

Building Decision Confidence in 2026

How geospatial intelligence is powering
the UK's most high-stakes decisions across
critical industries



Foreword

Turning trusted location data into more confident business decisions



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The decisions being made in UK boardrooms today are among the most consequential in a generation. From planning resilient infrastructure in the face of a changing climate to accelerating next-generation network rollouts, leaders across the UK's utilities, telecommunications and financial services sectors are operating under extraordinary pressure. They are being asked to make increasingly high-stakes decisions at greater speed, often involving more stakeholders than ever before. As a result, the data underpinning those decisions has never been more critical.

To better understand how business leaders are navigating this changing environment, we surveyed 250 senior decision-makers across the UK's utilities, telecommunications and financial services sectors. This research explores confidence in the data underpinning those critical decisions, identifies where the biggest gaps exist, and examines how geospatial intelligence can help close them - because location data is no longer a technical requirement but a strategic necessity.

Our findings reveal that there are clear cracks emerging in business confidence when it comes to planning for the future, with nearly one in five leaders not confident that they have the data available to help support decisions when it comes to environmental or climate risk planning, for example. More broadly, the research shows that data and technology failures are adding months of delays to major projects, and while AI is already influencing strategic decisions across the UK, fewer than one in three decision-makers feel fully confident in the data powering those systems.

This is where geospatial intelligence has a transformational role to play. Location data is far more than just maps. It connects physical assets to operational decisions, enabling risks such as climate change to be visualised and quantified on the ground, while providing the authoritative foundation that modern AI systems need to be trusted. As organisations seek greater clarity in increasingly complex environments, geospatial insight offers a powerful way to connect disparate datasets, uncover hidden insights, and support more confident decision-making.

Ordnance Survey data forms a digital backbone for the nation. That's because the trusted location data we provide forms the foundation that underpins how the UK functions every day. We work with thousands of organisations across the UK, helping them solve complex real-world challenges through trusted location intelligence. Whether that's helping telecoms providers identify the best location for next generation network rollouts, supporting financial services organisations with underwriting and making property risk assessments, or enabling utilities companies to assess climate-related risks and plan more resilient energy and water networks, our data provides a reliable foundation for faster, more confident decision-making.

This report provides valuable insight into the challenges that business leaders across the UK face today and demonstrates how geospatial intelligence can help them make decisions with greater certainty. Because in an increasingly complex world, better decisions start with trusted location data.

A New Era of High-Stakes Decisions

Tackling growing complexities in a new era of high-stakes decision making

Across the utilities, financial services and telecommunications sectors, over three quarters (76%) of organisations say that decision-making has changed significantly over the past five years.

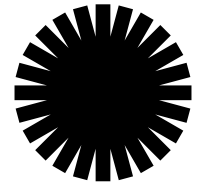
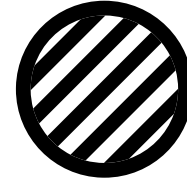
40% of senior leaders say that strategic decisions have become more complex, while 37% report that they are making significantly more strategic decisions than they were five years ago. More than a third (35%) also say strategic decisions are now taking longer to make.

What is striking is not simply the rate of change, but the scale of the challenge facing decision-makers. Leaders are being asked to make increasingly important decisions in an environment shaped by greater complexity, heightened scrutiny and a wider range of competing priorities. And these pressures are compounding one another because, as decisions become more strategic and interconnected, the consequences of getting them wrong also increase.

At the same time, leaders face growing expectations to act quickly. More than a quarter (28%) say that they are expected to make decisions faster than ever before, while 23% report experiencing greater decision fatigue than five years ago. Together, these findings point to a leadership environment where the demands on decision-makers are accelerating faster than the systems and processes that support them.

There are, however, signs of progress. Positively, 40% of respondents believe they now have access to better information and analytics than they did five years ago, helping to make decision-making easier and more informed. Yet despite these advances, many organisations are still struggling to build a complete picture of the world around them.

One in five respondents (20%) say they lack a clear, joined-up view of their operating environment due to the sheer volume of data which now exists. So the issue is not necessarily access to information, but how



insights are being extracted from it. That's because critical data is often spread across multiple systems and teams throughout an organisation. Asset data may sit in one place, customer information in another, and environmental risk data somewhere else entirely. Bringing these different sources together to support a single decision can be difficult, time-consuming and inconsistent.

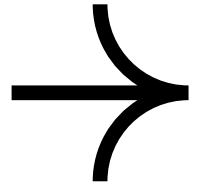
This challenge is becoming more acute as external pressures increase. More than a third (34%) of respondents say factors such as regulation, climate change and economic uncertainty have made decision-making more difficult over the past five years. These pressures rarely exist in isolation. Instead, they interact across places, assets, organisations and communities, creating a more dynamic and interconnected operating environment.

So whether a business is making decisions about infrastructure investment, managing financial risk, improving resilience or planning for future growth, organisations increasingly need to understand how people, places, assets and external factors influence one another. Without that broader perspective, decision-making can become slower and less certain.

The answer, then, is not simply accessing more information. It's bringing together trusted, authoritative data in a way that creates a coherent view of the operating environment to support long-term planning, giving decision-makers more confidence in the choices they make.

Yet for many organisations, that confidence is still not guaranteed.

The Confidence Deficit



When assessing whether organisations have the right data to support decision-making, the survey revealed several important findings. Confidence is high in more established disciplines such as network planning (95%) and infrastructure investment (93%), where data sources and decision-making processes are well understood. However, confidence is noticeably lower in areas such as climate and environmental risk planning, where organisations must navigate a broader range of variables and emerging challenges.

Confidence falls to just 82% when it comes to planning for emerging threats related to climate and environmental risks, with senior business leaders indicating that they do not have the right data to support effective decision-making in this area. Given the importance of these considerations in long-term planning across critical infrastructure sectors, including telecommunications, utilities and financial services, this represents a significant confidence gap.

As well as this, almost a third (31%) of respondents say concerns about data quality are actively undermining confidence in major business decisions, and more than one in five (22%) have had to revisit a significant strategic decision because the data underpinning it was incomplete or inaccurate.

There is also a clear difference between strategic and operational perspectives. C-suite leaders consistently report higher levels of confidence than senior managers, who are often closer to day-to-day delivery. In climate and environmental risk planning, for example, confidence drops by 12% from 88% among C-suite respondents to 76% among senior managers. This may reflect greater visibility of the practical challenges, data gaps and limitations that can emerge when turning strategy into action.

When evaluating strategic decision-making tools, respondents were almost twice as likely to prioritise accuracy of data and analysis



“Every business decision is only as strong as the data behind it. In a world flooded with information, organisations rely on the data they can trust—grounded in authoritative sources, strengthened by expert insight and validated in the real world, because knowing where things are is critical to every decision made.”

Tina Kennedy
Chief Customer Officer

results (47%) as they were to prioritise cost (24%), highlighting the greater importance of data quality than price.

47% selected accuracy of data and analysis results among their top three considerations.

36% selected the reliability and trustworthiness of underlying data.

24% selected cost.

This reinforces the importance of trust in data, with nearly a third (31%) of leaders saying that understanding where their data comes from is now business-critical.

Taken together, it’s clear that, as decisions become more consequential and scrutiny increases, confidence is shaped not just by the volume of data available, but by the credibility of the information behind it.

Top 3 factors when evaluating strategic decision-making tools

Factor	 Financial Services	 Telecoms	 Utilities
Accuracy of analysis and results	45.68%	43.53%	52.94%
Reliability and trustworthiness of the underlying data	39.51%	30.59%	38.82%
Cost of the tool or platform	25.93%	23.53%	23.53%

The five-month tax - when bad data delays major projects

If confidence in business decisions is only as strong as the data behind them, the consequences of getting that data wrong can be significant.

Our research shows that major projects across utilities, telecommunications and financial services are running approximately five months late on average – meaning that poor-quality and fragmented data is not only undermining confidence but also delaying major projects and creating measurable costs for organisations across the UK.

Almost half (48%) of organisations report delays of between three and six months, while a further 22% experience delays of between seven and nine months. Just 6% say their major projects have avoided significant delays altogether.

What is perhaps most revealing is the cause of those delays. Budget constraints and planning or regulatory approvals both feature among the leading factors. However, they are joined by three other challenges that are fundamentally rooted in data and technology – legacy technology and systems (24%), poor data quality and incomplete information (23%) and difficulty integrating different data sets (20%)

When asked what would make the greatest difference to decision-making speed and project delivery, respondents pointed to a clear need for stronger data foundations.

What leaders say will reduce delays

Nearly four in ten (39%) say that access to high-quality, trusted data would directly enable faster decision-making. More than a third (34%) say access to trusted location data specifically would help them make faster, more confident decisions and reduce costly project delays – rising to 42% in financial services.

This finding is significant because location often provides the common thread that links different datasets together. Assets, customers, infrastructure, environmental risks and operational activity all exist in a physical place. For example, when a telecommunications provider is planning network upgrades, it may need to combine information on existing infrastructure, coverage maps, population density, road networks, planning constraints, topography



"Everything happens somewhere. Location is the golden thread that connects data from different systems and sources, helping organisations build a more complete understanding of their assets, operations and risks. Through authoritative location data, deep geographic expertise and rigorous quality assurance, Ordnance Survey provides the trusted foundation for confident, evidence-based decisions."

Tina Kennedy
Chief Customer Officer

and environmental risks to determine where investment is needed and how services can be delivered most effectively.

Similarly, a utilities company assessing the potential impact of flooding on critical assets may need to bring together information on asset locations, flood risk, local infrastructure, environmental conditions and the communities it serves. By understanding how these factors interact in a specific location, it can identify vulnerabilities, prioritise investment and improve resilience planning.

In both cases, location provides the shared context that allows different sources of information to be connected and understood as a whole.

Organisations do not simply need more data - they need to understand what that data means in the real world. Trusted location data helps provide that context, bringing together information from multiple sources and turning it into meaningful insight that supports faster, more confident decisions.

Top 5 factors delaying or increasing cost of major projects in organisations

Factor	 Financial Services	 Telecoms	 Utilities
Budget constraints	32.10%	27.06%	40%
Planning and regulatory approval delays	24.69%	25.88%	35.29%
Legacy technology or systems	25.93%	23.53%	23.53%
Poor data quality or incomplete information	20.99%	21.18%	27.06%
Difficulty integrating different datasets	23.46%	12.94%	22.35%

Flying blind on climate risk



As Great Britain's national mapping service, OS provides the authoritative location data that underpins decision-making across the public and private sectors. Thousands of organisations rely on OS data and expertise to understand how people, places and infrastructure interact. Whether assessing wildfire risk, understanding the impact of extreme weather on critical infrastructure or planning long-term investment decisions, OS helps organisations build resilience and make better informed decisions.

Of all the findings in this research, one stands out as particularly significant: climate and environmental risk planning has the lowest data confidence of any strategic decision area tested.

- **17% are not confident in climate or environmental risk data (all sectors)**
- **20% of utilities companies are not confident in their climate or environmental risk data - the weakest data confidence finding in the research**
- **19% are not confident in telecommunications for climate or environmental risk planning**

These are sectors that face some of the most direct exposure to climate-related disruption - from flooding and extreme weather to infrastructure resilience and net-zero requirements - yet they are among the least confident in the data underpinning their decisions.

The challenge becomes even more apparent when looking at the data organisations are actually using to make strategic decisions. Only a third (33%) of organisations use environmental or climate data when making major strategic decisions, and use of location or geospatial data is even lower, at 30%.

This presents a significant challenge. Climate risk is not a peripheral concern for these sectors - it is central to investment planning, regulatory compliance, asset management and long-term national resilience. Yet the data that can help organisations understand those risks is among the least used in strategic decision-making.

Where geospatial intelligence delivers value

Climate resilience is fundamentally a spatial challenge. Understanding how flooding, subsidence, sea level rise or extreme weather will affect assets, infrastructure and communities requires organisations to understand not just what risks exist, but where they exist and how they interact with the physical environment.

By combining location data with information about assets, infrastructure, environmental conditions and future climate scenarios, organisations can build a clearer picture of risk and make better-informed decisions about long-term planning. Spatial risk modelling helps organisations assess any vulnerabilities that may arise from extreme weather events and evaluate risks associated with future climate change projections, enabling them to implement targeted mitigation and adaptation measures.

The need for this understanding is already being felt. Nearly one in five (19%) respondents say limited understanding of how climate is likely to impact future projects is delaying delivery or increasing costs today. At the same time, 29% say location intelligence plays a critical role in future-proofing major business or investment decisions.

Taken together, the findings point to a clear opportunity. Climate-related risks cannot be understood in isolation or based on future predictions about temperature and weather changes. Instead, they need to be viewed in the context of the places and infrastructure they may affect. Authoritative geospatial data provides that context, helping organisations understand risk and make better informed decisions about the future.

AI is only as good as the data behind it

AI is already playing a central role in strategic decision-making across UK utilities, telecommunications and financial services as 43% of respondents use AI-generated insights as a data source for major business decisions – above scenario modelling (35%) or environmental data (33%).

The growing role of AI brings significant opportunities to improve business insights and support faster decision making, but it also raises an important question: how confident are leaders in the data underpinning the systems they increasingly rely on?

The trust gap in AI-assisted decision-making

Despite widespread AI adoption, fewer than one in three (31%) respondents report being 'very' confident in their organisation's understanding of the data used to generate AI insights and train AI models. Additionally, more than one in five (22%) business leaders they are not confident in the underlying data behind the AI-generated insights used to support strategic decisions.

This creates a clear challenge. Organisations are making significant decisions using AI while

simultaneously acknowledging that they do not fully understand the information those systems are built on. The issue is no longer simply generating insight. It is about ensuring that decisions can be understood, verified and defended when they are scrutinised by boards, investors, regulators or the public. This is even more important as government policy and frameworks are being introduced where organisations are increasingly expected to demonstrate how AI-driven decisions are being reached, what data is informing them and how any risks are being managed.

When asked what organisations require in order to trust AI-generated insights, the answers point overwhelmingly to data quality and transparency rather than the sophistication of the AI systems themselves:

The message from this is clear - organisations are not simply looking for more powerful AI tools. They want confidence in the information that powers them and greater visibility into how AI-generated outputs are created.

Connecting AI and location intelligence

Taken together, the findings suggest that trust in AI is as much a data challenge as it is a technology one. UK leaders do not simply need faster insights - they need decisions they can stand behind. That requires confidence in both the data being used and how it is being applied.

There is also a direct connection to location intelligence. Nearly a third (31%) of respondents say that combining trusted location data with other datasets would help increase confidence in AI-generated insights. When AI systems are built on authoritative geospatial data that is verified and traceable to a trusted source, the outputs become easier to understand and scrutinise.

43%

Require AI systems that are transparent and explainable

42%

Require access to high-quality, authoritative data sources

41%

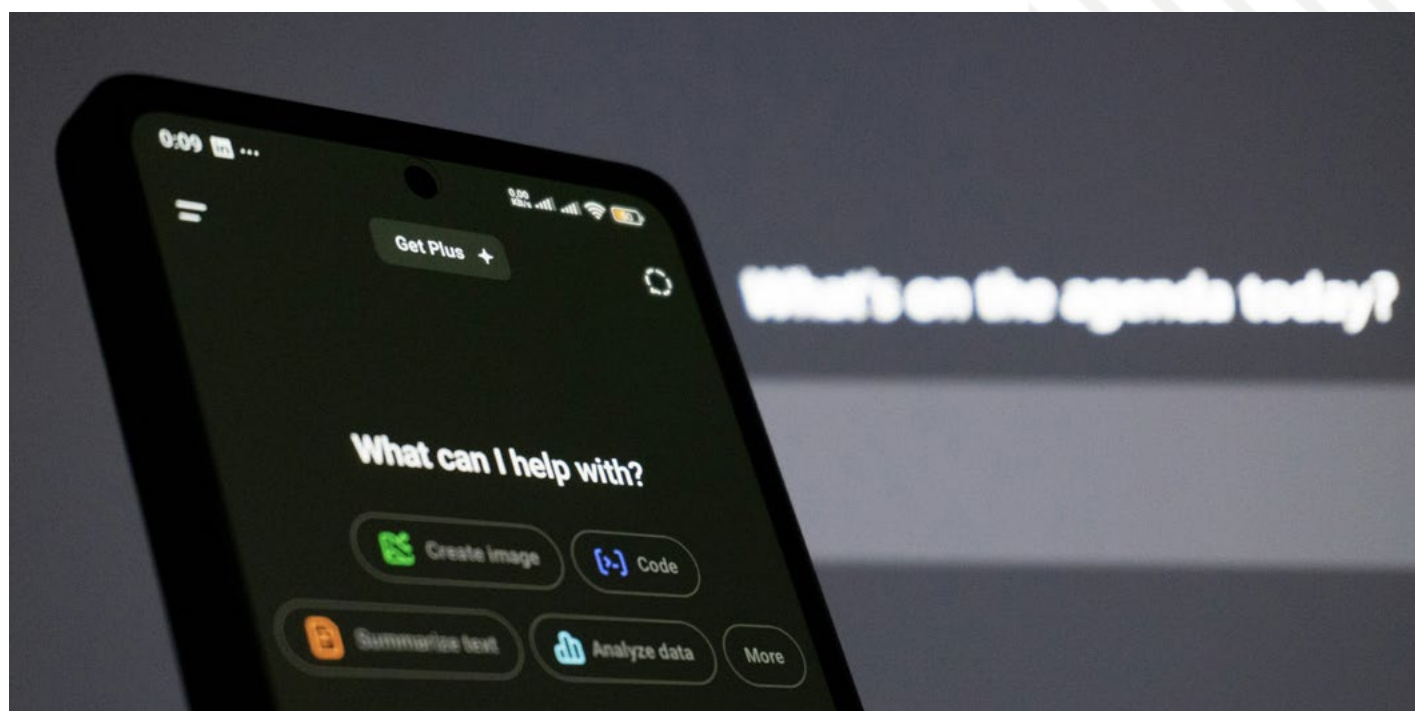
Require the ability to verify the data used in analysis

38%

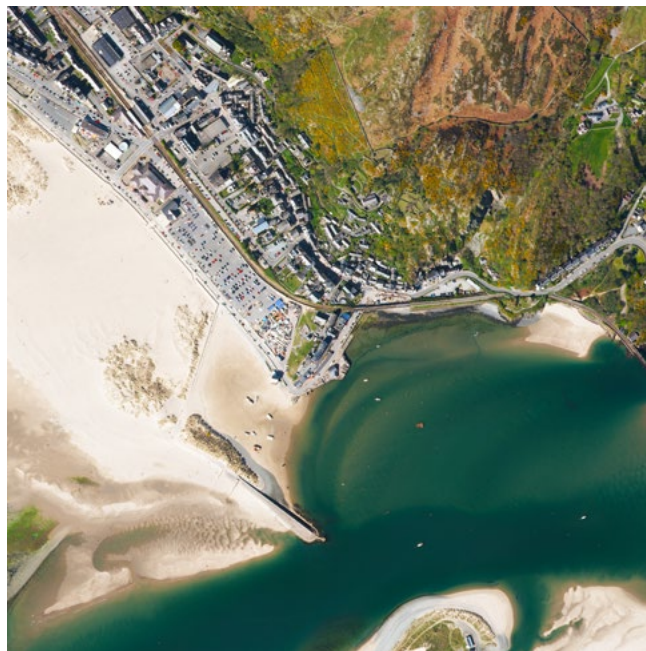
Require transparency about where the underlying data comes from

38%

Require human expertise to interpret AI-generated insights



From complexity to clarity – how trusted location data builds decision confidence



The findings in this report point to a common challenge facing organisations across telecommunications, utilities and financial services. Leaders have access to more data, analytics and insights than ever before, yet many still struggle to bring that information together in a way that creates a coherent view of the world around them.

Whether organisations are grappling with project delays, climate risk, AI transparency or increasing regulatory scrutiny, the underlying issue is often the same: fragmented information, disconnected systems and uncertainty about which data can be trusted. The challenge is not simply accessing more information, but understanding how different sources of data relate to one another and what they mean in the context of real-world decisions.

What organisations need is a way to connect information from different sources and understand it in context. They need a clearer view of how people, places, assets and risks interact in the real world. This is where trusted location data can make a meaningful difference.

Empowering confident decision-making

Trusted location data provides the context that helps organisations bring information together and understand it as a whole. As Great Britain's national mapping service, OS provides the authoritative location data that underpins many of these decisions. The OS National Geographic Database (NGD) is continuously maintained, giving organisations access to a trusted view of the physical environment on which their assets, operations and investments depend.

Driving efficiency

The research found that legacy systems, poor data quality and difficulties integrating datasets are among the leading causes of project delays, contributing to an average delay of five months across major projects.

Trusted location data helps address these challenges by providing a common reference point that allows information from different systems to be connected more effectively. This makes it easier for organisations to integrate data, reduce duplication and build a clearer understanding of their operations.

More than a third (34%) of leaders say trusted location data helps reduce costly project delays

39% say better access to trusted data would enable faster decision-making

34% say trusted location data reduces costly project delays – rising to 42% in financial services

Enabling better collaboration

As we have outlined, the impact of poor data extends beyond individual decisions. When teams and partners are working from different information sources, alignment becomes harder and decisions take longer.

Trusted location data provides a shared view of the environment, helping organisations work from a common understanding of the assets, places and risks involved. This can be particularly valuable for major infrastructure projects, where multiple organisations need to coordinate activity and make decisions based on the same evidence.

The importance of this transparency is reflected in the research. Nearly a third (31%) of respondents say understanding where their data comes from has become a business-critical issue. Trusted location data helps address that need by providing a clear and consistent foundation for decision-making.

For more than 225 years, OS has helped organisations understand and navigate the physical world. Today, that role extends beyond mapping to helping organisations turn complexity into clarity, providing the trusted location data that supports more confident decisions across infrastructure, climate resilience, AI and long-term investment planning.

Talk to us

If you would like to find out how authoritative geospatial intelligence can transform your organisation's strategic decision-making and long-term resilience planning, contact Ordnance Survey at www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk or speak to your OS account manager.

Financial Services

OS helps financial services companies improve risk assessment, underwriting and fraud detection with precise, property-level location data.

→ Learn more about how OS helps companies operating in financial services

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/industries/financial-services>

Telecoms

OS works with some of the biggest network providers to accelerate network planning, rollout and performance with reliable location data for better coverage and decision making.

→ Learn more about how OS helps telecoms companies

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/industries/telecoms>

Utilities

OS provides location data solutions for utilities infrastructure and assets to build smarter, future ready water, energy and gas networks.

→ Find out more about how OS data supports utilities services providers

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/industries/utilities>

os.uk

Methodology

Research conducted by Censuswide polled 251 C-suite and organisational planning decision-makers in UK organisations across Utilities, Telecoms and Financial Services. All respondents manage projects worth £100,000 and over. Data collected between 20–27 March 2026. Sample breakdown: Financial Services (n=81), Telecoms (n=85), Utilities (n=85). Seniority breakdown: Business Owner (n=96), C-Level Executive (n=56), Senior Management (n=99).

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