

New Research from CyrusOne Explores Public Perception Towards Data Centers in Europe

More than 13,000 people were surveyed across the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France and Germany, with the results revealing that economic dividends improve public acceptance

LONDON, November 7, 2024 - CyrusOne, a leading global data center developer and operator specializing in delivering state-of-the-art digital infrastructure solutions, today announced new research which revealed that public attitudes towards data centers are more favorable than expected, with a total of 93% of people saying that they either feel positively (51%), or neutral (42%) about them. The survey, which was commissioned by CyrusOne and conducted by Censuswide, also found that positivity increases among those who know they have a data center located near them.

While the sector has witnessed significant growth across Europe, challenges remain in meeting the increasing demand for capacity, notably in terms of access to reliable power and suitable land. The concerns that are emerging amongst local communities in certain markets are evident, largely driven by a misunderstanding of the data center industry. This is supported by the research which demonstrates that people's understanding of a data center's purpose is relatively limited, with 52% selecting the accurate explanation. What's more, those surveyed do not seem to draw a connection between data centers and the digital services that they use on a daily basis. For instance, when asked what infrastructure and technologies were needed to power digital applications - such as WhatsApp, social media platforms, video conferencing tools and other digital services - fewer than half (45%) of all those surveyed chose data centers, showing that the industry still has much work to do to address this disconnect.

Despite a number of broad similarities in attitudes across Europe, there were significant variations in both public understanding and opinions both between and within markets. For instance, people's understanding of what data centers do was much lower in the UK, with 38% choosing the correct definition, compared to other markets such as Germany at 66%, the Netherlands and Ireland both at 60%. This is surprising in view of the size of the UK market and the strength of the UK's digital services sector.

"Data centers are the backbone of how we live and work today, but the degree to which they support our society is still largely misunderstood by the general public, as our research demonstrates," said Matt Pullen, EVP, Managing Director Europe at CyrusOne. "Misconceptions ultimately lead to mistrust, and this is why developing a sound understanding of public attitudes to data centers is critical to ensure that we can continue to provide state of the art infrastructure for the businesses that depend upon us and deliver meaningful benefits to our host communities. This was our impetus to conduct the survey and why we are sharing the findings so broadly."

The Importance of Economic Dividends on Public Sentiment

The research shows that the economic benefits that data centers can deliver are the most material to respondents, with two thirds (66%) agreeing that they bring value through job opportunities and 62% agreeing that they contribute to economic growth in the local area. This increases to 71% and 68% respectively among those who have a data center located nearby.

The results also show a correlation between economic dividends and public acceptance. For instance, 83% of those who strongly agree that data centers bring value through job opportunities would be willing to have a data center in their area, as would 85% of those that strongly agree that they bring value through economic growth.

The Role of Community Investment in Driving Positive Perception

Regarding the impact that community investment has on driving positive perception, overall, 49% of people surveyed agree that investment in related projects, such as parks and playgrounds, is a benefit that data centers bring. That number rises to 58% amongst those living near a data center.

The top three amenities identified as beneficial to people are: building recreational sport or children's playing facilities, developing community gardens and improving pedestrian areas.

Public Concerns Regarding Data Centers

While the results show that both general and local populations are aware of the negative impacts that data centers can have, the positive sentiment demonstrably outweighs the negative. The negative impacts most selected by those surveyed were the impact of high energy use (40%), the creation of electronic waste (33%), and land use (30%).

Can the Data Center Industry Change Public Perception?

When people were asked what would make them feel more positive about data centers, the vast majority of respondents (83%) are open-minded and receptive to changing their perspective about data centers.

In exploring the leading factors that could contribute to changing public perception overall, increasing job opportunities would have the most impact in making people feel more positive (40%), followed by amenities (37%) such as biodiverse spaces for public use, cycle paths and playgrounds.

Knowing a data center development would create broader economic growth for the local area would make 31% of those surveyed more willing to have one in their local community; this is followed by hiring local people for construction and operations (27%) and providing training and apprenticeship opportunities for local people (23%).

"It's clear from the research that public opinion of data centers is more positive than expected and that perhaps the sector is not always presented in a way that accurately portrays how people really perceive it." said Emma Fryer, Director of Public Policy, Europe at CyrusOne. "It is therefore really important that we, as developers and operators, listen carefully to people in our host communities, while continuing to educate, identify their needs and act accordingly to deliver meaningful local benefits."

The full survey results, including a breakdown per market and recommended next steps for the industry, are compiled in dedicated local language reports titled, *'Listening to Communities: Understanding Public Perception Of Data Centers in Europe And How This Shapes Community Initiatives'*.

The report, infographics, charts and graphs are available for download at www.cyrusone.com/listening-to-communities

About CyrusOne

CyrusOne is a leading global data center developer and operator, delivering sophisticated digital infrastructure solutions worldwide. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, the company operates over 55 data centers across the United States and Europe. Specializing in comprehensive solutions for hyperscale and Fortune 1000 companies, CyrusOne enables customers to align with their unique business and sustainability goals, catering to the complex needs of AI-driven applications and services workloads. CyrusOne's data centers offer unparalleled flexibility, enabling customers to modernize, simplify, and rapidly respond to changing demands. CyrusOne delivers tailored build-to-

suit, colocation, and interconnection solutions that meet the evolving digital needs of its customers. For more information, please visit [cyrusone.com](https://www.cyrusone.com).