



FACT SHEET

SAFETY BELT USE

Of the 32,598 passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2002, 59 percent were not wearing a safety belt. [The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Annual Assessment of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2002]

Among passenger vehicle occupants over 4 years old, safety belts saved an estimated 14,164 lives in 2002. If *ALL* passenger vehicle occupants over age 4 wore safety belts, 21,317 lives (that is, an additional 7,153) could have been saved in 2002. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts Occupant Protection, 2002]

Each percentage-point increase in safety belt use represents 2.8 million more people buckling up, approximately 270 more lives saved and 6,400 injuries prevented annually, NHTSA estimates. [NHTSA, FY2003 Performance Plan, 2002]

Safety belt use has increased significantly in the past few years, but more must be done. Safety belt use in the United States rose to 79 percent in 2003 from 58 percent in 1994. [NHTSA, Technical Report, Safety Belt Use in 2003, September 2003]

RESTRAINT EFFECTIVENESS

Seventy-three percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who were involved in a fatal crash in 2002 and were restrained survived; of those who were not restrained, only 42 percent survived. [Traffic Safety Facts 2002]

In fatal crashes, 73 percent of all passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected were killed. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections: only 1 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants reported to have been using restraints in fatal crashes were totally ejected, compared with 30 percent of the unrestrained occupants. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts Overview, 2002]

SAFETY BELTS SAVE LIVES AND MONEY

In the past 26 years, safety belts prevented 135,000 fatalities and 3.8 million injuries, saving \$585 billion in medical and other costs. If all vehicle occupants had used safety belts during that period, nearly 315,000 deaths and 5.2 million injuries could have been prevented — and \$913 billion in costs saved. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002]

In 2000, the deaths and serious injuries prevented by safety belts resulted in savings of \$50 billion in medical care, lost productivity and other injury-related costs. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002]

Motor vehicle crashes in 2000 cost a total of \$230.6 billion, an amount equal to 2.3 percent of the gross domestic product, or \$820 for every person living in the United States. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002]

In 2000, the economic cost to society was more than \$977,000 for each crash fatality and an average of \$1.1 million for each critically injured person. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002]

The general public pays nearly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes, delays and lost productivity. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002]

ADULTS UNDER 35 AND TEENS

In 2002, 62 percent of all 18- to 34-year-old passenger vehicle occupants who were killed in crashes were not wearing safety belts. By comparison, among vehicle occupants age 35 and older who were killed in crashes, 48 percent were not buckled up. [Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 2002 Annual Report File (ARF)]

In 2002, 65 percent of the 18- to 34-year-old male passenger vehicle occupants who were killed in crashes were not wearing safety belts. Fifty-four percent of the women age 18 to 34 who were killed in crashes were not buckled up. [Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 2002 Annual Report File (ARF)]

In 2001, when ranked by specific age, motor vehicle traffic crashes were the leading cause of death for age 2 and every age 4 through 33. [NHTSA, Research Note, Motor Vehicle Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in the United States, 2001, December 2003]

In 2002, 59 percent of 16- to 20-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a safety belt. [Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 2002 Annual Report File (ARF)]

In 2002, the economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers age 15 to 20 was about \$40.8 billion. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002 –Young Drivers]

Male teens continue to lag behind female teens in safety belt use. In 2001, 18.1 percent of high school males said they rarely or never wore a safety belt as a passenger, compared with 10.2 percent of high school females. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001]

Ninety-four percent of drivers age 16 to 20 said they buckle up to avoid serious injury. Eighty-two percent said they use safety belts because it's the law, and 80 percent do so to avoid a ticket. [NHTSA, Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, 2000]

DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Safety belt use among African Americans rose to 77 percent — increasing to essentially the same level as that of the general population — in 2002, from 69 percent in 2000. More than a quarter of African Americans who did not use safety belts in 2000 used them in 2002. [NHTSA, National Occupant Protection Use Survey, June 2002]

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for African Americans from birth through age 14 and are the second leading cause of death for African Americans 15 to 24 years old. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1998]

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Hispanics age one to 34 and the third leading cause of death for all Hispanics, surpassed only by heart disease and cancer. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2000]

In 2001, 16.1 percent of African American teens said they rarely or never used a safety belt as a passenger, compared with 13.6 percent of white teens and 14.5 percent of Hispanic teens. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001]

Even though African American and Hispanic male teens drive fewer miles than white male teens, they are twice as likely than whites to die in a crash. [Archives Of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, 1998]

RURAL AREAS AND PICKUPS

Safety belt use in rural areas was 73 percent in 2002, slightly below the 75 percent national average for 2002. [NHTSA, National Occupant Protection Use Survey, June 2002]

Safety belt use by pickup truck occupants is about 69 percent, among the lowest for any demographic group. [NHTSA, Technical Report, Safety Belt Use in 2003, DOT HS 809 646, September 2003]

SAFETY BELT LAWS

There are two types of safety belt laws: primary and secondary. A primary law allows a law enforcement officer to write a ticket if he or she simply observes an unbelted driver or passenger. Under a secondary law, an officer cannot ticket anyone for a safety belt violation unless the motorist is stopped for another infraction. Primary laws are very effective in increasing safety belt use. In 2003, belt use in States with primary laws was 83 percent, compared with 75 percent in States without primary laws. [NHTSA, Technical Report, Safety Belt Use in 2003, September 2003]

Teen safety belt use is significantly higher in States with primary safety belt laws than in States with secondary laws. [National Safety Council, Teenage Safety Belt Use, 2002]

As of April 2003, only 18 States, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia had primary safety belt laws. The primary-law States are Alabama, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Washington. New Hampshire is the only State that has no adult safety belt law.

HIGH VISIBILITY ENFORCEMENT

The *Click It or Ticket* model uses advertising, earned media and high-visibility law enforcement to increase safety belt and child safety seat use. *Click It or Ticket* programs have successfully sustained increases in restraint use at the community, State and regional levels. [NHTSA, Evaluation of Click It or Ticket Model Programs, 2002]

In May 2002, 10 States that implemented full-scale *Click It or Ticket* campaigns increased safety belt use overall by 8.6 percentage points, to 77.1 percent. The States used paid and earned media and Statewide law enforcement for four weeks. But in States that increased enforcement without publicizing the effort through paid media, belt use rose an average of only half a percentage point. [NHTSA, Evaluation of Click It or Ticket Model Programs, 2002]