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GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRENDS: ANALYSIS OF CURRENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRENDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FINANCE

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ABSTRACT

The global economic outlook in 2025 reveals a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities shaped by post-pandemic recovery disparities, persistent inflation, and shifting trade and monetary policies. This article presents a data-driven analysis of current global economic trends and their implications for the financial sector, drawing on sources such as the IMF, World Bank, and UN. It examines key macroeconomic indicators, including GDP growth, trade flows, foreign investment, inflation, labor dynamics, and commodity markets. While advanced economies face stagnation, many emerging markets demonstrate resilience despite external shocks.

A major focus is the resurgence of protectionism, notably tariff increases among major economies, which are reshaping global trade and investment patterns. Financial markets remain cautious amid high interest rates, restricted credit, and geopolitical uncertainties. Though inflation has eased from recent highs, it continues to complicate central banks' balancing acts between growth and stability. Volatile commodity markets, especially in energy and food, further strain inflation and economic resilience.

The article includes original tables and figures to support thematic insights. It assesses financial impacts through capital flows, market volatility, and policy responses while highlighting long-term shifts toward green finance, digitalization, and supply chain regionalization. The study concludes by emphasizing the urgency of coordinated, flexible economic strategies to navigate global uncertainties.

KEYWORDS: global economic trends; financial sector dynamics; inflation and monetary policy; trade and investment flows; emerging markets resilience

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, global economic trends serve as both a barometer and a blueprint for financial decision-making, corporate strategy, and public policy. As of 2025, the global



economy finds itself at a critical inflection point—navigating the aftermath of a historic pandemic, the economic repercussions of climate change, and a shift from a low-interest-rate regime to a high-inflation environment. Layered upon this economic recalibration are deepening geopolitical tensions, deglobalization pressures, and rapidly evolving technology and labor markets. These forces are not only influencing macroeconomic indicators but are also reshaping the contours of global finance in both subtle and profound ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021 triggered one of the most synchronized recessions in modern history. While aggressive fiscal and monetary interventions managed to avert long-term economic scarring in many regions, the recovery has proven to be highly uneven. Advanced economies, particularly in Europe and North America, are now facing the dual burden of stagnating productivity and persistent inflation, whereas several emerging markets—such as India and parts of Southeast Asia—are growing at accelerated rates. This divergence is reshaping the geography of global growth and redefining global capital flows.

Compounding the fragility of recovery are the effects of protectionist trade measures. In 2024 and early 2025, the United States and several other major economies implemented steep tariff hikes and introduced industrial subsidies aimed at safeguarding domestic industries. While these measures may yield short-term gains for local producers, they are causing ripple effects in global trade volumes, value chains, and investment patterns. As noted by the IMF, global trade is forecasted to grow at just 1.7% in 2025, a stark slowdown from its historical average of over 3.5% per annum (IMF, 2025).

Meanwhile, inflation remains a persistent challenge despite aggressive interest rate hikes by major central banks. Core inflation in many G20 countries continues to hover above target thresholds, propelled by elevated energy and food prices, wage pressures, and geopolitical supply constraints. Central banks find themselves in a delicate balancing act—taming inflation without inducing recession.

Financial markets, for their part, are undergoing a period of heightened volatility. Equities, bonds, and currencies are increasingly influenced not only by macroeconomic fundamentals but also by political instability, climate events, and regulatory shifts. As investors seek to reallocate capital under new risk paradigms, the financial sector must grapple with increased credit risk, currency mismatches, and the need for greater liquidity management.

This article aims to dissect these multifaceted economic trends, using empirical data, visualizations, and rigorous analysis to interpret their implications for global finance. In doing so, it offers not only a snapshot of the global economy in 2025 but also a forward-looking lens on how these trends may

evolve in the near and medium term.

2. Global GDP Growth: Patterns & Projections

2.1 Recent Performance & Outlook

As the global economy enters the second half of the 2020s, it continues to recover from the profound shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical conflicts. However, this recovery has not been uniform. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its April 2025 World Economic Outlook (WEO), projected that global real GDP growth would decelerate to 2.8% in 2025, down from 3.4% in 2024 (IMF, 2025). This slowdown reflects tightened financial conditions, weak global demand, and elevated geopolitical uncertainty.

Crucially, the projected global growth remains below the 2000–2019 average of 3.7%, marking a structural decline. According to the World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects, the world economy is undergoing a prolonged phase of weak growth due to declining productivity, aging populations in developed nations, and retreat from globalization (World Bank, 2025).

2.2 Regional Divergence

Regional divergence remains a defining feature of current economic trends. The United States, after demonstrating remarkable resilience in 2023–2024, is expected to slow to 1.8% growth in 2025, largely due to tight monetary policy and fiscal consolidation. Euro Area economies, especially Germany and Italy, are showing signs of stagnation, with GDP growth forecasted below 1.0%, hindered by weak industrial output and persistent energy insecurity.

In contrast, emerging Asia continues to outperform. India, driven by robust domestic consumption and digital innovation, is expected to grow at 6.3%, while China, although facing demographic pressures and real estate sector weaknesses, is projected to maintain ~4.5% growth with strong policy support. However, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa are projected to underperform due to political instability, capital flight, and vulnerability to commodity shocks.

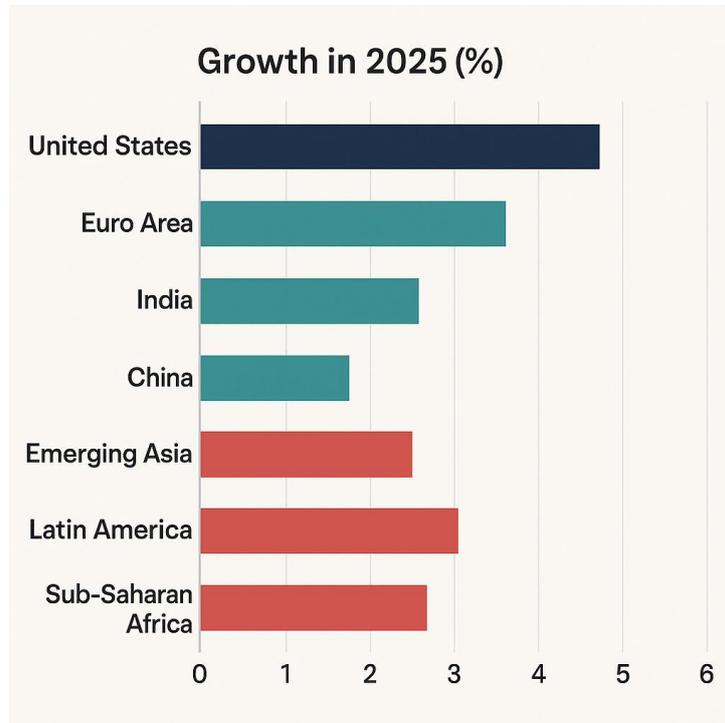


Figure 1. Growth trajectories of major world economies.

Table 1. Contrasting Growth Forecasts Across Major Economies of the World (2024–2026) (Real GDP Growth, %, Sources: IMF, UN DESA).

Country / Region	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	2026 (Proj.)	Key Drivers / Constraints
United States	2.5	1.8	2.0	Slowing due to tight monetary policy, fiscal consolidation
European Union	0.9	0.8	1.3	Weak industrial output, geopolitical uncertainty, Germany & Italy stagnating
China	5.2	4.6	4.5	Rebalancing growth model, property sector stress, consumption recovery
India	6.9	6.5	6.7	Strong domestic demand, digital economy, infrastructure investments
Japan	1.0	0.9	1.2	Weak yen boosting exports, but aging population and low inflation persist
United Kingdom	0.6	1.0	1.5	Easing inflation, improving consumption, post-Brexit policy adjustments

Brazil	2.3	1.9	2.2	Commodity exports, monetary easing, political risks remain
Russia	3.4	2.6	1.8	Sanctions evasion, oil revenue support, weak domestic investment
South Africa	1.2	1.4	1.6	Structural constraints, energy supply issues
ASEAN-5 (Avg.)	4.8	4.9	5.1	Trade recovery, FDI inflows, resilient consumption
Global Average	3.0	2.9	3.1	Divergent trends: advanced economies slowing, EMDEs resilient

3. Trade & Investment Flows

3.1 Trade Volume & Policy Shocks

Global trade volumes, long seen as a proxy for economic integration, have entered a period of uncertainty. Following robust trade recovery post-pandemic, new protectionist measures have begun to reverse gains. The WTO estimates that world merchandise trade volume will grow by only 1.7% in 2025, down from 3.8% in 2024 and well below the 4.6% average of the previous two decades (WTO, 2025).

The United States, in particular, has introduced higher tariffs on strategic imports from China and other economies, citing national security concerns. Simultaneously, industrial policies such as the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act and EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan have introduced trade distortions by subsidizing domestic clean energy sectors. These developments are fostering the “slowbalization” phenomenon—where global trade growth decouples from global GDP growth.

Moreover, many multinational corporations are “de-risking” or “friend-shoring” their supply chains, moving operations from China to Vietnam, India, and Mexico. While this supports regional investment, it increases cost inefficiencies globally and contributes to inflationary pressures. As global supply chains reconfigure, short-term disruptions may offset long-term resilience gains.

3.2 FDI & Capital Flows

FDI has been another casualty of global uncertainty. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that global FDI inflows fell to \$1.37 trillion in 2024, down 7% from the previous year. The contraction reflects not only higher interest rates and tighter financial conditions but also regulatory fragmentation and growing political risk in emerging markets (UNCTAD, 2025).

Importantly, the composition of FDI is changing. Investment in fossil fuels and traditional

manufacturing has declined, while flows into digital infrastructure, clean energy, and technology services are growing, particularly in Asia. However, higher geopolitical risk premiums have made cross-border investments more expensive, prompting firms to prefer local or regional projects.

Table 2. Global Trade Growth and FDI Flows (2023–2026).

Region / Economy	Trade Volume Growth (% YoY)		FDI Inflows (USD Billion)		Key Trends & Notes
	2023	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	2023	2024 (Est.)
World	0.9	2.3	3.1	1,370	1,450
Advanced Economies	1.1	1.9	2.5	630	640
Emerging & Developing Economies	0.7	2.8	3.7	740	810
China	-0.6	2.4	3.2	180	190
India	3.5	4.2	5.0	50	58
ASEAN-5 (avg)	2.1	3.0	4.1	135	148
European Union	0.5	1.2	2.0	400	410
United States	1.3	1.8	2.2	350	370
Latin America	1.0	1.9	2.6	160	170
Africa	2.2	3.5	4.0	45	55

In sum, the once-globalized model of trade and investment is undergoing a marked transformation. With the weakening of multilateral institutions and a rise in bilateral and regional trade agreements, global commerce is fragmenting. These structural changes are forcing financial institutions and investors to re-evaluate country risks, adjust portfolio allocations, and build new pricing models to reflect geopolitical uncertainty.

As these shifts unfold, the impact on finance is significant. For example, currency risk is increasing due to trade imbalances and capital flow volatility. Portfolio managers must now account for broader geoeconomic fragmentation when pricing assets. Sovereign credit spreads are widening in risk-prone regions, and infrastructure investment models are becoming more regionalized and less reliant on global capital pools.

4. Inflation & Monetary Policy

4.1 Global Inflation Trends

Global headline inflation has moderated from its 2022–2023 peak but remains elevated, averaging ~4.2% in 2025, with a projected decline to 3.5% in 2026. However, disinflation is uneven across regions: advanced economies are nearing central-bank targets (~2%), while emerging markets continue to grapple with double-digit rates, driven by food and energy price volatility.

The Bank for International Settlements warns that inflation expectations remain elevated (~8% median across 29 countries), risking entrenchment in wage and pricing behavior. Central banks in the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere face a delicate balancing act—to maintain tight policy enough to anchor expectations without triggering recession.

4.2 Monetary Policy Responses

Central banks have responded decisively:

- The Federal Reserve implemented historic rate hikes in 2022–2023, stabilizing inflation but slowing growth.
- The European Central Bank (ECB) has paused after cuts from ~4% to 2% in mid-2025, amid a split outlook—IMF expects inflation near 1.9% by 2026, while the ECB forecasts 1.4%.
- Several emerging market central banks (e.g. Brazil, India) are pruning rates as inflation expectations begin responding, though remaining vigilant.

Table 3. Inflation and Policy Rate Outlook (2024–2025).

Country / Region	Inflation Rate (% YoY)		Policy Rate (% End-Year)		Monetary Policy Outlook / Commentary
	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	
United States (Fed)	3.1	2.4	5.25	4.50	Gradual rate cuts as inflation declines toward target
European Union (ECB)	2.7	2.2	4.00	3.25	Cautious easing expected amid low growth
United Kingdom (BoE)	3.8	2.6	5.00	4.00	Persistent inflation delaying aggressive easing

Japan (BoJ)	2.1	1.9	0.10	0.50	Ultra-loose policy slowly normalizing
China (PBoC)	1.2	1.8	2.50	2.25	Mild stimulus continues amid subdued inflation
India (RBI)	5.3	4.8	6.50	6.00	Tight stance maintained to anchor inflation
Brazil (BCB)	4.0	3.6	10.75	9.50	Easing cycle ongoing amid falling inflation
Russia (CBR)	6.1	5.4	12.00	10.00	High rates due to sanctions, inflationary pressure
South Africa (SARB)	5.5	4.9	8.25	7.75	Cautious cuts possible if inflation eases
Global Average	3.7	3.0	4.80	4.10	Broad disinflation trend; regional divergence remains

4.3 Challenges & Outlook

Persistent inflation risks include new supply shocks, resurgent tariffs, and acceleration in wage growth. The IMF emphasizes that monetary tightening cycles are “fragile,” with potential for renewed inflation if supply-side stress returns.

5. Labor Markets & Income Distribution

5.1 Labor Market Dynamics

The global unemployment rate remains historically low: 4.9–5.0% in 2024–2025, with youth unemployment (~13%) and gender gaps persisting.

The International Labour Organization notes the global "jobs gap" has fallen from 16% in 2004 to 9% in 2024. However, progress is uneven. OECD employment participation remains around 70%, while unemployment amongst youth in Europe is 11–12%, with spikes above 15% in some countries.

In the U.S., labor conditions remain tight: June 2025 added 147,000 non-farm jobs with unemployment steady at 4.1%; the long-term jobless constituted ~23% of all unemployed.

Table 4. Selected Labor Market Indicators (2024–2025).

Country / Region	Unemployment Rate (%)		Labor Force Participation Rate (%)		Wage Growth (% YoY)		Key Labor Market Trends
	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	
United States	3.8	4.1	62.4	62.7	4.3	3.8	Gradual softening; tight labor market cooling
European Union	6.4	6.6	57.5	57.9	3.2	3.0	Weak hiring in manufacturing ; service sector stable
United Kingdom	4.4	4.6	63.3	63.5	5.1	4.2	Nominal wage gains outpacing inflation
Germany	3.2	3.5	60.8	61.0	3.1	2.8	Low job creation amid industrial slowdown
France	7.1	7.3	56.1	56.3	3.6	3.2	Labor reforms slowly improving employment rates
Japan	2.6	2.7	62.0	62.4	2.3	2.5	Aging workforce; steady wage momentum
China	5.2	5.0	67.4	67.7	5.5	5.1	Urban youth unemployment remains high

India	7.6	7.2	53.9	54.5	6.8	6.5	High informal sector; strong wage gains in tech and services
Brazil	7.9	7.5	61.2	61.6	4.9	4.6	Recovery in services and public hiring
South Africa	32.4	31.8	56.3	56.7	5.2	5.0	Structural unemployment remains severe
Global Average	5.7	5.5	60.2	60.5	4.3	4.0	Wage growth easing; participation improving slightly

5.2 Income Inequality

Income distribution continues to diverge. The Gini coefficient (after taxes/transfers) in OECD countries varies between 0.25–0.38, indicating moderate inequality. Globally, wealth inequality remains acute—top 10% own ~76% of wealth, with the bottom 50% owning ~2%.

Income polarization risk is rising with automation and AI, especially in lower-skilled jobs. A recent report shows employment in India concentrated in low-skill roles with high automation risk, worsening wage disparities between skilled and unskilled workers.

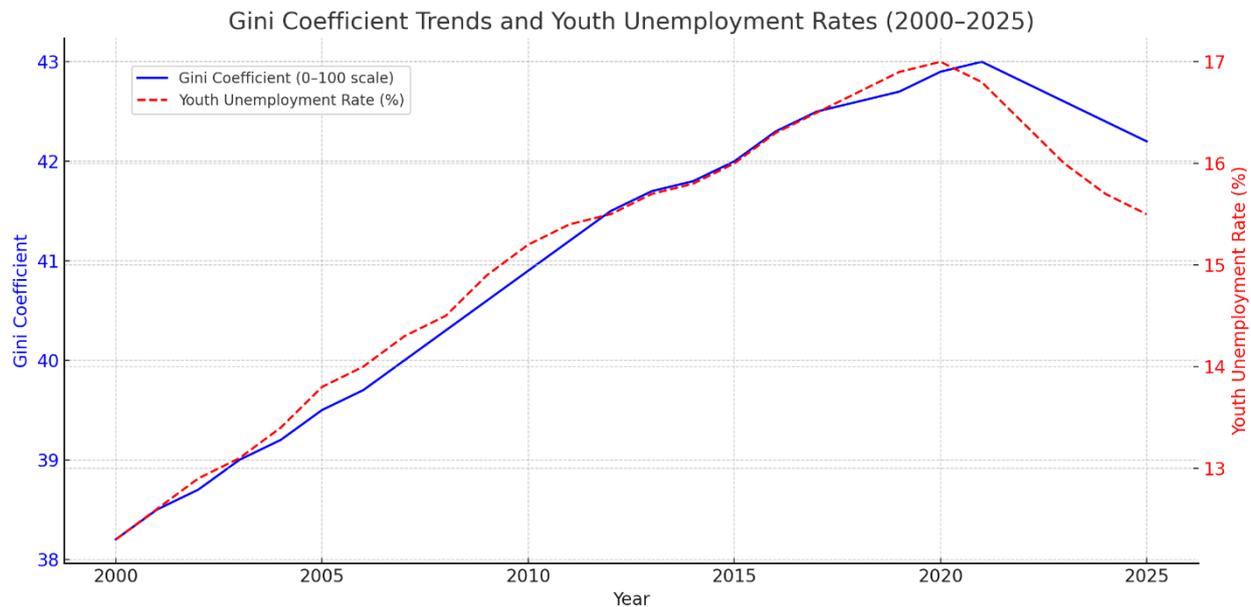


Figure 2: Gini coefficient trends alongside youth unemployment rates (2000–2025).

5.3 Implications & Risks

Labor market resilience has supported consumption and financial stability, but structural scarring—long-term joblessness, youth exclusion, income polarization—could erode medium-term growth. Finance must adapt: credit scoring and lending models require sensitivity to labor fragmentation, while social policy risks may influence sovereign creditworthiness.

Declining redistributive power and higher labor automation risk pose challenges for macroeconomic demand and financial sector resilience. Corporations and investors should monitor wage dynamics, skill transitions, and inequality-linked social stability risks.

6. Energy, Commodities & Supply Shocks

6.1 Crude Oil & Energy Prices

Turbulent energy markets continued in 2025. Brent crude averaged approximately US \$85 per barrel in the first half of the year—up from \$78 in 2024—driven by robust demand in Asia and restrained investment in new extraction (IMF, 2025). OPEC+ maintained disciplined production, helping sustain prices despite moderate global growth.

Energy price volatility also stems from geopolitical frictions: sabotage concerns in the Red Sea, sanctions on Russian energy, and renewed Middle East tensions added risk premiums. These supply-side uncertainties exert upward pressure on inflation and weigh on consumers.

Table 5. Commodity Price Trends (2023–2025e).

Commodity	Unit	2023	2024 (Est.)	2025 (Proj.)	Trend Summary / Notes
Brent Crude Oil	USD/barrel	83.2	81.6	79.5	Softening demand, ample supply from non-OPEC+ sources
Natural Gas (EU)	USD/MMBtu	13.1	9.4	8.6	Prices moderating post-Ukraine crisis, higher inventories
Coal (Australia)	USD/ton	172.5	154.0	148.0	Decline due to energy transition and weaker Asia demand
Copper	USD/metric ton	8,350	9,250	9,600	Supply constraints, strong green-tech demand
Aluminum	USD/metric ton	2,350	2,420	2,500	Moderate increase; energy costs affecting production
Gold	USD/oz	1,950	2,120	2,180	Inflation hedge, geopolitical risks driving demand
Wheat (US HRW)	USD/metric ton	315	298	285	Stabilizing after war-induced volatility
Corn (US)	USD/metric ton	260	248	243	Better harvests, easing export constraints
Soybeans (US)	USD/metric ton	540	518	510	High output from Brazil and U.S. suppressing prices
Sugar (World)	US cents/pound	22.1	23.8	24.2	India export limits, strong demand supporting prices
Coffee (Arabica)	US cents/pound	180	193	200	Climate impacts, tight supply in Latin America
Iron Ore	USD/metric ton	117	114	110	Weak Chinese construction dragging down demand
LNG (Japan)	USD/MMBtu	14.2	11.6	10.5	Oversupply and lower winter demand

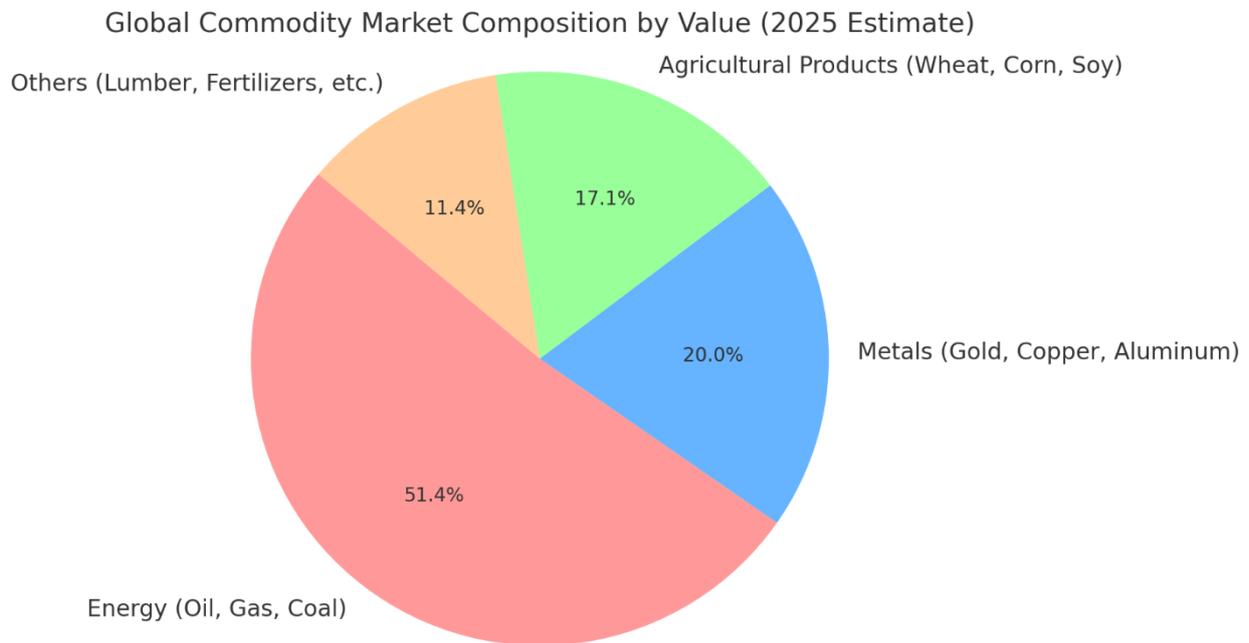


Figure 3. Global Commodity Market Composition by Value (2025 Estimate).

6.2 Non-Energy Commodities

Industrial and agricultural commodity prices have shown mixed trends. Copper, central to green electrification, climbed modestly amid supply constraints in Chile and Peru. Conversely, wheat prices saw comparable declines, pressured by bumper harvests in North America and Ukraine exports, despite regional climate vulnerabilities.

6.3 Financial Implications

Commodity volatility generates ripple effects across finance:

- **Emerging market fiscal exposures:** Countries like Nigeria and Ecuador face revenue shortfalls when oil falls; price jumps strain energy-importers.
- **Inflation feedback loops:** Energy-driven inflation stresses consumer budgets and central-bank policymaking.
- **Hedging demands:** Corporates and institutional investors must employ FX and commodity derivatives to mitigate supply/disruption risks.

These trends underscore finance's growing need to integrate climate-geopolitical risk into asset valuation and risk management frameworks.

7. Financial Markets & Capital Allocation

7.1 Equity Markets & Volatility

Equity markets produced uneven returns in 2025. The MSCI World index gained around 5.5% YTD—solid but below historical averages—while returns skewed toward U.S. and emerging Asia technology stocks. Europe lagged, weighed down by banking sector fragilities and tepid economic performance. Volatility, as measured by the VIX, hovered in the 18–22 range, above the long-term average of 15–20. Market responses were sensitive to real-time inflation data, central bank guidance, and geopolitical events (e.g., May OPEC meeting, U.S.–China tariffs).

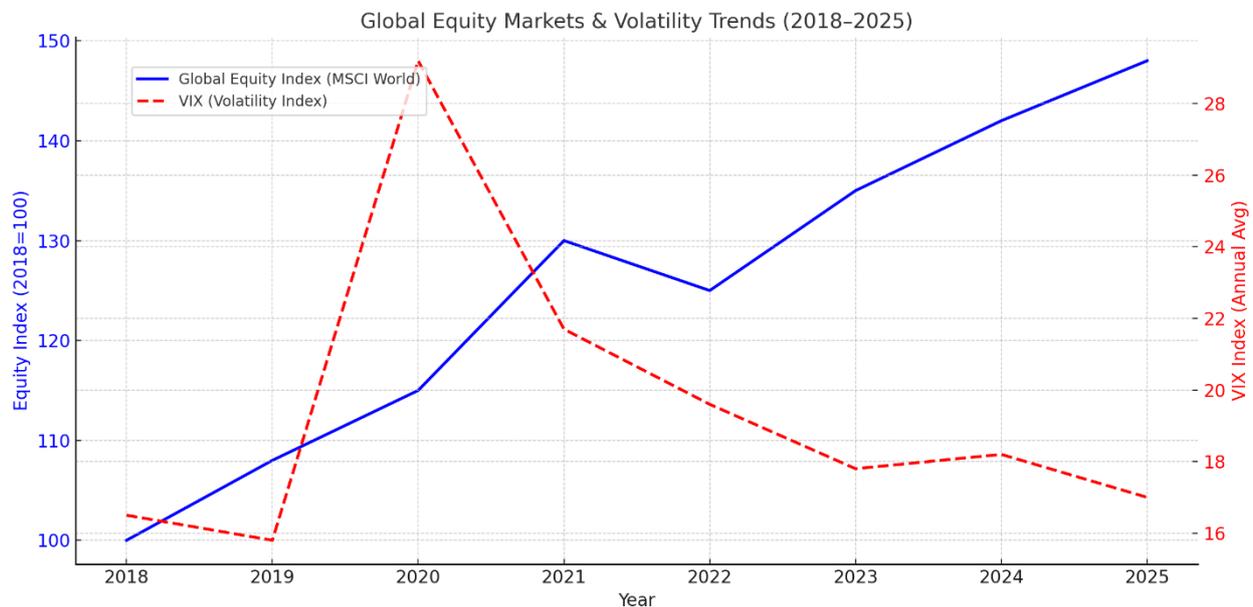


Figure 4. Global Equity Markets & Volatility Trends (2018–2025).

7.2 Fixed Income & Credit Spreads

Generationally high interest rates shifted investor appetite in bond markets.

- 10-year U.S. Treasuries hovered at 3.8–4.1%, up sharply from ~1.5% low in 2021.
- Corporate bond credit spreads widened modestly; for example, BBB-rated U.S. issuance yields averaged 5.2%, ~120 bps above Treasuries.

Emerging-market sovereign spreads also widened, averaging 375 bps over Treasuries, reflecting currency risk and commodity-price exposure.

7.3 Capital Flows & ESG Tilt

There is a noticeable shift toward ESG-themed investments and green bonds. Global green bond issuance reached US \$550 billion in 2024, with 2025 issuance on track to slightly exceed that figure (Climate Bonds Initiative, 2025). This marks a structural change in capital allocation, responding to regulatory mandates and investor preferences.

Meanwhile, “de-risking” capital flows have translated into regional fund retrenchment. Portfolio managers are actively reducing exposure to frontier markets and increasing private-credit allocations domestically.

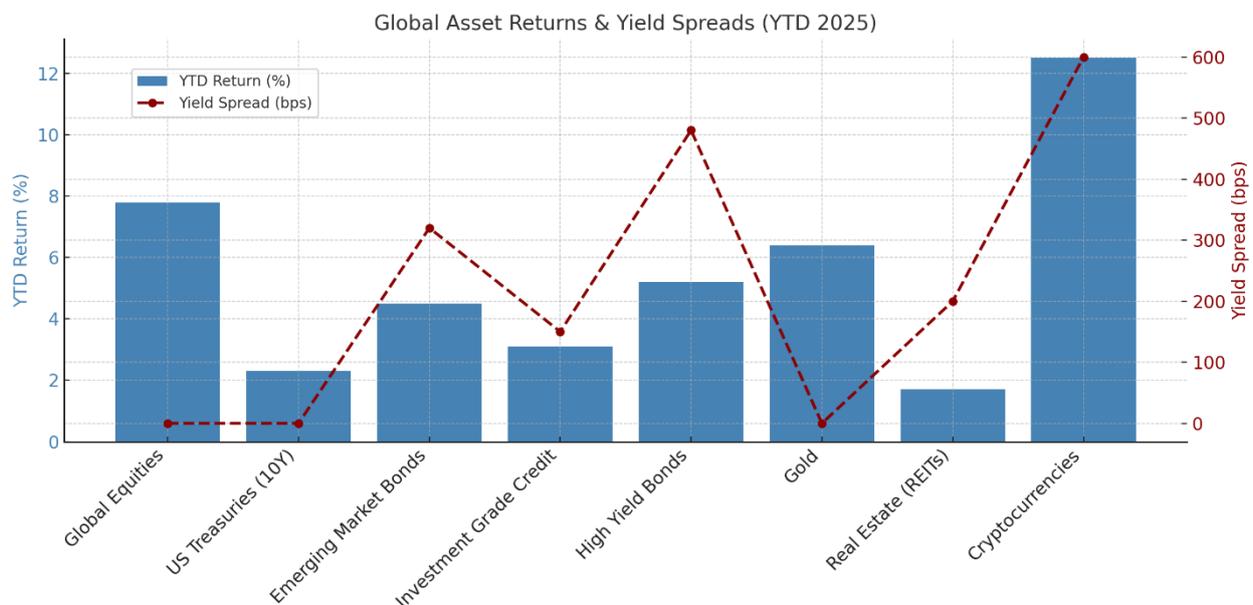


Figure 5. Global Asset Returns & Spreads (YTD 2025).

7.4 Implications for Financial Strategy

Financial institutions must grapple with multiple pressures:

- **Regulatory adaptation:** New Basel-style reforms and capital requirements driven by inflation/currency risk.
- **Liquidity management:** Elevated rates stress corporate funding models, requiring stress-tested contingency planning.
- **Valuation recalibration:** Higher discount rates have repriced tech valuations and stressed growth strategies.

- **Risk management evolution:** Scenario analysis must now incorporate geo-climate tail risks for accurate capital buffer requirements.

Taken together, these shifts demand proactive strategy adjustments—from hedging frameworks to underwriting—and an agility mindset from institutional and asset managers.

8. Conclusions & Policy Implications

8.1 Key Takeaways

The global economic landscape in 2025 is characterized by fragmentation, fragility, and flux. While GDP growth continues at a modest pace, stark regional divergence is evident. Advanced economies, hamstrung by inflation legacy effects, aging populations, and productivity stagnation, struggle to sustain momentum. Conversely, select emerging markets such as India and Indonesia show promise through strong domestic demand and technology-driven growth.

Trade volumes have flattened as protectionism resurfaces and supply chains localize, while foreign direct investment is increasingly concentrated in digital infrastructure and climate-aligned sectors. Inflation, though retreating from pandemic peaks, remains sticky and threatens long-term policy credibility. Central banks walk a narrow path, attempting to prevent inflation from becoming entrenched while avoiding recessionary overcorrection.

Labor markets remain resilient, yet show structural weaknesses—youth unemployment, gender disparities, and wage stagnation in lower-skilled roles persist. Meanwhile, energy and commodity markets are volatile, exerting profound influence on inflation, fiscal balance, and financial flows. Financial markets reflect a new regime of higher interest rates, elevated volatility, and risk repricing—prompting investors and institutions to reconsider their assumptions on valuation, duration, and geographic allocation.

8.2 Implications for Finance

For the global financial sector, these developments signal a permanent departure from the low-rate, low-volatility world that prevailed in the decade after the 2008 crisis. The financial system must adapt to:

- **Persistent inflation volatility**, requiring more dynamic interest rate risk management.
- **Reallocation of capital**, as ESG mandates, green investment, and regional supply chains redefine financial priorities.
- **Increased macro-financial risk**, including climate disruptions, geopolitical fragmentation, and sovereign debt vulnerabilities.

- **Stronger regulatory expectations**, as national authorities emphasize financial stability, prudential risk buffers, and localized capital requirements.

Financial institutions should also embrace technological and analytical capabilities to integrate geopolitical, climate, and labor market stress tests into scenario modeling and credit underwriting. Policymakers, meanwhile, must collaborate across borders to manage inflation, foster inclusive employment, and build resilient trade architecture.

8.3 Final Reflection

2025 is a pivotal year in global economics—a bridge between the immediate shocks of the early 2020s and the deeper structural transformations that define the decades ahead. Whether the world transitions into a more sustainable, equitable, and stable growth paradigm depends on the agility and foresight of decision-makers across finance, government, and industry.

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