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DIVERSITY INCLUDING LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN SUPER BOWL ADS LAGS AT CRITICAL TIME

Many Super Bowl advertisers scale back DEI efforts in commercials

By [Lindsay Rittenhouse](#). Published on February 07, 2025.

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(Clockwise, from top left) Dove, the NFL, Novartis and WeatherTech are some of the Big Game advertisers getting praise for being more inclusive in their casting and storyline choices.

Credit: Ad Age composite: Dove, NFL, WeatherTech, Novartis

Super Bowl LIX advertisers appear to be dialing back efforts around diversity and inclusion. But just how much has DEI receded in Super Bowl commercials? It's hard to tell.

For the fourth consecutive year, Ad Age asked every Super Bowl advertiser with plans to air national, in-game commercials about how they prioritized diversity and inclusion in the creation and production of their ads. This includes how they approached casting, diversity within the agencies they worked with and the makeup of those working on the production. Not only did just 14 of 58 brands with in-game spots respond to Ad Age's survey, many of those that did respond simply made blanket statements about supporting diversity efforts without identifying any specific strategies or data. This compares with 23 responses out of 51 brands in 2024.

Ad Age will continue to track this data as more advertisers reveal their in-game ads for Super Bowl LIX.

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Some industry experts are making a correlation between the lack of desire to discuss DEI efforts surrounding this year's Big Game and the conservative backlash against DEI and LGBTQ+ rights, including at the federal level.

“The Super Bowl isn't just a football game, it's a cultural phenomenon,” said Carlton Jared Lockett, head of strategy at multicultural media company My Code. “With over 100 million viewers, it's a moment to look and change the world. This year, as attacks on LGBTQIA+ rights continue to rise across the country, representation is not just a way of inclusion, it's a way of resistance.”

Rocket Cos., the NFL, Häagen-Dazs, NerdWallet, Come Near, DoorDash and Booking.com fully participated in Ad Age's survey. Ritz answered some survey questions but did not provide the makeup of its cast or the team behind its commercial.

Taco Bell, Pringles, Uber Eats, Hellmann's, Dove and Hims & Hers responded to the survey but provided little detail or offered generic statements on how they broadly approach inclusivity. Anheuser-Busch InBev did not respond to survey questions, instead sending a list of credits for each of its spots for brands Bud Light, Stella Artois, Michelob Ultra and Budweiser. Hims & Hers also sent its list of credits in addition to its statement.

Squarespace, MSC Cruises, WeatherTech and GoDaddy declined to participate. The following in-game brands did not respond to the survey as of press time: Angel Soft, Bosch, Cirkul, Coffee mate, Coors Light, Disney+, Doritos, Dunkin', Duracell, FanDuel, Fetch, Foundation to Combat Antisemitism, Google, HexClad, Homes.com, Instacart, Jeep, Lay's, Liquid Death, Little Caesars Pizza, Meta, Mountain Dew, Nerds, Novartis, Pfizer, Poppi, Ram, Reese's, Salesforce, Skechers, Totino's Pizza Rolls and Tubi.

One of the biggest issues in attempting to measure diversity and track progress both in front of and behind the camera continues to involve guidelines that prevent requiring crew members or cast to disclose information about how they identify. Some brands, including NerdWallet, cited this as a barrier to gathering certain diversity data.

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As of this writing, Ad Age has confirmed seven Super Bowl spots were directed by people of color—Homes.com (both of its ads), Rocket, NFL (one of its two ads), Mountain Dew, Lay's and WeatherTech.

Only four directors this year are people of color (one handled four ads). That's a decrease from last year, when eight of the 49 Super Bowl ad directors confirmed by Ad Age were people of color.

Of the 65 celebrities that have so far been featured in this year's Super Bowl commercials, 18 identify as female, while 47 identify as male. As of the count at deadline, only 12 celebrities starring in this year's Super Bowl ads are Black; one is Hispanic and four are two or more races. Miki Ann Maddox, the former assistant to reality TV star Tom Sandoval, is in DoorDash's in-game ad, and is currently the only celebrity in a Big Game spot who is Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. This analysis did not include those who appeared in the ad who were not celebrities.

Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez star in the Häagen-Dazs ad with Ludacris; actress Hailee Steinfeld appears in Novartis' Super Bowl debut; and singer-songwriter Charlie XCX is featured in Uber Eats' star-studded in-game commercial.

In terms of Black representation, rapper Ludacris also appears in Häagen-Dazs' "Fast and Furious"-inspired ad; Snoop Dogg stars with Tom Brady in The Foundation to Combat Antisemitism's ad from WPP agency VML; comedian Wanda Sykes appears alongside Steinfeld in the Novartis spot; and Grammy-nominated singer Shaboozey performs a rendition of Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" in a colorful Nerds in-game commercial.

The overwhelming majority of celebrities (47) who star in this year's Big Game commercials are white.

In comparison to last year, by Ad Age's count, of the 90 celebrities that appeared in Super Bowl 2024 commercials, 28 identified as female and 62 identified as male; 23 were

Black, four were Hispanic, two were AANHPI and six were two or more races.

The lack of representation is disappointing, but not surprising, according to multiple advertising executives.

“I don’t think that the Super Bowl is the moment where I expect marketers to truly tackle diverse topics or subjects,” said Jason Campbell, chief creative officer of ad agency Translation. “It’s a mass consumption moment where marketers take a hammer-over-the-head approach ... But even if you look at the audience of the NFL from a fan standpoint, casual and hardcore, it’s actually diverse. The work that’s created and the communication that’s done is not diverse.”

Some brands justified their casting decisions based on the authenticity of the celebrity’s connection to the brand or the tone of the aid.

DoorDash, for example, said it hired comedian Nate Bargatze, a white man, for its ad promoting its DashPash, because he is a “known” user of the service. “From there, we cast a wide net to find the remaining talent,” a DoorDash spokesperson said. “Our campaign also taps a diverse range of influencers with a varied following.”



Booking.com said it “aimed to feature people from a broad mix of backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences” in its Super Bowl spot from agency Zulu Alpha Kilo

New York that stars many beloved Muppets characters including Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog and Animal alongside different vacationers.

“Our casting approach was intentional, ensuring that our talent selection authentically represented the diversity of America across race, gender, ethnicity and body type,” a Booking.com spokesperson said. “We also took great care to avoid casting into preconceived stereotypes, prioritizing a thoughtful and inclusive approach that highlights a wide range of travelers in a way that feels natural and authentic.”

NerdWallet’s in-game ad, “Genius Beluga,” from IPG agency Deutsch, stars a white male character who drops his phone into the ocean, only for it to be retrieved by the company’s new beluga whale mascot, voiced by Kieran Culkin. And although the star is a white man, a company spokesperson said NerdWallet’s casting partner reviewed 247 people and 45% of them were people of color. Of its 15 background actors, seven were female, four were Black and four were AAPI, according to NerdWallet.



“Since our main character Richard is intended to be a bit dumbstruck at his situation, we were careful about who we cast in that role to avoid perpetuating any negative racial stereotypes or biases regarding intelligence,” the NerdWallet spokesperson added.

“He Gets Us,” the ad campaign centered on interpreting Jesus’ teachings for the contemporary world, is running an in-game spot, “What is Greatness,” created by agency Lerma/. A spokesperson for Come Near, the organization behind the ad, said of

its 52 principal and background actors, 31 are people of color, 17 are female, five have disabilities and three are LGBTQ+.

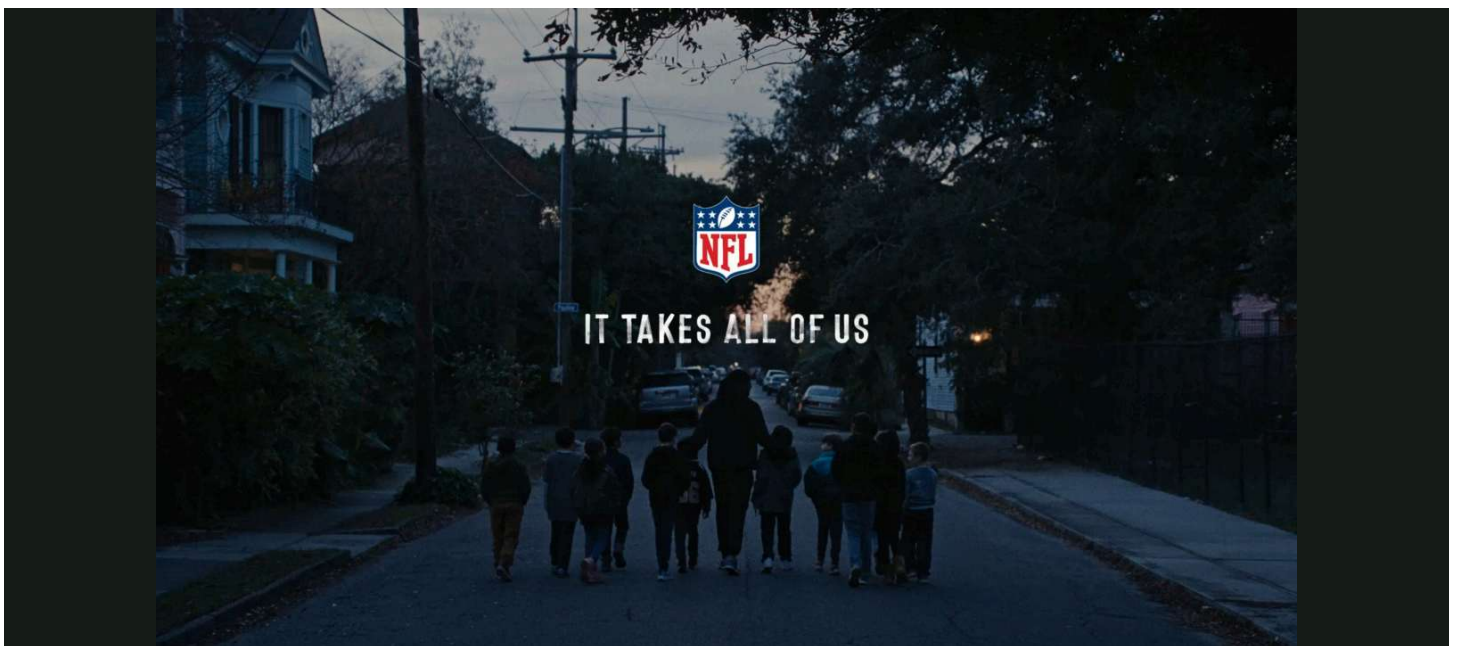
Rocket, which will air an ad centered around the American dream from creative shop Mirimar, said it aimed to honor “the diverse lived experiences of America” in its casting choices and storytelling. As previously stated, Rocket’s ad is also one of the few directed by a person of color this year.

NFL scores big on inclusion

Both in front of and behind the camera, the NFL sets an example for how to promote inclusivity in Super Bowl advertising.

One of its two in-game ads, “Somebody”, is one of the most inclusive commercials in the game this year. The organization recently released a 60-second version of the spot, created by 72andSunny Los Angeles, featuring real participants of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Special Olympics and InsideOut to reaffirm how sports can empower children from all walks of life. A 30-second version will run during the Super Bowl.

Marissa Solis, senior VP of global brand and consumer marketing at the NFL, told Ad Age previously that the spot is about the power of mentorship and comes at a “critical time” for youth, given the widespread mental health crisis.



It was important for the NFL to cast real members of these organizations in the spot, and an organization spokesperson said “we collectively made sure that we were highlighting a diverse range of kids and abilities,” as well as “NFL players who have real connections to these organizations.”

Choosing the right director was also critical. “Somebody” is the only in-game ad confirmed so far that will be directed by a woman of color, Savannah Leaf of Park Pictures.

“Savannah brought such a real and personal perspective to the project,” an NFL spokesperson wrote in a statement to Ad Age. “As a former pro athlete, coach and woman of color, she understands the impact of mentorship firsthand. That insight naturally shaped her approach, and her beautifully powerful visual style made the story feel even more authentic and moving.”

Leaf told Ad Age previously that the ad reflects her own experience as a 2012 Olympian and former professional athlete, who knows “the importance of mentorship and community support.”

Leaf is a renowned up-and-coming director and “Somebody” marks her Super Bowl directing debut.

The 72andSunny L.A. agency team behind “Somebody” was 73% diverse, taking “into account race/ethnicity and gender,” per the NFL. The production partner was Park Pictures, a certified Women’s Business Enterprise and the editorial company, Cabin, is certified by the National Minority Supplier Development Council. The editor of the ad was Nathan Rogers, who is Black, Indigenous or a person of color, according to the NFL, and representation within the production company is about 25% diverse.

The NFL’s second in-game ad, “Flag 50,” which was also handled by 72andSunny L.A., spotlights flag football and how female players are taking the sport to new heights.

It’s also an example of how to promote inclusion in Big Game commercials.

The NFL cited these stats: 48% of on-camera principal actors are diverse and 52% are female; nearly 69% of the 72andSunny L.A. agency team behind the ad is diverse, taking

“into account race/ethnicity and gender”; and its director of photography, Ava Berkofsky, is nonbinary.

The NFL also used Game Changing Films to help with sports coordination in the commercial—the firm that helps cast, coordinate and shoot sports action was co-founded by female duo Aimee McDaniel and Jessi Sheldon. McDaniel—a producer, former athlete and stunt coordinator—also served as the lead football coordinator, choreographing all the drills and football actions in the commercial, according to the NFL.

“This film in particular is told from the perspective of the women players, and the fight they’ve endured to take the sport to new heights is at the very center of the story arc,” the NFL spokesperson said. “In addition to the main characters, we also featured cameos by female players from five foreign countries, including Mexico, France, Germany, Brazil, and Australia, to show how the game is experienced across borders.”

Representation behind the camera

Of the 43 directors confirmed doing Super Bowl commercials this year (some will direct more than one ad), three are men of color and only one is a woman of color: WeatherTech’s director Joseph Kahn, Rocket’s director Matthew Dillon Cohen, Taika Waititi (Homes.com, Lay’s and Mountain Dew) and Leaf, who directed NFL’s “Somebody” ad.

Four women directors have been confirmed by Ad Age. Aside from Leaf, Alice Mathias directed Totino’s Pizza Rolls’ ad, Katina Mercadante directed Dove’s commercial and Kylie Matulic, part of a director duo with Todd Mueller, directed Angel Soft’s spot.

All of the remaining 36 confirmed directors are white men.

Elsewhere in production, Come Near said the crew for its “He Gets Us” in-game ad was 30% female and 15% Black, Indigenous or people of color.

Rocket said its in-game commercial was shot by the renowned Chayse Irvin, who is a person of color and is known for his cinematography in films including “BlacKkKlansman.” The diversity makeup of its agency Mirimar was reported as white

non-American (27.3%), white American (27.3%), Black (13.6%), Asian (18.2%) and Hispanic/Latino (13.6%), according to a Rocket spokesperson, who added that “the production crew was intentionally diverse, with key roles filled by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ individuals and those with disabilities.”

Häagen-Dazs’ agency team from nice&frank consisted of 73% women and 33% Black, Indigenous or people of color, according to the company. “As a proud queer woman, nice&frank co-founder and Chief Creative Officer Laura Petrucelli served as the lead connective, creative thread from pitch, to production, to post-production,” a Haagen-Dazs spokesperson added. The company noted that part of its decision to hire nice&frank as its lead U.S. creative agency in July hinged on finding a shop that “valued underrepresented voices.”

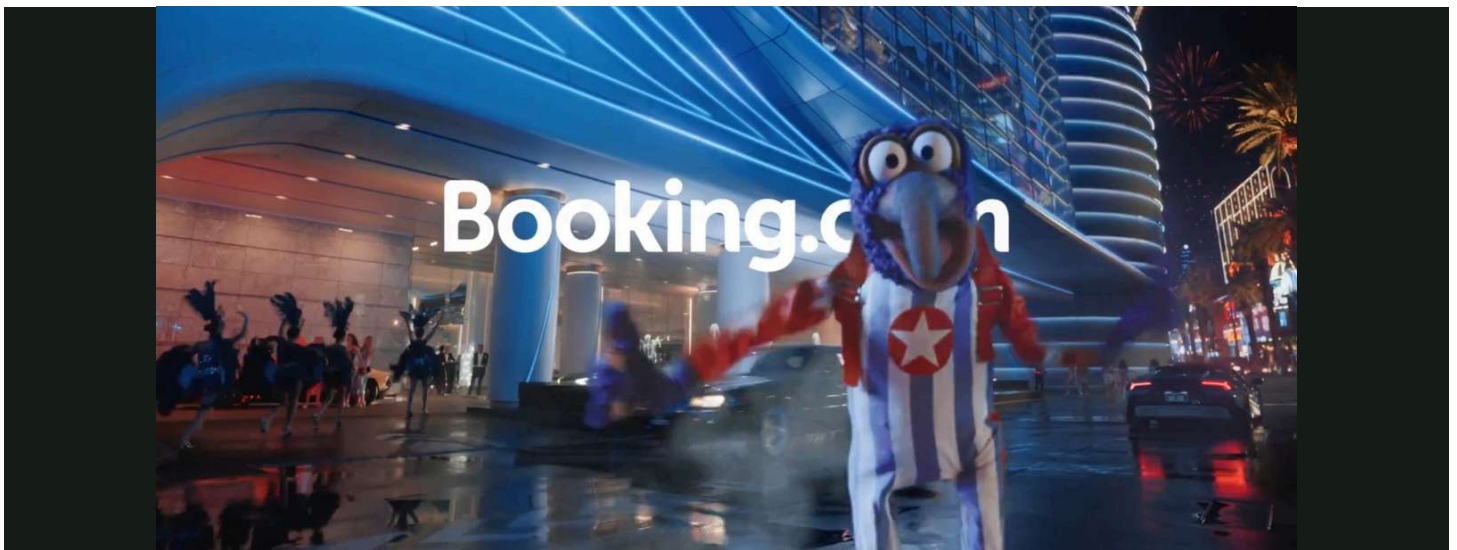
NerdWallet’s agency team at Deutsch is 40% Black, Indigenous or people of color and 60% of the brand marketing team that worked on the in-game commercial were female, according to the company. NerdWallet said its team also consisted of three AAPI, four Hispanic and two Black employees.

The company added that it used director of photography, Matthew Libatique, a Filipino American, for “Genius Beluga.” Although NerdWallet said it did not give specifics on the diversity makeup of its production crew, the company worked with the AICP Double the Line program, an initiative that helps increase diversity in commercial shoots.

Booking.com said its creative agency team at Zulu Alpha Kilo consisted of 25 people, with 64% identifying as female with “representation from nine nationalities.” Zulu Alpha Kilo is minority-founded and owned and certified by the Canadian Aboriginal & Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC), which has a reciprocal agreement with the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) in the U.S, a company spokesperson said.

“Our brand, creative and production teams reflect a global mix of perspectives, with team members from the U.S., Canada, Poland, Italy, South Africa, the Netherlands and the U.K., among others,” the Booking.com spokesperson said. “Booking.com’s employee base as a whole represents more than 150 nationalities, fostering an environment where different ideas, experiences, and viewpoints naturally shape the way we tell stories.”





DoorDash's agency, Wieden+Kennedy Portland, partnered with the company's in-house creative studio, Superette, on its in-game commercial. Together, the ad's team was 10% Asian, 17% Black, 10% Latinx, 14% two or more races and 14% LGBTQ+, according to the DoorDash spokesperson.

DoorDash also worked with Biscuit and Walker Music, both woman-owned companies. The colorist on the film is also a woman, the spokesperson said.

How ERGs play a role

Some of the brands that responded to survey questions once again cited the use of resource groups in helping make their ads more inclusive. Specifically, some said they leaned on ERGs, employee-led groups that provide resources and representation to foster diversity and inclusion, to gain critical, diverse perspectives on their campaigns.

The use of ERGs in the making of some Super Bowl ads underscores the need for investment in DEI. Conservative backlash has resulted in an increasing number of companies cutting DEI efforts, with some of these companies also consolidating or refocusing their ERGs to focus on more generic goals such as business development.

ERGs—while they are also tapped to provide guidance on making workforces more inclusive, internally—can provide critical expertise in helping brands market authentically to diverse audiences.

“You have to have people in your organization that represent the different points of view you're trying to include in your advertising,” Translation's Campbell said. If the team

that is creating your commercial does not reflect diversity, you're "not doing it right," he added.

Booking.com is one of the brands that noted working with its ERGs to gain insights to shape its creative approach. A spokesperson said it strived to showcase "a range of people engaging in different travel experiences. As part of this, we actively engage with Booking.com's employee resource groups (ERG) to gain valuable input on our marketing campaigns, leveraging the diverse perspectives of our employees to help shape our creative approach," the spokesperson said.

The company also said it leveraged an internal "Inclusion Reviews group that provides feedback at key checkpoints throughout the creative process. This team is embedded across different departments, fostering a mindset of inclusivity in our day-to-day work and ensuring that campaigns are developed with a broad range of perspectives in mind."

The NFL leaned on its agency 72andSunny's ERGs and DEI experts to create its two in-game ads. NerdWallet also leaned on its agency ERGs and involved its own internal director of DEI in its Super Bowl spot to "ensure the characters and cast and storylines were not playing into stereotypes or reflecting unconscious biases."

"Meeting with [ERGs] and DEI experts is a cadence that we keep throughout the process of campaign development," an NFL spokesperson said. "We track how and who we make our work with, make sure that we are hitting our inclusivity goals."

Come Near said its lead creative agency Lerma/, a minority-owned shop, "employs a cultural fluency team assigned to consider every concept through a cross-cultural lens."

"They provide the internal Lerma/ creative teams and all of us at Come Near with specific input on the scenes, characters and claims in every commercial we create," the Come Near spokesperson said. "This process helps identify blind spots or missed opportunities in representation and potential issues in culture or politics that might trigger an unforeseen response from the execution. And yes, there are always adjustments along the way."

Some advertisers, including Come Near and Booking.com, said they also tested campaigns with focus groups.

“We tested 12 campaign assets with audience groups that reflected national representation in the U.S., ensuring diversity across age (18+), gender and region,” the Booking.com spokesperson said. “This allowed us to gather a broad range of perspectives and make optimizations based on real audience feedback. Throughout the project, we also engaged with our internal teams to ensure the campaign struck the right tone and authentically represented the wide range of travelers we serve.”

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LGBTQ+ representation lags at a critical time

From Ad Age's count, only four celebrities starring in this year's Big Game ads are openly part of the LGBTQ+ community: Michelle Rodriguez (Häagen-Dazs), Jake Shane (Poppi), Dan Levy (Homes.com) and Wanda Sykes (Novartis). And there are no campaigns so far representing authentic LGBTQ+ stories.

Last year, six celebrities who starred in Big Game ads were openly part of the LGBTQ+ community, by Ad Age's count.

The Super Bowl comes weeks after President Donald Trump signed an executive order asserting that the U.S. government recognizes only male and female sexes, and days after his order barring transgender girls and women from competing on sports teams that match their identity.

“Outside of a few casting choices (Michelle Rodriguez bicon clocked) [and] a few gay icons (Miss Piggy), I have not seen much representation of my LGBTQIA+ fam thus far,” said Kindra Meyer, executive creative director of experiential agency Verb. “Where is the gender-inclusive diversity? Where are the gay people of color? Where are the different body shapes, sizes, and ages?”

My Code’s Lockett said the Super Bowl has historically ignored the LGBTQ+ community, but given the rise in states introducing anti-LGBTQ+ bills, brands have a responsibility to stand up for what is right on advertising’s biggest night.

“For LGBTQIA+ people, seeing oneself on this stage is a confirmation,” he said. “For supporters, it is understanding. And for the brands, it is both the right thing to do and the right thing to do for business. The LGBTQIA+ consumers are a big and loyal consumer market, and still, agencies and brands are afraid to suggest inclusive ideas, fearing backlash or turning off conservative buyers.”

Lockett said “things have changed” and younger consumers, especially, “appreciate the companies that do not only talk but act.” Execution-wise, he said a LGBTQ+ storyline doesn’t “always have to be the main plot.”

“At times, the strongest messages are delivered through small acts of incorporating diverse people into the world we all inhabit,” Lockett said. “Inclusion can be as natural and as unobtrusive and still feel quite meaningful.”

LGBTQ+ representation has historically been lacking in the Super Bowl.

The first in-game ad to feature a gay or lesbian couple was in 2014, a Coca-Cola spot featuring two dads who take their daughter roller-skating, according to research from Alltold, a self-described “people-first responsible AI company.”

Last year, Volkswagen’s “An American Love Story,” from agency Johannes Leonardo, showed a wide array of VW customers, including a lesbian couple who shared a kiss in one of its cars on their wedding day.

Missing groups

Hispanic and Asian American representation is once again severely lacking in this year's crop of ads.

While Hispanic representation in last year's Big Game ads was limited, there were a few standouts, including Doritos' "Dina and Mita" spot starring Hispanic actors Jenna Ortega, her on-screen abuelas and Danny Ramirez.

Lisette Arsuaga, the co-president and co-CEO of DMI Consulting and co-founder of the Association of National Advertisers' Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing said there is no authentic representation of Hispanic culture in any of this year's Big Game spots that she's seen so far.

Asian American representation also continues to be nearly non-existent in Super Bowl ads, aside from Miki Ann Maddox appearing in the DoorDash ad and a few non-celebrity AANHPI actor appearances.

"The Super Bowl, a major national cultural event, unites Americans," said Genny Hom-Franzen, executive director of the Asian American Advertising Federation, who observed a huge gap in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) representation in this year's Super Bowl advertising. "By 2040, the U.S. is projected to become a minority-majority country. As the fastest-growing consumer segment, Asian Americans contribute substantially to the economy and culture. We appreciate brands that recognize and authentically engage with our community, and we notice when we are overlooked."

Hom-Franzen noted that the 3AF hasn't necessarily seen any misrepresentations of AAPI individuals, but that's "due to a general lack of any representation." She said she can't recall a Super Bowl ad, even in the past, that "exceptionally represented AAPI culture or, more specifically, authentically showcased their fandom of the NFL."

"This absence itself is a missed opportunity and, in a way, contributes to a form of misrepresentation," she said.

Hom-Franzen pointed to a Statista stat that showed "a substantial 62% of the AAPI community are NFL fans. This demonstrates a clear and passionate connection to the

sport, making the lack of representation in Super Bowl advertising even more glaring,” she said.

Accessibility and representation of people with disabilities

This year’s Super Bowl ads have included some representation of people with disabilities—but not much.

Along with the NFL’s “Somebody” spot, which features Special Olympics athletes, Rocket said it included a diverse cast across different “backgrounds, ethnicities, genders and abilities.” The company added that “Ryan Hudson Peralta, an internationally recognized designer and disability advocate is featured, ensuring disability representation was integral, not an afterthought.”

Still, no commercial so far this year seems to compare to Google’s in-game ad last year, which was hailed as one of the most inclusive representations of people with disabilities in Super Bowl advertising. Google’s 60-second ad for its Pixel 8 phone was partly filmed with a camera obscured by petroleum jelly, a choice blind director Adam Morse made to transport people into the point of view of a blind character.

This year, Google’s Super Bowl commercial will focus on a father using its Gemini Live AI assistant to prepare for a job interview, as was revealed in a two-minute extended version of the spot.

Most of the advertisers that responded to the survey—including the NFL, Ritz, Booking.com, Haagen-Dazs, NerdWallet, Come Near and Rocket—said they followed best practices for making their ads accessible to consumers of different abilities. These in-game ads will have closed captioning and/or audio descriptions for broadcast.

NerdWallet said the company is also using “auto-generated text overlay captions for assets on social platforms” for its Super Bowl spot.

“We work to ensure legibility and accessibility to all viewers by paying attention to contrast when using on-screen text and providing closed captioning options, in addition to ensuring clarity in sound design, mix and overall comprehension,” the DoorDash spokesperson said.

Reflection of older individuals

One area where brands did seem to do a better job is in representing older people.

From Ad Age's count, 21 celebrities starring in Big Game spots are above the age of 50.

Arsuaga said that some ads have “a really good representation in the aging segment” including WeatherTech's 30-second in-game spot from agency Pinnacle Advertising.

The ad, set to the Steppenwolf classic “Born to Be Wild,” follows four daredevil grannies on a wild ride in their 1963 Lincoln Continental convertible, which is only protected from their shenanigans by their WeatherTech mats.



WeatherTech's commercial was directed by one of the only directors of color in this year's Super Bowl, Joseph Kahn. The company declined to participate in the survey.

“With the music, ‘Born to Be Wild,’ and the women are ready to tear the town down,” Arsuaga said. “I thought it was funny. It was really well done. Women, as they get older, still can be wild and crazy and have fun.”

WeatherTech isn't the first to showcase older people in such a light, but it's still rare in the Super Bowl and advertising in general—the industry has historically had a problem with ageism and prioritizing youth culture. Taco Bell's 2013 in-game ad, “Viva Young,”

memorably followed a group of seniors who break out of their retirement home for a night of wild partying and debauchery.

The WeatherTech ad has received mixed reactions so far.

Karen McKinley, the co-founder and chief creative officer, copy, of Geezer, a new agency that was founded to help marketers better target individuals over the age of 50, wasn't as impressed with WeatherTech's storyline.

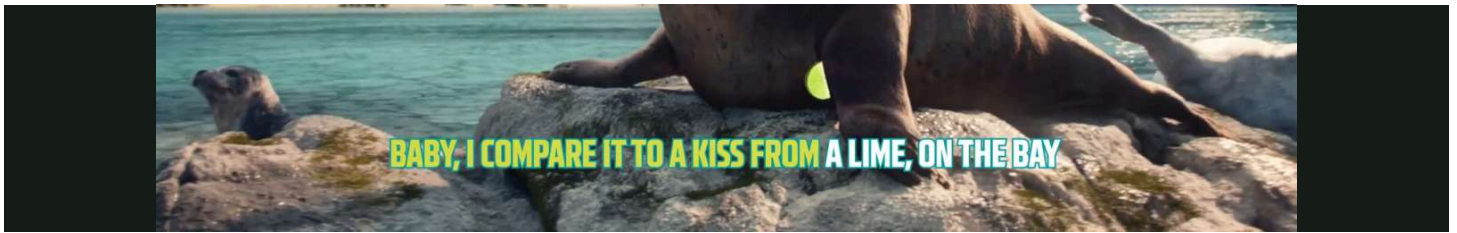
"It uses older people as a punchline, and honestly does it in a very unfunny way," McKinley said. "They're using all the outdated stereotypes (slow driving, knitting, drinking tea and being cougars). Plus, the younger men in the car [are] grossed out by older women. Really?"

She said inclusion of older people in this year's Super Bowl commercials "isn't an issue," but the way they are being represented still needs work. Other spots that prominently feature older people include Michelob Ultra's in-game ad starring Willem Dafoe and Catherine O'Hara as pickleball hustlers as well as Reese's commercial featuring a 94-year-old actress (one of the oldest people ever to star in a Super Bowl spot).

"The problem isn't that older people don't appear in the ads this year, the problem is when those people aren't portrayed in the right way or they're in a spot that isn't creative and memorable," McKinley said.

However, McKinley did shout out Mountain Dew's ad for winning across all age groups. The spot from Goodby Silverstein & Partners stars Seal—as a seal—with a ridiculous remake of his "Kiss From a Rose" hit to promote the Baja Blast. It's also one of the few ads being directed by a person of color (Taika Waititi).



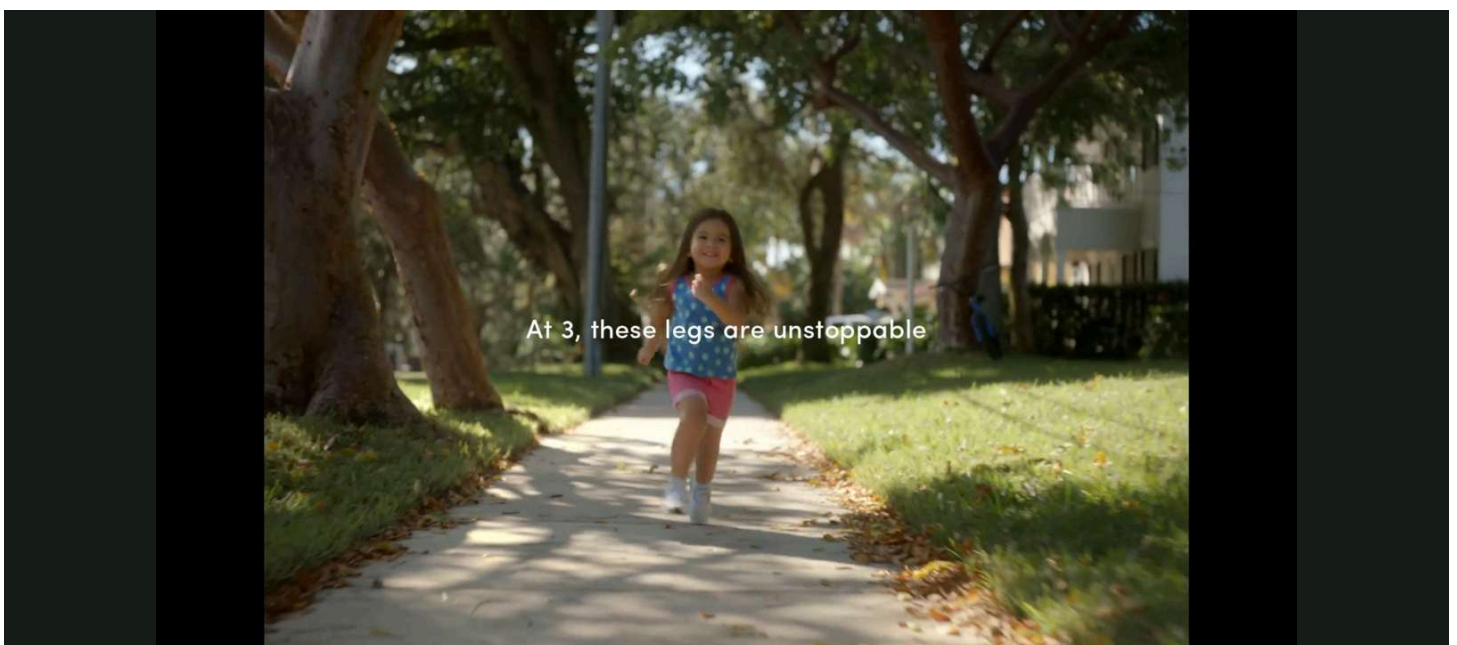


Female representation

Female representation also continues to see improvement from Super Bowl ads in the previous decades.

For example, Unilever’s Dove, which did not respond to the full survey, will run another ad in this year’s Super Bowl with a message of female empowerment. The spot from WPP agency Ogilvy features a three-year-old girl joyously running to Bruce Springsteen’s “Born to Run,” before transitioning to a message that warns of the body image issues that many teen girls face as they get older, pushing some to quit sports. The ad is also one of the only in-game commercials being directed by a woman, Katina Mercadante.

“Our approach has always been to depict beauty by telling real stories with real people,” a Dove spokesperson said in a statement. “For this year’s Big Game spot, our talent search resulted in collaborating with a wide range of agency partners, diverse crew, and Director Katrina Mercadante to create ‘These Legs.’ The purpose of the spot is to raise awareness of our work and help build body confidence and self-esteem in girls so they can keep playing the sports they love.”



Christine Guilfoyle, president of SeeHer, an Association of National Advertisers initiative that champions the positive representation of women in marketing, praised pharmaceutical brand Novartis, which will make its Super Bowl debut with an ad from agency Merkle and Partners highlighting breast cancer. It stars breast cancer survivor and comedian Wanda Sykes and actress and breast cancer advocate Hailee Steinfeld.

Guilfoyle commended Novartis for its strategy to “take a stereotype, staring at women’s breasts, and turn that upside down for breast cancer awareness.”

Overall, Guilfoyle said female representation in this year’s Super Bowl ads was about a “50/50 split between women appearing in the creative and not being represented at all.”

“A point of note, in those [ads] where women appear, is their role contributing to the messaging? Are they background characters? Do they show up authentically? Are they the butt of the joke? How these questions are answered will be key to how well they connect with consumers,” Guilfoyle added.

Several brands cited predominantly female-led teams behind their in-game ads.

NerdWallet said 60% of its brand team behind “Genius Beluga” was female, including its lead creative director.

Come Near said it worked with music partner Mophonics and public relations firm, Genuine Article, both of which are majority female-owned companies, on its “What is Greatness” Super Bowl ad.

Rocket said it partnered with Biscuit Filmworks, a female-owned production company, on its in-game commercial.

Häagen-Dazs noted its predominantly female marketing team under executives including Dreyer’s Grand Ice Cream Chief Marketing Officer Elizabell Marquez, who is also Hispanic, and Häagen-Dazs Marketing Director Rachel Jaiven.

Although Uber Eats did not respond to specific survey questions, the company's spokesperson said in its statement that the campaign was driven by a majority female-led team including its agency, Special US, which is led by [CEO Kelsey Hodgkin](#).

“While the narrative itself hinges on the history of football, leveraging talent like Charli XCX, Martha Stewart, and Greta Gerwig allows us to speak to audiences that have traditionally been underrepresented in the sport's biggest moment,” an Uber Eats spokesperson said.

Why diversity matters

According to a recent [Harris Poll survey](#), 72% of U.S. consumers are planning to tune into Super Bowl LIX on Sunday, an increase from the 67% who watched last year. CivicScience data shows Gen Z adults ages 18-24 are the most likely to tune into the Big Game (75%)—that's important because Gen Z is more [racially and ethnically diverse](#) than previous generations and they are known to buy from brands that [reflect them and their values](#).

Plus, Super Bowl commercials that feature inclusive representation boost purchase intent by more than 40% across all consumers, according to data from the ANA's [SeeHer Gender Equality Measure](#).

Reflecting the diverse audiences who watch the Super Bowl matters and brands are “missing out on their own future” and the “next generation” by not doing that, Translation's Campbell said. “The industry looks at [the Super Bowl] like this shining moment when all the things we make go on show, but it's not very diverse. And isn't that a miss because you're talking about reaching more consumers than you ever will on any other stage.”

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