It may come as a shock to you, but Google Analytics reports reflect only a tiny part of your real statistics. It's not that you're doing it all wrong, it's just that even Google cannot possibly track every single Internet user. While you can fix some Google Analytics problems, others currently have no real solutions.

Today we'll talk about the latter category. You can't fix these problems, but you should be aware of their existence to make informed judgements based on your reports.
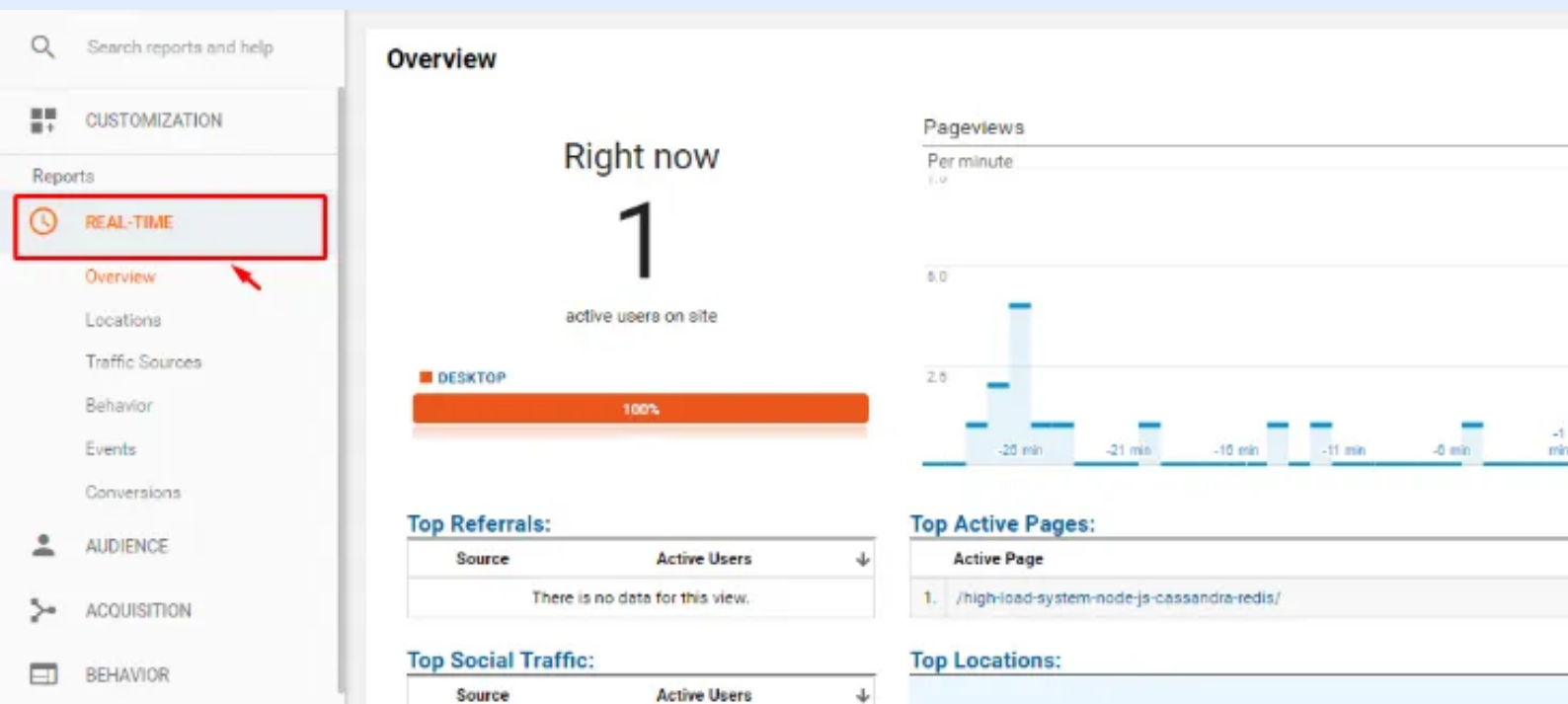
No Cookies

No Cookies is one of the problems you can't fix. Google Analytics is unable to track users who have disabled cookies. No cookies, no data – simple as that. Cookies are essential because they tag users and record information about their activity on your website over the course of multiple visits. There are dozens of reasons why cookies can cause problems:

- The user's firewall deletes or blocks cookies
- The user deletes them manually
- The user's browser doesn't accept cookies

FAQ: The user enabled cookies, but GA still can't track any data. Why is this?

There may be two reasons:

1. **Disabled JavaScript:** Google Analytics can't track users whose browser is unable to load the JavaScript tags placed in the page's code.
1. **Google hasn't processed the data yet:** GA is 6-24 hours behind based on the size of your website, so be patient and check the report later. To make sure that your data is being collected, jump to Real Time Mode, where information will appear within 15 minutes.

Session Timeout

Yet another problem caused by cookies. There are two types of cookies used by GA:

- **Permanent cookies** - these cookies are placed on the device on the first visit and remain there until they are expired or deleted.
- **Session cookies** - these cookies are deposited on each visit.

But what happens if a user browses the website but then leaves the computer to have a 30 minute nap, after which he or she comes back and continues browsing? Unfortunately, GA will consider this a brand new session, as it sends a new session cookie after 30 minutes of inactivity.

Different or Shared Devices
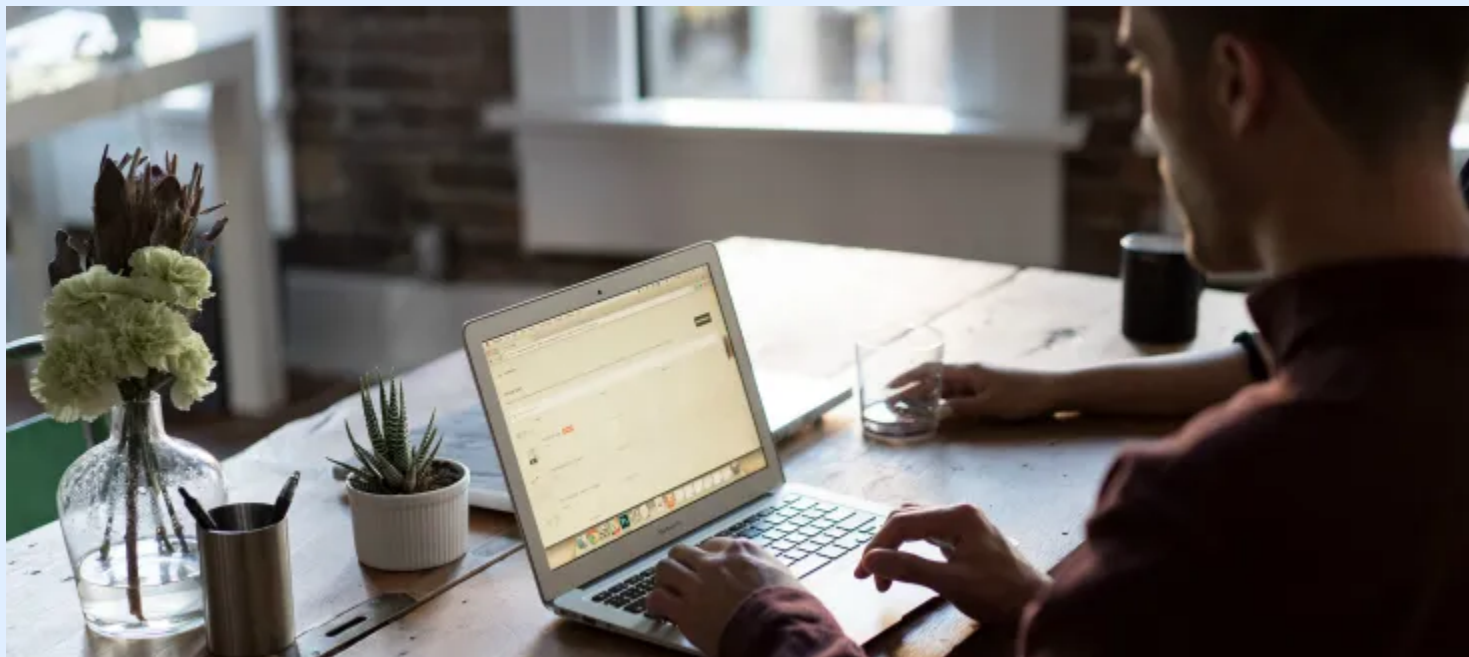
Different Devices

Imagine this situation: a man is stuck in traffic and starts searching for new headphones on his smartphone. When he comes home, he accesses the page he bookmarked from his computer and buys the headphones. In a perfect world, this should be tracked as one visitor who switched devices. In reality, these are counted as two unique non-related visits.

Shared Devices

Moreover, there is a reverse situation when two or more people use a shared device. For example, after the man bought the headphones, his wife gets on the computer and visits the same website for the first time, searching for a hair dryer. Ideally, this should be counted as two separate visits, but the cookie is tied to the device, so Google Analytics will consider the two visits as visits from the same consumer.

"What's the point of using Google Analytics if the information is not correct?" you may ask. Keep your head up: Google Analytics compensates for the inaccuracy by collecting huge volumes of data, therefore the sampling is still statistically representative and provides you with a clear picture of visitors and buyers.

At the same time, the reasons behind some of the illogical data can be found in one of the afore mentioned cases. When you understand the problems and know what causes them, you see these reports in a whole new light.

We'd also like to help you get to the root of your analytics issues. Feel free to get in touch with our app creators if you need assistance or have any questions.