

DRIVING ENGAGEMENT: UNVEILING THE SECRETS OF F1'S SOCIAL DATA

PART 2: DOES F1 NEED DRIVE TO SURVIVE?

POWERED BY
BUZZRADAR 

THREE REPORTS BASED ON F1 SOCIAL DATA AND AI

WE'VE IDENTIFIED 3 KEY TRENDS IN THE DATA THAT WE'VE INVESTIGATED FURTHER

PART 1

HAVE WE REACHED PEAK F1?

PART 2

DOES F1 NEED DRIVE TO SURVIVE?

PART 3

THE DRAMATIC CHANGE IN F1'S FANBASE

INTRODUCTION



Image Credit: Buzz Radar

We're Buzz Radar, a leading social intelligence company. We take the sea of online data created by social media and use it to help organisations understand their audiences.

In Part 1 of this series, we explored whether F1 reached its peak in 2022, after a huge rise in popularity over the preceding years. Many people attribute this success to the Netflix show, Drive to Survive; but is this really true?

In Part 2, we explore the next important question: Does F1 need Drive to Survive?

Using social data, AI, and human analysis, we dive into the multiple factors that contributed to F1's success. This report quantifies each factor, and the decisions that Liberty made since taking over F1 in 2017, with some surprising findings.

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT DRIVE TO SURVIVE?

THE NETFLIX SHOW HAS BEEN CREDITED WITH CHANGING F1

In our research, looking at millions of social media posts around F1, we noticed two distinct camps of fans: Those who found the sport through Netflix's Drive to Survive... and everyone else.

There's a widely accepted view that Drive to Survive was a fundamental factor in transforming F1 from a niche sport - catering to a specific demographic - into a global sporting phenomenon by bringing in millions of new fans.

But is that true?

And is it largely responsible for F1's growth?



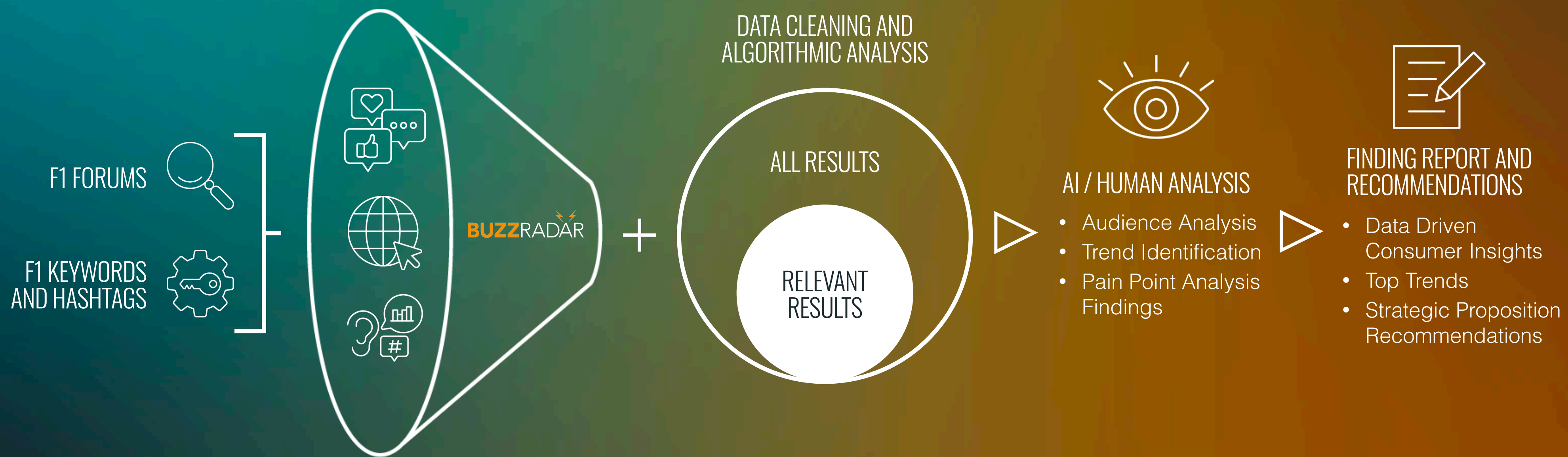
Image Credit: @F1 on X

HOW WE'VE ANALYSED F1 AUDIENCES AND TRENDS

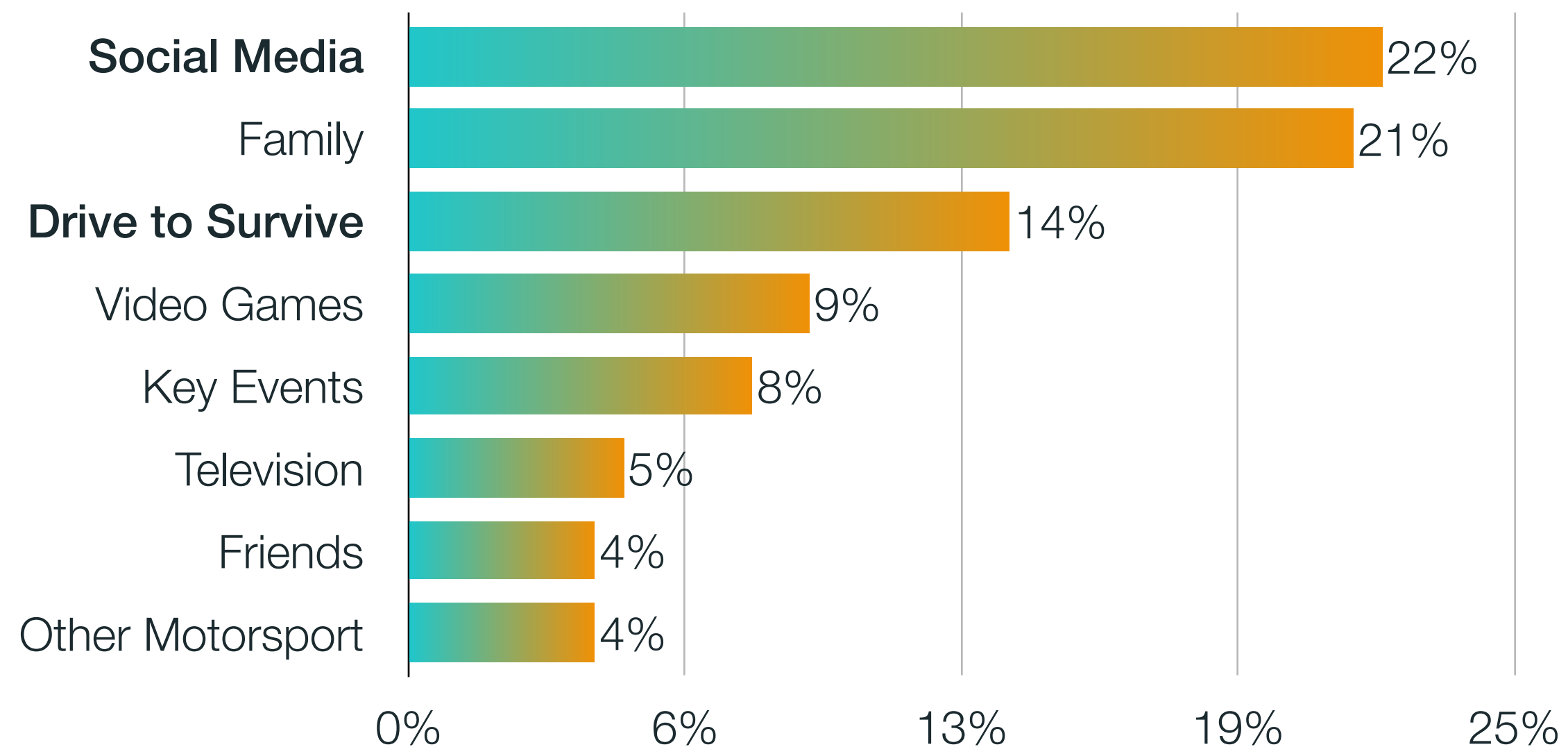
THE NUMBERS, METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

77.6M
Online conversations
around F1

247K
F1 fan accounts
analysed



TL;DR: F1 IS NO LONGER RELIANT ON DRIVE TO SURVIVE



Our research shows that, though Drive to Survive clearly had an enormous role to play in the expansion of F1's fanbase, it is far from the whole story.

The show helped create a new audience and energised them, giving the sport a super-engaged online fanbase of creators and consumers. However, our data shows that this new audience has become self-sustaining. This massive increase in social media content, from posts to podcasts, quickly developed its own momentum and eclipsed the impact of the Netflix show. That content itself is now bringing in new fans.

While fans enjoy the Drive to Survive soap opera, it has become just one component amongst other key factors: a relaxation in F1's use of content online, a generation of social-media native drivers, the extra spare time created by the pandemic, and the ability to connect with the personalities of those behind the wheel. Each makes a huge difference to turning the sport around.

Taken together, these elements gave fans something F1 had always lacked: access to the people behind the sport in a way that made them excited and invested like never before. The barriers of elitism and accessibility have been removed.

Drive to Survive was a scaffolding around which this new fandom was built – however now that the fandom is there, the scaffolding is no longer needed to keep it standing. The show might have lit the blue touch paper on F1's growth, but there is clear data and evidence to suggest that its influence has been overtaken.

HOW DRIVE TO SURVIVE IMPACTS F1 FANDOM

01

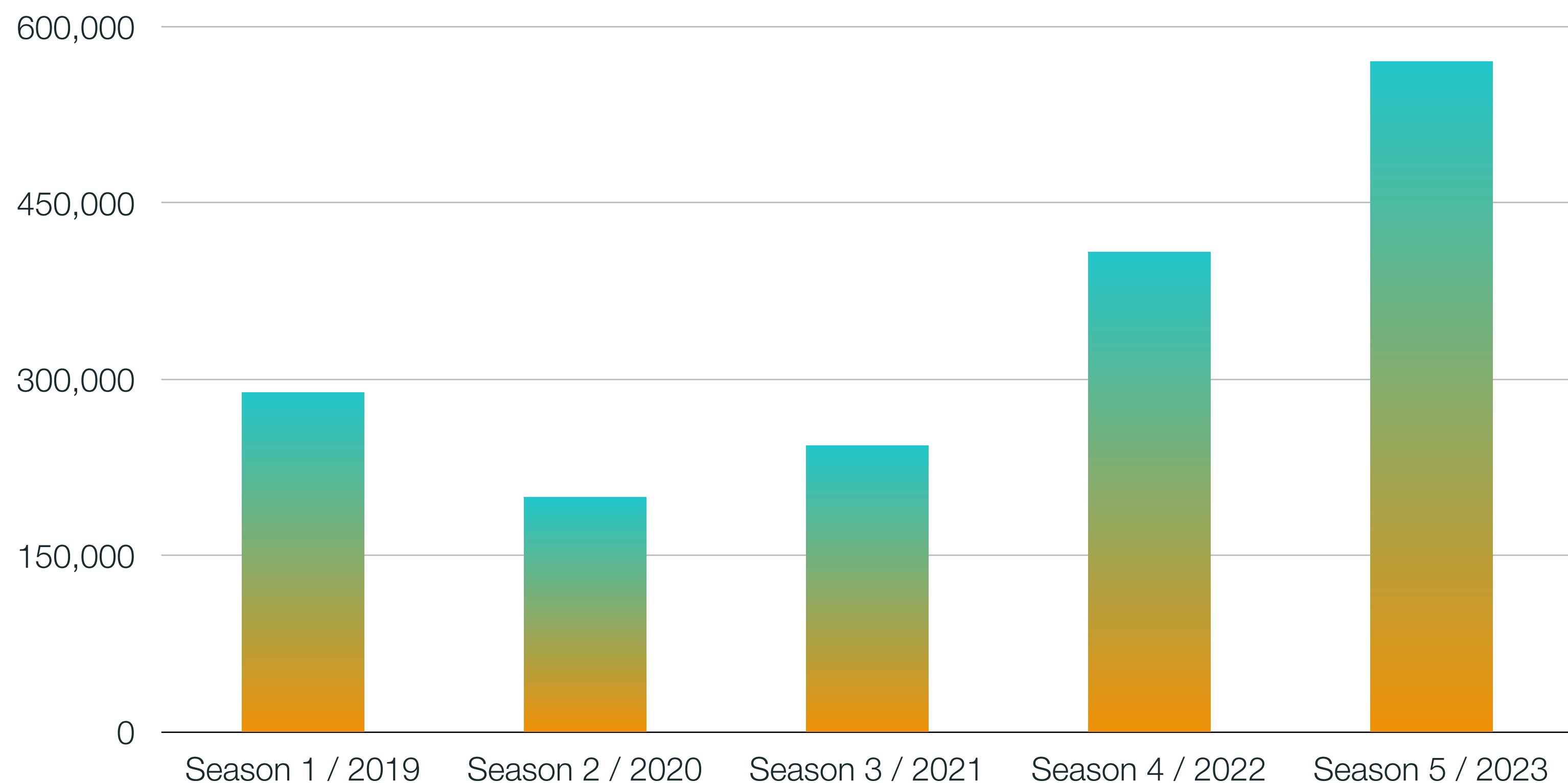
HOW MANY PEOPLE WATCH DRIVE TO SURVIVE?

THE VIEWING NUMBERS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- More than **6.8 million viewers** have watched the show.
- **63%** of viewers watched at least three episodes in a row.
- **18 to 29**-year-olds make up **31%** of the audience.
- The gender split of viewers is much more balanced than the sport itself, with **46% being female**.

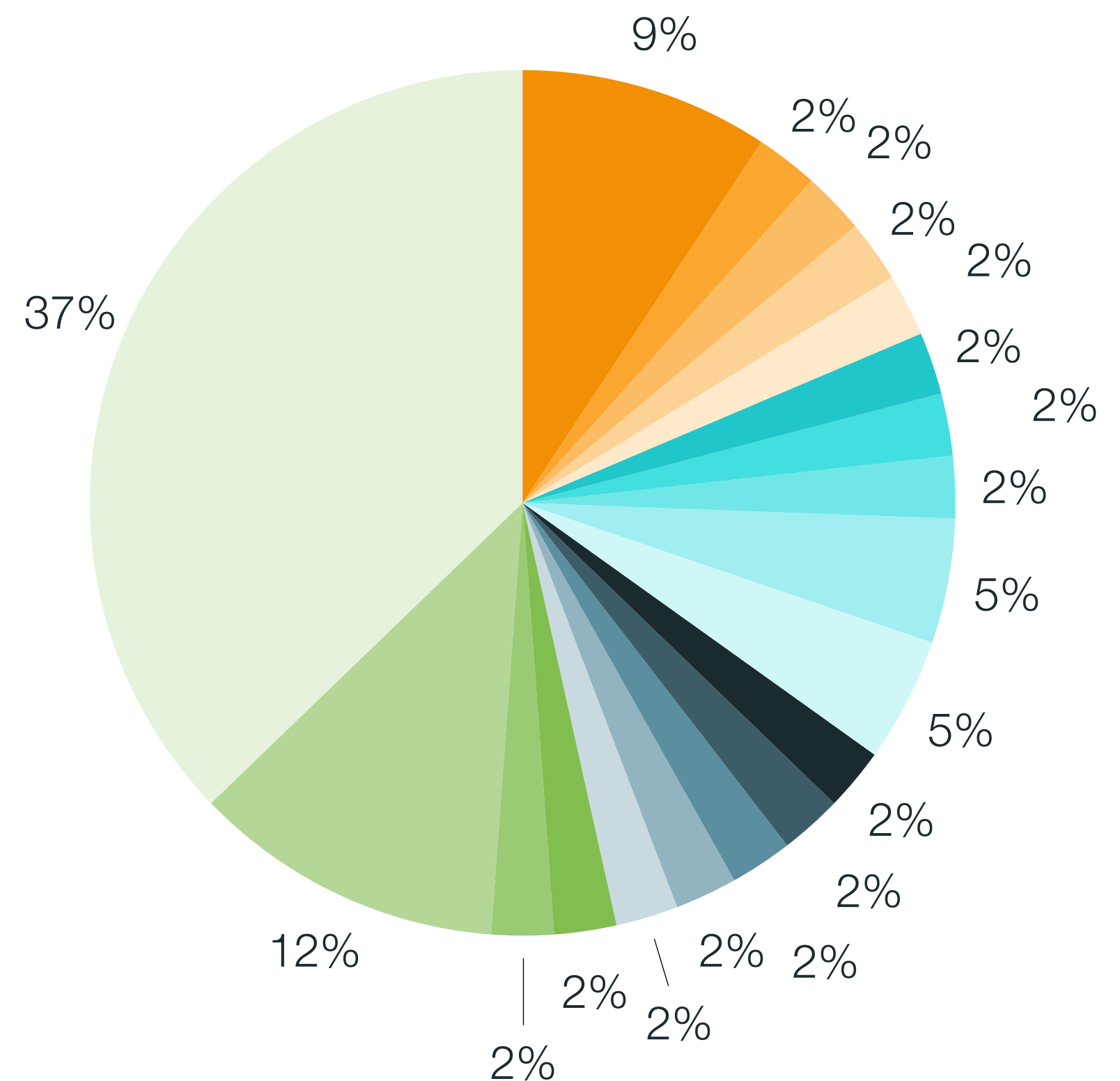
Source

Week 1 Viewership of Drive to Survive



WHERE DID DRIVE TO SURVIVE HAVE THE MOST IMPACT?

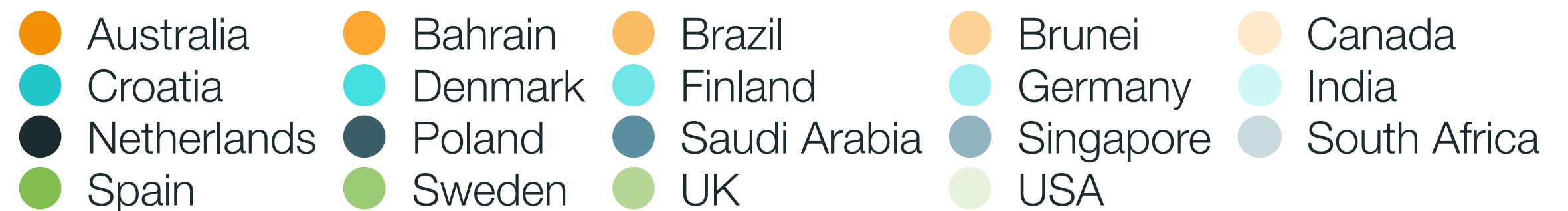
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF NEW FANS



We found that Drive to Survive directly influenced new fans from all over the world and from every continent.

However, it was in the USA that the show made the biggest splash. 37% of those who cited Drive to Survive as a catalyst for their interest in the sport were from the USA.

The UK and Australia also saw notable increases in fans as a direct result of watching the show, with 12% of Drive to Survive-turned-F1 fans coming from the UK and 9% coming from Australia.



HOW DRIVE TO SURVIVE HELPED F1 CRACK AMERICA

THE NETFLIX TO F1 PIPELINE FOR US FANS

Drive to Survive has undeniably played a role in increasing the American fanbase.

28% of U.S. adults now identify as “avid” or “casual” fans of Formula 1, up from 21% in a February 2020 survey ([source](#)). Of these, more than half said Drive to Survive was a reason they became a follower of the sport, with 30% citing it as a “major reason.”

People in the US who considered themselves fans of the sport rose 33% in the years Drive to Survive was released. Following season one, US Grand Prix viewers rose to almost 1,000,000; 39% higher than the previous race season. [[source](#)]

There’s also been a knock on effect on in-person race attendance. In 2018, only about 263,000 people attended the US Grand Prix in Austin, Texas. In 2022, that number jumped to 440,000, which many people have attributed to Drive to Survive.

“Drive to Survive” Impact on Formula 1 Fandom

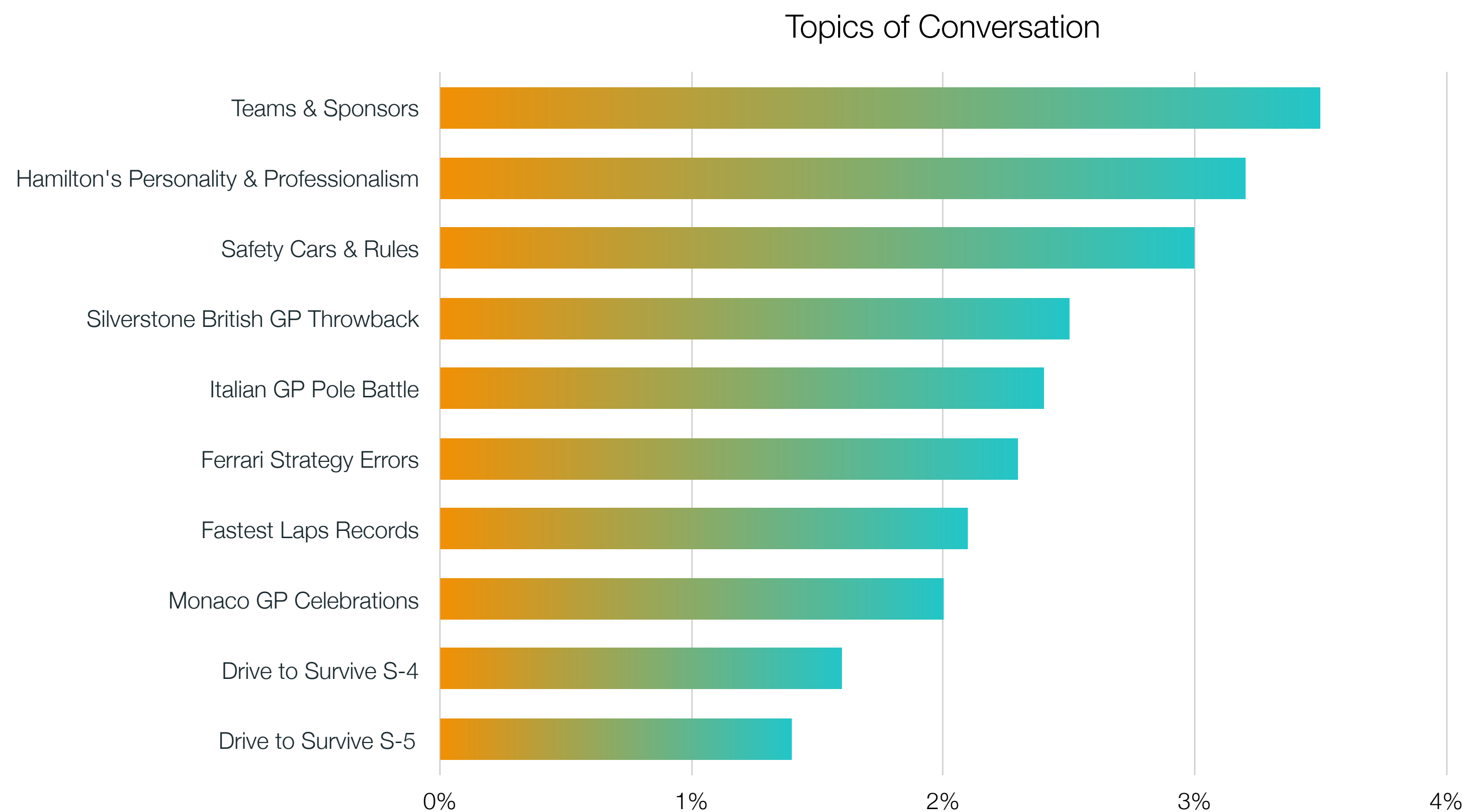
Survey Q: How much of a role did the Netflix series play in your becoming a fan of F1?



Source: [LINK](#)

LEADING TOPICS OF ONLINE CONVERSATION AMONGST FANS

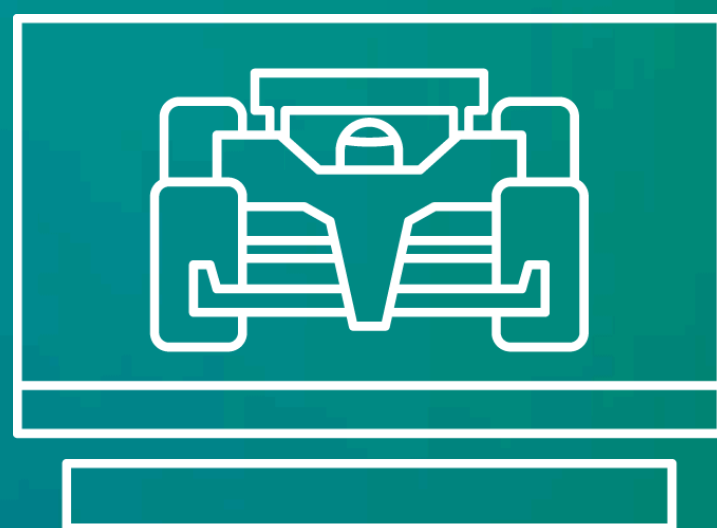
DRIVE TO SURVIVE IS NOT A KEY DRIVER



ONLY **2.5%** OF
TWITTER/X
CONVERSATION ABOUT F1
IS DIRECTLY ABOUT DRIVE
TO SURVIVE

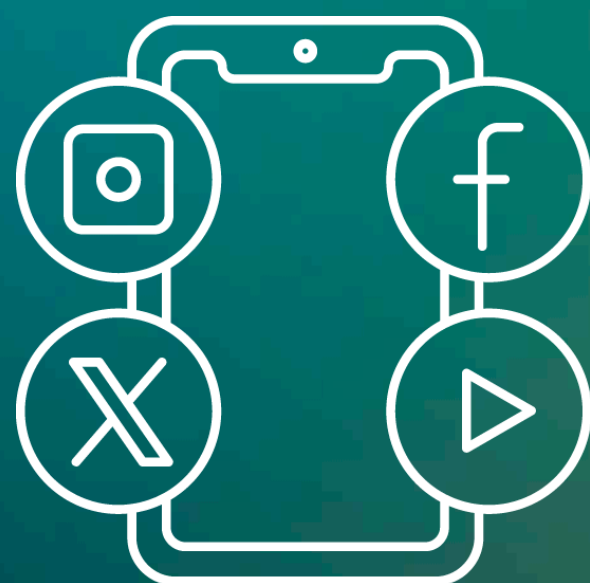
Sources: Twitter, Forums and Blogs F1 Conversations 2022 - 2023

DRIVE TO SURVIVE FANS DON'T NECESSARILY FOLLOW F1



26% of Drive to Survive fans have limited interest in Formula One ([source](#)).

This suggests that many people are simply enjoying Drive to Survive as a standalone piece of entertainment, rather than a gateway into the sport.

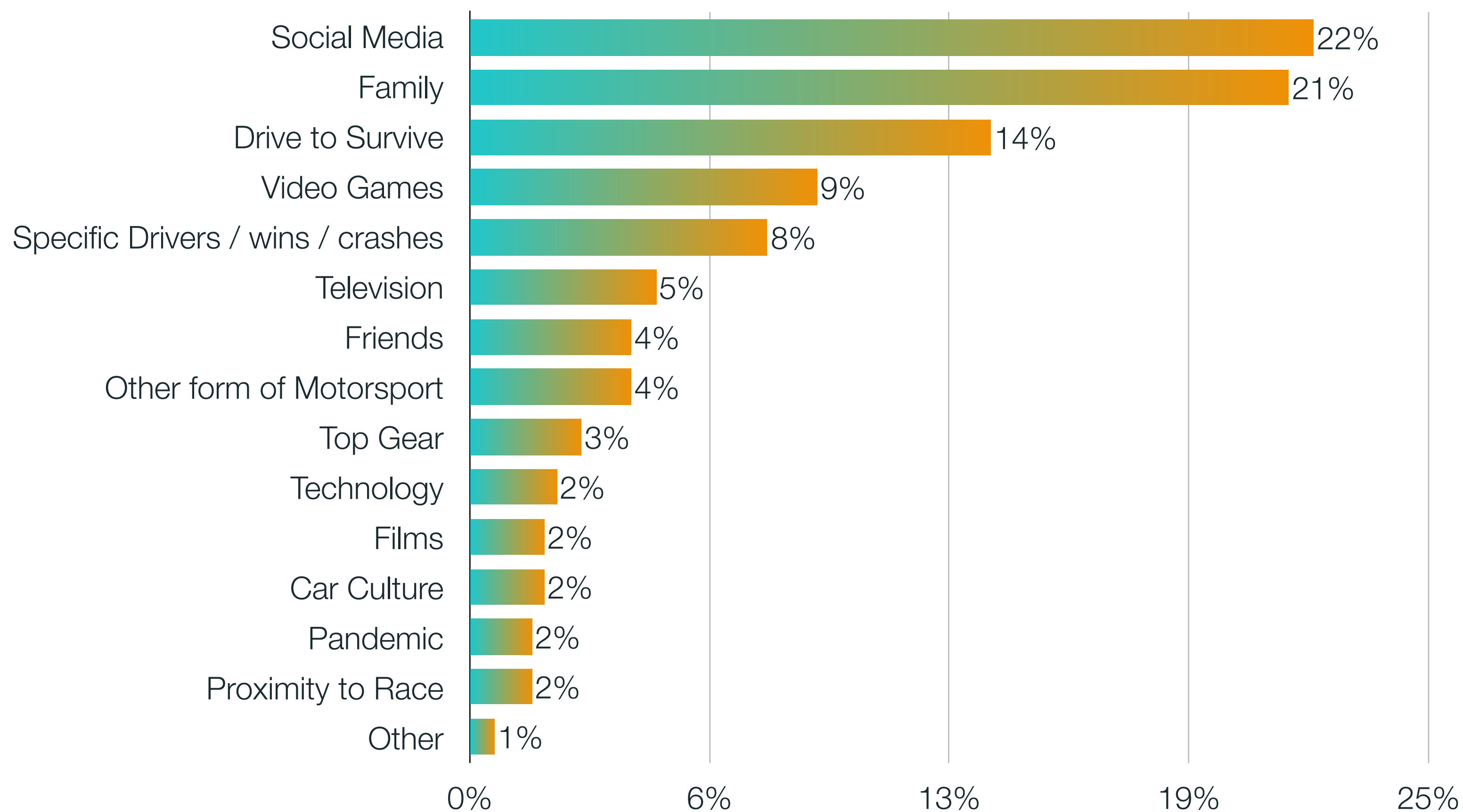


Overall, **family interest and social media content** were more powerful factors in attracting someone into becoming interested in F1.

Although many people cited Drive to Survive as getting them into the sport, we found other factors that were more likely to be a part of a new fan's journey into F1.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS MORE IMPACTFUL THAN DRIVE TO SURVIVE

THE SHOW PLACES THIRD AS A ROUTE FOR LEADING NEW FANS INTO THE SPORT



F1 content on social media is the most powerful factor in creating new fans.

In particular, algorithmic recommendations on YouTube pull in audiences by showing team radio clips, race highlights, and historical documentaries.

Drive to Survive is the third most powerful gateway to F1 fandom after social media and the influence of family members.

THE DRIVE TO SURVIVE BACKLASH

SOME FANS DON'T SEE THE SHOW AS A TRUE REPRESENTATION OF F1

There's a vocal section of F1 fandom who don't regard Drive to Survive as legitimate behind-the-scenes document at all; feeling that events are manipulated and curated to create compelling stories that don't really reflect the racing world, much like reality TV shows such as Real Housewives or Keeping Up With The Kardashians. In 2022, there were 1,680 uses of the hashtag #BoycottDTS due to perceived manipulation of events to create compelling storylines.



Blue

09/15/2023 8:21 AM

Drive to Survive distorts reality in favour of drama which is completely manufactured and can put drivers in a bad light when it's completely undeserved



@VarunKumar-ro4ll

2 years ago

DTS has done a great deal attracting new fans and I can't blame them too much for twisting the facts and spicing up situations that were not a big deal irl [...] everything you watch on DTS, watch it with a pinch of salt [...] people have to learn to differentiate between reality TV drama and an actual sport.



@ahmed_baokbah

9,272 followers

Lando Norris basically showing how Netflix and Drive to survive is using F1 drivers radios in places not been said to attract people who were never interested in the sport by making sounds dramatic like some reality tv show .



8:57 PM · Feb 20, 2023 · 746.6K Views

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT IS NOW THE MOST POWERFUL GATEWAY TO FORMULA 1 FANDOM

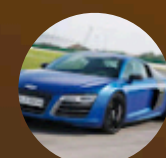
02

NEW FANS DRAWN INTO F1 VIA THE ALGORITHM

YOUTUBE & TIKTOK CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS HOOK LARGE NUMBERS OF NEW FANS

'I got sucked into F1 via the algorithm' is one of the most commonly cited routes into the sport in online conversation. New fans are frequently served content like team radio, race highlights, memes, crashes/dramatic race moments and details about car aerodynamics.

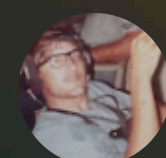
Viral YouTube clips of Grosjean's crash in 2020 drew people to Formula 1 for weeks and months after the event, as fans describe the YouTube algorithm suggesting clips of the crash as a key moment that piqued their interest and drew them to the sport for the first time.



@junjun-wt3wc

2 years ago (edited)

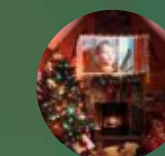
Everyone seems to have really nice stories about how they got into F1 involving their parents grandparents or some experience of their own. I however, got into F1 because of the team radio clips recommended to me by YouTube



@jamesshiffer6265

2 years ago

I actually got into it again because of YouTube in 2018 watching a race recap from there I spiralled down the rabbit's hole to watch Raikkonen's greatest moments as well as Seb & Raikkonen [...]



@5-16

5-16

The same thing happened to me and now I'm a fan. You don't decide to get into F1, it chooses you

2661 Likes 28 Replies



@reddogalicious

5-16

The algorithm made me a fan. I had no say.

161 Likes



@Henry.mcc

5-16

Why tf is TikTok trying so hard to make me an F1 fan like I don't have anything against it but the videos are non-stop. I don't interact with them or anything yet they just keep coming

11.2K Likes 338 Comments



DRIVE TO SURVIVE IGNITES WAVE OF CONTENT CREATORS

INSPIRES AN ECO-SYSTEM OF CONTENT THAT HELPS SUSTAIN F1'S NEW AUDIENCE



[P1 with Matt and Tommy](#)



[Pitstop Podcast](#)



[lissiemackintosh](#)

The biggest impact that Drive to Survive has had on F1 is arguably the wave of content creators it inspired. Coupled with the timing of the pandemic, the show caused a generation of fans to start creating their own F1 reactions and coverage ... and even earn a living from it, something that was previously the domain of a small number of F1 journalists and broadcasters.

Since the show's first season, hundreds of YouTube channels and podcasts have launched dedicated to F1, often communicating in more relatable ways to new and younger fans than traditional coverage.

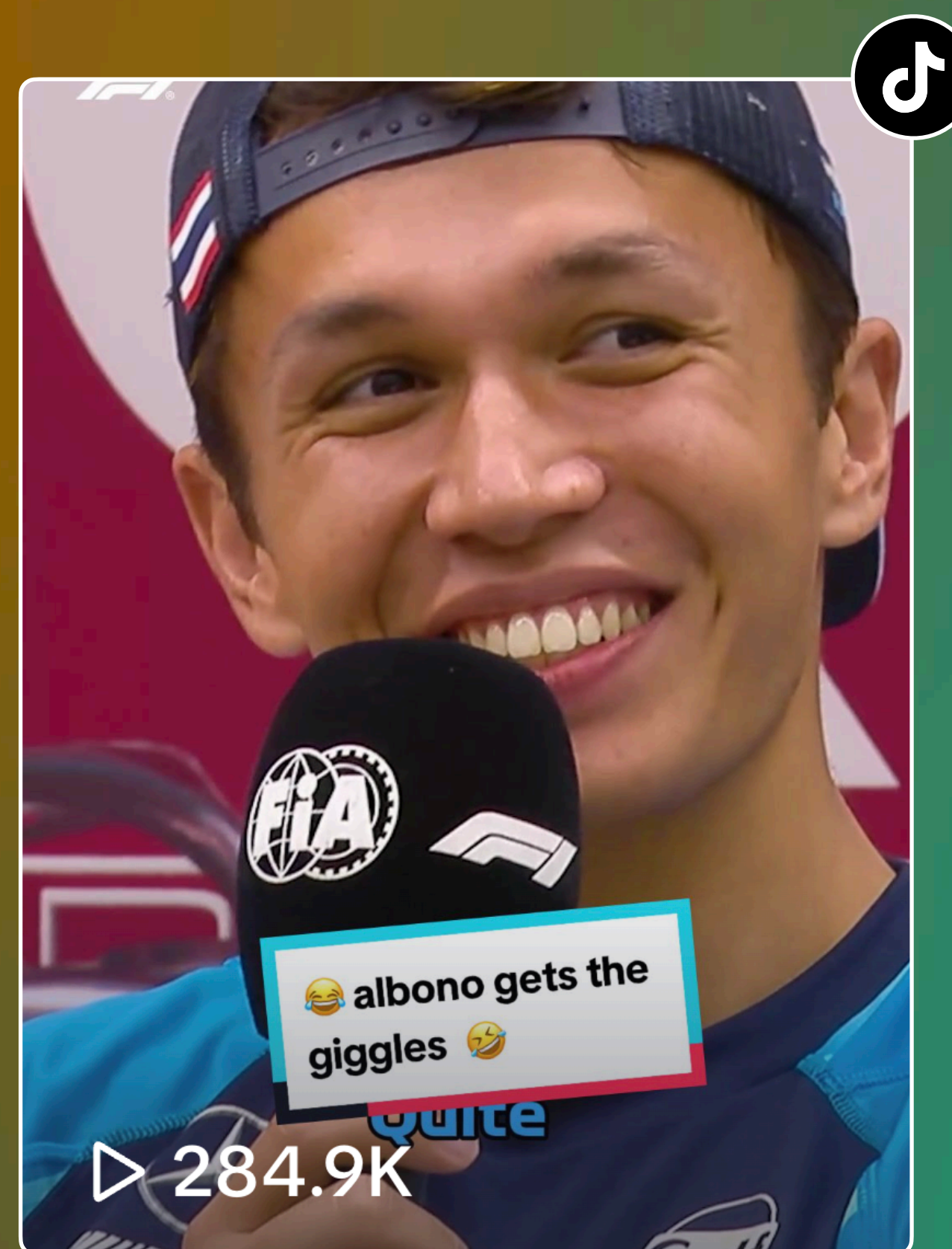
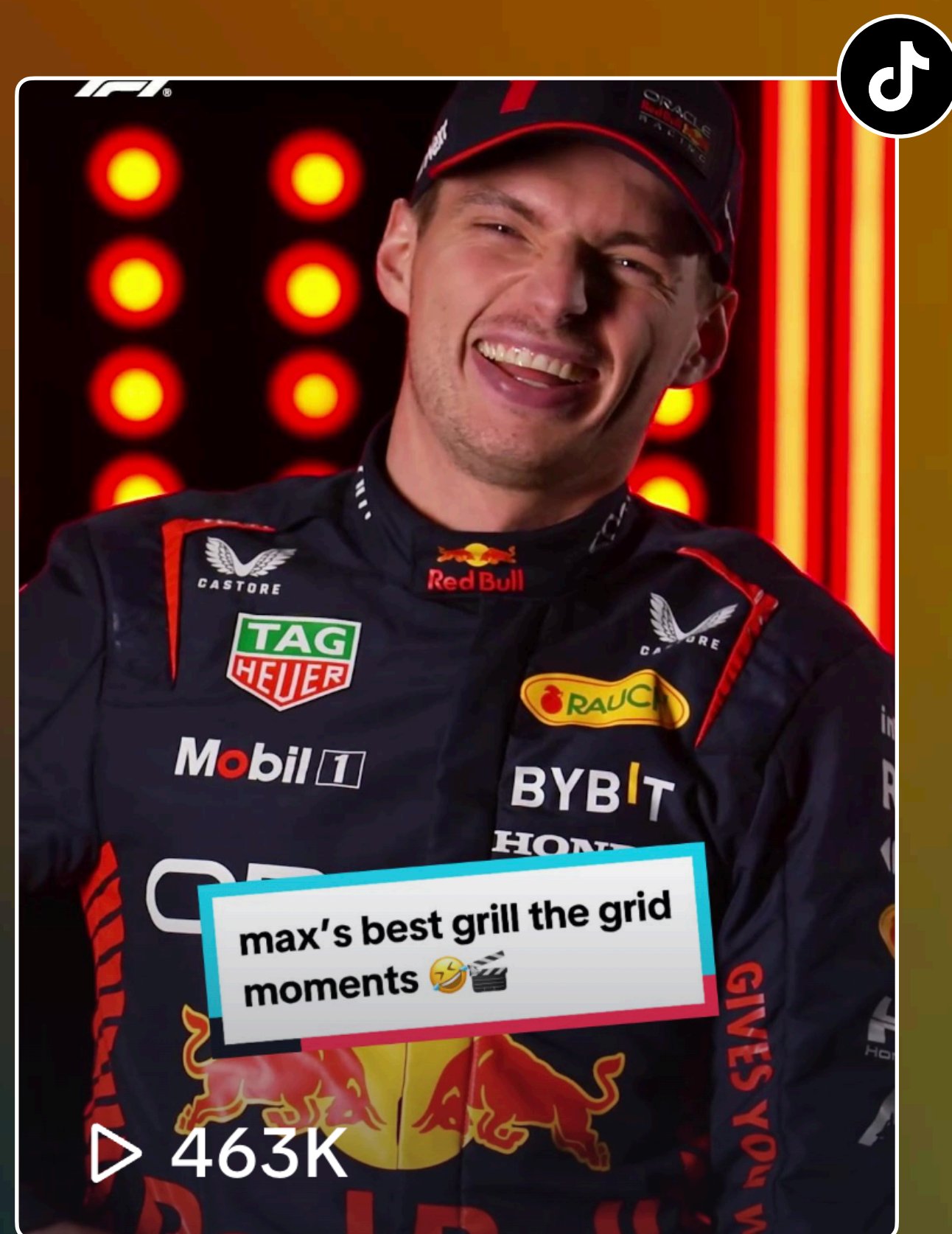
These channels can have an audience comparable to some broadcast channels, often with a much more dedicated following.

This new ecosystem of content helps to sustain F1's new audience, with podcasts and channels having fandoms of their own. It extends the sport's reach considerably, feeding into Formula 1's master audience. The audience for many podcasts and streams has risen to the point that even Drive to Survive itself could almost be considered simply another content strand among hundreds.

OFFICIAL F1 CHANNELS CREATE WAVE OF SOCIAL CONTENT

F1 SOCIAL CONTENT DRAWS FANS ON YOUTUBE, INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK

67 million people now follow the official F1 social accounts, while a further 139 million follow the current 20 drivers, and 166 million follow the 10 constructor accounts. The success is a result of F1's willingness to follow the culture change of DTS, making relatable, behind the scenes content that showcases driver personalities.



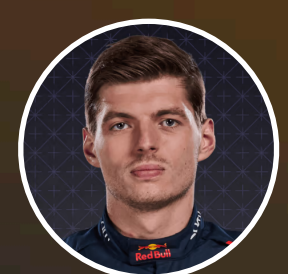
YOUNG DRIVERS CONNECT WITH FANS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

ONLINE DRIVER PRESENCE HELPS DRAW IN THE YOUNGER FANBASE

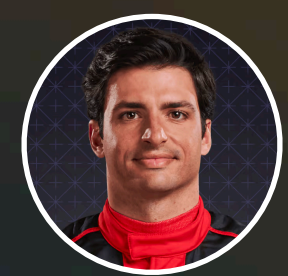
“Lando is not much older than me, it feels like they [the drivers] are approachable,” an 18 year old American fan explained about how he views F1 drivers. “They seem funny and cool like you could hang out with them for a day, like someone you could be friends with.” ([Source](#)). Lando Norris, the most popular among female fans and all fans under age 25, explained that he uses his social media to give people a look “behind-the-scenes” and “give people something that they don’t see with many other drivers.” ([Source](#))

“I was drawn in by the drivers,” a 24-year-old American fan said. “The young ones are relatable, they’re changing things up. Max, Charles, George, Lando, they are my generation. They are on social media, TikTok; you feel like you know them and that through them you know the sport.” ([Source](#))

INTRODUCTION OF YOUNG DRIVERS BY SEASON:



[Max Verstappen](#)
17 Years



[Carlos Sainz](#)
20 Years



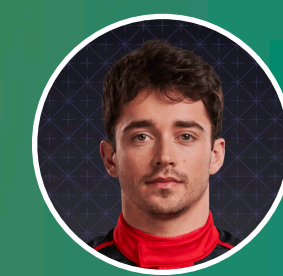
[Esteban Ocon](#)
19 Years



[Pierre Gasly](#)
21 Years



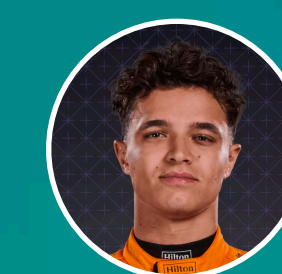
[Lance Stroll](#)
18 Years



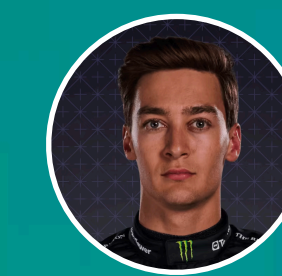
[Charles Leclerc](#)
20 Years



[Alexander Albon](#)
22 Years



[Lando Norris](#)
19 Years



[George Russell](#)
21 Years

2015

2016

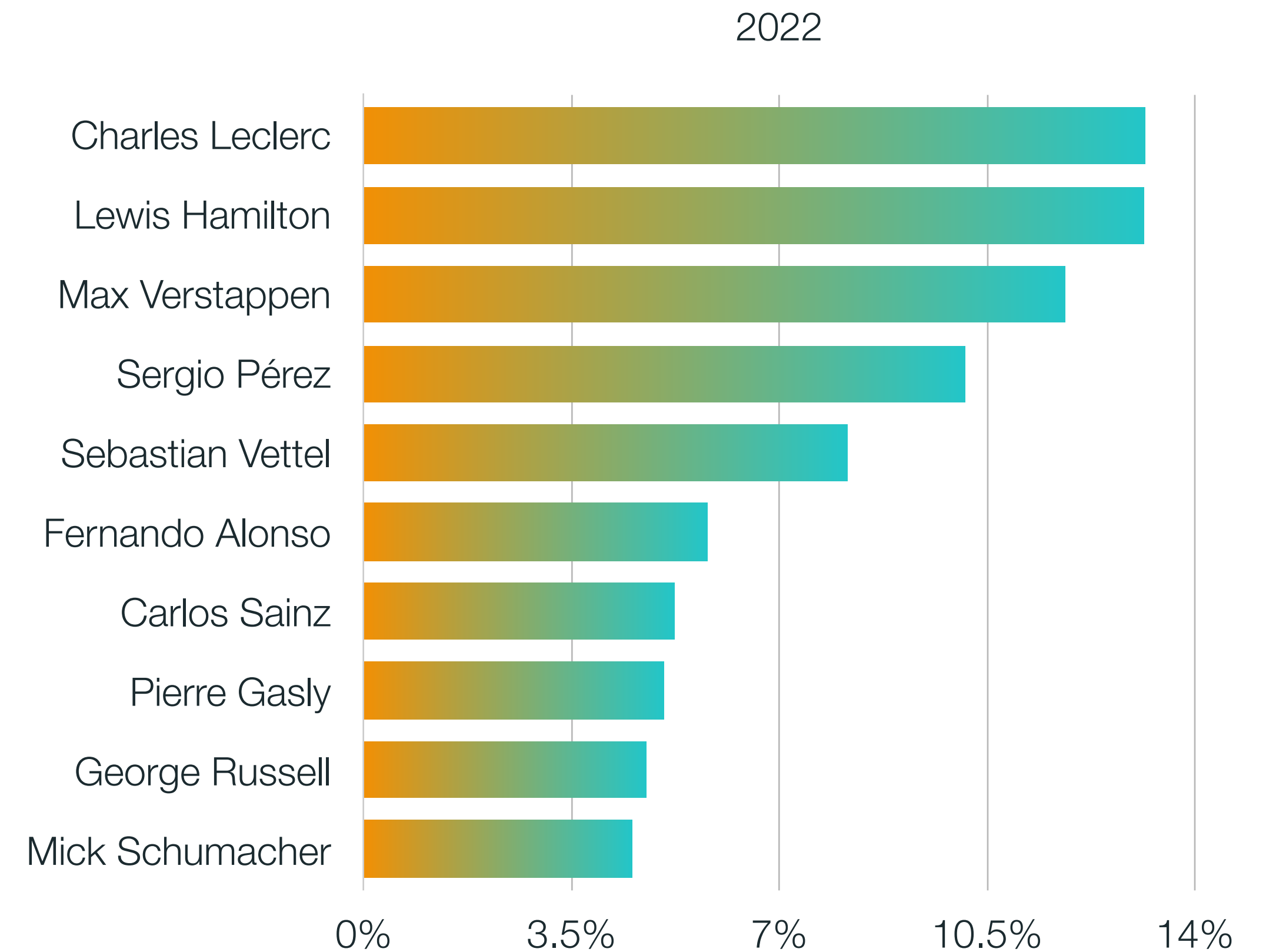
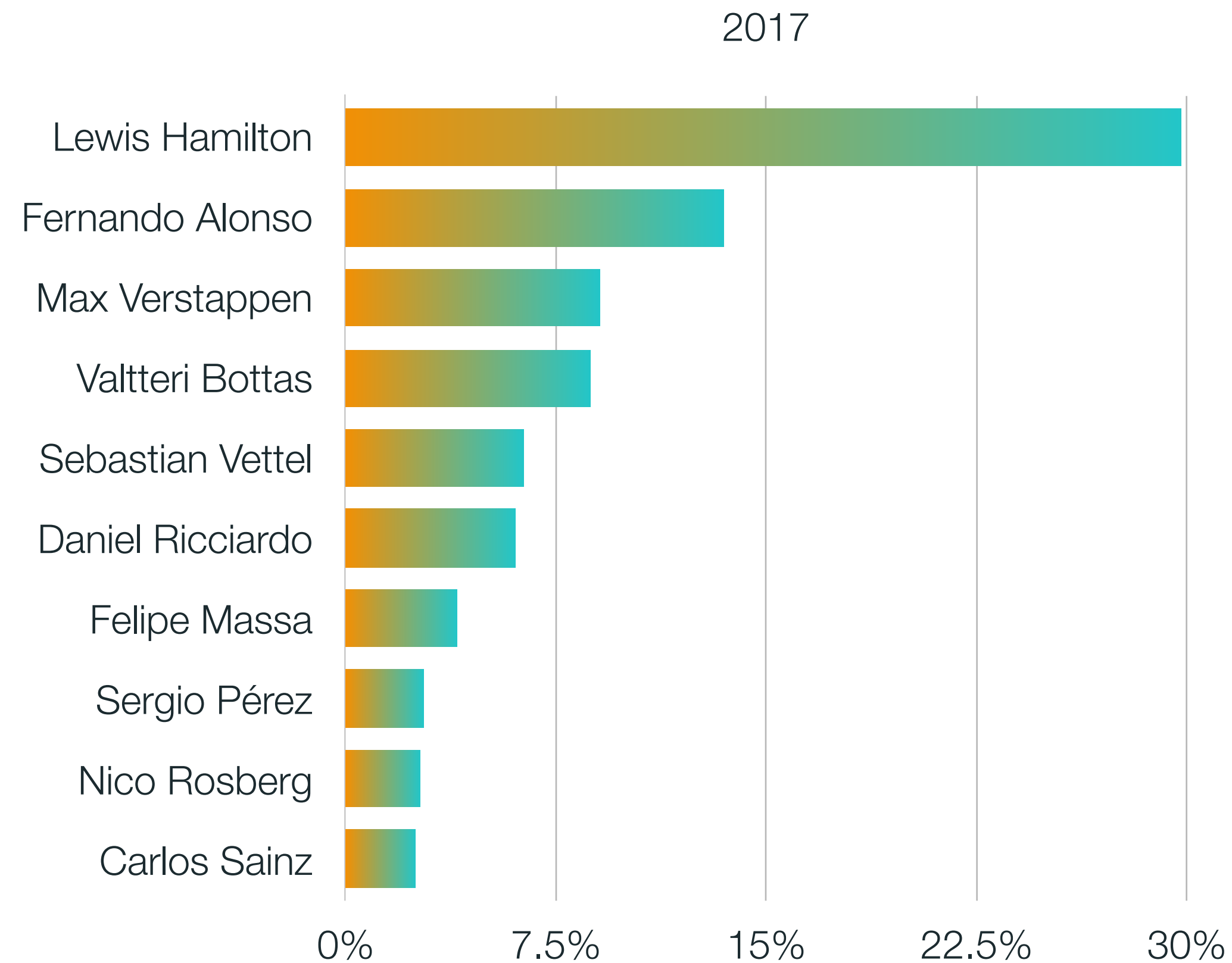
2017

2018

2019

WHICH DRIVERS ARE TALKED ABOUT THE MOST?

HOW THE LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

OUR NEXT REPORT,
"THE DRAMATIC CHANGE IN F1'S FANBASE"
WILL BE RELEASED SOON.

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MISS OUT BY SIGNING UP BELOW.

SIGN UP NOW

BUZZRADAR

FEBRUARY 2024