

BUILDING TRUST WITH VOTERS

**In a Time of Heightened
Skepticism, New Research
Reveals Voters Still Trust
Political Mail**





CAPTURING VOTERS' ATTENTION

The general election is expected to be the dominant event in American politics for 2020. With projections of high voter turnout¹ and record-breaking campaign spending², it is also predicted that this election cycle will continue to see a trend of increased use of political mail, according to internal USPS® data.

The United States Postal Service commissioned a survey of 1,813 registered voters in Louisiana and Kentucky immediately following the 2019 general elections to better understand what drives voter decision-making.³ These states both featured highly competitive gubernatorial races with incumbent governors — one from each political party. The research provided valuable insights, including that trust and believability play an important role in campaign communications.

The research revealed voters want information they can trust is accurate and honest. The increasing skepticism by voters of mass media

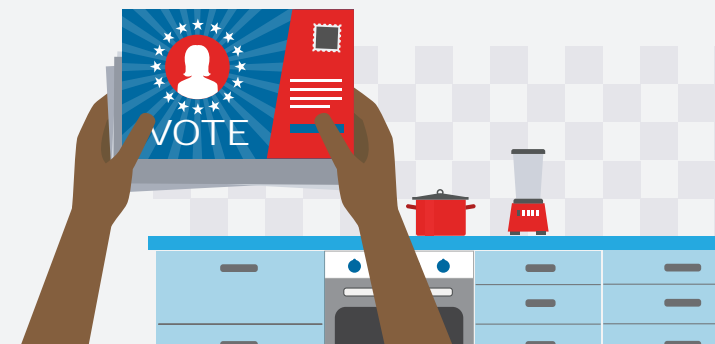
organizations⁴ makes political mail, now more than ever, an integral part of a winning campaign strategy. The research also highlighted voters are making up their minds earlier than in previous elections, which is supported by data on national increases in early and absentee voting as well as shifts in timing and frequency of political advertising.⁵

This survey, combined with additional voter research conducted in other states over the past four years, creates a valuable body of evidence to show how campaigns can most effectively capture voters' attention. The dynamic of high voter turnout, rising political spending, declining credibility in sources, and increased early decision-making in recent election cycles makes it essential for campaigns to understand voter motivations and leverage advertising channels with a proven record of successfully reaching voters.

TRUST, FACTS, AND BELIEVABILITY ALL RANK HIGH WITH MAIL

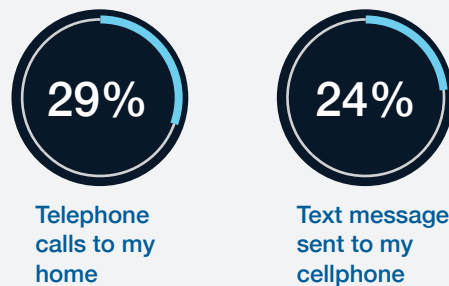
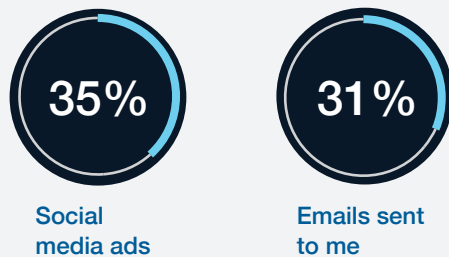
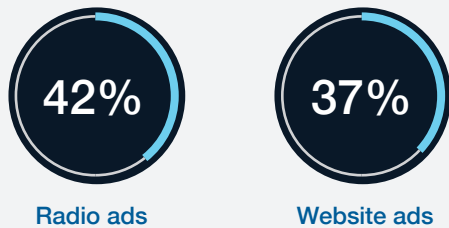
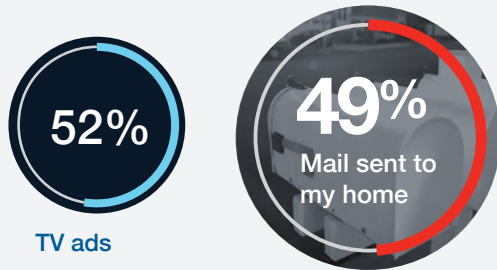
In this very polarized political climate, it seems as though voter skepticism and mistrust are at an all-time high.

However, in several of the survey questions, voters doubled down on their trust in political mail. Nearly half of surveyed voters considered the claims in political mail to be very or somewhat factual — just behind TV and, notably, higher than all forms of digital marketing and communications.



How factual do you find the claims in each of the following types of political advertising?

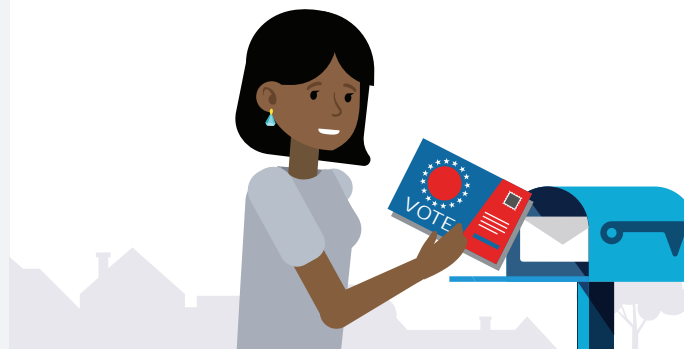
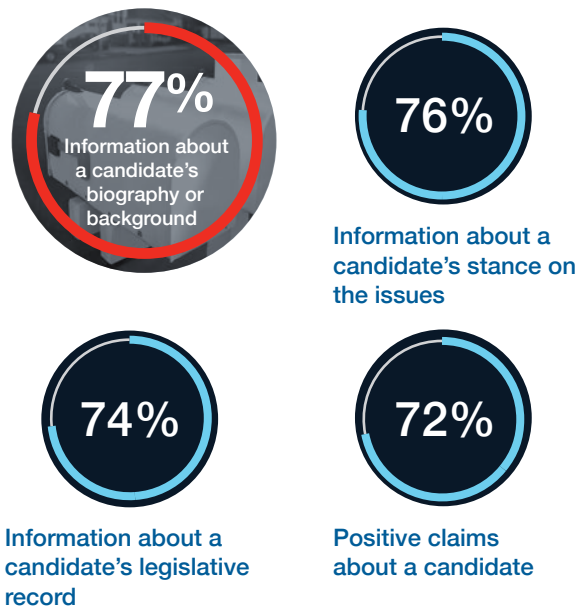
Very/Somewhat Factual Summary



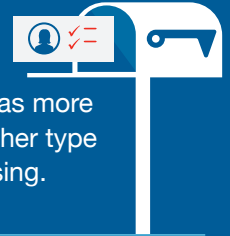
More than 7 in 10 surveyed voters revealed they would trust mail about a candidate's biography, stance on the issues, and legislative record.

For each of the following types of political advertising content, please indicate how much you would trust the accuracy of that content if you read it in mail sent to your home.

Strongly/Somewhat Trust Summary



When registered voters were asked about Political Mail specifically...



58% agreed it was more factual than any other type of political advertising.

73% said it was very or somewhat easy to determine the source of the content.

49% said mail received at home was very or somewhat believable, rating statistically second only to TV at 52% believable.

African American and Gen Z voters rate mail very or somewhat believable, while Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation call mail the most believable medium.

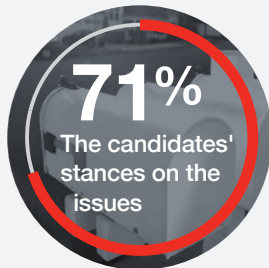
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMPAIGNS

Voters want information they can feel confident is accurate and honest. This research overwhelmingly finds that mail consistently delivers believable, factual information voters can trust.

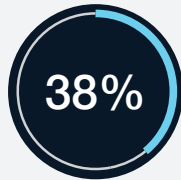
STANCES ON ISSUES MATTER MOST

Voters want to appear thoughtful, logical and fair. As such, it's no surprise that they say the most important factor to them when voting is the candidate's stance on the issues. Likewise, they are somewhat reticent to admit that political party affiliation or general candidate likability plays in their decision making, both of which have been proven to have a significant impact on election outcomes.

When making your decisions about who to vote for, which three of the following are most important to you?



How much I trust the candidates

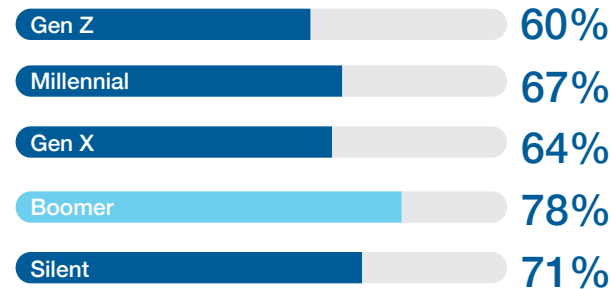


The candidates' political party affiliation

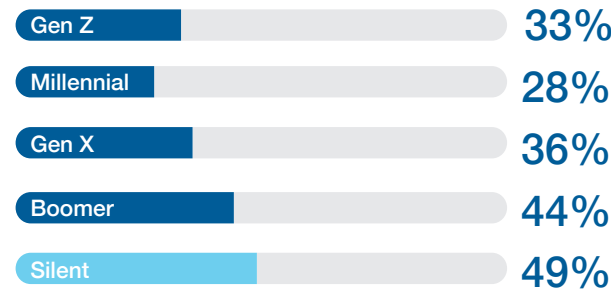
Voters who made up their minds early about who to support were more likely than late deciders to say that a candidate's position on the issues mattered and also more likely to admit the role of political party.

Most Important Factors in Deciding Vote

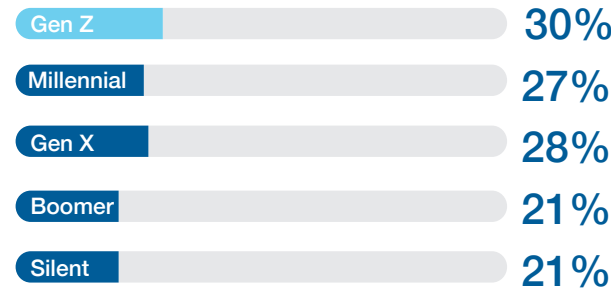
Candidates' stances on issues



Political party

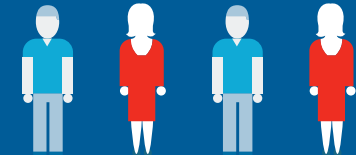


Candidate likability



Baby Boomers were most likely to say issues mattered the most and were among those most likely to admit that political party was important.

Younger voters were more likely to say they considered how much they liked the candidate.



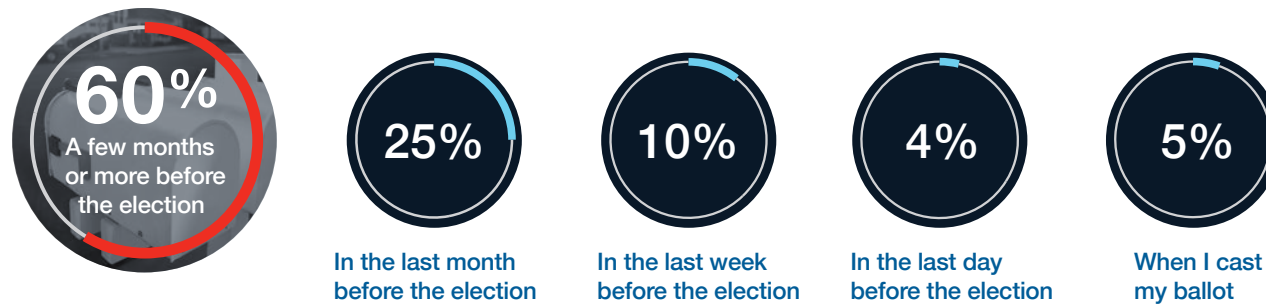
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMPAIGNS

Voters may portray themselves as more logical and deliberate about their voting choices than they really are, but their desire for information on where candidates stand on the issues is real. Research proves that mail is a particularly effective medium for delivering the content voters want and need to feel informed.

MORE VOTERS ARE DECIDING EARLY

Increasingly, registered voters are locking in their voting decisions early. Six in 10 surveyed voters reported making up their minds about who to support a few months or more before the election and a quarter made their decisions in the last month.⁶ By comparison, just 19 percent decided relatively late — in the last week up to the last minute before casting their ballots.

In thinking about this most recent election season, when did you make your decision about who to vote for?



When Voters Decided Who to Support

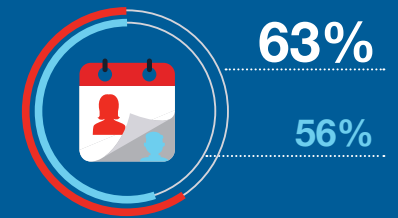
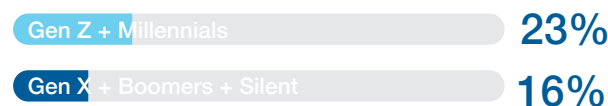
Few months or more



Last month



Last week or later



Women (63%) were more likely than men (56%) to solidify their voting decisions a few months or more before Election Day.



Gen X, Boomers, and Silent Generation (63%)⁷ are more likely than Gen Z and Millennials (52%) to make up their minds a few months or more before the election.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMPAIGNS

These findings make clear the importance for a campaign to get persuasive messages into the homes of voters early in the election cycle — and then again during the final weeks to sway the remaining undecided voters.

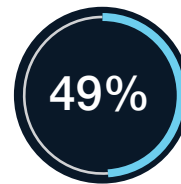
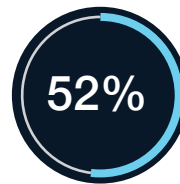
All data from the Summit Research post-election survey on behalf of the Postal Service™ among 1,813 actual voters in Kentucky and Louisiana, conducted immediately following the 2019 general elections.

POLITICAL MAIL REINFORCES OTHER POLITICAL ADVERTISING

Mail is an effective medium on its own, but it also delivers a strong reinforcement of other forms of political advertising. A majority of voters agreed that mail reinforced the ads they saw on TV and drove them to pay closer attention to those ads. Nearly half said mail led them to search online for more information.

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

Strongly/Somewhat Agree Summary



Gen Z, Millennial, and Gen X voters were more likely than older voters to acknowledge the power of mail in supplementing TV and online political messages.



71% of surveyed voters say political mail helps them learn about political candidates and their positions on issues.

Mail drives voter interaction, with 47% of surveyed voters immediately reading mail upon seeing it.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMPAIGNS

Most campaigns know that a mix of media is best. This research reinforces that mail should be in that mix to make TV and online spending more effective.



HOW MAIL DELIVERS THE WIN TO CAMPAIGNS



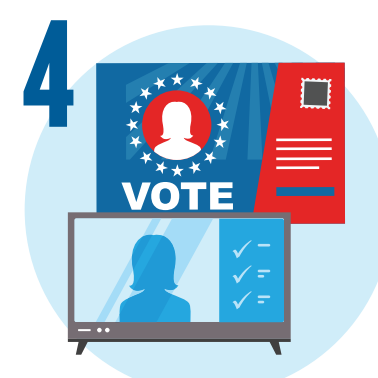
Voters want campaign advertising to be accurate and honest. The research confirms that voters view mail as factual, believable and transparent.



Voters want information about where candidates stand on issues important to them. Mail plays an important role in helping voters feel informed on what they say matters most.



With early decision-making and increased early and absentee voting, campaigns should start mail programs earlier during the election cycle.



Using targeted mail as part of a broader media strategy will reinforce critical campaign messages in conjunction with TV, online and other advertising platforms.

1 United States Election Project, "Voter Turnout," electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data (Nov. 20, 2019). **2** Group M, "This Year Next Year: U.S. Media Forecasts," groupm.com/news/year-next-year-us-media-forecasts-0 (Dec. 3, 2019). **3** Summit Research post-election survey of 1,813 voters in Kentucky and Louisiana, conducted online on behalf of the Postal Service®. The sample sizes in each state were selected to provide a robust data set and the ability to examine subgroups within the voter population. The Kentucky survey was fielded Nov. 5-10, 2019, immediately following the Nov. 5 elections. The Louisiana survey was fielded Nov. 16-21, 2019, immediately following the Nov. 16 elections. The survey results were weighted according to 2019 exit poll data, to ensure the sample matched the actual voter population in each state by gender, age, ethnicity, and education. **4** Jeff Jones and Lydia Saad, "Gallup Poll Social Series: Governance," Gallup News Service (Sept. 3-15, 2019). **5** United States Election Project, "2018 November General Election Early Voting," electproject.org/early_2018 (Nov. 6, 2018). **6** Because voters had the opportunity to vote in several races and may have made up their minds about who to vote for at different times, they were permitted to select multiple responses, meaning the totals add up to more than 100 percent. Combined 83 percent of voters selected "a few months or more" and/or "in the last month" before the election. Combined 19 percent of voters selected "in the last week," "in the last day," or "when I cast my ballot." **7** The generations were defined using the Pew Research Center's definitions based on voters' ages in 2019. Generation Z = 18-22 (n=98); Millennials = 23-38 (n=367); Generation X = 39-54 (n=421); Baby Boomers = 55-73 (n=832); Silent Generation = 73+ (n=95).



GET IN TOUCH

The Postal Service has specialists available to help campaigns capitalize on their direct mail outreach with voters. 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.

To find out more,
visit us at:

[DeliverTheWin.com](https://www.usps.com/DeliverTheWin)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH AAPC

Thanks to the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) for participating 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 include political consultants, media consultants, pollsters, campaign managers, corporate public affairs officers, professors, fund-raisers, lobbyists, congressional staffers and vendors. Membership is open to anyone associated with politics from the local level to the White House.

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