

Traffic Safety Facts

Crash•Stats

November 2004

A Brief Statistical Summary

DOT HS 809 819

Restraint Use Among Fatally Injured Passenger Vehicle Occupants by Vehicle Type

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) recently released the annual crash statistics for the year 2003. A total of 42,643 people died on the Nation's highways. The numbers were made available from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which annually collects crash statistics from 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Research has found that lap/shoulder safety belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent. However, the 2003 data showed that a majority of fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants continue to be

unrestrained (56 percent). This Crash•Stats looks at the differences in restraint use among fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants based on vehicle type.

Out of the 31,904 passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2003, 19,460 (61 percent) were occupants of passenger cars, 4,446 (14 percent) were occupants of sport utility vehicles (SUVs), 5,904 persons (19 percent) were occupants of pickup trucks, 2,066 persons (6 percent) were occupants of vans and the rest were from other light trucks. The chart below and Table 1 (overleaf) show 3-year trend data of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities by vehicle type and restraint use. The data clearly show that restraint use among fatally injured occupants of SUVs and pickup trucks is much lower compared to passenger cars and vans.

Figure 1
Percent Unrestrained Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities by Vehicle Type and Year

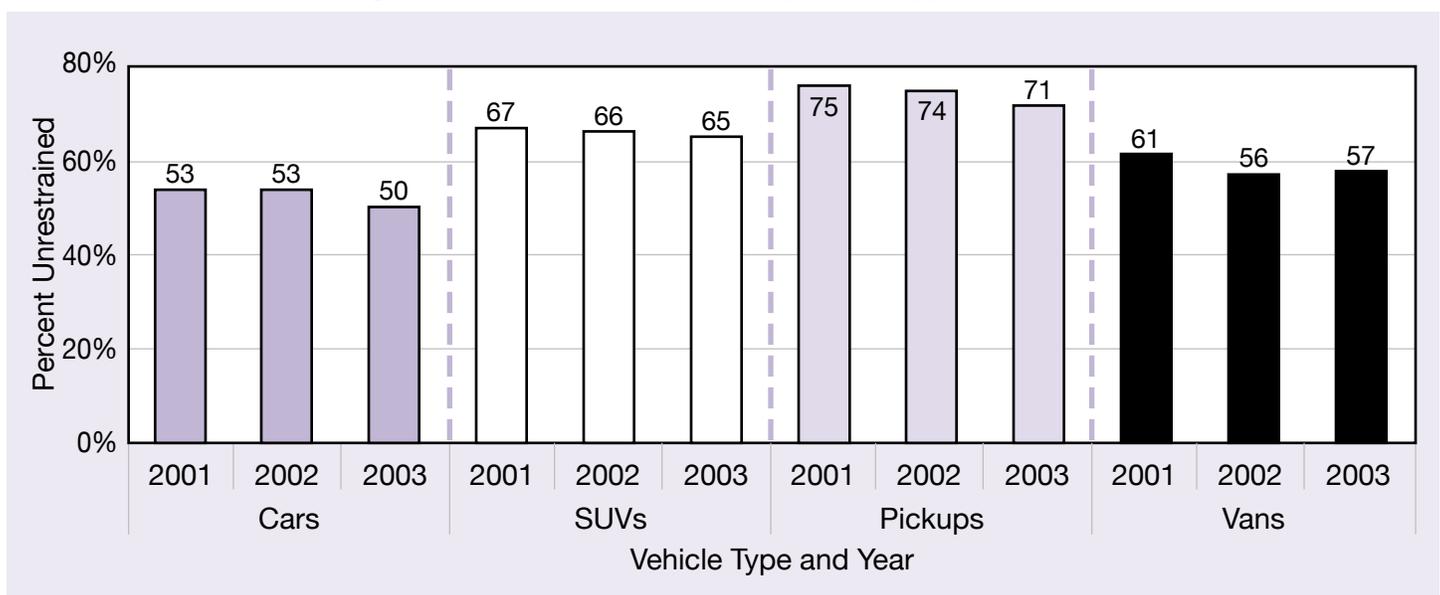


Table 1

Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities by Year, Vehicle Type and Restraint Use

Calendar Year and Vehicle Type		Restraint Use				Total	
		Not used		Used			
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2001	Passenger Cars	10,788	53	9,532	47	20,320	100
	SUVs	2,354	67	1,176	33	3,530	100
	Pickups	4,624	75	1,515	25	6,139	100
	Vans	1,230	61	789	39	2,019	100
	Other Light Trucks	25	73	10	27	35	100
	Total*	19,051	59	12,992	41	32,043	100
2002	Passenger Cars	10,840	53	9,729	47	20,569	100
	SUVs	2,653	66	1,378	34	4,031	100
	Pickups	4,538	74	1,562	26	6,100	100
	Vans	1,191	56	918	44	2,109	100
	Other Light Trucks	29	85	5	15	34	100
	Total*	19,272	59	13,571	41	32,843	100
2003	Passenger Cars	9,699	50	9,761	50	19,460	100
	SUVs	2,874	65	1,572	35	4,446	100
	Pickups	4,211	71	1,693	29	5,904	100
	Vans	1,187	57	879	43	2,066	100
	Other Light Trucks	21	74	7	26	28	100
	Total*	18,019	56	13,885	44	31,904	100

Source: NCSA, FARS 2001-2002 (FINAL), 2003 (ARF)

Unknown restraint use is distributed proportionally to the known use categories.

* Not equal to sum of (Passenger Cars, SUVs, Pickups, Vans and Other Light Trucks) due to individual rounding.

Definitions

The term 'occupant' is used for drivers, passengers and the unknown occupant types of a motor vehicle in transport. The term 'passenger vehicle occupant' refers to the drivers, passengers and unknown occupant type of passenger cars, SUVs, pickup trucks, vans and other light trucks. Restraint usage is classified into three categories. Table 2 shows the classification of restraint use.

Table 2

Classification of Restraint Use

Classification	Categories Used
Used	Shoulder belt, Lap belt, Lap and shoulder belt, Child safety seat, Restraint used – type unknown, Safety belt used improperly, Child safety seat used improperly
Not Used	None used (vehicle occupant)
Unknown	Unknown if used

For questions regarding the data reported in this note, contact Umesh G. Shankar [202-366-5558] or Cherian Varghese [202-366-1114]. Some of the findings in this note were obtained from the following NCSA publication: DOT HS 809 774. This crash stats 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>