



Keep the District of Columbia safe. Encourage drivers and passengers to buckle up.

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of **motor vehicle occupant deaths and seat belt use** and an overview of proven strategies for increasing the use of seat belts, car seats, and booster seats. The information can help local public health decisionmakers and community partners see gaps and identify relevant strategies to encourage people to buckle up.

### Fast Facts

- Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death during the first three decades of Americans' lives.
- By wearing seat belts and properly buckling children into age- and size-appropriate car seats and booster seats, people can reduce the risk of serious injury and death in a crash by half.
- Although most drivers in the United States follow these safety measures on every trip, there are still millions who don't.
- These data show what's happening in your state.

## MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT DEATHS

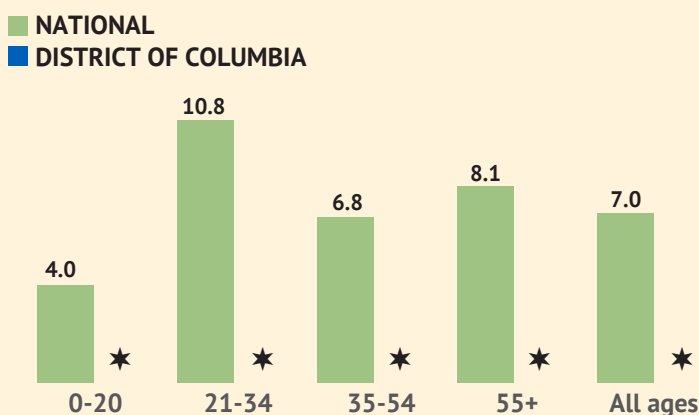
Number of Deaths, 2003–2012



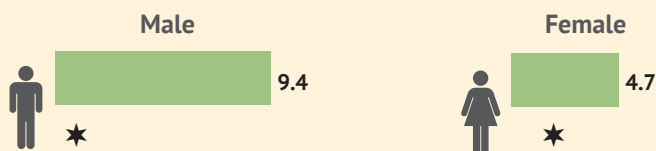
# 175

motor vehicle occupants were killed in the District of Columbia

Rate of Deaths by Age (per 100,000 population), 2012



Rate of Deaths by Gender (per 100,000 population), 2012

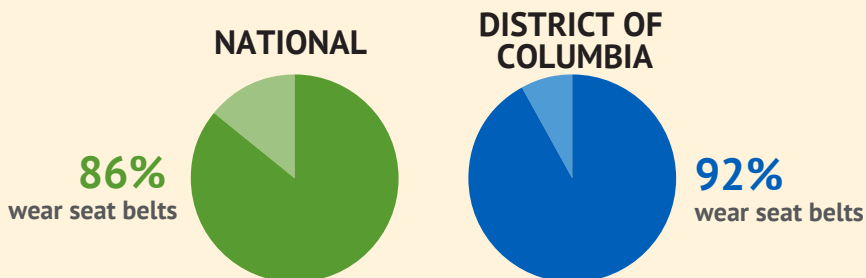


Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

\*Fatality rates based on fewer than 20 deaths are suppressed.

## RESTRAINT USE

Percentage of Drivers and Front Seat Passengers Wearing Seat Belts



Source: National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), 2012.

Source: State Observational Survey of Seat Belt Use, 2012.

## SEAT BELT AND CHILD RESTRAINT LAWS

- Drivers and adult front seat passengers must wear seat belts in the District of Columbia and all states except New Hampshire.
- In the District of Columbia, seat belt laws are primary. They cover drivers, as well as passengers age 16 and older in all seats.
- Child restraint laws vary by state. For up-to-date information on these laws in your state, check with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety at [www.iihs.org](http://www.iihs.org).



## For More Information

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at [www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety) for:

- Injuries, costs, and other data on motor vehicle crashes
- Detailed information on effective strategies to improve seat belt use
- Detailed information on effective strategies to improve child passenger safety

## What Works

The strategies in this section are effective for increasing seat belt, car seat, and booster seat use. They are recommended by *The Guide to Community Preventive Services* and/or have been demonstrated to be effective in reviews by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.\* Different strategies may require different resources for implementation or have different levels of impact. Find strategies that are right for your state.

### Strategies to increase seat belt use

- ⊗ **Primary seat belt laws** allow police officers to stop and ticket someone for not buckling up. On average, primary laws result in higher rates of seat belt use than **secondary seat belt laws**, which allow officers to give tickets only if they have pulled the driver over for another reason. Seat belt laws are most effective when they **cover occupants in all seats** of the vehicle.
- ⊗ **Increased penalties** for violating seat belt laws may include higher fines or points on a driver's license.
- ⊗ **Short-term, high-visibility enforcement** involves a brief period of increased police efforts including checkpoints or saturation patrols. These efforts are highly publicized through a **media campaign** that mixes both earned media coverage and paid advertisements. Combining law enforcement and media coverage is particularly effective for reaching people who typically don't use seat belts regularly, such as men, teens, and young adults.
- ⊗ **Combined nighttime enforcement programs** are short-term, highly visible enforcement strategies. They are conducted at night, when seat belt use is lowest and crashes are most common. They are combined with enforcement of other laws, such as impaired driving laws. This can help law enforcement target limited funding and resources for the greatest public safety impact.

### Strategies to increase car seat and booster seat use

- ⊗ **Child restraint laws** require children riding in a car to use approved restraint devices (car seats, booster seats, or seat belts) appropriate for their age, height, and weight. Strengthening current laws with **booster seat provisions** helps reduce injuries and deaths by requiring children who have outgrown car seats to use booster seats through age 8 years or until seat belts fit properly.
- ⊗ **Enhanced enforcement programs** for child passenger safety are similar to those used for seat belt use (see above). Effective programs are short-term, highly visible in the community, and advertised widely in the media.
- ⊗ **Distribution plus education programs** help parents and caregivers get access to car seats through giveaways, loans, or low-cost rentals. They also teach the importance of car seats and how to properly use and install them.
- ⊗ **Incentive and education programs** reward parents or children with coupons or other prizes for correctly using car seats. Programs offer print materials, videos, or other instructional aids for parents and caregivers.

\*Sources: The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide), Motor Vehicle-Related Injury Prevention, at [www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org), and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2013). Countermeasures that work: a highway safety countermeasures guide for State Highway Safety Offices, 7th edition, at [www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811727.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811727.pdf).