

OpenAI’s Image Surge, a More Contested Model Race, and the New Shape of AI Work

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OpenAI shared fast early growth for ChatGPT Images as fresh evaluations and investor commentary pulled the open-model story in different directions. The day also added evidence that AI is reshaping software jobs toward planning and review, while practical local deployment keeps advancing.

What stood out

Today’s clearest story was market pull, not a single blockbuster launch. OpenAI posted fresh adoption data, benchmark charts drew unusually explicit disagreement, and software-engineering commentary kept shifting from replacement toward workflow redesign [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

OpenAI is seeing product pull from images — and still arguing for smarter models

ChatGPT Images usage rose more than 50% in a few weeks, with nearly 60% of daily users coming from newly logged-in users; Greg Brockman said the feature is “really taking off” [1, 6]. Sam Altman separately said he increasingly sees smarter models as more important than cheaper or faster ones [7].

“but it seems that just being smarter is still the most important thing” [7]

Why it matters: OpenAI’s own usage signal suggests that new capability can still bring in fresh audiences quickly, especially when the use cases are broad across design, learning, work graphics, and creative work [1].

The open-model race looked more contested, not less

A NIST CAISI evaluation said DeepSeek V4 trails leading U.S. models by about eight months; Sebastian Raschka said he would have liked to see GLM 5.1, Kimi K2.6, and Qwen3.6 Max included on the same chart, and the full report is here: nist.gov/news-events/news/2026/05/caisi-evaluation-deepseek-v4-pro [2, 8]. At the same time, commentary endorsed by Marc Andreessen argued that Kimi K2.6 and DeepSeek V4 show open-source scaling is continuing, while Nathan Lambert said much depends on which trend line is more representative and noted that the best open models have long been Chinese [9, 10, 11, 12]. Another widely shared critique warned that these ELO gaps are inferred from benchmark scores rather than head-to-head play, and can widen mechanically as models approach 100% accuracy on more tests [3].

Why it matters: For anyone tracking the U.S.-China or open-vs.-closed race, leaderboard headlines are carrying more interpretation risk than usual. Official evaluations, open-model momentum claims, and benchmark-methodology caveats are all landing at once.

Software work still looks like a redesign story before a replacement story

Citadel Securities analysis shared by several AI commentators said demand for software engineers — the most AI-exposed occupation — has continued to accelerate, with job postings up 18% from the May inflection point [4, 13]. In parallel, swyx highlighted a shift toward “plan and review”: as AI “eats the middle,” engineers spend more time defining work and reviewing model output, which he described as the biggest lever for shipping faster [5]. Andreessen also endorsed the view that “we need more engineers, not less” [9, 10].

Why it matters: The short-term pattern in these notes is not simple displacement. Demand may still be rising even as the job changes shape toward specification, oversight, and review.

Local and embedded AI kept getting more practical

A Reddit post described a quantized Llama 3.3 70B running locally on a MacBook Pro M4 with 64GB RAM at about 71 tokens per second, finishing an offline client queue over an 11-hour flight with checkpointing for battery swaps [14]. Separately, a LocalLLM commenter pointed to OpenAI’s newly released PII redaction model intended to run locally or in the browser, and Elon Musk said Grok Voice is already being used by Starlink [15, 16].

Why it matters: The common thread is deployment. More attention is shifting from raw model scores to where models can actually run: offline, in-browser, and inside operational systems.

Sources

1. X post by @nickaturley
2. X post by @sebkrier
3. X post by @0xdoug
4. X post by @Konstantine
5. X post by @aiDotEngineer
6. X post by @gdb
7. X post by @sama
8. X post by @rasbt
9. X post by @casper_hansen_
10. X post by @pmarca
11. X post by @natolambert
12. X post by @natolambert
13. X post by @pmarca
14. r/LocalLLM post by u/DragonflyOk7139
15. r/LocalLLM comment by u/this_for_loona
16. X post by @elonmusk