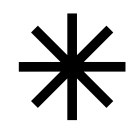


The hidden network challenge

That enterprises can't
afford to ignore

*Arelion



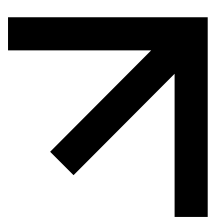
The hidden network challenge

Ask enterprise leaders to choose what matters most in a network relationship from a list, and transparency ranks fifth. Security, reliability, performance and data sovereignty all rank above it.

Take the list away and ask the same leaders in their own words what would earn a provider their full trust, and transparency jumps to first place by a wide margin, at 38%, almost double the next most common answer.

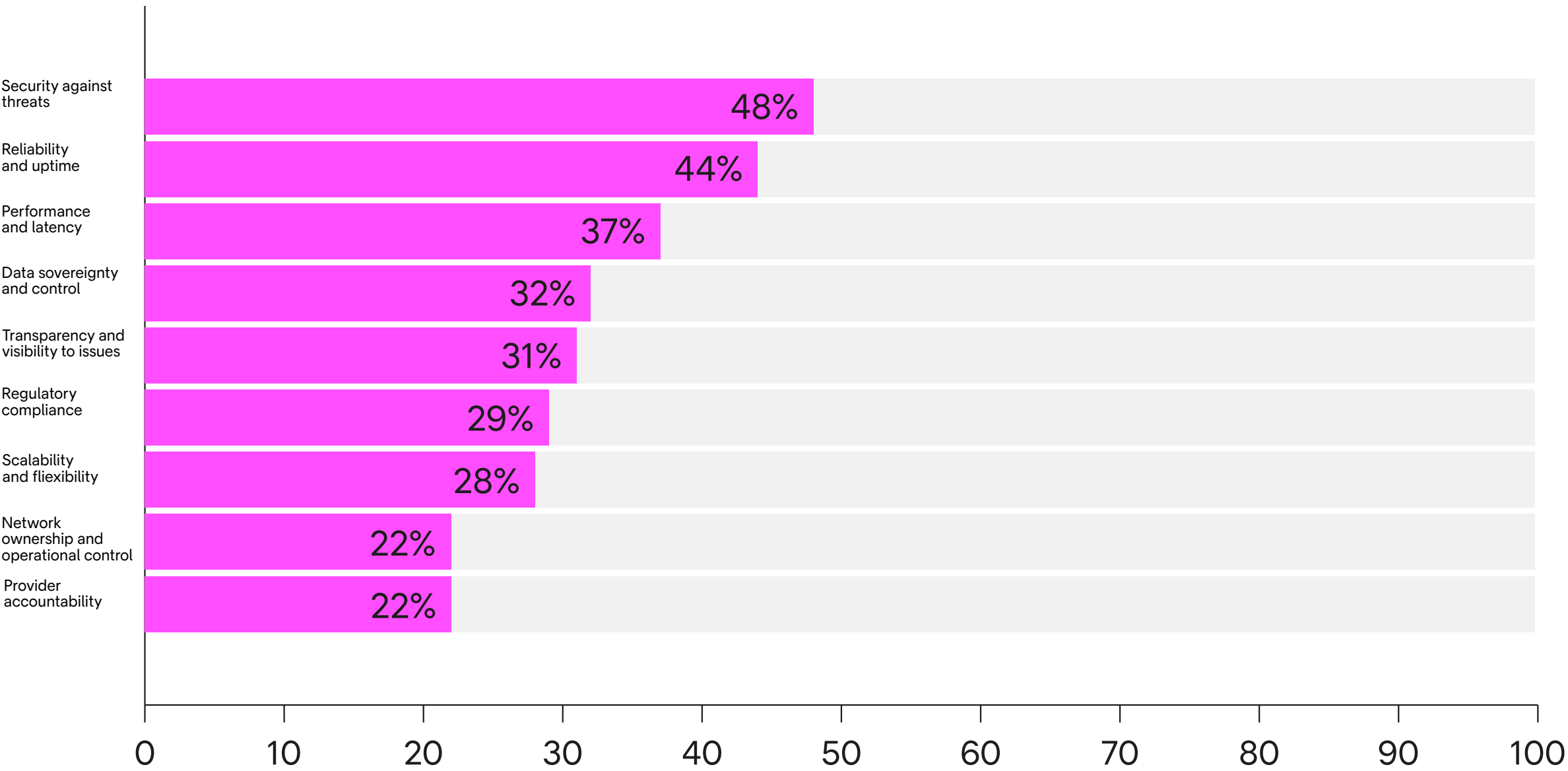
In fact, Gartner’s 2026 technology trends research names trust, alongside AI-driven innovation, as one of the defining priorities organizations need to navigate this year.¹

Security and reliability are baseline expectations. They’re so fundamental, leaders may not think to name them when given the freedom to say anything. Transparency seems to work differently. Leaders notice it most by its absence, and that’s exactly what comes through when they answer in their own words.



48% of leaders say that security matters most

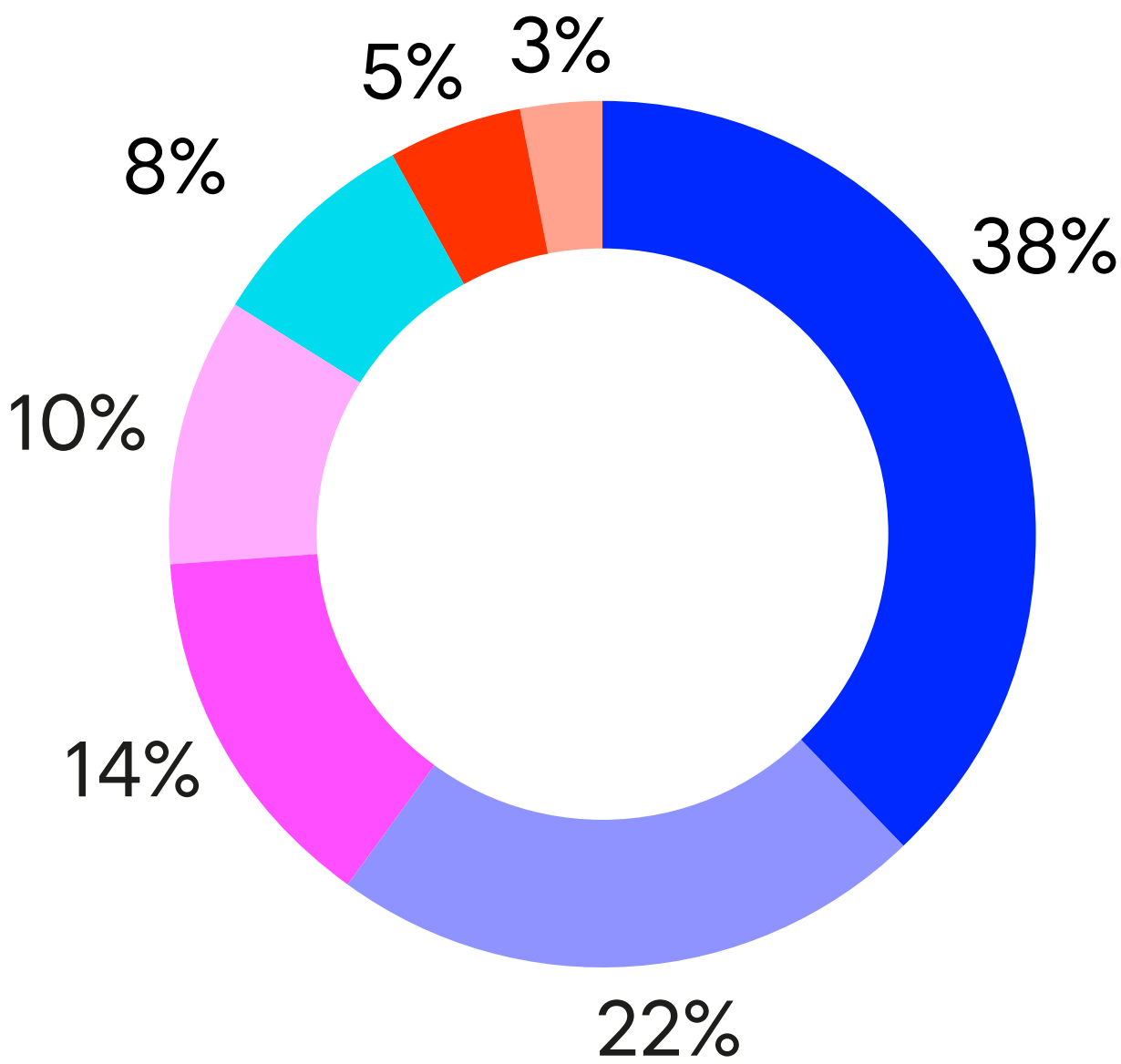
When you think about trust in an enterprise network, what matters most to you?



Key themes

~38% Transparency
~22% Reliability
~14% Security

- Transparency
- Reliability and uptime
- Security and privacy
- Proactive comms
- Customer support
- Pricing fairness
- AI and innovation



¹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/technology-trends>



Transparency is the biggest lever

Overall trust in network providers looks healthy on paper. 93% of leaders say they largely or completely trust their current provider, and 83% say that trust has strengthened over time. The open-ended data reveals what’s actually sitting underneath that number.

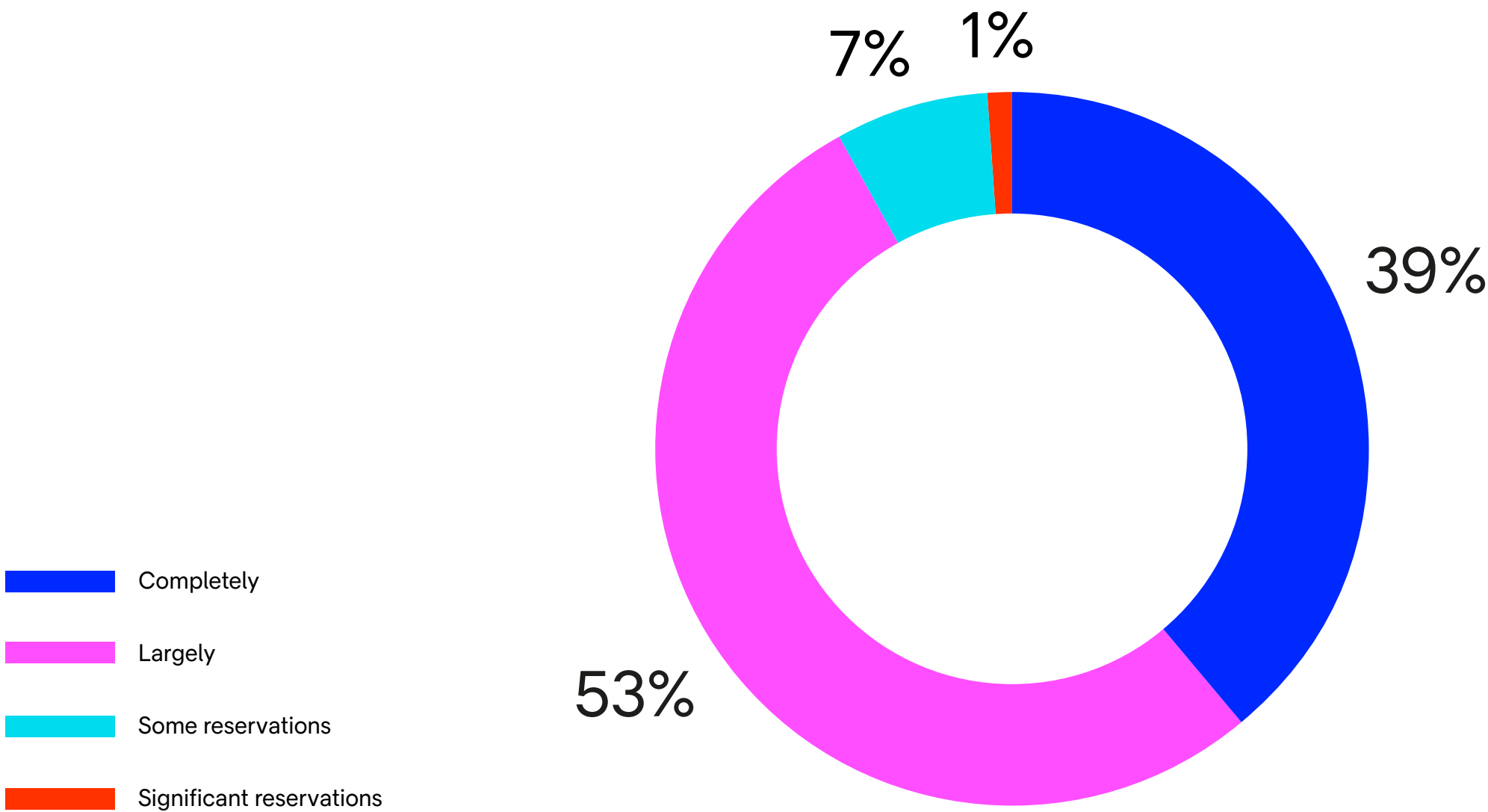
Leaders don’t want a provider that’s merely competent. They want one that’s honest. When leaders were asked directly – and without any prompt – what a provider could do to fully earn their trust, 38% pointed to some form of transparency as the biggest lever:

- honest, complete pricing with no hidden fees or expected hikes
- real-time dashboards showing network status and performance
- full visibility into how data is handled, stored and shared
- open communication about incidents, positive or negative, without waiting to be asked

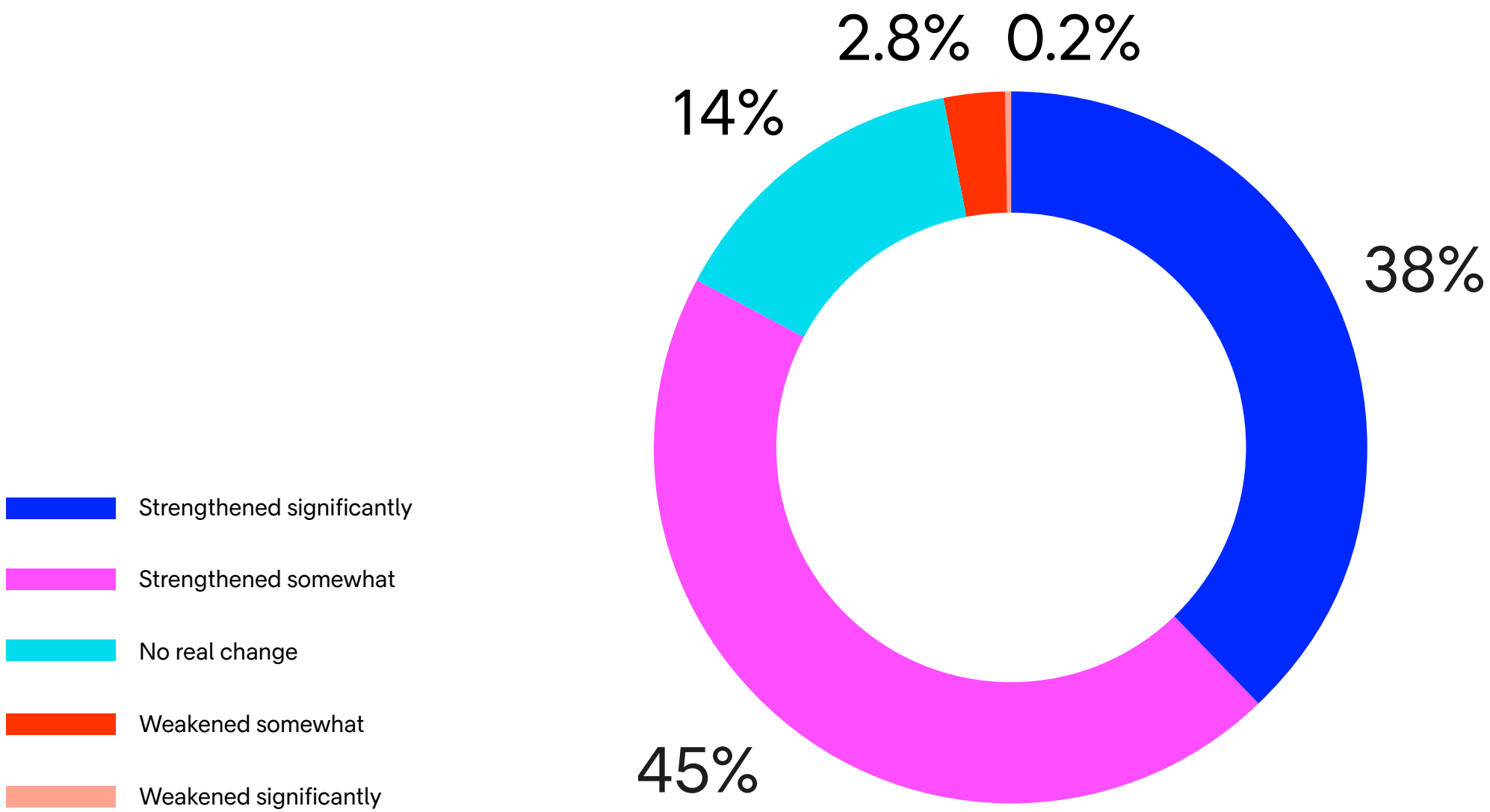
Each of these points to the same underlying expectation: a provider that treats its customer as a partner instead of just a client.

PwC’s 2025 analysis on corporate trust argues that stakeholder expectations now extend well beyond price and product quality, to data protection and how AI is deployed.² Its 2024 Trust Survey backs this up, with 93% of executives agreeing that maintaining trust improves the bottom line.³

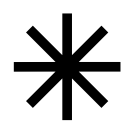
Overall, how much do you trust your current network provider(s) to keep your organization’s data moving securely, reliably and without disruption?



Over time, has your trust in your current network provider strengthened or weakened?



² <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/trust/new-architecture-of-trust.html>
³ <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/trust-in-business-survey.html>



What leaders really mean by ‘reliable’

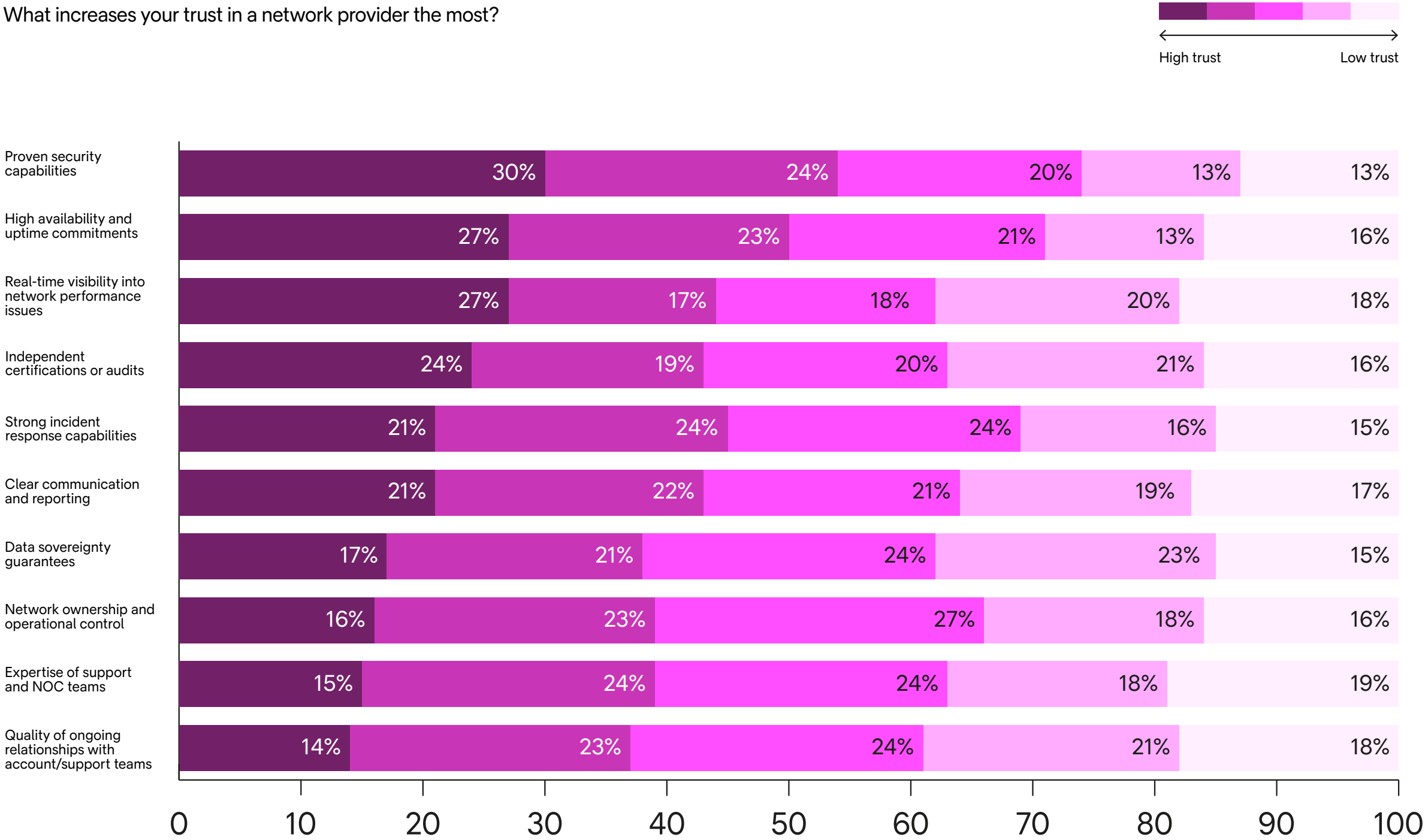
Leaders measure reliability by how rarely a network fails in the first place. Reliability and uptime ranked second, at 22%. Combined with transparency, these two themes alone account for 60% of everything leaders said.

The ask here is specific: clear SLAs with financial penalties when commitments aren’t met; issues resolved before the customer notices them; consistent performance at peak times rather than just advertised speeds, and a proven long-term track record rather than one good quarter.

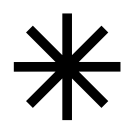
High availability and uptime commitments rank alongside proven security capabilities as the top drivers of trust, with strong incident response close behind.

The financial stakes make it clear why. Research from Splunk, a Cisco company, surveying 2,000 executives at the world’s largest companies, puts the cost of downtime at \$15,000 a minute, more than \$900,000 an hour, up 50% in just two years.⁴ Reliability isn’t a nice-to-have. It’s the difference between a rounding error and a material loss.

What increases your trust in a network provider the most?



⁴ https://www.splunk.com/en_us/pdfs/gated/ebooks/the-hidden-costs-of-downtime-2026.pdf



Where does trust break down?

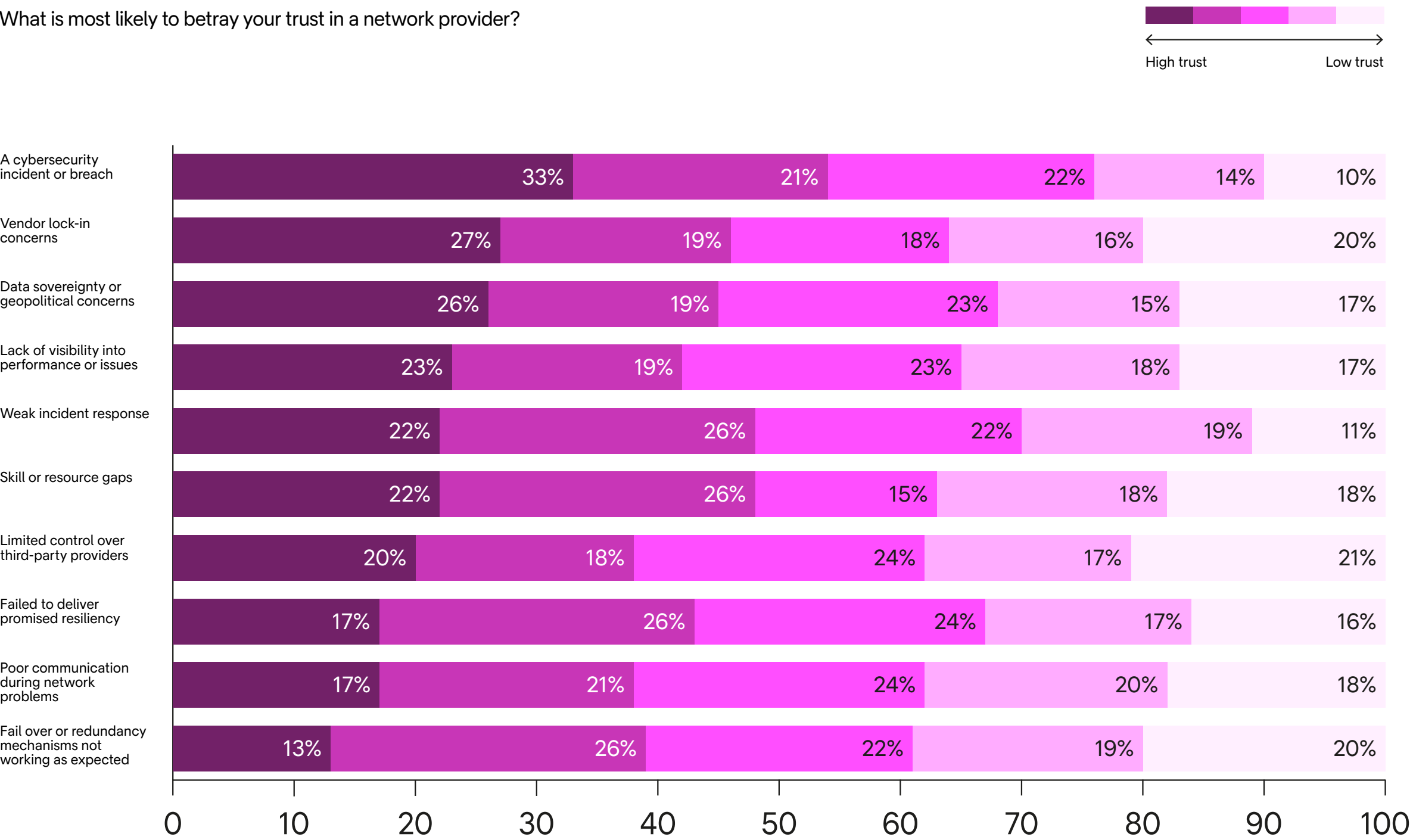
Trust isn't only built. It can be lost, and leaders are specific about how. Asked what is most likely to betray their trust in a provider, leaders point first to a cybersecurity incident or breach, with vendor lock-in concerns a close second, ahead of data sovereignty and geopolitical concerns.

That fear isn't abstract. Only 15% feel certain their provider would catch a serious incident fast. That means most enterprises are trusting on faith rather than evidence.

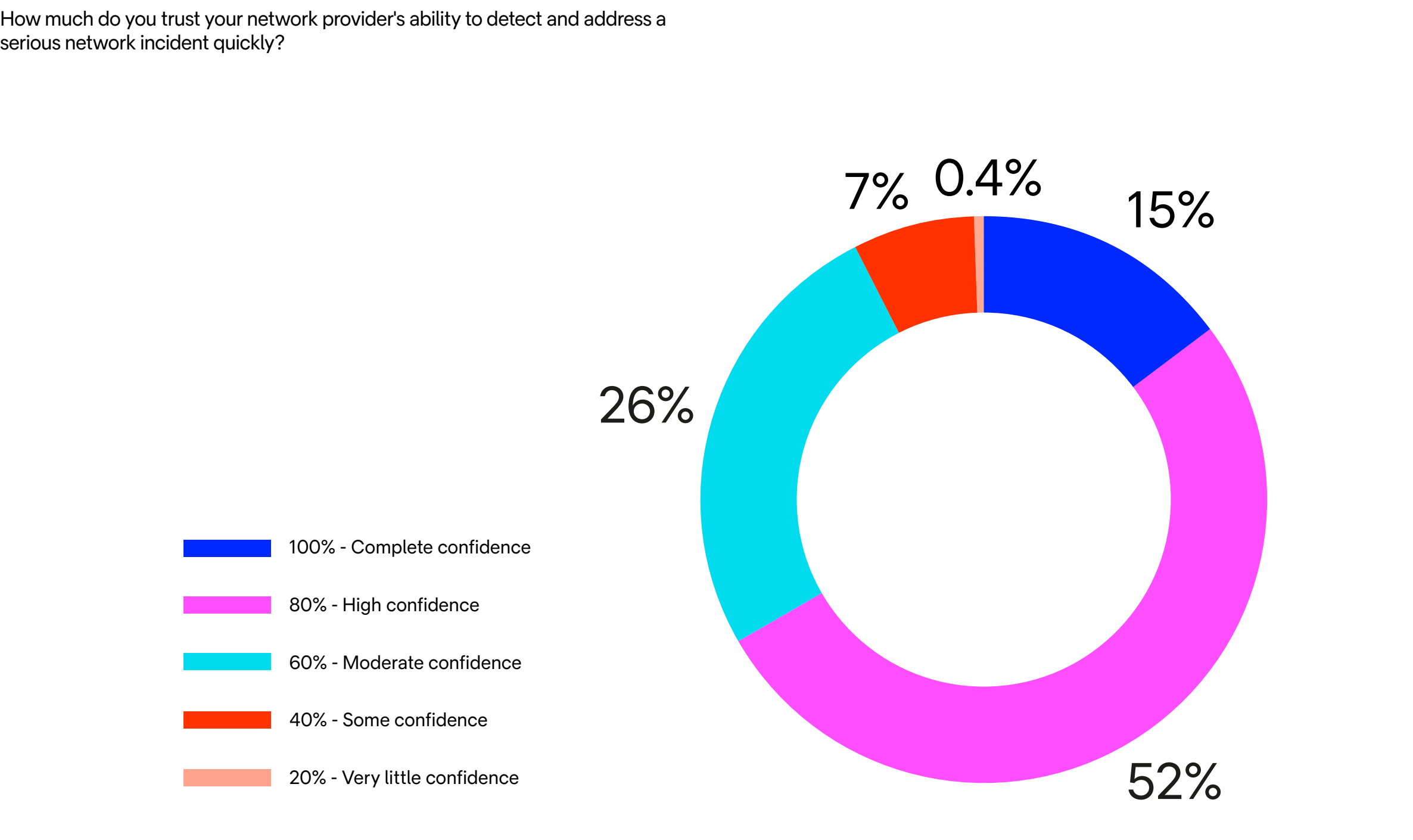
Security and data privacy ranked third in the open-ended responses, at 14%. What leaders really want is narrower than compliance with data protection laws like GDPR and DORA: independently verified certifications, proactive AI-driven threat detection and rapid incident response, and data kept on infrastructure the provider itself owns, not passed along a chain of third parties they've never heard of. Compliance is the baseline. Ownership is what actually reassures them.

Proactive communication, at 10%, ranked just below. Leaders don't want to be the ones who notice a problem first. They want a provider that flags it before they do, a dedicated contact who acts like a strategic partner, and honest disclosure of technology roadmaps, including where a provider's current capability falls short. Taken together, the pattern is consistent. Leaders build trust around competence and communication. They lose it fast when a provider fails at either.

What is most likely to betray your trust in a network provider?



How much do you trust your network provider's ability to detect and address a serious network incident quickly?





What this means for enterprise leaders

Handed a list, leaders reach for the same words every provider already claims to offer: security, reliability and performance. Take the list away, and leaders describe something closer to a relationship. Honesty when things go well, honesty when they don't, and a provider who treats them as a partner worth informing instead of a customer to manage.

Trust like this gets proven in practice. It shows up in whether a provider catches a problem before the customer has to report it. Whether it communicates clearly the moment something does go wrong. Whether it can account for exactly where data travels across its own network, rather than passing that responsibility down an unaccountable chain of third parties.

That's worth asking about directly, before a serious incident forces the question.

Read the full report:

The Trust Illusion: Why AI and Digital Transformation Need More Than a Reliable Network

Discover what enterprise leaders value most in provider relationships, how much they are willing to pay for trust, and what they expect from providers in the years ahead.





About Arelion

Arelion solves global connectivity challenges for multinational enterprises whose businesses rely on digital infrastructure. On top of the world's #1 ranked IP backbone and a unique ecosystem of cloud and network service providers, we provide an award-winning customer experience to customers in close to 130 countries worldwide.

Our global Internet services connect more than 700 cloud, security and content providers with low latency. For further resilience, our private Cloud Connect service connects directly to Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud, IBM Cloud and Oracle cloud across North America, Europe and Asia. Discover more at [Arelion.com](https://arelion.com), and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

