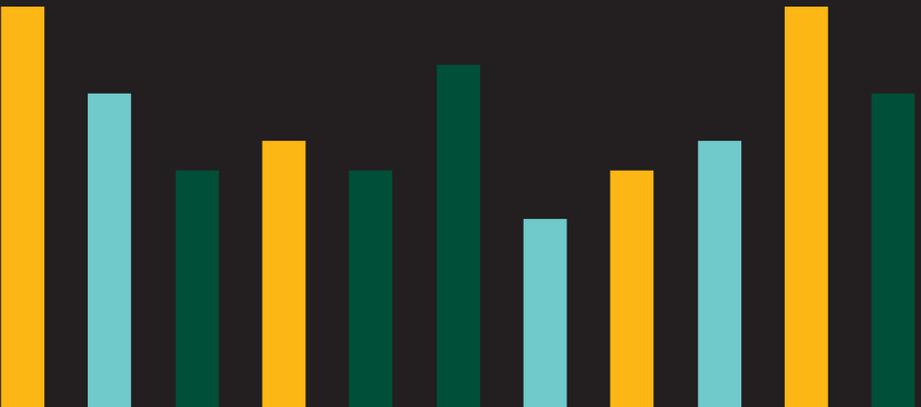


Measuring Data Use:

An Analysis of Data Portal Web Traffic

December 2018



What are website analytics?

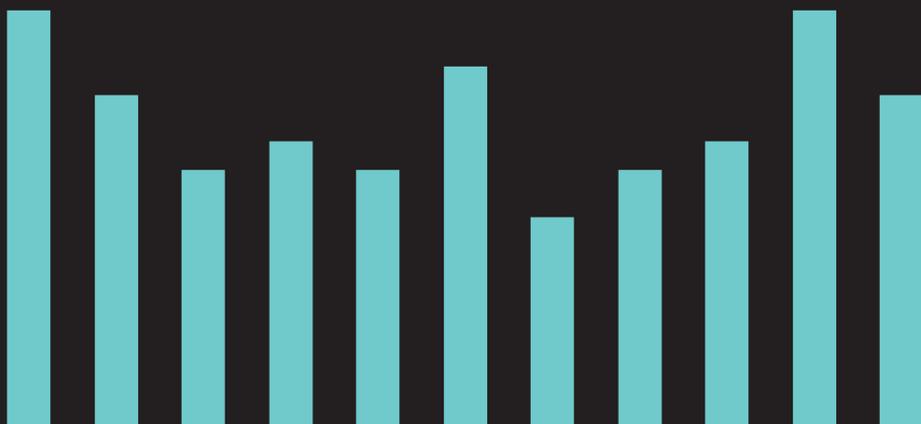
Website analytics are the measurement of traffic and user behavior online. They tell us what users are doing on websites and how they navigate and access content.

Why should National Statistical Offices (NSOs) care about website analytics?

Analytics are integral part of how leading businesses, civil society organizations and governments around the world communicate effectively online. NSOs can and should use web analytics to ensure that access to data is streamlined and easy.

How can the *Measuring Data Use* report improve access to data?

We conducted this study to help NSOs and their partners understand the benefits of web analytics and their ability to improve data accessibility and dissemination online. This report provides specific and actionable recommendations that can be implemented by web managers to improve the accessibility of online data for users.



More information about the study

The study was made possible by funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and is a collaboration between Open Data Watch, Aid-Data at William & Mary, and PARIS21. It is part of a broader project to increase the impact of official statistics and serves as a companion to *Counting on Statistics: What can data producers and donors do differently to increase use?*

- Seven NSOs were invited to participate to analyze web traffic on their principal websites or data portals using Google Analytics.
- Participants included low- or middle-income countries from South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia and differed in size and in their level of economic development.
- The ten websites and data portals included in the study differed in size, content, and in the effectiveness of their installed web analytics packages.
- The study relied on web analytics experts at Forum One, a digital marketing company based in Alexandria, Virginia USA.



What did the study reveal about web traffic?

- NSO websites receive a higher volume of web traffic than dedicated data portals, but visitors to data portals make more in-depth use of them.
- Search engines drive the most traffic to websites, while direct referrals drive most traffic to data portals.
- Web traffic decreased during December and January due to holidays, while increases in traffic throughout the year likely correspond to the release of key data.
- Pages with economic statistics were most frequently visited.
- Domestic users are the source of the greatest number of site visits.

The websites and data portals we studied are not data graveyards.

The study uncovered evidence that users are seeking, finding, and using a wide variety of statistical data. This confirms that these websites and data portals play a vital role in the dissemination of data to the public.

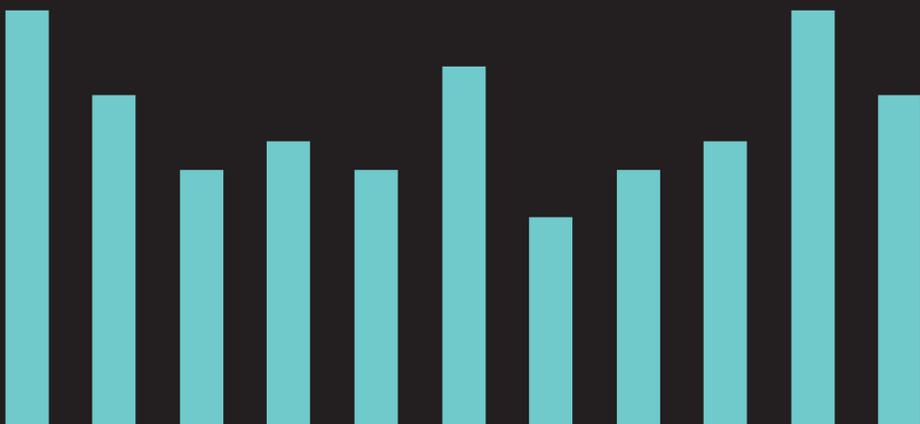


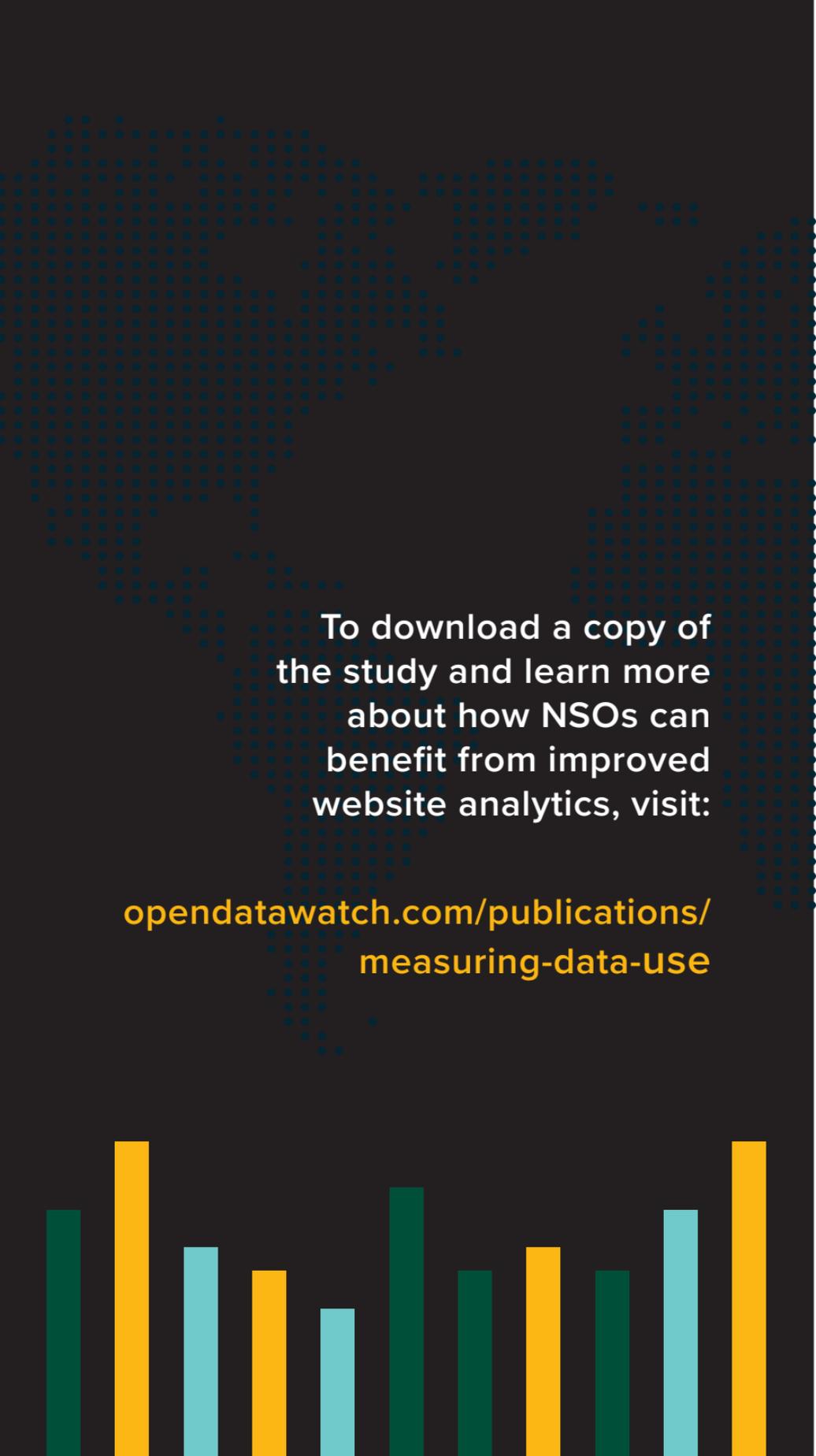
NSOs should make use of available tools for measuring, collecting, analyzing, and reporting data about the use of their websites. Proper installation of a web analytics package is necessary for collecting relevant and accurate data.

Common errors in implementing Google Analytics that may also be applicable to other packages include:

- URL and page names that are labeled poorly and lack a canonical tag.
- Bot traffic is not effectively filtered.
- Data download tracking is not implemented.
- Analytics code is not included on all pages.
- Cross domain tracking may be disabled.

Detailed recommendations can be found in the full report and are categorized by the level of effort they require to implement. We encourage all NSOs to adopt as many of these recommendations as possible.





To download a copy of
the study and learn more
about how NSOs can
benefit from improved
website analytics, visit:

[opendatawatch.com/publications/
measuring-data-use](https://opendatawatch.com/publications/measuring-data-use)

