JULY 2016

CDC Vitalsigns™

Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths

How is the US doing?

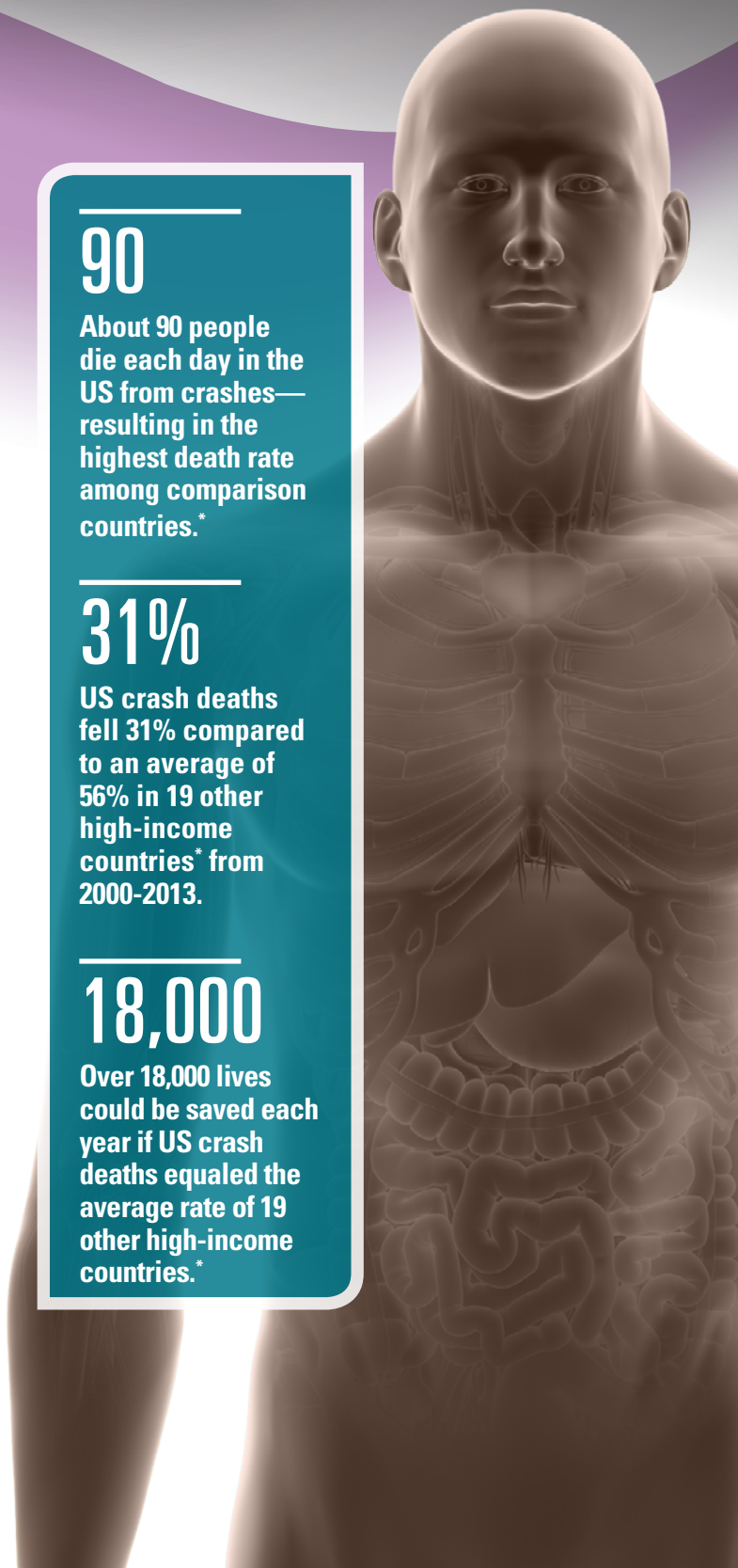
Reducing motor vehicle crash deaths was one of the great public health achievements of the 20th century for the US. However, more than 32,000 people are killed and 2 million are injured each year from motor vehicle crashes. In 2013, the US crash death rate was more than twice the average of other high-income countries. In the US, front seat belt use was lower than in most other comparison countries. One in 3 crash deaths in the US involved drunk driving, and almost 1 in 3 involved speeding. Lower death rates in other high-income countries and a high percentage of risk factors in the US suggest that we can make more progress in reducing crash deaths.

Drivers and passengers can:

- Use a seat belt in every seat, on every trip, no matter how short.
- Make sure children are always properly buckled in the back seat in a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt, whichever is appropriate for their age, height, and weight.
- Choose not to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs, and help others do the same.
- Obey speed limits.
- Drive without distractions (such as using a cell phone or texting).

*Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Want to learn more?
www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/motor-vehicle-safety



90

About 90 people die each day in the US from crashes—resulting in the highest death rate among comparison countries.*

31%

US crash deaths fell 31% compared to an average of 56% in 19 other high-income countries* from 2000-2013.

18,000

Over 18,000 lives could be saved each year if US crash deaths equaled the average rate of 19 other high-income countries.*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Problem:

Motor vehicle crash deaths in the US are still too high.

There were more than **32,000** crash deaths in the US in 2013. These deaths cost more than $380 million in direct medical costs.

Major risk factors for crash deaths in the US:

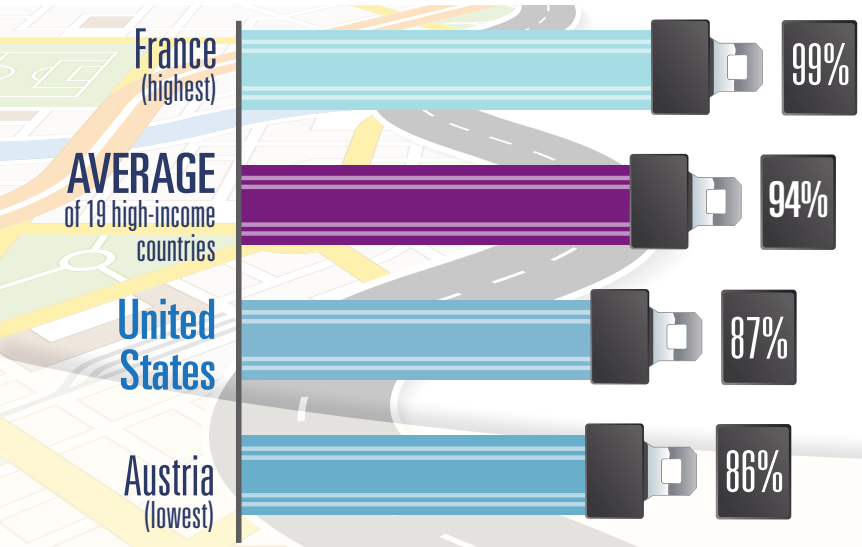
- Not using seat belts, car seats, and booster seats contributed to over 9,500 crash deaths.
- Drunk driving contributed to more than 10,000 crash deaths.
- Speeding contributed to more than 9,500 crash deaths.

Reducing major risk factors could save thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars in direct medical costs each year.

Seat belts saved over 12,500 lives in the US in 2013, yet:

- The US had lower-than-average front and back seat belt use compared with other high-income countries.
- About half of drivers or passengers who died in crashes in the US weren't buckled up.

Front seat belt use
in the US and selected high-income countries



Some proven measures of best performing high-income countries.

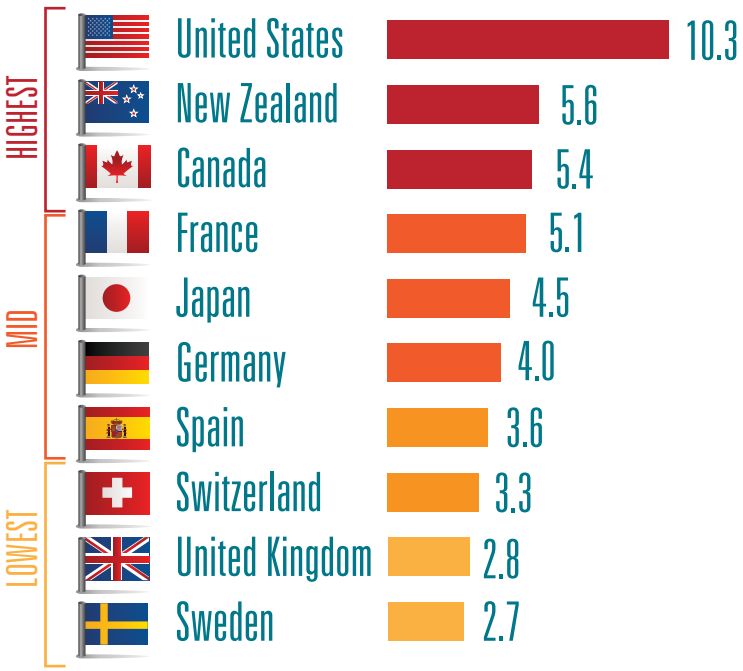
Even when considering population size, miles traveled, and number of registered vehicles, the US consistently ranked poorly relative to other high-income countries for crash deaths. Some of the best performing countries:

- Have policies in line with best practices, including those that address:
  - Primary enforcement of seat belt laws that cover everyone in every seat.
    - Police officers can stop a vehicle and write a ticket for anyone not buckled up.
  - Requirements for car seats and booster seats for child passengers through at least age 8.
  - Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels.
    - US, Canada and the United Kingdom define drunk driving as BAC levels at 0.08% or above; all other comparison countries use lower BAC levels (0.02-0.05%).
- Use advanced engineering and technology, such as:
  - Ignition interlocks for all people convicted of drunk driving.
    - This device keeps the vehicle from starting unless the driver has a BAC below a pre-set low limit.
  - Automated enforcement, for example, speed and red light cameras.
  - Improvements in vehicle safety and transportation infrastructure.
- Implement proven measures, such as:
  - More use of publicized sobriety checkpoints.
  - Maintain and enforce the minimum legal drinking age.

SOURCES: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2013 data. WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2015.

Road traffic deaths in the US and other high-income countries.

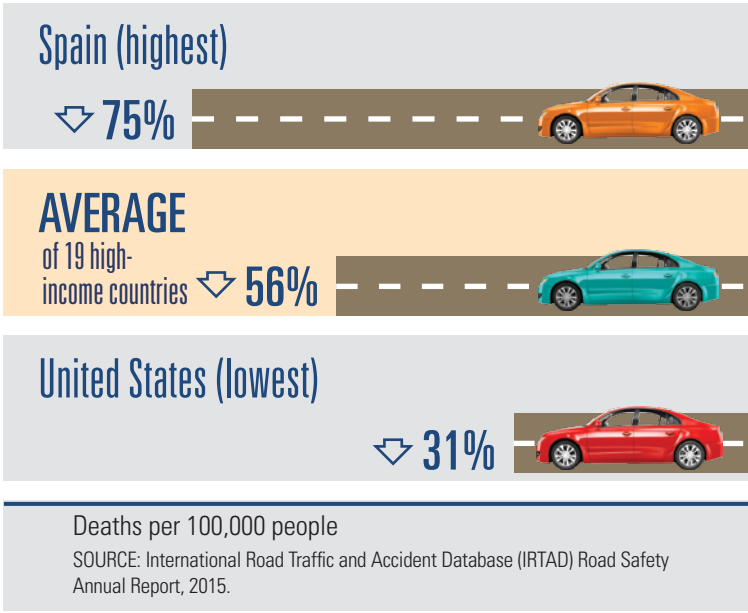
Motor vehicle crash deaths
in 10 comparison high-income countries, 2013



Deaths per 100,000 people

SOURCE: WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2015.

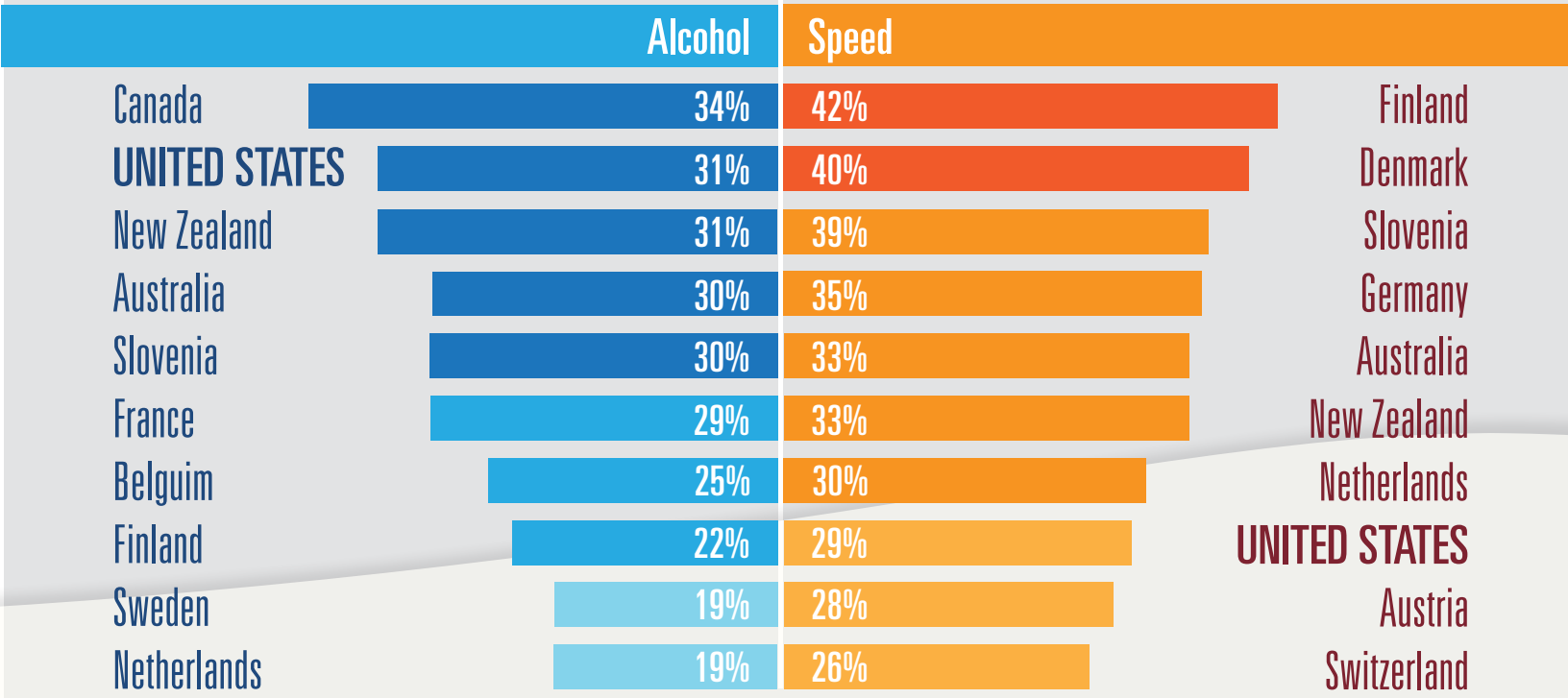
Countries with the highest and lowest reductions in crash deaths, 2000-2013



Deaths per 100,000 people

SOURCE: International Road Traffic and Accident Database (IRTAD) Road Safety Annual Report, 2015.

High-income countries with the highest percentage of crash deaths involving alcohol or speed



Note: 19 countries reported the percentage of deaths involving alcohol and 15 countries reported the percentage of deaths related to speeding.

SOURCES: WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2015. IRTAD Road Safety Annual Report, 2015.

What Can Be Done?

The Federal government is

- Tracking the nation's progress in reducing crash injuries and deaths.
  www.cdc.gov/psr/national-summary/mvi.html
- Evaluating and encouraging the use of proven programs and policies.
  www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/index.html
  www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/812202-CountermeasuresThatWork8th.pdf
- Collaborating with and providing guidance, resources, and tools for motor vehicle injury prevention to state, local, tribal, and federal partners.
  www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety

Drivers and passengers can

- Use a seat belt in every seat, on every trip, no matter how short.
- Make sure children are always properly buckled in the back seat in a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt, whichever is appropriate for their age, height, and weight.
- Choose not to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs, and help others do the same.
- Obey speed limits.
- Drive without distractions (such as using a cell phone or texting).

States can

- Increase seat belt use with primary enforcement seat belt laws that cover everyone in the vehicle.
  www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/seatbelts/states.html
- Consider requiring car seats and booster seats for children through at least age 8 or until seat belts fit properly.
  www.cdc.gov/psr/national-summary/mvi.html
- Reduce drunk driving by:
  - Expanding publicized sobriety checkpoints.
    www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/AID/sobrietyckpts.html
  - Enforcing existing 0.08% blood alcohol concentration (BAC) laws and minimum legal drinking age laws.
    www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/AID/mlda-laws.html
  - Consider ignition interlock requirements for people convicted of drinking and driving, starting with their first offense.
    www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/ignition_interlock_states.html
- Support traffic safety laws with media campaigns and visible police presence to increase restraint use and decrease impaired driving and speeding.
- Consult CDC's Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator for States (MV PICCS) to find out the cost of implementing up to 14 interventions and the number of injuries prevented and lives saved.
  www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/calculator
- Consider implementing Vision Zero—a road safety approach that deems death and severe injuries on our roads unacceptable and preventable.
  www.visionzeroinitiative.com
  www.towardzerodeaths.org

Healthcare providers can

- Give patients resources about motor vehicle safety and remind them how important it is to use a seat belt on every trip.
- Counsel parents and caregivers on using age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats, and seat belts on every trip.
  www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Child_Passenger_Safety
- Talk to patients about the dangers of impaired driving and help identify counseling options as needed.
- Provide parents and caregivers of teens with resources on safe teen driving.
  www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey

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