Traffic Safety Facts

2020 Data

October 2022 (Revised)

DOT HS 813 326

NHTSA

In this fact sheet for 2020 the information is presented as follows.

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Occupant Protection in Passenger Vehicles

Occupant protection discussed in this fact sheet includes seat belts, car seats for those under 5, and frontal air bags in passenger vehicles. Passenger vehicles consist of passenger cars and light trucks (pickups, SUVs, and vans) with gross vehicle weight ratings (GVWRs) of 10,000 pounds or less. Vehicle occupants include drivers and passengers.

Key Findings

- Fifty-one percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 2020 were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).
- In traffic crashes in 2020, considering known driver restraint use by passenger vehicle type, 61 percent of pickup drivers who were killed were unrestrained, compared to 52 percent of SUV drivers, 47 percent of passenger car drivers, and 44 percent of van drivers.
- Sixty-one percent (based on known restraint use) of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in the 25-to-34 age group in 2020 traffic crashes were unrestrained — the highest percentage of all age groups in this report.
- In traffic crashes in 2020, among male fatalities with known restraint use, 55 percent were unrestrained; among female fatalities with known restraint use, 43 percent were unrestrained.
- In 2020 among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities with known restraint use, 50 percent seated in the front row and 59 percent of those in the second row were unrestrained.
- Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in fatal crashes in 2020 with known restraint use, 44 percent were unrestrained during the day compared to 58 percent at night.

This fact sheet contains information on fatal motor vehicle crashes and fatalities based on data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). Refer to the end of this publication for more information on FARS.

A motor vehicle traffic crash is defined as an incident that involved one or more motor vehicles in transport that originated on a public trafficway, such as a road or highway. Crashes that occurred on private property, including parking lots and driveways, are excluded. The terms "motor vehicle traffic crash" and "traffic crash" are used interchangeably.

Overview

According to NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) for 2020 (Report No. DOT HS 813 072), the estimated seat belt use rate over the decade 2011 to 2020 increased from 83.8 percent in 2011 to 90.3 percent in 2020. NOPUS provides the only nationwide probability-based estimate of observed seat belt use in the United States.

It is based on the observation of front seat occupant (driver and passenger) seat belt use during daylight hours (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.), and does not necessarily represent restraint use among occupants involved in crashes.

Restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes from 2011 to 2020 is shown in Table 1. There were 38,824 traffic fatalities in the United States in 2020, of which 23,824 (61%) were occupants of passenger vehicles. Of the 23,824 passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020, there were 10,483 (44%) who were restrained and 10,893 (46%) who were unrestrained at the time of the crashes. Restraint use was not known for the remaining 2,448 (10%) occupants. Considering only passenger vehicle occupant fatalities whose restraint use was known, 49 percent were restrained and 51 percent were unrestrained. The number of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020 is the highest it has been in that 10-year period.

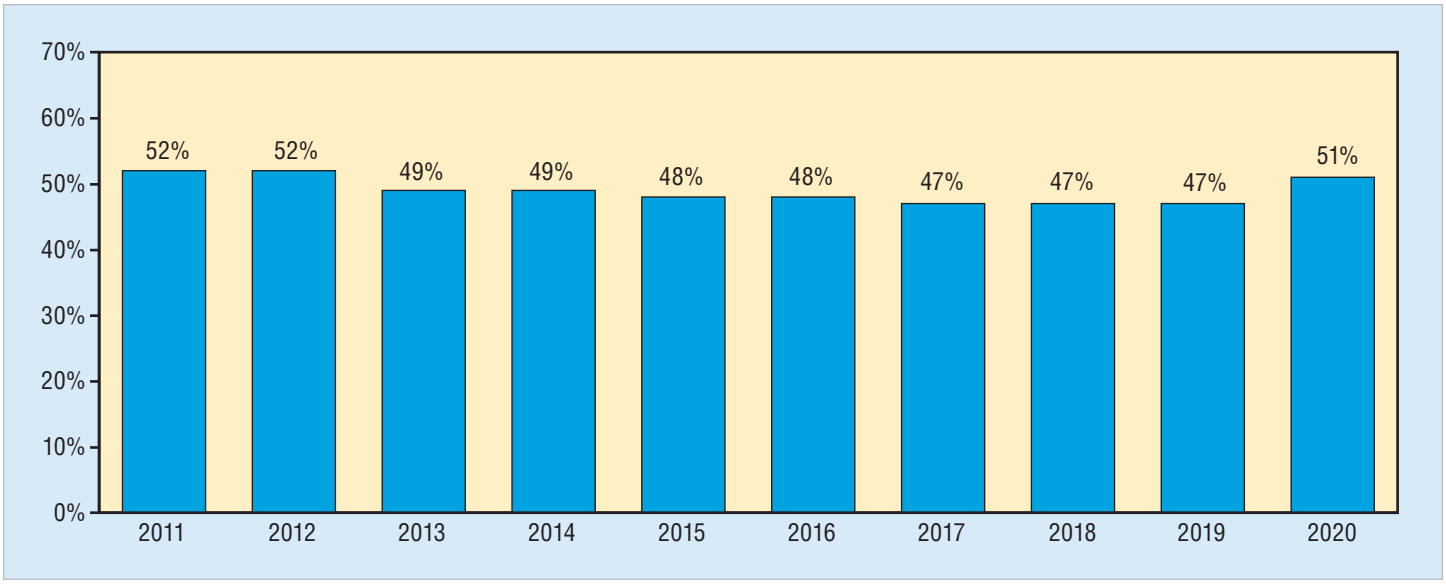
Table 1
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Restraint Use, 2011–2020

	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
Year	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
2011	9,471	44%	10,215	48%	1,630	8%	21,316	100%	48%	52%
2012	9,746	45%	10,370	48%	1,663	8%	21,779	100%	48%	52%
2013	9,840	46%	9,622	45%	1,761	8%	21,223	100%	51%	49%
2014	9,961	47%	9,410	45%	1,679	8%	21,050	100%	51%	49%
2015	10,763	48%	9,975	44%	1,903	8%	22,641	100%	52%	48%
2016	11,343	48%	10,463	44%	1,981	8%	23,787	100%	52%	48%
2017	11,488	49%	10,116	43%	2,059	9%	23,663	100%	53%	47%
2018	11,055	48%	9,845	43%	1,945	9%	22,845	100%	53%	47%
2019	10,891	49%	9,523	43%	1,958	9%	22,372	100%	53%	47%
2020	10,483	44%	10,893	46%	2,448	10%	23,824	100%	49%	51%

Source: FARS 2011–2019 Final File, 2020 Annual Report File (ARF)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.

The percentages of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes are shown in Figure 1. Among passenger vehicle occupants killed, when restraint use was known, the percentage of unrestrained deaths increased by 4 percentage points, from 47 percent in 2019 to 51 percent in 2020.

Figure 1
Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, 2011–2020



Source: FARS 2011–2019 Final File, 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Occupant Characteristics

Passenger Vehicle Types

Table 2 shows fatalities separately for drivers and passengers for each passenger vehicle type. Seventy-six percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020 were drivers, and 24 percent were passengers.

In 2020 there were 18,110 passenger vehicle drivers killed in traffic crashes, the majority (56%) in passenger cars. Among the 16,321 passenger vehicle driver fatalities for whom restraint use was known, 51 percent were unrestrained. However, the percentage of drivers killed who were unrestrained differed by vehicle type: 61 percent of pickup drivers, 52 percent of SUV drivers, 47 percent of passenger car drivers, and 44 percent of van drivers.

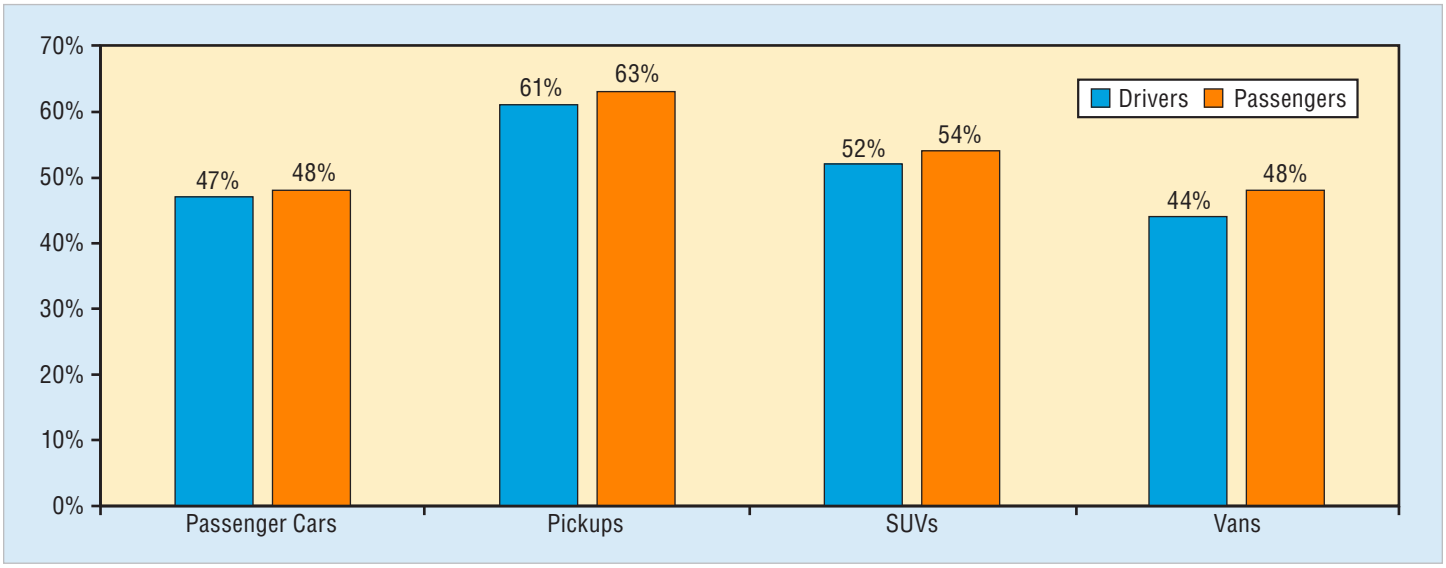
Table 2
Drivers and Passengers Killed, by Passenger Vehicle Type and Restraint Use, 2020

Passenger Vehicle Type		Restraint Use: Restrained Number	Restrained Percent	Unrestrained Number	Unrestrained Percent	Unknown Number	Unknown Percent	Total Number	Total Percent	Percent Based on Known Restraint Use: Restrained	Unrestrained
Drivers Killed	Passenger Car	4,839	48%	4,269	42%	1,067	10%	10,175	100%	53%	47%
	Light Truck*	3,197	40%	4,016	51%	722	9%	7,935	100%	44%	56%
	–Pickup	1,248	35%	1,988	56%	286	8%	3,522	100%	39%	61%
	–SUV	1,632	43%	1,771	47%	375	10%	3,778	100%	48%	52%
	–Van	314	50%	250	40%	61	10%	625	100%	56%	44%
	Total	**8,036**	**44%**	**8,285**	**46%**	**1,789**	**10%**	**18,110**	**100%**	**49%**	**51%**
Passengers Killed	Passenger Car	1,507	46%	1,383	42%	407	12%	3,297	100%	52%	48%
	Light Truck*	940	39%	1,225	51%	252	10%	2,417	100%	43%	57%
	–Pickup	264	33%	453	56%	91	11%	808	100%	37%	63%
	–SUV	533	41%	634	49%	130	10%	1,297	100%	46%	54%
	–Van	143	46%	134	44%	31	10%	308	100%	52%	48%
	Total	**2,447**	**43%**	**2,608**	**46%**	**659**	**12%**	**5,714**	**100%**	**48%**	**52%**

Source: FARS 2020 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes other/unknown light-truck vehicle types.

There were 5,714 passengers killed in passenger vehicles in 2020; fifty-eight percent were riding in passenger cars. Among the 5,055 passengers killed in passenger vehicles for whom restraint use was known, 52 percent were unrestrained, but use varied by vehicle type: 63 percent of passengers killed in pickups were unrestrained, compared to 54 percent in SUVs, 48 percent in vans, and 48 percent in passenger cars. Figure 2 compares the percentage of known unrestrained drivers killed versus passengers killed for each passenger vehicle type.

Figure 2
Percentages of Unrestrained* Drivers and Passengers Killed, by Passenger Vehicle Type, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Age and Sex

Information on restraint use by age group for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020 is shown in Table 3. Among those where restraint use was known, the 25-to-34 and 21-to-24 age groups had the highest percentages of unrestrained occupants (61% and 60%), followed by the 35-to-44 age group at 58 percent unrestrained. These percentages are shown in Figure 3.

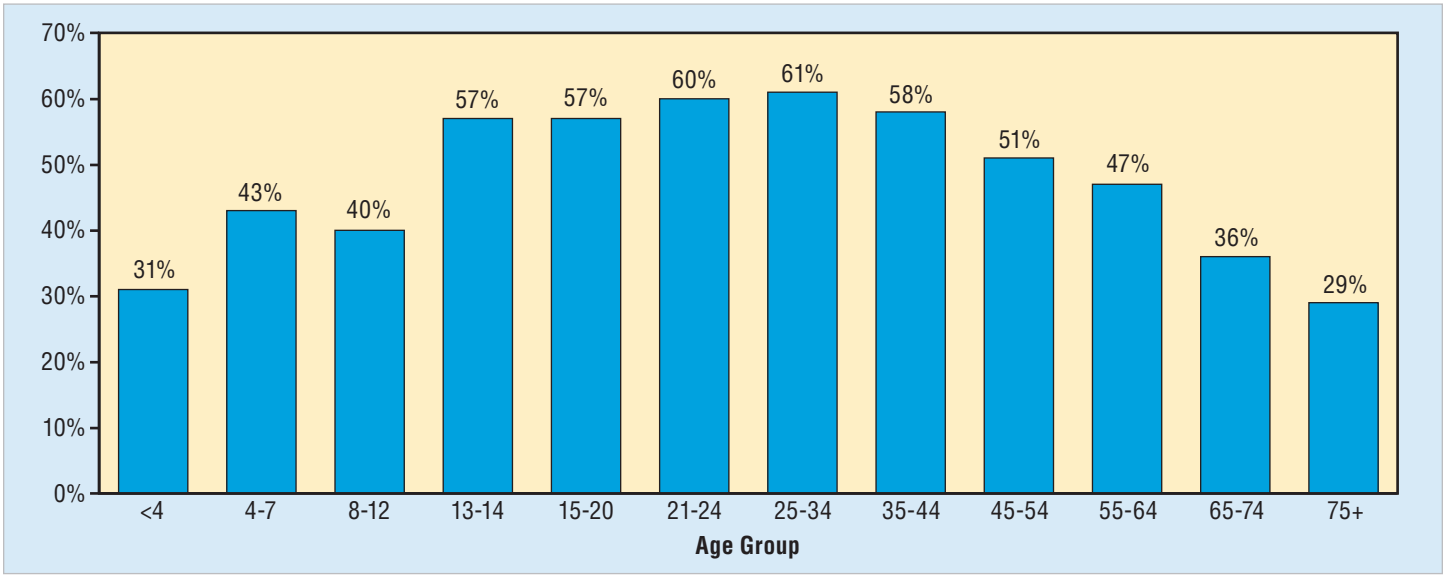
Table 3
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Age Group and Restraint Use, 2020

Age Group	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
<4	114	63%	52	29%	15	8%	181	100%	69%	31%
4–7	106	51%	80	39%	21	10%	207	100%	57%	43%
8–12	118	54%	79	36%	22	10%	219	100%	60%	40%
13–14	56	38%	75	51%	17	11%	148	100%	43%	57%
15–20	1,002	38%	1,325	50%	298	11%	2,625	100%	43%	57%
21–24	807	35%	1,215	52%	312	13%	2,334	100%	40%	60%
25–34	1,629	34%	2,553	53%	601	13%	4,783	100%	39%	61%
35–44	1,283	38%	1,748	52%	337	10%	3,368	100%	42%	58%
45–54	1,196	44%	1,233	45%	285	11%	2,714	100%	49%	51%
55–64	1,378	49%	1,199	43%	233	8%	2,810	100%	53%	47%
65–74	1,271	60%	706	33%	148	7%	2,125	100%	64%	36%
75+	1,502	67%	601	27%	143	6%	2,246	100%	71%	29%
Total*	**10,483**	**44%**	**10,893**	**46%**	**2,448**	**10%**	**23,824**	**100%**	**49%**	**51%**

Source: FARS 2020 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes passenger vehicle occupants of unknown age.

In 2020 there were 181 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities among children under 4 years old, and 31 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use). In the 4-to-7 age group, there were 207 fatalities; 43 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).

Figure 3
Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Age Group, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

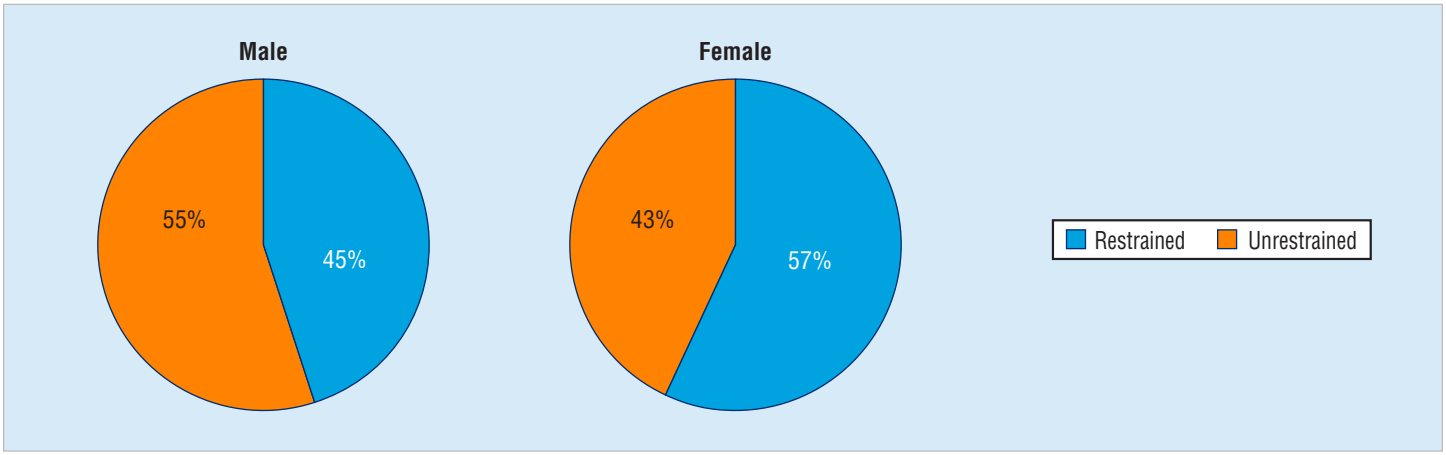
Nearly twice as many male occupants (15,863) as female occupants (7,934) in passenger vehicles were killed in 2020, as shown in Table 4. When restraint use was known, 55 percent of the males killed and 43 percent of the females killed were unrestrained (Figure 4). Restraint use was unknown for 11 percent of male occupant fatalities and 9 percent of the female occupant fatalities.

Table 4
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Sex and Restraint Use, 2020

Sex	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
Male	6,365	40%	7,777	49%	1,721	11%	15,863	100%	45%	55%
Female	4,110	52%	3,106	39%	718	9%	7,934	100%	57%	43%
Total*	**10,483**	**44%**	**10,893**	**46%**	**2,448**	**10%**	**23,824**	**100%**	**49%**	**51%**

Source: FARS 2020 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes passenger vehicle occupants of unknown sex.

Figure 4
Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Sex and Restraint Use*, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Seating Position

Restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020, by their seating position, is shown in Table 5. Among killed occupants with known restraint use, 50 percent of those in the front row and 59 percent of those in the second row were unrestrained.

Table 5

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Seating Position and Restraint Use, 2020

Seating Position		Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
Front Row	**Total**	**9,855**	**45%**	**9,793**	**45%**	**2,159**	**10%**	**21,807**	**100%**	**50%**	**50%**
	Left (Driver)	8,038	44%	8,293	46%	1,790	10%	18,121	100%	49%	51%
	Middle	9	29%	15	48%	7	23%	31	100%	38%	63%
	Right	1,807	50%	1,475	41%	358	10%	3,640	100%	55%	45%
	Other/Unknown	1	7%	10	67%	4	27%	15	100%	9%	91%
Second Row	**Total**	**587**	**36%**	**857**	**53%**	**181**	**11%**	**1,625**	**100%**	**41%**	**59%**
	Left	256	38%	346	51%	74	11%	676	100%	43%	57%
	Middle	52	27%	127	66%	13	7%	192	100%	29%	71%
	Right	271	38%	348	49%	85	12%	704	100%	44%	56%
	Other/Unknown	8	15%	36	68%	9	17%	53	100%	18%	82%
Other*		21	13%	118	74%	21	13%	160	100%	15%	85%
Unknown		20	9%	125	54%	87	38%	232	100%	14%	86%
Total		**10,483**	**44%**	**10,893**	**46%**	**2,448**	**10%**	**23,824**	**100%**	**49%**	**51%**

Source: FARS 2020 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes additional rows, cargo areas, trailing units, and vehicle exteriors.

Restraint Use and Benefits

Seat Belts

Looking at all passenger vehicle occupants (those who were killed as well as those who survived) in fatal crashes in 2020 with known restraint use:

- 29 percent were unrestrained at the time of the crashes (Table 6);
- 26 percent were unrestrained during the day; and
- 33 percent were unrestrained at night.

For those passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use who survived fatal crashes in 2020:

- During daytime, 14 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who survived fatal crashes were unrestrained; and
- 18 percent of crash survivors were unrestrained during nighttime.

Table 6

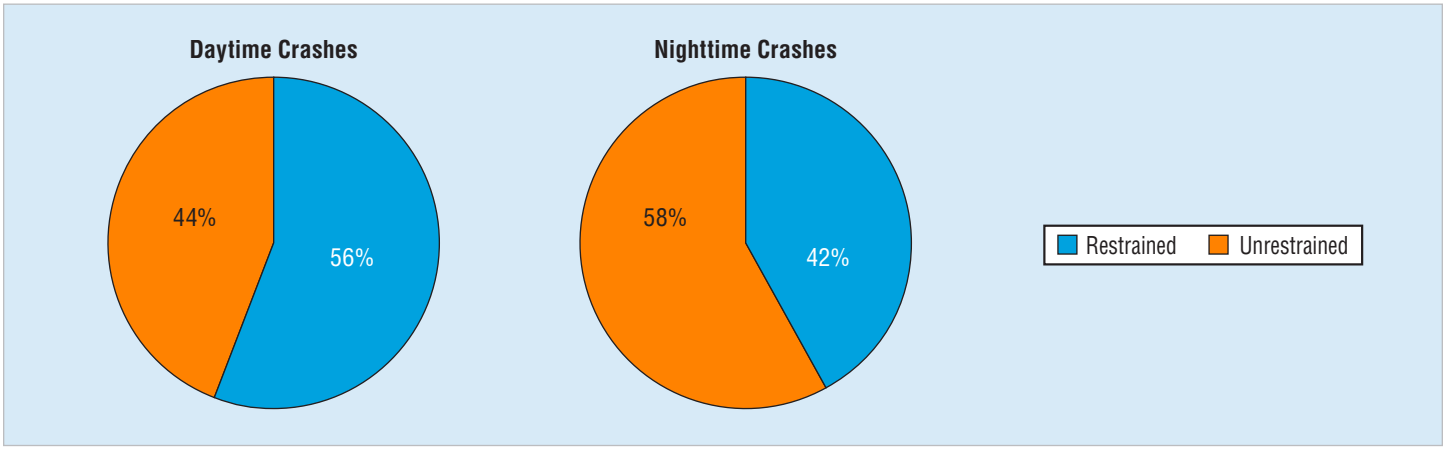
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Survival Status, Time of Day, and Restraint Use, 2020

Survival Status/ Time of Day		Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
Killed	Daytime	6,113	52%	4,740	40%	934	8%	11,787	100%	56%	44%
	Nighttime	4,319	36%	6,034	51%	1,493	13%	11,846	100%	42%	58%
	Unknown	51	27%	119	62%	21	11%	191	100%	30%	70%
	Total	**10,483**	**44%**	**10,893**	**46%**	**2,448**	**10%**	**23,824**	**100%**	**49%**	**51%**
Survived	Daytime	14,464	79%	2,334	13%	1,448	8%	18,246	100%	86%	14%
	Nighttime	14,517	72%	3,131	16%	2,447	12%	20,095	100%	82%	18%
	Unknown	37	47%	23	29%	18	23%	78	100%	62%	38%
	Total	**29,018**	**76%**	**5,488**	**14%**	**3,913**	**10%**	**38,419**	**100%**	**84%**	**16%**
Total	Daytime	20,577	69%	7,074	24%	2,382	8%	30,033	100%	74%	26%
	Nighttime	18,836	59%	9,165	29%	3,940	12%	31,941	100%	67%	33%
	Unknown	88	33%	142	53%	39	14%	269	100%	38%	62%
	Total	**39,501**	**63%**	**16,381**	**26%**	**6,361**	**10%**	**62,243**	**100%**	**71%**	**29%**

Source: FARS 2020 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
Daytime – 6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.; Nighttime – 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.

Among passenger vehicle occupants killed in fatal crashes in 2020 with known restraint use, the percentages of unrestrained fatalities during daytime was 44 percent compared to 58 percent during nighttime (Figure 5).

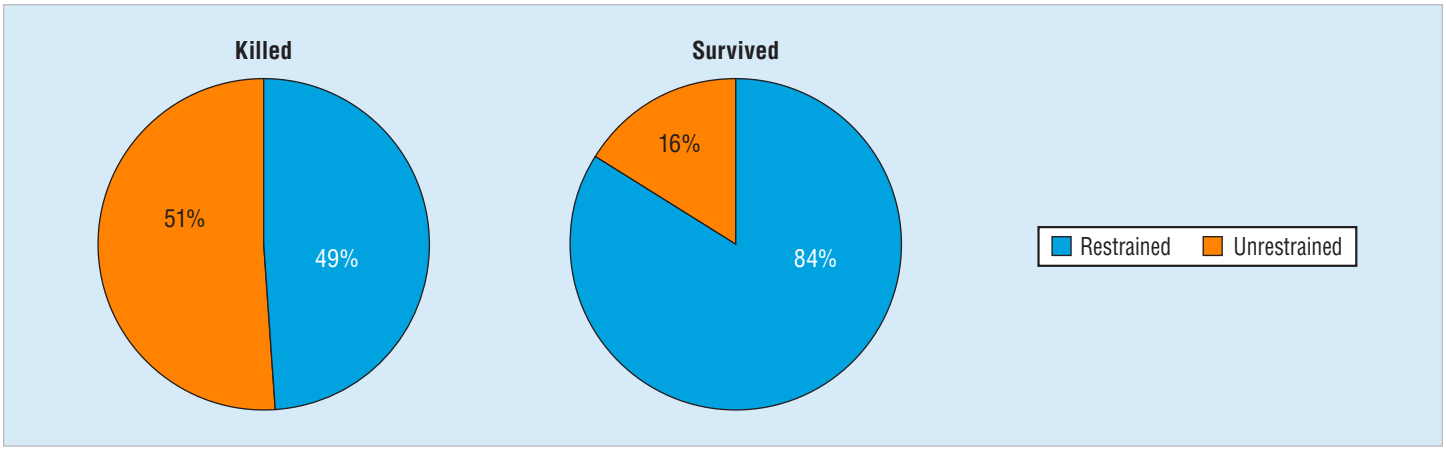
Figure 5
Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Time of Day and Restraint Use*, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

For passenger vehicle occupants involved in fatal crashes in 2020, over half (51%) of those who were killed were unrestrained in the crashes, compared to only 16 percent of those who survived (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Survival Status and Restraint Use*, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Ejection from the vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. In NHTSA's FARS data, ejection refers to occupants being totally or partially thrown from the vehicles. In 2020 crashes based on known restraint use, 82 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from vehicles were killed. Seat belts are very effective in preventing total ejections; in 2020 only 1 percent of all passenger vehicle occupants (those killed as well as survivors) in fatal crashes reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected, compared to 26 percent of those unrestrained.

The safety benefits of seat belt use are significant and well-documented. Seat belts help keep occupants inside vehicles and also prevent them from becoming projectiles inside the vehicle and hurting others. NHTSA has estimated that lap/shoulder seat belts, when used, reduce the risk of:

- fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent;
- moderate-to-critical injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 50 percent;

- fatal injury to front-seat light-truck occupants by 60 percent; and
- moderate-to-critical injury to front-seat light-truck occupants by 65 percent (Kahane, 2015; NHTSA, 1984).

Among passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older, seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives in 2017 (latest data available), as shown in Table 7. If all passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older had worn seat belts, 17,504 lives (that is, an additional 2,549) could have been saved in 2017. From 1975, when NHTSA's FARS database began, through 2017, seat belts have saved an estimated 374,276 lives. If all passengers had worn seat belts during these years, a total of 760,994 (that is, an additional 386,719 lives) could have been saved. The estimated number of lives saved by child restraints, seat belts, and frontal air bags, as well as the additional lives who could have been saved at 100-percent seat belt use, are available for each State in the Crash*Stat *Lives Saved in 2017 by Restraint Use and Minimum Drinking Age Laws* (Report No. DOT 812 683).

Table 7

Estimated Number of Lives Saved in Passenger Vehicles, by Restraint System, 1975–2017

Restraint System	1975-2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Frontal Air Bags	25,294	2,557	2,481	2,403	2,341	2,422	2,398	2,400	2,597	2,774	2,790	**50,457**
Child Restraints (age 4 and younger)	8,884	262	281	286	245	267	246	236	255	319	325	**11,606**
Seat Belts (age 5+)	241,865	13,312	12,757	12,670	12,071	12,386	12,644	12,801	14,062	14,753	14,955	**374,276**
Lives Savable at 100% Seat Belt Use	597,558	17,482	16,447	16,026	15,467	15,416	15,415	15,678	16,777	17,224	17,504	**760,994**
Additional Lives That Could Have Been Saved at 100% Seat Belt Use	355,693	4,171	3,690	3,356	3,396	3,030	2,771	2,877	2,715	2,471	2,549	**386,719**

Source: *Lives Saved in 2017 by Restraint Use and Minimum Drinking Age Laws* (Report No. DOT HS 812 683)

Frontal Air Bags

Frontal air bags, combined with lap/shoulder belts, offer effective safety protection for passenger vehicle occupants. NHTSA analyses indicate frontal air bags reduce fatalities by 14 percent when no seat belts were used, and 11 percent when seat belts were used in conjunction with frontal air bags (Kahane, 2015).

Air bags are supplemental protection and are designed to work in combination with seat belts. In addition, they are not designed to deploy in all crashes. Most are designed to inflate in moderate-to-severe frontal crashes. Some crashes at lower speeds may result in injuries, but generally not the serious injuries that air bags are designed to prevent. Lap/shoulder belts should always be used, even in vehicles with air bags.

In 2017 (latest data available) an estimated 2,790 lives were saved by frontal air bags. From 1987, when front air bags were first widely adopted in production vehicles, through 2017, a total of 50,457 lives were saved, as shown in Table 7.

Child Restraints

NHTSA has estimated that car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (younger than 1 year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (1 to 4 years old) in passenger cars. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the corresponding reductions are 58 percent and 59 percent (Kahane, 2015).

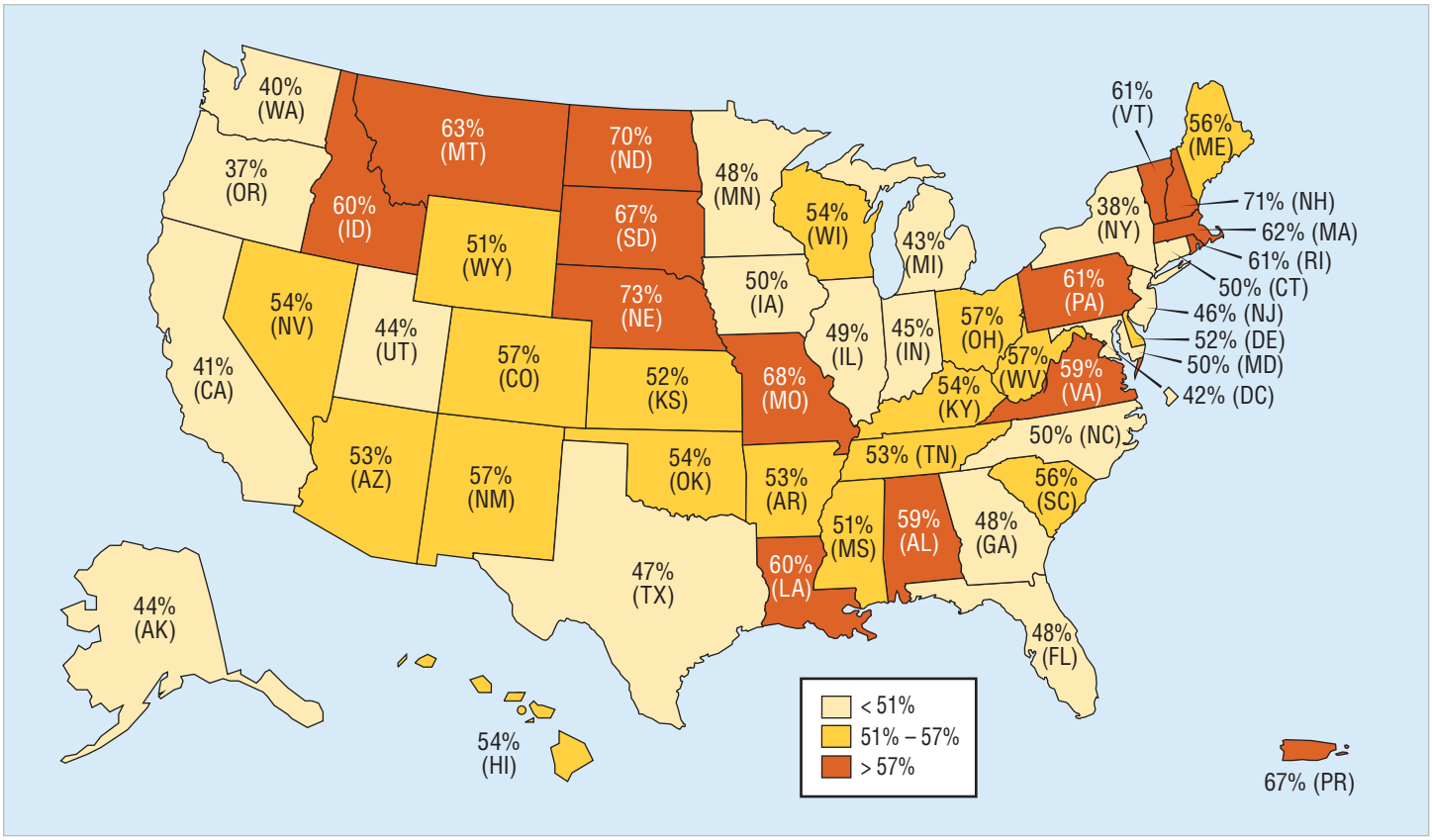
Among children under 5, an estimated 325 lives were saved in 2017 by restraint use. Of these 325 lives saved, an estimated 312 were associated with the use of car seats and 14 with the use of adult seat belts. At 100-percent car seat use for those under 5 years old, an estimated 371 (that is, an additional 46) lives could have been saved in 2017. Since 1975 there have been 11,606 lives of children under age 5 saved because of child restraint use.

State

Figure 7 shows the percentages of the known unrestrained use of passenger vehicle occupants killed in each State for 2020. Table 8 shows seat belt use information for passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2020 by State. Also in Table 8 are observed seat belt use rates in the States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. These results were obtained from NOPUS by observing occupants in traffic on roads at selected sites.

Figure 7

Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by State, 2020



Source: FARS 2020 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Table 8

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by State, Restraint Use, and Observed Seat Belt Use Rate, 2020

State	Total Occupants Killed	Restraint Use						Percent Based on Known Use		Observed Seat Belt Use Rate*
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown				
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained	
Alabama	705	263	37%	384	54%	58	8%	41%	59%	92.3%†
Alaska	39	18	46%	14	36%	7	18%	56%	44%	94.1%†
Arizona	507	209	41%	234	46%	64	13%	47%	53%	90.6%†
Arkansas	429	178	41%	204	48%	47	11%	47%	53%	81.9%†
California	2,061	1,105	54%	756	37%	200	10%	59%	41%	96.0%†
Colorado	351	142	40%	190	54%	19	5%	43%	57%	86.3%
Connecticut	168	65	39%	65	39%	38	23%	50%	50%	93.7%†
Delaware	73	32	44%	34	47%	7	10%	48%	52%	92.5%†
District of Columbia	17	7	41%	5	29%	5	29%	58%	42%	95.7%
Florida	1,745	895	51%	816	47%	34	2%	52%	48%	89.8%†
Georgia	1,072	505	47%	465	43%	102	10%	52%	48%	95.9%†
Hawaii	40	11	28%	13	33%	16	40%	46%	54%	97.1%†
Idaho	156	56	36%	85	54%	15	10%	40%	60%	85.7%†
Illinois	776	300	39%	293	38%	183	24%	51%	49%	94.3%†
Indiana	589	272	46%	226	38%	91	15%	55%	45%	94.9%†
Iowa	205	91	44%	91	44%	23	11%	50%	50%	95.2%
Kansas	288	125	43%	134	47%	29	10%	48%	52%	85.0%
Kentucky	541	247	46%	294	54%	0	0%	46%	54%	89.7%†
Louisiana	534	200	37%	298	56%	36	7%	40%	60%	87.5%†
Maine	114	50	44%	64	56%	0	0%	44%	56%	88.5%†
Maryland	322	134	42%	133	41%	55	17%	50%	50%	89.9%
Massachusetts	213	60	28%	98	46%	55	26%	38%	62%	81.6%†
Michigan	670	294	44%	221	33%	155	23%	57%	43%	94.4%†
Minnesota	245	110	45%	100	41%	35	14%	52%	48%	93.4%†
Mississippi	537	221	41%	229	43%	87	16%	49%	51%	79.3%
Missouri	679	197	29%	425	63%	57	8%	32%	68%	86.1%
Montana	151	56	37%	94	62%	1	1%	37%	63%	89.9%
Nebraska	158	37	23%	100	63%	21	13%	27%	73%	80.6%
Nevada	153	63	41%	73	48%	17	11%	46%	54%	94.2%†
New Hampshire	56	15	27%	36	64%	5	9%	29%	71%	72.4%
New Jersey	302	148	49%	126	42%	28	9%	54%	46%	90.2%†
New Mexico	240	98	41%	131	55%	11	5%	43%	57%	91.8%†
New York	518	286	55%	176	34%	56	11%	62%	38%	94.2%†
North Carolina	1,038	501	48%	501	48%	36	3%	50%	50%	87.1%
North Dakota	61	17	28%	39	64%	5	8%	30%	70%	83.7%
Ohio	791	304	38%	395	50%	92	12%	43%	57%	85.9%†
Oklahoma	453	189	42%	220	49%	44	10%	46%	54%	84.7%†
Oregon	295	159	54%	94	32%	42	14%	63%	37%	94.6%
Pennsylvania	669	219	33%	336	50%	114	17%	39%	61%	88.9%
Rhode Island	34	11	32%	17	50%	6	18%	39%	61%	88.3%†
South Carolina	700	296	42%	372	53%	32	5%	44%	56%	90.3%†
South Dakota	91	28	31%	57	63%	6	7%	33%	67%	68.3%
Tennessee	814	351	43%	391	48%	72	9%	47%	53%	91.8%†
Texas	2,430	1,156	48%	1,018	42%	256	11%	53%	47%	90.9%†
Utah	175	84	48%	65	37%	26	15%	56%	44%	90.2%†
Vermont	38	15	39%	23	61%	0	0%	39%	61%	88.8%
Virginia	582	240	41%	340	58%	2	0%	41%	59%	85.4%†
Washington	333	166	50%	111	33%	56	17%	60%	40%	93.0%
West Virginia	177	64	36%	84	47%	29	16%	43%	57%	90.2%†
Wisconsin	399	150	38%	179	45%	70	18%	46%	54%	89.2%
Wyoming	90	43	48%	44	49%	3	3%	49%	51%	82.5%
U.S. Total	**23,824**	**10,483**	**44%**	**10,893**	**46%**	**2,448**	**10%**	**49%**	**51%**	**90.3%****
Puerto Rico	115	38	33%	77	67%	0	0%	33%	67%	84.8%

Sources: FARS 2020 ARF; NOPUS 2020

Notes: Shaded States are those with primary seat belt laws in 2020. Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.

*Observed Seat Belt Use Rates were obtained from probability-based observational surveys conducted by each State, certified by NHTSA.

**From NHTSA's NOPUS. Observations were made of moving traffic, not crashes (refer to NOPUS 2020 in Report No. DOT HS 813 072).

†A waiver enabled States and U.S. Territories to use their 2019 seat belt use rate for their 2020 seat belt use rate.

For more information on State observed seat belt use rates, see the Crash*Stat *Seat Belt Use in 2020—Use Rates in the States and Territories* (Report No. DOT HS 813 109). Note that restraint use (observed data as well as that for occupants killed in traffic crashes) differs considerably by State. Additional information on State seat belts laws, such as the ages and seating positions covered, is available at the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) website at www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/Seat-Belts.

Restraint Use Laws

- The first mandatory seat belt use law was enacted in New York in 1984.
- The first mandatory child restraint use law was implemented in Tennessee in 1978.

Adult seat belt use laws are in effect in 49 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The laws differ from State to State, according to conditions such as the type and age of the vehicle, occupant age, and seating position. The goal of these laws is to promote seat belt use and thereby reduce deaths and injuries in motor vehicle crashes.

In 2020 the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 34 States had primary seat belt laws in effect, enabling law enforcement officers to stop vehicles and write citations when they observed violations of the seat belt law. In another 15 States, the laws specified secondary enforcement, meaning that police officers were permitted to write citations only after vehicles were stopped for some other traffic infraction. New Hampshire is the only State without a seat belt law for adults, although it does have a primary child passenger safety law that covers all drivers and passengers under 18 years old.

Since 1985 all 50 States and the District of Columbia have had child restraint use laws in effect. Child restraint use laws differ from State to State, in terms of the ages of children covered and in other important ways, including height and weight limits, seating position requirements, and various exemptions and exceptions.

The most current information on seat belt laws and child passenger safety laws is available on the GHSA website at www.ghsa.org.

- Seat belt laws—www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/seatbelt_laws.html
- Child passenger safety laws—www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/childsafety_laws.html

A 2008 NHTSA research note, *States With Primary Enforcement Laws Have Lower Fatality Rates* (Updated) (NCSA, 2008), suggested that seat belt use among killed occupants was at least 13 percentage points higher in States with primary enforcement laws. In addition, results from the annual NOPUS have found that seat belt use in primary law States is consistently higher than use in States with secondary laws or no law (91.1% versus 87.6% in 2020) (see Report No. DOT HS 813 072, Figure 3).

Important Safety Reminders

Child Restraint Systems

- As children grow, so do their restraint types (rear-facing, forward-facing, booster seat, or seat belt). Always use the one that fits your child's current age and size. Use the NHTSA Car Seat Finder located at www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats.
- Use either the lower anchors and tether, or the seat belt and tether when installing forward-facing seats.
- Every car seat or booster seat has different installation instructions, so make sure you read, understand and follow both the car seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual.
- To get assistance with installation, find a certified child passenger safety technician at a location near you using NHTSA's Inspection Station locator: www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#installation-help-inspection
- Remember to register your car seat or booster seat so you can be notified in the event of a safety recall.
- Plan for using car seats or booster seats when travelling and riding in taxis or ride-share vehicle.
- Find out when your child is ready to use an adult seat belt, please reference the Car Seat Recommendations for Children located at: www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/carseat-recommendations-for-children-by-age-size.pdf. Be sure to read information for Booster Seat and Seat Belt Use.
- Keep children in the back seat until at least age 13. It's the safest place to ride.

Seat Belts

- Buckling up is the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself in a crash. Wear your seat belt for the entirety of every trip you make. Protect yourself no matter the time of day, weather, trip distance, vehicle speed, road type, or proximity to your home.
- It is important to keep yourself safe when driving and when riding in the front AND back seat of all vehicles.
- Always wear your seat belt when riding in taxis and rideshare vehicles.
- Always wear your seat belt properly. Learn how to correctly position your belt across the middle of your chest and away from your neck. NEVER put the shoulder belt behind your back or under an arm.
- If you're pregnant, always wear a seat belt to maximize your safety and the safety of your unborn child. For more information, see www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/pregnant-seat-belt-use.pdf.
- You still need to wear your seat belt even if your car or truck has air bags or advanced safety features.
- Encourage your passengers to wear their seat belts when riding in your car. Establish your own safety rules.

For information on all of these safety tips, please visit www.nhtsa.gov.

— *NHTSA's Research and Program Development*

References

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National Center for Statistics and Analysis (2008, February). *States with primary enforcement laws have lower fatality rates* (Updated) (Report No. DOT HS 810 921). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/810921

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (1984, July). *Final regulatory impact analysis: Amendment to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208. Passenger car front seat occupant protection* (Report No. DOT HS 806 572). https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/806572

Fatality Analysis Reporting System

FARS contains data on every fatal motor vehicle traffic crash within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To be included in FARS, a traffic crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a public trafficway that results in the death of a vehicle occupant or a nonoccupant within 30 days of the crash. The Annual Report File (ARF) is the FARS data file associated with the most recent available year, which is subject to change when it is finalized the following year to the final version known as the Final File. The additional time between the ARF and the Final File provides the opportunity for submission of important variable data requiring outside sources, which may lead to changes in the final counts. More information on FARS can be found at www.nhtsa.gov/crash-data-systems/fatality-analysis-reporting-system.

The updated final counts for the previous data year will be reflected with the release of the recent year's ARF. For example, along with the release of the 2020 ARF, the 2019 Final File was released to replace the 2019 ARF. The final fatality count in motor vehicle traffic crashes for 2019 was 36,355, which was updated from 36,096 in the 2019 ARF. The number of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities from the 2019 Final File was 22,372, which was updated from 22,215 from the 2019 ARF.

The 2017 and 2018 Final Files have been amended, but this amendment did not change the overall number of fatal crashes or fatalities.

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2022, October, Revised). *Occupant protection in passenger vehicles: 2020 data* (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 326). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

For More Information:

Motor vehicle traffic crash data are available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), NSA-230. NCSA can be contacted at NCSARequests@dot.gov or 800-934-8517. NCSA programs can be found at www.nhtsa.gov/data. To report a motor vehicle safety-related problem or to inquire about safety information, contact the Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236 or www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/VehicleComplaint/.

The following data tools and resources can be found at https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/.

- Fatal Motor Vehicle Crash Data Visualizations
- Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool (FIRST)
- State Traffic Safety Information (STSI)
- Traffic Safety Facts Annual Report Tables
- FARS Data Tables (FARS Encyclopedia)
- Crash Viewer
- Product Information Catalog and Vehicle Listing (vPIC)
- FARS, NASS GES, CRSS, NASS Crashworthiness Data System (CDS), and Crash Investigation Sampling System (CISS) data can be downloaded for further analysis.

Other fact sheets available from NCSA:

- Alcohol-Impaired Driving
- Bicyclists and Other Cyclists
- Children
- Large Trucks
- Motorcycles
- Older Population
- Passenger Vehicles
- Pedestrians
- Rural/Urban Comparison of Traffic Fatalities
- School-Transportation-Related Crashes
- Speeding
- State Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Estimates
- State Traffic Data
- Summary of Motor Vehicle Crashes
- Young Drivers

Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data*. The fact sheets and Traffic Safety Facts annual report can be found at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration