

In Google AI Mode, 44.9% of citations point back at Google. In AI Overviews, 9.9%.

Your citation count can read as a loss while your product is winning inside the answer.

AI Mode builds more of its answers out of Google's own rich-result surfaces than AI Overviews ever did. When your product wins a slot in one, the answer cites the module rather than your page.

The gap is eight months old, not eight days

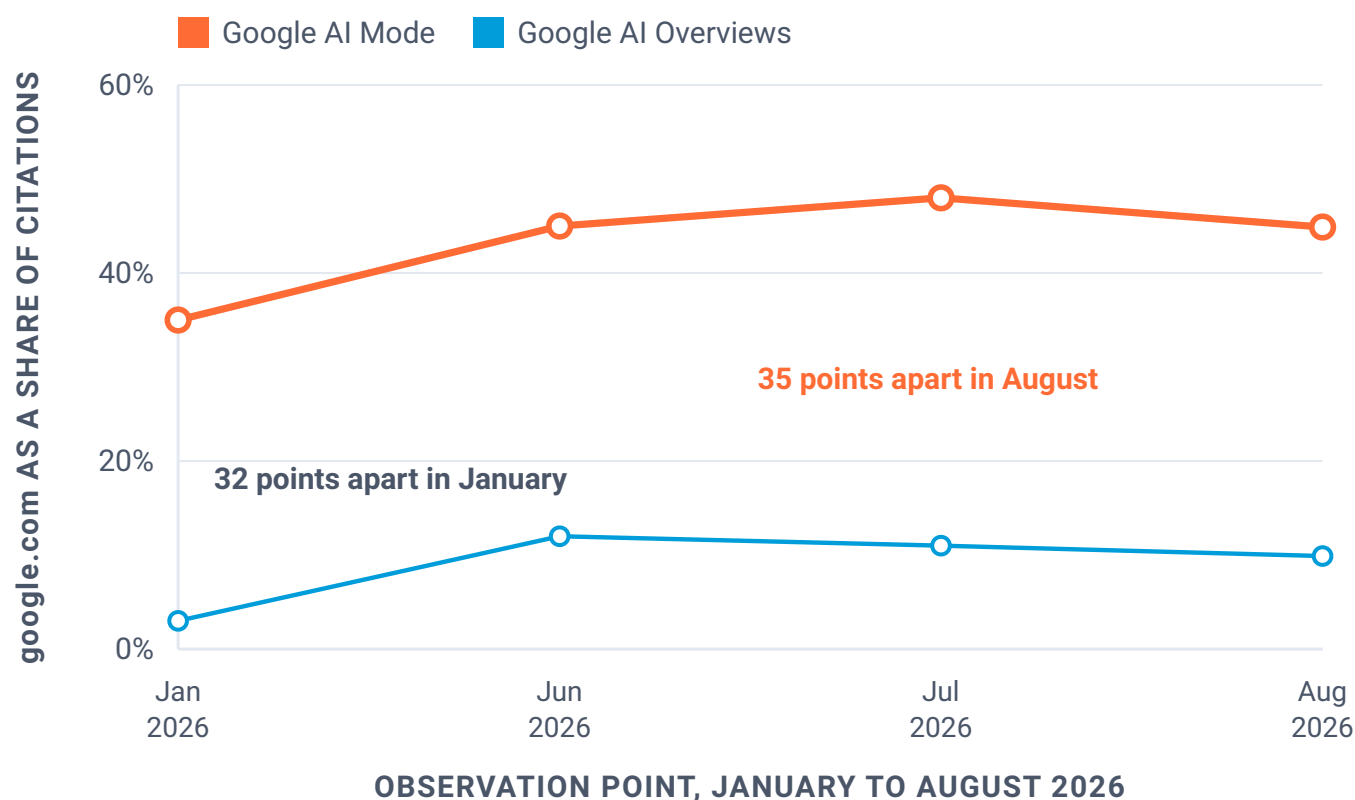


Figure 1. google.com as a share of all citations each engine makes, four observation points from January to August 2026. Vertical axis shows google.com as a share of citations. Horizontal axis shows the observation point. Plotted as absolute share, never indexed.

Source: BrightEdge Insights from AI Hyper Cube. A tracked prompt set covering consumer product and finance queries, United States.

Google confirmed in August 2026 that it routes outbound search clicks through its own redirect layer. This chart predates it. AI Mode was already citing google.com in 35% of its citations in January, against 3% in AI Overviews. A change confirmed in August does not explain a gap that was 32 points wide in January.

Same question, two constructions

PROMPT	AI MODE, CITED DOMAINS	AI OVERVIEWS, CITED DOMAINS
"fruit snacks"	google.com	walmart.com welchsfruitsnacks.com wikipedia.org
"things to do in orlando"	google.com	visitorlando.com tripadvisor.com neverstoptraveling.com makingmyownlane.com
"local restaurants"	google.com	reddit.comhotels.com
"american airlines stock price"	google.com	robinhood.comtradingview.com marketbeat.com

Figure 2. Cited domains for four example prompts, Google AI Mode against Google AI Overviews, August 2026. These four are shown as illustration, not as a sample. Replicated to a stable set, in which every prompt returned google.com on AI Mode. The measurement is Figure 1.
Source: BrightEdge Insights from AI Hyper Cube. United States.

On "american airlines stock price" AI Mode returns google.com and nothing else, while AI Overviews returns robinhood.com, tradingview.com and marketbeat.com. Retail, travel, local and finance all split the same way. AI Mode answers from a Google surface, AI Overviews cites outbound sources.

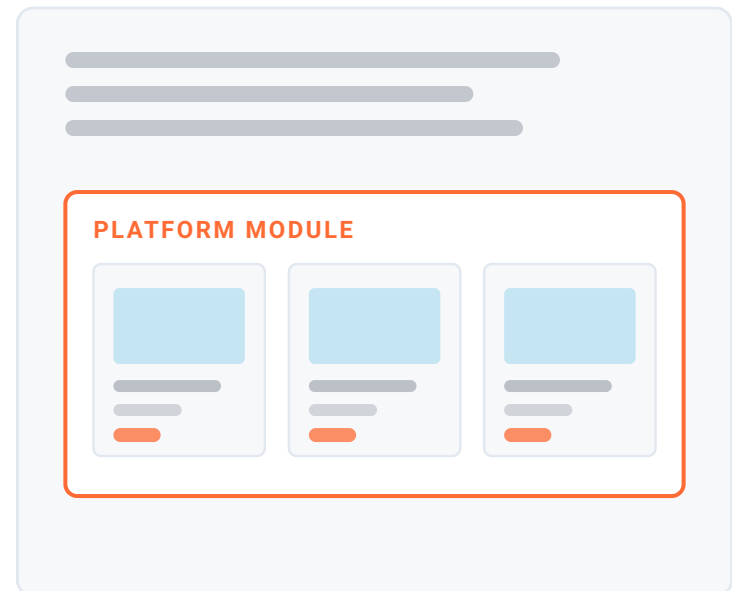
This is rich results, extended into the answer

ANSWER BUILT FROM LINKS OUT



Three citations. Three clicks available.

ANSWER BUILT FROM AN OWNED MODULE



One citation. Your product is inside it.

Figure 3. How the two answer constructions differ. Schematic, not to scale. Left, an answer assembled from outbound links, which produces one citation per publisher. Right, an answer assembled from a platform module, which produces one citation for the module while brand data sits inside it.

Source: BrightEdge.

Product grids, price comparison strips, fare modules and rate tables have shaped classic Search for years. AI Mode extended those same surfaces into a conversational answer at a scale AI Overviews never reached. It concentrates in eCommerce and Travel.

Four reads on your own numbers

✓ **A low AI Mode citation count is not proof of lost visibility**

Read it next to your presence in the rich results the answer is built from. In categories where modules carry the page, the citation report and the win are recorded in two different places. google.com accounts for 44.9% of AI Mode citations and 9.9% of AI Overviews citations, a multiple of 4.5x. That is one brand measured against two constructions.

✓ **eCommerce and Travel feel this first**

These are the categories where rich results already have the deepest footprint in classic Search. Product grids and price comparisons in retail, fare and hotel modules in travel. That existing infrastructure is what AI Mode has to extend into, which is why the pattern concentrates there.

✓ **Audit the three inputs you control**

Product, Offer and Review schema quality. Feed completeness on pricing, availability, GTINs and images. Crawlability and indexation. Rich-result eligibility is governed by inputs you can check this week, unlike a ranking model you cannot see inside.

✓ **Google is still the channel to plan around**

Strengthen the structured data that already earns rich results in classic Search. The same schema and the same feed serve the classic result and the AI Mode answer. Fix once, and both surfaces improve.

Three inputs decide whether your data is eligible at all

1

Feed quality

For retail, product feed completeness and accuracy on pricing, availability, descriptions, attributes, ratings and imagery. For travel, the equivalent fare and property feeds. The same feed populates the classic grid and the AI Mode answer.

2

Supporting schema

Product, Offer and Review markup. Completeness and validity here decide eligibility for the modules AI Mode draws from. Check what is marked up, then check that it validates.

3

Differentiated content

For publishing and finance, entity ownership and commentary written by real people, carrying data that is not widely available and not generated by AI. Underneath all three, crawlability and indexation.

BrightEdge measures citations across Google AI Mode, AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Perplexity and Gemini, alongside the classic result. You can see which surface absorbed a citation.

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