

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2004 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2004 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 all interstate highways and freeways and a random sample of residential streets within selected areas.

There were 120,664 front seat occupants at 258 locations statewide observed in this survey. The

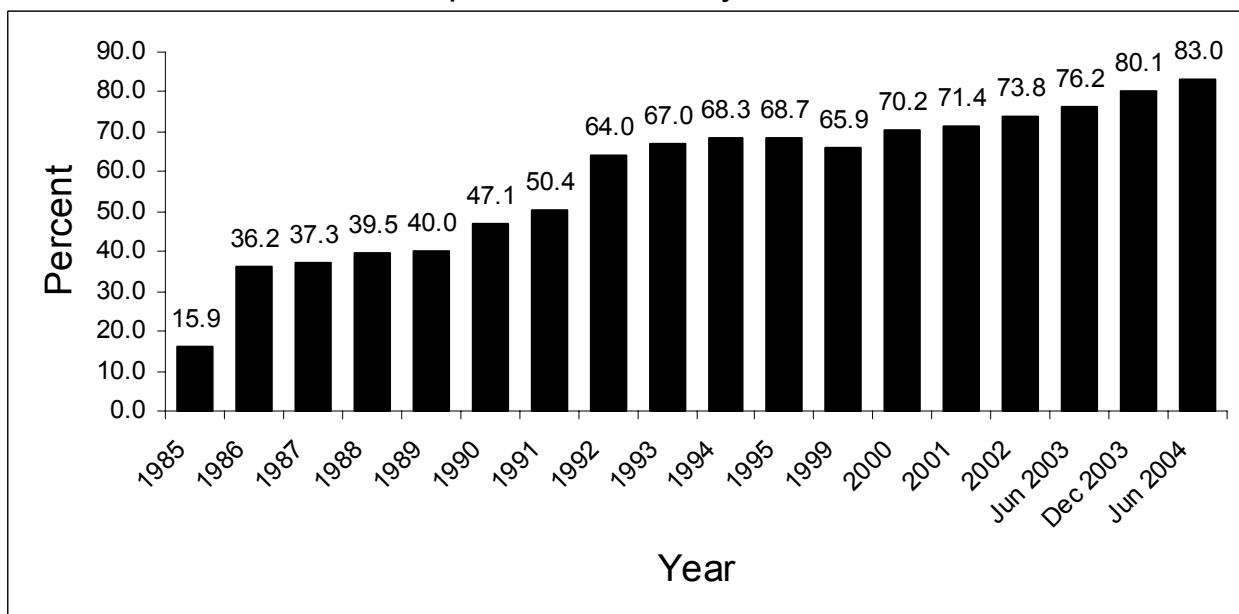
survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), January 1994.

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 2004 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 that time, the usage rate has shown a gradual increase, peaking this year at 83.0 percent. There was an increase of over 67 percentage points since the first survey was conducted in April 1985 (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 258 sites during June 2004 are summarized in **Table 1**. The first column of the table depicts the total number of front seat occupants observed and the second column shows the actual usage rate. 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 types, and a breakdown of weekdays and weekends.

A total of 120,664 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 83.0 percent were wearing safety belts.

The Downstate Counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) had the highest usage rate at 87.6 percent followed by the Collar Counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) at 84.0 percent. Cook County, excluding the City of Chicago, had a usage rate of 80.1 percent, and the City of Chicago had the lowest rate at 76.8 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 91.7 percent followed by U.S. and Illinois marked highways at 82.4 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 79.5 percent.

The usage rate on weekends was higher at 85.5 percent than the 80.7 percent on weekdays.

Table 1 Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois (June 2004)		
Selected Characteristics	Total Observed	Actual Usage Rate
Statewide (258)	120,664	83.0%
Regions		
City of Chicago (46)	22,328	76.8%
Cook County (40)	13,801	80.1%
Collar Counties (118)	57,753	84.0%
Downstate (54)	26,782	87.6%
Road Type		
Residential (190)	68,457	79.5%
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	22,816	82.4%
Interstate Highways (28)	29,391	91.7%
Day of Week		
Weekends (115)	58,229	85.5%
Weekdays (143)	62,435	80.7%

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