

# Traffic Safety Facts

## Crash•Stats

## Reduction of Fatalities and Injuries Among Passenger Vehicle Occupants Age 4-7

Among 4- through 7-year-old passenger vehicle occupants, fatalities have declined 14.5 percent from 1999 to 2003 (see Table 1). The number of passenger vehicle occupants injured has dropped from 71,000 in 1999 to 52,000 in 2003 (see Table 2). Passenger vehicles consist of passenger cars, sport utility vehicles (SUVs), vans, and pickups. The fatalities and injuries analyzed in this note are limited to people within passenger vehicles in transport.

Table 1  
**Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities, Age 4-7, By Year, and Restraint Use**

| Year | Restraint Used |             | Unrestrained |             | Total Number |
|------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|      | Number         | Percent (%) | Number       | Percent (%) |              |
| 1999 | 152            | 39          | 235          | 61          | 387          |
| 2000 | 180            | 49          | 187          | 51          | 367          |
| 2001 | 186            | 50          | 184          | 50          | 370          |
| 2002 | 155            | 49          | 163          | 51          | 318          |
| 2003 | 168            | 51          | 163          | 49          | 331          |

Source: FARS 1999-2002 Final, 2003 Annual Report File

Note: Children whose restraint use was coded as "unknown" were pro-rated between the restraint used and unrestrained categories. The pro-rated fatality counts in the table above have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

- In 2003, almost half of the 4- through 7-year-old occupants who were fatally injured were unrestrained.
- The percent of fatally injured occupants 4 through 7 who were unrestrained declined from 61 percent to 49 percent from 1999 to 2003.

The number of unrestrained occupants 4 through 7 who were fatally injured decreased 31 percent, from 235 in 1999 to 163 in 2003. Two-thirds of this decrease occurred from 1999 to 2000.

For the fatality data provided in Table 1, children whose restraint use was coded as "Shoulder Belt", "Lap Belt",

"Lap and Shoulder Belt", "Safety Belt Used Improperly", "Child Safety Seat", "Child Safety Seat Used Improperly", or "Restraint Used, Type Unknown" were grouped into the "Restraint Used" category. Those children with a restraint use variable coded as "None Used" were considered unrestrained.

Table 1 provides fatality counts for 4- through 7-year-olds from 1999 through 2003. Table 2 shows corresponding injury data for the same age group and time period.

Table 2  
**Passenger Vehicle Occupant Injured, Age 4-7, By Year, and Restraint Use**

| Year | Restraint Used |             | Unrestrained |             | Total Number |
|------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|      | Number         | Percent (%) | Number       | Percent (%) |              |
| 1999 | 60,000         | 84          | 11,000       | 16          | 71,000       |
| 2000 | 57,000         | 87          | 9,000        | 13          | 66,000       |
| 2001 | 50,000         | 87          | 8,000        | 13          | 58,000       |
| 2002 | 47,000         | 85          | 8,000        | 15          | 55,000       |
| 2003 | 46,000         | 89          | 6,000        | 11          | 52,000       |

Source: GES 1999-2003

Note: Totals may not equal sum of components due to independent rounding. Percents were calculated prior to rounding. Restraint use is determined by police and may be overreported.

- The number of injured passenger vehicle occupants 4 through 7 declined by 27 percent from 1999 to 2003. Within this 5-year period, the number of injured occupants dropped each year, from 71,000 in 1999, down to 52,000 in 2003.
- In 2003, the percent of injured 4- through 7-year-old passenger vehicle occupants that were unrestrained dropped to an all-time low of 11 percent.

For the injury data provided in Table 2, children whose restraint use was coded as "Shoulder Belt", "Lap Belt", "Lap and Shoulder Belt", "Child Safety Seat", or "Restraint Used,

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Type Unknown” were grouped into the “Restraint Used” category. Those children with a restraint use variable coded as “None Used” were considered unrestrained. Children whose restraint use was coded as “Unknown” were pro-rated between the restrained and unrestrained categories. The pro-rated injury counts in Table 2 have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.

The National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) provides probability-based data on the use of child restraints on the nation’s roads. The NOPUS survey of 2002 was the first to examine the age group of 4- through 7-year-olds. In 2002, this survey found that only 83 percent of 4- through 7-year-olds are restrained. The survey also found that 29 percent of 4- through 7-year-olds were seated in the front seat, instead of the safer back seat.

NHTSA’s National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) used three databases for this report. The passenger vehicle occupant fatality data shown in table 1 were provided by the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). The injury data provided in table 2 was collected from the National Automotive Sampling System General Estimates System (GES). The probability-based estimates of restraint use were provided by the NOPUS observational survey.

For additional copies of this research note, call 800-934-8517 or fax your request to 202-366-3189. For questions regarding the data reported in this research, call Marc Starnes at 202-366-0183. This research note and other general information on highway traffic safety may be accessed by Internet users at:<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/ncsa/AvailInf.html>.



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