

Usage Report

COVID-19

With COVID-19 rampaging across the globe, people have to change the way they conduct day to day activities. Governments are encouraging, and in some cases ordering, people to stay at home and avoid outdoor activities. In the U.S. alone, almost 80% of the country was ordered to shelter-in-place.

This new situation is making us change the way we conduct business. If once we could just go out to the store and buy what we need, now we try to do anything we can online. From buying groceries to every day-to-day activity you can think of, we do what we can via the Internet.

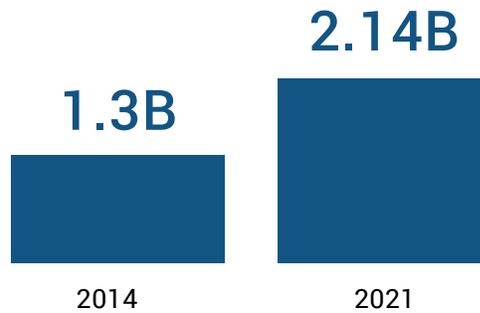
This, of course, has had a major impact on websites' incoming traffic around the world. In Ireland, for example, they saw a [rise of 50%](#) in the country's web traffic. According to [Comcast](#), "Weekday usage of VoIP and video conferencing applications is up 212 percent while VPN traffic has increased roughly 40 percent, the result of more people moving to work and learn from home environments."

Of course, we would expect that websites for online retailers would have seen an increase in traffic but what we actually saw was an increase in unforeseen places. Government websites that in normal days handle several thousands requests per month saw a spike in incoming traffic. For example, the Israeli Employment Bureau saw a massive increase in traffic and inquiries. Many lost their jobs due to the virus outbreak and went online to register for unemployment and physical registration in the bureau's branches wasn't an option anymore.

You would expect the "usual suspects" to be at the top of the list for increased data usage. Traffic to websites for gaming, online shopping and government agencies will be up and for travel, transportation, and fashion will go down.

Apparently, there are some surprises.

In the last few years, we are seeing a steady increase in the number of people using online websites to purchase goods. These consumers are adapting to the new world order quite easily. In the last 5 years, the number of Digital Buyers grew rapidly and is expected to almost [double in size](#) by 2021.



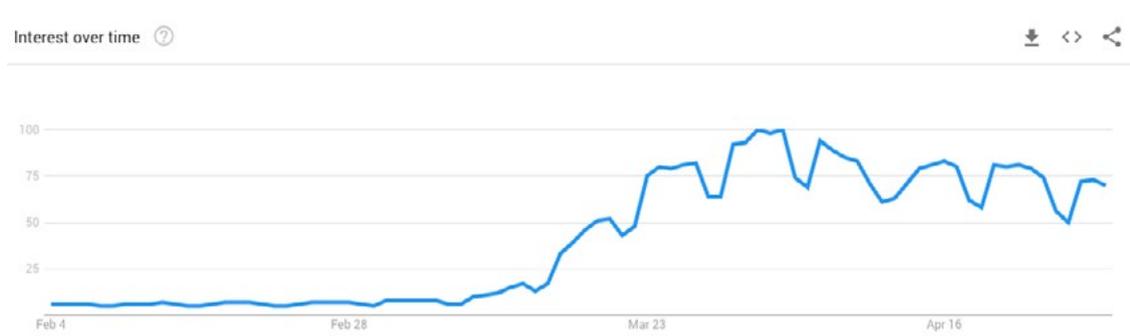
In fact, in a [global survey](#) conducted last year, 74% of in-store shoppers claimed to search online before coming to the store.



In a global survey, 74% of in-store shoppers who searched online before going to the store to shop, said they searched for something in-store related such as the closest store near them, locations, in stock near them, hours, directions, wait times, and contact information.

Even before COVID-19, the Internet was an important factor in our lives. During this outbreak, it has become a vital and indispensable tool that not only helps us to continue working, but also helps us to continue managing our day-to-day lives.

An easy way to see the impact of COVID-19 is to examine the very popular Zoom application. Zoom Video Communications is a remote conferencing service that combines video conferencing, online meetings, chat, and mobile collaboration - all of them have become crucial with Social Distancing. If we take a look at [Google Trends](#) we can see the meteoric rise of people searching for Zoom on Google in the last 3 months.



Zoom is definitely the biggest winner of the situation. In fact, according to [Fortune.com](#), Eric Yuan, the founder of Zoom, has added \$2 billion to his net worth in 2020 and is now worth \$5.6 billion. But Zoom is not the only one “profiting” from the virus outbreak. Facebook reported an increase of 50% in messaging services while shares of major companies like Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft have [outperformed the market since late January](#).

But how much did the COVID-19 virus really affect the online market? Maybe it’s just a lot of buzzwords with no real change to the numbers. We decided to check and give you the results.

How did we collect the data?

We analyzed incoming traffic data by business sector from February and compared it with the incoming traffic data from March, which is the month that we felt the effects of COVID-19. Some of the results were to be expected but some took us by surprise.

Bear in mind that this analysis is based on the data we had in hand, from which we deduced the following:

1. Healthcare

The healthcare industry is in the heart of the COVID-19 outbreak with healthcare providers battling the pandemic. While healthcare professionals are out fighting the virus, people staying at home are relying on online services to assist them with their healthcare needs.

We would expect to see a rise in online healthcare traffic but we actually saw the opposite. As people are too afraid of going out, they even try to avoid going to the doctor. As a result, they decrease their visits to their healthcare provider website as they are preferring not to schedule new appointments.



2. Travel

We can easily say that the travel industry is one of the most affected industries from the COVID-19 outbreak and not in a good way.

With people being asked to stay at home, many travel websites are seeing a decrease in incoming traffic.



The travel industry is in a state of disarray and we are expecting these numbers to go way down before they return to normal.

3. eCommerce

It would come as no surprise that online retailers' websites will show an increase in traffic. With giants like Amazon and eBay, online shopping websites were already replacing local stores. COVID-19 and social distancing did not help physical stores and people had to replace them with online shopping.

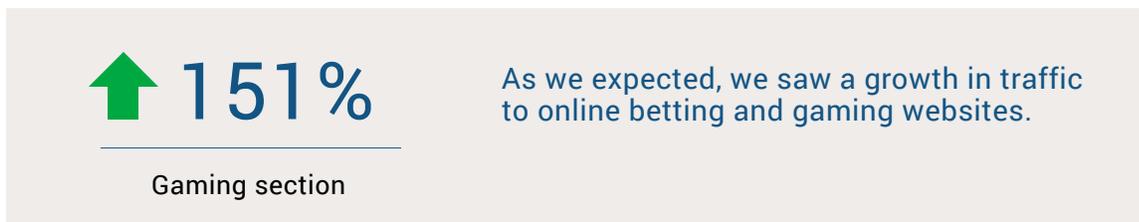
So we did expect a rise in traffic for online shopping but some of the figures were mind-blowing.



Adding to that the fact that businesses needed to find a new way to sell their products. Local stores that did not see the need in an online store, suddenly joined the digital transformation and started offering online purchase options.

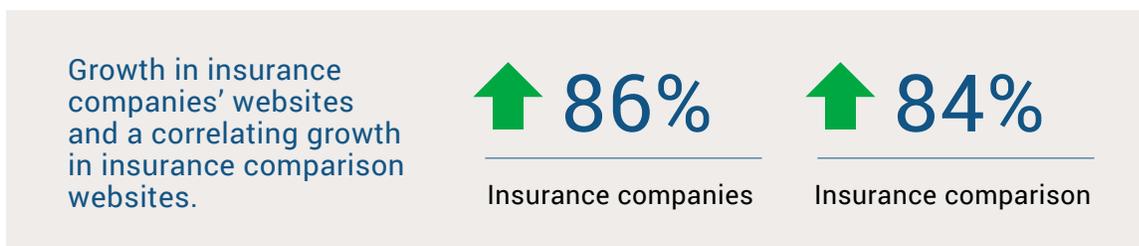
4. Gaming

It is not a big surprise to assume that people locked at home will look for various forms of entertainment. Some will binge on Netflix, some will read and some will go to online gaming. Be it multiplayer games like Fortnite or online poker, games are a great way to escape from the situation we are caught in.



5. Insurance

You wouldn't think of insurance making the list but not only that it made the list, it showed a massive growth. It might be because people are worried and trying to secure their financial future.



6. Government

This section really surprised us because when we looked at the numbers for the entire sector we saw a small growth of only 3.5%. We expected to see a massive growth as people are using more online governmental services. But, when we drilled down in the data we saw that some figures cancelled each other out.

The unemployment bureau website saw a massive increase in traffic while other municipal websites saw a drop in traffic.

 200%

Unemployment bureau

 22%

Municipalities

These figures started to make sense as so many [people lost their jobs](#) and the incoming traffic to the unemployment bureau website grew. At the same time, people avoided new adventures like buying a house or opening a business. As a direct result they stopped visiting relevant government and local municipal websites and this is why we see a shift in traffic.

7. Media

News, news and more news. We find ourselves glued to the TV or scrolling various news websites to learn more about everything going on in our community and around the world.

 153%

Media websites

As expected, we saw a rise in media websites that offer news updates.

8. Transportation

One of the industries affected by the COVID 19 is the transportation industry. Not only are many people staying at home, even those who do not are reluctant to use public transportation, ride sharing, taxis, etc. Social Distancing is making people think twice before interacting with strangers. This is why we are seeing a drop in the usage of ride sharing apps.

 32%

Ride sharing apps

These numbers of course are affected by all the different regulations that are constantly changing.

9. Various

Many other websites that deal with various activities are seeing a shift in website traffic. Here are some that we thought worth mentioning:

Fitness

 **32%**

eFitness services

With people not being allowed to visit the gym, websites that offer Fitness accessories, and eFitness services like videos, training, etc. are seeing a rise in traffic.

Education

 **29%**

Online courses

With Education we see mixed results. While some college's websites are seeing an increase, others websites are seeing a decrease. This may be explained by some institutions offering online courses and some do not. In fact, the remote learning option has truly affected the education field and as the situation prolongs, more and more institutions are adopting remote learning. We assume that we will see a rise in traffic in the near future.

 **32%**

College's websites

HR

 **6%**

Job seeking websites

Another field that was affected by the pandemic is the HR field. With millions of people being forced to go on unpaid leaves, some of them losing their jobs completely, we would expect a rise in traffic. But, maybe due to the level of confusion and uncertainty, we are seeing a drop in incoming traffic for job seeking related websites. We are also seeing a drop in traffic for web based HR platforms.

 **8%**

HR platforms

A word on security

As our data above showed, COVID-19 has had a marked effect on web traffic, but not always in the expected direction. More traffic, from a greater range of sources, and an expanded presence and dependency on the web for many organizations, gives more opportunity to malicious players. Website security, as important as it is now, will become even more critical. And fixing a problem after the fact is almost always more expensive than setting up proper controls right from the start.

Conclusion

COVID-19 is changing our lives in more ways than we can realize. People are already talking about life BC and PC - Before Covid and Post Covid - and that it might take a lot of time for things to return to normal. Also, the “normal” we knew will not be the same and we will need to adopt to a new reality.

For businesses this is even more true. Some businesses will not fully recover and will need to reinvent themselves. But we are also seeing something quite special when it comes to online services. Many stores and service providers are rediscovering the opportunities of the web and are realizing that this can be a whole new revenue stream. Local grocery stores, toy stores, coffee shops - these are just some of the businesses that moved their main activities online and more likely than not, they will keep their online presence after this. There are already talks of more organizations allowing their employees to keep working from home - if not full time then a few days a week.

While we do not know if and when we will go back to normal, we do know that the world will be different and we will be different. We can assume that the internet will be different too. How different and how websites will adapt we do not know yet and we will have to wait and see.

What we do know is that as we have seen in previous years, web attacks will keep rising. Especially now when there are new players in the online world and the major retailers are increasing their online activity.

About Reblaze

Reblaze is a cloud-native, fully managed security solution for web applications, and APIs. Hostile traffic is blocked in the cloud before it reaches the protected network.

Reblaze is a comprehensive web security solution, providing a next-gen WAF, DoS and DDoS protection, Bot Management, API Security, scraping prevention, CDN, load balancing, and more.

The platform offers a unique combination of benefits. Machine learning provides accurate, adaptive threat detection. Dedicated Virtual Private Clouds ensure maximum privacy. Top-tier infrastructure assures maximum performance. Fine-grained ACLs enable precise traffic regulation. An intuitive web-based management console provides real-time traffic control. A one-month trial offer allows you to assess Reblaze with no cost, risk, or obligation.

Reblaze is fully compliant with GDPR, SOC 1/SSAE 16/ISAE 3402, FISMA Moderate, PCI DSS, ISO 27001, FIPS 140-2, HIPAA, CSA (Cloud Security Alliance), and other standards and certifications. Our platform is ISO 27001 Certified, as well as a PCI DSS Certified Level 1 and Level 2 Service Provider.

