Google’s Discover Core Update Finishes Rolling Out via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google’s February 2026 Discover core update has finished rolling out, per an update posted to the Search Status Dashboard at 2:02 AM PT on February 27.

The rollout took roughly 22 days, starting February 5. That’s about 8 days longer than Google’s original estimate of up to two weeks.

Google announced the update on the Search Central Blog, saying it was the first time the company publicly labeled a core update as a Discover core update.

When it launched, Google listed three goals for the update. It aims to show users more locally relevant content from websites based in their country, reduce sensational content and clickbait, and surface more in-depth, original, timely content from sites with topic expertise.

The initial rollout applied to English-language users in the US. Google said it plans to expand to all countries and languages in the months ahead, but didn’t share a specific schedule.

What Third-Party Data Shows

Early third-party tracking gives a first look at what changed during the rollout.

NewzDash published a scorecard comparing pre-update (Jan

25-31) and post-update (Feb 8-14) windows across the top 1,000 domains and top 1,000 articles in the US, California, and New York.

As we reported earlier this week, the data pointed to three patterns.

NewzDash's data suggests regional personalization increased. New York-local domains appeared roughly five times more often in the New York feed than in the California feed, and the reverse held true for California-local domains. The feeds still share most of their top 100 items, but each state now gets a meaningful local layer on top of that national core.

Fewer domains are getting top placements. Unique domains in the US top 1,000 dropped from 172 to 158 in the post-update window. California showed a similar decline from 187 to 177. New York was the exception, where unique publishers held roughly steady.

Topic variety grew while publisher diversity shrank. Unique content categories increased across all three geographic views. Combined with the drop in unique domains, that suggests Discover is covering more topics but concentrating top placements among a narrower set of publishers.

NewzDash also reported that X.com posts from institutional accounts climbed from 3 to 13 items in the US top 100 Discover placements. Most of those items came from established media brands posting on X. NewzDash has been tracking X.com's Discover growth since November 2025, and the update appears to have accelerated the trend.

Broader Context

The Discover core update arrives at a time when Discover's role as a traffic source keeps growing.

An analysis of over 400 news publishers found that Discover's

share of Google-sourced traffic had nearly doubled in two years, climbing from 37% in 2023 to roughly 68%. Traditional web search traffic to news publishers dropped from 51% to about 27% over the same period.

That data doesn’t explain why Google changed Discover’s scoring, but it helps explain why a Discover-only core update matters. When a single surface drives that much traffic for publishers, any algorithmic change to how it selects content has real-world revenue effects.

Why This Matters

The completed rollout means US sites can now compare their Discover performance data in Search Console across a full pre-update and post-update window. Google recommends waiting at least a weekafter a core update completes before drawing conclusions, and comparing against a period before the update began.

The NewzDash data suggests publishers with strong regional relevance and clear topic focus may have benefited, while those without topic-level authority may have lost ground. Discover covered more topics in the post-update window, but fewer sites were appearing in top placements in the US and California. That combination is worth monitoring as more data comes in.

The roughly 22-day rollout also ran longer than Google’s two-week estimate, which means some of the NewzDash data was captured while the update was still in progress. Updated analysis using a post-completion window could show different patterns.

Looking Ahead

Google hasn’t said whether Discover will continue to get its

own core updates going forward. This was the first time Google labeled a core update as a Discover core update, so it’s too early to know if this becomes a recurring pattern.

Remember that a drop in Discover traffic doesn’t indicate your organic Search rankings changed.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/googles-discover-core-update-finishes-rolling-out/568413/