2017/18 GRANICUS BENCHMARK REPORT (UK)

Insights for Mapping an Effective Digital Strategy

GRANICUS

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There has never been a time in my long memory when we have had so many unprecedented and often frightening events to challenge and change us. From terror on the streets of London and Manchester to the political and economic fallout from Brexit, via the horror of Grenfell Tower and the impact of austerity. This has put extraordinary pressure on the public sector communications profession in particular to step up to the mark repeatedly to explain, reassure, involve and support. And at a time when communications teams are being cut and their budgets squeezed, now more than ever public sector organisations need to deliver clear and powerful communication which supports critical public services, brings communities together, and improves programme outcomes.

- Paul Masterman, Strategic Communications Specialist and LGA Associate

Introduction
Benchmarking in the Public Sector

Although more and more, public sector communications teams are being asked to generate new income (both within the function as well as by supporting other teams in their organisation to reach their commercial potential), rarely are vital programme outcomes measured by revenue generated - the metric of success for private sector communications. Instead, the return on investment is more often measured in the number of lives impacted, or even saved, or in terms of efficiency savings (financial, resource, and time).

For all sectors, audience engagement is essential to organisations' missions and must be guided by effective marketing tactics. Getting the right message to the right people at the right time remains the holy grail, and with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation in May 2018, being able to deliver targeted and compelling communications at scale is more important than ever.

To help public sector organisations gauge their comms performance level and compare metrics with others in the sector, Granicus produced the first-ever Benchmark Report in 2016. Now our 2017 report serves to help guide communicators further, as they explore new tactics and tools for creating meaningful connections with citizens.

See how you could move the needle on your comms performance to inform, educate, and convert more people into action. Use this report to make incremental changes to your digital communications strategy; pave the way for better citizen engagement and bigger impacts in individual lives and whole communities.

Engagement rate tracks your most active audience members (those who clicked or opened an email) over a period of 90 days.

The Value of Email in the Public Sector

The majority of this report is focused on monitoring and measuring email metrics for a few important reasons. First (and most importantly), email is still the most effective tactic for driving a large audience to action. Even the *private sector agrees*: email reigns supreme when it comes to delivering return on investment (ROI) for marketers, and won't be going extinct anytime soon. In the public sector, this means that email is most likely to assist you in converting citizens to action, which translates to better programme outcomes and positive impacts in more people's lives.
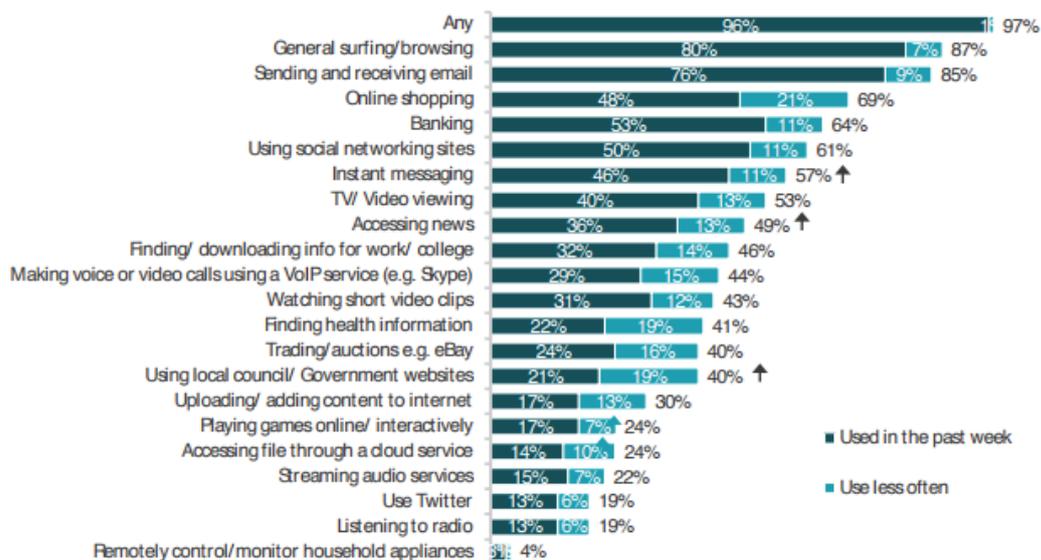
Second, one of the greatest advantages of email marketing is its ability to help you reach an authentic audience, or citizens who 'raise their hand' and opt in to receive messages. Giving an audience a choice to connect with you empowers them and your organisation. This proactive connection is proving to be one of the

strongest pillars of real change and for building effective relationships between citizens and the state. Plus, subscribers' consent to receive direct communications is more critical than ever under the new GDPR.

Lastly, email provides the best opportunity for reaching your target audience over any other channel, and according to the latest *Ofcom market report* (see figure below), email remains the most common internet activity after general browsing in the UK.

In the private sector, companies focus on the overall revenue generated by marketing efforts aimed at relatively small or niche audiences: they prioritise profit and can afford to ignore audiences which do not "convert" and deliver good ROI. By contrast, government organisations are responsible for all citizens in all places; which represents a huge challenge and a need for organisations to embed themselves in people's lives. With so many responsibilities and critical messages, the public sector must be able to reach and engage people at the right time.

Figure 5.20: Claimed use of the internet for selected activities

Activity	Used in the past week	Use less often	Total
Any	96%	1	97%
General surfing/browsing	80%	7%	87%
Sending and receiving email	76%	9%	85%
Online shopping	48%	21%	69%
Banking	53%	11%	64%
Using social networking sites	50%	11%	61%
Instant messaging	46%	11%	57% ↑
TV/ Video viewing	40%	13%	53%
Accessing news	36%	13%	49% ↑
Finding/ downloading info for work/ college	32%	14%	46%
Making voice or video calls using a VoIP service (e.g. Skype)	29%	15%	44%
Watching short video clips	31%	12%	43%
Finding health information	22%	19%	41%
Trading/auctions e.g. eBay	24%	16%	40%
Using local council/ Government websites	21%	19%	40% ↑
Uploading/ adding content to internet	17%	13%	30%
Playing games online/ interactively	17%	7% ↑	24%
Accessing file through a cloud service	14%	10%	24%
Streaming audio services	15%	7%	22%
Use Twitter	13%	6%	19%
Listening to radio	13%	6%	19%
Remotely control/ monitor household appliances	3	1	4%

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker. Data from Q1 2014, then H1 2015-2017
Base: All adults without the internet aged 16+ (n=597)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 99% confidence level between UK 2016 and UK 2017.
QE33 (QE25A): Why are you unlikely to get internet access at home in the next 12 months?

While citizens' needs will vary and the associated communications to assist them should be audience-specific, organisations must find an effective and economical way to reach different groups at critical moments. With over 3.7 billion email users worldwide, including 76% of adults in the UK using email at least once a week, email remains a unique opportunity for the public sector to engage a huge and varied audience.

More than 3,000 public sector organisations worldwide are already using the *GovDelivery Communications Cloud* (by Granicus) to segment audiences and deliver targeted communications to citizens who have opted to receive them. These messages are helping to *inform, educate and nudge* over 150 million citizens (including 11 million subscribers in the UK) to be more involved in their local community and services, as well as participate in national and international government programmes.

REMEMBER

Email is simply the most reliable form of communication, and can help both large and small organisations accomplish their desired programme outcomes. This doesn't mean other tactics like text messaging or social media can't be extremely powerful; they can, depending on your target audience and strategy. In the last year, government organisations sent 275 million text messages through the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, communicating appointment and event reminders, travel alerts, opportunities to participate in consultations and more.

For a medium that has been so readily and regularly written off over the years, and one that remains undervalued by companies in terms of budget, it is striking how healthily email marketing continues to perform as a channel for marketing communications, and how much room it retains for innovation and development.

- Econsultancy, 2017

Key Takeaways and Highlights

The 2017 Granicus Benchmark Report was published in order to help public sector organisations measure, monitor and improve the performance of their communications. Having the right metrics enables organisations to determine which digital strategies are most effective and which should be adapted in order to have a bigger impact on programme and campaign outcomes.

Data from June 2016 to June 2017

Data from 3,000 public sector organisations

1.4M+ emails sent to 9.8B addresses

Activity among 267M citizen subscribers

Median subscriptions per subscriber went up by 2.7

Median engagement rate went down by 8%

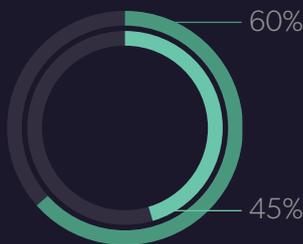Top 20% overlay rate went up by 980%
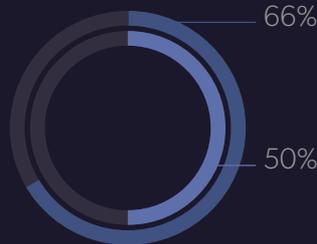
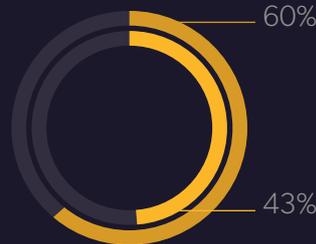| Median	Top 20%	Median	Top 20%	Median	Top 20%	Median	Top 20%

ENGAGEMENT RATE

60%

45%

2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks (global)

66%

50%

Highlights for the UK public sector overall

60%

43%

Highlights for the UK central government

69%

56%

Highlights for the UK local government

OPEN RATE
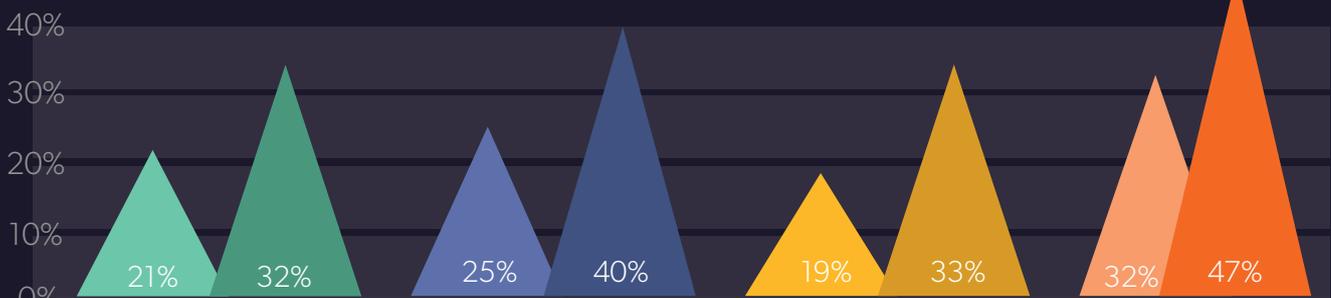
40%							
30%							
20%							
10%							
0%							

21%   32%   25%   40%   19%   33%   32%   47%
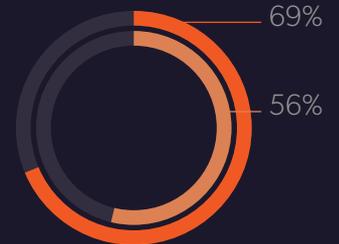
2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks(global)

Highlights for UK public sector overall

Highlights for UK central government
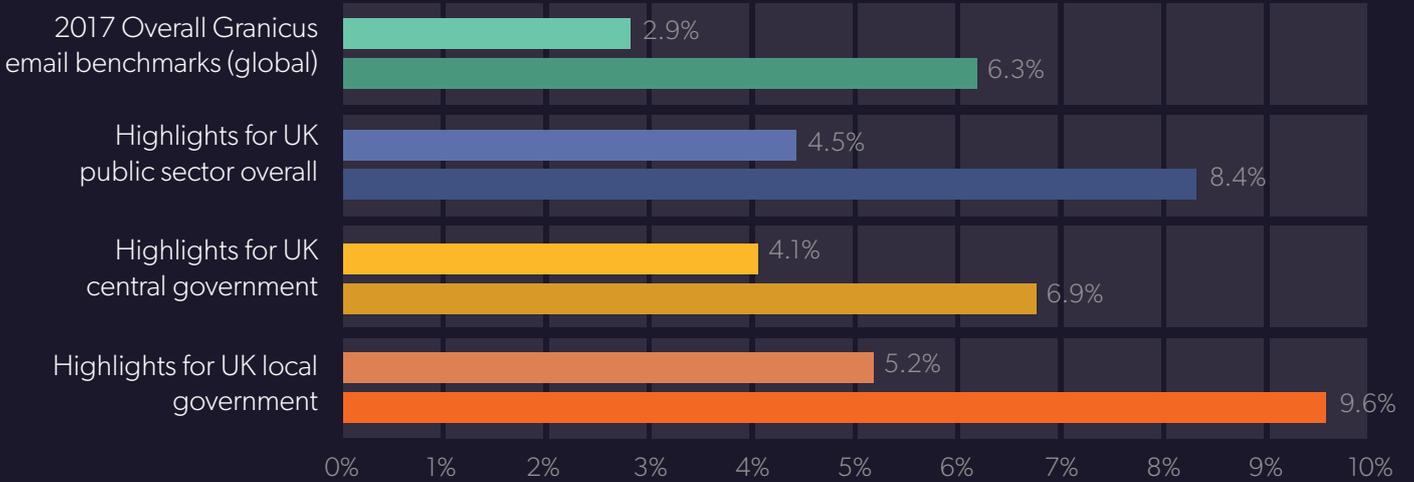
Highlights for UK local government

CLICK RATE

Category		
2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks (global)	2.9%	6.3%
Highlights for UK public sector overall	4.5%	8.4%
Highlights for UK central government	4.1%	6.9%
Highlights for UK local government	5.2%	9.6%

0% 1% 2% 3% 4% 5% 6% 7% 8% 9% 10%

SUBSCRIPTIONS PER SUBSCRIBER

2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks (global)

5.65
10.68

Highlights for UK central government

2.10
4.47

Highlights for UK public sector overall

2.10
5.00

Highlights for UK local government

1.83
3.25

OVERLAY IMPACT

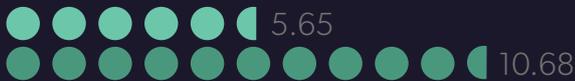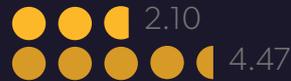|	2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks (global)	Highlights for UK public sector overall	Highlights for UK central government	Highlights for UK local government
	144% / 1564%	156% / 463%	117% / 193%	117% / 475%

1600% 1300% 1000% 700% 400% 100% 0%
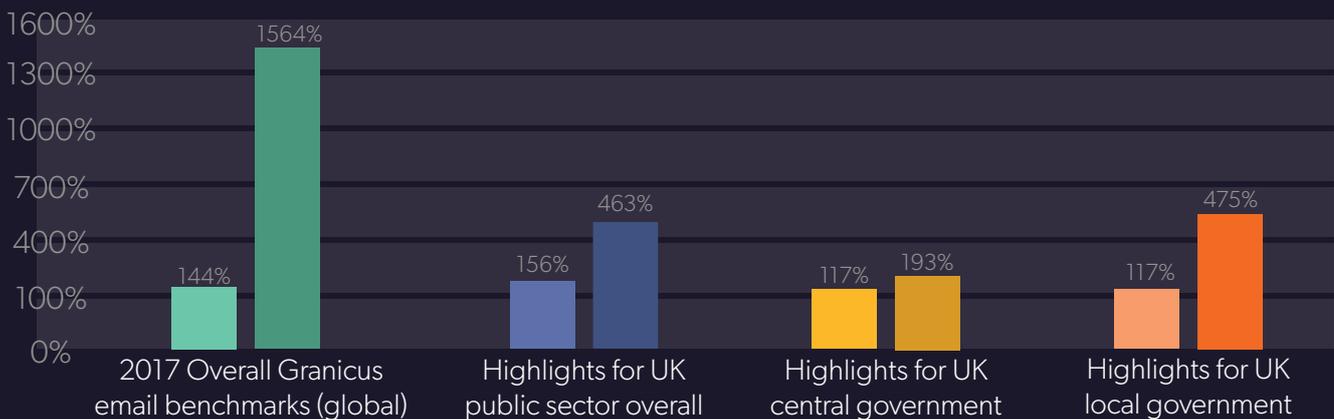
Further Insights for the Public Sector
UK Public Sector Benchmarks

Internal (Employee) Communications

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate
61.9%	76.4%	46.8%	66.7%	10.5%	24.0%

Fire and Rescue Services

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
79.6%	85.9%	27.4%	37.7%	5.5%	8.0%	1.63	2.60	37%	111%

London Councils

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
57.4%	57.7%	35.5%	47.9%	4.7%	7.9%	1.53	2.16	458%	1062%

INCREASE STAFF ENGAGEMENT LEVELS AND JOB SATISFACTION USING GOOD COMMS

*Check out this success story to see how **West Sussex County Council** is using digital comms to reach 5,300 employees across multiple locations and build a more connected and motivated workforce.*

? DID YOU KNOW?

Things are pretty busy in London, as you'd expect. A London council sends an average of 243 email bulletins through the GovDelivery Communications Cloud (by Granicus) a year, while London-based subscribers are signing up for an average of 5.4 updates from their local council and 7 updates from across local and central government organisations in the GovDelivery Network.

Comparing Sectors
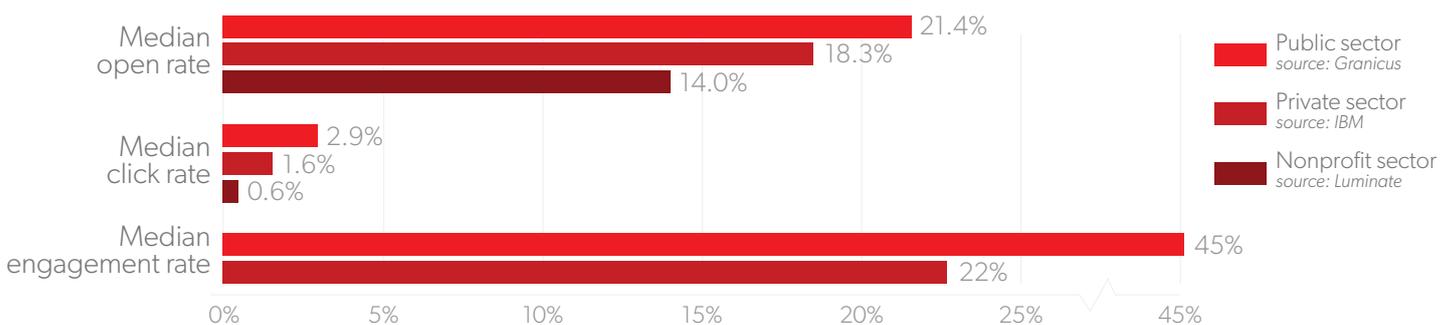## *Comparing Public Sector Benchmarks to Other Sectors*

When using benchmarking data to compare your organisation to your peers in the public sector, it is helpful to understand the larger context of email metrics – particularly those in the private and nonprofit sectors.

For years, benchmarking metrics have been used in the private and nonprofit sectors to help inform and guide digital engagement strategies. It wasn't until *Granicus' 2016 Benchmark Report* that the public sector had data solely dedicated to how government and public sector teams are communicating across verticals.

Again this year, Granicus' benchmarking data highlights a compelling story in the world of public sector communications. When standard median metrics, including open rate, click rate, and engagement rate are compared across the public, private and nonprofit sectors, it is clear that public sector email and SMS messages are being opened, clicked on and actioned by more people than in other industries.

Examples from leading private- and nonprofit-sector industry reports (global averages):

Median open rate	Public sector — 21.4%; Private sector — 18.3%; Nonprofit sector — 14.0%	
Median click rate	Public sector — 2.9%; Private sector — 1.6%; Nonprofit sector — 0.6%	
Median engagement rate	Public sector — 45%; Private sector — 22%	

Public sector
source: Granicus

Private sector
source: IBM

Nonprofit sector
source: Luminate

See how your comms performance compares to organisations in other sectors by reviewing your account reports in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud by Granicus.

This data reaffirms the value and power of public sector email communications for reaching and engaging citizens in meaningful ways. Even in our crowded inboxes, these messages are resonating with audiences and outperform those in the private- and nonprofit-sector. Whether it's an update about a local community project or the latest on our missions into space, these benchmarking metrics demonstrate the strong public demand for information from government and other public bodies, and citizens' appetite to participate in opportunities in their communities.

The Importance of the GovDelivery Network and the GDPR

This year's data also highlights the importance of the GovDelivery Network, which is a strong contributing factor to the higher metrics. Organisations that leverage the GovDelivery Communications Cloud (by Granicus) are automatically connected to the 150 million citizens within the GovDelivery Network. This means anyone who subscribes to one organisation's digital updates will be given the option to subscribe to updates from other organisations in the network, as a final step in the sign-up process.

The GovDelivery Network provides access to new audiences you otherwise may not be able to reach. This visibility and unique opportunity to engage citizens who have expressed an interest in content from related or nearby organisations will be even more important and critical to your audience acquisition strategy under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Acquiring citizens' unequivocal consent to receive your communications is a requirement under the new regulation. Using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud's robust sign-up process will help you comply. The platform also enables you to identify when and how someone subscribed to your updates, giving you the proof of opt-in that you need under the GDPR.

500%+
SUBSCRIBER GROWTH

As a direct result of participating in the GovDelivery Network, organisations are seeing a 500 per cent or more increase in their subscriber base.

The GovDelivery Network will be critical to organisations' subscriber acquisition strategies as they prepare for the GDPR and under the new regulations.

Top Trends
Top Digital Communications Trends for 2017/18

Each year, Granicus asks public sector employees for their take on challenges, opportunities and trends for the coming year in the *UK Public Sector Digital Communications Trends Report*. According to this research, the top challenge in the public sector continues to be the lack of resources, or budgetary constraints.

> *Public sector communicators are content marketers. Nearly 50 per cent of respondents in the Public Sector Digital Communications Trends Report indicated that the number one digital communications priority for 2017/18 would be to increase engagement with content and services.*

At the same time, there are still great opportunities ahead – primarily, according to the trends report, by connecting more people to information and opportunities via targeted and timely digital communication.

For more guidance on content marketing, download *A Guide to Content Marketing in the Public Sector* published by Granicus. This guide highlights five of the top tactics for content marketing in the public sector, including use of email bulletins. See the trending bulletin tags from 2017 on the next page. These are the subject matters achieving the highest engagement rates from across the UK public sector.

Benchmarking for Success

How will public sector communicators measure the success of their initiatives in 2017/18? According to 44 per cent of respondents to the trends survey, communicators will measure success using digital engagement metrics.

Generally speaking, the better the metrics, the greater the impact on the desired outcome. For example, the higher the email engagement rate, the more likely it is people – lots of people – will take the action you want them to. That action could be life-changing or even life-saving.

Wherever possible, it's important that you pair these performance metrics with tracked impacts in the service areas you support. Monitor your audience reach, engagement rates, average subscriptions per subscriber and overlay impact - since these are strong indications of your potential to impact outcomes - but also work with your colleagues to follow the knock-on action and overall effect. Look at the data and identify how, when and for whom your messages led to results. Whether it's a reduction in calls, increased citizen satisfaction, more revenue, or changes in customer behaviour, evaluating the impact of your communications is important for your continual improvement. Granicus solutions can integrate with your CRMs, databases and other systems to help you create a full and accurate picture.

This benchmarking report provides the metrics you need to be able to measure, monitor and report on the performance of your communications.
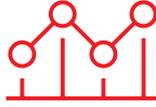
2017 TOP TRENDING BULLETIN TAGS

1. Tax Returns

2. MOT Testing

3. Bin and Waste Collection

4. School Communications

5. Local Leadership

6. Vehicle Safety Recalls

7. Housing and Tenant News

8. Digital Services

9. Driving Test
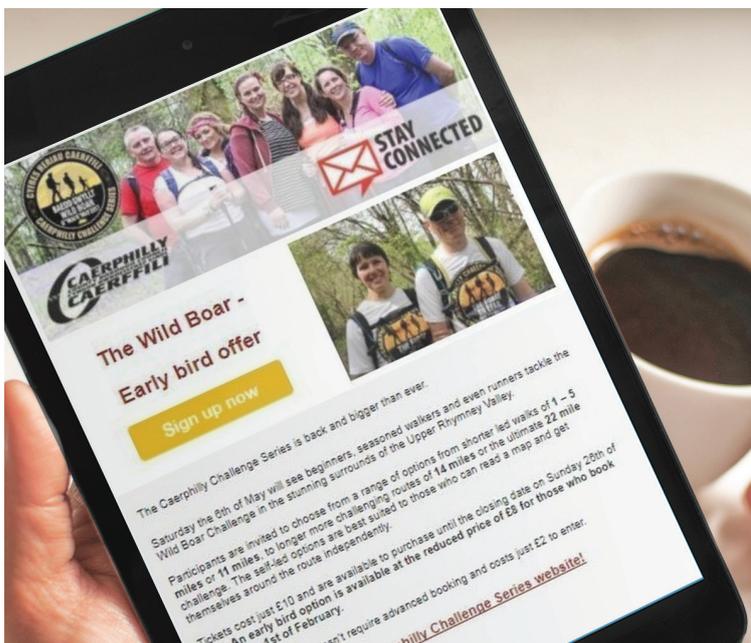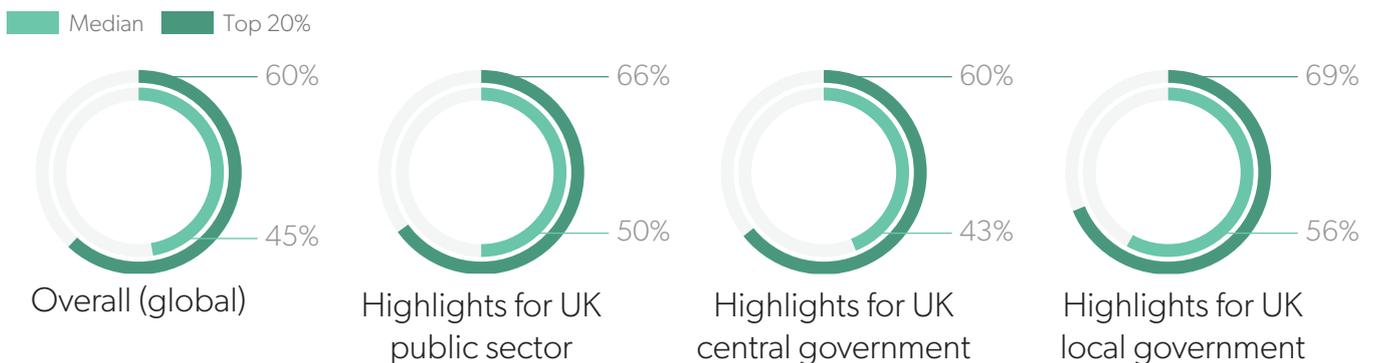
10. Library News and Updates

The Data
Benchmark 1: Engagement Rate

Engagement rate is one of the most important metrics to measure and monitor consistently, as it can provide great insight into how a strategy is performing over a longer period of time.

Engagement rate tracks your most active audience members (those who clicked or opened an email) over a period of 90 days.

Granicus calculates this metric by taking the number of unique email recipients who opened an email or clicked on a link in an email over a period of 90 days, and labelling those individuals as "engaged". That number is then divided by the total number of email recipients who received an email during that time period. If the rate holds steady or improves while the total reach grows, an organisation typically sees improving impact of digital communications over time.

ENGAGEMENT RATE OVERVIEW

Median ▮ **Top 20%** ▮

60%	66%	60%	69%
45%	50%	43%	56%
Overall (global)	Highlights for UK public sector	Highlights for UK central government	Highlights for UK local government

ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLE

Why we love it:

- The message is targeted at a specific audience.

- The call-to-action button is clear and uses a verb.

- Images are attractive and descriptive.

- The message achieved a high level of engagement: 49% open rate and 12% click rate.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT RATE

Use the three "Ts"

Balance the "three Ts" to boost your engagement rate: tone, timing and targeting. Finding the right tone for your message, coupled with sending your message at the right time to the right audience is a recipe for success.

Test what works

The best way to increase the number of people engaging with your comms is to use basic testing functionality or to invest in GovDelivery's *Advanced Package for Communications Cloud* to further streamline *A/B testing* (a method of comparing two versions of an email to see which performs better). This allows you to see what messaging and design approaches prompt the most people to engage with you.

Balance imagery with a strong subject line

Because engagement rate measures both open and click rates over a period of time, having a strong subject line in addition to a relatable image in the header can lead to higher engagement rates over time. Looking for guidance on best subject line words to use? Check out this *blog* for "5 best words to use in your subject lines".

Keep it short

As word counts go up, readership goes down. Messages should be brief, scanable and high-level, with trackable links offering access to more detail.

Target your messages

Whether it's an alert to renew a service subscription or a reminder to pay a bill, one-to-one messaging is critical to the transactional functions of government and public sector bodies at every level. Granicus' *Targeted Messaging Service (TMS)* allows millions of personalised messages to be sent simultaneously, for example an SMS prompt to help people meet payment deadlines, or an email confirmation for a customer transaction. These automated messages save your organisation time and improve the customer experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Looking to take your engagement to the next level? Dive deeper with this recent webinar, *20 Tips to Boost Engagement*. Learn email best practices and hear from speakers working in local government.
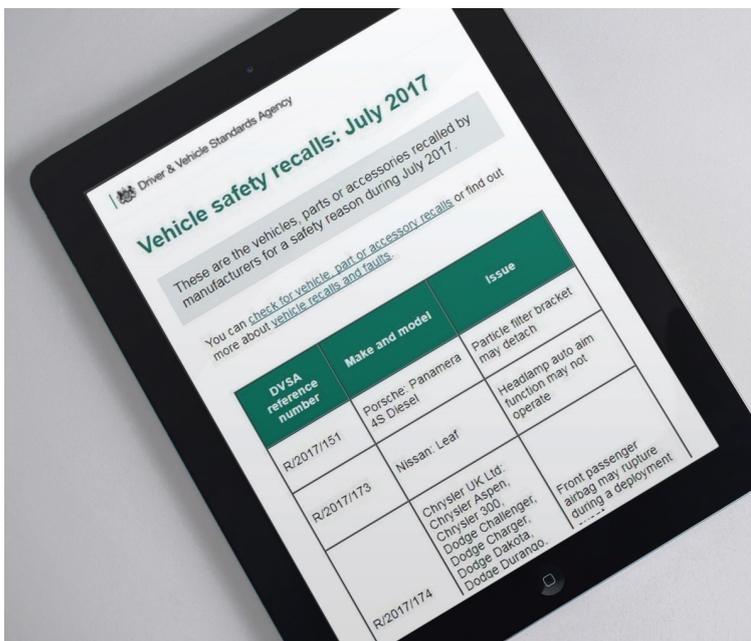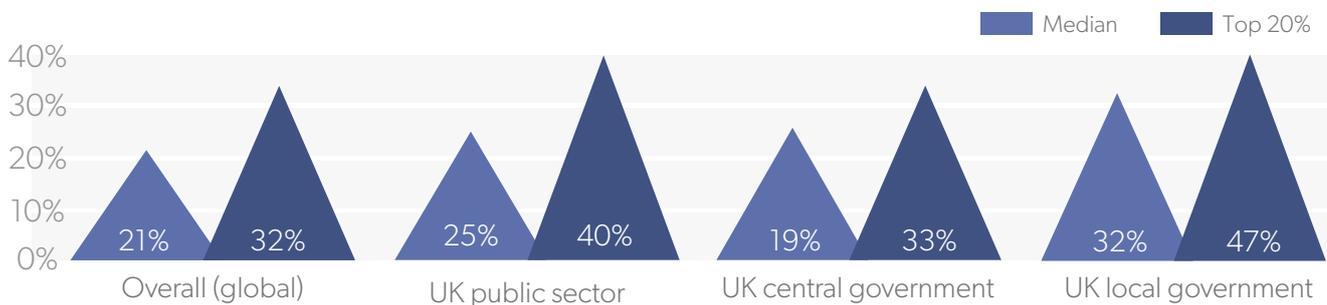
The Data
Benchmark 2: Open Rate

Open rate is best used to understand the effectiveness of messages when compared over time, or in a side-by-side test. It helps determine which approaches work best for the message and target audience. Your subject line plays a crucial role in prompting a good open rate. This is your hook, or most important opportunity to persuade someone to open your message.

> *Open rate is the number of recipients who opened an email compared to the number who received it.*

Of course, other factors are attributed to strong open rates like sender information, time of day, quality of the contact list and other variables.

Although open rate is an important performance metric, don't base critical comms strategy decisions on this metric alone. Remember, your subject line could tell the recipient all they need to know, eliminating the need for them to open the email. Plus, a portion of your audience will view your message in the "preview pane" of their inbox which doesn't get counted as an open (because no images/pixels are downloaded).

OPEN RATE OVERVIEW

Legend: Median | Top 20%

	Median	Top 20%
Overall (global)	21%	32%
UK public sector	25%	40%
UK central government	19%	33%
UK local government	32%	47%

OPEN RATE EXAMPLE
Why we love it:

- The need-to-know information is formatted in a clear and structured way, making the email easy to follow.
- The subject line is short and to-the-point: "Vehicle safety recalls: July 2017" (39% of recipients opened the email).
- Text is kept to a minimum with links to further points of contact.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING OPEN RATE

Segment your audience

The most effective way to increase open rates is to understand your readers. Do you know what they care about? If so, maximise the power of Granicus' audience segmentation and targeting features to deliver messages that drive more active engagement.

Be timely and use a hook

Personalise your content and hinge your comms around people's location, interests, a community event, or things happening now in people's lives. Be careful not to annoy people with misleading subject lines; be true to your core message.

Keep your subject line simple

Generally, good subject lines include a call to action and are under 54 characters. The best way to find what works is to A/B test different subject lines for a single email.

Personalise using a name

Test sending high-priority messages (those that are more action-oriented than informational) from an individual sender such as "Director Jane Smith, Department." People are much more likely to open a message from an individual than from an organisation.

Consider bundling non-critical emails

If frequency is exceeding two messages per day per individual, look for opportunities to bundle messages into one email. You could also consider turning groups of information into weekly or monthly newsletters - but be careful to keep these concise.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Looking for inspiration for your next email? Check out the latest *10 Excellent Emails* guide for examples of strong messages from the UK public sector.
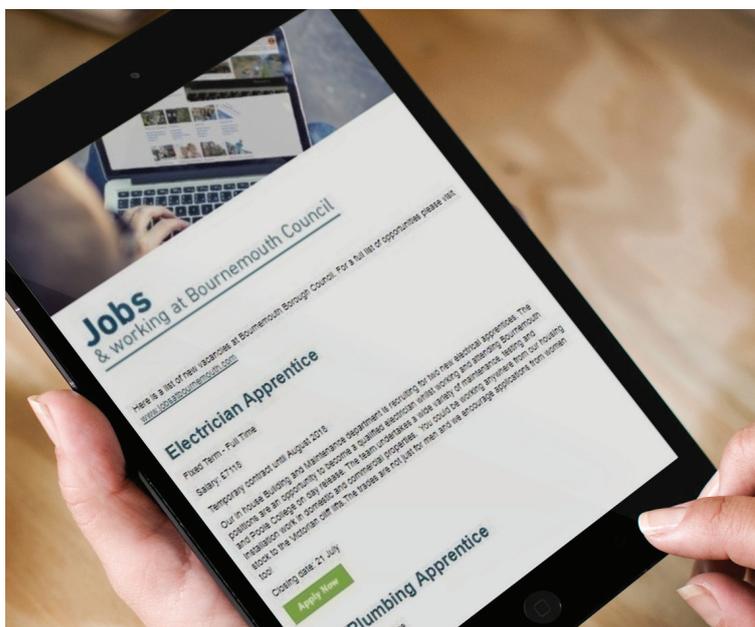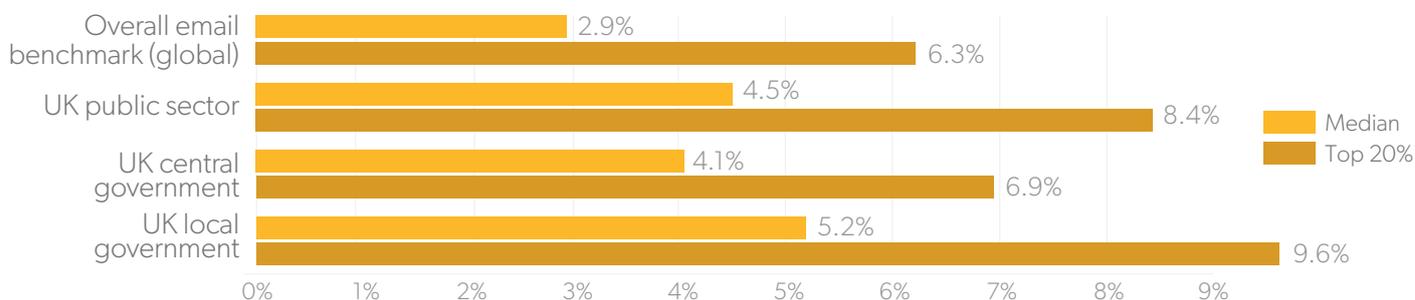
The Data
Benchmark 3: Click Rate

The click rate of an email can be a more revealing metric than open rate for several reasons. Most often (including for this report), click rate refers to the measurement of recipient action in response to an email message. Click rates represent the number of recipients who clicked on at least one clickable feature within an email, divided by the total number who received the message.

Click rate is the number of recipients who clicked on an email compared to the total number who received it.

Most emails are designed to encourage an action or drive a recipient to a piece of content on your website. For this reason, click rates can be an excellent metric for determining which messages prompt action and which need to be refined. Because many public-sector emails are solely informational, however, and don't require any link clicks — say, an email alerting residents to a snow emergency or weather advisory — click rates are not always an accurate means of determining whether a message has reached its intended audience. Messages of this nature also tend to be urgent, so they may not be going out at an ideal time of the day for optimising click performance.

CLICK RATE OVERVIEW

	Median	Top 20%
Overall email benchmark (global)	2.9%	6.3%
UK public sector	4.5%	8.4%
UK central government	4.1%	6.9%
UK local government	5.2%	9.6%

CLICK RATE EXAMPLE
Why we love it:

- The straight formatting, minimal text and decent amount of white space make the message easy to follow.
- The bold call to action button makes taking action easy for the reader.
- The subject line "Excellent Apprenticeships" is short and enticing.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING CLICK RATE

Keep an eye on total clicks

Click rates will rarely be through the roof since so many public sector emails serve to raise awareness or remind people of something. However, a large and growing subscriber base combined with stable or improving click rates will indicate the quality of your digital communications and audience.

Test your call to action (CTA)

Try not to overload your message with multiple CTAs, make your CTA button clear. If you must include several messages in one bulletin, use bold and consistent buttons and straight formatting. Test out the optimal position of your CTA.

Make it easy

Focus your audience's attention with streamlined content and an immediate call to action right up front. Try using a coloured button to highlight your primary call to action. It's more tempting to click a big colourful button than to hover over and follow a hyperlink. Use the *active voice* in your email body and a verb for your CTA wherever possible.

Don't forget your hero image

It's becoming increasingly common for organisations to hyperlink a hero image (or a header image) at the top of the email. Think strategically about which hyperlink you want your audience to be directed to, and track its success along the way.

Get even more insight

Organisations that use the GovDelivery Communications Cloud see a 10-point increase in their average opens and click rates. Dive deeper into your data with *Advanced Analytics*, which can give you greater insight into the metrics that matter to your organisation when it comes to improving your outcomes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Are you looking to deliver more compelling comms? Granicus' *Plain Language Playbook* emphasises that simpler messages put through the plain language process have a greater chance of making an impact.

The Data

Benchmark 4: Subscriptions Per Subscriber

When public trust in institutions is at an all-time low, the public sector must find ways to reconnect with citizens. Encouraging more people to get involved in public decision-making processes is a vital part of building a society where citizens feel motivated, represented, and able to contribute. Giving your audience access to information about the things that matter to them is empowering, for example, offering

> *Subscription per subscriber is calculated by dividing the total number of subscriptions (across all subscribers) by total subscribers.*

updates on public consultations can enrich the discussion and help you deliver better outcomes for more people (see p.5 in this *new guide* for an example).

Whether you've recently launched a digital comms platform or have been sending messages for years, organising and monitoring subscriptions per subscriber can be a great metric to help you gauge the level of interest in your content. This metric is also an effective way for you to assess whether you need to launch a re-engagement campaign or do better at cross-promoting other topics and opportunities which may also be of interest.

SUBSCRIPTIONS PER SUBSCRIBER OVERVIEW

● Median
● Top 20%

2017 Overall Granicus email benchmarks (global)
5.65
10.68

Highlights for UK central government
2.10
4.47

Highlights for UK public sector overall
2.10
5.00

Highlights for UK local government
1.83
3.25
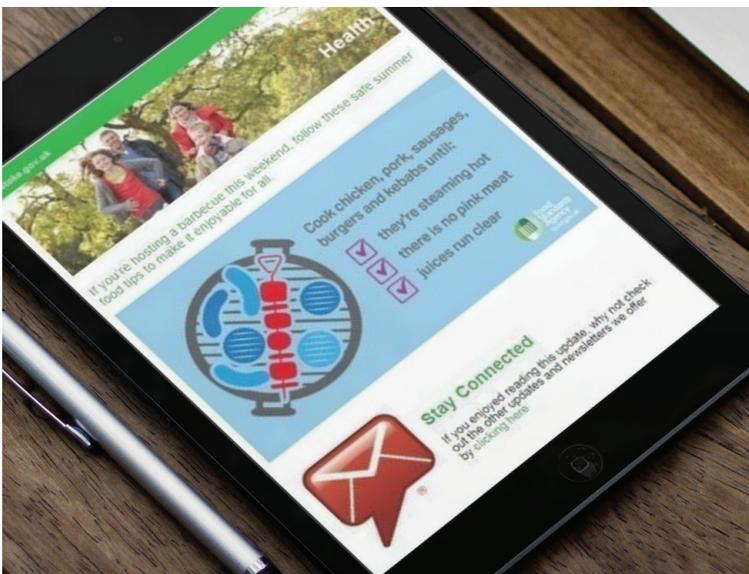
SUBSCRIPTIONS PER SUBSCRIBER EXAMPLE

Why we love it:

- Stoke-on-Trent Council gives people the chance to browse other subscription options by including this footer in most bulletins.
- People have subscribed to 4 topics on average.

Re-connect with people by offering new topics

By using Granicus' default templates for processing new subscribers, you will automatically be able to offer a "picklist" of topics up front. Those who have subscribed to your updates within the last two months are most likely to be receptive to new opportunities and subscribe to more. Do engage them on a regular basis within the framework of what they've opted to receive. For example, add a banner ad promoting another topic they may be interested in and cross-promote your content wherever possible.

Send a welcome message

Welcome messages often have strong open and click rates because your audience is new and you have their attention. Take the opportunity to send a thoughtful welcome message offering more subscription options.

Identify collaboration opportunities

Connect internally or with other organisations locally to identify cross-promotional opportunities like events or external content that could include a pitch for signing up for your lists. For example, with over 150 UK public sector organisations in the GovDelivery Network, it's likely there are organisations near you offering digital updates to citizens and businesses who may also benefit from your content. Check your account reports to see which organisations have the biggest "Network Impact" and work with them to share relevant opportunities across your combined subscriber base.

Organise subscription lists by group

When bundling your subscription topics, it is a best practice to group them thematically to attract more people's attention and then invite them to select the sub-topics within the group. Group them into categories like "Healthy Living" or "Education and Enrichment", and offer more granular subscriptions within them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Are you looking for creative ways to engage citizens and drive better recycling behaviours? Download the new guide *5 Ways to Improve Waste & Recycling Services Using Digital Communications*.
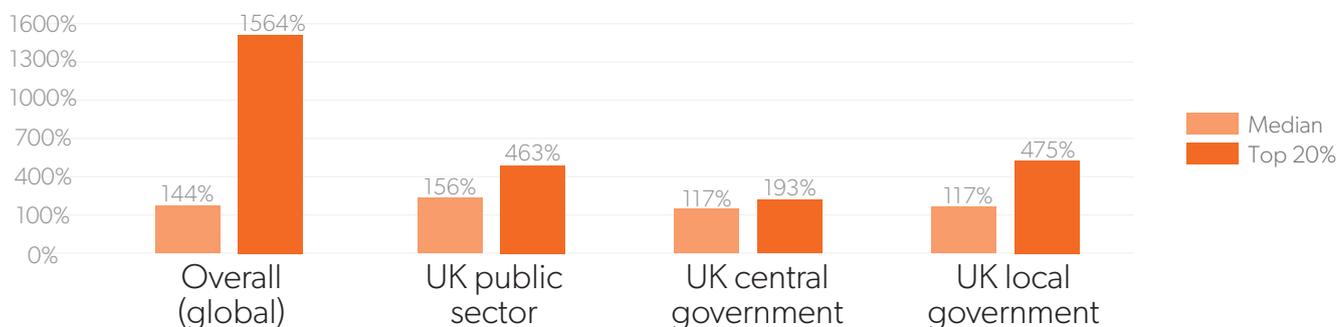
The Data

Benchmark 5: Overlay Impact

An overlay is a clean, understated light window box strategically positioned on your website that enables you to capture contact information from website visitors. Whether you want to increase the use of leisure venues, tell people about a new policy, or increase registrations for an event, overlays are a powerful tool for increasing your reach and converting web visitors into active audience members who opt

Overlays appear for first-time or repeat visitors on a webpage that prompts an action. Often, overlays subscribe the vistor to an email list.

to receive specific updates from you. Overlays are proving to be the fastest and most effective method for growing a digital audience, capable of achieving a 150 per cent to 1,500 per cent increase in the number of people who elect to hear from an organisation on topics that matter to them.

If you're worried an overlay will disrupt the online user experience, there are different approaches to make it more or less "intrusive". You can also set up an overlay so that it doesn't pop up again if a visitor closes the overlay or has filled in their information.

OVERLAY IMPACT OVERVIEW

Bar chart — Median (light orange) vs Top 20% (dark orange):

Category	Median	Top 20%
Overall (global)	144%	1564%
UK public sector	156%	463%
UK central government	117%	193%
UK local government	117%	475%

OVERLAY EXAMPLE
Why we love it:

- The overlay appears on Hackney's rubbish and recycling web page, inviting already-interested people to subscribe to handy updates.

- They make it clear what the subscriber is signing up for.

- The design fits the topic to help embed the message.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING OVERLAY IMPACT

Just try it

If you aren't using an overlay now, you may want to consider implementing one on your website's most visited web pages. Implementing an overlay is the best way to increase the reach of your messages quickly and convert web visitors. Your overlay should offer further connection points relevant to the webpage. For example, on your waste and recycling service's main page, use an overlay to ask people to subscribe to your bin alerts service to improve collection rates.

Start with something simple

Overlays should be simple, unobtrusive and appear straightaway when a visitor arrives on your homepage and other key web pages. When considering an overlay, simple is the best way to start.

Display one step at a time

If you are using your overlay to gather more information, and the process is multi-step, make sure your overlay only displays one step at a time. This can reduce subscription fatigue, where a subscriber sees a large number of fields to submit and abandons the signup form before they have submitted it.

Explain

Summarise what your audience will receive if they sign up. Useful text could be "Sign up for updates on the latest ticket releases", "Be the first to know about housing in your area", or "Register for email updates on this project".

Transition quickly

Once you get people to submit their contact details through an overlay, direct them to a "picklist" of more topics on offer for them to subscribe to. Giving them choice about what they receive will ensure you only message people who've expressed an interest.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Are you looking for more examples of what an overlay looks like? Visit the recent Granicus blog *4 Types of Overlays That Can Have a Huge Impact* to learn more.

Next Steps

Conclusion: The Importance of Monitoring Metrics

Metrics are vitally important to helping organisations at all levels of government and the wider public sector optimise their outreach and engagement efforts. But to get the most from such intelligence, it is critical to first understand which metrics are most important to your organisation and why, and how you fare against others in a similar position.

① Focus on building an authentic audience

The high volume of communication that organisations using Granicus technologies generate every day supports the recommendation that public sector communication efforts should focus on boosting their overall authentic reach and be able to connect with even more citizens on a regular basis. By placing the emphasis on building your reach and improving your comms metrics per this report, you can significantly increase the potential for your organisation to impact more citizens' lives and drive real change in communities one message at a time.

② Consider additional platforms for connecting

In addition to providing information via email, the public sector should also be considering other digital solutions based on their audiences' needs and preferences. Consider leveraging other platforms in addition to your website or content management system. Depending on your strategy, that might be exploring interactive text messaging or live streaming your public meetings. Whatever your objectives and chosen tactics, ensure you evaluate the effectiveness of your campaigns to help you continually refine your activities. Use this *workbook* to help you.

③ Use the benchmark report regularly

Granicus hopes this benchmark report provided new clarification and insights that you can apply toward making sustainable improvements to your email programmes. Review your own metrics regularly to monitor incremental changes over time. Try new comms tactics and test what works. In the public sector, the difference of a few per cent on your open rate could be the difference between 100 families receiving life-changing support as opposed to just 10. Small improvements can make a big difference.

④ Talk to us

Are you unsure where to start in using benchmark metrics to improve your communication strategies? Have a chat with us! Our client success consultants would love to walk you through your metrics and help you develop your use of our technologies to improve your campaign outcomes. The best way to set up a meeting is to email us at *info@granicus.com*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Guide to Content Marketing in the Public Sector

Until recently, content marketing was seen as a "nice to have" in the public sector. Now we're understanding the value of content marketing for reaching, engaging, and converting citizens to action. *Download this guide* to learn what content marketing is and how to create and execute a strategy.

5 Ways to Improve Waste and Recycling Services Using Digital Communications

Download this guide to learn how digital communications can help inform, educate and engage residents into action that: improves recycling rates, reduces contamination, reduces cross-border service usage, and improves service efficiency and customer satisfaction with rubbish and recycling services.

5 Ways to Increase Citizen Participation in Public Meetings and Decisions

Download this guide to learn how digital solutions can help your organisation build trust among your target audiences and get more people interested and involved in public decision-making processes.

How to Use Digital Tools to Cut Costs

Download this checklist to learn how digital solutions can help you streamline processes, automate your communications and save time and money.

FOLLOW THE GRANICUS BLOG

For more case studies, digital comms best practices, industry news and ideas, follow Granicus' blog: *Reach the Public*.

Methodology
About the Data

The metrics in this report are based on annual data and have been broken down into four main groups: overall global (taking into account Granicus' 3,000+ clients globally), the UK public sector overall (150+ clients), UK central government clients, and UK local government clients. Overall global benchmark metrics measured by vertical (or subsector) can be viewed in the addendum to the report.

Primary metrics and definitions

The primary metrics measured in this year's Benchmark Report are open rate, click rate, engagement rate, subscriptions per subscriber and overlay impact. Here are the definitions of the five primary metrics measured:

Engagement rate

The number of unique email recipients who opened an email or clicked on a link in an email over a period of 90 days, then divided by the total number of email recipients who received an email during that time period.

Open rate

The number of recipients who opened an email compared to the number who received it.
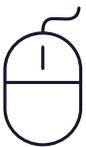
Click rate

The number of recipients who clicked on an email compared to the total number who received it.

Subscriptions per subscriber

The number of topic-specific email updates a subscriber has signed up to receive, calculated by dividing total subscriptions by total subscribers.

Overlay impact

A small box that appears for first-time or repeat visitors on a webpage that prompts an action. Most often, overlays invite the visitor to subscribe to an email update.

ABOUT GRANICUS

Granicus provides technology that empowers public sector organisations to create better lives for the people they serve. By offering the industry's leading cloud-based solutions for communications, meeting and agenda management, and digital services to more than 3,000 public sector organisations including more than 150 in the UK, Granicus helps turn government missions into quantifiable realities. Granicus products connect more than 150 million people (including 11 million in the UK), creating a powerful network to enhance government transparency and citizen engagement. By optimising decision-making processes, Granicus strives to help government realise better outcomes and have a greater impact for the citizens they serve.

To discuss how Granicus could support your organisation's objectives, please get in touch:

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Addendum
Overall Global Benchmark Metrics by Vertical

Admin & Internal Employee Services

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
53.4%	71.1%	28.9%	49.8%	5.3%	9.5%	2.1	3.1	154%	499%

Agriculture

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
53.9%	60.6%	19.5%	32.9%	1.7%	2.9%	3.7	6.2	416%	969%

Courts & Office of Public Defence

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
56.0%	68.4%	25.4%	33.5%	3.7%	13.2%	1.3	3.5	405%	585%

Defence & Veteran Affairs

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
47.7%	58.3%	15.9%	26.4%	1.8%	3.8%	2.1	3.7	485%	1514%

Economic Development

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
47.5%	57.7%	19.9%	29.4%	2.8%	4.5%	2.4	3.9	222%	406%

Education

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
52.5%	59.1%	12.6%	26.8%	0.3%	4.2%	1.85	2.7	403	1277%

Elected Official

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
46.0%	65.6%	23.1%	31.1%	1.6%	3.6%	1.0	2.0	183%	1527%

Environment & Conservation

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
47.5%	57.2%	22.9%	25.8%	2.7%	5.5%	2.6	3.5	148%	468%

Fish, Game, Parks & Recreation

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
50.1%	57.0%	25.9%	31.9%	3.6%	6.1%	2.8	4.8	405%	571%

Health & Human Services

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
50.4%	57.7%	18.5%	33.1%	2.2%	5.7%	2.2	4.6	157%	577%

History, Arts & Culture

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber
44.0%	51.0%	17.9%	22.8%	1.6%	6.3%	2.2	2.6

IT & Enterprise Services

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
53.4%	71.0%	22.5%	43.6%	3.4%	5.9%	2.1	3.9	104%	206%

Addendum
Overall Global Benchmark Metrics by Vertical

Labour & Workforce Development

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
44.3%	54.3%	18.4%	25.6%	2.0%	3.8%	1.6	4.2	130%	416%

Local Government

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
57.2%	67.3%	25.6%	36.1%	3.5%	6.6%	2.4	3.9	131%	415%

Oversight

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
45.3%	53.2%	18.2%	30.3%	2.5%	4.0%	2.4	4.8	752%	1245%

Public Safety

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
51.7%	66.0%	23.4%	34.1%	1.8%	6.0%	1.9	4.1	553%	876%

Regulatory & Standards

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
50.1%	59.2%	22.5%	37.2%	3.3%	7.3%	1.9	4.1	66%	519%

Science & Research

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
38.8%	51.5%	14.9%	20.3%	2.0%	3.7%	2.6	6.3	13%	41%

🛂 Tourism

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
41.7%	44.2%	22.1%	36.0%	3.5%	20.3%	2.2	3.1	181%	889%

🚄 Transit

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
52.5%	64.1%	14.1%	19.5%	0.9%	2.8%	4.0	7.5	32%	255%

🚗 Transportation

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
52.8%	65.6%	21.9%	27.3%	2.3	4.8%	3.6	8.0	128%	200%

🏛 Treasury & Revenue

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
49.3%	61.1%	25.6%	33.0%	3.6%	5.6%	3.0	4.2	259%	779%

🔧 Utilities

Median Engagement	Top 20% Engagement	Median Open Rate	Top 20% Open Rate	Median Click Rate	Top 20% Click Rate	Median Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Top 20% Subscriptions Per Subscriber	Median Overlay Impact	Top 20% Overlay Impact
56.7%	62.9%	29.1%	33.1%	2.3%	3.8%	1.7	2.2	428%	1113%

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