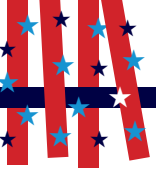


2024 Political Graphics Report





Welcome to the Inaugural Helium Creative Services Political Graphics Report



In April 2023, Helium Creative Services, a leading political communications design firm, launched a five-month survey researching voter behavior towards political campaign graphics.

The report aimed to understand voter perception so political campaign designers can successfully produce compelling and voter-friendly graphics and communications. ■

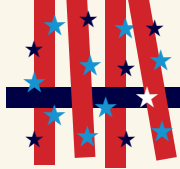
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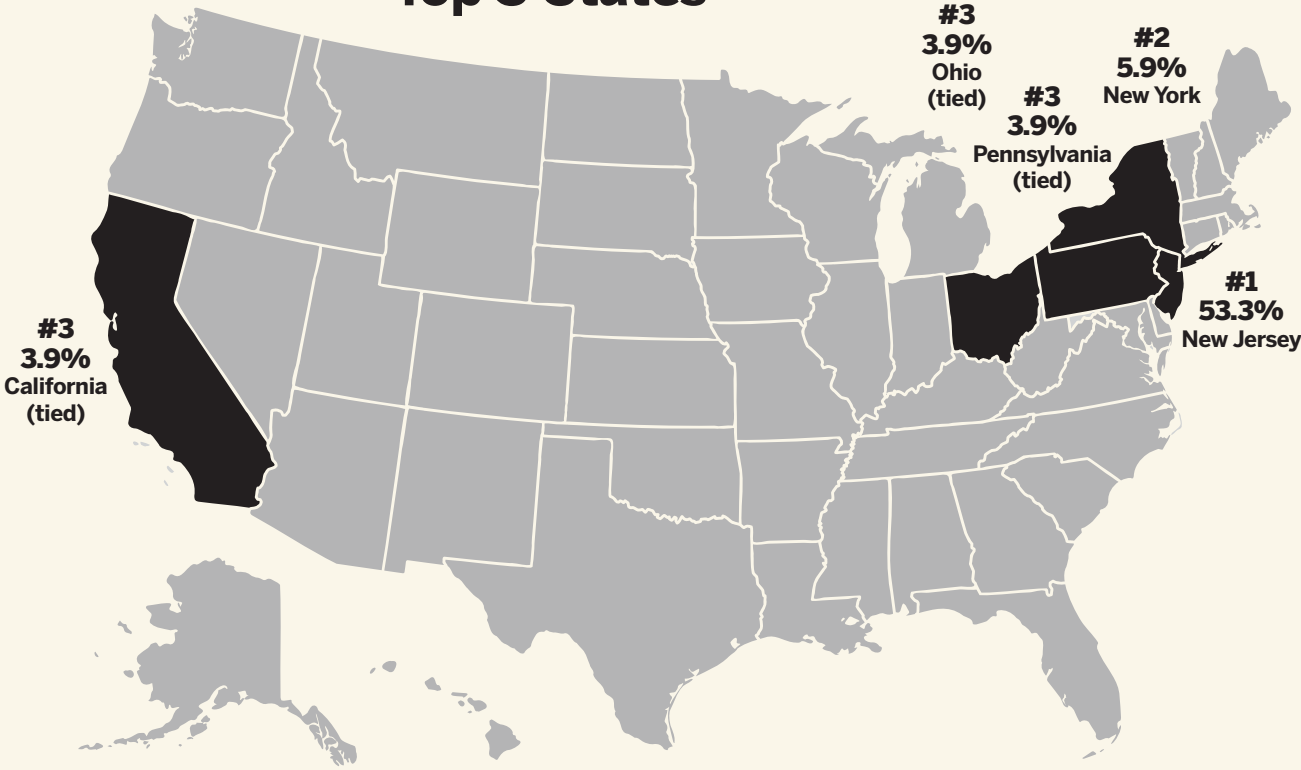
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State Residency Top 3 States

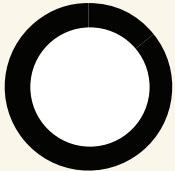


- 0.7% Alabama
- 0 Alaska
- 0 Arizona
- 0.3% Arkansas
- 3.9% California**
- 2.6% Colorado
- 0 Connecticut
- 0 Delaware
- 2% Florida
- 2.3% Georgia
- 0 Hawaii
- 0 Idaho
- 0 Illinois
- 1.6% Indiana
- 2.3% Iowa
- 0.7% Kansas
- 0.7% Kentucky

- 0.7% Louisiana
- 0 Maine
- 1.6% Maryland
- 1.6% Massachusetts
- 1.3% Michigan
- 1.3% Minnesota
- 0 Mississippi
- 2% Missouri
- 0 Montana
- 0 Nebraska
- 0 Nevada
- 0.3% New Hampshire
- 53.3% New Jersey**
- 0.3% New Mexico
- 5.9% New York**
- 1% North Carolina
- 0 North Dakota

- 3.9% Ohio**
- 0.7% Oklahoma
- 0 Oregon
- 3.9% Pennsylvania**
- 0 Rhode Island
- 0 South Carolina
- 0 South Dakota
- 0.3% Tennessee
- 3.3% Texas
- 0 Utah
- 0.7% Vermont
- 0.3% Virginia
- 0.3% Washington
- 0.3% West Virginia
- 0 Wisconsin
- 0 Wyoming

Age Group



0%
18-19



4.2%
20-29



10.5%
30-39



24.5%
40-49



27.5%
50-59

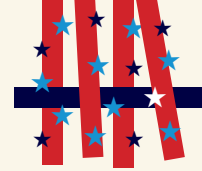


15.4%
60-69



18%
70+





SURVEY PROFILE



Gender

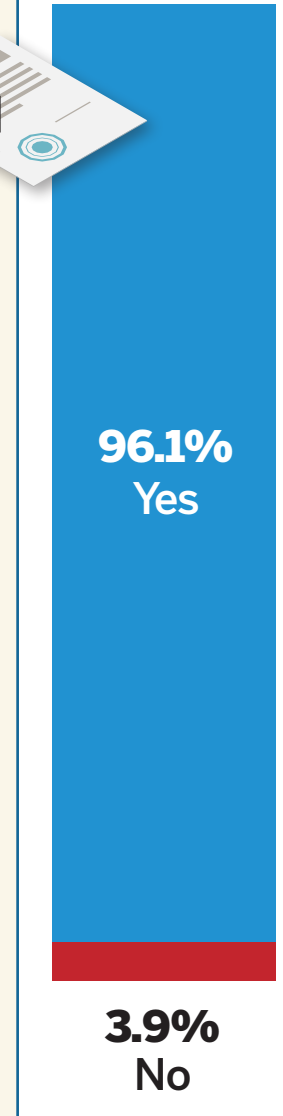


Male

Female

Non-binary

Registered Voter?



96.1%
Yes

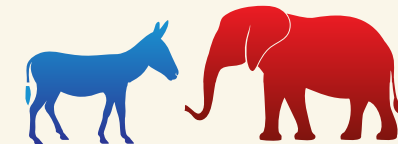
3.9%
No

Education

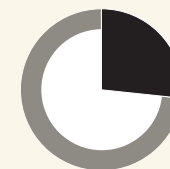


- 18.3% High School
- 17% Associates
- 30.4% Bachelors
- 26.8% Masters
- 5.9% PhD
- 1.6% Some Grad School

Political Affiliation



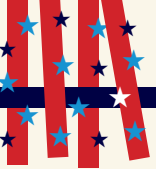
54.6%
Democrat















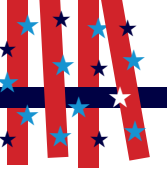
26.8%
Unaffiliated



18.6%
Republican



BALLOT	OFFICE	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Local  A★	Do You Vote in Local Elections? (i.e., Mayor, Council, Board of Education, etc.)	A  62.4%	A  31%	A  6.5%
State  B★	Do You Vote in State Elections? (i.e., Governor, State Assembly, State Senate, etc.)	B  76.1%	B  18.3%	B  5.6%
Federal  C★	Do You Vote in Federal Elections? (i.e., President, Senate, or Congress)	C  88.2%	C  7.5%	C  4.2%



Survey: Participant Profile

Three hundred-eight individuals from thirty states participated in the survey, with most of the responses coming from the East Coast: New Jersey and New York. Tied for third place were Pennsylvania, California, and Ohio.

Ninety-six point one percent (96.1%) of the respondents were registered voters. The most significant percentage were affiliated with the Democrat Party (54.6%), while the second highest affiliation was independent voters.

The majority of respondents, 67.3%, were women, while 25.7% of the participants were between the ages of 50 and 59.

Most participants (30.4%) hold a bachelor's degree, followed by 26.8% who earned a master's degree. The participants regularly voted in local (62.4%) and state elections (76.1%), but the highest voter turnout was in federal-level elections (88.2%). ■

Report Roundup

By Ana Paula Rodrigues

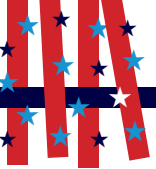
Direct mail continues to be an essential staple in political campaigns. Even as printing and mailing costs increase, direct mail offers campaigns the opportunity to bolster their message in conjunction with targeted digital and television advertising efforts.

The participants in the survey indicated that when reviewing a campaign mailer, the first thing that captures their attention is the photo and the headline (41.2% tie), followed by the copy (9.5%), the candidate logo (6.5%), and the election date (1.6%). Although many smaller campaigns forgo working with professional photographers due to the expense, the survey results demonstrate that the investment can benefit the campaign.

Photos that capture the candidate's essence or authentic moments on the campaign trail

can yield a greater return on investment when used in mailers and throughout the campaign, as they become part of the candidate's brand. Although smaller campaigns will continue to push back on hiring professional photographers, they must face the reality that politics is about image, regardless of the size of the race. If the candidate is unwilling to invest in how they are presented visually, the money and time spent crafting mailers may be in vain.

In conjunction with the photo, the survey participants indicated that the headline equally captures their attention. A campaign mailer that finds the sweet spot between the right image and a powerhouse headline can garner the voter's attention within the eight-second¹ window before they discard the mailer. Although



a lower number of survey participants (18.3%) indicated that they *always* read political mailers, a larger group (65.4%) specified that they *sometimes* read political mailers, increasing your odds that your message will cut through postal clutter, also considering that only 16.3% of the survey participants indicated that they *never* read political mailers.

Another point to consider when crafting an engaging political mailer is to write less. More than half of the survey participants (57.3%) indicated they prefer *less copy* on a mailer. These are unsurprising figures since voters encounter a barrage of campaign information directed at them every day through various channels during campaign cycles. This cognitive overload can cause a voter to disengage.

However, a difference of 14.8% separates survey participants who indicated that they wanted more copy versus those who wished political mailers

had *less copy*. This variance does not give us a definitive answer on how campaign communication teams should proceed. However, given the eight-second window to connect with a voter through mail, your message needs to get across faster, so *less copy* is more.

Interestingly enough, when given a chance to read opposing political mailers, those surveyed responded similarly to reading campaign mailers in general. Sixty-three point one percent (63.1%) answered that they *sometimes* read opposing campaign mailers, while 65.4% *sometimes* read campaign mailers in general. Incidentally, a slight 2% difference exists between those surveyed who *never* read opposing campaign mailers and those who *never* read campaign mailers in general.

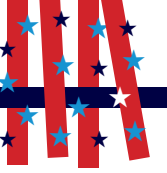
The Politics of Color & Type

Survey participants overwhelmingly identified red as the color associated with the Republican

Party (80.1%) and blue with the Democratic Party (80.7%). Even though red, white, and blue have been a staple in American political ephemera, the association of red and blue with Republicans and Democrats, respectively, was only solidified in the American psyche about a quarter of a century ago.

However, a trend has emerged in the past few years in which campaigns are moving away from this traditional color palette. Candidates whose campaigns employed contrasting colors and won, such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who used purple and gold, led the way for this change. So, does that mean campaigns must avoid using red to identify a Republican candidate or blue for a Democrat? No, it does not; since most survey participants could not differentiate political parties based on those two colors, it can serve as a shortcut to get the party voter's attention.

Reversely, those surveyed found no alliance between a particular typeface (font) and the two



political parties. When questioned whether the traditional serif (strokes projecting outward from the letterform) typeface *Times* asserted allegiance to the Republican or Democrat Party, 63.4% declared *neither*. In comparison, when the participants were asked about the modern sans-serif (without strokes projecting outward from the letterform) typeface *Helvetica* in relation to the Republican and Democrat parties, 76.1% again declared *neither*. Although typography may not be an end-all for campaigns, we would be remiss if we did not mention Barack Obama's sans-serif font choice, Gotham, during his 2008 presidential campaign.

Gotham became the go-to typeface following Obama's presidential win as it became synonymous with the characteristics of the candidate - youthful, modern, and seeking change. Candidates campaigning for all levels of office favored using Gotham as their campaign font, hoping it would communicate similar

characteristics to their electorate.

The survey results for these questions are not surprising. What is fascinating is that 19.6% of the survey respondents affixed the typeface *Times* with Republicans, and 14.4% identified *Helvetica* with Democrats. Although these numbers are low, some voters are connecting political parties to certain type styles and the attributes they imply. For example, serif typeface characteristics are traditional and authoritative, while sans-serif typefaces are modern and amicable.

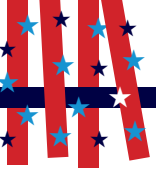
A study completed in 2019 by Virginia Tech professors supports this premise. It reported that Republican candidates were more inclined to use serif fonts like *Times*, while Democrats used sans-serif fonts like *Helvetica*. Researcher Katherine Haenschen wrote, "This study demonstrates empirically that typeface plays a role in American political communication, conveying ideology through the anatomy of its letter forms. Ergo,

candidates' choice of typeface may produce unexpected or unintended consequences in terms of how they are perceived."²

Research into the psychology of typography and campaigns is relatively new. However, understanding the fundamental premise that type characteristics can communicate more than just the intended message should have campaigns paying closer attention to type choice and the implied collective attributes shared between the candidate and the font.

Campaign Logos

Type and color are just two foundational elements that construct a logo, and together, they serve as the first interaction a voter has with the candidate. In the survey, more than half of the respondents (66.7%) said that logos *sometimes* helped them recall the candidate's name. Meanwhile, 20.6% feel logos *never* help, and 12.7% believe it *always* helps



them recognize the candidate's name.

In a perfect world, we want the results to be closer to 100% of the respondents replying that logos *always* help them recall the candidate's name. But considering that campaign logos compete with one another and hundreds of other logos on any given day, the response of 66.7% is on par. Considering that political logos hardly vary in design across party lines, it is no surprise that voters cannot recall a candidate's name just based on a logo. But those numbers should not deter a campaign from designing a campaign logo that is distinct and relevant to the candidate, as that logo is a staple in every form of communication a campaign releases into the electorate sphere.

A Digital Divide

Websites remain the 24-hour gateway between a campaign and a voter seeking information about the candidate. Fifty-eight point five

percent (58.5%) of survey respondents said they *sometimes* visited campaign websites, while 36.3% said they *never* visited them. That is a stark difference compared to the 5.2% who *always* visit campaign websites.

When respondents did visit campaign websites, 66.3% logged on to learn about the *issues*. They also visited the website to read the candidates' bios (25.8%), donate (5.6%), and volunteer (2.3%) in the campaign.

Campaigns should note the 40.5% difference between the top two reasons respondents visited campaign websites. This information directs candidates to prioritize the issues section on the campaign website.

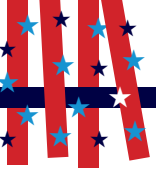
When it came to campaign digital advertising, more than half (53.3%) of those surveyed reported *never* clicking on online campaign ads. In comparison, 44.8% reported doing it *sometimes*, and a paltry 2% said they *always* click on online ads.

Digital advertising is cost-effective and has an expansive reach. It is plausible that political advertising has inundated the digital world. It is the driving force behind the many respondents who never click on digital campaign ads.

Television commercials, on the other hand, had a higher percentage of follow-through than campaign websites. Sixty-five point four percent (65.4%) reported that they *sometimes* watch political commercials to the end, while 12.1% *always* watch until the end. That is a 10.1% difference between *always* watching a political commercial until the end and *always* clicking online ads.

One argument for the low website interaction is that there is a digital divide among the various age groups of the survey respondents. However, this survey was executed solely on a digital platform, indicating that respondents do not have trouble navigating the web.

Another plausible reason for low digital turnout



in visiting websites and online advertising is that campaigns have done a great job of educating voters about the candidates through other avenues. Hence, the need to seek out information online just may not be there. Regardless, campaigns cannot afford to ignore the candidate's online presence through a website and online advertising.

Conclusion

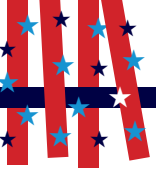
Although some of the data from the Helium Creative Services 2024 Political Graphics Report is not surprising, a proportion of it brings new insight into how voters view and interact with campaigns and candidates through their visual communications. This data serves as a touchstone for those navigating these campaigns successfully

through the teeming channels. And as technology forges ahead, campaigns and designers will face new challenges in the ever-evolving political communications landscape.

Helium Creative Services would like to extend our appreciation to everyone who took part in the survey, those who helped shape the survey, and those who downloaded our report. ■

¹ Gould, Summer "Five Tips To Grab Readers' Attention With Your Direct Mail Campaign," Forbes, March 13, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/03/13/five-tips-to-grab-readers-attention-with-your-direct-mail-campaign/?sh=2490cef24b18>

² Haenschen, Katherine, "What's in a Font? Ideologic "What Perceptions of Typography." Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, www.researchgate.net/publication/338093911_What%27s_in_a_Font_Ideological_Perceptions_of_Typography



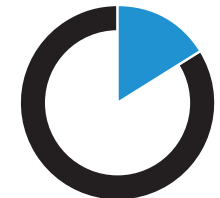
Do you read campaign mailers?



18.3%
Always

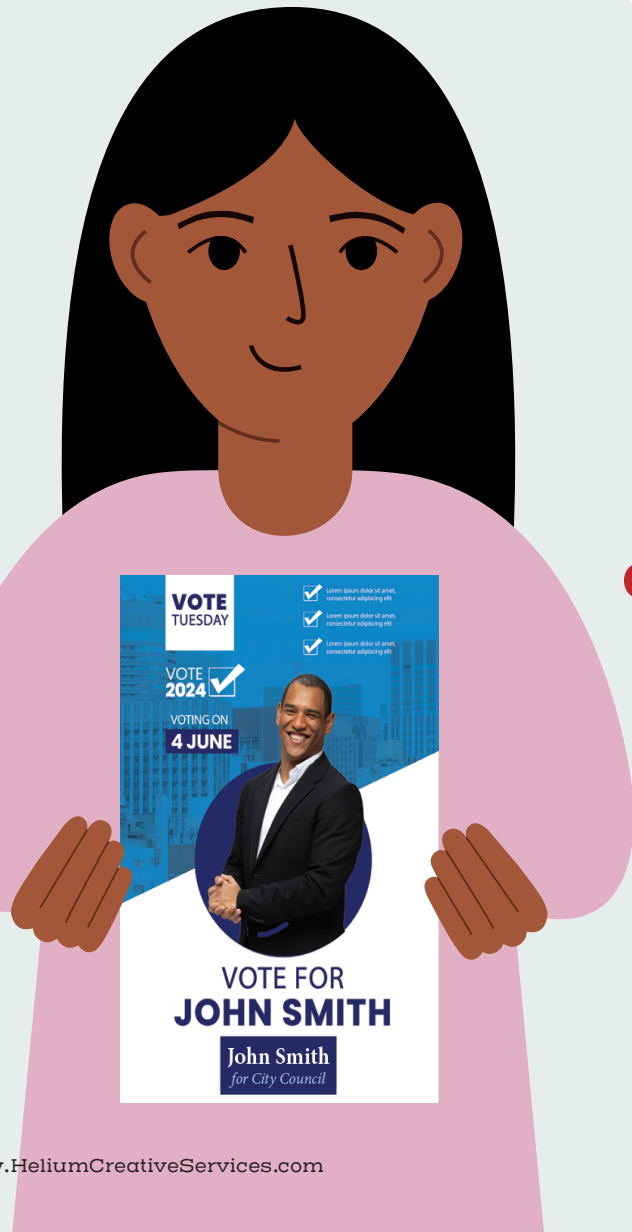


65.4%
Sometimes



16.3%
Never

When you look at a political campaign mailer, what do you notice first?



1.6%
Election Date

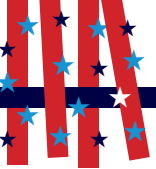


9.5%
Copy
(written words)
on the page

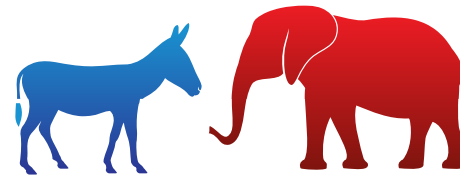
41.2%
Image/Photo

41.2%
Headline

6.5%
Candidate Logo



Do you read opposing political campaign mailers?



18.6%
Always

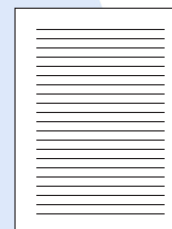


63.1%
Sometimes



18.3%
Never

Do you prefer political campaign mailers with more or less copy (words) on them?



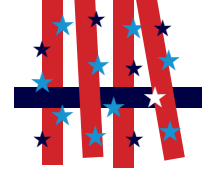
42.5% More Copy

I want to learn as much as I can about the candidate.



57.2% Less Copy

Who has the time to read?
Get to the point.



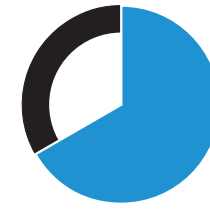
SURVEY: Campaign Logos



Do political campaign logos help you recall the candidate's name?



12.7%
Always

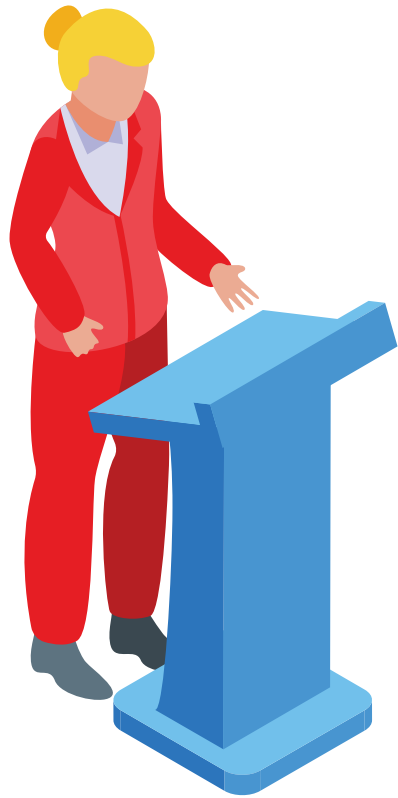
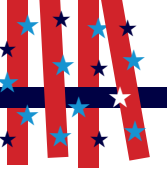


66.7%
Sometimes

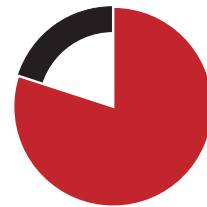


20.6%
Never

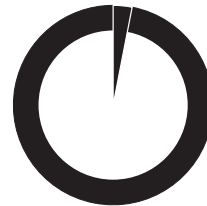




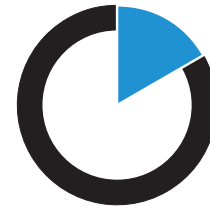
When you see **red on a political campaign mailer, do you assume it is a Republican or Democratic candidate?**



80.1%
Republican



3.3%
Neither

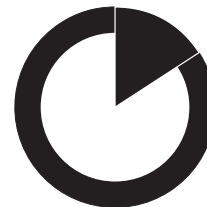


16.7%
Democrat

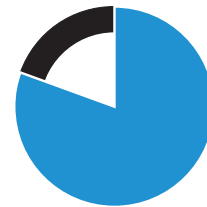
When you see **blue on a political campaign mailer, do you assume it is a Republican or Democratic candidate?**



3.3%
Republican

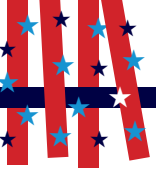


16%
Neither



80.7%
Democrat

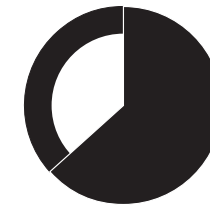




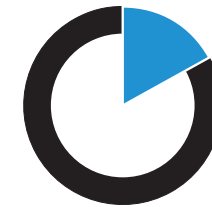
When you see a typeface like **Times used in a political campaign mailer, do you think Republican or Democrat?**



19.6%
Republican



63.4%
Neither



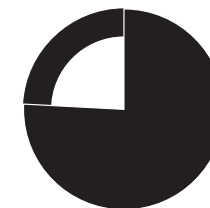
17%
Democrat



When you see a typeface like **Helvetica used in a political campaign mailer, do you think Republican or Democrat?**



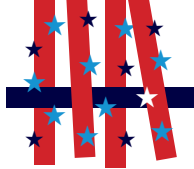
9.5%
Republican



76.1%
Neither

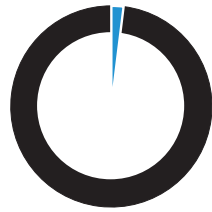


14.4%
Democrat



SURVEY: Campaign Digital Advertising

Do you click on political campaign ads when you see them online?



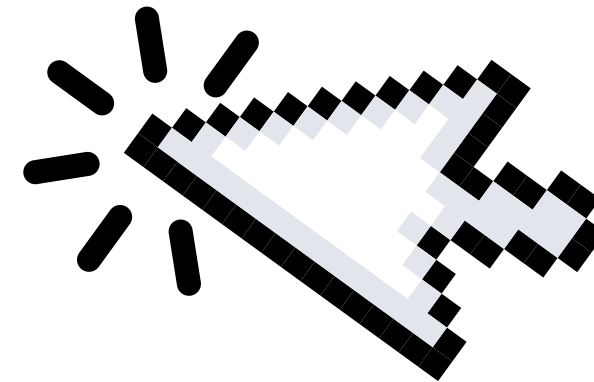
2%
Always



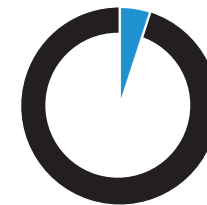
44.8%
Sometimes



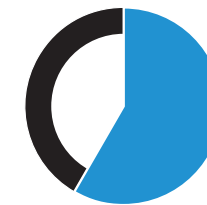
53.3%
Never



Do you visit political campaign websites?



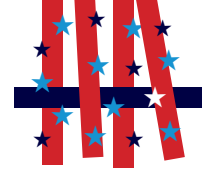
5.2%
Always



58.5%
Sometimes

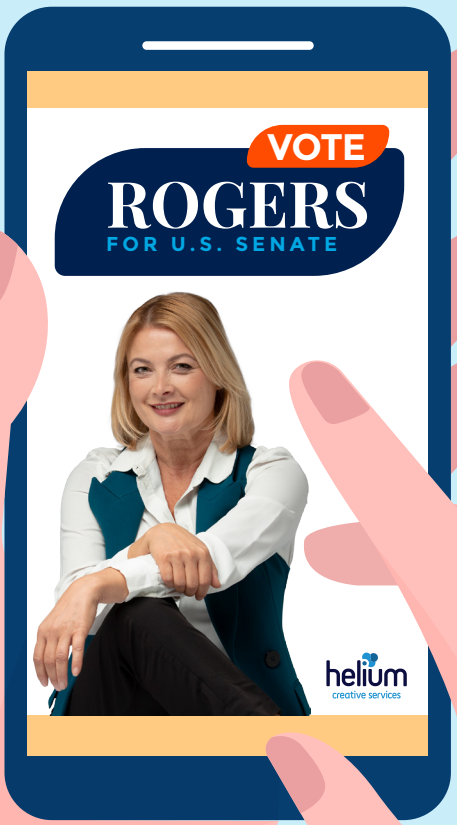


36.3%
Never



SURVEY: Campaign Websites & Television

Why do you visit political campaign websites?



66.3% Issues
Learn about the issues they support and do not support

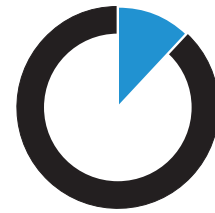
25.8% Biography
Learn more about the candidate

5.6% Donate
Support the candidate through a monetary donation

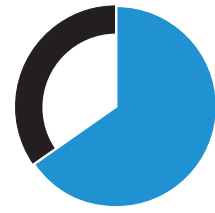
2.3% Volunteer
Learn how I can help in the campaign



Do you watch political campaign television commercials to the end?



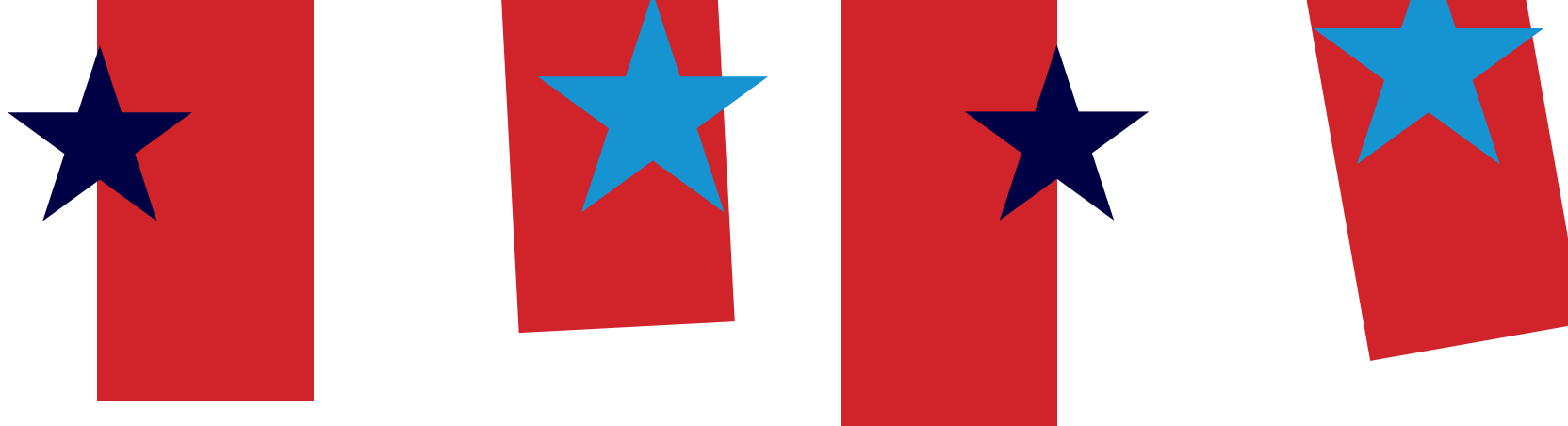
12.1%
Always



65.4%
Sometimes



22.5%
Never



Helium Creative Services – We love what we do and so will you.

Helium Creative Services is a full-service communications design firm committed to tackling creative challenges across all platforms, regardless of the size of your campaign. And we start with the most powerful tool we have – our creativity.

Helium will help you stand out while you stand up for the issues that affect your community. We bring a wealth of knowledge that spans over 30 years in communication design and 15 years within the political sphere.

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