

Google's May 2022 core update impact was mixed, but it touched down fast and seemed very large

On May 25, 2022, Google began rolling out the May 2022 core update, this update came over six months after the November 2021 core update, whereas there was about four and a half months span between the November update and the July 2021 core update. This was the the first update we had in 2022, in contrast, in 2021, we had a total of three core updates.

Historically, we have waited longer to report on the impact of these core updates but honestly, after writing several of these core update impact stories, generally the vast majority of the impact is realized within the first few days of the update (although there have been outliers to this). With this update, the impact was felt super quickly, within 24 hours of the announcement, so we feel it is now safe to report on the impact of this May 2022 core update.

Data providers on the May 2022 core update:

Generally the data providers, which have consistently been Semrush and RankRanger for these reports, have agreed on how volatile these updates have been but with this update – they seem to disagree, that is until you dig into the data.

Semrush. Semrush data showed that the May 2022 core update hit pretty quickly after the announcement. In terms of its volatility tracker, as shown below (or you can view live at the Semrush Sensor tool).

In terms of the speed for these core updates to roll out, “This is already the 3rd core update in a row where the initial roll-out saw a very short burst of initial rank volatility,” Mordy Oberstein, Semrush Communication Advisor, told us. He added that “this seems to be a new pattern” with the rollout of these core updates.

When you compare the May 2022 core update to the November 2021 core update, at first glance, it seems the May update was less volatile than the November update. This is with the exception of the real estate niche, “which seemed to undergo a significant shakeup,” the company shared. Here is this chart comparing the May 2022 core update to the November 2021 core update by vertical:

The issue is that the average level of volatility prior to the May 2022 core update was higher than that of the volatility seen before the November 2021 core update, Semrush explained. In fact, Semrush said the overall increase in rank volatility compare to the baseline level of before the core update volatility was 19% less during the initial release of the May 2022 update compared to the November 2021 core update on desktop, and 24% on mobile.

So if you plot the peak volatility, you see things differently:

So this might mean that even with Semrush data, May 2022 might have been more volatile than the November 2021 core update? Again, it is all about how you process and interpret the data.

This chart below shows you that 17% of the new top 20 ranked results in Google post May 2022 core update came from position 20 or beyond, which is not far off from the previous November 2021 core update:

RankRanger. The RankRanger team also analyzed the Google search results after this May 2022 core update rollout and here you can see how quickly there tool also picked it up (you can also see this live at the Rank Risk Index tool). RankRanger did say the May 2022 core update was a “significant update.”

The folks at RankRanger did compare the May 2022 core update to the November 2021 core update for us as well. RankRanger found that in its data the May 2022 update's average position changes were higher than the November 2021 update.

When you dive in and compare by position, the volatility does seem more similar across positions:

Retail seemed to be most impacted according to RankRanger data, as you can see by these charts below:

SISTRIX. SISTRIX, another data provider that tracks the changes in the Google search results, sent their top 20 winners and losers for the May 2022 core update. These are US based sites from Sistrix's data set.

Sistrix added “In our example, we saw that the visibility of the domain was 25.84 points on Thursday, then increased to 27.95 on Friday and as of now (Monday 30th May 08:55) the Visibility Index is 31.98.”

More on the May 2022 core update

The SEO community. The May 2022 core update to the community seems much more significant than the November 2021 core update. Unlike the November 2021 core update, where the timing for that update was not the best, i.e. right during the busiest online shopping season, this update was scheduled a lot better for retailers. I was able to cover the community reaction in one blog post on the Search Engine Roundtable early on. It includes some of the early chatter, ranking

charts and social shares from some SEOs.

On Twitter you can find plenty of examples of SEOs sharing charts from their clients – mostly showing winners but also showing losers – with this update.

What to do if you are hit. Google has given advice on what to consider if you are negatively impacted by a core update in the past. There aren't specific actions to take to recover, and in fact, a negative rankings impact may not signal anything is wrong with your pages. However, Google has offered a list of questions to consider if your site is hit by a core update. Google did say you can see a bit of a recovery between core updates but the biggest change you would see would be after another core update.

Why we care. It is often hard to isolate what you need to do to reverse any algorithmic hit your site may have seen. When it comes to Google core updates, it is even harder to do so. What this data and previous experience and advice has shown us is that these core updates are broad, wide and cover a lot of overall quality issues. The data above has reinforced this to be true. So, if your site was hit by a core update, it is often recommended to step back from it all, take a wider view of your overall website and see what you can do to improve the site overall.

We hope you, your company and your clients did well with this update.

More on Google updates

Other Google updates. This year, we only had one confirmed update outside of this May 2022 core update. We have the March 2022 product reviews update. Last year we had a number of confirmed updates from Google and many that were not confirmed. In the most recent order, we had: The July 2021 core update, Google MUM rolled out in June for COVID names and

was lightly expanded for some features in September (but MUM is unrelated to core updates). Then, the June 28 spam update, the June 23rd spam update, the Google page experience update, the Google predator algorithm update, the June 2021 core update, the July 2021 core update, the July link spam update, the November spam update and a December 2021 product reviews update.

Previous core updates. The most recent previous core update was the November 2021 core update which hit hard and fast. Prior to that was July 2021 core update which was quick to roll out (kind of like this one) followed by the June 2021 core update and that update was slow to roll out but a big one. Then we had the December 2020 core update and the December update was very big, bigger than the May 2020 core update, and that update was also big and broad and took a couple of weeks to fully roll out. Before that was the January 2020 core update, we had some analysis on that update over here. The one prior to that was the September 2019 core update. That update felt weaker to many SEOs and webmasters, as many said it didn't have as big of an impact as previous core updates. Google also released an update in November, but that one was specific to local rankings. You can read more about past Google updates over here.

New on Search Engine Land

About The Author

Barry Schwartz a Contributing Editor to Search Engine Land and a member of the programming team for SMX events. He owns

RustyBrick, a NY based web consulting firm. He also runs Search Engine Roundtable, a popular search blog on very advanced SEM topics. Barry can be followed on Twitter here.
<https://searchengineland.com/googles-may-2022-core-update-impact-was-mixed-but-it-touched-down-fast-and-seemed-very-large-385479>