National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Volume 2

Safety Belt Report

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16. Abstract

The 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey was the fifth in a series of biennial national telephone surveys on occupant protection issues conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Data collection was conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc., a national survey research organization. The survey used two questionnaires, each administered to a randomly selected national sample of about 6,000 persons age 16 or older. Interviewing began January 8, 2003 and ended March 30, 2003. This report presents the survey findings pertaining to safety belts. Detailed information on the survey methodology, as well as copies of the questionnaires, are contained in a separate NHTSA report ("2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Volume 1. Methodology Report").

The passenger car remains the most common primary vehicle driven by adults (59%), although the percentage has continued to drop as SUVs (13%) have increased in frequency. The predominant type of safety belt in the front seat of vehicles is the one-piece manual lap and shoulder system (80%). Drivers increasingly are reporting that they have adjustable shoulder belts (52%). Eighty-four percent of drivers said they wore their safety belt "all of the time" while driving, but 7% of those immediately said that they did not use a safety belt while driving at least once in the past day or week. Reported belt use traditionally is higher than observed belt use, although the demographic patterns tend to be the same. Reported safety belt use was lower among males, drivers age 16-24, drivers in rural areas, pickup truck drivers, drivers who engage in other risky driving behaviors, and drivers in secondary enforcement States. Drivers most often cited injury avoidance as their most important reason for using safety belts (66%). Part-time belt users substantially outnumbered those who reported never wearing safety belts, and their primary reasons for non-use were driving just a short distance and forgetting. Eighty-eight percent of the public favored laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear safety belts, 64% favored standard enforcement and 65% favored fines for drivers who do not wear safety belts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey (MVOSS) was the fifth in a series of biennial national telephone surveys on occupant protection issues conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Data collection was conducted by the firm Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI), a national survey research organization. The survey employed two questionnaires, each administered to a randomly selected national sample of approximately 6,000 persons age 16 and older (with younger ages oversampled). Interviewing began January 8, 2003 and ended March 30, 2003.

This report presents the survey findings pertaining to safety belts. The data are weighted to yield national estimates. Readers are cautioned that some subgroup analyses (indicated in the body of the report) are based on a small number of cases. Technical information on confidence intervals is presented in Appendix A so that readers may judge the precision of sample estimates. A full description of the methodology, and the questionnaires, is presented in a separate report.

Vehicle Characteristics

- **Motor Vehicle Use.** About 89% of persons age 16 and older drive a motor vehicle. Certain demographic groups had far higher percentages of non-drivers than the national average, such as Blacks[1] (22%), Hispanics (28%), teenagers (22%), and persons in low-income households (28% in households under $15,000).
- **Vehicle Type**. Passenger cars continued to drop as a percentage of the vehicle fleet, although they still accounted for 59% of all primary vehicles driven (versus 71% in 1994). Pickup trucks (16%), SUVs (13%), and vans/minivans (10%) followed next in frequency.

Safety Belt Use

- **Type Of Belt**. Four-fifths (80%) of primary vehicles had one-piece manual lap and shoulder belts in the front seat. In vehicles having a shoulder belt, 52% had adjustable shoulder belts. While some of the persons with adjustable belts (31%) said that they had never tried to adjust their adjustable shoulder belt, those who did usually said that they were able to make the belt more comfortable (93%).
- **Reported Belt Use**. When asked how often they used their lap and shoulder safety belts while driving, more than four-fifths (84%) of drivers said “all of the time”. However, on a follow-up question, 7% of these “all of the time” users immediately stated that they had not worn their safety belt while driving at some time during the past day or week. Nine percent of drivers said they used their safety belt “most of the time” while driving. Seventy-one percent of these “most of

[1] The category used on the racial background question since the 1994 baseline survey is “Black or African American”.

the time" users said on the follow-up question that they had not worn their safety belt while driving at some time during the past day or week.

- **Reported Belt Use By Safety Belt System.** Among those safety belt systems not having an automatic component, reported "all of the time" use was lowest among lap only systems (64%) and highest among one-piece lap and shoulder systems (84%). Among two-piece belt systems where the shoulder belt was always being used, drivers were much more likely to use their lap belt "all of the time" if the shoulder belt was manual (96%) rather than automatic (66%).
- **Reported Belt Use By Demographics.** Reported "all of the time" use by drivers tended to be lower among males (79%), drivers ages 16-24 (79%), pickup truck drivers (71%), and drivers in rural areas (77%).
- **Safety Belt Use On The Job.** About one-third of drivers (34%) said they drove a motor vehicle at least sometimes as part of a job or business. Most drove as part of a job or business almost every day (57%) or a few days a week (24%). A majority of these drivers (53%) reported that their company had a policy requiring safety belt use when driving on the job. Drivers were more likely to report higher safety belt use on the job compared to personal driving if they thought their company had a safety belt policy (25% versus 16%). For driving in general (among drivers who at least on occasion drove on the job), the percentage of drivers who reported wearing safety belts "all of the time" was higher among those who thought their company had a safety belt policy than those who did not (83% versus 76%).
- **Safety Belt Use By Seating Position.** Reported safety belt use was lower in the back passenger seating positions compared to the driver and front passenger seating positions. Whereas more than four-fifths of respondents said they always wore their safety belt when driving (84%) or riding as a passenger in the front seat (83%), just over half (53%) said they always wore the belt when riding as a passenger in the back seat.

Reasons For Safety Belt Use And Non-Use

- **Reasons For Use.** Injury avoidance was the most frequent reason given by drivers for wearing safety belts regardless of how often they wore their safety belts. However, infrequent safety belt users (73%) gave this as a reason less often than frequent safety belt users (96%).
- **Most Important Reason For Use.** When drivers were asked for the most important reason for wearing safety belts, about two-thirds (66%) said it was injury avoidance. Infrequent users of safety belts (42%) were less likely than frequent users (67%) to report injury avoidance as their primary reason for safety belt use.
- **Reasons For Non-Use.** Among drivers who at least on occasion did not use their safety belt, the most frequent reasons for non-use were that they were only driving a short distance (56%), they forgot (55%), they were in a rush (40%), or they found the belt uncomfortable (32%).

- **Most Important Reason For Non-Use**. The most important reasons given by drivers for not wearing safety belts were usually that they forgot (25%) or they were driving just a short distance (23%). These two reasons were characteristic of part-time safety belt users, who substantially outnumbered drivers who rarely or never wore their safety belts. The primary reasons for non-use among the rare/never users tended to revolve around discomfort, concerns about safety belts being dangerous, personal freedom, and absence of habit.
- **Annoyances From Safety Belts.** All drivers, whether or not they wore safety belts regularly, were asked if there was anything they particularly disliked or found annoying about wearing them. One-third (33%) answered "yes," with females (40%) more likely to respond affirmatively than males (26%). The most common complaint involved pressure or pain on parts of the body (52%). Females who were annoyed by safety belts particularly expressed this type of discomfort (61%), especially being choked by the safety belt (48%).

Attitudes About The Utility Of Safety Belts, Risk Perception, And Fatalism

- **Would Want Safety Belt On In Crash.** The vast majority of the public (95%) age 16 and older either strongly (88%) or somewhat (7%) agreed with the statement "If I were in an accident, I would want to have my seat belt on." As reported safety belt use increased, so did agreement with the statement.
- **Perceived Harm From Safety Belts.** More than one-third of the public (35%) either strongly (14%) or somewhat (21%) agreed with the statement "Seat belts are just as likely to harm you as help you." As reported safety belt use decreased, agreement with the statement increased.
- **Impact On Medical Insurance Costs.** About two-thirds of the public (65%) either strongly (41%) or somewhat (24%) agreed that "Medical insurance costs would be lower if more people wore seat belts." Agreement was highest among those who used their safety belt "all of the time" (67%).
- **Anxiety From Safety Belts.** Relatively few people (15%) agreed strongly (9%) or somewhat (5%) that "Putting on a seat belt makes me worry more about being in an accident." Agreement with this statement was expressed more often by persons who only sometimes (19%) or rarely/never (26%) wore their safety belt.
- **Accidents Happen Close To Home.** Four-in-five persons (80%) either strongly (57%) or somewhat (23%) agreed that "Most motor vehicle accidents happen within five miles of home." Agreement with this statement was higher among persons who wore their safety belt all (82%) or most (83%) of the time than those who rarely or never wore it (76%).
- **Seriousness Of Crashes Close To Home.** Relatively few people (16%) strongly (8%) or somewhat (8%) agreed "An accident close to home is usually not as serious as an accident farther away."
- **Pressure From Group Norms.** About one-in-five persons (19%) either strongly (13%) or somewhat (6%) agreed that "I would feel self-conscious around my friends if I wore a seat belt and they did not." Persons who wore their safety belt

only some of the time (12%) or rarely/never (12%) were less likely to agree with this statement than more frequent safety belt users.

- **Parental Influence On Safety Belt Use.** Among persons ages 16-24, 69% either strongly (51%) or somewhat (18%) agreed that "I have a habit of wearing a seat belt because my parents insisted I wear them when I was a child." The percentage who agreed dropped to 44% among persons ages 25-34, and 26% among those ages 35-44, reflecting the lower belt use rates during their childhood years for these age cohorts.
- **Fatalism And Safety Belt Use.** The fatalistic belief that wearing safety belts did not matter because "If it is your time to die, you'll die" was more prevalent among drivers who reported less frequent safety belt usage: 23% among "all of the time" users, 29% among "most of the time" users, 47% among "some of the time" users, and 59% among those who rarely or never wore safety belts.
- **Differences In Attitude By Age.** About one-half (47%) of 16-20 year-olds agreed that safety belts were as likely to harm as to help, compared to 34% of those 21 to 64 and 31% of those 65 and older. The youngest age group also was more likely to agree that an accident close to home was usually not as serious (30%), that putting on a safety belt makes them worry more about being in an accident (27%), that they would feel self-conscious if they were going against the group norm in wearing safety belts (30%), and that medical insurance costs would decrease if more people wore safety belts (73%).
- **Differences In Attitudes By Race/Ethnicity.** Blacks and Hispanics differed markedly from Whites and non-Hispanics on perceived risk and the utility of safety belts. Whereas less than one-third of Whites (31%) and non-Hispanics (33%) agreed that safety belts were as likely to harm as help, about one-half of Blacks (48%) and Hispanics (52%) agreed. Blacks and Hispanics also were more likely than Whites and non-Hispanics to agree that putting on a safety belt made them worry more about being in a crash, or that a crash close to home would not be as serious as one farther away. Hispanics (36%) and Blacks (26%) were more likely than the other groups to say they would feel self-conscious about using safety belts if their friends did not. Blacks (39%) and Hispanics (37%) were more likely than Whites (23%) and non-Hispanics (25%) to agree with the fatalistic statement that wearing a safety belt did not matter because if it was your time to die, you'll die.
- **Differences In Attitudes By Education.** Persons who had more years of formal schooling tended to be less fatalistic, less ambivalent about the injury reduction benefits of safety belts, and less self-conscious about going against group norms of non-use.

Attitudes, Knowledge, And Experience With Safety Belt Laws And Their Enforcement

- **Support For Front Seat Safety Belt Laws.** The vast majority of the public (88%) favored safety belt laws for front seat occupants either "a lot" (69%) or "some" (18%). More females (92%) than males (82%) voiced support for front seat safety belt laws. Blacks (92%) and Hispanics (93%) were more likely to express support than Whites (86%) and non-Hispanics (87%).
- **Support For Back Seat Safety Belt Laws.** Among persons who supported front seat safety belt laws, 80% also supported applying safety belt laws to back seat adult passengers. Of the total population age 16 and older, 70% supported laws for adults in both the front and back seats.
- **Support For Fines/Points.** Almost two-thirds (65%) of the population age 16 and older supported fines for drivers who did not wear safety belts. About half that many (31%) supported points against the license as a penalty. Among persons who supported fines, 40% favored a fine under $50 (or no fine at all) if it was a first time violation. For repeat violations, 13% supported fines under $50 while 48% favored fines of $100 or more.
- **Knowledge Of Who Is Covered By The Law.** Almost everyone (94%) believed his/her State had a law requiring safety belt use. They most often thought the law covered drivers (98%), children in the front (93%), and adult passengers in the front (94%). Many thought the law in their State also covered children in the back (86%). Fewer than half (48%) assumed that adults were required to wear safety belts in the back seat.
- **Awareness Of (Standard/Secondary) Enforcement Provisions In Their State.** Safety belt laws contain either standard enforcement provisions (i.e., law enforcement officers can stop a vehicle on the basis of observing a safety belt violation) or secondary enforcement provisions (i.e., some other violation must be observed before stopping a vehicle). At the time of the survey, 18 States plus the District of Columbia had standard enforcement laws, 31 States had secondary enforcement laws, and 1 State did not have a safety belt law applicable to adults. Among those who believed their State had a safety belt law (94%), 66% thought the law permitted standard enforcement. About three-fourths (77%) of the total population in standard enforcement States believed their State had a safety belt law that included standard enforcement provisions. In secondary enforcement States, there were more persons who believed their State law had standard enforcement provisions (46%) than thought it had secondary enforcement provisions (31%).
- **Enforcement Provisions And Reported Safety Belt Use.** Drivers were more likely to report that they wore their safety belt "all of the time" while driving if they resided in States having standard enforcement provisions (89%), as opposed to secondary enforcement provisions (81%). The difference in "all of the time" use was similar when comparing drivers who <u>believed</u> their State safety belt law permitted standard enforcement (86%) to those who <u>believed</u> their State law called for secondary enforcement (80%).

- **Support For Standard Enforcement.** Overall, 64% of the population believed that police should be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observed a safety belt violation when no other traffic laws were being broken, compared to 61% in 2000. Support was greater among females (68%), Blacks (67%), and Hispanics (74%). As expected, support was higher in standard enforcement States (71%). But even in secondary enforcement States, the majority (56%) favored standard enforcement.
- **Stopped By Police In Past Year For Traffic Related Reason.** About one-in-six drivers (17%) said they had been stopped by police for a traffic-related reason in the past year, more often males (20%) than females (14%). Traffic-related stops for the general population of drivers peaked at ages 21-24 (32%), and then declined across subsequent age groups. Drivers usually said they were wearing safety belts when stopped (86%). More than half (59%) of all drivers stopped by the police received some type of ticket.
- **Previously Received A Ticket/Warning For A Safety Belt Violation.** About 13% of the population age 16 and older had received a ticket and/or warning some time in the past for violating safety belt laws (7% had received a ticket only, 2% had received both a ticket and a warning, and 4% had received only a warning). In States with standard enforcement provisions, 14% had received a ticket and/or warning, compared to 12% in secondary enforcement States. When asked if their frequency of safety belt use had changed after receiving the safety belt ticket or warning, 58% said they started using their safety belt more often. However, the current level of belt use reported by drivers who had received a ticket or warning was still well below that of drivers who had never received either.
- **Perceived Risk Of Personally Being Ticketed.** Almost half (46%) of drivers considered it very (21%) or somewhat (25%) likely that they would receive a ticket if they did not wear their safety belt at all while driving over the next six months. The perceived risk of being ticketed was higher among drivers in standard enforcement States, and higher among drivers who tended to wear their safety belt more often. Among demographic groups, Hispanics (64%) and Blacks (57%) were more likely than others to perceive themselves at risk of being ticketed.
- **Perceived Emphasis On Ticketing For Safety Belt Violations By Local Police.** The public was more likely to agree (42%) than disagree (37%) with the statement "Police in my community generally do not bother to write tickets for seat belt violations." Many people (21%) said they did not know. Agreement that police don't bother to write tickets was more likely in secondary enforcement States (47%) than standard enforcement States (38%), and more likely among infrequent than frequent safety belt users.
- **Preferred Level Of Enforcement Activity.** When asked to rate on a 10-point scale how strictly they believed the police should enforce safety belt laws, the public's response was mixed. They most often picked a value of "10" (27%) meaning "Police should give tickets at every opportunity," although responses also clustered at the middle and low end of the scale. The average score was

6.3, but higher among females (6.6) than males (5.9), Blacks (6.5) than Whites (6.1), and Hispanics (7.2) than non-Hispanics (6.1).

Comparison To Prior Year Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Surveys

- **General Stability In Findings.** In many areas, the 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey found circumstances essentially unchanged from its predecessors:
  - The percentage of drivers who drive on the job (34%) has remained stable since 1994 (34%-36%).
  - In 2003, 7% of drivers who said they wear safety belts "all of the time" also said that they did not wear safety belts while driving in the past day or week. This is consistent with what was obtained in the previous years (8% to 10%).
  - About two-thirds of drivers (66% in 2003, 64%-68% in earlier years) continued to point to injury avoidance as their most important reason for wearing safety belts.
  - Forgetting (25%) and driving only a short distance (23%) continued as the most important reasons for non-use of safety belts, with similar percentages to previous years.
  - Persons who said they rarely or never wore their safety belts continued to be substantially outnumbered by part-time safety belt users (i.e., persons who reported wearing safety belts more often than rarely, but also admitting some non-use). As in previous years, the survey found reasons for non-use to differ between part-time users and rare/never users, with "forgetting" and "only driving a short distance" more characteristic of part-time users while rare/never users tended to refer to "discomfort" and "other" reasons (e.g., personal freedom issues, perceived dangers from belts, lack of habit).
  - There has been little change in attitudes concerning the utility of safety belts, and associated perceptions of risk, since those questions were introduced in 1998.
  - Since 1994, more than 80% of the public has favored safety belt laws that apply to the front seat, and about two-thirds has favored laws that also apply to the back seat. Support for fines has ranged from 60% to 65%, while support for points as a sanction has been about 30%.
  - The percentage of the population aware that their State has a safety belt law remained unchanged since 1994 at 94%.
- **Changing Equipment.** The 2003 survey detected a continuation of change in the vehicle fleet and restraint systems used:
  - Among drivers' primary vehicles, passenger cars continued to decrease as a proportion of the vehicle fleet (71% in 1994; 59% in 2003) while SUVs increased (3% in 1994; 13% in 2003).
  - There was a small but continued increase in one-piece manual lap and shoulder systems in the front seat of drivers' primary vehicles (70% in 1994; 80% in 2003), with this being by far the predominant restraint system.

- Adjustable shoulder belts continued their penetration of the vehicle fleet (36% in 1996; 52% in 2003).

- **Increasing Use Of Safety Belts.** There has been a steady rise in reported use of safety belts:
  - The percentage of drivers who reported wearing their safety belt "all of the time" when they drive has increased from 74% in 1994 to 76% in 1996 to 79% in 1998 to 83% in 2000 to 84% in 2003.
  - "All of the time" safety belt use by front seat passengers increased from 73% in 1996 to 84% in 2003.
  - Reported "all of the time" safety belt use in the back seat also increased, rising from 37% in 1996 to 53% in 2003.
  - The percentage of drivers reporting that there is something they dislike or find annoying about their safety belt has declined by a percentage point or two with each subsequent survey, from 40% in 1994 to 33% in 2003.
- **Increasing Acceptance Of Standard Enforcement.** The number of States with safety belts laws that contain provisions permitting standard enforcement has increased substantially since the survey was first administered, reaching 18 at the time of the 2003 survey. Consistent with that increase:
  - The percentage of the population who believe their State law permits standard enforcement has steadily increased, reaching 66% in 2003 from 49% in 1994.
  - Support for standard enforcement has also steadily increased, from 52% in 1996 (when the question was first asked) to 64% in 2003.
- **Greater Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed.** There were continuing trends in the implications that persons saw for themselves personally with respect to enforcement:
  - Since 1996, the percentage of drivers who considered it somewhat or very likely that they would be ticketed if they did not wear their safety belt at all while driving over the next six months has increased from 33% in 1996 to 39% in 1998 to 42% in 2000 to 46% in 2003.
  - The percentage of the population of drivers who believed their likely reaction to receiving a ticket would be that they deserved it, rather than that they did not deserve it, has increased by 1 to 3 percentage points with each subsequent survey, reaching 71% in 2003.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey is conducted biennially for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). It is a national telephone survey composed of two questionnaires, each administered to several thousand randomly selected persons age 16 and older. The Version 1 Questionnaire emphasizes safety belt issues while Version 2 emphasizes child restraint issues. The questionnaires also contain smaller modules addressing such areas as air bags, emergency medical services, and crash injury experience. For the 2003 survey, each questionnaire was administered to approximately 6,000 individuals.

NHTSA conducted the first Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey in 1994. Subsequent versions of the survey have included modest revisions to reflect changes in information needs. Thus, the 2003 survey contained numerous items from the earlier surveys allowing the agency to monitor change over time in knowledge, attitudes, and (reported) behavior related to motor vehicle occupant safety. The 2003 survey also included new questions dealing with such areas as wireless phone use while driving, inspection stations for child restraints, and new LATCH and tether child car seat attachments.

The following report presents findings from the 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey pertaining to safety belts. Specifically, it explores the following areas: 1) 2003 safety belt use; 2) reasons for safety belt use and non-use; 3) attitudes concerning the utility of safety belts, and 4) attitudes, knowledge, and experience with safety belt laws and their enforcement. A fifth section examines trends between 1994 and 2003 on selected safety belt issues.

Methodology

The 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey was conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI), a national survey research organization. SRBI conducted a total of 12,377 telephone interviews among a national population sample. To reduce the burden on respondents, the survey employed two questionnaires. A total of 6,180 interviews were completed with Version 1 and 6,197 interviews were completed with Version 2. Although some questions appeared in both versions (e.g., demographics, crash injury experience, safety belt use), each questionnaire had its own set of distinct topics. Each sample was composed of approximately 6,000 persons age 16 and older, including oversamples of persons age 16-39. The procedures used in the survey yielded national estimates of the target population within specified limits of expected sampling variability, from which valid generalizations can be made to the general public.

The survey was conducted from January 8, 2003 to March 30, 2003. For a complete description of the methodology and sample disposition, including computation of weights, refer to the 2003 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, Volume I. Methodology Report. The report includes English and Spanish language versions of the questionnaires.

The percentages presented in this report are weighted to reflect accurately the national population age 16 and older. Unweighted sample sizes ("N"s) are included so that readers know the exact number of respondents answering a given question, allowing them to estimate sampling precision (see Appendix A for related technical information).

Percentages for some items may not add to 100 percent due to rounding, or because the question allowed for more than one response. In addition, the number of cases involved in subgroup analyses may not sum to the grand total who responded to the primary questionnaire item being analyzed. Reasons for this include some form of nonresponse on the grouping variable (e.g., "Don't Know" or "Refused"), or use of only selected subgroups in the analysis. Moreover, if one of the variables involved in the subgroup analysis appeared on both versions of the questionnaire but the other(s) appeared on only one questionnaire, then the subgroup analysis was restricted to data from only one version of the questionnaire.

The survey employed two questions to categorize cases for subgroup analyses involving race and ethnicity. The first asked respondents if they considered themselves to be Hispanic or Latino. Those who said "Yes" composed the Hispanic analytic subgroup in the study, those who said "No" composed a non-Hispanic comparison group. The second question was treated independently of the ethnicity question, i.e., it was asked of every respondent. The interviewers recited several different racial categories, and asked respondents which categories described them. Respondents could select more than one. For purposes of analysis, a respondent was assigned to a specific racial category if s/he selected only that category. The few respondents who selected multiple categories (fewer than 350 out of more than 12,000 cases) were analyzed as a separate multi-racial group. Because race and ethnicity were considered independently, each racial group could include both Hispanics and non-Hispanics, and the Hispanic analytic group included both Blacks and Whites.

The abbreviations DK and Ref are frequently listed as response categories in the report. DK stands for "Don't Know" and Ref stands for "Refused". For most questions, the persons who answered "Don't' Know" vastly outnumbered those who refused to answer the question.

2003 SURVEY RESULTS

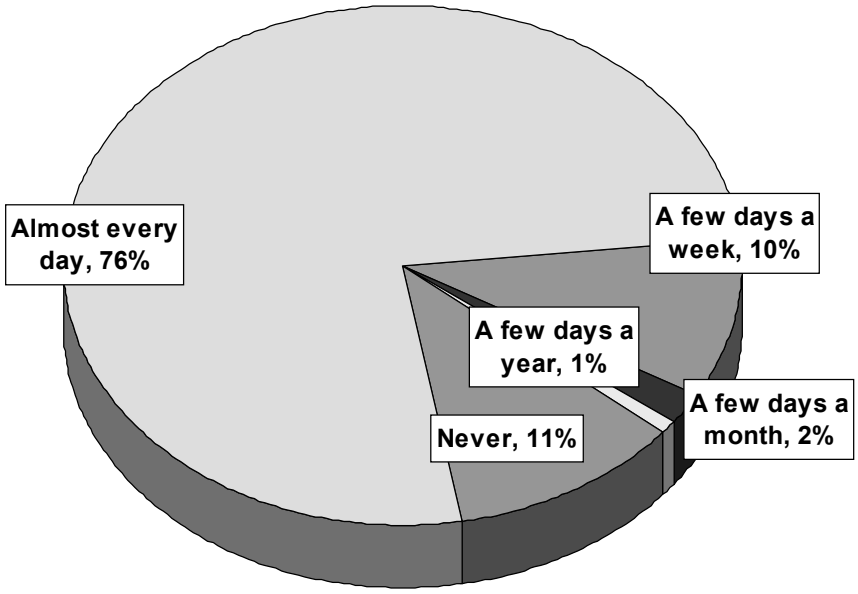
CHAPTER 1: SAFETY BELT USE

Prior to collecting detailed information on safety belt use, the survey asked respondents if they were drivers, and if so, what type of vehicle they most often drove. Drivers were then asked about the safety belt configuration in that vehicle. Only then did the survey query respondents about their safety belt use, defining it as usage **while driving their usual vehicle**. The questionnaire flow was designed to maximize consistency by giving all respondents a standard definition to use when discussing their belt use behavior.

Drivers And Vehicles

About nine-in-ten persons age 16 and older drive a motor vehicle. Three-in-four do so almost every day.

Figure 1
Driving Frequency



Qx: How often do you drive a motor vehicle? Almost every day, a few days a week, a few days a month, a few days a year, or do you never drive?

Base: Total population age 16+.

Unweighted N=12377

There were proportionally fewer drivers among the youngest and oldest age groups, racial and ethnic minorities (see page xx for group definitions), females and low-income households.

Table 1
Driving Frequency By Demographic Characteristics

Qx: How often do you drive a motor vehicle? Almost every day, a few days a week, a few days a month, a few days a year, or do you never drive?

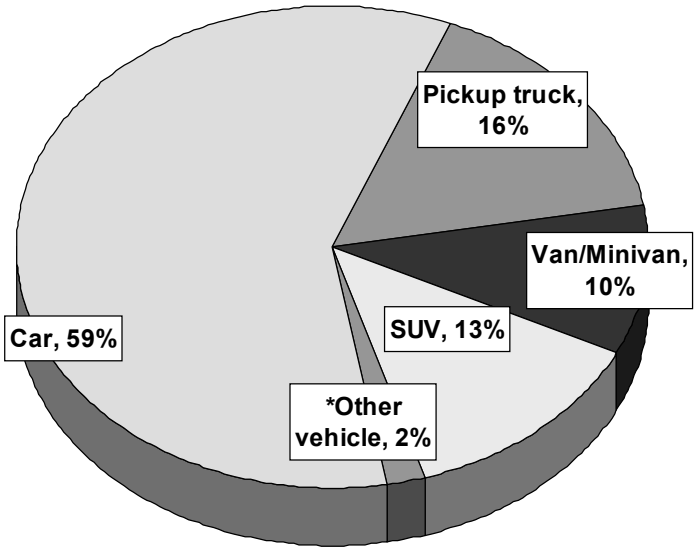
Base: Total population age 16+.

	Unweighted N	Almost every day	A few days a week	A few days a month	A few days a year	Never
Age						
16-20	(1058)	56%	14%	7%	2%	22%
21-24	(886)	77%	6%	3%	1%	13%
25-34	(2779)	80%	6%	2%	1%	11%
35-44	(2687)	86%	5%	1%	*	8%
45-54	(1847)	85%	6%	1%	1%	7%
55-64	(1286)	78%	11%	1%	1%	9%
65+	(1643)	58%	21%	4%	1%	15%
Gender						
Male	(5880)	81%	8%	2%	1%	8%
Female	(6497)	71%	11%	3%	1%	14%
Race						
Black	(1096)	65%	7%	4%	2%	22%
White	(9179)	80%	10%	2%	1%	7%
Asian	(276)	73%	10%	2%	1%	13%
Native American/ Alaskan Native	(240)	64%	14%	2%	1%	18%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	(47)	62%	7%	4%	3%	25%
Multi-race	(311)	67%	13%	2%	2%	16%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	(1519)	58%	10%	3%	2%	28%
Non-Hispanic	(10744)	79%	10%	2%	1%	8%
Income						
<$15,000	(1360)	50%	16%	5%	1%	28%
$15,000-29,999	(1923)	68%	13%	3%	1%	15%
$30,000-49,999	(2508)	83%	8%	1%	*	7%
$50,000-74,999	(2088)	88%	6%	2%	*	4%
$75,000-99,999	(1113)	92%	3%	1%	1%	3%
>$100,000	(1318)	91%	6%	1%	*	2%

*Less than 0.5%. --No cases.

Many households have more than one motor vehicle. Since the type of safety equipment may vary from one vehicle to another, drivers were asked about the vehicle that they drive most often. Roughly six-in-ten drivers (59%) use a car as their primary vehicle, followed by 16% who drive a pickup truck, 13% who drive a sport utility vehicle (SUV), and 10% who drive a van or minivan.

Figure 2
Primary Vehicle Driven



Qx: Is the vehicle you drive most often a car, van, motorcycle, sport utility vehicle, pickup truck, or other type of truck?

Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

Unweighted N=11070

**Includes 1.1% other trucks, 0.3% motorcycles, 0.2% other, and 0.1% Not sure/Refused.*

The survey posed a series of questions to determine the type of safety belt installed in the front seat of the respondent's primary vehicle. The initial question asked whether it was a lap belt, shoulder belt, or both.

Safety belts in 92% of primary vehicles went across both the lap and shoulder. Differences were relatively small across vehicle types. Only 13 vehicles out of more than 11,000 reportedly had no safety belts in the front seat.

Table 2
Safety Belt Configuration By Type Of Primary Vehicle

Qx: For the next series of questions, please answer only for the (car/truck/van) you said you usually drive. Do the seat belts in the front seat of the (car/truck/van) go across your shoulder only, across your lap only, or across both your shoulder and lap?

Base: Vehicle driven most often is not a motorcycle.

Safety Belt Position	Total	Car	Van/Minivan	SUV	Pickup truck
	(N=**11039)	(N=6566)	(N=1049)	(N=1496)	(N=1753)
Across shoulder only	6%	7%	5%	4%	6%
Across lap only	1%	1%	1%	*	2%
Across both	92%	92%	93%	95%	92%
Vehicle has no belts	*	*	*	--	*
Not sure/Refused	*	*	*	*	*

*Less than 0.5%. --No cases. **Includes 133 other trucks, 24 other vehicles, and 18 not sure or didn't respond to vehicle type.

If the front seat safety belt went across both the shoulder and lap, the survey asked if it was one-piece or two separate belts and if the safety belts were automatic. Table 3 shows that 80% of front seat safety belts (in primary vehicles) were one-piece manual lap/shoulder systems. Relatively few safety belts (9%) had an automatic component, whether one-piece or two-piece. In addition, 6% of those with automatic belts said that they at least sometimes disconnected, disabled, or placed the belt behind them.

The results also suggested that some people may not fully understand their belt system. Dozens of respondents answered "Don't Know" to one or more basic belt configuration questions. In addition, two-piece lap/shoulder belts where both belts were automatic are not known to exist in the vehicle fleet (i.e., automatic lap belts have not been installed into production vehicles).

Table 3
Type Of Driver Safety Belt In Primary Vehicle

Qx: *Do the seat belts in the front seat of the (car/truck/van) go across your shoulder only, across your lap only, or across both your shoulder and your lap?*

Qx: *Are the shoulder and lap belt one piece or are they two separate belts?*

Qx: *Are both the shoulder and lap belt automatic, is only the shoulder belt automatic or is neither the shoulder or lap belt automatic?*

Qx: *Is the shoulder belt automatic or do you have to fasten it?*

Base: *Vehicle driven most often has safety belts.*

N	Belt system type	Description	Percent
10062	**One-piece systems**	**Only one buckle**	**91%**
124	Lap belt only	One belt that goes across the driver's lap.	1%
8897	Lap/shoulder-manual	Combination system that must be pulled and buckled by the driver.	80%
397	Lap/shoulder-automatic	Combination system that automatically fastens around the driver.	4%
568	Shoulder only-manual	One belt that goes across the driver's shoulder that must be pulled and buckled by the driver.	5%
74	Shoulder only-automatic	One belt that automatically fastens across the driver's shoulder.	1%
2	One-piece-NS/Ref	One-piece, don't know if automatic/refused to say.	*
894	**Two-piece systems**	**Two separate buckles for lap and shoulder belts.**	**8%**
412	Lap manual/ shoulder manual	Driver must pull and fasten each belt separately.	4%
399	Lap manual/ shoulder automatic	Belt automatically fastens across driver's shoulder but driver must pull and fasten lap belt.	4%
71	Lap automatic/ shoulder automatic	Each belt automatically fastens around the driver	1%
12	Two-piece-NS/Ref	Two-piece, not sure if automatic.	*
70	**Not sure**	**Not sure where belts cross, or if one-piece or two-piece**	**1%**

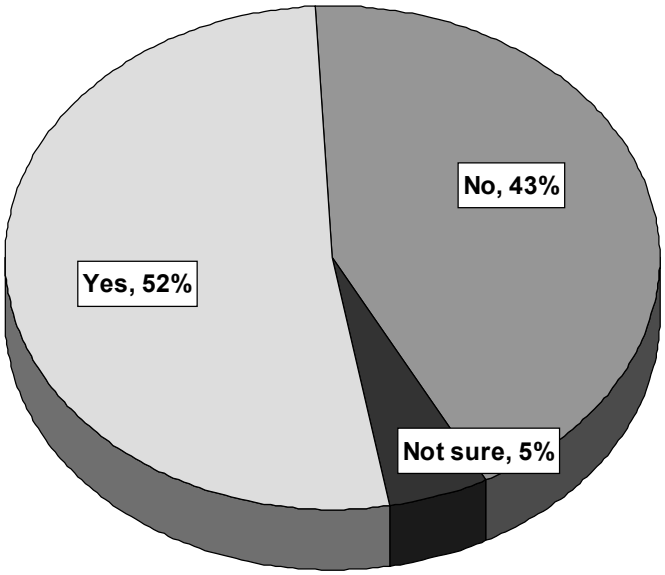
*Less than 0.5%.

Adjustable Shoulder Belt

Drivers were asked if their shoulder belts were adjustable (i.e., their attachment to the door or frame behind the driver's left shoulder can be moved up or down). This adjustment of the shoulder strap allows for a more comfortable fit.

More than half of all drivers said their shoulder belt was adjustable (52%) while 43% of drivers said that it was not. A small percentage (5%) said they were not sure.

Figure 3
Have Adjustable Shoulder Belt



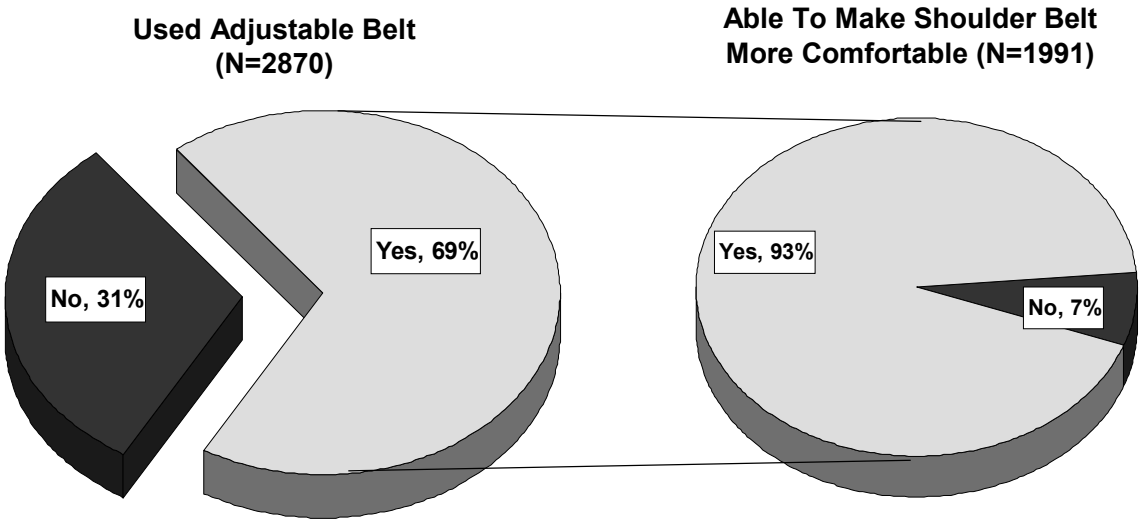
Qx: Shoulder belts are usually attached to the door or frame behind the driver's left shoulder. In some vehicles, this attachment can be moved up or down to adjust the shoulder belt. Is this attachment adjustable in your vehicle?

Base: Vehicle has safety belts across both lap and shoulder or across shoulder only.

Unweighted N=5470

About seven in ten drivers (69%) with adjustable shoulder belts said they had tried to adjust them. More than nine in ten (93%) said their adjustments made the belts more comfortable.

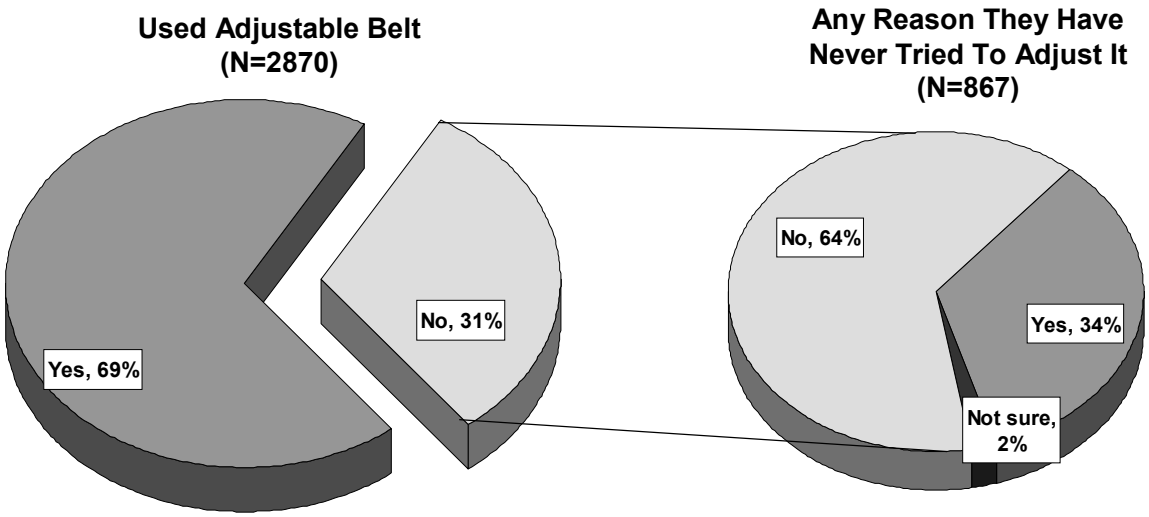
Figure 4
Effectiveness Of Adjustable Shoulder Belts



Qx: Have you ever tried to adjust it?
Qx: Were you able to make the shoulder belt more comfortable by adjusting it?
Base: Pie1: Vehicle has adjustable shoulder belts.
Pie 2: Tried to adjust belt.
Unweighted N's listed above.

About one-third of drivers did not use the adjustable feature on their shoulder belts. Most of them (64%) said there was no particular reason why they have never tried to use it. Those that gave a reason usually said it was because the belt already fit satisfactorily (see Table 4).

Figure 5
Any Reason Why They Have Never Tried To Adjust The Shoulder Belt



Qx: Have you ever tried to adjust it?
Qx: Is there any reason why you have never tried to adjust it?
Base: Pie1: Vehicle has adjustable shoulder belts.
Pie 2: Never tried to adjust belt.
Unweighted N's listed above.

Table 4
Reasons Why Drivers Have Never Tried To Adjust The Adjustable Feature On Their Shoulder Belt

Qx: What is the reason?

Base: Drivers with adjustable shoulder belts who said they never tried to adjust them, and said there was a reason why they had never tried to adjust them.

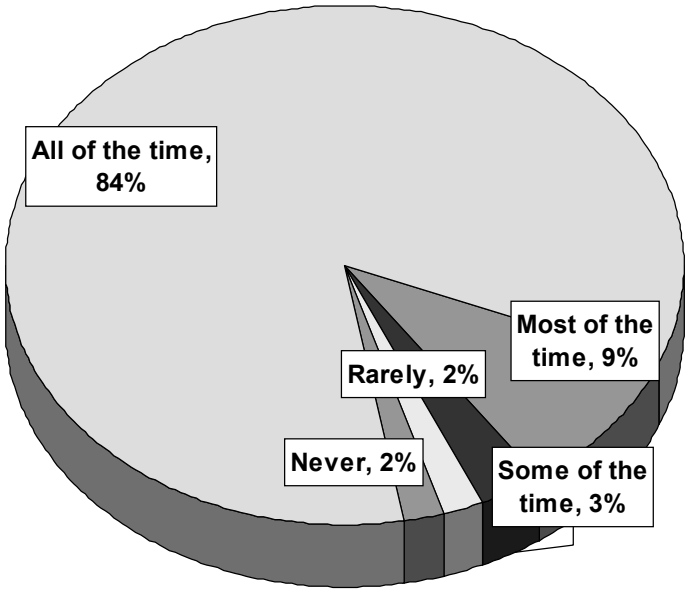
Unweighted N=304

Reason	Percent
Already fits/fits as is/it's fine where it is now.	73%
It was adjusted for me/they adjusted it to fit me.	1%
It's comfortable enough/comfortable as is.	20%
Never thought about it.	1%
Other miscellaneous responses.	4%
Not sure.	1%

Drivers' Use Of Safety Belts

The vast majority of drivers (84%) reported using their safety belt "all of the time" while driving. Most of the remaining drivers (9%) said they used their safety belt "most of the time." Few drivers reported that they rarely (2%) or never (2%) wore their safety belt.[2]

Figure 6
Reported Frequency Of Driver Safety Belt Use

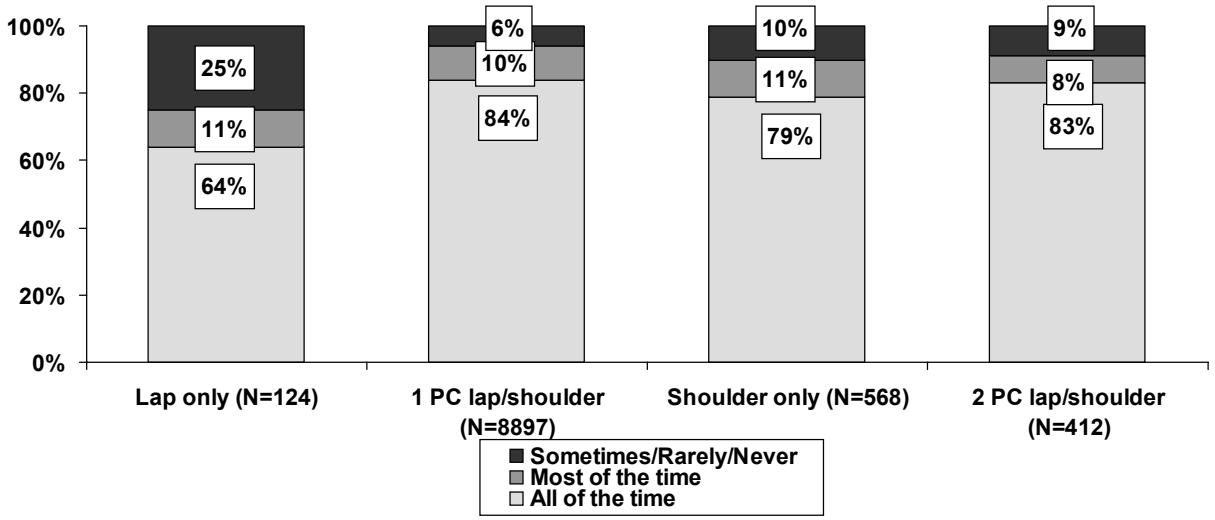


Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.
Unweighted N=11005

[2] Frequency of safety belt use was determined by combining the two questions which asked how often drivers wore their lap belt and their shoulder belt. Values were assigned by taking the highest response for either question. For example, if a respondent stated that s/he wore a shoulder belt "all of the time" but a lap belt "most of the time", the respondent was assigned to the category "all of the time".

Drivers were most likely to wear safety belts all of the time if the belts had both a lap and shoulder strap, either attached as a one-piece system (84%) or separated into a two-piece system (83%). Shoulder only systems corresponded with somewhat lower usage (79%), while lowest usage occurred in vehicles with lap only systems (64%).

Figure 7
Frequency Of Driver Safety Belt Use:
Belts Not Having Automatic Components



Qx: Do the seat belts in the front seat of the (car/truck/van) go across your shoulder only, across your lap only, or across both your shoulder and lap?

Qx: Are the shoulder and lap belts one piece or are they two separate belts?

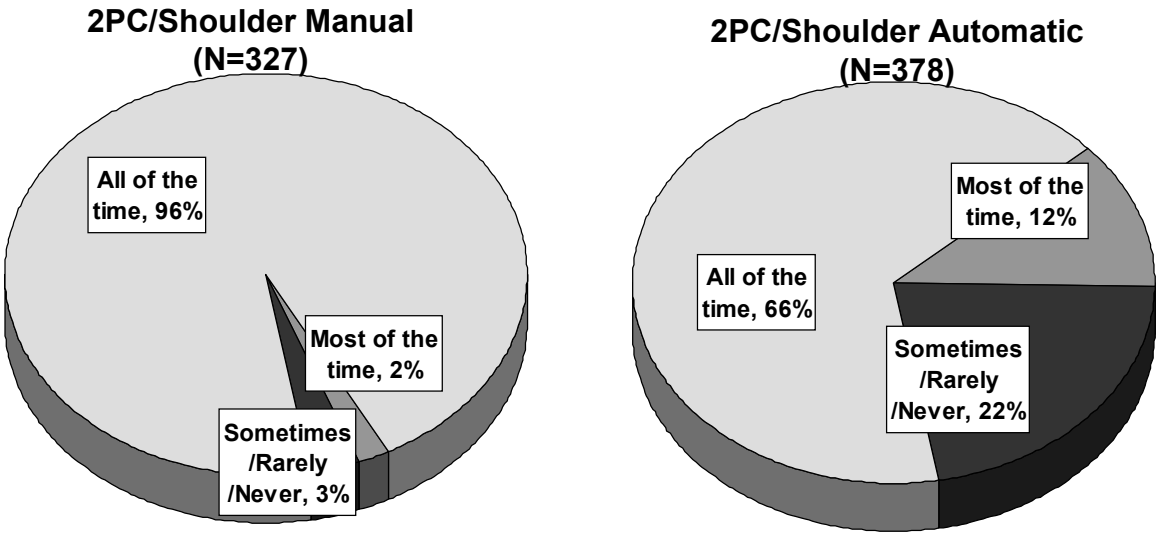
Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?

Base: Drivers whose safety belts have no automatic component.

Unweighted N's listed above.

A key question about two-piece belt systems is whether persons who wear their shoulder belt also put on their lap belt (lap and shoulder belts used together are the most effective form of restraint for preventing injuries and fatalities). Figure 8 shows that if the shoulder belt was manual and used all of the time, 96% of drivers said that they also wore their lap belt all of the time. But if the shoulder belt was automatic and used all of the time, then 66% said they wore their lap belt all of the time [this analysis excluded systems reported to have both an automatic lap belt and an automatic shoulder belt because they were considered to be errors in belt identification by respondents].

Figure 8
Frequency Of Driver Lap Belt Use:
Shoulder Belt Used All The Time



Qx: Are the shoulder and lap belt one piece or are they two separate belts?

Qx: Are both the shoulder and lap belt automatic, is only the shoulder belt automatic or is neither the shoulder or lap belt automatic?

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?

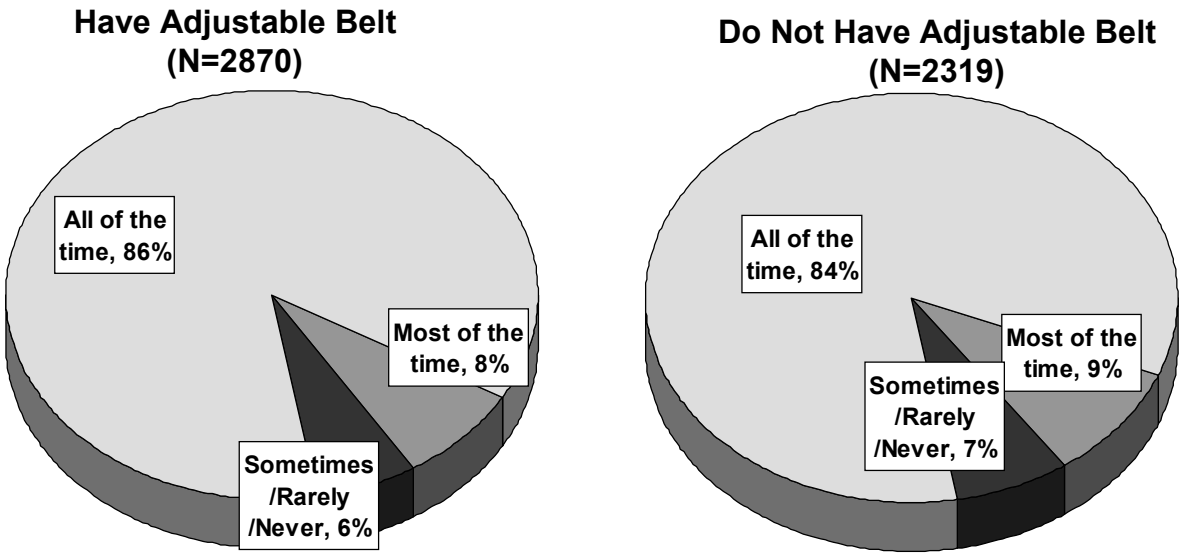
Base: Drivers with two-piece belt systems (lap belt is manual) who always use their shoulder belt.

Unweighted N's listed above.

**The percentages in the pie do not sum to 100% because of rounding.*

Since drivers who use the adjustable feature on shoulder belts are usually able to make themselves more comfortable (see page 8), analyses were conducted to assess whether the presence of an adjustable shoulder belt corresponded with higher belt usage. Figure 9 shows the results. Eighty-six percent of drivers who had adjustable shoulder belts reported using their shoulder belt "all of the time" compared to 84% of drivers who did not have shoulder belts with the adjustable feature.

Figure 9
Frequency Of Driver Shoulder Belt Use: Adjustable Versus Non-Adjustable Shoulder Belts



Qx: Shoulder belts are usually attached to the door or frame behind the driver's left shoulder. In some vehicles, this attachment can be moved up or down to adjust the shoulder belt. Is this attachment adjustable in your vehicle?

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has shoulder belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

Group Differences In Reported Safety Belt Use

Table 5 presents group differences in reported safety belt use by drivers while driving. The "all of the time" response category is the primary index employed by this survey to describe level of safety belt use. It therefore provides a good point of reference for readers to focus on while reviewing the Table.

One of the largest differentiating factors in belt use was the gender of the driver. Females (89%) were significantly more likely to report "all of the time" use than males (79%). Another differentiating factor was the type of primary vehicle driven, with pickup truck drivers (71%) less likely to report "all of the time" use than drivers of cars (88%), vans/minivans (87%), or SUVs (86%). In addition, drivers in rural areas (77%) were less likely than those in urban (86%) or suburban areas (86%) to report "all of the time" use. A linear relationship between usage and income or education failed to materialize. However, the analysis indicated that drivers at the highest educational levels were most likely to report wearing safety belts "all of the time."

Younger drivers were less likely than older drivers to wear safety belts. The percentage of drivers ages 16-20 (79%) and 21-24 (79%) who reported "all of the time" safety belt use was lower than the percentage for the overall population (84%).

Blacks (83%) were similar to Whites (84%) in reported "all of the time" use.[3] The figure for Hispanics (88%) was somewhat higher than that for non-Hispanics (84%). It bears noting that a large proportion of Hispanics in the study sample resided in states whose safety belt laws contained provisions permitting standard (as opposed to secondary) enforcement of safety belt violations.[4] In particular, a substantial proportion of the Hispanic sample resided in California, which has standard enforcement provisions as well as the second highest observed safety belt usage rate of any state according to 2002 figures.

Table 5 also lists reported safety belt usage by weight and height for each gender. Four years ago, the weight and height groups for analysis were determined by separating males and females into approximate quartiles. Inspection of the 2003 data showed the separation points used in 1998 and 2000 to be reasonable for the current data. Thus, the analysis presented in Table 5 uses groups comparable to those in 1998 and 2000. The 2003 data shows lower belt use among males in the heaviest weight quartile. There was no pattern among females. There was little variability in reported belt use according to reported height except for slightly higher belt use among males under 5'9" in 2003.

[3] See operational definition on page xx

[4] See page 134 for more information on standard and secondary enforcement

Table 5
Driver Safety Belt Use By Demographic And Other Characteristics

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van), how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

	Unweighted N	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
Total	(11005)	84%	9%	3%	2%	2%
Gender						
Male	(5346)	79%	12%	4%	2%	3%
Female	(5659)	89%	6%	3%	1%	1%
Age						
16-20	(827)	79%	11%	5%	4%	2%
21-24	(778)	79%	12%	5%	3%	2%
25-34	(2502)	82%	9%	4%	2%	2%
35-44	(2488)	84%	9%	3%	2%	2%
45-54	(1705)	85%	9%	3%	1%	2%
55-64	(1169)	84%	10%	3%	1%	2%
65+	(1373)	90%	6%	2%	1%	1%
Race						
Black	(871)	83%	10%	4%	2%	1%
White	(8477)	84%	9%	4%	2%	2%
Asian	(240)	92%	6%	1%	--	1%
Native American/ Alaskan Native	(189)	82%	9%	3%	1%	4%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	(35)	88%	7%	6%	--	--
Multi-race	(265)	83%	9%	3%	2%	4%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	(1117)	88%	7%	3%	1%	1%
Non-Hispanic	(9795)	84%	9%	4%	2%	2%
Education						
11 or less	(1170)	82%	9%	4%	3%	3%
HS grad/GED	(3228)	80%	11%	5%	2%	3%
Some college	(2599)	84%	9%	3%	2%	2%
College grad	(3924)	88%	8%	3%	1%	1%

*Less than 0.5%. --No cases.

Table 5 (Continued)
Driver Safety Belt Use By Demographic And Other Characteristics

	Unweighted N	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
Income						
<$15,000	(976)	85%	8%	4%	2%	2%
$15,000-29,999	(1649)	82%	10%	4%	2%	2%
$30,000-49,999	(2345)	83%	9%	4%	2%	2%
$50,000-74,999	(2012)	83%	9%	4%	2%	2%
$75,000-99,999	(1082)	84%	9%	3%	2%	1%
>$100,000	(1281)	84%	9%	4%	2%	1%
Child under age 16 in household	(4411)	84%	10%	3%	2%	2%
No child under 16 in household	(6570)	85%	8%	4%	2%	2%
Urbanicity						
Urban	(3070)	86%	8%	3%	1%	1%
Suburban	(5452)	86%	7%	3%	1%	2%
Rural	(2483)	77%	13%	5%	3%	2%
Vehicle type						
Car	(6553)	88%	8%	3%	1%	1%
Van/Minivan	(1046)	87%	6%	4%	1%	1%
Pickup truck	(1744)	71%	15%	6%	4%	4%
SUV	(1492)	86%	9%	3%	1%	1%
Injured in crash						
Yes	(3126)	84%	9%	3%	2%	2%
No	(7861)	84%	9%	4%	2%	1%

Table 5 (Continued)
Driver Safety Belt Use By Demographic And Other Characteristics

	Unweighted N	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
Weight						
Males						
<163 lbs.	(595)	84%	9%	4%	1%	2%
163-180 lbs.	(627)	85%	9%	3%	1%	2%
181-205 lbs.	(679)	79%	12%	4%	3%	2%
206+ lbs.	(743)	74%	13%	5%	3%	4%
Females						
<126 lbs.	(635)	89%	7%	3%	1%	*
126-140 lbs.	(690)	91%	6%	2%	1%	*
141-160 lbs.	(623)	92%	6%	1%	*	1%
161+ lbs.	(764)	87%	6%	4%	1%	2%
Height						
Males						
<5’9”	(752)	83%	8%	5%	1%	3%
5’9”-5’10”	(652)	79%	12%	4%	2%	3%
5’11”-6’0”	(679)	80%	13%	4%	1%	2%
6’1” +	(551)	78%	11%	4%	4%	3%
Females						
<5’3”	(681)	90%	6%	2%	1%	*
5’3”-5’4”	(742)	90%	6%	2%	1%	*
5’5”-5’6”	(692)	90%	6%	2%	1%	*
5’7” +	(666)	88%	5%	3%	1%	2%

Relating Safety Belt Use To Other (Problem) Behaviors

Past research has suggested that persons who do not wear their safety belt are more likely to engage in other unsafe or unhealthy behaviors. The Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey asked questions about alcohol use and driving speed. Tables 6 and 7 show drivers' reported belt use according to how persons answered these questions.

Whether or not persons had consumed alcohol in the recent past did not make much difference in reported safety belt use. Rather, what seemed to matter was the manner in how people drank. Those drivers who typically consumed 1 drink when drinking reported the highest belt use among drinkers: 89% said they wore their safety belt all of the time. The percentage who said "all of the time" declined to 83% for those who averaged 2-3 drinks, 75% for those who averaged 4-6 drinks, and 61% for those who averaged more than 6 drinks. Among those persons who stated that they had driven a vehicle after drinking alcohol within the past 30 days, 78% claimed they wore their safety belt all of the time while driving. If they acknowledged driving when they thought they had consumed too much alcohol to drive safely, all of the time use fell to 63% (although the number of persons who reported that they drove after drinking too much was small).

Reported safety belt use was lower among persons who tended to drive faster than others. The survey asked drivers which statement best described their highway driving: "I tend to pass other cars more often than other cars pass me" or "Other cars tend to pass me more often." Those who tended to pass others were less likely to report wearing their safety belt all of the time (79% compared to 87% of those who tended to be passed). The survey also asked how fast the respondents generally drove on highways. Those who tended to drive more than 70 miles per hour were less likely to report wearing safety belts compared to slower drivers (80% versus 86%).

Table 6
Driver Safety Belt Use By Alcohol Use

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van), how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?
Qx: During the past 30 days, have you had at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage, including liquor, beer, wine or wine coolers?
Qx: Did you drink any alcoholic beverages at all during the past 12 months?
Qx: On the average, how many drinks did you typically have on the days you drank?
Qx: During the past 30 days, have you driven a vehicle after you had been drinking alcohol?
Qx: In the past 30 days, have you driven a vehicle when you thought you might have consumed too much alcohol to drive safely?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

	Unweighted N	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
Alcohol Use						
Within past 30 days	(2973)	84%	10%	4%	2%	1%
In past year, but not in past 30 days	(783)	85%	9%	3%	1%	2%
Not in past year	(1771)	87%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Usual number of drinks						
1	(1419)	89%	7%	3%	1%	1%
2-3	(1720)	83%	11%	3%	1%	1%
4-6	(431)	75%	9%	7%	5%	4%
7 or more	(96)	61%	14%	6%	9%	10%
Drank and drove in past 30 days	(706)	78%	13%	4%	2%	2%
Drank too much and drove in past 30 days	(44)	63%	19%	4%	6%	8%

Table 7
Driver Safety Belt Use By Driving Speed

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van), how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?
Qx: Which statement best describes your highway driving: I tend to pass other cars more often than other cars pass me, or other cars tend to pass me more often?
Qx: In general, how fast do you drive on highways?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

	Unweighted N	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
I tend to pass other cars more often	(1786)	79%	11%	5%	3%	3%
Other cars tend to pass me more often	(3276)	87%	8%	3%	1%	1%
Neither, I drive the same as most others	(254)	90%	5%	3%	1%	1%
Both, I pass others, and others pass me	(150)	85%	7%	3%	2%	2%
Normal speed on highway						
55 or less	(910)	86%	9%	2%	1%	1%
56-60	(877)	86%	8%	3%	1%	1%
61-70	(2697)	86%	8%	4%	1%	1%
More than 70	(895)	80%	10%	5%	3%	2%

Clarifying Reported Usage

Questionnaire development during 1994 included cognitive testing. During the testing, subjects were asked how often they wore their safety belt while driving their vehicle. Most said "all of the time." The interviewers then followed that question with a cognitive probe, asking the subjects when was the last time they did not wear their safety belt while driving. A number of persons who had just previously said that they wore their safety belt "all of the time" while driving responded "yesterday" or even that very morning.

It appeared that some subjects chose to interpret the initial usage question in a way that differed from the exact wording of the item, so NHTSA included the cognitive probe in the survey. Seven percent[5] of drivers who said that they wore their safety belts "all of the time" immediately acknowledged not using their safety belt while driving in the past day or week. Seventy-one percent of self-reported "most of the time" users admitted recent non-use, indicating that usage by at least some people in this category may be much more sporadic than the label would suggest. In general, the data implied a significant difference in usage between the "all of the time" and "most of the time" categories.

Table 8
Last Time Drivers Did Not Wear Safety Belt By Frequency Of Reported Safety Belt Use

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van), how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?
Qx: When was the last time you did not wear your seat belt (neither lap nor shoulder) while driving?
Qx: Has there been any occasion in the past 12 months when you did not wear your seat belt (neither lap nor shoulder) when driving?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts, and who at least on occasion wear safety belts.

Last time safety belt not worn	All of the time (N=9213)	Most of the time (N=1004)	Some of the time (N=389)	Rarely (N=188)
Today	3%	24%	57%	68%
Past week	5%	47%	35%	25%
Past month	4%	15%	5%	3%
Past year	4%	3%	1%	2%
Not sure/Within past year	1%	2%	1%	*
Year or more ago	84%	7%	1%	1%

[5] The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Table due to rounding.

Revised Safety Belt Use

Table 9 shows what happens when "all of the time" users who conceded to not wearing their safety belt in the past day or week while driving were subtracted from the "all of the time" category. The percentage of "all of the time" belt users declined 6 percentage points, from 84% to 78%.

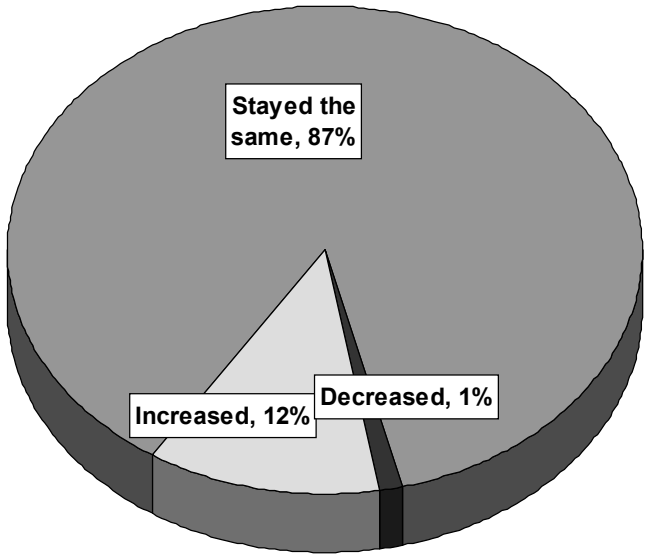
Table 9
Revised Safety Belt Use By Drivers

	All of the time (Excludes past day or week non-users)	All of the time **But** Past day or week non-use	Most of the time	Some of the time/Rarely/ Never
Total drivers	78%	**6%**	9%	7%
Male	73%	**6%**	12%	9%
Female	84%	**6%**	6%	4%
Black	76%	**7%**	10%	6%
White	78%	**6%**	9%	7%
Age 16-24	71%	**8%**	11%	10%
Age 25-69	79%	**6%**	9%	7%
Age 70+	84%	**7%**	6%	4%
Passenger cars	81%	**6%**	8%	5%
Pickup trucks	64%	**6%**	15%	14%
Urban	80%	**6%**	8%	6%
Suburban	81%	**5%**	7%	6%
Rural	70%	**7%**	13%	9%

Reported Changes In Belt Use

Besides questioning drivers about their current safety belt usage, the survey asked respondents whether their use of safety belts when driving had changed in the past 12 months. Most (87%) said that their usage had stayed the same. Twelve percent answered that it had increased, while 1% reported a decrease.

Figure 10
Reported Change In The Use Of Safety Belts By Drivers



Qx: In the past 12 months, has your use of seat belts when driving (car driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N=5540

Regional Differences

NHTSA segments the country into ten regions for programmatic outreach. Table 10 shows both change in belt use and frequency of belt use reported across the ten regions. No more than 1% of drivers in any region reported that their use of safety belts in the past year when driving had decreased. The percentage of drivers who said that their usage had increased ranged from 8% in NHTSA Region IX to 15% in NHTSA Regions I and VII. In some regions, small 12-month increases may reflect higher pre-existing usage rates that limited the amount of potential gain. For example, Region IX recorded the highest overall usage rate (92% said they wore their safety belts all of the time) and lowest increase (8%). Readers are cautioned that some of the regional percentages are based on small numbers. In particular, Regions I (n=275), VII (n=257), VIII (n=201), and X (n=246) all included fewer than 300 cases in computing the percentage increase/decrease.

Table 10
Patterns Of Reported Driver Safety Belt Use By NHTSA Region

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van), how often do you wear your (lap/shoulder) belt?
Qx: In the past 12 months, has your use of seat belts when driving (car driven most often) increased, decreased or stayed the same?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

NHTSA regions	States	Change in safety belt use within past year (N=5540)		Percent of drivers reporting using safety belt "All of the time" (N=11005)
		Increased	Decreased	
I	CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT	15%	1%	76%
II	NJ, NY	11%	*	88%
III	DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV	11%	1%	80%
IV	AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN	14%	1%	82%
V	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI	12%	1%	83%
VI	AR, LA, NM, OK, TX	13%	*	86%
VII	IA, KS, MO, NE	15%	*	79%
VIII	CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY	13%	*	74%
IX	AZ, CA, HI, NV	8%	1%	92%
X	AK, ID, OR, WA	10%	1%	90%
	Total	**12%**	**1%**	**84%**

*Less than 0.5%.

Demographic Differences

Persons who were younger (25% for 16-20 year-olds), were not high school graduates (17%), or were Black (19%) were more likely to report that their use of safety belts as drivers had increased in the past 12 months.

Table 11
Reported Change In Driver's Use Of Safety Belts In The Past Year By Demographic Characteristics

Qx: In the past 12 months, has your use of seat belts when driving (car driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

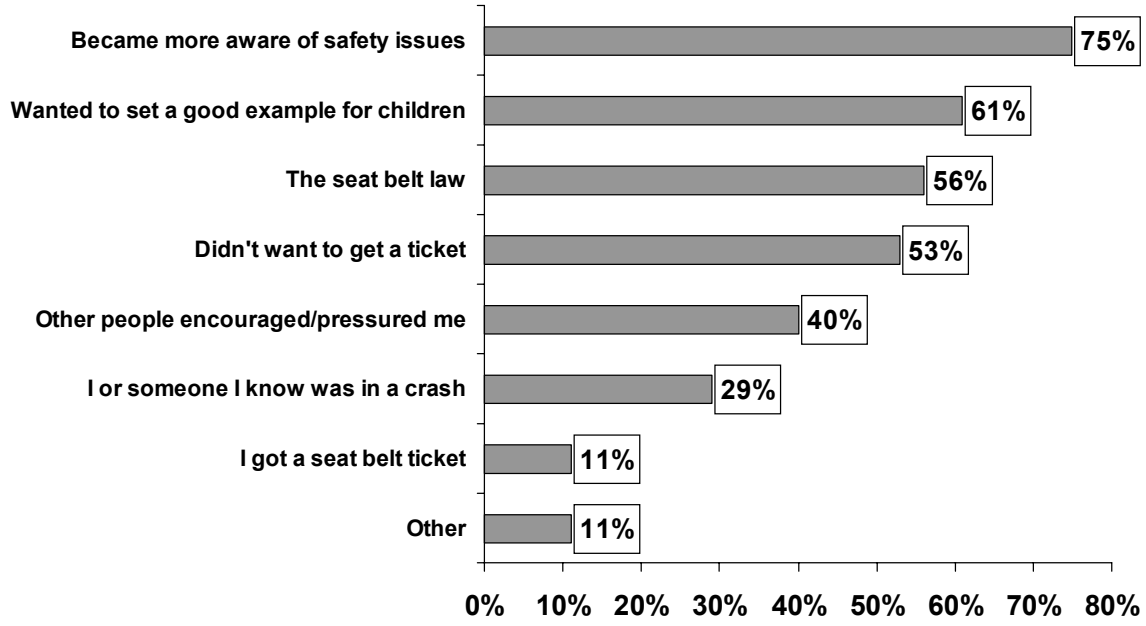
	Unweighted N	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Age				
16-20	(420)	25%	2%	73%
21-24	(411)	18%	1%	81%
25-34	(1279)	12%	1%	86%
35-44	(1265)	12%	*	87%
45-54	(874)	10%	*	89%
55-64	(580)	10%	1%	88%
65+	(639)	7%	*	92%
Gender				
Male	(2684)	12%	1%	86%
Female	(2856)	12%	1%	87%
Race				
Black	(439)	19%	1%	80%
White	(4278)	11%	1%	88%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	(555)	15%	1%	83%
Non-Hispanic	(4955)	12%	1%	87%
Education				
11 or less	(588)	17%	1%	81%
HS grad/GED	(1579)	14%	1%	85%
Some college	(1378)	13%	1%	86%
College grad	(1969)	8%	*	92%

*Less than 0.5%. -- No cases.

Reasons For Change

Drivers who said that their use of safety belts had increased over the past 12 months were asked what caused the change. The interviewers read seven potential reasons to the respondents, who then indicated for each whether it was a cause of their increased safety belt use. The interviewers also gave the respondents the opportunity to volunteer other reasons. Most often, the drivers ascribed their increased use of safety belts to a greater awareness of safety (75%) and wanting to set a good example for children (61%). Belt laws (56%), avoidance of a ticket (53%), and pressure from others (40%) also emerged as significant reasons. While 11% volunteered "other" reasons, these often elaborated on safety-related and child-related reasons.

Figure 11
Causes Of Increased Safety Belt Use

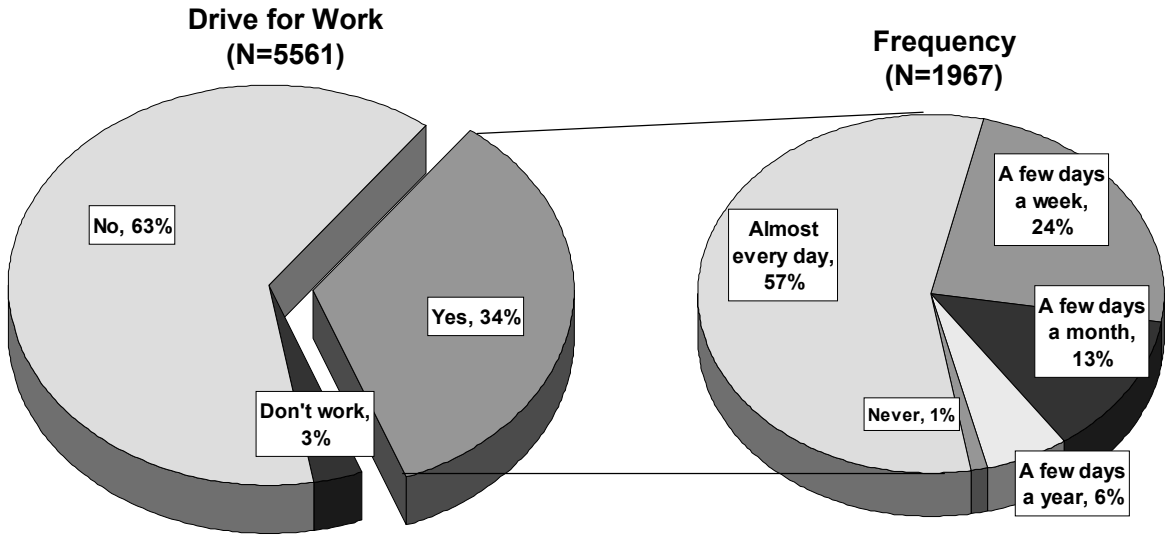


Qx: What caused the change? Was it because… ?
Base: Drivers who reported an increase in safety belt use over the past 12 months.
Unweighted N=680

Company Safety Belt Policy

Thirty-four percent of drivers at least sometimes drove a vehicle as part of a job or business (not including driving to and from work). This was more prevalent among males (43%) than females (25%). If someone drove on the job, it usually occurred at least several days a week. More than one-half (57%) of those who drove on the job said they did so almost every day, another 24% said they did so a few days a week.

Figure 12
Frequency Drive Vehicle As Part Of Job Or Business



Qx: Not including driving to and from work, do you at least sometimes drive a vehicle as part of a job or business?

Qx: How often do you drive a vehicle as part of a job or business? Almost every day, a few days a week, a few days a month, or a few days a year?

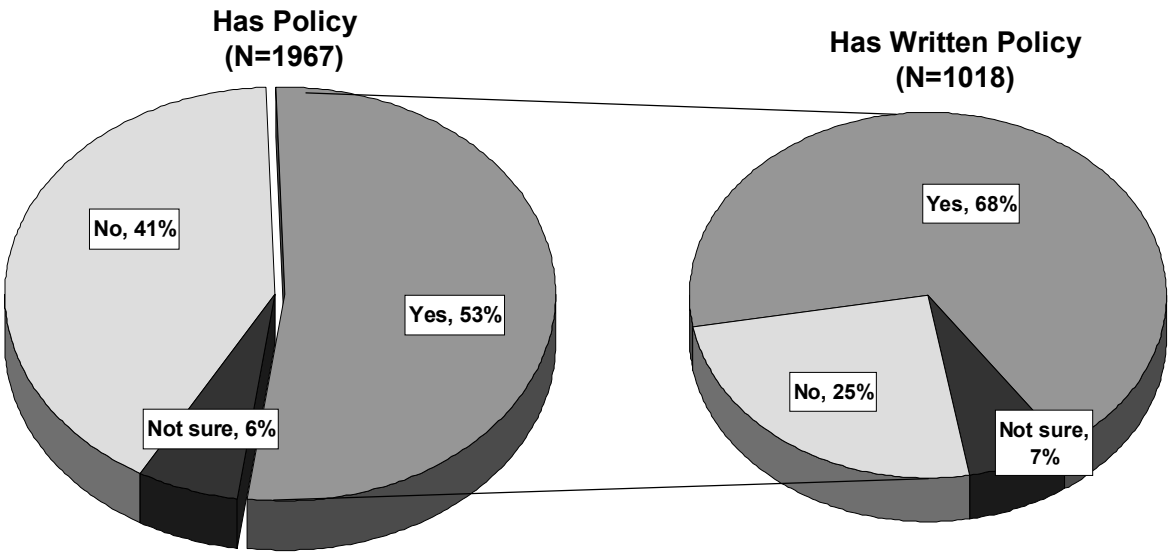
Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

Unweighted N's listed above.

**The percentages in the pie do not sum to 100% because of rounding.*

More than one-half of drivers (53%) who drove on the job believed their company had a policy requiring safety belt use when driving on the job. Forty-one percent said there was no policy and 6% were unsure. Among those who thought their company had a policy, 68% claimed it was a written policy. One-quarter (25%) did not believe the policy was written, and 7% were unsure. In total, 36% of those who drove as part of a job or business reported that their company had a written policy requiring the use of safety belts when driving on the job.

Figure 13
Presence Of Company Safety Belt Policy

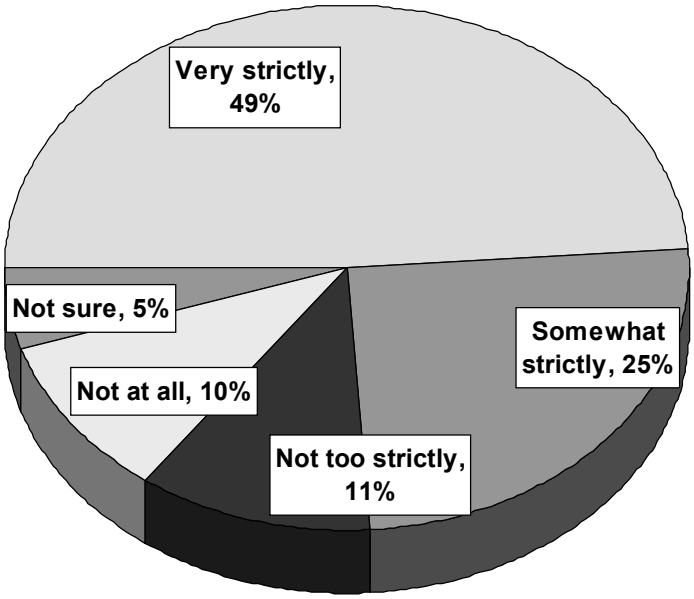


Qx: Does your company or business have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job?
Qx: Is that a written policy?
Base: Drivers who drive on the job.
Unweighted N's listed above.

Company Enforcement Of Safety Belt Policy

If workers believed that their company had a safety belt policy, they also tended to believe that it was enforced at least to some degree. About one-half (49%) of drivers who drove on the job and believed their company had a safety belt policy said that the policy was enforced "very strictly." Another 25% stated that it was "somewhat strictly" enforced. About one-in-five persons answered that the policy was not too strictly enforced (11%) or not enforced at all (10%).

Figure 14
Enforcement Of Company Safety Belt Policy



Qx: How strictly does your company enforce its policy about wearing seat belts?
Base: Drives a vehicle as part of job and believes the company has a safety belt policy.
Unweighted N=1018

Company enforcement of safety belt policy may take the form of requests, notices, visual checks, warnings, suspensions, dismissals, or fines. Among drivers who drove on the job and reported at least some enforcement of their company safety belt policy, the most frequently identified approaches to enforcement were requests for cooperation from employees without attaching penalties (26%), suspensions or dismissals (18%), and warnings (15%). In addition, 24% said that the company "kept an eye out" to check that safety belts were being worn. Eight percent stated that belt use was essentially left up to the individual because the company didn't really enforce their policy.

Table 12
How Employer Enforces Safety Belt Policy

Qx: How does your company enforce its seat belt policy?

Base: Drives a vehicle as part of a job and believes company (very, somewhat, or not too strictly) enforces safety belt policy.

Unweighted N=849

Method	Percent
Ask to wear (no penalty specified)	**26%**
Boss/Supervisor asks employees to wear their seat belts	14%
Written notices/Posted instructions (unspecified)	7%
Safety meetings/Safety talk every week	4%
Written notice in company vehicle	2%
Any other asked to wear mentions	2%
Warnings	**15%**
Boss/Supervisor gives daily verbal warning	2%
Written reprimand in your file	9%
Initial warning	3%
Warning posted on your vehicle's window	*
Any other warning mentions	4%

Category totals may sum to less than the components listed due to multiple responses, coding decisions, and/or rounding.

Table 12 (Continued)
How Employer Enforces Safety Belt Policy

Method	Percent
Suspensions/dismissals	**18%**
After a single violation	6%
Suspension for noncompliance/Suspension after a warning	6%
After a couple of infractions you are fired/dismissed	5%
Other suspension/dismissal mentions	2%
Fined	**3%**
Fined/Fine deducted from paycheck	3%
Miscellaneous	**43%**
People keep eye out to see/check you are wearing seat belt	24%
Left up to individual/not really enforced	8%
Offender pays ticket	2%
Medical coverage is void if not wearing seat belt	1%
Any other miscellaneous mentions	10%
Not sure/No answer	**17%**

*Less than 0.5%.

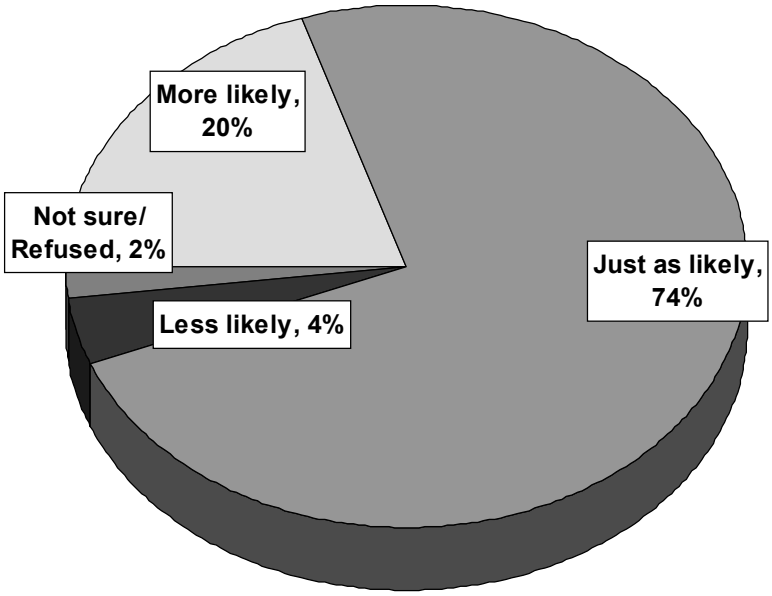
Categories sum to more than 100% because more than one response was allowed.

Safety Belt Use At Work And Company Policy

Those persons who drove as part of their job were asked if there was any difference in their safety belt use between their work and personal driving. Persons who had indicated that they never wore their belt when driving were not asked the question.

A majority of drivers (74%) said that there was no difference in their safety belt use when driving on the job as compared to when driving for personal use. However, 20% claimed they were more likely to wear their safety belts on the job, whereas 4% reported that they were less likely to wear them at work.

Figure 15
Likelihood Of Wearing Safety Belt:
Work Compared To Personal Driving



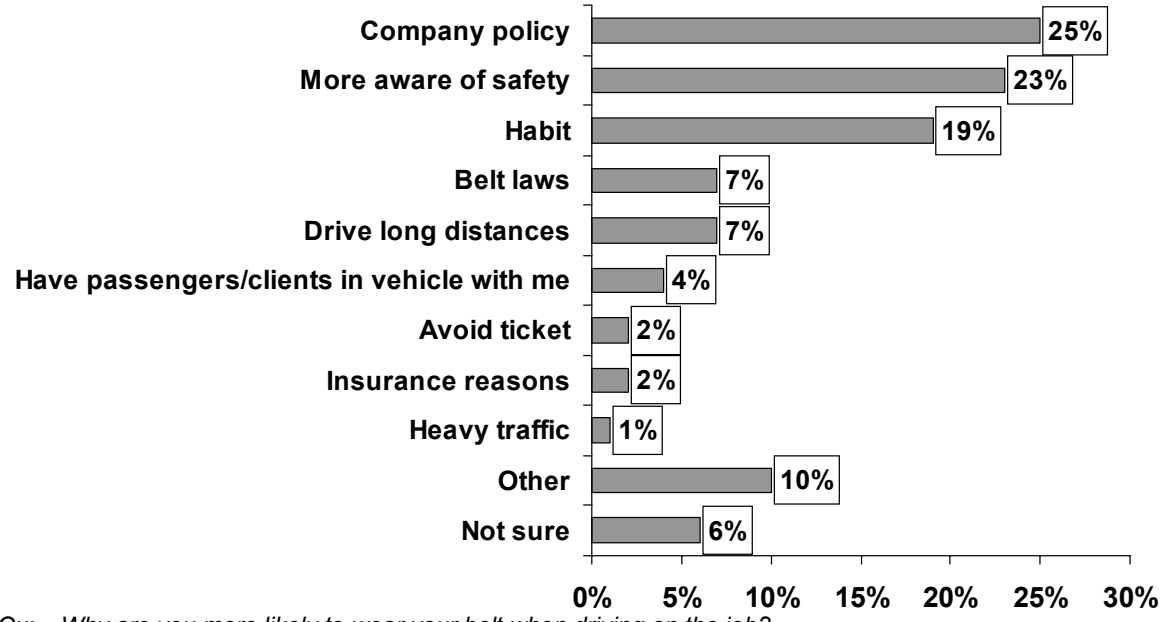
Qx: Are you more likely, less likely or just as likely to wear your seat belt when driving on the job as compared to when driving for personal use?

Base: Drives a vehicle as part of job and at least on occasion wears a safety belt.

Unweighted N=1902

Of those more likely to wear their safety belt when driving on the job, the most frequent reason was because of company policy (25%), followed by an increased awareness of safety (23%). Among the few drivers who said they wore their safety belt less frequently when driving on the job, the single most common reason was that they were in and out of the vehicle all of the time (34%).

Figure 16
Causes Of Increased Belt Use When Driving On The Job



Qx: Why are you more likely to wear your belt when driving on the job?

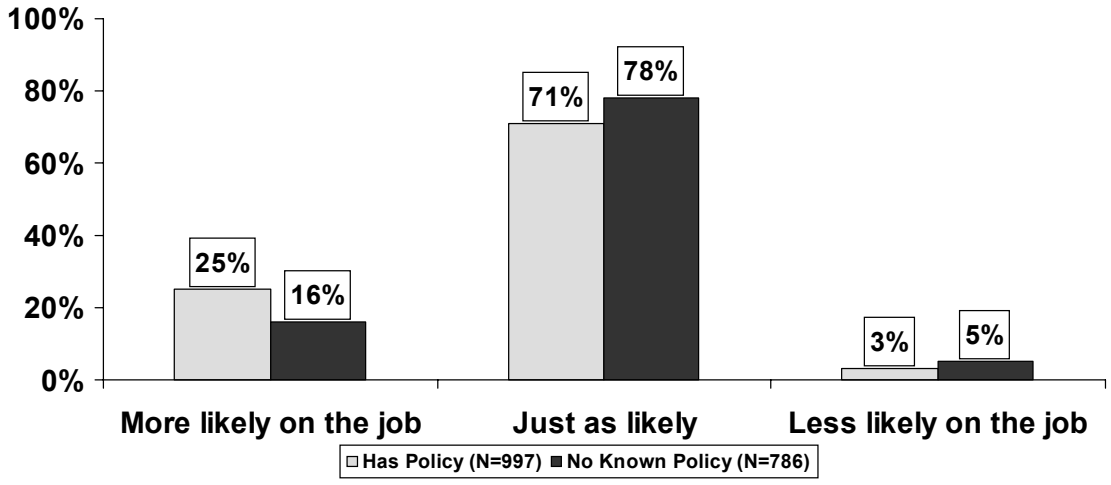
Base: More likely to wear safety belt when driving on the job as compared to personal driving.

Unweighted N=378

Categories sum to more than 100% because more than one response was allowed.

A key question is whether or not the presence of a company safety belt policy affects employees' safety belt use. The item asking respondents to compare their safety belt use when driving for work to their usage during personal driving provides one means for exploring this issue. Figure 17 compares the responses to this question from drivers who thought their company had a safety belt policy to those who did not think there was a company policy. It shows that drivers were more likely to report higher safety belt use on the job if they believed their company had a safety belt policy (25% to 16%).

Figure 17
Drivers' Job Versus Personal Safety Belt Use By Presence Of Company Policy



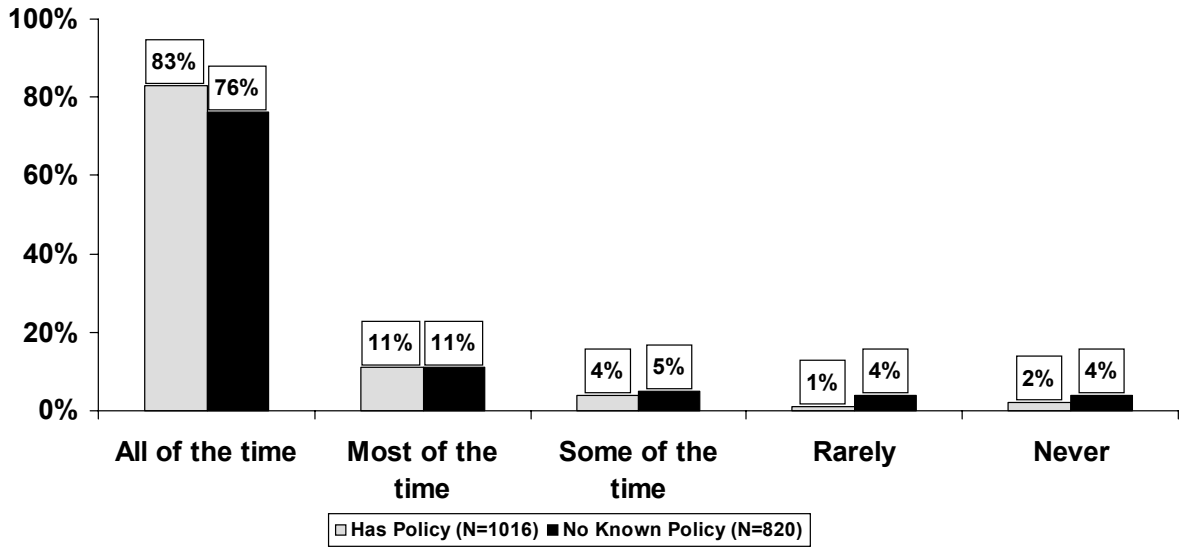
Qx: Does your company or business have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job?

Qx: Are you more likely, less likely or just as likely to wear your seat belt when driving on the job as compared to when driving for personal use?

Base: Drives a vehicle as part of job, at least occasionally wears safety belt, and primary vehicle has safety belts. Unweighted N's listed above.

Figure 17 assessed whether company policies were associated with reported differences in safety belt usage between work and personal driving. However, it did not address the question of whether the presence of a company safety belt policy affected usage during both types of driving. Figure 18 looks at general reported safety belt usage (i.e., not associated with a particular type of driving) for persons who drove on the job and did, or did not, believe that their company had a safety belt policy. This analysis included persons who said they never wore their safety belts while driving. According to the data, 83% of drivers who thought their company had a policy said they wore their safety belts "all of the time" compared to 76% who did not think there was a company policy.

Figure 18
Drivers' General Safety Belt Use
By Presence Of Company Policy

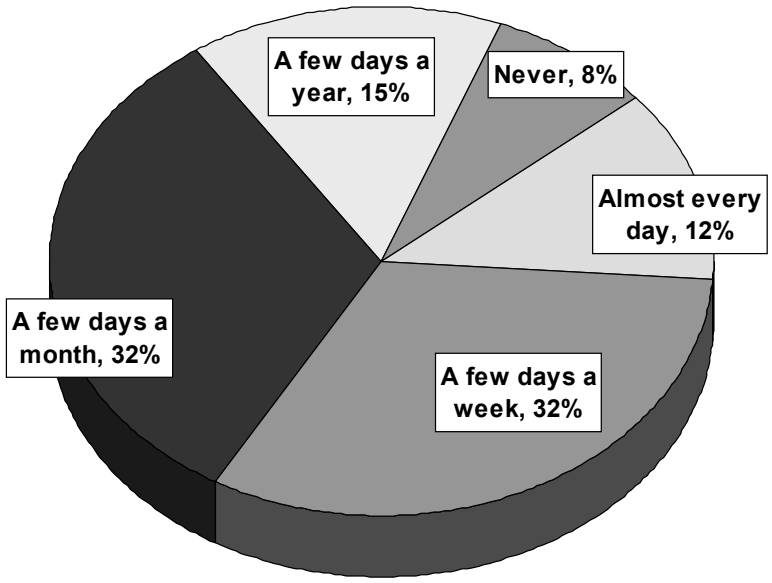


Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?
Qx: Does your company or business have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job?
Base: Drives a vehicle as part of job and primary vehicle has safety belts.
Unweighted N's listed above.

Passenger Use Of Safety Belts

More than 90% of the public ride as passengers in motor vehicles at least on occasion. Twelve percent do so almost every day while larger numbers ride as passengers either a few days a week (32%) or a few days a month (32%).

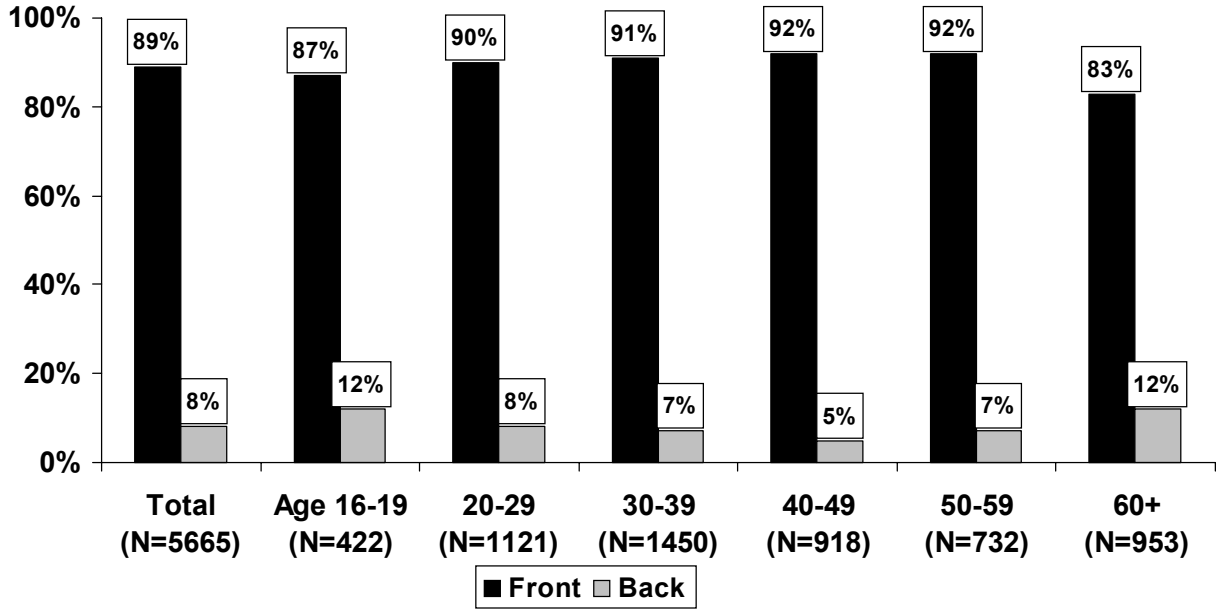
Figure 19
Frequency Ride As Passenger



Qx: How often do you ride as a passenger in any kind of car, van or truck?
Base: Total population age 16+.
Unweighted N=6180
**The percentages in the pie do not sum to 100% because of rounding.*

The vast majority of persons age 16 and older (89%) usually sit in the front seat when riding as passengers in motor vehicles. Eight percent usually sit in the back and 3% were unsure where they usually sat. Persons age 60 and older were least likely to usually sit in the front.

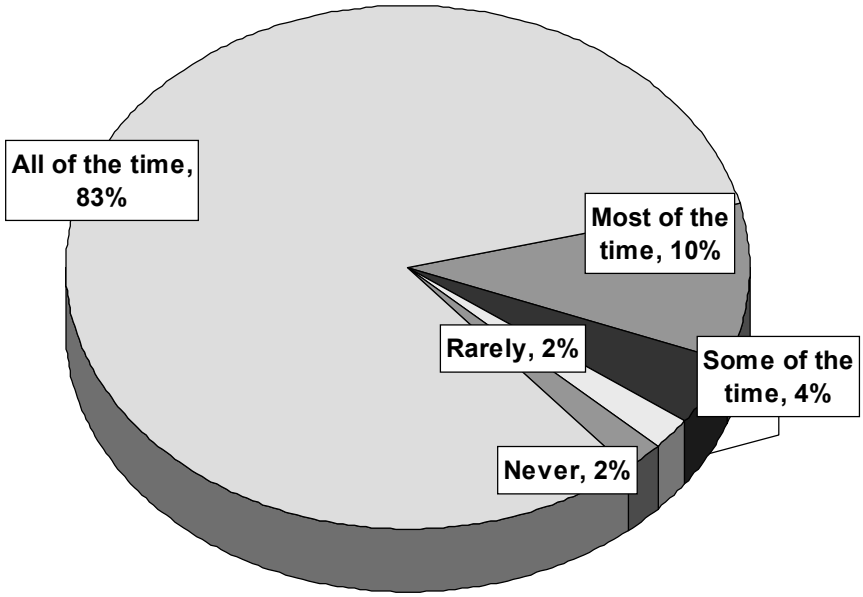
Figure 20
Usually Rides In Front Or Back Seat



Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?
Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger.
Unweighted N's listed above.

As noted on page 11, 84% of drivers said that they used their safety belt “all of the time” while driving. Reported safety belt usage was about the same on the front seat passenger side at 83%

Figure 21
Reported Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Passenger In Front Seat



Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger.
Unweighted N=5665
**The percentages in the pie do not sum to 100% because of rounding.*

Safety belt use may be affected by whether a person is sitting in his/her normal seating position as unusual situations could interfere with established habits. However, for the front seat passenger position, the data showed little difference in reported usage between persons who normally rode in the front as passengers and those who normally rode in the back. Eighty-two percent of persons who normally rode in the front seat as passengers said they always wore their safety belt when riding as front seat passengers. Eighty-six percent of those who normally rode in the back seat said they always wore their safety belt when riding as front seat passengers.

Table 13
Frequency Wear Safety Belt As Front Seat Passenger By Where Usually Ride As Passenger

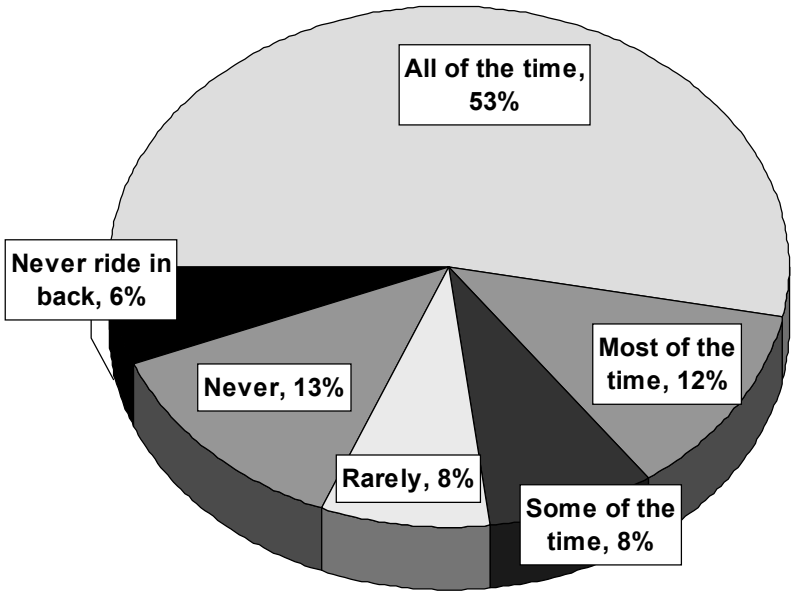
Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?
Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger.

Frequency of front seat passenger safety belt use	Where usually ride as a passenger		
	Front seat	Back seat	Not sure
	(N=5047)	(N=449)	(N=162)
All of the time	82%	86%	84%
Most of the time	10%	6%	8%
Some of the time	4%	4%	4%
Rarely	2%	1%	1%
Never	2%	1%	1%
Never ride in front seat	*	2%	2%
Not sure/Refused	*	*	*

*Less than 0.5%.

Safety belt use was substantially lower in the back seat passenger positions. Only 53% of persons said that they always wore their safety belt when riding as a passenger in the back seat. About one in eight (13%) reported never wearing safety belts in the back seat. It bears repeating, however, that the vast majority of adults usually rode in the front seat (see page 38).

Figure 22
Reported Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Passenger In Back Seat



Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger.
Unweighted N=5665

As with the front seat (page 40), safety belt use in the back did not vary substantially according to the person's normal seating position. Fifty-two percent of those who normally rode in the front seat as passengers said they always wore their safety belt when riding in the back. Fifty-five percent of those who normally rode in the back seat said they always wore their safety belt when riding as back seat passengers.

Table 14
Frequency Wear Safety Belt As Back Seat Passenger By Where Usually Ride As Passenger

Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?
Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger.

Frequency of back seat passenger safety belt use	Where usually ride as a passenger		
	Front seat	Back seat	Not sure
	(N=5047)	(N=449)	(N=162)
All of the time	52%	55%	59%
Most of the time	12%	12%	17%
Some of the time	8%	11%	6%
Rarely	8%	9%	6%
Never	13%	13%	11%
Never ride in back seat	7%	*	1%
Not sure/Refused	*	*	*

*Less than 0.5%.

People were fairly consistent in their reported safety belt use as drivers and front seat passengers. More than nine-in-ten (93%) who said they used their safety belt all of the time when driving also said they wore their safety belt all of the time while riding as front seat passengers. About two-thirds (62%) of those who rarely or never wore their safety belts while driving also rarely or never used them as front seat passengers.

Table 15
Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Driver By Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Front Seat Passenger

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?
Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts and who at least sometimes ride as passengers.

Frequency of safety belt use as front seat passenger	Seat belt use as driver			
	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely/Never
	(N=4325)	(N=450)	(N=168)	(N=157)
All of the time	93%	31%	12%	14%
Most of the time	5%	57%	21%	11%
Some of the time	1%	9%	52%	12%
Rarely/Never	1%	3%	15%	62%
Never ride in front	*	--	--	--
Not sure/Refused	--	--	--	--

*Less than 0.5%. -- No cases.

Even those who normally wore their safety belts in the front seat were less inclined to wear their safety belts in the back. Only 61% of persons who said they always wore safety belts while driving also said they always wore them as back seat passengers. About two-fifths of persons who wore safety belts "most of the time" as drivers either always (13%) or most of the time (28%) wore them when riding in the back.

Table 16
Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Driver By Frequency Of Safety Belt Use As Back Seat Passenger

Qx: When driving this (car/truck/van) how often do you wear your (shoulder/lap) belt?
Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts and who at least sometimes ride as passengers.

Frequency of safety belt use as back seat passenger	Seat belt use as driver			
	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely/Never
	(N=4325)	(N=450)	(N=168)	(N=157)
All of the time	61%	13%	7%	5%
Most of the time	12%	28%	3%	2%
Some of the time	8%	12%	17%	1%
Rarely/Never	14%	38%	61%	82%
Never ride in back	6%	8%	12%	10%
Not sure/ Refused	*	1%	--	--

*Less than 0.5%. -- No cases.