

Seat Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2019 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2019 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 2017 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.

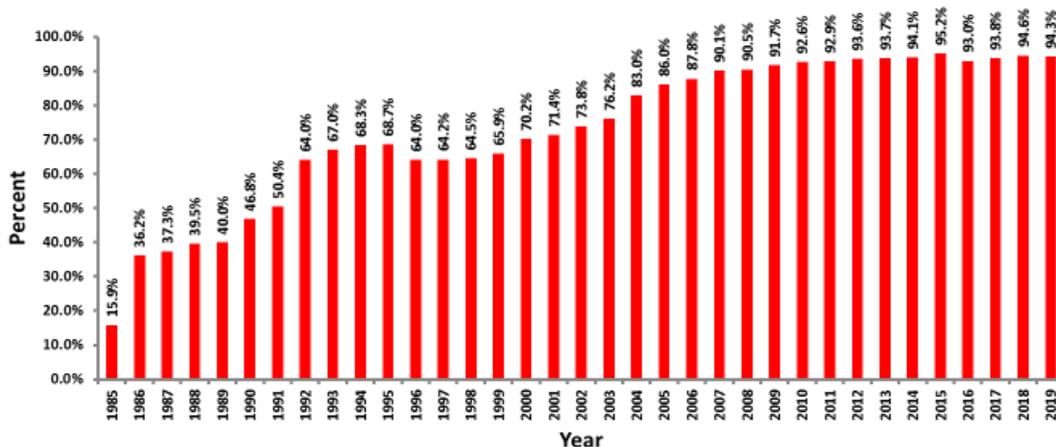
There were 147,159 front seat occupants observed during the June 2019 observational survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to "Seat Belt Use Survey Design for State of Illinois: Sampling, Data Collection and Estimation Plan", Bureau of Safety Programs and Engineering, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), March 2016.

Historical Trends

Illinois' first seat belt survey was conducted in April 1985, prior to the seat 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 seat belts.

On July 3rd, 2003, the primary seat 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



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 seat 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 over 78.4 percentage points. In June 2015, the seat belt usage rate peaked at 95.2 percent, but, in June 2019, it was slightly lower at 94.3 percent (see **Figure 1**).

Summary of Findings

Results of the seat belt survey conducted at 288 sites during June 2019 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 147,159 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 94.3 percent were observed wearing seat belts. The seat belt usage rate for drivers was 94.9 percent. The seat belt usage rate for passengers was slightly lower at 91.3 percent.

Cook County (excluding the city of Chicago) had the highest usage rate at 96.0 percent, followed by the downstate counties (Champaign, Sangamon, Mclean, Vermilion, Rock Island, Madison and St. Clair) at 94.0 percent. The collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, Winnebago, DeKalb, and Will) had a usage rate of 93.5%. The city of Chicago had the lowest safety belt usage rate at 87.6 percent.

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 96.3 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highways at 94.7 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 93.7 percent.

The seat belt usage rate on weekends was 93.0 percent, while on the weekdays it was 95.1 percent.

Table 1
Seat Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2019)

Selected Characteristics	Total Observed (1)	Usage Rate (2)
Statewide (288)	147,159	94.3%
Occupants		
Drivers	121,559	94.9%
Passengers	25,600	91.3%
Regions		
City of Chicago (35)	20,738	87.6%
Cook County (63)	35,506	96.0%
Collar Counties (120)	58,190	93.5%
Downstate (70)	32,725	94.0%
Road Type		
Residential (144)	38,469	93.7%
U.S./Illinois Highways (84)	41,256	94.7%
Interstate Highways (60)	67,434	96.3%
Day of Week		
Weekends (112)	92,822	93.0%
Weekdays (176)	61,022	95.1%

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