# Secure Access Service Edge Outcomes Reported by Security Practitioners

The Take

S&P Global Market Intelligence conducted a custom secure access service edge (SASE) research project in late 2022 and early 2023 focused on determining key SASE project characteristics for respondents in Europe and Asia-Pacific. The first report in this series covered potential business and technical benefits of SASE, the second report covered roadblocks and lessons learned from real-world SASE deployments, and this, the final report, covers outcomes of SASE projects.

We asked study participants to select key outcomes realised from their SASE deployments to date. Reduced risk was the top response, followed by ease of ongoing deployment. Reduced cost and improved productivity/user experience were tied for the third-place response.

## Achieved outcomes from SASE implementations
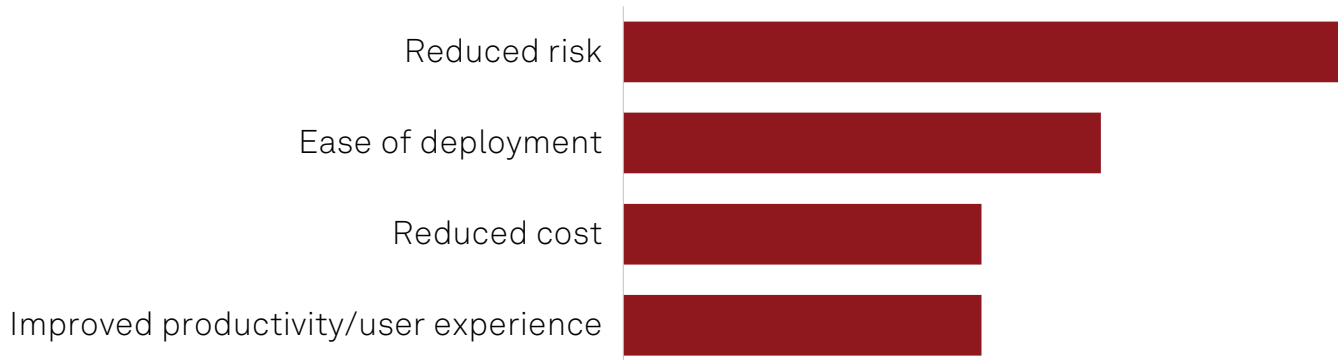
Q. What outcomes have you seen as a result from implementing SASE/ZTNA?
Base: All virtual executive discussion board respondents (n=20; APAC=10, Europe=10).
Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence custom SASE study, March 2023.

Business impact

The first two reports in this series showed that all organisations in our study expected to realise benefits from their SASE deployments; however, they had to overcome some roadblocks to achieve those results. This paper covers the other side of the equation: the specific outcomes organisations achieved with mature SASE rollouts, as well as expected outcomes for those still toward the beginning of the process. Respondents reported four primary achieved or anticipated SASE outcomes: reduced risk, ease of SASE deployment, reduced costs, and improved productivity and user experience. Note that participants could choose multiple outcomes.

Reduced risk. Addressing risk is a primary concern of organisations, and SASE contributes to this in several ways, including reduced architectural complexity, increased control granularity, faster time to resolve security issues and increased coverage for ever-expanding attack surfaces. Specific areas of risk reduction include the ability to implement new layers of controls and creating a safer user environment by stopping malicious users. Participants also mentioned improvements in compliance audit results.

For example, the CISO of an Australian banking organisation said: "Cost savings was never the goal. Reduced risk was the objective." The CIO of a healthcare organisation in Sweden reported that SASE resulted in "[a] safer environment, stopped malicious user and antagonistic behaviour... Quicker problem management and higher uptime."
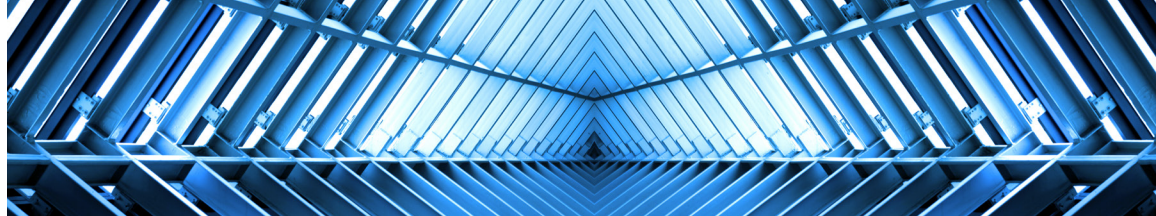
Ease of ongoing rollouts and related business advantages. Once SASE was deployed, participants reported that ongoing rollouts became easier, which is logical since many of the initial roadblocks had been cleared — and key lessons had been learned. A common theme was streamlining and simplifying organisational growth, such as onboarding new employees and opening new offices.

One participant, the CTO of a healthcare organisation in the UK, described SASE advantages this way: "[SASE] has enabled simplified implementation of new sites and business areas. Due to software-defined policies at the edge, this has delivered value through quickness of deployment." Another participant, CIO of a UK-based hospitality firm, reported that "It [SASE] has simplified the onboarding of new employees." And the CIO of a Swedish healthcare organisation mentioned "Faster deployment for new units…", describing how SASE has allowed it to more quickly open new offices and clinics. Others described how SASE aids in adapting to organisational change, such as acquiring new companies. The head of digital solutions for a Hong Kong-based utilities company described it this way: "We have achieved tangible and intangible benefits, yes… It has also given us the flexibility of 'bolting on' M&A acquisitions with little additional effort. Also, we can respond to changing business operations."

Reduced costs. Study participants were asked whether they had realised actual savings after SASE deployment, and results were mixed. Several reported significant cost savings, while others indicated they had not realised tangible savings, either because they were early in their deployment or were unconcerned about tracking them. Of those that had not reported cost reductions, several felt it was too early in their deployment to quantify them.

The CIO of a Swedish healthcare organisation reported 15% cost savings, and the regional CISO of an IT services firm in Singapore stated: "[We realised] significant reductions in communications costs and equipment maintenance across all locations that have completed network fabric replacement projects." Overall, many participants said cost reductions would be a positive SASE outcome; it was mainly a question of whether they felt cost quantifications were required.

Improved productivity and user experience. Two clear SASE outcomes reported by study participants were improved productivity, expressed in terms of efficiency gains both by IT/security staff and end users, and improvements in user experience such as simplified remote access from reduced or eliminated VPN requirements and faster employee onboarding.

One respondent, a principal in applications and data security for a Singapore-based mining and metals organisation, reported: "For what has been deployed so far, we can see a simplification of the infrastructure (with an immediate productivity impact) and better user experience for mobility and access to systems." The regional CISO for a Singapore-based engineering firm said that "[SASE] also allowed improved user experience with fast performance." The regional CISO of another Singapore-based IT services organization said that "end users can get 99+% of activities completed without VPN access, saving them time and frustration."

Looking ahead

Based on feedback from our study participants, SASE delivered clear positive outcomes in several areas, including reduced risk, ease of ongoing deployment, reduced cost and improved employee productivity/user experience. While SASE projects are not without roadblocks, every respondent indicated positive outcomes and benefits.

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We commissioned this research to help companies cut through all the noise and get a true picture of both the good and the bad. Understanding both the obstacles businesses are facing and the benefits that can be achieved through SASE enables us to evolve the services that we offer. Our highly experienced network security consultants can support you throughout the journey, including to help determine your strategic approach and target operating model, as well as providing ongoing proactive management. We can help you de-risk adoption and realise greater benefits, faster.

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