LQ DIGITAL

Q3 2026 REPORT

Social in AI Search: Which Networks Matter?

A Look at the Social Platforms Powering Citations Across ChatGPT, Google, Gemini, and Perplexity

5
AI ENGINES ANALYZED

22
SOCIAL PLATFORMS TRACKED

6
MONTHS OF CITATION DATA

LQ Digital · lqdigital.com
Powered by LQ Vision™ Search Intelligence
© 2026 LQ Digital. All rights reserved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where AI Engines Go for Social Proof

YouTube and Reddit Lead the Pack Across the Most Popular AI Engines

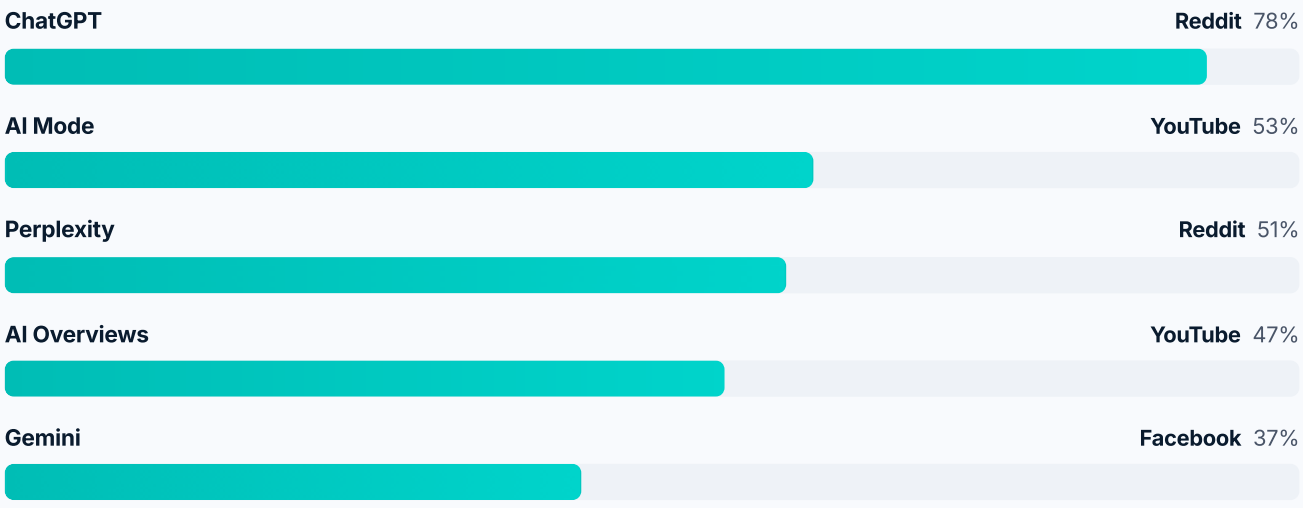
Which social network shows up most often depends heavily on which AI engine you're using. Based on the prompts tracked in our AI insights platform, LQ Vision, ChatGPT leans overwhelmingly on Reddit, and Google's two AI surfaces lean on YouTube.

Reddit is the single highest-cited network on both ChatGPT and Perplexity, and it shows up well beyond that too, holding about a fifth of AI Overviews' citations and about 16% of AI Mode's. YouTube is the top social source for both of Google's AI surfaces, AI Overviews and AI Mode, and keeps a real presence even where it isn't first, holding nearly 30% of Gemini's citations.

For brands, that's the opening. Optimizing your own website is one lever for AI visibility, but building real content and community presence on highly-cited social networks is a second, often faster one. At LQ, it's one of the levers we use to help brands own their space in AI search.

Top Social Networks Cited by Each AI Engine

Share of Social Citations, September 2026



> These findings are based on more than 200,000 social citations across the five AI engines in this report, drawn from LQ Digital's own client mix. These results are best read as directional guidance rather than definitive benchmarks.

SPOTLIGHT ON CHATGPT

ChatGPT Has One Favorite Social Site: Reddit

Nearly four out of every five social citations ChatGPT pulls come from the platform.

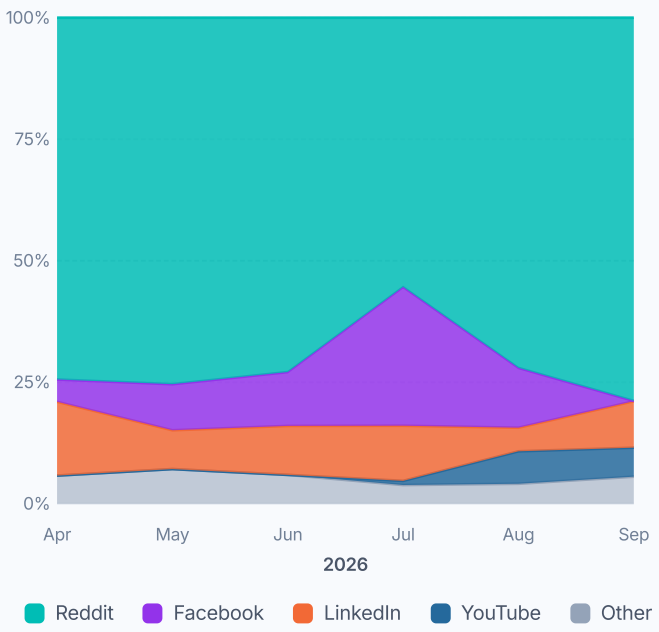
Reddit has been ChatGPT's top social source for months, and usually accounts for the overwhelming majority of citations. There was a dip in July, when a surge in Facebook citations pulled Reddit down to just over half of the total. It bounced right back, and September was its strongest month yet. Reddit isn't just ChatGPT's top social source, it's the dominant one by a very wide margin.

YouTube is the one to watch. It was absent from ChatGPT's social citations through June, but it has held a small, steady presence since August. LinkedIn, meanwhile, rebounded to a clear second place in September, though it is still far behind Reddit.

If your category gets discussed on Reddit, that's where ChatGPT is listening.

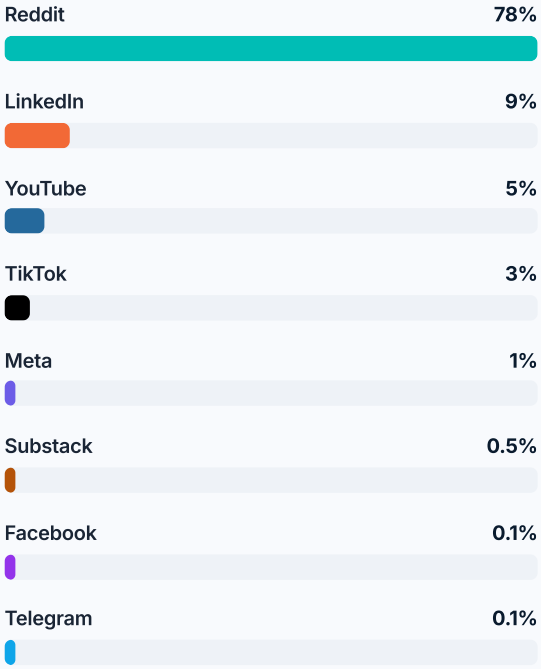
Six-Month Trend

Top networks, normalized citation share



September 2026

All tracked networks, normalized citation share



SPOTLIGHT ON GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

Google's AI Overviews Runs a Two-Platform Show

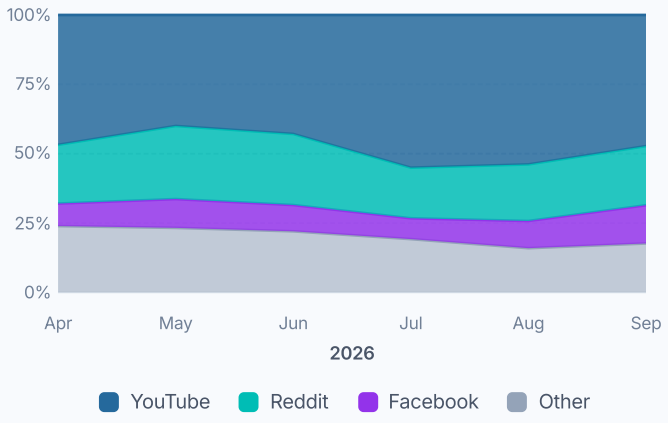
YouTube and Reddit together account for roughly seven out of every ten social citations.

Of the five engines in this report, AI Overviews has the most settled social citation mix. YouTube has held the top spot every single month, consistently accounting for close to half of all social citations, and September was no exception. Reddit has been a steady second, typically holding somewhere between a fifth and a quarter of the total.

Further down, Facebook has pulled ahead of LinkedIn since August and now earns nearly twice as many citations as LinkedIn, while nothing else registers in a meaningful way. There's no reshuffling story at the top, just a consistent choice to reward brands with an active video presence first, and a credible Reddit footprint second.

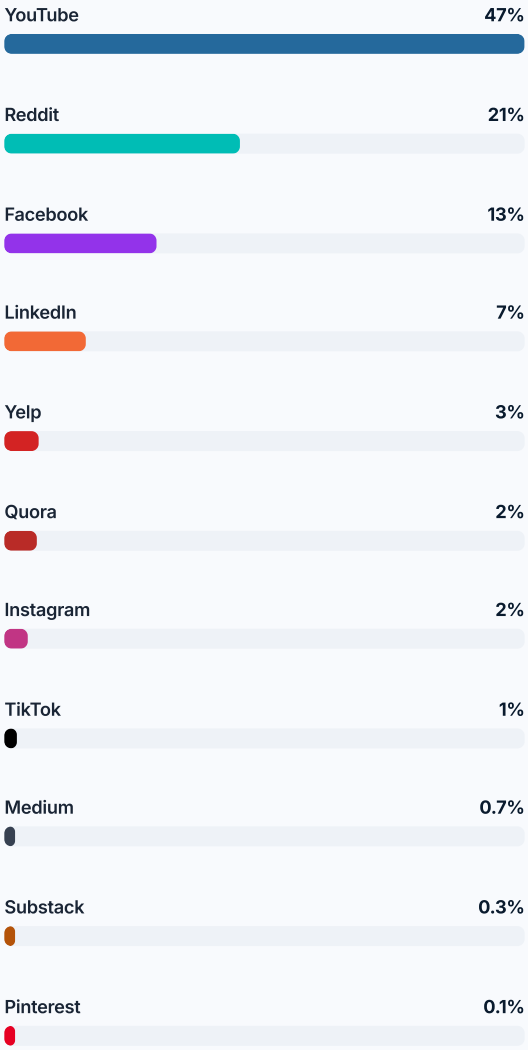
Six-Month Trend

Top networks, normalized citation share



September 2026

All tracked networks, normalized citation share



SPOTLIGHT ON GOOGLE AI MODE

AI Mode Is Skewing Increasingly Toward YouTube

YouTube's share has jumped to roughly half of all social citations by September.

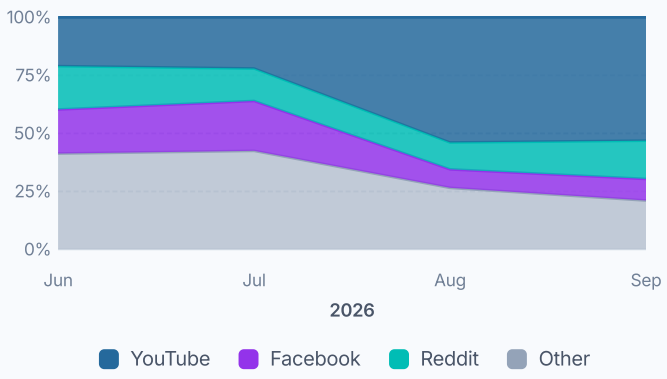
Looking at June through September, YouTube's share of social citations in AI Mode moved in a step change rather than a steady climb. Through July it sat at roughly a fifth of the total. In August it more than doubled to just over half, and it has held there since.

The other platforms gave up ground as YouTube took it. Facebook and Reddit started the window at similar levels, but Facebook has since fallen by about half, while Reddit slipped in August before partly recovering in September. Yelp followed a similar path, dropping sharply in August and rebounding modestly in September.

The clearest, most reliable signal here is YouTube's rise, and it's the one brands prioritizing AI Mode visibility should act on first.

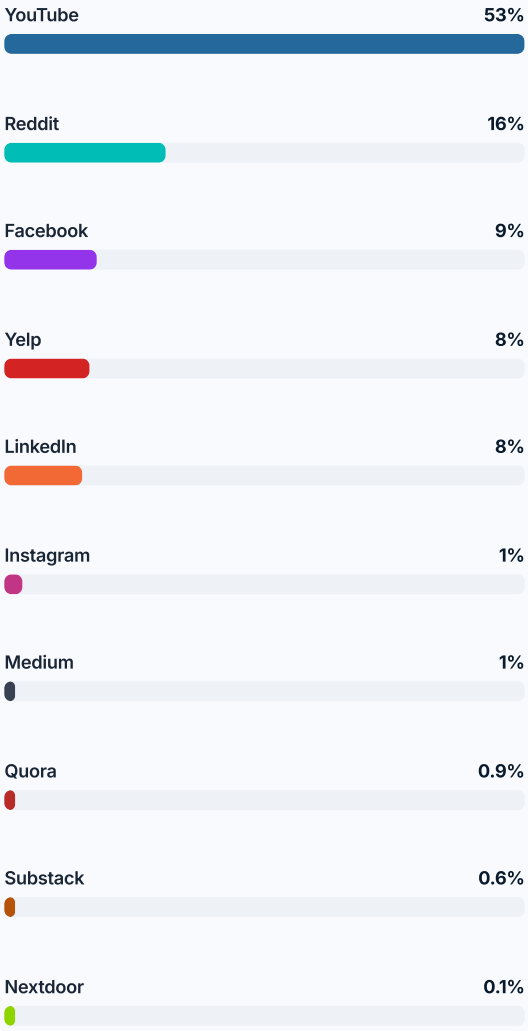
Six-Month Trend

Top networks, normalized citation share



September 2026

All tracked networks, normalized citation share



SPOTLIGHT ON GEMINI

Gemini Is Increasingly Citing Facebook

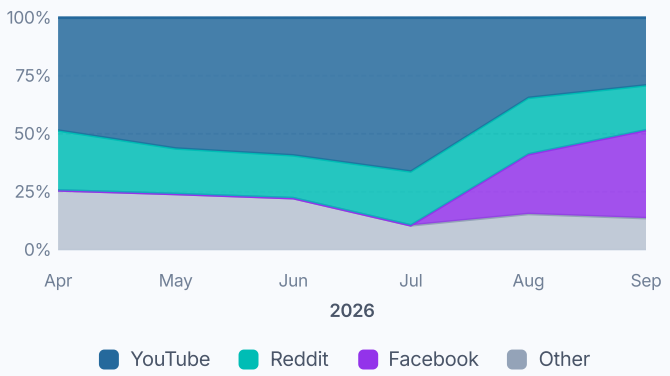
Facebook's share has recently pulled ahead of both YouTube and Reddit.

For most of the year, Gemini leaned on YouTube and Reddit as its two real platforms, which together made up roughly three out of every four social citations or more, while Facebook barely registered.

That changed fast. Facebook's share jumped in August and climbed again in September, moving past both YouTube and Reddit to become Gemini's leading social source. It's rounded out by Medium and Quora, each with less than 10% share.

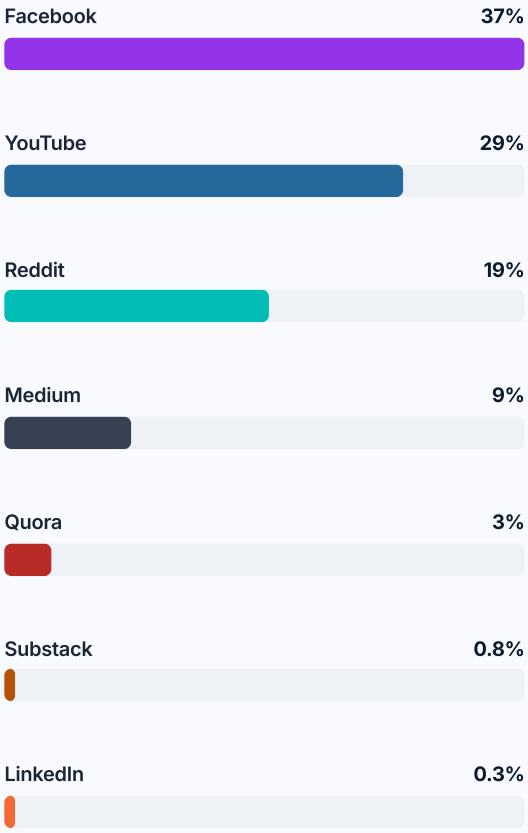
Six-Month Trend

Top networks, normalized citation share



September 2026

All tracked networks, normalized citation share



SPOTLIGHT ON PERPLEXITY

Perplexity Shifts Further Toward Reddit

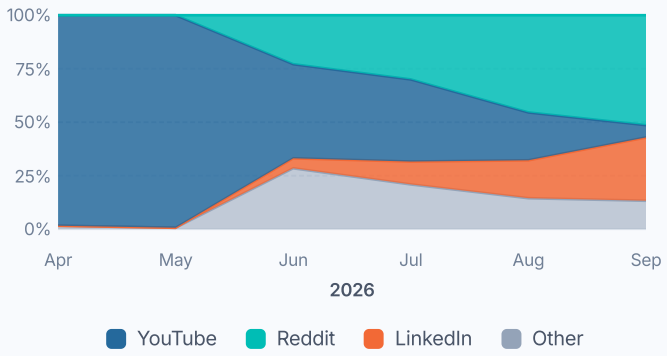
After a heavy supply of YouTube citations, Reddit has emerged as the leader.

No engine in this report changed more than Perplexity. Through April and May, YouTube accounted for most of its social citations. Starting in June, that dominance evaporated: Reddit moved to the clear leader by September, and LinkedIn came from nowhere to claim a strong second place, giving Perplexity a more diversified social mix. YouTube, meanwhile, has fallen to a sliver of what it was.

For brands focused on Perplexity, the opportunity now sits with Reddit and LinkedIn rather than YouTube.

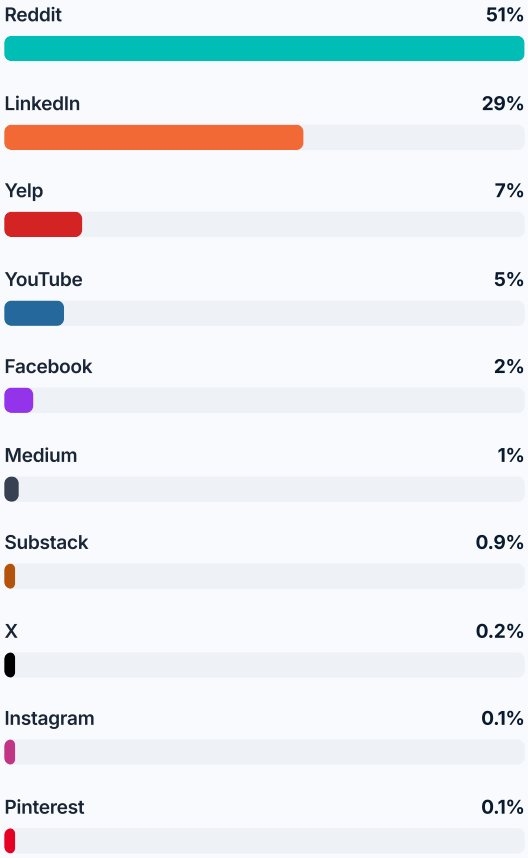
Six-Month Trend

Top networks, normalized citation share



September 2026

All tracked networks, normalized citation share



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

The "Best" Posts Win the Most Citations

The posts that win citations are largely about the "best" companies in a category, with the brand shortlist sitting in the post itself or in a top comment. Popularity isn't the deciding factor. Posts with modest engagement still become go-to sources when they name the best companies in a category. Four real examples below.

r/ **r/boating**
Posted by u/TipDismal2901 — REDDIT

Best Insurance Companies

Looking for recommendations on boat insurers with good policies and pricing, and wondering whether a boat-specialty company or a general big-name insurer is the better route.

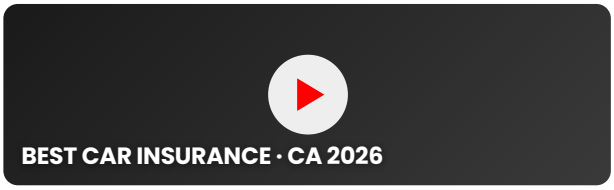
> **u/-Maim-** ↑ 1
> Geico partners with BoatUS, so you can usually get a deal on the membership and insurance. For a smaller boat, I'd go that route.

↑ 1 upvotes · 9 comments

DV **Didier Vandenberghe**
Senior Pest Control & Hygiene Specialist · Business Consultant — LINKEDIN

The "best" pest control companies globally are usually the big three: Rentokil, Orkin, and Terminix, prized for scale, tech integration (like Rentokil's PestConnect), and decades of track record. The rest of a ten-company list rounds out with specialists and regional players like Aptive, Ehrlich, and Anticimex.

👍 10 reactions · 1 comment · ↻ 1 repost



The 3 Best Car Insurance Companies in California = Geico, State Farm & Progressive
FreeAdvice.com · 914 views · 2 years ago — YOUTUBE

> **@FreeAdvice** PINNED
> 🛒 Get quotes from the best car insurance companies in California here: freeadvice.com/compare-insurance

👍 14 · 15 comments

J **Jessica Naylor**
Restaurant Owners and Managers · Group — FACEBOOK

What apps do you use for scheduling? Pros and cons please — currently using a word doc but considering Workforce or 7shifts.

> **Michael Cordell O'Kelley**
> Personally like Square's shift scheduling and team management.

👍 5 reactions · 20 comments · ↻ 0 shares

YOUR NEXT STEP

Find Out Where Your Brand Stands in AI Search — Free.

The AI Search Scorecard gives you a fast, free snapshot of your brand's current visibility in AI Search, and a clear roadmap for what to do about it.

STEP 1

LQ Scorecard

Your AI visibility snapshot. Free, fast, and insightful.

STEP 2

LQ Vision™

Ongoing intelligence on how AI is reshaping your brand visibility.

STEP 3

LQ Partnership

Acquire profitable customers with our proven playbook and talented team.

YOUR SCORECARD REVEALS:

- ✓ Are you present for key searches?
- ✓ How do you compare to direct competitors?
- ✓ Which sources define your brand to AI?

WHAT IT COSTS:

$0

Free. No commitment.
No technical setup required.

Get My Free AI Search Scorecard →

lqdigital.com/scorecard

Book a Strategy Call with LQ

lqdigital.com/contact

© 2026 LQ Digital. All rights reserved. · lqdigital.com