

# Could the global internet completely shut down?

Could the global internet collapse? Explore the resilient structure of the world's network and risk scenarios in 2026.

Everyone has experienced the frustration of slow internet speeds and disconnections right when they're working or watching a movie at a crucial moment. Widespread internet outages over the years demonstrate that the internet can sometimes experience serious problems, enough to disrupt daily activities. But the big question is: is it possible for the entire global internet to 'go down' simultaneously?

The internet is often referred to as the 'network of networks,' connecting devices in homes, businesses, public spaces, and many other environments. Therefore, for the global internet to shut down, a great deal of core infrastructure would have to be impacted within a short period of time.

According to Professor George Cybenko (Dartmouth University), this is theoretically possible, but would require enormous resources and/or rare coincidences, making the likelihood very low. Even if the global internet were to fail, local networks (in homes or businesses) could still continue to function.



From the beginning, the Internet was built with a high degree of diversity, randomness, and distribution, making a complete system failure extremely difficult. When you send information—for example, a message between two smartphones—the data is divided into many small packets and automatically selects the fastest available route. If one route fails, the packet switches to another. This ensures that data still arrives even if there is a local failure.

This design helps the Internet avoid complete collapse due to physical damage (such as severed undersea fiber optic cables, network outages) or software failures (system errors, hacker attacks). Even if a large infrastructure provider like Cloudflare experiences a problem, disruptions typically last only a few hours and do not spread to other systems.

If a more significant event occurs—such as a strong and unexpected solar storm—repairs could take time. However, many governments and large corporations have recovery plans in place, including cloud storage and backup power, to quickly resume operations.



Conversely, during periods of large-scale protests, some governments have deliberately cut off the internet by disrupting infrastructure such as power grids and fiber optic cables, or by throttling bandwidth (intentionally reducing connection speeds). However, these deliberate outages are usually restored relatively quickly.

According to William Dutton (Oxford University), many people are still surprised by the internet's incredible resilience. However, if the disruption is prolonged, the consequences are not just inconvenience: hospital IT systems, power grids, traffic management, and essential services could be paralyzed.

The Internet is increasingly playing a central role in healthcare, the economy, and even modern security and warfare. Therefore, the safety and reliability of the Internet are paramount. Despite concerns that Internet growth will lead to overload, experts assert the opposite: the more connection points there are, the more robust the Internet becomes. In other words, growth makes the Internet stronger, not weaker.

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