

Techtonic States

GROW YOUR BUSINESS **EDGE**



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The New Business Edge: The strategic integration of advanced technologies and data-led decision-making to drive resilience, agility and long-term growth.

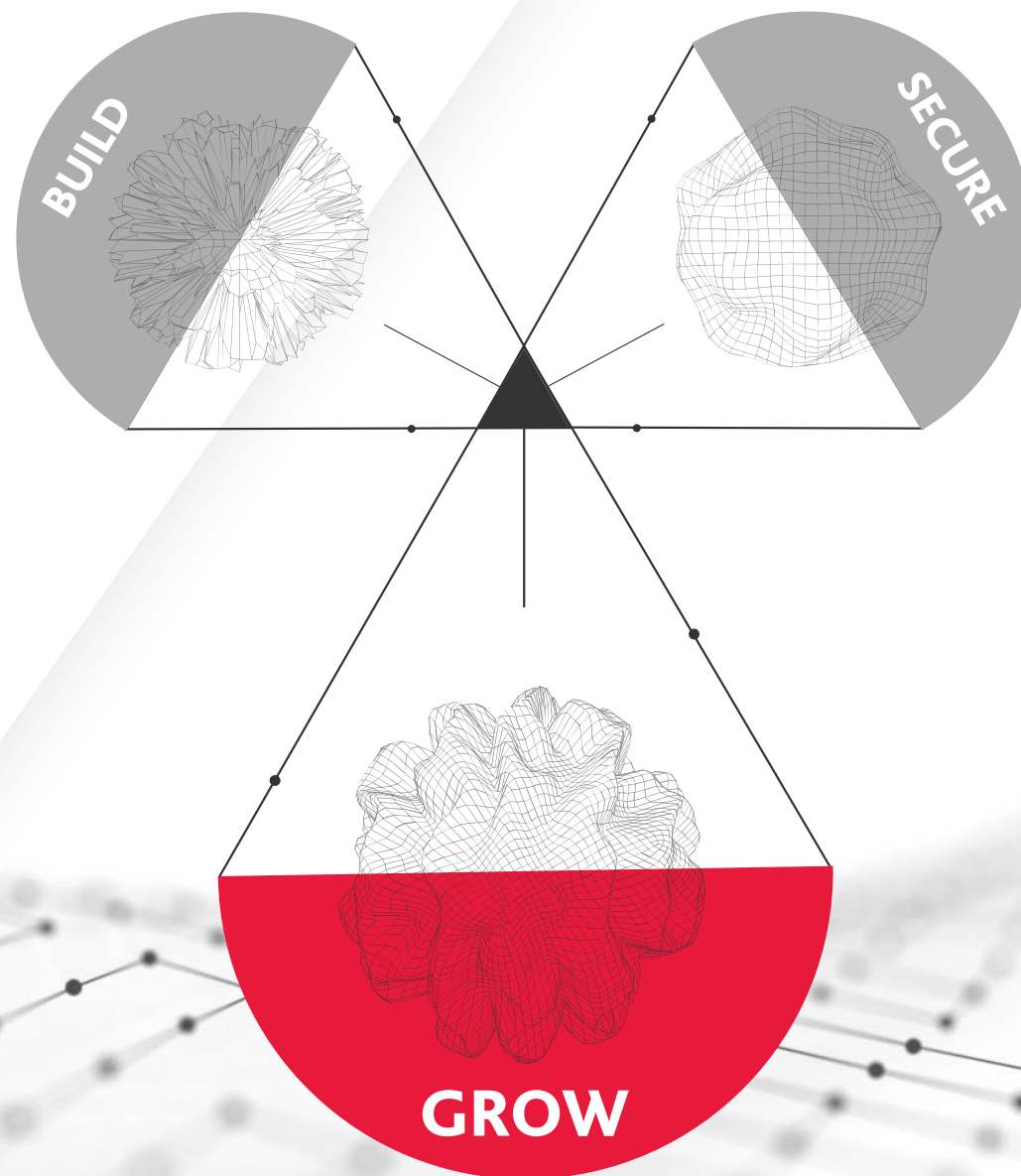
Our *Tectonic States* study reveals that leaders are doubling down on AI adoption and data-driven innovation as their top levers for competitive advantage. With 62% expecting AI adoption to be widespread across all areas of business by 2028, the message is clear: AI is no longer a future ambition, but a present-day imperative. But when the ground is constantly shifting, the smartest businesses are those that grow with intention, not just urgency.

In previous chapters, we explored how businesses can lay the groundwork for strategic and secure tech adoption. But this is just the starting point.

To fully unlock their New Business Edge, organisations must integrate and scale advanced solutions with a focus on security, sustainability and strategic alignment.

As organisations face adversity on an almost daily basis, resilience and agility – being able to adapt quickly, learn continuously and scale what works – is what sets leaders apart. By embracing a ‘fail fast, learn faster’ mindset, organisations can unlock new sources of value, accelerate innovation, and stay ahead of evolving customer and workforce expectations. This way, they don’t just keep up but grow stronger, smarter, and more future-ready with every move.

The Three Dimensions of the
New Business Edge

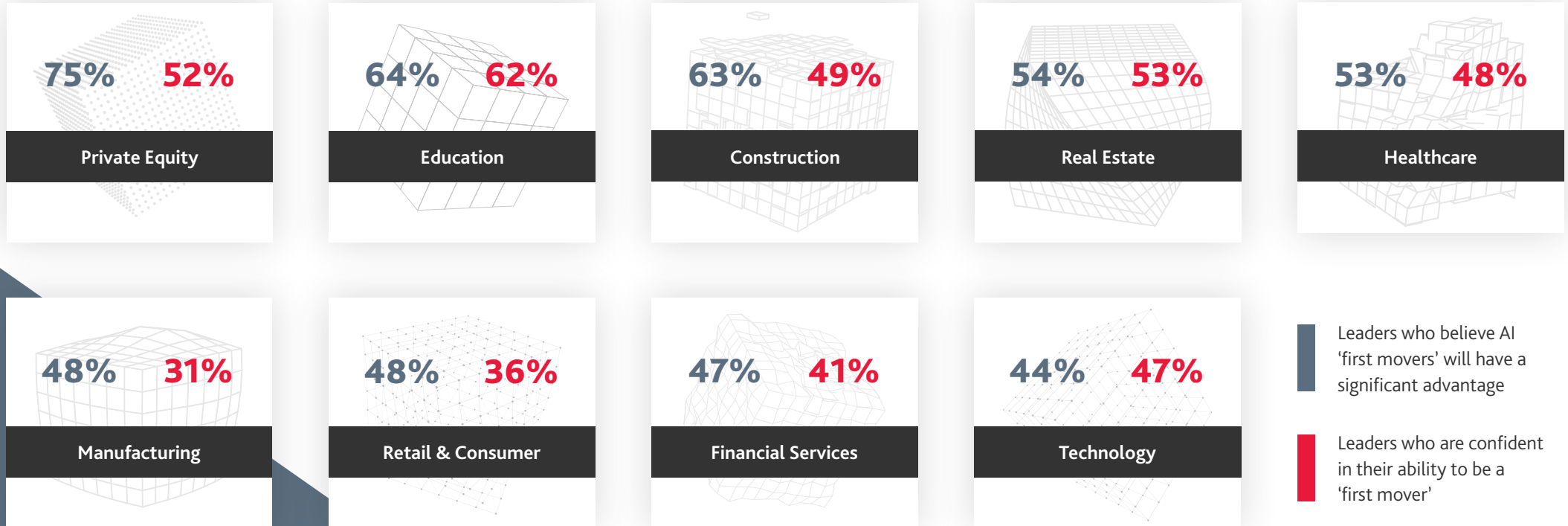


Strategically Scaling Investment

According to our research, 59% of leaders say their organisation has a clear plan for scaling AI. However, just 45% feel confident in their organisation's ability to be a 'first mover' in adopting emerging technologies, such as AI and quantum computing. At the same time, 53% believe the organisations that are AI 'first movers' will have a significant competitive advantage.

Notably, leaders in the tech sector are the least likely to believe in this 'first-mover advantage'. In a space where innovation moves at lightning speed, today's breakthrough can quickly become the baseline for competitors to improve upon. The challenge, then, is to balance speed with clear strategic vision.

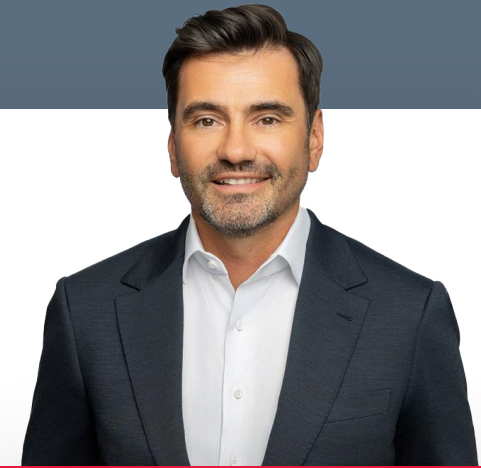
SECTOR SPOTLIGHT: THE FIRST MOVER ADVANTAGE



Across all sectors, taking a phased approach to innovation – continuously testing, refining and scaling – will allow organisations to adapt without losing direction or overcommitting resources.

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In the AI race, the fear of falling behind is real — but the greatest risk is standing still. Building capability is the foundation for progress. Momentum is best achieved through steady, incremental adoption, not sweeping transformation. While large-scale overhauls may promise big returns, they also carry high risk in fast-moving AI cycles. Investing piece by piece — in data, skills, systems, and strategy — reduces that risk while delivering faster, more sustainable returns, making it easier to start now and keep pace as the technology evolves.



BRUNO SUPPA
CEO, BDO Canada

KEY STEPS FOR INCREMENTAL GROWTH

01

Get specific

Avoid large, unfocused investments. Identify one high-potential opportunity where AI or automation could deliver measurable impact. Launch a tightly scoped pilot and see it through to the end, continuously evaluating to enable quick pivots. Once you've proved the value, you can scale with purpose.

02

Embrace failure

Smart risk-taking fuels innovation and builds long-term confidence. Not every project will succeed, and that's part of the process. What matters is identifying the failures fast and extracting valuable insights from every attempt.

03

Collaborate to innovate

63% of business leaders believe it is more important than ever for companies to choose their innovation partners carefully for competitive advantage. Working closely with suppliers, partners and even competitors will be crucial to extend your capabilities and grow your business edge.

Embedding Sustainability for **Responsible Growth**

As organisations look to integrate and scale advanced technologies, sustainability must be more than a parallel priority; it must be embedded in the strategy itself.

The recent *Tectonic States* study reveals a significant decline in leaders' confidence around sustainability progress. In 2023, 71% of leaders anticipated that overall progress against sustainability goals would be significant in three years' time (by 2026). In 2025, just 54% of leaders believe overall progress will be significant by 2028.

This drop may reflect shifting political priorities, particularly outside the EU, where climate change has slipped down the agenda. However, the imperative remains: to integrate technology in a way that supports responsible, resilient and sustainable growth. To achieve this, businesses must focus on two interconnected priorities.

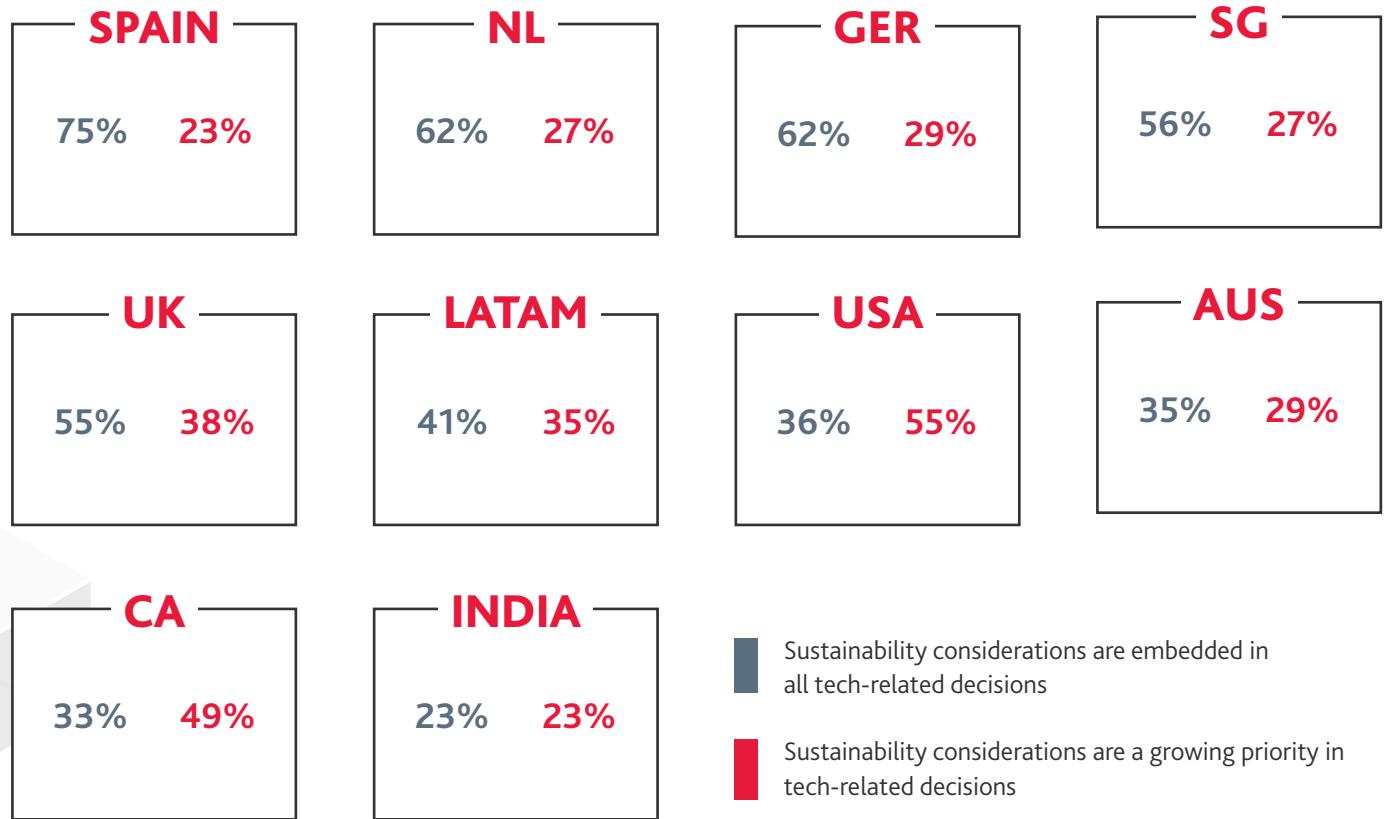
DEPLOYING TECHNOLOGY SUSTAINABLY

With advanced technologies like AI demanding increasingly energy-intensive infrastructure, sustainability considerations must be built into every stage of the tech lifecycle, from procurement and deployment to operations and decommissioning. This is particularly critical as ESG regulations across the EU – such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) – become more stringent, requiring businesses to demonstrate clear accountability for their environmental impact throughout their value chains.

Encouragingly, nearly half (47%) of leaders report that sustainability considerations are embedded in all their organisation's tech-related decisions. Meanwhile, a further 34% say sustainability considerations are a growing priority in their tech-related decisions but are not yet fully embedded. However, there are stark differences between global markets.

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Organisations' sustainability considerations when making tech-related decisions



- Sustainability considerations are embedded in all tech-related decisions
- Sustainability considerations are a growing priority in tech-related decisions



There's a growing awareness around the environmental impact of AI, and many leaders genuinely want to make progress. But measuring sustainability is incredibly complex, and the path forward isn't always clear. The good news is that AI itself may be part of the solution – helping us track, measure and manage our impact more effectively.



ALLAN EVANS
Global Head of Strategic Projects, BDO

DEPLOYING TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

When harnessed with intent, technology can be a powerful catalyst for advancing sustainability efforts. In fact, 63% of leaders believe technology is a key enabler of solutions to global challenges, including climate change, sustainable development, healthcare and demographic shifts.

At an organisational level, aligning digital innovation with sustainability goals can power resilient and responsible growth. AI and advanced analytics can help to identify potential vulnerabilities, streamline reporting and enhance supply chain sustainability, helping businesses adapt quickly to change while strengthening long-term value creation.

Key steps for sustainable growth

01

Design with sustainability in mind

Make energy efficiency a key criterion when choosing models and infrastructure. Consider the environmental cost of training large models and explore alternatives like smaller, fine-tuned systems or shared resources.

02

Use tech to measure what matters

You can't manage what you can't measure. Invest in tools that provide accurate, real-time insights into your environmental impact – from energy use to emissions to supply chain risks – and use these to inform strategic decisions.

03

Make sustainability everyone's business

Embedding sustainability requires a cultural shift where every team understands their role in reducing environmental impact. Cross-functional collaboration ensures sustainability is factored into every tech decision.

Measuring Impact to Refine Your Edge

03

By 2028, 66% of business leaders believe technology will have a transformational impact on productivity. But transformation without measurement is just guesswork; it lacks the precision and accountability required to support future success. Smart scaling hinges on a granular, data-driven understanding of what has changed, why it has changed, and the impact it has had.

Over half (55%) of leaders say that a clear framework for measuring the return on investment in AI will be critical for successful digital transformation. This means moving beyond tracking surface-level outputs to tangible outcomes that are directly aligned with business goals, whether that's improving operational efficiency, enhancing customer experience or accelerating innovation.

Organisations that embed measurement into their digital strategies position themselves to continuously refine their approach, proactively manage risks, and scale with greater clarity.

KEY STEPS FOR MEASURABLE GROWTH

01

Apply AI with intent

Every project should start with a clear definition of success, aligned with your broader business strategy. This ensures every initiative is purposeful, as well as driving accountability and transparency. Just as importantly, build in interim checkpoints to identify potential failures early and allow for timely intervention.

02

Balance leading and lagging indicators

To get a full picture of impact, you need to track both what's happened and what's ahead. A smart mix of lagging indicators (such as revenue and profitability) and leading indicators (such as pipeline growth, deal size and close rates) ensures you're steering toward success, not just reporting on it.

03

Measure early and recalibrate often

Start tracking from day one – establish a baseline, monitor progress and adjust as needed. An agile, iterative approach to measurement helps you stay aligned, responsive and on track for long-term success.

“

Once organisations are able to demonstrate value through measurable improvements, this fosters the confidence required to progress from an idea to business outcomes. Such confidence forms the basis for resilience and agility, empowering businesses not only to adapt effectively to change, but also to embrace it.



RIC OPAL
Global BDO Digital Leader, BDO

The Role of BDO

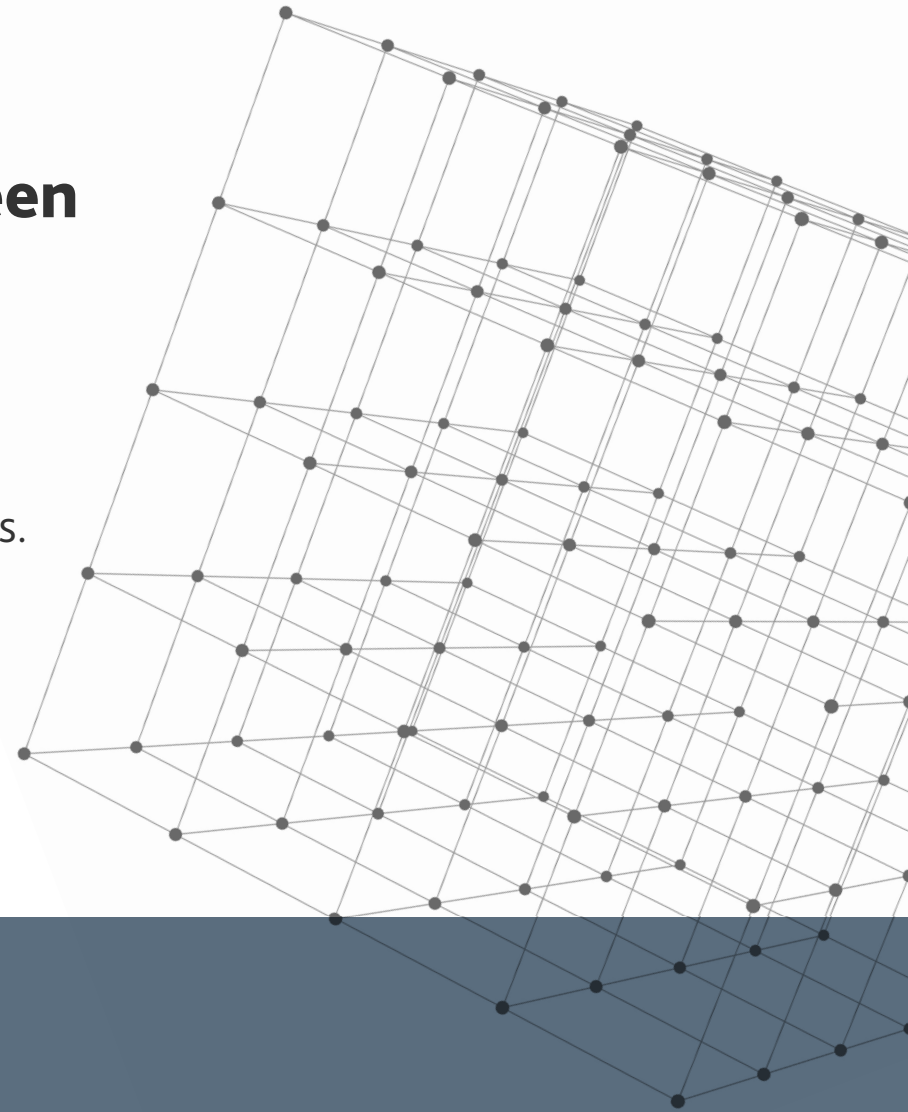
At BDO, we help ambitious enterprises grow with confidence. By breaking down complex transformations into focused, manageable steps, we enable our clients to achieve quicker wins while reducing the risks associated with large-scale change.

Our BDO Digital professionals are also committed to providing clients with a means to navigate the intersection between [Digital and Sustainability](#).

From data governance, quality, engineering, and security to Ethical AI, we can support your journey through complex digital environments to ultimately achieve your sustainable business goals.

Visit the [BDO Global website](#) to read more about our services or get in touch with our team.

To find out more about the *Tectonic States* study, read the other report chapters



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