

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SEAT BELT USE

INTRODUCTION

While NHTSA reports that roughly 90% of drivers buckle up while driving, motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death nationwide, and about half of occupants who die in crashes are unrestrained. The seat belt is the most important protective countermeasure in the vehicle and increasing seat belt use will help save lives on the road. Understanding demographic, geographical, circumstantial, and other individual differences that underscore seat belt use is necessary to identify effective strategies for increasing restraint use, especially among populations at increased risk. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is working with the National Opinion Research Center to examine the characteristics of people who never, sometimes, and always use seat belts when driving or riding in vehicles, and to identify strategies for increasing restraint use.

PROJECT GOAL AND PLAN

The objectives of this study are to: 1) identify and synthesize literature regarding seat belt use among U.S. drivers and passengers; 2) conduct research to examine how those who never, sometimes, and always use seat belts differ by characteristics; and 3) identify and prioritize actions for traffic safety stakeholders to mitigate safety concerns and increase seat belt use. A mixed method study will address these objectives. The research team will conduct a literature review, secondary data analysis of Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data. A large-scale national survey will also be conducted, which will inform the creation of interactive profiles of road users and their seat belt use and strategies for traffic safety and public health practitioners to increase use.

Project Team

National Opinion Research Center

Alycia Bayne

(Principal Investigator)

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Lindsay Arnold

(Project Manager)

Period of Performance

October 2024 – March 2026