Search Engine Optimsiation

How-to guide

Agenda

1. How to set-up Google Search Console to understand website performance
2. How to optimise your content and get quick wins
3. How to optimise your page speed
4. Recap

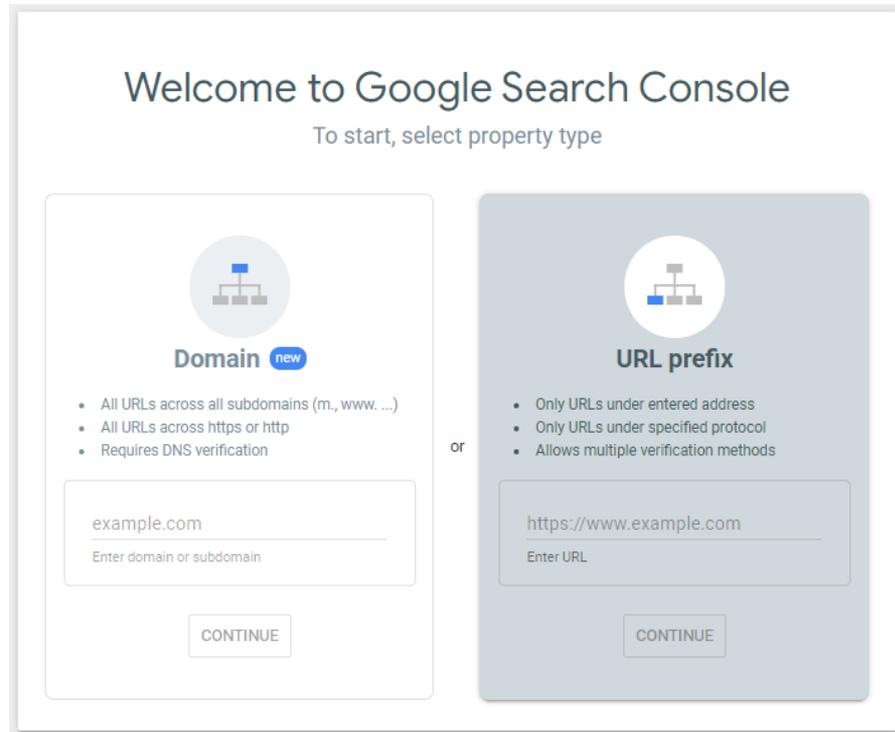# HOW TO SET-UP GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE TO UNDERSTAND WEBSITE PERFORMANCE

What is Google Search Console and why is it so important?

- Google Search Console (GSC) is the main connection between website owners and Google

- It's the best place to see the SEO performance of your website. Not all information is easy to read, but we'll cover all the basics that are relevant even if you don't know anything about SEO

- Even if you don't intend to use GSC now, it's important to verify your website. This way, data is collected daily and you have historical data to help your optimisation in the future

Verifying your website on GSC

- Go to https://search.google.com/search-console/welcome. You can verify the domain or just the URL prefix.

- The domain option is better, however either will give you the same data. URL prefix is easier because it doesn't require DNS verification.

- Even if you don't intend to use GSC now, it's important to verify your website. This way, data is collected daily and you have historical data to help your optimisation in the future.

- Make sure to use the specific format (www or not, https or not) visitors use to access your website: https://example.com is different from https://www.example.com.

- The only difference in using Domain is that all versions are verified at once (www or not, https or not).

Welcome to Google Search Console
To start, select property type

Domain new
- All URLs across all subdomains (m., www. ...)
- All URLs across https or http
- Requires DNS verification

example.com
Enter domain or subdomain

CONTINUE

or

URL prefix
- Only URLs under entered address
- Only URLs under specified protocol
- Allows multiple verification methods

https://www.example.com
Enter URL

CONTINUE

Verifying your website on GSC

- After choosing between Domain or URL, you need to choose an option to prove you own the website.

- The recommended option is to add an HTML file to your server. You might not know how to do this or would have to ask your developer.

- As an alternative, you can use your Google Analytics account. No extra code is required, but just by showing you have access to Google Analytics is enough proof.

- It doesn't matter how you verify, the data you see is exactly the same.
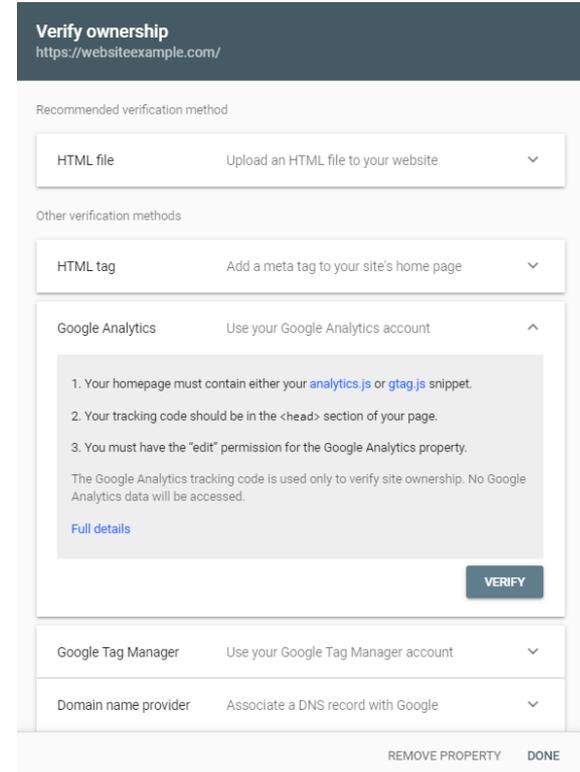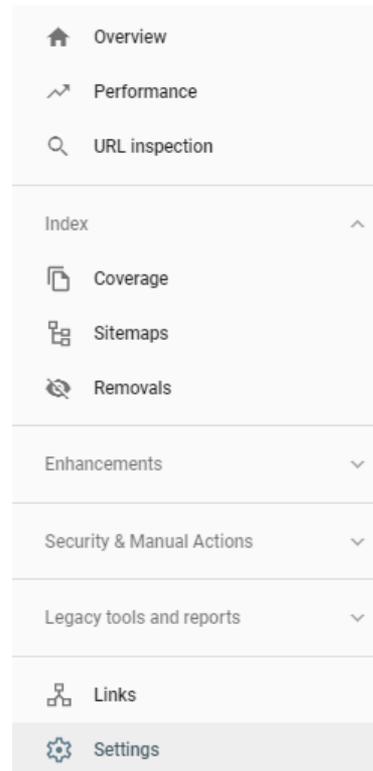

Verify ownership
https://websiteexample.com/

Recommended verification method

| HTML file | Upload an HTML file to your website | ⌄ |

Other verification methods

| HTML tag | Add a meta tag to your site's home page | ⌄ |

| Google Analytics | Use your Google Analytics account | ⌃ |

1. Your homepage must contain either your analytics.js or gtag.js snippet.
2. Your tracking code should be in the <head> section of your page.
3. You must have the "edit" permission for the Google Analytics property.

The Google Analytics tracking code is used only to verify site ownership. No Google Analytics data will be accessed.

Full details

VERIFY

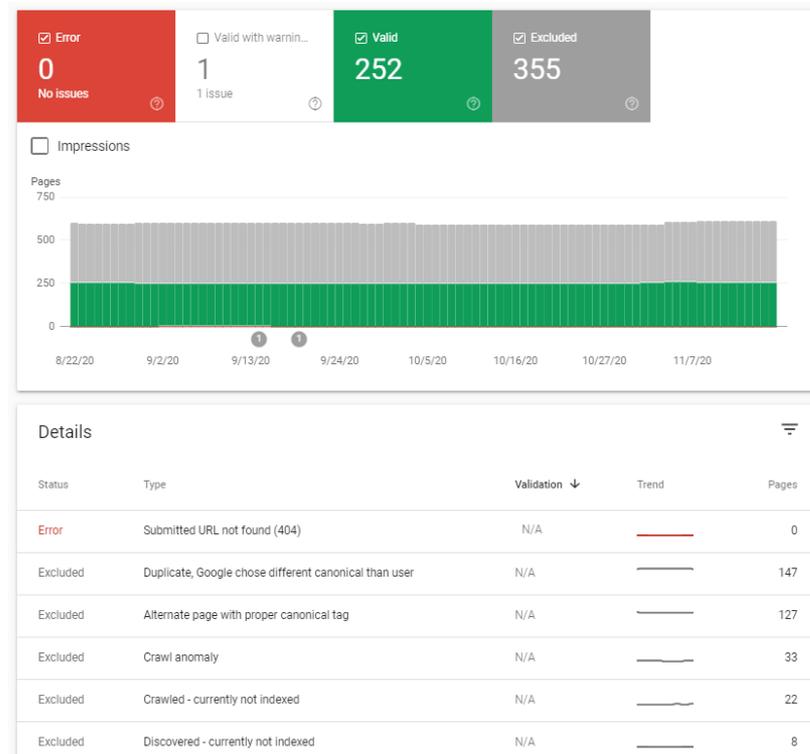| Google Tag Manager | Use your Google Tag Manager account | ⌄ |
| Domain name provider | Associate a DNS record with Google | ⌄ |

REMOVE PROPERTY   DONE

Insights about how Google sees your website

- On GSC you can see how your website is performing in terms of organic traffic, pages Google decided to add on their index (pages people can find on search), page enhancements, links, manual actions (e.g. website hacked) and so on.

- If you're not too familiar with SEO or website development, the most interesting areas to start with are Performance and Coverage.

Overview

Performance

URL inspection

Index

Coverage

Sitemaps

Removals

Enhancements

Security & Manual Actions

Legacy tools and reports

Links

Settings

GSC Coverage

- This section shows an overview of URL status for Google. It shows if pages were deleted or Google is not allowed to visit them anymore (as an instruction added by a developer to block them).

- Google has gotten smarter in defining which pages they want to show in their index, so it's common to find a lot of "excluded" pages.

- Pages that are not valid aren't always an issue. For instance, it makes sense to block a contact confirmation page, cart or pages that have a redirect in place.

- This is only a problem if pages that you want to show to users are blocked. You can see the status of these pages over the last 3 months but no further historical data remains available.

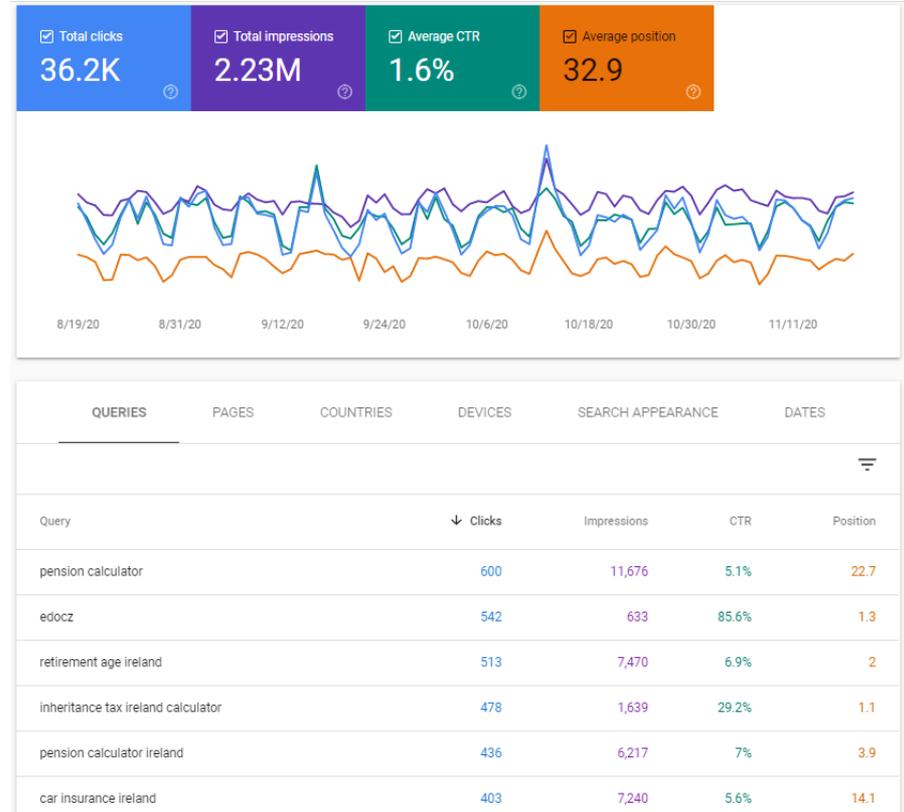| Status	Type	Validation ↓	Trend	Pages
Error	Submitted URL not found (404)	N/A		0
Excluded	Duplicate, Google chose different canonical than user	N/A		147
Excluded	Alternate page with proper canonical tag	N/A		127
Excluded	Crawl anomaly	N/A		33
Excluded	Crawled - currently not indexed	N/A		22
Excluded	Discovered - currently not indexed	N/A		8

GSC Performance

- This area gives you a sample of how your website is performing in the following areas:

  - Clicks from organic search
  - Impressions (every time you appear on a Google page, regardless of being clicked or not)
  - Average CTR: the ratio between clicks and impressions
  - Average position: for every time a page of your website appeared on the results, which position it appeared

- It's good to remember that this is just a sample of the data, not everything. For this reason, these numbers are not expected to match what you see under organic on Google Analytics.

- You can change the dates up to the last 16 months and filter out by query, page, country, device and search appearance.
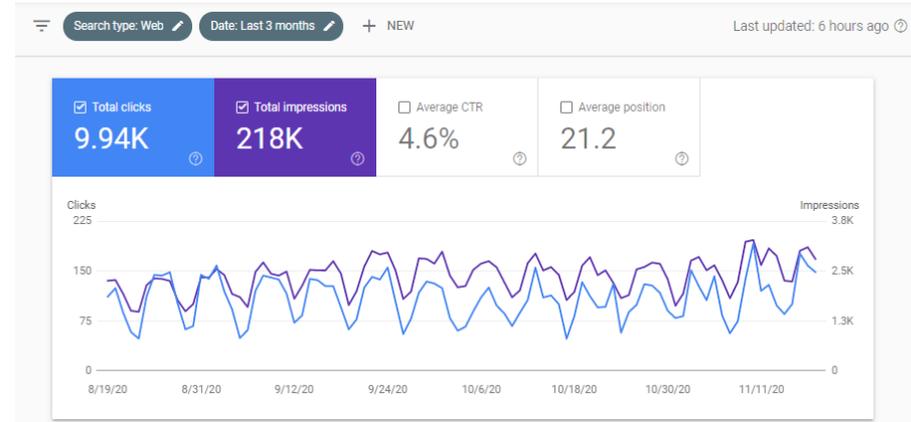
How to find the keywords you appear for right now

- Keyword research is essential for SEO. It can help you to find how people look for your services and optimise your pages to answer those questions.

- GSC is one of the few places where you could start the research. The main advantages are (1) data tailored for you and (2) it's free.

- To make it more relevant, filter per country. It doesn't matter which country is your focus, you probably have some traffic from other countries and this will skew your averages.

- These numbers are a sample and averages. Many factors influence the results you see in Dublin vs somewhere else.

- You can also export the whole data to Excel or Google Sheets.

☑ Total clicks	☑ Total impressions	☑ Average CTR	☑ Average position
36.2K	2.23M	1.6%	32.9

QUERIES	PAGES	COUNTRIES	DEVICES	SEARCH APPEARANCE	DATES

Query	↓ Clicks	Impressions	CTR	Position
pension calculator	600	11,676	5.1%	22.7
edocz	542	633	85.6%	1.3
retirement age ireland	513	7,470	6.9%	2
inheritance tax ireland calculator	478	1,639	29.2%	1.1
pension calculator ireland	436	6,217	7%	3.9
car insurance ireland	403	7,240	5.6%	14.1

How to connect Google Analytics and Search Console

- You can connect your Google Analytics (GA) to Search Console (GSC) to see all the data on Analytics

- This is useful because most people use Analytics but not Google Search Console

- To connect, go to Acquisition > Search Console. You must have Edit permission for the GA account and Owner permission for the GSC account that you want to link.
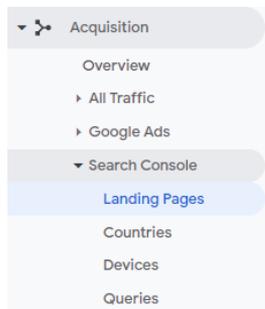
This report requires Search Console integration to be enabled.

Set up Search Console data sharing

What is Search Console?
Search Console is a free product that provides data and analytics to help improve your site's performance in Google search.

Enabling Search Console data within Analytics
Once you connect a site you own in Search Console to your Analytics property, its data becomes visible in your Search Engine Optimization reports. You can visit the Property Settings page in Analytics account management to change which of your Search Console sites' data you wish to show, and control which views on your Web Property have access to view the data.

How to use Search Console data within Analytics
Search Console provides data about what users see in Google search results before they decide to click to your site (or some other site). You can use this data to identify opportunities and prioritize development effort to increase the number of visitors to your site. Examples:

- Identify landing pages on your site that have good clickthrough rates (CTR), but have poor average positions in search results. These could be pages that people want to see, but have trouble finding.
- Identify search queries (keywords) for which your site has good average positions, but poor click through rates. These are queries for which your pages get attention and improved content could lead to more visitors.

```
▼ ⤙ Acquisition
    Overview
    ▸ All Traffic
    ▸ Google Ads
    ▼ Search Console
        Landing Pages
        Countries
        Devices
        Queries
```

HOW TO OPTIMISE YOUR CONTENT AND GET QUICK WINS

How to use the queries from GSC to optimise your website

- Use the queries available in your GSC to uncover relevant topics. These could be commercial terms (e.g. life insurance) or more informational questions (e.g. what is mortgage protection).

- A good way to find opportunities is to look for keywords you don't rank on page one for yet (positions 1 to 10). In the example, there's a filter to only include queries where "what" is mentioned. This is a way to answer customers' questions at early stages and remain top of mind.

- Does your blog, news or FAQ sections fulfil the request? If not, create unique content to help users.
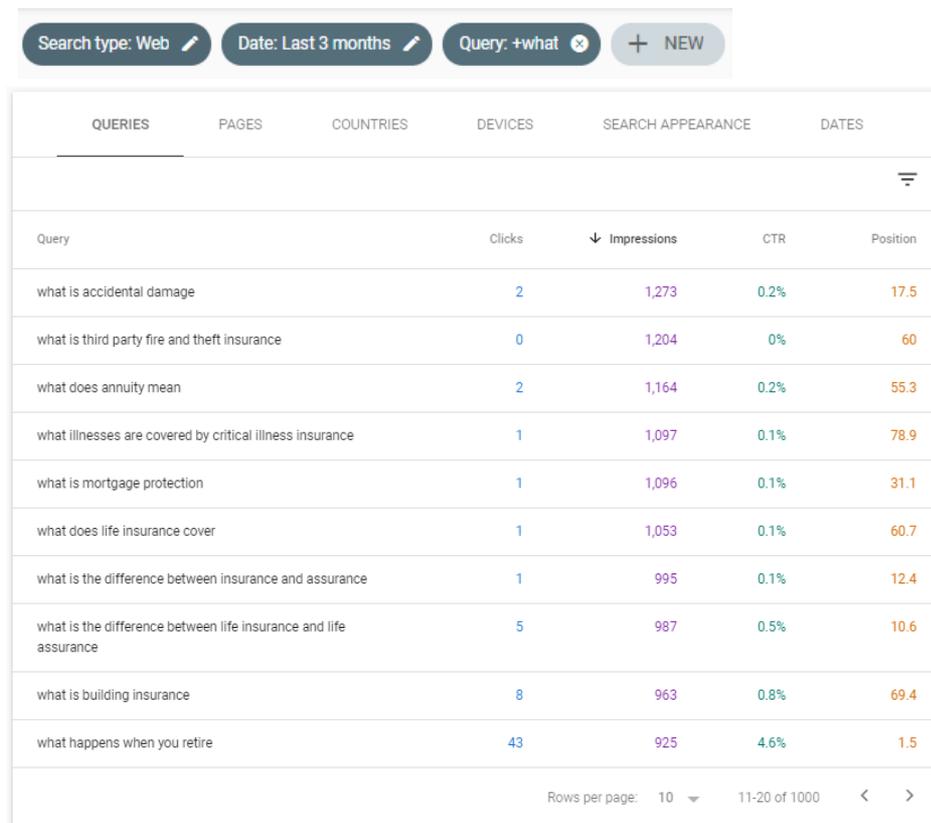
Search type: Web ✏️ | Date: Last 3 months ✏️ | Query: +what ⊗ | ➕ NEW

| | QUERIES | PAGES | COUNTRIES | DEVICES | SEARCH APPEARANCE | DATES |

Query	Clicks	↓ Impressions	CTR	Position
what is accidental damage	2	1,273	0.2%	17.5
what is third party fire and theft insurance	0	1,204	0%	60
what does annuity mean	2	1,164	0.2%	55.3
what illnesses are covered by critical illness insurance	1	1,097	0.1%	78.9
what is mortgage protection	1	1,096	0.1%	31.1
what does life insurance cover	1	1,053	0.1%	60.7
what is the difference between insurance and assurance	1	995	0.1%	12.4
what is the difference between life insurance and life assurance	5	987	0.5%	10.6
what is building insurance	8	963	0.8%	69.4
what happens when you retire	43	925	4.6%	1.5

Rows per page: 10 ▾   11-20 of 1000   ‹ ›

How to use your GMB to uncover extra keywords

- You can also find keywords on your Google My Business profile. These are the ones where a result triggered a map with local companies.

- These keywords (sometimes referred to as queries) are available on GMB > Insights. Sometimes your website is not on the list, but your GMB profile is, so these lists compliment each other.
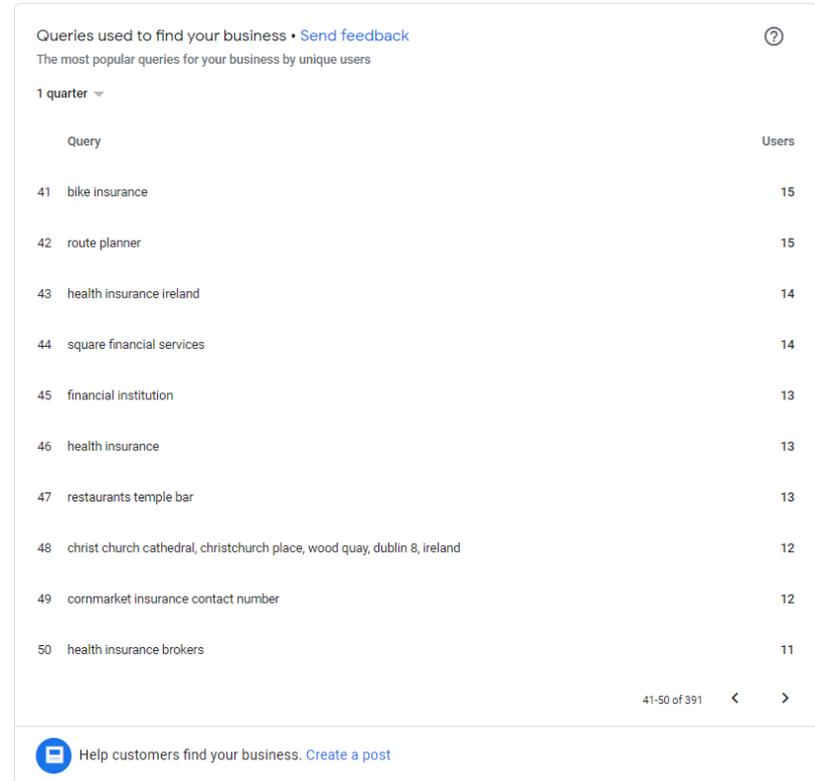
Queries used to find your business • Send feedback
The most popular queries for your business by unique users

1 quarter ▾

	Query	Users
41	bike insurance	15
42	route planner	15
43	health insurance ireland	14
44	square financial services	14
45	financial institution	13
46	health insurance	13
47	restaurants temple bar	13
48	christ church cathedral, christchurch place, wood quay, dublin 8, ireland	12
49	cornmarket insurance contact number	12
50	health insurance brokers	11

41-50 of 391 < >

Help customers find your business. Create a post

Local pack results are highly influenced by location

Prepare your optimisation calendar

Query	URL	Optimised?	Clicks	Impressions	CTR	Position
how much is the state pension in ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	195	3116	6.26%	1.03
pension age ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	185	6045	3.06%	4.3
irish state pension	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	101	3637	2.78%	4.9
state pension ireland 2019	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	95	1093	8.69%	1.14
state pension age ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	94	2461	3.82%	19.74
how much do i need to retire ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Yes	97	480	20.21%	3
car insurance ireland	insurancecompany.com/products/car-insurance	TBD	401	7285	6.70%	2.25
life insurance	insurancecompany.com/products/life-insurance	TBD	329	11352	1.51%	6.17
car insurance	insurancecompany.com/products/car-insurance	TBD	299	7225	2.78%	4.9
life assurance	insurancecompany.com/products/life-assurance	TBD	291	13231	1.30%	6.83
life insurance calculator	insurancecompany.com/calculators/	TBD	283	7117	4.12%	13.52
life insurance ireland	insurancecompany.com/products/life-assurance	TBD	271	10003	20.21%	3
state pension ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/retirement-age	Not Yet	236	10738	2.31%	38.65
mortgage protection insurance	insurancecompany.com/calculators/pension	Not Yet	231	9134	2.53%	12.8
pension calculator	insurancecompany.com/calculators/pension	Opportunity	615	11859	15.16%	20.74
retirement age ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/retirement-age	Opportunity	503	7472	4.55%	5.22
inheritance tax ireland calculator	insurancecompany.com/calculators/inheritance-tax	Opportunity	476	1637	2.18%	15.84
pension calculator ireland	insurancecompany.com/calculators/pension	Opportunity	439	6262	3.76%	10.12
old age pension ireland	insurancecompany.com/blog/state-pension-guide	Opportunity	99	7618	1.30%	13.52

Once you know which keywords matter the most, compare your average position and ranking for these terms. If you don't rank well, there's your opportunity to create content.

How to Analyse the SERP results

- Look at clues from Google: do you appear for results in your area?

- Which websites or specific pages appear on page one. Can you learn something from them?

- Use "Incognito mode" to avoid skewed results.

HOW TO OPTIMISE
YOUR PAGE SPEED

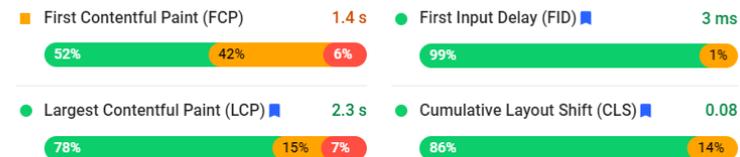# Find your Google Page Speed Insights score [VIDEO]

ZURICH®

- Page Speed Insights is a free tool from Google which you can use to measure your page speed.

- As the name says, it's measured per page, not the whole website. It can vary a lot from one page to another.

- Usually mobile scores are lower than desktop and harder to get up.

- The list includes a lot of suggestions, which is most cases do require a developer. On this video, we'll show you two simple ways to optimise which are simple to identify.

72

https://www.zurich.ie/car-insurance/

🔴 0—49　　🟠 50—89　　🟢 90—100 ⓘ

Field Data — Over the previous 28-day collection period, field data shows that this page **passes** the 🔖 Core Web Vitals assessment.

🟧 First Contentful Paint (FCP)	1.4 s	🟢 First Input Delay (FID) 🔖	3 ms
52%	42% 6%	99%	1%
🟢 Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) 🔖	2.3 s	🟢 Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) 🔖	0.08
78%	15% 7%	86%	14%

☐ Show Origin Summary

Lab Data

🟢 First Contentful Paint	0.8 s	🟧 Time to Interactive	3.0 s
🟧 Speed Index	2.2 s	🟢 Total Blocking Time	100 ms
🔺 Largest Contentful Paint 🔖	3.0 s	🟢 Cumulative Layout Shift 🔖	0.079
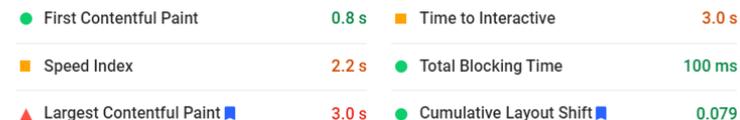
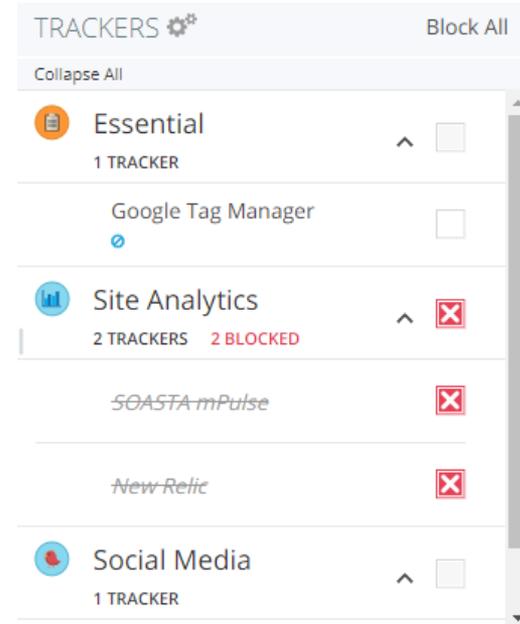# Identifying heavy images and compressing them

- One of these images has 507kb and the other has 118kb. Can you visually spot which one if heavier?
- The image was compressed using a free image compressor. There are many options such as TinyJpg.com. You just upload and download the optimised image in a click. Upload the new image on your website and make the page load faster!
- Always keep the original version saved in case you need it in the future.

Reducing third party content

- Another common reason why a page is slow is due to external elements loaded on a page. Google Analytics is one. The pixel is on Google servers and is requested every time a page is loaded, so you can see which pages were visited, conversions, etc.

- Although Google Analytics is essential, not all trackers are. Sometimes they're installed for a specific task, but once the task is done, the tracker is forgotten. It has no use, but it keeps being requested every time the page loads.

- "Ghostery" is free a browser extension made to block trackers, however you can also use it to find out which trackers are loaded in your own website. You can do this by looking at the code too, but this is a more friendly version.

- If you find trackers that are no longer relevant, you have to remove it from your code. A developer might still be required, however it's usually a simple task done in minutes.

TRACKERS ⚙ Block All

Collapse All

Essential
1 TRACKER

Google Tag Manager

Site Analytics
2 TRACKERS   2 BLOCKED

SOASTA mPulse

New Relic

Social Media
1 TRACKER

RECAP

Recap

- Make sure you have Google Analytics and Google Search Console (GSC). It's useful even if you only plan to look after SEO in the future, because it retains historical data.

- Start exploring the keywords and performance you see on GSC. You will learn about your business and how people arrive to your website.

- Use this information to improve your content and rankings. If you don't rank in page one, usually there is an opportunity! Are you answering the right questions, do you have the resources required?

- Improving page speed can be very technical, but there are things you can identify and fix even if you're new to this. Compress your images and remove unused third-party trackers!

- All advertising must comply with the Central Bank of Ireland's Consumer Protection Code, which you can find a copy of at www.centralbank.ie

- Another important legal requirement is to ensure that your website is compliant with Cookie requirements and the GDPR regulation. Further information on this can be found at www.dataprotection.ie

Thank you