



Reply Research

To Sales x Recruiters x and more

## How to Write Better Subject Lines

According to Data



Let's dust off our lab coats and dig deeper into the data to uncover the hidden patterns and actionable insights for **effective cold email subject lines**.

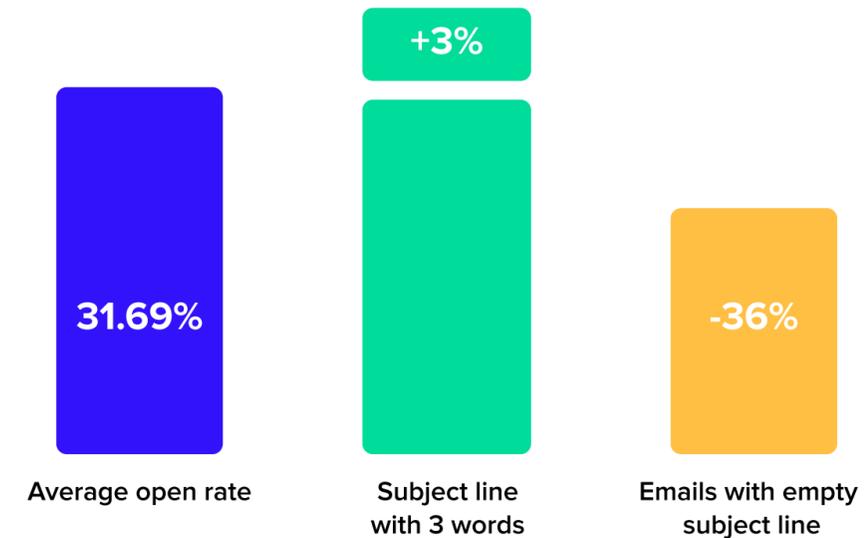
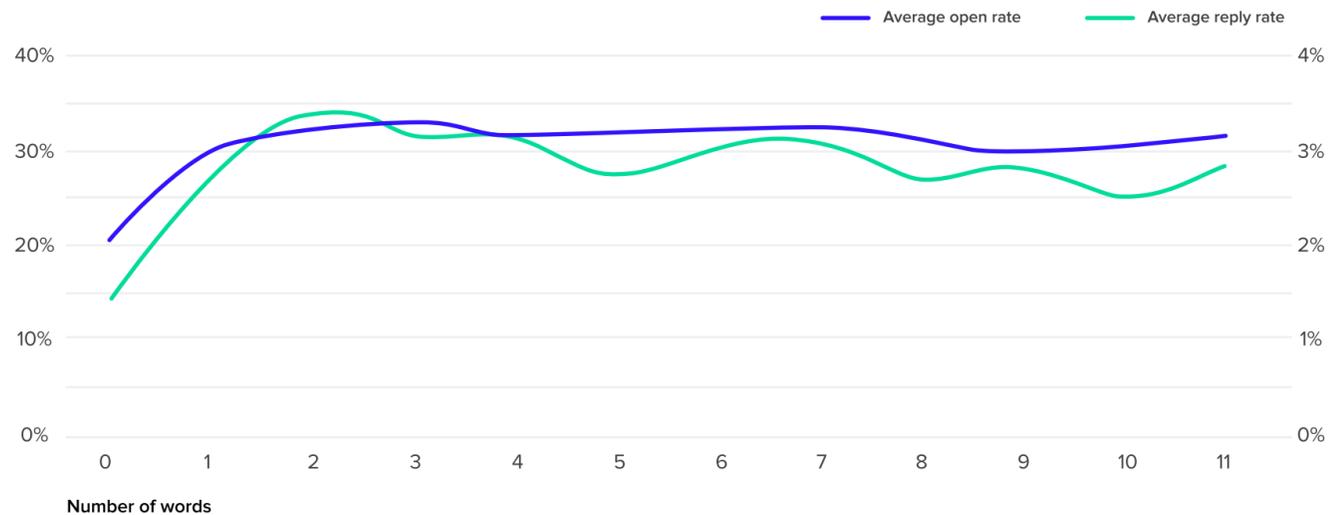
For this issue of Reply Research, our data scientists have analyzed **712k first-step emails with unique subject lines** against 4 key parameters: length, letter case, variables, and emojis.

#### Disclaimer:

*The average performance metrics for the analyzed emails that we will be using as the benchmarks in this research are 31.69% open rate and 3.02% reply rate.*



# How long should your subject line be?

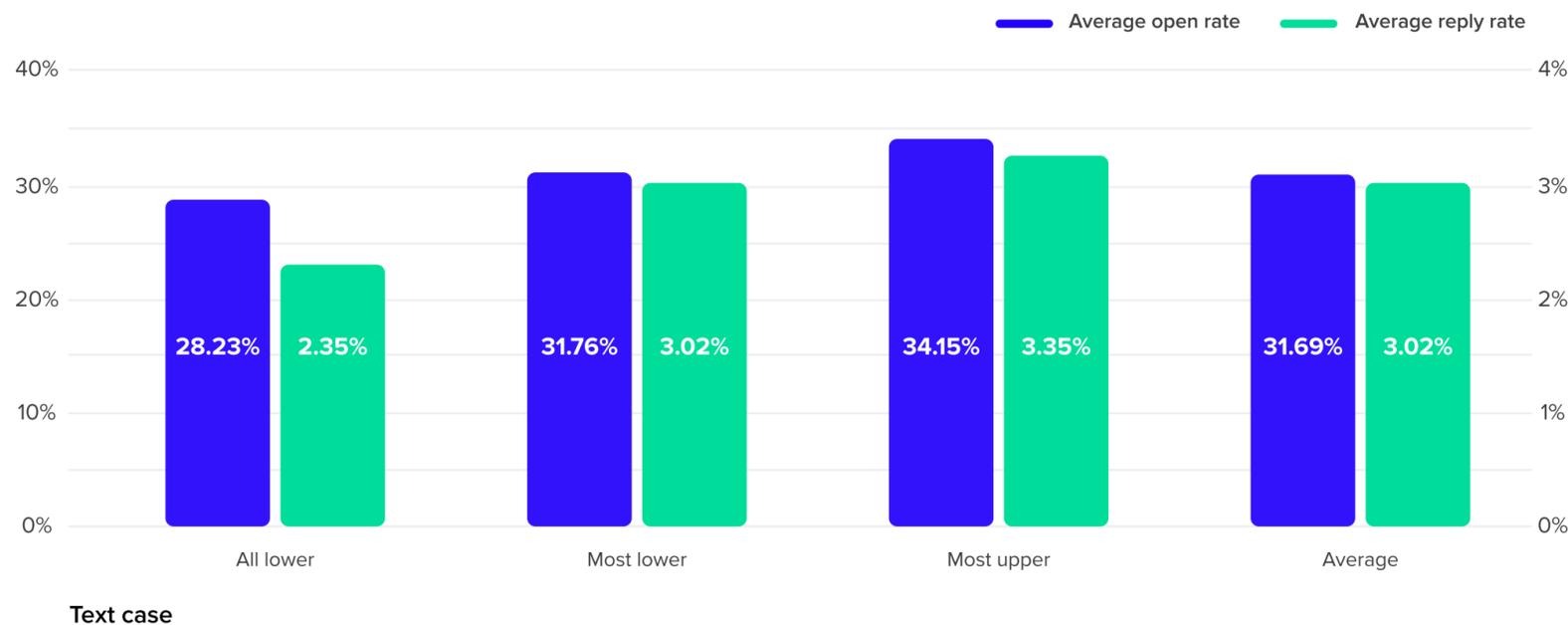


- 1 Subject lines with **1, 2, 3, and 4 words** get the highest **open rates**, the fewer words — the better.
- 2 Using longer subject lines with **8+ words** will result in **lower open and reply rates**.
- 3 Subject lines containing **3 words** generate **3% more opens**.
- 4 Emails with **no subject line** generate almost **36% fewer opens**.
- 5 The average reply rate **declines if the subject line has 5 or more words**, but an average open rate is the same whether you use 5 words or 11+ words in the subject line.

**Key takeaway:**

*Keep your subject lines short with up to 4 words to get the highest open and reply rates.*

# Should you capitalize your subject lines?

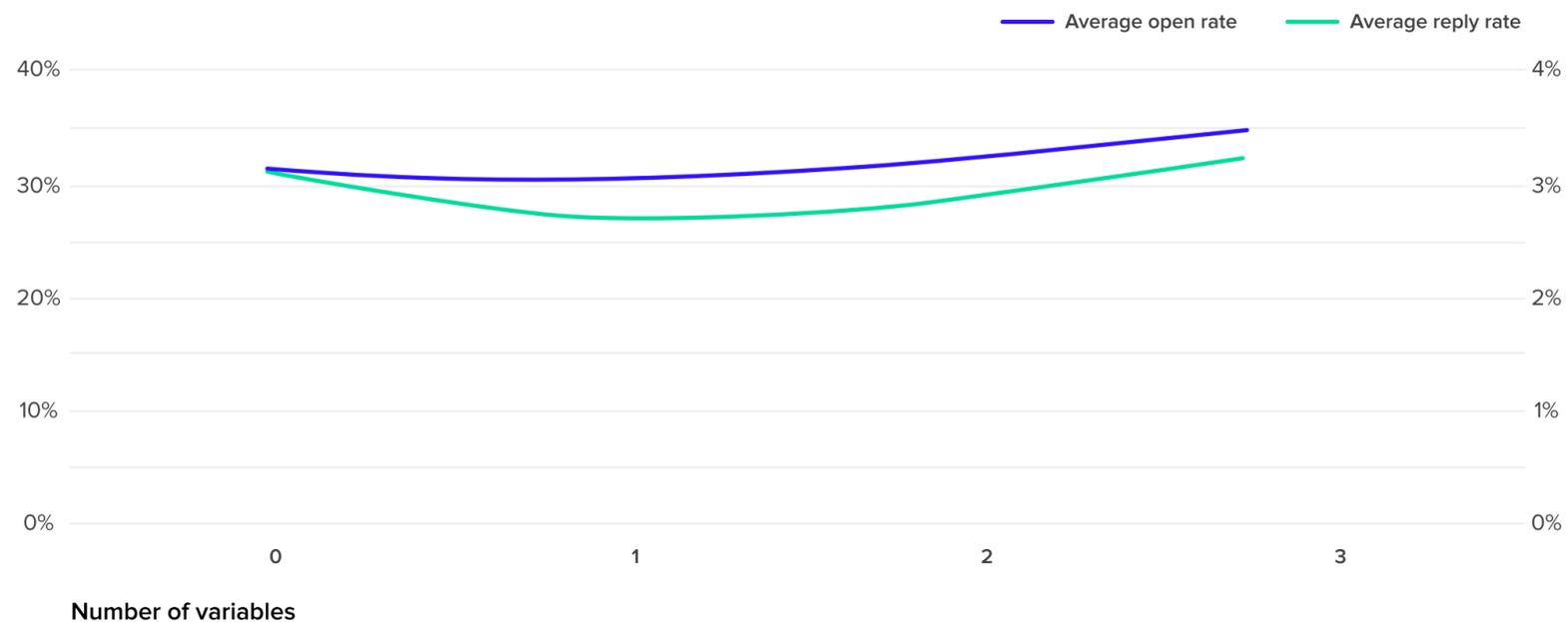


- 1 Subject lines containing all lower case words (e.g., “sales development process at reply.io”) **generate 3.46% fewer opens**. The average reply rate here would be significantly lower (by 11%) as well.
- 2 Using mostly lower case words (e.g., “Sales development process at Reply.io”) in a subject line **won’t affect your open and reply rates**, keeping them close to the average (just some 0.22% higher).
- 3 If the subject line contains most upper case words (e.g., “Sales Development process at Reply.io”), the **open rate would be 2.46% higher and reply rate — 10.93% higher**.

**Key takeaway:**

*Go with the upper case subject lines whenever possible to get better results.*

# How many variables should you use in a subject line?

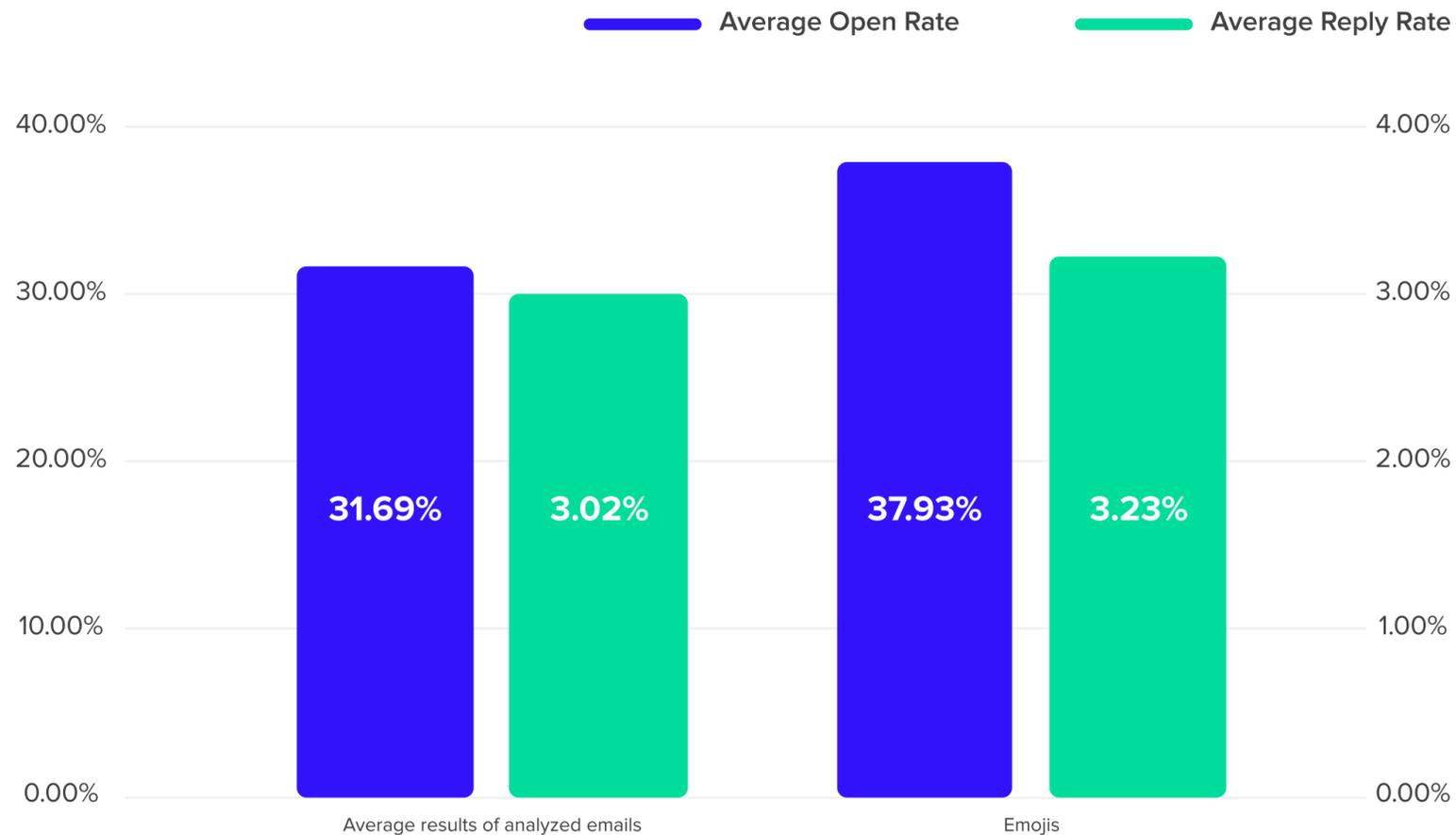


- 1 The subject lines containing 2 and 3 variables tend to generate slightly more opens than the average (by 4.04% and 12.15% respectively).
- 2 Surprisingly, the subject lines with 0 or 1 variable get almost the same open rates.
- 3 The reply rate with subject lines containing only 1 variable would be 6.6% lower.

## Key takeaway:

*It's OK to send cold emails with no personalized variables in the subject line (as long as it's still relevant and appealing).*

# Should you use emojis in the subject line?



- 1 Subject lines containing emojis can generate **19.7% higher open rate.**
- 2 Reply rate for subject lines with emojis is **6.95% higher.**

Emojis

## Key takeaway:

*Adding an emoji to a subject line can make a real difference! So don't hesitate to try it (or at least A/B test this approach to make sure it resonates with your target audience).*

# Should you use emojis in the subject line?



With our research results in mind, here are some subject line best practices to follow in your cold outreach sequences.

## Do's

- ✓ Keep your subject lines short and mobile friendly (ideally 1-5 words)
- ✓ Use a few personalization variables (2-3 are usually enough)
- ✓ Capitalize all or most words in your subject line
- ✓ Add emojis whenever appropriate
- ✓ Prioritize timing and relevance in your subject lines
- ✓ Always A/B test your subject lines

## Dont's

- ✗ Never send a cold email with a blank subject line
- ✗ Avoid misleading subject lines (e.g., RE: or FWD:)
- ✗ Don't use exclamation or question marks
- ✗ Steer clear of spam trigger words
- ✗ Avoid generic words like "hi," "quick," "chance"
- ✗ Don't use lower case in your subject lines
- ✗ Never write your subject lines in ALL CAPS

**And remember:** 30% open rate is ok, 50%+ is amazing! If your results are lower, your subject line is most likely to blame. Follow the tips listed above to fix it!

For more research and insights visit [Reply Resource Library](#)