



## State and Federal Efforts to Increase Adult Seat Belt Use

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The increase in seat belt use in the United States between 1975 and 2017 saved over 374,000 lives, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA). NHTSA estimates that over 386,000 additional lives would have been saved during this time period if 100% of people had buckled up.

In 2019, 90.7% of American adult front-seat passengers used seat belts. This represents only a slight rise from 89.6% in 2018, but the overall rate increased from 81.7% to 90.7% during the last 15 years.

Seat belt use rates vary widely between states. In 2018, they ranged from 76.4% in New Hampshire to 97.8% in Hawaii. While there used to be a notable difference in seat belt use between urban and rural areas, 2019 data shows that only slightly more urban vehicle occupants (90.8%)

than rural occupants (90.4%) are wearing seat belts. Increased seat belt use has led to fewer fatalities among unrestrained occupants in daytime crashes, from 46.4% to 38.5% between 2005 and 2018.

Rear-seat belt use among occupants 8 years and older increased from 70% in 2009 to 76.1% in 2018, the most recent year for which data is available. The number of occupants that buckle up in the back seat, however, continues to be significantly lower than front-seat belt users. Additionally, a [study](#) suggests that rear-seat belt use is higher in private vehicles than in taxis, and results are mixed regarding ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft.

### State Action

Each state determines its seat belt laws. Some states require all occupants to buckle up while others require seat belt use only in front seats.

### Did You Know?

- The chances of being fatally injured in a crash are reduced by nearly half for people wearing seat belts in passenger cars.
- Only 76.1% of rear-seat occupants wore a seat belt in 2018 while 89.6% of those in the front seat buckled up.
- Only one state, New Hampshire, and one territory, American Samoa, do not require adults to wear seat belts, although New Hampshire is considering legislation to do so.

