

Digital Realty Global Data Insights Survey Reveals Enterprise Shift from AI Strategy to Execution as Infrastructure Emerges as Top Barrier

September 17, 2026

New global research finds infrastructure constraints have surged more than fourfold since 2024 as enterprises race to operationalize AI

AUSTIN, Texas, Sept. 17, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Digital Realty ([NYSE: DLR](#)), the world's largest cloud- and carrier-neutral data center platform, today released findings from its 2026 Global Data Insights Survey (GDIS), which indicate that enterprises are increasingly facing infrastructure and governance challenges as they accelerate AI investment and deployment.

The research, based on responses from 2,131 IT decision-makers across 19 countries, found that 40% of IT decision-makers now identify lack of specialized infrastructure as the primary constraint on AI initiatives, a more than fourfold increase from just 9% in 2024. The figures underscore how rapidly enterprise priorities have shifted from AI strategy to AI execution. At the same time, enterprises are accelerating investment in AI and increasingly focusing on how to operationalize it at scale while balancing performance, governance, data sovereignty and cost control.

Respondents expect AI spending to increase by 32% over the next year and 79% expect to deploy AI initiatives in 2026. This comes as 3% of respondents report seeing no measurable return on investment (ROI) on investment from their AI initiatives and nearly two thirds (63%) expect to see returns within the next six months to two years.

98% percent of respondents expect to be running real-time AI applications within the next 12 months, which is expected to increase demand for low-latency connectivity and resilient infrastructure. As organizations move data and compute closer to business operations, 88% have adopted a distributed data strategy and 92% now tie data location decisions directly to AI plans, up from 73% in 2024. This reflects growing recognition that AI performance, governance and cost efficiency may depend increasingly on where data and infrastructure reside.

The survey also shows that concerns around data control and compliance are reshaping AI strategies globally. The majority (86%) of respondents say their organizations are pursuing sovereign AI initiatives, reflecting growing demand for greater control over where data and AI workloads reside. At the same time, more than 50% of respondents say their organizations now host AI workloads in private cloud environments, highlighting the growing importance of private AI architectures designed to support stronger governance, security and operational control.

"As organizations move decisively from strategy to execution, one factor emerges above all others as the determinant of success: infrastructure. Legacy data centers, built for a different era, cannot on their own meet emerging requirements for performance, compliance, scale, and security. The infrastructure beneath AI is now the gatekeeper between promise and payoff, and organizations that recognize this will be the ones who lead," said Colin McLean, Chief Revenue Officer at Digital Realty.

The full report is available at [Global Data Insights Survey | Digital Realty](#).

Methodology

The 2026 Global Data Insights Survey surveyed 2,131 IT decision-makers across 19 countries and eleven industries, including financial services, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, travel, transportation and logistics, business and professional services, energy and utilities, and media and entertainment. Respondents represented organizations with between 500 and more than 10,000 employees.

About Digital Realty

Digital Realty brings companies and data together by delivering the full spectrum of data center, colocation, and interconnection solutions. PlatformDIGITAL®, the company's global data center platform, provides customers with a secure data meeting place and a proven Pervasive Datacenter Architecture (PDx®) solution methodology for powering innovation, from cloud and digital transformation to emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), and efficiently managing Data Gravity challenges. Digital Realty gives its customers access to the connected data communities that matter to them with a global data center footprint of 300+ facilities in 55+ metros across 30+ countries on six continents. To learn more about Digital Realty, please visit [digitalrealty.com](#) or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

For Additional Information

Media Contacts
Helen Bleasdale
Digital Realty
+1 (737) 267-6822
hbleasdale@digitalrealty.com

Investor Relations
Jordan Sadler / Jim Huseby
Digital Realty
+1 (737) 281-0101
InvestorRelations@digitalrealty.com

Safe Harbor Statement

This press release contains forward-looking statements which are based on current expectations, forecasts and assumptions that involve risks and uncertainties that could cause actual outcomes and results to differ materially, including statements related to AI adoption, AI infrastructure demand, customer demand, expected customer benefits, PlatformDIGITAL®, data location strategies, Digital Realty's strategy and the expected results or impact of the Global Data Insights Survey. For a list and description of risks and uncertainties, please see the company's reports and other filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The company disclaims any intention or obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.