



# WHY YOUR ORGANIC SESSIONS MIGHT BE DOWN AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT



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## INTRODUCTION

Whether we like it or not (and there's ample reason for both positions), many of our brands are dependent on the organic traffic we receive through Google, and there are few things as scary for us as noticing a sudden or trending decline in that traffic and the loss of revenue it can presage.

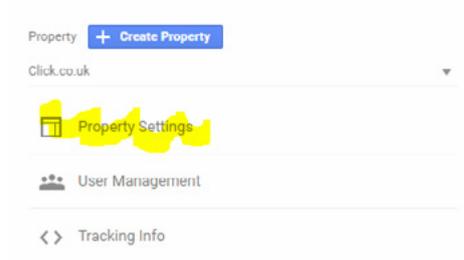
One of the issues with a business ecosystem becoming almost entirely reliant on one source of traffic to their brand is that it can seem like we have no control over that traffic and are simply subject to the ups and downs that come.

While implementing SEO best practice is obviously the main way to avoid major traffic loss, but there are events that can impact our traffic over which we have little control – as well as things which have impact about which we are not aware.

This eBook will attempt to cover a fair few of the bases – giving you a list of things to look out for both to prevent traffic drops and also to help resolve any issues that may cause one.

## WHAT ARE ORGANIC SESSIONS?

Organic sessions are the result of a user entering your site from a search engine result page (SERP) having clicked on an unpaid, or 'organic' link. This is distinct from other web traffic through inbound links which is referred to as resulting from 'referral'.



## HOW TO FIND OUT YOUR ORGANIC SESSIONS FIGURES

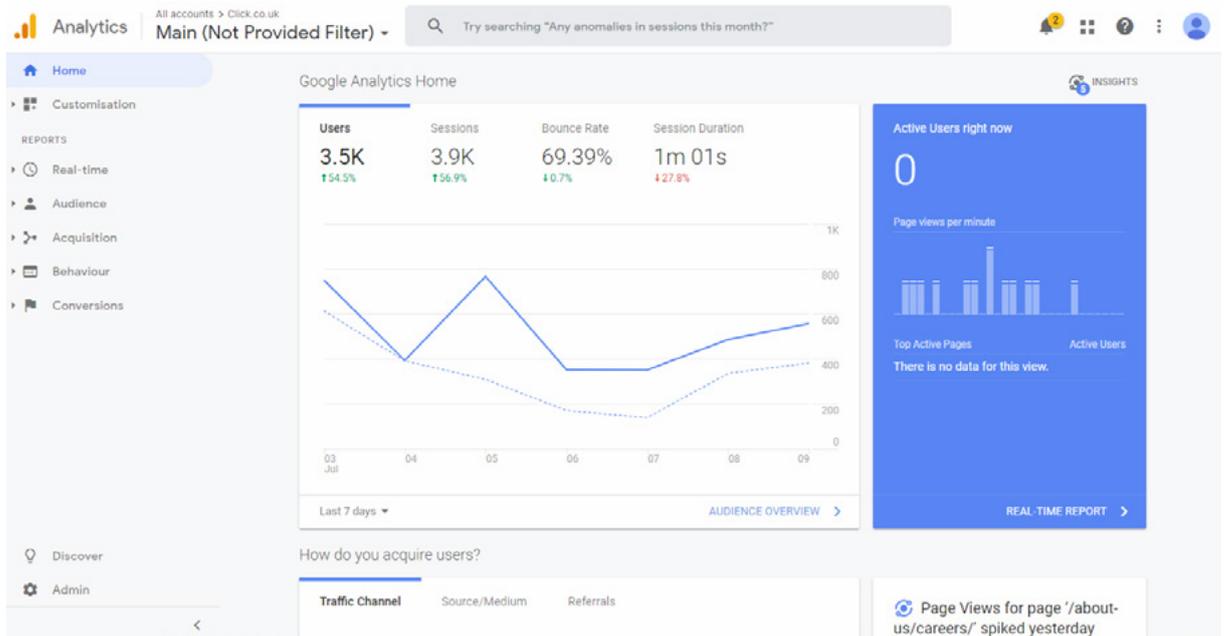
Your organic sessions are discoverable using Google Analytics. If you haven't added the Google tracking script to your site, you can find your tracking code by using the Admin tab in your analytics, selecting the right account and property and then 'Property Settings'.

You'll then see a 'Tracking ID' at the top of your basic settings. You can then add this code into the gtag.js snippet (in place of GA\_MEASUREMENT\_ID and place it directly after the <head> tag across the site. This will allow you to pull in the information you'll need to track things like organic sessions.

```
<!-- Google Analytics -->
<script>
(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){
(i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),
m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m)
})(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga');

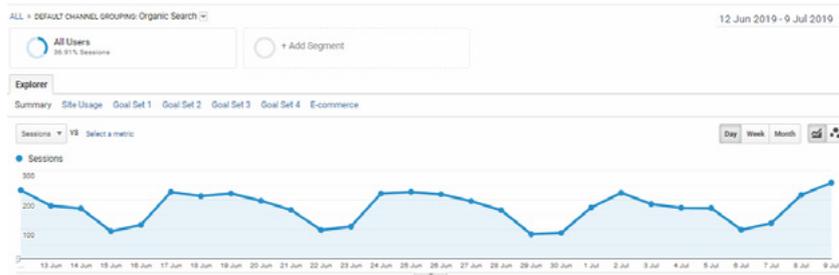
ga('create', 'GA_MEASUREMENT_ID', 'auto');
ga('send', 'pageview');
</script>
<!-- End Google Analytics -->
```

Once you have Analytics set up, your main screen will look something like the below:



To find your organic sessions, you will need to select 'Acquisition', then 'All Traffic', then Channels.

After choosing the above options, if you click on the 'Organic Traffic' channel, you'll be given a report which allows you to track your organic sessions over time.



- Acquisition
  - Overview
  - All Traffic
    - Channels**
    - Treemaps
    - Source/Medium
    - Referrals
    - Google Ads
    - Search console
    - Social
    - Campaigns

## REASONS AND RESOLUTIONS

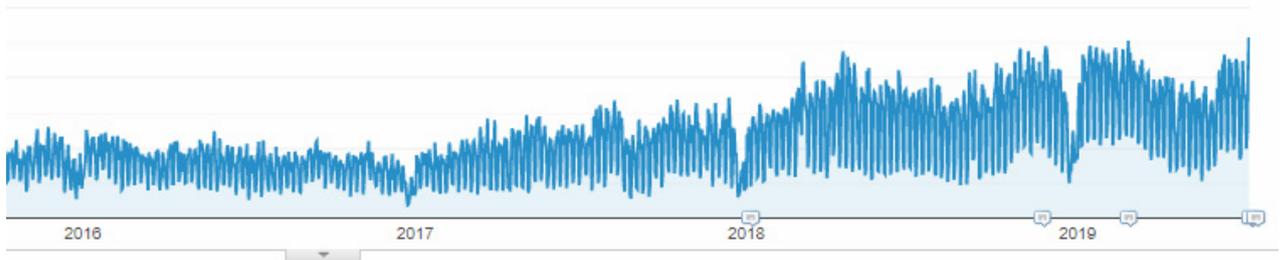
There are as many reasons for a drop in sessions as there are websites, but what we're going to have to do here is cover the most common cases and try to empower you to be able to spot edge cases on your own.

### MAKE SURE YOU'VE DISCOUNTED THE BASICS

While it will mostly go without saying, there are a few causes of apparently troubling traffic drops which can be fairly easily explained and resolved, but if you're new to tracking or to a brand, then it's worth considering them before engaging full-blown panic mode.

#### Seasonality

Unless you've been specifically briefed, seasonality can cause heart palpitations – the vast majority of brands will experience seasonal variation in organic sessions regardless of industry. Click, for example, experiences a drop (as most B2B businesses will) around the Christmas period. The below, for example, despite showing growth, shows a not insignificant drop in the middle of December each year:



There will be a seasonal impact on all businesses – so it's important to take the long view when considering a traffic drop. Garden furniture retail, for example, will see peaks in the summer months and troughs in the winter, while bed retailers experience the reverse.

So take a look at the long view (if you have it) and look for trends in the data.

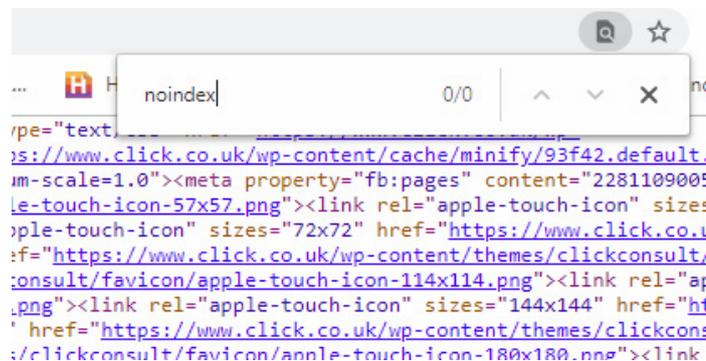
## Noindex

This happens more often than it should – because despite the potential catastrophic consequences of the error, it’s an unfortunately easy one to make. The majority of brands will have a staging or development site which, for obvious reasons, they want to keep out of the index. In order to do this, they will add `<meta name=“robots” content=“noindex”>` to the development site. The problem occurs when new changes are rolled out to the live site and the “noindex” tag is not removed from the site’s HTML when the roll out happens, resulting in the complete removal of the site from Google SERPs (though the site will still be discoverable in Bing, the majority of most organic traffic comes from Google).



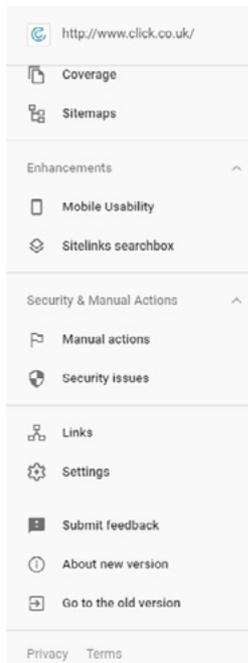
No index visibility impact chart. Source: Moz

You can find out whether this is the case fairly easily without tools by visiting the site or page you feel has lost the traffic and right clicking to ‘View Page Source’ which will open in another window.



In that window, simply CTRL+F (or the Apple equivalent) and search for ‘noindex’ – hopefully you’ll return no result, but if you do, you’ll need to get on to the phone to your developer straight away.

## CHECK GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE FOR PENALTY NOTIFICATIONS



While for the most part, manual action penalties are unlikely to be a concern, it is still worth checking to ensure that any traffic loss is not due to a specific penalty given to your site. In order to do this, you can log in to your Google Search Console account and select 'Manual actions' from the left hand menu bar (under 'Security & Manual Actions').

After which, you'll hopefully see the below message:



However, if Google has taken any action against your site, you'll find the details of it here. They will generally fall into one of three categories – each of which has the cure in the title to a large extent.

### On page violations:

- Hacked content spam
- Incorrect structured data
- Major and pure spam problems
- Spam problems
- Unnatural outbound links
- User-generated spam

### Off page violations

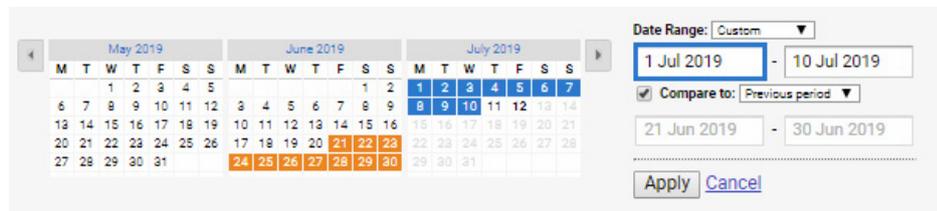
- Unnatural inbound links

### Reconsideration requests & related notifications

- Disavow file updated notification
- Reconsideration request (submission confirmed)
- Reconsideration request rejected
- Reconsideration request processed
- Reconsideration request approved

## CHECK WHETHER TRAFFIC LOSS IS SITE-WIDE

Again, in Google Analytics, you'll need to access the 'Organic Traffic' report. Rather than compare over an extended period, however, you can amend the date filter to compare periods.



Then you'll need to select a point before and after the drop and then scan through the landing page to see whether there are noticeable drops in the sessions of specific pages.

Landing Page	Acquisition			Behaviour			Conversions		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration	Contact Us - April 21st (Goal 1 Conversion Rate)	Contact Us - April 21st (Goal 1 Completions)	Contact Us - April 21st (Goal 1 Value)
	16.19% <small>1,830 vs 1,575</small>	1.27% <small>85.90% vs 84.80%</small>	17.66% <small>1,572 vs 1,336</small>	1.21% <small>72.95% vs 73.84%</small>	2.89% <small>1.51 vs 1.47</small>	8.21% <small>00:01:31 vs 00:01:24</small>	136.68% <small>0.60% vs 0.25%</small>	175.00% <small>11 vs 4</small>	0.00% <small>£0.00 vs £0.0</small>
1. [REDACTED]									
01-Jul-2019 - 10-Jul-2019	272 (14.86%)	88.60%	241 (15.33%)	91.18%	1.10	00:00:45	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
21-Jun-2019 - 30-Jun-2019	274 (17.40%)	89.42%	245 (18.34%)	90.51%	1.11	00:00:28	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
% Change	-0.73%	-0.91%	-1.63%	0.74%	-0.26%	58.94%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
2. /									
01-Jul-2019 - 10-Jul-2019	219 (11.97%)	76.71%	168 (10.69%)	48.86%	2.47	00:03:09	2.74%	6 (54.55%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
21-Jun-2019 - 30-Jun-2019	194 (12.32%)	72.68%	141 (10.55%)	50.00%	1.94	00:01:56	1.03%	2 (50.00%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
% Change	12.99%	5.55%	19.15%	-2.28%	27.35%	62.82%	165.75%	200.00%	0.00
3. [REDACTED]									
01-Jul-2019 - 10-Jul-2019	148 (8.89%)	89.66%	133 (8.68%)	81.76%	1.22	00:01:13	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
21-Jun-2019 - 30-Jun-2019	139 (8.83%)	91.37%	127 (9.51%)	91.37%	1.11	00:00:16	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	£0.00 (0.00%)
% Change	6.47%	-1.64%	4.72%	-10.52%	9.78%	363.46%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00
4. [REDACTED]									

If you don't spot any specific pages with drops, you can assume that the issue is site-wide and your exploration will need to continue. If you do see a page with a drop, you can look to investigate further, by checking your CMS for the most recent changes to the page. For example:

- Has it been altered so that it no longer answers the query that was driving traffic?**  
 If so, firstly establish the reason for the change, and if no convincing reason exists, reverse the change.
- Has the page URL changed so that traffic is now hitting a 404 error?**  
 It happens, but when it does, you'll need to redirect the 404ing URL (and the previous URL if you can't recreate it exactly) to the new one.

## CHECK SOME OF THE ALGORITHM TRACKERS

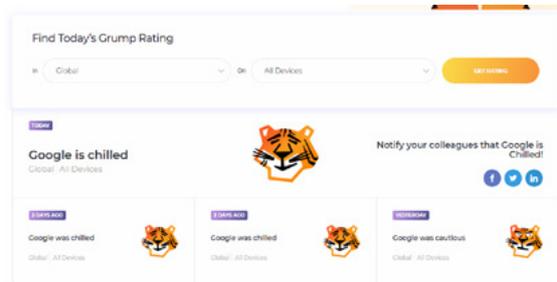
While, generally speaking, if you are immersed in SEO you'll be aware from moment one when the rumours begin circulating about a new algorithm update. However, not everyone wants to convert their Twitter in to a timeline of search news, so if you've spotted a drop then it's worthwhile checking one or two of the algorithm trackers.

These are tools which specifically track fluctuations in Google's ranking algorithm and allow you to observe whether your issue may run a little deeper in the industry at large. A few of them to start are:



### Algoroo

<https://algoroo.com/>



### Google Grump

<https://www accuranker.com/grump>



### Mozcast

<https://moz.com/mozcast/>

Each of these measure rankings across a number of key domains and rate them against a base level to determine whether there is above average movement in the rankings which might indicate a specific algorithm update.

Sadly, in most cases, the advice from Google is minimal around what are generally referred to as 'Broad Core Updates', with SEOs generally referred to the [Google Quality Rater Guidelines](#) to improve their performance, however, it's worthwhile following Google's [Gary Illyes](#), [John Mueller](#) and [Danny Sullivan](#) who are on the frontlines and will no doubt be well underway fielding questions by the time you notice a drop in sessions.

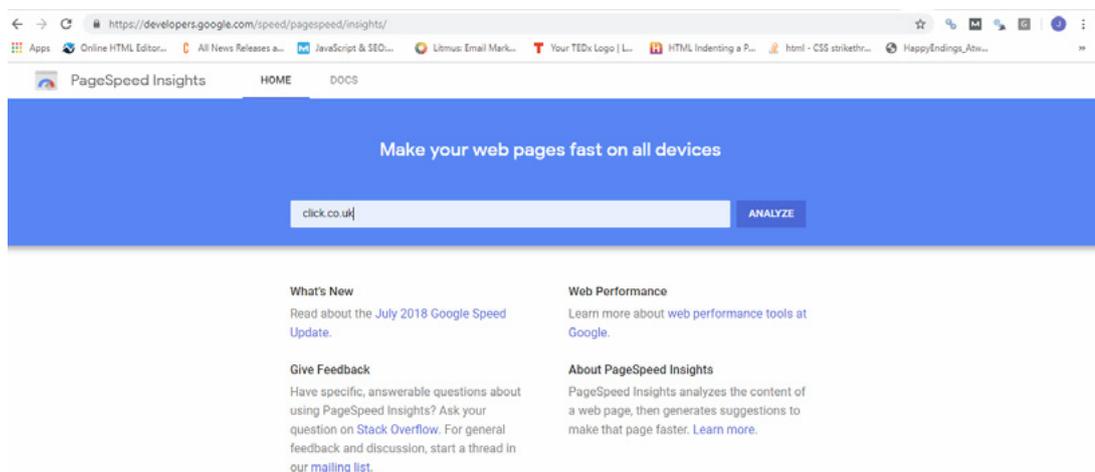
For algorithm updates for which there is no express reason for the change (nothing explicit given by Google directly), the actions you'll need to take are to interrogate your site for lapses in best practice (you can find out many of these from our [SEO Uncovered series](#)).

# CHECK YOUR LIGHTHOUSE REPORT AND PAGESPEED INSIGHTS REPORT

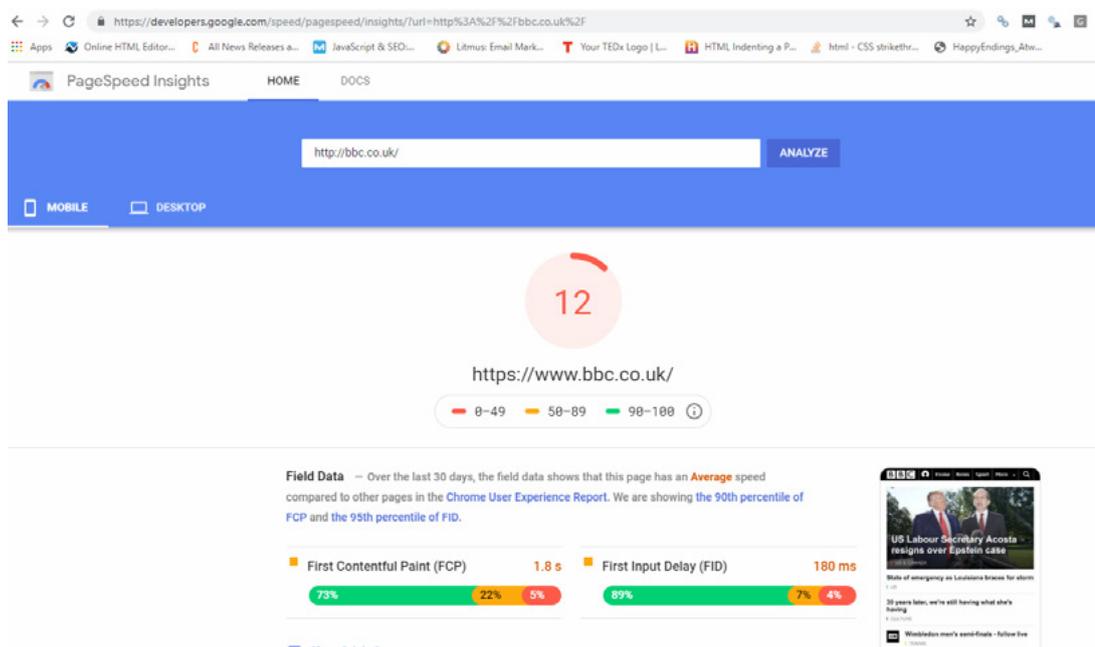
In addition to the above mentioned methods, there are a couple of key tools you can use to check that your performance is currently up to scratch, these are your: ‘Lighthouse Report’ and ‘[PageSpeed Insights](#)’ report.

## PageSpeed Insights

The simpler of the two, your PageSpeed Insights report can be accessed by going to the URL linked to previously and entering your site’s URL.

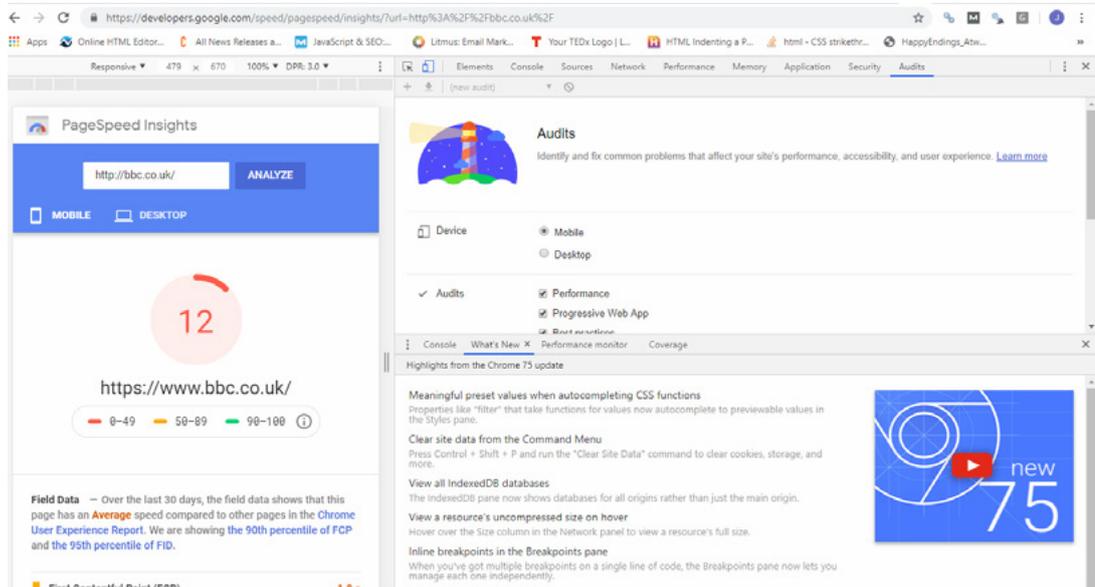


This will then provide a unique page speed report for both Desktop and Mobile – allowing you to judge your site against the increasingly important speed metric.

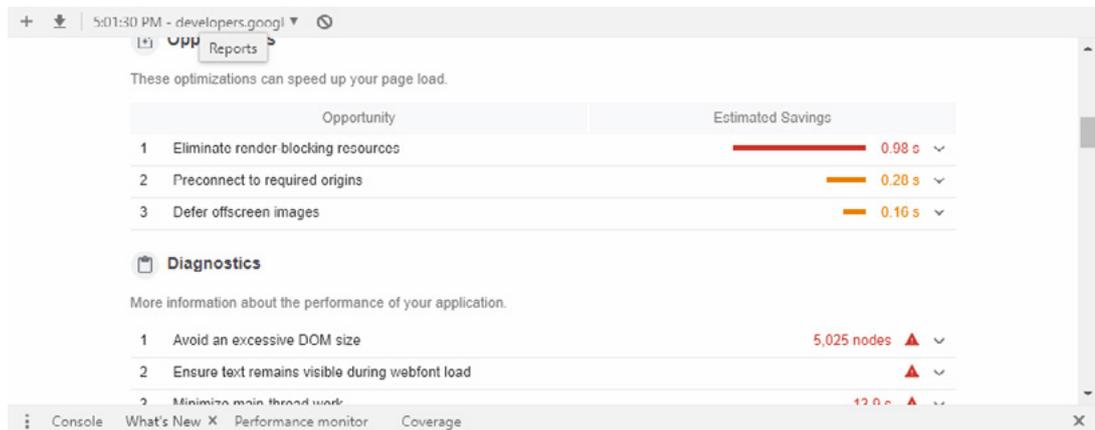


## Lighthouse Report

Slightly more difficult to access, but nevertheless useful, you can find your Lighthouse Report by opening 'Developer Tools' by clicking the burger menu (top right), then 'More tools' and then 'Developer tools'. You then select 'Audits' and you'll be presented with a selection of reporting options for your site.



This will then generate your Lighthouse Report and the resultant advice for webmasters:





## CONCLUSION

While there are a plethora of reasons for a potential drop in organic sessions, you do have the power to diagnose many of them using free tools available online. While recovery from some issues is easier than for others, recovery is seldom impossible.

The main advice is to maintain a critical eye on your performance so that you're not suddenly surprised by a dramatic drop at the end of the month. The sooner a drop in sessions is spotted, the quicker you can leap into action and begin the process of correcting the issues that have led to it.

# GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

## ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

## YOUR BESPOKE ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

REQUEST NOW



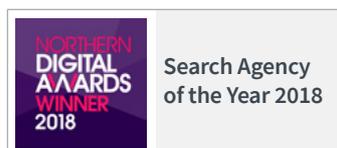
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## OUR ACCREDITATIONS



## OUR AWARDS



## OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor **TRAX** rank **TRAX** feed **TRAX** link **TRAX** pro **TRAX** page **TRAX**