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

DOT HS 813 840 October 2026

Occupant Protection in Passenger Vehicles

In this fact sheet for 2024 the information is presented as follows.

- Overview
- Occupant Characteristics
  - Passenger Vehicle Types
  - Age and Sex
  - Seating Position
- Time of Day and Survival Status
- Benefits
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  - Child Restraints
- States
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- Important Safety Reminders

This fact sheet discusses occupants (drivers and passengers) of passenger vehicles and their occupant protection including seat belts, car seats for children under 5 years old, and frontal air bags. Passenger vehicles are passenger cars and light trucks (pickups, SUVs, and vans) with gross vehicle weight ratings of 10,000 lb or less.

Key Findings

- Forty-eight percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 2024 were unrestrained (based on known restraint use).
- In traffic crashes in 2024, considering known driver restraint use by passenger vehicle type, 59 percent of pickup drivers killed were unrestrained, compared to passenger car drivers (47%), SUV drivers (46%), and van drivers (42%).
- Sixty percent (based on known restraint use) of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in the 21-to-24 and 25-to-34 age groups in traffic crashes in 2024 were unrestrained—the highest percentage of all age groups.
- In 2024 traffic crashes, among passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use, 53 percent of male fatalities were unrestrained compared to 40 percent of females.
- In 2024 among passenger vehicle occupant traffic fatalities with known restraint use, 47 percent seated in the front row and 58 percent of those in the second row were unrestrained.
- Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in traffic crashes in 2024 with known restraint use, 41 percent were unrestrained during the day compared to 56 percent at night.

This fact sheet has motor vehicle traffic crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). Refer to the end of this publication for more information on FARS.

Due to a vehicle classification change, the 2020 and later-year vehicle type classifications are not comparable to 2019 and earlier-year vehicle type classifications. This change affects any analysis with a vehicle component to it. Refer to the end of this publication for information on Product Information Catalog and Vehicle Listing (vPIC) Vehicle Classification.

A motor vehicle traffic crash is defined as an incident that involved one or more motor vehicles in-transport and originated on or had a harmful event (injury or damage) on a public trafficway, such as a road or highway. Crashes that occur on private property not regularly used by the public for transport, including some parts of parking lots and driveways, are excluded. The terms "motor vehicle traffic crash" and "traffic crash" are used interchangeably in this fact sheet.

Overview

According to NHTSA's 2024 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), the estimated seat belt use rate from 2015 to 2024 increased from 88.5 percent in 2015 to 91.2 percent in 2024 (National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 2025a). NOPUS provides the only nationwide probability-based estimate of observed seat belt use in the United States. This represents estimates of observed front-seat occupant (driver and passenger) seat belt use during daylight (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and does not necessarily represent restraint use among occupants in crashes.

Restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes from 2015 to 2024 is shown in Table 1. There were 39,254 traffic fatalities in the United States in 2024, of which 22,713 (58%) were occupants of passenger vehicles. Of the 22,713 killed, there were 10,402 who were restrained (46%) and 9,758 who were unrestrained (43%) at the time of the crashes. Restraint use was unknown for the remaining 2,553 occupants (11%) killed. Considering only passenger vehicle occupant fatalities whose restraint use was known, 52 percent were restrained, and 48 percent were unrestrained. The number of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2024 declined 7.4 percent compared to 2023.

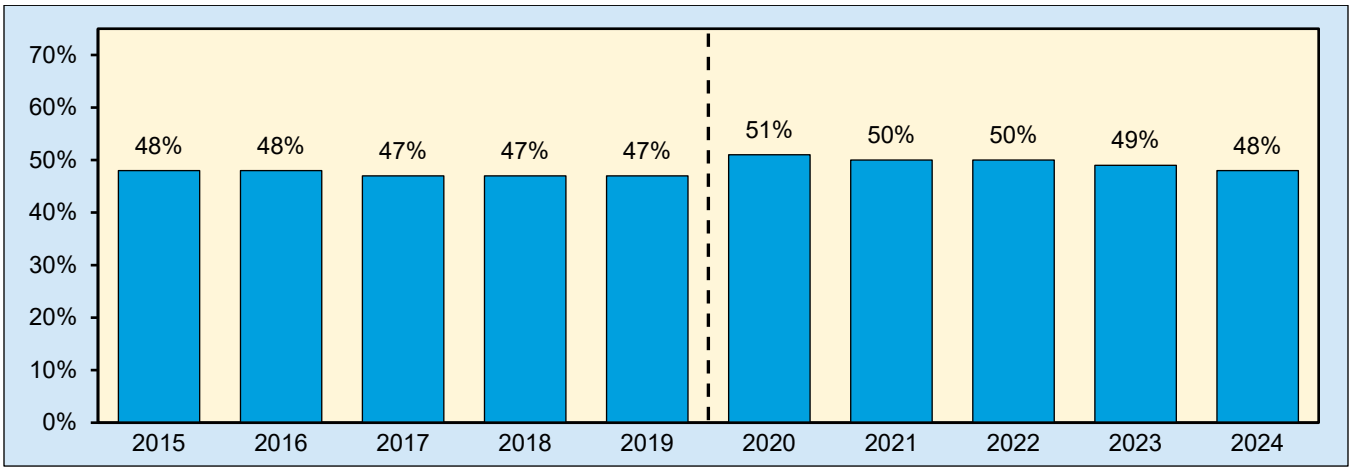
Table 1. Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Restraint Use, 2015–2024

	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
Year	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
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	10,532	44%	10,925	46%	2,457	10%	23,914	100%	49%	51%
2021	11,899	45%	11,878	45%	2,689	10%	26,466	100%	50%	50%
2022	11,436	45%	11,359	45%	2,705	11%	25,500	100%	50%	50%
2023	10,833	45%	10,533	44%	2,651	11%	24,017	100%	51%	49%
2024	10,402	46%	9,758	43%	2,553	11%	22,713	100%	52%	48%

Source: FARS 2015–2023 Final File, 2024 Annual Report File (ARF)
Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding. Due to a vehicle classification change, the 2020 and later-year data is not comparable to 2019 and earlier years. Refer to the end of this publication for information on vPIC vehicle classification.

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 declined to 48 percent in 2024 from 49 percent in 2023.

Figure 1. Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, 2015–2024



Source: FARS 2015–2023 Final File, 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.
Notes: Due to a vehicle classification change, the 2020 and later-year data is not comparable to 2019 and earlier years. Refer to the end of this publication for information on vPIC vehicle classification.

Occupant Characteristics

Passenger Vehicle Types

Table 2 shows traffic fatalities separately for drivers and passengers for each passenger vehicle type. Seventy-six percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2024 were drivers, and 24 percent were passengers.

In 2024 there were 17,268 passenger vehicle drivers killed in traffic crashes: 47 percent were in passenger cars and 53 percent were in light trucks. Among the 15,416 passenger vehicle driver fatalities for whom restraint use was known, 49 percent were unrestrained. However, the percentage of drivers killed who were unrestrained differed by vehicle type: 59 percent of pickup drivers, 47 percent of passenger car drivers, 46 percent of SUV drivers, and 42 percent of van drivers.

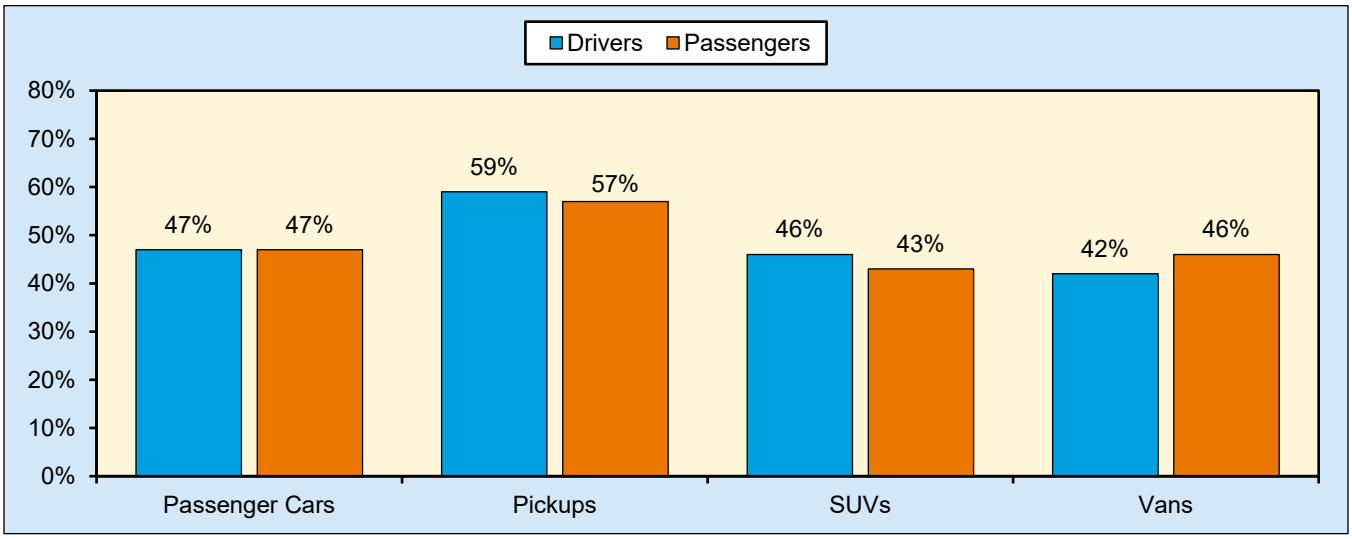
Table 2. Drivers and Passengers Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Passenger Vehicle Type and Restraint Use, 2024

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	3,820	47%	3,403	42%	900	11%	8,123	100%	53%	47%
	Light Truck*	4,057	44%	4,136	45%	952	10%	9,145	100%	50%	50%
	–Pickup	1,247	37%	1,780	52%	379	11%	3,406	100%	41%	59%
	–SUV	2,502	49%	2,132	41%	515	10%	5,149	100%	54%	46%
	–Van	308	52%	223	38%	56	10%	587	100%	58%	42%
	Total	**7,877**	**46%**	**7,539**	**44%**	**1,852**	**11%**	**17,268**	**100%**	**51%**	**49%**
Passengers Killed	Passenger Car	1,174	46%	1,033	40%	345	14%	2,552	100%	53%	47%
	Light Truck*	1,351	47%	1,186	41%	356	12%	2,893	100%	53%	47%
	–Pickup	272	39%	363	51%	70	10%	705	100%	43%	57%
	–SUV	933	50%	699	38%	232	12%	1,864	100%	57%	43%
	–Van	146	45%	123	38%	54	17%	323	100%	54%	46%
	Total	**2,525**	**46%**	**2,219**	**41%**	**701**	**13%**	**5,445**	**100%**	**53%**	**47%**

Source: FARS 2024 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes occupants in other/unknown light-truck vehicle types.

In 2024 there were 5,445 passengers killed in passenger vehicles in traffic crashes, and 47 percent were riding in passenger cars. Among the 5,445 passengers killed in passenger vehicles for whom restraint use was known, 47 percent were unrestrained, but non-use varied by vehicle type: 57 percent of passengers killed in pickups were unrestrained, compared to 47 percent in passenger cars, 46 percent in vans, and 43 percent in SUVs. 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 in Traffic Crashes, by Passenger Vehicle Type, 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Age and Sex

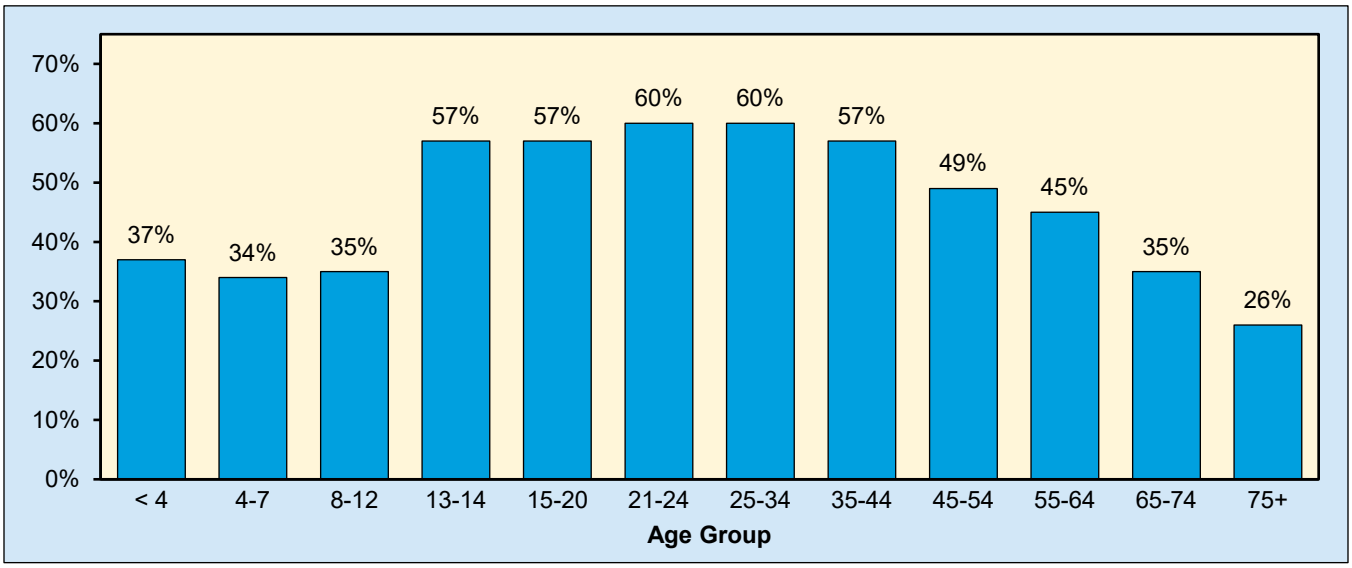
Table 3 shows information on restraint use by age group for passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2024 traffic crashes. Among those where restraint use was known, adults in the 21-to-24 and 25-to-34 age groups had the highest percentage (60%) of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities, while the lowest percentages of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities were seen among children 4 to 7 years old (34%) and people 75 or older (26%). Figure 3 shows these percentages.

Table 3. Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Age Group and Restraint Use, 2024

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	107	57%	62	33%	18	10%	187	100%	63%	37%
4–7	98	58%	50	29%	22	13%	170	100%	66%	34%
8–12	104	54%	55	28%	34	18%	193	100%	65%	35%
13–14	47	37%	62	49%	18	14%	127	100%	43%	57%
15–20	888	37%	1,173	49%	357	15%	2,418	100%	43%	57%
21–24	689	35%	1,015	52%	258	13%	1,962	100%	40%	60%
25–34	1,388	35%	2,079	52%	513	13%	3,980	100%	40%	60%
35–44	1,219	38%	1,607	50%	388	12%	3,214	100%	43%	57%
45–54	1,160	46%	1,122	44%	264	10%	2,546	100%	51%	49%
55–64	1,330	50%	1,092	41%	247	9%	2,669	100%	55%	45%
65–74	1,381	60%	741	32%	189	8%	2,311	100%	65%	35%
75+	1,978	68%	689	24%	221	8%	2,888	100%	74%	26%
Total*	**10,402**	**46%**	**9,758**	**43%**	**2,553**	**11%**	**22,713**	**100%**	**52%**	**48%**

Source: FARS 2024 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes occupants of unknown age.

Figure 3. Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Age Group, 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

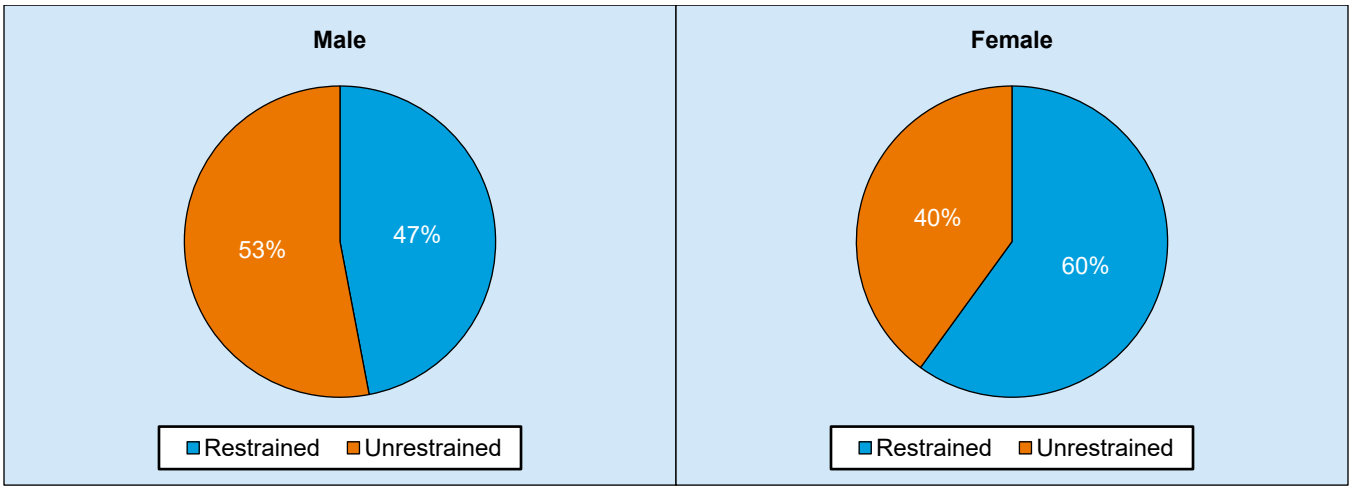
Nearly twice as many male occupants (15,008) as female occupants (7,672) in passenger vehicles were killed in traffic crashes in 2024, as shown in Table 4. When restraint use was known, 53 percent of the males killed and 40 percent of the females killed were unrestrained (Figure 4) in passenger vehicles. Restraint use was unknown for 12 percent of the male passenger vehicle occupant fatalities and 10 percent of the female passenger vehicle occupant fatalities.

Table 4. Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Sex and Restraint Use, 2024

Sex	Restraint Use						Total		Percent Based on Known Restraint Use	
	Restrained		Unrestrained		Unknown					
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Restrained	Unrestrained
Male	6,222	41%	7,009	47%	1,777	12%	15,008	100%	47%	53%
Female	4,168	54%	2,738	36%	766	10%	7,672	100%	60%	40%
Total*	**10,402**	**46%**	**9,758**	**43%**	**2,553**	**11%**	**22,713**	**100%**	**52%**	**48%**

Source: FARS 2024 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes occupants of unknown sex.

Figure 4. Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Sex and Restraint Use,* 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Seating Position

Table 5 shows restraint use for passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 2024, by their seating position. Among killed passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use, 47 percent of those in the front row and 58 percent of those in the second row were unrestrained.

Table 5. Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Seating Position and Restraint Use, 2024

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**	**9,778**	**47%**	**8,754**	**42%**	**2,201**	**11%**	**20,733**	**100%**	**53%**	**47%**
	Left (Driver)	7,878	46%	7,539	44%	1,852	11%	17,269	100%	51%	49%
	Middle	6	29%	14	67%	1	5%	21	100%	30%	70%
	Right	1,892	55%	1,194	35%	346	10%	3,432	100%	61%	39%
	Other/Unknown	2	18%	7	64%	2	18%	11	100%	22%	78%
Second Row	**Total**	**572**	**36%**	**802**	**50%**	**215**	**14%**	**1,589**	**100%**	**42%**	**58%**
	Left	223	38%	284	48%	80	14%	587	100%	44%	56%
	Middle	56	29%	114	58%	26	13%	196	100%	33%	67%
	Right	289	38%	368	48%	102	13%	759	100%	44%	56%
	Other/Unknown	4	9%	36	77%	7	15%	47	100%	10%	90%
Other*		32	23%	93	66%	16	11%	141	100%	26%	74%
Unknown		20	8%	109	44%	121	48%	250	100%	16%	84%
Total		**10,402**	**46%**	**9,758**	**43%**	**2,553**	**11%**	**22,713**	**100%**	**52%**	**48%**

Source: FARS 2024 ARF
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to individual rounding.
*Includes additional rows, cargo areas, trailing units, and vehicle exteriors.

Time of Day and Survival Status

Table 6 shows passenger vehicle occupants in fatal traffic crashes by their survival status, time of day, and restraint use. Forty-eight percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained (based on known restraint use), compared to 13 percent for those who survived. Looking at all (killed and survived) passenger vehicle occupants in fatal traffic crashes in 2024 with known restraint use:

- 26 percent were unrestrained at the time of the crashes;
- 23 percent were unrestrained during daytime; and
- 29 percent were unrestrained during nighttime.

For those passenger vehicle occupants with known restraint use who survived fatal traffic crashes in 2024:

- 12 percent were unrestrained during daytime; and
- 15 percent were unrestrained during nighttime.

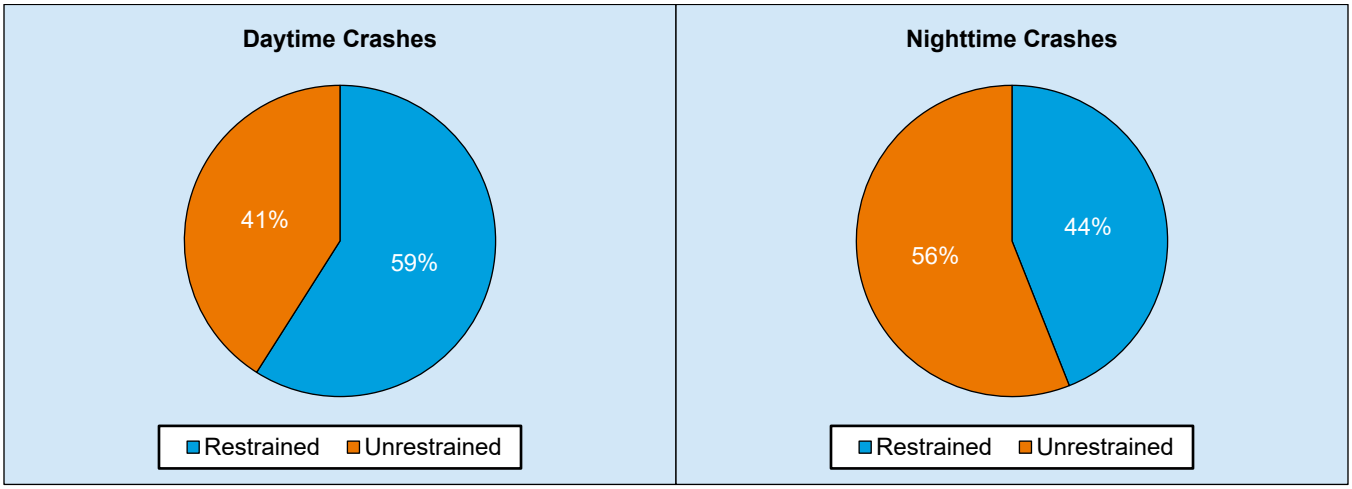
Table 6. Passenger Vehicle Occupants in Fatal Traffic Crashes, by Survival Status, Time of Day, and Restraint Use, 2024

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	6,117	53%	4,319	38%	1,037	9%	11,473	100%	59%	41%
	Nighttime	4,240	38%	5,364	48%	1,492	13%	11,096	100%	44%	56%
	Unknown	45	31%	75	52%	24	17%	144	100%	38%	63%
	Total	**10,402**	**46%**	**9,758**	**43%**	**2,553**	**11%**	**22,713**	**100%**	**52%**	**48%**
Survived	Daytime	15,465	82%	2,022	11%	1,464	8%	18,951	100%	88%	12%
	Nighttime	15,436	74%	2,709	13%	2,744	13%	20,889	100%	85%	15%
	Unknown	28	47%	9	15%	23	38%	60	100%	76%	24%
	Total	**30,929**	**78%**	**4,740**	**12%**	**4,231**	**11%**	**39,900**	**100%**	**87%**	**13%**
Total	Daytime	21,582	71%	6,341	21%	2,501	8%	30,424	100%	77%	23%
	Nighttime	19,676	62%	8,073	25%	4,236	13%	31,985	100%	71%	29%
	Unknown	73	36%	84	41%	47	23%	204	100%	46%	54%
	Total	**41,331**	**66%**	**14,498**	**23%**	**6,784**	**11%**	**62,613**	**100%**	**74%**	**26%**

Source: FARS 2024 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 traffic crashes in 2024 with known restraint use, the percentage of unrestrained fatalities during daytime was 41 percent compared to 56 percent during nighttime (Figure 5).

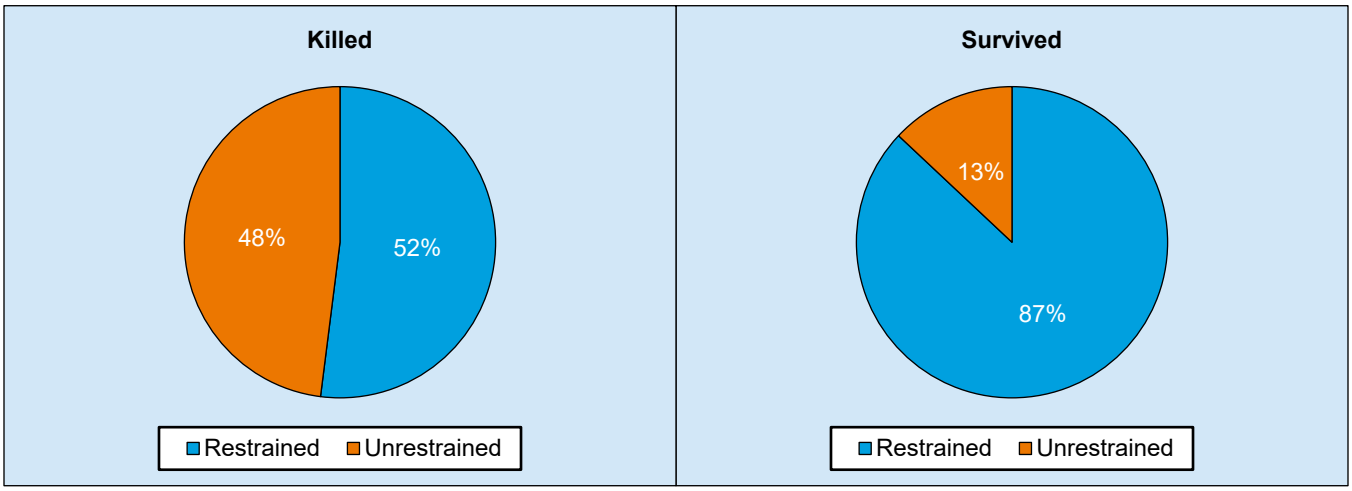
Figure 5. Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Time of Day and Restraint Use,* 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

For passenger vehicle occupants in fatal traffic crashes in 2024, forty-eight percent of those killed were unrestrained, compared to only 13 percent of those who survived (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Percentages of Passenger Vehicle Occupants in Fatal Traffic Crashes, by Survival Status and Restraint Use,* 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Benefits

Seat Belts

The safety benefits of seat belt use are significant and well-documented. Seat belts help keep occupants inside vehicles and 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 45 percent;
- moderate-to-critical injury to front-seat passenger car occupants 50 percent;
- fatal injury to front-seat light-truck occupants 60 percent; and
- moderate-to-critical injury to front-seat light-truck occupants 65 percent (Kahane, 2015; NHTSA, 1984).

Ejection from the vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to people in a crash. In NHTSA's FARS data, ejection refers to an occupant being totally or partially thrown from the vehicle. In 2024 fatal traffic crashes based on known restraint use, 84 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from vehicles were killed. Seat belts are very effective in preventing total ejections; in 2024 only 1 percent of all passenger vehicle occupants involved (those killed as well as survived) in fatal traffic crashes reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected, compared to 24 percent of those unrestrained.

Frontal Air Bags

Frontal air bags, combined with lap/shoulder belts, offer effective safety protection for passenger vehicle occupants. NHTSA analyses show frontal air bags reduce fatalities 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 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.

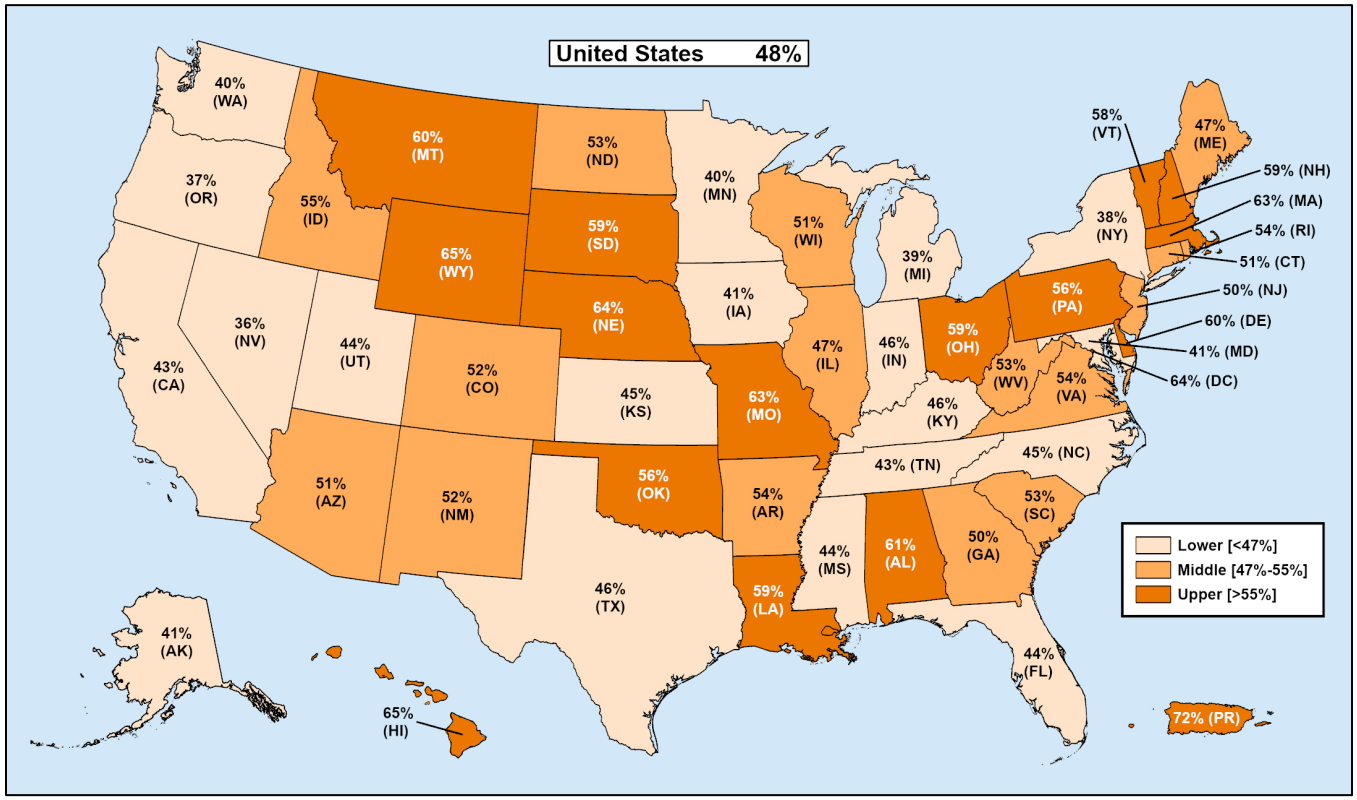
Child Restraints

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

States

Figure 7 shows the percentages of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes for each State for 2024, based on known restraint use. Table 7 shows seat belt use information for passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes by State. Also, Table 7 shows seat belt use rates in the States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The national seat belt use rate results were obtained from NOPUS by observing occupants in traffic on roads at selected sites. Observed seat belt use rates at the State level were obtained from probability-based observational surveys conducted during daylight hours (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.) by each State, certified by NHTSA.

Figure 7. Percentages of Unrestrained* Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, By State, 2024



Source: FARS 2024 ARF
*Based on known restraint use.

Table 7. Passenger Vehicle Occupants Killed in Traffic Crashes, by State, Restraint Use, and Observed Seat Belt Use Rate, 2024

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	636	223	35%	344	54%	69	11%	39%	61%	92.2%
Alaska	38	16	42%	11	29%	11	29%	59%	41%	92.1%
Arizona	592	253	43%	261	44%	78	13%	49%	51%	89.5%
Arkansas	401	165	41%	194	48%	42	10%	46%	54%	77.7%
California	1,977	1,013	51%	755	38%	209	11%	57%	43%	97.5%
Colorado	364	159	44%	170	47%	35	10%	48%	52%	88.2%
Connecticut	163	54	33%	57	35%	52	32%	49%	51%	95.0%
Delaware	62	24	39%	36	58%	2	3%	40%	60%	92.3%
District of Columbia	19	5	26%	9	47%	5	26%	36%	64%	93.4%
Florida	1,479	803	54%	632	43%	44	3%	56%	44%	90.0%
Georgia	848	377	44%	371	44%	100	12%	50%	50%	88.8%
Hawaii	31	9	29%	17	55%	5	16%	35%	65%	97.2%
Idaho	160	61	38%	75	47%	24	15%	45%	55%	85.7%
Illinois	699	281	40%	251	36%	167	24%	53%	47%	92.4%
Indiana	528	229	43%	195	37%	104	20%	54%	46%	93.6%
Iowa	217	120	55%	85	39%	12	6%	59%	41%	94.0%
Kansas	225	114	51%	95	42%	16	7%	55%	45%	86.2%
Kentucky	434	233	54%	201	46%	0	0%	54%	46%	87.8%
Louisiana	438	162	37%	236	54%	40	9%	41%	59%	88.4%
Maine	119	62	52%	56	47%	1	1%	53%	47%	93.8%
Maryland	294	151	51%	103	35%	40	14%	59%	41%	90.6%
Massachusetts	197	61	31%	102	52%	34	17%	37%	63%	84.4%
Michigan	694	344	50%	221	32%	129	19%	61%	39%	92.0%
Minnesota	291	146	50%	99	34%	46	16%	60%	40%	94.7%
Mississippi	528	251	48%	196	37%	81	15%	56%	44%	81.2%
Missouri	595	205	34%	346	58%	44	7%	37%	63%	88.3%
Montana	137	52	38%	79	58%	6	4%	40%	60%	79.3%
Nebraska	175	54	31%	97	55%	24	14%	36%	64%	80.2%
Nevada	187	103	55%	58	31%	26	14%	64%	36%	94.8%
New Hampshire	77	27	35%	39	51%	11	14%	41%	59%	78.2%
New Jersey	296	137	46%	135	46%	24	8%	50%	50%	90.4%
New Mexico	230	89	39%	95	41%	46	20%	48%	52%	93.6%
New York	508	287	56%	175	34%	46	9%	62%	38%	91.9%
North Carolina	1,028	522	51%	430	42%	76	7%	55%	45%	92.8%
North Dakota	58	24	41%	27	47%	7	12%	47%	53%	79.8%
Ohio	716	259	36%	374	52%	83	12%	41%	59%	85.2%
Oklahoma	412	164	40%	209	51%	39	9%	44%	56%	86.4%
Oregon	324	177	55%	103	32%	44	14%	63%	37%	95.5%
Pennsylvania	647	240	37%	305	47%	102	16%	44%	56%	87.6%
Rhode Island	25	11	44%	13	52%	1	4%	46%	54%	90.5%
South Carolina	657	288	44%	330	50%	39	6%	47%	53%	89.7%
South Dakota	83	33	40%	47	57%	3	4%	41%	59%	88.6%
Tennessee	789	400	51%	304	39%	85	11%	57%	43%	92.2%
Texas	2,507	1,211	48%	1,014	40%	282	11%	54%	46%	90.1%
Utah	147	67	46%	53	36%	27	18%	56%	44%	90.7%
Vermont	41	15	37%	21	51%	5	12%	42%	58%	88.4%
Virginia	602	276	46%	320	53%	6	1%	46%	54%	81.8%
Washington	432	205	47%	139	32%	88	20%	60%	40%	94.6%
West Virginia	157	60	38%	69	44%	28	18%	47%	53%	92.0%
Wisconsin	382	158	41%	163	43%	61	16%	49%	51%	89.2%
Wyoming	67	22	33%	41	61%	4	6%	35%	65%	73.4%
U.S. Total	**22,713**	**10,402**	**46%**	**9,758**	**43%**	**2,553**	**11%**	**52%**	**48%**	**91.2%****
Puerto Rico	121	34	28%	87	72%	0	0%	28%	72%	86.3%

Sources: FARS 2024 ARF; NOPUS 2024
Notes: Shaded States are those with primary seat belt laws for front-seat occupants in 2024. 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 (NCSA, 2025b).

For more information on State-observed seat belt use rates, see NCSA (2025b). Note that restraint use (observed data as well as that for passenger vehicle 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) web page at www.ghsa.org/state-laws-issues/seat-belt-use.

Restraint Use Laws

The first mandatory seat belt use law was enacted in New York in 1984. 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 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 2024 there were 35 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico that had primary seat belt laws in effect for front-seat occupants, enabling law enforcement officers to stop vehicles and write citations when they observed violations of the seat belt law. In 14 States the laws specified secondary enforcement, meaning that police officers were permitted to write citations only after a vehicle was 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.

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 GHSA website at www.ghsa.org.

- Seat belt laws—www.ghsa.org/state-laws-issues/seat-belt-use
- Child passenger safety laws—www.ghsa.org/state-laws-issues/child-passengers

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 (91.7% versus 89.2% in 2024) ([NCSA, 2025a], 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 traveling and riding in taxis or rideshare vehicles.
- To 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

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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 trafficway customarily open to the public and must result 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 2024 ARF, the 2023 Final File was released to replace the 2023 ARF. The final fatality count in motor vehicle traffic crashes for 2023 was 41,025, updated from 40,901 in the 2023 ARF. The number of passenger vehicle occupant fatalities from the 2023 Final File was 24,017, updated from 23,959 from the 2023 ARF.

Product Information Catalog and Vehicle Listing (vPIC) Vehicle Classification

Historically, vehicle type classifications (passenger cars, light trucks, large trucks, motorcycles, buses) from FARS used for analysis and data reporting were based on analyst-coded vehicle body type. NHTSA did not have manufacturer authoritative data to assist in vehicle body type coding. NCSA has developed a vPIC dataset to decode Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) and extract vehicle information. Details of vehicles (make, model, body class, etc.) in crashes are obtained from vPIC via VIN-linkage. The VIN-derived information from vPIC uses the manufacturer's classification of body class, which allows for more accurate vehicle type analysis.

The vPIC-based analysis data is available beginning with the 2020 FARS data file. Vehicle-related analysis for 2020 and later years are based on vPIC vehicle classification. As a result, the 2020 and later-year vehicle type classifications are not comparable to 2019 and earlier-year vehicle type classifications. This change affects any analysis with a vehicle component to it. More information on vPIC can be found at https://vpic.nhtsa.dot.gov.

The suggested APA format citation for this publication is:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2026, October). *Occupant protection in passenger vehicles: 2024 data* (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 840). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. https://doi.org/10.21949/7mth-qn39

For More Information:

Motor vehicle traffic crash data is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 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.nhtsa.gov/report-a-safety-problem.

The following data tools and resources can be found at https://cdan.dot.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)
- Motor Vehicle Crash Databook
- Leading Cause of Death Reports
- 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
- Race and Ethnicity
- Rural/Urban Traffic Fatalities
- School-Transportation-Related Traffic Crashes
- Speeding
- State Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Estimates
- State Traffic Data
- Summary of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes
- Young Drivers

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

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