Google Definitions

Pageviews

This is the number of times users view a page that has the Google Analytics tracking code inserted. This covers all page views; so if a user refreshes the page, or navigates away from the page and returns, these are all counted as additional page views.

Unique Pageviews

The unique pageview number counts all the times the page was viewed in an individual session as a single event; so whether a visitor viewed the page once in their visit or five times, the number of unique pageviews will be recorded as just one.

Time on Page

Time on page is measured by subtracting the time a visitor hit a page from the time they hit the next page. (e.g. If they hit Page 1 at 12:00 and hit Page 2 at 12:03, time on Page 1 is three minutes.) This means that the time on page for the last page in a visit is always zero because Google Analytics doesn't track pages being closed.

Time on Site

This is the sum of the time on page for all pageviews in a visit. Or, more accurately, it is the difference between the time they viewed the first page and last page in a visit. Note that viewing pages in different tabs doesn't affect this. Google Analytics simply sees a string of pages being viewed in chronological order, without any reference to multiple tabs or windows.

Visits

Visits are the individual periods of time (also known as "sessions") that visitors spend on your site. A visit is ended either after 30 minutes of inactivity or if the user leaves your site for more than 30 minutes (if a user leaves your site and returns *within* 30 minutes, this is counted as part of the original visit).

Unique Visitors

When a user visits your site for the first time, a new visit and unique visitor are both recorded. If the same user returns to the site after their initial visit, only a new visit is added.

Google Analytics is able to recognise whether a user has been to the site before through the use of cookies. This means that if a user deletes their cookies, or accesses the site through a different browser or machine, then they may be mistakenly added as a new unique visitor; for this reason Google Analytics tends to place more prominence on the visits data.

New vs. Returning Visitors

New visitors are those users that have not visited your site before the time period specified, while returning visitors will have made at least one visit to at least one page on your site previously. This is again determined by whether Google Analytics can detect cookies, which indicate previous visits. If Google cannot detect a cookie one will be set for future recording, unless the user has disabled cookies in their personal browser preferences.
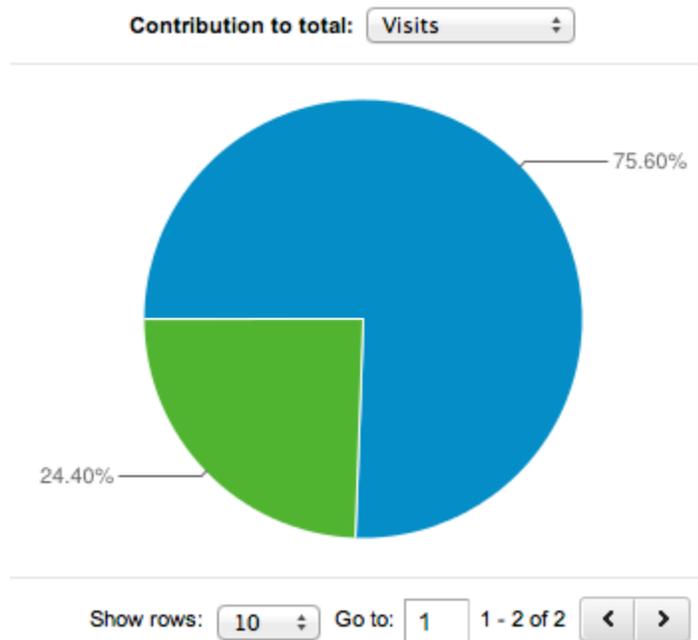
Pie chart showing breakdown of new vs. returning visitors

Landing Page

The page your user begins their visit to your site on; quite simply, how they 'land' on your site.

Bounce Rate

Bounce rate is given as a percentage, and represents the number of visits when users leave your site after just one page; regardless of how they got to your site or how long they stayed on that page.

Traffic Sources: Direct vs. Referral

Traffic sources show you how users got to your site, and in Google Analytics are split into direct and referral traffic.

Direct traffic is made up of visitors that type a URL directly into the address bar, select an auto-complete option when typing the URL, or click on a bookmark to get to your site (however, instances when Google Analytics cannot determine a source also get automatically assigned as direct).

Referral traffic is when a user has landed on your site by clicking on a link from somewhere else; this could be another site, a social media profile, or a search engine.

Search Traffic: Organic vs. Paid

Google Analytics also lets you see what percentage of your traffic came from search engines, and this is further broken down into organic and paid search.

Organic search shows the users who came to your site by clicking on the organic links on the search engine results page (SERP); these results appear below that adverts and are determined by how well the page is optimised for search engines.

The paid search results show users who clicked on one of your paid search engine adverts; these typically appear at the top and side of the SERPs and are managed via an advertising account such as Google AdWords or Bing Ads.

Keyword

For both organic and paid search channels, Google Analytics records the keyword: the word or phrase a user entered into the search box that led them to click on one of your links.

Keyword: (not provided)

If a user is searching via Google Secure Search over SSL (ie. using https://www.google.com instead of http://www.google.com), their keywords are not passed on to your Google Analytics account; instead, a (not provided) result is displayed. Some browsers, such as FireFox, have the https:// version of Google set as a default, and Google itself caused controversy last year when it revealed that users signed in to a Google account will also be automatically redirected to this URL. It's worth noting that keywords are still provided when users click on paid search results, even if they are using the secure search (a move that has led some commentators to accuse Google of bias towards those clients who advertise with them).