



Lead Agency: Missoula City-County Health Department
Health Promotion Division
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Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 8, 2019

County Health Officials Release Updated Seatbelt-Use Rate for Missoula

After observing more than 5,000 vehicles in Missoula over the course of a week, officials with the Missoula City-County Health Department report that about 92% of occupants were observed wearing seatbelts.

Steve Schmidt, senior community health specialist and Buckle Up Montana coalition coordinator for Missoula County, says of the 5,262 vehicles observed at 11 locations throughout Missoula Sept. 23-30, 4,844 were observed with occupants wearing seatbelts. This is up significantly from the 2018 survey, when only about 76% of Missoulians were observed wearing seatbelts. In 2017, the rate was 81%. This year also saw a considerable increase in seatbelt use among pickup truck occupants, from about 71% in 2018 to 86% in 2019.

Though 8% of Missoulians are still not wearing seatbelts, today's numbers stand in stark contrast to those collected in 1987, when only 34% of vehicle occupants were observed wearing seatbelts, a spike apparently so dramatic for that year that it prompted the surveyor to draw a smiley face on the report (see attached graphic).

"Why is this important? Simply put, it's about saving lives, reducing injuries and promoting a healthier lifestyle," Schmidt says. "We put a large emphasis on health in our society. We can spend years exercising, eating healthy and trying to improve the quality of our life, and one single trip down the street while not wearing a seatbelt could end it all in an instant."

According to the [2019 Missoula Community Transportation Safety Plan](#) (3.6.3.3, Page 28), there were a total of 872 crashes involving unrestrained occupants in Missoula between 2013 and 2017, which resulted in 15 fatalities, 90 serious injuries and 446 minor or possible injuries. Unrestrained occupants tended to be younger, with 26% listed as under 18, 20% between the ages of 19 and 24, and 25% between the ages of 25 and 40.

"I used to tell my kids, you could become an astronaut or join the special forces, but driving as a teenager will be the most dangerous thing you ever do," Schmidt says. "I'm passionate about helping people, and since more young people in Montana lose their lives through vehicle crashes than from any other cause, this is where I need to be. Our community should be focused on traffic safety as a health issue."

For more information, contact Schmidt at 406-258-3880 or 406-543-2345.

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Missoula County Buckle Up Coalition

THEN & NOW

We've been surveying Seatbelt Use for over 30 years and the results of our educational and enforcement campaigns are keeping Missoula County residents safer!

DATE: *June 9, 2003*

1987

LOCATION	TIME	BELTED	UNBELTED	%	1.2
RATTLESNAKE	7:45	52	98	25	42
UNIVERSITY AVENUE	8:10	53	97	35	42
PATTEE CANYON	8:25	47	103	31	37
10TH & RUSSELL	8:50	32	118	21	25
HIGHWAY 93 & ERNST	9:30	34	116	29	28

DATE: *June 8, 2021*

LOCATION	TIME	BELTED	UNBELTED	%	1.2
BANCROFT & SOUTH	8:10	45	105	30	26
10TH & RUSSELL	8:40	36	124	17	20
ADAMS & BROADWAY	9:35	35	116	23	28
HIGGINS & BROOKS	9:10	51	99	34	41
MCCORMICK & SPRUCE	7:10	57	102	34	41

FORMULA

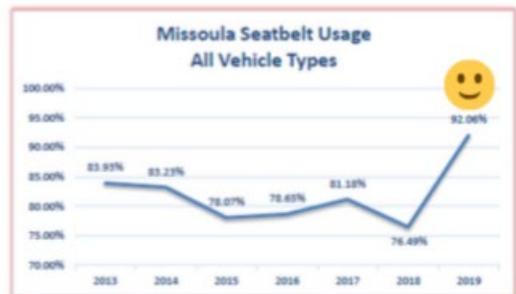
of seat belt wearers divided by 150
 $\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times 1.2 = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$

"Seat Belt Rate" = 34%

2019 Missoula Seatbelt Usage Surveys Totals

Seatbelt Usage

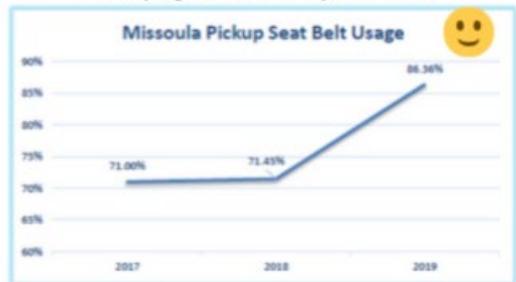
2013	83.93%
2014	83.23%
2015	78.07%
2016	78.65%
2017	81.18%
2018	76.49%
2019	92.06%



After 3 years of targeted "Buckle Up In Your Truck" campaigns, rates are up over 20%!

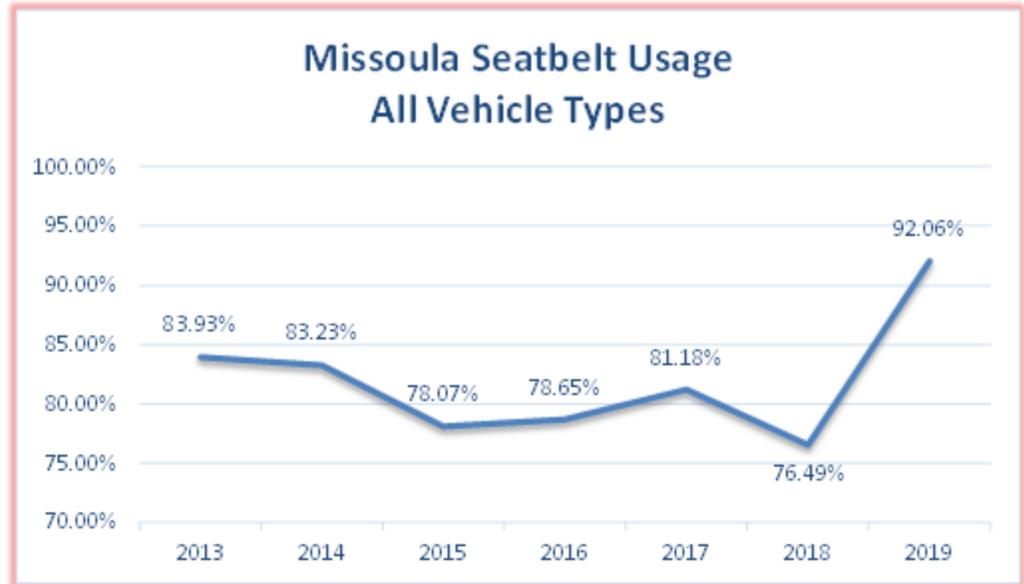
Pickup Seat Belt Usage

2017	71.00%
2018	71.45%
2019	86.36%



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	<u>Seatbelt Usage</u>
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