

# Google's decade-old analytics platform is going away as the company embraces the post-cookie, cross-channel future of measurement

Article

**The news:** Universal Analytics (UA) will be phased out by Google next year in favor of Google Analytics 4, the search giant announced Wednesday.

- On July 1, 2023, UA properties will cease to process new hits, while the newer Universal Analytics 360 properties will stop tracking hits on October 1 of next year.
- After those dates, previously processed data in Universal Analytics will be kept for at least six months.

Businesses must negotiate new obstacles to understand their customers' complicated, multiplatform journeys in today's measuring market, all while preserving user privacy.

**What's driving this move:** Google cited multiplatform journeys and user privacy as the reasons for pulling the plug on UA.

- According to **Russell Ketchum**, director, product management at Google, in a blog post announcing the move, “Universal Analytics was built for a generation of online measurement that was anchored in the desktop web, independent sessions, and more easily observable data from cookies. This measurement methodology is quickly becoming obsolete.”
- UA turns a decade old in October, and was built for a different time—the iOS App store was then just 4 years old. Like other site-tracking tech at the time, UA focused on user sessions. That works fine for brand experiences that rely solely on a single platform (i.e., your brand’s website viewed from a computer or a phone), but takes a lot of work to connect cross-device, cross-platform usage.

**More on Google Analytics 4:** Launched in October 2020, it differs significantly from past versions of Google Analytics.

- GA4 works across platforms and can track data across websites and applications, doesn't require cookies, and measures insights using an event-based data model.

- It also uses data-driven attribution to assign credit to more than simply the last click, allowing marketers to see how various initiatives influence conversions.
- It also doesn't maintain IP addresses, which can help brands comply with privacy laws.
- For all these reasons, it's supposedly a more forward-looking solution.

**The blowback:** Even if GA4 is an upgrade, implementation can still be a hassle for the measurement community—and much of the buzz, particularly on Twitter, wasn't ecstatic about the forced switchover.

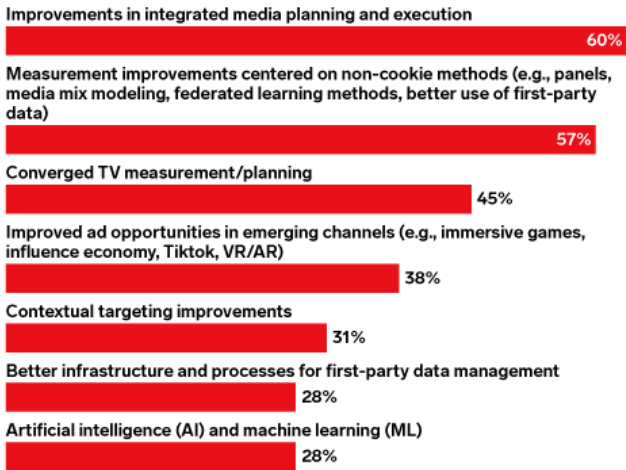
- Search marketing consultant **Joe Youngblood** shared frustration that Google will be deleting all prior GA data and not providing any means to view historical data within GA4, tweeting “this should be entirely unacceptable by business owners and marketers.”
- Digital marketing expert **Jono Alderson** tweeted that sunseting UA next year “will not go well,” claiming that GA4 isn't ready and there hasn't been any incentive for analytics professionals to adopt “a more complex, half-finished product.”
- “Yes, Google Analytics 4 can take some getting used to,” admitted Google's ads product liaison, **Ginny Marvin**, in a tweet.

**The big takeaway:** Google is using this announcement to signal to businesses that they need to start moving to GA4 sooner than they would otherwise—making this an opportune moment for brands to set up their GA4 properties if they haven't already done so.

- Although GA4 has existed for well over a year, configuring it now will allow firms to begin recording metrics they track, ensuring that historical data is available when it's needed.
- This should also serve as a red alert to search marketers who have been postponing implementation of GA4, as it goes from optional to mandatory in less than 15 months. The more comfortable they become with GA4's interface and capabilities, the better prepared they'll be to manage the transition for their brands.

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% of respondents



Source: Mediaocean, "2021 Market Report and 2022 Outlook," Jan 6, 2022

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