

2020 Higher Education Website Benchmarks

Summary

- ☑ Total website traffic dropped by 27% in 2020. Search traffic took a 30% hit, led by a significant loss of Google traffic. Social media traffic also declined, but paid traffic increased by 12%.
- ☑ Digital marketing not only increased in volume, but there was also a marginal increase in the quality as well. The bounce rate dropped slightly and new sessions increased and users engaged with multiple pages during those sessions. The traffic did not perform as well as other sources though, so there is still room for improvement.
- ☑ Facebook still provides the highest volume of traffic to higher ed websites, but the highest quality comes from Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.
- ☑ Two-year public or private colleges have the best Google Ads performance. Four-year for-profit colleges both spend the most and have the lowest-performing Google Ads.

Results



Site Metrics

Benchmarking Type	2020 Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session	Average Page Load (s)
2-year for-profit	579,718	76%	73	1.3	70%	1.8	7
2-year public or private	947,748	36%	160	2.7	37%	2.5	4
4-year for-profit	2,449,350	59%	99	1.7	55%	1.9	5
4-year private: Small	318,055	61%	113	1.6	54%	2.4	5
4-year private: Mid-sized	861,233	52%	131	1.9	56%	2.4	4
4-year private: Large	2,440,479	50%	142	2.0	51%	2.4	4
4-year public: Small	926,098	38%	146	2.4	58%	2.3	4
4-year public: Mid-sized	3,230,562	33%	166	2.8	49%	2.4	3
4-year public: Large	11,719,769	43%	159	2.3	49%	2.6	4
Graduate only	696,046	60%	144	1.6	56%	2.4	6
Medians	1,888,522	50%	138	2.0	52%	2.4	4



Social Media

Social Network	2020 Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
Facebook	41,359	65%	64	1.3	74%	1.6
Instagram	1,495	63%	86	1.3	57%	2.1
Instagram Stories	357	86%	39	1.0	65%	1.7
LinkedIn	3,698	59%	70	1.3	67%	1.8
Pinterest	245	81%	34	1.1	72%	1.5
Reddit	707	80%	38	1.1	75%	1.6
Sina Weibo	4	100%	12	1.0	88%	1.4
Tumblr	10	98%	0	1.0	100%	1.0
Twitter	6,513	51%	99	1.5	64%	1.9
YouTube	407	48%	141	1.5	51%	2.5
Medians	7,047	66%	69	1.2	65%	1.8



Search Sources

Search Source	2020 Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
ask	281	45%	163	1.8	38%	3.0
baidu	2,270	88%	96	1.1	68%	2.0
bing	42,174	38%	167	2.2	41%	2.8
duckduckgo	4,131	56%	153	1.6	44%	2.8
ecosia.org	3,143	30%	173	2.6	41%	3.0
google	919,907	44%	159	2.0	48%	2.6
naver	90	87%	101	1.1	51%	2.8
so.com	37	91%	39	1.0	67%	1.7
sogou	112	99%	7	1.0	95%	1.1
yahoo	16,174	42%	174	2.0	41%	2.9
yandex	32	83%	88	1.1	58%	2.2
Medians	97,460	57%	145	1.6	49%	2.6



Paid Traffic

Search Source	2020 Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
ask	281	45%	163	1.8	38%	3.0
baidu	2,270	88%	96	1.1	68%	2.0
bing	42,174	38%	167	2.2	41%	2.8
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so.com	37	91%	39	1.0	67%	1.7
sogou	112	99%	7	1.0	95%	1.1
yahoo	16,174	42%	174	2.0	41%	2.9
yandex	32	83%	88	1.1	58%	2.2
Medians	97,460	57%	145	1.6	49%	2.6



Google Ads Traffic

Benchmarking Type	2020 Spend	CPC	Clicks	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
2-year for-profit	\$467,845	\$3.20	114,923	72%	42	75%	1.5
2-year public or private	\$125,193	\$0.64	127,427	46%	78	51%	2.3
4-year for-profit	\$6,581,589	\$4.91	460,750	74%	40	79%	1.4
4-year private: Small	\$37,681	\$2.58	43,580	80%	56	64%	2.1
4-year private: Mid-sized	\$34,899	\$1.45	32,855	71%	51	73%	1.8
4-year private: Large	\$68,304	\$1.33	69,305	72%	58	70%	1.8
4-year public: Small	\$45,982	\$2.05	28,617	58%	72	67%	1.9
4-year public: Mid-sized	\$109,457	\$0.80	119,040	58%	84	55%	1.9
4-year public: Large	\$45,268	\$1.07	93,450	60%	53	67%	1.9
Graduate only	\$103,258	\$2.74	34,773	68%	87	64%	2.1
Medians	\$57,340	\$1.47	52,107	70%	56	70%	1.9

Methodology

These benchmarks are based upon website traffic data for the 2020 calendar year aggregated across 279 higher ed institutions. All institutions included use Google Analytics to track and report on their website traffic, and all granted Niche read-only access to their Google Analytics. In order to calculate industry benchmarks for key traffic metrics, the data across all institutions was pulled via the Google Analytics API and the median value among all institutions was calculated for each metric.

The key traffic metrics benchmarked are:

- Total Sessions
- Percent New Sessions
- Bounce Rate
- Average Session Duration
- Pageviews per Session
- Sessions per User
- Average Page Load Time

Benchmarks were determined for traffic on a site-wide level, as well as for traffic across various search engines, social networks, and paid sources. Not all institutions had traffic from every source. The benchmark for traffic from a specific source is the median among all schools with traffic from that source.

Additionally, for those with Google Ads connected Niche benchmarked:

- 2020 Ad spend
- CPC
- Clicks