



2023-2026

Statewide Public Awareness Campaign Results



Prepared by



Report to the
Legislature

Executive Summary

The Budget Act of 2022 directed the California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) to develop and launch a statewide outreach campaign to raise awareness of victim support services and connect historically underserved crime victims in hard-to-reach geographies with CalVCB’s financial support. The Legislature appropriated \$3 million from the Restitution Fund for this purpose, directing CalVCB to develop a campaign that prioritized reaching underrepresented and marginalized communities, including non-English speaking communities, immigrant communities, and individuals in unstable housing situations, and to employ approaches that are culturally appropriate and trauma-informed.

In 2023, following a competitive public procurement process, the CalVCB Board approved a contract with Civilian Inc. (Civilian), a California-based marketing and communications firm specializing in behavior change, to design, develop, and execute a comprehensive, multi-platform statewide media campaign. Before campaign development, Civilian conducted a pre-campaign benchmark awareness survey and in-depth creative testing among priority audiences— inclusive of crime victims and their support networks—to establish a data-driven foundation for the campaign’s strategy, creative development, and messaging. The findings informed the development of the robust suite of campaign assets, and the statewide paid media campaign began in April 2024 and officially concluded in February 2026, spanning 23 months, with pivotal touch points throughout Crime Victims’ Rights Week and Domestic Violence Awareness Month, as well as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.

The campaign achieved its primary goal of increasing awareness of CalVCB among priority populations.

Statewide awareness of CalVCB among low-income Californians increased from 25 percent before the campaign to 31 percent at its conclusion—a statistically significant gain. Among self-reported victims of violent crime, awareness reached 53 percent. Spanish-language advertisements outperformed English-language placements in engagement efficiency, and targeted campaigns for ethnic media audiences and low-income communities delivered millions of additional impressions and tens of thousands of website clicks. An influencer pilot program with a mental health therapist and disability advocate extended the campaign’s reach into new and underserved communities through trusted, authentic messengers. Across all media channels, the campaign delivered 280.5 million impressions and 1.58 million clicks. It drove more than 1.6 million new users to CalVCB’s website.

CalVCB is proud of the results achieved through this campaign. This report provides the Legislature with a full overview of the campaign’s strategies, execution, and outcomes.

At A Glance

280.5 Million Total Campaign Impressions	1.58 Million Total Clicks	31% Post-Campaign Statewide Awareness
72% Ad-Aware Respondents Who Took Action	53% Crime Victim Awareness of CalVCB Post-Campaign	64,200 Applications Received During Campaign

Legislative Background

The Budget Act of 2022 appropriated \$3 million to CalVCB for a three-year, multi-faceted media and outreach campaign to connect crime victims in hard-to-reach and underserved populations with CalVCB's services. The Budget Act provision specifically required:

"Of the amount appropriated in Schedule (1), \$3,000,000 shall be used to conduct an outreach campaign to raise awareness of statewide victim support services. Efforts and strategies shall prioritize outreach to underrepresented or marginalized communities, including non-English speaking communities, immigrant communities, and individuals in unstable housing situations. The California Victim Compensation Board shall utilize approaches that are culturally appropriate and trauma informed and may partner with community-based organizations and other entities to support their outreach efforts."

– **Budget Act of 2022**

The Budget Act also required a legislative report covering the partnerships that were created, strategies utilized, and an evaluation of the efficacy of the strategies employed as a part of the campaign. This report covers the full arc of the campaign—from pre-campaign research and strategy through creative development, paid media execution, and final results—and includes an evaluation of the efficacy of the strategies employed.

Despite the breadth of services CalVCB provides, awareness of the program has historically been low, particularly among the communities most likely to need it. The Legislature's investment in this Public Awareness Campaign recognized that closing the gap between eligible victims and available services requires sustained, targeted outreach.

Pre-Campaign Research and Creative Development

Before any paid media ran, Civilian undertook a rigorous research and development phase that shaped every aspect of the campaign that followed. This phase was critical to ensuring the campaign was grounded in evidence, responsive to the needs of target audiences, and positioned to deliver measurable results.

Pre-Campaign Benchmark Survey

Civilian fielded a statewide benchmark awareness survey among 600 low-income (household income of \$75,000 or less) California respondents, representative of the 15 most populated California counties plus Shasta and Butte counties. This approach was informed by a 2023 Office of Data and Innovation analysis that had indicated decreasing CalVCB market penetration per crime levels in these areas. The survey also reached priority audiences, with approximately 70 percent of respondents from highly populated Southern California counties (e.g. Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego), 38 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and a substantial share reporting use of public benefits. The survey established the baseline conditions against which the campaign's impact would ultimately be measured. Key findings from the pre-campaign survey included:

- Only 25 percent of low-income Californians surveyed had heard of CalVCB.
- 56 percent had an unclear or inaccurate understanding of what CalVCB offers.
- 25 percent did not believe or were unsure whether CalVCB could help them financially if they became victims of violent crime.
- 58 percent expressed interest in learning more about CalVCB, indicating a clear opportunity for the campaign.
- These findings confirmed the need for a broad awareness campaign and informed the campaign's strategic priorities: increasing awareness, building trust, and educating Californians about eligibility and how to apply.

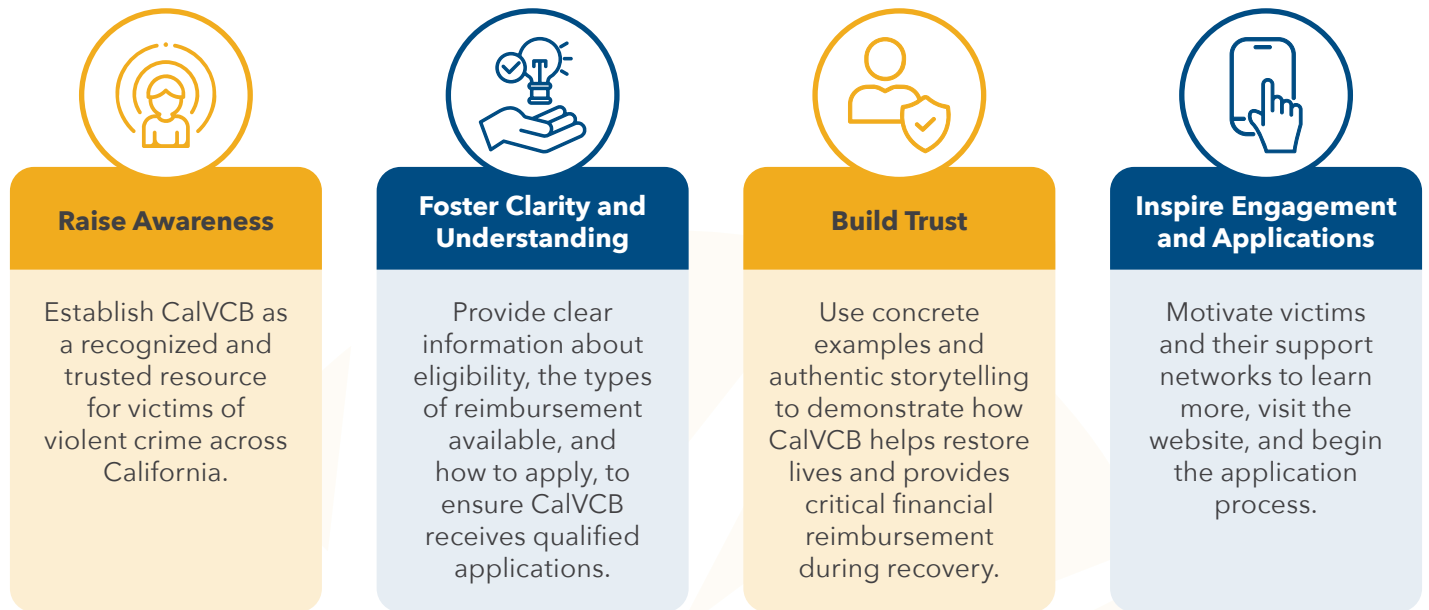
Creative Testing

Following the benchmark survey, Civilian conducted in-depth creative testing with members of the target audience to evaluate messaging concepts, visual approaches, and language strategies prior to full creative development. The results of this testing directly informed the campaign creative, ensuring that the messaging and imagery that would ultimately reach millions of Californians had been validated with the people it was designed to serve. Findings and a recommended creative approach were approved by CalVCB before development proceeded.



Campaign Strategy and Design

Based on the pre-campaign survey findings and creative testing results, Civilian developed a Strategic Communications Plan with four core objectives, each building on the last:



The campaign targeted two primary audience groups.



Campaign Structure

The campaign was structured around a baseline statewide media presence, augmented by a series of targeted campaign flights designed to reach priority populations and geographies with greater depth and frequency. This layered approach allowed the campaign to achieve broad statewide reach while also concentrating resources in the communities where need and opportunity were greatest.

- **A baseline campaign** targeted low-income English and Spanish speakers across 15 California counties selected based on population, violent crime rates, and historical CalVCB application volumes.
- **Emphasized market flights** delivered concentrated media investment in three priority counties—Kern, Los Angeles, and San Diego—through two separate flight periods.
- **An ethnic, in-language media campaign** specifically designed and placed in-language to reach Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Hindi, Punjabi, Hmong, and Vietnamese speakers, as well creative specific to Black and African American communities.
- **A low-income audience campaign** targeted underserved Californians zip codes in the 15 priority counties through digital channels.
- **An influencer pilot program** engaged trusted community voices to extend the campaign’s reach through authentic, personal content in online social media spaces.

Paid media channels included paid social media, display banner advertising, native display, streaming audio, broadcast radio, paid search, out-of-home (OOH) advertising including billboards and posters, digital out-of-home (DOOH), and print.

All channels were deployed in service of the campaign’s full-funnel strategy, with upper-funnel tactics (display, audio, OOH) building broad awareness and lower-funnel channels (paid search, native, social) capturing intent and driving engagement.

Campaign Timeline

The campaign unfolded across three broad phases spanning approximately 30 months from contract award through final reporting.

1

Phase 1: Research, Development, and Launch

(September 2023 - April 2024)

Following Board approval of the Civilian contract in 2023, the campaign team immediately began the research and development phase. Civilian fielded the statewide pre-campaign benchmark survey, conducted creative testing with target audiences, and developed the Strategic Communications Plan. Creative assets including visual concepts, copy, and in-language versions were developed, tested, reviewed, and approved. In April 2024, CalVCB issued a campaign launch press release distributed to 35 news outlets across the state and published on the PRWeb wire service, generating over 2,100 reporter views and 669 click-throughs. Paid media launched statewide in April 2024.

2

Active Campaign and Optimization

(April 2024 - September 2025)

The baseline media campaign ran continuously from April 2024 through the conclusion of the campaign, maintaining a consistent statewide presence across digital channels. During this phase, the campaign was actively monitored and optimized based on performance data. Key dates included:

- **August-October 2024:** Kern County Flight 1 launched, marking the first emphasized market activation, delivering 9.6 million impressions across OOH, audio, and digital channels.
- **October-November 2024:** Influencer test launched, securing valuable learnings about the viability and performance of the channel.
- **January 2025:** Streaming audio was phased out of the baseline campaign mix in favor of higher-performing channels, including paid search and paid social. Spanish-language investment was increased from 30 percent to 40 percent of the baseline media budget.
- **February 2025:** The Los Angeles emphasized market flight, originally planned for an earlier launch, was formally delayed due to the Southern California wildfires. Ad copy referencing the concept of “rebuild”— language that had tested well in pre-campaign research but was causing confusion in the context of the fire—was revised. The revision was informed by feedback CalVCB was receiving directly from community partners. Civilian developed a path forward that remained true to the original creative testing results and presented it for CalVCB approval. The updated copy was rolled out in May 2025.
- **August 2025:** Campaign visuals were refreshed to address audience fatigue and improve performance, while remaining consistent with the original creative concept. The Ethnic Media campaign and low-income audience campaign both launched, as did the second Kern County flight and the Los Angeles and San Diego emphasized market flights.

3

Phase 3: Campaign Expansion, Post-Campaign Awareness Survey, and Conclusion

(October 2025 - February 2026)

The final phase of the campaign concentrated the remaining investment across all active campaign layers, driving the highest engagement rates of the entire campaign period. In December 2025, the campaign budget was assessed and the campaign was extended through February 2026 to maximize impact with remaining funds. January and February 2026 achieved the highest click-through rates of any period for both display and paid search. The campaign concluded at the end of February 2026, followed by the post-campaign awareness survey.

Reaching Underserved and Marginalized Communities

The Legislature’s direction explicitly stated that the campaign must prioritize underrepresented and marginalized communities. CalVCB and Civilian built this requirement into the architecture of every element of the campaign, from the selection of channels and markets to the development of in-language creative and the targeting of specific demographic audiences. The results reflect that commitment.

Spanish Language Outreach

Spanish-language advertising was a cornerstone of the campaign from the outset. The baseline campaign maintained an investment of approximately 40 percent Spanish-language and 60 percent English-language across digital channels. Spanish-language ads consistently outperformed English-language ads in engagement efficiency throughout the campaign, with a final click-through rate of 1.10 percent for Spanish compared to 0.94 percent for English. Across the baseline campaign, Spanish-language placements delivered 48.5 million impressions and 535,000 clicks.

The post-campaign survey confirmed the impact of this investment: 49 percent of low-income Spanish-speaking Californians recalled seeing one or more CalVCB advertisements, and Spanish ad recall was among the strongest of any audience segment measured.

Ethnic Media Campaign

In August through October 2025, Civilian executed a dedicated ethnic media campaign targeting communities that have historically been underserved by mainstream media outreach. The campaign reached audiences including Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Hindi, Punjabi, Hmong, and Vietnamese speakers through digital display, paid social, broadcast radio, and print placements in culturally relevant media outlets. The campaign also included dedicated placements targeting Black and African American communities.

The ethnic media campaign delivered 23.6 million impressions and 72,000 website clicks. Paid social placements within the ethnic media campaign achieved a 0.42 percent click-through rate, outperforming campaign benchmarks and validating the effectiveness of meeting in-language audiences in the platforms and environments they already use.



The post-campaign survey measured a statistically significant 12 percent increase in awareness among Black and African American respondents compared to pre-campaign levels, one of the strongest demographic gains of the entire campaign.

To support multilingual outreach beyond paid media, Civilian provided voice overs for six instructional videos translated into 16 languages, including Spanish, Simplified Chinese (Mandarin), Traditional Chinese (Cantonese), Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi, Tagalog, Arabic, Armenian, Farsi, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Russian, and Thai. Upon completion, these videos will be made available on the CalVCB website to provide accessible guidance on the application process for non-English speaking Californians.

Low-Income Audience Campaign

In October and November 2025, a dedicated low-income audience campaign delivered targeted digital advertising across display, native display, and paid social channels to underserved Californians in the 15 priority counties. The campaign delivered 22.9 million impressions and 75,000 clicks, with paid social placements achieving a 1.27 percent click-through rate that significantly exceeded benchmark. The campaign confirmed that low-income audiences, when effectively reached through the right channels and with the right message, engage meaningfully with CalVCB’s content.



Emphasized Market Flights

Three California counties—Kern, Los Angeles, and San Diego—were identified as priority markets for concentrated campaign investment based on population, crime rates, and CalVCB application volumes. Each county received a dedicated emphasized market flight that layered OOH advertising (billboards and large-format posters), broadcast radio, streaming audio, and digital OOH onto the existing baseline digital media presence.

- Kern County received two separate flights (August-October 2024 and August-October 2025), delivering a combined 21.6 million impressions. Out-of-home placements emphasized Spanish-language creative and were concentrated in equity-focused zip codes. Audio placements reached broad, Spanish-language, and LGBTQIA+ audiences.
- Los Angeles County received one flight (August-October 2025), delivering 53.3 million impressions at a highly efficient \$1.70 cost per thousand impressions—driven by significant investment in large-format printed OOH that blanketed the market with broad, cost-effective awareness.
- San Diego County received one flight (August-October 2025), delivering 15.6 million impressions across OOH, digital OOH, and a balanced mix of audio placements on local stations serving multicultural audiences.



Billboard, San Diego County



Billboard, Los Angeles County

Influencer Pilot Program

As part of the campaign, Civilian executed a pilot influencer program in October and November 2025 timed to coincide with Domestic Violence Awareness Month, to explore the potential of trusted community voices in extending CalVCB's reach. The pilot engaged two California-based micro-influencers: a Los Angeles-based psychotherapist and emotional resilience educator whose practice focuses on victims of domestic abuse and trauma, and a disability community advocate and mental health creator focused on healing and resilience.

Both influencers drew on their personal and professional experiences to create authentic content that raised awareness of CalVCB's mission, built credibility, and encouraged their audiences to share the information with others who might benefit. The pilot generated more than 10,000 video views and reached more than 7,000 individual accounts.

Audience comments across both influencers' platforms were positive, with viewers expressing gratitude and sharing the content with their own networks.



Después de un delito o crimen violento, **CalVCB** podría ayudar a pagar sus facturas.

Aprenda más y aplique en victims.ca.gov.



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Campaign Results

The campaign's primary measure of success was the change in awareness of CalVCB among low-income Californians, as measured by a post-campaign awareness survey conducted at the conclusion of the campaign and compared to the pre-campaign benchmarks.

The results were clear and statistically significant: statewide awareness increased from 25 percent to 31 percent, a six-percentage-point gain that reflects the campaign's ability to meaningfully move the needle against the baseline.

Among self-reported victims of violent crime—the campaign's primary target audience—awareness reached 53 percent. The post-campaign survey showed a statistically significant seven-percentage-point increase in awareness in Southern California (excluding San Diego), reflecting the impact of the concentrated Los Angeles market flight. The 12 percent increase in awareness among Black and African American respondents was one of the strongest demographic gains of the campaign and directly reflects the investment in the ethnic media campaign.

The campaign's estimated cumulative reach was 65 to 70 percent of the target population, with an average frequency of eight to nine exposures per individual, both reflecting an ideal range for an awareness campaign of this type and duration. Of those who recalled seeing a CalVCB advertisement, 59 percent of violent crime victims recalled one or more campaign ads.

Engagement

Beyond awareness, the campaign drove significant engagement. Seventy-two percent of ad-aware respondents reported taking an action after seeing a CalVCB advertisement—including visiting the CalVCB website, searching for more information online, or discussing CalVCB with someone they know. This high action rate reflects well-designed, resonant creative that motivated audiences to move beyond passive recognition.

Across all paid media channels, the campaign delivered 1.58 million clicks at a 0.56 percent overall click-through rate. Paid search was the top-performing engagement channel, achieving an 18 percent click-through rate, which reflects the campaign's success in generating organic demand.

Trust in CalVCB also showed a positive trend among those exposed to advertising. Eighty percent of ad-aware survey respondents believed CalVCB could help them financially if they became a victim of violent crime, representing a five-percentage-point increase from the pre-campaign benchmark.

Website Performance

The campaign successfully drove a large and sustained increase in traffic to CalVCB's website. Over the 23-month campaign period, 1.6 million new users accessed the CalVCB website, with total campaign-driven page views reaching 3.2 million. Monthly page views averaged approximately 130,000, with a peak of 200,000 views in October 2025—coinciding with the concentrated media investment of the campaign's final phase. The strong correlation between paid media activity and website traffic was clearly demonstrated: new users visiting the homepage dropped from 46,000 in January 2026 to 8,600 in March 2026 following the conclusion of the campaign.

More than 9,000 high-intent users clicked the "Application Start" button on the CalVCB website during the campaign period, with a consistent monthly average of approximately 431 clicks and the number never dropping below 360 in any given month. This consistency reflects a campaign that sustained meaningful engagement across its full 23-month run.

Applications

CalVCB received 64,236 applications during the 23-month campaign window. While this represents a decrease of 15 percent compared to the prior 23-month period, this campaign was designed and evaluated as an awareness campaign, and application volume is shaped by many factors that extend well beyond the reach of a media campaign alone.

Violent crime in California declined during the campaign period: with a nine percent reduction in the overall violent crime rate since 2024, a 13.5 percent drop in homicides, and 67 percent of California counties experiencing reductions in violent crime.

Additionally, the post-campaign survey identified an important shift in the primary barrier to CalVCB engagement: distrust of government agencies has replaced concern about process complexity as the top reason among those unlikely to believe CalVCB could help them. This reflects a broader socio-political dynamic that no single awareness campaign can fully address, but which informs the direction of future efforts.

Paid Media Performance Summary

The following table summarizes cumulative paid media performance across all campaign channels for the full 23-month campaign period (April 2024 through February 2026).

Channel	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	CPM	CPC	Spend
Paid Social	86,551,527	1,107,798	1.28%	\$7.91	\$0.62	\$684,359
Display Banner	75,449,429	209,047	0.28%	\$6.39	\$2.31	\$482,410
Out-of-Home	75,421,482	–	–	\$1.72	–	\$129,781
Native Display	25,168,696	137,971	0.55%	\$7.52	\$1.37	\$189,196
Streaming Audio	8,954,630	3,375	0.04%	\$16.46	\$43.68	\$147,414
Broadcast Audio	8,070,266	–	–	\$19.83	–	\$160,051
Paid Search	665,855	120,682	18.12%	\$187.63	\$1.04	\$124,938
Print	261,313	–	–	–	–	\$8,424
TOTAL	280,543,198	1,578,873	0.56%	\$6.87	\$1.22	\$1,926,573

Note: CTR = Click-Through Rate; CPM = Cost Per Thousand Impressions; CPC = Cost Per Click.

Out-of-Home impressions reflect estimates.

Performance data includes all campaign layers: Baseline, Emphasized Market Flights, Ethnic Media, and Low-Income campaigns.

Cross-channel reach and frequency reflect estimates based on available data.

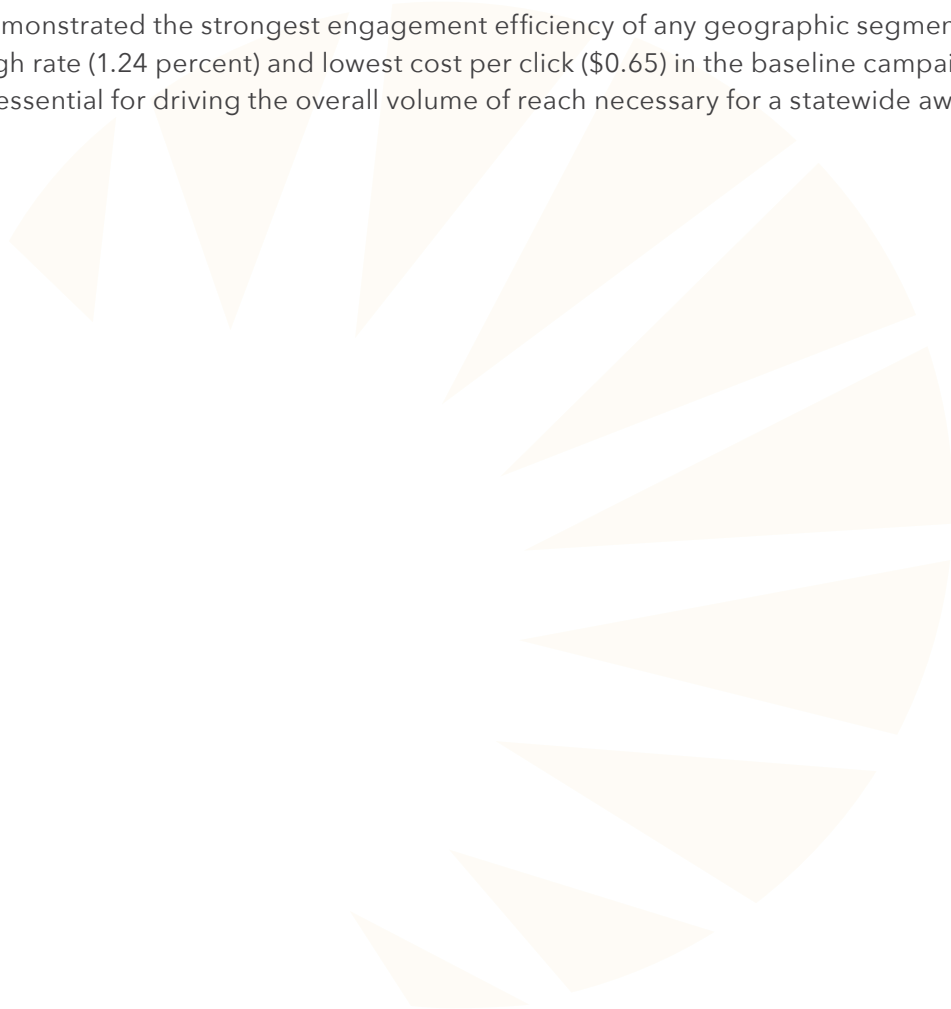
Total spend reflects paid media only.

Language and Audience Performance

Spanish-language advertising consistently outperformed English in engagement efficiency across the campaign. The final baseline campaign Spanish click-through rate of 1.10 percent compared favorably to the English rate of 0.94 percent, and Spanish maintained the lowest cost per click (\$0.78). This pattern was consistent across channels and flight periods, confirming that Spanish-language outreach is both necessary and highly effective for CalVCB's target population.

Secondary audiences—defined as the institutional and support networks that work with crime victims, including health providers, social workers, and law enforcement—delivered higher engagement efficiency than primary audiences across multiple channels based on available ad response data. Secondary audiences achieved a 1.05 percent click-through rate compared to 0.98 percent for primary audiences, indicating strong responsiveness among individuals positioned to refer eligible victims to CalVCB's services.

Smaller markets demonstrated the strongest engagement efficiency of any geographic segment—achieving the highest click-through rate (1.24 percent) and lowest cost per click (\$0.65) in the baseline campaign—while larger markets remained essential for driving the overall volume of reach necessary for a statewide awareness effort.



Future Recommendations

Civilian made recommendations to inform any future awareness or outreach investment.

Evolve from Awareness to Education

This campaign proved the value of broad reach in establishing CalVCB as a recognized name among target audiences. A future effort should build on that foundation by placing greater emphasis on education specifically, closing the gap between awareness and accurate understanding. The post-campaign survey found that respondents' understanding that CalVCB reimburses victims for crime-related expenses after bills have been paid remains limited, holding steady at 47 percent, similar to pre-campaign benchmark levels. Future campaigns could also more intentionally drive toward application outcomes.

Maintain a Full-Funnel Channel Mix

Upper-funnel channels including display, OOH, audio, and paid social should continue to sustain broad visibility, while mid- and lower-funnel tactics, particularly paid search and native display, should receive greater emphasis to capture high-intent users and drive them toward the application process. Paid search consistently delivered the strongest engagement of any channel and should anchor future media strategies oriented toward application growth.

Continue and Expand In-Language Investment

Spanish-language campaigns outperformed English in click-through rate throughout the campaign, and ethnic media placements demonstrated strong performance and positive audience response. Future campaigns should further scale in-language strategies, particularly on paid social, and continue to identify and activate high-performing in-language audience segments.

Conclusion

CalVCB is proud of the results achieved through the 2023-2026 Public Awareness Campaign. This campaign reflected a genuine commitment to the Legislature's directive to reach the Californians most in need of victim support services, through channels, languages, and messengers designed specifically for them.

The statistically significant increase in statewide awareness, strong engagement among Spanish-speaking and Black and African American communities, 280.5 million impressions delivered across more than two years of active media, and 1.6 million new users introduced to CalVCB's website are all measures of success. They reflect the sustained, collaborative work of CalVCB, Civilian, and the community partners who help amplify CalVCB's message.

CalVCB remains committed to reaching every eligible Californian with information about the support that is available to them. The findings and recommendations in this report will inform how the organization continues that work going forward.

Appendix

Glossary of Key Campaign Terms	
Reach	the unduplicated number of individuals exposed to a campaign
Impressions	total number of ad exposures
Clicks	number of times which an advertisement was clicked on
Click Through Rate (CTR)	percentage of total clicks relative to total impressions served
CPM	cost per thousand impressions
CPC	cost per click
Frequency	the average number of times an individual within a target audience is exposed to the campaign
Out-of-home (OOH)	marketing found outside of the consumer's home. This includes formats such as billboards, transit displays (bus shelters, subways), and digital screens in public venues
Session	a period of time when a user interacts with the website
User	a person who starts a session on the site
Engaged Session	a session that lasts longer than 10 seconds, has a key event, or has at least 2 pageviews
Bounce Rate	percentage of sessions that were not engaged
Application Start Button Click	click of buttons or links that drive to the application site

