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Abstract
This research focuses on analyzing the effects of shifting traffic safety policies within the United States. These naturally occurring shifts are examined to determine the effectiveness of altering traffic safety policies. Three substantive chapters are presented focusing on different policy shifts. Examining the speed limit increase in Kansas reveals that the 2011 increase did not result in increased fatality figures; however, it did produce a significant increase in serious injuries sustained from crashes. The probable reason is attributed to the increase only affecting four-lane divided highways; these crashes are not the deadly head-on crashes but with vehicles traveling the same direction at different speed. Studying the upgrade to primary enforcement of seat-belt laws in Kansas reveals considerable responsiveness from local law enforcement officers when state legislators change the parameters of enforcement. Primary enforcement increases the ability of officers to conduct traffic stops while imposing a monetary limit on the citation acts as a reduction in profitability for cities. Kansas’ $10 seat-belt citation fine does not even cover the cost for municipalities of enforcing the policy, thus cities with managers substantially reduce enforcement efforts. Finally, analyzing three distracted driving policies for all states reveal that only completely banning cell phone usage for all drivers is associated with a reduction in the seriousness of crash outcomes. Policies banning texting while driving and novice drivers from using cell phones while driving are ineffective at reducing serious crash outcomes. Actually, policies banning teens from cell phone usage is associated with an increase in crashes caused by cell phone based distractions. This finding shows the limited long-term effects of policies targeting teens, in shaping their behavior in a desirable direction. Overall, this project provides statistical support for specific policies that are important for policymakers to consider when contemplating shifts in their state’s traffic safety policies.

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The Effects of Changing to Primary Enforcement on Daytime and Nighttime Seat Belt Use. Scott Masten1. Background. The ARIMA analyses also indicated that nighttime seat belt use increased after enacting primary enforcement in all the intervention States except Maryland. Conclusions. Office of Behavioral Safety Research. was expected based on the results of prior evaluations, this study also demonstrates that changing to primary enforcement increases nighttime belt use as well. With regard to the findings of no effect for Maryland, it is interesting to note that both the daytime and nighttime pre-intervention seat belt use percentages in this State were high relative to the other States analyzed.