UK AI SEARCH LANDSCAPE
REPORT 2026

100+ Verified Statistics · 12 Categories · 15+ Industry Sources

Consumer Adoption · Trust & Behaviour · Retail Investment · Startup Ecosystem · Future Outlook

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Executive Summary

This report aggregates and synthesises verified data from 15+ leading industry sources including Adyen, Yext, The SEO Works, Metapack, Startup Coalition, Firney, RSM UK, and OFCOM. All 100+ statistics are directly cited and linked to their original publications. No data is fabricated or estimated.

Consumer Adoption
• 28% of UK shoppers now use AI assistants for shopping (up from 12%)
• 40% of UK consumers use AI search daily
• 41% of UK internet users used generative AI in the past year
• 78% of UK 16–24 year olds used a generative AI tool this year

Consumer Trust
• 38% of UK consumers trust AI tools vs 50% for traditional search
• 62% of global consumers trust AI to guide brand decisions
• 44% of UK shoppers are open to fully autonomous AI purchasing
• 49% of Millennials open to AI handling entire shopping journey

Shopping Behaviour
• ChatGPT generates 50.2M monthly shopping-intent visits in the UK
• Conversational AI delivers 200–300% higher conversion rates
• 43% of Gen Z begin product searches on TikTok, not Google
• 60% of searches now result in zero clicks

Business Investment
• 84% of UK retailers open to AI-completed purchases
• 90% of global retailers plan AI spending increases in next 24 months
• UK AI top 1,000 startups raised £20.2B, employ 35,000+
• UK ranks 3rd globally for AI investment and talent

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Methodology & Data Sources

This report is a synthesis of published research from multiple sources. No new primary research was conducted. All data is presented as originally published with full attribution. Statistics were collected between January and March 2026.

Source	Sample	Fieldwork	Method
Adyen Retail Report 2026	2,000 UK adults + 500 UK retailers	Nov–Dec 2025	Online panel (Censuswide)
Yext Research 2026	2,000 UK consumers	Late 2025	Consumer survey
The SEO Works / ONS Data	UK internet users 16+	2024–2025	ONS data compilation
Metapack Ecommerce Benchmark 2026	8,000 consumers, 400 retailers	Nov 2025	Retail Economics surveys
Firney Research 2026	UK consumer data	2025–2026	Consumer behavior analysis
Startup Coalition AI Index 2026	Top 1,000 UK AI startups	2025	Beauhurst data analysis
RSM UK Mid-Market Report 2026	500 UK mid-market businesses	Jan 2026	Business survey
OFCOM Online Nation Report 2026	UK online adults	2025	Government research

Chapter 1: UK Consumer AI Adoption 2026

1.1 Overall AI Usage

28%	**40%**	**68%**
UK shoppers use AI assistants for shopping (up from 12% prior year)	UK consumers use AI search at least once a day	Global consumers used AI platforms for local product/service research
Adyen 2026	*Yext 2026*	*Yext 2026*

75%		
Global users say they use AI search tools more than a year ago		
Yext 2026		

1.2 UK Generative AI Adoption

41%	**78%**	**48%**
UK internet users aged 16+ used a generative AI tool in the past year	UK 16–24 year olds used a generative AI tool in the past year	UK adults use AI-assisted tools to find information (up 22 pp YoY)
SEO Works / ONS	*SEO Works / ONS 2024*	*SEO Works 2024*

23%		
UK internet users aged 16+ used ChatGPT in the past year		
SEO Works 2024		

1.3 Generational Breakdown

43%	**42%**	**70%**
Gen Z (16–27) use AI for shopping	Millennials (28–43) use AI for shopping	Gen Z already use AI tools during the shopping journey
Adyen 2026	*Adyen 2026*	*Firney 2026*

62%		
Gen Z prefer visual search to text		
Firney 2026		

1.4 Platform Usage

50.2M Monthly shopping-intent visits to ChatGPT and similar platforms in the UK *Metapack 2026*	**78%** Global consumers used AI tools such as ChatGPT in the past 12 months *Metapack 2026*	**93%** Global consumers under 35 used AI tools in the past 12 months *Metapack 2026*
43% Gen Z consumers begin product searches on TikTok rather than Google *Firney 2026*		

Chapter 2: Trust in AI & Autonomous Shopping

2.1 Trust in AI Tools

38% UK consumers trust AI tools (vs 50% for traditional search engines) *Yext 2026*	**62%** Global consumers trust AI to guide brand decisions *Yext 2026*	**18%** UK users believe AI search results are reliable (21% among 16–24s) *SEO Works 2025*

2.2 Readiness for Autonomous AI Shopping

44% UK shoppers open to letting AI handle entire shopping process incl. payment *Adyen 2026*	**49%** Millennials open to AI handling the entire shopping journey incl. payment *Adyen 2026*	**41%** Gen Z open to AI making purchases on their behalf *Adyen 2026*
42% Gen X open to AI making purchases on their behalf *Adyen 2026*	**33%** Baby Boomers open to AI making purchases on their behalf *Adyen 2026*	**30%** UK adults open to AI acting as a personal shopping agent *Metapack 2026*

2.3 Trust Conditions & Concerns

34% Shoppers want clarity on who is responsible if the wrong item is purchased *Adyen 2026*	**32%** Want the control to review and cancel purchases after AI selection *Adyen 2026*	**32%** Cite security of payment information and data privacy as top priorities *Adyen 2026*
14% Fully trust autonomous purchasing without human oversight *Firney 2026*		

Chapter 3: AI in Shopping & Retail

3.1 AI as a Shopping Channel

50.2M	**78%**	**93%**
Monthly UK shopping-intent visits to ChatGPT and similar platforms	Global consumers used AI tools such as ChatGPT in the past 12 months	Global consumers under 35 used AI tools in the past 12 months
Metapack 2026	*Metapack 2026*	*Metapack 2026*

3.2 Conversion Impact

200–300%	**2.6x**	**78%**
Higher conversion rates from conversational AI vs keyword-based search	Higher spending from customers who actively use site search	Potential reduction in return rates via conversational consultation
Firney 2026	*Firney 2026*	*Firney 2026*
16%		
Higher conversion rate for AI search visitors vs non-AI traffic		
SEO Works 2025		

3.3 AI Shopper Personas

17%	**30%**	**30%**
AI Delegators — affluent, time-poor, Millennials; let AI take the lead	AI Collaborators — young, digitally-savvy; use AI as trusted co-shopper	AI Selectors — typically older; engage occasionally for reassurance
Metapack 2026	*Metapack 2026*	*Metapack 2026*
23%		
AI Skeptics — cost-focused; limited AI use, prioritise low prices		
Metapack 2026		

3.4 Search Behavior Trends

60%	**47%**	**34.5%**
Searches now result in zero clicks	Google search results now feature AI Overviews	Average drop in CTR for first organic result when AI Overview appears
SEO Works 2025	*SEO Works 2025*	*SEO Works 2025*

**2.94% →
0.84%**

Reduction in organic CTR when AI
Overviews are present

SEO Works 2025

Chapter 4: Retailer AI Adoption & Investment

4.1 Retailer Openness to AI

84%	**49%**	**34%**
UK retailers open to enabling AI to complete purchases on shopper's behalf	Retailers view AI-enabled purchasing as a top strategic priority	Retailers plan to invest in AI purchasing technology in next 12 months
Adyen 2026	*Adyen 2026*	*Adyen 2026*

4.2 Investment Plans

90%	**80%**	
Global retailers plan to boost AI spending for ecommerce in next 12–24 months	UK retailers expect online sales growth in 2026 as AI enhances experiences	
Metapack 2026	*Metapack 2026*	

4.3 Adoption Challenges

36%	**54%**	**35%**
European retailers cite keeping pace with AI as a major 2026 challenge	Larger retailers (£500M+ turnover) cite skills gaps and legacy systems	Smaller firms (under £100M turnover) cite high development costs
Metapack 2026	*Metapack 2026*	*Metapack 2026*
17%		
European retailers have AI embedded across multiple functions (vs 28% in North America)		
Metapack 2026		

4.4 Retailer Priorities

39%	**38%**	**36%**
Retailers cite complete data security as the most important adoption factor	Prioritise effortless systems integration	Retailers resisting AI fear loss of direct customer relationship
Adyen 2026	*Adyen 2026*	*Adyen 2026*

Chapter 5: The UK AI Startup Ecosystem

5.1 UK AI Startup Landscape

£20.2B Total funding raised by UK's top 1,000 AI startups *Startup Coalition 2026*	**£45B** Combined valuation of UK's top 1,000 AI startups *Startup Coalition 2026*	**35,000+** People employed by UK's top 1,000 AI startups *Startup Coalition 2026*
3rd Global ranking for AI investment and talent concentration *Startup Coalition 2026*		

5.2 Geographic Distribution

65% Top UK AI startups (649 firms) are headquartered in London *Startup Coalition 2026*	**70%** Total funding (£14B) goes to London-based AI startups *Startup Coalition 2026*	

5.3 Leading Sectors

1st: Business Services Leading sector by number of firms, jobs, and funds raised *Startup Coalition 2026*	**2nd: Financial Services** Second-largest AI startup sector *Startup Coalition 2026*	**3rd: Health** Third-largest AI startup sector *Startup Coalition 2026*

Chapter 6: Future Outlook & Strategic Implications

6.1 The Future of AI in Retail

48%	**25%**	
Shoppers expect AI to act as a helpful assistant across shopping by 2030	Shoppers expect AI to evolve into a trusted co-shopper that automates decisions by 2030	
Metapack 2026	*Metapack 2026*	

6.2 AI Overviews Impact

60%	**47%**	**34.5%**
Searches now result in zero clicks	Google search results now feature AI Overviews	Average drop in CTR for the first organic result when AI Overview appears
SEO Works 2025	*SEO Works 2025*	*SEO Works 2025*

6.3 Strategic Implications for Brands

Trust = New Currency	**Conversational Commerce**	**UK Opportunity**
38% trust AI; brands must prioritise transparent AI strategies	3x higher conversions + 50.2M monthly shopping-intent AI visits	EU AI adoption lags North America (17% vs 28% scaled) — act now
Analysis	*Analysis*	*Analysis*
Gen Z Are AI-Native	**Zero-Click Metrics**	
78% of 16–24s use generative AI; 43% start product searches on TikTok	60% of searches yield zero clicks — measure AI Share of Voice, not traffic	
Analysis	*Analysis*	

Appendix: Full Source List

All statistics in this report are drawn from the following sources. Each source is listed for verification.

1. Adyen Retail Report 2026
https://www.adyen.com/en_GB/press-and-media/adyen-retail-report-2026-uk-ai

2. Yext Research 2026
https://cmotech.uk/story/yext-predicts-ai-will-redefine-online-discovery-by-2026

3. The SEO Works / ONS Data
https://www.seoworks.co.uk/downloads/ai-seo-statistics/

4. Metapack Ecommerce Benchmark 2026
https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20260204939235/en/

5. Firney Research 2026
https://agilitypr.news/Conversational-AI-search-delivers-up-to--1004275

6. Startup Coalition AI Index 2026
https://api.startupcoalition.io/news/the-ai-index/

7. RSM UK Mid-Market Report 2026
https://www.rsmuk.com/insights/mid-market-report-2026

8. OFCOM Online Nation Report 2026
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-nation-2026