# UK designates Google with strategic market status to curb dominance in search services



The UK’s Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has officially designated Google with "strategic market status" in the country’s search services sector, marking a significant step toward increased regulatory oversight of the tech giant’s dominance. This designation, established under the new Digital Markets Competition Regime that came into effect earlier this year, reflects the CMA’s concern over Google’s control of over 90% of search queries in the UK, underscoring its entrenched market position.

Although the CMA has yet to find any wrongdoing by Google, the new status enables the regulator to consider targeted interventions intended to promote competition and consumer choice. These measures could include the introduction of "choice screens" that offer users visible alternatives to Google’s search engine, establishing fair and non-discriminatory principles for ranking websites, and empowering publishers with greater control over how their content appears in search results. The CMA also indicated it is exploring ways to enhance data portability to support innovation among emerging competitors. These steps aim to create a more competitive market environment while ensuring that businesses and consumers are treated fairly.

Google has voiced concerns that such regulatory interventions might hinder innovation and economic growth. Oliver Bethell, Google’s competition chief, argued in a blog post that UK businesses and consumers have benefited from Google’s innovations, often gaining access to new technologies months earlier than European counterparts. He further pointed out that Google Search contributed an estimated £118 billion to the UK economy in 2023 alone. According to Bethell, some of the proposed interventions could slow down product launches during a critical period of AI-driven innovation.

The CMA’s designation follows an extended investigation launched in early 2025 to assess Google’s impact on competition and user choice within the search and online advertising markets. The regulator’s roadmap, unveiled earlier, outlines potential targeted measures that could reshape the way search services operate in the UK. These include both technical solutions, such as choice screens, and procedural safeguards like an effective complaints process allowing businesses to challenge unfair search listings.

Consumer advocacy groups have welcomed the CMA’s decision, viewing it as a crucial move to challenge Google’s dominance. For instance, Which? policy lead Rocio Concha described the regulator’s evidence as compelling, stressing the importance of regulatory action to address Google’s substantial market power, especially as generative AI tools reshape the search landscape.

This regulatory move places the UK among several jurisdictions intensifying scrutiny of major tech firms. Recently, Google faced a €2.95 billion fine from the European Union over alleged abuse of its advertising technology dominance. In the United States, legal battles continue over Google’s control of the Google Play Store and other core products, though the company recently avoided mandates to divest its Chrome browser or Android operating system.

The CMA expects to begin a public consultation on possible interventions later in 2025. While it remains to be seen how the proposed changes will be implemented, the designation signals a growing willingness by UK regulators to hold powerful digital platforms accountable and foster a more competitive digital economy.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-confirms-google-has-strategic-market-status-in-search-services), [[7]](https://www.apnews.com/article/4501271f6f3beb2783d1614426524715)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-takes-first-steps-to-improve-competition-in-search-services-in-the-uk), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/uk-plans-increase-control-over-google-search-2025-06-24/), [[6]](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/24/google-could-face-changes-to-search-in-the-uk-amid-cma-crackdown.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-to-investigate-google-s-search-services), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-takes-first-steps-to-improve-competition-in-search-services-in-the-uk)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[6]](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/24/google-could-face-changes-to-search-in-the-uk-amid-cma-crackdown.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[7]](https://www.apnews.com/article/4501271f6f3beb2783d1614426524715)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/uk-plans-increase-control-over-google-search-2025-06-24/), [[6]](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/24/google-could-face-changes-to-search-in-the-uk-amid-cma-crackdown.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/), [[7]](https://www.apnews.com/article/4501271f6f3beb2783d1614426524715)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/google-may-be-forced-to-make-changes-to-search-engine-in-uk/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-confirms-google-has-strategic-market-status-in-search-services> - The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has officially designated Google with 'strategic market status' in general search and search advertising services. This designation, under the new Digital Markets Competition Regime, allows the CMA to consider targeted interventions to promote competition and ensure fair treatment for consumers and businesses. The CMA plans to consult on potential measures later in the year, aiming to enhance competition in the digital market. Google has expressed concerns that such interventions could inhibit innovation and growth in the UK economy.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-takes-first-steps-to-improve-competition-in-search-services-in-the-uk> - The CMA has proposed designating Google with 'strategic market status' under the new Digital Markets Competition Regime. This proposal is part of the CMA's efforts to improve competition in the UK's search services market. The CMA has published a roadmap outlining potential actions, including promoting search engine alternatives and enforcing non-discriminatory ranking practices. Google has expressed concerns that these measures could inhibit UK innovation and growth, potentially slowing product launches during a period of significant AI-based innovation.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-to-investigate-google-s-search-services> - The CMA has launched an investigation into Google's search and search advertising services to determine if the company holds 'strategic market status' under the new Digital Markets Competition Regime. The investigation aims to assess Google's market position and its impact on consumers and businesses in the UK. The CMA is considering whether Google's dominance in the search market is harming competition or consumer choice. The investigation is expected to take up to nine months and could result in Google being required to share data with other businesses or give publishers greater control over their content.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/uk-plans-increase-control-over-google-search-2025-06-24/> - The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has proposed designating Google with 'strategic market status' under its new regulatory powers to enhance oversight of the tech giant’s search services. This designation would be the first under a new regime targeting major tech companies and is aimed at promoting fairer rankings for businesses, facilitating access to alternative search engines, and increasing transparency and control for content publishers. Google, which handles over 90% of UK search queries, would also be required to enhance data portability to support innovation among emerging competitors.
6. <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/24/google-could-face-changes-to-search-in-the-uk-amid-cma-crackdown.html> - The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has proposed designating Google with 'strategic market status' under the new Digital Markets Competition Regime. This designation would allow the CMA to enforce consumer protections on tech giants and take actions, including fines of up to 10% of global annual revenues for breaches. The CMA has outlined potential measures, such as choice screens to help users select and switch between search services, fair and non-discriminatory search rankings, and control over how publishers' content is used. Google has expressed concerns that these interventions could have significant implications for businesses and consumers in the UK.
7. <https://www.apnews.com/article/4501271f6f3beb2783d1614426524715> - The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has designated Google as holding 'strategic market status' in the online search advertising sector, due to its significant and entrenched market power, controlling over 90% of online searches in the UK. This is the first such designation under new UK digital regulations introduced earlier in the year. While the designation is not an accusation of wrongdoing, it gives the CMA authority to introduce measures to ensure fair competition, such as promoting search engine alternatives and enforcing non-discriminatory ranking practices.