

greenlane

THE 2025 MARCH CORE UPDATE

HOW GOOGLE'S CHANGES
IMPACT LOCATION PAGES



AN INDUSTRY STUDY ON LOCAL SEO
TRENDS AFTER THE MARCH
ALGORITHM UPDATE

STUDY CONDUCTED & SUMMARIZED BY
ADAM WELLS

The 2025 March Core Update Brought Uncertainty for the Future of Location Pages

Study Conducted & Summarized by: [Adam Wells](#)

Introduction

Following the 2025 March Core Update, several of my clients, all in different industries, experienced sharp traffic fluctuations.

Upon investigating these fluctuations, there was a clear pattern. In each instance, the clients were gaining or losing traffic associated with a very small group of keywords.

Furthermore, it was not just the organic positions for these keywords that were changing; the ranking pages were changing from location-based URLs to non-location URLs. I investigated to get an impression of how serious and how widespread this change was.

The Investigation

I identified six industries where location-based pages represent a significant amount of organic traffic:

- Law/Legal
- Health/Doctor Finder
- Finance

- Real Estate
- Auto
- Travel

For each industry, I tried to find roughly 10 websites that

1. Had location-based pages in a specific folder (/locations/, /offices/, etc.)
2. Operated in a specific area, rather than nationally or internationally (to keep the number of keywords for each website in a manageable 20,000 – 50,000 range)

After these websites were identified, I downloaded both their current rankings from SEMRush as well as historic rankings from February 2025, just prior to the March Core Update.

For each website, I de-duplicated the rankings so only the top-ranking page was listed in each spreadsheet. I highlighted the location-based pages, then compared their positioning and the ranking pages using various Excel formulas.

For each industry, I then combined all the data into a single spreadsheet to determine the significance of the changes in each vertical.

Findings by Vertical

Legal

Number of Websites Reviewed: 11

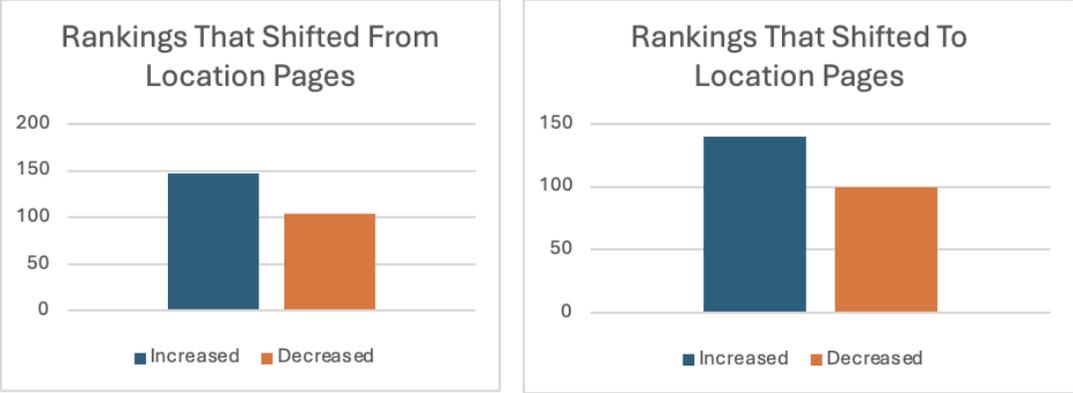
Total Local Rankings: 7979 keywords

Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 261 (3.37%)

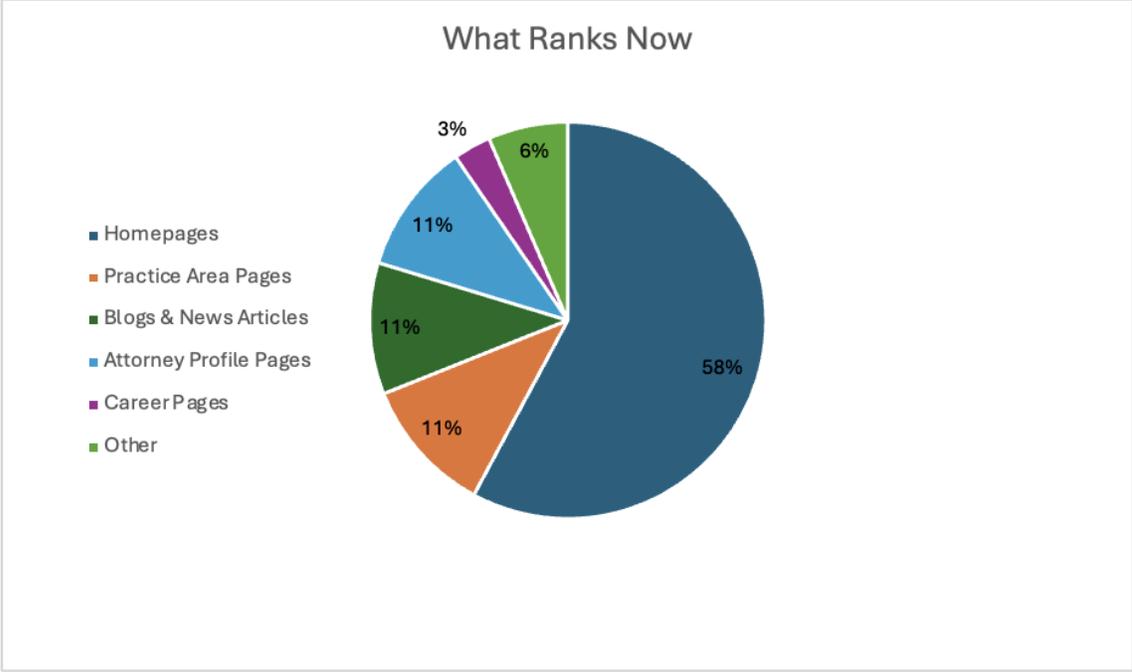
Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 261

This was the only industry where the rankings that shifted *to* local pages exactly matched — or were even close to matching — the number that shifted *from* local

pages. Furthermore, in both cases, there were more position increases than decreases.



In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead.



The rankings were overwhelmingly organic. More AI overviews did appear following the update, though these largely took the place of other SERP features such as People Also Ask.



Health & Doctor Finder

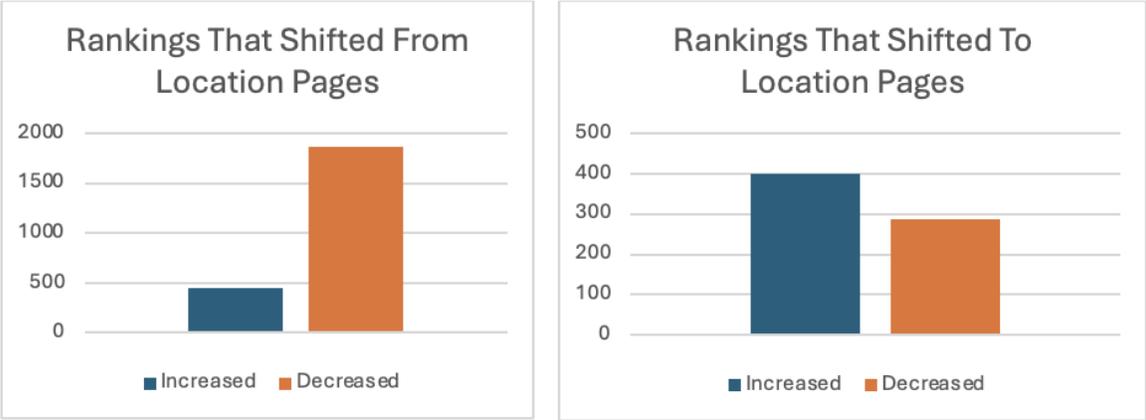
Number of Websites Reviewed: 9

Total Local Rankings: 23,333 keywords

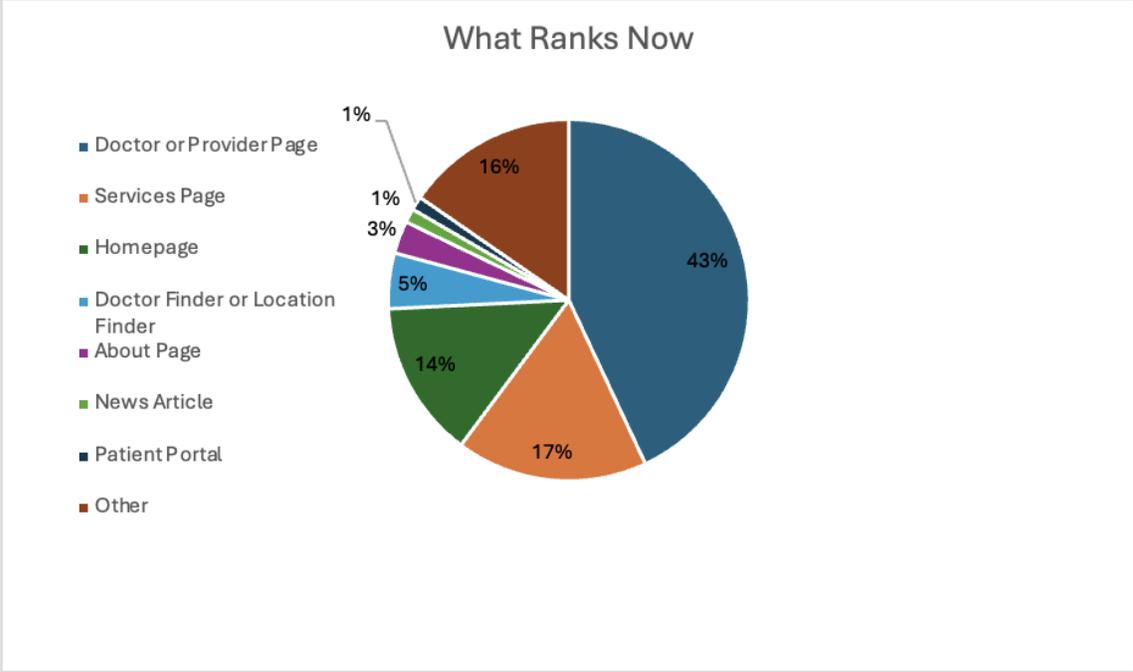
Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 2614 (11.20%)

Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 872

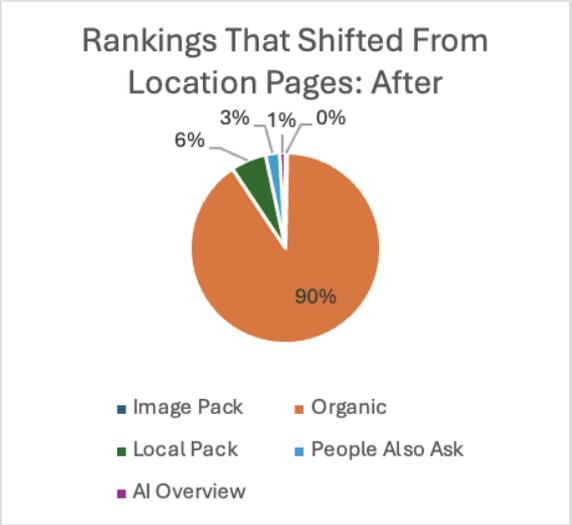
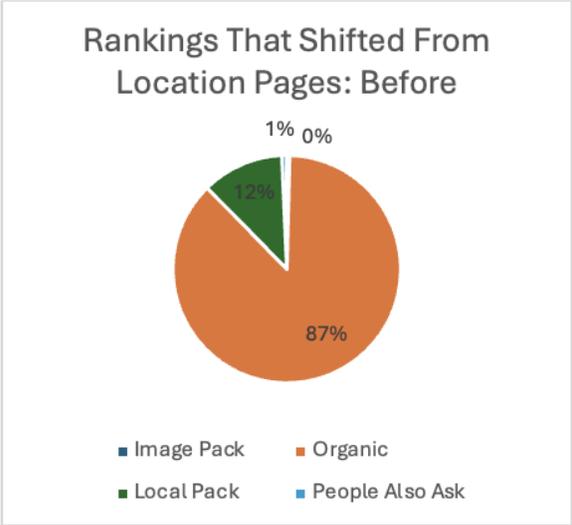
The health industry saw a greater percentage of rankings shift away from local pages than any other. It also saw the greatest disparity between rankings that shifted to and from local pages. While rankings that shifted to location pages saw slightly more increases than decreases, the rankings that shifted from location pages overwhelmingly saw decreases.

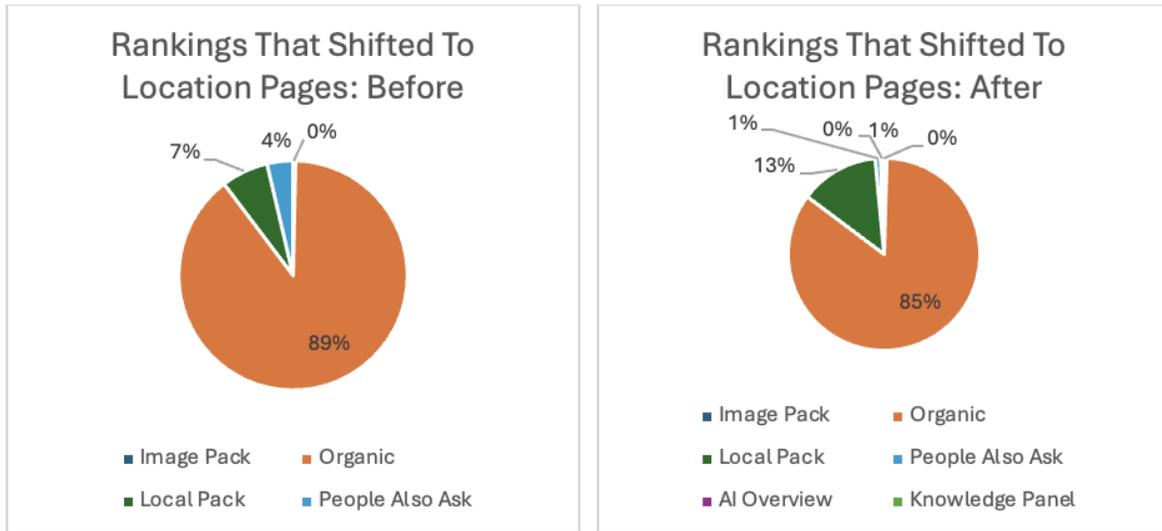


In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead.



Once again, the rankings were overwhelmingly organic.





Finance

Number of Websites Reviewed: 12

Total Local Rankings: 14,961 keywords

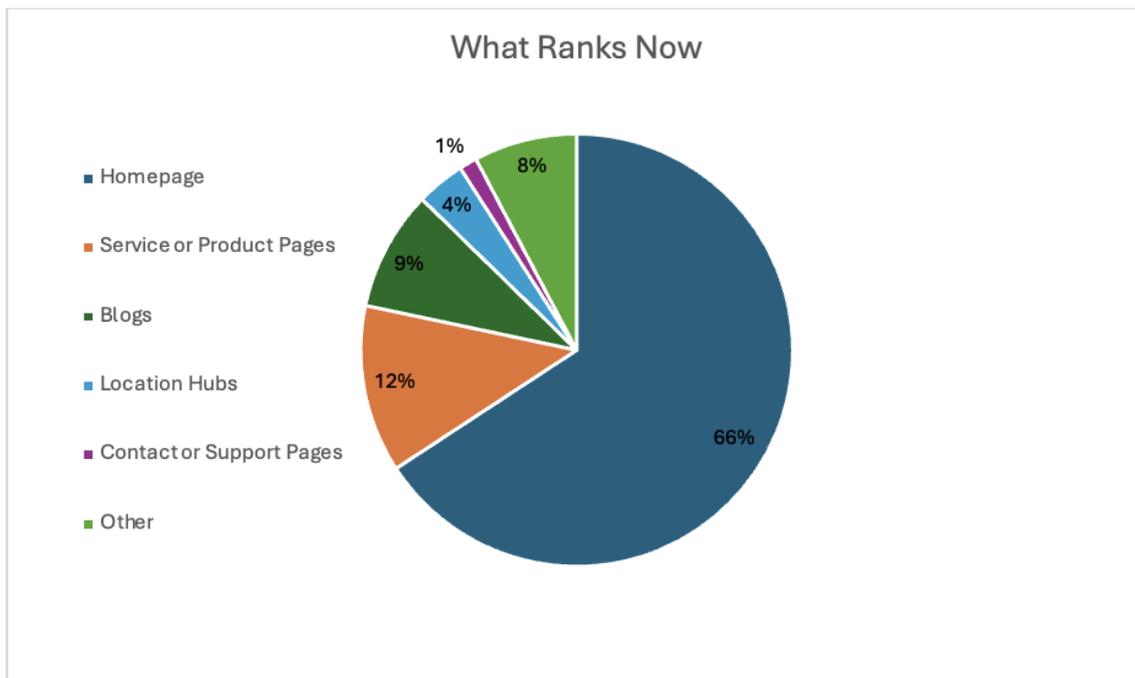
Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 1125 (7.52%)

Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 583

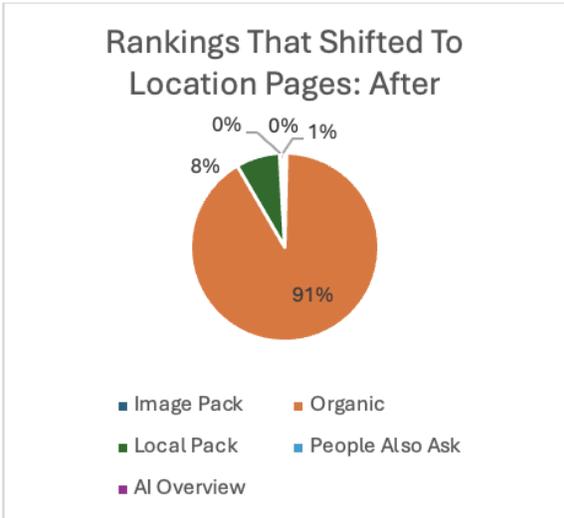
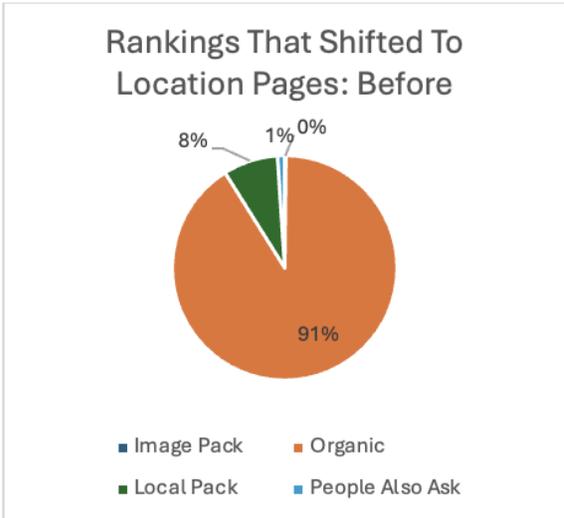
Like health, the finance industry saw a greater percentage of rankings shift away from local pages than most other industries. Unlike health, however, the finance industry saw 35% more position increases than decreases.



In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead.



As with the health and legal industries, the rankings were overwhelmingly organic. For both rankings that shifted to and from location pages, organic results represented 91% of the appearances both before and after the Core Update.



Real Estate

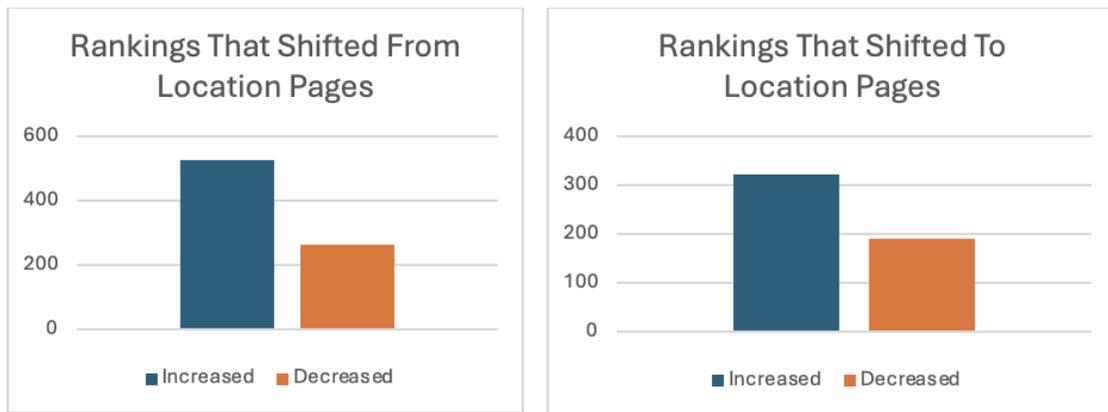
Number of Websites Reviewed: 10

Total Local Rankings: 32,574 keywords

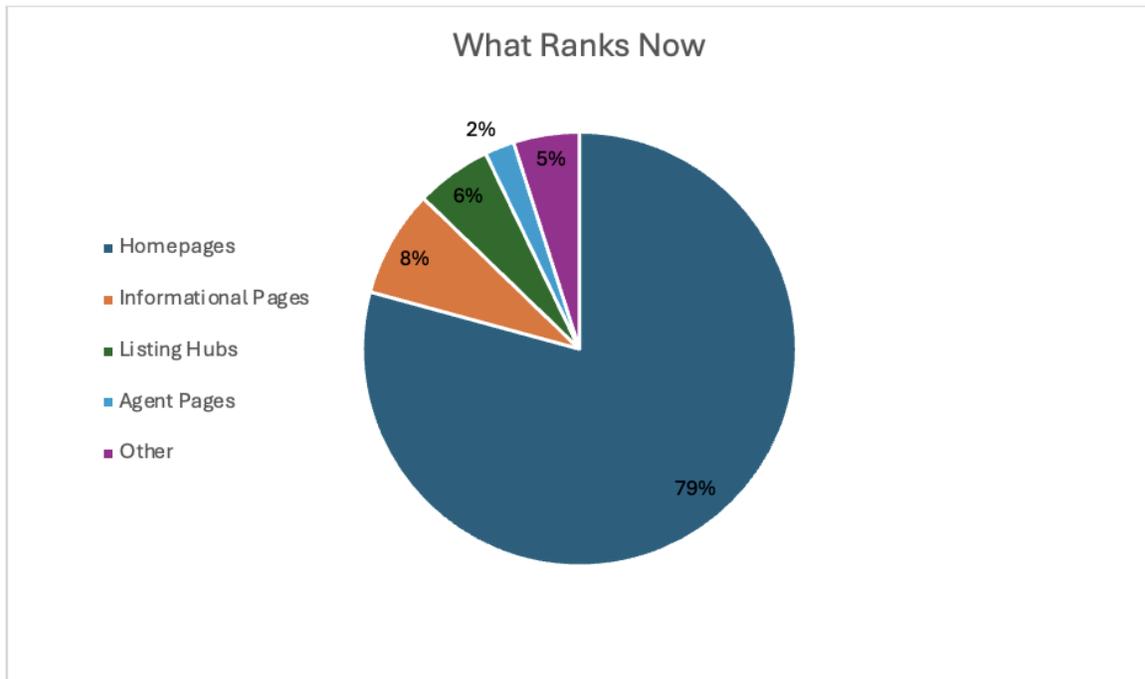
Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 814 (2.50%)

Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 556

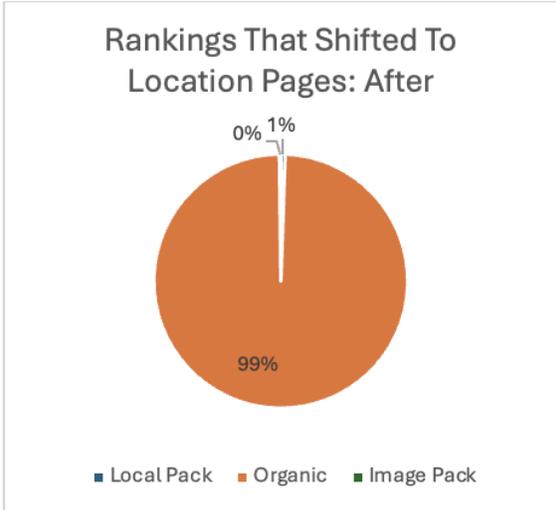
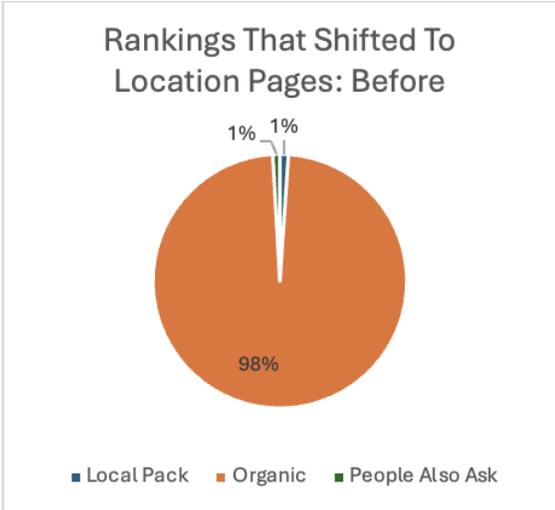
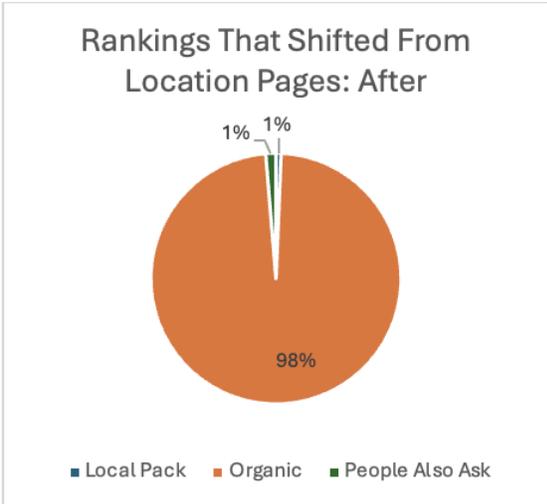
The real estate industry saw the smallest percentage of rankings shift to or from location pages. It should be noted the real estate industry consistently saw more position increases than decreases.



In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead. Real estate listings come and go faster than location pages in other verticals, and removed listings often redirect to homepages. This partially explains why homepages in the real estate industry have taken such a higher percentage of rankings that location pages previously had.



While most of the industries we reviewed had overwhelmingly organic rankings, real estate had the smallest percentage of rankings within SERP features. Even after the Core Update, at least 98% of the rankings assessed remained organic. One particularly interesting item is that not even one of the rankings we assessed shifted to an AI overview.



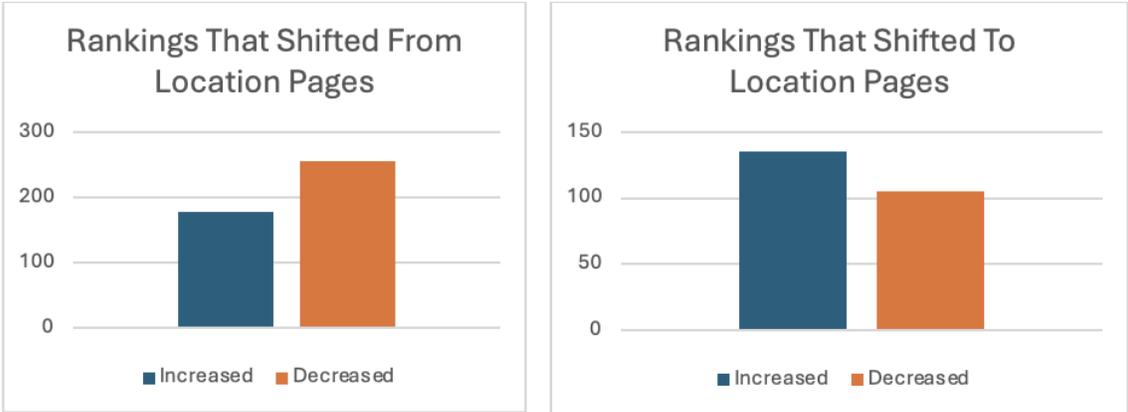
Auto

Number of Websites Reviewed: 9
Total Local Rankings: 19,329 keywords

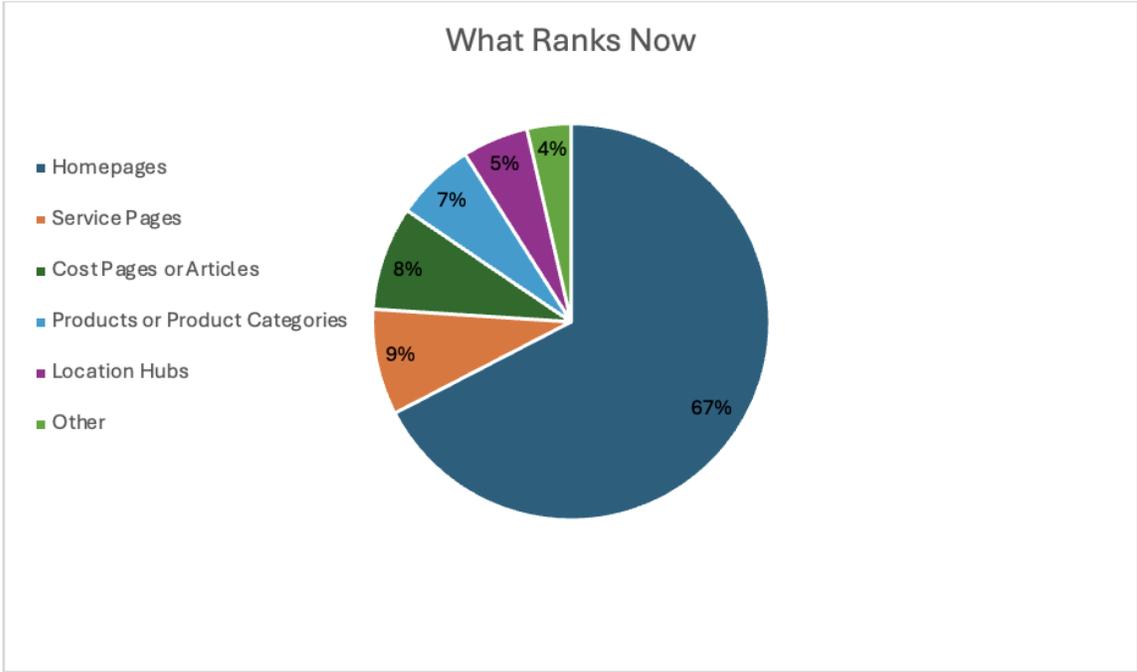
Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 613 (3.17%)

Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 460

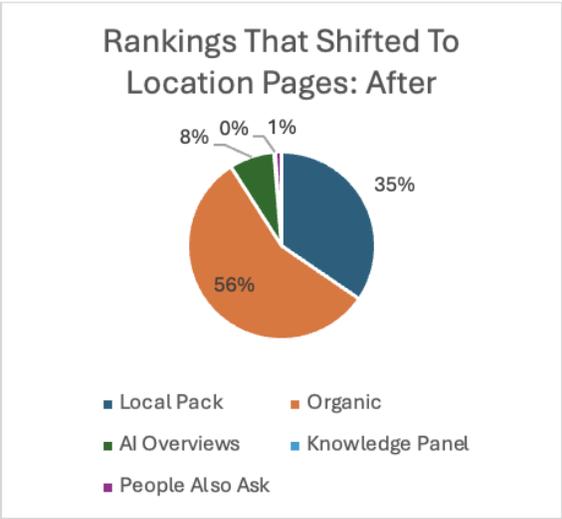
In the auto industry, when rankings shifted away from location pages they tended to decrease and when they shifted toward location pages they tended to increase.



In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead.



While organic rankings represent most real estate website appearances in search results, there are more SERP features for this vertical than there are for any of the others we assessed. The local pack represents 24 – 35% of location rankings while People Also Ask represents 13 – 21% of non-location rankings.

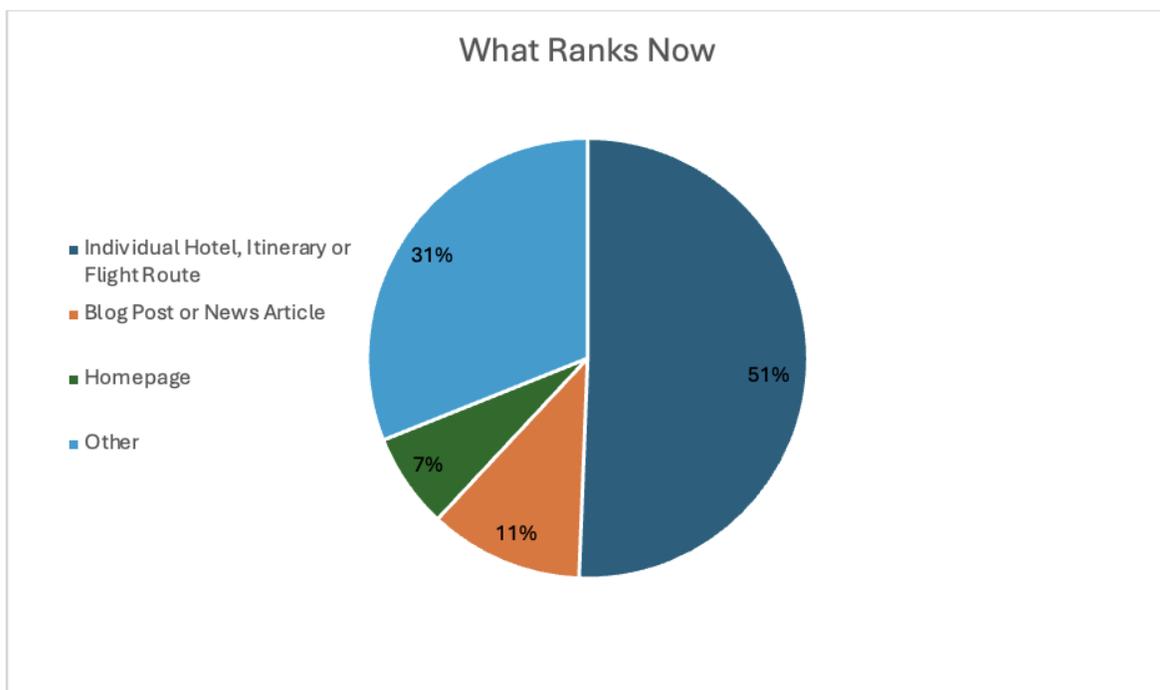


Travel

Number of Websites Reviewed: 8 (2 hotel booking, 3 cruise booking, 3 flight booking)
Total Local Rankings: 37,857 keywords (mostly #1 rankings)
Total Rankings That Shifted from Local Pages to Non-Local Pages: 1200 (3.17%)
Total Rankings That Shifted from Non-Local Pages to Local Pages: 1174

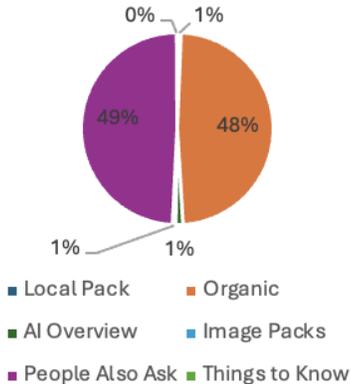
I mentioned in “The Investigation” section above that I explicitly looked for websites operating in a niche area, but this proved to be impossible for the travel industry. True, there are tourism websites for specific cities and regions, but generally these websites do not handle booking. Therefore, for the travel industry only, I used data samples from some larger booking websites. In doing so, this limited me to mostly #1 ranking keywords, preventing a proper assessment of increases and decreases.

In the case of the rankings that shifted from location pages, here is what ranks now instead. In many of the other verticals, rankings shifted to homepages or other landing pages higher in conversion funnel. In the travel industry, rankings shifted lower in the conversion funnel to individual hotels, itineraries and flight routes.

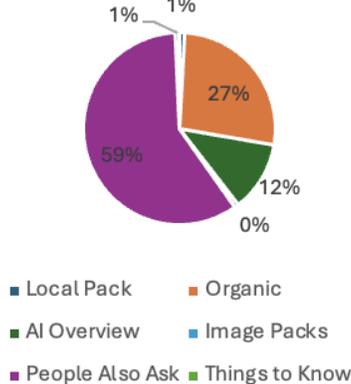


Unlike every other industry we assessed, the travel industry is not overwhelmingly dominated by organic results. In every instance we reviewed, there were more results in People Also Ask than there were organic results. The travel industry also saw the most significant increase in AI overviews and was the only industry with the Things to Know feature.

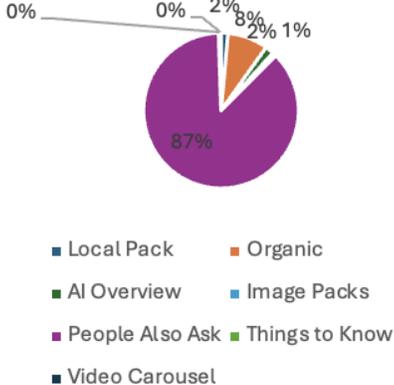
Rankings That Shifted From Location Pages: Before



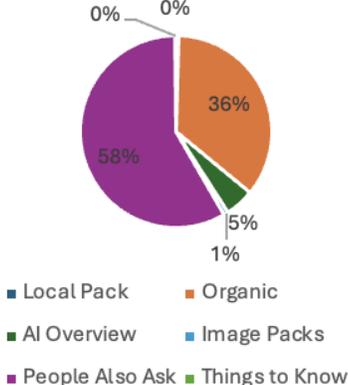
Rankings That Shifted From Location Pages: After



Rankings That Shifted To Location Pages: Before



Rankings That Shifted To Location Pages: After



Comparing Verticals

Shift Away from Location Pages

Four of the six verticals we assessed saw between 2.5% and 3.5% of their rankings shift from location pages to non-location pages. The two exceptions were health and finance – both your-money-or-your-life (YMYL) industries.

Vertical	% of Keywords Where Ranking Page Changed
Health	11.20%
Finance	7.52%
Legal	3.27%
Auto	3.17%
Travel	3.17%
Real Estate	2.50%

Increases vs. Decreases

For this section I am calling an industry a “winner” if more keywords increased than decreased. However, with landing pages shifting, this could provide a worse experience for users. Therefore, if your industry notched a “win,” it does not mean you should expect a sudden surge in traffic in conversions. In fact, you should audit the local signals and E-E-A-T signals on your non-location landing pages to ensure they are ideal entry points for users who searched the shifted rankings

Losers

Location pages in the health and auto industries tend to rank better than non-location pages, but unfortunately there were significantly more rankings that shifted to non-location pages.

Health



Auto



Winners

In the legal and real estate industries, rankings tended to increase regardless of whether a location or non-location page was ranking. In the finance industry, non-location pages tended to rank better.

Legal



Finance



Real Estate



SERP Features

Everyone is panicking about AI overviews. However, they are not stealing local organic rankings except in the case of the travel industry. Even then, People Also Ask is still a much more significant chunk and a higher priority opportunity. If you are in the travel industry, optimizing for People Also Ask is just as important as optimizing for organic keywords.

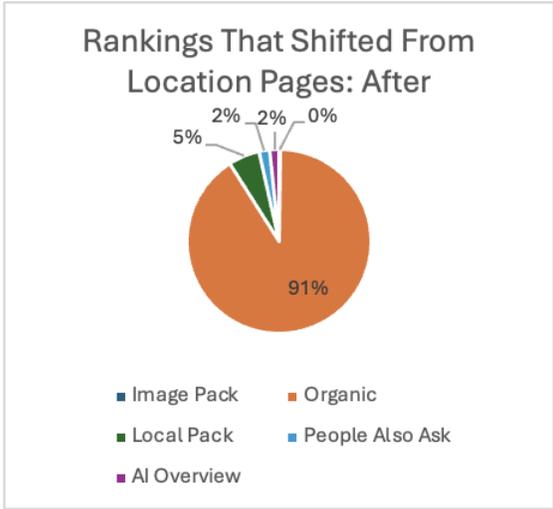
Legal



Health



Finance



Real Estate



Auto



Travel



Takeaways, Action Items & Further Discussion

If you have a business with one or more physical locations, you should be optimizing your location pages with schema and relevant keywords.

This is not a revelation, nor a new piece of information. What is in question, however, is the long-term role of the location page.

4 out of 6 verticals saw 2.5% - 3.5% of their location page rankings shift to non-location pages.

This could be a coincidence, but I would not put it past Google to run a test on ~3% of searches to determine if it can make location pages obsolete. Location pages often have thin, duplicate or AI-generated content, especially for websites with hundreds or thousands of them. Google wants hyper-relevant, but it also wants original. It is impossible for a company to maintain this at volume. Therefore, it stands to reason that Google is looking for alternative solutions.

It's not the AI overviews: Organic rankings tend to stay organic rankings regardless of whether a location-based or non-location page ranks.

If you want to [optimize for AI overviews](#), we can help. While still a viable strategy in 2025, this study has not uncovered any new reasons for, nor changes to how that optimization should occur. AI overviews may be stealing clicks but very few organic rankings are becoming AI overviews. It is more likely that today's People Also Ask result will become tomorrow's AI overview.

For the health and travel industries, use location keywords on more granular pages

If available, it is more likely that an organic ranking will shift from a location page to an even more granular page. For example, with a physician directory, instead of Google showing a page about doctors in your city, it will show a specific doctor listing from that directory. However, when making this shift, the rankings tend to decrease.

For this reason, it may be advisable to optimize these granular pages for the keywords that would generally be reserved for location-based pages. In the health industry this would include doctor listings while in the travel industry it would include flight, hotel and itinerary pages. On that note...

People Also Ask results are disproportionately popular in the travel industry.

As rankings are shifting from location-based pages to individual flight, hotel and itinerary pages, you should optimize those with information about passports, ways to travel, the best months to travel, expected costs for lodging, transportation and amenities.

For industries where pages do not get more granular than locations, hold steady...

If there are no pages more granular than location pages available on a website, rankings most commonly shift all the way back to homepages. In these cases, we are more commonly seeing rankings increase. Furthermore, although a shift in 3% of rankings has led to visible traffic fluctuations when those phrases have high enough volume, 3% is still a fairly low number. It would be a risk to start optimizing your homepage for locations when 97% of your location-based rankings remain unchanged.

...Unless you are in a YMYL industry

YMYL industries like health and finance saw rankings shift away from location pages at a greater rate than other industries. For this reason, it may be advisable for businesses in these industries to evaluate the full effects of the March Core Update on their location rankings and prepare a plan for transitioning their optimization efforts should Google continue the observed trend.

Local SEO Strategy from Greenlane Marketing

If your website's rankings are shifting away from location pages, it is important to have a strategy in place to ensure your other landing pages satisfy the same user intent and are perfect introductions to your brand. Greenlane wants to be your trusted SEO partner. Connect with us today to discuss starting with [Local SEO](#) and a revitalizing [content strategy](#).