

Traffic Safety Facts

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A Brief Statistical Summary

April 2009

Seat Belt Use in 2008—Use Rates in the States and Territories

In 2008, seat belt use in the United States ranged from 55.7 percent in American Samoa to 97.2 percent in Michigan. These results are from probability-based observational surveys conducted by 50 States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories in accordance with criteria established by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to ensure reliable results. Compliance with the criteria is verified annually by NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis.

The 2008 State and Territory surveys also found the following:

- Sixteen States and Territories achieved use rates of 90 percent or higher—Michigan, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Maryland, Iowa, Puerto Rico, New Jersey, Delaware, Indiana, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Illinois, and District of Columbia.
- Jurisdictions with stronger belt enforcement laws continue to exhibit generally higher use rates than those with weaker laws. Maine's primary enforcement seat belt law took effect on September 17, 2007, but citations were issued beginning April 1, 2008. This State saw an increase in use from 79.8 percent in 2007 to 83.0 percent in 2008.

Seat belt use rates in the States, U.S. Territories, the District of Columbia, and nationwide from 2001-2008 are listed in the following table. Rates in jurisdictions with primary belt enforcement during the calendar year of the survey are shaded in the table. However, the law might not have taken effect when the survey was conducted.

National Seat Belt Use Rate

Seat belt use nationwide was 83 percent in 2008, as measured by NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS). NOPUS provides NHTSA's official measure of nationwide use because it is the only probability-based observational survey of seat belt use in the United States. Additionally, NOPUS does not employ sampling frame exemptions allowed of the States and Territories in 23 CFR Part 1340 (namely, the omission of up to 15 percent of low-population areas and the permission to observe data solely in vehicles stopped at stop signs or stoplights), and so provides a more accurate measure of nationwide use than would be obtained by combining the use rates from the States and Territories.

Table: Seat Belt Use in States, U.S. Territories, and Nationwide, 2001-2008

State or U.S. Territory	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2007-2008 Change
Alabama	79.4%	78.7%	77.4%	80.0%	81.8%	82.9%	82.3%	86.1%	3.8%
Alaska	62.6%	65.8%	78.9%	76.7%	78.4%	83.2%	82.4%	84.9%	2.5%
Arizona	74.4%	73.7%	86.2%	95.3%	94.2%	78.9%	80.9%	79.9%	-1.0%
Arkansas	54.5%	63.7%	62.8%	64.2%	68.3%	69.3%	69.9%	70.4%	0.5%
California	91.1%	91.1%	91.2%	90.4%	92.5%	93.4%	94.6%	95.7%	1.1%
Colorado	72.1%	73.2%	77.7%	79.3%	79.2%	80.3%	81.1%	81.7%	0.6%
Connecticut	78.0%	78.0%	78.0%	82.9%	81.6%	83.5%	85.8%	88.0%	2.2%
Delaware	67.3%	71.2%	74.9%	82.3%	83.8%	86.1%	86.6%	91.3%	4.7%
Dist. Of Columbia	83.6%	84.6%	84.9%	87.1%	88.8%	85.4%	87.1%	90.0%	2.9%
Florida	69.5%	75.1%	72.6%	76.3%	73.9%	80.7%	79.1%	81.7%	2.6%
Georgia	79.0%	77.0%	84.5%	86.7%	89.9%	90.0%	89.0%	89.6%	0.6%
Hawaii	82.5%	90.4%	91.8%	95.1%	95.3%	92.5%	97.6%	97.0%	-0.6%
Idaho	60.4%	62.9%	71.7%	74.0%	76.0%	79.8%	78.5%	76.9%	-1.6%
Illinois	71.4%	73.8%	80.1%	83.0%	86.0%	87.8%	90.1%	90.5%	0.4%
Indiana	67.4%	72.2%	82.3%	83.4%	81.2%	84.3%	87.9%	91.2%	3.3%
Iowa	80.9%	82.4%	86.8%	86.4%	87.1%	89.6%	91.3%	92.9%	1.6%

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Table: Seat Belt Use in States, U.S. Territories, and Nationwide, 2001-2008 (Continued)

State or U.S. Territory	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2007-2008 Change
Kansas	60.8%	61.3%	63.6%	68.3%	69.0%	73.5%	75.0%	77.4%	2.4%
Kentucky	61.9%	62.0%	65.5%	66.0%	66.7%	67.2%	71.8%	73.3%	1.5%
Louisiana	68.1%	68.6%	73.8%	75.0%	77.7%	74.8%	75.2%	75.5%	0.3%
Maine	NA	NA	NA	72.3%	75.8%	77.2%	79.8%	83.0%	3.2%
Maryland	82.9%	85.8%	87.9%	89.0%	91.1%	91.1%	93.1%	93.3%	0.2%
Massachusetts	56.0%	51.0%	61.7%	63.3%	64.8%	66.9%	68.7%	66.8%	-1.9%
Michigan	82.3%	82.9%	84.8%	90.5%	92.9%	94.3%	93.7%	97.2%	3.5%
Minnesota	73.9%	80.1%	79.4%	82.1%	83.9%	83.3%	87.8%	86.7%	-1.1%
Mississippi	61.6%	62.0%	62.2%	63.2%	60.8%	73.6%	71.8%	71.3%	-0.5%
Missouri	67.9%	69.4%	72.9%	75.9%	77.4%	75.2%	77.2%	75.8%	-1.4%
Montana	76.3%	78.4%	79.5%	80.9%	80.0%	79.0%	79.6%	79.3%	-0.3%
Nebraska	70.2%	69.7%	76.1%	79.2%	79.2%	76.0%	78.7%	82.6%	3.9%
Nevada	74.5%	74.9%	78.7%	86.6%	94.8%	91.2%	92.2%	90.9%	-1.3%
New Hampshire	NA	NA	49.6%*	NA	NA	63.5%	63.8%	69.2%	5.4%
New Jersey	77.6%	80.5%	81.2%	82.0%	86.0%	90.0%	91.4%	91.8%	0.4%
New Mexico	87.8%	87.6%	87.2%	89.7%	89.5%	89.6%	91.5%	91.1%	-0.4%
New York	80.3%	82.8%	84.6%	85.0%	85.0%	83.0%	83.5%	89.1%	5.6%
North Carolina	82.7%	84.1%	86.1%	86.1%	86.7%	88.5%	88.8%	89.8%	1.0%
North Dakota	57.9%	63.4%	63.7%	67.4%	76.3%	79.0%	82.2%	81.6%	-0.6%
Ohio	66.9%	70.3%	74.7%	74.1%	78.7%	81.7%	81.6%	82.7%	1.1%
Oklahoma	67.9%	70.1%	76.7%	80.3%	83.1%	83.7%	83.1%	84.3%	1.2%
Oregon	87.5%	88.2%	90.4%	92.6%	93.3%	94.1%	95.3%	96.3%	1.0%
Pennsylvania	70.5%	75.7%	79.0%	81.8%	83.3%	86.3%	86.7%	85.1%	-1.6%
Rhode Island	63.2%	70.8%	74.2%	76.2%	74.7%	74.0%	79.1%	72.0%	-7.1%
South Carolina	69.6%	66.3%	72.8%	65.7%	69.7%	72.5%	74.5%	79.0%	4.5%
South Dakota	63.3%	64.0%	69.9%	69.4%	68.8%	71.3%	73.0%	71.8%	-1.2%
Tennessee	68.3%	66.7%	68.5%	72.0%	74.4%	78.6%	80.2%	81.5%	1.3%
Texas	76.1%	81.1%	84.3%	83.2%	89.9%	90.4%	91.8%	91.2%	-0.6%
Utah	77.8%	80.1%	85.2%	85.7%	86.9%	88.6%	86.8%	86.0%	-0.8%
Vermont	67.4%	84.9%	82.4%	79.9%	84.7%	82.4%	87.1%	87.3%	0.2%
Virginia	72.3%	70.4%	74.6%	79.9%	80.4%	78.7%	79.9%	80.6%	0.7%
Washington	82.6%	92.6%	94.8%	94.2%	95.2%	96.3%	96.4%	96.5%	0.1%
West Virginia	52.3%	71.6%	73.6%	75.8%	84.9%	88.5%	89.6%	89.5%	-0.1%
Wisconsin	68.7%	66.1%	69.8%	72.4%	73.3%	75.4%	75.3%	74.2%	-1.1%
Wyoming	NA	66.6%	NA	70.1%	NA	63.5%	72.2%	68.6%	-3.6%
Nationwide	73%	75%	79%	80%	82%	81%	82%	83%	1%
Puerto Rico	83.1%	90.5%	87.1%	90.1%	92.5%	92.7%	92.1%	92.8%	0.7%
American Samoa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55.7%	
Guam	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	85.0%	4%
Northern Mariana Islands	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	89.8%	9.8%
U.S. Virgin Island	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80.2%	NA	82.3%	

Note 1: Rates in jurisdictions with primary belt enforcement during the calendar year of the survey are shaded for the 50 States and District of Columbia. The four U.S. Territories in the last four rows of the table all had primary belt use laws in effect for the survey year of 2008; however, since we have no data about which year their primary laws began to take effect, the shading scheme is NOT applicable to the four territories.

Note 2: Arkansas passed the primary seat belt law in March 2009 and the law will take effect on June 30, 2009.

* The 2003 rate for New Hampshire was not reported by the State. It was obtained from an independent source.

NA: No rate reported.



U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

For questions regarding the above reported data, contact Yuan Yan Chen at 202-493-0241, or Tony Jianqiang Ye at 202-366-3603. This issue of Crash•Stats and other general information on highway traffic safety may be accessed online at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CMSWeb/index.aspx>