

Anthropic vs. OpenAI — The IPO Race

Pre-IPO Comparison — June 2026

Preferred Name	Basis of View	Key Divergence	Date
ANTHROPIC	Relative (both pre-IPO)	Path to profit & structure	June 2026

Summary & View

We frame this as a relative call rather than a valuation-against-price one, in that both companies remain private and there is as yet no traded price to anchor against, and as such our conclusion is simply which of the two we would rather own as it comes to market. On that basis we prefer Anthropic. The reason is not that we regard OpenAI as a weak business, which it plainly is not, but that Anthropic now appears to carry a cleaner path to the profitability that a near-trillion-dollar listing implicitly demands, alongside a corporate structure that public investors can underwrite without the governance overhang that still surrounds its rival. Both have filed confidentially within days of each other, both are reported to be targeting raises of upwards of \$60bn, and both sit close to a \$1tn valuation, so the question is not which is the larger story but which of two very large stories is the more investable at the point of listing.

The central argument is therefore that Anthropic offers the more defensible entry. It has, on the most recent reporting, overtaken OpenAI on both private valuation and revenue run rate, it derives the bulk of that revenue from enterprise customers rather than consumer subscriptions, and it expects to reach operating profit earlier. As such the premium an investor pays at IPO is being asked to bridge a shorter and more visible gap. We stop short of dismissing OpenAI, whose scale and brand are without equal, but we regard its later profitability horizon, heavier losses and more complicated history as reducing the margin of safety at a comparable valuation.

Side-by-Side — Key Metrics

Metric	Anthropic	OpenAI
Latest private valuation	~\$965bn (Series H, May 2026)	~\$852bn (round closed Mar 2026)
Reported raise target	>\$60bn	>\$60bn
Revenue run rate	~\$47bn	~\$24bn annualised
Revenue mix	~80% enterprise	Enterprise ~40%, rest consumer
Expected operating profit	~2028	~2030
2026 loss guidance	Approaching breakeven	~\$14bn projected loss
Corporate structure	Public Benefit Corp (settled)	PBC conversion (recently finalised)
Lead underwriters (reported)	Goldman, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley	Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley
Filing status	Confidential S-1, Jun 1 2026	Confidential S-1, late May 2026

Figures are drawn from public reporting around the two companies' respective financing rounds and IPO preparations and are approximate; private-market valuations and run-rate revenue are point-in-time estimates rather than audited results.

Why We Prefer Anthropic

The first reason is the shape of the income statement. Anthropic's reported run-rate revenue has risen sharply over the course of the year and now sits ahead of OpenAI's on a comparable basis, and crucially the great majority of it is enterprise revenue, which tends to be stickier and higher-margin than consumer subscription income. As such, when the market is asked to underwrite a near-trillion-dollar valuation, it is being asked to extrapolate from a revenue base whose quality is, in our view, easier to defend. OpenAI is the larger consumer phenomenon by some distance, but a valuation of this size ultimately has to be justified by durable economics rather than by reach alone.

The second reason is the path to profitability. Anthropic is reported to expect operating profit around 2028, whereas OpenAI does not anticipate profitability until roughly 2030 and is guided to a loss in the region of \$14bn in 2026 alone.

The distance between those two timelines is precisely the period over which a newly listed share is most exposed to sentiment, and a company that can credibly point to breakeven within a couple of years of listing has, all else equal, less to prove and less reason to return to the market for dilutive capital. This matters a great deal for an equity whose value rests so heavily on future rather than present cash generation.

The third reason is structural clarity. OpenAI has only recently completed its conversion from a non-profit into a for-profit public benefit corporation, and while that process appears to have been resolved, it has been a live source of governance uncertainty for some time. Anthropic has operated as a public benefit corporation throughout, which removes a layer of complexity that public investors would otherwise have to price. In a listing of this scale, where a great deal of capital is committed quickly, a simpler and more settled governance position is itself a form of risk reduction.

The Case for OpenAI — and Why It Does Not Change Our View

In fairness, the argument for OpenAI is a strong one and should not be dismissed. It remains the most recognised name in the field, it commands an enormous consumer base, and the optionality embedded in that distribution is difficult to value but almost certainly real, in that a platform of that reach has repeated opportunities to monetise that a smaller rival does not. There is also a reasonable view that brand and scale are themselves a moat, and that the company's losses are the deliberate cost of entrenching a lead that will prove durable. An investor who weights these factors heavily could justify preferring OpenAI at a similar valuation, and we would not regard that as an unreasonable position.

Our view is simply that, at comparable valuations and at the moment of listing, we would rather pay for the business with the clearer near-term economics and the fewer unanswered structural questions. The decisive point is that neither company's audited prospectus is yet public, and as such both theses rest on reported figures rather than filed accounts. We would therefore treat our preference as provisional and revisit it once the respective S-1 filings allow the revenue quality, gross margin after compute, and contractual commitments of each to be examined directly.

Key Risks to This View

Risk	Description	Severity
Pre-IPO information gap	Neither audited S-1 is public; the entire comparison rests on reported, point-in-time figures that the filings may revise materially.	High
Compute cost & margin	Both businesses depend on very large contracted compute commitments, and gross margin after compute is the key unknown that could erode either profitability case.	High
AI demand & valuation cycle	Both valuations assume sustained demand growth; a broad de-rating of AI assets would compress both listings regardless of relative merit.	High
Competitive convergence	The enterprise-vs-consumer distinction may blur as each firm pushes into the other's territory, weakening the revenue-quality argument.	Medium
Execution & capital needs	Both may require further capital to fund infrastructure; the dilution risk is lower for Anthropic on its earlier-breakeven path but is not absent.	Medium

Disclaimer: This note is produced by The Long Game (formerly RoadToCFA) for educational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice. Anthropic and OpenAI are privately held and not available as listed securities at the time of writing; no recommendation to buy, sell or subscribe to any security is made or implied. All figures are drawn from public reporting, are approximate and are not guaranteed. Forward-looking statements are estimates and subject to change once audited filings become available. The author may hold no position in the entities mentioned. Past performance is not indicative of future results. This is not a regulated financial promotion. Please conduct your own due diligence before making any investment decision.