

Media Release

Retail investors lose confidence, but hold their nerve through market volatility

8 April 2026

Australian retail investors have been shaken by geopolitical tensions, but there is no sign of panic selling, with new Australian Shareholders' Association Investor Sentiment Survey data showing most are holding positions, keeping cash ready and looking for opportunities created by volatility.

The survey found 56.0 per cent of respondents are somewhat or much less confident as investors over the next 12 months, while only 2.2 per cent said they were more confident. Even so, 56.2 per cent said they are mostly holding their current positions and waiting, while a further 24.8 per cent said they are selectively buying opportunities created by volatility.

The findings suggest retail investors are unsettled but remain disciplined and engaged.

When asked what they are watching most closely in the companies they own, the largest group, 29.6 per cent, nominated valuation opportunities created by market overreaction. That was followed by earnings exposure to affected regions or markets at 15.9 per cent, energy costs, input costs or inflation pressure at 15.0 per cent, and board quality, management credibility or risk oversight at 13.3 per cent.

The survey also points to caution around fresh capital. Over the next three months, 34.1 per cent said they would add gradually to existing investments, while 27.0 per cent said they would keep more in cash or term deposits. Another 13.7 per cent said they do not expect to invest new money over that period.

Australian Shareholders' Association CEO Rachel Waterhouse said the results show confidence has been shaken, but retail investors are not retreating.

"This is not a panic selling story," Ms Waterhouse said.

“Retail investors are clearly less confident, but they are not rushing for the exits. They are staying patient, holding cash where appropriate and looking for value where markets may have overreacted.”

Ms Waterhouse said the findings also show investors are paying closer attention to how boards and management teams respond in a more volatile environment.

“In uncertain markets, retail investors want confidence that boards and management teams understand the risks, are making disciplined decisions and are communicating clearly with shareholders,” she said.

“That focus on judgement, credibility and oversight becomes even more important when confidence is fragile.”

The 119 open-ended responses reinforced that picture. Many investors described a “wait and see” approach, said they were “holding cash”, “waiting for opportunities” or that it was “steady as she goes”, while others stressed the importance of not panicking.

A smaller but notable group said they were rotating selectively towards areas such as energy, defence, gold and commodities, or trimming exposure to the US. Others said they were watching tariffs, stagflation, sovereign risk, AI impacts and company leadership more closely before making their next move.

Ms Waterhouse said the findings show retail investors remain engaged with markets, but are approaching current conditions with greater caution and selectivity.

“Retail investors are not switching off,” she said.

“They are cautious, alert and looking closely at risk, valuation and leadership. In volatile markets, that discipline matters.”

About the Australian Shareholders' Association

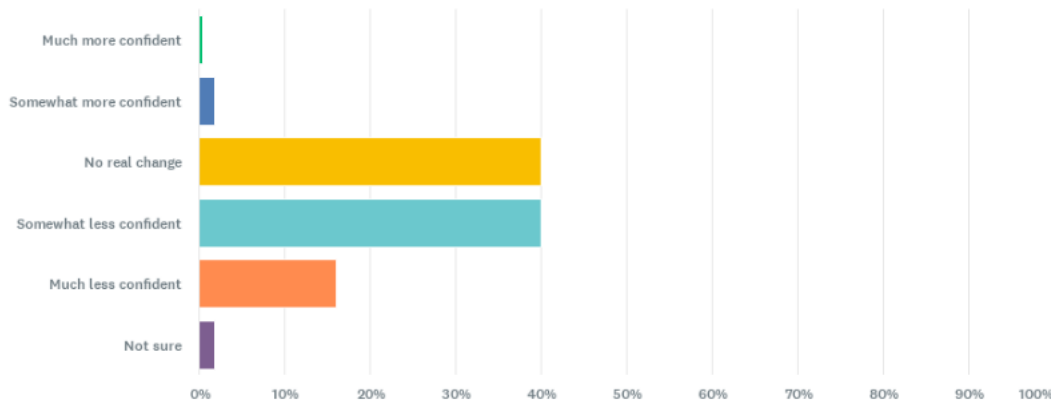
ASA is the leading independent voice and community for Australian retail shareholders and investors, working to improve shareholder outcomes through education, engagement, advocacy, and company monitoring.

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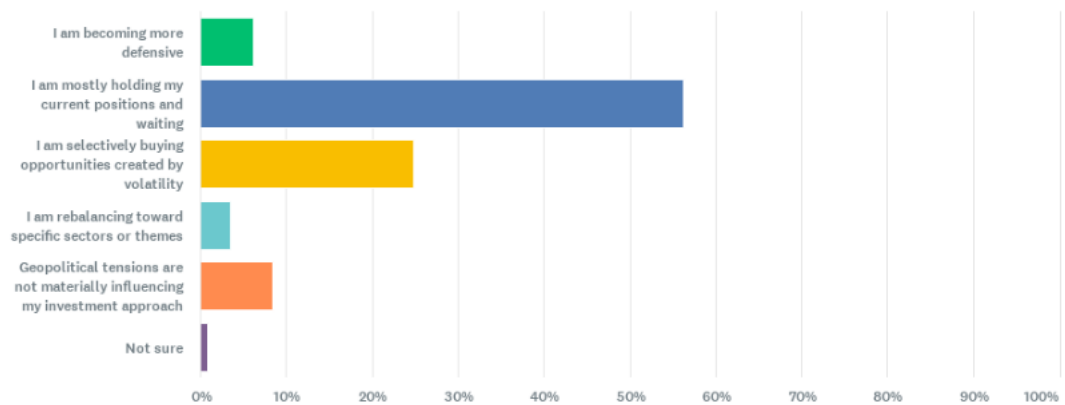
About the survey

The Australian Shareholders' Association Investor Sentiment Survey on Geopolitics and Market Volatility was conducted between 27 March 2026 and 7 April 2026 and received 226 responses to the survey questions. The optional open-ended question received 119 responses.

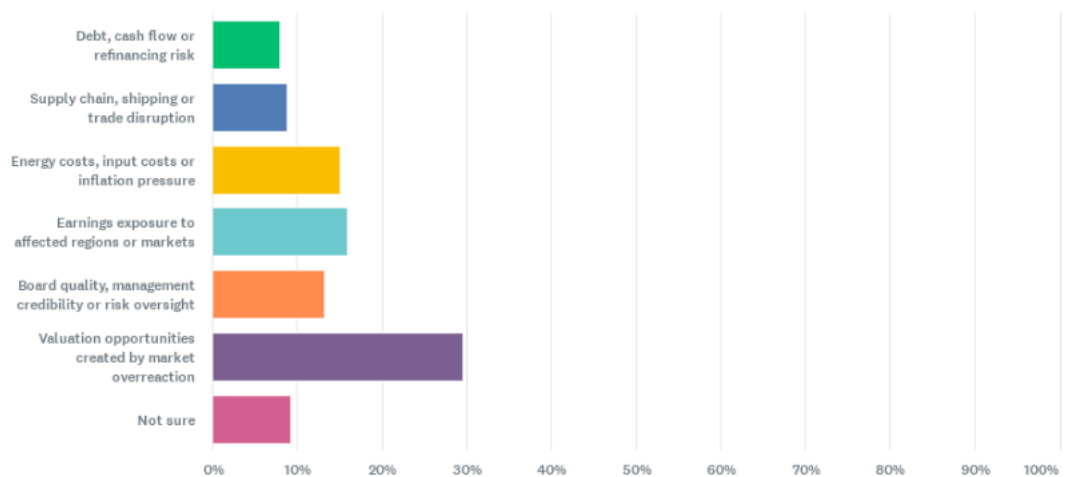
Q1 How have current geopolitical tensions affected your confidence as an investor over the next 12 months?



Q2 Which one statement best describes your current investment approach?



Q3 Which one factor are you watching most closely in the companies you own?



Q4 What are you most likely to do with new money over the next three months?

