

# 2013 EMAIL MARKETING METRICS BENCHMARK STUDY:

An Analysis of Messages  
Sent Q1-Q4, 2012



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# 2013 EMAIL MARKETING METRICS BENCHMARK STUDY: AN ANALYSIS OF MESSAGES SENT Q1-Q4, 2012

From opens to unsubscribes to click-throughs and beyond, email marketers love benchmarks. Of course, they aren't the only ones obsessed with statistics — see the legions of fantasy football enthusiasts, political prognosticators and Wall Street traders, among others — but emailers have a special yen for numbers because email marketing has so many ways you can use them to measure your success.

That said, Silverpop holds that accurately gauging your marketing success requires looking beyond industry benchmarks to see whether your email program met, exceeded or fell short of your goals while adding value to the customer/prospect relationship and maximizing conversions and revenue. Used correctly, however, benchmark data can give you a baseline scorecard to help understand how far you need to travel in your performance-improvement journey.

With this study of emails sent by 2,787 brands throughout 2012, Silverpop takes the typical benchmark study to a higher level in three respects:

## 1. Deeper Perspective in Benchmarks

Here, you'll find the classic list of email marketing benchmarks such as open, click and bounce rates, but with additional computations that deliver a deeper and more accurate picture of reader engagement and action on your email messages.

These include unique and gross open rates, number of opens per opener, the click-to-open rate, clicks per clicker, email message size, and complaint and unsubscribe rates. We'll also slice the data up by industry verticals.

## 2. International Comparison

Most benchmark studies are conducted from a U.S./single-country-centric viewpoint, but we wanted to see if metrics vary among different countries.

Thus, we first report overall statistics and then break down those statistics by four major countries/regions: United States, Canada, EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) and APAC (Asia-Pacific).

## 3. Benchmarks Beyond "Average"

Benchmarking your progress against your competitors is a necessary step when analyzing your email program's health, but you have to select the correct benchmarks.

Most studies report "average" benchmarks, but in our view, being average is no longer enough. In today's hypercompetitive marketplace, "average" has become the new bottom.

Instead, we hope to encourage you to set your sights higher. If you want to be a world-class marketing organization, compare yourself to those

who are doing the best on the benchmarks that are most important to you.

Thus, we present the median benchmark along with top- and bottom-performing quartiles for each benchmark. Although averages are the most common form of reporting statistics, in many cases the median offers a more meaningful benchmark.

At the end of this report, you'll find an appendix with more resources, including an explanation of the methodology, definitions of the terms used in this study, and links to white papers and tip sheets you can use to help improve your marketing performance.



## Next Step: Benchmark Against Yourself

This study presents a variety of key performance benchmarks for email messages sent to recipients around the world. However, this should be just the beginning for you.

One note to apply with this report: The metrics we examine are what we call “process” metrics, which measure activity on email messages. These are important measurements that help drive improvements in areas such as creative, deliverability and list hygiene, but it’s important to dig deeper.

Knowing your open rate exceeds the industry average, even placing your messages among the top-performing email marketers, doesn’t necessarily mean you’re meeting your most important business goals.

Understanding where your email program stands on process metrics is one half of the benchmarking equation. The other and arguably more important half is using “output” metrics, such as revenue, leads generated, cost savings, order size or number of downloads. These measure how well your email campaign delivered against your individual company’s business goals.

## Study Findings

### OPEN RATES

#### Overview

The open rate (both unique and gross, or total) can be calculated in multiple ways. For this study, we calculated the open rate as the number of measured opened

messages — including emails in which images were enabled as well as “implied opens” on text messages that recorded a click on a link or an HTML message whose viewer didn’t enable images but clicked on a link — divided by the number of delivered messages.

“Opens per opener” is a lesser-known but illustrative metric, which is calculated by dividing the total or gross measured opens by the number of unique opens. In simplest terms, it measures how many times a recipient (or recipients, when the message is forwarded) opens the same message. As above, this would also include “implied” opens.

#### UNIQUE OPEN RATE (by Country/Region)

Open Rate (Unique)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	19.7%	17.1%	35.7%	8.2%
U.S.	18.9%	16.5%	34.7%	8.2%
EMEA	19.6%	17.4%	34.9%	8.5%
Canada	24.2%	23.8%	36.4%	6.8%
APAC	31.5%	27.2%	44.6%	5.7%

#### UNIQUE OPEN RATE (by Industry)

Open Rate (Unique)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	17.2%	16.8%	27.3%	6.3% ▼
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	13.4%	12.0%	38.1%	8.3%
Computer Software	21.4%	20.4%	34.0%	7.9%
Consumer Products	23.8%	25.4%	32.4%	8.1%
Consumer Services	21.2%	18.5%	35.9%	7.4%
Education	26.2%	19.4%	46.1% ▲	7.5%
Financial Services	22.0%	20.9%	34.3%	7.2%
Healthcare	18.7%	17.9%	30.0%	9.7%
Travel & Leisure	13.6%	10.7%	38.5%	7.9%
Media & Publishing	16.4%	15.6%	30.9%	8.3%
Real Estate & Construction	20.9%	19.9%	32.1%	9.6%
Retail	21.3%	17.5%	39.6%	8.9%
Corporate Services	18.1%	15.7%	32.6%	8.8%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	17.8%	15.9%	31.8%	8.3%

#### GROSS OPEN RATE (by Country/Region)

Open Rate (Gross)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	38.6%	27.9%	84.7%	11.6%
U.S.	35.7%	26.5%	79.8%	11.8%
EMEA	39.0%	28.6%	83.8%	11.7%
Canada	42.1%	38.5%	70.0%	9.0%
APAC	80.6%	46.7%	127.9%	8.5%

▲ Strongest performer ▼ Weakest performer

**GROSS OPEN RATE (by Industry)**

Open Rate (Gross)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	27.2%	27.6%	50.9%	10.7%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	27.7%	23.3%	93.8%	11.8%
Computer Software	45.4%	35.4%	78.5%	12.1%
Consumer Products	53.3%	39.5%	96.5%	11.0%
Consumer Services	39.7%	30.3%	71.3%	10.7%
Education	63.6%	35.6%	126.5% ▲	10.9%
Financial Services	46.3%	38.1%	76.8%	10.3% ▼
Healthcare	35.5%	31.9%	69.9%	14.5%
Travel & Leisure	21.8%	15.0%	93.6%	10.7%
Media & Publishing	27.1%	23.0%	63.9%	11.8%
Real Estate & Construction	43.6%	34.3%	79.0%	12.0%
Retail	39.2%	24.8%	98.8%	13.1%
Corporate Services	40.6%	28.2%	93.4%	12.4%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	32.5%	30.3%	62.4%	11.8%

**OPENS PER OPENER (by Country/Region)**

Opens per Opener	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	1.95	1.64	2.37	1.42
U.S.	1.89	1.61	2.30	1.44
EMEA	1.98	1.64	2.41	1.37
Canada	1.74	1.62	1.92	1.32
APAC	2.56	1.71	2.87	1.51

**OPENS PER OPENER (by Industry)**

Opens per Opener	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	1.58	1.64	1.87	1.69
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	2.07	1.93	2.61	1.42
Computer Software	2.12	1.73	2.31	1.53
Consumer Products	2.24	1.56	2.98 ▲	1.36
Consumer Services	1.87	1.64	1.99	1.44
Education	2.43	1.84	2.75	1.46
Financial Services	2.10	1.82	2.24	1.44
Healthcare	1.90	1.78	2.33	1.50
Travel & Leisure	1.61	1.39	2.43	1.36
Media & Publishing	1.65	1.48	2.07	1.42
Real Estate & Construction	2.08	1.73	2.46	1.24 ▼
Retail	1.84	1.42	2.49	1.47
Corporate Services	2.24	1.80	2.87	1.41
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	1.83	1.90	1.96	1.41

**Observations**

While median open rates are fairly close across the board, top-quartile performers achieved open rates slightly more than double the median and more than four times higher than bottom-quartile performers. Disparities among the different results for the gross open rate are even greater, with top performers achieving rates six to 12 times higher than low performers.

When comparing industry verticals, it becomes clear that some companies are doing email right. Consumer products scored the highest among industry verticals, tallying a median 25.4 percent unique open rate.

Regarding the opens-per-opener rate, several factors can drive multiple opens:

- **Use of multiple devices:** A 2012 Litmus study revealed that only 3 percent of email users view an email message in more than one environment. Those few that do “triage” their emails on a mobile device and then view them later on their desktop or tablet are likely highly engaged, though, meaning that they could have a disproportionate impact on both the opens-per-opener and clicks-per-clicker rates.
- **Relevance/depth of content:** Emails that are long, include offer deadlines or are otherwise relevant and have a “shelf life” might be more likely to be opened a second time (or more).
- **Viral sharing:** When your subscribers forward your email using the “forward” link or button in their email software clients instead of your forward-to-a-friend link, subsequent opens by others would be associated with the original recipient.

Top-quartile performers achieved a rate of 2.37 opens per openers, 45 percent higher than the median and 67 percent higher than the bottom-quartile rate of 1.42.

None of the 14 industry verticals achieved a median of 2 or more opens per opener, although 11 of the top-quartile verticals cracked the mark.

Because the open rate doesn't accurately capture all opens due to image blocking and other factors, it can actually underreport the number of recipients who view your message. This uncertainty underscores the importance of not over-relying on the open rate as a key measure of subscriber engagement.

Despite these limitations, the open rate does have good value as an in-house benchmark that you can use to establish trends and diagnose issues with your email program.

## CLICK-THROUGH RATES

### Overview

The click-through rate (CTR) is the number of unique clicks on links in the email message divided by the number of delivered email messages in a campaign. The click-to-open rate (CTOR), also known as the effective rate, is the ratio of unique clicks as a percentage of unique opens. It measures click-through rates as a percentage of messages opened, instead of messages delivered.

Clicks per clicker, as with opens per opener, measures how often a recipient clicks links in the same message. It captures actions by

recipients who either click a specific link multiple times or click more than one link in the email message.

### CLICK-THROUGH RATE (by Country/Region)

Click-Through Rate (Unique)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	3.6%	2.3%	8.8%	0.6%
U.S.	3.3%	2.2%	8.3%	0.6%
EMEA	3.3%	2.4%	8.1%	0.6%
Canada	5.8%	2.7%	12.9%	0.6%
APAC	7.1%	4.5%	11.0%	0.8%

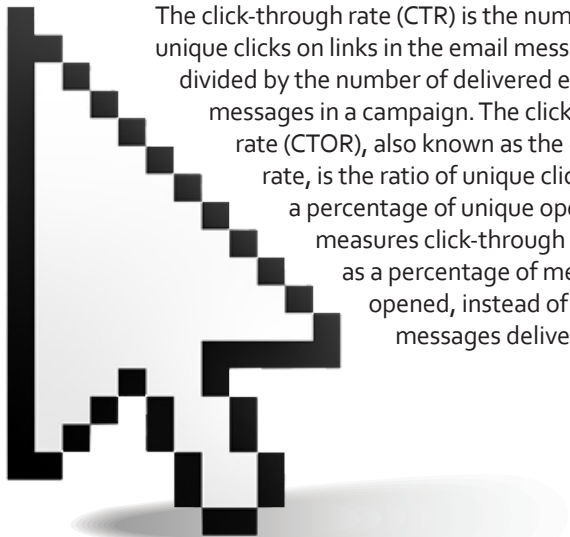
### CLICK-THROUGH RATE (by Industry)

Click-Through Rate (Unique)	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	2.0%	1.7%	4.8%	0.6%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	1.5%	1.0%	4.8%	0.5%
Computer Software	2.6%	1.4%	8.5%	0.7%
Consumer Products	3.6%	3.3%	6.7%	0.3% ▼
Consumer Services	3.9%	2.6%	8.9%	0.9%
Education	5.8%	2.8%	12.8% ▲	0.6%
Financial Services	3.3%	2.1%	7.9%	0.6%
Healthcare	4.2%	2.4%	9.9%	0.7%
Travel & Leisure	2.1%	1.5%	6.5%	0.7%
Media & Publishing	3.1%	2.2%	7.6%	0.6%
Real Estate & Construction	2.8%	2.3%	5.6%	0.8%
Retail	3.8%	2.7%	7.8%	0.7%
Corporate Services	3.2%	2.3%	8.0%	0.6%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	2.3%	2.1%	4.9%	0.6%

### CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE (by Country/Region)

Click-to-Open Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	18.0%	13.5%	24.6%	7.7%
U.S.	17.5%	13.1%	24.0%	7.5%
EMEA	16.9%	13.5%	23.4%	7.5%
Canada	24.2%	11.2%	35.5%	9.2%
APAC	22.5%	16.5%	24.7%	13.3%

▲ Strongest performer ▼ Weakest performer





**CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE (by Industry)**

Click-to-Open Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	11.6%	10.4%	17.7%	8.8%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	11.5%	7.9%	21.6%	6.1%
Computer Software	12.0%	6.9%	25.1%	8.4%
Consumer Products	15.3%	12.9%	20.6%	4.3% ▼
Consumer Services	18.3%	14.1%	24.9%	11.5%
Education	22.0%	14.3%	27.8%	8.4%
Financial Services	14.8%	10.3%	23.1%	8.7%
Healthcare	22.6%	13.3%	33.0% ▲	7.4%
Travel & Leisure	15.3%	13.8%	16.7%	8.8%
Media & Publishing	19.0%	14.4%	24.6%	7.8%
Real Estate & Construction	13.6%	11.6%	17.5%	7.9%
Retail	18.0%	15.2%	19.6%	7.6%
Corporate Services	17.9%	14.7%	24.7%	6.6%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	13.0%	13.5%	15.5%	7.5%

**CLICKS PER CLICKER (by Country/Region)**

Clicks per Clicker	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	1.74	1.51	1.86	1.48
U.S.	1.7	1.53	1.83	1.46
EMEA	1.75	1.54	1.84	1.59
Canada	1.89	1.64	2.08	1.39
APAC	1.95	1.78	2.05	1.44

**CLICKS PER CLICKER (by Industry)**

Clicks per Clicker	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	1.59	1.43	1.62	1.76
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	1.93	1.99	2.18	1.40
Computer Software	1.89	1.59	1.93	1.49
Consumer Products	1.45	1.27	1.68	1.38 ▼
Consumer Services	1.63	1.42	1.61	1.48
Education	2.01	1.51	2.05	1.47
Financial Services	1.92	1.82	1.75	1.42
Healthcare	1.61	2.02	1.43	1.46
Travel & Leisure	1.57	1.45	1.98	1.47
Media & Publishing	1.78	1.47	2.05	1.40
Real Estate & Construction	1.85	1.50	1.93	1.50
Retail	1.63	1.37	2.26 ▲	1.64
Corporate Services	2.02	1.57	2.08	1.44
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	1.84	1.69	2.02	1.59

**Observations**

Across the three click-based metrics, some key findings:

- **Click-Through Rate:** Top-quartile performers had click-through rates that were nearly four times higher than the median CTR of 2.3 percent. In contrast, bottom-quartile performers didn't even muster 1 percent click-throughs.

The education, healthcare, retail and consumer products/services verticals performed the best of the 14 industries. Higher click-through rates in these sectors might reflect their content, which usually relies more on news and information than on promotions. Especially regarding healthcare, the information might also be more likely to be personalized or relevant to recipients.

Education scored a noteworthy 2.8 percent median CTR and 12.8 percent for top performers, nearly five times higher than the median. Of all the performance metrics in this study, CTR revealed the greatest divide between top and bottom performers.

- **Click-to-Open Rate:** Again, top-quartile performers far surpassed their counterparts, notching click-to-open rates nearly double the median and three times higher than bottom performers. Splits among industry verticals were similar to those in the click-through category.

Here, healthcare emails had the highest CTOR. As noted above, this is likely a strong indication of email effectiveness because it measures unique clicks as a percentage of opened emails. Healthcare emails can have high relevance if they are personalized for recipients' individual situations.

- **Clicks per Clicker:** This metric is a clear indicator of recipient activity on your email message. Here, the difference between high and low performers is less pronounced than in other categories, but the top quartile still tallied 23 percent more clicks per clicker than the median rate. Strong performers in the industry verticals include retail, computer hardware, education, and media and publishing, with top-quartile companies for each tallying slightly more than 2 clicks per clicker.

In contrast with other metrics covered in this study, clicks per clicker measures consumer behavior, not marketer-defined metrics. Email messages with higher clicks per clicker usually reflect content that gives consumers several options to generate multiple unique clicks in a single message, or useful content the recipient wants to retain and consult more than once.

## MESSAGE SIZE

### Overview

As with subject line length, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to optimizing message size. Message context, corporate branding, message length and the amount of HTML and images used will determine how large a message your email becomes.

On desktop computers connected to the home or corporate network, message size is of little consequence — an email of 200KB might load in roughly the same time as a 40KB message. Optimizing for message size becomes more important as more recipients view your messages on smartphones connected to a cell network

with only two bars of coverage or less, not just to avoid long load times but also to keep messages from being truncated, or cut off due to size.

Truncation forces the reader to click again to read your full message. Keeping your most important content higher up in the email becomes key if you can't slim down your messages.

A recent rule of thumb is to keep email messages in the 50KB range to ensure they load quickly. While many companies send emails of 80KB to 120KB or more with no issues, optimizing message size may become more important as a growing percentage of your subscribers read your emails on mobile devices.

### Observations

The majority of companies in our study are keeping messages below 40KB with a median size of 15.9KB — a good size that should load fairly quickly regardless of viewing platform. Note that for this metric we've labeled the top and bottom quartiles as "Smallest" and "Largest," because we have no optimal numeric size.

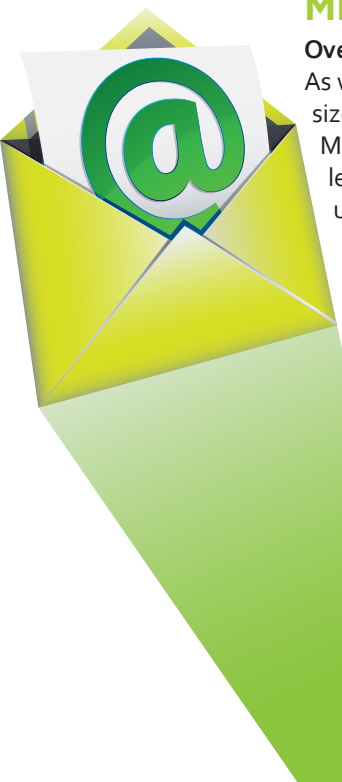
However, a message of only a few kilobytes is likely a text-only message and might significantly underperform versus a comparable but HTML-designed message many times larger.

### MESSAGE SIZE (by Country/Region)

Message Size (kilobytes)	Mean	Median	"Smallest" Quartile	"Largest" Quartile
Overall	18.3	15.9	6.4	35.1
U.S.	17.3	14.9	6.4	35.1
EMEA	22.2	18.8	6.8	36.0
Canada	16.1	13.6	4.2	31.2
APAC	20.9	19.5	5.5	33.7

### MESSAGE SIZE (by Industry)

Message Size (kilobytes)	Mean	Median	"Smallest" Quartile	"Largest" Quartile
Nonprofits	23.7	19.6	6.1	40.5
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	17.4	17.3	6.7	37.2
Computer Software	14.0	12.4	6.9	26.5
Consumer Products	14.6	12.6	6.3	33.6
Consumer Services	19.6	17.7	5.1	33.7
Education	16.0	15.8	6.9	27.9
Financial Services	17.4	13.6	6.9	37.9
Healthcare	19.1	12.6	6.7	40.6
Travel & Leisure	12.3	11.8	6.8	30.8
Media & Publishing	18.8	16.8	4.1	34.3
Real Estate & Construction	18.8	16.0	9.6	33.0
Retail	20.8	16.8	7.1	36.6
Corporate Services	23.7	19.1	7.0	41.6
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	15.1	12.7	6.6	33.9





# LIST CHURN METRICS

## Overview

The unsubscribe rate and spam (abuse) complaint rate measure reader disengagement: Does your email program (or specific messages) match what your subscribers expected when they signed up for your emails?

In general, unsubscribers are telling you that your program has missed the mark or no longer meets their needs, usually because your emails aren't

relevant to them. Or, they want to change email addresses or preferences but see no option but to leave. In contrast, the spam complaint is an immediate red flag. Your subscriber doesn't want your email message and can't find or doesn't trust your unsubscribe process enough to use it to leave the list.

The hard bounce rate measures permanent delivery errors: How many email messages were undelivered because the addresses either don't

exist or belong to closed accounts? A high bounce rate indicates problems with accurate data collection at opt-in as well as with email address churn among subscribers.

Each of these rates can be negligible by itself, but when added together during a year of message deliveries, they can cost you a quarter to a half of your list.

In our study, a high bounce rate is definitely a feature common to low-performing companies. The hard bounce rate is below 1 percent for both the overall median and top-quartile companies but shoots up to nearly 10 percent in some industry verticals.

## Observations

The bounce rate highlights the difference between email's top performers and its median or bottom performers. Top-performing companies had hard bounce rates roughly one-seventieth that of bottom performers – which, when mailing to a list of 500,000, would be the difference between 500 hard bounces and 35,000.

This indicates that top performers are likely more vigilant about verifying email addresses before adding them to the database and about performing list hygiene to remove undeliverable addresses. The result is that they have to spend a lot less time and money reacquiring them.

Across industries, top-quartile performers were very consistent, with all segments falling in the 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent range.

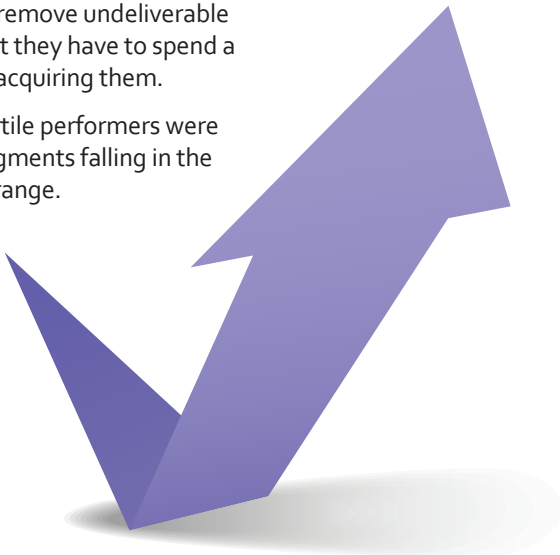
HARD BOUNCE RATES (by Country/Region)

Hard Bounce Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	2.2%	0.8%	0.1%	6.9%
U.S.	2.3%	0.8%	0.1%	7.0%
EMEA	1.7%	0.6%	0.1%	5.7%
Canada	1.9%	0.7%	0.1%	6.4%
APAC	3.7%	1.2%	0.1%	9.5%

HARD BOUNCE RATES (by Industry)

Hard Bounce Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	1.7%	0.4%	0.1%	9.0%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	3.2%	1.3%	0.1%	8.0%
Computer Software	2.8%	1.3%	0.2%	6.9%
Consumer Products	2.0%	1.0%	0.1%	4.1%
Consumer Services	1.8%	0.5%	0.1%	6.4%
Education	3.7%	1.1%	0.1%	9.4% ▼
Financial Services	2.2%	1.0%	0.2%	6.1%
Healthcare	2.1%	1.4%	0.1%	6.0%
Travel & Leisure	2.1%	0.8%	0.2%	6.5%
Media & Publishing	1.9%	0.4%	0.1% ▲	8.3%
Real Estate & Construction	1.1%	0.6%	0.2%	4.8%
Retail	1.3%	0.2%	0.1%	7.4%
Corporate Services	2.0%	0.9%	0.1%	5.7%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	2.0%	1.1%	0.1%	4.7%

▲ Strongest performer ▼ Weakest performer



### Observations

As with the open rate, the best use of the unsubscribe rate is by examining it over time for trends. An unsubscribe rate that increases over time or remains constant while spam complaints increase likely signals subscriber discontent.

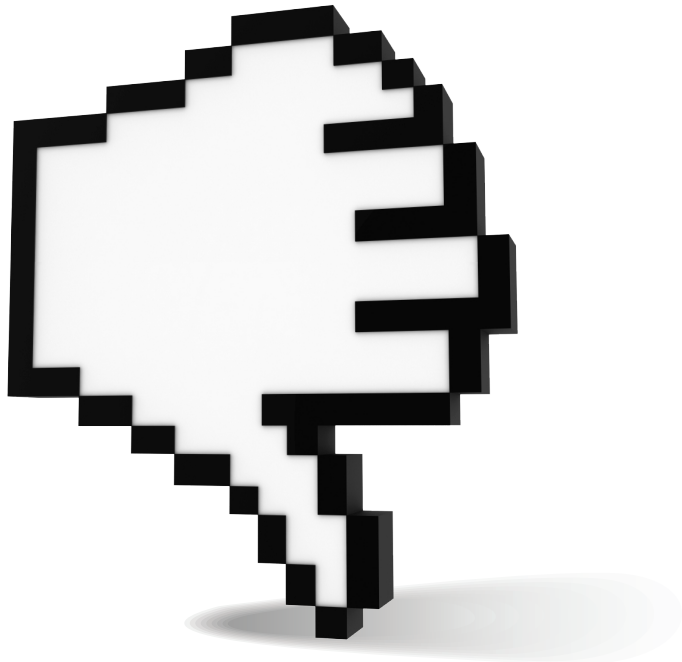
While even the bottom-quartile companies see an unsubscribe rate just above or below half of a percentage point, those figures are still more than three to four times the median rate and more than 20 times higher than the best performers, whose customers rarely unsubscribe (median 0.17 percent across all regions). If you're sending three emails a week, that difference can add up to thousands of subscribers over a year.

### UNSUBSCRIBE RATES (by Country/Region)

Unsubscribe Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	0.25%	0.17%	0.03%	0.60%
U.S.	0.25%	0.18%	0.03%	0.58%
EMEA	0.26%	0.16%	0.03%	0.66%
Canada	0.21%	0.13%	0.03%	0.51%
APAC	0.26%	0.15%	0.03%	0.71%

### UNSUBSCRIBE RATES (by Industry)

Unsubscribe Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	0.20%	0.17%	0.02%	0.51%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	0.24%	0.15%	0.01% ▲	0.59%
Computer Software	0.25%	0.17%	0.03%	0.56%
Consumer Products	0.27%	0.18%	0.04%	0.65%
Consumer Services	0.25%	0.18%	0.04%	0.54%
Education	0.28%	0.18%	0.04%	0.69% ▼
Financial Services	0.20%	0.13%	0.03%	0.67%
Healthcare	0.22%	0.17%	0.04%	0.50%
Travel & Leisure	0.19%	0.14%	0.04%	0.61%
Media & Publishing	0.19%	0.10%	0.03%	0.53%
Real Estate & Construction	0.17%	0.10%	0.04%	0.42%
Retail	0.16%	0.12%	0.04%	0.49%
Corporate Services	0.30%	0.21%	0.03%	0.65%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	0.27%	0.21%	0.02%	0.49%



**SPAM COMPLAINT RATES (by Country/Region)**

Spam Complaint Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Overall	0.07%	0.05%	0.01%	0.19%
U.S.	0.08%	0.05%	0.01%	0.19%
EMEA	0.06%	0.04%	0.01%	0.16%
Canada	0.06%	0.05%	0.01%	0.13%
APAC	0.05%	0.03%	0.01%	0.14%

**SPAM COMPLAINT RATES (by Industry)**

Spam Complaint Rate	Mean	Median	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Nonprofits	0.07%	0.04%	0.01%	0.17%
Computer Hardware, Telecom & Electronics	0.03%	0.02%	0.01%	0.21%
Computer Software	0.08%	0.04%	0.01%	0.27% ▼
Consumer Products	0.09%	0.07%	0.02%	0.15%
Consumer Services	0.08%	0.06%	0.01%	0.19%
Education	0.07%	0.05%	0.01%	0.16%
Financial Services	0.06%	0.03%	0.01%	0.20%
Healthcare	0.06%	0.04%	0.01%	0.14%
Travel & Leisure	0.10%	0.08%	0.01%	0.16%
Media & Publishing	0.07%	0.04%	0.01%	0.20%
Real Estate & Construction	0.05%	0.04%	0.01% ▲	0.18%
Retail	0.06%	0.05%	0.02%	0.12%
Corporate Services	0.08%	0.05%	0.01%	0.18%
Industrial Manufacturing & Services	0.05%	0.04%	0.01%	0.11%

▲ Strongest performer ▼ Weakest performer

**Observations**

While recipient engagement has become increasingly important in inbox delivery, abuse (spam) complaints are still an important factor ISPs consider when deciding whether to deliver your messages to the inbox, route them to the junk/spam folder or even block them entirely.

As a result, minimizing abuse complaints and actively monitoring the number and percentage of complaints for each mailing remains an important aspect of performance monitoring. While each ISP is different, a rule of thumb is not to exceed one to two complaints per thousand messages.

Across industry and geographic locations, the complaint rates for top-quartile performers are about one per 10,000, while most of the bottom-quartile performers were within the two per 1,000 range.



## Methodology, Glossary & Resources

### Research Methodology

This study examined messages sent by Silverpop's Engage client base. Researchers looked at all messages sent by 2,787 brands from 40 countries.

A broad set of message types was included in the study — from promotional emails and content-based newsletters to notifications and transactional messages — sent by companies in a variety of industries.

For this study, researchers analyzed various metrics for both the overall category (all 40 sender countries, including the United States, Canada, EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa) and Asian Pacific (APAC) countries), and for just the United States, Canada, EMEA and APAC. Because the overall numbers include countries beyond the United States, Canada, EMEA and APAC, in some instances the overall median might actually be higher (or lower) than the combined median of the United States, Canada, EMEA and APAC.

**Reporting the Findings:** Each performance chart features statistics that include the mean, median, and top and bottom quartiles. The standard statistical definition of quartiles was used for this study. The "top quartile" is calculated by taking the median of all data *above* the overall median, and "bottom quartile" is the median of all data *below* the overall data median.



**TWEET THIS!**

Reading Silverpop's "2013 Email Marketing Metrics Benchmark Study"

### Definitions for Terms Used in This Paper

**Open:** "Open" refers to an HTML email message whose viewing is recorded by a clear 1 X 1 pixel image. When a message is opened and images are enabled, the image calls the server and the message is then counted as an open. The number of opens counted for this research include both this direct reporting and an "implied open" on text messages that recorded a click on any link in the message or an HTML message whose viewer did not enable images but clicked on a link.

**Open Rate (Unique):** The unique open rate measures one open per recipient and is expressed as a percentage of the total number of delivered email messages. To calculate the rate, divide the number of unique opens by the total number of delivered emails, and then multiply by 100 to display the percentage.

**Gross Open Rate:** Sometimes called the total open rate and also expressed as a percentage of total delivered email messages. It measures how many times the email message is opened, either by the original recipients or by those to whom the original recipient forwards the message by using the "forward" button in the email client instead of a "forward to a friend" link. To calculate, divide the total number of opens by the total number of delivered messages and multiply by 100.

**Median Opens per Opener:** Expresses the median number of times a recipient opens the message; exactly half are above that number and half below.

**Click-Through Rate (CTR):** Measures the percentage of email messages that drew at least one click. For this study, it's expressed as unique click-through rate, counting only one click per recipient. To calculate the click-through rate, divide the number of unique clicks by the number of delivered messages and multiply by 100.

**Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR):** Measures the percentage of opened messages that recorded clicks. To calculate, divide the number of unique clicks by the number of opened messages and multiply by 100.

**Median Clicks per Clicker:** The median number of times a recipient clicks any link in an email message.

**Message Size:** The actual size of a message measured in kilobytes (KB). Factors affecting message size include the amount of text, HTML coding and images in a message, as well as whether multipart format is used (both an HTML and text version within the same message).

**Hard Bounce:** This study analyzed "hard bounces," which are permanent delivery failures because the address doesn't exist or the account was closed.

**Hard Bounce Rate:** The percentage of sent messages that failed (bounced) because the address doesn't exist or the account was closed. To calculate, divide the total number of bounced messages by the total number of emails sent. Multiply by 100 to express the percentage.

**Spam Complaint:** A complaint registered by a recipient who indicates that the email message is unwanted, whether it fits the classic definition of "spam" as an unsolicited email or simply any message the recipient no longer wants to receive. The majority of spam complaints are received via a direct "feedback" loop with an ISP.

**Spam Complaint Rate:** The percentage of delivered email messages that generate spam complaints. To calculate, divide the total number of spam complaints by delivered emails and multiply by 100.

**Unsubscribe Rate:** The percentage of delivered email messages that generate unsubscribe requests. To calculate, divide the number of unsubscribe requests received by delivered emails and multiply by 100.

## Additional Resources

### White Papers & ebooks

- 1) ["Almost Everything You Wanted to Know About Email Marketing"](#)
- 2) ["Multiscreen Maturation: Email Design Strategies and Tips for Connecting Across Devices"](#)
- 3) ["7 Digital Marketing Strategies Made Better Through an Integrated Platform"](#)

### Webinars & Slideshares

- 1) ["Multiscreen Email Design: Lessons from the Pros"](#)
- 2) ["Don't Let a Good Shopping Cart Get Away: Tips for remarketing with email"](#)
- 3) ["10 Retail Emails to Automate"](#)

### Blogs

- 1) ["Click-to-Open Rate: Are You Using This Gem of a Metric?"](#)
- 2) ["Browse Abandonment Emails: How You Can Use Them to Bring Browsers Back to Buy"](#)
- 3) ["Time to Whack Your Email Program with the Behavior Stick?"](#)

### Videos

- 1) ["Moving From Single Emails to Behavior-Driven Series or Tracks"](#)
- 2) ["Re-Engaging Inactive Subscribers"](#)
- 3) ["Onboarding Programs: Transitioning from a single welcome message to a dynamic multi-message format"](#)

Silverpop's digital marketing automation platform was designed to make it simple to build hyper-personalized campaigns, creating individualized experiences for every relationship. [Watch our demo](#) to see our product in action, and [contact Silverpop](#) to see how we can help you accomplish your marketing goals for 2013.

