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# Using Multi-Year Data to Analyze Reader Trends and Plan for 2022

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WHO WE ARE

# We enable meaningful stories to thrive — wherever they live

**700** enterprise publishers

**65 billion** pageviews tracked per month

**70** Countries

**6** Continents



The Washington Post

CNN

Clarín

 **CBS** Interactive

 **ALJAZEERA**

The Telegraph

 **UOL**

The New York Times

## AGENDA

Today, we'll cover trends from January 2019 through 2021:

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**How (and where) has traffic grown?**

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**How deeply do people read?**

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**Where do they find content?**

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**Do readers form long-term habits?**

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**What content drew attention?**

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**In each of these sections, we'll dive into:**

- Overall reader patterns
- Regional trends
- Breakdowns by size of site
- Takeaways from 2021

# Patterns in Monthly Traffic

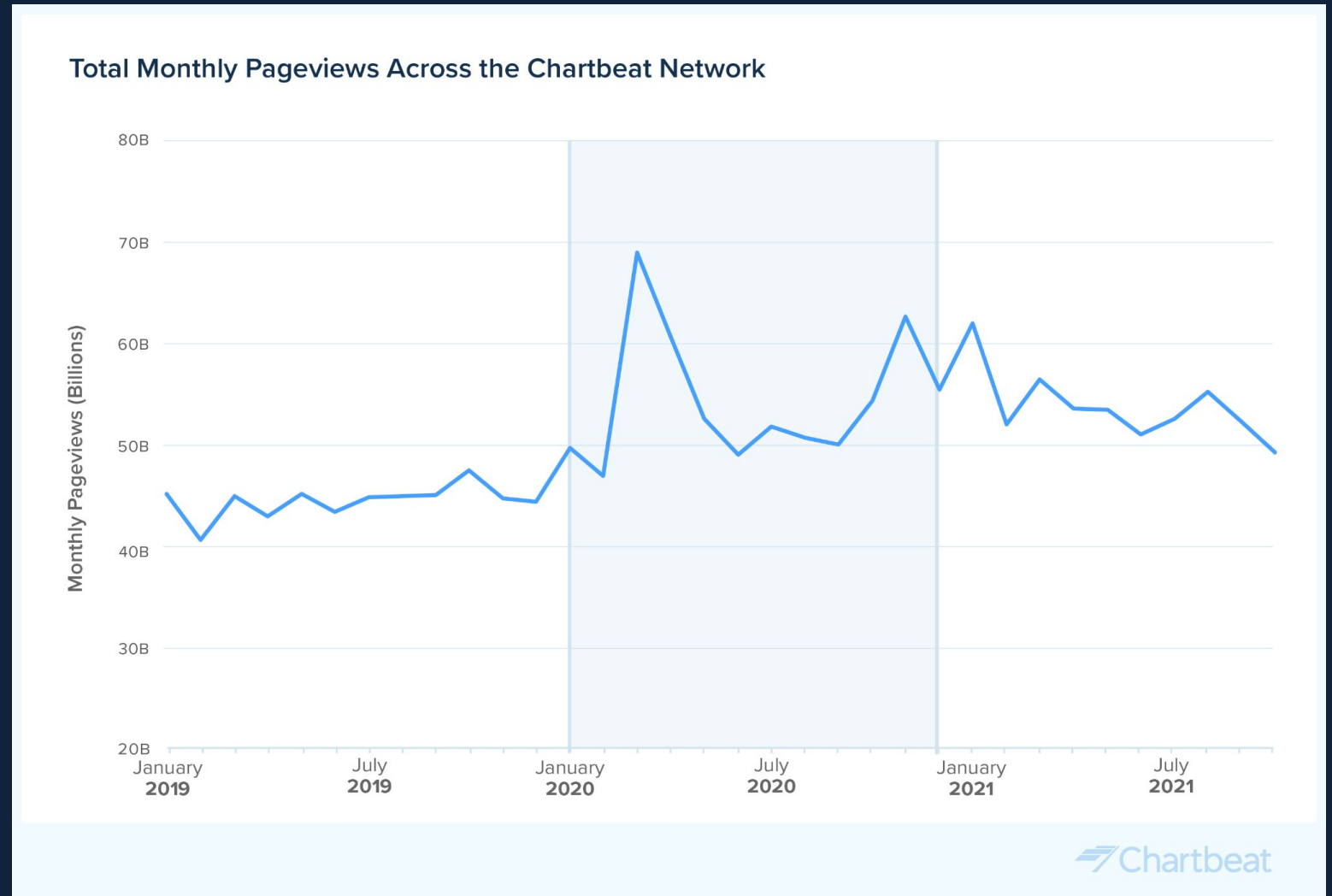


## TRAFFIC TRENDS

2019 was relatively stable, traffic-wise. The next two years were much spikier due to:

- COVID lockdowns
- US Presidential Election
- January 6 Insurrection

Traffic in 2021 was still more erratic than 2019, but began to normalize after January.

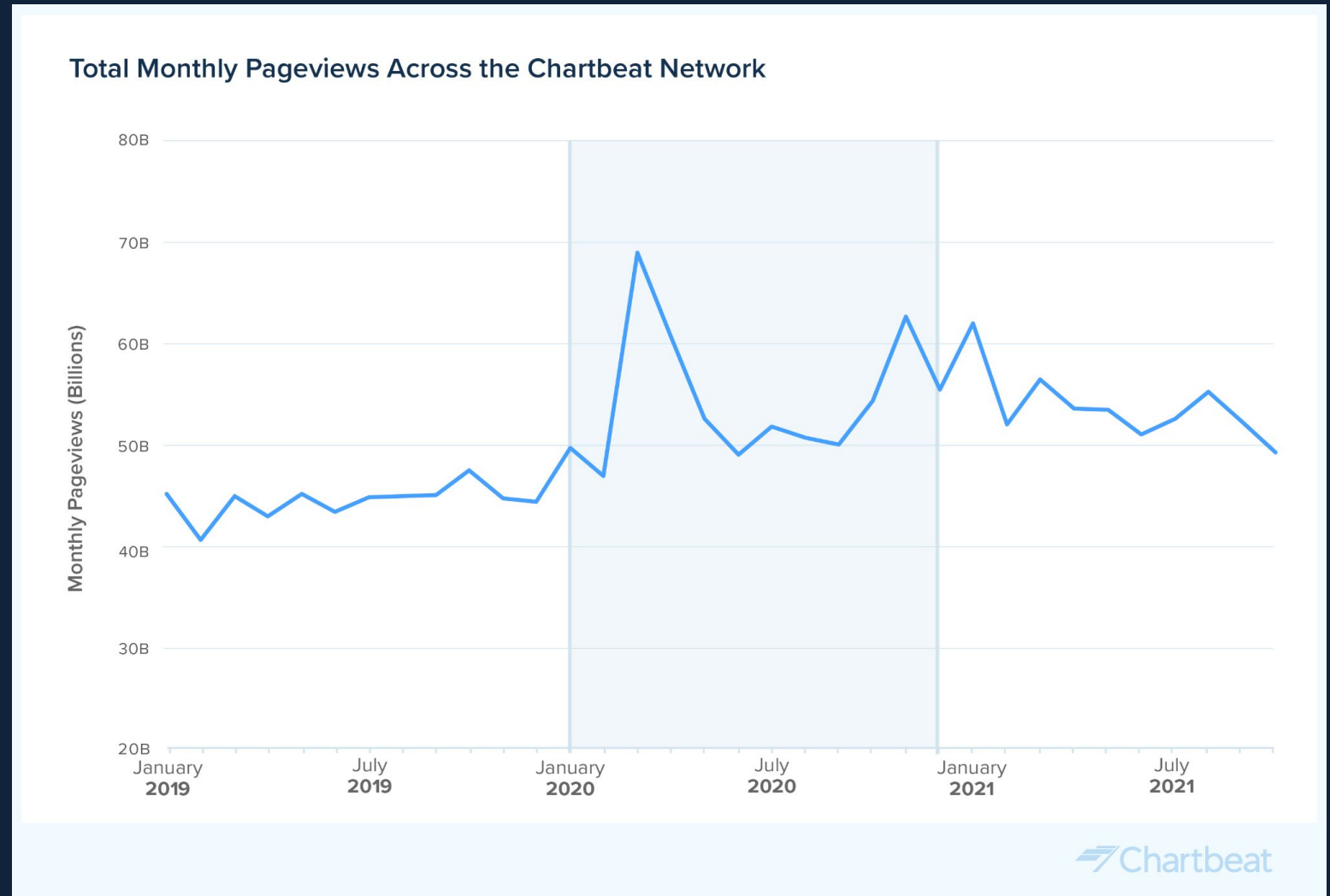


## TRAFFIC TRENDS

2019 was relatively stable, traffic-wise. The next two years were much more spiky.

Delta between the year's best and worst month:

- **2019:** 17%
- **2020:** 47%
- **2021:** 26%



TRAFFIC TRENDS

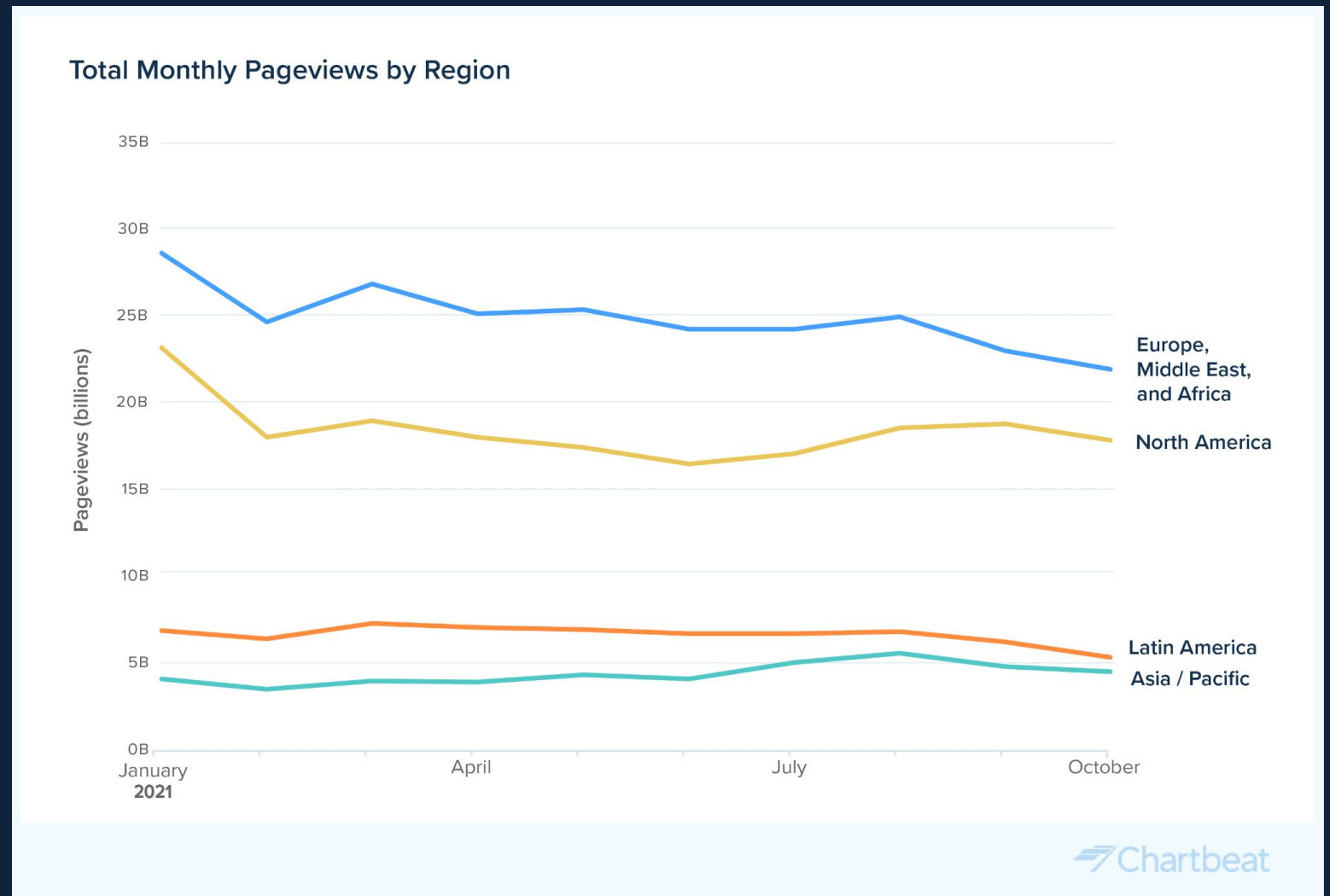
Average monthly traffic in 2021 was still much higher than 2019, indicating that some of the reader growth in 2020 has been sustained during this most recent year.

	Avg. Monthly Pageviews	Change from 2019
2019	47.8B	--
2020	55.9B	+22%
2021	55.3B	+21%



## TRAFFIC TRENDS

North America and Europe, Middle East, and Africa saw higher spikes in January 2021 than other regions.





## TRAFFIC TRENDS

Asia / Pacific is the only region that saw growth in 2021.

All other regions have seen a notable decline since August of last year.

	Traffic Growth in 2021
Europe, Middle East, Africa	<b>-23%</b>
North America	<b>-23%</b>
Latin America	<b>-21%</b>
Asia / Pacific	<b>+9%</b>



## TRAFFIC TRENDS

The largest sites in the world account for more than 98% of total traffic. These sites also saw the largest traffic decline over the course of 2019:

LARGE

-21%

SMALL

-17%

### Size definitions:

- **Large:** More than 100K pageviews per day
- **Small:** Fewer than 100K pageviews per day



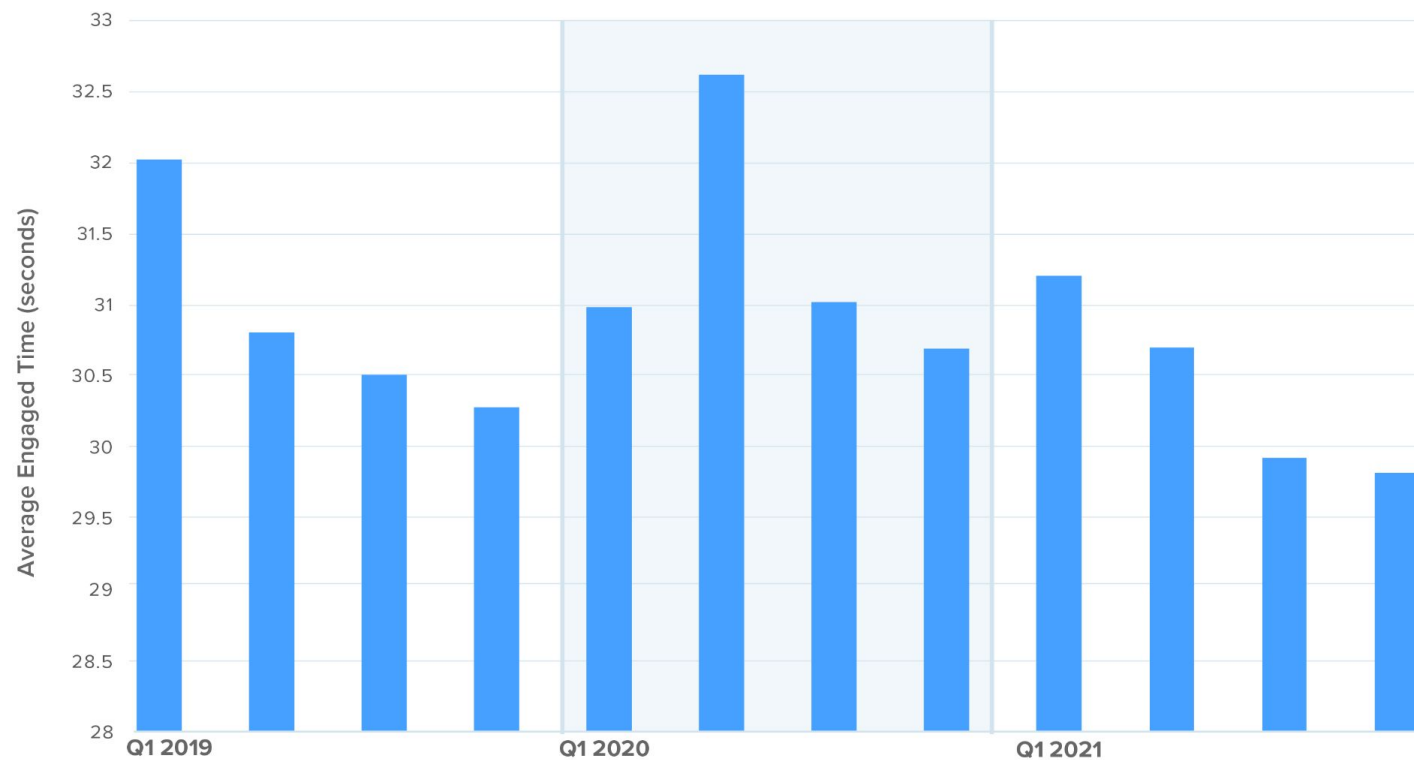
# Average Engagement per Pageview

## ENGAGEMENT

Average Engagement per pageview saw steady declines over the course of 2019 before climbing rapidly at the onset of COVID lockdowns.

Engagement has also been declining in 2021, with average reading time dropping by more than 7% between January and October.

Average Engaged Time Per Quarter



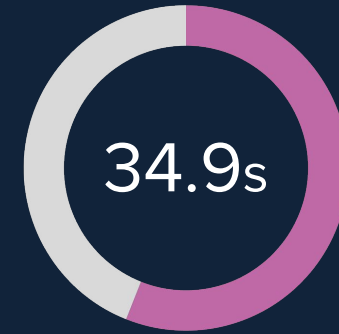
## ENGAGEMENT BY REGION

Over all three years, Latin America has the highest average engaged time (34.9s) and Europe, Middle East, and Africa has the lowest (28.9s).

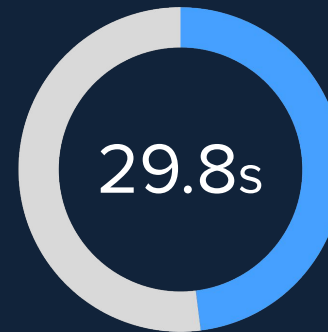
Asia / Pacific has seen the largest drop in Average Engaged Time since 2019 (-9%) and Latin and North America saw modest growth (about +1%).



North  
America



Latin  
America



Asia /  
Pacific



Europe, Middle  
East, Africa

## ENGAGEMENT

The world's largest sites have a higher average engaged time (+9%) than their smaller counterparts

LARGE

30.6s

SMALL

28.1s

### Size definitions:

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SNAPSHOT IN TIME

**To scroll or not to scroll?  
Depends on the region**

SCROLL DEPTH

A key indicator of engagement and loyalty is whether a reader scrolled at all during the visit, or bounced after viewing the first window only.

In APAC and North America, more readers showed scroll behavior in May 2021 compared to 2018.



Region	2018 % of Readers who Scrolled	2021 % of Readers who Scrolled
Asia / Pacific	71%	82%
North America	66%	75%
Europe, Middle East, Africa	74%	71%
Latin America	72%	66%



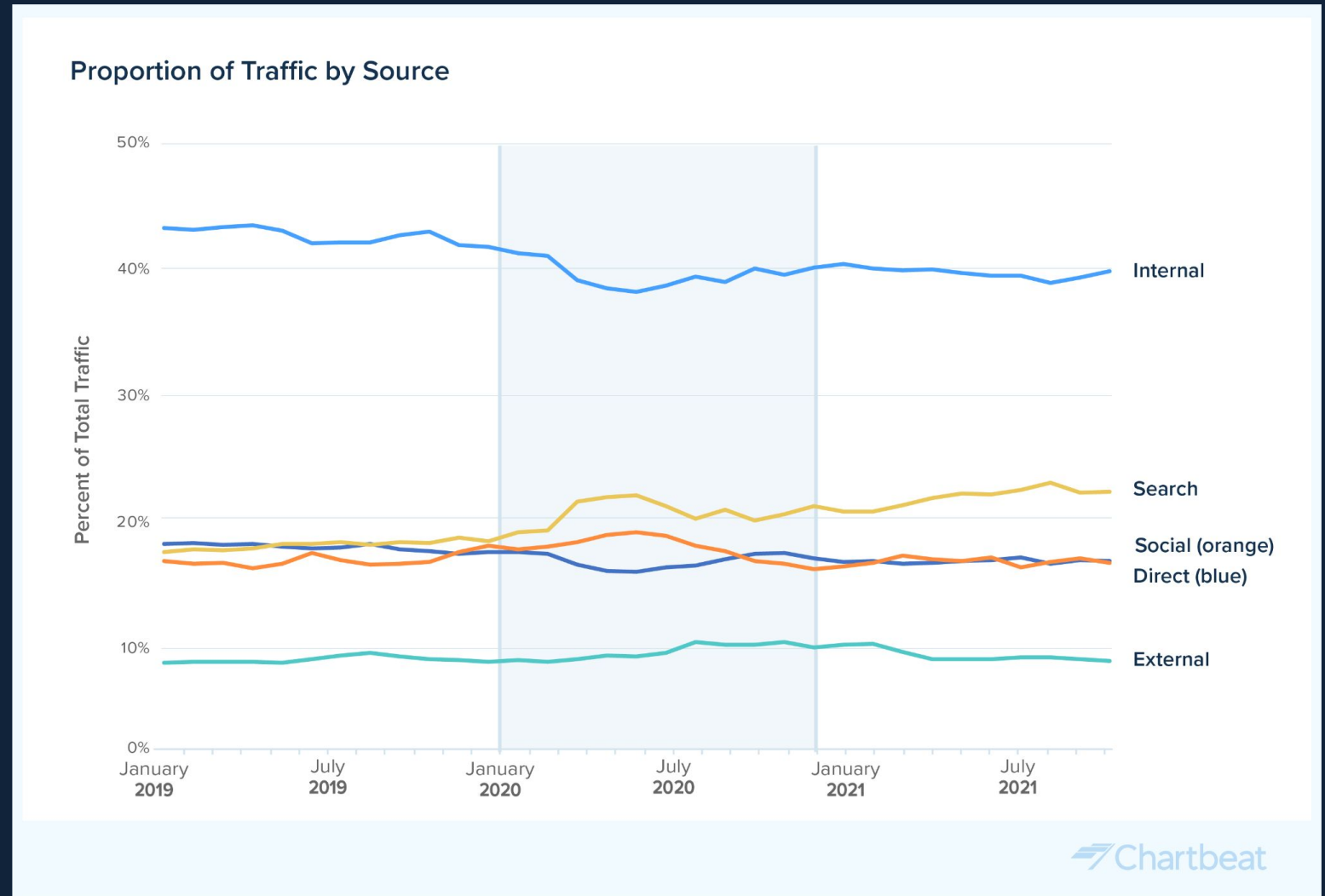
# Performance by Traffic Source

## TRAFFIC SOURCES

Internal is by far the largest source of traffic, accounting for about 41% of all pageviews.

Search is the largest external source of traffic at 19.3%.

Internal and Direct have remained relatively stable.



TRAFFIC SOURCES

Readers from external sources of traffic (search, social, external) have a higher average engaged time than readers who go directly to a site or move around inside the same site.

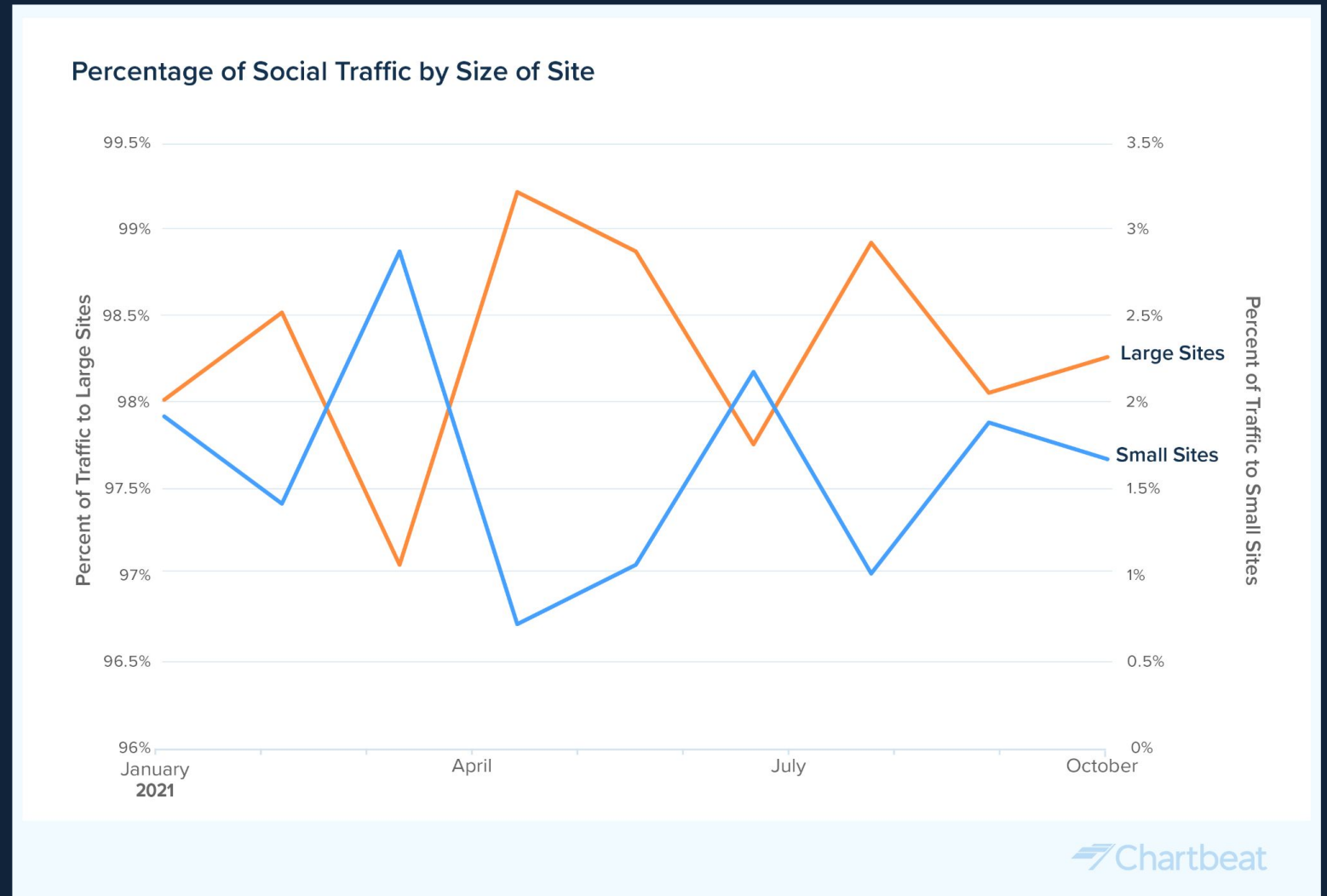
	Pageview Growth Since 2019	Avg. Engaged Time
Search	+36%	41s
External	+14%	32s
Social	+9%	33s
Internal	+2%	28s
Direct	+2%	24s



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

Social traffic, as with overall traffic, is predominantly sent to the world's largest sites (97-99%)

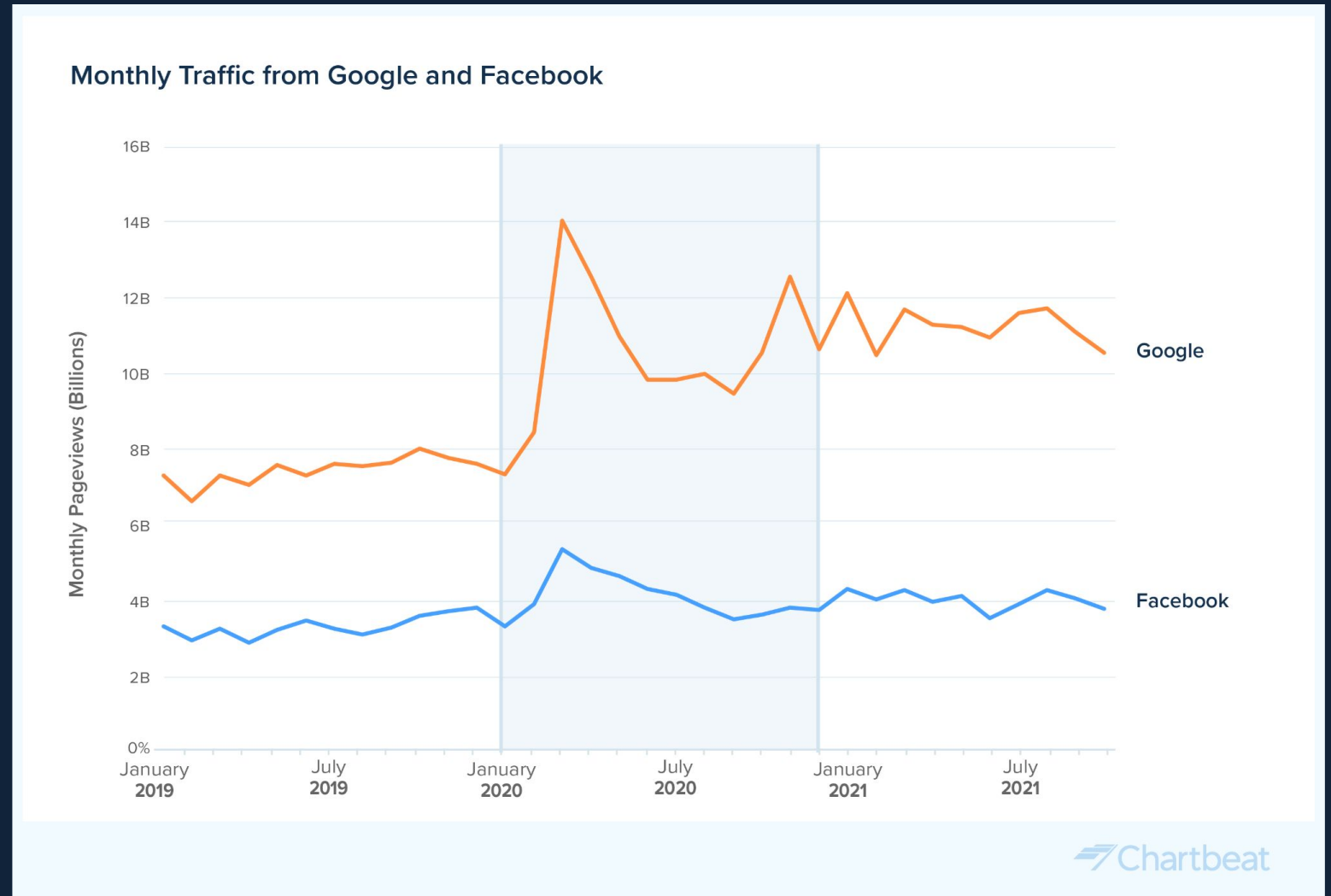
However, we did observe periods in 2021 where a higher proportion of traffic than normal was being sent to smaller sites, notably in March, June and August.



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

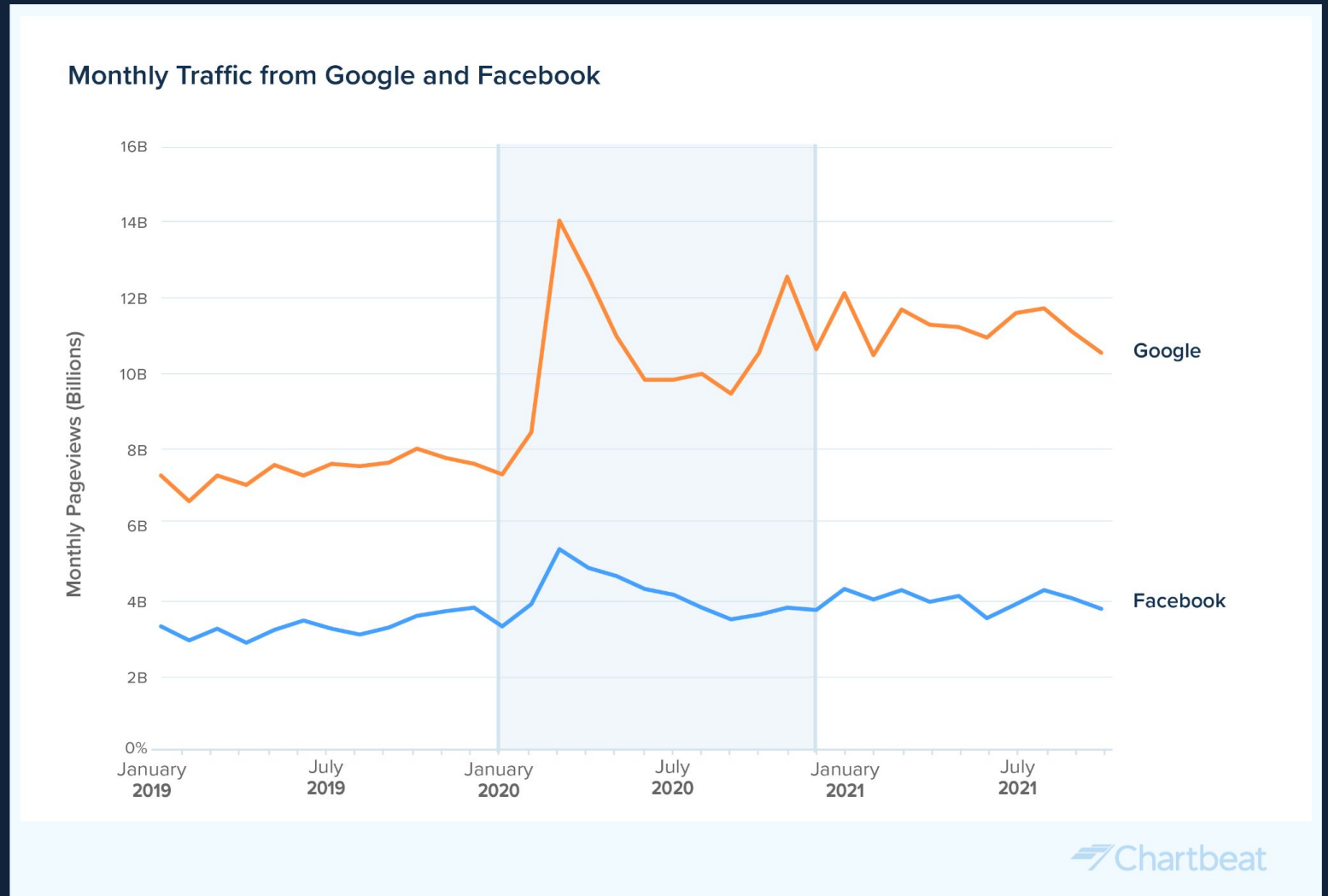
Search traffic has seen the largest growth in Average Monthly Pageviews since 2019.

More specifically, Google continued to drive increasing shares of traffic worldwide in 2021, growing by ~3.5 percentage points.



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

Since the COVID peak in 2020, Search traffic has been growing at a faster pace than Social, though the channels have shown similar monthly traffic patterns (albeit at different volumes).



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

While both Google and Facebook saw rising traffic across all three years (with particular bumps in early 2020), Google's growth is outpacing Facebook's.

	Avg. Monthly Pageviews (change since 2019)		
	Google	Facebook	Multiplier
2019	7.5B	3.4B	2.2x
2020	10.6B (+41%)	4.2B (+23%)	2.6x
2021	11.4B (+51%)	4.1B (+21%)	2.8x

TRAFFIC SOURCES

In addition to better traffic performance, Google readership also records higher Average Engaged Time and has seen growth in engagement while Facebook sees a decline.

	Average Engaged Time (in seconds)	
	Google	Facebook
2019	40.0s	39.7s
2020	41.7s	35.2s
2021	41.7s	34.9s





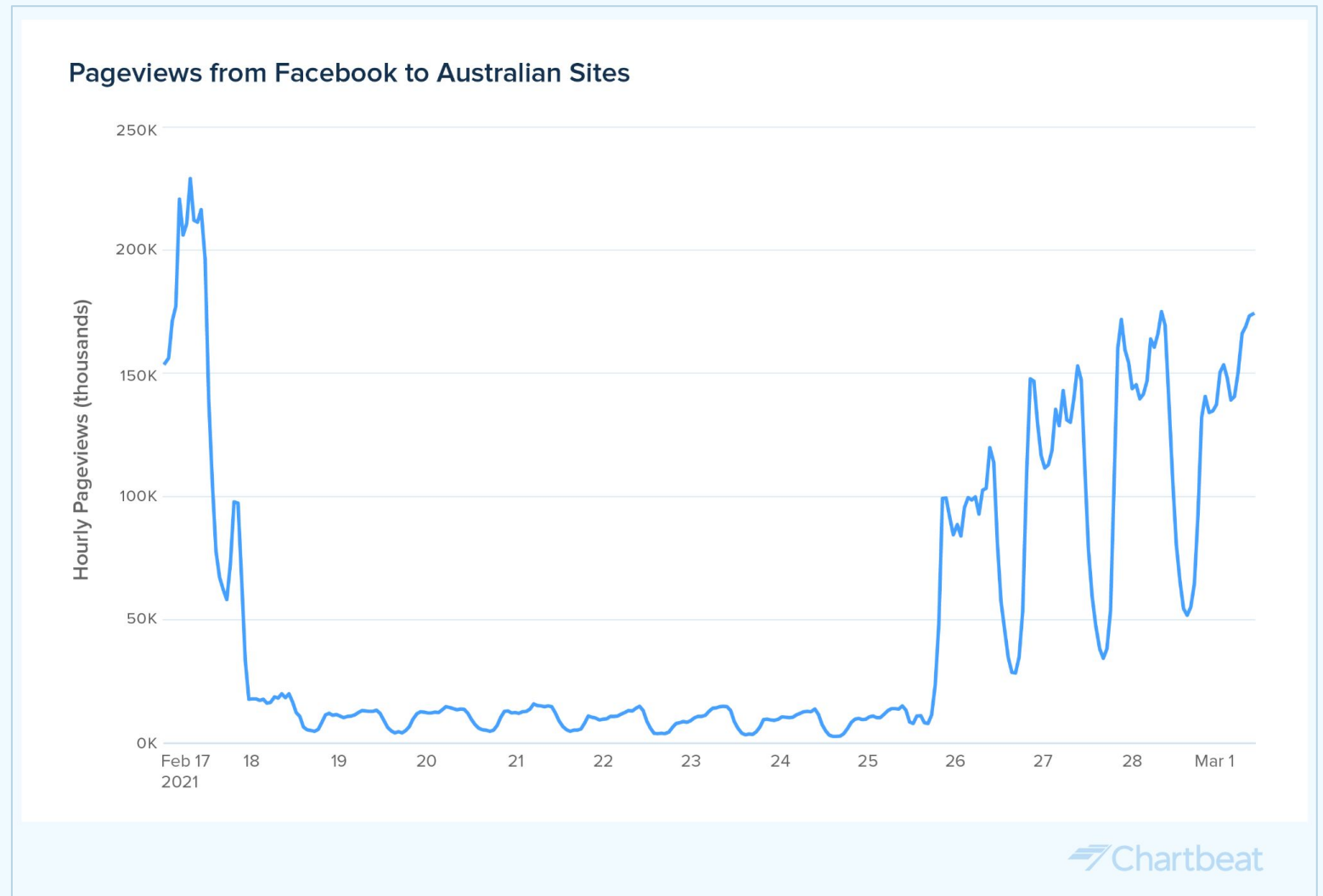
SNAPSHOT IN TIME

# The effects of the Facebook outages on overall traffic

## FACEBOOK BANS AUSTRALIAN SITES

On February 18, Facebook blocked posts from news sites in Australia for eight days. The ban had a profound effect:

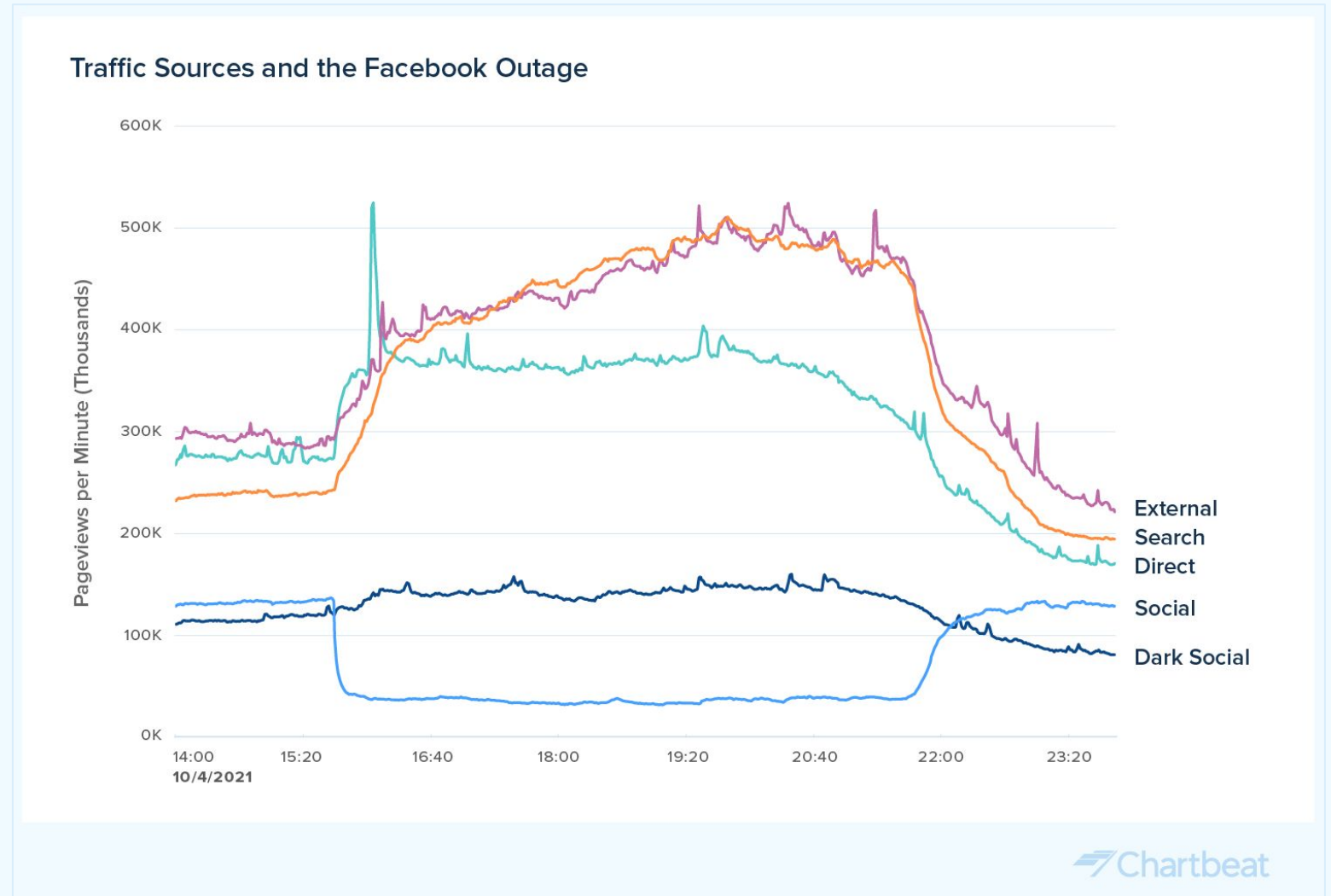
Prior to the announcement, more than 10% of website visits from visitors in Australia were driven by Facebook. By Thursday, that number dropped to less than 2%.



## FACEBOOK OUTAGE

On Oct. 4, Facebook apps experienced a global outage that lasted more than five hours:

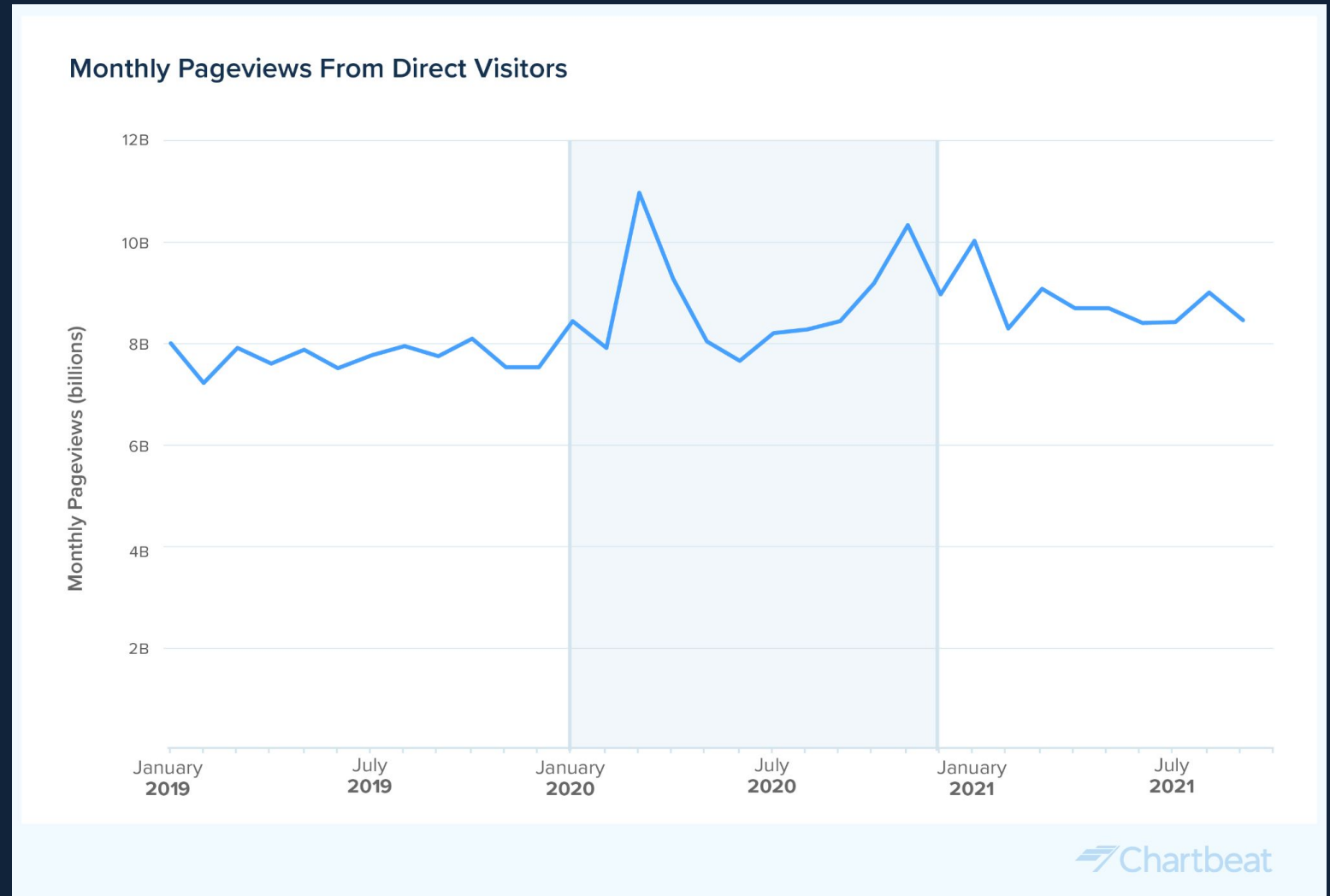
- Prior to the outage, Social traffic represented about 18.8% of all traffic. Facebook accounted for 6.5% of that.
- A few hours into the outage, **total traffic across our network was up 38%** compared to the same time the previous week. At the same time, Social had fallen to just 7.6% of traffic.
- Direct traffic increased by 28%, Search was up 52%, and Twitter traffic jumped by 72%.



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

During early COVID and the US Election, more traffic than usual was recorded by readers who came directly to a site, resulting in a 22% increase in Direct traffic in 2020 compared to the year before.

Direct traffic fell slightly in 2021 (-1%), but remains notably higher than 2019 (+21%), indicating that some readers from 2020 have converted into Direct visitors.



## TRAFFIC SOURCES

Unfortunately, we don't have enough time to dive into referrer trends region by region, so here are some overall highlights from our analysis of 2021:

- In North America, Social traffic as a percent of total traffic actually increased slightly from its levels in late 2020, driven by traffic from Facebook.
- Asia / Pacific sites saw the biggest rise in Search traffic, driven by Google Search, while Social traffic declined by about 5 percentage points, a result of declines in Facebook traffic. For Asia / Pacific sites, Google Search share grew by 6-8 percentage points and Facebook declined by 3-4%.
- Traffic driven from Twitter to sites in North America saw a slight bump in Jan 2021, most likely due to the storming of the US Capitol and related news stories.

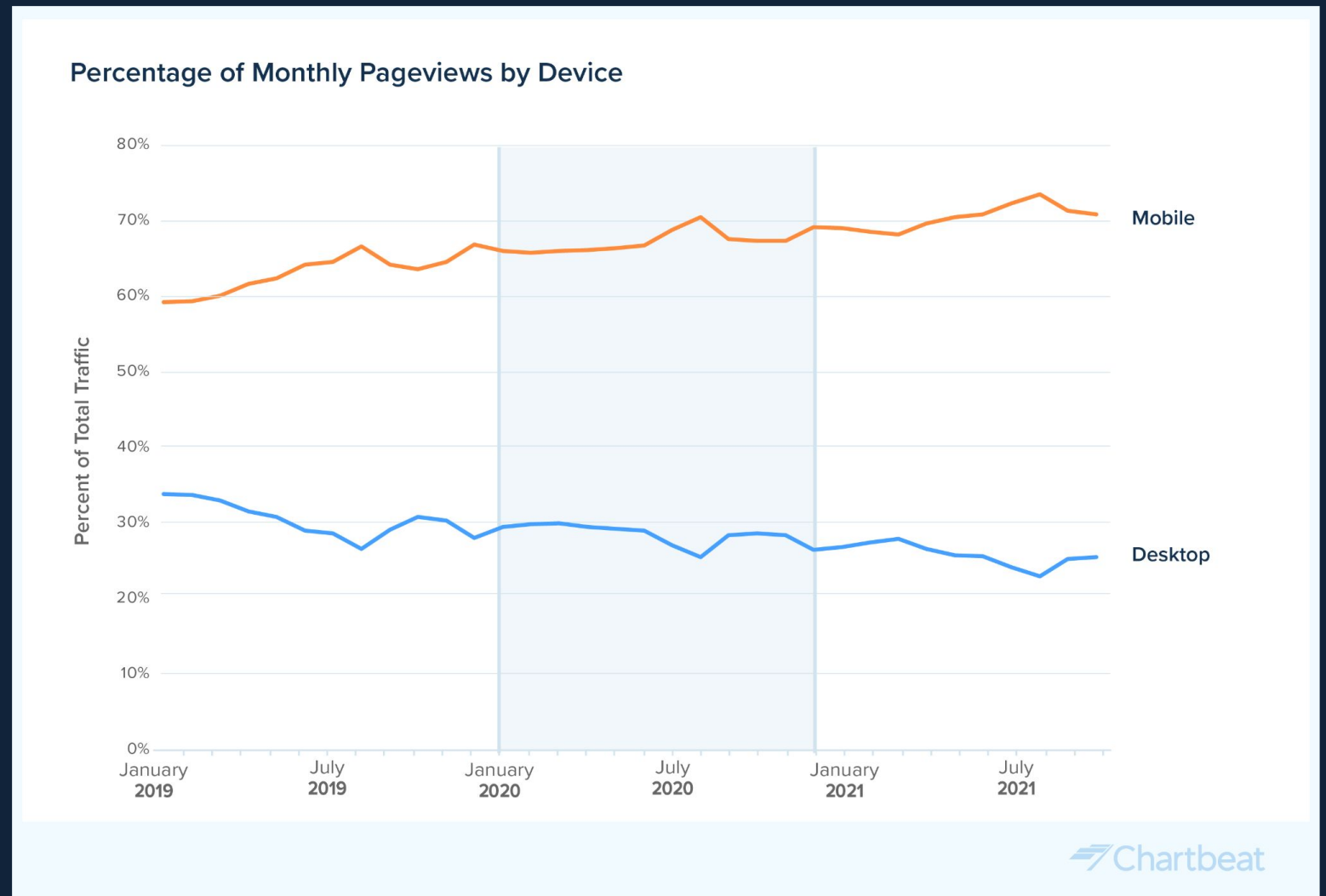


# Behaviors by Device



## DEVICE

The general trend of growing mobile readership has been steady as a percentage of traffic, indicating that the device shift is a long-term, organic pattern.

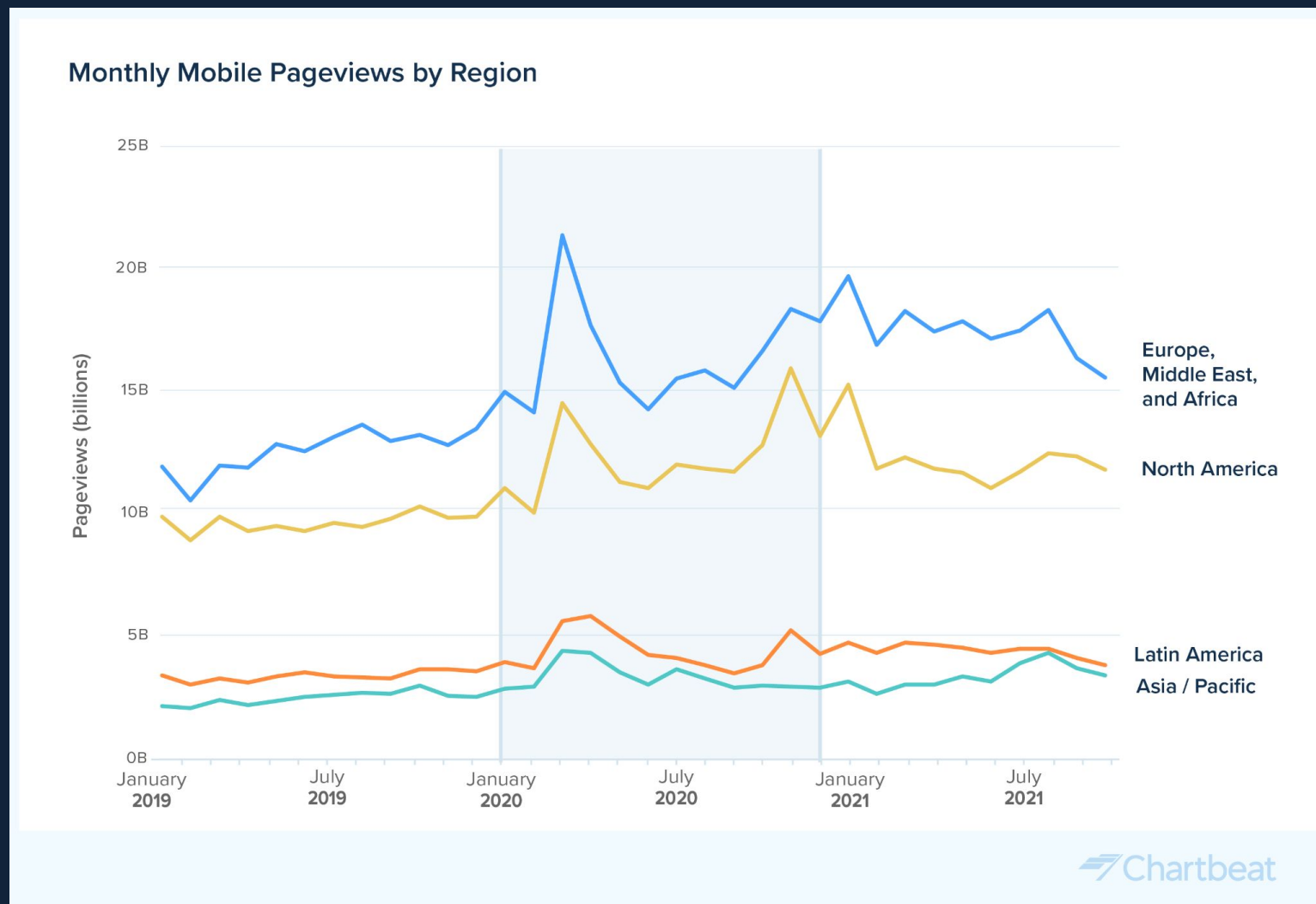


## DEVICE

In terms of monthly mobile pageviews, we've observed different growth patterns by region.

Over the 3-year period, Europe, Middle East, and Africa saw the most overall growth in average monthly mobile traffic (+33%).

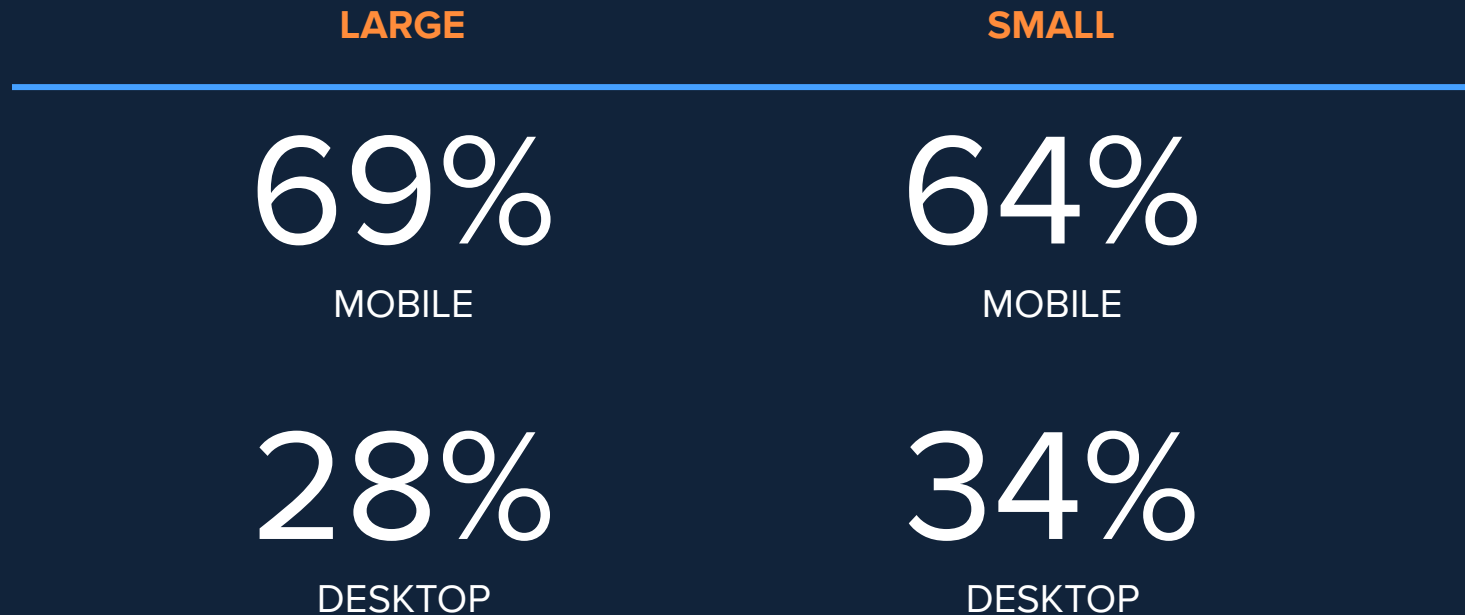
North America saw the least growth (27%).





## DEVICE

Broken down by size, the world's largest sites see a higher proportion of traffic from mobile devices.



The lag in mobile growth for smaller sites may indicate that more work is needed to provide engaging mobile experiences



### Size definitions:

- **Large:** More than 100K pageviews per day
- **Small:** Fewer than 100K pageviews per day

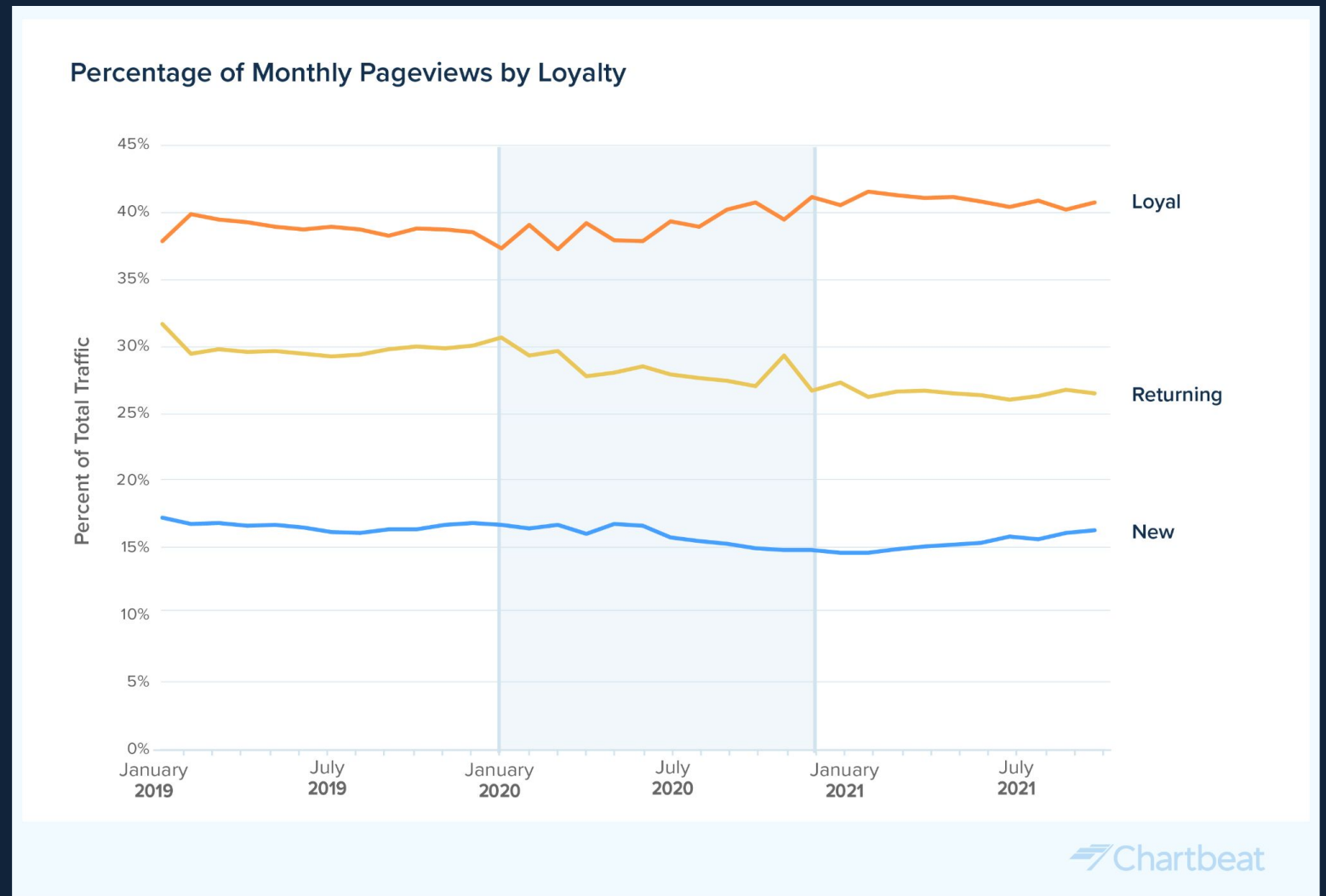
# Traffic by Loyalty



## DEVICE

Loyal readers, though smaller in actual number, contribute the highest percentage of traffic (~40%).

Starting in mid-2020, Loyal traffic has been rising steadily as a proportion of overall traffic.



## LOYALTY

By region, we are seeing increases year over year in the percentage of traffic from Loyal readers.

	Asia /Pacific		Europe, Middle East, Africa		Latin America		North America	
	Loyal	New	Loyal	New	Loyal	New	Loyal	New
2019	36%	18%	43%	13%	33%	17%	37%	21%
2020	37%	16%	43%	13%	33%	15%	37%	20%
2021	37%	17%	44%	12%	37%	14%	40%	21%



### Regional trends in 2021:

- Asia / Pacific sites saw a slight rise in the percentage of pageviews from loyal readers and a corresponding decline in pageviews from returning readers, possibly signaling a shift towards greater loyalty.
- A similar shift was also observed for Latin American sites.
- In North America, the percentage of pageviews from new readers grew, and this was observed for sites regardless of size.

## LOYALTY

Perhaps unsurprisingly, large sites see much higher Loyalty than small sites.

### LARGE

41%

LOYAL

15%

NEW

### SMALL

21%

LOYAL

38%

NEW

### Size definitions:

- **Large:** More than 100K pageviews per day
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# Content that Won Attention

## ENGAGING CONTENT

Chartbeat evaluated more than 33 million pieces of content to build a list of the stories with the highest Total Engaged Time in 2021.



Most Engaging Stories Archive: [2021](#) [2020](#) [2019](#) [2018](#) [2017](#) [2016](#)





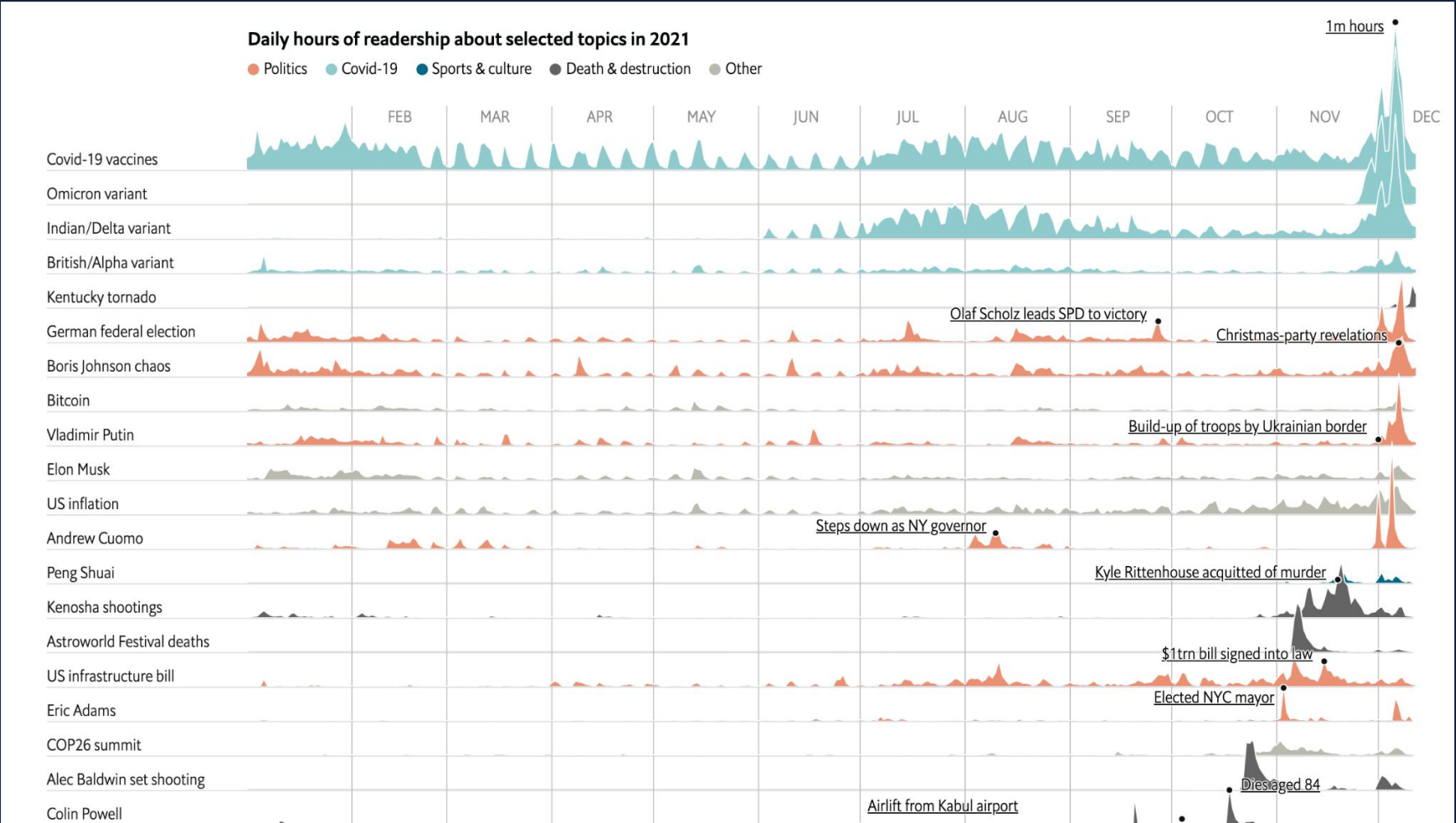
## ENGAGING CONTENT

- |   |  |                     |
|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | 'I just want to find 11,780 votes': In extraordinary hour-long call, Trump pressures Georgia secretary of state to recalculate the vote in his favor | THE WASHINGTON POST |
| 2 | Comparing the Covid-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson  | STAT                |
| 3 | 'We feel incredibly betrayed': Thousands of Guardsmen forced to vacate Capitol   | POLITICO            |
| 4 | 'We found a baby on the subway - now he's our son'   | BBC                 |
| 5 | Trump went 'ballistic' after being tossed off Twitter  | POLITICO            |
| 6 | Trump's last-minute pardons include Bannon, Lil Wayne and scores of others   | CNN                 |



ENGAGING TOPICS

In partnership with The Economist, we calculated the total reading time for articles covering 45 events in 2021 to understand readership patterns across key news cycles.



[Read the full article](#)



# Key Takeaways

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Traffic and engagement were lower in 2021 compared to the year before, but remain notably higher than 2019.
- The largest sites in the world see higher engaged time, loyalty, and mobile readership, but have also seen larger traffic declines
- Search, particularly Google, is the largest external source of traffic and has been growing at a faster rate than other channels.
- Readers continue to slowly shift their behaviors toward mobile.
- Growth in both Direct and Loyal traffic indicates that some readers formed a deeper habit with individual sites over all three years.
- COVID, Trump, and US political news dominated our attention in 2021.



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# Questions?

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