PUBLIC DATA

What AI assistants cite: *mostly earned media.*

When ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini answer a question, what do they link to? A study of more than 25 million cited links, and a study of Google users' clicks, give the clearest answers so far.

84%
of links cited by AI assistants come from earned media (Muck Rack, 2026)

27%
of cited links are journalism

1.1%
are press releases

8%
of visits with a Google AI summary led to a click on a result, against 15% without one (Pew)

Free to quote with a link

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What ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini cite: press coverage and AI search

KEY FINDINGS

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Short answer: AI assistants mostly cite what others write, not what companies pay for or announce. In Muck Rack's analysis of more than 25 million links cited by ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini, about 84% came from earned media and 27% were journalism; press releases were 1.1%.[1] At the same time, people click less: when Google showed an AI summary, users clicked a regular result in 8% of visits, against 15% without one.[2] Being covered in respected outlets is how you get into the answers.

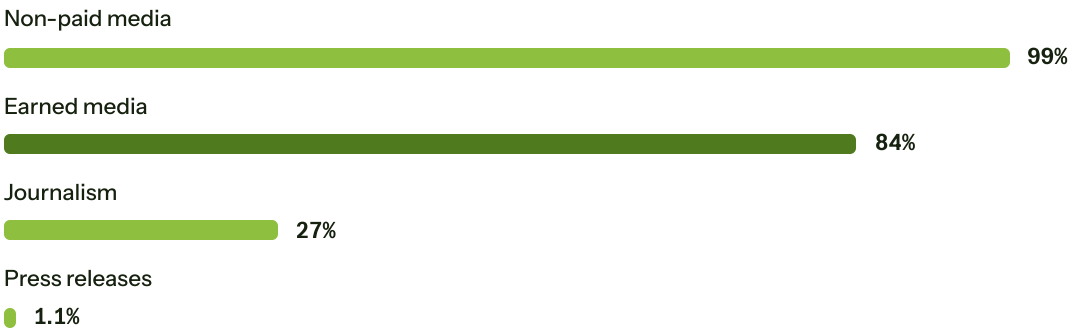
What AI reads: earned media

Muck Rack submitted prompts to ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini and analyzed more than 25 million links in their answers. About 99% of the cited links came from non-paid media, about 84% from earned media, and about 27% were journalistic. Press releases made up 1.1%.[1]

Recency matters too: among cited journalism with a known date, 57% had been published in the previous 12 months.[1]

What AI assistants cite

Share of cited links



Source: Muck Rack, What Is AI Reading? (May 2026), 25 million+ links from ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini.

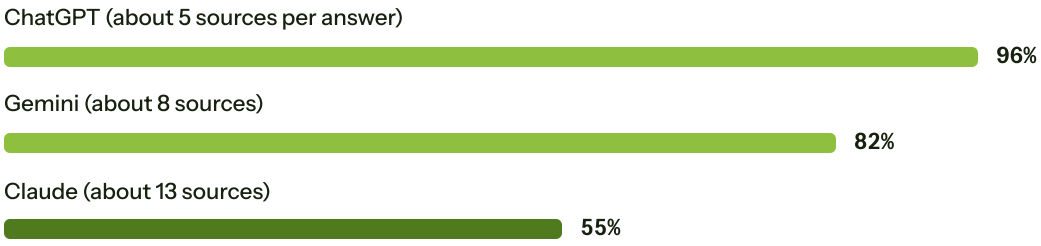
Each assistant cites differently

ChatGPT includes citations in 96% of its responses, with about five sources each. Gemini cites in 82%, with about eight. Claude is the most selective: only 55% of its responses include citations, but when it cites, it averages 13 sources, more than twice ChatGPT's.[1]

The assistants also favor different outlets. No outlet ranks in the top five for all three, and only Forbes is in the top five for more than one: first for Gemini and fifth for ChatGPT.[1]

How often each assistant cites sources

Share of responses with at least one citation, and average sources when it cites



Source: Muck Rack, What Is AI Reading? (May 2026).

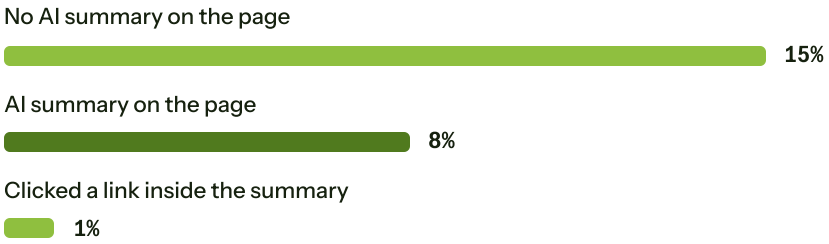
Fewer clicks when the answer is on the page

Pew Research Center tracked the browsing of 900 US adults who searched Google in March 2025. 18% of their searches showed an AI summary. When one appeared, people clicked a regular search result in 8% of visits, compared with 15% when it didn't. They clicked a link inside the summary in just 1% of visits, and they ended their browsing on 26% of pages with a summary, against 16% without.[2]

The sources Google's summaries cited most were Wikipedia, YouTube and Reddit, the same as in regular results, and 6% of the links in AI summaries went to .gov websites.[2]

Clicks on Google, with and without an AI summary

Share of visits that led to a click on a regular search result



Source: Pew Research Center (900 US adults' Google searches, March 2025).

More people ask AI for news

In the Reuters Institute's 2026 survey of 48 markets, weekly use of AI chatbots for news rose from 7% to 10%, and to 16% among people under 35. Among those users, 42% say they always or often click through to the source.[3]

What it means if you want AI to mention you

- **Get written about, not just published.** AI assistants cite earned media and journalism far more than company announcements. A press release alone is rarely what they cite.
- **Keep it recent.** Most cited journalism is less than a year old. One article from three years ago does less than steady coverage.
- **Be in more than one outlet.** Each assistant favors different outlets, so coverage in several respected publications reaches more of them.
- **Make the facts clear.** Summaries repeat plain facts. Articles that state what you do, for whom and with what results are easier to quote.

We also check every week what Claude and Gemini answer when someone asks for a PR firm; the questions never mention us by name.

How we did this

Muck Rack's "What Is AI Reading?" (May 2026) analyzed more than 25 million links cited in answers from ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini. Pew Research Center analyzed the browsing of 900 US adults who agreed to share it and searched Google at least once in March 2025. The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2026 surveyed 97,520 people in 48 markets. Muck Rack sells PR software.

Questions

What sources do ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini cite?

Mostly earned media: about 84% of the links they cite, and about 27% are journalism, in Muck Rack's analysis of 25 million+ links (May 2026). Press releases were 1.1%.

Do AI summaries reduce clicks?

Yes. In Pew Research Center's study, Google users who saw an AI summary clicked a regular result in 8% of visits, against 15% when there was none, and clicked a link inside the summary in 1%.

How do I get my company mentioned by AI assistants?

Be covered by respected publications, recently and in more than one outlet, with clear facts about what you do. AI assistants cite earned media and journalism far more than company announcements.

Sources

1. What Is AI Reading? (May 2026), Muck Rack.
   https://media.muckrack.com/documents/What_Is_AI_Reading__May_2026.pdf
2. Google users are less likely to click on links when an AI summary appears in the results, Pew Research Center.
   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/
3. Digital News Report 2026: Executive Summary, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
   https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2026/dnr-executive-summary

How to cite this report

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