

MAIL MATTERS MORE THAN EVER.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL MAIL IN A COVID-DISRUPTED
WORLD. A REPORT FOR MARKETERS AND BUSINESSES.



Royal Mail

MarketReach

A stack of envelopes and a card with a table of contents. The card is white and placed on top of several envelopes, including two white ones and one brown one. The background is a solid blue color.

CONTENTS

1. Foreword from Sue Unerman
2. Why this research now?
3. Research overview & the implications for mail
4. Useful data
5. Making mail is easy

A COVID- DISRUPTED WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Marketing effectiveness is always important – during difficult times, it's crucial. Even as vaccinations take effect, challenges and questions remain for all of us.

Almost every business has had to rethink and retrench because of the pandemic. Most businesses are down on where they thought they'd be. The lucky few are ahead. But even they face greater pressure to demonstrate they offer genuine value to their customers. In 2020, things got very real, very quickly.

The rules of engagement have changed, in some ways permanently. No-one knows exactly what shape the future will take, so flexibility is going to be key. One thing is clear: home will continue to be a more important place for the foreseeable future, with far-reaching implications for media.

There's been a much-publicised shift to digital, but that's far from the whole picture. As the research outlined here shows, physical mail in its many forms has been a particularly effective channel in these unsettled times.

That might surprise some people, but we've always held that mail has a unique resonance, resilience and credibility. It plays a vital role in the marketing mix, and, as home has become a central part of the 'new normal', mail has demonstrated its continued value.

We're sure you will find the information in this guide useful.



FOREWORD

Back in October 2020 we marked our annual IPA EffWorks week in London – where we showcased all the wonderful new industry learning on effectiveness that we have developed through our unique cross-industry collaboration of senior brand marketers, agency leaders and media partners. It was also when we celebrated the IPA Effectiveness Awards and I was very proud to have been Convenor of Judges for these marketing Oscars.

Covid has not only intensified a focus on effectiveness and the evidence base of marketing ROI buy. It has also meant disruption to the media landscape and many of its channels – often changing their rules of engagement.

To further enhance and update our body of media effectiveness learning, I'm thrilled that one of our long-standing EffWorks partners, Royal Mail MarketReach, invested in one of their most extensive pieces of research ever during the initial lockdown in 2020 – on the changing role of this media landscape and of mail in particular.

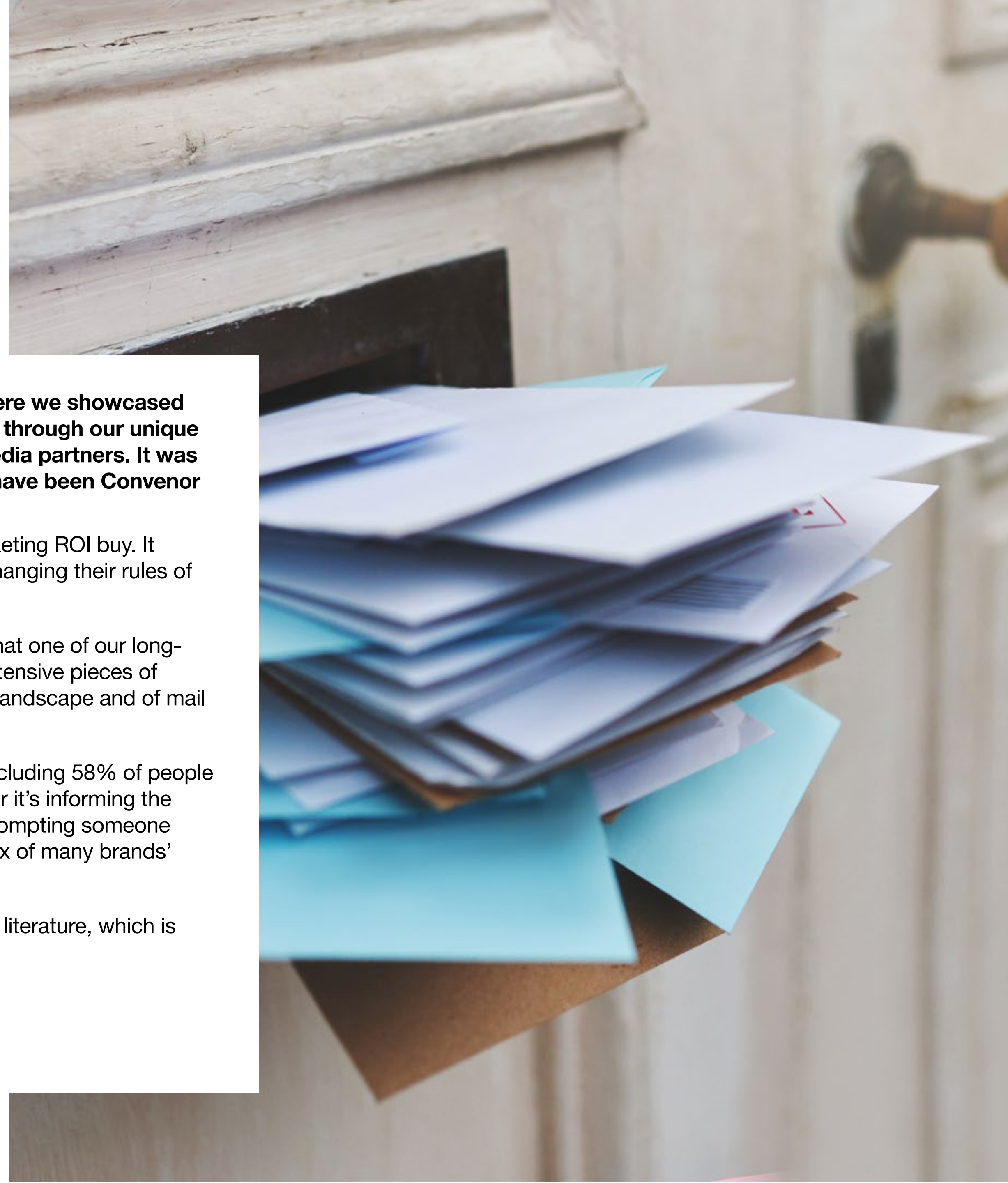
Significant increases in engagement with mail for those at home during lockdown – including 58% of people remembering the Prime Minister's letter – is just one of the important findings. Whether it's informing the populace to stay home, reminding someone to get their cat's annual vaccination or prompting someone to go online to buy something useful, mail continues to play a key role in the media mix of many brands' marketing and operations today.

I hope you enjoy the read. I am sure it will add to our collective canon of effectiveness literature, which is needed now more than ever.

Sue Unerman

Chief Transformation Officer – MediaCom

Convener of Judges – IPA Effectiveness Awards 2020





WHY THIS RESEARCH NOW?

The way we lived before March 2020 already seems like a distant memory. Covid-19 has impacted all our lives in so many ways, and will continue to do so for some time. The ‘new normal’ is now simply ‘the normal’.

The media landscape shifted dramatically last year. The main change was clear – more people spent a lot more time at home. Out of home and cinema both suffered, and whilst there was an expected shift online, phrases like ‘digital burnout’ indicated that this rapid move towards screens was not universally welcomed.

As a media owner we wanted to understand the impact of these far-reaching lifestyle changes on consumer behaviour – and the effects that had on businesses, brands and agencies.

This report reveals the impact and implications of Covid-19 on the media landscape and attitudes towards physical mail.

Over the following pages we present the highlights, the key information that we’ve learned, and what it all means for your business.

NEW RESEARCH

The evidence in this report is drawn from two main sources.

- JICMAIL (Joint Industry Committee for Mail) delivers industry-standard audience measurement data for mail and door drops. The research covers April - June 2020 and pre-lockdown from 2018.
- We commissioned qualitative and quantitative research conducted by Trinity McQueen covering both business decision makers and consumer audiences. As well as the initial lockdown, the data covers the period prior to lockdown and the various stages of easing.

A TIME OF INTENSE CHANGE



You won't need this research to tell you about what's been going on.

Half of the people¹ we spoke to plan to spend more time at home during the pandemic and with new restrictions this is likely to increase. Everyone has felt the impact of the pandemic: health (both physical and mental), education and finances have taken considerable hits. On the flip-side, people have taken the opportunity to spend more time with family, and on self-improvement. Many of us have reassessed our options and priorities. It hasn't all been gloom.

TRENDS AMPLIFIED

Trends have moved faster. Behaviours have become more intense. The most obvious of these is the digitisation of everything. Witness the rise of video conferencing. Or the shift away from cash.

Yes, the online retail giants have grown even bigger. But many smaller, previously offline businesses, have also been able to survive, adapt and flourish.

RETENTION FOCUS

As expanded on in a report by Gartner recently, the Covid-19 crisis has shifted CMOs' focus from customer acquisition to customer retention and loyalty². According to our commissioned research, around 60%¹ of marketers have identified these areas as business priorities going forward. Marketing leaders also say that in the event of an economic downturn spend on customer data platforms is among the least likely to be cut.

ANXIOUS TIMES

For many businesses, these are tough times with tough decisions. Unsurprisingly, marketing budgets are under keen scrutiny. And there is pressure to make more use of digital channels. They're perceived as more targeted, more easily demonstrable in their impact, faster, and cheaper. For many they are the conclusion, regardless of the question.

CONSUMERS CRAVE REAL, TANGIBLE AND 'HUMAN' INTERACTION.

What's powering digitisation is really a desire for measurable return. Every business wants answers to the same question: what are we going to get back for each pound we spend?

However, the limits of digital channels are becoming clearer: 2 in 5 people¹ have reported suffering digital burnout. Consumers crave real, tangible and 'human' interaction³.

THINKING LONG-TERM

It's often too easy to focus on the allure of short-term ROI and efficiency rather than the potential greater profit that could be achieved by focusing on longer-term effectiveness.

But effectiveness is where mail can really deliver. Business decision makers from our research recognise the value of using mail and intend to increase spend.

Source: ¹ Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020 ² Gartner Annual CMO Spend Survey 2020

³ Deloitte 2021 Global Marketing Trends

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOME

A lot of us have had to spend a lot of time at home recently.

It's forced us to re-evaluate; to focus on what's really important to us. We're back at home and the value of a home is back.

ESTABLISHING ROUTINES

During the first lockdown, people liked to find some kind of routine. Getting dressed for work (at least from the waist up), maintaining regular meal times and taking time to exercise have all helped people keep hold of reality. Mail is part of this routine. People have their own rituals about processing their post, but our research has highlighted the widespread appreciation for the rhythm of the postie's arrival and the reassuring thump of the mail onto the floor.

SWITCHING OFF

Suddenly having to work, study and connect to people from home has compounded the intensity of the pandemic for many. And there is evidence that there has been a reaction against living our lives through a device, a trend that pre-dates the pandemic.

The research also shows that while too many messages from computers and phones can feel invasive and stressful, physical mail is often welcomed into the home like a good friend.

What arrives on the doormat is also inherently trusted. It feels as though a person has thought about it and invested time, effort and money in getting their message across. "It must be worth reading" was a common sentiment among respondents.

DOWN IN WRITING

Tellingly, when the government wanted to communicate and underline the importance of the initial lockdown, they chose to send a letter to every household.

And that effort was recognised.

One of the most startling findings from the research was the impact of that media choice.

It is remembered to a remarkable degree and demonstrably affected people's behaviour. By writing a letter, 66%¹ of people who recall receiving mail from the Government said it had an impact on their behaviour.

They were literally bringing the message home.

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCKDOWN, THEY CHOSE TO SEND A LETTER.

MORE OF THE SAME

Although everything seemed to change back in March 2020, it was also a time where familiar patterns reasserted themselves. People sought comfort in gardening and baking: domestic routines became important sources of meaning.

Public attitudes to mail during lockdown showed that behaviours and feelings towards mail were simply enhanced.

Source: ¹ Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020



THE CHANNEL FOR TODAY

As we've seen, the pandemic has amplified many existing behaviours. And that's true of the way people have responded to mail. Physical mail's ability to engage people and drive behaviour has increased noticeably.

JICMAIL data obtained during the initial lockdown allows us to relate data to other media channels and work out the impact of adding mail to the media mix.

MAIL IS ENHANCING ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS PATTERNS OF WORKING AND LIVING HAVE SHIFTED.

KEY TAKEOUTS

- Mail has got stronger on all the things we knew it to be good at. Media planners and buyers will be particularly interested in the frequency and reach that mail has delivered. The average item of mail is interacted with 4.5¹ times and reach is up 4%¹: both metrics are at their highest level ever.
- Mail is a valuable tool for the digital marketer. It has shown its value in driving online traffic, with a 70% YOY increase¹.
- Engagement with mail is higher than ever at 96%¹.
- It's not just older age-groups that are responding more to mail. The biggest rise in engagement with mail came from people aged 18 to 34² – potentially because of the relative novelty of receiving post.

Mail is proving its effectiveness as patterns of working and living have shifted. With more people at home than ever, mail matters more.

Source: ¹ JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020 ² Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020



MARKETING DURING THE NEW NORMAL

Most people spent a lot more time at home during the pandemic – and we are unlikely to suddenly return to old patterns of living and working. Home-working is now mainstream in all kinds of industries, something that would have been hard to imagine a couple of years ago.

As we continue to spend more time at home, mail's ability to reach and engage audiences offers huge potential for marketers. This is not just because mail provides tangibility in an increasingly saturated digital world. It's also because of its special place in people's hearts. In this new world of virtual meetings and video calls, print literally offers something to hold on to.

As a trusted and valued medium, it can drive behaviour both in terms of immediate response and also in terms of cut-through and the longer-term reinforcement of key messages. 50%¹ of respondents acknowledged the usefulness of mail – as a reminder to do something –

whilst 88%¹ reported paying as much or more attention to mail during lockdown.

ONLINE OPENINGS

Print also places a key role as a driver towards digital channels, a role that's set to become even more vital now that online shopping is now firmly established in everyday life. When primed by mail, people spent 30%² longer looking at social ads.

With the bricks-and-mortar retail sector facing ongoing challenges, window-shopping and browsing perhaps aren't the drivers to purchase they once were. Mail's tactile nature can provide a vital way to raise awareness and encourage consumers to get to know brands. While it will never replace the role of physical shopping, it can help fill some of the gaps left on the high street.

LONGER-TERM TRENDS POINT TO THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF MAIL.



LOOKING AHEAD

Thanks to widespread vaccination, life is returning to some kind of normal. But some of the trends that have been amplified by Covid-19 will continue – life will not simply go back to the way it was before. As we've seen, these longer-term trends point towards the continued relevance of mail.

In the medium-term, consumers are going to be more value-focused than before, given the unprecedented disruption and uncertainty we've all lived through. 40% of advertisers say customer demand for value is shaping their 2021 plans³. But value is complicated: it's about establishing and communicating worth rather than simply lowering prices. Given mail's role in brand-building and engagement, it has a key part to play in establishing a brand's genuine value and relevance in consumer's lives.

Mail has always mattered. It now matters more than ever.

Source: ¹ Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020. ² Royal Mail MarketReach, Neuro-Insight 2018
³ WARC, April 2021



PLEASE **USE** OUR DATA

If there's a time to work together, this is it.

On the next pages we've included key stats and useful content from the JICMAIL and Trinity McQueen research that supports the conclusions you've been reading.

Just one small request. If you quote this information, please attribute the source.

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

40%

OF PEOPLE **AGREE** OR **STRONGLY AGREE** THAT BEING IN LOCKDOWN MADE THEM REALISE **HOW IMPORTANT** MAIL WAS TO THEM. ONLY 20% DISAGREED.



88%

OF PEOPLE PAID THE **SAME** OR **MORE** ATTENTION TO MAIL DURING LOCKDOWN

1-IN-2

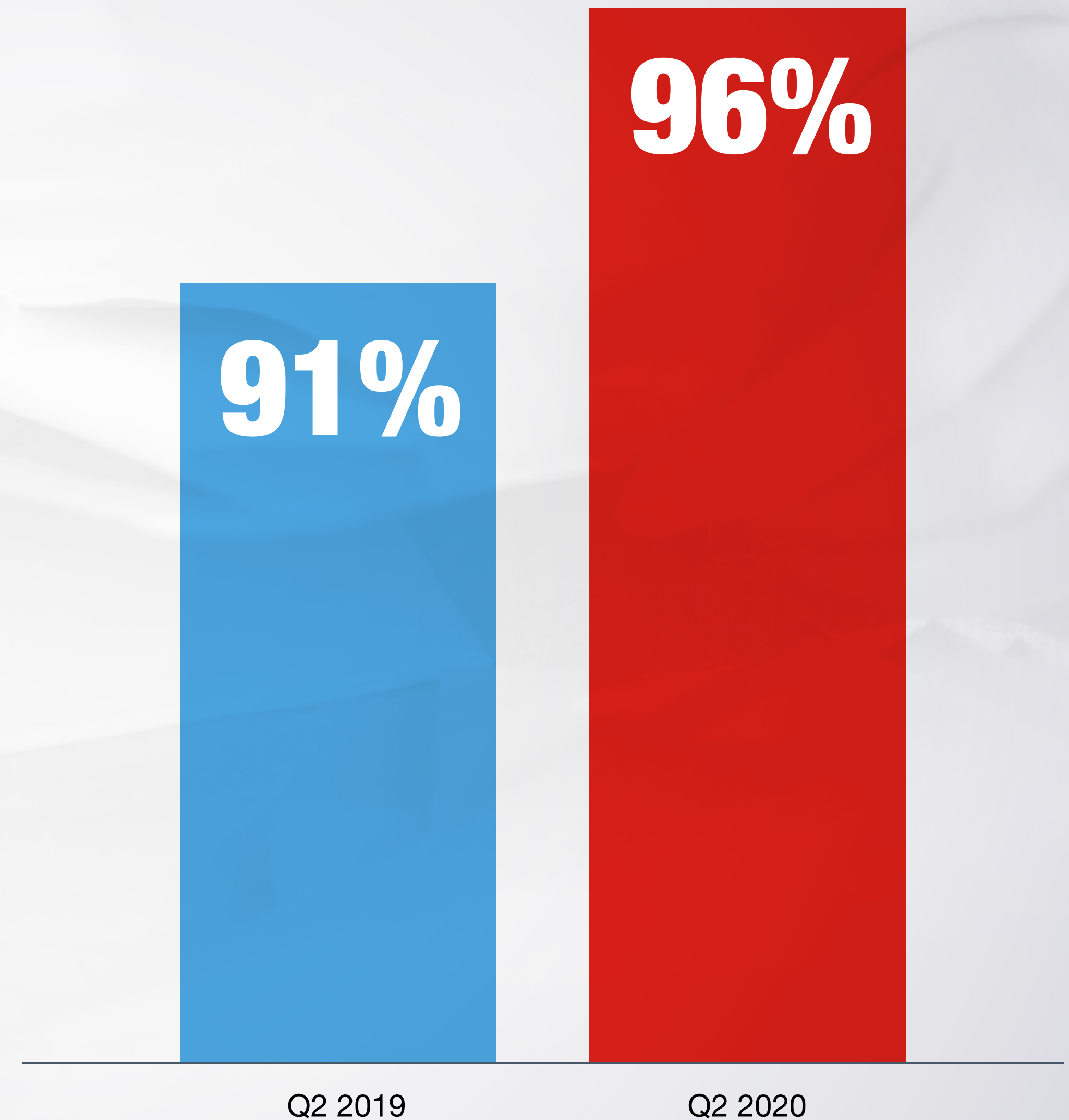
ACKNOWLEDGED THE **USEFULNESS OF MAIL** IN LOCKDOWN

24%

OF **18-TO-34** YEAR OLDS REPORTED **ENGAGING MORE** WITH MAIL

Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020.

**A RECORD
96% OF ALL
MAIL WAS
ENGAGED
WITH**



Source: JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020

MAIL IS THE **RIGHT CHOICE** WHEN IT REALLY **MATTERS**

72%

**7 IN 10 PEOPLE FELT
MAIL WAS THE RIGHT WAY
FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO
COMMUNICATE**

Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020

63%

**THOUGHT USING MAIL SHOWED
THE GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING
COVID-19 SERIOUSLY**

MAIL IS REMEMBERED

80%

REMEMBER A GOVERNMENT
MAILING. (4 IN 5 PEOPLE)



58%

RECALL THE “BORIS LETTER”



Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020

MAIL DELIVERS POSITIVITY AND TRUST

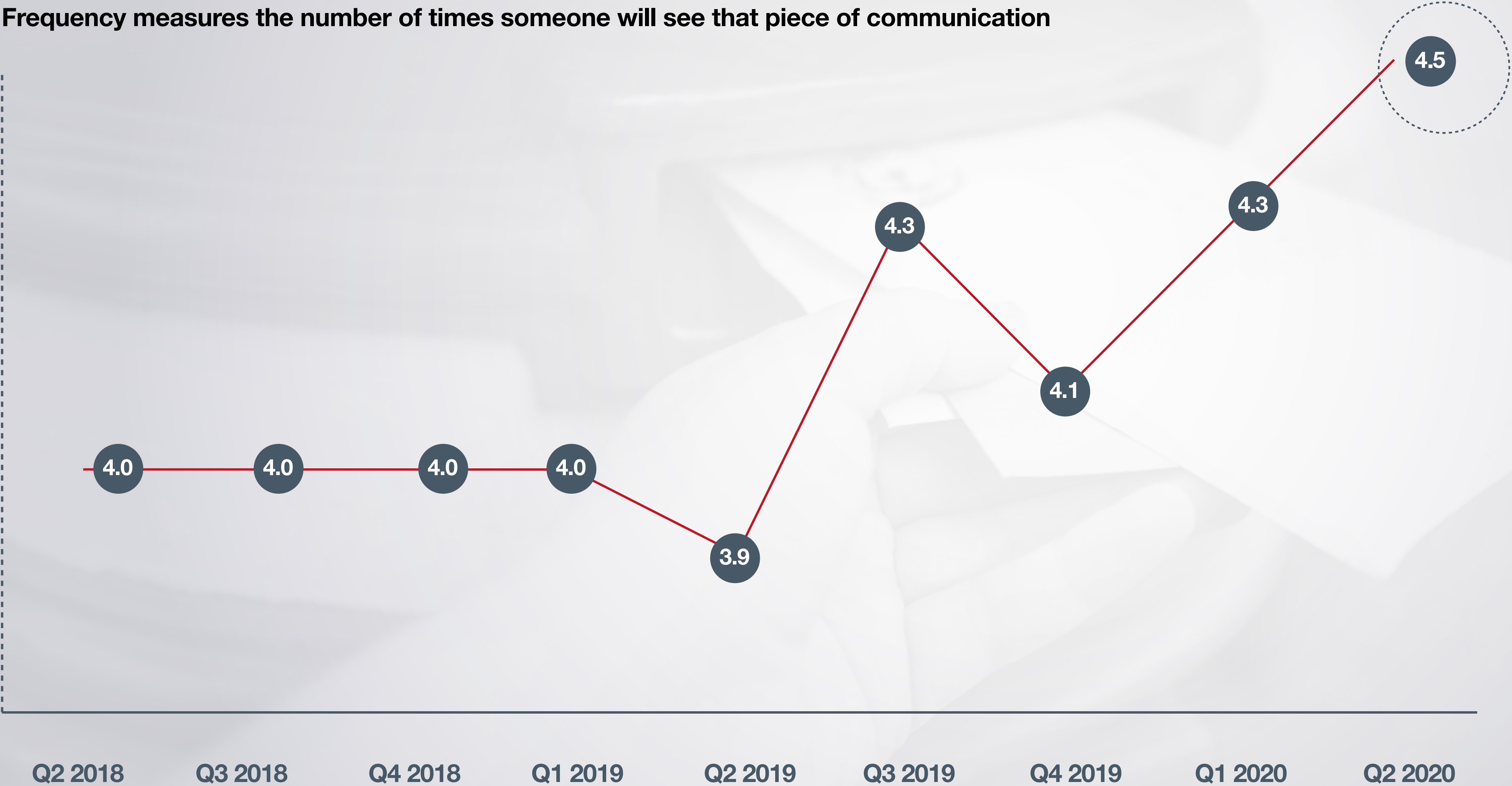
44%

**SAID THEY LOOKED FORWARD
TO RECEIVING MAIL DURING
LOCKDOWN, WITH 2 IN 5
ALSO EXPRESSING THAT THE
PERIOD REAFFIRMED THE
IMPORTANCE OF MAIL**

Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020

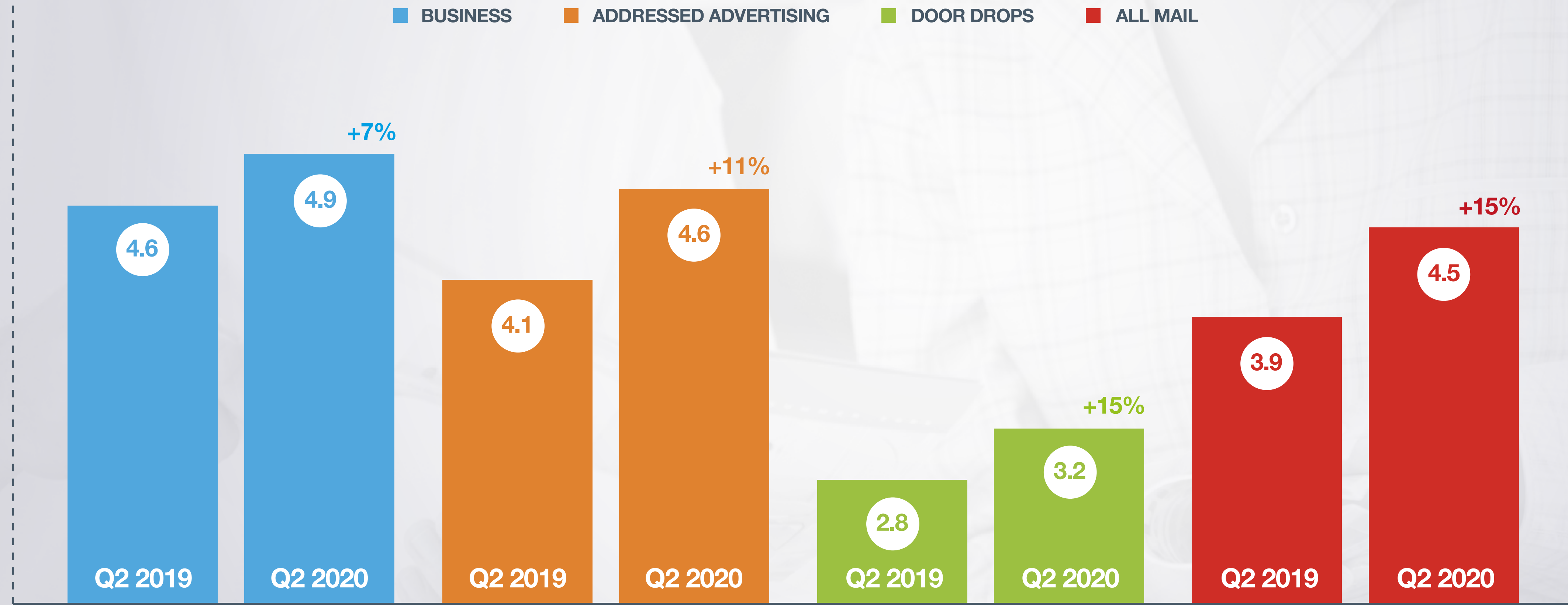
FREQUENCY OF EXPOSURE TO ALL MAIL IS AT ITS **HIGHEST LEVEL** IN RECENT HISTORY

Frequency measures the number of times someone will see that piece of communication



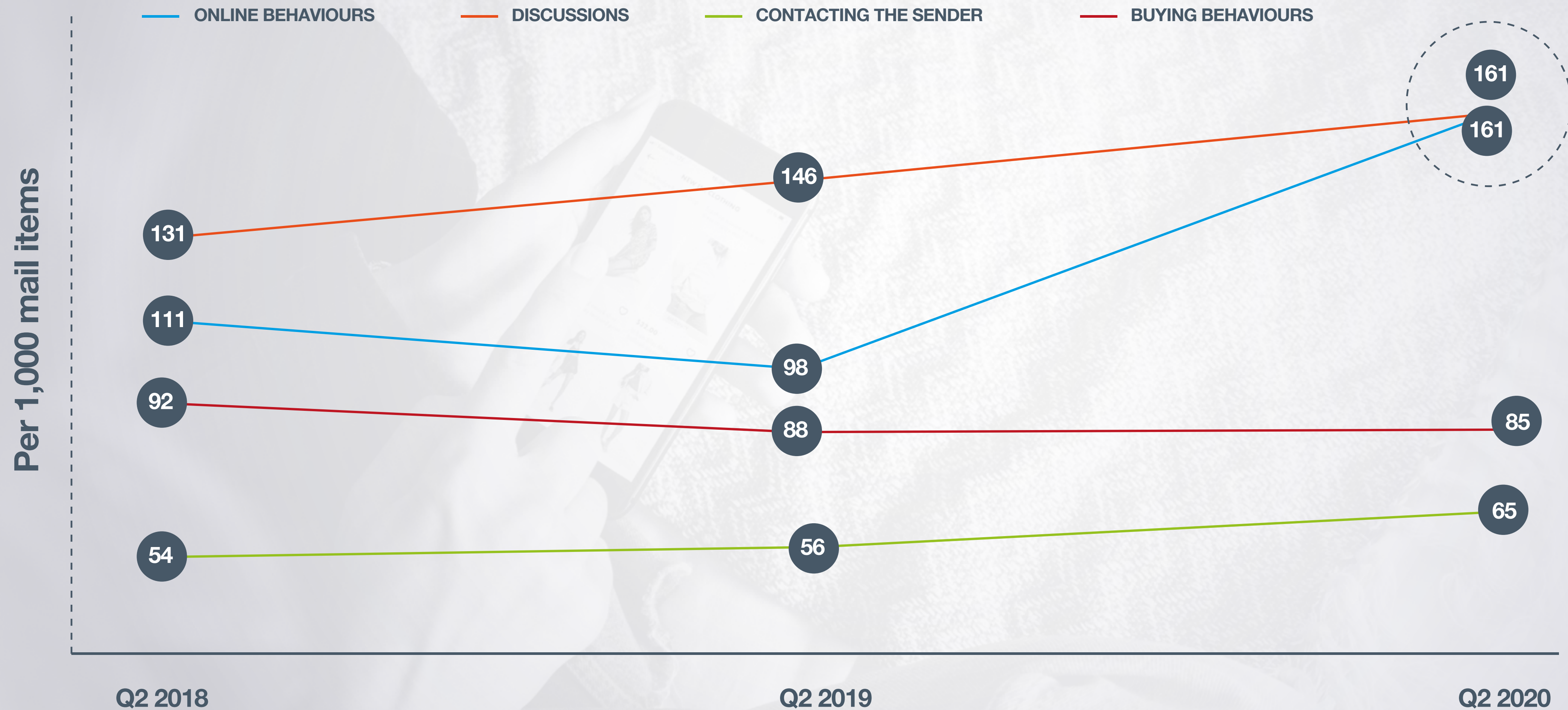
Source: JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020

HUGE GROWTH IN YOY INTERACTION WITH ALL MAIL TYPES, PARTICULARLY AD MAIL & DOOR DROPS



Source: JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020

AD MAIL ALSO HAD THE NUDGE FACTOR – SEEING A SIGNIFICANT **64% SHIFT** IN ONLINE BEHAVIOURS YOY



Source: JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020

MAKING MAIL IS EASY

Royal Mail has created a range of tools that make mail production and distribution simple and straightforward.

1. INTEGRATION WITH MARKETING AUTOMATION PLATFORMS

You may well already have the ability to easily create data files and even trigger offline communications based on online behaviour if you use one of the following platforms.

It's the holy grail for CRM marketers seeking the best ROI – a data driven, multi-channel, technology-based marketing ecosystem that delivers personalised and relevant content to their customers – when they want it and how they want it.

Some of the leading automation platforms to integrate with currently include: Salesforce, Oracle, Adobe & Iterable.

[MORE INFO](#)

2. HYBRID MAIL

Create, print and send with just a few clicks

Royal Mail Hybrid Mail is a fast and cost-effective digital mail solution. It enables you to easily send important customer correspondence such as service updates, bills, invoices and appointments directly from your desktop or laptop. You can do all this remotely, without the need to physically print or post. And you can save up to 46%¹ on traditional Business Mail.

Simply create and upload your templates online to ensure brand consistency, and we'll print and send them. It's a secure one-stop shop.

[MORE INFO](#)

3. PROGRAMMATIC MAIL

Help turn abandoned online baskets into sales

It's frustrating when prospective online customers abandon their journey. If the customer has given you contact permissions, you might be able to send a follow-up email to encourage them to return and complete the purchase.

Programmatic Mail uses the basket data to create personalised direct mail. Your potential customer can now hold a personalised discount voucher in their hands, with a picture of the item from their basket, within 24 to 48 hours.

It's no wonder this is so effective – your customer feels more valued, and is more likely to respond.

[MORE INFO](#)

4. ADMAILER

AdMailer has everything you need to generate and deliver powerful, data-driven direct mail campaigns. It can help you build a customer database and create artwork for leaflets, flyers and brochures. We'll handle printing – and will deliver through our trusted network at a time chosen by you.

[MORE INFO](#)

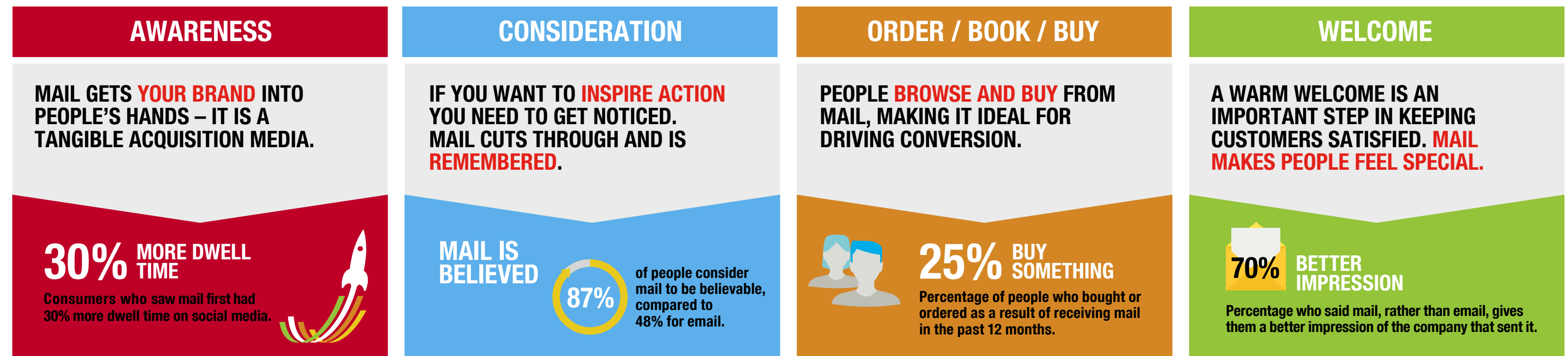
¹ Savings based on indicative example

MAIL CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE AT ALL STAGES OF THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Every media channel has its place in the customer journey and its own key role to play. TV, for instance, drives mass brand awareness, email is great for quick updates, while social media is good for further engagement.

Mail should be strategically integrated into the customer journey, working alongside other channels to deliver the maximum value.

ACQUISITION



IN-LIFE AND RETURN



Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Neuro-Insight, 2018. Royal Mail MarketReach, The Value of Mail in Uncertain Times, Kantar TNS, 2017. IPA Touchpoints, 2018. Royal Mail, Door drop entries, DMA Awards Meta Analysis, 2012-2016. JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020. Power of Print Catalogues, Illuminas 2017.

MAIL & EMAIL

Mail and email work on different levels, but in ways that complement each other. Email is ideal for delivering messages that have a short impact and lifespan. Mail has a longer-lasting impact and helps build a positive relationship between customer and brand.



CONTACT US

Royal Mail MarketReach supports business growth using mail.

Our dedicated specialists have a unique set of skills, tools and services to help you build your bottom line. And this support is completely free of charge.

For more information, please call us:

0808 239 3368

or visit marketreach.co.uk/MailNow