

Web Analytics



You've invested a lot of time (and perhaps money) into building a website for your church's Web ministry, and you want to know if your hard work is paying off. This is where Web analytics comes into play.

Regardless of who you choose to host your website, you should be able to generate or request analytics of your site. These are reports that reflect the number of visits to your site, the number and type of page views, the length of a visitor's session on your site, from which page or site they entered yours and where they go when they leave your site, etc. All of these analytics or traffic reports give you important clues that will help you to make ongoing improvements to your website so you are reaching your goals and meeting the needs of your target audiences.

Here are some basic definitions and explanations of the types of analytics you want to gather each month from the traffic to your website:

- **Hit**—A request for a file from the Web server. The number of hits received by a website is frequently cited to assert its popularity, but this number is extremely misleading and dramatically over-estimates popularity. A single webpage typically consists of multiple (often dozens) of discrete files, each of which is counted as a hit as the page is downloaded, so the number of hits is really an arbitrary number more reflective of the complexity of individual pages on the website than the website's actual popularity. The total number of visitors or page views provides a more realistic and accurate assessment of popularity.
- **Page view**—A request for a file whose type is defined as a page. A single page view may generate multiple hits as all the resources required to view the page (images, .js and .css files) are also requested from the Web server.
- **Visit / Session**—A series of requests from the same uniquely identified client with a set timeout, often 30 minutes. A visit contains one or more page views.
- **First Visit / First Session / New Visitor**—A visit from a visitor who has not made any previous visits.
- **Visitor / Unique Visitor / Unique User**—The uniquely identified client generating requests on the Web server or viewing pages within a defined time period (i.e. day, week or month). A unique visitor counts once within the timescale. Identification is made to the visitor's computer, not the person, usually via cookie and/or IP+User Agent. Thus the same person visiting from two different computers will count as two unique visitors.
- **Repeat Visitor**—A visitor that has made at least one previous visit. The period between the last and current visit is called visitor recency and is measured in days.
- **Bounce Rate**—The percentage of visits where the visitor enters and exits at the same page without visiting any other pages on the site in between. Also referred to as "Singletons."
- **% Exit**—The percentage of users who exit from a page.
- **Visibility Time**—The time a single page is viewed.

- **Session Duration**—Average amount of time that visitors spend on the site each time they visit.
- **Page View Duration / Time on Page**—Average amount of time that visitors spend on each page of the site.
- **Page Depth / Page Views per Session**—Page depth is the average number of page views a visitor consumes before ending a session. It is calculated by dividing total number of page views by total number of sessions and is also called “page views per session” or “PV/Session.”
- **Frequency / Session per Unique**—Frequency measures how often visitors come to a website. It is calculated by dividing the total number of sessions (or visits) by the total number of unique visitors.
- **Click Path**—The sequence of hyperlinks one or more website visitors follows on a given site.

Another way to generate traffic reports for your website or other Web presence (blog, FAC profile, etc.) is to use a free service like Google Analytics. In addition to understanding and using website analytics, you can improve your page ranking with search engines by learning more about [Search Engine Optimization \(SEO\)](#).

Learn more about website analytics:

- [Google Analytics](#)
- [Website Optimization Tool](#)
- [A Few Good Web Analytics Tools](#)