G R A C K E R A I R E S E A R C H R E P O R T

The State of AI Search Visibility in Cybersecurity

2026 Benchmark Report

How 100 cybersecurity vendors perform across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews — and what the data reveals about winning AI citations in the security industry.

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gracker.ai

Executive Summary

The way B2B cybersecurity buyers discover and evaluate vendors has fundamentally changed. In 2025, nearly 90% of B2B buyers began using generative AI during their purchase journey (Forrester, 2025). AI-referred sessions jumped 527% in the first five months of 2025 alone (Previsible AI Traffic Report), and AI search-driven leads now convert 40% better than traditional search leads (G2, 2025).

Yet the vast majority of cybersecurity vendors remain invisible in this new channel. This report presents the first comprehensive, cybersecurity-specific benchmark of AI search visibility, analyzing how 100 cybersecurity companies perform across six major AI platforms.

Key Findings at a Glance

73%	of cybersecurity vendors tested received zero citations from ChatGPT when buyers asked for vendor recommendations in their category
4.4x	the value per visitor from AI-referred traffic compared to traditional organic search, based on conversion data across B2B SaaS
2–7	domains cited per AI response on average — far fewer than Google's 10 blue links, making inclusion dramatically more competitive
48%	of ChatGPT citations come from Wikipedia, with Reddit at ~11% — most vendor-owned content is not being cited at all
12K+	cybersecurity keywords now trigger Google AI Overviews for a single enterprise security company, fundamentally changing SERP dynamics

This report provides cybersecurity marketing leaders, CMOs, and growth teams with the data they need to understand where their brand stands in AI search, which platforms matter most, and what specific actions drive citation improvements.

1. Why This Report Matters Now

1.1 The AI Search Revolution in B2B Buying

The B2B technology buying process has undergone its most significant transformation since the rise of Google search. Buyers no longer follow a linear journey from awareness to consideration to decision. Instead, AI search is collapsing the entire funnel into single interactions.

Consider a typical cybersecurity buyer scenario: A CISO asks ChatGPT, "Which SASE vendor is best for a 500-person financial services company that needs SOC 2 compliance and integrates with our existing Microsoft stack?" The AI responds with a comparative analysis citing specific vendors, features, pricing considerations, and implementation complexity — all in a single response. That buyer has moved from awareness to shortlist without visiting a single vendor website.

The Data Behind the Shift

Metric	Data Point	Source
B2B buyers using GenAI in purchase journey	~90%	Forrester, 2025
AI-referred sessions growth (Jan–May 2025)	527% increase	Previsible AI Traffic Report
B2B marketers prioritizing GEO over SEO	35%	10Fold Communications, Oct 2025
AI search as % of qualified B2B leads	34% (#2 source)	10Fold Communications, 2025
Buyer journey completed in 12 weeks or less	73%	Google/NRG Survey, Dec 2025
Buyers who switched vendors in past 6 months	58%	Google/NRG Survey, Dec 2025
ChatGPT monthly active users	400M+ weekly	Exploding Topics, 2025
AI traffic growth YoY (2024 to 2025)	7x increase	SE Ranking Study, 2025

1.2 Why Cybersecurity Is Uniquely Affected

Cybersecurity is one of the verticals most impacted by the AI search shift for several interconnected reasons:

- **High-complexity buying decisions:** Security purchases involve 6–10 stakeholders and require deep technical evaluation. AI assistants excel at synthesizing complex comparisons, making them a natural tool for security buyers.
- **Risk-averse buyer behavior:** 78% of cybersecurity buyers shortlist only known vendor names. If AI doesn't mention you, you never enter the consideration set.
- **Rapidly evolving threat landscape:** Buyers need current information on threats, compliance, and capabilities. AI search platforms that perform real-time retrieval (Perplexity, ChatGPT with browsing) are becoming primary research tools.
- **Market size and competition:** The global cybersecurity market was valued at $219B in 2025, growing at 13.8% CAGR. North America alone represents $94B. The stakes for visibility have never been higher.

1.3 The Visibility Gap

Our research uncovered a critical disconnect: companies with strong traditional SEO rankings often have minimal AI search presence, while some newer entrants with AI-optimized content strategies are winning citations they would never have earned through Google rankings alone.

One enterprise cybersecurity firm with 50,000+ monthly Google visitors received zero ChatGPT citations when buyers searched for their category. Meanwhile, a competitor with a fraction of their organic traffic appeared consistently across multiple AI platforms due to structured, citation-friendly content.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Scope and Approach

This benchmark study analyzed 100 cybersecurity vendors across 10 major sub-categories, testing their visibility across six AI platforms using standardized buyer-intent prompts. The research was conducted between September 2025 and January 2026.

Vendors Analyzed

100 cybersecurity companies were selected across 10 categories: Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR), Security Information & Event Management (SIEM), Zero Trust / SASE, Identity & Access Management (IAM), Cloud Security (CSPM/CWPP), Email Security, Vulnerability Management, Managed Detection & Response (MDR), Data Loss Prevention (DLP), and Network Security / Firewall. Vendors ranged from enterprise leaders (CrowdStrike, Palo Alto Networks) to mid-market challengers and emerging startups.

AI Platforms Tested

Platform	Search Method	Traffic Share (of AI)	Key Characteristic
ChatGPT (GPT-4o/o1)	Browsing + training data	77.97%	Largest AI traffic driver; favors authoritative, well-known sources
Perplexity AI	Real-time web search	15.10%	Citation-heavy; cites more sources per response; freshness matters
Google AI Overviews	Integrated with Google SERP	Google's 86% share	Biggest immediate impact; 16% of queries trigger AIOs
Claude (Anthropic)	Training data + limited browsing	0.17%	Highest session value ($4.56); favors technical accuracy
Google Gemini	Real-time + Google ecosystem	6.40%	Integrated with Google services; growing in enterprise use
Microsoft Copilot	Bing index + GPT models	N/A	Enterprise integration; rising in B2B and professional contexts

Prompt Methodology

We developed 250 standardized buyer-intent prompts across three funnel stages:

- **Top-of-Funnel (Awareness):** "What are the best [category] tools for [use case]?" — 80 prompts testing brand awareness and category positioning.
- **Mid-Funnel (Evaluation):** "Compare [Vendor A] vs [Vendor B] for [specific requirement]" — 100 prompts testing competitive positioning and feature differentiation.
- **Bottom-of-Funnel (Decision):** "Which [category] vendor is best for a [company size] in [industry] with [specific compliance requirement]?" — 70 prompts testing purchase-ready recommendations.

Scoring Framework

Each vendor was scored on four dimensions: Citation Frequency (how often the brand appears in AI responses, 0–100), Citation Quality (whether the brand is mentioned as a top recommendation or merely listed, weighted), Cross-Platform Consistency (consistency of appearance across all six AI platforms, 0–100), and Sentiment Accuracy (whether AI-generated descriptions accurately reflect the vendor's actual capabilities).

3. Platform-by-Platform Citation Analysis

3.1 ChatGPT: The Dominant Discovery Channel

ChatGPT drives nearly 78% of all AI-referred traffic to websites and is the single most important platform for cybersecurity vendor visibility. With 400 million weekly active users and session durations averaging nearly 10 minutes on referred sites, ChatGPT represents the primary AI discovery channel for B2B buyers.

Citation Patterns

ChatGPT's citation behavior in cybersecurity follows a distinct hierarchy. Our analysis of 30 million AI citations (Profound, 2025) reveals that nearly 48% of ChatGPT's top cited sources are Wikipedia, with Reddit at approximately 11%, followed by established technology outlets like TechCrunch, Forbes, and industry analyst sites.

For cybersecurity-specific queries, the pattern shifts somewhat. Vendor-owned content appears more frequently in technical queries ("How does XDR differ from SIEM?") but almost disappears in buyer-intent queries ("What's the best SIEM for mid-market?"), where third-party review sites, analyst reports, and editorial content dominate citations.

Key Finding: The Earned Media Bias

The September 2025 University of Toronto study on GEO confirmed a systematic and overwhelming bias in AI search toward earned media (third-party, authoritative sources) over brand-owned content. In cybersecurity, this means that your blog posts and product pages are far less likely to be cited than a Gartner mention, a peer review on G2, a Reddit thread in r/cybersecurity, or a third-party comparison article.

Cybersecurity Vendor Visibility in ChatGPT

Category	Top Cited Vendor	Citation Rate	# Vendors Cited (of 10)	Avg. Responses with Zero Vendor Citations
EDR	CrowdStrike	82%	4–5	18%
SIEM	Splunk	71%	3–4	26%
Zero Trust / SASE	Zscaler	68%	3–5	22%

IAM	Okta	75%	3–4	24%
Cloud Security	Wiz	63%	3–4	31%
Email Security	Proofpoint	59%	2–3	35%
Vulnerability Mgmt	Tenable	66%	3–4	28%
MDR	Arctic Wolf	52%	2–3	38%
DLP	Symantec/ Broadcom	48%	2–3	42%
Network Security	Palo Alto Networks	79%	4–5	20%

3.2 Perplexity AI: The Citation-Dense Alternative

Perplexity accounts for 15.1% of AI traffic globally and nearly 20% in the US market. Unlike ChatGPT, Perplexity performs real-time web searches for every query and cites more sources per response, creating more opportunities for vendor inclusion. Perplexity users also view an average of 4.64 pages per visit, indicating deeper research engagement.

For cybersecurity vendors, Perplexity represents a significant opportunity because it favors fresh, well-structured content regardless of domain authority. A vendor that publishes a comprehensive comparison page today could appear in Perplexity results within hours. Session durations on referred sites average approximately 9 minutes, comparable to ChatGPT.

Perplexity vs. ChatGPT Citation Differences

Dimension	ChatGPT	Perplexity
Sources cited per response	2–4 sources typically	5–8+ sources per response
Source freshness weighting	Mix of training data + browsing	Strong real-time bias; recency matters
Vendor-owned content citation rate	Low for buyer queries	Moderate — cites vendor docs if structured well
Third-party preference	Strong preference for Wikipedia, Reddit	Balanced across editorial, vendor, analyst
Technical content performance	Good for established brands	Excellent for detailed, well-cited content
Update cycle for new content	Days to weeks (browsing mode)	Minutes to hours (real-time search)

3.3 Google AI Overviews: The Largest Immediate Battleground

Google AI Overviews represent the biggest near-term GEO opportunity for cybersecurity vendors, given Google's 86%+ share of search. AI Overviews appeared in approximately 16% of all US desktop queries by mid-2025, peaking at nearly 25% in July before Google pulled back to under 16% by November 2025 (Semrush). Informational queries — the type cybersecurity buyers use for research — make up approximately 88% of AI Overview triggers.

One enterprise cybersecurity company we tracked had approximately 12,000 of their target keywords triggering AI Overviews. The scale of this impact is immense. AI Overviews can cut click-through rates by 34.5% for top-ranking pages, with some sites seeing traffic drops of 20–40% since their rollout (SE Ranking, 300K keyword study).

Critical Data Point: Being Cited vs. Ranking

Perhaps the most important finding: 80% of sources cited in eCommerce AI Overviews don't rank organically in the top results, and holding a top-three position gives only an 8% chance of being featured in the AI Overview (SellersCommerce, 2025). While the exact figures vary for cybersecurity, the directional insight is clear: ranking on page one of Google does not guarantee AI Overview citation.

Google's AI Overviews typically reference 6–14 sources per response, with 9 sources being the most common count (SE Ranking). This creates a larger "citation surface" compared to ChatGPT's 2–7 sources, but competition is intense given Google's massive search volume.

3.4 Claude, Gemini, and Copilot

While ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews represent the largest immediate opportunities, the remaining platforms have distinct characteristics worth understanding:

Claude (Anthropic): Despite driving only 0.17% of AI traffic, Claude has the highest session value at $4.56 per visit — significantly higher than any other AI platform. Claude prioritizes technical accuracy and tends to give more nuanced, balanced vendor comparisons. For cybersecurity vendors targeting enterprise buyers, Claude's influence may exceed its traffic share.

Google Gemini: Holds 6.4% of AI traffic and benefits from deep Google ecosystem integration. Gemini tends to surface Google-indexed content and shows particular strength in queries requiring structured data comparison. Cross-agent consistency scores for cybersecurity vendors

are notably lower between Gemini and ChatGPT (CyberTheory audit data shows scores as low as 26/100).

Microsoft Copilot: Built on the Bing index and GPT models, Copilot is gaining traction in enterprise environments, particularly organizations in the Microsoft ecosystem. For cybersecurity vendors targeting enterprise accounts, Copilot visibility is increasingly important given Microsoft's pervasive presence in corporate IT stacks.

4. Cross-Platform Visibility Scores by Category

Our composite AI Visibility Score combines citation frequency, quality, cross-platform consistency, and sentiment accuracy across all six platforms. Scores are normalized on a 0–100 scale.

Category-Level Visibility Scores (Top 3 Vendors per Category)

Category	#1 Vendor (Score)	#2 Vendor (Score)	#3 Vendor (Score)	Category Avg
EDR	CrowdStrike (87)	SentinelOne (72)	Microsoft Defender (68)	41
SIEM	Splunk (79)	Microsoft Sentinel (71)	IBM QRadar (58)	36
Zero Trust / SASE	Zscaler (76)	Cloudflare (69)	Palo Alto Prisma (65)	38
IAM	Okta (78)	CyberArk (67)	Ping Identity (54)	35
Cloud Security	Wiz (74)	Orca Security (61)	Lacework (47)	33
Email Security	Proofpoint (71)	Mimecast (58)	Abnormal (52)	30
Vuln Management	Tenable (73)	Qualys (66)	Rapid7 (59)	37
MDR	Arctic Wolf (64)	Expel (57)	Red Canary (49)	29
DLP	Symantec (61)	Digital Guardian (48)	Forcepoint (44)	27
Network / Firewall	Palo Alto (83)	Fortinet (76)	Check Point (63)	40

Key Insights from Cross-Platform Analysis

1. **Winner-take-most dynamics:** In every category, the top 2–3 vendors capture the vast majority of AI citations. The gap between #1 and the category average is consistently 30–50+ points.
2. **Traditional leaders generally maintain advantage:** Established brands like CrowdStrike, Palo Alto Networks, and Splunk dominate AI citations, primarily due to higher earned media presence, Wikipedia pages, and analyst coverage.

3. **Challenger opportunity exists on Perplexity:** Newer entrants like Wiz, Abnormal Security, and Expel show disproportionately higher scores on Perplexity relative to ChatGPT, suggesting that real-time content optimization can close the gap.
4. **Cross-platform inconsistency is the norm:** The average cross-platform consistency score was just 41/100, meaning most vendors experience wildly different visibility across different AI platforms.

5. The SEO vs. GEO Gap in Cybersecurity

One of this report's most significant findings is the disconnect between traditional SEO performance and AI search visibility. Having a high Google ranking does not guarantee AI citation, and in some cases, SEO-optimized content performs worse in AI contexts than content optimized for citations.

SEO Ranking vs. AI Citation Rate

Google Organic Position	Probability of AI Overview Citation	ChatGPT Citation Rate	Perplexity Citation Rate
Position 1–3	~8%	Moderate (varies by content type)	Moderate-High (if freshly updated)
Position 4–10	~5%	Low to Moderate	Moderate
Position 11–100	~9.5% (AI Overviews)	Low	Low-Moderate (content-dependent)
Not ranking (new content)	Possible (earned media)	Very Low	Possible (if cited by others)

A counterintuitive finding: 9.5% of Google AI Overview citations come from pages ranking 11–100 in traditional Google SERPs, and 14.4% come from pages ranking outside the top 100 entirely. This means AI Overviews are actively surfacing content that Google's own organic algorithm wouldn't show on page one.

What Explains the Gap

Traditional SEO content is designed for click-through: it uses engaging narratives, long-form storytelling, and keyword-optimized headers. AI engines need something fundamentally different. They need structured, extractable data that can be synthesized into a direct answer. When a buyer asks AI "What's the difference between CrowdStrike and SentinelOne?", the AI needs comparison tables, feature matrices, and direct answer blocks — not a 3,000-word narrative blog post.

The 77% overlap between strong SEO and AI visibility (Superprompt, 400-site study) confirms that traditional SEO provides a foundation — but the remaining 23% is what separates vendors who get cited from those who don't. That 23% comes from content structure, citation-readiness, and multi-platform authority signals.

6. The Zero-Click Impact on Cybersecurity Pipeline

The zero-click phenomenon — where users get their answer from AI without clicking through to any website — is reshaping cybersecurity vendor pipeline economics.

Traffic Impact Data

Metric	Value	Source
Zero-click search rate	~60% of all searches	SparkToro / Datos, 2025
CTR drop when AI Overviews appear	34.5% decline for top pages	SE Ranking (300K keywords)
Organic CTR with AI Overview present	0.64% (down from 1.41%)	Seer Interactive, Sept 2025
Consumers relying on zero-click results	80% for 40%+ of searches	Bain & Company, Feb 2025
Traffic reduction from zero-click	15–25% organic traffic loss	Bain & Company, 2025
Paid CTR decline (AIO queries)	Dropped to fraction of 2024 levels	Seer Interactive, Sept 2025

The Hidden Demand Problem

For cybersecurity vendors, the zero-click trend creates a category of “invisible demand” — buyers who research, evaluate, and shortlist vendors entirely through AI interactions without ever visiting a vendor’s website. This demand is real and high-intent (AI-referred visitors are worth 4.4x traditional organic visitors), but it’s invisible to traditional analytics.

A vendor’s Google Analytics dashboard might show steady or declining organic traffic, but this doesn’t capture the brand impressions happening inside ChatGPT conversations, Perplexity research sessions, or Google AI Overviews. The vendors being cited in these responses are building brand awareness and trust even when no click occurs.

7. What Wins AI Citations in Cybersecurity

Based on our analysis of which cybersecurity vendors consistently earn citations and the academic research on GEO effectiveness, we identified the following citation success factors:

GEO Strategy Effectiveness (Princeton Research Applied to Cybersecurity)

GEO Strategy	Visibility Improvement	Best For (Cybersecurity Context)
Statistics Addition	30–40% improvement	Threat data, benchmark numbers, breach costs, performance metrics
Cite Sources / Quotation Addition	30–40% improvement	Referencing industry frameworks (NIST, MITRE ATT&CK), analyst data
Fluency Optimization + Statistics	Best combination (5.5%+ above single)	Technical documentation, comparison pages
Easy-to-Understand Language	15–25% improvement	Explainer content, buyer guides
Technical Terms (domain-specific)	10–20% improvement	Deep technical content for security practitioners
Keyword Stuffing (traditional SEO)	Negative impact	Actively hurts AI visibility — avoid entirely

Content Types That Earn the Most Cybersecurity Citations

5. **Third-party reviews and analyst content:** Gartner Magic Quadrant mentions, G2 reviews, and Forrester Wave inclusions drive the highest citation rates. Investing in earned media and analyst relations has a direct GEO impact.
6. **Comparison and alternatives pages:** Structured comparison content (“CrowdStrike vs. SentinelOne”) is heavily cited when buyers ask evaluation questions. Pages with feature comparison tables, pricing data, and use-case matrices perform best.
7. **Original research and proprietary data:** Vendors publishing original threat intelligence, benchmark data, or industry surveys earn citations as primary sources. This is hard to replicate, which is why it works.
8. **Programmatic SEO portals:** CVE databases, compliance centers, and security tool directories generate 18% conversion rates vs. 0.5% from traditional blogs. AI engines frequently cite these as authoritative reference sources.

9. **Community and peer validation:** Reddit threads (r/cybersecurity, r/sysadmin), community discussions, and user-generated content are increasingly cited by AI engines. Authentic peer validation now influences AI recommendations.

8. Strategic Recommendations

8.1 For Marketing Leaders and CMOs

10. **Audit your current AI visibility immediately.** Ask ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude the 10 most common buyer questions in your category. Document where you appear, how you're described, and which competitors are cited instead.
11. **Allocate dedicated GEO budget.** 35% of B2B marketers already prioritize GEO as their #1 success metric. Reallocate 15–20% of content marketing budget toward AI-optimized content creation and earned media programs.
12. **Invest in earned media and analyst relations.** Given AI's strong bias toward third-party sources, PR and analyst relations have a direct, measurable GEO impact. Target 20+ high-authority citations per quarter.
13. **Track AI-specific metrics.** Set up GA4 channel groupings for AI referral traffic (chatgpt.com, perplexity.ai). Monitor citation frequency across platforms weekly. Measure AI share of voice against key competitors.

8.2 For Content Teams

14. **Restructure existing content for AI extraction.** Add 40–60 word answer blocks that directly address buyer questions. Include comparison tables, statistics with sources, and structured FAQ sections.
15. **Prioritize data-driven content.** Content with original statistics earns 4.1x more AI citations. Publish original research, benchmark data, and threat intelligence reports with verifiable data points.
16. **Build programmatic content at scale.** CVE databases, compliance guides, integration pages, and alternatives pages create large citation surface areas. pSEO portals achieve 18% conversion rates while simultaneously feeding AI engines with structured data.
17. **Update content every 30 days.** Content updated within 30 days gets 3.2x more AI citations than stale content. Implement a monthly refresh cycle for your top 50 pages.

9. About This Research

About GrackerAI

GrackerAI is the pioneering AI-powered AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) and GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) platform built specifically for B2B SaaS companies. The platform helps businesses get discovered and cited by AI search engines including ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot.

GrackerAI's platform provides real-time AI visibility monitoring, automated AI-optimized content creation, competitor citation analysis, and programmatic SEO portals. The company has helped 500+ B2B SaaS companies improve their AI search visibility, with a special focus on cybersecurity, fintech, and enterprise software verticals.

Methodology Note

This report represents GrackerAI's analysis of publicly observable AI search behaviors. All AI platform queries were conducted using standard, publicly available interfaces. Vendor visibility scores are based on GrackerAI's proprietary scoring methodology and should be considered directional benchmarks rather than absolute measures. AI platform behaviors change frequently, and results may vary over time.

Get Your Free AI Visibility Audit

Want to see exactly how your cybersecurity brand performs across all six AI platforms? GrackerAI offers a complimentary AI Visibility Audit that benchmarks your brand against competitors and identifies specific improvement opportunities.

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