

State of the Global Supply Chain:

A 2026 Market Analysis

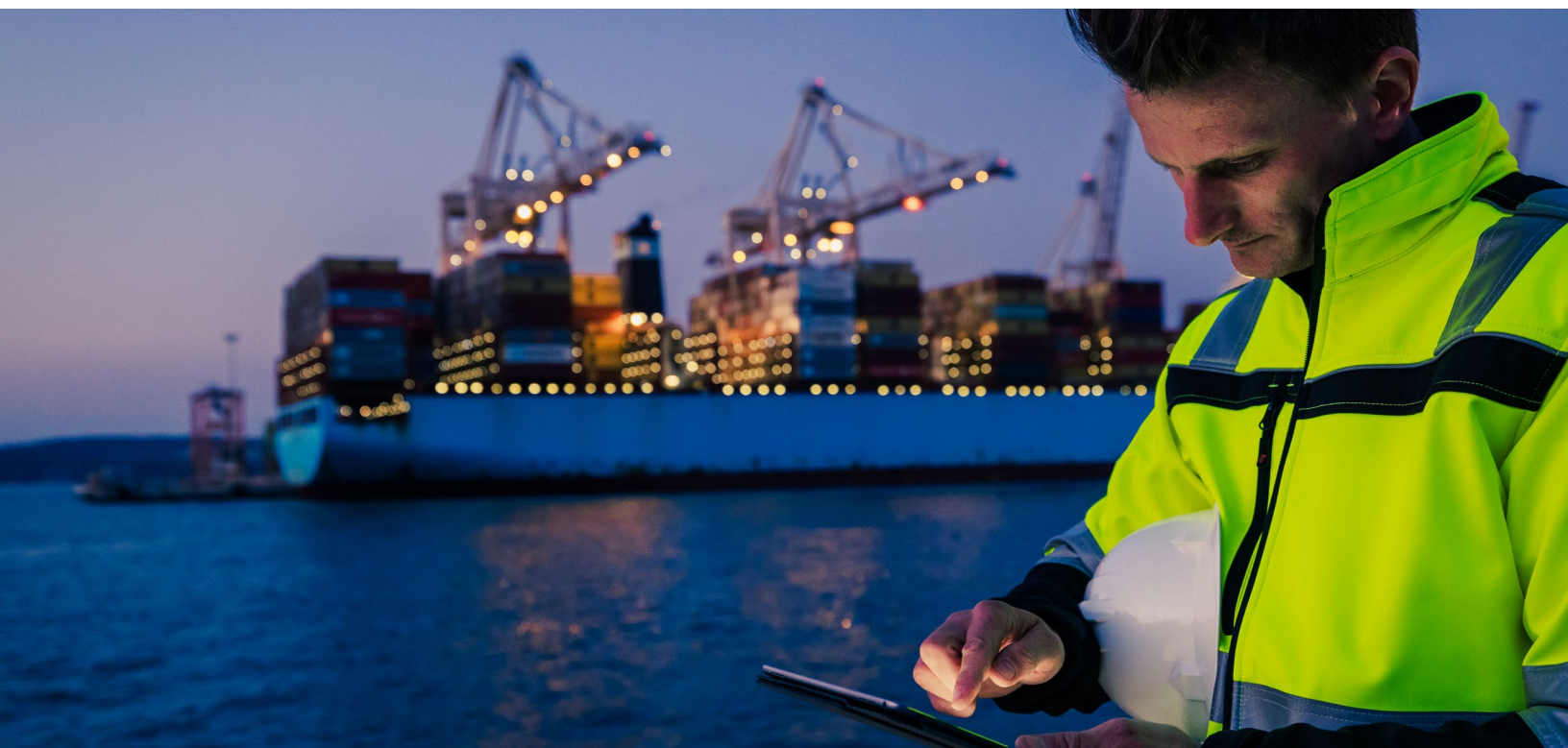


molex



TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Introduction
04	Precious Metals
05	Raw Materials
07	Resins
08	Freight and Logistics
09	Molex: Building a Resilient and Intelligent Supply Chain



INTRODUCTION

NAVIGATING VOLATILITY: A STRATEGIC SUPPLY CHAIN OUTLOOK

What does it take to build a resilient supply chain when volatility is the only constant? Modern procurement relies on rigorous planning and uncompromising standards, where deep supply chain intelligence and unrelenting agility serve as the essential links to business continuity.

Ongoing volatility in precious metals, raw materials and resins combines with logistics uncertainty to pressure cost structures and disrupt planning cycles. Lead times have improved from peak disruption but remain uneven across suppliers and regions, while global logistics networks remain vulnerable to regional disruptions and capacity constraints.

Procurement teams access more data than ever before, yet translating that information into actionable strategy remains a key barrier. Competitive differentiation now relies heavily on supply chain performance, not just product availability. Advanced supply chain visibility and continuous monitoring of global supply and demand signals help organizations navigate these challenges. As digitally supported supply chain tools provide real-time insights into supplier performance and demand fluctuations, integrated supply chain intelligence supports data-driven decision making.

By proactively identifying market shifts, procurement teams can make earlier decisions to mitigate risk and maintain supply continuity. Increased agility in planning and sourcing

strategies allows for a faster response to variability and reduced exposure to delays. Optimized routing and mode selection improve reliability while balancing cost and service levels. This capability for faster, more confident decision-making strengthens supply assurance and ultimately optimizes customer outcomes.

The following report provides a high-level supply chain outlook, detailing key trends shaping the landscape across four critical categories:

- **Precious Metals**
- **Raw Materials**
- **Resins**
- **Freight and Logistics**



PRECIOUS METALS: SAFE-HAVEN FLOWS AND INDUSTRIAL STABILITY

Global uncertainty and shifting monetary policies continue to redefine the baseline for precious metals. Organizations must navigate these macroeconomic pressures to secure critical materials.

Market Overview

The global precious metals market continues to reflect the lasting effects of recent economic and monetary developments. Gold remains strongly supported by persistent global uncertainty, central bank purchases and expectations of further US federal interest rate cuts. Central banks maintain substantial gold purchases, continuing a multi-year trend. Countries including China,

India, Poland and Turkey continue diversifying away from US dollar assets, sustaining structural demand for gold.

Although slowing worldwide growth and muted retail demand in India and China may constrain jewelry consumption, heavy investment and reserve demand have offset that decline and keep overall market fundamentals strong. Furthermore, a softer US dollar stimulates additional global purchases across emerging markets. Silver demand remains steady as industrial use in the electronics and photovoltaics sectors provides consistent market support. Geopolitical tensions and shifting trade policies continue to drive safe-haven flows into gold and, to a lesser extent, silver.

Lead Time Analysis

- Lead times for gold and silver have remained stable through the first quarter of 2026, with no significant delays from major suppliers across the US, Japan, Singapore, China and Europe.
- While macroeconomic tensions and trade-policy risks remain, proactive supply chain risk management has kept these factors from directly impacting delivery timelines for precious metals.
- Accurate demand forecasting remains critical, allowing suppliers to manage capacity and material requirements effectively.
- Rigorous internal audits and reliance on certified responsible suppliers help organizations prevent compliance-related disruptions in supply chain management.

Summary

Gold market fundamentals remain strong, underpinned by central bank demand and global uncertainty. Jewelry and retail demand may remain soft, but investment and reserve-based demand provide structural support. Lead times remain favorable globally, though continued monitoring of macroeconomic and trade developments is required. Procurement teams must maintain strong internal communications and prepare to respond to customer initiatives, including recycling and ethical sourcing programs.

RAW MATERIALS: COPPER DEFICITS AND SHIFTING GLOBAL DEMAND

The surge in advanced technologies is fundamentally altering the raw materials landscape. Balancing this new demand against the traditional needs of the sector requires strategic foresight.

Market Overview

Across the globe, the electronic components market operates at two distinct speeds. Traditional sectors such as automotive, industrial, consumer and communications grow more slowly than the rapidly expanding artificial intelligence (AI) and data center segments.

Demand in the AI ecosystem remains incredibly strong. The spillover from that sector now influences availability in more traditional segments.

Hyperscale investments reached \$600 billion in 2025, and these investment levels are projected to remain high throughout 2026. As major hyperscale

operators aggressively move ahead with new facilities across North America and Asia, this expansion directly creates the need for large quantities of high-conductivity strip, copper cabling, busbars and specialized alloys. Consequently, this concentrated demand strains global capacity and forces procurement teams in traditional sectors to compete for limited resources.

Worldwide demand has shifted geographically. US policy continues to emphasize domestic manufacturing over transformative energy initiatives. Consequently, electric vehicle copper demand in the US has slowed. The 50% US tariff on semi-finished copper products implemented in August of 2025 is now fully built into global trade patterns. Although refined copper remains exempt for now, the possibility of additional tariff measures continues to influence buying behavior and tighten availability across regions.

Countries in Asia and India remain key growth engines, fueled by electrification, urban development and continued investment in grid infrastructure. China remains an influential force in the market. While the property sector struggles, recent monetary easing efforts have started to reactivate infrastructure activity. The elimination of export tax rebates on copper products pushes more material into the domestic market, limiting export volumes. To strengthen supply chain risk management and offset increased tariff costs, OEMs increasingly require supply and manufacturing footprints outside of China. At the same time, refined copper imports from the Democratic Republic of Congo remain high to support strong global demand.

Supply remains tight with several major global mines facing lower ore grades or intermittent disruptions. Asian smelters continue to contend with limited concentrate availability and stringent environmental rules.



Exchange inventories remain well below historical norms. These combined factors contribute to a refined copper deficit that persisted through the first quarter of 2026.

Lead Time Analysis

- Lead times remain extended and uneven across regions and material types due to shifting global demand, capacity limitations and buyers front-loading orders ahead of tariff deadlines.
- High demand for advanced technologies causes suppliers to reallocate capacity, which extends wait times for analog power, high-speed connectivity and signal-chain devices.
- Regional sourcing models reduce logistics risk and support more stable deliveries amid global trade volatility.
- In Asia, energy-related production constraints and low regional inventories compound delays, as smelters increasingly prioritize domestic buyers.



Summary

Ongoing supply tightness and heightened macroeconomic risks characterize the copper market in 2026. Procurement strategies established in recent years remain essential, prioritizing expanded optionality, local-to-local sourcing, alternative alloy qualifications and proactive supplier engagement. China and India will continue to account for most of the global copper demand, with data centers and electrification serving as major growth engines.

Demand is expected to exceed supply throughout 2026. Success requires prioritizing long-term supplier relationships alongside strategic volume planning and continued risk-mitigation efforts.



RESINS: LATE-CYCLE NORMALIZATION AND REGIONAL SHIFTS

Following years of high volatility, the resin market is entering a new phase of stabilization. However, regional disparities and specialty grade constraints call for constant vigilance.

Market Overview

A late-cycle normalization phase characterizes the global resin market in 2026, following several years of volatility. Broad capacity additions, especially in Asia, have reduced systemic shortages. Market balance remains fragile and uneven by resin type and grade. Demand remains cautious but not weak, with selective strength in automotive electronics, data infrastructure and industrial automation. The category has shifted from a supply assurance mindset to a proactive supply chain risk-management phase.

Commodity resins such as polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE) and acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) see global supply exceeding demand in most regions. Suppliers remain disciplined on run rates to protect margins. Engineering resins, including polycarbonate (PC), polybutylene terephthalate (PBT) and polyamide (PA), have standard grades with adequate supply. Flame-retardant, electrical and high-temperature grades remain structurally tighter. Capacity exists, but it concentrates among fewer qualified suppliers. Supplier allocation risk has shifted from global to supplier specific.

Asia has the most competitive capacity environment. Export pressure into Europe and North America is increasing. The North American market remains balanced with suppliers focused on margin

defense. Current dynamics favor domestic supply for reliability rather than price leadership. Europe faces structural cost pressures from energy and regulation, which limit supplier flexibility.

Lead Time Analysis

- Average resin lead times for standard grades sit near normalization, with sporadic extended lead times for specialty engineering grades and supplier-specific constraints.
- PC and PC blends show slight improvement as global capacity additions help reduce regional tightness, while PBT engineering thermoplastics used in connectors remain mixed based on specific electrical grade requirements.
- ABS shows moderate easing overall, though regional anti-dumping policies and import measures could create local spikes.
- PA remains stable to slightly tight for high-performance glass-filled and heat-stabilized grades, as demand from electric vehicle markets can tighten supply quickly.

Summary

Market conditions have normalized, but not uniformly. The global resin supply no longer faces systematic constraints, although availability remains uneven by resin family and grade. Engineering resins remain the primary risk, as these specialty blends and materials see wide use across the industry. Single-source specifications continue to represent the greatest vulnerability, making regionalization a key strategy to improve resilience. The current environment offers an ideal window to diversify suppliers and lock in resilience ahead of the next demand cycle.

FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS: SUPPLY CHAIN RISK MANAGEMENT AMID STRUCTURAL SHIFTS

Shifting geopolitical landscapes and economic pressures are forcing a massive realignment of international shipping networks. Adapting to these changes is essential for maintaining supply chain fluidity.

Market Overview

Global trade patterns are undergoing structural shifts influenced by macroeconomic factors. Industry reports show continued weakness in cargo demand on specific trans-Pacific routes. Carriers remain resilient and agile in positioning capacity to manage tensions, evolving trade flows and ongoing disruption risks. Freight operators are approaching the return of certain canal routes with a cautious, phased strategy to mitigate operational disruptions and port congestion. Vessel deliveries in 2026 will primarily consist of larger ships with capacities of 12,000 TEU and above, suggesting tight capacity within the intra-Asia market, which relies heavily on smaller vessels.

Supply chain dependence on historically dominant manufacturing regions like China, Hong Kong and

South Korea has declined from 90% to 50% over the past decade as companies accelerate supply chain diversification. Several Southeast Asian nations have emerged as key beneficiaries, with public trade data showing container imports growing year-over-year from Vietnam by 23%, Thailand by 9.3% and Indonesia by 5.4%.

The AI demand bubble remains a key influence on air cargo, with projections for robust growth of 5.2% in 2026. Shifting trade policies have rapidly redirected e-commerce volumes, creating a 62% increase in China-to-Europe air flows. Air cargo demand has normalized in line with global economic trends following a period influenced by mode-shift factors like tariff-related frontloading and e-commerce growth. Freighter and passenger belly capacity is expanding into 2026, supported by global passenger travel growth and the entry of new freighters ordered during the pandemic. Long-term widebody production bottlenecks, however, keep overall capacity constrained.

Land-based logistics also face new pressures. Road toll developments in Europe will continue to impact

freight rates in 2026. The EU Emissions Trading System will require shipping companies to offset 100% of greenhouse gas emissions, with costs passed on to customers. In the US, warehousing availability is high, shifting leverage to buyers, while strong demand in Mexico continues to fuel investment in new construction.

Lead Time Analysis

- Global shipping lead times remain under pressure due to ongoing ocean reliability issues, blank sailings and slow steaming tactics aimed at managing overcapacity.
- Worldwide port congestion in 2026 will likely remain episodic and region-specific, driven primarily by seasonal peaks and shifting trade routes rather than systemic gridlock. Key constraints include limited yard space and lagging infrastructure, along with equipment and labor shortages.

Summary

Despite ongoing challenges, the global logistics market continues to evolve. Stability has given way to fluctuating lead times, with suppliers responding swiftly even to perceived disruptions. Navigating the dynamic landscape demands heightened diligence and collaboration across the supply chain. As global trade expands and tariffs grow more complex, demand for specialized customs brokerage and compliance expertise continues to rise. Transitioning to a digital supply chain proves more critical than ever for transportation and warehousing. Rising customer expectations and continued pressure for efficiency are heightening the need for integrated digital ecosystems.

MOLEX: BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT AND INTELLIGENT SUPPLY CHAIN

This supply chain outlook points to a significant evolution in global supply chain management, influenced by rapid technological adoption and shifting macroeconomic policies. Material market shifts and ongoing global logistics volatility have redefined modern procurement. Success in this new environment requires deep supplier collaboration supported by comprehensive digital enablement.

Molex provides the proven expertise, comprehensive capabilities and global scale required to navigate and deliver

amid this market transformation. At the heart of this approach is the Intelligent Digital Supply Chain (IDSC) initiative, which establishes a highly connected digital supply chain. This gives customers opportunities to account for supply chain constraints during the design phase, respond to unexpected events in real time and pivot in the face of market volatility. By applying specialized expertise, Molex helps solve the industry's most complex challenges, from developing localized sourcing strategies to engineering resilient supply networks.

While reliability is non-negotiable, innovation sets leading suppliers apart. Balancing reliability and

innovation requires deep collaboration, achieved through structured programs that actively bring market insights into early product development. By embedding supply chain intelligence throughout the innovation cycle, Molex anticipates market shifts and delivers solutions with and for leading global organizations.

To learn more about how Molex is building the supply chain of the future, explore [Supply Chain and Agility Solutions](#).



www.molex.com

Molex is a registered trademark of Molex, LLC in the United States of America and may be registered in other countries; all other trademarks listed herein belong to their respective owners.
Order No. 987653-0091 ©2026 Molex

molex