

MOBILE METRICS

for Journalists



THIRD IN A SERIES

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INTRODUCTION

WE KNOW THAT MEDIA HAS AN IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC, SHAPING DISCUSSION and action on important issues. How can we use the data to measure how stories that appear in print, online, or in broadcast reach members of the public, who consume, subscribe, amplify, and contribute to the conversation?

This guide is part of the USC Media Impact Project's Understanding Media Metrics series of publications. It uses methods explained in the first guide of the series, *Web Metrics: Basics for Journalists*, which provides basic terms and methods for measuring digital audiences. You can download it at **www.mediaimpactproject.org/web-metrics-guide.html**.

The purpose of this guide is to help media organizations analyze the impact their stories have on mobile audiences. In this guide, we'll expand on our basic web metrics concepts and answer the following questions:

- How many people are reading stories on mobile devices?
- How many pages or articles do these users typically read?
- When do these mobile users visit the site?
- Where are these mobile users located?
- Which stories did well with mobile users?
- How do mobile metrics compare to site averages?

This guide uses Google Analytics to illustrate the types of software tools used to gather and report mobile web metrics data. It is one of several popular web metrics tools that are used by media organizations – others include Adobe SiteCatalyst (formerly Omniture), Chartbeat, and WebTrends. Keep in mind that data from one tool usually can't be combined with data from another, as they use different methods and terms. All of the reports from Google Analytics and the other tools are designed to be used by non-technical users.



A NOTE ON APPS

There are two ways to access online content with a phone, tablet, or other mobile device: a **MOBILE BROWSER** or an **APPLICATION**. It's important to recognize the difference between the two, as each will be tracked differently and show up differently in Google Analytics.

Sometimes websites will have a different URL on mobile devices. These usually start with a prefix of “m” or “mobile” instead of the usual “www.” For example, if someone visits the *New York Times* on a mobile phone, they will be automatically redirected to “mobile.nytimes.com.” As long as the tracking code is present on these pages, you will be able to see the data in Google Analytics.

Separate from a website, which is viewed in a web browser, some content providers have applications, or apps. These have to be downloaded onto a mobile device and are similar to software applications. Apps are specific to an operating system, e.g., an iPhone app won't work on an Android or Windows phone.

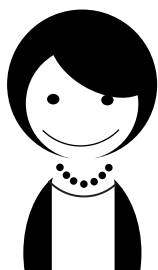
To track app usage, you need a program that produces a specific set of standard metrics and reports that are unique to the app. For example, instead of listing *pageviews* or *pages* as with web metrics, an app report may list *screens* and *screens per session*.

This first mobile metrics guide will focus on mobile websites rather than mobile apps, as the audiences for mobile websites are far larger than those for mobile apps. Also, all news organizations can have a mobile-optimized website, but not all organizations have the resources to build and maintain mobile apps.



BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT MOBILE METRICS

Getting started? How do we find the data on mobile web users?

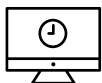


Meet Jenny. She's a seasoned reporter who has recently delved into the world of web audience analytics and discovered a couple of things. First, Jenny found that the methods for measuring audience behavior are quite easy to learn. Second, she realized that she has a talent for slicing and dicing the data (*"This isn't just for the SEO guy and the marketing people."*) Jenny has become the go-to person in her newsroom for all things related to digital audiences.

Jenny learned the basics of web audience measurement using Google Analytics (see *Web Metrics: Basics for Journalists*). In particular, she mastered the pathways to find basic metrics such as pageviews, sessions or visits and users or visitors.



A **PAGEVIEW** is a count of each time someone views a page by any method, such as clicking on a link, typing in a URL, or refreshing a page.



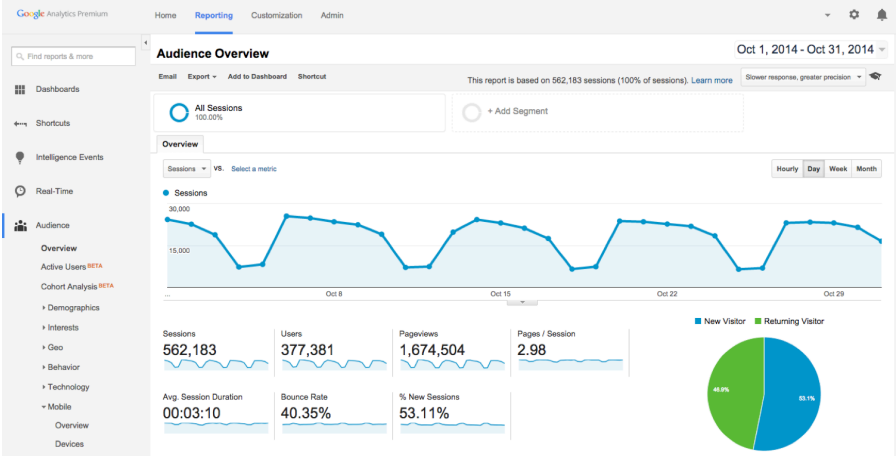
A **SESSION**, or visit, is a series of pageviews in a single interaction with a website. This metric is shown by default in most charts in Google Analytics.



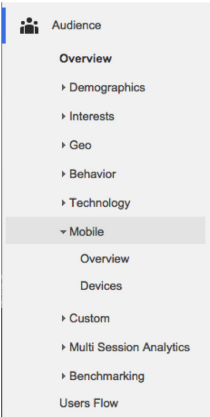
A **USER** is a visitor to the site over multiple sessions. (Note: A "user" may seem like a person, but that's not quite true. Google Analytics really measures interaction from a specific browser and device. If Jenny visits a site using two different devices – or even two different browsers on the same device – she will be counted as two users.)

Now, Jenny is ready to ask more specific questions about the audiences who visit her news organization’s site using their smartphones and tablets — at stores and restaurants, on the subway, walking, talking — anywhere.

Mobile users are obviously an important audience segment. How can Jenny find out more about them using web metrics?



1 Jenny logs into Google Analytics, and chooses the **REPORTING** navigation link on the upper left of the login page. That opens up the standard Audience Overview navigation screen that has a graph on the page that measures all sessions for the site over a 30-day span. (This is the default time span in Google Analytics and can be adjusted by clicking on the date range on the upper right.) All other data on the Audience Overview screen, such as pageviews and users, represent traffic for all sessions.



Since Jenny wants to find out information about sessions or visits from mobile users, she checks the options in the left menu bar under **AUDIENCE**. She sees many choices, including **MOBILE**.

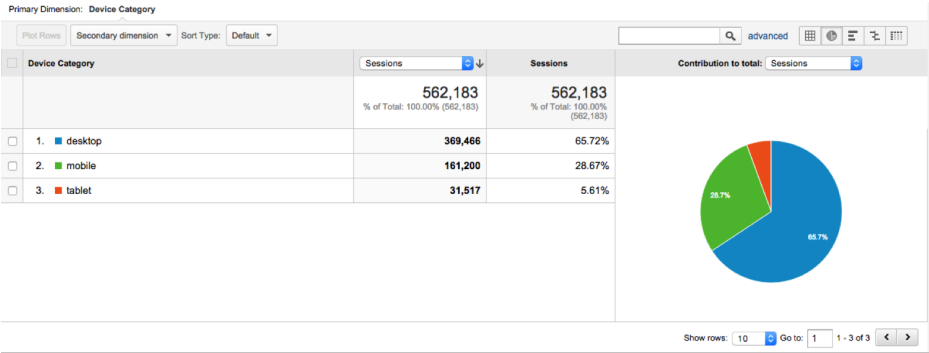
2 Jenny selects Mobile > Overview. A new table appears underneath the graph, which breaks out the traffic to her website into three device types: desktop, mobile, and tablet.

Plot Rows		Secondary dimension		Sort Type: Default				advanced							
Device Category		Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions							
		Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	Goal Value					
		562,183 100.00% (562,183) % of Total: 100.00%	53.11% Avg for View: 53.11% (0.00%)	298,582 100.00% (298,582) % of Total: 100.00%	40.35% Avg for View: 40.35% (0.00%)	2.98 Avg for View: 2.98 (0.00%)	00:03:10 Avg for View: 00:03:10 (0.00%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 0.00% (0.00%)	\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)					
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. desktop	369,466 (65.72%)	50.81%	187,743 (62.89%)	34.91%	3.47	00:03:39	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. mobile	161,200 (28.67%)	57.24%	92,274 (30.90%)	52.04%	1.95	00:02:09	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)					
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. tablet	31,517 (5.61%)	58.90%	18,565 (6.22%)	44.44%	2.55	00:02:49	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)					
Show rows: 10											Go to:		1 - 3 of 3		

Show rows: 10 Go to: 1 1 - 3 of 3

In the table, Jenny can see and compare how many sessions and users came from smartphones and tablets in relation to the totals for her website. She notices that an important metric called **BOUNCE RATE** — which measures how many users viewed one story and left — was highest among mobile users, at 52 percent, and 17 points higher than the bounce rate for desktop users (35 percent). This means about half of the sessions from mobile users left the site after seeing one page. Jenny suspected that this would be the case, since most people she knows use their smartphones to multitask and don't spend much time leisure reading.

3 The table and graph are helpful, but Jenny wants a more visual depiction to show to her colleagues. She goes back to the table and clicks on the small circular icon on the upper right side.

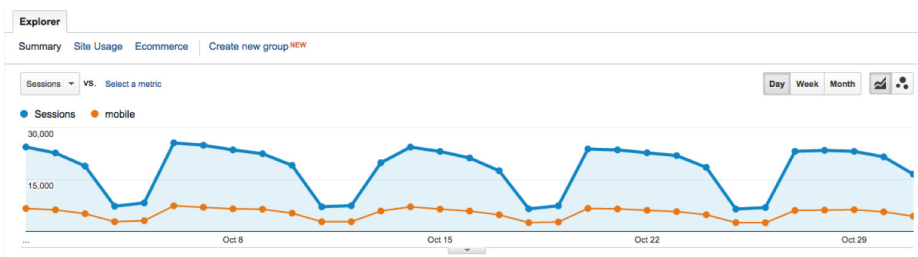
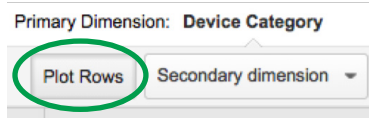


The pie chart more clearly shows that mobile users make up a substantial portion of overall visitors to Jenny's website.

Getting specific: How can we tell if mobile usage is growing over time?

The table above shows the total number of sessions for each device, but Jenny is also interested in looking at trends over time for mobile users.

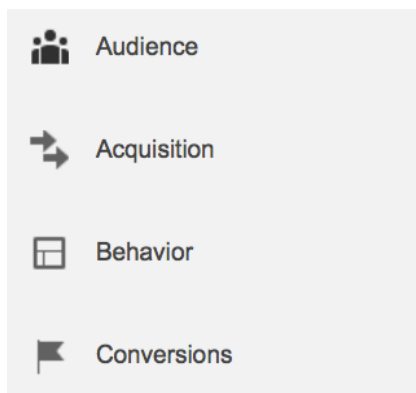
- 1 To create a graph that shows the sessions for mobile users over a 30-day period, Jenny checks the box next to the mobile row on the table and then clicks the Plot Rows button on the upper left side.



- 2 Jenny can now see a plotted line showing mobile sessions (orange) compared with the line that shows sessions for all devices (blue). The trend for sessions from mobile users was far more flat than the trend for all devices.

Getting specific: How do we explore how mobile users find & use our site?

Web Metrics: Basics for Journalists explained some of the basic reports Jenny can run looking at all website users.



AUDIENCE: Basics about who users are

ACQUISITION: How users access a website

BEHAVIOR: How users behave on the site

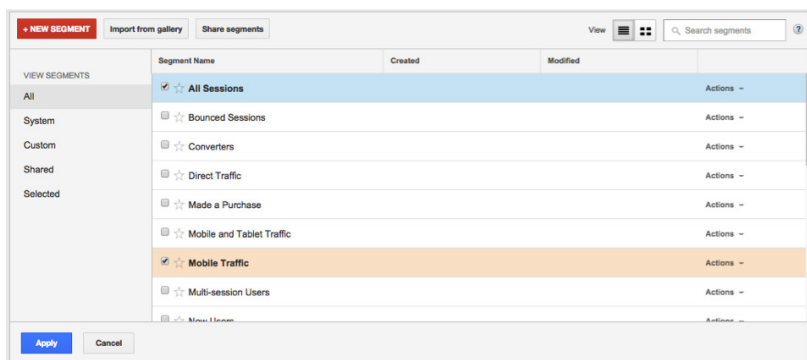
CONVERSATIONS: Which users responded to prompts such as buying a product

To look at these reports for mobile web users only, Jenny can use a feature in Google Analytics called **SEGMENTS**.

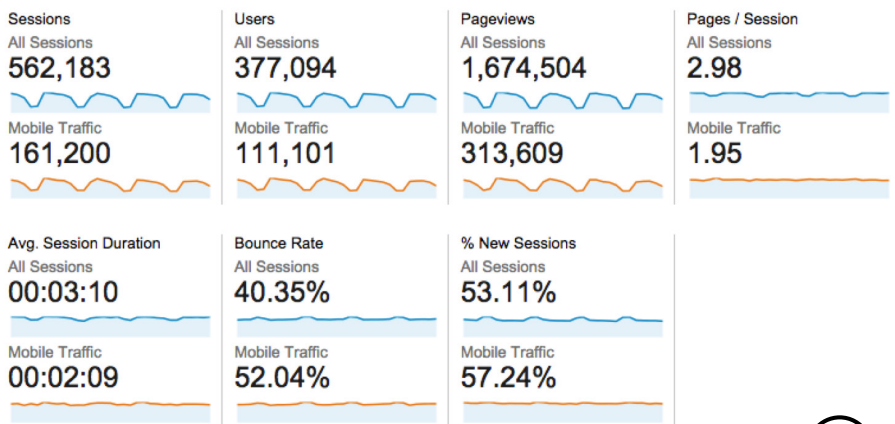
1 Jenny goes back to the standard Audience Overview navigation screen. Looking above the graph, she sees an **ALL SESSIONS** icon, and a grayed-out icon next to it labeled **ADD SEGMENT**.



When Jenny clicks Add Segment, a dropdown menu appears with many options, including one for **MOBILE TRAFFIC**. Jenny selects Mobile Traffic, and clicks **APPLY**, and the Audience Overview report changes.



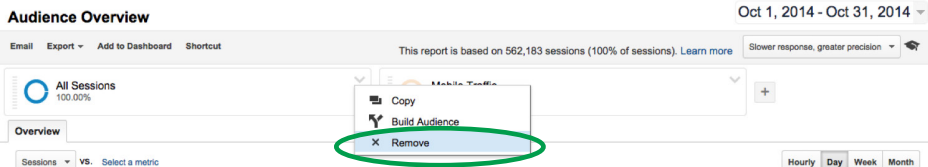
2 Using the All Sessions > Add Segment > Mobile Traffic path brings up a graph similar to the one Jenny already created in Mobile Overview, with an orange line added for mobile users. A new table is also presented underneath the graph, with Mobile Traffic vs. All Sessions clearly separated.

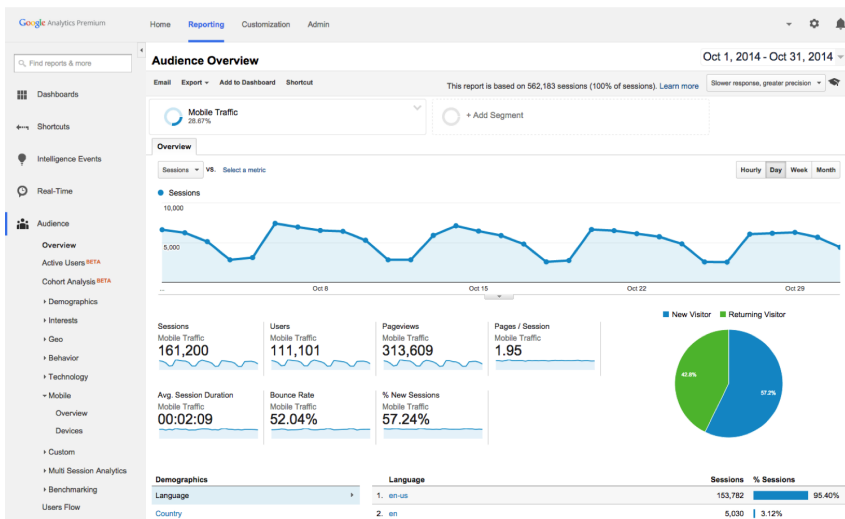


Although the data in the table is presented differently — in a scorecard format — it is basically the same as the mobile overview data Jenny accessed earlier. So is the graph. “So,” Jenny wonders, “*why is this mobile segment report useful? Haven’t I seen all of this information already?*”



To explore just how mobile users used the site, Jenny removes the line for All Sessions by clicking Remove on the dropdown menu.





Now all she sees is the sessions from mobile web users, and she's ready to explore the other reports Google Analytics offers that will show her how mobile web users found specific stories and which stories had the highest bounce rates.

3 Jenny is curious to find out how many people used their phones or tablets to read a story she wrote on campaign fraud.

She runs a report using the following path, located on the left side menu: Behavior > Site Content > Landing Pages. This will allow her to find how many mobile web users read her story first when visiting the site.

Once she has clicked on **LANDING PAGES**, Jenny sees a list of ten URLs. She doesn't see her story's URL on the list, so she types the URL of her story in the search box at the top of the list.

Primary Dimension: **Landing Page** [Other](#)

Plot Rows

Secondary dimension

Sort Type: Default

campaign-fraud

edit

Landing Page	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	Goal Value
Mobile Traffic	1,697 % of Total: 0.30% (562,183)	64.82% Avg for View: 53.11% (22.05%)	1,100 % of Total: 0.37% (258,562)	61.70% Avg for View: 40.35% (52.89%)	2.09 Avg for View: 2.98 (-29.77%)	00:02:38 Avg for View: 00:03:10 (+16.93%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)	\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)
1. /politics/campaign-fraud	1,697 (100.00%)	64.82%	1,100 (100.00%)	61.70%	2.09	00:02:38	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)

Show rows: 10Go to: 11 - 1 of 1

That pulls up her campaign fraud story, and Jenny can now see a table of data such as pageviews, users, sessions, and bounce rate, specifically for her story.

Primary Dimension: Landing Page Other

Secondary dimension		Sort type: Default		campaign-fraud			
Landing Page		Acquisition			Behavior		
		Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
Mobile Traffic		1,697 % of Total: 0.30% (562,183)	64.82% Avg for View: 53.11% (22.05%)	1,100 % of Total: 0.37% (298,582)	61.70% Avg for View: 40.35% (52.89%)	2.09 Avg for View: 2.98 (-29.77%)	00:02:38 Avg for View: 00:03:10 (-16.1%)

How did mobile users find her story? Jenny clicks an icon above the table named **SECONDARY DIMENSION**. That presents a dropdown menu with a series of options.

Primary Dimension: Landing Page Other

Secondary dimension		Sort type: Default		campaign-fraud						
Landing Page		Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
		Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	Goal Value
Mobile Traffic		1,697 0.30% (562,183)	64.82% Avg for View: 53.11% (22.05%)	1,100 0.37% (298,582)	61.70% Avg for View: 40.35% (52.89%)	2.09 Avg for View: 2.98 (-29.77%)	00:02:38 Avg for View: 00:03:10 (-16.93%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)	\$0.00

Acquisition

Default Channel Grouping

Medium

Referral Path

Source

Source / Medium

Traffic Type

Advertising

Show rows: 10 Go to: 1 1 - 1 of 1

By clicking Acquisition > Default Channel Grouping, Jenny gets a table showing how many visitors accessed her story through search engines, by typing in the direct URL, or through social media.

Primary Dimension: [Landing Page](#) [Other](#)

Secondary dimension: Default Channel Grouping		Sort Type: Default		campaign-fraud						
Landing Page	Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
		Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	
Mobile Traffic		1,697 % of Total: 0.30% (562,183)	64.82% Avg for View: 53.11% (22.05%)	1,100 % of Total: 0.37% (298,582)	61.70% Avg for View: 40.35% (52.89%)	2.09 Avg for View: 2.98 (-29.77%)	00:02:38 Avg for View: 00:03:10 (-16.93%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)	
1. /politics/campaign-fraud	Organic Search	1,487 (87.63%)	64.09%	953 (66.64%)	61.26%	2.08	00:02:39	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	
2. /politics/campaign-fraud	Social	199 (11.73%)	71.36%	142 (12.91%)	65.33%	2.12	00:02:33	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	
3. /politics/campaign-fraud	Referral	11 (0.65%)	45.45%	5 (0.45%)	54.55%	2.91	00:02:11	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	

Show rows: 10 Go to: 1 1 - 3 of 3



SUMMARY

UNDERSTANDING HOW MOBILE USERS DIFFER FROM DESKTOP USERS HELPS news organizations be more informed when planning changes to content, design and navigation.

This guide covered the basics of mobile web audience metrics:

- Using the Mobile Overview report to see only sessions from mobile web users
- Viewing mobile web user trends over time
- Comparing mobile web traffic with all site traffic
- Analyzing basic metrics on audience type, traffic sources and site behavior for mobile web users

Any suggestions for future topics? We would love to hear from you! Please send your questions and comments to us at **media.impact@usc.edu**.



The Media Impact Project is a hub for collecting, developing and sharing approaches for measuring the impact of media. Based at the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, we seek to better understand the role that media plays in changing knowledge, attitudes and behavior among individuals and communities, large and small, around the world. For more information, please visit **www.mediaimpactproject.org**.



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