

Mississippi Observational Child Restraint Survey Report

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Child Restraint Use in Mississippi

The safety of children on Mississippi roadways remains a major health concern for the state. Each year several countermeasures designed to subvert the trend of needless deaths to our children are put in place with the hope of saving precious lives. Citations are written to those who violate the child restraint law, and many child restraint clinics staffed by highly trained technicians are provided at no cost to the public. As a measuring stick, observational surveys are conducted to gauge the impact of these efforts each year. The 40 municipalities surveyed throughout the state can be seen in Table 1.

1	Biloxi	21	Long Beach
2	Brandon	22	Madison
3	Brookhaven	23	McComb
4	Canton	24	Meridian
5	Clarksdale	25	Moss Point
6	Cleveland	26	Natchez
7	Clinton	27	Ocean Springs
8	Columbus	28	Olive Branch
9	Corinth	29	Oxford
10	Gautier	30	Pascagoula
11	Greenville	31	Picayune
12	Greenwood	32	Pearl
13	Grenada	33	Petal
14	Gulfport	34	Ridgeland
15	Hattiesburg	35	Southaven
16	Hernando	36	Starkville
17	Horn Lake	37	Tupelo
18	Indianola	38	Vicksburg
19	Jackson	39	West Point
20	Laurel	40	Yazoo City

In 2017, the Mississippi Child Restraint Survey conducted by Mississippi State University, there were 4,427 vehicles observed in the 40 municipalities during the survey period from March to August. These vehicles contained a total of 5,597 children estimated to be under the age of 7, as Mississippi law states all children under the age of 7 must be restrained in a child restraint device or booster seat system. A complete analysis of the data resulted in a 2017 overall calculated child restraint usage rate of 83.7% for the state.

The following graph shows the child restraint usage breakdown by each municipality surveyed. There are eleven cities that exhibit outstanding child restraint usage rates above 95%. These cities are Brookhaven, Columbus, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Laurel, Meridian, Oxford, Pascagoula, Petal, Starkville, and

Tupelo. It should also be noted that in four of the eleven cities, not even one child was seen unrestrained. Hattiesburg, Laurel, Petal and Tupelo showed 100% child restraint usage! On the other end of the scale however, four counties (Greenville, Grenada, Indianola, and Vicksburg) stand out as having very low child restraint usage rates under 70%.

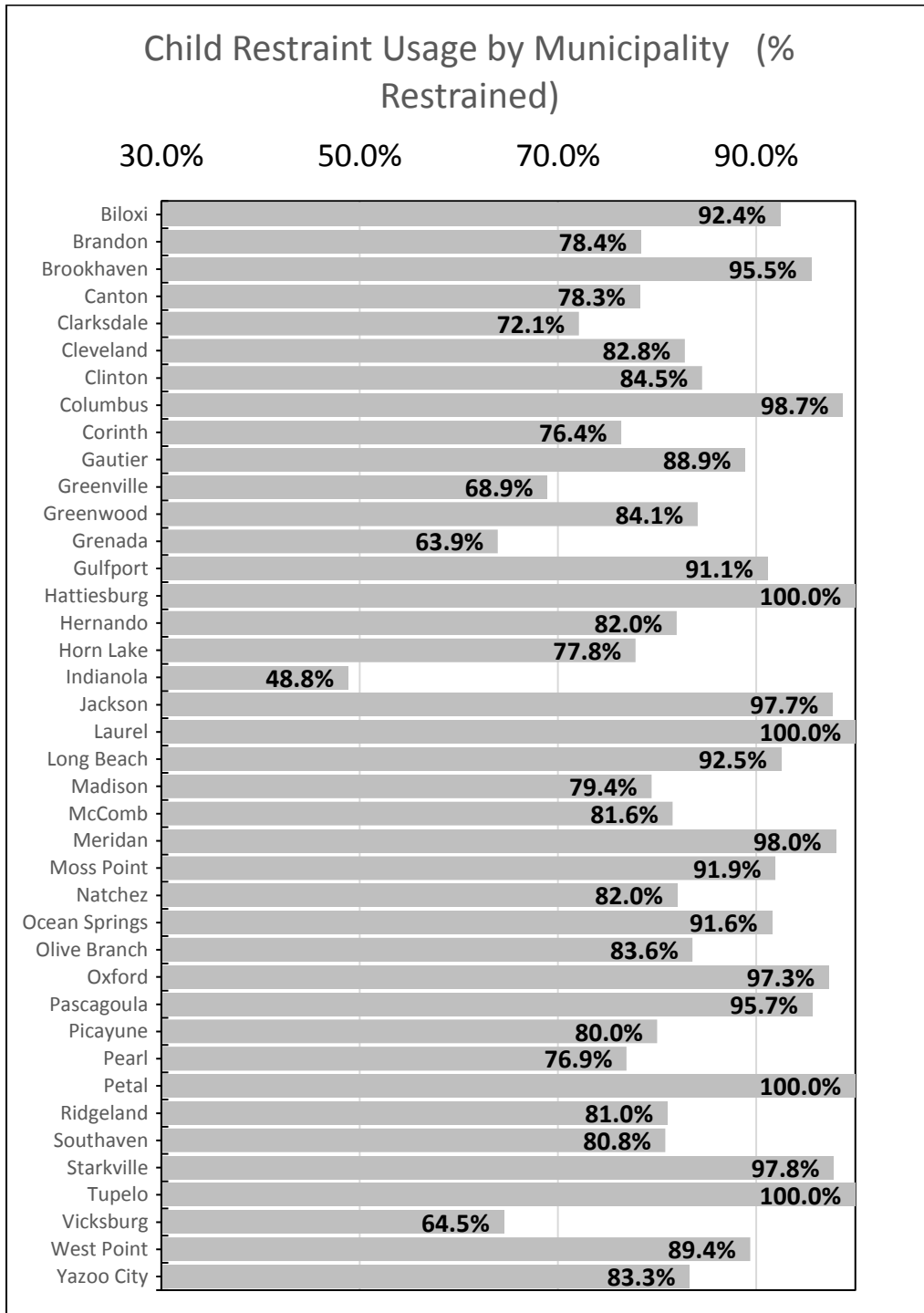


Table 2 illustrates the number of observations and child restraint usage rates for each type of location surveyed. There are five types of locations that show children being restrained at a rate above 90%. Those types of locations are large shopping malls, private medical practices, city parks and similar attractions, churches, and restaurants. The types of locations showing the least rate of restrained children in vehicles are service stations and banks.

Table 2: Child Restraint Use by Type of Location

Location Type	Children Observed	Restraint Usage Rate
Fast Food	783	84.0%
Large Shopping Mall	53	96.2%
Grocery Store	428	82.7%
Daycare or Child Learning Center	1,271	81.4%
State Health Department	199	80.9%
Private Medical Care Complex	331	90.6%
Playground, Park, Museum or Zoo	141	90.1%
Small Shopping Center or Wal-Mart	793	83.2%
Discount or Dollar Store	153	79.1%
Street Intersection	922	81.7%
Church or Church Nursery	366	92.1%
Service Station	78	75.6%
Restaurant (non fast food)	32	100.0%
Bank	47	72.3%

Restraint use by child seating position varies greatly from front seat to back seat. As it is well known, the back seat, or second row of seats, is the safest place for a child to be positioned in a vehicle in the event of a crash. In the observational survey, children observed in the back seat of a vehicle were more likely to be restrained than those children observed in the front seat. Regardless of the gender of the driver, only slightly above half (55.1%) of the 771 children observed in the front seat of a vehicle were restrained. Table 3 shows more detail about the restraint use of children by gender of the vehicle driver and seating position of a child. For those children seated in the back seat of a vehicle with a male driver, the restraint rate was 85.9%. Similarly, but slightly higher, nearly nine out of ten female drivers (89.2%) restrained children in the back seat of vehicles. Overall, for all 4,805 children observed in the back seat of a vehicle, 88.3% of these children were restrained in some manner.

Table 3: Child Restraint Usage Rates by Gender of Driver and Seating Position of Child

Male Drivers		
Seating Position of Child	Children Observed	Child Restraint Usage Rate
Front Seat	263	56.3%
Back Seat	1,258	85.9%
Female Drivers		
Seating Position of Child	Children Observed	Child Restraint Usage Rate
Front Seat	508	54.5%
Back Seat	3,547	89.2%
Male and Female Drivers		
Seating Position of Child	Children Observed	Child Restraint Usage Rate
Front Seat	771	55.1%
Back Seat	4,805	88.3%

Summary

The overall estimated child restraint usage rate for MS in 2017 is 83.7%, based on the observation of 4,427 vehicles and 5,597 children as occupants in those passenger vehicles. Several municipalities show very high child restraint usage rates during the survey period, with 4 municipalities having 100% child restraint usage. Male drivers restrain children positioned in the front seat at a slightly higher rate than females. However, female drivers outshine their male counterparts as they were observed restraining children in the back seat by more than 3 percentage points more than males. Perhaps Mississippi would have nearly a 90% observed child restraint usage rate if children under 7 were always seated behind the first row of vehicles seats.