

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2005 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2005 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.

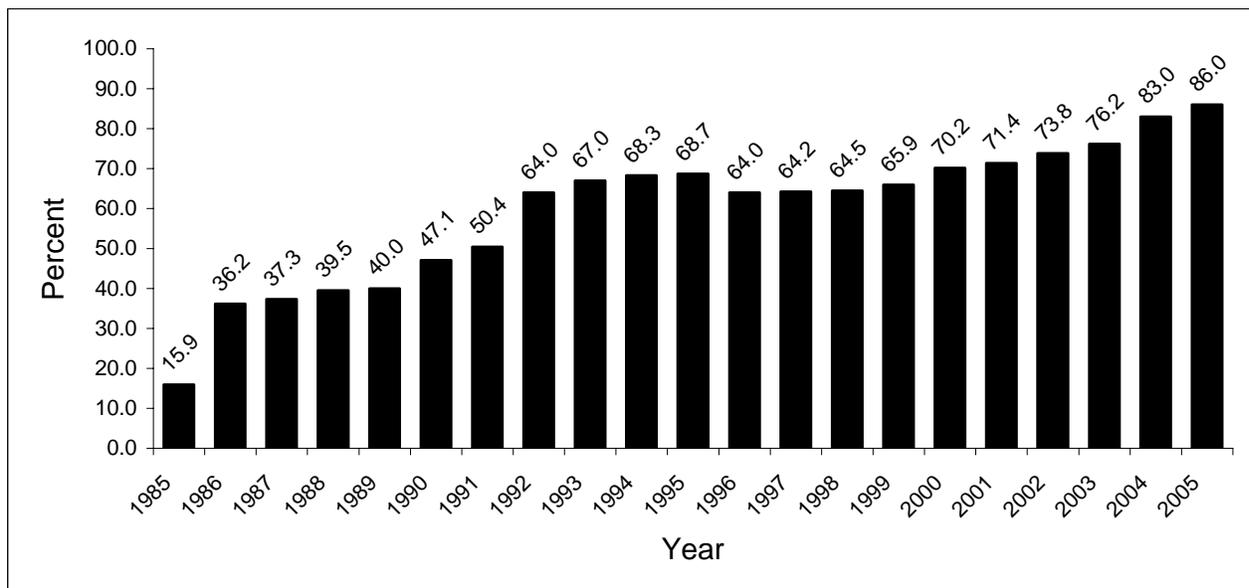
There were 129,247 front seat occupants observed during the June 2005 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", 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, Governor Blagojevich signed primary safety belt legislation (Public Act 93-099) that took 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 2005 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 by more than 70 percentage points, peaking at 86.0 percent in June 2005 (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 258 sites during June 2005 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 129,247 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 86.0 percent were observed wearing seat belts.

The Collar Counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had the highest usage rate at 88.4 percent followed by the Downstate Counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) at 86.8 percent. Cook County, excluding the City of Chicago, had a usage rate at 83.5 percent. The City of Chicago had the lowest rate at 80.1 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 92.9 percent followed by U.S. and Illinois marked highways at 86.3 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 82.9 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 88.0 percent, while on the weekdays it was only 83.9 percent.

**Table 1
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2005)**

Selected Characteristics	Total Observed (1)	Actual Usage Rate (2)
Statewide (258)	129,247	86.0%
Regions		
City of Chicago (46)	24,350	80.1%
Cook County (40)	13,874	83.5%
Collar Counties (118)	63,342	88.4%
Downstate (54)	27,681	86.8%
Road Type		
Residential (190)	74,630	82.9%
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	22,305	86.3%
Interstate Highways (28)	32,312	92.9%
Day of Week		
Weekends (115)	63,489	88.0%
Weekdays (143)	65,758	83.9%

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