

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2009 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2009 on both high volume state highways and low volume local roads and residential streets. The survey design was based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's requirements and had four characteristics.

1. The survey was conducted between 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. when the light was adequate for observation.
2. The survey observations were restricted to front seat occupants (drivers and passengers) of cars, sport utility vehicles, taxis, vans and pickup trucks.
3. Only the use of a shoulder harness was observed since vehicles passed an observation point without stopping.
4. The survey sites included interstate highways, freeways, county roads, state highways and a random sample of residential streets within selected areas.

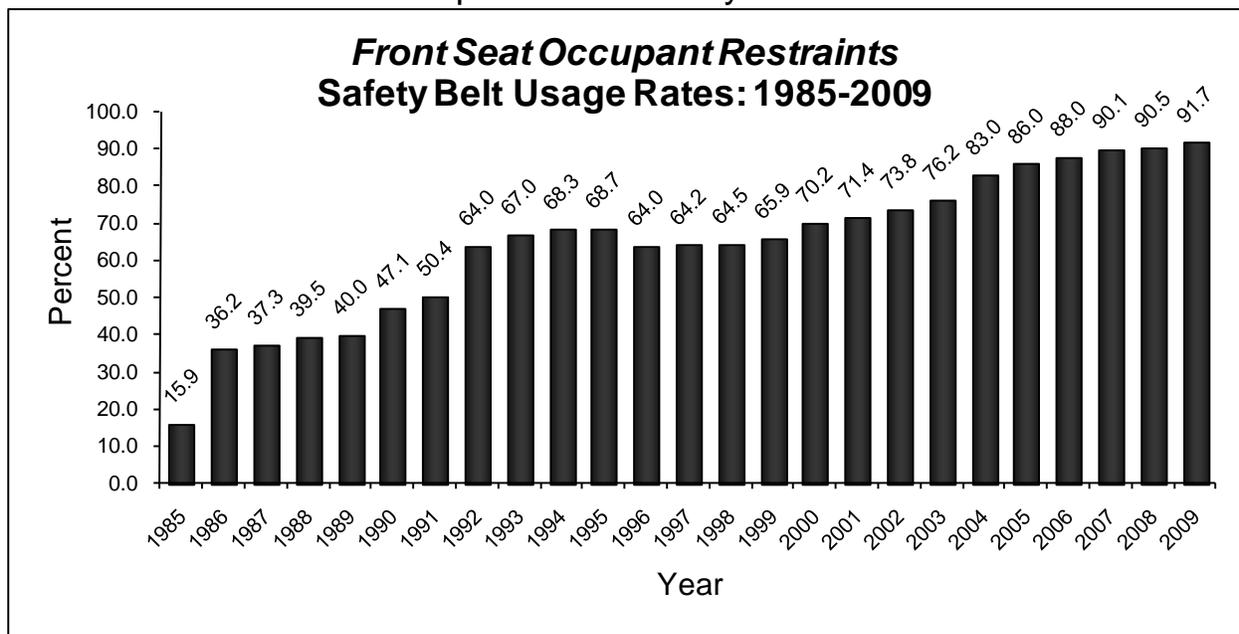
There were 126,680 front seat occupants observed during the June 2009 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), January 1994.

Historical Trends

Illinois' first safety belt survey was conducted in April 1985, prior to the safety belt law becoming effective on July 1st, 1985. The data from the first survey became a base from which to measure the success of Illinois' efforts to educate citizens about the benefits of using safety belts.

On July 3rd, 2003, the primary safety belt legislation was signed into law (Public Act 93-099) taking effect immediately. Under the primary belt law in Illinois, police officers can stop vehicles in which occupants fail to buckle up and issue citations.

Figure 1
Front Seat Occupant Restraint Usage Rate
Comparison of Survey Results



Note: 1998 through 2009 surveys include pickup trucks, which tend to have lower usage rates.

The base line (April 1985) occupant restraint usage rate for all front seat occupants (drivers and passengers) observed in Illinois was 15.9 percent. During the first twelve months after the safety belt law became effective, the observed usage rate increased to 36.2 percent. Since the first survey was conducted in April 1985, the seat belt usage rate has increased almost 76 percentage points, peaking at 91.7 percent in June 2009 (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 258 sites during June 2009 are summarized in **Table 1**. Column **(1)** shows the total number of front seat occupants observed. Column **(2)** shows the percentage of occupants who were observed wearing seat belts. The categories listed down the left side of the table indicate the various regions of the state where the survey was conducted (with the number of sites in each region in parenthesis), road type, and day of week.

A total of 126,680 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 91.7 percent were observed wearing seat belts.

The collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had the highest usage rate at 93.1 percent closely followed by the downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) at 93.0 percent. Cook County had a seat belt usage rate of 90.2. The city of Chicago had the lowest rate at 86.8 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 95.3 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highways at 91.3 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 89.9 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 92.9 percent, while on the weekdays it was only 90.3 percent.

**Table 1
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2009)**

Selected Characteristics	Total Observed (1)	Actual Usage Rate (2)
Statewide (258)	126,680	91.7%
Regions		
City of Chicago (46)	21,990	86.8%
Cook County (40)	15,494	90.2%
Collar Counties (118)	63,706	93.1%
Downstate (54)	25,490	93.0%
Road Type		
Residential (190)	70,577	89.9%
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	21,848	91.3%
Interstate Highways (28)	34,255	95.3%
Day of Week		
Weekends (115)	61,772	92.9%
Weekdays (143)	64,908	90.3%

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