

The Power of Google Analytics

Getting beyond counting
visitors

Hit counters

- Face it—you're the only one who really cares how many times a certain page on your website was "hit"

Hit counters are so 1985. Honestly, showing a hit counter evokes more of a “so what” response these days. It reveals to people how popular your page is. And for most local church websites, the popularity doesn't amount to much. The fact your website gets 11 hits a week might actually reduce its popularity, not increase it.

That said, some hit counters can give you more information behind the scenes if you ever look at it. It might be enough to warrant virtually hiding the counter itself and using it for the information it provides. Then again, you can do that for free without the hit counter using Google Analytics. Google Analytics can provide you with a wealth of information that helps you tune your website to make it more popular without most website visitors ever seeing it.

Let's explore what it takes to set it up, and what kind of information you can glean from it.

Signing up

- google.com/analytics

As with most services that count things for you, you'll need to sign up for an account. If you already have a Google account (Gmail or gci.org or Picasa, or many other services) you can use that account to sign up for Analytics. So sign in with an existing Google account, or click the sign up button at the top to create a new account.

Adding the tracking code

- Google will generate some javascript code that should get added to every page on your website

This is one place where content managers shine. You can either edit the template to include the tracking code on every page manually, or you can use a plugin for your content manager to do it for you. Using a plugin generally requires only your Google Analytics “property ID”, a big long number starting with UA-.

If you write your own HTML pages, you’ll need to add it manually to every page.

And once it’s installed, it’s just a waiting game before statistics start showing up.

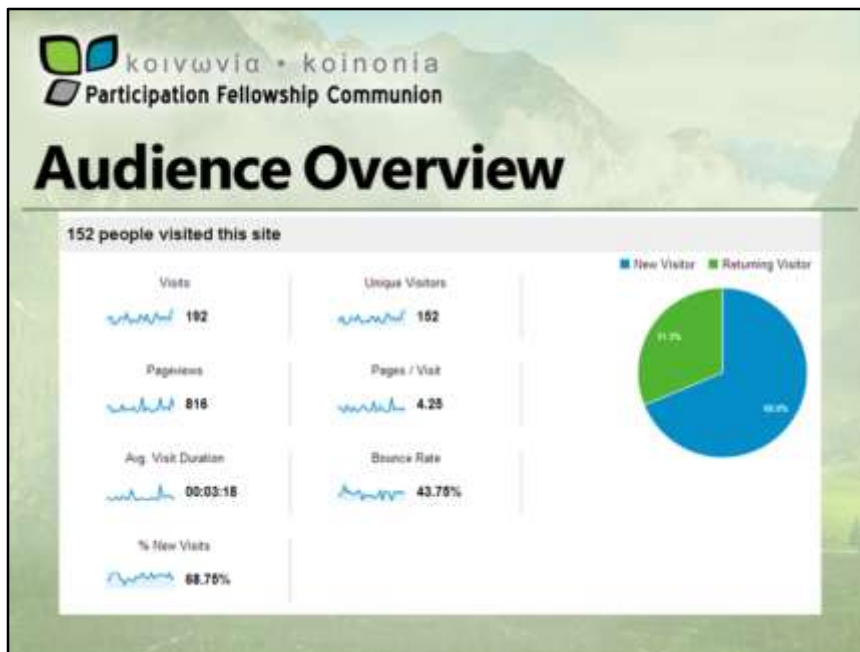


The following examples are all taken from actual statistics from my own local church website.

The first place you generally land when you look at your Google Analytics statistics is on the audience overview. By default, Google shows you information about your website visitors over the last month. You can change that time period to get a longer term view if you want. That can be especially helpful if you don't check your stats often.

Note that not all the statistics are 100% accurate. For example, even though Google is pretty good about determining who is new and who is repeat, the techniques are somewhat dependent on how website visitors have configured their browsers. Some people won't be counted at all, and others will be considered "new" when they are not. Still, the statistics give you a general idea and can be helpful.

Regardless of that, we start with a nice graph showing the number of visits each day. For a local church website, we don't really expect these to be high numbers—just the fact that we get visited regularly means we've done a decent job building and promoting the website.



As we scroll down, we can see that in the last month, the website has been visited 192 times by 152 different people. Now one person who uses two different web browsers might be considered two “people”. Also, if a person has more than one computer, or visits your website from both a computer and a phone or tablet, they’ll likely be counted more than once.

We can see that on average, people look at 4 or 5 different pages when they visit spending about 3½ minutes on the website.

About 70% of my website visitors are new visitors. We like to see new visitors because this may mean local people looking for a church.

And then there are about 30% of repeat visitors. On my website, we offer audio from our weekly services, so many of these repeats are probably coming to listen to the audio, check the bulletin for activities, or read a devotional.

Bounce rate is also interesting as it tells you how many people visit just one page and do not spend enough time on it to glean actual information. These people came to your website, but weren’t interested enough to read it. Obviously, the lower this number, the better. But the more online promotion you do, the more uninterested traffic you’ll get.

Audience Overview: Language

Demographics	Language	Visits	% Visits
Language	1. en-us	100	53.75%
Country / Territory	2. in	11	5.73%
City	3. pt-br	1	0.52%

Yes, most of my website visitors have their computer systems set to English as the primary language, which is good since the website is only in English. Language is the default demographic show. You can also choose other stuff, which we'll do just to see what interesting information we can find.

Audience Overview: Country

Country / Territory	Visits	% Visits
1. United States	181	94.27%
2. Canada	3	1.56%
3. Philippines	3	1.56%
4. Argentina	1	0.52%
5. Brazil	1	0.52%
6. India	1	0.52%
7. Iran	1	0.52%
8. New Zealand	1	0.52%

And mostly our website is visited from the United States, which is good because that's where we are located. Canada is probably our pastor's family. Not sure why the other countries, but perhaps they found us based on a topic they searched for.

Audience Overview: City

City	Visits	% Visits
1. Upland	35	16.23%
2. Los Angeles	19	9.90%
3. Rancho Cucamonga	16	8.33%
4. Ontario	8	4.17%
5. Corona	5	2.60%
6. Fontana	5	2.60%
7. San Diego	5	2.60%
8. Modesto	4	2.00%
9. Chino	3	1.56%
10. Moreno Valley	3	1.56%

In our top 10 cities, Upland, where we are located is on top. We'd both expect and hope for that since those are the people we are most interested in reaching. We also see several neighboring cities, and a few that are farther away. People are not going to drive from San Diego or Modesto to our church, so perhaps these are people who used to attend or know someone who does.

Audience Overview: Browser

Browser	Visits	% Visits
1. Chrome	61	31.77%
2. Safari	46	23.96%
3. Internet Explorer	35	18.23%
4. Android Browser	23	11.98%
5. Firefox	23	11.98%
6. Mozilla Compatible Agent	2	1.04%
7. Safari (in-app)	2	1.04%

Generally, we all have a web browser we like to use, whether that's Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, or Safari. Our stats are probably a little atypical as I wouldn't expect Chrome to be the #1 browser. But it is what I use, so some of that is me. Obviously, other people use it too. What this tells us is that we should look at our website in a few different browsers, especially the most popular ones and try to make it look good and work well in them.

One surprise on this list is that Android is so popular. That means we have a significant audience on mobile devices and should take some time to make the website more mobile-friendly.

Audience Overview: OS

Operating System	Visits	% Visits
1. Windows	102	53.12%
2. iOS	36	18.75%
3. Macintosh	27	14.06%
4. Android	25	13.02%
5. Firefox OS	1	0.52%
6. Windows Phone	1	0.52%

Here we can see what types of devices visit our website. The majority is Windows—no surprise there. But we have more iPhones and iPads than we do Mac computers.

Audience Overview: Provider

Service Provider	Visits	% Visits
1. time warner cable internet llc	48	25.00%
2. verizon online llc	34	17.71%
3. charter communications	16	8.33%
4. at&t internet services	14	7.29%
5. sprint nextel corporation	12	6.25%
6. calico partnership dba verizon wireless	7	3.65%
7. service provider corporation	5	2.60%
8. springhill suites	4	2.08%
9. t-mobile usa inc.	4	2.08%
10. (not set)	3	1.56%

Other than just being novel information, I can't see how knowing what internet providers your visitors come from really helps you.

Audience Overview: Mobile

Operating System	Visits	% Visits
1. iOS	36	57.14%
2. Android	25	39.68%
3. Firefox OS	1	1.59%
4. Windows Phone	1	1.59%

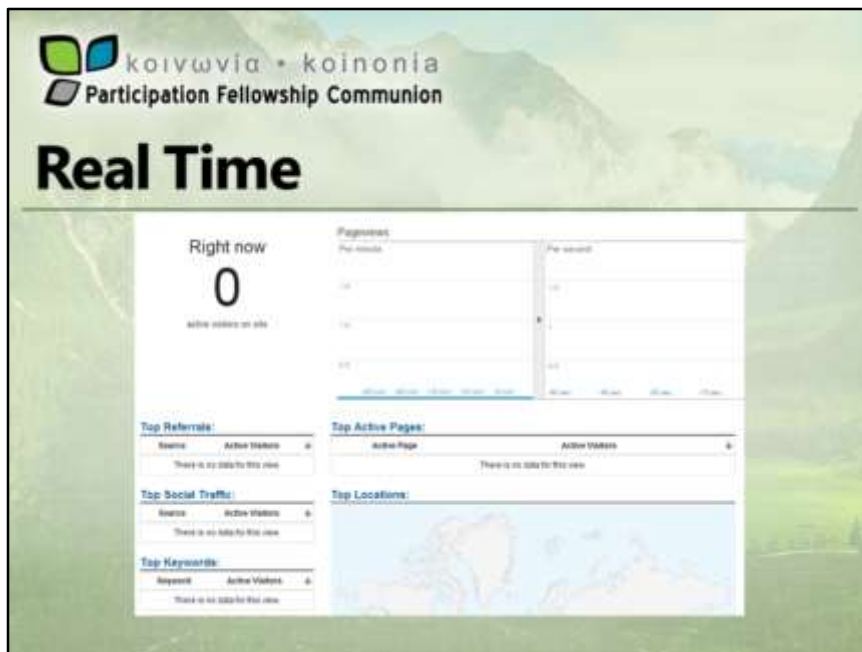
Some simple math here and I can see that 1/3 of my website visits are from mobile devices. Again, that tells me that being mobile-friendly would be an improvement for my website.

Audience Overview: Screen size

Screen Resolution	Visits	% Visits
1. 320x480	16	25.40%
2. 768x1024	12	19.05%
3. 320x568	8	12.70%
4. 720x1280	5	7.94%
5. 960x540	3	4.76%
6. 1280x720	2	3.17%
7. 480x800	2	3.17%
8. 854x1070	2	3.17%
9. 854x1263	2	3.17%
10. 1024x768	1	1.59%

Knowing the screen size of your mobile visitors can be helpful too. Tablets with larger screen sizes handle normal website designs just fine. But as more smart phones visitor your website, they'll have trouble clicking on the menus if the width of the screen is fixed too large. Plus they'll have to scroll back and forth to read the content. These are things than can be handled with intelligent website design and by making your website mobile-responsive so it changes the look when it finds devices with smaller screen sizes.

So already we can see a wealth of information about who comes to visit our website. And that's just the overview page.



Real time is almost useless for a local church website. It shows how many visitors you have on your website “right now”. While that can be interesting if you actually have one, most of the time a local church website will have no one. Our gci.org website on the other hand almost always has someone on it reading or watching something.

Traffic sources



Knowing where your traffic comes from can help you promote. For example, if very little of your traffic comes from search, you probably haven't done a great job with your content or search engine optimization. In my case, most of my traffic comes from search.

Search keywords

Keyword	Visits	% Visits
1. (not provided)	46	45.54%
2. reliance church upland	8	7.92%
3. baptism	3	2.97%
4. reliance community church	3	2.97%
5. churches in upland ca	2	1.98%
6. non denominational churches in inland empire	2	1.98%
7. reliance church	2	1.98%
8. +churchs in the inland empire	1	0.99%
9. church in upland	1	0.99%
10. christian church in homes upland	1	0.99%

While it doesn't seem to be able to get every keyword or phrase from search, it does get some so you can see the most popular words and phrases that get people to your website. If you aren't seeing what you want here, you may need to do some tuning to make your content more friendly to those words or phrases.

One surprise on this list for me is "baptism". I wouldn't expect to be listed high enough for that word that we get site visits from it.

Content

Page		Pageviews	% Pageviews
1. /		252	 30.88%
2. /who-we-are/our-story/		74	 9.07%
3. /resources/teaching/		56	 6.86%
4. /contact-us/		35	 4.29%
5. /home/services/		32	 3.92%
6. /who-we-are/pastor/		30	 3.68%
7. /who-we-are/beliefs/		27	 3.31%
8. /vision/mission/		25	 3.06%
9. /whats-next/baptism/		19	 2.33%
10. /calendar/		17	 2.08%

Under content, you can see the most popular pages on the website. The only surprise I have on this page is again baptism. I expect to see the home page on top followed by pages about the church and the resources we offer.

Behavior Flow



In behavior flow, you can click on a starting page and see where they go next.

Site Content

Page	Pagesviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit
	816 % of Total: 100.00% (100)	532 % of Total: 100.00% (100)	00:01:01 Site Avg: 00:00:47 (47%)	192 % of Total: 100.00% (100)	43.75% Site Avg: 45.75% (46%)	23.53% Site Avg: 23.52% (24%)
1. /	252	108	00:01:21	105	40.00%	39.29%
2. /info-we-are/our-story/	74	41	00:00:26	2	50.00%	12.19%
3. /resources/teaching/	56	24	00:00:30	1	100.00%	7.14%
4. /contact-us/	35	20	00:01:11	0	0.00%	20.00%
5. /home/basics/	32	20	00:00:37	1	0.00%	15.62%
6. /info-we-are/justice/	30	23	00:00:28	1	0.00%	16.67%
7. /info-we-are/beliefs/	27	19	00:01:23	1	0.00%	11.11%
8. /about/mission/	25	17	00:00:57	1	100.00%	4.00%
9. /info-we-are/baptism/	19	16	00:00:49	13	75.32%	63.16%
10. /calendar/	17	13	00:00:21	1	100.00%	29.41%

In site content you can see how many times each page was viewed—now many times by different visitors, how long they spend on the page, which pages people land on when they come to your website. And the which pages site visitor exist your site from.



In-page analytics allows you to look at a page on your website and see where website visitors go from the page.



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