

Alabama Observational Survey of Occupant and Child Restraint Use 2009

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Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Survey Design

The Injury Prevention Branch of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, within the Alabama Department of Public Health, conducts an annual survey of vehicle safety belt usage and child restraint usage throughout Alabama. Year 2009 marks the twentieth time that the required National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) guidelines were followed for the surveillance procedure.

The NHTSA sampling system incorporates a probability based multi-staged stratified sampling approach. This approach provides data for rural and urban roadways. This sampling system does not, however, overlook the larger counties, as all four metropolitan areas (Jefferson, Madison, Mobile, and Montgomery) are included in the survey. A total of 15 counties actually compose the entire survey area. In addition to the four metropolitan areas, 11 counties were randomly selected from a pool of the 37 largest counties. A majority of Alabama residents are in the sample pool, since 85% of the state's population lies within these 37 counties. The counties are Blount, Colbert, Escambia, Etowah, Houston, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Madison, Marshall, Mobile, Montgomery, Shelby, Tuscaloosa, and Walker.

Occupant Restraint Observational Survey

For the safety belt usage survey, 23 sites in each of the 15 counties are randomly selected based on Average Daily Traffic (ADT) totals supplied by the Alabama Department of Transportation. In the surveys, ADTs are broken down into three categories: low (0-4,999), medium (5,000-10,499) and high (10,500-75,000). At least one site from each category is surveyed in each county chosen. A total of 345 sites were selected and observed for one hour,

using the curbside lane as the reference position. At each site, surveillance was done to determine the number of people in the front outboard seat of the cars and the number of these occupants wearing safety belts. This year, the survey was conducted during a two-week period during May 2009.

Child Restraint Observational Survey

The child restraint survey took place at 10 randomly selected sites in each of the 15 counties. The counties and sites are the same as those in the Click-It-or-Ticket campaign. At least one site from each ADT category is surveyed in each county chosen. Each site required one hour of direct observation. The survey required a total of 150 hours of direct observation. All children age five and under were observed, in any position in the car. The survey sites selected proportionally reflect road travel in urban and rural areas and account for road volume. The survey results measure a proportional distribution which resembles the statewide population. The survey was conducted during August 2009.

Occupant Restraint Survey Results

The survey team observed a total of 46,340 front seat occupants in 41,035 vehicles throughout the 15 selected counties. Alabama was estimated to have a weighted safety belt usage rate of 89.54%. Variance (V) and Standard Error (SE) were calculated and considered acceptable. Madison County had the highest usage rate of 92.60% and Shelby County had a usage rate of 92.59%. Walker County's usage rate was 82.18%, the lowest rate of the surveyed counties. The survey determined that the observed female occupants' restraint usage rate of 93.03% was greater than males' rate of 88.13%.

Child Restraint Survey Results

The survey team observed a total of 2,689 children, five and under, in any position in the vehicle, of those 2,552 were restrained. Alabama was estimated to have a child restraint usage rate of 94.91%. Marshall County had the highest rate of 98.14%. Walker County had the lowest rate of 87.93%. Of the child restraints observed, 1,067, or 41.81% were improperly restrained in the front seat of the vehicle. Observations of unrestrained children accounted for 5.37% of all observations and 56.20% of the unrestrained children were observed in the front seat of the vehicle.

State Milestones

1982 Car Seat Law - through age 3
Every person transporting a child under the age of three years in a motor vehicle shall provide for the protection of the child by properly using a child passenger restraint system meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards.



1989 Car Seat Law - under the age of 6
Changed the 1982 Car Seat Law by raising the age to children required to use a child passenger restraint system to 6 years.



1991 Secondary Seat Belt Law
Each front seat occupant of a passenger car manufactured with safety belts in compliance with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 shall have a safety belt properly fastened about his body at all times when the vehicle is in motion. Failure to use safety belts is a secondary offense.

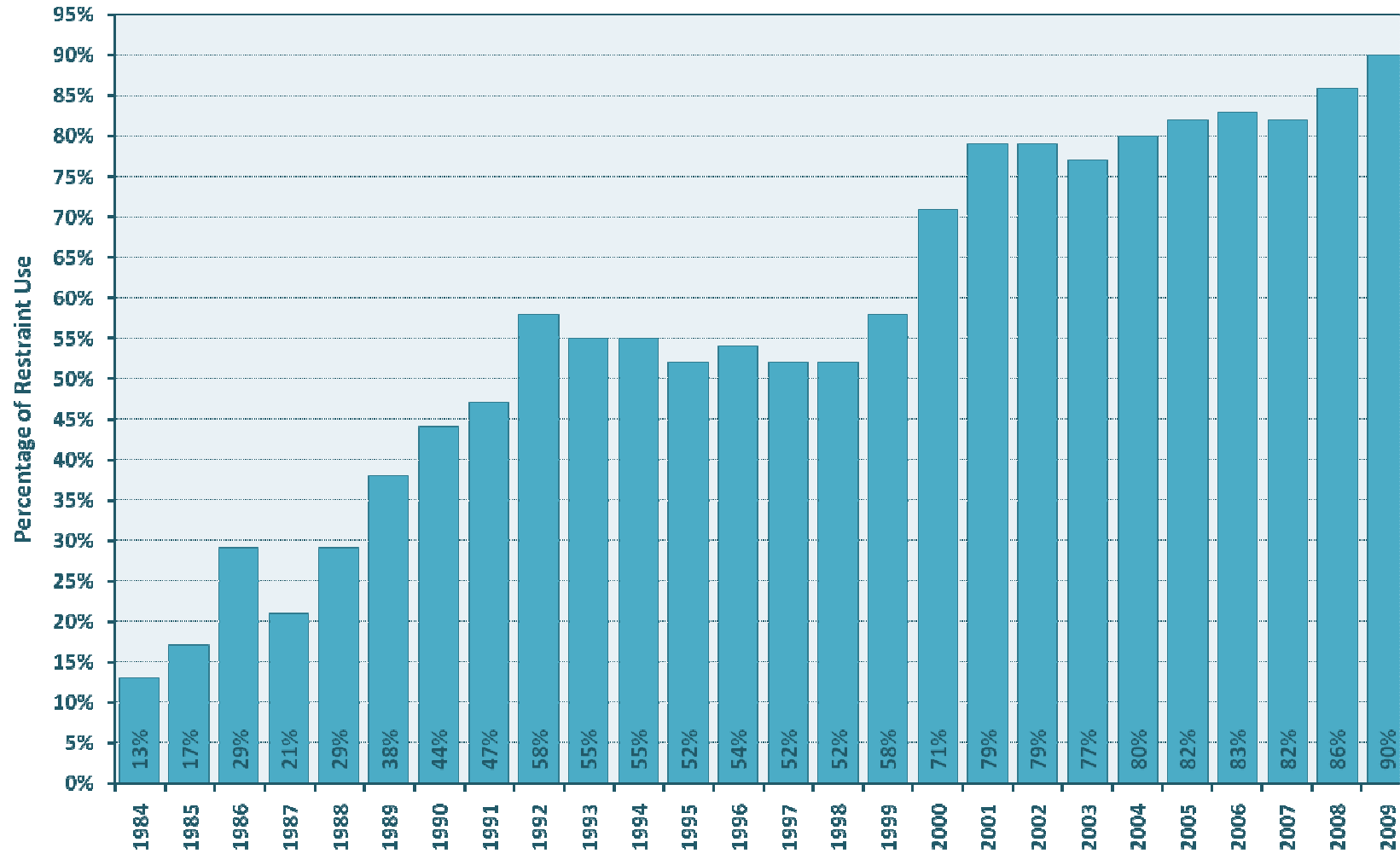


1999 Primary Seat Belt Law
Changed the 1991 Seat Belt Law by making failure to use safety belts a primary offense.



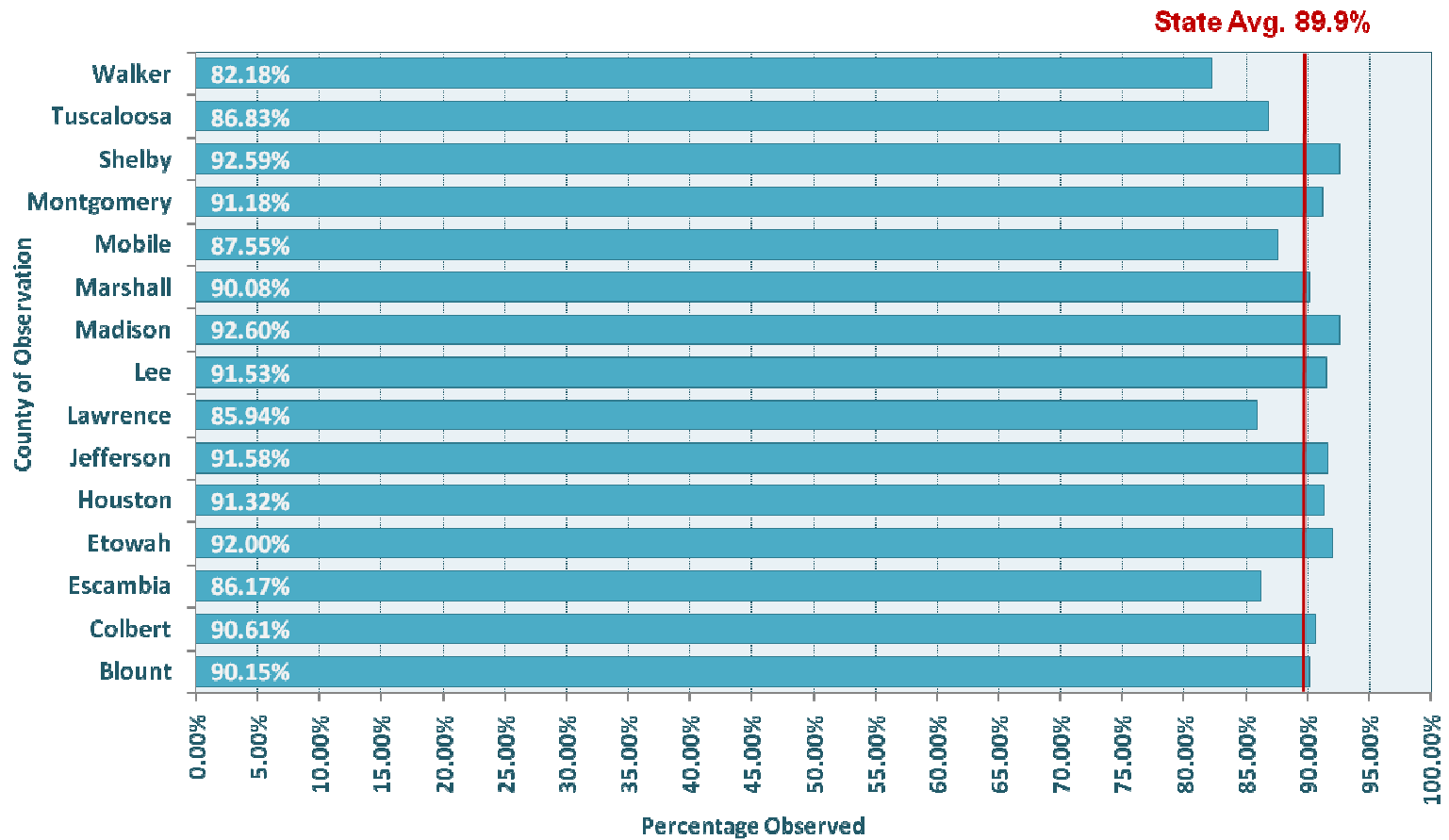
2006 Car Seat Law – under the age of 15
Changed the 1989 Car Seat Law by requiring children up to age 15 to be in an appropriate restraint while riding in a vehicle. Provided specific criteria for car seat and seat belt use by children in motor vehicles in Alabama.

Alabama Occupant Restraint Usage, 1984 - 2009



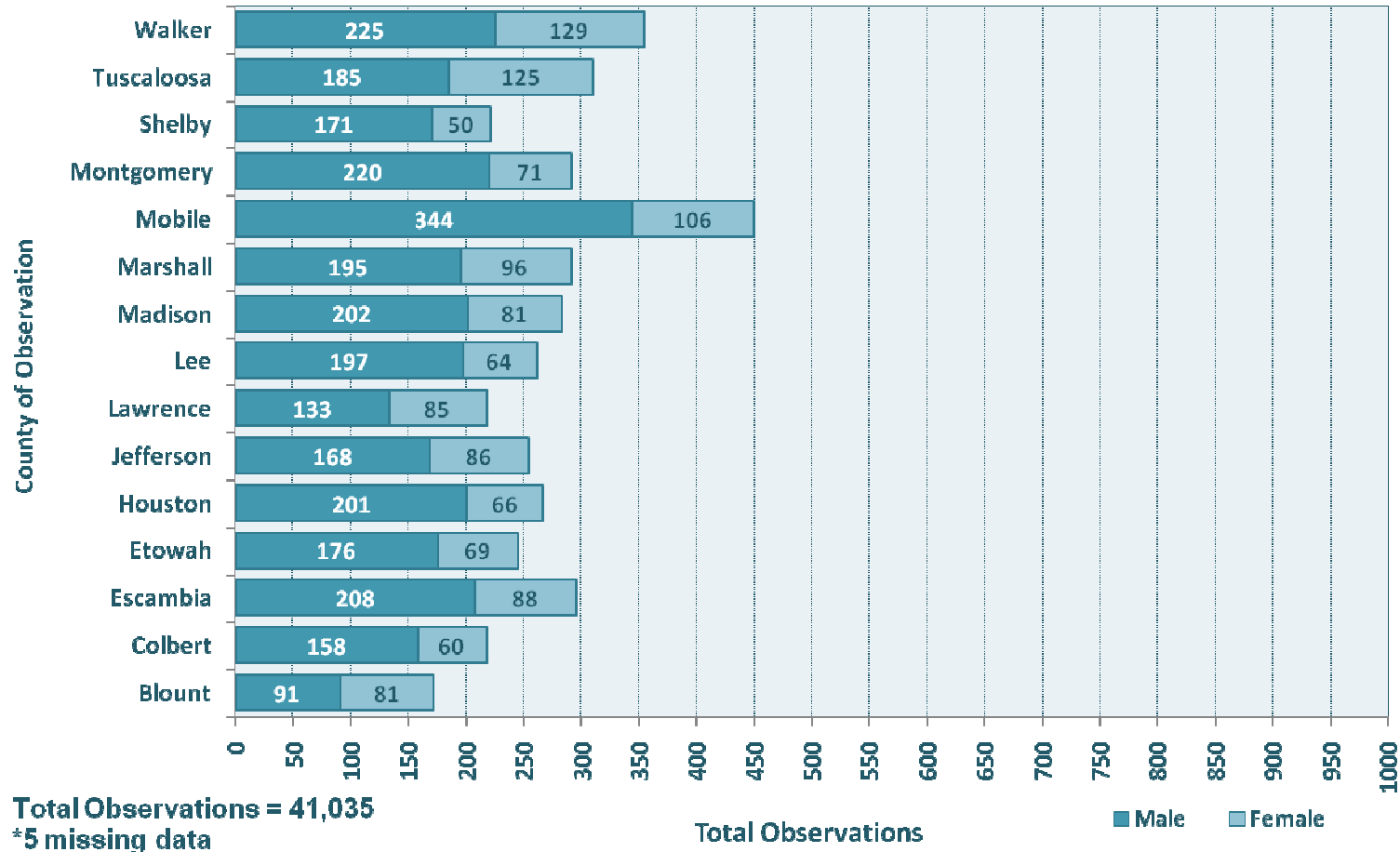
This project was supported by Subgrant No. 07-HS-K2-001 awarded by ADECA/LETS and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Alabama Restraint Use, 2009



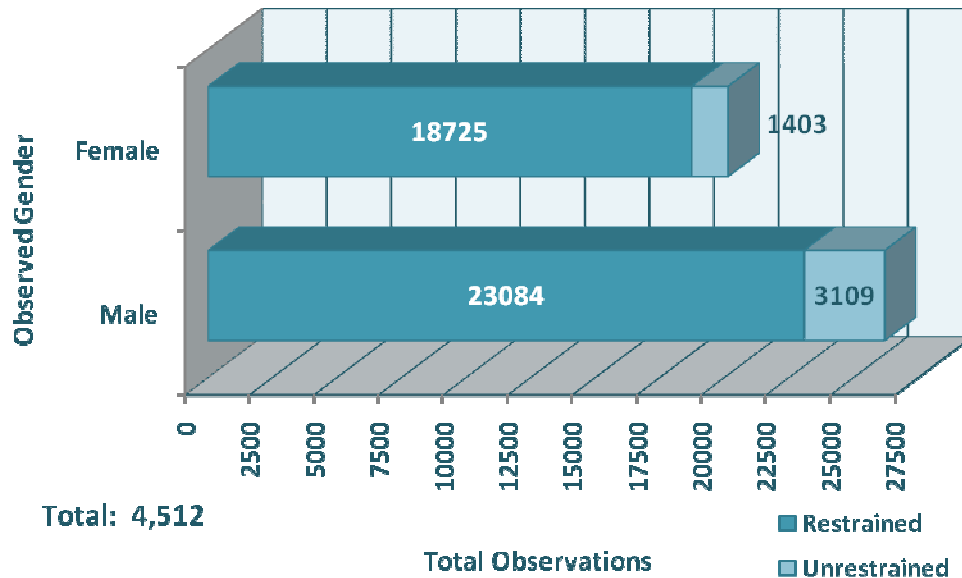
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Unrestrained Observations by Gender and County, 2009

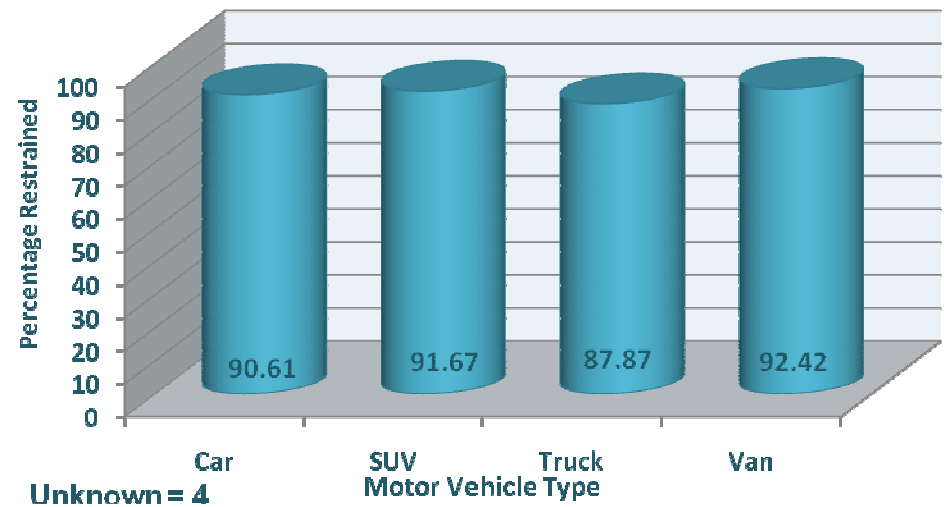


This project was supported by Subgrant No. 07-HS-K2-001 awarded by ADECA/LETS and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Seatbelt Use by Gender, 2009

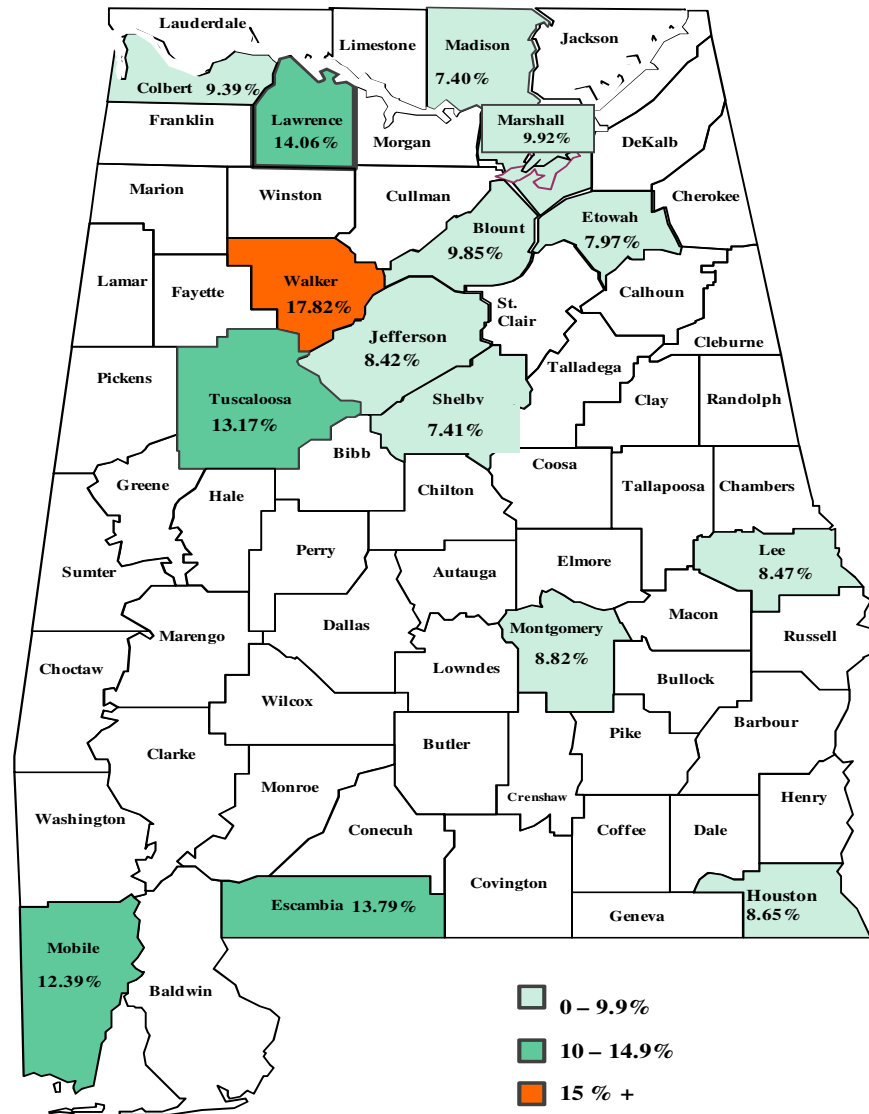


2009 Restraint Use by Motor Vehicle Type



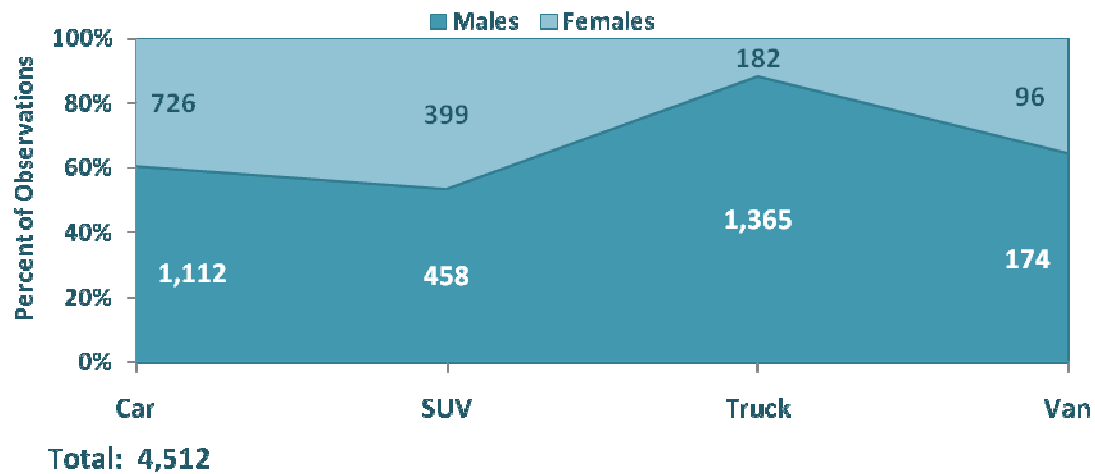
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Percent Not Restrained by Alabama County - 2009

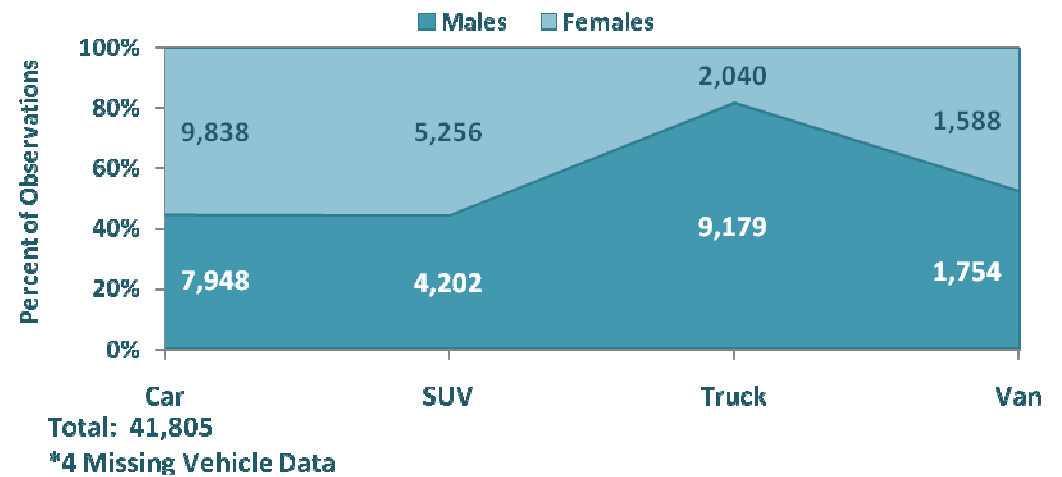


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Unrestrained Observations by Gender & Vehicle Type, 2009

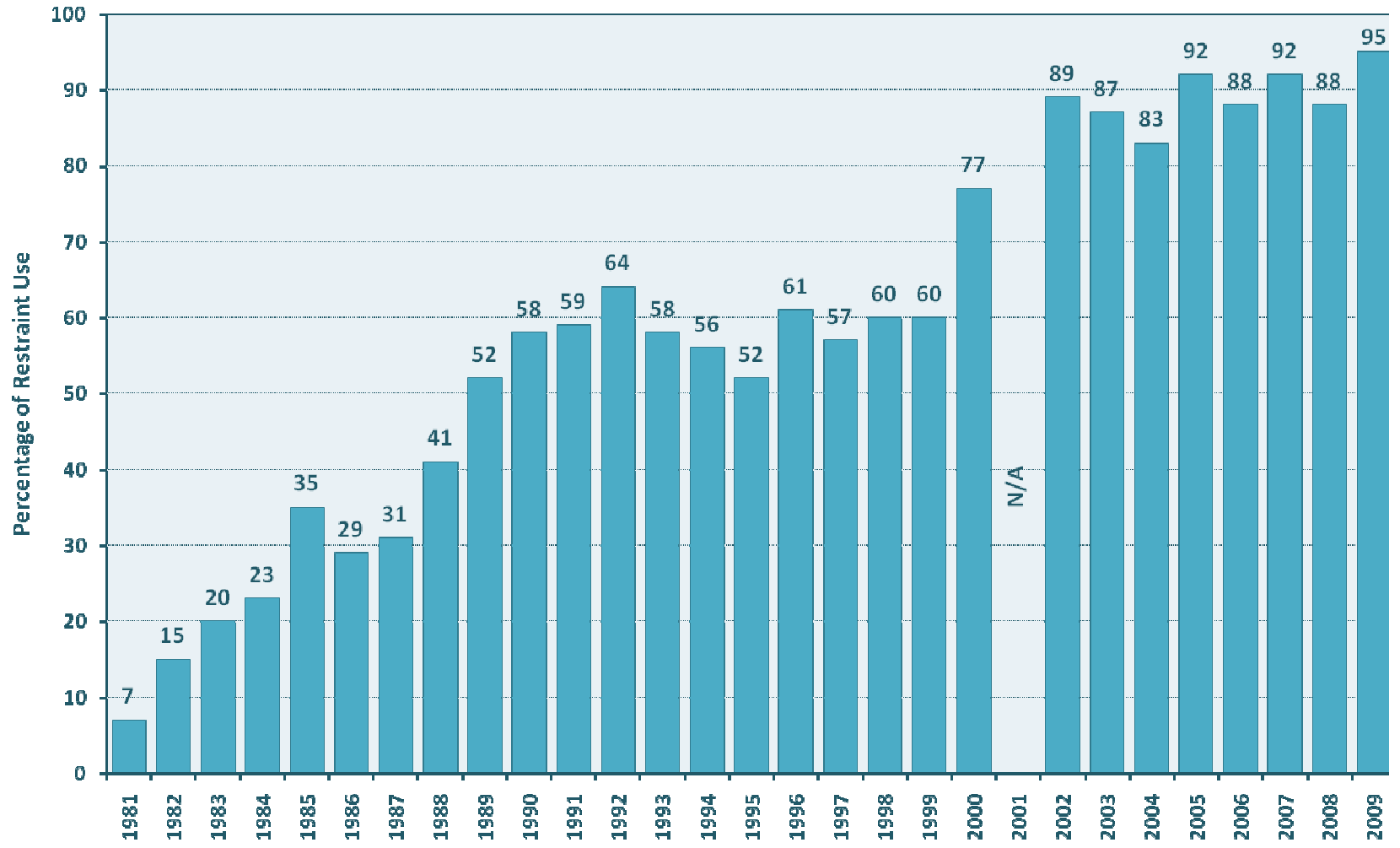


Observed Restraints by Gender & Vehicle Type, 2009



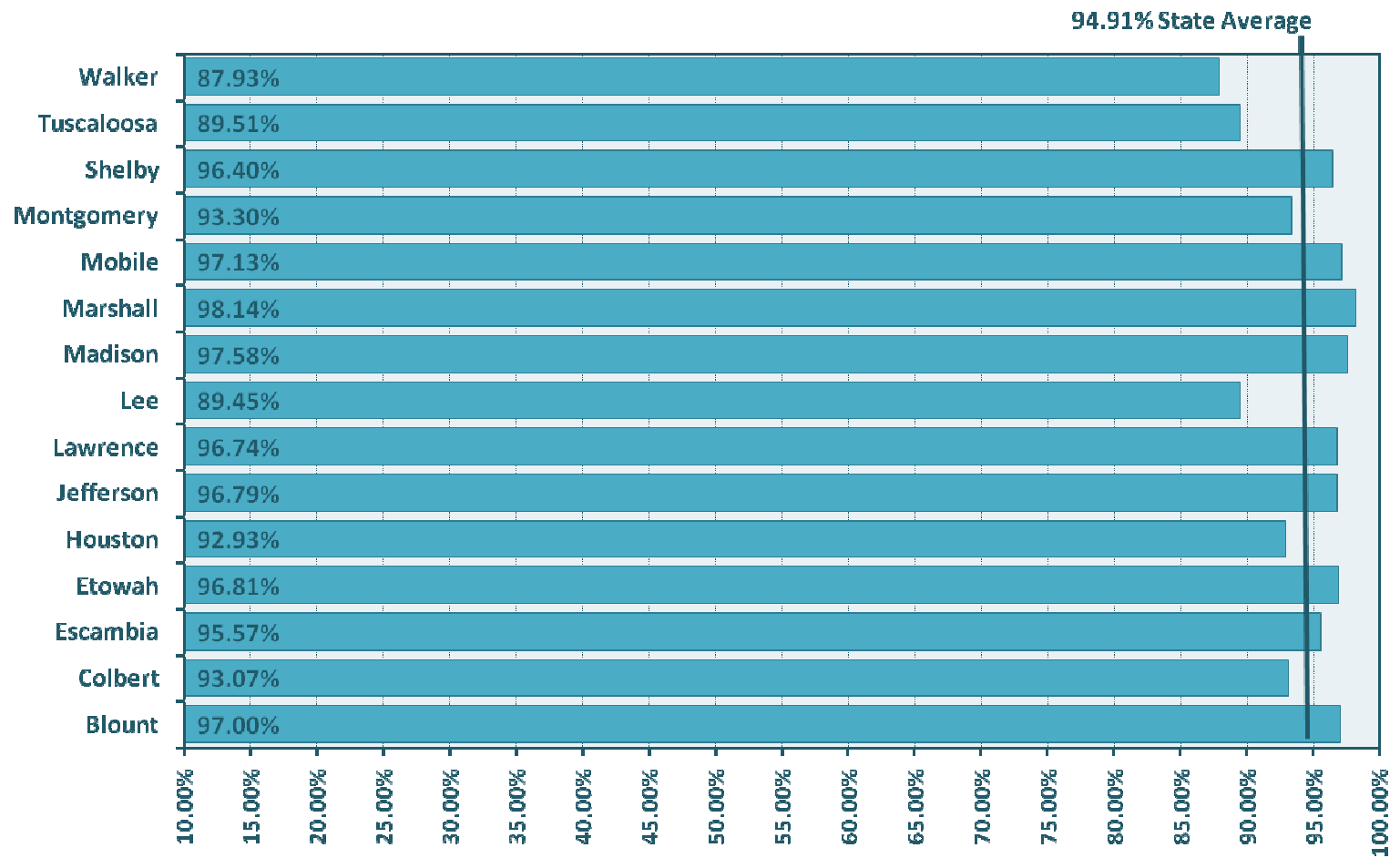
This project was supported by Subgrant No. 07-HS-K2-001 awarded by ADECA/LETS and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Alabama Child Restraint Usage, 1981 - 2009



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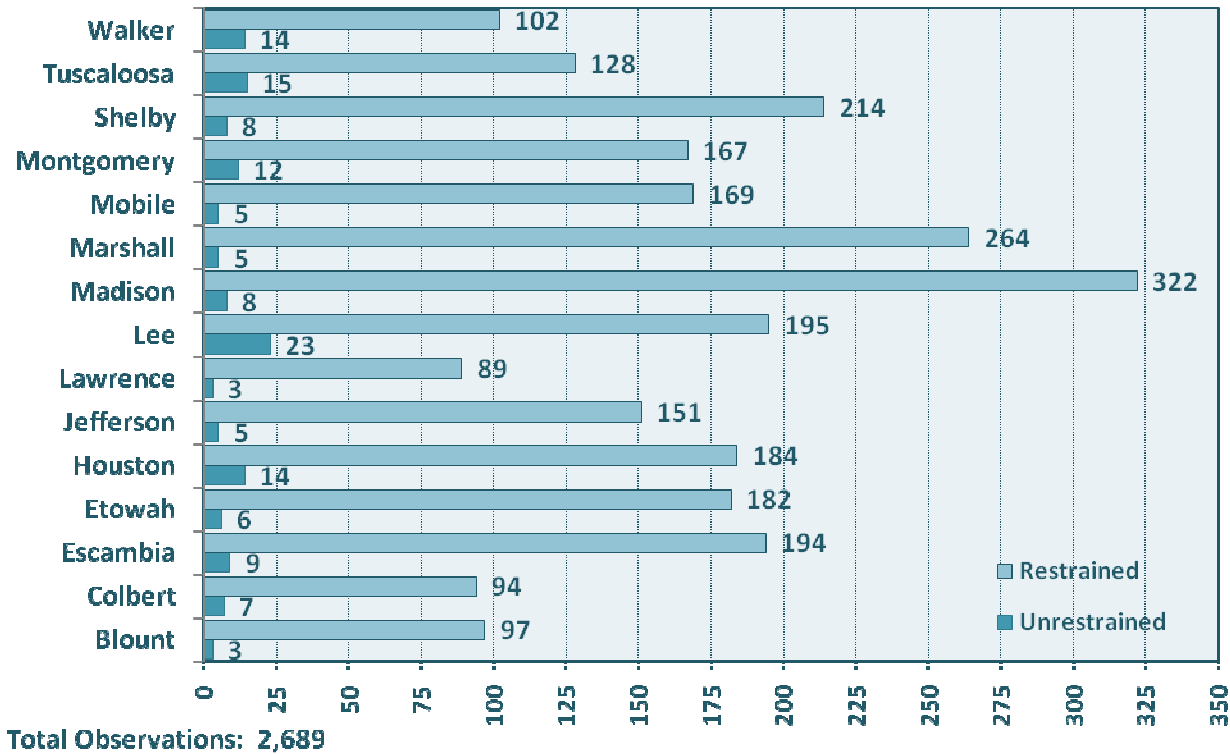
Percentage of Alabama Child Restraints, 2009



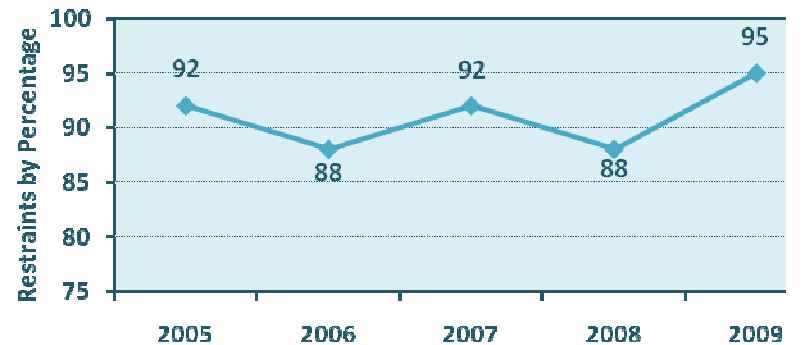
Total Observations: 2,689

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Alabama Child Restraints by County, 2009

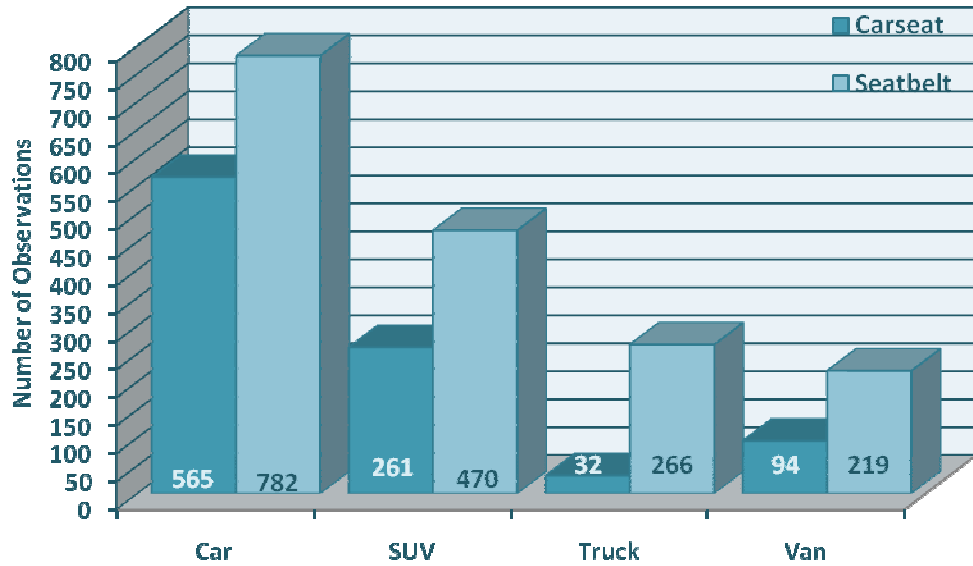


Percent Change by Year, 2005 - 2008



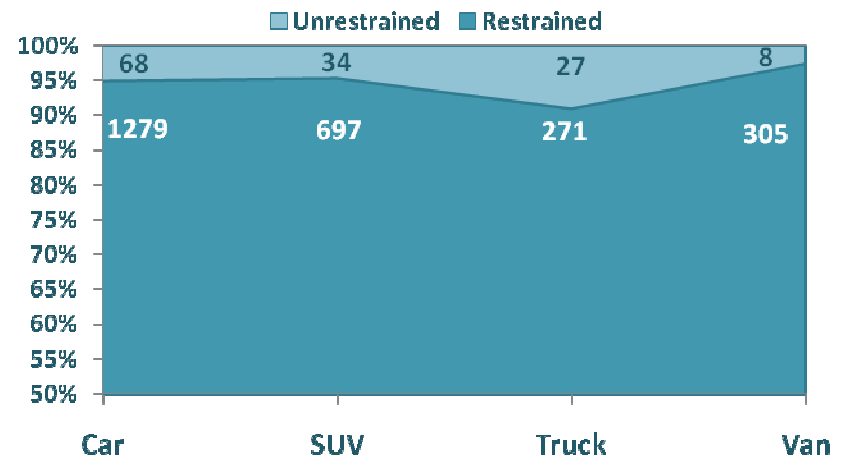
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Observations by Vehicle Type, 2009



Total: 2,689

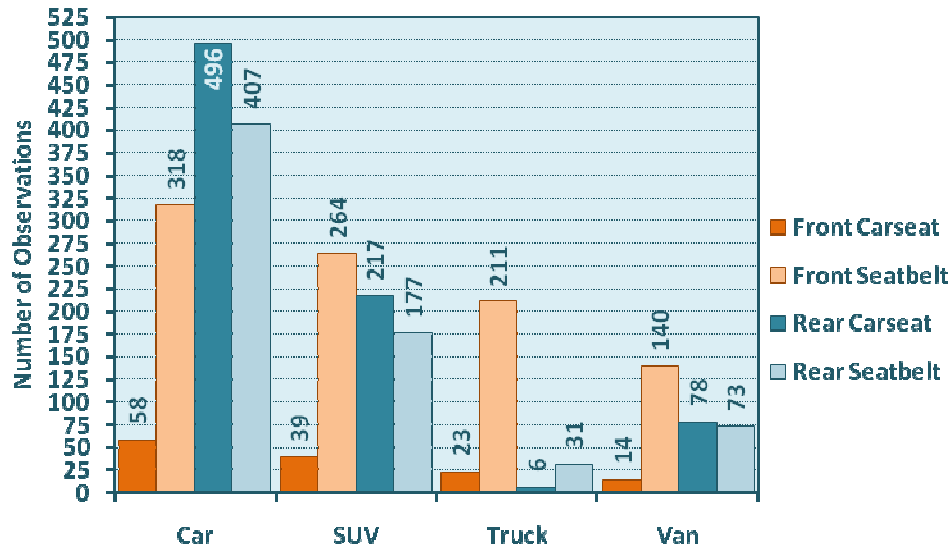
Restraint by Vehicle Type, 2009



Total: 2,689

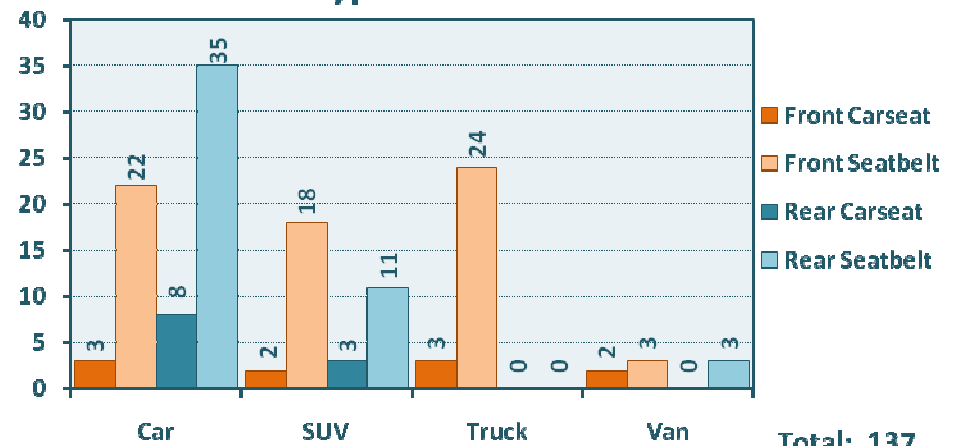
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Restrained Observations by Vehicle Type & Placement



Total: 2,552

Unrestrained Observations by Vehicle Type & Placement



Total: 137

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