Traffic Safety Facts

2014 Data

April 2016

DOT HS 812 262

NHTSA

Key Findings

- Forty-nine percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were killed in 2014 were unrestrained.
- In 2014, 59 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants in age groups 13 to 15 and 25 to 34 who were killed in traffic crashes were not using restraints — the highest percentage of all age groups.
- In traffic crashes in 2014, among male fatalities with known restraint use, 53 percent were unrestrained, and among females with known restraint use, 40 percent were unrestrained.
- In traffic crashes in 2014, considering restraint use by passenger vehicle type, 60 percent of the drivers of pickup trucks who were killed were unrestrained, compared to 54 percent for SUV drivers, 42 percent for passenger car drivers, and 38 percent for van drivers.
- In 2014, seat belts saved an estimated 12,802 lives among passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older.
- An estimated 252 lives of children under 5 were saved by child restraints in 2014.
- In 2014, an estimated 2,396 lives were saved by frontal air bags.

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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Occupant Protection

Occupant protection discussed in this fact sheet includes seat belts, child safety seats, and frontal air bags in passenger vehicles. Vehicle occupants are both drivers and passengers. Passenger vehicles consist of passenger cars, pickup trucks, vans, and sport utility vehicles. In this fact sheet, the 2014 information on passenger vehicle occupant protection is presented as follows:

Overview

When seat belt use is examined for the Nation, not limited to fatal crash data, the use rate was 87 percent in 2014. In 2005 the national seat belt use rate was 82 percent. This information comes from the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) which is the only survey that provides nationwide probability-based observed data on seat belt use in the United States (Pickrell & Choi, 2015).

In 2014, there were 21,022 occupants of passenger vehicles killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of these 21,022 occupants, 9,958 (51%) were known to be restrained, as shown in Table 1. Looking at only occupants where the restraint status was known, 49 percent were unrestrained at the time of the crash. Restraint use was not known for 1,679 occupants.

The proportion of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes has decreased from 2005 to 2014. Among passenger vehicle occupants killed, when restraint use was known, the percentage of unrestrained deaths decreased by 6 percentage points from 55 percent in 2005 to 49 percent in 2014.

Table 1

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Crashes, by Restraint Use, 2005–2014

Year	Restraint Use						Total		Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
2005	13,064	41%	16,247	51%	2,238	7%	31,549	100%	45%	55%
2006	12,710	41%	15,635	51%	2,341	8%	30,686	100%	45%	55%
2007	12,322	42%	14,446	50%	2,304	8%	29,072	100%	46%	54%
2008	10,691	42%	12,925	51%	1,846	7%	25,462	100%	45%	55%
2009	10,190	43%	11,545	49%	1,712	7%	23,447	100%	47%	53%
2010	9,969	45%	10,590	48%	1,714	8%	22,273	100%	48%	52%
2011	9,471	44%	10,215	48%	1,630	8%	21,316	100%	48%	52%
2013	9,746	45%	10,370	48%	1,663	8%	21,779	100%	48%	52%
2013	9,840	46%	9,622	45%	1,762	8%	21,224	100%	51%	49%
2014	9,958	47%	9,385	45%	1,679	8%	21,022	100%	51%	49%

Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2005–2013 Final File and 2014 Annual Report File (ARF).

Occupant Demographics

Age

Information on restraint use by age group for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2014 is shown in Table 2. Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities where restraint use was known, the age groups of 13 to 15 and 25 to 34 had the highest percentage of unrestrained occupants (59%), followed closely by the 21-to-24 (58%) and 34-to-44 (57%) age groups.

Table 2

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Age Group and Restraint Use, 2014

Age (Years)	Restraint Use						Total		Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
<4	131	72%	36	20%	16	9%	183	100%	78%	22%
4–7	135	63%	64	30%	14	7%	213	100%	68%	32%
8–12	102	50%	91	44%	13	6%	206	100%	53%	47%
13–15	87	36%	125	52%	30	12%	242	100%	41%	59%
16–20	1,007	43%	1,141	49%	201	9%	2,349	100%	47%	53%
21–24	886	38%	1,214	52%	229	10%	2,329	100%	42%	58%
25–34	1,441	38%	2,048	53%	349	9%	3,838	100%	41%	59%
35–44	1,015	39%	1,362	53%	207	8%	2,584	100%	43%	57%
45–54	1,213	46%	1,213	46%	197	8%	2,623	100%	50%	50%
55–64	1,290	54%	910	38%	168	7%	2,368	100%	59%	41%
65–74	1,073	60%	596	34%	109	6%	1,778	100%	64%	36%
75+	1,568	69%	577	25%	139	6%	2,284	100%	73%	27%
Unknown	10	40%	8	32%	7	28%	25	100%	56%	44%
Total	**9,958**	**47%**	**9,385**	**45%**	**1,679**	**8%**	**21,022**	**100%**	**51%**	**49%**

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

In 2014, there were 183 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities among children under 4; 22 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use). In the age group 4 to 7, there were 213 fatalities; 32 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).

Gender

Almost twice as many male occupants were killed (13,715) compared to female occupants (7,303), as shown in Table 3. When restraint use was known, 53 percent of male fatalities and 40 percent of female fatalities were unrestrained.

Table 3

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Gender and Restraint Use, 2014

Gender	Restraint Use						Total		Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Male	5,917	43%	6,635	48%	1,163	8%	13,715	100%	47%	53%
Female	4,040	55%	2,748	38%	515	7%	7,303	100%	60%	40%
Unknown	1	25%	2	50%	1	25%	4	100%	33%	67%
Total	**9,958**	**47%**	**9,385**	**45%**	**1,679**	**8%**	**21,022**	**100%**	**51%**	**49%**

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

Seating Position

Restraint use by seating position for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2014 is presented in Table 4. Among fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use, 47 percent of those in the front seat, and 58 percent of those in the second row of seats, were unrestrained.

Table 4

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Seating Position and Restraint Use, 2014

Seating Position		Restraint Use						Total		Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Front Seat	Total	9,283	49%	8,231	43%	1,457	8%	18,971	100%	53%	47%
	Left	7,403	48%	6,860	44%	1,157	8%	15,420	100%	52%	48%
	Middle	10	19%	37	69%	7	13%	54	100%	21%	79%
	Right	1,869	54%	1,329	38%	289	8%	3,487	100%	58%	42%
	Other/Unknown	1	10%	5	50%	4	40%	10	100%	17%	83%
Second Row	Total	630	38%	869	53%	144	9%	1,643	100%	42%	58%
	Left	257	41%	326	52%	50	8%	633	100%	44%	56%
	Middle	76	33%	138	59%	18	8%	232	100%	36%	64%
	Right	291	40%	372	51%	68	9%	731	100%	44%	56%
	Other/Unknown	6	13%	33	70%	8	17%	47	100%	15%	85%
Other		42	19%	171	76%	12	5%	225	100%	20%	80%
Unknown		3	2%	114	62%	66	36%	183	100%	3%	97%
Total		**9,958**	**47%**	**9,385**	**45%**	**1,679**	**8%**	**21,022**	**100%**	**51%**	**49%**

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

Passenger Vehicle Types

Table 5 shows 2014 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities, separately for drivers and passengers, for each passenger vehicle type. There were 15,416 passenger vehicle drivers killed in traffic crashes, the majority in passenger cars. Forty-eight percent of passenger vehicle drivers killed were unrestrained (based on known use). However, restraint use differed by vehicle type: 60 percent (1,877) of the drivers of pickup trucks killed were unrestrained, 54 percent (1,367) for SUV drivers, 42 percent (3,383) for passenger car drivers, and 38 percent (219) for van drivers.

Table 5
Drivers and Passengers Killed, by Passenger Vehicle Type and Restraint Use, 2014

Type of Passenger Vehicle		Restraint Use						Total		Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Drivers Killed	Passenger Cars	4,652	54%	3,383	39%	655	8%	8,690	100%	58%	42%
	Pickup Trucks	1,247	37%	1,877	56%	240	7%	3,364	100%	40%	60%
	Sport Utility Vehicles	1,142	42%	1,367	50%	201	7%	2,710	100%	46%	54%
	Vans	354	56%	219	35%	59	9%	632	100%	62%	38%
	Other Light Trucks	5	25%	12	60%	3	15%	20	100%	29%	71%
	Total	**7,400**	**48%**	**6,858**	**44%**	**1,158**	**8%**	**15,416**	**100%**	**52%**	**48%**
Passengers Killed	Passenger Cars	1,677	52%	1,248	39%	311	10%	3,236	100%	57%	43%
	Pickup Trucks	274	31%	545	62%	65	7%	884	100%	33%	67%
	Sport Utility Vehicles	419	39%	574	53%	93	9%	1,086	100%	42%	58%
	Vans	186	48%	153	39%	49	13%	388	100%	55%	45%
	Other Light Trucks	2	17%	7	58%	3	25%	12	100%	22%	78%
	Total	**2,558**	**46%**	**2,527**	**45%**	**521**	**9%**	**5,606**	**100%**	**50%**	**50%**

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

There were 5,606 passengers killed in passenger vehicles in 2014. Among those 5,085 fatalities for which restraint use was known, 50 percent (2,527) were unrestrained, but use varied by vehicle type: 67 percent (545) of the passengers killed in pickup trucks were unrestrained, compared to 58 percent (574) for SUVs, 45 percent (153) for vans, and 43 percent (1,248) for passenger cars.

Benefits of Restraint Use

Seat Belts

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 (Kahane, 2015) and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light-truck occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent (Kahane, 2015) and moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent (NHTSA, 1984).

Ejection from the vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. In fatal crashes in 2014, about 80 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed. Seat belts are very effective in preventing total ejections; in 2014, only 1 percent of the occupants reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected, compared to 30 percent of the unrestrained occupants.

Among passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older, seat belts saved an estimated 12,802 lives in 2014, as shown in Table 6. If all passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older had worn seat belts, 15,616 lives (that is, an additional 2,814) could have been saved in 2014. From 1975, when NHTSA's FARS database began, to 2014 seat belts have saved a total of 330,507 lives. If all passengers had worn seat belts during these years, a total of 709,489 (that is, an additional 378,983 lives) could have been saved.

Table 6
Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Restraint Systems, 1975–2014

	Restraint Type	1975–04	2005	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013	2014	Total
	Seat Belts	195,496	15,688	15,458	15,223	13,312	12,757	12,670	12,071	12,386	12,644	12,802	**330,507**
	Child Restraints	7,476	424	427	388	286	307	303	262	285	263	252	**10,673**
	Frontal Air Bags	16,918*	2,752	2,824	2,800	2,557	2,481	2,403	2,341	2,422	2,398	2,396	**42,292**
Seat Belts	Lives Savable at 100% Use	535,006	21,355	20,926	20,271	17,482	16,447	16,026	15,467	15,437	15,456	15,616	**709,489**
Seat Belts	Additional Lives That Could Have Been Saved at 100% Use	339,510	5,667	5,468	5,048	4,171	3,690	3,356	3,396	3,051	2,812	2,814	**378,983**

Source: Lives Saved in 2014 by Restraint Use and Minimum Drinking Age Laws
*Total from 1987-2004. Frontal air bags did not exist prior to 1987.
Note: The 2009 to 2012 estimates of lives saved differ from previously published estimates due to a computational correction. Previous estimates did not properly account for 2010 to 2013 model year passenger vehicles, thus slightly underestimating lives saved by seat belts, child restraints, and frontal air bags.

Frontal Air Bags

Frontal air bags, combined with lap/shoulder belts, offer effective safety protection for passenger vehicle occupants. NHTSA analyses indicate a fatality-reducing effectiveness for frontal air bags of 14 percent when no seat belt was used and 11 percent when a seat belt was used in conjunction with frontal air bags (Kahane, 2015).

Air bags are supplemental protection and are not designed to deploy in all crashes. Most are designed to inflate in a moderate-to-severe frontal crash. 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 2014, an estimated 2,396 lives were saved by frontal air bags. From 1987, when air bags first began to be installed in vehicles, to 2014, a total of 42,292 lives were saved, as shown in Table 6.

Child Restraints

NHTSA has estimated that child safety 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, respectively (Kahane, 2015).

Among children under 5, an estimated 252 lives were saved in 2014 by restraint use. Of these 252 lives saved, 236 were associated with the use of child safety seats and 17 with the use of adult seat belts. (The total number of children's lives saved [252] does not equal the sum of the two types of safety equipment, 236 + 17, due to independent rounding.) At 100-percent child safety seat use for children under 5, an estimated 289 lives (that is, an additional 37) could have been saved in 2014. Since 1975, there were 10,673 lives of children under 5 saved because of child restraints.

Children in rear-facing child safety seats should not be placed in the front seats of vehicles equipped with passenger side air bags. The impact of a deploying air bag striking a rear-facing child safety seat could result in serious injury to the child.

State Belt Use

Table 7 shows observed seat belt use rates in the States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in 2014. The results were obtained by observing occupants in traffic on roads at selected sites. For more information on State seat belt use rates, see the Crash*Stat titled Seat Belt Use in 2014—Use Rates in the States and Territories (Chen, 2014). Also in Table 7 are seat belt use rates for passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes. Restraint use for fatally injured occupants differs substantially by State.

Restraint Use Laws

The first mandatory belt use law was enacted in New York in 1984. Adult belt use laws are now in effect in 49 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The laws differ from State to State, according to the type and age of the vehicle, occupant age and seating position, etc. The goal of these laws is to promote belt use and thereby reduce deaths and injuries in motor vehicle crashes.

In 2014, there were 33 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico that 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 16 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.

Table 7

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by State, Restraint Use, and Observed Seat Belt Use Rate by State, 2014

State	Total Occupants Killed	Restraint Use						Percent "Known" Restrained	Percent "Known" Unrestrained	Observed Seat Belt Use Rate*
		Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown				
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Alabama	618	240	39%	351	57%	27	4%	41%	59%	95.7%
Alaska	42	12	29%	21	50%	9	21%	36%	64%	88.4%
Arizona	393	141	36%	209	53%	43	11%	40%	60%	87.2%
Arkansas	345	149	43%	166	48%	30	9%	47%	53%	74.4%
California	1,618	993	61%	476	29%	149	9%	68%	32%	97.1%
Colorado	308	140	45%	156	51%	12	4%	47%	53%	82.4%
Connecticut	137	50	36%	48	35%	39	28%	51%	49%	85.1%
Delaware	71	46	65%	23	32%	2	3%	67%	33%	91.9%
District of Columbia	10	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%	70%	30%	93.2%
Florida	1,206	638	53%	510	42%	58	5%	56%	44%	88.8%
Georgia	795	376	47%	363	46%	56	7%	51%	49%	97.3%
Hawaii	38	15	39%	18	47%	5	13%	45%	55%	93.5%
Idaho	130	61	47%	68	52%	1	1%	47%	53%	80.2%
Illinois	621	319	51%	245	39%	57	9%	57%	43%	94.1%
Indiana	497	236	47%	190	38%	71	14%	55%	45%	90.2%
Iowa	219	109	50%	88	40%	22	10%	55%	45%	92.8%
Kansas	296	128	43%	150	51%	18	6%	46%	54%	85.7%
Kentucky	498	213	43%	285	57%	0	0%	43%	57%	86.1%
Louisiana	502	171	34%	283	56%	48	10%	38%	62%	84.1%
Maine	104	63	61%	41	39%	0	0%	61%	39%	85.0%
Maryland	255	135	53%	96	38%	24	9%	58%	42%	92.1%
Massachusetts	201	66	33%	100	50%	35	17%	40%	60%	76.6%
Michigan	585	305	52%	196	34%	84	14%	61%	39%	93.3%
Minnesota	270	156	58%	93	34%	21	8%	63%	37%	94.7%
Mississippi	475	192	40%	279	59%	4	1%	41%	59%	78.3%
Missouri	556	198	36%	312	56%	46	8%	39%	61%	78.8%
Montana	145	40	28%	99	68%	6	4%	29%	71%	74.0%
Nebraska	183	57	31%	95	52%	31	17%	38%	63%	79.0%
Nevada	145	69	48%	65	45%	11	8%	51%	49%	94.0%
New Hampshire	58	13	22%	45	78%	0	0%	22%	78%	70.4%
New Jersey	294	157	53%	119	40%	18	6%	57%	43%	87.6%
New Mexico	229	105	46%	98	43%	26	11%	52%	48%	92.1%
New York	540	329	61%	155	29%	56	10%	68%	32%	90.6%
North Carolina	865	471	54%	360	42%	34	4%	57%	43%	90.6%
North Dakota	105	29	28%	71	68%	5	5%	29%	71%	81.0%
Ohio	733	295	40%	375	51%	63	9%	44%	56%	85.0%
Oklahoma	500	209	42%	258	52%	33	7%	45%	55%	86.3%
Oregon	232	137	59%	61	26%	34	15%	69%	31%	97.8%
Pennsylvania	768	288	38%	371	48%	109	14%	44%	56%	83.6%
Rhode Island	25	15	60%	9	36%	1	4%	63%	38%	87.4%
South Carolina	568	269	47%	275	48%	24	4%	49%	51%	90.0%
South Dakota	102	29	28%	69	68%	4	4%	30%	70%	68.9%
Tennessee	697	296	42%	354	51%	47	7%	46%	54%	87.7%
Texas	2,404	1,232	51%	973	40%	199	8%	56%	44%	90.7%
Utah	156	80	51%	71	46%	5	3%	53%	47%	83.4%
Vermont	27	11	41%	14	52%	2	7%	44%	56%	84.1%
Virginia	476	223	47%	250	53%	3	1%	47%	53%	77.3%
Washington	297	167	56%	106	36%	24	8%	61%	39%	94.5%
West Virginia	202	71	35%	93	46%	38	19%	43%	57%	87.8%
Wisconsin	363	159	44%	162	45%	42	12%	50%	50%	84.7%
Wyoming	118	48	41%	67	57%	3	3%	42%	58%	79.2%
U.S. Total	**21,022**	**9,958**	**47%**	**9,385**	**45%**	**1,679**	**8%**	**51%**	**49%**	**87.0%**
Puerto Rico	143	65	45%	78	55%	0	0%	45%	55%	89.5%

Grey shaded: States with primary seat belt laws in 2014.
Source: FARS ARF 2014; Chen, 2014

The first mandatory child restraint use law was implemented in Tennessee in 1978. 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 website of the Governors Highway Safety Association at www.ghsa.org/index.html.

- 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 fatally injured occupants was at least 13 percentage points higher in States with primary enforcement laws. In addition, results from the annual National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) have found that seat belt use in primary law States is consistently higher than use in States with secondary laws or no law (90% versus 79%, respectively, in 2014) (see Pickrell & Choi, 2013, Figure 3).

This fact sheet contains information on motor vehicle fatalities and fatal crashes, based on data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). FARS is a census of fatal crashes within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (although Puerto Rico is not included in U.S. totals). Data from the NOPUS and observed belt use rate data obtained from individual States are also used in this fact sheet.

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For more information

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NSA-230, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted at 800-934-8517 or by e-mail at ncsaweb@dot.gov. General information on highway traffic safety can be found at www.nhtsa.gov/NCSA. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Alcohol-Impaired Driving, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists, Children, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Older Population, Overview, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Rural/Urban Comparisons, School Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates, State Traffic Data,* and *Young Drivers.* Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System.* The fact sheets and annual Traffic Safety Facts report can be found at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx.

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