

Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2004

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 20th and Saturday 24th April 2004. In total 17,044 cars were observed and details of 26,047 occupants recorded.

Key Points

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

In April 2004, 91% of drivers were recorded as wearing a seat belt. Front seat passengers (90%) were more likely to use a restraint than back seat passengers (77%).

Changes in Seat Belt Wearing since April 2003

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate for drivers and front seat passengers have increased by one percentage point each to 91% and 90% respectively. The wearing rate for back seat passengers rose by two percentage points over the period, to 77%.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The overall seat belt wearing rate for back seat passengers of 77% disguises different wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 67% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, compared to 83% of children. Both these figures compare favourably with April 2003, when 64% of adults and 81% of children wore a seatbelt in the back.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates by Age

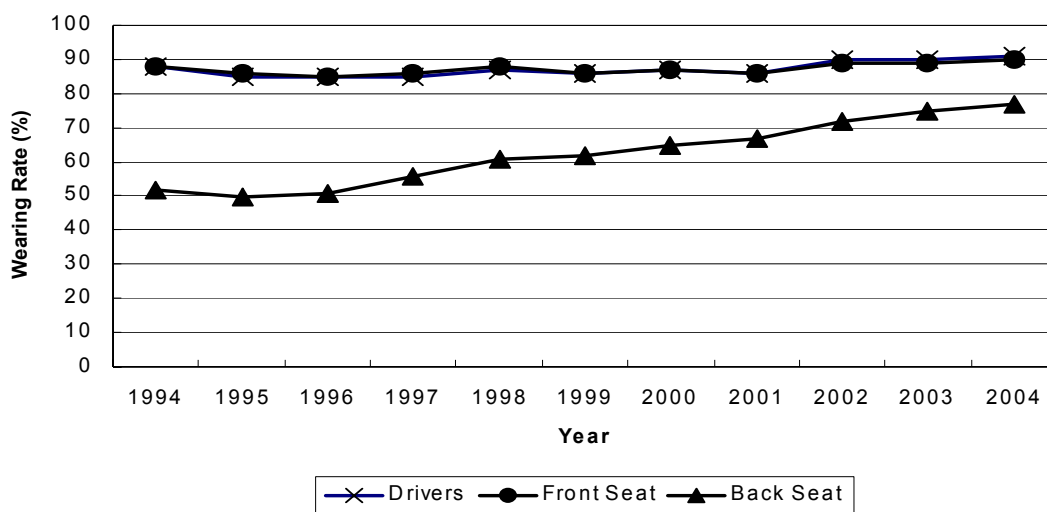
Children under one year of age have the highest back seat restraint wearing rate (98%). The age group with the lowest back seat wearing rate was 14 to 29 year olds (64%), however this figure represents the highest rate recorded since the series began in 1994. Around one in four children (23%) aged between 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. 93% of front seat passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle was wearing one, compared to only 54% when the driver was not. In the back seat, 80% of passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle also wore one, compared to 40% when the driver did not.

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in NI: 1994 - 2004



The seat belt wearing rate for drivers (91%) and front seat passengers (90%) increased by one percentage point each from April 2003. 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 two percentage points, from 75% in April 2003 to 77% in April 2004, the highest wearing rate recorded amongst back seat passengers since the series began. Wearing rates amongst back seat passengers has increased by 25 percentage points over the duration of the current series of surveys, from 52% in 1994 to the current high of 77% (See Table 1, Chart 1).

Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2004)*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90	90	91
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89	89	90
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77

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

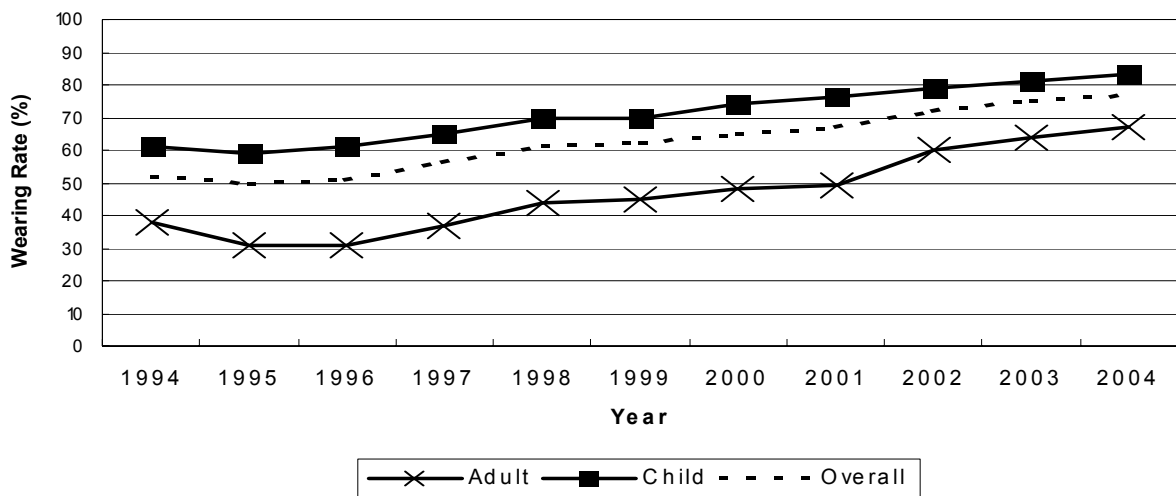
Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Age

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 2004 was recorded as 77%. Within this overall rate, the back seat wearing rate for adults (14 years and over) was 67% compared to 83% 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 29 percentage points, from 38% in 1994 to 67% in 2004 and the rate for children increasing from 61% in 1994 to 83% in 2004, a rise of 22 percentage points.

Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers (Adults, Children and Overall): 1994 - 2004



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, and again in 2003 and 2004, has contributed to the differential narrowing to 16 percentage points.

Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2004)*

Age	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95	97	98
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85	87	88
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71	75	77
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72	75	78
All Children	61	59	61	65	70	70	74	76	79	81	83
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59	60	64
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56	66	68
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69	74	74
All Adults	38	31	31	37	44	45	48	49	60	64	67
All Ages	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77

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

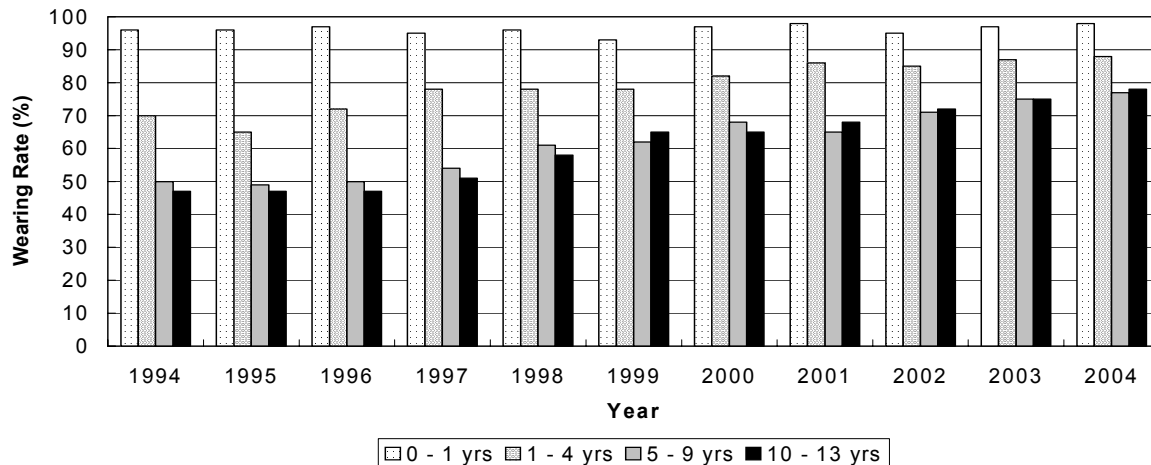
Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Throughout the period 1994 to 2004, 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 and 2004. Although there was a slight decrease to 95% in 2002, the figure for April 2004 was 98%, the highest recorded rate since the series began (Chart 3, Table 2).

The wearing rate for back seat passengers aged between one and four years was 70% in 1994, falling to 65% in 1995, before increasing steadily to 86% in 2001. This figure fell to 85% in 2002, but following increases in 2003 and 2004, it is at its highest rate recorded since the series began (88%).

Back seat wearing rates for older children (5 - 9 years and 10 - 13 years) have risen steadily over the period. The rate for 5 - 9 year olds rose to 77%, whilst the rate for 10 - 13 year olds rose to 78%, the highest rate recorded for both age groups since the series began in 1994. However, around one in four children (23%) aged between 5 and 13 years still travel unrestrained in the back seat.

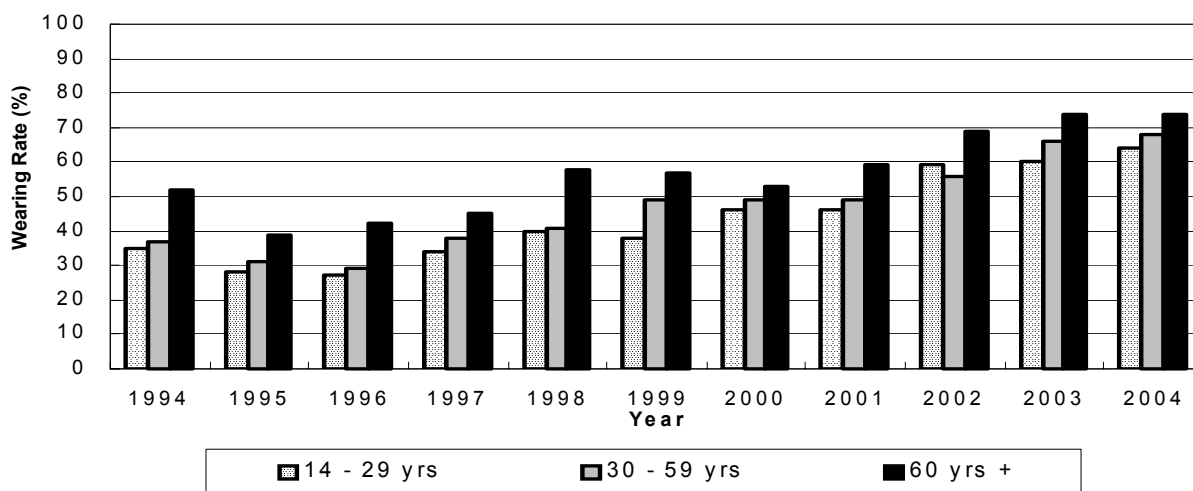
Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers: 1994 - 2004



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. In 2003, the rate for this age group was 74% and remained at this level in 2004, the highest rate recorded to date.

Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat Passengers : 1994 - 2004



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 14 to 29 years, (64%), 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, 93% of front seat passengers were also restrained. However, when the driver of the car did not wear a seat belt, this figure fell to 54% (Table 3).

Table 3: Wearing Rate of Front Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not The Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2004)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Driver Restrained	91	90	91	99	91	91	91	92	92	93
Driver Unrestrained	50	49	48	55	49	53	49	56	56	54

A similar scenario was observed in relation to back seat passengers, with 80% of back seat passengers wearing a seat belt when the driver of the car wore one, compared to only 40% 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 - 2004)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Driver Restrained	53	54	60	64	65	69	70	76	78	80
Driver Unrestrained	23	29	40	28	32	36	37	37	47	40

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 2004) are available from:

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