AIRNITE

ZERO DAY

ISSUE 10/2026 · MARKETING & SEO

Answers instead of clicks: what Google's AI Overviews mean for your website

When Google puts an AI summary above the results, users click on websites less often. Studies by Pew and Ahrefs show clear declines; Google disagrees. What the numbers say and what SEO looks like now.

Published: 21 November 2026 Reading time: 6 min Author: Airnite editorial team

SOFTWARE. SECURITY. CODE.

// THE SITUATION IN NUMBERS

8% vs 15%
clicks on traditional results
with or without an AI summary (Pew, browsing data March 2025)

1%
clicks on links in the summary
share of visits with an AI summary (Pew)

-58%
estimated CTR for position 1
for keywords with an AI Overview, Ahrefs model (Dec 2025)

“stable”
Google's view of organic clicks
total volume year-over-year according to Google (Aug 2025)

Since Google started showing an AI summary above many search results, users often get the answer directly – without visiting a website. For companies that live on organic search traffic, this is one of the biggest changes in years. What is proven, and what is disputed?

// What happened?

The independent **Pew Research Center** analysed browsing data from 900 US adults in March 2025. The result: when users saw an AI summary, they clicked on a traditional result in **8%** of visits; without a summary, in **15%**. They clicked a link inside the summary in only **1%** of visits. And after pages with a summary, **26%** ended their browsing session, compared with 16% without one.

SEO tool **Ahrefs** published an updated analysis of 300,000 keywords in February 2026. According to it, an AI Overview correlates with a **58%** lower click-through rate for the top-ranking result; in April 2025 the figure was 34.5%. Important: Ahrefs describes this as a correlation and uses a model that factors out the general development of click rates.

// How does it work?

AI Overviews summarise content from several sources and answer the question at the top of the page. For simple informational questions, that is enough for many users. The websites the answer comes from are linked, but according to Pew rarely clicked. Anyone who used to win visitors with advice content thus loses visibility in the form of clicks, even though their content is still being used.

Google sees it differently. Head of Search Liz Reid wrote in August 2025 that total organic click volume from Google to websites had been relatively stable year-over-year and that Google was sending slightly more “quality clicks” than a year earlier – clicks after which users do not quickly return. Reports of dramatic declines, she wrote, were often based on flawed methodologies. Google does not provide raw data or a methodology in the post.

// Who is affected?

Websites that answer simple informational questions are hit hardest: guides, glossaries, how-it-works articles. Pages where users want to act – buy, book, enquire – or that offer their own data, tools and experience that a summary cannot replace are less affected.

For companies, this means reach is shifting. Visibility increasingly comes from being mentioned and linked in the AI answer – not just from the first position in the results.

// What should you do now?

The figures differ by method, but the direction of the independent studies is the same. It makes sense to read your own Search Console data carefully, focus content on clear, verifiable answers and maintain technology and structured data so that machines classify content correctly. And: measure success by enquiries, not just clicks. The checklist below sums up the steps.

// How does Airnite help?

Airnite does **SEO and visibility in AI answers**: knowledge articles with clear answers, structured data, llms.txt and clean technology – just as we implemented with ZAT's knowledge base. On the **SEO journey**, we guide you step by step from analysis to measurable enquiries. In **consulting**, we assess which of your content is losing clicks and what helps.

> Note: Pew's data relates to US users, the Ahrefs figure is a modelled estimate and Google's statements are vendor claims. Research status: 21 November 2026.

Checklist: what to do now

[+] Check in Search Console which pages lose clicks while impressions stay the same – that is where AI Overviews hit hardest.

[+] Write content that answers questions directly and verifiably, with a clear structure and headings.

[+] Maintain structured data (e.g. organisation, article, FAQ) and an llms.txt so that machines classify your content correctly.

[+] Provide your own data, experience and case studies – what an AI summary cannot replace.

[+] Measure success not only by clicks but by enquiries, leads and brand awareness.

[+] Build several channels (newsletter, social media, direct contact) to depend less on one search engine.

How Airnite helps

- SEO & Visibility – Visible on Google and in AI answers.
- The SEO Journey – From invisible to found.
- Consulting – An outside view of your plans and projects.

Are you mentioned in AI answers?

Airnite checks how your company appears in Google overviews and AI assistants and builds content that gets cited: knowledge articles with clear answers, structured data, llms.txt and clean technology. The goal is not just clicks, but enquiries.

Request an initial call · Send an email · Via WhatsApp

Contact

Questions about this article? Message us on WhatsApp: +49 174 6834842

Read online: https://airnite.de/en/magazine/ai-overviews-google-fewer-clicks-seo/

Sources

Every fact in this article is based on the sources below. Primary sources are marked.

1. **Pew Research Center · Google users are less likely to click on links when an AI summary appears in the results** · 22 Jul 2025 · PRIMARY SOURCE
   Primary source (study): 900 US adults, browsing data March 2025, click rates, session ends
   https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/07/22/google-users-are-less-likely-to-click-on-links-when-an-ai-summary-appears-in-the-results/
2. **Ahrefs · Update: AI Overviews Reduce Clicks by 58%** · 4 Feb 2026 · PRIMARY SOURCE
   Study: 300,000 keywords, December 2023 vs December 2025, modelled CTR
   https://ahrefs.com/blog/ai-overviews-reduce-clicks-update/
3. **Google · AI in Search is driving more queries and higher quality clicks (Liz Reid)** · 6 Aug 2025 · PRIMARY SOURCE
   Vendor statement: organic clicks relatively stable, criticism of third-party studies
   https://blog.google/products/search/ai-search-driving-more-queries-higher-quality-clicks/

General editorial information, not legal advice and not an assessment of your individual systems. Status: date of publication.

Airnite GmbH · Am Waldbach 7 · 77654 Offenburg · airnite.de