

# Traffic Safety Facts

## Crash • Stats

DOT HS 811 324

A Brief Statistical Summary

May 2010

## Seat Belt Use in 2009—Use Rates in the States and Territories

In 2009, seat belt use in the United States ranged from 67.6 percent in Wyoming to 98.0 percent in Michigan among the States. These results are from probability-based observational surveys conducted by 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. Territories. These surveys are conducted 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 2009 State and Territory surveys also found the following:

- Fifteen States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico achieved use rate of 90 percent or higher. These States are Michigan, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, California, Maryland, Iowa, Texas, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, Nevada, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Alabama.
- Jurisdictions with stronger seat belt enforcement laws continue to exhibit generally higher use rates than those with weaker laws. Arkansas strengthened its seat belt law to a "primary" enforcement law, effective June 2009. This State saw a jump in use rate from 70.4 percent in 2008 to

74.4 percent in 2009. Florida, Minnesota, and Wisconsin also passed primary laws that took effect in 2009.

- Seat belt use rates in the States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, other U.S. Territories, and nationwide from 2002-2009 are listed in the following table. Rates in jurisdictions with primary seat 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 being conducted.

### National Seat Belt Use Rate

The nationwide seat belt use was 84 percent in 2009 as measured by NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS). NOPUS is a national probability-based survey, which is independent from the State belt survey. The belt use rate from the NOPUS provides NHTSA's official measure of nationwide use in the United States and other related information. Due to a difference in the survey methodology, this survey provides a different 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, 2002-2009**

State or U.S. Territory	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2008-2009 Change
Alabama	78.7%	77.4%	80.0%	81.8%	82.9%	82.3%	86.1%	90.0%	3.9%
Alaska	65.8%	78.9%	76.7%	78.4%	83.2%	82.4%	84.9%	86.1%	1.2%
Arizona	73.7%	86.2%	95.3%	94.2%	78.9%	80.9%	79.9%	80.8%	0.9%
Arkansas	63.7%	62.8%	64.2%	68.3%	69.3%	69.9%	70.4%	74.4%	4.0%
California	91.1%	91.2%	90.4%	92.5%	93.4%	94.6%	95.7%	95.3%	-0.4%
Colorado	73.2%	77.7%	79.3%	79.2%	80.3%	81.1%	81.7%	81.1%	-0.6%
Connecticut	78.0%	78.0%	82.9%	81.6%	83.5%	85.8%	88.0%	85.9%	-2.1%
Delaware	71.2%	74.9%	82.3%	83.8%	86.1%	86.6%	91.3%	88.4%	-2.9%
Dist. Of Columbia	84.6%	84.9%	87.1%	88.8%	85.4%	87.1%	90.0%	93.0%	3.0%
Florida	75.1%	72.6%	76.3%	73.9%	80.7%	79.1%	81.7%	85.2%	3.5%
Georgia	77.0%	84.5%	86.7%	89.9%	90.0%	89.0%	89.6%	88.9%	-0.7%
Hawaii	90.4%	91.8%	95.1%	95.3%	92.5%	97.6%	97.0%	97.9%	0.9%
Idaho	62.9%	71.7%	74.0%	76.0%	79.8%	78.5%	76.9%	79.2%	2.3%
Illinois	73.8%	80.1%	83.0%	86.0%	87.8%	90.1%	90.5%	91.7%	1.2%
Indiana	72.2%	82.3%	83.4%	81.2%	84.3%	87.9%	91.2%	92.6%	1.4%
Iowa	82.4%	86.8%	86.4%	87.1%	89.6%	91.3%	92.9%	93.1%	0.2%

*Table continues on next page*

**Table: Seat Belt Use in States, U.S. Territories, and Nationwide, 2002-2009 (Continued)**

State or U.S. Territory	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2008-2009 Change
Kansas	61.3%	63.6%	68.3%	69.0%	73.5%	75.0%	77.4%	77.0%	-0.4%
Kentucky	62.0%	65.5%	66.0%	66.7%	67.2%	71.8%	73.3%	79.7%	6.4%
Louisiana	68.6%	73.8%	75.0%	77.7%	74.8%	75.2%	75.5%	74.5%	-1.0%
Maine	NA	NA	72.3%	75.8%	77.2%	79.8%	83.0%	82.6%	-0.4%
Maryland	85.8%	87.9%	89.0%	91.1%	91.1%	93.1%	93.3%	94.0%	0.7%
Massachusetts	51.0%	61.7%	63.3%	64.8%	66.9%	68.7%	66.8%	73.6%	6.8%
Michigan	82.9%	84.8%	90.5%	92.9%	94.3%	93.7%	97.2%	98.0%	0.8%
Minnesota	80.1%	79.4%	82.1%	83.9%	83.3%	87.8%	86.7%	90.2%	3.5%
Mississippi	62.0%	62.2%	63.2%	60.8%	73.6%	71.8%	71.3%	76.0%	4.7%
Missouri	69.4%	72.9%	75.9%	77.4%	75.2%	77.2%	75.8%	77.2%	1.4%
Montana	78.4%	79.5%	80.9%	80.0%	79.0%	79.6%	79.3%	79.2%	-0.1%
Nebraska	69.7%	76.1%	79.2%	79.2%	76.0%	78.7%	82.6%	84.8%	2.2%
Nevada	74.9%	78.7%	86.6%	94.8%	91.2%	92.2%	90.9%	91.0%	0.1%
New Hampshire	NA	49.6%*	NA	NA	63.5%	63.8%	69.2%	68.9%	-0.3%
New Jersey	80.5%	81.2%	82.0%	86.0%	90.0%	91.4%	91.8%	92.7%	0.9%
New Mexico	87.6%	87.2%	89.7%	89.5%	89.6%	91.5%	91.1%	90.1%	-1.0%
New York	82.8%	84.6%	85.0%	85.0%	83.0%	83.5%	89.1%	88.0%	-1.1%
North Carolina	84.1%	86.1%	86.1%	86.7%	88.5%	88.8%	89.8%	89.5%	-0.3%
North Dakota	63.4%	63.7%	67.4%	76.3%	79.0%	82.2%	81.6%	81.5%	-0.1%
Ohio	70.3%	74.7%	74.1%	78.7%	81.7%	81.6%	82.7%	83.6%	0.9%
Oklahoma	70.1%	76.7%	80.3%	83.1%	83.7%	83.1%	84.3%	84.2%	-0.1%
Oregon	88.2%	90.4%	92.6%	93.3%	94.1%	95.3%	96.3%	96.6%	0.3%
Pennsylvania	75.7%	79.0%	81.8%	83.3%	86.3%	86.7%	85.1%	87.9%	2.8%
Rhode Island	70.8%	74.2%	76.2%	74.7%	74.0%	79.1%	72.0%	74.7%	2.7%
South Carolina	66.3%	72.8%	65.7%	69.7%	72.5%	74.5%	79.0%	81.5%	2.5%
South Dakota	64.0%	69.9%	69.4%	68.8%	71.3%	73.0%	71.8%	72.1%	0.3%
Tennessee	66.7%	68.5%	72.0%	74.4%	78.6%	80.2%	81.5%	80.6%	-0.9%
Texas	81.1%	84.3%	83.2%	89.9%	90.4%	91.8%	91.2%	92.9%	1.7%
Utah	80.1%	85.2%	85.7%	86.9%	88.6%	86.8%	86.0%	86.1%	0.1%
Vermont	84.9%	82.4%	79.9%	84.7%	82.4%	87.1%	87.3%	85.3%	-2.0%
Virginia	70.4%	74.6%	79.9%	80.4%	78.7%	79.9%	80.6%	82.3%	1.7%
Washington	92.6%	94.8%	94.2%	95.2%	96.3%	96.4%	96.5%	96.4%	-0.1%
West Virginia	71.6%	73.6%	75.8%	84.9%	88.5%	89.6%	89.5%	87.0%	-2.5%
Wisconsin	66.1%	69.8%	72.4%	73.3%	75.4%	75.3%	74.2%	73.8%	-0.4%
Wyoming	66.6%	NA	70.1%	NA	63.5%	72.2%	68.6%	67.6%	-1.0%
Nationwide	75%	79%	80%	82%	81%	82%	83%	84%	1%
Puerto Rico	90.5%	87.1%	90.1%	92.5%	92.7%	92.1%	92.8%	92.3%	-0.5%
American Samoa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55.7%	60.0%	4.3%
Guam	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	85.0%	80.0%	-5%
Northern Mariana Islands	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	89.8%	84.6%	-5.2%
U.S. Virgin Island	NA	NA	NA	NA	80.2%	NA	82.3%	85.6%	3.3%

**Note:** Rates in jurisdictions with primary belt enforcement during the calendar year of the survey are shaded. The un-shaded rates are from the jurisdictions that either have a secondary belt enforcement law or have no belt enforcement law.

\* 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**

This issue of Crash•Stats was written by Yuan Yan Chen, a mathematical statistician in NHTSA, and by Tony Jianqiang Ye, a contractor employed by URC Enterprises, Inc., working with NHTSA. For questions regarding the information presented in this document, please contact [yuan.chen@dot.gov](mailto:yuan.chen@dot.gov). Internet users may access this Crash•Stats and other general information on traffic safety at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/cats/index.aspx>.