

Email Benchmarking

2020

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Customer Engagement

DM
Data &
Marketing
Association **A**

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/ Introduction

This report is released amid a significant period of change for many marketers, with the lasting impact of these times still to be fully understood over the coming months and years.

The coronavirus and the resulting lockdown have brought about a feeling of common experience that we've never lived through before. Amid these changes, we've continued to see email used as a key method of communicating with customers to ensure they have the information needed.

The figures collated for this report are from January to December 2019 and represent a snapshot of how email has performed against these metrics before the conditions we now face. We will have to wait to understand the full impact of the coronavirus on how consumers interact with email marketing.

The '[Consumer Email Tracker 2020](#)', released earlier this year highlights some of the key areas where consumer behaviour both shifts and remains constant in recent years – with the '[Marketer Email Tracker 2020](#)' pointing out some places this conflicts with what many in the industry might think.

This report wouldn't be possible without the participation of several companies that took the time to collate their metrics and share them with the DMA. I'd like to thank the teams at **Celerity**, **Cheetah Digital**, **dotdigital**, **Emarsys**, **ITG**, **Moosend**, and **Pure360** for the commitment and time they dedicated to this project too.

The data in this report provides marketers with some benchmarks to understand how their email programme might compare. Although this comes with the reminder that we increasingly see consumers opting not to click on email links, but rather make their own journey to engage with the brand through other channels.

To truly understand the performance of your email programme, including the goal of your marketing and how you can most accurately measure it, be sure to look beyond the metrics in this report. Only then will you be able to comprehend the real impact and return of email.

Tim Bond,
Head of Insight, Data & Marketing Association

/ Foreword – Pure360

It's perhaps no surprise to see that the email channel continues to enjoy strong engagement, given consumers' continued appetite to receive this type of communication from their brands of choice.

Our experience over the last couple of months during the pandemic would suggest that engagement has only increased further, consumers and brands having become more reliant on the email channel as the single most dependable conduit for 121 personalised communication.

It's great to see delivery rates increasing: it's testament to brands' improving compliance with GDPR and deliverability standards. Engagement KPIs show some of the highest levels of consumer engagement compared to other digital channels.

However, the high degree of variance in the results highlights the fact that there is a great deal of difference between good and bad email delivery and as such email marketers cannot be complacent. When one quantifies the impact of implementing best practices within their email strategy, the difference to their customer experience and on their revenue bottom line can be substantial.

In a world where the interaction between consumer and brand is changing rapidly, where brand loyalty is fluid and where consumers' needs are evolving, marketers have to remain agile.

Marketers need to be able to continuously refine and adapt their strategy to meet the needs of their customers, whilst ESPs need to provide more flexible support structures to help their clients negotiate the transition challenges they face. Best practice techniques are evolving, and never has it been more important for brands to adopt continuous testing frameworks to measure consumers' responses to new email strategies.

The results show opportunity within Publishing, in particular for such an improvement. The democratisation of media publishing across social media channels has presented unique challenges for traditional publishers to monetise and maintain the interest of their audience. Adapting media delivery techniques to increase relevance and engagement will be the high priority.

But as with all other sectors, marketers need to take advantage of the development of more interactive email content formats, alongside increased segmentation capability, journey automation capability, and in-depth content personalisation that many ESPs now provide. This presents opportunities for publishers and marketers to differentiate themselves from their competitors and inspire the interest and trust of their audience.

Mark Ash,
CEO, Pure360

/ Overview

After the slight increase seen in last year's report, email metrics overall have remained stable. The average delivery rate has increased slightly to 98.5%, while click and click-to-open rates both remained stable, at 2.4% and 12.0% respectively. All these key metrics have also continued a long-term positive trend over the last five years of figures.

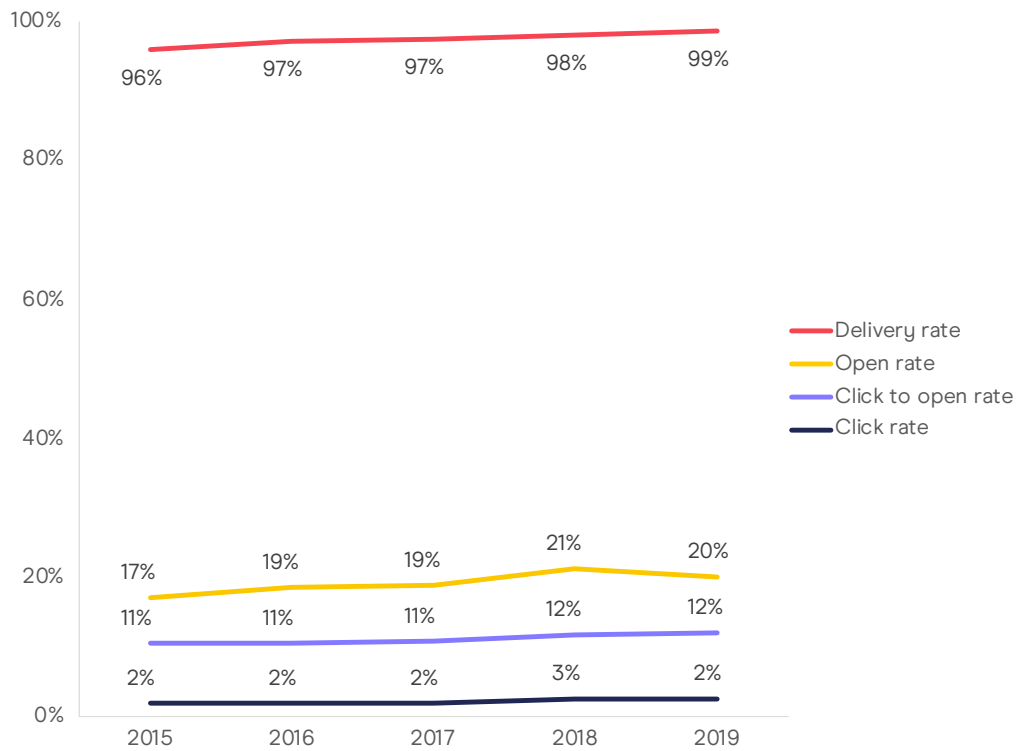
Open rate saw a slight decrease in 2019 to 20.0%, but this remains above figures from 2017 and years prior. The shift may also be down to an organisations mailable list sizes, returning to growth again post-GDPR. This is something we saw in the 'Marketer Email Tracker 2020' research, where 58% of marketers said their lists had grown over the last 12 months – with just a third (33%) saying they had got smaller.

This year's figures also include the range within which these averages have been calculated, offering insight into the variance on either side. These are found in each metric's chapter to follow and span the last four years, with the overall figures for 2019 included here.

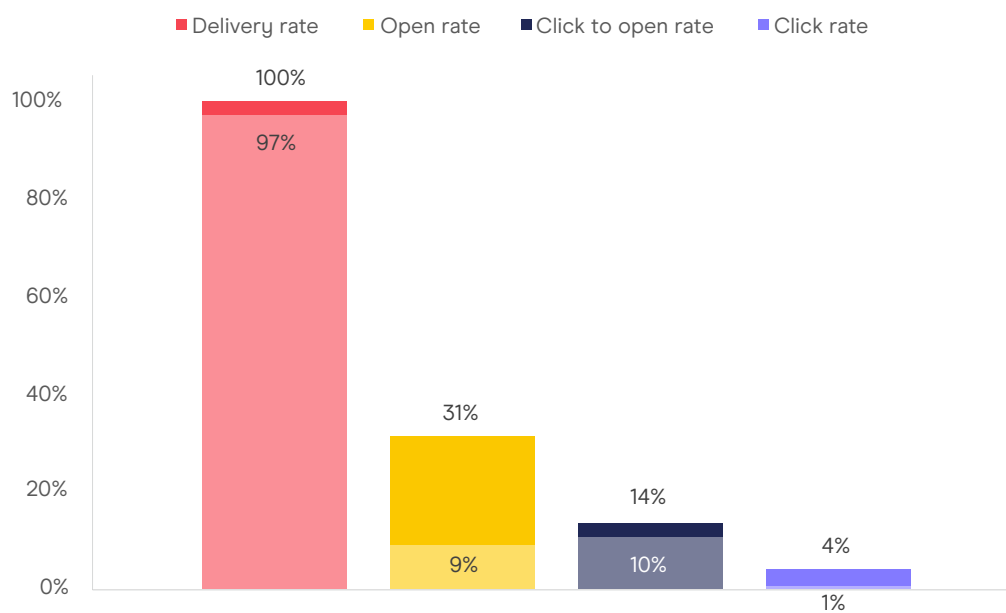
The average delivery rate is between 97.2-99.8%, pointing to the high level of success and attention paid to this key area of email marketing – as we found in the recent '[Email Deliverability: A Journey into the Inbox 2020](#)' report.

Open rate, on the other hand, saw a high degree of variance, with a possible range of 8.8-31.2%, and click rate also saw a relative increase in the rates reported – 0.8-4.0 this year. Meanwhile, click-to-open remained slightly more consistent across the data provided at 10.4-13.6%.

Email benchmark averages, 2015-2019



Email benchmark ranges, 2019



/ Delivered

The start of an email's journey to the inbox is key and marketers have, for the most part, understood the importance of deliverability to their overall programme performance. It should also be remembered that the number of emails 'delivered' is just one of the dimensions of deliverability, of which there are many.

As our [recent report](#) into this topic outlined, the key to success is ensuring that good practices are in place to comply with both relevant legislation and the clear guidelines offered by mailbox providers.

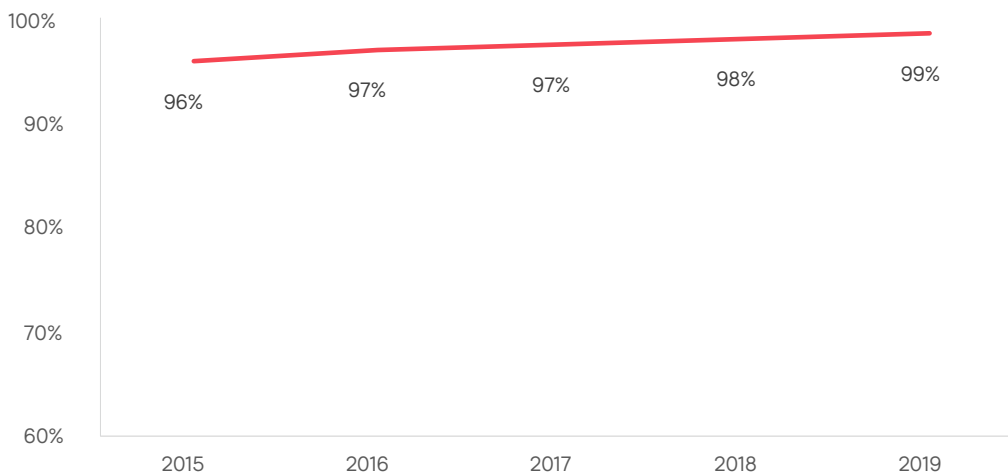
In 2019, delivery rates continued their trend over the last five years – rising to 98.5% and the possible range of variance also narrowing, indicating more campaigns are performing at this higher level too.

For emails sent in a B2C context, performance remained steady at 98.4% – slightly down on the previous year but up on 2017 and 2016 figures, while B2B marketers appear to have improved their email delivery rate markedly from just under 95% to 98.8% in 2019. (N.B. Figures for B2B emails were not reported in 2017. Information on why is available in the 'Methodology' section.)

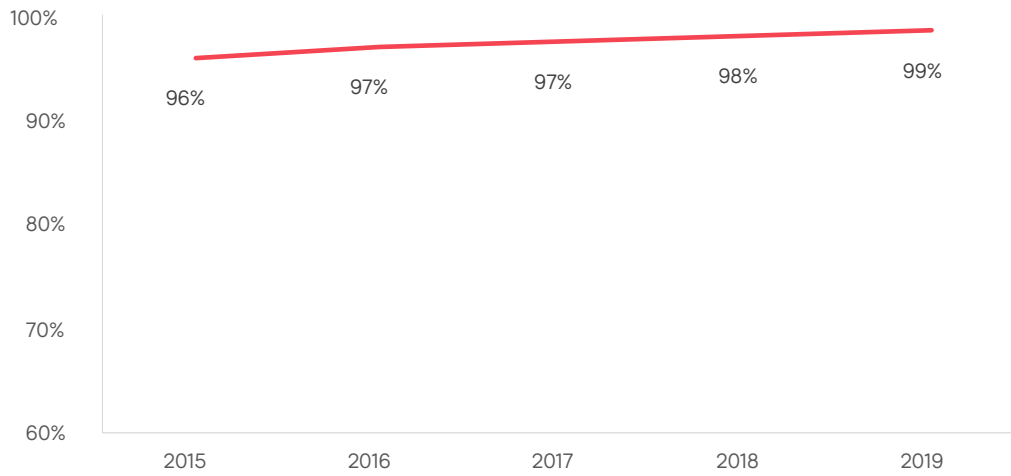
Looking across the sectors available within the data, delivery rates remain high across the board – varying from 98% to over 99%. The highest was 'Publishing' with 99.4%, while the lowest was 'Travel' – although this remains high and markedly higher than several different sectors in previous years. Meanwhile, 'Retail' had the highest variance in rates reported this year (97.3-100%).

This continued positivity around delivery rates is reinforced by the results from this year's '[Marketer Email Tracker](#)' report too, where the majority of marketers (72%) said they have increased in the last year – with just one in ten reporting a decline (13%). Also, respondents report 'spam complaints' continuing to decline too (62%), indicating that most organisations are following the rules set out in law and by mailbox providers.

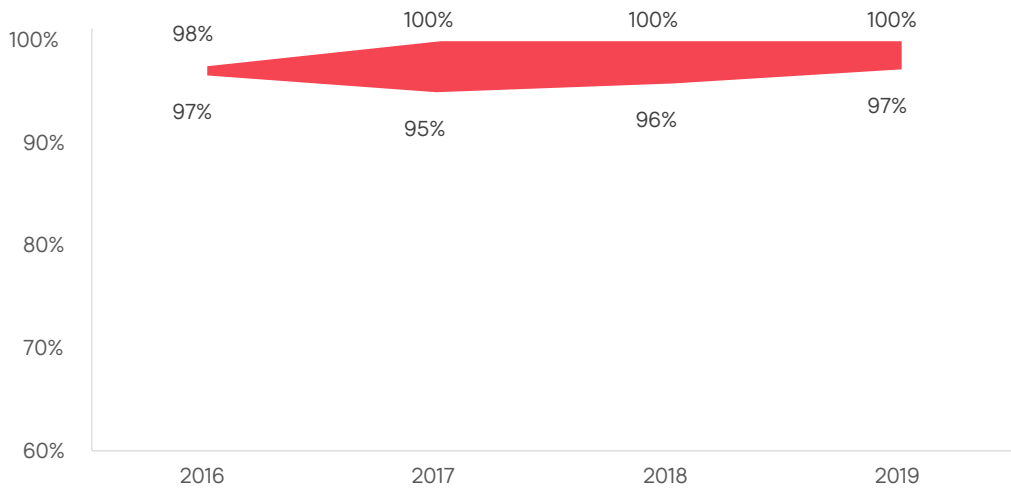
Delivery rate average, 2015-19



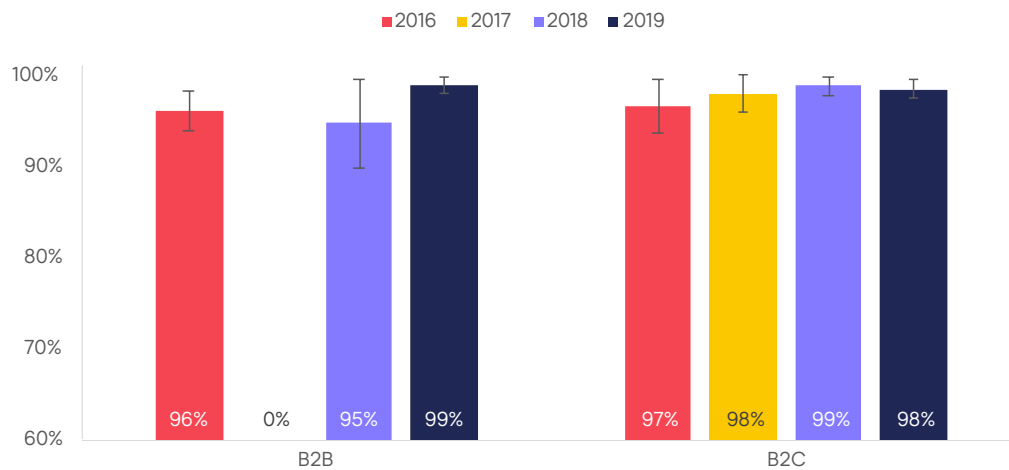
Delivery rate average, 2015-19



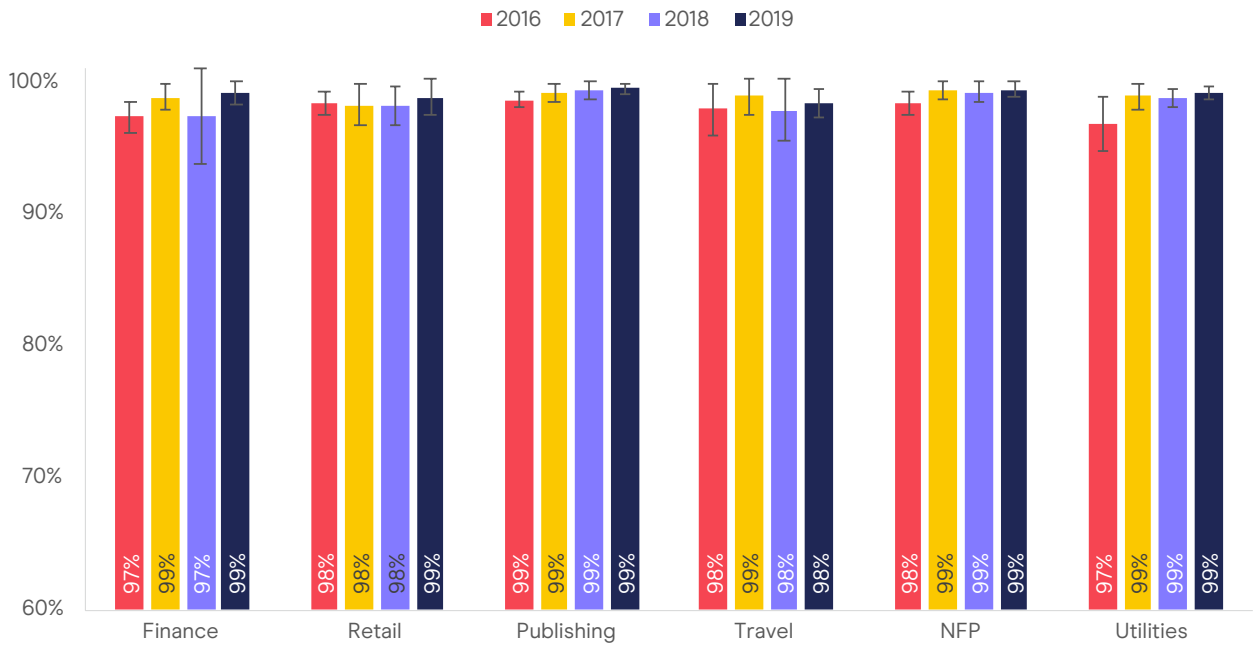
Delivery rate range, 2016-19



Delivery rates by B2B/B2C, 2016-2019



Delivery rates by sector, 2016-2019



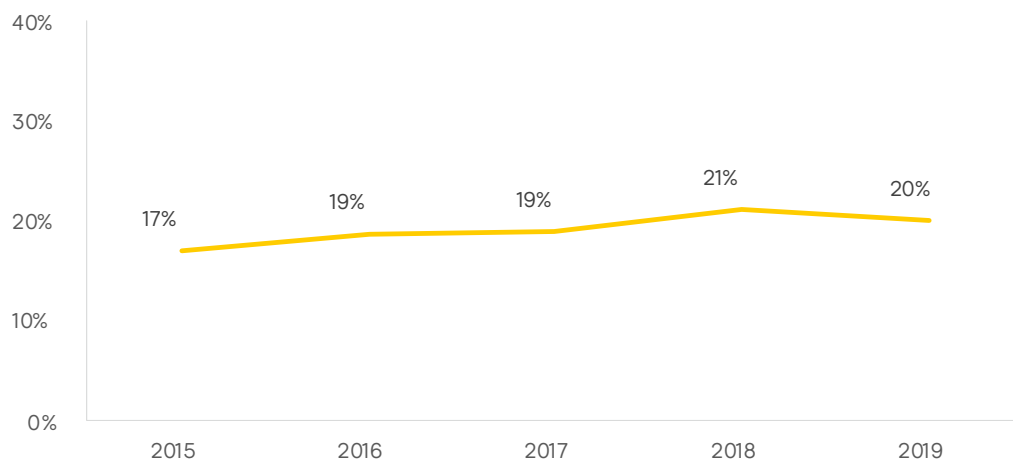
/ Opened

When it comes to opening an email, the data shows a slight decline in 2019 to 20%, although that's still higher than in most previous years. The source of this decline may also be the variance of the figure received, as the range most campaigns appear to perform within almost doubled to 8.8-31.2% – that's a 22.4% range compared to around 11-13% in previous years.

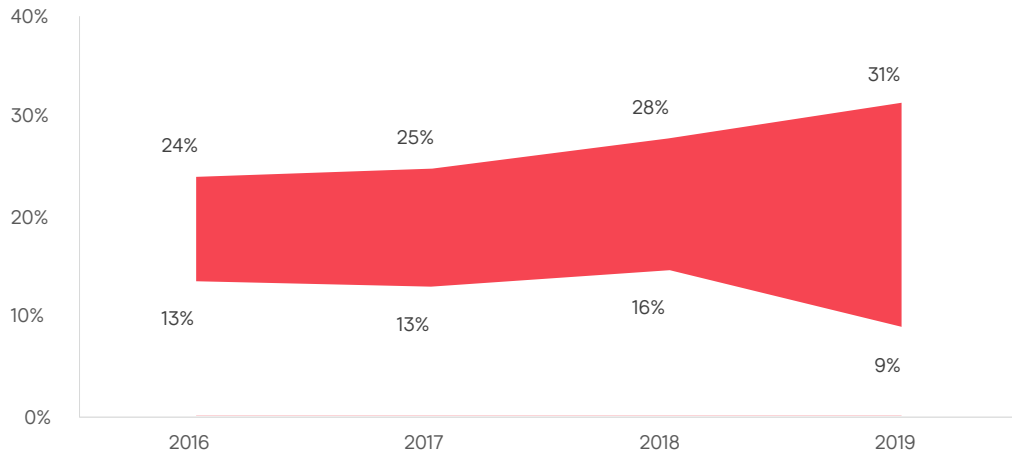
Despite the apparent decline, most marketers (70%) reported an increase in open rates in our [tracker from earlier this year](#). Marketers from B2C organisations reported a slight increase in open rates, but this was also matched by a rapid increase in the range of open rates reported this year (8.3-32.4%). Meanwhile, those sending B2B marketing emails reported a slight decline to 20.6%.

Looking at the sector analysis, many saw declines year-on-year, although most of these were a return to prior (2017) levels. The best performing sectors this year were 'Travel' (22.2%) and 'Utilities' (21.2%), while 'Publishing' reported the lowest open rate (13.5%) and also a narrowing of the variance in figures in this year's data (8.6-18.4%). The continued decline of this sector, as seen over the last few years, highlights the challenges it has faced and continues to try to address.

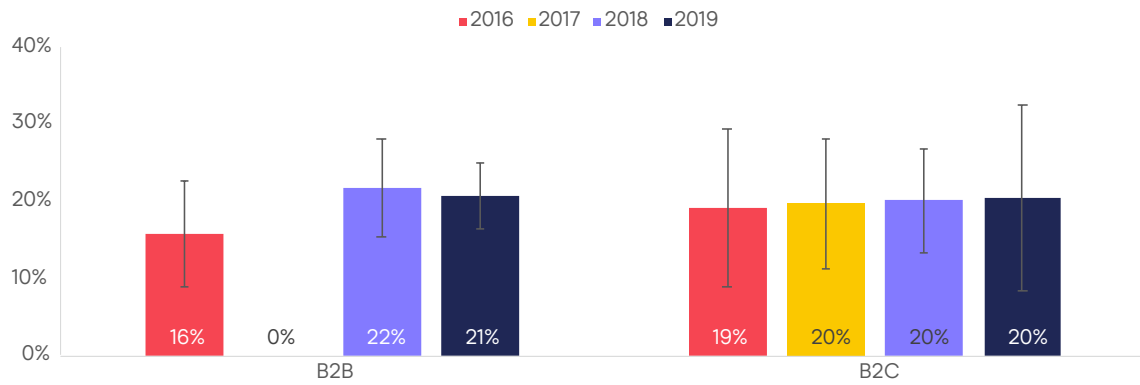
Open rate average, 2015-19



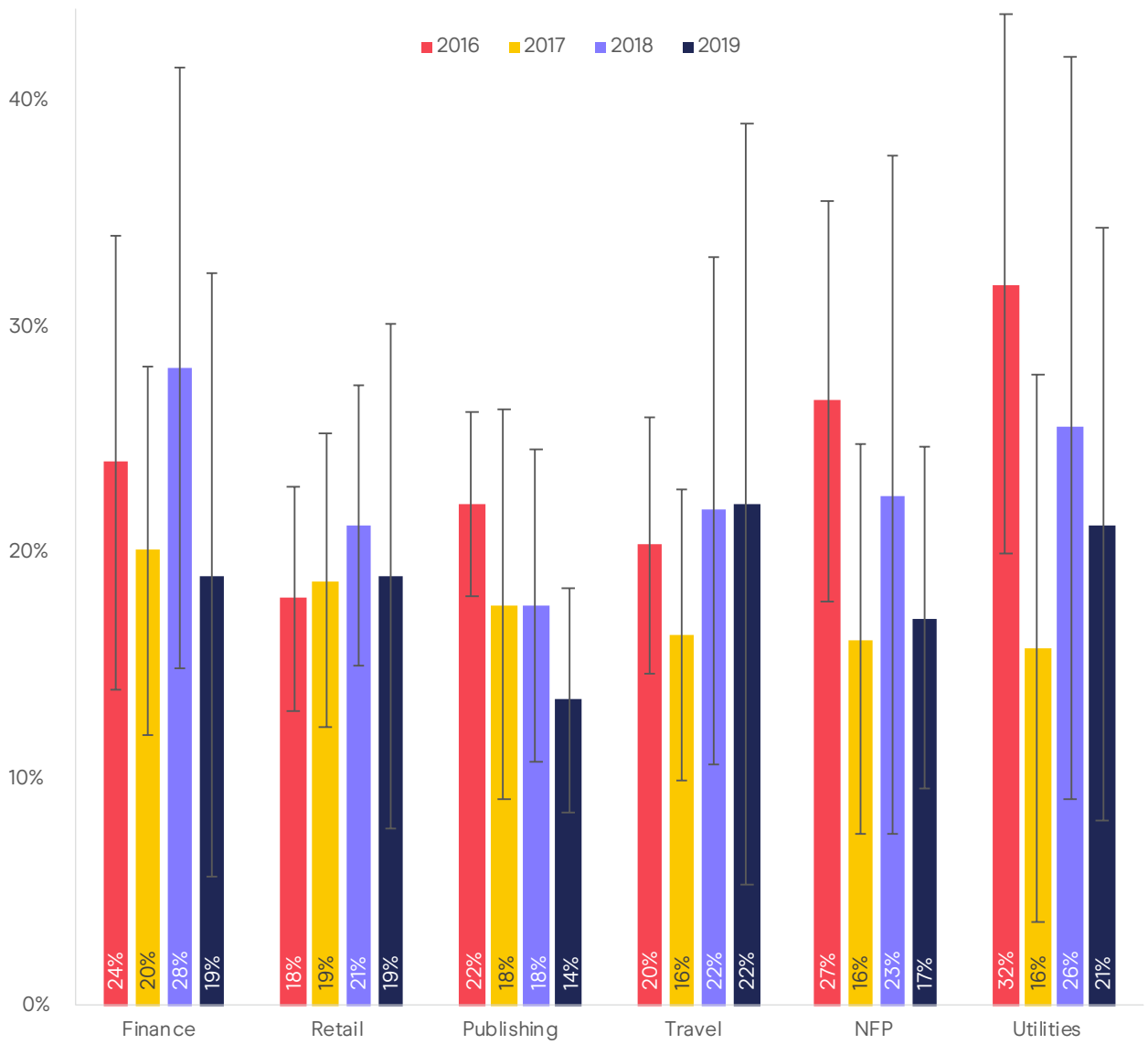
Open rate range, 2016-19



Open rates by B2B/B2C, 2016-2019



Open rates by sector, 2016-2019



/ Clicked

The number of people clicking links in the emails they receive has remained steady year-on-year at 2.4%, following an increase from around 2% on years before 2018. However, we also see a marked increase in the range of click rates reported – up to 0.8-4.0% in 2019.

Despite these mixed results, marketers reported positive increases in click-through rates (71%) and also conversion rates (68%) as part of the [‘Marketer Email Tracker 2020’](#).

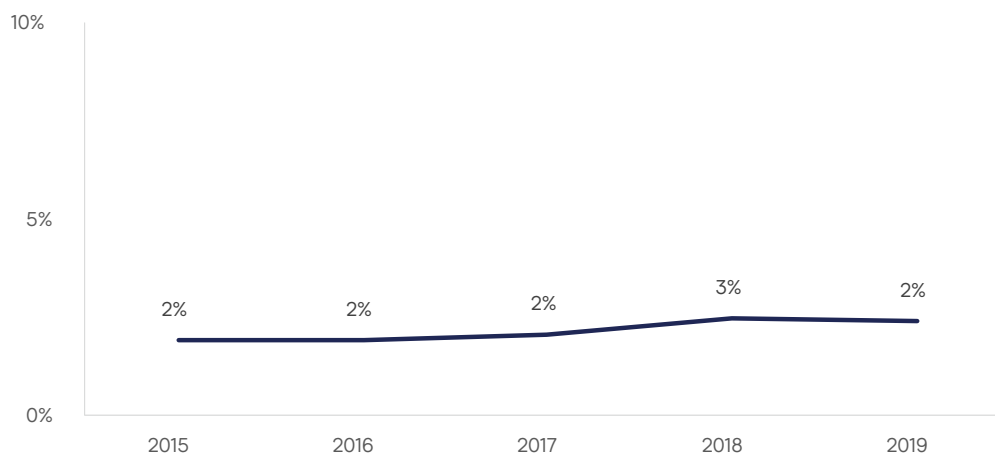
B2B marketers reported a steady performance (2.5%) compared to previous years, with the range of reported rates also narrowing to 1.8-3.2%. B2C organisations saw a steady performance on the year prior (2.5%), but this was with a marked increase of the variance in these rates too – now up to 0.8-3.2%.

The best performing sector in 2019, by some way, was ‘Travel,’ which is up to 3.3%, although this was with a range of 0-7.9% too – the largest in 2019. There were notable declines for ‘Not-for-profit’ and ‘Publishing’ (again) this year, while ‘Utilities’ saw an increase. ‘Finance’ remained stable overall, but did see an increase in the range of different values reported (0-5.1%).

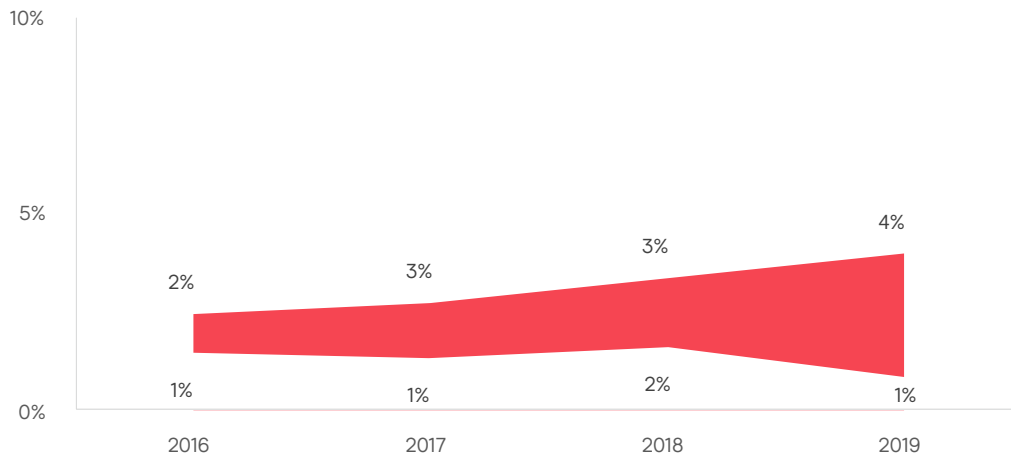
It’s always important when evaluating the performance of email campaigns to not underestimate the impact of the channel beyond the click too. For example, figures from this year’s [‘Consumer Email Tracker’](#) show that while a click is the most popular action, there are still many people that choose to engage with brands without clicking on the email at all (for instance, through search, physical stores, social media, or even calling them).

While clicks are clearly important, it’s also necessary to look beyond this metric alone to understand the true value of email marketing to an organisation.

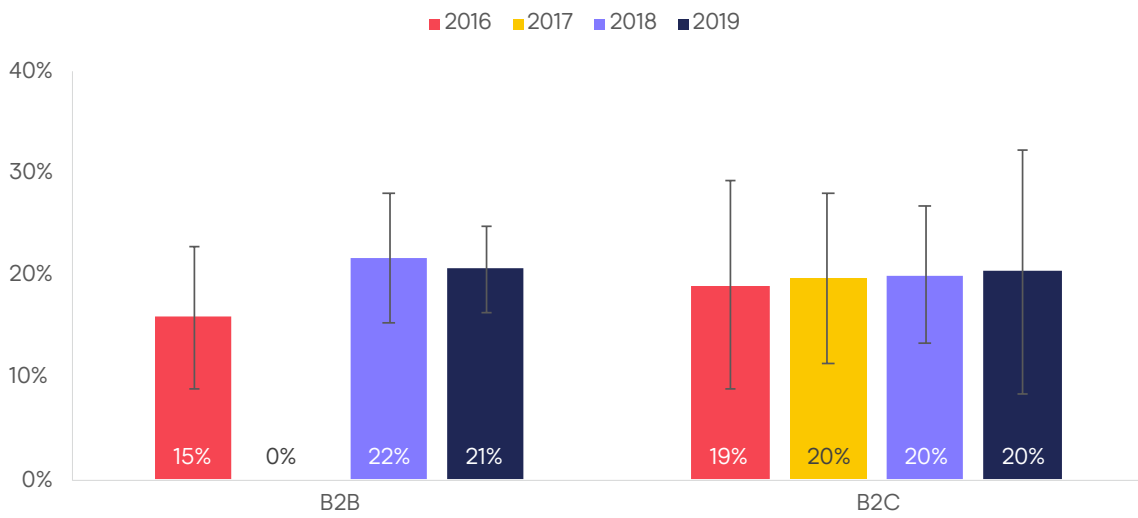
Click rate average, 2015-19



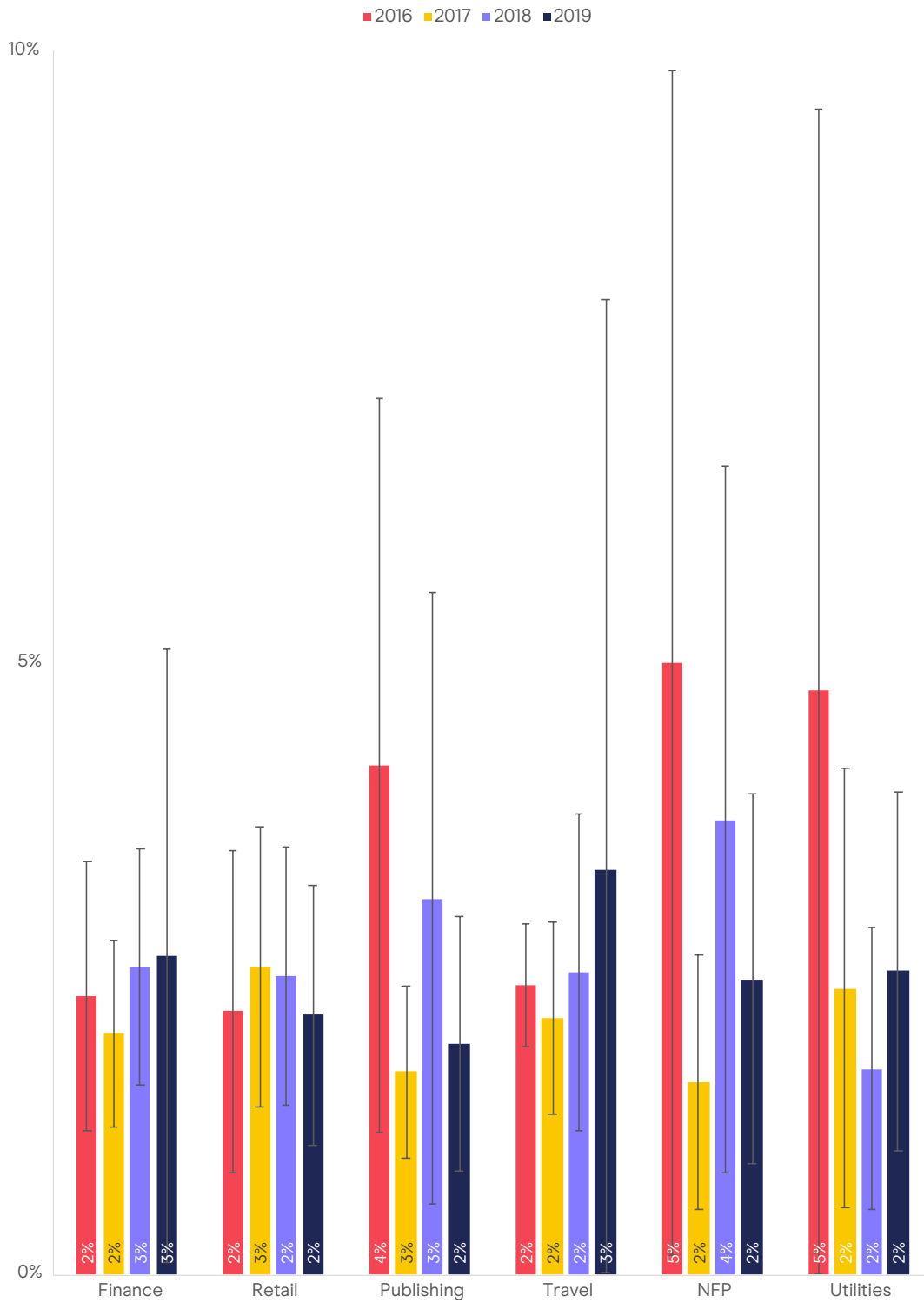
Click rate range, 2016-19



Click rates by B2B/B2C, 2016-2019



Click rates by sector, 2016-2019



/ Click-to-Open

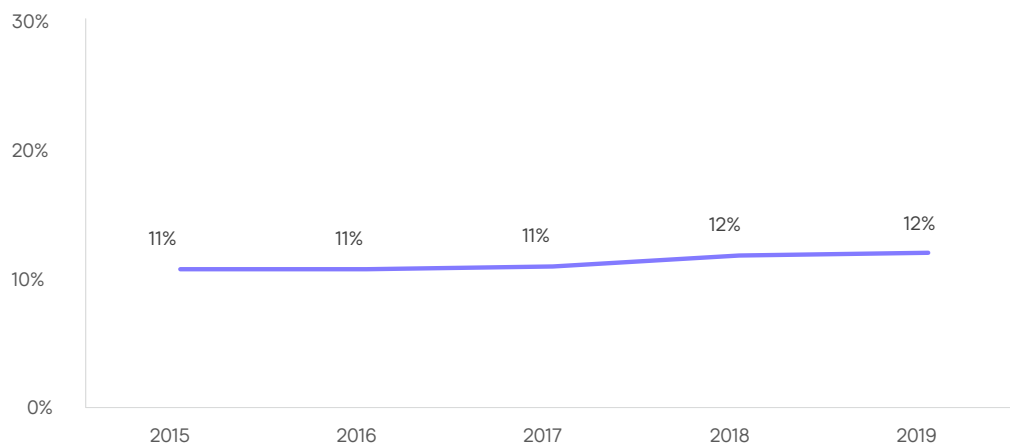
Overall, the click-to-open rates in 2019 remained relatively stable, with the range narrowing slightly – meaning more campaigns appear to be closer to the 12.0% average.

B2C marketers saw an increase in the click-to-open rate this year and, despite increases in the ranges for both click and open rate individually, the variance seen has narrowed too. For B2B organisations, figures have remained steady year-on-year, with an even more pronounced narrowing of the range in which most campaigns have performed this year too.

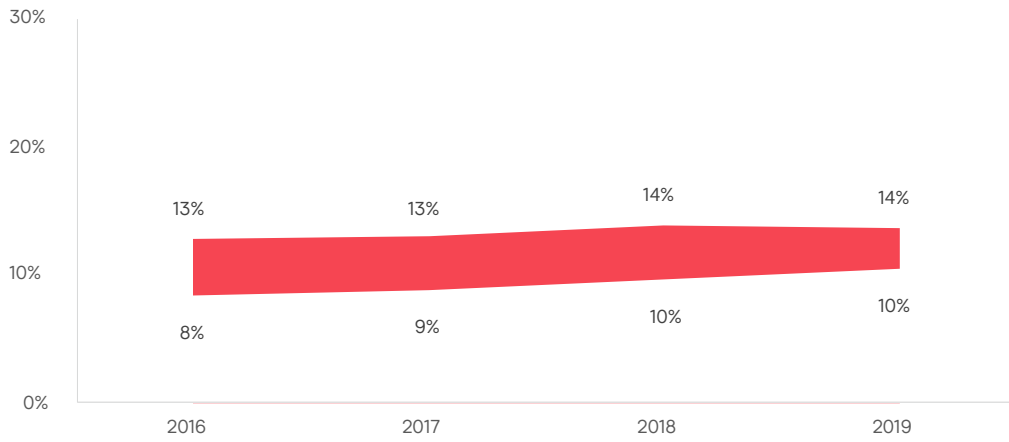
Looking across the sectors this year, there's a more mixed picture. However, 'Finance' and 'Utilities' both saw a notable increase overall, while 'Not-for-profit' and 'Publishing' saw a decline. The increases in both click and open rate have meant that the rate for 'Travel' remained similar to previous years. Both 'Travel' and 'Not for profit' also have the widest range of possible rates this year too – 5.6-17.9% and 8.2-20.2% respectively.

However, as mentioned in the previous section, it's also important to note the goal of these messages and whether clicks or opens are the right means to measure success. For many organisations, using these alone may underestimate the power of email as a channel to trigger one of the alternative journeys to engage with the brand we're increasingly seeing in our [other research](#).

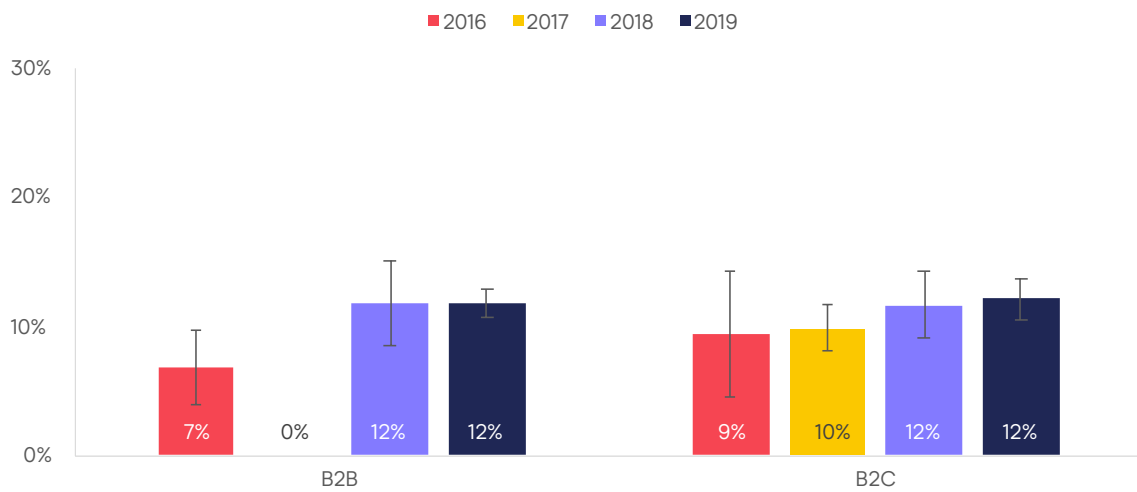
Click-to-open rate average, 2015-19



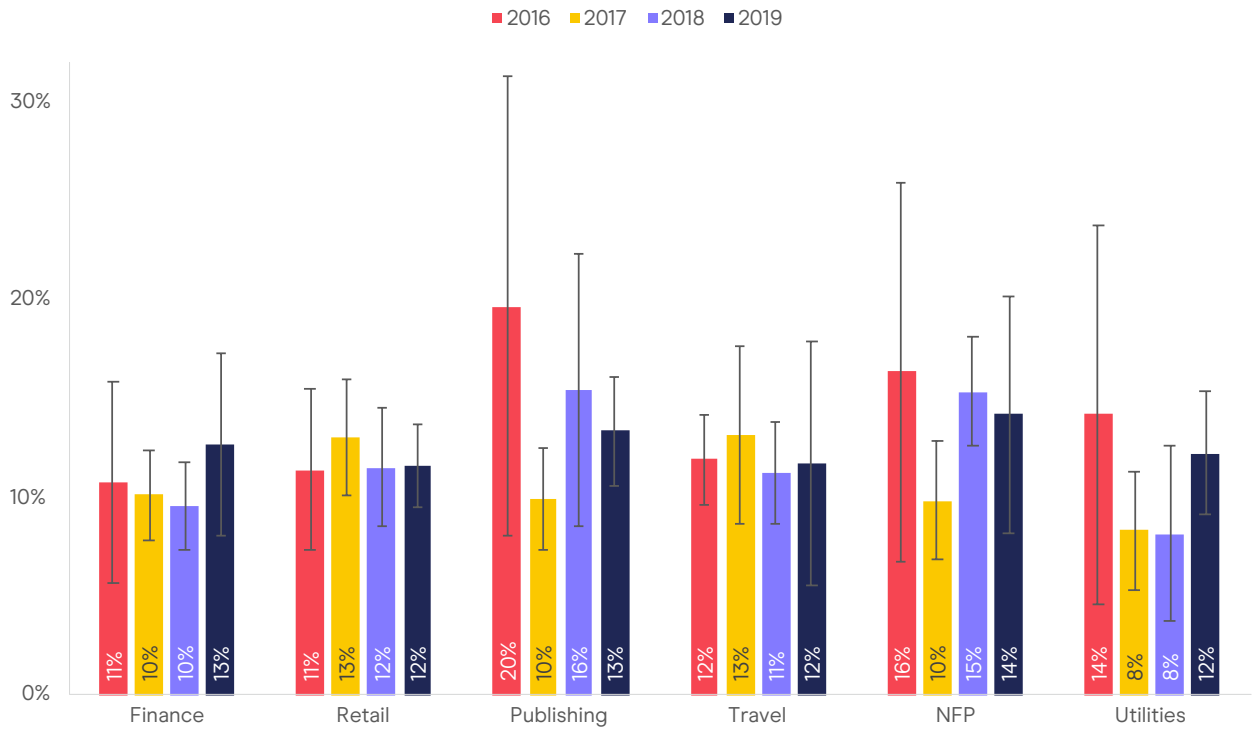
Click-to-open rate range, 2016-19



Click-to-open rates by B2B/B2C, 2016-2019



Click-to-open rates by sector, 2016-2019



/ 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, and 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

/ About Pure360

Pure360 is a marketing technology company providing multi-channel data and marketing solutions to help the UK's leading and growing brands get better results.

Providing UK marketers with an unrivalled combination of our all-in-one AI marketing platform, which enables brands to better integrate, analyse, personalise and deliver, and our industry-leading consultancy through our proprietary Maturity Model, we are focused on accelerating customer results across email, mobile, web and social.

We drive better email, better personalisation and better revenues, helping marketers be the best they can be.

We deliver best in class results for over 1,400 customers across the eCommerce, FMCG, Publishing and Travel sectors. Pure360 customers include **The Range, Wagamamas, Kuoni, FT.com, innocent, Shoezone, Health Education England (NHS),** and **Aqua Restaurants.**

We are ranked as #1 in Email Marketing by Gartner Digital Markets and a 'High Performer' for Email Marketing by G2.com. We are also proud to be named as finalists at the Brighton and Hove Business Awards 2019.

Born and bred in Brighton, at Pure360 we believe people are paramount. From our customers to our employees, we are passionate about bringing people together, connecting audiences like never before. Better starts here.

www.pure360.com

/ Methodology

Data was 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 131 billion emails sent from January 2019 to December 2019 by eight different ESPs: **Celerity**, **Cheetah Digital**, **dotdigital**, **Emarsys**, **ITG**, **Moosend**, and **Pure360**. 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, **Pure360**, and the Email Council's Research Hub to ensure relevance to the current state of the email industry.

Figures for B2B organisations in 2017 have not been published due to the low volume of email data received for this particular year.

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