

# MAIL MATTERS MORE THAN EVER.

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

 **marketreach**  
unleash the magic of mail





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# A COVID- DISRUPTED WORLD



## INTRODUCTION

**During difficult times, effectiveness matters more than ever.**

Almost every business has had to rethink and retrench since the pandemic started. Marketing spend in the UK has fallen 48%<sup>1</sup> year-on-year and budgets have come under intense focus. The return marketing drives has become of even more critical importance.

The rules of engagement have changed too. The unprecedented disruptions to our lives this year have changed the way media is consumed.

There's been a much-publicised shift to digital, but that's far from the whole picture. As the new 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 central to people's lives, mail has demonstrated its continued value.

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



## FOREWORD

**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 this year 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 this year I was very proud to have been Convener 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.

So 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, has invested in one of their most extensive pieces of research ever – conducted during the first lockdown this year – on the changing role of this media landscape and of mail in particular.

Significant increases in engagement for 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?

**Back in March the whole world seemed to change overnight. Covid-19 has impacted all our lives in so many ways, and continues to do so.**

The media landscape has shifted dramatically. The main change was clear – more people were suddenly spending a lot more time at home. Out-of-home and cinema would both suffer and whilst there would be an expected shift towards digital, there is evidence that this is starting to create channel fatigue amongst consumers.

As a media owner we wanted to understand the impact that these changes were having 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 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 people<sup>1</sup> 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 loyalty. Around 60%<sup>2</sup> 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 people<sup>1</sup> have reported suffering digital burnout. Consumers crave real, tangible and 'human' interaction<sup>3</sup>.

## **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:** <sup>1</sup> Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020 <sup>2</sup> Gartner Annual CMO Spend Survey 2020  
<sup>3</sup> 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%<sup>1</sup> of people who recall receiving mail from the Government said it had an impact on their behaviour.

They were literally bringing the message home.

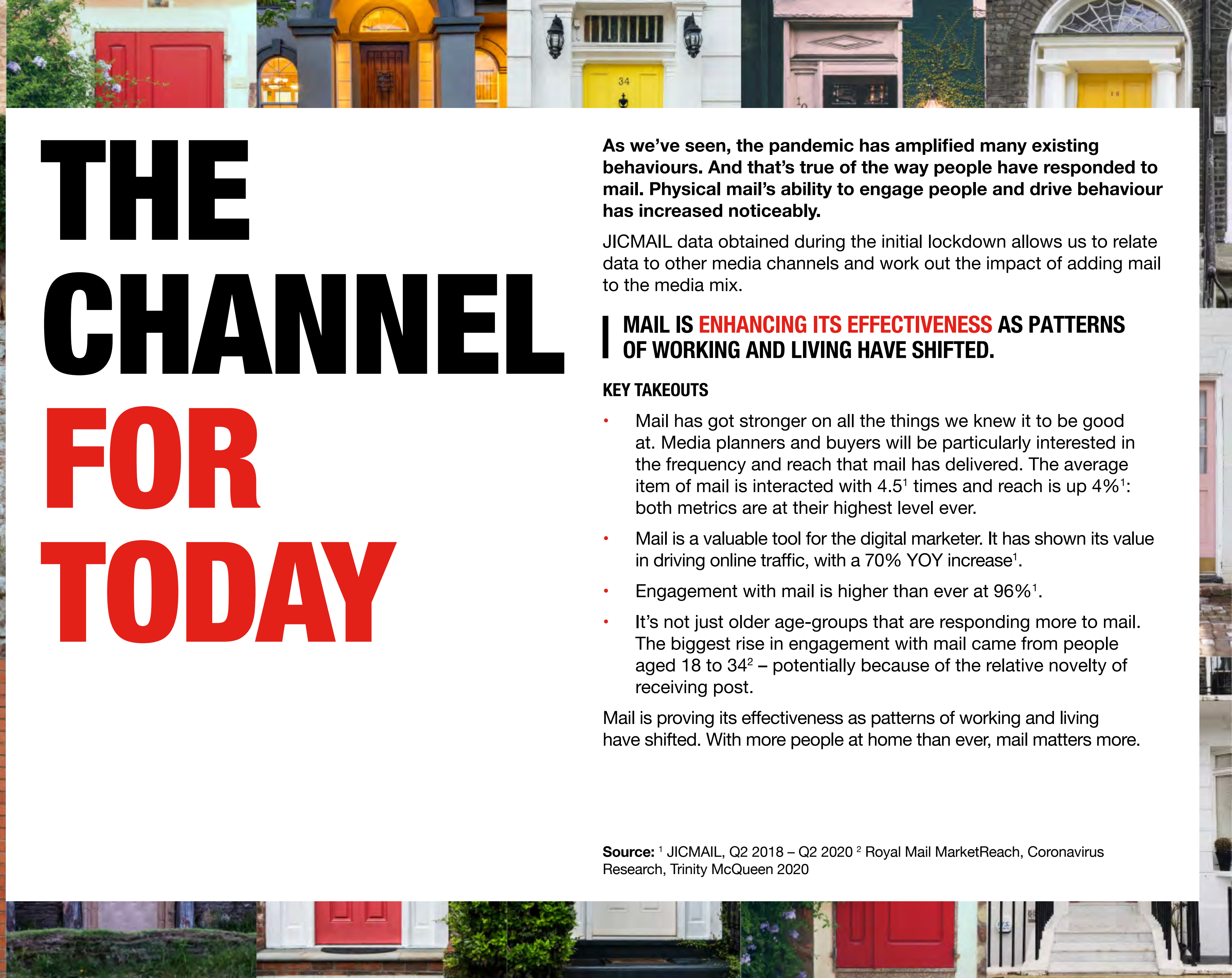
**WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCKDOWN, THEY CHOSE TO SEND A LETTER.**

## **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:** <sup>1</sup> 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 4.5<sup>1</sup> times and reach is up 4%<sup>1</sup>: 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 increase<sup>1</sup>.
- Engagement with mail is higher than ever at 96%<sup>1</sup>.
- 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 34<sup>2</sup> – 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: <sup>1</sup> JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020 <sup>2</sup> Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020



# MARKETING DURING THE NEW NORMAL



**Mail has come to the fore as a key part of the marketing mix during the pandemic and its importance is set to continue. As we continue to spend more time at home, its 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 a time that can feel transient and fast-moving, 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%<sup>1</sup> of respondents acknowledged the usefulness of mail – as a reminder to do something – whilst 88%<sup>1</sup> 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 and online purchasing, a role that's set to become even more vital. When primed by mail people spent 30%<sup>2</sup> longer looking at social ads.

With the bricks-and-mortar retail sector facing significant 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

Hopefully the pandemic will end soon. But some of the trends that have been amplified by Covid-19 will continue – life will not simply snap back to the way it was before. And these longer-term trends point towards the continued relevance of mail.

'In home' is going to be a big part of our future for a while yet, with increased remote working likely to be a reality for millions of people. And, as the shift to online shopping continues, businesses and brands will need to work harder than ever to reach out, stand out and feel part of people's lives.

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

**Source:** <sup>1</sup> Royal Mail MarketReach, Coronavirus Research, Trinity McQueen 2020. <sup>2</sup> Royal Mail MarketReach, Neuro-Insight 2018



# 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**.



NEARLY HALF OF ALL PEOPLE SAID THEY LOOKED FORWARD TO RECEIVING MAIL

# 88%

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

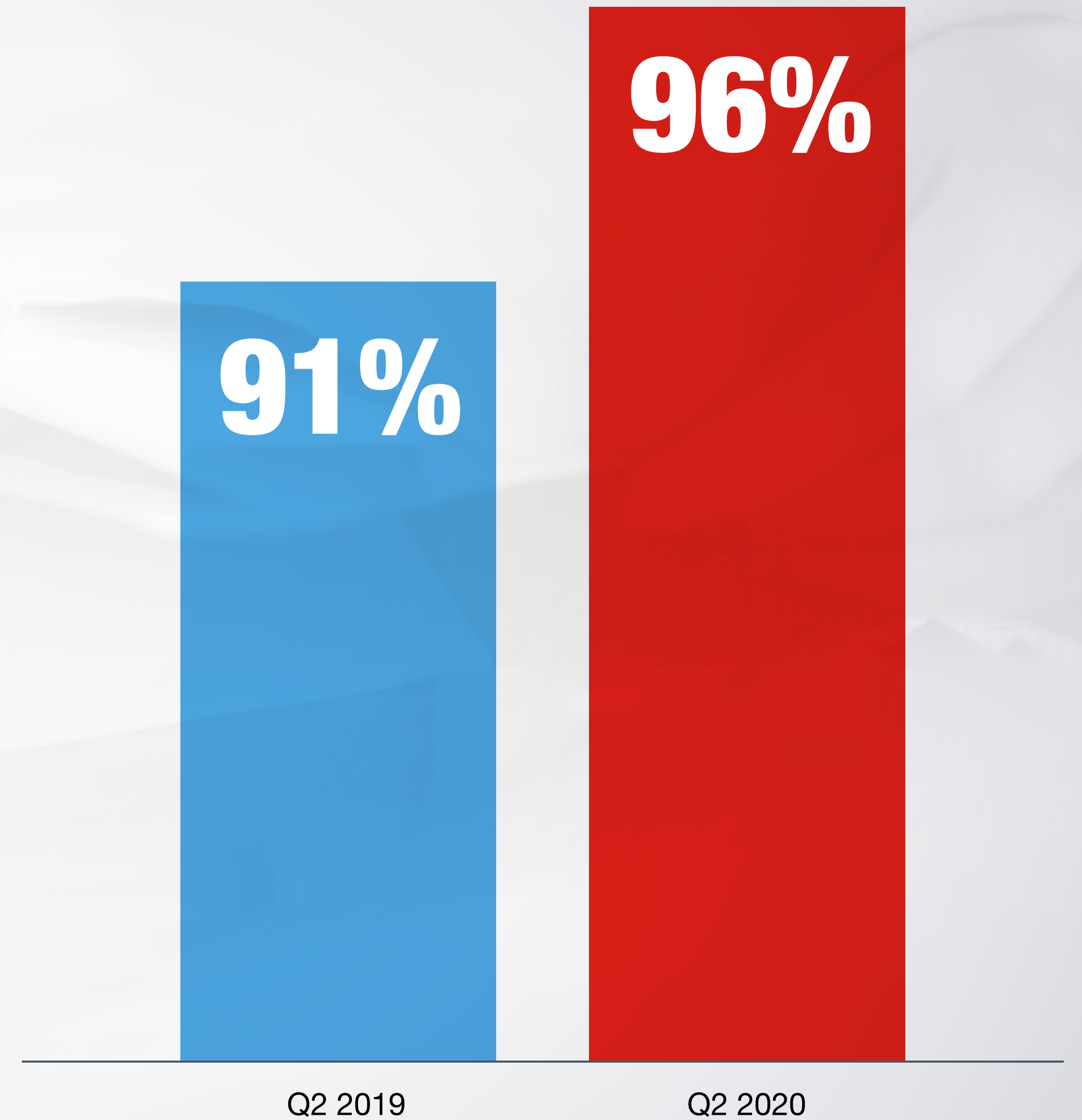
# 1-IN-2

ACKNOWLEDGED THE **USEFULNESS OF MAIL** IN LOCKDOWN

# 24%

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

**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**

**63%**

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

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

# MAIL IS REMEMBERED

**80%**

**REMEMBER A GOVERNMENT MAILING. (4 IN 5 PEOPLE)**



**58%**

**RECALL THE "BORIS LETTER"**



# 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

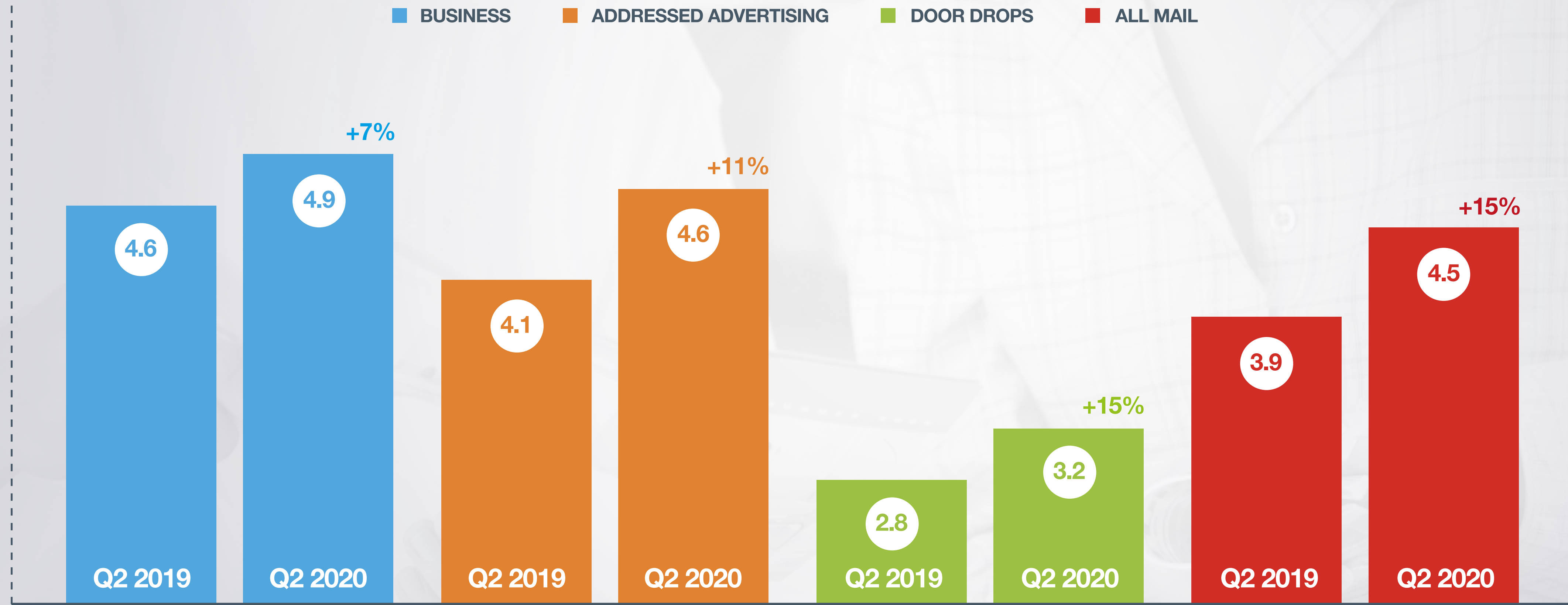


Source: JICMAIL, Q2 2018 – Q2 2020





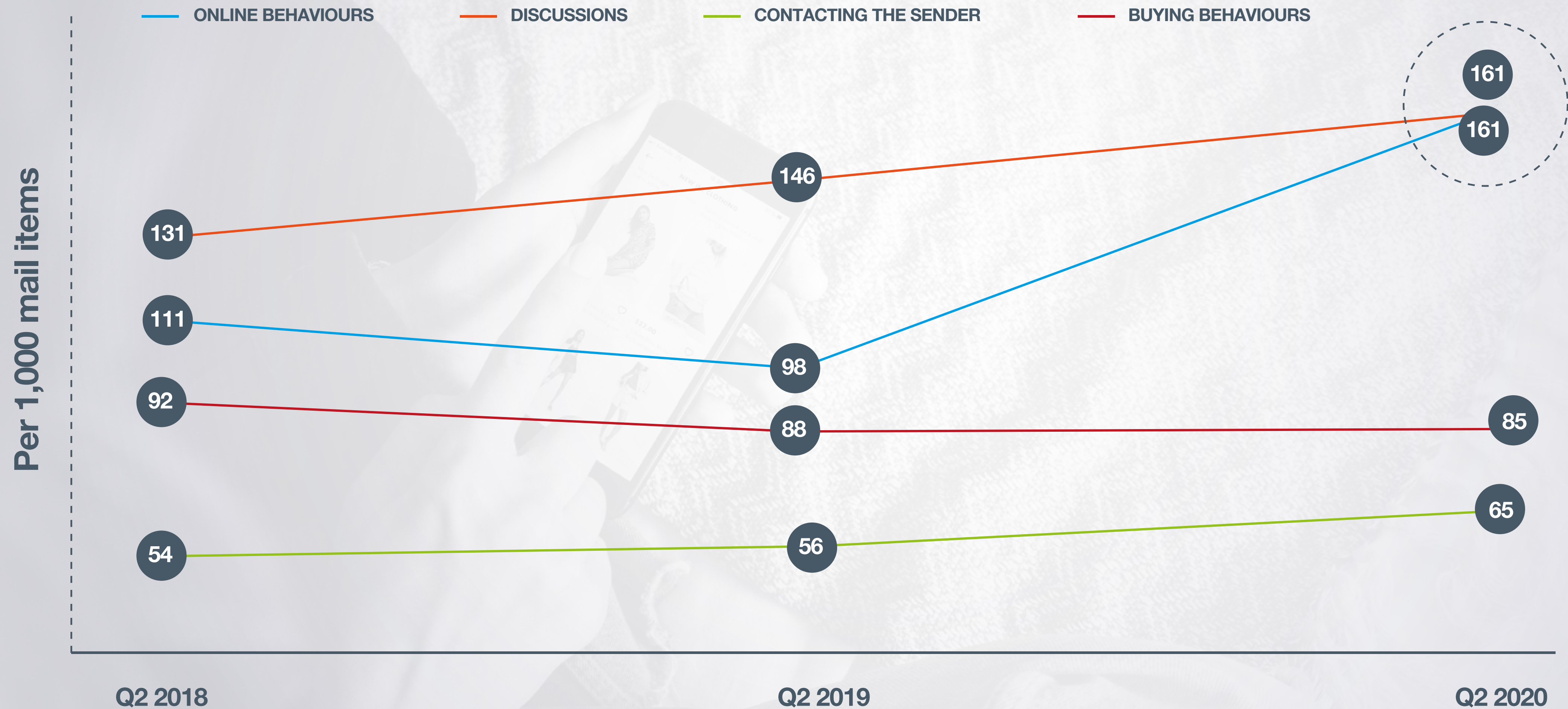
# HUGE GROWTH IN YOY INTERACTION WITH ALL MAIL TYPES, PARTICULARLY AD MAIL & DOOR DROPS



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%<sup>1</sup> 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](#)

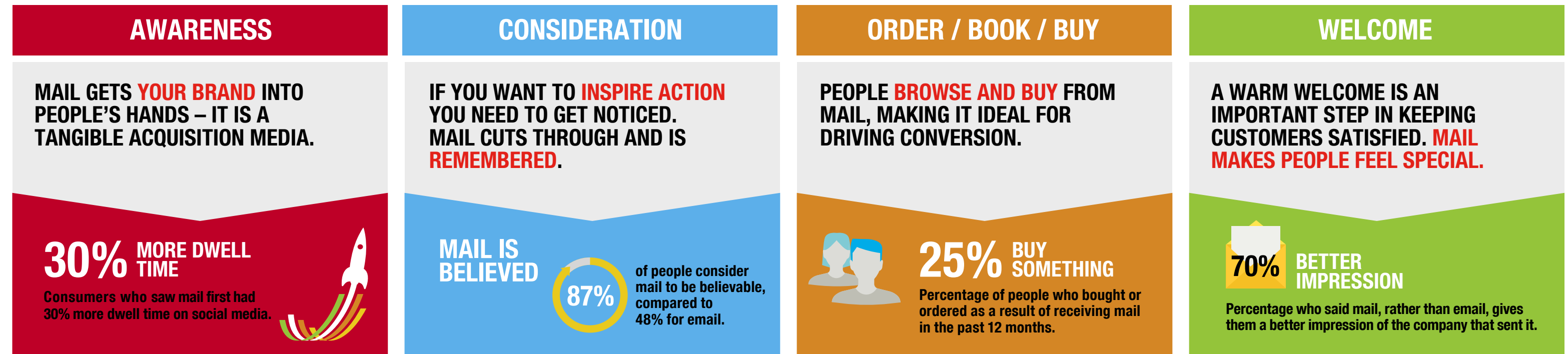
<sup>1</sup> Savings based on indicative example

# 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



# 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](https://marketreach.co.uk/MailNow)