

# **2026 Annual**

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# **Media Work Plan**

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# Executive Summary



Educating drivers about safe, responsible behavior behind the wheel remains central to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) mission to reduce roadway fatalities and prevent injuries.

In 2026, NHTSA's public safety campaigns will continue to focus on high-risk audiences—particularly men ages 18 to 34 years old—who consistently over-index in distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding and seat belt non-use incidents. This group exhibits low perceived enforcement risk and high tolerance for risk-taking, making them a priority for both high-visibility enforcement (HVE) and targeted media efforts.

NHTSA's media strategy is designed to reach the audience through the channels and content they engage with most. Campaigns align safety messaging with passion points, such as live sports, gaming, fitness, music festivals and adventure travel, and deliver content through high-consumption platforms, including social media, streaming video, podcasts and digital audio. Influencer-led storytelling and creator partnerships enhance authenticity, while geotargeted digital placements and English, Spanish and bilingual creative ensure cultural and contextual relevance.

Each campaign flight is timed to seasonal risk windows or enforcement mobilizations, with rotating creative and platform-specific content optimized to break through in a crowded media landscape. This integrated approach balances reach, frequency and engagement—ensuring that safety messages are delivered when and where they matter most.

The 2026 Media Work Plan outlines audience engagement trends, campaign timing, budget allocations and creative strategies for four core issues: distracted driving, seat belt non-use, speeding and impaired driving. Each campaign leverages omnichannel tactics and adaptive creative formats designed to maximize impact, sustain engagement and drive measurable behavior change.

Assets are available at [www.TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov](http://www.TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov). State departments of transportation (SDOTs), state highway safety offices (SHSOs) and highway safety advocates are encouraged to reference the paid media strategy and subsequent media buy details to develop their respective state and local campaigns.

**FIGURE 1:** NHTSA Campaigns, Target Audience, Advertising Periods and Planned Budget

Issue	Target Audience(s)	Advertising Period(s)	Planned Budget
Distracted Driving	Adults 18 to 34 Years Old	April 6–13, 2026	\$5 million
Seat Belts	Men 18 to 34 Years Old	May 11–May 31, 2026	\$12.4 million
Speeding	Men 18 to 44 Years Old	July 6–31, 2026	\$8 million
Impaired Driving	Men 21 to 34 Years Old Alcohol-Impaired Driving  Men 18 to 34 Years Old Drug-Impaired Driving  Men 35 to 54 Years Old Alcohol-Impaired Riding (Motorcyclists) (August/Labor Day flight only)	August 19–September 7, 2026 and December 16, 2026–January 1, 2027	\$31.9 million

# Integrated Media Approach

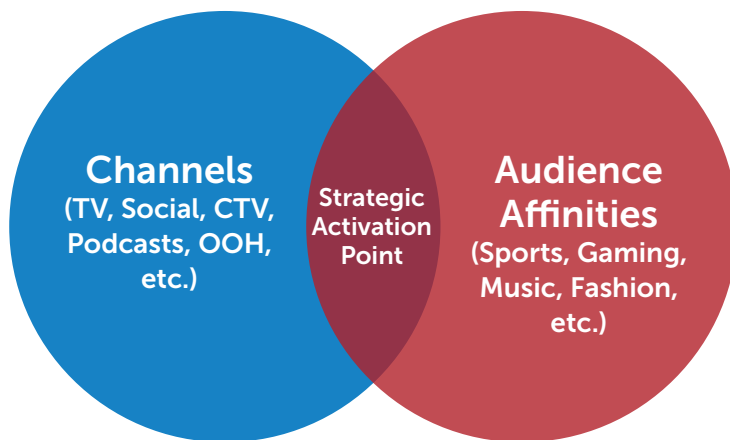


In today's saturated media environment, where content competes for attention across every device, NHTSA's behavioral safety campaigns must do more than reach audiences—they must engage them meaningfully. Engagement is not just a performance metric; it's a proxy for attention, relevance and potential for impact on behavior change. While traditional metrics like impressions measure exposure volume, engagement metrics such as dwell time, click-through rate (CTR) and video completion rate (VCR) offer deeper insight into message quality, recall potential and relevance.

NHTSA's media planning strategy centers on identifying the "engagement sweet spot"—the intersection of two critical factors:

- **Channels**—Identifying where the target audience can be reached (e.g., TV, social media, connected TV (CTV), podcasts, out-of-home (OOH))
- **Audience Affinities**—Understanding what content the audience truly values and engages with (e.g., sports, gaming, music, fashion)

**FIGURE 2:** The Engagement Sweet Spot



This overlap defines the environments where safety messages are most likely to be noticed, trusted and remembered. By targeting this strategic activation point, NHTSA can:

- **Maximize Connection:** Deliver messages within content environments the audience already trusts, increasing authenticity and relevance.
- **Enhance Efficiency:** Allocate resources to media placements that drive exposure and meaningful engagement, avoiding wasted spend on low-impact channels, tactics or placements.
- **Drive Greater Reach and Impact:** Leverage influential voices and tailored content that resonate deeply, sparking stronger audience response and behavior change.

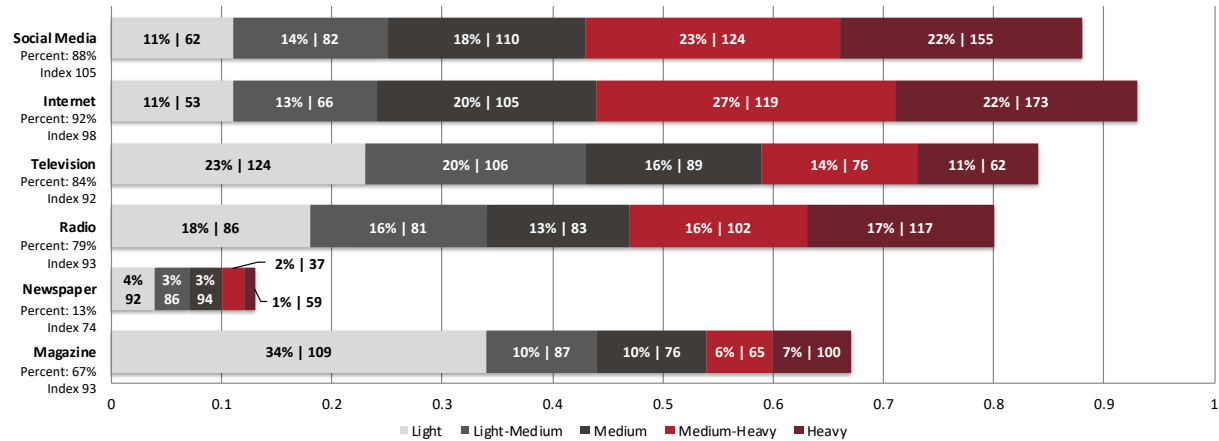
Whether through custom content, influencer led-storytelling or geotargeted placements, this approach ensures that NHTSA's safety messaging is not only seen—but felt. It transforms media planning from a reach exercise into a behavior-change strategy.

# Media Consumption and Trends Impacting All Campaigns

Recognizing the high digital engagement of its core audience, NHTSA designs campaigns to connect widely and encourage active participation while adapting to trends.

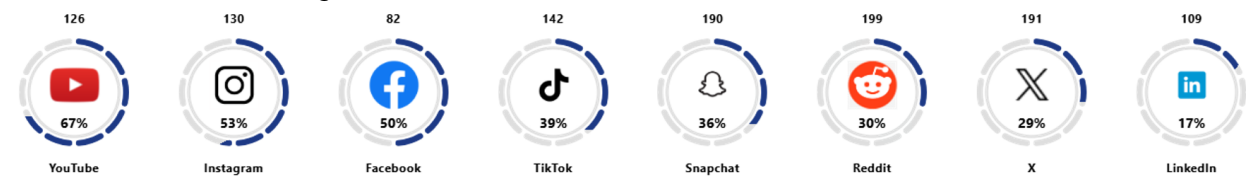
Although platforms and device preferences continue to evolve to digital mediums, traditional media strongholds still hold a strategic role for "appointment viewing" programming within the target audience's interests and affinities (Figure 3). This highlights the importance of integrating strong social platforms (Figure 4) and emergent digital-native platforms like YouTube Music (Figure 5) with traditional media into NHTSA campaigns to ensure messages reach drivers where they are most engaged.

**FIGURE 3: Media Usage for Men 18 to 34 Years Old**



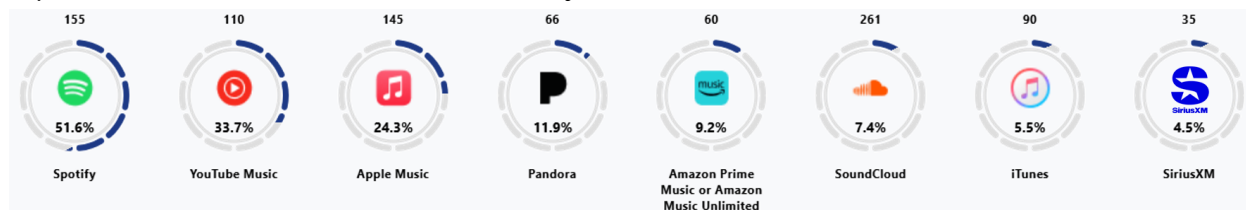
Source: 2025 Spring MRI-Simmons USA

**FIGURE 4: Social Media Usage for Men 18 to 34 Years Old**



Source: 2025 Spring MRI-Simmons USA

**FIGURE 5: Digital Audio Media Usage for Men 18 to 34 Years Old**  
Top 8 Music/Audio Services Listened to Last 30 Days



Source: 2025 Spring MRI-Simmons USA

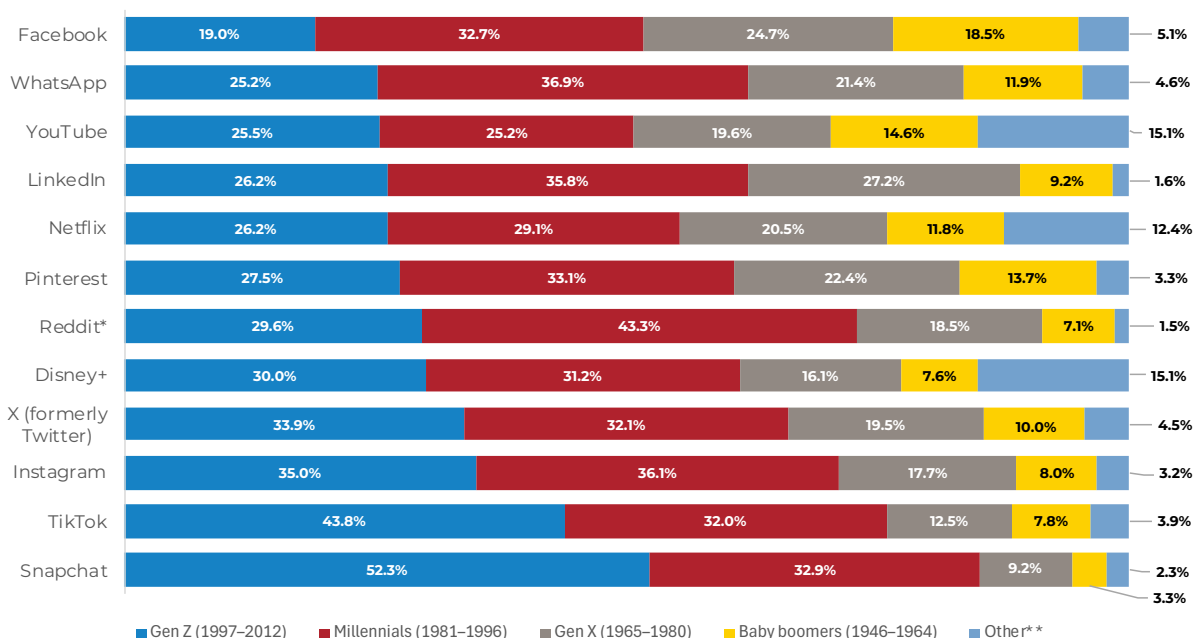
## Trend 1:

### Short-Form Storytelling That Aligns With Platform Preferences and Daily Routines

By 2026, the shift toward mobile-first, short-form video content will dominate consumption patterns among men 18 to 34 years old. Over 43% of total media time for adults in this group is already spent on digital platforms via smartphones, computers or tablets—a share expected to grow as emerging platforms expand and sports, lifestyle and entertainment content becomes increasingly interactive. Meta Reels, YouTube Shorts and Snapchat will remain critical storytelling tools, with continued adoption of new short-form formats driving deeper engagement and conversion. Campaign strategies will integrate mobile-optimized creative, influencer partnerships with authentic and culturally resonant messaging and contextually placed media, such as pre-roll on travel/lifestyle sites and digital out-of-home (DOOH) in high-traffic locations (e.g., gas stations, convenience stores, rest stops).

While many platforms seek to capitalize on this trend, they have varied reach and audience composition. As of 2025, YouTube leads all platforms with roughly 2.5 billion monthly active users, with more than half of its U.S. audience comprising Gen Z or Millennials. This combination of scale and age relevance makes YouTube a potent vehicle for reaching younger men who dedicate much of their media time to video content. Instagram and TikTok, with about 2 billion global users, skew even more heavily toward younger audiences, underscoring their importance for short-form, mobile-first storytelling that resonates with this demographic. With 850 million users and the youngest overall user base, Snapchat adds daily engagement that keeps safety messages at the top of people's minds in more intimate, peer-driven environments. By contrast, LinkedIn's 571 million global users make it a powerful professional platform, but its older audience composition limits its role in NHTSA's efforts to reach the 18- to 34-year-old male segment. Presenting both percentage share of use (Figure 6) and absolute user base clarifies why YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat have risen to the top as priority channels:<sup>1,2</sup> they dominate relative time spent and represent the largest and most demographically relevant audiences for safety messaging.

**FIGURE 6:** Share of Total U.S. Users on Select Digital Platforms, by Generation, 2024



Source: EMARKETER Forecast, May 2024

Note: internet users who access their account on the referenced digital platform via any device at least once per month; social network user forecasts from May 2023; \*logged-in users; \*\*includes the Silent Generation, Gen Alpha and younger

1 Sprout Social. (2025). Social media demographics to inform your 2025 strategy. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/>

2 Sprinklr. (2024). Social Media Statistics: 100+ Platform-wide stats for 2025. <https://www.sprinklr.com/blog/social-media-statistics/>

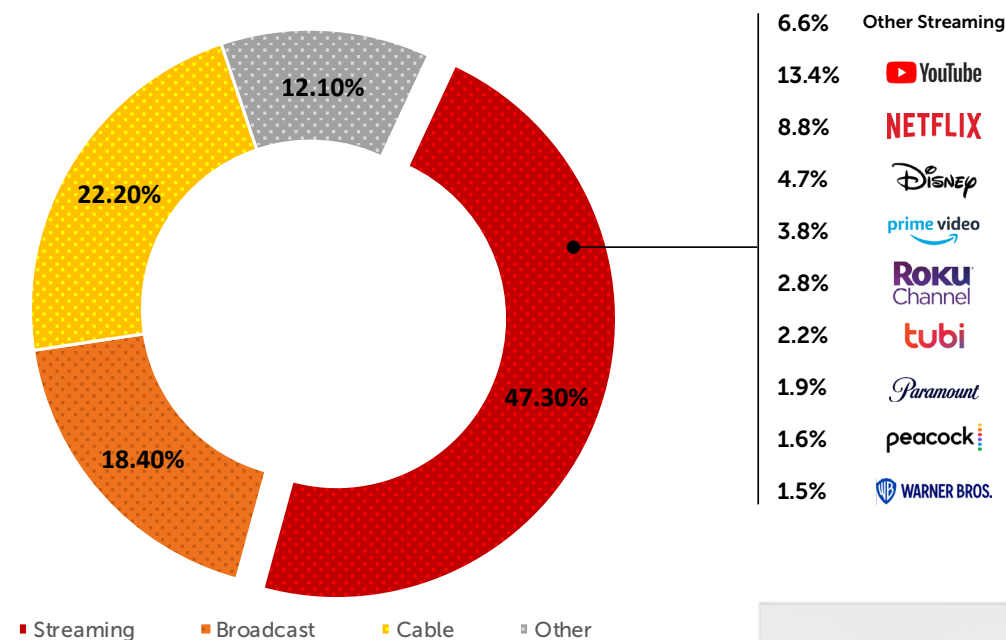
## Trend 2:

### Video Streaming Platforms as Primary Channels for Reaching Young Men

Streaming will remain a dominant force in NHTSA's media strategy, anchored in its proven ability to reach high-risk, hard-to-reach audiences, particularly men ages 18 to 34 years old, who are among the heaviest streaming users and underrepresented in traditional TV viewership. Platforms like YouTube, Hulu, Peacock, Netflix and ESPN+ consistently outperform traditional channels regarding incremental reach, engagement rates and cost efficiency. As of June 2025, streaming accounted for 47.3% of all U.S. TV viewing, surpassing cable (22.2%) and broadcast (18.4%), a lead expected to widen in 2026 (Figure 7).<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, cultural moments like live sports are increasingly migrating from broadcast to digital platforms, evidenced by the NFL's expanded portfolio of streaming-exclusive games across Amazon Prime Video, ESPN+, Peacock, Netflix and now YouTube.<sup>4</sup> Embedding messaging within these highly viewed and emotionally engaged programming blocks, such as major sports events and seasonal entertainment, increases attention and drives message retention by aligning safety content with moments of peak viewer engagement and cultural relevance.

**FIGURE 7:** Video Streaming Media Usage



Source: Nielsen "The Gauge," June 2025



<sup>3</sup> Nielsen. (2025, June). The Gauge: June 2025. Nielsen. <https://www.nielsen.com/data-center/the-gauge/>

<sup>4</sup> Front Office Sports. (2025, Aug). Every Regular-Season NFL Exclusive-Streaming Game in 2025. <https://frontofficesports.com/every-regular-season-nfl-exclusive-streaming-game-in-2025>

### Trend 3:

#### Integrated Audio Strategies That Blend Scale, Trust and Cultural Relevance

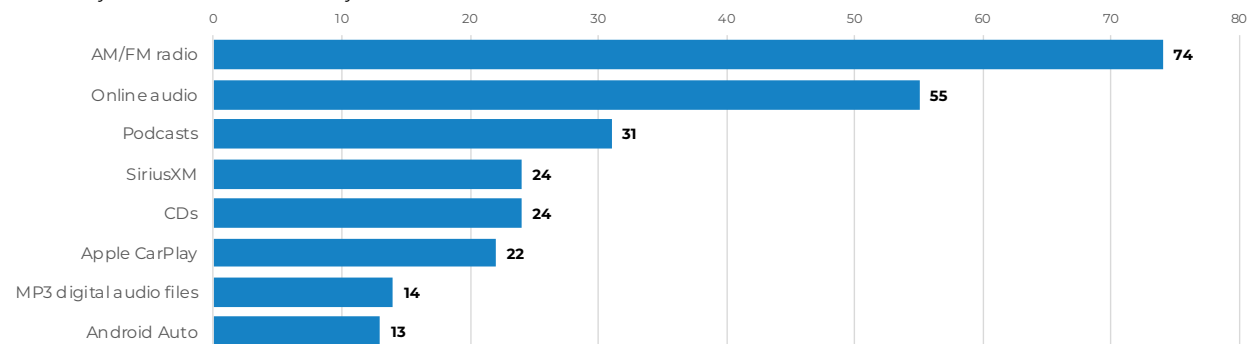
Audio opportunities continue to evolve rapidly, with podcasts and streaming audio serving as primary growth channels for reaching NHTSA's priority audiences. At the same time, radio remains critical due to its continued dominance and in-car listening, a high-value moment for safety messaging (Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8:** Edison Research "Infinite Dial," Q1 2025

Audio Sources Currently Used in Car

Base U.S. 18+ Who Has Driven/Ridden in Car Last Month; 88%

% Currently Use Audio Source in Primary Car



According to Radio Ink, more than 70% of Spanish-language radio listeners tune in for at least one hour daily, and nearly 40% listen for two hours or more.<sup>5</sup> This high daily engagement among Spanish-speaking audiences highlights terrestrial radio's continued resonance. Among men 18 to 34 years old, 72% listen to the radio via smartphones (index 121, meaning they are 21% more likely than average to do so), while 41% listen in the car, at home or on standalone radios (index 74). Additional devices like desktops (25%) and gaming systems (9%) illustrate how radio content increasingly intersects with digital environments (Figure 9).

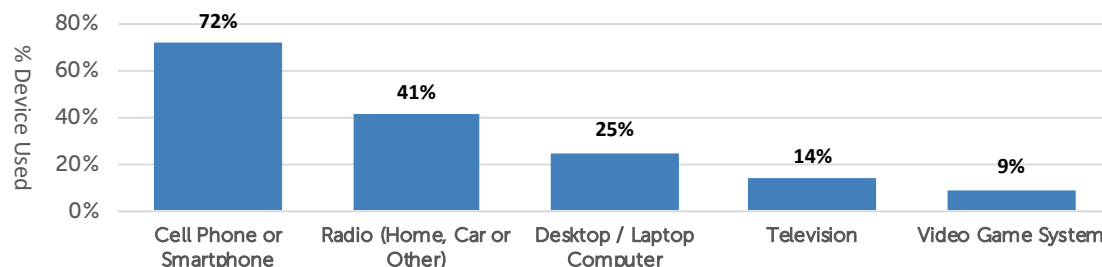
Audience attitudes underscore why audio remains influential: roughly a third of listeners cite radio as a source of pure entertainment (34%) or as something that puts them in a good mood (30%), while others emphasize its role in keeping them informed (30%) or providing a sense of escape (22%) (Figure 10). This combination of reach, mobility and emotional relevance reinforces the need for integrated strategies that balance AM/FM's broad in-car scale with the precision and interactivity of digital audio.

**FIGURE 9:** Top Five Devices for Radio Use Among the Target Audience

Radio Listening

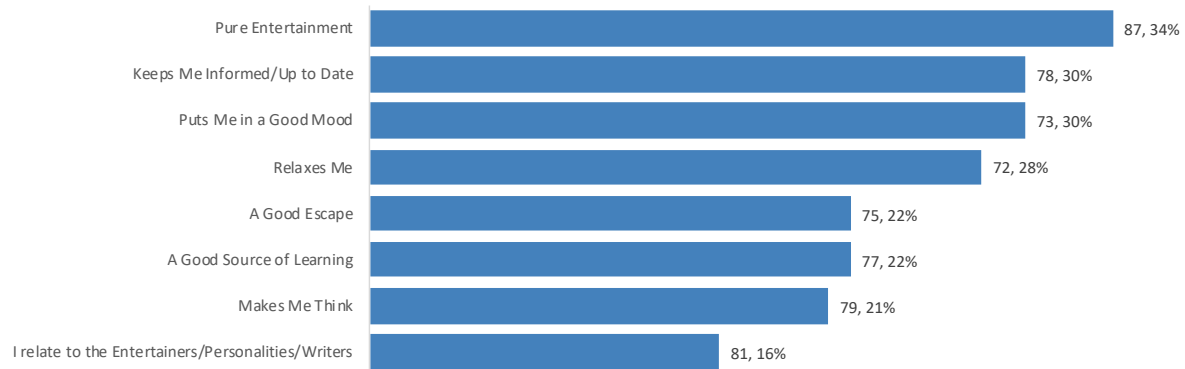
Unweighted 7,469 | Weighted 38,253 | % of Base 15%

Top Five Devices Used to Listen to Radio



<sup>5</sup> Radio Ink. (2024, July). New Study Shows Radio's Enduring Spanish-Language Appeal. <https://radioink.com/2024/07/08/new-study-shows-radios-enduring-spanish-language-appeal/>

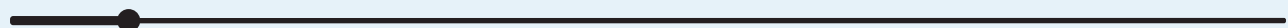
**FIGURE 10:** Top Eight Psychographic Radio Attitudes



Source: 2025 Spring MRI-Simmons USA



Among men  
18 to 34 years old,  
**72%**  
listen to the radio  
via smartphones

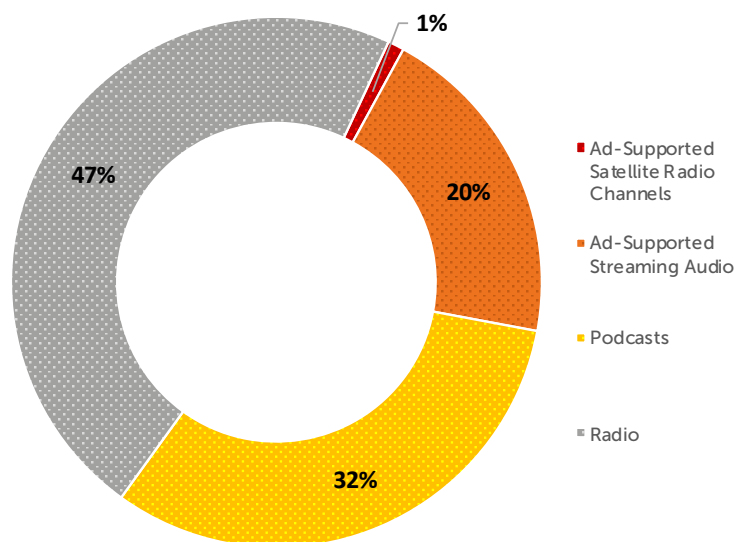




Edison’s “Share of Ear” study (Figure 11) further reinforces the balance across platforms, showing that, for adults 18 to 34 years old, 47% of time spent listening goes to terrestrial radio, 32% to podcasts, 20% to streaming audio and just 1% to satellite. This distribution underscores the complementary role each channel plays and the importance of integrating strategies that blend AM/FM’s broad in-car scale with the precision and interactivity of digital audio.

**FIGURE 11:** Edison Research “Share of Ear,” Q1 2024

Share of Daily Time Spent With Ad Supported Audio Among U.S. Audiences (Persons 18 to 34 Years Old)



Audio also remains a powerful, trusted channel positioned at the intersection of cultural relevance, real-time connection and on-demand convenience. Unlike social or on-demand video, audio pairs these qualities with situational listening contexts and habitual trust relationships: audiences hear messages during high-impact moments like commuting or exercising, hosts and personalities foster companion-like credibility and the medium fits seamlessly into daily routines, reaching people when screens cannot. As digital streaming and terrestrial radio converge, campaigns integrate across platforms to meet audiences wherever they listen.

NHTSA’s audio strategy leverages this evolution, aligning with the passions of millions of Americans through live sports and personality-driven programming. Campaign messaging is woven into the listening experience for sporting events like the NFL, college football and the MLB with customized audio scripts, live reads and interactive digital extensions, ensuring relevance on air and streaming platforms. Equally important, Spanish-speaking audiences who over-index in radio consumption are reached through high-engagement sports, such as Liga MX soccer, international soccer tournaments and boxing, where live play-by-play and commentary are cultural touchpoints. This integrated approach ensures NHTSA’s messages resonate across the general market and Spanish-speaking audiences in sports environments.



With placements across 3,500 affiliate stations, nearly one-third of all commercial AM/FM outlets, NHTSA achieves a broad demographic reach while maintaining strategic audience alignment. Past campaigns have successfully activated high-impact, personality-led programs such as “The Big D and Bubba Show,” “DeDe in the Morning,” “The Anna and Raven Show” and “The Free Beer and Hot Wings Morning Show” to provide custom-voiced integrations and endorsements that authentically connect with loyal listeners. In Spanish-language markets, influential voices like Fernando Fiore and DJ Alex Sensation extended this impact, leveraging cultural credibility and deep community connections to engage Spanish-speaking audiences with relevance.

By bridging terrestrial radio’s scale and trust with digital audio’s precision and interactivity, NHTSA maximizes message impact across broadcast, streaming, smart speakers and mobile devices—ensuring campaigns resonate in today’s dynamic audio landscape.

#### *Trend 4:*

### **Hyper-Targeted National Media Strategies That Reflect Local Behaviors and Platforms**

Messaging that reflects a user’s immediate surroundings, weather, time of day or local events feels more relevant and earns higher engagement. NHTSA’s 2026 media strategy leverages this principle through geolocation, contextual targeting and behavioral segmentation across audio, digital and social ecosystems. Campaigns are designed to deliver optimized frequency and impact, balancing exposure with reduced audience fatigue, while tailoring creative to reflect local behaviors and platform preferences.

Urban and college-town audiences, often mobile-first, bilingual and culturally fluid, engage heavily with short-form, socially shareable content. Platforms like Meta Reels and livestreaming apps are central to media consumption, making dynamic, interactive formats ideal for attention and message retention. Suburban men, by contrast, respond best to a balanced media mix, combining digital platforms with high-trust local media and community-oriented content that emphasizes family, safety and neighborhood relevance. Rural audiences continue to rely on traditional channels, such as radio, local TV and print alongside digital engagement, with Spanish-language media playing a pivotal role where applicable. Messaging in these regions prioritizes credibility, consistency and familiar formats.

NHTSA executes this hyper-targeted approach through programmatic digital campaigns, dynamic creative optimization (DCO), addressable TV/CTV and social media micro-targeting. By aligning creative and media placement with regional behaviors and platform preferences, campaigns ensure relevance, maximize engagement and maintain equitable coverage across urban, suburban and rural communities.

## Trend 5:

### Interactive Gaming Channels That Deliver Messages Through Creator Partnerships

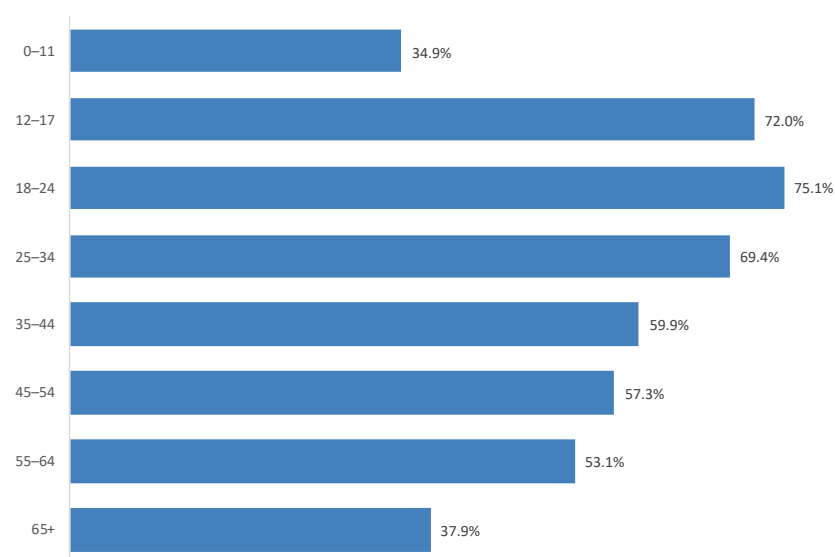
Gaming is not just entertainment but a social and media platform. From Twitch and YouTube Gaming to in-game advertising and sponsorships on platforms like Fortnite, Call of Duty and EA Sports titles, men in this demographic spend hours in these ecosystems.

While the overall trend spans various platforms and titles, brand-safe opportunities exist within Mature-rated (MA) gaming environments. Leading franchises such as Call of Duty, Madden NFL, NBA 2K and FIFA are highly engaging and offer structured ad inventory, controlled sponsorship opportunities and proven brand-safety measures. These titles deliver generational relevance and safeguards that align with NHTSA standards.



**FIGURE 12:** Digital Gamers by Age

% of Population



*Note: Internet users who play games through the internet or play games that update via the internet on any device at least once per month; includes desktop/mobile app and browser gaming, online console gaming and gaming on social networks*

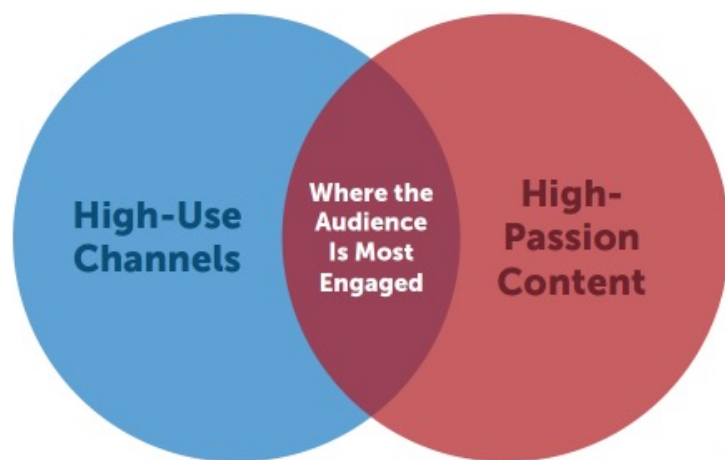
*Source: EMARKETER Forecast, August 2023*

By partnering with trusted streamers and creators, campaigns can amplify message credibility and emotional impact, tapping into the deep trust and influence these personalities hold with their audiences. Additionally, with such a high concentration of the target demographic active on these platforms, gaming channels provide precision targeting and engagement potential, making them essential tools in reaching this audience effectively and meaningfully. Working with creators who connect across different audience segments and language preferences further strengthens message relevance and impact.

# Campaign Audience Affinities and Passion Points

Focusing on core audience affinities and passion points helps identify the most effective approach for engaging the target audience. Utilizing influencers or placing messaging with content that speaks to these passion points ensures that the campaign messaging has the best opportunity to connect with the audience and foster a meaningful chance to alter driving behavior.

**FIGURE 13:** Where the Audience Is Most Engaged



## Leveraging Influencers as Trusted Voices

Influencers are critical in connecting with drivers within the 18- to 34-year-old demographic. This audience is deeply engaged with creator culture, and campaigns that feature trusted, relatable voices can significantly enhance message impact.

NHTSA's influencer strategy extends across high-engagement platforms like Meta Reels, YouTube Shorts and Snapchat, utilizing strategic approaches and formats like Reels, storytelling and creator-led messaging. Influencers are carefully selected based on their alignment with

campaign themes, such as thrill-seeking, peer influence and cultural rituals like sports, nightlife and holiday celebrations. While much of the focus is on young men, the approach also adapts to reach women in campaigns where they are a priority audience, ensuring messaging remains inclusive of different at-risk groups. Content is designed to inform and prompt self-reflection, often featuring authentic voices and lived experiences that humanize the consequences of unsafe driving.

## Live Sports and Communal Resonance

Live sports remain one of the most emotionally charged and community-driven media consumed among men ages 18 to 34 years old. The unscripted, high-stakes nature of sports, whether victory or defeat, creates emotionally immersive experiences that can heighten attention and message receptivity. With 68% of this demographic reporting that live sports is one of the only types of content they prioritize watching in real time, and 74% experiencing fear of missing out when they're not part of significant sports moments, these events offer a powerful space for engagement.<sup>6,7</sup> NHTSA's past campaigns have successfully capitalized on these moments, particularly through strategic ad placements and partnerships with sports influencers.

The 2026 media calendar presents new opportunities to tap into this landscape through events across professional and college sports, including the FIFA World Cup, beginning in June. Notably, recent increases in viewership and cultural momentum around women's basketball and college sports provide additional entry points to reach engaged and passionate audiences. Aligning safety messaging with the communal highs and lows of sports fandom creates a deeper emotional connection, encouraging audiences to reflect on their behavior during shared moments of excitement and tension.

6 McKinsey. (2025, June). *The Attention Equation*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/the-attention-equation-winning-the-right-battles-for-consumer-attention>

7 *Financial Times*. (2025). *The New Sports Fan*. <https://www.ft.com>

**FIGURE 14:** Sporting Events Regularly Watched on TV or Online

Study Universe	18- to 34-Year-Old Men			18- to 34-Year-Old Men (Spanish-Speaking)		
	Weighted Pop. (000)	% of Target	Index	Weighted Pop. (000)	% of Target	Index
	38,253	100%	100	10,402	100%	100
Alpine Skiing & Ski Jumping	*280	*0.73%	*140	*95	*0.91%	*175
Auto Racing—NASCAR	659	1.72%	61	*216	*2.08%	*74
Auto Racing—Other	811	2.12%	109	*155	*1.49%	*76
Baseball—College	1,029	2.69%	138	*284	*2.73%	*140
Baseball—MLB Regular Season	3,739	9.77%	101	1,319	12.68%	131
Baseball—MLB Playoffs/World Series	3,332	8.71%	101	1,163	11.18%	129
Baseball—Minor League Baseball (MiLB)	753	1.97%	160	*255	*2.45%	*199
Basketball—College	2,494	6.52%	98	380	3.65%	55
Basketball—NBA Regular Season	4,207	11.00%	151	1,402	13.48%	185
Basketball—NBA Playoffs/Finals (T, R, A) Watch on TV or Online: Regularly	4,462	11.66%	146	1,348	12.96%	163
Basketball—NCAA Basketball Tournament	3,127	8.17%	101	521	5.01%	62
Basketball—WNBA (T, R, A) Watch on TV or Online: Regularly	916	2.39%	101	*235	*2.26%	*95
Bicycle Racing	237	0.62%	120	*111	*1.07%	*206
Bowling	*225	*0.59%	*110	*78	*0.75%	*141
Boxing	1,332	3.48%	176	727	6.99%	353
Cheerleading	*199	*0.52%	*151	*64	*0.62%	*178
Esports (video game tournament)	636	1.66%	274	*143	*1.37%	*227
Extreme Sports—Summer	308	0.81%	205	*117	*1.12%	*286
Extreme Sports—Winter	351	0.92%	230	*114	*1.10%	*275
Figure Skating	*266	*0.70%	*67	*113	*1.09%	*105
Fishing	580	1.52%	111	*121	*1.16%	*86
Football—College Regular Season	5,899	15.42%	95	950	9.13%	56
Football—College Playoff/National Championship	5,699	14.90%	103	1,090	10.48%	72
Football—NFL Monday, Thursday or Sunday Night Games	8,582	22.43%	101	1,941	18.66%	84
Football—NFL Weekend Games (Day)	8,151	21.31%	103	1,784	17.15%	83
Football—NFL Playoffs/Super Bowl	8,453	22.10%	97	1,921	18.47%	81
Golf—PGA	1,388	3.63%	78	*292	*2.81%	*60
Golf—LPGA	439	1.15%	95	*137	*1.32%	*109
Golf—Other	429	1.12%	159	*109	*1.05%	*148
Gymnastics	450	1.18%	71	*130	*1.25%	*75
High School Sports	711	1.86%	84	*178	*1.71%	*78
Horse Racing (at track or OTB)	*252	*0.66%	*89	*110	*1.06%	*143
Ice Hockey—NHL Regular Season	1,714	4.48%	122	343	3.30%	90
Ice Hockey—NHL Playoffs and Stanley Cup	1,713	4.48%	118	337	3.24%	85
Lacrosse	*265	*0.69%	*169	*127	*1.22%	*298
Marathon, Triathlon & Obstacle Race	*216	*0.56%	*112	*94	*0.90%	*179
Monster Truck Racing	305	0.80%	216	*87	*0.84%	*227
Motorcycle Racing	354	0.93%	166	*106	*1.02%	*183

	18- to 34-Year-Old Men			18- to 34-Year-Old Men (Spanish-Speaking)		
Olympics—Summer	2,253	5.89%	57	424	4.08%	39
Olympics—Winter	1,196	3.13%	54	290	2.79%	48
Poker Tournament	*202	*0.53%	*98	*121	*1.16%	*215
Professional Bull Riders (PBR)	*185	*0.48%	*93	*109	*1.05%	*202
Rodeo	254	0.66%	109	*121	*1.16%	*191
Soccer—MLS	1,101	2.88%	164	573	5.51%	314
Soccer—World Cup	2,228	5.82%	147	1,179	11.33%	285
Soccer—U.S. Men's National Team	1,320	3.45%	160	768	7.38%	343
Soccer—U.S. Women's National Team	759	1.98%	107	436	4.19%	225
Soccer—International	2,055	5.37%	171	1,060	10.19%	324
Tennis—Men's	831	2.17%	91	*333	*3.20%	*134
Tennis—Women's	678	1.77%	78	*269	*2.59%	*114
Track & Field	742	1.94%	98	*214	*2.06%	*104
Truck & Tractor Pull/Mud Racing	384	1.00%	267	*160	*1.54%	*410
Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)	1,126	2.94%	178	521	5.01%	303
Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)	548	1.43%	156	*282	*2.71%	*295
Volleyball—Pro Beach	251	0.66%	132	*126	*1.21%	*243
Wrestling—WWE	1,503	3.93%	174	567	5.45%	241
Wrestling—Other Professional	887	2.32%	201	389	3.74%	324

Source: 2024 Fall MRI-Simmons USA

## Online Experiences and Gaming

As live sports captivate audiences through real-time, emotionally charged experiences, gaming offers similarly immersive and highly engaged virtual environments where safety messages can resonate.

For many, gaming is more than a pastime; it's a social experience and a personal passion. Somewhat uniquely, gaming is both a passion point and a delivery channel in its own right. Whether it is console gaming, mobile titles, esports tournaments or fantasy leagues, the competitive and participatory nature of these environments makes them ideal for delivering contextually relevant safety messaging integrated directly into the experience for highly engaged audience participants.

NHTSA's campaigns are designed to integrate with this ecosystem, using banner ads, sponsorships and branded content that aligns with the themes and experiences of sports and action games. Prior campaigns have shown that gaming-specific executions consistently outperform standard banners, particularly during high-traffic periods like weekends and commuting hours. By meeting the audience in the virtual spaces they already inhabit and when they are most engaged, NHTSA can deliver timely, relevant messages that naturally integrate into the user experience.





## Music and Festival Culture

Music venues and festivals are a critical component of NHTSA's 2026 strategy because they represent high-risk environments where unsafe driving behaviors such as impaired driving, speeding and distraction are more likely to occur. These events are cultural touchpoints for men ages 18 to 34 years old, particularly within high-energy genres like hip hop, EDM, Latin and country. According to Nielsen, approximately 32 million people attend at least one music festival in the United States each year, and nearly half (46%) of attendees are ages 18 to 34 years old, highlighting a significant opportunity to reach NHTSA's core target demographic.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Eventbrite's data indicates that 72% of 21- to 35-year-olds feel positively toward events, underscoring the growing engagement of younger audiences in live events. The context of live music, which frequently coincides with late-night travel and consumption of impairing substances, creates both risk and opportunity.

These moments of emotional intensity and communal energy can be powerful windows for reaching people with public safety messages when they are most engaged and impressionable. Music concerts and festivals, characterized by high-energy crowd behaviors such as crowd surfing or pushing to get closer to the stage, are environments where impaired driving, speeding and distracted driving also tend to increase. For example, a study found that 62% of attendees who intended to drive after electronic music dance events tested positive for alcohol or drugs, and a survey revealed that 19% of drivers admitted to driving after potentially exceeding the legal limit following festivals or parties.<sup>9</sup>

NHTSA can use these events to activate geotargeted mobile ads, DOOH placements and on-site messaging that speaks directly to festivalgoers. Partnering with artists, who already have trust and cultural credibility, amplifies this impact.

Even a performer's short PSA or social post can increase message retention and peer-to-peer influence. Emotional environments like festivals heighten feelings of excitement, connection and openness, making behavior-change messaging more "sticky." When delivered authentically and without judgment, safety messages at music events can inspire self-reflection and safer choices.<sup>10</sup> In this way, music venues and festivals become more than just high-traffic spaces; they are high-impact stages for life-saving interventions.

<sup>8</sup> Information Management and Business Review. (2025, September). *Developing a Predictive Model of Crowd Behavior at Music Concerts and Festivals (MCF): A Proposal for a Research Framework*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383923898\\_Developing\\_a\\_Predictive\\_Model\\_of\\_Crowd\\_Behavior\\_at\\_Music\\_Concerts\\_and\\_Festivals\\_MCF\\_A\\_Proposal\\_for\\_a\\_Research\\_Framework](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383923898_Developing_a_Predictive_Model_of_Crowd_Behavior_at_Music_Concerts_and_Festivals_MCF_A_Proposal_for_a_Research_Framework)

<sup>9</sup> Dayinsure. (2024, July). *The risks of drink driving after a festival and how to avoid them*. <https://www.dayinsure.com/news/how-many-drivers-are-willing-to-drink-drive-after-attending-a-festival>

<sup>10</sup> Cambridge University Press. (2020, August). *Music as a coevolved system for social bonding*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioral-and-brain-sciences/article/music-as-a-coevolved-system-for-social-bonding/F1ACB3586FD3DD5965E56021F506BC4F>



## Adventure and Travel

For NHTSA's 2026 strategy, this mindset offers a compelling opportunity to connect at a critical intervention point. Reaching this demographic when planning or experiencing these adventures through content creators, mobile ads or travel-centric media placements creates space for safety messages to feel personally relevant and emotionally resonant for those who share these passions.

Adventure-oriented content is already a thriving ecosystem across high-volume platforms like YouTube and Instagram, where travel vloggers, outdoor influencers and action-sports creators have built trusted relationships with highly engaged audiences. By aligning messaging with these voices and content formats, especially during high-travel periods like summer, holidays or long weekends, NHTSA can reach higher propensity risk takers for whom road trips and destination travel are common. Messaging about maintaining control, protecting freedom and respecting the road appeals to this audience's identity without being heavy-handed. Whether through a creator-led video, a campaign tied to national parks or beach destinations, or digital placements triggered by travel behavior, NHTSA can position safety not as a restriction, but as an essential part of the adventure.





## Fitness and Wellness

Fitness is a significant lifestyle driver for men ages 18 to 34 years old, cutting across content categories like gym routines, workout challenges, nutrition, recovery and supplements. During each of the 2024 NHTSA campaigns, including distracted driving, where women are included in the target audience, fitness and wellness emerged as a key affinity. For many in this demographic, fitness isn't just a hobby; it's a central part of their identity, often tied to discipline, control, strength and self-mastery concepts. This cultural connection creates an opportunity for NHTSA's 2026 strategy to align safe driving behaviors with the same aspirational mindset that fuels gym culture and personal growth. In contrast to fear-based messaging, safety framed through a fitness lens positions responsibility behind the wheel as a reflection of inner strength and control, appealing to how these men already see themselves, or aspire to.

Fitness creators, trainers and health influencers have built credibility around performance, discipline and self-improvement values that closely mirror those required for responsible driving. NHTSA can activate partnerships with these voices to deliver messages that equate focus on the road with the same mental toughness applied in training or competition. Campaigns can feature safety messages embedded in gym content (e.g., warm-up routines, post-workout reflections) or tie into lifestyle themes such as "staying sharp," "protecting your gains" or "being strong for your crew." With the rising popularity of fitness content on platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, there is also an opportunity to deliver snackable, motivational safety messaging that feels native to the format and aligned with the audience's daily routines.

Fitness creators, trainers and health influencers have built credibility around performance, discipline and self-improvement values that closely mirror those required for responsible driving.











# Campaign Planning Details and Insights



Macro trends and audience habits impact all of NHTSA's safety campaigns, but each activation has individual timing and planning nuances. This section reviews each campaign in greater detail, including audience, timing, budget, planned assets and prior campaign learnings.

**FIGURE 15:** Campaign Flights

Campaign	Target Audience(s)	APR	MAY	JUL	AUG	DEC
	Adults 18 to 34 years old					
	Men 18 to 34 years old					
	Men 18 to 44 years old					
	Men 21 to 34 years old					
	Male Motorcyclists 35 to 54 years old					
	Men 18 to 34 years old					



**PUT THE PHONE  
AWAY OR PAY**

# Distracted Driving:

## *Put the Phone Away or Pay*



### Issue Focus

Distracted Driving



### Flight Dates

April 6–13, 2026



### Media Spend

\$5 million



### Target Audience

Adults 18 to 34 years old

Driver distraction occurs when drivers divert attention from driving to another activity, such as texting, eating, talking to passengers or adjusting vehicle controls. According to the National Center for Statistics and Analysis in 2023, there were 3,275 people killed in distracted driving crashes.<sup>11</sup> Overall, distracted driving was a factor in 8% of fatal crashes, 13% of injury crashes and 13% of police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes. As part of Distracted Driving Awareness Month, NHTSA will launch the 2026 *Put the Phone Away or Pay* campaign to promote national traffic and highway safety to reduce distracted driving.

<sup>11</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2025, April). *Distracted driving in 2023* (Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 813 703). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

## Target Audience:

Men and women 18 to 34 years old are identified as the most likely demographic to be involved in an automobile crash because of distracted driving. Research shows that phone use was considered necessary among the targeted age group, and the group did not see distracted driving enforcement as a serious threat.<sup>12</sup> In 2023, younger drivers were disproportionately involved in distracted driving crashes. Drivers ages 15 to 20 years old accounted for just 9% of drivers in fatal crashes overall, but they had a higher share of distracted drivers (11%) and cell phone-related distraction (15%) (Figure 16). Similarly, drivers ages 25 to 34 years old made up 21% of drivers in fatal crashes, but they had an even larger share of distracted driving cases (23%) and phone-related distraction (24%) (Figure 17).

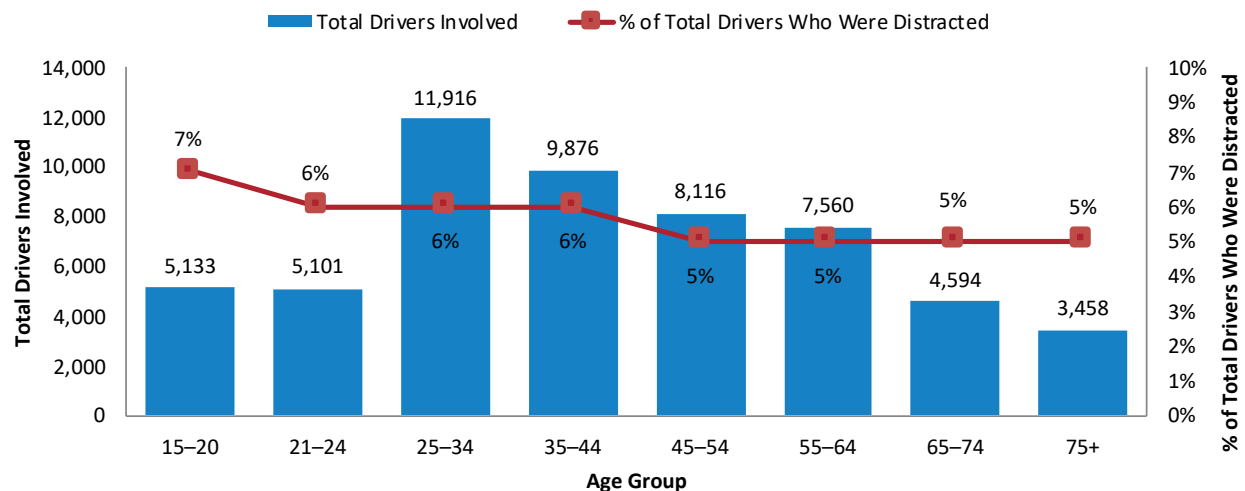
**FIGURE 16:** Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes, by Age Group, Distraction and Cellphone Use, 2023

Age Group	Total Drivers		Distracted Drivers			Drivers Using Cellphones		
	Number	% of Total Drivers	Number	% of Total Drivers in This Age Group	% of Distracted Drivers	Number	% of Distracted Drivers in This Age Group	% of Drivers Using Cellphones
15–20	5,133	9%	348	7%	11%	55	16%	15%
21–24	5,101	9%	298	6%	9%	48	16%	13%
25–34	11,916	21%	710	6%	23%	88	12%	24%
35–44	9,876	17%	545	6%	17%	73	13%	20%
45–54	8,116	14%	366	5%	12%	43	12%	12%
55–64	7,560	13%	358	5%	11%	37	10%	10%
65–74	4,954	9%	250	5%	8%	21	8%	6%
75+	3,458	6%	188	5%	6%	3	2%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,939</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,143</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FARS 2023 ARF

Notes: The total includes 93 drivers 14 and younger, eight of whom were noted as distracted. Additionally, the total includes 1,732 of unknown age, 72 of whom were noted as distracted.

**FIGURE 17:** Percentage of Total Drivers Who Were Distracted by Age Group, 2023



Source: FARS 2023 ARF

<sup>12</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2022, October). Distracted Driving Mindset Research. <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/sites/tsm.gov/files/2024-10/distracted-social-norm-mindset-research-en-p2023-tag.pdf>

### Advertising Period:

National paid advertising will run April 6–13, 2026.

### Budget:

The total media budget for the 2026 *Put the Phone Away or Pay* campaign is \$5 million.

### Campaign Objective:

The campaign aims to increase awareness about the potential consequences of distracted driving and influence young drivers to avoid risky driving by educating them about the legal, economic and emotional consequences.

### Planned Campaign Assets:

The *Put the Phone Away or Pay* campaign will feature new English and Spanish-language brand assets, including video, audio, OOH, digital display and paid social media. Designed for broad impact, the assets can be customized for different audiences, media channels or national initiatives, enabling states and partners to share content that resonates locally while extending the campaign's reach and engagement.

Campaign materials will be available for download and retagging at [TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov](https://TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov).

### Unique Campaign Media Planning Considerations:

The distracted driving campaign stands out from other NHTSA paid efforts because it includes women as a core audience—something no other campaign does. With only eight days to deliver impact, the strategy demands immediate, high-intensity execution. Messaging will be amplified from day one through channels that reach the audience instantly, with rapid, real-time optimizations to maximize engagement and effectiveness.

Unique campaign tactics to promote safe driving and influence the target audience to put the phone down while driving include:

- **Omnichannel Strategy.** The campaign leans into digital tactics that can scale quickly and engage deeply. Rich media units that provide interactive, mobile-first formats have demonstrated higher dwell times and interaction in past campaigns, particularly when delivered in bilingual creative. Programmatic display and video deliver immediate reach with precision targeting that can be optimized mid-flight for efficiency. Social media adds cultural relevance and shareability, using short-form, organic-feeling content aligned to passion points to spark fast interaction. Finally, custom fan placements tied to high-attention events and entertainment releases provide contextual lift, driving above-benchmark CTRs and memorability.
- **Passion Point Messaging.** Brand-consistent content tailored to the audience's interests, spanning sports, fashion, gaming, music, travel, adventure, fitness and entertainment, will be delivered through fast-activating digital channels to maximize reach and engagement within the short campaign window. By combining core brand assets with custom executions tied to cultural and fan moments, the campaign balances broad awareness with more profound audience relevance.

- **Peak Travel Time.** Launching during the traditional spring break season when family and leisure travel spike, the campaign will use quick-turn, location-based tactics to reach audiences around popular destinations and highway routes in real time. “On-the-go” channels such as digital audio, online video, paid social media, streaming, DOOH at gas stations and geofencing will maximize engagement during travel. Geofencing allows NHTSA to set virtual perimeters around high-traffic travel hubs, rest stops and destinations, ensuring messages are delivered when audiences are on the move. This approach extends the reach of DOOH beyond static placements and ties exposure back to trackable metrics such as mobile impressions, retargeting opportunities and visitation lift, bringing measurability and accountability to traditionally broad-reach media.

### Campaign Timing Opportunities:

The following events and milestones are potential opportunities to engage the target audience:

#### *Sports Events:*

- The Masters Tournament
- 2026 NCAA Men’s and Women’s Final Four
- MLB Regular Season
- Premier League MW32
- Liga MX
- MLS
- NBA Regular Season Finale
- Women’s Tennis Events

#### *Entertainment Events:*

- Coachella 2026

### Prior Campaign Learnings:

The following represents key takeaways from previous *Put the Phone Away* or *Pay* campaigns:

**Content and Cultural Relevance:** Campaigns that tap into fandoms and cultural moments consistently perform better. Leveraging nostalgic fan bases and timing efforts around significant events such as movie releases, game launches or fan-driven attention peaks creates built-in momentum for engagement. Aligning messaging with culturally significant moments also increases visibility and memorability. A strong example came from Fandom’s “The Last of Us” custom animated units, which wrapped campaign assets in the context of the popular franchise and nearly doubled CTRs compared to 2024 benchmarks.

**Audio Strategy:** Audio proved most effective when approached holistically, with terrestrial, digital and podcast placements working together as part of an integrated ecosystem. This three-pronged approach extended reach and reinforced frequency by meeting listeners across multiple touchpoints in their daily routines. In addition to the strategic benefits, negotiations secured significant added-value impressions, amplifying reach more than three to five times over previous campaigns. Performance also improved, with listen-through rates and lead conversion rates rising between 1.25% and 2%. The consistency of messaging, paired with custom audio spots voiced by familiar personalities, further enhanced authenticity and relatability, ultimately driving stronger audience connections and measurable impact.



**Rich Media Performance:** Rich media delivered the highest levels of in-unit engagement across partners. Spanish-language and bilingual formats outperformed English-language units, achieving engagement rates as high as 0.97% and more than three times benchmark levels and dwell times, averaging nine seconds versus the six-second benchmark. Mobile-first design played a critical role, with fast load times, vertical layouts and touch-friendly interactions driving stronger audience engagement.

**Targeting and Segmentation:** Audience segmentation revealed meaningful gender-based behavioral differences that point to opportunities for personalization. Women consistently showed higher engagement rates and click-through actions, gravitating toward cozy gaming and reality television content. Men, meanwhile, engaged more with sports, gaming and anime. These insights underscore the importance of tailoring creative and messaging to specific passion points and audience behaviors to maximize impact.

**Creative Strategy:** Campaign creative should continue to lean into short-form, organic-feeling content, particularly on social platforms where audiences are most receptive to native messaging. Developing content calendars that align with cultural and fandom-driven moments can further enhance relevance and resonance. Production timelines should allow for creative pivots and mid-flight optimization to ensure flexibility and responsiveness so that assets can adapt to what is performing best in real time.

### Summary of Campaign Planning Priorities:

This campaign will activate efficient paid media across platforms to expand reach while prioritizing at-risk audiences—both men and women—based on distinct engagement patterns. While core affinities like gaming, sports and entertainment remain central, women show stronger interest in cozy gaming, reality TV, fitness and lifestyle content. At the same time, men lean toward anime, competitive gaming, travel, adventure and traditional sports.

These behavioral differences inform nuanced media placement strategies such as weighting impressions toward the platforms and content verticals where each group is most engaged, tailoring creative formats to match consumption habits and layering in Spanish-language and bilingual messaging to maximize resonance.

With only an eight-day flight, the campaign will focus on rapid digital delivery across social, programmatic video, digital audio and rich media—formats proven to drive engagement and dwell time. By aligning messaging with fandoms, cultural moments and high-energy passions, the campaign is designed to achieve 55–65% reach of the target audience within the flight window, with an average frequency of three to four exposures, balancing broad visibility with sufficient repetition to ensure recall. The campaign aims to deliver scale and precision to reduce distracted driving fatalities through customized creative and strategic timing.





# Seat Belt: *Click It or Ticket*



## Issue Focus

Seat Belt Safety



## Flight Dates

May 11–31, 2026



## Media Spend

12.4 million



## Target Audience

Men 18 to 34 years old

The *Click It or Ticket* campaign remains a cornerstone of NHTSA's behavioral safety efforts, encouraging drivers and passengers to wear seat belts consistently. On average, every 50 minutes, someone not wearing a seat belt dies in a traffic crash, and 10,484 people lost their lives in crashes while unrestrained in 2023 alone.<sup>13</sup> This national campaign focuses on educating the public about the serious consequences of not buckling up. Its goal is to raise nationwide awareness of seat belt laws and promote safer driving behaviors among all vehicle occupants.

### Target Audience:

Men ages 18 to 34 years old are identified as the demographic most likely not to wear a seat belt. Among young adults in this age group who were killed while riding in passenger vehicles, more than half (60%) were completely unrestrained. Men make up the majority of those killed in traffic crashes and, in 2023, more than half (53%) of male passenger vehicle fatalities occurred without seat belts.<sup>14</sup> While many factors impact fatal crash outcomes, it is notable that such a high proportion of fatalities are in unbelted crashes when seat belts are proven to significantly reduce the risk of death and serious injury by 45%.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/seat-belt-safety>

<sup>14</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2025, May). Occupant protection in passenger vehicles (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 730). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>15</sup> Kahane, C. J. (2015, January). Lives saved by vehicle safety technologies and associated Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, 1960 to 2012 – Passenger cars and

### Advertising Period:

National paid advertising will run May 11–31, 2026.

### Budget:

The total media budget for the *Click It or Ticket* campaign is \$12.4 million.

### Campaign Objective:

The campaign aims to increase awareness about the dangers of driving or riding in a vehicle without a seat belt. It highlights the nationwide mobilization and enforcement of seat belt laws to promote safer behaviors nationwide.

### Planned Campaign Assets:

The *Click It or Ticket* campaign will feature new English and Spanish-language brand assets, including video, audio, OOH, digital display and paid social media. Designed for broad impact, the assets can be customized for different audiences, media channels or national initiatives, enabling states and partners to share content that resonates locally while extending the campaign's reach and engagement.

Campaign materials will be available for download and retagging at [TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov](https://TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov).

### Unique Campaign Media Planning Considerations:

Unique campaign tactics to encourage seat belt use with the target audience include:

- **Target Geographies.** Placing increased media weight in states with the highest number of fatalities related to seat belt non-use helps direct resources where they are most needed.
- **Storytelling.** Using storytelling to evoke emotional responses effectively engages the target audience, particularly in rural areas where personal connection enhances message impact.
- **Influencer Activations.** Leveraging established influencers tied to driving culture and seasonal behaviors ensures the *Click It or Ticket* message resonates at the exact moment seat belt use dips. For 2026, partnerships with well-known outdoor and adventure personalities, road-trip vloggers, national park and camping creators, motorsports figures and off-road enthusiasts will align naturally with the campaign's timing as road trips, family travel and community gatherings kick off for Memorial Day, end-of-school celebrations and early summer travel. Complementary categories include recognizable lifestyle creators who highlight everyday driving moments (commutes, family travel) and sports and fitness personalities whose audiences overlap with younger men, a group with historically lower seat belt usage rates. By focusing on vetted, higher-profile influencers across platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat, the campaign ensures both cultural resonance and broad, trusted reach to drive shifts in perception and normalize seat belt use as an expected, universal behavior.

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LTVs – With reviews of 26 FMVSS and the effectiveness of their associated safety technologies in reducing fatalities, injuries and crashes. (Report No. DOT HS 812 069). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



## Campaign Timing Opportunities:

The following events and milestones are potential opportunities to engage the target audience:

### ***Sports Events:***

- The PGA Championship
- NBA Playoffs
- NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs
- Indy 500
- Preakness Stakes
- Belmont Stakes
- WNBA All-Star Game
- 2026 FIFA World Cup
- NASCAR
- Liga MX
- MLB
- Concacaf Champions Cup

### ***Entertainment Events:***

- Billboard Music Awards
- Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards
- Tony Awards
- American Music Awards (AMAs)
- Railbird Festival

## Prior Campaign Learnings:

The following represents key takeaways from previous *Click It or Ticket* campaigns:

**Storytelling and Audience Alignment:** Campaign insights confirm that blending broad-reach tactics with direct, custom content in the environments and mindsets of the audience drives meaningful engagement. Tailored messaging that reflects audience behavior, interests and preferences enhances authenticity and trust, ensuring that safety messages resonate in contextually relevant spaces such as music, sports, fitness, travel/adventure and gaming. In 2025, this approach delivered more than 984 million impressions, with custom content achieving engagement rates two to four times compared to standard brand assets and video completion rates at an average of 92%—clear indicators of aligning message and mindset, and deepening impact.

**Omnichannel Engagement and Mobile-First Integration:** Data from previous campaigns show that adapting buys and targeting based on learned audience insights improves overall engagement. For example, by leveraging overlapping media vendors across channels, NHTSA was able to test similar tactics to run with slight creative variations while aligning with specific outcomes. Notably, rural audiences with working-class lifestyles, families and interest in racing and college football demonstrate higher dwell time with high-impact units, with one tactic achieving an average time spent 60% above benchmark.

These results validate the effectiveness of nuanced audience targeting and reinforce the importance of mobile-first design elements such as fast load times, vertical layouts and touch-friendly interactions. As engagement continues to grow, future strategies should focus on tailored messaging and gamified creative units that reflect audience lifestyles and interests, ensuring every asset is optimized for mobile delivery.

**Passion Points and Contextual Engagement:** Embedding messages in high-value OOH environments where the audience is actively engaged, such as live sports, entertainment and seasonal travel moments, reinforces relevance. By layering geofencing, NHTSA can also capture audiences exposed to messaging in-venue and retarget them digitally, tying upper-funnel awareness to measurable engagement or action. Campaigns that integrate brand and custom content in these spaces achieve engagement comparable to more direct tactics, highlighting the value of a blended approach.

### Summary of Campaign Planning Priorities:

The 2026 *Click It or Ticket* campaign prioritizes efficient, omnichannel media execution to reach the general 18- to 34-year-old male audience and high-risk subgroups, such as pickup truck drivers in rural areas and men in states with historically higher unrestrained fatalities based on the latest FARS data.

Building on previous campaign learnings, the strategy emphasizes digital delivery of audience-tested messaging in contextually relevant environments aligned with passion points and seasonal moments, including music, live sports, gaming and Memorial Day. Innovative formats, such as gamification, mobile-first rich media and influencer integrations, drive engagement beyond clicks, capturing attention in high-risk scenarios. Location-based tactics ensure both on-site and online exposure.

By leveraging behavioral and environmental data, the campaign targets smarter, not just wider—enhancing dwell time, reinforcing seat belt use and generating actionable learnings for future campaigns.





**SPEEDING CATCHES  
UP WITH YOU**

# Speeding:

## *Speeding Catches Up With You*



### Issue Focus

Speeding



### Flight Dates

July 6–31, 2026



### Media Spend

\$8 million



### Target Audience

Men 18 to 44 years old

Speeding significantly increases the risk of crashes by reducing a driver's reaction time. NHTSA's *Speeding Catches Up With You* campaign aims to prevent speeding by educating drivers about the dangers and consequences associated with speeding. In 2023, speeding was a factor in 28% of fatal crashes, 13% of injury crashes and 9% of property-damage-only crashes. That same year, 11,775 fatalities, accounting for 29% of all traffic deaths, occurred in speeding-related crashes.<sup>16</sup>

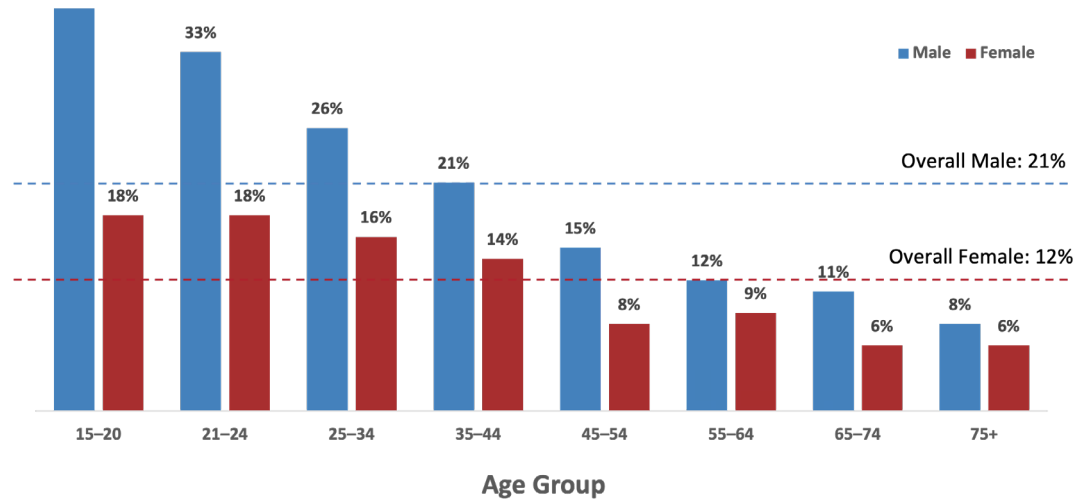
<sup>16</sup> Source: National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2025, June). *Speeding: 2023 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 721)*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



## Target Audience:

Men ages 18 to 44 years old are the demographic most likely to be in a fatal speed-involved crash. In 2023, of an estimated 332,598 people injured in traffic crashes, 14% were involved in speeding-related incidents. Among male drivers aged 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes, 37% were speeding, the highest proportion across any age group. Overall, young male drivers consistently exhibit the greatest likelihood of speeding at the time of fatal crashes.<sup>17</sup>

**FIGURE 18:** Percentages of Speeding Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes, by Age Group and Sex, 2023



Source: FARS 2023 ARF

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*



### Advertising Period:

National paid advertising will run July 6–31, 2026.

### Budget:

The total media budget for the *Speeding Catches Up With You* campaign is \$8 million.

### Campaign Objective:

The *Speeding Catches Up With You* campaign emphasizes that speeding is dangerous and can carry life-changing consequences. The campaign aims to raise awareness and perception of risk to encourage drivers to always adhere to the posted limits, regardless of road type or comfort level.

### Planned Campaign Assets:

The *Speeding Catches Up With You* campaign will feature existing English and new Spanish-language brand assets, including video, audio, OOH, digital display and paid social media. Designed for broad impact, the assets can be customized for different audiences, media channels or national initiatives, enabling states and partners to share content that resonates locally while extending the campaign's reach and engagement.

Campaign materials will be available for download and retagging at [TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov](https://TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov).

### Unique Campaign Media Planning Considerations:

- **Repositioning Speed with FOMO.** Speeding is often a thrill-seeking behavior or a means to get somewhere faster. This mentality offers an opportunity for reframing by tying into experiences that are meant to be enjoyed. Using influencers tied to key audience activation points, NHTSA will explore ways to show the audience that speeding through an experience can cause you to miss out. Whether it's skipping past available points in a game or not achieving the results in the gym they have been working towards because they sped through their workouts, customized messages will highlight that speeding through life will catch up to them—one way or another.
- **Community-Powered Social Norms.** Speeding is often perceived as a social norm among young men. NHTSA will collaborate with media vendors to shift this perception through community-driven activations that promote pro-social and anti-aggressive driving behavior. Peer-led engagement helps normalize safe driving and fosters collective accountability. To maximize impact, the campaign will feature voices that "matter" to the audience—especially those tied to speeding in aspirational and everyday contexts, such as sports, gaming, fitness and lifestyle culture.

### Campaign Timing Opportunities:

Key July NASCAR events, including the Quaker State 400 at Atlanta Motor Speedway (July 6), the NASCAR All-Star Race at Charlotte Motor Speedway (July 19) and the Foxwoods Resort Casino 301 in New Hampshire (July 20), provide high-visibility platforms to engage automotive fans and reinforce speed safety messaging. The campaign can also leverage broader travel and cultural moments, such as Route 66 Centennial celebrations and summer music festivals. By integrating messaging into these events and cultural touchpoints, the campaign can inspire audiences to enjoy the adventure of the open road while embracing responsible, safe driving behaviors.

The following events and milestones are potential additional opportunities to engage the target audience:

**Sports Events:**

- NASCAR
- Indy Car (Iowa Speedway, Streets of Toronto, WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca)
- NBA Summer League
- MLB All-Star Game
- PGA (multiple events, including the Open Championship)

**Entertainment:**

- PAX West

**Prior Campaign Learnings:**

The following represents key takeaways from previous *Speeding Catches Up With You* campaigns:

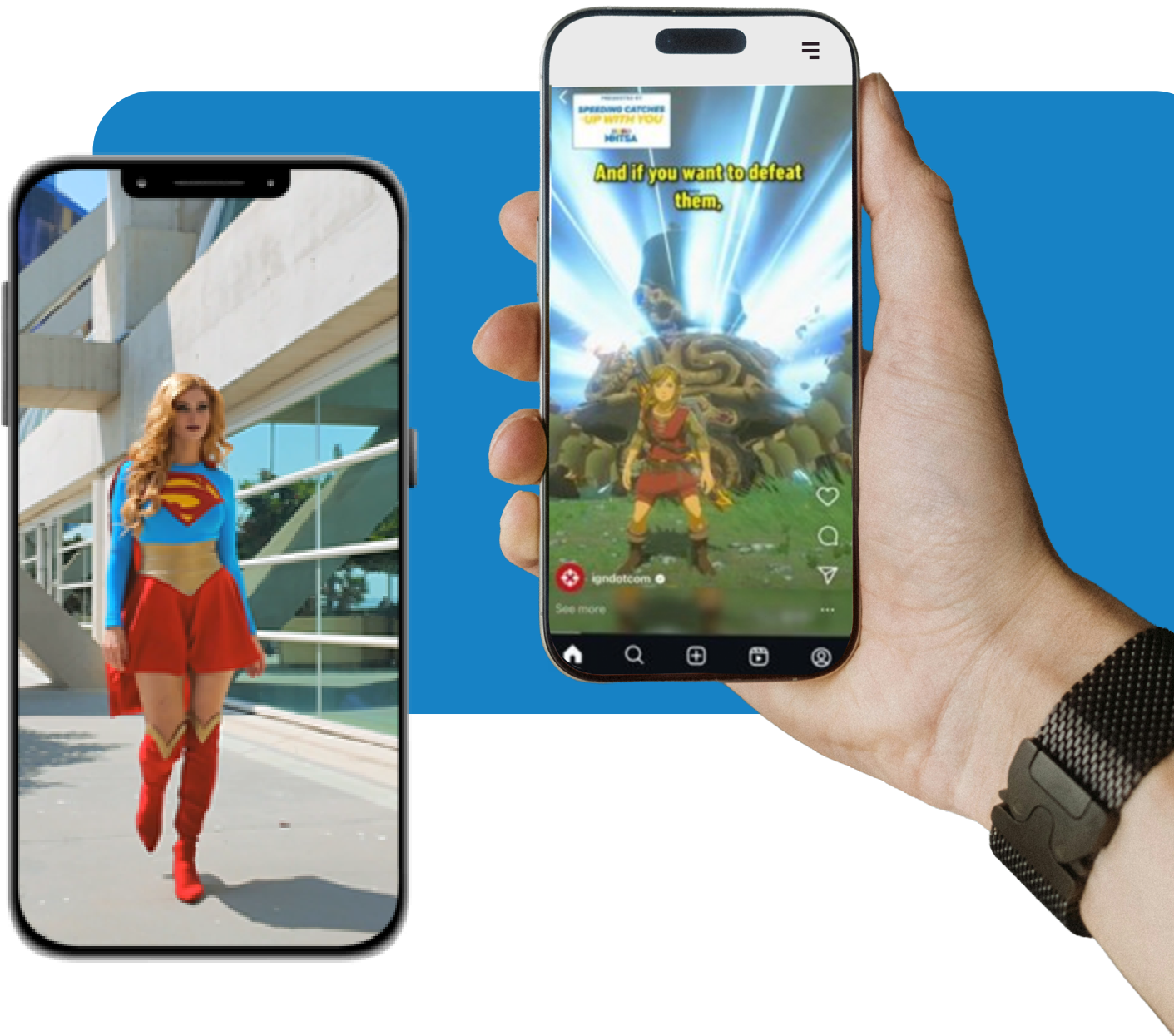
**Immersive Engagement Through 360° Campaigns:** Rich, interactive 360° campaign executions consistently outperform standard formats for speed prevention messaging by driving deeper engagement and delivering added value across multiple touchpoints. In 2025, the Fandom @ San Diego Comic-Con program spotlighted “Superman: Legacy” and “The Fantastic Four.” Custom videos, including “Safety Squad @ SDCC,” “Alternate Takes,” “FanPulse SDCC Edition” and “Movie Fights” livestream, collectively delivered 7 million video views and 5.1 million completions with a 76% VCR, exceeding projections. Paid social posts generated 4.73 million engagements with a 42.7% engagement rate and a 0.11% CTR (above the 0.10% benchmark). At the same time, custom promotional units delivered 3.8 million impressions with a 0.29% CTR, surpassing the display benchmark of 0.14%. By layering multiple touchpoints across digital, social and custom content, this approach maximized engagement, extended reach and increased frequency, ensuring the speed safety message was repeatedly seen by the male 18- to 44-year-old target audience during periods of peak interest. These integrated 360° activations combined cultural relevance, trusted platforms and high-profile event alignment to deliver measurable impact far above standard benchmarks.

**Data-Driven Creative Optimization:** High-impact media placements, such as pre-roll videos, Blitz takeovers and sticky/adherence units, amplify reach and maintain message prominence in platform-relevant moments. Mobile continues to be a key driver, and understanding user behavior across iOS and Android devices helps refine targeting and creative delivery. In 2025, MobileFuse activations, including rich media interstitials, in-banner video and custom video units, showed the strongest engagement among 35- to 44-year-old audiences, particularly in rural areas, with video completion rates peaking on weekends and iOS users outperforming Android by up to 80 times in interstitial units. These insights on audience behavior and state-level performance informed real-time adjustments to creative and targeting, enabling NHTSA to optimize reach.

## Summary of Campaign Planning Priorities:

Building on the success of the 2025 campaign, the 2026 effort emphasizes efficient, multi-platform paid media execution that reaches high-risk drivers with maximum impact. Learnings from last year confirmed that 360° campaigns, rich interactive media and culturally relevant activations drive engagement far above benchmarks, while custom content and influencer storytelling deepen message resonance with men 18 to 44 years old. The campaign also showed that trusted voices and cultural moments amplify effectiveness. NFL legend Champ Bailey and CFB athlete David Sanders successfully reframed slowing down as leadership. At the same time, activations tied to San Diego Comic-Con and major film releases captured attention at peak anticipation.

In 2026, the campaign will continue leveraging proven high-impact tactics, pre-rolls, blitz takeovers, sticky/adherence units and adaptable content formats to ensure channel continuity and seize audience attention during critical cultural and seasonal moments. By integrating these evidence-based strategies from recent campaigns, the 2026 approach is designed to deliver efficiency and effectiveness, maximizing reach, engagement and the behavioral impact of NHTSA's speed prevention messaging.







# Impaired Driving:

*Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*

*Ride Sober or Get Pulled Over*

*Drive High Get a DUI*



## Issue Focus

Alcohol-Impaired Driving

Alcohol-Impaired Riding

Drug-Impaired Driving



## Flight Dates

August 19–September 7, 2026, and  
December 16, 2026–January 1, 2027

August 19–September 7, 2026

August 19–September 7, 2026, and  
December 16, 2026–January 1, 2027



## Target Audience

Men 21 to 34 years old

Men 34 to 55 years old

Men 34 to 55 years old



**Media Spend** \$31.9 million

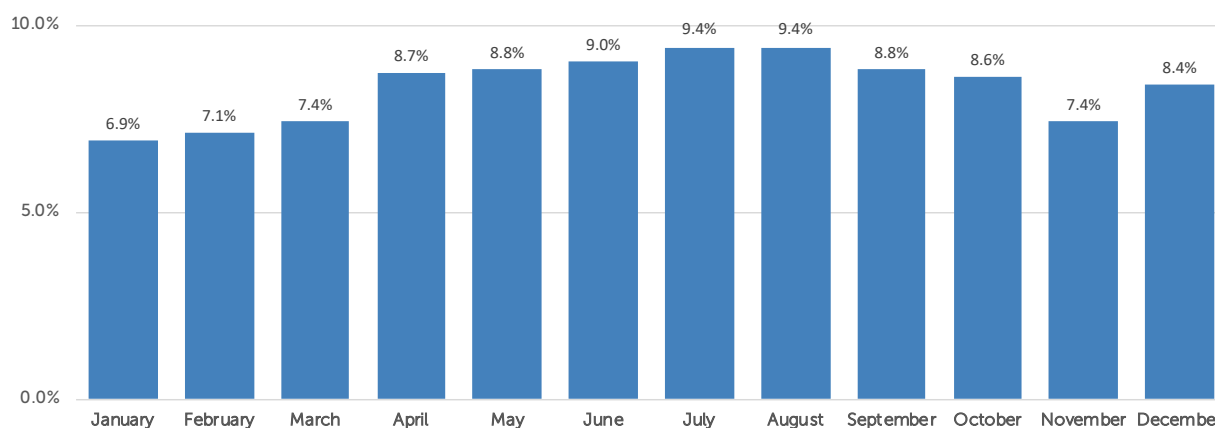


On average, an alcohol-impaired-driving fatality occurs every 42 minutes. To combat this, NHTSA activates multiple campaigns designed to influence behavior and reduce several forms of impaired driving, including:

- **Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over**, which focuses on alcohol-impaired driving.
- **Ride Sober or Get Pulled Over**, which focuses on alcohol-impaired motorcycle riding.
- **Drive High, get a DUI**, which focuses on drug-impaired driving, specifically driving under the influence of marijuana.

All three of these campaigns are activated in support of nationwide mobilizations that increase enforcement of DUI laws at strategically timed moments throughout the year, including during peak summer driving and holiday periods, when impaired driving fatalities are highest (Figure 19).

**FIGURE 19:** Percentages of Alcohol-Impaired Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes by Month, 2023



### Target Audiences:

The 2026 impaired driving campaigns focus on high-risk groups that data consistently show are disproportionately represented in impaired driving crashes. These include men ages 18 to 34 years old who consume marijuana, men ages 21 to 34 years old who drink alcohol and men ages 35 to 54 years old who ride motorcycles and drink alcohol.

Young men and alcohol impairment remain a central focus because male drivers ages 21 to 24 years old had the highest proportion of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes (28%), accounting for 22% of all alcohol-impaired drivers in deadly crashes. NHTSA conducted a study across trauma centers and medical examiner offices, which found that about 26% of drivers involved in crashes that resulted in serious injury or death tested positive for active THC, the psychoactive component of marijuana, underscoring the risks of drug-impaired driving.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/drug-impaired-driving#3806>

Motorcyclists represent another disproportionately impacted group. In 2023, their fatality rate was 28 times higher than that of passenger car occupants per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.<sup>19</sup> That same year, 6,335 motorcyclists died in traffic crashes, representing 15% of all traffic fatalities.<sup>20</sup> Alcohol impairment remains a persistent factor in these crashes. In fact, in 2023, motorcycle riders in fatal crashes had higher percentages of alcohol impairment than drivers of any other motor vehicle type.<sup>21</sup>

By aligning the campaign strategy with these high-risk groups, NHTSA ensures that the messaging reaches the drivers most likely to engage in impaired behavior while reinforcing broader public awareness of the dangers of driving under the influence.

**FIGURE 20:** Alcohol-Impaired Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes, by Age Group, Sex and Vehicle Type, 2022 and 2023

Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes	2022			2023		
	Alcohol-Impaired Drivers			Alcohol-Impaired Drivers		
	Total Drivers	Number	% of Total	Total Drivers	Number	% of Total
<b>Total*</b>	<b>60,308</b>	<b>12,919</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>57,939</b>	<b>11,779</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Age Group</b>						
<b>15–20</b>	4,876	937	19%	5,133	1,030	20%
<b>21–24</b>	5,308	1,542	29%	5,101	1,413	28%
<b>25–34</b>	12,661	3,500	28%	11,916	3,134	26%
<b>35–44</b>	10,398	2,482	24%	9,876	2,257	23%
<b>45–54</b>	8,652	1,731	20%	8,116	1,562	19%
<b>55–64</b>	7,932	1,347	17%	7,560	1,215	16%
<b>65–74</b>	5,076	624	12%	4,954	596	12%
<b>75+</b>	3,460	264	8%	3,458	260	8%
<b>Sex</b>						
<b>Male</b>	43,770	9,887	23%	42,101	9,155	22%
<b>Female</b>	14,783	2,571	17%	14,186	2,339	16%

Source: NHTSA 2023 Alcohol Impaired Data

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/motorcycle-safety>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/drunk-driving/ride-sober-or-get-pulled-over>

<sup>21</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2025, July). Motorcycles: 2023 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 732). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

## Advertising Periods:

National paid advertising will run August 10–September 7, 2026, and December 16, 2026–January 1, 2027.

## Budget

The total media budget for the 2026 impaired driving campaigns is \$31.9 million.

## Campaign Objective:

The objective of the impaired driving campaigns is to raise awareness about increased nationwide enforcement and the consequences of impaired driving among the target audiences

## Planned Campaign Assets:

The impaired driving campaigns will feature new English and Spanish-language alcohol- and drug-impaired brand assets. Drug-impaired will debut for August/Labor Day and alcohol-impaired will debut for Winter Holiday. Existing alcohol-impaired motorcycle brand assets will be used. Brand assets include video, audio, OOH, digital display and paid social media. Designed for broad impact, the assets can be customized for different audiences, media channels or national initiatives, enabling states and partners to share content that resonates locally while extending the campaign’s reach and engagement.

Campaign materials will be available for download and retagging at [TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov](https://www.traffic-safety-marketing.gov).

## Unique Campaign Media Planning Considerations:

- **Alcohol-Impaired Persona Segmentations.** NHTSA’s 2024 alcohol-impaired segmentation study identified two key personas for strategic messaging:<sup>22</sup>

**Persona 1:** Younger, frequent drinkers who enjoy taking risks and are likely to drive within two hours after drinking, often at bars or clubs.

**Persona 2:** Older (30 to 34 years old), higher-income individuals (\$100K+), who drink at breweries, wineries or restaurants and are likely to drive within two hours after drinking.

These personas were tested during the 2025 August/Labor Day Impaired Driving campaign using NHTSA brand messaging and targeting the study’s demographic, behavioral and contextual data. Early insights from that campaign showed that Persona 2 demonstrated high exposure, but lower engagement with the brand messaging. At the same time, Persona 1 showed more substantial potential when the creative spoke with them rather than at them. As the 2025 Winter Holiday Impaired Driving campaign concludes, results will be compared across both flights to determine if these trends hold, with recommendations for how best to evolve persona targeting strategies into 2026.

<sup>22</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2024, December). Impaired Driver Segmentation. <https://www.traffic-safety-marketing.gov/sites/tsm.gov/files/2024-12/drug-drunk-segmentation-research-en-2024-16579-tag.pdf>

- **Motorcycle Audience.** Male motorcyclists who consume alcohol skew older and require distinct contextual activations that feel authentic to their lifestyle. To reach this audience during the 2025 August/Labor Day Impaired Driving flight, the campaign included custom content interviews featuring Matt Lienhart and Elliot Sloan, an avid motorcycle rider and well-known gamer. Sloan's :30 video drove nearly 50% of all social engagements targeted to the motorcycle audience, underscoring the impact of credible messengers within this community. In addition, Live Nation extended reach through motorcycle-related concerts, with social efforts exceeding CTR benchmarks and pre-roll brand spots achieving a strong 82.86% VCR. Together, these activations confirm that embedding the message in culturally resonant spaces effectively engages this high-risk audience.
- **Influencer Engagement.** The campaign leverages influencers and creators who embody an aspirational, risk-taking mindset—such as travel vloggers, adventure athletes and gaming streamers—to build trust and align safe behavior with audience passions. Messaging is delivered as a lifestyle value, not a lecture. For example, Elliot Sloan, a vertical skateboarding risk-taker, partnered with NHTSA to emphasize the one place not to take risks: drinking and riding. These videos delivered high engagement, with video completion rates above 80% across online video.
- **Location-Based Behavioral Messaging.** The campaign evolves from broad awareness to a targeted, behavior-focused strategy that reaches drivers at high-risk moments and locations. Media placements concentrate on geo-fenced ads near bars, liquor and cannabis stores, concert venues and nightlife districts—places where the risk of impaired driving is at its highest. Paid media can also be prioritized in states with elevated alcohol- and drug-impaired fatality rates, especially where marijuana is legalized. By layering location data with DUI incident hotspots, the campaign delivers geographically precise messaging at the exact moment behavior can be influenced, maximizing impact and efficiency. This ensures the campaign raises awareness and intercepts risky behavior in real time.
- **Entertainment Venues and Platforms.** Messaging can be embedded organically within the audience's most-used platforms that coincide with riskier behavior. This includes in-app messaging on rideshare and navigation apps during late-night hours, branded content within video games and ads on Jumbotron at sports or concert venues. This approach creates seamless, natural interactions that capitalize on high engagement and decision-making moments.
- **Audio and Podcasts.** Audio and podcast platforms provide a unique opportunity to engage core audiences with minimal distractions. The campaign will secure ad placements on top-listened podcasts within the gaming, comedy and sports genres, where a trusted host can deliver messaging.

Additionally, custom content, such as a dedicated series of "safe ride home" messages, can be distributed via major audio platforms to reach listeners more personally and directly on platforms like YouTube Audio, Spotify and Pandora during holiday road travel.

### Campaign Timing Opportunities:

The impaired driving campaigns aligns with peak travel periods when risk is elevated, particularly Labor Day and the winter holidays. These moments often involve long-distance driving, family gatherings, nightlife and celebrations—all conditions that heighten the likelihood of impaired driving.



## August/Labor Day Flight:

### *Sports Events:*

- U.S. Open (Tennis)
- NFL Pre-Season
- NCAA College Football Kickoff Weekend
- Premier League
- MLB
- Liga MX
- NASCAR Cup Series

### *Entertainment:*

- Bourbon & Beyond Festival
- State Fairs
- Bikefest
- Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
- Labor Day Parade

## Winter Holiday Season Flight:

### *Sports Events:*

- NBA Regular Season
- College Basketball Holiday Tournaments and Regular Season Games
- NFL Playoff Race
- College Football Bowl Games and Playoffs
- Premier League Soccer
- UEFA Champions League
- Formula 1

### *Entertainment:*

- Video Game Awards

## Prior Campaign Learnings:

The following represents key takeaways from previous impaired driving campaigns.

**Customized Creative and Platform Alignment:** Campaigns show stronger results when content is tailored to fit each platform's culture, social environments, streaming or in-game placements. By adapting tone and creative style to feel less like traditional advertising and more like authentic, peer-to-peer messaging, campaigns more effectively reach young male audiences who are most at risk for impaired driving. Fandom leveraged its existing Honest Ad series, well-known cultural property "The Fantastic Four" that was highly relevant within flight and popular influencer alignment to create a custom video that delivered social engagement rates over 57% and CTRs double standard campaign assets.

**Creative Optimizations and Flight Adjustments:** Adjusting creative between flights has provided measurable performance improvements, with shifts in media goals directly impacting website traffic and message recall. For example, during the 2025 August/Labor Day Impaired Driving campaign, refreshed creative assets drove a 15% lift in CTRs compared to the prior flight, while custom video units increased time spent on site by nearly 20%. Similarly, adapting messaging for the Winter Holiday flight improved message recall by 6%, underscoring that agile adjustments keep the campaign timely and relevant and deliver tangible gains. These optimizations reinforce the importance of adaptation as travel patterns, cultural moments and impairment risks shift across the calendar.

**Beyond Click-Throughs:** Messages crafted to be fully understood in a single impression, whether viewed in feeds, during live events or around seasonal celebrations, can raise awareness and encourage self-reflection on impaired driving, even when users do not actively click or engage with the content.

**Contextual Targeting and Geofencing:** Travel-heavy holidays like Labor Day and the winter season also represent peaks in impaired driving risks. By leveraging geofencing and location-based tactics tied to bars, entertainment districts and high-traffic routes, campaigns connect with drivers at the precise moments they are most likely to consider getting behind the wheel.

**Persona 1 Challenges, Persona 2 Wins:** Persona 1 is particularly resistant to messaging, with overall engagement 20–30% lower than the main audience. As they resonate more with enforcement-based messaging, NHTSA can lean into custom messaging using relatable figures they respect to discuss legal and personal consequences of driving impaired. Although not targeted directly at Persona 1, Overtime's custom social segments positioned Nick Singleton to deliver key messaging about the personal consequences of impaired driving, delivering high engagement rates three times benchmarks, at 1.25%. In comparison, Persona 2 targeting delivered 10–20% higher engagement than the main audience. While standard messaging is currently driving high engagement, message penetration will be more effective when placed strategically with media platforms and community voices that drive respect from this audience, further enforcing social norming surrounding the enforcement message.

## Summary of Campaign Planning Priorities:

Impaired driving remains the leading contributor to roadway fatalities, making it a top priority for NHTSA's 2026 campaign. The campaign leverages custom activations and strategic partnerships with sports figures and high-profile broadcasts to engage audiences around culturally relevant passion points. Audience-tested digital creative ensures messages are clear, impactful and adaptable across multiple platforms, while ongoing in-flight optimization toward the highest engagement signals is a proxy for message awareness. By combining broad platform reach with tailored, contextually placed messaging, the campaign maximizes both exposure and meaningful impact, ensuring each impression contributes to safer driving behaviors.



# State Media Planning Tips and Tools



## Start with the National Framework

- Review the national media calendar, budgets and creative briefs to understand key flight dates, channel mix and messaging priorities.
- Identify overlapping audiences (e.g., men ages 18 to 34 years old, adult drivers 18 years old and older) to build upon the same research and targeting.

## Localize Audience Targeting

- Use state-specific behavioral, demographic and psychographic insights to refine targeting.
- Overlay local traffic patterns, cultural events or seasonal behavior shifts that may not be reflected in the national plan.
- Adjust creative messaging for regional tone, dialect or imagery to increase local resonance and affinities.

## Optimize Media Mix for Local Impact

- While national media may emphasize an omnichannel approach, states can add hyperlocal layers, such as local radio, targeted social media, geo-fencing and local publisher sponsorships. These may complement the national media or supplement campaigns without national coverage.
- Leverage placements that over-index in your state (e.g., local sports sponsorships, high-performing in-state OOH).

## Integrate Measurement and Attribution

- Consider comparing results using shared KPIs with the national plan (e.g., VTR, CTR, VCR).
- Monitor local performance to track state-specific outcomes and identify optimizations faster than the national cycle.

## Campaign Analysis

- Review campaign performance at the end of a campaign and compare metrics from the national and local levels to find consistencies and anomalies.
- Knowing what works and needs to be tweaked can build stronger campaign performance on each flight.

# FAQs

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**Here are some common general questions about NHTSA media plans and how to approach state planning.**

## **Omnichannel Integrated Media Planning Tips:**

### **Q: How do we ensure consistency across channels?**

**A:** Start with a unified creative brief and media strategy that clearly defines objectives, audience personas and key messaging. Use consistent tone, visuals and brand voice while tailoring creative formats to each channel's strengths.

### **Q: How should we allocate the budget across channels?**

**A:** Use historical performance, audience reach data and test-and-learn strategies to guide allocation. Factor in each channel's role based on mass awareness for reach and digital, social and influencers for engagement.

### **Q: How do we integrate traditional, social and digital media?**

**A:** Coordinate timing, messaging and targeting. For example, synchronize CTV spots with paid social media campaigns for retargeting or use DOOH QR codes and geofencing to drive to a mobile landing page. Custom content incorporation can also be a key factor in amplifying the integration of traditional, social and digital media within affinity content.

### **Q: How do we measure success in an omnichannel plan?**

**A:** Set unified KPIs aligned with campaign objectives, then track channel-specific metrics to inform optimizations. Balancing reach, frequency and engagement is key. KPIs should be aligned with the channel tactic as well.

### **Q: How can we adapt quickly if performance lags?**

**A:** Build flexibility into your plan with contingency budgets. Monitor results quickly and shift dollars to top-performing channels or creative assets. Weekly pacing of campaign performance metrics is recommended to keep a pulse on vendor, innovative and engagement metrics. This allows for optimizations within flight and to find data correlations that tell the story of who is engaging as well as where, when and how they are engaging.

# Paid and Unpaid Influencer Tips:

## Q: How can influencers be incorporated into media buys as earned versus paid creators?

A: Unpaid influencers, especially micro and nano tiers, can be incorporated as added value through negotiated added-value placements within paid media packages. While they are not compensated directly, their participation can be secured as part of broader media buys, where exposure and alignment with a public service message serve as the incentive.

## Q: Can unpaid influencers succeed within a campaign like paid influencers?

A: Use influencers as trusted messengers for public service campaigns; unpaid influencers can act as ambassadors for key messages by creating and sharing content without monetary or product compensation. Their motivation often comes from alignment with the cause, personal connection to the issue or a desire to build credibility with their audience, helping drive awareness, engagement and message adoption.

## Q: How do we find paid or unpaid influencers, especially for resource-limited state offices?

A: Use media partnerships and contacts who have expressed interest in representing the brand.

- For managed campaigns, partner with influencer agencies, which handle legal and usage rights but require minimum spending.
- Negotiate with paid media partners for on-air personalities or local celebrities to be creators.
- Use organic social posts asking for personal stories and assess social reach.
- Identify micro and nano influencers who align with your cause and may collaborate for free.
- Leverage partnerships with local sports teams or vetted community voices (e.g., local news anchors or radio hosts, local lifestyle bloggers, community organizers or activists).
- Search hashtags relevant to your campaign or geography to find local advocates (e.g., #tnsafedrivemoms).

## Q: What if an influencer acts in a way that harms the campaign or NHTSA/state brand?

A: Rapid response is critical. For example, the content was promptly removed when NHTSA was alerted to an influencer facing legal issues. Agencies actively monitor influencer activity and retain the right to terminate partnerships if content becomes brand-unsafe. Ongoing monitoring helps safeguard the brand's integrity.

## Q: Can influencers be used for events?

A: Yes, influencers have successfully been integrated at auto shows, fairs, Comic-Con and sporting events, creating authentic content tied to the event journey. Keeping messaging authentic and unscripted helps maintain engagement and trust.

**Q: What advice should be shared about working with influencers?**

- A:** Authenticity is key—avoid overproducing or scripting content heavily.
- Choose creators who naturally align with your brand voice.
  - Rough, real content resonates better than polished ads.
  - Influencer marketing is becoming a core brand channel tactic, increasing industry budget shares. Research the going market rates for paid influencers and any expectations they might have, as well as the brand, before engaging in contracting.
  - Millennials and Gen Z prefer micro and nano influencers for authenticity, so a mixed influencer level strategy is recommended.
  - Monitoring continuously is key.

**Q: How should I brief creators when using a custom content approach?**

- A:** Provide a clear creative brief with brand guidelines, key messages, dos/don'ts and required disclosures. Allow room for the creator's authentic voice to ensure content feels organic while meeting campaign objectives.

**Q: How do I ensure brand safety when working with influencers?**

- A:** Start by thoroughly vetting influencers before partnerships begin, following established guidelines like those used by NHTSA. Vetting evaluates sensitive areas such as religion, politics, substance use and brand alignment, with criteria varying depending on campaign needs (for more detailed guidance, outreach to NHTSA is recommended). Once creators are selected, maintain safeguards by reviewing drafts before publishing, setting up continuous monitoring and including contract clauses allowing content removal or partnership termination if brand safety concerns arise.

**Q: How much creative control should the brand keep when working with influencers?**

- A:** Strike a balance and set clear brand parameters but trust the creator's audience knowledge. Overly scripted content can feel inauthentic and hurt performance.

**Q: How should paid amplification be planned for influencer campaigns?**

- A:** Build a media plan that supports organic reach with paid boosts to top-performing posts. Use platform-specific targeting to reach desired demographics beyond the influencer's organic audience.

# Custom Content Tips:

## Q: What role does custom content play in an omnichannel plan?

**A:** Custom content can drive deeper engagement by making brand messages more relevant to specific audiences or contexts. Distribute content in multiple formats (video, articles, native ads) across the channels where your audience spends the most time.

## Q: What is a custom content approach in paid media?

**A:** It's when ad creative is developed to feel native to the platform and highly relevant to the audience, often blending storytelling with campaign objectives. This can include platform-specific videos, interactive content, sponsored articles or tailored visuals that go beyond standard ad formats.

## Q: Why use custom content alongside brand messaging ad units?

**A:** Custom content typically drives higher engagement because it's designed for the audience and platform environment, not just repurposed from other channels. It builds trust, authenticity and deeper connections with the audience, which can lead to stronger results over time and, when run in rotation with the brand messages, can amplify both.

## Q: What are the best practices for developing custom content?

- A:** Start with clear audience insights and objectives.
- Design for the platform's native look and feel and audience content consumption.
  - Keep brand messaging integrated but not overpowering.
  - Test multiple creative variations to optimize performance.

# Glossary and Terms



## Video

**Addressable TV:** The capability to show different ads to different households while they watch the same TV program, based on data targeting.

**Advertising-Based Video on Demand (AVOD):** Ad-supported video streaming.

**Audience Targeting:** Using data points to target specific population segments based on demographics, interests and behaviors.

**Automatic Content Recognition (ACR):** ACR is a technology that leverages a content database to recognize and identify video and audio content with which a user is actively engaging.

**Brand Safety:** Keeping a brand's reputation safe when they advertise by ensuring that ads do not run adjacent to content that goes against brand guidelines.

**Connected TV (CTV):** Another term for Smart TV, CTV refers to any TV that can be connected to the internet and access content beyond what is available via the standard offering from a cable provider. CTVs are designed to provide a more immersive experience for TV viewers by delivering interactive features, such as web browsing, social networking, video-on-demand and video streaming, and regular TV content.

**Dynamic Ad Insertion (DAI):** Technology that inserts video ads into streaming content in real time, allowing for tailored and updated ad delivery.

**Interactive Video Ads:** Ads that invite viewer interaction, such as clicking on options, polls or shoppable video elements.

**Linear TV:** A TV service where the scheduled program must be watched at a specific time and on a particular TV channel.

**Over-the-Top (OTT):** A device connected to a TV that directly provides streaming media as a standalone product to viewers over the internet, bypassing telecommunications, multi-channel TV and broadcast TV platforms that traditionally act as a controller or distributor of such content. Popular examples are Roku, Chromecast, Amazon Fire Stick, Apple TV and other major gaming consoles.

**TV Everywhere:** TV Everywhere refers to a subscription business model in which access to streaming video content from a television channel requires users to "authenticate" themselves as current subscribers to the channel.

**Programmatic TV:** A TV ad buy that uses data and automation to target specific consumer audiences precisely.



**Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD):** Like traditional pay-TV packages, SVOD allows consumers to access an entire content catalog for a flat rate, typically paid monthly. Examples of SVOD include Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+ and Amazon Prime. Normally, they do not offer advertising opportunities.

**Synched:** Uses a technology platform to automatically trigger a digital ad campaign based on what was viewed on TV. This could extend to video ads on laptops, mobile devices, tablets, display ads, ads seen on social media or search marketing.

**Second Screen:** A mobile device used while watching TV, especially to access supplementary content or applications.

**Skippable In-Stream Ads (formerly TrueView):** YouTube's skippable in-stream ads allow viewers to skip an ad after five seconds, with advertisers paying only when the ad is watched to completion or reaches a set duration. While YouTube has phased out the TrueView name, this format now lives within Video Action Campaigns, which combine skippable ads with discovery placements to maximize reach and performance across YouTube and Google video partners.

**Thru Play:** The number of times a video is played to completion or for at least 15 seconds.

## Audio

**Audio Ad Stitching:** The dynamic insertion of ads into podcast episodes or streaming audio content.

**Audio Streaming:** Delivering real-time audio through a network connection.

**Average Quarter-Hour (AQH):** The average number of persons listening to a particular station for at least five minutes for 15 minutes.

**Connected Audio:** Streaming audio services accessed via internet-connected devices (smart speakers, apps, smart TVs).

**Podcast Sponsorship:** Advertising placements integrated within podcast episodes, often read by hosts to increase authenticity.

**Terrestrial:** Any radio signal that travels along the land, is broadcast from a land-based station and is received by land-based receivers (AM/FM radio).

# Digital

**Augmented Reality (AR) Ads:** Ads that use AR technology to create immersive brand experiences via mobile devices.

**Esports:** A multiplayer video game competition played for spectators, often team-based and played for prize money. Esports are live-streamed and involve commentators and analyses like “traditional” sports.

**Free-To-Play Games:** Free-to-play (F2P) is a business model for online games in which the game designers do not charge the user or player to join the game. Instead, they generate revenue from advertisements or in-game sales, such as payment for upgrades, special abilities, unique items and expansion packs.

**Live-Streaming:** A gamer shares their gaming experience with fans/followers by live broadcasting their game. Some streamers consistently play the same games, and others try different games or follow trends.

**Metaverse:** A universal and immersive virtual world.

**Native Advertising:** A form of paid media that matches the look, feel and function of where the ad appears. Native ads are often found in social media feeds or as recommended content on a webpage.

**Programmatic Digital:** Automated bidding on advertising inventory in real-time for the opportunity to show an ad to a specific customer within a particular context.

**Programmatic Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH):** Automated buying and targeting of digital billboards and signage.

**User-Generated Content (UGC):** Refers to any form of content posted by users on online platforms, including videos, text, testimonials and audio.

## Paid Social Media

**Influencer Marketing:** A strategy that involves partnering with influencers to create authentic content that resonates with target audiences, often blending organic storytelling with paid promotion.

**Macro-Influencers:** Those with between 100,000 and 1 million followers. Macro-influencers have a broader reach and can impact larger audiences while maintaining some degree of personal connection.

**Mega-Influencers/Celebrities:** Influencers with over 1 million followers, often including well-known celebrities and public figures. They offer massive reach but typically have lower engagement rates than smaller influencers.

**Micro-Influencers:** Influencers with follower counts generally between 10,000 and 100,000. They deliver strong engagement within niche communities and are valued for their authentic content and targeted reach.

**Nano-Influencers:** Individuals with a small but highly engaged following, typically between 1,000 and 10,000 followers. They often have a very close, trusted relationship with their audience, making their endorsements feel highly authentic.

**Paid Influencers:** Individuals or creators compensated by brands or agencies to promote products, services or campaigns on their social media channels or other digital platforms. Paid influencer campaigns leverage the influencer's established audience and credibility to drive awareness, engagement and conversions.

**Sponsored Content:** Posts or media created by influencers that disclose brand partnerships, promoting a product or message in a native, audience-friendly format.

## General

**Cost Per Thousand (CPM):** The cost of delivering 1,000 gross impressions.

**Cross-Device Measurement:** Technology to measure user behavior and ad exposure across multiple devices for a unified measurement.

**Engagement Rate:** The percentage of people who interacted (clicked, liked, shared, commented) with an ad or content.

**Flight:** Advertising timing strategy where ads or commercials are run during a period (called a flight). The higher the weight of the advertising, the more often it is seen.

**Frequency:** The number of times you touch each person with your message.

**Quintile:** Viewers, listeners, readers or consumers of a particular medium are ranked according to their usage and then divided into five equal groups, or quintiles, ranging from the heaviest to the lightest in media consumption.

**Reach:** The number of people you touch with your marketing message or people exposed.

**Viewability:** The measure of whether an ad was seen by a user (e.g., 50% of the ad's pixels in view for at least one second).