

# Adult Seat Belt Use in the US

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 5-34. Adult seat belt use is the single most effective way to save lives and reduce injuries in crashes. The percentage of adults who always wear seat belts increased from 80% to 85% between 2002 and 2008. Even so, 1 in 7 adults do not wear a seat belt on every trip. Primary enforcement seat belt laws make a big difference in getting more people to buckle up.\* In 2010, 19 states—where 1 in 4 adult Americans live—did not have a primary law.

\* A primary enforcement seat belt law means a police officer can pull someone over and issue a ticket to the driver just because someone in the vehicle is not wearing a seat belt. A secondary enforcement law allows a police officer to issue a ticket for someone not wearing a seat belt only if the driver has been pulled over for some other offense.

Learn what you can do to increase seat belt use.

→ See page 4

Want to learn more? Visit

[www !\[\]\(003082e50e3009141f59bd5df831749f\_img.jpg\) http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns)

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention



**6,400**

Every day, about 6,400 adults are injured in a crash.

**50%**

Using seat belts reduces serious injuries and deaths in crashes by about 50%.



**7.3M**

7.3 million more adults would have worn their seat belts in 2008 if all states had primary enforcement seat belt laws and had 88% use.\*



# Seat Belt Use

*Millions of Americans are not protected from injury because they aren't wearing their seat belts on every trip.*

## Problem

### **1. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 5-34.**

- ◇ More than 2.3 million adult drivers and passengers were treated in emergency departments for injuries from crashes in 2009.
- ◇ In one year alone, deaths and injuries to drivers and passengers from crashes cost \$70 billion in medical and lost work.
- ◇ Young adults age 18-34 have the highest crash-related injury rates of all adults.

### **2. Many factors affect seat belt use.**

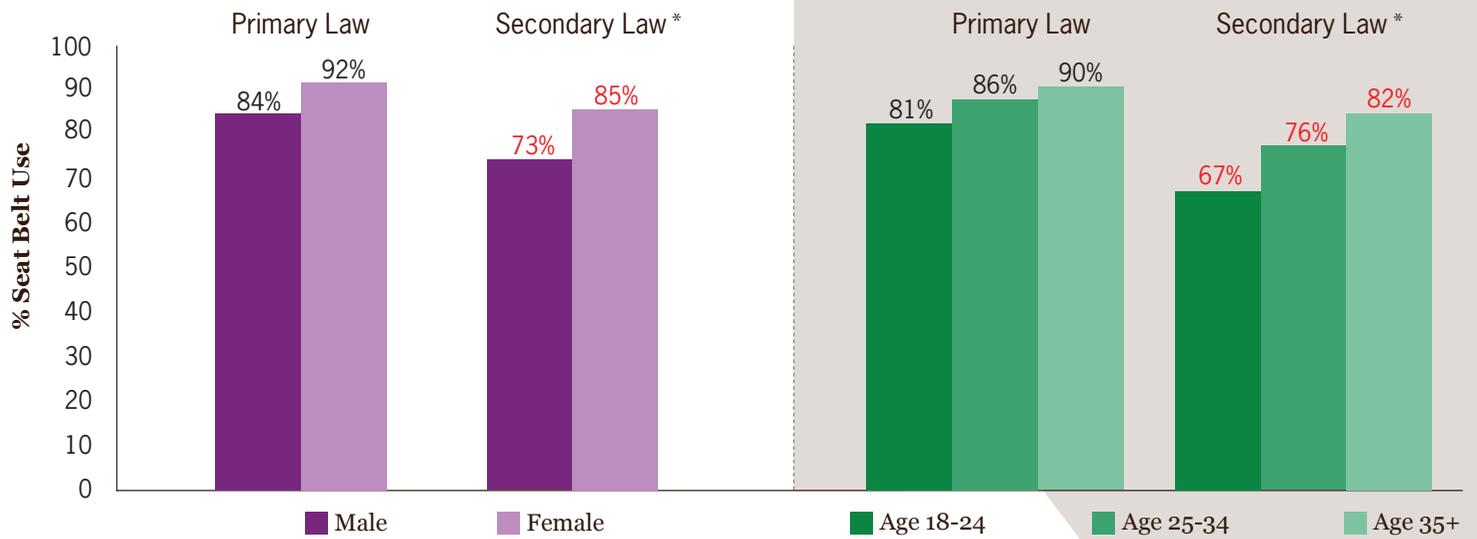
- ◇ Adults age 18-34 are almost 10% less likely to wear a seat belt than adults 35 years or older.
- ◇ Men are 10% less likely to wear seat belts than women.
- ◇ Adults who live in rural areas are 10% less likely to wear seat belts (78% use) than adults who live in urban and suburban areas (87% use).

### **3. Using a seat belt on every trip is the most effective way to prevent injury and death.**

- ◇ Seat belt use reduces serious injuries and deaths in crashes by 50%. Air bags provide added protection but are not a substitute for seat belts in a crash.
- ◇ Seat belt use is higher in states that have primary enforcement laws (88%) than in those states that do not have them (79%).
- ◇ In 2009, about 12,000 more injuries would have been prevented and about 450 more lives saved if all states had primary enforcement seat belt laws.
- ◇ In 2010, 19 states—where 1 in 4 adult Americans live—did not have a primary law.

***In 2009, about 12,000 more injuries would have been prevented and about 450 more lives saved if all states had primary enforcement seat belt laws.***

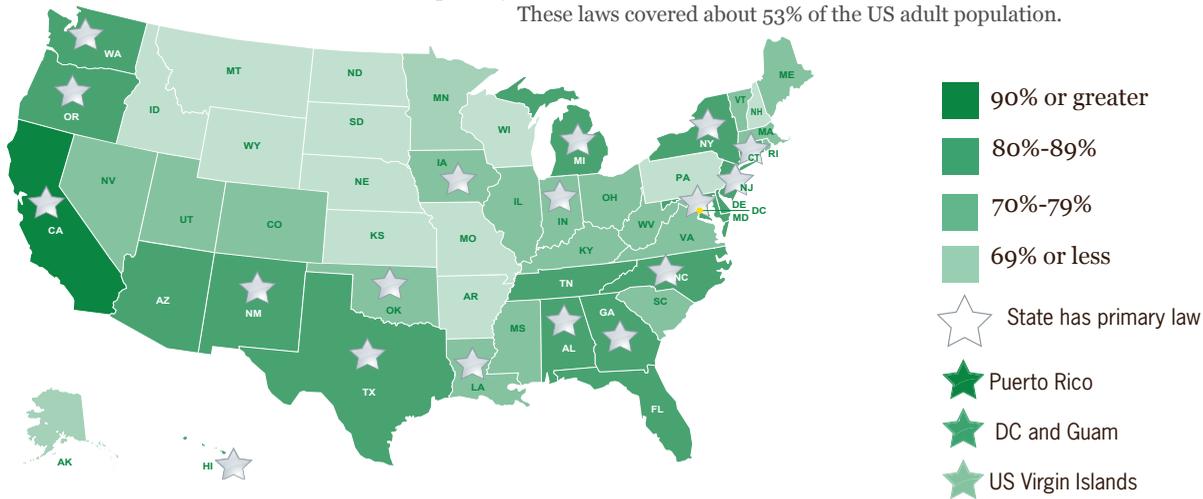
## Seat belt use by sex, age, and type of law, US, 2008



\*Includes one state with no adult seat belt law.

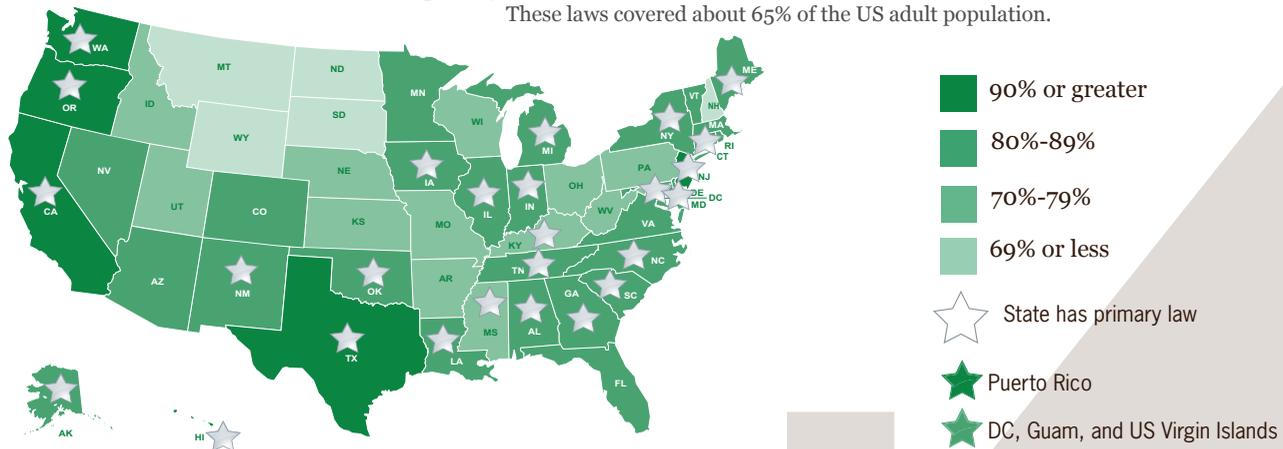
## Seat belt use by type of law, US, 2002

In 2002, primary seat belt laws existed in 18 states, 3 territories, and the District of Columbia. These laws covered about 53% of the US adult population.



## Seat belt use by type of law, US, 2008

In 2008, primary seat belt laws existed in 26 states, 3 territories, and the District of Columbia. These laws covered about 65% of the US adult population.

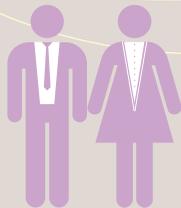


# What Can Be Done



## States can

- ◇ Pass a primary enforcement seat belt law.
- ◇ Make sure that seat belt laws apply to everyone in the car, not just those in the front seat.
- ◇ Ensure that fines for not wearing a seat belt are high enough to be effective.
- ◇ Make sure that police and state troopers enforce all seat belt laws.
- ◇ Support seat belt laws with visible police presence and awareness campaigns for the public.
- ◇ Educate the public to make seat belt use a social norm.



## Employers can

- ◇ Post information in break rooms and parking lots that encourage employees to buckle up.
- ◇ Identify the cost of car crashes to their workforce in terms of medical care and lost wages.
- ◇ Require seat belt use in company vehicles at all times, and in personal vehicles while on company business.
- ◇ Develop active enforcement programs for staff about seat belt use when driving company vehicles.

## Everyone can

- ◇ Use a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short.
- ◇ Encourage all passengers in the car to buckle up, including those in the back seat.



## Parents and caregivers can

- ◇ Use a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short. This sets a good example.
- ◇ Make sure children are properly buckled up in a seat belt, booster seat, or car seat, whichever is appropriate.\*
- ◇ Have all children age 12 or under sit in the back seat.
- ◇ Never seat a child in front of an air bag.
- ◇ Place children in the middle of the back seat when possible, because it is the safest spot in the vehicle.



## Health professionals can

- ◇ Remind patients about the importance of seat belt use.
- ◇ Encourage patients to make wearing a seat belt a habit.
- ◇ Wear seat belts themselves and encourage their colleagues to do the same.



\* Motor vehicle crashes are also a leading cause of death among children. To learn more about which type of safety seat is best for your child's age and size, visit [www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety).

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