



the ValueExchange

THE WORLD TO AFRICA 2026: NAVIGATING THE NEW FRONTIER OF INVESTMENT STABILITY AND PRIVATE MARKET MOMENTUM

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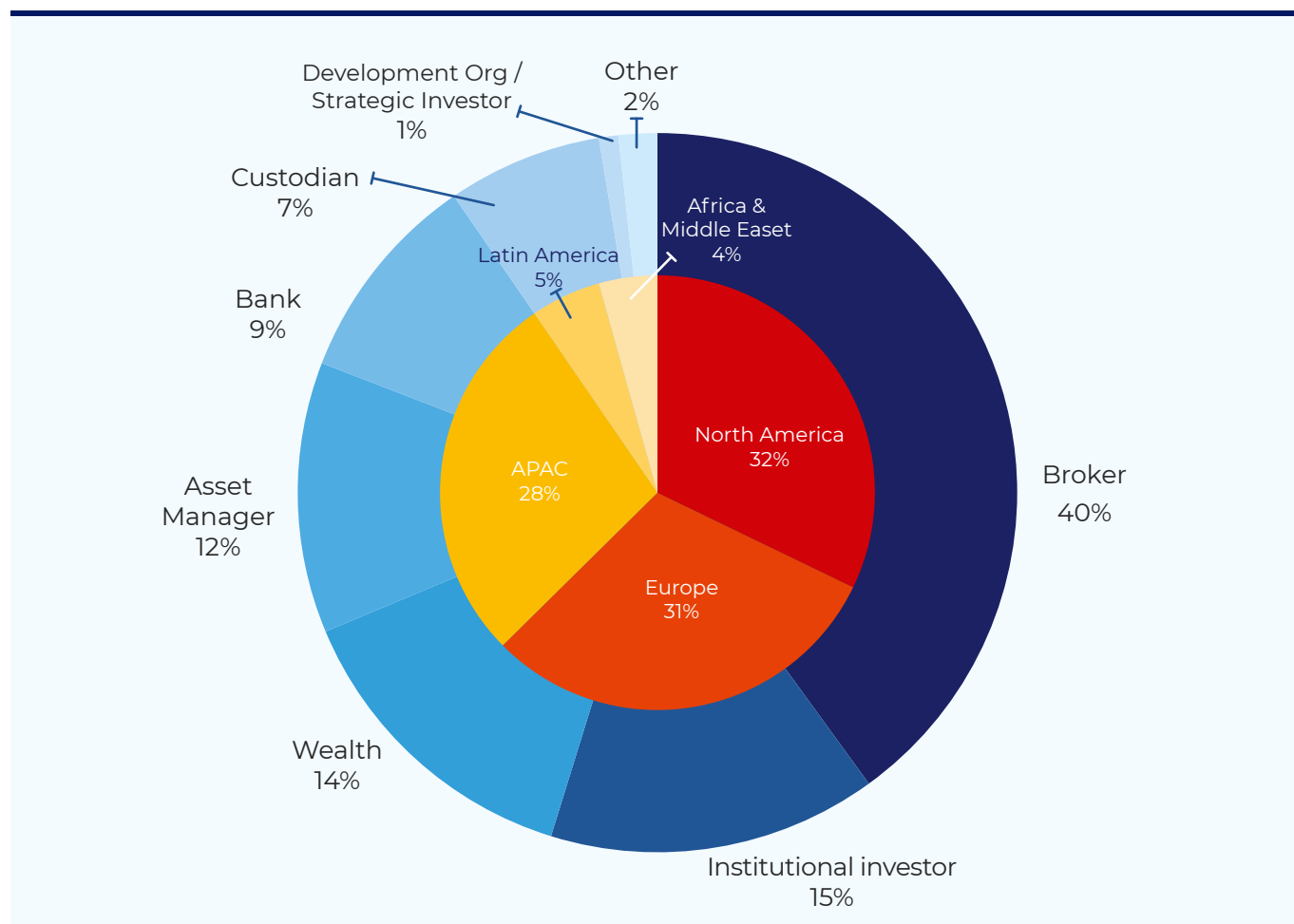
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1. WORLD TO AFRICA H1 2026: AN OVERVIEW

In the high-stakes world of emerging market allocation, understanding the composition of the global participant base is far more than a statistical exercise; it serves as a critical proxy for institutional sentiment. When we analyze who is actively looking at Africa today, we are essentially mapping the future trajectory of global capital. The diversity of our 115 respondents—ranging from the high-velocity brokers to the long-horizon asset managers—provides a holistic, 360-degree view of the market. This isn't just a survey of opinions; it is a synthesis of the collective intelligence of the entities currently moving billions across borders.

Our March 2025 survey, conducted in strategic partnership with Standard Bank, reached deep into the decision-making suites of the world's leading financial institutions. By capturing views from brokers (40%), wealth managers (14%), and asset managers (12%), we have bridged the gap between aggressive front-office growth targets and the operational realities of custody and banking. This multi-stakeholder approach is vital: a broker might see the trade potential, but a custodian (7%) sees the settlement friction. Together, they provide the “industry transformation” narrative that we at The ValueExchange prioritize.





What the data forces us to confront is the remarkably balanced geographical footprint of this interest. With North America at 32%, Europe at 31%, and the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region at 28%, we are witnessing a global consensus that transcends historical regional biases. This balance is a significant “changemaking” signal. It indicates that Africa is no longer a niche pursuit for former colonial corridors or a “satellite” interest for APAC. Instead, it has become a primary, structural focus for the world’s most sophisticated financial hubs.

For the forward-leaning investor, this global alignment is the ultimate de-risking factor. When North American pension funds and European wealth managers move in tandem, it creates a floor for liquidity and a catalyst for regulatory reform. This broad consensus among 115 experts sets a firm foundation for our findings, allowing us to move beyond anecdotal optimism into a definitive, data-driven analysis of how the global investment community is repositioning itself for Africa’s 2026 growth story.

Key findings



74% of investors plan to increase their African investments before 2028



Africa is getting easier to access for 49% of investors



The institutional investor perspective: positive but stable



The African portfolio is going private

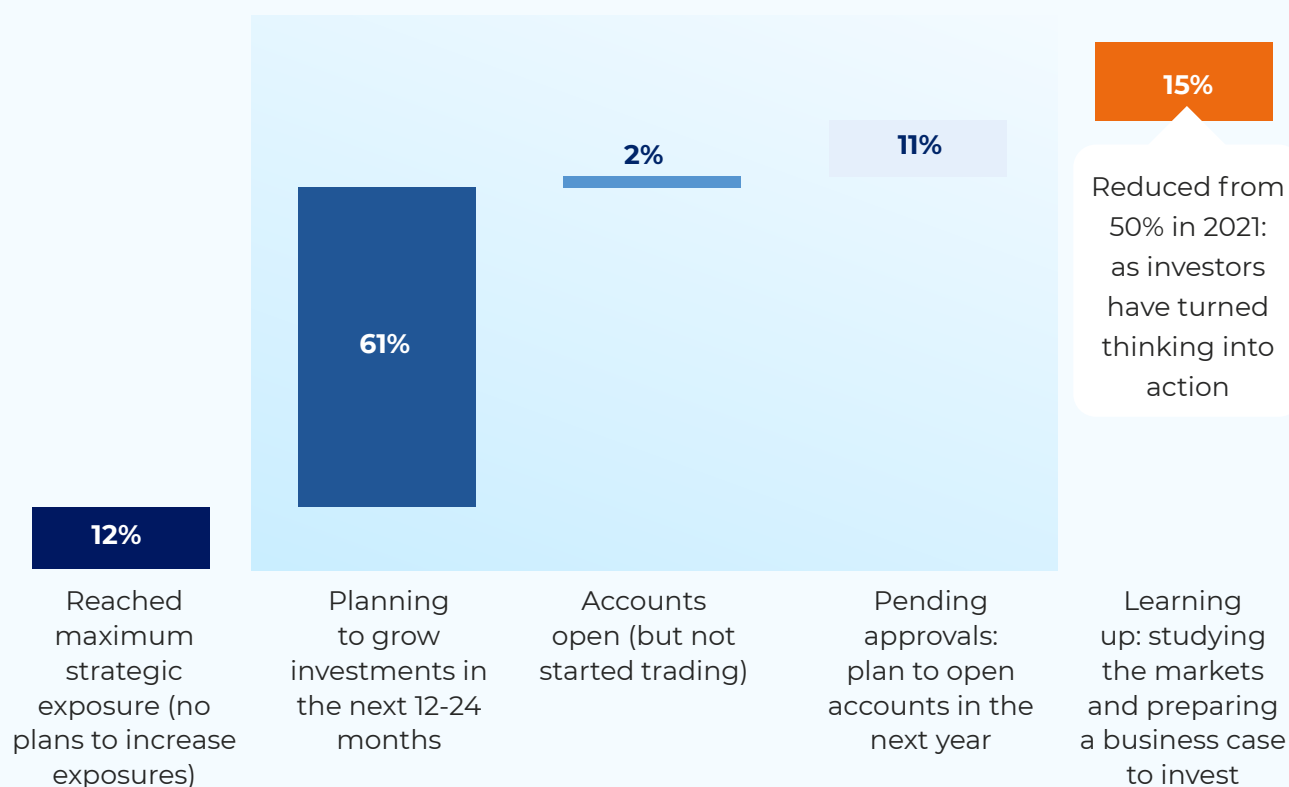


Is there a flight to liquidity in the public markets?

2. THE 2026 STRATEGIC OUTLOOK: FROM CONSIDERATION TO COMMITMENT

The headline finding of our 2026 research is a powerful signal of long-term capital commitment: **74% of investors plan to increase their African investments before 2028**. To a Senior Strategist, this is not merely a “positive outlook”; it is a massive structural weight shift. It suggests that Africa has successfully transitioned from the periphery of “wait and see” to a core component of global portfolio growth. This isn’t just about capital looking for a home—it’s about capital finding a permanent residence.

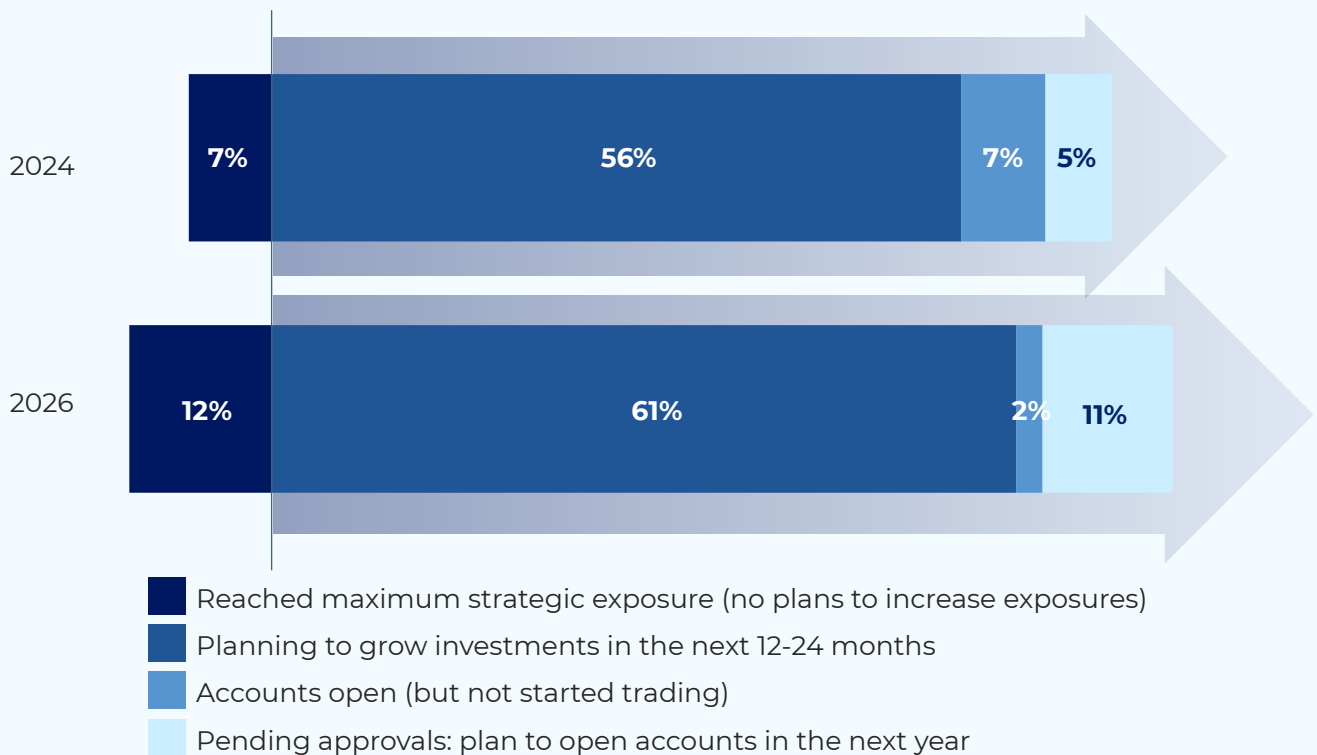
Global investors' investment plans into Africa (2026)



Our analysis of investment plans for 2026 reveals that 61% of firms have near-term expectations for growth. While 12% of respondents have reached their maximum strategic exposure—a figure that has grown by 5% since 2024—this should be viewed as a sign of healthy maturity and portfolio discipline. For these investors, Africa is now a fully-weighted “staple” rather than a speculative “add-on.” Meanwhile, the vast majority are in various stages of active entry, and the “velocity” of this capital is increasing.



Global investors' investment plans into Africa (2026, excluding "no plans")



The momentum shift since 2021 is palpable and represents a fundamental professionalization of the asset class. In 2021, a full 50% of investors were still in the “learning up” phase, essentially kick-starting their business cases. By 2026, that figure has plummeted as thinking has turned into action. The current investment lifecycle stages identified include:



Planning to grow (61%):

Looking to increase exposure in the next 12-24 months



Learning up:

Studying markets and preparing the business case for investment (reduced significantly since 2021).



Pending approvals (15%):

Actively planning to open accounts within the year.



Accounts open (11%):

Accounts are ready, awaiting the right entry point.



Active Activation:

A significant reduction in unused accounts (from 7% down to 2%) shows that once accounts are open, they are being traded. Capital is no longer sitting idle; it is being deployed.



Standard Bank

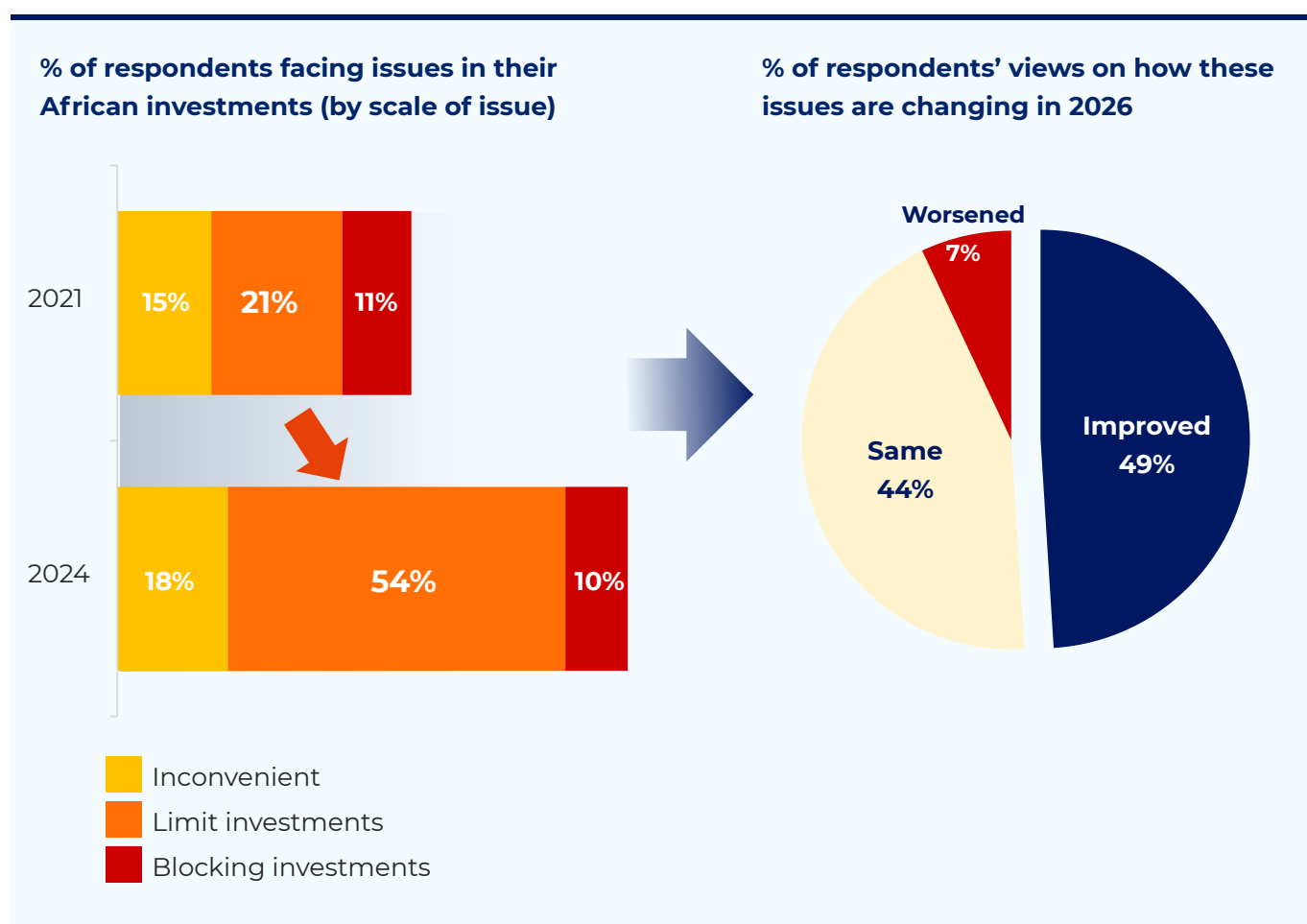
“Africa enters 2026 in a noticeably more stable economic position than in recent years, although the recovery remains uneven...”

(Standard Bank's African Markets Revealed - Jan 2026)

This surge in confidence is underpinned by economic reality. To a changemaker, this “unevenness” is where the opportunity lies. This stability, while gradual, is the bedrock upon which these growth plans are built. As inflation eases and currencies stabilize, the “Africa community” remains stable and increasingly active, setting the stage for a total reimagining of market access.

3. OPERATIONAL EVOLUTION: THE GREAT REVERSAL OF MARKET ACCESS BARRIERS

Operational efficiency is the “last mile” of any investment strategy. Without it, even the most compelling macro thesis eventually fails under the weight of settlement risk and FX friction. For years, the narrative in Africa was one of rising barriers; however, our 2026 data marks a historical turning point. **49% of investors now find Africa easier to access.** This “Great Reversal” is a critical indicator of market professionalization and a direct result of institutional advocacy.



To understand the magnitude of this shift, one must look at the 2021–2024 trend. In 2021, only 21% of respondents faced significant issues. By 2024, that figure had spiked to 54%, driven largely by FX liquidity crises and post-pandemic volatility. The 2026 data shows a major reversal of that negative trend. We have moved from a period of “operational survival” to one of “operational optimization,” where one in two respondents sees a tangible improvement in their African investment operations.



Institutional investors have identified the **Top 5 areas of improvement** that are making this possible:

1

FX Liquidity and Restrictions

The easing of currency blockages is the single biggest driver of ease.

2

Regulatory and Legal Frameworks

Modernization of local laws is providing the certainty Tier 1 investors demand.

3

Investment Advice

The quality of guidance from asset allocators and service providers has reached a tipping point.

4

Operational Risk

A reduction in manual processing through better technology.

5

Market Transparency

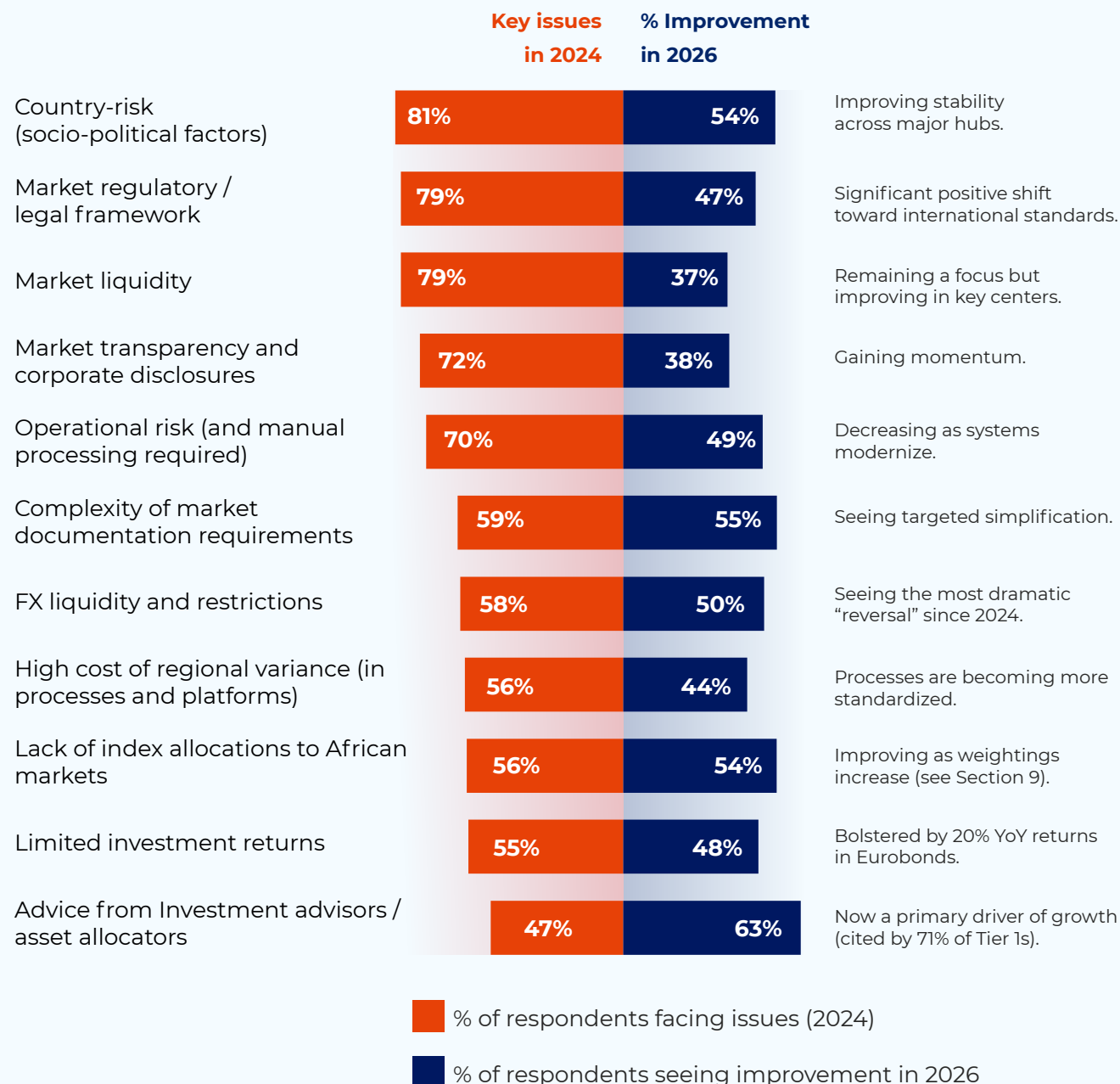
Improved corporate disclosures and data availability.





We continue to monitor 11 critical challenges, many of which are seeing significant reversals:

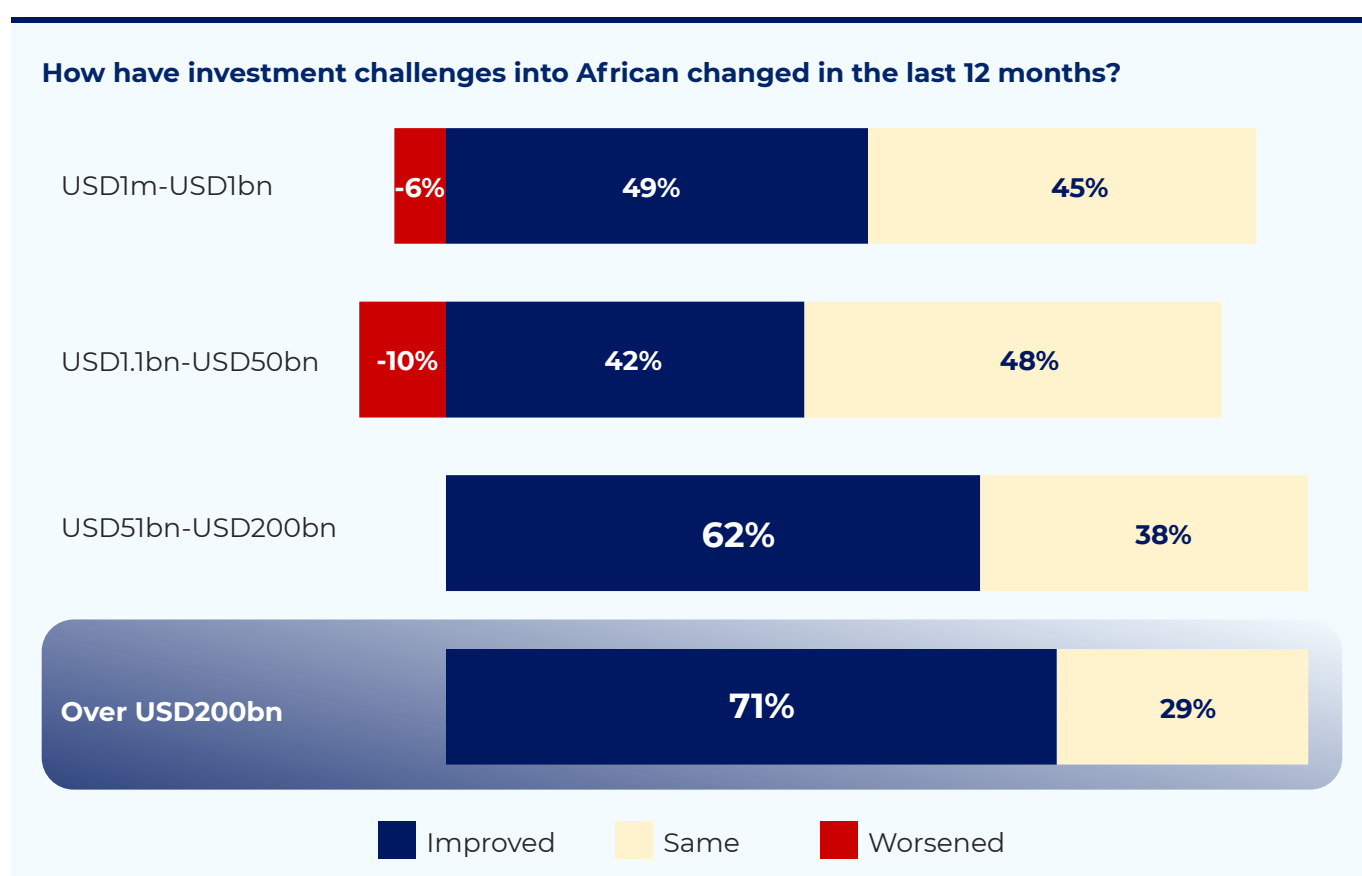
Investing into Africa is getting significantly easier



These operational improvements are the engine of increased institutional confidence. As the "plumbing" of the markets improves, the barriers to entry fall, allowing the positive sentiment of the "changemakers" to translate into actual trading volume.

4. THE INSTITUTIONAL LENS: STABILITY AND CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

Tier 1 institutional investors—those managing over USD 50bn—act as the anchors of the African market. Their participation provides the necessary depth and credibility for long-term development. In 2026, their outlook is best described as “positive but stable.” While they are not retreating, their role has shifted from being the primary engine of new, speculative flow to being the bedrock of market stability. They are the “long money” that allows African markets to weather global storms.



The data shows that 71% of Tier 1 investors are seeing improvements in Africa's market conditions, particularly in the quality of advice and the effectiveness of asset allocators. However, a significant constraint has emerged: 50% of these Tier 1 investors (primarily based in North America) report that they have already reached their maximum strategic exposure. For these giants, Africa is no longer an “emerging” opportunity to be discovered; it is a fully-weighted, maturing component of their portfolios.

The prevailing sentiment is captured by the observation that: “Investment performance in 2025/2026 should be underpinned by easing inflation... However, the pace of improvement is modest rather than transformative.” For the forward-leaning strategist, this “modesty” is actually a blessing. It suggests a “boring is good” era where the focus moves from surviving volatility to removing friction from the trade cycle. This is the stage where markets professionalize and institutionalize their gains.



Service providers and index providers are playing an outsized role in this phase of institutional maturity. Up to 64% of institutional investors cite that advice from their advisors—the ones providing the “Concierge” level insights—is driving their current African allocations. Asset owners are becoming more positive because their service providers are finally delivering the data and transparency required to make the case for Africa internally.

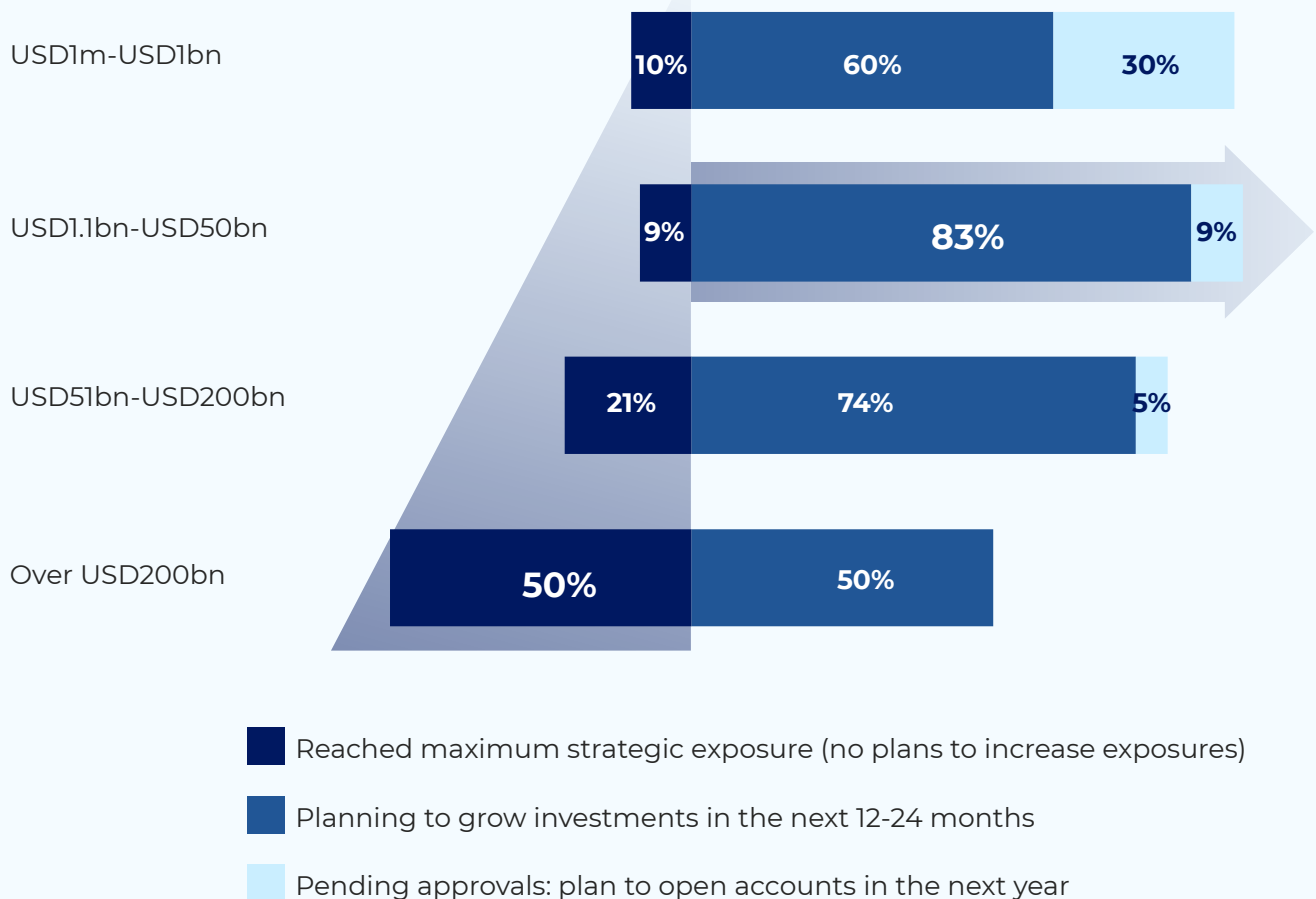
As these Tier 1 anchors reach their capacity limits, the strategic centre of gravity is shifting. While the institutional base remains a source of stable AUM, the “engine” of new volume growth is moving toward more dynamic, agile, mid-tier segments. We are moving from a market of a few giants to a market of many mid-sized “changemakers.”



5. THE NEW ENGINES OF VOLUME: TIER 2 AND WEALTH MANAGEMENT GROWTH

As the largest institutional players hit their capacity ceilings, a new leadership group has emerged to drive the next phase of African capital growth. Tier 2 (mid-tier) investors and Wealth Managers are now the primary engines of new volume. These segments possess the most “headroom” and are demonstrating the highest levels of optimism in the 2026 landscape. They are the agile capital that moves into new opportunities while the giants are still getting approvals.

Global investors’ investment plans into Africa (2026, by Africa AUM, excluding “no plans”)





The statistics are undeniable:

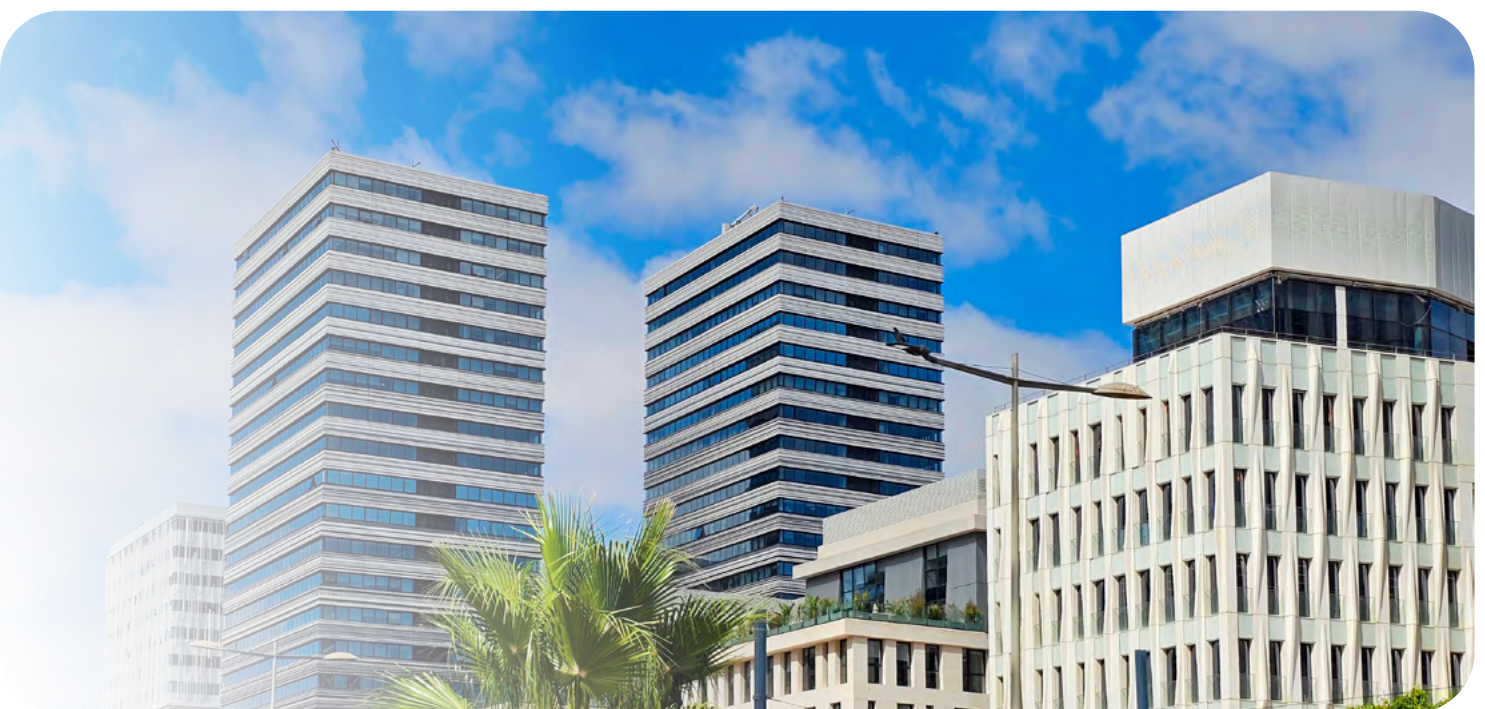
83% of small and mid-tier investors expect their African exposures to grow before 2028.

This growth is not coming from traditional hubs alone; we are seeing a notable surge in interest from Latin American (Latam) and European segments. These investors are looking for the growth that the larger, more conservative funds have already stabilized. They are the ones chasing 20% YoY returns while Tier 1s focus on asset maintenance.

The Wealth Management sector, in particular, represents a massive, largely untapped opportunity. Currently, only 7% of wealth managers have reached their maximum strategic exposure. This leaves a staggering 93% of the sector with significant capacity to increase allocations. Wealth investors are increasingly viewing Africa through a diversification lens, particularly as they seek yield in a global environment that is only slowly stabilizing.

Contrast this with the current stance of Asset Managers. While they appear more conservative in 2026, our data shows they are “reloading.” They have articulated strong growth plans for 2027 and 2028, suggesting a two-stage growth model. In this scenario, Wealth and Tier 2 investors provide the immediate volume in 2026, while Asset Managers prepare the infrastructure for a secondary, massive surge in the next 24 months.

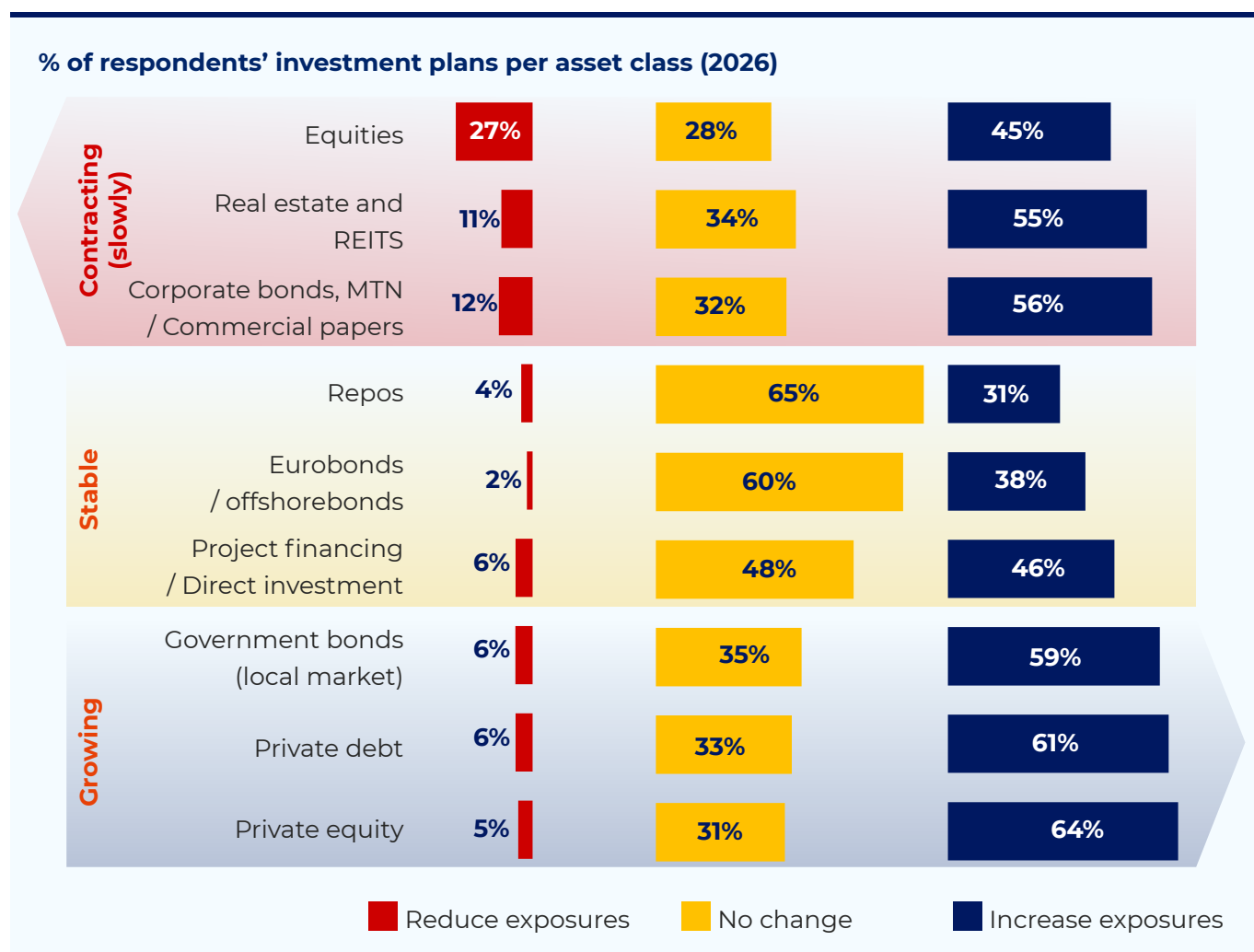
These new engines of volume are not just bringing more capital; they are bringing different preferences. Unlike the index-hugging Tier 1 funds, these new players are more willing to explore diverse asset classes, specifically those that offer higher yields and direct, tangible impact on the ground. This brings us to the most significant shift in asset preference we have seen in a decade.



6. THE PRIVATE MARKET PIVOT: A STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN ASSET PREFERENCES

One of the most profound structural changes in the 2026 landscape is the definitive pivot toward private markets. This shift has the potential to disrupt traditional public exchange models across the continent. Investors are increasingly bypassing listed equities in favor of private equity, venture capital, and direct debt instruments. This is “changemaking” in its purest form—capital moving directly to the source of growth.

The data reveals a stark contrast between public and private sentiment. Approximately 27% of respondents expect their public equities volumes to decline. This “contraction” is most pronounced among smaller investors, who are finding the costs and liquidity constraints of listed markets too high. In contrast, only 4% of Tier 1 institutional investors expect a decline in their equity AUM, suggesting that the public markets are becoming the exclusive domain of the very large, while the rest of the market seeks growth elsewhere.





Strategic Momentum: The Asset Class Rebalance



Growth Segments:

- **Private Markets:** A core growth opportunity for all tiers; the primary enabler for Africa's most attractive sectors (Infrastructure, FinTech).
- **Eurobonds:** Stable and growing, bolstered by impressive 20% YoY returns that outweigh onshore volatility.



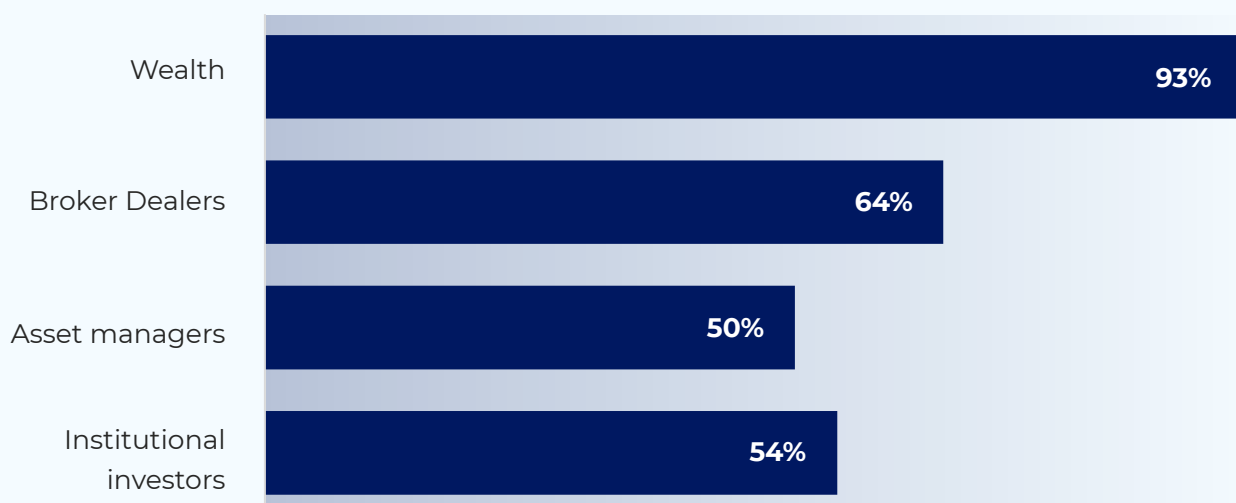
Growth Segments:

- **Public Equities:** Facing significant volume contraction as smaller players exit.
- **Onshore Listed Markets:** Threatened by a migration of capital to private, bespoke channels.

Wealth investors are the undisputed “engine” of the private markets. Almost all wealth respondents expect to grow their private exposures in the next 12 months, with North American wealth managers leading the charge. Tier 1 and Tier 2 investors are following suit, with one in two respondents across these tiers seeing their private exposures grow.

This pivot has massive implications for post-trade infrastructure. As capital moves from centralized exchanges (T+2 models) to fragmented, bespoke private deals, the requirements for custody, valuation, and transparency change entirely. The “African portfolio” is becoming more complex, requiring sophisticated tools for risk management and a move toward private contract management systems. The industry must adapt its “plumbing” to support this direct-to-asset flow.

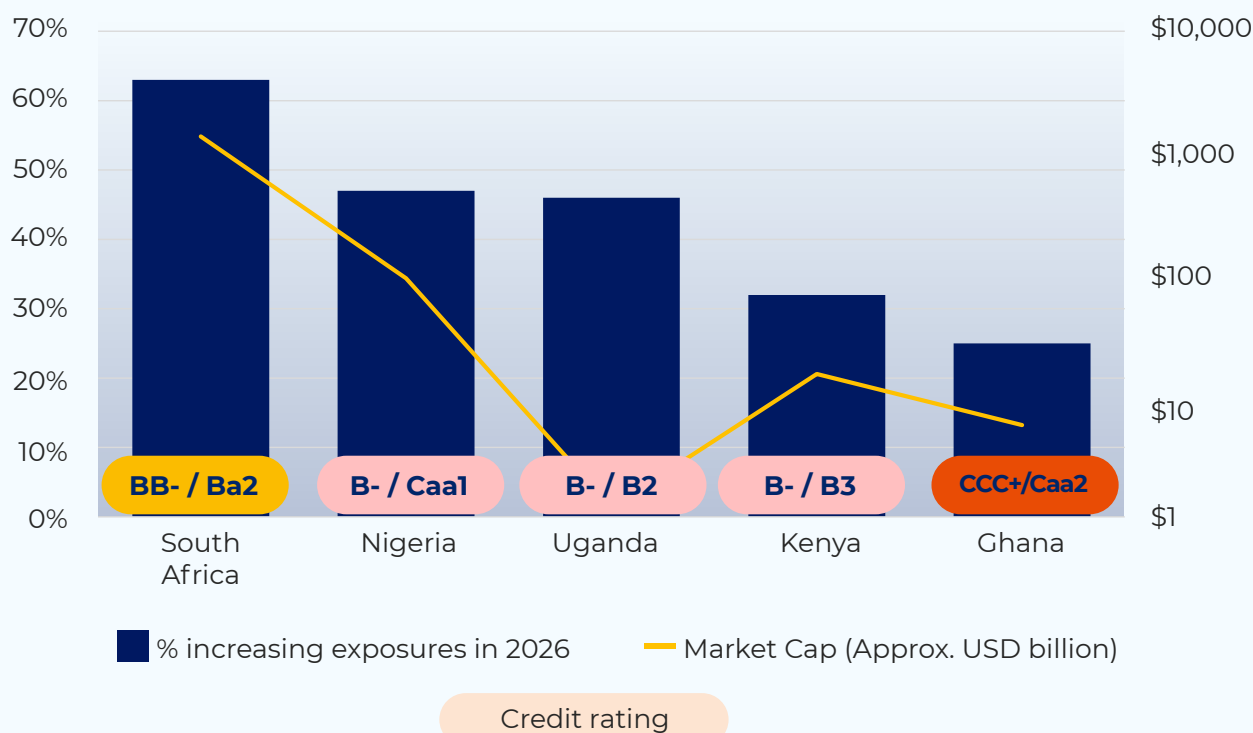
% of respondents increasing exposures to private markets in next 12 months



7. PUBLIC MARKET DYNAMICS: THE FLIGHT TO LIQUIDITY AND SAFETY

In the 2026 public market landscape, liquidity has superseded raw yield as the primary arbiter of capital flow. In a world of “modest” recovery, investors are no longer just looking for the highest return; they are looking for the “exit.” This has created a bifurcated market where depth and safety are the only ways to attract significant institutional interest. If you can’t get out, you won’t go in.

% of respondents expecting to increase investments into top 5 markets, versus current market capitalisation (USD bn)



A distinct “Flight to Safety” trend is visible in our data. Investors are rotating out of markets like Kenya and Angola—where one in five respondents expects to reduce exposure—and moving capital into South Africa. This isn’t necessarily a vote against the frontier; it’s a vote for the ability to trade at scale. Two-thirds of respondents expect to see growth in South Africa, proving that market depth is the ultimate “liquidity premium.”

Over 60% of respondents plan to grow their South African exposures in 2026. What is fascinating is that this persists despite South Africa’s credit rating remaining at “Speculative” (BB- / Ba2). This confirms a critical strategic shift: for the majority of global investors, the ability to trade \$1.3 trillion in market depth is currently far more important than a pristine credit rating or high-yield speculative opportunities in illiquid frontier markets.

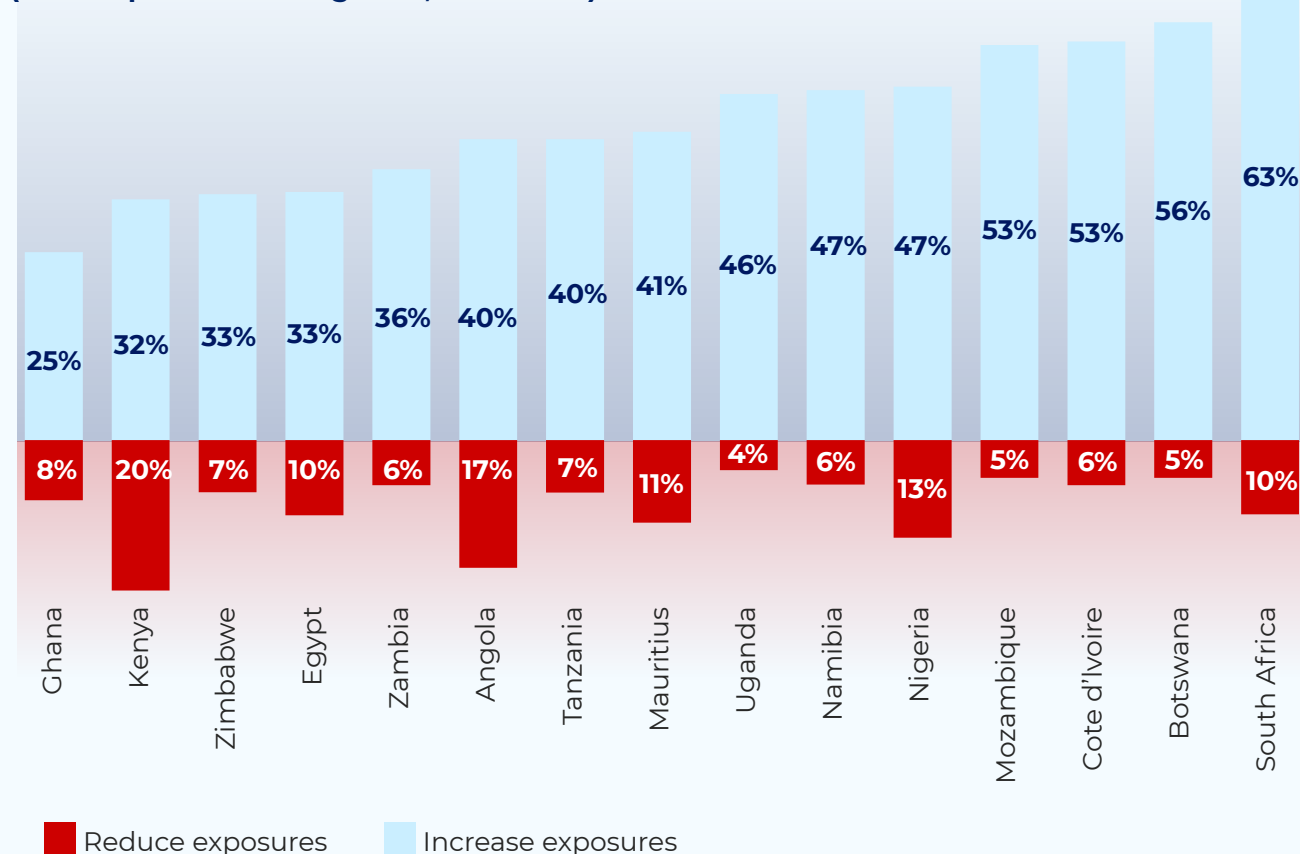


Top 4 African Growth Leaders (Scale vs. Growth Tension)

Country	Growth Plan %	Market Size (Approx. USD)	Credit Rating
South Africa	63%	\$1,360 Billion	BB- / Ba2
Cote d'Ivoire	53%	\$24 Billion	BB- / Ba2
Mozambique	53%	\$1 Billion	CCC+ / Caa2
Nigeria	47%	\$92 Billion	B- / Caa1

As shown above, expansion plans map closely to market size and established infrastructure. Liquidity depth is the winning strategy in 2026. Without it, even the most impressive GDP growth forecasts (like Cote d'Ivoire's 7.1%) are failing to attract the same volume of capital as the established South African deep-water port. Investors are choosing the "exit" over the "alpha."

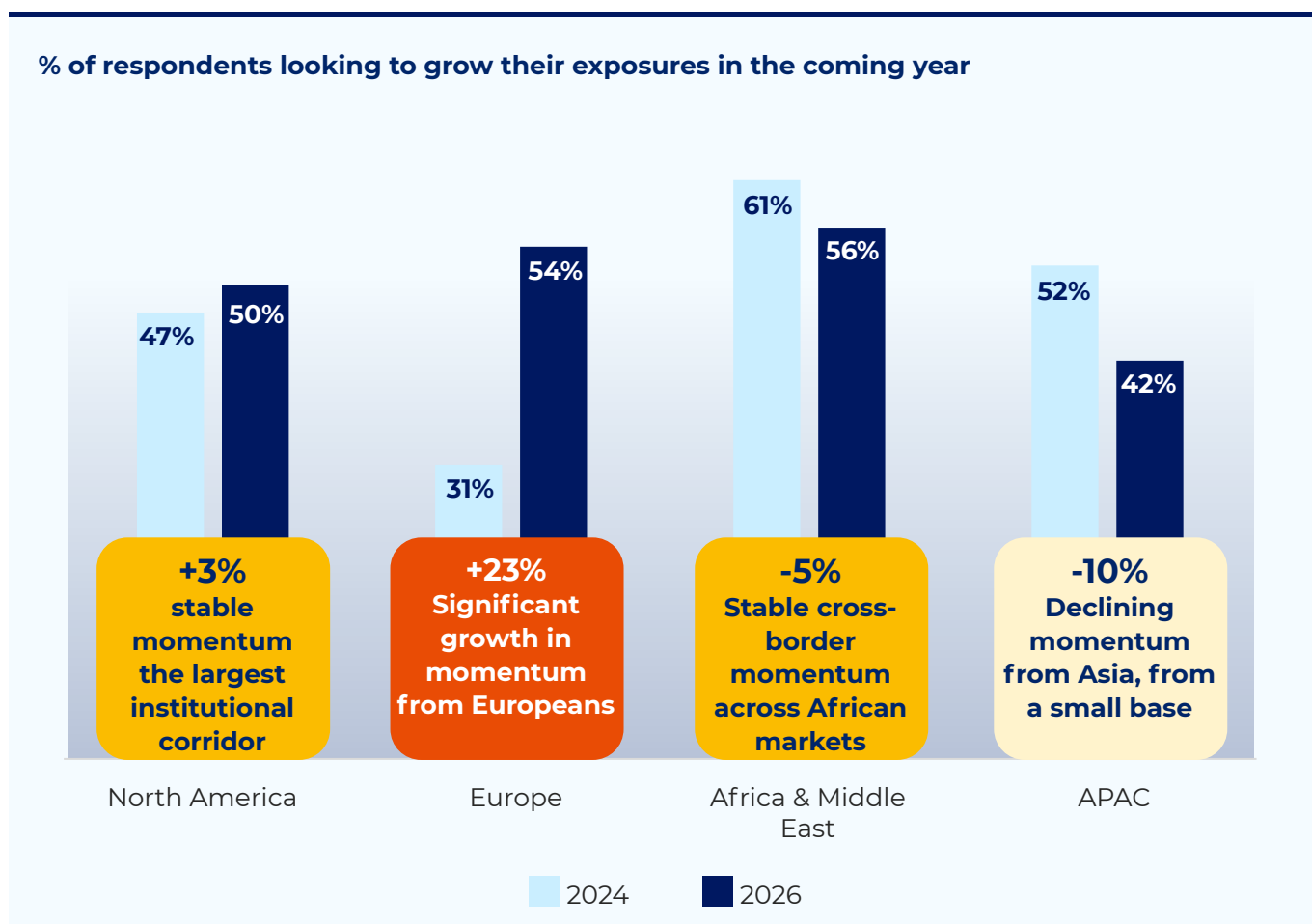
Expected changes to asset class exposures in next 12 months (% of respondents citing each, excl stable)



8. GLOBAL CORRIDORS: REGIONAL MOMENTUM AND INTER-REGIONAL FLOWS

The strategic importance of corridor-specific momentum cannot be overstated. Global liquidity does not move uniformly; it flows through specific regional channels that dictate the pace of transformation. In 2026, we are seeing a significant realignment of these corridors, with Europe emerging as the high-growth leader, while Asia shows a temporary retreat.

European momentum has seen a dramatic +23% increase compared to 2024. This is being driven primarily by pension funds that are finally moving past the “learning up” phase and allocating significant, “sticky” capital to Africa as part of long-term diversification strategies. Conversely, momentum from Asia has declined by 10%, reflecting a shift in focus back to domestic recovery. North America remains a pillar of “solid growth,” but as noted, its Tier 1 funds are increasingly hitting capacity limits.



Perhaps the most exciting development is the rise of inter-regional flows. Approximately 56% of respondents based in Africa and the Middle East (ME) are looking to grow their cross-border exposures within the continent. This is a “changemaking” moment: Africa is beginning to fund its own growth, reducing its historical dependence on external hubs.

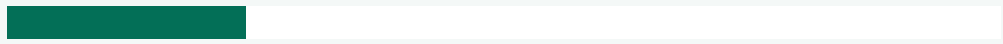


Corridor Momentum Status

Europe

+23% momentum; driven by structural pension fund shifts. ¹

(High Growth)



North America

50% growth plans; stable but reaching capacity in the largest funds.

(Solid Growth)



Africa/ME

56% looking to grow cross-border; the most active regional corridor.

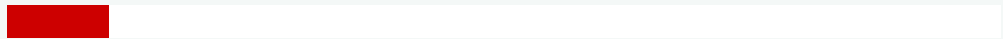
(Inter-regional Focus)



Asia

-10% momentum; showing a tactical retreat from frontier markets.

(Declining)



These corridors are influencing specific market rankings. The enthusiasm of European pension funds is a direct contributor to the growth seen in ESG-aligned private investments and frontier debt. Meanwhile, the rise of the Africa/ME corridor is creating a new internal liquidity pool that is less susceptible to the “flight to safety” tantrums of global capital.



9. MARKET DEEP DIVES: WINNERS, LOSERS, AND INDEX REALIGNMENT

For the modern strategist, tracking index weightings (MSCI and JPM benchmarks) is a mandatory precursor to understanding fund flows. In 2025 and 2026, key African markets have seen significant shifts in their index weightings, which serve as leading indicators for both passive and active allocations. These weightings are the “gravity” that pulls capital into or out of a market.

Country	Primary Index Type	Change Direction	Key Reason
Kenya	MSCI Frontier Markets	Increasing	Frequent addition of banking stocks; strong liquidity.
Nigeria	JPM Debt Indices	Increasing	High-yield debt demand; improved GDP forecasts.
Morocco	MSCI Frontier / Debt	Stable / Up	Consistent performance; top-tier frontier debt weight.
Egypt	MSCI Emerging / Debt	Volatile	Currency-driven equity drops vs. high bond weighting.
South Africa	MSCI Emerging Markets	Decreasing	Structural lags; underperformance vs. India/Taiwan.

In terms of growth plans, a clear hierarchy has emerged. The top growth markets are South Africa (63%), Botswana (56%), and Cote d’Ivoire (53%). At the other end of the spectrum, markets like Ghana, Kenya, and Angola are facing reductions in exposure from roughly 20% of the market. This reflects a shift away from markets struggling with debt restructuring or currency volatility toward those that have stabilized their “plumbing.”

The discrepancy between GDP forecasts and investor plans is the most telling insight of 2026. Cote d’Ivoire has a staggering GDP forecast of 7.1%, yet its growth plan percentage (53%) is lower than South Africa’s (63%), which has a GDP forecast of only 1.2%. This is the “Liquidity Premium” in action. Investors are no longer prioritizing “space capacity” or raw economic growth. They are prioritizing markets where the infrastructure is ready, the index weighting provides a tailwind, and the exit is guaranteed. The new hierarchy of African investment is one where liquidity and index inclusion are the ultimate prizes.



10. CONCLUSION: THE VX ROADMAP TO 2028

As we look toward 2028, the core thesis of our research is clear: Africa has entered a period of “modest but resilient” growth. The era of speculative, “tourist capital” volatility is being replaced by a phase of professionalization, de-risking, and a structural pivot toward private capital. While the “transformative” explosion may still be a few years away, the current stability is exactly what institutional and wealth investors need to commit long-term capital.

The “So What?” for the industry is straightforward: the opportunity has moved from the large, public exchanges to more agile, private, and mid-tier channels. To succeed in this new frontier, investors and changemakers must act now.

About the ValueExchange

The ValueExchange (thevx.io) is uniquely positioned to help you navigate this transformation. Our suite of services is built to solve the very challenges identified in this report:

- **Concierge:** Personalized, “boots on the ground” service to get the specific answers you need.
- **Measure Impact:** Specialist benchmarking to track your transformation in dollars and cents.
- **Industry Advocacy:** Collaborative campaigns to drive the structural change you need.
- **Thought Leadership:** Tailored intelligence to help you lead the conversation and make your internal case.

Our findings are built on an expert community of industry leaders and over five years of unique, practitioner-driven data. At thevx.io, we believe that data-driven insights are the only way to empower changemakers. As Africa continues its evolution toward a stable and accessible investment frontier, we are here to provide the intelligence you need to drive the next phase of global evolution. Let's build the future of African markets together.

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