

19-March-2026

Response from Dr Ashwin Nagappa, QUT Digital Media Research Centre

We have seen an increase in the presence of AI Overviews, but yet to examine the ratio of different websites in search results.

... based on our research so far, Google's claim could be partly accurate. As more people seek information through AI platforms, the SEO industry has been scrambling to understand how visibility works in the AI era. Search Engine Journal shared a report this week highlighting a decline in website traffic that affects small publishers much more than larger organisations. This is also evident in Google's blog post, which introduces new search-specific features available to publishers with higher impression volumes. It is likely that major news organisations will experience a smaller drop in traffic than smaller ones. Therefore, Google's claim may be partly true, as it may be applying different criteria to calculate website traffic over time. That said, while Google regularly shares updates to be more transparent, it does not provide APIs for several SEO tools or give researchers access to examine its search systems.

Follow-up thought on 20 March 2026

We have been grappling with questions about changes to website traffic without a clear lead. Based on my expertise in web history and the history of technologies, I understand that, in the current era with the rise of AI interfaces, we are witnessing a shift from the open web (where anyone could publish and anyone could access public content) towards more curated, organised content by large tech organisations. In my view, this mirrors the shift from local retailers to major grocery and tech retailers who transformed the market and continue to dominate. The web is heading in that direction, possibly with the aid of AI tools.