



2026

# Direct Mail Marketing Benchmark Report

Examining how marketers leverage direct mail, what impacts performance, and how consumers engage across touchpoints



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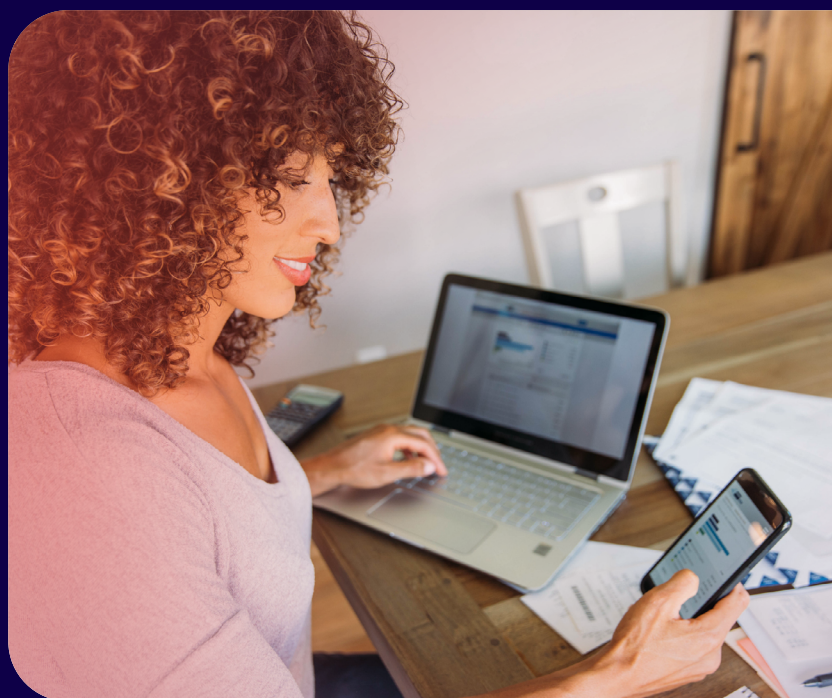
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## Executive Summary

Franklin Madison Direct’s 2026 Direct Mail Marketing Benchmark Report combines the latest marketer and consumer research to deliver a clear view of current direct mail performance and the factors shaping its impact. This year’s results show a channel that remains strong and stable, with marketers achieving gains through more precise targeting, relevant content, and consistent testing rather than broad strategic shifts. At the same time, consumers view direct mail as one of the most influential and engaging advertising types—responding most favorably when mail is offer-led, personalized, and connected to digital pathways.

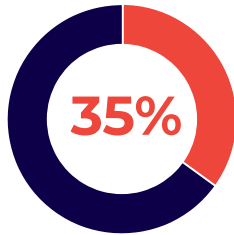
## Methodology

To complete this year’s industry research, we partnered with research firm Circlebox to field two national studies: one among marketers and one among consumers. In January 2026, Circlebox surveyed 500 U.S. B2B, B2C, and mixed-model marketing professionals through a 10-minute online questionnaire, gathering insights on direct mail performance, execution practices, targeting and testing strategies, and channel integration. During that same period, Circlebox conducted a second online study with 600 U.S. consumers, designed to understand how frequently they engage with different advertising formats, how influential and enjoyable they find each, and their behaviors and preferences specific to direct mail.

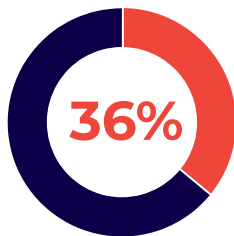
# Marketer Audience Demographics

## Company Business Model

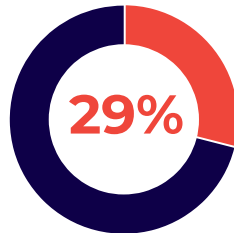
Combination of B-to-C and B-to-B



Business to Consumer



Business to Business



## Industry

Financial Services . . . . .	<b>13%</b>
Insurance Services . . . . .	<b>13%</b>
Retail . . . . .	<b>8%</b>
Consumer Products/Packaged Goods . . . . .	<b>8%</b>
Automotive . . . . .	<b>7%</b>
Investment Services . . . . .	<b>7%</b>
Real Estate . . . . .	<b>7%</b>
Education . . . . .	<b>6%</b>
Telecommunications . . . . .	<b>6%</b>
Travel and Leisure . . . . .	<b>6%</b>
Healthcare . . . . .	<b>6%</b>
Utility . . . . .	<b>5%</b>
Non-Profit . . . . .	<b>4%</b>
Other . . . . .	<b>2%</b>

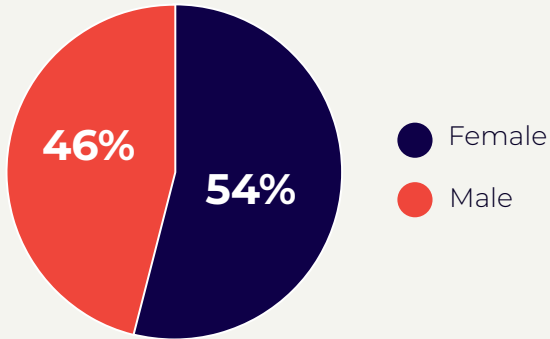
## Role in the Organization

Marketing Director . . . . .	<b>42%</b>
CMO/VP of Marketing . . . . .	<b>23%</b>
C-Suite non CMO . . . . .	<b>12%</b>
Marketing Manager . . . . .	<b>9%</b>
CEO/President . . . . .	<b>7%</b>
Creative Director . . . . .	<b>3%</b>
Brand Manager . . . . .	<b>2%</b>
Digital Manager . . . . .	<b>1%</b>
Media Buyer . . . . .	<b>&lt;1%</b>

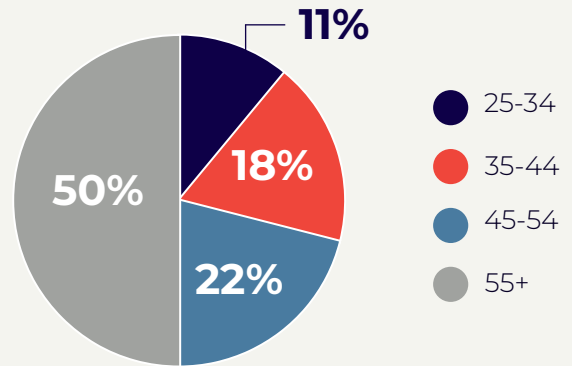


# Consumer Demographics

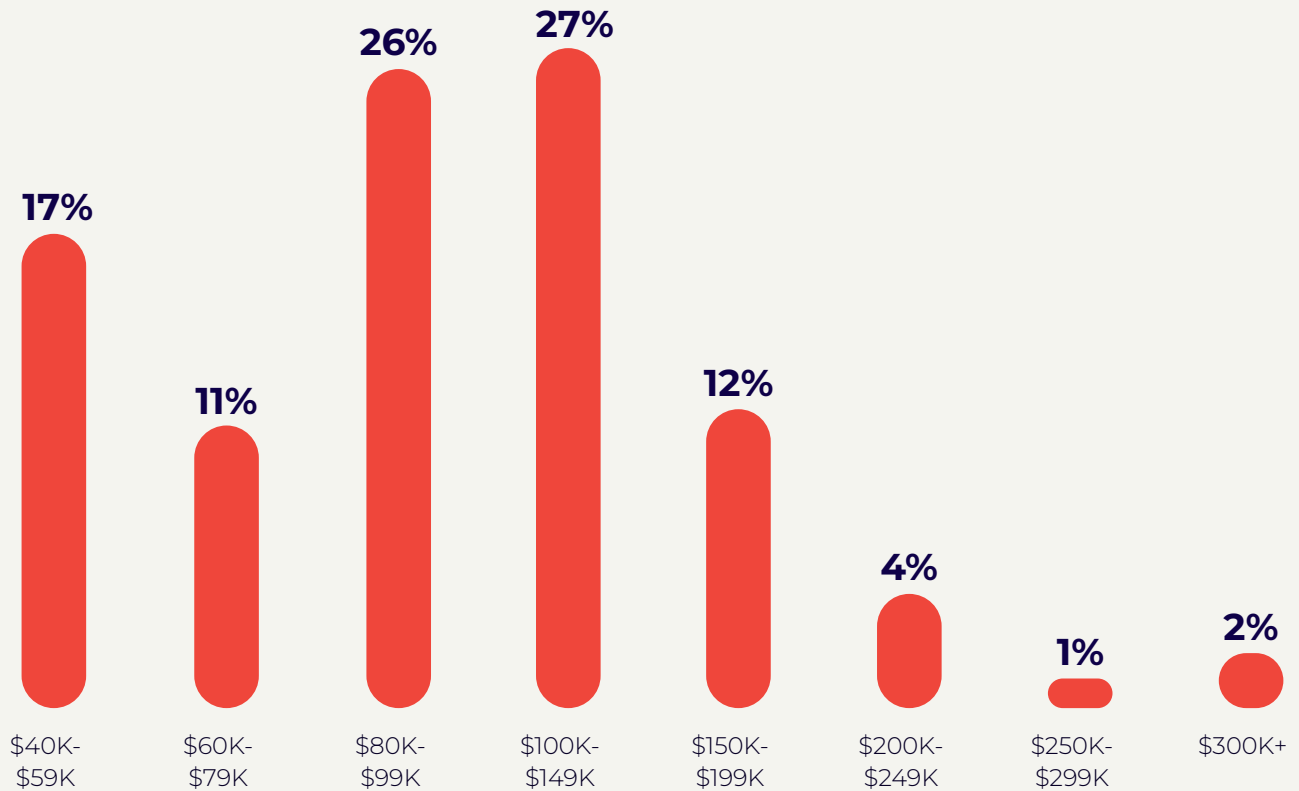
## Gender



## Age Group



## Household Income



## Current State of Direct Mail Usage



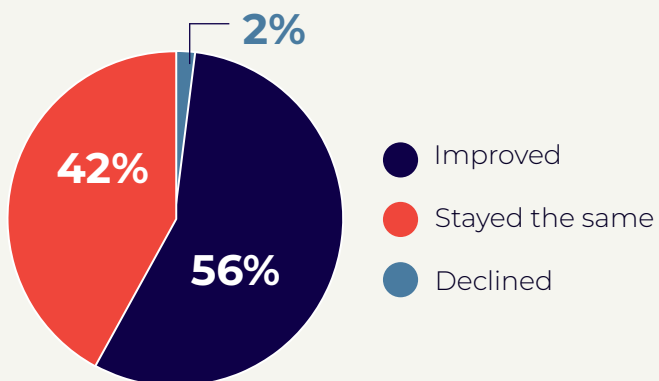
### Reality Check: Consumer Insights

- 79% of consumers engage with the mail they receive
- Direct mail is the second most influential advertising channel for purchasing decisions

This year's results show direct mail continuing to deliver meaningful value for marketers. More than half report improved performance in the past 12 months, and another 42% say results held steady, leaving only a very small share experiencing declines. This distribution highlights a channel that remains effective across a wide range of programs and business models. Marketers who are seeing gains point to sharper targeting and more relevant content as key contributors.

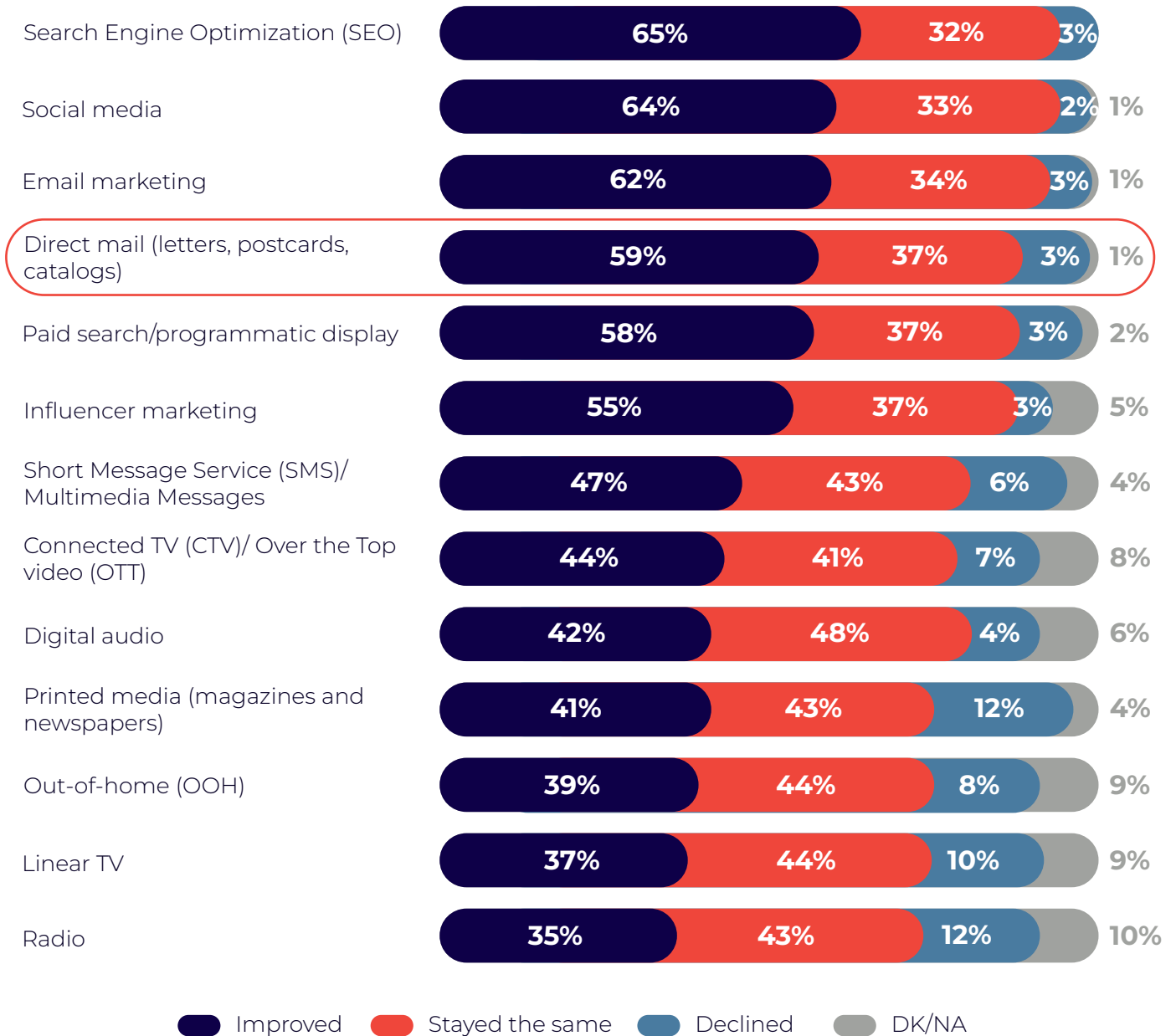
### Changes in Direct Mail Performance in Last 12 Months

**Marketer Question:** In the last 12 months, has your direct mail performance...



## Direct Marketing Strategy Performance in Last 12 Months

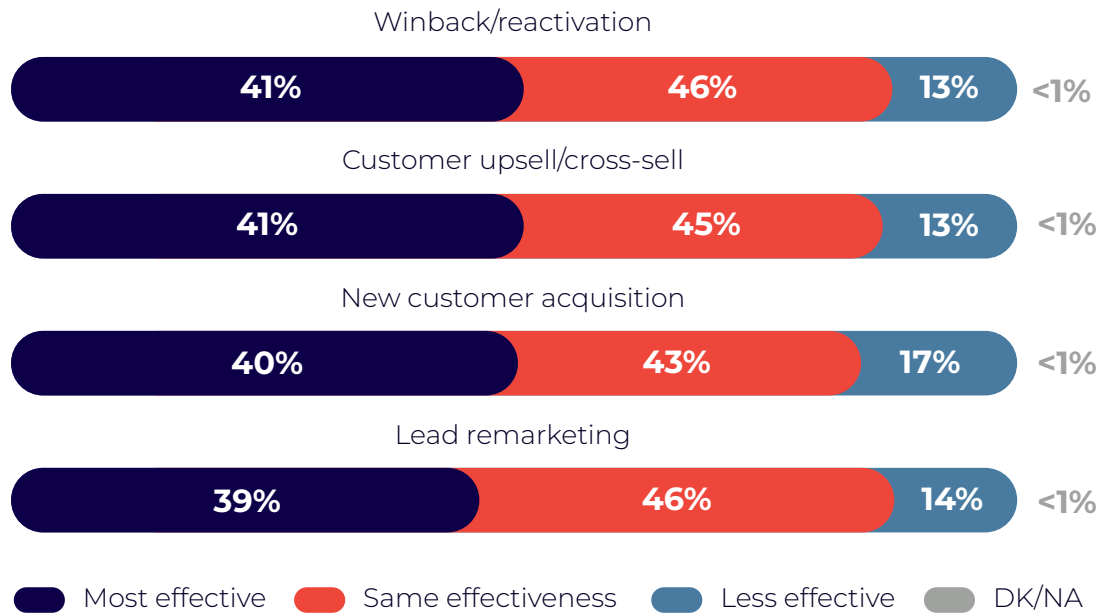
**Marketer Question:** How has your performance for the following direct marketing strategies changed in the last 12 months?



**More than half of marketers increased their direct mail budgets over the past 12 months,** a strong signal of confidence in the channel. Although performance improvements are less dramatic than in prior years, the channel's consistency has become a strategic advantage—especially at a time when many digital tactics continue to fluctuate in cost and effectiveness. Direct mail's reliability shows up clearly in comparative performance: **41% say it outperforms digital for winback, 41% for upsell or cross-sell, 40% for new customer acquisition, and 39% for lead remarketing.**

## Effectiveness of Direct Mail vs. Digital Channels

**Marketer Question:** In terms of effectiveness at achieving each of the following objectives, please tell us how direct mail compares to digital channels.

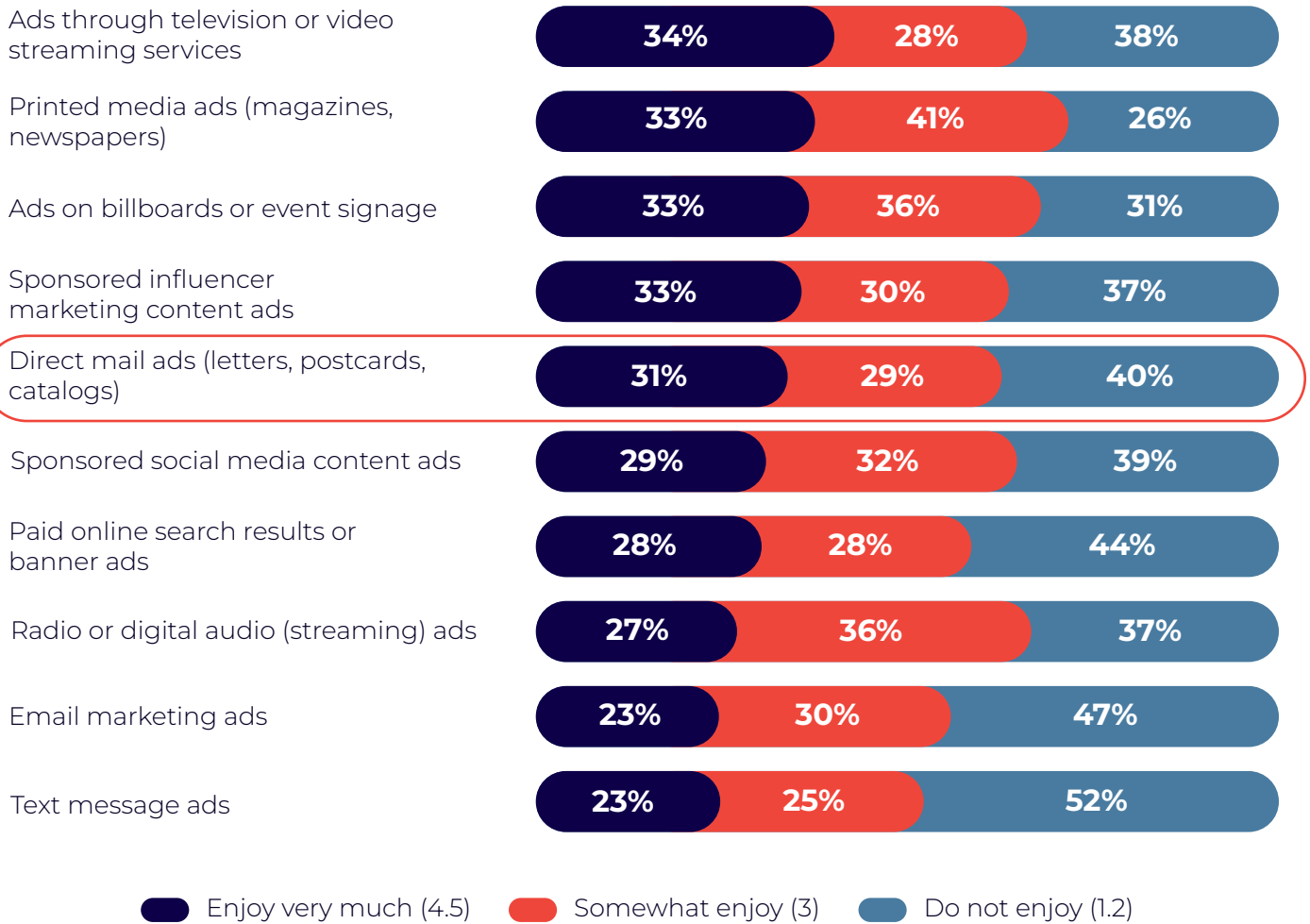


Consumers remain receptive to direct mail, with nearly one-third saying they genuinely enjoy receiving it, placing it among this year's top-rated advertising experiences. Engagement remains steady, as **21% interact with their mail daily or more**. Direct mail also preserves its strong persuasive power: **37% rank it among the most influential ad types** in shaping their purchase decisions, particularly older adults. And importantly, **about one in five consumers report making a purchase** in the past year from relevant mail they received.



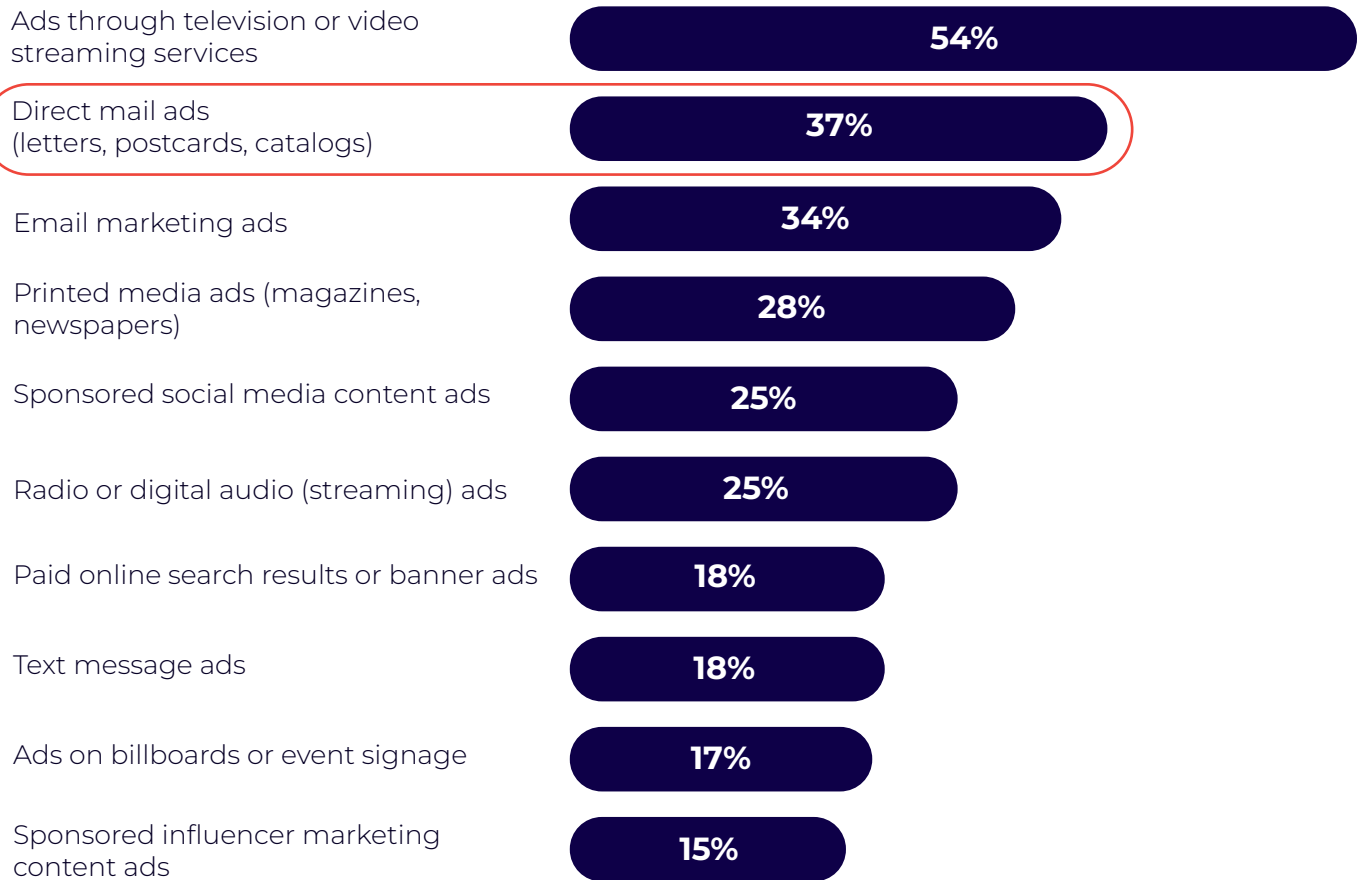
## Level of Enjoyment from Types of Advertising

**Consumer Question:** Please rate how much you enjoy or appreciate each of the following types of advertising.



## Most Influential Types of Advertising

**Consumer Question:** Please choose and rank the types of advertisements that are most influential over your purchase decisions. [Select top three types]



# Trends in Direct Mail Testing & Execution



## **Reality Check:** Consumer Insights

- **Nearly one in five consumers report making a purchase in the last 6–12 months** as a result of receiving relevant direct mail
- **52% of consumers enjoy mail** because they can keep an interesting piece and refer to it later

As marketers move through another year of cautious but growing economic comfort, our 2026 research shows that **direct mail remains a steady and reliable component of the marketing mix**. That confidence is reinforced by performance outcomes, as marketers who increased direct mail spend were more likely to see improvement (63%) than those who kept budgets flat (48%) or reduced spend (42%).

Marketers are increasingly focused on strengthening the elements that have the greatest influence on performance. Hyper-personalization and deeper customization rank among the top opportunities, alongside rising interest in data analytics, predictive insights, and clearer multichannel integration. Many teams are also working to improve targeting precision and explore AI-driven efficiency gains.

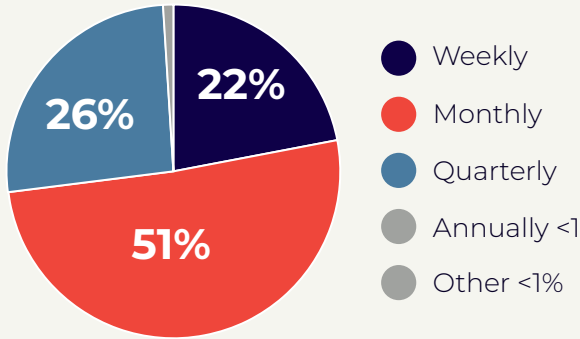
Creative testing also continues to be a foundational part of direct mail strategy. While last year saw widespread testing frequency increases, 2026 reflects more stable testing rhythms, with most teams still testing creative multiple times per year and strengthening data-source reviews to ensure relevance. This aligns closely with consumer sentiment: relevance and clarity remain key drivers of enjoyment, with **52% valuing the ability to keep mail for later reference and 44% saying it feels less intrusive than other ads**.

Mailing patterns show subtle but notable adjustments. Marketers are mailing more consistently to winback and remarketing audiences, especially on monthly cycles, while quarterly and annual outreach is being tightened around audiences with stronger historical response rates. These shifts mirror consumer behavior, where direct mail engagement and influence have held stable or improved slightly year over year.

Even with USPS rate changes and operational cost pressures, direct mail is driving meaningful consumer action. One of the most significant findings this year is that **21% of consumers made a purchase in the past year after receiving a relevant mail piece**. With influence rising in key segments, direct mail continues to play an important role in omnichannel strategies that prioritize measurable outcomes.

## Frequency of Mailing to Winback and Lead Remarketing Audiences

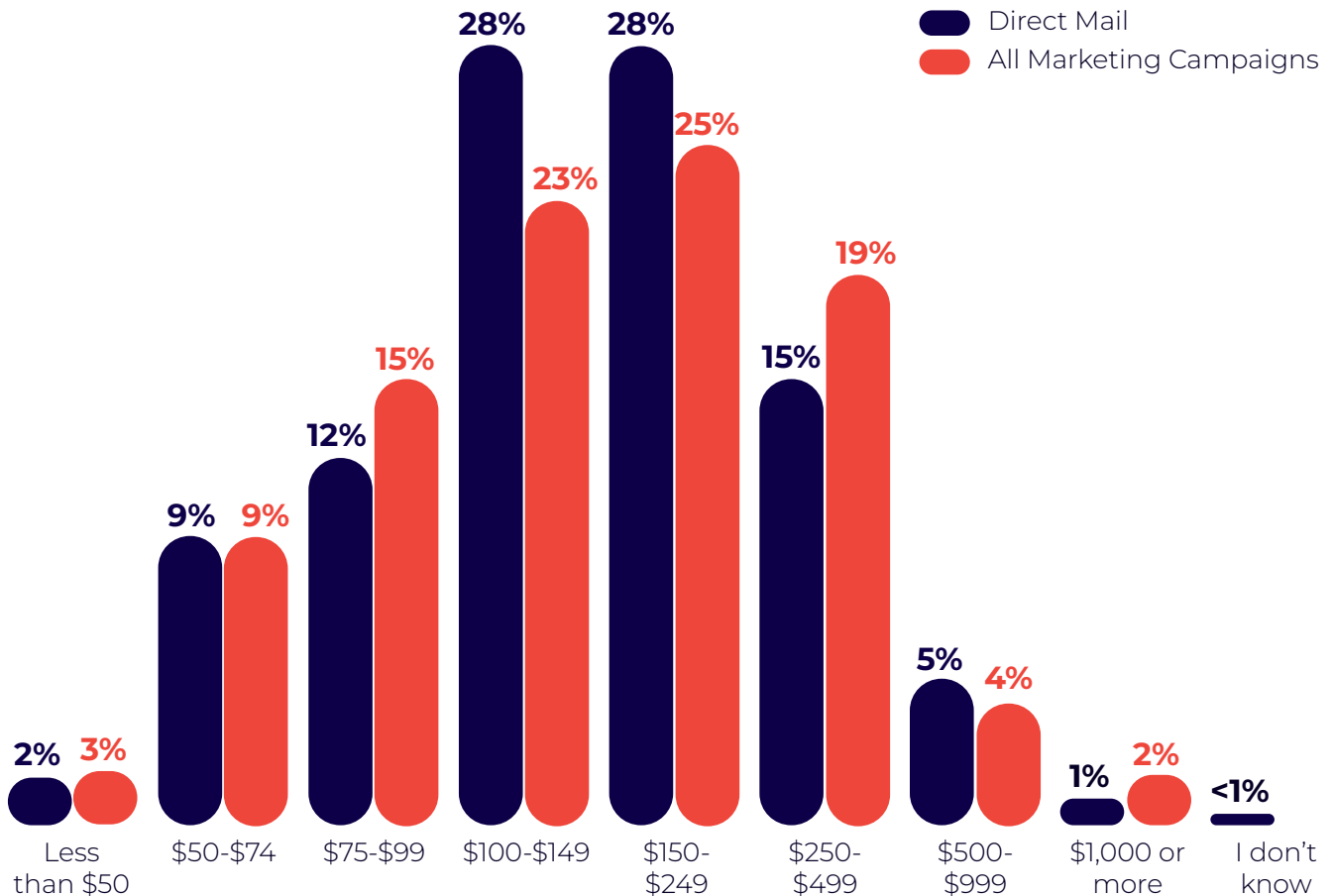
**Marketer Question:** How often are you mailing to your winback and lead remarketing audiences?



## Average Direct Mail Cost Per Acquisition vs. for All Marketing Campaigns

**Marketer Question:** What is your average cost per acquisition (CPA) for direct mail?

**Marketer Question:** What is the average cost per acquisition (CPA) for all of your direct marketing campaigns?



## Integration with Digital Channels



### **Reality Check:** Consumer Insights

- **31% of consumers are more likely to engage** with brand content when they receive both a mail piece and a digital ad (up 4% from 2025)
- **Visiting a website** is the most common action after receiving relevant mail, with younger and middle-income consumers driving higher engagement

Marketers are leaning further into the strengths of direct mail by weaving it more intentionally into digital experiences. Rather than treating mail as a standalone touchpoint, brands are using it as a launchpad to reinforce messaging, extend reach, and create more connected customer journeys.

Integration is also becoming more multidimensional. While email remains the most common digital partner for direct mail, marketers are expanding their playbooks. **Growing adoption of paid social (52%), SMS/MMS (46%), display (44%), and connected audio (40%)** shows movement toward broader cross-channel storytelling.

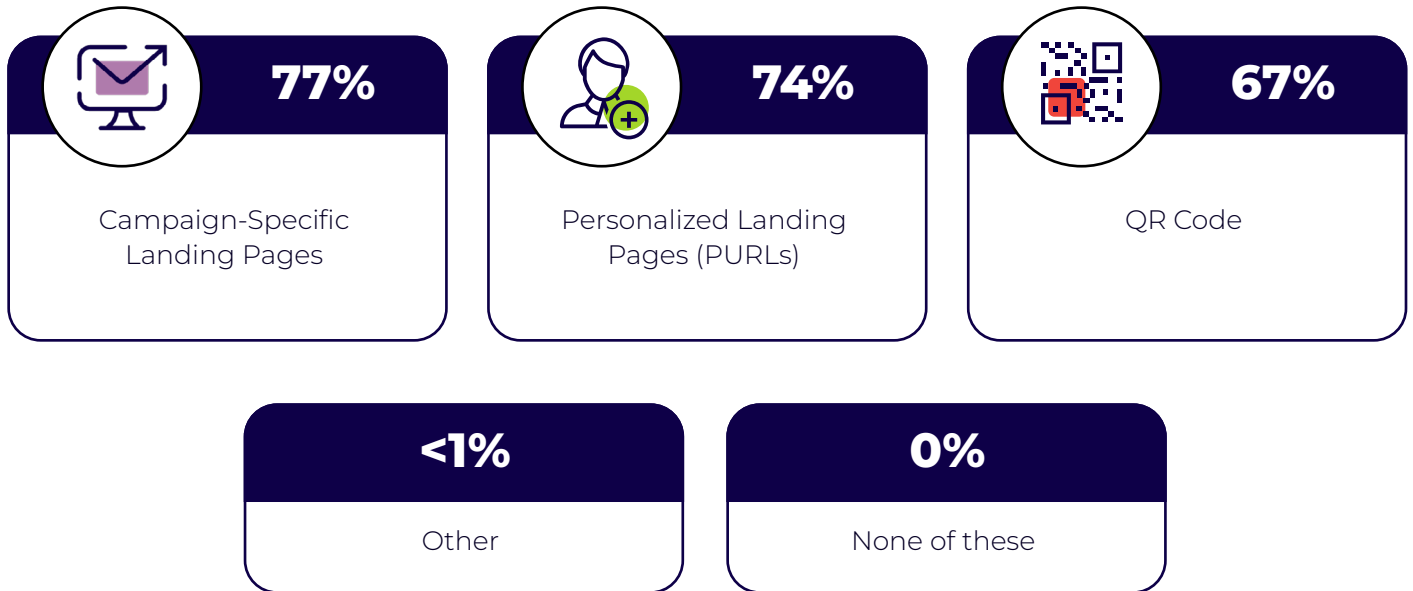
Direct-mail-specific landing pages remain central to conversion strategies. This year, **95% of marketers who integrate channels use a dedicated landing page**, and 98% say mirroring the mailpiece's creative in the digital experience leads to better results. The emphasis has shifted from simply "having a landing page" to ensuring the experience feels unified and reinforces brand clarity from the mailbox to the browser.

Measurement approaches are evolving as well. Marketers are relying heavier on digital performance indicators, with **67% prioritizing website visits, CTRs, and conversion metrics to understand campaign lift**. At the same time, use of matchback analysis has gained traction as organizations look for clearer attribution across online and offline behaviors.

For teams still working toward integrating multiple channels, the barriers are less about tools and more about strategy. Establishing a cohesive creative approach and aligning measurement across platforms remain the most common challenges delaying adoption.

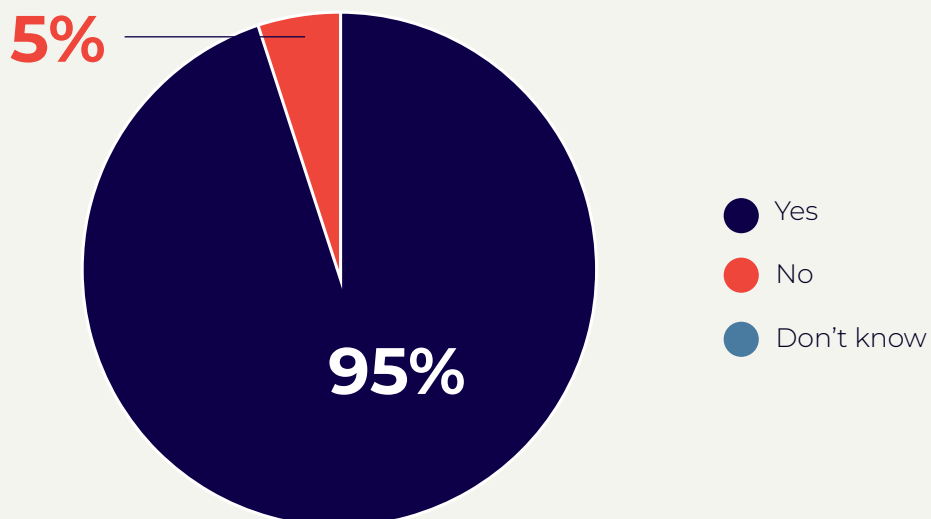
## Elements Used to Drive Engagement from Mail to Digital Environments

**Marketer Question:** What elements are you using to drive engagement from the mail piece to digital environments? Select all that apply.



## Integrating Direct Mail/Digital Channels has Positive Impact on Campaign Performance

**Marketer Question:** Generally speaking, does integrating direct mail and digital channels have a positive impact on campaign performance?



# Strategic Insights for Marketers

As direct mail programs become more integrated and refined, marketers are concentrating on the core factors that most directly influence performance.

This year, the strongest contributors to improved results were **more precise audience targeting (38%) and enhanced personalization (38%)**. Yet these same areas remain challenging. Targeting and data access again rose to the top pain points, followed by performance tracking and internal bandwidth constraints.

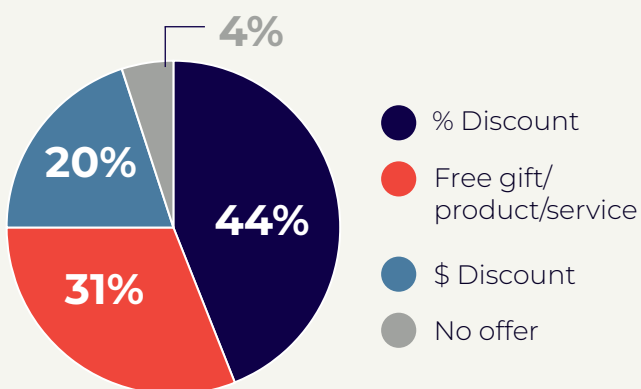
In-house management increased significantly, replacing some reliance on automation tools as teams seek tighter control over data, timing, and creative alignment. Supporting that shift, nearly all marketers now maintain structured testing routines: **97% test list data sources quarterly or more**, and creative is tested at a similar frequency.

Offer strategy continues to evolve as well. **Percentage-based discounts remain the best-performing incentive (44%)**, though marketers report growing interest in offer structures that balance motivation with cost efficiency.

These findings suggest that the next phase of performance improvement will be driven less by scale and more by precision.

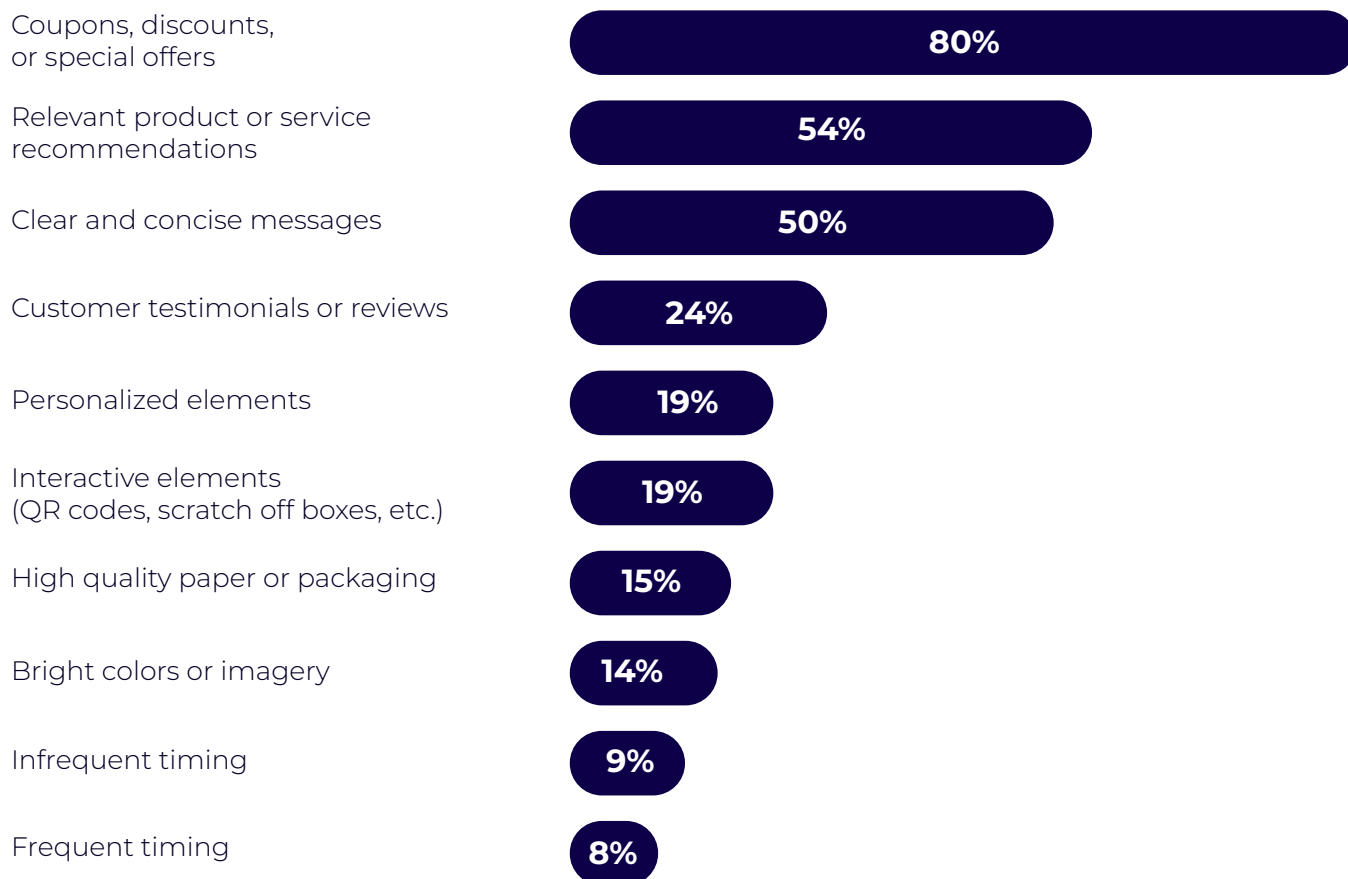
## Best Offer Strategy

**Marketer Question:** Which offer strategy performs best for your brand?



## Most Likely to Give Positive Impression of Direct mail Ad (Top Three Attributes)

**Consumer Question:** Which of the following are most likely to give you a more positive impression of a direct mail advertisement? [Select top three attributes]



## Top Three Advantages of Direct Mail Channel

**Marketer Question:** In your opinion, what are the top three advantages of the direct mail channel?

Quality audience targeting data

41%

Ability to integrate with digital campaigns

37%

Easy to track attribution and performance

36%

Personalization/customization

35%

Mail volumes and budget flexibility

33%

Flexibility with creative and format

31%

Physical, tangible media

29%

Affordable (CPA/CAC)

28%

It's scalable in ways other channels are not

27%

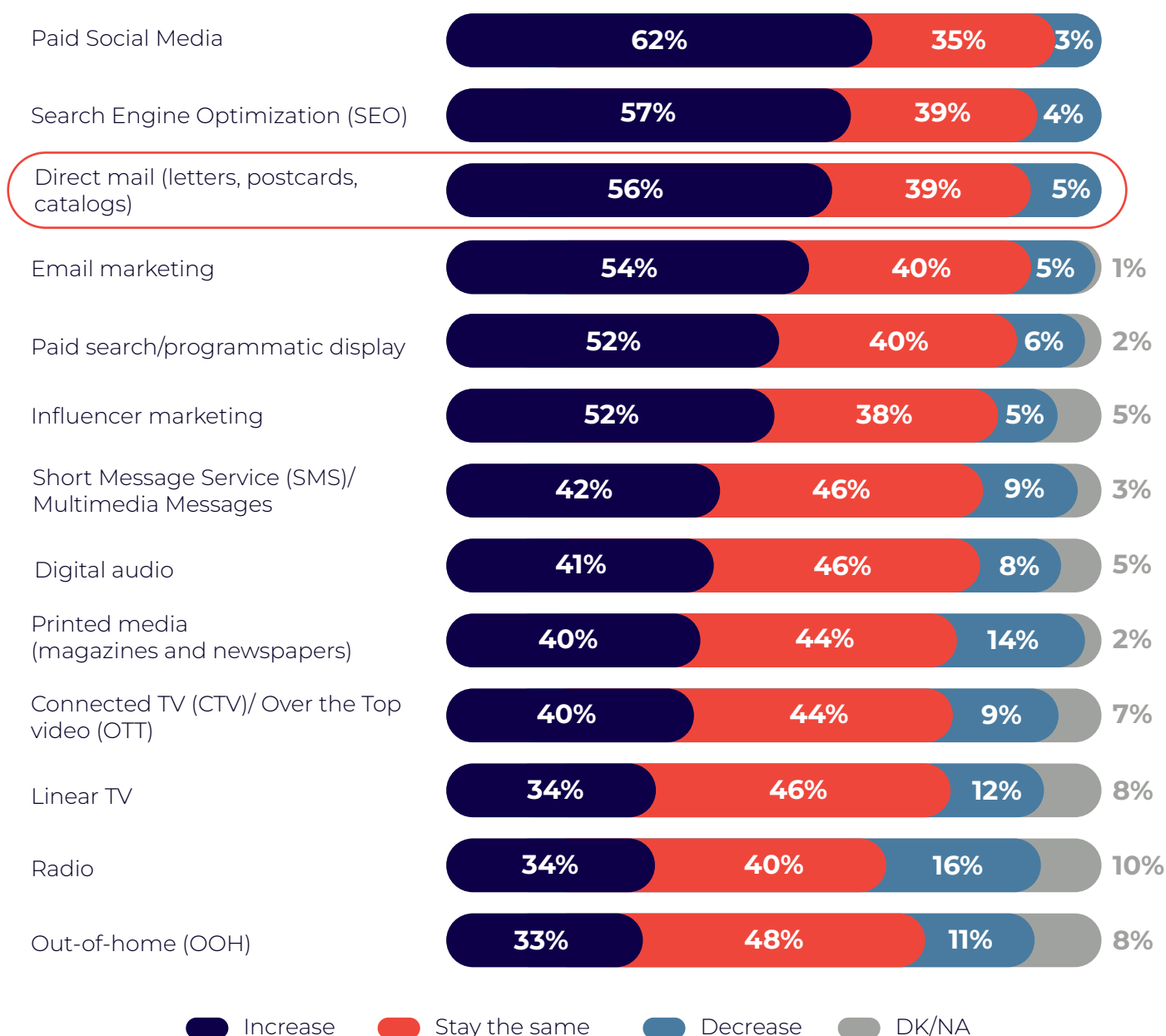


## Future Outlook and Opportunities

Looking ahead, direct mail is entering the next 12 months with more forward momentum than any other direct marketing channel. While budget expectations across social, search, email, and other digital tactics remain largely stable, **95% of marketers say they plan to maintain or grow their investment in direct mail**, reflecting a meaningful rise from last year's 87% and making it one of the only channels with clear commitment.

### Anticipated Direct Marketing Budget Changes in Next 12 Months

**Marketer Question:** How do you anticipate your budget for the following direct marketing strategies will change in the next 12 months?

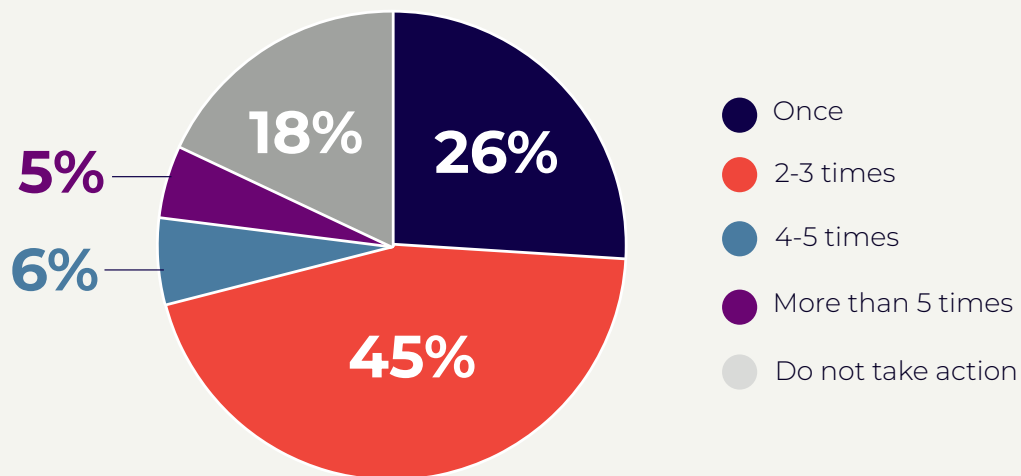


Rather than broadly increasing volume, organizations are becoming more deliberate about where and when mail is deployed across the customer lifecycle. Consumer response patterns support this approach: while 26% say one mailing is enough to prompt action, the majority (45%) report needing two to three mailings before taking action.

As a result, many brands are shifting away from large, infrequent drops and toward more consistent, targeted outreach. Thoughtful segmentation, controlled testing, and ongoing message refinement are helping teams drive incremental lift over time. This approach is making direct mail programs smarter and more efficient.

### Mailing Frequency Required to Compel Action

**Consumer Question:** On average, how many times does a company need to send mail advertising before you take a requested action?

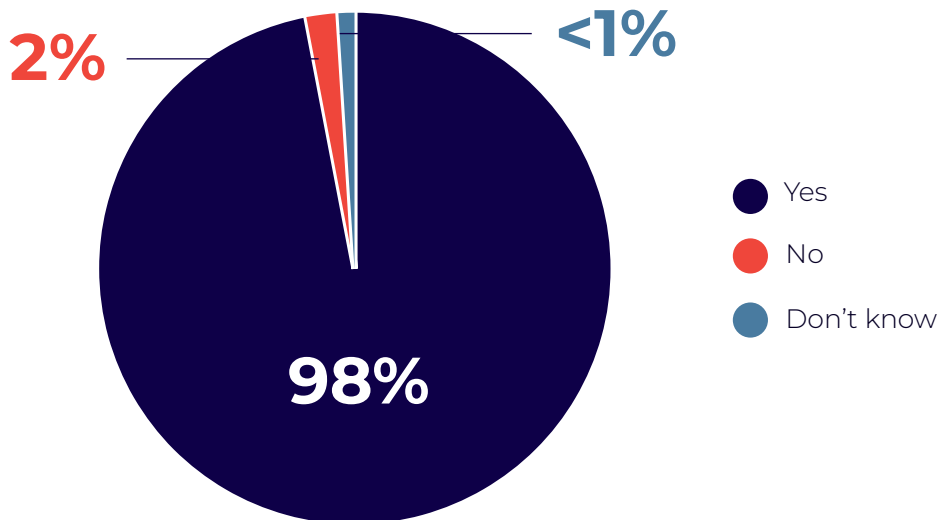


At the same time, consumers continue to respond strongly to marketing experiences that feel connected across channels, particularly as digital environments become more crowded and competitive. When brands create a cohesive journey between their offline and online touchpoints, **consumers are more likely to notice, engage, and ultimately act.**

Marketers who integrate channels continue to see performance advantages. Among those who believe integration improves campaign performance, **nearly all maintain landing pages dedicated to their direct mail programs** with creative elements that mirror the mail design and offer, reinforcing a consistent experience from the mailbox to the digital interaction.

## Landing Page Consistent With Mail Design Improves Campaign Results

**Marketer Question:** Does a landing page that is consistent with your mail design improve campaign results?



### Where Strategy and Consumer Response Align

Our 2026 marketer and consumer research highlights a rare alignment: what brands are doing with mail is working and consumers are responding.

This year, the data shows a channel defined not by dramatic swings, but by dependable performance and steadily growing confidence. Marketers are strengthening their results through smarter targeting, consistent testing, and creative refinement. Meanwhile, consumers continue to meet those efforts with engagement, keeping meaningful mail in their homes, responding predictably to repeated exposure, and experiencing far less overwhelm than they do in many digital environments. In a marketing landscape defined by volatility, mail offers something increasingly valuable: stability, clarity, and room to stand out.

If you're already using direct mail, use these insights to strengthen a channel known for its stability, steady performance, and dependable results. If you're considering it, this is your sign: the mailbox is wide open.

Want help crafting high-performing campaigns? Learn more about how to turn these insights into action at [franklinmadisondirect.com](https://franklinmadisondirect.com).