

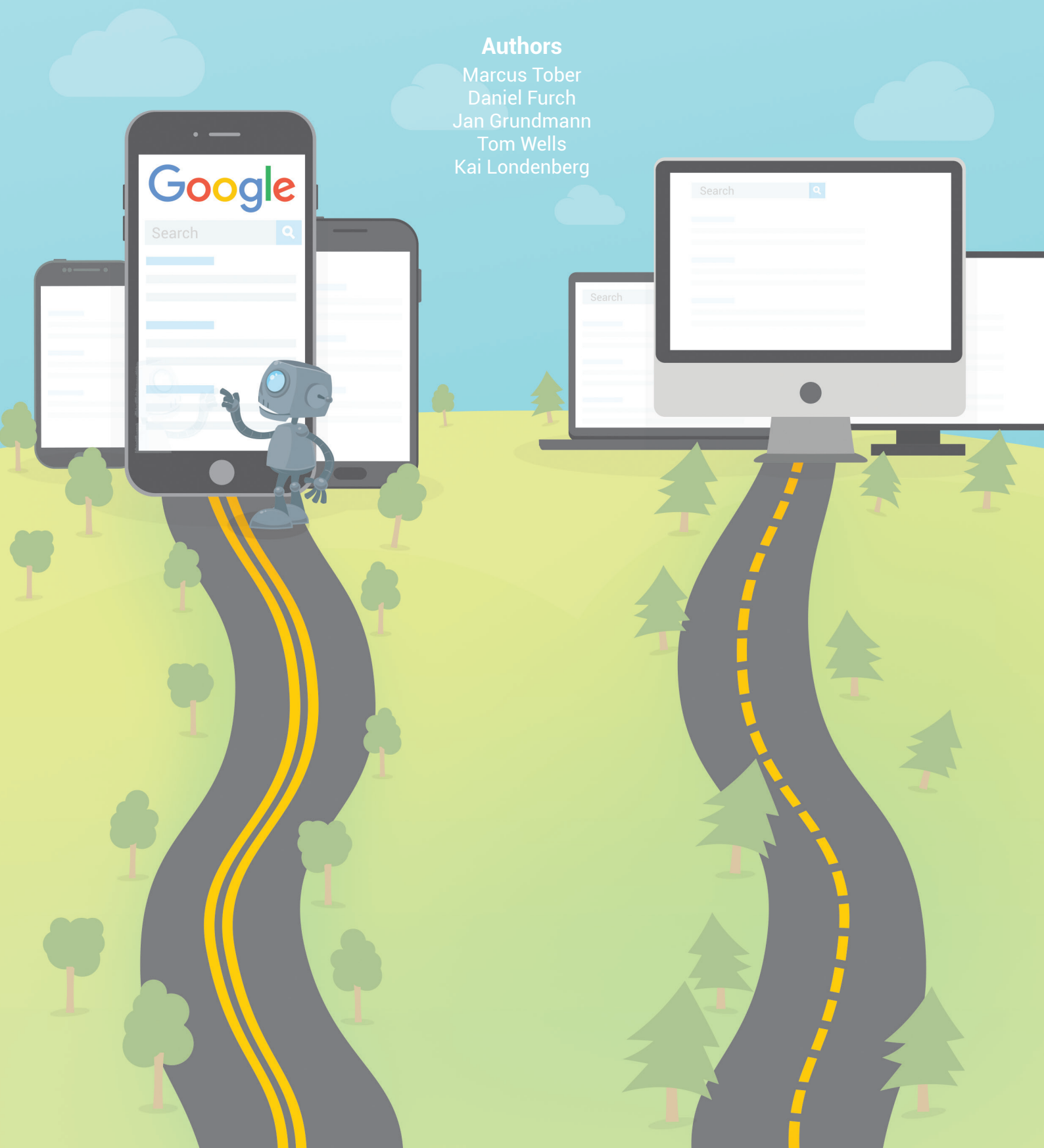
# Mobile Ranking Factors

Google US 2015

- Mapping out mobile search -

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## ABOUT SEARCHMETRICS

Searchmetrics, founded in 2005 is the pioneer and leading global enterprise platform for Search Experience Optimization. Search Experience Optimization combines SEO, Content Performance Marketing, Social Media and PR analysis to create the foundation for developing and executing a successful content strategy. It places the spotlight on the customer, contributing to a superior and memorable online experience.

Over 100,000 users from more than 8,000 brands use the Searchmetrics Suite to plan, execute, measure and report on their digital marketing strategies. Supported by its Research Cloud, which is a unique continually updated global data and knowledge repository, Searchmetrics answers the key questions asked by SEO professionals and digital marketers. It delivers a wealth of forecasts, analytic insights and recommendations that boost visibility and engagement, and increase online revenue. Many respected brands, such as T-Mobile, eBay, Siemens, Zalando, Tripadvisor and Symantec, rely on the Searchmetrics Suite.

Searchmetrics has offices in Berlin, San Mateo, New York, London, and Paris, and is backed by Holzbrinck Digital, Neuhaus Partners and Iris Capital.

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[SEARCHMETRICS SUITE](#)

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Responsive design  
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### CONCLUSION

Why Mobilegeddon?  
Technical  
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Backlinks

Building on our annual ranking factors study for desktop search results, in this paper we present for the first time analyses of mobile Google search results in the same main ranking factor categories: Technical, User Experience, Content, Backlinks and Social Signals. This year's mobile results are compared with last year's mobile results, as well as with the 2015 desktop results\*.

This paper is aimed at webmasters, SEOs and content marketers who want to discover which aspects are important for mobile search rankings, what the top 10 results do differently, and how successful pages in mobile search differ to desktop.

## THE FOCUS OF THIS PAPER IS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. *Which ranking factors are most important for mobile, particularly after the Google mobile update?*
2. *How do ranking factors differ in mobile and desktop search?*
3. *What average values do top-10 landing pages have in relation to these ranking factors?*

In answering these questions, we aim to provide targeted recommendations and mobile specific strategies for your own web projects. Knowing how content differs in mobile search compared with desktop, or what average site speed the top 10 mobile search results have, is a great basis to start benchmarking and optimizing your page.



*\* Our analysis is based on one general keyword set. This set comprises 10,000 keywords. For each keyword the first 30 mobile search results were analyzed. The keyword set is identical to the set used for the desktop ranking factors, in order to be able to make a meaningful comparison. The data for the mobile results was pulled after the Google mobile-friendly update. Where logical, mobile comparisons with the previous year have been integrated with desktop results. In certain cases, Wikipedia has been excluded from results to give a more accurately reflect current trends and avoid data skew.*

**Find more info here:**

WHAT IS A RANKING FACTOR?

# 1

## MOBILE SEARCH: TRAFFIC DEVELOPMENT AND GOOGLE UPDATES

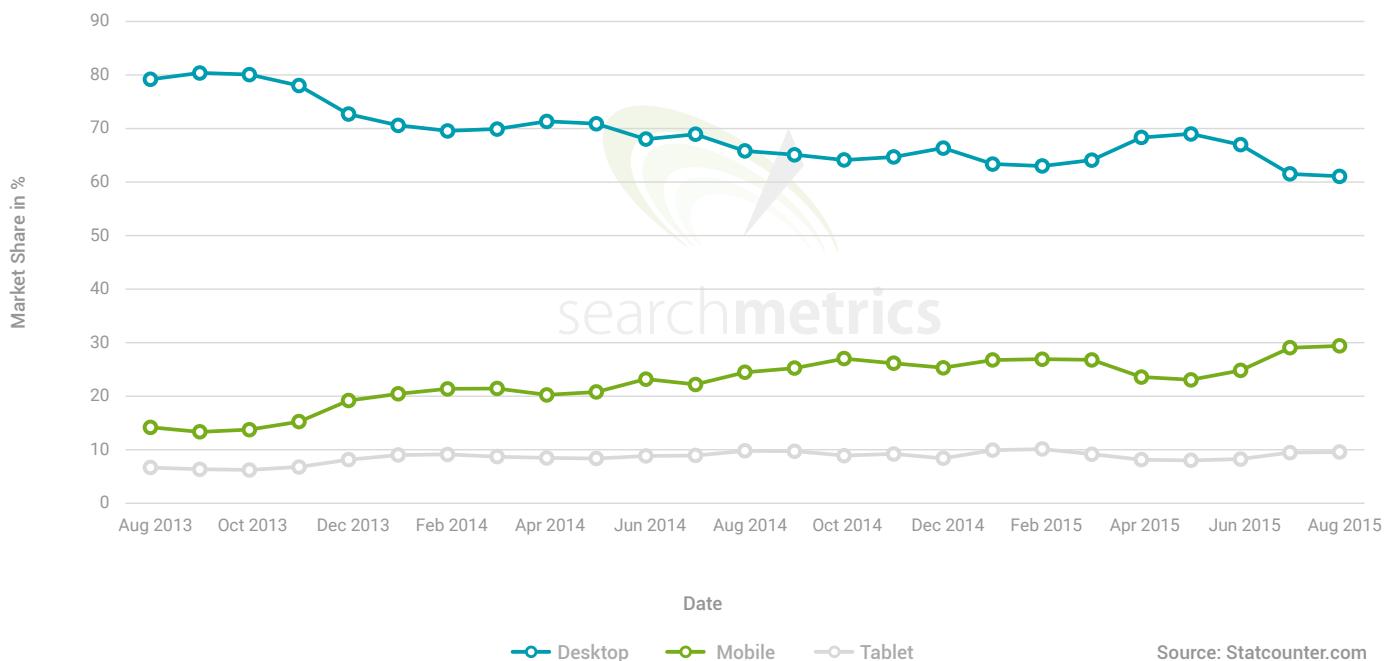
### THE RISE OF MOBILE TRAFFIC

As mobile end devices become increasingly widespread, mobile internet usage and with it mobile search requests have continually increased over the last few years. The customer journey increasingly involves mobile devices.

- According to StatCounter, the share of total online traffic in the U.S. made up by mobile more than doubled from 14% to 29% between August 2013 and August 2015 [/source](#)
- Google stated in spring 2015: "In fact, more Google searches take place on mobile devices than on computers in 10 countries including the US [...]." [/source](#)

### GROWTH OF MOBILE

US - AUG 2013-AUG 2015



# MOBILE SEARCH: TRAFFIC DEVELOPMENT AND GOOGLE UPDATES

## Google's mobile optimization history



### December 2011

Google announces the launch of Googlebot-Mobile on their blog. This bot is tasked specifically with crawling to determine which sites provide a better mobile experience.

### June 2013

Google devalues pages with faulty (mobile) redirects and smartphone-only errors.

### August 2013

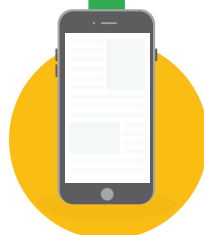
Google adds mobile support for their PageSpeed tool, giving webmasters information on their website and how to speed it up specific to mobile devices.

### November 2014

Google begins adding „Mobile-friendly“ at the beginning of site descriptions within SERPs. If none of the past signs didn't send the signal certainly this one should, Google wants to send mobile visitors to sites that will provide them with the best experience for their device.

### April 21, 2015

Roll-out of the Google Mobile Update, also known as “Mobilegeddon”



*More Google searches take place on mobile devices than on computers.*

# 2

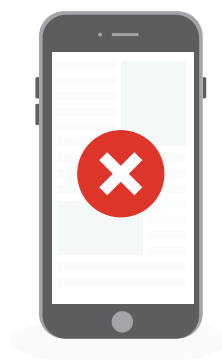
## MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

### DEFINITION

To ensure that your site is mobile-friendly, you need to provide a good user experience for visitors using smartphones and mobile devices. Two major issues are the smaller screen size and the touch navigation instead of mouse pointer.

Here are the 7 most common mistakes according to Google [/source](#):

- *Blocked JavaScript, CSS and image files*
- *Unplayable content*
- *Faulty redirects*
- *Mobile-only 404s*
- *Avoid interstitials*
- *Irrelevant cross-links*
- *Slow mobile pages*



Please note that the evaluation of a website's mobile friendliness by Google is page-based, not domain-based. So it is possible to have both mobile-friendly and not mobile-friendly URLs on one and the same domain at the same time. Google recognizes changes immediately (depending on the crawl time). So changes on your website should have immediate effects to the performance of your optimized URLs.

Google's mobile-friendly test can found [here](#).

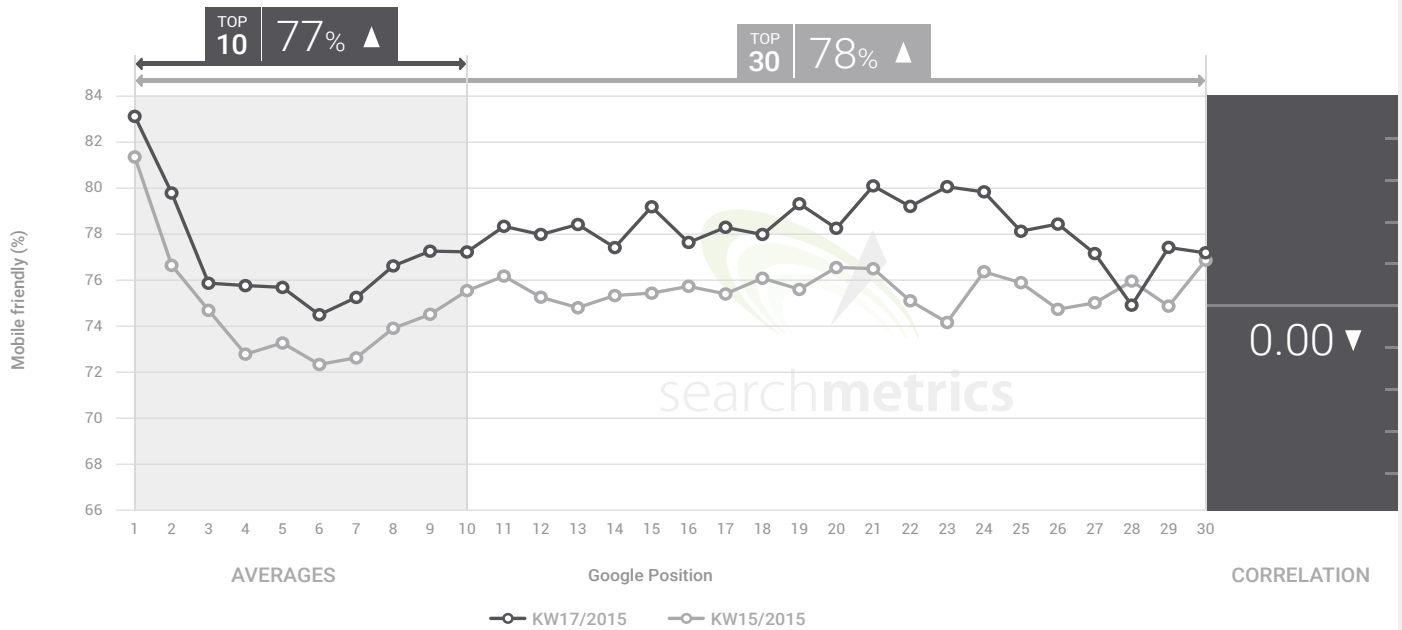
### CONFIGURATION

There are three methods for creating mobile websites [/source](#). A separate mobile URL would be something like m.example.com or mobile.example.com.

Configuration	Does my URL stays the same?	Does my HTML stay the same?
Responsive Web Design	✓	✓
Dynamic Serving	✓	X
Separate URLs	X	X

## MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

### MOBILE FRIENDLY



### THE MOBILE UPDATE A.K.A. MOBILEGEDDON

The much anticipated Google mobile-friendly update was rolled out on 21 April 2015. This update aimed to devalue pages that disregard Google guidelines for mobile search results. Although it created less turbulence than hashtag #Mobilegeddon was expecting, partly due to preemptive measures by many sites to become mobile-friendly, there have been some immediate impacts on the visibility of some sites.

*Find out more on Searchmetrics blog:*

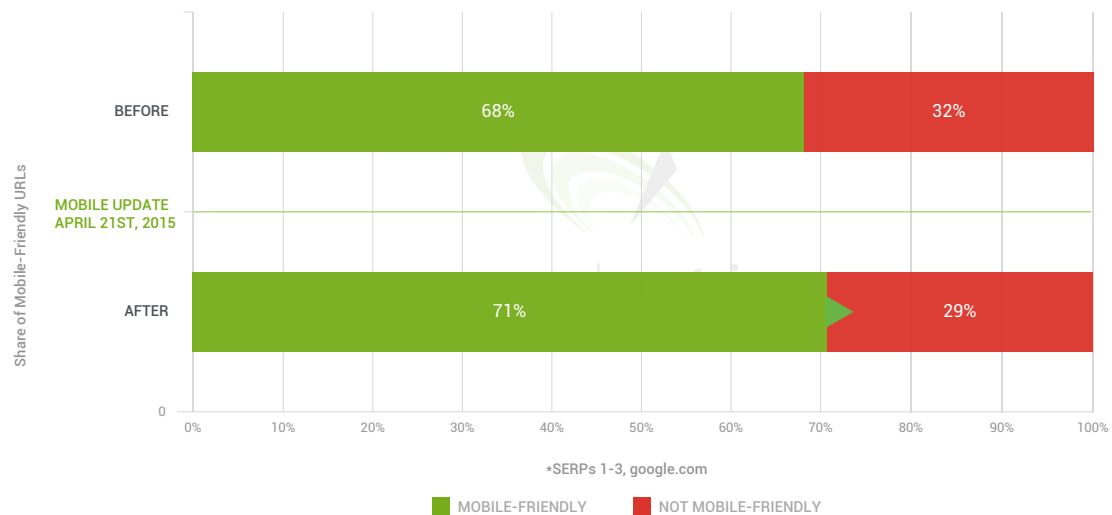
WINNER AND LOOSER OF MOBILEGEDDON

In general, it was not surprising that the proportion of websites which have been assigned a “mobile-friendly” tag from Google has increased by several percentage points since the start of 2015.



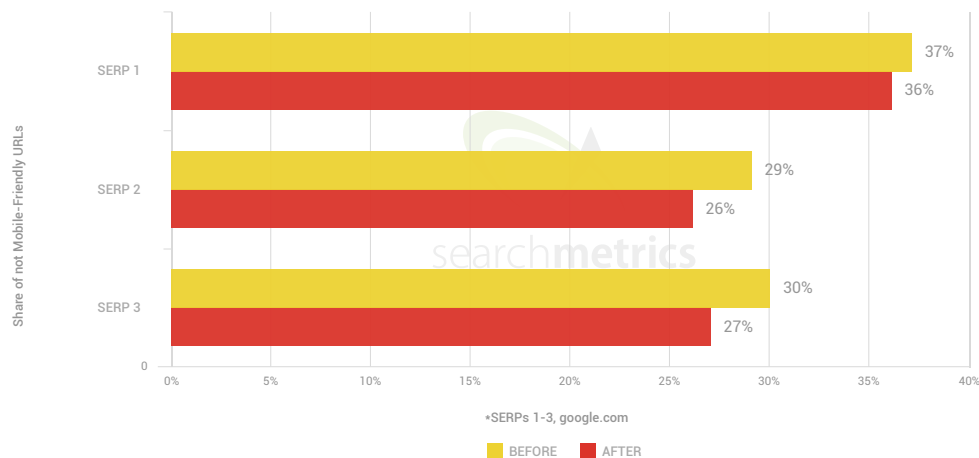
# MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

## SHARE OF MOBILE-FRIENDLY URLs



The percentage of mobile-friendly sites in the top 30 mobile search results has continued to increase since the beginning of the year.

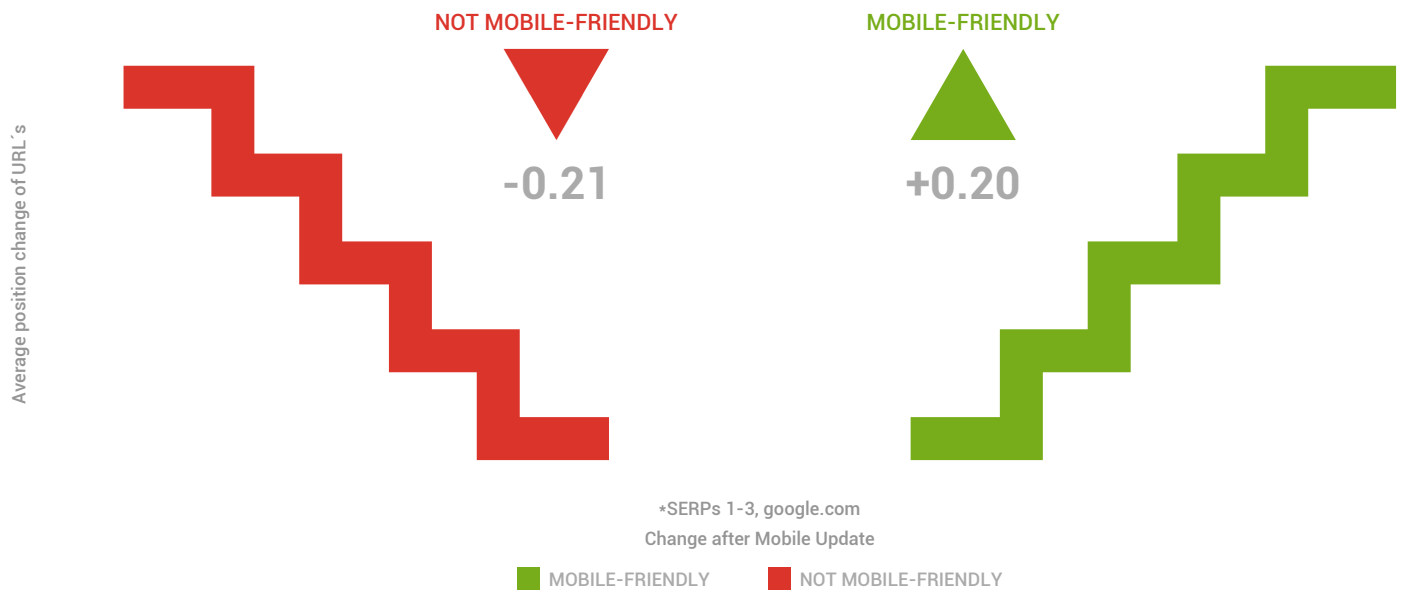
## SHARE OF NOT MOBILE-FRIENDLY URLs



Prior to the mobile-friendly update, 68% of ranking URLs were found to be mobile-friendly. We found this share to have increased to 71% after the update (data measured in calendar week 17)

## MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

### AVERAGE POSITION CHANGE OF URLS



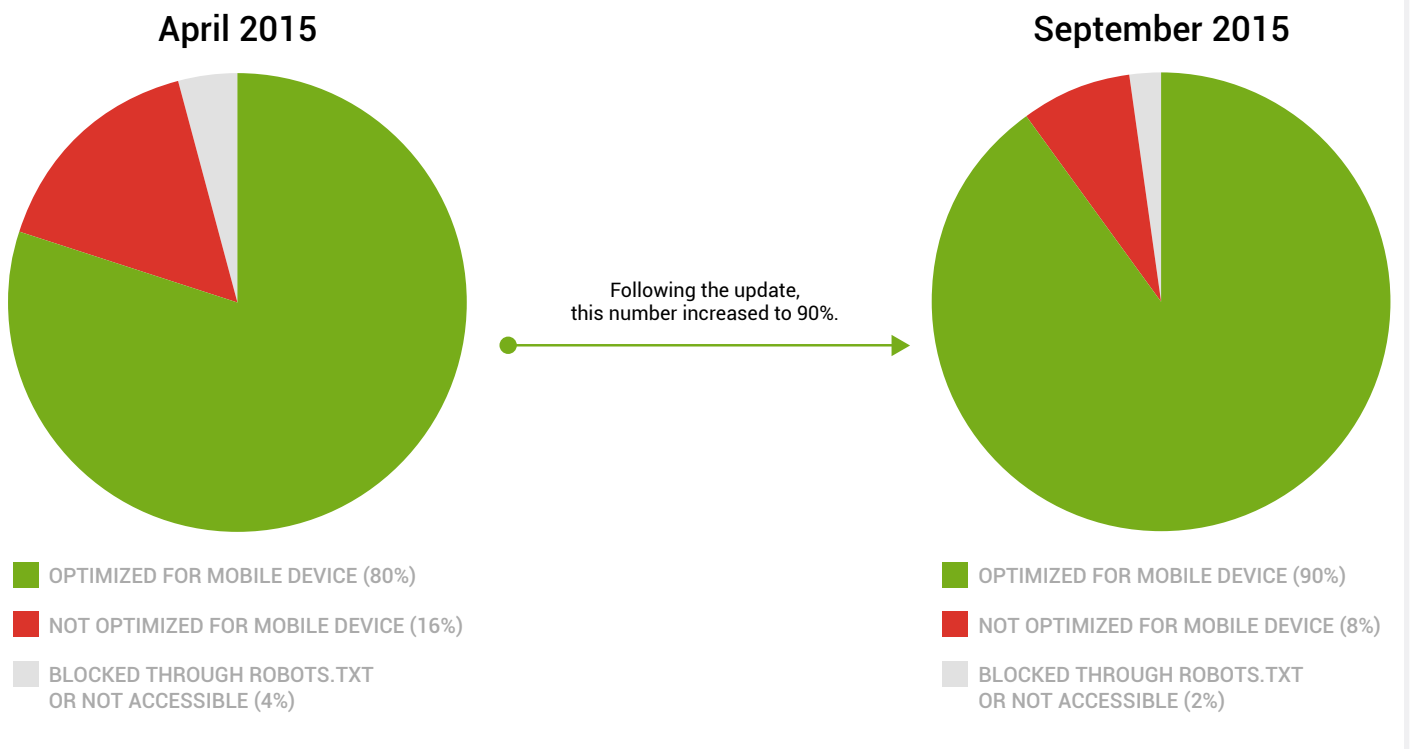
*There are increasing numbers of mobile-friendly URLs ranking in the mobile search results.*

# 3

## TOP 100 SEO VISIBILITY

In the wake of Mobilegeddon we evaluated the top 100 pages by SEO Visibility (KPI developed by Searchmetrics) in the Google index for mobile friendliness (read more on this on the [Searchmetrics blog](#)). To be exact, we examined the homepages (the evaluation was URL specific not domain wide).

Before Mobilegeddon only 80% of the top 100 sites were found to be mobile-friendly.



Check your Desktop vs Mobile SEO Visibility with Searchmetrics Research Cloud:

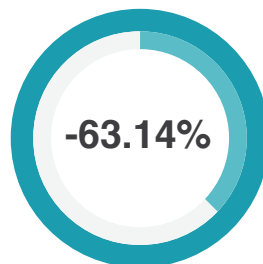
Desktop vs. Mobile

SEO Visibility



92,540

-3.44%



Mobile SEO Visibility

BETA



34,110

-1.38%

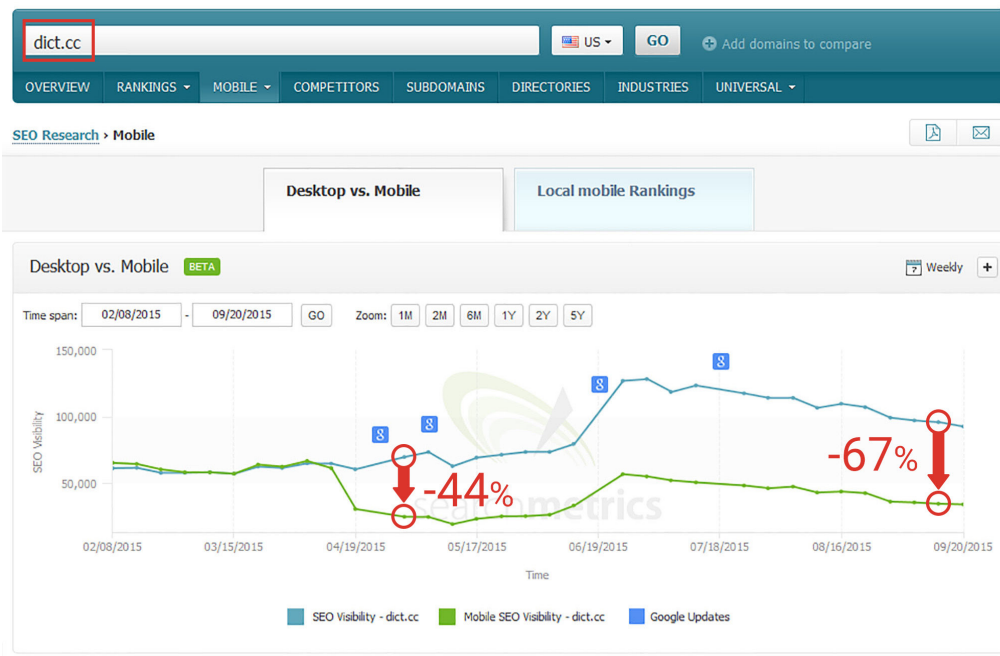
CHECK YOUR MOBILE VISIBILITY

# 4

## EFFECTS OF THE MOBILE UPDATE

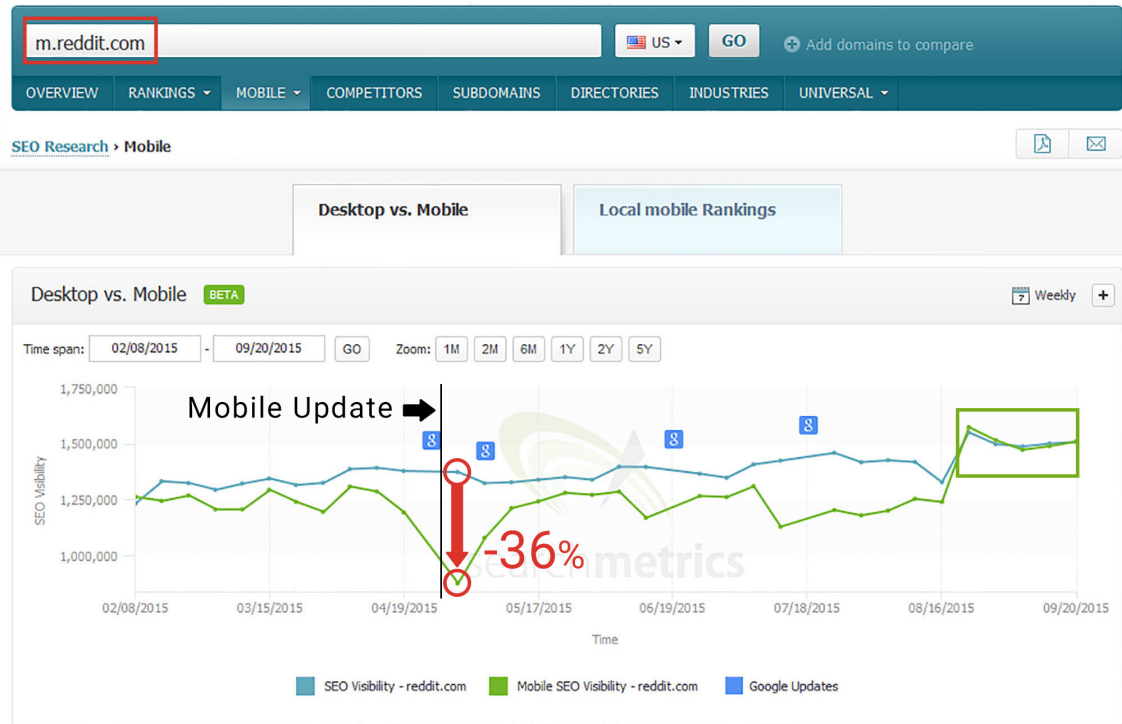
There have been some interesting developments in the wake of the Google mobile-friendly update and websites have reacted in different ways. Here are some examples (all screenshots taken from Searchmetrics Suite software):

1. There are still sites that disregard their mobile visibility, meaning they rank lower in the mobile rankings, dict.cc is a good example of this.

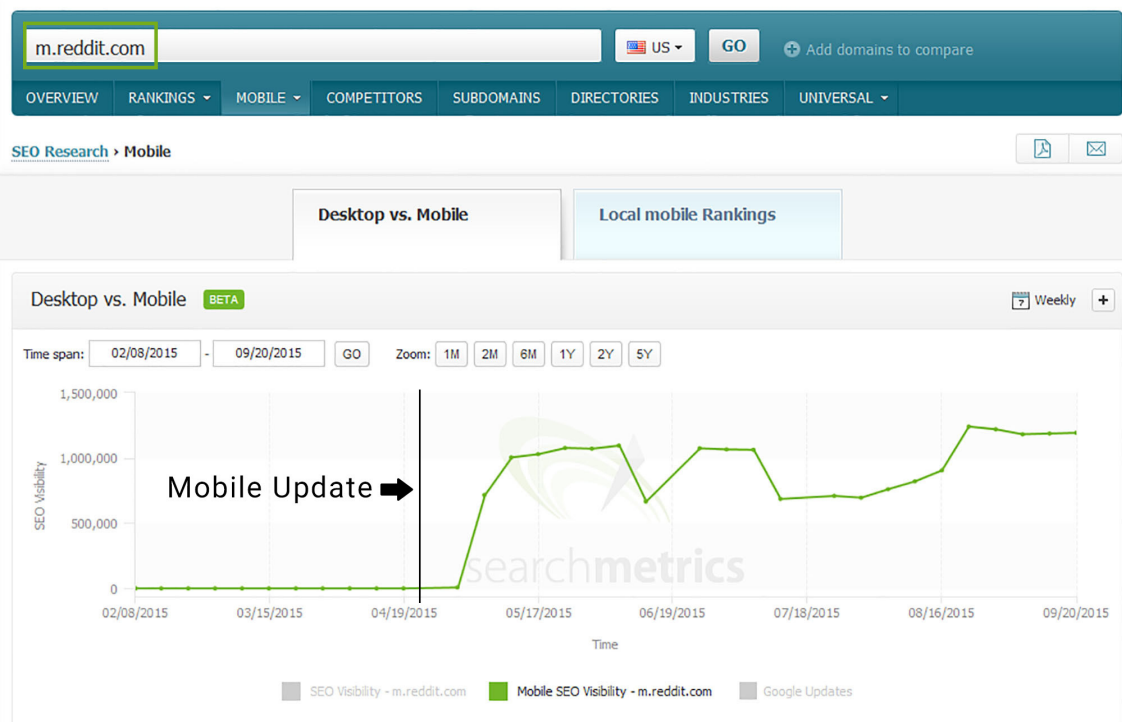


## EFFECTS OF THE MOBILE UPDATE

2. There are pages that immediately reacted to the mobile update, for example reddit.com with a dedicated mobile site.



You can see the dedicated mobile site of reddit.com was only launched after the update, but soon gained visibility.



# EFFECTS OF THE MOBILE UPDATE

Desktop vs. Mobile Rankings April 2015 (shortly after the mobile update) vs September 2015

04/26/2015 GO

Desktop vs. Mobile Rankings (26 to 50) BETA Weekly +

Keyword	URL	Pos.	CPC	Search Volume
wallpapers	www.reddit.com/r/wallpapers www.reddit.com/r/wallpapers	2 8	€ 0.72	183,000
super smash bros	www.reddit.com/r/smashbros/ www.reddit.com/r/smashbros/	7 11	€ 0.54	554,416
runescape	www.reddit.com/r/runescape	3	€ 0.21	437,833
doge	www.reddit.com/r/doge/ www.reddit.com/r/doge/	5 8	€ 0.98	325,500
twitter.com	www.reddit.com/domain/twitter.com/ www.reddit.com/domain/twitter.com/	2 5	€ 1.38	335,666
gifs	www.reddit.com/r/gifs/	2	€ 1.85	152,500
smash bros	www.reddit.com/r/smashbros/	3	€ 0.48	203,250
news	www.reddit.com/r/news/ www.reddit.com/r/news/	21 25	€ 1.11	10,610,000
woody harrelson	www.reddit.com/r/1AmA/comments/p9a1v/im_woody_harrelson_ama	3	€ 0.67	200,333
ask	www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/ www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/	5 9	€ 0.01	948,305
thepiratebay	www.reddit.com/r/thepiratebay/ www.reddit.com/r/thepiratebay/	2 3	€ 0.07	312,666
cnn.com	www.reddit.com/domain/cnn.com/ www.reddit.com/domain/cnn.com/	7 9	€ 1.16	1,317,875
adventure time	www.reddit.com/r/adventuretime www.reddit.com/r/adventuretime	7 10	€ 0.47	437,833

Please note the difference/ non-difference between rankings.

09/13/2015 GO

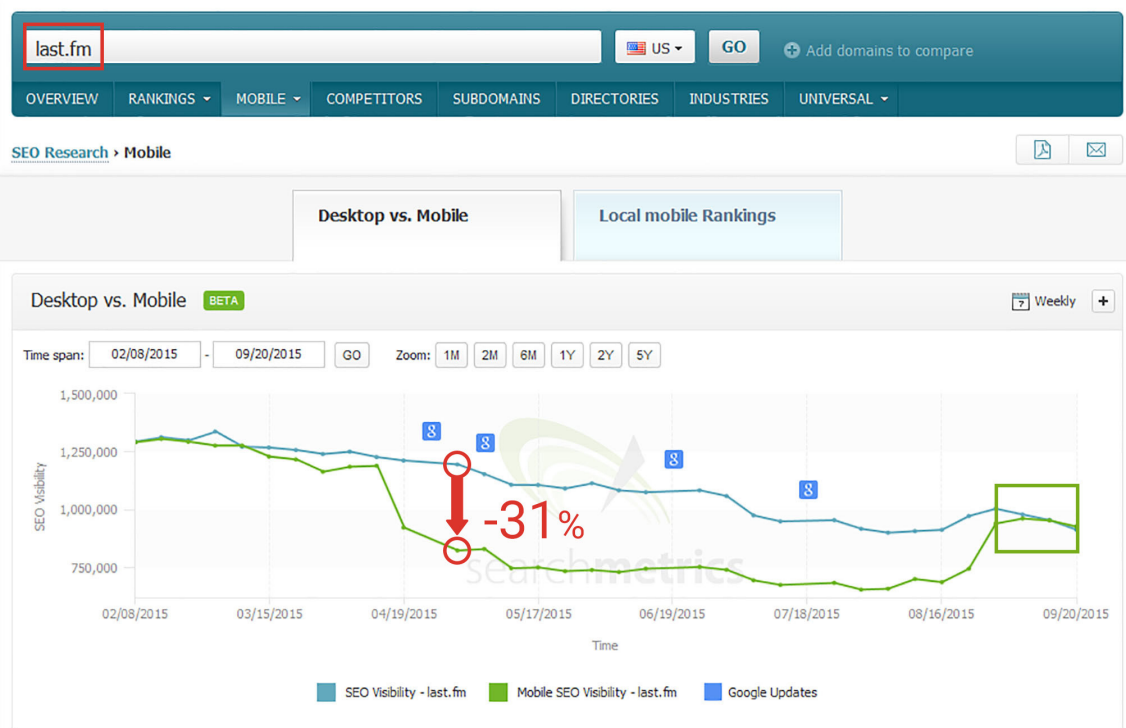
Desktop vs. Mobile Rankings (26 to 50) BETA Weekly +

Keyword	URL	Pos.	CPC	Search Volume
tattoos	www.reddit.com/r/tattoos/ m.reddit.com/r/tattoos/	6 6	€ 0.54	508,333
video	www.reddit.com/r/videos/ m.reddit.com/r/videos/	5 5	€ 0.86	312,166
amiibo	www.reddit.com/r/amiibo/ m.reddit.com/r/amiibo/	3 3	€ 0.28	272,658
super smash bros	www.reddit.com/r/smashbros/ m.reddit.com/r/smashbros/	6 6	€ 0.99	471,750
roblox	www.reddit.com/r/roblox/ m.reddit.com/r/roblox/	10 9	€ 0.11	2,758,333
funny pics	www.reddit.com/r/Funnypics/ m.reddit.com/r/Funnypics/	2 2	€ 0.16	195,000
serial podcast	www.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/ m.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/	5 5	€ 2.84	378,681
wallpapers	www.reddit.com/r/wallpapers m.reddit.com/r/wallpapers	2 2	€ 0.67	186,000
news	www.reddit.com/r/news/ m.reddit.com/r/news/	20 19	€ 1.91	11,100,000
beastiality	www.reddit.com/r/beastiality www.reddit.com/r/beastiality	6 6	€ 0.10	422,666
motherless	www.reddit.com/r/1stBulshit/comments/3ck2wr/1stbulshit_motherless_is_an_... m.reddit.com/r/1stBulshit/comments/3ck2wr/1stbulshit_motherless_is_an_fb...	10 10	€ 0.35	1,021,916
ama	www.reddit.com/r/ama m.reddit.com/r/ama	6 5	€ 0.98	470,083

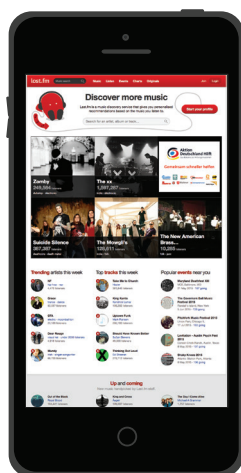
## EFFECTS OF THE MOBILE UPDATE

### 3. Some sites reacted by implementing responsive design.

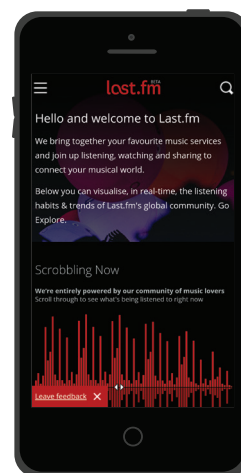
As this study has made clear, both user search behavior and search results differ depending on the device used to perform the search. But this knowledge is just the first step. There are other aspects that need to be taken into account when it comes to mobile search.



April 2015  
not mobile-friendly



September 2015  
mobile-friendly



# 5

## FURTHER ASPECTS OF MOBILE SEARCH

### DISTRIBUTION OF KEYWORD SEARCH VOLUME BY DEVICE TYPE

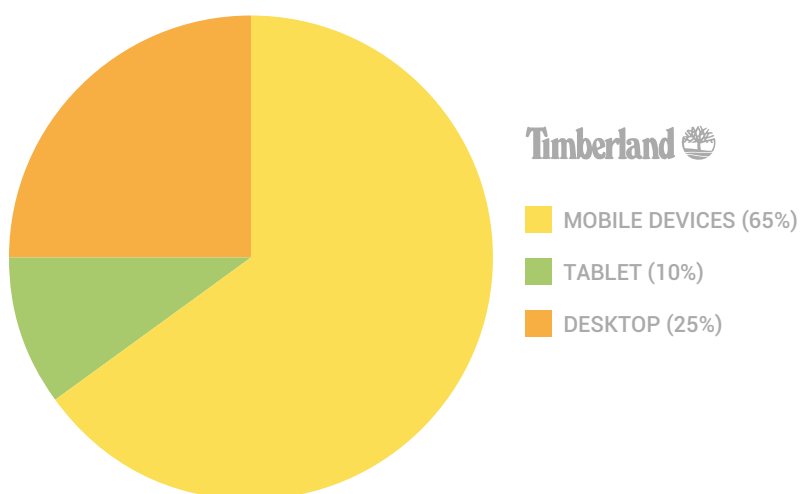
The keyword search volume differs greatly depending on the type of device used. Strategically, for mobile vs. desktop channels, a strategy integrating device distribution is indispensable.

Device breakdown by keyword (1 to 10 of 225) BETA +

Keyword	Desktop	Smartphone	Tablet	Device Distribution	
timberland boots	<div><div></div></div> 25.30%	<div><div></div></div> 65.10%	<div><div></div></div> 9.60%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
zapatos	<div><div></div></div> 24.60%	<div><div></div></div> 65.00%	<div><div></div></div> 10.40%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wallabees	<div><div></div></div> 27.50%	<div><div></div></div> 65.00%	<div><div></div></div> 7.50%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
moccasin boots	<div><div></div></div> 27.30%	<div><div></div></div> 62.50%	<div><div></div></div> 10.10%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
white converse	<div><div></div></div> 29.80%	<div><div></div></div> 61.20%	<div><div></div></div> 9.00%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
burberry rain boots	<div><div></div></div> 27.80%	<div><div></div></div> 60.70%	<div><div></div></div> 11.50%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
red converse	<div><div></div></div> 30.80%	<div><div></div></div> 59.00%	<div><div></div></div> 10.20%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
infant shoes	<div><div></div></div> 29.70%	<div><div></div></div> 58.40%	<div><div></div></div> 11.90%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cowgirl boots	<div><div></div></div> 30.90%	<div><div></div></div> 57.90%	<div><div></div></div> 11.20%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>
stilettos	<div><div></div></div> 34.40%	<div><div></div></div> 57.80%	<div><div></div></div> 7.70%	<div><div></div></div>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 » Add new keywords add keywords (0)

Example: "Timberland Boots" (monthly search volume ~370,000)



The fact that well above 60% of the 370,000 monthly search requests for e-commerce keywords like "Timberland boots" are carried out on smartphones is a relevant and useful piece of information. Although the majority of conversions take place on desktop computers, many customers like to inform themselves about products on their mobile device. Mobile search is a highly relevant topic and integral part of a successful, comprehensive e-commerce strategy.



## FURTHER ASPECTS OF MOBILE SEARCH

### LOCAL MOBILE RANKINGS

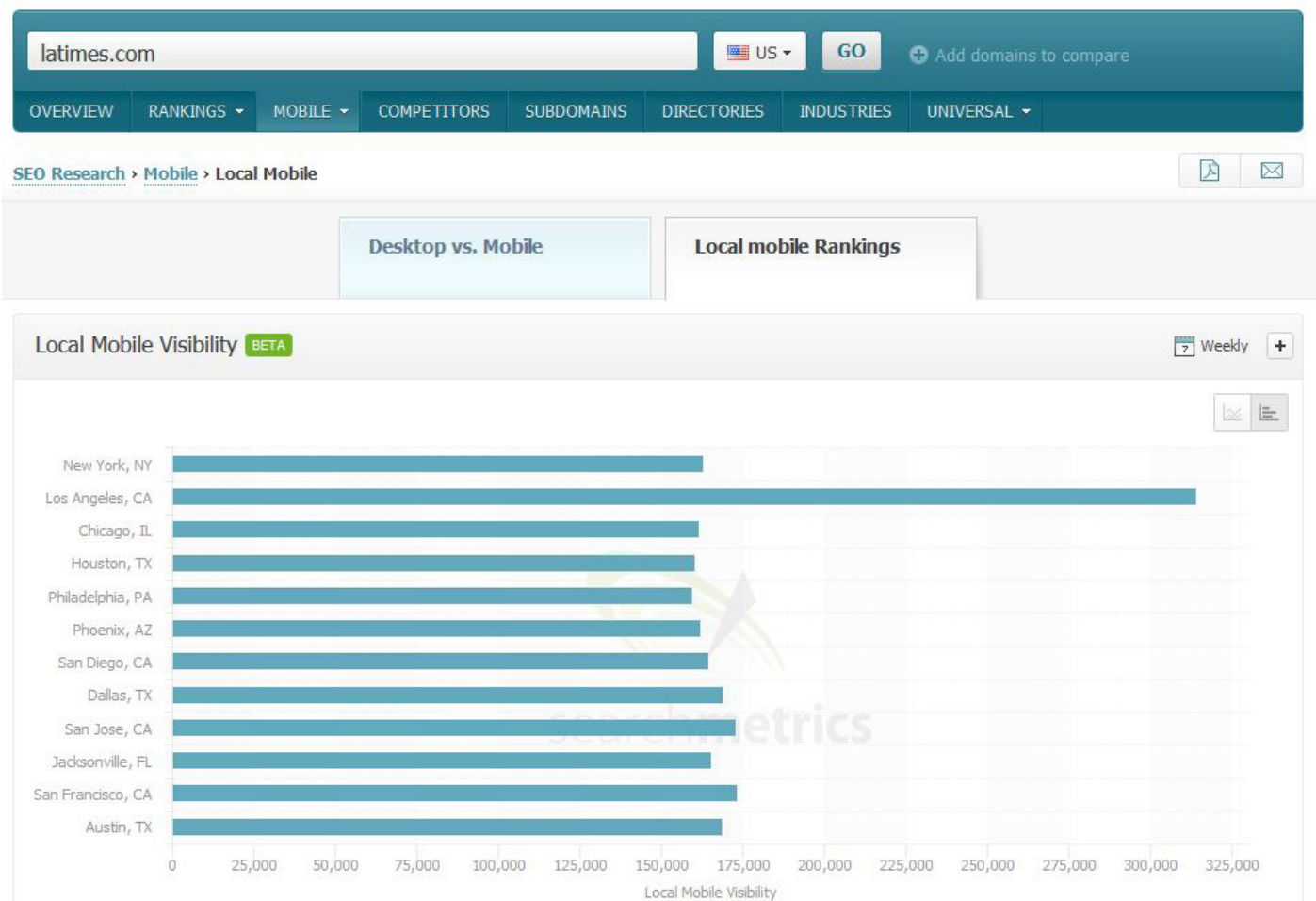
Local parameters play a key role in mobile search. Mobile search results are by definition more individual than desktop results; different results are served depending on the place where the search is performed.

Why is this important? Well, for local businesses in particular a local market specific mobile strategy, a knowledge of local visibility and user search behavior is highly relevant.

*Find out more on Searchmetrics blog:*

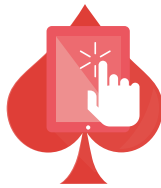
MOBILE RESEARCH SOLUTION

Example: The local visibility of the LA Times in Los Angeles is more than twice high as in other cities.



# Data Analysis

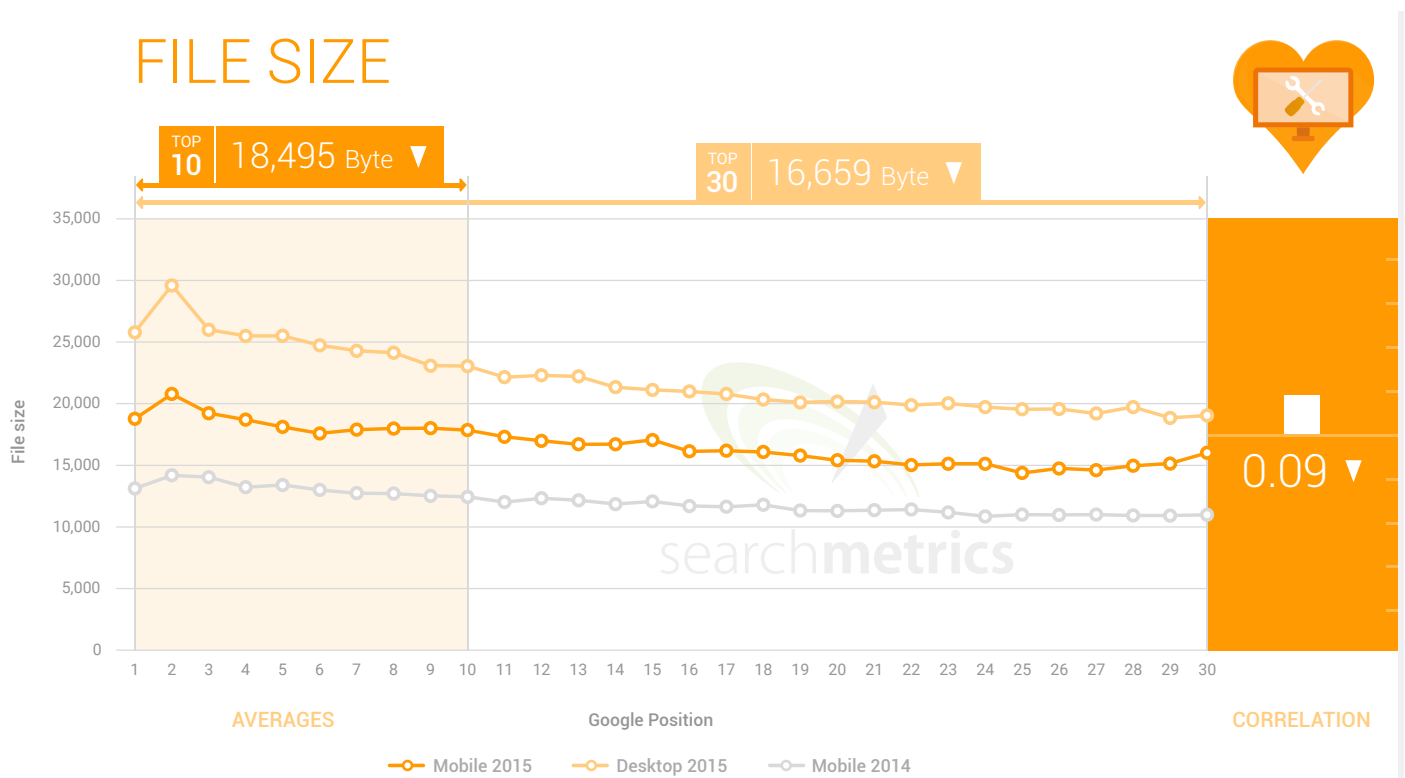
Let the number crunching begin...



# 6

## TECHNICAL

Technical aspects have a particularly large influence on mobile rankings due to limited bandwidth and smaller display areas on mobile devices.



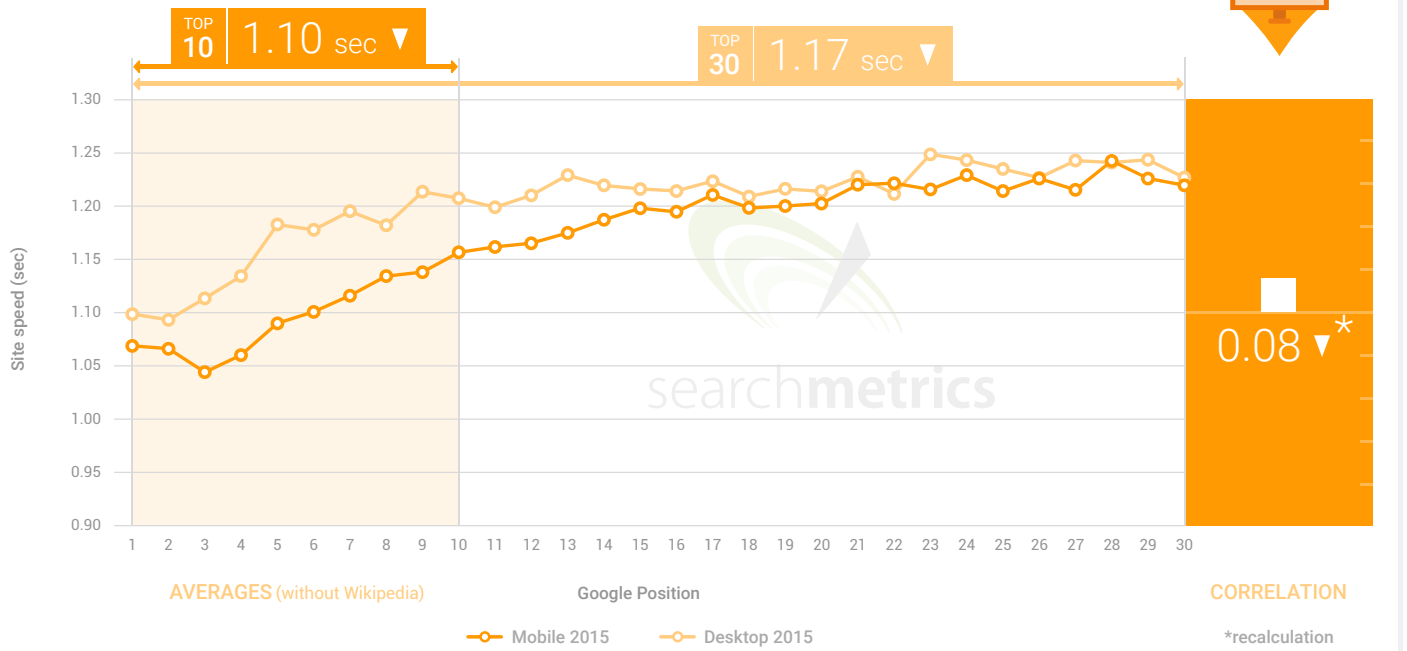
All analyzed mobile search results were found to have smaller average file sizes than the top 30 desktop results. However, comparing mobile search results year on year, the average file size has increased this year, analog to desktop search results, which also saw an increase this year.



Less is more: keep an eye on the file size of your mobile site. Large file sizes can slow loading times.

## TECHNICAL

### SITE SPEED

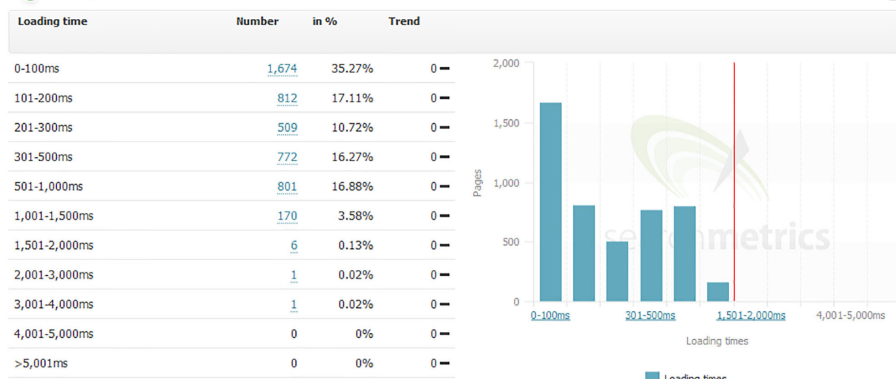


The difference in page loading times between desktop and mobile is very clear. Mobile pages – also because of smaller file sizes – load more quickly, in some cases by around one tenth of a second. The average loading time in the mobile top 30 is 1.17 seconds. The top 10 load more quickly, with an average time of 1.10 seconds.



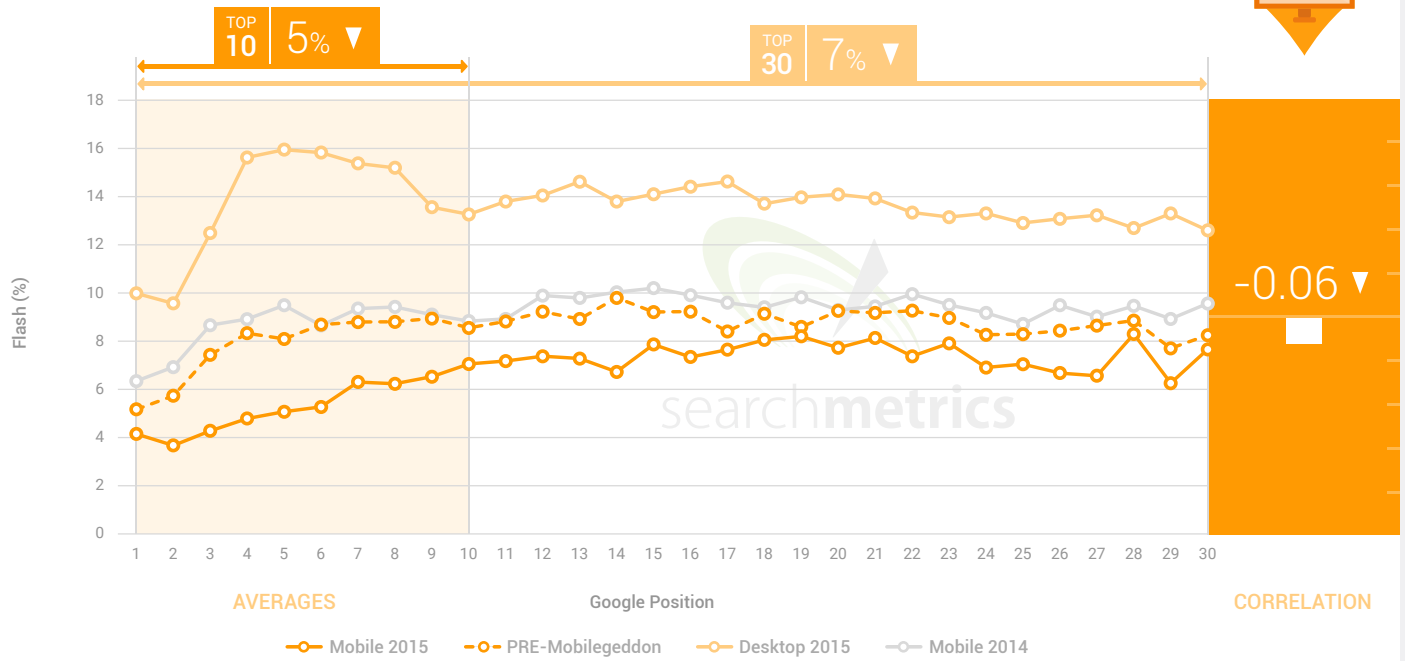
*Need for speed. Make sure your loading times are optimized, for example with Google Page Speed or with Searchmetrics Site Structure Optimization.*

#### ✓ Loading times Details



## TECHNICAL

### FLASH



The use of Flash elements in mobile rankings is not only lower than in the 2015 desktop search results, but has also decreased in relation to mobile search results from last year, and dropped further after the mobile-friendly update. Only 5% of the top 10 mobile search results integrated Flash in their landing pages.

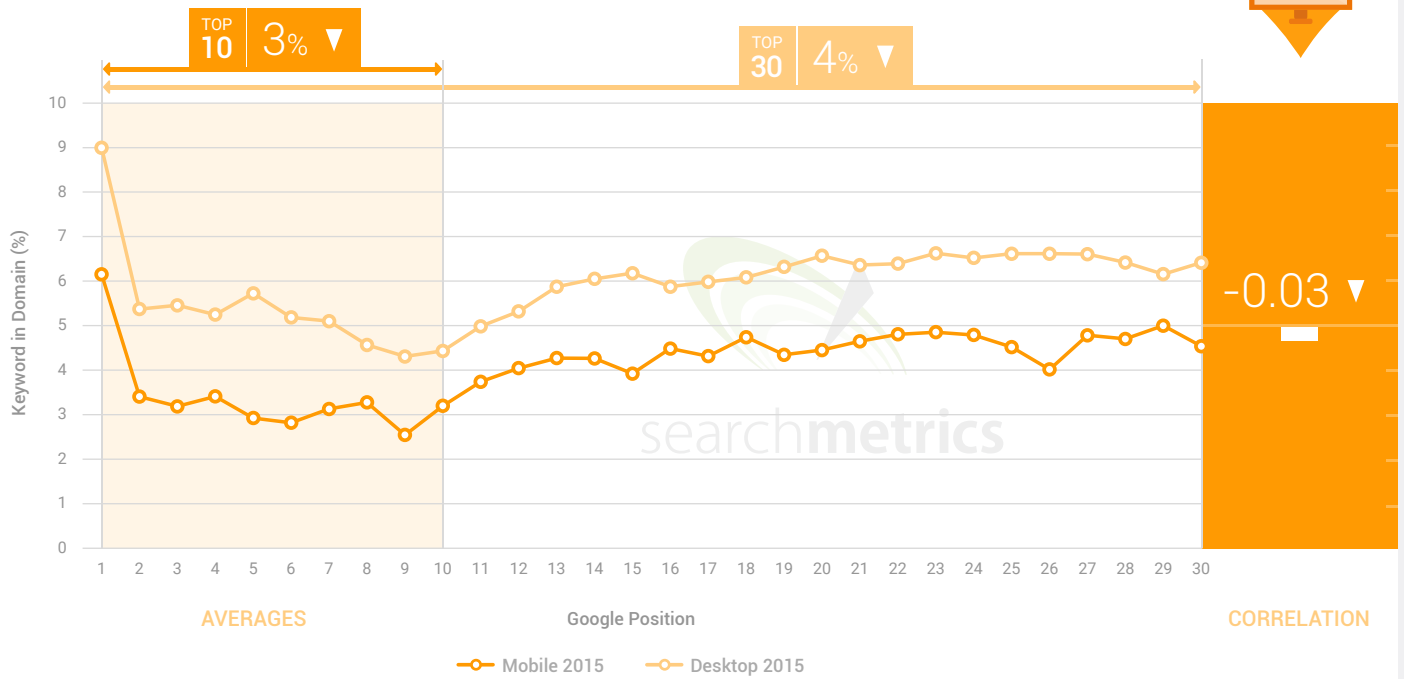
Flash usage will continue to decline, as, aside from the known security problems, HTML5 is set to replace it. In addition, Flash is no longer supported on many devices.



Avoid using Flash to reach as many users as possible.

## TECHNICAL

### KEYWORD IN DOMAIN



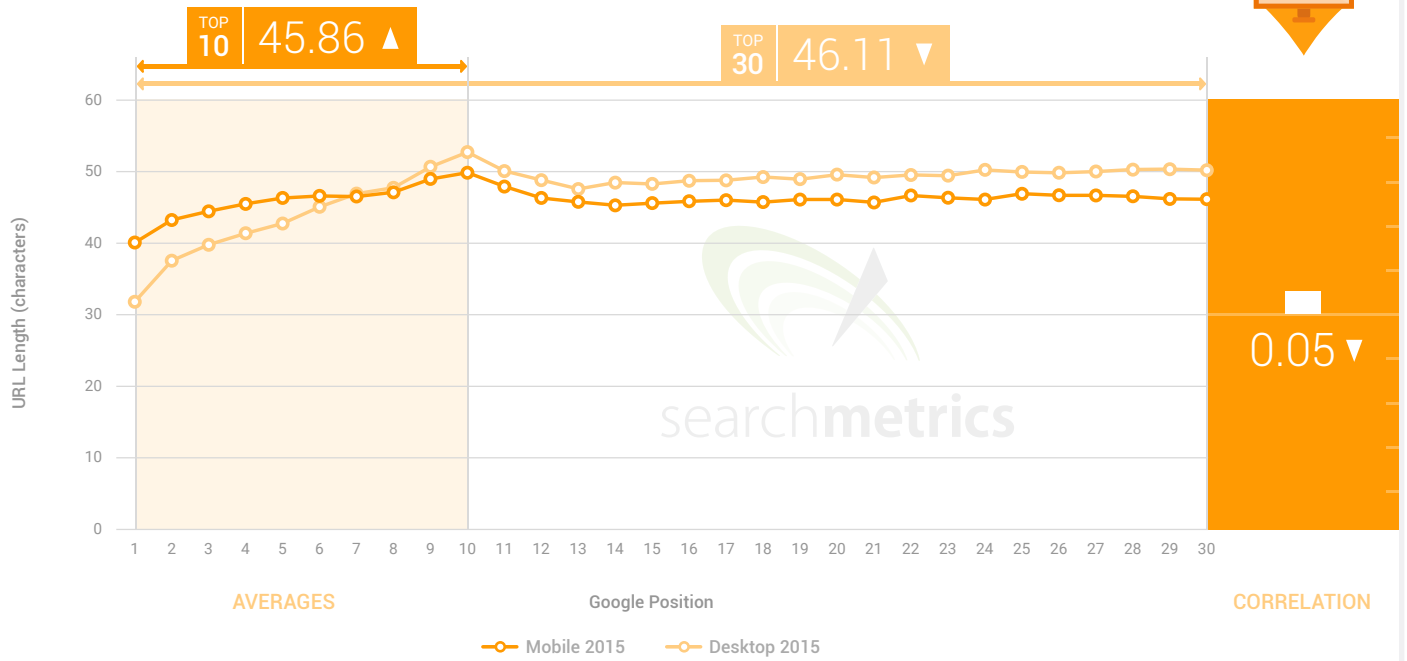
The share of keyword in domain names is even lower in the mobile SERPs than in the desktop rankings. We have not been able to observe any positive effect from having the keyword in the domain name for quite some time now.



*Focus on becoming a recognizable brand rather than on keywords in your content or your domain name.*

## TECHNICAL

### URL LENGTH



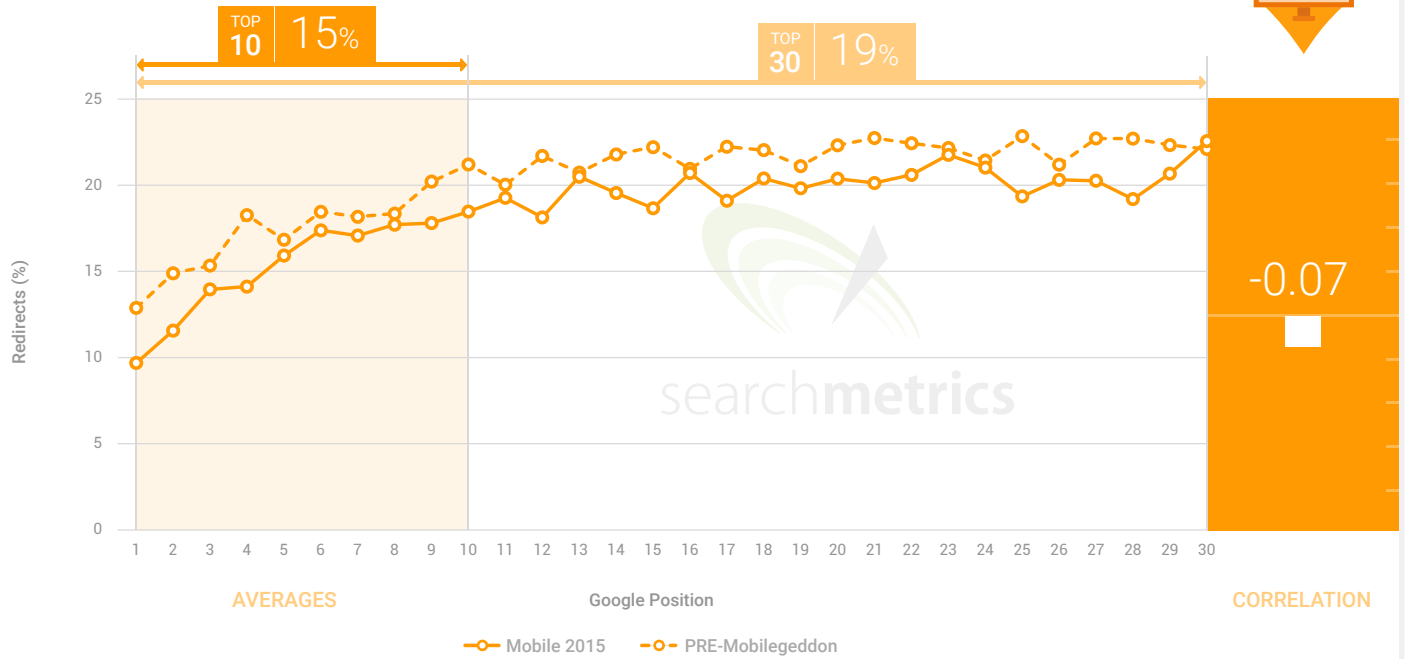
Compared with the 2015 desktop data, the mobile SERPs exhibited a longer URL name on average. One possible reason is that often mobile specific URLs (m.example.com / mobile.example.com) are longer but still rank higher in the mobile results.



*In general, try and use speaking URLs that are as short as possible.*

## TECHNICAL

### REDIRECTS



Comparing mobile SERPs, the number of URLs redirected with a HTML status code decreased following the mobile-friendly Google update.



Avoid redirecting your mobile users wherever possible.





## TECHNICAL RANKING FACTORS SUMMARY: MOBILE VS DESKTOP

- *Smaller file size*
- *Mobile URLs load faster*
- *Flash is facing extinction*
- *Fewer keyword domains*
- *Longer URL length in top results, perhaps due to mobile specific site with longer name*
- *Fewer redirected pages following mobile-friendly Google update*

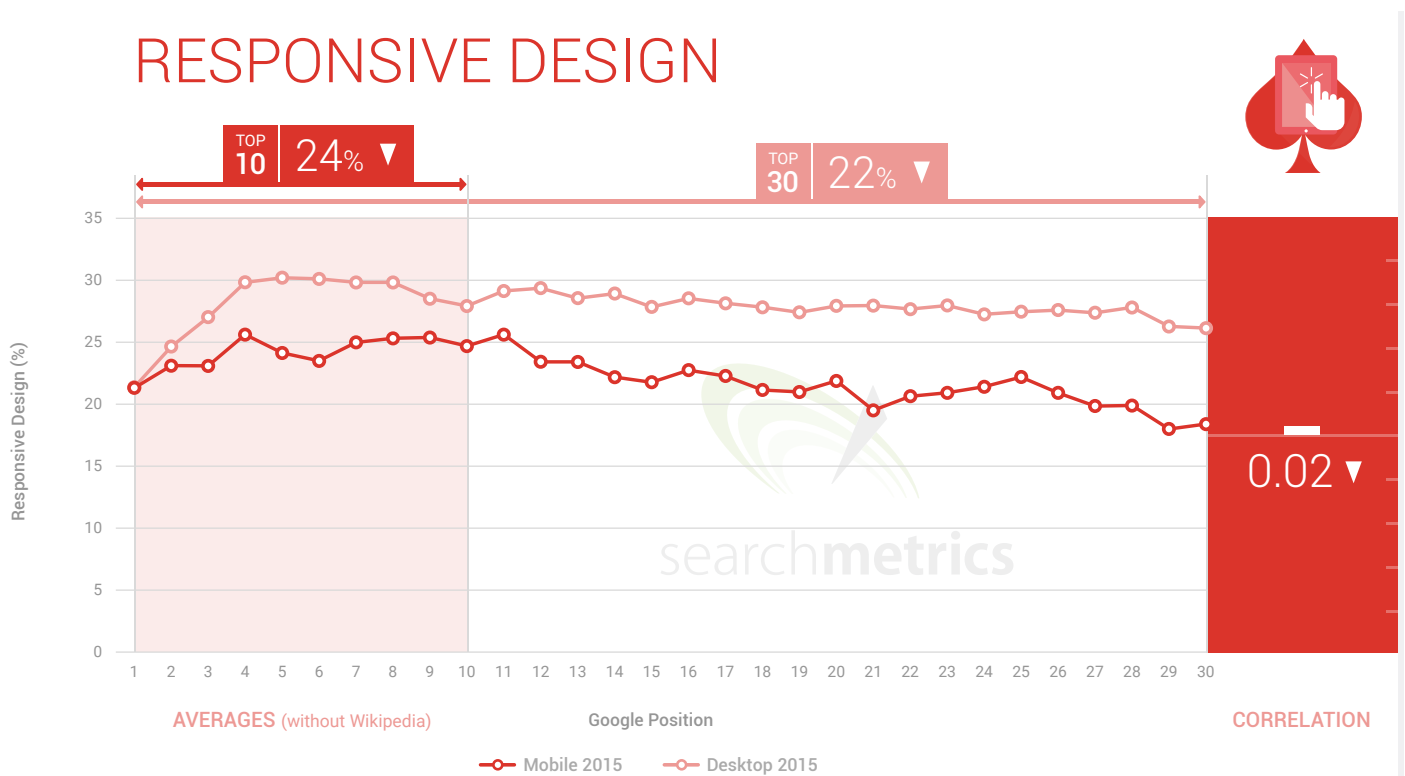
[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# 7

## USER EXPERIENCE

Due to the limited display area on mobile devices and given that users are mainly on-the-move, user experience is extremely important. Factors such as design and layout decisions play a decisive role. In this section we look at mobile ranking factors relating to design and usability for the first time.

### RESPONSIVE DESIGN



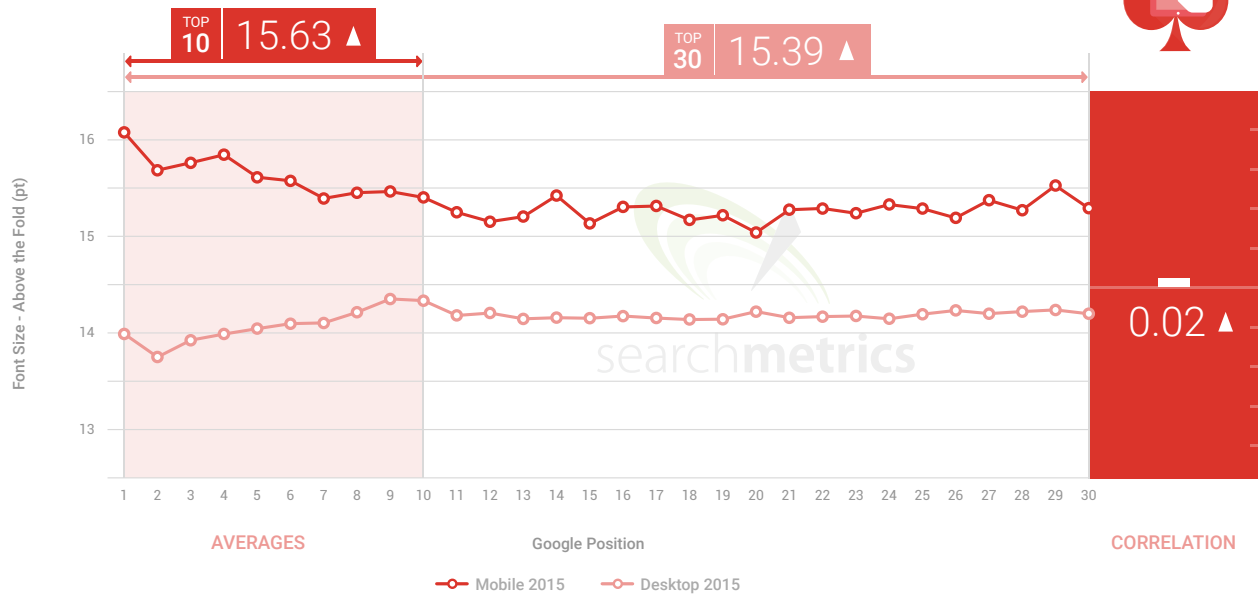
At first glance it may seem strange that proportionally more sites in the desktop results integrate responsive design than in the mobile SERPs. However, this is explained by the fact that in the mobile results only mobile versions of sites rank, whereas in the desktop results these dedicated mobile versions do not.



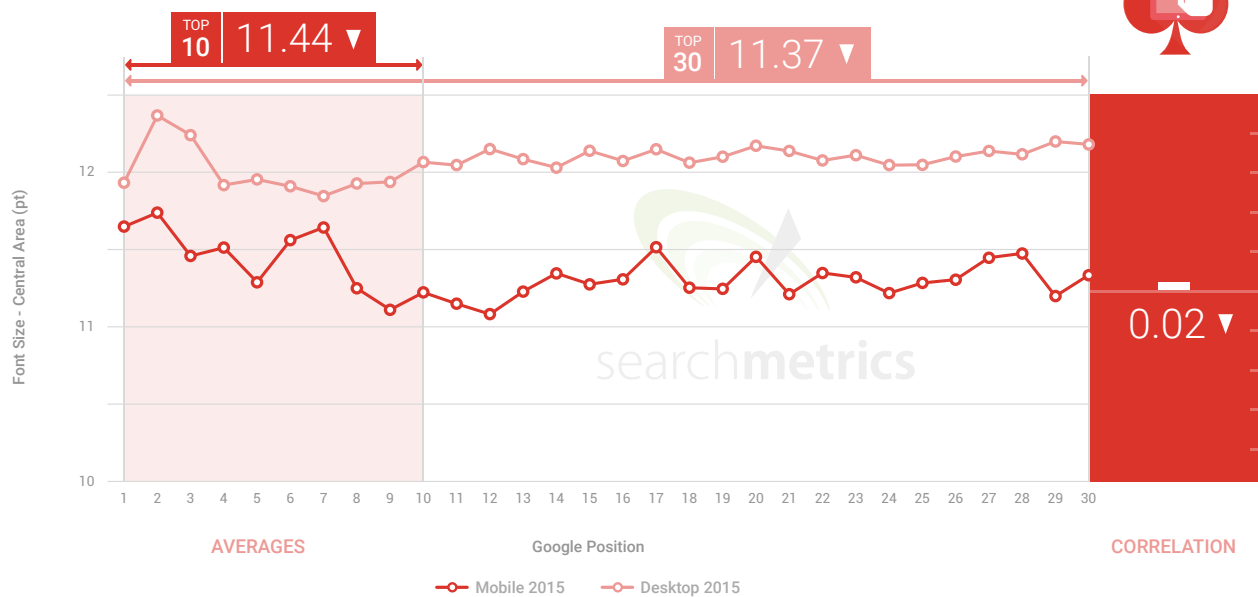
Whether with a responsive site design or a separate mobile version, the most important thing is to offer users an optimal user experience on every device.

## USER EXPERIENCE

### FONT SIZE - ABOVE THE FOLD



### FONT SIZE - CENTRAL AREA



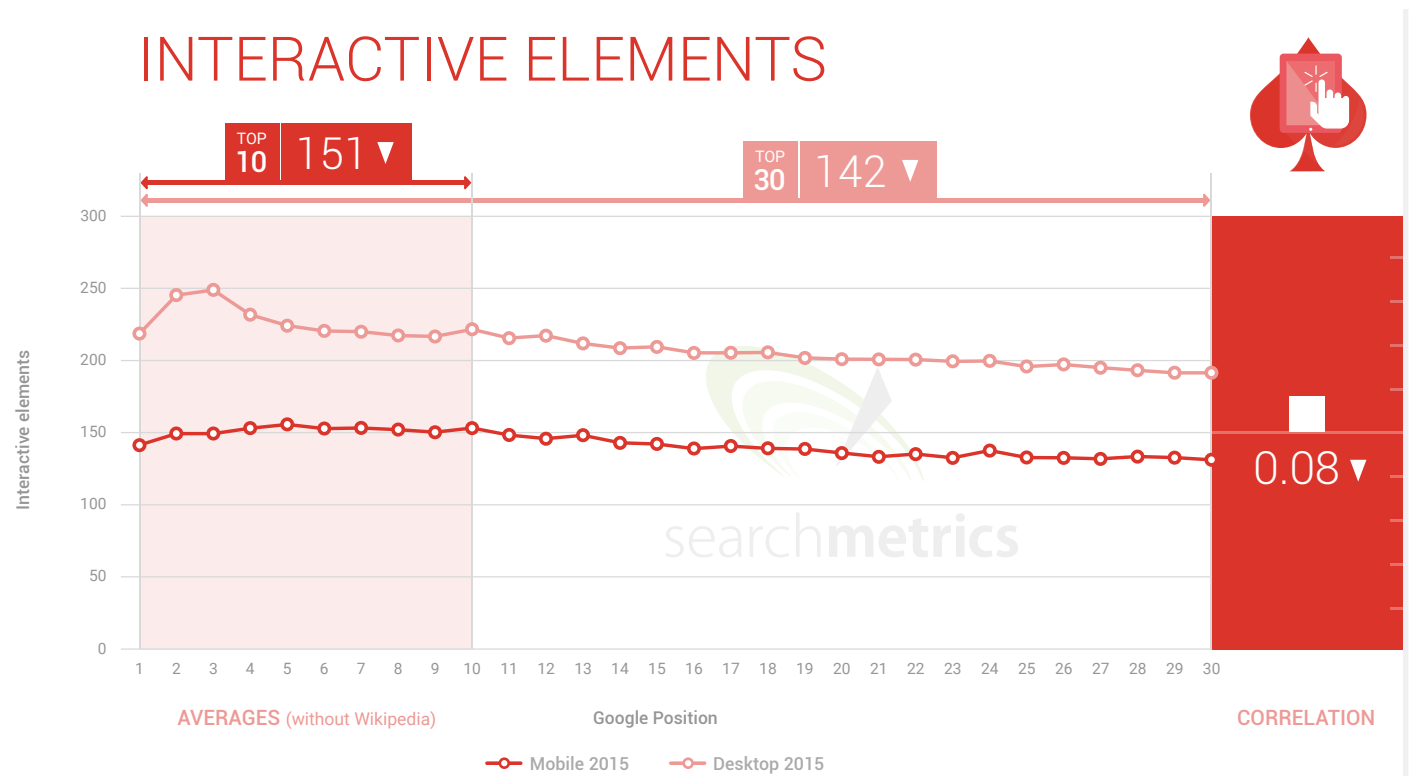
Average font size in content from the mobile SERPs – corresponding to the individual sizes, dimensions and usable area of mobile devices – is different to the Desktop SERPs. Above the fold - the visible area without scrolling – the average font size in the mobile results is significantly larger. In the central area, however, average font size is somewhat smaller in the mobile SERP content than in the desktop results. Here, the difference between clickable navigation and menu elements and the actual content is significant.

## USER EXPERIENCE

### STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Due to the smaller display size, documents in mobile search results exhibited much fewer interactive elements (buttons, menus etc.) than in the desktop results. There is simply less space for these items.

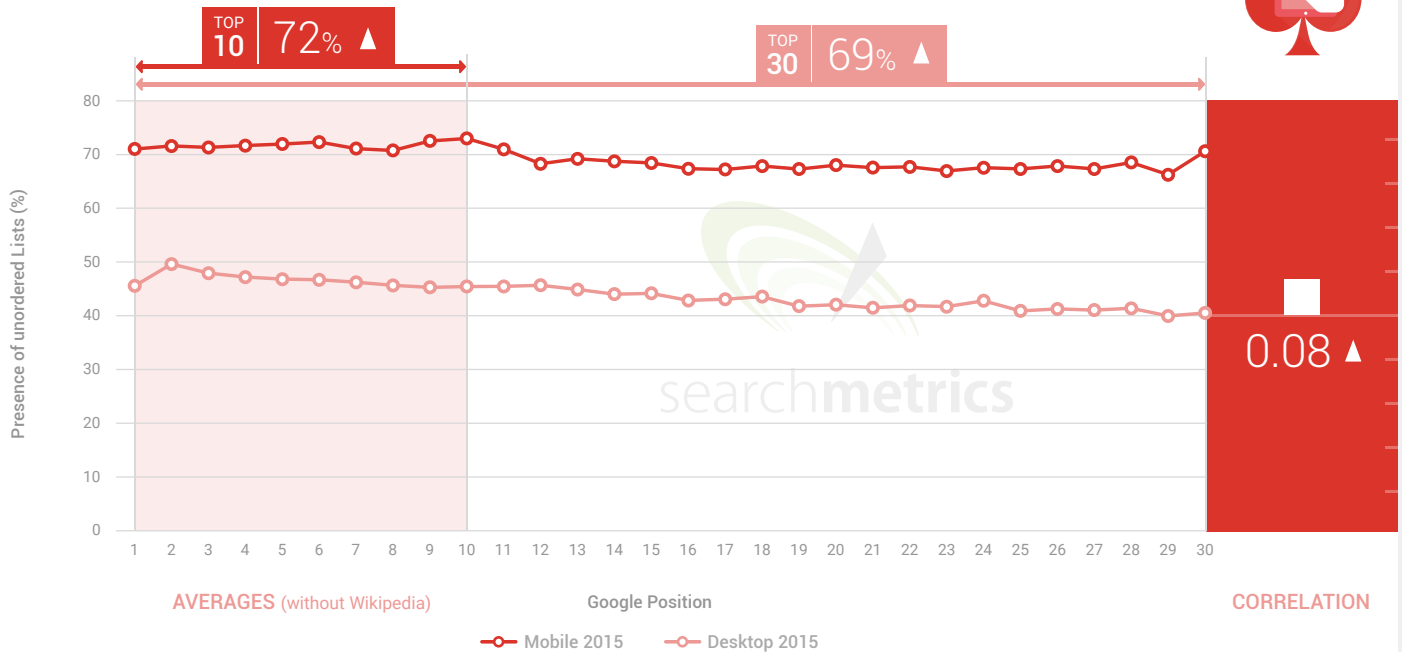
However, around a quarter more mobile sites contain at least one unordered list (bullet points) – a considerably higher proportion than in the desktop search results. A closer look at these lists allows a further differentiation: desktop results on average contain more unordered lists per page, especially in the top 10, as well as a higher average of bullets per list, compared with the mobile SERPs.



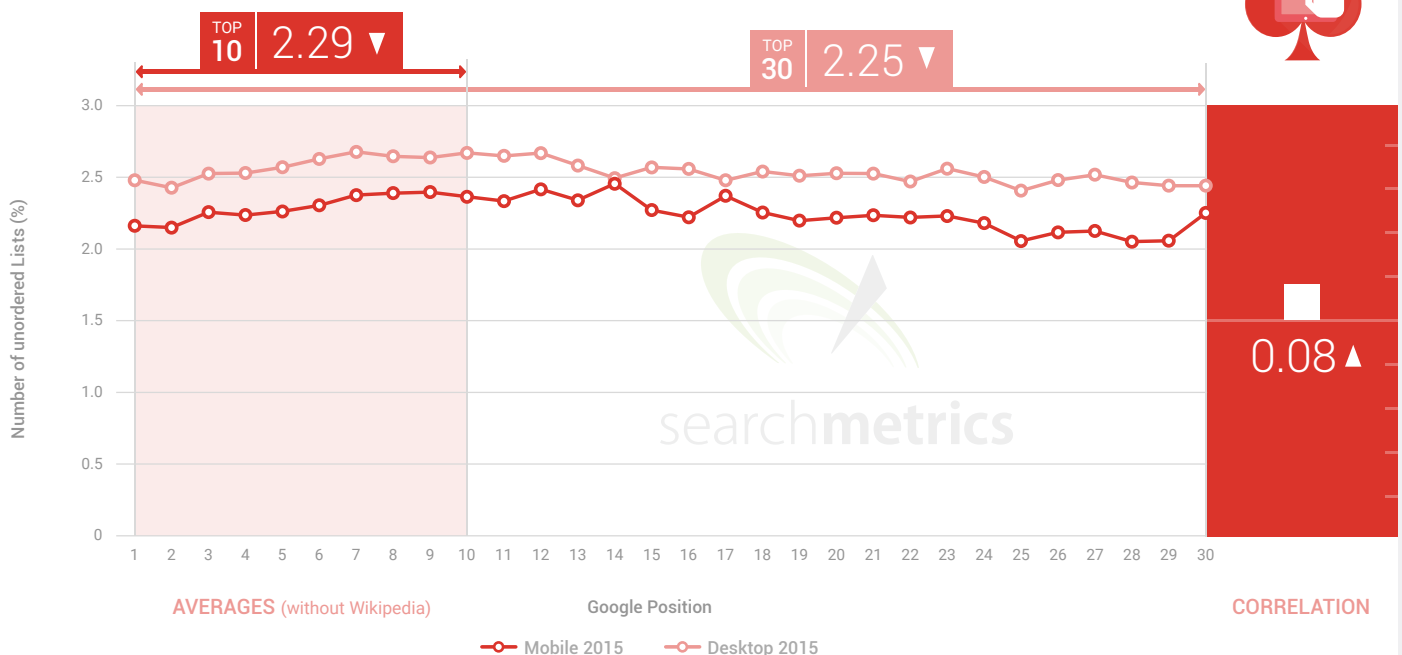
Adjust clickable elements and font size for smaller displays and remember that mobile users navigate by touch.

## USER EXPERIENCE

### PRESENCE OF UNORDERED LISTS

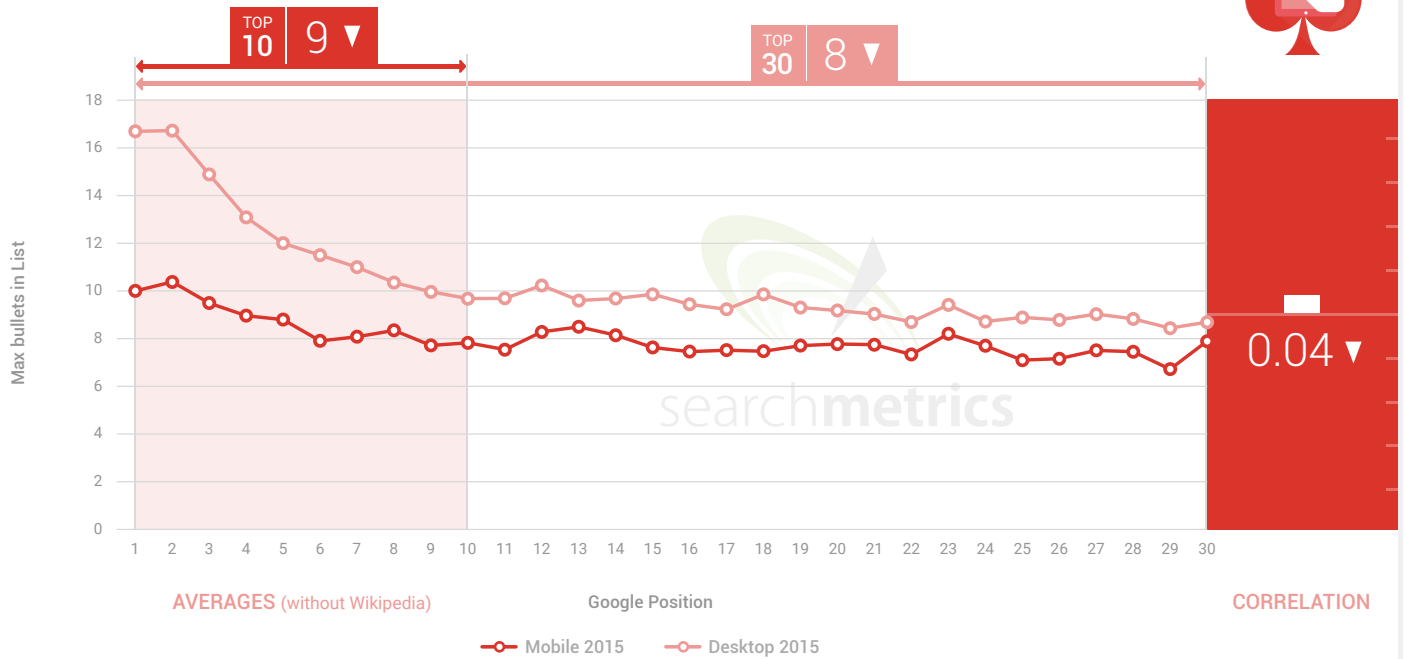


### NUMBER OF UNORDERED LISTS



## USER EXPERIENCE

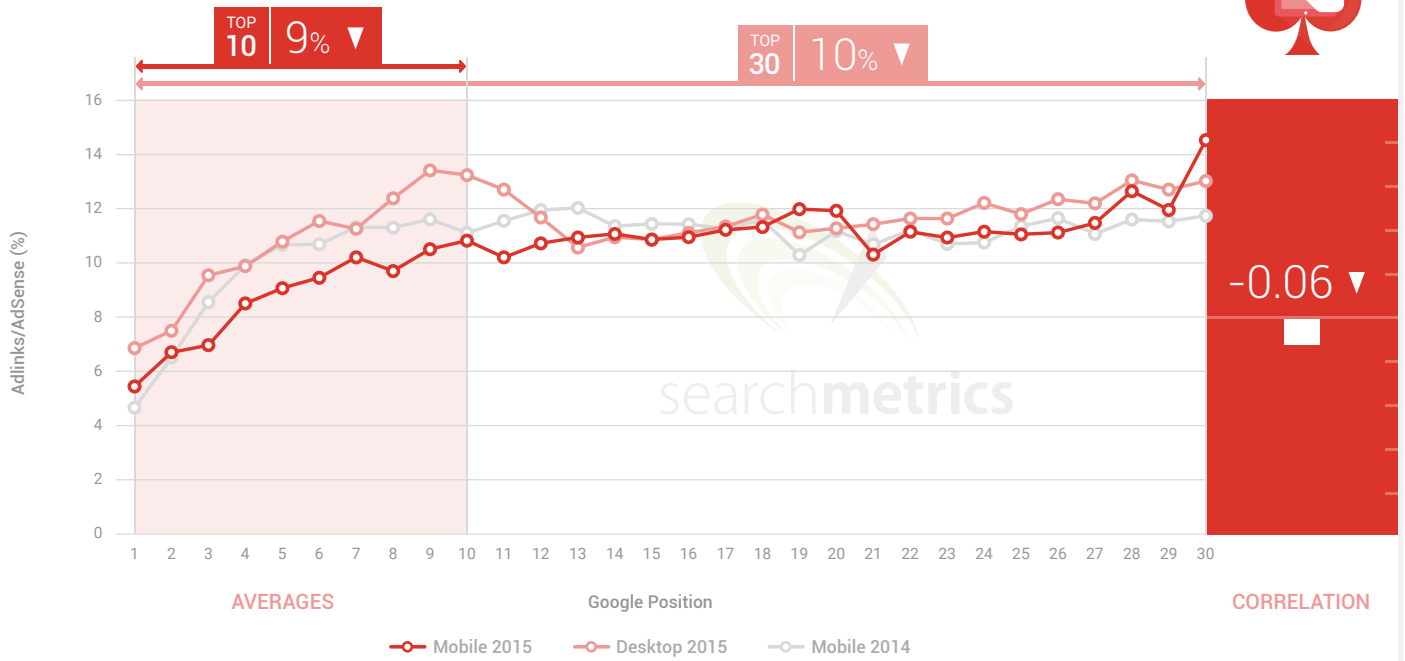
### MAX BULLETS IN LIST



Structure your content as clearly as possible, but try to reduce the number of elements to the essentials.

## USER EXPERIENCE

### ADLINKS/ADSENSE



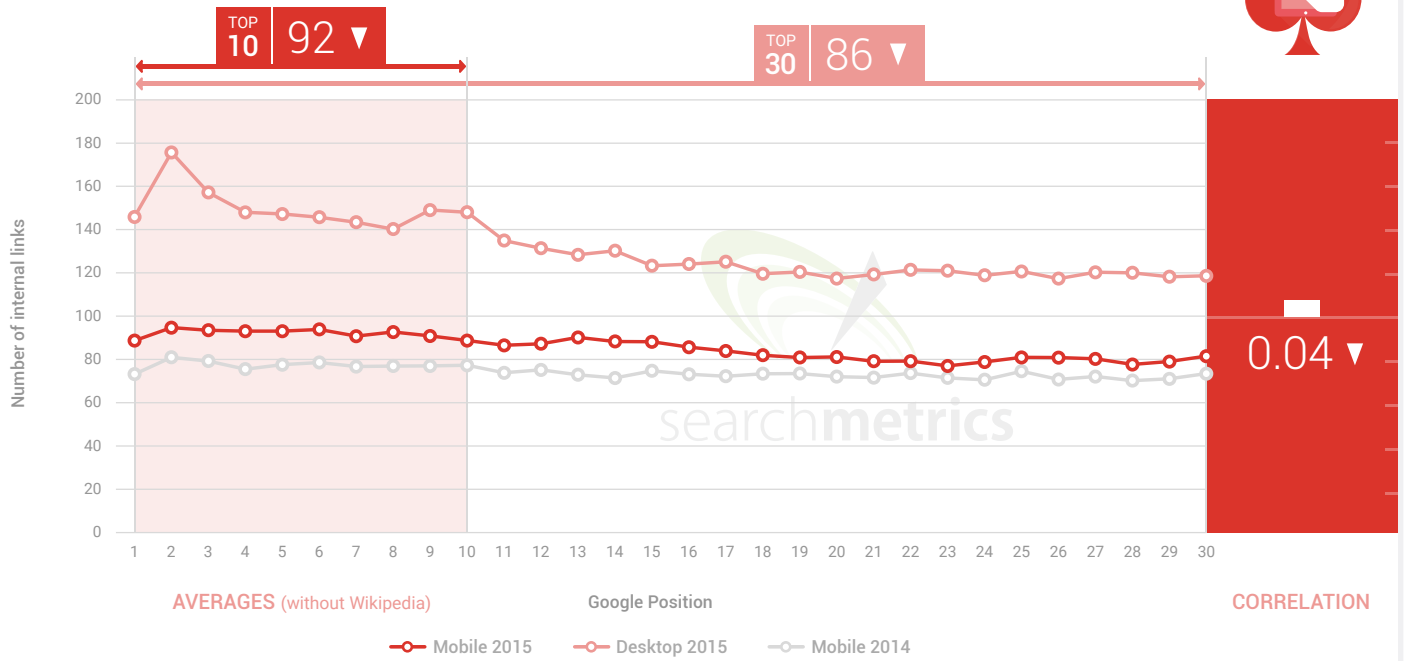
The integration of AdSense ads and Adlinks is less common in the mobile results compared to desktop. In comparison to 2014, the percentages have slightly decreased in both mobile and desktop. URLs optimized for mobile devices feature significantly less ads. This certainly has something to do with the amount of space available, but also with the fact that ads increase file size and load time, which should be kept to a minimum on mobile devices.



*Be aware that ads increase load times and file size. Avoid overlays and interstitials wherever possible.*

## USER EXPERIENCE

### NUMBER OF INTERNAL LINKS

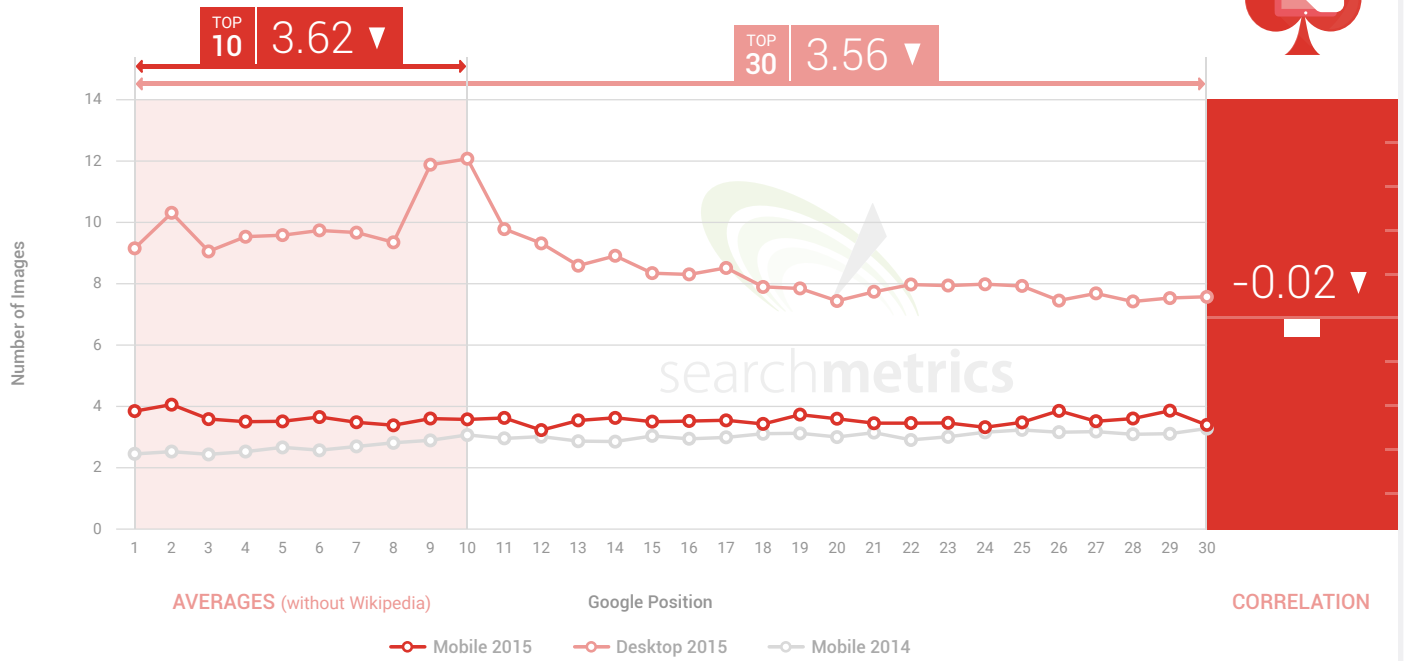


Compared with last year the average number of internal links has increased in both mobile and desktop, which can in part be attributed to the trend of content becoming more comprehensive. However, it is important to note that in the mobile results the average number of internal links is significantly lower than in the desktop results. Google advises against placing mobile links too close to each other, as the precision of a digit swiping on a smartphone is clearly different to that of a mouse pointer.



## USER EXPERIENCE

### NUMBER OF IMAGES



While the average number of images per page is around nine in the desktop top 30, less than four images are found in the mobile SERPs on average. This value has slightly increased from 2014, which can be attributed to the trend of content and texts getting longer (see word count).



*Optimize your image size for mobile displays to reduce load times.*



## USER EXPERIENCE RANKING FACTORS SUMMARY: MOBILE VS DESKTOP

- *Larger font size*
- *Both responsive design and dedicated mobile versions of sites (m.domain.tld or mobile.domain.tld) rank in the mobile SERPS*
- *Less structural and interactive elements; unordered lists used more often, but with less bullets than in desktop*
- *Less ads*
- *Fewer internal links*
- *Less images than desktop, increased year on year*

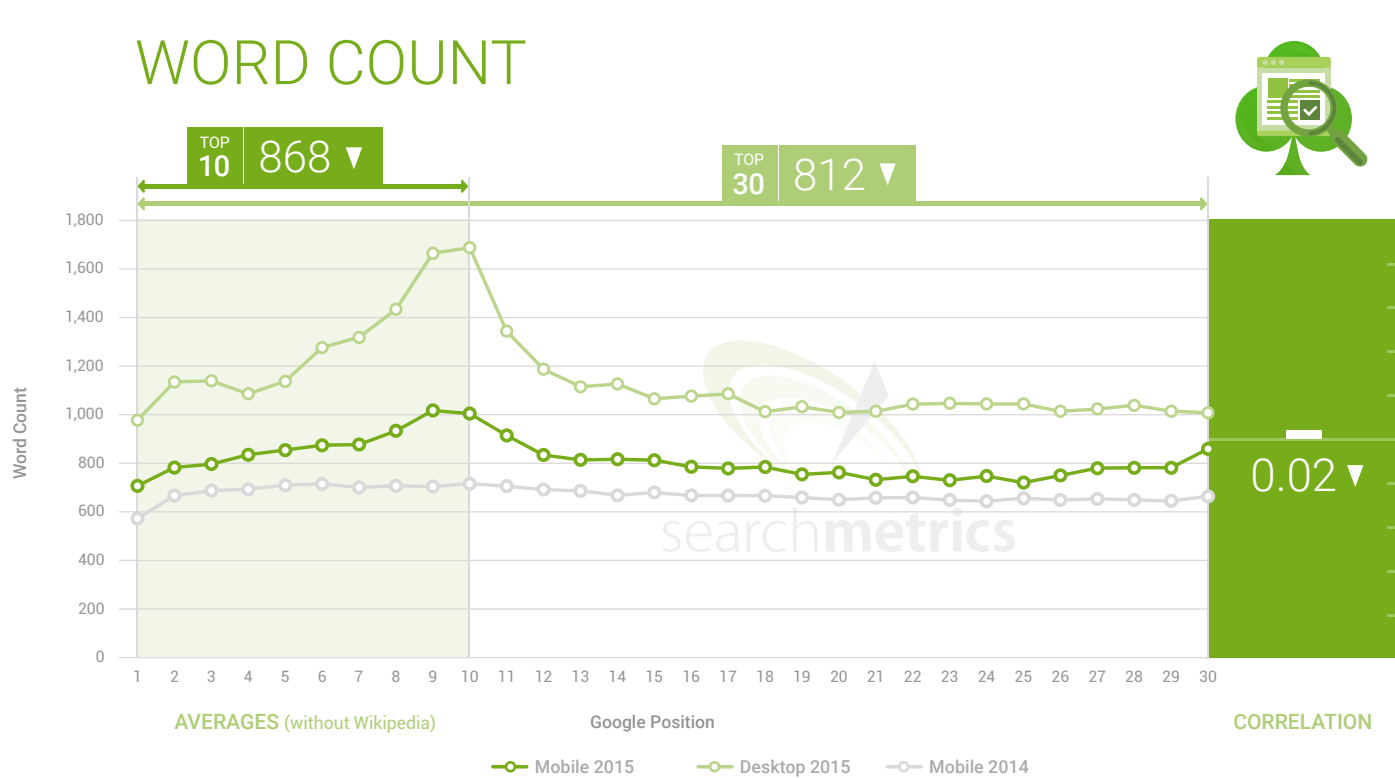
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# 8

## CONTENT

As stated in the 2015 Ranking Factors Study for desktop, content ranking factors are amongst the most important for good rankings.

### WORD COUNT



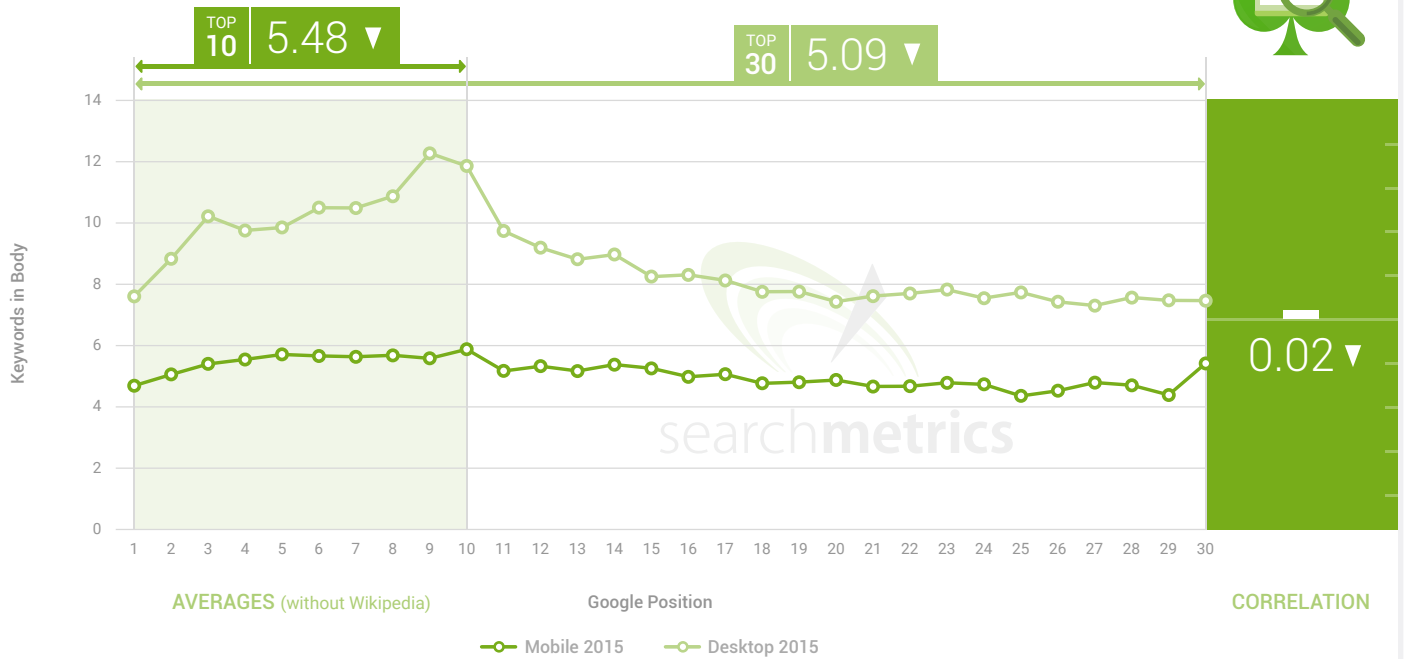
Average word count has risen across both mobile and desktop results, with ranking pages exhibiting a higher average word count this year. Texts have become longer and more comprehensive. Word count also increased in the mobile SERPs in the wake of the mobile-friendly Google update.



Content is increasing in length in the mobile results, but it still remains significantly shorter than in the desktop results. In most cases, reducing content length for mobile devices is worthwhile.

## CONTENT

### KEYWORDS IN BODY



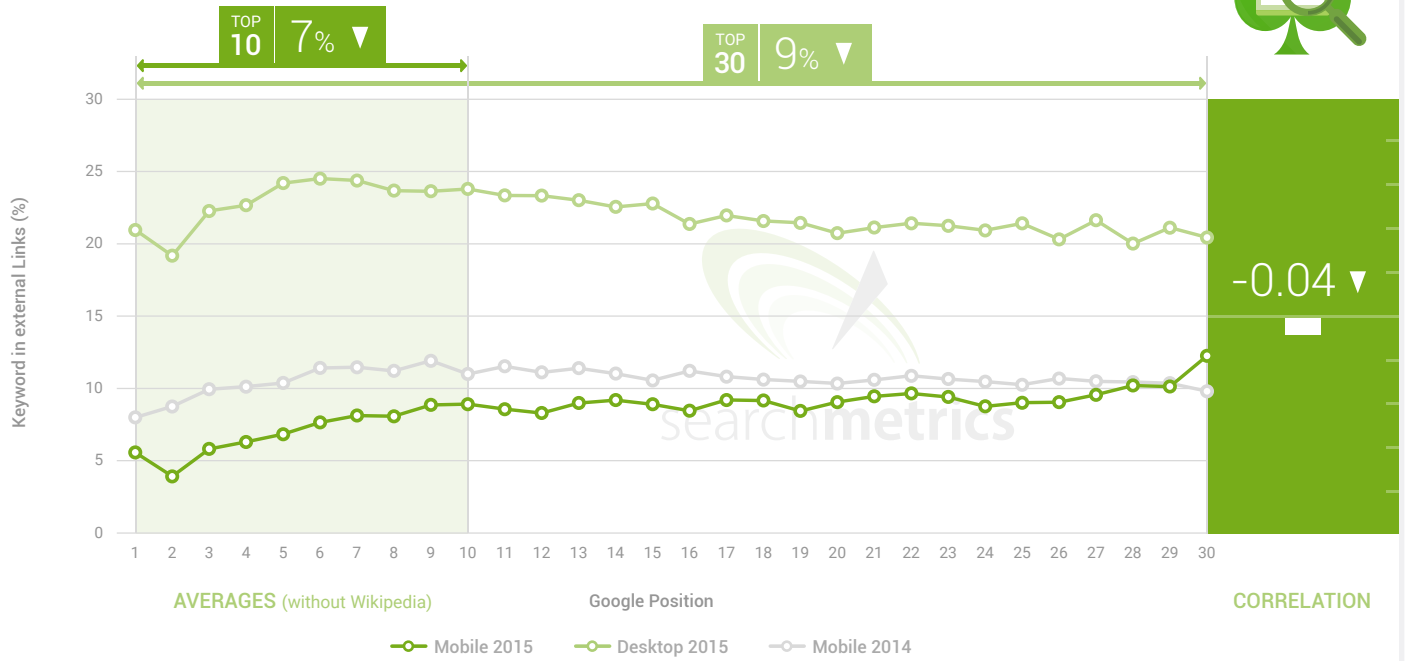
The trend regarding keywords in the body is analog to word count: in the 2015 mobile SERPs the amount of keywords in the body has risen; the mobile average still remains lower than in the desktop results. This can be explained by the increasing text length: a longer text increases the number of keywords that organically occur in a text.



Organically composed texts contain keywords as well as synonyms and related phrases – but don't overdo it.

## CONTENT

### KEYWORD IN EXTERNAL LINKS



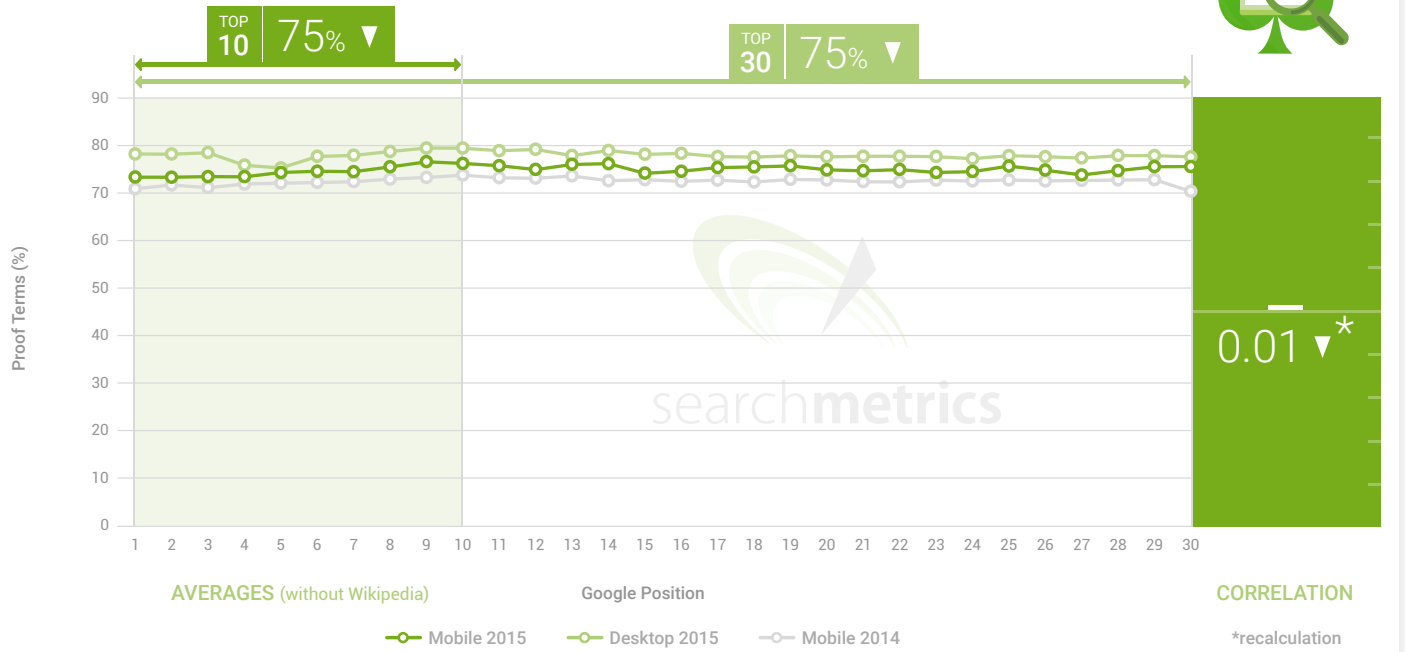
The percentage of pages where the keyword for which they rank links to an external page has decreased in the mobile SERPs compared with last year. Compared with the desktop results the mobile value is significantly lower and the correlation is negative.



Avoid references to external sites that are linked with terms that you want to be relevant and rank for. Both Google and your visitors could interpret this link as being more relevant for this topic than your own page.

## CONTENT

### PROOF TERMS



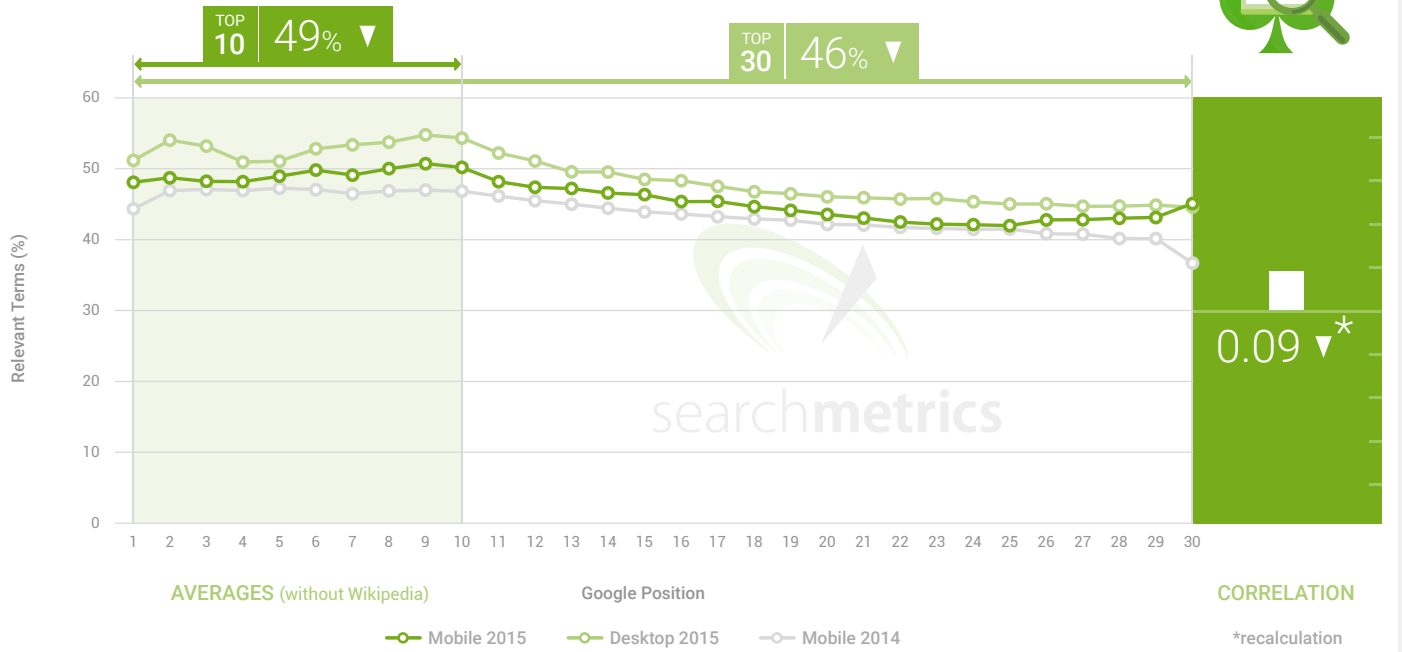
Ranking URLs in the mobile SERPs use slightly more proof terms – terms that are semantically very closely linked to the main keyword – than last year. This year the value is 75% (the percentage represents the share of used proof terms for a specific keyword. These proof terms are determined by Searchmetrics during analysis, and the percentage represents how many of these terms are found on the URLs on average). The desktop values are slightly higher; this is again related to word count.



*Proof terms are also a prerequisite for good mobile rankings.*

## CONTENT

### RELEVANT TERMS



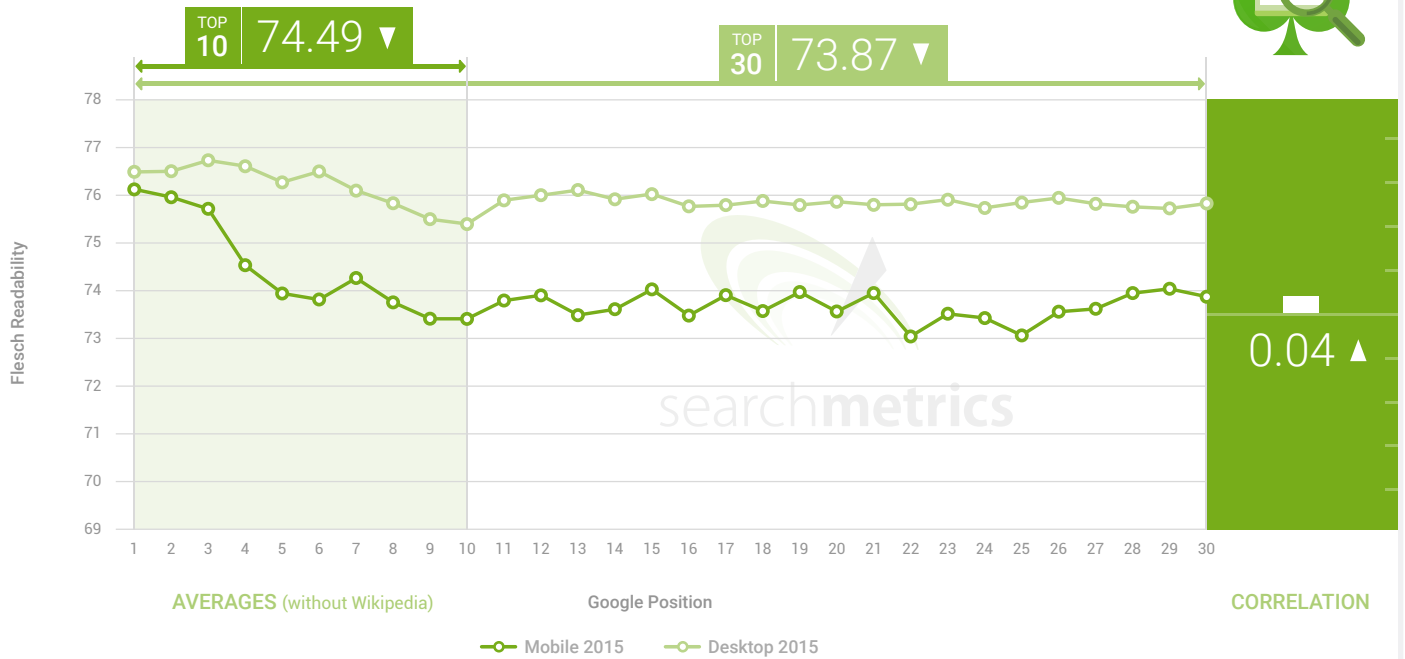
The percentage of relevant terms – semantically more distantly related terms to the main keyword (may often occur in their proximity depending on context) – has also increased in the mobile SERPs. While in 2014 the top 10 mobile search results 47% of relevant terms were used, this year the average is 49%. The desktop values are also higher across the board.



Use relevant terms to make your landing page more holistic and to adapt to the search intention of your users. Distance yourself from the competition with holistic content.

## CONTENT

### FLESCH READABILITY



Interestingly and rather surprisingly, our data suggest that content in the mobile results is more demanding to read than in the desktop results. The differences are minimal and can probably be attributed to the shorter text length found in the mobile results.





### CONTENT RANKING FACTORS SUMMARY: MOBILE VS DESKTOP

- *Texts are on average longer than in 2014, still shorter than desktop*
- *The percentage of keywords found in external links has decreased*
- *Ranking URLs in the mobile results use more proof terms – semantically closely related terms – than last year. The percentage of relevant terms – semantically more distantly related terms – has also increased in the mobile results*
- *Proof terms are a prerequisite for good rankings for both mobile and desktop. Relevant terms can make money pages more holistic – setting you apart from the competition*
- *Mobile content is slightly more demanding in terms of readability*

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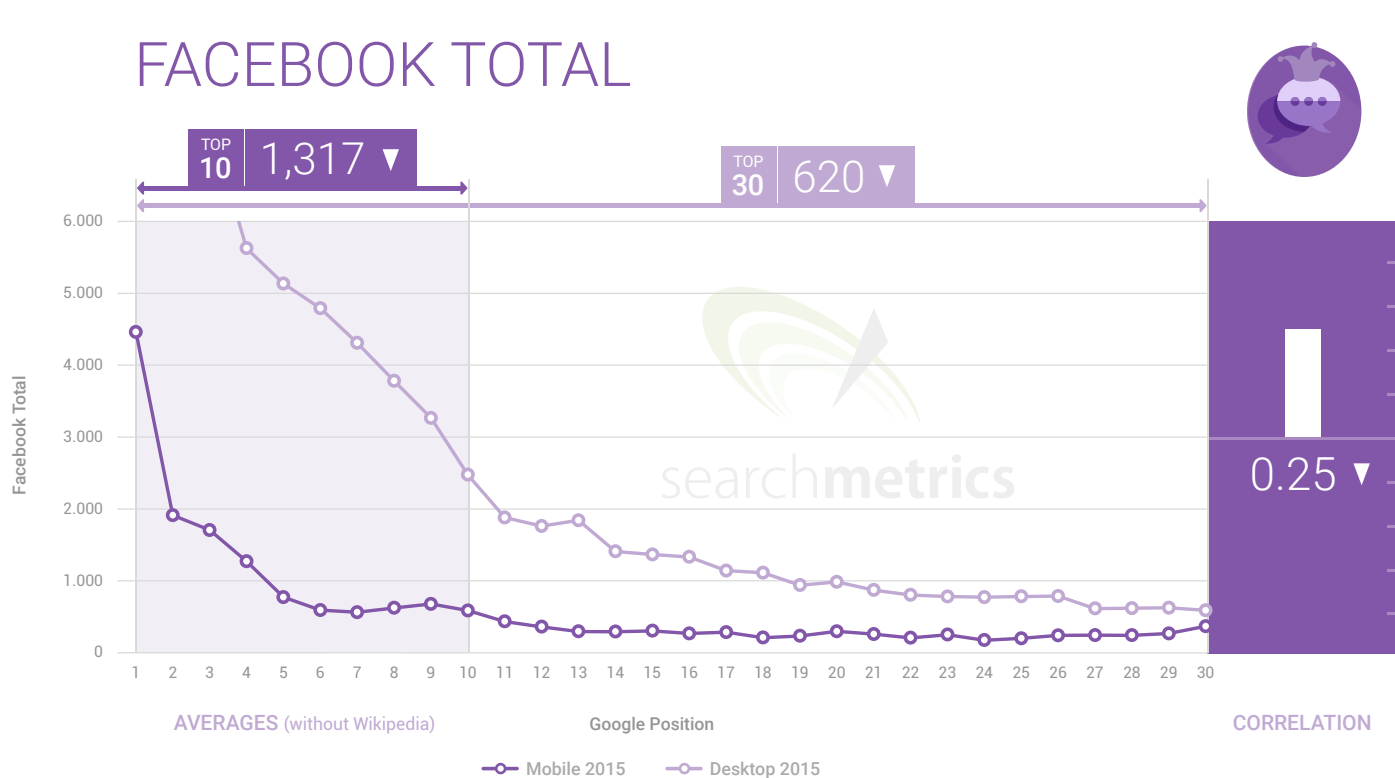
# 9

## SOCIAL SIGNALS

Whether Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or Pinterest, the average number of social signals has increased in both desktop and mobile results compared to 2014. It is important to note that the average desktop values are considerably higher than the mobile social signals.

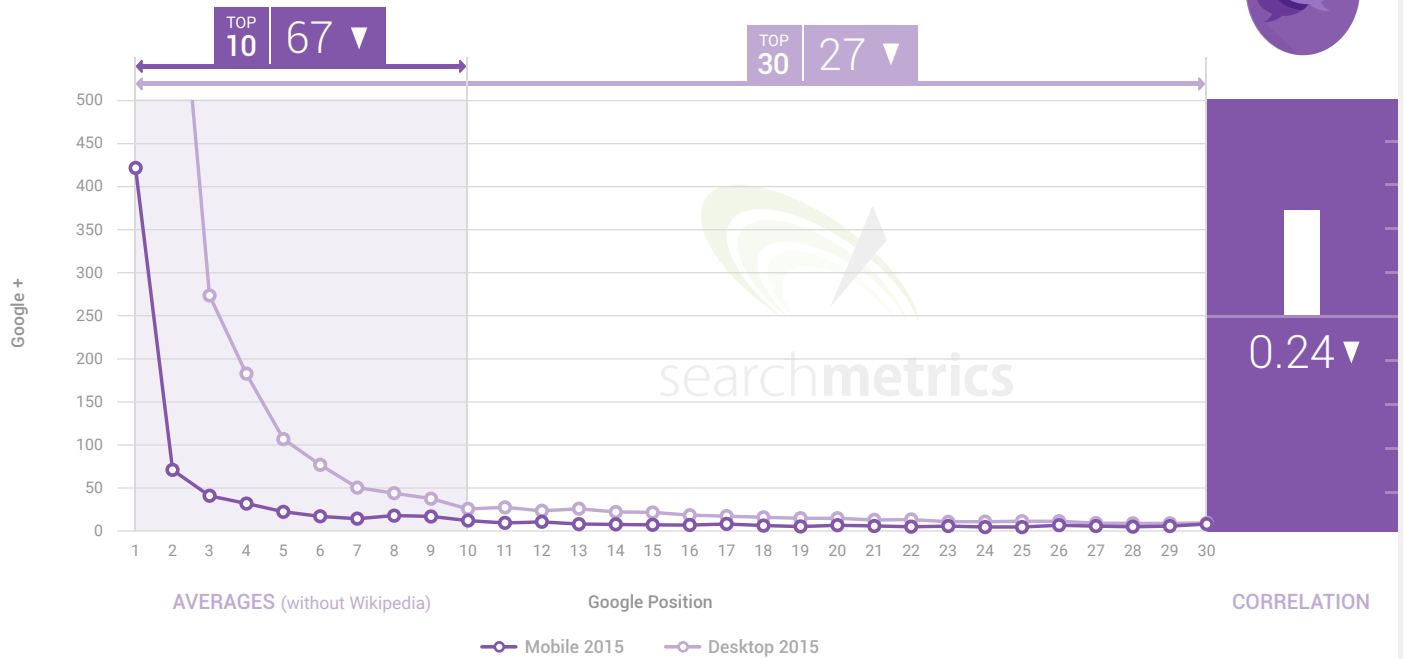
The correlations in the mobile data are slightly lower this year, however, still comparatively high compared with other ranking factors; this is also true of the desktop values. The high correlation values can be attributed to the large difference between the different ranking positions and can be summarized as follows: the higher a URL ranks, the more social signals it has on average.

The scale used in the following charts represents the maximum value of the mobile results. For this reason the maximum value for the desktop results sometimes lies outside the visible area. Without truncating the scale in this way, it would have been difficult to present the mobile data.

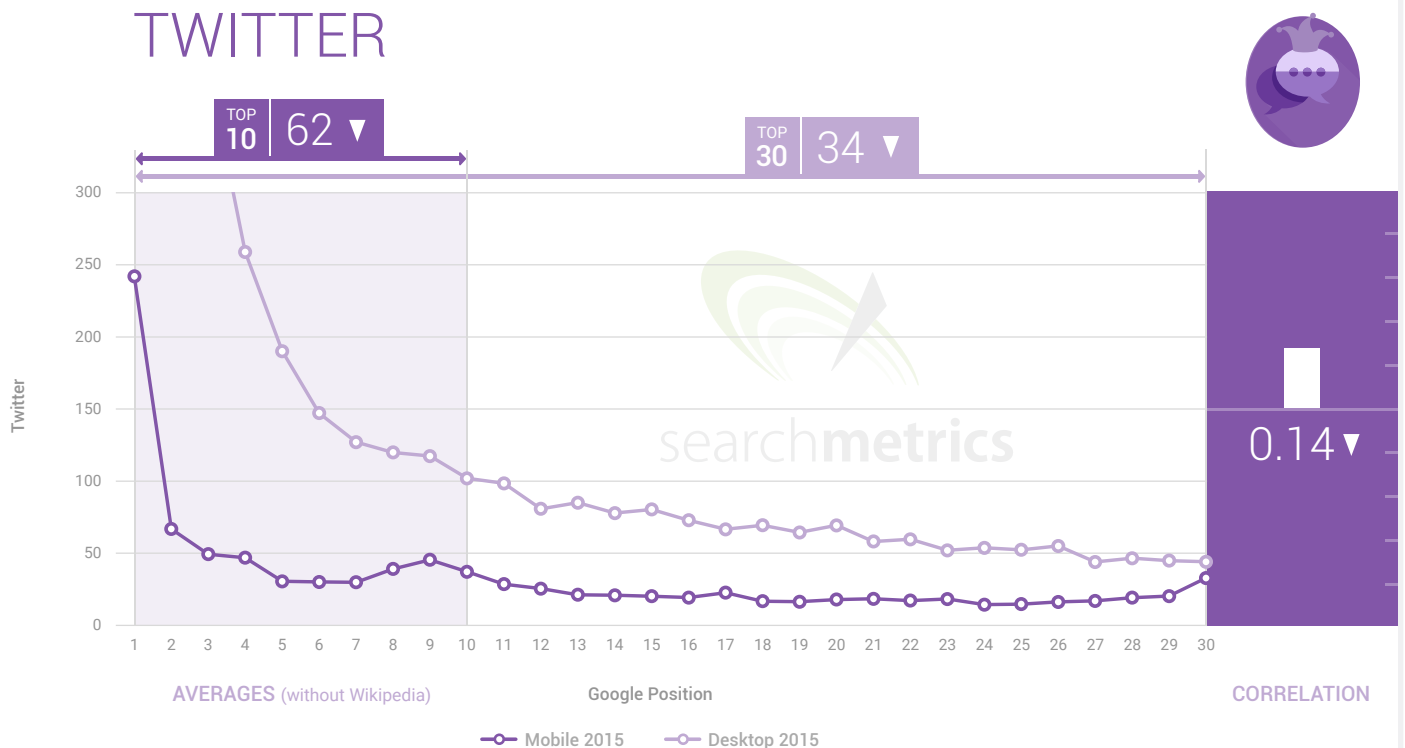


## SOCIAL SIGNALS

### GOOGLE +

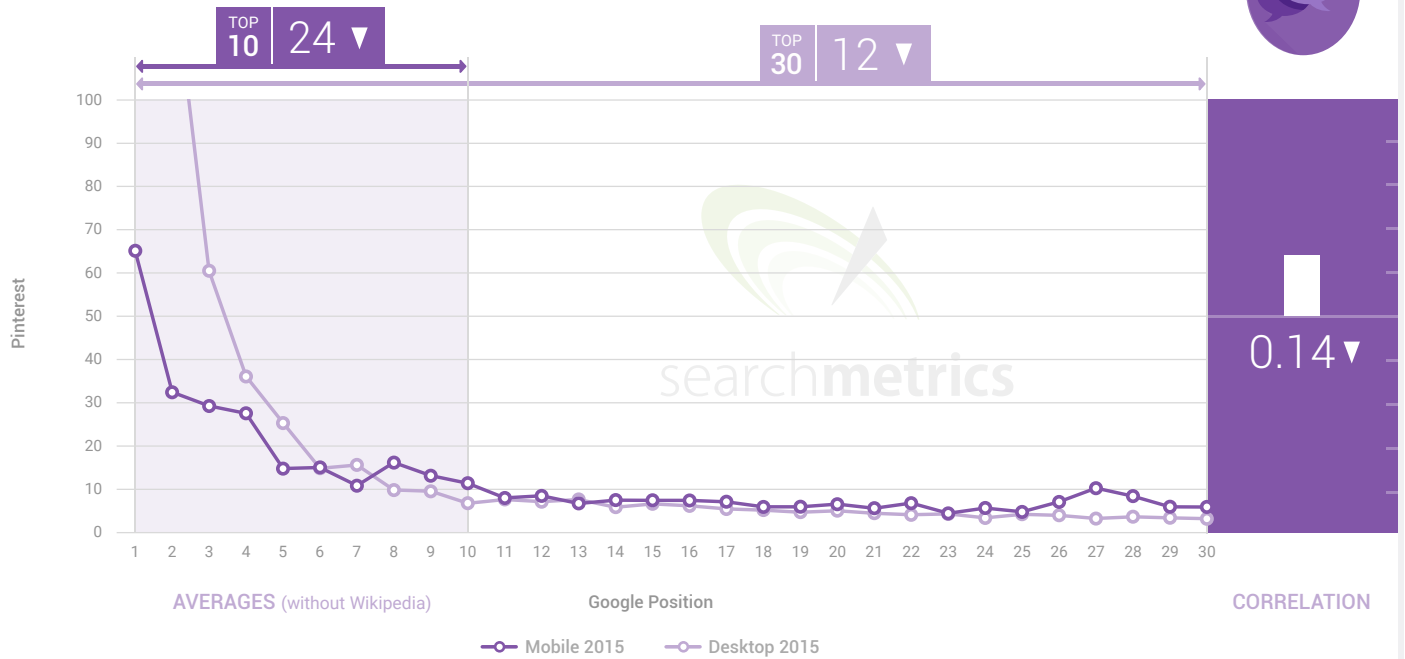


### TWITTER



## SOCIAL SIGNALS

### PINTEREST

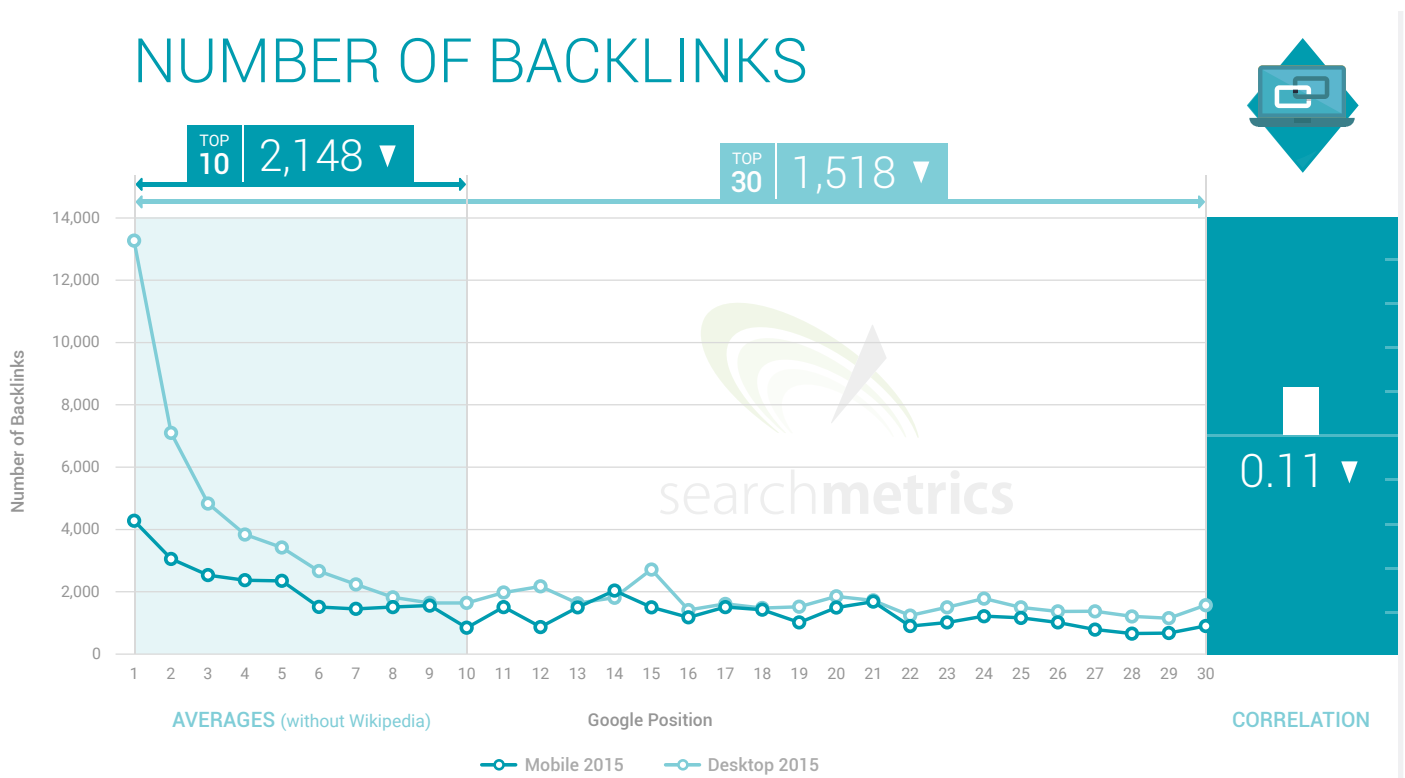


Organic social signals can be a bonus for good rankings.

# 10

## BACKLINKS

Links from other sites remain an important quality benchmark for evaluating a webpage. However, according to our data, we believe the influence of backlinks, particularly regarding mobile search results, is on the decline. On mobile devices, content is typically shared socially and not actively linked.



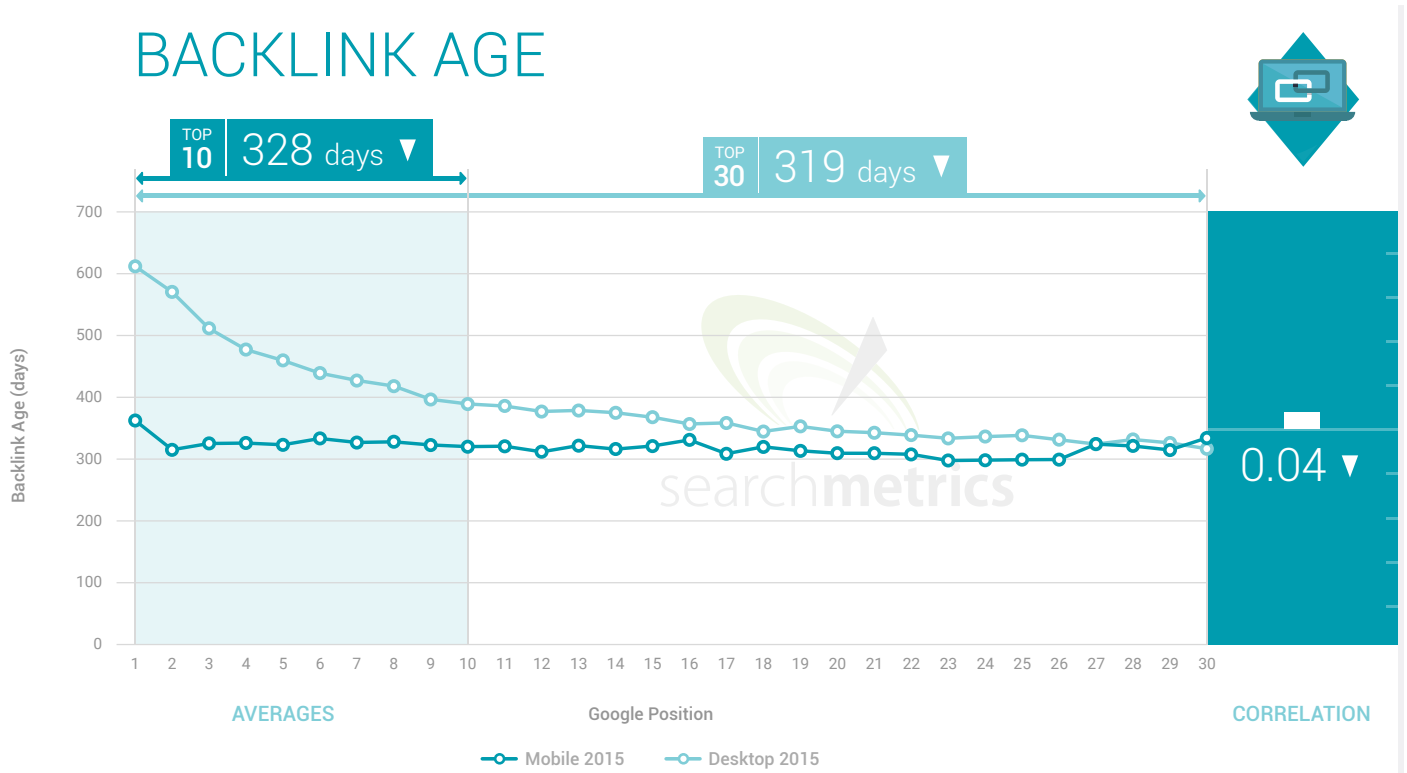
On average URLs in the mobile results exhibit much fewer backlinks than in the desktop results. This also shows that often completely different pages rank in the mobile search results compared with desktop. In the top 10 mobile results the average number of backlinks is about half that of the desktop results. One probable cause is that often of a dedicated mobile version of a site exists that has much fewer backlinks than its desktop big brother. Another possible reason is that sites with a lot of backlinks do not rank in the mobile results because they are not mobile-friendly.



Backlinks as a ranking factor will continue to lose significance as other factors like mentions or other social signals become more important.

## BACKLINKS

### BACKLINK AGE



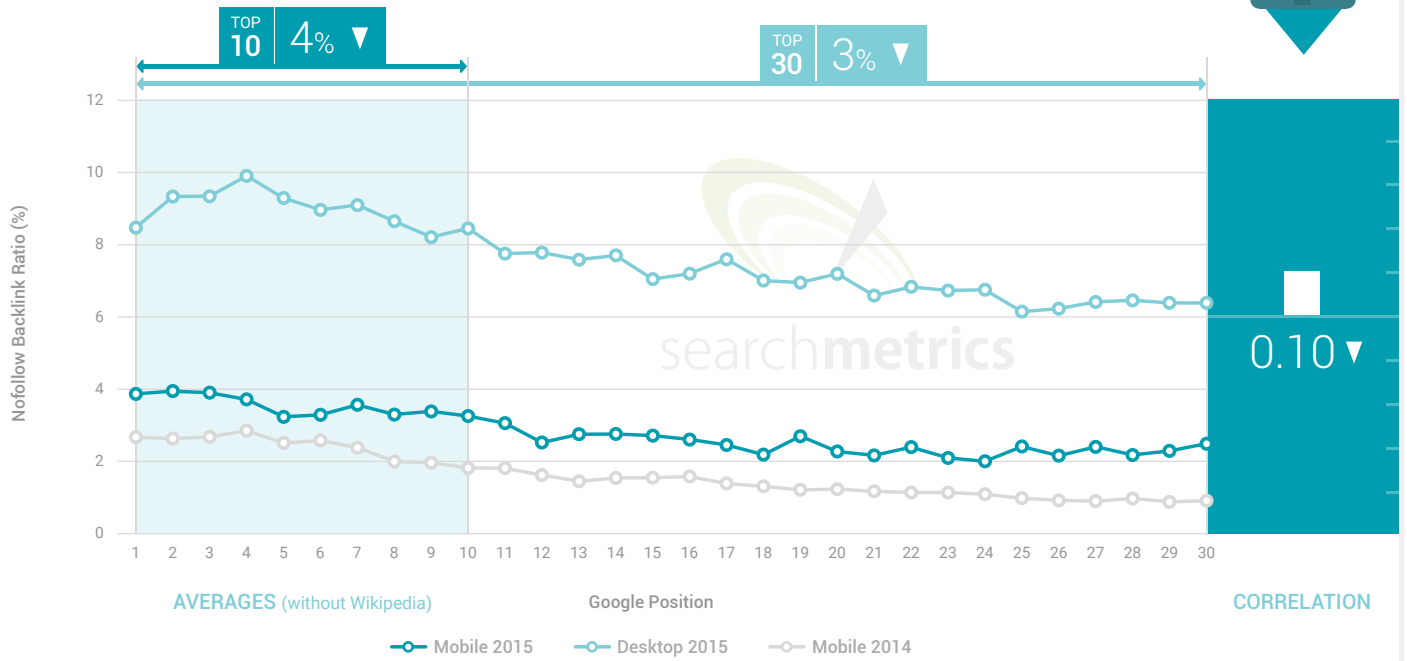
From our analysis of backlink age we can conclude that the desktop results typically, particularly in the top 10, contain backlinks that on average are significantly older than in mobile. In the mobile results there were barely any detectable differences in the age of backlinks for different ranking positions (low correlation of 0.04), while the desktop correlation value is comparatively high (0.19).



*URLs in the mobile search results are younger and on average have younger backlinks than desktop URLs.*

## BACKLINKS

### NOFOLLOW BACKLINK RATIO



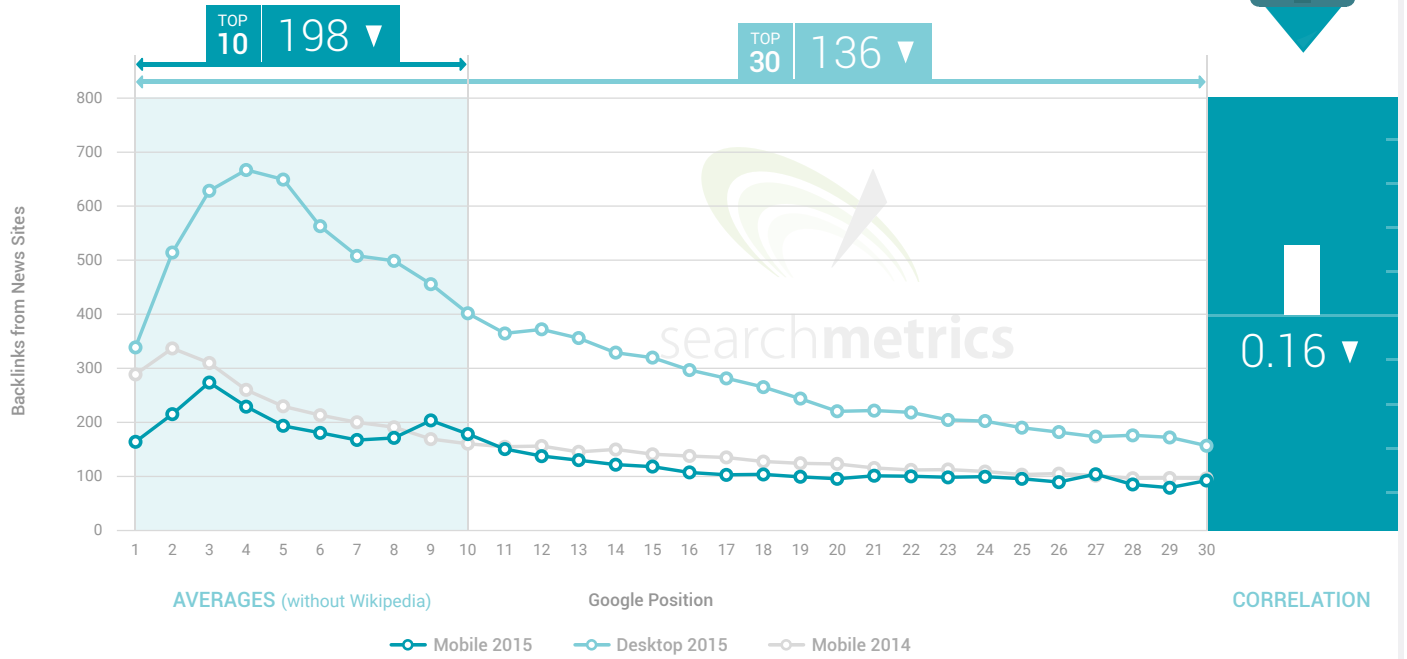
The percentage of nofollow backlinks has increased this year. Mobile results still have on average less nofollow backlinks than the desktop results.



*Pages in the mobile rankings do not only have less backlinks, but also a lower percentage of nofollow backlinks – although this percentage is slowing increasing.*

## BACKLINKS

### BACKLINKS FROM NEWS SITES



The average percentage of backlinks from news sites in the mobile SERPs has decreased this year and is significantly lower than in the desktop results (a value that is on the rise). Websites that have a dedicated mobile version (m.example.com / mobile.example.com) are most often linked to news pages, and unsurprisingly it is the desktop URL that is linked more often.



*Responsive websites have an advantage when it comes to backlinks from news sites which are often trusted for relevancy and being up-to-date.*





## LESSONS

### BACKLINKS RANKING FACTORS SUMMARY: MOBILE VS DESKTOP

- *Less backlinks, relevancy of this factor decreasing*
- *Significantly younger backlinks and URLs; similar values across ranking positions*
- *Percentage of nofollow backlinks increased this year*
- *Mobile websites are linked to news sites much less often than in desktop sites, this trend is decreasing; this trend is increasing in the desktop results*

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## CONCLUSION

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*The share of mobile-friendly sites has increased in the wake of Google's mobile update. However, this is not just because of Mobilegeddon, we are witnessing a sustained trend that started before the Google update as many sites continue to further optimize their user experience. Many of our findings regarding the mobile ranking factors correspond to issues discussed in Google's "most common mistakes" /[source](#).*

In general it is advisable to use a responsive design approach, however this presupposes of course that smooth, error-free implementation or migration is possible and that the site meets the needs of your users – certainly not the easiest task. Depending on individual needs, a dedicated mobile site (that always points to the corresponding desktop version using canonicals) can often be a good solution. It is important to avoid redirect errors.

## WHY MOBILEGEDDON?

Faulty redirects



Slow websites



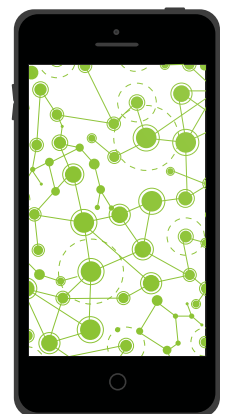
Interstitials



Not responsive



Too many links



## TECHNICAL

- *Average file size in all analyzed URLs was less in all mobile ranking positions compared with desktop results.*
- *The difference in page loading times between desktop and mobiles is very clear. Mobile pages – also due to smaller file sizes – load more quickly, in some cases by around one tenth of a second.*
- *The use of Flash elements has continued to decrease. Only 5% of the top 10 mobile search results integrated flash in their landing pages.*
- *The percentage of keyword domains is lower in the mobile SERPs than in the desktop results.*
- *Compared with this year's desktop figures, longer average URL names were found in the mobile results. This could be attributed to the fact that mobile versions of sites often have a longer name.*

## USER EXPERIENCE

- *Above the fold - page area that is visible without scrolling - average font size is much larger than in the mobile SERPs the desktop results. In the central area the differences are less significant.*
- *Together with responsive sites, dedicated mobile versions of sites also appear in the mobile SERPs; these mobile versions generally do not appear in the desktop SERPs.*
- *While structural and interactive page elements appear less frequently than in the desktop results, in the mobile SERPs text structural elements such as unordered lists appear more frequently – these have less items individually than in desktop results.*
- *Mobile optimized URLs have much fewer ads, images and internal links than the desktop results. This can partly be explained by the fact that such ads increase file size and load time, which need to be kept to a minimum on mobile devices.*

## CONTENT

- *This year's average word count increased across the board. Online content is becoming longer and more comprehensive. Mobile texts are typically much shorter than desktop texts.*
- *The number of keywords in external links has decreased.*
- *Ranking URLs in the mobile SERPs use slightly more proof terms – terms that are semantically very closely linked to the main keyword – than last year. The percentage of relevant terms – semantically more distantly related terms to the main keyword – has also increased in the mobile SERPs. The desktop values are slightly higher; this is again mainly related to word count.*
- *Proof terms are a prerequisite for good rankings for both mobile and desktop. Relevant terms on the other hand can make money pages more holistic – setting you apart from the competition.*
- *The Flesch readability score of mobile content is on average lower than desktop content. This means mobile content is typically slightly harder to read.*

## SOCIAL SIGNALS

- *Whether Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or Pinterest, all average values or the analyzed social signal have increased compared to 2014. The desktop values are still, however, considerably higher than the mobile social signal values.*
- *The correlations are comparatively high compared with other ranking factors. This can be attributed to the large difference between the different ranking positions and can be summarized as follows: the higher a URL ranks, the more social signals it has on average.*

## BACKLINKS

- *Mobile SERPs exhibited much fewer backlinks than the desktop results.*
- *The importance of backlinks as a ranking factor will continue to decrease. Regarding mobile search requests, content is shared socially or recommended rather than actively linked.*
- *The percentage of nofollow backlinks has increased this year, but remains well below the desktop value.*
- *Mobile results are linked much less frequently to news pages, which can in part be attributed to the separate mobile versions of websites (their desktop counterparts are the ones typically linked to news sites). This trend is also decreasing compared to desktop.*

**OVERVIEW OF AVERAGE VALUES FOR TOP 10 RESULTS FOR OUR  
MOBILE VS DESKTOP RANKING FACTORS:**

FACTOR	MOBILE 2015	TREND TO 2014	DESKTOP 2015	TREND TO 2014
Filesize	18,495 byte	▼	25,171	▲
Sitespeed	1.10 sec	*	1.16 sec	*
URL Length	45.86	▼	43.64	▲
Flash	5%	▼	14%	▶
Keyword in Domain	3%	▼	5%	▼
Redirects	15%	▼	16%	-
Responsive Design	24%	NEW	28%	NEW
Font Size - Above the fold	15.63	NEW	14.08	NEW
Font Size - Central Area	11.44	NEW	12.01	NEW
Number of internal links	92	▲	150	▲
Interactive elements	151	NEW	226	NEW
Presents of unordered lists	72%	NEW	47%	NEW
Number of unordered lists	2.29	NEW	2.58	NEW
Max Bullets in list	8.75	NEW	12.59	NEW
Adlinks / Adsense	9%	▼	11%	▼
Number of images	3.62	▲	10.03	▲

FACTOR	MOBILE 2015	TREND TO 2014	DESKTOP 2015	TREND TO 2014
Word Count	867	▲	1,285	▲
Keywords in body	5.48	▲	10.22	▲
Keyword in external links	7%	▼	23%	▼
Proof Terms	75%	▲	78%	▼
Relevant Terms	49%	▲	53%	▲
Flesch Readability	74.49	▲	76.19	▲
Facebook Total	1,317	▲	6,504	▲
Google +	67	▲	1,367	▲
Twitter	62	▲	442	▲
Pinterest	24	▲	60	▲
Number of Back-links	2,148	▲	4,248	▲
Backlink Age	328 days	▲	470 days	▲
Nofollow Backlink Ratio	4%	▲	9%	▲
Backlinks from News Sites	198	▼	522	▲

\* = recalculation

- = no data

▲ = increasing

▼ = decreasing



For questions regarding this whitepaper, the Searchmetrics Suite™ or to find out more about how we can help your business, contact:

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**[www.searchmetrics.com](http://www.searchmetrics.com)**



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