AI Search Has Reached Mainstream Scale

A 2025–2026 evidence brief for business owners | Google Gemini, AI Mode, AI Overviews and the changing search experience

THE BUSINESS CASE

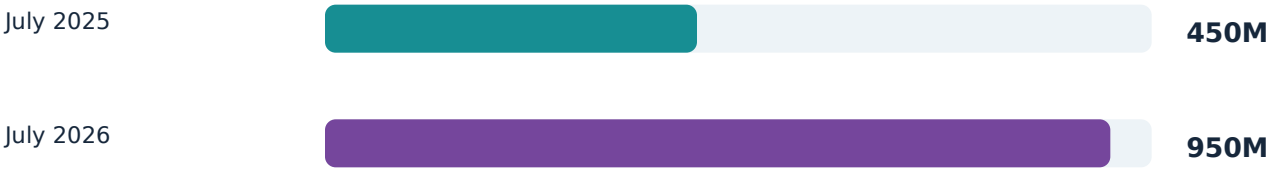
AI-assisted search is no longer an early-adopter experiment. Google reports rapid growth across its Gemini app and AI-powered Search experiences. Independent research also finds that users interact differently with search results when AI summaries appear. Together, these changes make AI-search visibility a practical business planning issue—not a speculative trend.

950M
Gemini app monthly active users
Q2 2026

1B+
AI Mode monthly users
May 2026

2.5B+
AI Overviews monthly users
June 2026

Gemini app: monthly active users



Growth: +500 million users, or approximately +111%. Official Alphabet figures, Q2 2025 and Q2 2026. [1, 2]

Google AI Mode: monthly active users



At least a tenfold increase in reported scale. Both figures are rounded thresholds, not exact counts. [1, 3]

Search Behavior Is Changing

Adoption matters—but the way people respond to AI-generated answers is equally important for SEO strategy.

AI Overviews: monthly users



Google reported more than 2 billion monthly users in July 2025 and more than 2.5 billion by June 2026. Because both figures are lower-bound estimates, an exact percentage growth rate cannot be calculated. [1, 4]

Traditional search-result clicks (Pew study)



In Pew Research Center's March 2025 U.S. browsing sample, traditional results received clicks in 15% of visits without an AI summary versus 8% with one—a 7-percentage-point difference. The study shows association, not proven causation. [5]

Additional Pew findings

Only 1% of visits with an AI summary resulted in a click on a link within that summary. Users ended their browsing sessions after 26% of results pages with an AI summary, compared with 16% of pages without one. The research covered 900 U.S. adults and 68,879 unique Google searches. [5]

What the data does—and does not—show

The evidence demonstrates massive adoption of Google's AI features and different observed clicking behavior. It does not establish that AI search has replaced traditional search, that every business has lost traffic, or that AI optimization guarantees inclusion in generated answers. Visibility and conversion still need to be measured at the individual website level.

What This Means for Businesses

A practical opportunity to improve discoverability and turn search visibility into leads.

Why businesses should pay attention

Customers can now ask AI-powered search tools detailed questions about problems, services, products, and purchasing decisions. Clear, credible website content gives search systems useful material to discover and reference, while helping potential customers evaluate providers.

A practical SEO + AI-search visibility program

- **Establish a baseline.**
  Review Search Console, Analytics, priority keyword rankings, and a repeatable sample of AI-generated answers to relevant customer questions.

- **Connect answers to offerings.**
  Link educational content to relevant service, product, and contact pages that help visitors take the next step.

- **Strengthen website fundamentals.**
  Check crawlability, indexing, content clarity, original expertise, internal links, accurate business details, and appropriate structured data.

- **Measure business outcomes.**
  Track qualified organic traffic, engagement, inquiries, and observable AI referrals or citations where measurable.

SEO remains the foundation. AI visibility expands the opportunity.

Google says established SEO fundamentals still apply to AI Overviews and AI Mode. No special AI-only markup guarantees inclusion. [6, 7]

Sources and methodology

[1] Alphabet Q2 2025 earnings remarks (July 23, 2025)
[2] Alphabet Q2 2026 earnings remarks (2026)
[3] Google: How AI Mode is changing search (May 19, 2026)
[4] Alphabet investor presentation (June 2026)
[5] Pew Research Center: clicks with AI summaries (July 22, 2025)
[6] Google Search Central: AI features and your website
[7] Google Search Central: generative AI optimization guide