



What America Wants from the Postal Service

America's communications needs are continually evolving; the Digital Revolution has accelerated that change. Physical mail is losing its primacy as the most widely used communication channel, increasingly displaced by the immediacy and convenience of the Internet. Individuals and businesses now rely on many forms of communication and methods of transacting business — both digital and physical. At the same time, the nation's current digital communications infrastructure still has some fundamental gaps hindering public adoption of the online channel such as lack of universal access, security concerns, and the decentralized nature of the network.

The U.S. Postal Service is at a critical juncture in determining its role in the Digital Age. Fundamental questions about the role of the Postal Service in the lives of Americans, both now and in the future, are at the heart of determining how to modernize. Considerations to the debate about how the Postal Service should evolve often include insights from Postal Service management, the postal regulator, employee groups, individual customers, large mailers, members of Congress, the Administration, and other stakeholders. Largely absent from the debate, however, has been the direct voice of the American public — the very people the Postal Service exists to serve.

The Postal Service Office of Inspector General commissioned a study by the market research firm InfoTrends to better understand how Internet-connected Americans view the Postal Service now, as well as what role it could play in their lives in the future. The study was an Internet-based survey. The findings are intended to be the basis for more in-depth follow-up research into topics this initial survey identifies as important. Additional research will likely reach a larger population, including those without access to the Internet, and may include focus groups, additional surveys, and/or interviews.

The following report, *What America Wants from the Postal Service: A Survey of Internet-connected Americans*, describes the results of InfoTrends' study.

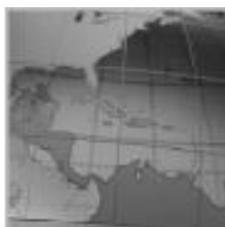
Key Findings

While survey results were compared across multiple demographic criteria, the age of respondents was most likely to reveal variations in response. Specifically, younger respondents had the most open views about what the Postal Service can and should be doing, while older respondents appeared to be less comfortable with the Postal Service changing its traditional role. Results did not vary significantly based on whether respondents came from rural or urban areas.

Several key trends emerge from the study and the OIG's analysis:

- *Perceptions of the Postal Service's Role:* The overwhelming majority of respondents think their life would be affected adversely if the Postal Service did not exist in five years. Most respondents also consider Postal Service delivery a public service that should be maintained, even if it is not profitable. Respondents, however, generally misunderstand how the Postal Service is funded, believing it is funded through tax dollars, rather than postage sale revenue.
- *Accessibility:* While most respondents are satisfied with the service and accessibility of their Post Office, a strong majority indicated they would be interested in more self-service options. The majority of respondents, however, said if they were to have access to postal products and services through an existing non-postal operated retail facility — such as a grocery store or pharmacy — rather than their local Post Office, it would neither increase nor decrease their use of the Postal Service.
- *Cost Reduction Efforts:* Respondents are generally not opposed to closing Post Offices to reduce costs, but are less likely to support the notion if it resulted in their local Post Office closing. Respondents, however, do not support cost reduction efforts that would delay mail delivery, reduce mail delivery to three days per week, or decrease Post Office hours.
- *Comfort Level with Online Interactions:* The majority of respondents still have interest in receiving at least some physical mail. A strong majority of respondents indicated some level of discomfort conducting transactions online, but more than half of those indicated they do so anyway. The majority prefer receiving physical mail over digital messages, although there is at least some interest in receiving specific types of mail electronically rather than physically, such as advertising mail.
- *Growth Opportunities:* Respondents support service expansion at the Postal Service. Respondents expressed interest in being able to access additional services at Post Offices, such as renewing a driver's license and obtaining permits or licenses. Respondents are also interested in the Postal Service providing digital services, with younger respondents being most encouraging of growth in this direction.

Analysis



May 2013

What America Wants from the Postal Service

A Survey of Internet-connected Americans

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Introduction

The U.S. Postal Service has long been a critical element of the country's national communication infrastructure pre-dating the Constitution. Its legal mandate is to provide services that "bind the nation together," and it has been doing so for more than 240 years. It is currently the cornerstone of a mailing industry that generates \$1.3 trillion in revenue annually and supports about 8.4 million jobs, which accounts for 6% of all jobs in the country.¹ The Postal Service currently delivers mail and packages to every address—business and residential—six days per week. Many people rely on the Postal Service to affordably send and receive important communications and business transactions as well as packages, including prescription drugs and other necessities. Nevertheless, reliance on paper-based communications has decreased significantly in recent years as the digital age has changed the way individuals and businesses communicate and transact. As a result, mail volume has declined and the Postal Service has had to reassess how it can adapt to meet evolving communication needs.

Research Background

All members of the postal community, including postal management, legislators, regulators, and customers, are currently working to address the need for the Postal Service to co-evolve with the rapidly changing environment. Critical, balanced, and unbiased information about Americans' communication needs and expectations could help inform key decision-makers as they make important decisions about the future of the Postal Service.

Objective and Scope

Due to limited consumer insight in the Postal debate, the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General (OIG)² commissioned InfoTrends to collaboratively design, analyze, and report on a pilot survey of Americans regarding their perceptions of the Postal Service and the role it plays in their lives.

To achieve this objective, we conducted a web survey of 5,000 Internet-connected Americans aged 18 years and older. As a web-based survey, this research inherently excluded approximately 20% of the U.S. population who lack consistent Internet access, thus creating a skew to the results. Consequently, this excluded segment of the population, who are likely rural and lower-income respondents, would not have had an opportunity to participate at this juncture. A web survey was chosen for convenience and cost considerations with the understanding that those people not included in this pilot survey could be reached in a future phase of the research (via mail, phone, or in-person).

¹ "2012 EMA Mailing Industry Job Study," *Envelope Manufacturers Association*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.envelope.org/>.

² The USPS OIG's research initiatives are objective and independent from the Postal Service and other stakeholders.

These research findings (collected in February and March of 2013) should be treated as preliminary insights into what Internet-connected Americans view as important about the Postal Service and as a premise for additional exploration of key areas for discussion.

Our 45-question web survey was distributed by a third-party Internet survey provider who gave incentives to encourage participation. To help ensure unbiased responses, survey takers were not aware the research was commissioned by the USPS OIG.

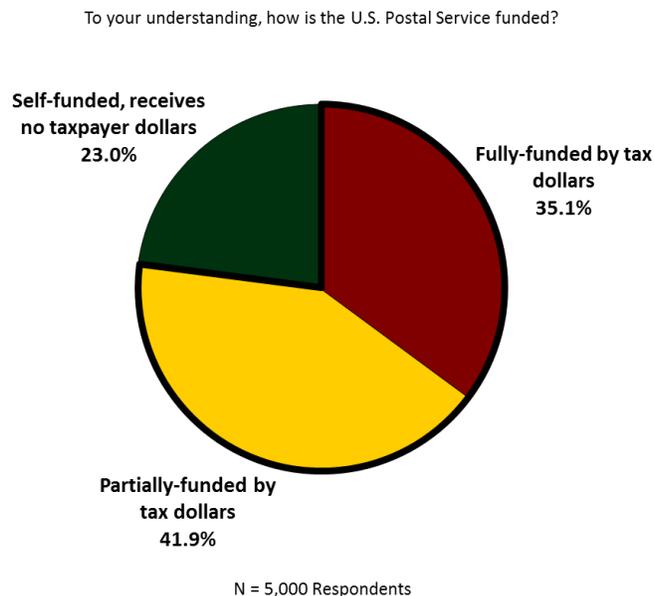
Demographics of the respondents were monitored to ensure the final sample aligned with the distribution of the most recent U.S. Census for age, region of the country, and gender. InfoTrends handled data cleansing—removing respondents who completed the survey too quickly and those who were not taking the survey seriously (based on open-ended responses). This process resulted in the removal of approximately 400 responses resulting in a total of 5,000 “clean” responses.

Perceptions of the Role of the Postal Service

Understanding of How the Postal Service is Funded

As an independent establishment of the executive branch, the Postal Service receives no tax dollars to fund its operations; these costs are funded solely by revenue it generates through its products and services.³ Even so, 77% of respondents incorrectly believe the Postal Service is either partially or fully funded through tax dollars.

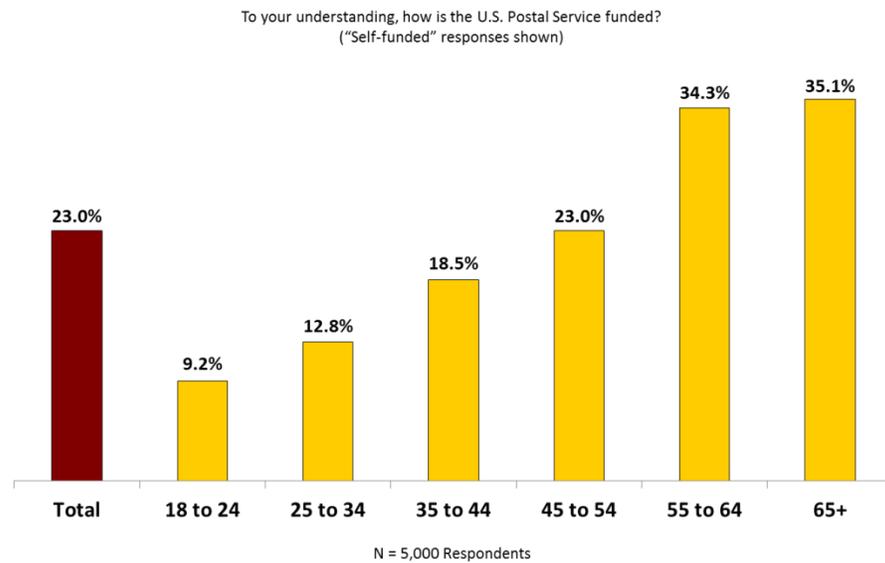
Figure 1: Many Americans are Misinformed as to How the USPS is Funded



Respondents’ understanding of how the Postal Service is funded appears to differ by age. As Figure 2 shows, only 9% of respondents between 18 and 24 were correct in their understanding, compared to 35% of respondents 65 years of age and older.

³ Although the Postal Service does not receive any tax dollars to fund its operations, it receives nominal funds as reimbursements for revenue foregone for services it has rendered based on legal requirements, such as free mail for the blind and overseas voters.

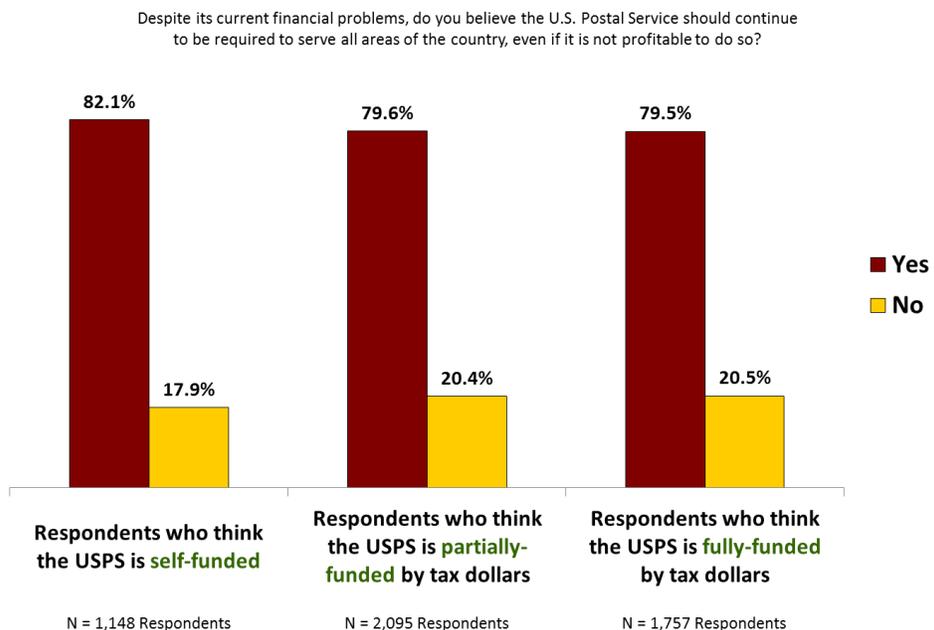
Figure 2: Older Americans are Most Likely to Understand that the USPS is Self-funded



Expectation to Fulfill Universal Service Obligation

While it receives no tax dollars to fund its operations, the Postal Service has a legal obligation to provide universal service to the American public. This includes providing affordable delivery services to "every door, every day," even where it does not make financial sense to do so. To explore Americans' agreement with the universal service obligation, we asked respondents to weigh in on whether or not the Postal Service should continue to be required to serve all areas of the country. About 80% agree that it should, including those that understand it is self-funded.

Figure 3: Most Americans Support the Universal Service Obligation



Responses varied insignificantly by age, gender, income, and region of the country. Nevertheless, rural respondents (82.8%) were understandably more likely to say it should continue to serve all regions of the country when compared to suburban (79.3%) and urban (79.9%) respondents. Since respondents were all Internet-connected, it would be interesting to follow up on this question with a non-Internet connected sample to see if the disparity between rural, suburban, and urban responses is more pronounced.

Here are a few of the explanations respondents gave to support their opinions:

“Mail service is vital to our economy.”

– 45 to 54 year-old woman from Pennsylvania

Yes, the Postal Service should be required to serve all areas of the country.

- “US mail has been around forever, it is as important as the right to freedom of speech.”
- “I feel that Congress should shore up the [Postal Service] or keep out of its business.”
- “It is important to have a standardized system in place for the processing of mail. I fear what would happen if the postal system [were] in the hands of a private party.”
- “Mail service is vital to our economy.”
- “Post offices are more than just a service station. In many smaller areas and towns, they serve as a hub of information. People use these areas for conversation and spread of community information and cohesiveness.”

No, the Postal Service should not be required to serve all areas of the country.

- “Until we get our financial feet under us, we will have to make cuts everywhere.”
- “...People can adjust to having to drive a little farther to the nearest post office. I don’t think many people mail enough to care.”
- “Normal business wouldn't keep a location there. If you aren't being profitable, then move the resources to a more profitable location. This is probably why you are in the mess to begin with.”
- “We need to continue to do what is economically fiscal for our country. If this means cuts in service, then I support it.”
- “Personally, I feel that if the Post Office cannot be profitable, it should close and let the private sector provide the services.”

With regard to the last quote, we wanted to explore how much Americans would be affected if the Postal Service did not exist in five years. In fact, nearly 95% said they would be impacted, with almost half of our respondents citing a significant impact.

Figure 4: Americans Would be Impacted if the USPS Did Not Exist in Five Years

If the U.S. Postal Service did not exist in five years, would it have an impact on you?

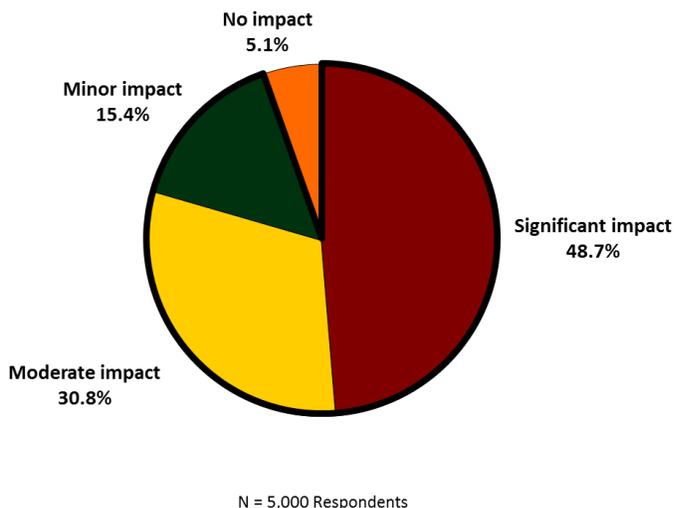
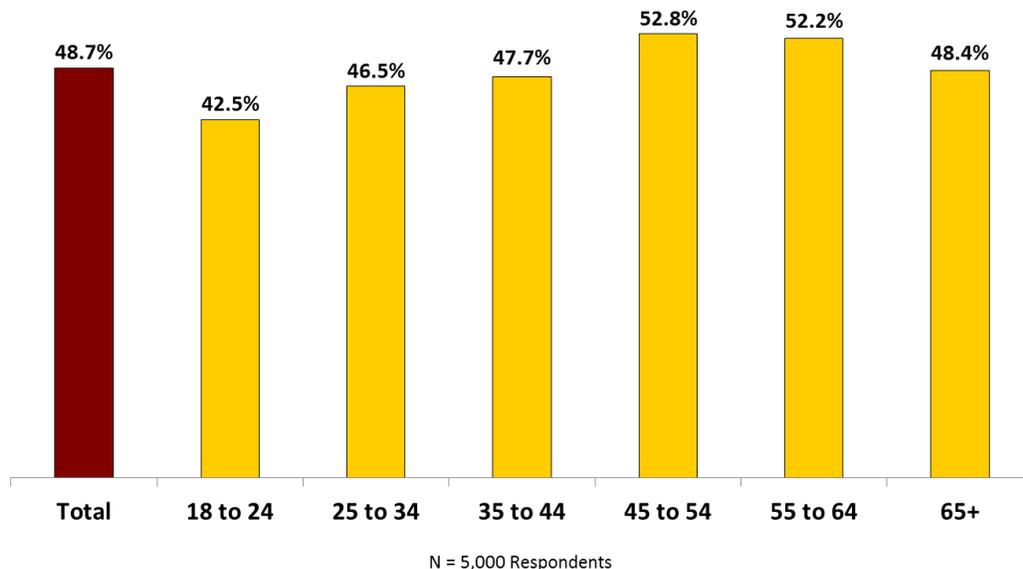


Figure 5 shows significant impact, by age. Younger respondents were least likely to be significantly impacted.

Figure 5: Younger Americans are Least Likely to be Significantly Impacted if the USPS Did Not Exist in Five Years

If the U.S. Postal Service did not exist in five years, would it have an impact on you?
("Significant impact" responses shown)



While fewer younger respondents cited they would be significantly impacted if the USPS did not exist in five years, the variation in the findings is notable, but not dramatic. In fact, only 5% of respondents under the age of 35 cited that the elimination of the USPS would have no impact on them. This finding signifies that the Postal Service has an opportunity to engage these younger Americans and increase its value to them.

Insight on Accessibility of the Postal Service

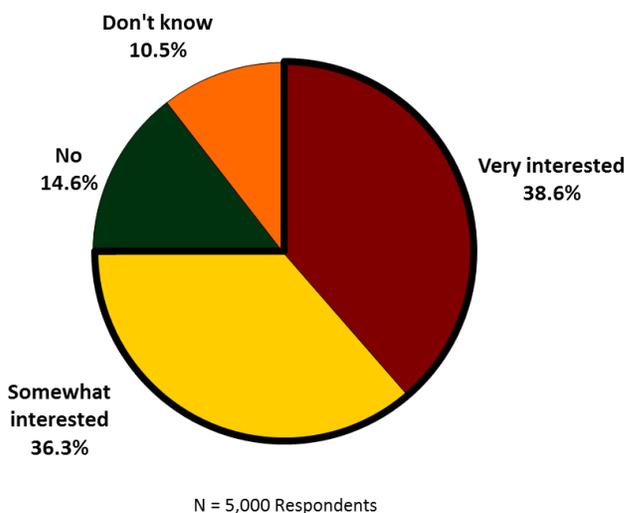
The Postal Service operates nearly 32,000 Post Offices, with retail partners providing an additional 70,000+ locations to purchase stamps and conduct other postal transactions. It continues to review measures that would reduce costs, while providing similar levels of services to the American public. Our research probed the topics of accessibility of postal products and services as well as customer satisfaction. Respondents were generally satisfied on both fronts.

Interest in Self-service Options

More than half of survey respondents are satisfied with the self-service options currently available at their local Post Office. Many respondents showed interest in having more self-service options for tasks such as buying stamps, paying for shipping, and mailing letters or packages.

Figure 6: Americans are Interested in More Self-service Options at the Post Office

Would you be interested in having post offices provide more self-service options for buying stamps, paying for shipping, and mailing items?



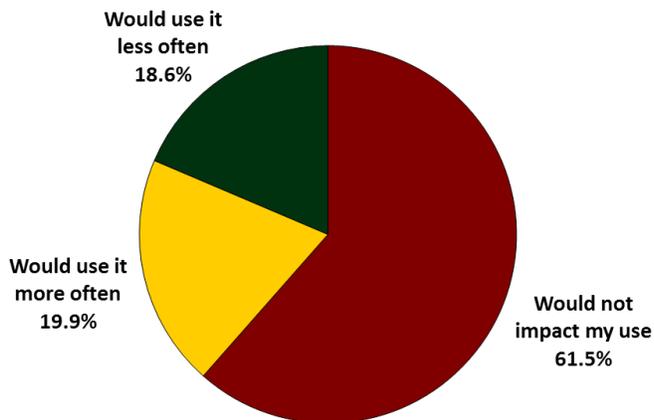
The highest interest in self-service options came from respondents aged 25 to 34 (56%), 35 to 44 (49%), and those who were employed full-time (46%).

Interest in Co-location of Post Offices

In addition to more self-service options at the Post Office, another topic currently under discussion is whether the Postal Service should use shared retail space with other businesses to cut costs and offer the public more convenience. As shown in Figure 7, 62% of respondents would use the Postal Service just as before, while 20% of respondents would use it more often if their local Post Office was closed and moved inside a nearby retail chain.

Figure 7: Co-location Would Not Dramatically Change Use of the USPS

If the U.S. Postal Service closed your local post office and moved it inside a nearby retail chain, how would this impact your use of the USPS?



N = 5,000 Respondents

“Post offices are more than just a service station... People use these areas for conversation and spread of community information and cohesiveness.”

– 18 to 24 year-old man from Illinois

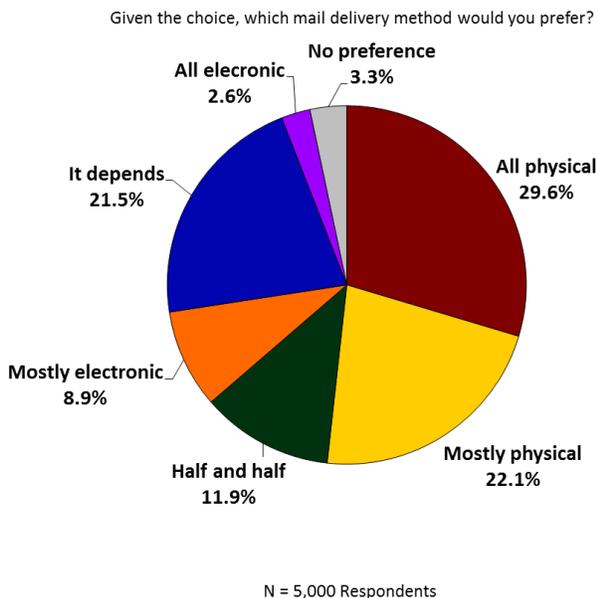
Respondents aged 25 to 34 (31%) and 18 to 24 (29%) showed the greatest likelihood of increasing their frequency of use of postal services when available in existing retail locations, with interest declining incrementally for older demographics. Respondents from urban environments (25%) were also more likely to cite increased use of postal services in this scenario when compared to their suburban (17%) and rural (12%) counterparts. In fact, 32% of rural respondents cited that they would use the Postal Service less often.

Frequently-cited services that respondents want to have available at co-located Post Offices included the ability to buy stamps (84%), have mail services available for packages (75%), and drop off mail (71%).

Consumer Delivery Channel Preference

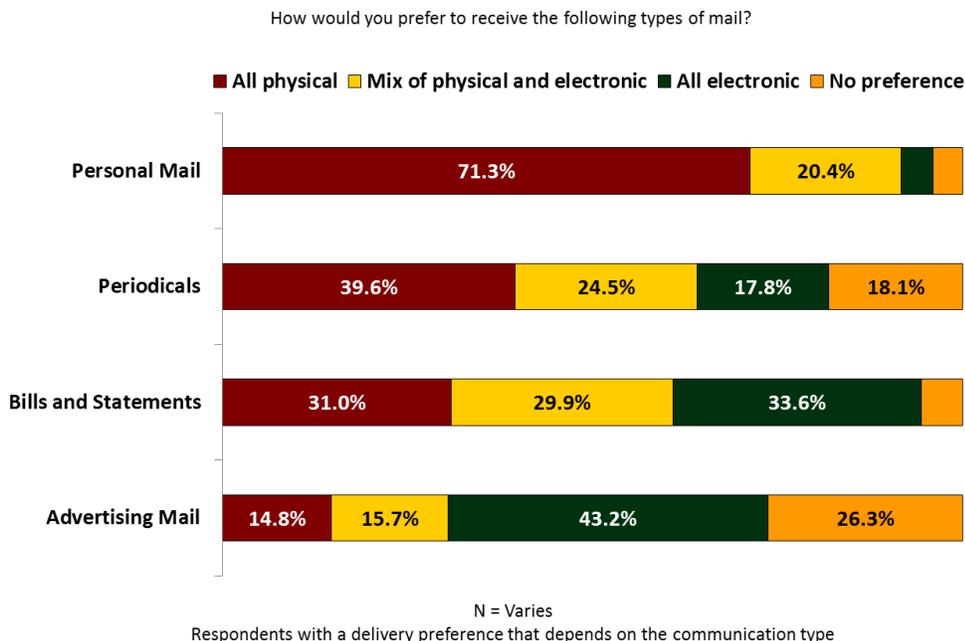
Electronic substitution of traditional mail is accelerating, as consumers and businesses increasingly rely on new technologies. The result has been considerable mail volume and revenue decline for the USPS. Technological advances are making it much easier for people to receive their mail in digital format. Nevertheless, problems remain with developing digital services. These include a lack of universal access and inadequate levels of privacy, confidentiality, security, and dependability. Even with physical mail declines, over 50% of respondents still prefer physical mail over digital communications.

Figure 8: More than Half of Americans Prefer for Mail Delivery to be All or Mostly Physical (versus Digital)



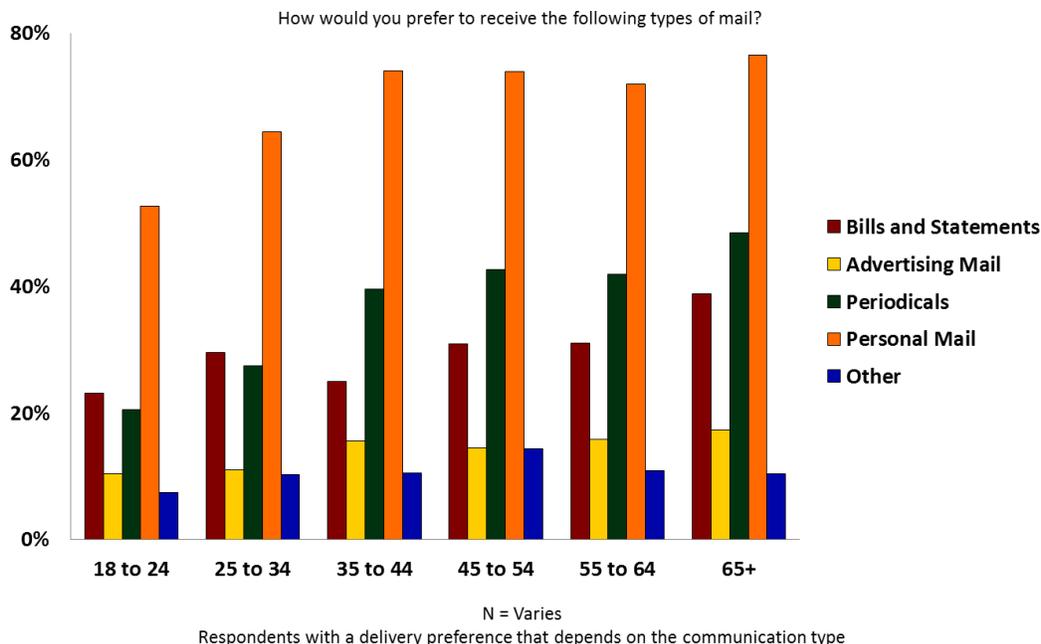
Upon further examination, we found respondents were most likely to prefer personal mail (e.g., postcards, letters) be delivered as only physical (71%), compared to periodicals (40%), bills (31%), and advertising mail (15%).

Figure 9: Americans Show Preference for Physical Delivery by Type of Mail



In general, our older respondents had a stronger preference for receiving physical mail. This was especially true with personal mail, periodicals, as well as bills and statements.

Figure 10: Preference for Physical Mail by Type (by age)



Possible explanations could be that the younger demographic is more comfortable with electronic communications. Conversely, the older demographic might have a harder time breaking with traditional ways of communicating, such as paying bills by mail and receiving hardcopy periodicals. We will expand our exploration of the topic of comfort with online communications in a later section.

Cost Reduction Measures

The Postal Service is considering two primary cost reduction measures: optimizing the retail network and modifying delivery options. The goal is to optimize the retail network by matching customer demand with supply, focusing on reducing unnecessary overhead cost, and improving service. Some of these proposed improvements include closing some underutilized facilities and modifying hours of operation.

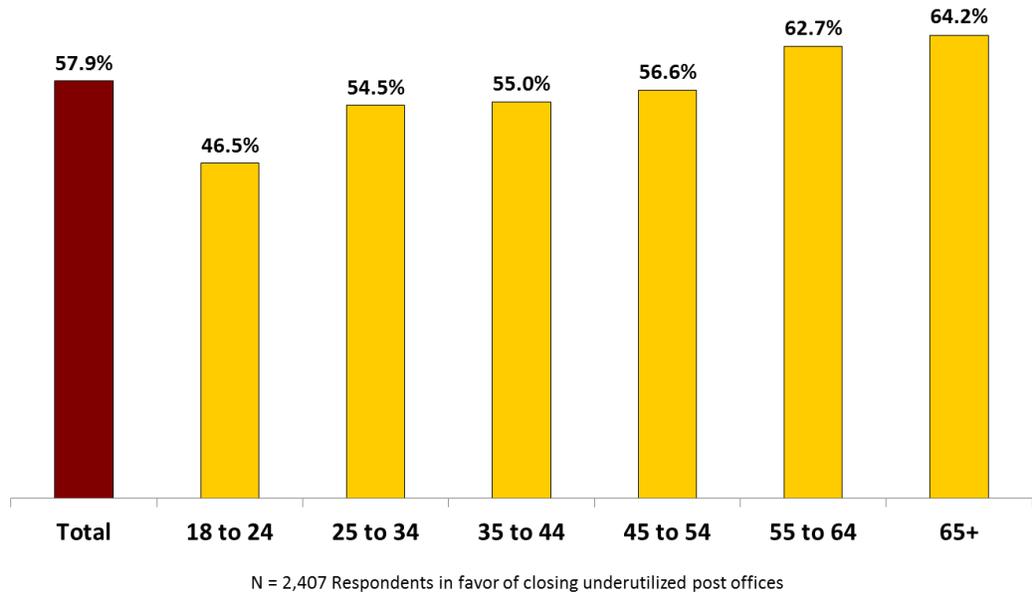
Our survey respondents were divided regarding these proposed changes. Nearly 48% were supportive of closing underutilized Post Offices; however, only 58% of these respondents were still in favor of closures if it was their local Post Office. This finding aligns with some current discussions on the future of the Postal Service. Some people are outwardly supportive of changes (e.g., closures), as long as the changes do not result in direct impact. Older respondents were more likely to maintain their support of closures (64%), even if it was their own Post Office, compared to younger respondents (47%).

“[The Postal Service] needs to break even, and has too many post offices that are underutilized.”

– 65+ year-old man from Washington

Figure 11: Older Respondents are More Supportive of Closing Post Offices Even if it Means Their Local Office Closes

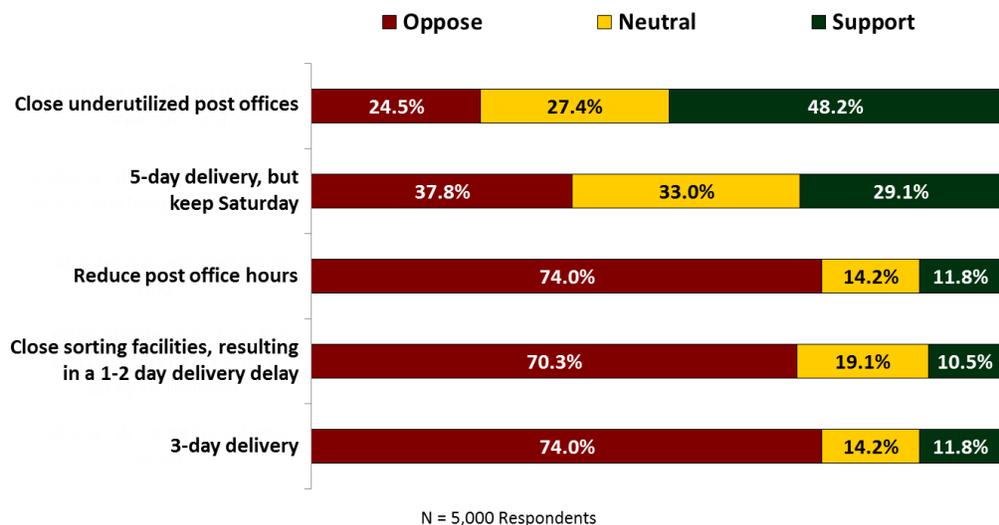
Would you still be in favor of the U.S. Postal Service closing post offices if it meant your local post office would close?
 (“Yes” responses shown)



Respondents showed a strong opposition (over 70%) to several proposed changes, including reducing the hours of operation for Post Offices, closing sorting facilities (resulting in a delivery delay), and moving to three-day delivery.

Figure 12: Varying Levels of Support for Potential Cost Reduction Measures for the Postal Service

How do you feel about these additional possible cost reduction changes for the US Postal Service?



These results reconfirm the lack of support for changes that would disrupt respondents’ current mail usage patterns. Although it was not properly vetted in this survey, Americans appear to want the Postal Service to change gradually. This could be an interesting topic for follow-up research to determine what combination of cost reduction measures would yield the most support. For example, if people support closing Post

Offices, then they may expect the remaining locations to maintain (or expand) their existing hours of operation. In 2011, the Postal Service announced plans to review 3,600 Post Offices for closure, but criticism caused it to survey customers to determine the effect of such closings, and it ultimately decided to reduce hours instead. It is unclear whether the limited hours have met consumer need, and could be a valuable point to further explore.

More recently, the Postal Service announced plans to eliminate Saturday delivery of mail, excluding packages, starting in August 2013. The Postal Service estimated that eliminating Saturday delivery would save it \$2 billion annually. Reducing delivery days is no longer a near-term option, however, because Congress recently reenacted a measure that requires it to maintain existing delivery days, but future legislation may allow for a change to five day delivery.

Our research probed the value of Saturday delivery to respondents. Nearly 38% of respondents opposed the elimination of Saturday delivery, with even stronger opposition to reducing delivery to 3 days per week (74%).

Growth Opportunities

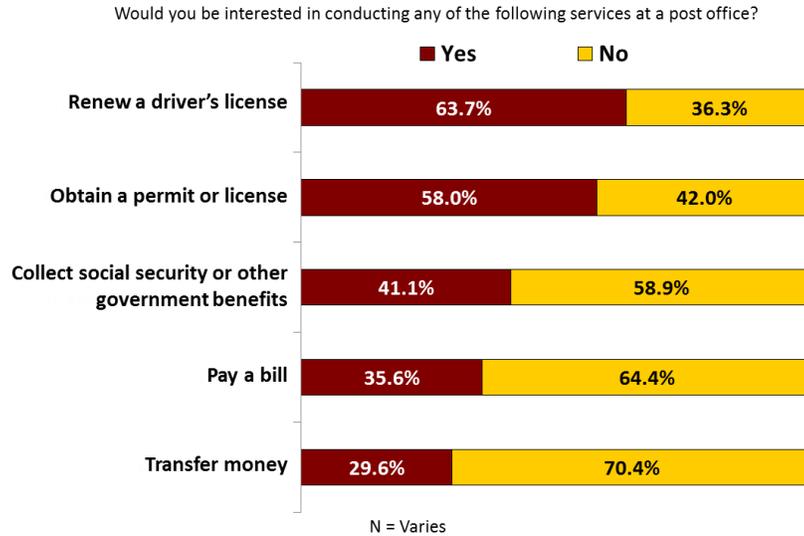
Non-Postal Services

The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 (PAEA) limited the Postal Service to providing only postal products and services, except those non-postal products and services grandfathered by the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). The PRC has also allowed the Postal Service to provide non-postal products and services to government agencies. As the Postal Service continues to look for new ways to generate revenue to sustain its operations, however, the topic of providing non-postal products and services has frequently emerged. Offering non-postal products and services may allow the Postal Service to continue to meet Americans' needs, particularly in a world increasingly reliant on digital communications, as well as earn additional revenue and help cover costs associated with universal service. Existing non-postal services, such as passport applications, generated a net income of \$141 million in 2011.⁴

As the Postal Service seeks authority to expand its non-postal products and services, the main requirements for new products and services may include requirements to meet the needs of the public, not unfairly compete with the private sector, and cover its costs. Potential new services include providing access to government services, such as licenses and permits, allowing for collection of social benefits, and providing services for bill pay at Post Office locations.

⁴ "U.S. Postal Service: Overview of Initiatives to Increase Revenue and Introduce Nonpostal Services and Experimental Postal Products," *Government Accountability Office*, January 15, 2013, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/651298.pdf>.

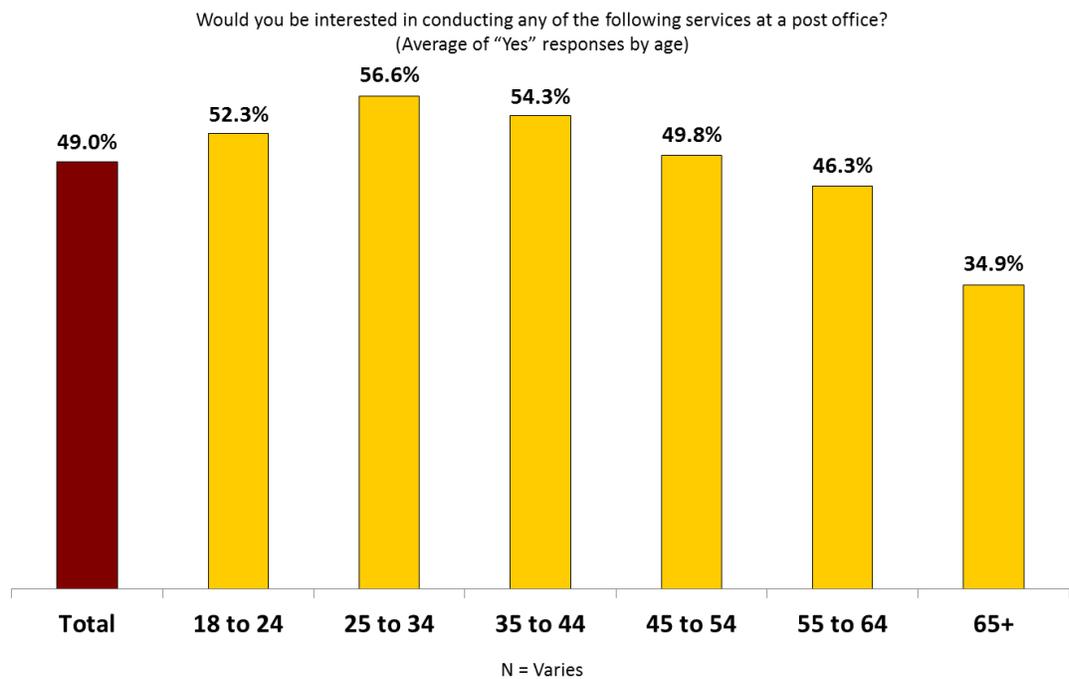
Figure 13: Interest in Additional Services at Post Offices



Most people would support driver's license renewal services as well as being able to obtain permits or licenses. Interest was lower for the other services, but that does not necessarily indicate a lack of opportunity for the Postal Service. For example, 36% of respondents were interested in paying bills at a Post Office. Having another recurring reason to get over one-third of Americans into a Post Office could be a significant opportunity for cross-selling and upselling other products and services.

Overall, nearly 50% of respondents expressed interest in having more services available at the Post Office. As shown in Figure 14, interest in additional services from the Postal Service was strongest among the younger demographics. Interest steadily declined with age, with a significant drop in interest coming from the 65+ age category.

Figure 14: Older Demographic is Less Interested in New Non-postal Services



A few open-response suggestions from the survey for new services included notary public, copy/fax services, electronic money transfers, self-service stamp machines, and other self-service options to avoid lines. One respondent commented, “Wow, if I could do all those things, you can only imagine what other ideas that could take place at the post office... kind of like the old days... a General Store...”

Through other narrative responses, respondents indicated that while they would enjoy the convenience of having additional services at the Post Office, they are simultaneously concerned that adding more services could put extra burden on already strained postal clerks. Specifically, respondents said additional services could exacerbate problems of long lines and slow service. The sample comments from narrative responses reflect those concerns:

- “The staffing of post offices is already quite low, and providing more services would inevitably lead to even longer lines and wait times.”
- “Lines are too long just to get a stamp - I can't imagine the time that would be wasted waiting in line for other services.”
- “I just wish the services they are already obligated to handle were handled more efficiently. I don't think that they can handle the services they are assigned now.”

Some Americans feel the current workload for Postal Service employees is already strained, and adding more services would only add to the problems and result in longer wait times.

An important element of the discussion surrounding the potential for adding new services, which our respondents were probably not aware of, is that postal clerks would not necessarily be the people staffing the new services.

Letter Carrier Services

The Postal Service has also been considering new ways to optimize the value of its service through letter carriers, such as bringing more services directly to people's doors. For instance, most respondents (62%) were interested in their letter carrier picking up packages to be shipped. Considering that 43% of respondents said that mailing a package was their most common reason for visiting a Post Office, it makes sense that so many people would be eager to ship via a mail carrier rather than having to make a trip to the Post Office. Yet, interestingly, Postal Service letter carriers already provide this service, suggesting that Americans may not know about this option. In the open response questions, several people said they would like their mail carrier to sell stamps, which is another service letter carriers provide in some locations. These findings seem to indicate the Postal Service could improve its marketing and educational efforts around services already provided by letter carriers.

Respondents also indicated interest in other potential letter carrier services, such as identity verification (23%) and bill payment/transactional capabilities (18%). At the same time, 29% of respondents indicated they did not want letter carriers to provide any new services in the future. Age was a factor in responses to these new services. Only 17% of the younger respondents said they would want no additional services, versus the older respondents in which over 45% said they would not want additional letter carrier services.

Digital Services

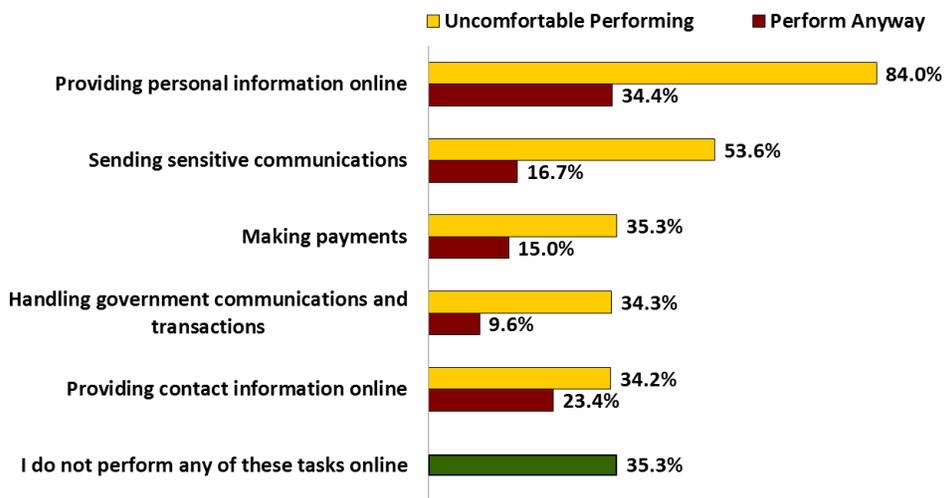
Evolving technology, spurred by the expansion of the Internet, has set the stage for new opportunities for the Postal Service to expand into digital services and find new ways to meet consumers' needs. Our research explored consumer comfort with online interactions and new services the Postal Service could consider embracing.

Level of Comfort with Online Interactions

Before asking respondents about their preferences for digital services, we first wanted to understand how comfortable they were performing various tasks online. Respondents identified activities they *did not* feel comfortable conducting online. Nearly 30% of respondents indicated no concerns about online interactions, with 35 to 44 year old respondents (39%) being the most comfortable. For those who cited that they were uncomfortable performing certain tasks, some perform them anyway. Figure 15 illustrates the comparison of results for the 70% of respondents who stated they were uncomfortable conducting certain interactions online.

Figure 15: People are Uncomfortable with Online Interactions, but Perform Anyway

Which of the following types of interactions do you NOT feel comfortable conducting online?
 Despite not feeling comfortable with doing the following tasks online, which of these interactions do you still conduct online?



N = 3,524 Respondents
 Multiple Responses Permitted

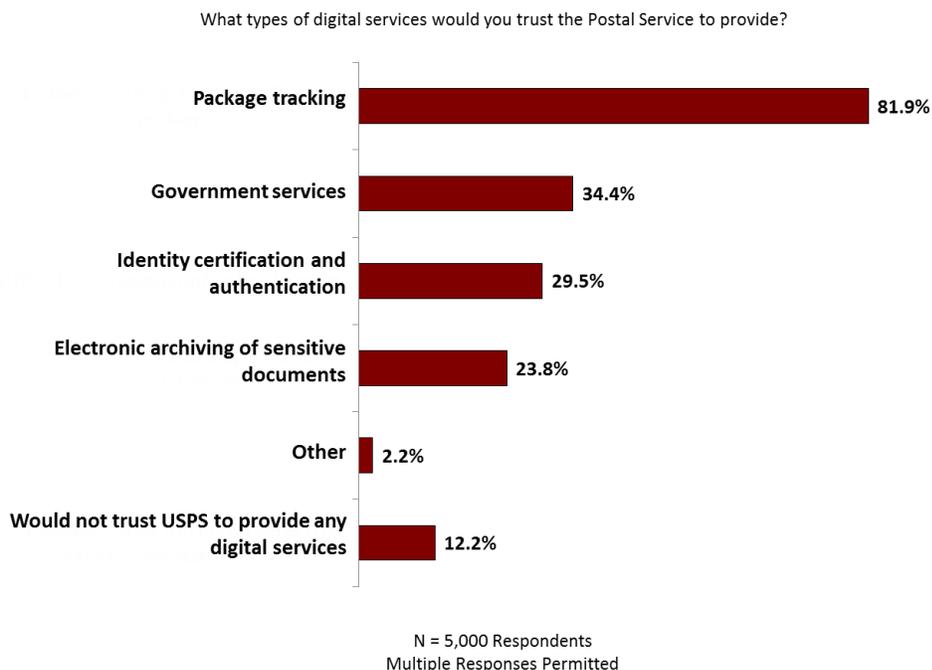
Many respondents indicated they would conduct these online interactions regardless of their discomfort. This was most pronounced in providing personal information (34%) and providing contact information (23%) online.

The survey results indicate that comfort with online interactions varies by age, as well. Against an average of 35%, only 24% of the younger demographic (18-34) indicated they do not perform any of the listed interactions online, compared to 45% for the older demographic (65+). Higher levels of comfort among younger respondents may be a result of having grown up with technology that might elicit fewer concerns for them than with the older demographic.

Postal Service Expansion into Digital Services

To better understand the relevance of digital services provided by the Postal Service, InfoTrends explored some possible opportunities. Only 12% of respondents indicated they would not trust the Postal Service to provide any digital services. Aside from package tracking (which is a service the Postal Service currently provides), however, consumer trust in the Postal Service offering the other digital services listed is limited. Concerns about the overall security of digital communications may be hindering interest in digital services from the Postal Service beyond simply a trust issue. This would certainly require additional research to understand whether the lack of trust is based on the Postal Service’s capabilities or based on the general mistrust people have with digital communications.

Figure 16: Digital Services Respondents Would Trust the USPS to Provide

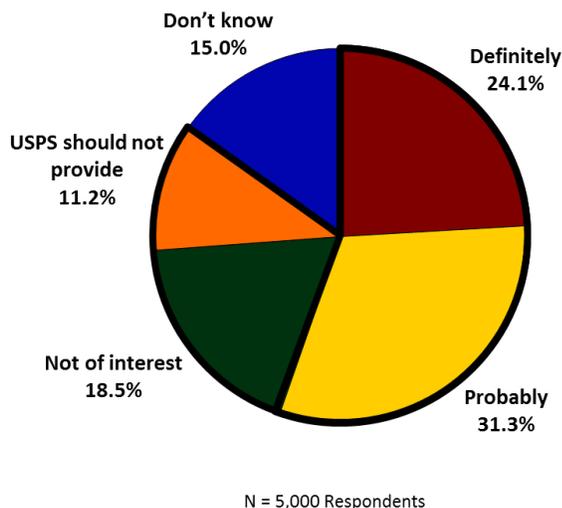


Enabling Personalized Delivery Preferences

The Postal Service could play a future role in helping manage consumer delivery preferences between physical and digital environments for sensitive business communications (e.g., bills, statements, legal notices, letters). As shown in Figure 17, over 24% of respondents see definite value in the Postal Service providing a delivery preference management system, with an additional 31% of respondents seeing potential value.

Figure 17: Interest in Postal Service Providing Delivery Preference Manager Service

Would you value a U.S. Postal Service offering that helps manage your delivery preferences for sensitive communications?



Digital Mailbox Services

Moving beyond preference management, we also wanted to understand consumer receptivity to the Postal Service providing a platform to receive digital communications in a secure digital mailbox. Digital mailboxes are not traditional e-mail, but a secure, trusted, third-party environment that gives consumers control over their mail delivery preferences and allows them to screen and view mail digitally. Over 40% of respondents expressed interest in having a digital mailbox service, with the majority of those respondents saying they would trust the Postal Service to provide it.

The topic of digital mailboxes is new to many people, and 40% of respondents said they were undecided about wanting the Postal Service to provide a digital mailbox, citing they would like to learn more about digital mailboxes before making a decision. While it is understandable that people would like to better comprehend how a digital mailbox works, we also discovered that respondents' reluctance toward the Postal Service providing this service may stem more from fears associated with hacking and privacy rather than a lack of familiarity.

Despite assurances of security and privacy, respondents remained concerned about the safety of their digital information. Open responses from the survey focused on the fact that a digital mailbox would be a central location for a lot of personal information, making it more valuable to a hacker. This was backed up by several respondents commenting that nothing digital can ever be fully protected:

“I'd be afraid that it's not in the best interest of people to have all of their personal information located in one spot.”

– 65+ year-old woman from Minnesota

- “[The Postal Service] may claim to be hacker free, but that's not possible with all of the people that are so Internet/computer savvy. I'd be afraid that it's not in the best interest of people to have all of their personal information located in one spot.”
- “I am not sure I fully trust such online service. Seems like everything gets hacked or has its service compromised sooner or later no matter how secure they say it is.”
- “I don't think I would need this type of service. I realize that the post office is trying to move into the digital age, but I'm not sure I could trust it. Hackers are going to be a real problem in the future as more and more info is stored digitally and this would give them just one more place to hack into your info.”

In light of these concerns, if the Postal Service were to offer a digital mailbox service, it should consider how to assure that the public's information will be kept safe. This issue will be critical in determining if the Postal Service is able to move forward with such an offering. Additional research into this topic would be extremely beneficial, given that the universal delivery needs of Americans are evolving rapidly to include digital services.

Conclusion

The Postal Service has been reliably serving the American people for over two centuries. Its services have become engrained in American culture and most people want it to continue to serve in existing and new capacities. As the Postal Service seeks to reduce costs, respondents clearly indicated that it is important to uphold universal service. This research has shown that Internet-connected Americans are open to the Postal Service implementing new services and undertaking cost-reduction measures, as long as a certain level of service is maintained. Survey results, however, demonstrate that preferences vary significantly by age and are strongly motivated by convenience and reliability. Respondents under the age of 35 indicated the most support for new services and have shown that they value the Postal Service like older generations.

These findings help validate the importance of the Postal Service today, as well as support the need to continue to discuss how to meet the new delivery needs of the American public in an age of ever-expanding communication technology. Again, the respondents of this survey did not include up to 20% of the American population not connected consistently to the Internet—it is important that the Postal Service hears those opinions, as well. While the Postal Service is looking to embrace new digital services, it will be critical to bridge the digital divide by serving the needs of its customers through physical and digital communication services.

This material is prepared specifically for clients of InfoTrends, Inc. The opinions expressed represent our interpretation and analysis of information generally available to the public or released by responsible individuals in the subject companies. We believe that the sources of information on which our material is based are reliable and we have applied our best professional judgment to the data obtained.

U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General
1735 N. Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Telephone: 703-248-2100
www.uspsoig.gov

For media inquiries, contact Agapi Doulaveris
Telephone: 703-248-2286
adoulaveris@uspsoig.gov