Ad Blocking Growth Is Slowing Down, but Not Going Away

Article

Fewer internet users than expected are blocking ads across the US and Western Europe. For the second year in a row, we've downgraded our estimates of the ad blocking population in France, Germany, the UK and US, as well as our forecast for future growth.

In the US, roughly one in four internet users will block ads this year on at least one of their internet-connected devices. Penetration will be stable, increasing only to 27.0% of internet

users at the end of our forecast period. Germany currently has the highest concentration of ad blocking users of the four countries, with 32.8% of internet users using some form of ad blocking this year.

US Ad Blocking User Penetration and Growth, 2018-2021
% change and % of internet users

	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of internet users	24.9%	25.8%	26.4%	27.0%
% change	7.5%	5.2%	3.9%	3.3%

■ % change　■ % of internet users
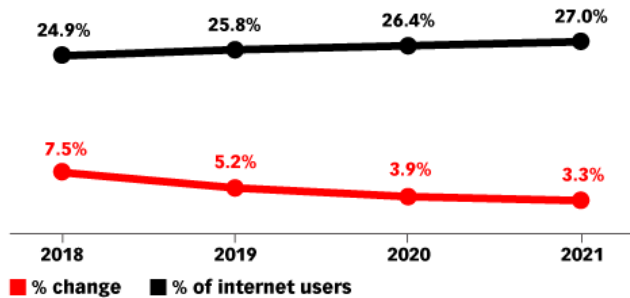
Note: internet users of any age who access the internet at least once per month via any device (including a mobile device) that has an ad blocker enabled
Source: eMarketer, July 2019

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In July 2018, we predicted 75.4 million US internet users would block ads this year; we now expect this year's US ad blocking population to reach 73.2 million. That still represents an increase of more than 3 million new ad blocking users this year, and the motivations behind having an ad blocker enabled are still there: Many digital ads are disruptive to content experiences.

Desktop and laptop continues to be where most ad blocking occurs. It's harder to block ads on smartphones since most activity takes place within individual apps.

Although ad blocking may not be as hot a topic as it was a few years ago, consumer attitudes toward the intrusiveness of ads remain. Most ad blocking users in the UK, France and Germany said that they block ads because there are too many ads online, or they find ads to be annoying or irrelevant, according to GlobalWebIndex surveys. Some take issue with ads being too intrusive or taking up too much screen space. Users worldwide said they use ad blockers to mitigate bad user experiences while browsing the internet.

Reasons that UK Ad Blocking Users Use an Ad Blocker, by Age, Q1 2019
% of respondents in each group

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Too many ads are annoying or irrelevant	48%	47%	55%	66%	76%
There are too many ads on the internet	44%	42%	50%	58%	69%
Ads are too intrusive	44%	40%	47%	56%	66%
Ads sometimes contain viruses or bugs	40%	36%	37%	44%	43%
Ads take up too much screen space	38%	29%	32%	35%	42%
To avoid having to see video ads before watching clips/shows	37%	29%	31%	34%	39%
To speed up page loading times	33%	31%	36%	43%	44%
I try to avoid all ads wherever, whether on TV or online	27%	28%	33%	38%	54%
To stop ads being personalized based on my browsing history	24%	22%	25%	34%	43%
Ads might compromise my online privacy	22%	24%	26%	29%	34%
To stop my device's battery life being drained	20%	19%	20%	20%	24%
I want to stop my data allowance from being used up	17%	18%	19%	18%	20%
Other	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%

Note: n=3,954
Source: GlobalWebIndex, June 25, 2019

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"Ad blocking may not be increasing at double-digit rates anymore, but it's also not going away," said Nicole Perrin, principal analyst at eMarketer. "There's a substantial number of internet users rejecting the current tradeoff of ads for content as unfair, though they may be whitelisting sites that have proved their value. And past research suggests those users are valuable to marketers: younger and more affluent than average."

Ad blocking has become prevalent enough that companies like Google are taking steps to push back against ad revenues lost to blocking. For example, it launched a tool called Funding Choices that asks or requires users to turn off ad blockers after viewing a certain number of articles on a publisher's website. Publishers can also block access entirely until ad blockers are turned off, or offer users the option of an ad-free experience through Google Contributor, where Google takes a 10% cut of revenues.

Google's Chrome browser rolled out its own ad blocker in early 2018 that only allows ads from sites that follow certain guidelines, but in reality, fewer than 1% of ads fail to meet those guidelines. More aggressively, the company announced earlier this year that it plans on changing the way extensions work in Chrome, which will prevent many third-party ad blocking extensions from working properly. Google makes virtually all of its revenues through digital advertising, and effective ad blocking has an impact on its ad income.