

# Child death rates from motor vehicle crashes vary widely between states

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Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death among children in the United States. New research highlights how widely pediatric crash-related death rates vary from state to state, with child seat-restraint use and red-light camera policies appearing to play a role.

The abstract, "Pediatric Deaths from Motor Vehicle Crashes: State-Level Variation and Predictors of Mortality," will be presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) 2016 National Conference & Exhibition in San Francisco on Oct. 23. Researchers examining 2010-2014 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data discovered substantial differences among states, with annual [mortality](#) rates ranging from 0.25 deaths per 100,000 children in Massachusetts to 3.20 deaths per 100,000 children in Mississippi.

The study identified several factors linked to children's death rates from crashes. States with a greater percentage of children who ride unrestrained or inappropriately restrained, and states where a larger proportion of crashes occur on rural roads or during the daytime, had higher motor vehicle crash death rates. States without a red light camera policy also had a greater percentage of children dying from crashes.

The study's findings suggest that revising state traffic safety regulations and improving enforcement play a significant role in helping to prevent the number of children who die in [motor vehicle crashes](#), said abstract author Lindsey L. Wolf, MD, a third-year resident and research fellow at the Center for Surgery and Public Health at Brigham and Women's

Hospital. In fact, she and her research colleagues determined that a 10 percent absolute improvement in child restraint use nationally could prevent more than 1,500 children from dying over five years.

Many previous studies have looked at an individual's risk factor for dying in a motor vehicle crash, Dr. Wolf said, but stepping back to view these risks at the regional level shows how many lives might be saved by developing and enforcing state child safety regulations.

"We are interested in helping states understand how their laws can prevent children from dying if they are involved in a car crash," said senior author Faisal G. Qureshi, MD, FAAP, Associate Professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. "Once lawmakers understand this at a state level they can make more informed decisions on what laws to focus on," he said.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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