

# Traffic Safety Facts

## Traffic Tech – Technology Transfer Series

## 2007 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey (MVOSS) Gives Status Report on Attitudes and Support for Seat Belt Use

### Background

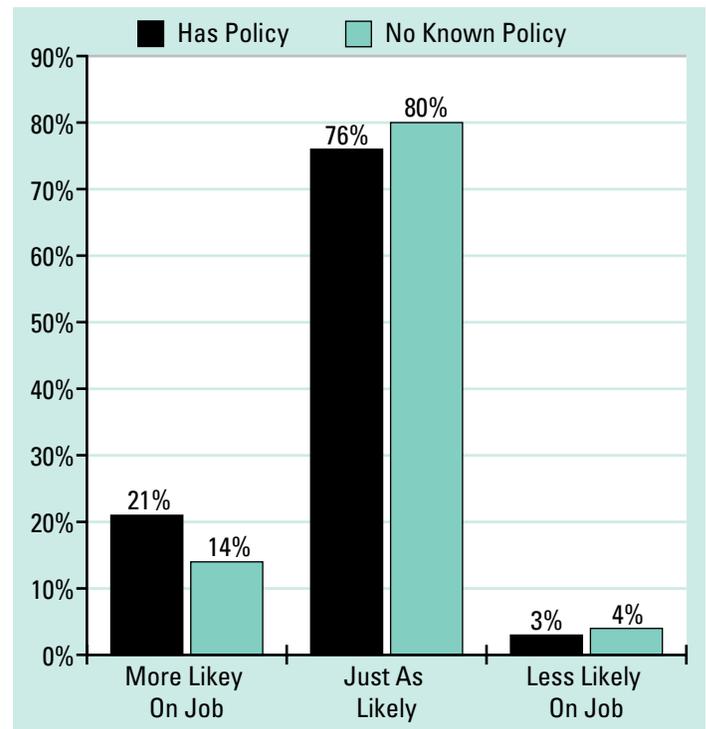
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducts a national telephone survey on a periodic basis to monitor the public's attitudes, knowledge, and self-reported behavior regarding use of seat belts and child occupant restraints. The 2007 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey (MVOSS) was the sixth in the series, which began in 1994. It was composed of two questionnaires, each administered to a randomly selected sample of approximately 6,000 people age 16 and older, with younger ages over-sampled. Interviewing ran from January 9, 2007, through April 30, 2007.

### Seat Belt Use When Driving

- Almost 9 in 10 drivers (88%) reported using a seat belt *all of the time* when driving, which was an increase over the 84% obtained in 2003 when the survey was last administered. The vast majority of seat belts in the driver seating position were one-piece (95%), usually a one-piece manual lap and shoulder belt (83%). Five percent of driver seat belts were two-piece (separate lap and shoulder belts). For two-piece belt systems, drivers were much more likely to use a lap belt *all the time* if the shoulder belt was manual (92%) rather than automatic (68%).
- Reported *all the time* use was **lower** for males (85%), males in the heaviest weight quartile (82%), drivers ages 16 to 24 (81%), pickup truck drivers (79%), and drivers in rural areas (80%).
- Six percent of drivers who said they wore a seat belt *all the time* also said they had not worn a seat belt while driving in the past day or week. Seventy percent of self-reported *most of the time* users made the same admission. These findings are consistent with previous years.
- The survey showed continued penetration of adjustable shoulder belts into the vehicle fleet, with 58% of drivers now saying they had them in their primary vehicle compared to 52% in 2003. If drivers used the adjustable feature (67%), they usually were able to make themselves more comfortable (94%).
- About one-third of drivers (35%) said they at least sometimes drive as a part of a job or business. More than half of these drivers (56%) believed their company had a policy

requiring seat belt use when driving on the job. Drivers were more likely to report higher seat belt use on the job compared to their personal driving if they believed their company had a seat belt policy.

### Drivers' Job versus Personal Seat Belt Use by Presence of Company Policy

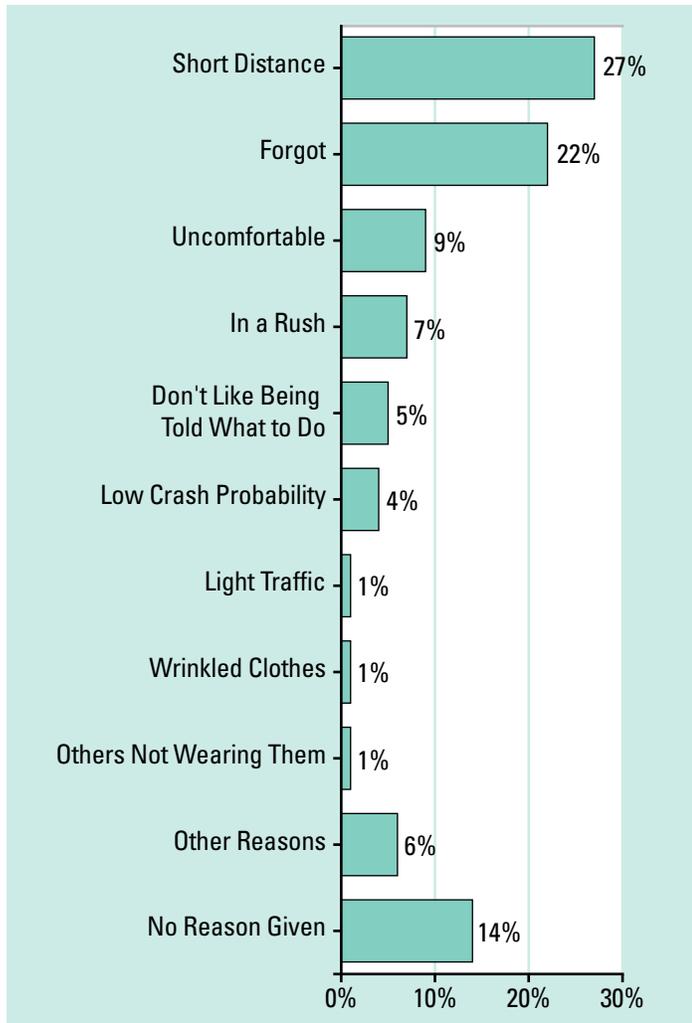


### Reasons for Use and Nonuse

- Safety remained the foremost reason that drivers gave for wearing seat belts. Almost all drivers (95%) considered it to be a contributing reason, and nearly two-thirds (64%) said that avoiding serious injury was the most important reason why they used seat belts.
- The most common reasons for non-use were short trips and forgetting. About three-fifths of drivers (59%) said they sometimes did not wear a seat belt because they were only driving a short distance, with 27% saying it was the

main reason when they don't use a seat belt. Forgetting to put the seat belt on ranked second, with 52% identifying this as a contributing reason and 22% as the most important reason.

### Most Important Reasons for Non-Use of Seat Belts – Drivers



■ Drivers who rarely or never wore a seat belt tended to give different reasons for nonuse than did drivers who sometimes or most of the time used seat belts. They were more likely to cite discomfort (34% versus 7%) or “other” reasons (18% versus 5%) as the predominant causes.

### Attitudes About the Usefulness of Seat Belts

- The vast majority of the public strongly (87%) or somewhat (8%) agreed with the statement “If I were in an accident, I would want to have my seat belt on.”
- One-third of the public strongly (14%) or somewhat (21%) agreed with the statement “Seat belts are just as likely to harm you as help you.” For some demographic groups, the figure was about 50%.
- One-quarter of the public (26%) agreed that “If it is your time to die, you’ll die, so it doesn’t matter whether you wear your seat belt.”

### Seat Belt Laws and Their Enforcement

- Almost 9 in 10 persons (88%) favored laws that required drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts. Two-thirds of the public (67%) believed that police should be allowed to stop a vehicle if they see a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken (3 percentage points higher than in 2003). The proportion of drivers who reported wearing seat belts all the time when driving was higher in States where police had this authority (91%) than States where they did not (85%).
- Half (50%) of drivers considered it likely that they would be ticketed if they did not wear a seat belt at all while driving over the next 6 months.
- The public was more likely to disagree (41%) than agree (36%) with the statement that “Police in my community generally do not bother to write tickets for seat belt violations.”

### How to Order

For a copy of *2007 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, Volume 1 Methodology Report* (40 pages plus questionnaires) and *Volume 2 Seat Belt Report* (188 pages plus appendices) prepared by Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas, Inc., write to the Office of Behavioral Safety Research, NHTSA, NTI-130, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590, send a fax to 202-366-7394, or download from [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). Alan Block was the project manager for this study.



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., NTI-130  
 Washington, DC 20590

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