



**SURVEY OF BOOSTER SEAT USAGE  
AND AWARENESS IN 50 STATES**

Prepared for  
Ford Motor Company—*Boost America!*

April 2001



Prepared by  
Wirthlin Worldwide



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Research Overview.....	2
Executive Summary.....	2
Methodology.....	3
<b>2. DETAILED FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Right Age for Booster Seats .....	4
Heard or Read of Booster Seats.....	7
Booster Seat Usage.....	9
Trends by Region.....	12
<b>3. APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Appendix A – Usage and Heard or Read by State.....	14
Appendix B – Age to Place Child in Regular Seat With a Seat Belt.....	15
Appendix C – Survey Questions.....	16



## 1. INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

### RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The following ***Final Report*** highlights findings from the December 2000 through January 2001 quantitative research conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide. Results are based on interviews conducted via the telephone with a state-by-state sample of Americans (n=11,701). The phone interviews took place from December 18, 2000 through January 28, 2001.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, one fifth (21%) of parents and caregivers (of children 4-8) use booster seats. Even though nearly nine out of ten (88%) parents and caregivers say they have heard or read about booster seats, only one fourth (23%) of those parents or caregivers *that have heard or read of booster seats* actually use them and use them correctly.

All parents and caregivers are conscientious about making sure their children are in seat belts or safety seats of some type. Ninety-six percent (96%) of those with children between ages 4 to 8 report that their children travel with a seat belt or in a safety seat.

Although parents and caregivers report they are using seat belts and safety devices for children under their care, they are misinformed about the right types to use at different ages. Up to seventy-nine percent (79%) appear not to be using the correct device for children between the ages of 4 to 8. Seventy-five percent (75%) are misinformed or don't know when it is safe to place a child in a vehicle with just a regular safety belt without a specialized safety seat or other device.

### METHODOLOGY

All respondents interviewed in this research are members of a targeted state-by-state sample of American adults who are parents or caregivers of children under twelve years of age. A detailed explanation of this sample selection method appears below. A sample of 11,701 interviews yield results that can be



generalized to the entire universe of American parents or caregivers of young children within +/-1.0 percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases. We completed 300 interviews in each of the fifteen most populated states, and 200 interviews in each of the remaining 35 states and the District of Columbia. In several portions of the report, results are based on parents or caregivers of children between 4-8 years old. This sample size is 7720 interviews and has a sample error of +/- 1.17. *This survey should be used to compare states against the national average only.*

Approximately 15% of all interviews were independently validated for procedure and content. Completed interviews were edited and coded at Wirthlin Worldwide's Orem, Utah field facility. Statistical analysis and cross-tabulations were produced by the firm's own software and computer system.

*Sample Design.* Effective survey research must be based on a sample truly representative of the universe of interest. The sample for this survey was targeted for parents or caregivers of young children within each state.

Up to five callbacks were made on each number in the sample, unless it proved inoperable, before it was removed from the sample. When contact was established, the interviewer screened for an appropriate adult, which is anyone over the age of eighteen, and subsequently for parenthood or guardianship over children under the age of twelve years.

The application of these procedures produced a calculable probability of being included in the survey sample for each member of the potential universe.

## **2. DETAILED FINDINGS**

### **RIGHT AGE FOR BOOSTER SEATS**

About 4 in 10 Americans (41%, based on Wirthlin Worldwide's August 2000 National Quorum) have children or care for children under age 12. Booster seats are intended for children between the ages of 4 to 8. About 31% of Americans have children or care for children between these ages.

The good news is that most parents and caregivers are making sure children are using some type of safety restraint. Ninety-six percent (96%) of all parents and caregivers report that the children under their care usually use a seat belt or safety seat or some type.

The bad news is that most of these parents and caregivers are not always using the type of seat that is most appropriate or safe for children of older ages.



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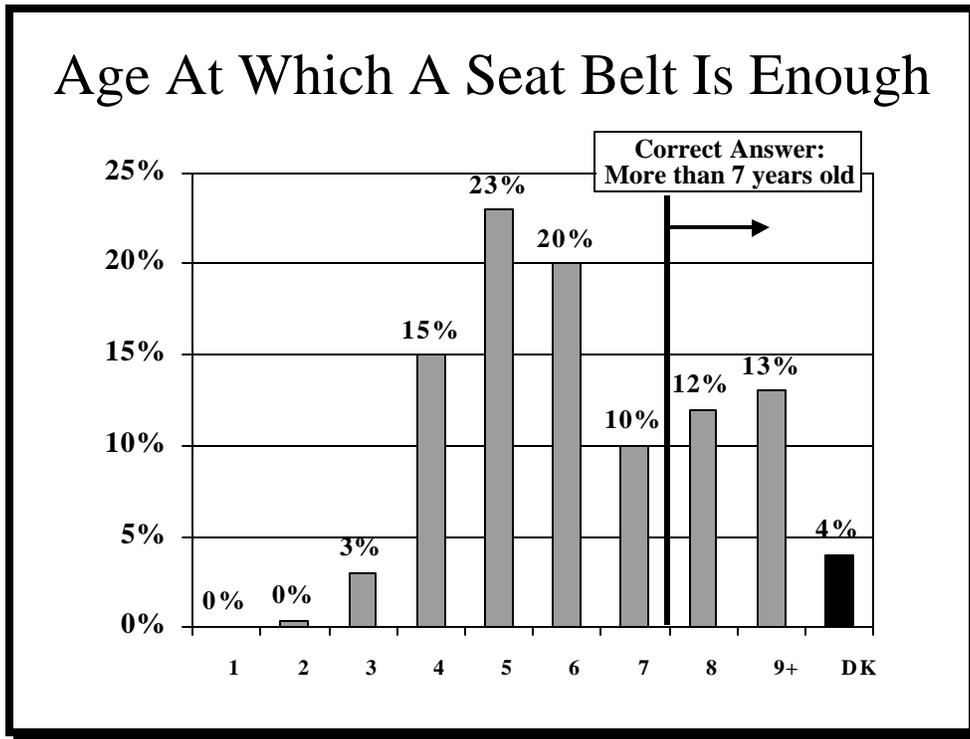
Among parents and caregivers of children between 4 to 8, nearly nine of ten (88%) have heard or read about “booster seats.” Nevertheless, despite the high number of parents and caregivers of children under age 12 that have heard about booster seats, the number of parents and caregivers who use them, or are knowledgeable about which ages of children should use them, is very low:

- Seventy-one percent (71%) of all parents and caregivers **mistakenly** believe it is safe to place children under age 8 in a “regular seat with a regular safety belt without any specialized safety seat or other device.” Another 4% admit they don’t know when it is safe.
- Most people (97%) know it is unsafe to put children 3 years or younger in a regular seat with a seat belt.



- Beyond age 3, however, many people believe it is safe to transfer a child into a regular seat with a seat belt.
  - ⇒ Fifteen percent (15%) mistakenly believe it is safe for 4 year olds to ride without any safety seat devices.
  - ⇒ Forty-one (41%) percent of parents and caregivers mistakenly believe it is safe by age 5.
  - ⇒ Sixty-one percent (61%) mistakenly believe children are safe to ride without a specialized safety seat or other device by the time they are 6 years old.

FIGURE 1

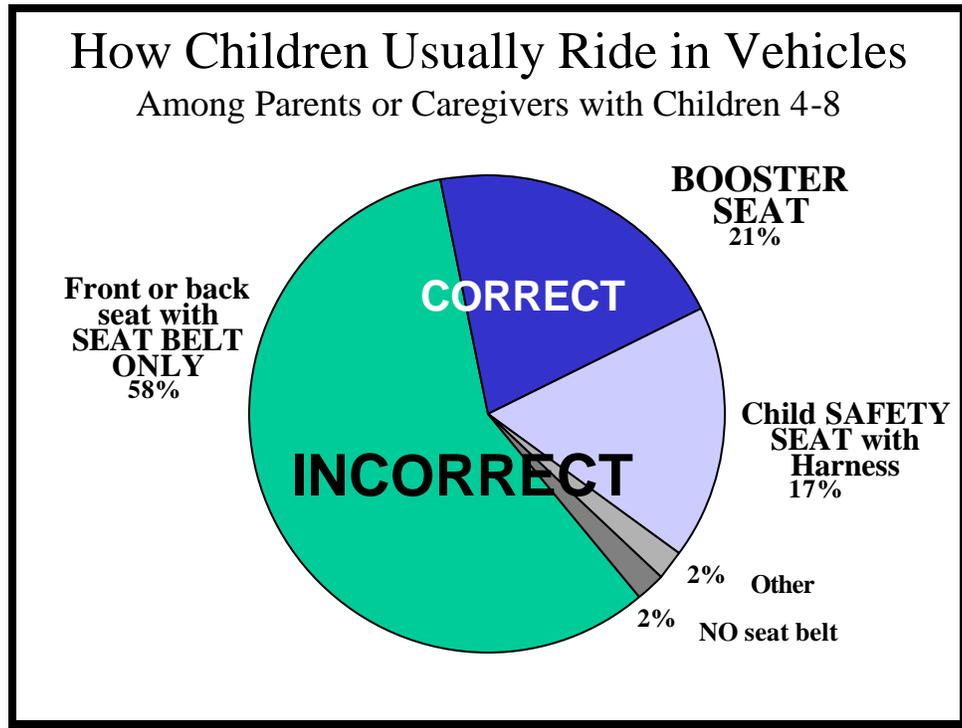


- The following numbers detail how children between the ages of 4 and 8 usually ride in vehicles:



- ⇒ Only one-fifth (21%) of parents or caregivers with children between 4 to 8 are actually using booster seats.
- ⇒ Just under one-fifth of parents and caregivers (17%) are using front or rear facing safety seats with harnesses that may or may not be appropriate for the height and weight of children between ages 4 to 8. Belt positioning booster seats are specifically designed for children between 40 to 80 pounds (roughly between the ages of 4 to 8).
- ⇒ Fifty-eight percent (58%) of parents and caregivers simply use a seat belt for these children.
- ⇒ Two percent (2%) admit to using no safety or restraint device.

FIGURE 2





## HEARD OR READ OF BOOSTER SEATS

- Having heard or read of booster seats does not necessarily create an understanding or commitment to use them. Only a fourth (23%) of those parents or caregivers that have heard or read of booster seats actually use them. There is, nevertheless, a big gap between those who have heard or read of booster seat versus those that have not:
  - ⇒ Heard or read of booster seats: 23% use booster seats;
  - ⇒ Not heard or read of booster seats: 7% use booster seats (after they were described)
- In general, women are somewhat more likely than men to have heard or read of booster seats.
  - ⇒ Women: 91% report hearing about booster seats;
  - ⇒ Men: 83% report hearing about booster seats.
- People 54 years old or younger are more likely to have heard or read about booster seats than those who are 55 years old or older.
  - ⇒ 18-34 years old: 88% report hearing about booster seats;
  - ⇒ 35-54 years old: 88% report hearing about booster seats;
  - ⇒ 55 years or older: 74% report hearing about booster seats.
- Among ethnic minorities Blacks are somewhat more likely to have heard about booster seats:
  - ⇒ Blacks: 81% report hearing about booster seats;
  - ⇒ Hispanics: 79% report hearing about booster seats;
  - ⇒ Other Minorities: 78% report hearing about booster seats
  - ⇒ White: 89% report hearing about booster seats.
- Higher levels of income and education also correlate with greater numbers of people who have heard or read of booster seats:
  - ⇒ Less than high school: 82% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ Some college: 87% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ College graduate: 91% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ Post graduate degree: 90% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ Less than \$20,000 income: 80% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ \$20-\$40,000 income: 86% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ \$40-60,000 income: 88% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ \$60-80,000 income: 89% heard of booster seat;
  - ⇒ More than \$80,000: 90% heard of booster seat.



- Some of the biggest differences are found when comparing different subgroups with the demographic groups and regions. The worst reports of those who have heard or read about booster seats come from the following groups:
  - Older men (55+) report only 65% heard or read of booster seats;
  - Lower income men (<\$40K) report only 79% heard or read of booster seats;
  - Black men (76%) and Hispanic men (75%) also report lower heard or read of booster seats.
  
- The best reports of those who have heard or read about booster seats come from the following groups:
  - Younger to middle-aged women (18-54 years) report one of the highest levels of heard or read of booster seats (92%);
  - Wealthier women (\$80,000 or more) also report high heard or read of booster seats (94%).



## BOOSTER SEAT USAGE

- Nationwide there is considerable variation among different demographic subgroups with regard to booster seat usage. In general, those that are more likely to be in contact with children and transporting them around are more likely to be using booster seats rather than just regular seat belts that may or may not be appropriate for the height and weight of children between 4 to 8.
  - In general, women are somewhat more likely than men to have children 4 to 8 ride in booster seats.
    - ⇒ Women: 23% report using booster seats with children 4 to 8;
    - ⇒ Men: 19% report using booster seats.
  - Younger people (18-34 years old)—those more likely to be raising these children themselves—are somewhat more likely than older people—grandparents and the like—to be using booster seats.
    - ⇒ 18-34 years old: 25% report using booster seats;
    - ⇒ 35-54 years old: 20% report using booster seats;
    - ⇒ 55 years or older: 16% report using booster seats.
  - Ethnic minorities are somewhat less likely to be using booster seats:
    - ⇒ Blacks: 16% report using booster seats;
    - ⇒ Hispanics: 18% report using booster seats;
    - ⇒ White: 22% report using booster seats.
  - Higher levels of income and education also correlate with greater booster seat usage:
    - ⇒ Less than high school: 17% booster seat;
    - ⇒ Some college: 20% booster seat;
    - ⇒ College graduate: 25% booster seat;
    - ⇒ Post graduate degree: 23% booster seat;
    - ⇒ Less than \$20,000 income: 18% booster seat;



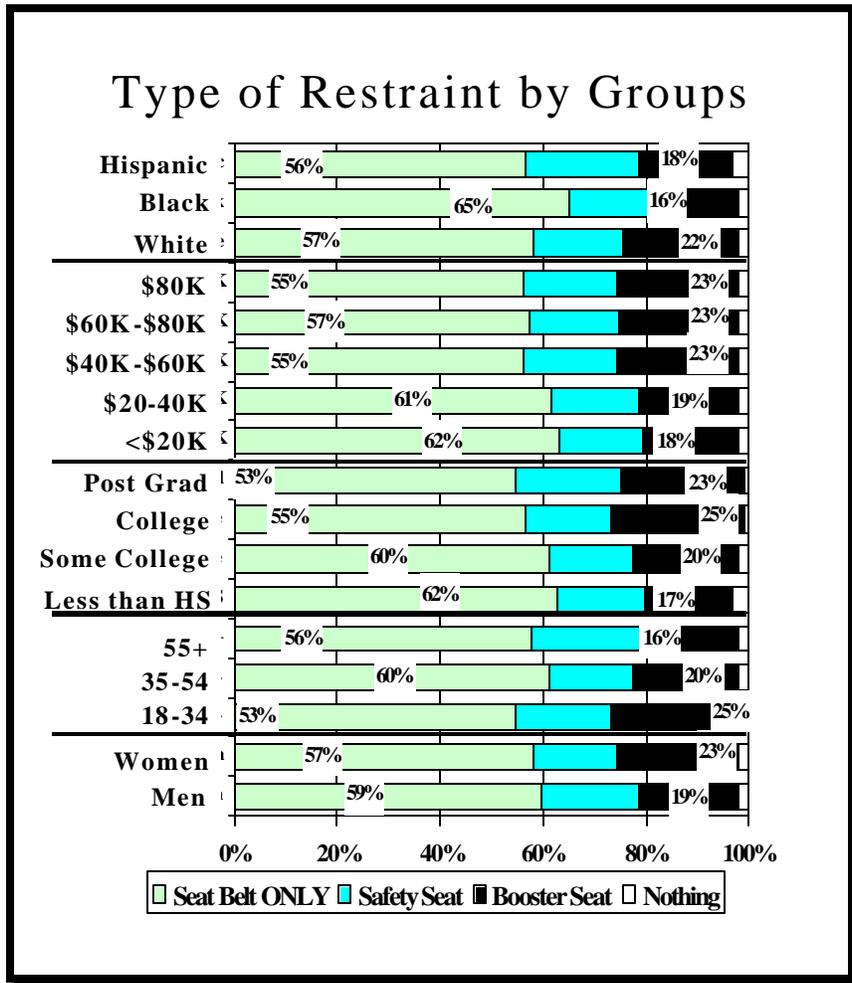
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⇒ \$20-\$40,000 income: 19% booster seat;  
⇒ More than \$40,000: 23% booster seat.

- Some of the biggest differences are found when comparing different subgroups with the demographic groups and regions. The worst reports of booster seat usage come from the following groups:
  - Older men (55+) report only 13% booster seat usage;
  - Lower income men (<\$40K) report only 15% booster seat usage;
  - Black (13% usage) and Hispanic men also report lower usage.
  
- The best reports of booster seat usage come from the following groups:
  - Younger women (18-34 years) report one of the highest levels of booster seat use (26%);
  - Wealthier women (\$80,000 or more) also report high booster seat use (27%).



FIGURE 3



**HEARD OF BOOSTER SEATS VS. SEAT USAGE**

**BOOSTER SEAT USAGE**

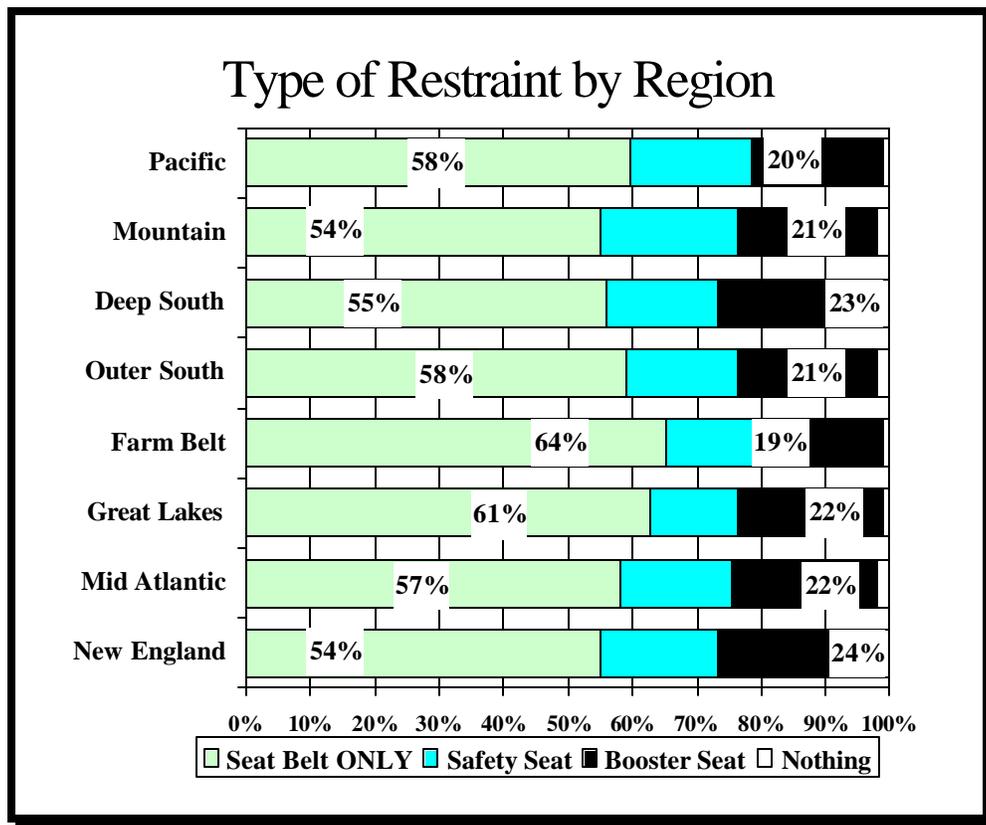
Many Americans have heard or read of booster seats (88%) but few use them (21%). Simply having heard or read about booster seats is not enough for people to understand the need for children between the ages of 4 to 8 to use them. Based on responses, parents and caregivers are unaware of the proper age to place a child in the regular seat with a regular seat belt. Increasing the awareness of the safety risks when children are improperly placed in automobiles will have a profound affect on increasing the use of booster seats.

**TRENDS BY REGION**



- Concerning those who have heard or read of booster seats, New England (91% heard or read) and Mid-Atlantic (89%) states do a little better than Mountain (86%) and Great Lakes (86%) states with the other regions ranking somewhere in between.
- Concerning usage, New England (24% booster seat use) and Deep South (23%) states do a little better than Farm Belt (19%) and Pacific (20%) states with the other regions ranking somewhere in between.

FIGURE 4





- When looking at results state by state, it is clear that the states with the most people who have heard or read about booster seats are not necessarily the highest in terms of actual usage. The following states have the highest reported heard or read of booster seats:
- 93% Washington
  - 92% Alabama
  - 92% Massachusetts
  - 92% Minnesota
  - 92% New Hampshire
  - 92% Vermont
  - 91% Kansas
  - 91% Kentucky
  - 91% New York
  - 91% Rhode Island

- Nevertheless, Minnesota is the only state with both the high heard or read and high usage percentages: 92% heard or read and 30% usage. The following states have the highest usage percentages (heard or read percentages in parentheses):

<u>Usage</u>	<u>Heard or Read</u>	<u>State</u>
30%	(92%)	Minnesota
30%	(89%)	Maryland
30%	(88%)	Delaware
29%	(85%)	Colorado
29%	(90%)	Connecticut
28%	(86%)	Arkansas

- Two of the states reporting among the highest levels of heard or read—New York and Kentucky—also happen to be two of the states lowest in terms of actual usage:

<u>Usage</u>	<u>Heard or Read</u>	<u>State</u>
18%	(91%)	New York
15%	(91%)	Kentucky

### 3. APPENDIX A

#### HEARD OR READ ABOUT BOOSTER SEATS AND USAGE BY STATE

STATE	HEARD OR READ	USAGE	STATE	HEARD OR READ	USAGE
Alabama	92%	21%	Nebraska	85%	21%
Alaska	86%	12%	Nevada	83%	20%
Arizona	85%	19%	New Jersey	89%	23%
Arkansas	86%	28%	New Mexico	90%	20%
California	87%	17%	New York	91%	18%
Colorado	85%	29%	Ohio	84%	17%
Connecticut	90%	29%	Oklahoma	90%	19%
DC	87%	18%	Oregon	86%	18%
Delaware	88%	29%	Pennsylvania	90%	21%
Florida	84%	19%	Rhode Island	91%	21%
Georgia	88%	24%	S. Carolina	84%	19%
Hawaii	82%	17%	S. Dakota	89%	15%
Idaho	87%	18%	Tennessee	85%	22%
Illinois	85%	22%	Texas	85%	17%
Indiana	86%	17%	Utah	84%	21%
Iowa	85%	18%	Vermont	92%	24%
Kansas	91%	21%	Virginia	89%	24%
Kentucky	91%	15%	Washington	93%	27%
Louisiana	83%	20%	W. Virginia	86%	17%
Maine	87%	25%	Wisconsin	87%	23%
Maryland	89%	30%	Wyoming	90%	22%
Massachusetts	92%	23%			
Michigan	85%	19%	<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Minnesota	92%	30%			
Mississippi	88%	21%			
Missouri	86%	18%			
Montana	90%	18%			
N. Carolina	88%	27%			
N. Dakota	89%	20%			
N. Hampshire	92%	26%			

\*This survey should be used to compare states against the national average only.

### APPENDIX B

#### AGE PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS FEEL IT WOULD BE SAFE TO PLACE THEIR CHILD IN A REGULAR SEAT WITH A REGULAR SEAT BELT WITHOUT THE AID OF ANY SPECIALIZED SAFETY SEAT OR OTHER DEVICE

STATE	<4yr	4-7yr	TOTAL IN-CORRECT	TOTAL CORRECT (8yr+)	STATE	<4yr	4-7yr	TOTAL IN-CORRECT	TOTAL CORRECT (8yr+)
Alabama	2%	74%	76%	21%	Nebraska	4%	71%	75%	22%
Alaska	7%	72%	79%	19%	Nevada	5%	79%	84%	15%
Arizona	1%	70%	71%	26%	New Jersey	3%	62%	65%	32%
Arkansas	3%	76%	79%	17%	New Mexico	7%	66%	73%	24%
California	3%	74%	77%	20%	New York	2%	64%	66%	32%
Colorado	6%	68%	74%	25%	Ohio	4%	72%	76%	18%
Connecticut	1%	60%	61%	32%	Oklahoma	3%	72%	75%	24%
DC	2%	61%	63%	32%	Oregon	5%	69%	74%	25%
Delaware	3%	70%	73%	25%	Pennsylvania	3%	62%	65%	29%
Florida	3%	75%	78%	20%	Rhode Island	0%	63%	63%	33%
Georgia	5%	69%	74%	21%	S. Carolina	5%	64%	69%	25%
Hawaii	2%	64%	66%	34%	S. Dakota	4%	67%	71%	25%
Idaho	7%	66%	73%	25%	Tennessee	5%	75%	80%	17%
Illinois	4%	69%	73%	23%	Texas	6%	67%	73%	28%
Indiana	4%	74%	78%	18%	Utah	6%	68%	74%	26%
Iowa	5%	74%	79%	20%	Vermont	1%	59%	60%	34%
Kansas	3%	65%	68%	27%	Virginia	5%	69%	74%	24%
Kentucky	4%	69%	73%	24%	Washington	4%	59%	63%	33%
Louisiana	3%	75%	78%	21%	W. Virginia	3%	72%	75%	23%
Maine	3%	65%	68%	26%	Wisconsin	2%	80%	82%	17%
Maryland	2%	64%	66%	31%	Wyoming	4%	67%	71%	28%
Massachusetts	1%	59%	60%	34%					
Michigan	4%	68%	72%	21%	<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Minnesota	4%	63%	67%	25%					
Mississippi	6%	72%	78%	19%					
Missouri	2%	76%	78%	19%					
Montana	4%	66%	70%	30%					
N. Carolina	2%	69%	71%	24%					
N. Dakota	6%	63%	69%	28%					
N. Hampshire	3%	54%	57%	33%					

\*This survey should be used to compare states against the national average only.

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONS

Q1. Do you have any children under the age of 12 or do you ever have to provide care, baby-sit or watch children under the age of 12?

1 Yes

2 No [THANK AND TERMINATE]

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[ASK Q2-Q8 ONLY IF Q1=1]

Q2. We are now talking about children riding in automobiles. Based on what you have heard or read, please tell me at about what age you feel it would be safe to place your child in a regular seat with a regular seat belt without the aid of any specialized safety seat or other device? [DO NOT READ RESPONSES]

- 1 1 YEAR OLD
- 2 2 YEARS OLD
- 3 3 YEARS OLD
- 4 4 YEARS OLD
- 5 5 YEARS OLD
- 6 6 YEARS OLD
- 7 7 YEARS OLD
- 8 8 YEARS OLD
- 9 9 YEARS OR OLDER
- 10 DK/REF

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Q3. Do you have any children between the ages of 4 and 8, or do you ever have to provide care, baby-sit or watch children between the ages of 4 and 8?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No [SKIP TO Q9]

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[ASK Q4 ONLY IF Q3=1]

Q4. When traveling with one of your children or one of the children you care for between the ages of 4 and 8, please tell me which of the following best describes how they usually ride in an automobile. Is it: [READ AND ROTATE ORDER. IF RESPONDENT STATES THEY HAVE OR CARE FOR MORE THAN ONE CHILD, TELL THEM TO THINK ABOUT AND RESPOND FOR ONLY ONE OF THE CHILDREN. IF RESPONDENT ASKS ABOUT WHAT KIND OF SAFETY SEAT FOR CHILDREN, TELL THEM ANY SAFETY SEAT FOR CHILDREN.]

- 1 In the front or back seat with a seat belt[SKIP TO Q7]
- 2 In the front or back in a safety seat for children.
- 3 In the front or back seat without a seat belt [SKIP TO Q7]
- 4 Other [DO NOT READ, SKIP TO Q7]
- 5 DK/REF [DO NOT READ, SKIP TO Q7]

---

**[ASK Q5 ONLY IF Q4="In the front or back in a safety seat for children."]**

- Q5. You indicated you use a safety seat for this child. Which of the following best describes the type of safety seat you use for this one child between 4 and 8 years old:
- 1 A forward or rear facing child seat that has its own harness to restrain the child and uses the regular vehicle seat belt to hold the safety seat in place,
  - 2 A booster seat that is placed on the vehicle seat to raise the child up so that the regular vehicle lap and shoulder belts fit the child correctly,
  - 3 Other [DO NOT READ]
  - 4 DK/REF [DO NOT READ]
- 

- Q6. When is the last time this child traveled in your vehicle without the safety seat?
- 1 Within one day
  - 2 Within one week
  - 3 Within one month
  - 4 More than a month
  - 5 DK/REF

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**[ASK Q7 ONLY IF CHILD IS BETWEEN 4-8 AND THE CHILD DOES NOT RIDE IN A SAFETY SEAT FOR CHILDREN]**

- Q7. Please tell me the main reason why this child between the ages of 4 and 8 years old does not ride in a booster seat while in a vehicle? [DO NOT READ LIST, ACCEPT ONLY ONE ANSWER]
- 1 Uses a seat belt
  - 2 Only going for a short ride
  - 3 Use more than one vehicle and don't like to transport safety seat from one vehicle to the other.

- 4 In a hurry and don't have time to buckle the child in the booster seat
- 5 Do not have a booster seat with me
- 6 Child won't stay in the booster seat
- 7 Child is too big for the booster seat
- 8 No room for the booster seat in the vehicle
- 9 Cannot afford a booster seat
- 10 I was not aware I needed a booster seat
- 11 Don't Own a booster seat
- 12 My child's similar age friends do not use one (peer pressure)
- 13 The parents of friends and family don't use a booster seat
- 14 Child doesn't like the booster seat
- 15 I don't like the booster seat
- 16 Child Uses a safety seat
- 17 Child weighs enough for a seat belt
- 18 Other-Specify\_\_\_\_\_

**As I described before** [say only to those who heard description in Q5], a booster seat is a safety seat for children, which is placed on the vehicle seat to raise the child up so that the regular vehicle lap and shoulder belts fit the child correctly.

Q9. Some people have heard or read about booster seats and others have not. How about you? **Before tonight had** [Only to those who have child between 4 and 8] **Have** [Only to those who do not have child between 4 and 8] you ever heard or read about booster seats?

- 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 DK/Ref
-

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Cathy Gillen

Tel: (202) 289-2001

Cell: (443) 463-4449

[cgillen@stratacomm.net](mailto:cgillen@stratacomm.net)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Ford CEO Nasser, DOT Secretary Mineta, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith,**  
**Nickelodeon's "Blues Clues," and Safety Groups Join Forces to Increase**  
**Booster Seat Usage**

**Survey Finds Millions of Children at Risk--One Million Free Seats to be Distributed--Education Program Goes to Every Elementary and Pre-school in Country--Push for New State Booster Seat Laws**

April 30, 2001

*Washington, DC*—Citing a new 50-state survey that found that the majority of all parents and caregivers are not taking the proper action to protect four-to-eight-year old children in motor vehicles, Ford Motor Company today launched the largest child passenger safety program in automotive history—a \$30 million commitment this year—to shift attitudes and behavior in favor of better protection for child passengers through increased booster seat use.

The multi-faceted campaign includes a massive educational component featuring a video by superstars Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, an endorsement from Nickelodeon's "Blues Clues," distribution of one million booster seats through United Way agencies and Ford Motor Company dealers/Toys "R" Us, educational events in all 50 states over the next 12 months, and a push for new state booster seat laws. In addition to the celebrities, federal and state governments and numerous safety groups are joining Ford Motor Company to increase the use of booster seats among four-to-eight year olds.

-more-

At the national kick-off event at Anthony Bowen Elementary School in Washington, DC, Ford Motor Company President and CEO Jacques Nasser said, “As many as three out of four parents probably are using the wrong safety device for older children, including placing them in adult safety belts that do not protect them properly. That’s an alarming number. We are committed to doing everything we can to encourage the safety of all our passengers.” The *Boost America!* program was initiated to help parents and caregivers of children between the ages of four and eight understand the importance of using belt-positioning booster seats and to increase the use of these seats nationwide.

Joined by supporters representing federal and state governments, the nation’s leading highway safety and child welfare organizations, and hundreds of youngsters of booster seat age, Nasser said, “Today we shift our coast-to-coast *Boost America!* campaign into overdrive. Our goal is to make sure that every child weighing 40-80 pounds rides in a booster seat so they will have the best protection available should a crash occur.”

The research, the most extensive survey of booster seats ever conducted, found that most parents and caregivers (96%) are conscientious about ensuring that children ride safely, reporting that their children ride with a safety belt or safety seat “of some type.” But the survey also found that up to 79 percent are misinformed about the correct safety device to use for children of different ages. While 88 percent of parents and caregivers say they have heard or read about booster seats, only 21 percent are using them for their children. Wirthlin Worldwide conducted the 50-state survey in December 2000-January 2001. Nearly 12,000 parents and caregivers were interviewed.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said, “We are pleased to partner with Ford in *Boost America!*, and to work with the many other organizations joining the effort to make booster seat use the standard rather than the exception. Children are our most important responsibility, and no child should be injured or killed because a parent or caregiver did not get the message about the need for booster seats.”

Superstar singer and actor Will Smith, of “Men in Black” and “Independence Day” fame, together with his wife, the actress Jada Pinkett Smith, are helping the campaign. They taped an educational video to convince elementary school children to ride in booster seats. The animated character, “Blue,” of Nickelodeon’s hit television show, *Blue’s Clues*, will take the message to pre-school children.

“As parents ourselves, we want to lend our support and talk with kids and parents all across the country about how booster seats are the cool way to stay safe in the family car or truck,” Jada Pinkett Smith said. The Smiths have three young children.

Nationally-known booster seat advocate Autumn Alexander Skeen of Walla Walla, Washington, lost her son, Anton, because he was using an adult safety belt instead of a booster seat. “It has been said that ‘if only’ are the two saddest words a human can say.

No truer words are these as far as my life is concerned. If only I hadn't overcorrected that vehicle that day. If only Anton would've been in a booster seat. It's bad enough to lose your child to death when there was nothing you could do. But believe me, it is a bottomless anguish when help was out there, and you didn't have it."

The safety rationale for booster seats is that a child who has outgrown the age and weight recommendations for traditional child safety seats (infant and toddler models) needs a transition until big enough physiologically to use adult lap/shoulder belts. Booster seats raise the child up in the seat so adult safety belts fit them better and more comfortably—low across the hips and snugly across the chest. Parents report an added benefit: the child can see out of the window better.

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death and injury to our children. The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that more than 500 children age four to eight are killed every year in motor vehicle crashes.

*Boost America!* will put one million booster seats into use over the next 12 months and hold campaign events in all 50 states. An unusual combination of educational and communications components, and the collective efforts of the campaign's many partner organizations, will work to convince youngsters, and their parents or caregivers, that booster seats are not just a safety necessity, but the "cool" way to ride.

"We want to jumpstart the market for booster seats by providing a total of one million free seats to Ford customers and families in need. In particular, we want to be sure that those families who cannot afford to purchase this life-saving device will still have the opportunity to get one," Nasser said. Five hundred thousand seats will go to the neediest families through United Way agencies around the country. The remainder will go to Ford Motor Company customers who will receive a voucher from participating Ford, Lincoln, Mercury, Volvo, Jaguar, Land Rover and Mazda dealers that can be redeemed for a booster seat at a Toys "R" Us store. Vouchers will be arriving at Ford dealerships this week.

Elinor Johnstone Ferdon, Chair-elect of the United Way of America Board of Governors said, "As one of the nation's leading community solutions providers, United Way is always looking to help people. Through partnerships with generous corporations like Ford Motor Company, United Way is better able to reach people with the services they need."

Toys "R" Us CEO John Eyler said, "We are incredibly pleased to participate in this important campaign to promote booster seat safety. Our mission at Toys "R" Us is to improve the lives of children everywhere, and this initiative will go a long way in doing just that."

Nasser said that children will be taught safety in the classroom through a massive education program. A professionally developed *Boost America!* educational curriculum already has been sent to 152,000 elementary schools and pre-schools. The Will Smith

and Jada Pinkett Smith video is included in the elementary school version of the curriculum, and “Blue” appears in the pre-school materials. Also included is a lesson plan and other materials to help teachers explain auto safety to children in an entertaining, age-appropriate way, and a take-home component so parents or other caregivers can be involved in their child’s learning experience.

Ford Motor Company today also announced that it would push for new state booster seat laws similar to those for infant seats. “While education has gone a long way to increase child seat use, we know from discussions with our government and safety partners that state laws are an important element,” said Nasser. “Ford Motor Company will work with state governments to implement sensible booster seat legislation. Currently, only three states – Washington, California, and Arkansas – have booster seat laws.

The Wirthlin data are broken down by states (attached), so local officials can benchmark their efforts and track progress. Other key findings:

- Nationally, 88 percent have heard or read about booster seats, but reported usage was only 21 percent. “Too big” is the leading reason cited by parents for not using a booster seat.
- Nearly three-quarters (71%) mistakenly believe it is safe to place children under age eight in a vehicle with just a regular safety belt. Four percent don’t know when it is safe.
- Women are somewhat more likely than men to be aware of booster seats and have their children ride in them.

- Among ethnic minorities, African-Americans are somewhat more likely to have heard about booster seats. But the children of all ethnic minorities are less likely to be riding in a booster seat.
- Higher levels of income and education correlate with greater booster seat awareness and usage.
- The best reports of booster seat usage by their children come from younger women (18-34 years) and wealthier women (\$80,000 or more).

The Evenflo *Rightfit* and Graco-Century *Breverra Contour Sport* models were selected for the campaign because they offer child passengers a good combination of comfort and belt fit. The *Breverra Contour Sport* is not available in stores—it was developed specifically for the United Way low-income portion of the *Boost America!* campaign.

Both models position the vehicle's lap/shoulder belts to improve belt fit—low across the hips and thighs, and across the chest and shoulder. The *Rightfit* is a backless booster designed to be used in vehicles with a taller rear seat back that comes above the child's ears. The *Breverra Contour Sport* model has an integral high back to provide head protection in vehicles with shorter rear seat backs, or without head restraints.

In addition to distributing booster seats, Ford Motor Company is building relationships with states to run fitting clinics, and to certify additional child passenger safety seat technicians to provide instruction on how to install and use all child safety seats.

Key to Ford Motor Company's effort will be its partnerships with respected and influential national organizations that will help with the campaign. In addition to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, these organizations also are part of the campaign: AAA; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Trauma Society; Emergency Nurses CARE; Evenflo; Graco-Century; Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau; Hertz Corporation; Indian Health Service; International Association of Chiefs of Police; International Center for Injury Prevention; National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives; National Association of Police Organizations; National Association of School Nurses; National Association of School Resource Officers; National Fire Protection Association; National Urban League; Nickelodeon's *Blue's Clues*; The Society of Automotive Engineers; State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association; Toys "R" Us; and United Way of America.

Additional information on *Boost America!* is available at the campaign's website: [www.boostamerica.org](http://www.boostamerica.org). Private schools, day care providers, civic groups and others that would like to obtain elements of the *Boost America!* educational package can download it from this site.

# # #

**Notes:**

- A video news release (VNR) with same-day coverage of the event and the entire B-roll package will be available via satellite from 3:00-3:30 PM ET on Galaxy 3R (c-band), transponder 2, 6.2 & 6.8 audio, downlink frequency 3740(v). Broadcast quality copies of the **VNR/B-Roll** are also available by contacting Don Shipley at 202/289-2001.
- Photos/graphics are available from [www.boostamerica.org/graphics.htm](http://www.boostamerica.org/graphics.htm) and [media.ford.com](http://media.ford.com)

State	Heard or Read of**  Booster Seats	Unaware of Proper**	Booster Seat***
		<u>Booster Seat</u> <u>Ages</u>	Usage
ALABAMA	92%	76%	21%
ALASKA	86%	79%	12%
ARIZONA	85%	71%	19%
ARKANSAS	86%	79%	28%
CALIFORNIA *	87%	77%	17%
COLORADO	85%	74%	29%
CONNECTICUT	90%	61%	29%
DELAWARE	88%	73%	29%
D. C.	87%	63%	18%
FLORIDA*	84%	78%	19%
GEORGIA*	88%	74%	24%
HAWAII	82%	66%	17%
IDAHO	87%	73%	18%
ILLINOIS*	85%	73%	22%
INDIANA*	86%	78%	17%
IOWA	85%	79%	18%
KANSAS	91%	68%	21%
KENTUCKY	91%	73%	15%
LOUISIANA	83%	78%	20%
MAINE	87%	68%	25%
MARYLAND	89%	66%	30%
MASSACHUSETTS*	92%	60%	23%
MICHIGAN	85%	72%	19%
MINNESOTA*	92%	67%	30%
MISSISSIPPI	88%	78%	21%
MISSOURI*	86%	78%	18%
NA	90%	70%	18%
NEBRASKA	85%	75%	21%
NEVADA	83%	84%	20%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	92%	57%	26%
NEW JERSEY*	89%	65%	23%
NEW MEXICO	90%	73%	20%
NEW YORK*	91%	66%	18%
NORTH CAROLINA*	88%	71%	27%
NORTH DAKOTA	89%	69%	20%
OHIO*	84%	76%	17%
OKLAHOMA	90%	75%	19%
OREGON	86%	74%	18%
PENNSYLVANIA*	90%	65%	21%
RHODE ISLAND	91%	63%	21%
SOUTH CAROLINA	84%	69%	19%
SOUTH DAKOTA	89%	71%	15%
TENNESSEE	85%	80%	22%
TEXAS*	85%	73%	17%
UTAH	84%	74%	21%
VERMONT	92%	60%	24%
VIRGINIA*	89%	74%	24%
WASHINGTON	93%	63%	27%
WEST VIRGINIA	86%	75%	17%
WISCONSIN	87%	82%	23%
WYOMING	90%	71%	22%

# Boost America! 50 State Study

conducted by  
*Wirthlin Worldwide*

This study was conducted to better understand booster seat awareness and usage for children between the ages of 4 to 8 years old.

The total sample of the survey included 11,701 interviews yielding results that can be generalized to the entire universe of American parents of young children within +/-1.0 percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases. There were 300 interviews completed in each of the fifteen most populated states, and 200 interviews in each of the remaining 35 states and the District of Columbia. In several portions of the report results are based on parents or caregivers of children between 4 and 8 years old.