

## Comment from Maria Kuhn

Two years and three days ago, my family and I were hit head on by an oncoming car. A distracted driver slid across a lane, rounded a corner, and found our car ten feet ahead.

My intestine instantly ruptured, although we would not find out for hours. My mom suffered a fractured sternum, tailbone, and concussion. Thankfully, we are all okay today. My family is lucky to be alive, healed, and together.

A simple mistake should not have such dire and traumatic consequences with the advanced technology of today. Yet one reason remains – cars do not care about women.

This is not to say that cars care particularly about any man. These masses of steel and power throttle to their destiny no matter the passenger. The same is not true, however, for their designers and regulators. It is not true for the ones who are supposed to protect us from the cars themselves.

The government has known since the 1980s that cars are not designed equitably. Women, being of a different sex, are different. Variations in mass distribution, skeletal formations, and stature relative to seat positioning all contribute to a more dangerous vehicular structure for women. The famous statistics published by UVA, and validated by NHTSA, show that women are 17% more likely to be killed and 73% more likely to be injured in a frontal belted crash. VerityNOW estimates 1,300 women's lives would be saved each year with more equitable safety measures. The cause is the design of the cars themselves – designed to fit a safety standard in which women are not accounted for. The safety standard, as implemented through the New Car Assessment Program, only requires male drivers. The results of these tests determine a car's safety score and are displayed on the Monroney label. Thus, consumers unknowingly proceed in their purchases based on faulty and untrue data.

Some kinds of crashes are inevitable. Drivers will get distracted, an animal will jump in the road, or a tire will skid on a patch of black ice. The difference, however, between a simple accident and a life-altering injury or death is enormous. If cars were designed with female dummies, I could drive without remembering the pressure against my chest of a seatbelt not supposed to fit a women's chest, without the echo of a searing tear in my abdomen.

The Monroney label should represent an accurate and reliable measurement of the cars' protection for its passengers. Instead, it boasts an inconsistent and biased calculation, willingly endorsed by the government and misleading consumers. Any ongoing assessments, and advancements based on these, will be wholly unjust should they proceed in the same inequitable manner. I hope the government does not willfully and knowingly continue to deceive and endanger consumers, particularly women.