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Research · 2026

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M&A LAWYERS AI DISCOVERY INDEX

Which M&A firms AI names
288 AI answers · October 28, 2026

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

Engines :
ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity
plus 65 Google AI Overviews

Prepared by :
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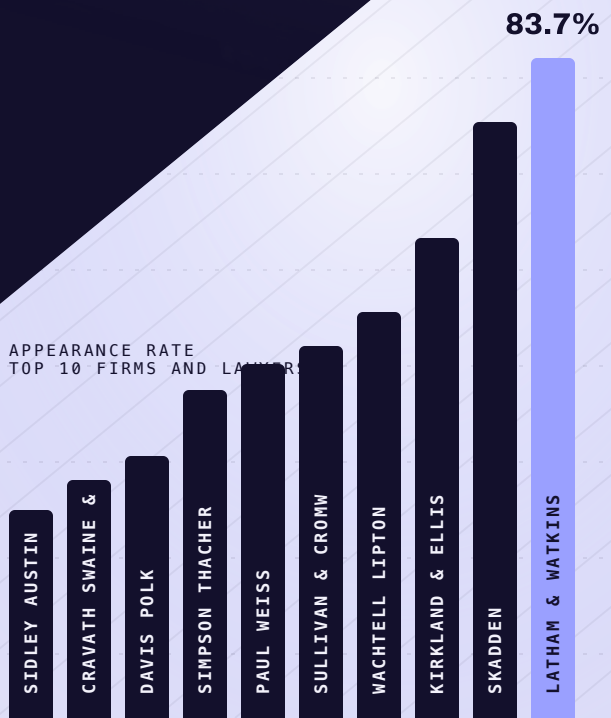

AT A GLANCE

Latham and Skadden lead. The two are within the margin of error.

Latham & Watkins was the firm or lawyer that ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity named most often. Latham & Watkins appeared in 241 of 288 answers (83.7%) measured on October 28, 2026. Skadden came next at 218 of 288 (75.7%). The two confidence intervals overlap, so the data cannot confirm that Latham & Watkins is ahead. Latham & Watkins was named first more often than any other firm or lawyer, in 92 of 288 answers. Google AI Overviews appeared on 65 of 65 searches (100%).

> Version 2. This version replaces the first version of this study, first published May 27, 2026. It uses measured counts, so the two versions are not comparable.

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

83.7%
of answers named Latham & Watkins, the most-named (241 of 288)

13
tracked firms and lawyers named at least once (of 13)

100%
of Google searches showed an AI Overview (65 of 65)

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KEY FINDINGS

01 What the data shows

MOST NAMED

241/288 (83.7%)

Latham & Watkins appeared in 241 of 288 four-engine answers (CI 79–87.5%). Skadden appeared in 218 of 288 (75.7%, CI 70.4–80.3%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated.

NAMED FIRST

92/288 (31.9%)

Latham & Watkins was the first firm or lawyer named in 92 of 288 answers, more than any other tracked firm or lawyer. Average first position: 2.6.

CLAUDE SKEW

65/72 (90.3%)

Claude named Kirkland & Ellis in 65 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 24 to 51 of 72.

CLAUDE SKEW

36/72 (50%)

Claude named Davis Polk in 36 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 15 to 24 of 72.

OWN-SITE CITATIONS

120/288 (41.7%)

Latham & Watkins's own domains were cited in 120 of 288 grounded answers, more than any other tracked firm or lawyer. Skadden followed at 84 of 288. Every tracked firm and lawyer had at least one.

AIO TRIGGER

65/65 (100%)

Google AI Overviews appeared on 65 of 65 searches (CI 94.4–100%).

AIO LEADER

41/65 (63.1%)

Latham & Watkins was the firm or lawyer named most often in AI Overviews, at 41 of 65, followed by Kirkland & Ellis at 34 of 65 (52.3%). In the four-engine set, Latham & Watkins was named in 241 of 288 answers (83.7%).

TOP DOMAIN

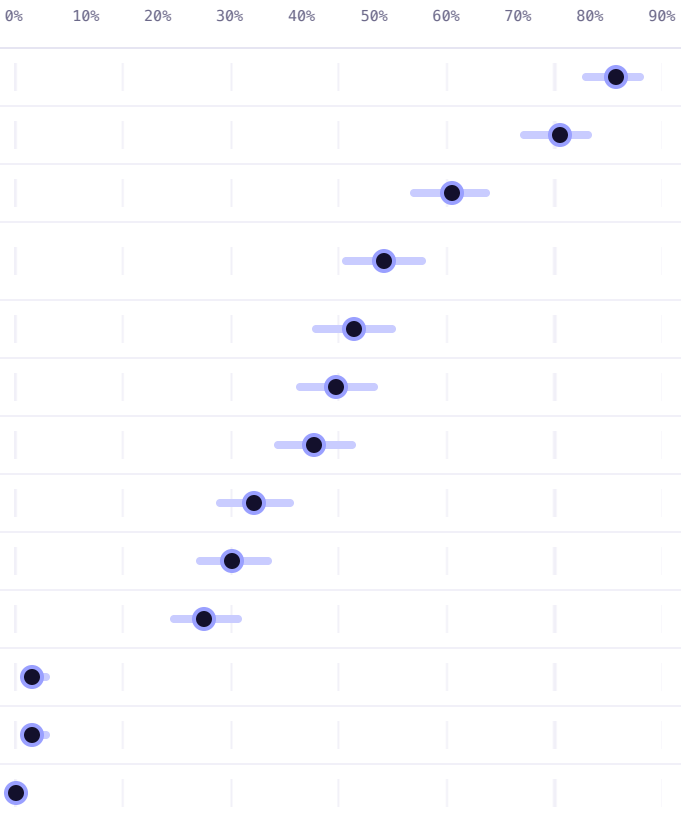
104/288 (36.1%)

chambers.com was cited in 104 of 288 grounded four-engine answers, with 156 of 2,564 citations (6.1%). lw.com came second with 155 citations in 120 answers (41.7%).

02 THE LEADERBOARD

Which firms and lawyers 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	Latham & Watkins	83.7%	241/288
2	Skadden	75.7%	218/288
3	Kirkland & Ellis	60.8%	175/288
4	Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz	51.4%	148/288
5	Sullivan & Cromwell	47.2%	136/288
6	Paul Weiss	44.8%	129/288
7	Simpson Thacher	41.7%	120/288
8	Davis Polk	33.3%	96/288
9	Cravath Swaine & Moore	30.2%	87/288
10	Sidley Austin	26.4%	76/288
11	Faiza Saeed	2.4%	7/288
12	Martin Lipton	2.4%	7/288
13	H. Rodgin Cohen	0.3%	1/288

02 THE LEADERBOARD

The full list

Own-domain citation is the share of 288 grounded answers that cited the entity's own domains (subdomains included). Citation share is of all 2,564 citations.

#	FIRM OR LAWYER	NAMED IN	APPEARANCE RATE	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
1	**Latham & Watkins**	241/288	**83.7%**	79–87.5%	2.6	41.7% (120/288)	6%
2	**Skadden**	218/288	**75.7%**	70.4–80.3%	3.4	29.2% (84/288)	4.7%
3	**Kirkland & Ellis**	175/288	**60.8%**	55–66.2%	2.9	12.5% (36/288)	1.4%
4	**Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz**	148/288	**51.4%**	45.6–57.1%	3.6	8.3% (24/288)	1%
5	**Sullivan & Cromwell**	136/288	**47.2%**	41.5–53%	4.4	10.1% (29/288)	1.2%
6	**Paul Weiss**	129/288	**44.8%**	39.2–50.6%	4.9	14.2% (41/288)	1.6%
7	**Simpson Thacher**	120/288	**41.7%**	36.1–47.4%	5.2	8% (23/288)	0.9%
8	**Davis Polk**	96/288	**33.3%**	28.1–39%	5.1	5.2% (15/288)	0.6%
9	**Cravath Swaine & Moore**	87/288	**30.2%**	25.2–35.7%	4.5	5.6% (16/288)	0.7%
10	**Sidley Austin**	76/288	**26.4%**	21.6–31.8%	3.6	16.3% (47/288)	2.1%
11	**Faiza Saeed**	7/288	**2.4%**	1.2–4.9%	2.6	5.6% (16/288)	0.7%
12	**Martin Lipton**	7/288	**2.4%**	1.2–4.9%	2	8.3% (24/288)	1%
13	**H. Rodgin Cohen**	1/288	**0.3%**	0.1–1.9%	3	10.1% (29/288)	1.2%

PROFILES

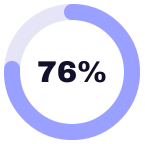
03 The top eight, side by side

RANK 1

Latham & Watkins

241/288 answers · 95% CI 79–87.5%

2.6	41.7%	6%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (120/288)	citation share

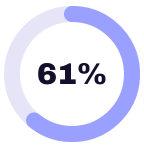


RANK 2

Skadden

218/288 answers · 95% CI 70.4–80.3%

3.4	29.2%	4.7%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (84/288)	citation share

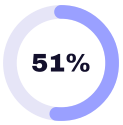


RANK 3

Kirkland & Ellis

175/288 answers · 95% CI 55–66.2%

2.9	12.5%	1.4%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (36/288)	citation share

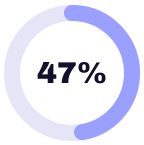


RANK 4

Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz

148/288 answers · 95% CI 45.6–57.1%

3.6	8.3%	1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (24/288)	citation share

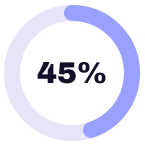


RANK 5

Sullivan & Cromwell

136/288 answers · 95% CI 41.5–53%

4.4	10.1%	1.2%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (29/288)	citation share

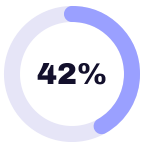


RANK 6

Paul Weiss

129/288 answers · 95% CI 39.2–50.6%

4.9	14.2%	1.6%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (41/288)	citation share

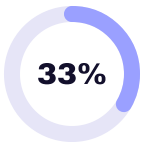


RANK 7

Simpson Thacher

120/288 answers · 95% CI 36.1–47.4%

5.2	8%	0.9%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (23/288)	citation share



RANK 8

Davis Polk

96/288 answers · 95% CI 28.1–39%

5.1	5.2%	0.6%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (15/288)	citation share

04

HOW THE ENGINES DIFFER

Same questions, different answers

Claude named Kirkland & Ellis in 65 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 24 to 51 of 72. Claude named Davis Polk in 36 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 15 to 24 of 72.

ChatGPT

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Skadden	**84.7%**
Latham & Watkins	**83.3%**
Sullivan & Cromwell	**61.1%**
Wachtell Lipton Rosen & ...	**51.4%**
Kirkland & Ellis	**48.6%**
Simpson Thacher	**48.6%**

Claude

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Latham & Watkins	**97.2%**
Kirkland & Ellis	**90.3%**
Skadden	**88.9%**
Wachtell Lipton Rosen & ...	**68.1%**
Sullivan & Cromwell	**61.1%**
Paul Weiss	**61.1%**

Gemini

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Latham & Watkins	**86.1%**
Skadden	**76.4%**
Kirkland & Ellis	**70.8%**
Wachtell Lipton Rosen & ...	**54.2%**
Paul Weiss	**48.6%**
Sullivan & Cromwell	**45.8%**

Perplexity

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Latham & Watkins	**68.1%**
Skadden	**52.8%**
Paul Weiss	**36.1%**
Kirkland & Ellis	**33.3%**
Wachtell Lipton Rosen & ...	**31.9%**
Simpson Thacher	**25%**

05

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

The fifth engine

Google AI Overviews were captured through 65 U.S. desktop searches and scored only where an overview appeared, so five-engine figures use 288 + 65 = 353 answers.

TRIGGER RATE

Google AI Overviews appeared on 65 of 65 searches (100%, CI 94.4–100%). The other 0 searches showed no overview. Within the 65 overviews, Latham & Watkins was named in 41 (63.1%), Kirkland & Ellis was named in 34 (52.3%), Skadden was named in 31 (47.7%), Paul Weiss was named in 23 (35.4%). legal500.com was the most-cited source, with 18 citations and an appearance in 15 of 65 overviews.

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

1	Latham & Watkins	79.9%	=
2	Skadden	70.5%	=
3	Kirkland & Ellis	59.2%	=
4	Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz	48.2%	=
5	Sullivan & Cromwell	43.1%	=
6	Paul Weiss	43.1%	=
7	Simpson Thacher	38.2%	=
8	Davis Polk	32.9%	=
9	Cravath Swaine & Moore	30.3%	=
10	Sidley Austin	24.9%	=

LEADERS BY QUESTION

06 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

Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz 100%

TIED WITH SKADDEN, LATHAM & WATKINS

Skadden	100%
Latham & Watkins	100%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q02 · 12 ANSWERS

Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz 100%

TIED WITH SULLIVAN & CROMWELL

Sullivan & Cromwell	100%
Latham & Watkins	91.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q03 · 12 ANSWERS

Sullivan & Cromwell 100%

Skadden	75%
Simpson Thacher	75%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q04 · 12 ANSWERS

Simpson Thacher 100%

TIED WITH KIRKLAND & ELLIS

Kirkland & Ellis	100%
Paul Weiss	91.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q05 · 12 ANSWERS

Latham & Watkins 66.7%

Skadden	41.7%
Sullivan & Cromwell	25%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q06 · 12 ANSWERS

Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz 100%

TIED WITH SKADDEN, SIMPSON THACHER

Skadden	100%
Simpson Thacher	100%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Most-cited domains

The four engines produced 2,564 citations in total. chambers.com was cited most often, with 156 citations (6.1%) across 104 answers. Next came lw.com (155), skadden.com (120), legal500.com (109), leadersleague.com (75), privatebankerinternational.com (60).

FOUR AI ENGINES · SHARE OF 288 GROUNDED ANSWERS

lw.com	**41.7%**
chambers.com	**36.1%**
skadden.com	**29.2%**
legal500.com	**27.4%**
leadersleague.com	**17%**
sidley.com	**16.3%**
goodwinlaw.com	**14.9%**
paulweiss.com	**14.2%**
coyotewealth.com	**13.2%**
vault.com	**13.2%**

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS · SHARE OF 65 OVERVIEWS

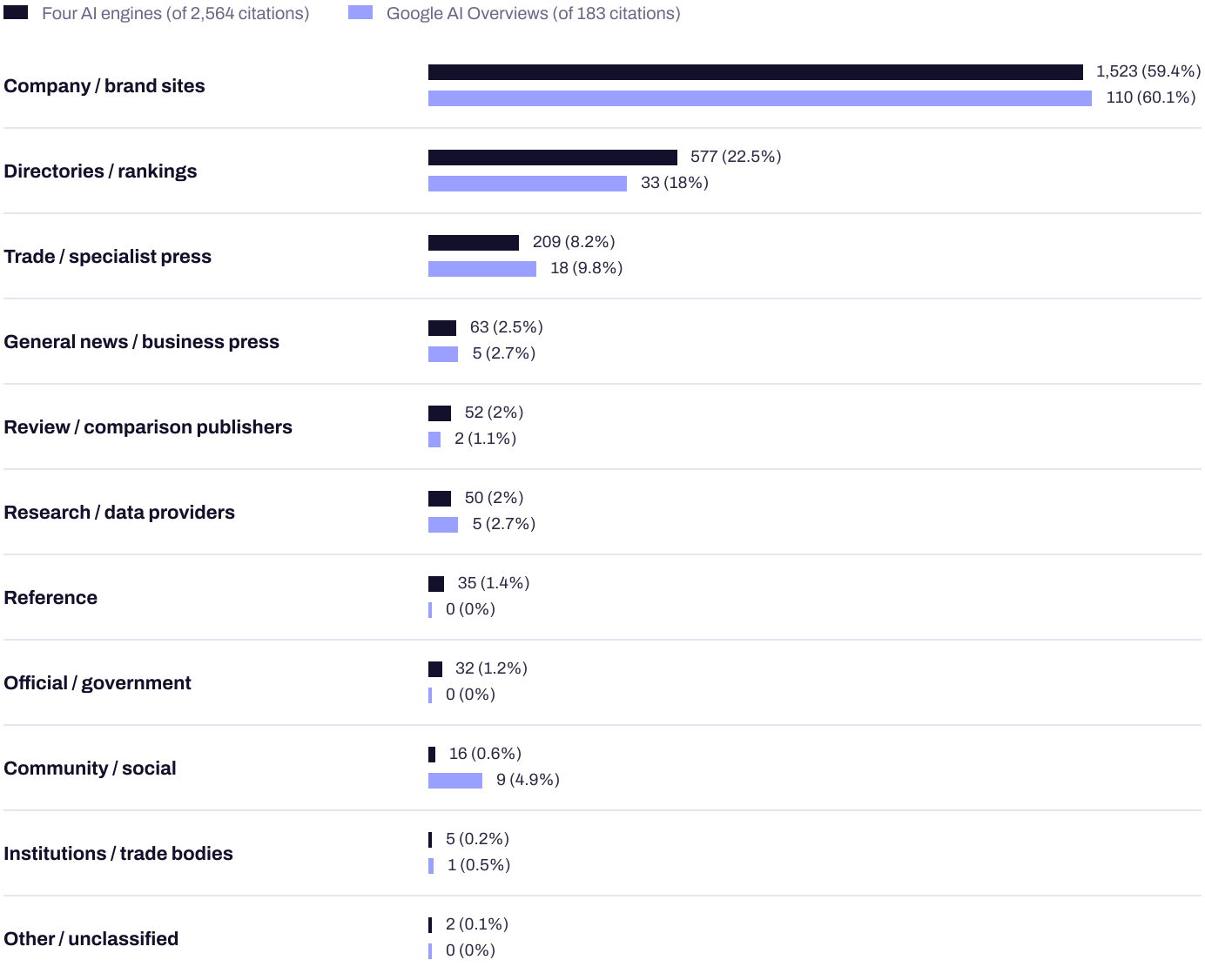
legal500.com	**23.1%**
cooley.com	**10.8%**
news.bloomberglaw.c...	**9.2%**
paulhastings.com	**9.2%**
ballardspahr.com	**6.2%**
goodwinlaw.com	**6.2%**
kirkland.com	**6.2%**
vault.com	**6.2%**
businesschief.com	**4.6%**
chambers.com	**4.6%**

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 firms and lawyers improve their 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.	Latham & Watkins's own domains were cited in 41.7% of grounded answers, Skadden's in 29.2% and Sidley Austin's in 16.3%. H. Rodgin Cohen was named in only 0.3% of answers, yet its own domains were cited in 10.1%.
Keep your facts accurate on the sites engines cite.	The most-cited sites other than the tracked names' own were chambers.com (in 36.1% of grounded answers), legal500.com (27.4%), leadersleague.com (17.0%), goodwinlaw.com (14.9%) and coyotewealth.com (13.2%). Directories and rankings supplied 22.5% of citations and trade and specialist press 8.2%.
Check each engine separately.	Claude named Kirkland & Ellis in 90.3% of answers against 33.3% on Perplexity. ChatGPT named Sullivan & Cromwell in 61.1% of answers against 20.8% on Perplexity.
Do not ignore video and community sites.	Community and social sites supplied 4.9% of Google AI Overview citations against 0.6% in the four chat engines. reddit.com was cited in 4.6% of overviews.
Watch names outside the tracked list.	Goodwin Procter LLP (52), Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP (48), Cooley LLP (31), Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP (28), Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (26) 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 firm or lawyer do AI engines name most often?

Latham & Watkins, named in 241 of 288 four-engine answers (83.7%, CI 79–87.5%). Skadden was second at 218 of 288 (75.7%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated statistically.

Q2 Which firm or lawyer is named first most often?

Latham & Watkins was the first firm or lawyer named in 92 of 288 answers, with an average first position of 2.6.

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

An overview appeared on 65 of 65 searches (100%, CI 94.4–100%). Within those 65 overviews, Latham & Watkins was named most often, in 41 (63.1%).

Q4 Which sources do the engines cite?

Across 2,564 four-engine citations, chambers.com was cited most (156 citations, in 104 of 288 grounded answers), followed by lw.com (155 citations).

Q5 Do the four engines agree?

Only in part. Claude named Kirkland & Ellis in 65 of 72 answers, against 24 to 51 of 72 on the other engines. Claude named Davis Polk in 36 of 72 answers, against 15 to 24 of 72 on the other engines.

METHODOLOGY

09 How this study was measured

24	×	3	×	4	=	288	+	65
questions		runs each		AI engines		answers		Google searches · 65 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. Entities count as named when they appear in the answer text; products and name variants roll up to the tracked name, and people are matched with middle names or initials, nicknames, possessives and suffixes. First-name variants (for example Jeffrey for Jeff, William for Bill) are matched, but only together with the tracked last name. Law firms are also counted by their common short name (for example Weil for Weil Gotshal, Akin for Akin Gump), matched case-sensitively as a whole word; short forms that could mean a tracked lawyer or a common name are not used.

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)	65	65 shown	65

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

METRIC DEFINITIONS

- Appearance rate: answers naming the entity ÷ answers returned, with Wilson 95% intervals.
- First mention: average order in which the entity first appears (1 = first).
- Own-domain citation: grounded answers citing the entity's domains ÷ grounded answers.
- Citation share: citations to the entity'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 13 tracked firms and lawyers were scored. Untracked names that appeared often were not scored, including Goodwin Procter LLP (52), Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP (48), Cooley LLP (31), Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP (28), Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (26).
- AI Overview figures are based on only 65 overviews, so estimates for individual firms and lawyers are less precise than the four-engine figures.
- 7 Google searches could not be fetched by DataForSEO after three tries. They are excluded from the AI Overview figures, so the trigger rate uses 65 searches.
- 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.
- Intervals treat each answer as independent, so they understate uncertainty for the 24 repeated questions.

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	**Best M&A law firms for a $5 billion strategic acquisition.**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
02	**Which law firms are best at defending against a hostile takeover?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
03	**Which law firms advise on bank mergers?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
04	**Which law firms are best for private equity acquisitions?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
05	**What law firm should a founder hire to sell a startup?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
06	**Which law firms lead in public company M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
07	**Who are the most prominent M&A lawyers in the US?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
08	**Which law firms handle cross-border acquisitions?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	CORE QUESTION
09	**Which law firms advise companies facing activist investors?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
10	**Which law firms advise on technology M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
11	**Which law firms advise on healthcare and pharmaceutical M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
12	**Which law firms advise board special committees?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
13	**Which law firms advise on energy M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
14	**Which law firms handle SPAC transactions?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
15	**Which law firms handle antitrust review of mergers?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
16	**Which law firms advise on middle-market M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
17	**Which law firms advise on corporate spin-offs?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
18	**Which law firms advise boards in proxy fights?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
19	**Which law firms rank highest in M&A league tables?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
20	**Which law firms advise on CFIUS reviews?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
21	**Which law firms advise on media company mergers?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
22	**Which law firms advise on take-private deals?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
23	**Which law firms advise on sales of venture-backed companies?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION
24	**Which law firms advise on insurance M&A?**	M&A and Corporate Lawyers	ADDED QUESTION

5W

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS · RESEARCH

Legal AI Discovery: M&A 2026

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

WEB
5wpr.com

RESEARCH
5wpr.com/research