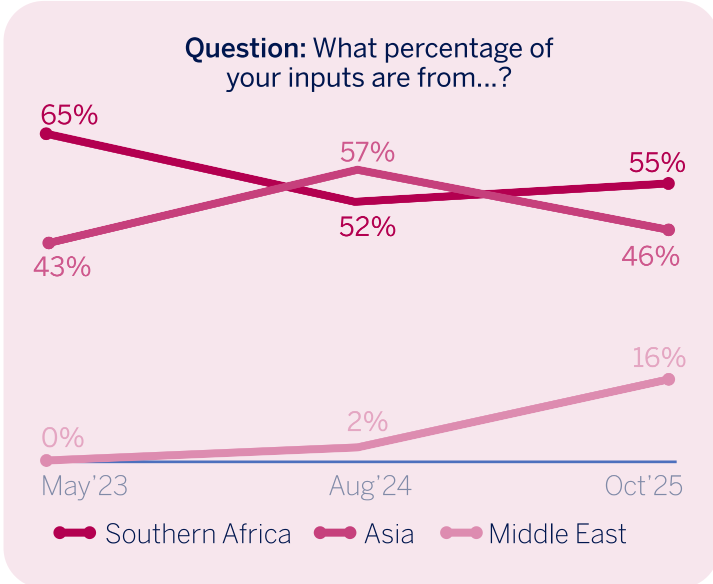
55% of surveyed importers cited Southern Africa as the source of their inputs.

The trade openness index score can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates a high burden of obstacles inhibiting trade, 50 indicates a moderate burden of obstacles inhibiting trade and 100 indicates a low burden of obstacles inhibiting trade. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, the trader perceptions on the degree of challenges impacting trade score decreased to 55 from 58 in August 2024.

Southern Africa replaced Asia as the primary source of imports for surveyed importers in Zambia in this iteration of the survey. The share of surveyed businesses that cited Southern Africa as the source of their inputs increased by 3-percentage points, while the share that reported Asia decreased by 9-percentage points compared to August 2024 (see **Figure 14**). More specifically, the proportion of inputs imported from South Africa increased to 31%, compared to 27% in August 2024, while the share of inputs imported from China declined from 30% in August 2024 to 26% in this iteration. That said, the South Africa findings do not align with data at the aggregate country level. Zambia's imports from South Africa declined from ZK 6.2 billion (approx. USD 252 million) in 2024 to ZK 5.9 billion (approx. USD 246 million) in 2025, representing a ZK 117 million (approx. USD 5 million) or 2% decrease.[84] In contrast, the China survey results align with data at the aggregate country level. Zambia's imports from China declined from ZK 4.7 billion (approx. USD 181 million) in August 2024 to ZK 4 billion (approx. USD 174 million) in October 2025, representing a decrease of ZK 152 million (approx. USD 6.7 million) or 3.7%.[85] Notably, there was a significant increase in the share of surveyed importers that cited the Middle East as the source of their inputs. This is partially attributed to the fact that the Middle East, particularly the UAE, is Zambia's primary source for mineral fuels, oil, and related products, which were among Zambia's major imports in 2025. This result is in line with data at the aggregate country level, which shows that Zambia's imports from the UAE increased by 166-percentage points in the second quarter of 2025.[86]

The majority of surveyed importers operate in the services industry. This was an 18-percentage point increase from August 2024. On the other hand, the share of surveyed importers operating in the consumer goods sector decreased by 13-percentage points from August 2024 (see **Figure 15**). The growth observed in the services industry, particularly among logistics and infrastructure companies, engineering and contracting firms, and related businesses importing vehicles, mining equipment, and mining experts, may partially be attributed to recent developments in the mining sector, which have created several opportunities for business in these service areas.[87] These developments include the government's increased investment in the sector. For instance, in the 2025 national budget, the allocation for aerial geological and geophysical mapping more than doubled from ZK 160 million (approx. USD 6 million) in 2024 to ZK 364 million (approx. USD 16 million) in 2025. This mapping exercise is expected to help define the nation's mineral resource endowment and attract investment, which in turn is creating several opportunities for service sector businesses.[88]

Figure 14: Importers' input source sectors



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

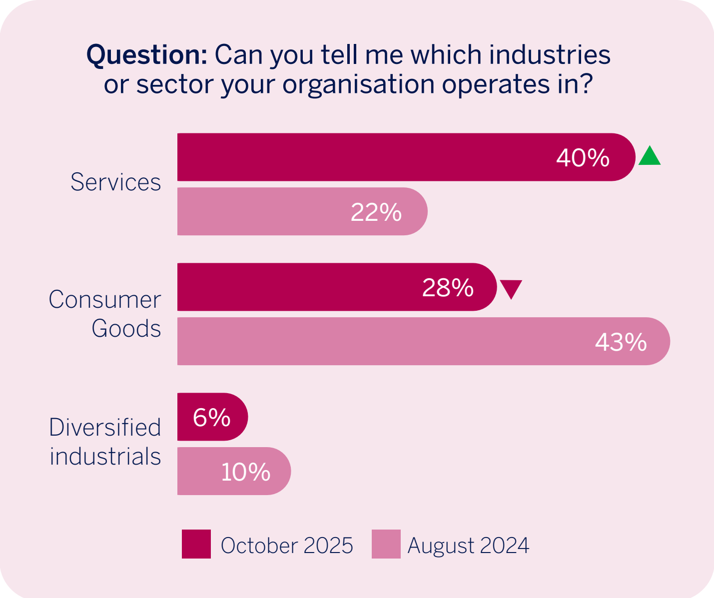
> If given access to new markets, it would give us increased exports. Infrastructure has been developed in these routes—a lot of infrastructure.
>
> Representative from the National Milling Cooperation Zambia

> I have seen quite a number of businesses stepping up. I mean, we are approaching elections very soon, and almost 90% of campaign materials are imported from China—the kitenges, the wrappers, the t-shirts, and all sorts of things are pretty much imported from there.
>
> Representative from the Zambia Revenue Authority

84 OEC, 2025. Available here.
85 OEC, 2025. Available here.
86 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
87 Chambers and Partners, 2025. Available here.
88 Chambers and Partners, 2025. Available here.

FAST FACT:
Mining reforms and licensing transparency are attracting new investment.

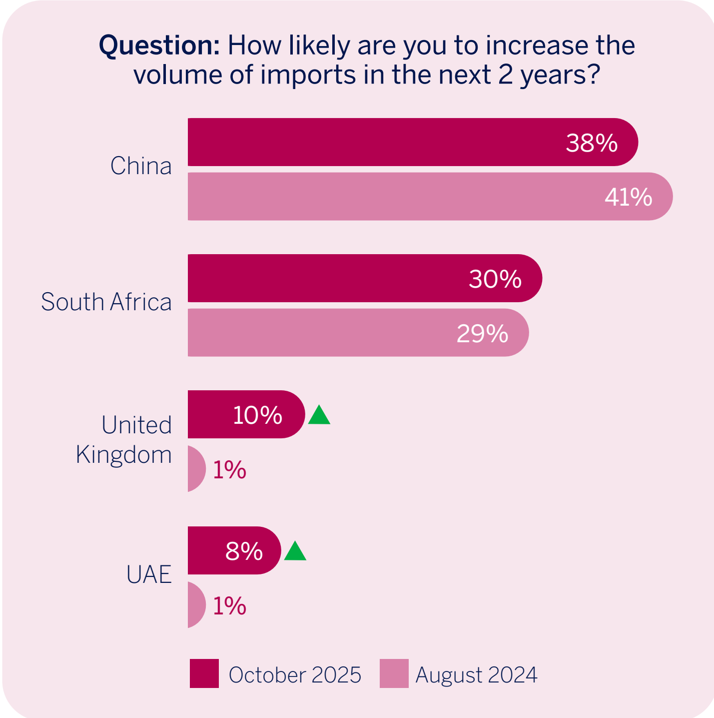
Figure 15: Importers' operation industries/ sectors



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Surveyed importers and exporters are optimistic about the growth of their import and export volumes in the next two years. The share of surveyed importers who cited that it was likely that the volume of their imports would increase in the next two years increased to 60% in this iteration of the survey, compared to 55% in August 2024. More specifically, the majority of surveyed importers cited China, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the import countries likely to see increased volumes, with both high share and high frequency (see **Figure 16**). The significant increases in the likelihood of increased import volumes from the UK (9-percentage points) and the UAE (7-percentage points) are partially attributed to both countries' growing economic partnerships with Zambia, driven by their investments in key sectors. For instance, the UK formalised a USD 2 billion investment in the Zambian energy sector in 2023 to support green growth.[89] Similarly, the UAE formalised a USD 2 billion deal with the Zambian government in 2023 to develop 2 GW of solar energy through Masdar (an Abu Dhabi renewable energy company) and Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO).[90] These ongoing projects continue to require the importation of high-value capital goods, including specialised machinery and renewable energy hardware, which explains businesses' expectations of sustained import growth from these countries.

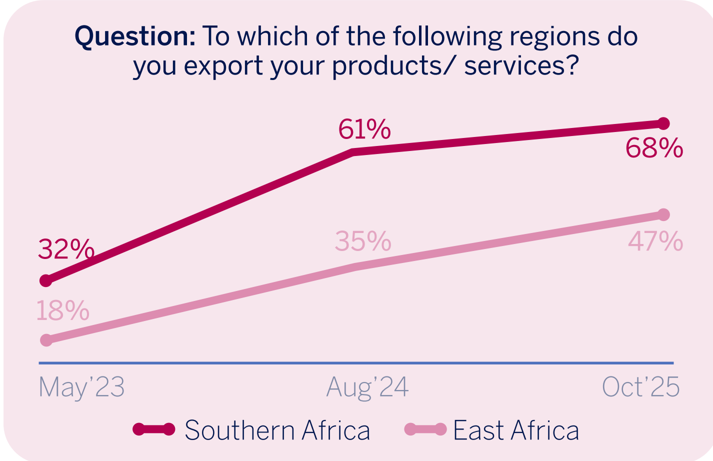
Figure 16: Import countries likely to increase import volumes over the next 2 years (%)



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

The majority of surveyed exporters cited Southern Africa and East Africa as the destinations for their exports. Over the past three iterations, the share of surveyed exporters that export to these regions has grown consistently (see **Figure 17**). More specifically, the major destination countries in each of the regions are South Africa (38%) and Zimbabwe (29%) in Southern Africa, and Malawi (50%) in East Africa. Furthermore, the majority of surveyed exporters operated in the consumer goods sector (37%).

Figure 17: Exporters' operation industries/ sector



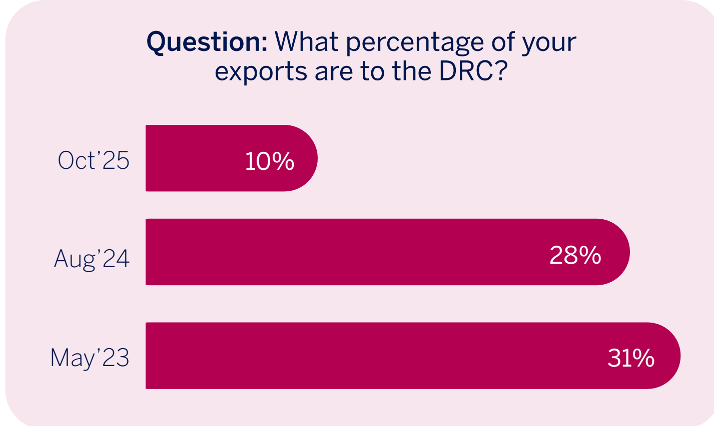
Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) lost its position as the top export destination for surveyed exporters in this iteration of the survey. South Africa and Zimbabwe became the primary export destinations, replacing the DRC, which had maintained the top position in previous iterations. The share of exports to the DRC gradually decreased over the past three iterations (see **Figure 18**). This decrease in exports to the DRC may have fallen largely due to political instability, which has made the Southern trade corridor unsafe. Attacks on truck drivers have made Zambian traders reluctant to use this route.[91] The situation has also disrupted supply chains and trade routes, for instance, in early 2025, heavy congestion and long delays at the Kasumbalesa border disrupted normal trade flows.[92]

Surveyed businesses reported fewer negative impacts from trade-related taxes and regulations in this iteration of the survey. The share of surveyed importers that cited a negative impact of importation-related taxes, including tariffs, on their business growth declined from 35% in August 2024 to 26% (see **Figure 19**). This more positive outlook among surveyed importers is an interesting finding, given that the 2025 tax amendments increased their tax burden. These amendments included an increase in surtax from 5% to 10% and a reduction in duty payment days from five days to three days, among other changes.[93]

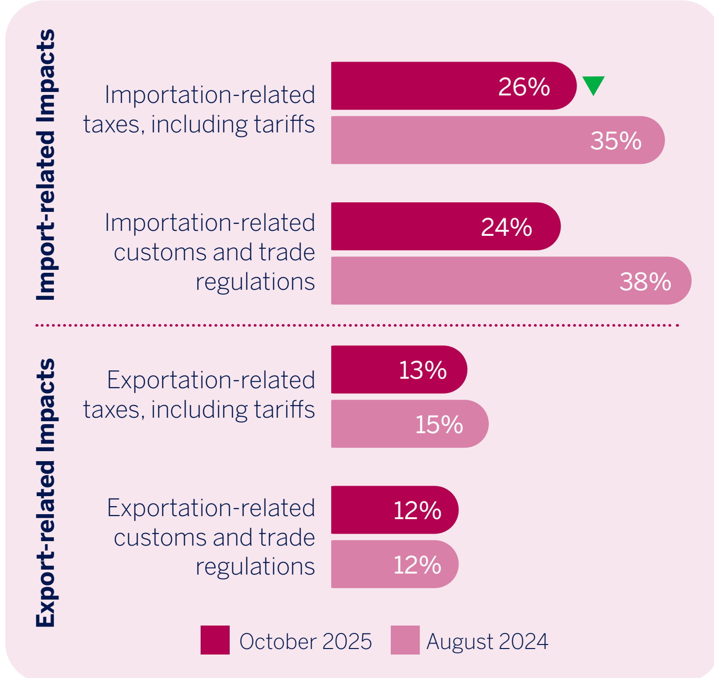
68% of surveyed businesses reported that it was likely that the volume of their exports would increase in the next two years.

Figure 18: Percentage of exports to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by surveyed exporters



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Figure 19: Impacts of trade-related taxes and customs regulations on import and export operations



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

89 Zambia Is Back, 2025. Available here.

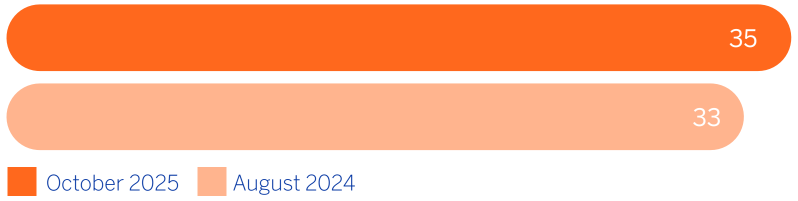
90 National Assembly of Zambia, 2025. Available here.

91 Tanzanian Times, 2025. Available here.
92 Bankable, 2025. Available here.
93 PKF - Zambia, 2025. Available here.

8 TRADERS' FINANCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND ACCESS TO FINANCE

Surveyed businesses in Zambia perceived access to credit as difficult, a trend partially linked to persistent liquidity constraints and high interest rates.

ZAMBIA'S ACCESS TO CREDIT INDEX SCORE



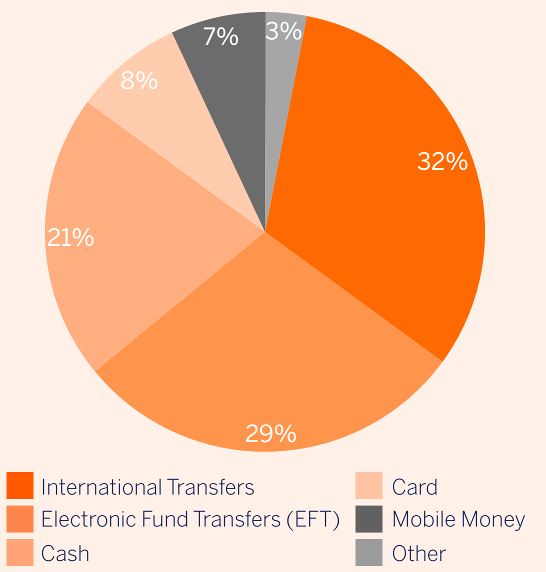
Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Access to finance can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates an extreme difficulty in accessing finance, 50 neutrality, and 100 indicates no difficulty in accessing finance. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, Zambia's access to finance index score slightly improved to 35 from 33 in August 2024. This means that surveyed businesses in Zambia generally perceived it slightly easier to access credit in this iteration of the survey compared to August 2024.

International transfers are the most preferred payment method for cross-border sales by surveyed businesses in this iteration of the survey. Preference for international transfers for cross-border sales increased to 58% from 43% in August 2024. This trend is evident across all surveyed business segments, with the proportion of payments utilising international transfers among small businesses increasing to 24% from 5% in August 2024. Surveyed big and corporate businesses increased to 31% and 39% from 7% and 25% in August 2024, respectively. Conversely, the preference for Electronic Fund Transfers (EFTs) declined from 83% in August 2024 to 53% in this iteration of the survey. Overall, international transfers and EFTs accounted for the largest proportion of payments made for cross-border sales, while cash accounted for a significant 21% (see **Figure 20**).

Figure 20: The proportion of cross-border sales by payment method

Question: Thinking of your sales, generally, are you paid for goods/services when trading with buyers in other countries?



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: Other represents letters of credit and other payment methods.

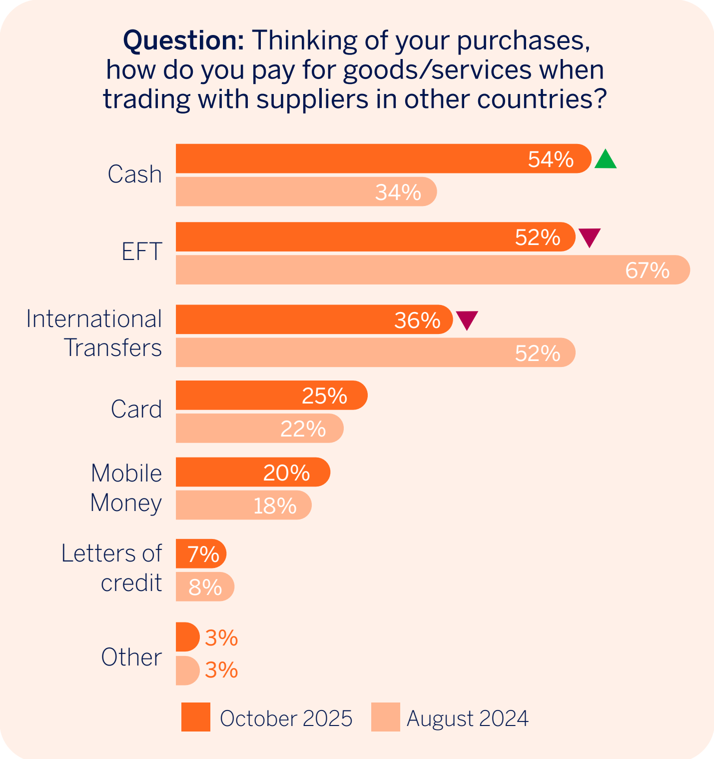
54% of surveyed businesses prefer using cash for cross-border purchases compared to 34% in August 2024.

The above trend was reversed with regard to cross-border purchases. Surveyed businesses in Zambia significantly increased their preference for cash for cross-border purchases in this iteration of the survey. The increased preference for cash coincided with a notable decline in digital methods, specifically electronic funds transfers (EFTs) and international bank transfers (see **Figure 21**). This trend was evident across all surveyed business segments. The proportion of payments for cross-border purchases made using cash among surveyed small businesses increased to 35% from 26% in August 2024. Surveyed big and corporate businesses also increased to 19% and 41% from 8% and 7% in August 2024. Minimal cost fees were cited by 50% of the surveyed businesses as a major reason for the increased preference for cash for cross-border purchases.

With regard to domestic transactions, cash remains the most preferred payment method. 92% and 89% of surveyed businesses prefer using cash for their domestic sales and purchases in this iteration of the survey, similar to the 93% and 90% (respectively) recorded in August 2024. The preference for mobile money, EFTs, and cards as payment methods for domestic sales significantly declined (see **Figure 22**). Similarly, the preference for mobile money, EFT and card for domestic purchases significantly declined from 59%, 35% and 34% in August 2024 to 42%, 27% and 24%, respectively.

> "While technology allows for remote transactions, the rise of digital fraud and scams has forced some traders to remain cautious, often requiring physical verification or payment on delivery arrangements to ensure the transaction is legitimate."
>
> Representative from the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)

Figure 21: Preferred payment methods for cross-border purchases by surveyed business segment



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

There are a number of factors that contributed to the decline in the use of digital payment methods and the dominance of cash in domestic transactions. For one, the introduction of the "Heritage Series" currency in March 2025 significantly improved the availability and security of physical banknotes, establishing cash as a reliable medium for immediate settlement in Zambia.[94] The "Heritage Series" referred to a complete redesign of Zambia's currency to include updated security and design inspired by Zambia's natural wealth. This new currency addressed previous shortages of high-quality tender, which had hindered small-scale trade and domestic transactions. By enhancing security features, the Bank of Zambia reduced the risk of counterfeiting, thereby increasing merchant confidence in accepting large cash payments. Consequently, businesses increasingly favoured physical currency over electronic alternatives, which were often subject to liquidity constraints and high transaction fees during this period. The formal banking sector faced acute tight liquidity conditions in 2025 as the monetary policy rate climbed and stayed at 14.5% for most of 2025.[95] This significantly raised the cost of traditional credit and EFTs, making them less accessible for many businesses.[96]

In addition, the Bank of Zambia's extension of Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) operating hours in early 2025 failed to curb the reliance on cash due to persistent structural and technical barriers. Although the Bank of Zambia extended RTGS operating hours in April 2025,[97] persistent settlement delays continue to drive businesses toward cash. While the extension aimed to facilitate faster high-value payments, structural inefficiencies and frequent internet outages undermined these technical improvements linked to the severe 2023/2024 drought and Zambia's reliance on hydropower.[98] For many enterprises, the inability to access funds immediately due to digital downtime may have presented a significant operational risk that electronic systems could not mitigate.

Despite the persistent use of cash among Zambian businesses, the government extensively invested in digital public infrastructure in 2025. A key milestone was the launch of the USD 100 million Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP) in September 2025, which focused on building interoperable and secure platforms to facilitate regional trade.[99] This initiative was complemented by strategic partnerships with Mezzanine and Visa in 2025, aimed at promoting secure digital payment solutions to enhance financial inclusion and cross-border connectivity.[100] Furthermore, the Bank of Zambia's decision to phase out cheques by mid-2026, as part of the National Payment Systems Vision and Strategy, continued to accelerate the transition toward high-value digital settlement channels.[101] These structural improvements provided the necessary reliability and security for enterprises to pivot away from traditional, slower methods toward more direct international bank transfers. It will be interesting to track, in future iterations of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer, whether these initiatives result in a decline in the use of cash by surveyed businesses and an increase in the use of digital payment methods.

Figure 22: Preferred payment methods for domestic sales

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Mobile money also became a primary driver of the domestic economy in 2025. According to official Bank of Zambia statistics, the first half of 2025 recorded consistent growth in both transaction volumes and values, with monthly

"Securing funding is extremely difficult for Zambian businesses compared to foreign investors (such as Chinese companies) since local banks demand strict guarantees and charge high interest rates, making Zambian money too expensive for local traders to borrow."

Representative from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry)

94 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.

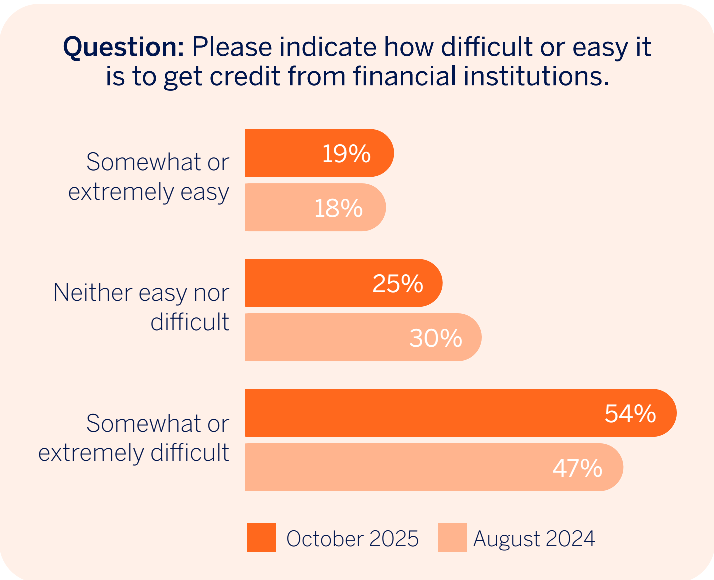
95 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
96 Zambia Monitor, 2025. Available here.
97 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.
98 Tech Africa, 2025. Available here.
99 Ecofin Agency, 2025. Available here.
100 Tech Africa, 2026. Available here.

101 Bank of Zambia, 2024. Available here.

volumes for non-bank mobile payments peaking at over 290 million transactions in May.[102] This surge is part of a broader shift toward a cash-lite society, where active mobile money wallets now represent a significant majority of the adult population. The utility of these platforms was further enhanced in Q1 2025 when the central bank extended the operating hours for the Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system, enabling more seamless 24/7 transfers between mobile wallets and formal bank accounts.

Surveyed businesses continued to perceive access to credit as difficult. In addition to the fact that the majority of surveyed businesses continued to perceive access to credit as difficult (as was the case in the August 2024 survey), this majority actually increased, from 47% to 54% (see **Figure 23**). This trend was driven by small businesses since a majority of those that perceived access to credit as either somewhat difficult or extremely difficult increased to 61% from 49% in August 2024.

Figure 23: Ease of access to credit

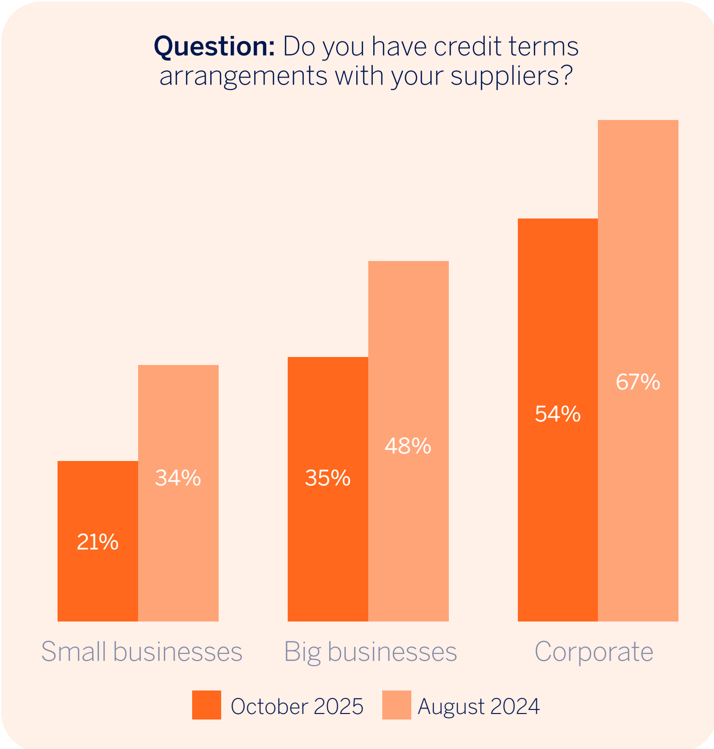


Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: Numbers may not add up to exactly 100% due to "don't know" and "refused" responses not being included.

The proportion of surveyed businesses with credit agreements with suppliers declined from 41% in August 2024 to 27% in this iteration of the survey. This trend was evident across all surveyed business segments (see **Figure 24**).

Figure 24: Credit arrangements with suppliers



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Ways in which financial institutions could support the surveyed businesses remained the same in this iteration of the survey as was in August 2024. Quicker access to funding was perceived as an important intervention area by 81% of surveyed businesses, while 79% perceived a better understanding of their businesses as essential. Other areas that were perceived as important include provision of flexible loan terms (78%), accounting services (77%) and insurance of goods (77%).

54% of surveyed businesses in Zambia perceive access to credit as difficult, up from 47% in August 2024.

STANBIC BANK'S OFFERINGS

Africa China Trade Solutions

Stanbic Bank's Africa China Trade Solutions (ACTS) helps unlock Market Access for African businesses for export and import opportunities.

Through our Export Solution we are able to assist businesses grow their business by finding trading partners in international markets. Our Import Solution enables us to assist businesses grow their operations through importing quality machinery and equipment.

Exporter Readiness Programme

The programme covers regulatory requirements, registration processes, and logistics considerations. It supports SMEs that aspire to grow through exporting, enabling them to develop sustainable market-entry strategies informed by research, market insights, and guidance on product and service positioning.

Partnerships for Market Access

Stanbic Bank partners with Chambers of Commerce, Trade Promotion Agencies and Industry Bodies to collaborate on enabling Market Access across African and international markets.

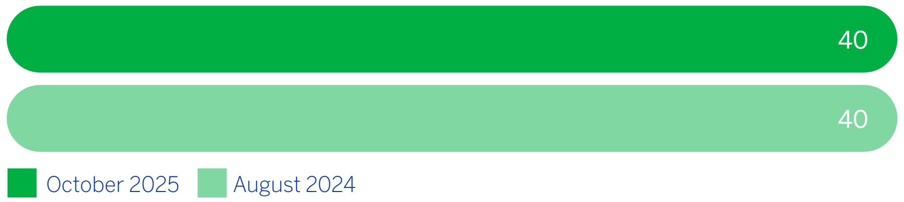
We leverage our Market Access solutions and vast networks, to deliver valuable and impactful collaboration with our partners to enable growth opportunities for African businesses.

102 Bank of Zambia, 2025. Available here.

9 FOREIGN TRADE AND TRADING IN AFRICA

Africa and Asia maintained their positions as Zambia's preferred trading partners, though surveyed businesses faced increasing challenges in regional trade.

ZAMBIA'S EASE OF TRADE INDEX SCORE



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Ease of trade can vary between 0 and 100, where 0 indicates an extreme difficulty in trading with other countries, 50 indicates neutrality, and 100 indicates an ease of trade with other countries. In the October 2025 SB ATB survey results, Zambia's ease of trade index score remained unchanged at 40, as it was in August 2024. This means that the perceptions of surveyed businesses in Zambia with regard to ease and/or difficulty to trade remain unchanged from August 2024.

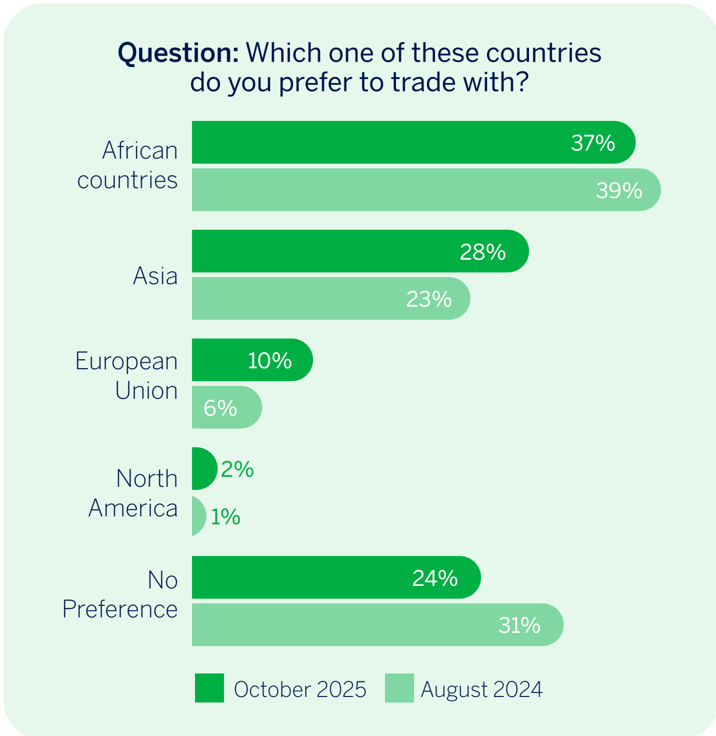
Africa and Asia maintained their positions as the most preferred trading partners among surveyed Zambian businesses. However, the share of surveyed businesses that cited Africa as a preferred trading partner decreased by 2-percentage points, while the share that cited Asia as a preferred trading partner increased by 5-percentage points, compared to August 2024 (see **Figure 25**). The majority of surveyed businesses that prefer trading with fellow African countries cited fast response time (42%) and low cost of importing (42%) as their key reasons. Conversely, those that prefer Asia cited the low cost of products (48%) and good quality of products (48%) as their primary reasons.

In Asia, China is the most preferred trading partner for the majority of surveyed businesses. This preference is partially attributed to the implementation of a zero-tariff policy covering all tariff lines between Zambia and China, which has significantly boosted bilateral trade. For instance, trade volume between the two countries reached USD 3.6 billion in the first half of 2025, representing a 15.5% increase compared to the previous year.[103] Most surveyed businesses engage with China primarily by buying final goods or services directly from traders or wholesalers located in China (77%), importing raw materials from China (28%), and buying final goods or services from Chinese traders or wholesalers located in other regional markets (21%). The key factors driving this trade relationship are the lower cost of products (81%), favourable government policies that support their businesses (78%), and low cost of importing (78%).[104]

37% of surveyed Zambian businesses prefer trading with fellow African countries, down 39% in August 2024.

103 360 Mozambique, 2025. Available here.
104 The percentages included in ()* represent rankings of how important each trade element is, where percentages closer to 100% indicate 'extremely important' and percentages closer to 0% indicate 'not at all important'.

Figure 25: Preferred trading partners



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Trading with the rest of Africa became slightly more challenging for surveyed businesses in this iteration of the survey. The share of surveyed businesses that found trading with the rest of Africa (ROA) very difficult or extremely difficult increased to 42%, compared to 32% in August 2024.

> Because we're landlocked, we don't have access to seaports, so we have very high transportation costs. If we get goods that come from the sea, we have to pay a lot of money for them.
>
> Representative from the National Milling Corporation of Zambia

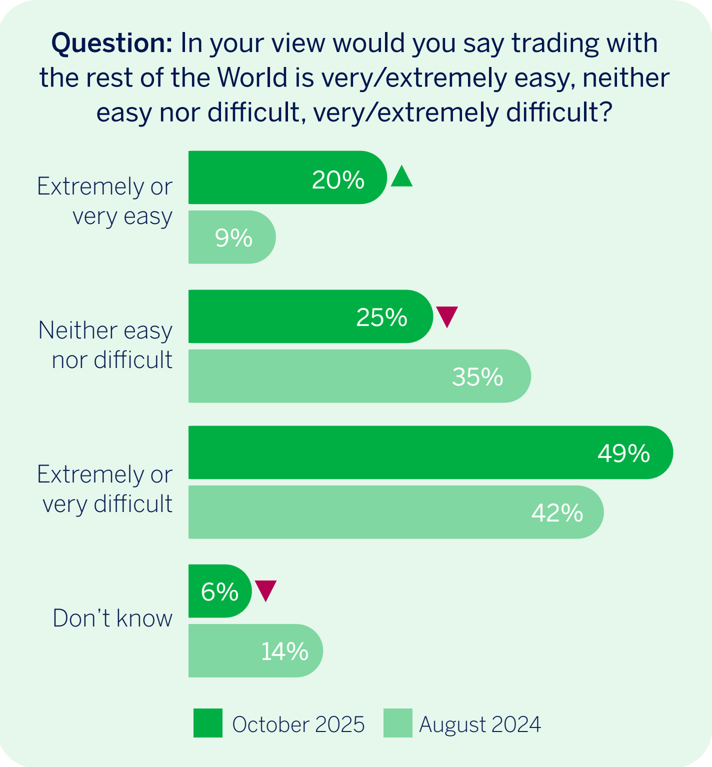
Surveyed businesses attributed this to high transport costs (37%), tough business policies or restrictions by other countries (22%), and currency variations (16%). At the macro-level, these sentiments may also have been driven by the disruption of trade with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia's top African trading partner until 2025. Throughout 2025, trade flows were obstructed by political and security instability within the DRC. These disruptions caused logistical bottlenecks at the Kasumbalesa border, increasing transport costs and dwell times for Zambian exporters.[105]

Perceptions of trading with the rest of the world showed mixed results. The share of surveyed businesses that found trading with the rest of the world (ROW) very difficult or extremely difficult increased by 7-percentage points compared to August 2024 (see **Figure 26**). However, the share of surveyed businesses that found trading with the ROW very easy or extremely easy also increased significantly, rising by 11-percentage points from August 2024. Those that found it very easy or extremely easy to trade with the ROW cited cheaper products (9%), technology advancements such as e-commerce (9%), and good trading relationships (9%) as their top three reasons.

Awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) declined among surveyed businesses. The share of surveyed businesses that were aware of the AfCFTA declined from 37% in August 2024 to 29% in this iteration of the survey. This was largely driven by big businesses and corporates, which exhibited the largest decreases in awareness - 12 and 11 percentage points respectively (see **Figure 27**). This decline is surprising given that Zambia made significant progress in AfCFTA implementation in 2025, with key announcements made to the public and AfCFTA events hosted in the country. For instance, Zambia hosted the inaugural AfCFTA Digital Trade and Services Forum in May 2025. The forum attracted over 1,000 delegates, including several market players and industry leaders, to share knowledge on boosting digital trade to accelerate AfCFTA implementation.[106]

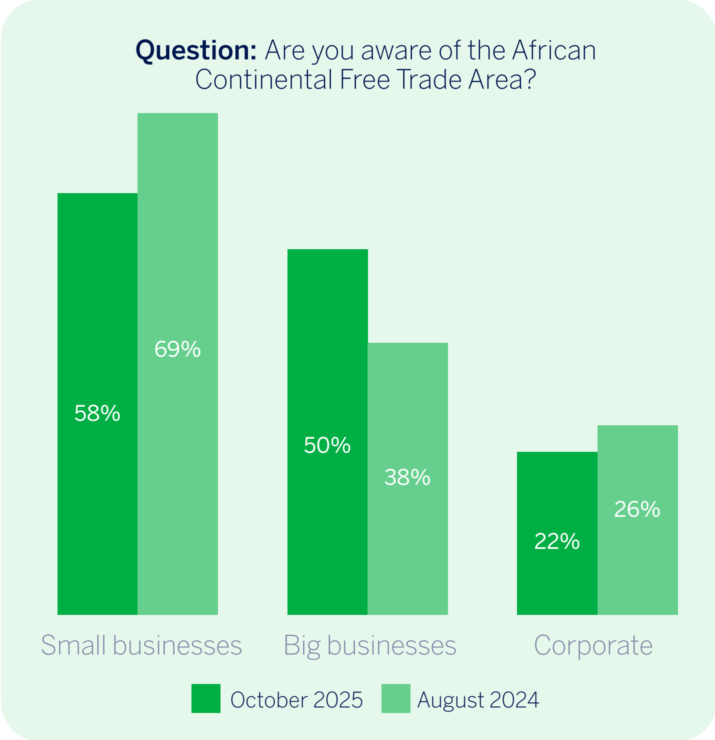
Among surveyed businesses that were aware of the AfCFTA, the top three cited benefits were ease of movement of goods and services across borders (25%), allowing for a larger market share (20%), and contribution to the movement of capital and people across borders (16%).

Figure 26: Perceptions of trading with the Rest of the World (ROW)



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Figure 27: Awareness of AfCFTA by surveyed business segment



Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

> Following the implementation of the AfCFTA, there has been economic diversification—we are now focusing on digital trade, and this has accelerated economic integration. I have seen increased market access and tariff reductions.
>
> Representative from the National Milling Corporation of Zambia

105 Southern African Development Community (SADC), 2025. Available here.

106 Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry, 2025. Available here.

CONCLUSION

Zambia's trade outlook, especially at the macro-level, is defined by a gradual and steady recovery, even as the country navigates significant short-term impediments. Zambia dropped two positions to 10th in the overall Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB) rankings, a decline largely driven by its Stanbic Bank Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) performance and persistent challenges in credit access and infrastructure perceptions. Despite this, the macroeconomic foundation has strengthened considerably following a resilient recovery from the 2024 drought and the successful restructuring of 94% of Zambia's external debt. This fiscal stability, coupled with an upgrade to a 'CCC+' credit rating by S&P Global, provides a vital anchor for future growth. The mining sector remains a cornerstone of this optimism, with copper production rising by 18% year-on-year, supported by revitalised operations and a zero-tariff trade policy with China, which saw bilateral trade volumes surge to USD 3.6 billion in the first half of 2025.

The internal operating environment is being reshaped by ambitious infrastructure projects and digital reforms. While surveyed businesses reported severe disruptions due to energy load shedding in early 2025, the government's aggressive pivot toward renewable energy, highlighted by the commissioning of the 100 MW Chisamba and Kabwe solar plants, is beginning to stabilise perceptions. Furthermore, the "Mission 300" initiative and the USD 100 million Digital Zambia Acceleration Project (DZAP) are laying the groundwork for a more resilient logistics and financial backbone. Infrastructure indices for road, rail, and telecommunications all showed improvement, driven by landmark agreements such as the USD 1.4 billion TAZARA railway revamp and the Lobito Corridor project. These investments are projected to drastically reduce cross-border bottlenecks, such as the Nakonde One-Stop Border Post, where transit times are expected to drop from 64 to 10 hours.

Therefore, the decline in Zambia's ranking to 10th place is a reflection of being outpaced by regional peers. For instance, while Zambia was still navigating the residual trauma of early-2025 energy shortages, Tanzania maintained its 4th-place rank by fully commissioning the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Plant, providing its businesses with a more stable and predictable energy outlook. This competitive pressure is further evidenced by the rise of Mozambique, which jumped to 1st place, fueled by massive LNG-driven foreign investment and the rapid scaling of the Port of Maputo, which successfully positioned itself as a high-efficiency alternative to traditional routes. South Africa also remained a formidable peer despite slipping a rank to 2nd place due to its own logistics crisis. However, due to its deep financial markets and advanced digital payment systems and credit markets, which provided a liquidity safety net for its businesses, it remained ahead of Zambia, where 54% of the surveyed businesses perceived access to credit as difficult.

Looking ahead, Zambia's ability to rebound in the SB ATB rankings will depend on bridging the gap between large-scale policy successes and the daily operational realities of small businesses. Although business confidence slightly declined, the anticipated expansion of export volumes and the shift toward diversified trade partners in Southern Africa and the Middle East signal untapped potential. The government's commitment to climate-resilient growth through the Green Economy and Climate Change Act of 2024 and the Stability and Resilience Facility (SRF) addresses the long-term risks posed by environmental shocks. If the ongoing structural reforms in the energy, mining, and digital sectors continue to translate into lower costs and higher reliability for traders, Zambia is well-positioned to leverage its status as a critical SADC logistics hub and reclaim a higher standing in future iterations of the barometer.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB) Country Ranking for Issue 5, 2025

The Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB) scores are an aggregate of the Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) scores and the Stanbic Bank Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB) scores. Countries are ranked against each other, i.e., relative scores to each other. This is pegged on a scale of 0 - 100. When indexed between this range, Mozambique has the highest Tradability Index, while Zambia has the lowest. This does not imply that one cannot trade in Zambia or that Mozambique is perfect; it only implies that at a common starting point of 0 and a maximum point of 100, this is how the two markets fared.

SB ATB scores remained the same for Uganda, while over half of the countries saw their scores increase from August 2024 (see **Table 2**).

Countries that have retained their ranking from August 2024:

- Nigeria (5th position)
- Tanzania (4th position)
- Uganda (9th position)

Countries that have improved in their ranking from August 2024:

- Angola (10th to 8th position)
- Ghana (7th to 6th position)
- Mozambique (3rd to 1st position)

Countries that have declined in their ranking from August 2024:

- Kenya (6th to 7th position)
- Namibia (2nd to 3rd position)
- South Africa (1st to 2nd position)
- **Zambia (8th to 10th position)**

Table 2: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer (SB ATB) scores by country

	Africa Trade Barometer (ATB) Score		ATB Ranking		
			Aug '24	Oct '25	
Angola	10	0	10	8	▲
Ghana	24	14	7	6	▲
Kenya	21	16	6	7	▼
Mozambique	100	29	3	1	▲
Namibia	44	43	2	3	▼
Nigeria	30	19	5	5	●
South Africa	90	100	1	2	▼
Tanzania	31	25	4	4	●
Uganda	7	7	9	9	●
Zambia	0	13	8	10	▼

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: The scores denote the performance of each country relative to the full country list on the specified measures.

Appendix 2: Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) Country Ranking for Issue 5, 2025

The Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the selected indicators collected from existing secondary data sources and reported facts.

SB QTB scores increased for Ghana, Mozambique, and Nigeria, while Angola's score remained the same. Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia had their scores decline from August 2024 (see **Table 3**).

Countries that have retained their ranking from August 2024:

- Angola (10th position)
- Nigeria (4th position)
- Tanzania (7th position)
- Uganda (9th position)

Countries that have improved in their ranking from August 2024:

- Ghana (8th to 5th position)
- Mozambique (3rd to 1st position)

Countries that have declined in their ranking from August 2024:

- Kenya (5th to 6th position)
- Namibia (2nd to 3rd position)
- South Africa (1st to 2nd position)
- **Zambia (6th to 8th position)**

Table 3: Stanbic Bank 3-Year Quantitative Trade Barometer (SB QTB) scores by country

Africa Trade Barometer (ATB) Score			ATB Ranking	
			Aug '24	Oct '25
Angola	0	0	10	10
Ghana	23	20	8	5
Kenya	19	22	5	6
Mozambique	100	37	3	1
Namibia	36	45	2	3
Nigeria	30	25	4	4
South Africa	82	100	1	2
Tanzania	16	20	7	7
Uganda	9	11	9	9
Zambia	9	21	6	8

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: The scores denote the performance of each country relative to the full country list on the specified measures.

Appendix 3: Stanbic Bank Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB) Country Ranking for Issue 5, 2025

The Stanbic Bank Firm Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB) scores and ranking by country are the averages of all the data collected from the primary research surveys conducted with 2 218 businesses.

The SB STB scores have remained unchanged for Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia in this wave for all countries, while all other countries saw their scores rise (see **Table 4**).

Countries that have retained their ranking from August 2024:

- Mozambique (9th position)
- South Africa (4th position)
- Tanzania (1st position)
- **Zambia (10th position)**

Countries that have improved in their ranking from May 2024:

- Angola (3rd to 2nd position)
- Kenya (7th to 5th position)
- Nigeria (8th to 7th position)

Countries that have declined in their ranking from August 2024:

- Ghana (5th to 6th position)
- Namibia (2nd to 3rd position)
- Uganda (6th to 8th position)

Table 4: Stanbic Bank Survey Trade Barometer (SB STB) scores by country

	Africa Trade Barometer (ATB) Score		ATB Ranking		
			Aug '24	Oct '25	
Angola	81	79	3	2	▲
Ghana	57	37	5	6	▼
Kenya	64	34	7	5	▲
Mozambique	33	25	9	9	●
Namibia	79	79	2	3	▼
Nigeria	55	31	8	7	▲
South Africa	78	44	4	4	●
Tanzania	100	100	1	1	●
Uganda	44	34	6	8	▼
Zambia	0	0	10	10	●

Source: Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5

Note: The scores denote the performance of each country relative to the full country list on the specified measures.

Appendix 4: Selected Macroeconomic Indicators for Zambia

This appendix is structured around the thematic categories of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer: macroeconomic stability, trade openness and foreign trade, access to finance and infrastructure. These are important in evaluating the trade environment and prospects of a country. Within each theme, specific indicators have been selected to quantify elements contributing to the overall trade climate. The data spans from 2020 to the estimated values for 2025 and forecasted values for 2026, offering a temporal perspective on trends and potential future directions.

Table 5: Zambia macroeconomic overview

Thematic Categories	Indicator	Unit	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025f	2026f
Macroeconomic Stability	GDP per capita	USD	983	1 108	1 437	1 338	1 240	1 440	2 022
	Real GDP growth rate	%	-2.80	3.60	4.24	5.40	4.00	5.10	6.20
	Inflation rate pa	%	15.7	22.1	11.1	10.9	15	14	8.2
	Exchange rate stability pa (USD/ZMW)	Zambian Kwacha	18.4	19.6	17.2	20.2	26.1	25.1	20.1
	Policy interest rate pa	%	9.7	8.5	9.0	9.8	13.1	14.4	13.3
	FX reserves pe	USD, billions	1.2	2.8	3.0	3.3	4.3	5.4	6.0
	Domestic debt (% of GDP)	%	39.2	43.1	41.3	39.5	34.1	31.3	29.2
	External debt (% of GDP)	%	87.5	65.3	48.7	51.5	59	47.3	32.9
Trade Openness and Foreign Trade	Trade (exports and imports as % of GDP)	%	79.2	86.2	69.3	79.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Balance of Trade*	USD, billions	2.7	4.0	2.4	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.7
	Current account (% of GDP)*	%	12.0	12.2	3.7	-1.1	-1.0	-1.0	0.4
	Trade (% of GDP)	%	79.2	86.2	69.3	78.2	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Exports of goods and services	USD, billions	8.6	11.7	12.4	11.5	12.7	14.3	16.5
	Merchandise of trade (% of GDP)	%	72.8	81.4	70.8	74.5	85.1	N/A	N/A
	Imports of goods and services	USD, billions	5.8	7.7	10.0	10.9	12.1	13.4	14.7
Access to Finance	Domestic credit to private sector (% of GDP)	%	12.2	8.5	10.2	12.8	12.5	N/A	N/A
	Gross capital formation (% of GDP)	%	32.2	31.4	27.0	31.4	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Net official development assistance and official aid received	USD, billions	10.1	10.8	18.2	14.2	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Personal remittances received (% of GDP)	%	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.3	N/A	N/A
	FDI	USD, billions	0.3	-0.6	-0.3	0.5	1.8	0.8	1.5
Infrastructure	Individuals using the internet (% of population)	%	24.5	32.5	15.0	33.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Access to electricity (% of population)	%	44.6	46.7	47.8	51.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mobile cellular subscription (per 100 people)	Ratio	100.2	103.3	98.4	102.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Air freight tonnage	Ton-Km, millions	70.0	75.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Container traffic at ports	DWT, thousands	1 548.6	1 566.1	1 566.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Standard Bank African Markets Revealed Report | World Bank. Available here.

Note: *Negative values indicate that a country is a net importer, while positive values indicate it is a net exporter. **2025 and 2026 data points are estimates. ***TEU refer to a twenty-foot equivalent unit.

N/A denotes that the relevant data was unavailable from the specified source.

Appendix 5: Key Results of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer Issue 5 Survey in Zambia

This appendix presents the key results of the main questions asked to businesses in Zambia as part of the fifth edition of the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer. The results are structured according to the SB ATB thematic categories: macroeconomic stability, trade openness and foreign trade, infrastructure, government support, as well as traders' financial behaviours and their access to finance. **Not all questions in the SB ATB survey are presented here.** The questions selected for inclusion have been chosen for their closed-ended nature and being succinct enough for a concise presentation. Questions pertaining to the general profile of businesses and individual respondents, or those requiring open-ended responses, have been omitted. This approach ensures that the findings detailed in the following table are directly relevant and valuable for interpreting the trade dynamics within the Zambian context.

Table 6: Key findings of the survey

Thematic Categories	Question	Responses								
Macroeconomic Stability	Thinking of your business turnover over [from 2020 to 2021], please indicate if turnover increased, decreased or remained the same.	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same		Don't know	Refused			
		N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A			
	Thinking ahead [from 2024 to 2025], do you expect business turnover to increase, decrease or remain the same?	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same		Don't know	Refused			
		70%	15%	13%		2%	N/A			
	Thinking ahead [from 2025 to 2026], do you expect business turnover to increase, decrease or remain the same?	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same		Don't know	Refused			
		73%	8%	15%		5%	N/A			
	Please indicate how you feel about the performance of the economy in relation to business in the next 3 years.	Extremely optimistic	Very optimistic	Neutral	Not very optimistic	Not at all Optimistic	Refused	Don't know		
		7%	30%	34%	20%	9%	0%	1%		
Infrastructure	[Road infrastructure] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		3%	11%	27%	32%	27%	0%	0%		
	[Water supply] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		6%	8%	21%	23%	41%	N/A	N/A		
	[Telecommunications] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		6%	10%	25%	28%	30%	1%	0%		
	[Ports] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		2%	10%	27%	29%	10%	7%	16%		
	[Airports] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		11%	17%	33%	21%	5%	7%	7%		
	[Customs and trade regulations] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		5%	12%	31%	35%	13%	1%	4%		
	[Power supply] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		5%	5%	8%	12%	68%	0%	1%		

Thematic Categories	Question	Responses								
Infrastructure (cont.)	[Rail infrastructure] How would you rate the quality of the following aspects in your market?	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not depend on/ use this	Don't know		
		5%	7%	19%	27%	30%	5%	7%		
Trade Openness and Foreign Trade	How likely are you to increase the volume of imports in the next 2 years?	Extremely likely	Very likely	Neither likely nor unlikely		Very unlikely	Extremely unlikely			
		15%	45%	20%		10%	10%			
	How likely are you to decrease the volume of imports in the next 2 years?	Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely		Very likely	Extremely likely			
		18%	39%	32%		12%	N/A			
	To what extent do importation-related taxes, including tariffs, impact your business growth?	Severe impact	Major impact	Moderate impact		Minimal impact	No impact			
		5%	21%	27%		24%	22%			
	To what extent do importation-related customs and trade regulations impact your business growth?	Severe impact	Major impact	Moderate impact		Minimal impact	No impact			
		4%	20%	27%		26%	22%			
	How likely are you to increase the volume of exports in the next 2 years?	Extremely likely	Very likely	Neither likely nor unlikely		Very unlikely	Extremely unlikely			
		N/A	68%	21%		11%	N/A			
	How likely are you to decrease the volume of exports in the next 2 years?	Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely		Very likely	Extremely likely			
		N/A	54%	38%		8%	N/A			
	To what extent do exportation-related taxes, including tariffs, impact your business growth?	Severe impact	Major impact	Moderate impact		Minimal impact	No impact			
		2%	11%	21%		28%	38%			
	To what extent do exportation-related customs and trade regulations impact your business growth?	Severe impact	Major impact	Moderate impact		Minimal impact	No impact			
		2%	11%	23%		26%	39%			
	In your view, would you say trading with the rest of Africa is extremely easy, very easy, neither easy nor difficult, very difficult or extremely difficult?	Extremely easy	Very easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult	Don't know	Refused		
		3%	17%	32%	33%	10%	3%	1%		
	In your view, would you say trading with the rest of the world (OUTSIDE OF AFRICA) is extremely easy, very easy, neither easy nor difficult, very difficult or extremely difficult?	Extremely easy	Very easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult	Don't know	Refused		
		2%	18%	25%	31%	18%	6%	N/A		
	Are you aware of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement?	Yes			No					
		29%			71%					
	What are the top 3 benefits of the AfCFTA on your business?	No benefits (Exclusive)	Ease the movement of goods/ services across borders	Allow for a larger market for my goods/ services	Allow for greater competition	Promote the availability of more products and services to choose from	Contribute to the movement of capital and people across borders	Facilitate greater investment across countries	Promote industrial development across the countries	Enhanced regional payment systems
		19%	25%	20%	13%	16%	16%	12%	15%	11%
Government Support	Please indicate how supportive your government is with regard to cross-border trading activities.	5 - Extremely supportive	4	3	2	1 - Not at all supportive	Refused	Don't know		
		10%	16%	31%	24%	12%	0%	7%		

Thematic Categories	Question	Responses								
Traders' Financial Behaviour and Access to Finance	Please indicate how difficult or easy it is to get credit from financial institutions	Extremely easy	4	3	2	1 - Extremely difficult	Refused	Don't know		
		7%	12%	25%	28%	26%	N/A	2%		
	Why do you prefer using cash to pay for your goods or services when trading with suppliers in other countries?	Minimal cost/ fees	Allows for negotiations		Limited knowledge in other payment methods		Convenient - easy to deal with		Privacy	Other
		50%	46%		11%		35%		19%	N/A
	What challenges, if any, do you encounter when using cash when trading with suppliers in other countries?	Fraud	Loss of money/ security risks		Fluctuating exchange rates		Customs declarations	Inconvenience - of carrying large amounts of money		Other
		33%	43%		37%		13%	24%		N/A
	What benefits or incentives would encourage you to entirely switch to formal channels (such as cards, electronic payments, international transfers) when trading with suppliers in other countries?	Faster transaction processing times	Minimal document requirements	Competitive exchange rates	Guaranteed security	Recorded transactions	Other			
		57%	44%	22%	33%	22%	N/A			
	Do you offer credit terms to your clients?	Yes			No					
		37%			63%					
	Do you have credit terms arrangements with your suppliers?	Yes			No					
		27%			73%					

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer is based on both primary and secondary research sources. This is Issue 5 of the SB ATB. Issues 1, 2, 3 and 4 were released in June 2022, November 2022, September 2023 and August 2024, respectively. Data collection (both primary and secondary research) for Issue 5 was carried out between September and October 2025 in all 10 countries of interest.

The primary research component involves the administration and analysis of a firm survey (i.e., a survey of sample businesses in the countries of interest) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with key stakeholders. The sample is stratified by size (small, big and corporate), region and industry. A total of 2 218 businesses were surveyed, and 30 IDIs were conducted across the 10 countries in Issue 5.

In Zambia, 219 businesses were surveyed. 44% of these businesses were in Lusaka, 19% in Kitwe, 14% in Kabwe, 13% in Ndola and 10% in Chingola. The breakdown of surveyed businesses in Zambia by business segment was as follows:

- 71% were small businesses
- 17% were big businesses
- 12% were corporates

In the context of the SB ATB, small businesses are defined as those with a turnover of less than ZK 10 million, large businesses as those with a turnover of between ZK 10 million and ZK 200 million and corporates as those with a turnover of more than ZK 200 million.

The breakdown of surveyed businesses in Zambia by industry was as in **Table 7**:

Table 7: Breakdown of surveyed businesses in Zambia by industry

Industry	%	Industry	%
Other service activities	18	Arts, entertainment and recreation	4
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	14	Professional, scientific and technical activities	3
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	10	Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	3
Information and communication	7	Mining and quarrying (includes oil & gas)	2
Education	6	Financial and insurance activities	2
Manufacturing	5	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	2
Accommodation and food service activities	5	Transportation and storage	2
Administrative and support service activities	4	Real estate activities	1
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	4	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0
Construction	4	Activities of extraterritorial organisations	0

The breakdown of surveyed businesses by staff complement was as follows:

- 50% had below 5 employees
- 20% had 5 - 10 employees
- 9% had 11 - 20 employees
- 12% had 21 - 50 employees
- 4% had 51 - 100 employees
- 3% had 101 - 1 000 employees
- 1% had 1001 - 5000 employees

With regard to individual respondent characteristics within the businesses, 45% were female, and 55% were male. The breakdown by their job titles is as follows:

- 33% were owners, partners or co-owners
- 20% were general managers
- 11% were chief executive officers (CEOs)
- 6% were heads of departments
- 5% were financial directors
- 4% were managing directors
- 4% were chief accountants
- 3% were treasurers
- 2% were chief financial officers
- 2% were chairmen

Further details by region, business segment, industry, staff complement, age of firm, the firms' corporate and strategic decision-making structures, as well as individual respondent characteristics (gender, job title, etc.) are available on request.

There were three in-depth interviews conducted in Zambia as part of Issue 5. The interviews were held with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Zambia Revenue Authority, and the Zambia National Milling Corporation.

The survey and in-depth interviews were conducted on a confidential basis.

The secondary research component involves the gathering and analysis of quantitative data. This data is primarily collected from World Bank sources, although additional data is obtained from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Trade Center and individual country central banks.

In-depth details on how the Stanbic Bank Africa Trade Barometer scores for each country are calculated, and the resultant country rankings, are available on request.

The research was produced by Standard Bank Business and Commercial Banking Research & Insights. For any questions or information requirements on this report, please contact **tradebarometer@standardsbg.com**

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