

# THE MEDIA MIX

Integrating Mail to Influence Voters



# THREE BILLION PIECES OF POLITICAL MAIL

were delivered to voters across the United States during the 2018 midterm election cycle.

Designed and targeted to reach voters in every corner of the United States, political mail impacted decisions made about elected officials and ballot measures at all levels.

Spending for political mail campaigns reached a record high of \$573 million during the 2018 midterm election cycle. That's an increase of 42 percent over the 2014 midterm election cycle and 11 percent more than in the 2016 presidential election cycle.<sup>1</sup>

The 2018 midterm elections broke the record for the most expensive congressional midterm election to date. In response, the United States Postal Service® commissioned a survey of Florida and Ohio voters to understand how campaigns communicated with voters and better understand best practices in political mail.

The survey assessed how mail performed in an increasingly crowded political advertising environment and what role it played in the media mix.

Here, we share valuable insights gleaned from the recently completed 2018 midterm elections survey. We highlight the memorability of the Mail Moment® experience, explain why mail integration is critical, show that mail remains credible in an age of unprecedented skepticism, and illustrate how mail is particularly effective with women, minority and Millennial voters.

## WHY FLORIDA AND OHIO?

The Postal Service™ surveyed voters in these states because they featured especially competitive races in the 2018 midterm elections and will likely act as battleground states in the 2020 presidential election cycle. From November 6th through the 11th, immediately following the 2018 midterm elections, 821 Florida voters and 803 Ohio voters were surveyed. The results were weighted to exit poll data.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> USPS Internal Data.

<sup>2</sup> Conducted by Summit Research on behalf of the Postal Service™. The sample sizes in each state were selected in order to provide a robust data set and the ability to examine subgroups within the voter population. The survey results were weighted according to the 2018 Exit Poll data to ensure the sample matched the actual voter population in each state by gender, age, ethnicity, and education.

# THE MEMORABLE MAIL MOMENT<sup>®</sup> EXPERIENCE

When consumers open their mailboxes and sort through their mail, it's a unique event we call the Mail Moment<sup>®</sup> experience. It defines how people perceive and are influenced by their mail from the moment they see it.

Direct mail leverages existing mailbox habits and reaches voters where they live and are receptive to absorbing information about candidates and campaigns. Surveyed voters reported being inundated with information. Meanwhile mail stood out as memorable.

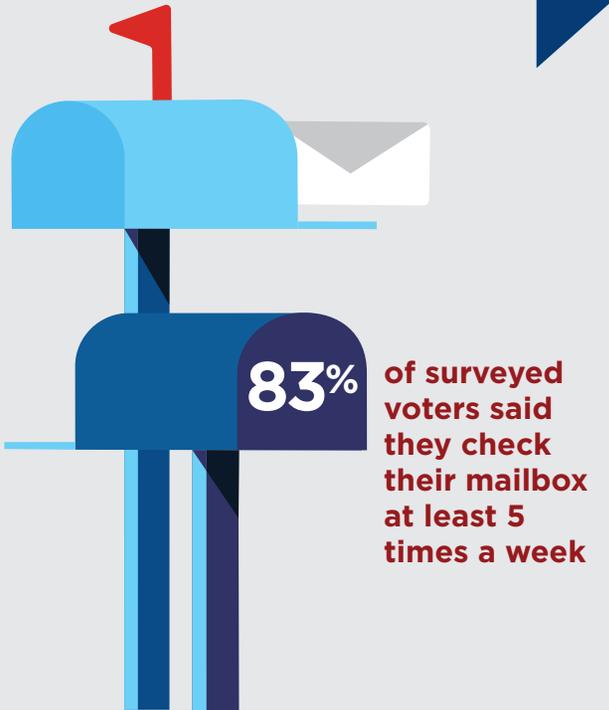
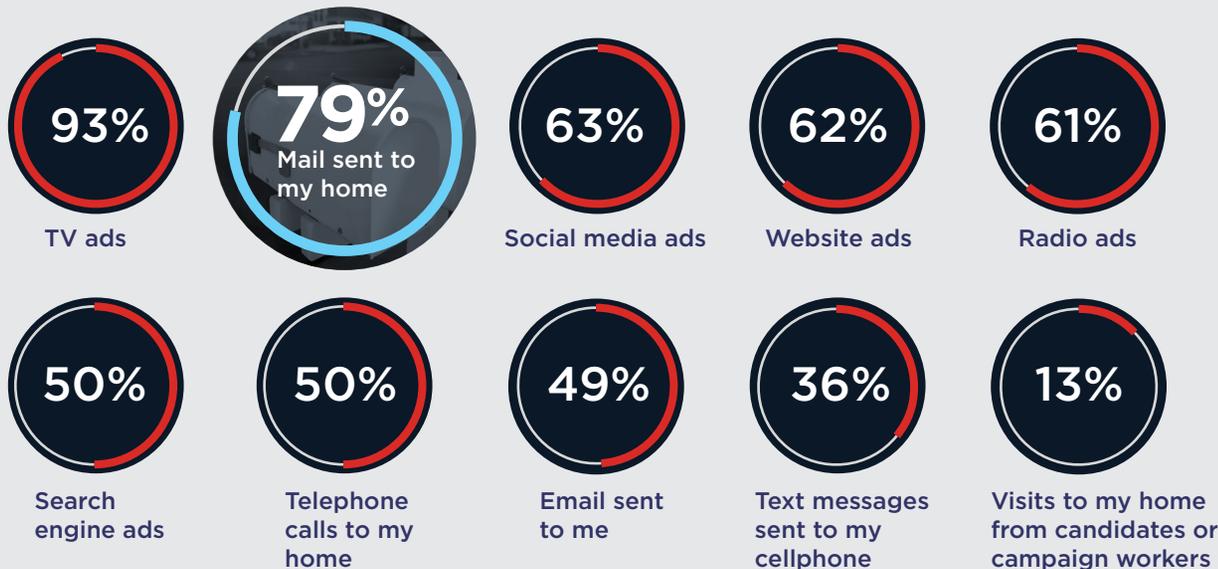
The survey reveals that mail leaves voters with a memorable impression. In fact, 79 percent of voters recall receiving political mail daily or weekly – second only to TV (93 percent) and over ten percent higher than all digital formats. As a result, we are confident concluding the following: **the Mail Moment<sup>®</sup> experience leaves a memorable impression on voters.**

Nearly half of the voters surveyed (47 percent) agreed that political mail was

“THE MOST MEMORABLE FORM OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING I RECEIVED DURING THE MIDTERM ELECTIONS.”

## During this fall election season (2018), how often did you see, hear, or receive political advertising from the following sources?

Percentage answering “At least daily/At least weekly”:



All data from the Summit Research post-election survey on behalf of the Postal Service<sup>™</sup> among 821 actual Florida voters and 803 actual Ohio voters, conducted immediately following the midterm elections (November 6-11, 2018).

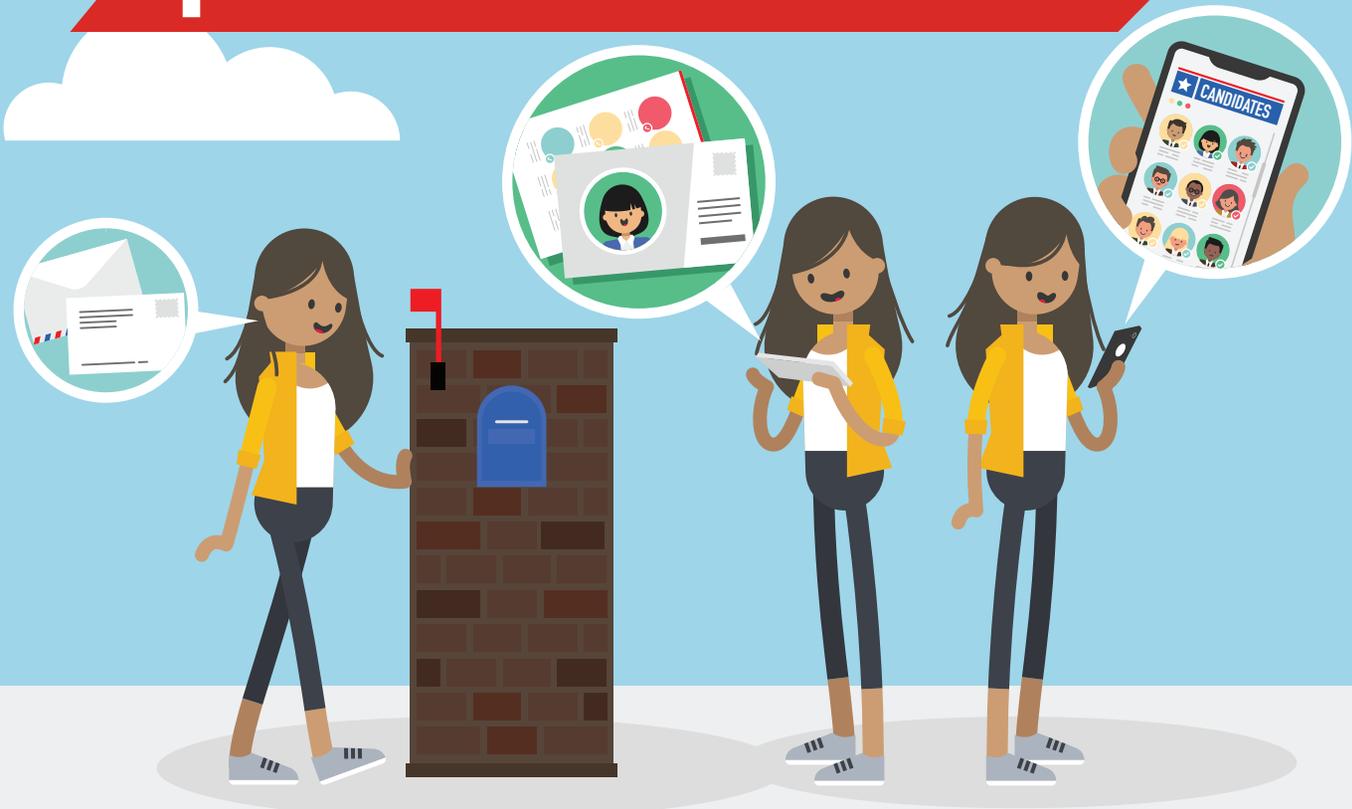
# MAIL DRIVES ACTION

Contact with voters combines different outreach tactics to generate specific actions – fundraising, volunteering, educating, persuading, and, of course, voting.

Mail is the foundation for any campaign. Going to the mailbox is a routine, well-established behavior for most Americans. But mail is not only a powerful political communications tool in its own right; it also enhances the impact of the rest of the media mix. For example, it motivates voters to go online and reinforces the impact of TV.

Mail continues to play a major role in getting-out-the-vote, but it's also influential during every phase of the campaign, from introduction to persuasion to voting decision.

## 4 STAGES OF MAIL INTEGRATION AS SEEN IN THE SURVEY:



### INTRODUCTION

**72%** of surveyed voters said that mail increased their awareness of which candidates were running

**66%** of surveyed voters said that mail was a helpful starting point to learn about a candidate and their positions

**46%** of surveyed voters say if they got mail from a political organization with information about candidates or ballot issues they would read it upon seeing it

### PERSUASION

**53%** of surveyed voters rated mail as one of the top three most persuasive political advertising techniques

**60%** of surveyed voters said that mail made them a more informed voter

**34%** of surveyed voters said they are likely to read political mail that contrasts with the candidate's opponent on the issues



### VOTING DECISION

**47%** of surveyed voters said that political mail had an impact on their voting decision



### GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

**77%** of surveyed voters found mail to be a helpful source for deadlines for registering to vote or early voting



## MAIL HEIGHTENS THE MEDIA MIX

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about political advertising you received in the mail?

Percentage saying "Strongly" or "Somewhat Agree":

Reinforce the television ads they've seen in support of and/or in opposition to a candidate.

**56%**



Search online for more information about the campaign.

**50%**

# MAIL DELIVERS CREDIBILITY IN AN AGE OF UNPRECEDENTED SKEPTICISM

In today's highly competitive media environment, communication sources are coming under heavy scrutiny. We have entered an age of unprecedented skepticism. In the era of "fake news," it is paramount for campaigns to ensure that they are sending their messages out to voters through a credible source.

When asked to rank the credibility of political advertising techniques, more than half (57 percent) chose direct mail as the most credible.

## Please rank the top three political advertising techniques that you find the most credible.

Percentage top 3 choice:



**These results are similar to those from the Postal Service's™ 2017 Virginia Gubernatorial Election survey, where two-thirds of Virginia voters said that direct mail was the most credible form of political outreach during the election.**

Summit Research post-election survey on behalf of the Postal Service™ among 900 actual Virginia voters, conducted immediately following the gubernatorial election (November 7-9, 2017).

# MAIL'S IMPACT ON WOMEN, MINORITIES AND MILLENNIALS

Surveyed voters reveal how direct mail is particularly effective with women, minorities, and younger voters. These findings demonstrate that crafting your message to target certain demographics is important.

## BIG INSIGHTS



**1** Female voters were more likely than male voters to say that mail increased their awareness of which candidates were running and drove them to search online for information about the campaign.



**2** African American and Hispanic voters were more likely than White voters to find mail credible and impactful.



**3** Younger voters highly value mail to inform their voting decisions.

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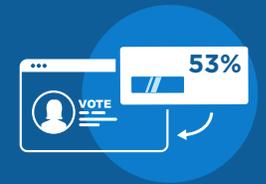
## THREE VOTER PROFILES

### Women Voters



**75%** said political mail increased their awareness of which candidates were running.

More than half (53%) of women said that mail drove them to **search online for more information** about the campaign.

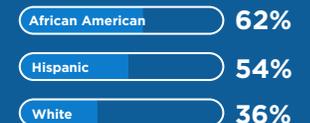


### African American and Hispanic Voters



68% of African American voters and 61% of Hispanic voters called mail a **credible source**, compared with 43% of White voters.

62% of African American voters and 54% of Hispanic voters said that mail was **impactful on their voting decisions**, compared to 36% of White voters.



### Millennial Voters

**60%** said that mail was **impactful when making the voting decision**.

67% said mail drove them to **search online for more information** about the campaign, compared to 51% of Gen X and 46% of Boomers.





# ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



In an election season with campaign spending at a record high, mail sent to voters homes emerged as an extremely effective tool for campaigns. As the 2020 presidential election cycle approaches, we anticipate that the overall trend toward using direct mail will continue to increase.

As you prepare for your next campaign, talk with an expert at the Postal Service™ about the advantages of using political mail and how to capitalize on the insights gained from this research.

Whether you're interested in direct mail insights, mail piece design analysis, or operational support, the Postal Service is committed to helping you and your campaign.

For more information about the survey and how this research can help your campaign, please visit [www.deliverthewin.com/the-media-mix/](http://www.deliverthewin.com/the-media-mix/)

## IN ASSOCIATION WITH AAPC

Thanks to American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) for their participation in this study. Founded in 1969, the AAPC is a multi-partisan organization of political and public affairs professionals dedicated to improving democracy. It is the largest association of political and public affairs professionals in the world. AAPC members consist of political consultants, media consultants, pollsters, campaign managers, corporate public affairs officers, professors, fund-raisers, lobbyists, congressional staffers and vendors. Membership is open to everyone associated with politics from the local level to the White House.

For more information, visit [www.theaapc.org](http://www.theaapc.org)

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