

Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2005

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 19th and Saturday 23rd April 2005. In total 16,642 cars were observed and details of 25,203 occupants recorded.

Key Points

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

In April 2005, 93% of drivers were recorded as wearing a seat belt. Front seat passengers (92%) were more likely to use a restraint than back seat passengers (81%).

Changes in Seat Belt Wearing since April 2004

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate for drivers and front seat passengers have increased by two percentage points each to 93% and 92% respectively. The wearing rate for back seat passengers rose by four percentage points over the period, to 81%.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The overall seat belt wearing rate for back seat passengers (81%) disguises different wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 73% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, compared to 86% of children. Both these figures compare favourably with April 2004, when 67% of adults and 83% of children wore a seatbelt in the back.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates by Age

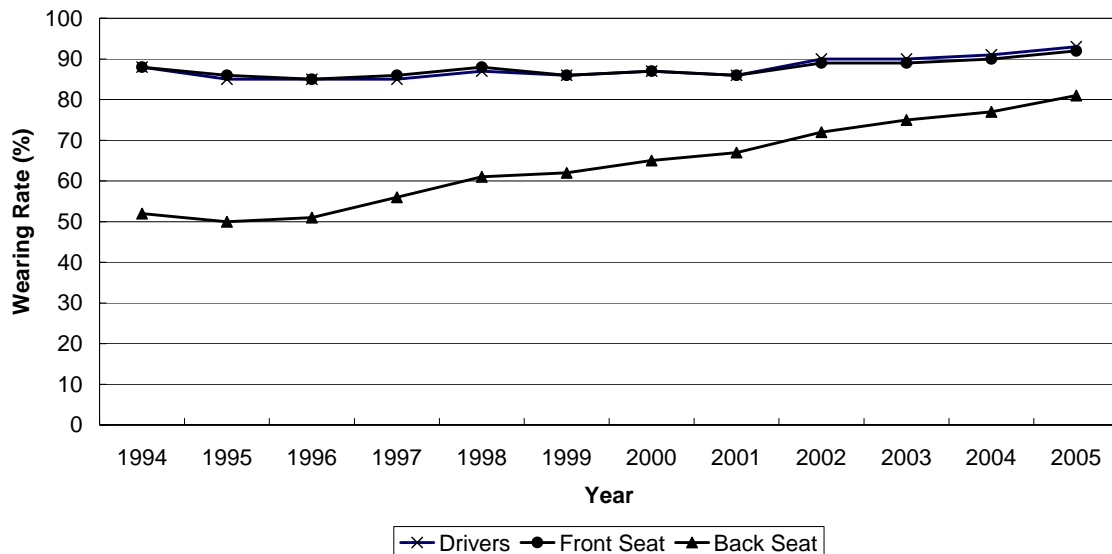
Children under one year of age have the highest back seat restraint wearing rate (98%). The age group with the lowest back seat wearing rate was 14 to 29 year olds (68%), however this figure represents the highest rate recorded since the series began in 1994. Around one in five children (18%) aged between 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. 94% of front seat passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle was wearing one, compared to only 55% when the driver was not. In the back seat, 83% of passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle also wore one, compared to only 53% when the driver did not.

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in NI: 1994 - 2005



The seat belt wearing rate for drivers (93%) and front seat passengers (92%) increased by two percentage points each from April 2004. 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 four percentage points, from 77% in April 2004 to 81% in April 2005, the highest wearing rate recorded amongst back seat passengers since the series began. Wearing rates amongst back seat passengers has increased by 29 percentage points over the duration of the current series of surveys, from 52% in 1994 to the current high of 81% (See Table 1, Chart 1).

Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2005)

	1994 %	1995 %	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90	90	91	93
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89	89	90	92
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77	81

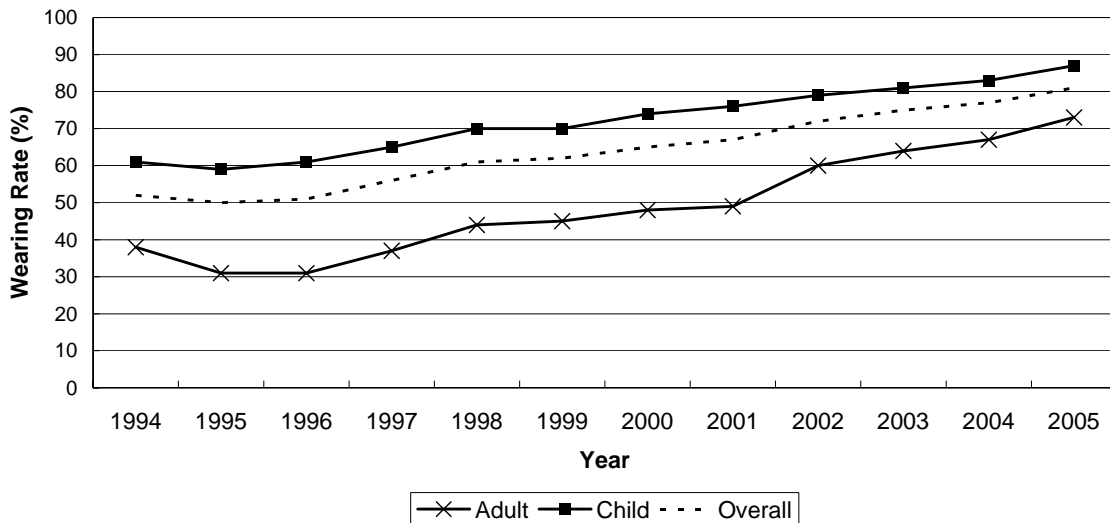
Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Age

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 2005 was recorded as 81%. Within this overall rate, the back seat wearing rate for adults (14 years and over) was 73% compared to 86% 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 35 percentage points, from 38% in 1994 to 73% in 2005 and the rate for children increasing from 61% in 1994 to 86% in 2005, a rise of 25 percentage points.

Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers (Adults, Children and Overall): 1994 - 2005



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, 2004, and 2005 has contributed to the differential narrowing of 13 percentage points in 2005.

Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2005)

Age	1994 %	1995 %	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95	97	98	98
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85	87	88	92
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71	75	77	82
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72	75	78	82
All Children	61	59	61	65	70	70	74	76	79	81	83	86
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59	60	64	68
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56	66	68	77
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69	74	74	85
All Adults	38	31	31	37	44	45	48	49	60	64	67	73
All Ages	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77	81

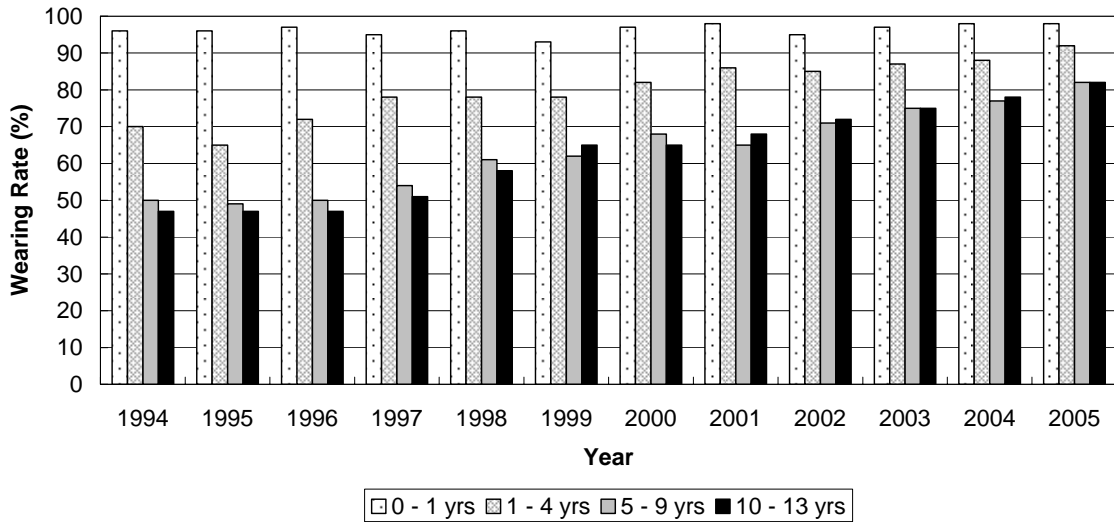
Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Throughout the period 1994 to 2005, 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, 2004 and 2005. Although there was a slight decrease to 95% in 2002, the figure for April 2005 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 since 2003, it is at its highest rate recorded since the series began (92%).

Back seat wearing rates for older children (5 - 9 years and 10 - 13 years) have risen steadily over the period. The rates for both 5 - 9 year olds and 10 - 13 year olds have risen to 82%, the highest rate recorded for both age groups since the series began in 1994. However, around one in five children (18%) aged between 5 and 13 years still travel unrestrained in the back seat.

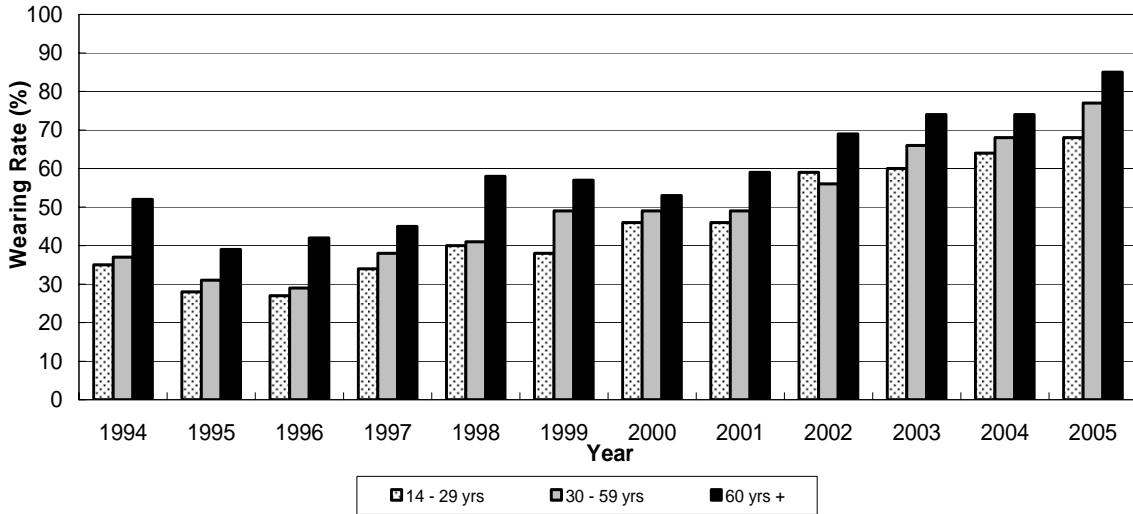
Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers: 1994 - 2005



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 2004, the rate for this age group was 74% increasing to 85% in 2005, the highest rate recorded to date.

Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat Passengers : 1994 - 2005



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.

Over the last year the greatest increase in back seat belt wearing rates for all age groups was recorded amongst those aged 60 and over. This showed an increase of 11 percentage points from 74% to 85%, the highest recorded rate for that age group 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, 94% of front seat passengers were also restrained. However, when the driver of the car did not wear a seat belt, this figure fell to 55% (Table 3).

Table 3: Wearing Rate of Front Seat Passengers depending upon whether or not the Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2005)

	1995 %	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
Driver Restrained	91	90	91	99	91	91	91	92	92	93	94
Driver Unrestrained	50	49	48	55	49	53	49	56	56	54	55

A similar scenario was observed in relation to back seat passengers, with 83% of back seat passengers wearing a seat belt when the driver of the car wore one, compared to only 53% 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 - 2005)

	1995 %	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
Driver Restrained	53	54	60	64	65	69	70	76	78	80	83
Driver Unrestrained	23	29	40	28	32	36	37	37	47	40	53

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 2005) are available from:

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