

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2014 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2014 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 (NHTSA)'s Uniform Criteria for State Observational Surveys of Seat Belt Use. This plan is fully compliant with the Uniform Criteria and was used for the implementation of Illinois 2014 seat belt survey. The new plan 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.

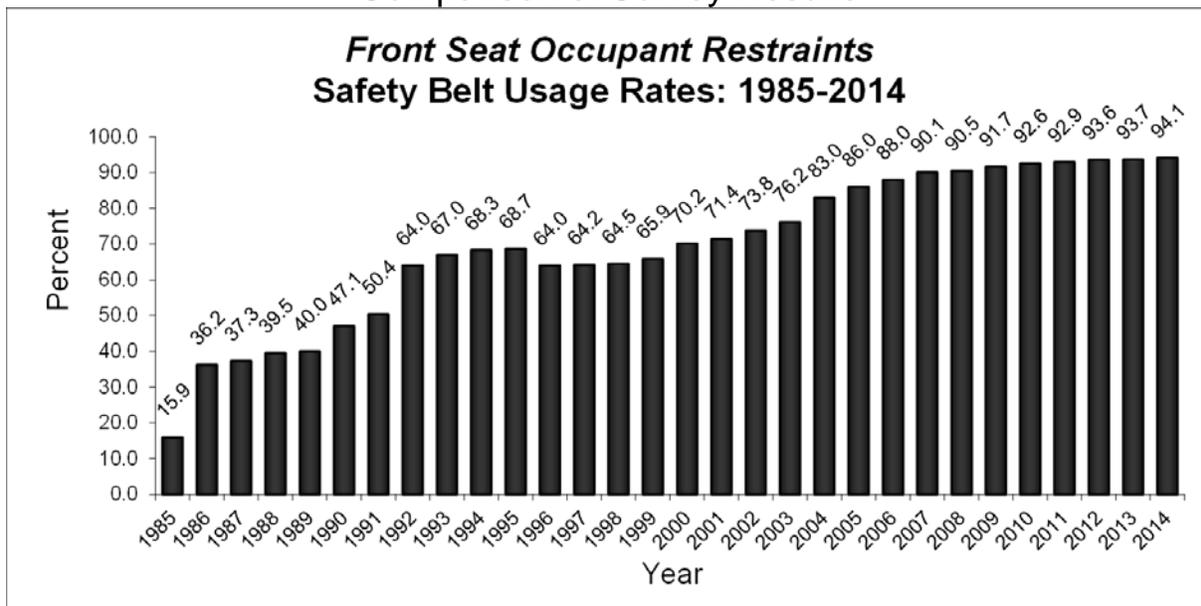
There were 169,319 front seat occupants observed during the June 2014 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to "Seat Belt Use Survey Design for State of Illinois: Sampling, Data Collection and Estimation Plan", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), March, 2012.

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 2014 surveys include pickup trucks, which tend to have lower usage rates.

The baseline (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 78 percentage points. In June 2014, the seat belt usage rate peaked at 94.1 percent (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 288 sites during June 2014 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 169,319 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 94.1 percent were observed wearing seat belts. The seat belt usage rate for drivers was 94.1 percent. The seat belt usage rate for passengers was slightly lower at 93.7 percent.

The downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) had the highest usage rate at 95.1 percent closely followed by Cook County at 94.9 percent. The collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had a seat belt usage rate of 93.6. The city of Chicago had the lowest rate at 91.7 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 95.6 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highways at 93.4 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 90.2 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 94.6 percent, while on the weekdays it was only 92.5 percent.

**Table 1
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2013)**

Selected Characteristics	Total Observed (1)	Actual Usage Rate (2)
Statewide (288)	169,319	94.1%
Occupants		
Drivers	141,026	94.2%
Passengers	28,293	93.7%
Regions		
City of Chicago (35)	24,734	91.4%
Cook County (63)	41,884	95.5%
Collar Counties (120)	68,121	94.0%
Downstate (70)	34,580	96.5%
Road Type		
Residential (144)	46,616	91.6%
U.S./Illinois Highways (84)	56,730	93.4%
Interstate Highways (60)	65,973	95.9%
Day of Week		
Weekends (112)	79,532	94.3%
Weekdays (176)	89,787	93.8%

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