

# The State of Email Engagement

Litmus has analyzed billions of email opens to find out when, where, and how people engage with email.



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# Introduction: Get to know your subscribers

In email marketing, data means power. The better you understand your audience and how they engage with your email, the better you can fine-tune your email strategy and execution—and, ultimately, send better email.

We analyzed more than 10 billion—yes, that’s billion with a “B”—email opens tracked with email analytics in the past year to provide you with actionable insights into how the average subscriber engages with email. In the most comprehensive resource on subscriber engagement out there, we look at what email clients subscribers use, when they are most likely to open email, how long they engage with email messages, and more.

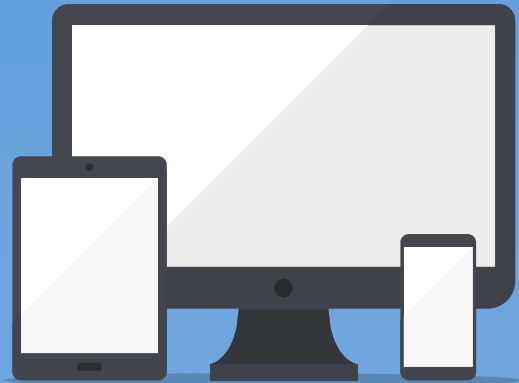
Use these insights to benchmark your email performance against your peers and get actionable advice on how to turn subscriber insights into strategies and tactics that improve your email program.



## Become a better email marketer with Litmus

It’s our mission is to help brands get access to the knowledge and tools they need to send better email. Join more than 600,000 marketing professionals who use Litmus to create high-performing email campaigns and provide an incredible email experience.





## 2

## Know where they open your emails

Understand what email clients and devices subscribers use to read email—and how email client popularity impacts your email strategy and execution.

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What devices and apps your audience uses tells you a lot about who they are. Plus, it has a significant impact on how you approach email for that very audience.

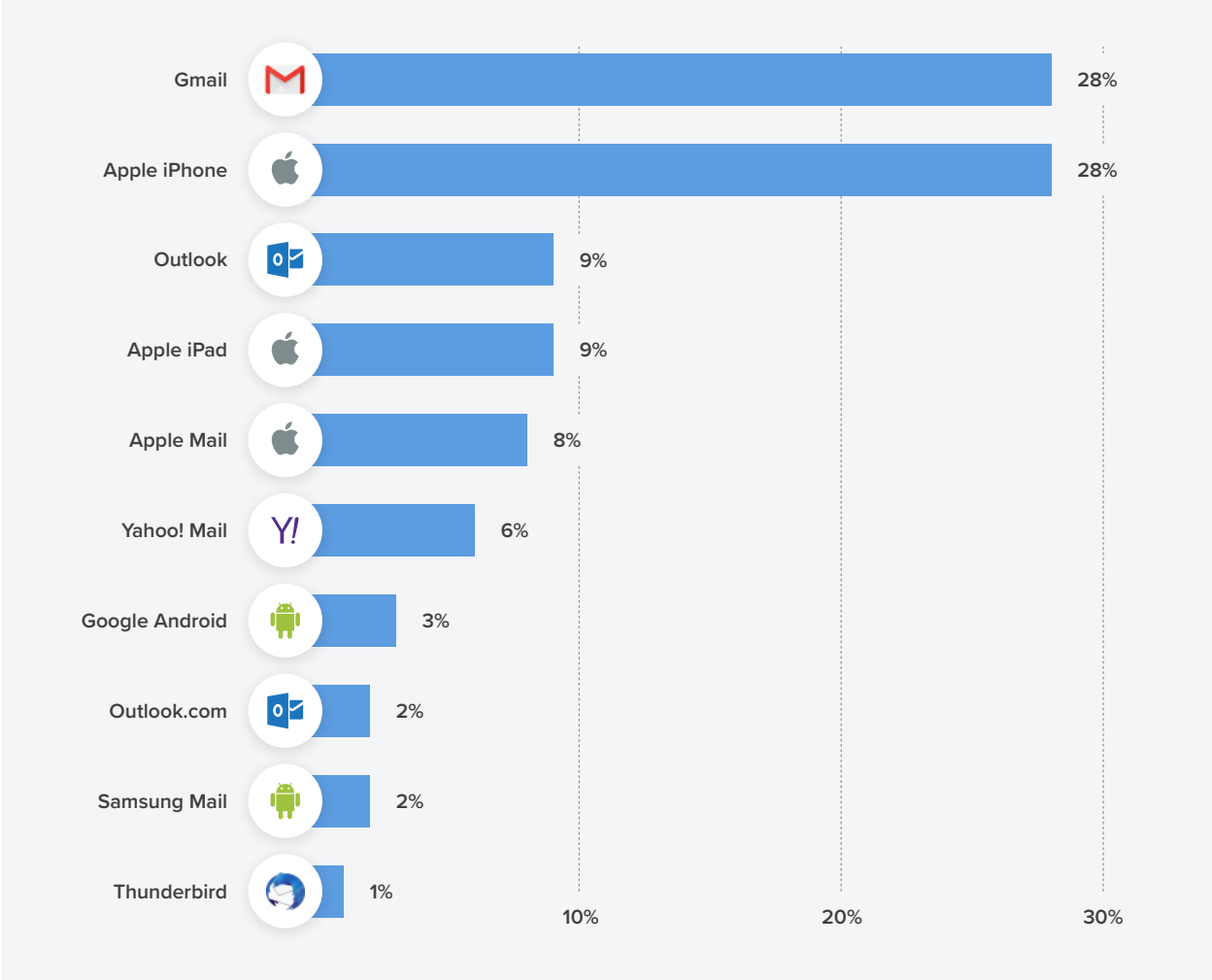
Do most of your subscribers open on mobile apps? You'll have to create emails that look great on a smartphone, with calls to action that are easy to tap and content that loads fast—even on the train with bad cellphone reception. Are a lot of your subscribers using Outlook? Take caution when using background images or animated GIFs and plan appropriate fallbacks.

We analyzed what reading environments are the most popular with subscribers worldwide—and break down what these stats mean for your program.

# The most popular email clients

## Gmail #1 most popular email client

Email client market share by email opens, April 2019.



## Most emails are now opened in Gmail

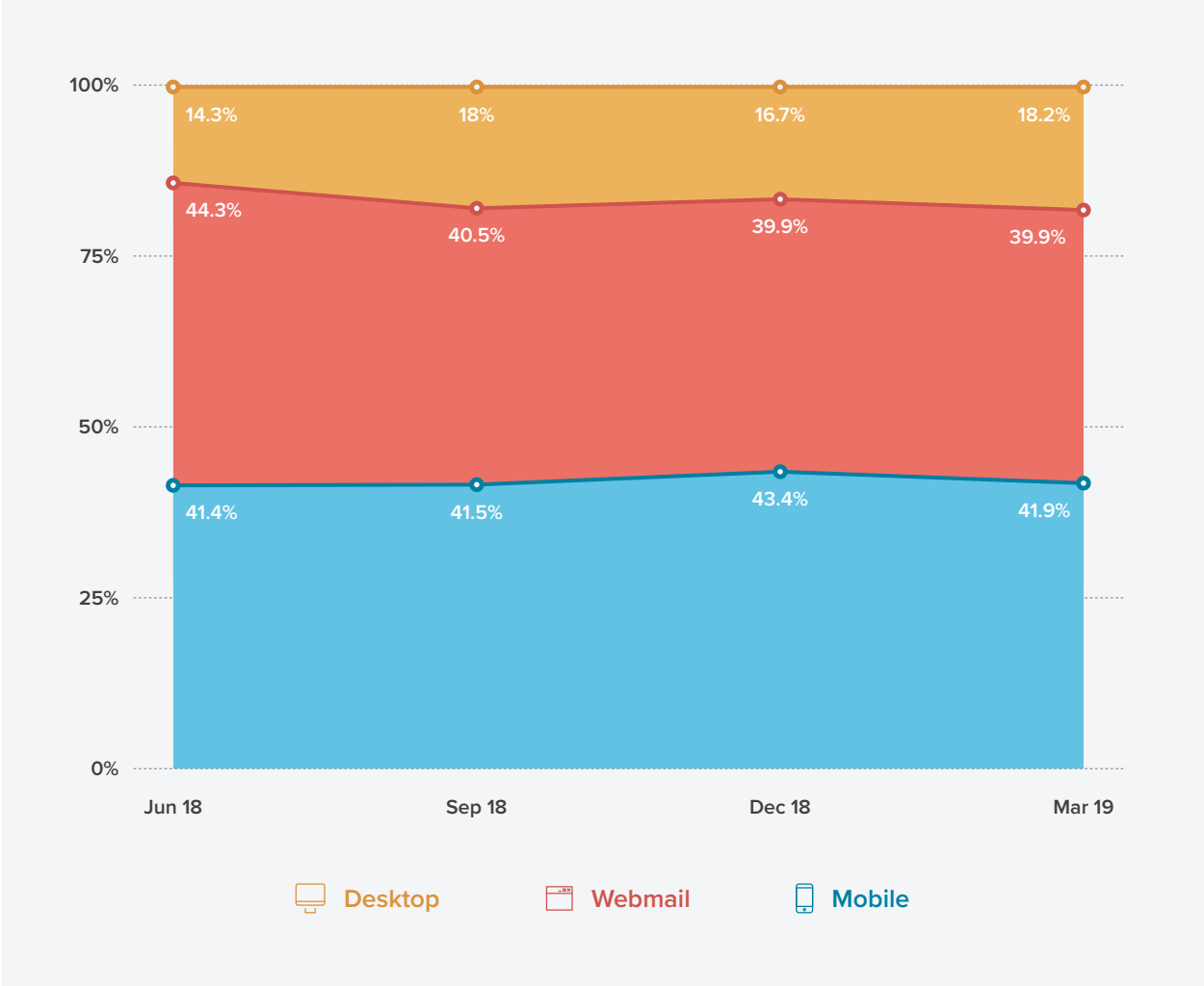
For the first time ever, Gmail is leading the global email client market share in April 2019, moving Apple’s iPhone—for years the #1 email client—to the second spot on the leaderboard.

With a number of big updates to Gmail—including the [revamped Promotions Tab](#) and the announcement of [AMP for Email](#)—Gmail is offering marketers new opportunities to stand out in the inbox. That and the increasing popularity of Gmail among consumers makes this email client the #1 inbox provider for email marketers to look out for.

# The most popular reading environments

## 42% of emails are opened on mobile devices

Most popular reading environments, measured by email opens, Q2 2018 to Q1 2019.

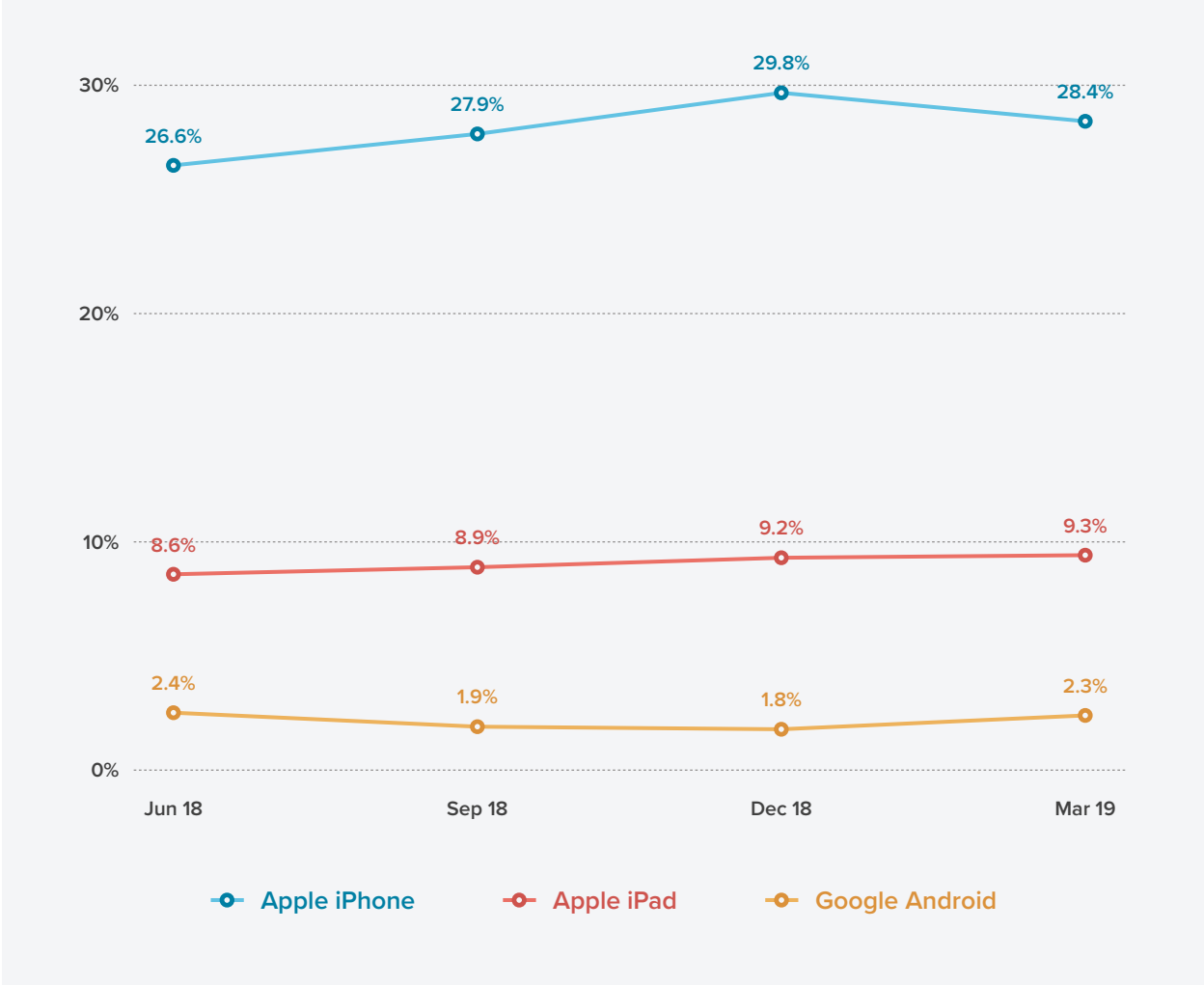


Even though mobile opens fluctuated a bit throughout the year, mobile remains the most popular reading environment with 42% of all emails being opened on smartphones or tablets. Webmail opens accounted for 40% of all email opens in March 2019, with the remainder—that's 18%—of emails opened on desktops.

# The most popular mobile email clients

## Apple iPhone #1 mobile email client

Most popular mobile email clients, measured by total email opens, Q2 2018 to Q1 2019.

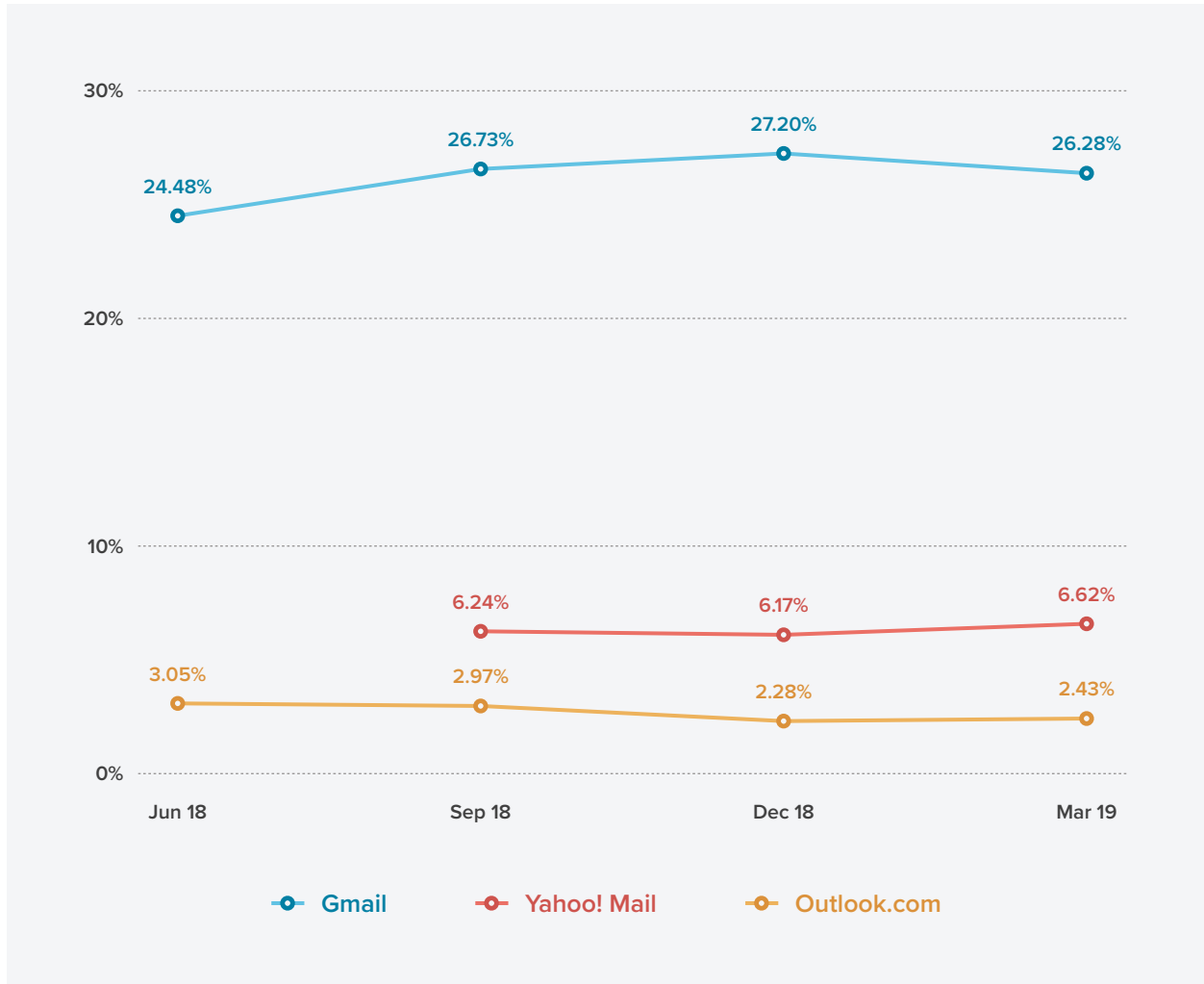


Apple’s iPhone continues to be the undisputed leader in mobile email. About 28% of all email opens happen on iPhones, and an additional 9% come from Apple’s iPad, the #2 most popular mobile email client. Google Android comes in third, with [its native email client](#) accounting for about 2% of all email opens.

# The most popular webmail clients

## Gmail #1 web email client

Most popular webmail clients, measured by total email opens, Q2 2018 to Q1 2019.



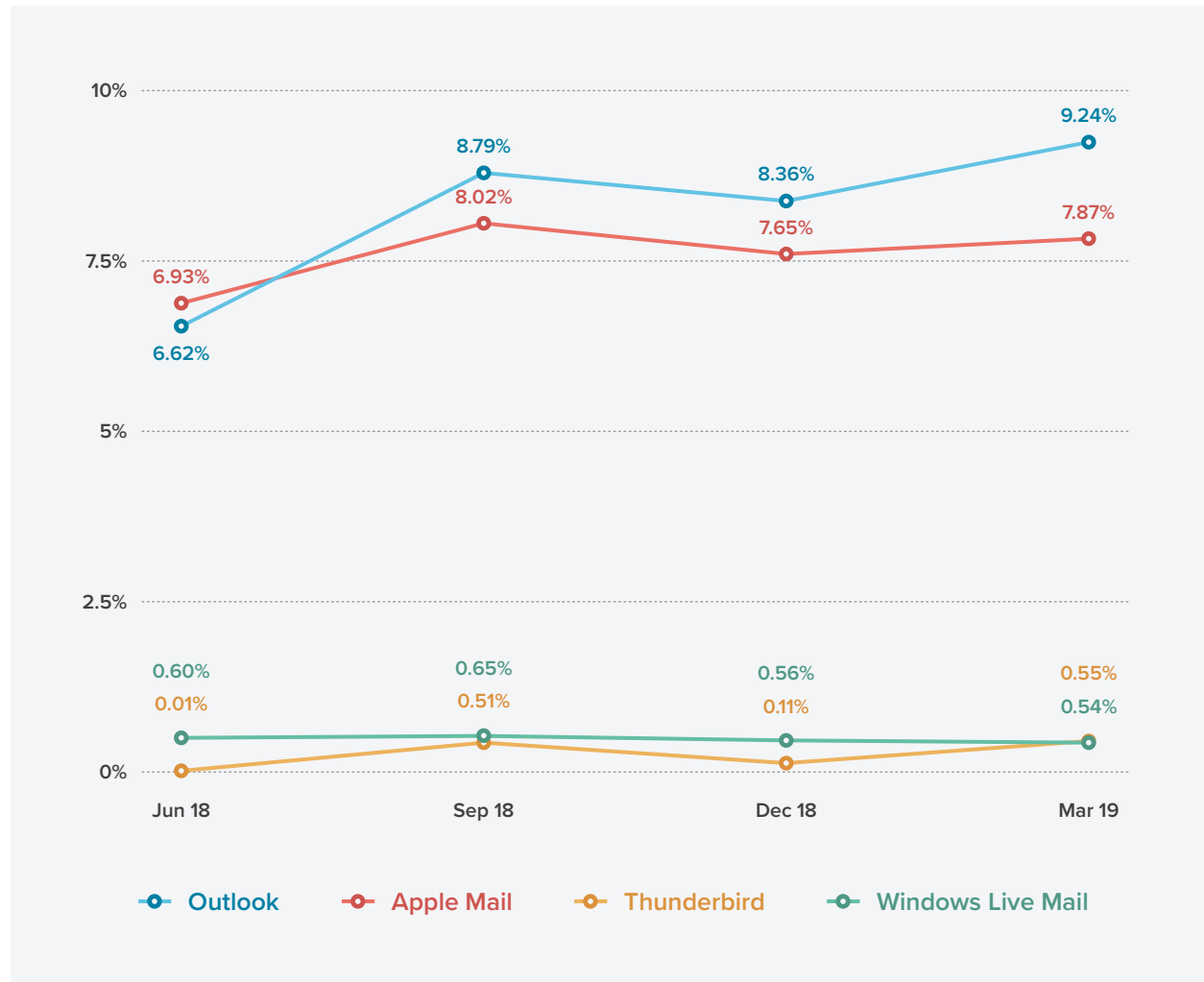
Throughout the past year, Gmail has been holding the undisputed leadership position in webmail opens, outperforming other webmail clients by a long shot. Yahoo! Mail—[which after its infrastructure merge includes AOL and Verizon opens](#)—comes in at 6.6% of all email opens, making it the second most popular webmail environment.



# The most popular desktop clients

## Outlook #1 most popular desktop email client

Most popular desktop email clients, measured by total email opens, Q2 2018 to Q1 2019.



Outlook opens have shown steady growth since 2017 and now account for more than 9% of all email opens. This makes Outlook the most popular desktop email client—even before Apple Mail—and the #3 most popular email client overall.



## Put the insights into action:

### 1. Understand how your audience compares against the global averages.

Your audience isn't the average, and email client usage can differ significantly from industry to industry and brand to brand. If you only rely on global averages to inform design decisions, you might be drawing the wrong conclusions. Use a tool like [Litmus Email Analytics](#) to understand your audience's device and reading environment breakdown.

### 2. Make optimizing for Gmail a priority.

The majority of brands see a heavy usage of Gmail in their subscriber base. If you're one of them, make optimizing for Gmail a priority for your team. You should also consider taking advantage of some of Gmail's most recent innovations that help your email stand out in the inbox: [annotations in the Promotions Tab](#) and interactivity using [AMP for Email](#).

### 3. Ensure your emails look great in Outlook.

Even though Microsoft has made significant improvements to [Outlook 2019](#), making your emails look great in older Outlook clients can still be a challenge. If your audience looks like the global average with a significant share of subscribers opening in Outlook, you'll have to invest the time to [optimize your emails for Outlook](#).

### 4. Continue to optimize your emails for mobile.

Subscribers continue to consume email on their smartphones and tablets, so it's key for email marketers to ensure that their emails look great and perform in these reading environments. Use [mobile-friendly design approaches](#) to optimize your emails for smaller screens, and ensure you [test your email for rendering issues](#) on mobile email clients before you send.

### 5. Use email client insights to focus your testing efforts.

You spotted a rendering issue in one email client? Some tricky rendering bugs can take hours to fix. Use email client market share insights to make data-backed decisions on where to focus your testing and optimization efforts. We all want our emails to look great everywhere, but it's a balancing act. If you see a small rendering issue in an email client that less than 1% of your subscribers use, let it go. Your time is better spent elsewhere.



### 3

## Know when they open your emails

Timing matters. Learn at what time subscribers are most likely to open email—and why those preferences differ by country and reading environment.

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Sending your email at the wrong time can derail the most well-crafted campaign. Knowing when your audience is the most likely to open your emails is crucial. If you're sending your emails at a time when your audience isn't actively checking their email, that means your messages get pushed further down the inbox as more emails come in—and are less likely to be seen by your subscribers. 23% of all email opens occur within the first hour after delivery, [GetResponse found](#); within the second hour, opens drop by half.

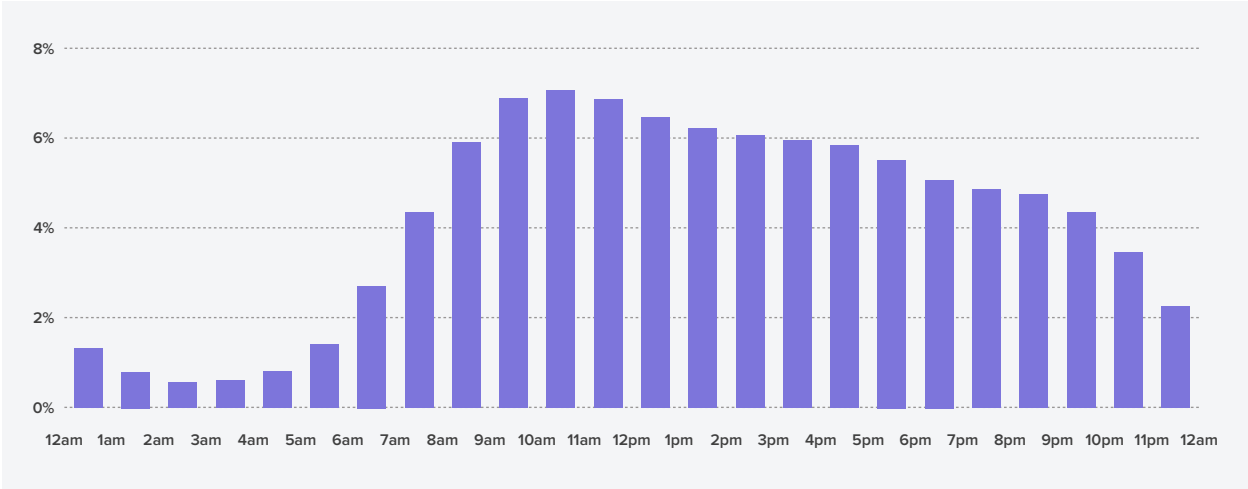
So it's no surprise that many email marketers put significant effort into optimizing their send times to make sure messages reach subscribers when they're actively checking their inboxes.

But what's the best time to send email? It depends! We analyzed billions of email opens by time of day and found that the results are heavily impacted by geolocation and device usage.

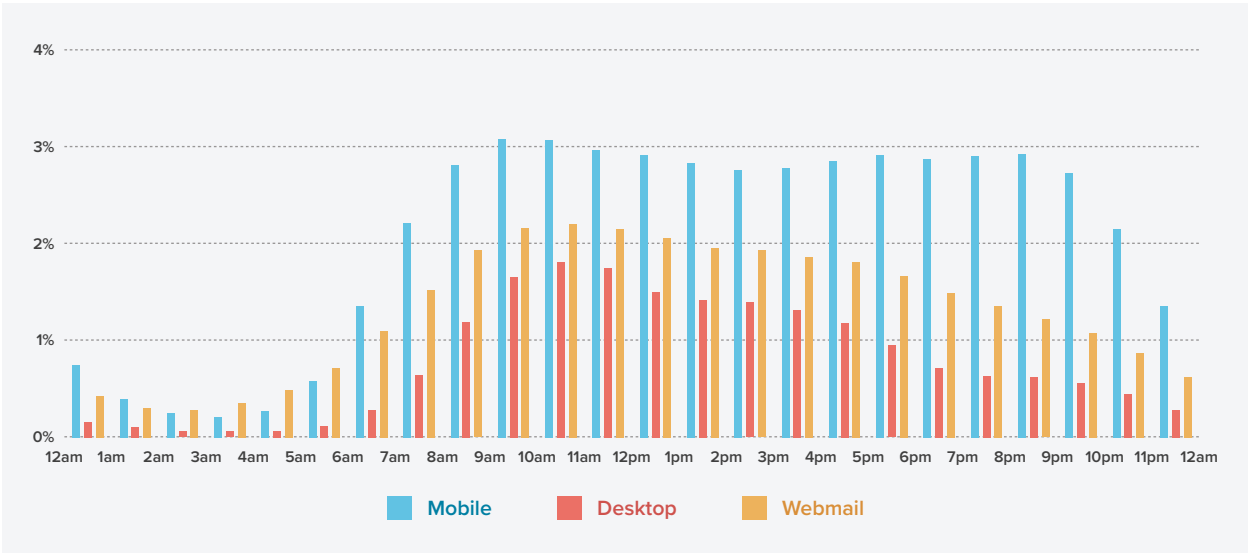
# United States

In the United States, the most popular reading time for email is the morning. About 7% of all opens happen between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., and 21% of all opens happen between 9 a.m. and noon. Mobile opens are fairly steady between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., while webmail and desktop spike in the morning and start to drop in the afternoon.

## United States: Email opens by time of day



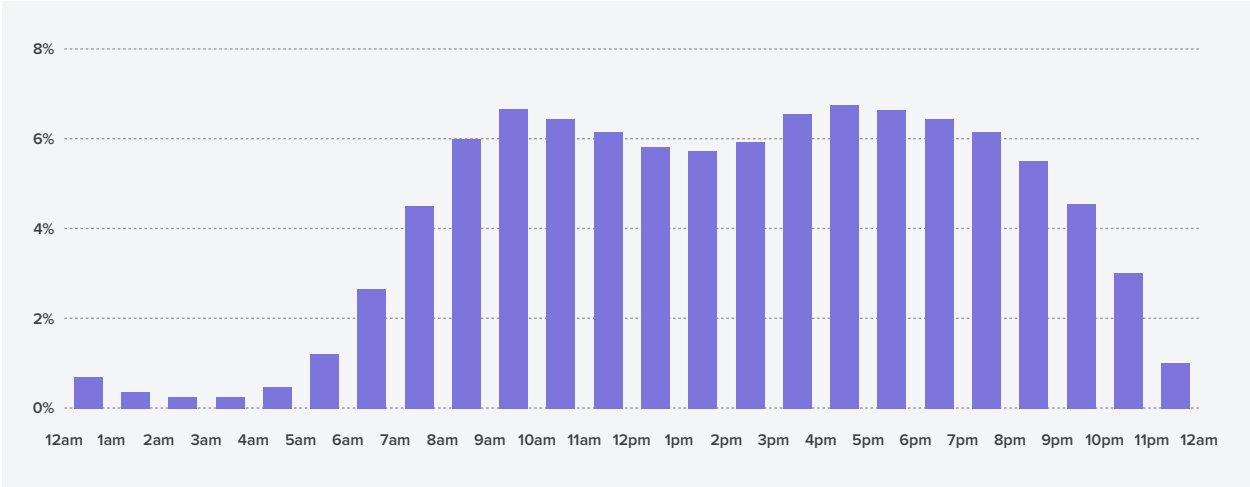
## United States: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day



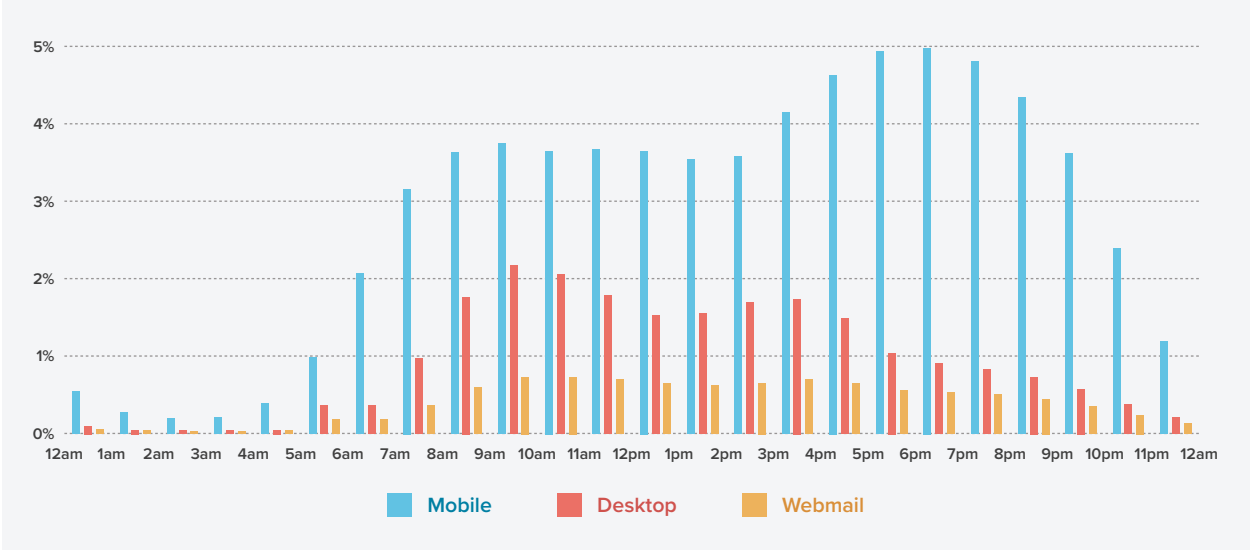
# United Kingdom

Of all the countries we analyzed, the UK was the only location where the most popular time to read email is in the afternoon (between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.) rather than in the morning. These numbers are heavily driven by an increase in mobile opens in the late afternoon and early evening. Mobile opens in the UK peak at 6 p.m.

## United Kingdom: Email opens by time of day



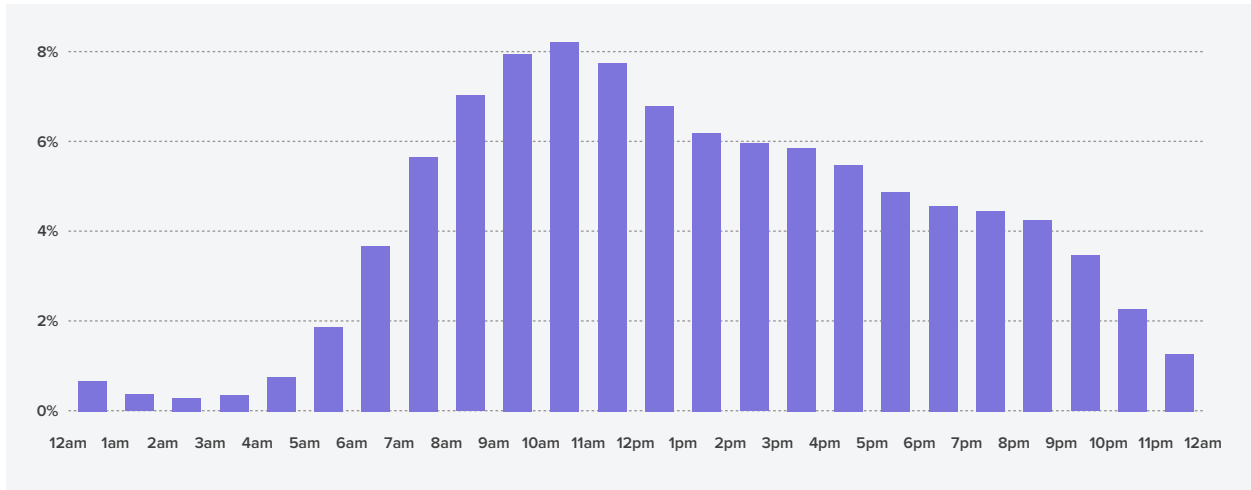
## United Kingdom: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day



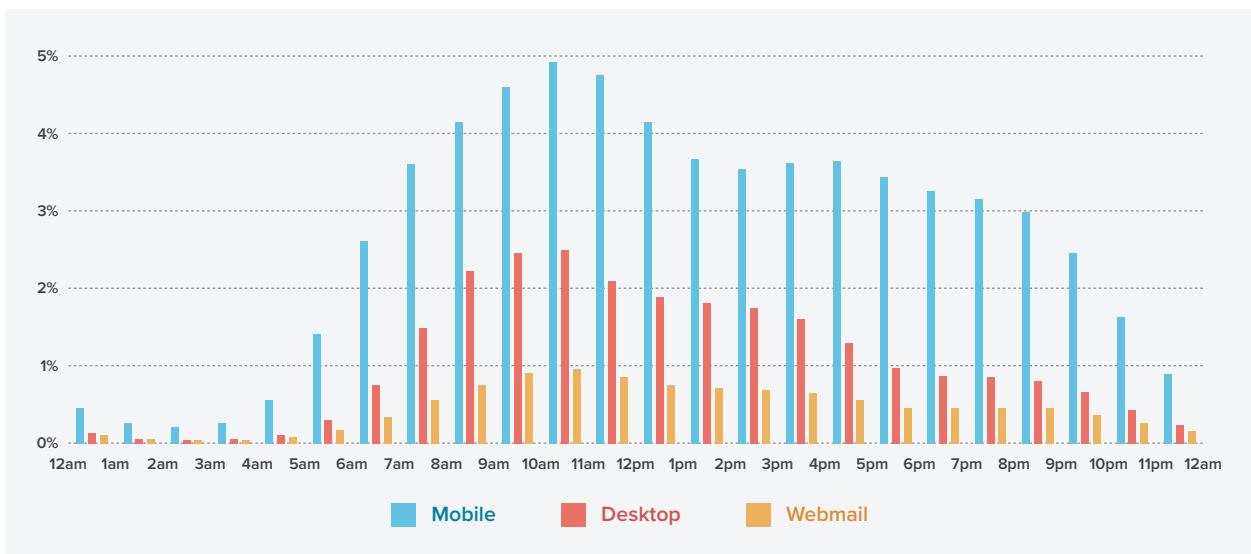
# Canada

In Canada, the most popular time to read email is between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., with more than 8% of all emails being opened during that time. Email opens fall off quickly after noon across all reading environments.

## Canada: Email opens by time of day



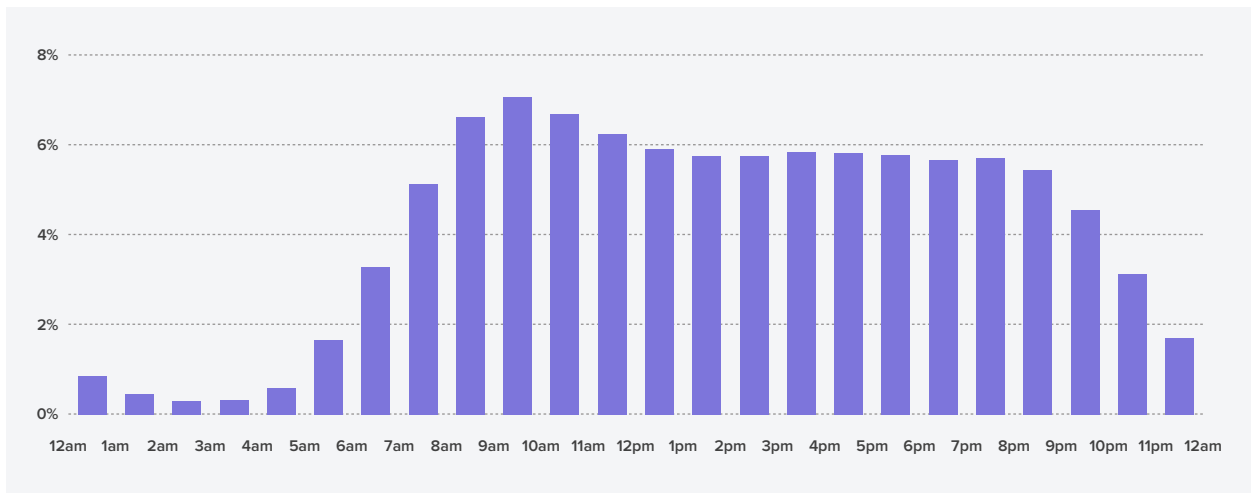
## Canada: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day



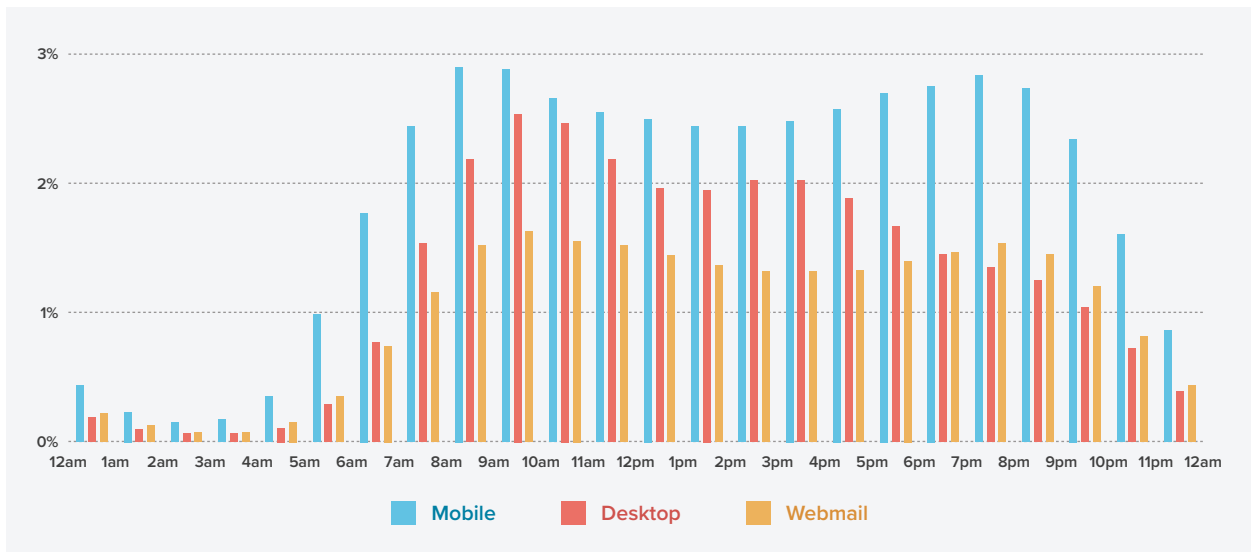
# Germany

Most emails in Germany are read between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. local time, but read rates are fairly steady throughout the day. Until about 8 p.m., read rates range between 5.5% and 6%—mostly driven by the high open rates on mobile and webmail clients.

## Germany: Email opens by time of day



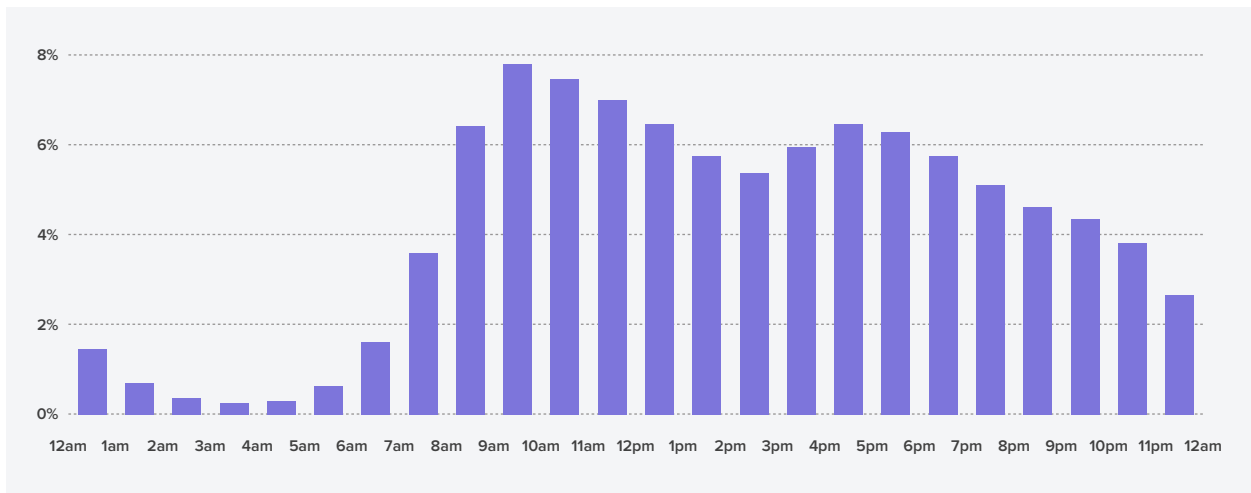
## Germany: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day



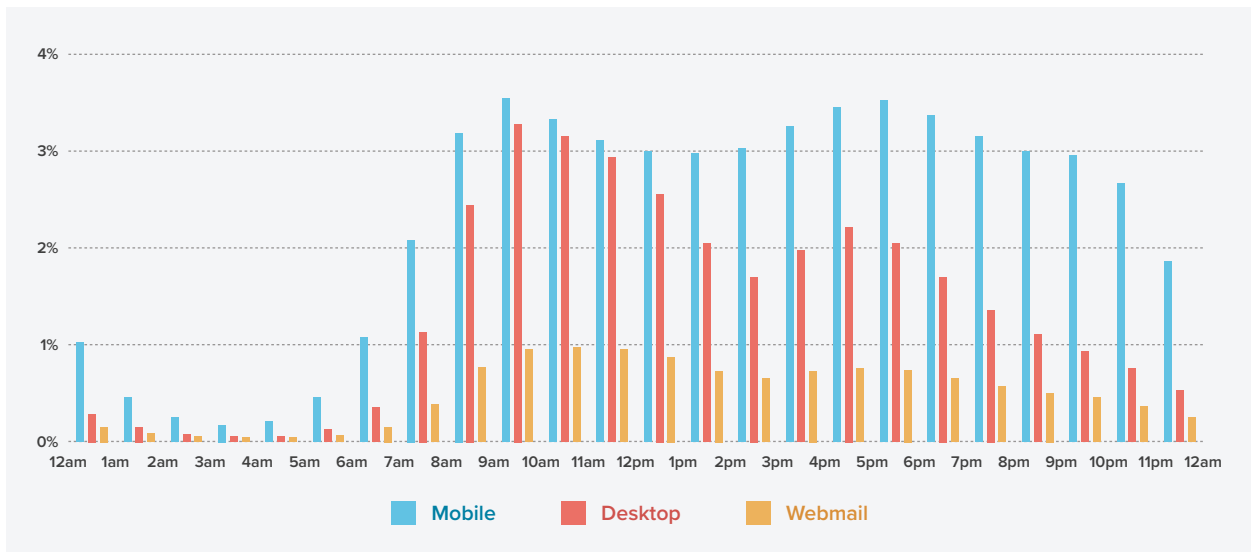
# Spain

In Spain, most emails are read between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. There is a dip in overall email opens between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. After that, opens rise again for another peak between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. local time. Desktop opens are almost on par with mobile opens in the morning hours, but fall quickly after noon.

## Spain: Email opens by time of day



## Spain: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day

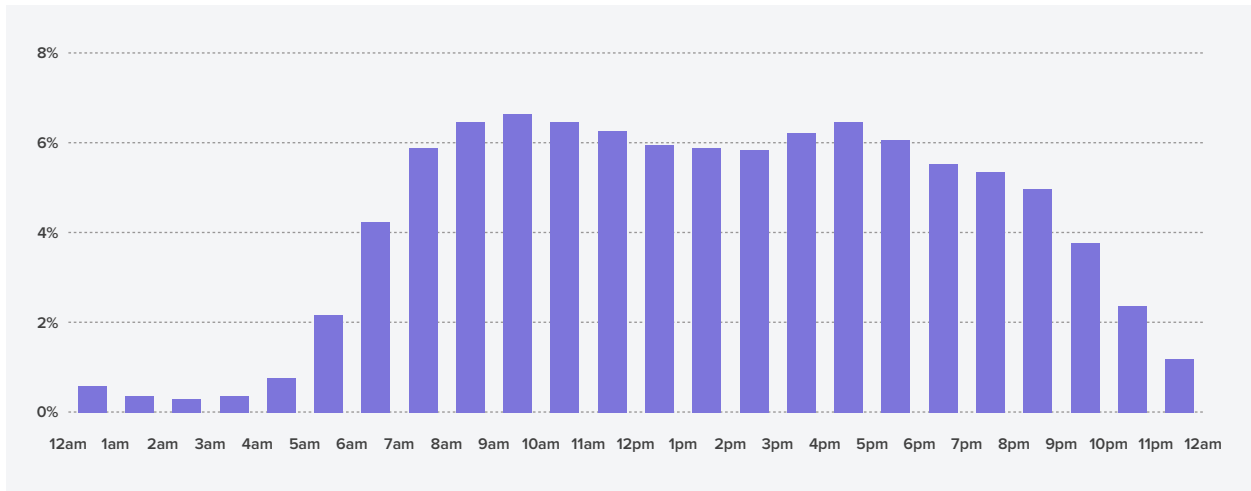




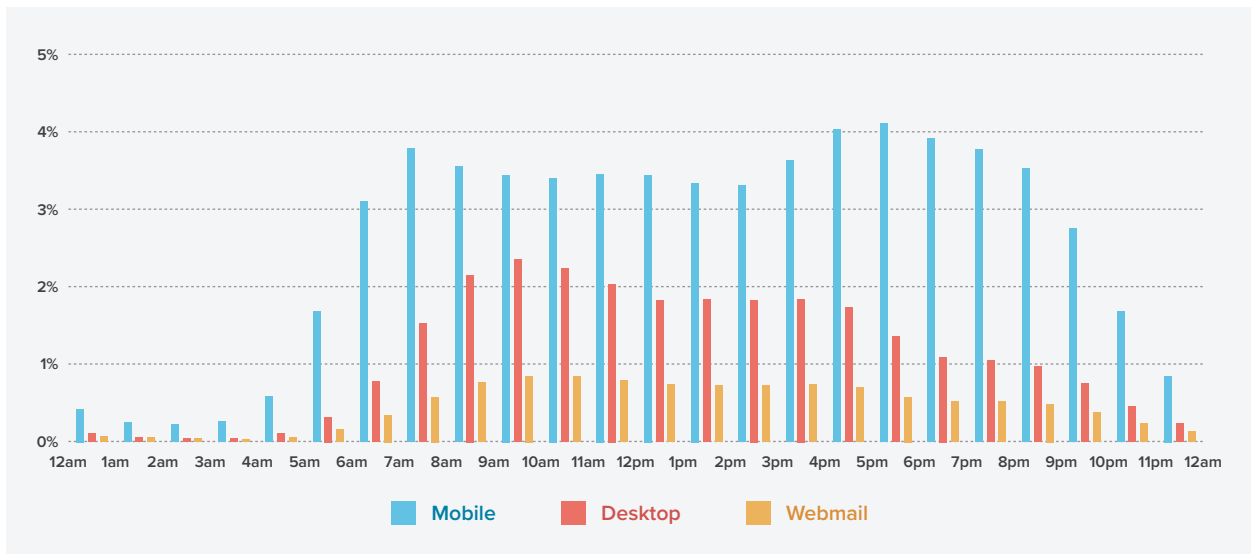
# Australia and New Zealand

While most emails in Australia and New Zealand are opened between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.—that’s on par with most other geolocations—the earlier morning hours are more active than other regions. Mobile opens are starting to pick up as early as 5 a.m. local time—a time that’s still quiet in most other geolocations.

## Australia & New Zealand: Email opens by time of day



## Australia & New Zealand: Mobile, desktop, and webmail opens by time of day





## Put the insights into action:

Our research shows that there isn't one perfect time to send email. When your subscribers are most likely to engage with your message heavily depends on additional factors like geolocation, the device they use to open your emails, and more. The insights above can help you get a first idea on what might work for your audience, but it's even more important that you...

### 1. Understand when *your* audience opens email.

Utilize open data—either from your ESP or a tool like [Litmus Email Analytics](#)—to identify the most popular open times for your audience. Then, use these insights to test and optimize your send time to see if a shift in send timing leads to a lift in email performance. Make sure you don't just look at open rates though. You'll also want to keep an eye on whether or not different send times might impact click rates and overall conversions.

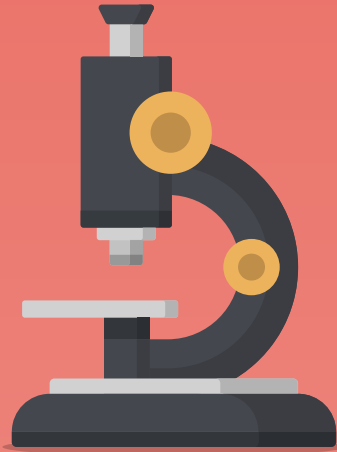
### 2. Understand where your subscribers are based—and if it's worth optimizing send times for different time zones and geolocations.

If your subscribers span across a range of time zones, and important markets aren't close to each other, [segmenting your list by time zone](#) can be a highly effective approach. If you don't have geolocation information, [Litmus Email Analytics](#) can help you understand where your subscribers are based when opening your emails.

## What's the best send time for your campaigns?

See what's the most popular time for your audience to open your email with individual-level tracking in Litmus Email Analytics.





## 4

# Know how they engage with your emails

You know if your subscriber opens your email, and you know if they click. But there's a lot that happens in between. Entering: Engagement insights.

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Email engagement is a black box for many email marketers. Too often, marketers only look at opens and clicks—but have no insight into what happens in between.

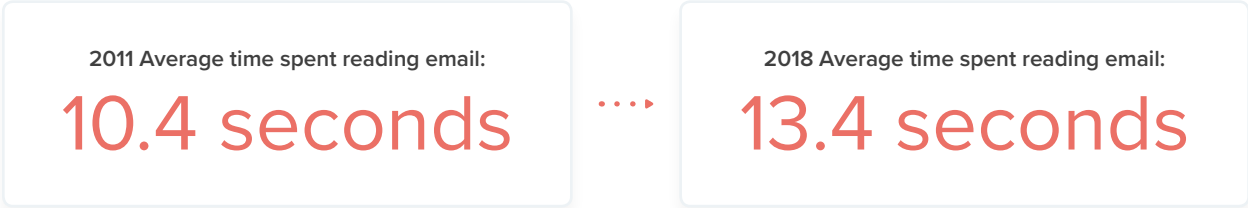
Think about how this compares to web analytics, for example. Online marketers don't just look at the number of visitors and the number of clicks on their sites. They also know how the visitor engages with the site: How long do they stay on each page? How many visitors bounce? How do they move on the page and what do they do there? Insights like these are crucial for website optimization—and they're just as powerful in email marketing.

Are you ready to open up the black box of email engagement?

# Email engagement times

Mobile phones, Twitter, texting, video games, and other digital era trappings are blamed for shortening our attention spans to less than that of goldfish. You might be tempted to throw email in that bucket... but you'd be wrong. The average time spent reading an email increased to 13.4 seconds in 2018.

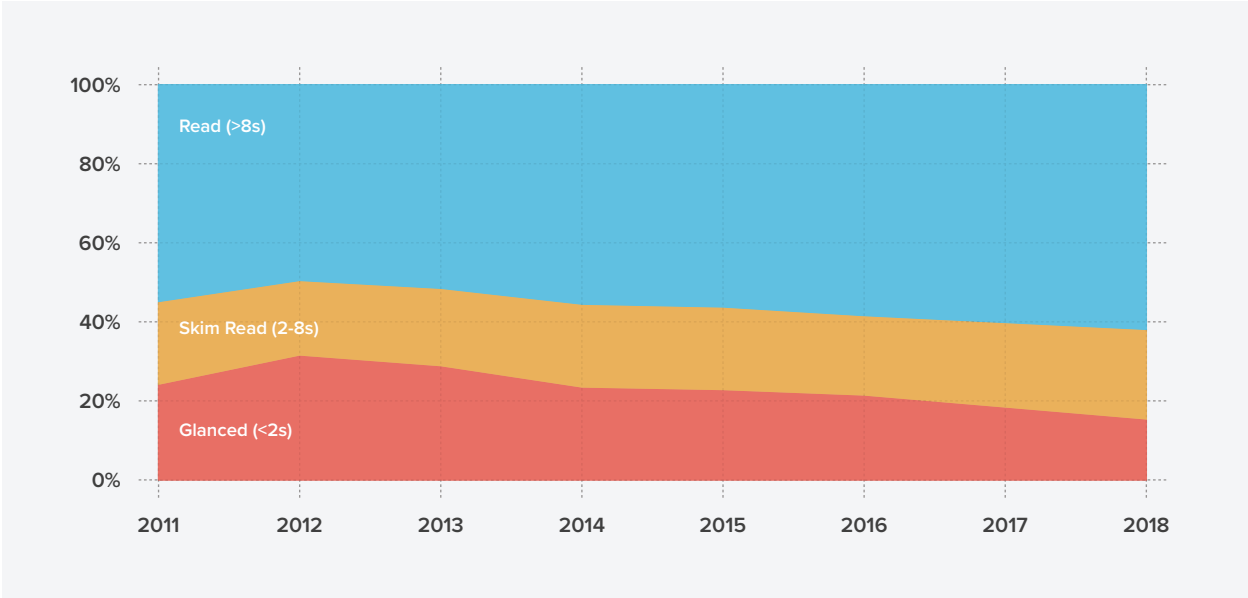
The average time spent reading an email increased by nearly 29% over the last 7 years.



Once opened, the majority of emails manage to catch the reader's attention, with 61% of all emails being read for 8 seconds or more. About a quarter (23.5%) of all emails get skimmed (an engagement of 2-8 seconds), and only 15% of all messages get less than 2 seconds of their readers' attention.

## 61% of emails are being read for more than 8 seconds

Share of emails that got glanced, skimmed, or read from 2011 - 2018.

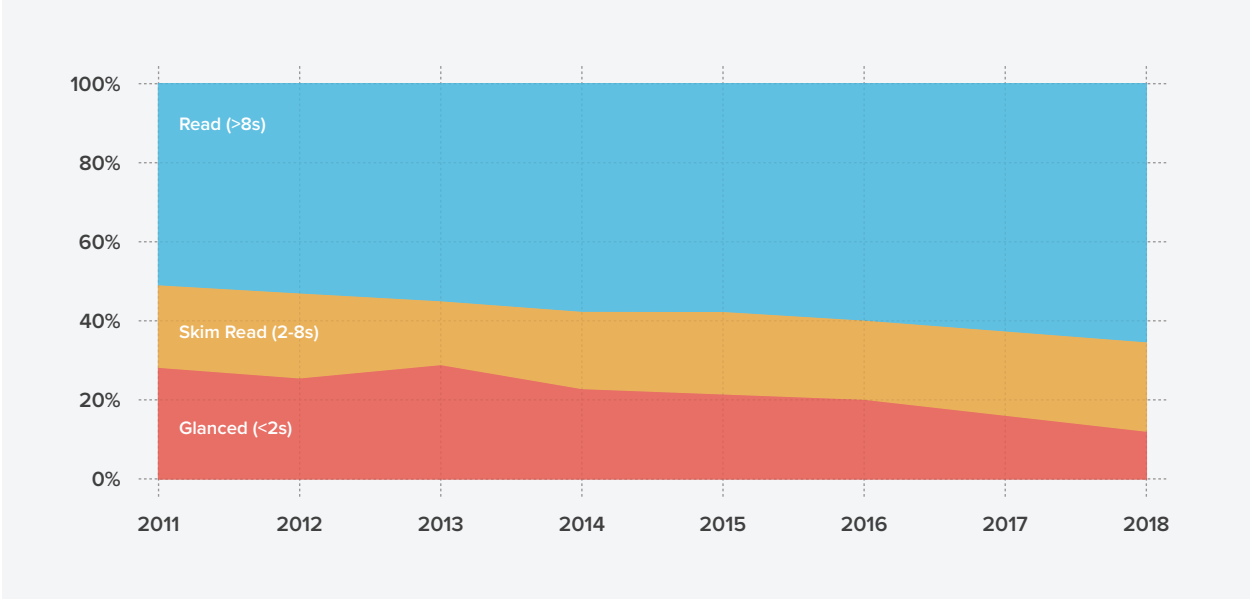


# Mobile engagement times

The overall increase in engagement times is largely driven by growing attention spans for email on mobile. Of all emails opened on mobile devices, 66% are read for more than 8 seconds. 23% are open for 2-8 seconds, and only 11% see engagement times of less than 2 seconds.

## 66% of emails opened on mobile are being read for more than 8 seconds

Share of emails opened on mobile that got glanced, skimmed, or read from 2011 - 2018.



People turn to their mobile devices when they're bored or have a little free time on the subway or bus, in a waiting room, or while watching TV. They aren't in a big hurry—at least not compared to when they're at work. That means that many of the email interactions on mobile devices are slightly more relaxed compared to those on desktops.



## Put the insights into action:

### 1. See how your engagement times compare.

Benchmark your email engagement times against the global average to see how your campaigns compare against your peers. If your ESP doesn't provide engagement duration data, you can use [Litmus Email Analytics](#) for deeper insights.

### 2. Compare engagement data with other metrics for a more complete picture.

When it comes to interpreting duration of engagement data, we recommend tracking trends and changes in your data over time and comparing that to other factors, like open rates, click rates, and content and design changes. A long duration of engagement with an email doesn't necessarily equate to a positive email experience for your subscribers. For example, they could be spending more time on your email because it's hard to read, or they are searching for a CTA.

### 3. Experiment with longer-form emails.

The increase in email engagement times shows that subscribers are willing to spend time engaging with email content, but only if the content is relevant. Shorter might not always be better. Especially in cases where you're providing educational content (rather than encouraging a quick purchase, for example), it might be worth moving more content from your landing pages into your email.

## How engaging are your emails?

Go beyond opens and clicks and see how long your subscribers spend reading your email with engagement time tracking in Litmus Email Analytics.



## Printing: How often subscribers print emails

While not relevant to everyone, some brands can benefit from tracking how often an email was printed.

For example, imagine an email that includes a coupon that needs to be printed and brought to a local store for redemption. Measuring this email's success by clickthrough rates wouldn't be fair, since its goal isn't to generate website visits. This email is successful if a large percentage of your audience prints the email (and hopefully redeems the coupon at the brand's store). Measuring the number of times an email was printed helps you better understand the effectiveness of the coupon campaign and email's contribution to it.

The average email generates 1 print for every 313 email opens. That's a print rate of 0.32%.



**Average print rate: 0.32%**  
(1 print for every 313 opens)



### Put the insights into action:

If your brand sends emails that contain coupon codes or vouchers, booking confirmations, tickets for travel or events, or other content that requires a print-out, consider the following:

- 1. Start tracking your print rate.**

Analyze your print-per-open rate to understand if your campaigns trigger print activity. If your ESP doesn't provide insights on prints, you can use [Litmus Email Analytics](#) to track this metric.

- 2. Compare your print rate campaign by campaign.**

Not all campaigns require printing. For example, it's unlikely for your subscribers to print out a newsletter. Compare print rates for campaigns where a print is an insightful success metric—for example, when you compare one voucher campaign with another.

## Forwarding: How often subscribers share emails

Forwards expand the reach of your messages and generate additional conversions, but they have significant meaning beyond that. Forwards are a powerful indication of the overall health of your email program, because they are a sign that you're fulfilling your subscribers' needs at the highest level and delivering deals, content, and experiences that are so remarkable they're worth telling someone else about.

The average email generates 1 forward for every 170 email opens. That's a forward rate of 0.59%.



**Average forward rate: 0.59%**  
(1 forward for every 170 opens)



### Put the insights into action:

**1. Start tracking your forward-to-open rate.**

Keep an eye on your forwards-per-open stats as a barometer of email program health. If your ESP doesn't provide insights on forwards, you can use [Litmus Email Analytics](#) to track forward behavior.

**2. If your forward-to-open rate is far below the global average, then you might have to take action.**

Low forward rates can be a sign that your email program is not delivering experiences that are deeply relevant. If you constantly see a lack of forwards, you might want to try something new. Always keep in mind though that not every campaign will see high forward rates, especially if an email has highly personalized content that subscribers are unwilling to share. Use this metric only for campaigns where sharing is expected and encouraged behavior.

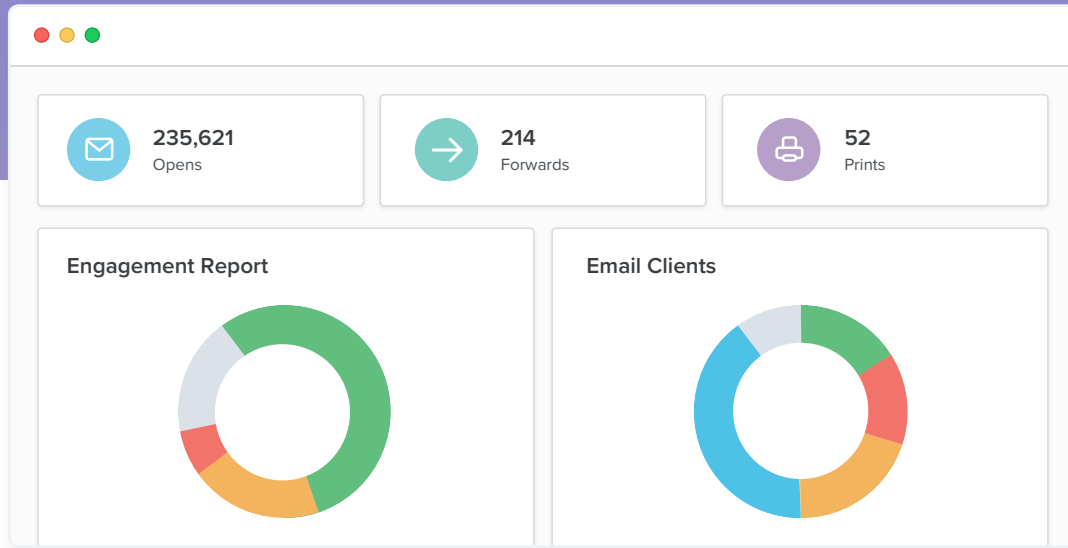
**3. Learn from your most viral emails.**

Compare the forward-to-open rate of different campaigns to see which ones performed best when it comes to forwarding. Analyze campaigns with higher-than-average forward rates and dig into why those emails might have been more share-worthy than others. Was it a specific deal that resonated? If so, you'll want to do more of that.



# Your audience isn't the average

Global benchmarks can only tell you so much. Email client preferences and email engagement differ from industry to industry and from brand to brand. Learn how *your* audience engages with email with Litmus Email Analytics—and get the data you need to optimize your email programs.



## Get to know your audience + 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 utilize Litmus Email Analytics generate an ROI of 45:1. That's 16% higher than the average ROI of brands that only rely on email insights provided by their ESPs.**

## Where did we get all this data?

The insights for this report are derived from over 10 billion opens collected worldwide with Litmus Email Analytics between April 1, 2018 and April 1, 2019. They highlight worldwide trends across all industries and verticals. Some email clients may be over- or under-represented due to image blocking.



### About the author

Bettina Specht, Senior Content and Campaigns Manager at Litmus, wrangles Litmus' content, including the Litmus blog, webinars, and—you guessed it—ebooks. When she's not busy creating content that helps email marketers learn about the newest trends, hacks, and industry research, she enjoys travel and great food (and ideally a combination of both).



### About the Email Analytics wizard

Gary Heslop, Principal Software Engineer at Litmus, is the master of the Litmus Email Analytics infrastructure. But Gary isn't just a wizard at building an infrastructure that can handle insane amounts of data and slicing and dicing that data to identify industry trends, he's also a certified plumber! We call that a skill set!



### 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.