



Canadian roadside study finds 8 in 10 car seats misused

Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada, CYBEX Canada, Dalhousie University, IWK Health team up to study and improve child passenger safety

Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 24, 2025 — A new roadside study shows that 81% of car seats and booster seats are not being used properly. The Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada (CPSAC) is urging parents and caregivers to seek out help and support from a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) to make every ride safer.

Between May and November 2024, CPSAC-certified CPSTs checked 1,005 child passengers at 41 roadside checkpoints in 33 communities across Nova Scotia. They documented whether the car seat or booster seat was appropriate for each child's age, weight, and height, and whether they were installed and used correctly.

What the study found

- **Rear-facing seats:** 77% had at least one error.
- **Forward-facing seats:** 89% had at least one error.
- **Booster seats:** 77% had at least one error.
 - **An additional 26% of children observed buckled in the seat belt alone were not using a booster seat, even though the law in Nova Scotia required it.**
- **Unrestrained:** 25 children were observed to be not buckled in a car seat, booster seat, or even a seat belt.

At the check points, CPSAC technicians were able to correct most errors and provide seats courtesy of CYBEX Canada when needed to replace seats that were expired, damaged, or not present.

Quote

“Caregivers are doing their best, and small changes make a big difference. This study provides important data about how car seats and booster seats are being used on Canadian roadways. Most of the problems we saw were quick to fix, but could have significant impacts on the child’s safety. A certified technician can help families choose the right seat, install it correctly, and use it properly every time.”

— **Katherine Hutka, President, Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada**

Quick facts

- 1,005 child passengers were checked at 41 roadside checkpoints in 33 communities across Nova Scotia.
- 682 drivers completed questionnaires about where they received information about how to use and install their seat. Most said they learned by reading the instructions, from health centres, and then from various online sources. Fewer reported learning from experts such as the manufacturer or a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, demonstrating the need for more direct support.
- This roadside research - which updates data collected in 2012 - found that 81% percent of car seats and boosters had at least one error.
- Proper use of child restraints can reduce the risk of death by up to 71% and injury by 67%.
- The study was led by Dalhousie University with support from Child Safety Link at IWK Health with funding from CYBEX Canada and support from the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada and community partners.
- Child Passenger Safety Week runs September 20–28, 2025, with the theme “Breaking Down Barriers to Buckling”. Check cpsac.org/events for information on events taking place in your community, or cpsac.org/find-a-tech to find a CPST near you.

Associated links

- CYBEX Canada: [News Release](#)
- CYBEX Canada: [Child Restraint Use Study Report](#)
- Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada (CPSAC) [Find-a-Tech Map](#)
- Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada: [Ages and Stages Summary Sheets](#)
- Child Safety Link (IWK Health): [Breaking Down Barriers to Buckling](#)
- Child Safety Link: [Nova Scotia Drivers Struggle to Buckle Kids Safely, Study Finds](#)

Media contacts

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For broadcast use

30-Second broadcast

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for Canadian children - but the right car seat, used correctly, can cut the risk by up to 71%.

A new roadside study in Nova Scotia checked more than 1,000 child passengers and found that 81% of car seats and boosters were being used incorrectly. The study was led by Dalhousie University with support from Child Safety Link at IWK Health with funding from CYBEX Canada and support from the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada and community partners.

Experts say small fixes - like tightening the harness, adjusting the chest clip, and securing the tether on forward-facing seats - can make every ride safer.

Parents and caregivers can get hands-on help from a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. Find one at cpsac.org.

60-Second broadcast

Keeping kids safe on the road takes more than just buckling up.

A new roadside study in Nova Scotia checked over a thousand children in car seats, boosters, and seat belts. The results: 81% percent of children were being transported in car seats and booster seats with mistakes.

- Nearly 9 in 10 forward-facing seats were not being used correctly.
- 3 out of 4 booster seats had fit or installation issues.

- And more than 1 in 4 children using just a seat belt alone were not using a booster seat, even though the law required it for their age and size.

The good news? Most errors could be quickly corrected on the spot, showing how small changes can make a big difference in safety.

The study was led by Dalhousie University with support from Child Safety Link at IWK Health with funding from CYBEX Canada and support from the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada and community partners. CPSAC is urging caregivers to connect with a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, or CPST, for hands-on help.

Find resources and a technician near you at cpsac.org.