



2016

Financial  
Email  
Marketing  
Benchmark  
Report



HARLAND CLARKE®

MARKETING SERVICES



# Summary

Financial institutions enjoy another strong year of effective communication through the email channel.

Email continues to be a powerful channel for financial institutions as recipients demonstrated a willingness to receive and engage with financially focused messages. With a combination of increased message frequency and segmented, targeted lists, financial institutions saw high levels of engagement throughout the year.

To compile this research report, Harland Clarke performed a quarterly analysis of more than 190 financial institutions' email marketing programs (half banks and half credit unions) throughout 2015. These financial institutions collectively sent more than 8,000 campaigns across 73,000 deployments to more than 86 million recipients through Harland Clarke's SubscriberMail® platform.

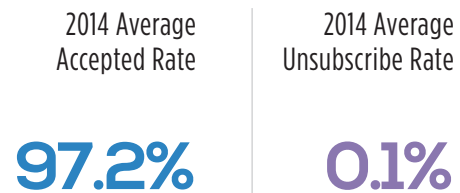
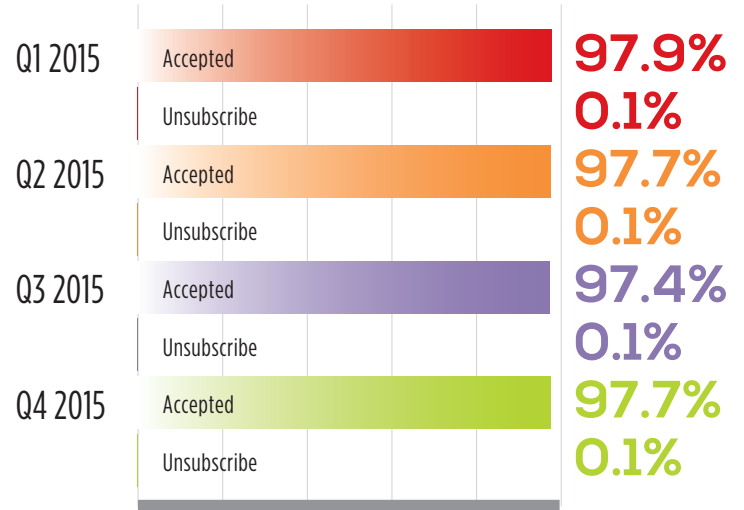
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# Financial Institutions Consistently Send to Very Clean Mailing Lists

Financial email messages enjoyed acceptance rates above 97% throughout 2015, with the remaining messages bounced back as undeliverable. This data indicates financial institutions are taking care to capture accurate email information from account holders which, when combined with automated list hygiene processes, yielded consistently clean mailing lists. Financial institutions are advised to review email collection processes to guard against invalid/inaccurate data, and carefully monitor bounce activity particularly after any influx of new records (such as those stemming from a merger/acquisition activity).

Email recipients exhibited a willingness to receive communications via email from financial institutions, as unsubscribe rates on such messages stayed at 0.1% for all of 2015. This not only indicates recipients are willing to keep this line of communication open, but also shows that financial institutions are making good decisions when determining their audience, and avoiding shortcuts such as list purchases that can lead to a higher rate of opt-outs.

## Accepted Rates and Unsubscribe Rates for Financial Email



## Unique Confirmed Open Rates Largely Unchanged Year-Over-Year

Harland Clarke measures unique confirmed opens by including recipients who have rendered images in an email or clicked on a link within the message (to account for recipients who view messages with images disabled). This measurement, which takes into account both primary means of email engagement, remained in the 24 - 26% range for the entire year. This performance very closely mirrored 2014 data, with the largest difference being an increased unique open rate from 23.7% in Q1 2014 to 25.9% in Q1 2015.

Also consistent with 2014 was the click-through rate for financial emails of approximately 2% throughout 2015. Although these numbers are artificially lowered by notifications and other emails that do not include clickable links, financial institutions would be well served to evaluate their use of calls-to-action (including placement and design) in generating more interaction and engagement. This is especially true given the robust open rates.

### Overall Campaign Engagement

	Click Through Rate	Unique Confirmed Opens
Q1 2015	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>
Q2 2015	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>
Q3 2015	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>
Q4 2015	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>

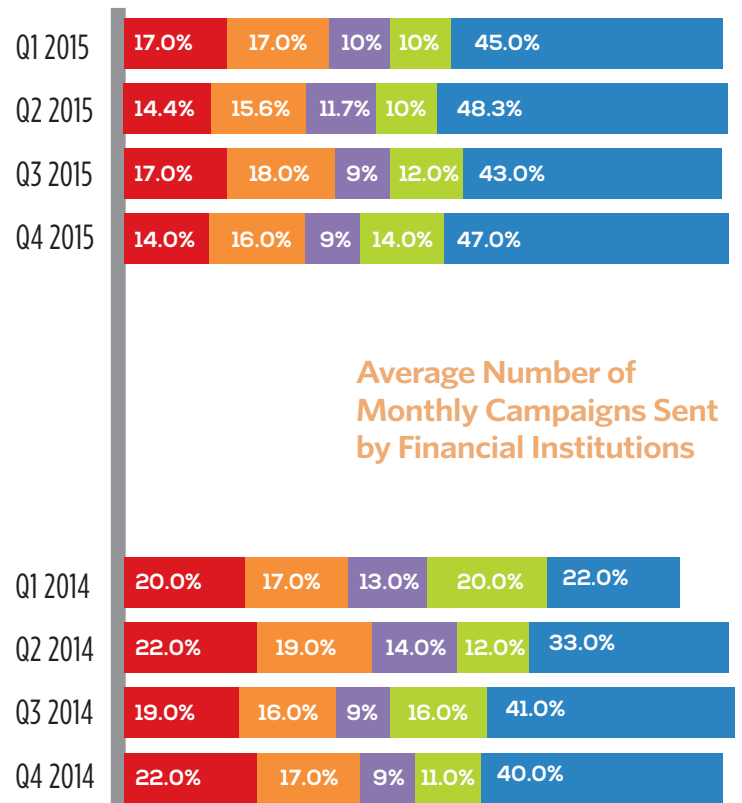
	Click Through Rate	Unique Confirmed Opens
Q1 2014	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>
Q2 2014	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>26.1%</b>
Q3 2014	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>
Q4 2014	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>

48% of  
Financial Institutions  
Averaged  
More Than 10  
Email Campaigns  
Per Month  
in Q2 2015.

The number of financial institutions sending an average of more than 10 monthly emails rose significantly in 2015. This was especially shown in the first two quarters of the year, with Q1 showing a 105% increase and Q2 showing a 46% increase compared to the same time period in 2014. In fact, the majority of financial institutions sent at least six emails per month throughout 2015, including a high mark of 61% in Q4.

This increase is at least partly attributable to automated, ongoing programs, such as email onboarding campaigns, in addition to regular communications, such as newsletters and promotions. Increased frequency does not appear to be having an adverse impact based on low unsubscribe rates and steady message engagement, so financial institutions appear to have an opportunity to stay in the type of regular communication with account holders that can help keep their brand and related services top-of-mind with recipients.

**1** **2-3** **4-5** **6-10** **>10**



# Smallest Deployments See Highest Unique Open Rate in 2015

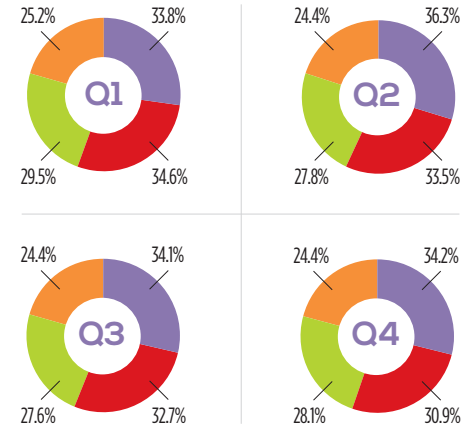
Messages sent to smaller, more targeted audience segments tend to reward the strategic approach with higher engagement rates. This held true for financial institutions in 2015, with messages sent to less than 100 recipients showing unique confirmed open rates ranging from 34 - 36%. As deployment size increased to 1,000 or even 10,000+ recipients, response rates decreased to a still respectable 24 - 29% range.

This data, along with the increase in campaign frequency indicated on page 5, suggests that financial institutions are using smaller lists to target specific groups of account holders more frequently, but are also mixing in larger deployments, such as notifications and promotions that still manage to generate a fair amount of engagement with the broader audience.

## Unique Confirmed Opens by Deployment Size

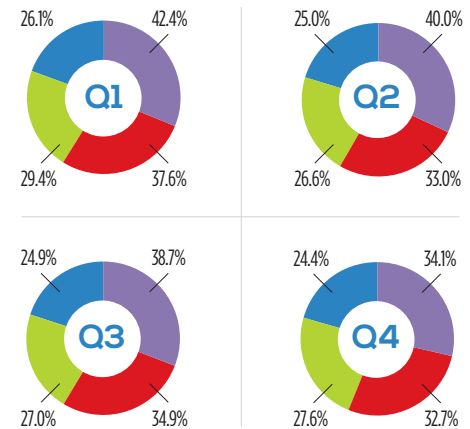
### 2015

<100 | 100-999 | 1,000-10,000 | >10,000



### 2014

<100 | 100-999 | 1,000-10,000 | >10,000



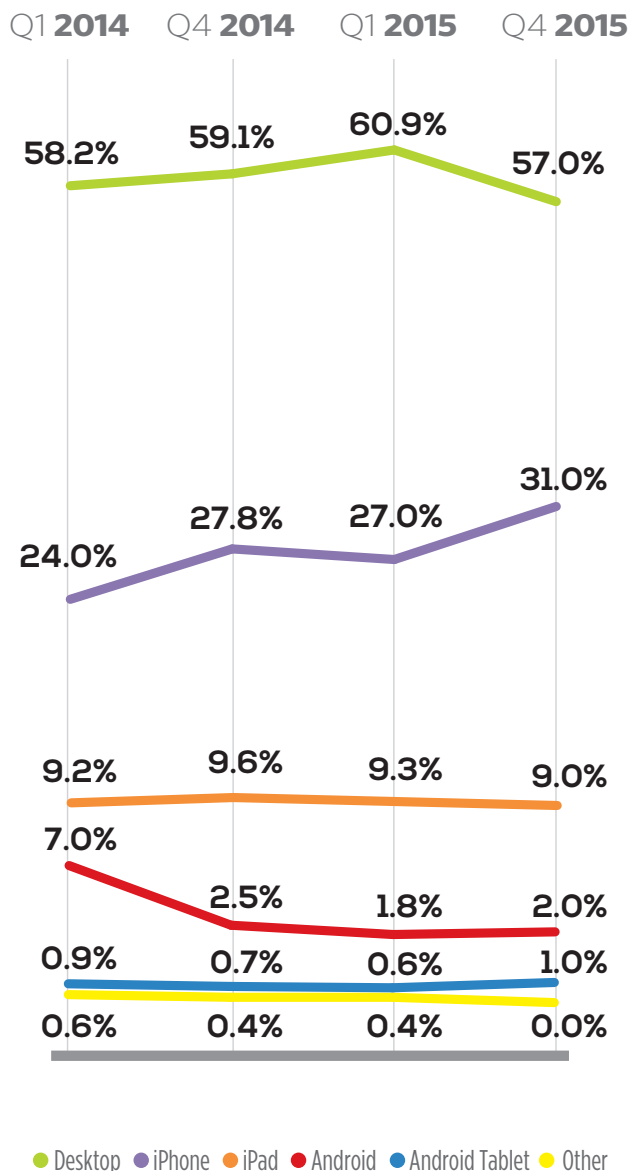
# Email Engagement From Android® Devices Fell Significantly in 2015

Mobile renders on the iPhone® increased by 12% in Q1 2015 compared to the same period of time in 2014, but email messages rendered on an Android® fell 74% during that same time period. Including smartphones and tablets, 92.8% of email engagement on mobile devices occurred on Apple devices. Somewhat surprisingly, email engagement via desktop in 2015 did not decline in comparison to 2014, staying relatively flat.

As in 2014, the 2015 data makes clear that the audience for financial emails is not yet leaning as heavily toward mobile engagement as what is seen with other industry verticals. The need to optimize email messages to display properly across both desktop and devices, particularly Apple devices, continues to be a priority for financial institutions to provide the best recipient experience.



% Total Opens by Device



# Key Takeaways



- Email acceptance rates stayed above 97% throughout 2015, indicating very clean mailing lists.
- Account holders showed receptivity to email communications with unsubscribe rates at 0.1% for all of 2015.
- Unique confirmed open rates unchanged year-over-year, remaining in the 24 - 26% range in 2015.
- Click-through rates for financial emails stayed consistent with 2014 at approximately 2% throughout 2015.
- The number of financial institutions sending an average of more than 10 monthly emails rose significantly in 2015.
- Smallest deployments saw highest unique confirmed open rate in 2015.
- Email engagement from Android devices fell significantly in 2015.

For information on how Harland Clarke can help your financial institution achieve its objectives, call **1.800.351.3843**, email **[contactHC@harlandclarke.com](mailto:contactHC@harlandclarke.com)** or visit **[harlandclarke.com/MarketingServices](http://harlandclarke.com/MarketingServices)**.