SURVEY

BUSINESSEUROPE

THE MAIN FACTORS IMPACTING EUROPEAN COMPANIES IN THE U.S. MARKET

COMPANIES CRAVE A FUTURE BUILT ON CERTAINTY

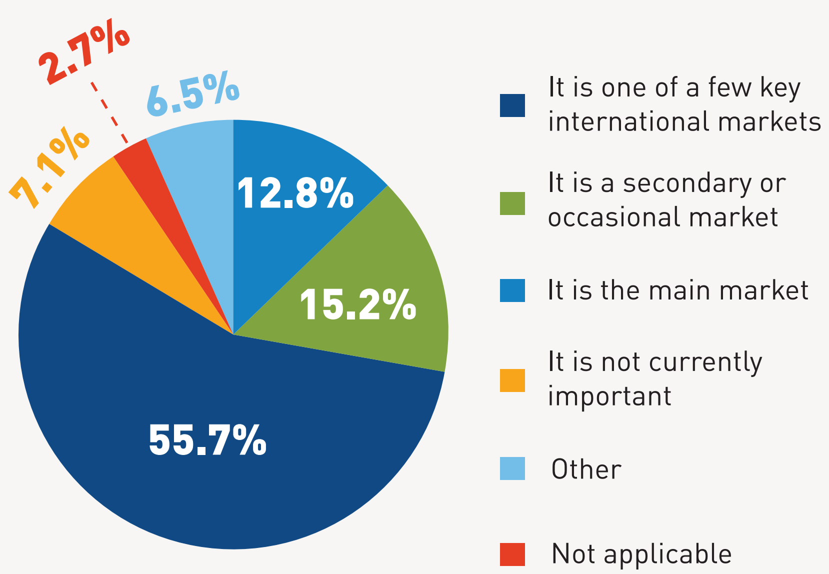
In September 2025, BusinessEurope conducted a focused survey to identify the main challenges affecting European companies operating in the U.S. market. The survey received 342 direct submissions from companies and federations across Europe, representing a broad and balanced mix of sectoral and national perspectives.

The findings reveal a consistent call for greater stability, regulatory alignment, and a more predictable transatlantic trading environment. Above all, businesses stress that restoring competitiveness in the U.S. market is essential to securing long-term growth and investment.

MARKET RELEVANCE

The United States remains an important part of European business strategy. Over **68.5%** of surveyed companies identified the U.S. as their primary or one of their primary markets, with several citing it as their largest single export market outside the EU. The findings show that European firms continue to view the U.S. as a dynamic growth market with enduring strategic importance.

CHART 1: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE U.S. MARKET TO YOUR COMPANY?



KEY OBSTACLES TO A STABLE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE RELATIONSHIP

The main challenges in EU-U.S. trade identified through the survey include:

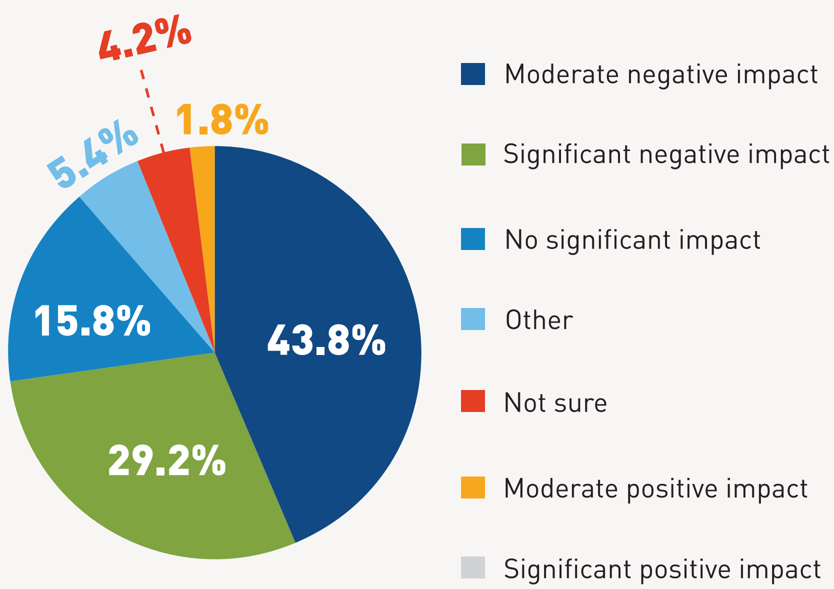
- **Tariff volatility**
- **Uncertainty and instability in U.S. trade policy**
- **Administrative and customs burdens**

The report underscores that revitalising stability, predictability, and regulatory alignment in the transatlantic trade relationship is essential to ensure european companies' competitiveness in the U.S. market.

TARIFFS THE MOST IMMEDIATE CHALLENGE

Tariffs emerge as the most immediate and damaging challenge for European businesses engaged with the U.S. market. **73%** of respondents report moderate to significant negative impacts on their business from tariffs imposed. **59%** of respondents report that they have experienced reduced competitiveness in the U.S. market due to the impact of tariffs.

CHART 2: HOW HAVE RECENT U.S. TARIFF CHANGES IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS?

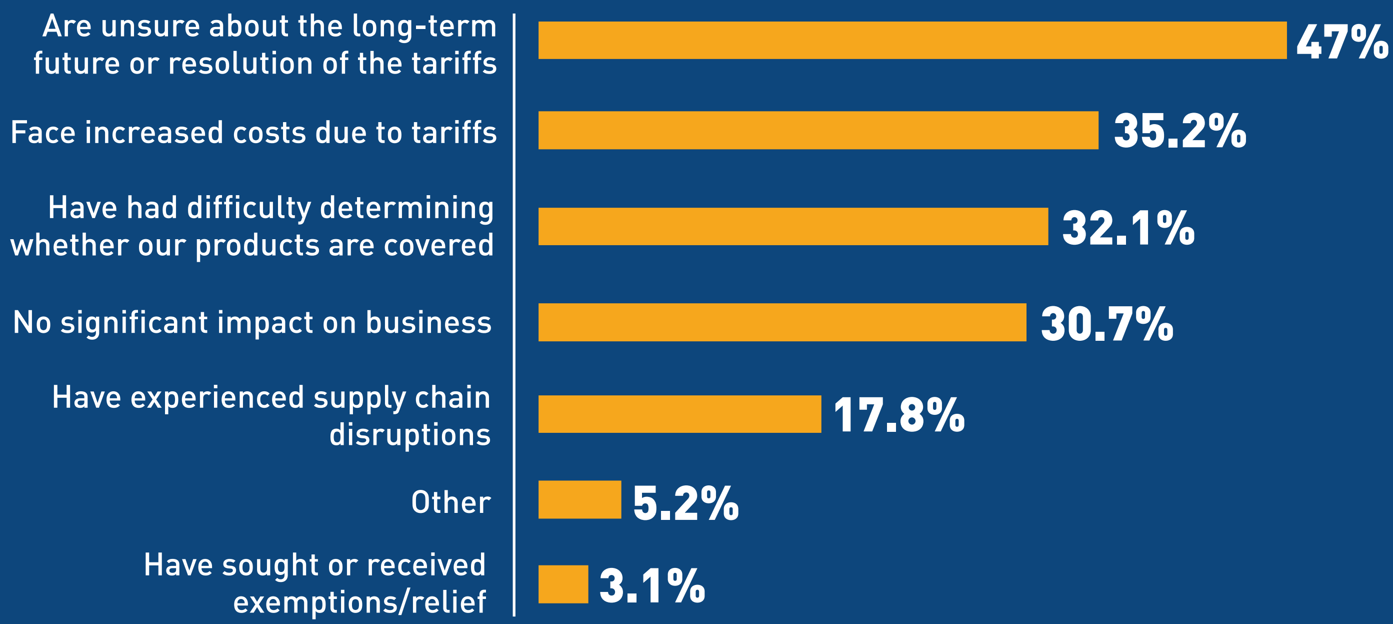


Tariffs are consistently described by respondents as eroding competitiveness, raising costs, and driving customers away. The most frequently mentioned example is the **50%** duty on steel, aluminium and copper products and their derivatives. It is negatively impacting companies' competitiveness and has effectively priced them out of the U.S. market, leaving long-standing commercial relationships disrupted or terminated altogether.

UNCERTAINTY SECTION 232 A KEY FACTOR

Across the entirety of the survey's findings, the imposed section 232 tariffs and their impact on European businesses are highlighted repeatedly. Section 232 tariffs are seen as particularly damaging due to their scope and unpredictability, where **47.5%** of respondents describe being impacted by the uncertainty of the future of 232 tariffs.

CHART 3: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY'S EXPERIENCE WITH SECTION 232 TARIFFS?



Section 232 on steel, aluminium and copper is the most quoted by respondents, together with the extended list of derivative products. Beyond the financial burden of **50%** tariffs, companies face extensive administrative challenges in determining and documenting the steel and aluminium content of exported goods.

Respondents also highlight broader regulatory instability in U.S. trade policy with regard to Section 232 tariffs in general. Sudden shifts in political priorities, coupled with weak consultation processes, create a climate of uncertainty.

Companies face significant challenges when subject to Section 232 tariffs, as their goods are frequently reclassified as derivative products, triggering extensive documentation requirements and creating a sense of uncertainty and volatility.

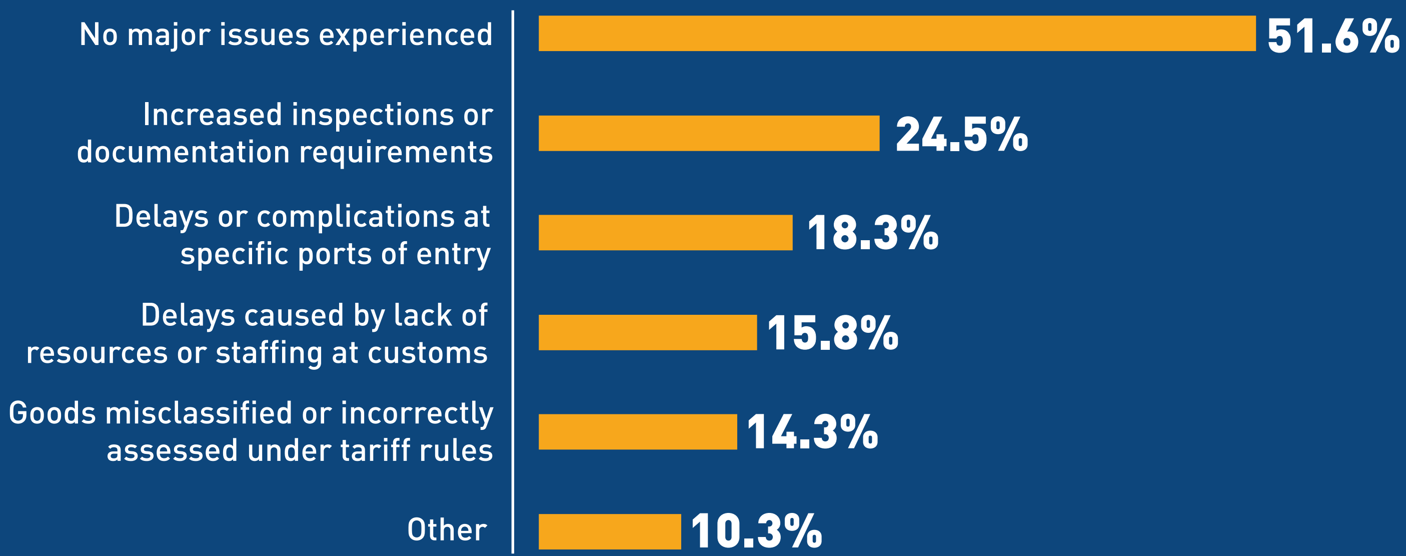
ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

CUSTOMS PROCEDURES WEIGH HEAVILY

In addition to tariffs, respondents emphasise the administrative and procedural barriers, especially with customs procedures, which weigh heavily on transatlantic trade at the moment. Almost **¼** of respondents indicate increased inspections or documentation requirements.

14.3% of respondents state that goods have been misclassified or incorrectly assessed by the U.S. customs authorities. In practice, this can mean entire shipments being delayed, held for inspection, or reclassified at significant cost.

CHART 4: HAS YOUR COMPANY EXPERIENCED ANY CHALLENGES WITH U.S. CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES RELATED TO TARIFF IMPLEMENTATION AT THE BORDER?



The individual responses reflect that navigating U.S. customs has become increasingly complex and burdensome.

The complexity is compounded by divergent tariff codes, confusion over definitions such as "significant transformation," and differing requirements concerning rules of origin under USMCA (United-States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) and other frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey confirms that while the U.S. remains a vital market for EU companies, the cumulative effects of volatile tariffs, shifting political and regulatory landscapes, complex customs procedures, and mounting administrative burdens have eroded both competitiveness and business confidence in the transatlantic trade environment.

A dual reality of strategic importance and persistent instability emerges across nearly all responses. This underscores the urgency of addressing the key challenges identified. **Restoring stability, predictability, and regulatory cooperation** in the transatlantic trade relationship is essential to ensure European companies' competitiveness in the U.S. market.

Additionally, a key priority identified is the **urgent need to resolve the Section 232 tariffs on steel, aluminium, and copper**, which have severely undermined European competitiveness in the U.S. market.

The EU should pursue **immediate measures**, focused on tariff and customs stabilisation and in this context **the priority must be to implement the existing Joint Framework Agreement,** including finding an urgent solution for Section 232 on steel and aluminium. **There is also a necessity for longer-term initiatives** to embed regulatory alignment and predictability **through regulatory cooperation and simplification.** This is a long-standing ask from the business community on both sides, intended to reduce costs and further support Transatlantic investment.

Continued and constructive dialogue is essential. It is the only way to tackle existing barriers and strengthen the foundation of transatlantic trade.

Looking ahead, companies identify **three priority areas for future action:**

01 Tariff stability – Removing or stabilising tariffs on EU goods and ensure clarity. Especially in regard to existing and forthcoming Section 232 tariffs. This is particularly urgent for 232 tariffs on steel, aluminium and copper and their derivatives.

02 Customs simplification – Streamline procedures and reduce documentation burdens of complex value chains and rules of origin to facilitate smoother trade flows. Ensure that changes to tariffs are implemented uniformly, and that customs and economic operators are sufficiently informed.

03 Regulatory cooperation – A long standing demand from businesses is for greater regulatory cooperation and reducing differences in standards between the EU and the U.S. Working towards simplifications and streamlining regulation to lower compliance costs and risks is key.

BusinessEurope is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at the European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, we speak for enterprises of all sizes in 36 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.

Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Republic
Denmark	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany
Germany	Greece	Hungary	Iceland	Iceland	Ireland
Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta	Montenegro
Norway	Poland	Portugal	Rep. of San Marino	Romania	Serbia
Slovak Republic	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	Switzerland
The Netherlands	Türkiye	Türkiye	Ukraine	Ukraine	United Kingdom

Avenue de Cortenbergh 168
B - 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32(0)22376511 / Fax: +32(0)22311445
E-mail: main@businesseurope.eu

WWW.BUSINESSEUROPE.EU

EU Transparency Register 3978240953-79