![eMarketer logo]

Ad Trackers Are on More than 75% of Websites

The lifeblood of data-driven digital campaigns, they can still creep users out

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Tracking pixels and scripts are often little understood, but they serve as the lifeblood of many data-driven digital campaigns.

But just how prevalent are these tools on the web? In a recent examination of more than 144 million webpages loaded in more than a dozen countries, Cliqz and Ghostery found that 77.4% of all websites had at least one third-party tracker.

In addition, the analysis revealed that a sizable minority of websites examined—16.2%—featured 10 or more trackers.

Number of Third-Party Trackers* Found on Websites Worldwide, May 1-14, 2017
% of total page loads tracked by Ghostery

0	22.6%
1	17.6%
2-9	43.6%
10+	16.2%
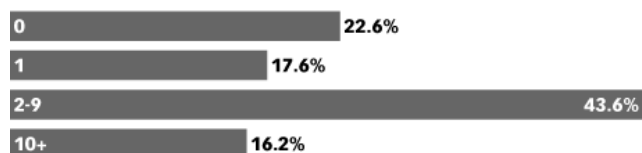
Note: represents activity tracked by Ghostery, broader industry metrics may vary; *collect personal data
Source: Ghostery and Cliqz, "Tracking the Trackers: Analyzing the global tracking landscape with GhostRank" as cited in company blog, Dec 4, 2017
234328   www.**e**Marketer.com

Google was the most prevalent employer of trackers, according to Cliqz and Ghostery. Trackers related to its Google Analytics service appeared on 46.4% of webpages examined. But trackers related to its other services, such as DoubleClick and AdSense, were also comparatively prevalent.

Facebook was the other big tracking enterprise, with its Facebook Connect service found on more than one-fifth (21.9%) of pages.

So why should publishers and advertisers care if users are drowning in a deluge of trackers? For one, tracking technologies allow for both segment targeting and retargeting. But the overuse of such marketing techniques has the potential to backfire on advertisers if audiences end a browsing session with concerns that companies are gathering too much data on them.
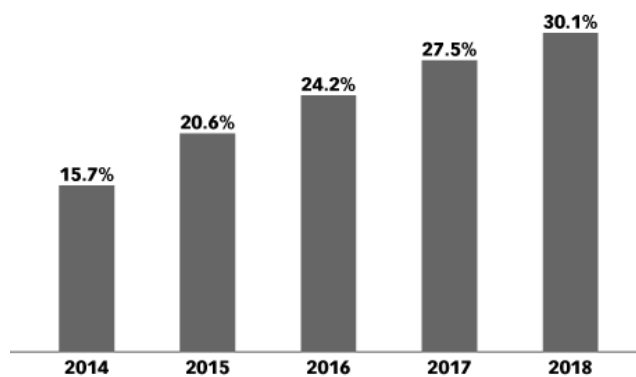
In some cases, high ad frequency rates can result in the installation of ad blockers, which are gaining steam in the US. eMarketer estimates that a little more than 30% of US internet users will use an ad blocker in 2018, up from 15.7% in 2014.

US Ad Blocking User Penetration, 2014-2018
% of internet users

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15.7%	20.6%	24.2%	27.5%	30.1%

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, Feb 2017
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For privacy-minded consumers, ad blockers are not just a way to evade unwanted digital ads, but also the tracking scripts and pixels that often accompany them.

Publishers should also be careful about the use of trackers because they can add to page load times, while simultaneously eating up consumers' data. This type of degradation of the user experience can sometimes be enough to drive audiences elsewhere.

But the reality remains that digital tracking remains an opaque process to most users. And the overall trend among publishers is still to embrace the technology.

Snapchat, for example, late last year reversed a previously publicly stated aversion to pixel tracking by allowing advertisers to use their technology to track audiences across its own app and the wider web.

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