

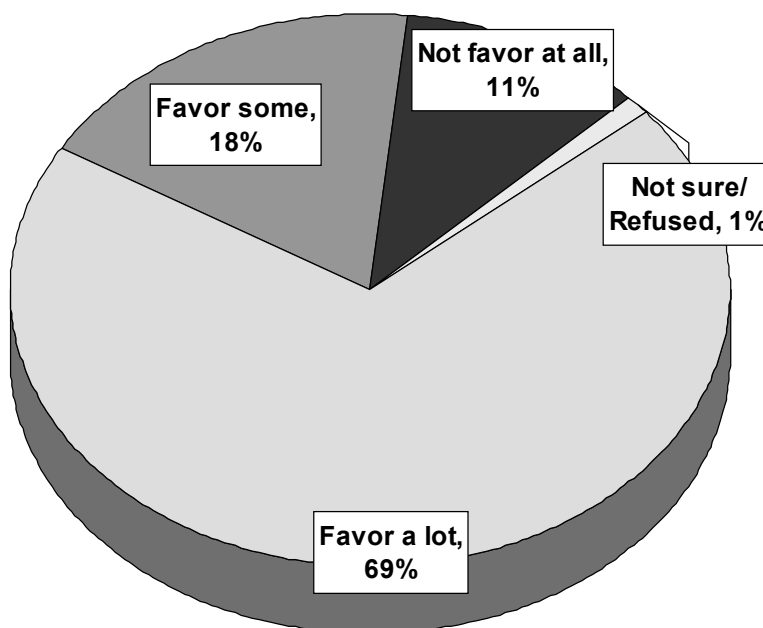
2003 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 4: ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE WITH SAFETY BELT LAWS AND THEIR ENFORCEMENT

Attitudes Toward Safety Belt Laws

At the time the survey was conducted, 49 states plus the District of Columbia had laws requiring safety belt use that were applicable to adults, New Hampshire being the exception (see Appendix B). Respondents were asked their attitudes about enactment and enforcement of the laws, their knowledge of the safety belt laws in their own State, and their personal experience with safety belt law enforcement. Most persons age 16 and older (88%)⁷ favored requiring drivers and front seat passengers to wear safety belts. More than two-thirds (69%) favored such laws a lot, and an additional 18% favored them somewhat. Eleven percent did not favor such laws at all while 1% was unsure.

Figure 56
Support For Front Seat Safety Belt Laws



Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these at all?

Base: Total population 16+.

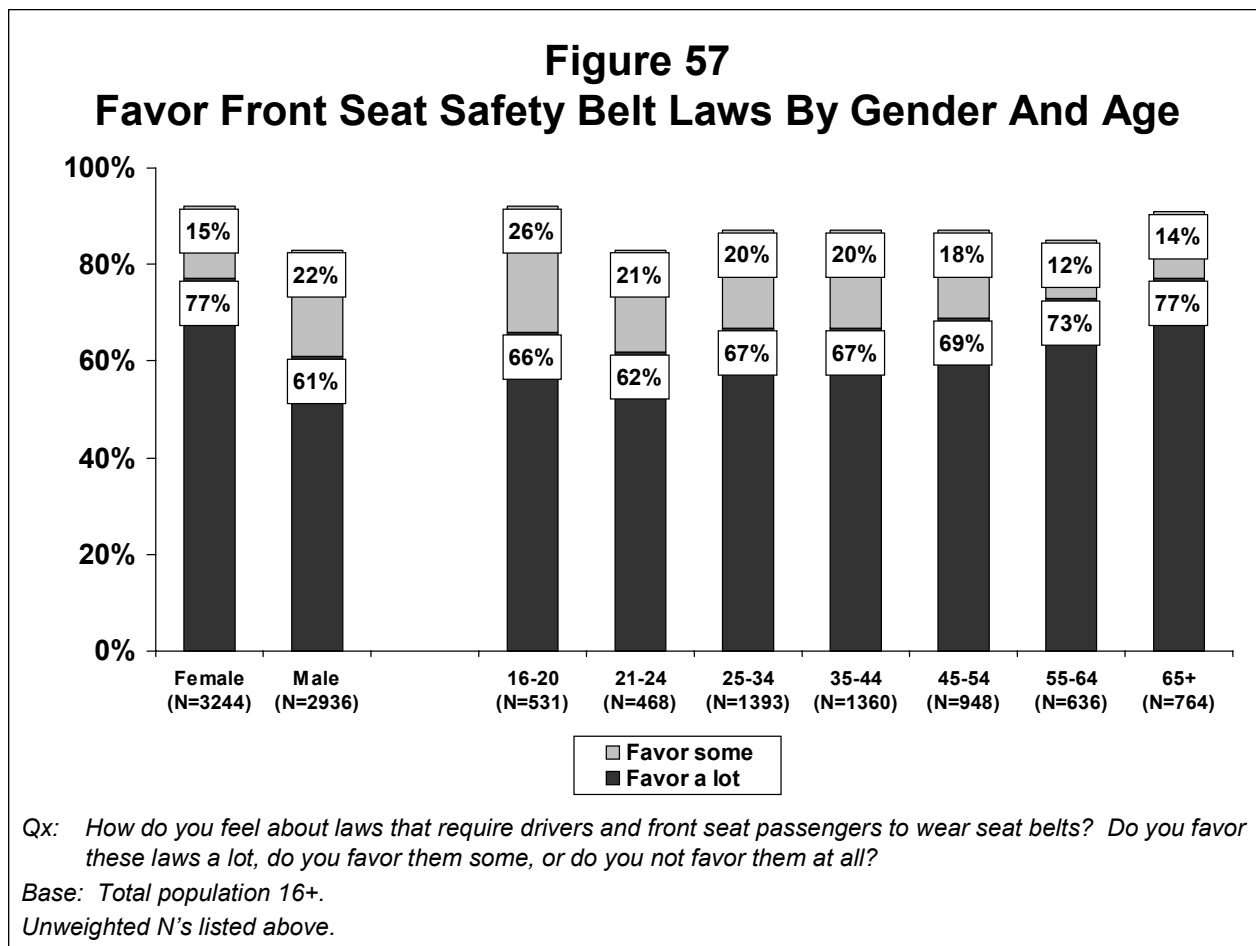
Unweighted N=6180

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

⁷ The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

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Females (92%) voiced stronger support for front seat safety belt laws than did males (82%)⁸. The oldest and youngest age groups were most likely to say that they supported front seat safety belt laws.

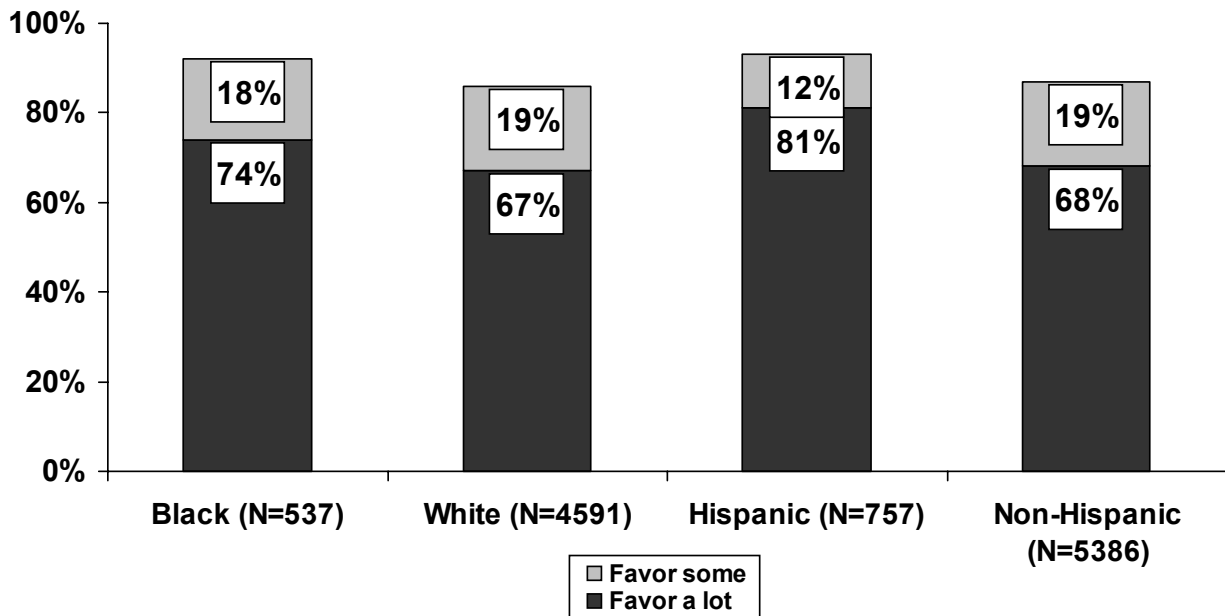


⁸ The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Blacks (92%) and Hispanics (93%) were more likely to express support for front seat safety belt laws than Whites (86%) and non-Hispanics (87%). This pattern of greater support among minority groups for legislation and enforcement was repeated on other questionnaire items addressed in this Chapter.

Figure 58
Favor Front Seat Safety Belt Laws By Race And Ethnicity



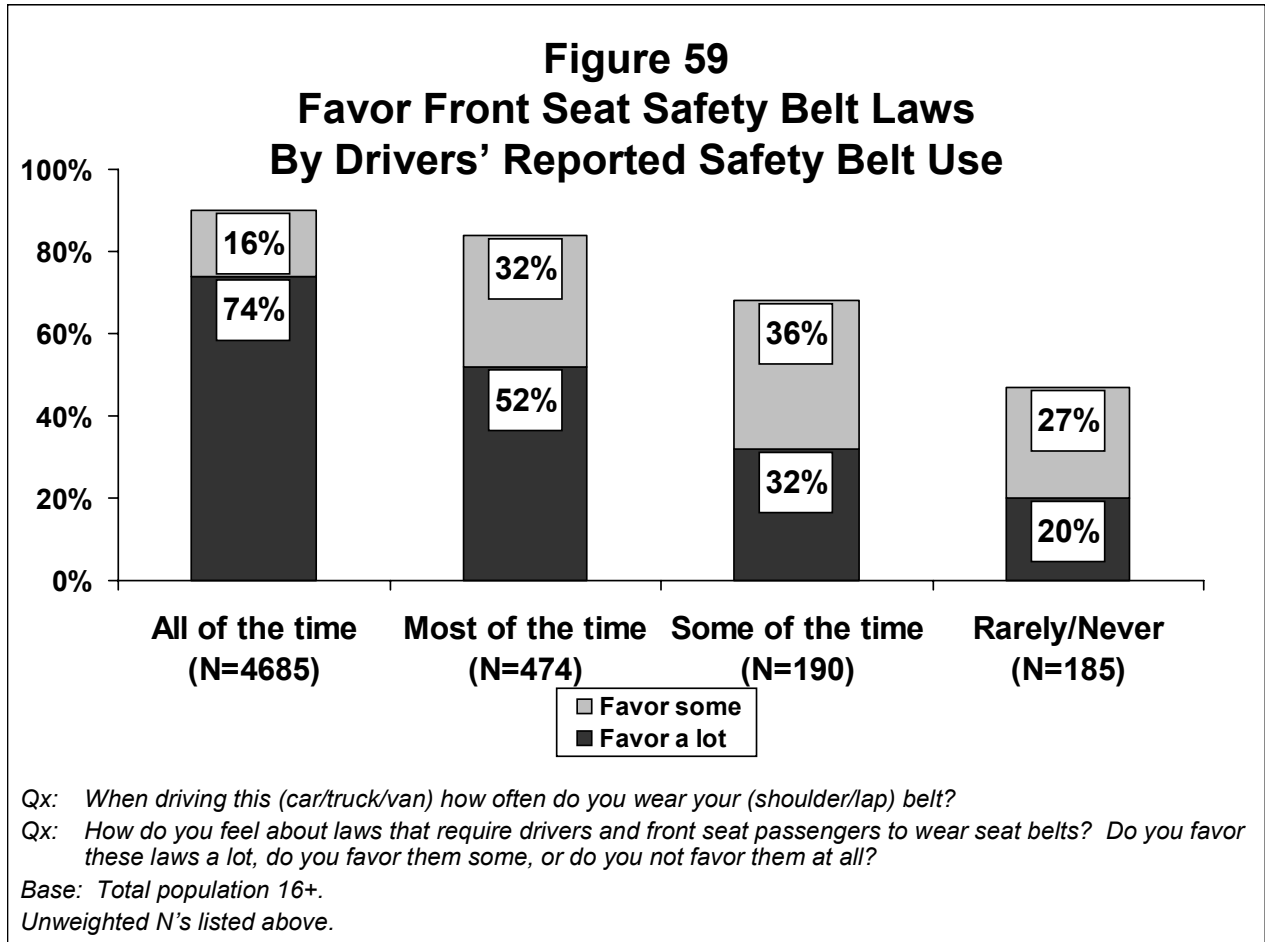
Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor them at all?

Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

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As expected, support for safety belt laws was strongest among those who used their safety belt most often. Nine-in-ten drivers (90%) who said they used their safety belt “all of the time” favored front seat safety belt laws “a lot” or “some.” The figure dropped to 83%⁹ of “most of the time” safety belt users, and 69% of “some of the time” users. Among drivers who rarely or never wore safety belts, 47% said they favored laws requiring safety belt use by drivers and front seat passengers.

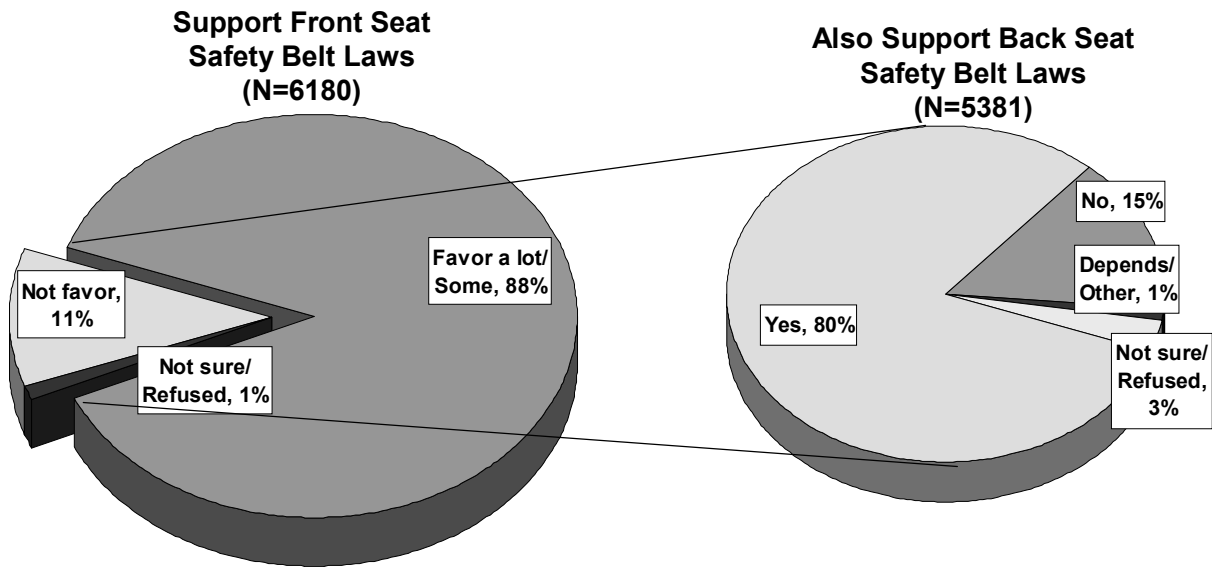


⁹ The numbers in this paragraph may not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

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If respondents said that they favored front seat safety belt laws (either somewhat or a lot), the interviewers then asked them if they also supported laws that applied to the back seat as well. Four-fifths (80%) said yes. This equates to more than two-thirds (70%) of the total population age 16 and older supporting safety belt laws that apply to both the front and back seats (80% of the 88% who favored front seat laws).

Figure 60
Support For Safety Belt Laws That Apply To Back Seat Adult Passengers



Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

Qx: Do you think that seat belt laws should also apply to back seat adult passengers?

Base: Pie 1: Total population age 16+.

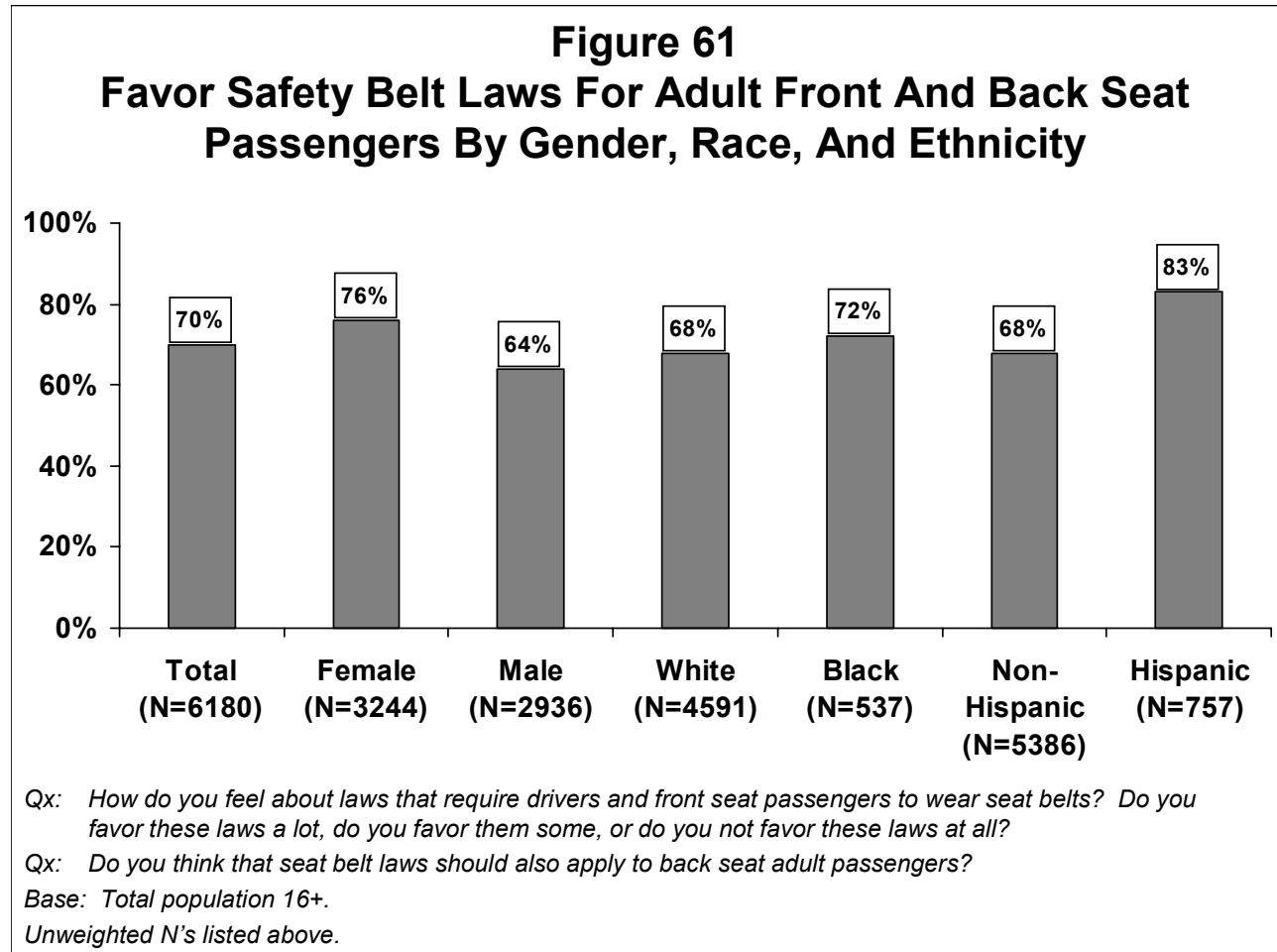
Pie 2: Those who favor front safety belt laws.

Unweighted N's listed above.

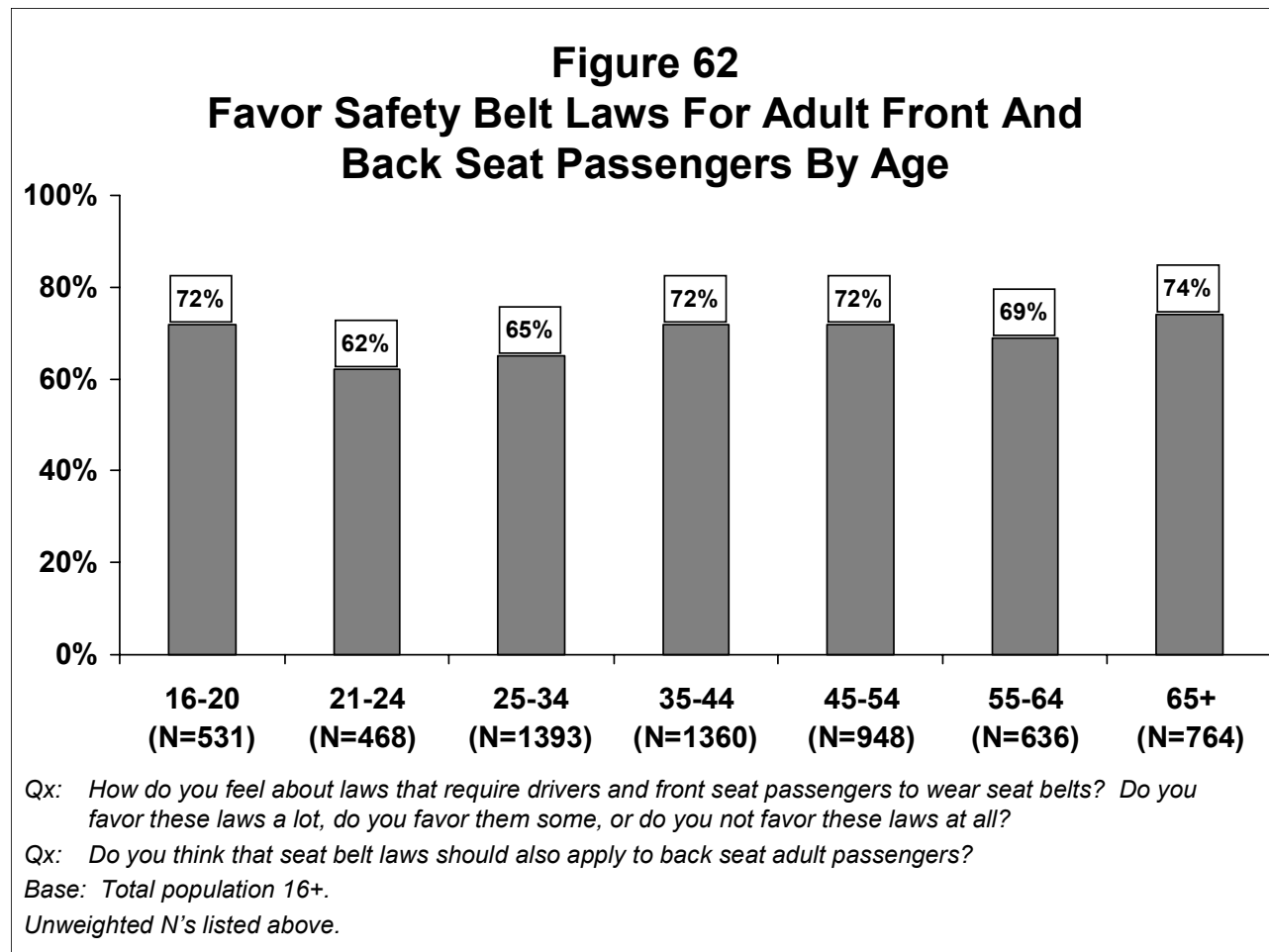
*The percentages in the pie do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

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As noted on the previous page, 70% of persons believed that safety belt laws should apply to vehicle occupants in both the front and back seats. The percentage was higher among females (76%) than males (64%), and higher among Hispanics (83%) than non-Hispanics (68%).



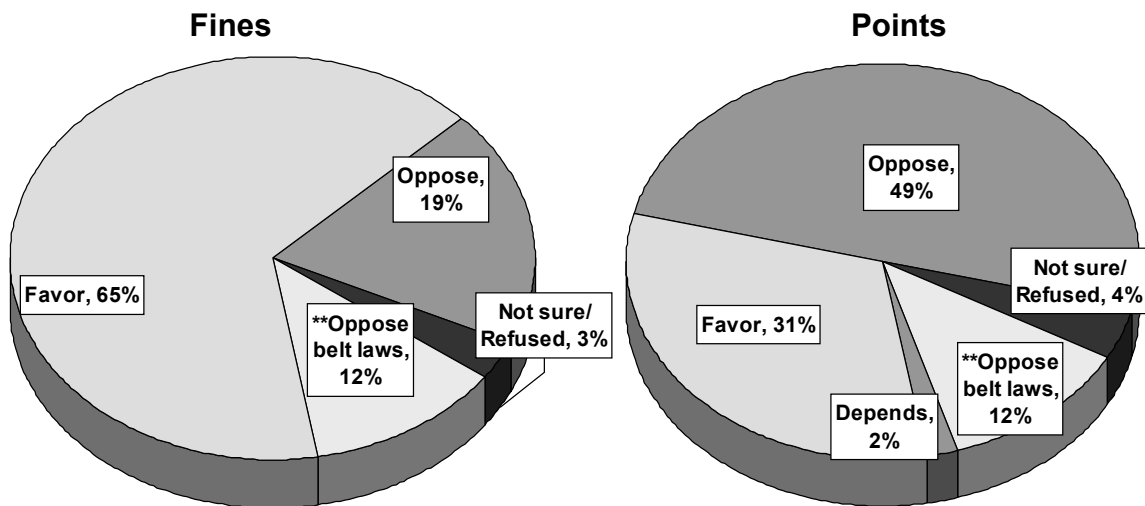
The least support across age groups for both front and back seat laws was recorded for persons ages 21 through 24 (62%).



Attitudes Toward Enforcement Of Safety Belt Laws

The public tended to favor enforcing safety belt laws with fines, but not with points on the driver's license. About two-thirds (65%) of the population age 16 and older supported fines for drivers who did not wear safety belts. Less than half that many (31%) supported points against the license as a penalty; another 2% said it depended on past violations. As indicated on page 110, 12% of the population opposed front seat safety belt laws entirely or did not know if they did (they did not receive the fines/points questions and therefore are separated from those who did).

**Figure 63
Support For Fines And Points**



** Includes 1% not sure/refused on support for front seat safety belt laws.

Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

Qx: Do you favor or oppose fines for drivers who do not wear seat belts?

Qx: Do you favor or oppose receiving points against a license as a penalty for seat belt violations?

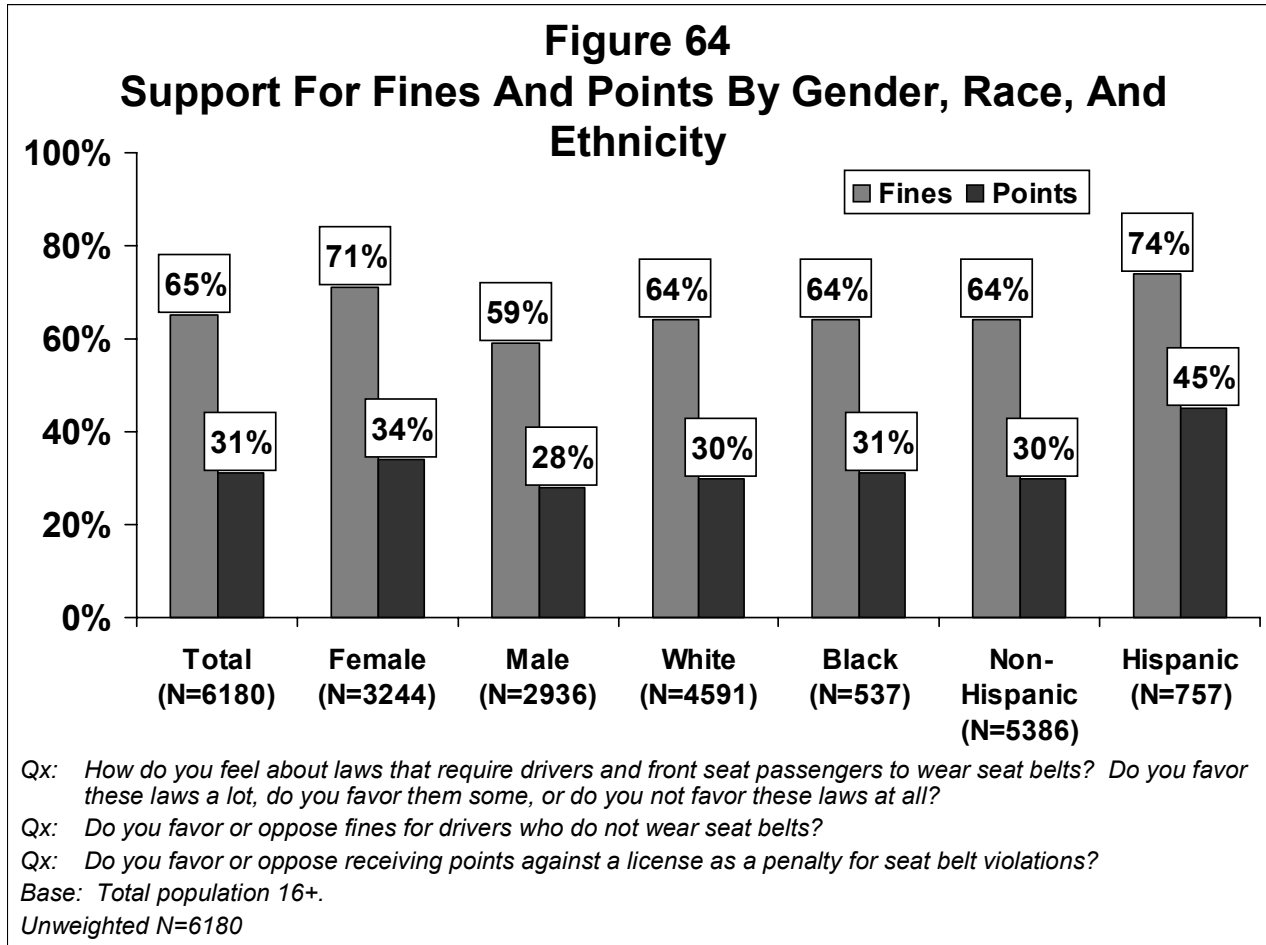
Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N=6180

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

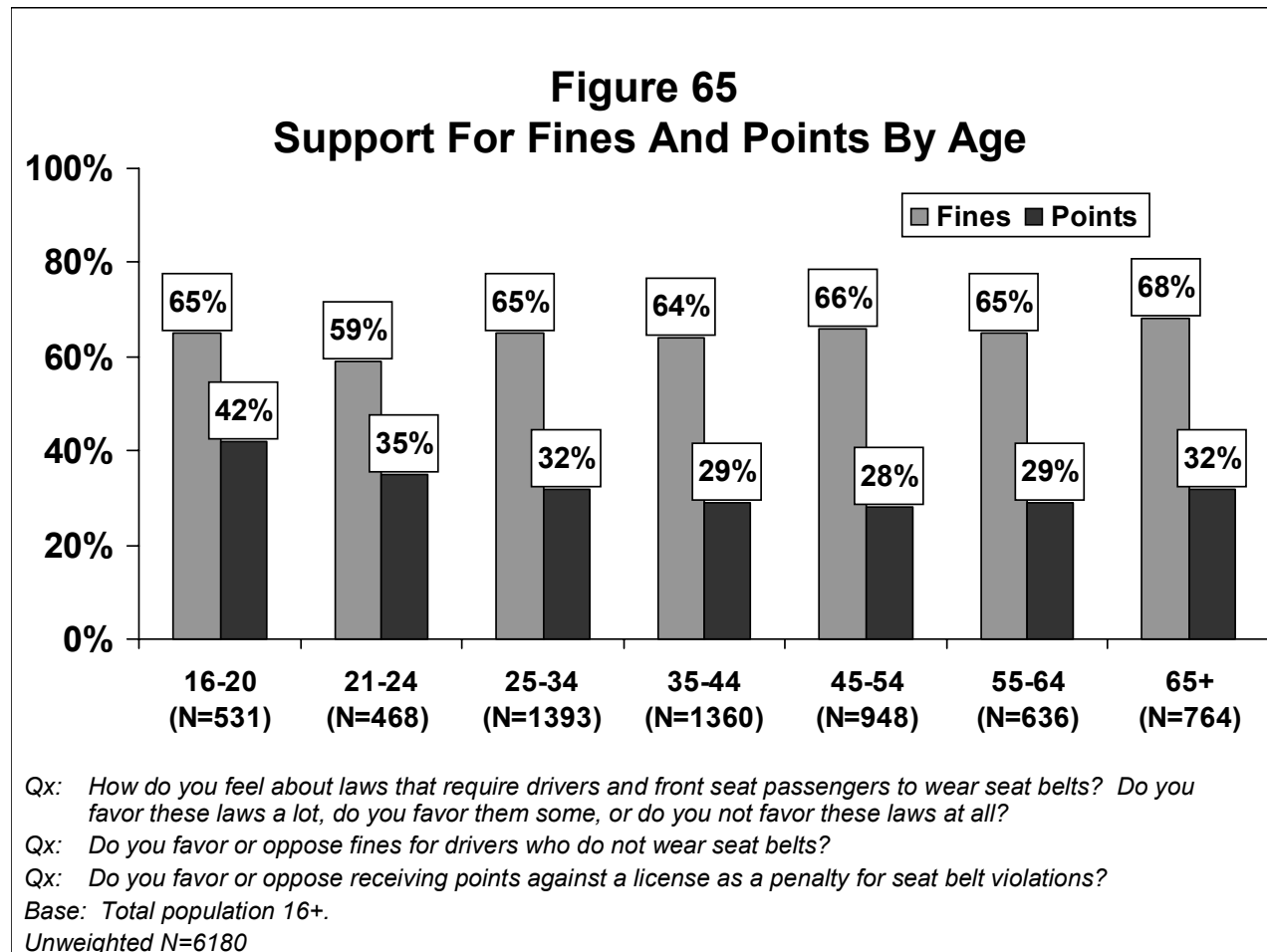
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Females were more likely to support fines and points against a license for safety belt violations than males (fines: 71% to 59%, points: 34% to 28%). Blacks and Whites were equal in their support for fines (64%) and points (31% to 30%). However, Hispanics were much more likely to support both fines (74% to 64%) and points (45% to 30%) for safety belt violations than non-Hispanics.



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There was little difference in support for fines for safety belt violations by age. However, younger persons (under 25) were more likely to support points than older persons.



2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Support for points was highest among those who had not graduated high school and those with incomes under \$15,000.

Table 39
Support For Fines And Points
By Demographic Characteristics

Qx: *Do you favor or oppose fines for drivers who do not wear seat belts?*

Qx: *Do you favor or oppose receiving points against a license as a penalty for seat belt violations?*

Base: *Total population age 16+.*

	Unweighted N	*Fines			*Points		
		Favor	Oppose	**Oppose belt laws	Favor	Oppose	**Oppose belt laws
Total	(6180)	65%	19%	12%	31%	49%	12%
Education							
11 or less	(806)	66%	19%	11%	43%	38%	11%
HS grad/GED	(1791)	63%	21%	13%	28%	52%	13%
Some college	(1474)	64%	19%	14%	29%	51%	14%
College grad	(2072)	67%	19%	11%	31%	51%	11%
Income							
<\$15,000	(643)	67%	19%	9%	39%	44%	9%
\$15,000-29,999	(957)	63%	20%	13%	35%	45%	13%
\$30,000-49,999	(1278)	66%	19%	12%	30%	51%	12%
\$50,000-74,999	(1064)	66%	19%	12%	30%	52%	12%
\$75,000-99,999	(615)	63%	19%	16%	28%	52%	16%
\$100,000+	(702)	66%	19%	13%	30%	51%	13%
Vehicle type							
Car	(3276)	67%	19%	11%	32%	50%	11%
Van/Minivan	(558)	69%	20%	9%	32%	55%	9%
Pickup truck	(860)	55%	21%	21%	26%	49%	21%
SUV	(745)	69%	15%	12%	30%	53%	12%

**The three response categories (favor/oppose/oppose belt laws) do not sum to 100% because persons who answered DK/Refused or Depends to the questions on fines or points are not shown in the table.*

***Includes those who did not know, or refused to say, if they supported front seat safety belt laws (they were not asked the questions on fines or points). This was about 1 percentage point for almost all groups*

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Interviewers asked those who supported fines as a sanction what they thought the minimum fine should be for the first safety belt violation. They then asked the same respondents what they thought the fine should be for repeat safety belt violations. If it was a first time violation, 40% supported fines under \$50 (or no fine at all) while 18% supported fines of \$100 or more. However, the respondents generally favored stiffer fines if it was a repeat violation: only 13% supported fines under \$50 while 48% supported fines of \$100 or more.

Figure 66
Suggested Minimum Fine For Violation Of Safety Belt Law:
Fine Supporters



Qx: What do you think the minimum fine should be for the first seat belt violation?

Qx: What do you think the minimum fine should be for repeat seat belt violations?

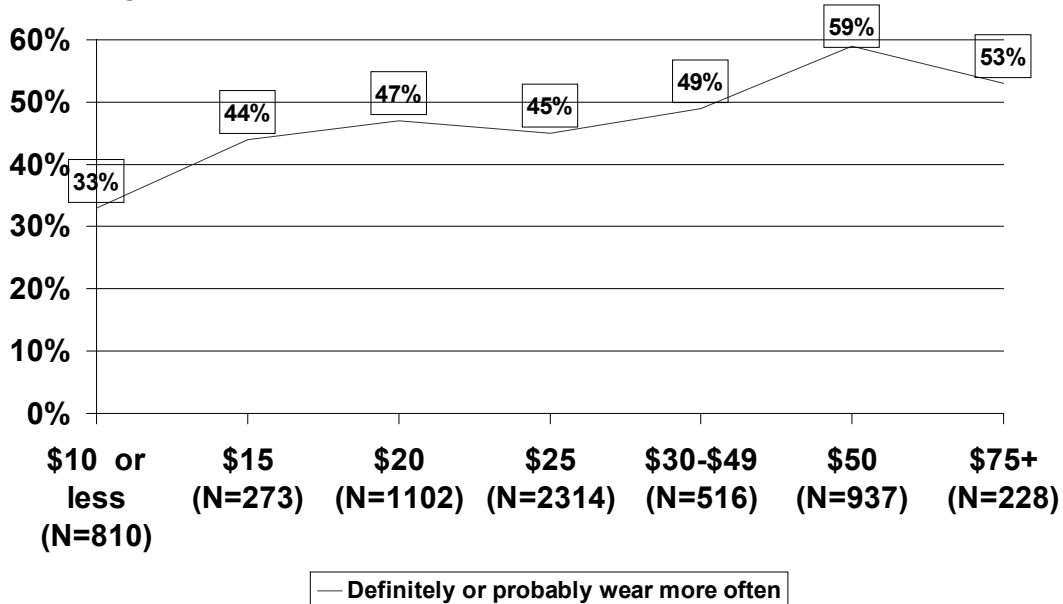
Base: Support fines for safety belt law violations.

Unweighted N=3978

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

The survey sought to determine whether the public believed that existing fine amounts can affect behavior. Respondents were asked if someone they knew who didn't use safety belts all of the time would wear them more often if assessed the amount of the fine in their State (in the one State not having a belt law applicable to adults an amount of \$25 was used; in States where the fine amount was within a designated range an amount of \$50 was used). When the general level of the fines increased, the expectations for behavior change did as well. If fined \$10 or less, 33% thought that someone they knew would probably or definitely wear safety belts more often. This increased to 47% with fines of \$20, 49% with fines of \$30-\$49, and to 59% with fines of \$50.

Figure 67
Someone They Know Would Probably Or Definitely Wear Safety Belts More Often If Assessed The State Fine



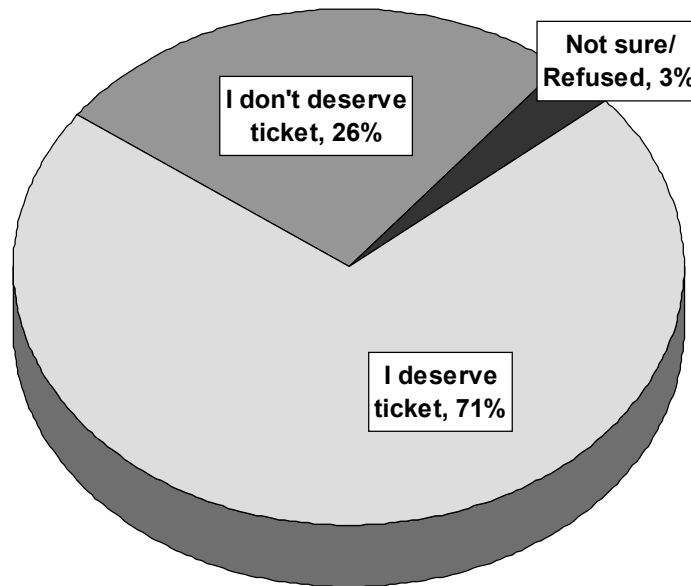
Qx: I'd like you to think about someone you know who doesn't wear seat belts all of the time. If that person were stopped and fined (amount of fine in state) for not wearing seat belts, would this person definitely wear seat belts more often, probably wear seat belts more often, or probably not change his or her seat belt wearing habits?

Base: Total population 16+.
 Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Respondents were asked how they would likely react to getting a ticket for a safety belt violation. The interviewers gave respondents two choices and asked which was more likely; that they would believe they deserved the ticket because they broke the law, or they would believe the ticket was undeserved because wearing a safety belt should be a personal choice. This question was designed to enable comparison of the public's views about safety belt laws from the societal perspective (support for belt laws in principle) and the personal perspective (reaction to personally receiving some punishment for violating the laws). According to the data, 71% would be more likely to believe that they deserved the ticket.

Figure 68
Likely Reaction To Receiving Ticket For Safety Belt Violation



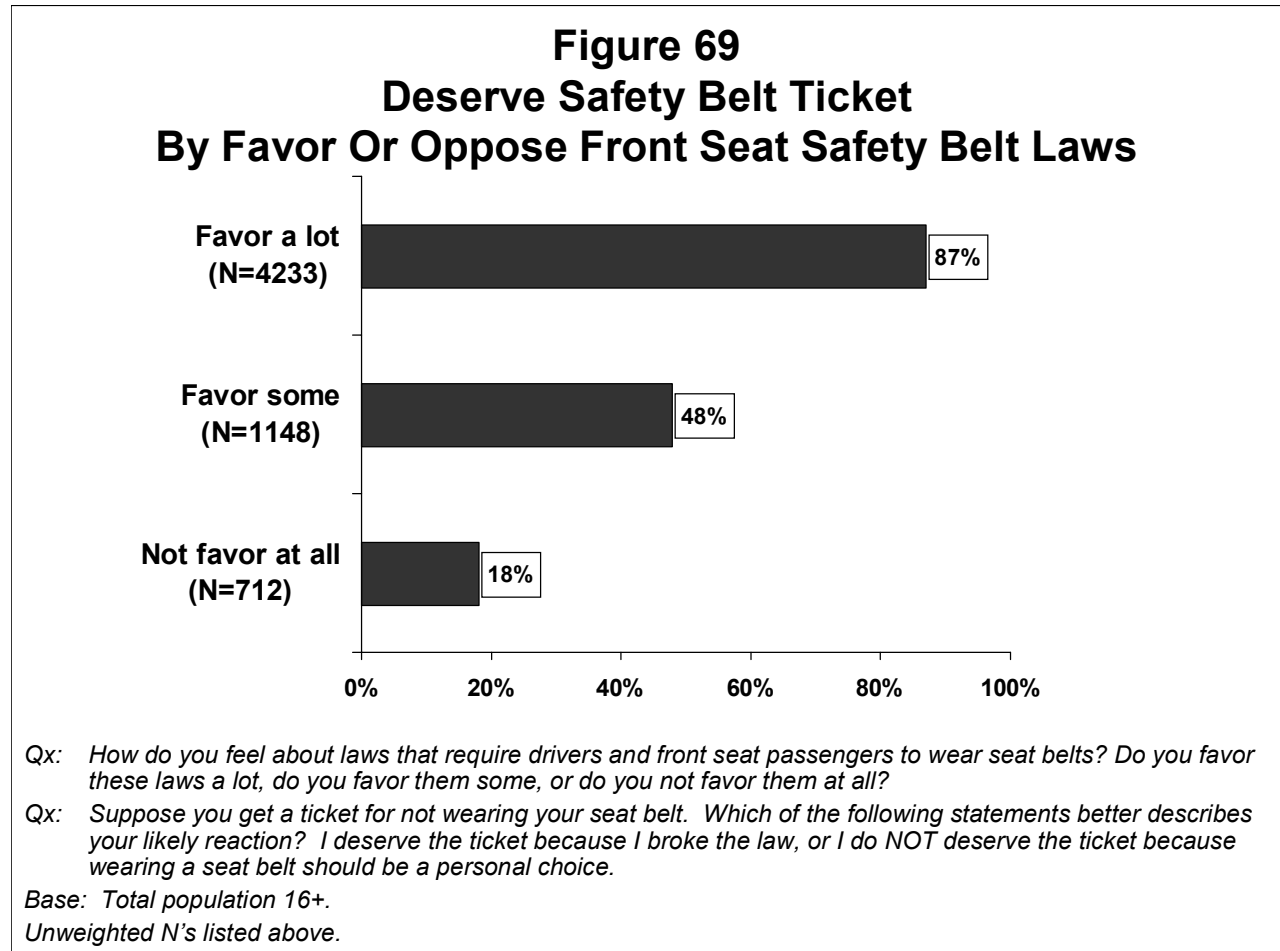
Qx: Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt. Which of the following statements better describes your likely reaction? I deserve the ticket because I broke the law, or I do NOT deserve the ticket because wearing a seat belt should be a personal choice.

Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N=6180

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

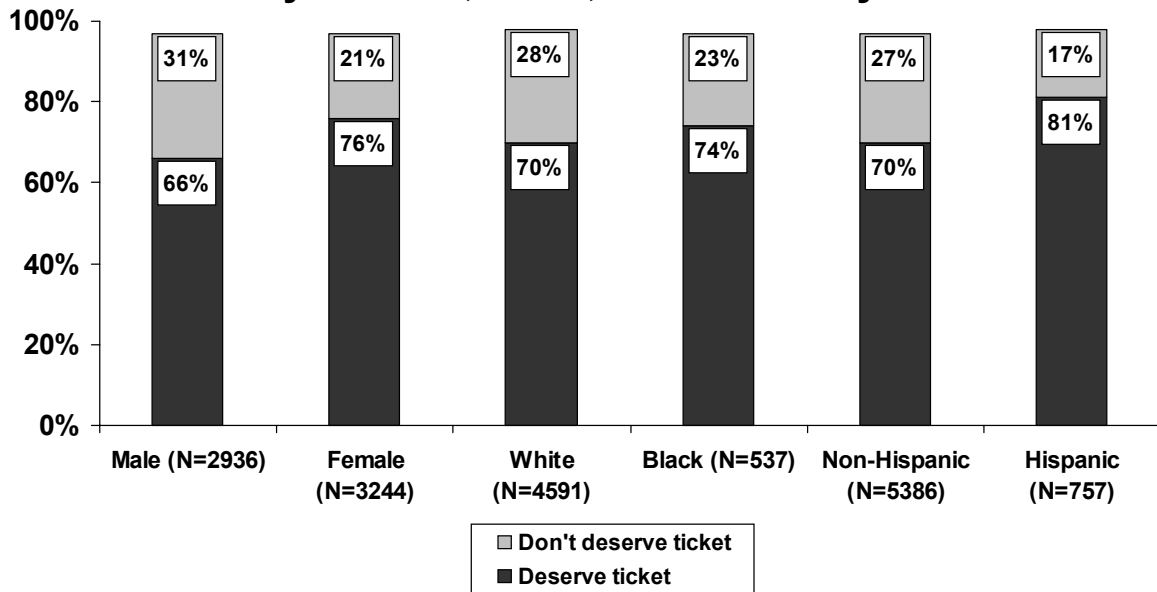
The survey found attitudes toward safety belt laws in general, and attitudes about the fairness of personally receiving a ticket for a safety belt violation, to be somewhat consistent with one another although not entirely so. About six-in-seven persons (87%) who said they favored front seat safety belt laws “a lot” also said they would deserve the ticket for breaking the law. This figure dropped to 48% for those who favored the laws “some”. Still, 11% who favored the laws “a lot” responded that they would not deserve the ticket because it should be a personal choice (about 2% “did not know” their likely reaction or did not answer). Conversely, 18% of those who did not favor the laws at all said they would deserve the ticket.



2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Females (76%) were more likely than males (66%) to believe that their probable reaction would be that they deserved the ticket. Almost one-third of males (31%) instead chose the argument that they did not deserve the ticket because it should be a personal choice. In addition, Hispanics (81%) and Blacks (74%) were more likely than non-Hispanics (70%) and Whites (70%) to answer that they likely would feel that they deserved the ticket.

Figure 70
Likely Reaction To Receiving Safety Belt Ticket
By Gender, Race, And Ethnicity



Qx: Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt. Which of the following statements better describes your likely reaction? I deserve the ticket because I broke the law, or I do NOT deserve the ticket because wearing a seat belt should be a personal choice.

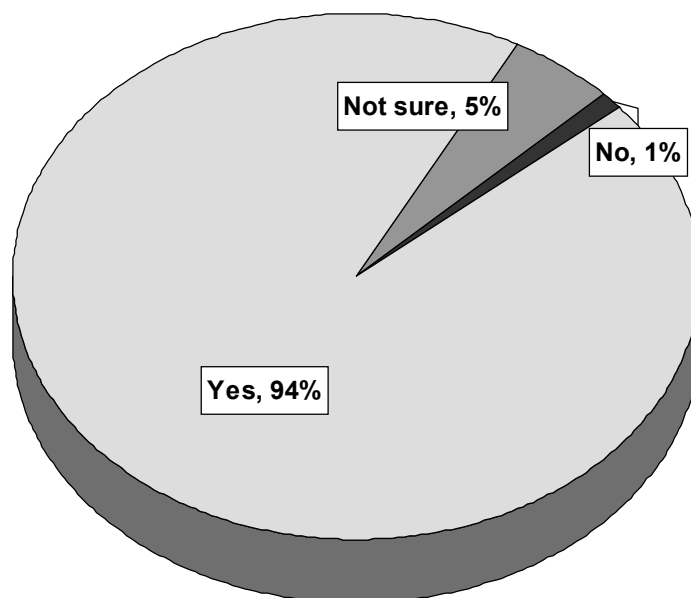
Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

Knowledge Of State Safety Belt Laws

Interviewers asked respondents whether or not their State had a safety belt law, and then asked questions about the law's coverage and enforcement guidelines. Most people (94%) believed their State did indeed have a safety belt law. Those that didn't were usually uncertain about the existence of a State law. At the time of the survey, New Hampshire was the only State not having a safety belt law applicable to adults. When the few survey cases from New Hampshire (30) were excluded from the analysis, the percentage of those who believed there was a State law remained unchanged at 94%.

Figure 71
Believe Their State Has A Law Requiring Safety Belt Use



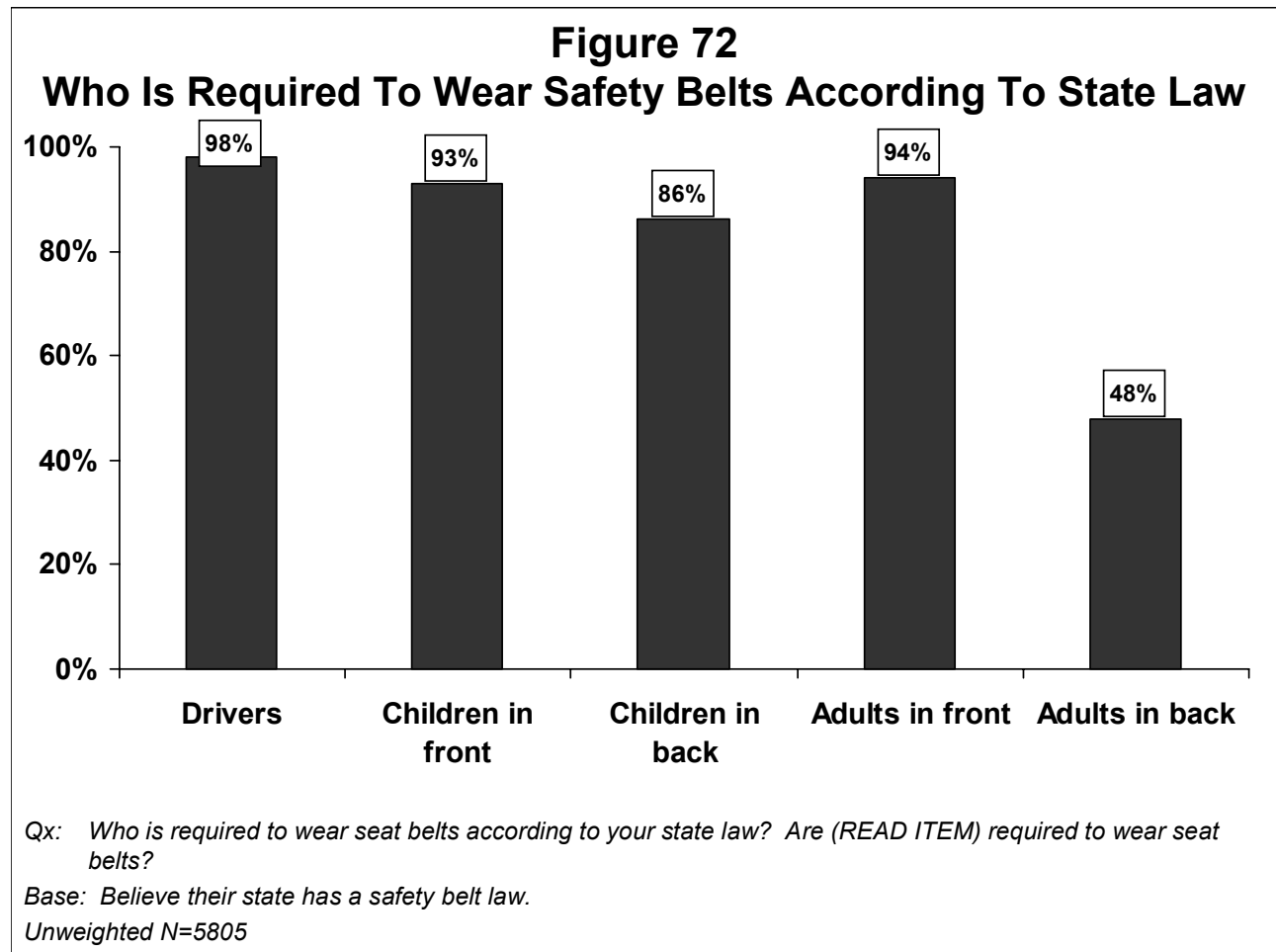
Qx: Does (STATE) have a law requiring seat belt use?

Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N=6180

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

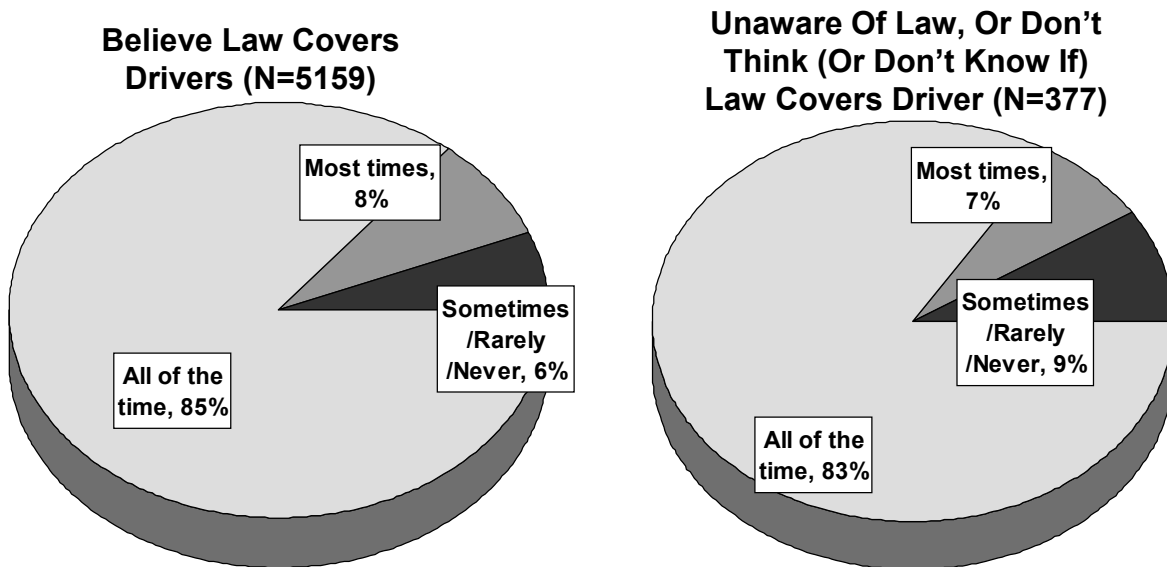
Those persons who believed their State had a law requiring safety belt use were asked who the law covered. The interviewers asked the respondents if each of the following groups was required to wear safety belts: drivers, children in the front seat, children in the back seat, adult passengers in the front seat, and adult passengers in the back seat. Almost everyone believed the law covered drivers (98%), children in the front (93%), and adult passengers in the front (94%). Many thought the law also covered children in the back (86%). Fewer than half (48%) assumed that adults were required to wear safety belts in the back seat.



2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

The next three pages show self-reported belt use for a specific seating position for persons who believed there was a law requiring usage in that seating position. For purposes of comparison, these pages also present self-reported belt use for persons who did not know there was a law, or did not believe that seating position was covered by the law, or were unsure if that seating position was covered by the law. Among drivers who thought there was a law requiring drivers to wear safety belts, 85% said they used their safety belt "all of the time" while driving. If they did not say that drivers were covered by a law, 83% said they wore safety belts "all of the time" while driving.

Figure 73
Driver Reported Safety Belt Use
By Whether Driver Believes Law Covers Drivers



Qx: Who is required to wear seat belts according to your state law? Are (Drivers) required to wear seat belts?

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

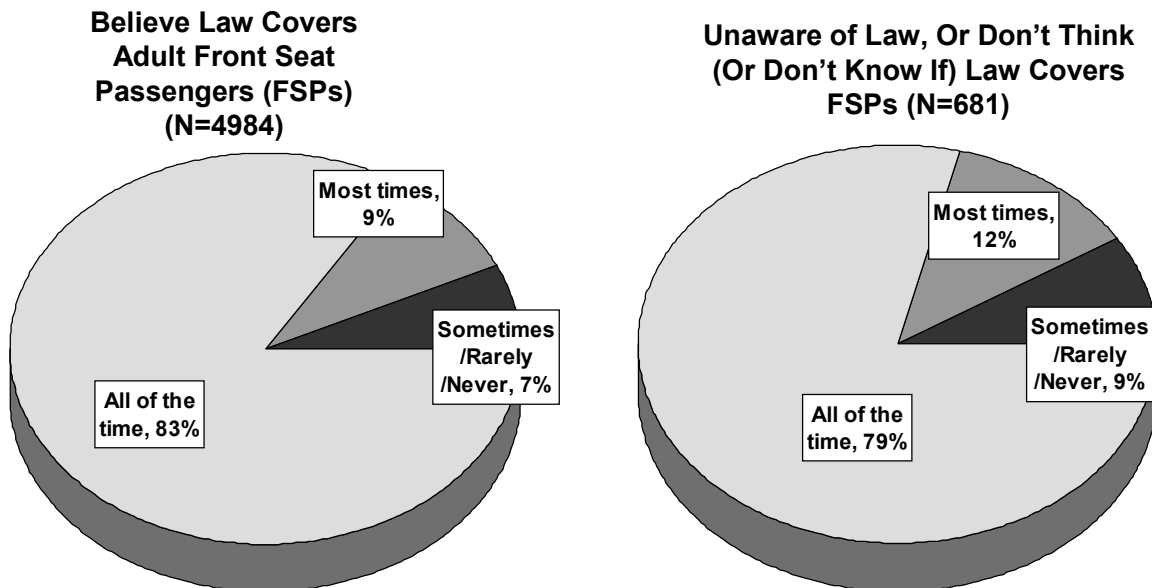
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

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

Eighty-three percent of those who said there was a safety belt law that covered adult front seat passengers also reported that they always wore their safety belt when sitting as passengers in the front seat. This compared to 79% of those who were unaware of a law, or did not say it covered front seat adult passengers.

Figure 74
Adults' Reported Front Passenger Safety Belt Use
By Whether Believe Law Covers That Position



Qx: Who is required to wear seat belts according to your state law? Are (adult passengers in the front seat) required to wear seat belts?

Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat how often do you wear your seat belt?

Base: Persons who at least on occasion ride as passengers.

Unweighted N's listed above.

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

The law appeared to make the greatest difference for safety belt use in the rear seating position. Among those who thought there was a law that covered the back seat, 62% said they used their safety belt “all of the time” when riding in the back. Only 45% of those who did not think or did not know if there was a law said that they wore their safety belt “all of the time” while riding in the back seat.

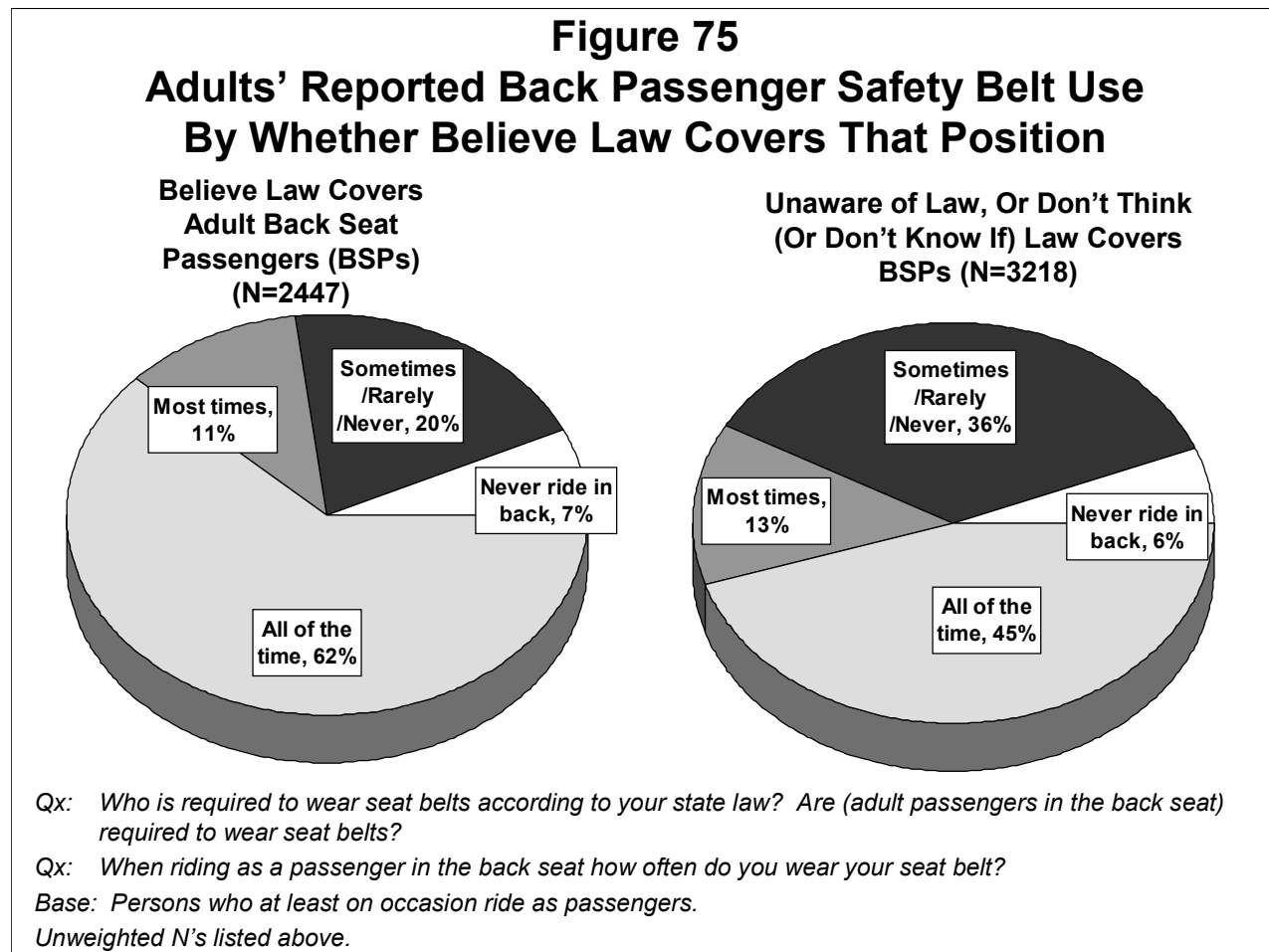
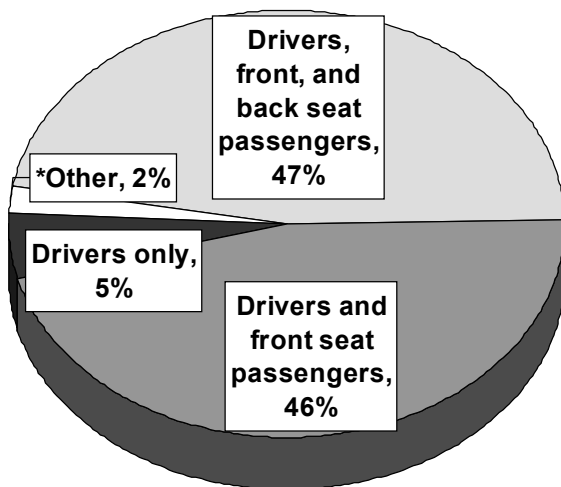


Figure 76 segments those persons who thought there was a State law into groups based on the extent they believed that the law covered adults. Forty-seven percent believed that the law applied to all adults in the vehicle (drivers, passengers in the front, and passengers in the back). About the same percentage (46%) thought that the law applied to only drivers and front seat passengers. Five percent said that the law applied to drivers only. The remainder of the respondents (2%) either provided a different permutation from the combinations possible, or else indicated that they did not know who the law covered.

Figure 76
Beliefs About Which Adults Are Required To Wear Safety Belts



Qx: *Who is required to wear seat belts according to your state law? Are (READ ITEM) required to wear seat belts?*

Base: *Believe their state has a safety belt law.*

Unweighted N=5805

* Other includes *Don't know/Refused* and other combinations not shown in the pie.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

The greater the coverage of the law, the more likely that persons correctly identified who in the vehicle was required to wear safety belts. In States where all seating positions were covered, 72% of the respondents correctly agreed that drivers, adult front seat passengers, and adult back seat passengers were required to wear safety belts. If the State law only covered the front seating positions, then fewer (55%) correctly agreed that drivers and adult front seat passengers, but not adult back seat passengers, were required to wear safety belts. Another 37% in these States believed that all seating positions were covered.

Table 40
Beliefs About Who Is Required To Wear Safety Belts
By Seating Positions Covered By State Law

Qx: Who is required to wear seat belts according to your state law? Are (READ ITEM) required to wear seat belts?

Base: Believe that state has a safety belt law.

Who public believes is required to wear safety belts	What state law requires	
	Driver and all passengers to wear safety belts	Only driver and front seat passengers to wear safety belts
	(N=1695)	(N=4095)
Driver and all passengers	72%	37%
Driver only	4%	6%
Driver and front seat passengers	22%	55%
Other/Not sure/Refused	2%	2%

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Pages 128-130 examined self-reported safety belt use according to beliefs about which seating positions were covered by the State law. Table 41 summarizes self-reported safety belt use according to the actual provisions of the State law. The results were similar in that the major difference occurred in the back seat. Without a law covering the back seating position, people were far less likely to report wearing their safety belt while riding in the back seat.

Table 41
Self-Reported Safety Belt Use
By Seating Positions Covered By State Law

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*

Qx: *When riding as a passenger in the back seat how often do you wear your seat belt?*

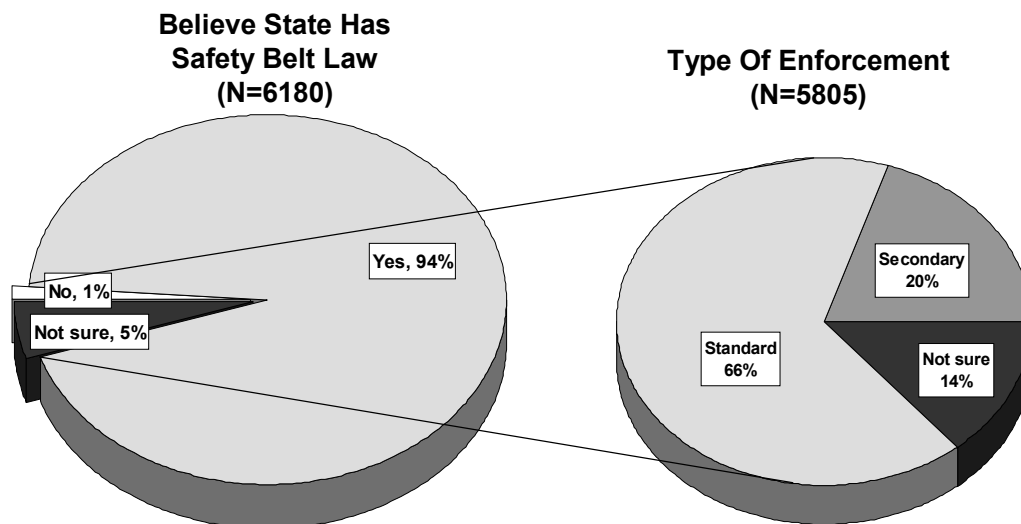
Base: *Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts/Persons who at least on occasion ride as passengers.*

Self-reported safety belt use for different seating positions	What state law requires	
	Driver and all passengers to wear safety belts	Only driver and front seat passengers to wear safety belts
Seat belt use as driver	(Drivers only/N=1611)	(Drivers only/N=3900)
All of the time	88%	84%
Most of the time	7%	9%
Some of the time	2%	4%
Rarely	1%	2%
Never	1%	2%
Seat belt use in front seat	(N=1642)	(N=3998)
All of the time	86%	82%
Most of the time	9%	10%
Some of the time	3%	4%
Rarely	1%	2%
Never	1%	2%
Seat belt use in back seat	(N=1642)	(N=3998)
All of the time	67%	47%
Most of the time	11%	13%
Some of the time	6%	9%
Rarely	5%	9%
Never	7%	15%
Never ride in back	4%	7%

Standard Or Secondary Enforcement Provisions Of Safety Belt Laws

State safety belt laws contain either standard or secondary enforcement provisions. Under standard enforcement (also known as primary enforcement), law enforcement officers can stop a vehicle on the basis of observing a safety belt violation. Under secondary enforcement an officer must observe some other violation first before stopping a vehicle. At the time of the survey 18 States plus the District of Columbia had standard enforcement provisions, and 31 State laws required secondary enforcement. Among persons who thought their State had a law, 66% believed it permitted standard enforcement. This equates to 62% of the total population age 16 and older (66% of the 94% who believed there was a State law).

Figure 77
Beliefs About Whether State Law Permits
Standard Or Secondary Enforcement



Qx: Does (STATE) have a law requiring seat belt use?

Qx: According to your state law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?

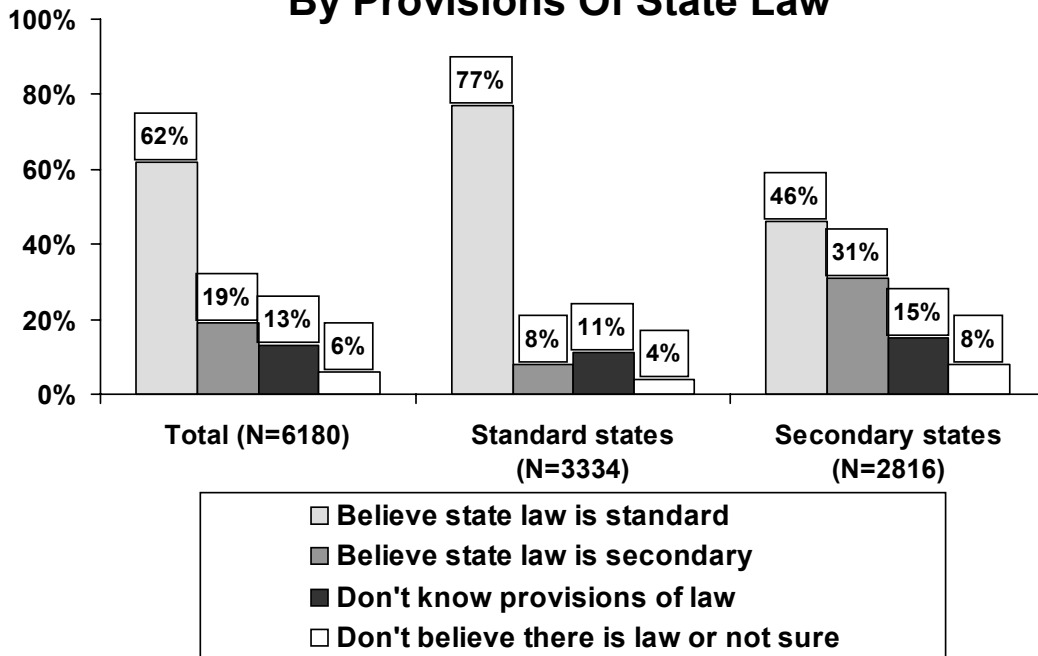
Base: Total population age 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Among persons living in States having safety belt laws with standard enforcement provisions, over three-quarters (77%) reported that police could stop vehicles on the basis of observing safety belt violations (this figure is based on the total population; not just those who thought there was a law). In States having secondary enforcement provisions, there actually were more persons who incorrectly believed that police could stop a vehicle based on observing a safety belt violation (46%) than those who correctly knew that some other violation must be the basis for stopping the vehicle (31%).

Figure 78
Knowledge Of Standard Versus Secondary Enforcement
By Provisions Of State Law



Qx: According to your state law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?

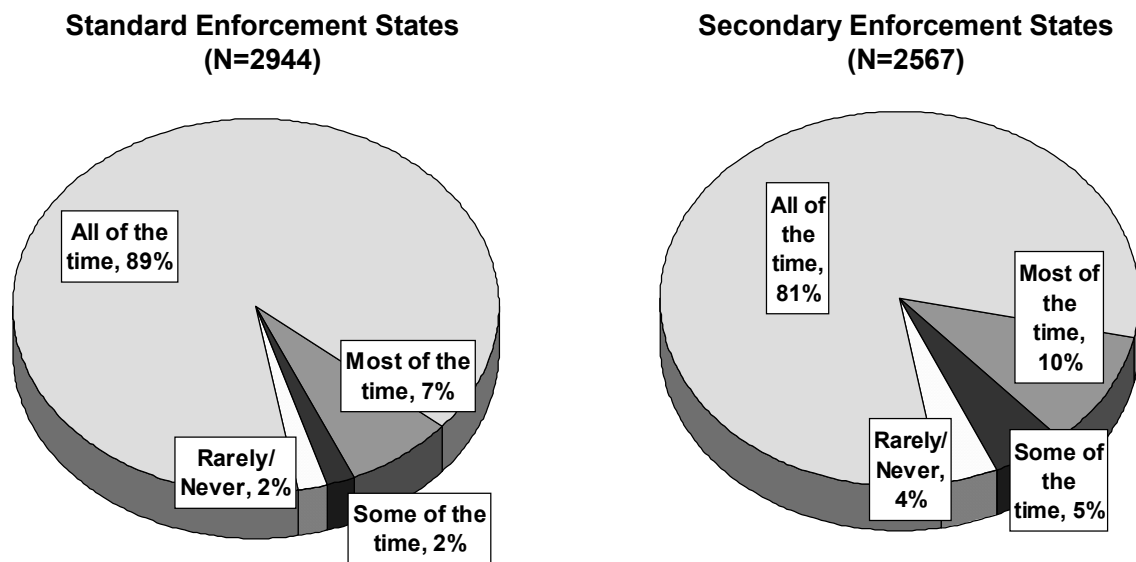
Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Drivers in States having standard enforcement provisions reported more frequent safety belt use than did those in secondary enforcement States. In States where law enforcement officers could stop motor vehicles on the basis of observing safety belt violations, 89% of drivers said that they wore their safety belt "all of the time" while driving. The comparable figure for drivers in secondary enforcement States was 81%.

Figure 79
Reported Safety Belt Use By Whether Driver Lives In Standard Or Secondary Enforcement State



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

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

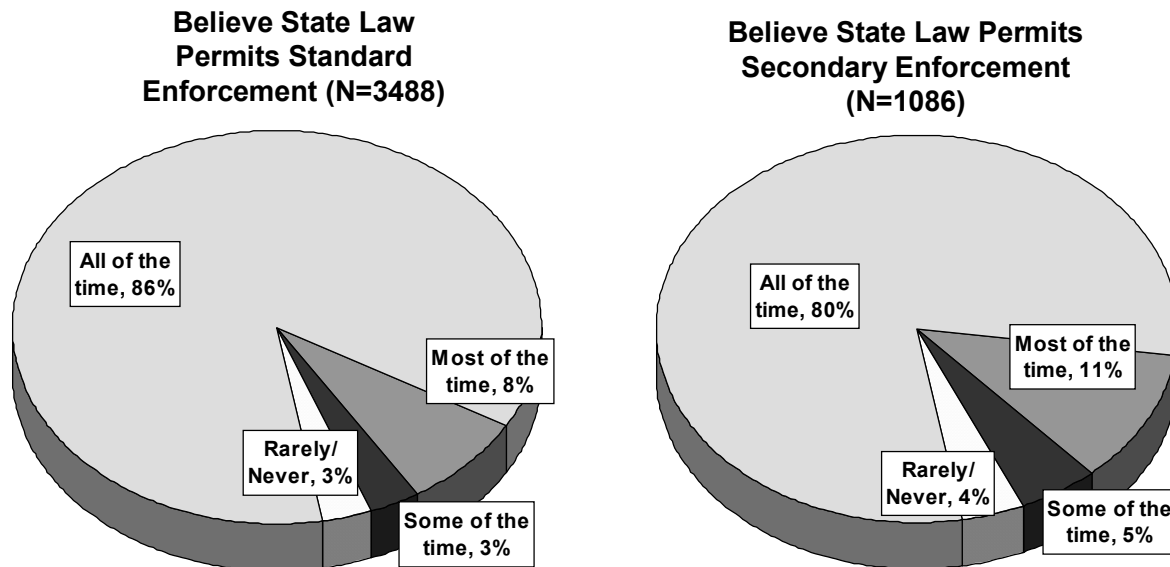
Unweighted N's listed above.

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

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

The previous page looked at differences in safety belt use based on whether the State law called for standard or secondary enforcement. Presented below is drivers' reported safety belt usage separated according to their beliefs about the provisions of the State law. The results were similar to the previous analysis. If drivers thought that their State law permitted standard enforcement, then they were more likely to answer that they wore their safety belt "all of the time" (86%) compared to drivers who did not think their State law allowed this (80%).

Figure 80
Reported Safety Belt Use By Whether Driver Believes Law Allows Standard Or Secondary Enforcement



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

Qx: According to your state law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

While reported safety belt usage was higher in standard enforcement States, there did not appear to be major differences between standard and secondary enforcement States in the perceived utility of safety belts. Table 42 compares respondents in the two groups of States on several belt utility items, as well as other attitudes. Comparison of those attitudes directly associated with enforcement are addressed later in this Chapter.

Table 42
Attitudes Concerning Utility Of Safety Belts
By Whether State Safety Belt Law Permits
Standard Or Secondary Enforcement

Qx: *Now I'm going to read you a few statements. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.*

Qx: *Do you agree or disagree that if it is your time to die, you'll die, so it doesn't matter whether you wear your seat belt?*

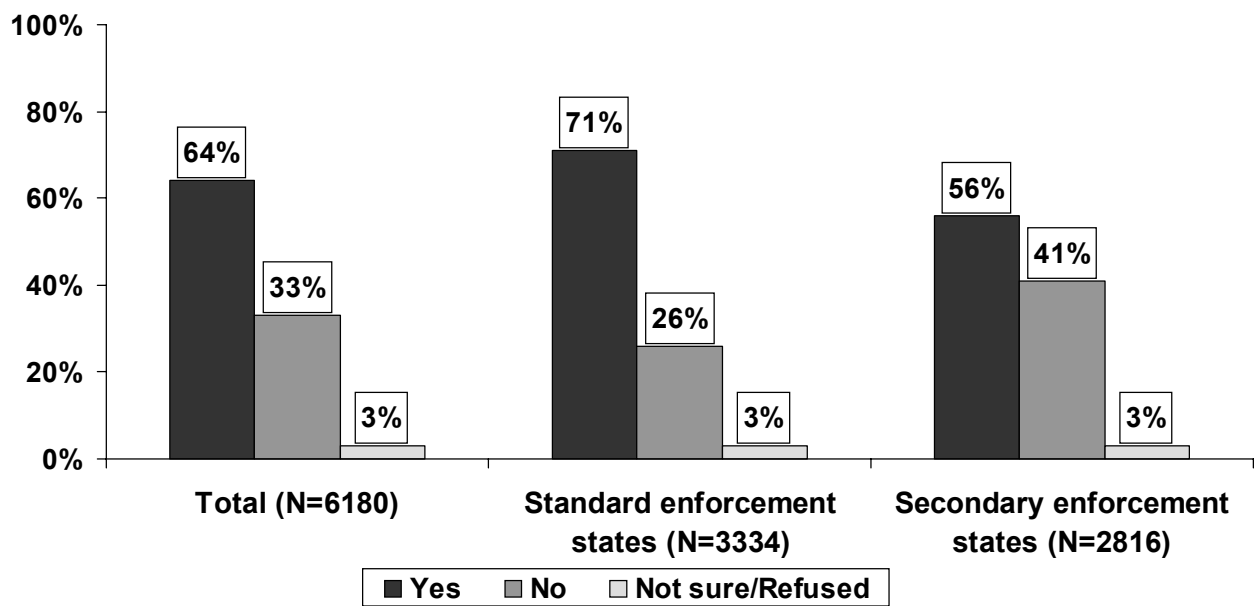
Base: *Total population age 16+.*

	Provisions of state law	
	Standard	Secondary
	(N=3334)	(N=2816)
Strongly or somewhat agree with statement:		
Seat belts are just as likely to harm you as help you.	34%	37%
An accident close to home is usually not as serious as an accident farther away.	17%	14%
If I were in an accident, I would want to have my seat belt on.	95%	94%
Most motor vehicle accidents happen within five miles of home.	79%	82%
I would feel self-conscious around my friends if I wore a seat belt and they did not.	21%	17%
Medical insurance costs would be lower if more people wore seat belts.	65%	65%
Putting on a seat belt makes me worry more about being in an accident.	17%	12%
Agree with statement:		
If it is your time to die, you'll die, so it doesn't matter whether you wear your seat belt.	26%	27%

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Besides exploring respondents' awareness of the enforcement provisions of their State law, the survey collected data on whether or not respondents supported standard enforcement. More than six-in-ten (64%) agreed that police should be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observed a safety belt violation when no other traffic laws were being broken. The figure was higher (71%) in States currently permitting standard enforcement of safety belt laws. Yet even in States with secondary enforcement provisions, more than half of the public (56%) supported standard enforcement.

**Figure 81
Support For Standard Enforcement
By Whether State Allows It**



Qx: In your opinion, should police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken?

Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Support for standard enforcement provisions was greater among females (68%) than males (59%), greater among Blacks (67%) than Whites (62%), and greater among Hispanics (74%) than non-Hispanics (62%). Persons age 21 through 24 showed the least support (57%) compared to any other age range listed below.

Table 43
Support For Standard Enforcement
By Gender, Age, Race, And Ethnicity

Qx: *In your opinion, should police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken?*

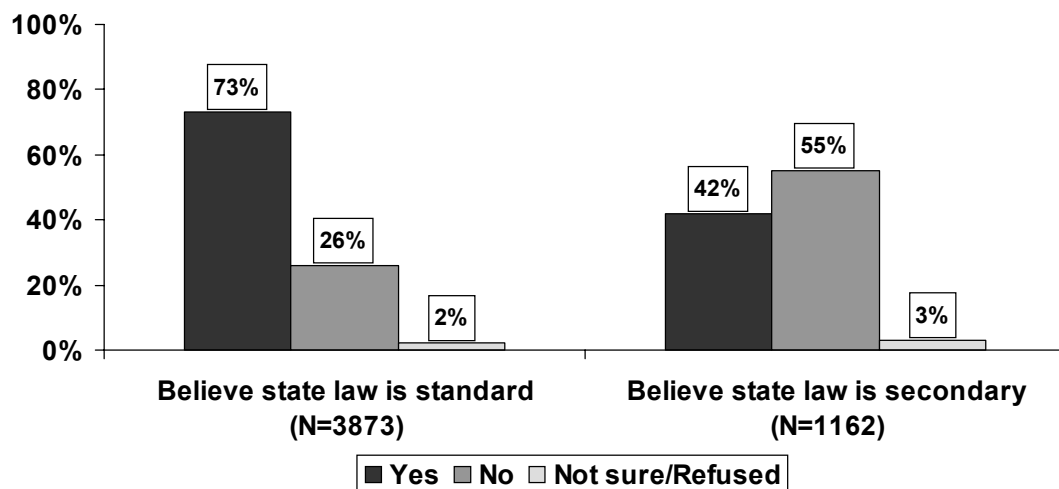
Base: *Total population age 16+.*

	Unweighted N	Yes	No	Not sure/ Refused
Total	(6180)	64%	33%	3%
Gender				
Female	(3244)	68%	28%	4%
Male	(2936)	59%	38%	2%
Age				
16-20	(531)	64%	34%	3%
21-24	(468)	57%	41%	3%
25-34	(1393)	63%	34%	3%
35-44	(1360)	62%	35%	3%
45-54	(948)	62%	35%	3%
55-64	(636)	67%	31%	2%
65+	(764)	70%	24%	6%
Race				
Black	(537)	67%	30%	3%
White	(4591)	62%	35%	3%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	(757)	74%	22%	4%
Non-Hispanic	(5386)	62%	34%	3%

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

In general, people's beliefs and attitudes about enforcement provisions tended to agree. Among persons who believed their State safety belt law permitted standard enforcement, 73% agreed that police should be able to stop the vehicle if they observe a safety belt violation but no other infraction. But if they believed their State law only allowed secondary enforcement, then the majority (55%) supported secondary enforcement provisions.

Figure 82
Support For Standard Enforcement By Whether Respondent Thinks Law Is Standard Or Secondary



Qx: According to your state law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?

Qx: In your opinion, should police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken?

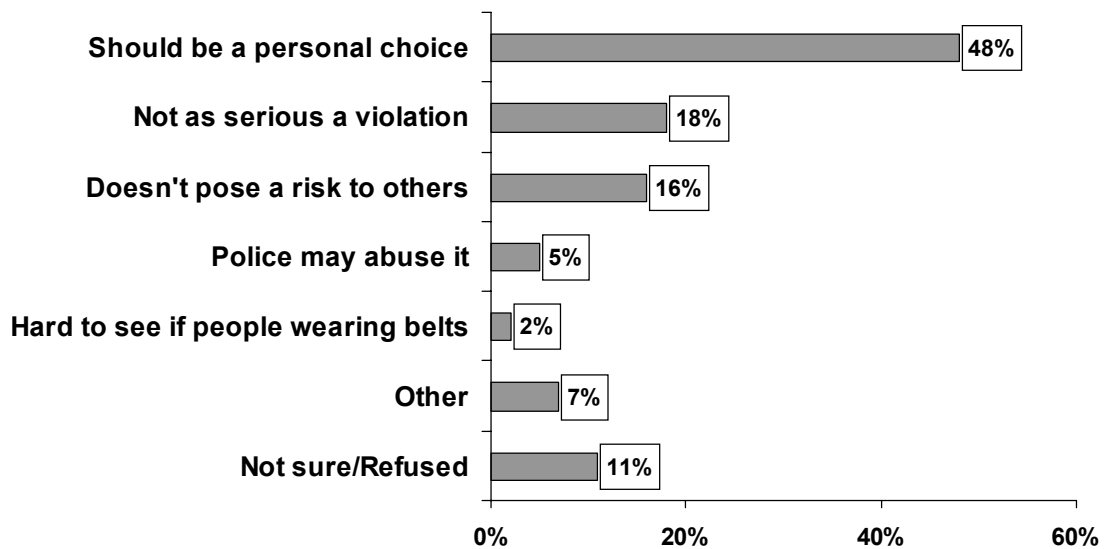
Base: Believe their State has a safety belt law, and identified it as having standard or secondary enforcement provisions.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

If a respondent said that police should not be allowed to stop a vehicle based on observing a safety belt violation, the interviewer stated that “Most other traffic laws allow police to stop the vehicle whenever they see a violation,” and then asked why the respondent thought safety belt violations should be treated differently from other violations. The predominant reason mentioned was that wearing safety belts should be a personal choice (48%). Less than one-in-five said it was not a serious violation (18%) or that it does not pose a risk to others (16%).

Figure 83
Reasons People Believe Safety Belt Violations Should Be Treated Differently From Other Violations



Qx: Most other traffic laws allow police to stop the vehicle whenever they see a violation. Why do you think seat belt violations should be treated differently from other traffic violations?

Base: Those who think that police should not be allowed to stop a vehicle for a safety belt violation.

Unweighted N=2106

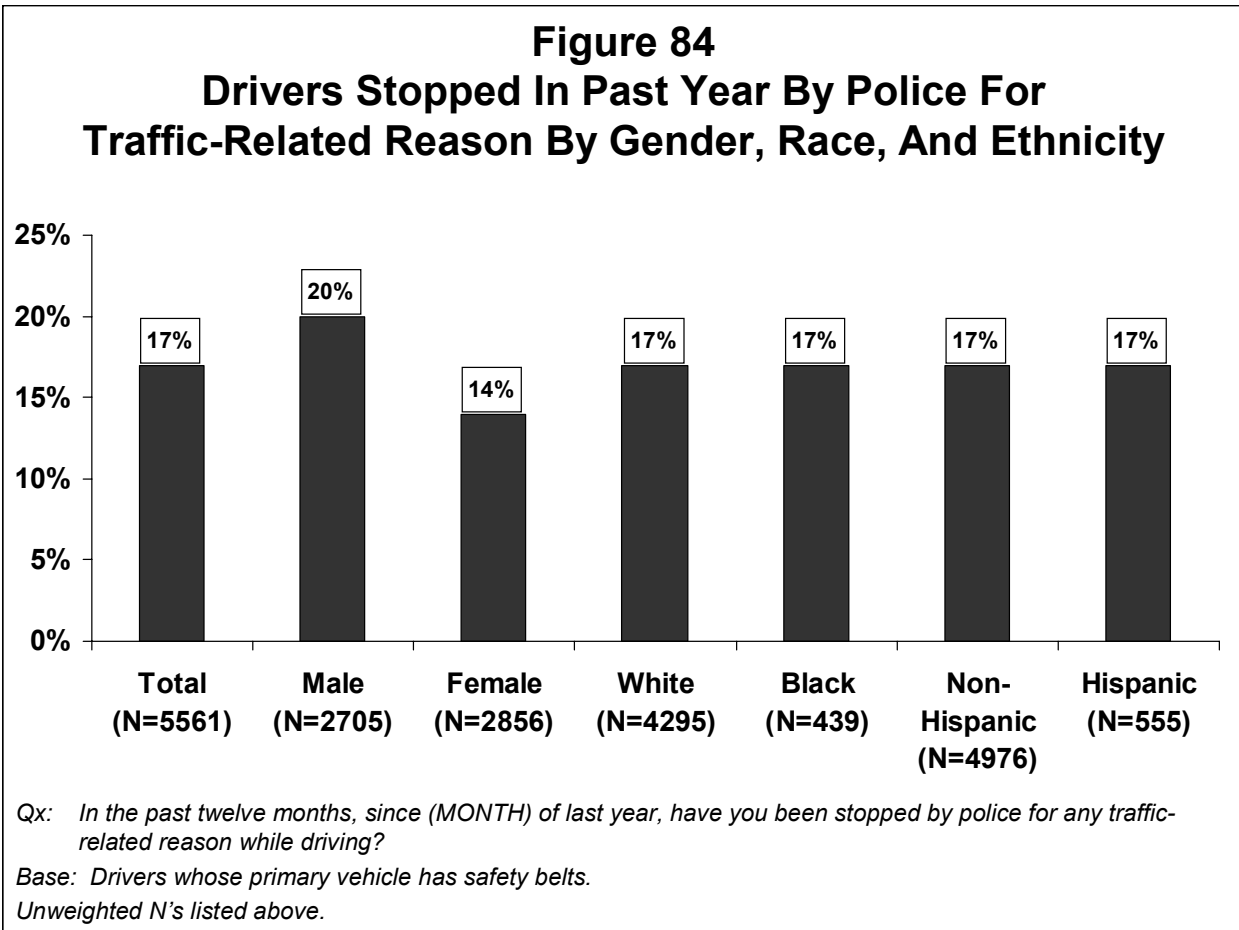
Stopped For Traffic-Related Reason In Past Year

The number of States having safety belt laws that contain standard enforcement provisions has risen over the years. However, most States at this time continue to require secondary enforcement (see Appendix B for listing of enforcement provisions of State laws at the time of the survey). One of the major objections raised in efforts to convert from secondary to standard enforcement has been the concern expressed by some groups that an upgraded law would be differentially enforced against them.

This survey examined whether certain groups are subjected to traffic stops at different rates by law enforcement officers. Interviewers asked drivers if they had been stopped by police in the past twelve months for any traffic-related reason while driving. If they had been stopped, the interviewers asked the respondents if they were wearing their safety belt at the time of the stop. Lastly, interviewers questioned the respondents about the outcome of the stop. Specifically, the interviewers asked the respondents if they received a ticket for a traffic violation.

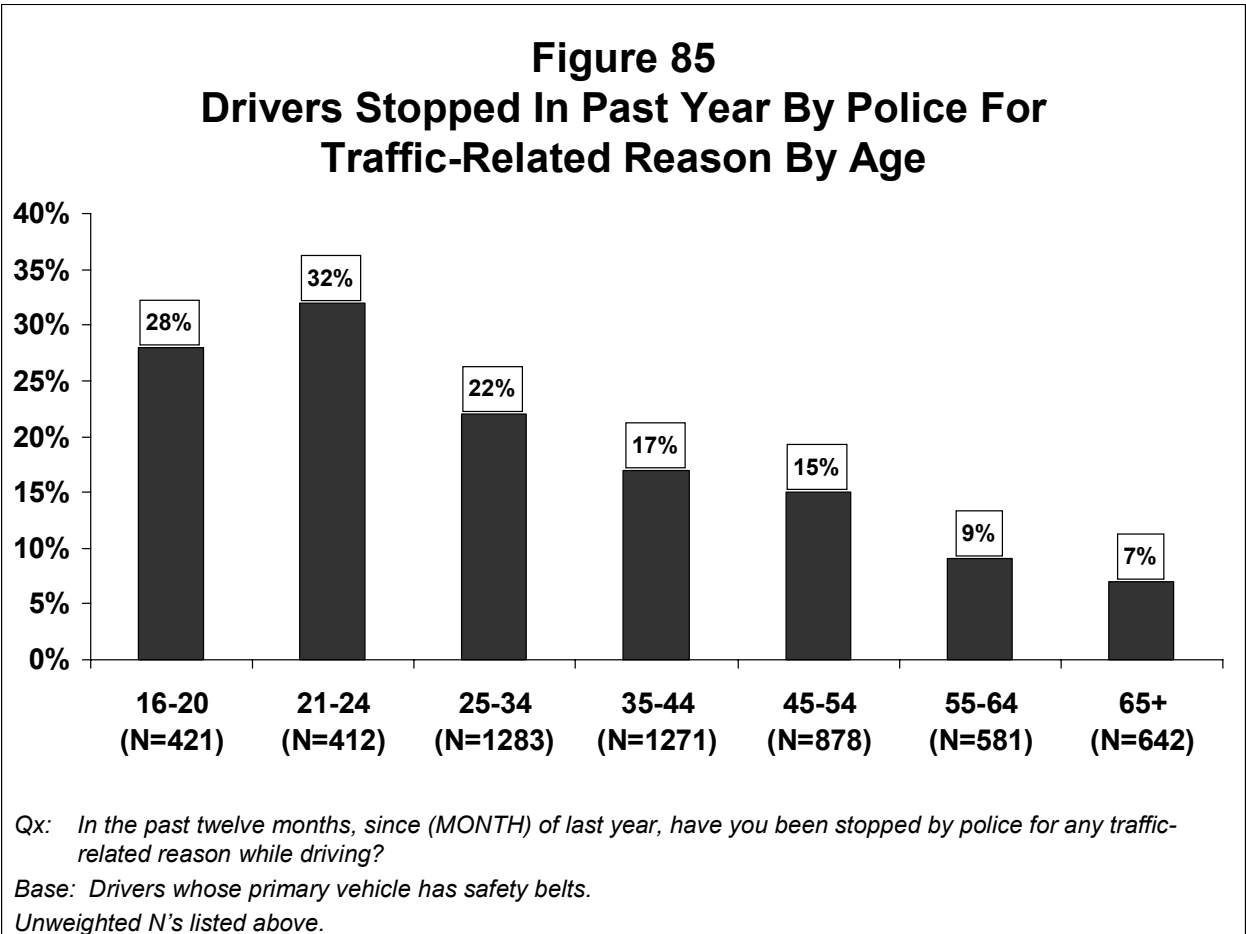
2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Seventeen percent of drivers said they had been stopped by police for a traffic-related reason in the past year. Males (20%) were more likely to have been stopped than females (14%). No differences were evident between Blacks (17%) and Whites (17%) or between Hispanics (17%) and non-Hispanics (17%).



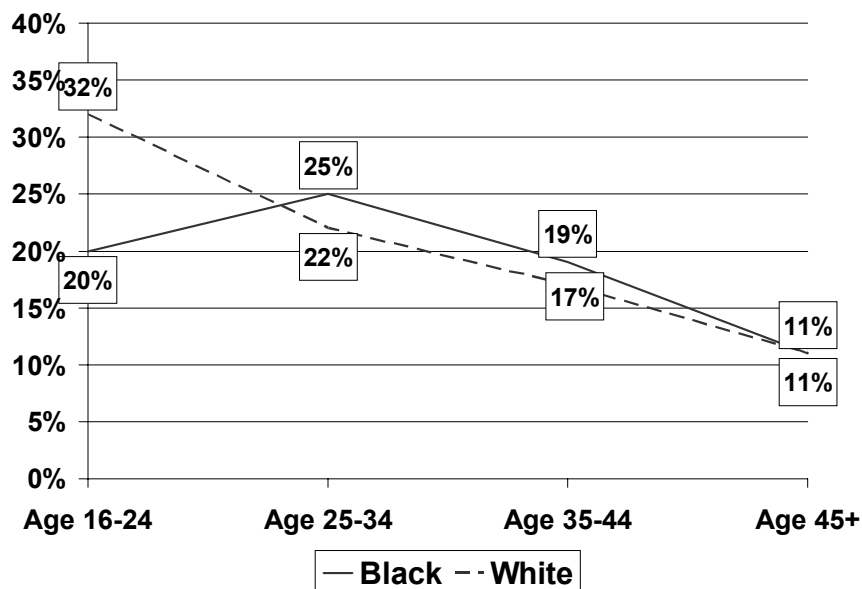
2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Differences occurred when segmenting the sample of drivers by age group. Drivers were most likely to have been stopped by the police in the past year for a traffic-related reason if they were ages 21 through 24 (32%) or younger (28%). The figure declined to 22% of drivers ages 25-34, 17% of drivers ages 35-44, 15% of drivers ages 45-54, 9% of drivers ages 55-64, and 7% of drivers age 65 and older.



While young White drivers were more likely than young Black drivers to have been stopped by police in the past year, rates by race and age are similar for those 25 years and older.

**Figure 86
Drivers Stopped By Police In Past Year By Age And Race**



Qx: In the past twelve months, since (MONTH) of last year, have you been stopped by police for any traffic-related reason while driving?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's:

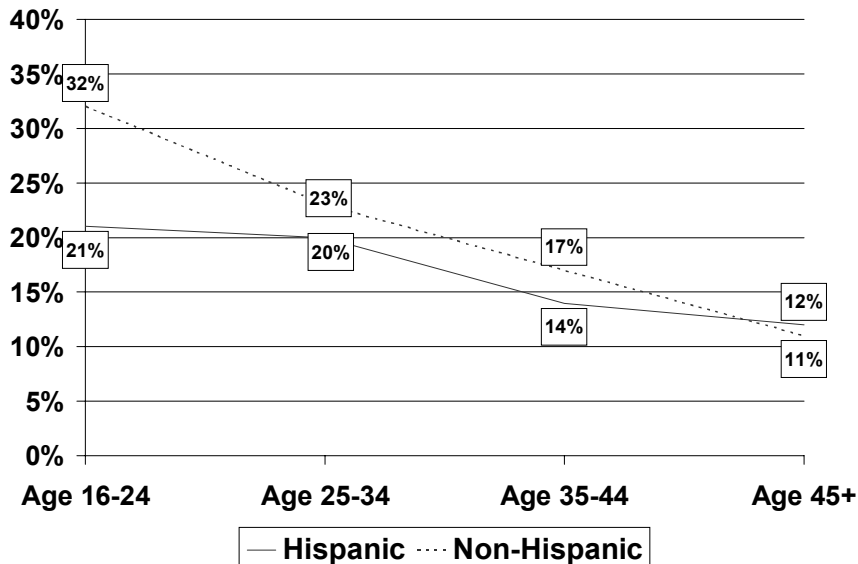
Black: Age 16-24 N = 92, Age 25-34 N = 111, Age 35-44 N = 98, Age 45+ N = 135

White: Age 16-24 N = 578, Age 25-34 N = 940, Age 35-44 N = 969, Age 45+ N = 1767

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

As with Blacks, there were relatively few Hispanic drivers in the specified age ranges. Figure 87 suggests little difference in police stops between Hispanics and non-Hispanics except for the youngest age group, where the percentage stopped was higher for non-Hispanics than Hispanics.

**Figure 87
Drivers Stopped By Police In Past Year
By Age And Ethnicity**



Qx: In the past twelve months, since (MONTH) of last year, have you been stopped by police for any traffic-related reason while driving?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

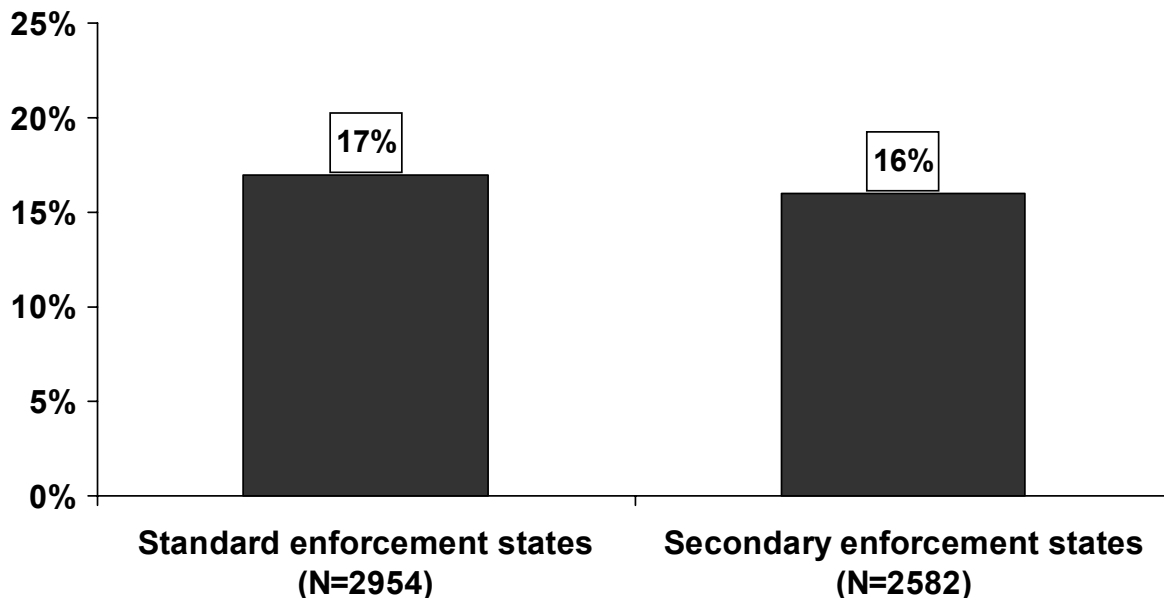
Unweighted N's:

Hispanic: Age 16-24 N = 123, Age 25-34 N = 179, Age 35-44 N = 150, Age 45+ N = 96

Non-Hispanic: Age 16-24 N = 708, Age 25-34 N = 1102, Age 35-44 N = 1119, Age 45+ N = 1991

Drivers in standard enforcement States were just as likely to have been stopped in the past year by police for a traffic-related reason as those in secondary enforcement States. Seventeen percent of those in standard enforcement States had been stopped, compared to 16% in secondary enforcement States.

Figure 88
Drivers Stopped In Past Year For Traffic-Related Reason
By Enforcement Provisions Of State Law



Qx: In the past twelve months, since (MONTH) of last year, have you been stopped by police for any traffic-related reason while driving?

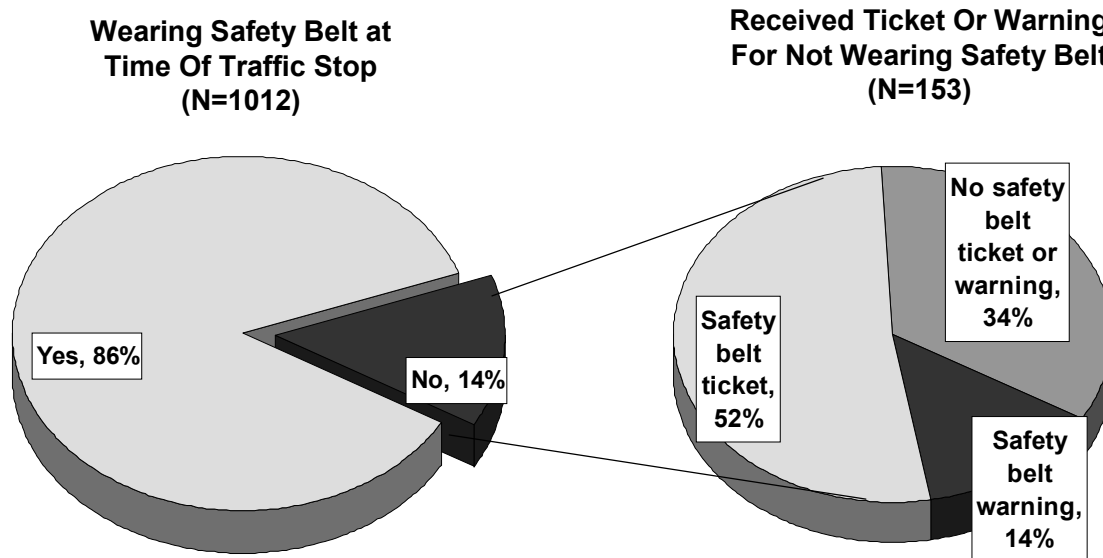
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Of those persons who said that they had been stopped by police in the past year for a traffic-related reason while driving, the vast majority (86%) answered that they were wearing a safety belt at the time. The majority of those not wearing a safety belt when stopped had received a ticket (52%) for violating safety belt laws.

Figure 89
Whether Driver Was Wearing Safety Belt At Traffic Stop



Qx: *Were you wearing a seat belt when you were stopped? (IF STOPPED MORE THAN ONCE IN PAST 12 MONTHS, ASK ABOUT MOST RECENT TIME)*

Qx: *Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?*

Qx: *Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?*

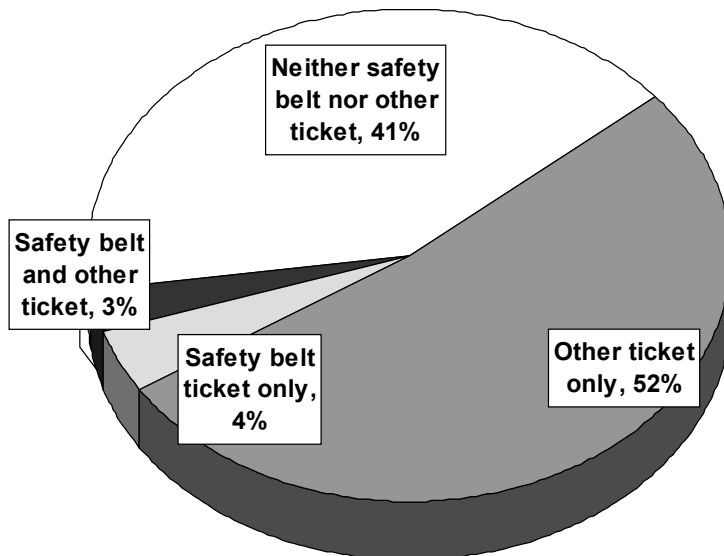
Base: *Stopped by police in past 12 months for a traffic-related reason while driving.*

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Among all drivers who were stopped for a traffic-related reason, 59% received a ticket for some type of traffic violation. Most often, they did not get a ticket for a safety belt violation (understandable since most were wearing their safety belts) but received a ticket for something else (52%). In a few cases (4%), they received a safety belt ticket but no other citation. About four-in-ten (41%) reported that they did not receive any type of ticket.

Figure 90
Outcome Of Traffic Stop



Qx: *In the past twelve, since (MONTH) of last year, have you been stopped by police for any traffic-related reason while driving?*

Qx: *Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?*

Qx: *Did you receive a ticket for some other traffic violation?*

Qx: *Did you receive a ticket for any traffic violation?*

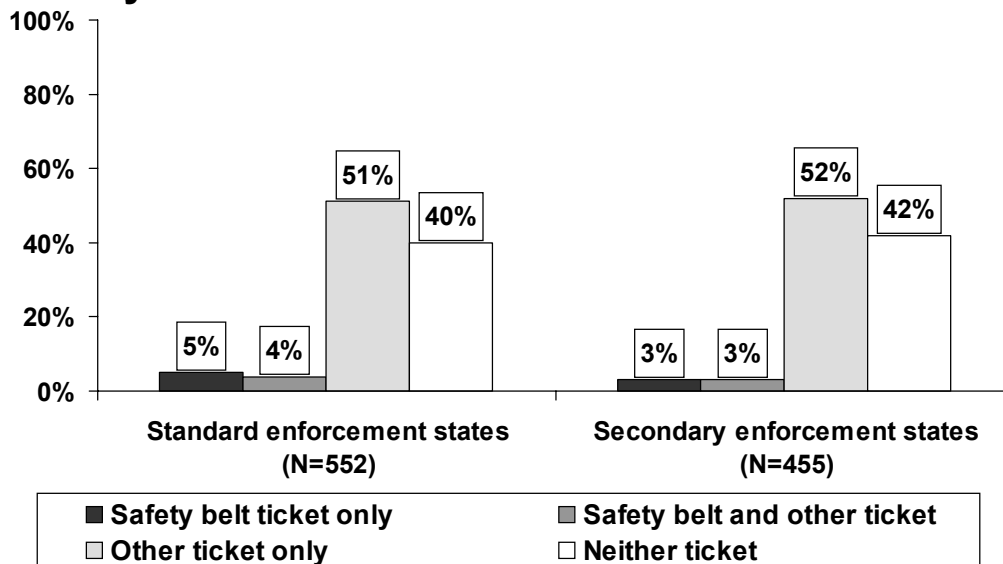
Base: *Stopped by police in past 12 months for a traffic-related reason while driving.*

Unweighted N=1012

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Sixty percent of the drivers in primary enforcement States received a ticket when they were stopped by the police, compared to 58% of the drivers in secondary enforcement States.

**Figure 91
Outcome Of Traffic Stop
By Enforcement Provisions Of State Law**



Qx: Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?

Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?

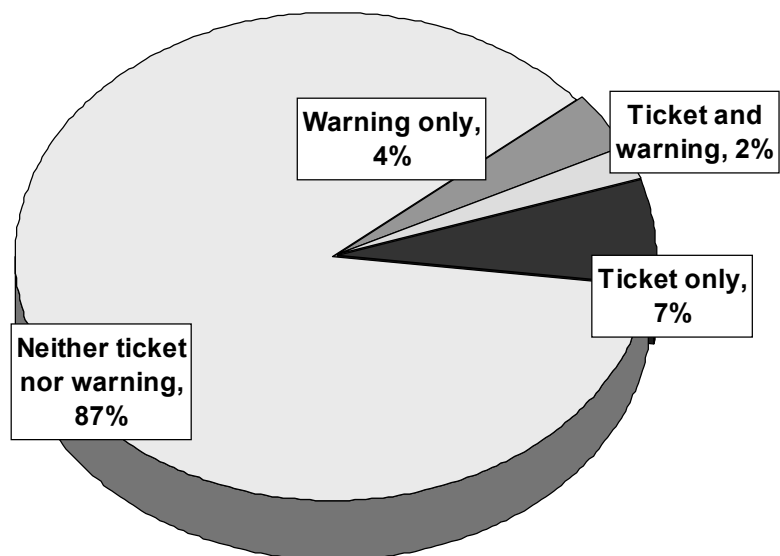
Base: Stopped by police in past 12 months for a traffic-related reason while driving.

Unweighted N's listed above.

Ever Received Ticket Or Warning For Safety Belt Violation

Thirteen percent of the population age 16 and older has received a ticket and/or warning for violating the safety belt laws. Specifically, 7% have received a ticket only, 2% have received both a ticket and a warning, and 4% have received only a warning. The vast majority, 87%, have received neither a ticket nor warning.

Figure 92
Ever Received Ticket Or Warning For Safety Belt Violation

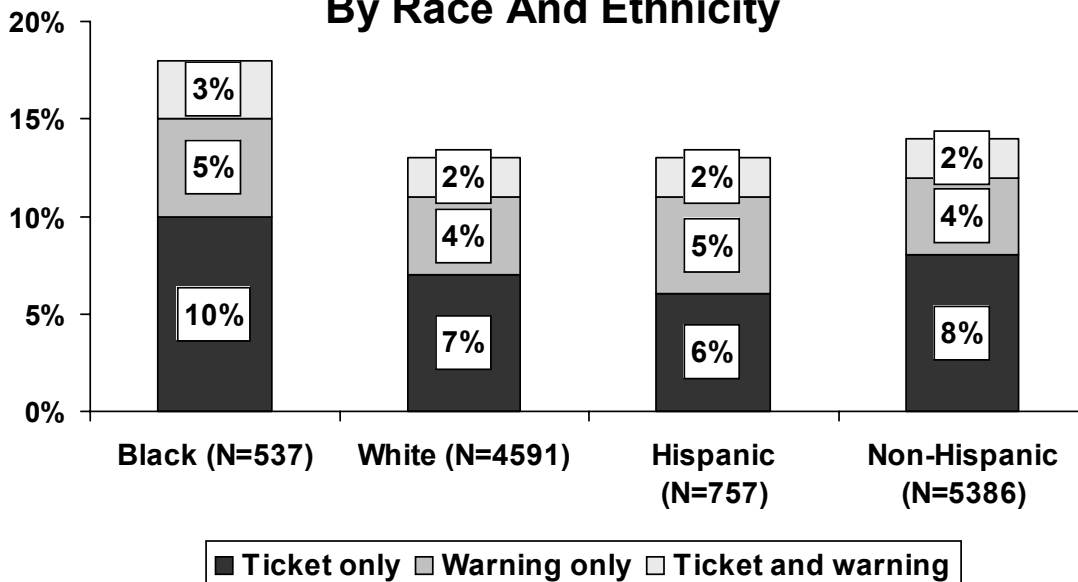


Qx: Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?
Qx: Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?
Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?
Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?
Base: Total population 16+.
Unweighted N=6180

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Overall, 13% of the population age 16 and older had received a ticket and/or warning at some time in the past for a safety belt violation. The figure was 17%¹⁰ for Blacks, 13% for Whites, 13% for Hispanics, and 13% for non-Hispanics. Specifically regarding tickets (either ticket only or ticket and warning), 12% of Blacks, 9% of Whites, 9% of Hispanics, and 9% of non-Hispanics had received safety belt citations.

Figure 93
Ever Received Safety Belt Ticket Or Warning
By Race And Ethnicity

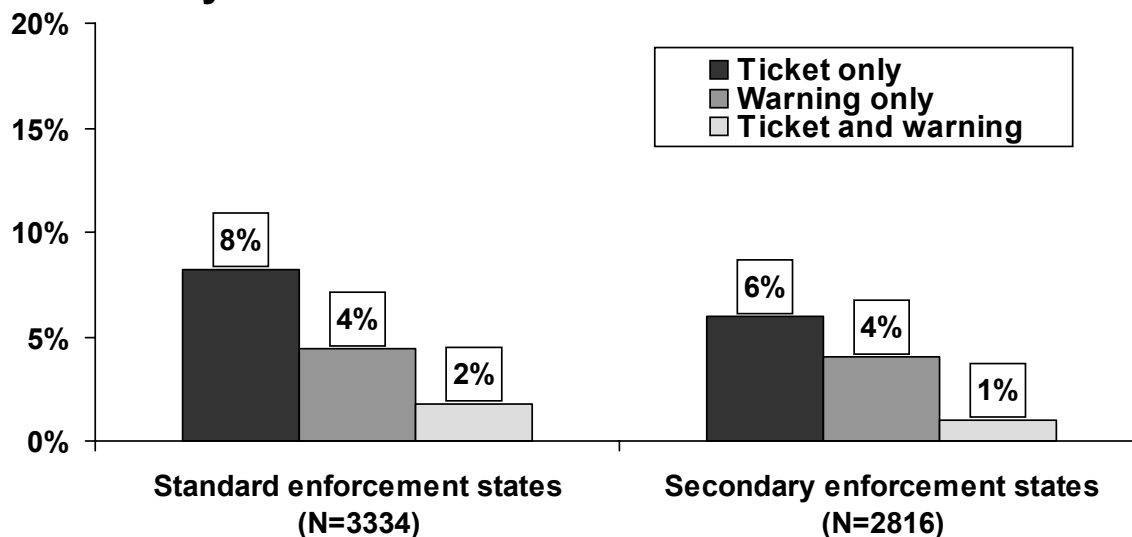


Qx: Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?
 Qx: Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?
 Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?
 Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?
 Base: Total population 16+.
 Unweighted N's listed above.

¹⁰ The numbers in this paragraph may not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

In States having safety belt laws with standard enforcement provisions, 14% of the population age 16 and older had received a ticket and/or warning for a safety belt violation. In secondary enforcement States, 12%¹¹ had received a ticket and/or warning.

Figure 94
Ever Received Safety Belt Ticket Or Warning
By Enforcement Provisions Of State Law



Qx: Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?

Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?

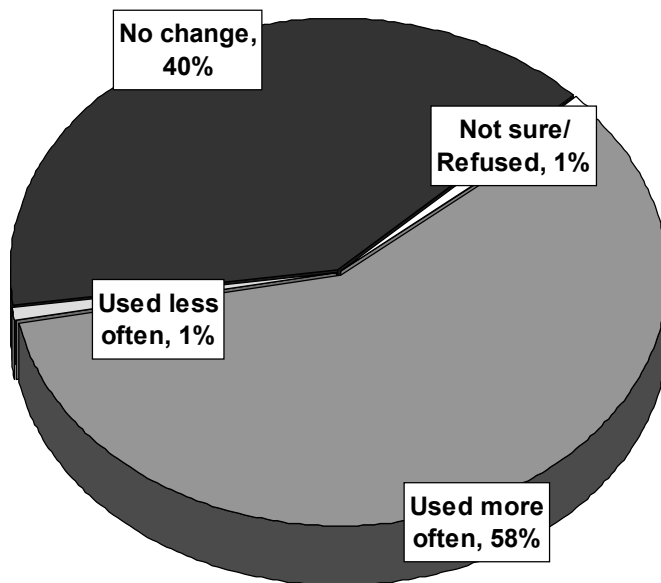
Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

¹¹ The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

When asked if their frequency of safety belt use had changed after they received the safety belt ticket or warning, most persons (58%) said that they started using their safety belts more often while 40% indicated that there was no change.

Figure 95
Reported Change In Frequency Of Safety Belt Use
After Receiving Safety Belt Ticket Or Warning



Qx: After you received the seat belt (ticket/warning), did you start wearing your seat belts more often, less often, or was there no change in how often you wore them?

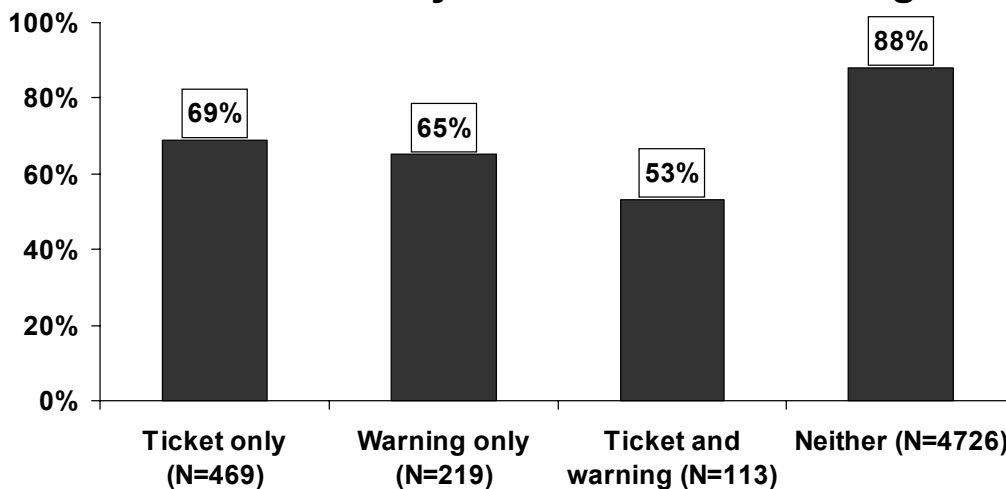
Base: Had received a ticket and/or warning for a safety belt violation at some time in the past.

Unweighted N=899

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Although most persons who had received a safety belt ticket or warning said that their use of safety belts increased afterwards, their reported level of current safety belt use still tended to be lower than that of persons who had received neither a ticket nor a warning. Among drivers, 69% of those who had received a ticket only, 65% of those who had received a warning only, and 53% of those who had received a ticket and warning said that they used their safety belt “all of the time” while driving. In contrast, 88% of drivers who had received neither a safety belt ticket nor warning reported wearing their safety belt “all of the time” while driving.

Figure 96
Driver “All The Time” Safety Belt Use By Whether Ever Received Safety Belt Ticket Or Warning



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

Qx: Did you receive a ticket for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Did you receive a warning for violating seat belt laws?

Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?

Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?

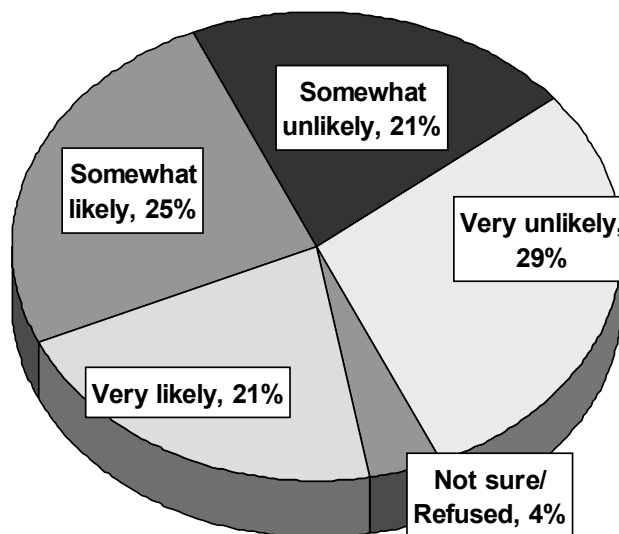
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed For Non-Use Of Safety Belts

Drivers were asked their likelihood of being ticketed if they did not wear a safety belt at all during the next six months while driving. A minority (46%) considered it likely; only one-in-five (21%) considered it very likely. Just under one-third of drivers (29%) thought they would be very unlikely to be ticketed. Readers are reminded that most non-use occurs among persons who use safety belts at least on occasion (see Chapter 1). Thus the question wording took the most extreme form of non-use, and removed the option taken by many drivers of responding to their own assessments of risk.

Figure 97
Likelihood Of Receiving A Safety Belt Ticket
If Safety Belts Were Not Worn For Six Months



Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt AT ALL while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt?

Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

Unweighted N=5561

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Drivers who previously had received a safety belt ticket and/or warning were more likely than non-cited drivers to view themselves at-risk of being ticketed if they did not wear their safety belt at all over the next six months. About one-third of those who had received a ticket (31%), a warning (30%), or both (32%) considered themselves to be very likely to be ticketed, compared to fewer than one-fifth (19%) of drivers who had experienced neither enforcement action.

Table 44
Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed
By Whether Ever Received A Safety Belt Ticket Or Warning

Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt AT ALL while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt?

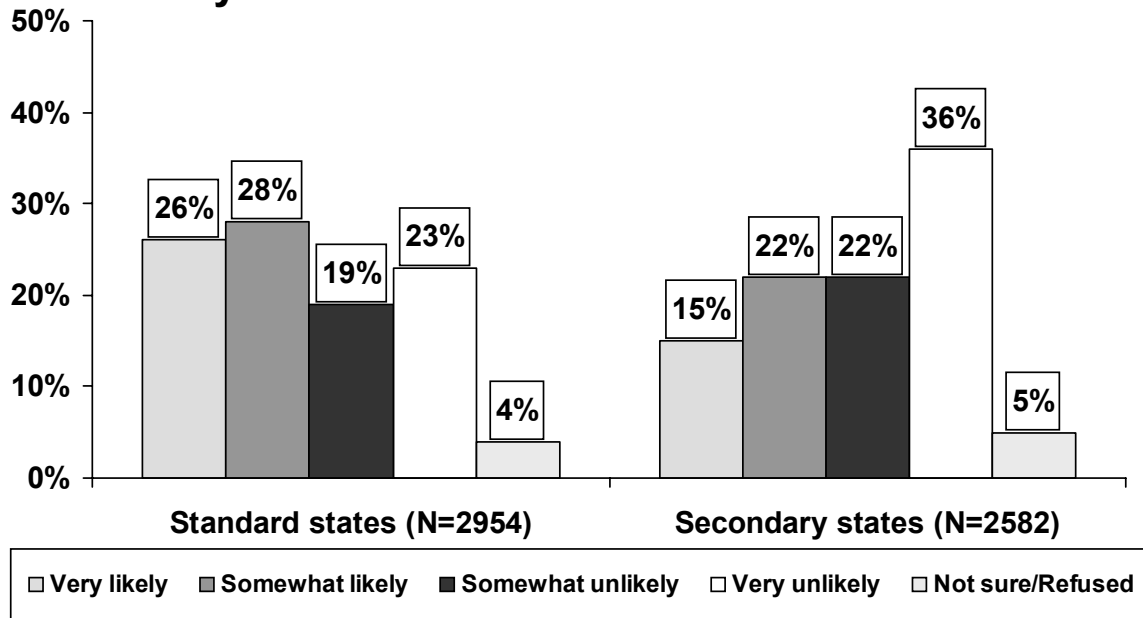
Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

Perceived risk of being ticketed	Ever received ticket or warning			
	Ticket only (N=473)	Ticket and warning (N=115)	Warning only (N=221)	Neither ticket nor warning (N=4743)
Very likely	31%	32%	30%	19%
Somewhat likely	25%	25%	24%	25%
Somewhat unlikely	20%	21%	20%	21%
Very unlikely	20%	21%	24%	30%
Not sure/Refused	3%	1%	2%	5%

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

The perceived risk of being ticketed differed substantially according to the enforcement provisions of the State law. In States permitting standard enforcement of safety belt laws, more than one-half of drivers (54%) said they were somewhat or very likely to be ticketed if they did not wear safety belts at all while driving over the next six months. In contrast, slightly more than one-third of drivers (37%) in secondary enforcement States considered themselves to be somewhat or very likely to be ticketed.

Figure 98
Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed For Non-Use
By Enforcement Provisions Of State Law



Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt AT ALL while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt?

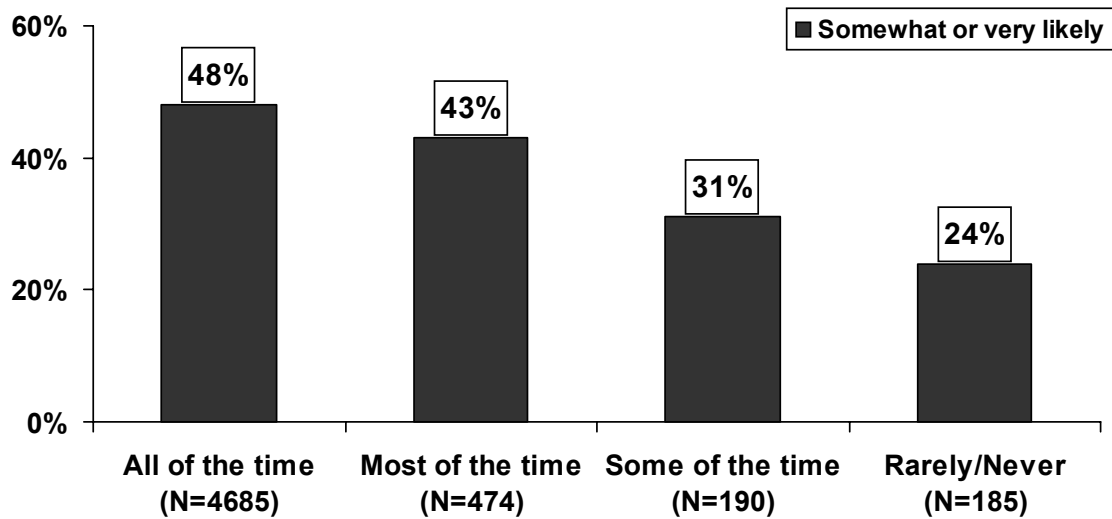
Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Drivers who wore their safety belts more often were more likely than other drivers to perceive themselves at-risk of being ticketed if they did not use their safety belts at all. Among self-reported “all of the time” safety belt users, 48% thought it was either somewhat likely or very likely that they would receive a ticket if they did not wear a safety belt at all while driving over the next six months. The number dropped to 43% among “most of the time” users, and 31% among “some of the time” users. Slightly less than one-fourth (24%) of those who said they rarely or never wore safety belts thought they would likely get a ticket.

Figure 99
Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed For Non-Use
By Drivers' Reported Frequency Of Safety Belt Use



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

Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt AT ALL while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts.

Unweighted N's listed above.

2003 MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY SURVEY: Safety Belt Report

Among the demographic groups listed in Table 45, greatest perceived risk of being ticketed for non-use of safety belts over a period of six months was recorded for Hispanics and Blacks. Almost two-thirds of Hispanics (64%) considered it very or somewhat likely they would be given a ticket, compared to 44%¹² of non-Hispanics. The gap was almost as large between Blacks (57%) and Whites (42%).

Table 45
Perceived Risk Of Being Ticketed For Non-Use
By Gender, Age, Race, And Ethnicity

Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt AT ALL while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt.

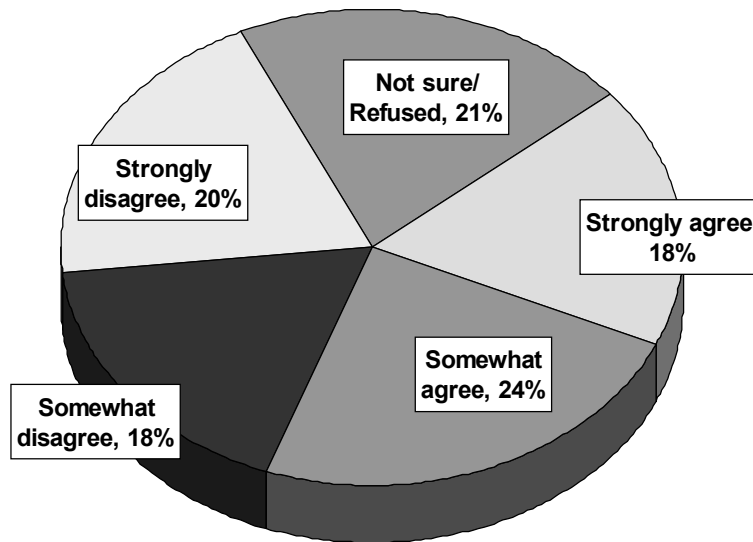
Base: Drives a motor vehicle.

	Unweighted N	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Not sure/ Refused
Total	(5561)	21%	25%	21%	29%	4%
Gender						
Female	(2856)	22%	27%	19%	27%	5%
Male	(2705)	19%	24%	22%	31%	4%
Age						
16-20	(421)	15%	30%	23%	30%	1%
21-24	(412)	18%	31%	21%	28%	2%
25-34	(1283)	20%	24%	23%	31%	2%
35-44	(1271)	24%	23%	20%	29%	3%
45-54	(878)	19%	25%	21%	31%	4%
55-64	(581)	19%	26%	20%	29%	6%
65+	(642)	24%	23%	16%	26%	11%
Race						
Black	(439)	31%	25%	16%	21%	6%
White	(4295)	17%	25%	22%	32%	4%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	(555)	40%	24%	12%	19%	4%
Non-Hispanic	(4976)	18%	25%	22%	30%	4%

¹² The numbers in this paragraph may not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

One of the attitude questions included in the survey asked respondents their level of agreement with the statement “Police in my community generally do not bother to write tickets for seat belt violations.” The public was more likely to agree with that statement (42%) than to disagree (37%)¹³. However, many people (21%) said they did not know the answer.

Figure 100
Police In My Community Generally Do Not Bother To Write Tickets For Safety Belt Violations



Qx: Now I'm going to read you a few statements. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. "Police in my community generally do not bother to write tickets for seat belt violations."

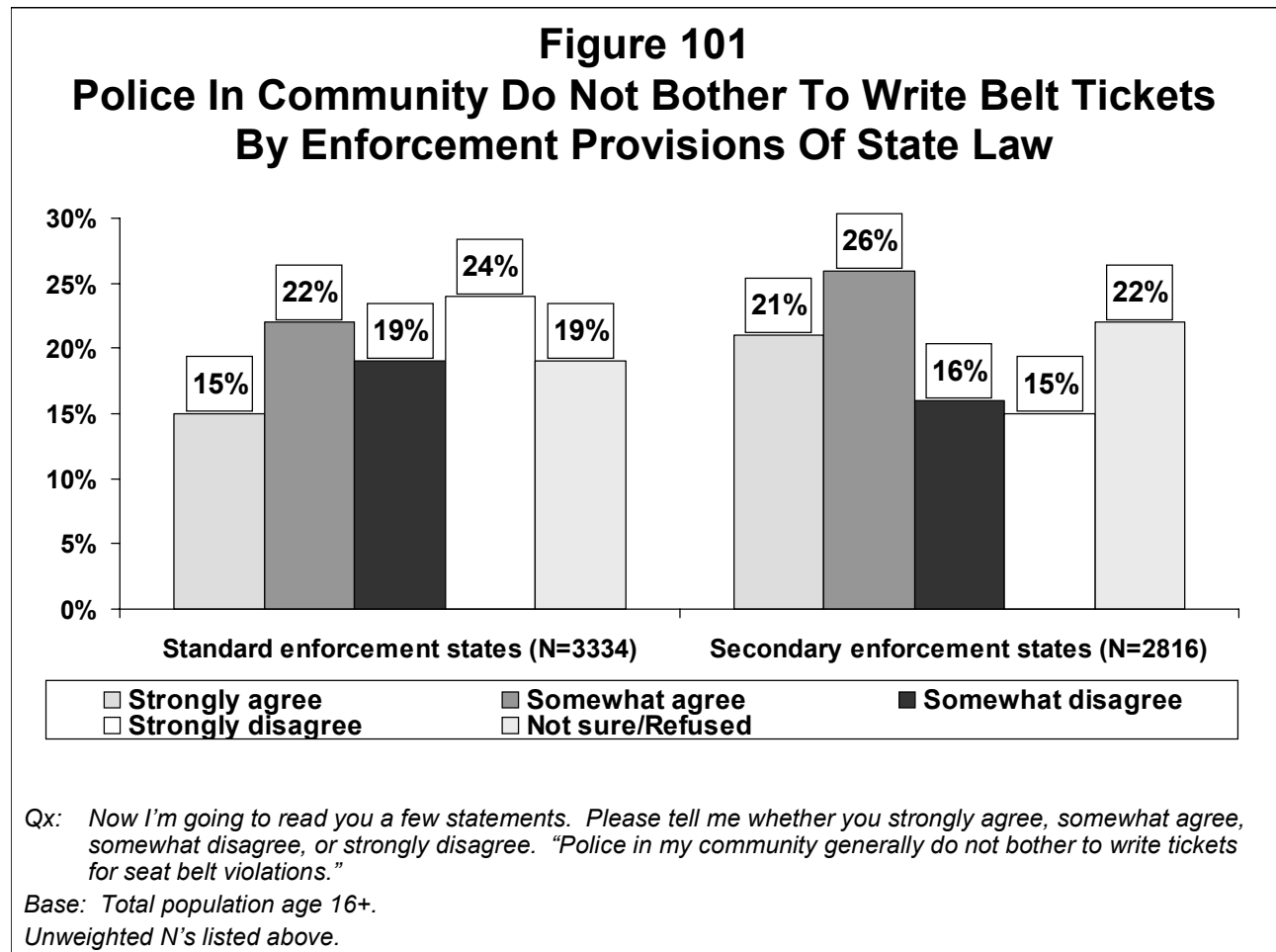
Base: Total population 16+.

Unweighted N=6180

¹³ The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

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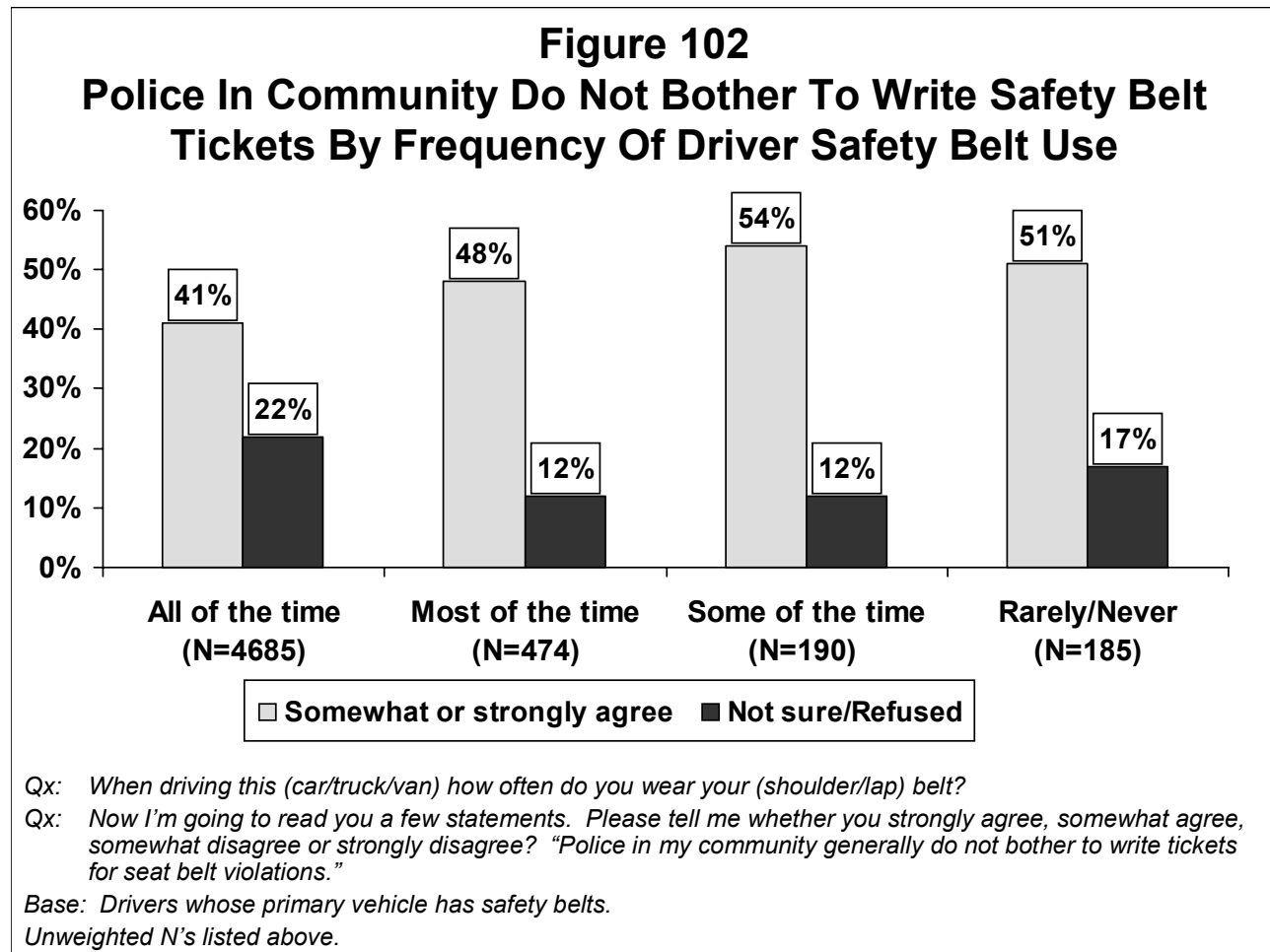
Respondents were less likely to (strongly or somewhat) agree that police in their community did not bother to write safety belt tickets if they lived in standard enforcement States (38%)¹⁴ than in secondary enforcement States (47%).



¹⁴ The number does not equal the sum of the components in the Figure due to rounding.

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Infrequent users of safety belts were less likely than frequent users to believe that local police enforced the safety belt law. However, even among regular safety belt users, about two-in-five agreed with the statement that police in their community do not bother to write safety belt tickets and 22% did not know.



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Persons ages 16-20 (57%) and 21-24 (48%) were most likely among the groups listed below to agree that ticketing for safety belt violations generally did not occur in their community; those age 65 and older were the most unsure (34%). Blacks and Hispanics differed from Whites and non-Hispanics in that the former two groups were more likely to strongly agree or strongly disagree with the statement and less likely to express uncertainty.

Table 46
“Police In My Community Generally Do Not Bother To Write Tickets For Safety Belt Violations”
By Gender, Age, Race, And Ethnicity

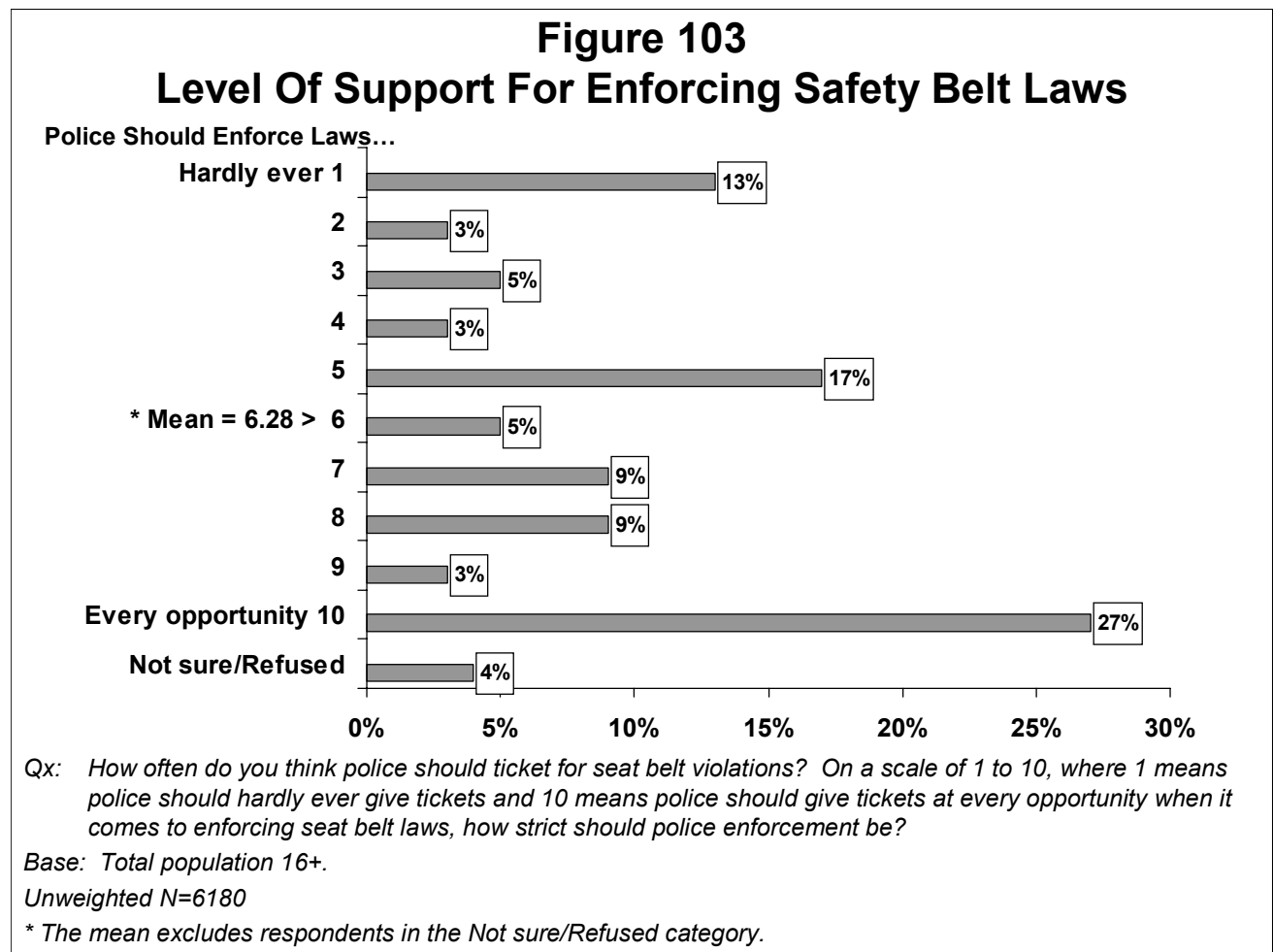
Qx: *Now I'm going to read you a few statements. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. "Police in my community generally do not bother to write tickets for seat belt violations."*

Base: *Total population age 16+.*

	Unweighted N	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/ Refused
Total	(6180)	18%	24%	18%	20%	21%
Gender						
Female	(3244)	18%	22%	17%	19%	24%
Male	(2936)	18%	26%	18%	20%	17%
Age						
16-20	(531)	25%	32%	20%	17%	6%
21-24	(468)	19%	29%	22%	20%	10%
25-34	(1393)	17%	25%	20%	21%	17%
35-44	(1360)	17%	24%	20%	20%	19%
45-54	(948)	16%	25%	18%	20%	21%
55-64	(636)	17%	21%	16%	20%	26%
65+	(764)	19%	17%	11%	19%	34%
Race						
Black	(537)	22%	18%	16%	29%	15%
White	(4591)	16%	26%	18%	18%	22%
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	(757)	24%	19%	16%	27%	14%
Non-Hispanic	(5386)	17%	25%	18%	18%	21%

Preferred Level Of Enforcement

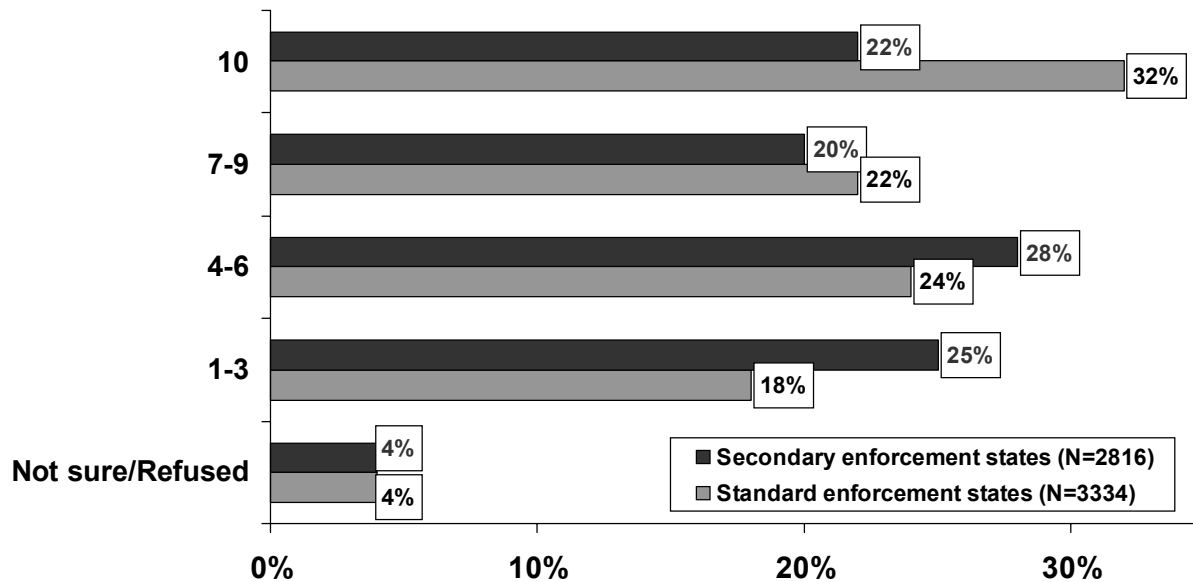
Support for safety belt law enforcement was mixed, with some favoring strong enforcement and others wanting little or no enforcement. Interviewers asked respondents how strictly police should enforce safety belt laws, using a 1-to-10 scale, where 1 meant police should hardly ever give tickets for safety belt violations and 10 meant they should give tickets at every opportunity. Most frequently, the respondents said they favored ticketing at every opportunity, although there also was clustering at the middle and low end of the scale. The average score was 6.3.



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Persons in standard enforcement States tended towards supporting stricter enforcement of safety belt laws than did those in secondary enforcement States. The mean score recorded for the respondents in standard enforcement States was 6.66 on the ten-point scale, versus 5.84 for respondents in secondary enforcement States.

Figure 104
Level Of Support For Enforcing Safety Belt Laws
By Enforcement Provisions Of State Law



Qx: How often do you think police should ticket for seat belt violations? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets and 10 means police should give tickets at every opportunity when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

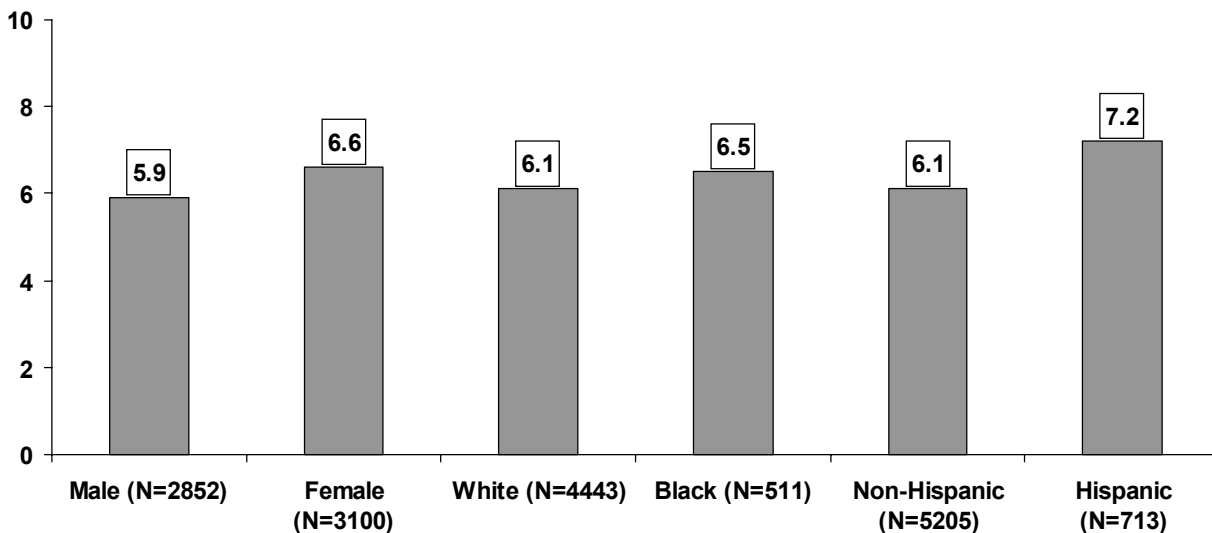
Base: Total population age 16+.

Unweighted N's listed above.

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Hispanics voiced the strongest support for enforcement of safety belt laws, providing an average score of 7.2 on the ten-point scale. Blacks (6.5) and females (6.6) also were above the mean population average of 6.3.

Figure 105
***Average Level Of Support For Enforcing Safety Belt Laws**
By Gender, Race And Ethnicity



Qx: How often do you think police should ticket for seat belt violations? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets and 10 means police should give tickets at every opportunity when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

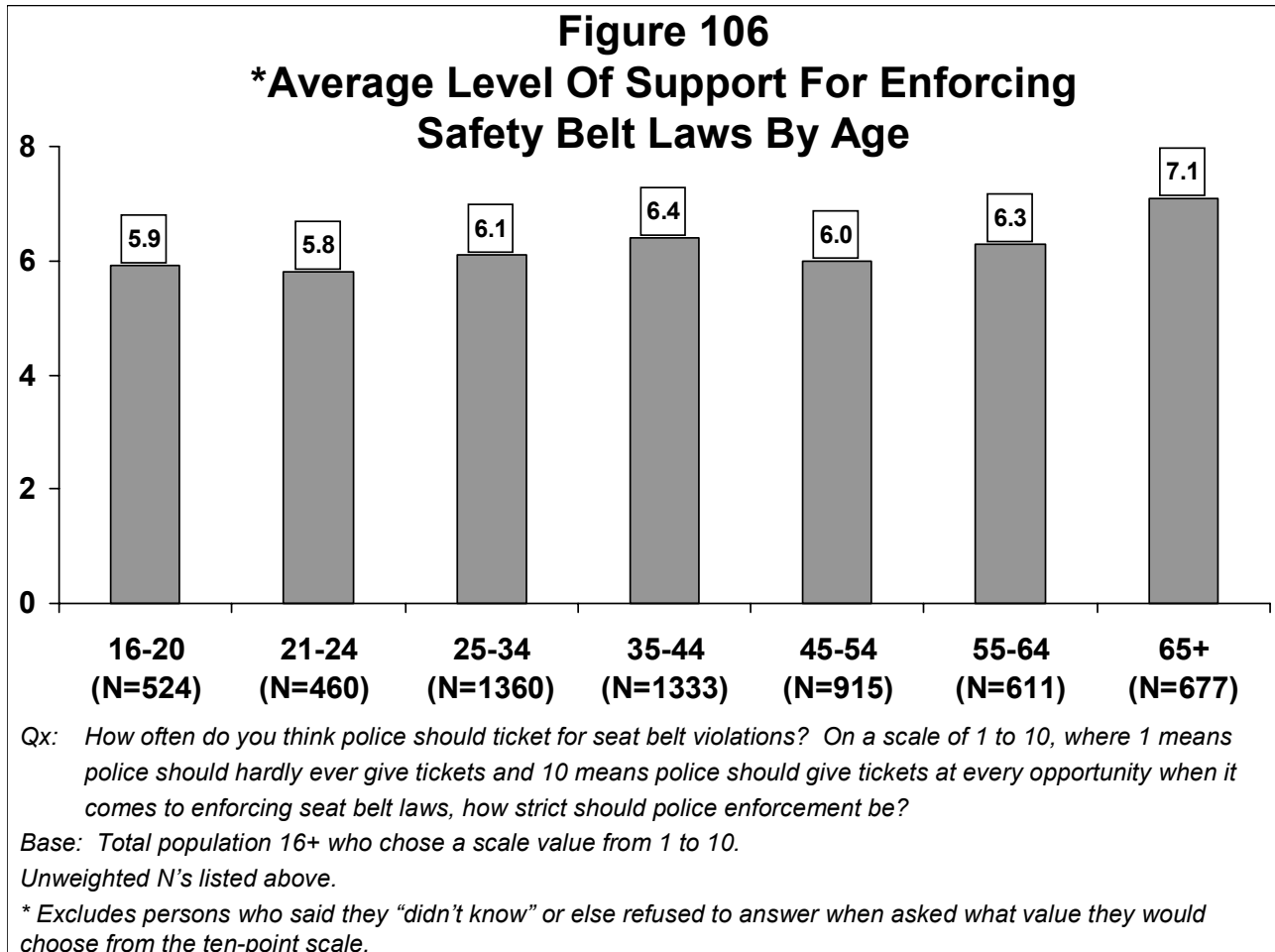
Base: Total population age 16+ who chose a scale value from 1 to 10.

Unweighted N's listed above.

*Excludes persons who said they 'didn't know' or else refused to answer when asked what value they would choose from the ten-point scale.

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Age differences in level of support for enforcement of safety belt laws were generally smaller than the racial/ethnic differences shown on the preceding page. The least support appeared among persons in the 16-24 age range, the greatest support among persons 65 years and older.



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