

2020 State of Email Engagement

Billions of email opens. Tons of insights. Learn the top trends on where-when-how people are interacting with email this year.



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Hello there.

Email engagement is crucial when it comes to the health of your email program. Yes, open rates and click through rates, but also some non-traditional metrics like: what email client people are opening on, print rates, and forward rates. Understanding this data is a powerful way to refine your email strategy and accelerate hitting your business goals.

[60% of marketers](#) say amping up personalization is a top priority for them this year. What better way to deliver a personalized experience than by understanding your audience's email environment, device, and location preferences.... And then optimizing for them?

In the report that follows, we analyzed almost 10 billion email opens anonymously collected and aggregated with Litmus Email Analytics from January 1 - September 30, 2020.

We include worldwide trends for all industries and verticals. Some email clients may be over- or under-represented due to image blocking.

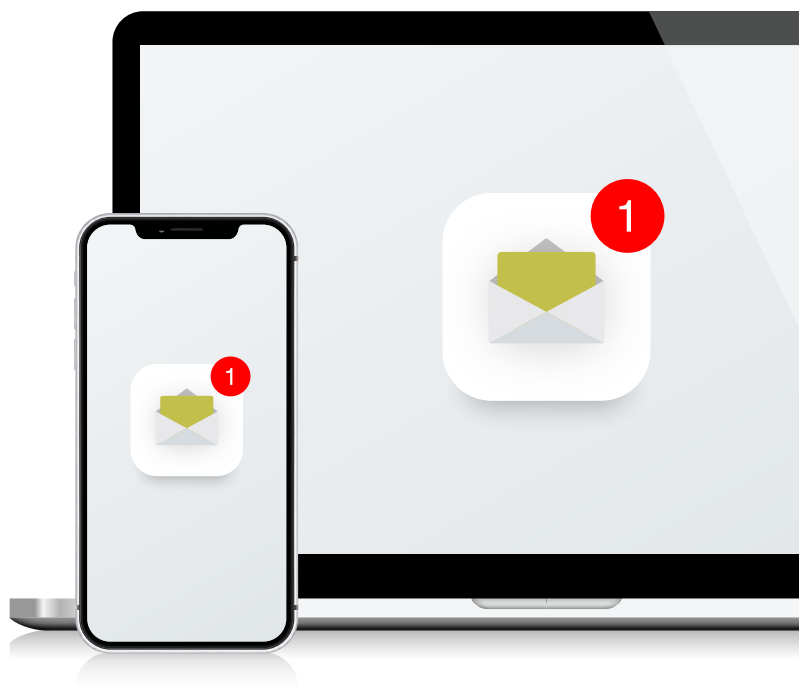
Leverage this report to understand and know current email trends (always good to be the person in the virtual room with some data on the fly!), as a benchmark for your own program, and for ways to use these insights to inform your email program strategy.

Ready to get started?

Cheers,

The Litmus Team

P.S. Want to stay at the top of your email game? Join over 300,000 email marketing pros who rely on Litmus for expert advice and analysis. [Sign up for our awesome emails.](#)





2

Know where your audience opens emails.

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

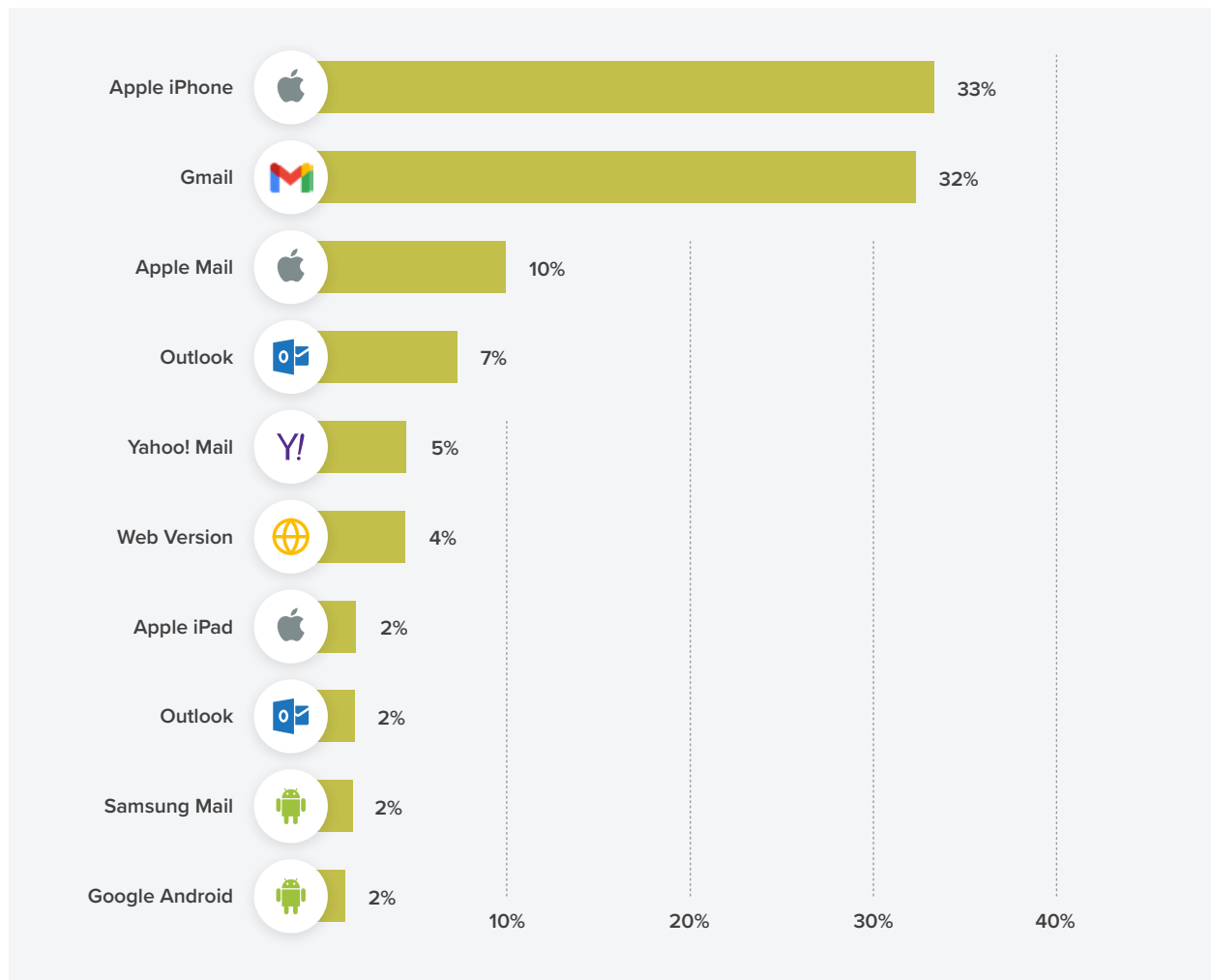
Having a good understanding of the devices and apps your audience uses gives you deeper insight into not only who they are, but also how you should approach your email strategy. Do most of your subscribers consume your content on mobile devices? Or do they engage with it on a desktop?

Knowing the answers to these questions will help you think through subscriber experiences like screen sizes, image load times, and more. Also, knowing which clients your audience uses can inform list segmentation strategy for deliverability. For example, if you know that a large portion of your audience uses Outlook, you might want to have a completely different design and cadence to get delivered to the inbox. When you know details like these, you can really take your email program to the next level. Let's [dive into the data](#).

Top email clients

Apple iPhone and Gmail continue to duke it out for the #1 spot this year.

Email client market share from January 1 – September 30, 2020

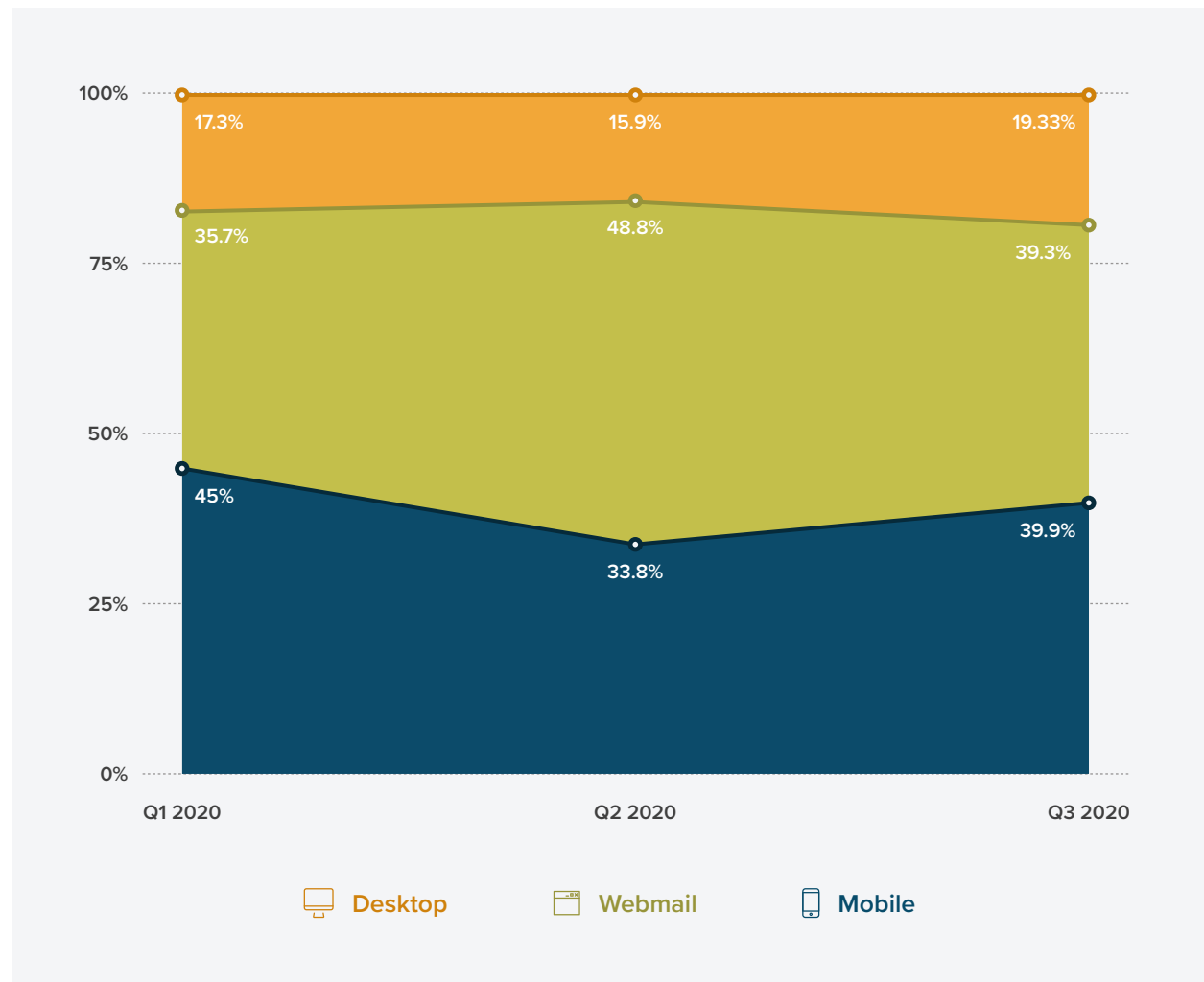


Apple iPhone and Gmail continue to be on each other's heels when it comes to claiming the top email client spot. Apple iPhone eked out the top spot with 33.37% of the market over Gmail's 32.38%. Though the two were going back and forth with pretty large swings throughout the year. It will be interesting to see how [Gmail's announcements on AMP for email support](#) will impact this continuous battle.

The most popular reading environments

Webmail has surpassed mobile as the top way to read email.

Most popular reading environments, measured by email opens, January 1 – September 30, 2020

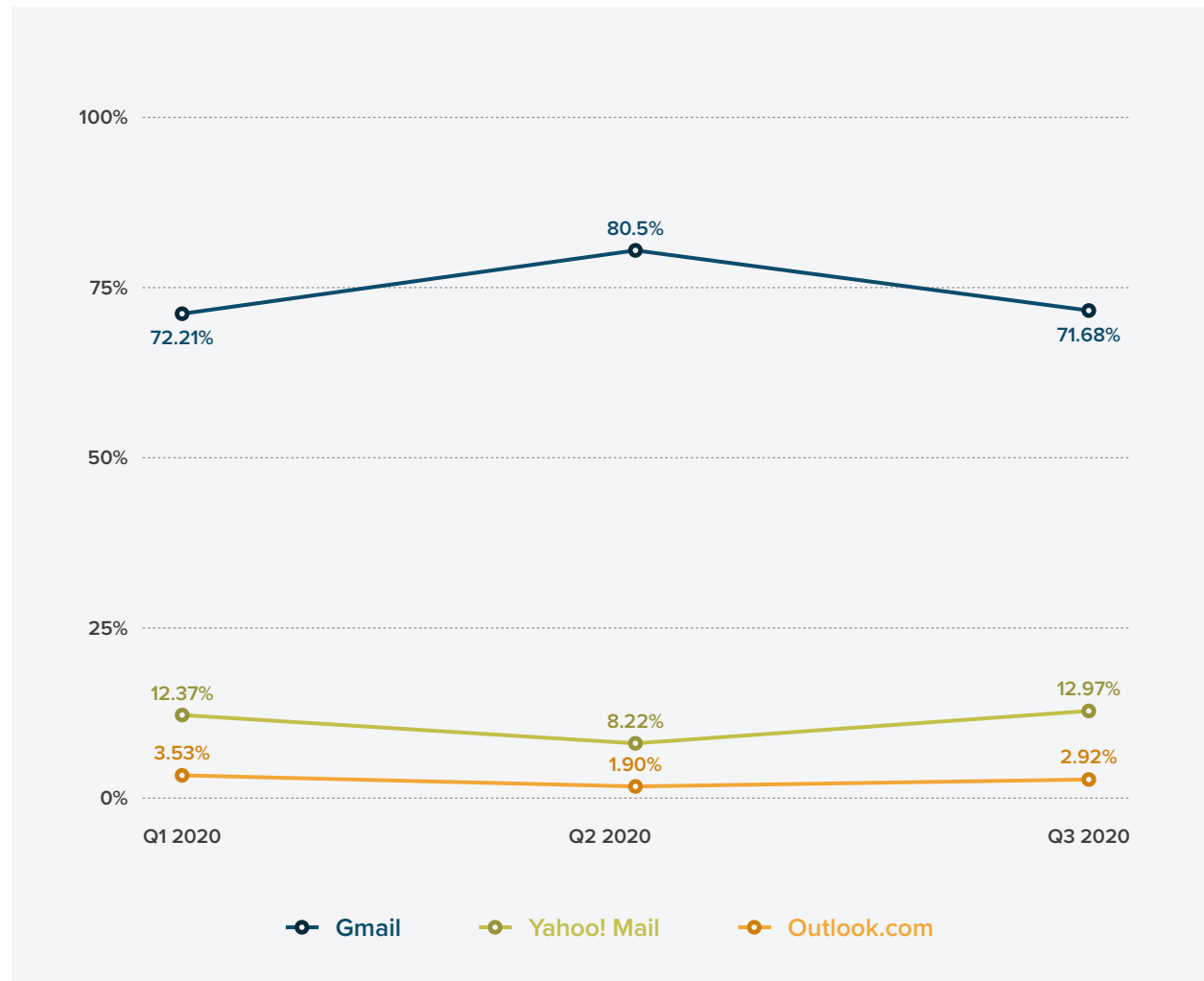


Last year, mobile was the preferred way to consume email. However, this year, mobile rates went down from 42% in 2019 to 39% in 2020. We saw the largest dip from 42% to 33% in mobile opens between April and June of 2020, which could be attributed to COVID-19. With people being in front of their computers for more and varied hours, this is a plausible explanation.

The most popular webmail clients

Gmail is the #1 web email client.

Most popular webmail clients, measured by email opens, January 1 – September 30, 2020

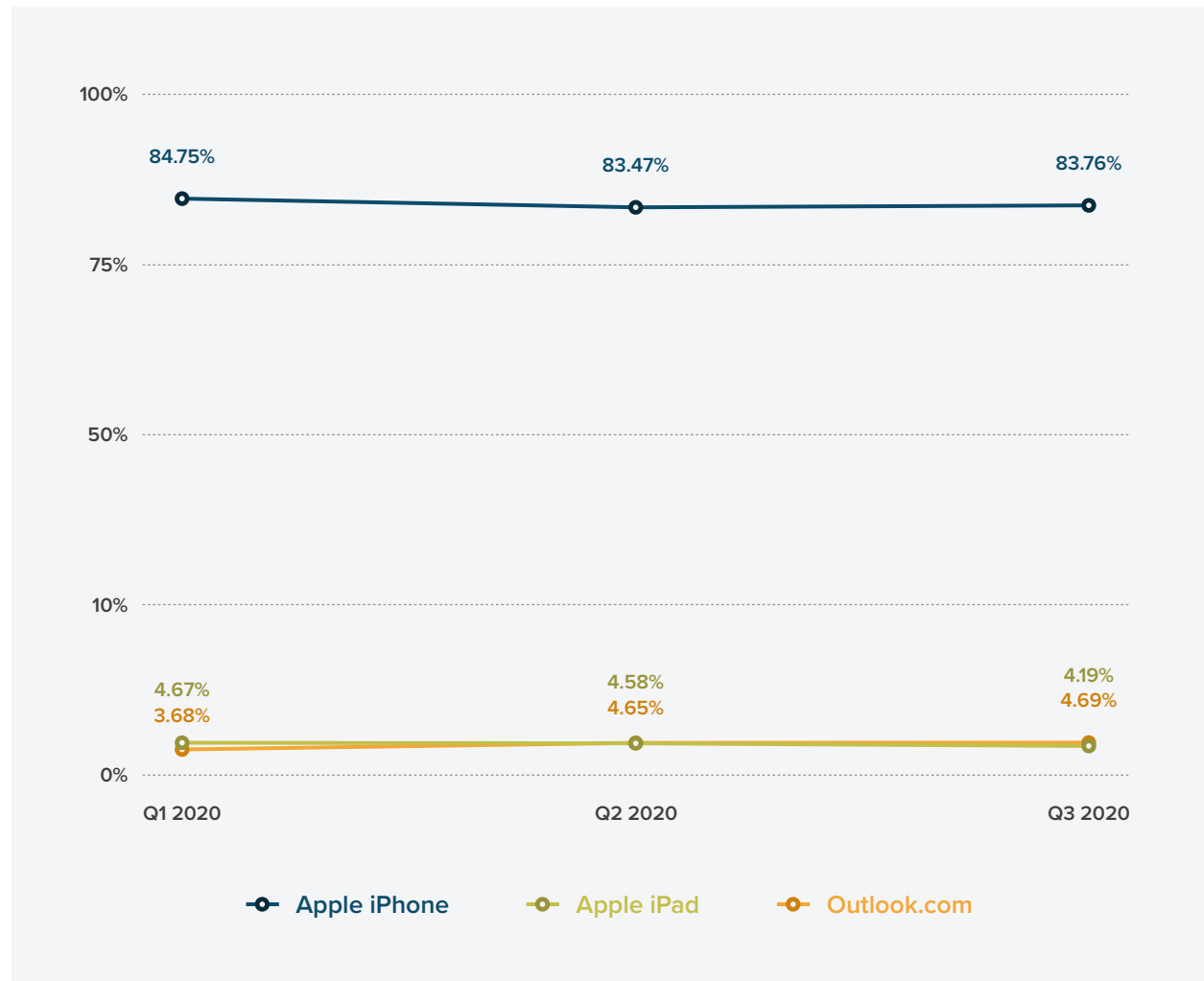


It's not surprising that Gmail is the leader in webmail clients. Almost 76% of webmail opens happen in Gmail with Yahoo! Mail in the next spot with 10.62%.

The most popular mobile email clients

Apple iPhone is the #1 mobile email client.

Most popular mobile clients, measured by email opens, January 1 – September 30, 2020

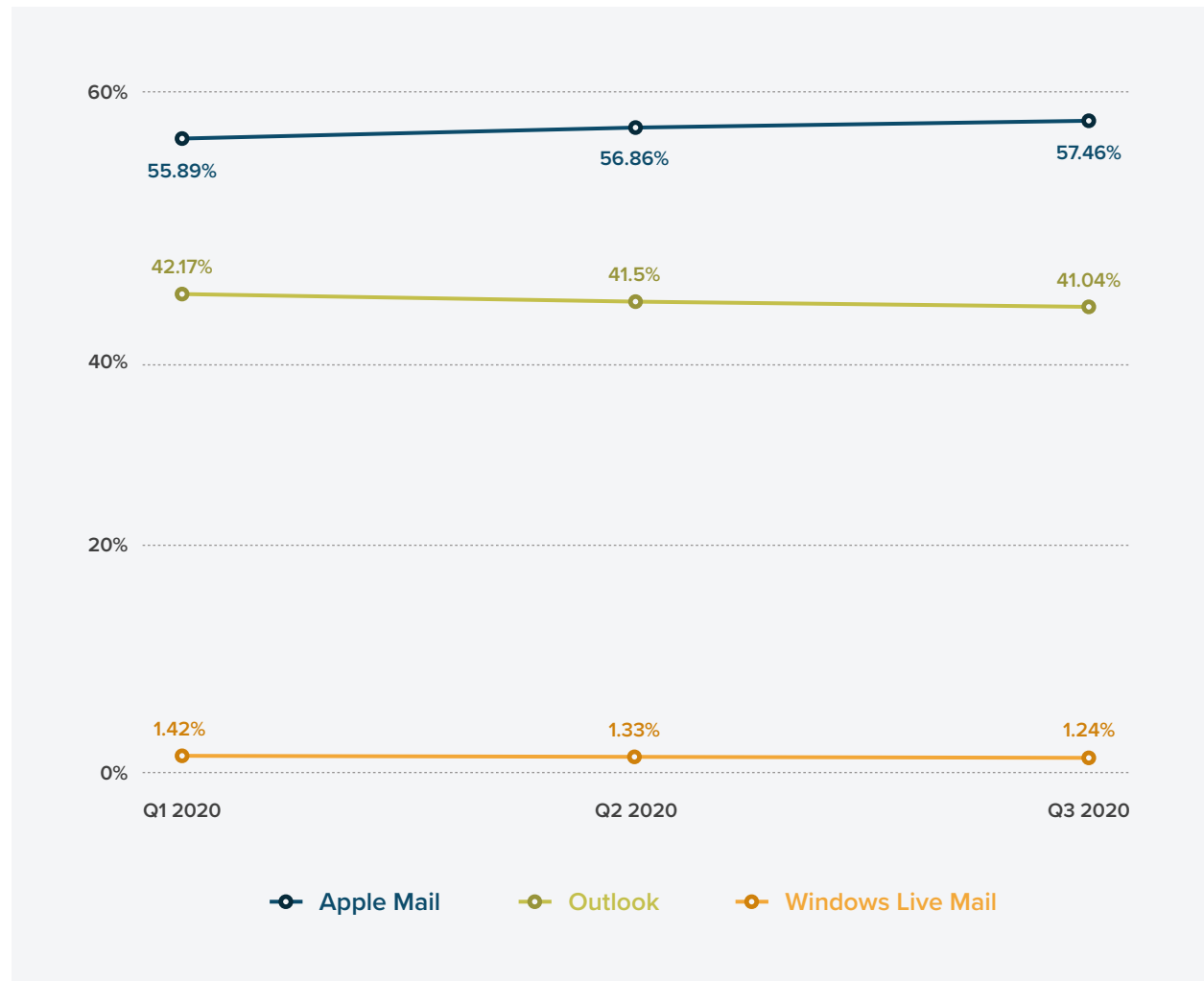


Apple's iPhone continues to be the seemingly untouchable leader in mobile email. About 84% of all mobile email opens happen on iPhones, and an additional 4.5% come from Apple's iPad, the second most popular mobile email client. Outlook takes the third spot from last year's Android with a 4.31% vs. 3.03% share, respectively.

The most popular desktop clients

Apple Mail is the #1 desktop client.

Most popular desktop clients, measured by email opens, January 1 – September 30, 2020



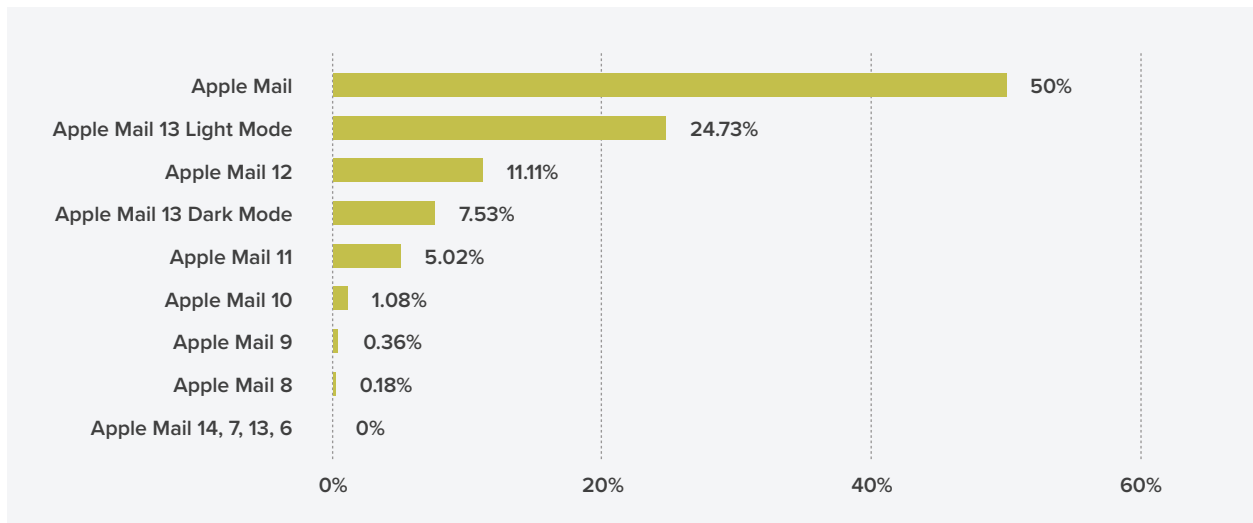
Apple Mail continues to hold the top spot when it comes to desktop clients, with Outlook holding firm in second. These two desktop clients hold the lion's share of the market.

What about Dark Mode?

One other trend we're keeping up with? Dark Mode. And for the first time ever, we're able to share some very early data. So, consider this your sneak peek.

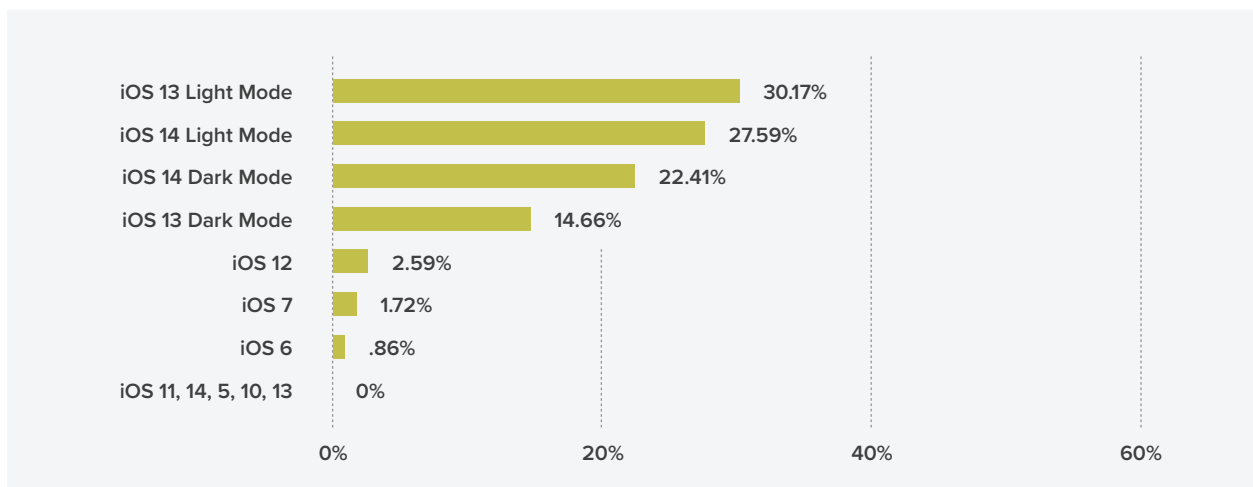
Of those using Apple Mail, 7.5% are using Dark Mode.

Dark Mode trends as detected by Litmus Analytics, September 14 – October 15, 2020



Of those using Apple iPhone, 36% are using Dark Mode.

Dark Mode trends as detected by Litmus Analytics, September 14 – October 15, 2020





Ideas for action:

Taking into account email clients, most popular reading environments, and Dark Mode detection is a smart move when it comes to optimizing your strategy. Check out our tips below on how to do just that.

- 1. Look at the most popular email clients for your audience.**

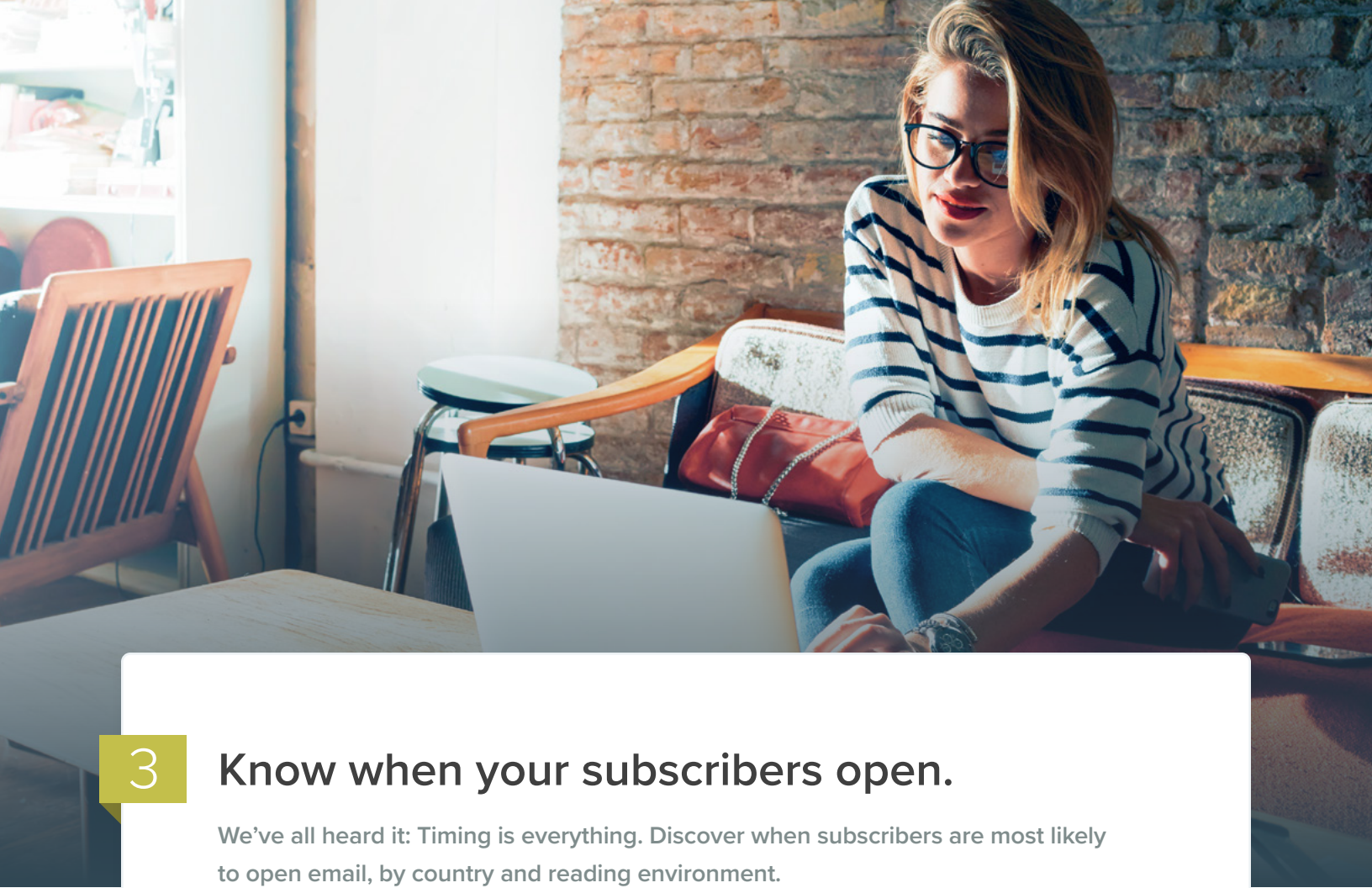
When was the last time you took a look at the breakdown of email clients for your own subscribers? Do some analysis and see if it's still the same as the last time you checked. Then, optimize your testing, design, and more based on that. Bonus tip: See if there are differences in key audiences you market to. If there are, you may want to adjust your strategy accordingly.

- 2. See what devices your audience uses.**

It's always a good idea to keep the pulse on how people are consuming your content. If you see a trend moving away from mobile, design your emails with that in mind. However, you should always make sure your emails will render across mobile devices. As mentioned earlier, there was a pretty large dip on mobile earlier this year, but it's already on the rebound.

- 3. Discover if your audience prefers Dark Mode.**

Use Litmus Analytics to determine what percentage of your audience is using Dark Mode. Alternatively, if you find that your audience reads emails using Apple technology—especially an Apple iPhone—you may want to incorporate a Dark Mode experience into your strategy.



3

Know when your subscribers open.

We've all heard it: Timing is everything. Discover when subscribers are most likely to open email, by country and reading environment.

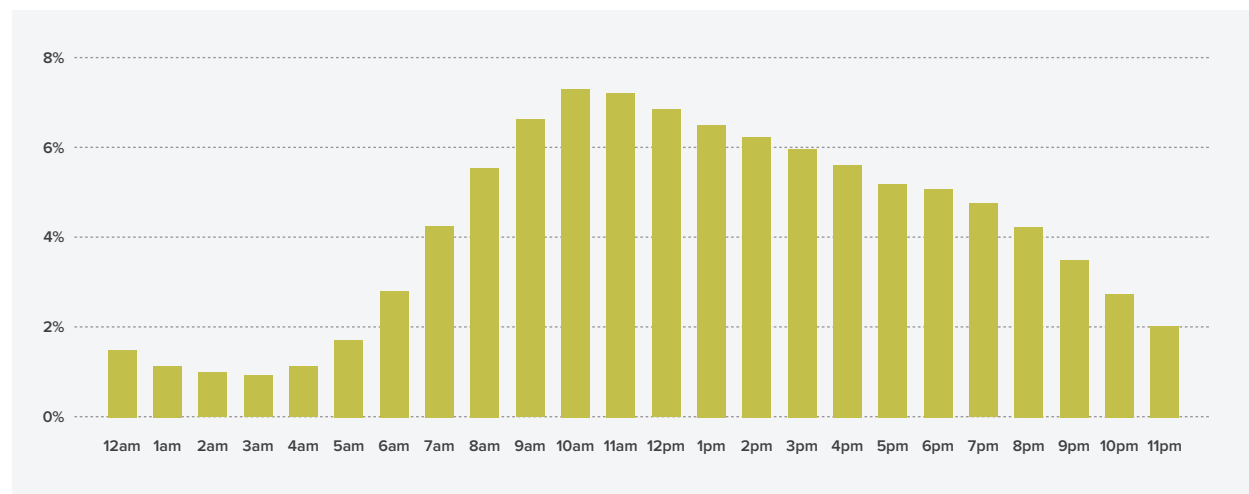
We've all heard that rumor in the email community: The best time to send an email is on Tuesday at 10am local time. But does that continue to hold true?

Knowing when your audience is most likely to open your email is key to setting your campaign up for success. And one size certainly doesn't fit all when it comes to opening times around the world, so understanding your list demographics—and optimizing for them—is another way to hone your strategy. [GetResponse](#) found that there's only a 1% chance of an email being opened 24 hours after a send and that just over 20% of all message opens are during the first hour after delivery.

United States

In the United States, the most popular reading time for email is the morning. About 7% of all opens happen at 10am, and 21% of all opens happen between 9am and noon local time which is consistent with last year.

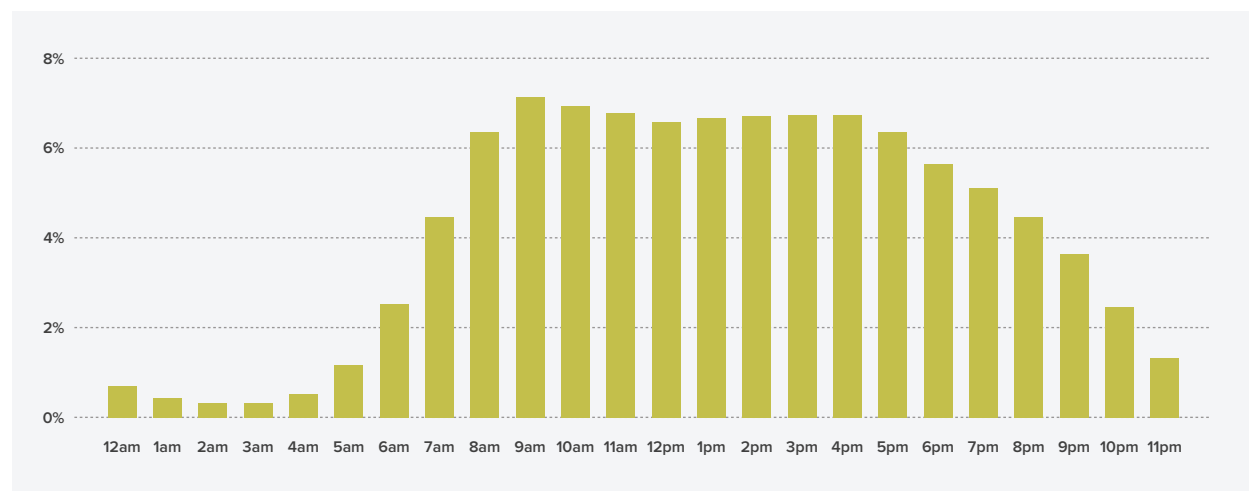
United States: Email opens by time of day



United Kingdom

For the first quarter, the open times in the United Kingdom were consistent with those of last year, where 5pm was the highest open time. However in the second and third quarters, behaviors changed. People were most likely to open around 11am local time in the second quarter and at 9am local time in the third quarter. This is likely pandemic-related with the major shifts in routines.

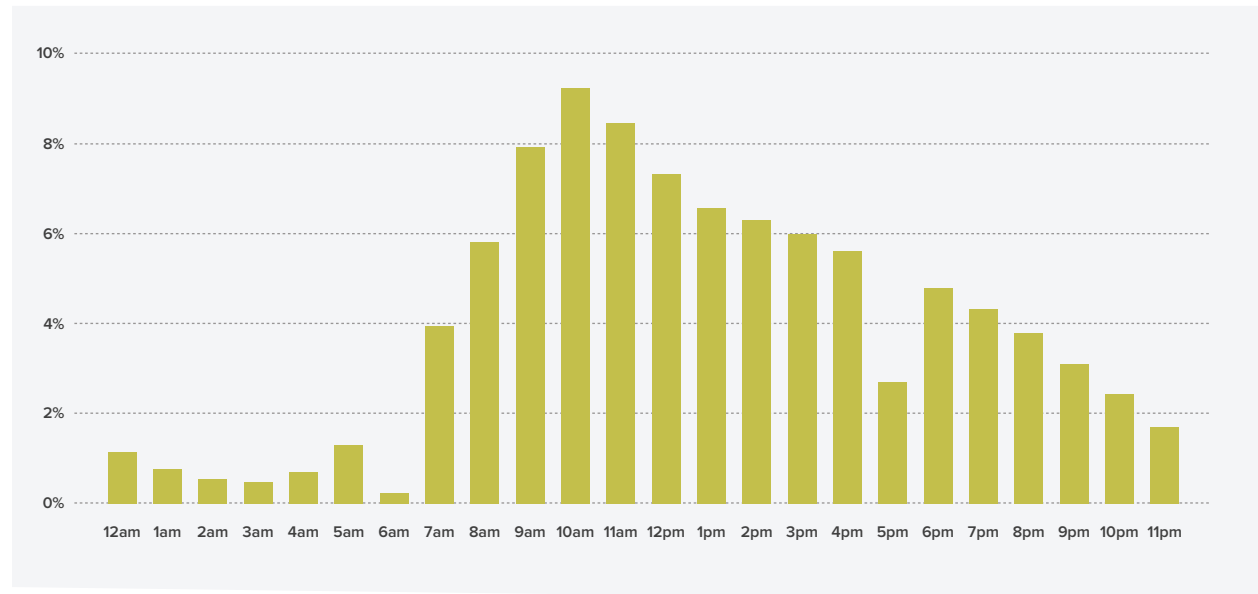
United Kingdom: Email opens by time of day



Canada

In Canada, the most popular time to read email continues to be between 10am and 11am local time, with more than 9% of all emails being opened during that time.

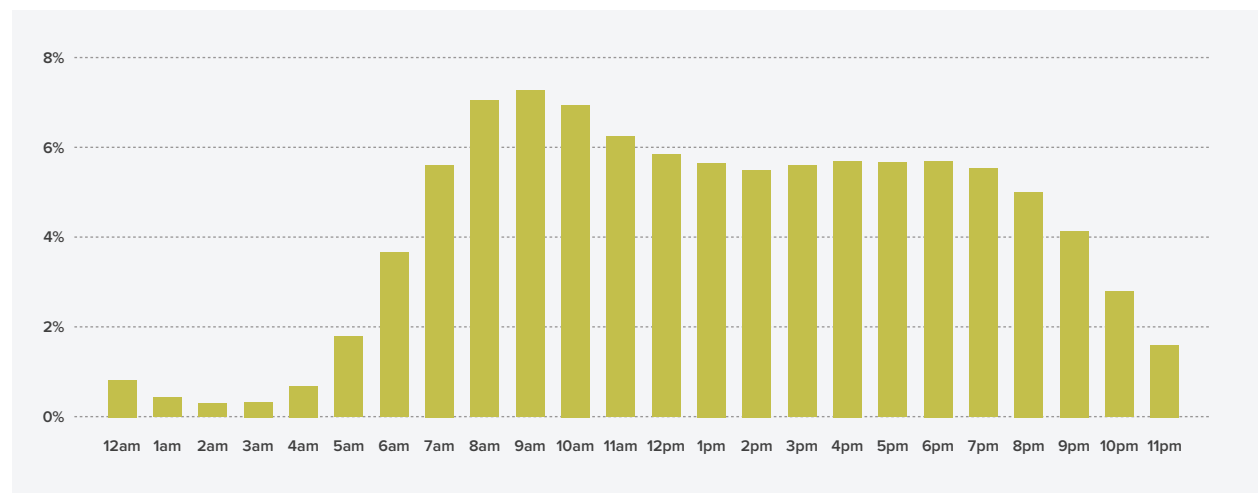
Canada: Email opens by time of day



Germany

Most emails in Germany are read between 9am and 10am local time, which is consistent with last year's data as well.

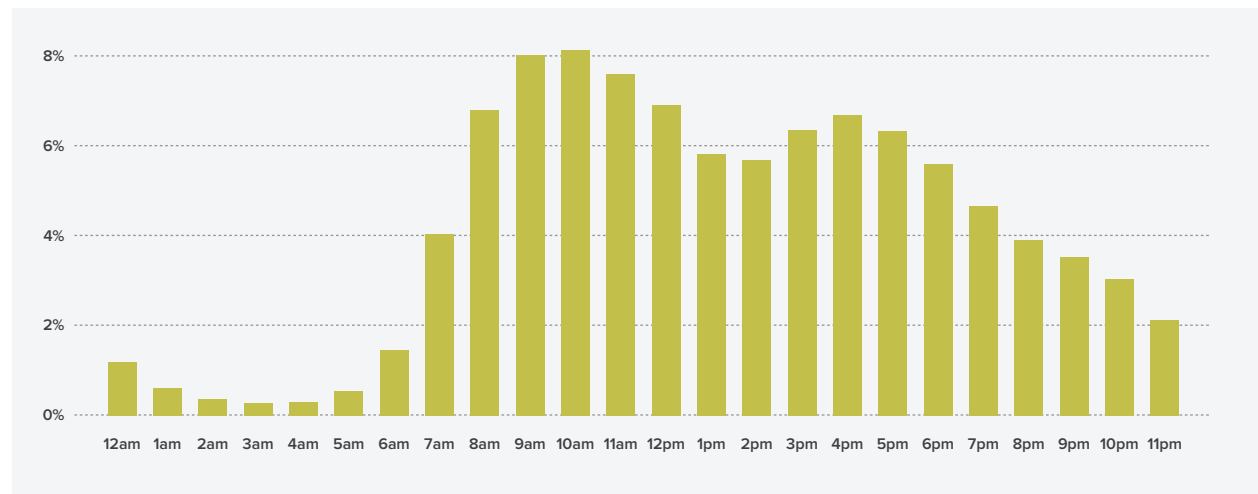
Germany: Email opens by time of day



Spain

In Spain, most emails are read between 9am and 10am local time. There is a dip in overall email opens between 1 pm and 3pm. After that, opens rise again for another peak between 4pm and 5pm local time, which is consistent with last year.

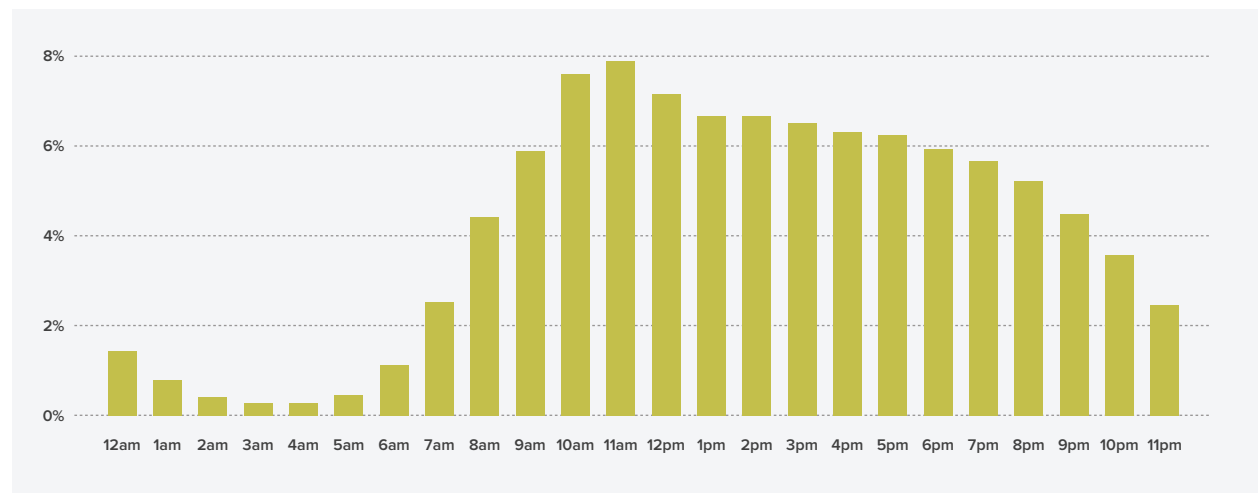
Spain: Email opens by time of day



Australia & New Zealand

Most emails in Australia and New Zealand are opened at 10am or 11am—that's an hour later than last year.

Australia & New Zealand: Email opens by time of day





Ideas for action:

There is no “magical send time” across the globe, but this year did show the emerging ideal send time between 9am and noon local time. It’s important to always test send times with your audience, but especially in years like this one where routines have shifted. Here are a couple of things to go understand now.

1. Look at your demographics.

Is everyone in your audience in the same time zone? Or do you have high concentrations in certain areas across the globe? If your ESP doesn’t have this data or you don’t have a tool like [Litmus Email Analytics](#), you can always segment out your list by area and do sends (it may take longer, but it’s worth it!). Once you understand where your audience is located, you can start testing for send times based on *their* time zone.

2. Align your strategy with company goals.

If your company is growing your market in a specific region, it may be good to focus your testing efforts there or to at least start there. Send time is a good thing to nail down early (though you still need to test at a regular cadence!).

Do you know where your subscribers are?

With Litmus Email Analytics, you can understand their geolocation, when they’re opening your emails, and more, so you can identify and put your send strategy into action now.





4

Know how subscribers engage with emails.

Traditional email metrics are a good guide on performance, but what about some of the non-traditional ones? Peek into engagement insights to go beyond opens and clicks.

Opens and clicks are powerful metrics, but other forms of engagement are just as important. And depending on your metric of success, they can be even moreso.

How long someone spends reading your email can be a good indicator of how long your content should be. Or it could be an indicator for you to try an alternate length to see if you can increase that number. Either way, it's another metric to see how deeply engaged your audience is.

Read on for other non-traditional email metrics that can shape your email program for the better.

Email engagement times

The average consumer sees [5,000 ads](#) in a single day. Not to mention that [60% of marketing leaders](#) also told us they planned to send more emails this year than last year. At a time when other companies are competing even more for your audience's attention, is your message breaking through?

The average time spent reading an email is down almost 12% from two years ago.



The average time spent reading an email is down 12% from two years ago, but in the second half of this year, the number actually started rebounding, with a 12.2 second average read rate at the end of the third quarter—a full second more than in the first quarter of this year.

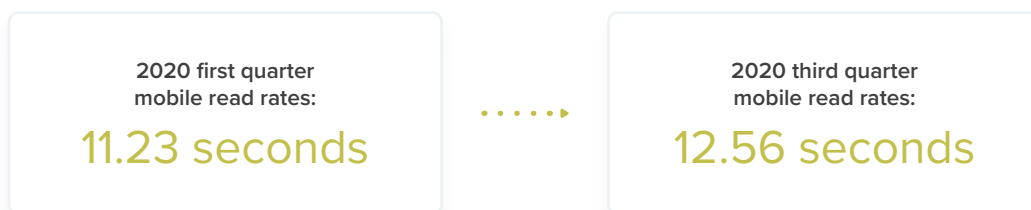


Idea for action:

See how your engagement times compare to the global average. If your ESP doesn't provide engagement data like what we've shared, check out Litmus Email Analytics for deeper insights.

Mobile engagement times

The average time spent reading an email on mobile went up almost 12% since the first quarter.



And if you have subscribers on mobile, we've got even more good news for you. Since the beginning of the year, mobile read times went up by 1.33 seconds. So, while the mobile environment may have dropped in popularity this year, those who are opening on mobile are spending more time with your content there, too.



Idea for action:

If you have a strong mobile readership, consider gamifying your emails through scavenger hunts or quizzes to get people to spend more time on your email. That catch? Make sure it's relevant and fun—a win-win for you *and* your subscribers.

Go beyond opens & clicks

How engaging are your emails? Go beyond opens and clicks to see how long your subscribers spend reading your email with engagement time tracking in Litmus Email Analytics.



Printing: How often subscribers print emails

Knowing the number of subscribers printing out emails can be helpful. For example, did you share an offer that needs to be printed out (like a coupon)? Even with mobile phones, printed coupons are still widely used. In this case, printing would be a key metric in understanding intent.

The average email generates 1 print for every 568 opens. That's a print rate of 0.18%.



Average print rate: 0.18%

(1 print for every 568 opens)

The average print rate has gone down by about 40%. That's not surprising given the pandemic. There are fewer chances to redeem offers in person. And for those who print emails and show co-workers or bosses, that opportunity has been reduced too.



Idea for action:

In the example used above, knowing who printed out your email could inform your follow-up strategy. You may send this person a message reminding them about the coupon expiration date vs. someone who didn't print it out, you may send them an entirely different offer.

Forwarding: How often subscribers share emails

Forwards are a good indicator of the overall health of your email program. A high forward rate means you're meeting your subscribers' needs at such a high level that it's worth telling someone else all about it.

The average email generates 1 forward for every 277 email opens. That's a forward rate of 0.36%.



Average forward rate: 0.36%
(1 forward for every 277 opens)



Idea for action:

Track your forward rate over time (hint: even go back and look at past campaigns if you can). Look at those with higher than average forward rates (whether it's your own average or the benchmark from this report) and use the same or similar content in social campaigns. Forwards are a great indicator for content likely to go viral or—at the least—have great engagement.

Learn *your* subscriber engagement trends

These benchmarks are a great indicator of global trends, but what are your subscribers doing? Find out how your audience is engaging—or not—with Litmus Email Analytics. The bonus? Brands that use Litmus Email Analytics generate an ROI of 45:1. Now, those are some numbers we can all get behind.

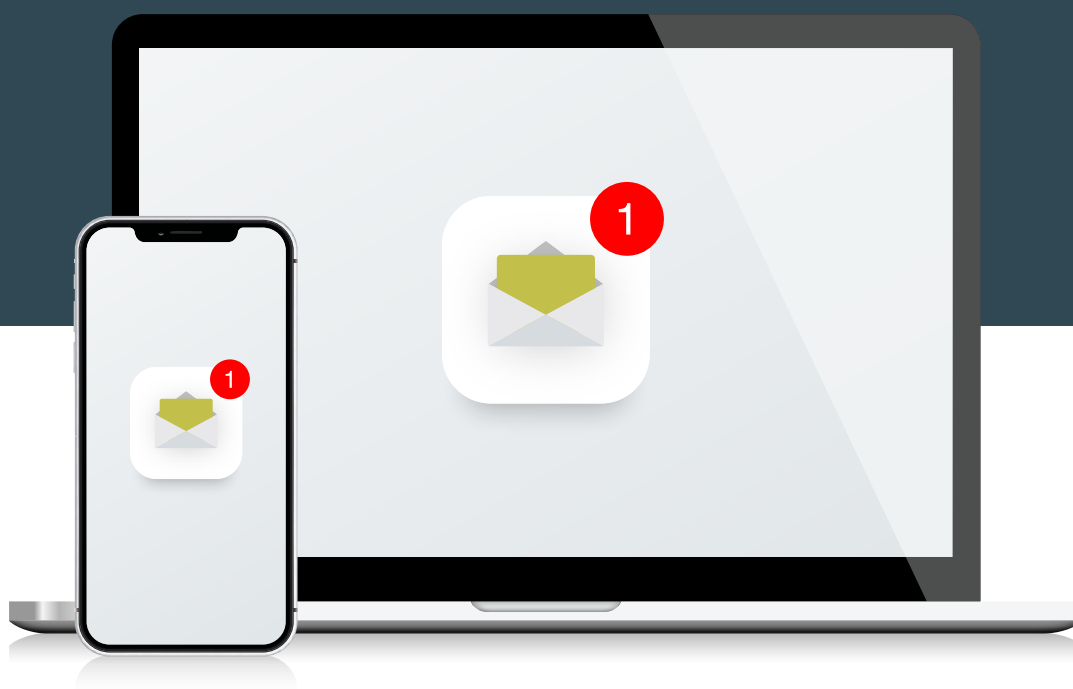


A little more about Litmus

Here at Litmus, we're passionate about everything email marketing. And our mission is to help brands access what they need to send better email, faster. Through our [blog](#), [Litmus Live conferences](#), [ebooks](#), [webinars](#), and more, we share best practices and trends to help your team stay at the forefront of the industry.

Another thing we're into? Software that makes creating high-performing email easy. Marketers pair Litmus with existing email service providers (ESPs) 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.

With Litmus by your side, you'll have the tools and insights you need to provide your customers with an incredible email experience—and an incredible ROI.



Share the email love

Share this report with others on your email and marketing teams. Then, sign up for our emails to stay on top of what's happening in email today...and predictions for tomorrow.