



Analysis / Arab children at highest risk in car accidents

By [David Ratner](#)

Children who do not sit in car seats or wear seat belts die more often than adults who don't buckle up. Arabs die more often than Jews in car accidents, compared to their proportion in the population, and an Arab child is five times more likely to be killed in a car accident than a Jewish child.

These statistics, based on research conducted by the Israel Police and the National Road Safety Authority, are not necessarily connected, but they are relevant to understand what happened in the car accident near Be'er Sheva yesterday, in which three Arab children aged 2, 3 and 5 - two siblings and their cousin - were killed.

According to the research department of the police traffic division, 340 passengers were killed in car accidents in 2005 (a statistic that doesn't include pedestrians killed in traffic accidents). Of this number, 51 people were killed because they were not wearing seat belts or sitting in car seats. In other words, the lives of 15 percent of the passengers killed last year could have been saved had they been buckled up. Out of the 51 unbuckled fatalities, 17 were younger than 30.

"Seventeen percent of the children killed between 2002 and 2004 were not wearing seat belts," said Hezi Schwartzman, head of the traffic police's research department. "In the research we conducted recently, in conjunction with the Rishon Letzion police, it turned out that while 90 percent of adults make certain to wear seat belts, only 60 percent of parents make certain to buckle in their children as well. It's more important for the parents to buckle themselves in than their children."

At the end of 2004, the National Road Safety Authority published research on traffic accidents in the non-Jewish sector. Arabs constituted a quarter of all people injured in serious and fatal accidents, although they constitute only 18.8 percent of the population.

The findings also showed that Arab drivers were involved in 40 percent of all accidents on intercity roads. The research showed that Arabs are disproportionately involved in car accidents as a whole as well as in serious and fatal accidents, 26 percent of which involve Arabs.

Arabs also constitute a quarter of all those injured in serious and fatal accidents. The disproportionately high Arab involvement in car accidents is particularly evident when it comes to accidents that involve children.

The road safety study cited a combination of reasons for the rate of Arab involvement in serious accidents, including faulty infrastructure in Arab communities and disregard for road safety in the Arab sector.

The researchers noted a widespread failure to use seat belts as "a particularly faulty area," and called for the development of an "extensive safety plan" targeting the Arab sector.

The researchers also suggested an experimental program to teach careful driving skills in a few Arab communities, and recommended that police put greater emphasis on enforcing the law and requiring the use of seat belts.