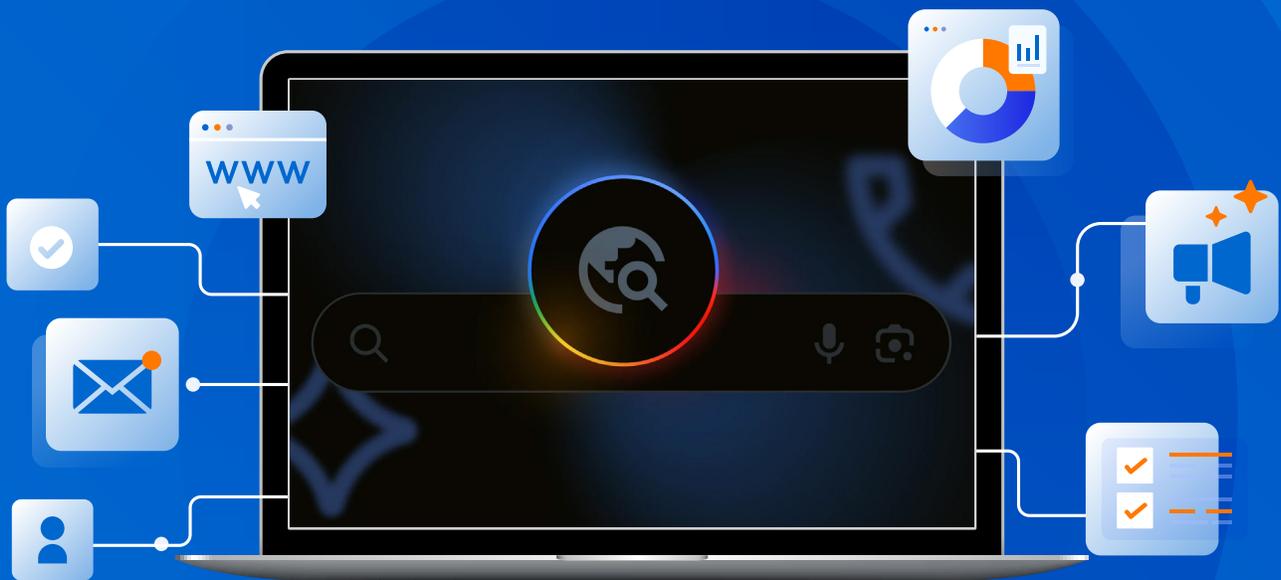




THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS



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Key Insights

30-50%

of all Google searches now have a corresponding AI Overview.

52%

of sources mentioned in AI Overviews rank in the top 10 results.

Traditional SEO techniques remain crucial to AI Overviews

HOW TO RANK IN AI OVERVIEWS:

Technical Updates

Utilize Schema markup and prioritize load speed

Content Optimizations

Write from the first person, and use a Q&A format

Off-page Strategy

Your entire web presence matters, ensure it's strong

A BRAND MENTION IN AN AI OVERVIEW CARRIES WITH IT A RINGING ENDORSEMENT FROM GOOGLE

Make it on your prospects' shortlist by appearing in AI Overviews.

WEBSITES ARE NOT BUILT PRIMARILY FOR HUMANS ANYMORE – THEY'RE ALSO BUILT FOR AI

373x

more Google searches are happening everyday than ChatGPT sessions.

28.9B

AI Overviews seen each week, compared to 800 million weekly active ChatGPT users.

An Introduction to AI Overviews

The AI revolution is officially upon us. Google's rollout of the AI Overview, beginning in May 2024, has brought about a new SERP element that's impacting brands and changing the way audiences search. Powered by Google's LLM Gemini, AI Overviews use artificial intelligence to summarize search results and provide searchers with a concise, helpful answer to their questions.

32% of keywords across our SEO clients trigger AI Overviews

What began as a Search Labs experiment contained in the US has grown into a global evolution of the search experience. Studies show that the prevalence of these new SERP elements has grown significantly, with some estimating that almost half of searches trigger an AI Overview.

But we've seen major shifts in the SERP landscape before. In 2014, over ten years ago, Google introduced the Featured Snippet. In many ways, the Featured Snippet was the precursor to the AI Overview; it pushed other organic results lower, prioritized good and helpful content, and scared a lot of SEOs. It also gave prominence to the "zero-click search" concept that has become even more potent in today's AI landscape.

However, we chose to take advantage of the Featured Snippet rollout by analyzing the new SERP and working with our clients to optimize their content accordingly. These optimizations drove up to a 3X increase in clients' visibility within the Featured Snippets. The same opportunities exist within AI Overviews.

Let's explore how brands can take advantage of the new opportunities presented by AI search experiences.

How are AI Overviews Formulated?

AI Overviews, or AIOs for short, are powered by Gemini, an AI engine developed by Google and trained on vast quantities of content from across the internet. Like all Large Language Models, or LLMs, Gemini's AIO engine analyzes its training data to learn how to predict the desired response to a query.

To formulate an AIO, Gemini must first process the search query to understand what the user might be interested in. Based on this understanding, it searches Google's index of content from across the internet to find documents, images, pages, and posts it determines to be relevant to the search query.

It's important to note that Google's AIO algorithm is directly integrated with their classic ranking algorithm. This means that its AI Overview responses, while fallible, are based on the highest-quality content available. Google has always prioritized experiences that searchers can trust. AIOs are no different; the Google algorithm analyzes webpages to find the most helpful information for the user based on their query or prompt.

Where AIOs differ is in what comes next. While traditional results offer webpages for browsing, AIOs summarize and synthesize Google's indexed content into a concise answer to questions it thinks the user is asking. Then, it compares its answer to the original content to ensure accuracy, before compiling the answer and sources into a user-friendly, AI-generated SERP element. Google uses hundreds to thousands of sites to develop an AI response, ensuring a higher level of confidence in the results.

How Google Utilizes Consumer Trust to Provide High-Quality Answers

When Google was first introduced, many folks were skeptical of the quality of results returned. And while it definitely wasn't perfect, frequent algorithm updates helped to grow public trust in the service.

Today, confidence in Google's organic results is almost sacred. There's a reason so few searchers navigate past the first page of results: Google is really good at prioritizing high-quality, relevant, and helpful content.

In its AI Overviews, Google is leaning on this confidence in hopes that its users feel just as sure about the information they find in the new feature as they do in the organic results.

This is likely why AIOs include links to their source content. Google wants users to know that AI Overviews aren't just fabricated text; they're built from the same results and algorithms that we already trust.

Brand Mentions vs. Citations

There are two distinct parts of an AIO: the generated answer and the cited sources.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "best gym for beginners". The AI Overview section on the left lists several gym brands: Planet Fitness, Anytime Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness, and Crunch Fitness. A blue box labeled "Mentions" points to these brand names. On the right, a list of citations is shown, including a Reddit post from May 12, 2024, and a Quora answer from August 5, 2021. A blue box labeled "Citations" points to these source cards.

Brand Mentions

For queries where the user has signaled that they're interested in comparing brands, being included in the AI-generated answer is immensely valuable. In the above screenshot, Planet Fitness is clearly defined as the best gym for beginners. A user can explore other options by expanding the AIO.

This real estate is crucially important as it can have a significant influence over a user's consideration journey and get your business added to the customer's "short list."

Citations

A list of webpages used to generate the answer text is included in the AI Overviews. These clickable elements vary, but are generally composed of top-ranked content for the query, user-generated content from forums, and authority-driven blogs.

These two placements offer slightly different benefits, and as such, visibility in each should be considered as distinct KPIs.

A brand mention carries with it a ringing endorsement from Google. On the other hand, a citation is used to lend credibility to Google's AI overview.

So, while the citation may lead to more traffic (since the citations are clickable), a brand mention is of higher priority given its larger impact on how a brand is perceived by prospective customers.

Other AI SERP Experiences

While AI Overviews are the biggest change that AI has brought to the SERP, many smaller changes can be found.

Inline Secondary SERP Links

AI Overviews at the top of SERPs now include conspicuous inline links. Instead of directing traffic to cited webpages, these links bring users to a separate, curated SERP experience for more information on the linked text.

People Also Ask AI Overviews

Google has begun testing using its AI Overview model in People Also Ask elements to summarize informational questions users might ask.

People also ask :

Which type of gym is best for beginners? 

Where should a beginner start at the gym? 

What is a good gym plan for beginners? 

What is the 3-3-3 rule gym? 

AI Overview 

The "3-3-3 rule" in a gym refers to **a workout structure where you perform three circuits, each containing three different exercises, three times**. This results in a total of nine "micro-sets" (3 circuits x 3 sets). It's a time-efficient and challenging routine that focuses on concurrent strength and global metabolic conditioning. 

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

- **Three Circuits:** Each circuit focuses on a specific area of the body (e.g., lower body, upper body pulling, upper body pushing). 
- **Three Exercises per Circuit:** You'll select three exercises that target the chosen muscle groups. 

Show more 

AI Mode

In an effort to directly compete with AI engines like ChatGPT, Google is rolling out AI Mode, an interactive AI experience that lives in the SERP and provides users a more robust and conversational AI interaction.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "best gym for beginners". The AI Mode response is displayed in a light blue box on the left side of the search results. It includes a summary paragraph, a list of factors to consider, and a "Show all" button. The factors are:

- Gym Atmosphere and Environment:**
 - Non-intimidating and Judgement-Free:** Look for a gym that promotes a welcoming and supportive environment for people of all fitness levels. Avoid gyms that feel overly competitive or intimidating.
 - Cleanliness and Well-maintained:** Ensure the gym is clean, organized, and the equipment is in good working order. This contributes to a safer and more pleasant workout experience.
- Equipment and Facilities:**
 - Variety of Equipment:** A good gym for beginners should have a variety of cardio machines (treadmills, ellipticals, bikes), strength training equipment (weight machines, free weights), and functional training areas.
 - User-Friendly Equipment:** Choose a gym with equipment that is easy to use and adjust, especially if you are new to working out.
- Classes and Training Options:**
 - Beginner-Friendly Classes:** Check if the gym offers introductory classes specifically designed for beginners, or classes that can be easily modified to suit different fitness levels.
 - Qualified Trainers:** Look for gyms with certified personal trainers who can provide guidance, create personalized workout plans, and ensure you are using proper form to prevent injuries.

At the bottom of the AI Mode box is a "Show all" button and a "Ask AI Mode" button with a microphone icon.

On the right side of the search results, there are three related search results:

- The Best Gym for Beginners to Start Their Fitness Journeys - Modded** (Dec 29, 2023) - Table of Contents show * Your Local Chain. * Planet...
- Is PF a good gym for a beginner? : r/xxfitness - Reddit** (Jul 22, 2021) - I've been a member of PF on two occasions. The first for 2-...
- A Beginner's Guide to the Gym: How to Feel Confident from ...** (Jan 24, 2024) - Access to equipment. Most gyms are stocked with a wide...

Accessed by selecting AI Mode from the results type tabs (Images, Videos, etc.), AI Mode opens up an AI messaging interface powered by Gemini. AI Mode can also be accessed in the AIOs, as a way to dive more deeply into a topic.

How are AI Overviews Impacting Brands?

The question everyone wants an answer to: How will this impact my business?

Our client data shows that the level of impact of AI Overviews varies significantly. As of June 2025, the average AIO prevalence among our SEO clients was 32%, with some as high as 57% and others as low as 5%.

What stood out to us were the trends based on business type. Sites with less AI Overview prevalence tended to be those with a more conversion-oriented nature. From consumer beauty product sales to real estate listings, these sites focus on well-known topics where searchers are closer to converting.

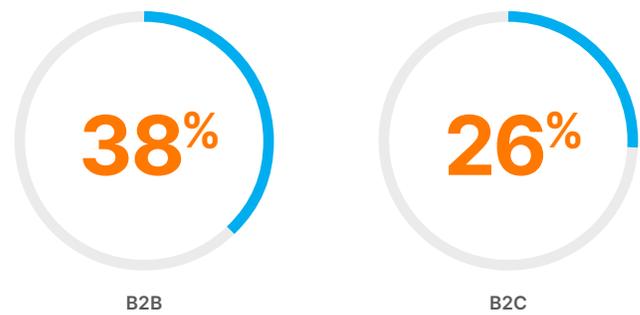
Industry studies tend to agree, with one exploring this nuance in query type. The study argues that lower-funnel, [transactional queries are less prone to traffic declines than upper-funnel, informational queries](#).

We also noted a distinction between B2B and B2C brands, where the latter tends to be less impacted by AI Overviews than the former.

On average, our B2B clients were finding AI Overviews in their SERPs 38% of the time. For B2C brands, AIO prevalence was closer to 26%.

This aligns with the above sentiment around search intent; B2B audiences may be conducting more research than the average consumer, leading to more top-of-funnel queries that can directly benefit from an AI Overview.

AIO Prevalence in Our Clients



Average percent of keywords in a site's total keyword universe that trigger AIOs, by business type.

Additionally, the products and services offered by our B2B clients tend to be more technical, and therefore, the queries relevant to their products are more informational in nature. When a consumer searches for a specific beauty product or home listing, an AI Overview may actually **dilute** the result rather than **enhance** it.

An Unexpected Opportunity

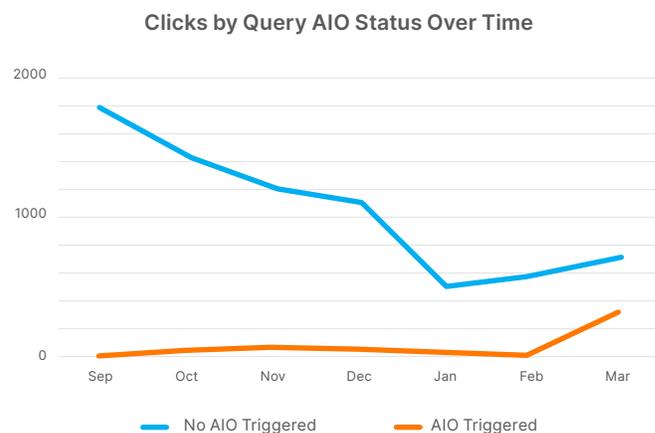
There's a lot of fear around lost traffic caused by the emergence of AIOs. Executives and marketing leaders are watching organic search traffic fall as more of their queries are impacted by AIOs. However, evaluating the impact of AIOs in silos, by only looking at query-level CTRs, for example, is misleading.

Industry data suggests that [Google Search grew 22% YoY in 2024](#). This means that although CTRs for upper-funnel terms may be declining, more searches are being conducted and we expect this trend to continue as AI engine use increases.

Additionally, the AI Overviews appearing at the top of SERPs for these terms provide links to other, related SERPs. This rise in multi-SERP searches will drive additional opportunities for brands to earn visibility and traffic from their audiences.

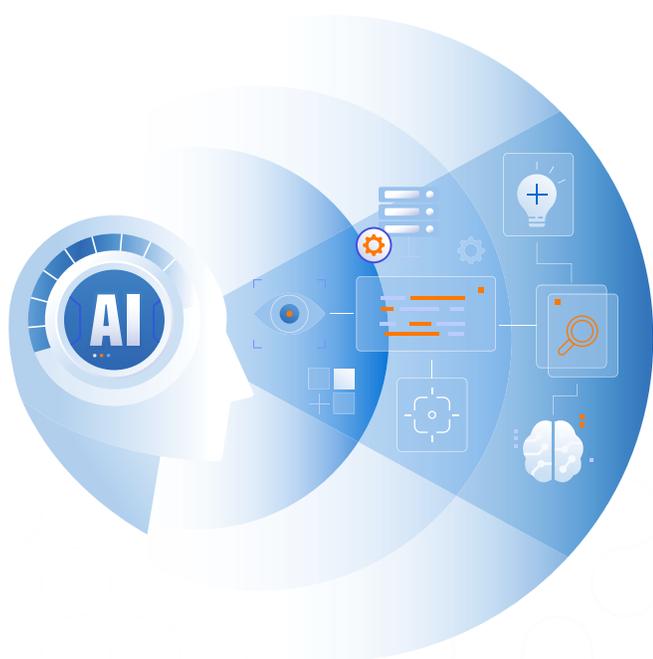
Plus, AIOs offer a new opportunity for brands to rank at the top of the SERP. Instead of one site owning position #1, many can be featured in the top element (some AI overviews mention numerous businesses and include 40+ citations).

Below highlights recent results from one of our clients who has experienced an increase in traffic among queries that trigger AI Overviews. Where other sites are losing traffic to AIOs, this brand, a major authority in the medical conference space, has earned increasing traffic volumes from these queries.



We tracked our client's monthly click volume and found that while traffic from queries not triggering AI Overviews declined over Q4 into Q1 (mainly a factor a seasonality in their industry), traffic volume from queries that trigger AI Overviews rose significantly with the sharp increase in AIO presence noted in March, due to strong visibility in the AIOs.

This example shows that brands who prioritize visibility efforts in AI experiences can make up lost traffic, and even earn incremental traffic from queries that were not producing significant traffic previously.



Understanding the Benefits of Ranking in an AI Overview

Given the fact that many AIOs appear for queries that are more informational in nature, and that many users can get the information they're seeking in the AIO itself, organic traffic to informational content (blogs, guides, glossaries, etc.) may decline (as a quick aside, it's important to note that broadly speaking, we have not seen conversion volume decline along with these traffic declines. In fact, we're generally seeing conversion rate increases when AIOs are negatively impacting traffic, likely due to the lost traffic being related to less qualified, upper funnel queries).

However, for searchers looking for a bit more information, there's an opportunity to explore the topic further through Google's in-line links to other SERPs.

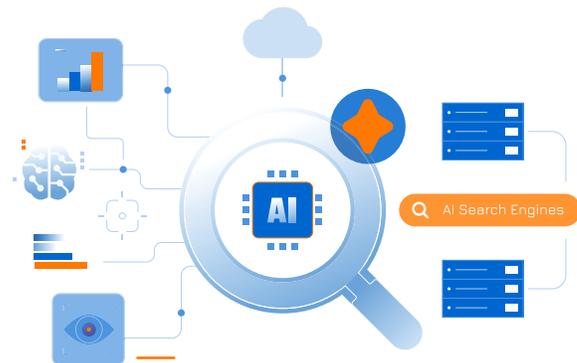
Additionally, actual user search volume continues to rise as the public begins searching for terms they might not have previously.

AI Search: A Driver of Increased Demand

Perhaps one of the most valuable differences between AI search experiences and classic Google search is how a user interacts with the search engine.

In traditional search, a user has to form their intent - their true intent - into a search term that will deliver the result they're seeking. In a way, we've all had to learn how to search for something. Up until now, there was no way to just ask.

However, AI engines enable users to write out a full prompt. Instead of a few words, searchers are using sentences upon sentences to carefully convey what they're looking for.



In this way, searches that weren't possible before are now possible. You can now search for "the best gym for a beginner in Boston with treadmills and good customer service" rather than just "best gym for beginners."

This evolving search behavior is likely contributing to the rising number of [Google searches each year](#).

Consideration: How the Organic Search Experience is Evolving

Searchers using Google to find products and services, those who are ready to sign up, purchase, or fill out a contact form, are still going to do so. This bottom-funnel audience is determined to convert, and today, the only place they can do that is on brand sites.

With that in mind, it's absolutely essential that your site appears for relevant, transactional queries. Being at the top of the SERP for these converting terms remains a key to growth.

However, the rise of AI Overviews offers an exciting new opportunity to increase the chances that a lower-funnel user chooses you over your competitors.

The AIO represents a shift in SEO strategy towards consideration. Searchers are using AI experiences like the AIO to learn about their options for a desired product or service. Think back to our "best gym for beginners" example earlier.

The user searching that query is looking for a place to start as they begin their journey to joining a gym. They don't need a ton of information, and they likely aren't ready to sign up just yet. The list of potential brands is exactly what they're looking for, and the concise descriptions of each option help to orient their journey.

By appearing first, with such a glowing review, Planet Fitness is positioned as the perfect choice for a beginner. Consciously or not, this user will likely continue to hold Planet Fitness in mind as a top choice.

It doesn't hurt that Planet Fitness also ranks in traditional organic search listings for this query, giving it several appearances in a SERP that previously only offered one.



credit: Planet Fitness

4 Steps to Measure AI Overviews and Their Impact

As AI Overviews are still such a new SERP element, and given the fact that they change so frequently, most legacy SEO tools don't have out-of-the-box AIO monitoring capabilities. Even Google's own Search Console platform excludes AI Overview-specific data/insights.

However, with the stakes as high as they are, it's important to be able to track the prevalence and impact of AI Overviews, as well as your site's ability to rank in these elements.

Synapse is developing automated tools and purpose-built analyses to monitor AIO prevalence across SERPs for our clients' keyword lists as well as the impact AIOs are having on traffic volume and site performance.

1. Implement Keyword Monitoring Specifically for AI Overviews

Tracking your site's visibility in SERPs for your priority keywords won't cut it anymore. With AIOs appearing in more SERPs every month, it's important to measure and analyze your site's appearances in AIOs.

After months of research, we've concluded that no legacy SEO tool can monitor a brand's appearance in AI Overview mentions or citations in a way that enables for deeper analysis.

Therefore, we've built our own suite of monitoring tools that track our clients' keyword lists and identify the terms triggering AIOs. Our tools can determine whether or not an AIO appears for a given keyword and how that changes over time. We can note whether or not the brand is cited or mentioned, and can even evaluate the context/sentiment in which the brand is mentioned. All of these metrics can be evaluated against your top competitors to see how you stack up.

2. Integrate Search Console Query Data to Determine Impact

Once you know which of your keywords are triggering AI Overviews (and how you're appearing in them), it's time to take the analysis further to understand how your site is affected.

By overlaying query-level Google Search Console data onto the AIO reporting, we're able to identify queries that have experienced traffic volatility.

For example, are keywords that trigger AIOs experiencing a drop in clicks? What if we only look at queries with AIOs where we're cited or mentioned, are we earning clicks from the AIO?

3. Compare Impact Against Expected SERP Behavior Changes

By analyzing large datasets, we can build an index that shows how AI Overviews impact CTRs for entire SERPs.

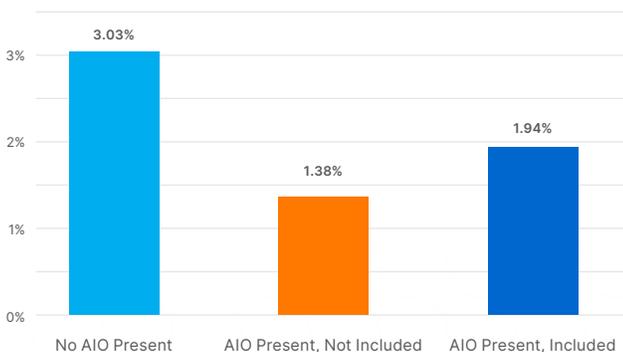
For example, we can determine what the total CTR for a given site is:

1. when no AIO is present
2. when an AIO is present but we don't appear in it
3. when an AIO is present and we *do* appear in it

To illustrate how this data can be used, we leveraged GSC data for one of our clients to create a customized benchmark of the CTR impact from AI Overviews. We found that the CTR for queries triggering AI Overviews was 54% lower than the average CTR for queries without an AIO. However, by appearing in the AIO as a citation, the brand was able to recover almost 20% of this lost traffic.

This tells us that while the AI Overview may reduce click volume, appearing in the element is crucial, as it can drive traffic directly to the site and may influence searchers to find your site below in the traditional search listings. Having a presence in the AIO can also significantly and directly contribute to brand awareness and credibility.

Click-Through Rate (CTR) for Terms Based on AI Overview Status

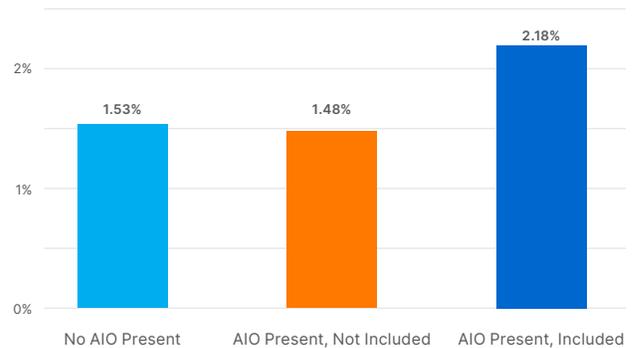


This analysis also enables us to determine the level of opportunity available by keyword, and we can scale this analysis across the entire tracked keyword list to prioritize efforts.

4. Segment Data by PPC Conversion Rate

Earlier, we discussed how informational queries have been most impacted by AI Overviews so far. By segmenting our query analysis by conversion rate, which we can pull at the query level from a PPC campaign, we can show expected impact by search intent.

Click-Through Rate (CTR) for Terms Based on AI Overview Status (Converting Queries)



By segmenting the analysis discussed in step 3 into groups of keywords based on their expected conversion rates, we can learn more about how different search intent types impact conversions.

For the same client, we analyzed keywords known to drive PPC conversions. For terms triggering AIOs that did not feature our site as a cited source, the impact on CTR was similar to the site average shown earlier.

However, our analysis showed that when our site was listed as a citation in the AI Overview, our listing earned a significant increase in click-through rate, pushing even higher than that of terms without AIOs.

This suggests that the AI Overview offers a key vote of confidence in your brand. In the case of these converting keywords, searchers were more likely to visit our site after finding us in the AI Overview.

Traffic is a great KPI to monitor, but in the age of AI search, visibility and conversions are the metrics to watch.

How to Rank in AI Overviews: An SEO Strategy Built for AI

While the shift towards an AI search strategy will require changes to process and techniques, there's some overlap between traditional SEO strategies and new AI-informed programs.

As discussed earlier, the AI elements are effectively summaries of the SERP, a concise compilation of the top-ranked webpages generated, with the goal of answering a specific question with a high level of confidence.

We know that LLMs generate their results based on the analysis of hundreds or thousands of pieces of content and information. But since Gemini is connected to Google's existing search index, the source materials used in generating the AI response are likely to also be found in the SERP.

One [study](#) suggests that there's a strong correlation between content that ranks in the top positions of organic search and its ability to appear in an AI Overview. 63% of AIOs pull content from the top 10 traditional organic listings.

This is logical; Google will more heavily weigh sites it has deemed credible and relevant when building its AIO response.

Google's official position echoes this sentiment. According to their [official documentation](#), "There is nothing special for creators to do to be considered [for AI Overviews] other than to follow our regular guidance for appearing in search, as covered in Google Search Essentials."

Overall, our highest priority recommendation is to keep doing what we've always done: create high-quality, helpful content made for people. This tried-and-true method has always proved best, and even in the world of AI, will continue to be the bedrock of SEO strategy.



63% of all AIOs pull content from the top 10 traditional organic listings

In addition, we have identified 9 key opportunities to help boost your brand's visibility in AIOs. As of July 2025, these tactics have proven successful in generating both mentions and citations. However, as generative AI optimization continues to evolve, and as we continue to test and learn in this new search landscape, this list is likely to grow.

9 Content Optimizations to Improve AI Overview Coverage

1. Utilize Schema Markup

INSIGHT: LLMs crawl the internet the same way that Google's bots do. Therefore, content structured in Schema markup can provide LLMs with easily-digestible versions of your site's content.

NEXT STEP: Review your site to ensure you're fully utilizing all relevant schema markup, including FAQ schema.

2. Make Content Digestible and Navigable

INSIGHT: LLMs often grab exact snippets of content from a site with great content. Content formatted with a question in an H2 tag and an answer immediately following as brief body copy tends to perform best. Tables of Content, with jump links included, also make it easy for AI crawlers to find information easily.

NEXT STEP: Write content with short paragraphs and use a list format where appropriate. For informational queries, consider using Q&A format.

3. Prioritize User Experience

INSIGHT: Google wants to give users access to content fast, and their release of Core Web Vitals as a ranking signal back in 2021 was one example of this. In the world of AI, it's no different: page load times will be vital to sustaining a high rank. Plus, evidence shows that AI engines will often skip slow-loading pages, or content elements that are rendered with JavaScript, limiting a webpage's ability to show up.

NEXT STEP: Audit your website content through tools like Google's PageSpeed Insights to ensure information is delivered and accessible in a fast-loading, HTML format for AI engines.

4. Obsess Over Search Intent

INSIGHT: Google's AIO algorithm is tasked with providing searchers with a complete answer to their search query and infers search intent to do so.

NEXT STEP: Review pages impacted by AI Overviews and consider what a user wants from each page. Make edits to the page that support what users need.

5. Focus on E-E-A-T Signals

INSIGHT: Google has long prioritized content that emphasizes actual experience and authority. AI Overviews tend to include content from sources like Reddit and other forums, as these platforms are a wealth of advice from "real people."

NEXT STEP: Write in the first person, refer to your experience, and utilize robust author biographies (including links to social profiles) to support your authority.

6. Analyze Existing AI Overviews

INSIGHT: While AIOs change all the time, it can be helpful to understand what types of content are appearing in these elements today.

NEXT STEP: Audit cited webpages, and identify gaps between these pages and yours. Evaluate their content and compare it (substance and format) to yours. Analyze the content included in the AI Overview, as well, and make note of the various topics and questions covered. This can help inform your content strategy and structure.

7. Develop Unique Content

INSIGHT: While the AI Overviews for some queries, especially those more high-level queries, summarize a number of very similar articles, the algorithm is known to prize unique angles and distinct information.

NEXT STEP: In addition to your classic Q&A, consider adding in an expert note or opinion on the topic. Use stats, refer to real data points, and cite sources.

8. Consider Review Content

INSIGHT: Many lower-funnel searches (like “best gym for beginners”) result in short lists. AI Overview models compile these lists, or mentions of specific brands, from various mentions or citations across the web.

NEXT STEP: Consider developing “review” content to help bolster your brand as well as get cited in the AI Overview results for BOFU queries. Further, consider investing in credible, third-party review websites to build your brand’s presence across other areas of the web.

9. Cite Credible Sources and Data

INSIGHT: Referencing authoritative third-party sources, such as reputable websites, industry reports, or expert quotes, can boost your brand’s trustworthiness and add to the helpfulness of your content, in turn allowing AI to find and showcase you as a reliable resource.

NEXT STEP: Utilize third-party and first-party research, as well as quotes from industry leaders, to elevate your content strategy.

How is Paid Search Impacted by AI Overviews?

Paid ads made their way into AI Overviews shortly after their rollout, and are now included in AIOs across mobile and desktop devices. This is no surprise, as paid advertising made up over 75% of Google's revenue in 2024. As such, we expect Google to continue to expand ads within AIOs throughout 2025.

Google Ads Liaison Ginny Marvin has recently clarified how ad placements within AIOs work. For a single auction, an advertiser's ads can show either above/below the AIO or within it, but not in both places at the same time.

The match type and campaign type determine eligibility:

- Broad match keywords, Performance Max, and AI Max campaigns can trigger in-AIO placements.
- Exact match and phrase match will only trigger ads above/below the AIO.

When both match types are present in the same ad group, the narrower match type is prioritized, so exact match will typically win the auction and place the ad outside the AIO.

In most cases, the typical PPC ad unit (triggered by exact and phrase match) appears above the AI Overview, meaning they're more likely to continue to hold the most valuable real estate on the SERP. Meanwhile, ads placed inside the AIO module often sit lower in the SERP feature, are harder to spot, and are surrounded by informational content that's rarely conversion-focused.

Additionally, Google Ads currently offers no reporting or tracking specific to AIO placements. Knowing that the typical exact and phrase match placements will likely provide more top-of-page visibility, we aren't recommending expanding into broad match solely to access AIO inventory until reporting is available and we can evaluate performance data.

Interestingly, in recent years, advertisers have started to shift funds away from PPC due to its high cost and into other channels, including SEO.

However, given paid ads' top-of-page visibility, which is even more valuable in the current AIO-dominated SERP, and the increased inventory due to ads showing in AIOs, we expect advertisers to once again shift funds back into paid search.

What Does the Future of AI in Search Look Like?

Our crystal ball is in the shop, so we can't be completely confident in our predictions. However, there are a few recent announcements that give us some insight into how Google's adoption of AI in search may evolve.

AI in Search is Here to Stay

Google is known for testing new experiences and SERP elements. Many of these tests come and go, only to be removed from the SERP and never seen again.

However, AI Overviews, or more broadly, AI search experiences, are here to stay. Since September 2024, we've seen AI Overviews grow significantly in prevalence. For some of our clients, over 50% of tracked keywords now trigger the experience.

It's helpful to remember that we're still very early in the adoption curve of AI in general. According to an [IBM study](#), almost half of all respondents have concerns about AI accuracy and bias. You may have experienced some unusual AI results yourself, despite the fact that the engine has the same confidence in its outputs whether they're accurate or not.

In the coming months, we believe AI adoption will continue to grow. As audiences become more comfortable with AI, in part a result of work being done by Google, ChatGPT, and other AI leaders to boost confidence in the tools, AI experiences will continue to proliferate.

AI Mode

One such experience we expect to grow in usage is Google's AI Mode. With a broad rollout announced in May 2025, AI Mode replicates the conversational format of engines like ChatGPT. AI Mode is directly competing with ChatGPT in an attempt to keep Google's loyal searchers on the platform.

Today, AI Mode is limited to more informational responses while providing links to additional sources for more exploration. We expect this experience to become more robust in the future, as Google integrates more of its search experience into the AI Mode platform.

Growing Adoption of ChatGPT and Other Engines

Currently, ChatGPT accounts for [less than 1%](#) of all search traffic online. However, the platform continues to show strong user growth, with some reports suggesting that the platform now has [more than 1 billion weekly users](#).

Additionally, we're finding that AI Referral traffic is much higher-value than traditional organic search visitors. Across our B2B clients, AI Referral traffic averages almost 3x higher than organic search traffic.

This suggests that users in AI experiences are much warmer than other audiences, perhaps closer to conversion after seeing an implied endorsement of your brand from the AI engine. This underscores just how impactful brand mentions can be across AI experiences.

We all know how valuable it can be to be the first player on the scene when a new technology comes out. ChatGPT benefits from this first mover advantage, as it is considered the #1 AI Engine in the world.

Given this, and continued growth in investment from huge players like Microsoft, we believe ChatGPT will continue to play a central role in the growth and adoption of AI. Where Google's AI experiences will immediately bring AI to the masses, ChatGPT may be the more advanced counterpart for the more adept user.

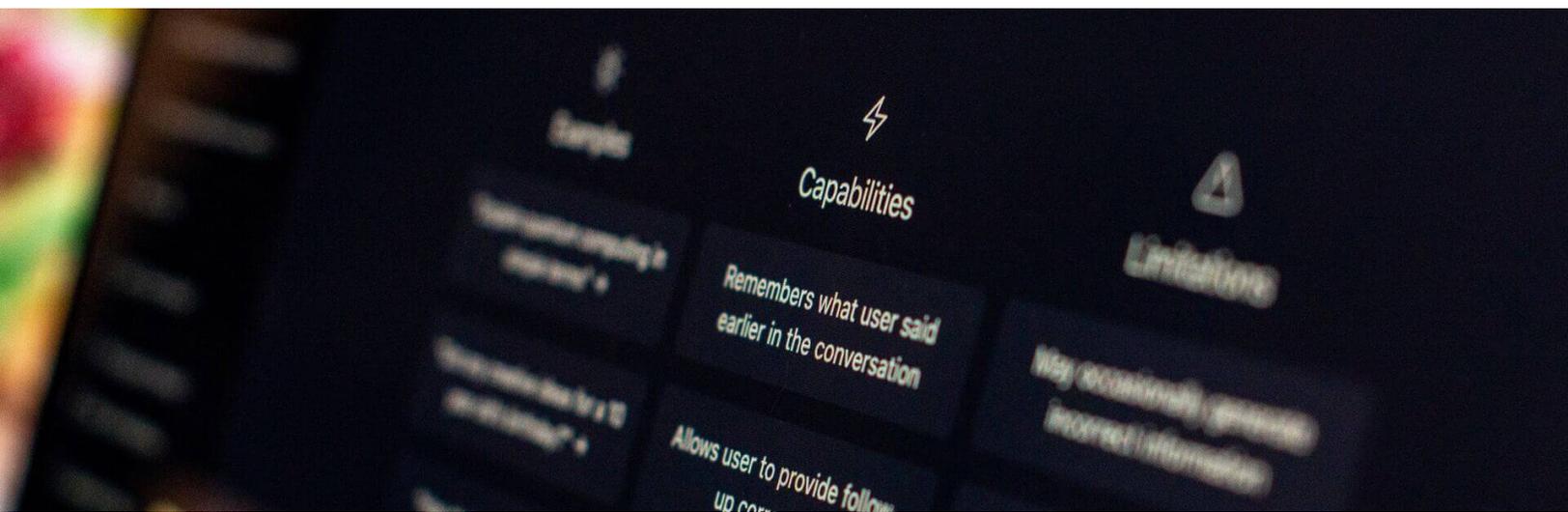
So, Is SEO Dead?

No! But it sure is changing. In the past year alone, we've seen more change in how people search than ever before.

What stands out to the search marketing community is the fact that there will always be a need for humans to optimize content for search engines, whether or not they're powered by AI.

Even the best LLM is still crawling webpages and trying to determine which source offers the best material for its response. AI engines will always be trained and based on content published by and for humans.

And as long as that's the case, there will always be an opportunity to optimize your website for LLMs better than your competitors. SEO has always been about aligning content with user behavior and needs while ensuring crawlability for search engines. As long as users are asking questions, we'll be here to help you answer them while earning the trust of your audience.



Bold Prediction: Google Search is Already a Dinosaur

For decades, the web has run on a simple model: the user conducts a query and Google provides a list of results that it believes are most relevant and helpful. The user then reviews those results, each dependent from one another, to try to arrive at an answer or complete a conversion. That model is now being disrupted.

With the rise of AI-powered tools like Google's AI Overviews and OpenAI's ChatGPT, users no longer need to click through a list of links to find answers. Instead, they're having conversational interactions, asking questions and getting synthesized, personalized responses directly from the AI.

This change from "searches" to "conversations" signals a new era in how users discover, evaluate, and even act on information. It also signals a major shift in what your website is for.

But what's coming next is even more disruptive: These AI systems won't just help users research, they'll help them transact. The entire customer journey is moving into the AI ecosystem.

AI-Native Conversions Are Already Possible

The infrastructure to support transactions within AI interfaces already exists. Most business systems today, CRMs like HubSpot, e-commerce platforms like Shopify, marketing tools, schedulers, and payment providers, are API-driven and cloud-native.

That means AI engines can already interact with them: retrieving inventory, submitting data, booking appointments, and completing purchases.

If your business logic is exposed via API, users won't need to visit your site. The AI can handle the entire interaction within its own environment.

For example, a user might say:

"Order a medium iced latte with oat milk from Pavement Coffee in Back Bay and have it ready ASAP."

If Pavement's ordering system is API-connected, the AI can place the order, pay, and confirm pickup without the user ever opening a website or app.

No search results. No checkout page. No app downloads. Just the request, fulfilled instantly, within the AI interface.

AI Crawlers Are Becoming the Primary Audience

As AI engines become the dominant way people interact with the web, there's growing scrutiny over how they access content and who gets paid.

Cloudflare CEO Matthew Prince has publicly called for AI companies to pay for crawling and indexing the open web. He argues that generative AI models are building commercial products using content they didn't create and publishers deserve compensation.

Cloudflare is developing the infrastructure to support this shift, including tools that let websites:

Block or rate-limit AI bots

Charge for AI crawler access

Monitor which models are using their data

This marks a fundamental change in how the web works. AI crawlers are no longer background infrastructure. They're becoming the primary consumers of websites. And the economics are starting to reflect that.

OpenAI's Browser Signals a Bigger Ambition

In July 2025, OpenAI launched its own browser, blurring the lines between search engine, chatbot, and traditional web browser. This new tool combines real-time web access with conversational responses, offering users direct, synthesized answers instead of directing them to third-party sites.

More importantly, it positions OpenAI to control the entire user journey from discovery to decision within a single, AI-first interface. As transactions and forms become integrated into this experience, websites may no longer be part of the user flow at all.

The New Role of the Website

In this new ecosystem, websites serve a different purpose. They're not built primarily for humans anymore. They're also built for AI.

That means businesses need to:

Structure content with clarity and schema so it's easily parsed

Expose key functions and data via APIs

Optimize not just for ranking, but for visibility and action inside AI interfaces

Your real audience isn't just people, it's the AI agents acting on their behalf.

To succeed in this shift, marketers must reimagine the website not as a destination, but as infrastructure powering the next generation of customer interaction.



Synapse is a performance marketing agency specializing in paid search, SEO, AI search optimization, content marketing.

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