What COVID-19 has done to the news

Jill Nicholson
Dir. of Customer Education
jill@chartbeat.com

April 2020
WHO WE ARE

We enable meaningful stories to thrive — wherever they live

700 enterprise publishers
50 billion pageviews tracked per month
70 Countries
6 Continents

The Washington Post
CNN
Clarín
The Atlantic
Le Monde
The Telegraph
UOL
The New York Times
We analyzed **105 billion** pageviews on 33 million articles, including **2.8 million articles about COVID-19**

This analysis is based on aggregated and anonymized data pulled from global media sites that work with Chartbeat and allow us to use this data for research purposes.

*Articles containing the entities Coronavirus, COVID19, Covid19 and keywords %coronavirus% OR keywords LIKE %Coronavirus% OR keywords LIKE %COVID-19% OR keywords LIKE %covid-19% OR keywords LIKE %Covid-19% OR keywords LIKE %novel coronavirus% OR keywords LIKE %corona-virus% OR keywords LIKE %Koronaviruss Covid-19% OR keywords LIKE %covid 19% OR keywords LIKE %COVID% OR keywords LIKE %koronaviruss% OR keywords LIKE %covid% OR keywords LIKE %covid19% OR keywords LIKE %koronavirus% OR keywords LIKE %corona virus% OR keywords LIKE %2019-nCoV% OR keywords LIKE %koroonaviirus% OR keywords LIKE %COVID 19% OR keywords LIKE %Covid-19% OR keywords LIKE %Covid19% OR keywords LIKE %COVID19% OR keywords LIKE %nCoV% OR keywords LIKE %SARS-CoV% OR keywords LIKE %Covid 19% OR keywords LIKE %CORONAVIRUS% OR keywords LIKE %2019 nCoV% OR keywords LIKE %2019-nCoV ARD% OR keywords LIKE %SARS-CoV-2%*
AGENDA

We’ll investigate how reader engagement has changed:

- **How much** people are reading
- **Where** they are finding content
- **Which content** is most engaging
Trends in coverage & traffic
Though coverage dipped during weekends, the number of articles produced on weekdays is still more than 75K per day.

About 20% of articles are COVID-related.
Last week, pageviews to COVID-19 Articles decreased by 4%, mirroring a drop in overall traffic.
Patterns and peaks in overall traffic
Traffic in the UK peaked the week of March 16 has been slowly declining.

Similar to patterns in other countries, peak traffic coincided with widespread lockdowns.
However, post-peak traffic remains notably higher than pre-virus levels.

Traffic over the past two weeks is still about 18% higher than February averages.
Referrer trends
After peaking March 16, Search and Social traffic steadily decline. Last week, however, Social traffic has stabilized (+1%) while Search continues to drop (-10%).
REFERRER TRENDS

Google Search (-5%) and Facebook (-2%) drove slightly less traffic last week, but are still showing about a 30% increase when compared to pre-virus traffic.
Average Engaged Time from Facebook increased by 3 seconds last week, though Google Search engagement still remains higher.
Due to that increase in Average Engaged Time, Facebook actually saw an increase in total engagement, despite the fact that traffic was down slightly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referrer</th>
<th>Total Engaged Time</th>
<th>Pageviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google Search</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twitter surpassed Google Chrome Suggestions to become the 4th-largest source of referred traffic:

1. Google News
2. Twitter
3. Google Chrome Suggestions
4. Bing
5. Flipboard
6. Smart News
7. Yahoo
Most referrers have been driving less traffic since March 16, but Smart News and Yahoo saw increased traffic last week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referrer</th>
<th>Week-over-week Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SmartNews</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flipboard</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google News</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Chrome Suggestions</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bing</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engagement & topic trends
COVID-19 articles account for about **29% of Total Engaged Time**, a proportion that has been slowly shrinking as readers turn attention to other types of content.
COVID-19 articles still have a higher Average Engaged Time than general articles, showing how valuable this content continues to be for readers.
Growing engagement and loyalty
UK engagement with COVID-19 articles is lower than the global average.
However, **Average Engaged Time across all pages in the UK has gone up** since the beginning of the year, especially after traffic hit its peak.

**UK ENGAGEMENT TRENDS**

- **January**: 24s
- **April**: 27s
Loyalty is also growing, with almost half of all traffic coming from Loyal* readers.

* Chartbeat defines a Loyal reader as someone who comes to your site every other day or more often.
Total Engaged Time on COVID-19 articles decreased slightly compared to the previous week. Most popular terms in coronavirus coverage:

1. Wuhan
2. NHS
3. CDC
4. ISSO
5. World Health Organization
6. Hubei
Almost half the engagement on the top 100 stories went to live blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>% of Top 100</th>
<th>% of engagement</th>
<th>Top traffic source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live blogs</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infographics</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longform</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Previous research shows the type of content people consume is different on each platform:

**Homepage**
- Breaking updates
- Live blogs

**Search**
- Factual content
- Personally relevant information
- Interactives & infographics

**Social**
- Human stories
- Emotional content
- Social apps
Most popular terms in non-coronavirus coverage:

**News**
- World leaders
  Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Jair Bolsonaro
- US Politics
  Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Congress, Senate, Democratic, Republican

**Sports**
- Soccer
  Premier League, Liverpool, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Arsenal, Manchester City
- Basketball
  NBA

**Entertainment**
- Celebrities
  Prince Harry, Meghan Markle
- Entertainment
  Hollywood, Netflix
- Social apps
  Instagram, Whatsapp
Key takeaways
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Growth in coverage and traffic has started to slow, particularly in countries that have been hit hard by the virus.

2. By country, traffic tends to climb quickly as the virus spreads, but peaks within days of a lockdown.

3. However, traffic remains higher than during normal news cycles.

4. The Google environment is by far the dominant source of traffic.

5. Engagement is higher on content that is directly related to coronavirus, but other topics have been steadily growing.
Where to get more info:

- Email your **Customer Success Manager**
- Learn more about Chartbeat by contacting **hello@chartbeat.com**

Stay up to date with Chartbeat’s research on our blog: **blog.chartbeat.com**
Thank you.

Jill Nicholson
Dir. of Customer Education
jill@chartbeat.com
@tumbling_after

chartbeat.com