



**THE INFORMZ 2012
ASSOCIATION
EMAIL MARKETING
BENCHMARK REPORT**

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INTRODUCTION

Email marketing has become one of the primary ways associations communicate with members, and has proven to be both cost-efficient and highly effective. However, with the struggling economy and increasing demands on members' time, optimizing email marketing campaigns has become more important than ever.

Informz, the leading provider of email marketing solutions for the association industry, has performed a study on our association client base to provide email marketers from member-based organizations benchmarking information for their email programs. This study will help you to understand what metrics you should be analyzing when reviewing your email marketing program, what goals you can set based on similar organizations, and how your email marketing program is performing.

This report includes a summary of email marketing metrics collected from over 700 large and mid-sized associations that used the Informz email marketing platform in 2011. These associations, located in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom, sent over 600 million emails in 2011, consisting of newsletters, appeals, surveys, and event-related emails.

Email Marketing Metrics

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 that were clicked by the recipient. Clicking on 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.



KEY FINDINGS

The Informz Association Email Marketing Benchmark Report analyzed the results from 600 million emails sent by over 700 large and mid-sized associations. The key findings from this study are as follows:

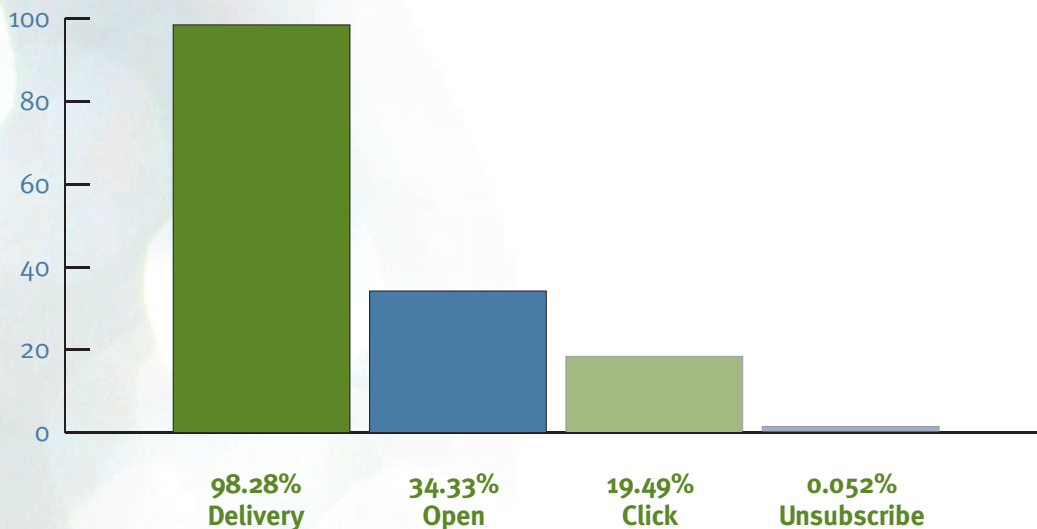
- The average email metrics for associations include a 98.28% delivery rate, 34.33% open rate, 19.49% click rate and a 0.052% unsubscribe rate.
- As with the 2011 results, this year's study found that the day of the week sent had little effect on the open and click results.
- Emails sent in the morning resulted in the highest open rates at 39.2% while mid-afternoon reported the highest click rates at 21.0%.
- For the third year, desktop email software usage continued to decline, while mobile email usage increased to 17%.
- In this study, iPhone was the leader in the mobile device category at 12% while iPad reported at 4% and Android at 3%.
- Shorter subject lines continued to outperform their longer counterparts. Fewer than 10 characters achieved the best open rate at 58%.
- 49% of emails sent were read by recipients (opened for longer than 10 seconds) while 35% of emails were opened for less than 3 seconds.
- Survey-related emails had the highest combined open and click rates with 36.60% average opens and 33.39% clicks. Appeal-related emails had the lowest click rate of the emails studied at 14.63%

RESULTS

Overall Association Metrics

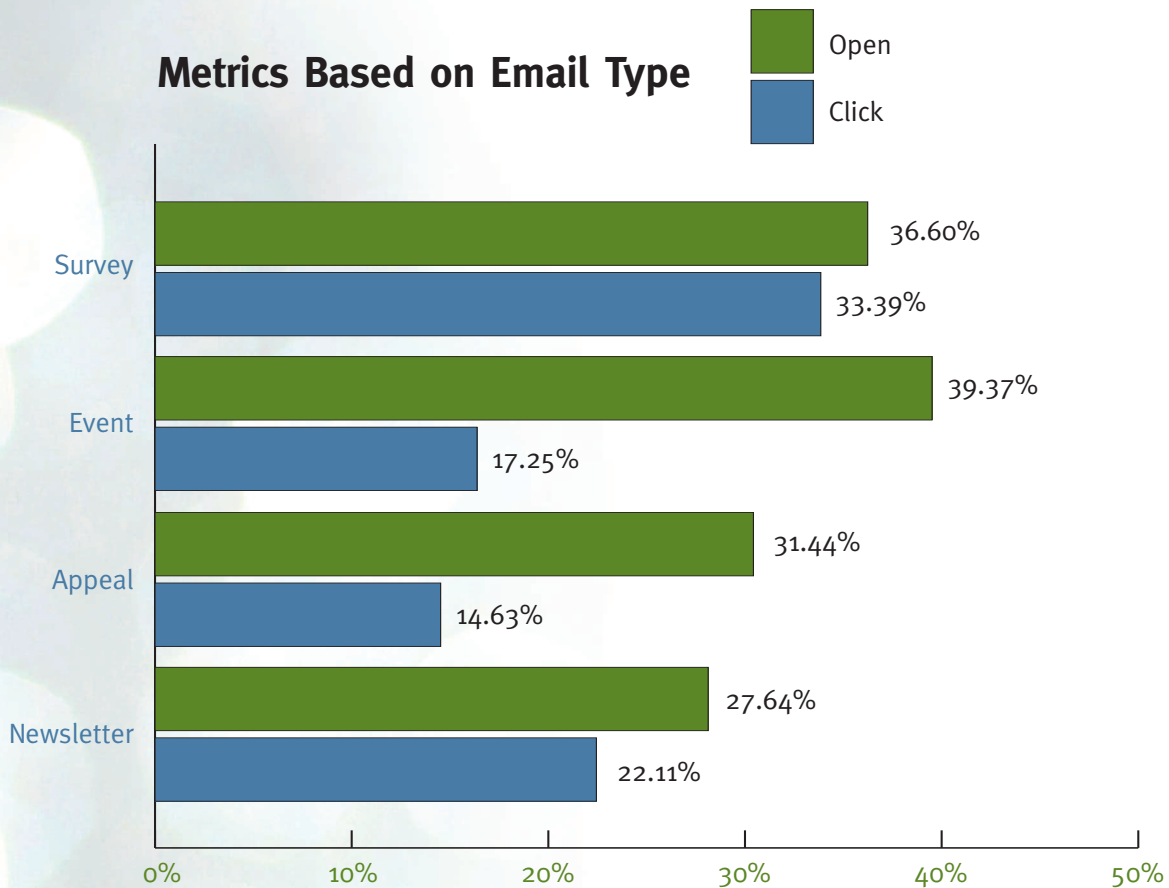
The following chart displays the average delivery, open, click, and unsubscribe rate from 600 million emails sent by over 700 associations in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Overall Association Metrics



Results by Email Type

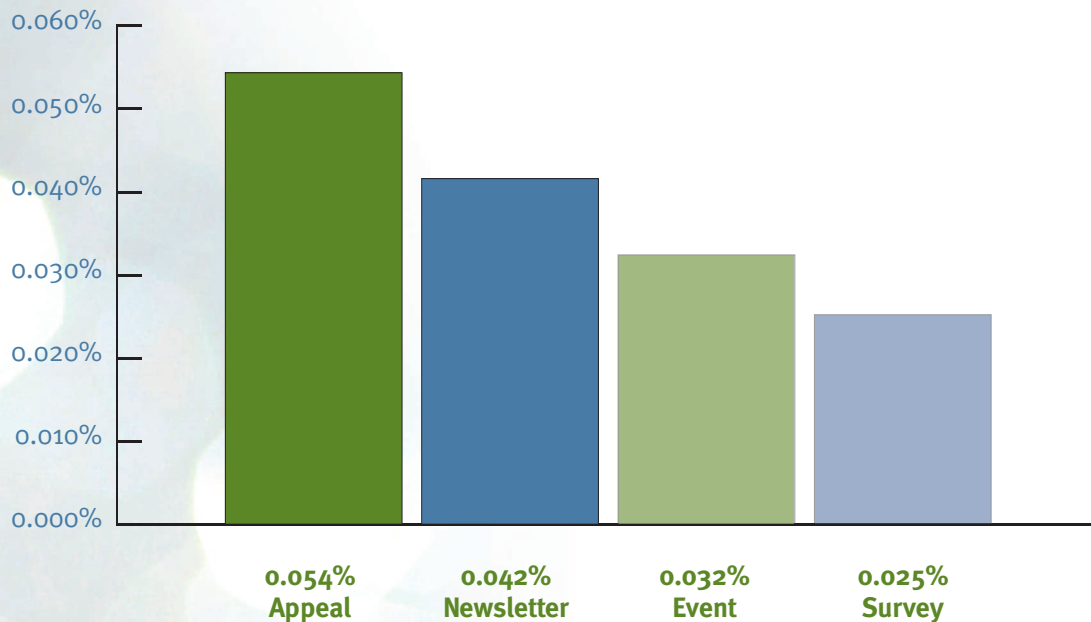
For the purpose of this study, the subject line of emails were analyzed to determine the email purpose and then segmented by category. The categories of emails are Newsletter, Event, Appeal, and Survey. It was found that the delivery rate did not vary with the purpose of the email, so only open and click rate results are displayed.



Notes:

Event-related emails received the highest open rate but resulted in the second lowest click-thru rates. This disparity between opens and clicks signifies the importance of sending multiple emails during a campaign to promote an event. One possibility is that people receive event notifications but do not immediately take action to register for the event. Therefore, it is recommended to send several follow-up emails to remind people of registration deadlines and event updates to encourage them to take action. Appeal emails received similar results and should allow for multiple touch points to achieve conversion. Newsletters and surveys both had more even open and click results that can be attributed to the relevancy of the content to the recipients of these types of mailings.

Unsubscribe Rate Based on Email Type

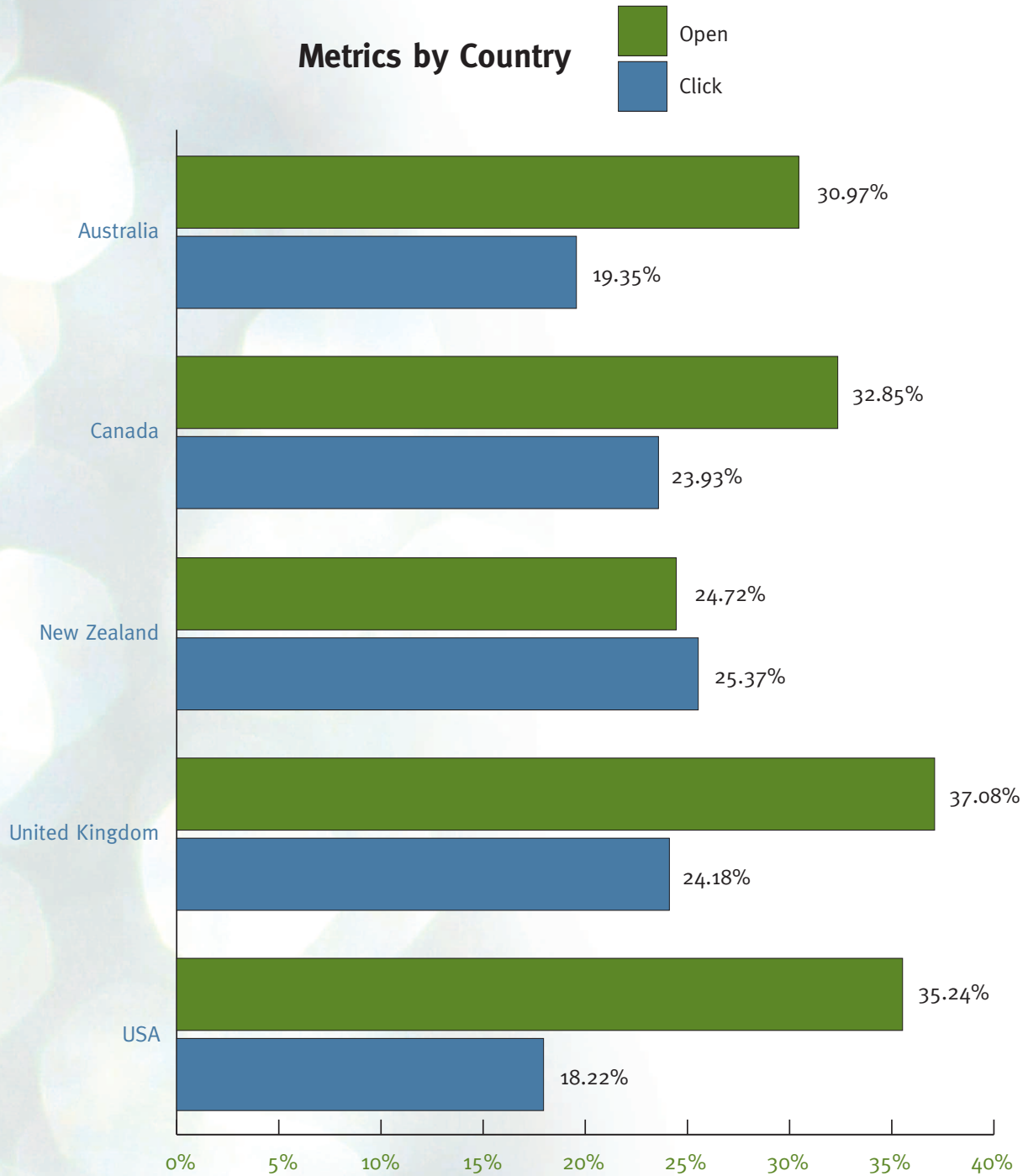


Notes:

It is of no surprise that appeal emails resulted in the highest unsubscribe rate. As noted in the previous study, appeals also resulted in the lowest click rate. This proves the increased need to focus on segmenting and targeting requests based on what will resonate best with an audience. Utilize the data collected on past donation history, events attended, and interest areas to segment the group based on what they are most likely to donate.

Results by Country of Sender

Based on the physical location of the association, email marketing results were split into USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom for analysis. Other countries were omitted because there were less than 30 clients located in those countries. Delivery rate did not vary between countries, so it has been omitted from the chart.

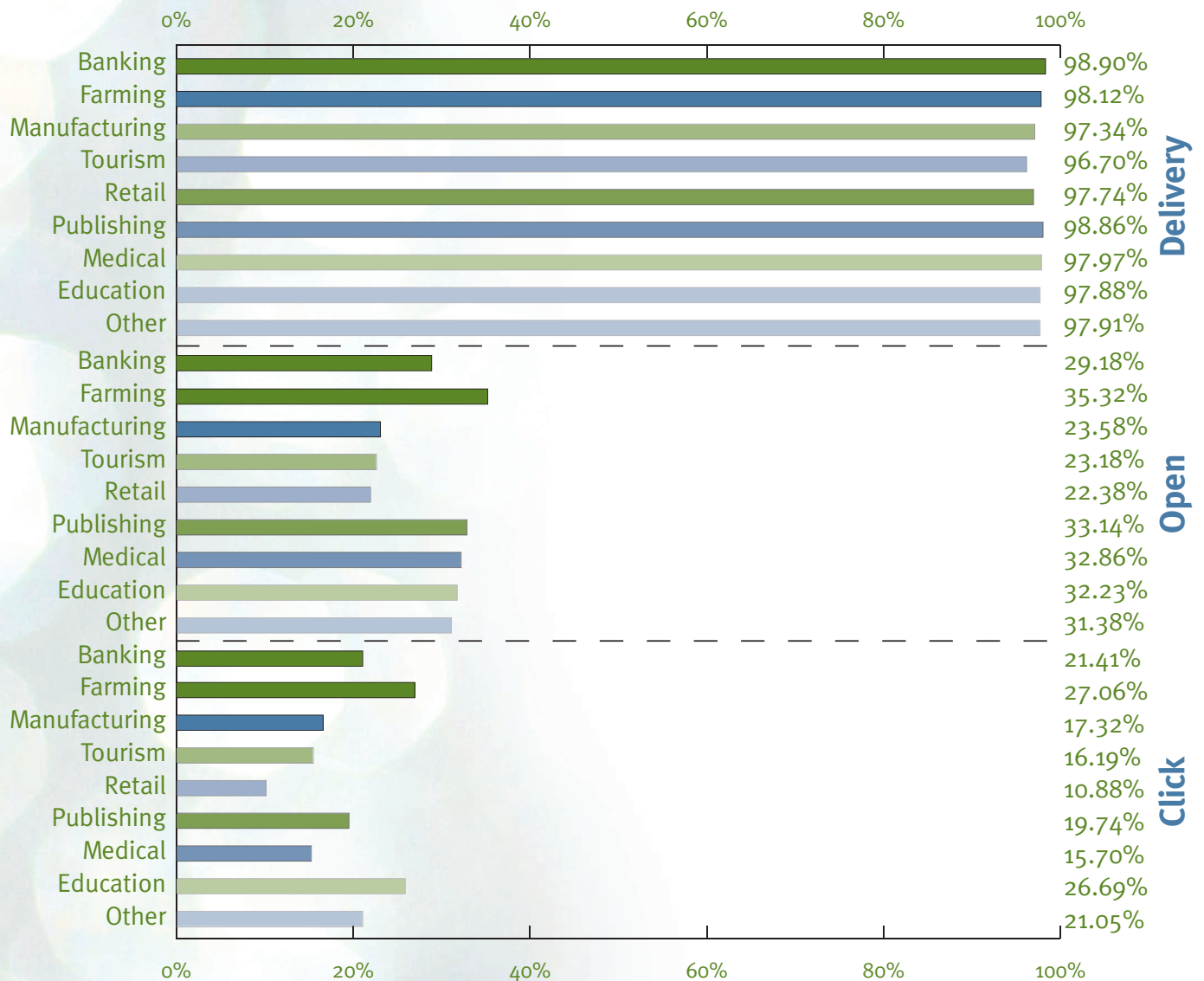


Notes:

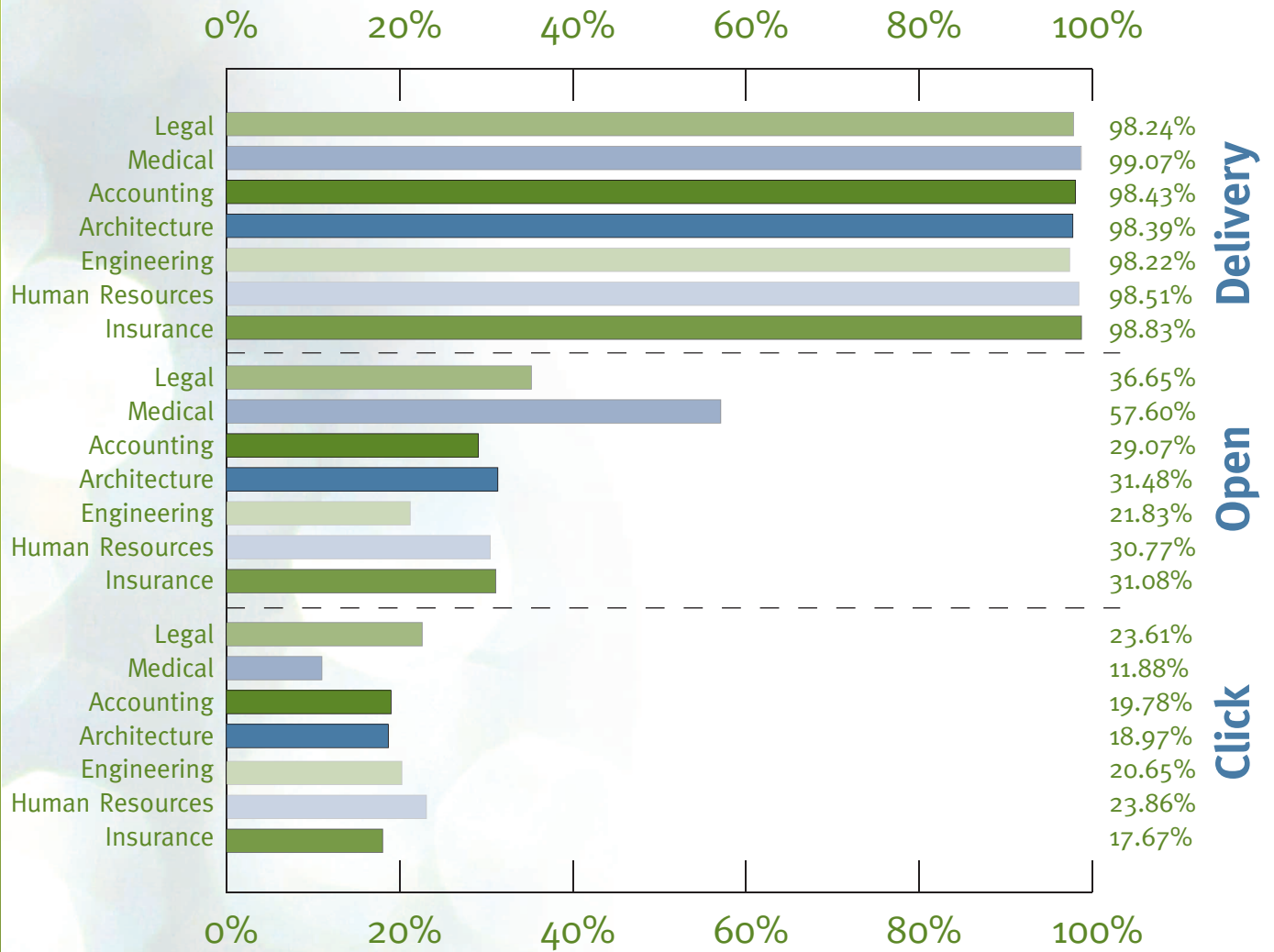
Memberships stretch throughout the world, making it difficult to deliver a message at the right time for everyone. Utilize demographic data to split groups by location and assign specific send times to each one to ensure it is delivered during the recipient's workday. For Informz clients, try using the Informz Send Time Optimization tool, a feature that automatically sends an email to a recipient when they are most likely to open based on their past behavior. This removes the guesswork from determining the best time to send your email!

Results by Association Type

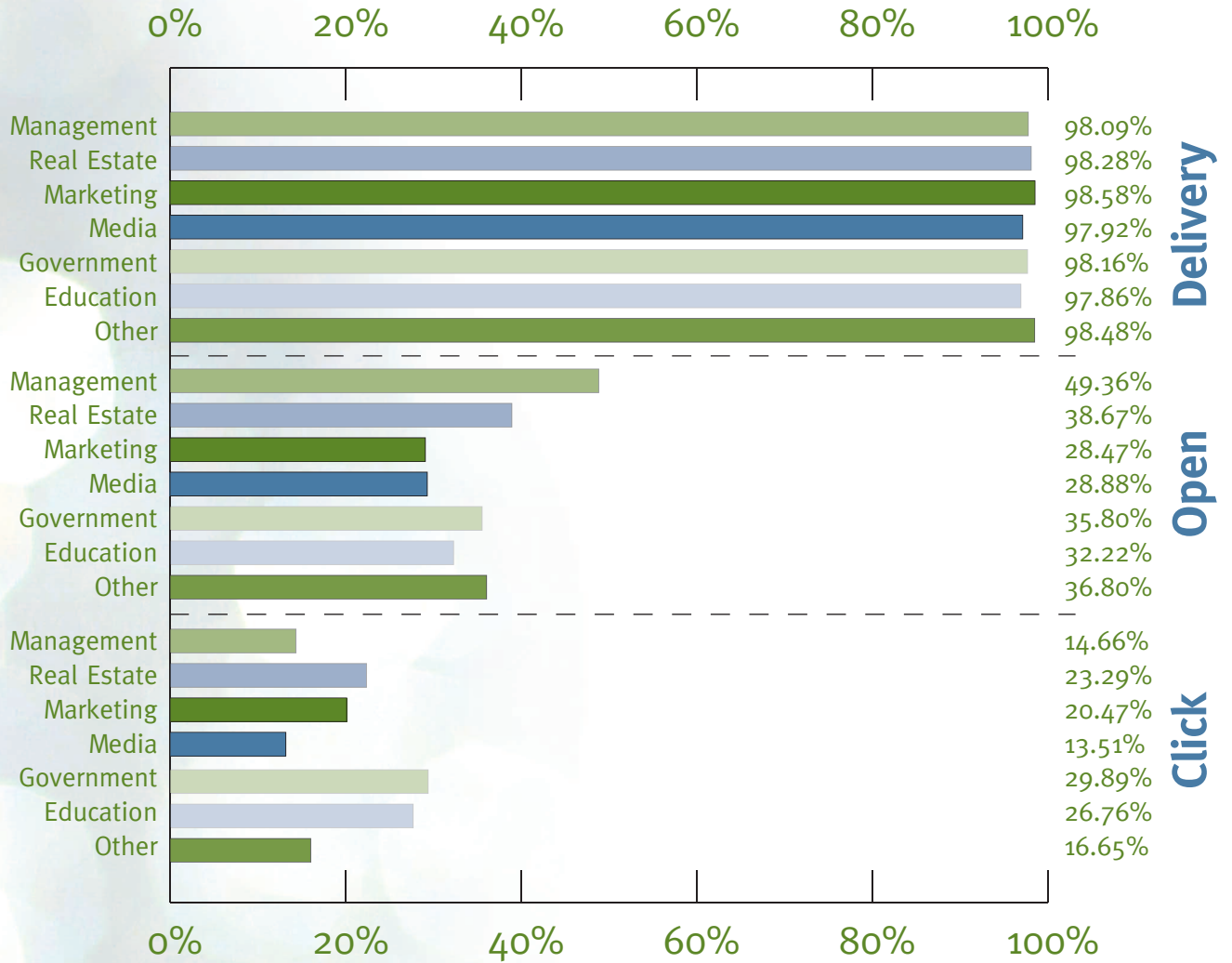
Business and Industry Associations



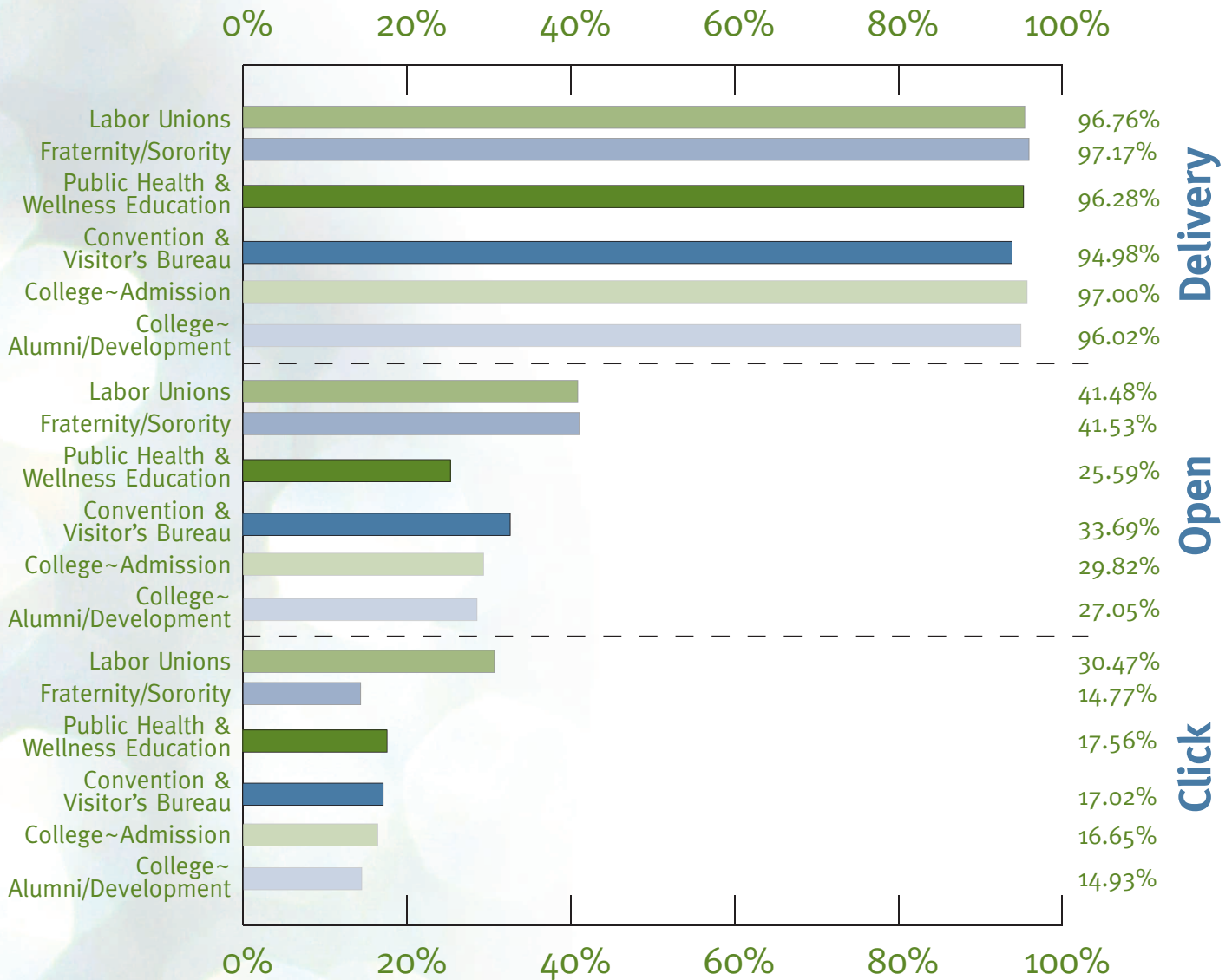
Professional & Trade Associations ~ Group 1



Professional & Trade Associations ~ Group 2



Other Organization Types



Notes:

To improve your own results, consider the profession your members are in. Are they away from a computer from 8am–3pm like education professionals; or are they constantly on the go like professionals in the medical industry? Tailor your emails so they are delivered at a time, or in a way, that works best for your members.

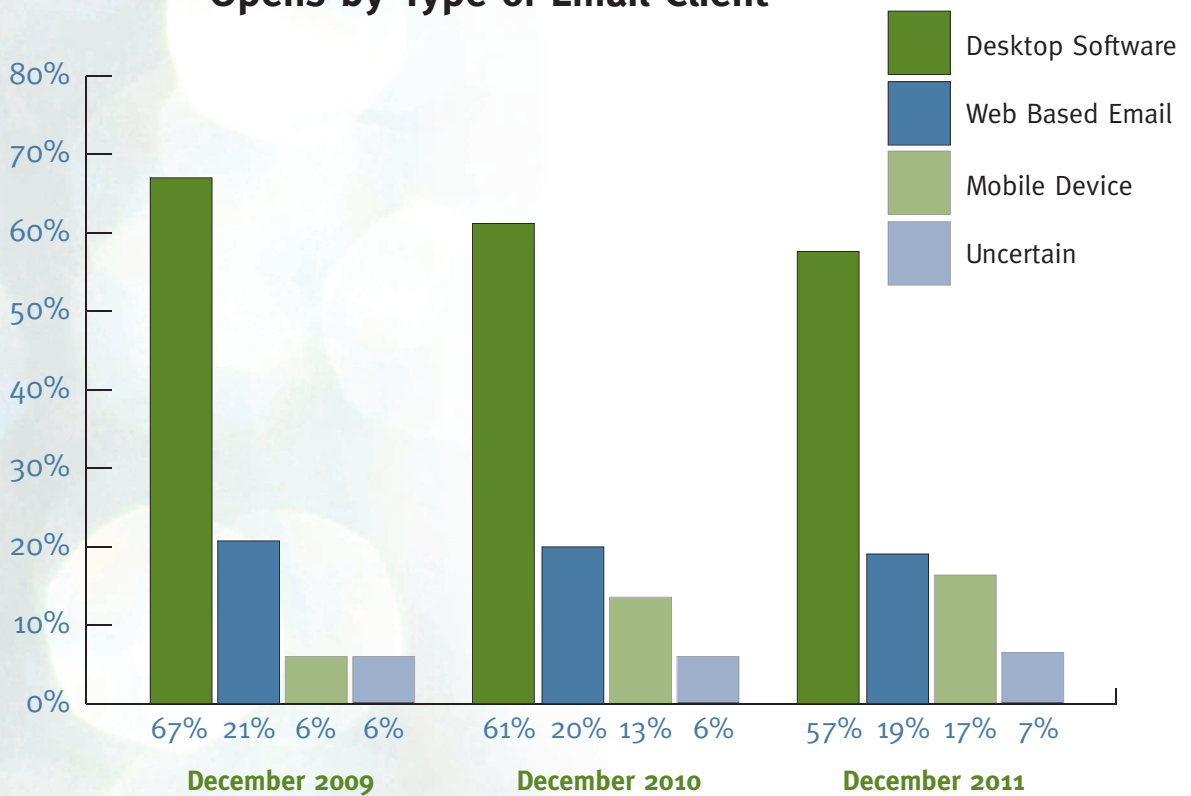
The results of the study show that medical industry associations had the highest open rate but the lowest click-thru rate. This speaks to a need to make the content be brief, to the point, and relevant.

Government associations had a consistent open and click rate, the highest among the industries studied. Timing is key with this group: many professionals have “busy times” based on local elections, congressional schedules, etc. Understanding your membership and maintaining good data can help you to customize the email experience for your members and in turn, deliver better results.

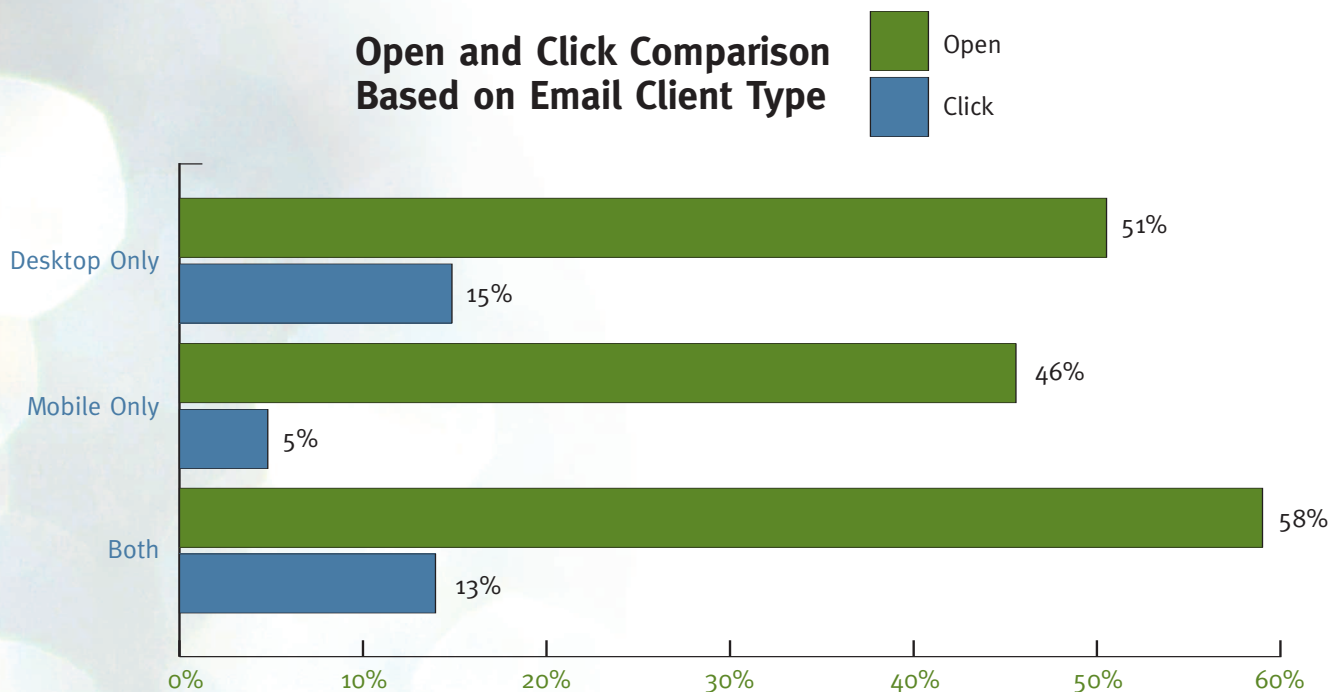
Results by Email Client Usage

Informz is able to determine the email client or program used to view any email that is recorded as being opened by Informz. The first chart shows the relationship between desktop software (Outlook, Lotus Notes), web-based (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail) and mobile email clients (iPhone, iPad, Android). It should be noted that emails opened in a web browser on a mobile device are considered mobile and not web-based. In addition, mobile devices that do not display HTML are not reported here.

Opens by Type of Email Client



Once again, mobile readership increased as web-based email and desktop software continued to decrease. Understanding what technology your members are using to read your emails on is essential to ensure it renders correctly. It is also important to consider the ever-growing tablet market, as tablet sales are expected to increase 62 percent in 2012. To optimize for mobile, look at the length of the subject line, width of the email, number of images, and the location of links. All of these small details go a long way in communicating a message to subscribers.

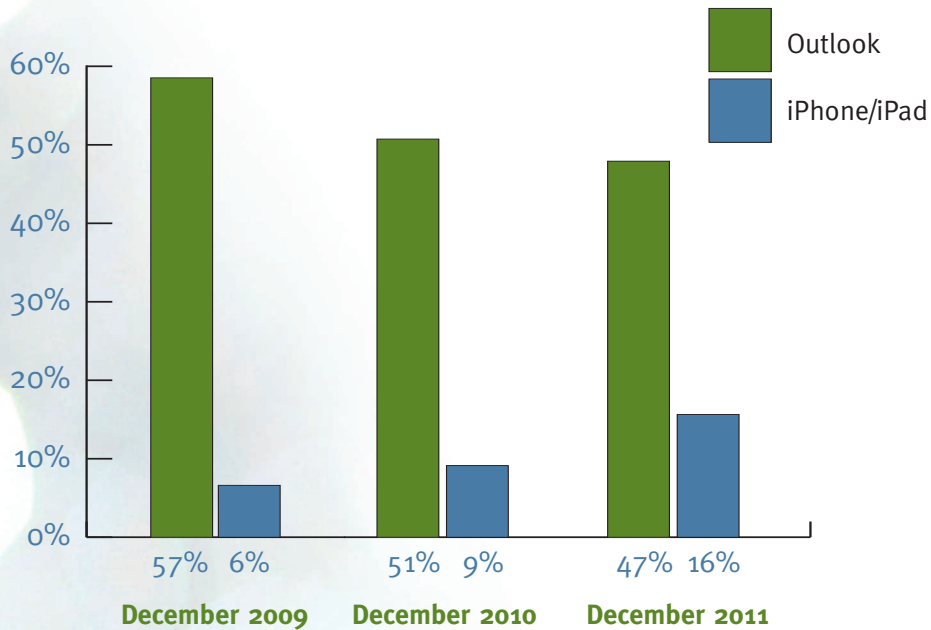


Notes:

This study examines the average open and click rate based on the email client type that the subscriber uses. The results show that each desktop subscriber opens 51% of the emails sent to them and clicks on 15%. The results show that subscribers that only use mobile devices open an average of 46% of the emails that they receive but only click on 5%. Those that use both email client types, have a higher open rate (58%), but a lower click through rate than desktop only. Understanding that your audience may be using multiple technologies for the same email is crucial in the design and layout of the email.

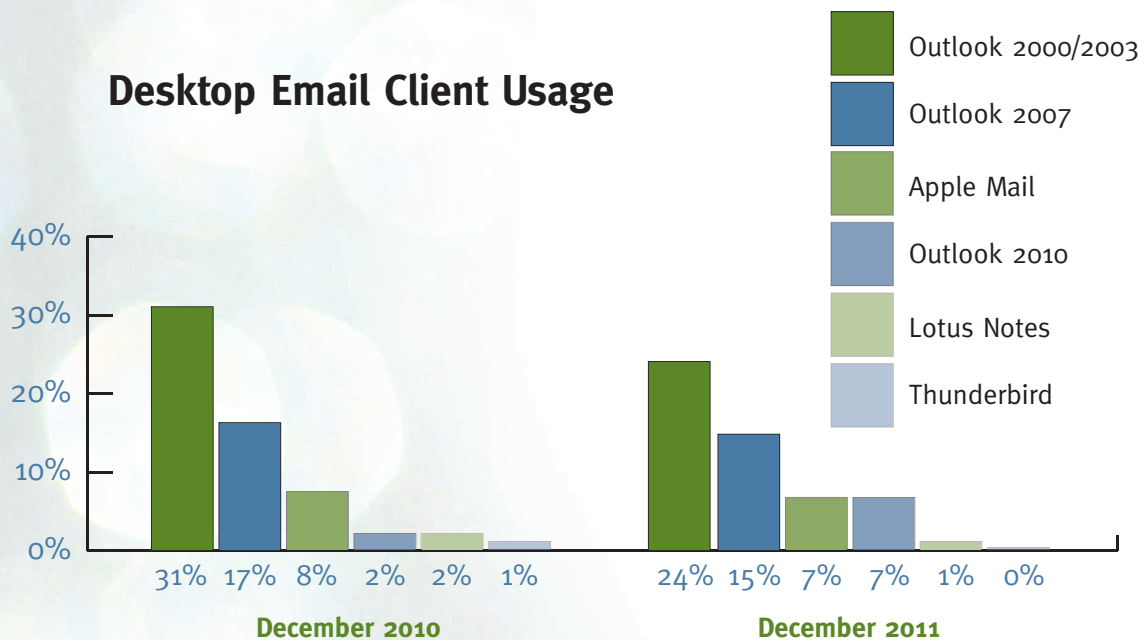
Mobile-only users resulted in a low click rate. This could be because many designs are not conducive to mobile readers, making it harder for them to read without zooming in or click on the correct link. The first step to help this is to include a link to the web version of the email and let the mobile readers know it is for them. Also, try spacing out the links so that it makes it easier to click on the small screens of mobile phones. Make changes to your email design and layout to create a combination design that will work best on either mobile devices or PCs.

Outlook and iPhone/iPad Usage



Outlook remains the email client leader in this study. However, similar to the mobile devices results of 2010, the usage of the iPhone and iPad has more than doubled since 2009. It is important to learn what your members are using and then design for those email clients. Each client renders differently, and this can affect how your message appears and could affect your email engagement.

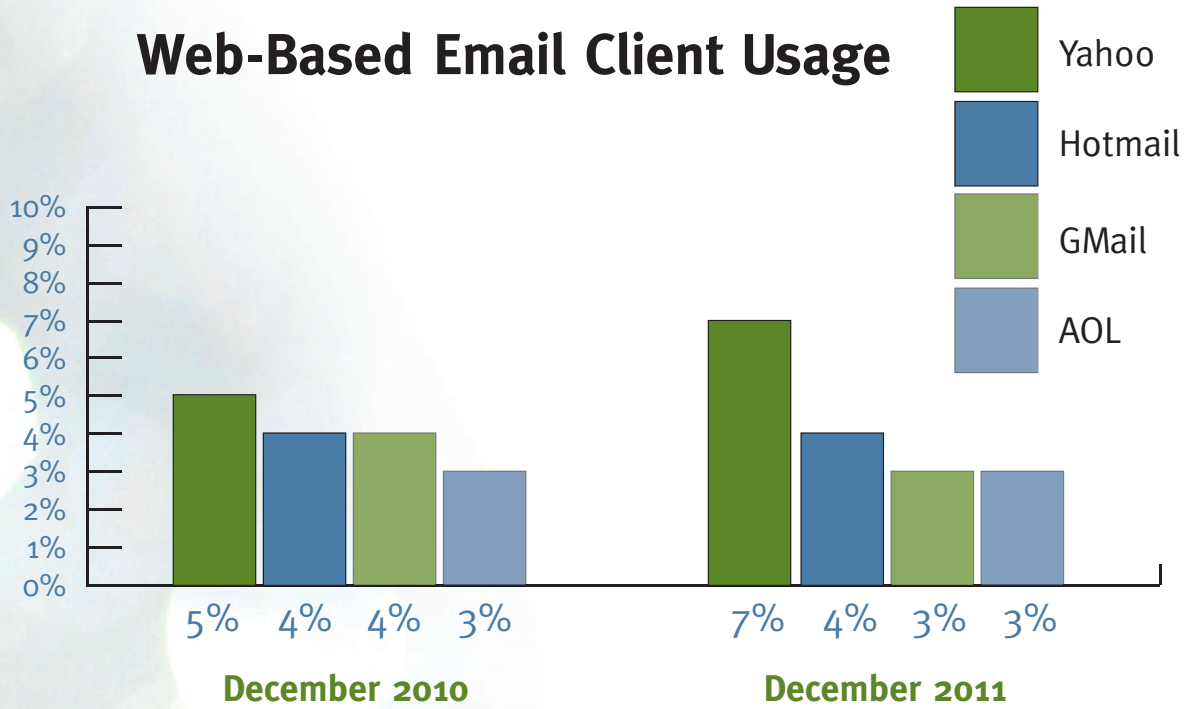
Desktop Email Client Usage



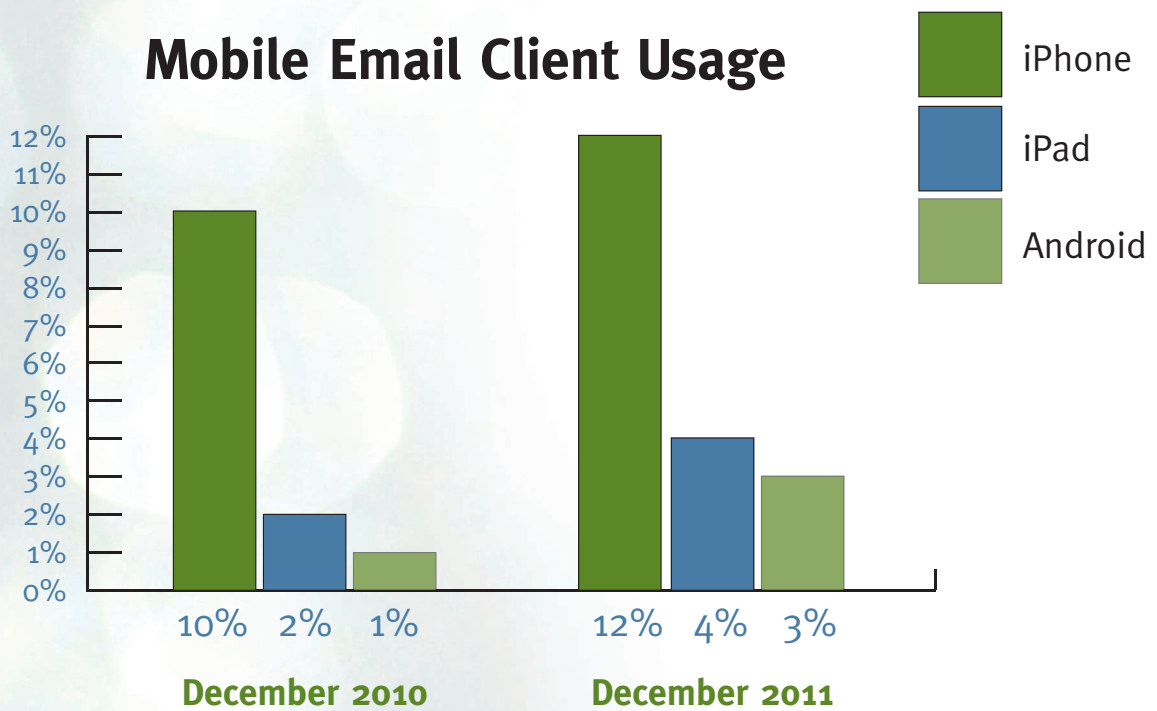
Note:

The percentages are based on total opens across all types of email clients. The results show that all desktop clients, with the exception of Outlook 2010, experienced a decline from 2010 to 2011.

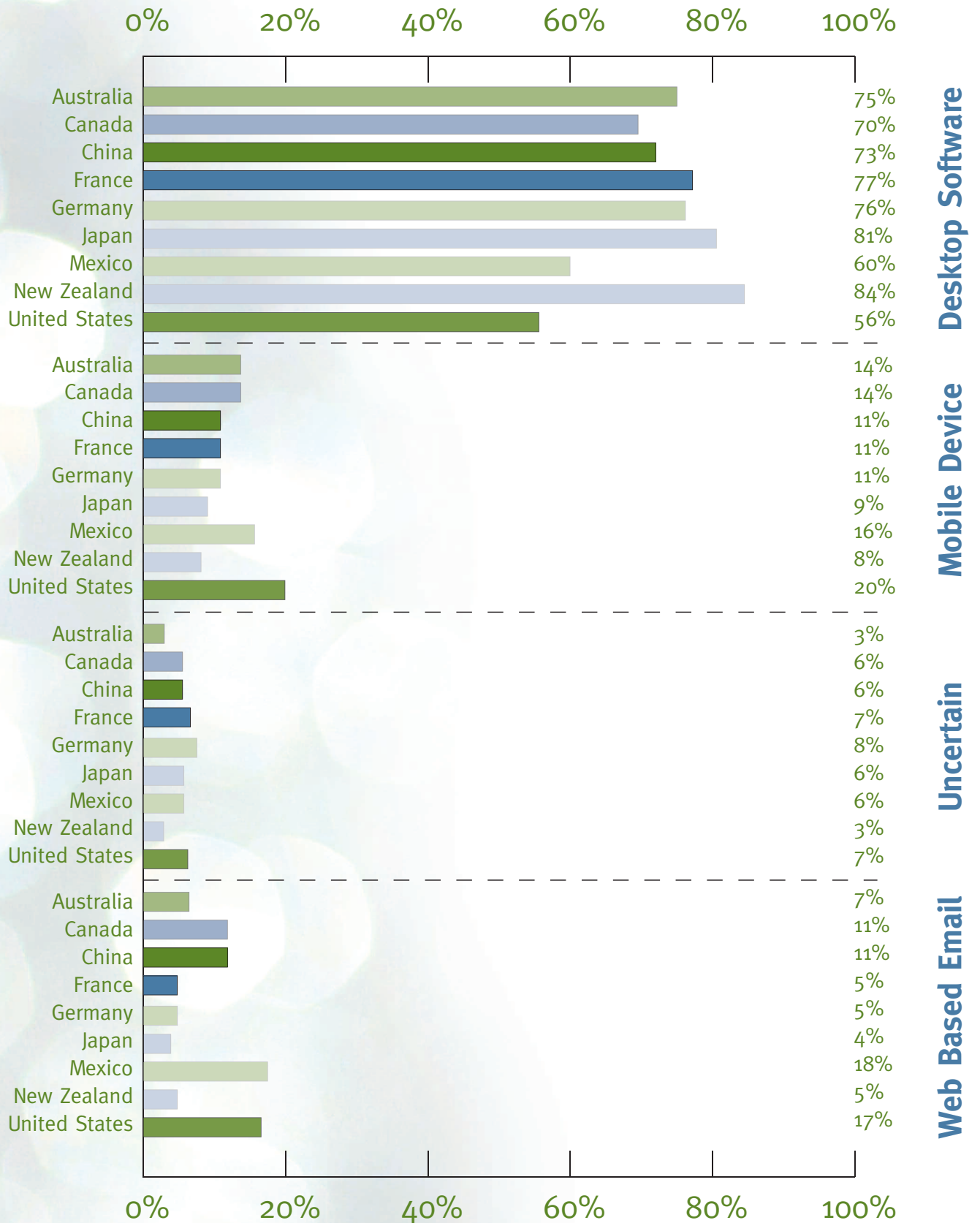
Web-Based Email Client Usage

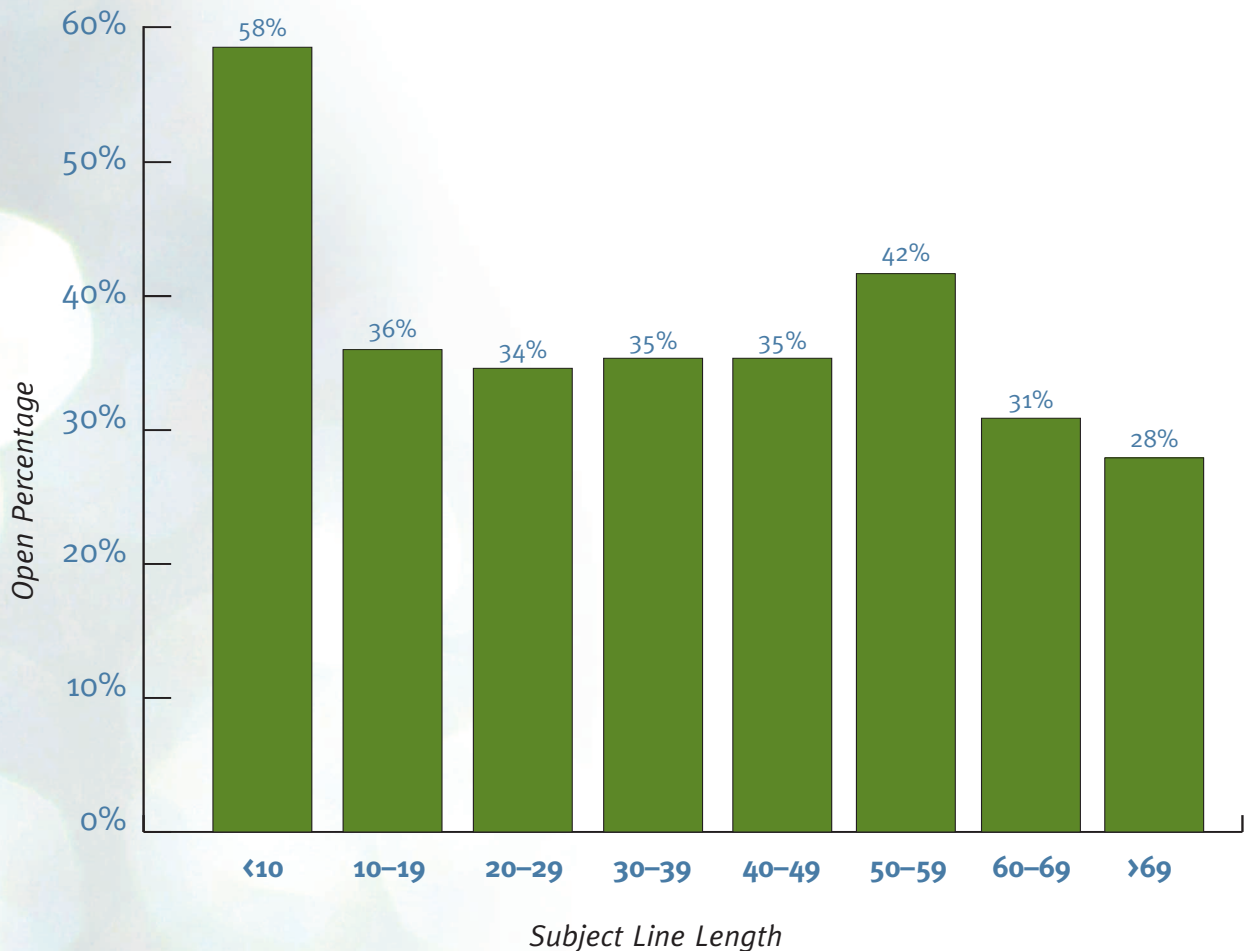


Mobile Email Client Usage



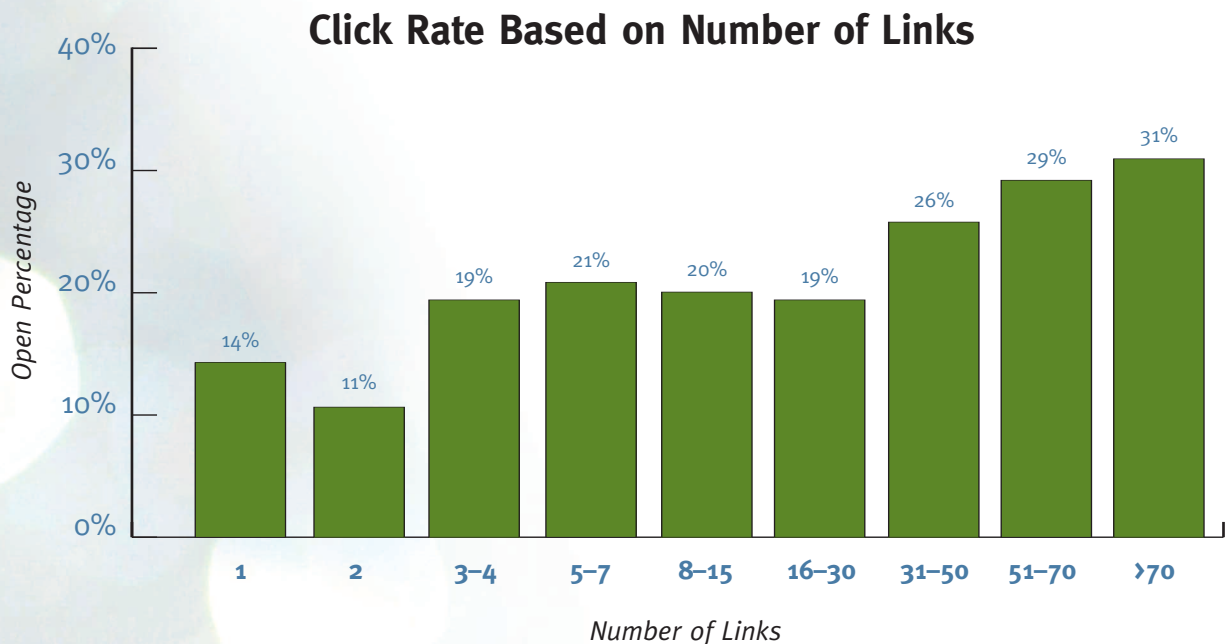
Email Client Usage by Country of the Recipient



*Results by Length of Subject Line***Open Rate Based on Subject Line Length****Notes:**

There is never a second chance to make a first impression. An email's subject line is one of the first things subscribers see to determine if the email is worth opening and they usually make that decision in less than three seconds. If your subject line is too long (more than 50 characters on a PC or more than 30 characters on mobile) it will be truncated and could deliver a different meaning than you intended. In most emails, shorter subject lines resulted in higher open rates. In the end, take time to consider your subject line and be mindful of the length. The subject line is also great for ongoing A/B testing to determine what works best for your audience.

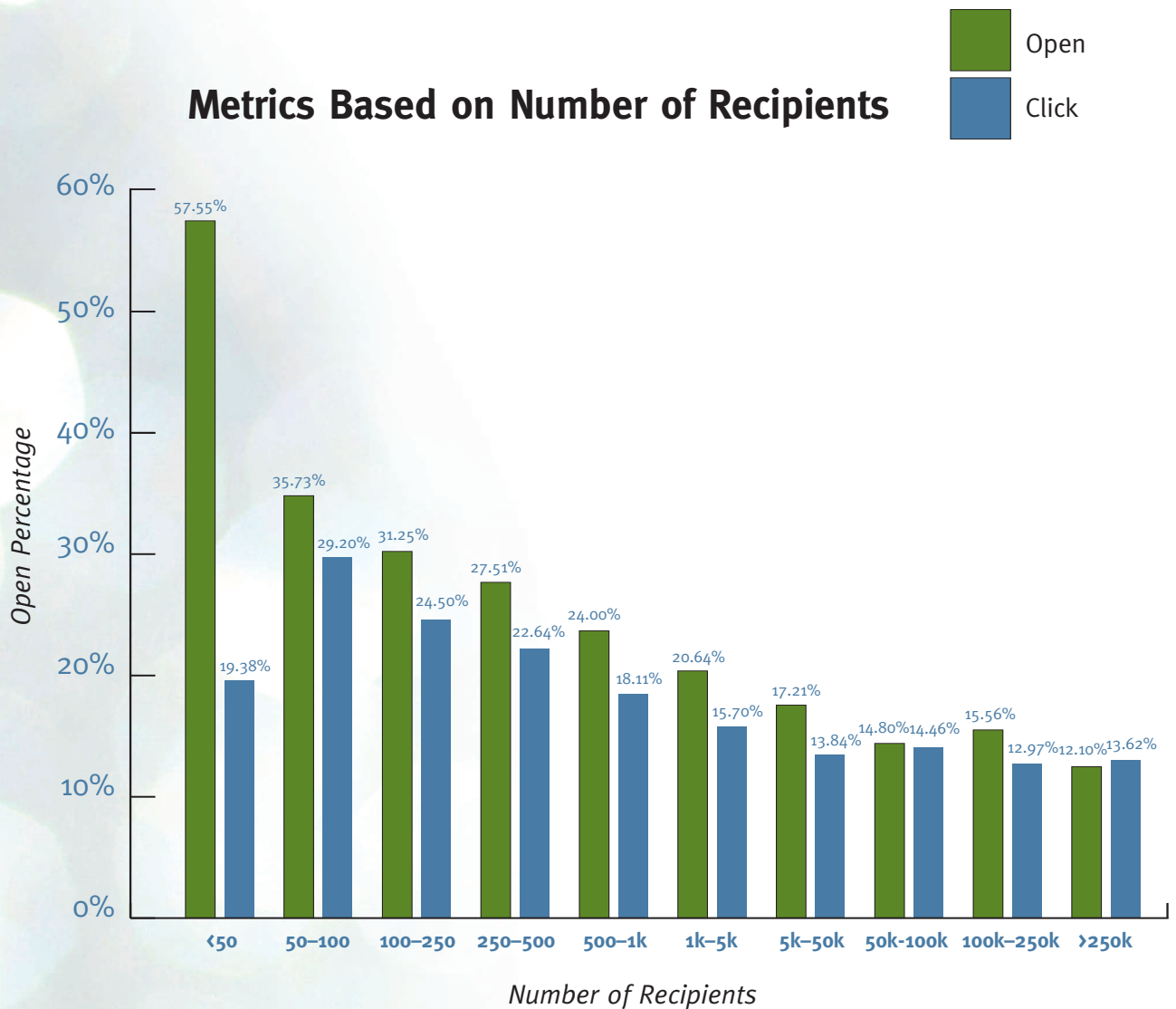
Results by Number of Links



Notes:

As found in the 2011 Benchmark Report, the more links in an email, the higher the click-thru rate. Providing readers with multiple opportunities to click to reach the same location is good. However, providing readers with too many different links (such as a join now, register now, download program, etc.) will distract them from the main call to action. Keep the message simple and straightforward, while offering a way readers can click-thru in multiple areas. Testing the placement of links is a great way to gain insight into how your readers read your email.

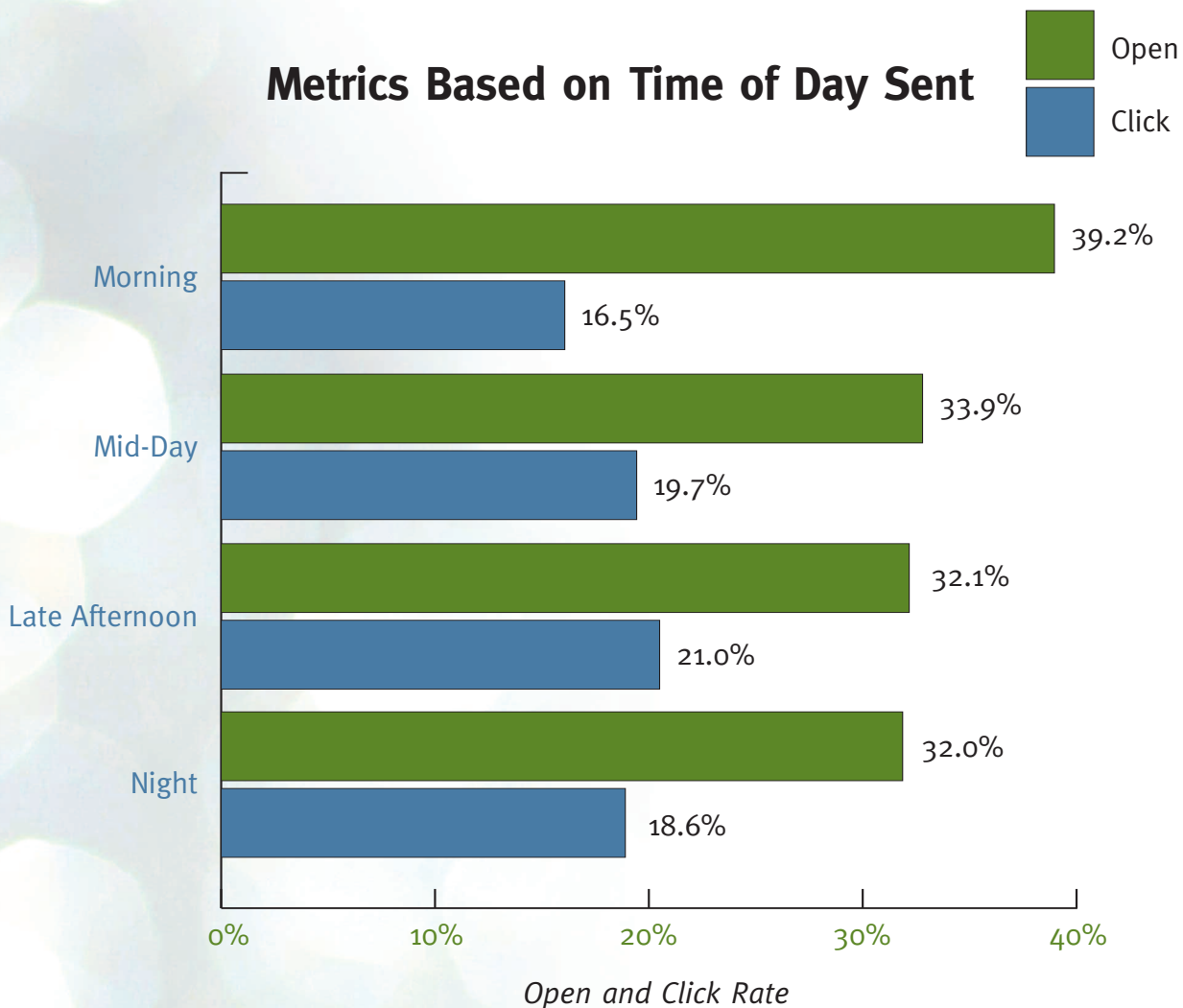
Results by Number of Recipients



Notes:

Deliverability was omitted from the results, as there was no change among the categories. However, the results show that email engagement decreases as the list size increases. For lists that were under 500 recipients, open and click rates were the highest because the targeting and relevancy are also at their highest. Relevant content is key to improving conversions and keeping subscribers happy. The number one reason members unsubscribe is that they receive too many emails that are not valuable. Segment your list based on data you know, demographics, transactional or behavioral data, and then target your message accordingly.

Results by Time of Day Sent

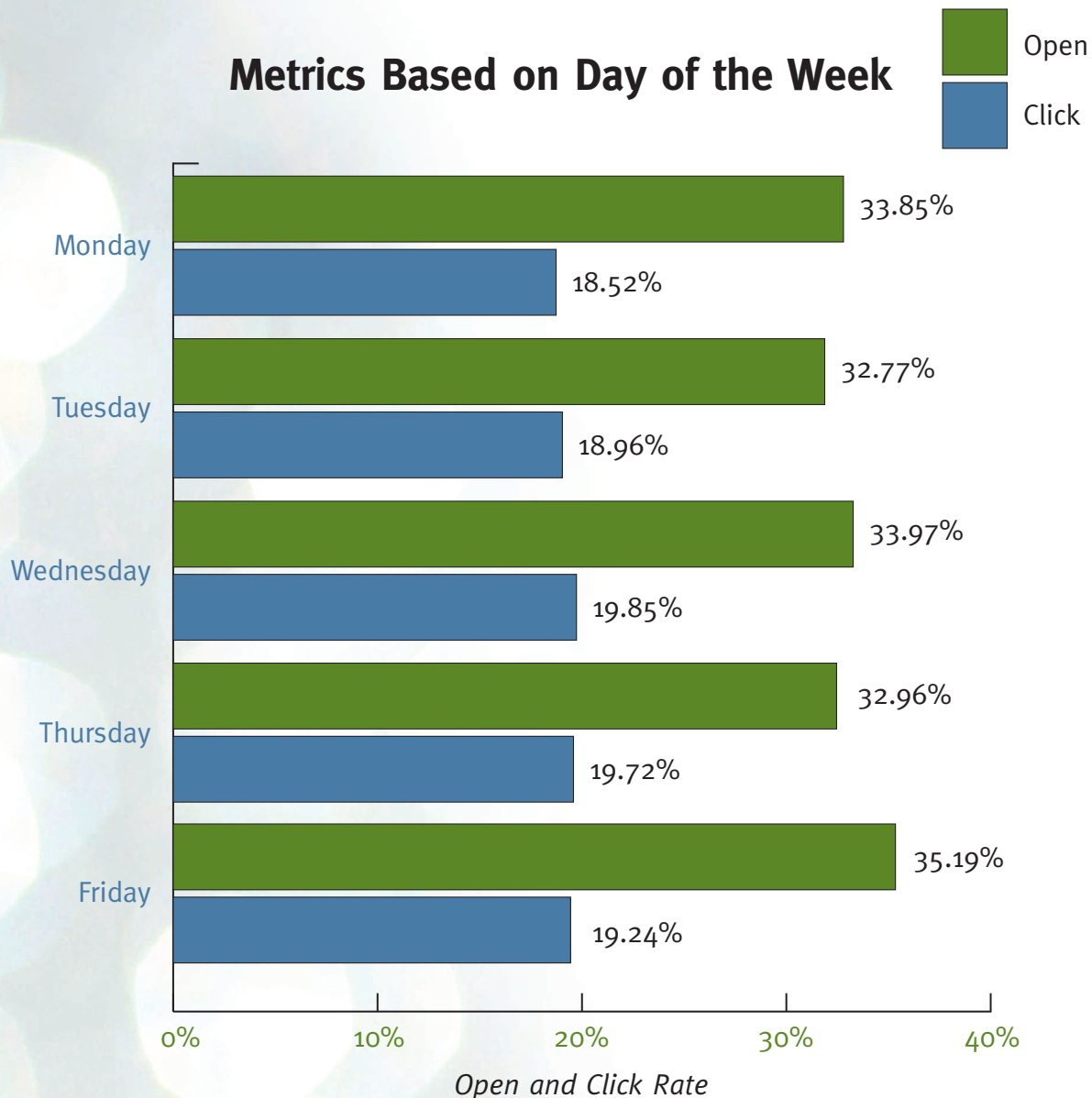


Notes:

Emails sent in the morning hours resulted in a slightly higher average open rate. This is a great time to send newsletters and other quick reads as individuals prepare for their day. The late afternoon, once again this year, saw higher click rates. Relevancy is a combination of creating the right content reaching the right person at the right time. Analyze when your subscribers are most active and then customize the send time to achieve optimal results.

Results by Day of Week Sent

One of the most common questions asked by email marketers is, “when is the best day to send my email?” This study analyzes the mailing results by day of the week, Monday–Friday.

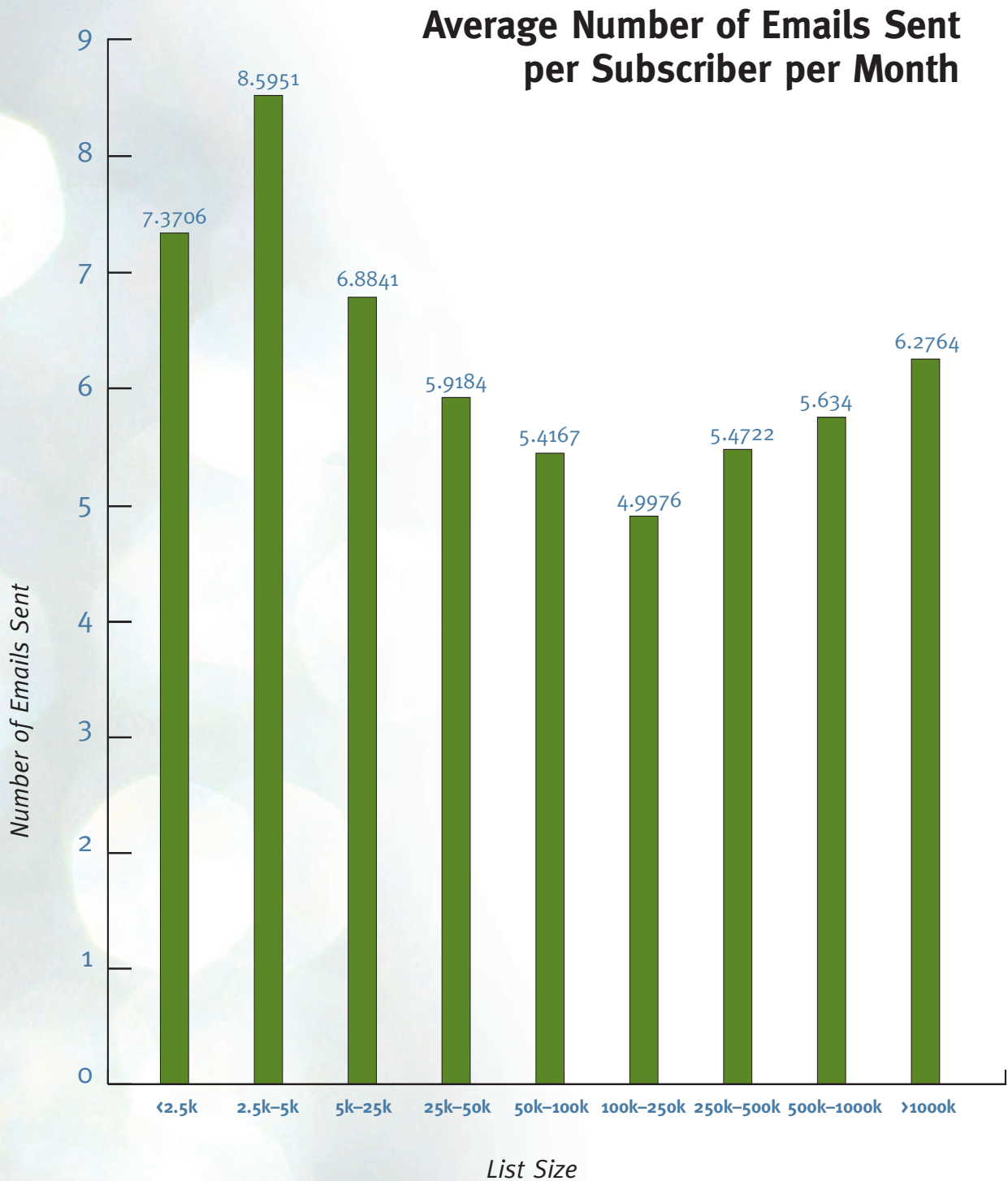


Notes:

As with last year, email delivery rates did not change based on the day of the week sent. The results also show that there is very little change in open or click rate based on the day of the week. Based on the results of this study and others in this report, it can be concluded that factors such as the relevancy of the content and the targeting of the email have a greater impact on results than the day of the week.

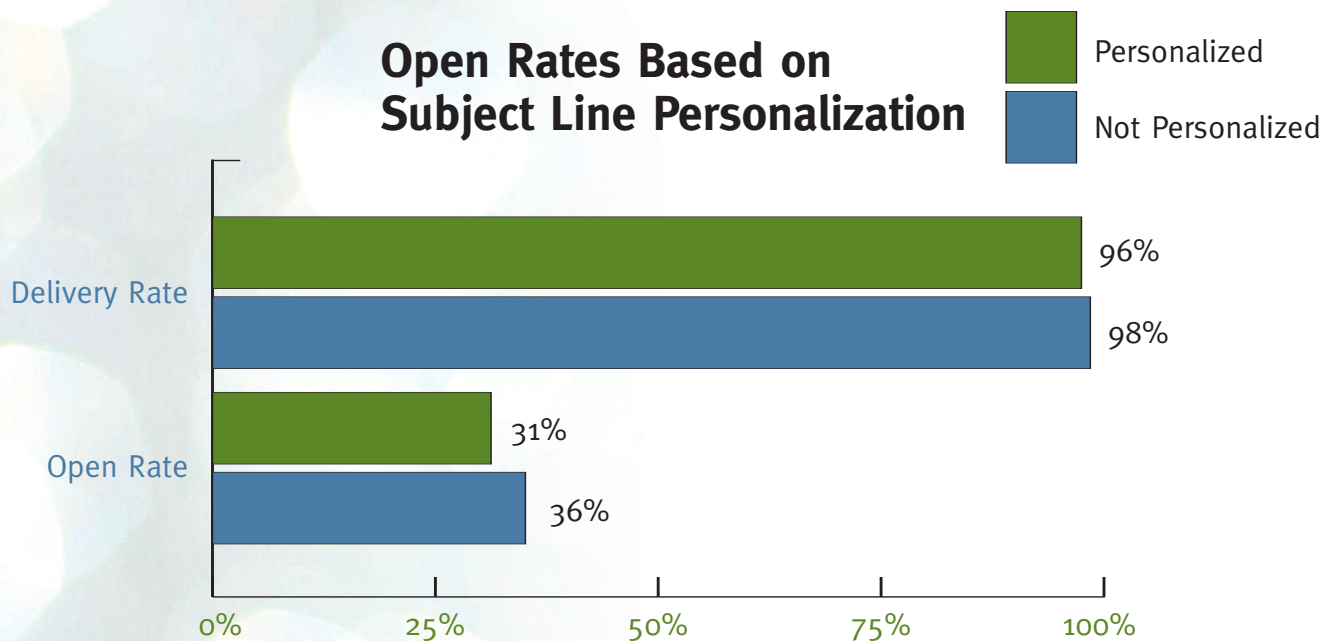
Average Number of Emails Sent by List Size

This study analyzes the average number of emails sent per month by the total number of subscribers. This can be a good tool to compare the number of emails your association sends to those with a similar number of email subscribers.



Notes:

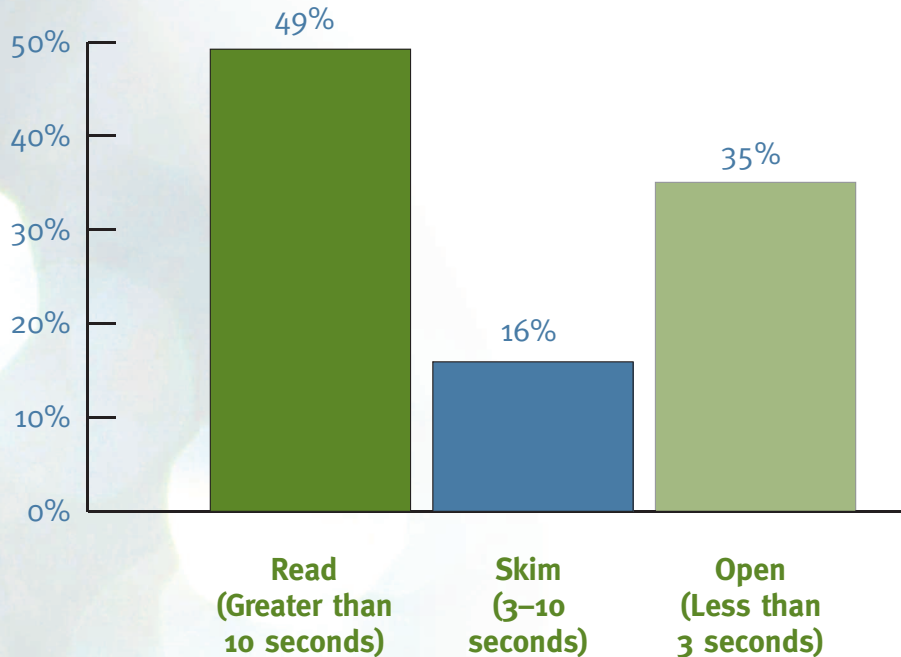
In addition to what day or time is better, we are often asked how many emails is too many. This is a tough question to answer due to the variables that come into play (type and relevancy of content, layout, purpose.) The smaller the list size, the more emails are being sent per month per subscriber. Associations with medium-sized lists send less per subscriber than the small or larger groups. Taking the time to segment your audience to deliver highly relevant content will help decrease the number of emails that are sent over the month to each subscriber. If you deliver a weekly newsletter, consider targeting stories within the newsletter for each audience. This will not cut back on the number of emails you send to the subscriber, but will make sure the ones you do send are more relevant, leading to higher engagement.

Effects of Personalizing the Subject Line**Notes:**

Personalizing the subject line resulted in lower open and delivery rates. This could be attributed to reasons such as being considered a non-trustworthy tactic or incorrect profile data being maintained. Instead of utilizing personalization in the subject line, try including it in the body of the email. Use A/B split testing on the subject line to determine the types of subject lines that are most effective with your audience.

Open Duration Results

Average Open Duration



Notes:

Open duration is measured to determine if the recipient really read the email or if they opened and quickly closed it. At Informz, we separate the open duration into three levels:

Open – the recipient looked at the email for less than 3 seconds

Skim – 3–10 seconds

Read – greater than 10 seconds.

This report shows that of the emails studied 49% of email opens were reads, 35% skims and 16% opens.

Understanding if a subscriber opened and clicked an email provides us with basic engagement results. Digging a little deeper to see if the subscriber spent time reading the message is key to understanding how relevant your content was. Relevancy is the most important factor in deciding if a reader is going to keep or delete the email. Relevancy applies to more than just text: utilize tactics such as video to entice readers to open, read, and click to view the video. Using new and innovative messaging techniques will help you see more readers in the “read” group than in the “open” group.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide industry-specific metrics to association email marketers, enabling them to have a better understanding as to:

- what metrics to analyze when reviewing email marketing programs
- what goals to set based on similar organizations
- how their email marketing program is performing

It is important to remember that the results from this study should only provide a general baseline to compare your current statistics. When considering analysis of your own email marketing program it is best to use these results in combination with your organization's past email marketing campaign results, taking into consideration your specific audience and their needs.

ABOUT INFORMZ

Since 1997, Informz has been dedicated to serving the association and nonprofit industries by offering powerful online marketing tools built to meet the unique challenges faced by these organizations.

Email is a Science

Web-based technologies from Informz enable personalized, highly targeted communications coupled with real-time reporting features designed to reach the inbox and drive results. Sending the right message to the right people at the right time is achieved through email relevancy and your organization's ability to leverage its database. Your successful marketing and communications depends on reaching the inbox and engaging subscribers. Simply stated, targeted email communications improve your response rates, and better response rates increase your message's impact.

The Informz Difference

In addition to on-demand product support, you deserve one-on-one, up-to-date email marketing guidance relevant to your unique needs, built upon strong relationships and reliable collaboration. In order to maximize your success, your exclusive eMarketing Advisor is always ready to assist throughout the development, publishing, and measurement of your email campaigns. Devoted to your professional success, Informz combines state-of-the-art technology with our trusted eMarketing Advisors to bring you products and services that align with your marketing goals.

Through dynamic targeting, intelligent deliverability, precision reporting, seamless integration, and expert Advisors, Informz truly is "the way to know email marketing."

"Informz has been a great email marketing tool; providing great analytics, great customer service and an easy to use product. Informz is now our core email marketing solution — from emails and newsletter to surveys and alerts; it has become essential in our business."

~Chris Ma, Australian Veterinary Association

