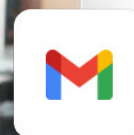
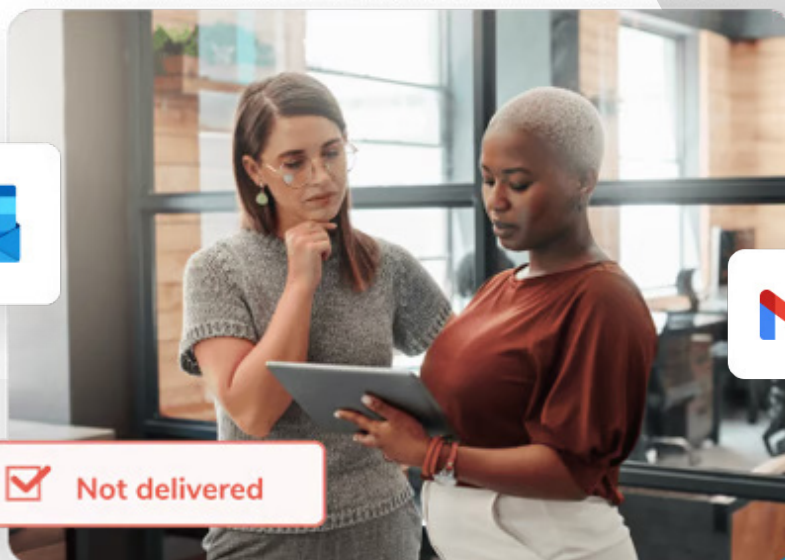
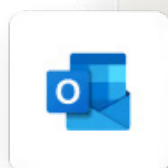


Score

9/10

The Email List Decay Report for 2023

See how fast your email list goes bad – and what you can do to keep it healthy



Not delivered

Almost a quarter of your email database may have degraded in the past year. ZeroBounce's Email List Decay Report for 2023 unveils exclusive, never-before-published data to help you get more out of your email list.

Building an email list is one of the smartest things you can do for your business. With more than four billion users worldwide, email is the lifeblood of transactional communication. As a marketing channel, it allows for unparalleled ROI opportunities. There are even million-dollar businesses run exclusively through email.

But for email marketing to work, great content can only make an impact if you actually connect with your prospects. So first, you need a healthy, valid email list. And much like your business and customer base, email lists are ever-changing.

A contact valid yesterday could be invalid today if that person left their job. Pandemic-related layoffs, business shut-downs and The Great Resignation have caused email data to decay even faster. People also switch to different email services and abandon their old addresses. We've all done it at least once.

Email list management thus becomes an ongoing purpose.



Why do email lists decay?

- **Businesses close.**
- **Employees leave their jobs.**
- **People change service providers.**
- **They create a new email address.**



How does email list decay affect the health of your email list over time? Does obsolete data lower your email deliverability? What can you do to always keep your email list fresh?

The ZeroBounce Email List Decay Report for 2023 answers these questions – and more. In this study, we bring exclusive insights into the dynamic lifecycle of email lists. Use this data to build your database the right way, increase email list engagement and hit your marketing goals in 2023.

THE EMAIL LIST DECAY REPORT FOR 2023: AVERAGE EMAIL LIST HEALTH STATISTICS

ZeroBounce validates billions of email addresses yearly. We learn a lot from the data we process – and now, we share our findings with you.

To create this report, we looked at all the email data we verified between January and December 2022. Then, we analyzed the overall email validity for 2021 and compared the two data sets to understand better how email lists degrade

Our customers range from solo business owners to behemoths like Amazon, Disney and Netflix, so the findings below reflect statistics across various business sizes and industries.



**At least
22.71% of an
email list
degrades
every year.**

SUMMARY OF EMAIL DECAY: HOW QUICKLY DO EMAIL LISTS DEGRADE?

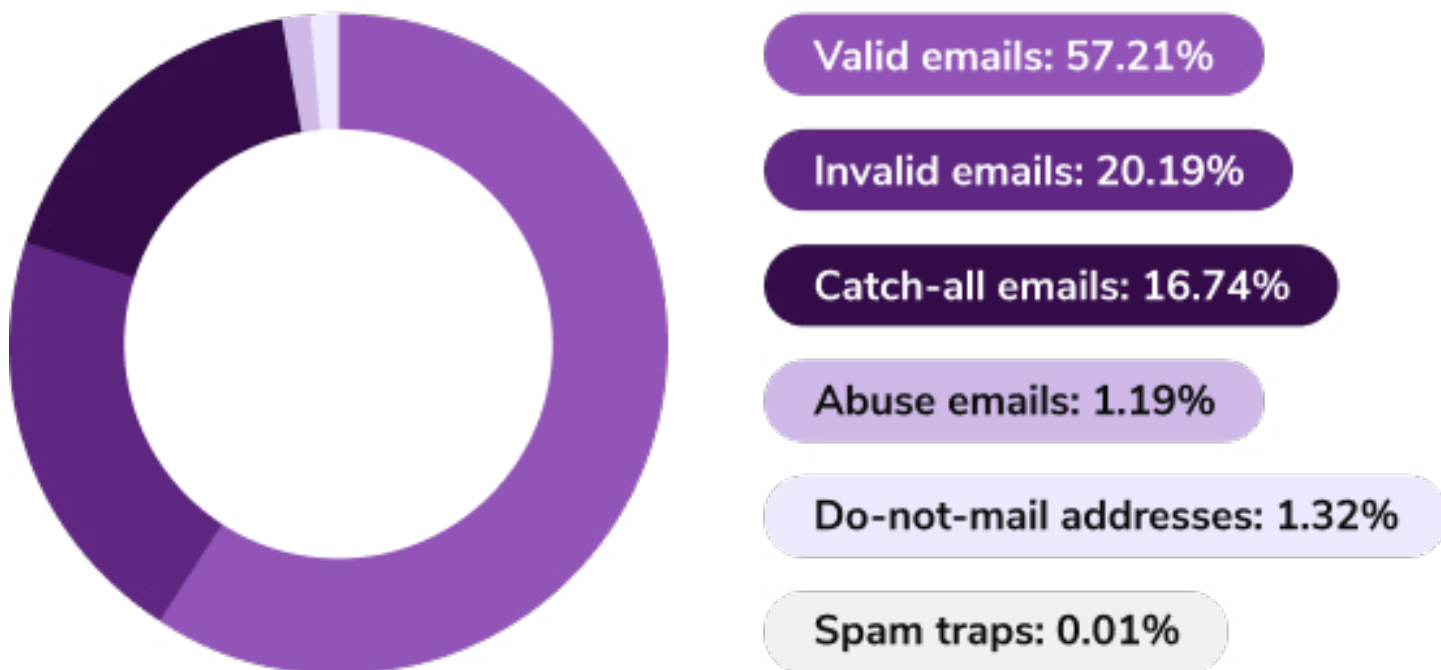
- At least **22.71%** of an email list degrades yearly.
- The most prevalent type of risky emails found in email lists are **invalid addresses**.
- **Catch-all emails** make up the second-largest segment of email addresses that are likely to bounce
- People make an astonishing number of typos when trying to sign up for emails. In just one year, ZeroBounce prevented **10+ million bounces** through typo detection.
- Disposable emails are a common way people avoid giving out their real email addresses. Last year, ZeroBounce identified **5+ million disposable emails**.
- Email validity was **0.45%** better in 2022 than the year before.
- Only **57.21%** of all emails submitted to ZeroBounce in 2022 were valid.

OVERALL EMAIL LIST DATA DECAY IN 2022

In 2022, ZeroBounce's email list cleaning software processed more than six billion email addresses – in bulk and in real time. How many of those emails were valid? Take a look below.

Here is a breakdown of the overall email list decay our software has identified:

ZeroBounce data from January 2022 – December 2022



How quickly does email list data decay?

On average, at least **22.71%** of an email list decays within just one year.

Out of the data we analyzed, 20.19% were invalid emails. However, invalid email addresses aren't the only types of contacts risky to your email deliverability. As you can see above, email databases can also acquire:

- ▶ **Abuse emails:** These are known complainers who have a history of reporting many emails as spam. To preserve your email list hygiene and ensure the highest inbox reach, we recommend you don't send emails to these contacts.
- ▶ **Spam traps:** Set up by Internet service providers (ISPs) and blacklist providers, spam traps are designed to detect and block spammers. Although ZeroBounce spotted only 0.01% spam traps in 2022, hitting a spam trap is a blow to your sender reputation and email deliverability. Read more about spam traps here to understand why they don't belong on your email list.
- ▶ **Do-not-mail addresses:** ZeroBounce uses this email validation status to group several kinds of poor-quality and risky contacts. These contacts include role-based emails, disposable emails and spam and bot-created emails. Make sure to remove these contacts from your database to maintain your reputation and help your emails go to the inbox.

Catch-all emails are a special breed

We stated above that at least **22.71%** of an email list decays within 12 months. Catch-all emails are the reason why you should consider this percentage only a low-end estimate.

In 2022, ZeroBounce found that 16.74% of all the emails it checked were catch-all emails. Now, some catch-all emails are valid and safe to use, but others are not.

Catch-all emails are associated with domains that accept all emails sent to them – even if the email address does not exist. They are impossible to validate without emailing them and waiting to see if they bounce. Non-existent catch-all email addresses will end up bouncing and hurting your sender reputation. Proper email list management will help you stay aware of these risky emails.

BONUS TIP:

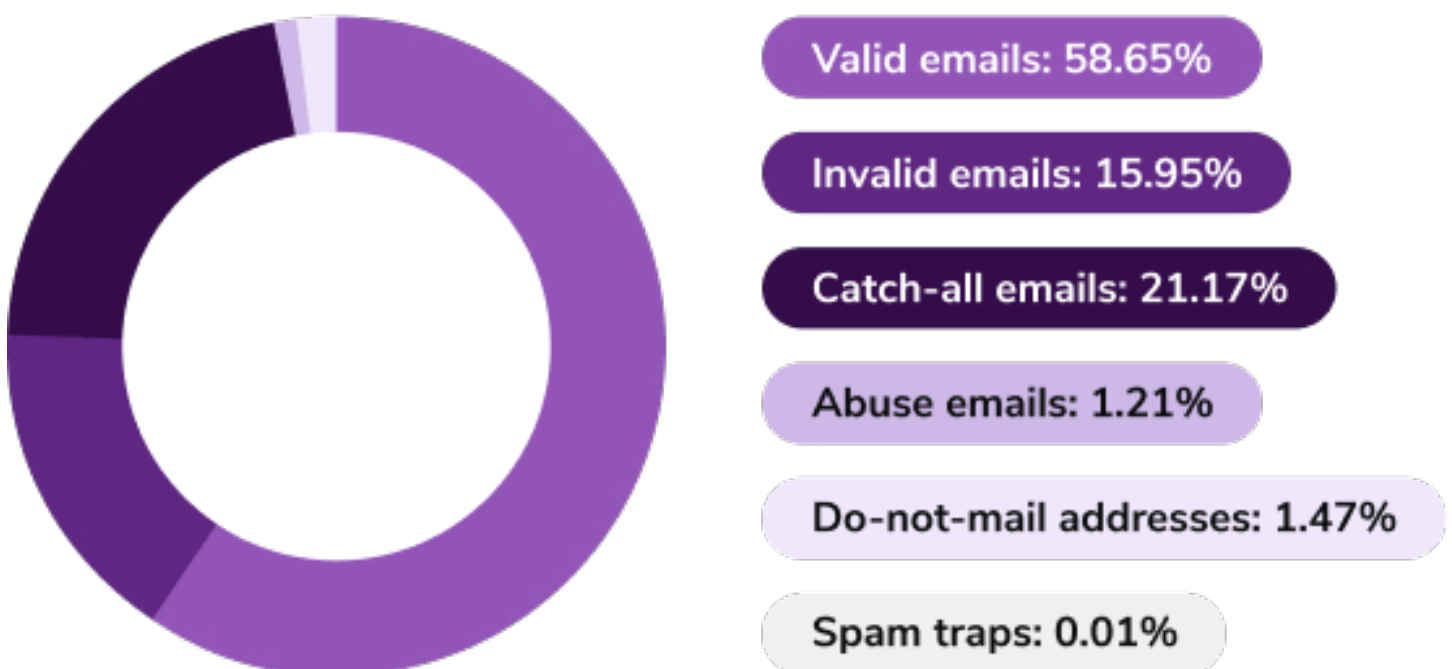
To further check the validity of catch-all emails, run them through the [ZeroBounce email scoring service](#). That way, you can make a more informed decision on which ones are safe to email.

EMAIL VALIDATION RESULTS FOR BULK AND REAL-TIME VERIFICATIONS

ZeroBounce verifies emails in bulk and in real time, through the email validation API. Next, let's break down the results from both email verification methods.

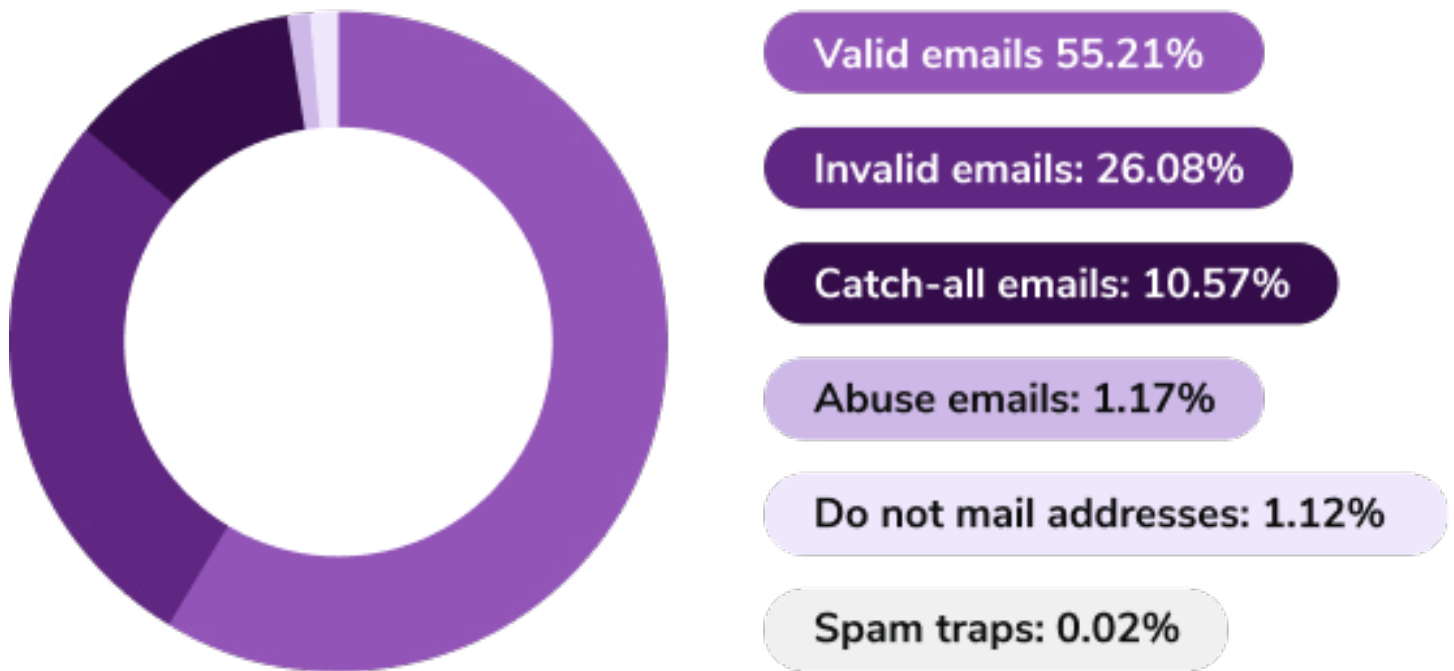
Bulk email validation results – identified when users uploaded existing email lists:

ZeroBounce data from January 2022 – December 2022



Real-time email validation results – detected by the ZeroBounce API:

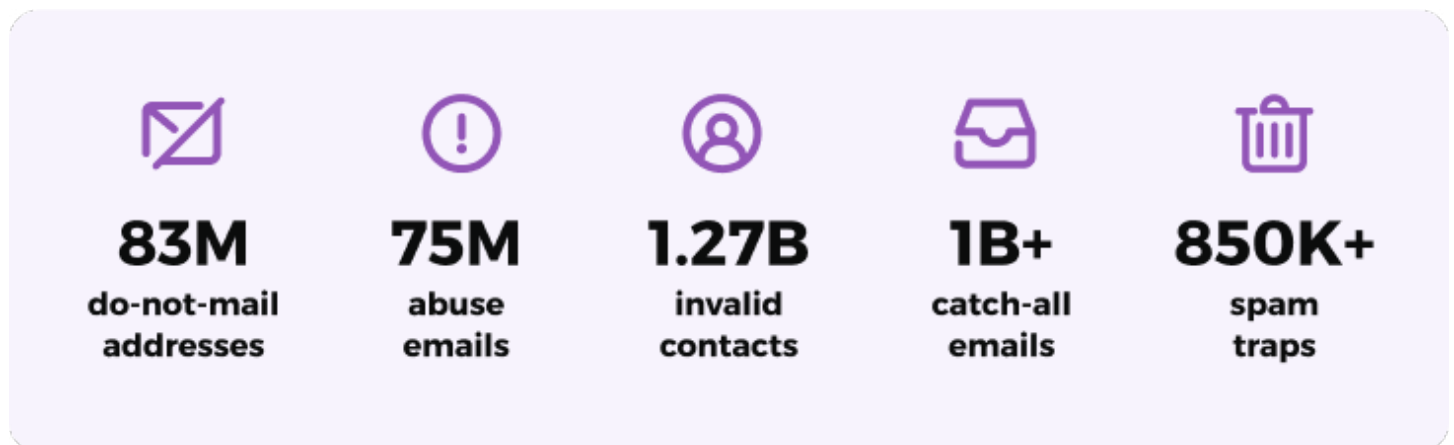
ZeroBounce data from January 2022 – December 2022



2022 EMAIL LIST DECAY BY THE NUMBERS

Percentages paint a broad picture of how much email lists degrade in a year. But let's look at the actual numbers to get an even better idea of the amount of bad data lurking in email lists.

In 2022, ZeroBounce identified:

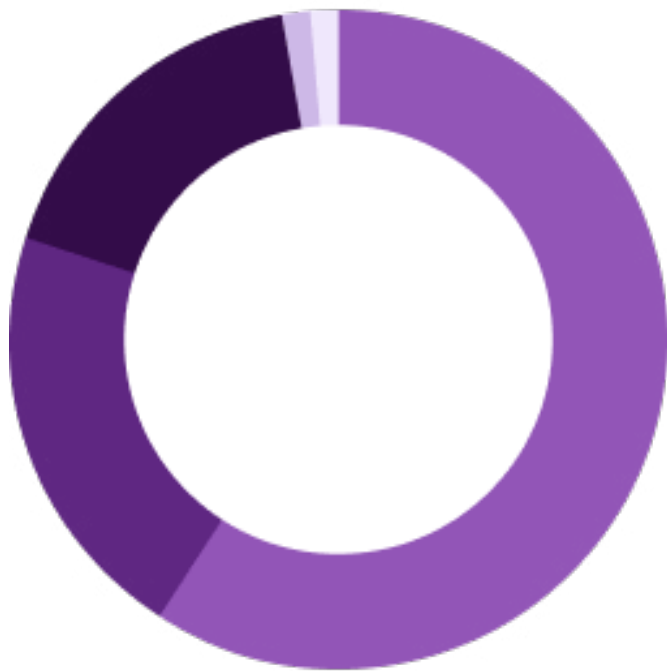


EMAIL VALIDITY IN 2022 VS. 2021

In 2022, ZeroBounce found that at least 22.71% of all emails it checked were invalid and risky. Was that percentage higher or lower in 2021?

We tracked that data, and here's what we found:

Email list decay in 2022: a total of 22.71% of all emails were risky



Valid emails: 57.21%

Invalid emails: 20.19%

Catch-all emails: 16.74%

Abuse emails: 1.19%

Do not mail addresses: 1.32%

Spam traps: 0.01%

Email list decay in 2021: a total of 23.16% of all emails were risky:



Valid emails: 57.30%

Invalid emails: 21.73%

Catch-all emails: 15.81%

Abuse emails: 0.27%


Do not mail addresses: 1.15%

Spam traps: 0.01%

Our data shows that email lists contained more outdated contacts in 2021 than in 2022. The higher percentage from 2021 could have been a residual effect of pandemic-related layoffs and businesses closing. Another significant contribution to data decay was “The Great Resignation” trend that started in early 2021. A year later, overall email validity improved by **0.45%**.

OTHER CAPTIVATING FACTS FROM ZEROBOUNCE’S EMAIL VERIFIER

We gathered these benchmarks to help you build healthier and more effective email lists. Aside from the stats above, the numbers below gave us extra insights into the email data landscape.



**Only 57.21% of
all emails that
ZeroBounce
checked were
valid.**

HERE’S WHAT STOOD OUT IN 2022:

- Between June 2018 and December 2022, ZeroBounce validated almost **18 billion** email addresses. Most of this data came from bulk uploads.
- More than 1.27 billion emails were invalid.
- The number of ZeroBounce API users has increased steadily through the years, with a total of **7,250** by December 2022.
- The ZeroBounce email validation API helped prevent more than **10 million bounces** by detecting typos made in sign-up forms as users were trying to input their contact details.
- The API prevented an additional **5+ million bounces** by detecting disposable emails. Some of these emails have a short life – sometimes as short as 15 minutes – and are sure to bounce.
- Abuse emails (known complainers) are more prevalent than you’d think. Across the bulk and real-time email list cleaning services, ZeroBounce found more than **75 million known complainers**.
- Our email checker detected more than **850,000 spam traps**. Spam traps can’t sign up for emails, so remember never to add any contacts to your email list without permission.
- More than **1 billion** of the emails ZeroBounce verified were catch-all emails.
- Only **57.21%** of all emails submitted to our platform were valid.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU CLEAN YOUR EMAIL LIST?

To keep email decay at bay and protect your sender reputation, clean your email list at least once a quarter. If your database grows quickly, run it through our email verifier every month.

Want to take a step further to preserve your email list hygiene? Connect our API to your CRM and any platforms you use to gather leads. Once set up, the API checks every new sign-up in real time so that no invalid and fake emails can make it to your list.

HOW TO PREVENT DATA DECAY AND KEEP YOUR EMAIL LIST HEALTHY

Email list decay is inevitable. Even the most diligent email marketers will still acquire risky emails in their databases. So fixing and preserving the quality of your email list takes consistent care – but it's easy to do!

Let's look at some best practices you can follow to keep your email list clean, protect your sender reputation and land more emails in the inbox.

Build your own email list

Purchasing or renting an email list isn't a shortcut to faster results but rather a direct path to the spam folder. First, it's highly unlikely to convert prospects who've never heard of you. What's more, you can get a deluge of spam complaints that hurt your sender reputation and direct your campaigns to the junk folder. So, instead of buying one, build your own email list by promoting it consistently across all channels. Preventing email list decay is easier when you start off with valid contacts.

Use double opt-in

Setting it up takes minutes and prevents your email list from acquiring undesirable contacts. The double opt-in subscription method entails sending an automatic email to every new subscriber, asking them to click a link to confirm they want to receive emails from you. Not only will this extra filter weed out fake sign-ups but also, your engagement will be higher. When people take that additional step to ensure they receive your emails, they're more likely to open and read them.

Connect an email validation API to your forms

You can always clean your email list in bulk, but if you want to stay on top of your email hygiene, use an email verification API. It's the most effective method to slow down email decay. The ZeroBounce API verifies every email address in real time – before it gets added to your database. You can connect it to your sign-up and registration forms, CRM, LinkedIn and any other channels where you gather leads. See all the ZeroBounce integrations and connect the API today.

Never email a complainer again

Spam complaints taint your sender reputation, so keep an eye on how many you get. The accepted benchmark is 0.01%, which is one complaint for every 1,000 emails. ZeroBounce's email list optimization tools help you detect and remove known complainers (abuse emails) before they can cause any damage. If you decide to email your abuse contacts nonetheless, and some do report you as spam, remove them permanently.

Prune out unengaged subscribers

Your email engagement has a great impact on your sender reputation – and hence, your email deliverability. Mailbox providers use behavioral signals such as opens and clicks to determine your emails' relevance. Healthy engagement helps them earn a spot in people's inboxes.

You can see why keeping unengaged subscribers in your email list hurts your performance. Aside from that, some of those addresses may have been abandoned and could bounce. To prevent email list decay, remove all subscribers who haven't clicked on your emails in the past three months.

Keep an eye on your metrics

Your email metrics provide clear insights into how people respond to the content you send. Did you notice a decline in your open and click rates? Your emails may be landing in spam – and email list decay is one of the most common reasons. You may be getting too many bounces or spam complaints. Your email database has too many unengaged subscribers, or your emails could be hitting spam traps.

It takes only minutes to use an email list cleaning service and remove obsolete data. Weeding it out has immediate benefits: your sender score improves, your campaigns start going to the inbox and your metrics will increase.

