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## Back-Seat Bullets

Do you need to buckle up in the back seat? According to results from the most recent PublicMind poll, half of New Jersey voters (51%) think that state law already requires all vehicle passengers, including those in the back seat, to wear seat belts. A third (32%) say no, you don't. Another 10% say they don't know. Just 7% know that the law only requires back-seat passengers under the age of 18 to buckle up.

"I'm a fanatic about having people wear a seat belt in my car," said Peter Woolley, director of the poll, "but even I didn't know the law."

"Unrestrained back-seat passengers become 'bullets' in a crash, putting everyone in the vehicle at risk," said Division of Highway Traffic Safety Director Pam Fischer.

"Unbuckled passengers sitting in the rear of a vehicle risk hitting the seat back in front of them, the dashboard, the windshield or even another vehicle occupant, if a crash occurs, making them a 'bullet.' The passenger can also be ejected from the vehicle, resulting in serious injury and often death."

The danger is graphically demonstrated by videos found on the Web site <http://www.njbackseatbullets.com>.

Asked whether they would support or oppose a law requiring all passengers to wear seat belts, including those in the back seat, more than 4 out of 5 registered voters (83%) say they would support it. That support is strong across all demographic groups, although women support the seat-belt requirement significantly more than men (87%-79%); liberals (91%) are more likely to support the measure than either moderates (81%) or conservatives (80%); and Democrats more likely than Republicans (88%-79%).

If any surprising difference emerged, it was between those who know about the current law and those who don't. Ninety percent (90%) of those individuals who think seat-belt use is already required for everyone in the back seat, or don't know whether it is, support the idea of requiring everyone to buckle up in the back seat. That compares to just 3 out of 4 (73%) who support changing the law among those who know that everyone is not required to buckle up. A bill, S18, is pending in the New Jersey Senate that would require every passenger to buckle-up, regardless of seating position in a vehicle. A similar bill, A870, passed the Assembly in February 2008.

"The chances of dying in a head-on crash are three times greater for an unbuckled back-seat passenger," said Fischer. "Closing the loophole will make everyone safer."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 505 registered voters, sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety, was conducted by telephone from Aug. 24, through Aug. 30 and has a margin of error of +/-4.5 percentage points.

<p><i>Tables, questions, and methodology available on the web at: <a href="http://publicmind.fdu.edu">http://publicmind.fdu.edu</a></i></p> <p><i>Radio actuality line: (201) 692-2846. For more information, please call (201) 692-7032.</i></p>
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**Methods and Tables**

The survey was conducted for the New Jersey Highway Traffic Safety Agency by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind by telephone from Aug. 24 through Aug. 30, 2009, using a randomly selected statewide sample of 505 registered voters and has a margin of error of +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by professionally trained interviewers use a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system.

Q1. Now let me ask you a question about seat -belts... In New Jersey, anyone riding in the front seat of a vehicle is required to use a seat belt — that means both the driver and the passenger side. But to the best of your knowledge are passengers in the back seat also required to buckle up or not?

	All	Male	Female	30-44	45-60	60+
Yes	51%	49%	53%	54%	50%	51%
No	32%	33%	31%	29%	31%	33%
Only Under 18/Kids	7%	10%	5%	12%	9%	2%
Don't Know	10%	7%	12%	5%	9%	13%

Q2. Right now, New Jersey law says people under 18 years of age are required to wear a seat belt in the back seat. A bill has been proposed to the New Jersey Legislature that would require all passengers, including those in the back seat, to wear seat belts. Do you support or oppose requiring all passengers to wear seat belts?

	All	Female	Male	Afric. Am.	White	Lib.	Mod.	Cons	Dem	Ind.	Rep
Support	83%	87	79	92	83	91	81	80	88	85	79
Oppose	14%	10	18	7	15	6	18	16	11	10	19
unsure	3%	3	3	1	3	2	1	4	2	5	3

		Answer to Q1	
Answer to Q2	All	Yes/DK	No/only kids
Support	83%	90	73
Oppose	14%	8	22
unsure	3%	2	5

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