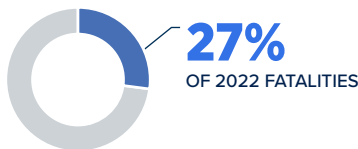


## NATIONWIDE

# 11,302

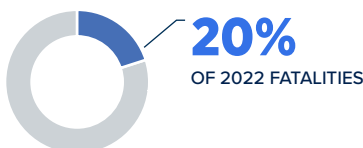
Fatalities in 2022 that involved unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants.<sup>1</sup>



## CONNECTICUT

# 75

Fatalities in 2022 that involved unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants.<sup>2</sup>



From 2013 to 2022, seat belt use increased in Connecticut from:<sup>3</sup>

# 87% → 92.1%



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## STRATEGY AT-A-GLANCE

# Unrestrained Occupants



### Unrestrained Occupants

crash type is defined based on the “restraint system” field in the crash report marked as “None Used” for either the driver or the passenger.

In 2022, there were 42,514 traffic fatalities nationally, of which 11,302 (27%) involved unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants.<sup>1</sup> Within Connecticut, there were 373 traffic fatalities in 2022, 75 (20%)<sup>2</sup> involving unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants. Regarding seat belt usage in that same year, Connecticut is slightly better than the national average at 92.1% versus 91.6%.<sup>1</sup> However only about 30 (18%) towns within Connecticut had no unrestrained occupant fatal or serious crashes from 2015 to 2022. The remaining towns had unrestrained occupants involved in crashes during the same period, including drivers from Bristol, Waterbury, Torrington, Bridgeport, and Middletown, which rank among the highest in these crashes.

Seat belt and child safety restraint laws, enforcement, and education are the most important safety countermeasures used to reduce the number of vehicle occupants that are unbelted or not properly restrained. Occupants include not only adults, but child passengers as well. According to 2022 data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), of passenger vehicle occupants killed, 25% under the age of 4 were unrestrained, 25% in the 75+ age group were unrestrained, and between 51% - 53% in the 15 to 44 age group were unrestrained.<sup>3</sup>

# Seat belt and child restraint laws:

## Nationwide:

- **1968:** The first seat belt law passed in the United States. It required all new cars to have seatbelts installed in the front seats, although occupants were not required to use them. By the mid-1970s, seatbelt usage was over 50%.
- **1984:** NHTSA introduced a new rule that seatbelts be installed for all passengers. By the 1990's, seatbelt usage was at 80%.<sup>4</sup>

## Connecticut:

- **1985:** Seat belts are required to be used by front seat passengers and all children between ages 4 to 16 no matter where they are seated.<sup>5</sup> Connecticut is a primary enforcement state for front seated passengers, which means law enforcement officers are permitted to stop and cite front seated passengers who are unrestrained independent of any other traffic violation.<sup>6</sup>
- **2017:** Child safety restraint law increased the age and weight thresholds for car seats as shown below.<sup>7</sup>
- **2021:** As of October 1, seatbelts are required by all passengers no matter where they are seated. This law uses secondary enforcement for rear seat passengers, meaning a law enforcement officer must have a different primary reason to conduct a traffic stop before they can ticket an unrestrained rear seated adult passenger.
- **2022:** From 2013 to 2022, seatbelt use steadily increased from 87% to 92.1%<sup>8</sup> in Connecticut, which may be attributed to increased media and public outreach efforts as well as enforcement campaigns.
- **Today:** There are safety advocates that support a primary enforcement law for rear seated occupants, including children; as of the end of the 2024 legislative session, the secondary enforcement law remains in place.

# Benefits of Seatbelts

- » **Improved Safety:** Buckling up is the best defense against being ejected from a vehicle during a crash, which usually results in serious injury or a fatality. Seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives nationally in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Buckling up in the front seat of a passenger car, can reduce risk of a fatal injury by 45% and a moderate to critical injury by 50%.<sup>1</sup>
- » **Most Important Vehicle Safety Technology:** Seatbelts have saved more lives than airbags, energy-absorbing steering assemblies, and electronic stability control combined, providing an unparalleled level of safety. Wearing a seatbelt, even without an airbag, provides more protection than not wearing a seatbelt in a vehicle with airbags as the force of an airbag can cause serious or even fatal injuries to an unrestrained occupant.<sup>9</sup>
- » **Avoid receiving a fine for not wearing one:** The current ticket cost for not wearing a seatbelt in Connecticut is \$92.<sup>10</sup> Failing to secure children under 8 years of age or who weigh less than 60 pounds into a child safety seat can result in an infraction for the first violation and a fine of up to \$199 for the second violation. Both violations also require offenders to take a two-hour educational car seat class through the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (CTDMV).

# Funding Resources

CTDOT applies for grants from NHTSA annually that aim to target unrestrained occupants in Connecticut. For fiscal year (FY) 2024, Connecticut applied for both Occupant Protection (OP) and Child Passenger Safety (CPS) grant programs. The OP programs utilize funding for initiatives and projects related to Click-It or Ticket, enforcement campaigns, public education and awareness campaigns, and media buy efforts. OP grant money is available through CTDOT's Highway Safety Office (HSO) for municipal use as well as for the Connecticut State Police (CSP) to help fund enforcement efforts.<sup>11</sup>

## Child Car Seat Age and Weight Recommendations

Age:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
Weight (lbs)									
< 30									
30-39									
40-59									
60 <									

### Car Seat Option:

- Rear-facing seat with five-point harness
- Front-facing or rear-facing seat with five-point harness
- Booster seat with seat belt or any of the above listed restraints
- Seat belt, booster seat, or live-point harness

# Application in Connecticut

## Seat belt usage education and enforcement campaigns:

In May 2024, the CTDOT, CSP, and local law enforcement joined a national effort aimed at enforcing seat belt usage. The [“Click It or Ticket It”](#)<sup>12</sup> media campaign was part of NHTSA’s nationwide campaign [“Seat Belts Save Lives”](#).<sup>9</sup> CTDOT also promoted the use of seatbelts through an OP campaign titled [“Buckle Up: Every Trip. Every Time”](#).<sup>13</sup> These enforcement campaigns aim to not only remind the general public to buckle up when in a vehicle, but also target repeat offender unrestrained occupants who increase the risk of injuring themselves and potentially others.

The CSP also has two seat belt machines as part of the Seat Belt Convincer Program, including the only one in the United States with ghost graphics and lights on it and one rollover simulator machine. In 2023, there were 76 requests from various organizations to bring the machines to events. The program is growing fast, with 82 requests to date for 2024. Events include the Big E, company safety presentations, hospital events, company family outings/safety nights, National Night Out, prom season events, summer camps, driving schools, Take Your Child to Work Day and other school events. More information can be found at Connecticut’s Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) website<sup>14</sup> and by calling Sergeant John Acampora at (860) 841-7593.



CSP Seat Belt Convincer Program Machine

## Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Initiatives:

The CSP, local law enforcement, municipalities, and the CTDOT also conduct car seat installation inspection and car seat clinics at a number of locations throughout the state to help families use car seats properly. To find a fitting station to assist with car seat installation and education, visit the [Safe Kids CT website](#).<sup>15</sup> There are also multiple CPS grant programs through the CTDOT HSO that further increase awareness and proper use of car seats. Such programs include providing services to Justice40/Environmental Justice communities through supporting classes and curriculums with a multi-lingual approach, and visiting schools, community-based and faith-based organizations, and hospitals/medical clinics to provide CPS education in Connecticut.

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