

Three things every HVAC owner should know about AI recommendations

55%

Ask the same question twice and the list changes

Of the businesses recommended in either of two identical searches, 101 of 184 (54.9%) were recommended both times. ChatGPT never returned the same list twice (0 of 15 repeats); Perplexity did in 8 of 14.

What it means for you: one check is a snapshot, not a verdict. Visibility has to be tested more than once.

23 of 96

ChatGPT and Perplexity mostly name different companies

Only 23 of the 96 businesses recommended in a market (24%) were recommended by both assistants. Most appeared on one platform only.

What it means for you: looking at one AI assistant gives an incomplete picture of how you show up.

15 of 30

Half of the established local firms we checked were never recommended in their market

We selected 10 HVAC companies per market from ordinary web search, each with its own website and a stated service area. 15 of the 30 were not recommended in any answer for their own market, while the most-recommended companies in each market appeared in 40–50% of answers.

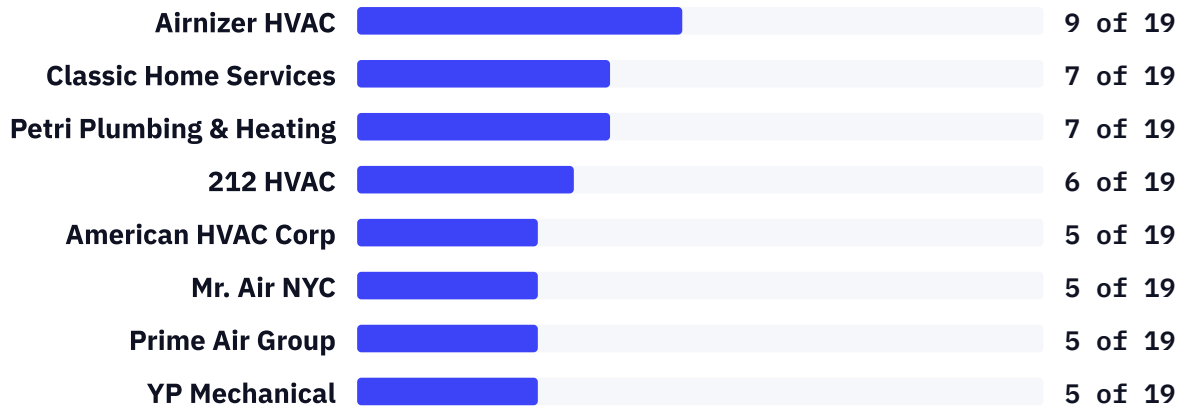
What it means for you: being findable on the web does not mean an AI assistant will name you.

Counts come from 59 answers collected October 9–10, 2026. They describe this sample, not every search or every customer.

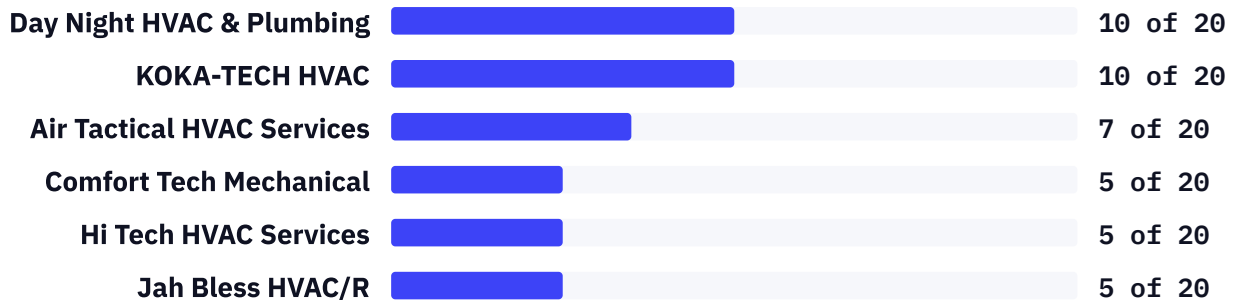
The businesses AI named most often in each market

Each bar shows in how many of the market's answers a business was recommended. These are frequencies in our sampled answers, not a ranking of quality or of the whole market.

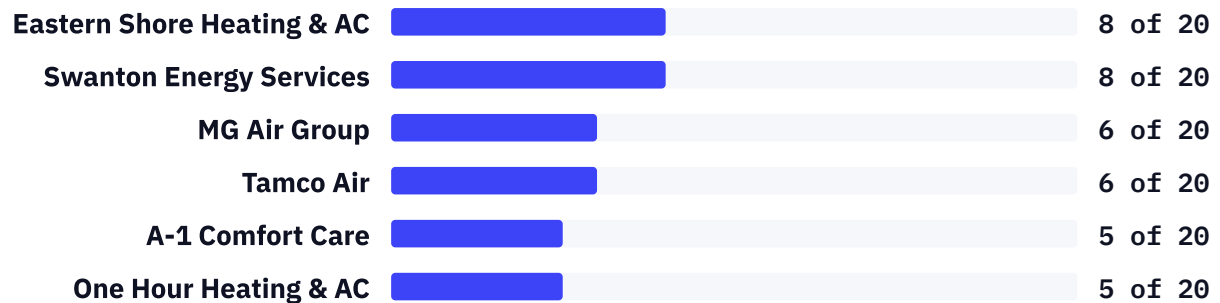
Brooklyn, NY 19 answers · 28 businesses recommended



Queens, NY 20 answers · 36 businesses recommended



Monmouth County, NJ 20 answers · 32 businesses recommended



Shown: businesses recommended in at least 5 of the market's answers. All five questions are counted together (best companies, best reviews, emergency repair, AC replacement, boiler or furnace repair). Brooklyn has 19 answers: one Perplexity answer was cut off during collection and is not counted. Businesses with equal counts are listed alphabetically.

Two assistants, two different shortlists

For each market we compared every business recommended at least once by each assistant.

■ ChatGPT only ■ Both ■ Perplexity only

Brooklyn, NY 9 of 28 recommended by both



Queens, NY 7 of 36 recommended by both



Monmouth County, NJ 7 of 32 recommended by both



46%

ChatGPT repeated 52 of 112 businesses when asked again, and returned a different list every time (0 of 15 identical).

68%

Perplexity repeated 49 of 72, and gave an identical list in 8 of 14 repeats.

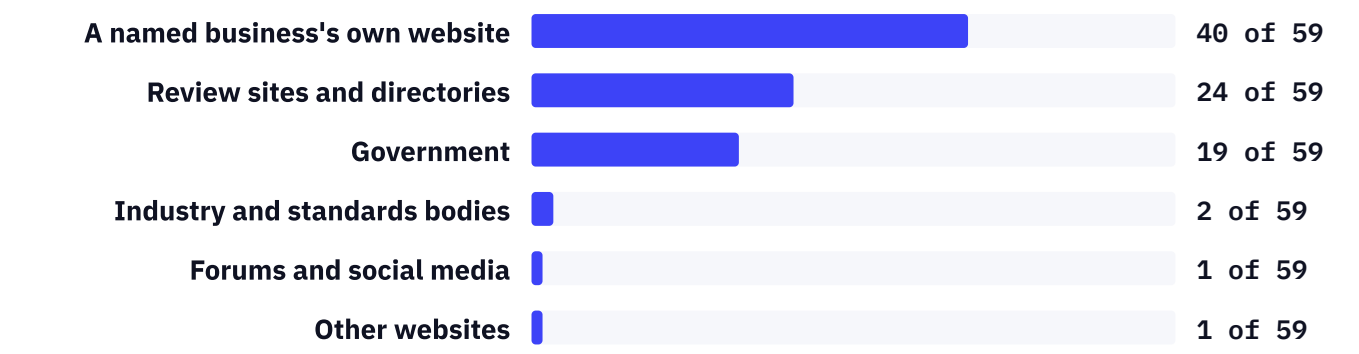
Same company, different assistant

BUSINESS	MARKET	CHATGPT ANSWERS	PERPLEXITY ANSWERS
KOKA-TECH HVAC	Queens, NY	8 of 10	2 of 10
MG Air Group	Monmouth County, NJ	6 of 10	0 of 10
Swanton Energy Services	Monmouth County, NJ	2 of 10	6 of 10
Arctic Air Conditioning	Monmouth County, NJ	0 of 10	4 of 10
Mr. Air NYC	Brooklyn, NY	5 of 10	0 of 9

Why it matters: a business can look well covered on one assistant and be missing from the other. Monitoring one platform shows only part of the picture.

What the answers linked to

57 of 59 answers showed at least one source link. The chart counts answers that linked to each kind of source at least once.



118 of 288

recommendations came with a link to that business's **own website** in the same answer (41%).

19 of 59

answers linked to a **government page**, mostly licence checks and consumer-protection sites (NYC 311, NJ Consumer Affairs).

Most-linked websites

WEBSITE	TYPE	ANSWERS
petriplumbing.com	Business website	11 of 59
reviews.birdeye.com	Review sites and directories	10 of 59
thumbtack.com	Review sites and directories	7 of 59
portal.311.nyc.gov	Government	6 of 59
swantonair.com	Business website	6 of 59
brooklynqueenshvac.com	Business website	5 of 59
energystar.gov	Government	5 of 59
njconsumeraffairs.gov	Government	5 of 59
ajperri.com	Business website	4 of 59

Why it matters: your website and your review and directory profiles are what these assistants put in front of people next to your name. This shows what was linked, not why a business was recommended.

Five practical steps

Each step separates what this study observed from general good practice. None of them is shown here to cause recommendations.

1

Check more than one AI assistant

OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY Only 23 of 96 recommended businesses appeared on both ChatGPT and Perplexity.

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE Ask both assistants the questions your customers ask, using your town's name.

2

Check more than once

OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY Repeating an identical question kept 54.9% of the recommended businesses; ChatGPT's list changed every time.

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE Re-check monthly and on different days before drawing conclusions.

3

Make service and area pages specific

OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY 118 of 288 recommendations came with a link to the business's own website. The questions named specific services (emergency repair, AC replacement, boiler or furnace repair).

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE Give each core service its own page that says what you do, where you work and how to reach you.

4

Keep review and directory profiles accurate

OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY 24 of 59 answers linked to review sites or directories such as Birdeye, Thumbtack and Yelp.

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE Keep your name, address, phone, services and hours consistent everywhere you are listed.

5

Make your licence and insurance easy to verify

OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY 19 of 59 answers sent readers to government licence-check or consumer-protection pages.

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE Show licence numbers and insurance details on your site so they match what a homeowner can look up.

How we did it, and what this study cannot tell you

What we did

- **Five homeowner questions** per market: best HVAC companies, best reviews, emergency heating repair, central AC replacement, and boiler or furnace repair.
- **Two assistants**, ChatGPT and Perplexity, used signed out in a private window, a new chat for every question.
- **Each question asked twice** in each market: 60 searches planned, 59 collected (one Perplexity answer was cut off and is reported as missing, not filled in).
- **Fieldwork** on October 9–10, 2026. Full answers were saved as text, with a fingerprint (hash) so they cannot be edited unnoticed.
- **A sample of 30 local firms** (10 per market) was fixed before any question was asked, chosen from public web search and checked on each firm's own website.

How we counted

- **Named:** the answer mentions the business.
- **Recommended:** the answer presents it as an option to contact, without warnings.
- **Own website linked:** the answer links to that business's site.
- **Third-party source:** a review site, directory, government page or other site the answer links to.

Quality checks

- Rules-based coding of every answer, with flagged cases reviewed and each decision logged with the quoted text.
- A reviewer spot-checked 12 randomly selected answers against the collected text. This was not a check against the original AI sessions.

Limitations

- A small, deliberate sample: 5 questions, 3 markets, 2 days. Results describe these answers, not every search.
- AI answers change with time, account, location and wording. One collector ran every search; their city was not recorded.
- Answers were captured as copied text, without screenshots, so they cannot be re-opened in the original apps.
- Ambiguous coding calls were made by the AI assistant that built the analysis, on the researcher's instruction, and are documented in the data.
- The 30-firm sample is not a complete list of HVAC companies. Recommendations of other firms were counted in full.
- This study does not measure calls, leads, bookings or revenue, and does not show why any business was or was not recommended.

Disclosure. This research was conducted by an agency that offers AI search optimization services. Some businesses in the research sample may be current or prospective clients of the agency. No company paid for inclusion or received preferential treatment, and the company roster was fixed before any AI answers were collected.

A technical appendix with every answer, count and coding decision is available on request.



Is your HVAC business being recommended by AI?

We can show you how your company appeared in searches like these, how nearby competitors performed, and which opportunities are worth a closer look.

- How your company appeared in the questions homeowners actually ask
- The competitors AI named instead, by platform
- The websites and listings AI linked to in your market

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