

# Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

## June 2012 Observational Survey Results

### Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2012 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.

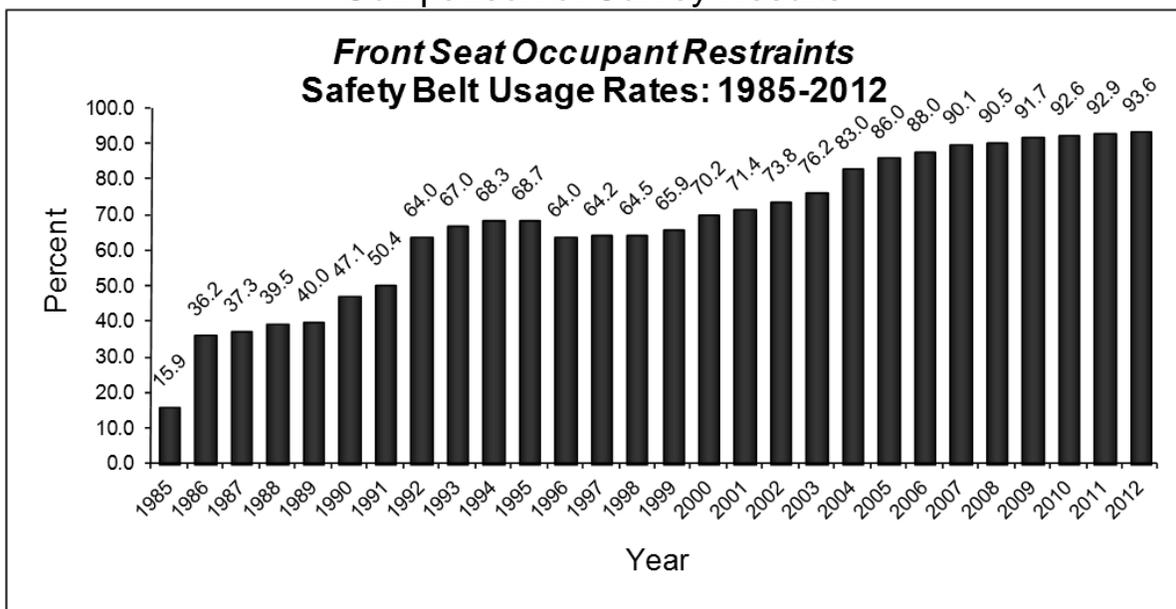
There were 121,910 front seat occupants observed during the June 2012 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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 2012 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 more than 77 percentage points, peaking at 93.6 percent in June 2012 (see **Figure 1**).

### Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 258 sites during June 2011 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 121,910 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 93.6 percent were observed wearing seat belts.

The collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had the highest usage rate at 94.5 percent closely followed by the downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) at 94.4 percent. Cook County had a seat belt usage rate of 92.2. The city of Chicago had the lowest rate at 89.0 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 96.9 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highways at 92.9 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 91.7 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 94.7 percent, while on the weekdays it was only 92.1 percent.

**Table 1  
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois  
(June 2012)**

<b>Selected Characteristics</b>	<b>Total Observed (1)</b>	<b>Actual Usage Rate (2)</b>
<b>Statewide (258)</b>	<b>121,910</b>	<b>93.6%</b>
<b>Regions</b>		
City of Chicago (46)	18,538	89.0%
Cook County (40)	15,641	92.2%
Collar Counties (118)	64,079	94.5%
Downstate (54)	23,652	94.4%
<b>Road Type</b>		
Residential (190)	65,133	91.7%
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	23,485	92.9%
Interstate Highways (28)	33,292	96.9%
<b>Day of Week</b>		
Weekends (115)	59,684	94.7%
Weekdays (143)	62,226	92.1%

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