

Gies Google Analytics Data Retention Policy Upgrade

A. Executive Summary:

Google Analytics 4 currently lets users look at 2 months of data at a time by default, with an option to extend to 50 months. Relying on the short-term data available can lead to skewed interpretations and flawed decision-making. With a longer time frame, we can more accurately show what times of year users are most active on the websites, what they click on, and do more in-depth analysis, providing more meaningful insights.

B. Challenges of Short-Term Data:

- ✓ **Seasonality and Cyclical Patterns** - With the two months of data we currently have, we are only able to see winter and early spring results. During this time, the last application deadlines occur, and acceptance emails are sent out. With both events, it is more likely that the sites will organically have more traffic, but we are unable to see how fits into the bigger picture.
- ✓ **Insufficient Data for Statistical Analysis** - With a shorter time frame, we have a smaller sample size, making it difficult to determine if the observed changes are statistically significant.
- ✓ **Difficulty Assessing Long-Term Effects** - Short-term data is effective for seeing the immediate impacts of campaigns, but limits assessing the effectiveness of long-term marketing campaigns, strategies, or website changes.

C. Benefits of Long-Term Data:

- ✓ **Identifying True Trends** -
 - a. Longer periods of data can show consistent pattern trends, potentially showing similar cycles around application openings and deadlines.
 - b. More accurate assessments of the overall performance can be made, leading to better-informed decision-making.
- ✓ **Improved Forecasting** -
 - a. Historical data over longer periods is far more useful for predicting future trends and creating forecasts.
- ✓ **Determining Underlying Issues** -
 - a. Consistent increases and decreases in certain metrics over longer periods of time can indicate issues with the website performance, marketing strategies, and user experience.

D. Implementation:

All we would need to start looking at long-term data is for the Data Retention setting to be changed. Since we do not have admin access, our team cannot make the change on our own, and we would need a Gies log-in to do so. The user data is already set to 14 months, only the event data retention needs to be altered.

Data retention

User and event data retention

You can change the retention period for data you send that is associated with cookies, user identifiers, or advertising identifiers. These controls don't affect most standard reporting, which is based on aggregated data. Changes to these settings take effect after 24 hours. [Learn more about data retention settings](#)

Event data

Data retention ⓘ

2 months ▼

User data

Data retention ⓘ

14 months ▼

Reset on new user activity ⓘ

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E. Conclusion:

The short-term data from both websites have provided immediate insights, but only relying on them can lead to incorrect conclusions. By extending the time frame in GA4, our team can provide overall trend patterns and more accurate insights. It is vital to plan for long term data retention, and to use the GA4 tools to properly analyze the data, aiding the Gies team for future projects.