Graphic detail Gender equality

The Economist April 1st 2025

Gender bias in car safety

One Size Fits Men

Gender gap in car safety standards puts women at a greater harm than men

Unforseen danger for half of the population lies in something as inconspicuous as occupying a vehicle. Due to shortfalls in car safety standards, women are at a greater risk of injury and fatality despite men getting into a car crash more frequently. A severe data bias is to blame for the disparity of harm between men and women involved in car crashes.

Since the inception of crash testing in the 1960s, standard crash test dummies used by vehicle regulation agencies have referenced the 50th percentile male body for male crash test dummies and the 5th percentile male body for female crash test

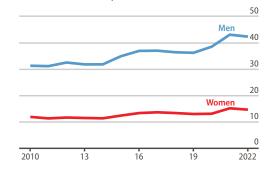
dummies. Since female dummies mirror the male body, testing data does not account for physiological differences in women like a wider pelvis, smaller thorax, and lower bone density.

Recent advancements, such as the THOR-5F crash test dummy, accurately represents the female body. However, bureaucracy stands in the way of standardizing new dummies in car safety testing, with agencies like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Euro NCAP still using outdated models.

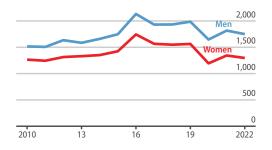
To close the gender gap, vehicle regulation agencies must enforce gender-inclusive car safety testing standards by replacing antiquated dummies with more accurate dummies. Furthermore, automakers must proactively include women in the workforce to drive unbiased innovation. Without these changes, the road will continue to pose a risk for half of the population.

→ Men are more likely to be involved in a car crash

Number of Men vs Women Involved in a Car Crash Based on Fatal Crashes, '000

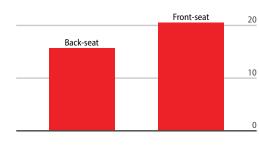


Number of Men vs Women Involved in a Car Crash Based on Injury Crashes, '000



→ But women are more at risk in injuries and fatality per-case basis

Risk Increase in Fatality for Women in a Car Crash Based on Seat Position, %



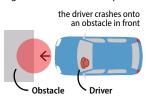
Risk Increase in Fatality for Women in a Car Crash Based on Seatbelt Type, %



Risk Increase in Fatality for Women in a Car Crash Based on Impact Type, %

14.1%

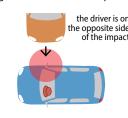
higher risk in a frontal impact



24.4% higher risk in a nearside impact

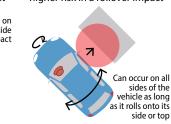


13.0% higher risk in a far-side impact



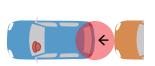
22.2%

higher risk in a rollover impact



17.7%

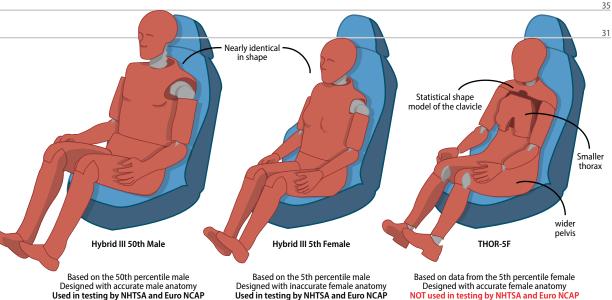
higher risk in a rear/other impact



ehicle crashes onto the rear of the driver

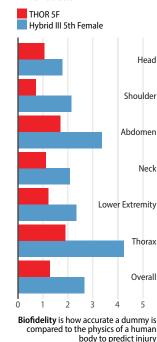
→ While new dummies like THOR-5 offer a more accurate representation of the female body, safety agencies still rely on outdated models

Crash Test Dummy Comparison Seating Height, in.



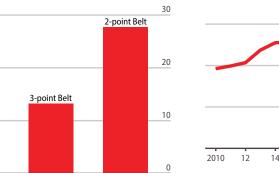
Crash Test Dummy Biofidelity

Lower is Better



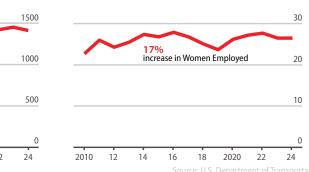
→ People employed in the automotive manufacturing industry has been steadily increasing since 2010





→ But % of women employed in the automotive manufacturing industry has remained stagnant in comparison

Women Employed in Automotive Manufacturing % of Total Employed



→ Only 1% of women chose that the automotive industry does the best job at retaining and attracting women

Q: Which Industry Retain and Attract Women? From a Deloitte Survey, %

