

DHL GLOBAL CONNECTEDNESS REPORT 2026

OVERVIEW



DHL GLOBAL CONNECTEDNESS REPORT 2026

A unique, in-depth analysis of the state of globalization and its prospects.

- Most comprehensive available portrait of how trade, capital, information, and people flows move around the world.
- Analyzes more than nine million data points and ranks 180 countries according to their global connectedness.
Last data update: January 2026.
- Special coverage of shifts in global flows amid geopolitical tensions
- Maps, charts, and other data visualizations bring the facts to life.
- Additional collection of 180 one-page country profiles with individual countries' globalization patterns.
- Published regularly since 2011, in partnership with:



Download the complete report at dhl.com/gcr



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KEY TAKEAWAYS – 2026 EDITION

#1

Global connectedness remains stable. The DHL Global Connectedness Index does not indicate a shift from international to domestic activity across trade, capital, information, and people flows. Global connectedness reached a record high in 2022 and has not changed appreciably through 2025.

#2

Goods trade grew faster in 2025 than in any year since 2017, excluding the volatile Covid-19 pandemic period. U.S. buyers rushed to import goods ahead of tariff hikes, China increased exports to non-U.S. destinations, and investment in AI infrastructure boosted trade in goods such as semiconductors and data transmission equipment.

#3

Trade growth is forecast to continue over the 2026–29 period at the same average pace as during the past decade. U.S. tariff increases only modestly reduced forecast global trade growth. Other countries supported trade growth by not raising tariffs, and many negotiated new trade deals to secure access to alternative markets.

#4

U.S.–China ties continue to diminish. Since 2016, the share of U.S. trade, capital, information, and people flows with China has dropped 42%, while China's share with the U.S. is down 37%. However, close allies of the U.S. and China (excluding Russia) show no similar pattern of decoupling from geopolitical rivals.

#5

The share of U.S. imports coming directly from China has fallen from a peak of 22% in 2017 to 13% in 2024, before plummeting further to only 9% during the first three quarters of 2025. Nonetheless, analysis considering Chinese inputs in goods imported from other countries does not show a clear declining trend in U.S. reliance on content from China.

#6

The world remains far from a split into disconnected geopolitical blocs. Only 4–6% of global goods trade, greenfield FDI, and cross-border M&A have shifted away from geopolitical rivals over the past decade. Trade flows shifted more toward neutral countries than to close allies, implying more 'de-risking' than 'friendshoring'.

#7

Most international business already occurs among friendly countries, limiting the threat de-risking strategies pose to globalization. In 2025, only 12% of global goods trade, 5% of greenfield FDI, and 3% of cross-border M&A took place between U.S.-aligned and China-aligned blocs of close allies.

#8

Goods trade and greenfield FDI crossed their longest average distances on record in 2025, while the shares of these flows occurring within major geographic regions fell to new lows. It remains to be seen whether nearshoring strategies will ultimately lead to more regionalized business patterns.

#9

Singapore is the world's most globally connected country, followed by Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Singapore has the largest international flows relative to domestic activity, and the United Kingdom has the most broadly distributed flows around the world. The United Arab Emirates achieved the largest increase in global connectedness since 2001.

#10

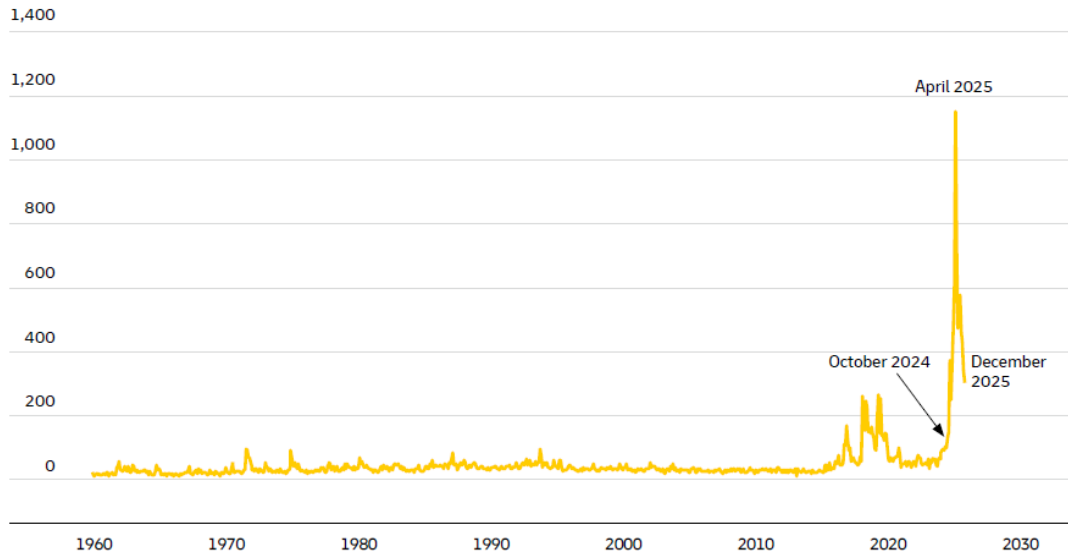
Prominent narratives about deglobalization are driven more by politics and public policy than by actual shifts in cross-border flows. While the risk of deglobalization has risen and the pattern of connectedness is shifting, the world overall remains as connected as ever.



**TRADE WILL
ALWAYS FIND
A WAY...**

**THE LANES
MAY BE
DIFFERENT,
BUT THE
VOLUMES
STILL FLOW**

TRADE POLICY UNCERTAINTY, 1960 – 2025



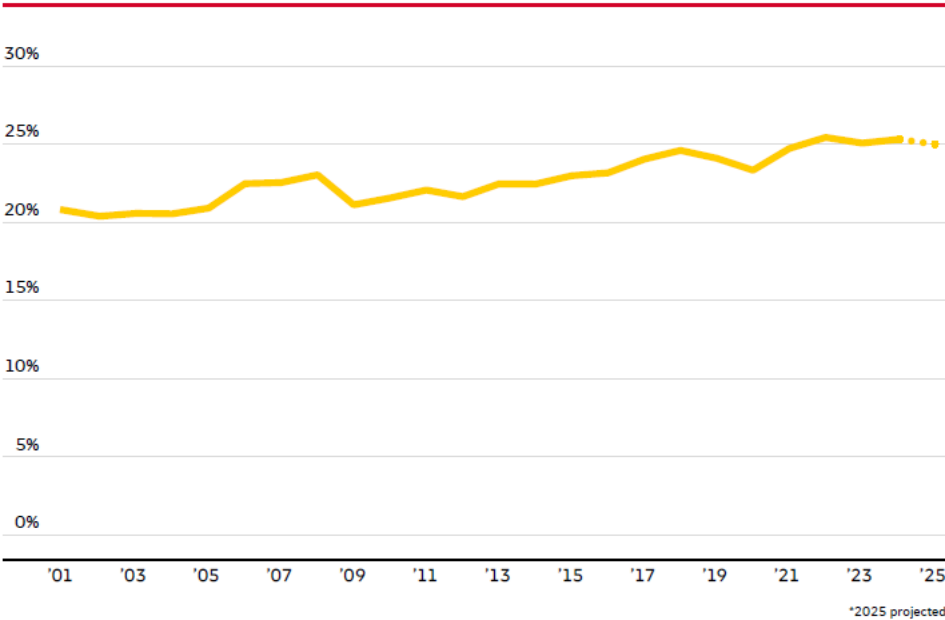
Uncertainty about future trade policies soared to the highest level on record after the re-election of U.S. President Trump in November 2024 and peaked following President Trump’s “Liberation Day” tariff announcement in April 2025.

(Trade Policy Uncertainty is measured based on the share of news articles discussing trade policy uncertainty in the Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Guardian, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post. A value of 100 means that one percent of news articles discuss trade policy uncertainty.)



GLOBALIZATION HOLDS FIRM AT A RECORD LEVEL

DHL Global Connectedness Index Depth Trend, 2001 – 2025*



Globalization remains at a historically high level – despite escalating geopolitical tensions, rising U.S. tariffs, and unprecedented uncertainty about future trade policies.

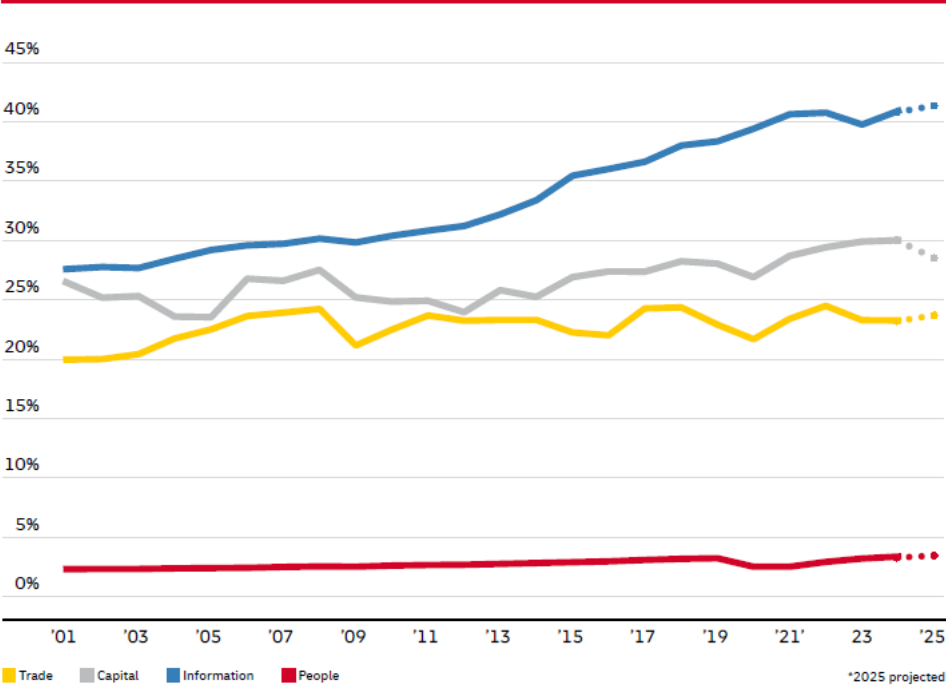
The world’s level of globalization was 25% in 2025, in line with the record high set in 2022.

The index summarizes globalization based on international flows of trade, capital, information, and people worldwide. The results are scaled between 0% (no cross-border flows) to 100% (borders and distance have no impact).



FOUR FLOWS THAT CONNECT THE WORLD

DHL Global Connectedness Index, Pillar Depth Trends, 2001 – 2025*



How have recent international tensions and crises affected cross-border flows of trade, capital, information, and people?

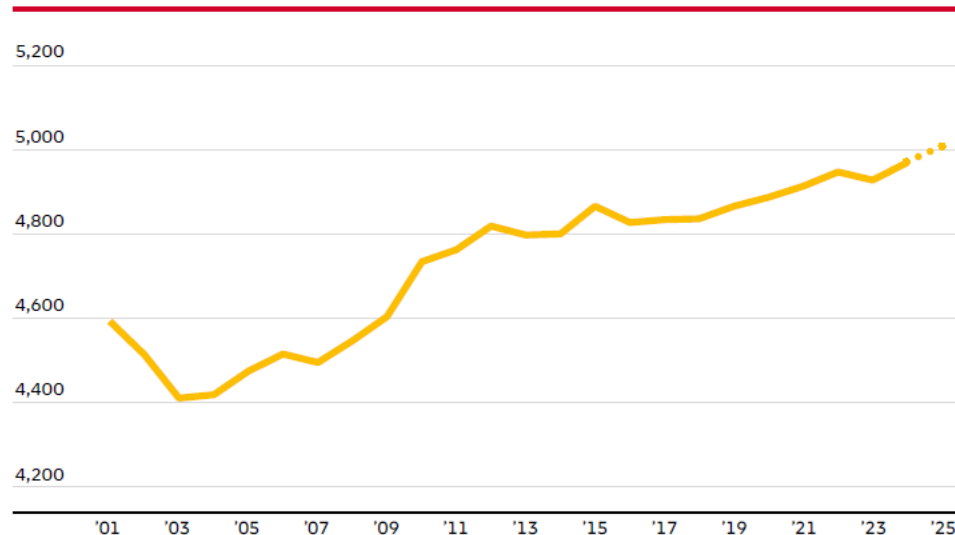
Information flows have reached the highest globalization levels compared to the other three flow types. Capital flows are second, followed by trade flows. People flows lag far behind, at much lower levels of globalization.

None of the flows shows unusual changes in 2024 or 2025. Since 2023, a decline on the capital pillar has been largely offset by small gains across the trade, information, and people pillars.



RECORD-LONG TRADE DISTANCES – NO TREND TOWARDS REGIONALIZATION

Goods Trade: Average Distance (Kilometers), 2001– 2025



Geopolitical tensions and supply chain concerns have led many observers to expect a shift from globalization to regionalization.

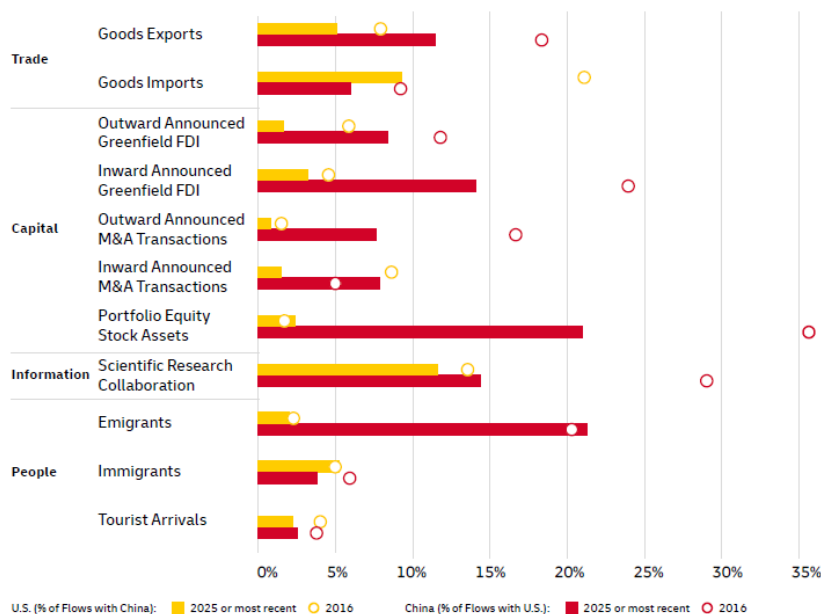
In 2025, however, traded goods traveled the longest average distance on record (5,010 kilometers).

Most other international flows are stretching over longer distances as well – and longer distances indicate less regionalization.



U.S. AND CHINA DECOUPLE – BUT NO GLOBAL SPLIT INTO RIVAL BLOCS

U.S.–China Flow Shares With Each Other, 2025 (Or Most Recent) vs. 2016



The figure illustrates that the U.S. and China continue to decouple.

Since 2016, they have reduced the share of their international flows with each other across nearly all types of trade, capital, information, and people flows.

Wherever the bars fall short of the circles, flow shares between the two countries have declined.

But further data in the report show that most other countries maintain trade and investment ties with their traditional partner countries.

The world economy remains very far from a wider split into rival blocs.

