SQUIDGY

August 2025

NO PANIC JUST PROGRESS:

Our Perspective on AI & SEO

Our stance is based on current developments and available data as of early August 2025.



A Shifting Search Landscape

(But No Panic Required)

Google is currently rolling out a new feature in the UK called **AI Mode**. It's part of a broader shift that also includes the already-visible **AI Overviews (AIOs)** – those AI-generated summaries that sit at the top of some search results. You'll typically see them on queries like "how to clean red wine from carpet" or "how does solar power work."

Rather than presenting a list of links, AIOs aim to answer the query right there on the results page. For many searches, users aren't being invited to click through – they're simply being handed 'an' answer.

That's raised understandable concerns for websites that rely on informational content to attract traffic. And the early data isn't comforting.

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- A detailed analysis by **Ahrefs** of 300,000 informational keywords showed that AI Overviews cause a **~34.5% drop in CTR** for position-1 organic results.

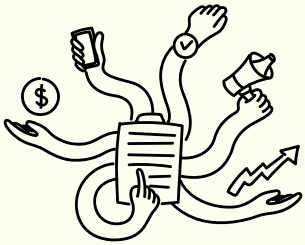
A **Pew Research Centre report** found that only:

- **8%** of users clicked on a traditional search result when an AI Overview appeared (vs. ~15% without one),
- **1%** clicked any link within the AI summary,
- and **26%** of sessions with an AI summary ended immediately afterward (vs. 16% without).

- Meanwhile, major publishers like MailOnline and CNN have reported traffic drops of **56–79%** since AIOs became widespread (**source**).

Several SQUIDGY clients have seen a dip in click-throughs, but this has been almost exclusively tied to informational queries – the kind that would typically land on blog posts or news articles. These pages are often created to build contextual and semantic relevance across a site, helping to strengthen the authority of core landing pages.

So while the traffic was never the primary objective, it was a valuable by-product – and yes, a 'nice to have'.



What Is AI Mode?

And How's It Different From AI Overviews?

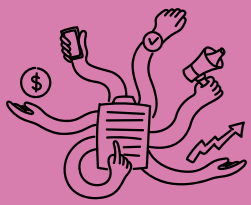
AI Mode is Google's latest experiment in AI-assisted search – and it goes a step further than AIOs.

Now rolling out in the UK, AI Mode offers users the option to switch into a different kind of search experience altogether.

When selected, AI Mode turns your search into a dynamic, Gemini-powered interface that reshapes the entire results page.

Gone are those familiar blue links – replaced with conversational answers, follow-up questions, and curated next steps.

Think of it as more of a browsing assistant than a list of links.

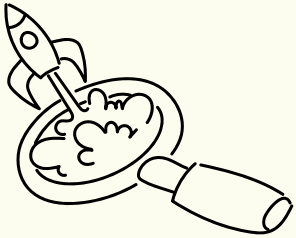


To put it simply

- **AI Overviews** = single AI-generated answers at the top of a standard search
- **AI Mode** = an ongoing, assistant-style interface that rewrites the whole experience

Some sources have suggested AI Mode is opt-in, which isn't quite true. So far, we've seen it appear as a **tab option** (alongside Maps, Images, Videos etc) just below the search bar – no special activation required.

That said, it's not the default experience, and many everyday users may not engage with it unless they're actively exploring.

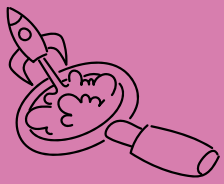


Where AIOs Show

And where they might

Up until recently, we'd only seen AIOs being shown for informational queries. That's mostly still the case however in some instances we are seeing AIOs appear where the user includes some evaluation based terms, resulting in **hybrid-intent queries**, particularly those with question-based or evaluative language (e.g. "how to fix a leaking tap" or "best cordless drill for DIY".

Recent research suggests this trend extends into local searches too, especially when location is combined with that same evaluative or exploratory tone – think "What venues in Northumberland allow outside catering?" or "Which bike shops in York offer repairs?".



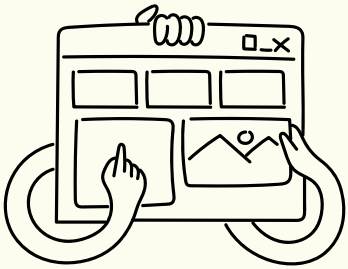
The resulting AIOs are however still sporadic in appearance.

A WhiteSpark study found that AIOs appeared in 68% of local business-style queries.

Outpacing even the traditional local pack in some cases.

So while direct commercial searches like “tree surgeon near me” or “skip hire Lincoln” may still trigger traditional results for now, searches that blend local context with intent to evaluate or understand a service **may** trigger AI Overviews.

AIO appearances in these cases are still sporadic – **not yet the norm, but increasingly worth watching**.



What About AI Mode?

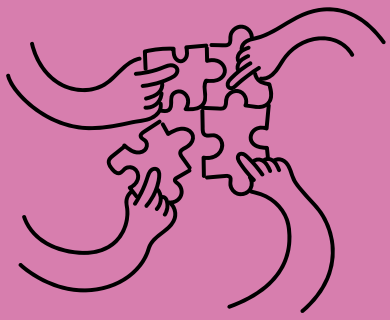
Do Rankings Still Matter?

Yes – but differently.

An **Ahrefs study** found that **76% of AI Overview citations** come from websites that are already in the top 10 organic search results for that query. That's not surprising – Google's AI is still drawing from its strongest known sources.

But in **AI Mode**, that overlap drops dramatically. Just **15%** of citations in AI Mode come from the top 10 organic rankings. That means **topical authority and content depth** are becoming even more important than before – potentially outweighing your organic position entirely in this new interface.

N.B. The data surround AI mode is still early in its infancy and is likely to change.



On GEO
(Generative Engine Optimisation)

There's a growing buzz around GEO, the idea of getting your content cited in AI-generated answers.

In theory, it makes sense: 'optimise' your content so that Google's AI sees it as a go-to source.

In practice? There's no guaranteed way to do it. You can't force a citation in an AIO. There's no markup, no metadata, and no paid route to appear in these summaries.



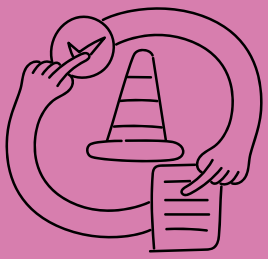
What we can say is that the content being cited most often – in both AIOs and AI Mode – tends to look like this:

- Clearly structured, well-formatted pages
- Authoritative, genuinely helpful information
- High levels of trust and topical relevance
- Alignment with E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness)

In short:

Good SEO is already good GEO.

We're not in the business of chasing shiny, speculative tactics. Our strategies are already aligned with where search is heading. The content we create – helpful, structured, and written with user intent in mind – is exactly what powers both traditional rankings and AI-driven results.



Do We Need to Change Our SEO Approach for AI Mode?

In short – no. Not in any drastic way.

Just like AI Overviews, AI Mode leans heavily on quality web content. It pulls in summaries, cites sources, and still links out to third-party websites. And when we look at the sources being used, they have the same traits we've been advocating for years:

- Content that's clear and well-structured
- Pages with depth and intent-led answers
- Trusted domains with authority signals
- Content made for people, not just algorithms



While AI Mode might change how some users explore search results, it doesn't change what Google looks for in content.

So, no – you don't need to overhaul your site, chase gimmicks, or try to game the AI. Our current approach – grounded in clarity, intent, and expertise – is already doing the heavy lifting.

That said, we're not standing still.

We're monitoring how AI Mode interacts with each client industry. Tracking shifts in visibility and CTR where possible. Testing and adapting as new data and behaviours emerge.

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Our Position

We're not here to jump on AI bandwagons. But we are here to help clients make sense of the change – and act when action is needed. We believe:

- AI Overviews are changing how users engage with informational content – and yes, click-throughs have taken a hit for some sites
- AI Mode is a bigger, more interactive experience that may shift user behaviour – but doesn't change the fundamentals of good content
- Some local and commercial intent queries do now trigger AIOs, especially those with informational or evaluative phrasing
- There's no reliable way to 'optimise for AI' beyond the strong SEO foundations we already follow
- Long-term success still hinges on creating high-quality, useful content – not chasing the latest Google experiment.

We'll keep tracking developments across every client and every industry. If the landscape shifts in a way that matters, we'll be ready – and we'll tell you.

Until then, know this:

We're ahead of the curve – but we're not going to lose our heads over it.