NHTSA

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

Effective Recall Communications

8.19.2019

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BACKGROUND

Background

Greater public awareness and engagement are vital for creating additional inputs to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that will help regulators identify early warning signs for safety defects. Increased public awareness and engagement will also improve timely notification of recalls and consumer recall compliance.

In support of this, NHTSA is refreshing its Safe Cars Saves Lives consumer information campaign with the goals of promoting greater awareness of the agency's role in vehicle safety investigations and recalls and motivating consumers to engage with NHTSA's online recall resources that will ultimately save more lives on America's roadways.

Research Objectives

Communicate more effectively with consumers about recalls

1. Better understand consumer attitudes toward recalls and what motivates their behavior (or lack thereof).
2. Explore the range of potential challenges, concerns, benefits, and motivations that shape consumer behavior.
3. Increase effectiveness of message content.
4. Improve visuals to make notifications command greater attention.
5. Help shape communication strategy through identification of credible third parties.

Methodology

Qualification Criteria

- U.S. ages 18+
- Possess a valid driver's license
- Own and operate a vehicle at least once a week
- Primary/Shared decision-maker for vehicle maintenance/repairs

Participants (n=189)

- Group 1 - General Population (n=39)
- Group 2 - General Population (n=39)
- Group 3 - Hispanics (n=37)
- Group 4 - Owners of vehicles impacted by Takata recall (n=37)
- Group 5 - Owners of vehicles impacted by Takata recall (n=37)

MODE

5 BrightBoard™ Sessions

- General Population (2 sessions)
- Owners of vehicles impacted by Takata recall (2 sessions)
- Hispanics (1 session)

LENGTH

4 days

- Day 1 (T) – General attitudes & experiences
- Day 2 (W) – Evaluation of communications
- Day 3 (Th) – Evaluation of NHSTA Recall webpage
- Day 4 (F) – Catch-up

DATES

Wave 1 - July 23 – July 26

- General Population group 1
- Takata group 1

Wave 2 - July 30 – August 2

- General Population group 2
- Takata group 2
- Hispanics group

GEOGRAPHY

National

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

While consumers consider all recalls important, those that compromise the safety of a vehicle and put the passengers at risk of injury or death are treated as a higher priority and are more likely to be repaired sooner rather than later.

What do drivers consider to be "major" recalls, and how do behaviors differ across recalls that are viewed as major and those that are not?

Vehicle safety and passenger safety are major priorities. If the recall impacts components such as brakes, air bags, seat belts, or drivetrain, it is considered to be more important than a recall that impacts something cosmetic, or a component that does not present an immediate threat.

Executive Summary

What other barriers exist, and what can be done from a communications perspective to help overcome those barriers?

Part 1

Outside of the lack of time, the second most common barrier to having a recall repaired is not seeing it as a safety problem or a serious threat. Some consumers are lulled into a false sense of security by this misperception. One case involved a respondent who is aware of a passenger side air bag recall but doesn't see it as a concern because no one sits in the passenger seat. Other participants trust their brand as reliable and don't expect them to have recalls due to poor manufacturing.

The keys to overcoming these barriers are continued education and an increased focus on the severity of the recall and the dangerous, if not lethal, outcomes that can result from not having it repaired. Visuals of defective components and what happens when a recall is not repaired can help drive home the message of how important it is to have the recall repaired.

Executive Summary

What other barriers exist, and what can be done from a communications perspective to help overcome those barriers?

Part 2

Misperceptions around the cost of the repair remain a significant barrier, especially among Hispanics. Some are simply not aware that all recall repairs are made free of charge. Others worry that the dealership will try to upsell them into other services or claim that damage/repairs are not tied to the recall.

In order to overcome this barrier, it is important to overemphasize the fact that

ALL RECALL REPAIRS ARE FREE!

Executive Summary

What other barriers exist, and what can be done from a communications perspective to help overcome those barriers?

Part 3

Convenience barriers (time and distance) exist generally, but the amount of time and distance when they become barriers varies and is often a function of the severity of the recall. Many referenced that they are not able to be without their vehicle for an extended time.

Similar to other barriers, it is important to convey the severity of the recall and highlight the risks of not having it repaired (which could result in being without a vehicle for an even longer time).

Vehicle safety and passenger safety are major priorities. If the recall impacts components such as brakes, air bags, seat belts, or drivetrain, it is considered to be more important than a recall that impacts something cosmetic, or a component that does not present an immediate threat.

Executive Summary

How do you communicate more effectively and influence consumers to have recalls repaired sooner rather than later?

There is no such thing as over-communication when it comes to the safety of consumers and to reducing threats of serious injury or death that can result from not having a recall repaired.

It is important to engage multiple channels and multiple sources. While mail is an effective channel and how most consumers expect to hear about recalls, it is not enough. Each channel offers advantages and a mixed channel strategy will be most effective.

Consumers want to hear directly from manufacturers about their specific vehicles, as well as from the government, to raise overall awareness and to give added credibility to the recall.

Executive Summary

Who are credible third parties to help communicate with consumers?

Having multiple messengers helps get the message out more effectively. This is especially true when there are challenges in finding the current owner of a vehicle. Second, consumers feel that having the government involved helps by serving as a bit of a watchdog and keeping manufacturers in line. The US DOT logo adds weight to the communication and can help consumers take the message more seriously. A few mentioned that it isn't important to have both messengers, as long as the information gets conveyed effectively by one.

Other credible third parties include state level vehicle agencies, dealerships, manufacturers, social media sites, news media, insurance companies, repair shops, special interest groups/clubs, AAA, retailers, and gas stations.

Executive Summary

What visuals are most effective in capturing attention and what content informs and influences behavior?

The use of the color red immediately grabs attention. Displaying government logos adds credibility to communications.

Language related to safety drives action, especially when using words like KILL. FREE also drives behavior (which makes sense as cost remains a barrier).

The most effective content both educates the owner and presents a clear and motivating call to action. Communications should convey several important pieces of information: 1) WHAT part needs to be replaced; 2) WHY - risks/threats/danger of not replacing; 3) WHEN - how quickly the repair should be made & an expectation of how long it should take; 4) NO COST - THAT IT IS FREE; and 5) HOW - next steps/how to schedule a repair.

Executive Summary

NHTSA's Safety Information & Recalls website is an underutilized resource, and it can serve as another tool to help to educate consumers and influence their decision to have a recall repaired.

What role does NHTSA's Safety Information & Recalls website play?

It is important to continue efforts to build awareness of the site and to look to partners such as state agencies, OEMs, dealerships, and automotive repair shops and retailers to help promote the site.

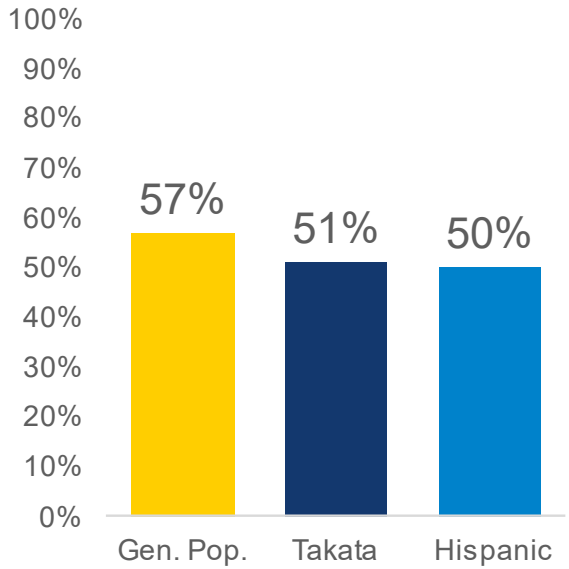
DETAILED FINDINGS

What are consumer attitudes toward recalls in general?

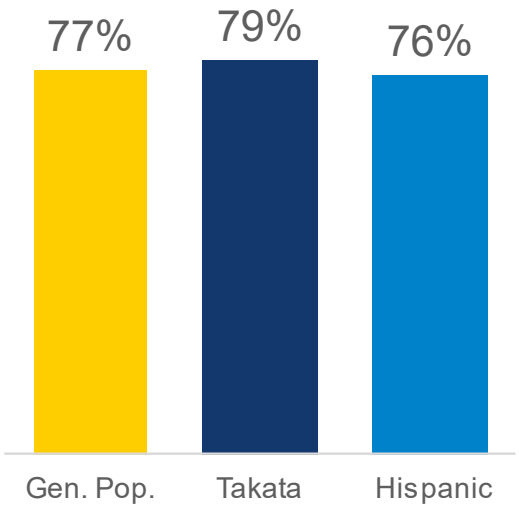
How do consumer attitudes toward recalls compare to attitudes toward maintenance & safety?

When thinking about recalls broadly, consumers tend to look at recalls more as basic maintenance than safety (similar scores on first and last statements). Attitudes will vary, however, based on the nature of specific recalls.

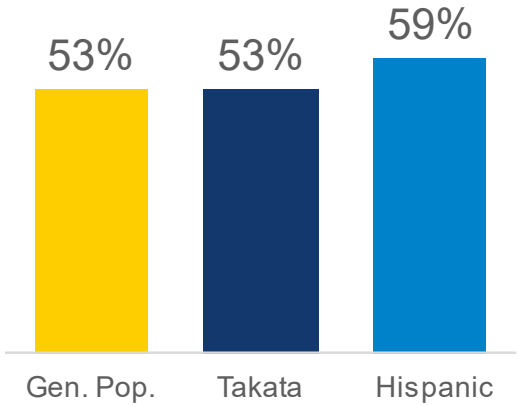
I do everything I can to pay attention to recalls and take my vehicle(s) in for repair if I receive a recall notice.
% Describes me perfectly/Extremely well



I do everything I can to keep my vehicle(s) safe to operate.
% Describes me perfectly/Extremely well



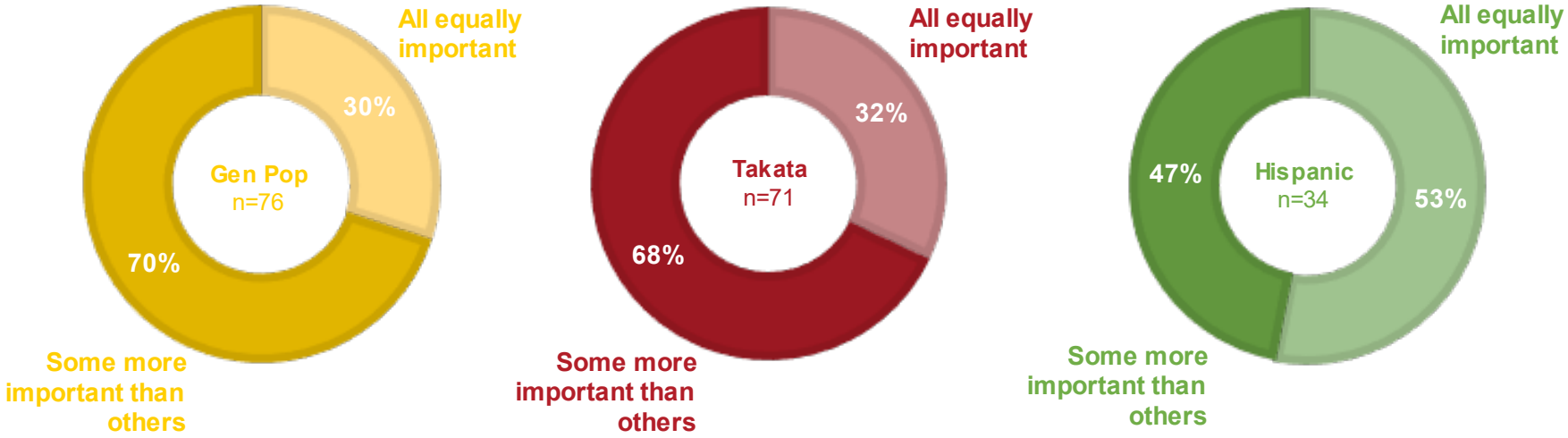
I do everything I can to keep up with the basic maintenance on my vehicle(s).
% Describes me perfectly/Extremely well



Q1.2 - Next, I'd like you to rate how well a few statements relating to your vehicle(s) describe you.

Do consumers consider all recalls to be the same? Or are some more important?

The Gen Pop and Takata groups often look at recalls on a case-by-case basis and view some recalls as being more important to repair sooner rather than later (although many acknowledge the importance of getting all recalls repaired eventually). The Hispanic group is more equally divided in its view.



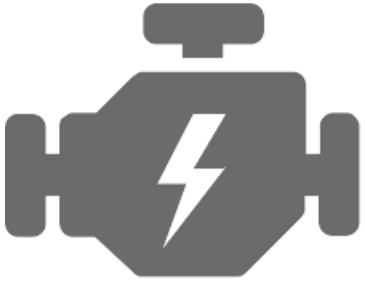
Q1.11 - Some people believe that some vehicle recalls are more important to fix than others. How about you? Do you feel some vehicle recalls are more important to repair than others? Or is every recall equally important to repair?

What are examples of recalls that are more important than others?

Consumers recognize that all recalls are important, but some are more urgent than others. Recalls that are related to safety issues and could result in the loss of control of a vehicle or an accident are considered to be a threat and are prioritized over other types of recalls.

Brakes

Air bag



Engine

Tires

Steering

I do think that some recall items are more important to be fixing others. For example an issue that might affect the steering column or an issue that might you know be connected to gas tank. ***Anything that can cause me to be in danger is way more important*** *than something cosmetic or something that might be an annoyance.*
David P (Gen Pop)

I think some are more important than others, but probably shouldn't have that attitude-all recalls should be addressed though. Example: ***replacing a defective airbag is a safety issue and should be addressed ASAP****.*
Jeff D (Takata)

I will fix everything but how quickly I do it depends on severity*. If there's a chance that my* ***brakes will fail due to the recall*** *they found, that is* ***very important to get done ASAP****. If it's something pertaining to a seatbelt in the back seat then I could figure out a day and time to take that in within the month.*
Tyrone C (Hispanic)

Q1.11 - Some people believe that some vehicle recalls are more important to fix than others. How about you? Do you feel some vehicle recalls are more important to repair than others? Or is every recall equally important to repair?

What comes to mind when reading/hearing the phrase *Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls*?

The phrase "Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls" carries weight with consumers by instilling a sense of anxiety and concern. It can help to convey the severity of a defect and to imply an urgency to learn more.

*The phrase itself **makes me feel uncomfortable** when I see it initially -- thinking about driving a vehicle that potentially has a defect makes me anxious. When I spend more time with it, I realize that most recalls I have been informed about I have gotten fixed ASAP so I am always taking care of the problem quickly.*
Jennifer B (Gen Pop)

*This phrase **makes me anxious**, honestly. Cars are already dangerous to operate when they're functioning properly, and the idea that an entire make/model of cars could have the same problem that has been deemed worthy of a recall, that's potentially thousands of lives in danger.*
Zoe M (Takata)

*When I hear the phrase "motor vehicle safety defects and recalls" it **makes me feel concerned and worried**. I want to know what they are, especially if it is my vehicle. What if one of those defects or recalls effects my car in a way that it is harmful to me and my family. that really concerns me.*
Abigail H (Hispanic)

Q1.4 - Think for a moment about this phrase "Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls." What thoughts and feelings come to mind when you read/hear that phrase? Please be as specific as you can in your description.

What comes to mind when reading/hearing the phrase *Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls*?

When thinking more deeply about the term, some highlight a tension between negative feelings of concern and frustration and positive feelings of gratitude and feeling protected.

*My initial feelings to the phrase "Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls" honestly **gives me a little bit of anxiety**. As someone who has been in 2 car accidents with one of them totaling my car, the **idea of "defects" and "recalls" in my car freaks me out**. YES, I am happy someone is monitoring these thing so we can know about them but... unfortunately, someone had to find out about the safety defect the hard way. I hate to think that I was driving around with a safety defect in my car and my passengers or me could have been injured for a reason that I was unaware of.*

*Another feeling that comes is a **sense of annoyance**, like a "are you kidding me?" type of annoyance. Most people **don't have time to go to the dealership and wait** an hour or so to have their car fixed... You just want to have confidence in the car that you purchase and defects and **recalls make you lose confidence in that car and possibly even the brand of car**.*

*I mostly have negative feelings toward that phrase but you can't deny that **deep down you may have a sense of gratitude**. My Uncle was one of the many reason's why kids were not allowed in the front seat. When my uncle was young, he was driving with his mom in the car and got into an accident leading to the airbags deploying and luckily he did not lose his life but he did lose his eyesight. I do not have gratitude that my Uncle lost his eyesight but I do have gratitude that we do make these changes in safety defects at no cost to us. I think **they are 100% worth it to fix**.*
-Logan M (Takata)

Q1.4 - Think for a moment about this phrase "Motor Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls." What thoughts and feelings come to mind when you read/hear that phrase? Please be as specific as you can in your description.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Communicating Effectively with Consumers

What are the most effective channels?

How do consumers expect to find out if their vehicle has a recall?

Consumers most commonly expect to find out if their vehicle has a recall by postal mail.

Of those who have had a recall in the past, most learned about the recall by receiving a notification in the mail.

Of those who have not had a recall, many expect a notification by mail, but they often mention other channels in addition to mail.

Q1.19 - If you have had a vehicle recall in the past, how did you find out about the recall and what did you do next? If you have NOT had a recall in the past, how WOULD you expect to find out about the recall and what WOULD you do next?

What is the most effective way to notify consumers about recalls?

When it comes to communications, the more channels, the better. Direct mail helps to reach specific owners and offers official documentation. Mass media efforts help close any gaps where OEMs are unable to reach owners. Text and email are dynamic and offer the ability to include links for follow-up. Phone calls offer the advantage of being able to ask specific questions.

*I think getting communication in multiple forms, with multiple notices, via **mail, phone, and email**. I'm pretty busy, and I miss things sometimes. In the mail, it needs to be in an official looking communication, not presorted mail. So much mail that's actually junk spoofs the look of an official document, so having something printed on the envelope like "Safety Recall Notice" and a governmental return address would help a lot.* Galen M (Gen Pop)

*Probably the **national news**, and then I suppose a **notice in the mail** with more details and what my options are for my car.*
Ashley B (Gen Pop)

*Send me a **notice in the mail** with official documentation from the manufacturer. The manufacturer should also send the message through a **call/text and email**. They should also alert the motorist through our **news media**.*
Brenda S (Takata)

*I'd prefer multiple ways to communication (**phone call, text message, email, and snail mail**). Sometimes the postcards sent in the mail just get tossed before I can see them. Nowadays, everyone is looking at their phone at least twice daily so they would be more likely to get the information in this fashion.*
Tiffany V (Takata)

*I think the vehicle manufacturer should personally **give you a call** telling you that your vehicle has a defect. Also I think equally important the vehicle manufacturer should **send you a letter** to your home address telling you that your vehicle has a defect.*
Akiva M (Hispanic)

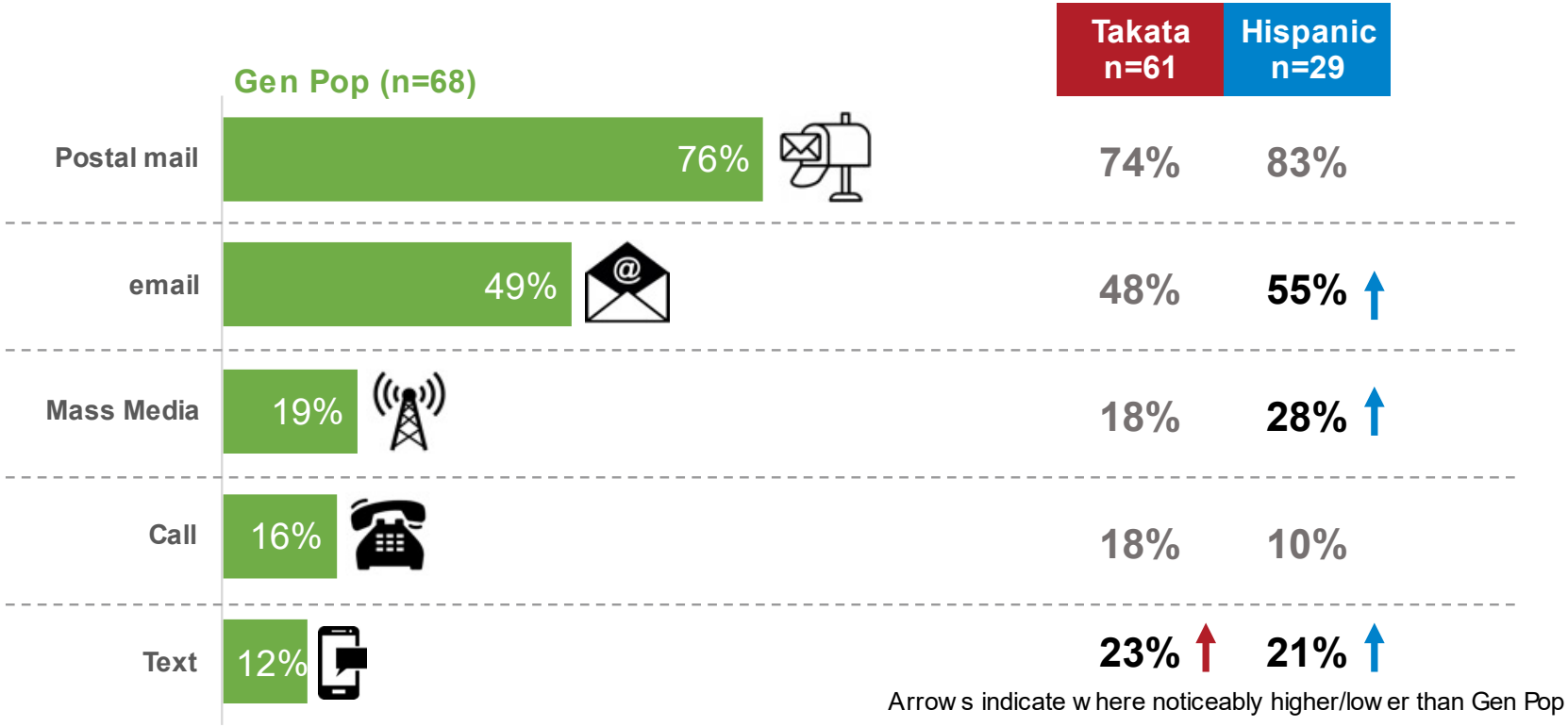
***Mail** always gets my attention. Another option would be by **e-mail**, but there's always a chance of going to junk mail folder and not being opened.*
Andreia T (Hispanic)

*I think all the above **mail, e-mail, phone calls** possibly by the actual car companies.*
Valerie W (Hispanic)

Q1.7 - Let's assume there was a recall on your vehicle. What would be the MOST effective way to **notify you of the recall** to make sure you receive the message and that it gets your attention?

What is the most effective way to notify consumers about recalls?

Postal mail is effective for all groups. Email is second and shows greater efficacy among Hispanics. Mass Media also scores higher among Hispanics. Text is less effective overall, but scores higher among owners of vehicles impacted by the Takata recall as well as Hispanics.



Q3.17 - Now thinking back over the discussion from the past week, based on everything you have seen, read and thought about, what is the most effective way to communicate with consumers about recalls?

What single channel is most preferred?

Even when focusing on MOST preferred channels, using multiple modes is critical. Mail is a good first choice as it is what many consumers expect. It tends to be more official and offers a physical reminder. There is also a desire to engage other contact methods (ideally the consumer could choose how they would be contacted).

***Mail** would be the most official and preferred. Unless it came from a trusted sender, I wouldn't be likely to click a link in a text from a number I don't recognize.*
Gabrielle D (Gen Pop)

*I'd **prefer email**, but with the **option to select** any of those (**mail, phone call, email, text,** etc.) for future communication.*
Aaron E (Gen Pop)

*I'm always on my phone so I would love an **email** regarding the recall and **then a text message** saying I've been emailed a recall notification.*
Jay D (Gen Pop)

*An informative **email** would be the most effective. Barring that however, a **letter in the mail** would also get my attention.*
Kyra C (Takata)

*I would like a **letter mailed** from Honda Corp., first class. Shortly **followed by an email, text, and lastly, a phone call**.*
Angela H (Takata)

*I think I am more used to **getting notices by mail.** I could keep the paper notice lying around as a reminder to get it done.*
Mark K (Takata)

*I would say **at least 2 contact methods** - definitely **direct mail** & maybe a **phone call** or **email** would suffice.*
Joel S (Hispanic)

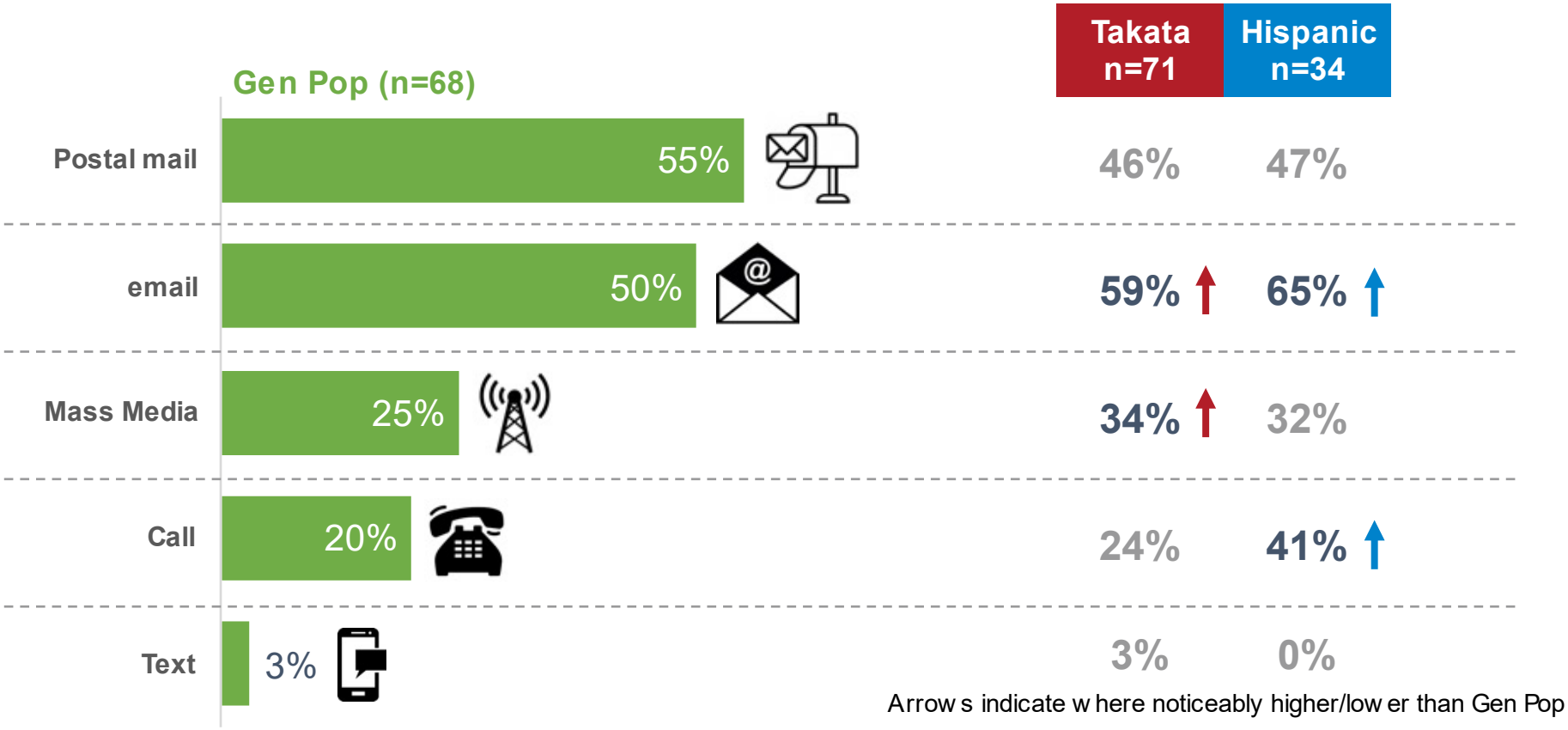
*By **email** would be my preferred method. Sending a notice in the **mail as a backup** would be nice too. That way you get the email right away and the paper notice as a reminder.*
Marcos H (Hispanic)

*Choosing from the above options, **I prefer email then mail**. I never want a text or a phone call, and as I said before, I prefer social media.*
Monica S (Hispanic)

Q1.8 - How would you like to receive the information about the recall? What format would you most prefer (mail, phone call, email, text, etc.)?

What single channel is most preferred?

Compared to the Gen Pop group, the Takata and Hispanic groups prefer email over postal mail. Owners of vehicles impacted by the Takata recall show a higher preference for text (compared to Gen Pop). Hispanics show a stronger preference for phone calls than Gen Pop.

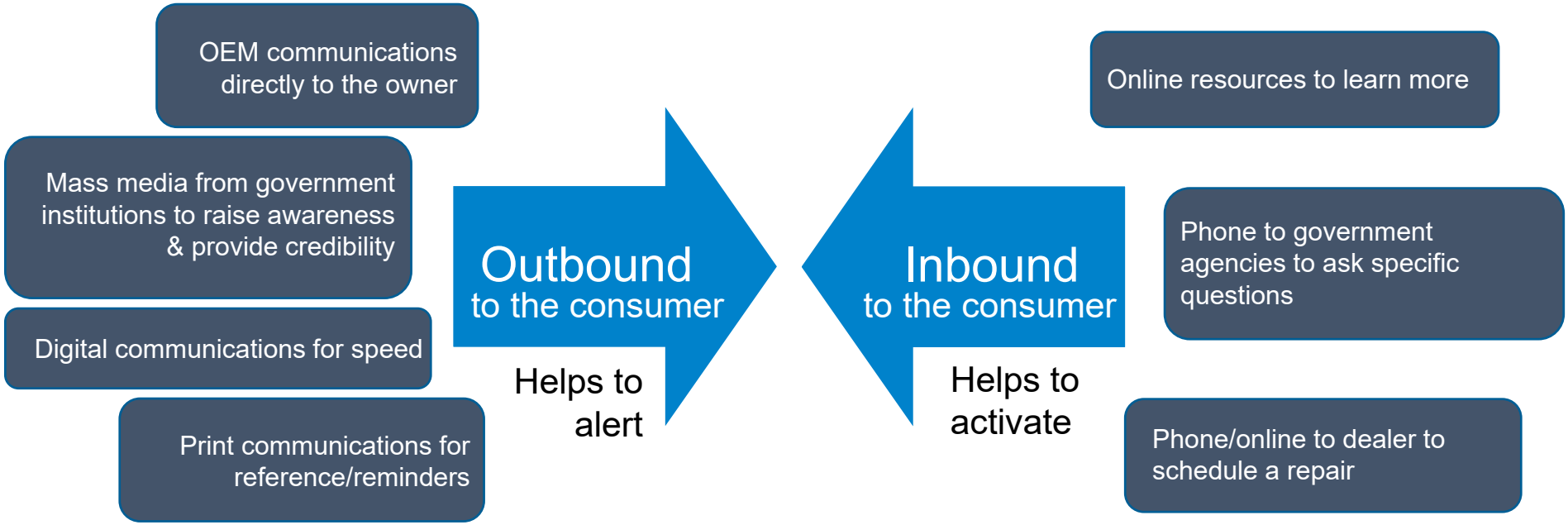


Q1.8 - How would you like to receive the information about the recall? What format would you most prefer (mail, phone call, email, text, etc.)?

Benefits of specific channels

Postal Mail	Email	Phone	Text	Dealership	Mass Media
• Contact owner directly • Physical reminder • Official-looking • Can be sent from a known source	• Contact owner directly • Can include links • Checked frequently • Cost effective personalization	• Contact owner directly • Can verify contact • Ability to ask questions	• Contact owner directly • Checked frequently • Cost-effective personalization	• Contact owner directly • Can offer to schedule repair • Trusted source	• Reaches a broad audience • Builds broader awareness
• OEM may not have current address • Could get lost in the mail • Don't check mail as often • Could be confused with junk mail • May not answer all questions	• OEMs may not have current email • Could be seen as SPAM • May not answer all questions	• Many people don't answer unrecognized numbers • Could be confused with extended warranty telemarketing	• Can only include limited information • May not answer all questions	• Not everyone has their vehicle serviced at the dealer • Upsell concerns	• Is not as personalized • Does not target a specific person

Multi-channel communication is critical, and it needs to go both ways.



DETAILED FINDINGS

Communicating Effectively with Consumers

What is the most effective content?

What information needs to be included?

WHAT

Inform consumer of the recall, explain when the recall was initiated and what part(s) need to be replaced – show visual of part that needs repair. Let them know if it is safe to operate the vehicle or not.

WHY

Educate the consumer on the risks associated with the defective part(s) and the danger of not replacing (show visuals where appropriate).

WHEN

Tell them how soon the repair should be made and set an expectation of how long the repair will take to be made.

COST

Reinforce that the repair will be made free of charge.

HOW

Provide next steps on how to schedule a repair. Provide dealer contact information including addresses and phone numbers for local dealerships.

Q1.9 - Still assuming there was a recall on your vehicle, I'd like to know what the MOST effective way would be to talk to you about the recall and how to get it fixed. What information would be the most important to know? Please describe at least 2-3 three types of information that would be important to know.

What information needs to be included?

Content should help inform consumers of several details relating to the recall, including WHAT is defective, WHY it needs to be repaired, WHEN it should be repaired and how long it will take, HOW MUCH it will cost, and HOW to schedule a repair.

*I would prefer a detailed letter showing **what I need to do, where I need to go, who to contact if I have questions**. I also would want some **detailed explanation on what is being recalled** and **what the potential risks are**.*
Brian M (Gen Pop)

*Firstly that **the issue is present** and that **a recall is in effect**. Also, what is **the timeliness of the issue**. That is, **does it need to be done right now** or is the next service interval acceptable. Also, **how and where to get the recall done**.*
Theodore K (Takata)

*The recall should include information such **as how the issue impacts safety, what the issue is and what causes the issue, and how much it will cost to have it repaired**. Additional but not necessary information might also include the **nearest location** that can fix the recalled item.*
Brandon O (Hispanic)

Q1.9 - Still assuming there was a recall on your vehicle, I'd like to know what the MOST effective way would be to talk to you about the recall and how to get it fixed. What information would be the most important to know? Please describe at least 2-3 three types of information that would be important to know.

What words are most impactful?

The most motivating words/phrases generated by consumers can be categorized into three areas related to Timeliness, Severity, and Safety. Words and phrases related to safety are most commonly mentioned.

Timeliness	Severity	Safety
• Urgent • Critical • Necessary • Imminent • Action needed • Immediate action • Immediate repair needed • ASAP	• Alert • Defect • Recall • Serious • Concern • Highly recommended • High risk • Catastrophic • Emergency • Do not drive • Worst case scenario	• Safety/Unsafe • Hazard • Stranded • Danger • Risk • Damage • Harmful • Injury • Life threatening • Lethal • Deadly/death • Fatal

Q1.10 - Still assuming there was a recall on your vehicle, what would motivate you to schedule a repair? Are there specific words or phrases that would encourage you to schedule a repair sooner rather than later?

What words are most impactful?

Creating a compelling mix of Timeliness, Severity, and Safety will have the strongest impact and help encourage consumers to schedule a repair sooner rather than later.

*I'd be **motivated based on the severity of the recall**. If the defect impacts my safety directly, I'd be more willing to get it done. Words like "**urgent, necessary, highly-recommended**" would get my attention.*
Aaron E (Gen Pop)

*If my **safety was severely threatened**, and my next few drives could be life threatening or extremely hazardous, I would go get it done ASAP or next day!*
Megan S (Takata)

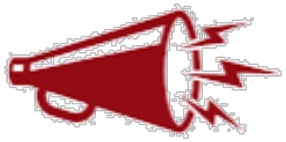
Understanding the safety risks would likely scare me enough** to where I decide I need to get the issue fixed. A few words/phrases that would convince me to fix the issue include: **highly dangerous, safety risk, life-threatening, imminent danger.
Brandon O (Hispanic)

Q1.10 - Still assuming there was a recall on your vehicle, what would motivate you to schedule a repair? Are there specific words or phrases that would encourage you to schedule a repair sooner rather than later?

How can the process be improved?

Use simple language and personalize communications

Manage expectations on availability of parts, urgency of recall, and time needed for repair



Use multiple modes of communication – follow up letters with calls/emails/texts

Clearly convey the risks/threats of what can happen if the recall is not repaired

Offer loaner cars/comp rentals

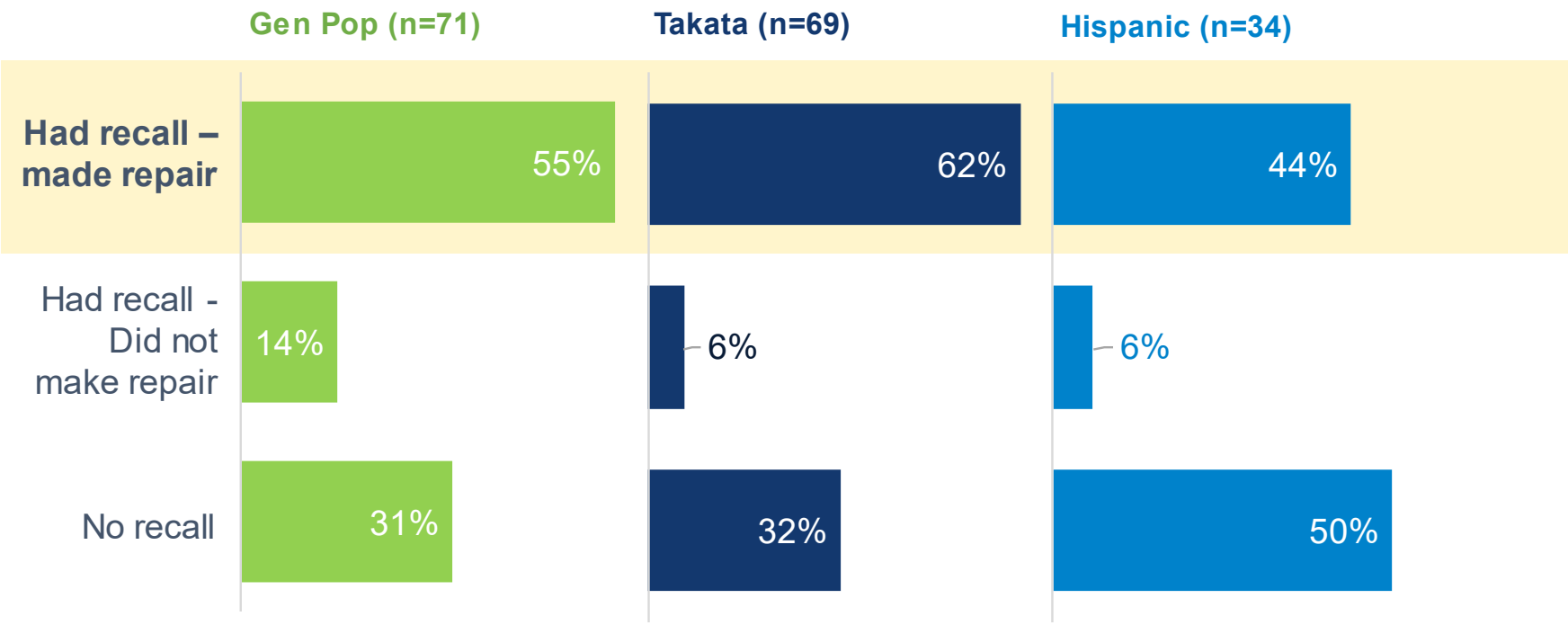
Q1.20 - If you have had a vehicle recall in the past, are there things that you feel could have been improved about the process of informing you about your vehicle recall?

DETAILED FINDINGS

What are the biggest barriers to having repairs made? (and what can be done from a communications perspective to help?)

How often do recalls go unrepaired?

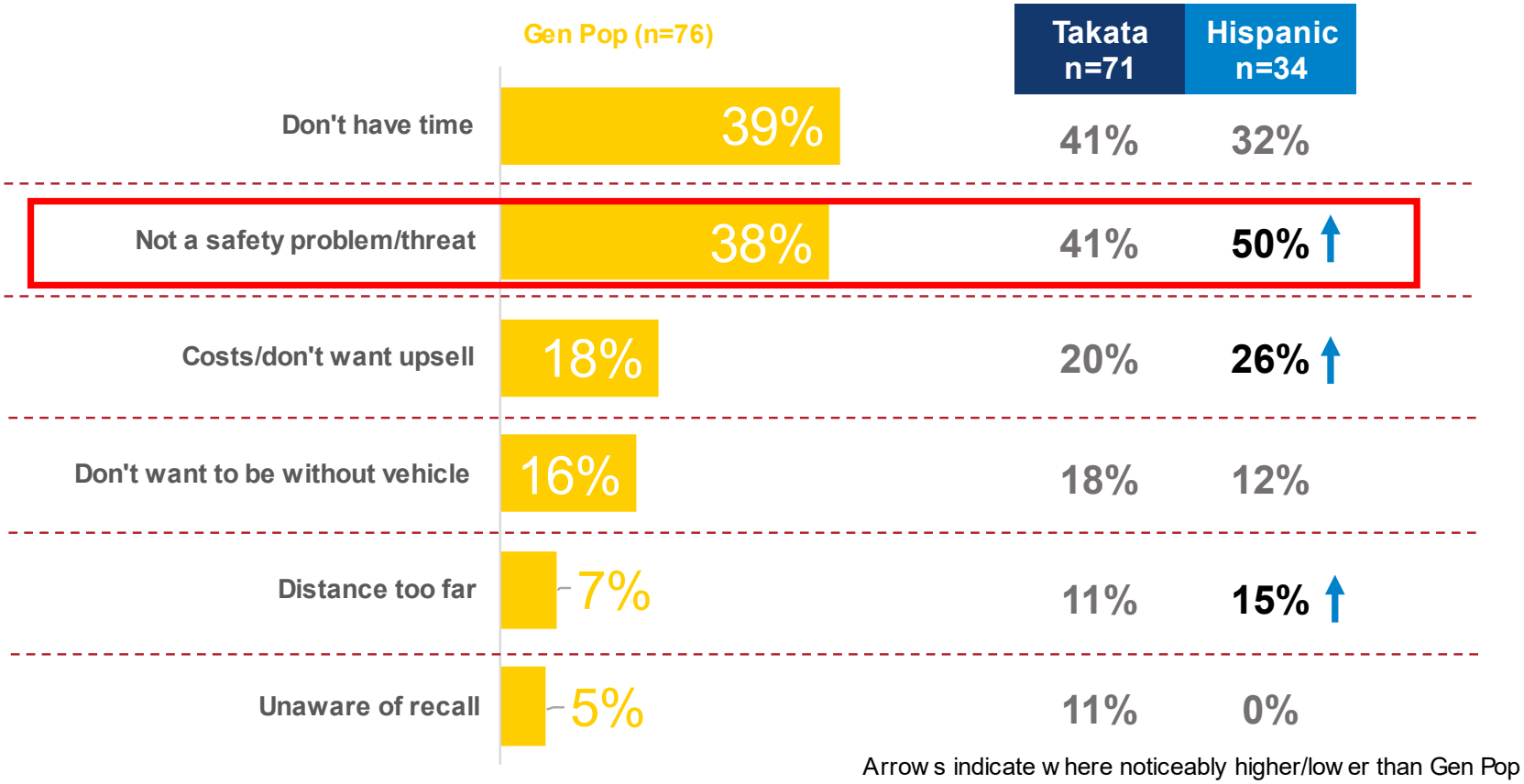
Overall, when consumers are aware of a recall, the recall gets repaired the vast majority of the time.



Q1.18 - Have you ever had a recall for a vehicle?

What are the common barriers to having recalls repaired?

Many of the common barriers align with findings from prior research. There is directional data to suggest that not seeing recalls as a safety issue is a particularly strong barrier among Hispanics.



Q1.14 - A number of vehicle recalls go unrepaired. Tell me some of the reasons why you would not take your car to the dealership to repair a recall.

When do time and distance become barriers?

There is a wide range of perspectives on when time and distance become barriers. Part of this is a function of the nature of the recall. If the recall is urgent and represents a serious threat, consumers are willing to drive further and wait longer. As a broad observation, however, once consumers have to travel more than 30 miles or wait more than a day, distance and time start to impede the decision to have recalls repaired.

*I'd say **more than 5 miles is too far.** If it's more than that the dealership should come get my car free of charge. I would just need to know its necessary to get fixed and that it would take an **hour or less to fix**.*
Nick H (Gen Pop)

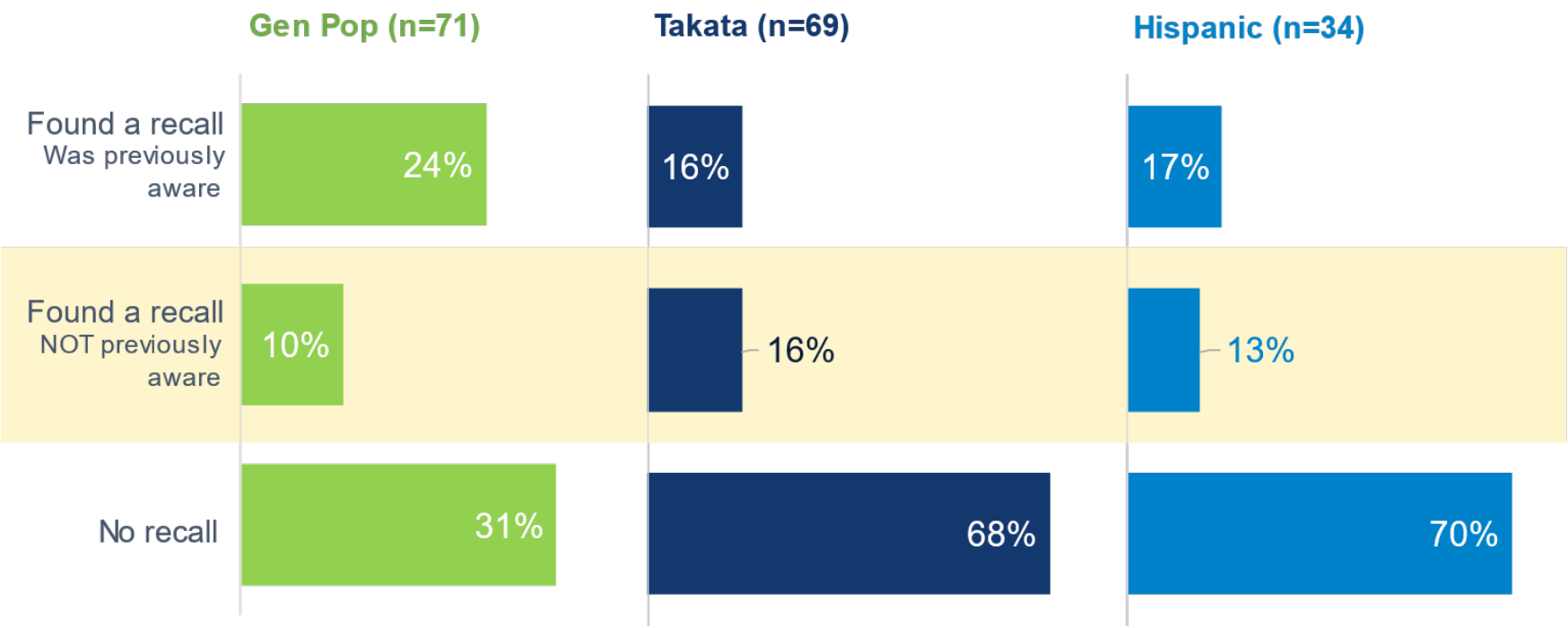
*I think if my safety was at risk **I'd get the car to the dealership no matter how far it was**. I can imagine some people would think it may not be important but than if something would happen you can't blame the car manufacturers if they informed you.*
Geri M (Gen Pop)

*Depending on the reason for the recall the **time to repair would not be a consideration**. The vehicle could be left at the dealer until complete.*
Steven D(Gen Pop)

Q1.15 - I'd like to know when distance (in miles), would become a major barrier to having a recall repaired.
Q1.17 - At what point does the amount of time needed to make a vehicle repair serve as a barrier to having the repair made?

Is lack of awareness an issue?

After doing a VIN lookup activity on NHTSA's Safety Issues & Recalls website, there was a slightly higher incidence of consumers who found recalls they were previously unaware of among the Takata group.



Q3.9- AFTER COMPLETING A VIN LOOKUP FOR THEIR VEHICLES
Did you find any open recalls for your vehicle(s)?

A less common, yet interesting barrier

False sense of security

Note: these were isolated mentions but are different from historic barriers and worth mentioning – particularly because they were both observed among the Takata audience

I currently have a recall on an airbag in my Jeep. I have been avoiding repairing the airbag due to my busy schedule. Also, it is the **passenger airbag and it is rare that anyone sits in that seat**. Furthermore, I am afraid that the mechanics will cause damage to my vehicle during the repair and I don't trust that they will hook the new airbag up properly.
Jeff C (Takata)

(After doing a VIN lookup on her 2007 Honda Civic) So so so many recalls.... Improperly Installed Passenger Air Bag Inflator, Improperly Installed Passenger Air Bag, Incorrectly Installed Replacement Air Bag, Passenger Frontal Air Bag Inflator May Rupture…I think **I had some idea about the air bag problems but I didn't realize it had THAT many problems**.
Logan M (Takata)

Q1.18 - If you had a vehicle recall and did not have it repaired, please write in - DID NOT REPAIR - and tell me the reasons why you decided not to have the repair made.

How can communications help overcome barriers?

Not a threat
Better communicate the severity of the recall and risks of not repairing

Don't want to be without vehicle
Highlight risks of not having repair made (and potential loss of vehicle)

Not aware of recall
Continue to promote awareness of recalls and encourage consumers to visit NHTSA's website to learn more

Time
Set expectations on how long repair will take

Suggest non-peak times for scheduling a repair

Cost
Reinforce that all recalls are repaired free of charge

Distance too far
Distance becomes less of a barrier relative to the severity of the recall

Q1.14 - A number of vehicle recalls go unrepaired. Tell me some of the reasons why you would not take your car to the dealership to repair a recall. And thinking of those reasons, what can be done to overcome those barriers?

DETAILED FINDINGS

Assessment of Communications

What language is most effective and what visuals are most compelling?

How to make envelopes better stand out (and make consumers more likely to open them)?

Before assessing specific communications, respondents were asked to provide ways to make the envelopes used for communications better stand out. There are multiple ways to enhance the visuals, language, and credibility of the envelopes.

Visuals/Formatting

- Use of colors (**especially red**)
- **Bold lettering**
- Large font
- Handwritten address
- Make it look official (Logos)
- Use unique envelope (perforated flap, manila envelope, more expensive cardstock)
- Feature image of car or defective part

Language

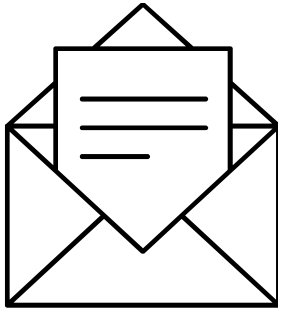
Timeliness
- Urgent
- Important
- Vehicle recall
- Recall notice enclosed

Call to action
- Immediate action needed
- Open immediately
- Do not discard

Personalization
- List Year/Make/Model or VIN

Credibility

- OEM logos
- Government logos/Federal seal
- Include return address to a recognized source (OEM or Government)
- Send through certified mail



Q2.1 - There are different ways vehicle owners can learn about recalls. One way is through letters they receive in the mail directly from vehicle manufacturers. What are some ways that manufacturers could make the envelopes used to send these letters better stand out (and make you more likely to open them)?

What are some ways to better communicate the importance of having recalls repaired?

Similar to the envelope activity, respondents were asked to provide ideas on how to make letters more effective. They suggested improvements related to visuals, language and call to action.

Visuals/Formatting

Visualize the problem
- Diagram of what is wrong
- Pictures of defective components
- Pictures of damaged vehicles

Credibility
- Corporate letterhead
- OEM logos
- Government logos

Language

Personalize
- Tailored to individual
- Year/Make/Model
- Multiple languages

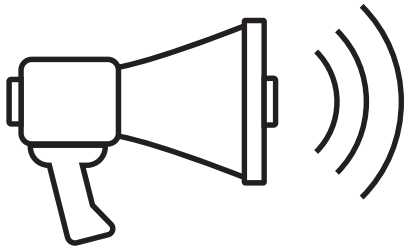
Focus
- Simple, easy to understand language
- Not too many pages

Convey severity & risks
- Urgent/Indicate how critical
- Dangerous/Potential damage
- Threat to safety of family
- Consequences of not having repair

No cost
- All recall repairs are free

Call to action

Next steps
- When to contact dealer
- Set expectations on how long repair will take
- Remind them it is free
- How to schedule repair
- List of local dealers/contact info
- Website/phone number to get more info



Q2.2 - Now thinking about the letter itself, what are some ways to better communicate the importance of the issue and increase the likelihood to have the repair made?

Communications Assessed

On Days 2 and 3 of the discussion, respondents were also presented with two envelope labels and two flyers to evaluate.

Label A

Label B

Flyer 1

Flyer 2

(FRONT)

(BACK)

Customer Service Numbers	
Acura	1-800-382-2238
Audi	1-800-822-2834
BMW	1-800-525-7417
BMW Motorcycles	1-800-831-1117
BRP Can-Am	1-888-272-9222
Buick	1-800-521-7300
Cadillac	1-800-458-8006
Chevrolet	1-800-222-1020
Chrysler	1-800-853-1403
Dodge	1-800-853-1403
Ducati Motorcycles	1-800-231-6696
Ferrari	1-866-551-2828
FIAT	1-888-242-6342
Ford	1-800-392-3673
Freightliner Sprinter	1-877-762-8267
Genuine Scooters	1-773-433-1311
GMC	1-800-462-8782
Harley-Davidson	1-800-258-2464
Honda	1-888-234-2138
Honda Motorcycles	1-866-784-1870
Hummer	1-800-732-5493
Hyundai	1-800-633-5151
Infiniti	1-800-662-6200
Jaguar	1-800-452-4827
Jeep	1-800-853-1403
Kawasaki	1-866-802-9581
Kia	1-800-333-4542
KTM Motorcycles	1-888-985-6090
Land Rover	1-800-637-6837
Lexus	1-800-255-3987
Lincoln	1-800-521-4140
Mazda	1-800-222-5500
Mercedes-Benz	1-800-367-6372
Mercedes-Benz Sprinter	1-800-367-6372
Mercury	1-800-521-4140
MINI	1-866-275-6464
Mitsubishi	1-888-648-7820
Nissan	1-800-647-7261
Oldsmobile	1-800-442-6537
Polaris	1-855-743-3436
Pontiac	1-800-762-2737
Porsche	1-800-767-7243
ProMaster	1-800-423-6343
RAM	1-800-853-1403
Saab	1-800-955-9007
Saturn	1-800-553-6000
Scion	1-866-707-2466
SMART	1-800-762-7887
Subaru	1-800-782-2783
Suzuki Motorcycles	1-714-996-7040
Tesla	1-877-798-3752
Toyota	1-800-331-4331
Triumph	1-678-854-2010
Volkswagen	1-800-893-5298
Volvo	1-800-458-1552
Yamaha Motorcycles	1-800-962-7926

What are the overall impressions of the labels?

- The use of **RED BOX & WHITE FONT** helps the label stand out visually
- "**IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL INFORMATION**" helps grab attention
- Mention of "**FEDERAL LAW**" also makes it feel urgent/important
- Use of logos add credibility

Label A

I think the **details in red and caps makes the importance of the letter stand out**. I feel that the **"important safety recall information" makes me want to read the rest of the letter** and see what it is all about. Also, **"Federal law" makes it seem more official.** I would definitely read this letter and see how it applies to my vehicle.
Angela J (Gen Pop)

Label B

Simply **adding the logos of the federal agencies makes it more official**. The .gov web address leaves little doubt about its authenticity. That **authenticity, combined with the red background, would prompt me to open it right away**.
Mark R (Gen Pop)

Q2.3 - Now let's take a look at an example of a vehicle recall label. For our activity today imagine that this label was on a letter sent to you about a vehicle you own. Please take a moment and review the example below. What are your impressions of this label (shown below)?

How can the labels be improved?

Overall, the impressions of the labels are positive, but a few respondents offered suggestions for how they could be further improved.

Consider including the word VEHICLE or list specific Make/Model

Make the word "recall" bolder or in a different color

Change Important to URGENT

State: THIS IS NOT A MASS/BULK MAILING/SALES PITCH

Yellow highlight of FEDERAL LAW

Q2.6 What would you do to change the label and make it more effective in getting people to open and read the letter?

What specific elements of the labels grab attention and motivate action?

The red color and logos help grab attention, while the mention of "safety recall" helps motivate action.

Label A

Label B

	Grabs my attention	Influences decision to open letter
Red color/backdrop	■■■■■■■■□□	■■■■□□□□□□
"Safety/Safety recall"	■■■■□□□□□□	■■■■■■■□□□
"Federal Law"	■■■□□□□□□□	■■■■□□□□□□
"Important"	■■■□□□□□□□	■■■■□□□□□□
Written in caps	■□□□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□
Logos (Label B only)	■■■■■□□□□□	■■■■□□□□□□

Q2.4 - Looking over the label, what elements - including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most effective in getting your attention?
Q2.5 - Looking over the label, what elements – including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most influential on your decision to open and read the le

What are the overall impressions of Flyer 1?

- RED header with “URGENT AIRBAG RECALL” gets attention
- OEM logos help make it relevant for owners & drives action
- “KILL” – grabs attention, conveys seriousness of issue/risk
- Provides clear information – where to go
- “FREE” stands out – important to convey
- Versatile – could be in a magazine, email, letter, flyer etc.
- Might be worth adding an 800 number for more information
- Listing Models in addition to Makes could help make it more helpful

*This is an **attention grabbing graphic.** It does a great job putting **focus on the recall** using **colors and symbols**. I would be willing to check this out via either of the **websites** listed on the picture.*

*I would **expect to see this in a newspaper, magazine, or flyer mailed to my house or even on the internet.***
Joseph H (Gen Pop)

Q2.13 - Now let's take a look at an example of a communication that could be used in an article, press release or posted online. Please take a moment and review the example below. What are your impressions of this communication?

How can Flyer 1 be improved?

Several respondents offered suggestions on improving Flyer 1. The biggest error is that it is lacking a phone number that a person can call and get more information.

Polish the visuals (some felt it looked a little amateurish)

If sending to an individual, personalize where possible

Add in "IN ACCORDANCE WITH FEDERAL LAW"

List affected Years & Models

Add a phone number for more information

Q2.17 - What would you do to change the communication and make it more effective in getting people to have their recalls repaired?

What specific elements of the flyer grab attention and motivate action?

"URGENT" & "FREE" capture attention best. "FREE" & "KILL" are most motivating.

	Grabs my attention	Influences decision to schedule repair
"Urgent"	■■■■□□□□□□	■■■□□□□□□□
"FREE"	■■■■□□□□□□	■■■■■■□□□□
"Airbag Recall"	■■■□□□□□□□	■■■■□□□□□□
"KILL"	■■■□□□□□□□	■■■■■□□□□□
Red color/backdrop	■■■□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□
OEM Logos	■■□□□□□□□□	■■□□□□□□□□
Airbag Graphic	■■□□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□
"Safety/Protect yourself"	■□□□□□□□□□	■■□□□□□□□□

Q2.14 - Looking over the communication, what elements - including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most effective in getting your attention?
Q2.15 - Looking over the communication, what elements – including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most influential on your decision to schedule a repair?

What are the overall impressions of Flyer 2?

- Clean, straight-forward, and informative
- “ASAP”, “FREE” and “Open Recall” grab attention
- Next steps give a clear call to action
- Includes websites and phone numbers
- Blue grabs attention, but is less alarming than red

(FRONT)

You Have an Open Recall on Your Vehicle!

NEXT STEPS

- Contact your nearest dealership ASAP! They will fix it for **FREE**!
- If you have any questions on your recall, call your vehicle’s manufacturer (*customer service numbers listed on back*).
- For more information on recalls and vehicle safety, visit nhtsa.gov/recalls.

(BACK)

Customer Service Numbers	
Acura	1-800-382-2238
Audi	1-800-822-2834
BMW	1-800-525-7417
BMW Motorcycles	1-800-831-1117
BRP Can-Am	1-888-272-9222
Buick	1-800-521-7300
Cadillac	1-800-458-8006
Chevrolet	1-800-222-1020
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Dodge	1-800-853-1403
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FIAT	1-888-242-6342
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GMC	1-800-462-8782
Harley-Davidson	1-800-258-2464
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Honda Motorcycles	1-866-784-1870
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Tesla	1-877-798-3752
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Triumph	1-678-854-2010
Volkswagen	1-800-893-5298
Volvo	1-800-458-1552
Yamaha Motorcycles	1-800-962-7926

*This design **looks much more professional** than yesterday's example, although **feels slightly less urgent**.*

I'd visit the URL from the bottom bullet point.

Aaron E (Gen Pop)

Q3.1 - Now let's take a look at an example of a communication that could be used in an article, press release or posted online. Please take a moment and review the example below. What are your impressions of this communication?

How can Flyer 2 be improved?

Respondents like the clean and simple design of Flyer 2, but felt it does not convey urgency and could be improved through additional personalization where possible.

Change blue to red to convey urgency

Personalize where possible – show Year/Make/Model impacted

List risks of not making repair – possibly show visual of defective part and/or what can happen

(FRONT)

You Have an Open Recall on Your Vehicle!

NEXT STEPS

- Contact your nearest dealership ASAP! They will fix it for **FREE**!
- If you have any questions on your recall, call your vehicle's manufacturer (*customer service numbers listed on back*).
- For more information on recalls and vehicle safety, visit nhtsa.gov/recalls.

(BACK)

Customer Service Numbers	
Acura	1-800-382-2238
Audi	1-800-822-2834
BMW	1-800-525-7417
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Volkswagen	1-800-893-5298
Volvo	1-800-458-1552
Yamaha Motorcycles	1-800-962-7926

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Lead with strong call to action – "CONTACT YOUR DEALER IMMEDIATELY"

Feature government agency more prominently

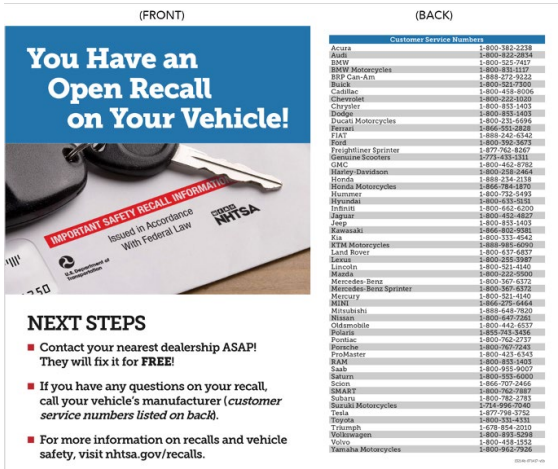
List addresses for nearest dealers

Should have messaging to reference safety concerns

Q3.5 - What would you do to change the communication and make it more effective in getting people to have their recalls repaired?

What specific elements grab attention and motivate action?

The phrase "Open Recall on Your Vehicle" in the header is most effective in grabbing attention, while the word "FREE" is most likely to inspire action.



	Grabs my attention	Influences decision to schedule repair
"Open Recall on Your Vehicle"	■■■■■□□□□□	■■□□□□□□□□
"FREE"	■■■□□□□□□□	■■■■■■□□□□
"Next Steps"	■■□□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□
OEM Phone #'s	■■□□□□□□□□	■■□□□□□□□□
Image with envelope	■□□□□□□□□□	■■□□□□□□□□
"Contact dealer ASAP"	■□□□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□
Blue coloring	■□□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□□□
USDOT/NHTSA	■□□□□□□□□□	■□□□□□□□□□

Q3.2 - Looking over the communication, what elements - including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most effective in getting your attention?
Q3.3 - Looking over the communication, what elements – including specific words, phrases and visual elements - are most influential on your decision to schedule a repair?

DETAILED FINDINGS

Assessment of Website
What do consumers think of NHTSA's Safety Issues & Recalls webpage?

Where do consumers go if they want to find out if their vehicle has a recall?

As with many questions, consumers tend to turn to the Internet first when seeking more information – specifically when wanting to determine if their vehicle has a recall.

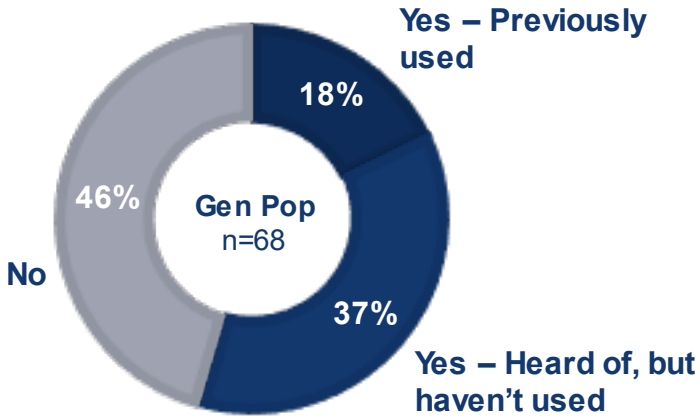
Google tends to be a starting point and basic searches contain vehicle make/model and terms like "recalls" or "defects."

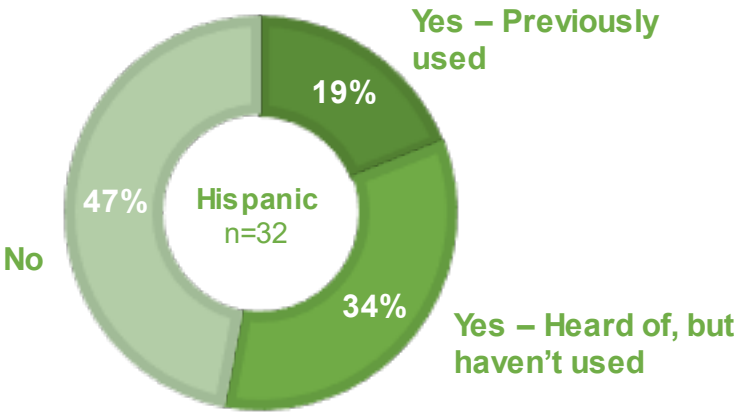
It is also not uncommon to look at manufacturer/dealer websites for more information. Checking with mechanics and calling the dealer are less common but were still mentioned.

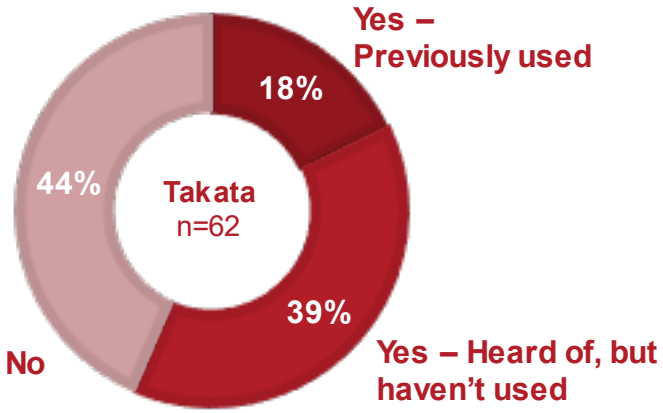
Q1.5 - If you wanted to find out if your vehicle had a recall, how would you go about finding out if your vehicle had a recall?

How many are aware of the NHTSA Safety Information & Recalls website?

About half of respondents are aware of NHTSA's Safety Information & Recalls website. About one-in-five have used the site in the past (generally to look up information related to vehicle recalls).



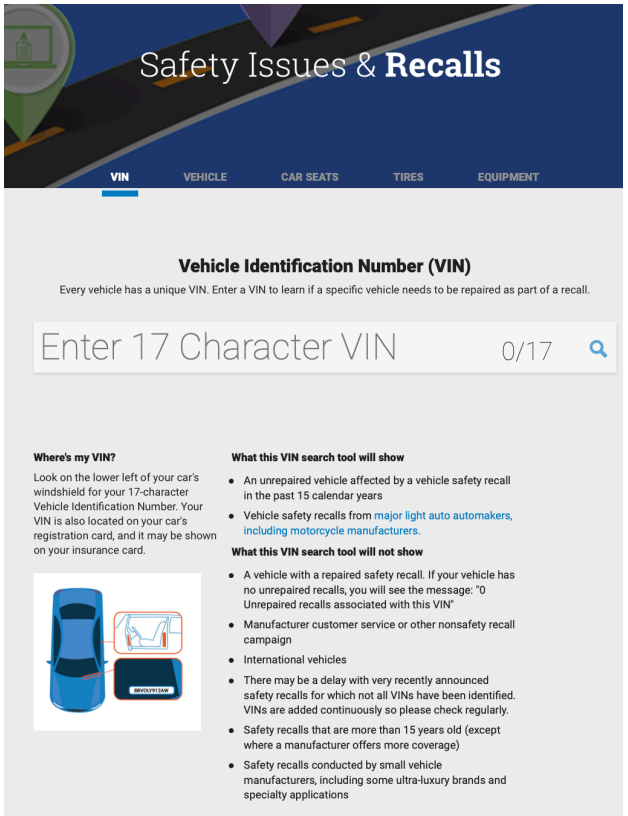




Q3.6 -Next, we want you to visit the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's NHTSA.gov website: www.NHTSA.gov/recalls. Have you previously heard of or used this site?

What are the overall impressions of the NHTSA Safety Information & Recalls website?

- Simple and effective
- User-friendly layout/easy to navigate
- Informative – helpful information on recalls and tips for safe driving
- VIN lookup tool is helpful resource
- Looks official/looks like a government site

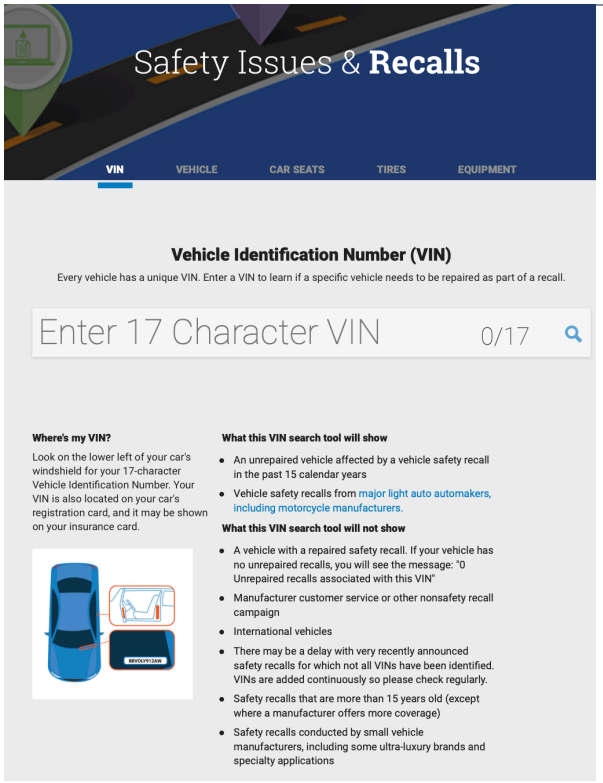


*The website **has the key information laid out at the top** and I love how **it gives the ability to just search by the cars VIN or year make and model**. The site provides lots of **details for past recalls and current ones** as well. This is a government backed site so it should be containing **very relevant information** for the consumer.*
Jay D (Gen Pop)

Q3.8 - If you haven't visited the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's NHTSA.gov website: www.NHTSA.gov/recalls yet, please take a moment to look at that website. In a few sentences please describe your overall impression of the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's NHTSA.gov website: www.NHTSA.gov/recalls

How can the NHTSA Safety Information & Recalls website be improved?

Overall impressions of the site are positive. The biggest improvement is to build awareness. Some suggested the need to use visuals to convey the urgency of getting recalls repaired and adding in the ability to get updates for their VIN (text and email) as well as adding a chat feature.



Better promotion/ Increase awareness

Sign-up for VIN-level updates

Include colors and graphics to help convey urgency

Add a chat feature

*I really **wouldn't change anything** BUT **I would make an ad** because a lot of **people need to know about this website** for their safety. I have heard of the website but never went to it and to be able to find out about my tire safety and even my car seat safety just amazes me.*
Anthony M (Gen Pop)

*Allow user to **sign up with VIN number, automatically get texted and e-mail and letter if there is a recall**.*
Steven C (Takata)

*The content of the website in my perspective is complete. I would only **change some of the graphics, such as red colors**.*
Danial S (Hispanic)

Q3.13 - Still thinking of www.NHTSA.gov/recalls, what would you change or add to the site to make it a better experience for users?

What is the most effective way to communicate with consumers about the NHTSA Safety Information & Recalls website?

Given that the biggest improvement/change consumers would like to see is increased promotion and awareness of the website, there are many ways to do so. The more the site can get promoted, the better. Tapping into partners such as local DMVs, car dealers, and repair shops is a good first step.

- **Ads on mass media (TV, Online, Print)**
- **List in car manuals**
- **List on insurance materials**
- **List on recall notices**
- **Promote at dealerships**
- **Promote at DMV (and on their website)**
- **Repair shops**
- **Show on oil change reminder window sticker**
- **Create a safety newsletter**

*I think the most effective way is through **mail or by ads on websites** (that's how I learned about it in the first place, I saw an ad on Facebook and it took me to this website).*
Melissa L (Gen Pop)

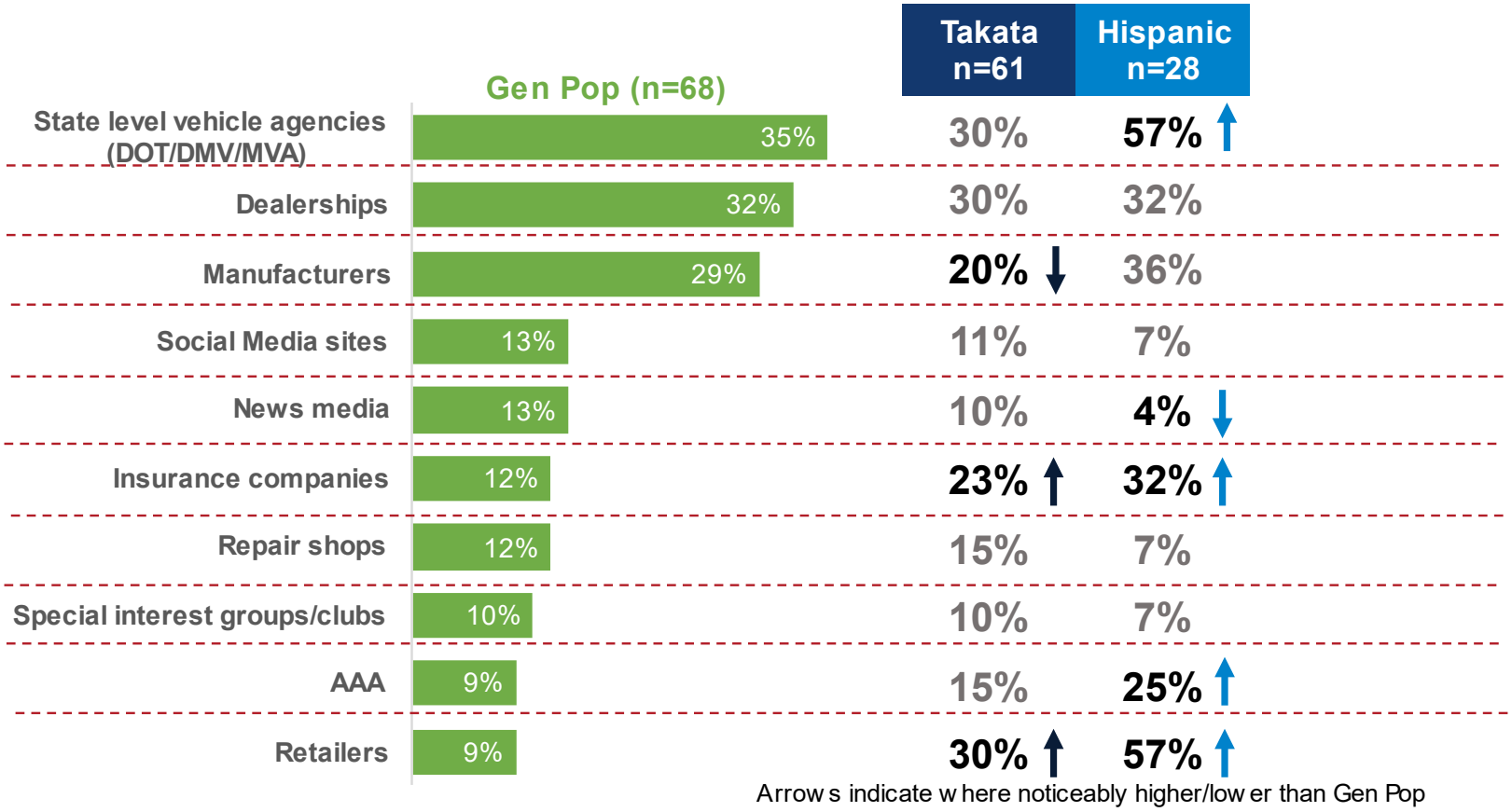
*I think they need to have a **commercial on TV** with a few testimonials to show real life people getting the recall repaired and showing how it saved their live so it puts urgency into people to get this fixed.*
William S (Takata)

I think every dealership should hand a little card with this site's information when selling new vehicles. Also insurance companies should have this site information available.
Angel C (Hispanic)

Q3.14 - Still thinking of www.NHTSA.gov/recalls, what is the most effective way to communicate with owners about the site?

Who would be effective communication partners to promote the NHTSA website?

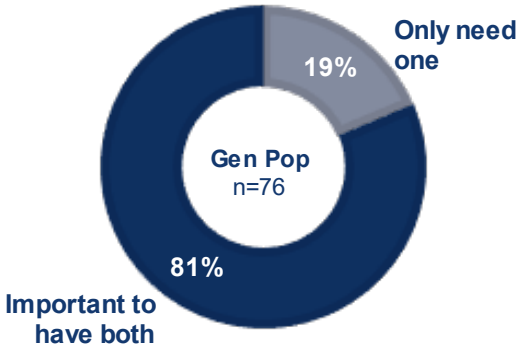
State level vehicle agencies are the best potential communication partners to help promote the website. Dealerships and OEMs are also effective. Retailers can help reach Hispanics and owners of vehicles impacted by the Takata recall.



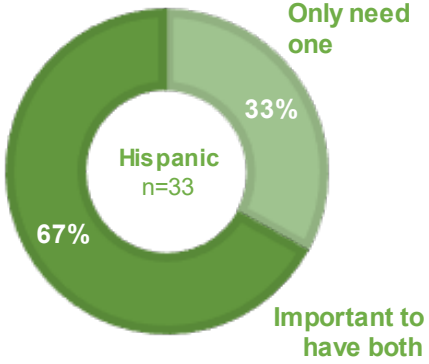
Q3.16 - Still thinking of www.NHTSA.gov/recalls, what organizations would be most effective to partner with to help promote the site and increase awareness among owners such as yourself?

What is the most effective source to notify consumers about recalls?

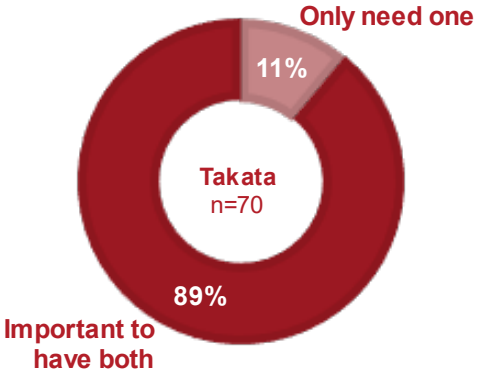
Communications become more powerful when they come from multiple sources. There are clear and strong preferences to hear from OEMs as well as from the government.



*The **more information and contact the better**. If you move and the manufacturers can't contact you, the US Dept of Transportation can put out information via online, media (print, television etc.). **Both are important and very necessary** the goal is to reach out as much as possible and locating vehicle owners.*
Natacha P (Takata)



*I think it is **important to get information from both sources**. The **agencies that are overseeing safety have an authority**, and the **dealers have the means of contacting** the affected people efficiently.*
Emily P (Gen Pop)



*The **manufacturers have a moral obligation** to let anybody know if there are particular problems or defects with some parts of the car but, I **feel more secure knowing that the government looks after the consumer** and keeps a watchful eye.*
Larry J (Hispanic)

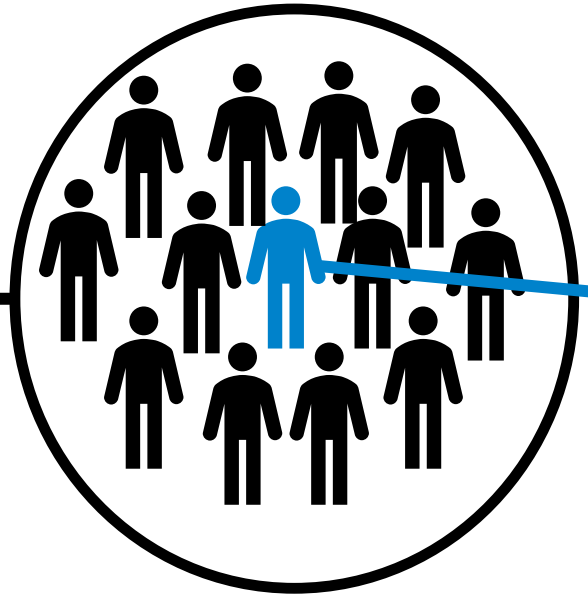
Q1.6 - There are laws requiring manufacturers to contact owners to alert them about recalls on the vehicles they own. The U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also makes efforts to build awareness around recalls more broadly. I'd like to know your thoughts on those two sources and answer. Is it important to receive information from both sources? If so, why?

There is value in the NHTSA/OEM relationship because they each bring some unique strengths to engaging consumers.

United States Department of Transportation

NHTSA

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION



OEMs

- Credible
- Protects consumer
- Legitimizes recall
- Raises awareness
- Fills gaps where OEMs can’t reach specific individuals

- Direct contact to owners
- May have relationship with owner via dealer/service
- Can offer specific solution

CONCLUSIONS + STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Conclusions + Strategic Imperatives

- Lack of perceived severity of recalls is a greater barrier than lack of awareness to getting recalls addressed. Emphasizing urgency is critical to motivating drivers to get their recalls fixed.
- The driving public generally acknowledges that not all recalls are alike. Communications should emphasize the significant safety risk, through overt examples, serving to highlight the importance of immediately addressing the most severe safety-related recalls.
- Outreach to consumers needs to employ a multi-channel approach. Direct mail from a government source conveys a sense of credibility in the communication; text and email offer dynamic feedback loops that allow consumers to follow-up directly and immediately. Mass media communications efforts help to close the gap when OEMs are unable to contact drivers directly and serve to drive overall awareness.

Conclusions + Strategic Imperatives

- Driving motivation for recall repairs comes from a clear articulation of the significant safety issue, the severity of that issue, its potential impact on driver/passengers, and the immediacy surrounding the urgency to have the repair addressed.
- Communications themselves can better engage consumers by including visuals (e.g. defective part, vehicle damage, logos), personalization to the individual/vehicle, highlighting risks, and emphasizing free repair.
- Arresting visuals and language — red color, “Federal Law,” “Safety Recall” — can help make these critical communications stand out from the clutter that bombards consumers daily.

APPENDIX

Additional Detailed Slides

Methodology

The research recruited a total of n=200 participants (n=40 per board X 5 boards). A total of n=189 participated and n=169 were active participants. With most studies, we recruit n=40 with the goal of getting at least n=30 active participants and each of the five boards exceeded that target.

	Recruited	Participants	Active Participants Completed 70% of activities
Group 1 – Gen. Pop	n=40	n=39	n=37
Group 2 – Gen. Pop	n=40	n=39	n=33
Group 3 - Hispanic	n=40	n=37	n=34
Group 4 - Takata	n=40	n=37	n=33
Group 5 - Takata	n=40	n=37	n=32
TOTAL	n=200	n=189	n=169