



FACT SHEET

SAFETY BELT USE

Safety belt use has increased significantly in the past few years, but even more must be done to get the remaining non-users to buckle up. Safety belt use in the United States rose to 79 percent in 2003, from 58 percent in 1994. [NHTSA, Safety Belt Use in 2003, September 2003]

Of the 32,598 passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2002, 59 percent were not wearing a safety belt. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

An estimated 14,164 lives were saved by safety belts in 2002, and if all vehicle occupants over age 4 had been wearing safety belts, 7,153 more lives could have been saved, NHTSA estimates. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002 - Overview, July 2003]

RESTRAINT EFFECTIVENESS

Seventy-three percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who were in a fatal crash in 2002 and were restrained survived; of those who were not restrained, only 43 percent survived. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

In fatal crashes, 73 percent of all vehicle occupants who were totally ejected were killed. Only 1 percent of restrained occupants were ejected. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002 – Overview, July 2003]

SAFETY BELTS SAVE LIVES AND MONEY

In 2000, safety belts prevented nearly 11,900 fatalities and 325,000 serious injuries, saving \$50 billion in medical care, lost productivity, and other injury-related costs. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, May 2002]

In the year 2000, the total economic cost of motor vehicle crashes in the United States was \$230.6 billion. This represents 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, May 2002]

The lifetime economic cost to society for each fatality is over \$977,000. Over 80 percent of this amount is attributable to lost workplace and household productivity. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, May 2002]



Each critically injured crash survivor costs an average of \$1.1 million. Medical costs and lost productivity accounted for 84 percent of the cost for this most serious level of non-fatal injury. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, May 2002]

Overall, those not directly involved in crashes pay for nearly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes and travel delay. In 2000 these costs, borne by society rather than by crash victims, totaled over \$170 billion. [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, May 2002]

TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 15 to 34 in the United States. [National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Report, 2003]

In 2002, 5,625 16- to 20-year old passenger vehicle occupants were killed and 476,000 were injured in traffic crashes. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

In 2002, 64 percent of 16- to 20-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a safety belt. And 16 percent of 16- to 20-year-old drivers and passengers injured in crashes were not restrained. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

In 2002, 8,833 21- to 34-year old passenger vehicle occupants were killed and 788,000 were injured in traffic crashes. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

In 2002, 69 percent of 21- to 34-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a safety belt. And 13 percent of 21- to 34-year-olds drivers and passengers injured in crashes were not restrained. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002, October 2003]

The economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers age 15 to 20 was an estimated \$40.8 billion in 2002. [NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2002 –Young Drivers, July 2003]

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, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001]

MINORITIES

Safety belt use among African Americans rose to 77 percent – slightly above the national average at the time – 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, Research Note: Safety Belt Use in 2002 – Demographic Characteristics, March 2003]

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for African Americans from 3 through age 13 and are the second leading cause of death for African Americans 14 to 29 years old. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2000.]

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Hispanics age one to 44 and the fifth leading cause of death for all Hispanics. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2000]

In 2001, 16 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]

Per mile traveled, African American and Hispanic male teens (13-19 years old) are nearly twice as likely to die in a crash as male teenagers who are white. [NHTSA, Safety Belts and Teens 2003 Report, April 2003]

RURAL AREAS AND PICKUP DRIVERS

Safety belt use in rural areas was 73 percent in 2002, slightly below the 75 percent national average at the time. [NHTSA, Research Note: Safety Belt Use in 2002 – Demographic Characteristics, March 2003]

Safety belt use among pickup truck drivers is about 69 percent – the lowest for any vehicle type – compared with 83 percent for SUVs and van drivers and 81 percent for passenger car drivers. [NHTSA, Research Note: Safety Belt Use in 2002 – Demographic Characteristics, March 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 was 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, 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 Seat Belt Use, 2002]



As of September 2003, 20 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had primary safety belt laws.

HIGH-VISIBILITY ENFORCEMENT

The two-week *Click It or Ticket Mobilization* enforcement blitz that runs from November 17 through the 30th is based on the Occupant Protection Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (sTEPs) model, which is a proven method to change motorists' safety belt use behavior. Successful Occupant Protection sTEPs have been documented in Canada, Europe and the United States. The sTEP model combines an intense period of targeted advertising with increased and highly visible safety belt enforcement.

The advertisements are all designed to reach large audiences of teens and young adults – especially men. This group is least likely to buckle up and most likely to die in a car crash.

The goal of the *Click It or Ticket Mobilization* is not to give out tickets, but rather to influence people to buckle up and prevent injuries and fatalities. Research proves that the certainty of a ticket and costly fines convinces people to *Click It*.

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. These States used paid media and Statewide law enforcement for two weeks each. 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, January 2002]

As a result of the May 2003 *Click It or Ticket* campaigns across the country, safety belt use increased to an all-time high of 79 percent and converted approximately 17 percent of safety belt nonusers into users, twice the rate seen in previous years.

[NHTSA, Safety Belt Use in 2003, September 2003]