



Ridehail Safety Issues For Riders

"We'll just Uber."

Easily said, when my [Citymapper](#) app suggests that there is no efficient Metro route to my destination, or I know I may consume alcohol at an event. When I talk to those who were in college or their 20s before ridehailing, I feel fortunate ridesharing arrived on the scene just as I entered college at George Washington University in Washington, DC in 2014.

Ridehail services like Uber and Lyft (Uber, Lyft, and other companies commonly use the term 'rideshare') have become a popular way to get around in recent years in the Washington, DC area, particularly when traveling to and from a night out at a restaurant, bar, or nightclub. A [2021 study](#) by Rutgers University Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies suggests that ridehail may take the place of drunk driving in areas where ridehail is quite active, such as Chicago. The findings in another [2021 study](#) published by the Journal of the American Medical Association on impaired driving in Houston, Texas suggest that individuals are choosing ridehail as the "safe alternative to impaired driving." Both studies conclude that areas with the highest volume of ridehail have fewer alcohol-involved crashes.

However, there are other important safety considerations to keep in mind when using these services, especially because ridehail is often employed when riders are at their most vulnerable — alone, intoxicated, or tired. Below are some tips for staying safe while using ridehail services.

1

Check the Driver's Ratings

Ridehail apps allow riders to rate their drivers, and drivers to rate their riders. After calling a ride, take a few moments to check the driver's ratings. If a driver consistently receives low ratings, it could be a sign that she may not provide a safe experience and signal a lack of professionalism. Choosing to only ride with highly rated drivers can help ensure that you are with highly rated drivers can help ensure that you are getting into a vehicle with someone who values your safety. Plus, good customer service will help ease any anxiety associated with getting into a stranger's car.

2

Verify the Driver and Vehicle

Before getting into a ridehail vehicle, it's important to verify that the driver and vehicle are legitimate. When you request a ride through the app, you should be able to see the driver's name, photo, and license plate number. Make sure that the driver and vehicle match the information provided in the app before getting into the car.

Do not ask the driver if he is there to pick up "Barkley." Rather, ask the driver who he is there to pick up or ask for the driver's name to make sure it matches the information provided in the app.

3

Stay Alert and Observant

Sitting in the back does not mean you should nuzzle into your phone for the trip or put in your headphones to avoid conversation. Rather, avoid distractions like texting, browsing the Internet, or listening to music. If you are nervous about ridehailing solo, your instinct may be to distract yourself with these activities. But being distracted during the ride may increase your risk of injury. Instead, pay attention to your surroundings and your driver's behavior and route. Be ready to act if necessary and show your driver that you are watchful.

4

Sit in the Back and Wear Your Seatbelt

Increasing the distance between yourself and the driver by sitting in the backseat will better protect your personal safety. In 2019, Uber released a [safety report](#) that included data on sexual assaults reported during rides in the United States in 2017 and 2018. According to the report, there were 2,936 reported sexual assaults in 2017 and 3,045 reported sexual assaults in 2018. While rides where a sexual assault was reported amount to a small percentage of total trips in 2017 and 2018, sexual assault is often underreported, and riders should take precaution against this real and serious threat.

In addition to putting some distance between yourself and the driver, wear your seatbelt. While ridehailing is associated with the benefit of less alcohol-related fatalities, it has also been linked to an increase in fatal car crashes. For example, [one study](#) by the Becker Friedman Institute for Economics at the University of Chicago found that the introduction of ridehailing services led to around a 3% annual increase in traffic fatalities. Wearing your seatbelt can help protect you in the event of a collision or sudden stop.

5

Share Your Trip Details

Most ridehailing apps allow you to share your trip details with friends or family members. This can be a good way to let others know where you are and who your driver is. Some apps even allow you to share your location in real-time during the trip. Sharing your trip details, including your estimated time of arrival and the route you are on, can provide an extra layer of safety if something goes wrong during your ride. In that event, your friends or family can easily access your trip information and follow up with you or contact law enforcement if necessary.

Also, knowing that someone else is aware of your location and tracking your progress can alleviate some anxiety you may feel while ridehailing. Here are directions on how to use this function on [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#).

6

Trust Your Instincts

If you ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe during a ridehail trip, trust your instincts and speak up. For example, if your driver is taking an odd route, ask about it and show that you are a vigilant rider. If your driver is texting while driving, or participating in other dangerous behaviors, politely request that she focus on the drive. If you feel scared of your driver for any reason, or dangerous behaviors continue, ask your driver to stop and let you out. It is better to be safe than sorry, and statistics prove that this is an area where more precaution is necessary.

Ridehail safety is important for all riders to consider. For more safety tips, explore Uber's [Safety Toolkit](#) and Lyft's [safety support](#). If you use another ridehail service, or even a traditional taxicab, try to employ similar safety measures.