

# Email Benchmarking Report

2019

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Customer Engagement



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# / Introduction

In a challenging year for many across the data & marketing industry, with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) coming into force and uncertainty around the prospect of Brexit, this report sheds some light on how the key channel for customer engagement has performed.

Despite some concerns about the impact GDPR would have on list sizes and customers potentially opting-out, earlier this year we saw in our 'Marketer Email Tracker 2019' report that the majority of marketers (56%) feel positive about the impact of the new laws on their email marketing.

In fact, just a fifth felt negative about the new regulations and most reported positive results in terms of key metrics like open and click rates in 2018. Moreover, there were no increases in opt-out or spam report rates, as some may have been worried about.

Marketers did report a reduction in the number of customers on their email lists in our survey earlier this year. But those with a positive outlook also added that the reduction in data had improved the quality of the information they hold and consequently the engagement from these recipients.

Even more encouraging is that the results in this report paint a similar picture. We found continued increases across all the key metrics we cover, although there were some notable changes within certain sectors, both positive and negative.

According to this year's 'Consumer Email Tracker 2019' research, many consumers (41%) said the new rules have made them more confident about how brands treat their personal data. Surely this sense of transparency reassured customers and aided some of the positive trends we saw continue in 2018 despite the rule changes.

This report and the insights it provides would not be possible without the participation of a number of companies that took the time to collate their own metrics and share them with the DMA. So I'd like to also thank the teams at Dotdigital, Epsilon, Itg, Mapp Digital, Moosend, Pure360, RedEye, Zeta Global and ZeroOne for the commitment and time they dedicated to this project.

Read on to find out more about the latest benchmarks across deliverability, opens and clicks, and to find out how your email marketing measures up.

**Tim Bond**  
Head of Insight  
Data & Marketing Association

# / Foreword - dotdigital

The correlation between the results uncovered in this benchmark report, and the findings in the DMA's [Marketer](#) and [Consumer Email Tracker](#) reports confirm, despite concerns about GDPR, email is still thriving.

Improved delivery rates, rising open rates and increasing click-through-rates prove that people are more engaged with email marketing than ever before. Although we've seen a slight decline in mailing list size, the quality of these lists is evident. There have been no increases in email opt-outs or spam reports. Combined with increased ROI email is producing (revealed in '[Marketer Email Tracker](#)' to be £42 for every £1 spent) it's clear that brands have embraced GDPR as an opportunity to improve customer engagements.

It's vital that email marketers utilise this positive sentiment. With so many new marketing channels emerging every day, email marketers need to maximise the popularity of email while it's here. That means never resting on your laurels.

Subscribers are willing to give brands personal information about themselves, but they want to get something in return. The '[Consumer Email Tracker](#)' revealed that, although they're subscribing to fewer new brands, their decisions are influenced by the promise of a unique experience.

By incorporating the insights revealed by the DMA's series of reports into your email marketing, you'll be maximising your email marketing to its fullest potential.

**Gavin Laugenie**

Head of Strategy & Insight  
dotdigital

# / Foreword - DMA Email Council

Like the person determined not to mention their ex but finding it's the first subject out of their mouth, not mentioning GDPR in my opening sentence has proved a similarly demanding subject non grata.

Fortunately, the reasons are positive. The first 'Email Benchmarking Report' published by the DMA in a post-GDPR world suggests the most significant digital consumer marketing legislation since digital – and by extension, email – marketing began has had...no discernible detrimental impact.

Across the board: open, click, click-to-open and even deliverability rates have improved.

This shouldn't be entirely surprising: GDPR enforced transparent opt-in, informed consent and clear privacy rules. It not only forced marketers to improve the level of trust with their audience, but it made the audience – in consideration of the sudden blizzard of service email pleading – reconsider the value of what they were opting in to.

As my colleague on the Email Council's Research Hub, Jenna Tiffany, puts it, "What this report, the 'Marketer Email Tracker' and the 'Consumer Email Tracker' highlight [is] the long-held belief that the focus of email marketing should be about quality and not the quantity of subscribers."

Being able to segment (by industry and B2B vs. B2C) simultaneously highlights that these observations do not necessarily translate across the board and we should be wary of drawing universally sunny conclusions.

Nonetheless, the benchmarking report has the numbers to back up the generally positive attitude to email shown in the 'Consumer Email Tracker 2019' and the optimism about its continued value as a marketing channel in the 'Marketer Email Tracker 2019'. On average, sending a marketing email results in 1 in 5 recipients opening and more than 1 in 50 visiting your website: figures that have not changed over the last 4 years of this re-launched report.

Email continues to be the pre-eminent, cost-effective marketing channel and shows no sign of diminishing: GDPR may even have embellished it and few would have bet on that outcome before May 2018.

## **Marcus Gearey**

Chair of the DMA Email Council's Research Hub & Analytics Manager  
Zeta Global

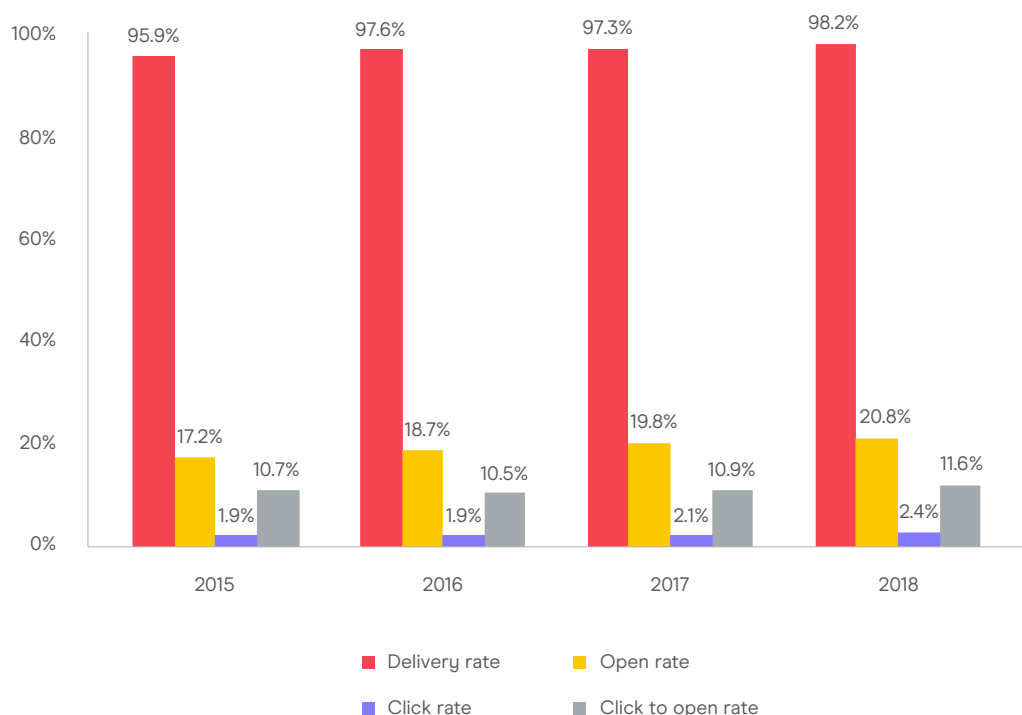
## **Jenna Tiffany**

Member of the DMA Email Council's Research Hub Founder & Strategy Director  
Let'sTalk Strategy

# / Executive Summary

- Overall, delivery, open, click and click-to-open rates all increased from 2017 to 2018
- Delivery rates increased to a new high of 98.2%, with 'Publishing' as the highest (99.2%); 'Finance' and 'Travel' both show a slight decline (97.2% & 97.4%) while still remaining very high
- Open rates have continued to increase over the last four years of tracking – rising from 17.2% in 2015 to 20.8% last year – 'Finance' (27.9%) and 'Utilities' (23.5%) top the list, but 'Publishing' has declined from one of the highest rates two years ago to the lowest in 2018 (26.3% to 17.7%)
- The rate of people that click links in emails has continued to increase, rising from 1.87% in 2015 to a high of 2.41% this year, with 'Utilities' leading the way (4.76%) and 'Publishing' seeing a dramatic reduction – from 7.06% to 3.07% year-on-year
- As a result of the positive changes in both clicks and opens, click-to-open rates overall have remained steady with a slight increase year-on-year from 10.9% to 11.6%, although 'Publishing' has seen a notable decline from 29.2% to 15.5%

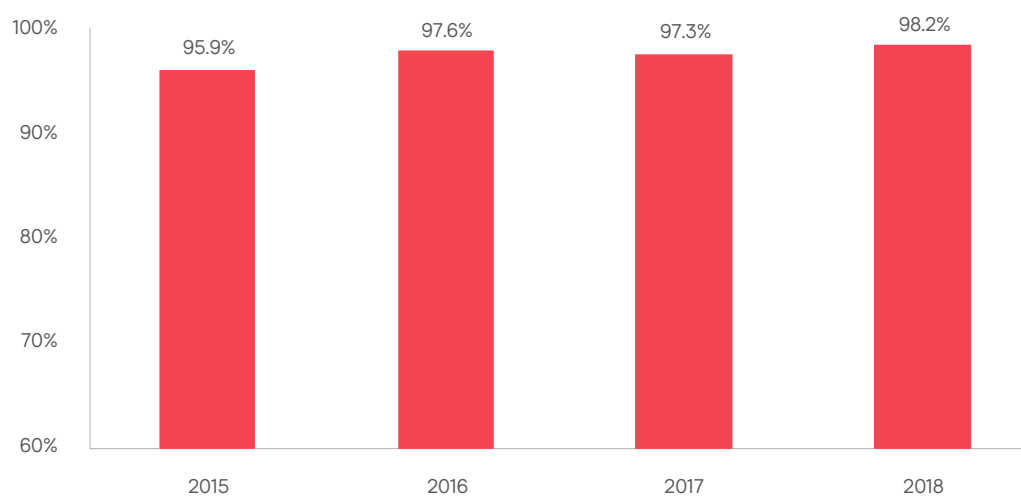
## Email benchmark metrics, 2015-2018



# / Deliverability

The email marketing industry has long excelled at ensuring the messages they send to customers are delivered in good order. Following the best practices set out by inbox providers has been key in driving this growth and will continue to be, despite the constant evolution of these guidelines.

## Delivery rates, 2015-2018

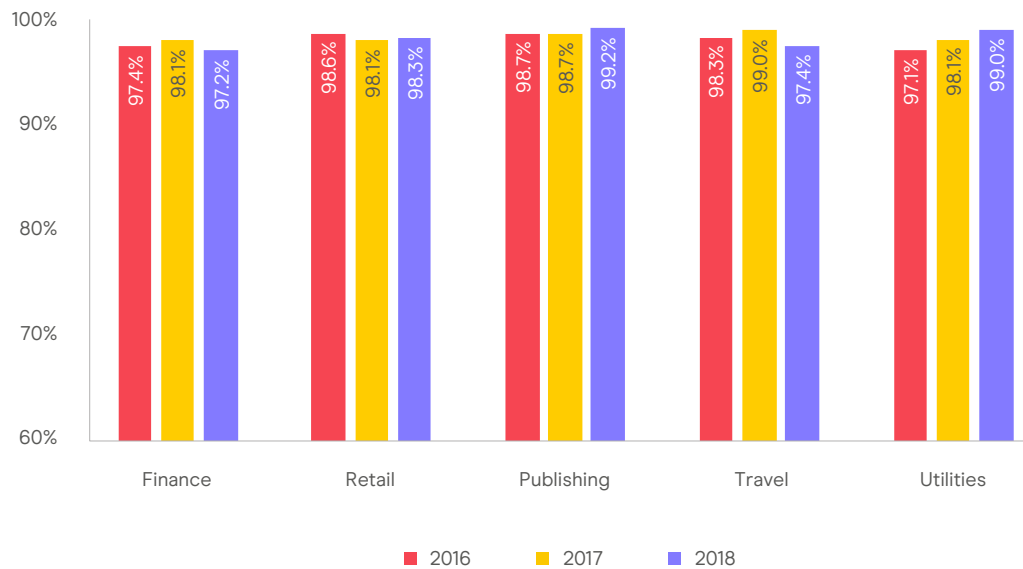


In 2018, delivery rates increased to the highest in recent years at 98.2% of all emails sent arriving in mailboxes safely – representing a 0.9% increase year-on-year.

For those sent in a B2C context, the average was slightly higher again at 98.8%, this despite the changes and potential impacts of the GDPR being unknown for much of the year.

Looking across the sectors available within the data, delivery rates remain high across the board – varying from 97-99%. The highest was 'Publishing' with 99.2%, which also increase by 0.9% from 2017 to 2018. Meanwhile, the only two sectors that saw a decline were 'Finance' and 'Travel', dropping 0.9% and 1.5% respectively. However, they are still relatively high with over 97% of emails delivered safely.

### Delivery rates by sector, 2016-2018



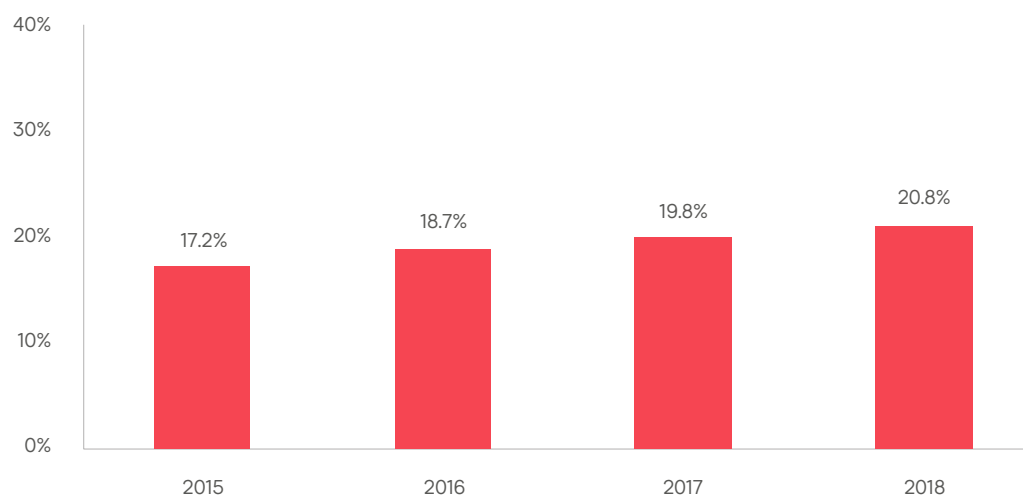
The continued positive trajectory of delivery rates is reinforced by data from the 'Marketer Email Tracker 2019' report, where most marketers reported delivery rates had increased (67%) and, at the same time, most agreed spam complaints had decreased (55%).



# / Opens

When it comes to opening emails, the data shows a continued increase over the last four years – rising from 17.2% in 2015 to 20.8% last year. This positivity is also felt among those working in email, as 76% of marketers reported an increase in their open rates over the last 12 months (for more information see our [‘Marketer Email Tracker 2019’](#) report).

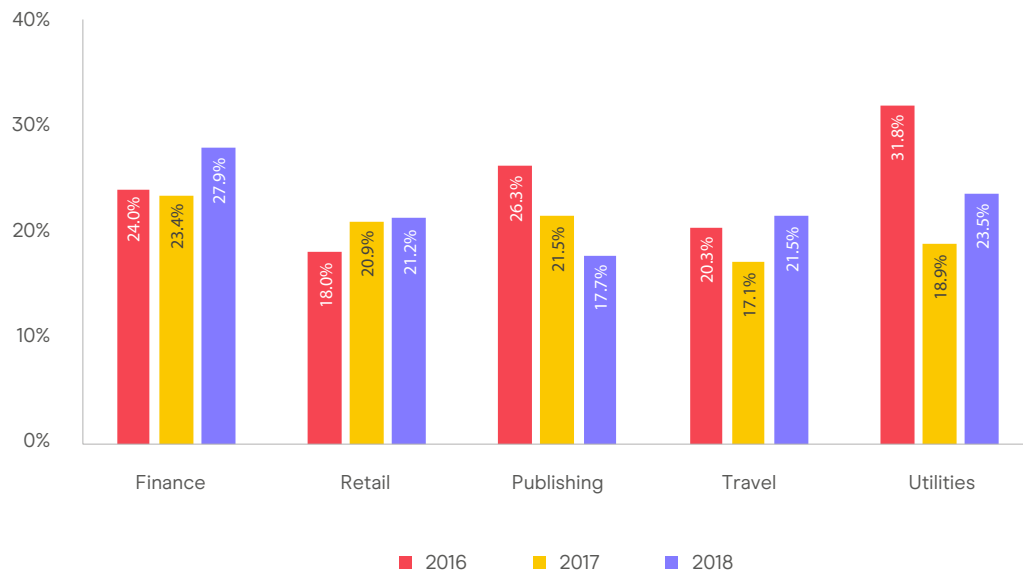
## Open rates, 2015-2018



For B2C emails, the proportion of emails opened remains strong (21.9%), despite a slight reduction year-on-year (-0.8%) – although this is still an increase of nearly 3% on figures from 2017 (19.1%).

The two sectors with the highest open rates were, understandably, ‘Finance’ and ‘Utilities’ – with many of these emails likely being driven by information about users’ account. However, one notable decline over the last three years has been ‘Publishing’, from one of the highest rates in 2016 to the lowest of those published in 2018. Meanwhile, ‘Retail’ and ‘Travel’ have continued to see positive growth.

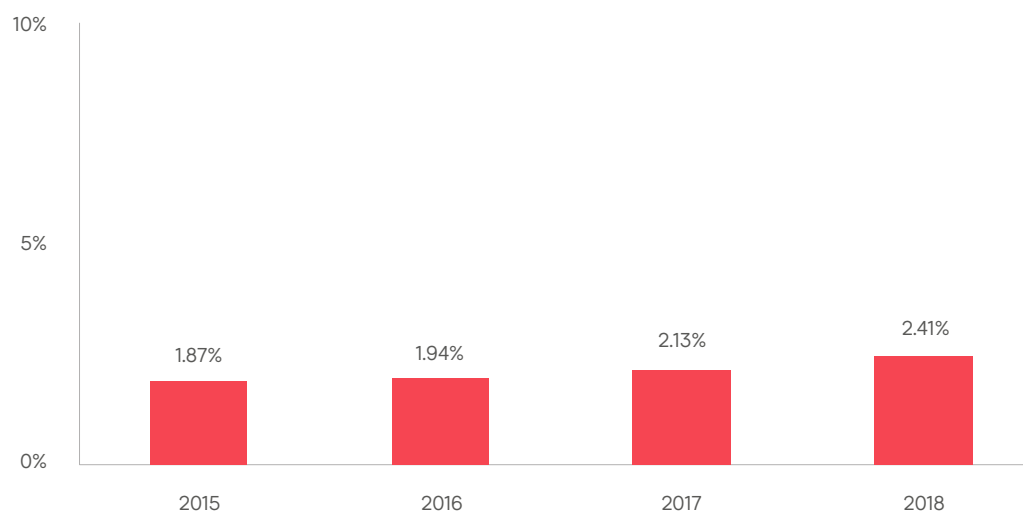
## Open rates by sector, 2016-2018



# / Click-Throughs

Alongside the growth in open rates, the number of people clicking links in the emails has continued to increase. Rising from 1.87% in 2015 to a high of 2.41% in 2018. This again appears to correlate with the positive sentiment expressed by marketers at the start of the year, when 75% reported an increase in click-through rates over the last year ('Marketer Email Tracker 2019').

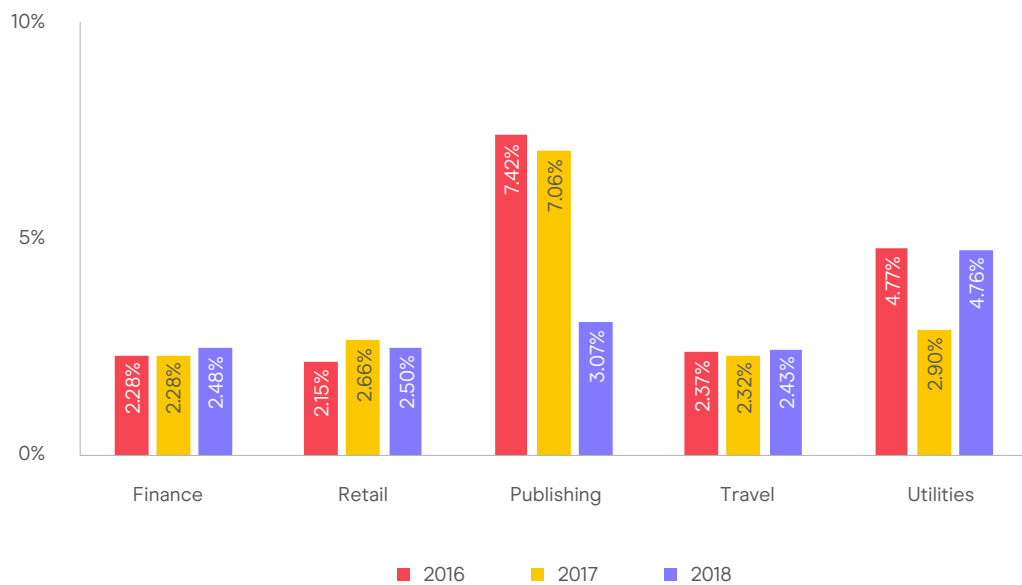
## Click rates, 2015-2018



For B2C this figure has seen further increases from just 1.69% back in 2016 to 2.55% last year – representing a significant positive change in the last three years.

The biggest increase within the sector analysis was for 'Utilities', returning to 2016 levels after a brief drop in 2017. 'Publishing' sees a dramatic reduction in click rates, following its decline in open rates seen in the previous section. Meanwhile, the other sectors analysed this year appear to be showing stability with some signs of positive growth.

## Click rates by sector, 2016-2018



Despite the positive trend, these metrics may well be continuing to underestimate the true impact of email. Data from the 'Consumer email tracker 2019' highlights that when people get an 'interesting' email just 40% said they would click on a link.

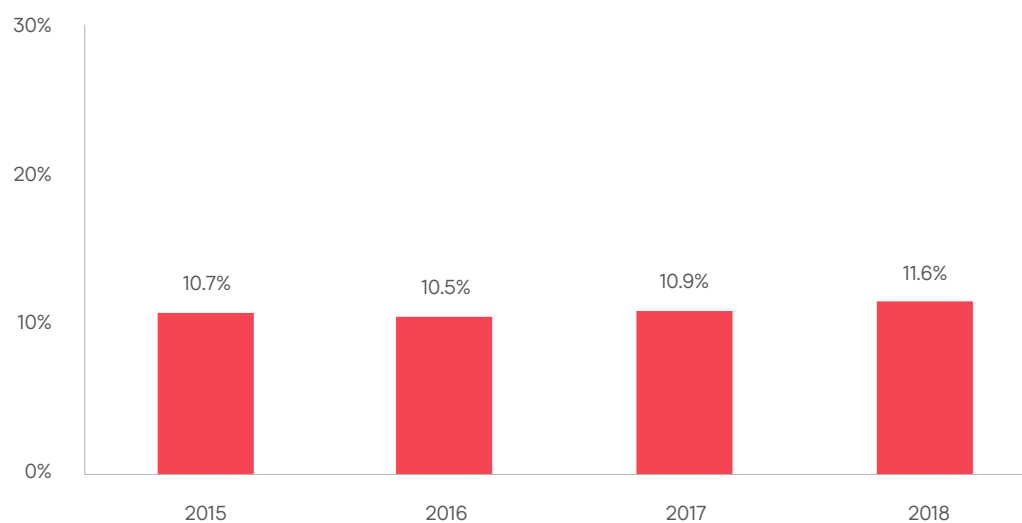
Meanwhile, around a quarter (27%) said they would go to the company's website (but not directly from the email), or they might visit their physical store (12%), social media accounts (9%) or even call them (5%).

In conclusion, it's evident the impact that email can have on a customer journey beyond the click.

# / Click-to-Open

As a result of the positive changes in both click and open rates seen in this year's data, the click-to-open rates overall have remained relatively steady, with a slight increase year-on-year from 10.9% to 11.6%. There was a notable increase for B2C emails, as this jumped 2.0% in 2018 to 11.4%.

## Click-to-open rates, 2015-2018

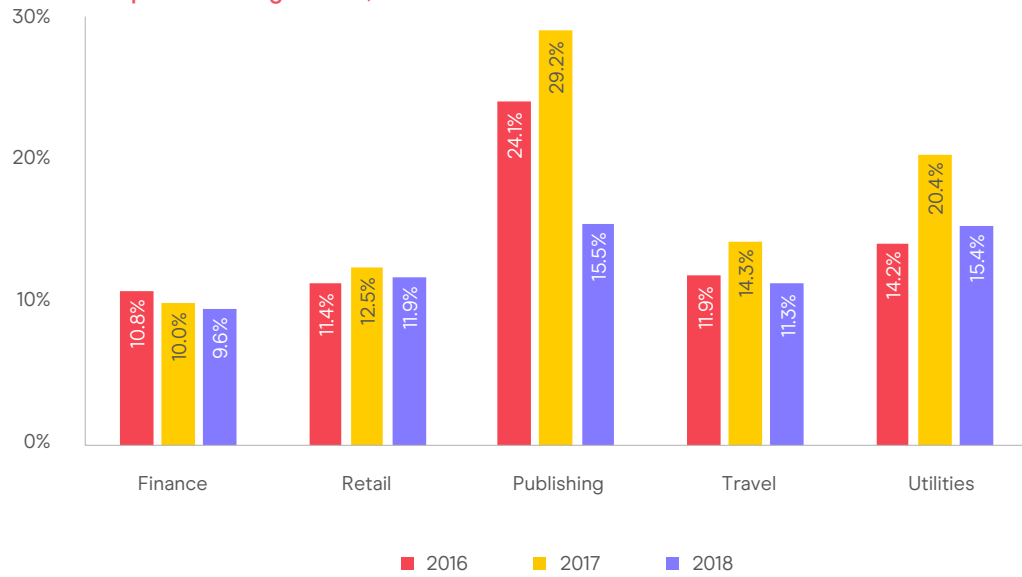


However, there were some marked shifts in the sector figures too. 'Publishing' has fallen by almost half the rate year-on-year and 'Utilities' has seen a reduction as well, although this was down to click-rates returning to 2016 levels.

Meanwhile, other sectors saw some modest declines due to the relative increases in open rate not being matched by clicks.

However, as mentioned previously, this may also be due to an underestimation of the email's power as a channel that triggers customers to simply click, as well as assuming that this is necessarily the goal of email campaigns in the first place.

## Click-to-open rates by sector, 2016-2018



# / Methodology

Data were provided voluntarily by email marketing service providers (ESPs), including DMA members and non-members. The average for all the emails sent, delivered, opened (uniques) and clicked on (uniques) for each ESP was then used to equate an overall industry average.

The sample covers over 35 billion emails sent from January 2018 to December 2018 by nine different ESPs: Dotdigital, Epsilon, Itg, Mapp Digital, Moosend, Pure360, RedEye, Zeta Global and ZeroOne. These participants have a wide range of clients across various industries at disparate volumes. This report should be used as a guideline only for email performance. Only aggregate figures have been reported.

The data was collected, collated and analysed by the DMA Insight Department. The report was written and designed by the DMA Insight Department and In-House Design Team. The findings were reviewed by the DMA, dotdigital and the Email Council's Research Hub to ensure relevance to the current state of the email industry.

# / About dotdigital

Formerly dotmailer, dotdigital is a leader in customer engagement technology.

dotdigital's Engagement Cloud is the platform of choice for businesses seeking to engage customers across all touchpoints. The platform's features empower 4,000+ brands across 150 countries to acquire, convert, and retain customers.

Users can connect customer data, surface powerful insights, and automate intelligent messages across email, SMS, social, and more. dotdigital is a global company with over 350 employees, serving companies of all sizes and in all verticals for over 20 years.





# / About the Customer Engagement Campaign

We put the customer at the heart of everything we do – especially when it comes to our [Customer Engagement](#) campaign.

This campaign uses research and insight to help you maximise your engagement for the benefit of marketers and consumers alike.

If you build a rapport with your customers, and you have something they want, then they will buy from you again and again.

We want to know what builds this rapport. We know creativity, data and technology are factors, but we don't know how the interplay works.

This campaign aims to discover what makes brilliant engagement.

Check out our popular [Marketer Email Tracker](#) and [Consumer Email Tracker](#), and explore our engaging infographics which are breaking down key ideas.

We also run events to encourage better Customer Engagement. Keep an eye on your emails, or visit our [events page](#) to book your spot.

Tap into DMA research, insights, thought leadership, and networking events on offer by visiting the DMA online and discover how you can get involved with and get the most out of our [Customer Engagement](#) campaign.

Better engagement means better business.

# / About the Data & Marketing Association

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) comprises the DMA, Institute of Data & Marketing (IDM) and DMA Talent.

We seek to guide and inspire industry leaders; to advance careers; and to nurture the next generation of aspiring marketers.

We champion the way things should be done, through a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, insight – underpinned by our customer-focused principles.

We set the standards marketers must meet in order to thrive, representing over 1,000 members drawn from the UK's data and marketing landscape.

By working responsibly, sustainably and creatively, together we will drive the data and marketing industry forward to meet the needs of people today and tomorrow.

[www.dma.org.uk](http://www.dma.org.uk)

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