

Image not found or type unknown

## Seat-Belt Use on Decline in USVI, Highway Safety Data Finds; VIPD to Take 'Immediate Action'

Community Center / **Published On December 05, 2022 05:37 AM /**

Elesha George **December 05, 2022**

Image not found or type unknown



Recent seat-belt safety statistics have shown a 5.3 percent decline in the use of seat belts among motorists in the U.S Virgin Islands.

Data generated through the VI Office of Highway Safety's (VIOHS) annual Observational Seat Belt Use Survey indicate that motorists and their front seat passengers are failing to consistently wear seat belts.

Each year, VIOHS hires an independent contractor to assess seat belt usage in the territory and although seat belts are proven to reduce risks for crash-related injuries and fatalities, 67 percent of motorists utilize it.

VIOHS said Sunday that when compared to the national seat belt usage rate which averages over 90%, the territory's rate continues to reflect a deficient safety culture.

“After a statistically significant gain of 4.3 percentage points in 2021, 2022 survey data plummeted to a usage rate of 67.0% - a loss of 5.3 percentage points,” it said in a press statement.

“This is more than a law enforcement issue. Lack of seat belt compliance translates into significant and unnecessary injuries that our health care system may be unable to support,” expressed VI Police Department Commissioner Ray Martinez.

Mr. Martinez said that law enforcement will take “immediate action” to address what he described as a “critical community concern.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), drivers who fail to wear their seat belts are more likely to transport unrestrained child passengers.

A recent rear seat observational study concluded that over 79% of children in the territory under age 12 are transported unrestrained or improperly restrained.

“The state of child passenger safety in our territory is grim with a staggering number of children transported unsafely,” shared VIOHS Director Daphne O’Neal.

She said it is critical that adults discontinue this risky behavior as it directly impacts the children in their care whose wellbeing should never rely on luck.

VIOHS is therefore encouraging motorists to Buckle up.