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# Brief: Google's Universal Analytics Retirement

Summary, Impacts, and FAQs

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# At-a-Glance: Google's Universal Analytics Retirement Announcement

## Summary

- Changes to Google Analytics announced on March 16, 2022
- Universal Analytics is effectively being retired on July 1, 2023, in favor of the newer GA4 version of Google Analytics
- To be ready with a full year of look-back data in GA4 by the deadline, your organization's GA4 tracking needs to be in place by June 30, 2022 (you'll still have time to sort out reporting impacts after tracking is migrated)

## Key Impacts

- Google Analytics tracking tags and event tags will need to be added (if you aren't already running GA4 in parallel to UA)
- Google Analytics reporting (custom reports, dashboards, etc.) will need to be aligned to GA4 sources and the new GA4 measurement protocol
- Plan an alternative solution if you rely on Google Analytics' eCommerce data as GA4's eCommerce features are still maturing
- Shorter GA4 data retention limits means most organizations will require an alternative solution for multi-year reporting

# FAQs: Retirement of Google's Universal Analytics & Migration from UA to GA4

## What's happening to Google's Universal Analytics?

On March 16th, 2022, Google announced that its Universal Analytics (UA) offering, the gold standard of Google Analytics you're most familiar with, is being retired in favor of its newest version, GA4.

## What's the timeline for retirement of Google's Universal Analytics (UA)?

There are two key dates:

- July 1, 2023: UA will stop processing new hits, but existing data will remain accessible
- January 2024 (or thereabouts\*): existing UA data will no longer be accessible

*\* Google has stated that existing UA data will remain accessible for "at least six months" after new data stops being processed.*

## What's the difference between UA and GA4?

|                                 | UA                                   | GA4  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Measurement Type</b>         | Session-based                        | Event-based  |
| <b>Base Metric</b>              | Page view                            | Event  |
| <b>Data Storage</b>             | 14 / 26 / 38 / 50 months             | 2 / 14 months  |
| <b>Hits Limit</b>               | 10m                                  | None   |
| <b>Sampling</b>                 | Yes – 500k+                          | Limited – 10m+                                       |
| <b>Thresholding for Privacy</b> | No                                   | Yes  |
| <b>Engagement Metric</b>        | Bounce Rate                          | Engaged Sessions per User + new Bounce Rate metric   |
| <b>Machine Learning</b>         | Basic                                | Advanced   |
| <b>Reporting</b>                | Lots pre-built with advanced filters | Fewer pre-built with focus on “Explorations” reports |
| <b>Roll-ups</b>                 | Yes                                  | Analytics 360 (Paid) Only                            |

## How can I do historical reporting in GA4 if the data retention cap is only 14 months?

There are a small number of standard reports which may display data older than 14 months, but for most purposes, historical reporting past 14 months won't be possible in GA4—a separate solution like BigQuery and/or PowerBI will be necessary.

GA4 changes Google Analytics' tracking from UA's page view-based approach to a more robust event-based approach, which means you'll need to blend the old UA data set with the new GA4 data set before any historical reporting can occur.

Reliable historical reporting is vital to ensuring your organization's long-term success. [Get in touch with RBA today to start planning your GA4 migration and historical reporting solution »](#)

## How do I get my data out of UA?

There are limited data export functions in Google's Universal Analytics, so if you want your entire dataset for historical reporting, you'll need to purchase Google's Analytics 360 offering—which isn't cheap.

Once you get the data out of your Google Analytics UA properties, you'll need a solution like BigQuery and/or Power BI to store the data and run analysis on it.

Looking to avoid purchasing Analytics 360 but want to get the most out of your existing UA dataset as possible? [Get in touch with RBA today to explore your UA data export options »](#)

## Do I need a new Google Analytics tracking tag for GA4?

If you're an RBA client and we manage your Google Tag Manager (GTM) container, we've got you covered—you are already running GA4 in parallel with UA, so no new tracking tag will be required. If you have sites that aren't yet setup with GTM, or you have third-party applications that don't support GTM, we'll need to work together to ensure these properties get migrated.

However, if you aren't already running GA4 in parallel with UA, you'll need a new GA4-based tracking tag. [Get in touch with RBA today to jumpstart your GA4 migration »](#)

## How does the switch from UA to GA4 impact Google Analytics event tracking tags currently in use?

If you're an RBA client and we manage your Google Tag Manager (GTM) container, we've got you covered—we have already enabled a "translation" feature within GA4 that interprets your UA-based Google Analytics event tags and captures them in GA4 as custom events. We are seeking clarification from Google as to whether this solution will be viable long-term or if it will be necessary to migrate UA-based event tags to GA4-based custom event tags.

Most Google Analytics event tracking tags are based on the UA standard and will need to be migrated to the GA4 standard. Keep in mind, GA4 changes the way events are structured (from category/action/label to event/param), so your events schema may need to be revised to fit this new approach.

## **I recently setup event tracking tags based on the UA standard; will those need to be migrated to GA4?**

If you're an RBA client and we manage your Google Tag Manager (GTM) container, we've got you covered. We've already set you up with GA4 tracking and are capturing your UA-based event tags in GA4 using the "translation" feature (see FAQ "How does this impact the Google Analytics event tracking tags I currently have setup?").

If a migration of your event tracking tags is required, we'll work with you to create and execute a plan to ensure you'll have a full year of data in GA4 by the UA retirement deadline in 2023.

## **Will the change to GA4 impact my existing Google Analytics goals?**

Yes, when migrating from Google Analytics' UA to GA4 version, you'll need to define your old UA Goals as new GA4 Conversions.

Frequently, Google Analytics goals get left behind as an organization's measurement strategy evolves. [Get in touch with RBA today to ensure your GA4 migration is strategically aligned to your organization's goals »](#)

## **How will the migration to GA4 impact my e-commerce tracking?**

GA4 changes the way eCommerce tracking is handled in Google Analytics. To be candid, it's more time-intensive to setup than with UA. GA4 also modifies the reporting side of e-commerce tracking, removing lots of the standard UA e-commerce reports many relied on; this will require creation of custom e-commerce dashboards to gain visibility into your online store's performance.

## How will the switch from UA to GA4 change my reporting?

GA4 moves away from the breadth of standard pre-built reports that UA was known for, instead preferring “Explorations” reports that allow more robust customization—at the expense of ease-of-use.

Google Analytics’ built-in custom reports, including those that get sent out automatically on a regular schedule, will need to be revamped within GA4.

The switch to GA4 from UA will also have a big impact on lots of users who leverage Google Analytics Views, especially when segmenting traffic, sites/sub-sites, etc. GA4 removes Views as we know them in UA, leaving us with a few different options for replacements:

- Create separate GA4 properties, which allow data access control but requires sending data via separate GA4 tags;
- Create custom reports via “Explorations” in GA4, which allow advanced filtering but lack access controls;
- Leverage BigQuery, Google Data Studio, and/or PowerBI to create custom data visualizations with advanced filtering and access controls.

If you use Google Data Studio or another data visualization/dash boarding solution, you’ll need to update your reports there to pull from the new GA4 data source and events schema. However, not all metrics/dimensions are available in Google Data Studio yet, so you’ll likely need to rely on the Explorations reports for things like detailed landing page data sets.

Reliable, accessible reporting is vital to ensuring your organization’s long-term success. [Get in touch with RBA today to start planning your GA4 reporting solution »](#)

## How do I migrate my UA roll-up reporting into GA4?

The free version of GA4 does not support roll-up reporting. There are some ways to achieve a similar outcome within the constraints of GA4, but ultimately, Google is directing roll-up reporting users to their paid Analytics 360 offering—which isn’t cheap.

Want to avoid purchasing Analytics 360 but still get roll-up reporting in GA4? [Get in touch with RBA today to explore your GA4 migration and reporting options »](#)



## How will the move to GA4 impact my paid media and attribution data?

You won't need to re-pixel your third-party trackers, and your campaign URLs that leverage UTM parameters will continue to work. However, attribution modeling will look different—with the notable absence of multi-touch attribution modeling.

If you're using Google Ads, you'll need to link your Ads account to your GA4 property and will also need to migrate your UA Goals into GA4 Conversions (and re-import any shared conversions from GA4 → Google Ads).

One of the big benefits of GA4 is its enhanced machine learning algorithms that will help bridge the growing data gap arising from privacy-related changes (think GDPR, iOS 14, etc.).

## Given the UA retirement announcement, is now the right time to switch analytics platforms?

Making a change in your analytics platform is a big undertaking. There are multiple alternatives to Google Analytics, several of which are recognized as leaders by Gartner.

[Get in touch with RBA today to ensure you're choosing the best fit for your organization's complex analytics needs »](#)

## In Closing

We know this is a BIG change, and it probably feels like Google's springing it on us at the worst time. We're here for you, we've got your back. RBA has been preparing for this for quite some time, and we're ready to support you as you and your organization prepare for the retirement of Universal Analytics over the next year. [Contact RBA today to get started »](#)

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