

Google's AI Overview changes

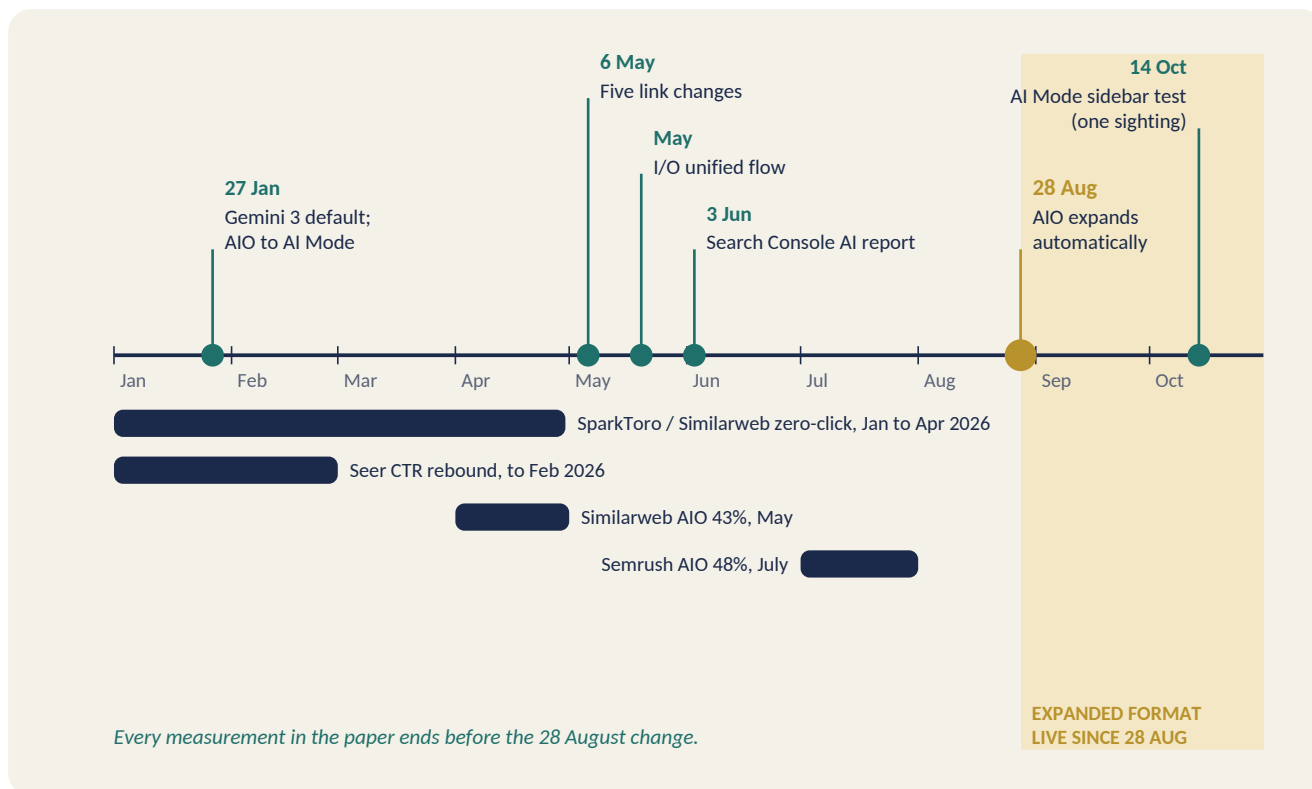
What they mean for AI Search, Today and Tomorrow

Steve Coulter | State of the Art Digital | Parts 1 to 3 reviewed as at 21 October 2026

Google's August change matters most. AI Overviews now expand on their own for some queries and push organic links further down the page. It supports the direction of the paper, **does not move the Q3 2027 date on its own**, and justifies a short addendum.

THE PICTURE

Google's changes against the paper's evidence



Gold marks the change that matters. Teal marks earlier changes. Navy bars show the period each statistic in the paper covers.

28 Aug

The date AI Overviews began expanding automatically. No paper figure covers it.

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Independent click studies of the new format found so far.

Q3 2027

Date unchanged. Still the author's extrapolation, with named triggers.

WHAT CHANGED

Six dated changes in 2026

Date	Change	Weight
27 Jan	Gemini 3 becomes the default model; AI Overviews hand follow-up questions to AI Mode	Context
May	I/O unifies the AI Overview and AI Mode flow	Context
6 May	Five link changes: inline links, hover previews, subscription labels, creator attribution	Helps citations
3 Jun	Search Console Generative AI report (impressions only, AI Overviews and AI Mode combined, data from 18 May)	Measurement
28 Aug	AI Overviews auto-expand for some queries with "Ask anything" open and no "Show more"; links pushed down; stops if the user scrolls	Key change
14 Oct	AI Mode sidebar test on main results, one sighting, not reproduced	Watch only

IMPACT ON THE PAPER

What it means for each part

1	Your Business Is Becoming Invisible ADD ONE SENTENCE Add a sentence noting that Google now shows inline citations in AI Overviews. No figures change.
2	Search Doomsday Is Q3 2027 KEEP THE DATE, NAME THE TRIGGER Every figure predates 28 August. Keep Q3 2027 as an aggressive-to-central estimate and state what would move it (see below).
3	The Chaff Effect ADD A CAUTION NOTE That expansion happens "where its systems judge it most useful" is inference only. Likewise, the idea that inline links reward quotable sections is a hypothesis for OPTIMUM, not a finding.

THE DATE

What would move Q3 2027

Earlier than Q3 2027	Later than Q3 2027
- Google extends automatic expansion widely, or makes AI Mode the default - The first independent click study of the new format shows loss beyond 40 to 61% - AI Mode's share of searches rises above 0.34%	- Click-through recovery continues (Seer: 1.3% to 2.4% from Dec 2025 to Feb 2026) - Expansion stays narrow

The Q3 2027 date remains the author's own extrapolation. It has no independent source for the 17% baseline.

READY TO PUBLISH

Paste-ready addendum text

Addendum, October 2026: Google's changes to AI Overviews

On 28 August 2026 Google began expanding AI Overviews automatically for some queries, with links placed further down the page. Every measurement in this paper predates that format, and I have found no independent click study of it.

The Q3 2027 inflection point remains my own extrapolation. It would move earlier if Google extends automatic expansion widely or makes AI Mode the default. I will update this paper when independent data exists.

LIMITS

Gaps and exclusions

- UK reach of the 28 August change is unconfirmed.
- The click effect of the new format is unmeasured.
- The 6 May changes and I/O figures rest on secondary sources.
- The 14 October sidebar was a single sighting and has not been reproduced.
- Excluded as untraceable: April 2026 "refresh" claims and a July claim that every query is now AI-first.

EVIDENCE BASE

Figures referred to

SparkToro / Similarweb	Zero-click 68.01%, Jan to Apr 2026 (Datos 2024: 60.45%, different panel)
Similarweb / Semrush	AI Overview coverage 43% (May), 48% (July)
Seer	CTR 1.3% to 2.4% (Dec 2025 to Feb 2026); no-AIO 2.8% to 3.8%
Agarwal and Sen, SSRN	Randomised study, April 2026: 39.8% fewer outbound organic clicks
CMA	Conduct requirement, 3 June 2026: publisher opt-out, attribution; nine months to implement
Google	AI Mode 1bn monthly users; Search Console Generative AI report, 3 June 2026

Sources: Google statements by a spokesperson and Robby Stein (28 August 2026); Google Search Central (3 June 2026); CMA decision (3 June 2026); SparkToro, Similarweb, Semrush, BrightEdge, Seer Interactive and SSRN as cited above.