common
great

GIVING TUESDAY 2022 EMAIL REPORT

THE STUDY

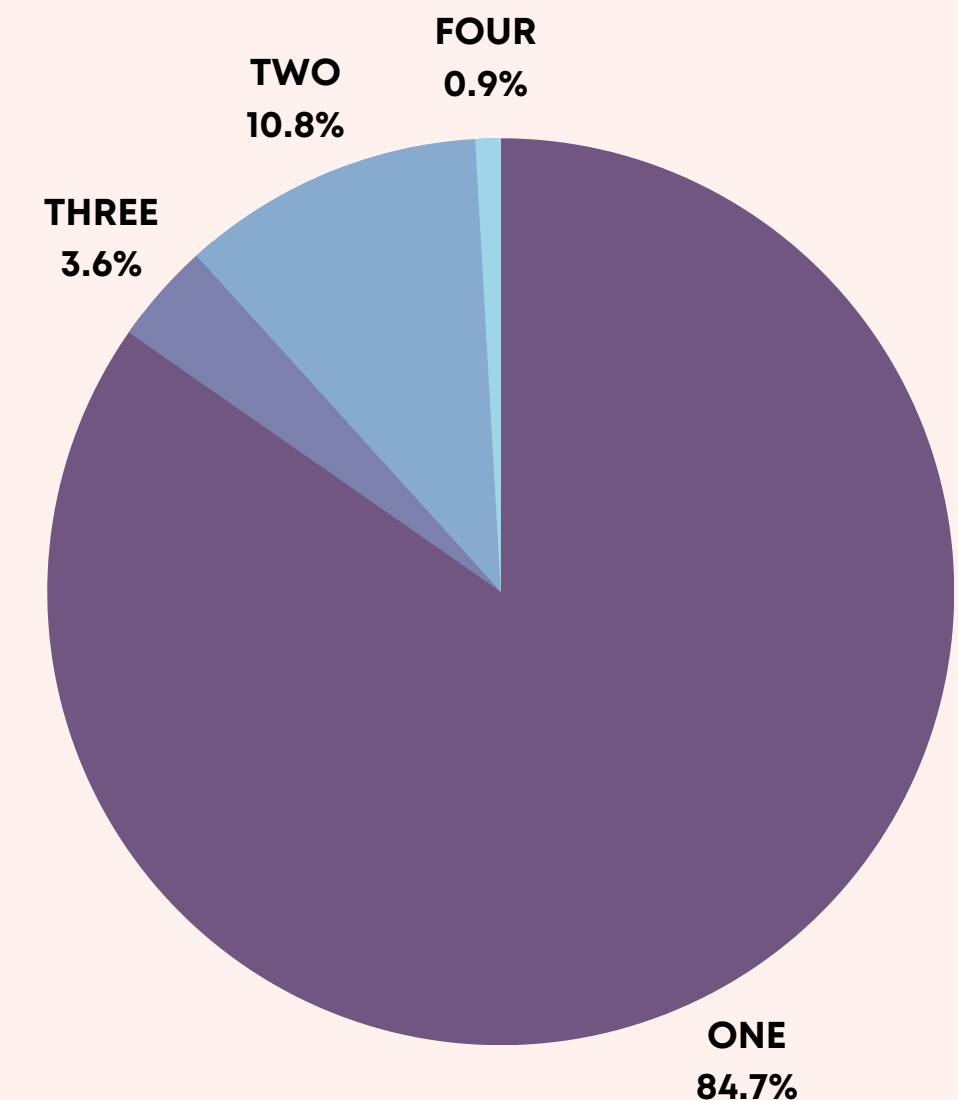Common Great collected and analyzed emails from nonprofits sent to recipients on Tuesday, November 29, 2022, over 24 hours.

The data compiled in this report includes 137 emails representing 112 nonprofit organizations from a broad range of mission areas, service areas, and operating budgets.

Kirsten Rogers, Digital Marketing Specialist and Consultant, compiled the data and report.

HOW MANY EMAILS WERE SENT?

- The study examined 137 emails.
- The study represents 112 nonprofit organizations.
- The majority of organizations (83.9%) sent one email.
- A small number sent 3 or 4 emails (5.4%).
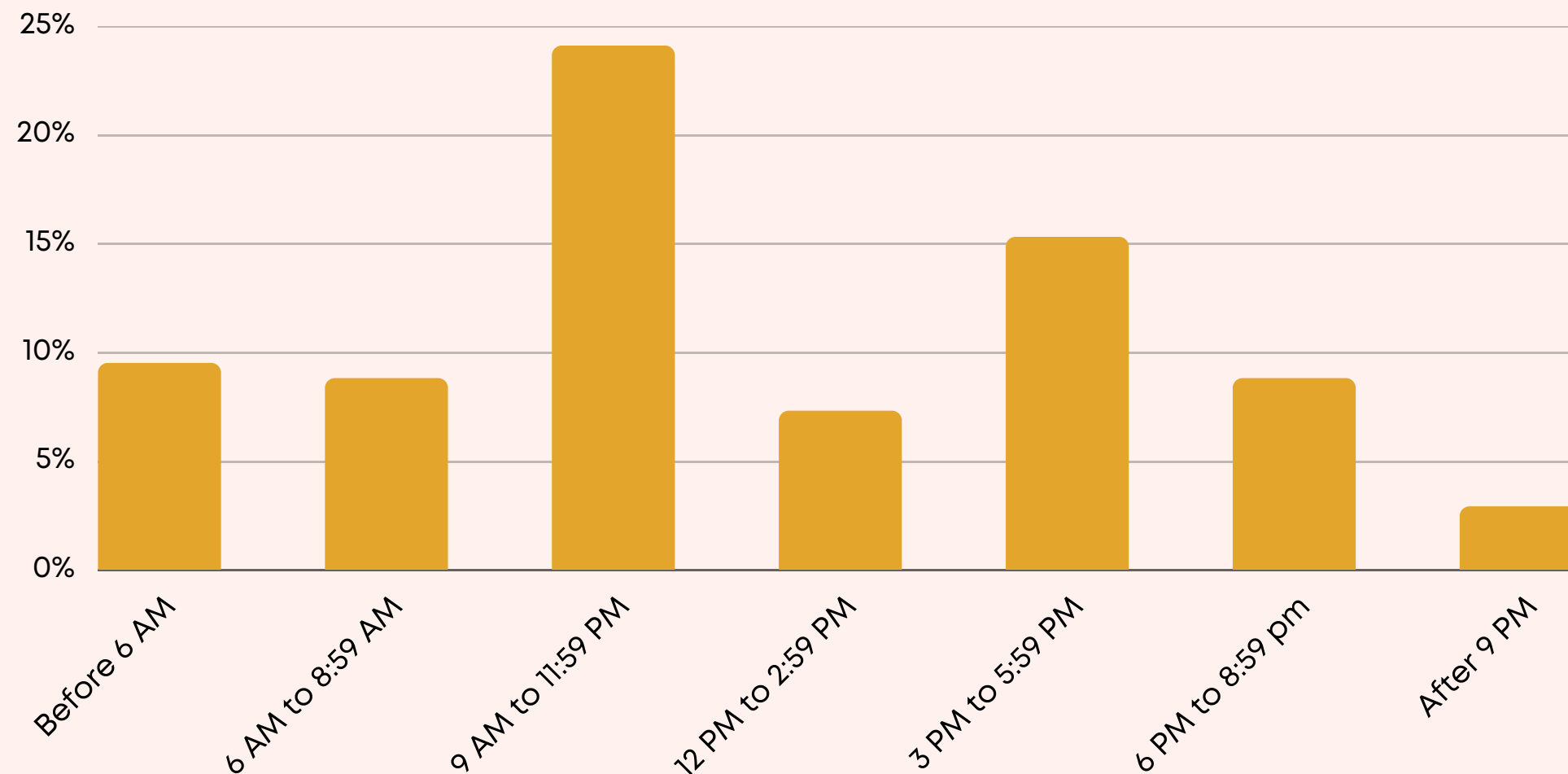- No one in our sample sent more than four emails.

Tip Time: Organizations could increase the number of emails they send to 2-3. Use the emails to build off one another and tell an unfolding story that drives people to open each one.

NUMBER OF EMAILS SENT BY EACH ORGANIZATION

FOUR
0.9%

TWO
10.8%

THREE
3.6%

ONE
84.7%

WHEN WERE EMAILS SENT?

EMAILS SENT BY TIME FRAME

Bar chart showing emails sent by time frame:
- Before 6 AM: ~9.5%
- 6 AM to 8:59 AM: ~9%
- 9 AM to 11:59 PM: ~24%
- 12 PM to 2:59 PM: ~7%
- 3 PM to 5:59 PM: ~15%
- 6 PM to 8:59 pm: ~9%
- After 9 PM: ~3%

Tip Time:

In July 2022, Hubspot surveyed over 300 U.S. email marketers and found the majority reported the highest engagement for their marketing emails occurred between 9 am to 12 pm and 12 pm to 3 pm. Other studies shows 10 am as the sweet spot. This finding aligns with the data from our study.

If you are a national or global organization and are sending emails to recipients across multiple time zones (and your email client allows it), use your email platform to send the email at the optional time for each time zone (eg. 10 am ET, 10 am PT).

Send more than one email next year. Plan one during the optimal based on studies and a second at the time that matches your audience's behavior and preferences. Because of email saturation on giving days, you may find your engagement higher at an off-peak time when people get fewer emails.
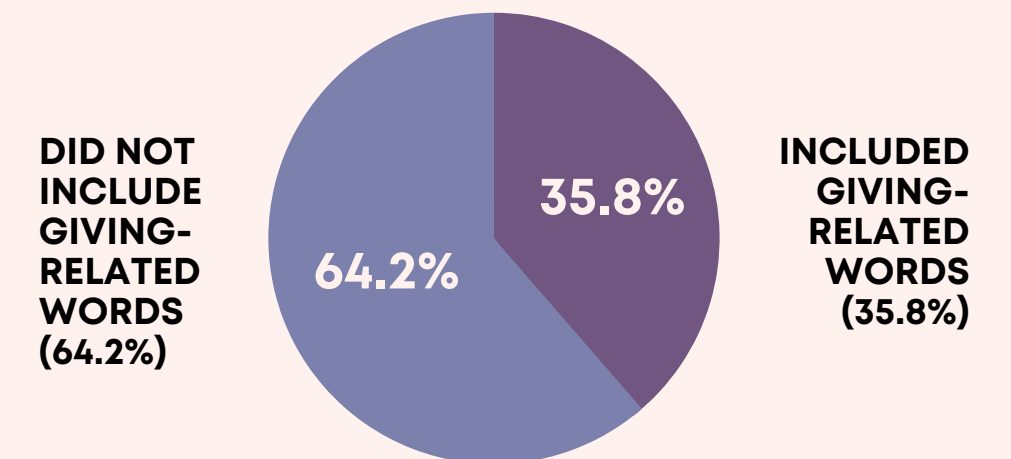
SUBJECT LINES WITH GIVING LANGUAGE

- Giving Tuesday or #GivingTuesday appeared in 43.1% of subject lines.
- Verbs like donate, give, help, support, etc. appeared in 35.8% of subject lines.

Tip Time: Throughout 2023, pay closer attention to which subject lines have the highest open rate and CTR. Don't feel boxed into using "Giving Tuesday" in the subject line on the day of giving. In fact, with the high number of emails using that in the subject line, your organization can stand out by deviating from the pattern.

"GIVING TUESDAY" IN SUBJECT LINES

DID NOT INCLUDE GIVING TUESDAY IN THE SUBJECT LINE (56.9%)

56.9%

43.1%

INCLUDED GIVING TUESDAY IN THE SUBJECT LINE (43.1%)
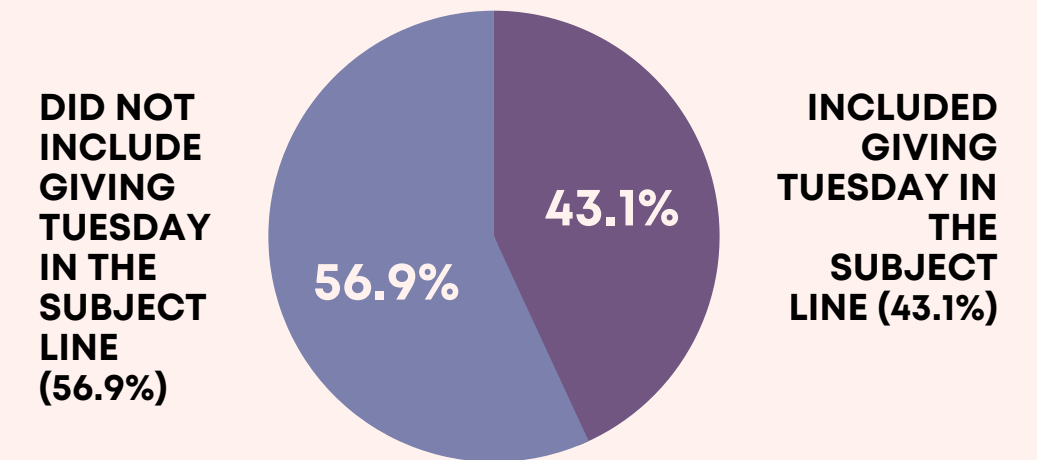
DONATE, GIVE, HELP, SUPPORT, ETC. IN SUBJECT LINES

DID NOT INCLUDE GIVING-RELATED WORDS (64.2%)

64.2%

35.8%

INCLUDED GIVING-RELATED WORDS (35.8%)

MOST POPULAR WORDS IN SUBJECT LINES

Frequency	Word
44	giving
39	tuesday
24	support
23	today
17	givingtuesday
16	help
11	gift
11	impact
10	match
8	double

Tip Time: When we compare the most frequently occurring words with the subject line grade (see page 7), popularity doesn't equate to performance.

The top 10 subject lines with the highest grade did not include the most used words: giving, Tuesday, or support. On the flip side, 15 of the 20 lowest-graded subject lines include two or more of the most popular words.

To stand out on Giving Tuesday, get creative and dig deep for a one-of-a-kind subject line.

DID YOUR SUBJECT LINE GET AN "A"?

We ran all the subject lines through software that ranks individual subject lines against a database of hundreds of thousands. The **average grade was a "B"** (numerically, 82.8 points).

GRADE DISTRIBUTION (HISTOGRAM)
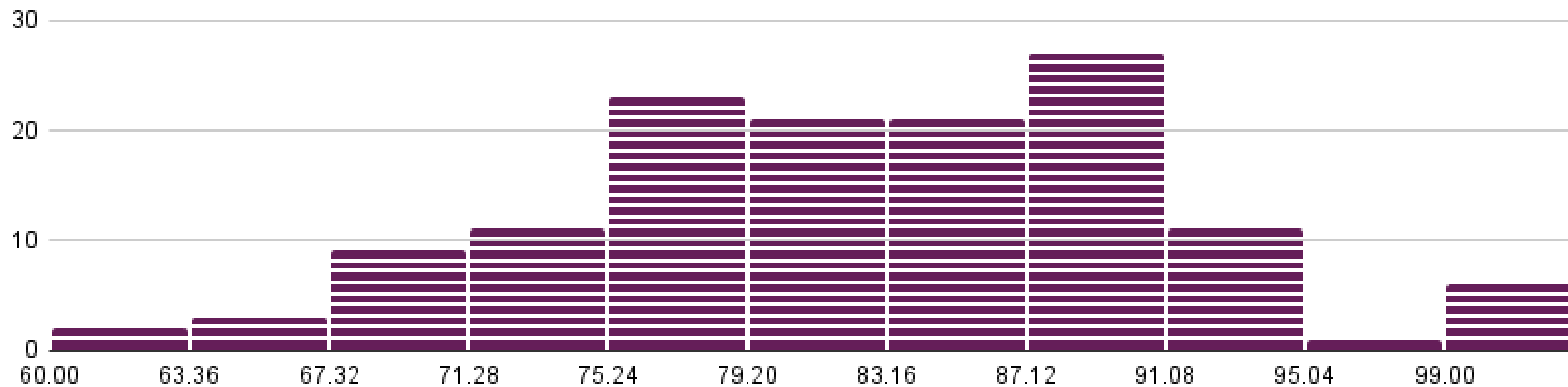
TOP OF THE CLASS

1. a little of your time? / Redwood Land Fund (101)
2. It's a great day. Will you show up? / Seeds of Peace (99)
3. Help those who need it most / NYT Neediest Cases Fund (99)
4. Can You Help Us Reach Our Goal? / FEEST (99)
5. How many more have to die? / Alliance for Gun Responsibility (99)

TABLE KEY
A (91-100+) = Very solid subject line that should perform well for you.
B (81-90) = You may be able to improve with some tweaks.
C (71-80) = You should be able to significantly improve this subject.
D (61-70) = You should consider a different approach or major changes.

Tip Time: Your subject line should get as much attention as the body of your email to ensure people open it. Use a subject line check tool and keep revising it until you get an "A".
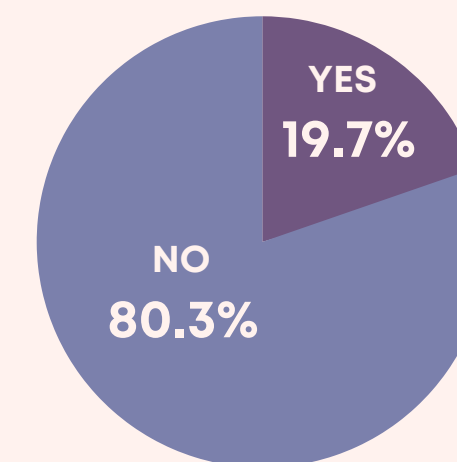
SUBJECT LINES WITH MATCH CHALLENGES

- Less than 1/5 (19.7%) of email subject lines mentioned a matching challenge.
- Of those that mentioned a matching challenge, we saw double and triple offers. Double matches were more common by almost 2x.

Tip Time: On average, having a matching opportunity increases donors' likelihood to give by 22% and increases gift amounts by 19% (Source: GiveGab).

If you have a match, promote it in the subject line or preview line and prominently throughout the body of the email.

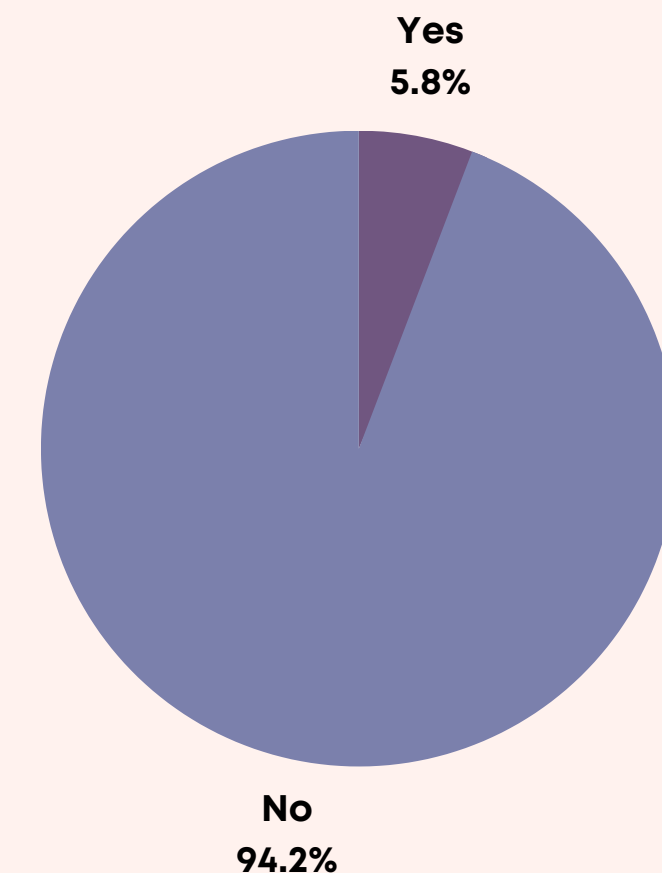## A MATCH CHALLENGE WAS PROMOTED IN THE SUBJECT LINE

YES
19.7%

NO
80.3%

TWO TYPES OF MATCHING CHALLENGES WERE OFFERED

DOUBLE 64.2%   35.8% TRIPLE
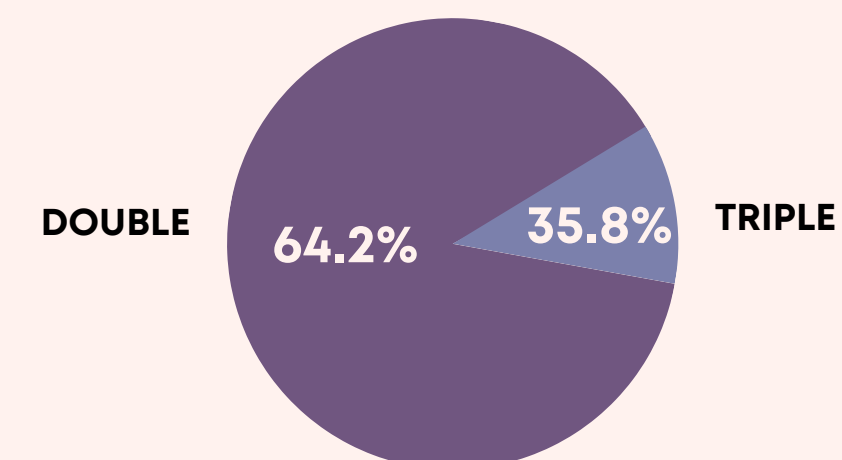
SUBJECT LINES & PERSONALIZATION

A small number (5.8%) of emails in our sample included personalization and merged in the first name of the recipient to the subject line.

Tip Time: Email subject lines personalized with a name can boost open rates by 10-14% across all industries. If you are worried about a mail merge disaster, put the time in over the coming year clean up your database to leverage personalization in 2023.
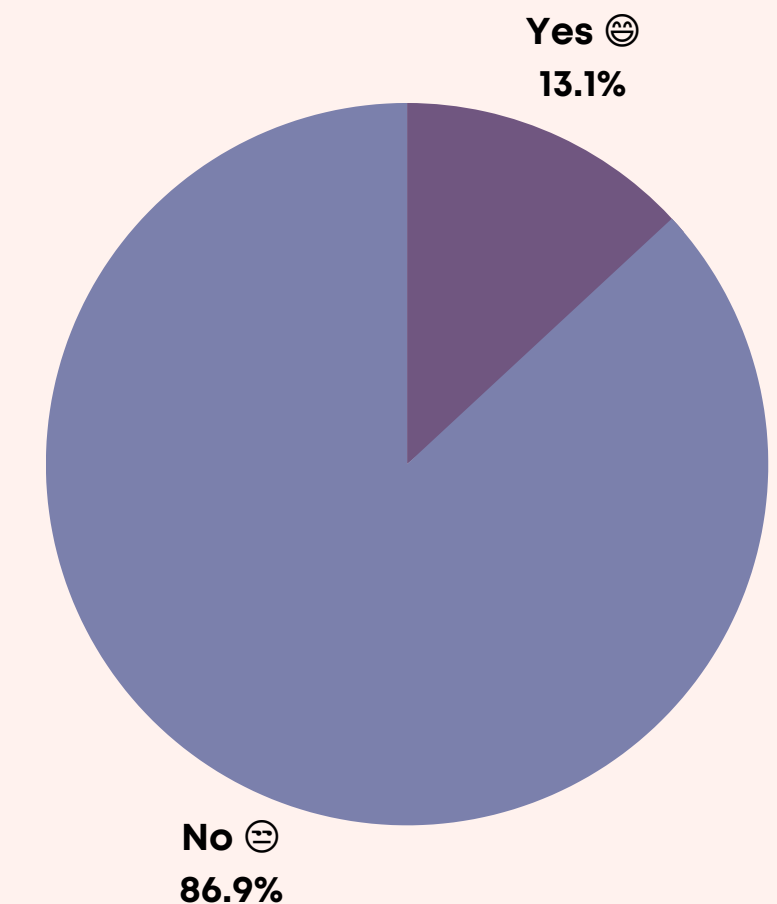
DID THE SUBJECT LINE INCLUDE THE NAME OF THE RECIPIENT?

Yes
5.8%

No
94.2%

SUBJECT LINES & EMOJIS 😄

We counted emojis in 13.1% of subject lines in our 137 emails.

DID THE SUBJECT LINE INCLUDE AN EMOJI?

Yes 😄
13.1%

No 😑
86.9%

Tip Time: Studies have shown that using emojis in subject lines only affects the open rate occasionally.

Adding an emoji during a festive season does increase open rates. The top-3 seasonal emojis performed roughly 3-4% better than average in terms of open rate.

Use the next 12 months to A/B test subject lines with and without emojis and see what resonates with your audience.
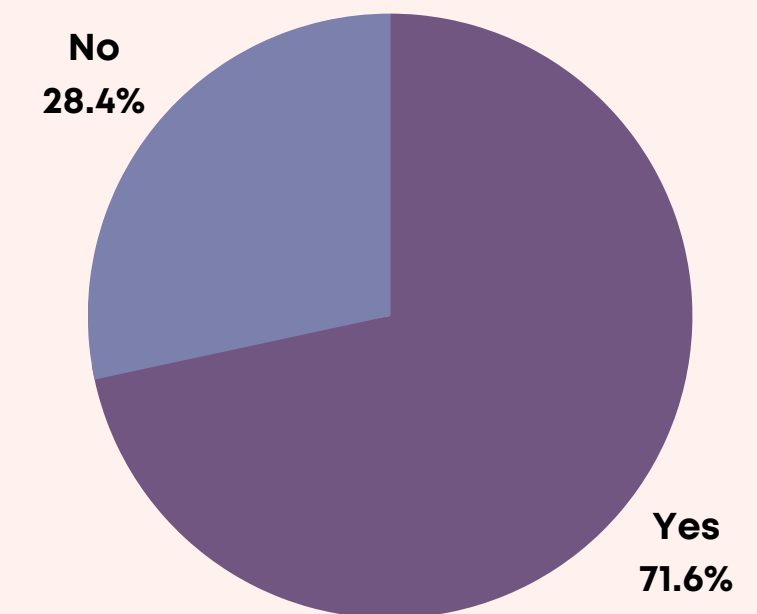
DID THE ORGANIZATION USE THE "PREVIEW LINE" FEATURE?

Preview lines act as a "teaser" for what's to come in the email. And it gives organizations a few more characters to capture the recipients attention and entice them to open the email.

Of our sample, 71.6% of emails used the preview line.

THE EMAIL INCLUDED A "PREVIEW LINE"

No
28.4%

Yes
71.6%

Tip Time: If your email client (eg. Mailchimp) allows you to include a preview line, always do it. Think of the preview line as an extension - or backup - for your subject line. It gives you another chance to get the recipient's attention and increase the open rate. You can have a mediocre subject line with a strong preview line and see improved open-rates, thanks to the preview copy.

WHO SENT THE EMAIL?

Who is listed as the sender on an email can impact the open rate. We wanted to see how nonprofits are applying best practices in this area to optimize open rate. We looked at the name of the sender to see if the email was sent by:

- An organization
- An individual
- An individual with the name of the organization

WHO WAS LISTED AS THE SENDER ON THE EMAIL?

Person, Organization
18.2%

Person
19%

Organization
62.8%

Tip Time: A 2016 study found 42% of people surveyed said the first thing they look at when deciding to open an email is the sender, or from, name. The most successful sender names are trustworthy, easily recognized, consistent, and segmented.

One, refrain from using a person's name unless they're well-known. Two, organization names are completely fine. Three, if the email is part of a series or newsletter, use the title as the sender (eg. "Monthly News from the Museum".

Sender names are also one of the first things spam filters evaluate before allowing an email to enter an inbox. If a spam filter perceives a sender's name to be potentially spammy or harmful, the spam filter will block the message from ever entering the inbox.

WHO WROTE THE EMAIL?

We looked at if the email was written in the voice of an individual, like the Executive Director, or in the voice of the organization. Almost 60% were written in the voice of the organization while 40% was written in first-person coming from an individual.

WHAT VOICE WAS USED IN WRITING THE EMAIL?

Individual
40.1%
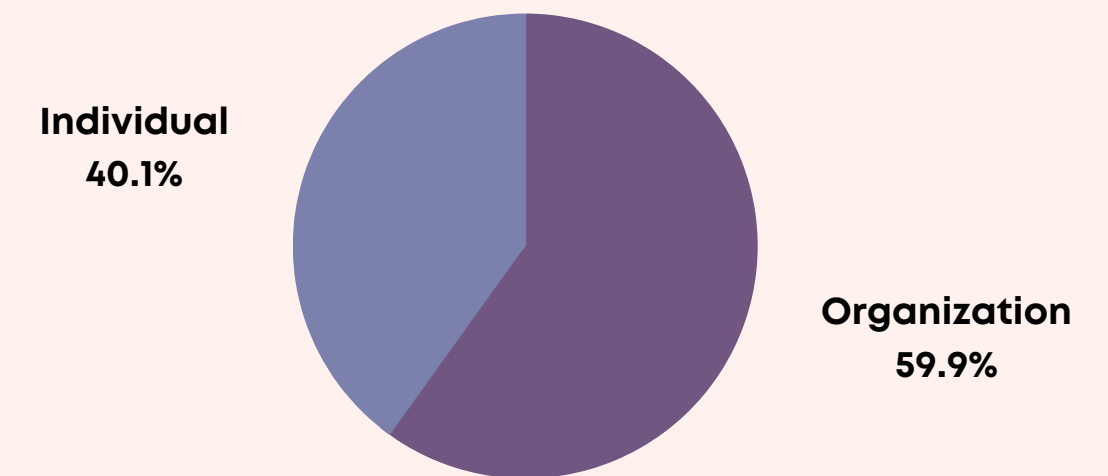
Organization
59.9%

Tip Time: To avoid coming off as marketing email, have fundraising emails be written in first person by a known figure in the organization. This sort of perspective is more human and will come across as more meaningful to the reader. Don't think that an email written in the voice of an individual needs to be a novel; even a few sentences will be more compelling than an email written as the organization.

WHAT EMAIL WAS USED?

What email address is used can impact the open rate. We wanted to see how nonprofits are applying best practices in this area to optimize open rate.

Tip Time: The same concept shared on the page "Who sent the email?" applies here - 42% of people surveyed said the first thing they look at when deciding to open an email is the sender.

- Never use info@ or web@ - spammers target these, and they are impersonal.
- To build subscriber trust, it's a good idea for your "From" name to be similar to your "From" email address.
- Let the email say something about the personality organization if you are not using the name of the org or an individual. For example, endhunger@foodbank.org.
- Using donate@ cues people in to an upcoming ask and may discourage them from opening it. You want them to read your appeal and not opt out before they learn what you are asking.

Are you using info@ because you don't want your Director's inbox flooded? While it's good for deliverability reasons to use a "From" address that invites recipients to contact you, you may want responses to go to a different address. If you've got a large subscriber list, you could end up receiving thousands of out-of-office emails that you'd prefer to go somewhere other than your main email address.

WHAT TYPE OF ADDRESS DID THE EMAIL COME FROM?

- web@ 2.2%
- person@ 22.1%
- info@ 36.1%
- org@ 12.5%
- hello@ 4.4%
- membership@ 4.4%
- donate@ 18.3%
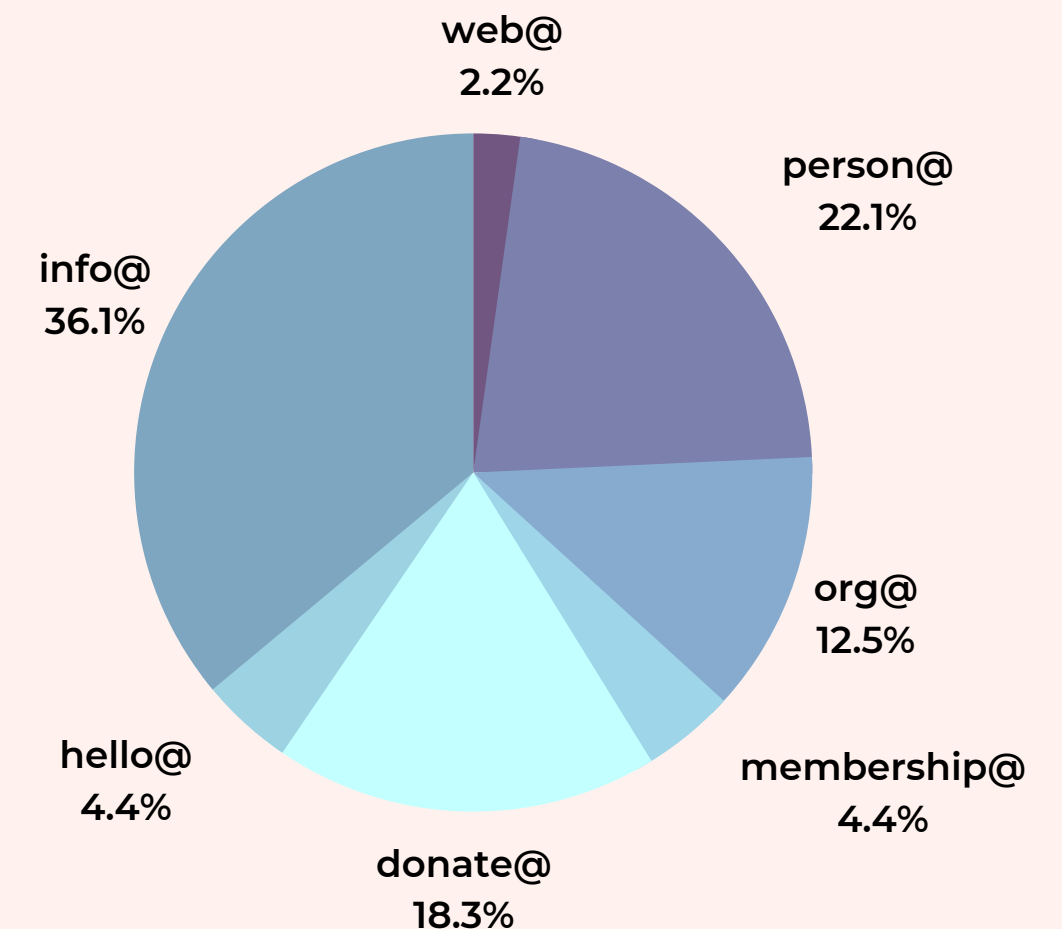
KEY: org@ means the email came from an email address that had the name of the organization before the @ symbol. person@ means the email came from an address that had the name of an individual before the @,

DID THEY OFFER SWAG?

A minority of organizations offered swag for donations made on Giving Tuesday - 3.6% (4) offered some sort of physical item in exchange for a donation. Of those offering something, 75% (3) represented the media/radio/news sector. The outlier was a religious-affiliated community center.

Tip Tip: In the "Eight Myths of US Philanthropy," swag is not listed among the top six reasons people give (trust, altruism, social benefits, tax benefits, and egoism).
Donors can see these "gifts" as adding to overhead, administrative, and fundraising costs and taking away from the nonprofit's work. This can make people less motivated to support a cause when offered swag.

If you want to experiment with using swag, look for ways to minimize the cost to the organization and be transparent to donors about those expenses. For example, find a corporate partner willing to provide swag as an in-kind donation and enlist volunteers to pack and ship the swag. Or pick "swag" that isn't physical, like a social media shout-out or chance to win a lunch date with your Executive Director or valued community leader connected to your mission.

## NONPROFITS GIVING SWAG ON GIVING TUESDAY

Offered a gift
3.6%

Nothing
96.4%
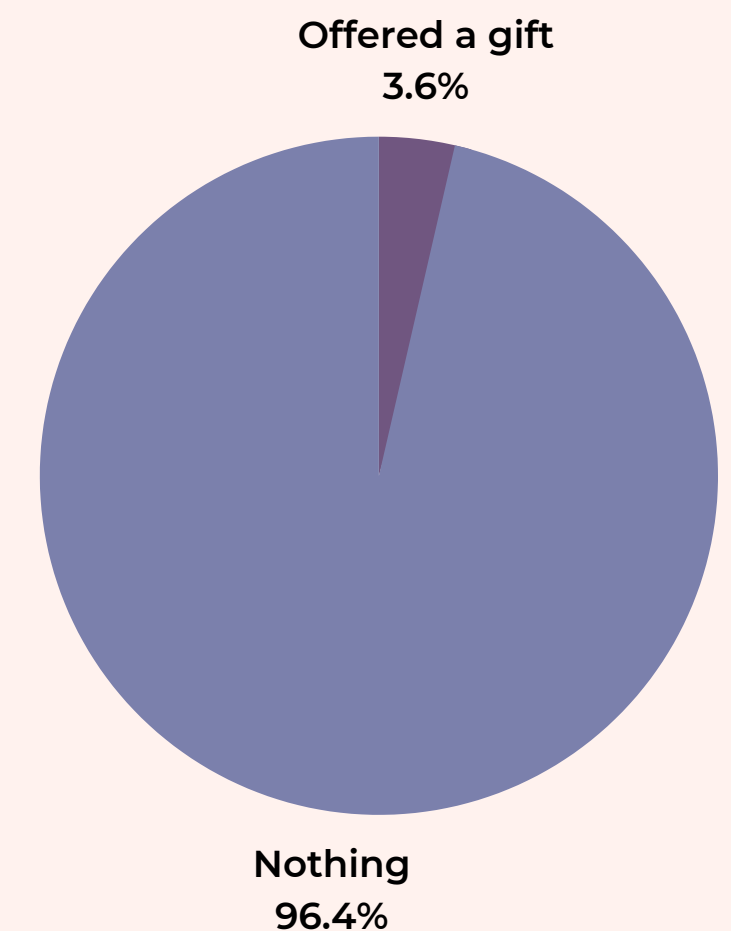
DID THEY PROMOTE MONTHLY GIVING?

Only 7.3% of the emails sent included an ask to give to a monthly giving program. Our study includes two types of monthly giving: (1) monthly donation or (2) a monthly membership through a monthly contribution.

Tip Time: Forty-five percent of donors worldwide are enrolled in a monthly giving program. In 2021, monthly giving increased by 24% compared to 2020.

Get in the habit of inviting your community to become monthly donors. Whenever you ask for donations—on your website, in your email appeals, or in a direct mail letter—ask for a monthly gift instead of just a one-time gift. When a donor is promoted to select an amount in an online donation form, ask, "Would you like to make this a monthly gift?" It's the fundraising equivalent of "supersizing" the donation.

PROMOTED A MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM IN THEIR EMAIL

Yes
7.3%

No
92.7%
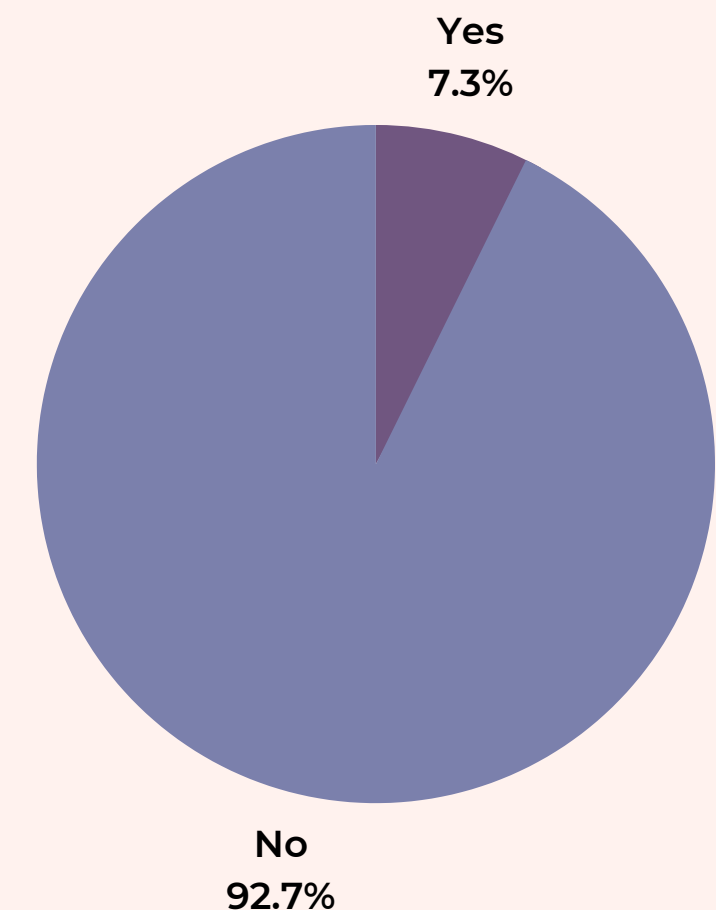
# WAS PEER-TO-PEER ENCOURAGED?

For the purpose of this study, peer-to-peer engagement is defined as any ask within the email that <u>directly</u> prompts email recipients to invite their community to give. For example:

- Make a Facebook fundraiser or P2P campaign page
- Forward this email to friends
- Share on social media

This does NOT include social sharing buttons.

Tip Time: At a minimum, your email should include an ask to share the work of the nonprofit by forwarding the email or posting about the organization on social media. For people who are not in a position to give, let them know sharing has a positive impact too.
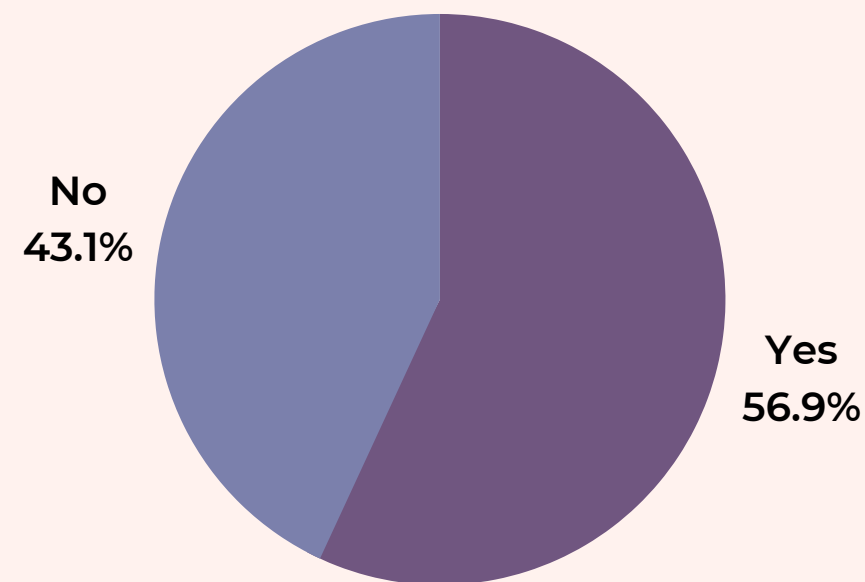
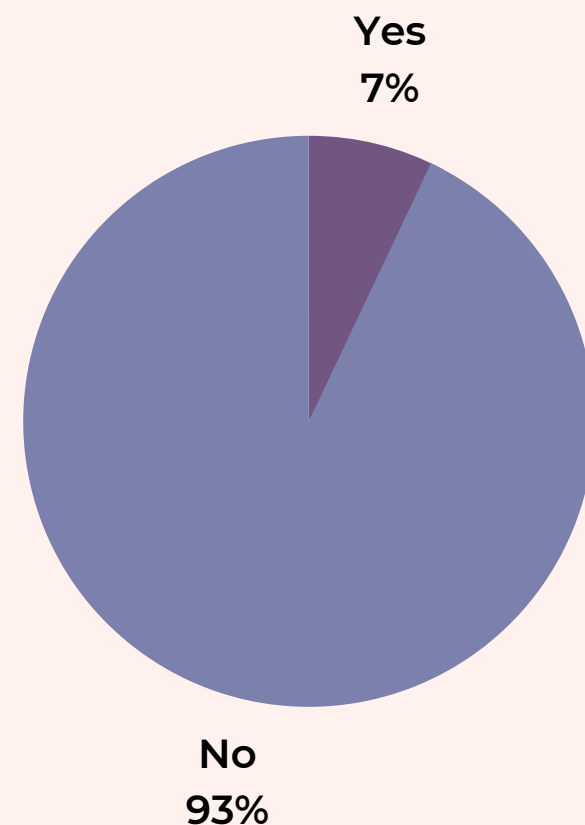## DID THE ORGANIZATION ENCOURAGE PEER-TO-PEER ENGAGEMENT?

Yes
3.6%

No
96.4%
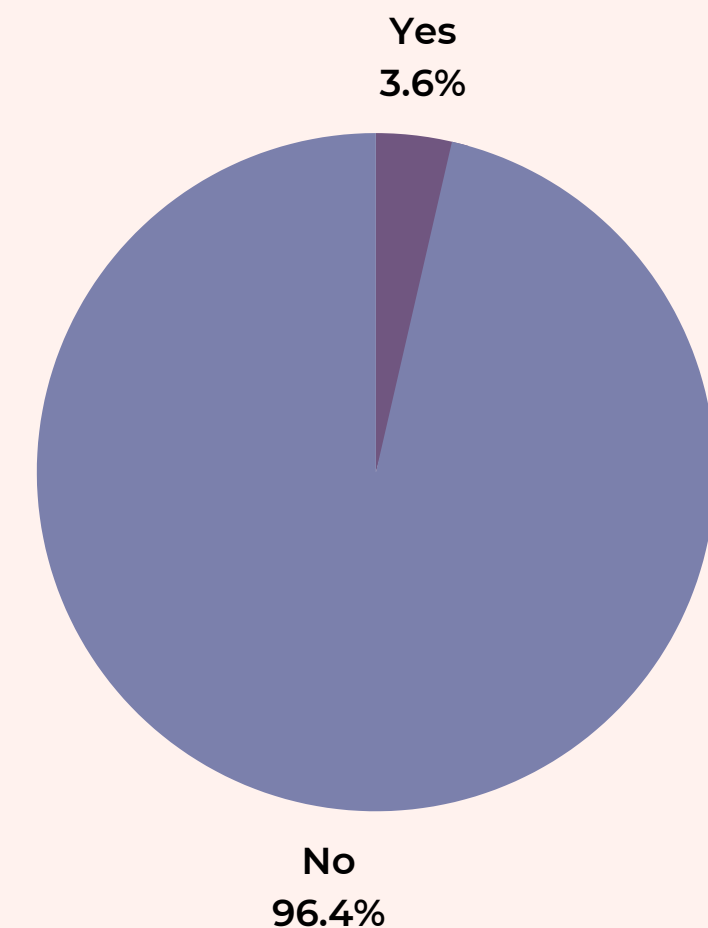
WERE PHOTOS OR VIDEOS USED?

We looked at what visual elements were used in each email. Photos appeared in almost 57% of emails while videos were included in 7%.

PHOTOS IN EMAILS?

No
43.1%

Yes
56.9%

VIDEOS IN EMAILS?

Yes
7%

No
93%

Tip Time: Photos and videos are powerful tools to communicate your mission. While you can add both to emails, that doesn't mean every subscriber can see them. In fact, some people block visual elements in their email platforms.

If you are going to use images, mind the tech specs. Having too many large-sized images can slow download time and impact user experience. Ideally, the height of the pictures used in emails should be kept to less than 200 pixels with a width of up to 600 pixels.

With every image, use Alt Text for accessibility. When naming your images and including Alt Text, be as descriptive as possible. Don't use "Image 5873." Title the image files with call to action along with the description to make the most out of your image space.

Additionally, when someone clicks your video to watch it, you are pulling them away from your primary call to action - donate. If you opt to use video, be sure the video includes an ask and clear instructions on where to give.

DESIGN- OR TEXT-HEAVY?

Photos and graphics are eye-catching, while a written narrative can be compelling in other ways. In this study, organizations favored copy heavy emails (56.9%) over graphic-heavy (43.1%). An email was categorized as one or the other when over 50% of the email was dedicated to the content type.

Tip Time: There are pros/cons to both content approaches. One way to see what resonates with your audience is to a/b test and watch the CTR. Do text-heavy or image-heavy emails perform better?

A balance of text and visuals can create great content. How you combine them makes a big difference in your campaign's performance. Use images sparingly and remember the following when writing your emails:

- Avoid using long words and sentences to ensure your audience can easily understand your content.
- Keep your copy to fewer than 200 words to ensure your audience's average reading time is under 45 seconds.
- Use 25 or fewer words per sentence.
- Write for your audience. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 54% of adults in the United States have prose literacy below the 6th-grade level.

WHAT WAS THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE EMAIL?

Design
43.1%

Text
56.9%
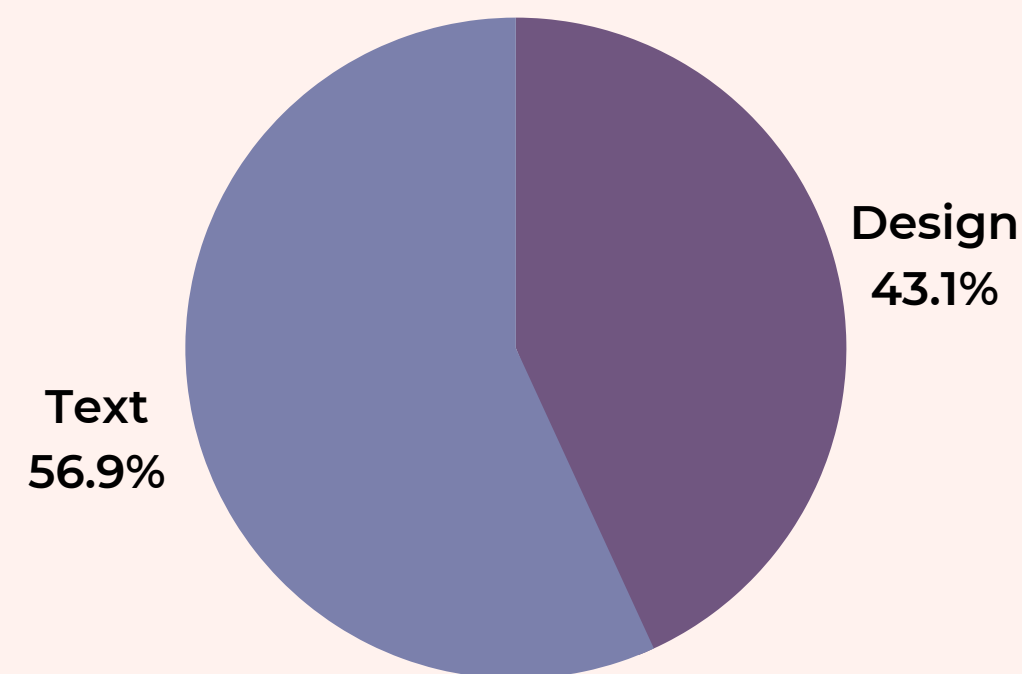
SUMMARY

We've offered up a number of tips to improve your email performance. If you can't implement them all, here are the top tips we'd encourage nonprofits to incorporate into their email strategy in 2023 leading up to Giving Tuesday:

- Pay attention to analytics on _every_ email and keep a running list of what works and what does not. Learn and iterate.
- Subject lines cannot be an after-thought. They should be unique, compelling and follow best practices.
- Do these three things that are shown to increase open-rate:
  - Sending at the optimal day and time based on your data/audience
  - Use personalization in the subject line
  - Have the email come from a known and trusted source, like an Executive Director, as well as a strong email address (Never use info@).

HIRE US FOR AN EMAIL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Beginning with a situational analysis, Common Great will review your existing email strategy and activity for the past six to 12 months. This includes your email marketing performance and a deep dive into key metrics like open-rate, click-through-rate, deliverability rate, and unsubscribe rate. We'll compare these to industry averages and grade your current performance. Based on what we learn, you'll get custom recommendations rooted in best practices to increase performance. You'll also get a data-tracking plan to stay on top of monitoring your email KPIs (key performance indicators).