

# The Role of Mass Media Campaigns in Reducing Traffic Crashes and How to Establish Sustainable Funding Mechanisms for Campaigns

Well-designed, sufficiently funded and well-executed mass media campaigns—effectively combined with best practice enforcement—are critical to changing road users’ risky behaviors and, over time, changing social norms. Mass media campaigns should be an essential component of comprehensive road safety strategies and plans.<sup>1</sup>

## Mass media campaigns have contributed to reducing crashes and road fatalities in high-, low- and middle-income countries.

- Road safety campaigns have an overall effect of reducing crashes by 9%. Campaigns using enforcement strategies are associated with greater crash reductions.<sup>2</sup>
- Progressive countries and municipalities maintain long-running, robust media campaigns to change risky behaviors and maintain social norms. Examples include:
  - [Australia’s Transport Accident Commission](#)<sup>3</sup>
  - [New Zealand](#)<sup>4</sup>
  - [Department for Transport UK](#)<sup>5</sup>
  - [New York City Department of Transportation \(United States\)](#)<sup>6</sup>
- The 2014 New Zealand Transport Agency’s “Mistakes” campaign aimed at curbing speeding drivers is estimated to have returned NZ \$1.6 for every NZ \$1 invested.<sup>7</sup>
- In the first year after the campaign launched, average speeds on New Zealand’s open roads had dropped by an average of 0.4 km/h contributing to save NZ \$46 million from the cost of crashes. Even if the campaign takes credit for just a tenth of this reduction (to allow for some contribution from enforcement and engineering), the financial return is NZ \$4.6 million for an outlay of NZ \$2.8 million in the first year alone.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Road safety mass media campaigns: a toolkit. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016. <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254281/9789241511797-eng.pdf;jsessionid=6BA0B371D314368DDD3A2B0A770069A3?sequence=1>

<sup>2</sup>R.O. Phillips et al. / Accident Analysis and Prevention 43 (2011) 1204–1218.

<sup>3</sup>TAC Campaigns. Transport Accident Commission. <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/tac-campaigns>

<sup>4</sup>Marketing Campaigns. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/what-waka-kotahi-is-doing/marketing-campaigns/>

<sup>5</sup>Campaigns. Think!. <https://www.think.gov.uk/campaigns/?filters=.drink-driving>

<sup>6</sup>Speeding Ruins Lives. New York City Department of Transportation. <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/campaigns.shtml>

<sup>7</sup>IPA (UK), Entrant: Clemenger BBDO Wellington, Gold, Best International (The Tim Broadbent Prize), IPA Effectiveness Awards, 2016

<sup>8</sup>Speeding (New Zealand Transport Agency): Mistakes, Case Study

- The United Kingdom's Department for Transport has been running road safety campaigns "Think!" on TV for over 50 years. The campaigns successfully challenged a number of behaviors and attitudes to improve road safety, including drink driving, drug driving and using handheld phones while driving. The campaigns have helped reduce the number of deaths from 22 per day in 1960 to 5 in 2017.<sup>9</sup>

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## Campaigns supported by Vital Strategies, within the framework of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS), both demonstrate impact and prove that societal benefits are greater than the implementation costs.

- Through the holistic BIGRS approach in partnership with governments in low- and middle-income countries, 97,148 lives have been saved since the start of the initiative in 2007 through 2018. An estimated 311,758 lives will be saved by 2030. Legislative changes alone account for 75% of lives saved. Another 13% is attributable to social marketing campaigns paired with police enforcement.<sup>10</sup>

**BIGRS locations that approach road safety holistically by strengthening legislation, implementing proven road safety interventions, and investing in intensive mass media campaigns run in conjunction with police enforcement, see positive changes in behavior and social norms. These changes have ultimately helped save lives.**

- Vital Strategies has supported more than 60 mass media campaigns across 14 priority countries. Campaigns are available on [Vital's website](#).<sup>11</sup>
- In Brazil, the city of Fortaleza's Municipal Traffic Authority ran three evidence-based speeding campaigns with US \$1 million in media placement from 2018-2021. Speeding decreased from 22% to 11%, from 2017 to 2021, and road traffic deaths have dropped by 39%, from 256 in 2017 (one

year before the first speeding campaign) to 157 in 2022. Overall, from 2014-2022, 890 deaths were prevented on the roads and an estimated US \$335 million in costs associated with road deaths were saved in the same period.<sup>12</sup>

- The Secretary of Mobility in Bogota, Colombia intensified speed management efforts between October 2018 and December 2019, with interventions including a speed limit reduction to 50 km/h on 10 critical corridors, upgrading infrastructure and four robust speeding mass media campaigns paired with enhanced enforcement operations. This was supported by earned media strategies—such as journalist workshops. These comprehensive measures led to a decrease in speeding from 39% to 21% during this period and prevented 73 deaths in the city. The overall US \$2.3 million project investment included US \$1.8 million allocated for media campaigns. An estimated US \$12.6 million in costs associated with road deaths was saved in the 14-month span from the 46 lives saved on the corridors which received reduced speed limits.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> New THINK! Road safety campaign launched to help cut child deaths, Department for Transport UK (2017, November 24). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-think-road-safety-campaign-launched-to-help-cut-child-deaths>

<sup>10</sup> Delia Hendrie et al, Lives Saved in Low- and Middle-Income Countries by Road Safety Initiatives Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and Implemented by Their Partners between 2007-2018 Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Nov; 18(21): 11185. Published online 2021 Oct 25. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8583449/>

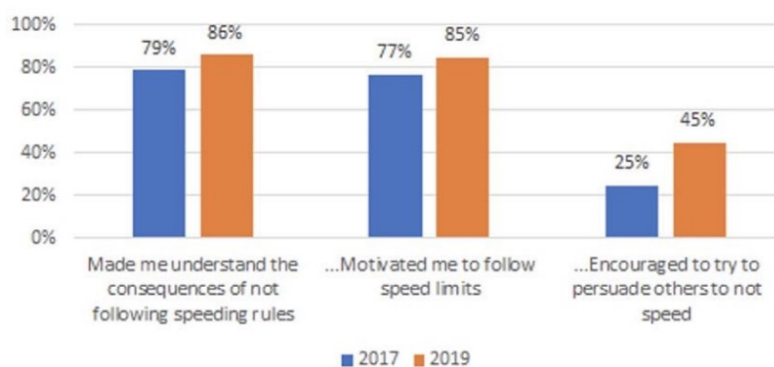
<sup>11</sup> Road Safety. Vital Strategies. <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/road-safety/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://vida.centralamc.com.br>

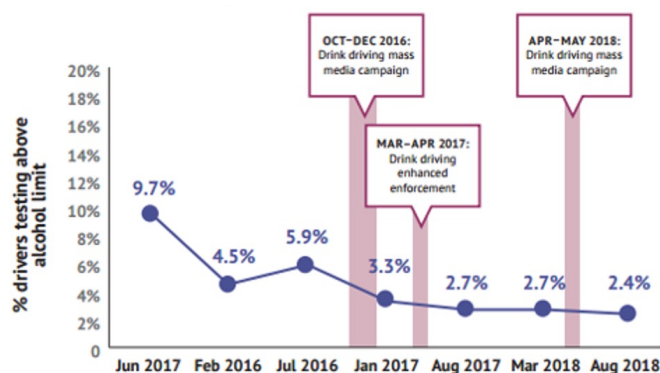
<sup>13</sup> Puentes, Ana. (2020, August 16). Bogotá se ahorró 12 millones de dólares al bajar la velocidad vial. El Tiempo. <https://www.eltiempo.com/bogota/bogota-beneficios-economicos-de-reducir-la-velocidad-en-la-ciudad-526930#Echobox=1596983120>

- In Salvador, Brazil, a Transalvador’s comprehensive road safety policy included two speeding campaigns 2021/22 with a total of US \$330,000 media placement paired with enforcement. This contributed to a decrease of observed speeding from 13% in 2020 to 8% in 2022<sup>14</sup>. Road traffic deaths in Salvador dropped 15% to 110 deaths in 2022 compared to 130 in 2020, one year before the first speeding campaign.<sup>15</sup>
- The Transport Programs Management Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia ran drink driving campaigns in 2016 and 2019. The campaigns reached millions of drivers bringing positive shifts in knowledge and attitudes toward drink driving, motivating compliance and changing social norms.<sup>16</sup>

## Effectiveness of a Drinking and Driving Campaign on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior Among Drivers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



## Observed Drink Driving in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia<sup>17</sup>



<sup>14</sup> JHU Observational Study for Salvador - Round 4: <https://vital.box.com/s/hg5ky6krty6ulxqb0y94r29d8g1i90ym>

<sup>15</sup> Salvador Traffic Crash Information System: <http://transalvador.salvador.ba.gov.br/conteudo/index.php/estatisticaAcidente/acidenteComVitima>

<sup>16</sup> Singh Negi, N. et al, Effectiveness of a Drinking and Driving Campaign on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior Among Drivers in Addis Ababa in Front. Sustain. Cities, 23 November 2020. Sec. Innovation and Governance <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frsc.2020.563350/full>

<sup>17</sup> JHU Observational Study for Addis Ababa, round 7.

## How to Establish Sustainable Funding Sources for Mass Media Campaigns

Increased investment in road safety mass media campaigns can help save lives and costs when the campaigns are anchored around risky periods and paired with highly visible and enhanced enforcement. However, even with a comprehensive road safety strategy, identifying sufficient and sustained funding can be a challenge. Inadequate funding means that messages only reaches a fraction of road users. This neglect contributes to high rates of traffic injuries and fatalities.

Sustainable funding can be established in a variety of ways, for example:

- **Campaign funding is embedded in traffic- and vehicle-related regulatory and policy frameworks.**
  - For example, Australia's Transport Accident Commission assigns a percentage of vehicle registration fees for road safety mass media efforts. It is estimated that the reduced costs of insurance payments to road crash claimants were 3.9 times the costs of advertising campaign run along the speed enforcement and 7.9 times the costs of advertising supporting the drink driving enforcement programs.<sup>18</sup>
  - In Brazil, 5% of the traffic fines fuels a nationwide fund for traffic safety and education, available for all levels of government.<sup>19</sup>
- **Tax unhealthy products to pay for campaigns.** For example, in Thailand, a 2% tax on unhealthy products (tobacco and alcohol) is earmarked for public health communication lead by ThaiHealth, an autonomous government agency.
- **Require broadcasters to provide free airtime for public health messages.** In Turkey, broadcasters are required by law to provide free airtime for public health including road safety campaigns.
- **Government makes multi-year funding commitments aligned with comprehensive road safety plans.** For example, New Zealand's Road to Zero's national strategy from 2020-2030 includes investment in mass media campaigns.
- **The establishment of public-private partnerships with no conflict-of-interest business to pay for the campaigns** (e.g., insurance or delivery companies).

Funding mechanisms which have been used to pay for mass media campaigns related to tobacco can be used as models for establishing mechanisms to pay for road safety campaigns.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cameron N.M. et al, Evaluation of TAC RS TV advertising (Monash University Accident Research center, 1993) [https://www.monash.edu/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/216514/muarc052.pdf](https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/216514/muarc052.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Brazilian Traffic Code, Art .20, §1 [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/19503compilado.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/19503compilado.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Position Paper: Sustainable Funding Mechanisms for Population-Level Tobacco Communication Programs. Vital Strategies. 2017 [https://www.vitalstrategies.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/VS\\_Sustainpaper\\_Final\\_light.pdf](https://www.vitalstrategies.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/VS_Sustainpaper_Final_light.pdf)