

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2016 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2016 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 2016 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.

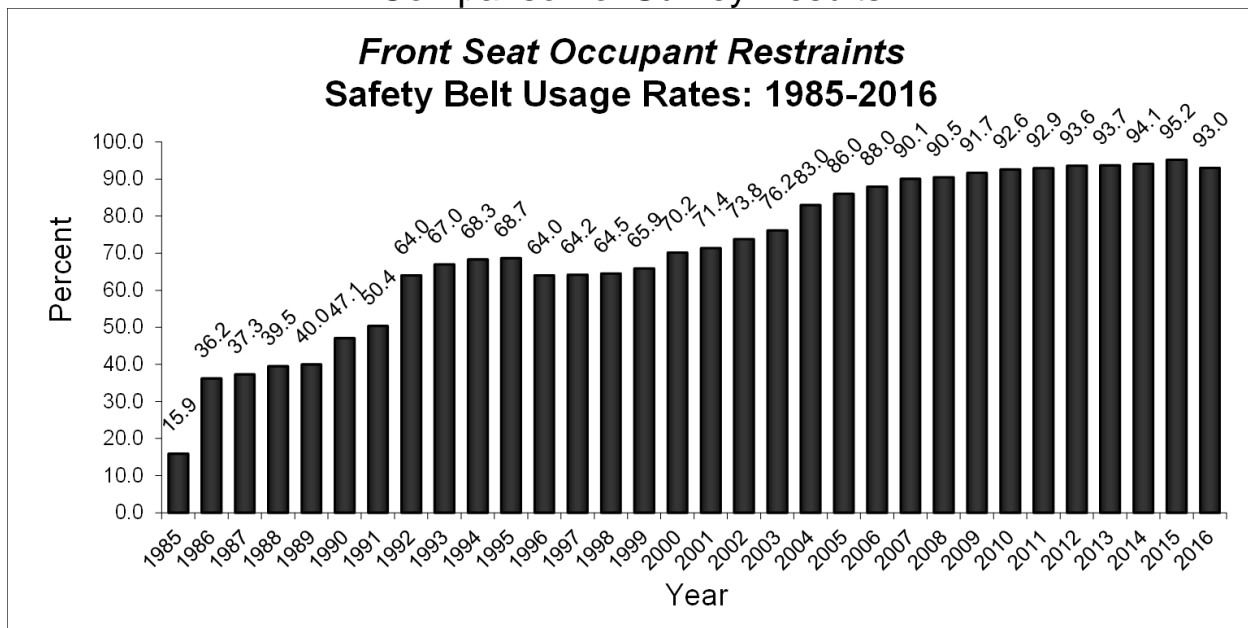
There were 170,367 front seat occupants observed during the June 2016 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to "Seat Belt Use Survey Design for State of Illinois: Sampling, Data Collection and Estimation Plan", Division of Transportation 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 2016 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 80 percentage points. In June 2015, the seat belt usage rate peaked at 95.2 percent, but, in June 2016, it slightly decreased to 93.0 percent (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 288 sites during June 2016 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 170,367 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 93.0 percent were observed wearing seat belts. The seat belt usage rate for drivers was 93.3 percent. The seat belt usage rate for passengers was slightly lower at 91.8 percent.

The downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) had the highest usage rate at 93.8 percent closely followed by the collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) and Cook county at 93.6 percent and 93.0 percent respectively. The city of Chicago had the lowest rate at 87.8 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 93.6 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highways at 92.5 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 91.6 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 93.1 percent, while on the weekdays it was 92.7 percent.

**Table 1
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2016)**

Selected Characteristics	Total Observed (1)	Actual Usage Rate (2)
Statewide (288)	170,367	93.0%
Occupants		
Drivers	143,244	93.3%
Passengers	27,123	91.8%
Regions		
City of Chicago (35)	16,354	87.8%
Cook County (63)	46,032	93.0%
Collar Counties (120)	77,309	93.6%
Downstate (70)	30,672	93.8%
Road Type		
Residential (144)	48,261	91.6%
U.S./Illinois Highways (84)	51,111	92.5%
Interstate Highways (60)	70,995	93.6%
Day of Week		
Weekends (112)	77,675	93.1%
Weekdays (176)	92,692	92.7%

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