2010 Website Benchmarks Report

An Analysis of 43 Environmental Organizations' Website Statistics

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Executive Summary

"How much website traffic is normal?"

As online communications consultants, this is a question we hear all the time from our nonprofit clients. While it's true that the answer depends on an organization's online strategy, it's an unfortunate fact that little research exists to provide context for what's "average" or "normal" web traffic, particularly for small to midsize nonprofit organizations. Similarly, organizations often wonder "How much time and energy should we be spending on website content?" but lack any useful data about how much similar groups are investing in their sites.

This study attempts to fill that gap. We worked with 43 Groundwire clients, all small to midsize environmental organizations, who allowed us access to their website statistics and completed a brief survey about their online publishing behaviors.

This study allows us to begin painting a picture of how small to midsize environmental groups are doing with their websites. We offer benchmarks for common website statistics, as well as information about how much time and energy organizations are investing in their websites -- and how much they *should* be investing. We also provide some insight into the correlations between organizational behaviors and website traffic outcomes which we believe will be useful to organizations that wish to assess and improve their website performance.

Key Findings

Most of our aggregate findings are pretty intuitive. Those organizations with the highest website traffic tended to be the organizations making the most effort and investment in their web presence. However, instructive details emerged about average number of hours invested in website updates and content generation, range of traffic referrals from Facebook, mobile browser traffic percentages, and the correlations between membership or staff size, overall budget and website performance.

Here's what we found:

The median group in our study received about 40,000 visits in the last year. However, the range varies widely, with some groups receiving several million visits per year, and some receiving under 10,000 per year.

40,000
Median website visits per year

The typical website visitor looks at about three pages per visit, and the typical visit lasts between two and three minutes. These numbers were consistent across all the groups in our study.

2.95
Median pages per visit

About 40% of visitors to a typical group's home page "bounce" away without exploring further. For most groups, this percentage ranged between 40% and 50%. This is a tough number to interpret, because a "good" result can vary depending on the nature of your site. However, we think that for a home page, a declining bounce rate is typically better than one that is increasing, since it tends to indicate stronger engagement with content. A bounce rate significantly over 50% may indicate a lack of engaging, relevant website content.

40%
Homepage bounce rate

Search engines refer about 55% of the visits to a typical group's website. Many sites in our study receive a great deal of traffic originating from search engine queries. This highlights the importance of ensuring that websites and their content are

55%
Visits referred by search engines

appropriately constructed for search engine visibility. Fortunately, modern content management systems like Plone, which Groundwire uses on all of its sites, have the common best practices for this built-in automatically.

About one third of the visits to a typical group's website are from repeat visitors. We found that this percentage varies quite widely among groups, and probably indicates whether a group is providing ongoing value to folks via its online presence. However, we found only a modest correlation between groups spending more time and energy on their sites and a greater percentage of repeat visitors.

32.67%
Median repeat visitors

Mobile phones (such as the iPhone) still don't account for much traffic on most sites. We found that the typical site in our study is receiving about 1% of its visits from mobile browsers. None of these sites have made big investments in mobile optimization or in outreach to mobile users.

1%
Median visits from mobile phone browsers

Organizational Behaviors & Attitudes

Groups think their websites are important. Over half of the groups we surveyed feel that their website is extremely or very important in their organization's work. Another 40% felt it was moderately important. Nobody felt that their website plays only a minor role in their work.

The typical organization in our study updates their website about once a week, and spends about 8.5 person-hours per week creating and editing website content. As one might expect, we see some groups, particularly think-tank and media organizations, making very big investments in web content—over 50 person-hours per week. Most others were making far more modest investments.

8.5
Median staff hours per week spent on website content

Web traffic correlates to the amount of time a group invests in their site and to the number of members/supporters that a group has. We saw positive correlations between effort invested/frequency of website updates and increased web traffic, and believe there is a positive feedback loop at work here. We also saw a positive correlation between how much web traffic a group receives and how many members/supporters a group has. Again, we

believe that causality flows both ways here—groups with larger supporter bases get more traffic, those same groups tend to have more resources to invest in content creation, and a robust web presence plays a role in retaining and attracting members/supporters .

Organizations getting above-average traffic invest usually at least one hour per week per full-time staffer or per $100K budget creating content for their website. When we looked at the amount of effort groups report spending on their site *per staff FTE and/or budget*, we found that most of the groups in our study who are experiencing average or above-average levels of web traffic are investing at least one hour per week per staff FTE or per $100K of organizational budget creating, editing or updating website content. Only a few groups were spending more than 3 hours per FTE/$100K budget per week, and these groups tend to be either extremely small (<3 staff) or to be media-centric organizations.

Nearly half the groups in our survey pool have a blog, and many are blogging regularly. 45% of the groups in our study have an organizational blog. About half of these groups update their blogs at least weekly, and the other half update them a few times a month or less. We found that blogging activity correlates moderately with several indicators of website performance.

45%
Organizations with blogs

Website Benchmark Results

Our results are broken out into the following sections:

1. **"Who Was in the Study?"**—a brief summary of the demographic characteristics of the organizations in our study. This section will help you understand the kinds of organizations whose website statistics we're reporting on, and give you the information you need to figure out how similar these groups are to yours.

2. **Website Statistics**—this section summarizes the "hard numbers" we gathered from organization's Google Analytics accounts. Here, you'll learn how much traffic the websites in our study received, and other key analytics metrics such as average time on site, repeat vs. new visitors, referrals from search engines and more.

3. **Organization Online Behaviors**—here we present the results from a brief survey we administered to all study participants. In this section, you'll learn how important groups think their websites are, how frequently organizations are updating their sites and how much time and effort groups are investing in their websites.

4. **Segmentation by Geographical Scope**—in this section, we segment our analytics and online behaviors data by the geographical scope of the organization (local, statewide and regional) in order to tease out any differences between organizations working at different scales.

5. **Correlations**—here we look at the statistical correlations between website analytics, organizational demographics and organizational behaviors. This section will help you understand which metrics may be related and why.

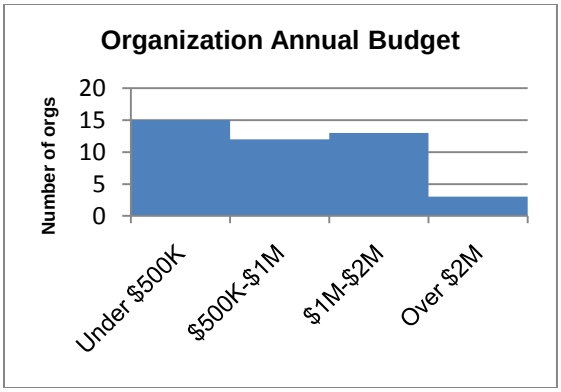
6. **"Top 10 vs. Everyone Else"**—in this last section, we segment our study pool into two groups: the Top 10 organizations by total web traffic and "everyone else." We look at how these two groups' web analytics and online behaviors are similar and different in order to gain a greater understanding of how higher-traffic groups are achieving their results.

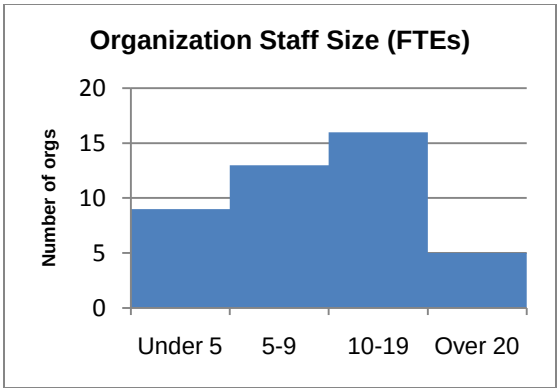
Who was in the study?

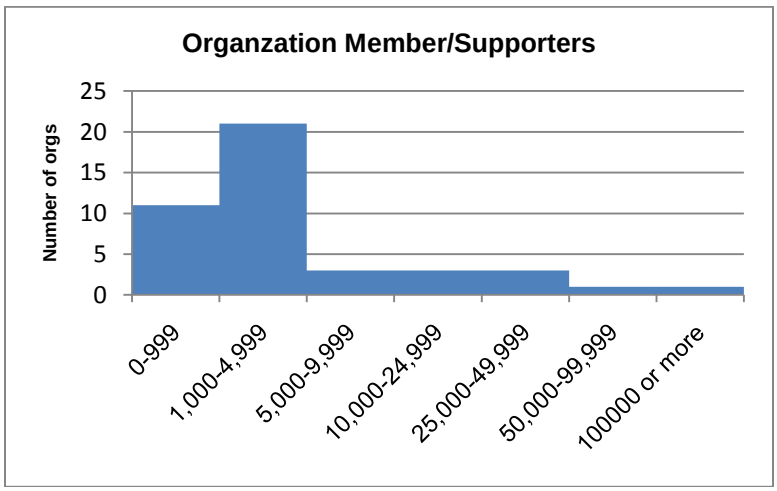
This study focused on the universe of Groundwire's website consulting clients, who are mainly small-to-midsized environmental organizations. We approached about 70 organizations via email; 43 responded and are included in this dataset.

Organization Size

Organizations in our study varied in size, but were generally small to midsized groups with modest membership/supporter bases, annual budgets around $800,000, and 8-10 FTE staff.

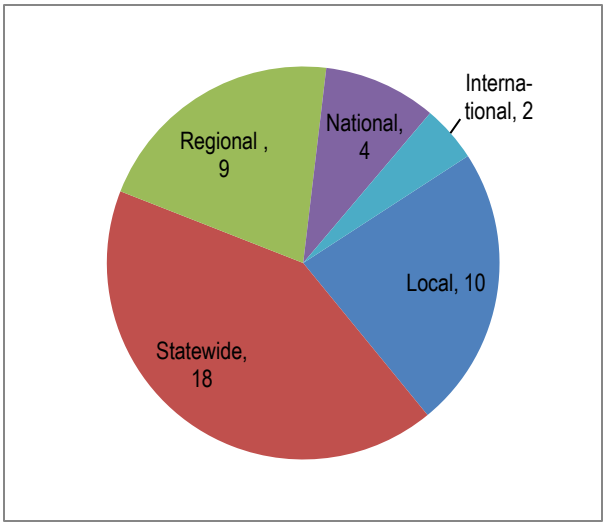






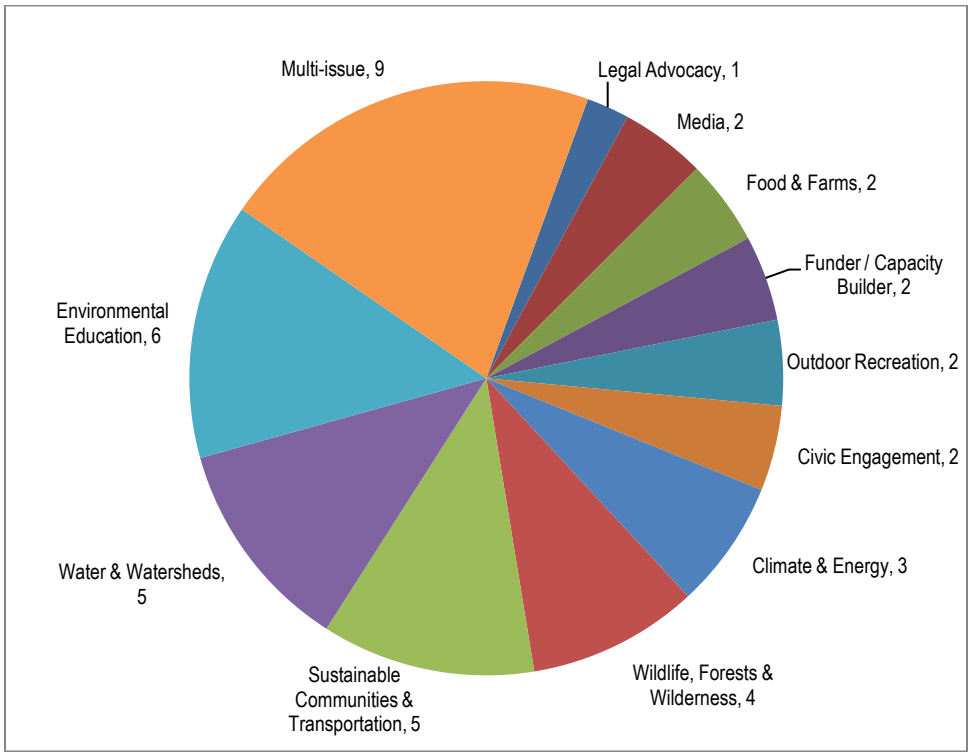
Geographic Scope

Organizations in our study are working at a variety of scales, but the majority are local, state or regional.



Issue Focus

Organizations in our study were spread across a wide range of environmental issues, including climate/energy, wilderness & forests, water & watersheds, public health and the environment, sustainable communities, outdoor recreation and more.



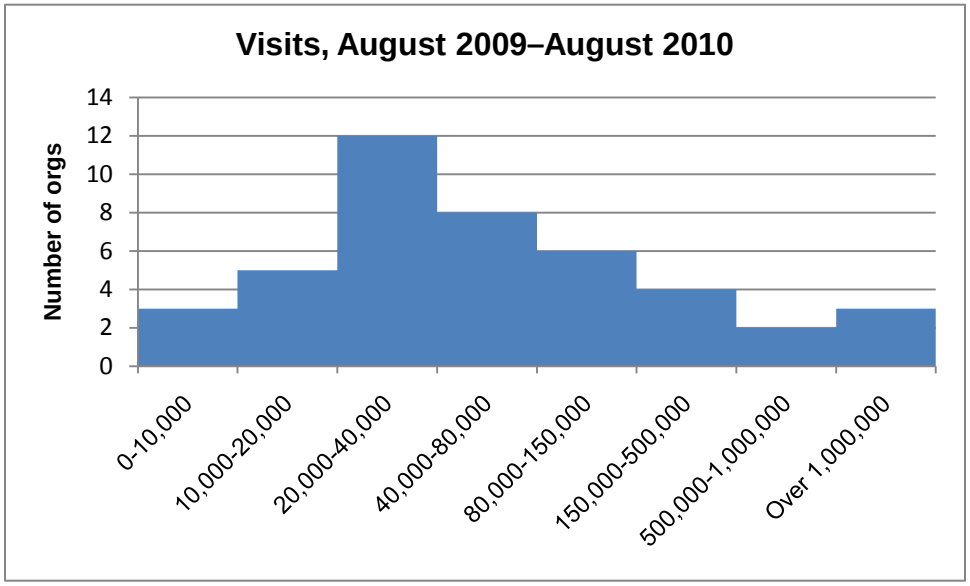
Website Statistics

We gathered high-level data from Google Analytics for each of the sites in our study group. In this section of our report, we'll summarize the results and offer some interpretation for each statistic. The site statistics we gathered were:

- Visits, August 2009–August 2010
- Visits, August 2008– August 2009
- Year over Year Growth
- Page Views, August 2009– August 2010
- Visitors, August 2009– August 2010
- Average Page Views per Visit
- Average Time Per Visit
- Bounce Rate for Home Page
- Percentage of Visits Referred by Bing, Google and Yahoo
- Percentage of Visits Referred by Facebook
- Number of Visits Referred by Facebook
- Percentage of Repeat Visitors
- Percentage of Visits from Mobile Browsers
- Percentage of Visits Using Internet Explorer 6

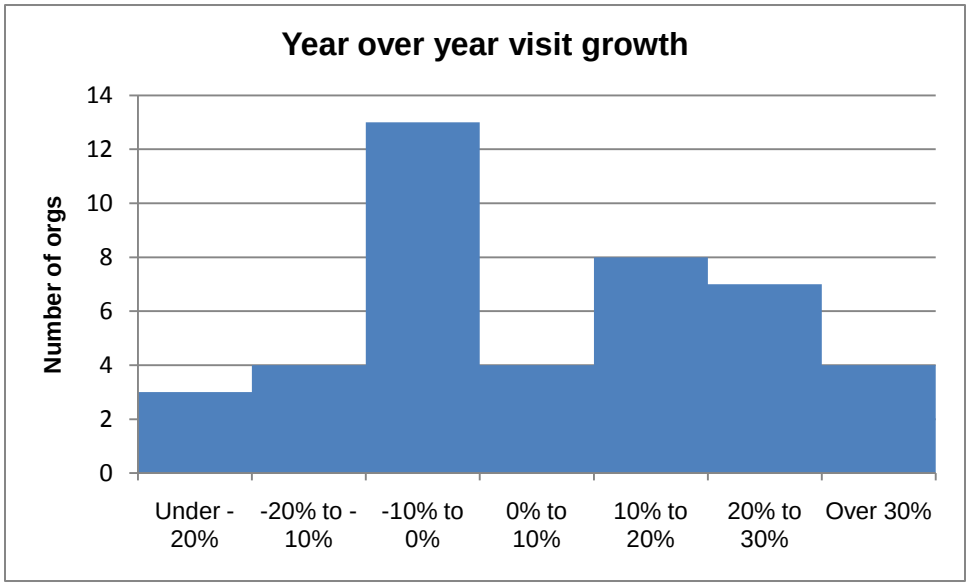
	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits, August 2009–August 2010	41,838	202,418	4,747 - 2,175,807

The average is skewed high by a few very high volume sites, typically belonging to organizations focused on media publishing. These sites are getting roughly 10 - 100x more traffic than a "typical" site (500,000 – 2.2 million visits per year). The rest of the sites tended to fall in the range of 20,000 – 150,000 visits per year.



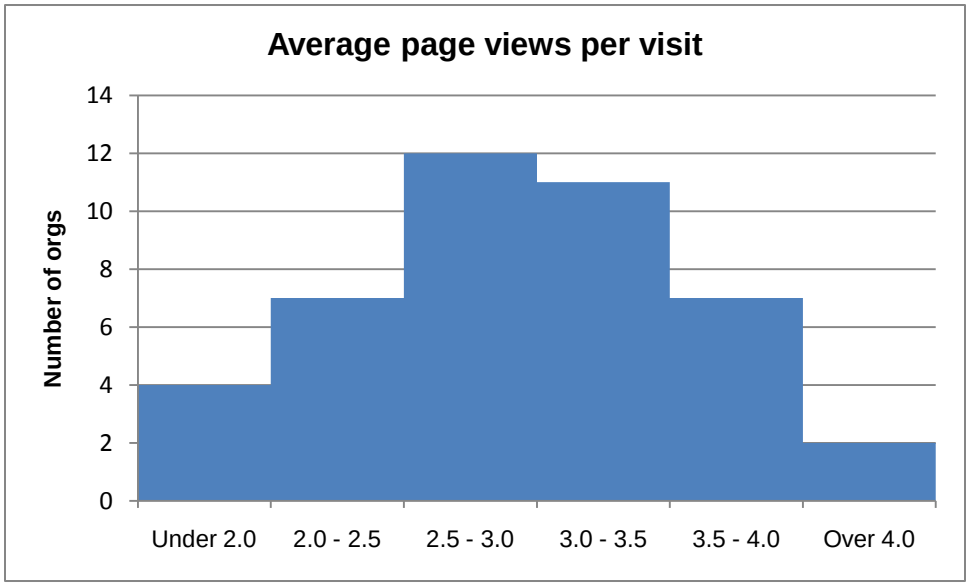
	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits, August 2009–August 2009	43,003	204,715	3,783 - 3,268,581
Year over Year Growth in Visits	-2.71%	-1.12%	-33.43% to +72.88%

Median traffic was down a fraction, but individual results varied widely. Overall, the median amount of traffic declined slightly, from 43,000 visits per year to just under 42,000 visits per year. However, results for individual groups varied widely, with 23 groups experiencing traffic growth and 13 seeing declines. We didn't have sufficient data for 7 groups to do consistent year-over-year comparisons.



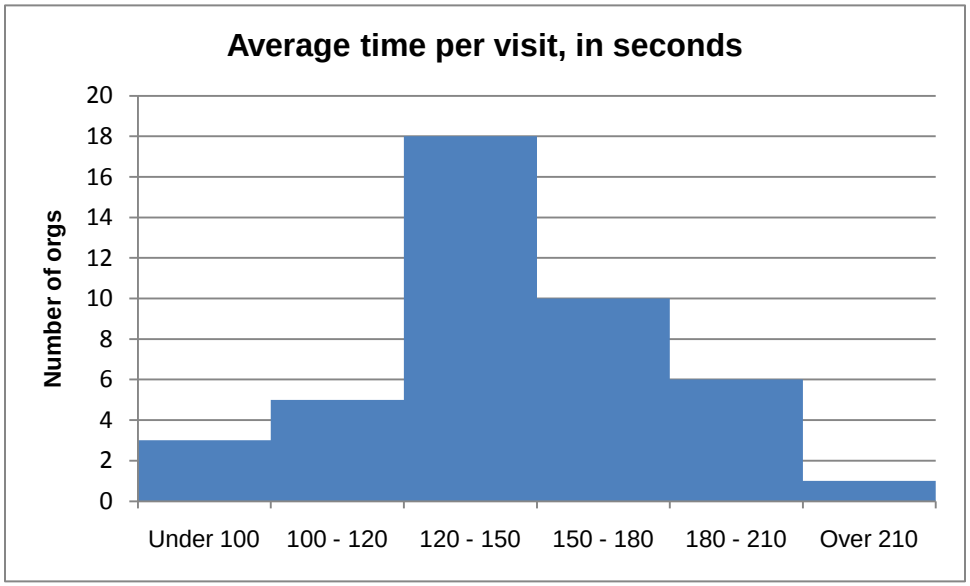
	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Page Views, August 2009–August 2010	139,215	552,636	16,409 - 8,312,946
Average Page Views per Visit	2.95	2.97	1.58- 5.60

These results were pretty consistent across all of the organizations we studied—only 4 organizations are seeing under 2 pages per visitor, and only 9 (less than 25% of our cohort) are seeing more than 3.5 pages per visit. Interestingly, the highest-traffic sites in our study tended to have fewer pages per visit than lower-traffic sites, with one major exception, belonging to an organization that offers a very compelling information service based on an extensive database.



	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Average Time Per Visit (seconds)	145	145	65 - 285

Average time per visit, at just over 2 minutes per visit, was very consistent across all of the sites we studied. We only saw 8 sites with average visit durations under 2 minutes, and 7 sites with average visits longer 3 minutes.

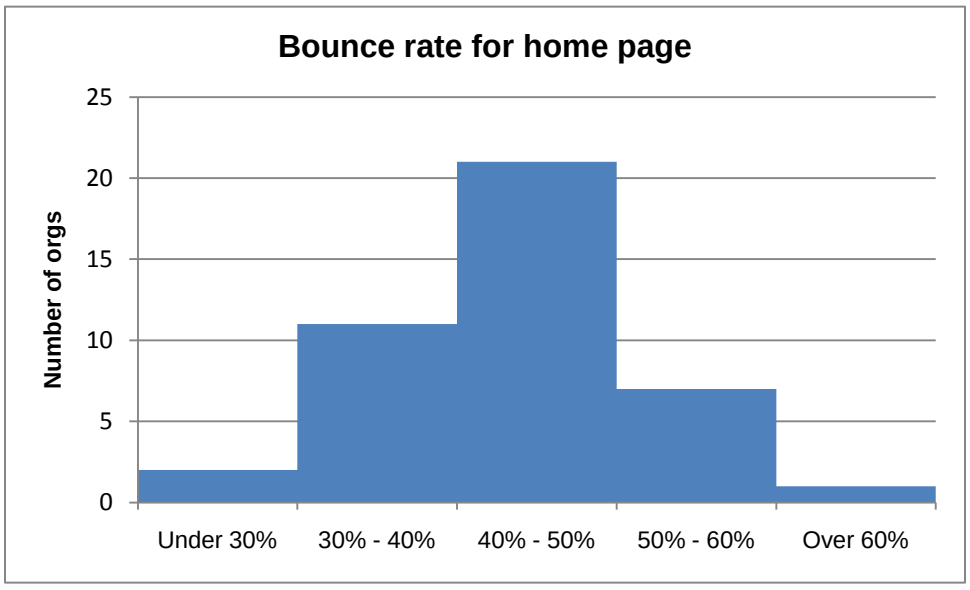


	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Bounce Rate for Home Page	42.71%	43.64%	26.41% - 79.08%

Homepage bounce rate measures the percentage of visitors that visit the homepage and then "bounce" away without exploring deeper. Lower homepage bounce rates are typically better, since a lower rate indicates that the homepage is successfully encouraging folks to explore deeper into the site, or that content within the site is drawing direct visitors via search engines or other referrals.

The sites we studied clustered pretty tightly between 40% and 50% bounce rates, with only 8 sites under 35% and 15 sites with bounce rates over 55%. Interestingly, the highest traffic site in our study also had the highest home page bounce rate, largely because it is a media site that showcases its multimedia content on its home page. Most visitors get to the home page, watch the video and leave.

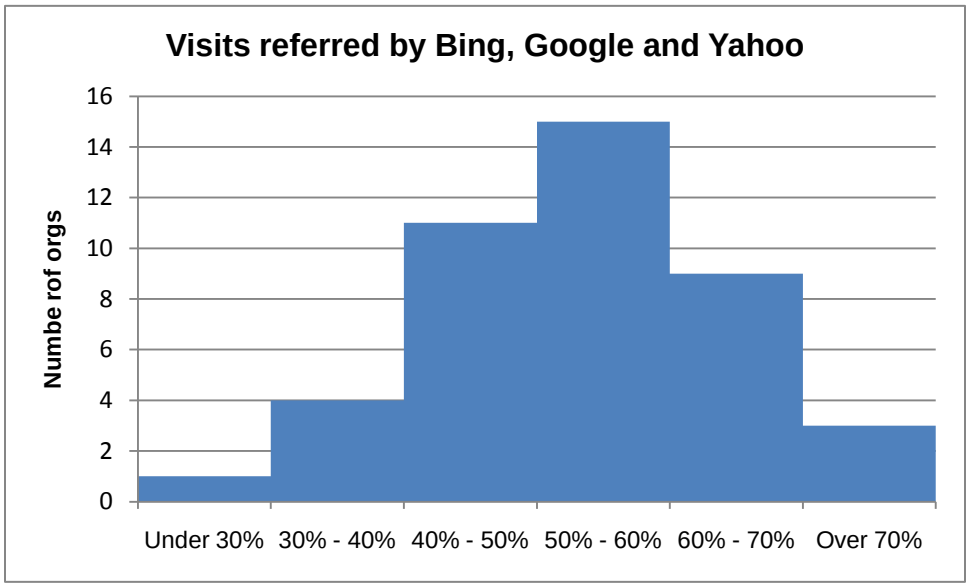
We believe that the absolute home page bounce rate for an organization is less important than its trend over time (that is, a declining rate is good!). However, if your home page bounce rate is significantly higher than 50%, that probably warrants analysis.



	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits Referred by Bing, Google and Yahoo	55.46%	53.72%	24.21% - 80.27%

Search engines are a huge source of traffic for most sites. The metric "Visits Referred by Bing, Google and Yahoo" measures how much traffic to each site is originating from search results in the "Big 3" search engines. (Other search engines generate negligible traffic.) The typical site in our study receives over half its visits from people who click on a link in search results. 12 groups are getting over 60% of their visits from search engines, and only 5 groups are getting fewer than 40% of their visits from search.

Though the groups getting the most traffic from search tend to be fairly average in total traffic, all but one of the highest-traffic sites get below-average percentages of traffic from search. This is likely because these high-traffic sites are actively driving traffic to their sites through email and other sources, and thus "passive" search referrals account for a smaller proportion of their traffic.

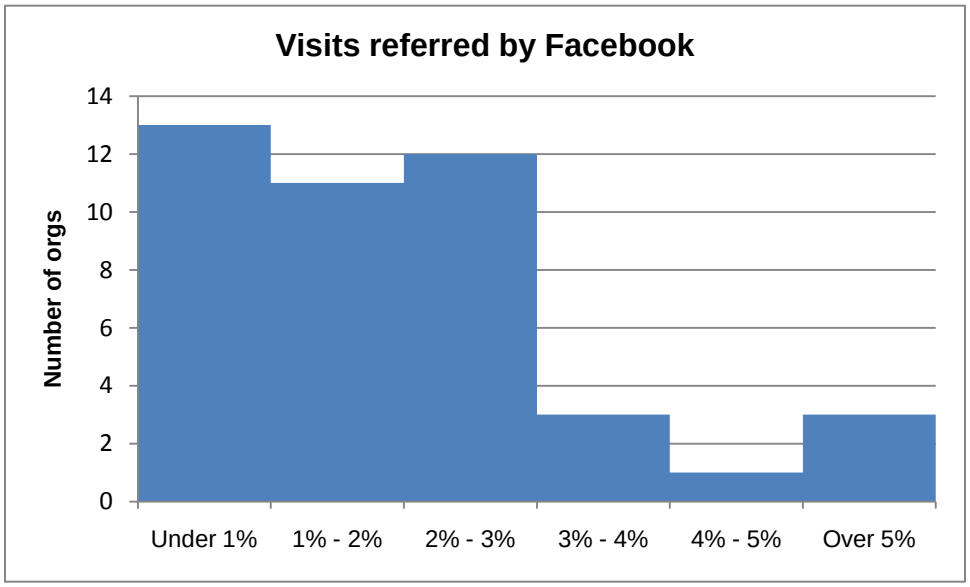


	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits Referred by Facebook	1.38%	1.95%	.13% - 10.27%

Facebook is a significant source of referral traffic for a few groups. While the median number of visits from Facebook was quite low, at 496 per year, we saw that some groups are getting significant amounts of traffic from Facebook in both absolute and relative terms.

- Seven organizations in our study are getting more than 3% of their web traffic referred from links shared on Facebook, with one group seeing over 10% of its traffic originating from Facebook.
- Five organizations received over 5,000 visits in the past year from Facebook.

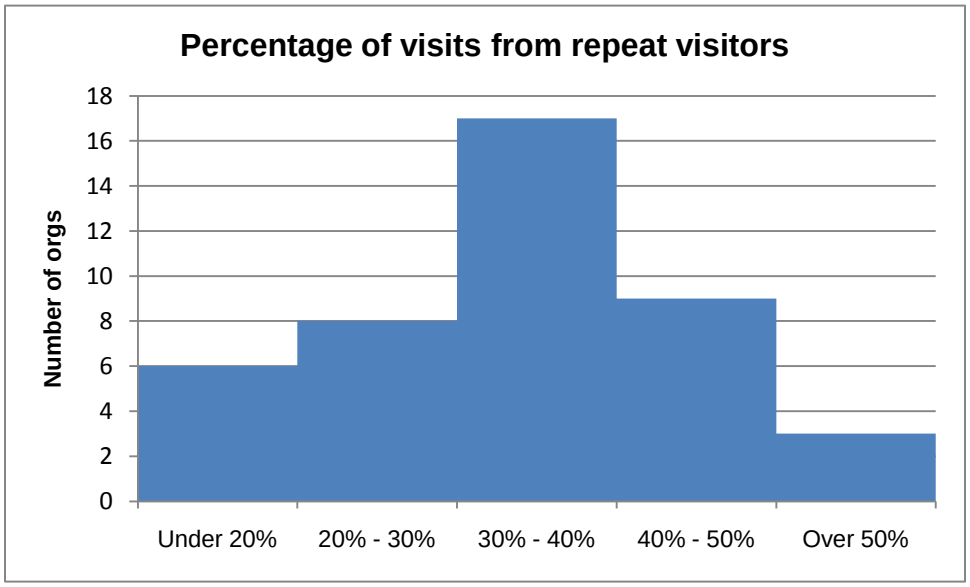
Anecdotally, we've seen huge growth for groups in Facebook referral traffic over the past year, suggesting that Facebook is becoming a significant source of traffic for those groups that have successfully invested in building up an active follower/fan base on Facebook.



	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Repeat Visitors	32.67%	33.98%	12.63% - 53.64%

This stat tracks whether a visitor has been to the site before, based on Google Analytics' cookies. There's a fairly wide range. A "good" result probably depends on your overall online strategy: does your theory of change revolve around consistently serving and engaging repeat visitors on your website, or are you happy to get people there once and hope that some "convert" by giving you permission to communicate more directly?

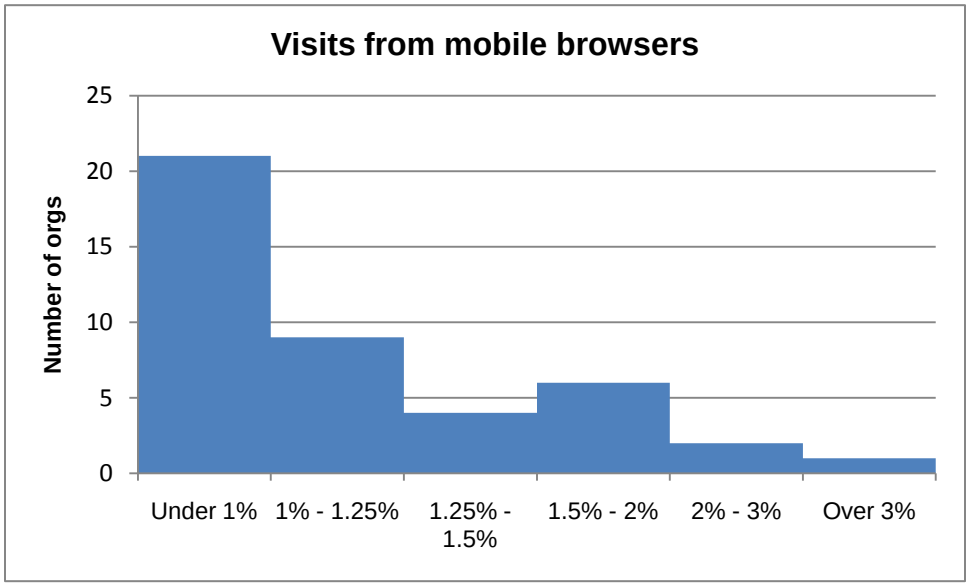
We saw a pretty even bell curve here, with most groups clustering in the 30% - 40% range. Groups with larger percentages of visitors being referred by search engines tended to have fewer repeat visitors. Groups with larger membership bases tended to have more repeat visitors, as did groups with more visitors referred by Facebook. We found a modest correlation between groups spending more time and energy on their sites and a greater percentage of repeat visitors.



	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits from Mobile Browsers	1.00%	1.14%	.36%- 3.39%

The typical organization in our study is not seeing a significant amount of traffic from smartphones yet. This is slightly under industry averages[1] showing 2.5% - 3% overall mobile browser market share, but given the small sample size, it's hard to read much into this discrepancy.

This is a good number to keep an eye on for long-term trends that could help you decide when to invest in making sure your site looks great on mobile devices. Many sites already do, if they are built with a solid content management system.



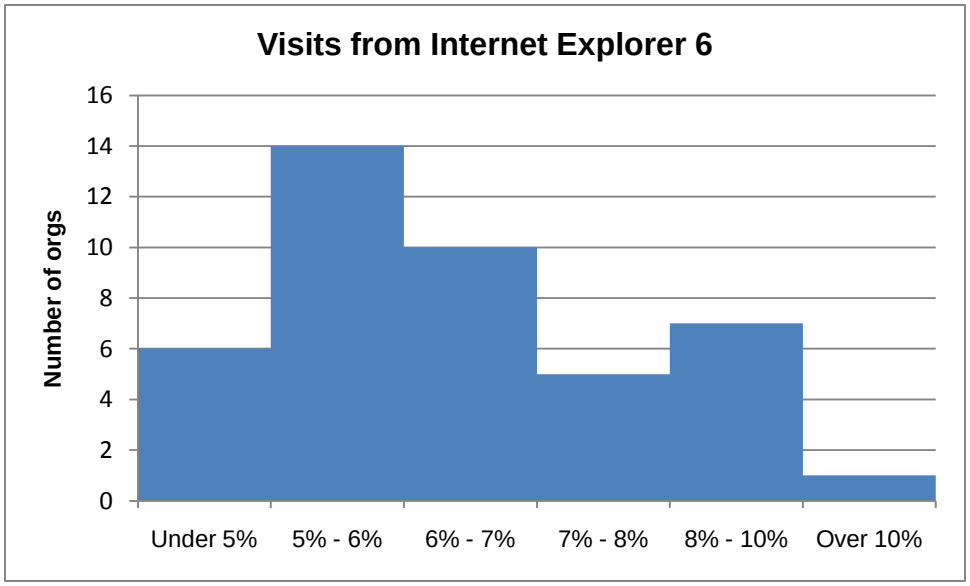
[1] http://gs.statcounter.com/#mobile_vs_desktop-na-monthly-200908-201008-bar

	Median	*Average*	*Range*
Visits from Internet Explorer 6	6.43%	6.54%	4.13% - 13.68%

Internet Explorer 6 (IE6) is the most out-of-date web browser still in wide use, and its lack of support for standard web coding practices forces organizations to spend scarce time and money working around its quirks. Many organizations wonder when IE6 will have a small enough market share that it can be ignored.

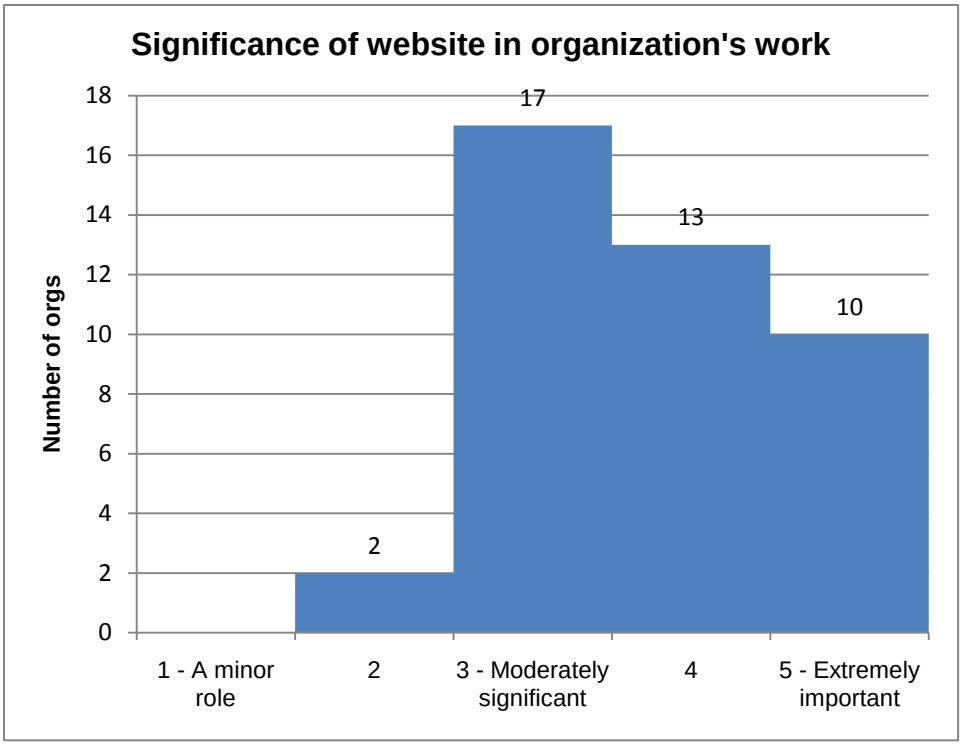
The typical site in our study group saw about 6.5% of its visits coming from users using IE6. We saw only one site with over 10% of folks using IE6, which we think is a strange outlier. This aligns fairly well with the overall market share of Internet Explorer, which as of August 2010 was at about 6.7%, down from 10.2% in January 2010.

If you're seeing similar stats on your site, you can probably stop worrying about requiring your web designers to spend extra time and money to make sure your site is pixel-perfect in IE6.

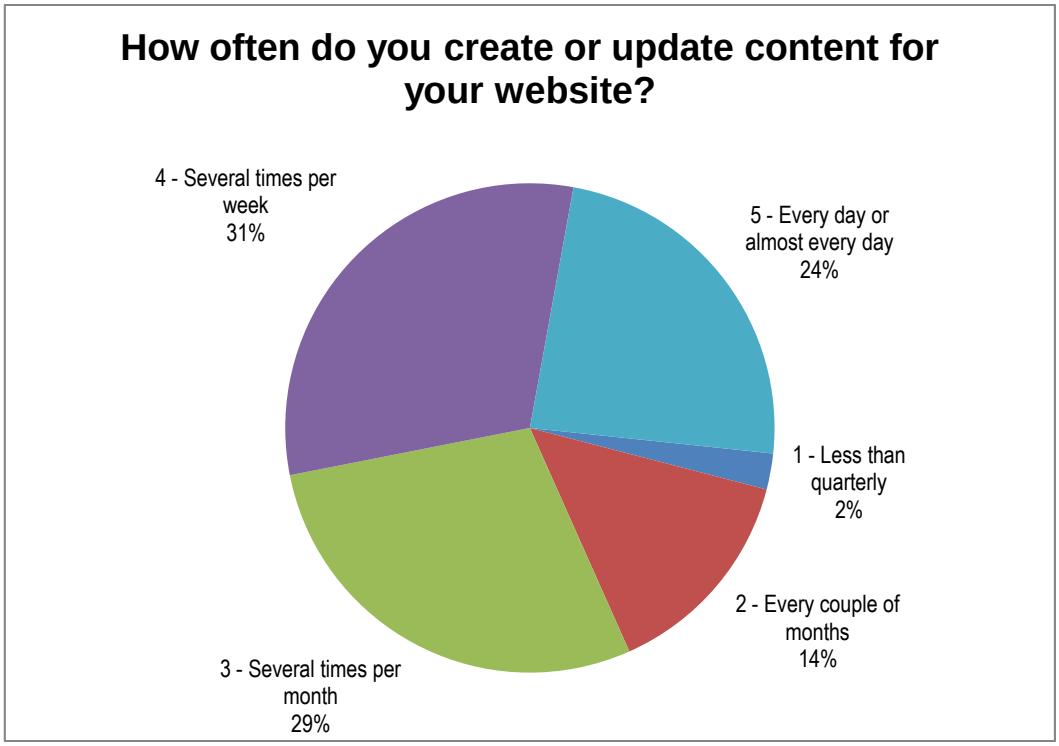


Organizational Online Behaviors

In addition to gathering data on participating groups' website statistics, we also asked them to answer a few simple questions about how they are investing in website content creation. Here's what we found.

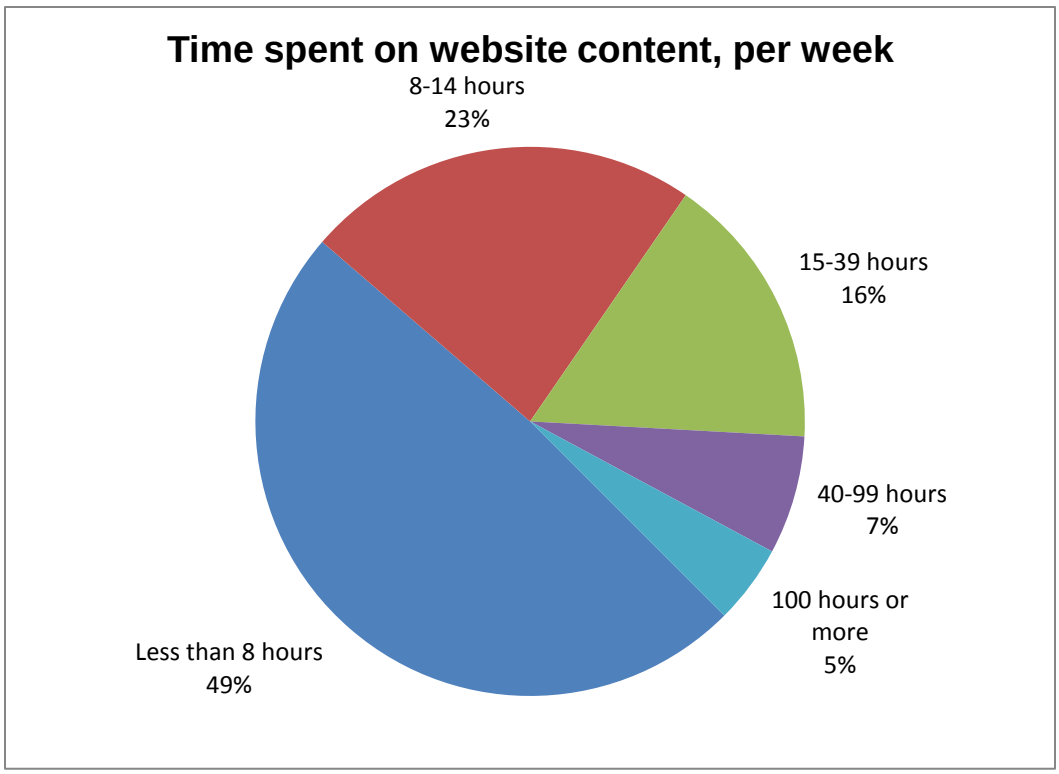


There is widespread agreement that the web is important. Over half of the groups we surveyed feel that their website is extremely or very important in their work. Another 40% felt it was moderately important. Nobody in our study group felt that their website plays only a minor role in their work.



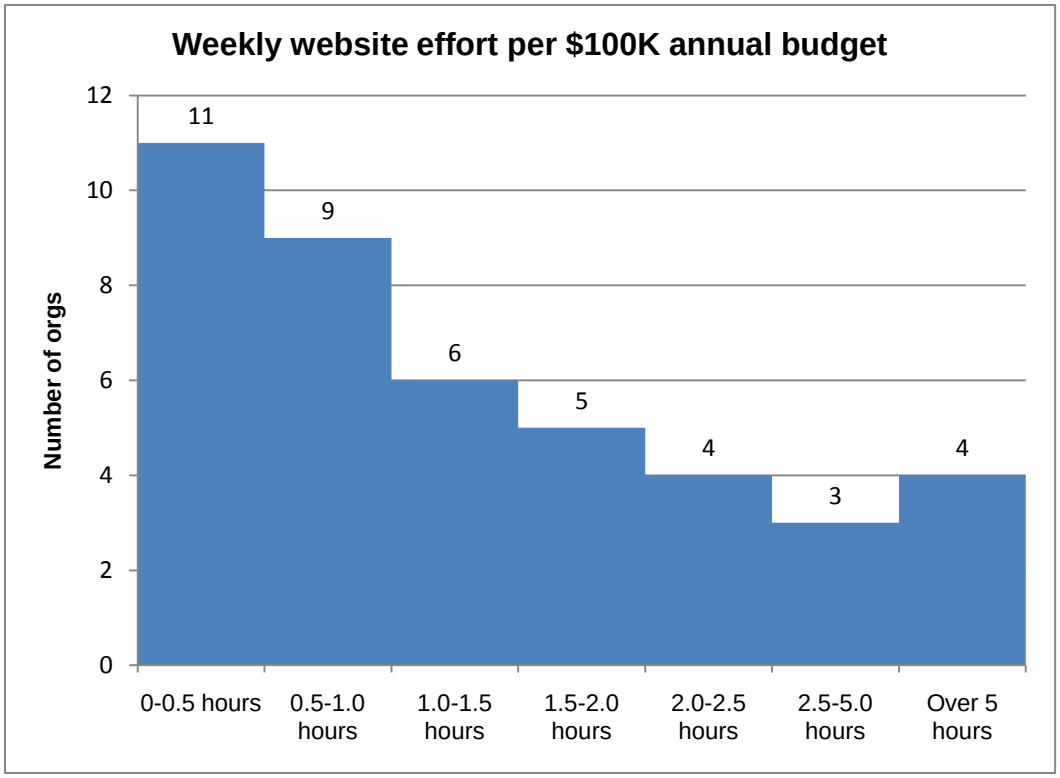
The typical group updates their website with moderate frequency. The average response value was 3.6, meaning that the average group updates their website content on a weekly basis. However, while just over half of the groups in our study are updating their sites daily or several times per week; most of the groups who reported that their websites were extremely important are updating their sites daily or nearly so.

We saw positive correlations between the frequency of website updates and website performance. The groups that updated their sites more frequently experienced significantly higher traffic. We also saw some correlation between how often a group updates its site, the site's perceived value to achieving its mission, and the size of a group's membership base.



The median group is spending 8.5 hours per week on website content. The average time spent is 18 hours, but as we see in the chart above, the average is skewed by a few groups spending over 100 hours per week on website content. Perhaps not surprisingly, these are mainly media or think-tank type organizations for whom publishing content online is the essence of what they do. Excluding these groups brings the average time spent on website content much closer to the median.

Again, we saw fairly strong positive correlations between the frequency of website updates and most measures of website performance. It is easy to imagine causality flowing both ways here in a positive feedback loop: groups that update their content more often tend to have more and higher quality content to attract visitors, and groups that are seeing significant traffic are more willing to invest time and energy in their website content.



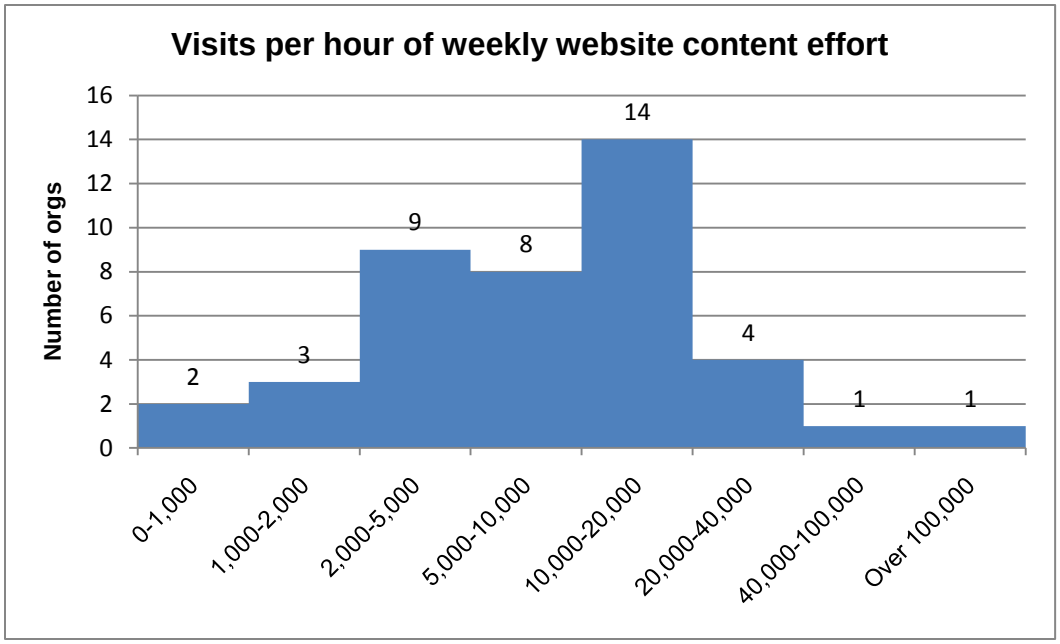
The median group is spending about 1.1 hours per week per $100K of organization annual budget on creating, editing and updating content on their website. This benchmark number provides some indication of how much effort groups of different sizes are investing in their sites.

A few groups at the top of the scale are investing considerably more than 5 staff hours per week per $100K of budget, but these organizations tend to be organizations for whom online publishing is among their most critical tasks, or groups with very, very small annual budgets. Most of the groups in our study getting above-average website traffic are investing between 1 and 2.5 hours per week per $100K of budget.

About a quarter of the groups in our study are investing less than half an hour per week per $100K budget. In general, these tend to be groups that are getting below-average website traffic and/or have fairly large staff sizes.

With this data, we can say that you should probably be investing at least an hour per week per $100K of annual budget in your website content, more if website content is central to fulfilling your mission. If you're investing over 2.5 hours per week per $100K budget, you should ask whether you're

spending your time efficiently and smartly or whether web content is so central to fulfilling your mission that it's worth that level of effort. If you're spending significantly less than an hour per week per $100K budget, and your site traffic is less than you'd like it to be, then you may be under-investing in your site.

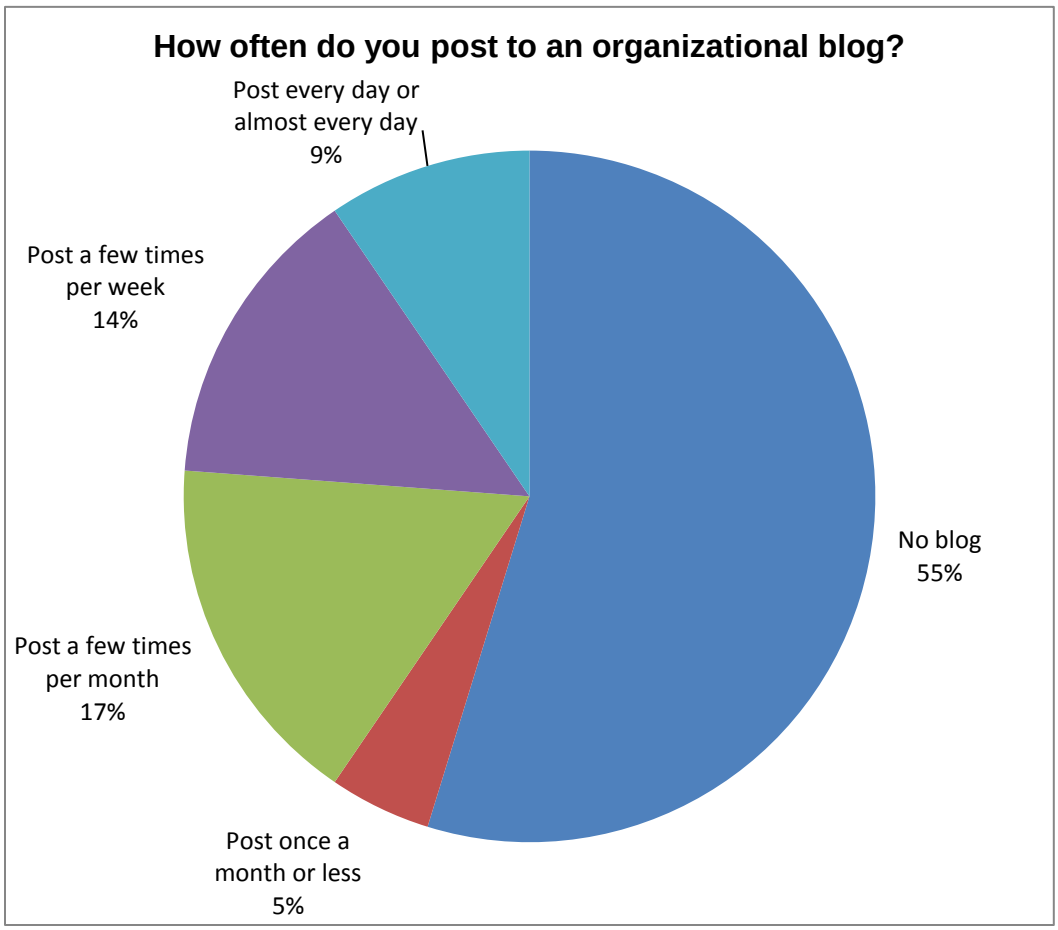


The median group is receiving 9,671 annual site visits per staff hour they spend on website content each week, and about half the groups in our study fell between 5,000 and 20,000 visits per staff hour of website effort. This benchmark provides some indication of how much "return on investment" (in the form of web traffic) a group is getting per hour it invests in website content.

Again, we saw the groups that are providing a compelling online service or a steady flow of top-notch original content rise to the top of this benchmark. The groups near the bottom tend to be either receiving below-average traffic or getting high traffic levels, but spending a lot of time and energy on original content as a core part of their organizational operations.

If you find yourself below the median on this benchmark, and especially if you are also getting below-average website traffic, ask yourself:

- Are you offering an online service or information that is of value to a clear target audience? Does the service connect strongly to your mission?
- Are you being efficient with your website content creation time? Are you spending your effort on your most visited or most-likely-to-be-visited content? Are you using your website analytics to help guide your editorial decisions?



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We found that blogging activity correlates moderately with several indicators of performance.

Organizational blogging behavior correlates moderately well with site traffic, visits from Facebook, number of members/supporters and how important to its mission an organization perceives its website to be. This makes sense: groups that believe their websites are important will invest time and energy in creating fresh, relevant content for it. That content draws visitors to the site, and is incidentally promotable via Facebook.

Website Statistics by Geographical Scope

Even in this small pool of 43 Groundwire clients, there is tremendous organizational diversity. One of the more interesting segmentations to look at is the differences between groups working at local, statewide and regional (multi-state) scales. Our study group included too few groups working nationally or internationally to draw any strong conclusions.

The following table segments our core web statistics by the geographic scope of the organization's work.

	Geographical Scope of Organization		
	Local Organization Median	Statewide Organization Median	Regional Organization Median
Visits, August 2009–August 2010	22,107	37,193	86,296
Page Views, August 2009–August 2010	90,071	99,547	194,346
Visitors, August 2009– August 2010	14,250	23,058	63,840
Year over year Growth	11.83%	1.78%	-2.14%
Average Page Views	3.42	2.81	2.67
Average Time Per Visit	2:34	1:17	2:33
Bounce Rate for Home Page	42.03%	41.68%	42.15%
Traffic from Bing, Google and Yahoo	50.39%	57.46%	46.22%
Traffic from Facebook	2.12%	1.03%	2.50%
Repeat Visits	41.23%	31.69%	35.71%
Mobile Visits	1.02%	0.94%	1.05%
IE6 Visits	6.03%	6.88%	6.00%

Analysis

As one might expect, **groups working at larger scales tend to have more web traffic.** These organizations tend to have larger audiences, more staff and financial resources to spend on their sites, and more ability to generate compelling content and services that draw visitors to their sites.

One unexpected finding was that **the overall traffic for statewide groups is much closer to local groups rather than to regional groups**. Statewide groups may be falling into a bit of a trough, where they have exhausted the easy gains from low-cost outreach and low-effort behaviors, but haven't yet made the leap to higher levels of online investment that can drive their traffic closer to that of better-resourced regional groups. Another reason may be that statewide environmental groups, at least in the Northwest, where most of the participants are based, are not actually attracting people statewide but tend to draw constituents mainly from urban centers. Because of this, their membership and website audience is more similar to that of their local counterparts.

Statewide groups receive a noticeably smaller proportion of their visits from Facebook than either local or regional groups. Again, we think similar dynamics may be playing out in the social media realm, where statewide groups have exhausted the easy gains of smaller local groups, and not quite managed to ramp up to the level of social media investment of their larger regional cousins. Additionally, although statewide groups theoretically represent and serve a larger geographic area and potential pool of constituents, in terms of membership and audience they function more like local organizations.

Interestingly, the **local groups in our survey pool saw the strongest median growth in traffic over the past year**, with statewide groups registering slight gains, and regional groups dipping a bit. It's hard to read much significance into this, though, since our sample size is so limited. However, a reasonable conclusion one could draw is that it is easier for smaller groups with smaller audiences to rack up bigger percentage gains, and that larger groups need to make bigger investments to make equivalent gains.

Correlations

We ran a series of statistical tests[2] to see which metrics and behaviors were related to each other. Here are the noteworthy correlations that surfaced in our data. It's important to remember that correlation is not causality—just because two things are correlated doesn't mean that one causes the other, or which one is cause and which one is effect.

An organization's web traffic has only a weak positive correlation with its budget and/or staff size. However, web traffic does seem to correlate with the amount of effort a group invests in its site, regardless of budget.

We saw a moderately strong correlation between the effort that groups invest in their site, overall traffic and an organization's blogging activity. This aligns well with our common-sense intuition. Producing a content-rich site (including blogging) takes time and energy. This content is what draws an audience. Conversely, having a substantial online audience makes it much more likely that an organization will choose to invest continuing resources in content. While great effort is not guaranteed to produce great results, minimal effort is almost certain to yield minimal results.

> An organization's effort on its website and its budget/staff size have only a weak positive correlation. This suggests that while larger organizations may have a slightly easier time investing in producing great web content, this is more about organizational strategic choices than sheer resources.

An organization's web traffic has a moderately strong correlation with its number of members/supporters.

In our data, variation in the number of organization members/supporters explained about 45% of the variation in annual website traffic and vice versa.

An organization's number of members/supporters has a moderately strong correlation with referrals from Facebook, but has a negative correlation with search engine referrals.

[2] Specifically, we computed the Pearson correlation coefficient and the R^2 value for each pair of metrics. Full results are in the spreadsheet that accompanies this report.

In our data, variation in number of members/supporters explains about 46% of the variation in percentage of visits referred by Facebook, and about 39% of the variation in absolute number of visits from Facebook. As member/supporter size increases, the percentage of visits from search engines tends to decline, with this correlation accounting for about 20% of the observed variation.

The percentage of new visitors correlates with shorter average visit times.

Sites with lots of new visitors tended to have shorter per-visit times, with this correlation accounting for about 54% of the variation.

Blogging is correlated with visits from Facebook. Groups that blog tend to have fresh, bite-sized chunks of content that are easy to promote on Facebook and tend to drive traffic to the site.

Top 10 vs. Everyone Else

In order to get some insight about how the stats and behaviors of organizations with higher website traffc differ from organizations with less website traffc, we segmented our study pool into the "Top 10" groups by total website visits and "everyone else" and ran the numbers again.

Some noteworthy results:

- The median "Top 10" group **received over ten times as much traffic** as the median group in the rest of the pack, and is **investing three times as much staff effort**. (The median and average values are quite spread apart, reflecting a few high-end outliers.)
- "Top 10" groups tended to be larger than the rest of groups in our study pool, with average budgets 67% larger and 73% more staff. They tend to have larger membership bases as well.
- "Top 10" groups were more likely to say that their websites were very important to their organization's mission, posted content more frequently, and were more likely to have a blog.
- Average page views, time per visit and repeat visitors were pretty similar between the "Top 10" and "everyone else."

	Top 10 organizations by visits per year		Everyone Else (N=33)	
	Median	*Average*	*Median*	*Average*
Visits, August 2009 - August 2010	377,167	735,145	29,397	40,985
Visits, August 2008 - August 2009	402,252	751,004	31,061	39,173
Year over year Growth	-6.24%	-2.11%	-5.36%	4.63%
Page views, August 2009 - August 2010	838,554	1,985,476	98,361	118,442
Visitors, August 2009 - August 2010	242,559	481,317	20,544	28,542
Average page views	2.34	2.70	3.02	3.06
Average time per visit	2:06	2:29	2:26	2:23
Bounce rate for home page	40.36%	43.87%	43.04%	43.57%
Visits referred by Bing, Google and Yahoo	51.01%	49.72%	55.46%	54.94%
Visits referred by Facebook	2.53%	2.64%	1.23%	1.75%
Absolute visits from Facebook (computed)	7,680	30,595	253	597
Repeat visitors	33.65%	35.85%	32.67%	33.41%
Visits from mobile browsers	1.27%	1.64%	0.93%	0.99%
Visits from Internet Explorer 6	6.52%	6.28%	6.30%	6.62%
Organization's total annual budget in $USD	$1,530,000	$1,466,000	$550,000	$877,205
Organization staff members (FTE)	16.5	16.0	7.0	9.2
How many person-hours per week, on average, does your organization devote to creating, editing and maintaining your website?	15.0	48.9	5.0	8.4
Visits per weekly hour of web content effort	12,935	41,679	8,195	8,930
Weekly web effort hours per $100K budget	1.4	3.3	1.1	1.9
How many members/supporters does your organization have? [A]	3.0	3.4	2.0	2.1
On a scale of 1-5, how significant a role does your website currently play in helping your organization achieve its mission?	4.5	4.3	3.0	3.6
How often do you post original content on your website? [B]	4.5	4.1	3.0	3.4
Does your website have a blog? If so, how often do you post new blog entries? [C]		2.4		2.0
Does your organization do online advocacy petitions/action alert [D]		1.8		2.1

[A] 1-6 scale: 1=0-999; 2=1,000-4,999; 3= 5,000-9,999; 4=25,000-49,999;5=50,000-99,999; 6=100,000+

[B] 1-5 scale: 1=less than once per quarter; 5=every day or almost every day

[C] 1-5 scale: 1= we don't have a blog; 2=post once a month or less; 3=post few times per month; 4=post few times per week; 5=post every day or almost every day

[D] 1-3 scale: 1= we don't do advocacy petitions/alerts; 2=do advocacy petitions/alerts occasionally; 3= do advocacy petitions/alerts frequently

It takes strong effort and significant investment to generate big traffic numbers.

The "Top 10" groups received a median of 377,167 website visits in the past year, while "everyone else" received a median of 29,397 website visits. The "Top 10" groups are spending a median of 15 hours per week on website content, while "everyone else" spends a median of only 5 hours per week.

Groups that regularly update their sites and invest in blog content tend to have more web traffic. As you might expect, these groups are also more likely to say that their site plays a very important role in delivering on their organizational mission.

Directions for Future Research

There is much more territory that could be fruitfully explored with this methodology. Of particular interest to us here at Groundwire:

More groups in each issue segment

We'd love to study a pool of organizations large and diverse enough to be able to draw some useful comparisons between the different subsectors of the environmental movement. How are climate/energy groups different from forest/wildlands groups? What about groups focused more on communities and transportation?

More national/international groups

The pool of groups in this study didn't have many national or international scale groups in it. We'd love to study a pool of organizations that included more groups working at larger scales, of a variety of staff sizes.

Greater geographic diversity

Most of the groups in this study were located in the Pacific Northwest. We'd love to study a more geographically diverse pool of organizations to see whether these benchmarks are more widely projectable and to find out if there are regional differences.

Issue or Campaign Networks

This methodology could be very easily applied to studying issue or campaign networks, such as the grantees of a funder or group of funders. Such a network might even be willing to share data non-anonymously inside the network.

Time-Series Data

Because the analytics data-gathering methodology is automated, it would be feasible to collect data on an ongoing basis for a cohort of organizations and to do longer-term month-by-month or year-by-year comparisons.

Notes on Our Methodology

We deliberately designed our study methodology to be easy to repeat and scale up. All data collection is done automatically—the web stats are gathered via a simple script and the behaviors data is gathered via a short online survey, which took an average of 8 minutes for a typical respondent to complete. We believe that this lightweight methodology could scale smoothly to a pool of up to a few thousand groups. It could also be repeated periodically for a given network to begin constructing time-series data.

Our script to collect data from Google Analytics is efficient, but it limits us to collecting data that can be easily queried via the Google Analytics API. In addition, we can only collect data that is tracked consistently from group to group. In practice, this approach does not allow us to collect:

- **Information about conversion rates, goal pages or goal funnels.** While this data is accessible via the Google Analytics API, groups configure and use these features inconsistently, and it would take a great deal of manual work and engagement from the participating groups to establish consistent comparisons.

- **Information about online donation performance.** While Google Analytics does support collecting e-commerce data, few online donation providers currently support pushing this data into Google Analytics and as a result few groups are pushing online donation data to Google Analytics. We think this is a missed opportunity and are working to encourage more online donation providers to support

donation data collection through Google Analytics.

- **Information about email performance.** This information is not generally captured in Google Analytics.

Any or all of these aspects of groups' online activities could be studied by a well-resourced research effort that focused on a relatively small network of sophisticated, highly-engaged participants.

Data Collection Tools

Access to Google Analytics Data

Study participants granted read-only access to their Google Analytics data to a Groundwire account. This allowed us to run a script to gather selected stats through the Google Analytics API. The script is available at https://groundwire.devguard.com/svn/public/scripts/harvest_analytics.py. It is completely generic and can be easily re-used and adapted by anyone familiar with basic Python scripting and the Google Analytics API.

Survey Instrument

In addition to pulling data directly from Google Analytics, we also asked participating organizations to complete a brief online survey, which is included in Appendix A.

Raw Data

We invite you to explore our raw data and see what conclusions you can draw. A complete set of the raw data, minus details that would identify the participating organizations, is available as an Excel spreadsheet from: http://groundwire.org/support/articles/2010-website-benchmarks-report/2010-website-benchmarks-public-data.xls/view

Conclusion and Next Steps

This research only begins to scratch the surface of what is possible. Thanks to the scalable techniques we developed for data collection and analysis, we believe it is possible to conduct similar research for much larger and more diverse sets of organizations—coalitions, grantees, issue networks, and more. Our data gathering techniques can also be adapted to begin conducting longer-term research on organizational website statistics and behaviors within a cohort of groups.

We hope that this study, in addition to providing you with useful information, inspires you with a sense of excitement and possibility. If you are an environmental nonprofit, Groundwire may be able to offer you partially subsidized consulting services to help you analyze your web performance and improve your online presence.

About Groundwire

Groundwire is a nonprofit capacity-building organization that provides online strategy and technology consulting to the environmental movement. We can customize online tools to support your theory of change, provide campaign design assistance, or help develop your engagement pyramid. We build websites and databases, and consult on email, online advocacy and social media.

Interested in learning more? You can find us at http://groundwire.org.

We conducted this website analytics study as a service to our clients, but believe it may also be of use to others in the broader nonprofit sector.

Thanks

Groundwire Senior Strategist Jon Stahl led this research effort, with assistance from pretty much the entire team at Groundwire and support from our Groundwire Labs program.

Special thanks to Groundwire Web Developer Matt Yoder for his work on the script that automates the gathering of Google Analytics data; without his skillful work, this research would not have been possible.

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And, above all, thanks to the 43 environmental organizations who volunteered to open their stats to the world. Their commitment to transparency and sharing is a model for the entire nonprofit sector, and we hope to see many organizations following in their footsteps soon.

Sharing This Report

Appendix A: Organizational Demographic & Online Behaviors Survey

The following pages reproduce the survey instrument we used to capture the organizational demographic and online behaviors information.

Hi there! Welcome to Groundwire's 2010 web statistics research project. Please fill out the information below to participate -- it should take 10-15 minutes.

1. Yes! We'd like to participate in Groundwire's first-of-its-kind study of the website stats of small/midsize environmental nonprofits!

- Count us in!

*** 2. Your organization's name**

*** 3. Is the scope of your organization best described as:**

- Local
- Statewide
- Regional (multi-state)
- National
- International

*** 4. Which issue area *best* describes the main focus of your organization? (We know it is tough/unfair to pick just one, but please try hard to place yourself within our existing categories, it will make our segmentation work much more useful!)**

- Civic engagement
- Climate & energy
- Environmental funders & capacity builders
- Environmental education
- Environmental health & toxics
- Environmental justice
- Food & farms
- Legal advocacy
- Media
- Multi-issue
- Network/coalition
- Outdoor Recreation
- Sustainable communities & transportation
- Water & watersheds
- Wildlife, forests & wilderness

*** 5. What is your organization's total annual budget in $USD?**

*** 6. How many staff members does your organization have (FTE)?**

* 7. How many members/supporters does your organization have?

- 0-999
- 1,000-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,00-24,999
- 25,000-49,999
- 50,000-99,999
- 100,000+

Other (please specify)

*** 8. On a scale of 1-5, how significant a role does your website currently play in helping your organization achieve its mission?**

- 1 - A minor role
- 2
- 3 - Moderately significant
- 4
- 5 - Extremely important

*** 9. How many person-hours per week, on average, does your organization devote to creating, editing and maintaining your website?**

*** 10. How often do you post original content on your website?**

- Every day, or almost every day
- Several times per week
- Several times per month
- Every couple months
- Less than once per quarter

*** 11. Does your website have a blog? If so, how often do you post new blog entries?**

- We don't have a blog
- We post every day or almost every day
- We post a few times per week
- We post a few times per month
- We post once a month or less frequently

*** 12. Does your organization do online advocacy petitions/action alerts?**

- Yes, regularly (once a month or more frequently)
- Yes, occasionally
- No

*** 13. A bit about you, so we can follow up with additional information and instructions.**

Name:

City/Town:

State/Province:

Email Address:

Phone Number: