

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-107093](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

Ridesourcing and taxi services help meet the transportation needs of many people in the U.S. Advocacy groups and other stakeholders have raised questions about the safety of these services.

Sami's Law, enacted in January 2023, provides for GAO to conduct a study on background check requirements for prospective ridesourcing and taxi drivers, and safety steps taken by ridesourcing and taxi companies. This report describes background checks of prospective ridesourcing and taxi drivers and safety features for drivers and passengers, among other objectives.

GAO searched state statutes and regulations to identify states with statewide background check requirements for prospective ridesourcing and taxi drivers.

GAO reviewed documents and interviewed officials from five federal agencies, six selected states, and four selected localities. GAO also interviewed representatives from five selected ridesourcing and five taxi companies. GAO selected states and localities based on their oversight of ridesourcing and taxi services, and selected ridesourcing and taxi companies to obtain variation in size and location, among other things.

GAO also conducted nongeneralizable intercept surveys to examine if passengers were aware of and used selected safety features. An intercept survey is an in-person data collection method conducted in a public place (such as an airport), where a specific targeted population is asked a series of questions.

View [GAO-24-107093](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Repko at 202-512-2834 or repkoe@gao.gov and Derrick Collins at 202-512-8777 or collinsd@gao.gov.

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RIDESHARING AND TAXI SAFETY




Information on Background Checks and Safety Features

What GAO Found

In general, ridesourcing (also referred to as ridesharing) and taxi companies can be regulated by states, localities, or both. GAO's review of state statutes and regulations found that 45 states and Washington, D.C., (states) require criminal background checks for prospective ridesourcing drivers, and 10 states require criminal background checks for prospective taxi drivers. Although fewer states have statewide background check requirements for taxi drivers compared with ridesourcing drivers, historically taxis tend to be regulated at the local level, according to a 2016 report by the Transportation Research Board. Selected states and localities GAO reviewed administer and manage background checks in a variety of ways. For example, one selected locality conducts all background checks for ridesourcing drivers, while another locality allows ridesourcing companies the option of having a third party, or the locality, conduct the check. All five ridesourcing and five taxi companies GAO interviewed said they conduct background checks for all prospective drivers, regardless of requirements.

Ridesourcing and taxi companies may offer pretrip safety features in digital applications (app), other in-app safety features, and in-vehicle safety features. For example, four selected ridesourcing and four selected taxi companies either require or allow drivers to use a security camera during trips.

Examples of Safety Features for Ridesourcing and Taxi Drivers and Passengers

Type of safety feature	Example of safety feature	Description
Pretrip in-application (app)	License plate number 	Passengers match the license plate number in the app to the vehicle to identify the correct vehicle.
Other in-app	Emergency call button 	If drivers or passengers need immediate assistance, this button can connect them with emergency responders.
In-vehicle	Partition 	Partitions provide a physical barrier between the front and back part of a vehicle.

Source: GAO analysis of ridesourcing and taxi company documents and interviews with their representatives. | GAO-24-107093

GAO conducted in-person surveys in public places (intercept surveys) in four locations and asked 304 individuals who were likely to have used ridesourcing or taxis about their awareness and use of selected safety features. Of the 267 respondents who were asked about pretrip in-app features, over 95 percent were aware of and had used at least one such feature when arranging a ride in the past year. Respondents were most likely to consider two pretrip in-app features—license plate number and driver name and picture—as very important to their safety. More than 90 percent of respondents were aware of at least one in-vehicle safety feature, such as a vehicle decal.