

# Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2003

## 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 8 and Saturday 12 April 2003. In total 18,632 cars were observed and details of 28,660 occupants recorded.

## Key Points

### Seat Belt Wearing Rates

In April 2003, 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 (75%).

### Changes in Seat Belt Wearing since April 2002

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate for drivers and front seat passengers remained the same at 90% and 89% respectively. The wearing rate for back seat passengers rose by three percentage points over the period, to 75%.

### Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The overall seat belt wearing rate for back seat passengers of 75% disguises different wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 64% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, compared to 81% of children. Both these figures compare favourably with April 2002, when 60% of adults and 79% of children wore a seatbelt in the back.

### Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates by Age

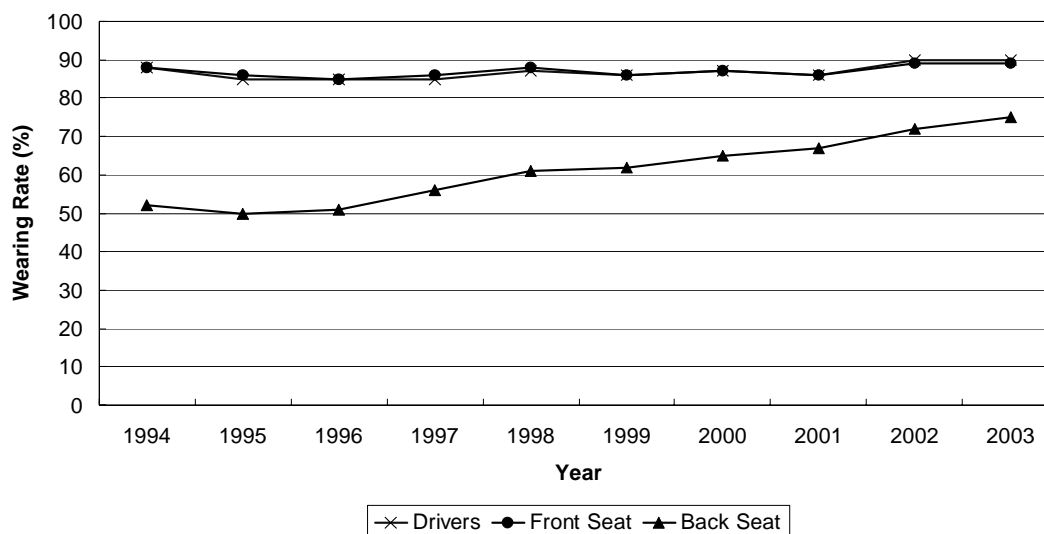
Children under one year of age have the highest back seat restraint wearing rate (97%), an increase of two percentage points on the figure for April 2002. The age group with the lowest back seat wearing rate was 14 to 29 year olds (60%), whilst the greatest improvement in back seat wearing rates since April 2002 occurred in the 30 to 59 year age group, up 10 percentage points from 56% in April 2002 to 66% in April 2003. One in four children aged between 5 and 13 years travel unrestrained in the back seat.

### Influence of Driver upon Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Passengers

The seat belt wearing rate for both front and back seat passengers was higher when the driver of the vehicle wore a seat belt, compared to when they did not. 92% of front seat passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle was wearing one, compared to only 56% when the driver was not. In the back seat, 78% of passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle also wore one, compared to 47% when the driver did not.

## Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in NI: 1994 - 2003



The seat belt wearing rate for both drivers (90%) and front seat passengers (89%) remained the same as that recorded in April 2002. These figures represent the highest rates recorded for both types of occupant since the current series of Northern Ireland Seat Belt Surveys began in 1994.

The wearing rate for back seat passengers increased by three percentage points, from 72% in April 2002 to 75% in April 2003, the highest wearing rate recorded amongst back seat passengers since the series began. Wearing rates amongst back seat passengers has increased by 23 percentage points over the duration of the current series of surveys, from 52% in 1994 to the current high of 75% (Table 1, Chart 1)

**Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2003)\***

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90	90
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89	89
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75

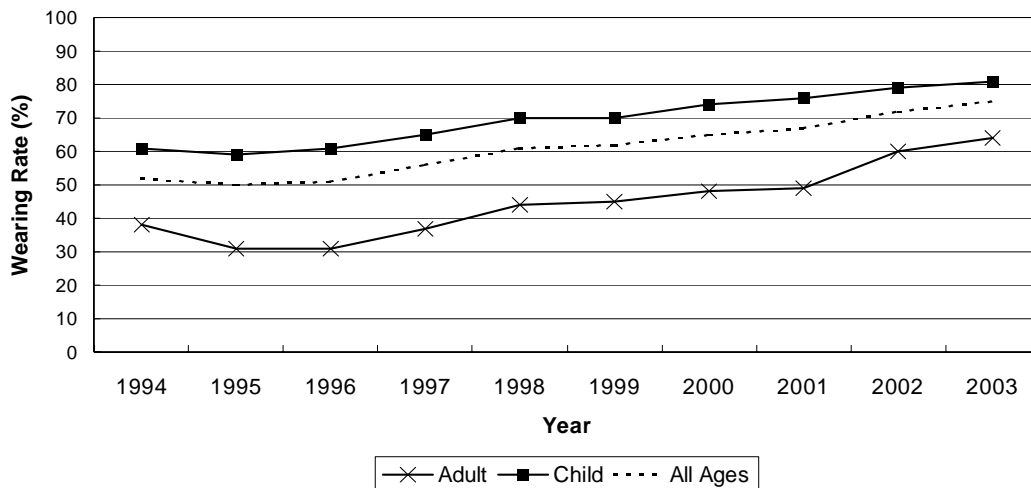
### Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Age

The large increase in back seat wearing rates since 1994 disguises various patterns of behaviour by different age groups of back seat occupants.

The overall rate of back seat wearing in April 2003 was recorded as 75%. Within this overall rate, the back seat wearing rate for adults (14 years and over) was 64% compared to 81% for children (13 years and under) (Table 2, Chart 2).

Since 1994, the back seat belt wearing rate amongst children has been consistently higher than that for adults. There have, however, been substantial increases in both rates, with the adult wearing rate increasing by 26 percentage points, from 38% in 1994 to 64% in 2003 and the rate for children increasing from 61% in 1994 to 81% in 2003, a rise of 20 percentage points.

**Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers  
(Adults, Children and All Ages): 1994 - 2003**



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 recorded in 2002, which continued this year, has contributed to the differential narrowing to 17 percentage points.

**Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2003)\***

Age	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95	97
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85	87
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71	75
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72	75
<b>All Children</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>81</b>
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59	60
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56	66
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69	74
<b>All Adults</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>75</b>

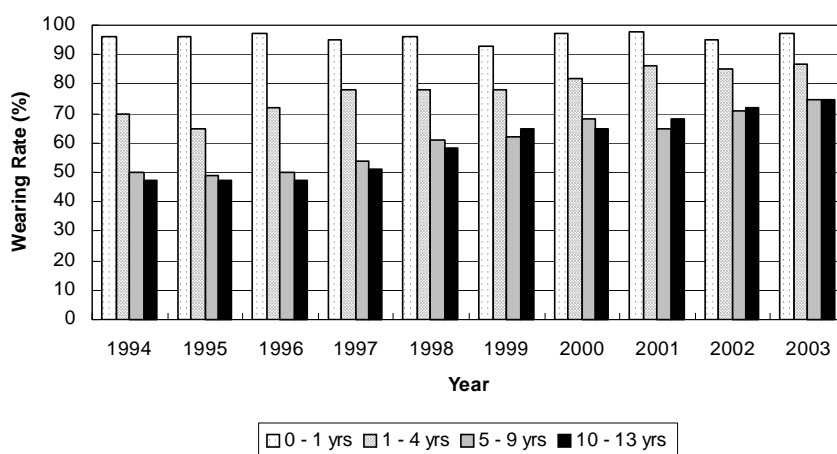
### Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Throughout the period 1994 to 2003, 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. Whilst this decreased slightly to 95% in 2002, the figure for April 2003 showed an increase of two percentage points to 97% (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. This figure fell to 85% in 2002, but has increased again in 2003 to 87%, the highest rate recorded since the series began.

Back seat wearing rates for older children (5 - 9 years and 10 - 13 years) have risen steadily over the period. Within the last year, the rate for 5 - 9 year olds rose four percentage points (from 71% to 75%), whilst the rate for 10 - 13 year olds rose three percentage points (from 72% to 75%), the highest rate recorded for both age groups since the series began in 1994. However, one in four children aged between 5 and 13 years still travel unrestrained in the back seat.

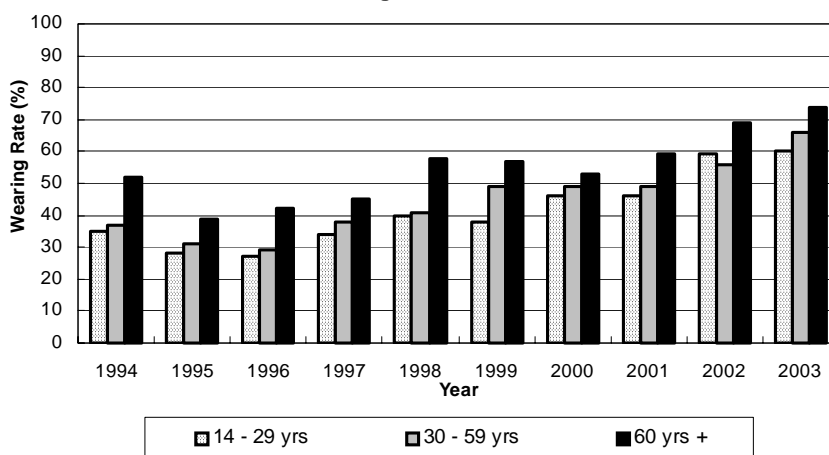
**Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers:  
1994 - 2003**



### Back Seat Wearing Rates for Adults

The back seat wearing rate recorded for those aged over 60 years has consistently been the highest of all the adult age groups since the beginning of the series. Over the last year, the rate for this age group increased by five percentage points to 74%, the highest rate recorded to date.

**Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat  
Passengers : 1994 - 2003**



The age groups 14 to 29 years and 30 to 59 years have consistently exhibited the lowest back seat wearing rates throughout the series, with 30 to 59 year olds displaying a marginally higher wearing rate than 14 to 29 year olds in most years. However, over the last year, the greatest increase in back seat belt wearing rates for all age groups was recorded amongst those aged 30 to 59 years, up ten percentage points from 56% in April 2002 to the current rate of 66%, the highest recorded since the series began (Chart 4, Table 2).

## Influence of Driver upon Wearing Rate of Passengers

There is a marked difference in the seat belt wearing rates of both front seat and back seat passengers depending upon whether or not the driver of the car is wearing a seat belt.

When the driver of a car wore a seatbelt, 92% of front seat passengers were also restrained. However, when the driver of the car did not wear a seat belt, this figure fell to 56% (Table 3).

**Table 3: Wearing Rate of Front Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not The Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2003)**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Driver Restrained	91	90	91	99	91	91	91	92	92
Driver Unrestrained	50	49	48	55	49	53	49	56	56

A similar scenario was observed in relation to back seat passengers, with 78% of back seat passengers wearing a seat belt when the driver of the car wore one, compared to only 47% when the driver of the car did not (Table 4).

**Table 4: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not The Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2003)**


	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Driver Restrained	53	54	60	64	65	69	70	76	78
Driver Unrestrained	23	29	40	28	32	36	37	37	47

The positive influence that a driver wearing a seat belt has upon both front and back seat passengers has been a consistent observation since it was first introduced in the survey in 1995.

## Additional Information

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

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