



WHITE PAPER



# SITECATALYST METRICS

Visits and Unique Visitors

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# 1 Unique Visitors

A unique visitor refers to an individual who has visited a site the first time within a certain time period. For example, the unique visitor could have visited a site 10 times in a week, but if the time period specifies unique visitors for that week, a single unique visitor will only be counted once for that week. Once that week is over, that unique visitor can be counted again for a new specified time period.

## 1.1 Tracking Unique Visitors

SiteCatalyst measures visitors to a web site by using various technologies, including persistent cookies, IP addresses, user agent string, or a combination of these technologies. Visitors may be reported across various time periods, site sections, and pages. This white paper defines the technologies used, the reporting periods, and the implications of each for web site managers and advertisers.

## 1.2 Technology Used to Track Unique Visitors

SiteCatalyst determines unique visitor information using several technologies. The primary method of calculating unique visitors is by setting a persistent cookie on the visitor's browser to uniquely identify the visitor. Cookie technology helps to avoid common pitfalls, for example, IP Pooling, caching, or tracking visitors behind a firewall, when counting unique visitors. For more information on IP Pooling, refer to *Frequently Asked Questions* in this document.

If the visitor has disabled cookies on their browser, or if the visitor's browser does not support persistent cookies, Omniture uses a combination of the IP address and the user agent string to determine if a visitor is unique or not. SiteCatalyst reports a small percentage (usually 1-2%) of visitors who do not support cookies.



**NOTE:** A web browser alone will not block cookies without specific user effort to reject cookies, for example, if the user installs utility software to block cookies.

### 1.2.1 Example: How SiteCatalyst Tracks a Visitor

The following example displays how SiteCatalyst tracks a visitor, over a two-month period, in the four types of unique visitor time frames.

- Visitor accesses the site for the first time on July 1, 2004 at 10:05 a.m. and views five pages before exiting the site.
- Visitor returns to the site on July 1, 2004 at 10:45 a.m. and views three pages before exiting the site.
- Visitor returns to the site on July 1, 2004 at 11:25 a.m. and views three pages before exiting the site.
- Visitor returns to the site on July 1, 2004 at 11:00 p.m. and views two pages before exiting the site.
- Visitor returns to the site on July 10, 2004 at 3:30 p.m. and views one page before exiting the site.
- Visitor returns to the site for a two-hour visit on August 10, 2004 at 11:00 a.m.

The SiteCatalyst Unique Visitor and Visit Reports register the visitor based on the previous data as shown in the following table.

**Unique Visitors (Cookies or No Cookies)\***

Date	Time	Hourly Unique Visitors	Daily Unique Visitors	Weekly Unique Visitors	Monthly Unique Visitors	Quarterly Unique Visitors	Yearly Unique Visitors	Yearly Unique Visitors	Visits**
1-Jul	10:05 AM	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1-Jul	10:45 AM								1
1-Jul	11:25 AM	1							1
1-Jul	11:00 PM	1							1
10-Jul	3:30 PM	1	1	1					1
<b>New Month</b>									
10-Aug	11:00 AM	1	1	1	1				1
10-Aug	12:00 PM	1							1

\* If the IP addresses change several times during a visit, the visitor may count as multiple unique visitors.

\*\* Visits and persistent cookie visitors are only counted if a persistent cookie can be set.

**1.3 Persistent Cookies**

The Persistent Cookies Filter in the Unique Visitors Reports, i.e. Hourly, Daily, Weekly, et cetera, shows the percentage of all cookie-based visitors. SiteCatalyst registers the remainder of visitors (non-cookie based users) by using the unique occurrence of the IP address and user agent string (the browser version, captured via the HTTP header).

The number of persistent cookie-based users reported by SiteCatalyst is extremely accurate (greater than 99.5%). The number of non-persistent cookie-based users is less accurate since a single visitor can have several IP addresses during a single visit, or several visitors may share an IP address from behind a corporate firewall.

## 2 Visits

A visit begins when a person first views a page on your company's website. The visit will continue until that person stops all activity on the site for 30 minutes, or until the maximum visit length occurs, which is 12 hours. For example, if you visit a page on [www.omniture.com](http://www.omniture.com), you have one instance of a visit that lasts until you have incurred 30 minutes of inactivity. Closing your browser window does not automatically end the current visit. If you don't view any pages for more than 30 minutes, and then resume viewing pages, SiteCatalyst registers a new visit.

SiteCatalyst measures visits by a calculation based on the unique visitor cookie, the page views by that visitor, and the visit timeout period. The unique visitor cookie helps to prevent re-counting. If a browser does not accept persistent cookies, SiteCatalyst does not calculate a visit for that visitor.

The maximum length of any visit is 12 hours. No visit is allowed to extend beyond that period. If additional activity occurs for a period longer than 12 hours, with no period of inactivity exceeding 30 minutes, the visit will be counted twice. The new visit is counted at the first page view after the 12 hour length has been exceeded.

The 30 minute visit timeout period is an industry standard. It is used by most web analytics products and it is recommended by industry analysts. Upon request, this time period may be customized by report suite. Contact Omniture Live Support to request a different inactivity threshold value.



**NOTE:** SiteCatalyst reports a visit only during the time period in which the visit is initiated. For instance, if a visit begins at 11:45 p.m. on December 1st, and continues until 12:30 a.m. on December 2nd, the visit is counted only on December 1st. This applies to other time periods, including weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly.

### 2.1 SiteCatalyst Unique Visitor Reports

The following table displays the types of available Unique Visitor Reports.

Hourly Unique Visitors	<p>Use the Hourly Unique Visitors Report to determine how many unique individuals visited your site during this hour.</p> <p>A visitor counts as an hourly unique visitor if this is the first time in the present hour they are visiting the site. For example, visiting a site once at 10:05, again at 10:45 and then again at 11:10, will show one hourly unique visitor during 10:00 and one hourly unique visitor during 11:00.</p>
Daily Unique Visitors	<p>Use the Daily Unique Visitors Report to determine how many unique individuals visited your site during the current day.</p> <p>A visitor counts as a daily unique visitor if this is the first time today they visited the site.</p>
Weekly Unique Visitors	<p>Use the Weekly Unique Visitors Report to determine how many people visited your site during the current week.</p> <p>A visitor counts as a weekly unique visitor if this is the first time during the week that they visited the site.</p>
Monthly Unique Visitors	<p>Use the Monthly Unique Visitors Report to determine how many individuals visited your site during the current month.</p> <p>A visitor counts as a monthly unique visitor if this is the first time in the month that they are visiting the site.</p>
Quarterly Unique Visitors	<p>Use the Quarterly Unique Visitors Report to determine how many individuals</p>



	<p>visited your site during the current quarter.</p> <p>A visitor counts as a quarterly unique visitor if this is the first time in the quarter that they are visiting the site.</p>
<p>Yearly Unique Visitors</p>	<p>Use the Yearly Unique Visitors to determine how many individuals visited your site this year.</p> <p>A visitor counts as a yearly unique visitor if this is the first time in the current year that they visited the site. If a visitor does not support cookies they will not be tracked in this report.</p>

## 3 Frequently Asked Questions

### What percentage of the Internet population support persistent cookies?

Internet averages indicate that about 97% of the overall Internet population support persistent cookies.

### Does the Cookies Report measure first or third party cookies?

The Cookies Report measures first party cookies, or those cookies that are set on the web site's domain. JavaScript sets and tests the cookie, which is named s\_cc.

### What is IP Pooling?

Internet Services Providers and large corporations share a limited number of IP addresses among multiple users at the same time. Under IP pooling, a single user may appear to the web server to be using multiple IP addresses in a single session. Solely relying upon IP addresses is misleading when calculating both Unique Visitors and Visits.

### How does SiteCatalyst track unique visitors if the visitor deletes their cookies?

If a visitor deletes browser cookies, the cookie is reset and the visitor is calculated as a new, unique visitor during their next visit.

### How does SiteCatalyst track Spiders and Bots?

SiteCatalyst requires supported browsers to execute JavaScript, render the page, and request and load images. Since most spiders and bots do not load images, they are not tracked. If a spider can execute JavaScript and load images, SiteCatalyst tracks the spider as a visitor. You can also exclude spiders by IP address or by using a VISTA rule to exclude by domain.

### How does SiteCatalyst track a user with two computers?

Each of the computers has a unique cookie ID and the visitor is counted as a unique visitor for each computer used.

### How does SiteCatalyst track a visitor who uses multiple browsers

Since browsers do not share cookies, SiteCatalyst tracks a visitor as unique for each browser used.

### Why does the Cookies Report show 2% of visitors as having cookies disabled when non-persistent cookie visitors are 10% of total visitors?

The Cookies Report cannot be compared to the Unique Visitors Reports because they are measured by different types of cookies ("first party" vs. "third party" cookies). The Cookies Report measures those visitors who enable first-party cookies, or the visitors that enable the site itself to set cookies.

The Unique Visitors metric relies on third party cookies, which are set by the SiteCatalyst domain. Additionally, as explained above, the non-persistent cookie visitors may be overstated due to the limits of using the IP address to identify visitors, and the effect of IP pooling.

### When I see Visitors as a column header, what does that metric mean?

Visitors refer to Daily Unique Visitors. For example, if you select multiple calendar days when running a report with the Visitors metric, the data shows the sum of Daily Unique Visitors for the selected days. This does not apply to the Hourly Unique Visitors Report, Weekly Unique Visitors Report, Monthly Unique Visitors Report, Quarterly Unique Visitors Report, and Yearly Unique Visitors Report.

**How do I calculate unique visitors for a segment or custom time frame?**

You can use the Data Warehouse to report unique visitors across specific segments and time frames.

**Why is the number of daily unique visitors greater than the number of visits?**

Occasionally, a web site’s traffic may contain a higher number of non-cookied users than normal. A non-cookied user cannot be counted as a visit because SiteCatalyst cannot place a cookie on their browser, but SiteCatalyst still counts them as a daily unique visitor based on IP address and user agent string. Additionally, if a visitor that does not support cookies obtains multiple IP addresses within a single session, the visitor may be counted multiple times.

**How does SiteCatalyst track a visitor if I use Multi-Suite Tagging?**

Multi-suite tagging sends a single page view to multiple SiteCatalyst report suites. For each report suite ID used within the code on a page, a unique cookie will be set. SiteCatalyst tracks the visitor separately and uniquely for each report suite.

**How does SiteCatalyst track unique visitors for a month by a content group?**

While SiteCatalyst tracks unique visitors for a report suite by hour, day, week, month, quarter, and year, content group must be enabled as a metric for each separate variable. Contact Omniture Live Support to enable the desired metric. Use the following table as a guideline to determine which variables are available for the various time frames.

Variable	Visits	Daily Uniques	Weekly Uniques	Monthly Uniques	Quarterly Uniques
Page	Included	Y	Y	Y	Y
Site Section	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Server	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Custom Insight 1 – 50 (Traffic)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Custom Links	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Exit Links	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
File Downloads	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hierarchy	Included	Included	Y	Y	Y
Conversion Reports (all)	Y	Y	-	-	-



CALL 1.877.722.7088  
1.801.722.0139

[www.omniture.com](http://www.omniture.com)  
[info@omniture.com](mailto:info@omniture.com)

550 East Timpanogos Circle  
Orem, Utah 84097

