

2016 Adestra Consumer Adoption & Usage Study

A comprehensive survey of consumers across the U.S. on their digital usage



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Introduction

What happens to your email campaigns as soon as you hit "send?" Do you know who's reading? What devices are they using? Do they even read your messages at all?

Email marketers are like big-game hunters. We're always trying to track where our customers are going and what they're doing. We scroll through spreadsheets of statistics but we're usually mystified by a lot of them.

What we really want to know is how consumers interact with, and think about, the email messages they receive. So, we asked 1,200 of them, from teens to Baby Boomers, living all over the United States.

Their answers – and our analysis and advice – are here in this report for you.

What Did Consumers Say?

Below are two highlights from our extensive survey.

1. Teens use email.

A few years ago, it was widely speculated that email would die out because teens didn't use it that's not happening. Teens are active email users for specific kinds of messages ... and not just because their parents set up their accounts for them.

2. Email is the preferred communication channel for communicating with brands and companies.

All age groups see email as a part of everyday life. And these consumers are in their inboxes all day long, especially when they're bored.

What else will you learn?

We've seen a resurgence in email's popularity as a communication channel over the last two years or so, tied to its use in identifying the customer so we can extend the conversation beyond just email.

This report will help you understand what your customers are doing with your email messages and how you can tailor your messaging to certain demographics, based on what you've learned about their preferences.

About our study participants.

Most studies break down trends and events by generations, such as: teens, Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers.

With this study, we examined the generations at opposite ends of the demographic scale: teens moving into adulthood (ages 14-18 and 19-34, the most native of the Digital Natives) and older users who are first-generation email users (ages 56-67). The full breakdown of the audience survey is in the appendix of this report.

"Email's premature death has been hyped ad nauseum. This study puts it to rest once and for all, or at least until the Zombie Apocalypse. Right now, that's about the only thing that can kill it."

Ryan Phelan
VP of Marketing Insights, Adestra

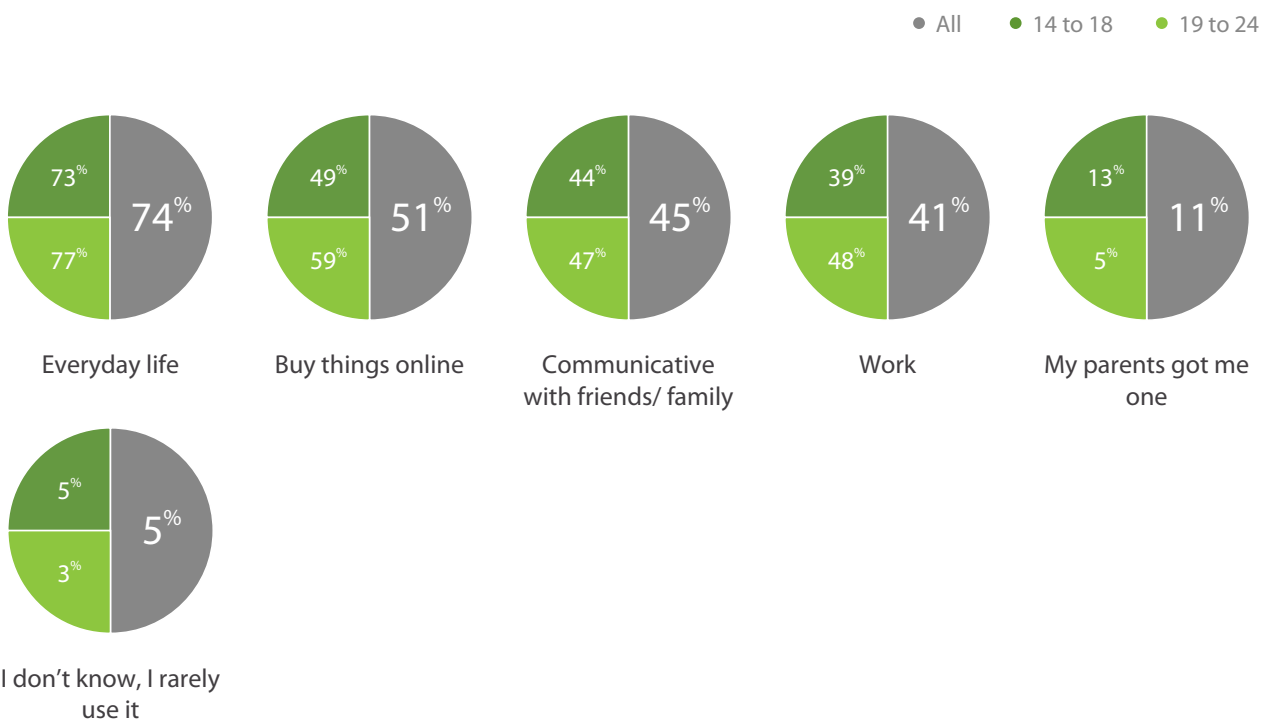


Section One:

IT'S ABOUT EVERYDAY LIFE

Finding 1: Email is the universal channel.

I have an email address because... (Check all that apply)



Here's confirmation that email use spans generations, even teens, who supposedly have spurned it for texting and Snapchatting: 74% recognize they need email in their everyday lives.

We combined Millennials with Boomers in order to focus on teens for this question, although their attitudes meshed for the most part.

A slightly larger proportion of teens said their parents set up their email accounts for them, but 50% set up and run their own email accounts, making email more than just something their parents make them do.

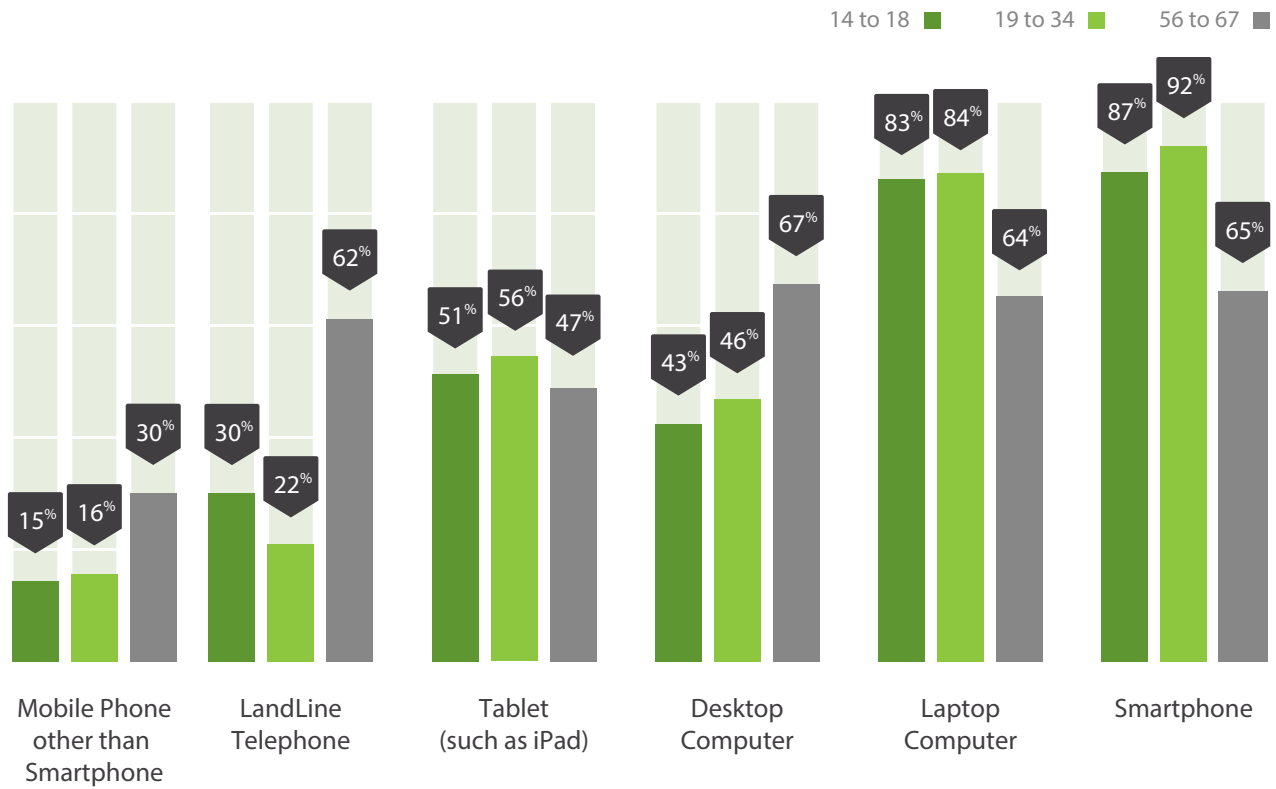
 **Marketer takeaway****Add teens to the mix.**

If teens constitute any part of your target audience, keep their interests and preferences in line when you create your email strategies and messages.

That doesn't mean translating your content into, like, total teen-speak: "OMG, that would be bonkers!!!" Instead, take the time to make your email more mobile-friendly. Teens do read email on their mobiles and will delete odd-looking or non-functional messages instead of trying to figure them out. (See next finding.)

Finding 2: Age rules device choice and use.

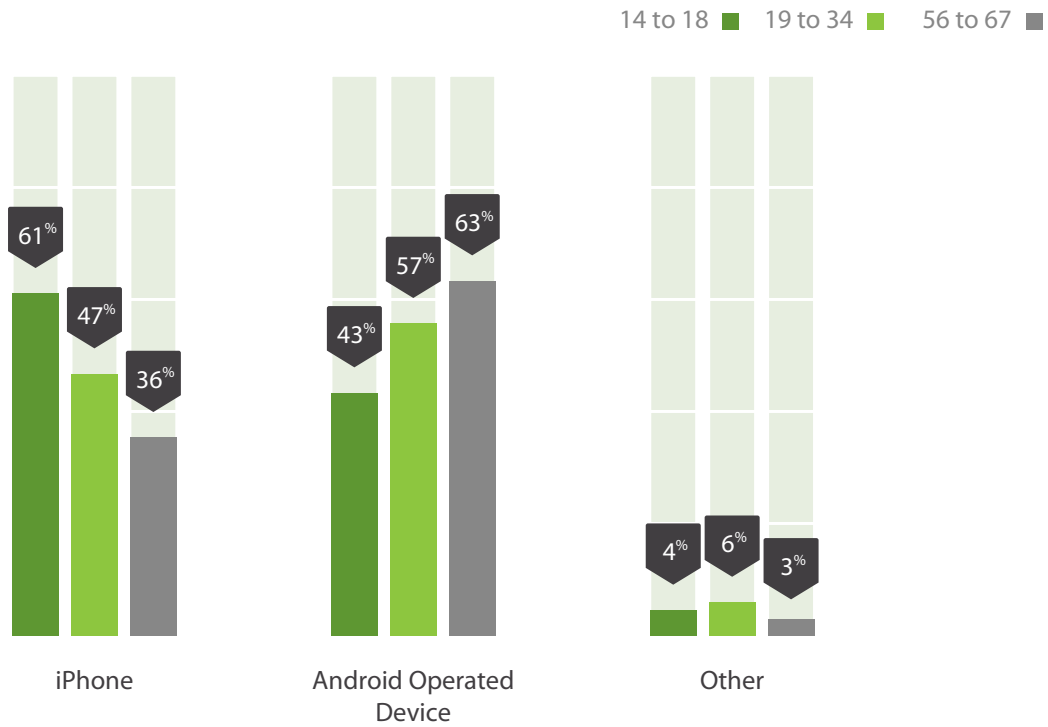
Which of the following devices do you own and use?



This graphic shows how various digital devices have penetrated the three different age groups we studied.

Although smartphones and laptops have the highest use among all recipients, the picture changes in the age breakdown. Tablets, laptops and smartphones dominate among younger users, while older users are more likely to use feature phones, landline telephones and desktop computers.

What type of smart phone do you have?



Although smartphone use is nearly universal among younger users and taken up by a strong majority of Boomers, we also detected a distinct age-related split between device types.

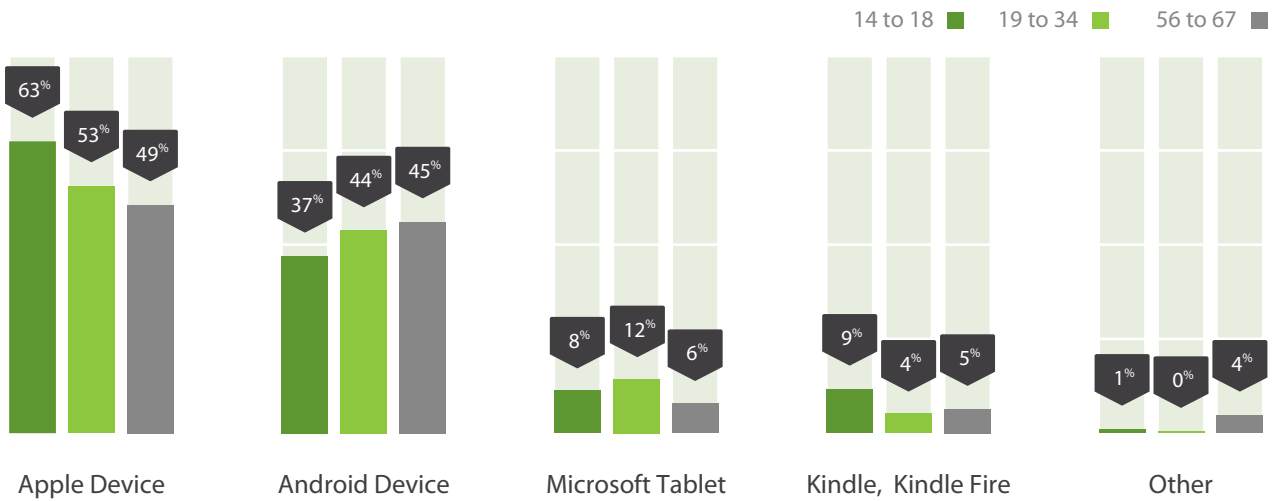
Teens were the most likely to own iPhones (61%), while Android devices rule among Boomers (63%).

Internet of Things (IoT) on the rise.

Although not represented in the graphic, our study did identify the small but growing market for the Internet of Things, which includes wearables like smartwatches and fitness trackers as well as Internet- or WiFi-connected appliances (refrigerators, home security systems, thermostats, light switches, etc.).

At 9% of users, teens are least likely to own wearables. Their older brothers and sisters (ages 19-34) are the most likely (19%). However, teens (20%) are the most active IoT users, probably because their Generation X parents bought them for family use.

Which type of tablet(s) do you own?



Kindle bubble.

Apple and Android devices also dominate among tablet owners, but among the also-rans, note the higher uptake of Kindles among teens.

Marketer takeaways

1. Mobile rules.

With smartphones dominating mobile phone use among all age groups, and tablet adoption hovering around 50% across all age groups, you're far behind the curve if you haven't made your digital presence – email, landing pages, your entire website – mobile-responsive.

The Marketer's Takeaways in each of the next findings will give you more reasons why you need to do this today.

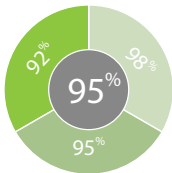
2. So do plain text versions for IoT.

Although the IoT is still relatively small, it's definitely a growth area. One caution: These devices generally don't render HTML email messages. So, it's a "Back to the Future" moment for text email. Be sure you have a text version of your HTML email that delivers the punch without the pretty pictures.

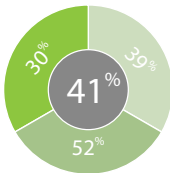
Finding 3: Calls and email are top uses on smartphones.

Which of the following activities do you use your smartphone for?
(Check all that apply)

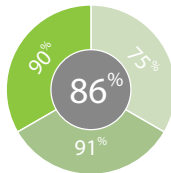
● All ● 14 to 18 ● 19 to 34 ● 56 to 67



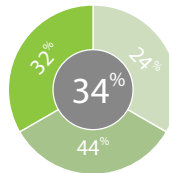
Personal telephone calls



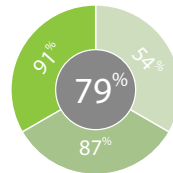
Business telephone calls



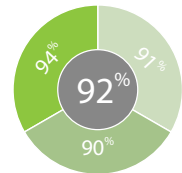
Personal email



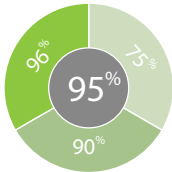
Business email



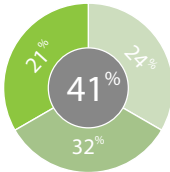
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest)



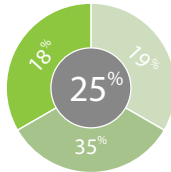
Send & receive texts



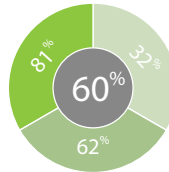
Browse the internet



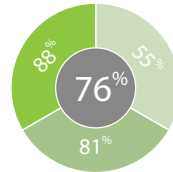
Linking to business services (finance, travel, retail, etc.)



Daily deal sites



Chatting with friends



Apps

This time, it's personal.

Personal use, that is. Our findings show people use their smartphones for personal communications – calls, texting, browsing, email and social media – over business calls and email.

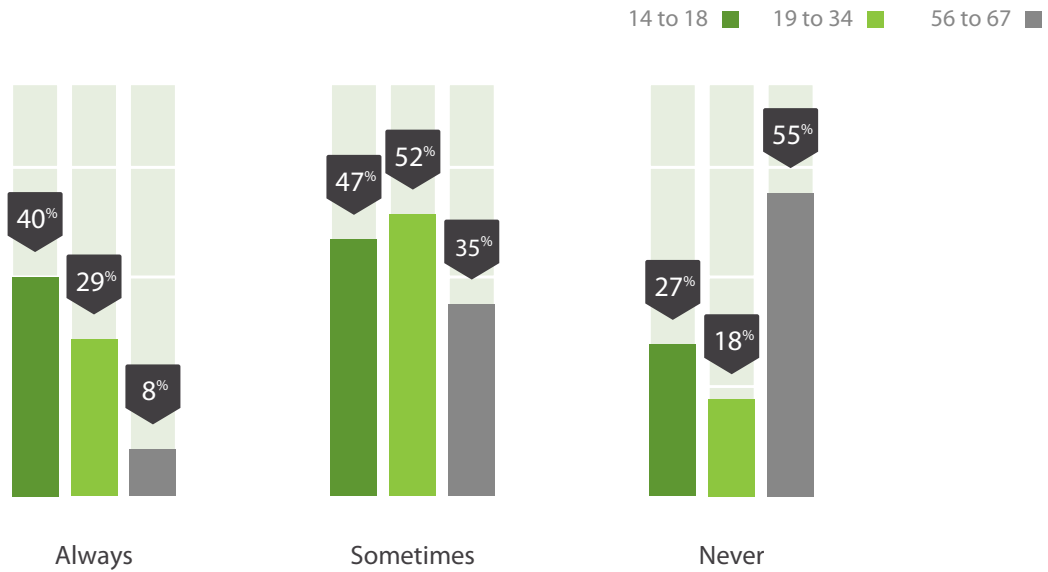
Want more proof that email isn't dying among younger users? Look at the personal email use broken out by age groups: 90% for teens, and 91% for older Millennials.

Marketer takeaway

Strong email performance among all age groups – even desktop-loving Boomers – points to the need to keep your email messages relevant, interesting and, most importantly, attractive and easy to act on in any environment.

Finding 4: Mobile can make or break your email.

Do you use your mobile device to sort through your emails before you read them on your desktop?



Today, more than 50% of email messages are read on mobile devices. That has spurred the phenomenon we call "inbox triaging," where users scan their inboxes quickly, deciding what they'll read now, read later, delete and ignore.

Although 44% of Boomers use this system, it's primarily a tactic for teens (73%) and Millennials (81%) to manage their inboxes

 **Marketer takeaway****Expand testing subjects.**

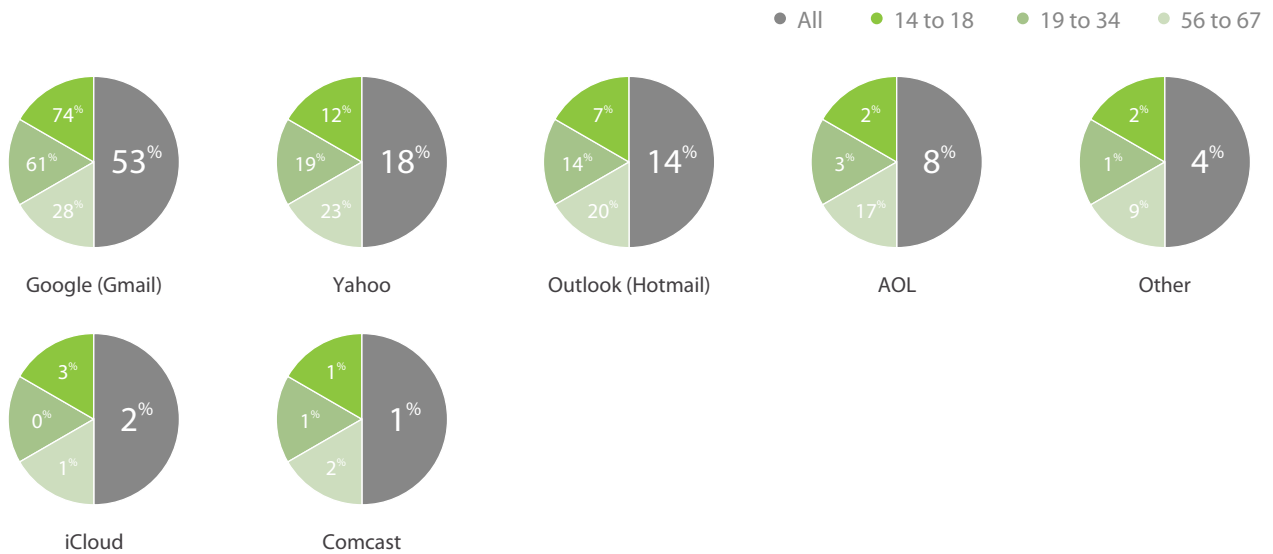
Most marketers who test aspects of their email program focus on finding the subject lines that will get the most opens. Although the subject line is important, it's not the only metric you should be looking at. Conversions are the gold standard. The click-to-open rate, which measures how many openers also clicked on your links, is another reliable indicator.

Test something other than the subject line because you need more than a good subject line to drive results. After all, you get paid on purchases, not on opens.

Just because you can't tie an open to a specific email address, that doesn't mean the recipient didn't see your email. Maybe he didn't like how your email looked like on his phone. (See Finding 12.) Or, she blocks image downloads so the open doesn't get recorded.

Finding 5: Google rules among email providers.

What email provider do you primarily use?



There's no other way to say it: Gmail is far and away the top email client among users today. Teens who sign up for their own email accounts choose it over competing clients. The assumption that Boomers are all on AOL is wrong.

Unlike teen and Millennials, Boomers present a more varied picture. A majority still clings to its decades-old legacy accounts on Yahoo, Hotmail or AOL. However, at 28%, the largest individual segment has migrated over to Gmail.

Marketer takeaways

1. Check your domains.

Don't ignore deliverability issues, especially with Gmail. Also, don't assume that your older customers are all on AOL. Run a domain report to find the most popular domains in your email database.

2. Study your deliverability statistics.

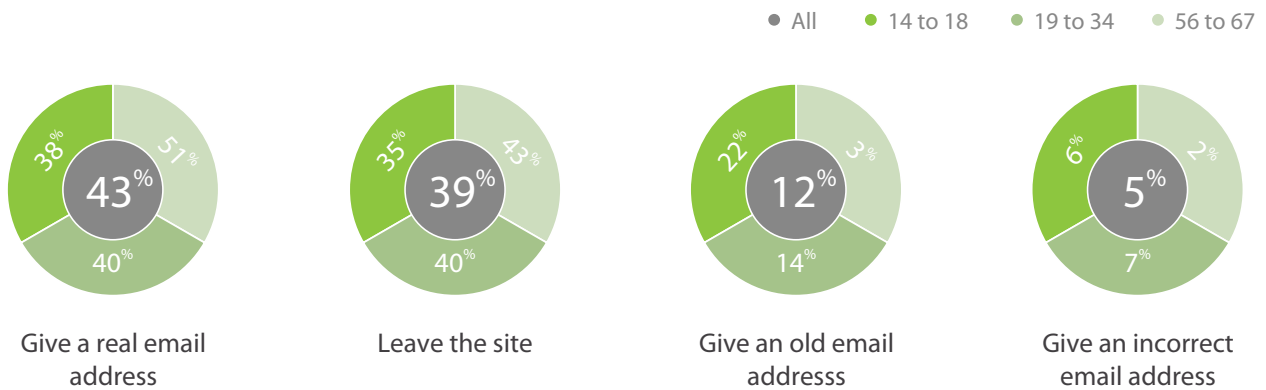
To see how well you deliver to those domains. This will help you assess the impact when ISPs like Google, Yahoo and Microsoft change their filtering practices or introduce new products.

Section Two:

DIGITAL BEHAVIOR

Finding 6: More than half lie or leave when websites ask for email addresses

When you come to a website that asks for an email address before you can access the website, what do you do?



Almost six of every 10 potential customers give you outdated or phony email addresses or leave your site rather than share a legit address with you.

Only your older customers (51%) are more likely to tell you the truth. But, they're also your most skittish bunch, with 43% leaving instead of sharing their email addresses.

 **Marketer takeaway**
Rethink that interstitial.

These findings should prompt you to take a long, hard look at using interstitials for acquisition. Many marketers use these web forms – also called pop-overs – to collect addresses from browsers who don't buy but still want to hear from the brand.

What's the cost, though? Knowing 60% of your visitors might lie to you on the email form, what's the quality of those email addresses you get by using this tactic? Sure, it's a large number. But, is it a valid, deliverable and profitable number?

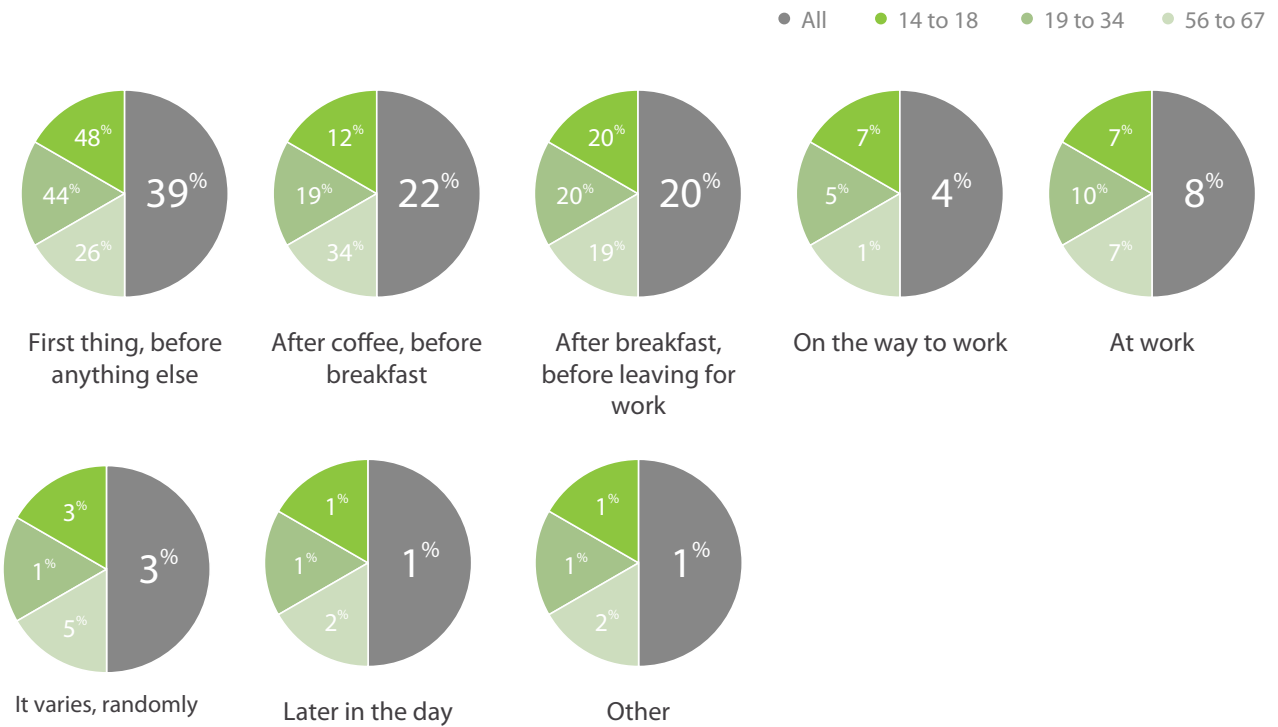
That 39% abandonment rate is pretty alarming, too. You're wasting brand equity if you use an interstitial that drives people away or collects fake addresses.

Despite these concerns, interstitials can be a useful tactic, but you need a plan and a different set of KPIs from those you use for your regular email program, such as these:

- Profitability
- Time to first sale
- Deliverability
- Buying on first purchase
- Incentive versus non-incentive acquisition

Finding 7: Message checking is part of the morning routine.

How early do you check email, text messages, social media, and voice mail after you wake up in the morning?



Generally, the younger you are, the more likely you are to be among the 48% of teens and 44% of Millennials who reach for their smartphones to check messages right after turning off the alarm clock (also on the smartphone).

Older users generally prefer to clear the cobwebs with a shot of caffeine before firing up their desktop or laptop computers and seeing what happened overnight. (See Section One for details on device ownership and usage.)

Besides knowing when your users are more likely to start checking messages, this information is also a helpful reminder that email isn't the only thing on your customers' minds in the morning.

 **Marketer takeaway****Tie messages to time of day.**

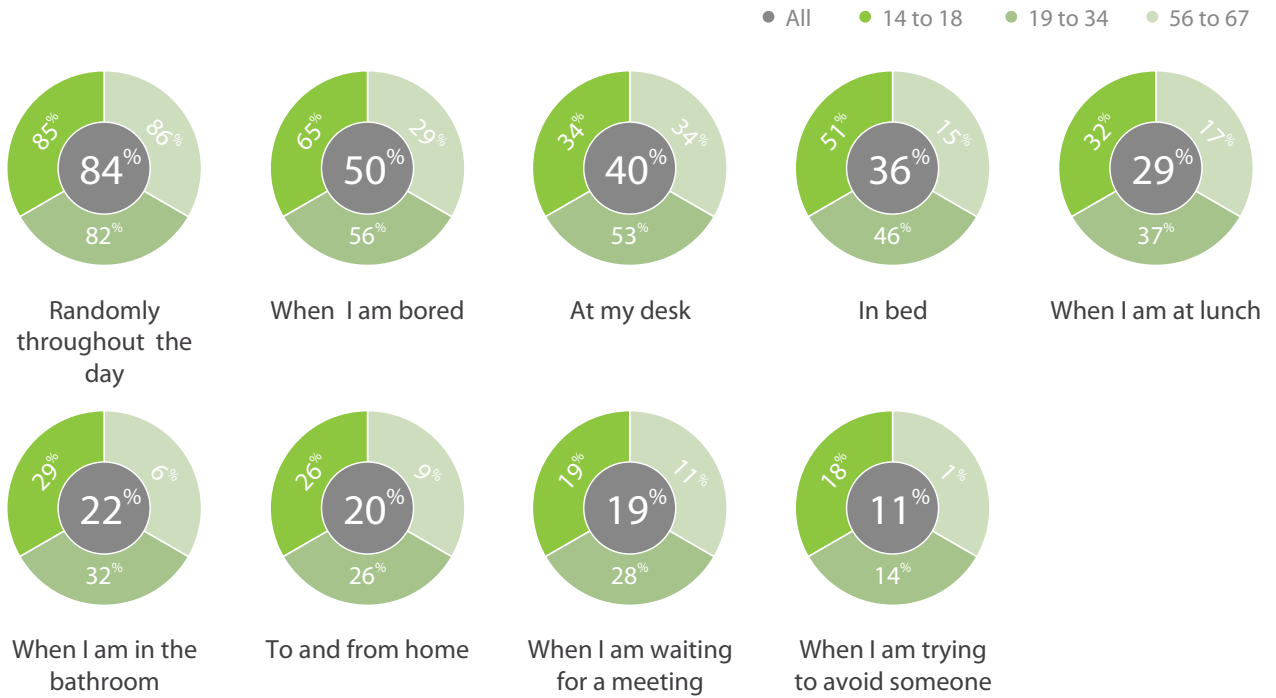
Think about the kind of messages you're sending as you're looking for the best times to send them. Are you promoting a product your customers might be willing to research while they're still in bed? Or, does your email attempt to drive a direct action they might not be awake enough to consider?

A credit-card offer is one example. Sending it first thing in the morning might get you to the top of the inbox, but your prospects might not be in the mindset to think about it. If they do flag your email for later reading, it will be buried under all of the other email they'll get during the day.

Even if you don't drive a sale first thing in the morning, you can try several tactics to maximize the opportunity for an action while they're on their lunch hour or when they knock off work later in the day. Resending the email to non-openers, or those who opened but didn't click, might be worth testing. (Review Findings 9 and 11 to learn more.)

Finding 8: Consumers check email at random all day long.

**Which of the following activities do you use your smartphone for?
(Check all that apply)**



Yes, across the board, people check email at random throughout the day. Whenever they need a break, when they're standing in line at the checkout, waiting for the food to come at a restaurant... whenever the mood strikes them, in other words.

This means they aren't settling in for a nice, long session of email reading. Even the 40% who read email at their desks are probably multi-tasking throughout their day.

All of this is problematic if you're trying to do send-time optimization (STO), which relies on recipients' consistency. Throwing mobile into the mix, which ratchets up random viewing, makes email reading less consistent and STO less reliable.

Now, note the second most popular response: "When I'm bored" (50%). In other words, when nothing more important has grabbed their attention.

What these stats imply for your email marketing program is a little ominous. Your customers aren't always looking for your particular messages, or even for anybody's emails. That means they aren't necessarily in the mindset to act.

Instead, they're triaging their inboxes, sorting through messages, deleting what doesn't interest them and flagging what they want to read later. If they're bored when they see your email, and if it doesn't stop them scrolling, your email might be history.

Marketer takeaways

1. Add zing to your inbox presence.

Work harder to capture attention. Use a clear and consistent "from" name that includes your brand or another clear identifier. Tell recipients what's in the email and what they should do about it in the subject line. Add preheader text that gives them even more information to open or save your email.

2. Consider time of day.

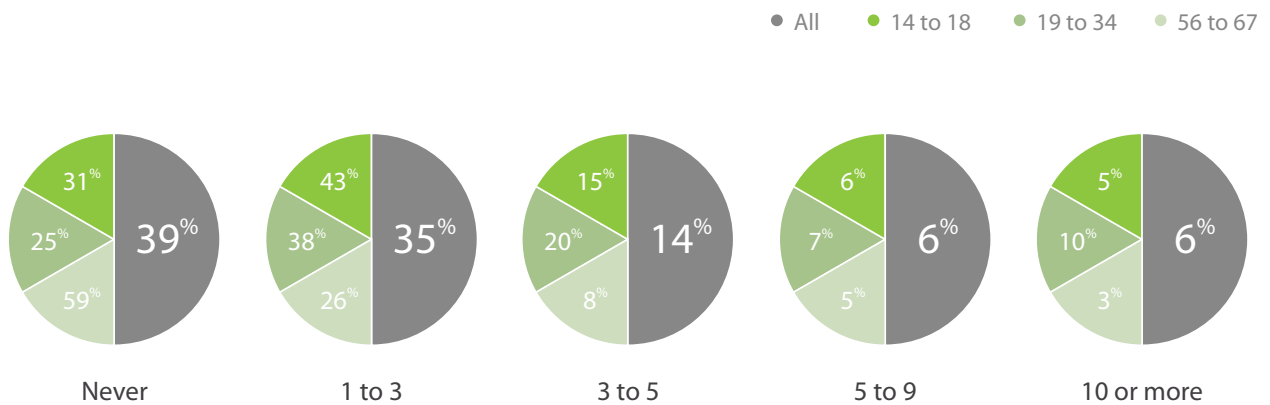
Although random email reading throws a wrench into STO, you can still shoot for optimal times to send by thinking about the results you want and how your customers will react when they see your email.

Retail tries to get into the inbox early in the day but that doesn't mean everybody should. Your industry vertical and type of customer should inform your decisions about the best time to send.

Test sending your broadcast campaigns at different times throughout the day and compare the results.

Finding 9: Checking personal email at work: everybody does it.

How often per day do you check your personal email at work?



Email users blur the lines between work and home, with 61% reporting that they check email at least a couple times a day, although it's driven by age. Boomers are more likely to stay on task, with 59% claiming they never check personal email on the job.

Once again, this messes with send-time optimization. When people aren't tied to home or work desktop computers, you can no longer predict that someone will open your emails at the same time every day. In fact, they might be opening your emails at a time when they are least able to act on it. Make sure your message is relevant enough to be read later and not deleted.

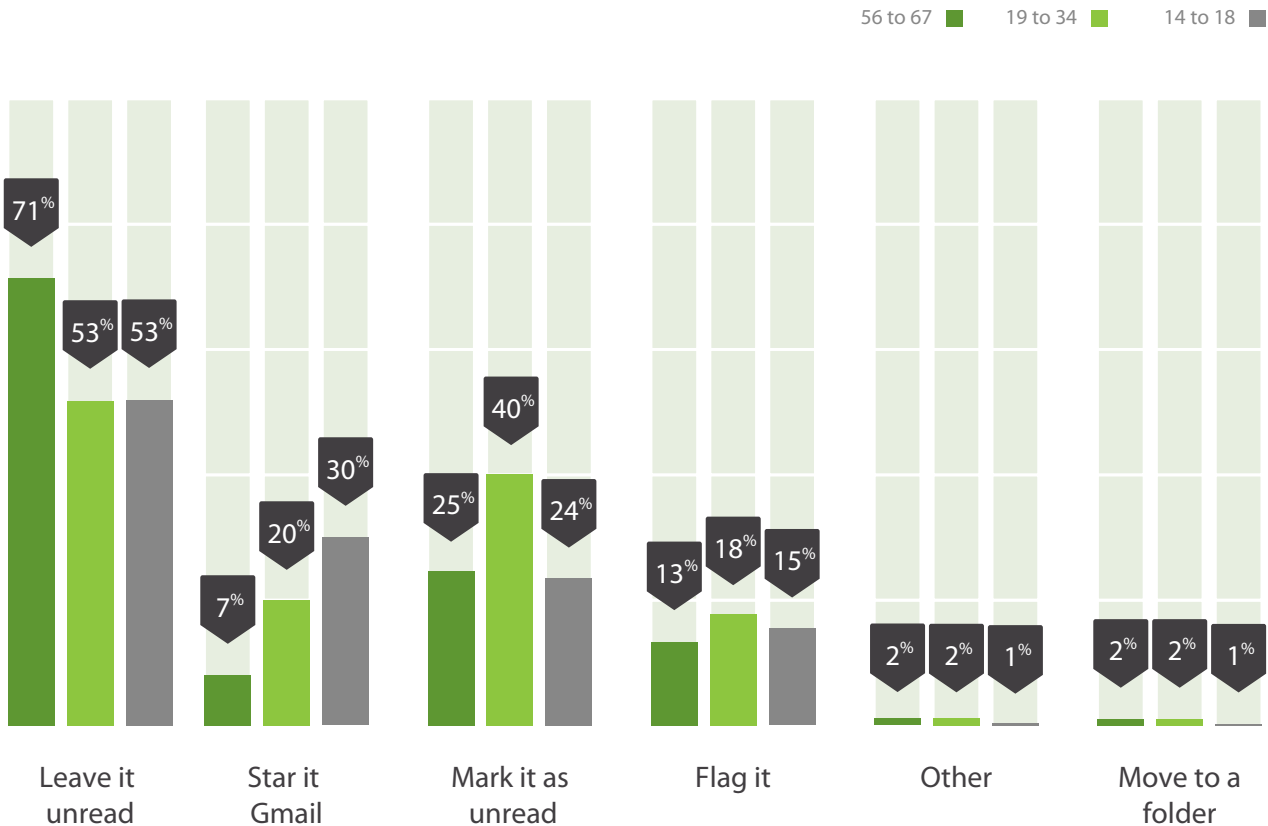
Marketer takeaway

Any message, any time, anywhere.

Say goodbye to the "right message, at the right time, to the right person" mantra. If you can't predict when your recipients will open your message, don't guess. Send at different times and compare results. Or, test resending the same message in a different day part. (See Finding 10.)

Finding 10: Recipients don't open emails they want to save for later reading.

If you save an email to be read later, what do you do with it?
[Check all that apply]



It seems logical that people leave emails unopened if they want to save them for reading later. But the picture is more complex than that.

Boomers let unread email pile up in their inboxes over the day, while Millennials are more likely to flag it or read it but mark it as unread. Teens use Gmail's star function to ID messages they want to save.

This suggests you should look at your total open rate for specific messages, not just unique opens. What's the ratio of unique to total, and how does that track by discount percentage, day of send, type of offer, etc.?

 **Marketer takeaway****Try resending.**

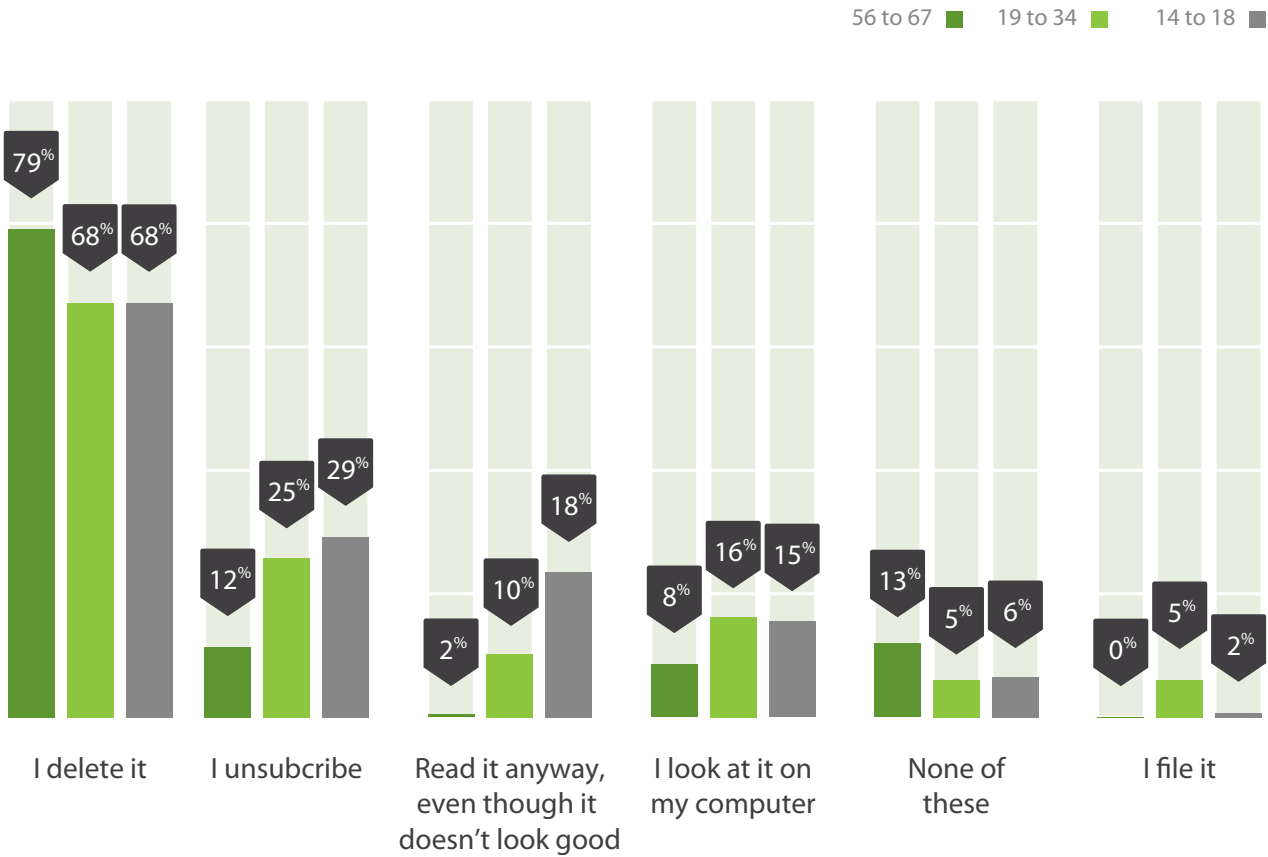
The email that somebody saved for later can get lost in the crowd even if it survives multiple inbox purges during the day. Resending your email later in the day to recipients who didn't open or click on it can put your message back on top in the inbox.

Watch your results carefully to see if you're getting the ones you desire. Don't use this strategy on every campaign. Hold out a specific segment of customers to see how they behaved without the resend. Look at the lift to see whether it justifies this strategy.

Track the numbers, too, to see if you can predict results based on resending certain kinds of campaigns once or twice during the month and how results vary for different verticals and different times of the year (Christmas versus midsummer, for example).

Finding 11: Ugly emails get deleted on mobile.

If you get a mobile email that doesn't look good, what do you do?
(Check all that apply)



Mobile email viewers are an unforgiving bunch. If your message renders funny, or not at all, they trash it.

Beyond that, 25% to 29% of younger mobile users will opt out of your email if it doesn't look good on their phones. They might not be your demographic today, but if you lose them now, you won't be on their radars when they move into your market.

 **Marketer takeaway****Optimize for mobile now.**

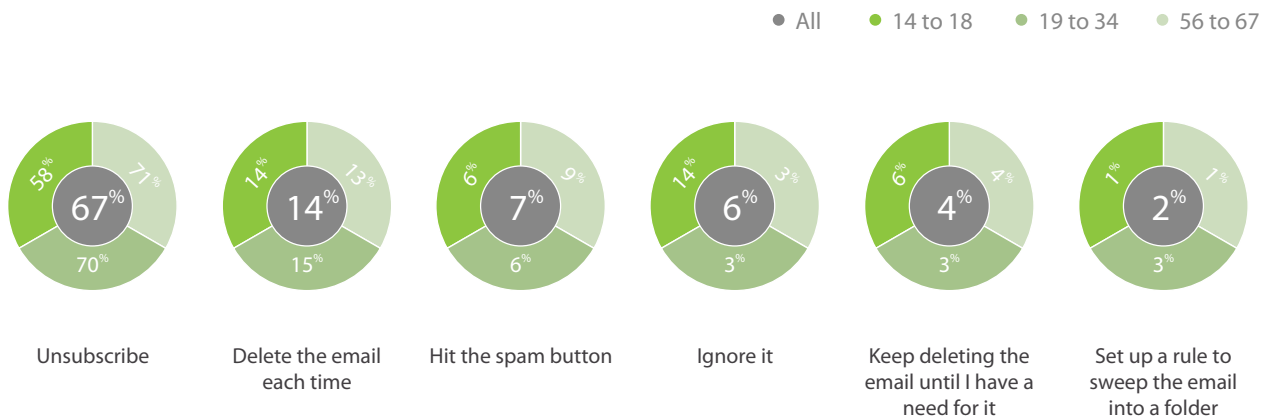
Teens are your growth market. Don't reduce your ability to reach them as they grow up because you don't make your emails look and work well on mobile devices.

We know a lot more today about what works and what doesn't, whether it's responsive email and web design, mobile-optimized or mobile-first. If you haven't made any changes in the last three to four years, you probably need a complete redesign.

If that's not in the cards, begin with some easy fixes, such as moving to a one-column format, increasing point size, reducing clutter and adding white space around links to avoid fat-finger tapping mistakes.

Finding 12: Recipients really do unsubscribe from unwanted email.

If you're getting emails from companies that you're no longer interested in, do you...



Good news! Email users seem to have gotten over their fear of the unsubscribe link. Instead of worrying that clicking the link will validate their email addresses to sketchy senders, 67% of users will use it.

Although 7% of users still rely on the spam button, assuming it will stop unwanted email, most of them treat it passively, either deleting it or ignoring it. (Although this makes us wonder if those ignored emails just keep piling up in the inbox.)



Marketer takeaways

1. Make unsubscribing easy.

Make it obvious, too. Don't hide it at the bottom of the page or camouflage it with a link color that blends in with the background.

The daily-deal email website Woot!, which sends daily emails, puts the unsubscribe link at the top of each email. You might not need to be that obvious, as long as you make the unsubscribe stand out with a contrasting color and eye-catching point size. Consider using a button instead of a link for added visibility.

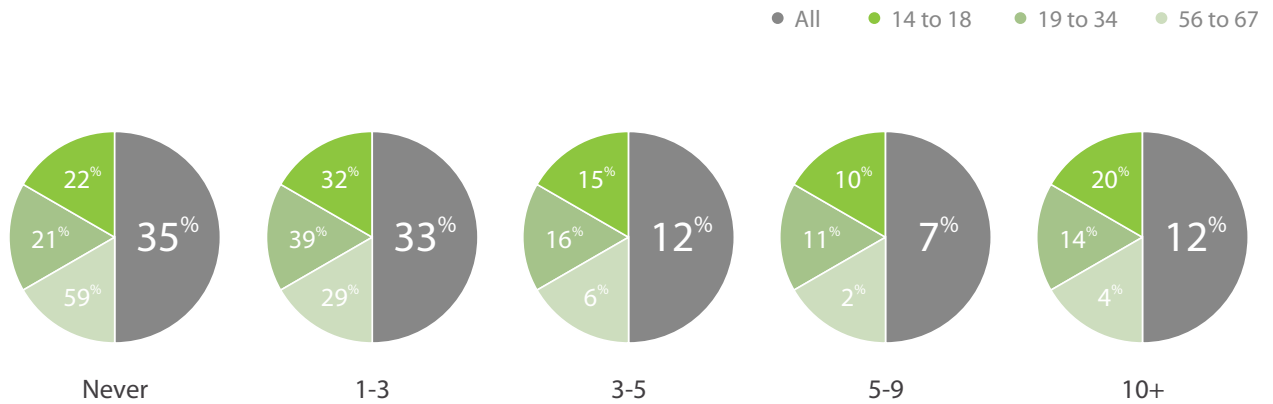
2. Offer opt-down.

People unsubscribe for many reasons. For the 67% of users who think they get too much email (see Finding 20), give them the option to receive fewer emails or to refine their email preferences.

Also, include an address change form on your unsubscribe or opt-down page. This will retain customers who are just changing email addresses.

Finding 13: Teens check social media all day long, even at work.

How often each day do you check social sites for personal reasons while at work (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)?



Although checking email is a random all-day activity for all users, visiting social sites for personal reasons is something younger users are more likely to do while at work.

Teens are into social media nearly all day long, with 20% saying they check out social media 10 or more times a day. Boomers, on the other hand, claim to discipline themselves while at work; 88% say they either avoid social media altogether or limit themselves to three or fewer visits a day.

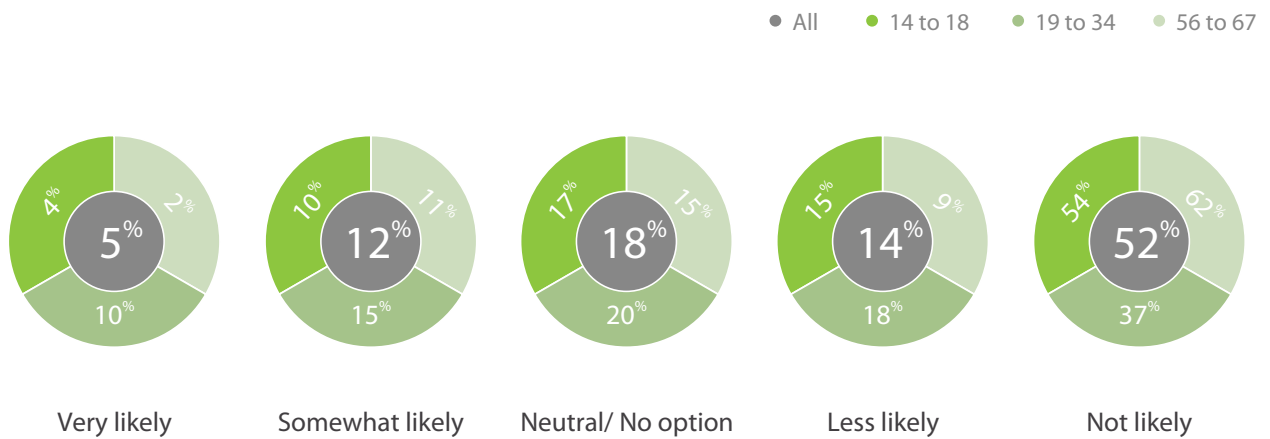
 **Marketer takeaway****Visits and shopping mindset.**

Your customers might be checking in all day long, or at least once an hour, but does that mean they're in the mood to shop. If they're checking it from work, they're probably looking for updates and information rather than direct appeals to buy.

Keep that in mind when crafting social media updates during the workday. It doesn't mean you shouldn't post promotional messages. Instead, consider how popular your various posts are and how long it might be before your messages pop up in their news feeds, Twitter streams, Snapchat message lists, etc.

Finding 14: "Share to social?" Users say "meh."

How likely are you to share messages from marketing/ advertising emails on your social networks?



Is it any surprise that "share to social" doesn't get much uptake? Two-thirds of recipients say they are either less likely or unlikely to share your email content to their social networks, and another 18% had no opinion.

But even though there isn't a groundswell of action, 17% of email users expressed some intention to share, with a higher propensity (25%) among Millennials.

 **Marketer takeaway****ID your influencers.**

Even though "share to social" isn't a hot activity, you likely do have some active users who love your email and want to share the wealth with your friends. Tag people who click your "share to social" links as influencers and put them into a separate category for special treatment.

Play to channel strengths.

Your email-and-social strategy should focus on building up the strengths of each channel rather than trying to duplicate messaging across channels.

That was the big challenge for marketers back in email's early days – not recognizing what made email different from print ads and direct mail. We're getting past that but sometimes are guilty of repeating that behavior when we treat texting or social like email.

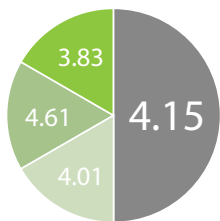
Section Three:

MESSAGE PREFERENCES BY CONTENT TYPE

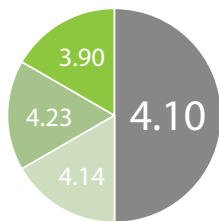
Finding 15: Discounts drive opt-ins and purchasing decisions.

Please tell us how much each of the following media influences your purchasing decisions.

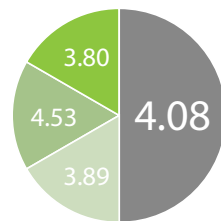
● All ● 14 to 18 ● 19 to 34 ● 56 to 67



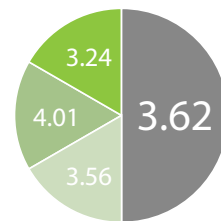
Emails that have discounts



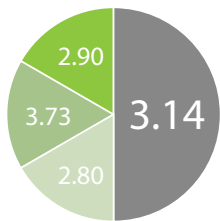
Emails that have content (information) about a product or service that I am interested in



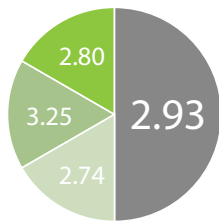
Review websites



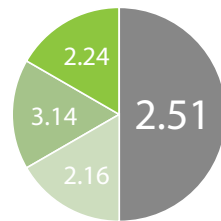
Coupon websites



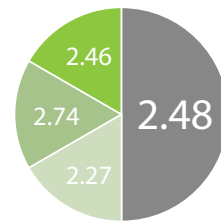
Facebook posts from friends about products



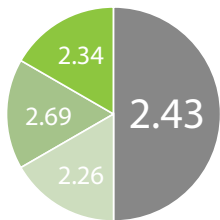
Text messages from companies that I have opted into



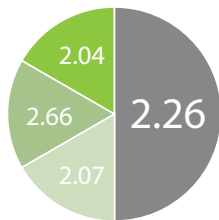
Facebook posts from companies



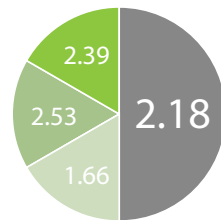
Banner ads/ Online ads



Brand names and subject line of emails I don't open



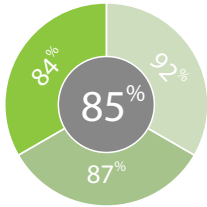
Getting an email from a company but not opening it



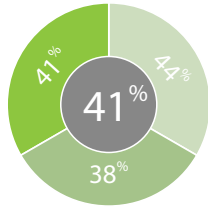
Tweets

**Which of the following are your most important reasons for signing up to receive emails from companies seeking your business? What else?
(Check all that apply)**

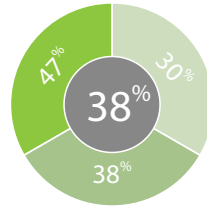
● All ● 14 to 18 ● 19 to 34 ● 56 to 67



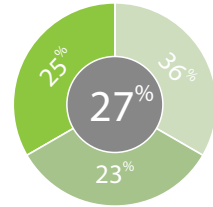
To receive discounts



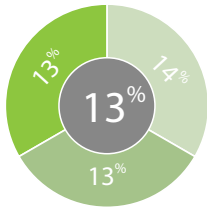
To get product/
services updates



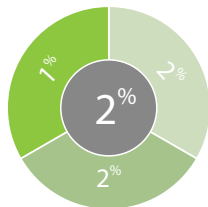
If I love the brand



Business
email



To access
information (e.g.
reports,
whitepapers, etc.)



Other

Why are these results so unsurprising? Because email marketers have taught consumers that email messages have to have discounts. So, at 4.15 on a scale of 1 (meaning minimal influence) to 7 (a driving force), customers across the board rated discounts in email highest for driving purchase decisions.

But that's not all they want. "Emails that have content about a product" came in at 4.1 on the scale. Your customers are telling you that they want more from your emails, such as information about a product, because that also influences their decision to buy.

So, it's no surprise that 85% of your customers are signing up to get discounts. But note that the next largest segment (41%) wants information and update about your products. In other words, content. Are you delivering on their expectations?

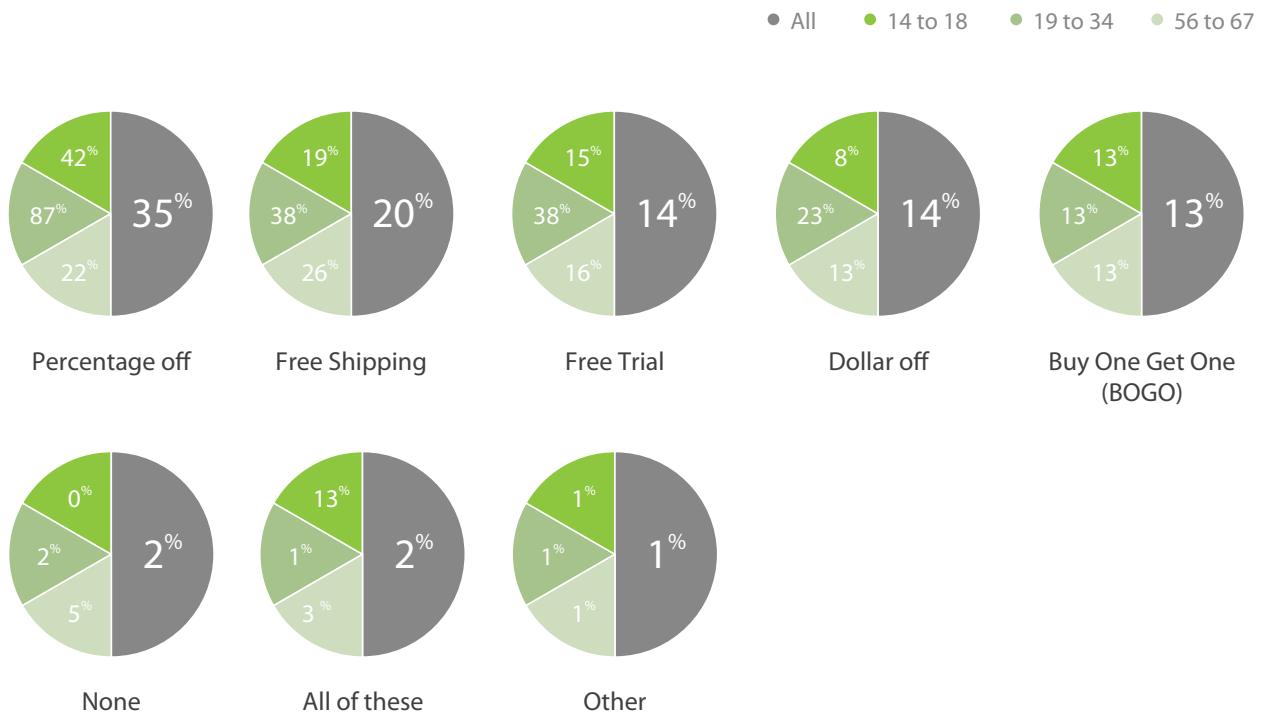
 **Marketer takeaway****Add more content.**

Focusing copy on a discount, incentive or other offer means you aren't giving your readers enough information to propel them to buy. Add supporting content such as product information, customer reviews, photos and other images where appropriate.

Also, add content-forward messages to your messaging program. These messages are designed to inform or entertain as much as drive an action like a purchase, registration or download.

Finding 16: Percentage discounts, free shipping lead customer discount requests.

What type of offers do you most prefer from companies in marketing emails?



About those discounts we've been discussing ... your customers really like percentage discounts, free shipping and free trials, and that's what they want to see in your emails. But age drives preferences within these areas, too.

Cash-strapped teens gravitate toward free shipping, free trials and BOGO, while Millennials, who are probably balancing school loans and entry-level wages, want cash discounts and free shipping.

Boomers, on the other hand, who presumably have more disposable income, like free shipping more than anything, although percentage discounts and free trials are attractive too.

 **Marketer takeaway****Mix it up.**

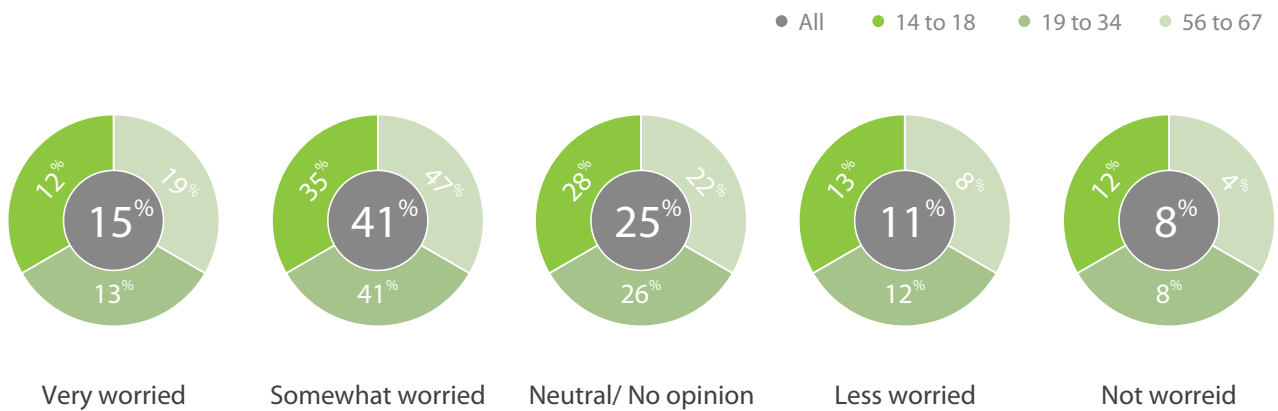
As long as customers expect discounts and other special offers, make sure you include them in your emails. Even content-focused messages should give your customers a reason to click to your website, browse around and either buy something or otherwise engage with your brand, such as filling out preferences, answering surveys, signing up for a loyalty program or checking out videos or other information.

Section Four:

PRIVACY

Finding 17: Boomers more cautious than teens about privacy and online shopping.

How much do you worry about your privacy because of online shopping?



These numbers bear out other studies that show teens don't have the same privacy concerns that make their elders more cautious about shopping online. While 63% of Boomers and 54% of Millennials have concerns, 53% of teens are neutral to not worried.

We can't determine whether this relatively blasé attitude happens because teens don't expect privacy or haven't been schooled in privacy protection by their parents. That's not a license to take advantage of the teen market, however.

Although teens and Millennials might not understand or be concerned about privacy implications, responsible companies not just talk about privacy policies and updates but also explain to all consumers why they are important.

 **Marketer takeaways**
1. Understand how privacy affects your business.

Beyond the laws and best practices, understand your customers' concerns about privacy and address them openly. Privacy policies can be a welter of legal jargon.

Translate them into plain language and post them wherever you ask for personally identifying information, such as email and postal addresses, but make your legal staff happy by linking to the full version elsewhere on your website.

Also, check on procedures for dealing with a data breach and have an emergency plan ready to go if it happens to you.

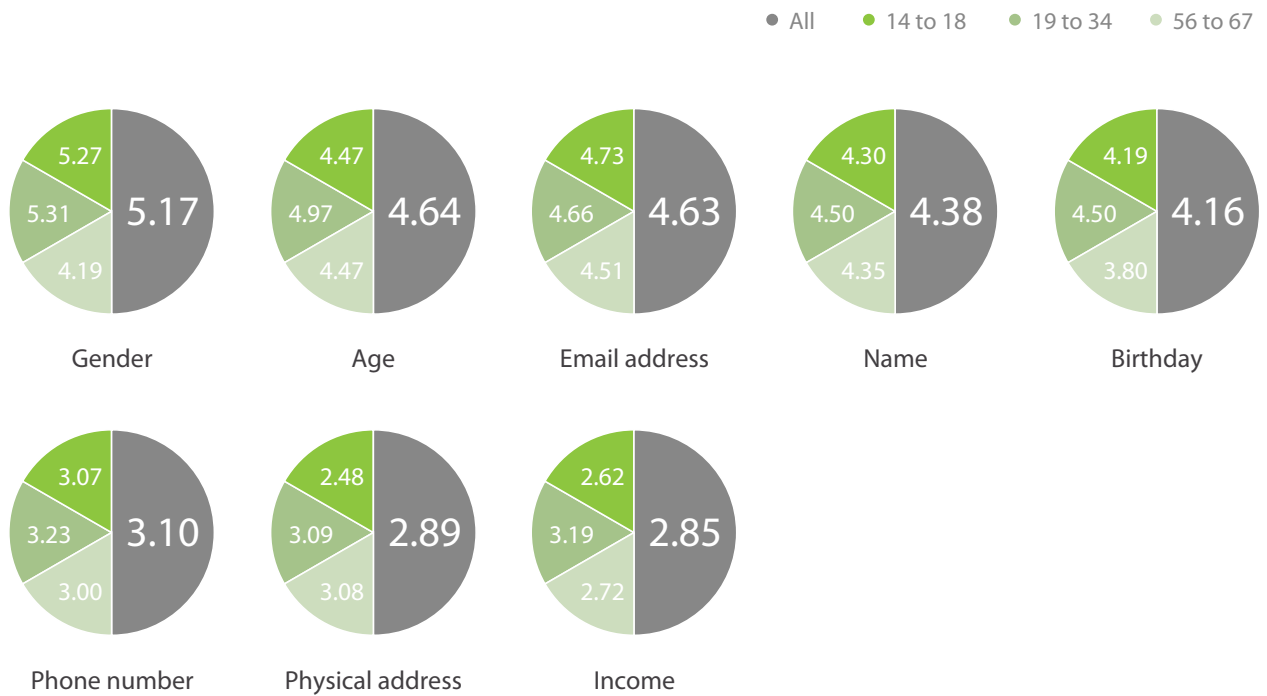
2. Bone up on privacy laws and guidelines.

Teens might not worry about their privacy, but everybody else does, whether they're consumers, governments, trade associations or consumer activists. Strict new laws from the European Union will affect how marketers around the world protect and transfer data.

Privacy and data regulation also are hot topics within the United States. Know the privacy guidelines in your industry. Conduct internal and external training in privacy protection.

Finding 18: Gender beats email address as shareable personal information.

How comfortable would you be in providing each of these elements of personal information to a company that has products or services that you are considering purchasing?



Although we didn't ask specifically about disclosing information to opt in to email, the findings above show you how comfortable people are disclosing personal information to a third party.

Gender (5.17 on a scale of 1 to 7) and age (4.64) rank higher than email address (4.63), probably because they don't involve the possibility of personal contact.

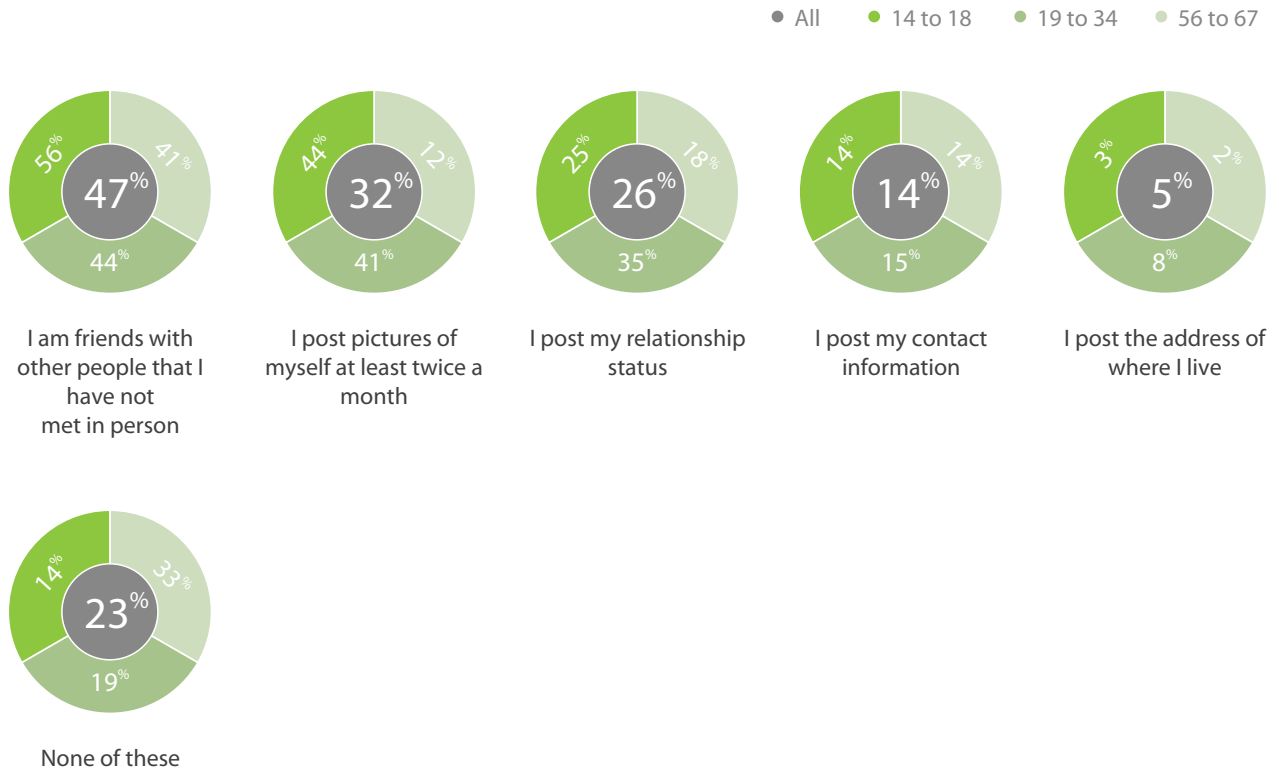
 **Marketer takeaway****Data now, data later.**

Testing will show you how much information your particular customer niche is willing to give up at opt-in. Many marketers just stop at collecting an email address but you should see how much additional information (gender, age (age ranges rather than specific year), name, birthday (month/date) you can secure to use for segmentation.

Note: whatever you ask for should be relevant to your brand and your products and services. Think about how you would use the information and what your customers would think about giving it up.

Finding 19: Social media use raises privacy concerns.

Check all that apply as it relates to your social media use:



We were, frankly, astounded at the lack of concern over privacy in social media use.

Older users are more circumspect about adding people they haven't met in person to their social circles, posting selfies and touting their relationships. But 19% of all respondents post personally identifying information – contact information and home address – on their profiles, with Millennials being the most open at 23%.

Although this issue is outside of email marketing, it should be a wakeup call to parents and schools to teach younger people more about privacy and social media.

 **Marketer takeaway****Privacy expectations.**

Our study doesn't attempt to determine whether this relative lack of concern about digital privacy among younger users is related to the low privacy expectations other studies have uncovered, but it points in that direction.

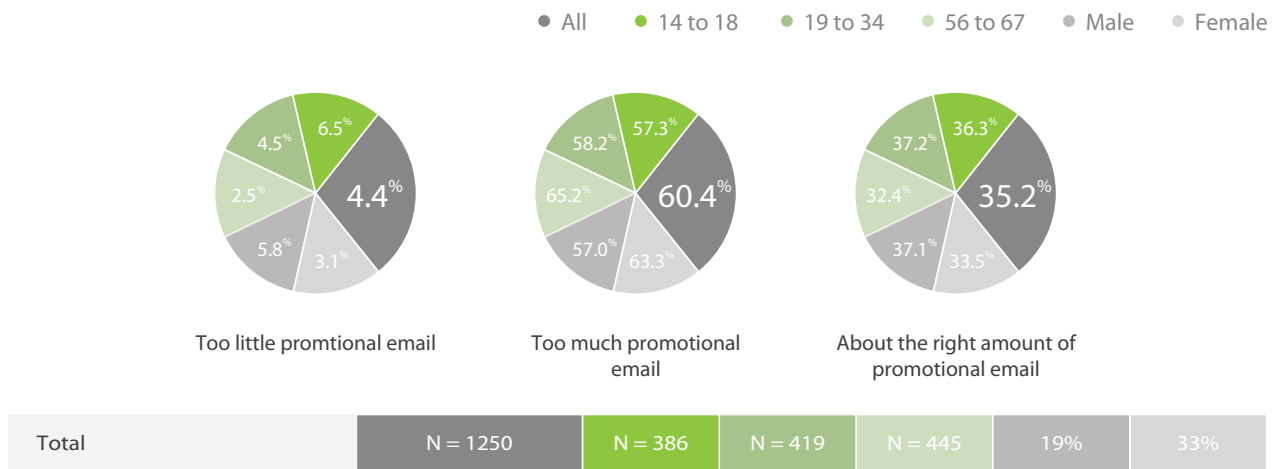
If you integrate social media into your digital marketing program, consider adding content that addresses these privacy practices and shows parents what to do to help their children (and themselves) be safer online.

Section Five:

WHAT THEY WANT

Finding 20: Too much, not enough, or just enough email?

Is the amount of promotional email communications too little, too much or about right for you?



Six of every 10 users say they get too much email, especially older people. That sounds depressing but remember that this statistic and all of the data reported in this study is self-reported. How overwhelmed are our email users and how much have we, the media or other users conditioned them to think they are?

Marketer takeaway

Check your stats.

Because this data is self-reported, look beyond it to behavior to get a more accurate and usable picture. Check your engagement statistics. Are opt-ins, unsubscribes, opens, clicks and conversions going up or down?

Take note of what people are saying but use it more as guidance than an absolute in assessing your own email program's performance.

Finding 21: Millennials, not teens or Boomers, want text messages.

**What type of businesses do you sign up for text messages from
(Check all that apply)**



Text messaging from brands is an outlier behavior for teen and Boomers. For teens, texting is what you do with your friends, and for Boomers it's barely on their radar.

However, the opportunity is still there with Millennials. Sixty percent of Millennials sign up for text messages from brands, preferring messages from national retailers and restaurants (33% each) and local retailers (32%).

 **Marketer takeaway****Develop a text strategy.**

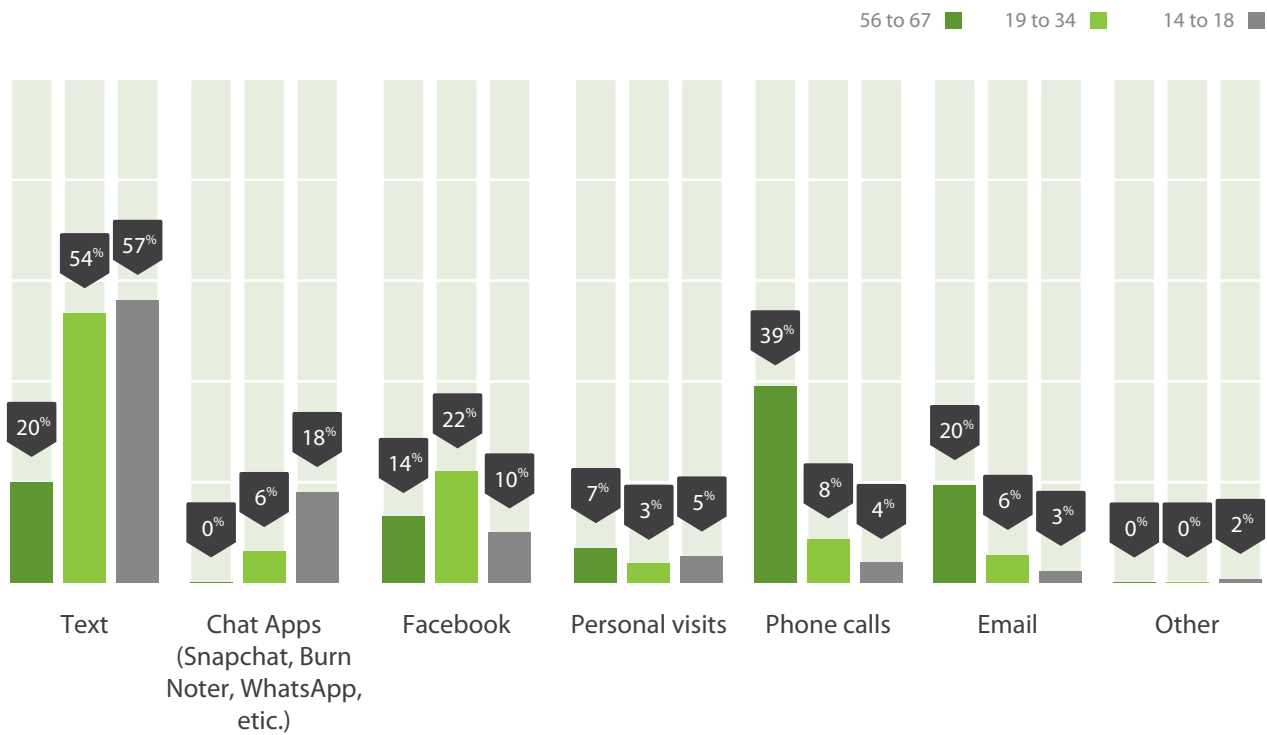
Even though 50% of respondents don't sign up for brand texts, you still have 50% who do. Across the board, retail is a major interest (27% for national brands; 25% for local retailers) as are restaurants (24%).

These numbers indicate a channel preference rather than a messaging preference. Having a text messaging strategy can help you get your message across when you need to send bulletins – flash sales, travel or credit-card alerts – instead of full emails.

Along with social media, you need to find where your customer hangs out the most. Signing up in one channel no longer implies that they'll always use only that channel to communicate with you.

Finding 22: Boomers call and email each other; teens and Millennials text.

What is your primary method for communicating with friends?
(Check all that apply)



Although smartphones dominate among mobile devices, which part of the phone gets used most often to communicate depends largely on the user's age.

Teens and Millennials rely on SMS and chat apps like Snapchat and WhatsApp to talk to their friends. Only 20% of Boomers use texting more than any other communication method, and they're barely a blip on the app radar.

However, Boomers, who grew up sharing the family phone, are far more likely to call their friends instead of pinging them on Facebook Messenger or texting them (39%, to single digits for Millennials and teens).

 **Marketer takeaway**
Relationship selling.

When you think about how to message Baby Boomers, remember that they have spent half their lives on the phone, whether at home or at work, and not on impersonal media like texting apps.

This tends to make them more relationship-focused than younger users, who would rather click a keyboard than make conversation with non-friends. Test whether changing your message style and content to emphasize relationship-style selling rather than promotional selling.

This approach focused on expressed preference or interest and derived preference or interest. Use different messaging to appeal to different customer groups.

A study by data company Acxiom once showed that in the fashion vertical, offering discounts did not influence purchase in the top defiles. Instead, branding and content exerted more influence.

Knowing this distinction of your data and subscribers can fundamentally change your message archetype.

Finding 23: What's on their mind? Fewer emails.

What would you like to tell retailers about the email that you receive?



The study gave respondents a chance to share their opinions about the emails they receive. So, what did they say? The biggest segment – 37%– had no opinion. The next largest group – 32%– either said they received too many emails or wanted marketers to stop sending emails (another reminder to optimize your unsubscribe).

 **Marketer takeaway****Start segmenting.**

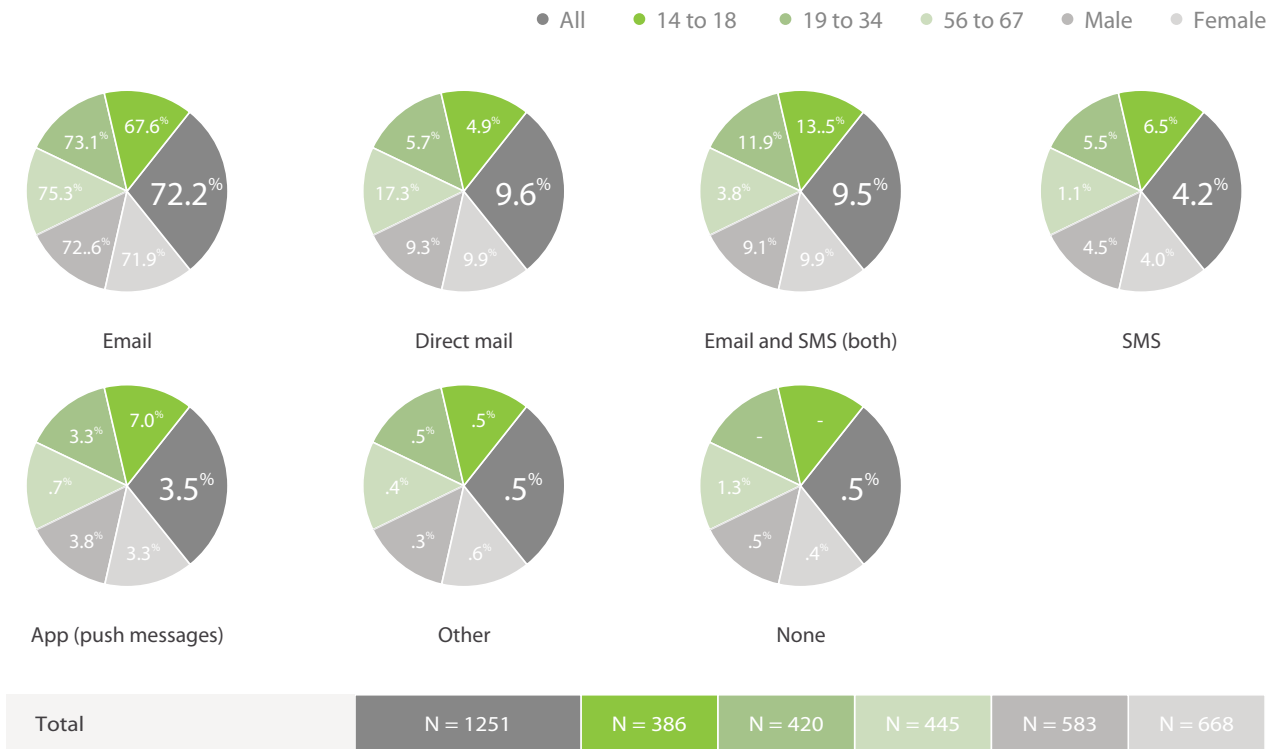
With so many comments revolving around sending fewer or more relevant emails, that should be your signal to start segmenting your database.

Use the information you have on your customers already, and solicit more information using progressive profiling.

Consider, too, that your customers might be getting bored with the same old email content every time. Change up your messaging and your focus. Look for new and fun things you can do with your email – anything that is within your brand image.

Finding 24: One channel to rule them all: Email!

If you could select a communication preference from a business which would you choose?



Let's be clear on this once and for all. Email is neither dead nor dying. Social media didn't kill it. Texting and Snapchat didn't kill it.

On the contrary, email is the "killer app" that marketers have been searching for.

Why? Because all ages in our study want to use it in order to communicate with brands.

It's true that teens don't use email chat with their friends. But, that's okay. When they want to get messages from brands, they prefer email more than four to one to their next most popular choice, an email-SMS hybrid.

Millennials prefer email in even bigger numbers. There's your growth market. Boomers, too, prefer email to everything else. They're also the last generation to look kindly on direct mail.

 **Marketer takeaway****Be bold.**

These numbers validate email as the primary channel for communicating with your customers. They really do want your emails, as long as you're smart about what you do with your email program.

Take this encouraging news to heart and start thinking about what you can do to take your email program to a higher level and to make your customers and subscribers fall even more deeply in love with the messages you send.

Don't just send more email. Send better email – messages that your readers want to anticipate, read, save and act on.

Beyond your subscribers, find new ways to make email more useful in your company and to prove its value to your executives.

Conclusion

This study presents convincing evidence that email is enjoying renewed popularity as marketers incorporate big data concepts and the linkage that email has to the addressable consumer.

Email marketers who are on a constant quest to do email better can take credit for much of this newfound good feeling toward email. They fought back against spammers and fraudsters and seek out ways to connect better with customers and add value to the relationship.

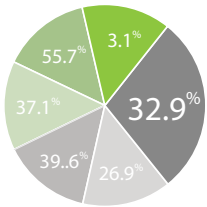
On top of that, marketers are working harder to show everyone from co-workers to executives how email contributes to their companies' prosperity and growth.

Challenges remain – making the mobile email experience reliable and fruitful, finding the right balance of commerce, content and frequency – but marketers are busy finding answers.

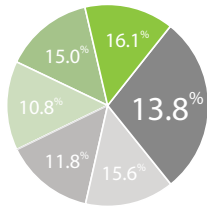
Appendix

Employment Status

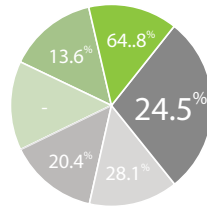
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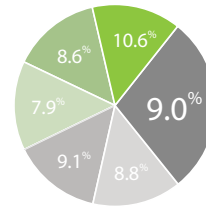
Work full time as employee or self-employed



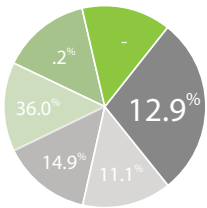
Part time Employee



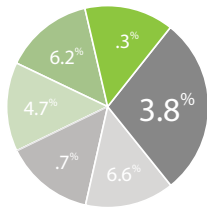
Unemployed student



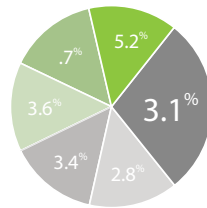
Not employed at this time



Retired from work



Gull time homemaker

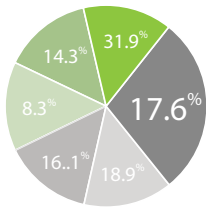


Other

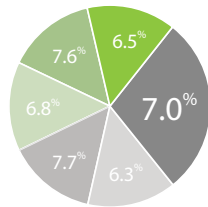
Total	N = 1251	N = 386	N = 420	N = 445	N = 583	N = 668
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Employment Status

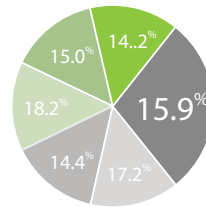
● All ● 14 to 18 ● 19 to 34 ● 56 to 67 ● Male ● Female



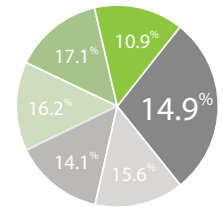
Under \$15,000



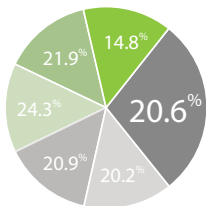
Part time Employee



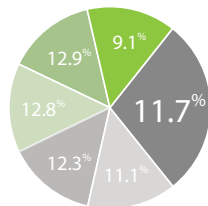
\$20,000 to \$34,999



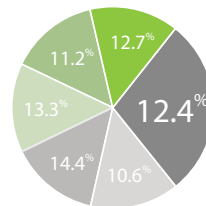
\$35,000 to \$49,999



\$50,000 to \$74,999



\$75,000 to \$99,999

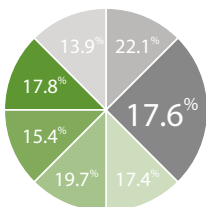


\$100,000 or greater

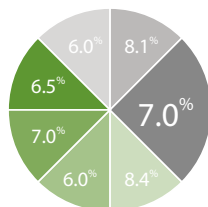
Total	N = 1250	N = 386	N = 420	N = 444	N = 583	N = 667
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Employment Status

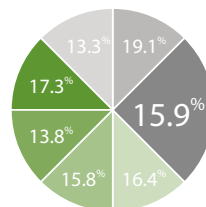
● All ● 14 to 18 ● 19 to 34 ● 56 to 67 ● Male ● Female



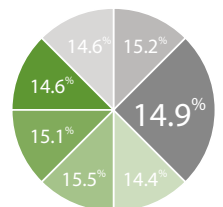
Under \$15,000



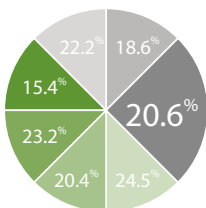
\$15,000 to \$19,999



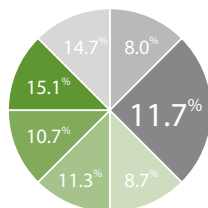
\$20,000 to \$34,999



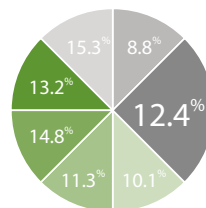
\$35,000 to \$49,999



\$50,000 to \$74,999



\$75,000 to \$99,999



\$100,000 or greater

Total	N = 1250	N = 565	N = 685	N = 370	N = 284	N = 298
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Email Takes More Than Technology

In today's hectic world, you need more than just technology to achieve your goals. You need award winning proactive customer support.

For more than a decade we have been providing marketers with powerful email technology that connects with their wider technology ecosystem; helping them engage with their customers and deliver fantastic return on marketing investment. We help our digital partners deliver personalized messages based on their customers' unique traits, behaviors and current needs.

**We're not just a Software as a Service,
we're Software AND a Service!**

Contact us:

1-855-835-0471 (toll free)

moreinfo@adestra.com (email)



We're not just a Software as a Service, we're Software AND a Service!

Adestra is a leading global provider of one-to-one email and lifecycle marketing solutions for global and growing brands alike. The company's industry leading digital marketing platform provides marketers with a powerful infrastructure that helps them communicate more effectively with their customers and subscribers by providing hyper-relevant context. This proprietary technology also allows for automated messaging and incorporates enterprise-class native functionality, which reduces implementations. Along with a superior platform to execute marketing automation, Adestra was founded on the principle that marketing success takes more than technology, which is why customer service is at the heart of our business. Adestra was a winner of the 2014 Customer Focus Award from the Customer Service Institute, and we continue to maintain one of the highest customer retention rates in the industry.

Established in 2004, Adestra's US operations are based in Dallas, with offices worldwide.



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