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not have as much company, according to a new study from American Express and CFO Research.

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The U.S. is expected to continue its recovery from the global recession, but it may not have as much company, according to a new study from American Express and CFO

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Spending Monitor are based on a sampling of 565 senior finance and corporate executives located in North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia and Australia.

While the U.S. economy is climbing back steadily, Canadian finance executives are less confident in their economy than their American counterparts (73% for Canadian respondents, up significantly from 62% in 2013, vs. 83% for the U.S. in 2015). However, Canadian businesses are gearing up to invest in growth at even higher levels than in previous years. The combined outlook for the U.S. and Canada sets the North American region apart from other regions as economies and companies attempt to rebuild from the aftermath of global recession.

Snapshots for each of the regions are as follows:

North America: Canada Increases Spending to Expand Sales, U.S. Invests in M&A

On average, North American respondents expect their company's planned level of spending and investment to increase by 8%. At the country level, Canada averages higher at 11% while the U.S. average is 7%.

Canadian businesses, in particular, are positioning themselves to forge ahead in the pursuit of expanded sales. The proportion of Canadian respondents planning to increase investment in new product and service development has soared to 60% this year, a significant jump over the 17% reporting planned increases in 2014. Canadians also show similar surges in plans to boost sales and marketing activities (45% of Canadian respondents this year vs. 24% last year).

American finance executives, however, plan to take a different path towards growth, saying that they expect to increase investment in mergers and acquisitions (M&A). Forty percent (up from 28% last year) say their companies plan on increasing investment in M&A activity, compared with 28% of all respondents to this year's survey. The U.S. is one of the few countries where respondents give approximately

the same weight to increasing investment in M&A as to increasing investment in

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In North America, 57% predict employment will continue to improve. The U.S. (61%) is near the top of the list of countries overall anticipating a rise in employment. Canada is less bullish: 44% expect employment will improve.

European Confidence Plateaus: Spain Most Optimistic, French Outlook Bleakest

Across Europe, growth expectations are mixed. In Spain, 81% expect economic expansion this year (up from 69% in 2014 and 44% in 2013). Respondents from France, however, had the lowest level of confidence of any country in the survey – only 29% of French executives believe France will enjoy positive economic growth in 2015. Germany (67%, down from 74%) and Russia (55%, down from 62%) both experienced less dramatic declines. Confidence in economic expansion in the United Kingdom appears to have fallen off, perhaps due to the fact that this May sees a general election in the U.K. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of this year's U.K. respondents expect expansion in the U.K. economy, down from 93% in 2014.

U.K. Plans Biggest Increase for Investment and Spending Regionally

On average, European respondents expect their company's planned level of spending and investment to increase by 8%. At the country level, the U.K. averages higher at 11%.

The survey revealed sharp rises in the number of respondents planning new investment in sales and marketing activities in the U.K. (41% vs. 25% in 2014). An identical number plan to invest in new product/service development (41%). A slightly smaller number of respondents in the U.K. (39%) plan to increase investment in mergers and acquisitions (M&A), as do respondents from France (40%). Spain will be investing more in new product/service development (47%), improving production process efficiency (44%), sales and marketing (43%), and new production capacity (38%).

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regularly to companies (19%), and for Russian financial leaders to their country's economy (26%).

Asia/Australia: India Leader in Economic Confidence, China's Confidence Drops

More than two-thirds of financial executives in Asia/Australia (67%, down from 70% a year ago) predict expansion in their economy. While India leads the world in economic confidence (94%, up from 86% in 2014 and 78% in 2013), China's confidence has dropped significantly since 2013 to 78% (down from 94%) and Singapore has also experienced a decline (70%, down from 82% last year and 78% in 2013). Executives from Hong Kong and Japan were each nearly evenly split between those anticipating economic expansion (50% and 52% respectively) and those expecting no change or expecting contraction in their economies (50% and 48% respectively).

India Plans Biggest Increase for Investment and Spending in Asia

On average, respondents in Asia/Australia expect their company's planned level of spending and investment to increase by 12%. At the country level, India averages highest at 19%.

Areas where companies plan to increase spending and investments include:

- Sales and marketing: Hong Kong (50%) and China (48%)
- New product/service development: Hong Kong (47%) and China (42%)
- Business intelligence and analytics: India (45%)
- Improving production efficiency: India and China (each, 45%) and Hong Kong (43%)
- Increasing production capacity: Hong Kong (43%) and China (42%)
- Improving administrative process efficiency: China (39%) and Hong Kong (37%)

India Predicts Greatest Rise in Employment Regionally

Across Asia/Australia, more respondents in the region expect employment to improve

(37%) than expect it to worsen (23%). India is again at the top worldwide, and is

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optimistic outlook in the region, it has experienced a significant drop in confidence from two years ago (75%, down from 100% in 2013). Expansion in Mexico has fallen off as well (73%, down from 86% in 2014 and 81% in 2013). Economic confidence in Argentina is in flux (67%, down slightly from 70% in 2014, but up from 60% in 2013).

Argentina Plans Biggest Increase for Investment and Spending in Latin America

On average, respondents in Latin America expect their company's planned level of spending and investment to increase by 14%. At the country level, Argentina averages highest in the region at 17%.

The survey revealed sharp rises in the number of respondents planning new investments in sales and marketing activities in Mexico (45% of respondents this year vs. 13% last year). Mexican respondents will also invest more in business intelligence and analytics (41%), as will Brazilian respondents (40%). Brazil and Argentina will invest more in improving administrative process efficiency (42% and 38%, respectively).

Brazil Anticipates Greatest Improvement in Employment Regionally

In Latin America, Brazil is near the top of the global list of countries anticipating a rise in employment (60%). Mexican respondents (53%) expect employment opportunities to improve as well, while more respondents in Argentina expect improvements (38%) than expect declines (29%).

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

Economic Expansion by Country:

% of Respondents Expecting Economic Expansion in Their Countries

Country	2015	2014	2013
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India

94%

86%

78%

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Mexico	73%	86%	81%
Canada	73%	76%	62%
Singapore	70%	82%	78%
Germany	67%	74%	73%
Argentina	67%	70%	60%
Australia	60%	73%	69%
Russia	55%	62%	39%
Japan	52%	55%	67%
Hong Kong	50%	48%	94%
France	29%	62%	39%

Employment Expectations by Country:

% of Respondents Expecting Employment to Improve or Become Worse in their Country*		
Country	Improve	Become Worse
India	78%	9%
Spain	66%	16%
U.S.	61%	6%

Brazil

60%

10%

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Singapore

30%

17%

Japan

29%

23%

Hong Kong

13%

31%

Australia

19%

39%

Germany

19%

44%

Russia

5%

60%

France

0%

76%

*Percentages do not equal 100% because "Remain the same" responses are not displayed

Click here to download the full [American Express/CFO Research Global Business and Spending Monitor](#).

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