5W Public Relations
Research · 2026

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS · 2026 RESEARCH

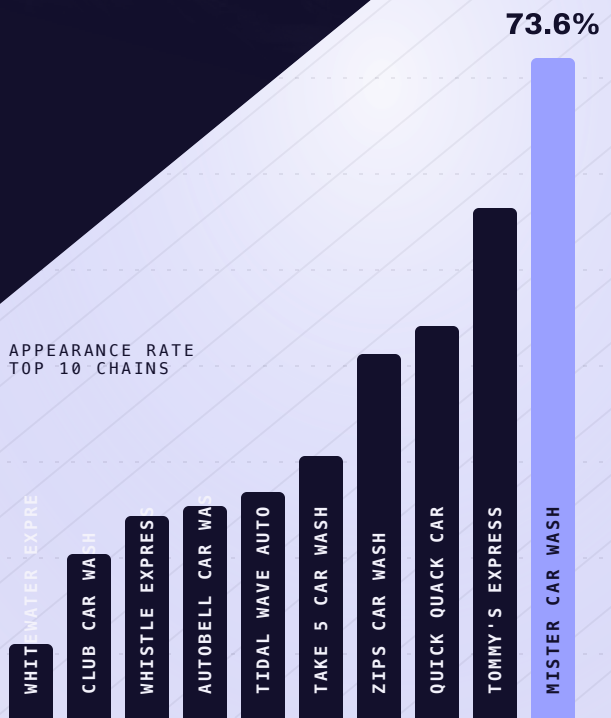
CAR WASH CHAINS VISIBILITY INDEX

Which car wash chains AI engines name
288 AI answers · October 28, 2026

Measured :
October 28, 2026
24 questions × 3 runs · 288 AI answers

Engines :
ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity
plus 61 Google AI Overviews

Prepared by :
5W Public Relations
5wpr.com



AT A GLANCE

Mister Car Wash leads. Tommy's Express is second.

Mister Car Wash was the chain that ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity named most often. Mister Car Wash appeared in 212 of 288 answers (73.6%) measured on October 28, 2026. Tommy's Express came next at 164 of 288 (56.9%). Mister Car Wash was named first more often than any other chain, in 129 of 288 answers. Google AI Overviews appeared on 61 of 62 searches (98.4%).

> Version 2. This version replaces the first version of this study, first published June 22, 2026. It uses measured counts, so the two versions are not comparable.

288
AI answers analyzed across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity

73.6%
of answers named Mister Car Wash, the most-named (212 of 288)

24
tracked chains named at least once (of 29)

98.4%
of Google searches showed an AI Overview (61 of 62)

INSIDE THIS REPORT

01 Key findings 03
02 The leaderboard 04
03 Profiles 06
04 How the engines differ 07
05 Google AI Overviews 08
06 Leaders by question 09
07 Who the engines cite 10
08 Frequently asked questions 13
09 Methodology 14
A Appendix: the 24 questions 15

KEY FINDINGS

01 What the data shows

MOST NAMED

212/288 (73.6%)

Mister Car Wash appeared in 212 of 288 four-engine answers (CI 68.2–78.4%). Tommy's Express appeared in 164 of 288 (56.9%, CI 51.2–62.5%). The intervals do not overlap.

NAMED FIRST

129/288 (44.8%)

Mister Car Wash was the first chain named in 129 of 288 answers, more than any other tracked chain. Average first position: 1.9.

GEMINI SKEW

55/72 (76.4%)

Gemini named Tommy's Express in 55 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 31 to 43 of 72.

CHATGPT SKEW

28/72 (38.9%)

ChatGPT named Autobell Car Wash in 28 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 6 to 17 of 72.

AIO TRIGGER

61/62 (98.4%)

Google AI Overviews appeared on 61 of 62 searches (CI 91.4–99.7%). On the other search, no overview was shown.

AIO LEADER

39/61 (63.9%)

Mister Car Wash was the chain named most often in AI Overviews, at 39 of 61, followed by Tommy's Express at 32 of 61 (52.5%). In the four-engine set, Mister Car Wash was named in 212 of 288 answers (73.6%).

TOP DOMAIN

105/288 (36.5%)

washindex.com was cited in 105 of 288 grounded four-engine answers, with 192 of 2,325 citations (8.3%). carwash.com came second with 104 citations in 52 answers (18.1%).

NO TRACKED NAME

0/12 (0%)

For 'Which trade publications cover the US car wash industry?', none of the tracked chains was named in any of 12 four-engine answers.

OWN-SITE CITATIONS

74/288 (25.7%)

Mister Car Wash's own domains were cited in 74 of 288 grounded answers (25.7%), more than any other tracked name. Tommy's Express followed at 55 of 288. In Google AI Overviews, Mister Car Wash's site was cited in 11 of 61 overviews. 10 tracked names had no own-site citation.

THE LEADERBOARD

02 Which chains AI engines name

Appearance rate across 288 four-engine answers. The bar is the 95% confidence interval; overlapping bars cannot be told apart at this sample size.

	BRAND	RATE	NAMED IN
1	Mister Car Wash	73.6%	212/288
2	Tommy's Express	56.9%	164/288
3	Quick Quack Car Wash	43.8%	126/288
4	Zips Car Wash	40.6%	117/288
5	Take 5 Car Wash	29.2%	84/288
6	Tidal Wave Auto Spa	25.3%	73/288
7	Autobell Car Wash	23.6%	68/288
8	Whistle Express Car Wash	22.6%	65/288
9	Club Car Wash	18.4%	53/288
10	WhiteWater Express Car Wash	8.3%	24/288
11	GO Car Wash	7.3%	21/288
12	Jax Kar Wash	7.3%	21/288
13	Express Wash Concepts	6.9%	20/288
14	ModWash	6.6%	19/288
15	Splash Car Wash	5.6%	16/288

THE LEADERBOARD

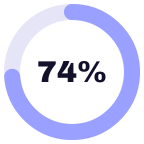
02 The full list

Own-domain citation is the share of 288 grounded answers that cited the official domains of each name (subdomains included). Citation share is of all 2,325 citations.

#	CHAIN	NAMED IN	APPEARANCE RATE	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
1	**Mister Car Wash**	212/288	**73.6%**	68.2–78.4%	1.9	25.7% (74/288)	3.3%
2	**Tommy's Express**	164/288	**56.9%**	51.2–62.5%	3.1	19.1% (55/288)	3.1%
3	**Quick Quack Car Wash**	126/288	**43.8%**	38.1–49.5%	3.2	11.1% (32/288)	1.4%
4	**Zips Car Wash**	117/288	**40.6%**	35.1–46.4%	3.5	15.6% (45/288)	2.1%
5	**Take 5 Car Wash**	84/288	**29.2%**	24.2–34.7%	3.8	6.3% (18/288)	0.8%
6	**Tidal Wave Auto Spa**	73/288	**25.3%**	20.7–30.7%	4.4	3.5% (10/288)	0.4%
7	**Autobell Car Wash**	68/288	**23.6%**	19.1–28.8%	3.6	8.7% (25/288)	1.1%
8	**Whistle Express Car Wash**	65/288	**22.6%**	18.1–27.7%	3.6	3.1% (9/288)	0.4%
9	**Club Car Wash**	53/288	**18.4%**	14.4–23.3%	5.1	3.5% (10/288)	0.4%
10	**WhiteWater Express Car Wash**	24/288	**8.3%**	5.7–12.1%	7	0% (0/288)	0%
11	**GO Car Wash**	21/288	**7.3%**	4.8–10.9%	8	2.8% (8/288)	0.3%
12	**Jax Kar Wash**	21/288	**7.3%**	4.8–10.9%	4.7	10.4% (30/288)	1.3%
13	**Express Wash Concepts**	20/288	**6.9%**	4.5–10.5%	5.1	2.4% (7/288)	0.3%
14	**ModWash**	19/288	**6.6%**	4.3–10.1%	7.6	0% (0/288)	0%
15	**Splash Car Wash**	16/288	**5.6%**	3.4–8.8%	7.4	0.3% (1/288)	0%
16	**Cobblestone Auto Spa**	15/288	**5.2%**	3.2–8.4%	3.6	2.4% (7/288)	0.3%
17	**El Car Wash**	13/288	**4.5%**	2.7–7.6%	7.6	1% (3/288)	0.1%
18	**Crew Carwash**	11/288	**3.8%**	2.1–6.7%	7.2	3.1% (9/288)	0.4%
19	**Spotless Brands**	7/288	**2.4%**	1.2–4.9%	6.1	1.4% (4/288)	0.2%
20	**Caliber Car Wash**	6/288	**2.1%**	1–4.5%	10.3	0.7% (2/288)	0.1%
21	**Mammoth Holdings**	4/288	**1.4%**	0.5–3.5%	13.3	0% (0/288)	0%
22	**Russell Speeders**	4/288	**1.4%**	0.5–3.5%	2	0% (0/288)	0%
23	**Hoffman Car Wash**	1/288	**0.3%**	0.1–1.9%	2	0% (0/288)	0%
24	**Mr. Magic Car Wash**	1/288	**0.3%**	0.1–1.9%	2	0.3% (1/288)	0%

PROFILES

03 The top eight, side by side

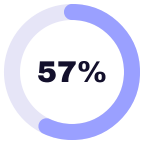


RANK 1

Mister Car Wash

212/288 answers · 95% CI 68.2–78.4%

1.9	25.7%	3.3%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (74/288)	citation share

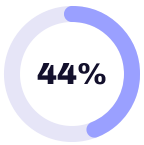


RANK 2

Tommy's Express

164/288 answers · 95% CI 51.2–62.5%

3.1	19.1%	3.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (55/288)	citation share

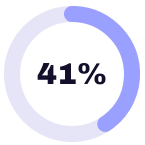


RANK 3

Quick Quack Car Wash

126/288 answers · 95% CI 38.1–49.5%

3.2	11.1%	1.4%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (32/288)	citation share



RANK 4

Zips Car Wash

117/288 answers · 95% CI 35.1–46.4%

3.5	15.6%	2.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (45/288)	citation share



RANK 5

Take 5 Car Wash

84/288 answers · 95% CI 24.2–34.7%

3.8	6.3%	0.8%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (18/288)	citation share



RANK 6

Tidal Wave Auto Spa

73/288 answers · 95% CI 20.7–30.7%

4.4	3.5%	0.4%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (10/288)	citation share

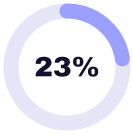


RANK 7

Autobell Car Wash

68/288 answers · 95% CI 19.1–28.8%

3.6	8.7%	1.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (25/288)	citation share



RANK 8

Whistle Express Car Wash

65/288 answers · 95% CI 18.1–27.7%

3.6	3.1%	0.4%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (9/288)	citation share

04 HOW THE ENGINES DIFFER

Same questions, different answers

Gemini named Tommy's Express in 55 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 31 to 43 of 72. ChatGPT named Autobell Car Wash in 28 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 6 to 17 of 72.

ChatGPT

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Mister Car Wash	**84.7%**
Tommy's Express	**59.7%**
Quick Quack Car Wash	**58.3%**
Zips Car Wash	**48.6%**
Autobell Car Wash	**38.9%**
Take 5 Car Wash	**16.7%**

Claude

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Mister Car Wash	**72.2%**
Tommy's Express	**48.6%**
Quick Quack Car Wash	**43.1%**
Zips Car Wash	**37.5%**
Take 5 Car Wash	**34.7%**
Tidal Wave Auto Spa	**34.7%**

Gemini

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Mister Car Wash	**76.4%**
Tommy's Express	**76.4%**
Quick Quack Car Wash	**44.4%**
Zips Car Wash	**41.7%**
Take 5 Car Wash	**34.7%**
Whistle Express Car Wash	**30.6%**

Perplexity

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Mister Car Wash	**61.1%**
Tommy's Express	**43.1%**
Zips Car Wash	**34.7%**
Take 5 Car Wash	**30.6%**
Quick Quack Car Wash	**29.2%**
Whistle Express Car Wash	**27.8%**

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

05 The fifth engine

Google AI Overviews were captured through 62 U.S. desktop searches and scored only where an overview appeared, so five-engine figures use 288 + 61 = 349 answers.



TRIGGER RATE

Google AI Overviews appeared on 61 of 62 searches (98.4%, CI 91.4–99.7%). The other search showed no overview. Within the 61 overviews, Mister Car Wash was named in 39 (63.9%), Tommy's Express was named in 32 (52.5%), Quick Quack Car Wash was named in 22 (36.1%), Whistle Express Car Wash was named in 17 (27.9%). youtube.com was the most-cited source, with 17 citations and an appearance in 14 of 61 overviews.

FIVE-ENGINE RANK (FOUR-ENGINE RANK IN ARROWS)

1	Mister Car Wash	71.9%	=
2	Tommy's Express	56.2%	=
3	Quick Quack Car Wash	42.4%	=
4	Zips Car Wash	37.5%	=
5	Take 5 Car Wash	26.1%	=
6	Tidal Wave Auto Spa	24.9%	=
7	Whistle Express Car Wash	23.5%	▲ 1
8	Autobell Car Wash	22.1%	▼ 1
9	Club Car Wash	17.5%	=
10	WhiteWater Express Car Wash	8.3%	=

06

LEADERS BY QUESTION

Who each question surfaces first

Six questions from the set. Each tile uses that question's own four-engine answers as the denominator.

Q01 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 100%

Quick Quack Car Wash	83.3%
Tommy's Express	58.3%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q02 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 75%

Zips Car Wash	58.3%
Tommy's Express	41.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q03 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 100%

Zips Car Wash	83.3%
Quick Quack Car Wash	41.7%

AI Overview shown on 2 of 2 searches

Q04 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 100%

TIED WITH TOMMY'S EXPRESS

Tommy's Express	100%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q05 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 100%

Tommy's Express	66.7%
Quick Quack Car Wash	66.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q06 · 12 ANSWERS

Mister Car Wash 75%

Autobell Car Wash	66.7%
Tommy's Express	33.3%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Most-cited domains

The four engines produced 2,325 citations in total. washindex.com was cited most often, with 192 citations (8.3%) across 105 answers. Next came carwash.com (104), mycarwashguide.com (65), mistercarwash.com (61), tommys-express.com (57), cptop100.com (53).

FOUR AI ENGINES · SHARE OF 288 GROUNDED ANSWERS

washindex.com	**36.5%**
mistercarwash.com	**20.8%**
cptop100.com	**18.4%**
carwash.com	**18.1%**
mmcginvest.com	**17.4%**
tommys-express.com	**17%**
mycarwashguide.com	**14.9%**
5wpr.com	**14.9%**
carwashadvisory.com	**13.9%**
zipscarwash.com	**13.5%**

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS · SHARE OF 61 OVERVIEWS

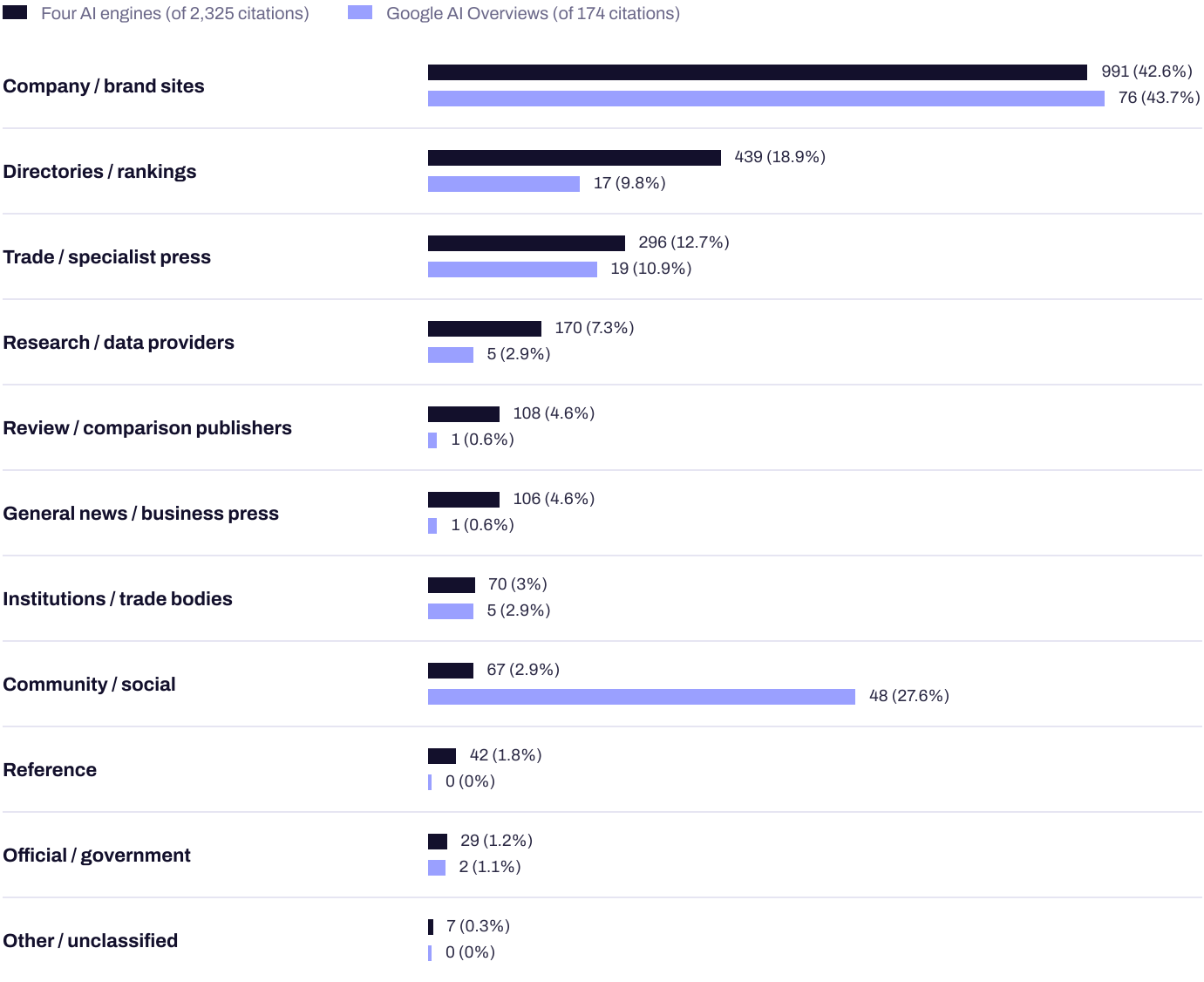
youtube.com	**23%**
mistercarwash.com	**18%**
reddit.com	**18%**
carwash.com	**14.8%**
facebook.com	**13.1%**
cptop100.com	**11.5%**
tommys-express.com	**9.8%**
zipscarwash.com	**9.8%**
instagram.com	**8.2%**
carwashadvisory.com	**8.2%**

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Citation share by source type

Share of all citations by the type of site cited. Source types were reclassified on October 29, 2026. 'Company / brand sites' now covers only the official sites of companies, brands and schools; publishers, directories, trade bodies and other sites have their own types, and sites that could not be placed are 'Other / unclassified'.



07

WHAT THE DATA SUGGESTS

How can a car wash chain improve its AI visibility?

These steps follow from the measured results above. They describe what the engines cited in this study and are not a guarantee of results.

STEP	WHAT THIS STUDY MEASURED
Put your facts on your own domain.	Mister Car Wash's own domains were cited in 25.7% of grounded answers, Tommy's Express's in 19.1% and Zips Car Wash's in 15.6%. Jax Kar Wash was named in only 7.3% of answers, yet its own domains were cited in 10.4%.
Keep your facts accurate on the sites engines cite.	The most-cited sites other than the tracked names' own were washindex.com (in 36.5% of grounded answers), cptop100.com (18.4%), carwash.com (18.1%), mmcginvest.com (17.4%) and mycarwashguide.com (14.9%). Directories and rankings supplied 18.9% of citations and trade and specialist press 12.7%.
Check each engine separately.	Gemini named Tommy's Express in 76.4% of answers against 43.1% on Perplexity. ChatGPT named Autobell Car Wash in 38.9% of answers against 8.3% on Claude.
Do not ignore video and community sites.	Community and social sites supplied 27.6% of Google AI Overview citations against 2.9% in the four chat engines. youtube.com was cited in 23.0% of overviews, reddit.com in 18.0% and facebook.com in 13.1%.
Watch names outside the tracked list.	Prime Car Wash (19), Professional Carwashing & Detailing (14), Car Wash Advisory (10), Fleet Clean USA (9) were named often but were not tracked.
Re-run the same questions every month.	Compare counts and intervals, not ranks. The 24 questions are in the appendix.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

08 Frequently asked questions

Q1 Which chain do AI engines name most often?

Mister Car Wash, named in 212 of 288 four-engine answers (73.6%, CI 68.2–78.4%). Tommy's Express was second at 164 of 288 (56.9%).

Q2 Which chain is named first most often?

Mister Car Wash was the first chain named in 129 of 288 answers, with an average first position of 1.9.

Q3 How often do Google AI Overviews appear for these questions?

An overview appeared on 61 of 62 searches (98.4%, CI 91.4–99.7%). Within those 61 overviews, Mister Car Wash was named most often, in 39 (63.9%).

Q4 Which sources do the engines cite?

Across 2,325 four-engine citations, washindex.com was cited most (192 citations, in 105 of 288 grounded answers), followed by carwash.com (104 citations).

Q5 Do the four engines agree?

Only in part. Gemini named Tommy's Express in 55 of 72 answers, against 31 to 43 of 72 on the other engines. ChatGPT named Autobell Car Wash in 28 of 72 answers, against 6 to 17 of 72 on the other engines.

METHODOLOGY

09 How this study was measured

24	×	3	×	4	=	288	+	62
questions		runs each		AI engines		answers		Google searches · 61 AI Overviews

24 questions, each asked 3 times on each engine, measured October 28, 2026. Market: United States, English. The destination site was not mentioned to any engine. Gemini answers were produced by gemini-3.6-flash; every Gemini answer in this report used that one model. All 72 Gemini answers had search sources. Chains count as named when they appear in the answer text; products and name variants roll up to the tracked name. Longer names take precedence over shorter overlapping ones, and common words count only in context. Unicode apostrophes and dashes are normalized.

ENGINE	MODEL IDS CALLED	ASKED	RETURNED	GROUNDED
ChatGPT	gpt-5-mini	72	72	72
Claude	claude-sonnet-5-5	72	72	72
Gemini	gemini-3.6-flash	72	72	72
Perplexity	sonar-pro	72	72	72
Google AI Overviews	DataForSEO Google SERP (live, advanced)	62	61 shown	61

Own-domain citations count a domain plus all its subdomains, with the same rule in every table.

METRIC DEFINITIONS

- Appearance rate: answers naming the chain ÷ answers returned, with Wilson 95% intervals.
- First mention: average order in which the chain first appears (1 = first).
- Own-domain citation: grounded answers citing the chain's domains ÷ grounded answers.
- Citation share: citations to the chain's domains ÷ all citations.

LIMITATIONS

- Measured on one day, October 28, 2026. Each engine answered 24 questions 3 times. Answers came from each engine's API (model IDs above); the consumer apps can answer differently.
- Only 29 tracked chains were scored. Untracked names that appeared often were not scored, including Prime Car Wash (19), Professional Carwashing & Detailing (14), Car Wash Advisory (10), Fleet Clean USA (9).
- AI Overview figures are based on only 61 overviews, so estimates for individual chains are less precise than the four-engine figures.
- 10 Google searches could not be fetched by DataForSEO after three tries. They are excluded from the AI Overview figures, so the trigger rate uses 62 searches.
- Take 5 Car Wash and Whistle Express are counted as separate names. Whistle Express bought Take 5 Car Wash, but not every location has been renamed yet.
- Reports describe what the engines said, attributed to the engines. They make no judgement about the people or organizations named and are not legal or financial advice.
- Some answers were asked again on October 28, 2026 after a storage error. The earlier texts are kept in the evidence archive and are not used in the counts.
- One question, "Mister Car Wash vs Tommy's Express: which is better?", names two chains, so those counts include up to 12 answers to it. Without it, Mister Car Wash and Tommy's Express are still the top two.
- Intervals treat each answer as independent, so they understate uncertainty for the 24 repeated questions.
- Corrected October 29, 2026: own-domain citation now uses each name's official domains (subdomains included), listed in the evidence file entity_rollups.csv. Names without a resolvable official site count zero.

A

APPENDIX

The 24 questions

Questions marked "Core question" are the original study questions, asked word for word. The others are added neutral questions.

#	QUESTION	GROUP	SOURCE
01	What is the best car wash chain in the US?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
02	Is an unlimited car wash membership worth it?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
03	Which car wash chain has the best unlimited wash plan?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
04	Mister Car Wash vs Tommy's Express: which is better?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
05	What is the best express car wash chain?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
06	What is the best full-service car wash chain?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
07	Are touchless car washes better for your paint?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
08	What is the best car wash franchise to own?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
09	Which car wash chains are growing the fastest?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
10	What is the biggest car wash company in the US?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
11	Which car wash chains offer interior cleaning?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
12	Which national car wash chains publish unlimited membership prices online?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
13	Which US car wash chains operate an express-exterior model?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
14	Which national car wash chains offer full-service cleaning?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
15	Which car wash operators disclose the number of US locations they own?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
16	Which car wash franchise brands publish franchise disclosure documents?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
17	What is the difference between a conveyor car wash and an in-bay automatic wash?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
18	Which national car wash chains publish membership cancellation terms?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
19	Which US car wash chains offer multi-vehicle membership plans?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
20	Which car wash operators publish information about water reclamation?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
21	Which sources track acquisitions among US car wash chains?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
22	Which car wash brands offer franchised and company-owned locations?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
23	Which trade publications cover the US car wash industry?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
24	Which national car wash chains publish vehicle restrictions and cleaning policies?	Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION

5W

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS · RESEARCH

Car Wash AI Visibility Index 2026

Measured October 28, 2026 across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity and Google AI Overviews.

WEB
5wpr.com

RESEARCH
5wpr.com/research