

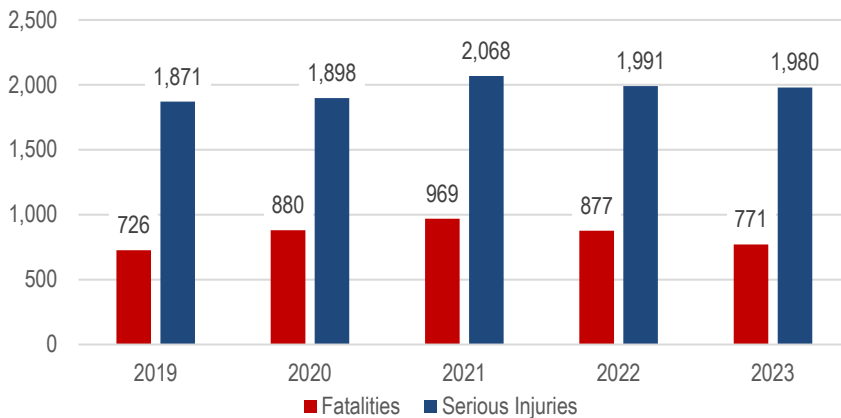


FLORIDA'S UNRESTRAINED OCCUPANT PROBLEM

Why Focus on Occupant Protection?

Despite impressive gains in safety belt usage, reducing the number of traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries involving unrestrained vehicle occupants in Florida continues to be a challenge in reaching our goal of zero. In 2023, 771 people who died and 1,980 who were seriously injured on Florida's roadways weren't wearing a safety belt.

Occupant Protection (2019-2023)



The Florida Occupant Protection Coalition (FOPC) was established in March 2017 to address key recommendations made based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Uniform Guidelines. The coalition is comprised of individuals who have expertise and familiarity with Florida-specific occupant protection needs. This includes members of agencies and organizations at the national, state, and local level, as well as law enforcement, educators, and public health officials.

The Florida Occupant Protection Strategic Plan calls out four areas that the Coalition will focus on over three years to reduce unrestrained or improperly restrained fatalities and serious injuries. These areas include:

- Program Management;
- Law Enforcement;
- Child Passenger Safety (CPS); and
- Occupant Protection for Low-Use Groups.

Florida Occupant Protection Coalition Members

DeMond Kolb and Associates

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

Department of Transportation

Florida A&M University, Construction/Civil Engineering Technology

Florida Highway Patrol

Florida Law Enforcement Liaison Program

Florida Police Chief's Association

Gainesville Fire Rescue

Goodbaby International

Hendry County Public Safety

Hendry County Sheriff's Office

Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital

National Safety Council

Orange County Sheriff's Office

Orlando Police Department

Preusser Research Group

Safe Kids

Silver Linings Safety

Santa Rosa County Development Services

Tallahassee State College

Tampa Police Department

Trauma Agency, Health Care District Palm Beach County

University of Florida

University of North Florida

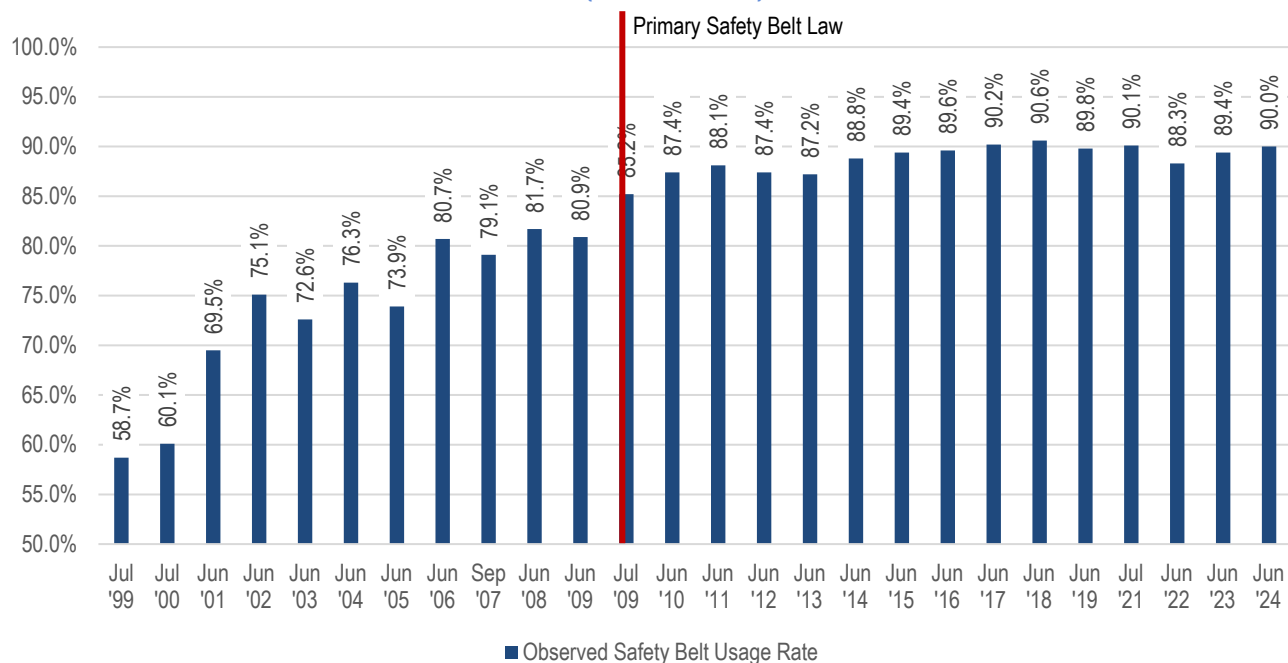
Wolfson Children's Hospital

Note: All data presented in this fact sheet was provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, unless otherwise noted.

Observed Safety Belt and Child Safety Seat Use

Florida conducts an annual survey¹ of safety belt usage and has done so since 1999. Since survey efforts began, Florida has seen an increase of 30 percentage points and reached more than 90 percent of occupants observed wearing their safety belt for the first time in 2017. Florida reached a historic record for statewide safety belt usage of 90.6 percent in 2018 and settled at 90.0 percent in 2024. More information about Florida’s annual observational safety belt survey can be found in the [Safety Belt Use Final Report 2024](#).

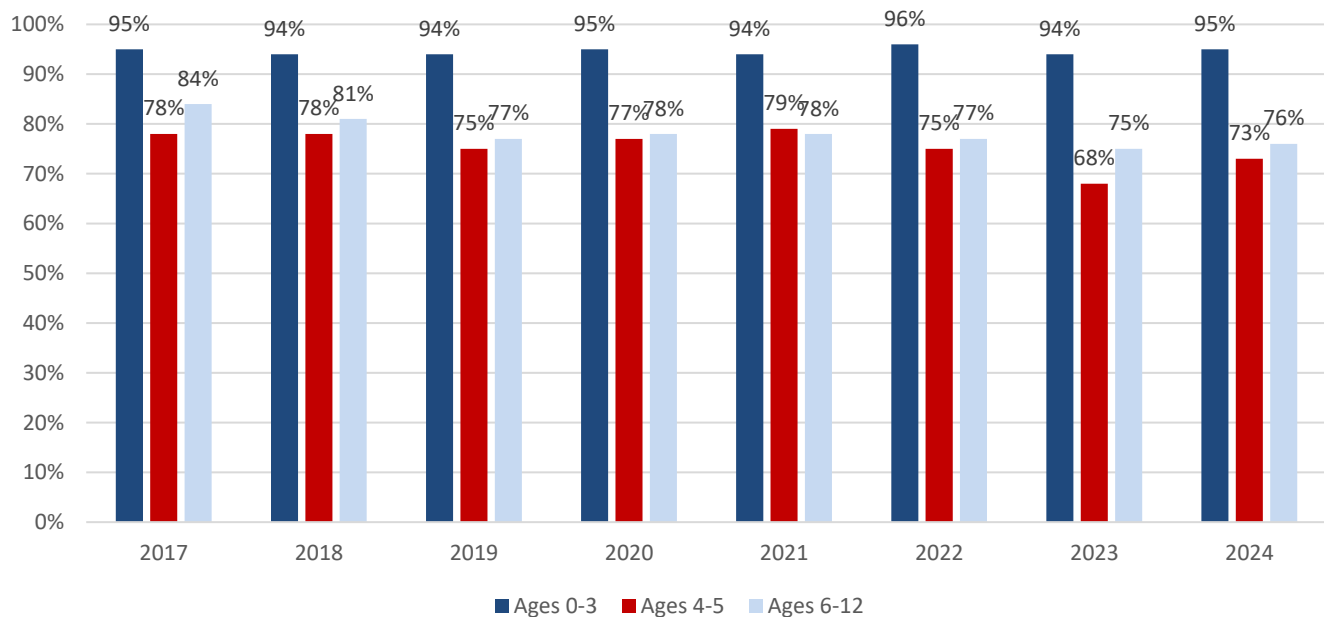
Observed Safety Belt Usage Rate (1999-2024)



¹ Florida did not conduct an observational survey in 2020 due to COVID-19 challenges.

Florida conducts an annual survey of child restraint usage and has done so since 2017. Since survey efforts began, Florida has observed restraint usage for the 0-3 age group stay consistent between 94 and 96 percent. Observed restraint usage for children ages 4-5 peaked in 2021 at 79 percent before reaching its lowest usage rate in 2023 with 68 percent. Observed restraint usage for children ages 6-12 peaked in 2017 at 84 percent and reached its lowest observed usage rate at 76 percent in 2024. More information about Florida’s annual observational safety belt survey can be found in the [Child Restraint Survey 2024 Final Report](#).

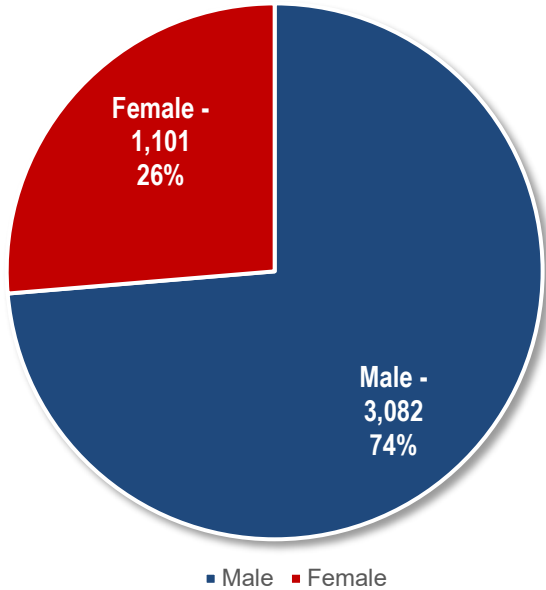
Observed Child Restraint Usage by Age Category (2017-2024)



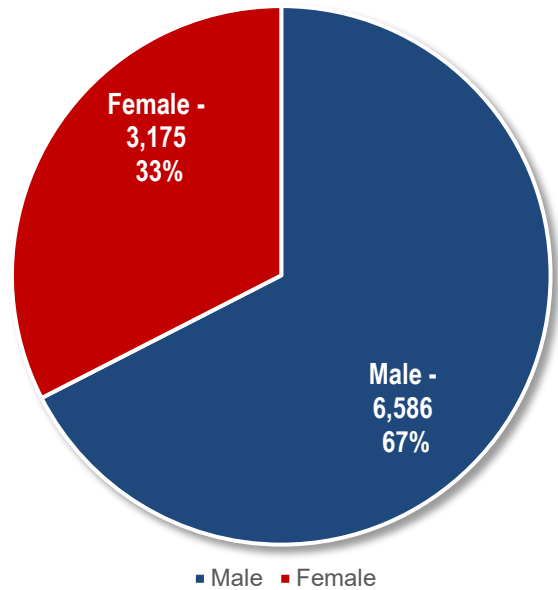
Occupant Protection Trends

The following trends are used to help identify the road users, roadway conditions, locations, and behaviors most commonly associated with occupant protection fatalities and serious injuries. Understanding these trends is a critical step in understand Florida’s occupant protection challenges and identifying solutions and countermeasures best suited to eliminate occupant protection fatalities and serious injuries.

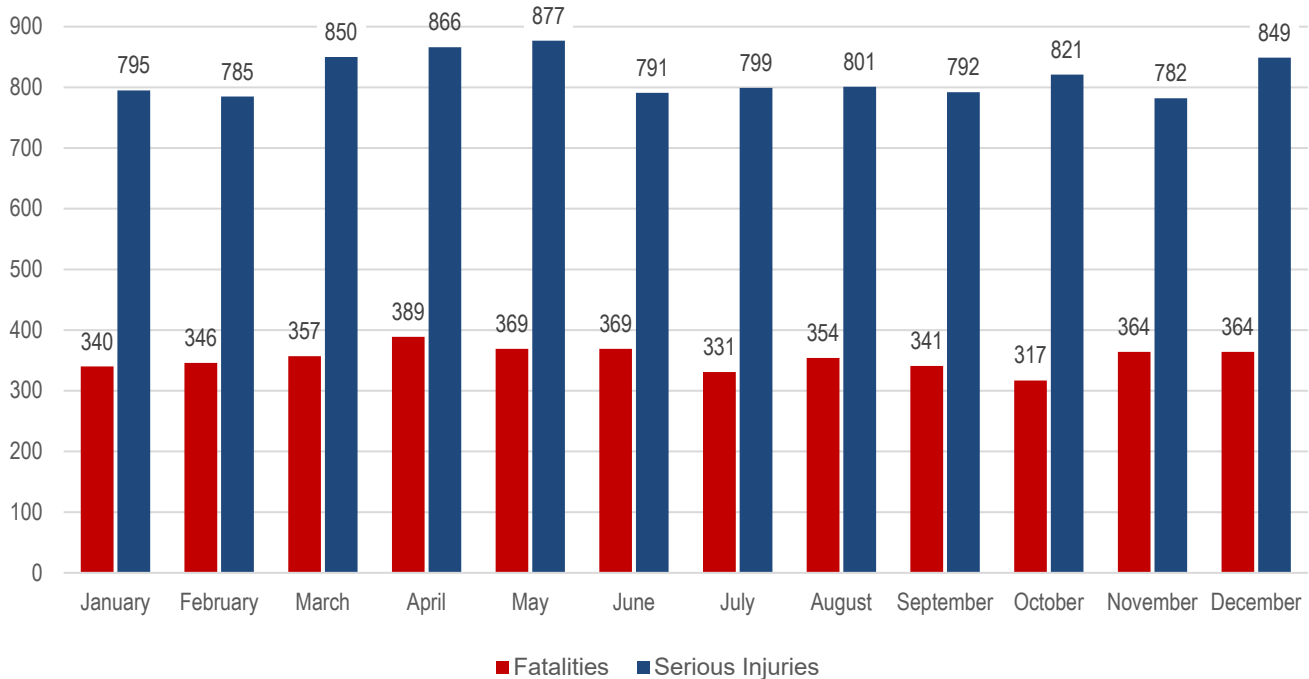
Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities (2019-2023)



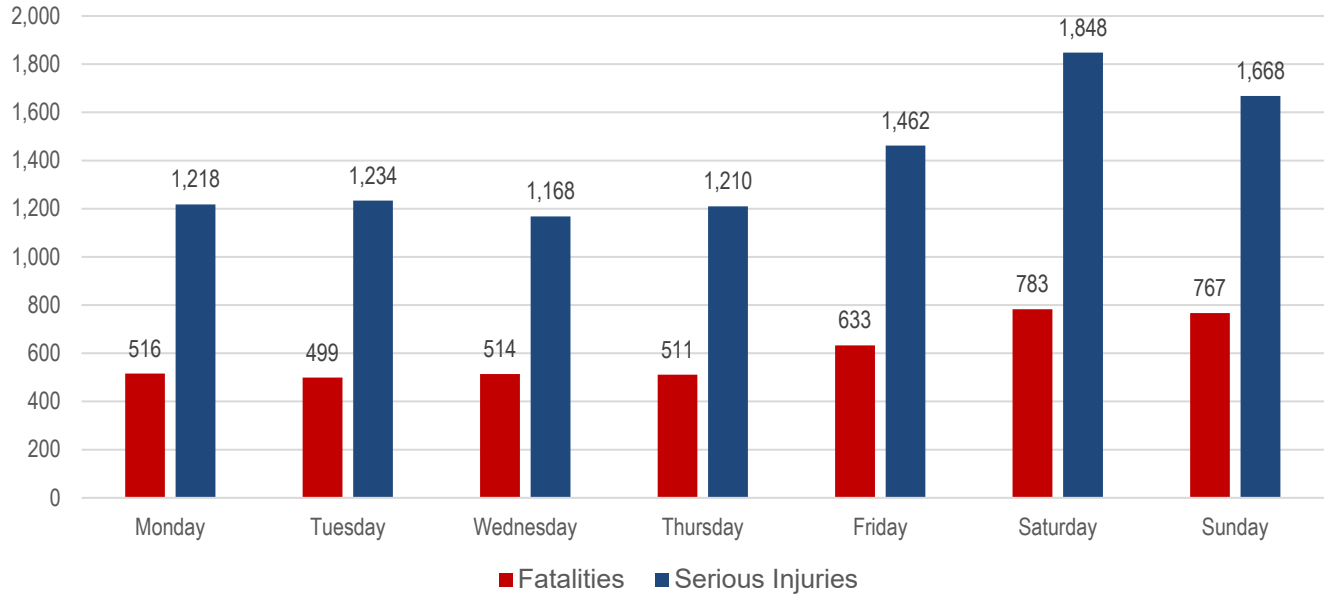
Unrestrained Occupant Serious Injuries (2019-2023)



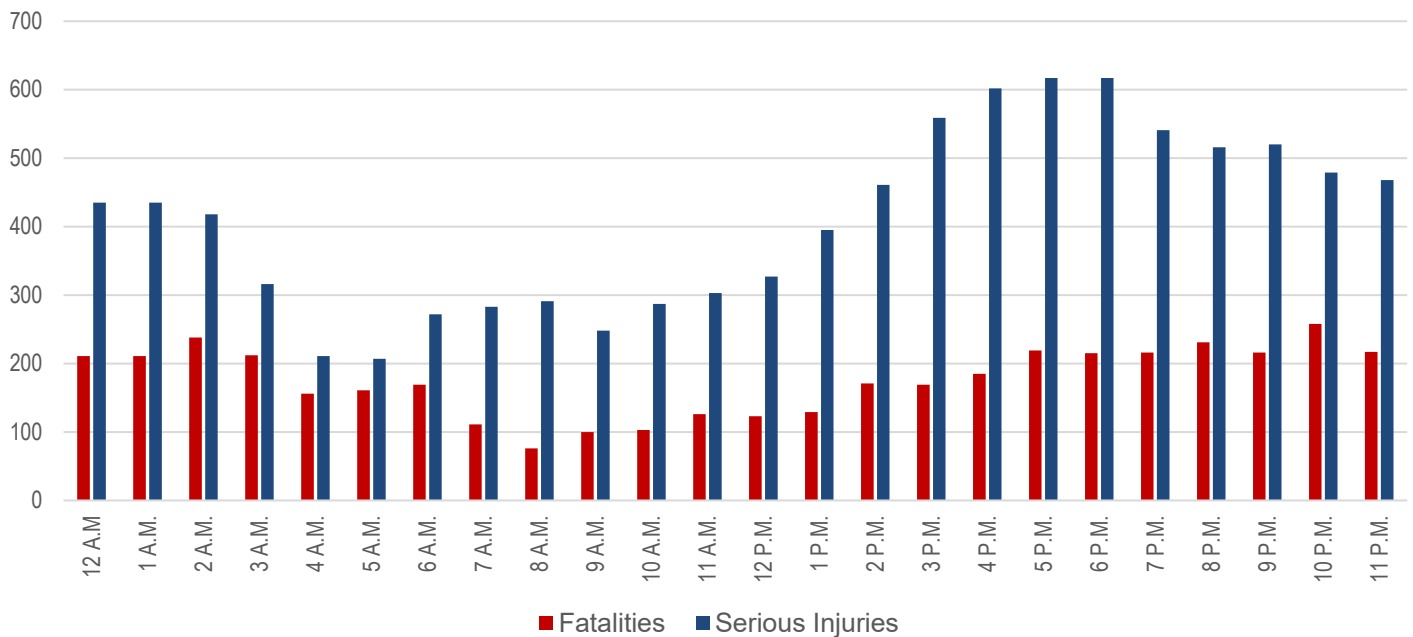
Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities and Serious Injuries by Month of Year (2019-2023)



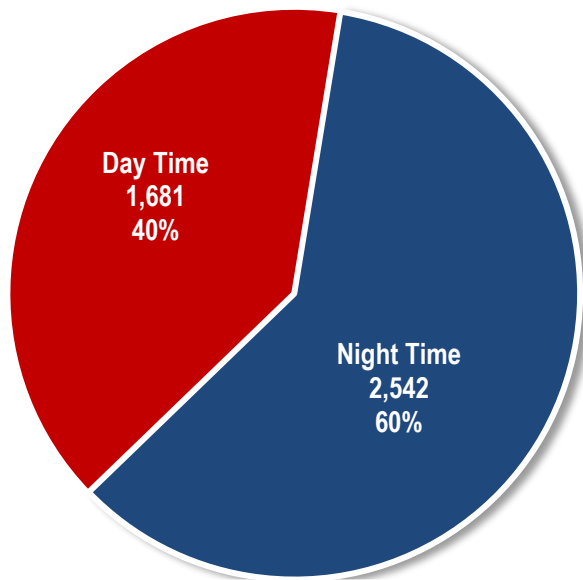
Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities and Serious Injuries by Day of Week (2019-2023)



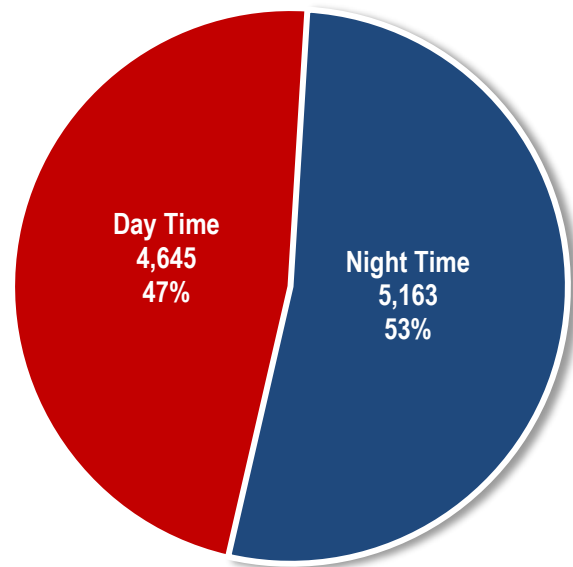
Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities and Serious Injuries by Time of Day (2019-2023)



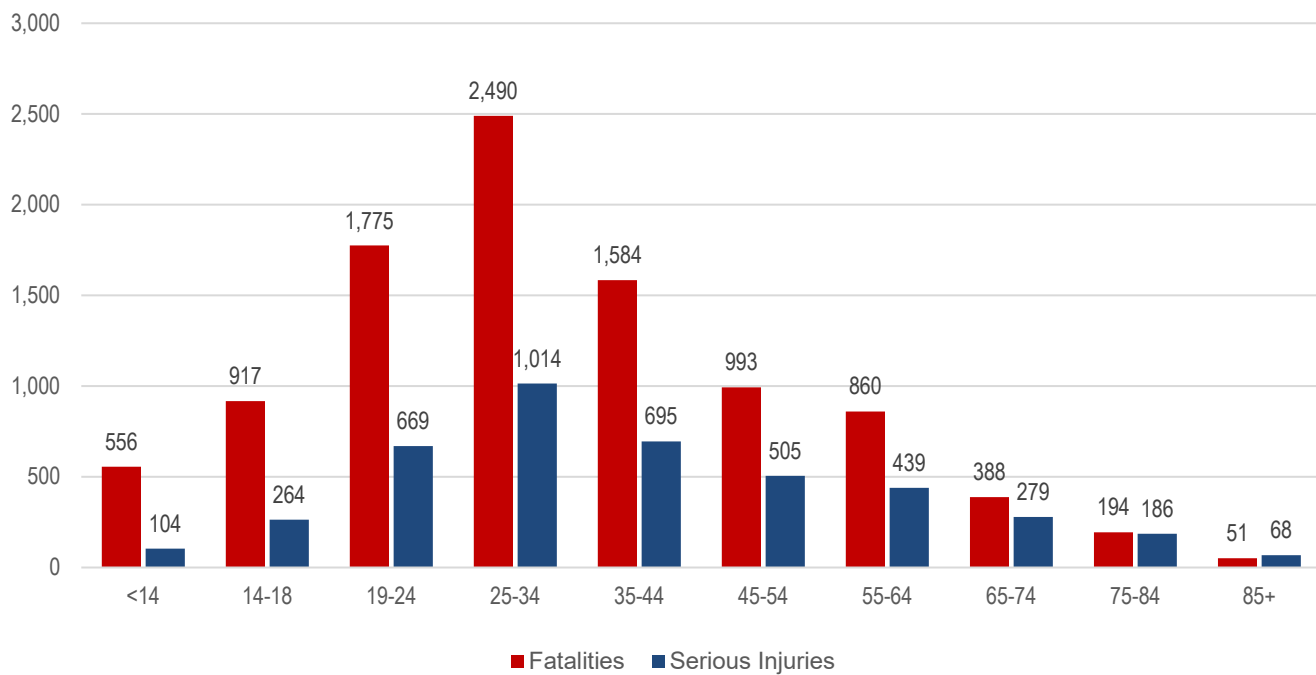
**Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities
(2019-2023)**



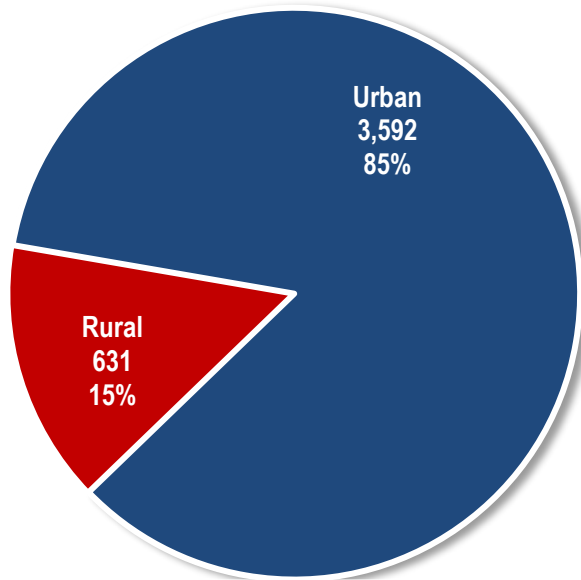
**Unrestrained Occupant
Serious Injuries
(2019-2023)**



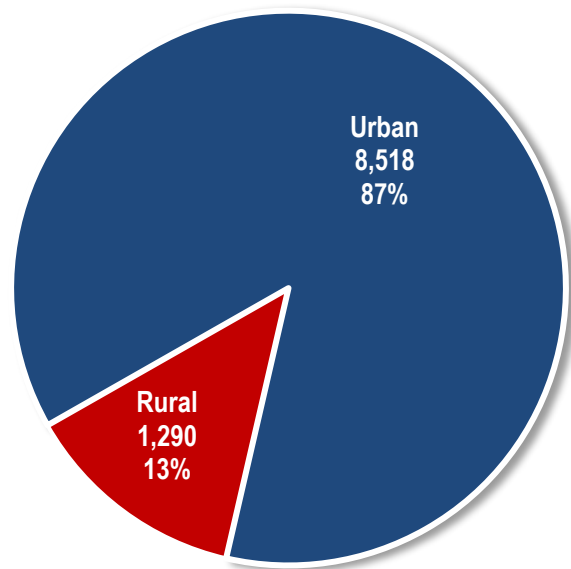
**Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities and Serious Injuries
by Age (2019-2023)**



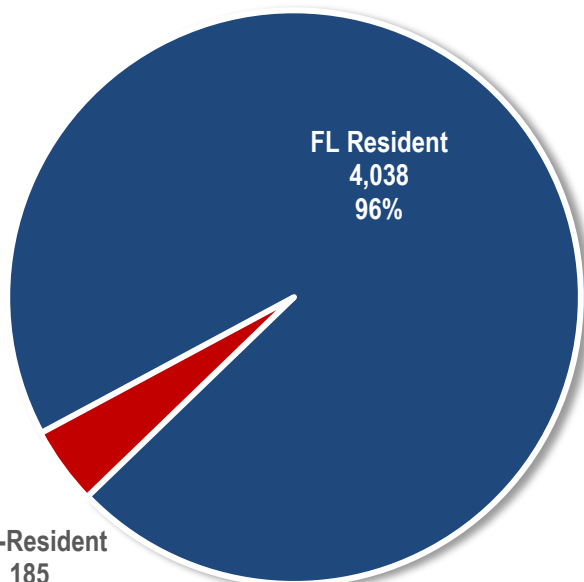
**Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities
(2019-2023)**



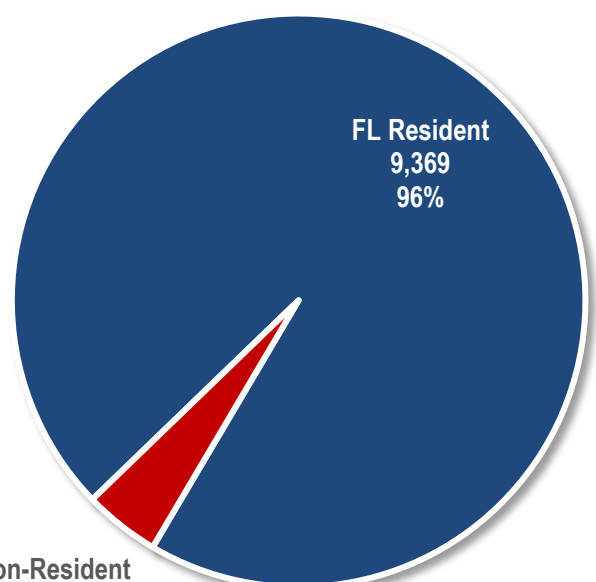
**Unrestrained Occupant
Serious Injuries
(2019-2023)**



**Unrestrained Occupant Fatalities
(2019-2023)**



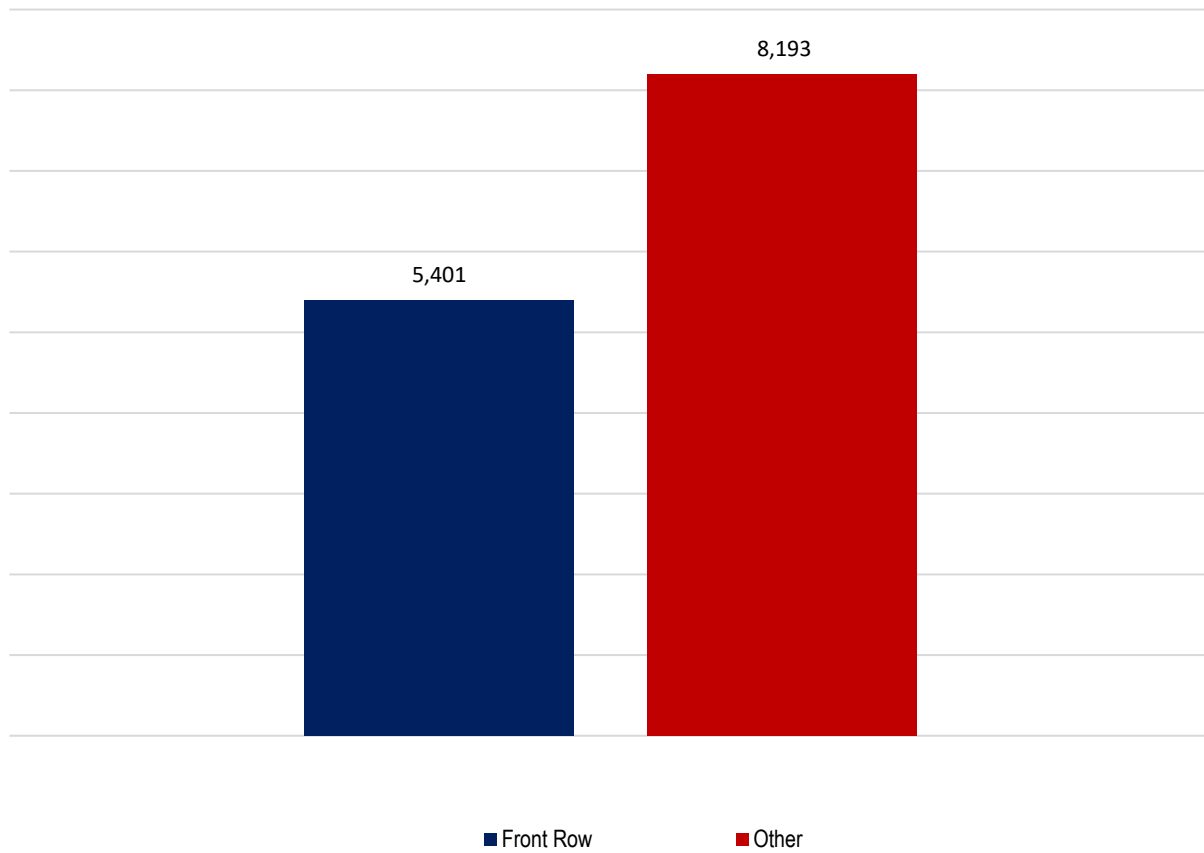
**Unrestrained Occupant
Serious Injuries
(2019-2023)**



Non-Resident
185
4%

Non-Resident
439
4%

Unrestrained Occupant Ejections by Seating Position (2019-2023)



Addressing Occupant Protection

The FOPC and their organizations are working to implement the following strategies to reduce fatalities and serious injuries related to a lack of proper safety belt use.

Program Management

- Conduct FOPC meetings and track action plan progress.
- Analyze, track, and report occupant protection data and related trends.
- Identify and prioritize occupant protection policies and best practices.
- Maintain a robust and active FOPC membership.
- Research and track best practices related to emerging technologies impacting occupant protection strategies.

Law Enforcement

- Improve law enforcement awareness of important occupant protection challenges.
- Improve law enforcement safety belt usage.
- Expand law enforcement tools and resources.

Child Passenger Safety (CPS)

- Expand, improve, and retain CPS technicians and instructors.
- Expand CPS digital and print resources and materials.
- Support mandatory diversion programs for first-time child restraint offenders.
- Support enhancement of Florida's CPS laws and policies.

Low-Use Groups

- Focus paid media activities on low-use groups.
- Expand digital and print resources and materials for low-use groups.
- Support the expansion of programs that encourage and support occupant protection for low-use groups.
- Support enhancement of Florida's safety belt laws and policies.