Traffic Safety Facts
2019 Data

September 2021

DOT HS 813 176

Occupant Protection

In this fact sheet for 2019 the information is presented as follows.

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). Vehicle occupants include drivers and passengers.

Key Findings

- Forty-seven percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 2019 were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).
- In traffic crashes in 2019, considering known driver restraint use by passenger vehicle type, 57 percent of pickup drivers who were killed were unrestrained, compared to 47 percent of SUV drivers, 42 percent of passenger car drivers, and 38 percent of van drivers.
- Fifty-eight percent (based on known restraint use) of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in the 21-to-24 and 25-to-34 age groups in 2019 traffic crashes were unrestrained — the highest percentage of all age groups in this report.
- In traffic crashes in 2019, among male fatalities with known restraint use, 51 percent were unrestrained; among female fatalities with known restraint use, 40 percent were unrestrained.
- In 2019 among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities with known restraint use, 45 percent seated in the front row and 58 percent of those in the second row of seats were unrestrained.
- Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in fatal crashes in 2019 with known restraint use, 39 percent were unrestrained during the day compared to 55 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 2019 (Report No. DOT HS 812 875), the estimated seat belt use rate increased from 85.1 percent in 2010 to 90.7 percent in 2019. 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 an average daylight moment, and does not necessarily represent restraint use among occupants involved in crashes.

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Restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes between 2010 and 2019 is shown in Table 1. In 2019 there were 36,096 traffic fatalities in the United States, of which 22,215 (62%) were occupants of passenger vehicles. Of the 22,215 passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2019, there were 10,815 (49%) who were restrained and 9,466 (43%) who were unrestrained at the time of the crashes. Restraint use was not known for the remaining 1,934 (9%) occupants. Considering only passenger vehicle occupant fatalities whose restraint use was known, 53 percent were restrained and 47 percent were unrestrained.

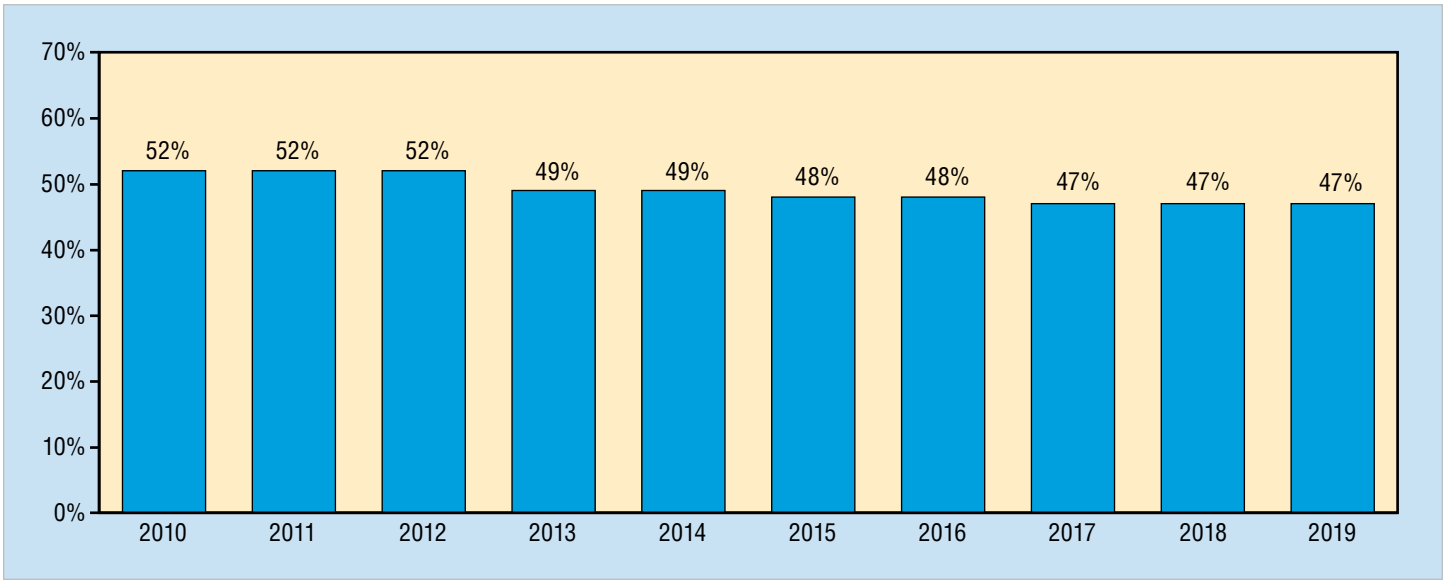
Table 1
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Restraint Use, 2010–2019

	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
Year	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
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%
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	10,815	49%	9,466	43%	1,934	9%	22,215	100%	53%	47%

Source: FARS 2010–2018 Final File, and 2019 Annual Report File (ARF)
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.

The percentage of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes is graphed in Figure 1. Among passenger vehicle occupants killed, when restraint use was known, the percentage of unrestrained deaths decreased by 5 percentage points, from 52 percent in 2010 to 47 percent in 2019.

Figure 1
Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, 2010–2019



Source: FARS 2010–2018 Final File, 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Occupant Characteristics

Passenger Vehicle Types

Table 2 shows passenger vehicle occupant fatalities separately for drivers and passengers for each passenger vehicle type. Seventy-five percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2019 were drivers, and 25 percent were passengers.

In 2019 there were 16,629 passenger vehicle drivers killed in traffic crashes, the majority (55%) in passenger cars. Among the 15,254 passenger vehicle driver fatalities for whom restraint use was known, 46 percent were unrestrained. However, the percentage of drivers killed who were unrestrained differed by vehicle type: 57 percent of pickup drivers, 47 percent of SUV drivers, 42 percent of passenger car drivers, and 38 percent of van drivers.

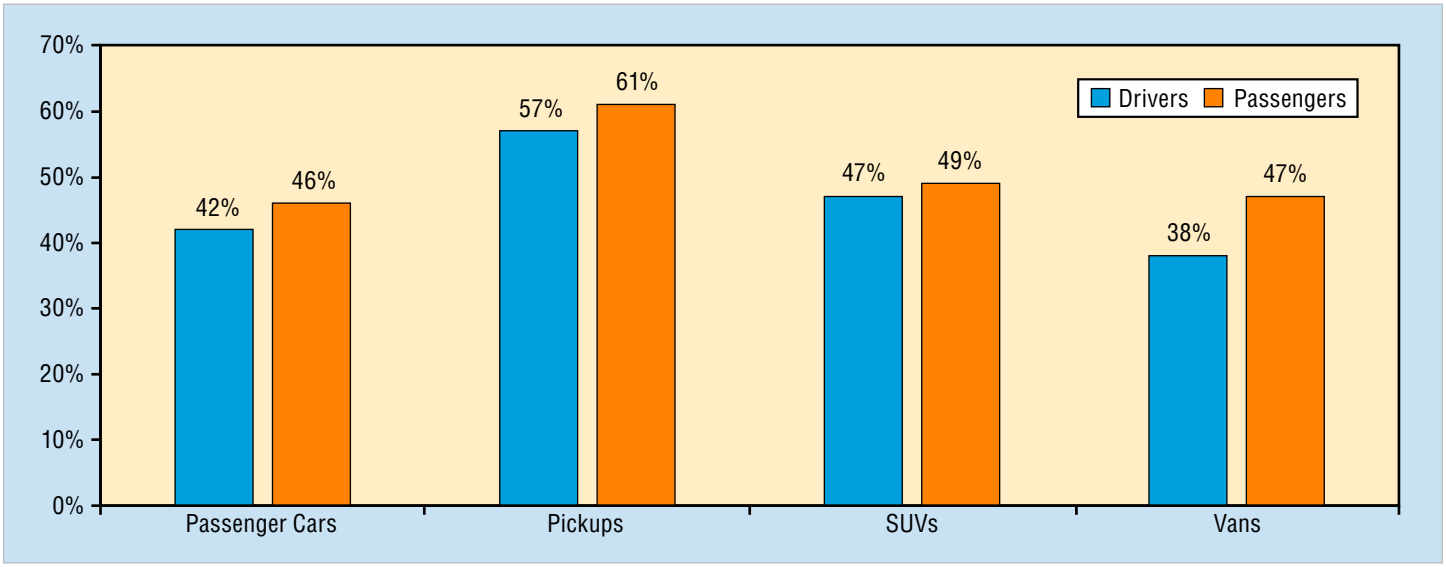
Table 2
Drivers and Passengers Killed, by Passenger Vehicle Type and Restraint Use, 2019

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	4,868	53%	3,490	38%	753	8%	9,111	100%	58%	42%
	Light Truck*	3,384	45%	3,512	47%	622	8%	7,518	100%	49%	51%
	–Pickup	1,353	40%	1,786	52%	282	8%	3,421	100%	43%	57%
	–SUV	1,649	49%	1,473	43%	271	8%	3,393	100%	53%	47%
	–Van	367	56%	227	35%	63	10%	657	100%	62%	38%
	Total	**8,252**	**50%**	**7,002**	**42%**	**1,375**	**8%**	**16,629**	**100%**	**54%**	**46%**
Passengers Killed	Passenger Car	1,514	48%	1,304	42%	310	10%	3,128	100%	54%	46%
	Light Truck*	1,049	43%	1,160	47%	249	10%	2,458	100%	47%	53%
	–Pickup	275	36%	426	55%	72	9%	773	100%	39%	61%
	–SUV	606	46%	579	44%	131	10%	1,316	100%	51%	49%
	–Van	167	46%	151	42%	42	12%	360	100%	53%	47%
	Total	**2,563**	**46%**	**2,464**	**44%**	**559**	**10%**	**5,586**	**100%**	**51%**	**49%**

Source: FARS 2019 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes other/unknown light-truck vehicle types.

There were 5,586 passengers killed in passenger vehicles in 2019. Fifty-six percent of the passengers killed were riding in passenger cars. Among the 5,027 passenger vehicle passenger fatalities for whom restraint use was known, 49 percent were unrestrained, but use varied by vehicle type: 61 percent of the passengers killed in pickups were unrestrained, compared to 49 percent in SUVs, 47 percent in vans, and 46 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, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Age and Sex

Information on restraint use by age group for passenger vehicle occupants who were killed in 2019 is shown in Table 3. Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities where restraint use was known, the 21-to-24 and 25-to-34 age groups had the highest percentages of unrestrained occupants (58%), followed by the 13-to-14 and 35-to-44 age groups at 55 percent unrestrained. These percentages are shown in Figure 3.

Table 3

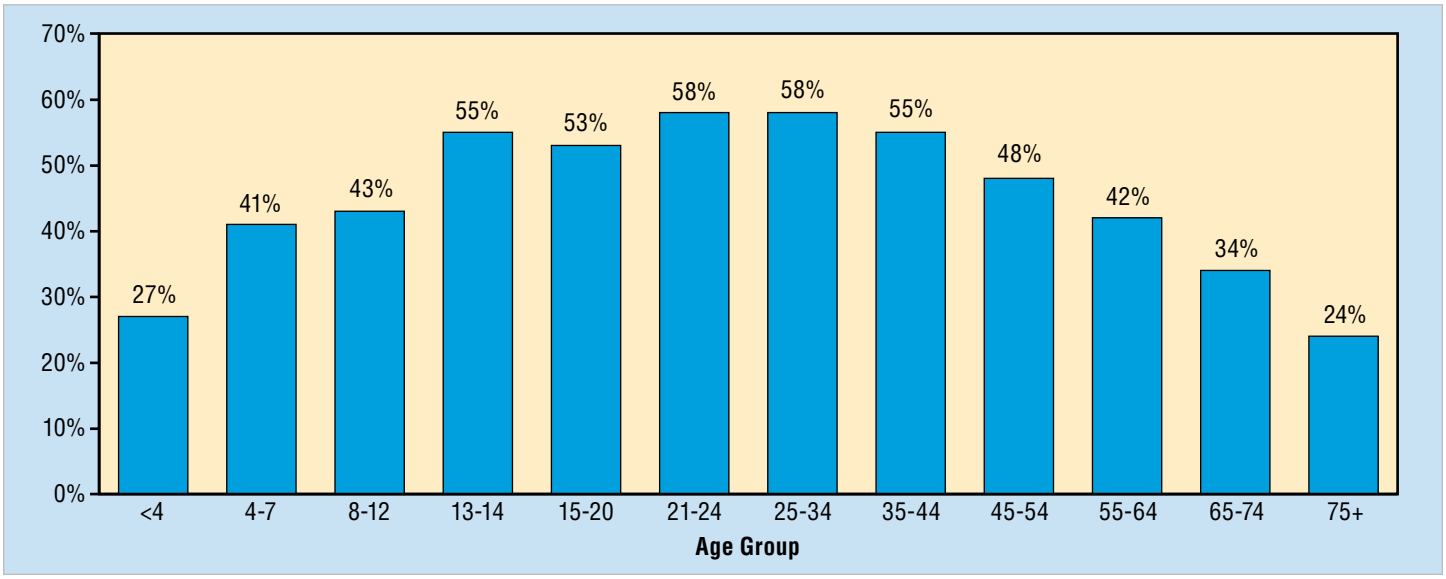
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Age Group and Restraint Use, 2019

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	118	67%	44	25%	15	8%	177	100%	73%	27%
4–7	107	53%	73	36%	22	11%	202	100%	59%	41%
8–12	118	52%	89	39%	22	10%	229	100%	57%	43%
13–14	49	40%	60	49%	14	11%	123	100%	45%	55%
15–20	939	42%	1,047	47%	227	10%	2,213	100%	47%	53%
21–24	779	38%	1,054	51%	227	11%	2,060	100%	42%	58%
25–34	1,489	37%	2,080	52%	416	10%	3,985	100%	42%	58%
35–44	1,238	41%	1,488	50%	259	9%	2,985	100%	45%	55%
45–54	1,248	48%	1,154	44%	199	8%	2,601	100%	52%	48%
55–64	1,431	53%	1,048	39%	230	8%	2,709	100%	58%	42%
65–74	1,370	62%	709	32%	139	6%	2,218	100%	66%	34%
75+	1,920	71%	615	23%	159	6%	2,694	100%	76%	24%
Total*	**10,815**	**49%**	**9,466**	**43%**	**1,934**	**9%**	**22,215**	**100%**	**53%**	**47%**

Source: FARS 2019 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes passenger vehicle occupants of unknown age.

Figure 3

Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Age Group, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

In 2019 there were 177 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities among children younger than 4, and 27 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use). In the 4-to-7 age group, there were 202 fatalities; 41 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).

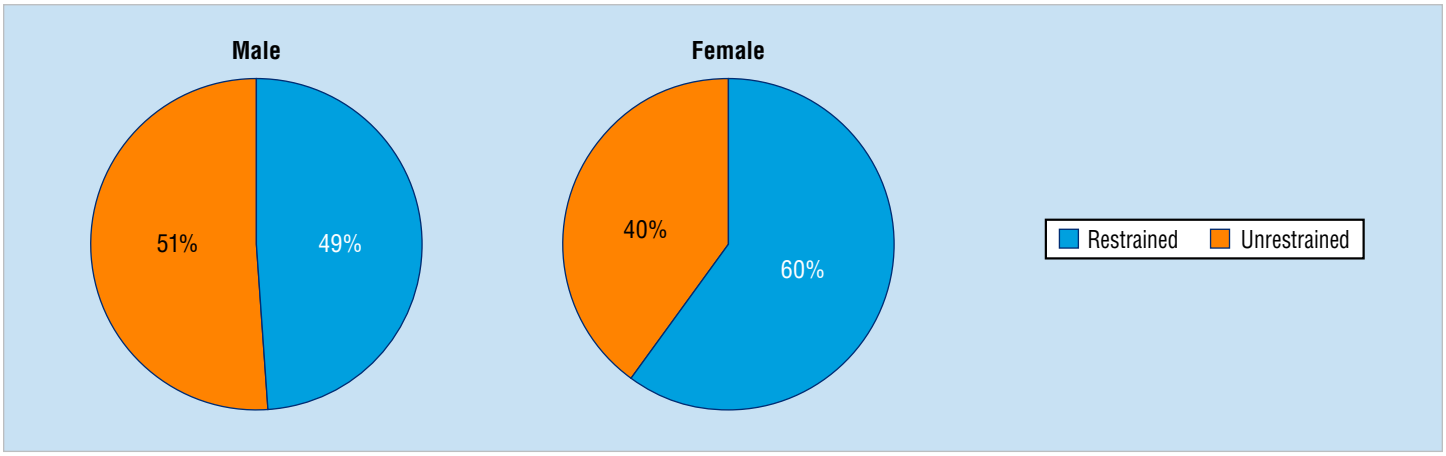
Nearly twice as many male occupants (14,435) as female occupants (7,752) were killed in 2019, as shown in Table 4. When restraint use was known, 51 percent of the males killed and 40 percent of the females killed were unrestrained (Figure 4). Restraint use was unknown for 9 percent of male occupant fatalities and 8 percent of the female fatalities.

Table 4
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Sex and Restraint Use, 2019

Sex	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
Male	6,489	45%	6,633	46%	1,313	9%	14,435	100%	49%	51%
Female	4,315	56%	2,822	36%	615	8%	7,752	100%	60%	40%
Total*	**10,815**	**49%**	**9,466**	**43%**	**1,934**	**9%**	**22,215**	**100%**	**53%**	**47%**

Source: FARS 2019 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*, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Seating Position

Restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2019, by their seating position, is presented in Table 5. Among killed occupants with known restraint use, 45 percent of those in the front row and 58 percent of those in the second row of seats were unrestrained.

Table 5

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Seating Position and Restraint Use, 2019

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	10,152	50%	8,349	41%	1,699	8%	20,200	100%	55%	45%
	Left (Driver)	8,252	50%	7,005	42%	1,374	8%	16,631	100%	54%	46%
	Middle	10	34%	14	48%	5	17%	29	100%	42%	58%
	Right	1,890	53%	1,324	37%	319	9%	3,533	100%	59%	41%
	Other/Unknown	0	0%	6	86%	1	14%	7	100%	0%	100%
Second Row	Total	623	38%	854	52%	155	9%	1,632	100%	42%	58%
	Left	245	38%	328	51%	72	11%	645	100%	43%	57%
	Middle	73	34%	130	60%	14	6%	217	100%	36%	64%
	Right	300	41%	361	50%	64	9%	725	100%	45%	55%
	Other/Unknown	5	11%	35	78%	5	11%	45	100%	13%	88%
Other*		31	16%	144	76%	14	7%	189	100%	18%	82%
Unknown		9	5%	119	61%	66	34%	194	100%	7%	93%
Total		**10,815**	**49%**	**9,466**	**43%**	**1,934**	**9%**	**22,215**	**100%**	**53%**	**47%**

Source: FARS 2019 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 that were killed as well as those that survived) in fatal crashes in 2019 with known restraint use:

- Twenty-six percent were unrestrained at the time of the crashes (Table 6);
- Twenty-two percent were unrestrained during the day; and
- Thirty percent were unrestrained at night.

For those passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use who survived fatal crashes in 2019:

- During daytime, 12 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who survived fatal crashes were unrestrained (thus 88% of the survivors were restrained); and
- Sixteen percent of crash survivors were unrestrained during nighttime.

Table 6

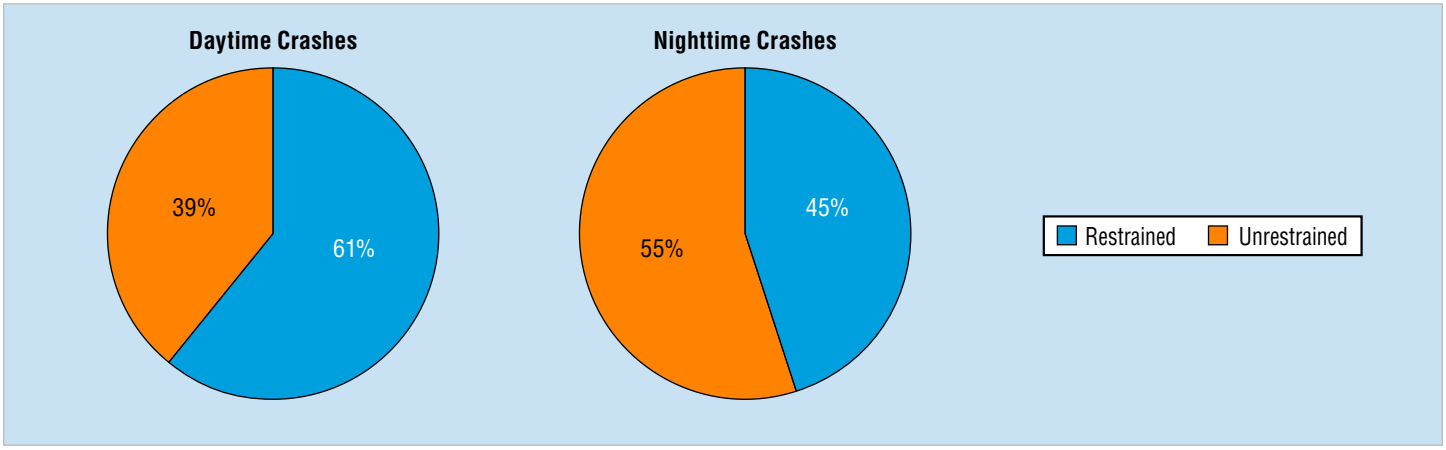
Passenger Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Survival Status, Time of Day, and Restraint Use, 2019

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	6,629	56%	4,288	36%	834	7%	11,751	100%	61%	39%
	Nighttime	4,124	40%	5,083	49%	1,070	10%	10,277	100%	45%	55%
	Unknown	62	33%	95	51%	30	16%	187	100%	39%	61%
	Total	10,815	49%	9,466	43%	1,934	9%	22,215	100%	53%	47%
Survived	Daytime	15,626	82%	2,123	11%	1,384	7%	19,133	100%	88%	12%
	Nighttime	13,858	75%	2,654	14%	2,085	11%	18,597	100%	84%	16%
	Unknown	33	53%	7	11%	22	35%	62	100%	83%	18%
	Total	29,517	78%	4,784	13%	3,491	9%	37,792	100%	86%	14%
Total	Daytime	22,255	72%	6,411	21%	2,218	7%	30,884	100%	78%	22%
	Nighttime	17,982	62%	7,737	27%	3,155	11%	28,874	100%	70%	30%
	Unknown	95	38%	102	41%	52	21%	249	100%	48%	52%
	Total	**40,332**	**67%**	**14,250**	**24%**	**5,425**	**9%**	**60,007**	**100%**	**74%**	**26%**

Source: FARS 2019 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 2019 with known restraint use, the percentage of unrestrained fatalities during daytime was 39 percent compared to 55 percent during nighttime (Figure 5).

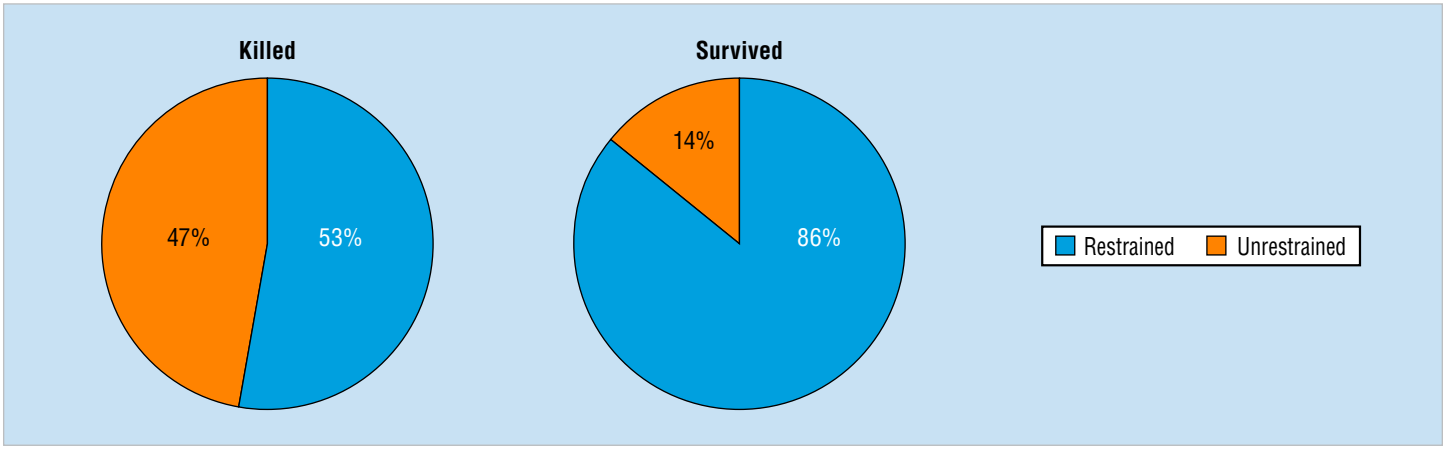
Figure 5
Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by Time of Day and Restraint Use*, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

For passenger vehicle occupants involved in fatal crashes in 2019, nearly half (47%) of those who were killed were unrestrained in the crashes, compared to only 14 percent of those who survived (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Survival Status and Restraint Use*, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 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 2019 crashes, 81 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from vehicles were killed. Seat belts are very effective in preventing total ejections; in 2019 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 that 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 did not exist prior to 1987

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).

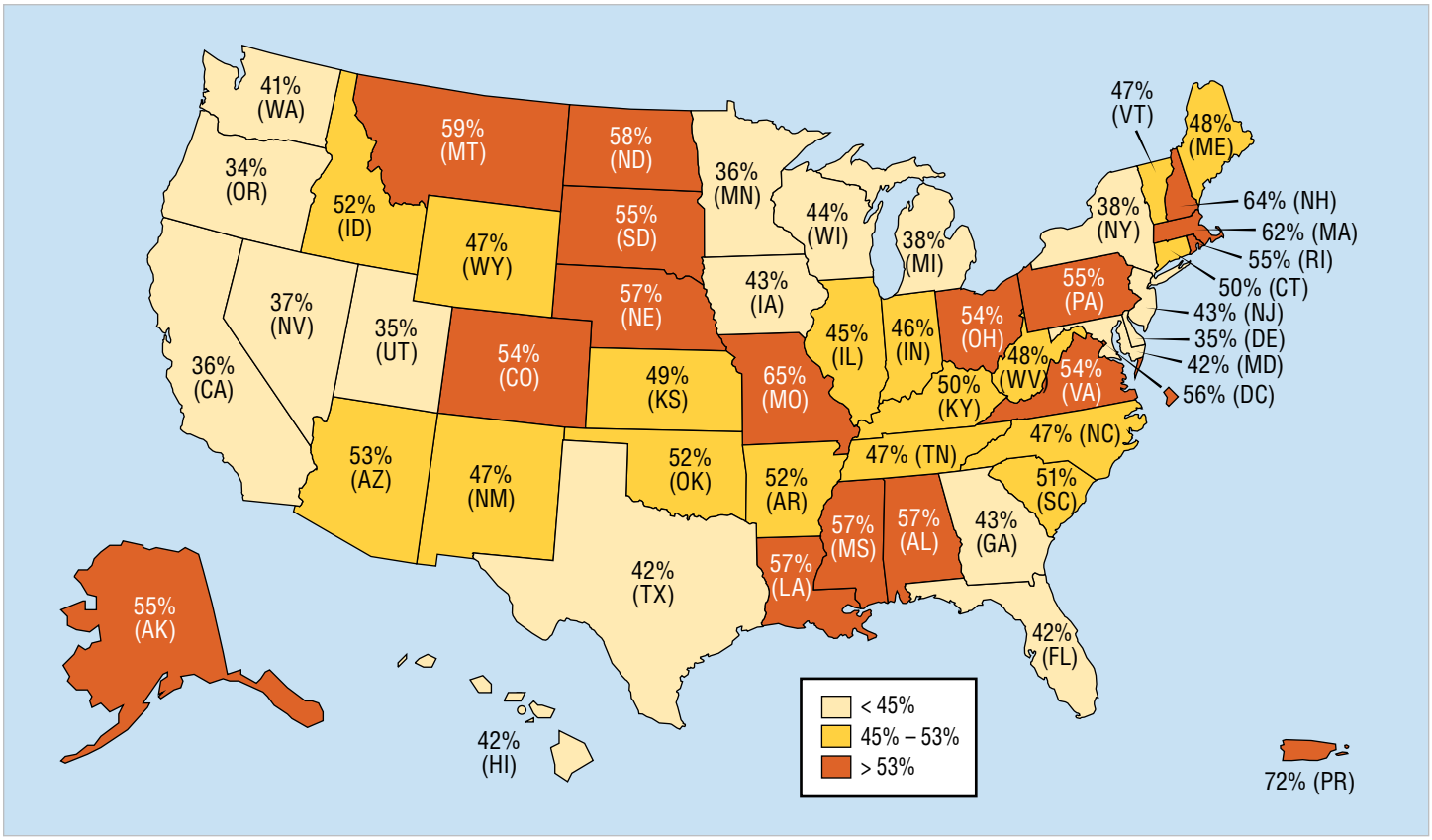
Among children under 5, an estimated 325 lives were saved in 2017 by restraint use. Of these 325 lives saved, 312 were associated with the use of car seats and 14 with the use of adult seat belts. At 100-percent car seat use for those under 5 years old, an estimated 371 (that is, an additional 46) lives 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 percentage of the known unrestrained use of passenger vehicle occupants killed in each State for 2019. Table 8 shows seat belt use information for passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2019 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 by observing occupants in traffic on roads at selected sites.

Figure 7

Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by State, 2019



Source: FARS 2019 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Table 8

Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed, by State, Restraint Use, and Observed Seat Belt Use Rate, 2019

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	673	268	40%	352	52%	53	8%	43%	57%	92.3%
Alaska	48	18	38%	22	46%	8	17%	45%	55%	94.1%
Arizona	466	190	41%	214	46%	62	13%	47%	53%	90.6%
Arkansas	350	151	43%	165	47%	34	10%	48%	52%	81.9%
California	1,900	1,126	59%	620	33%	154	8%	64%	36%	96.0%
Colorado	370	160	43%	189	51%	21	6%	46%	54%	88.3%
Connecticut	137	58	42%	57	42%	22	16%	50%	50%	93.7%
Delaware	72	44	61%	24	33%	4	6%	65%	35%	92.5%
District of Columbia	10	4	40%	5	50%	1	10%	44%	56%	95.4%
Florida	1,585	899	57%	658	42%	28	2%	58%	42%	89.8%
Georgia	989	514	52%	384	39%	91	9%	57%	43%	95.9%
Hawaii	46	22	48%	16	35%	8	17%	58%	42%	97.1%
Idaho	166	76	46%	81	49%	9	5%	48%	52%	85.7%
Illinois	643	311	48%	250	39%	82	13%	55%	45%	94.3%
Indiana	553	262	47%	220	40%	71	13%	54%	46%	94.9%
Iowa	237	125	53%	93	39%	19	8%	57%	43%	94.6%
Kansas	315	141	45%	137	43%	37	12%	51%	49%	84.9%
Kentucky	526	264	50%	262	50%	0	0%	50%	50%	89.7%
Louisiana	458	179	39%	234	51%	45	10%	43%	57%	87.5%
Maine	103	52	50%	48	47%	3	3%	52%	48%	88.5%
Maryland	298	147	49%	108	36%	43	14%	58%	42%	90.4%
Massachusetts	198	60	30%	96	48%	42	21%	38%	62%	81.6%
Michigan	644	343	53%	206	32%	95	15%	62%	38%	94.4%
Minnesota	238	129	54%	74	31%	35	15%	64%	36%	93.4%
Mississippi	504	210	42%	275	55%	19	4%	43%	57%	80.5%
Missouri	574	181	32%	340	59%	53	9%	35%	65%	87.7%
Montana	116	45	39%	66	57%	5	4%	41%	59%	88.9%
Nebraska	191	68	36%	90	47%	33	17%	43%	57%	79.7%
Nevada	158	94	59%	55	35%	9	6%	63%	37%	94.2%
New Hampshire	61	21	34%	38	62%	2	3%	36%	64%	70.7%
New Jersey	260	144	55%	108	42%	8	3%	57%	43%	90.2%
New Mexico	247	116	47%	101	41%	30	12%	53%	47%	91.8%
New York	438	248	57%	153	35%	37	8%	62%	38%	94.2%
North Carolina	893	448	50%	405	45%	40	4%	53%	47%	88.4%
North Dakota	69	24	35%	33	48%	12	17%	42%	58%	83.7%
Ohio	780	324	42%	379	49%	77	10%	46%	54%	85.9%
Oklahoma	435	194	45%	206	47%	35	8%	49%	52%	84.7%
Oregon	315	170	54%	87	28%	58	18%	66%	34%	95.7%
Pennsylvania	665	259	39%	318	48%	88	13%	45%	55%	88.6%
Rhode Island	35	15	43%	18	51%	2	6%	45%	55%	88.3%
South Carolina	628	292	46%	299	48%	37	6%	49%	51%	90.3%
South Dakota	72	31	43%	38	53%	3	4%	45%	55%	75.2%
Tennessee	777	383	49%	343	44%	51	7%	53%	47%	91.8%
Texas	2,279	1,187	52%	868	38%	224	10%	58%	42%	90.9%
Utah	149	88	59%	48	32%	13	9%	65%	35%	90.2%
Vermont	32	17	53%	15	47%	0	0%	53%	47%	89.3%
Virginia	559	255	46%	301	54%	3	1%	46%	54%	85.4%
Washington	303	147	49%	104	34%	52	17%	59%	41%	93.1%
West Virginia	169	78	46%	73	43%	18	11%	52%	48%	90.2%
Wisconsin	378	180	48%	143	38%	55	15%	56%	44%	90.2%
Wyoming	103	53	51%	47	46%	3	3%	53%	47%	78.3%
U.S. Total	**22,215**	**10,815**	**49%**	**9,466**	**43%**	**1,934**	**9%**	**53%**	**47%**	**90.7%****
Puerto Rico	138	39	28%	99	72%	0	0%	28%	72%	88.3%

Sources: FARS 2019 ARF; NOPUS 2019

Notes: Shaded States are those with primary seat belt laws in 2019.

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 2019 in Report No. DOT HS 812 947).

For more information on State observed seat belt use rates, see the Crash*Stat titled *Seat Belt Use in 2019—Use Rates in the States and Territories* (Report No. DOT HS 812 947). 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 2019 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 (92.0% versus 86.2%, respectively, in 2019) (see Report No. DOT HS 812 875, Figure 3).

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 2019 ARF, the 2018 Final File was released to replace the 2018 ARF. The final fatality count in motor vehicle traffic crashes for 2018 was 36,835, which was updated from 36,560 in the 2018 ARF. The number of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities from the 2018 Final File was 22,845, which was updated from 22,697 from the 2018 ARF.

The 2016 and 2017 Final Files have been amended, but this amendment did not change the overall number of fatal crashes or fatalities.

Important Safety Reminders

Child Restraint Systems

1. 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.
2. Use either the lower anchors and tether, or the seat belt and tether when installing forward-facing seats.
3. 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.
4. 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
5. Remember to register your car seat or booster seat so you can be notified in the event of a safety recall.
6. Plan for using car seats or booster seats when travelling and riding in taxis or ride-share vehicle.
7. 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.
8. Keep children in the back seat until at least age 13. It's the safest place to ride.

Seat Belts

1. 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.
2. It is important to keep yourself safe when driving and when riding in the front AND back seat of all vehicles.
3. Always wear your seat belt when riding in taxis and ride-share vehicles.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. You still need to wear your seat belt even if your car or truck has air bags or advanced safety features.
7. 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

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Additional data visualization tools for fact sheets can be found at https://cdan.dot.gov/DataVisualization/DataVisualization.htm#

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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. Additional data tools, such as the State Traffic Safety Information (STSI), Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool (FIRST), and more can be found at https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/. 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/.

Other fact sheets available from the NCSA are *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,* and *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 annual Traffic Safety Facts report can be found at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration