RESEARCH REPORT — NORTH ATLANTA SMALL BUSINESS SERIES

How Much Website Traffic Do AI Assistants Send to Local Businesses?

Google Analytics data from 37 small business websites, January 2025 to October 2026, shows how often visitors arrive from ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot and Claude, and how they compare with visitors from Google search

Prepared by Make It Loud | North Atlanta Small Business Research Series

Data Sources: Google Analytics 4 data from 37 Make It Loud client websites (anonymized and aggregated), January 2025–October 2026

0.67%	+86%	89%	28 of 28
of website visits came from AI assistants, January–October 2026	growth in AI-referred visits, Jan.–Oct. 2026 vs. 2025, on the same nine websites	of AI-referred visits in 2026 came from ChatGPT	websites with at least 500 visits in 2026 received AI-referred traffic

BOTTOM LINE

AI assistants are sending real, measurable visitors to local business websites, but still a small number. Across 37 small business websites, ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot and Claude accounted for 0.67% of visits from January through October 2026, about one AI visit for every 59 visits from organic search. The trend is clearly upward: on nine websites with data back to January 2025, AI-referred visits rose 86% year over year while overall traffic fell 8%, and October 2026 set a record. ChatGPT sent 89% of these visits, and AI visitors engaged with websites at nearly the same rate as visitors from Google search. Because Google's own AI answers are counted as Google traffic, the real influence of AI on how customers find businesses is larger than these numbers show.

Executive Summary

Business owners keep hearing that AI is replacing search. But how many customers actually click through from ChatGPT or another AI assistant to a local business website? Published numbers usually come from large national websites. Small local businesses rarely see data that looks like their own.

This report uses Google Analytics 4 data from 37 websites managed by Make It Loud Digital Marketing, most of them small businesses in Metro Atlanta and North Georgia. They include home service companies, medical and dental practices, professional service firms, automotive businesses, a nonprofit and others. We measured visits referred by AI assistants from January 2025 through October 2026 and compared them with visits from organic search. All data is anonymized and reported in aggregate.

Finding 1 | AI Assistants Send Less Than 1% of Visits Today

From January through October 2026, the 37 websites recorded 308,600 visits. Of those, 2,073 (0.67%) came from AI assistants. Organic search, mostly Google, brought in 122,785 visits (39.8%), roughly 59 times as many. AI referrals are measurable, but they are a small channel next to search, social media, advertising and direct visits.

2,073 of 308,600 visits (0.67%) came from AI assistants in January–October 2026, vs. 39.8% from organic search

Still, reach is broad. In October 2026, 27 of the 35 websites with traffic that month received at least one visit from an AI assistant, up from 11 of 14 a year earlier. Every one of the 28 websites with at least 500 visits in 2026 received AI-referred traffic.

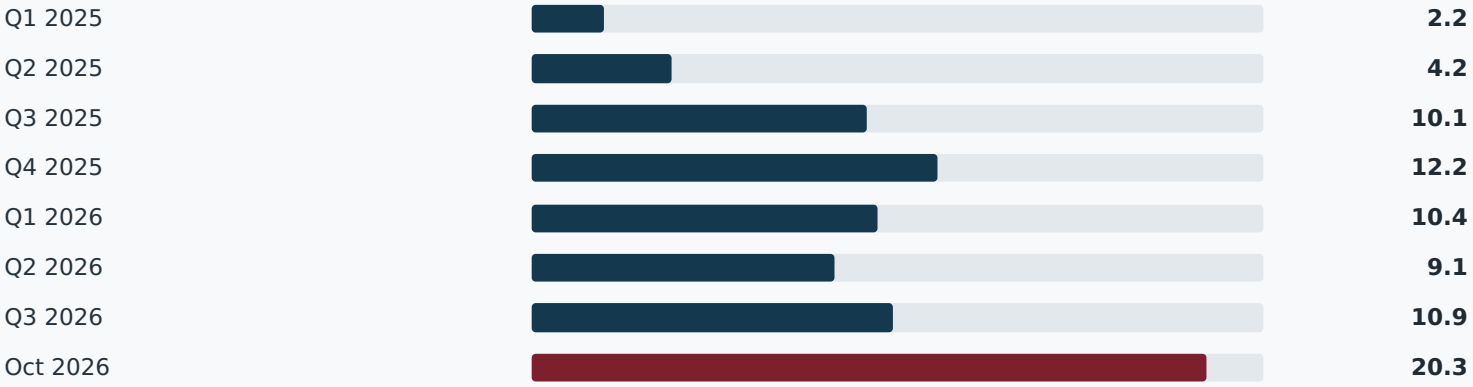
Finding 2 | AI Traffic Is Growing as Overall Traffic Dips

To measure growth fairly, we looked at nine websites that had traffic in both January 2025 and October 2026. On those sites, AI-referred visits rose from 484 in January–October 2025 to 899 in the same months of 2026, an 86% increase, while total visits fell 8%. AI's share of visits rose from 0.21% to 0.43%.

On nine websites tracked since January 2025, AI visits rose from 2.2 to 20.3 per 1,000 organic search visits

Growth came in steps. AI's share jumped in mid-2025, held near 0.4% from late 2025 through September 2026, then reached a record 0.73% in October 2026. Measured against organic search, these sites received 2.2 AI visits for every 1,000 organic search visits in early 2025 and 20.3 in October 2026. One month is not yet a trend, but the direction is consistent.

AI-Referred Visits per 1,000 Organic Search Visits, Same Nine Websites



Google Analytics 4, nine Make It Loud client websites with traffic in both January 2025 and October 2026. Quarterly totals; October 2026 is a single month.

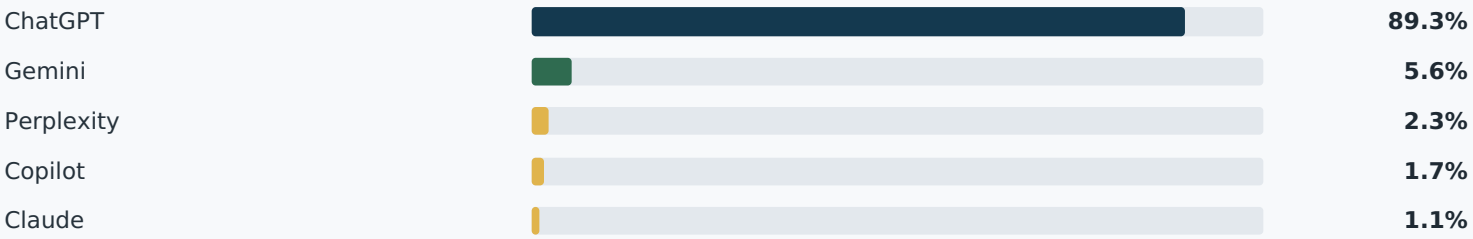
Finding 3 | ChatGPT Sends Nearly 9 of Every 10 AI Visits

ChatGPT dominated AI referrals, accounting for 89.3% of AI-referred visits in January–October 2026, down slightly from 91.9% in 2025. Google's Gemini app was the fastest-growing source, rising from 1.3% of AI visits in 2025 to 5.6% in 2026. Perplexity, Microsoft Copilot and Anthropic's Claude each sent fewer than 3%.

ChatGPT 89.3%, Gemini 5.6%, Perplexity 2.3%, Copilot 1.7%, Claude 1.1% of 2026 AI-referred visits

For local businesses, that makes ChatGPT the AI assistant to watch first. As Finding 2 of our companion study shows, ChatGPT often recommends different local businesses than Google does, so visibility in ChatGPT takes deliberate effort.

Share of AI-Referred Visits by Assistant, January–October 2026



Google Analytics 4, 37 Make It Loud client websites. Gemini counts only visits from the Gemini app (gemini.google.com); clicks from Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode are recorded as Google search.

Finding 4 | AI Visitors Engage About as Much as Search Visitors

59.0% of AI-referred visits were engaged, vs. 60.7% of organic search visits

AI-referred visitors behaved much like visitors from organic search. In January–October 2026, 59.0% of AI-referred visits counted as engaged in Google Analytics (the visitor stayed at least 10 seconds, viewed two or more pages or completed a key action), compared with 60.7% for organic search. Average engagement time was 43.6 seconds per AI visit and 47.6 seconds per organic search visit.

Visitors arriving from an AI assistant have often already read a summary of the business, so they arrive with context. They are not low-quality traffic; there just are not many of them yet. Too few of the websites tracked conversions consistently to compare conversion rates reliably.

January–October 2026	AI assistants	Organic search
Visits	2,073	122,785
Engaged-visit rate	59.0%	60.7%
Average engagement time per visit	43.6 sec.	47.6 sec.

Source: Google Analytics 4, 37 Make It Loud client websites.

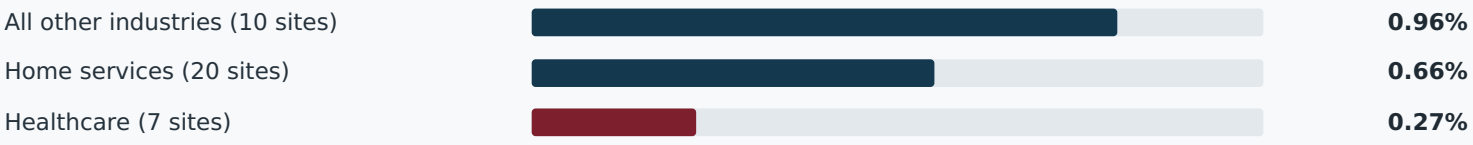
Finding 5 | Results Vary Widely by Business

Among 28 websites with 500+ visits in 2026, AI's share ranged from 0.06% to 4.92%; the median was 0.82%

The average hides a wide spread. Among the 28 websites with at least 500 visits in 2026, the share of visits from AI assistants ranged from 0.06% to 4.92%, with a median of 0.82%. Healthcare websites, mostly medical practices, had the lowest share (0.27%); home service websites came in at 0.66%; and all other industries combined, including professional services, automotive, retail and nonprofit websites, at 0.96%.

Websites that answer the questions people ask AI, explain services in detail and are referenced across the web tend to be the ones AI tools cite and link to. That makes AI visibility something a business can influence.

Share of Visits From AI Assistants by Industry, January–October 2026



Google Analytics 4, 37 Make It Loud client websites with traffic in 2026.

Finding 6 | Analytics Undercount AI's Real Influence

Clicks from Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode are counted as Google search, not as AI

The numbers in this report count only visits where an AI assistant passed a referral to the website. Several kinds of AI influence never show up that way. Clicks from Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode are recorded as ordinary Google search traffic. Some AI apps do not pass referral information, so their visits appear as direct traffic. And many people read an AI recommendation, then search the business name or call without visiting the website at all.

In other words, 0.67% is a floor, not the full picture. The AI answers people read are increasingly shaping which businesses they contact, even when the click comes through Google or the phone.

What This Means for Local Businesses

1. **Don't panic, but don't ignore AI.**
AI assistants send under 1% of visits today, while organic search sends about 40%. Search remains the core channel, but AI referrals are growing and reached a record in October 2026.

2. **Focus on ChatGPT first.**
ChatGPT sends almost 9 of every 10 AI-referred visits. Check what it says when customers ask about your services in your area.

3. **Make your website easy for AI to cite.**
Clear service pages, answers to common customer questions, accurate location details and current reviews help AI tools understand and link to a business.

4. **Track AI traffic in your own analytics.**
In Google Analytics 4, look for referral sources such as chatgpt.com, gemini.google.com, perplexity.ai, copilot.microsoft.com and claude.ai. Watch the trend over time rather than any single month.

About Make It Loud

Make It Loud Digital Marketing is a Metro Atlanta digital marketing agency serving small and midsize businesses across Gwinnett, Forsyth, Hall and Cherokee counties and beyond. The agency provides search engine optimization, generative engine optimization (GEO) and AI search visibility, Google Business Profile management, website design, pay-per-click advertising, social media, podcast production and AI consulting for home service, healthcare, professional service, automotive and nonprofit clients. More research is published at makeitloud.net/research.

Methodology, Limitations & Sources

Data. Google Analytics 4 data for 40 client website properties managed by Make It Loud Digital Marketing was pulled for January 1, 2025, through October 31, 2026, by month, by default channel group and by session source. Two properties had no data and were excluded, leaving 38 with traffic during the period and 37 with traffic in 2026. Most are small businesses in Metro Atlanta and North Georgia. Individual businesses are not identified, and results are reported only in aggregate.

Definitions. AI-referred visits are sessions whose source was an AI assistant: chatgpt.com and other OpenAI sources, gemini.google.com, perplexity.ai, copilot.microsoft.com, copilot.com and Bing's Copilot sources, and claude.ai. One website's campaign traffic tagged with the source "chatgpt" (a paid campaign, not an AI referral) was excluded, as were a handful of single visits from minor or unclear AI tools. Organic search is Google Analytics' Organic Search default channel. Engagement figures use GA4's engaged-session and user-engagement-duration metrics. The growth comparison (Finding 2) uses the nine websites with traffic in both January 2025 and October 2026, so that new clients joining during the period do not distort the trend.

Limitations. This is a convenience sample of agency clients, not a random sample of all businesses, and these websites receive ongoing SEO work. Industry groups are small. AI referral counts are small in absolute terms, so month-to-month changes can be noisy. GA4 cannot see AI influence that does not produce a referred click (see Finding 6). Conversion rates were not compared because few websites tracked key events consistently.

Google Analytics 4 Session, engaged-session and engagement-time data by month, channel and source for 37 Make It Loud client websites, January 2025–October 2026, retrieved Nov. 2, 2026.