

North Dakota Statewide Traffic Safety Survey, 2021

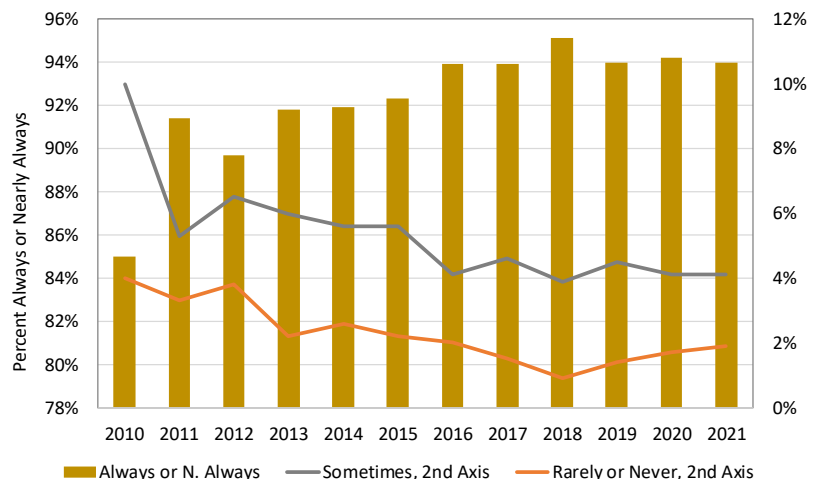
The United States lags behind other developed countries in several transportation safety metrics. Progress has been made in reducing the number of traffic-related fatalities, but preventable crashes resulting in death, injury, and property damage continue to occur. The statewide driver survey provides baseline metrics for the North Dakota Department of Transportation Safety Division and others to use in understanding perceptions and self-reported behaviors related to traffic safety.

A mail survey was selected as the method for the driver traffic safety survey. A questionnaire was created by blending a core set of questions addressing nationally agreed-upon priorities including seat belt use, impaired driving, and speeding, along with questions designed to better understand views on specific programs and attitudes pertinent to ND drivers. Surveys were mailed to 10,729 ND drivers in 2021. Analysis is based on 1,515 responses.

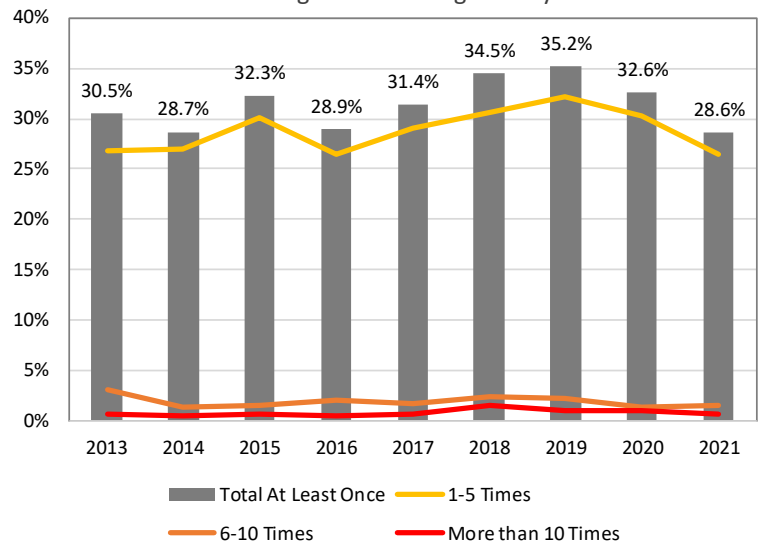
RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

- Seat Belts:** Self-reported use shows that 77.9% of respondents “always” wear seat belts with another 16.1% reporting usage as “nearly always.” Only 1.9% of drivers reported that they rarely or never use a seat belt.
- Distracted Driving:** The majority of drivers (51.5%) reported that they would make or answer a phone call while driving. Conversely, 26.4% responded they were “very unlikely/unlikely” to do so. The most commonly reported purpose for cell use while operating a vehicle was for talking, at 28.2%. Maps, texting, and social media were other reported uses. Just 20.5% of respondents indicated that they do not use cell phones while driving whatsoever. About a third of North Dakota drivers expect a citation for distracted driving is “likely/very likely”.
- Alcohol Impaired Driving:** Among respondents who drink alcohol, 28.6% reported driving a vehicle during the past two months within two hours of drinking one or two drinks. Another 4.4% reported driving after drinking three or more drinks. North Dakota drivers believe that a ticket for this dangerous behavior is just as unlikely as it is likely. Among those respondents who do drink alcohol, more than half (61.6%) reported that they are very likely to designate a sober driver when drinking or planning to drink.

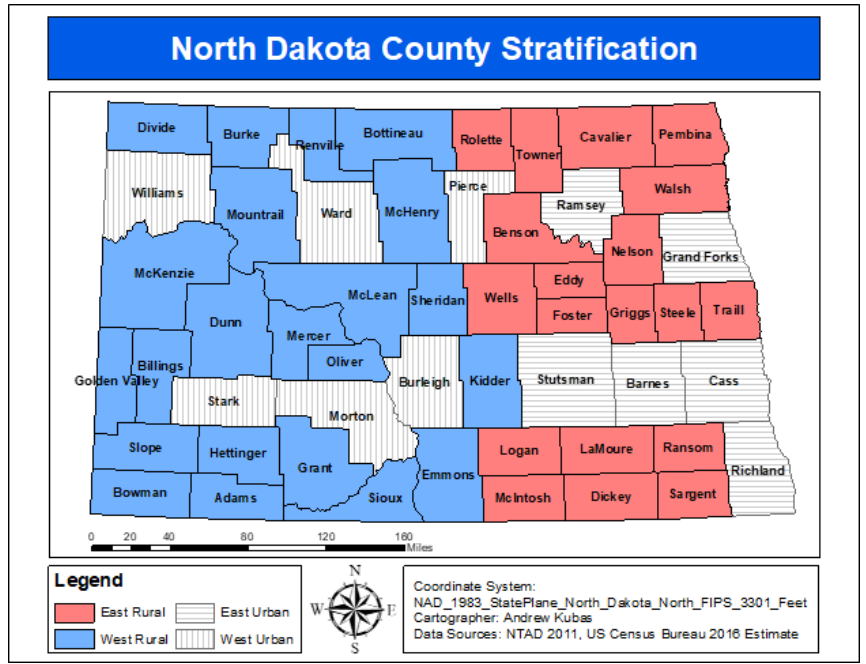
Self-Reported Seat Belt Use



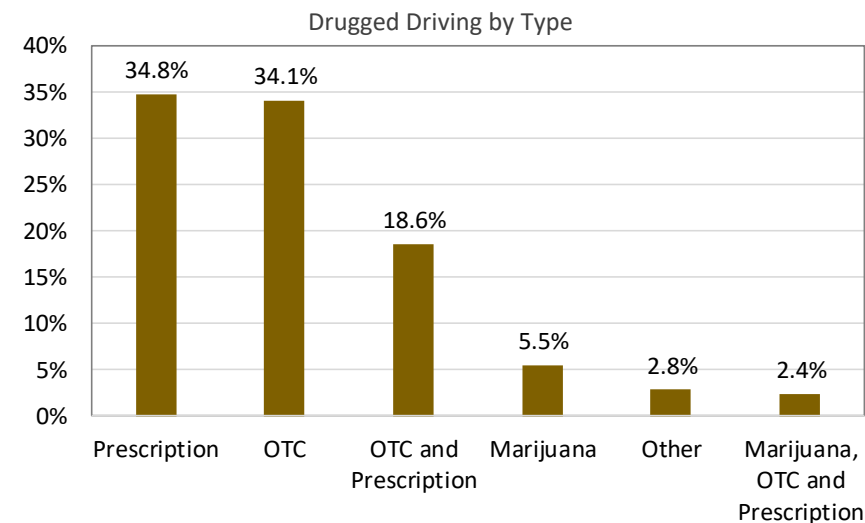
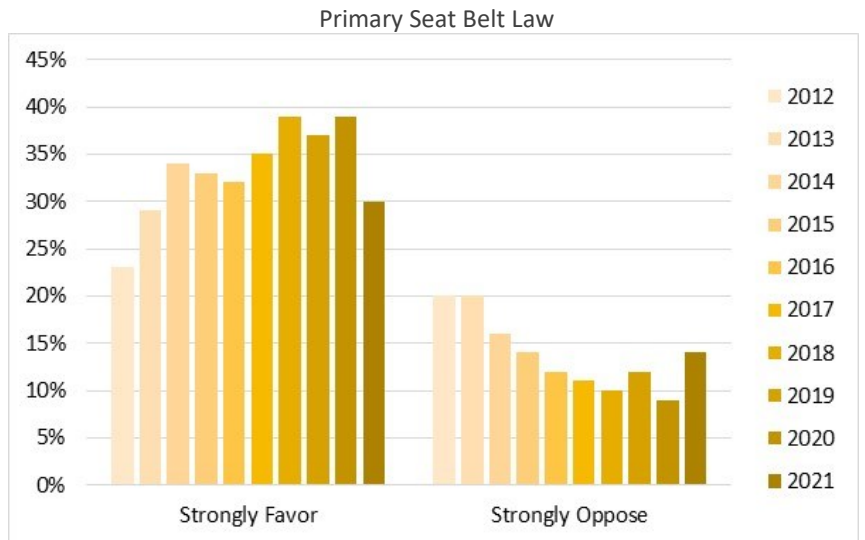
Driving After Drinking Activity



- Geography and Region:** Drivers living in the urban counties, as well as eastern residents, were more likely to use a seat belt, but were more dangerous with regards to impaired driving behaviors and were less likely to use a sober driver. Rural drivers and residents from the western half of the state were less likely to support a primary seat belt law, or a ban on using hand-held cellular devices while driving. Rural drivers were also more likely to answer a phone call while driving. Higher exposure to traffic safety messages about seat belt use, speeding, and distracted driving was also seen in rural drivers. Respondents from the eastern half of the state were more likely to believe one would be ticketed for not wearing a seat belt and were more likely to positively change driving and behavior in a highway safety corridor.



- Traffic Safety Messages:** Exposure rates from public media or other educational messages about traffic safety relating to impaired driving and seat belt use were 92.0% and 83.1%, respectively. Just 60.9% of survey participants responded with read, seen, or heard (RSH) exposure to speed enforcement as a traffic safety topic. This is expected as the NDDOT Safety Division does not disseminate safety messages for speeding.
- Primary Seat Belt Law:** In 2010, nearly half (46%) of the North Dakota driver population strongly favored a primary seat belt law, but only about 30% hold the same viewpoint in 2021. The 14% of respondents who “strongly oppose” was an increase from 9% in 2020, as well as the highest percentage since 2015.
- Drugged Driving:** 17.5% of respondents affirmed that they had driven after ingesting either marijuana, prescription drugs, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, other drugs, or a combination. Those who had driven under the influence of drugs also drove more often within two hours of consuming alcoholic beverages.



Additional detail related to 18 – 34 year old high-risk drivers is provided on page 3

Young Male and Female Drivers

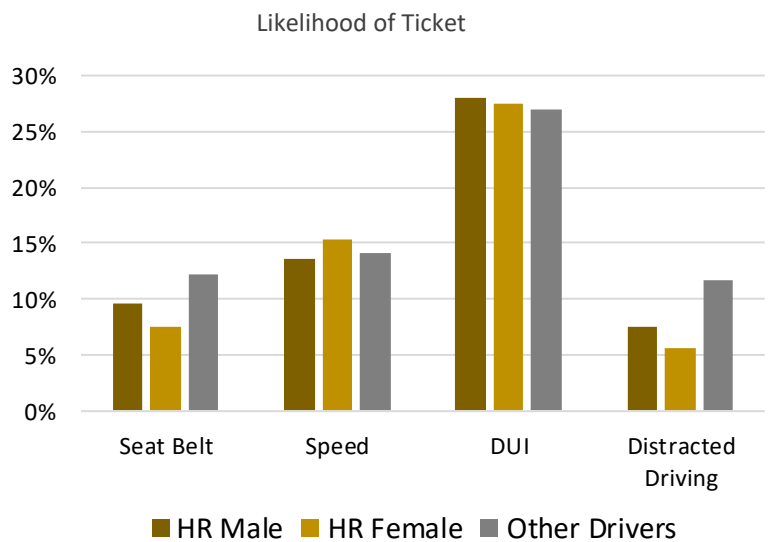
Selected target groups of 18-to-34-year-old high-risk (HR) male and female drivers show noticeable differences in behaviors, traffic safety message exposure, and views when compared to other drivers. In general, high-risk drivers exhibit more risky behaviors than drivers over the age of 35.

- Driving Behaviors:** The survey showed 59.5% of HR male drivers “always” wear a seat belt while driving or riding in a vehicle, a smaller number than the 73.5% of high-risk females, and the 84.1% of other drivers. Both HR groups have a higher likelihood of driving after drinking, and are more than twice as likely to answer the phone while driving. Drugged driving was reported higher in other drivers.

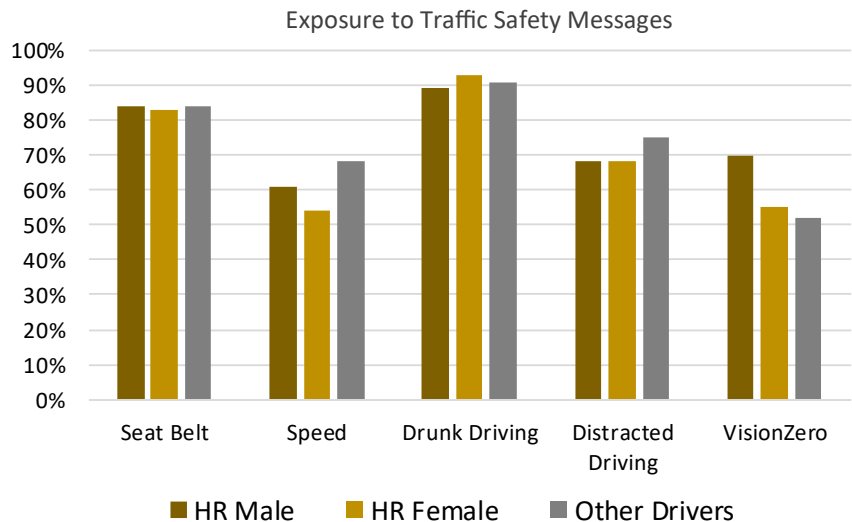
Driving Behaviors	HR Males	HR Females	Other Drivers
Seat Belt Use*	59.5%	73.5%	84.1%
Drive after 1-2 Drinks**	38.6%	35.8%	19.7%
Drive after 3+ Drinks**	14.0%	4.3%	3.9%
Answer Phone***	63.7%	69.7%	30.3%
Drugged Driving****	16.8%	13.0%	22.6%

*Always **All Frequencies ***Likely/Likely ****1+/Month

- Likelihood of Ticket:** Both HR groups have a lower expectancy for law enforcement to ticket drivers for seat belt violations and distracted driving when compared to the balance of the population. Both HR males and females feel there is a greater likelihood of a DUI arrest than the other respondents.



- Traffic Safety Messages:** Exposure to traffic safety messages that can be read, seen, or heard vary between the young male and female drivers compared to other drivers based on the message at hand. Both HR males and females perceived a lower likelihood of being exposed to safety messages about speeding and distracted driving. HR males reported the greatest exposure to Vision Zero messages, 70% to 55% of HR females.



- Viewpoints:** Young male and female drivers hold viewpoints about driving that are notably different than other drivers. HR males do not support a primary seat belt law as strongly as other drivers, with 37.6% who either “strongly favor/somewhat favor” such legislation compared with 55.6% of HR females and 58.9% of other drivers. HR male and female groups are also less likely to support a ban on handheld use of cell phones while driving compared with other drivers - 44.8%, 25.7%, and 23.5%, respectively, strongly oppose or somewhat oppose a ban.

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The content of this report reflects the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the information presented. This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the North Dakota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

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