

July 2015

Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2015 Observational Survey Results

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Evaluation Unit

The Evaluation Unit within the Division of Transportation 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., Local Alcohol Program and STEP 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 Transportation 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 estimated safety belt usage rates in Illinois using a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2015 on both high volume state highways and low volume local roads and residential streets in Illinois. In addition, the report provides safety belt usage rates by vehicle type (passenger car and pickup truck), region, road type, and day of week.

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 Transportation Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation, 1340 North 9th St., Springfield, Illinois 62702.

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Survey Design

The recent seat belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2015 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 2015 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 outboard passengers) of passenger cars (cars, sport utility vehicles, taxis, and 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 155,175 front seat occupants observed during the June 2015 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

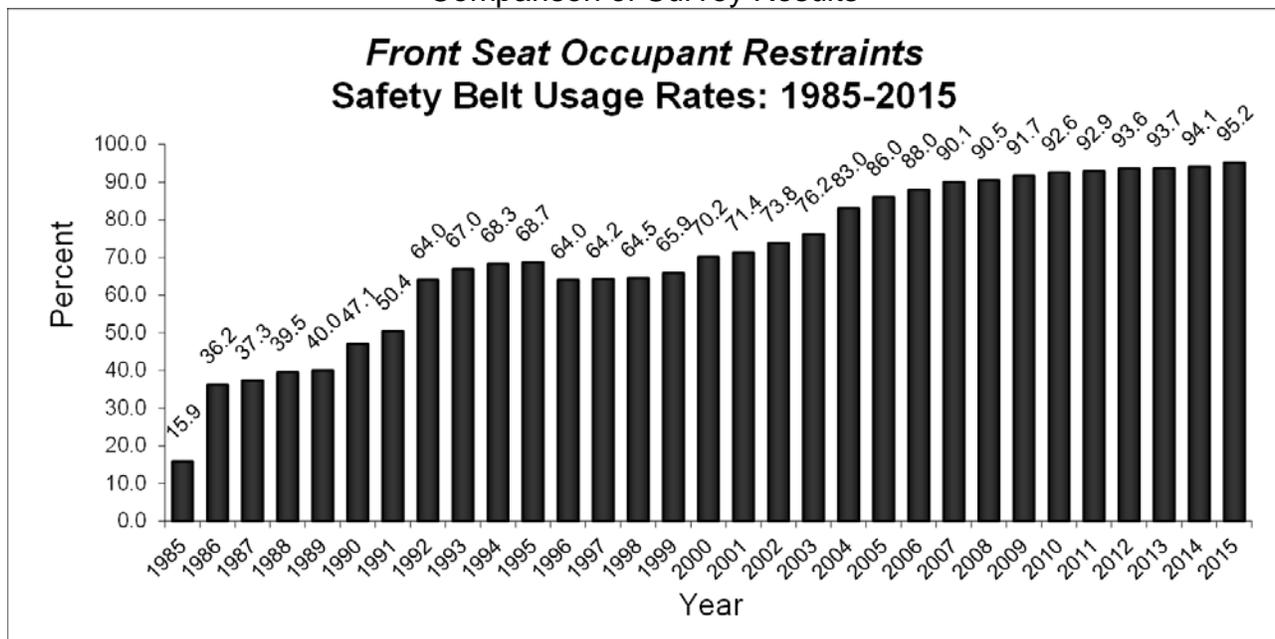
Currently the State of Illinois has a primary belt law, which became effective on July 3rd, 2003 after the bill was signed into the law. Under the primary belt law in Illinois, police officers can stop vehicles in which occupants fail to buckle up and issue citations.

The first Illinois safety belt law was passed in January 1985 and became effective July 1st, 1985. Originally, the safety belt law specified primary enforcement for front seat occupants of vehicles. Under this law, motor vehicle were required to be equipped with safety belts with the exception of those people frequently leaving their vehicles for deliveries if speed between stops was no more

than 15 mph, medical excuses, rural letter carriers, vehicles operating in reverse, and vehicles manufactured before 1965. In 1987, the original law was amended and became effective in January 1988 as a secondary enforcement law until July 3rd, 2003.

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 baseline from which to measure the success of Illinois' efforts to educate citizens about the benefits of using safety belts. 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 first safety belt law became effective, the observed usage rate increased to 36.2 percent. Since that time, the usage rate has gradually increased, peaking in June 2015 at a level of 95.2 percent. The safety belt usage rate in Illinois has increased almost 80 percentage points since the first survey was conducted in April 1985 (see Figure 1). It should be noted that the 1998 through 2015 safety belt surveys include pickup truck drivers and passengers who tend to have significantly lower usage rates than the front seat occupants of passenger cars.

Figure 1
Front Seat Occupant Restraint Usage Rate
 Comparison of Survey Results



Note: 1998 through 2015 safety belt usage rates include pickup truck drivers and passengers.

Summary of Findings

Tables 1 shows results of the safety belt survey conducted at 288 sites during June 2015. Columns 1, 3 and 5 show the total number of observations for drivers, passengers and totals (drivers and passengers). Columns 2, 4 and 6 represent the estimated safety belt usage rates for drivers, passengers, and totals (drivers and passengers). The categories listed down the left side of the table indicate where the surveys were conducted by region of the state (with the number of sites in each region in parentheses), by road type, and by day of week. A total of 155,175 front seat occupants were observed during the survey. By looking at these tables, the safety usage rate patterns across selected categories for drivers are similar to that for passengers.

Table 1 shows safety belt use for combined passenger cars and pickup trucks. Of the total of 155,175 front seat occupants observed, more than 95 percent were wearing safety belts. The downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St. Clair) had the highest usage rate at 97.3 percent closely followed by Cook County at 96.3 percent. The collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had a usage rate of 96.2 percent, while the city of Chicago had the lowest usage rate at 90.4 percent. Based on Road Type, Interstate highway travelers had the highest usage rate at 98.0 percent followed by U.S./Illinois Highway travelers at 92.5 percent. Motorists traveling on residential streets had the lowest usage rate at 92.4 percent. The usage rate on weekends was 95.8 percent, while on the weekdays it was slightly lower at 93.8 percent.

Table 2 and **Figure 2** compare safety belt usage rates from June 2014 to June 2015 and show percent changes among front seat occupants of passenger cars and pickup trucks.

Table 4 and **Figure 2** show that the overall safety belt usage rate among drivers and front seat passengers increased by 1.1 percentage point from June 2014 to June 2015. The collar counties had the highest increase in safety belt use showing an increase of 2.2 percentage points from 2014 to 2015. Both Cook County and the downstate counties had increase of 0.8 percentage points in safety belt use from 2014 to 2015. On the other hand, the city of Chicago had a slight decrease of 1.0 percentage point in safety belt use. Based on road type, safety belt use on Interstate highways and residential roads increased by 2.1 and 0.8 percentage points, respectively. From 2014 to 2015, the safety belt use rate on U.S./Illinois Highways decreased by 0.9 percentage point. Based on day of the week, safety belt use increased by 1.5 percentage points on the weekends. On the weekdays, from 2014 to 2015, the safety belt usage rate did not change.

Table 1
Overall Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2015)

	Drivers		Passengers		Total	
	Total Observed	Estimated Usage Rate	Total Observed	Estimated Usage Rate	Total Observed	Estimated Usage Rate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Statewide (288)	130,398	94.9%	24,777	96.2%	155,175	95.2%
Regions						
City of Chicago (35)	17,941	89.7%	3,830	92.7%	21,771	90.4%
Cook County (63)	35,983	96.4%	5,817	95.9%	41,800	96.3%
Collar Counties (120)	55,898	95.8%	9,667	97.4%	65,565	96.2%
Downstate (70)	20,576	97.3%	5,463	97.3%	26,039	97.3%
Road Type						
Residential (144)	37,807	92.9%	8,064	89.8%	45,871	92.4%
U.S./Illinois Highways (84)	44,688	92.2%	7,359	94.0%	52,047	92.5%
Interstate Highways (60)	47,903	97.9%	9,354	98.3%	57,257	98.0%
Day of Week						
Weekends (112)	57,736	95.3%	13,989	97.3%	71,725	95.8%
Weekdays (176)	72,662	94.2%	10,788	91.3%	83,450	93.8%

Note: Pickup trucks and passenger cars (cars, sport utility vehicles, taxicabs and vans) were included in this table.

**Table 2
Overall Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(Comparison of June 2014 and June 2015)**

	Drivers			Passengers			Total		
	Usage Rate (2014)	Usage Rate (2015)	Percent Change	Usage Rate (2014)	Usage Rate (2015)	Percent Change	Usage Rate (2014)	Usage Rate (2015)	Percent Change
Statewide (288)	94.2%	94.9%	0.7%	93.7%	96.2%	0.3%	94.1%	95.2%	1.1%
Regions									
City of Chicago (35)	91.1%	89.7%	-1.4%	92.2%	92.7%	0.5%	91.4%	90.4%	-1.0%
Cook County (63)	95.8%	96.4%	0.6%	93.8%	95.9%	2.1%	95.5%	96.3%	0.8%
Collar Counties (120)	94.1%	95.8%	1.7%	93.3%	97.4%	4.1%	94.0%	96.2%	2.2%
Downstate (70)	96.5%	97.3%	0.8%	96.5%	97.3%	0.8%	96.5%	97.3%	0.8%
Road Type									
Residential (144)	92.1%	92.9%	0.8%	89.3%	89.8%	0.5%	91.6%	92.4%	0.8%
U.S./Illinois Highways (84)	93.3%	92.2%	-1.1%	93.6%	94.0%	0.4%	93.4%	92.5%	-0.9%
Interstate Highways (60)	96.1%	97.9%	1.8%	95.1%	98.3%	3.2%	95.9%	98.0%	2.1%
Day of Week									
Weekends (112)	94.2%	95.3%	1.1%	94.7%	97.3%	2.6%	94.3%	95.8%	1.5%
Weekdays (176)	94.2%	94.2%	0.0%	91.2%	91.3%	0.1%	93.8%	93.8%	0.0%

Note: Pickup trucks and passenger cars (cars, sport utility vehicles, taxicabs and vans) were included in this table.

Figure 2
Overall Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois

