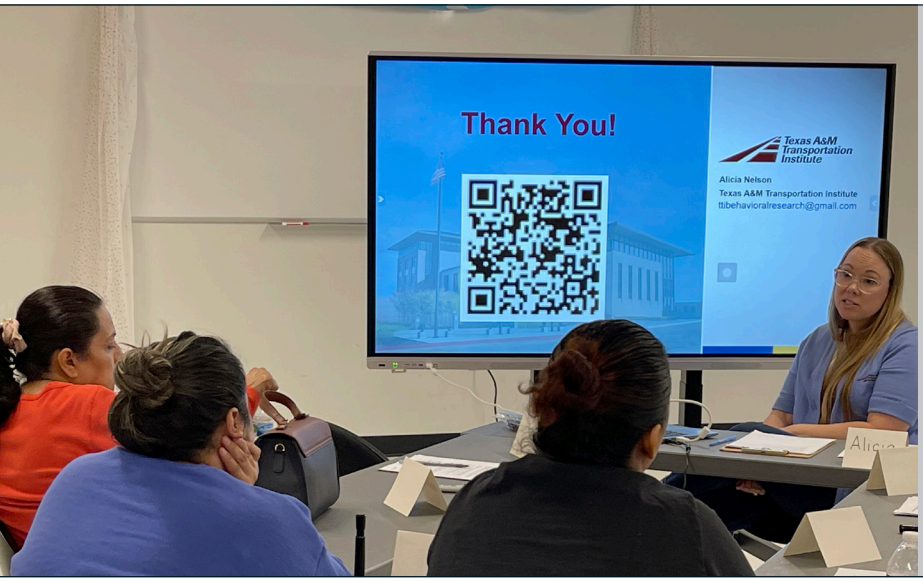
Center for Transportation Safety



Attitudes and Behaviors

Behavioral and attitudinal factors are prevalent underlying conditions of motor vehicle crashes. Studies of driver, passenger, and vulnerable road user behaviors and attitudes lead to a better understanding of how to effectively address these factors to create a safer traffic environment.

WHAT WE KNOW

Traffic safety is behavior driven.

Life-saving benefits of using seat belts are recognized by most but not all Americans. The national seat belt use rate in 2022 was 91.6 percent. The Texas seat belt use rate was 90.4 percent.

Correct use of child safety seats can reduce the risk of serious or fatal injury to infants by 71 percent and to children ages 1–4 years by 54 percent.

High-visibility enforcement campaigns have been shown to have a positive effect on driver and passenger behavior.

Distracted driving claims the lives of over 3,000 Americans each year. National, state and local agencies dedicated to improving traffic safety are focused on ways to change this high-risk behavior.

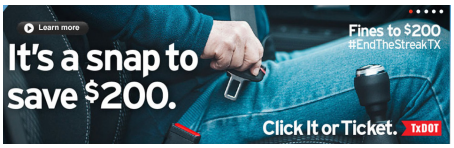
WHAT WE DO

Measure, Evaluate and Educate

The Behavioral Research team conducts a number of annual observational surveys to measure traffic safety behavior by motor vehicle drivers and passengers. These include surveys of statewide seat belt use, child restraint use, nighttime seat belt use, and statewide cell phone use; and urban area surveys of occupant protection and distracted driving using mobile communication devices. The team also conducts a variety of attitudinal surveys annually. We use carefully designed data collection methods to track and evaluate changes in behavior associated with countermeasure efforts. Our expertise extends to development of educational and public outreach material, curricula, and trainings that incorporate research findings.

WHAT WE DELIVER

Quantifying and exploring behavior



Click It or Ticket Evaluation Surveys

The Click It or Ticket enforcement mobilization campaign has been successfully implemented in Texas each year since 2002, publicizing high-visibility enforcement of the strong Texas mandatory seat belt law for all seating positions and child restraint use for children up to age eight. The effectiveness of the mobilization has been measured by the Behavioral Research team each year by conducting observational surveys of seat belt use before, during and after the increased enforcement period in 10 of Texas' major cities.

Law Enforcement Training on Pedestrian and Bicyclist Laws

Law enforcement officers receive a considerable amount of training on state laws and how to enforce them. However, specific training or instruction on laws pertaining to pedestrians and bicyclists can be limited, leaving many law enforcement officers unfamiliar with these laws and ill-equipped to conduct enforcement or properly respond to pedestrian- and bicyclist-related crashes. Similarly, there is little training on how to properly conduct pedestrian and bicycle safety enforcement, and on how to educate motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists during enforcement operations. Our team developed a curriculum to meet this need and conducts trainings for law enforcement agencies throughout Texas.

Statewide Mobile Communication Device Use Survey

Annual estimates of the statewide use of cell phones for talking and texting are determined for Texas using the controlled intersection method of the National Occupant Protection Use Survey as the basis for survey design and observation procedures. The rates are used as a performance measure for traffic safety programming and as a comparison with national trends in wireless communication device use.

Tapping into and Addressing Child Restraint Non-use in Texas

This three-year research and outreach project was designed to identify child safety seat non-users and their reasons for non-use, and to recommend countermeasures based on these findings. The study investigated child safety seat non-use by observation, questionnaire distribution, telephone interviews and focus groups. Age-appropriate educational materials, existing and newly created based on study findings, were provided to parents/caregivers on-site, and additional resources were made available.

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Surveys of Nighttime Seat Belt and Cell Phone Use in Texas Cities

This is an ongoing project to measure occupant protection use during nighttime hours. The research initially included development of a survey design and protocol feasible for collecting seat belt use at night using curbside stationary observation. In FY 2021, the survey was expanded to include nighttime cell phone use, which is collected concurrently with seat belt use during the hours of darkness.

Outcome Evaluation of the Buckle Up Phone Down Campaign

To measure the effects of the Buckle Up Phone Down Campaign, the Behavioral Research team conducted a pre- and post-campaign observational survey of seat belt and cell phone use using a matched site sample design. Two program cities and two control cities were selected, and 5,000 drivers were observed during each time period. This National Highway Traffic Safety Administration–funded study is currently under way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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