

Standard Chartered Hong Kong SME Leading Business Index

Results

Q2 2026



Background

- The “Standard Chartered Hong Kong SME Leading Business Index” is independently implemented by Hong Kong Productivity Council and sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited.

Survey Objectives



- To analyse Hong Kong SMEs’ confidence in the recent business environment

- To explore the current situation of talent recruitment and talent requirements among Hong Kong SMEs

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Results

Q2 2026



Key Findings of This Quarter



Overall Index was **43.3** for Q2 2026, down slightly by 0.6 from the previous quarter



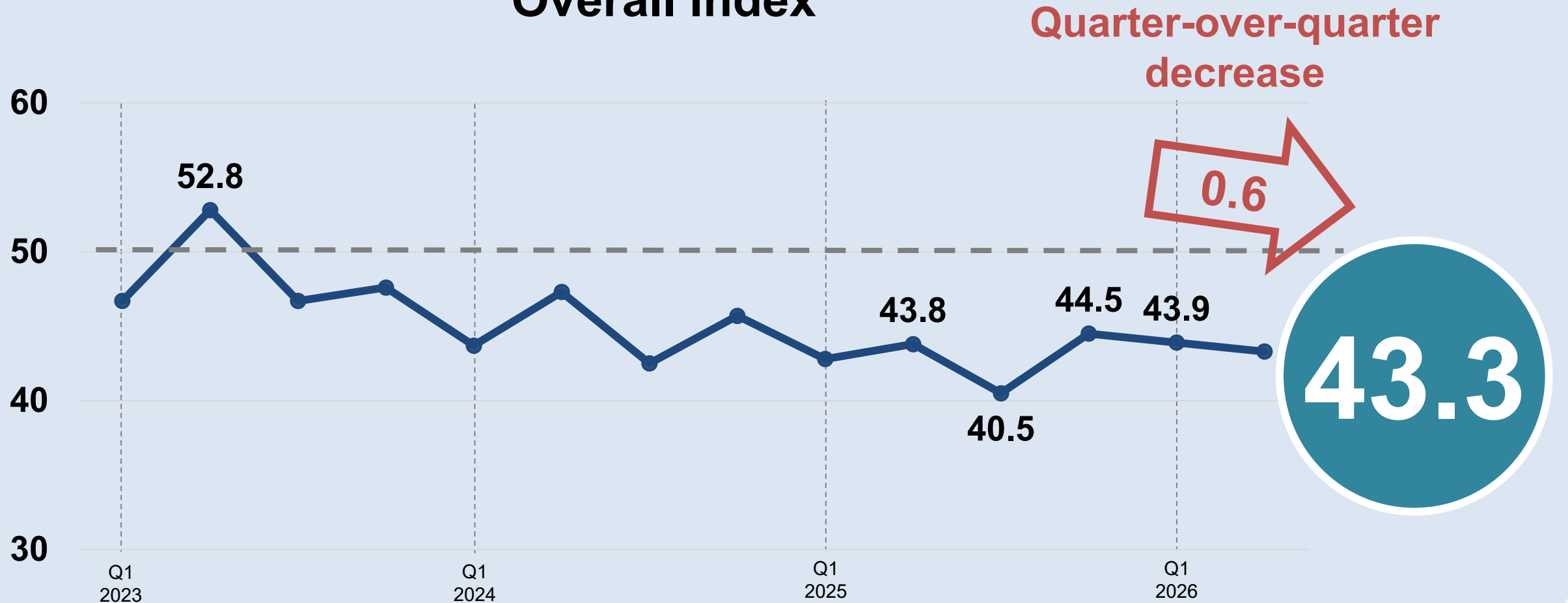
Over 60% of SMEs with staff turnover vacancies reported difficulties in staff recruitment



Over half of SMEs preferred job applicants who are capable of using AI

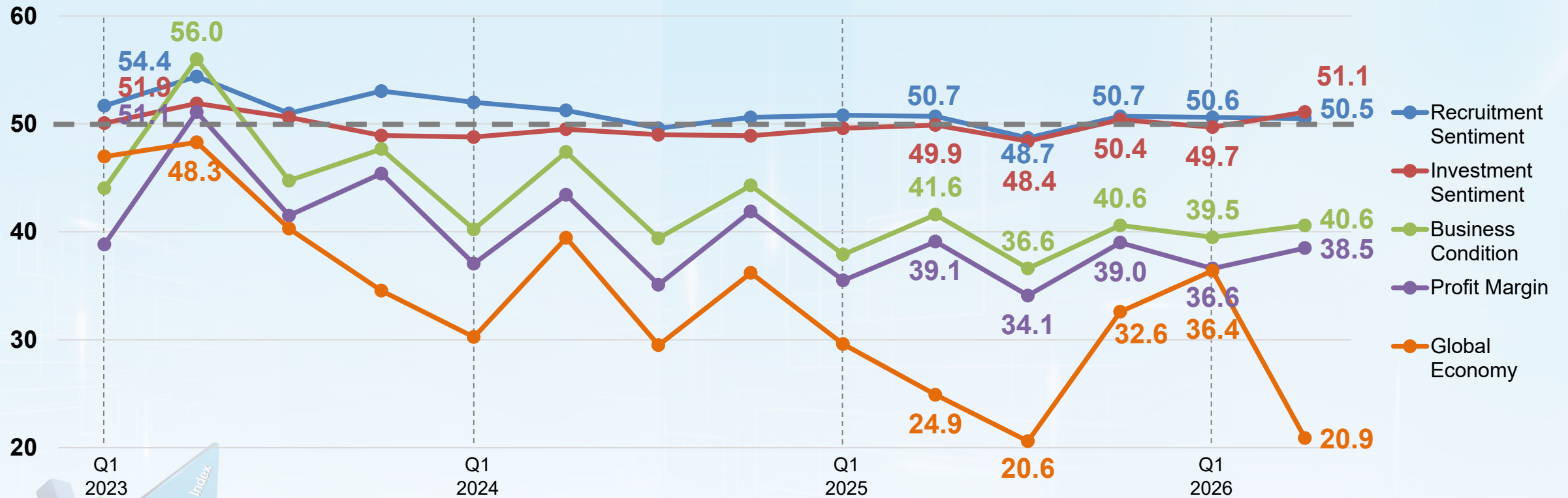
Overall Index in Q2 2026

Overall Index

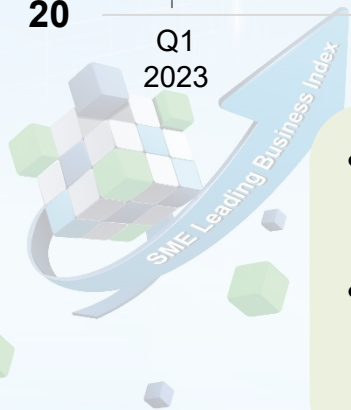


Five Component Sub-Indices of Overall Index

Five Component Sub-Indices of Overall Index



- “Global Economy” sub-index recorded a significant drop, falling by 15.5 to 20.9, returning to a level close to Q3 2025
- “Investment Sentiment”, “Business Condition” and “Profit Margin” recorded slight increases



Global Economy Sub-Index

“Global Economy” sub-index for “Transportation, Storage and Courier Services” and “Social and Personal Services” recorded the largest declines this quarter, falling by 24.8 and 22.5 respectively.

This was followed by “Financing and Insurance”, “Import / Export Trade and Wholesale”, and “Manufacturing”, each recording declines of more than 15 points.

Industries Recording the Largest Declines in “Global Economy”

24.8

Transportation, Storage and Courier Services

22.5

Social and Personal Services

18.1

Financing and Insurance

17.2

Import / Export Trade and Wholesale

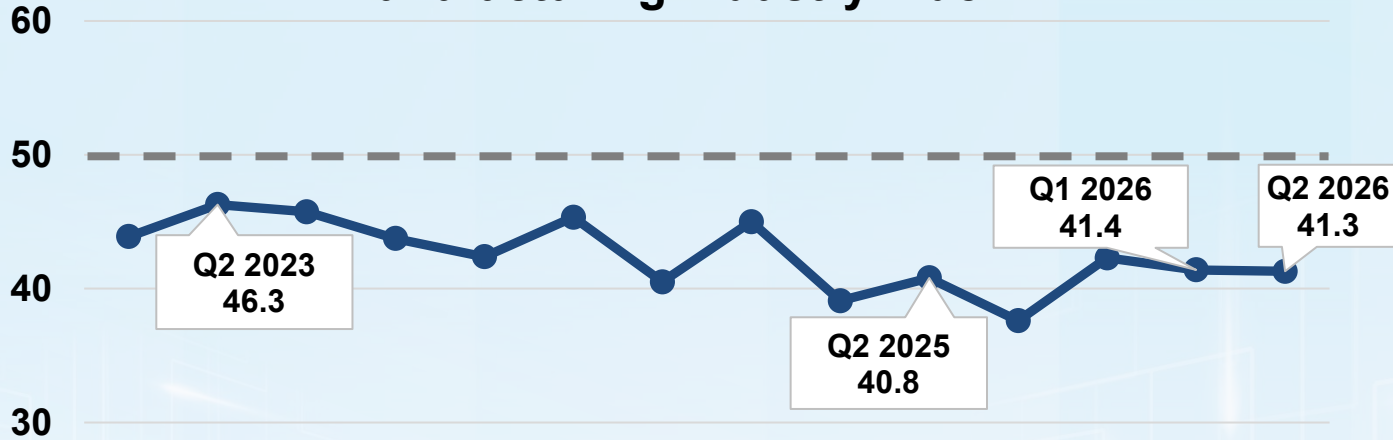
15.3

Manufacturing



Manufacturing

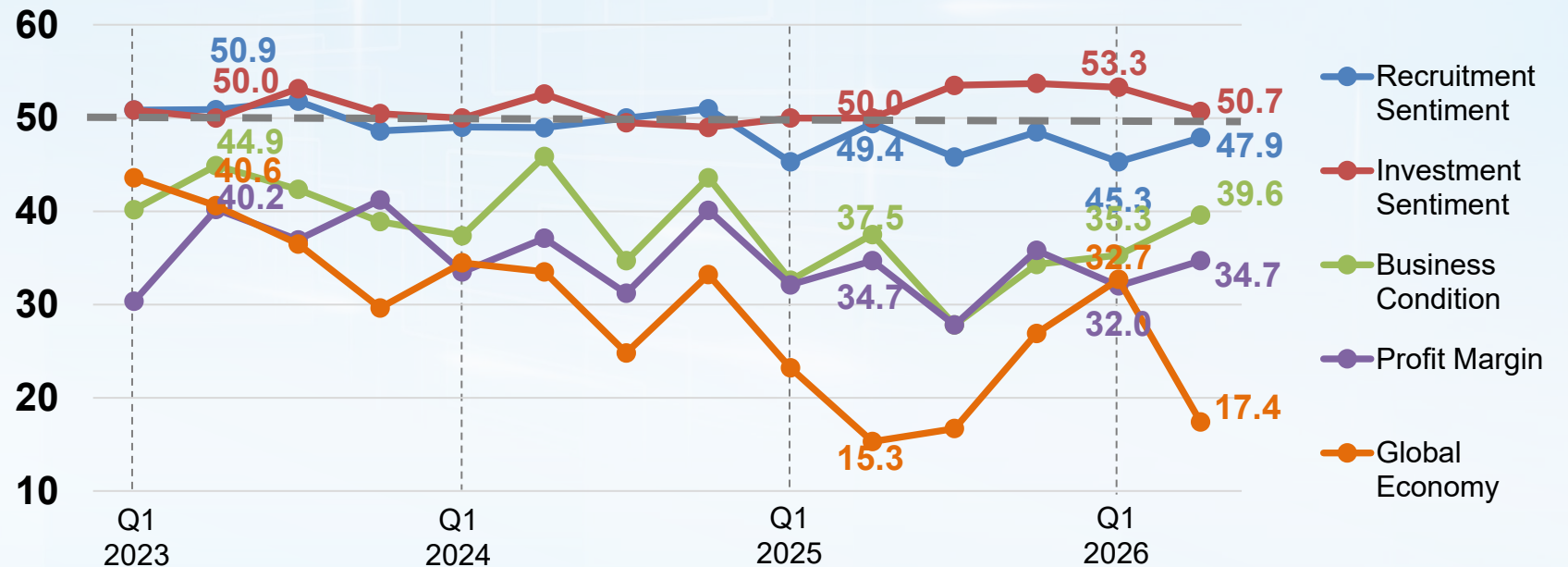
Manufacturing Industry Index



Industry index of Manufacturing Industry remained stable at 41.3

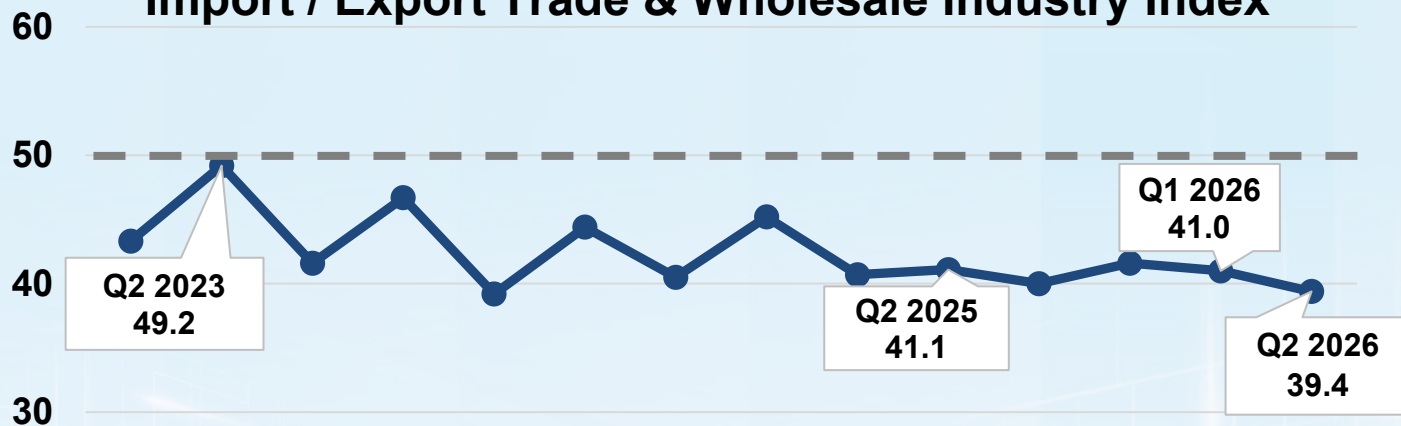
“Global Economy” sub-index dropped sharply by 15.3 to 17.4. In contrast, “Recruitment Sentiment”, “Business Condition” and “Profit Margin” recorded slight increases.

Component Sub-Indices of Manufacturing Industry



Import / Export Trade and Wholesale

Import / Export Trade & Wholesale Industry Index

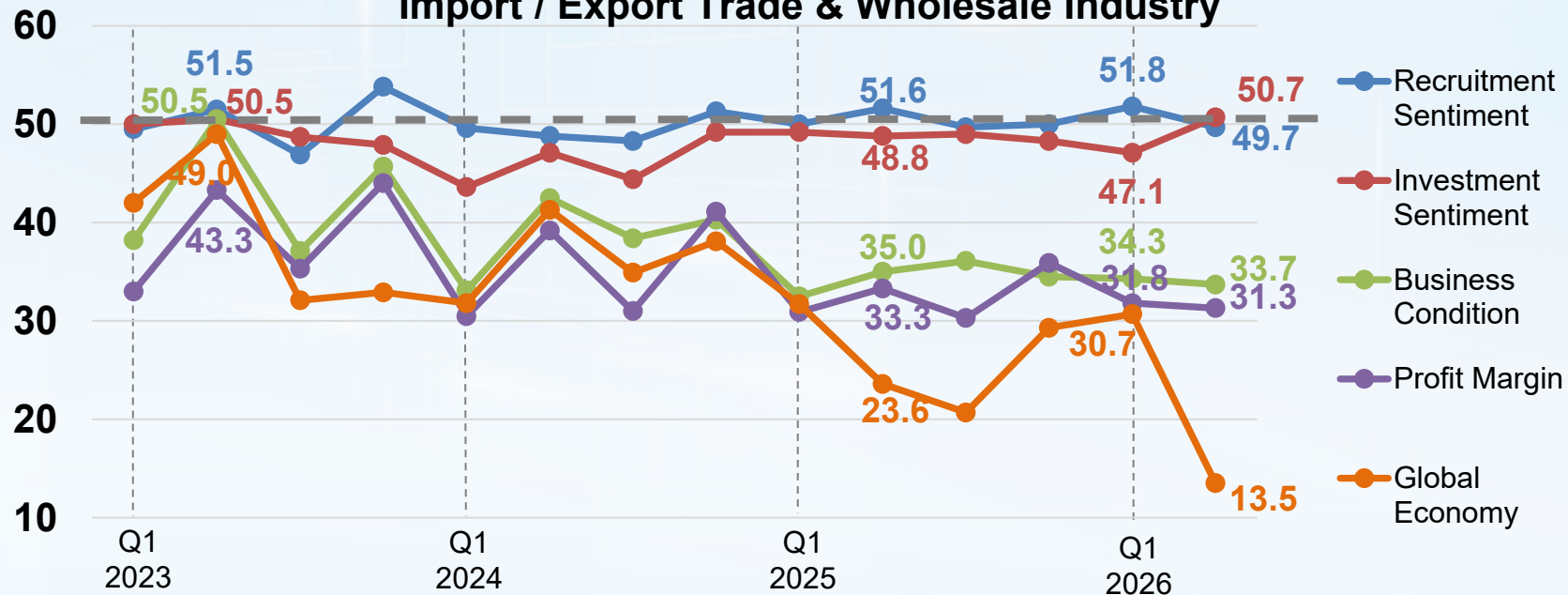


Industry index of Import / Export Trade and Wholesale Industry declined slightly by 1.6 to 39.4

“Global Economy” sub-index dropped sharply by 17.2 to 13.5, the lowest level in nearly six years.

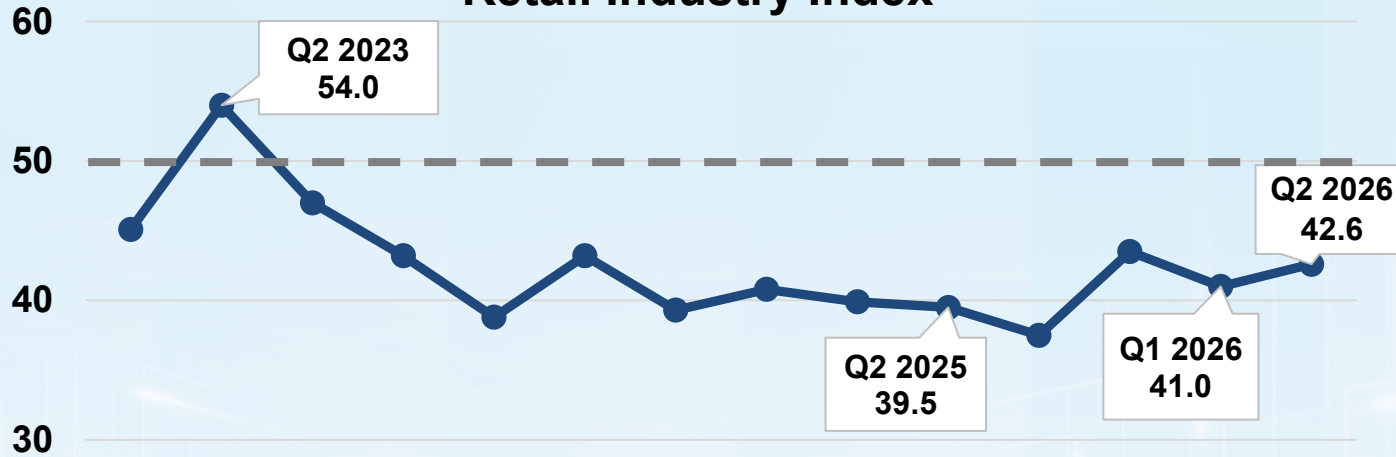
“Investment Sentiment” rebounded by 3.6 to 50.7, returning above the 50 neutral line.

Component Sub-Indices of Import / Export Trade & Wholesale Industry



Retail

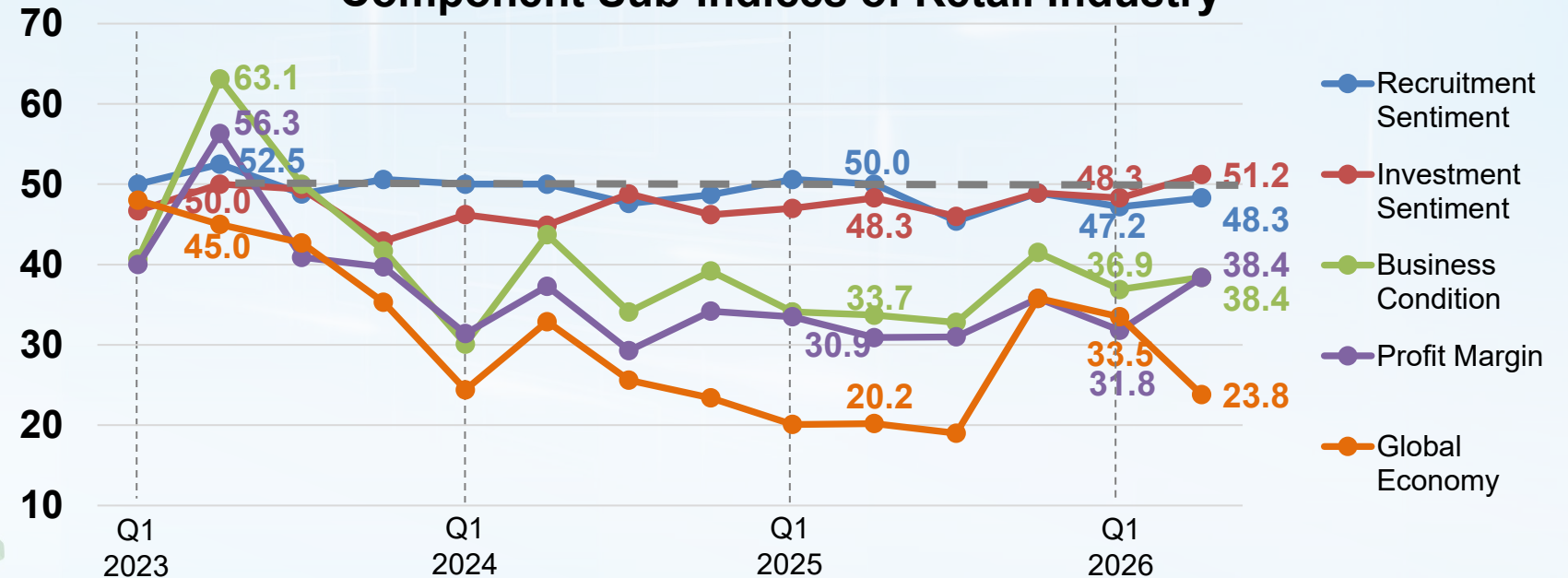
Retail Industry Index



Industry index of Retail Industry rose slightly to 42.6

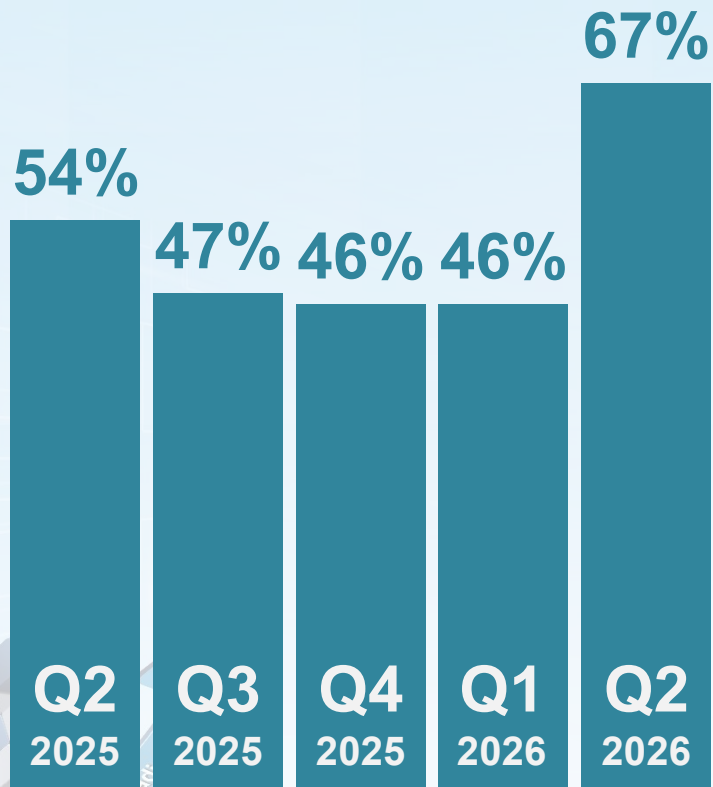
“Global Economy” sub-index declined by 9.7 to 23.8, but remained higher than the level in Q3 2025. All other four sub-indices recorded increases, with “Profit Margin” (+6.6) showing the largest rise.

Component Sub-Indices of Retail Industry

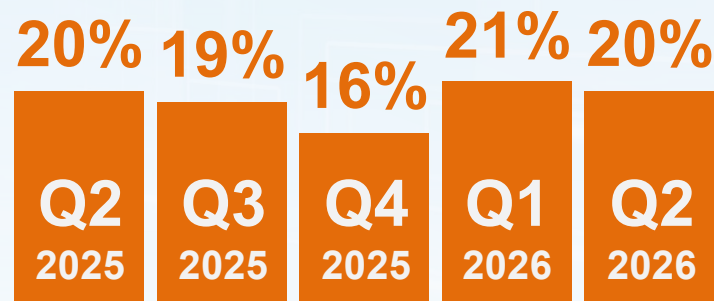


Expectations towards Increases on Raw Materials Cost, Staff Salary and Price Factors

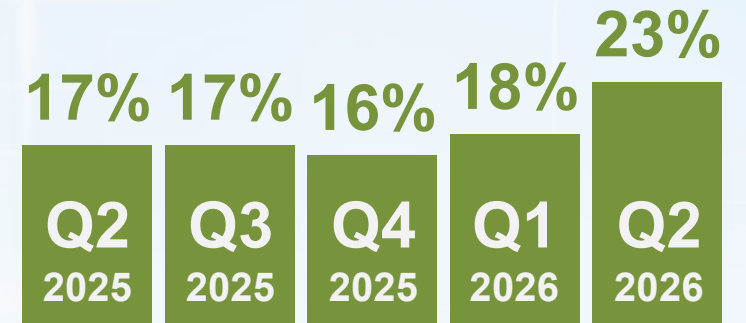
Proportion of surveyed SMEs:



Raw Materials Cost Increase



Staff Salary Increase



Product / Service Price Increase

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Thematic Topic

**Current Situation of Talent Recruitment
and Talent Requirements
among Hong Kong SMEs**



Types of Roles Most Needed by SMEs to Recruit

Among SMEs needing to fill up job vacancies due to resignation:

1

Sales and Customer Service

2

Administration, HR and Finance

3

IT, Digital and AI Support

4

Marketing and Data Analytics

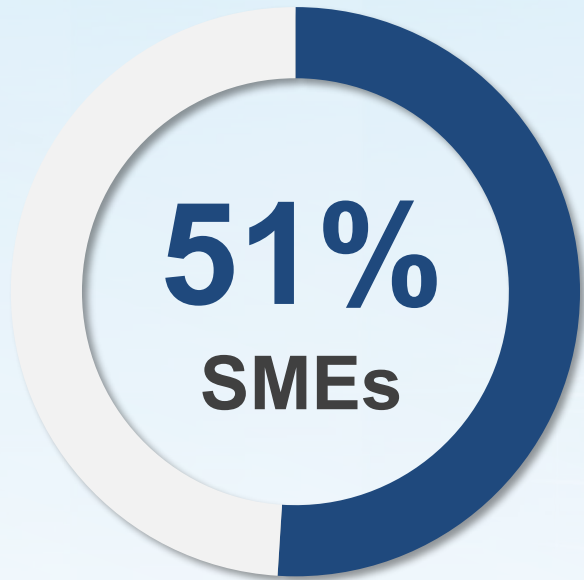
5

Procurement and Supply Chain



Key Talent Capabilities Valued by SMEs

Among SMEs needing to fill up job vacancies due to resignation:



Preferred applicants who are capable of using AI

In addition to AI capabilities, SMEs also place importance on the following attributes:

1 Ability to work independently

2 Relevant experience

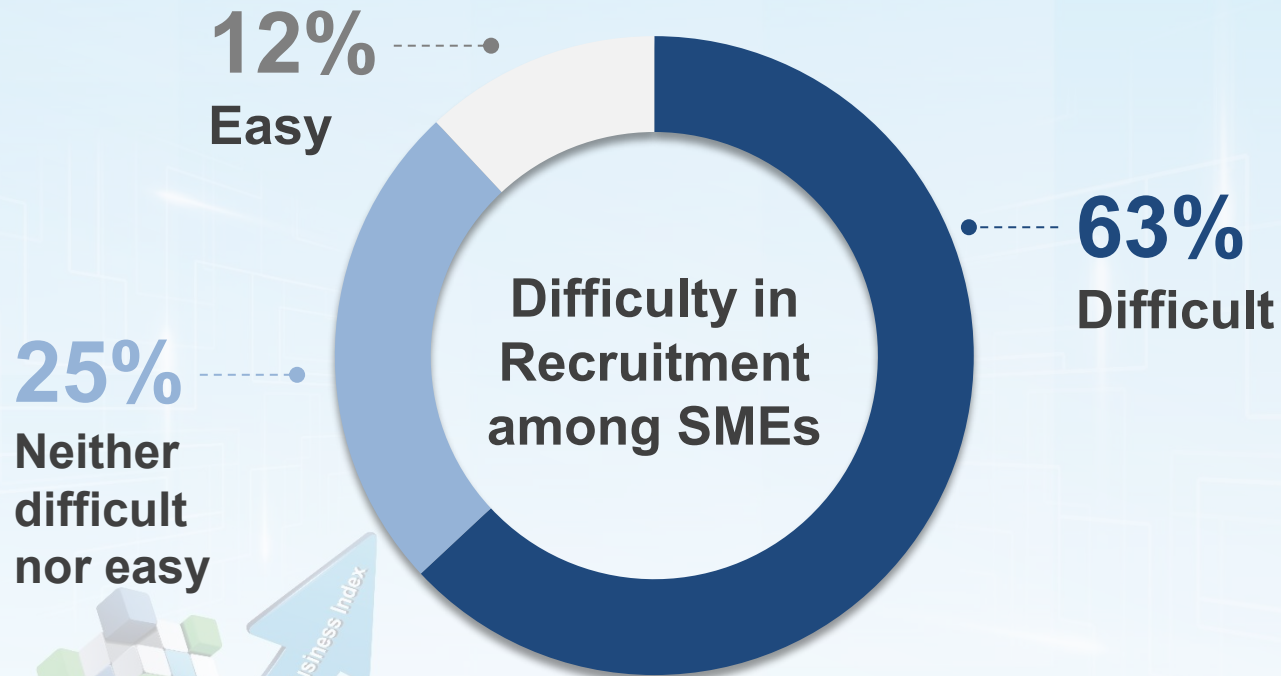
3 Good communication skills

3 Positive work attitude and sense of responsibility

3 Strong learning ability and adaptability

Difficulty in Staff Recruitment among SMEs

Among SMEs needing to fill up job vacancies due to resignation:



SMEs' measures in addressing manpower shortages:

- 1 Reorganising work allocation and workflows
- 2 Strengthening talent development and internal training
- 3 Flexible use of outsourcing and flexible employment arrangements
- 4 Adopting AI / automation to reduce reliance on manpower



SMEs' Intention to Hire Fresh Graduates



Will consider hiring fresh graduates

Key attributes of graduates valued by SMEs:

Workplace Attitude and Soft Skills

- 1** Positive work attitude and sense of responsibility
- 2** Good communication skills
- 3** Strong learning ability

Digital Skills and AI Application Capabilities

- 1** Willingness to explore and learn new technologies / AI
- 2** Ability to use AI / digital tools

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Expert Analysis



Report Download

“Standard Chartered Hong Kong SME Leading Business Index”
Reports are available on HKPC website:

<https://u.hkpc.org/scbi-en>



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Survey Background



Introduction



Diffusion Index



An index above 50.0 indicates **optimistic** business sentiment among SMEs

A reading at 50.0 indicates **neutral** business sentiment among SMEs

An index below 50.0 indicates **pessimistic** business sentiment among SMEs



Methodology

Survey Design

- Telephone Interview
- The sample is stratified by referencing to the number of SMEs in relevant sectors
- This survey was conducted in March 2026
- Management of 825 SMEs were interviewed

Business Category

1. Manufacturing
2. Construction
3. Import / Export Trade and Wholesale
4. Retail
5. Transportation, Storage and Courier Services
6. Accommodation and Food Services
7. Information and Communications
8. Financing and Insurance
9. Professional and Business Services
10. Real Estate
11. Social and Personal Services



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