

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a silver smartphone. The person is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or meeting environment with a window. The lighting is bright and natural, coming from the left side.

**2017**  
ASSOCIATION  
EMAIL MARKETING  
**BENCHMARK**  
**REPORT**



**HIGHER LOGIC**  
ALL TOGETHER

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# Introduction

Today's marketing is heavily metrics-driven, and it's important to understand how your organization measures up.

We've performed a study on our association client base to provide association email marketers with benchmarking information for their email marketing programs. This report includes a summary of email marketing metrics from over 1 billion emails sent in 2016 by associations located in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

This report is designed for marketers in the association industry. The data shared will help you understand what metrics to analyze, what goals to set, and how your email marketing program is performing in comparison to your peers. Always keep in mind that these are averages from your peers.

This is the seventh consecutive year we've reported on association email marketing benchmark data and the eighth association email marketing benchmark report we've produced.



# Email Marketing Metrics, Defined

Four key metrics are used in this report: **delivery**, **open**, **click** and **unsubscribe rates**.

**Delivery rate** is the percentage of emails that were not reported back to Informz as bounced or blocked.

**Open rate** is the percentage of delivered emails that were reported back to Informz as having been opened. If the text version of an email is read, it is not counted. Likewise, if an HTML email is read with the images turned off, it is not counted. However, if an email is opened with images off, but a link is clicked, the email is counted as being opened. Open rate only includes unique subscribers. Multiple opens by one subscriber only count once.

**Click rate** is the percentage of opened emails clicked by the recipient. Clicking a link in a text email is not counted as a click. Click rate only includes unique subscribers. Multiple clicks by one subscriber only count once.

**Unsubscribe rate** is the percentage of recipients who unsubscribed from a particular mailing.



# Executive Summary

*The key performance indicators that defined the success of Informz client email programs over the past year.*



- ➔ Email volume rose by 12.3% compared to the number of emails sent in 2015.
- ➔ Delivery rates remained favorable at 98%.
- ➔ Open rates were slightly lower in 2016 at 35.6% compared to 36% in 2015.
- ➔ Mobile open rates of 41.1% are consistent with 2015 metrics.
- ➔ Click rates dipped to 15.6% from 16.1% in 2015.
- ➔ Unsubscribe rates remained favorable at .06%.

# Trending Now: Marketing Automation

A significant milestone in this year's benchmark report is the first-time inclusion of marketing automation email metrics. In 2016, the volume of emails sent through marketing automation campaigns grew exponentially; a 70% increase year over year. The increase is significant given that marketing automation campaigns are highly customized messages sent to precise target groups. Email volume is expected to grow as associations gain greater visibility to marketing automation's capabilities and benefits to engagement.

Early adopters of marketing automation first utilized Informz to customize and automate member lifecycle campaigns. The benefits from automating lifecycle campaigns were operational efficiencies and improved member engagement. Instead of a new member one-off email, organizations served members with a customized new member onboarding experience. Customizing the experience means new members receive information based on how they engage with the series.

Early adopters are now taking progressive steps to move up the sophistication curve to harness the full power of marketing automation. Associations are leveraging offline and online activity to drive engagement and conversion.

Marketing automation campaign results in 2016 were promising, with key performance metrics exceeding the benchmark standard.

A marketing automation campaign targeting website visitors and abandoned event registrations increased event registration by 25% and drove \$19,000 in revenue.

A marketing automation campaign targeting members with low engagement scores saw an immediate positive impact on behavior: 60 days later, members maintained a higher engagement score.

# Trending Now: Managing Email Volume

For the second consecutive year in a row, email volume increased more than 11%. The steady growth in email volume has caused marketers to step back and evaluate email management strategies.

Traditionally many associations adopted a centralized communication strategy. In a centralized communication strategy, emails are created, reviewed, and published through a single department. Funneling all communications through a single department gives visibility to email volume and cadence. Today many associations have adopted a decentralized team structure, giving greater autonomy to departments to authorize and send their own email communications.

Regardless of organizational team structure, nearly 90% of associations say they are concerned about sending too many mass emails. Specifically, organizations are concerned about email cadence and impact to constituents.

- ➡ Timing between emails — multiple emails arriving same day or hours apart
- ➡ Audience experience — concern over email fatigue

A top priority for associations is to deliver email communications when subscribers are most likely to engage. Associations are leveraging technology more and more to help address business concerns and to seize new growth opportunities.

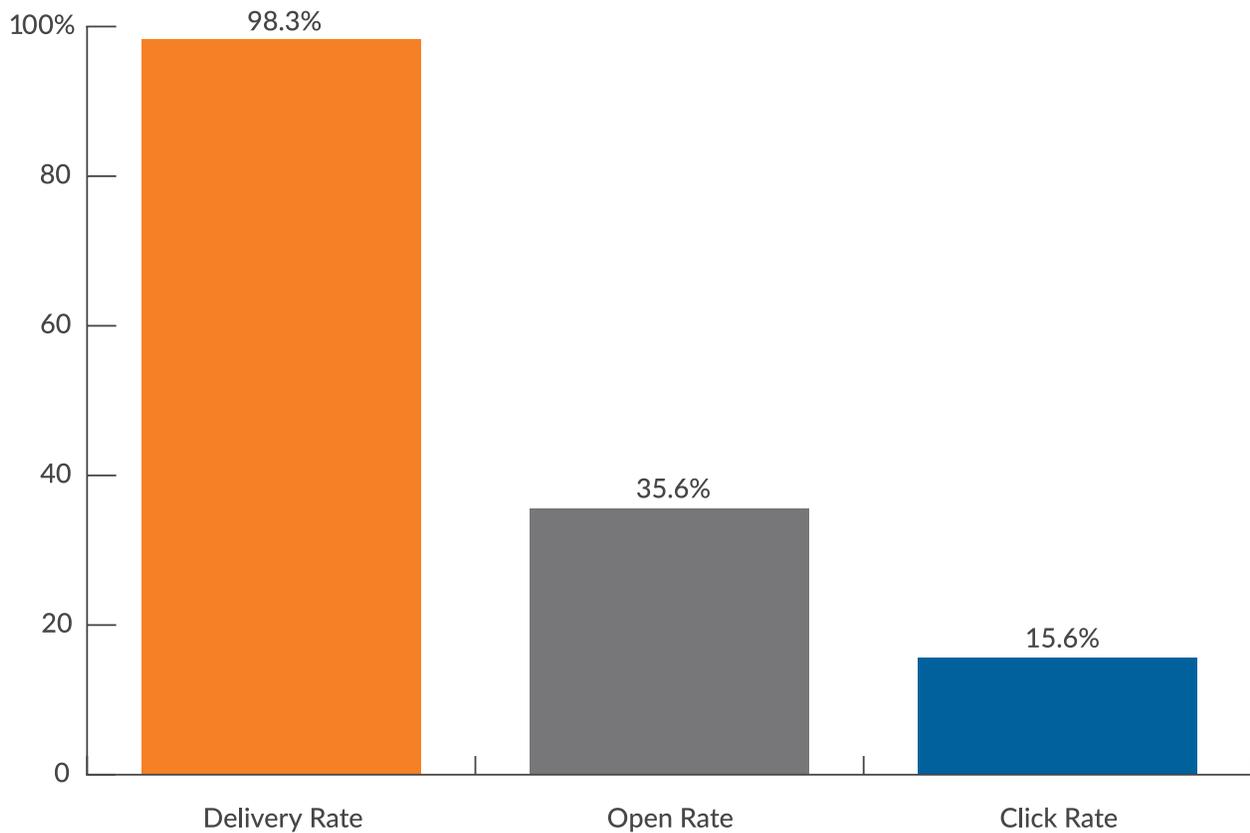


# BENCHMARK DATA AND KEY FINDINGS

# Overall Email Metrics

## KEY FINDINGS

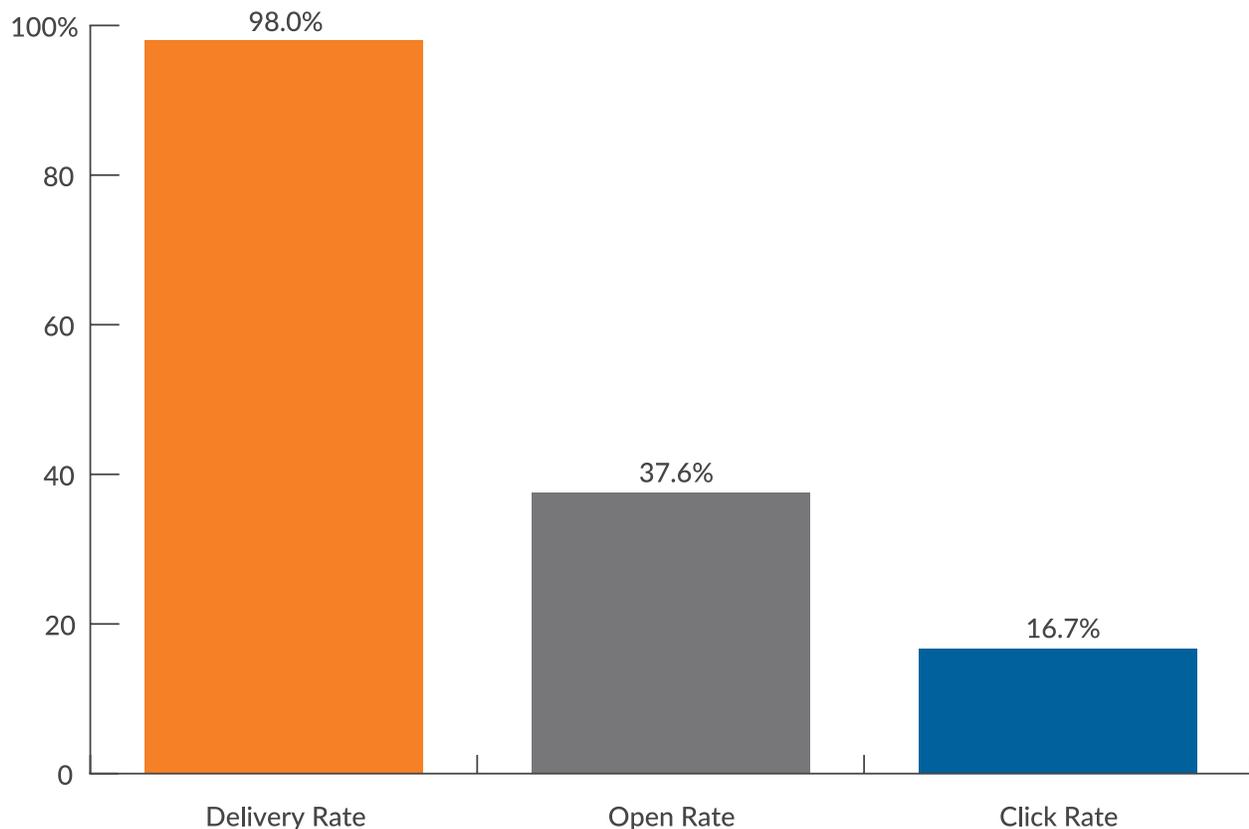
The average email metrics for associations include a 98.3% delivery rate, 35.6% open rate and 15.6% click rate.



# Marketing Automation Email Metrics

## KEY FINDINGS

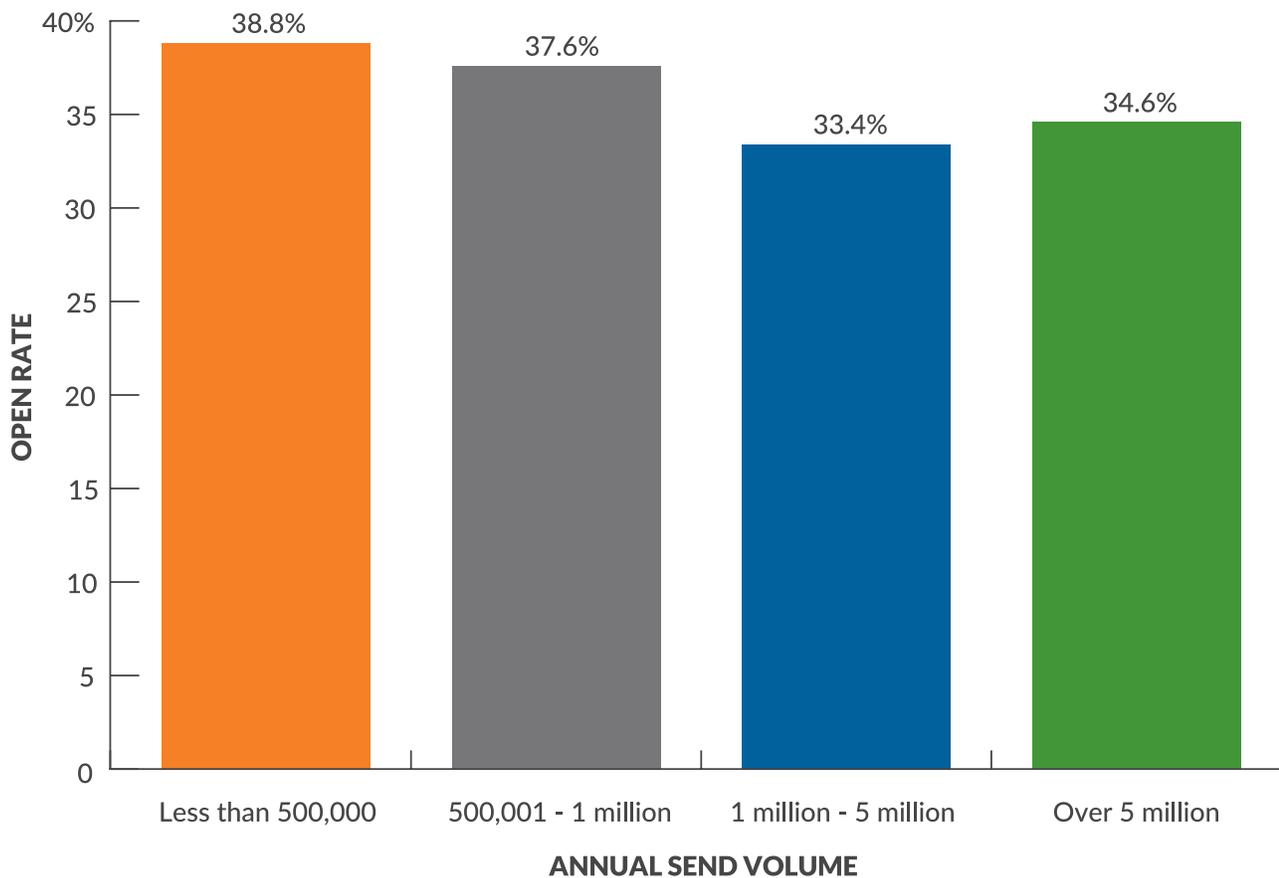
The average metrics for emails sent as a part of a campaign using marketing automation include a 98% delivery rate, 37.6% open rate and 16.7% click rate. Higher engagement metrics are attributed to the relevancy, targeting, and timing of automated messages.



# Open Rates by Annual Send Volume

## KEY FINDINGS

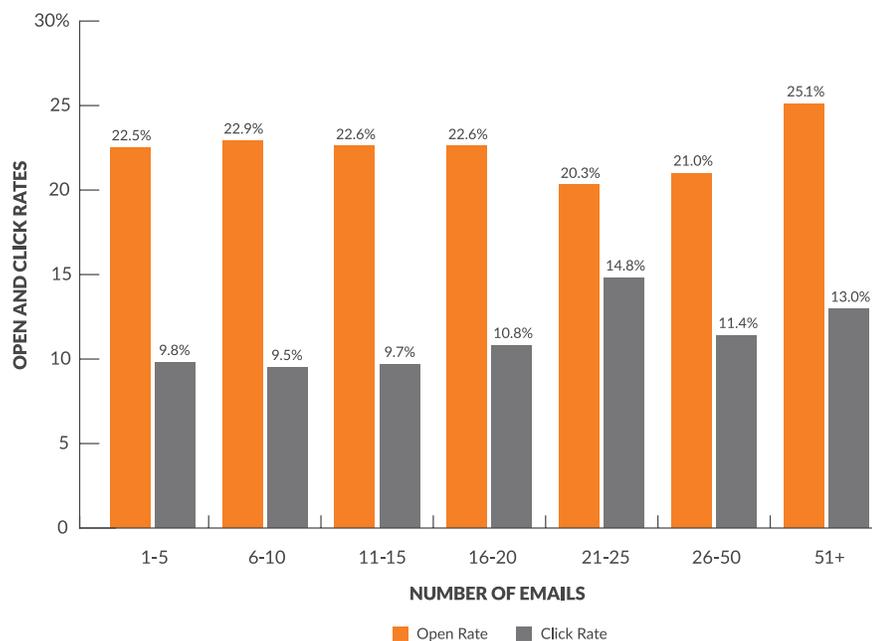
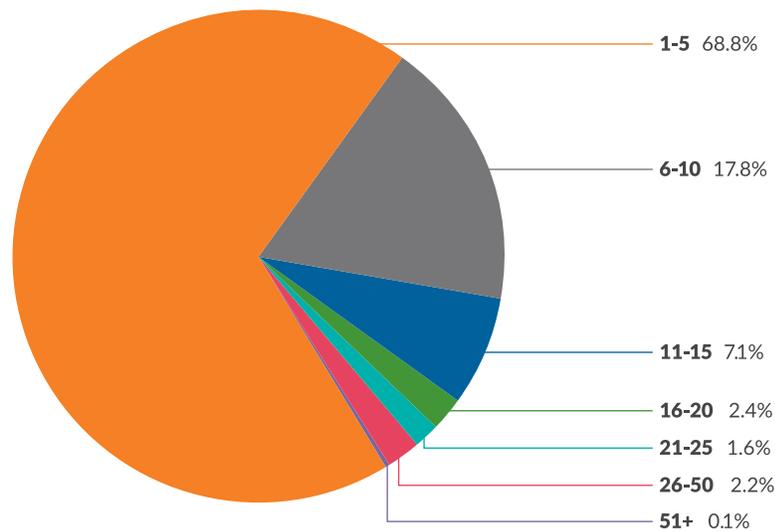
Associations with annual send volumes of 1 million or less achieved the highest average open rates, accounting for 15% of the total client base. Associations with annual send volume of 5 million emails generated an average open rate of 34.6% and represent nearly half of the associations in this benchmark study.



# Results by Frequency

## KEY FINDINGS

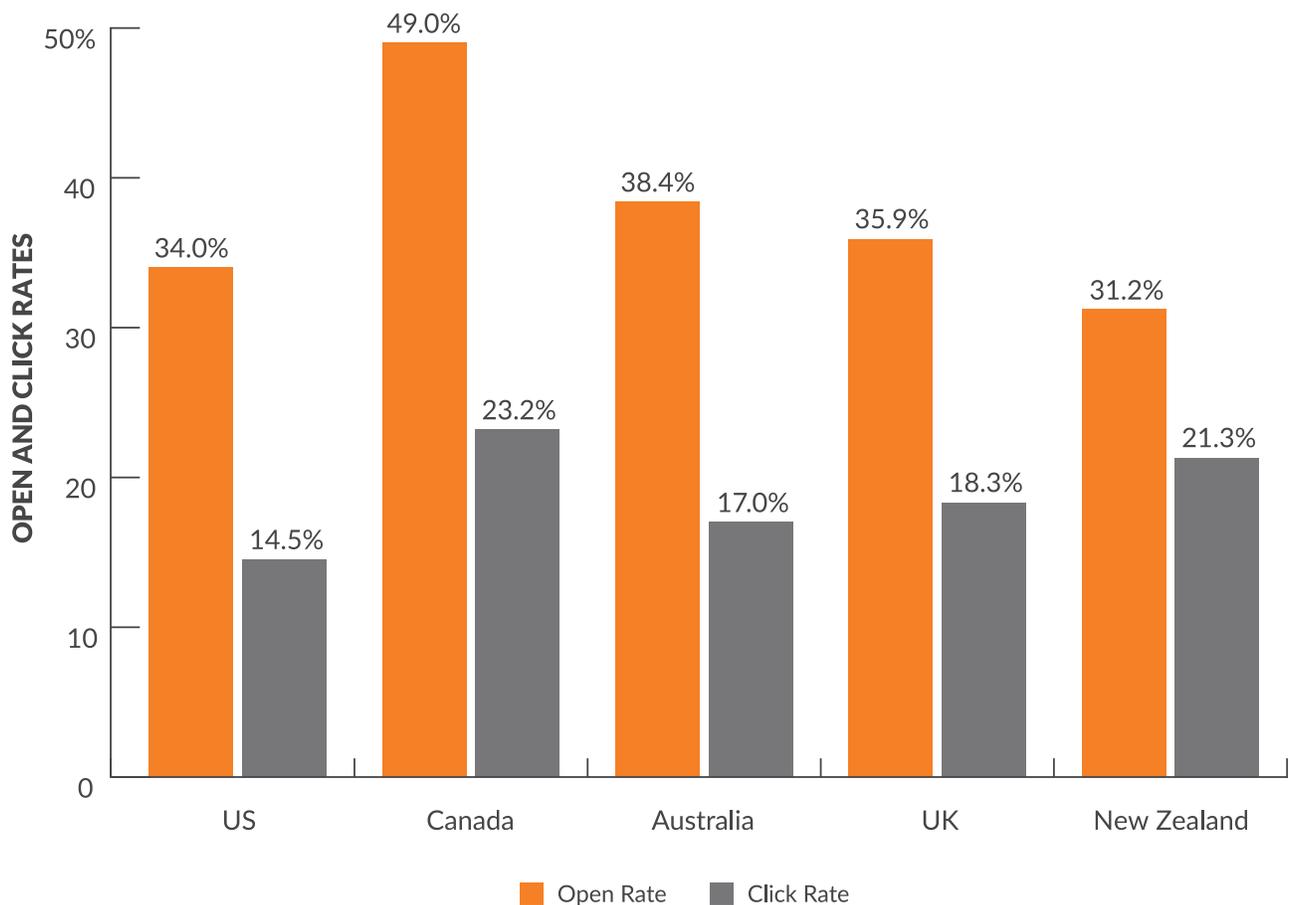
The number of monthly emails sent to subscribers has not changed significantly from 2015. The majority of subscribers (86.6%) were sent 10 or less emails per month.



# Results by Country of Sender

## KEY FINDINGS

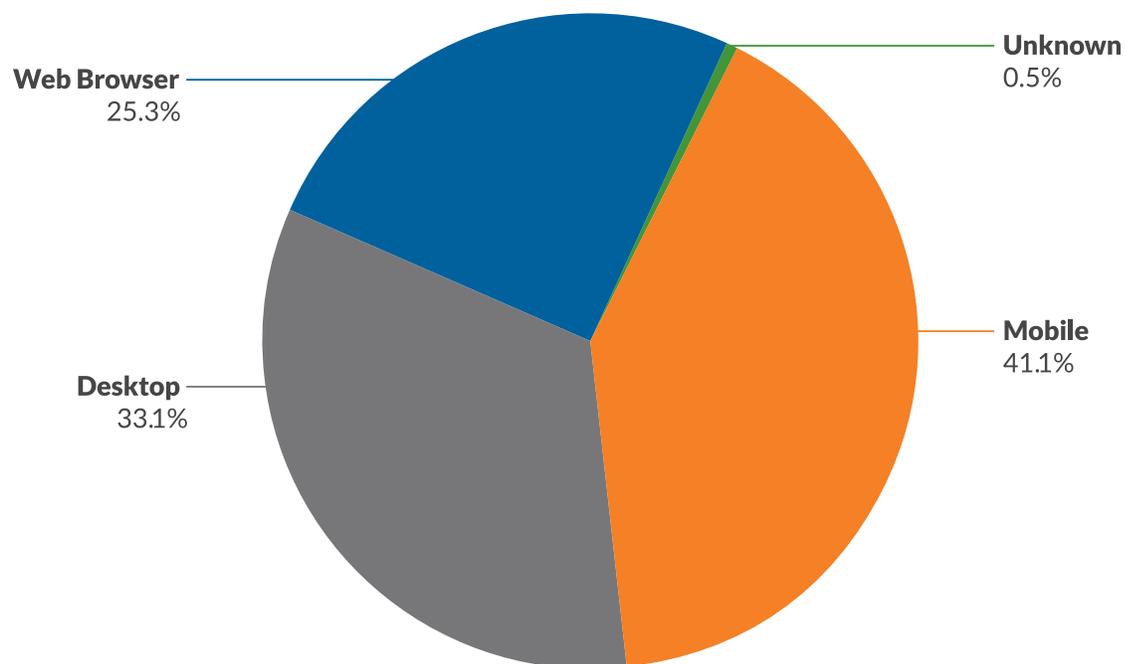
86% of the email volume came from senders in the USA. The United Kingdom accounted for the largest year over year increase in email volume at 47%. Canada's had the second largest increase in volume at 21% and had a moderate increase of 4% in open rates. Australia and New Zealand had positive open and click rates slightly higher than last year.



# Results by Email Client Type

## KEY FINDINGS

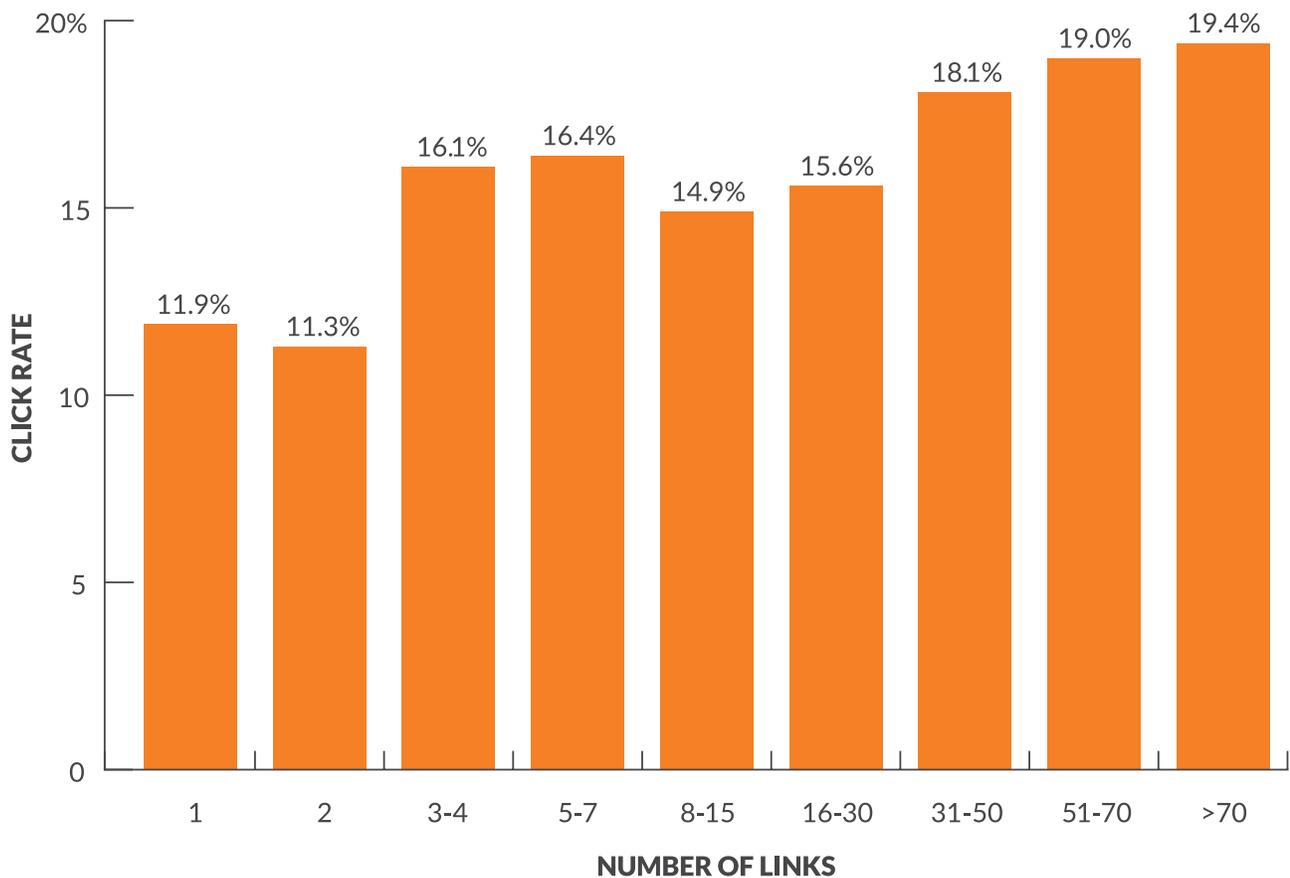
Mobile dominated in 2016 and was the most popular email client type with an open rate of 41.1%. Desktop email client usage dropped to 33.1% while Web email clients had the largest increase in usage, rising over 2%.



# Results by Number of Links

## KEY FINDINGS

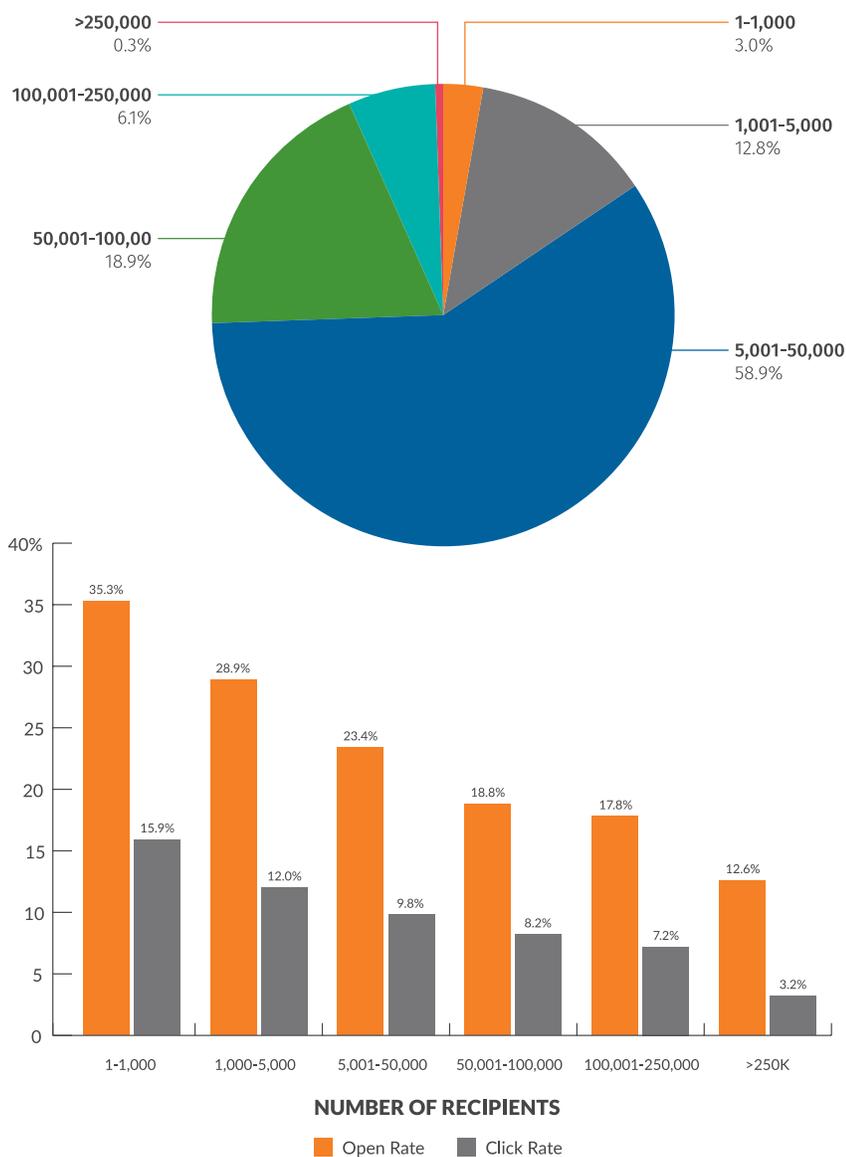
Emails containing between 3-7 links and emails with 31 or more links had click rates greater than the 2016 benchmark average. Emails containing 8 or more links represent 80% of the email sent volume.



# Results by Number of Recipients

## KEY FINDINGS

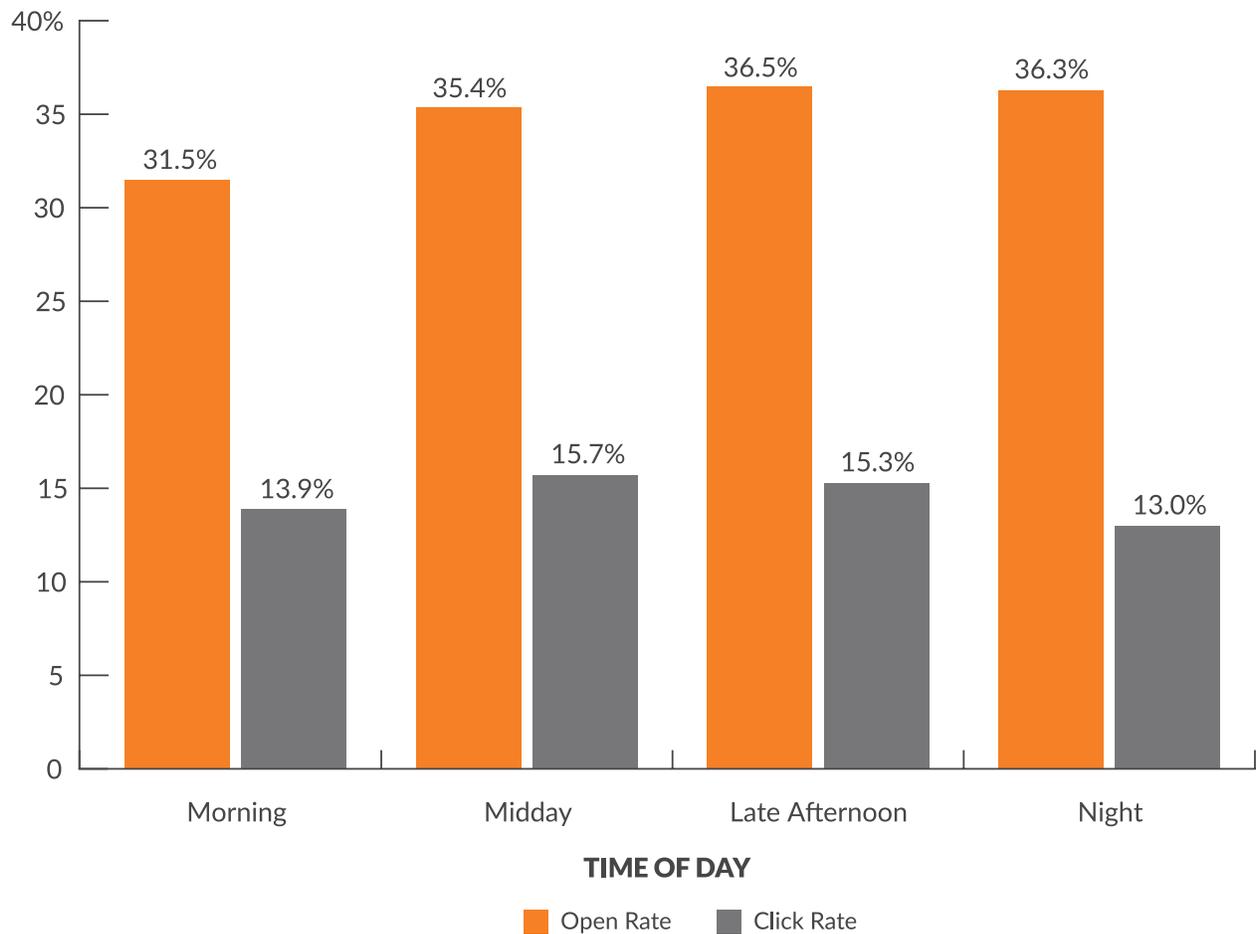
Emails sent to audiences of 50,000 or less account for nearly 75% of the email volume in 2016. The highest open rates were generated by smaller, more targeted audiences.



# Results by Time of Day

## KEY FINDINGS

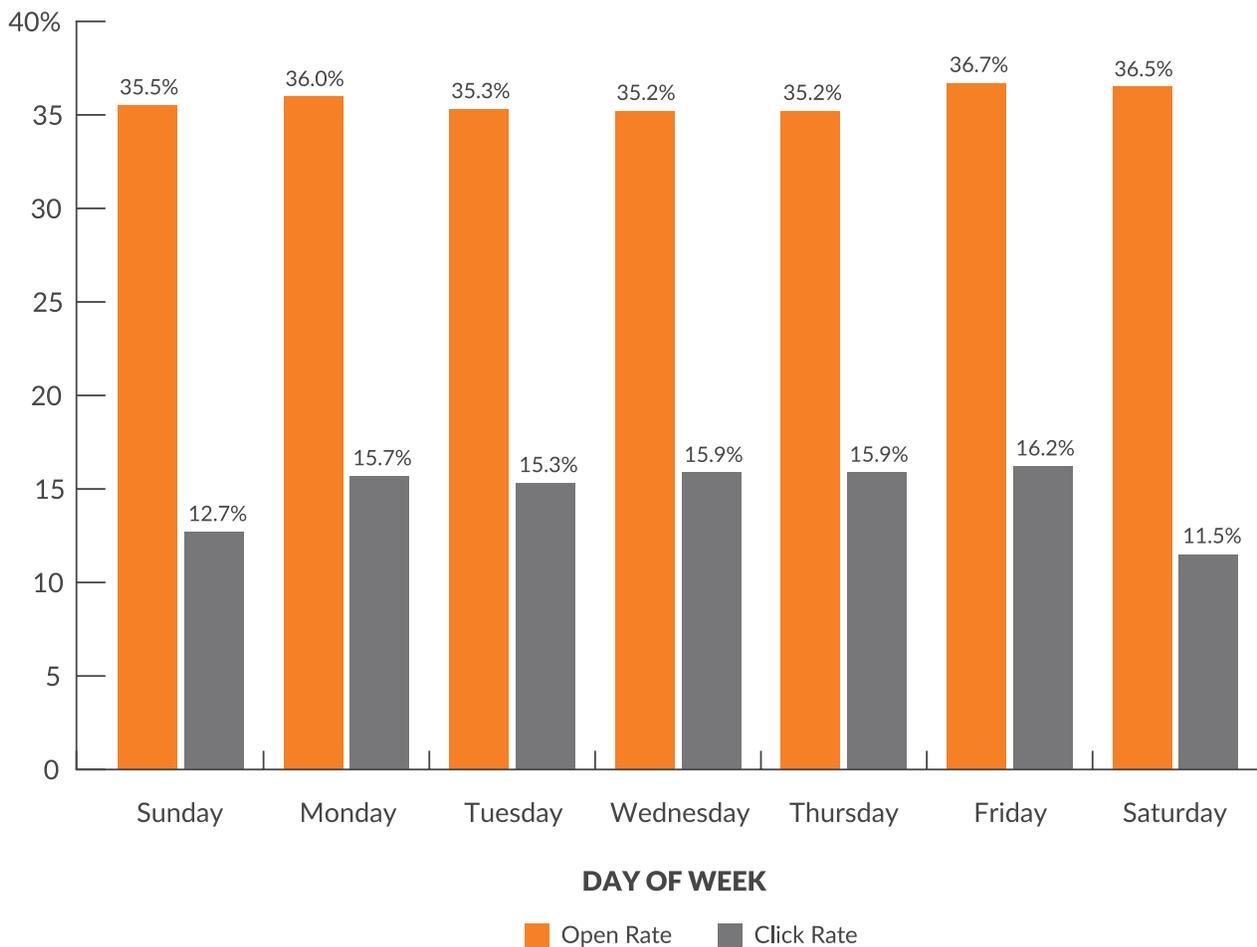
Emails sent in late afternoon had the highest open rate of 36.5%. Email sent mid-day still account for the largest percentage of emails sent and have the highest click rate.



# Results by Day of Week

## KEY FINDINGS

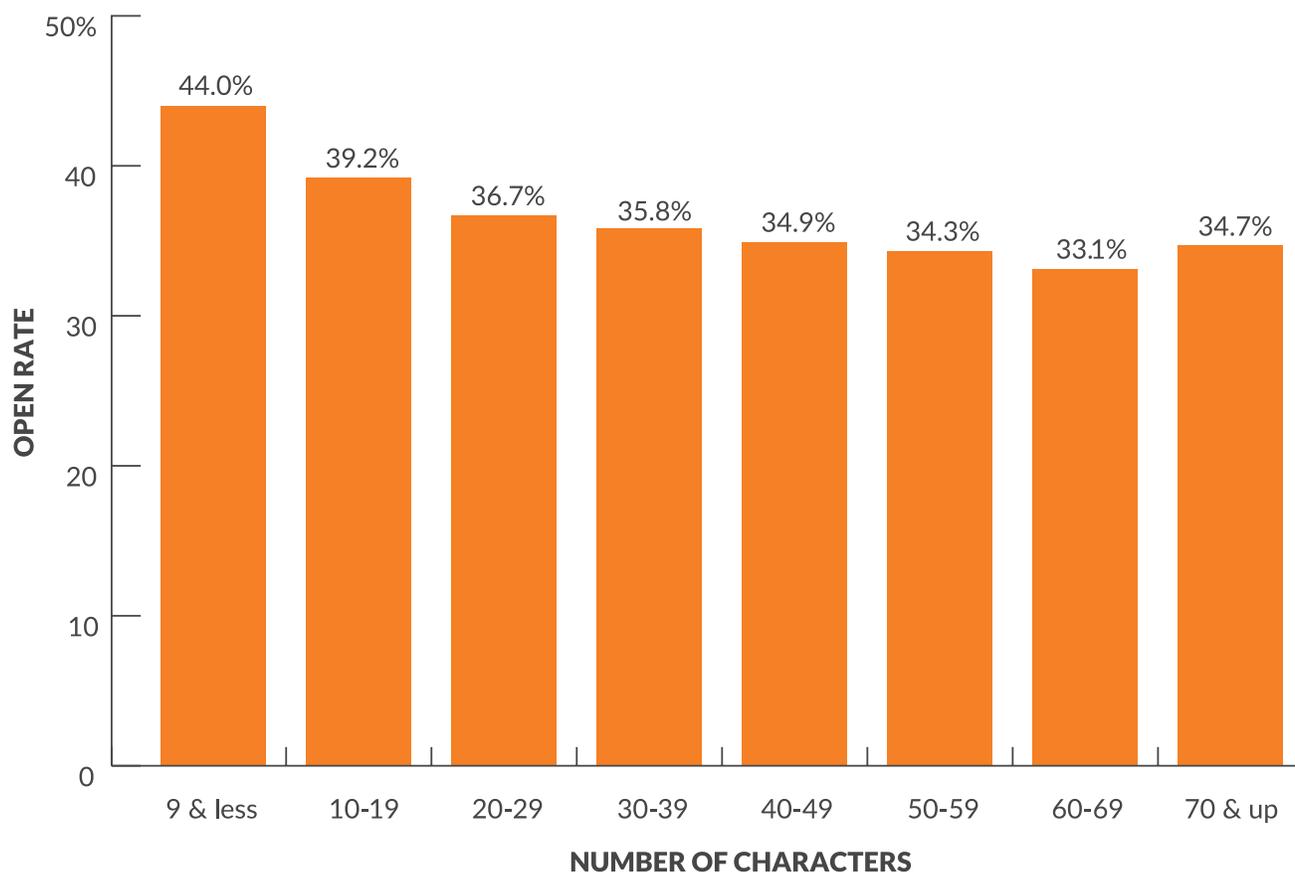
Friday had the highest open rate of 36.7% and highest click rate of 16.2%. For the second consecutive year, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday had the highest email volume, accounting for 64% of emails sent.



# Results by Subject Line Length

## KEY FINDINGS

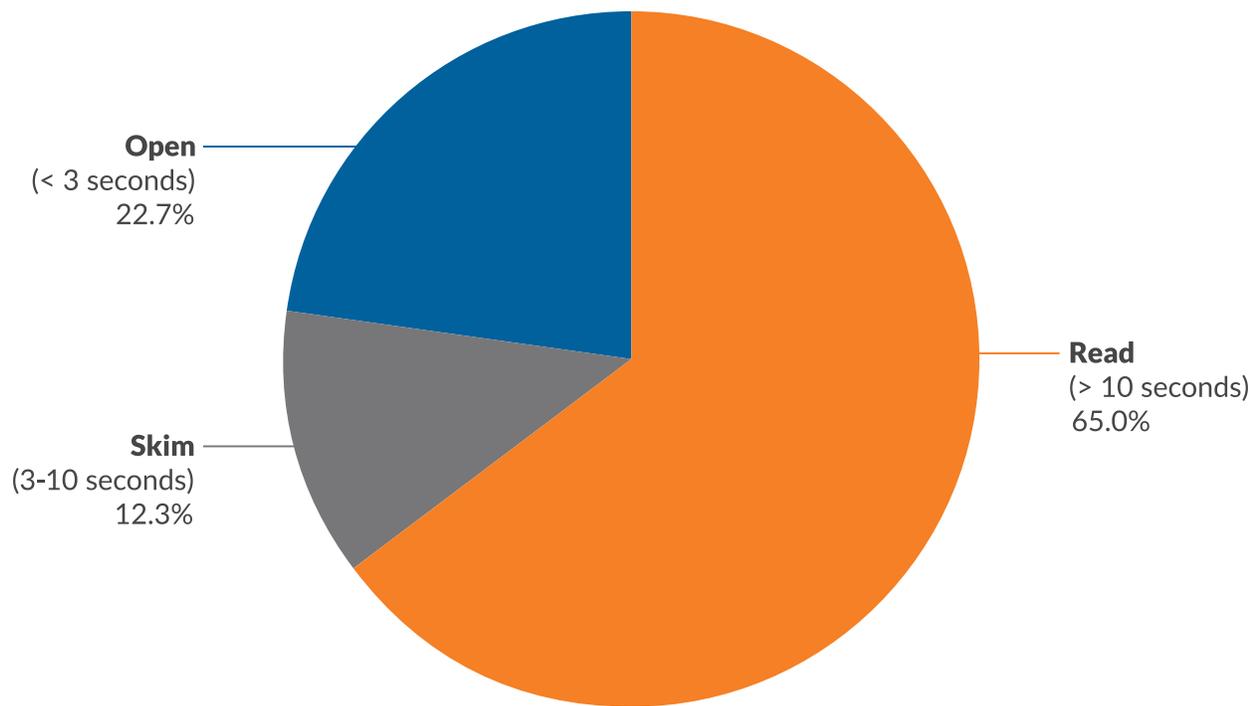
Subject lines with less than 10 characters had the highest open rate at 44.0% and accounted for less than 1% of the volume. Interestingly, email with subject line lengths greater than 40 characters accounted for 50% of the volume, yet had open rates lower than the benchmark standard of 35.6%.



# Open Duration Results

## KEY FINDINGS

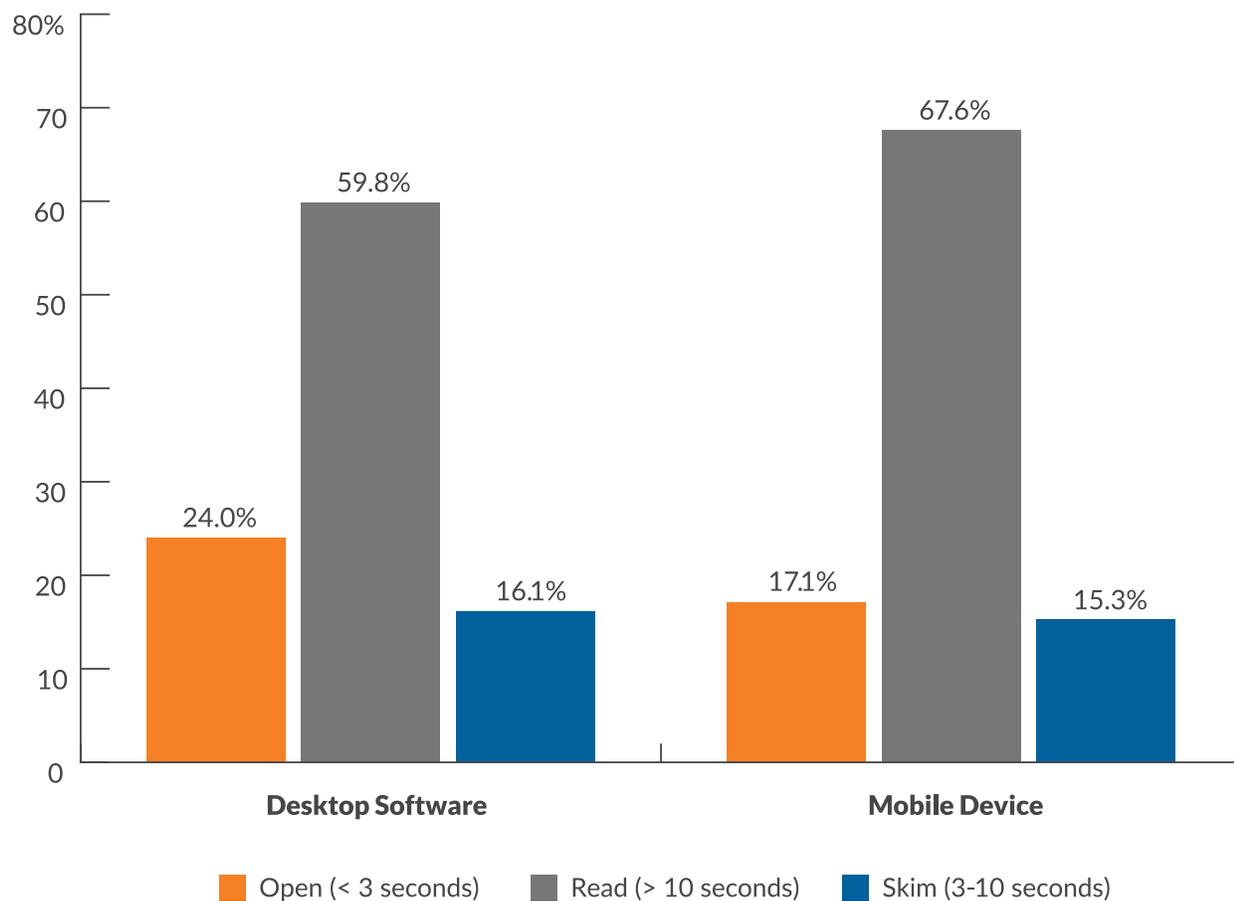
65% of opened email had engagement longer than 10 seconds while 22.7% of opened emails had engagement lasting less than 3 seconds.



# Mobile and Desktop Open Duration Comparison

## KEY FINDINGS

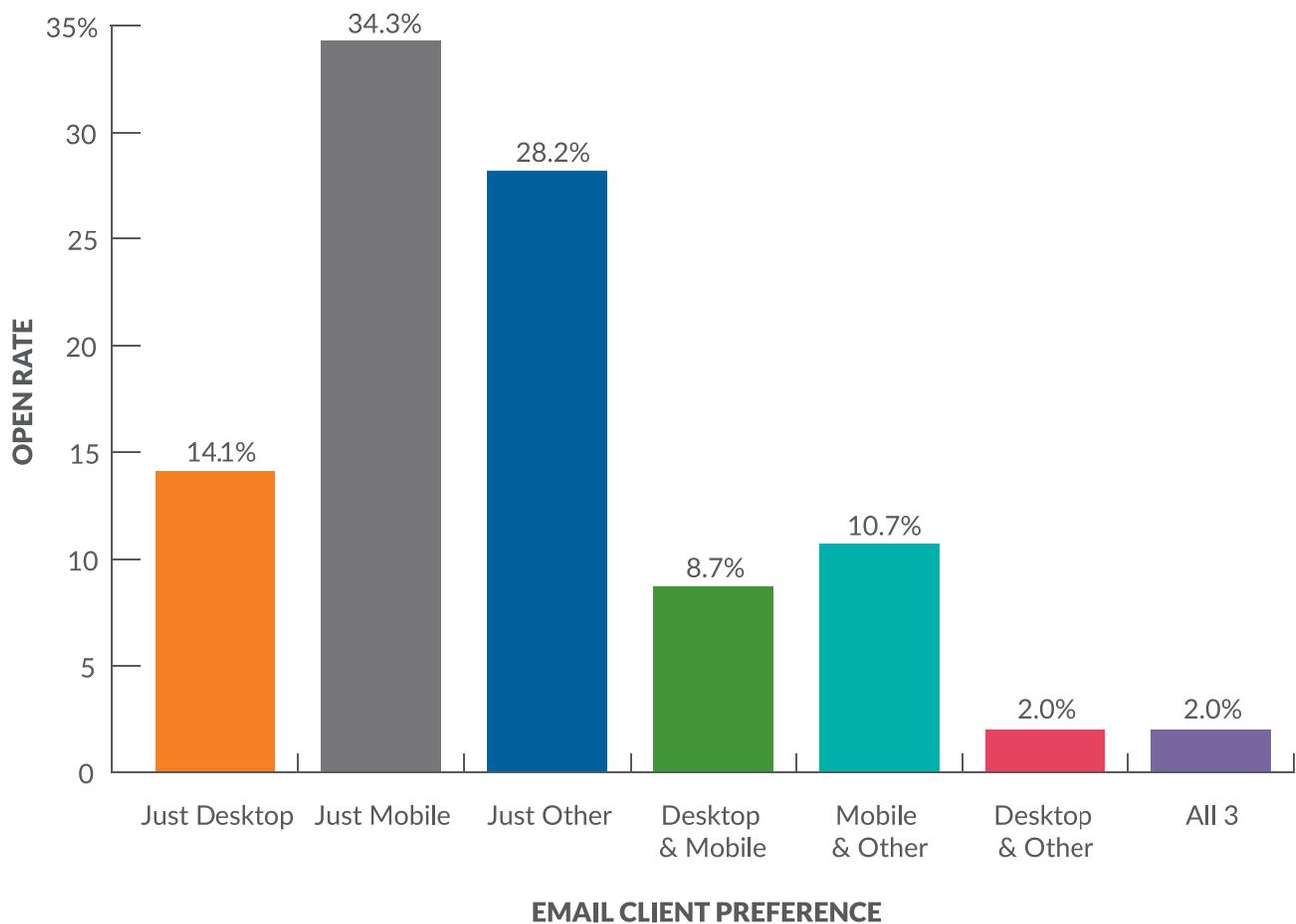
Mobile readers engaged with emails longer than desktop readers. 67.6% of mobile readers spend longer than 10 seconds reading emails compared to 59.8% of desktop readers.



# Email Client Preference and Open Rate

## KEY FINDINGS

76.6% of email opens occur just once, with mobile-only having the highest percentage at 34.3%.

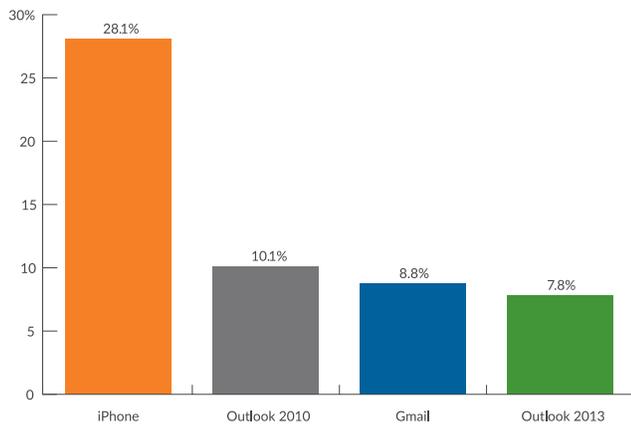


# Email Client Preference (Detailed)

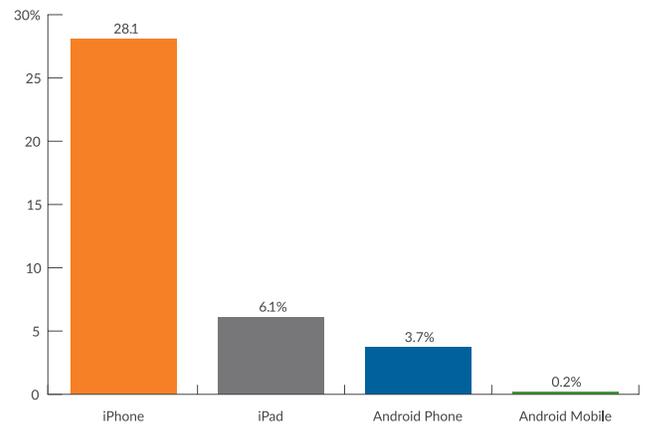
## KEY FINDINGS

*iPhones account for 28.1% of email opens, while Outlook remains the 2nd most popular client with 26.9% of email opens.*

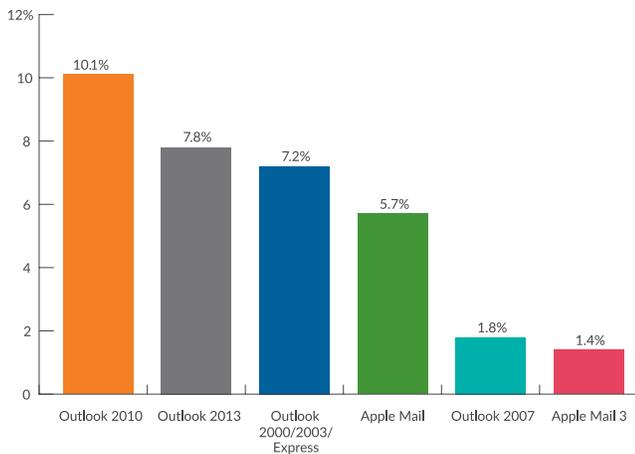
### HIGHEST USAGE



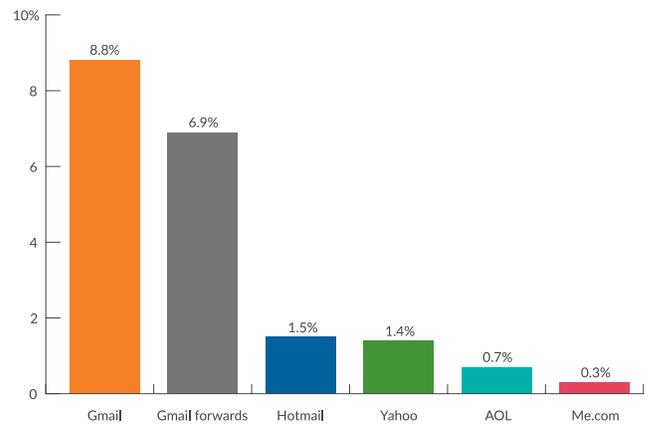
### HIGHEST USAGE MOBILE



### HIGHEST USAGE DESKTOP



### HIGHEST USAGE WEB





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