

Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2002

Introduction

Survey data were collected at 15 sites throughout Northern Ireland. Of these sites, six were located on rural roads, six on urban roads and three on motorways.

Fieldwork involved observing stationary traffic and recording details including gender, estimated age and whether a seat belt or child restraint was being used by car occupants. Recording took place between 08:30 and 17:00 on Tuesday 16 and Saturday 20 April 2002. In total 17,734 cars were observed and details of 27,259 occupants recorded.

Key Points

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The wearing rates for drivers, front seat passengers and back seat passengers are at their highest since the Northern Ireland Seat Belt Survey series began in 1994. In April 2002, 90% of drivers were recorded as wearing a seat belt. Front seat passengers (89%) were more likely to use a restraint than back seat passengers (72%).

Changes in Seat Belt Wearing since April 2001

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate for drivers increased by four percentage points from 86% in 2001 to 90% in 2002. Front seat passengers recorded as wearing a seat belt rose by three percentage points over the same period, from 86% to 89%. The wearing rate for back seat passengers rose by five percentage points on 2001, to 72%.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The 72% overall wearing rate for back seat passengers disguises differing wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 60% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, as compared to 79% of children. Since the survey began in 1994, the back seat restraint rate for children has been consistently higher than that for adults.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Children

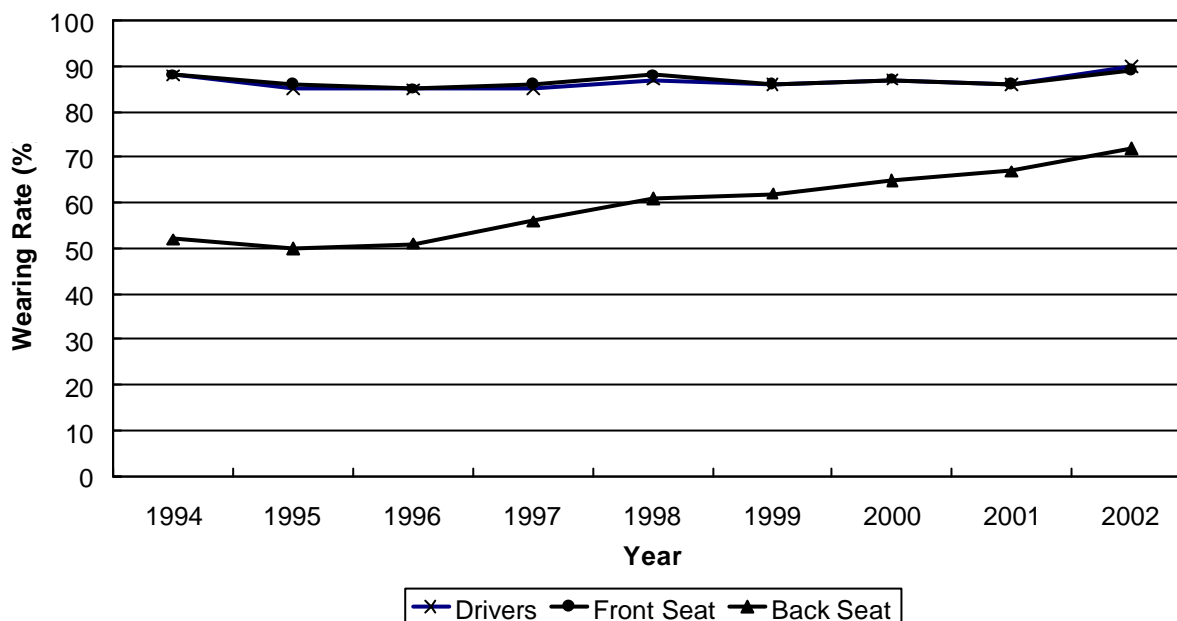
Children under one year of age have the highest back seat restraint wearing rate (95%), although this figure has dropped from 98% in 2001. Among child back seat passengers, those aged between five and nine years are least likely to wear seat belts (71%). Approximately three in ten children aged between five and 13 years (29%) travel unrestrained in the back of a car.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Adults

Between April 2001 and April 2002, the back seat passenger wearing rate for 14 to 29 year olds increased more than any other age group. It rose by 13 percentage points, from 46% in 2001 to 59% in 2002.

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in NI: 1994 - 2002



Since the beginning of the series of Northern Ireland Seat Belt Surveys, the seat belt wearing rates for all types of car occupants have increased to the current situation in 2002, when the seat belt wearing rate for drivers, front seat passengers and back seat passengers are at their highest levels since 1994 (Chart 1, Table 1).

The seat belt wearing rate for drivers is 90%, an increase of four percentage points since April 2001 (86%) and a rise of two percentage points since the series began in 1994.

Wearing rates for front seat passengers rose by three percentage points from 86% in April 2001 to 89% in 2002, and was up one percentage point overall since 1994.

The largest increase in seat belt wearing rates occurred among back seat passengers, where the percentage wearing either a seat belt or a child restraint was 72%, up 5 percentage points on April 2001. Since the Northern Ireland Seat Belt Survey began, the back seat wearing rates have increased by 20 percentage points from 52% in 1994 to 72% in 2002.

Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2002)*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72

* Figures relate to April Seat Belt Surveys which have been carried out every year since 1994.

Given the large differences in the seat belt wearing rates of back seat passengers observed since 1994, it is interesting to examine how different age groups contribute to the overall trend in the wearing rate of back seat passengers. It should also be noted that back seat wearing rates refer not only to passengers wearing a seat belt, but also to those wearing a child restraint.

Seat Belt Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers

Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Adults and Children

The seat belt wearing rate for all back seat passengers increased from 52% in 1994 to 72% in 2002, the highest rate recorded since the series began.

This 72% overall wearing rate for back seat passengers disguises different wearing rates among adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under) (Chart 2, Table 2).

Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers (Adults, Children and All Ages): 1994 - 2002

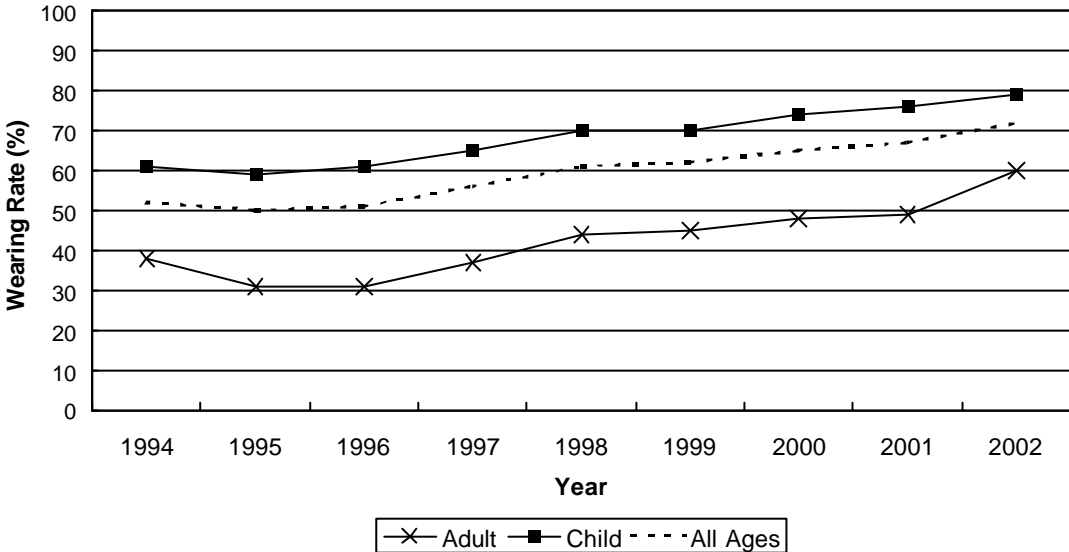


Chart 2 shows how the wearing rate for children travelling in the back seat is consistently higher than for adults, and also how it contributes significantly to the wearing rate of back seat passengers of all ages.

While the difference in back seat belt wearing rates between adults and children was largely constant between 1995 and 2001 (ranging between 25 and 30 percentage points), the marked rise in the adult back seat wearing rate in 2002 has contributed to the differential narrowing to 19 percentage points.

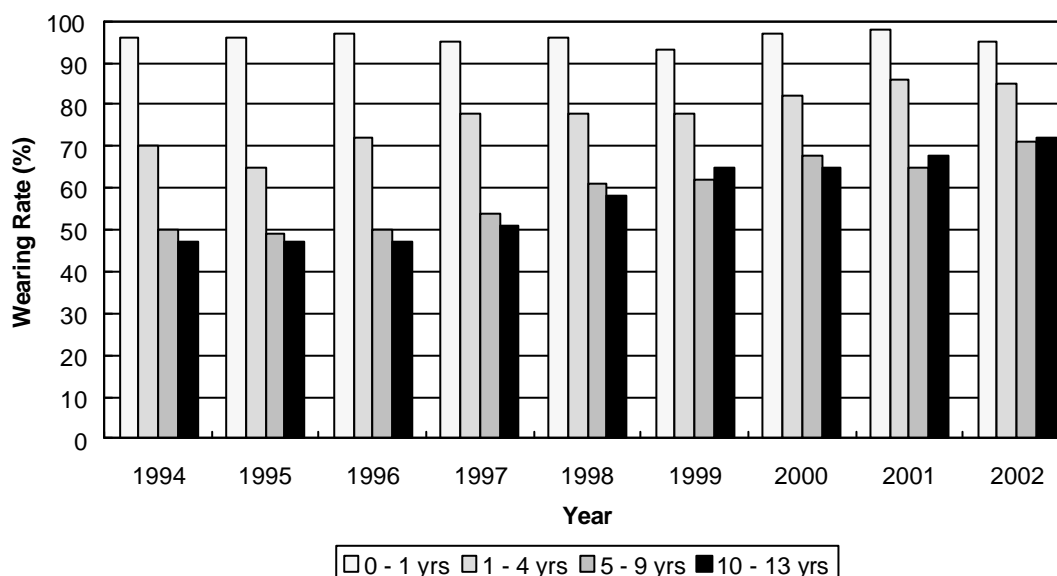
Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2002)*

Age	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72
All Children	61	59	61	65	70	70	74	76	79
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69
All Adults	38	31	31	37	44	45	48	49	60
All Ages	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72

* Figures relate to April Seat Belt Surveys which have been carried out every year since 1994.

Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers: 1994 - 2002



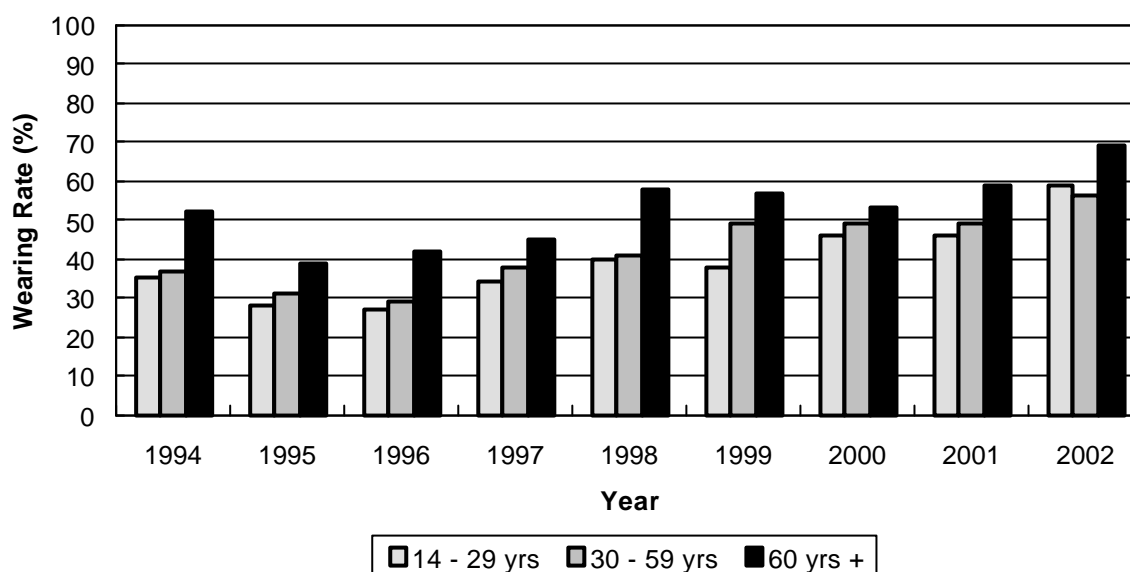
Throughout the period 1994 to 2002, child back seat passengers aged under one year consistently had the highest rate of seat belt wearing among all back seat passengers, ranging from 93% in 1999 to 98% in 2001. However, while both child and adult back seat belt wearing rates increased between 2001 and 2002, the rate for this age group fell from 98% to 95% (Chart 3, Table 2).

The wearing rate for back seat passengers aged between one and four years was 70% in 1994, falling to 65% before increasing steadily to 86% in 2001. As compared to 2001, the wearing rate for one to four year olds fell slightly by one percentage point to 85% in 2002.

Back seat wearing rates for older children (5 - 9 years and 10 - 13 years) increased steadily over the period. The wearing rate for children aged 5 to 9 year olds increased from 50% in 1994 to 71% in 2002, whilst back seat wearing rates for 10 to 13 year olds rose from 47% in 1994 to 72% in 2002.

Back Seat Wearing Rates for Adults

Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat Passengers : 1994 - 2002



The age groups 14 to 29 years and 30 to 50 years have consistently exhibited the lowest back seat wearing rates throughout the series, with 30 to 50 year olds displaying a marginally higher wearing rate than 14 to 29 year olds in most years. For the first time, in 2002, the wearing rate for 14 to 29 year olds (59%) exceeded that for 30 to 59 year olds (56%) (Chart 4, Table 2).

It should be noted, however, that the wearing rates for back seat passengers aged between 14 and 50 years have increased considerably since 1994, with passengers aged between 14 and 29 years increasing by 24 percentage points (35% to 59%) and those aged between 30 and 59 years rising by 19 percentage points (37% to 56%).

Since 2001, the back seat wearing rate for passengers aged 14 to 29 years increased by 13 percentage points, the largest increase of any age group over this period.

Among adults, those aged 60 years or over have consistently exhibited the highest back seat wearing rate throughout the series, ranging from a low of 39% in 1995 to the current rate of 69%.

Additional Information

Electronic and hard copies of this bulletin and the full Northern Ireland Seat Belt Survey Report (April 2002) are available from:

Central Statistics and Research Branch, Room 6.09, Clarence Court, 10 - 18 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT 8GB

 (028) 9054 0800 / (028) 9054 0799
Fax (028) 9054 0782
E-mail csrb@drdni.gov.uk