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May 2025

Outlook inbox from different SMTP providers — SendGrid, MailGun, and custom SMTP

This analysis explores the key factors influencing how quickly emails reach the Outlook inbox from different SMTP providers — SendGrid, MailGun, and custom SMTP.
The goal is to find the best provider and settings for fastest inbox delivery.

About Warmy and the Research Team

Warmy is the leading email deliverability technology, helping businesses improve their inbox placement, sender reputation, and overall email performance. Powered by AI-driven strategies.

The Warmy Research Team is a dedicated group of email deliverability-certified experts focused on analyzing and optimizing email-sending practices.

Through continuous testing, data-driven insights, and innovative methodologies, they uncover factors that impact deliverability and translate findings into actionable improvements for Warmy's platform. Their expertise helps businesses navigate the complexities of email deliverability with confidence.

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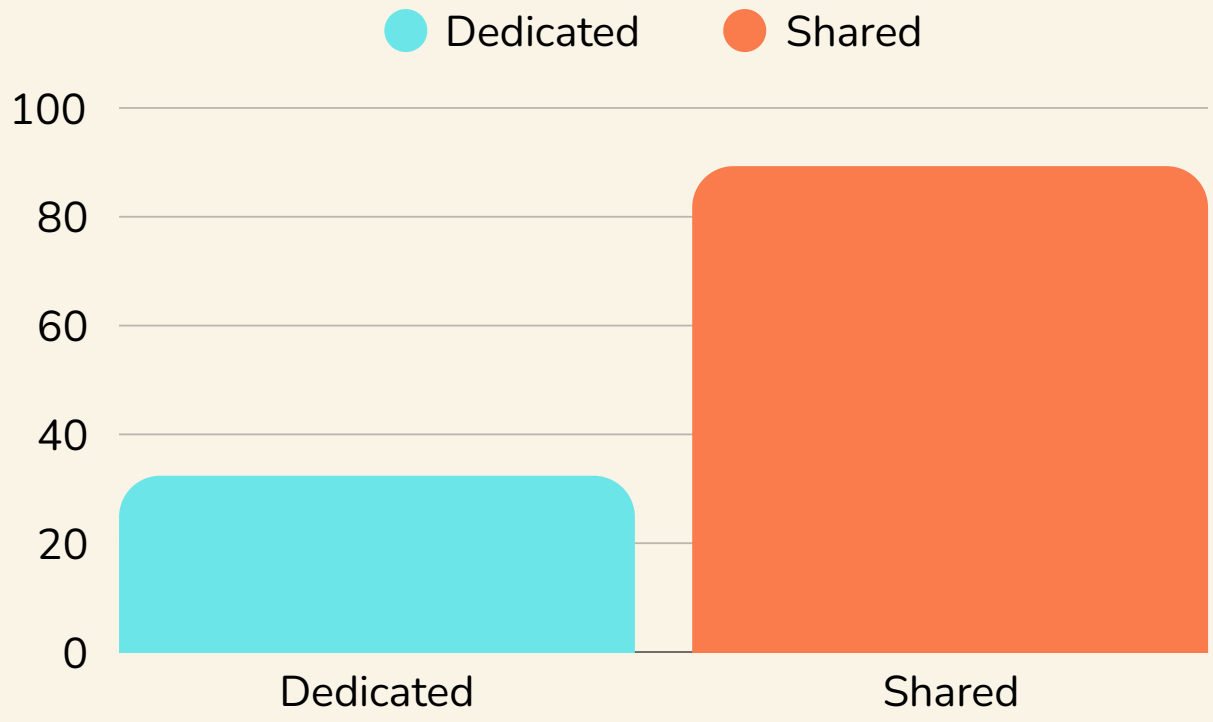
Key Factors Affecting Inbox Placement Time

IP Pool Type:

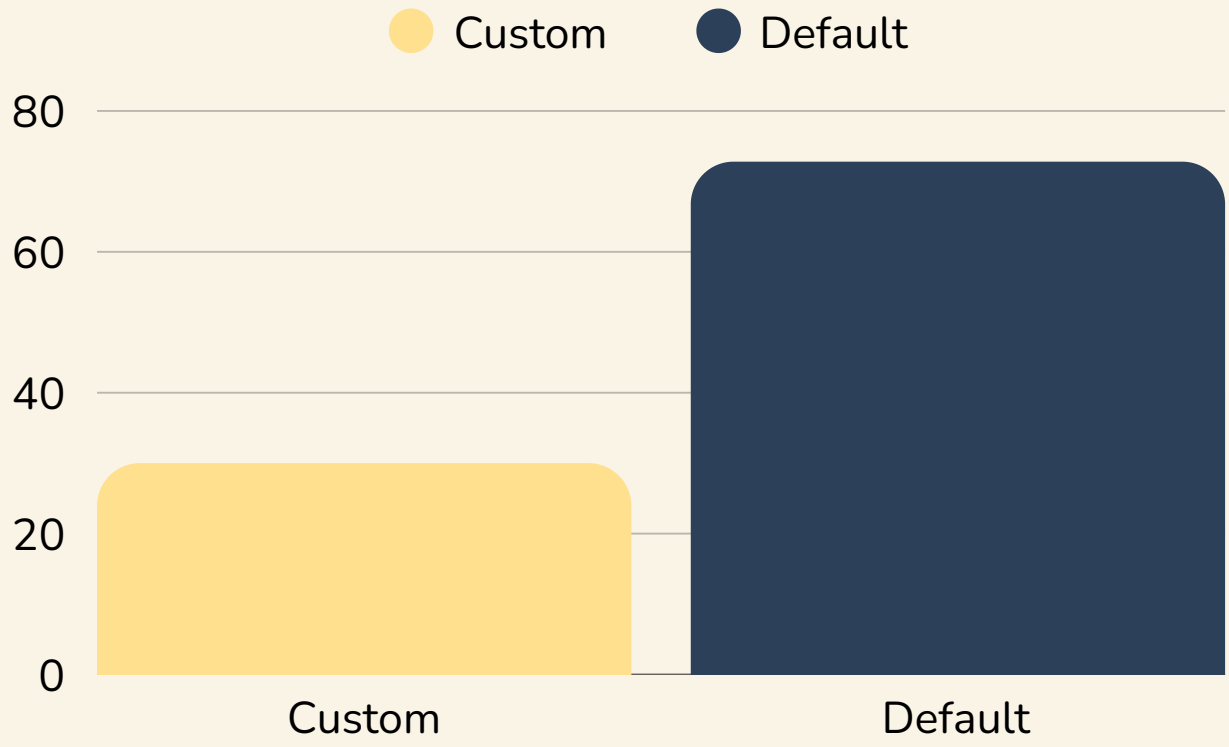
Average Days to Inbox: Dedicated vs. Shared IP Pool (Across All ESPs)



- Dedicated IP pool: ~32.4 days
- Shared IP pool: ~89.3 days
- ⏫ Increase: approximately +175.6%
- Dedicated IP pools speed up inbox placement compared to shared IPs. Multiple dedicated IPs help maintain a good reputation.
- Using a Shared IP pool results in nearly 3x slower inbox placement compared to a Dedicated IP pool.

Warm-up Template Type:

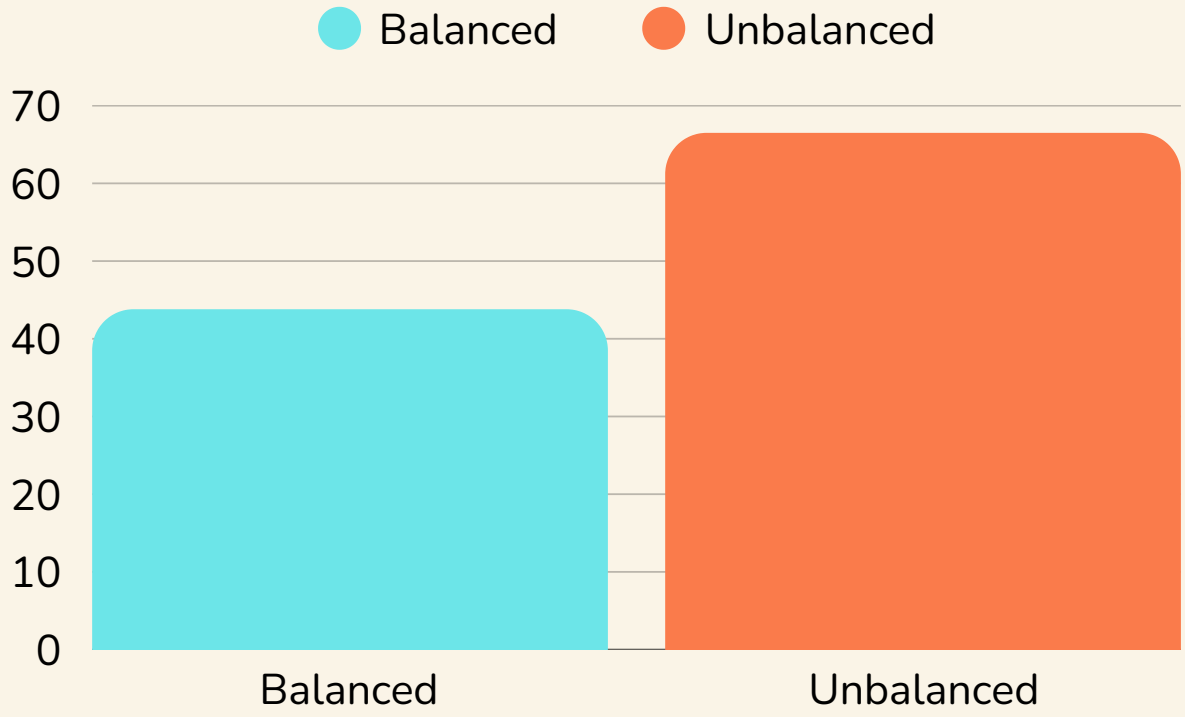
Average Days to Inbox: Custom vs. Default Template (Across All ESPs)



- Custom Template: ~30.0 days
- Default Template: ~72.8 days
- ⏫ Impact: Using default templates increases inbox time by ~142.6%
- You should also warm up your template (custom template) that you will send out. Warmed-up templates that match your brand have a higher chance of getting to the inbox.
- Custom templates perform better than default ones, improving delivery speed.

Sending Balance:

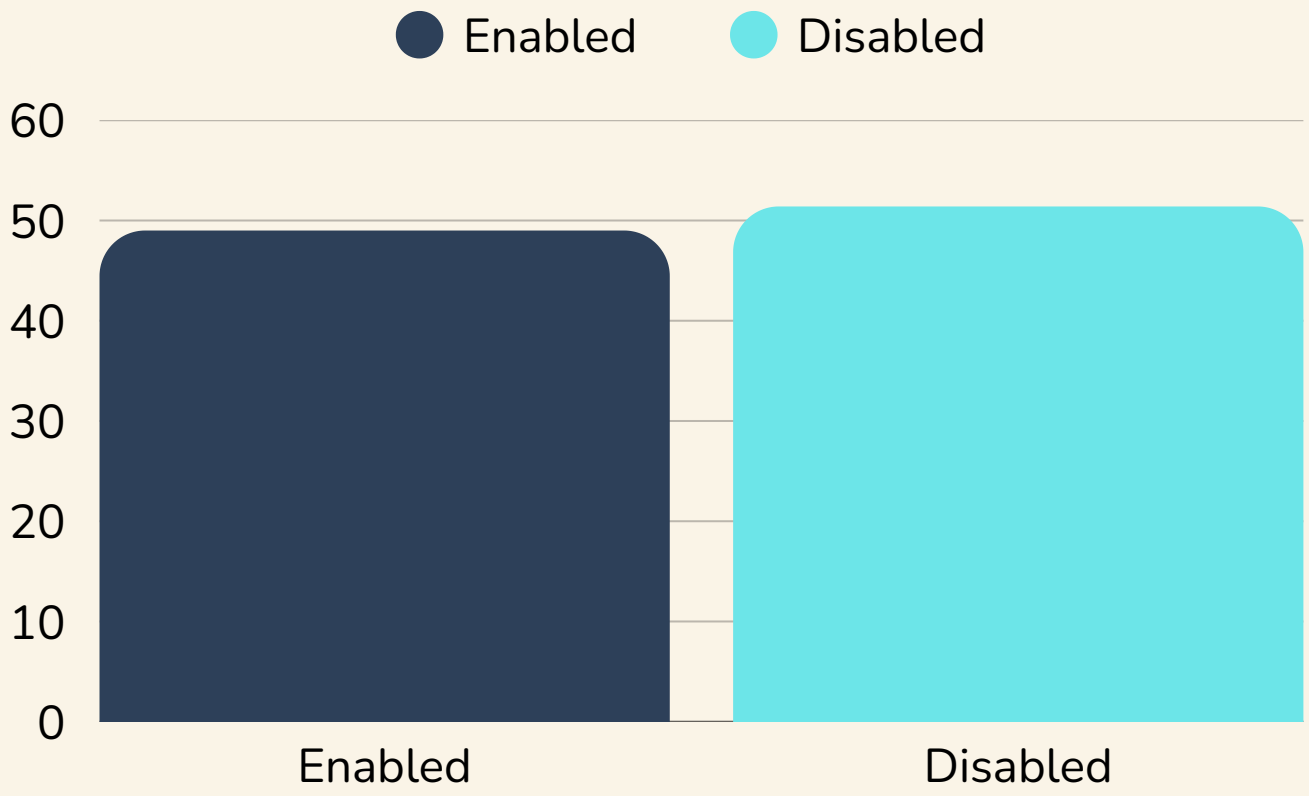
Average Days to Inbox: Balanced vs Unbalanced Sending (Across All ESPs)



- Balanced Sending (Balance = Yes): ~43.8 days
- Unbalanced Sending (Balance = No): ~66.5 days
- ⏫ Impact: Unbalanced sending increases inbox time by ~51.7%
- Balance - this option helps you focus on a particular provider. The best way to influence delivery is to gradually increase the balance to a specific provider by 5-10% every week or 2-3% every 3 days starting from 1000 emails/day. This will give you a gradual reduction in outgoing traffic to a particular provider. The more evenly the balance grows, the more chances you have to get into the inbox. But be careful if you have a big volume of outgoing traffic 2000 emails/day and put from 0% to 100% of the balance on outlook - this can lead to negative consequences, such as: bad domain and IP reputation, and even rejection.
- The “outgoing traffic” refers to the total sending volume,

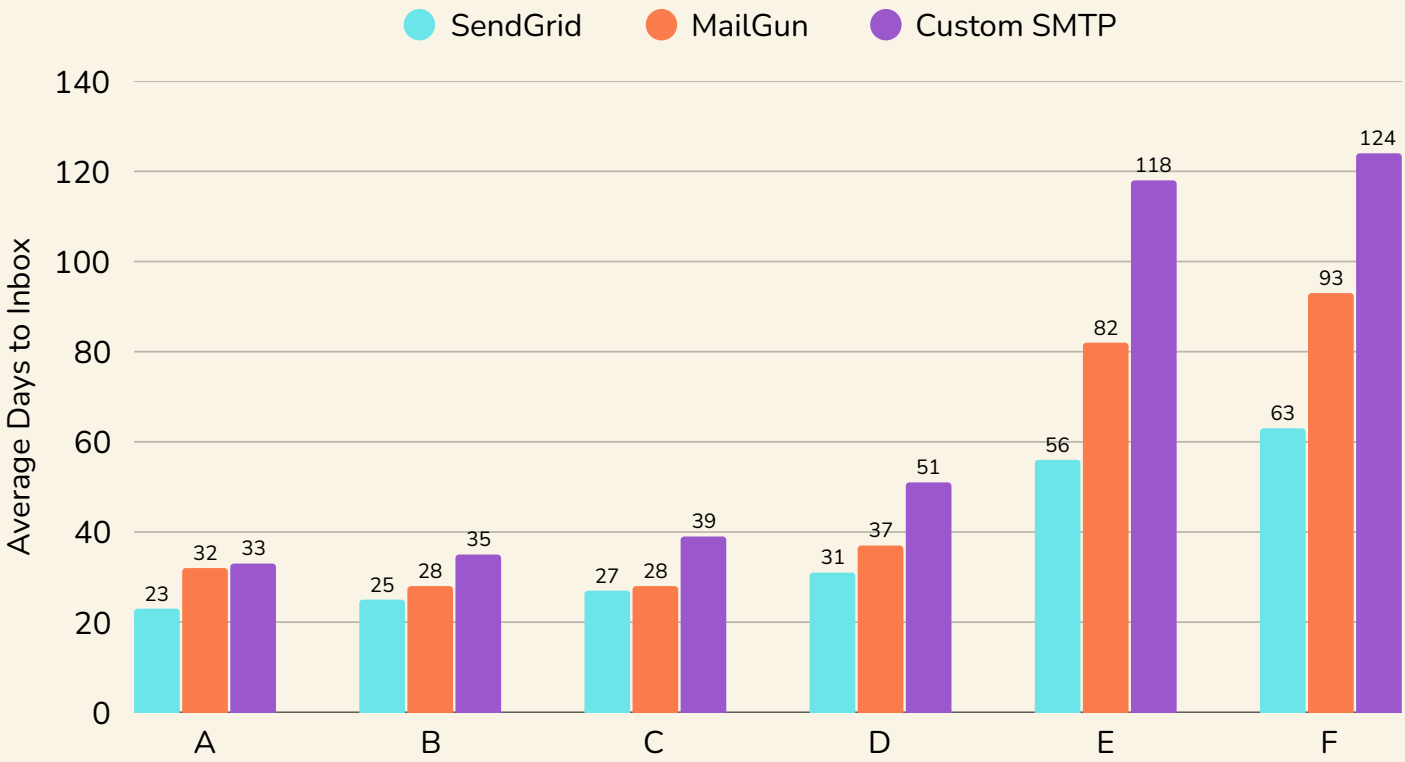
IMAP / Reply Ability:

Average Days to Inbox: IMAP Enabled vs. Disabled (Across All ESPs)



- IMAP Enabled: ~49.0 days
- IMAP Disabled: ~51.4 days
- ⏫ Impact: Only ~5% increase in inbox time when IMAP is disabled
- Enabling IMAP has minimal impact on inbox placement speed. The difference is statistically small compared to other factors like IP type, template, or sending balance.

Compilation of Factors of Average Days to Inbox Across ESPs



Here is a multi-bar chart that illustrates the average time to inbox for SendGrid, MailGun, and Custom SMTP, categorized by each unique combination of parameters: IP Pool Type, Template, Balance, and IMAP.

- **A** -Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Balanced sending | IMAP enabled
- **B** - Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled
- **C** - Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Unbalanced sending | IMAP enabled
- **D** - Dedicated IP pool |Default template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled
- **E** - Shared IP pool | Default template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled
- **F** - Shared IP pool | Default template | Unbalanced sending | IMAP disabled

Compilation of Factors of Average Days to Inbox Across ESPs

Factors	SendGrid	MailGun	Custom SMTP
Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Balanced sending | IMAP enabled	*~ 23 days*	*~ 32 days*	*~ 33 days*
Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled	*~ 25 days*	*~ 28 days*	*~ 35 days*
Dedicated IP pool | Custom template | Unbalanced sending | IMAP enabled	*~ 27 days*	*~ 28 days*	*~ 39 days*
Dedicated IP pool |Default template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled	*~ 31 days*	*~ 37 days*	*~ 51 days*
Shared IP pool | Default template | Balanced sending | IMAP disabled	*~ 56 days*	*~ 82 days*	*~ 118 days*
Shared IP pool | Default template | Unbalanced sending | IMAP disabled	*~ 63 days*	*~ 93 days*	*~ 124 days*

Conclusion

Our research uncovered several critical factors that influence how quickly emails land in the Outlook inbox when sent through popular SMTP providers.

- Dedicated IP pools dramatically speed up inbox placement. Dedicated IPs give you control over your sender reputation, making a huge impact on delivery speed.
- Custom warm-up templates outperform default ones. Custom templates improve credibility and help ISPs trust your messages faster.
- Balanced sending accelerates delivery. Gradually increasing your sending volume to a specific provider (balanced sending) results in faster inbox arrival.
- IMAP has minimal impact on inbox speed. Enabling IMAP slightly improves inbox time, but its effect is minor compared to IP type, template use, and sending balance.
- Provider performance varies by setup. SendGrid, MailGun, and Custom SMTP all showed differing inbox times depending on configuration. SendGrid generally performed best average time to inbox landing.

Takeaway: For fastest Outlook inbox placement, use dedicated IP pools with custom warm-up templates, maintain balanced sending practices, and consider—but don't overly rely on—IMAP. Careful configuration across these factors significantly improves your email deliverability.

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We are passionate about solving email deliverability challenges and making email a reliable channel for every business

325+
Years Of Combined Email Deliverability Expertise

9 countries
Home To Our Talented Team

95+
Countries Have Daily Active Users In Warmy