2024

The State of Direct Mail
Consumer Insights

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        A MINTEL COMPANY

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Welcome to our 2024 State of Direct Mail – Consumer Insights report. In partnership with Comperemedia, we surveyed 2,000 consumers to get their perspectives on direct mail relative to the other most common marketing channels.

The findings showcase just how much people appreciate having something physical in their hands, a reminder that in our digital age, the tangible still holds a special place.

There's a lot to be excited about, and still, as businesses, we have work ahead of us. More than ever before, consumers expect personalization, both in the mail and online. Our research shows that personalized direct mail leads to greater engagement with digital channels, fueling a truly omnichannel experience that's both memorable and effective. We need to be smart about our marketing mix — understanding the strengths of each channel and how they work together to create positive business outcomes.

The good news? We're no longer limited to the old ways of doing things. Marketers today have the technology and creativity to reinvent the mail and create more dynamic, engaging customer experiences. And with the right approach, direct mail can be your growth channel.

Happy mailing!

Ryan Ferrier, CEO

Methodology

2,000

US consumers age 18+

Respondents are nationally representative of age, gender, income, education, and region.

~50

Questions & follow-ups

Respondents answered an online survey with ~50 questions and open-ended follow-ups.

4

Sectors

Among other questions, respondents were asked a series of questions around their preferences and satisfaction related to direct mail and within four specific sectors:

Retail	Financial Services
Healthcare	Insurance

What's inside?

Key findings

01

Direct mail is a strong tool for customer and prospect engagement:

65% of respondents are likely to engage with mail from a brand they already have a relationship with. Direct mail is also the communication channel most often preferred for engaging with unfamiliar brands, particularly among older respondents.

02

Direct mail makes a quick impact:

Two-thirds of respondents read direct mail pieces on the same day they receive them, and 69% say they often or sometimes share direct mail with friends and family.

03

Direct makes omnichannel more effective:

Of respondents who have taken action from a direct mail piece in the past, 55% of respondents check the brand's website and 42% search for the product online.

Key findings

04

Personalization works — but it comes with privacy considerations:

63% of respondents are more likely to engage with direct mail if it is personalized. While personalization can lead to privacy concerns, 59% of our study's respondents were more concerned about seeing their personal information in digital advertisements than in direct mail advertisements.

05

Direct mail isn't saturated like other channels:

Only 23% of respondents reported that they receive direct mail pieces too frequently, far fewer than all other channels, including email (46%), digital ads (38%), and phone calls (34%). Additionally, 16% of respondents report that they don't receive enough direct mail.

06

Direct mail inspires action, especially with smart promotions and CTAs:

60% of respondents have taken action after receiving direct mail, and 78% of respondents are likely to open or read a direct mail piece with an offer or promotion.

Direct drives engagement and builds trust—*especially when paired with digital.*

Direct mail is an effective tool for both initiating conversations with new customers and maintaining ongoing relationships. 65% of respondents say they're likely to engage with direct mail from brands they already know. Although email engages customers, it isn't always trusted by them, and less than a quarter of respondents report that they would trust a brand that only reaches out digitally. This finding cements the potential for direct mail and digital marketing to work cohesively together to build trust and enable the success of an omnichannel strategy.

How likely are you to engage with the following type of communications from brands you have a relationship with?

BRANDS I HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH

■ 18-34   ■ 35-54   ■ 55+

DIRECT MAIL
- 67%
- 68%
- 58%

EMAIL
- 75%
- 74%
- 63%

SOCIAL MEDIA
- 45%
- 62%
- 59%
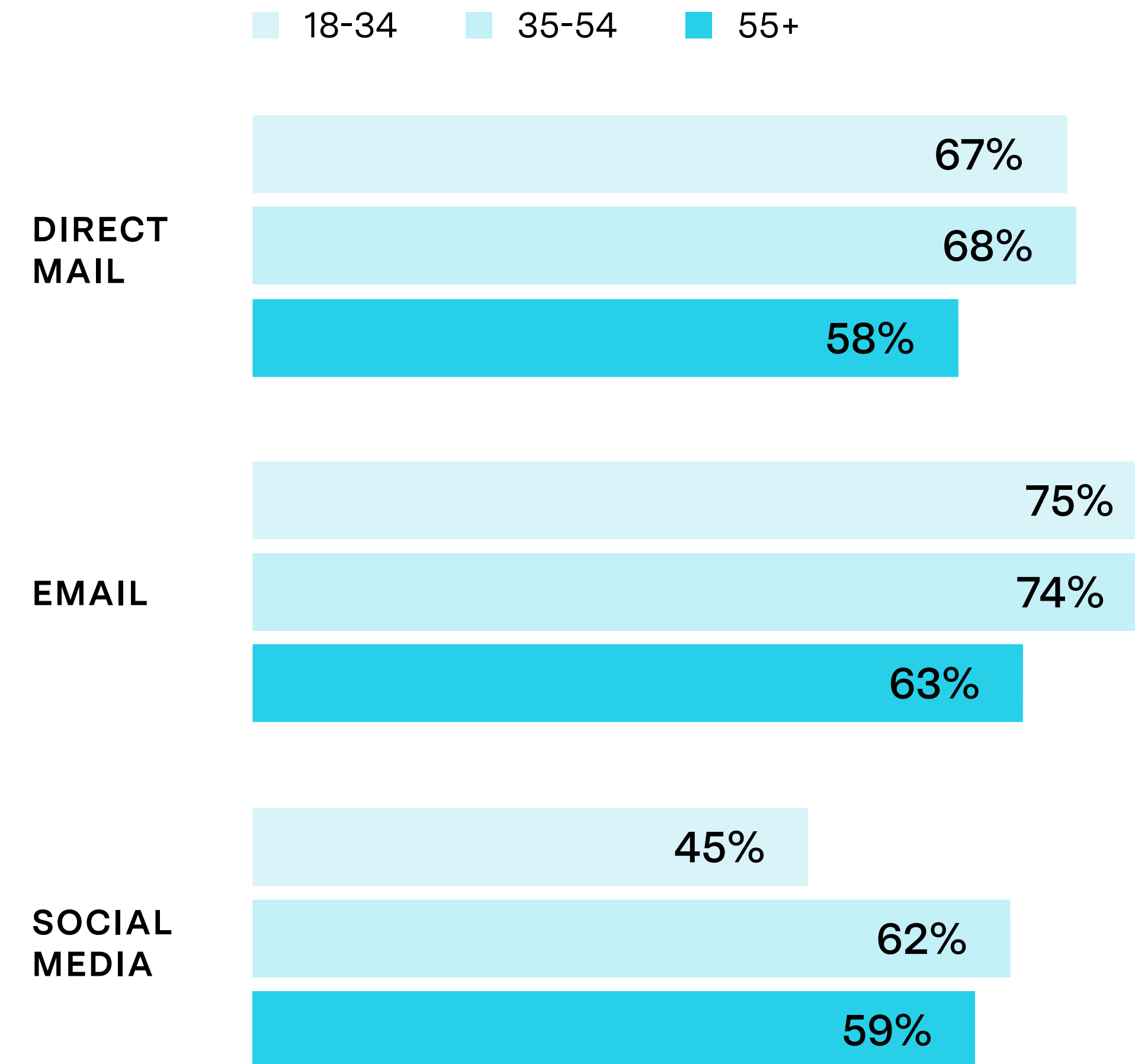
INSIGHTS

→ Less than a quarter of respondents are likely to trust a brand that only engages with them digitally.

→ Consumers over the age of 35 have the **most trust in direct mail from brands they have relationships with**, making it an especially critical channel for building relationships with this key buying group.

Which of the following types of communication (email, direct, text or social media) do you like to receive from brands you don't know?

BRANDS I DON'T KNOW

- Email
- Direct Mail
- Text Message
- Social Media Messages

Age	Email	Direct Mail	Text Message	Social Media Messages
18-34	40%	24%	13%	24%
35-54	37%	38%	6%	18%
55+	27%	59%	2%	12%
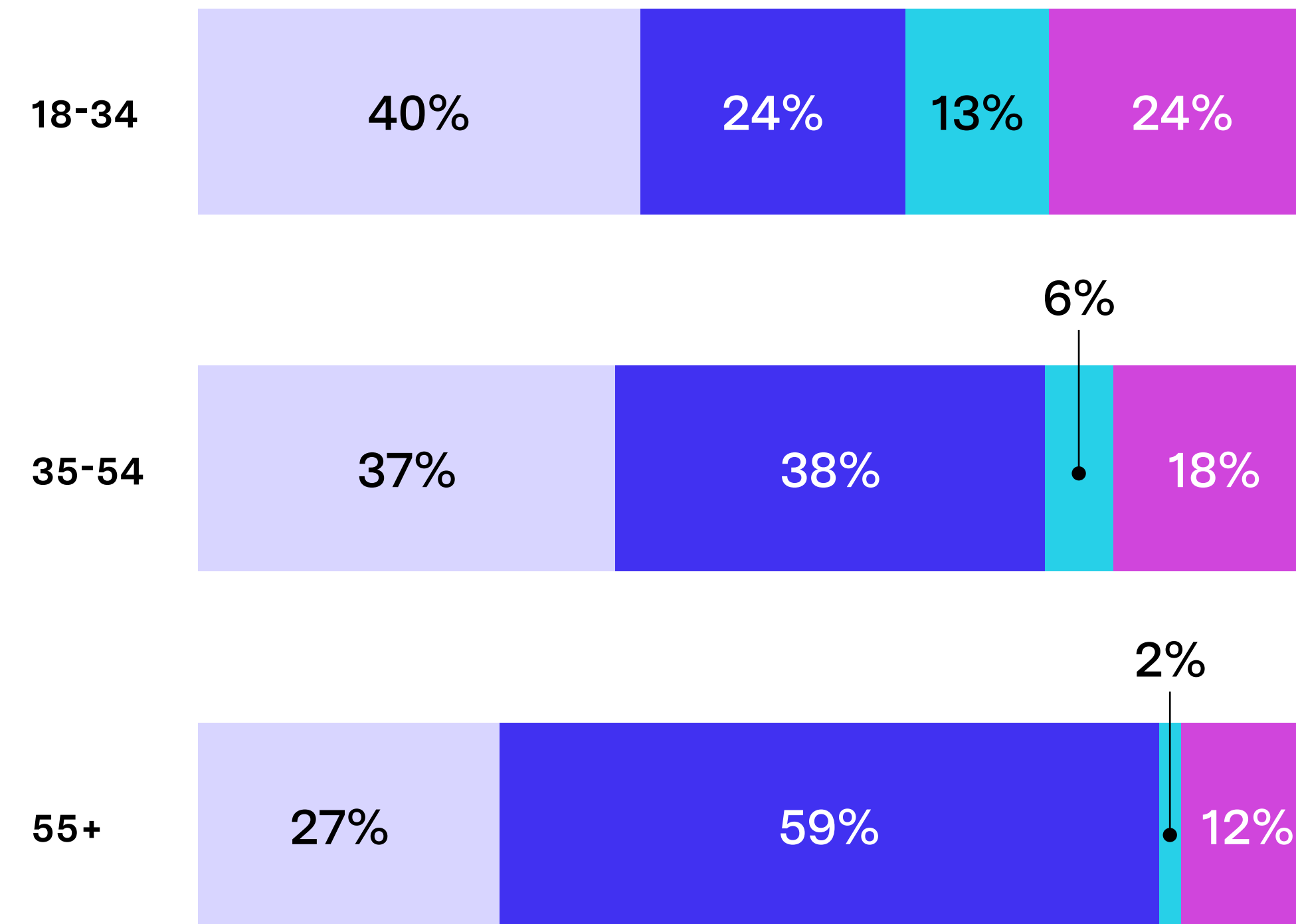
THE TANGIBLE TOUCH OF DIRECT MAIL

→ **51%** of respondents say direct mail is an important way for brands to build relationships with them.

→ **52%** of respondents say that receiving direct mail from a brand feels more important than receiving an email from a brand.

→ **Nearly half of respondents** say the tangibility of direct mail makes it feel more special than an email or digital ad.

→ **Direct mail can be a great first step** to building trust with consumers, and this brand awareness subsequently will make digital outreach more effective.

While consumers appreciate the tangibility of direct mail, *sustainability matters.*

Nearly three-quarters of respondents look for at least one of the following sustainability attributes in their direct mail pieces, suggesting it is an area of emerging interest for consumers.

While brands may be able to capture consumer interest by embracing sustainable direct mail practices, the sustainability space may need additional education for consumers to understand what to look for and how to evaluate the sustainability practices of direct mail providers.

Attribute	Percentage
Made with recycled paper	47%
Includes a version of the phrase "recycle me"	42%
Contains organic materials	26%
Uses sustainable materials (e.g., soy ink)	25%
Contains a third party sustainability certification	19%
None of the above	28%

PERSONALIZATION AND PRIVACY
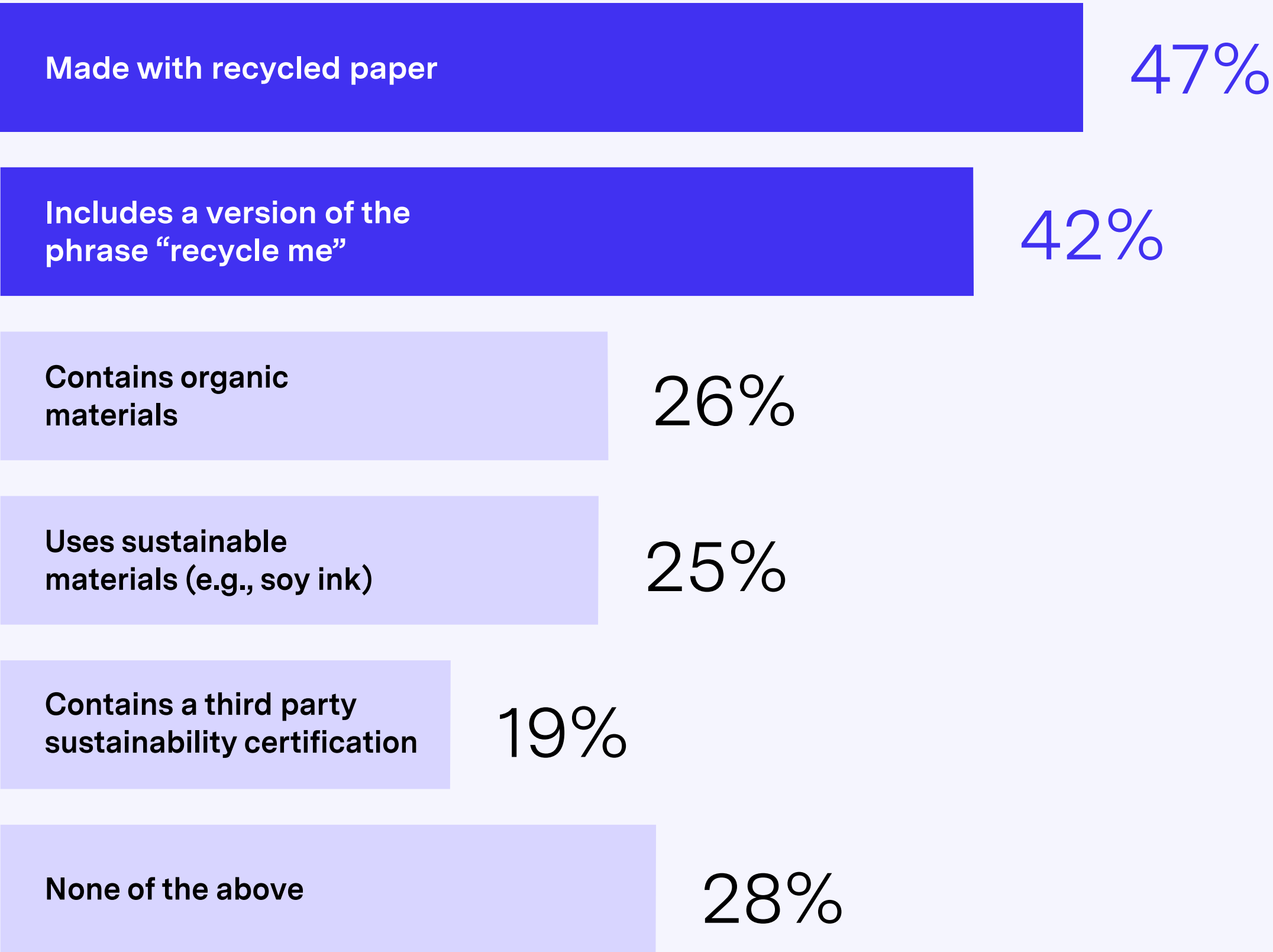
Personalization is effective and expected, yet it's a fine line to walk.

Personalization is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it's clear that tailoring content really hooks the audience: 63% of consumers are more likely to engage with personalized direct mail, and over half actually expect personalized direct mail pieces.

Yet, the extent to which a brand can utilize personalization is hindered by one consumer concern: privacy. 64% of consumers report privacy concerns with digital ads that are personalized and targeted, with older consumers more likely to have these concerns. However, the impact of personal touch is undeniable, and it remains a powerful yet contentious tool in the marketer's toolkit. Relatively speaking, direct mail is a safer channel to employ personalization: 59% of respondents are more concerned about seeing their personal information in a digital ad than in a direct mail ad.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS:

52%

of respondents say they expect direct mail they receive from brands to be personalized to them in some way.

DIGITAL TRUST ISSUES:

39%

of consumers are unlikely to trust a brand that only engages with them digitally (e.g., email, text and social).

Trust, privacy and personalization: striking a healthy balance

64%

I have privacy concerns with digital advertisements when they are personalized and targeted.

63%

I am more likely to engage with a message/ communication from brands when it is personal to me.

59%

I am more concerned about seeing my personal information in digital advertisements than in direct mail advertisements.

Direct mail extends the reach of *your message*.

Consumers quickly see and circulate mail once it's in the mailbox. 70% of respondents read direct mail pieces on the same day they receive them, and 69% of respondents share direct mail pieces with friends and family "sometimes" or "often." Of all channels, respondents are least likely to report receiving direct mail too frequently. By comparison, respondents are twice as likely to report they receive email too frequently and 65% more likely to say the same of digital ads. Some respondents even indicated they don't receive direct mail frequently enough.

How would you describe the frequency of communications you receive from brands overall?

Legend:
- Too frequent
- Right amount
- Not frequent enough

DIRECT MAIL
- 23%
- 60%
- 16%

EMAIL
- 46%
- 47%
- 7%

DIGITAL
- 38%
- 53%
- 8%

PHONE
- 34%
- 58%
- 8%

Base 2024 n=2,000; Q: How would you describe the frequency of direct mail you receive from brands overall? (Select one response.)
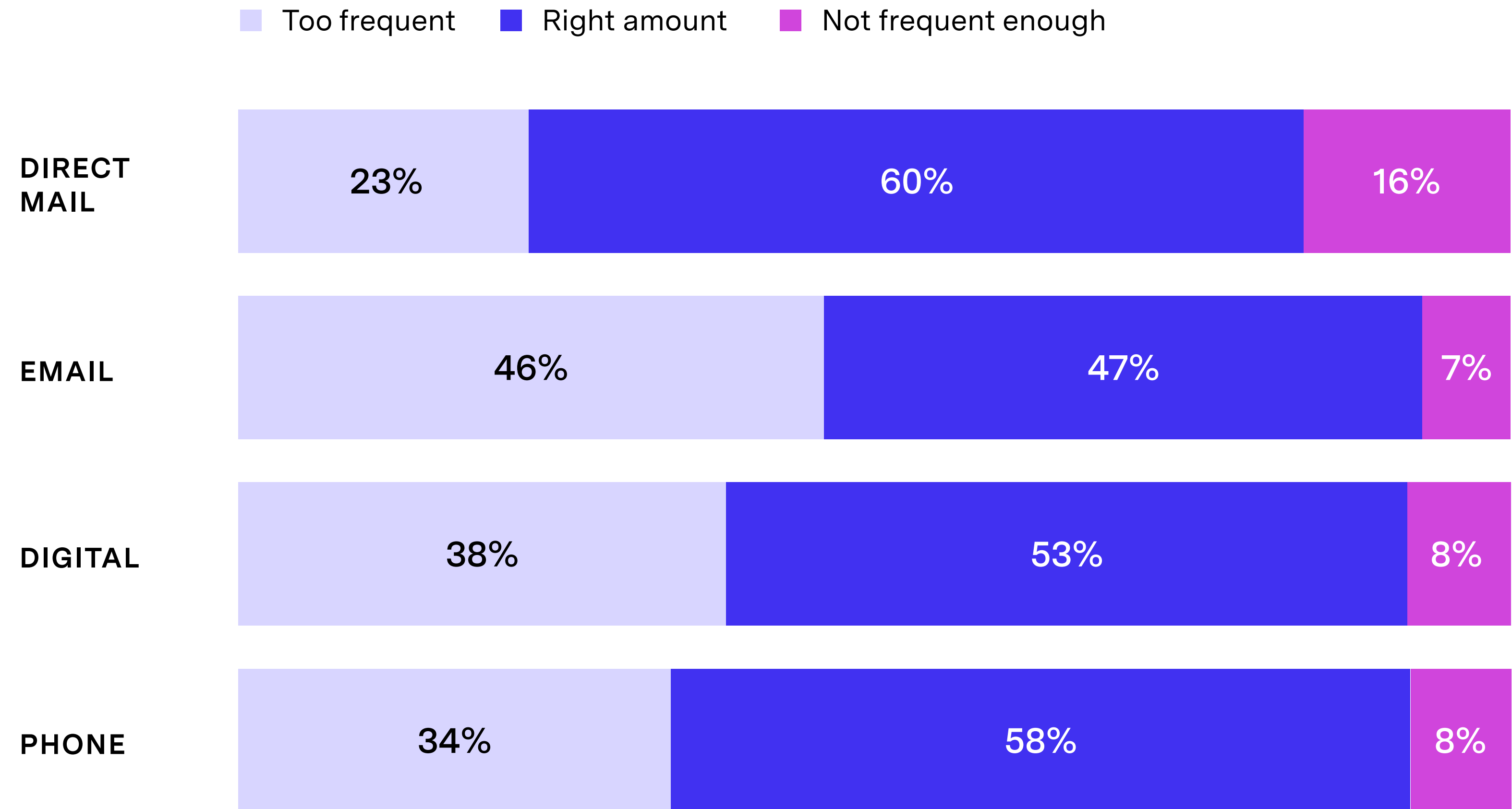
FREQUENCY OF SHARING DIRECT MAIL

- **11%** Often
- **40%** Sometimes
- **29%** Rarely
- **21%** Never
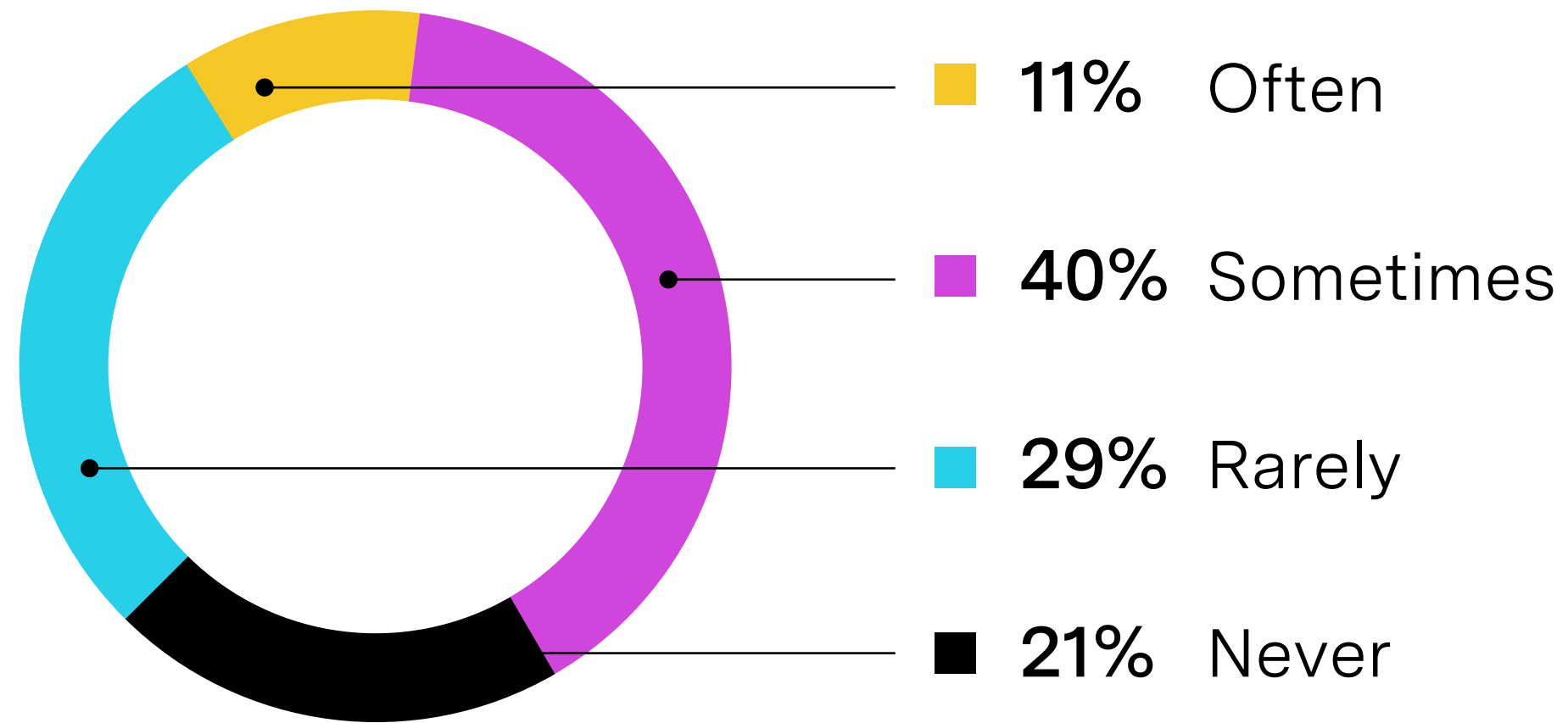
70% reported they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence.

CONSUMERS WEIGH IN:

Why did you share your direct mail?

" *Things like **specials and coupons** for groceries or other common goods which everyone needs regularly, or offers for maintenance or regular interval services like oil changes.*

" *Brands that I know either I or a family/ friend use. If they have a **good discount or special** promotion that I wasn't aware of, then I would share with them.*

" *"I got this sample pack from Sephora the other day in the mail and it had all these scents in it and **I showed it to other people.***

" *I've shared mail that has a coupon inside. Typically I'll ask my friends if it's something that they would like to use if I don't use it.*

Direct mail turns into direct action with *smart CTAs.*

Direct mail is more than just a piece of paper — when armed with the right strategies, it sparks real action. 60% of recipients report taking action after receiving direct mail, especially when prompted by promotions or product offers. 78% of respondents said they are likely to open or read a piece of direct mail featuring an offer or promotion. Offers also provide a fruitful opportunity for personalization to further increase engagement.

Digital CTAs, like a QR code linking to a website, pack a punch, with over half of the respondents reporting they've visited a brand's website from a direct mail piece. For brands aiming to ramp up engagement, technology integrations within the tech stack can help create easy and enticing direct-to-digital pathways.

When building an omnichannel strategy, it's important to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of different outreach methods at various points in a customer lifecycle. For example, direct mail is particularly effective at building trust, reaching new audiences, and engaging current customers. Because of regulations around opting in, text messaging and email are great ways to inspire action in your most loyal buyers.

60%
state a direct mail piece has inspired action.

55%
of those 18-34

60%
of those 35-54

63%
of those 55+

What's most effective in driving action?

WHAT INSPIRES ACTION BY AGE

| | 18-34 | 35-54 | ■ 55+ |

ALL RESPONDENTS

RESPONDENTS BY AGE DEMOGRAPHIC

There was an offer or promotion that caught my eye — **65%**
- 54%
- 59%
- 69%

I was already interested in the brand/ product/service — **60%**
- 46%
- 53%
- 64%

Someone I know had recently purchased from this brand and recommended them to me — **37%**
- 35%
- 34%
- 30%

The design and colors caught my eye — **30%**
- 31%
- 29%
- 26%

This piece was personalized to me — **28%**
- 34%
- 27%
- 17%

The copy (or writing) within the piece captured my attention — **21%**
- 22%
- 18%
- 18%

Base 2024 n=2,000; 18-34 n=594, 35-54 n=693, 55+ n=713; Q: Which of the following elements of a direct mail piece would inspire you to take action? Action can include searching for the brand online, visiting a brand website, checking the brand's social media, looking up reviews of the brand/product, buying a product, or visiting a brand location. (Select all that apply.)

What types of images make a direct mail piece most appealing to you?

IMAGE APPEAL

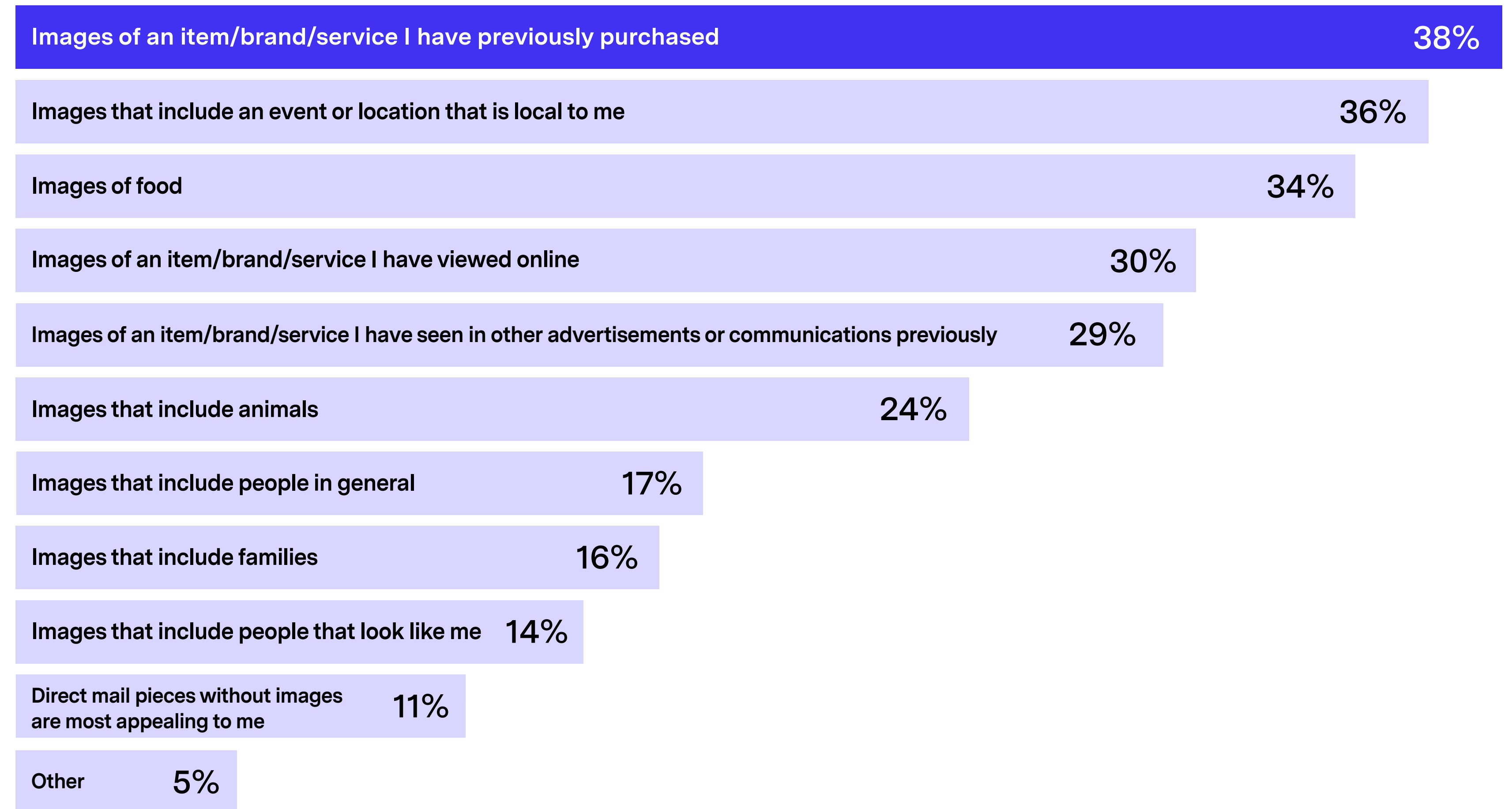|	
Images of an item/brand/service I have previously purchased	**38%**
Images that include an event or location that is local to me	36%
Images of food	34%
Images of an item/brand/service I have viewed online	30%
Images of an item/brand/service I have seen in other advertisements or communications previously	29%
Images that include animals	24%
Images that include people in general	17%
Images that include families	16%
Images that include people that look like me	14%
Direct mail pieces without images are most appealing to me	11%
Other	5%

After the mailbox –
how do consumers take action?

61%

of recipients would
be inspired to take
action on offers.

55%

would be inspired
to take action on
products of interest.

Over half of respondents report that the action they took in response to a direct mail piece was visiting the brand's website.

Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to report being inspired to take action because of the design and personalization of a direct mail piece.

Across age groups, direct mail results in omnichannel engagement, but preferred digital channels vary. After receiving a direct mail piece, older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to check the brand website, while younger respondents are more likely to check the brand's social media.

Which of the following describes the actions you've taken after receiving direct mail?

SPECIFIC ACTION TAKEN ON DIRECT MAIL
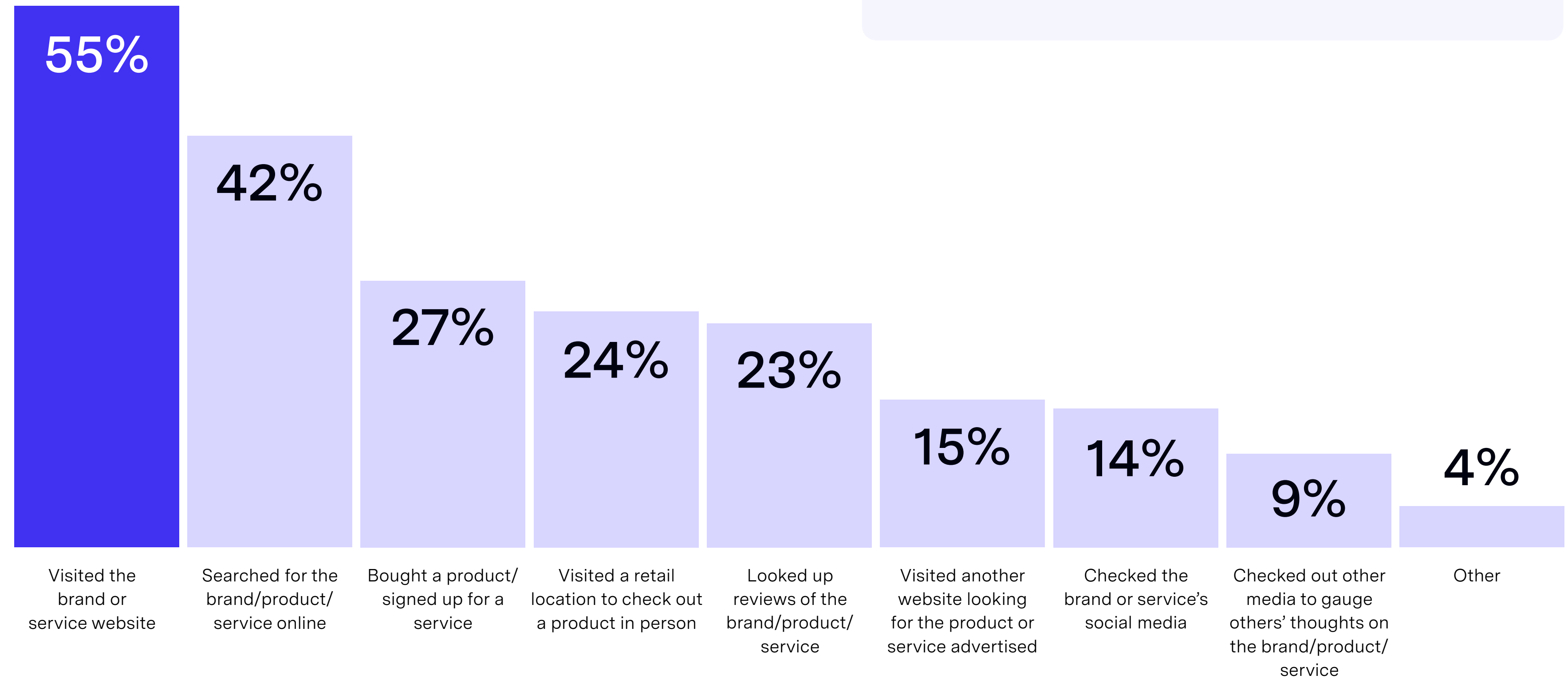
Offers are key to enticing recipients to open and read their direct mail, with PURLs and QR codes growing in popularity year-over-year. They're also an effective personalization method.

Action	%
Visited the brand or service website	55%
Searched for the brand/product/service online	42%
Bought a product/signed up for a service	27%
Visited a retail location to check out a product in person	24%
Looked up reviews of the brand/product/service	23%
Visited another website looking for the product or service advertised	15%
Checked the brand or service's social media	14%
Checked out other media to gauge others' thoughts on the brand/product/service	9%
Other	4%

How likely are you to read a piece of mail if it had the following?

LIKELIHOOD TO OPEN/READ FROM BRAND INTERESTED IF IT INCLUDED…
(TOP 2-BOX)

Single offer or promotion	**78%**
Multiple offers or promotions	**77%**
A local event or location	**66%**
Name of an item you recently purchased or viewed online	**61%**
Image of an item you recently purchased or viewed online	**60%**
Image of a recently purchased item	**56%**
Your first and last name	**54%**
Your first name	**51%**
Personalized URL (a hyperlink that directs you to a unique website/landing page tailored to you)	**48%**
Map to a local store or physical location	**48%**
QR code (an image you scan that directs you to a website/landing page)	**43%**

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Imagine you receive a piece of direct mail from a brand you are particularly interested in. How likely are you to open/read this piece of mail if it had the following included?

Over four in ten would use a QR code to take action, and younger consumers are 10% more likely *to take a digital action from physical mail.*

41%

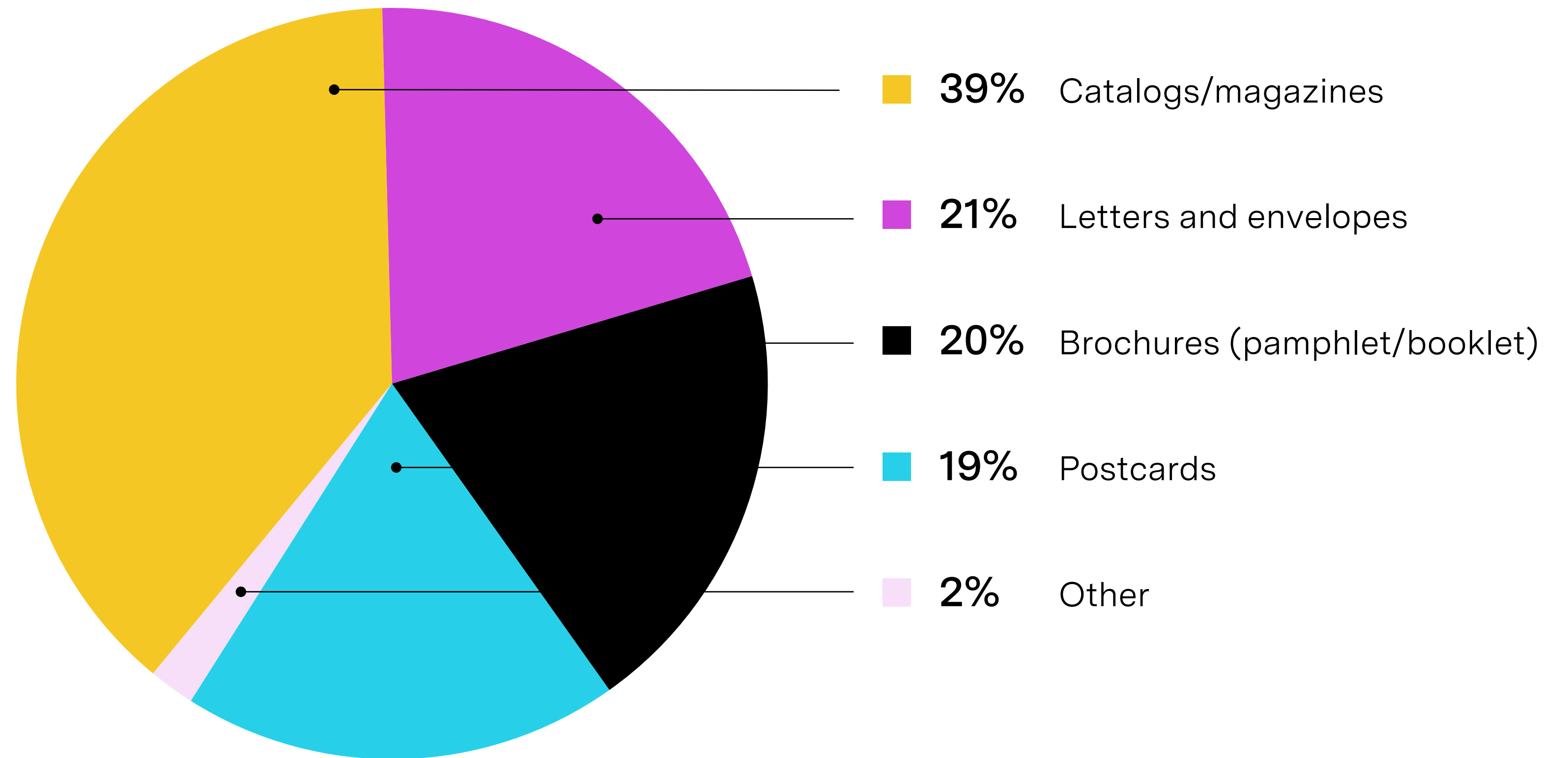are likely to scan a QR code on a piece of direct mail and take action.

48%

This figure rises to 48% for those aged 35-54.

51%

This figure rises to 51% for those aged 18-34.

Mail formats consumers are most likely to read

DIRECT MAIL FORMATS FROM BRANDS WITH RELATIONSHIP: MOST LIKELY TO READ

39% Catalogs/magazines

21% Letters and envelopes

20% Brochures (pamphlet/booklet)

19% Postcards

2% Other

Base 2024 n=2,000; Q: You mentioned you prefer to receive the following direct mail formats from brands you already have a relationship with. Which of the following are you most likely to read? (Select one response.)

OPERATIONAL MAIL

A majority still opt to receive at least some paper statements from brands, but paperless statements are more common among younger consumers.

31%

of all respondents have opted into paperless statements for every brand that offers it.

40%

of consumers ages 35-44 have opted into paperless statements for every brand that offers it.

23%

of consumers with a household income of <$25,000 have not opted into any paperless statements.

Take action on these insights.

With the right approach, direct mail can go from a classic strategy to a major growth channel for your brand. By cleverly combining digital tactics with the tangible appeal of direct mail, you can continue to connect with your audience in more meaningful ways.

Be thoughtful about personalization

Audiences expect direct mail to be tailored to them. Being mindful of how you use customer info and insights will keep your mailpieces personal, rather than invasive.

Tailor your mail in ways that lead to action.
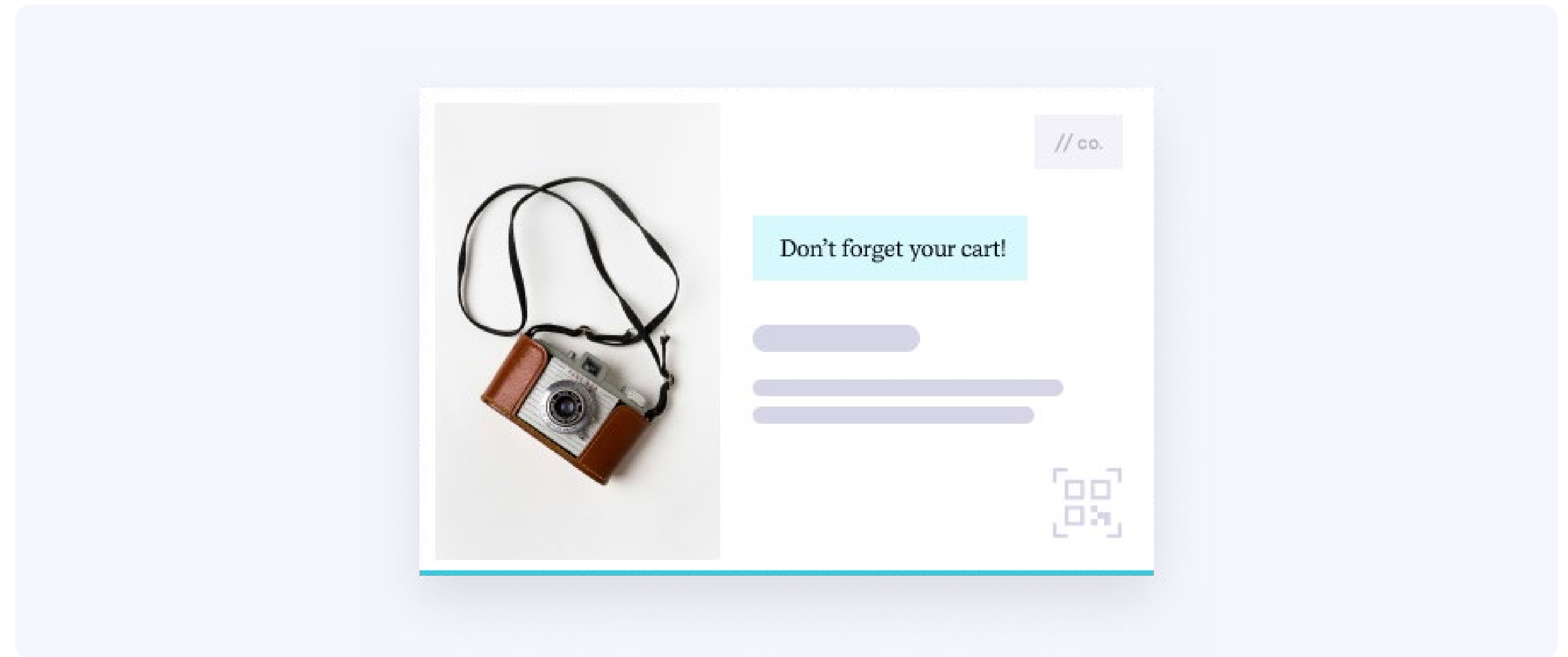
01

Feature products relevant to past purchases, searches, or abandoned carts.

02

Localize mailpieces with information such as nearby store events.

03

Keep any potentially sensitive information hidden in sealed mailers and letters.

Integrate with digital

Direct mail enhances the effectiveness of your digital channels — and leads to online action. Integrate your direct mail service with your tech stack to create omnichannel experiences for your customers.

01

Use your data to create direct mail segments that mirror existing audiences.

02

Create cross-channel campaigns to reinforce brand messaging and boost visibility.

03

Capture metrics about offline action, like QR code scans, to understand the impact of your direct mail campaigns.

Use triggers for immediate impact

Today's direct mail is fast, sending in hours instead of weeks. Trigger mailpieces based on online or offline activity, then hit the mailbox just in time to inspire action.

01

Set up automated direct mail based on custom events from your CRM.

02

Trigger sends based on key dates, actions, or funnel stages.

03

Minimize manual errors, improve operational efficiency, and guarantee timely delivery.

Engage using smart CTAs and offers

A compelling offer remains essential for engaging customers on any channel. Connect the dots between direct mail and online action with QR codes, PURLs, and unique offer codes that make it easy to take action.
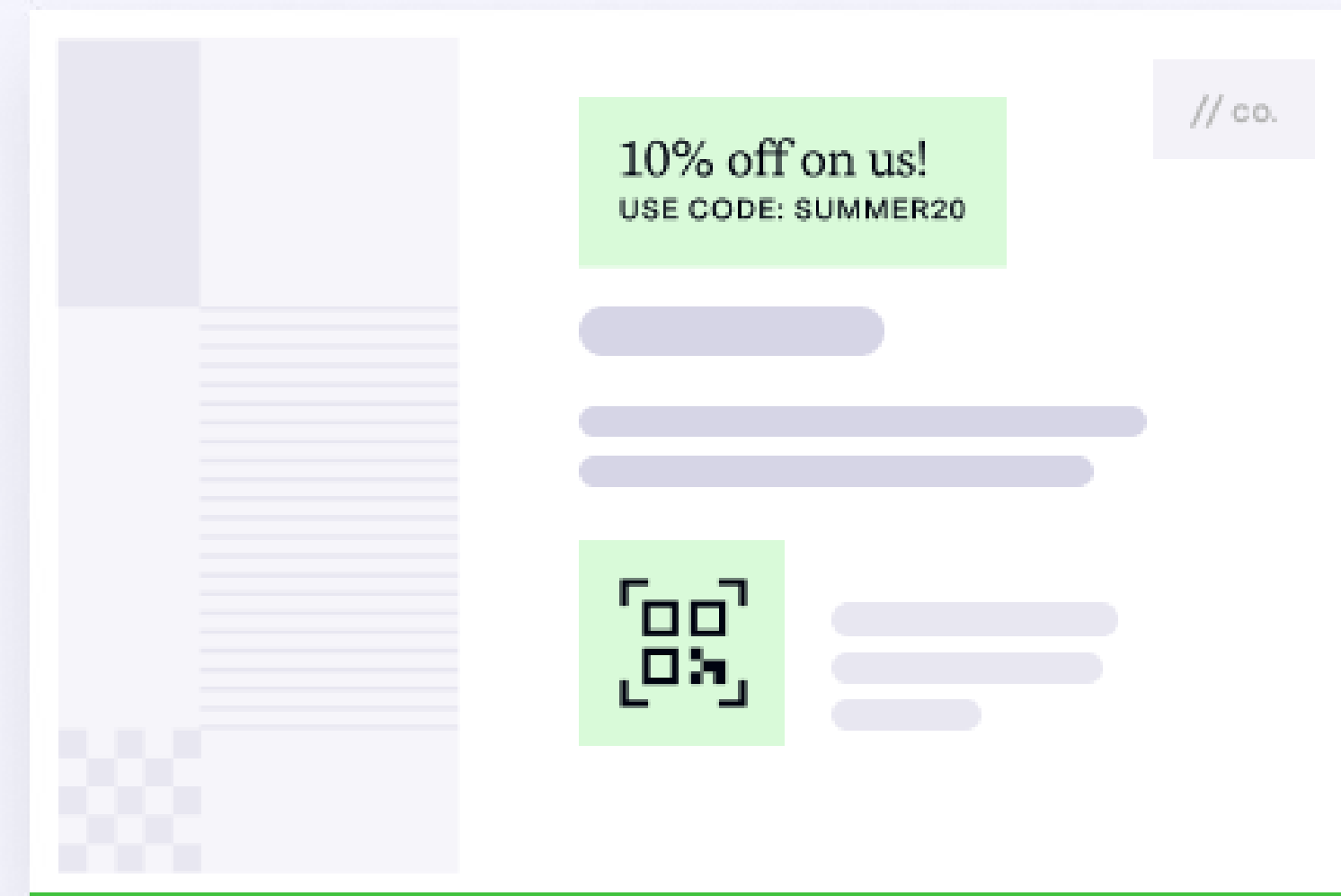
01

Personalize your offers based on funnel stages, past purchases, and key events.

02

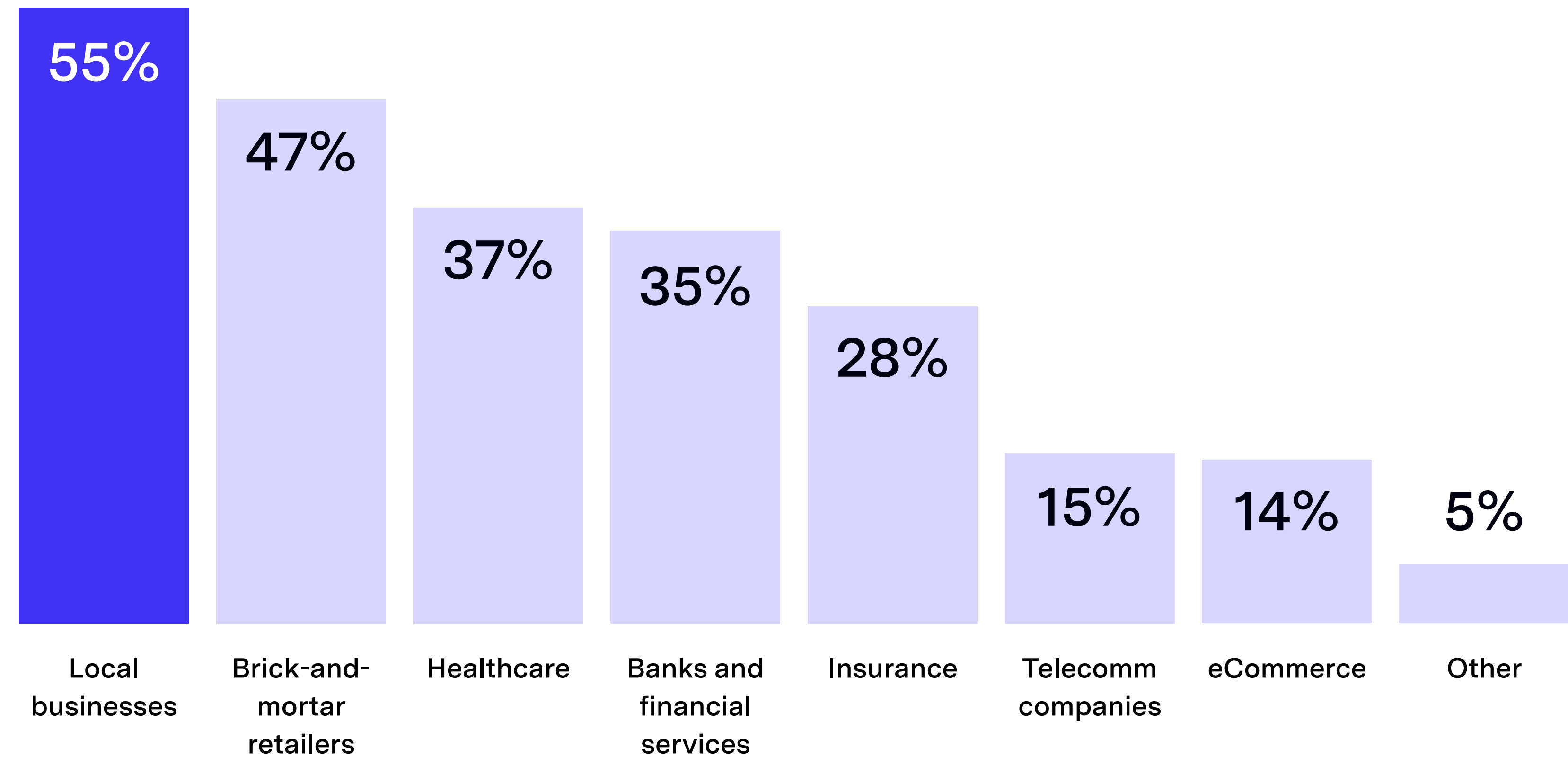Make the offer timely to encourage an immediate response.

03

Use marketing analytics to track the results of your CTAs and offers, and make adjustments to future sends.
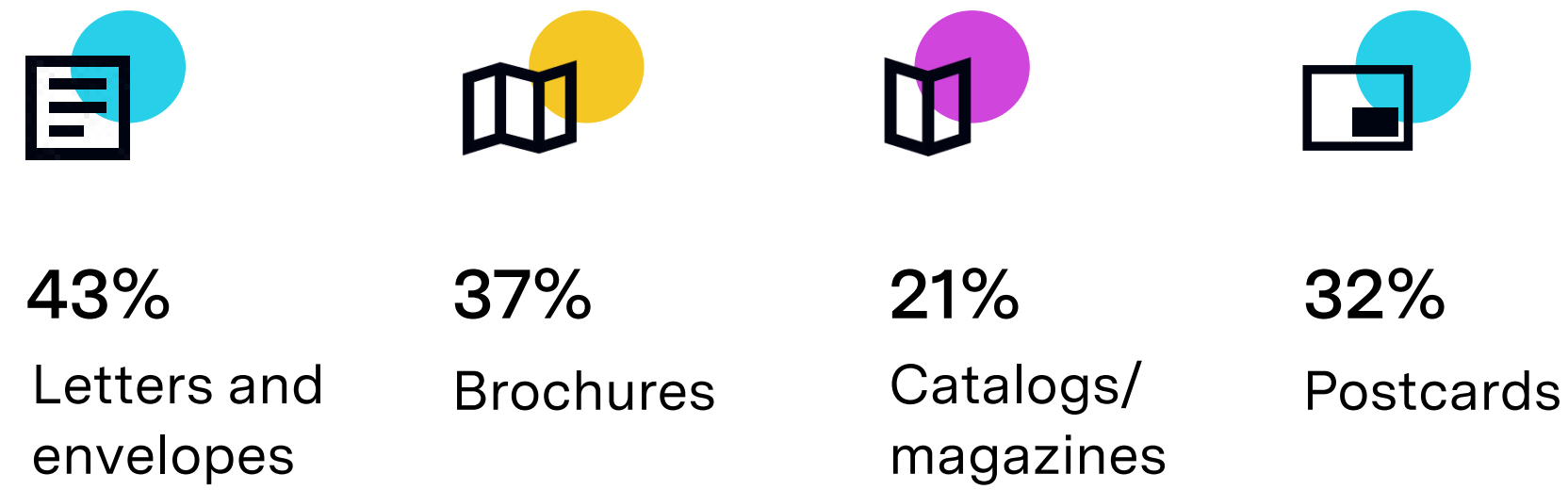
Industry spotlight:

Healthcare, Retail, Insurance, Financial Services

TYPES OF BUSINESSES WHERE DIRECT MAIL IS PREFERRED

Local businesses	Brick-and-mortar retailers	Healthcare	Banks and financial services	Insurance	Telecomm companies	eCommerce	Other
55%	47%	37%	35%	28%	15%	14%	5%

Base 2024 n=2,000 2023 n=2,000; Q: Which of the following types of businesses do you prefer to receive direct mail from? (Select all that apply.)

Healthcare

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

43%
Letters and envelopes

37%
Brochures

21%
Catalogs/ magazines

32%
Postcards

TYPICAL ACTION TAKEN

50% Read immediately

33% Keep and read it at a later time

17% Rarely read and typically throw out

WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website	27%
Searched for it online	22%
Nothing	18%
Looked up reviews	11%
Visited another website looking for it advertised	7%
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts	5%
Checked the brand or service's social media	5%
Visited a retail location	4%
Bought	3%

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND

32% Promotions from products/ services I already have

23% Newsletters or letters

20% Promotions from products/ services I don't already have

15% Announcement of a new products/service

9% Catalog showcasing products/services

N=984

Retail

(brick-and-mortar stores)

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

31%
Letters and envelopes

39%
Brochures

50%
Catalogs/magazines

35%
Postcards

WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website — **26%**
Searched for it online — **23%**
Visited a retail location — **14%**
Looked up reviews — **10%**
Nothing — **7%**
Visited another website looking for it advertised — **7%**
Checked the brand or service's social media — **5%**
Bought — **5%**
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts — **4%**

TYPICAL ACTION TAKEN

50% Read immediately
39% Keep and read it at a later time
11% Rarely read and typically throw out

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND

42% Promotions from products/services I already have

32% Promotions from products/services I don't already have

13% Catalog showcasing products/services

7% Announcement of a new products/service

5% Newsletters or letters

N=1,009

Insurance

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

48%
Letters and envelopes

29%
Brochures

16%
Catalogs/ magazines

33%
Postcards

WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website	25%
Nothing	23%
Searched for it online	19%
Looked up reviews	11%
Visited a retail location	6%
Visited another website looking for it advertised	6%
Checked the brand or service's social media	4%
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts	4%
Bought	3%

TYPICAL ACTION TAKEN

43% Read immediately

30% Keep and read it at a later time

27% Rarely read and typically throw out

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND

38% Promotions from products/ services I already have

26% Promotions from products/ services I don't already have

14% Newsletters or letters

14% Announcement of a new products/service

8% Catalog showcasing products/ services

Financial Services

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

49%
Letters and envelopes

33%
Brochures

19%
Catalogs/magazines

31%
Postcards

WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website	25%
Searched for it online	23%
Nothing	19%
Visited a retail location	8%
Looked up reviews	7%
Visited another website looking for it advertised	6%
Checked the brand or service's social media	5%
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts	4%
Bought	3%

TYPICAL ACTION TAKEN

43% Read immediately

31% Keep and read it at a later time

20% Rarely read and typically throw out

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND

35% Promotions from products/services I already have

27% Promotions from products/services I don't already have

15% Newsletters or letters

14% Announcement of a new products/service

9% Catalog showcasing products/services

Lob

Lob automates and personalizes direct mail at any scale, bringing the speed and features companies expect from their digital channels to direct mail for the first time. From creation to carbon neutral printing and delivery, Lob makes it easy to integrate, send and measure every piece. Over 12,000 businesses trust Lob to transform their direct mail.

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