

# 2018 State of Email Analytics

The email metrics brands measure and the impact of third-party analytics on performance and deliverability



# Brands use analytics to listen to what their subscribers and inbox providers are telling them. Without analytics, brands are deaf to both their cheers of happiness and their shouts of frustration.

In our first-ever State of Email Analytics report, we take a detailed look at how brands track metrics and use analytics, including...

- The use of third-party analytic tools.....05
- Which metrics brands track and plan to start tracking soon.....08
- How brands use open and click data to manage inactivity.....12
- How deliverability tools affect visibility into blocks and blacklistings.....17
- Measuring email return on investment, plus the factors that increase it.....23

Use the results to better understand how your email analytics capabilities stack up against your peers' and where you have email performance visibility gaps. Then, use these findings to argue for better email analytics so you can craft better strategies, improve deliverability, and boost performance and ROI.

All of this is made possible by the nearly 3,000 marketers who generously took our 2018 State of Email Survey and shared their insights with the industry. For a breakdown of the demographics of our respondents, check out [A Snapshot of the Email Professional](#).

Now, let's understand email analytics better!

## State of Email Survey Research Series

Now in its third year, Litmus' State of Email Survey has led to unprecedented insights into all facets of email marketing, including production, design, deliverability, budgeting, salaries, and much more. Improve your email program by learning from thousands of other brands.



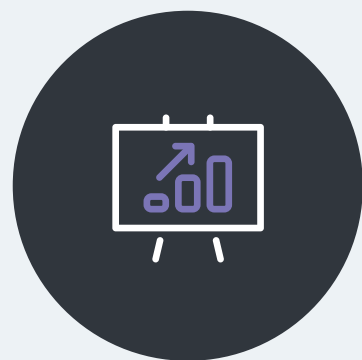
## Key Takeaways & Action Items

Here are our top five tips from the 2018 State of Email Analytics report to help you make smarter use of email metrics and analytics tools:

- 1. Increase your usage of strategic metrics like subscriber lifetime value.** That metric, along with subscriber value and email marketing return on investment, topped the list of the metrics that the most brands are planning to start tracking soon. See which metrics are most urgently sought on [page 10](#).
- 2. Gain metrics you can't get from your email service provider.** Brands get lots of great performance data from their ESPs, but they can't get every metric they might want. Learn why marketers turn to Google Analytics or another third-party analytics tool on [page 11](#).
- 3. Use your open and click data to power inactivity-based triggered emails.** While most brands track opens, clicks, and conversions, only about half use that data to trigger reengagement and win-back campaigns. Learn more about these highly effective emails on [page 12](#).
- 4. Determine if you might have an undiagnosed deliverability problem.** The more advanced your spam testing and deliverability monitoring tools are, the more likely you will realize you've been blocked or blacklisted. Learn why ignorance isn't bliss on [page 21](#).
- 5. Learn which behaviors and tools hurt or improve email marketing ROI.** How do permission practices, A/B testing, email team sizes, email frequency, regulations, and other factors affect email's return on investment? Discover the answers to those questions and more on [page 25](#).

### Get Better Insights with Litmus Email Analytics

Accelerate campaign performance with advanced data insights you won't get from your ESP. Fine-tune testing efforts, and utilize engagement and geographic data to inform design, segmentation, and copywriting decisions.



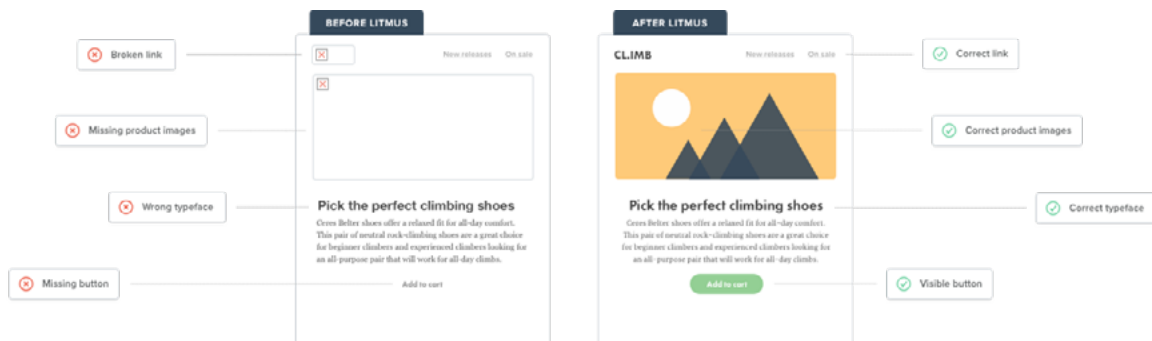


## Who Is Litmus?

Litmus is passionate about email marketing research, because our mission is to help brands get access to the knowledge and tools they need to send better email. Through our industry-leading [blog](#), [Litmus Live conferences](#), [ebooks](#), [webinars](#), [Email Design Podcast](#), [Community](#), and more, we discuss best practices and explore trends to help your team stay on the forefront of the industry.

We are also passionate about software that makes creating high-performing email easy. Marketers use Litmus alongside their existing email service providers to ensure a consistently great brand experience for every subscriber, work more efficiently, accelerate campaign performance, reduce errors, and stay out of the spam folder.

Email marketing is complex. However, through hands-on advice and software you can trust, we enable your team to do their best work—creating innovative, on-brand campaigns that engage and delight audiences. With the [Litmus Email Creative Platform](#), you'll have the tools and insights you need to provide your customers with an incredible email experience—and get the best results in return.



## Keep Up with the Latest in Email

Join over 300,000 email marketing pros who rely on Litmus for expert advice and analysis. Sign up for our emails to get the Litmus newsletter, notifications of new reports and leadership briefs, announcements of upcoming webinars and events, and more.





## Third-Party Analytics

While email service providers supply good data on the performance of your emails, it's not the whole picture. That's why a growing majority of brands use third-party analytics to supplement their ESPs' dashboards.

Among the 63% of brands that have embraced third-party email analytics, Google Analytics is almost a given, with 70% of them using the suite. Google Analytics is a key tool for connecting email activity to conversions on the web.

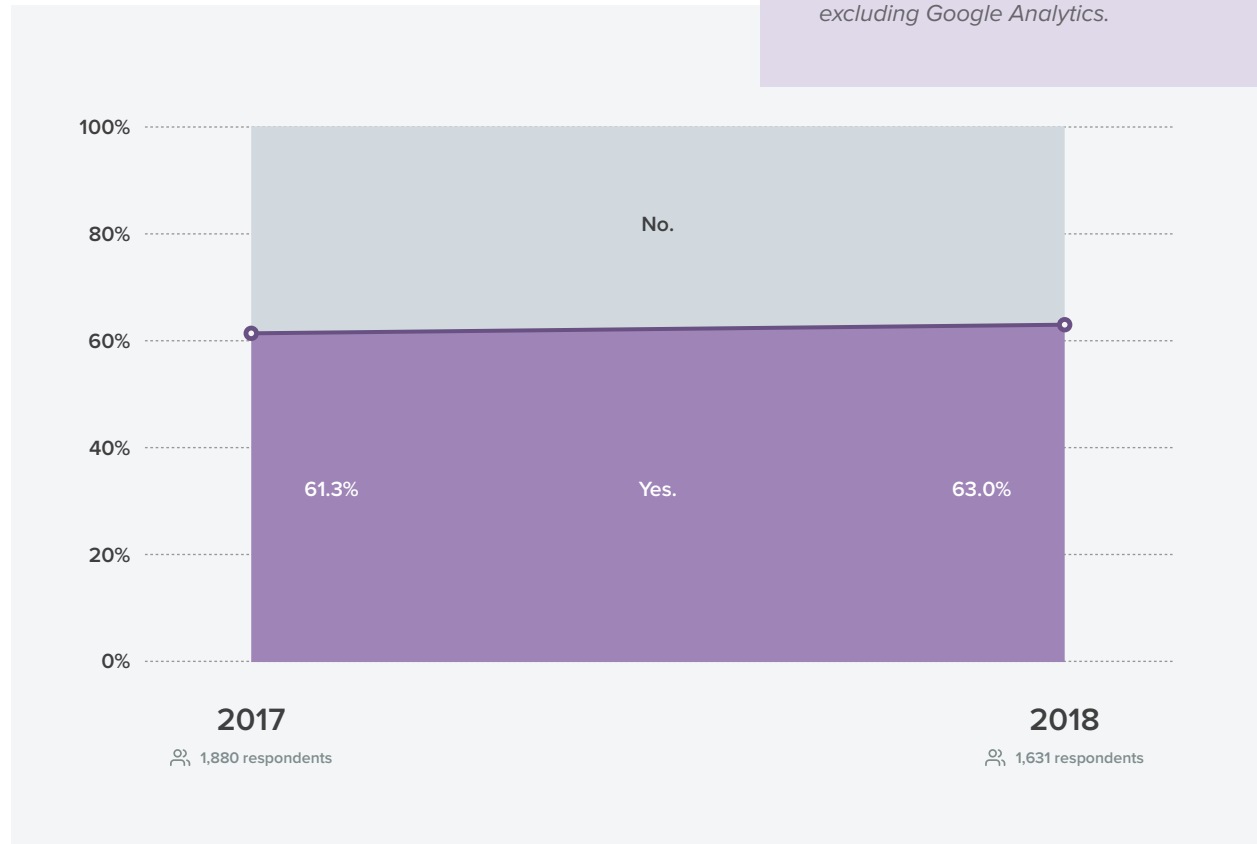
Brands that describe their email programs as successful are 19% more likely than less-successful ones to use third-party analytics. The advantage is even stronger if we exclude Google Analytics, with successful email programs 30% more likely to use third-party analytics.

As we revealed in our [2018 State of Email Service Providers report](#), analytics is just one of many areas where brands rely heavily on third-party tools to supplement what their ESPs provide.

## Majority of Brands Supplement Email Analytics Provided by Their ESPs

Does your company use additional analytics tools to supplement the email metrics and performance dashboards provided by your email service provider?

*Ignoring Google Analytics, which is very popular, 40% of brands use third-party email analytics. Marketers who describe their email marketing program as successful are 30% more likely than those at less-successful ones to use third-party email analytics, excluding Google Analytics.*



## Go beyond opens and clicks with Litmus Email Analytics

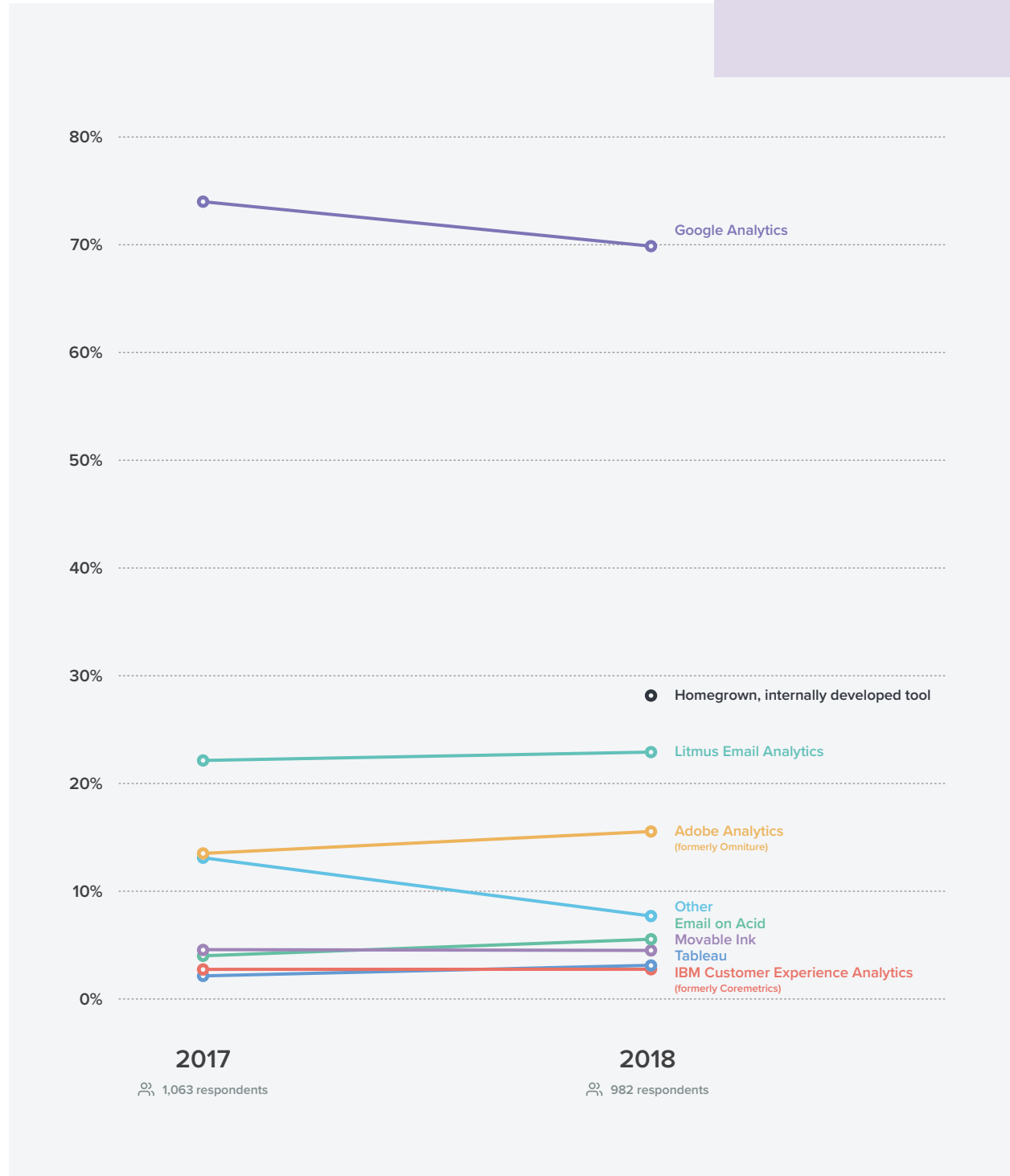
Accelerate campaign performance with advanced data insights you won't get from your ESP. Fine-tune testing efforts, and utilize engagement and geographic data to inform design, segmentation, and copywriting decisions.



## Google Analytics Dominates Third-Party Analytics Used to Supplement ESP Performance Data

Which analytics tool(s) does your company use? Select all that apply. Those with at least 1% market share shown.

*Brands that use third-party analytics to supplement their ESPs' dashboards use 1.6 additional analytics tools on average.*





## Email Performance Visibility

Brands have near-universal visibility into email opens and clicks, and excellent visibility into bounces. However, after that, visibility diminishes quickly.

Nearly a quarter of brands can't track email interactions down to conversions. Fewer than half can measure their email marketing return on investment. And less than 28% of brands can measure subscriber lifetime value, which many consider to be the king of North Star metrics.

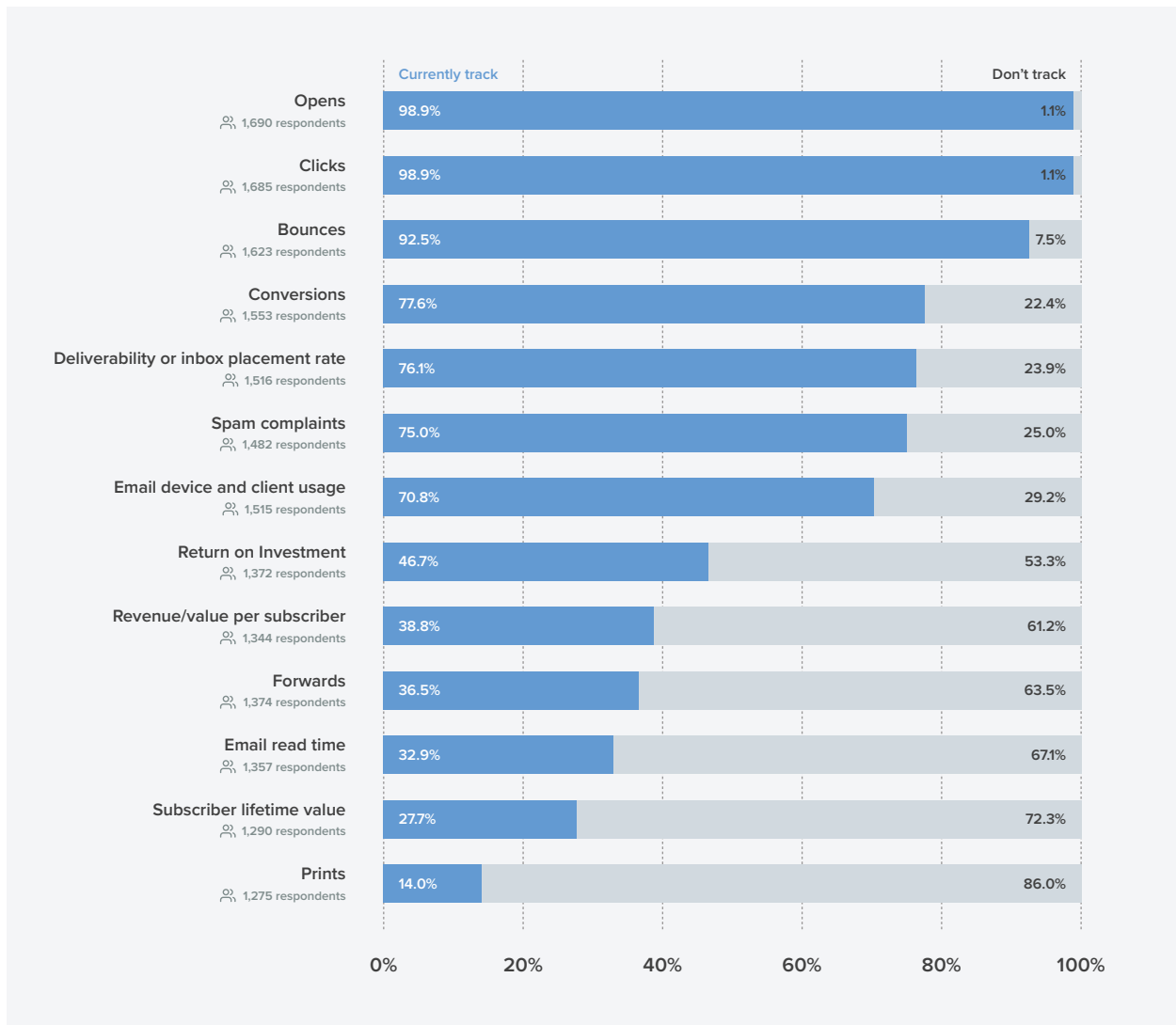
The good news is that brands clearly recognize the weaknesses in their analytics. The metrics that they're the most excited to start tracking are among the most strategic ones: subscriber lifetime value, value per subscriber, and ROI.

Third-party analytics will be key in helping them measure those three metrics, according to our research. For instance, users of third-party analytics are more than 50% more likely than non-users to be able to measure subscriber value.



## Visibility into Email Metrics Falls Off Significantly After Opens, Clicks, and Bounces

Using any of the analytics tools available to you, which email metrics do you currently track?

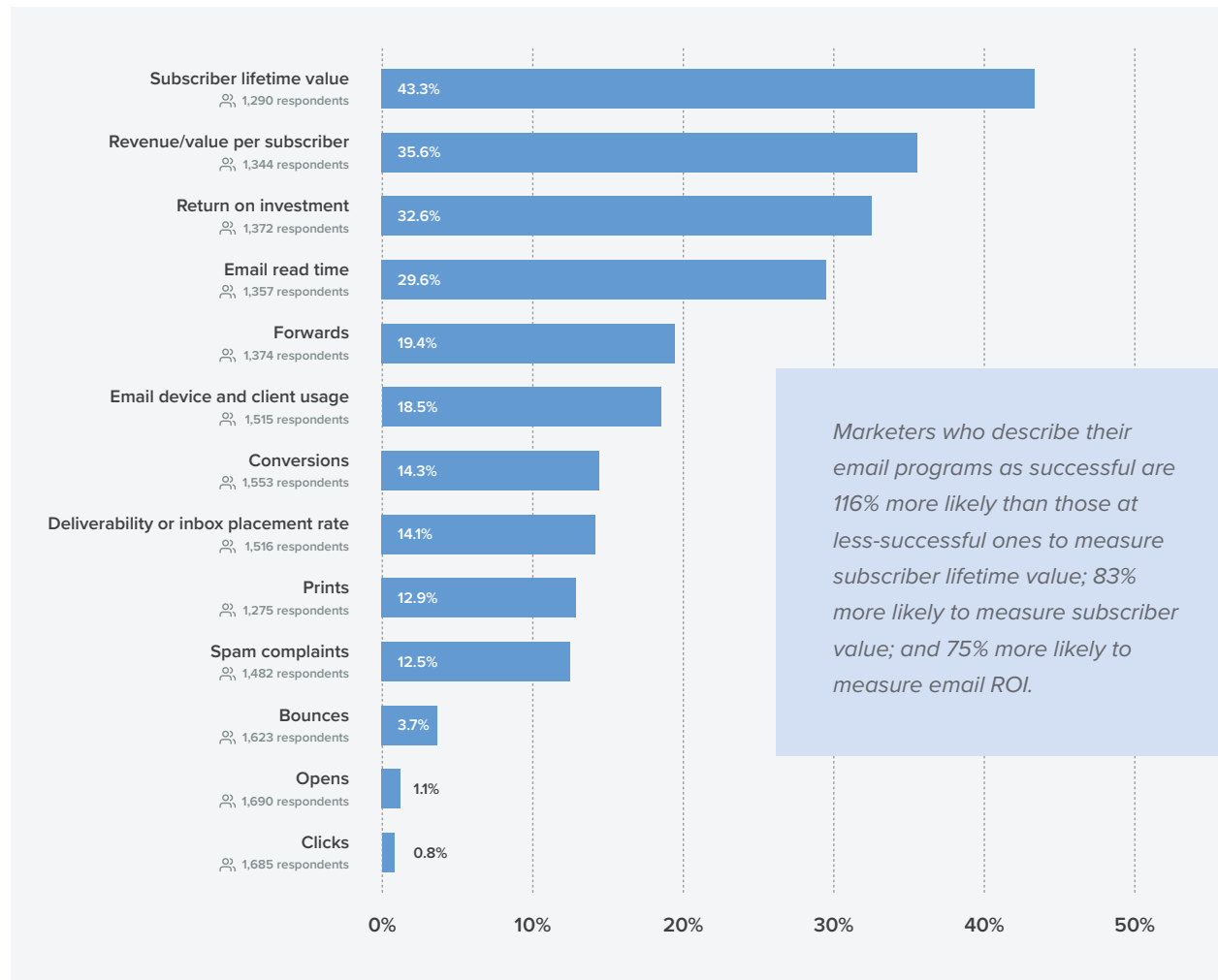


### Action Items

- Read [Holistic Email Metrics Matrix: Are you seeing the whole picture?](#)
- Discover [The 5 Metrics You Should Add to Your Email Reporting.](#)
- Be able to answer the question: [What Is an Email Conversion?](#)
- Learn [The Difference Between a Hard and Soft Bounce.](#)
- Understand [Why Measuring Subject Line Success by Opens Is All Wrong.](#)

## Lifetime Value and ROI Top the List of Email Metrics Brands Plan to Start Tracking

Which email metrics do you plan to start tracking in the next 12 months?



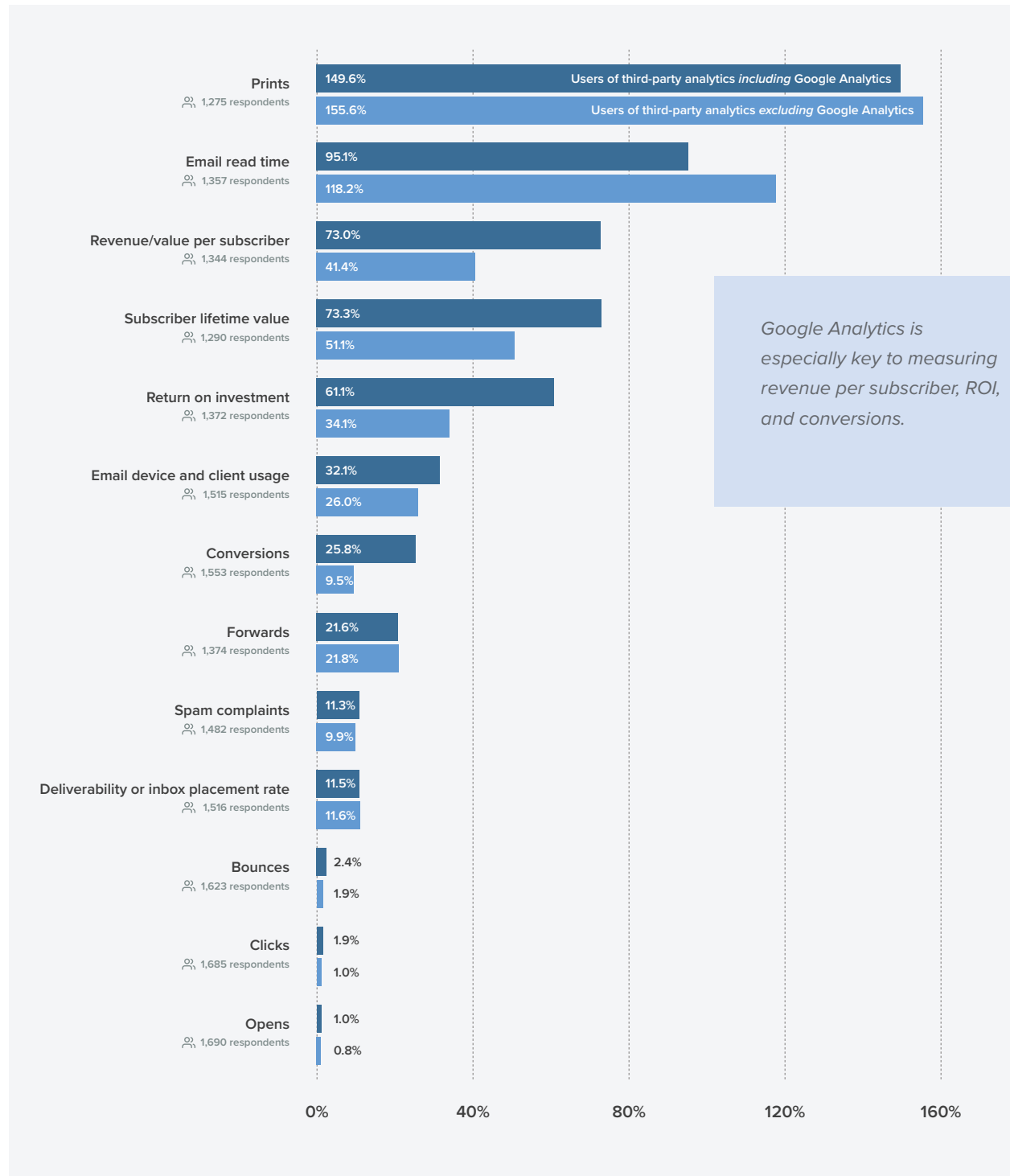
### Go Beyond Opens and Clicks

Optimize your campaigns with subscriber-level insights to improve segmentation and targeting strategies. Litmus Email Analytics gives you additional insights into email device and client usage, email read time, email forwards and prints, and more.



## Third-Party Analytics Are Vital to Measuring Email Prints, Read Times, and Subscriber Value

How much more likely users of third-party analytics are to track the following metrics compared to non-users.





## Inactivity Management

Nearly every brand tracks opens and clicks, but only a little more than half of them translate that data into inactivity and use it to help manage their subscribers. Because inbox providers factor subscriber engagement into their filtering algorithms, having too many inactive subscribers can cause them to block your messages to some or all of their users. So, we recommend actively managing your inactive subscribers because it leads to better deliverability and, therefore, better results.

In fact, marketers who describe their email programs as successful are 41% more likely than those at less-successful ones to send reengagement campaigns (59% vs. 42%). Successful email programs are also 27% more likely to eventually remove chronically inactive subscribers from their active mailing lists (55% vs. 43%).

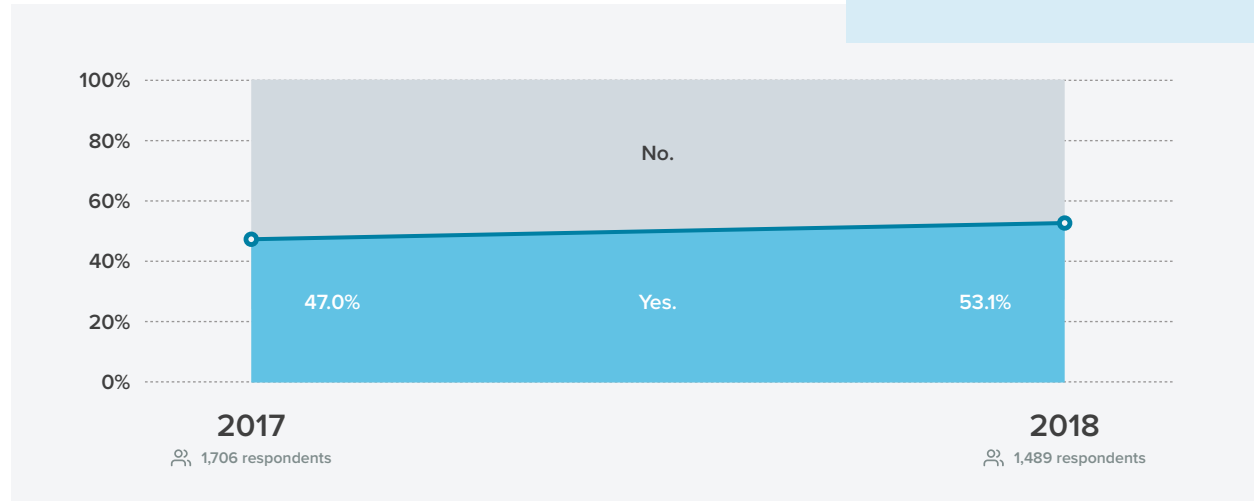
We also highly recommend managing inactive customers. While only 78% of brands track conversions, nearly half of them use that data to trigger win-back campaigns to customers or donors who haven't converted recently to try to get them to convert again. This is a very effective tactic, with successful email programs 58% more likely than less-successful ones to send win-back campaigns (58% vs. 36%).

With both inactive subscribers and inactive customers, brands that use third-party analytics are significantly more likely than those that don't use them to take corrective action. These are cases where greater visibility into subscriber and customer behavior empowers action.

## Use of Reengagement Campaigns to Reactivate Inactive Subscribers Increased 13% Year over Year

Does your company trigger or send reengagement campaigns to inactive subscribers?

*Brands that use third-party analytics are 50% more likely than brands that don't to send reengagement campaigns (61% vs. 40%).*

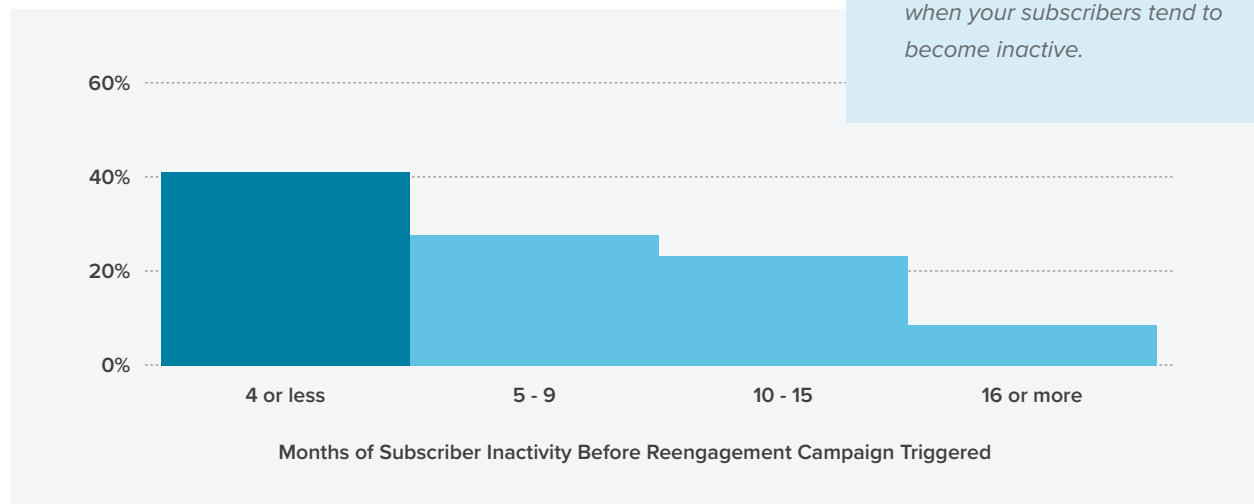


## 41% of Reengagement Campaigns Triggered by 4 Months or Less of Subscriber Inactivity

Among users of reengagement campaigns: After how many months of subscriber inactivity does your company send reengagement campaigns?

*The timing of reengagement emails used by marketers that describe their email programs as successful and those at less-successful programs didn't differ significantly. Use a timing that makes sense for your email frequency and when your subscribers tend to become inactive.*

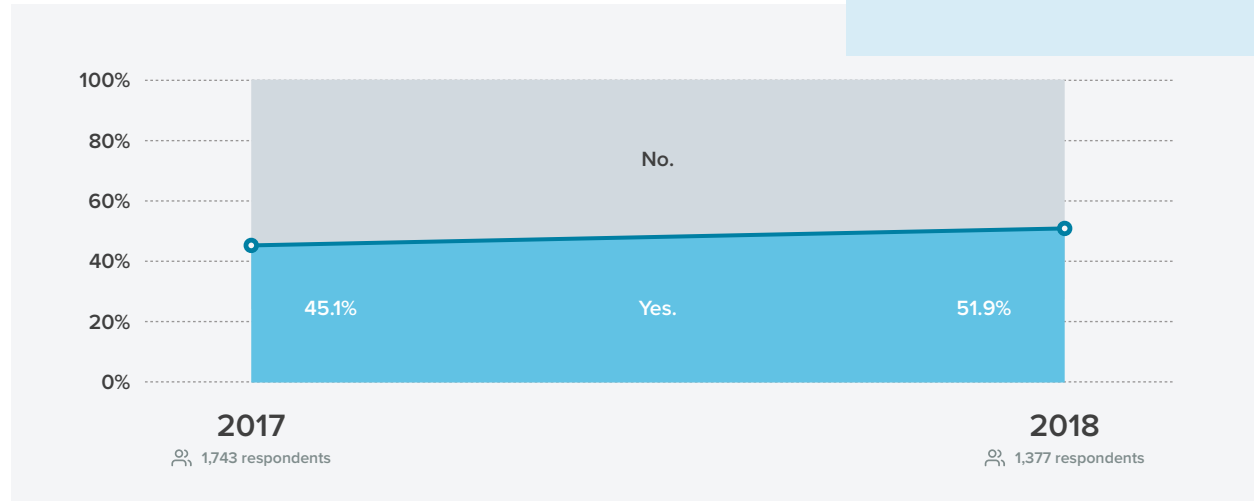
791 respondents



## Majority of Brands Now Remove Chronically Inactive Subscribers

Does your company eventually remove chronically inactive subscribers from its active mailing lists?

*Brands that use third-party analytics are 24% more likely than brands that don't to remove chronically inactive subscribers from their active mailing lists (56% vs. 45%).*

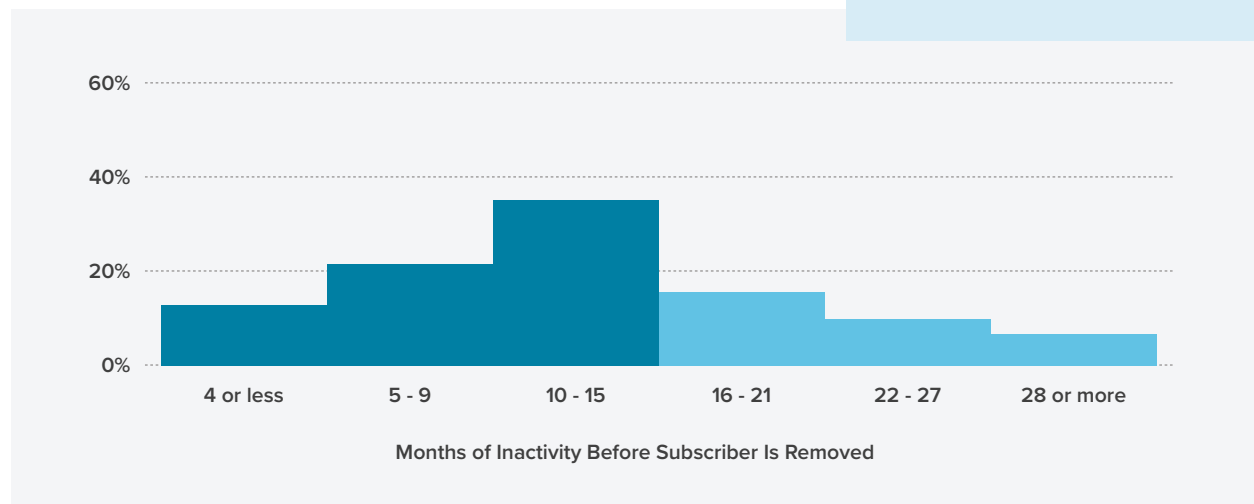


## Majority of Brands Tolerate Subscriber Inactivity for 15 Months or Less

Among brands that remove chronically inactive subscribers:  
How long do you keep chronically inactive subscribers on your active email list before removing or purging them?

*Marketers who describe their email programs as successful are more likely to favor removing subscribers after 5-9 or 16-21 months of inactivity compared to those at less-successful programs.*

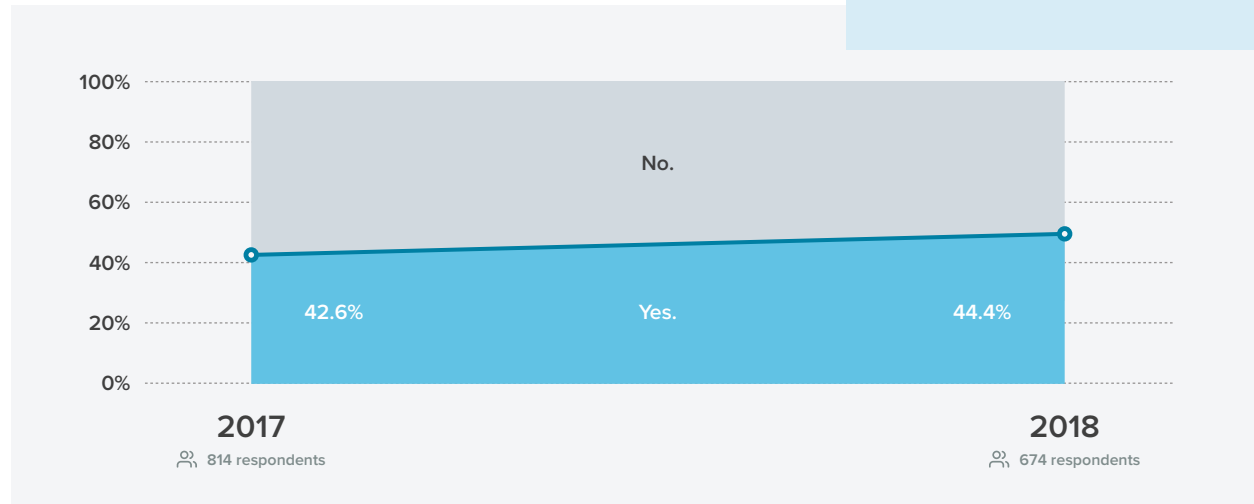
714 respondents



## Adoption of Re-permission Campaigns Slowly Growing

Among brands that remove chronically inactive subscribers:  
Does your company trigger or send re-permission campaigns to chronically inactive subscribers before removing or purging them from its active mailing list?

Among brands that remove chronically inactive subscribers, those that use third-party analytics are 28% more likely than brands that don't to send a re-permission campaign (48% vs. 37%).

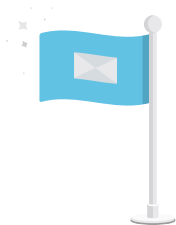
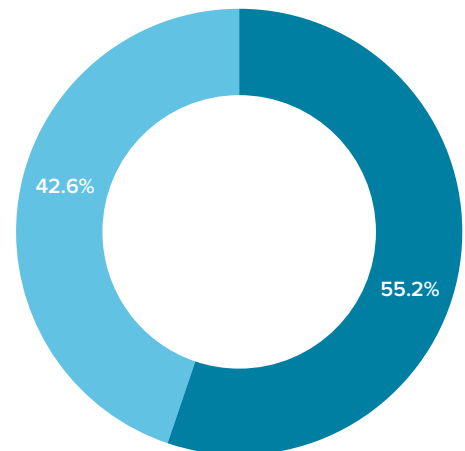


## Most Brands that Try to Re-permission Inactive Subscribers Send Just One Email Rather than a Series

Among brands that send re-permission campaigns: Does your company send a single re-permission email or a series of emails?

299 respondents

- A single re-permission email
- A series of re-permission emails



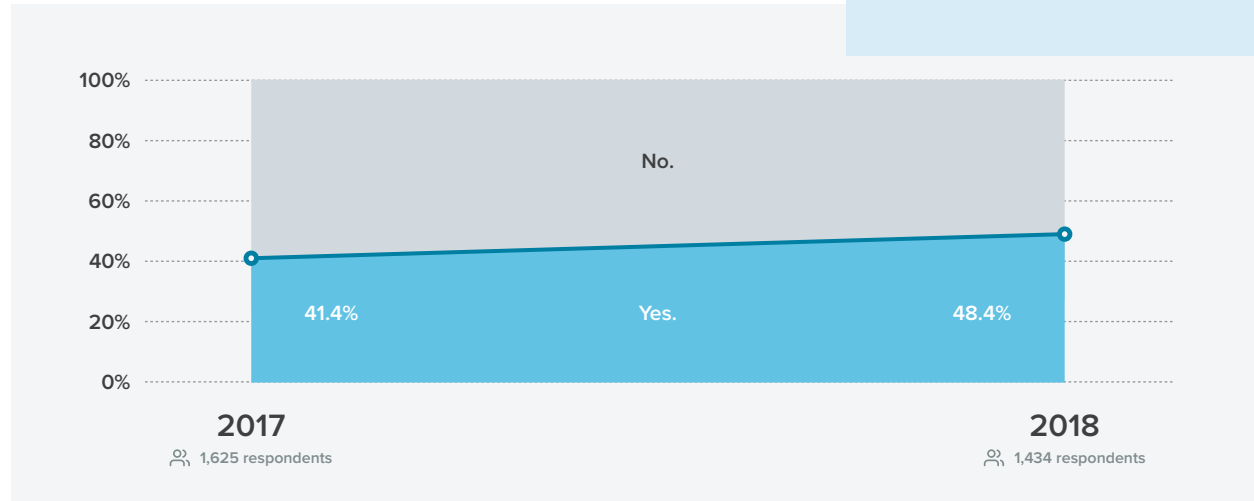
### Action Items

- Learn [How to Manage the 3 Kinds of Inactive Email Subscribers.](#)
- Read about [GDPR Re-permission Campaigns: 6 Tips for Making Them a Success.](#)

## Use of Win-Back Campaigns to Reactivate Inactive Customers Is Growing

Does your company trigger or send win-back campaigns to inactive customers, donors, or users who are subscribers?

*Brands that use third-party analytics are 55% more likely than brands that don't to send win-back campaigns (56% vs. 36%).*

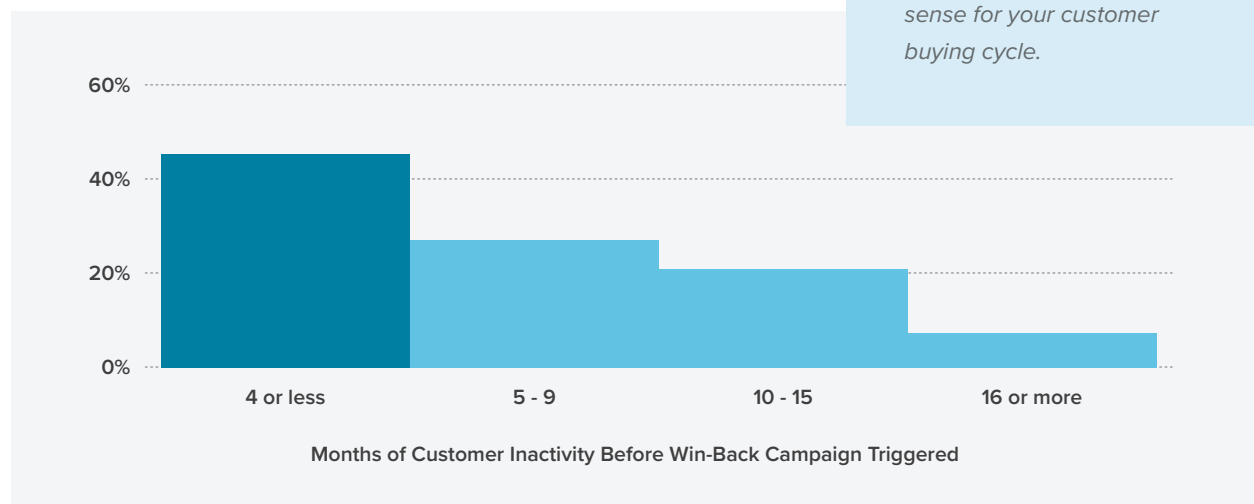


## 45% of Win-Back Campaigns Triggered by 4 Months or Less of Customer Inactivity

Among users of win-back campaigns: After how many months of customer inactivity does your company send win-back campaigns?

*As seen with reengagement emails, the timing of win-back emails used by marketers who describe their email programs as successful and those at less-successful programs didn't differ significantly. Pick a timing that makes the most sense for your customer buying cycle.*

694 respondents







## Deliverability

If you're not watching and paying attention, it's now easy to get your emails blocked or blacklisted and not know it. Spam filter testing tools and deliverability monitoring tools are instrumental in getting this critical visibility.

For example, marketers who use third-party spam filter testing tools are 20% more likely than those who don't to report being blocked in the past year (37% vs. 31%), and 50% more likely to report being blacklisted (22% vs. 15%). And marketers who use third-party deliverability monitoring tools are 53% more likely than those who don't to report being blocked (44% vs. 29%), and 111% more likely to report being blacklisted (28% vs. 13%).

While it might appear that brands using these tools are at higher risk of being blocked or blacklisted, that doesn't explain the huge differences in blocks and blacklistings. It's safe to assume that most of these differences are due to tool users having much better visibility into their deliverability. After all, you can't report a block or blacklisting if you aren't aware of it. More importantly, you can't resolve a block or blacklisting if you aren't aware of it.

Litmus found exactly the same dynamic at work when we examined brands that did and didn't send apology emails for email marketing mistakes in the past year. Brands that weren't sending apologies had much less sophisticated QA processes, which meant that they just weren't aware of the mistakes they were making, not that they weren't making them. It caused us to declare that [A Lack of Email Marketing Mistakes Is a Red Flag](#).

## Vast Majority of Brands Monitor Their Email Deliverability

Does your company monitor its deliverability or inbox placement rate?

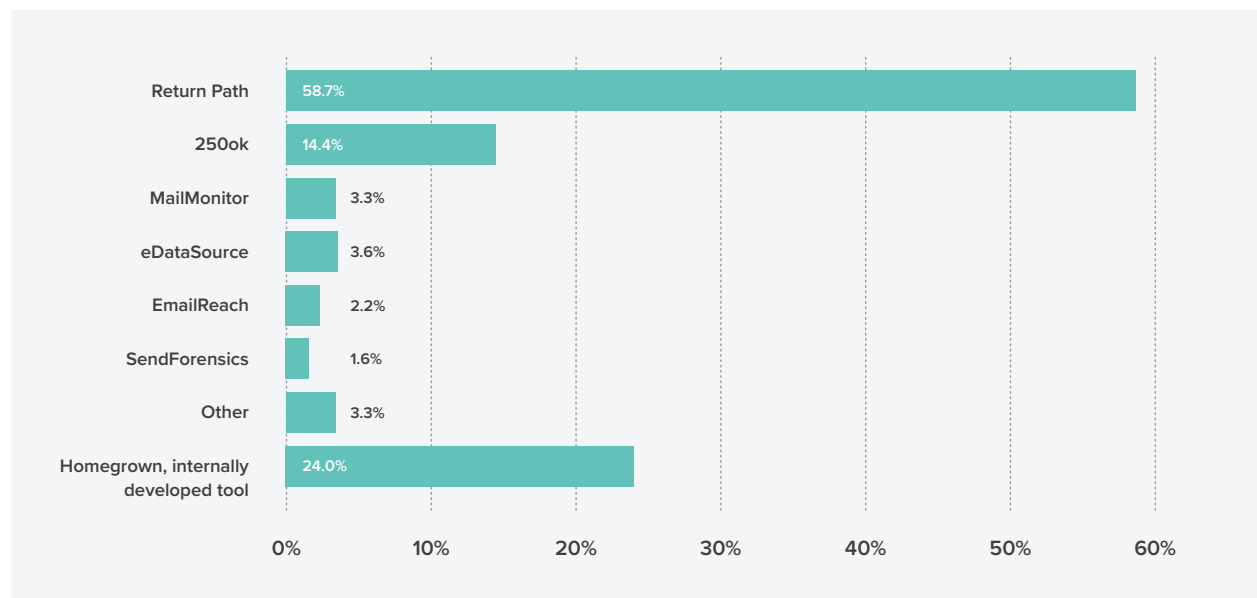
Marketers who describe their email programs as successful are 22% more likely than those at less successful ones to monitor their deliverability or inbox placement (86% vs. 70%).



## Return Path Dominates Deliverability Monitoring Tools Used to Supplement ESPs

What service or tool does your company use to monitor its deliverability or inbox placement rate? Select all that apply. Those with at least 1% market share shown.

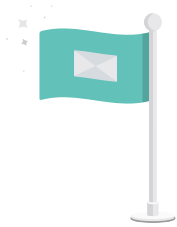
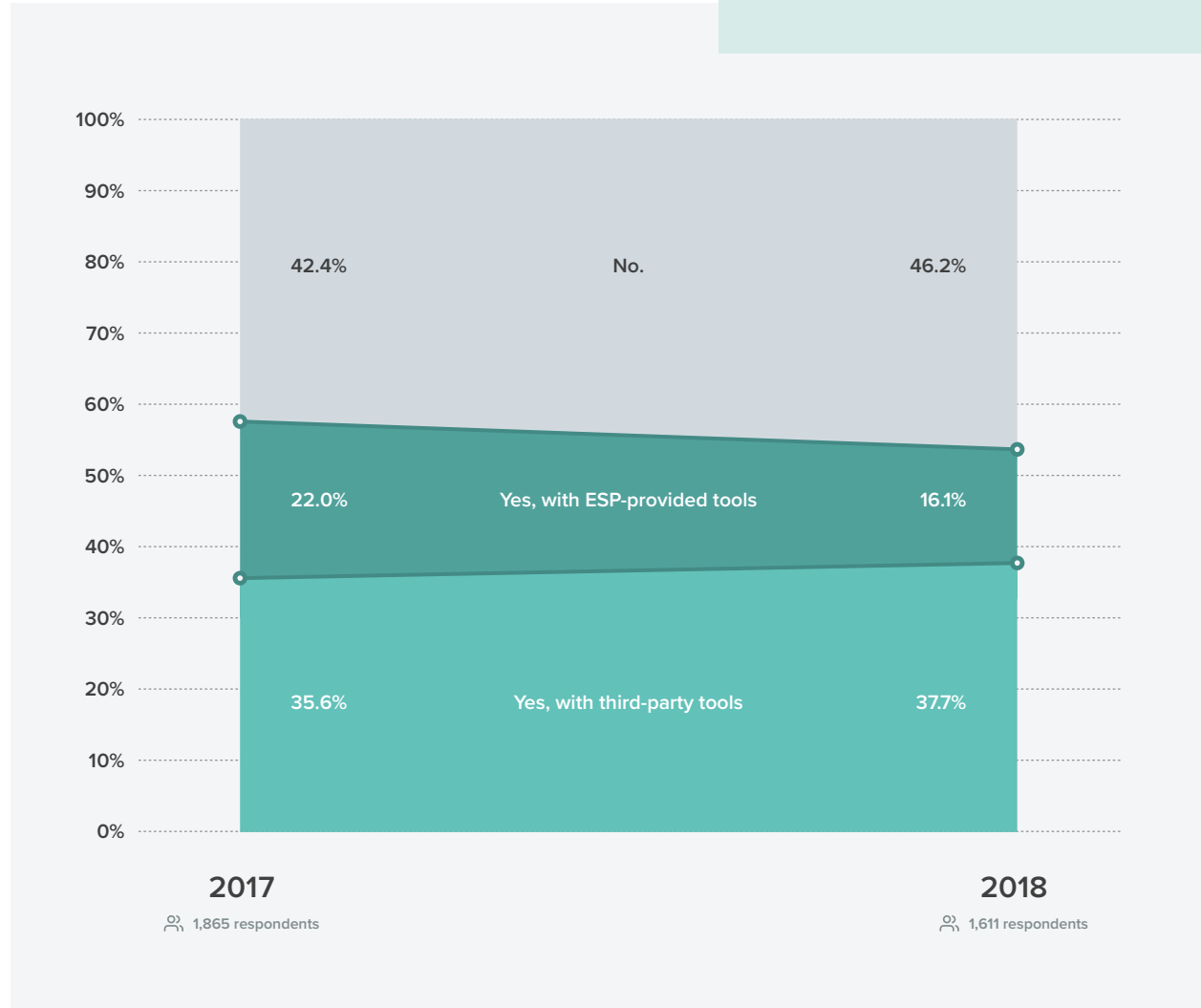
450 respondents



## Small Majority of Brands Uses Spam Filter Testing

Before sending an email, does your company run it through spam filter tests to identify potential deliverability problems?

Marketers who describe their email programs as successful are 23% more likely than those at less-successful ones to use spam filter testing tools (55% vs. 45%).



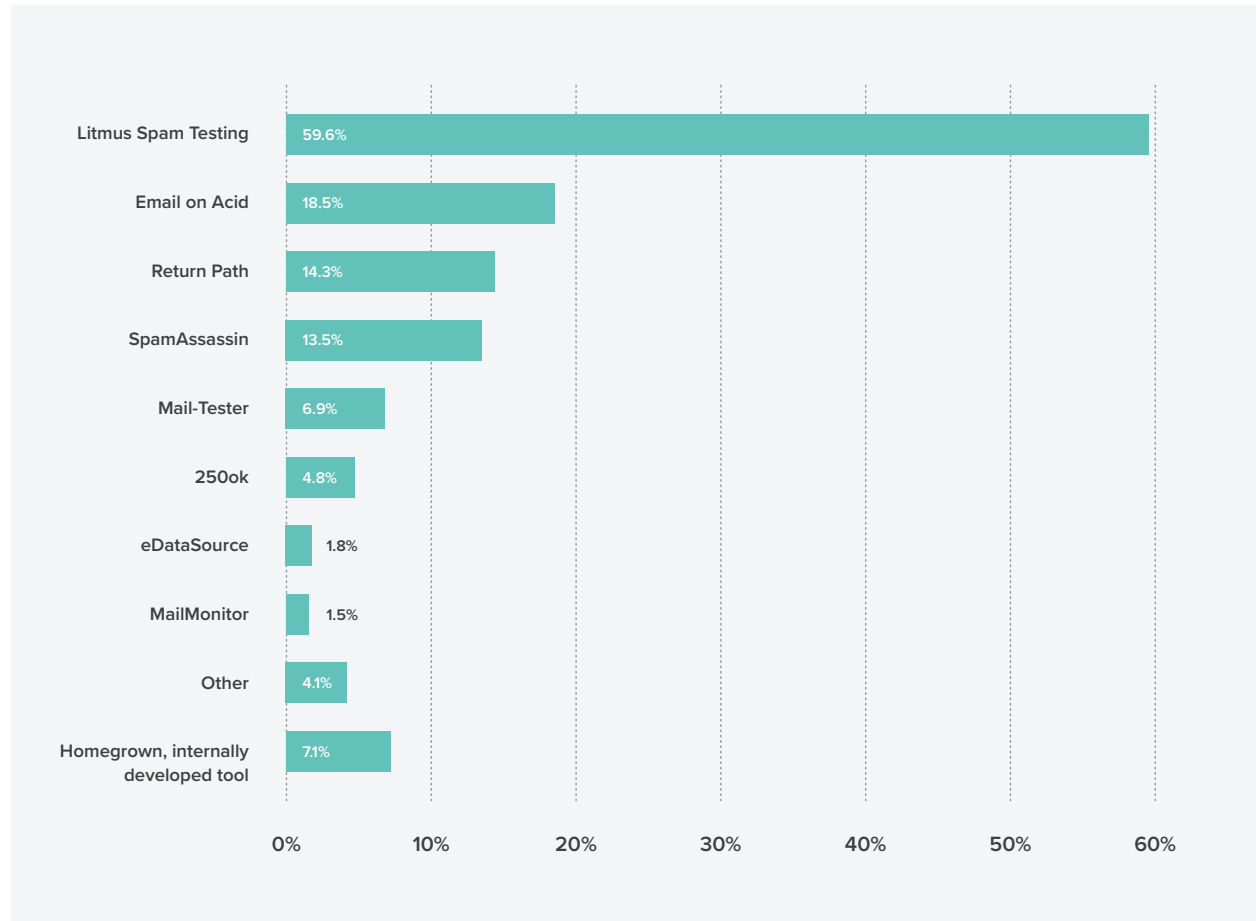
### Action Items

- Download our [2017 State of Email Deliverability report](#).
- Watch [The Root Cause of Poor Email Deliverability webinar](#).

## Litmus Dominates Spam Filter Testing Tools Used to Supplement ESP Functionality

What service or tool does your company use to check your emails against spam filters before you send them? Select all that apply. Those with at least 1% market share shown.

607 respondents



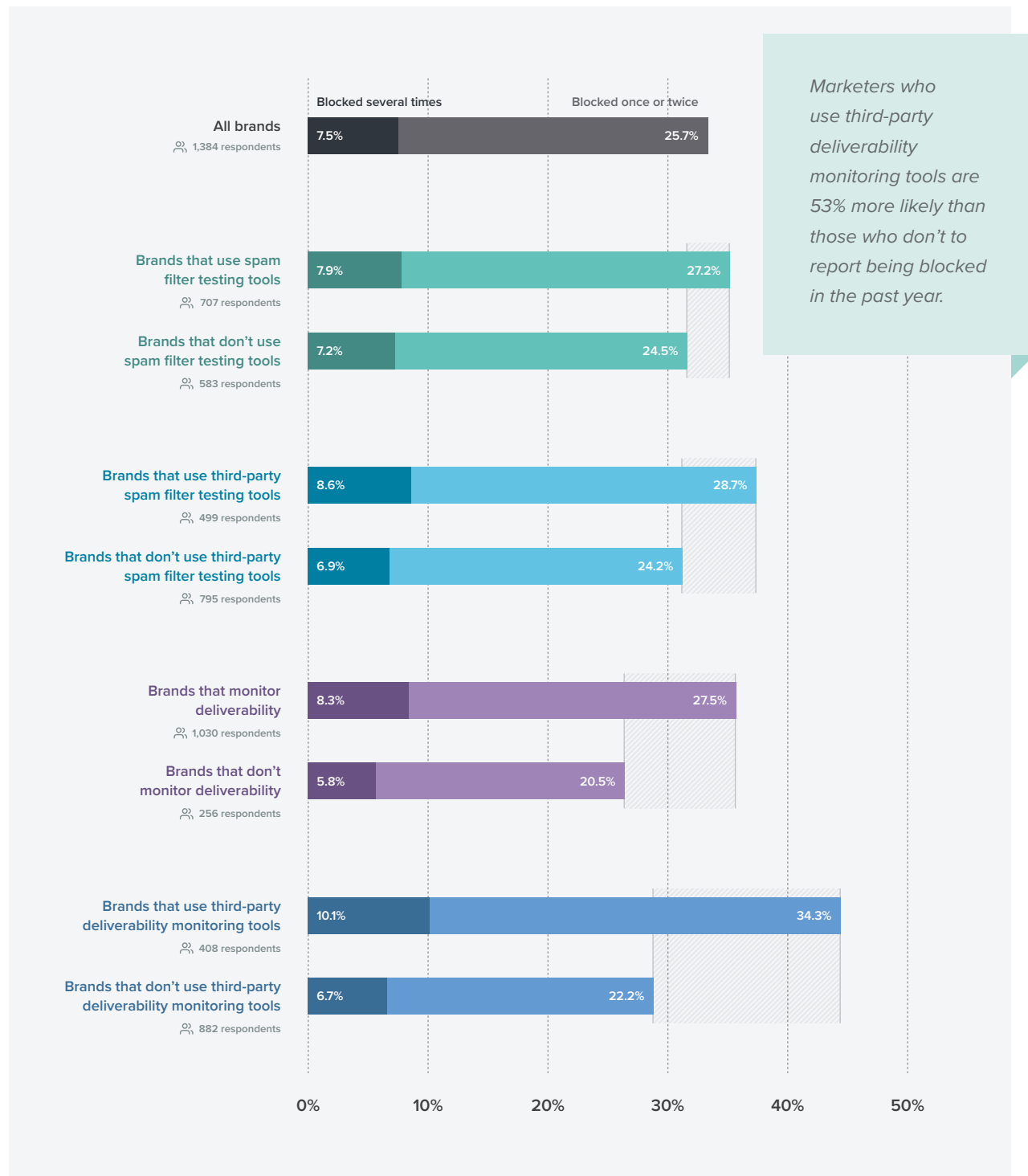
### Make It to the Inbox, Not the Spam Folder

Litmus Spam Testing checks your emails against consumer- and business-grade spam filters—including Gmail, Outlook, Barracuda, SpamAssassin, and many more—to alert you to issues before you hit send. Plus, we give you advice on how to fix issues so your emails are delivered safely to the inbox.



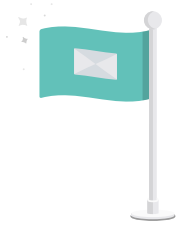
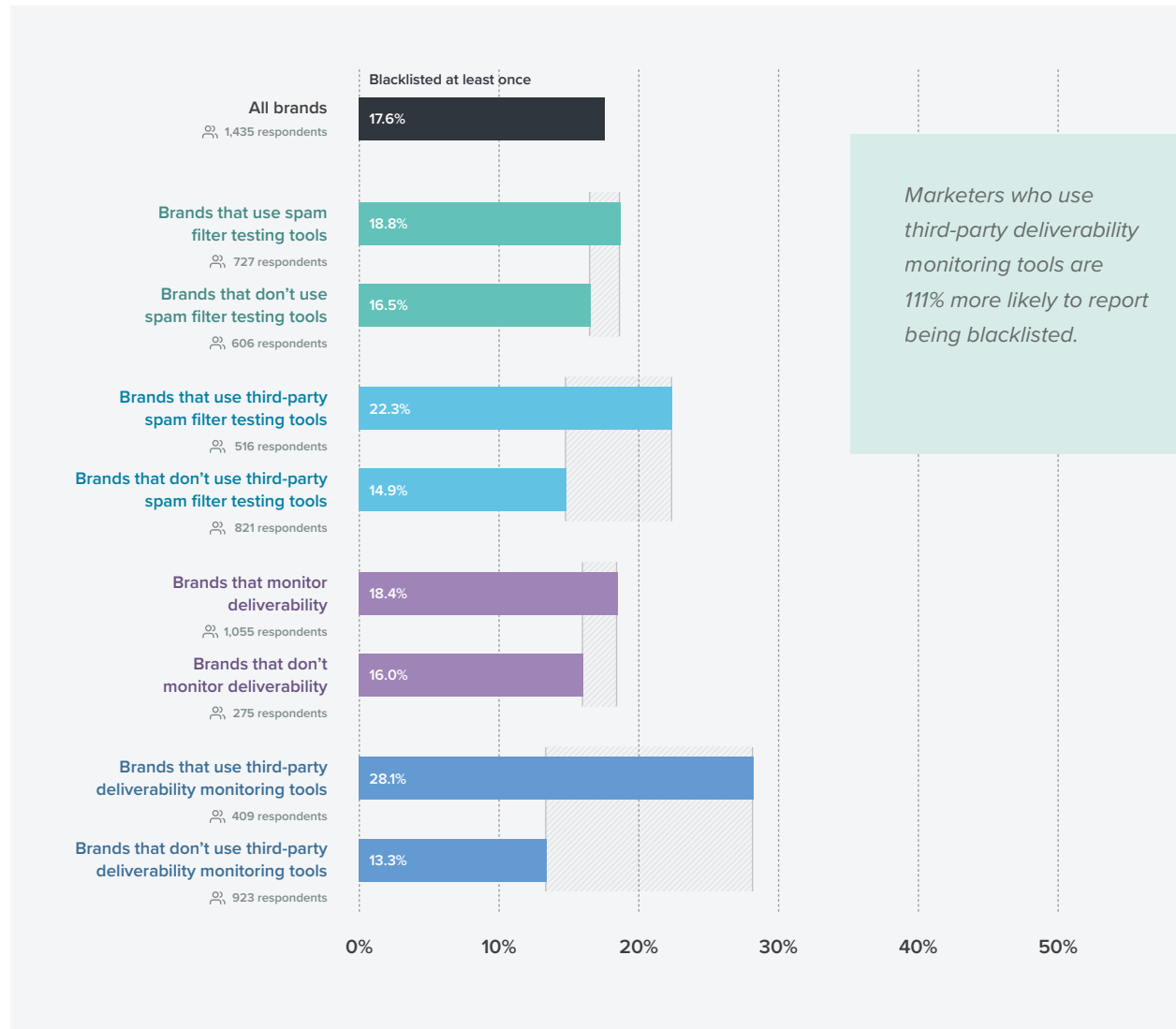
## Brands with Better Visibility into Their Deliverability Report Being Blocked at Higher Rates

Percentage of brands reporting blocks in the past 12 months among all brands, those using ESP-provided and third-party spam filter testing, and those using ESP-provided and third-party deliverability monitoring tools



## Brands with Better Visibility into Their Deliverability Report Being Blacklisted at Higher Rates

Percentage of brands reporting blacklistings in the past 12 months among all brands, those using ESP-provided and third-party spam filter testing, and those using ESP-provided and third-party deliverability monitoring tools.



### Action Items

- Understand [Why Blacklistings Don't Only Happen to Spammers.](#)
- Find out [What to Do If You've Been Blacklisted.](#)

The background features a network of white lines and nodes on a green field. Key icons include an envelope with an arrow, a stack of banknotes, a bar chart, a pie chart, and a line graph with data points.

## Email Marketing Return on Investment

In the age of performance-driven decision-making, much is made about how your return on investment should guide what you do. The problem is that most brands can't measure their email marketing ROI well.

However, brands that can measure it at least adequately report an average email marketing ROI of 38:1. At first glance, that figure is super impressive. However, as we discuss in our [Email Marketing ROI: The Factors that Lead to Better Returns](#) Leadership Brief, there are reasons to be concerned.

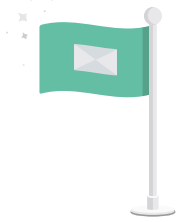
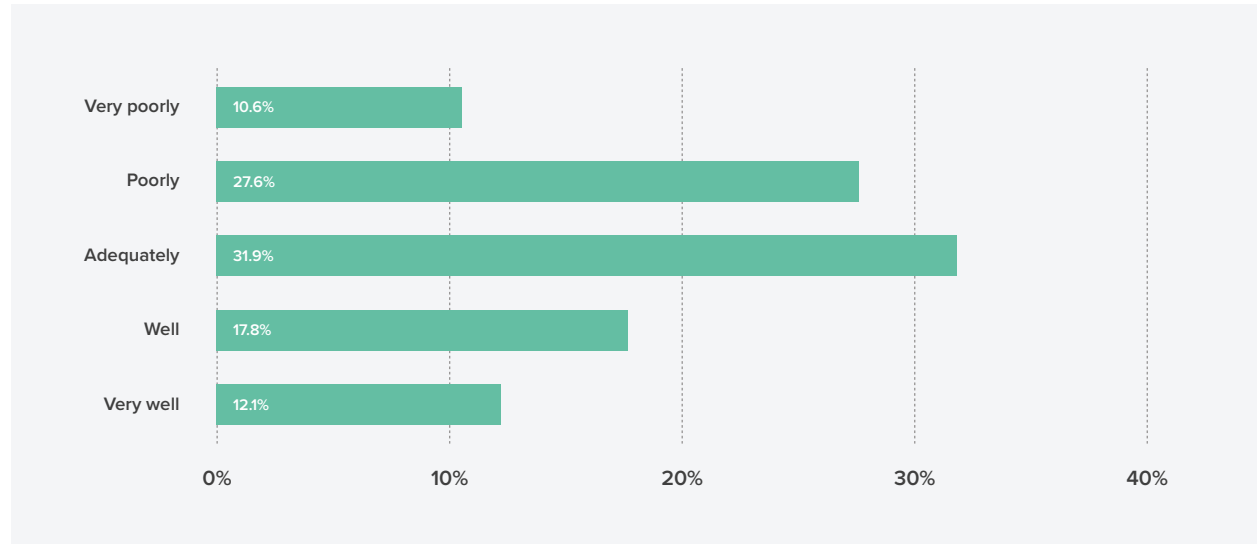
In that Leadership Brief, we also break down the email marketing behaviors, tactics, and tools that increase returns the most, as well as those that don't affect returns much, if at all. Some are truly surprising.

For instance, despite the much more stringent anti-spam and privacy regulations in the European Union and United Kingdom, brands operating there report slightly higher ROIs than brands in the United States. Also, brands that use double opt-in for email consent see much higher ROIs than brands using single opt-in.

## 70% of Brands Can't Measure Email Marketing ROI Well

How well can your company measure the return on investment of its email marketing efforts?

 1,506 respondents



### Action Items

- Read our Leadership Brief on [Email Marketing ROI: The Factors that Lead to Better Returns.](#)
- Learn about [8 Ways to Get Executive Buy-In for Larger Email Marketing Budgets, Besides ROI.](#)

## Increase Your Email Marketing ROI

The Litmus Email Creative Platform helps you get more from your email investment. For example, users of [Litmus Builder](#) generate an email ROI that's 40% higher than non-users; users of [Litmus Email Analytics](#) an ROI that's 19% higher; and users of [Litmus Email Previews](#) an ROI that's 14% higher.

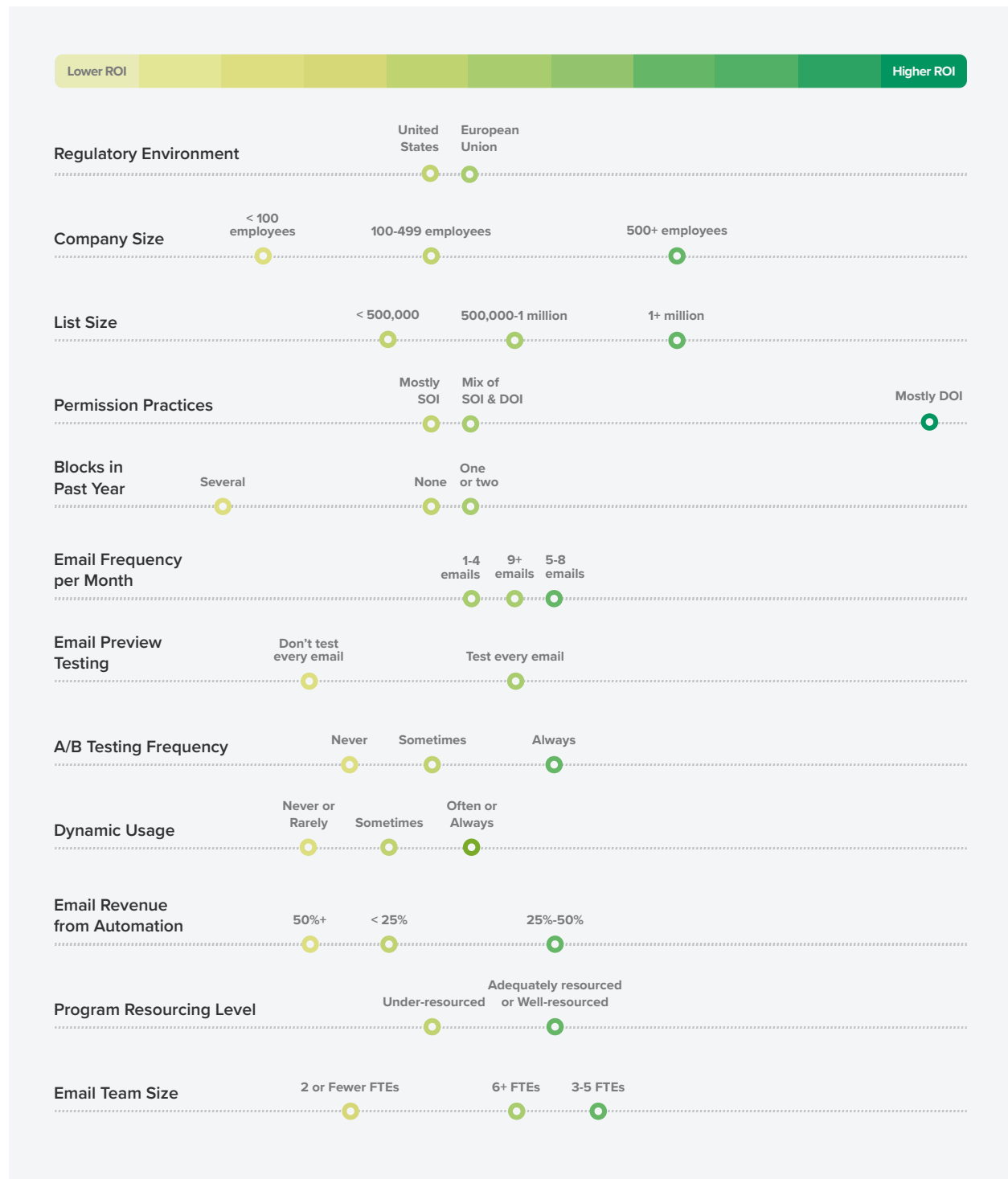




## The Factors that Influence Email Marketing ROI

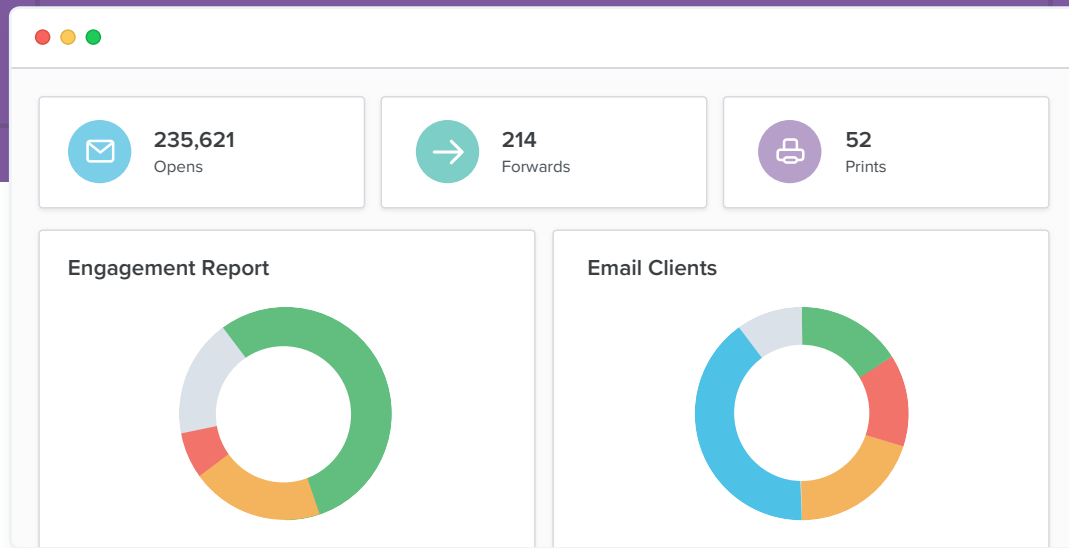
A heat map of various factors that correlate with higher or lower returns on investment for email marketing programs.

372 respondents



# Maximize ROI with advanced Litmus Email Analytics

Increase subscriber engagement and campaign results with data to help identify trends, optimize design and content, and enable better personalization.



## Go Beyond Email Opens and Clicks + Improve Your Email ROI with Litmus Email Analytics

### See duration of engagement

See how long your subscribers spend reading your email. Compare read rates by device to identify key areas for optimization.

### Discover where your subscribers open

Learn which devices and apps your subscribers use most and optimize more effectively, increasing your overall email performance.

### Pinpoint subscriber geolocation

See the specific countries and cities where your subscribers are opening to make more informed design, send time, and personalization decisions.

### Track forwards and prints

Discover how many times your email is printed and forwarded. Identify trends with email sharing, viral content, and evangelist behaviors.

**Brands that use Litmus Email Analytics report email marketing ROIs that are 19% higher than those reported by non-users, according to data from Litmus' 2018 State of Email Survey.**



## About Litmus

Litmus helps more than 250,000 marketers make email better. They use the Litmus Email Creative Platform alongside their existing email service provider to ensure a consistently great brand experience for every subscriber, work more efficiently, accelerate campaign performance, reduce errors, and stay out of the spam folder. For more information about Litmus and the latest email news and trends, visit [www.litmus.com](http://www.litmus.com).



## About the Author

Chad S. White is the Research Director at Litmus and the author of *Email Marketing Rules* and thousands of posts and articles about email marketing. A former journalist at Condé Nast and Dow Jones & Co., he has spent more than a decade researching email trends and best practices at the Direct Marketing Association, Responsys, ExactTarget, Salesforce.com, and in his current role. Chad is the Email Experience Council's 2018 Email Marketer Thought Leader of the Year.



## About the Designer

Chase Carpenter is a Junior Designer at Litmus. With a passion for simple illustration, subtle detail, and concise visual-communication, he strives to make the Litmus brand as approachable and memorable as it can be. When away from his computer, he can be found venturing out into the mountains around Salt Lake City to meditate or taking in a baseball game with a beer and a Chicago-style hot dog.