



LUNA STUDIOS RESEARCH · EDITION 05

The Talking Web 2026.

How much of American business can answer today — and what that says about the next ten years.

Measured August 2026

377,198 businesses

275,439 measured live

All 50 states

THE SPEAKING INDEX 2026 · UNITED STATES

0.05

out of 100

The share of measured business websites that can answer a visitor on their own. **One in 2,186 American business websites** is able to do it.

01 · THE BEHAVIORAL SHIFT

It took three years to retrain a billion people.

People who want to know something no longer type keywords into a box and work through a list of results. They ask a question — in full sentences, with context, with follow-ups — and expect an answer. Not ten blue links. An answer.

That habit is not confined to one service. It transfers. Anyone who has learned to ask instead of search carries that expectation everywhere — including onto the website of a contractor, a dental practice, an accounting firm.

The expectation changed. The websites did not.

This report measures how wide the gap has become. Not as an opinion, but as a number — updated annually, using the same method as every other edition in this series.

02 · WHAT PEOPLE EXPECT

Patience is no longer a currency.

The expectation side is well researched — it is just rarely gathered in one place. The most solid findings from independent studies:

83 %

expect to interact with someone immediately when they get in touch

> 50 %

expect a reply to an online enquiry within one hour

43 %

have less patience with digital services than they did a few years ago

Compiled from several independent studies on service speed; individual sources listed at the end of this report.

And the expectation keeps tightening: for AI-driven applications, **54 %** already expect an answer within seconds. What counted as fast service yesterday is the floor today.

The cost of waiting has been quantified precisely. A study by MIT and InsideSales analyzed more than 15,000 enquiries: responding within five minutes instead of thirty makes you **100 times more likely** to reach the prospect and **21 times more likely** to qualify them. An audit of 2,241 companies published in Harvard Business Review found the same pattern: firms replying within an hour were **seven times more likely** to qualify a lead than those replying an hour later — and sixty times more likely than those who waited a day.

That same audit surfaced a second finding that is still underrated: **23 % of the companies studied never responded at all**. Not late. Never.

03 · WHAT WEBSITES DELIVER

We asked 275,439 American business websites a question. 126 could answer.

The basis is **377,198 US businesses with their own website** across all 50 states — restaurants, medical practices, contractors, hotels, salons, law firms, schools, studios. Each website was requested once in August 2026 and the delivered source code checked for 30 common chat, messaging and assistant systems. **275,439 websites were reachable**; all figures below refer to those.

No channel for an immediate answer **99.1 %**

No chat, no assistant, no way to ask a question and have it answered

No contact form **58.6 %**

Phone number not tappable **59.8 %**

On a phone the number cannot be tapped — it has to be typed out

One language only **94.4 %**

Website no longer responds at all **12.2 %**

46,079 listed business websites were unreachable — expired addresses, dead domains, permanently shut down

Of the 275,439 reachable websites, **2,562 had any chat or assistant system at all** — 0.93 %. The vast majority of those are conventional chat windows that only answer when a human is sitting behind

them. Systems capable of answering a question on their own were found on **126 websites**. That is **0.05 %**.

| One in 2,186 American business websites can answer a visitor on its own.

Because the boundary can be argued, we report both readings: counting only systems whose integration is unambiguously present in the source code gives 0.93 %. Counting every trace of such a system — including analytics suites that merely could offer chat — gives 2.10 %. **Either way, it stays far below the threshold of visibility.**

04 · BY STATE

A country of many languages. Websites in one.

On answering behavior the states are almost indistinguishable — the spread is a fraction of a percent at a level below one percent. On multilingualism something more striking appears: not a single state reaches ten percent. California, Florida, Arizona and Texas — states where Spanish is spoken in millions of households — sit barely above the national average of 5.6 %.

STATE	WEBSITES	REACHABLE	CONTACT FORM	MULTILINGUAL
District of Columbia	1,925	71.8 %	45.4 %	9.3 %
North Dakota	508	76.7 %	53.5 %	8.1 %
Florida	10,969	69.9 %	43.4 %	7.6 %
California	29,863	71.5 %	42.0 %	7.2 %
Arizona	4,657	71.7 %	42.1 %	7.0 %
Alaska	1,169	77.5 %	43.2 %	6.8 %
Mississippi	903	69.5 %	45.1 %	6.8 %
New York	20,351	72.2 %	39.5 %	6.8 %
Hawaii	1,293	71.4 %	37.5 %	6.7 %
Alabama	2,849	70.2 %	44.7 %	6.6 %
Rhode Island	994	74.6 %	44.5 %	6.3 %
Nebraska	1,915	72.0 %	44.1 %	6.3 %
Texas	15,475	72.7 %	41.1 %	6.2 %
Illinois	12,185	75.2 %	42.9 %	6.2 %
Idaho	1,704	74.2 %	36.8 %	6.2 %
Connecticut	3,786	73.4 %	45.5 %	6.2 %
Nevada	1,873	71.1 %	37.6 %	6.2 %
Delaware	885	77.8 %	45.8 %	5.9 %

For comparison: in Switzerland 22.8 % of business websites offer a second language, in Austria 16.7 %, in Germany 8.2 %. The United States, by far the most linguistically diverse of the four markets measured, has the **lowest** share at **5.6 %**. This is not a question of capability — translation has never been cheaper. It is a question of who a website assumes it is talking to.

The eighteen states with the highest share of multilingual websites; at least 400 reachable sites each.

05 · BY INDUSTRY

No industry is ahead.

Industry categories come from the underlying data source, so they are recorded rather than estimated. The picture is remarkably uniform across every group.

INDUSTRY	WEBSITES	CONTACT FORM	TAPPABLE PHONE	MULTILINGUAL	INSTANT CHANNEL
Restaurants	42,795	28.7 %	42.7 %	4.0 %	0.30 %
Places of worship	19,215	38.6 %	23.7 %	5.0 %	0.18 %
Schools	14,930	48.5 %	43.3 %	6.4 %	0.47 %
Cafés	7,362	33.1 %	23.0 %	3.5 %	0.42 %
Dental practices	4,875	37.5 %	77.5 %	4.3 %	1.91 %
Museums	4,809	51.5 %	27.9 %	5.8 %	0.25 %
Bars	4,471	31.6 %	30.7 %	3.7 %	0.34 %
Fast food	4,325	26.8 %	32.3 %	4.0 %	0.46 %
Corporate offices	4,185	45.5 %	41.5 %	12.5 %	2.56 %
Hair salons	4,122	24.6 %	31.8 %	3.7 %	0.46 %
Golf Course	3,941	47.9 %	53.9 %	7.6 %	0.23 %
Auto repair shops	3,655	30.9 %	59.1 %	4.6 %	0.82 %

One number deserves attention. Among **4,875 dental practices**, **1.91 %** offer an instant channel — the highest value of any large category in this study, and more than five times the national average. The same measurement in Germany found **zero** among 5,297 dental practices. Two comparable professions, two continents, opposite ends of the scale. Whatever is holding this back, it is not the nature of the work.

Industries with at least 400 reachable websites, by frequency.

06 · WHAT THE PAGES SAY

The website forces the question — and offers no way to ask it.

The broad measurement tells us whether a website *can* answer. It says nothing about whether an answer would be needed in the first place. So we additionally analyzed a **deep sample of 400 randomly drawn businesses** — for these, not just the homepage but up to six subpages were read in full.

65.8 %

give no prices and no price ranges

80.8 %

have no frequently asked questions section

62.0 %

state no hours of operation

0.5 %

commit to when an answer will come

Only together do these produce the full picture. The website does not answer the most obvious questions — what it costs, how it works, when someone is there. It therefore forces the visitor to ask. And then it offers no way to do so except the telephone.

07 · THE OPENING HOURS OF THE INTERNET

**The website is awake
168 hours a week.
The business is awake 45.**

Among the deep-sample websites that state specific hours, the picture is consistent: availability begins at a median of **9:00** and ends at **18:00**.

45

of 168 weekly hours a human is reachable, at the median

10.8 %

state Saturday hours, 8.2 % Sunday hours

0.6 %

offer at least a messaging contact

That leaves roughly **73 % of the week** in which the website is alone. And those are not the fringes of business: evenings at the kitchen table, weekends, lunch breaks — precisely when people compare providers, read offers and make decisions. During those hours the website is the only contact a company has with the world. And it says nothing.

08 · THE GAP

Two sentences that do not fit together.

WHAT PEOPLE EXPECT

83 % want to interact with someone immediately

More than half expect an answer within an hour

54 % expect seconds from AI-driven services

Questions arise at night and on weekends, not during office hours

Whoever gets no answer asks the next company

WHAT WEBSITES OFFER

99.1 % have no channel for an immediate answer

0.5 % commit to when an answer will come

0.05 % can answer on their own

45 of 168 weekly hours someone is there

65.8 % do not even state a price

The gap is not incremental. It is structural: one side learned to ask. The other never learned to answer.

09 · WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE UNITED STATES

**This is not the exception.
This is the norm.**

The United States is home to over 33 million businesses, 99.9 % of them small and mid-sized. The 377,198 businesses measured here are typical of that group: owner-operated, with a maintained

website, without an in-house IT department.

Applied to that population, the finding describes the default state: reachable during office hours, silent for the remaining 73 % of the week, with no way for a visitor to get a simple question answered.

Every unanswered question is a buying signal that evaporates. Not rejected — merely unanswered.

What that costs cannot be stated responsibly as a single dollar figure; industries and order sizes differ too much. What can be said: the research on response time is unambiguous, it is decades old, and it has been confirmed repeatedly. The difference between an answer in five minutes and an answer the next day is not a comfort feature. It is the difference between a customer and a statistic.

10 · OUTLOOK

Why this number only moves one way.

The internet has changed fundamentally twice, and both times it went the same way. In 1993 the browser arrived, and companies asked why they would need a website. In 2007 the smartphone arrived, and the same question was asked about mobile layouts. Both times the share of early adopters started in the low single digits. Both times, within a few years, the question was no longer whether — but why not yet.

The Speaking Index stands at **0.05** in 2026. It is a number that did not exist before, because there was nothing to measure. And it is a number that becomes interesting in hindsight: anyone counted in it today belongs to 126 businesses in the entire United States.

The question is not whether websites will learn to answer. The question is how long until a website that cannot answer feels rude.

11 · TEST YOUR OWN

Where does your website stand?

The most interesting number in this report is the one that is not in it: yours. Enter your domain — Luna, the assistant on this page, will look at the website in real time and tell you which of the questions

studied here it can answer and which it cannot.



The self-test is available online

lunastudios.ai/research/united-states-2026

Scan the code or open the address, enter a domain — Luna inspects the website in real time and reports which of the questions studied here it can answer.

METHOD

How this was measured.

- **Population.** 377,198 US businesses with their own website, drawn from openly licensed geodata (OpenStreetMap, ODbL) across all 50 states. Included are businesses recorded there with their own web address; links to platform profiles such as social networks or directories were excluded. This is not a random sample of the entire US business landscape — businesses without a website and businesses absent from that data are missing. The real state of affairs is therefore likely worse rather than better.
- **Live measurement.** Each website was requested exactly once in August 2026 and the delivered source code checked for 30 common chat, messaging and assistant systems. 275,439 of 377,198 websites were reachable; 46,079 did not respond, 55,680 refused automated access.
- **Verification and correction.** Every hit was reloaded individually and checked against strict detection patterns. Loose patterns produce substantial false positives — through word fragments in foreign-language text, or through analytics tools that share an address with a related chat function. Only confirmed hits enter the figures. In this edition, 3,217.0 of the initial hits were discarded as false positives.
- **Two readings.** Strictly counted, a system registers only when its integration is unambiguous in the source code (0.93 %). Loosely counted, every trace registers (2.10 %). This report uses the strict reading.
- **Limits.** Only the delivered source code is examined. Systems injected later by JavaScript are invisible to this method — the figures are therefore lower bounds. Websites behind bot protection were not counted as lacking an answer channel but reported separately.
- **Speaking Index.** The share of websites able to give a visitor a substantive answer without human involvement. 2026 United States: 0.05 (126 of 275,439).
- **Deep sample.** Figures on prices, frequently asked questions, hours and response commitments come from 400 randomly drawn websites read in full, including up to six subpages (median 4 pages). Hours could be parsed unambiguously on 138 websites; medians are reported.
- **Vendors.** Individual chat and assistant products are deliberately not named. The subject of this study is whether a website can answer — not which product it uses.
- **Comparability.** Method, detection patterns and analysis are identical across every edition in this series, including the German-language editions for Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Country figures are therefore directly comparable.
- **Third-party data.** All figures on the expectation side come from independent studies by others. Luna Studios conducted no consumer survey for this report.

SOURCES

Oldroyd, McElheran, Elkington: "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads"

Harvard Business Review 89 (3), March 2011. Audit of 2,241 companies. hbr.org

Oldroyd et al.: Lead Response Management Study

MIT / InsideSales, 2007. Analysis of more than 15,000 enquiries. The 100x and 21x multipliers frequently attributed to Harvard Business Review originate from this study.

Expectations of response times in customer contact

Compilation of current studies on service speed and digital patience, including the Emplifi Consumer Survey.

Overview

U.S. Small Business Administration: Small Business Profiles

The United States is home to over 33 million businesses, 99.9 % of them small and mid-sized. [Source](#)

Business data

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Own measurement

Luna Studios, August 2026. 377,198 websites, 275,439 measured live, every hit verified individually.

USE

Citation explicitly welcome.

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Who publishes this report

Luna Studios builds Luna — an AI assistant with a real voice that lives on company websites and answers visitors around the clock. We have an obvious interest in the subject this report measures. That is precisely why every figure on the expectation side comes from third-party sources, why the measurement is disclosed in full — including the false positives we corrected along the way — and why this report contains no product claim of any kind.

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