



**Illinois Department of Transportation**

Division of Traffic Safety  
3215 Executive Park Drive / P.O. Box 19245 / Springfield, Illinois / 62794-9245

**TECHNICAL REPORT**

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**January 2006**

# **Child Safety Seat Usage In Illinois**

## **July 2005 Observational Survey Results**

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# **Illinois Department of Transportation**

## **Division of Traffic Safety**

### **Evaluation Unit**

The Evaluation Unit within the Division of Traffic Safety in the Illinois Department of Transportation focuses on evaluation and monitoring of various highway safety projects and programs in Illinois. The Evaluation Unit conducts research and analyses that enhance the safety and efficiency of transportation by understanding the human factors that are important to transportation programs in Illinois. The main functions of the Unit include the following:

1. Develop an in-depth analysis of motor vehicle related fatalities and injuries in Illinois using several crash related databases (Crash data, FARS, Trauma Registry, Hospital data, and state and local police data).
2. Develop measurable long term and short term goals and objectives for the Highway Safety Program in Illinois using historical crash related databases.
3. Evaluate each highway safety project with enforcement components (e.g., Traffic Law Enforcement Program, Local Alcohol Program, IMA GE projects) using crash and citation data provided by local and state police departments.
4. Evaluate several highway safety programs (e.g., Occupant Protection and Alcohol). This involves evaluating the effects of public policy and intervention programs that promote safe driving.
5. Design and conduct annual observational safety belt and child safety seat surveys for Illinois. The safety belt survey is based on a multi-stage random selection of Interstate Highways, US/IL Highways, and several local and residential streets.
6. Provide results of research and evaluation as well as annual enforcement activities to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) as part of the Federal Requirements of State Highway Safety Program in Illinois.
7. Provide statistical consultation to other Sections at the Division of Traffic Safety and other Divisions at IDOT.
8. Publish results of all research and evaluation at the Division and place them as PDF files at IDOT's Website.

**This report provides a descriptive analysis of child safety seat usage in Illinois. The survey was an observational survey conducted statewide during July 2005 at selected survey locations which included Day Care Centers, Health Care Centers, McDonald's restaurants, and Shopping Malls. This survey provided a statistically representative sample of child safety seat usage in the State of Illinois.**

The report was compiled and prepared by the Evaluation staff. Comments or questions may be addressed to Mehdi Nassirpour, Ph.D., Chief of Evaluation Unit, Bureau of Administrative Services, Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation, 3215 Executive Park Drive, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9245.

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## Executive Summary

1. During July 2005, a total of 3,380 children were observed in 2,358 passenger cars, pickup trucks, and vans at selected Day Care Centers, McDonald's restaurants, Health Care Centers, and Shopping Malls across Illinois.
2. The total observed safety seat usage rate was 87.7 percent. When only including the observations where the safety seat was used properly, the usage rate drops to 60.1 percent.
3. Cook County had the highest percentage of restrained children of more than 90 percent; the Collar Counties had the second highest percentage of restrained children of more than 87 percent; and the Downstate Counties had the lowest percentage of restrained children at 81.5 percent. When only including proper seat belt use across the three regions, the child safety seat usage rate was approximately 60 percent for each region.
4. Day Care Centers had the highest percentage of restrained children and properly restrained children of more than 94 percent and 66 percent respectively. Shopping malls had the second highest percentage of restrained children of more than 86 percent and more than 59 percent were properly restrained. The total child safety seat use was very similar for Health Care Centers and McDonald's restaurants with more than 83 percent of children restrained. On the other hand, McDonald's restaurants had a higher percentage of children who were properly restrained (57.6 percent) than Health Care Centers (50.7 percent).
5. Based on vehicle type, vans had the highest percentage of children who were restrained and properly restrained of more than 92 percent and 75 percent respectively. Child safety seat usage rates were similar for pickup trucks and automobiles. In both pickup trucks and automobiles, around 88 percent of children were restrained in those vehicles and around 59 percent were properly restrained.
6. As was expected, belted drivers had higher child safety restraint usage rates and proper child restraint usage rates than unbelted drivers (95.9 percent and 71.2 percent versus 62.6 percent and 25.7 percent respectively).
7. From 1997 to 2005, the child safety seat usage rate increased by 20.9 percentage points (from 66.8 percent in 1997 to 87.7 percent in 2005). The proper usage rate of restrained children only increased by 7.9 percentage points (from 52.2 percent in 1997 to 60.1 percent in 2005).
8. The Collar Counties had an increase of 14.3 percentage points of proper child safety restraint use from 1997 to 2005, while Cook County and the Downstate Counties had increases of 6.8 and 1.3 percentage points respectively.

9. From 1997 to 2005, the proper child safety restraint usage rate increased by 12.9 percentage points at McDonald's restaurants, 8.9 percentage points at Day Care Centers, 6.4 percentage points at Shopping Malls, and only 0.5 percentage point at Health Care Centers.
10. Since 1997, the proper child safety restraint usage rate has increased by 16.9 percentage points in vans, 13.8 percentage points in pickup trucks, and 7.9 percentage points in automobiles.
11. Male drivers had an increase of 11.4 percentage points of proper child safety restraint use (from 47.2 percent in 1997 to 58.6 percent in 2005); while female drivers had an increase of only 6.0 percentage points (from 55.1 percent in 1997 to 61.1 percent in 2005).
12. From 1997 to 2005, there was relatively no change in the proper use of child restraints for belted drivers (from 71.0 percent in 1997 to 71.2 percent in 2005). On the other hand, there was a 2.5 percentage point decrease in the proper use of child restraints for unbelted drivers (from 28.2 percent in 1997 to 25.7 percent in 2005).

## Survey Design

Using a multi-stage random sampling technique, a total of 3,380 children were observed in 2,358 passenger cars and pickup trucks in Illinois in 2005. There were a total of 117 randomly selected survey locations: 39 Day Care Centers, 11 Health Care Centers, 31 McDonald's restaurants, and 36 Shopping Malls within 12 selected counties. The counties were grouped into three different regions which included Cook County, the Collar Counties (Dupage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will), and the Downstate Counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair). The survey design 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 was restricted to a total of 30 observations or an hour of observation per site.
3. The survey was conducted at the exit/entrance of selected locations.
4. The survey included four incorrect uses of child seats:
  - seat faces wrong way,
  - harness not used,
  - seat not secured, and
  - belt across face.

For more information on the design of the survey refer to "Design of the Child Safety Seat Survey", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), June 1996.

## Results of Child Safety Seat Survey in Illinois

**Tables 1 through 7** provide descriptive information on the child safety seat usage rate and its correlates in Illinois in 2005.

**Table 1** shows that the overall child restraint usage rate in Illinois is 87.7 percent. After excluding total number of observations in which the child restraint is used incorrectly,

the usage rate is reduced to 60.1 percent. As was expected, child safety restraint usage rates are inversely proportional to the number of children in the car. It is likely to see usage rates decrease as the number of children in the vehicle increase. This trend can be seen in **Table 1**. The usage rate and correct usage rate for Child 1 are 89.4 percent and 61.7 percent respectively. On the other hand, these percentages are lower for Child 3 at 75 percent and 50 percent respectively.

**Table 1: Child Safety Seat Usage Rate in Illinois**

Seating Position	No Restraint	Incorrect Use	Correct Use	Total Observed	Usage Rate Total	Usage Rate (excludes incorrect use)
Child 1	249	653	1,456	2,358	89.4%	61.7%
Child 2	130	249	508	887	85.3%	57.3%
Child 3	30	30	60	120	75.0%	50.0%
Child 4	6	2	7	15	60.0%	46.7%
<b>Total</b>	415	934	2,031	3,380	87.7%	60.1%

Note: Examples of Incorrect Use include seat faces wrong way, harness not used, seat not secured, and belt across face

**Table 2** presents frequency and percentage distributions for selected demographics, including type of vehicle, driver’s gender, driver’s belt status, and total vehicles observed by site type. As expected, the largest percentage of vehicles observed were automobiles (65.9%); the second largest percentage of vehicles observed were vans (21.1%); and the lowest percentage of vehicles observed were pickup trucks (13.1%). Based on driver’s gender, more than 62 percent of the drivers observed were female, while only 39.3 percent of the observations were male. Based on driver’s belt status, more than 77 percent of drivers were observed wearing their seat belts, while the remaining 22.9 percent were unbelted. Based on location type, the largest percentage of vehicles was observed at Shopping Malls (38.0 percent). More than 28 percent of the vehicles were observed in Day Care Centers and more than 27 percent were observed at McDonald’s restaurants. The smallest percentage of vehicles was observed at Health Care Centers (5.9 percent).

**Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution  
of Selected Demographics for the  
2005 Child Safety Seat Survey**

<b>Type of Vehicle</b>		
<b>Type of Vehicle</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Automobile</b>	1,548	65.9%
<b>Truck</b>	307	13.1%
<b>Van</b>	495	21.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,350	100.0%
<b>Driver's Gender</b>		
<b>Driver's Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Female</b>	1,428	60.7%
<b>Male</b>	925	39.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,353	100.0%
<b>Driver's Belt Status</b>		
<b>Driver's Belt Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Belted</b>	1,804	77.1%
<b>Not Belted</b>	536	22.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,340	100.0%
<b>Total Vehicles Observed by Location Type</b>		
<b>Location Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Daycare</b>	669	28.4%
<b>Health Center</b>	138	5.9%
<b>McDonald's</b>	656	27.8%
<b>Shopping Mall</b>	895	38.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,358	100.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,358	100.0%

\*Note: The Totals are different for each demographic due to missing values.

**Table 3** shows frequency and percentage distributions of child restraint use by selected regions of Illinois (Collar Counties, Cook County, and Downstate Counties). Cook County had the highest percentage of child restraint use at 90.3 percent; the Collar Counties had a child restraint usage rate of more than 87 percent; while the Downstate Counties had the lowest child restraint usage rate at 81.5 percent. The three regions had approximately the same percentage of children who were properly restrained. Proper child restraint use ranged from 59.1 percent in Cook County to 62.6 percent in the Collar Counties.

**Table 3: Analysis of the 2005 Child Safety Seat Survey  
Child Restraint Status by Region**

Child Restraint Status	Region						Totals	
	Collar Counties**		Cook County		Downstate Counties***			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Properly Restrained	568	62.6%	1,052	59.1%	411	59.3%	2,031	60.1%
Incorrectly Restrained	224	24.7%	556	31.2%	154	22.2%	934	27.6%
<b>Total Restrained*</b>	792	87.3%	1,608	90.3%	565	81.5%	2,965	87.7%
Not Restrained	115	12.7%	172	9.7%	128	18.5%	415	12.3%
<b>Column Totals</b>	907	100%	1,780	100%	693	100%	3,380	100%

\* The row 'Total Restrained' is the sum of the cases from the rows 'Properly Restrained' and 'Incorrectly Restrained'

\*\* The Collar Counties are comprised of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, & Will

\*\*\* The Downstate Counties are comprised of Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, & St. Clair

**Table 4** provides information on child restraint usage rates by location type. The location types included Day Care Centers, Health Care Centers, McDonald's restaurants, and Shopping Malls. Day Care Centers had the highest percentage of children who were restrained at 94.1 percent, as well as, the highest percentage of children who were properly restrained at 66.2 percent. Shopping Malls had the second highest percent of children who were restrained and properly restrained at 86.6 percent and 59.0 percent respectively. Total restraint use was about 84 percent at both Health Care Centers and McDonald's restaurants, but proper restraint use was higher at McDonald's restaurants (57.6 percent) than Health Care Centers (50.7 percent).

**Table 4: Analysis of the 2005 Child Safety Seat Survey  
Child Restraint Status by Location Type**

Child Restraint Status	Location Type								Totals	
	Day Care Center		Health Care Center		McDonald's		Shopping Mall			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Properly Restrained	608	66.2%	106	50.7%	540	57.6%	777	59.0%	2,031	60.1%
Incorrectly Restrained	256	27.9%	70	33.5%	246	26.3%	362	27.5%	934	27.6%
<b>Total Restrained*</b>	864	94.1%	176	84.2%	786	83.9%	1,139	86.6%	2,965	87.7%
Not Restrained	54	5.9%	33	15.8%	151	16.1%	177	13.4%	415	12.3%
<i>Column Totals</i>	918	100%	209	100%	937	100%	1,316	100%	3,380	100%

\* The row 'Total Restrained' is the sum of the cases from the rows 'Properly Restrained' and 'Incorrectly Restrained'

**Table 5** shows child restraint use by vehicle type, including automobiles, pickup trucks, and vans. Vans had the highest percentage of children who were restrained and properly restrained at 92.2 percent and 75.1 percent respectively. Child restraint usage rates were similar for pickup trucks and automobiles with more than 87 percent of all children restrained. Pickup trucks and automobiles had similar proper usage rates with more than 59 percent of children properly restrained.

**Table 5: Analysis of the 2005 Child Safety Seat Survey  
Child Restraint Status by Vehicle Type**

Child Restraint Status	Vehicle Type						Totals**	
	Automobile		Truck		Van			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Properly Restrained	1,258	59.1%	249	59.3%	517	75.1%	2,024	62.5%
Incorrectly Restrained	615	28.9%	117	27.9%	117	17.0%	849	26.2%
<b>Total Restrained*</b>	1,873	88.0%	366	87.1%	634	92.2%	2,873	88.8%
Not Restrained	256	12.0%	54	12.9%	54	7.8%	364	11.2%
<i>Column Totals</i>	2,129	100%	420	100%	688	100%	3,237	100%

\* The row 'Total Restrained' is the sum of the cases from the rows 'Properly Restrained' and 'Incorrectly Restrained'

\*\* The total does not equal 3,380 cases due to missing data.

**Table 6** shows that female drivers tended to have slightly higher restraint usage rates and proper usage rates than males.

**Table 6: Analysis of the 2005 Child Safety Seat Survey  
Child Restraint Status by Driver's Gender**

Child Restraint Status	Driver's Gender				Totals**	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Properly Restrained	777	58.6%	1,250	61.1%	2,027	60.1%
Incorrectly Restrained	366	27.6%	563	27.5%	929	27.6%
<b>Total Restrained*</b>	1,143	86.3%	1,813	88.6%	2,956	87.7%
Not Restrained	182	13.7%	233	11.4%	415	12.3%
<i>Column Totals</i>	1,325	100%	2,046	100%	3,371	100%

\* The row 'Total Restrained' is the sum of the cases from the rows 'Properly Restrained' and 'Incorrectly Restrained'

\*\* The total does not equal 3,380 cases due to missing data.

**Table 7** shows frequency and percentage distributions of child restraint use by driver's belt status. As indicated earlier (**Table 2**), more than 77 percent of all drivers observed with children in their vehicles were wearing their seat belts (1,804 belted drivers divided by 2,340 total observations multiplied by 100 percent). Belted drivers have significantly higher child safety seat usage rates and proper child safety seat usage rates than unbelted drivers. The child safety seat usage rate and proper child safety seat usage rate for belted drivers were 95.9 percent and 71.2 percent respectively. On the other hand, unbelted drivers tend have significantly lower child restraint usage rates than belted drivers. The child safety seat usage rate and proper child safety seat usage rate for unbelted drivers were 62.6 percent and 25.7 percent respectively.

Since driver seat belt use is highly correlated with child safety seat use, as the seat belt usage rate increases in Illinois, the child safety seat usage rate continues to increase with it. With the continued increase in the seat belt usage rate and child safety seat usage rate, the number and percentage of unbelted drivers and children is decreasing.

**Table 7: Analysis of the 2005 Child Safety Seat Survey  
Child Restraint Status by Driver's Belt Status**

Child Restraint Status	Driver's Belt Status				Totals**	
	Driver Belted		Driver Unbelted		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Properly Restrained	1,792	71.2%	213	25.7%	2,005	59.9%
Incorrectly Restrained	624	24.8%	305	36.8%	929	27.8%
<b>Total Restrained*</b>	2,416	95.9%	518	62.6%	2,934	87.7%
Not Restrained	102	4.1%	310	37.4%	412	12.3%
<i>Column Totals</i>	2,518	100%	828	100%	3,346	100%

\* The row 'Total Restrained' is the sum of the cases from the rows 'Properly Restrained' and 'Incorrectly Restrained'

\*\* The total does not equal 3,380 cases due to missing data.

## A Comparative Look of Child Safety Seat Use Over Several Years

**Table 8** provides information about total child restraint usage rates and proper usage rate for 1997, 2001, 2003, and 2005. From 1997 to 2005, there was an increase of 20.9 percentage points for the child restraint usage rate (from 66.8 percent in 1997 to 87.7 percent in 2005). The proper usage rate of restrained children only increased by 7.9 percentage points (from 52.2 percent in 1997 to 60.1 percent in 2005). Percentage point increases for overall usage rates for all children ranged from 20.4 for Child 1 to 40.0 for Child 4. Percentage point increases for proper child restraint usage rates ranged from 8.2 for Child 1 to 26.7 for Child 4.

**Table 8: Child Safety Seat Usage in Illinois  
(Comparison of 1997, 2001, 2003, & 2005)**

Child Number	Total Usage Rate of Restrained Children					Correct Usage Rate of Restrained Children (excludes Incorrect Use)				
	Total Use (1997)	Total Use (2001)	Total Use (2003)	Total Use (2005)	% Change (1997-2005)	Proper Use (1997)	Proper Use (2001)	Proper Use (2003)	Proper Use (2005)	% Change (1997-2005)
<b>Total</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>78.0%</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>87.7%</b>	<b>20.9%</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>54.8%</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>
Child #										
Child 1	69.0%	81.0%	85.3%	89.4%	20.4%	53.5%	57.3%	61.8%	61.7%	8.2%
Child 2	59.6%	74.5%	80.0%	85.3%	25.7%	48.6%	51.6%	58.3%	57.3%	8.7%
Child 3	35.6%	51.1%	64.9%	75.0%	39.4%	24.4%	30.4%	42.5%	50.0%	25.6%
Child 4	20.0%	27.3%	50.0%	60.0%	40.0%	20.0%	22.7%	40.0%	46.7%	26.7%

\* Percent Change is calculated by subtracting the 1997 usage rates from the 2005 usage rates.

Note: Incorrect Use = seat faces wrong way, harness not used, seat not secured, and belt across face

**Table 9** shows comparative analyses of child safety seat usage rates for 1997, 2001, 2003, and 2005. The data are broken down by region, location, vehicle type, driver's gender, and driver's belt status. The information in **Table 9** is displayed in graphic presentations of child safety seat usage rates by selected characteristics in **Figures 1 through 5**.

**Figure 1** shows the proper child safety restraint usage rate by the selected regions in Illinois. All three regions had increases in proper child safety restraint use. From 1997 to 2005, the Collar Counties had the highest rate of increase (14.3 percentage points) of proper child safety restraint use. Cook County had an increase of 6.8 percentage points, while the Downstate Counties only had an increase of 1.3 percentage points.

**Figure 2** shows the proper child safety restraint usage rate by location type in Illinois. McDonald's restaurants had the highest rate of increase (12.9 percentage points) of proper child safety restraint use. Day Care Centers and Shopping Malls had increases in proper child safety restraint use of 8.9 percentage points and 6.4 percentage points respectively. Health Care Centers only had an increase of 0.5 percentage point.

**Figure 3** shows the proper child safety restraint usage rate by vehicle type in Illinois. Vans and pickup trucks had increase of 16.9 percentage points and 13.8 percentage points respectively in the proper use of child restraints. The proper child restraint usage rate in automobiles increased by 7.9 percentage points.

**Figure 4** shows the proper child safety restraint usage rate by driver's gender in Illinois. From 1997 to 2005, males had a higher rate of increase of proper child restraint use (an increase of 11.4 percentage points) than females (an increase of 6.0 percentage points). Although males had a higher rate of increase, females still had higher usage rates.

**Figure 5** shows driver's belt status by correct child safety restraint usage rates across selected years in Illinois. As was expected, the usage rates of child restraints were significantly higher for belted drivers than for unbelted drivers. From 1997 to 2005, there was no change in the proper use of child restraints for belted drivers. On the other hand, there was a 2.5 percentage point decrease in the proper use of child restraints for unbelted drivers. Since seat belt use and child safety seat use are highly correlated, as the population of unbelted drivers decreases, the child safety seat usage rate for this group will decrease as well.

## Table 9 Correct Child Safety Seat Usage Rates in Illinois by Selected Characteristics

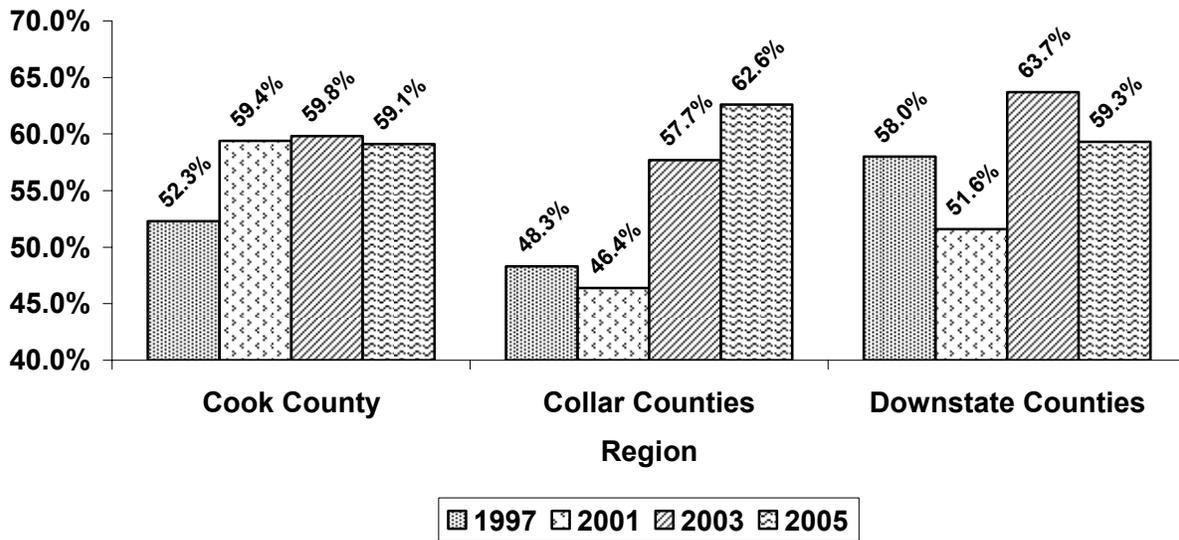
(excludes Incorrect Use)

### Comparison of 1997, 2001, 2003, and 2005

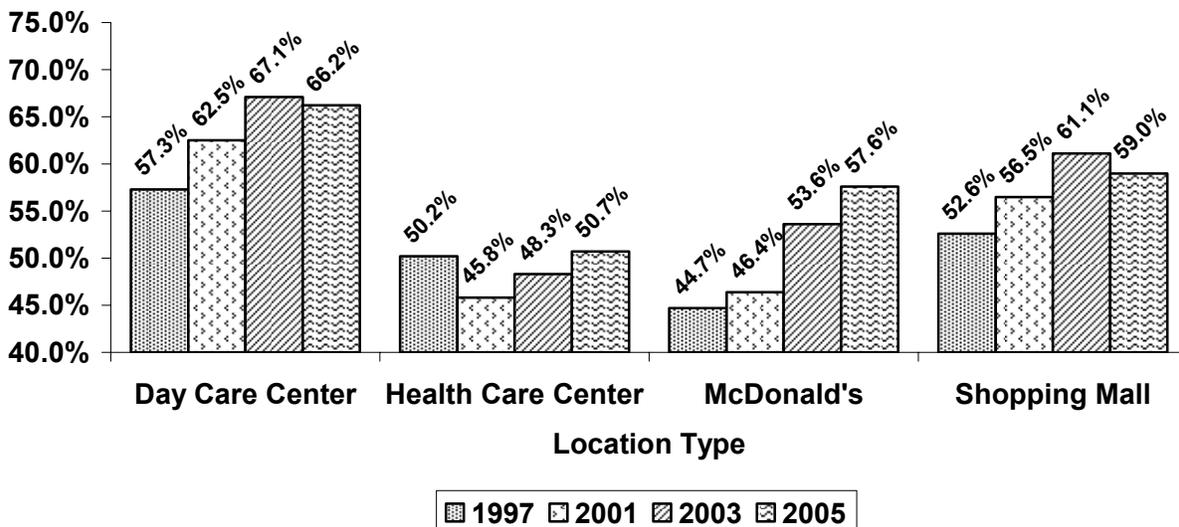
Selected Characteristics	Correct Usage Rate of Restrained Children (excludes Incorrect Use)				
	Usage Rate (1997)	Usage Rate (2001)	Usage Rate (2003)	Usage Rate (2005)	Percent Change (1997-2005)
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>54.8%</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>
<b>Region</b>					
Cook County	52.3%	59.4%	59.8%	59.1%	6.8%
Collar Counties	48.3%	46.4%	57.7%	62.6%	14.3%
Downstate Counties	58.0%	51.6%	63.7%	59.3%	1.3%
<b>Location</b>					
Day Care Center	57.3%	62.5%	67.1%	66.2%	8.9%
Health Center	50.2%	45.8%	48.3%	50.7%	0.5%
McDonald's	44.7%	46.4%	53.6%	57.6%	12.9%
Shopping Mall	52.6%	56.5%	61.1%	59.0%	6.4%
<b>Vehicle Type</b>					
Automobile	51.2%	53.9%	57.6%	59.1%	7.9%
Truck	45.5%	52.7%	52.1%	59.3%	13.8%
Van	58.2%	58.5%	67.7%	75.1%	16.9%
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	47.2%	51.7%	59.8%	58.6%	11.4%
Female	55.1%	56.5%	60.1%	61.1%	6.0%
<b>Driver's Belt Status</b>					
Belted	71.0%	68.2%	71.8%	71.2%	0.2%
Unbelted	28.2%	28.7%	32.9%	25.7%	-2.5%

Note: Incorrect Use = seat facing the wrong way, harness not used, seat not secured, and belt across face

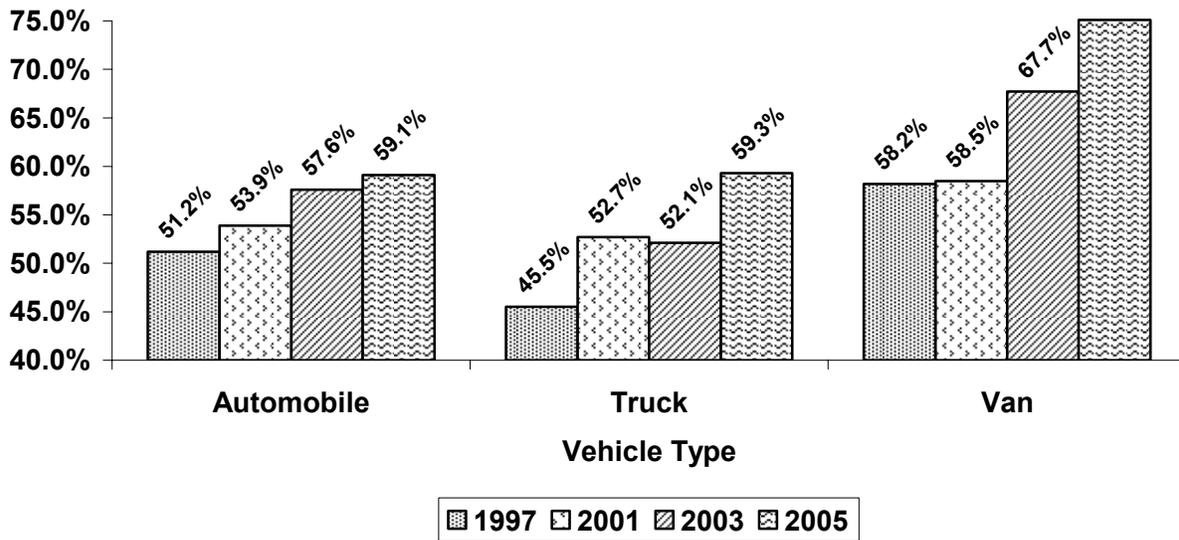
**Figure 1: Proper Child Safety Seat Usage Rates by Region in Illinois Across Selected Years**



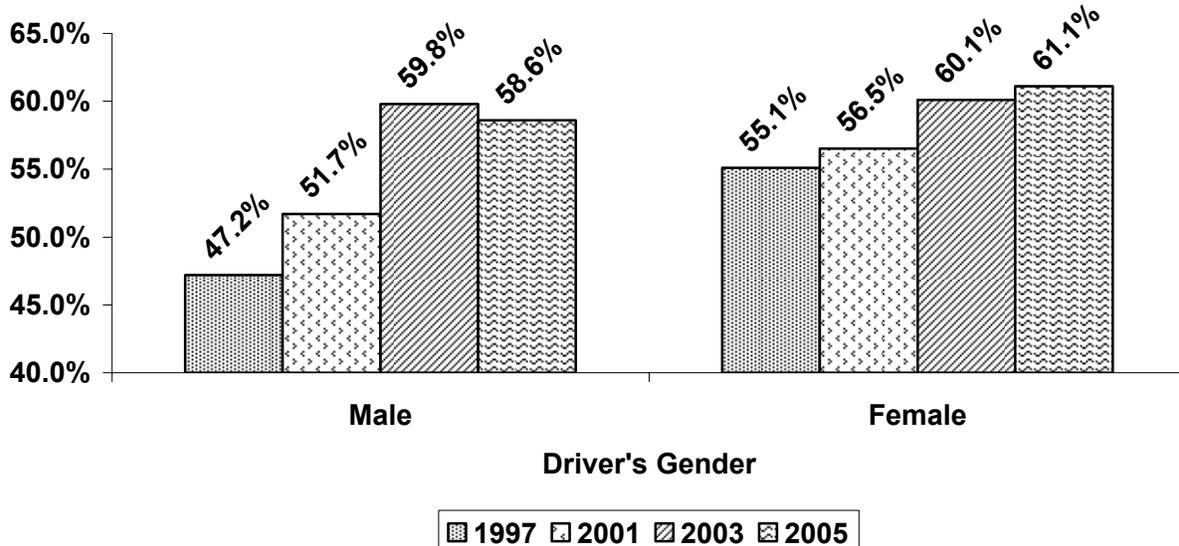
**Figure 2: Proper Child Safety Seat Usage Rates by Location Type in Illinois Across Selected Years**



**Figure 3: Proper Child Safety Seat Usage Rates by Vehicle Type in Illinois Across Selected Years**



**Figure 4: Child Safety Seat Usage Rates by Driver's Gender in Illinois Across Selected Years**



**Figure 5: Child Safety Seat Usage Rates by Driver's Belt Status in Illinois Across Selected Years**

