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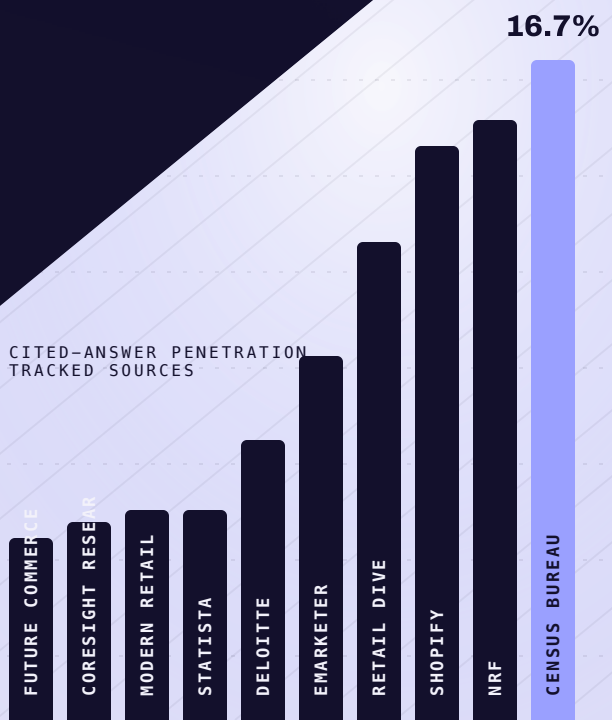
RETAIL SOURCES INDEX 2.0

Which retail sources AI engines cite
288 AI answers · November 2 to 3, 2026

Measured :
November 2 to 3, 2026
24 questions × 3 runs · 288 AI answers

Engines :
ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity
plus 52 Google AI Overviews

Prepared by :
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AT A GLANCE

Census Bureau tops a close field. Four other sources are within its margin.

Census Bureau, NRF, Shopify, Retail Dive and eMarketer lead this measured set. Census Bureau: 47/282 (16.7%; 95% interval 12.8–21.5%). NRF: 43/282 (15.2%; 95% interval 11.5–19.9%). Their 95% intervals overlap; neither can be called the sole leader. The most-cited untracked site, finance.yahoo.com, was cited in 17 answers.

Version 2. This version replaces the first version of this study, first published July 20, 2026. It uses measured counts, so the two versions are not comparable.

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

16.7%
of 282 grounded answers cited Census Bureau (47/282)

15
tracked sources cited at least once (of 18)

92.9%
of Google searches showed an AI Overview (52 of 56)

INSIDE THIS REPORT

01 Key findings 03
02 The leaderboard 04
03 Profiles 08
04 How the engines differ 09
05 Google AI Overviews 11
06 Leaders by question 12
07 Who the engines cite 13
08 Citation share by source type 14
09 Improving AI visibility 15
10 Questions people ask 16
11 Methodology 17
12 Appendix: the 24 questions 18

KEY FINDINGS

01 What the data shows

MOST CITED TRACKED SOURCES

47/282 (16.7%)

Census Bureau, NRF, Shopify, Retail Dive and eMarketer lead this measured set. Census Bureau: 47/282 (16.7%; 95% interval 12.8–21.5%). NRF: 43/282 (15.2%; 95% interval 11.5–19.9%). Their 95% intervals overlap; neither can be called the sole leader. The ranking covers tracked sources only. Untracked cited domains include finance.yahoo.com (17 answers), letstalkshop.com (15 answers), theretailexec.com (15 answers), businessinsider.com (13 answers), news.adobe.com (13 answers), en.wikipedia.org (12 answers), mordorintelligence.com (12 answers), youtube.com (12 answers), cbsnews.com (11 answers), cnbc.com (11 answers).

NAMED FIRST

47/288 (16.3%)

NRF was the first tracked source named in 47 of 288 answers, more than any other tracked source. Its average first position was 1.9. Census Bureau was named first in 33 of 288.

OWN-SITE CITATIONS

47/282 (16.7%)

Census Bureau's own domains were cited in 47 of 282 grounded answers, more than any other tracked source. NRF followed at 43 of 282. 3 of 18 tracked sources had 0 of 282.

AIO TRIGGER

52/56 (92.9%)

Google AI Overviews appeared on 52 of 56 searches (CI 83–97.2%). On the other 4, no overview was shown.

AIO LEADER

14/52 (26.9%)

Shopify was the source named most often in AI Overviews, at 14 of 52, followed by NRF at 12 of 52 (23.1%). In the four-engine set, Shopify was named in 41 of 288 answers (14.5%).

TOP DOMAIN

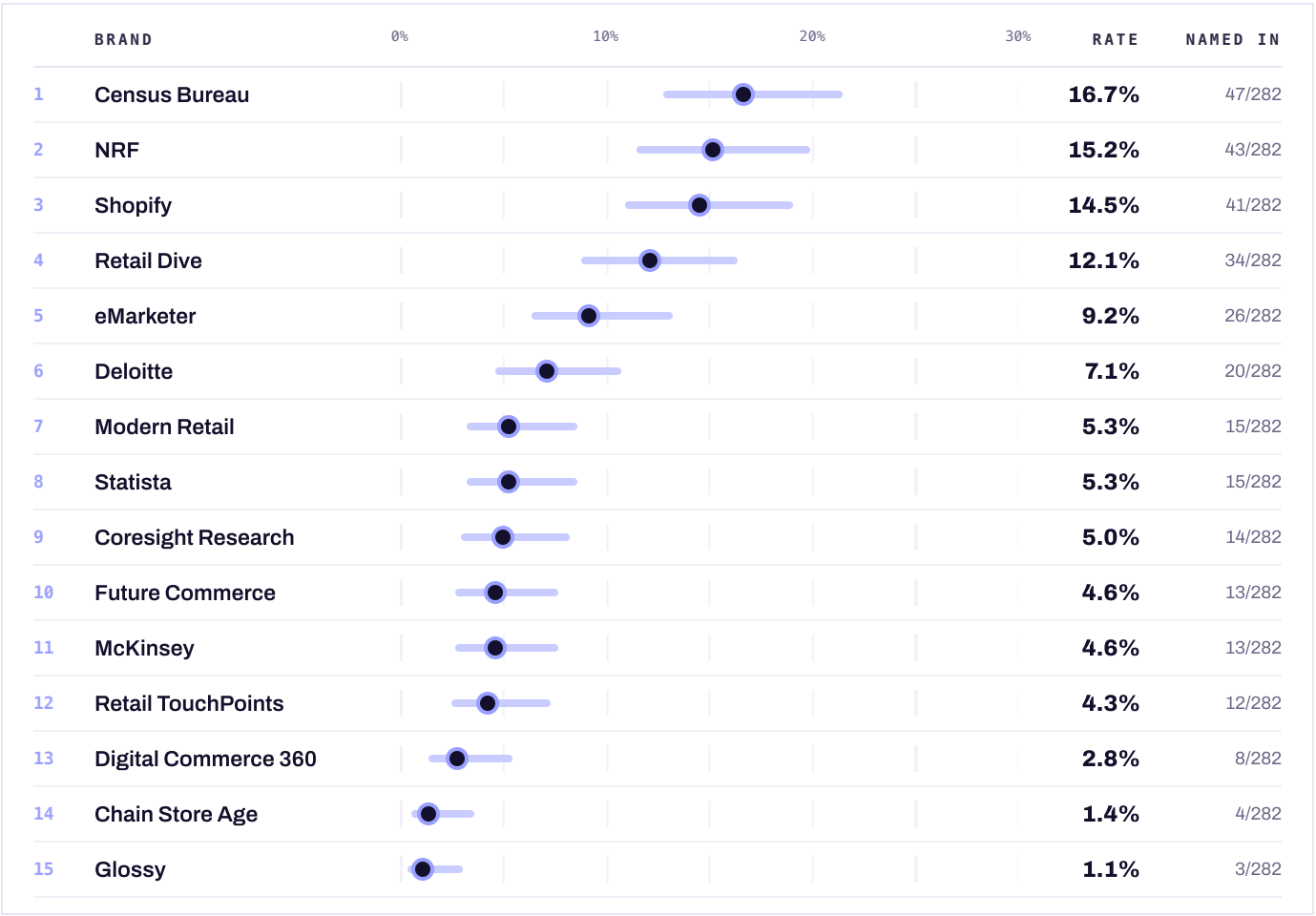
47/282 (16.7%)

census.gov was cited in 47 of 282 grounded four-engine answers, with 72 of 2,350 citations (3.1%). shopify.com came second with 53 citations in 38 answers (13.5%).

02 THE LEADERBOARD

Tracked sources by cited-answer penetration

Ranking of tracked sources by citation penetration across 282 grounded answers; not textual mentions.



	BRAND	RATE	NAMED IN
1	Census Bureau	16.7%	47/282
2	NRF	15.2%	43/282
3	Shopify	14.5%	41/282
4	Retail Dive	12.1%	34/282
5	eMarketer	9.2%	26/282
6	Deloitte	7.1%	20/282
7	Modern Retail	5.3%	15/282
8	Statista	5.3%	15/282
9	Coresight Research	5.0%	14/282
10	Future Commerce	4.6%	13/282
11	McKinsey	4.6%	13/282
12	Retail TouchPoints	4.3%	12/282
13	Digital Commerce 360	2.8%	8/282
14	Chain Store Age	1.4%	4/282
15	Glossy	1.1%	3/282

02 THE LEADERBOARD

The full list

Tracked platforms only. Text mention and first-mention data remain separate in the evidence.

#	TRACKED SOURCE	CITED ANSWERS	CITATION PENETRATION	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
1	Census Bureau	47/282	16.7%	12.8–21.5%	2.1	16.7% (47/282)	3.5%
2	NRF	43/282	15.2%	11.5–19.9%	1.9	15.2% (43/282)	2.1%
3	Shopify	41/282	14.5%	10.9–19.1%	1.8	14.5% (41/282)	2.5%
4	Retail Dive	34/282	12.1%	8.8–16.4%	2.3	12.1% (34/282)	2%
5	eMarketer	26/282	9.2%	6.4–13.2%	1.8	9.2% (26/282)	1.1%
6	Deloitte	20/282	7.1%	4.6–10.7%	2.3	7.1% (20/282)	1%
7	Modern Retail	15/282	5.3%	3.2–8.6%	2.3	5.3% (15/282)	0.6%
8	Statista	15/282	5.3%	3.2–8.6%	2.1	5.3% (15/282)	1%
9	Coresight Research	14/282	5%	3–8.2%	2.1	5% (14/282)	0.6%
10	Future Commerce	13/282	4.6%	2.7–7.7%	3.3	4.6% (13/282)	0.6%
11	McKinsey	13/282	4.6%	2.7–7.7%	3.2	4.6% (13/282)	0.6%
12	Retail TouchPoints	12/282	4.3%	2.5–7.3%	3.8	4.3% (12/282)	0.5%
13	Digital Commerce 360	8/282	2.8%	1.4–5.5%	3.5	2.8% (8/282)	0.3%
14	Chain Store Age	4/282	1.4%	0.6–3.6%	3.6	1.4% (4/282)	0.2%
15	Glossy	3/282	1.1%	0.4–3.1%	3.8	1.1% (3/282)	0.1%
16	2PM	0/282	0%	0–1.3%	2.7	0% (0/282)	0%
17	Adobe Digital Insights	0/282	0%	0–1.3%	1.5	0% (0/282)	0%
18	Circana	0/282	0%	0–1.3%	1.8	0% (0/282)	0%

02 UNTRACKED SOURCES

Top untracked domains beside the tracked ranking

The ranking covers tracked sources only. Untracked cited domains include finance.yahoo.com (17 answers), letstalkshop.com (15 answers), theretailexec.com (15 answers), businessinsider.com (13 answers), news.adobe.com (13 answers), en.wikipedia.org (12 answers), mordorintelligence.com (12 answers), youtube.com (12 answers), cbsnews.com (11 answers), cnbc.com (11 answers).

DOMAIN	CITED ANSWERS	PENETRATION	CITATION SHARE
finance.yahoo.com	17/282	6.0%	1.0%
letstalkshop.com	15/282	5.3%	0.6%
theretailexec.com	15/282	5.3%	0.8%
businessinsider.com	13/282	4.6%	0.9%
news.adobe.com	13/282	4.6%	0.8%
en.wikipedia.org	12/282	4.3%	0.7%
mordorintelligence.com	12/282	4.3%	0.5%
youtube.com	12/282	4.3%	0.5%
cbsnews.com	11/282	3.9%	0.5%
cnbc.com	11/282	3.9%	1.1%
forbes.com	11/282	3.9%	0.5%
improvado.io	11/282	3.9%	0.5%
mintel.com	11/282	3.9%	0.5%
prospershow.com	10/282	3.5%	0.4%
salesforce.com	10/282	3.5%	0.6%
tradingeconomics.com	10/282	3.5%	0.7%
adtribute.io	9/282	3.2%	0.4%
apnews.com	9/282	3.2%	0.4%
digiday.com	9/282	3.2%	0.4%
financebuzz.com	9/282	3.2%	0.6%

02 TEXT MENTIONS

Secondary measure: text mentions

Answers naming each tracked source in text, out of 288 four-engine answers. This is secondary; the main ranking above is citation penetration of grounded answers.

#	TRACKED SOURCE	NAMED ANSWERS	APPEARANCE RATE	NAMED FIRST
1	**NRF**	77/288	26.7%	47
2	**Shopify**	75/288	26.0%	47
3	**Census Bureau**	49/288	17.0%	33
4	**Deloitte**	34/288	11.8%	7
5	**Modern Retail**	32/288	11.1%	8
6	**Retail Dive**	32/288	11.1%	15
7	**eMarketer**	32/288	11.1%	19
8	**McKinsey**	30/288	10.4%	3
9	**Statista**	23/288	8.0%	10
10	**Digital Commerce 360**	18/288	6.3%	1
11	**Future Commerce**	18/288	6.3%	0
12	**Adobe Digital Insights**	16/288	5.6%	10
13	**Coresight Research**	15/288	5.2%	7
14	**2PM**	12/288	4.2%	3
15	**Chain Store Age**	12/288	4.2%	0
16	**Retail TouchPoints**	12/288	4.2%	0
17	**Circana**	4/288	1.4%	2
18	**Glossy**	4/288	1.4%	0

PROFILES

03 The top eight, side by side

RANK 1

Census Bureau

17%

Cited in 47/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 12.8–21.5%

2.1	16.7%	3.5%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (47/282)	citation share

RANK 2

NRF

15%

Cited in 43/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 11.5–19.9%

1.9	15.2%	2.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (43/282)	citation share

RANK 3

Shopify

14%

Cited in 41/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 10.9–19.1%

1.8	14.5%	2.5%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (41/282)	citation share

RANK 4

Retail Dive

12%

Cited in 34/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 8.8–16.4%

2.3	12.1%	2%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (34/282)	citation share

RANK 5

eMarketer

9%

Cited in 26/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 6.4–13.2%

1.8	9.2%	1.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (26/282)	citation share

RANK 6

Deloitte

7%

Cited in 20/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 4.6–10.7%

2.3	7.1%	1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (20/282)	citation share

RANK 7

Modern Retail

5%

Cited in 15/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 3.2–8.6%

2.3	5.3%	0.6%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (15/282)	citation share

RANK 8

Statista

5%

Cited in 15/282 grounded answers · 95% interval 3.2–8.6%

2.1	5.3%	1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (15/282)	citation share

04

HOW THE ENGINES DIFFER

Same questions, different answers

Cited-answer penetration for tracked sources, using each engine's own grounded-answer denominator.

ChatGPT

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Census Bureau	**22.2%**
NRF	19.4%
Shopify	19.4%
McKinsey	13.9%
eMarketer	12.5%
Deloitte	12.5%

Claude

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 66 GROUNDED

Census Bureau	**18.2%**
Retail Dive	16.7%
NRF	7.6%
Shopify	6.1%
Deloitte	4.5%
Statista	4.5%

Gemini

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

NRF	**29.2%**
Census Bureau	18.1%
Shopify	11.1%
Retail Dive	11.1%
Modern Retail	11.1%
Deloitte	6.9%

Perplexity

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Shopify	**20.8%**
eMarketer	16.7%
Retail Dive	13.9%
Coresight Research	12.5%
Census Bureau	8.3%
Statista	8.3%

04

BY SECTOR

Which platforms each sector cites

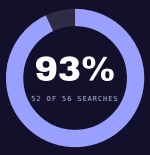
Up to three tracked sources cited in the most grounded answers per sector (three questions each), as cited answers / grounded answers. Sources with no citations are left out.

SECTOR	FOUR CHAT ENGINES: MOST-CITED TRACKED PLATFORMS	GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS
DTC	**Shopify (19/48), Retail Dive (9/48), Modern Retail (8/48)**	Shopify (5/7), Retail TouchPoints (1/7)
commerce channels	**Shopify (10/45), eMarketer (10/45), McKinsey (5/45)**	eMarketer (1/12), Adobe Digital Insights (None/None)
market data	**Census Bureau (44/84), Statista (13/84), eMarketer (12/84)**	Census Bureau (4/12), Retail Dive (2/12), Statista (2/12)
operations	**NRF (20/60), Retail Dive (11/60), Deloitte (6/60)**	NRF (1/9), Adobe Digital Insights (None/None)
sources	**Future Commerce (13/45), NRF (13/45), Shopify (6/45)**	Coresight Research (3/12), Retail TouchPoints (2/12), Future Commerce (1/12)

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

05 The fifth engine

AI Overview rankings below use citations to tracked source domains; they are not pooled with text-mention rankings.



TRIGGER RATE

52 of 56 successful searches showed an AI Overview. Shopify was cited in 5/52 overviews (9.6%). Census Bureau was cited in 4/52 overviews (7.7%). Retail Dive was cited in 3/52 overviews (5.8%). Coresight Research was cited in 3/52 overviews (5.8%).

TRACKED PLATFORM RANK IN AI OVERVIEWS (CHAT CITATION RANK IN ARROWS)

1	Shopify	9.6%	▲ 2
2	Census Bureau	7.7%	▼ 1
3	Retail Dive	5.8%	▲ 1
4	Coresight Research	5.8%	▲ 5
5	Retail TouchPoints	5.8%	▲ 7
6	NRF	3.8%	▼ 4
7	eMarketer	3.8%	▼ 2
8	Statista	3.8%	=
9	Future Commerce	1.9%	▲ 1
10	McKinsey	1.9%	▲ 1

LEADERS BY QUESTION

06 Who each question surfaces first

Six questions, ranked by cited-domain penetration within each question's grounded answers.

Q01 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

Census Bureau 100%

Coresight Research	25%
NRF	25%

AI Overview shown on 2 of 2 successful searches

Q02 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

Deloitte 75%

NRF	50%
Chain Store Age	25%

AI Overview shown on 1 of 1 successful searches

Q03 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

Census Bureau 75%

Statista	33.3%
2PM	0%

AI Overview shown on 1 of 3 successful searches

Q04 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

Shopify 50%

2PM	0%
Adobe Digital Insights	0%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 successful searches

Q05 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

McKinsey 25%

TIED WITH EMARKETER

eMarketer	25%
Retail TouchPoints	16.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 successful searches

Q06 · 12 GROUNDED ANSWERS

NRF 50%

Shopify	33.3%
Retail TouchPoints	16.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 successful searches

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Most-cited domains

The four engines produced 2,350 citations in total. census.gov was cited most often, with 72 citations (3.1%) across 47 answers. Next came shopify.com (53), retaildive.com (46), nrf.com (41), emarketer.com (27), cnbc.com (25).

FOUR AI ENGINES · SHARE OF 282 GROUNDED ANSWERS

census.gov	**16.7%**
nrf.com	**13.8%**
shopify.com	**13.5%**
retaildive.com	**12.1%**
emarketer.com	**9.2%**
deloitte.com	**7.1%**
finance.yahoo.com	**6%**
theretailexec.com	**5.3%**
letstalkshop.com	**5.3%**
modernretail.co	**5.3%**

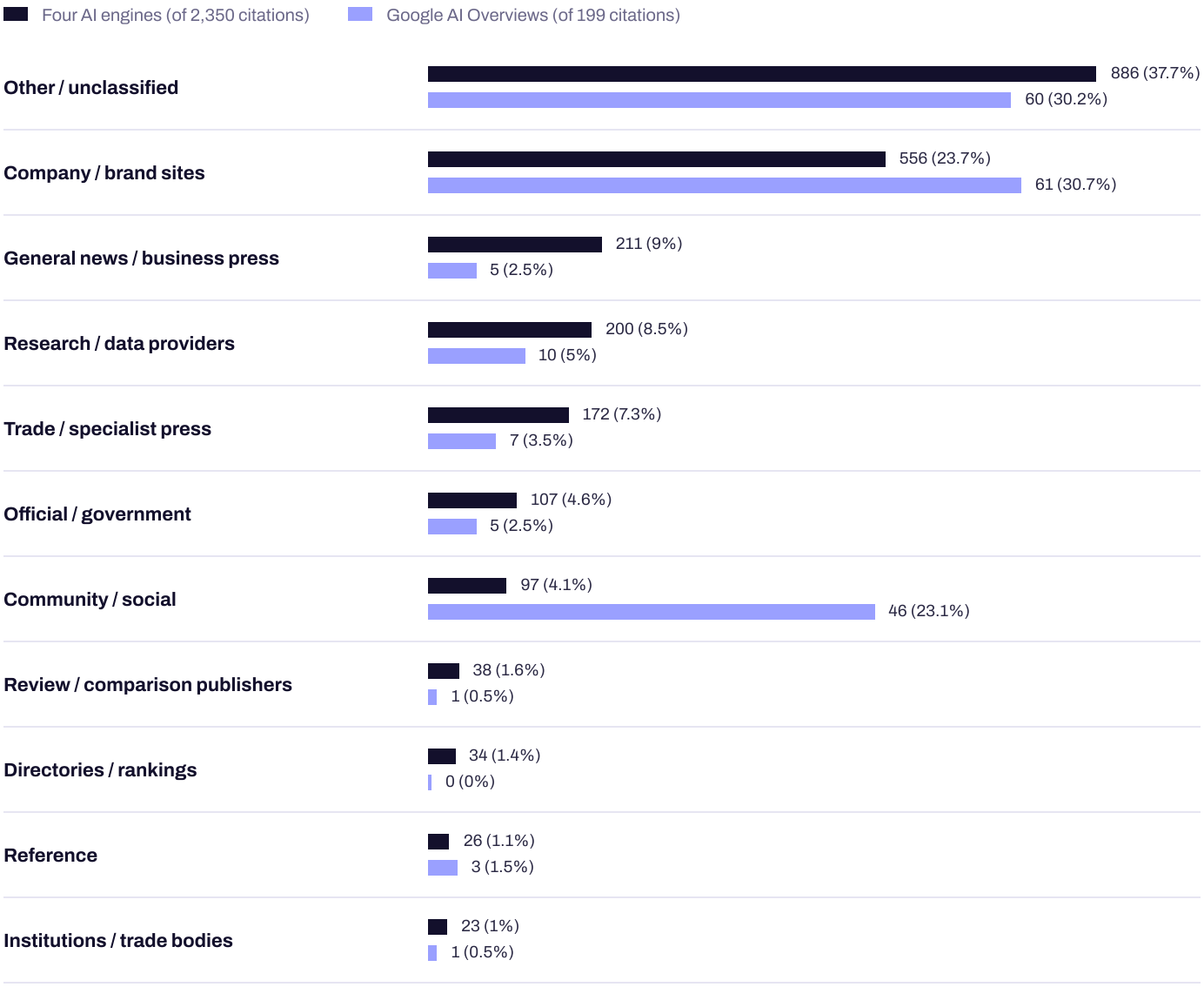
GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS · SHARE OF 52 OVERVIEWS

youtube.com	**32.7%**
reddit.com	**17.3%**
facebook.com	**11.5%**
appsflyer.com	**9.6%**
linkedin.com	**9.6%**
shopify.com	**9.6%**
census.gov	**7.7%**
advertising.amazon.com	**5.8%**
broadsign.com	**5.8%**
adjust.com	**5.8%**

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

08 Citation share by source type

Share of all citations by the type of site cited.



09

WHAT THE DATA SUGGESTS

How can retail sources 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.	Census Bureau's own domains were cited in 16.7% of grounded answers, NRF's in 15.2% and Shopify's in 14.5%. Retail Dive was named in only 11.1% of answers, yet its own domains were cited in 12.1%.
Keep your facts accurate on the sites engines cite.	The most-cited sites other than the tracked names' own were finance.yahoo.com (in 6.0% of grounded answers), theretailexec.com (5.3%), letstalkshop.com (5.3%), businessinsider.com (4.6%) and news.adobe.com (4.6%). General news and business press supplied 9.0% of citations and research and data providers 8.5%.
Check each engine separately.	ChatGPT named Shopify in 36.1% of answers against 9.7% on Perplexity. ChatGPT named Census Bureau in 25.0% of answers against 0.0% on Perplexity.
Re-run the same questions every month.	Compare counts and intervals, not ranks. The 24 questions are in the appendix.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

10 What AI answers

Q1 Which tracked sources are cited most often?

Census Bureau, NRF, Shopify, Retail Dive and eMarketer lead this measured set. Census Bureau: 47/282 (16.7%; 95% interval 12.8–21.5%). NRF: 43/282 (15.2%; 95% interval 11.5–19.9%). Their 95% intervals overlap; neither can be called the sole leader. The ranking covers tracked sources only. Untracked cited domains include finance.yahoo.com (17 answers), letstalkshop.com (15 answers), theretailexec.com (15 answers), businessinsider.com (13 answers), news.adobe.com (13 answers), en.wikipedia.org (12 answers), mordorintelligence.com (12 answers), youtube.com (12 answers), cbsnews.com (11 answers), cnbc.com (11 answers).

Q2 Which source is named first most often?

NRF was the first tracked source named in 47 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 52 of 56 searches (92.9%, CI 83–97.2%). Within those 52 overviews, Shopify was named most often, in 14 (26.9%).

Q4 Which sources do the engines cite?

Across 2,350 four-engine citations, census.gov was cited most (72 citations, in 47 of 282 grounded answers), followed by shopify.com (53 citations).

Q5 Do the four engines agree?

Largely. No tracked name differed by more than 12 points between engines.

METHODOLOGY

11 How this study was measured

24	×	3	×	4	=	288	+	56
questions		runs each		AI engines		answers		Google searches · 52 AI Overviews

24 questions asked three times on each of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity, measured November 2 to 3, 2026. United States, English; Google retrieval uses desktop results. Models: gpt-5-mini, claude-sonnet-5-5, gemini-3.6-flash only, sonar-pro. Google AI Overviews come from DataForSEO, not inferred chat answers. Appearance counts returned text, including ungrounded answers; citation rates use grounded answers. Longer overlapping names suppress shorter ones; First mention is the earliest eligible name order. Own-domain rates include declared domains and subdomains; shared parent scopes may count for multiple names and cannot be summed as unique citations.

ENGINE	MODEL IDS CALLED	ASKED	RETURNED	GROUNDED
ChatGPT	gpt-5-mini	72	72	72
Claude	claude-sonnet-5-5	72	72	66
Gemini	gemini-3.6-flash	72	72	72
Perplexity	sonar-pro	72	72	72
Google AI Overviews	DataForSEO Google SERP (live, advanced)	56	52 shown	52

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

METRIC DEFINITIONS

- Citation penetration: grounded answers citing tracked source domains ÷ grounded answers, with Wilson 95% intervals. Text mentions remain separate in the evidence.
- First mention: average order in which the tracked name first appears (1 = first).
- Own-domain citation: grounded answers citing the tracked name's domains ÷ grounded answers.
- Citation share: citations to the tracked name's domains ÷ all citations.

LIMITATIONS

- Only 18 tracked sources are ranked; results are not an exhaustive market ranking.
- 344 of 360 planned results were returned. 16 AI Overview lookups were excluded after at most three total attempts.
- 56 successful Google searches: 52 overviews shown; 4 without an overview. Failures are excluded, not scored as zero.
- 6 chat answers had no search sources and are left out of the citation figures.
- Measured across two days, November 2 to 3, 2026.
- No Core question names a tracked name.
- Names with no tracked own site are shown with a dash. Source types use Company / brand sites only for verified official organisations; other unresolved sites are Other / unclassified.
- Wilson 95% intervals are descriptive; overlapping leading intervals do not establish a sole leader. Measurements do not endorse medical, legal, financial or product claims.
- Ranked by citation penetration of grounded answers, with text mentions secondary and the top untracked cited domains beside the ranking.
- The ranking covers tracked sources only. Untracked cited domains include finance.yahoo.com (17 answers), letstalkshop.com (15 answers), theretailexec.com (15 answers), businessinsider.com (13 answers), news.adobe.com (13 answers), en.wikipedia.org (12 answers), mordorintelligence.com (12 answers), youtube.com (12 answers), cbsnews.com (11 answers), cnbc.com (11 answers).
- Answers were collected through each engine's API using the model IDs listed in the methodology. The consumer ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity apps can answer differently.

APPENDIX

12 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	How fast are US retail sales growing this year?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
02	What is the holiday shopping forecast this year?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
03	How big is US e-commerce as a share of retail?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
04	How does TikTok Shop work for brands?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
05	What are retail media networks?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
06	How much do returns cost retailers?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
07	What is a good customer acquisition cost for a DTC brand?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
08	What are the best sources for retail industry news?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
09	What are the best newsletters about e-commerce and DTC brands?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
10	Which retailers are closing the most stores?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
11	How much did Americans spend online last holiday season?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
12	What were US retail sales last month?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
13	How fast is US e-commerce growing?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
14	How big is Amazon's share of US e-commerce?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
15	How big are retail media networks?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
16	What is social commerce?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
17	How are tariffs affecting retailers?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
18	How much does retail theft cost retailers?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
19	What are the biggest retail trends this year?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
20	Which DTC brands are growing fastest?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
21	What is a good conversion rate for an online store?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
22	Why are DTC brands opening physical stores?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
23	Where can I find retail industry research reports?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
24	What are the best podcasts about retail?	Retail Sources Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION

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Retail Sources Index 2.0

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