

# New report: Trust in network providers is holding back AI and digital transformation initiatives

***58% of enterprise leaders have delayed, scaled back, or introduced additional safeguards around strategic initiatives due to concerns about their network provider, according to new research from Arelion.***

**STOCKHOLM, 28 September 2026** – A new report from [Arelion](#) reveals that trust concerns around network providers are directly affecting enterprise strategy. More than half (58%) of senior business leaders say they have delayed, scaled back, or added safeguards around strategic initiatives over the past two years due to concerns about their network provider.

AI and data-driven projects are the initiatives most affected, cited by 49% of respondents who experienced disruption. Security and compliance programs (44%), digital transformation initiatives (42%), cloud migrations (38%), expansion into new markets (30%), and new product or service launches (30%) were also impacted. Meanwhile, 30% of leaders say they have introduced additional resilience or risk mitigation measures around those initiatives.

The findings are published in Arelion's new report, ***The trust illusion: Why AI and digital transformation need more than a reliable network***, which explores the role trust plays in enterprise connectivity decisions and the operational and financial consequences when that trust is tested.

## The trust gap

At first glance, confidence in network providers appears strong. Nearly all respondents (93%) say they largely or completely trust their current provider. However, confidence weakens significantly when leaders consider a real-world network incident. Just 15% say they have complete confidence in their provider's ability to detect and resolve a serious network issue quickly, while only a third report moderate or some confidence.

The findings also suggest that trust can be fragile in day-to-day operations. 42% of respondents say their provider falls seriously short of expectations anywhere from a few times a year to monthly or more frequently.

When asked what matters most in building trust with a network provider, leaders ranked protection against security threats highest (48%), followed by reliability and uptime (44%), and performance and latency (37%).

## **The business impact of trust**

The report highlights that trust is not simply a perception issue. It has measurable business consequences. If their network provider experienced a serious failure tomorrow, 40% of leaders expect major operational disruption. Nearly one in five (18%) anticipate significant financial loss or severe financial or reputational damage, rising to 23% among respondents in the United States.

Trust is also influencing purchasing decisions. Nearly two-thirds of leaders (65%) say trust is the dominant or deciding factor in what they are willing to pay for network services. Almost all respondents (98%) say they would pay more for a provider that could consistently demonstrate trustworthiness, with 72% willing to pay between 6% and 20% more and an additional 13% willing to pay more than that.

When asked what would most help earn their trust, transparency emerged as a clear priority, cited by 38% of respondents. Reliability and uptime (22%) and security and data privacy (14%) followed.

## **Looking ahead**

For enterprises already running data-dependent workloads and accelerating towards AI, trust in the network is no longer optional – it is a prerequisite for growth. More than half of respondents (54%) identify AI and automation in network management and security as the biggest future challenge to trust, ahead of data sovereignty requirements (39%), geopolitical instability (39%), regulatory pressures (38%), and quantum computing threats to existing encryption standards (38%).

Against this backdrop, 85% of leaders believe trust in network providers will become more important over the next three years. Respondents identified proactive AI-driven fault prediction, stronger built-in security, responsive support teams, and greater accountability as the factors most likely to strengthen trust in the future.

“These findings make it clear that trust is no longer a soft metric,” said Mattias Fridström, Chief Evangelist at Arelion. “Trust is influencing which strategic initiatives move forward, how organizations manage risk, and which providers they choose to work with. As businesses become increasingly reliant on digital infrastructure, enterprises are looking for network providers that can demonstrate transparency, accountability and operational excellence, not just availability.”

## **Study Methodology**

This research was conducted on behalf of Arelion by Savanta, a global leader in digital data collection. An online survey was carried out in 2026 with 518 senior enterprise network decision-makers across the US, UK, Germany and France.

All participants work for organizations with more than 2,000 employees, and all have decision-making influence over their company's network development strategy, including data center, cloud and connectivity, with 66% holding the final word and sign-off responsibility for this area.

**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](#).

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