

RESEARCH · 2026

State of European Business 2026

The Visibility Economy Report

Insights into how 10,000+ peers across Europe are getting found online today, how discovery is changing, and how businesses can stay visible, trusted, and relevant.

Participating Brands:

() names.co.uk



() simply
HOSTING & SERVERS

ukdedicated

European businesses have more digital channels than ever — but being found is getting harder:

- More **competition for attention** than ever
- Greater **dependence** on **global platforms** they don't control
- **Changes** to **how customers discover** and **engage** with them
- **Fragmented tools, markets, and languages** across Europe
- **Limited visibility** into what actually turns attention into growth
- **Websites** are shifting from static presence to **active growth engine**

542

UK businesses surveyed

35.1%

Say reaching customers is harder, above Pan-EU (30.6%)

5.4%

Say reaching customers is harder, above Pan-EU (30.6%)

12.4%

Accurately track website conversion, above Pan-EU (9.7%)

46.9%

Not prepared for AI discovery, the highest in Europe

3.63/10

AI search confidence, the lowest of all priority markets

ABOUT TEAM.BLUE

Who we are and why this report matters

At team.blue, we recognise that Europe's businesses are navigating a fast-changing digital world where trust, security, and clarity matter as much as innovation. As a leading digital enabler, team.blue and our 60+ brands across Europe empower businesses to grow with robust, reliable, and secure solutions. We are committed to being the trusted partner that makes business success simpler for our **3.5 million customers**, ranging from solopreneurs to large enterprises.

This UK edition of our inaugural State of European Business report, produced in partnership with 26 team.blue brands and drawing on responses from more than 10,000 peers across Europe. It focuses on the visibility challenge: the rapidly evolving digital landscape of being found, chosen, and trusted online.

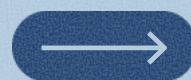
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK visibility economy: mature market, urgent gaps

UK businesses operate in one of Europe's most digitally mature environments. They are more experienced with digital tools, better at tracking website conversions, and, by their own assessment, less exposed to algorithm disruption than the European average. Yet the UK has the lowest AI search confidence of any priority market, the highest share of businesses completely unprepared for AI-driven discovery, and a website ownership rate below the European average. Maturity has not produced immunity.

68.2%

Word-of-mouth remains the #1 discovery channel. Search (52.7%) and social media (35.3%) (lowest in Europe). UK discovery is the most traditional in profile: strong on relationships, weaker on digital breadth.

74.1%

Trust in provider: 74.1% rank this as very important, which is 3rd highest in Europe. GDPR compliance: 60.8%. European provider: 29.5%, one of the lowest, reflecting post-Brexit context.

12.4%

Only 12.4% accurately track how website visitors become leads or customers, above Pan-EU (9.7%), but 58.0% still have no clear tracking. The UK is ahead of average, but the majority remain without conversion data.

16.3%

58.9% believe AI will change discovery, the lowest of all priority markets, 16.3% below Pan-EU. Yet 46.9% are completely unprepared, the highest unpreparedness rate in Europe. Low belief + low preparation = high risk.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK visibility economy: mature market, urgent gaps

UK Market Finding

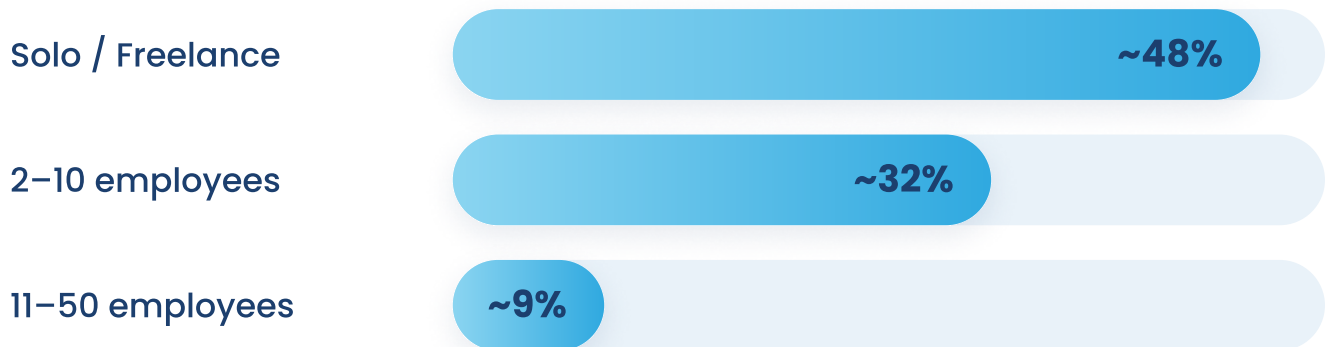
UK word-of-mouth reliance **(68.2%)** is above Pan-EU **(61.5%)**. UK social media discovery **(35.3%)** is the lowest of any priority market, 13.2% below Pan-EU. The UK's discovery mix is the most referral-and-search-focused in Europe, which brings resilience but limits scale.

"Businesses are not just facing technical platform issues: they feel strategically dependent on systems they cannot fully influence."

DEMOGRAPHICS

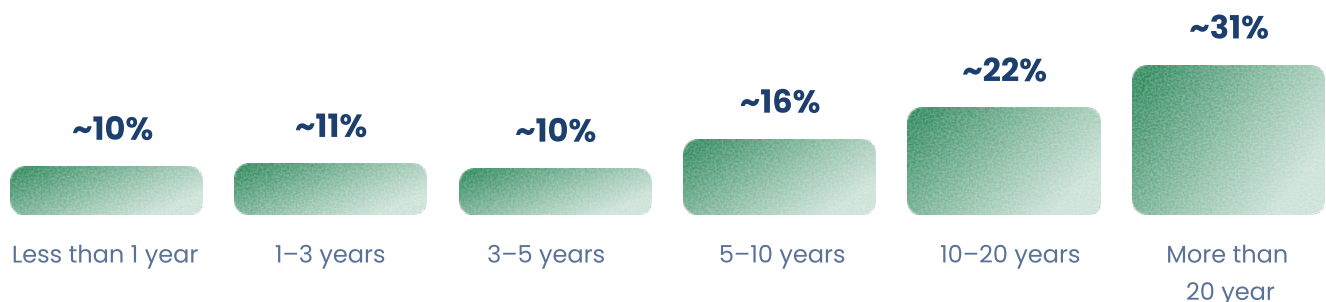
Company size

How many employees does your business have?



The UK respondent profile mirrors the European average closely. The UK SMB market is dominated by sole traders, micro-businesses, and owner-managed companies. Over 5 million of the UK's 5.5 million registered businesses are sole traders or micro-firms. For these businesses, digital tool decisions are personal, immediate, and high-stakes.

How long has your business been running?



Over half of UK respondents have been in business for more than a decade. This established base brings digital confidence, but also a tendency towards incremental rather than transformational change, and habits formed before AI-driven search was a commercial reality.

DISCOVERABILITY

Discovery channels: UK vs Pan-EU

Has it become harder, easier, or stayed the same to reach customers online over the past 2 years?

35.1%

of UK businesses say reaching customers online has become harder

30.6%

of Pan-EU businesses say reaching customers online has become harder

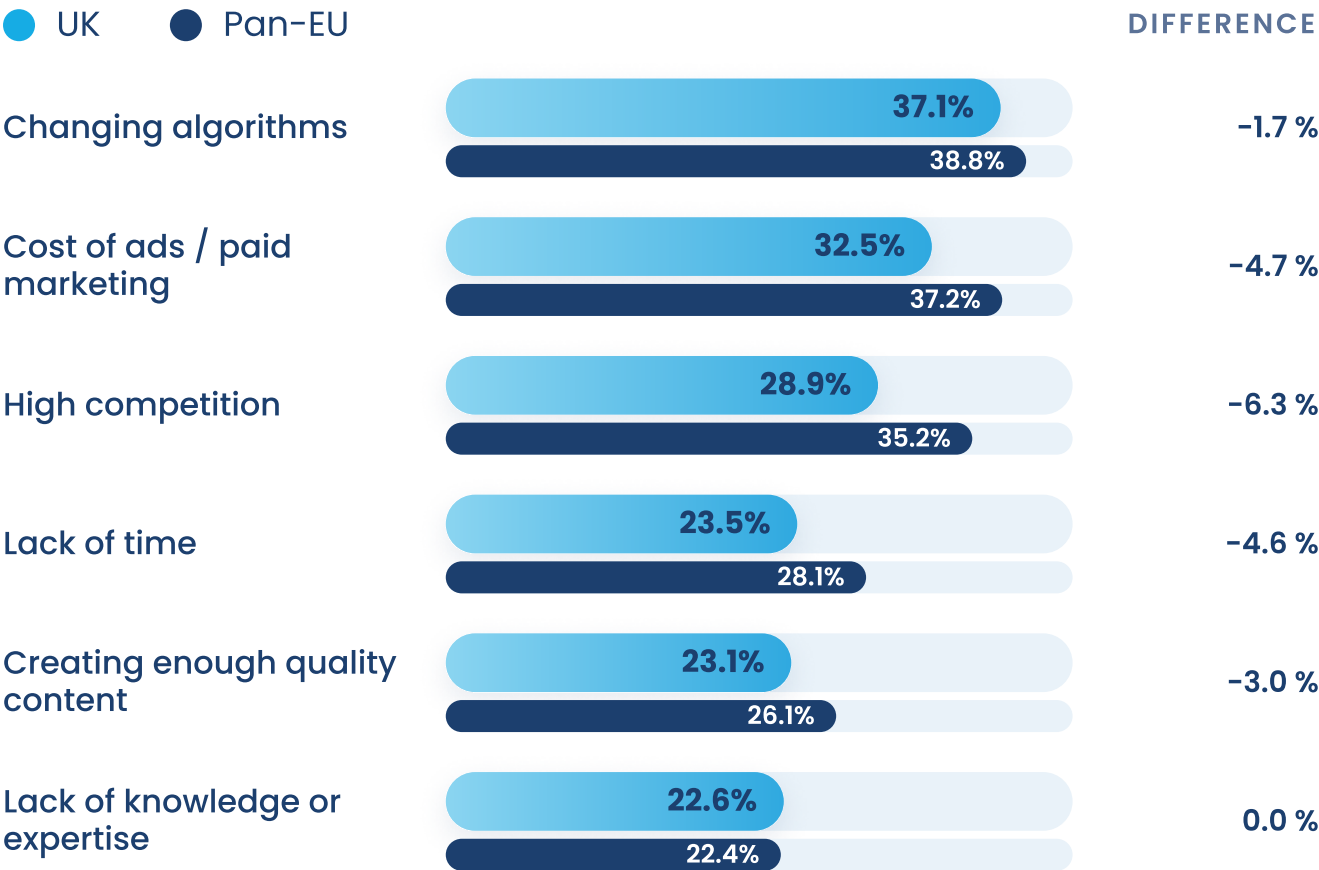
UK Market Finding

The UK is above the Pan-EU average on 'harder' (35.1% vs 30.6%) and notably below average on 'easier'. This reflects the UK's highly competitive digital market where paid search costs are among the highest in Europe and organic visibility is increasingly difficult to achieve.

DISCOVERABILITY

Discovery channels: UK vs Pan-EU

What are the biggest challenges you face in getting discovered online?



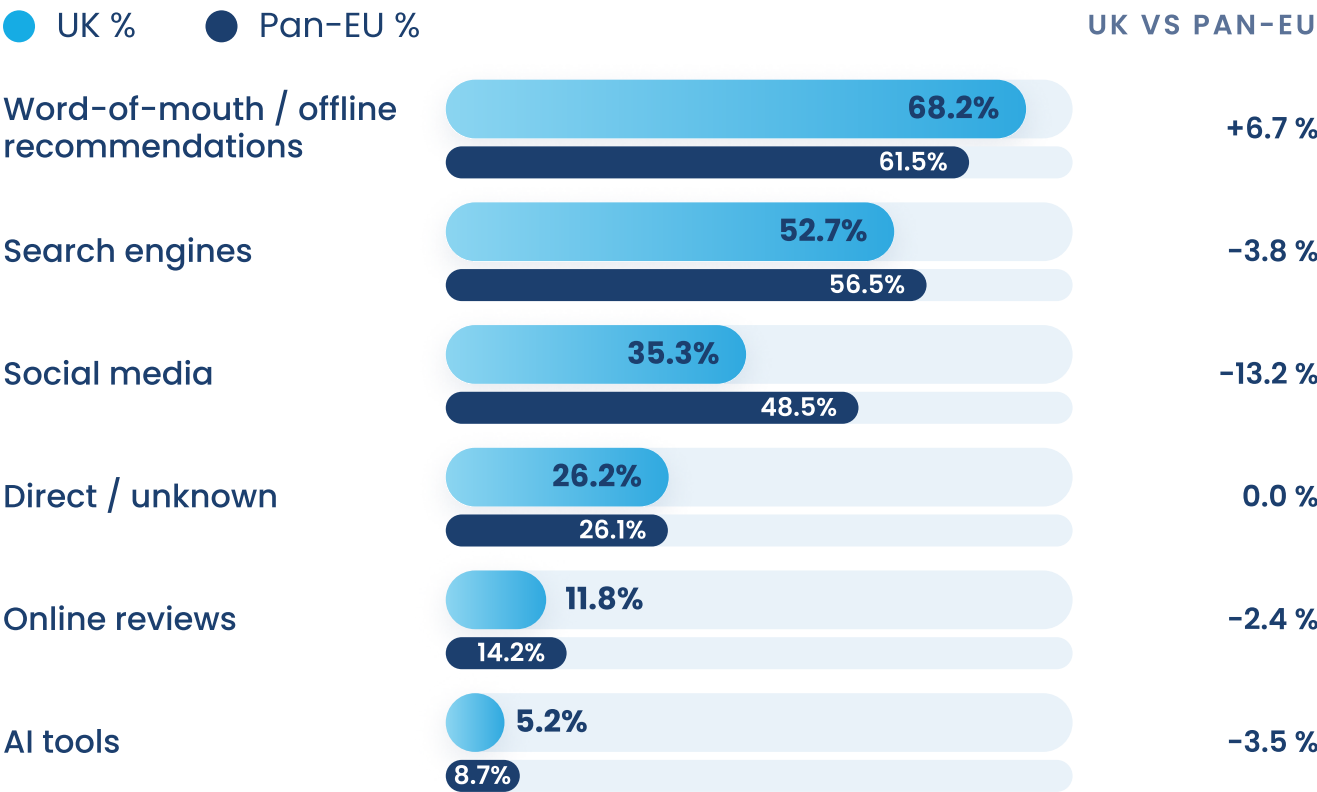
UK Market Finding

UK businesses score consistently below Pan-EU averages on most discovery challenges, suggesting a more digitally experienced cohort. However, algorithm changes remain the top challenge, and ad cost inflation (32.5%) remains a pressure point for smaller UK businesses that cannot absorb rising paid acquisition costs.

DISCOVERABILITY

Discovery channels: UK vs Pan-EU

Rank where customers most often first discover your business today



UK Market Finding

UK social media discovery at **35.3%** is the lowest of any surveyed market, **13.2 %** below Pan-EU. This is both a strength (lower exposure to social algorithm disruption) and a limitation (narrower discovery footprint, less reach into new audiences). The UK's discovery profile is the most traditional in Europe: heavily reliant on word-of-mouth and search, with social playing a supporting role only.

DISCOVERABILITY

Discovery channels: UK vs Pan-EU

Do you believe AI will change how customers discover businesses online?

58.9% of UK businesses believe AI will change discovery

75.2% Pan-EU, the lowest AI belief rate of any priority market

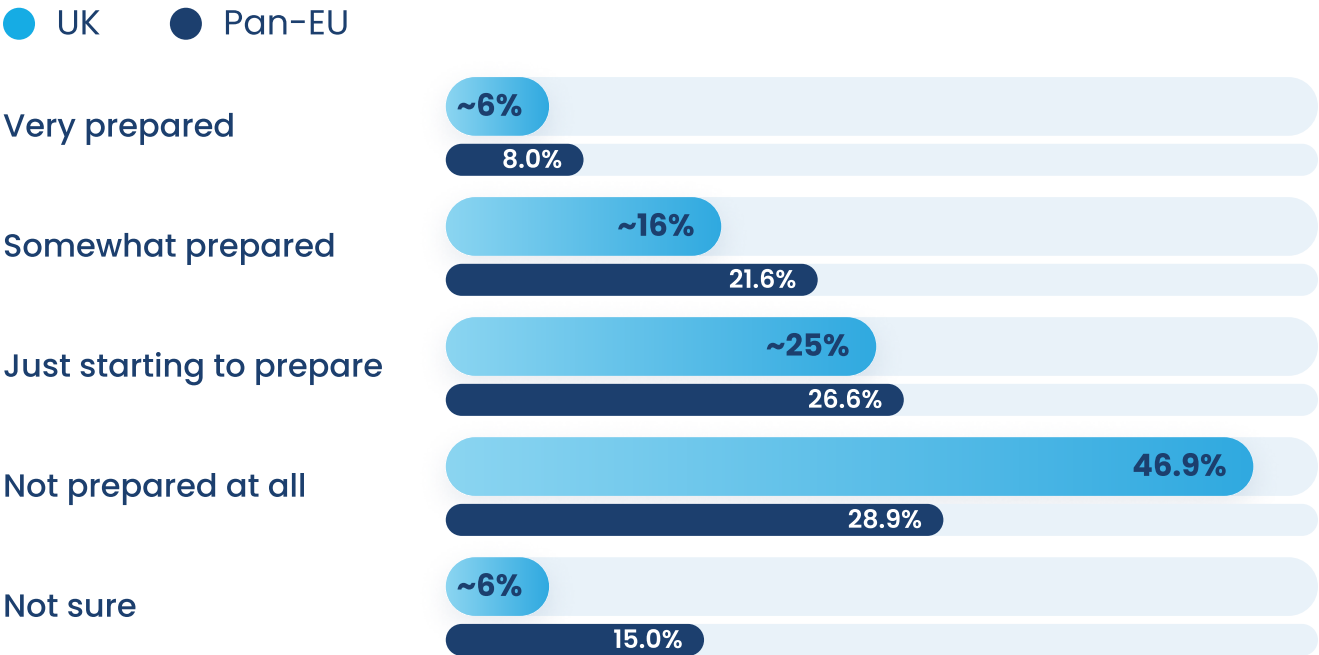
UK Market Finding

The UK's AI belief rate (**58.9%**) is the lowest among all focus countries, **16.3%** below Pan-EU. This pragmatic scepticism may reflect the UK business culture of waiting for proven ROI before investing. However, if AI-driven discovery accelerates as the global majority expects, this caution carries structural risk.

DISCOVERABILITY

Discovery channels: UK vs Pan-EU

How prepared is your business for AI-driven discovery?



46.9%

Highest unpreparedness rate of any priority market, vs 28.9% Pan-EU. UK readiness gap: 36.5 %

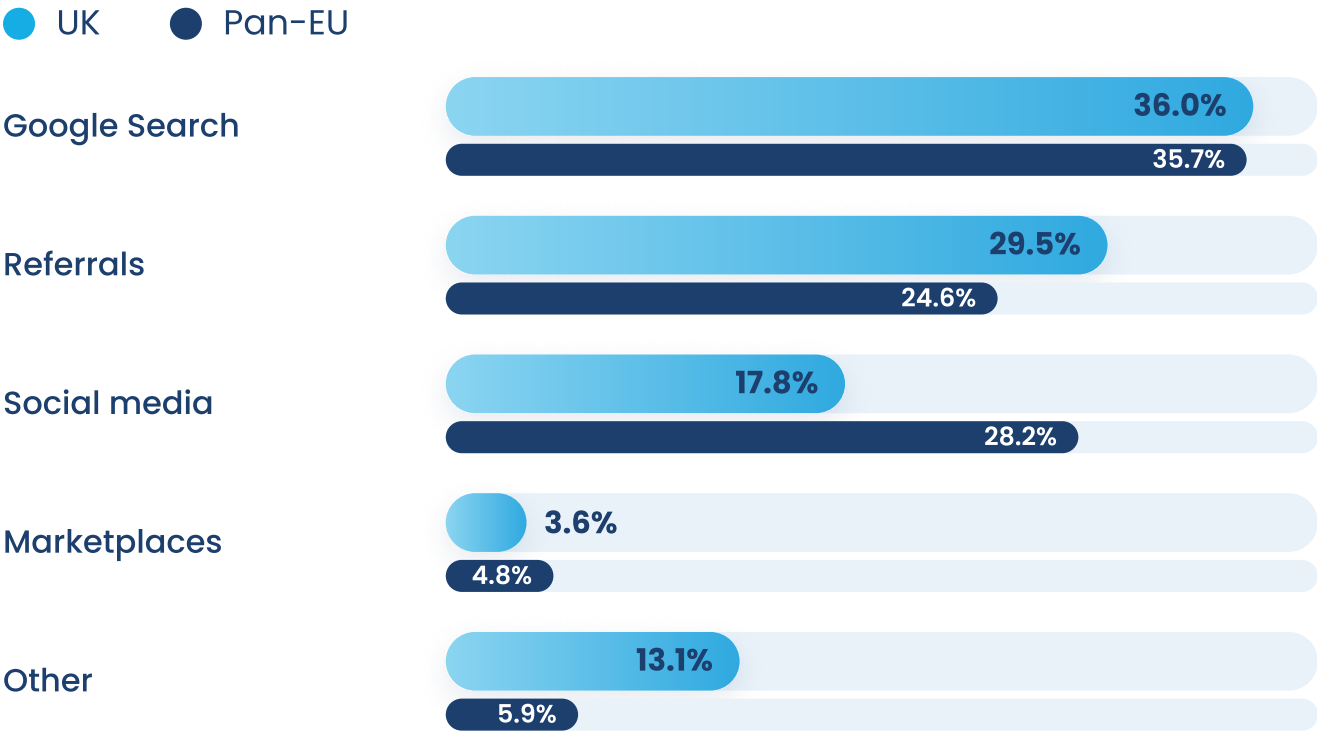
UK Market Finding

The UK has the highest rate of complete unpreparedness (**46.9%**) of any priority market. Small UK businesses are most exposed: **35.2%** of ≤50- employee UK businesses say reaching customers has become harder, and **37.3%** of small UK businesses are completely unprepared for AI-driven discovery.

PLATFORM DEPENDENCY & CONTROL

Platform disruption in the UK

Most important external platform (single select)



UK businesses rely on Google Search (**36%**) and referrals (**29.5%**) as their two most important platforms. Social media is a distant third at 17.8%, 10.4% below Pan-EU. This concentration in search and referral means UK businesses are well-positioned for SEO, but their discovery footprint is narrower than most European peers.

PLATFORM DEPENDENCY & CONTROL

Platform disruption in the UK

Have you experienced challenges due to platform changes?

An infographic with an orange background. On the left, the text '32.1%' is written in large white font. To its right, in smaller white text, it says 'of UK businesses have experienced platform disruption vs 39.6% Pan-EU, one of the lower rates in Europe'.

32.1%

of UK businesses have experienced platform disruption vs **39.6%** Pan-EU, one of the lower rates in Europe

The UK's relatively lower platform disruption rate (32.1% vs 39.6% Pan-EU) may reflect a more diversified platform mix, with heavier reliance on referrals and word-of-mouth reducing overall platform exposure. UK businesses are better insulated against platform risk than most European peers, though algorithm changes remain the #1 challenge.

To what extent do you feel in control of how customers discover your business online?

UK businesses broadly mirror the Pan-European average on perceived control. Much of the UK's perceived lack of control is rooted in the nature of referral-based acquisition: word-of-mouth is inherently unpredictable and unscalable without systematic tools to nurture and track it.

WEBSITE ROLE & OWNED PRESENCE

The UK website: below-average ownership, above-average tracking

Does your business currently have a website?

A blue rectangular box with rounded corners. On the left, the text '81.3%' is written in large, bold, white font. To the right of this, in a smaller white font, is the text '81.3% of UK businesses have a website vs 86.5% Pan-EU, 5.2% below average'.

81.3%

81.3% of UK businesses have a website vs 86.5% Pan-EU, 5.2% below average

UK Market Finding

UK website ownership (81.3%) is below the Pan-EU average despite the UK's overall digital maturity. This likely reflects the UK's strong word-of-mouth culture: businesses that win most customers through referral and recommendation may feel less urgency to invest in a sophisticated web presence. The risk is that as AI-driven discovery grows, those without an optimised website will be invisible to the tools customers are increasingly using to find and evaluate businesses.

WEBSITE ROLE & OWNED PRESENCE

The UK website: below-average ownership, above-average tracking

Is your website optimised for mobile visitors?

51.4%

of UK businesses are fully mobile-optimised vs **55.3%** Pan-EU, below average

UK mobile optimisation (51.4%) is slightly below the Pan-EU average. With the majority of UK search traffic now originating from mobile devices, there is a meaningful performance gap for the significant share of businesses that have not fully prioritised mobile experience.

How confident are you that your website is optimised for AI search?

3.63 / 10



3.63 / 10 UK average AI search confidence – lowest of all 10 priority markets (Pan-EU average: 4.03)

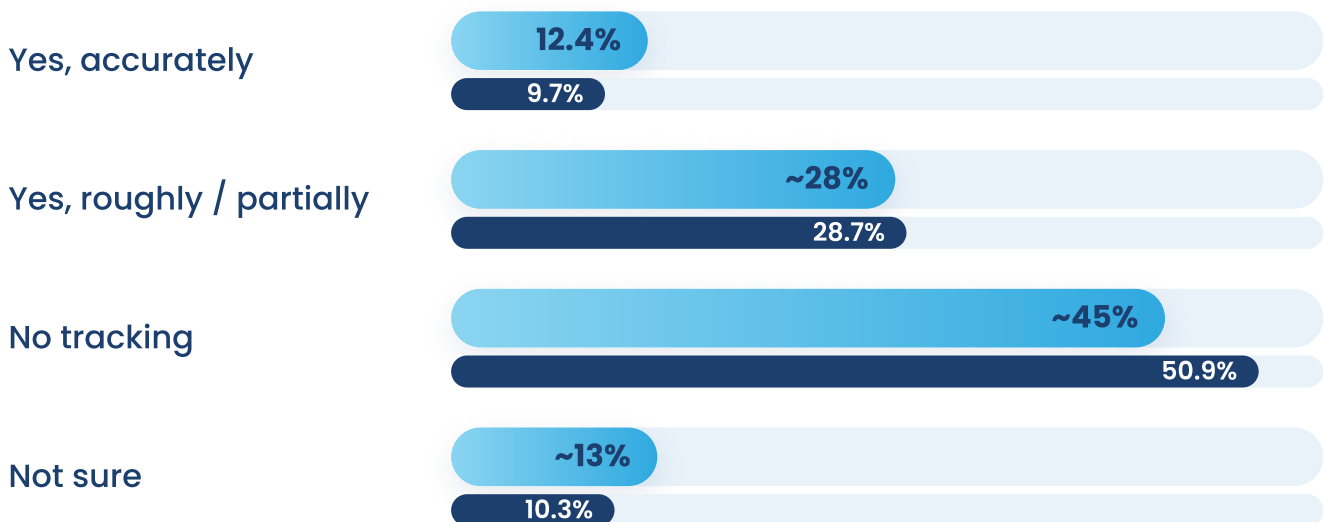
The UK has the lowest AI search confidence of any priority market, 0.40 below Pan-EU average. This is particularly significant given that the UK is one of Europe's most digitally sophisticated economies. The gap between digital experience and AI optimisation confidence reveals a specific, addressable skills and awareness deficit.

WEBSITE ROLE & OWNED PRESENCE

The UK website: below-average ownership, above-average tracking

Do you track how many website visitors become leads or customers?

● UK ● Pan-EU



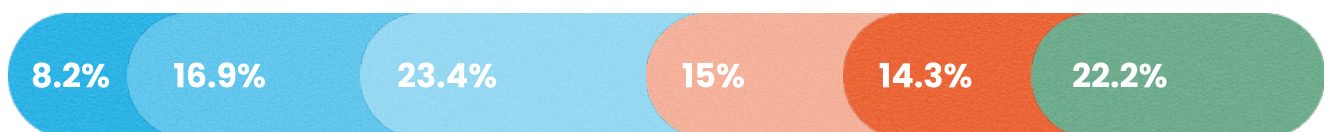
UK businesses are above average on accurate tracking (**12.4% vs 9.7%**), reflecting the UK's more mature digital marketing culture. However, **58.0%** of UK businesses still fall into the no-tracking or not-sure category, meaning the majority remain without conversion data on their most important owned asset.

TOOLS & FRAGMENTATION

Tool integration: the UK picture

UK businesses broadly mirror the Pan-European picture on tool integration: a minority have fully or mostly integrated tools, while a majority either experience fragmentation or are unsure whether their tools work together. The practical consequence is that UK businesses cannot see the full customer journey across discovery, engagement, and conversion, and cannot measure the commercial return on their digital investments.

How well do the tools you use to manage your online presence work together?



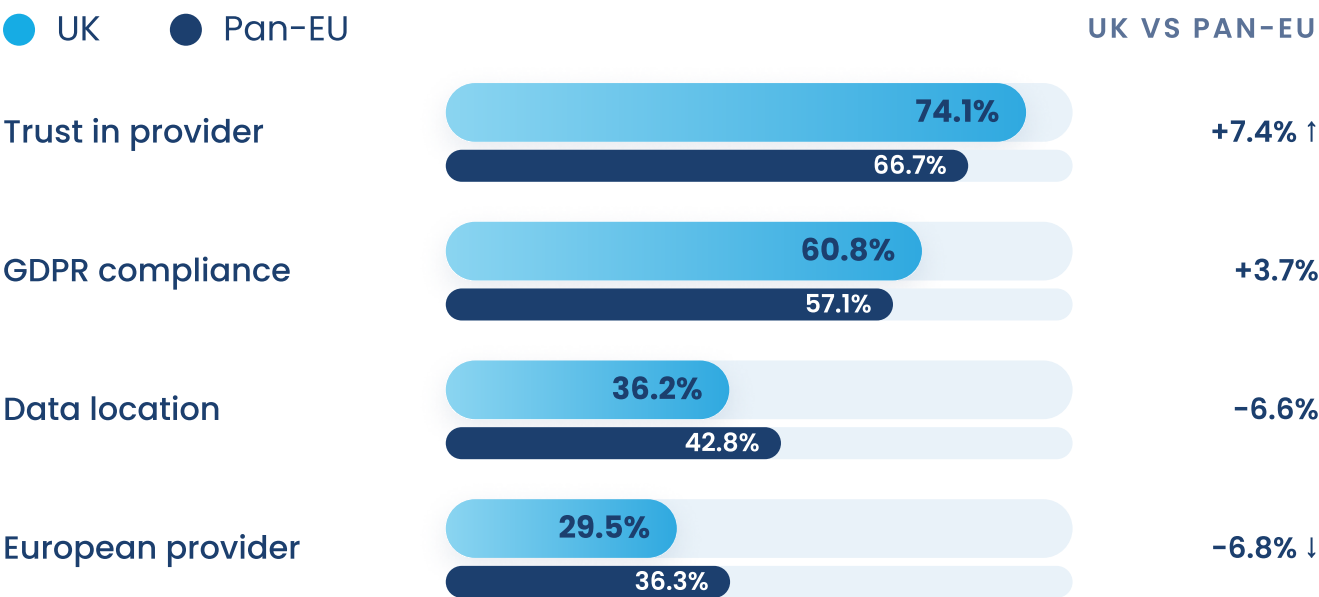
- Fully integrated
- Mostly integrated
- Somewhat integrated
- Mostly disconnected
- Completely disconnected
- Not sure

25.1%fully or mostly
integrated**29.3%**mostly or completely
disconnected**22.2%**not sure if their tools
work together

EUROPEAN IDENTITY: TRUST & DATA SOVEREIGNTY

What UK businesses value in a digital partner

How important are the following when choosing digital tools or providers?



UK Market Finding

UK businesses place above-average importance on provider trust (74.1%) and GDPR compliance (60.8%). However, 'European provider' scores notably below average (29.5% vs 36.3%). Post-Brexit, 'European' carries less automatic resonance for UK businesses. The more powerful frame is trusted, compliant, and transparent: 'your data is safe with us' rather than 'we're European'.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR UK BUSINESSES

What this means for UK digital growth

UK businesses have strong digital foundations: above-average tracking, below-average platform disruption, and an experienced, established business community. The challenge is not awareness; it is action on three critical fronts simultaneously.

1 Close the AI gap urgently

46.9% not prepared at all for AI-driven discovery (highest in Europe). 3.63/10 AI search confidence (lowest in Europe). This is the UK's most urgent and commercially actionable gap.

2 Build on referral strength

Word-of-mouth at 68.2% is a proven strength, but it needs a digital layer: CRM to track referrals, review tools to amplify reputation, and a website that converts the interest word-of-mouth generates.

3 Fix conversion measurement

58.0% still lack clear conversion tracking. Simpler, integrated tools connecting website visits to customer outcomes would unlock the next level of performance for the majority of UK SMBs.

4 Lead with trust

74.1% prioritise provider trust, 3rd highest in Europe. For UK businesses, team.blue's UK brands should lead with reliability, transparency, and data security over European identity.

About this research — UK Edition

This UK edition is drawn from the team.blue State of European Business 2026 survey, a Pan-European study conducted in early 2026 across 11 priority markets with 10,059 total valid responses. UK-specific data is based on 542 UK respondents and is benchmarked throughout against Pan-European averages.

TEAM.BLUE'S COMMITMENT TO UK BUSINESSES

Trusted • Practical • Compliant

Helping UK businesses close the visibility gap, from sole trader to enterprise

team.blue

We'd like to thank the team.blue brands that collaborated on this report and the 10,000+ respondents who took the time to share their perspectives with us.

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