

Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2006

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 25th and Saturday 29th April 2006. In total 15,499 cars were observed and details of 23,211 occupants recorded.

Key Points

Seat Belt Wearing Rates

In April 2006, 93% of drivers were recorded as wearing a seat belt. Front seat passengers (93%) were more likely to use a restraint than back seat passengers (85%).

Changes in Seat Belt Wearing Rates since April 2005

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate for drivers has remained at 93%. The front seat passenger wearing rate of 93% compares to 92% recorded in April 2005. For the second consecutive year, the wearing rate for back seat passengers has risen by four percentage points to 85%.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The overall seat belt wearing rate for back seat passengers (85%) disguises different wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 78% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, compared to 90% of children. This compares with April 2005, when 73% of adults and 86% of children wore a seatbelt in the back.

Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates by Age

Children under one year of age and those aged 1 to 4 years have the highest back seat restraint wearing rate (96%). The age group with the lowest back seat wearing rate was 14 to 29 year olds (75%), however this figure represents the highest rate recorded since the series began in 1994 and shows a seven percentage points increase from 2005. 15% of children aged between 5 and 13 years travel unrestrained in the back seat.

Influence of Driver upon Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Passengers

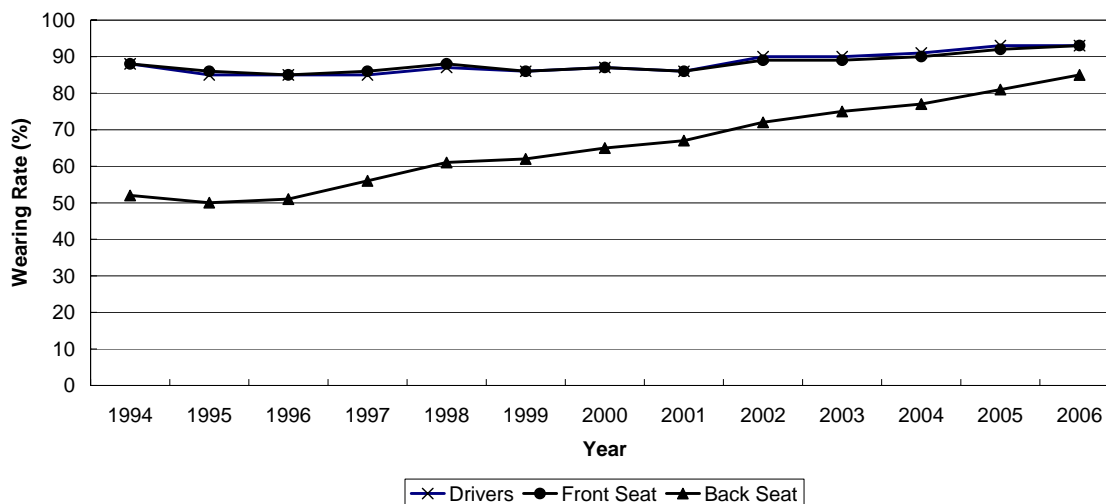
There was a marked difference in the seat belt wearing rate for both front and back seat passengers depending on whether the driver of the vehicle wore a seat belt or not. 95% of front seat passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle was wearing one, compared to 58% when the driver was not. In the back seat, 86% of passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle also wore one, compared to 57% when the driver did not.

Seat Belt Wearing rate by Gender

The overall seat belt wearing rate was recorded as 95% for females and 92% for males. There was little difference in the overall level of back seat restraint usage by gender. In the front seat 89% of males compared to 95% of females were restrained.

1. Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in NI: 1994 - 2006



The seat belt wearing rate for drivers and front seat passengers was recorded as 93%. This figure represents the highest rate recorded for both since the current series of Northern Ireland Seat Belt Surveys began in 1994.

For the second consecutive year, the wearing rate for back seat passengers increased by four percentage points, from 81% in April 2005 to 85% in April 2006. This is the highest wearing rate recorded amongst back seat passengers since the series began. The wearing rate for back seat passengers has increased by 33 percentage points over the duration of the current series of surveys, from 52% in 1994 to the current high of 85% (See Table 1, Chart 1).

Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2006)*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90	90	91	93	93
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89	89	90	92	93
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77	81	85

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

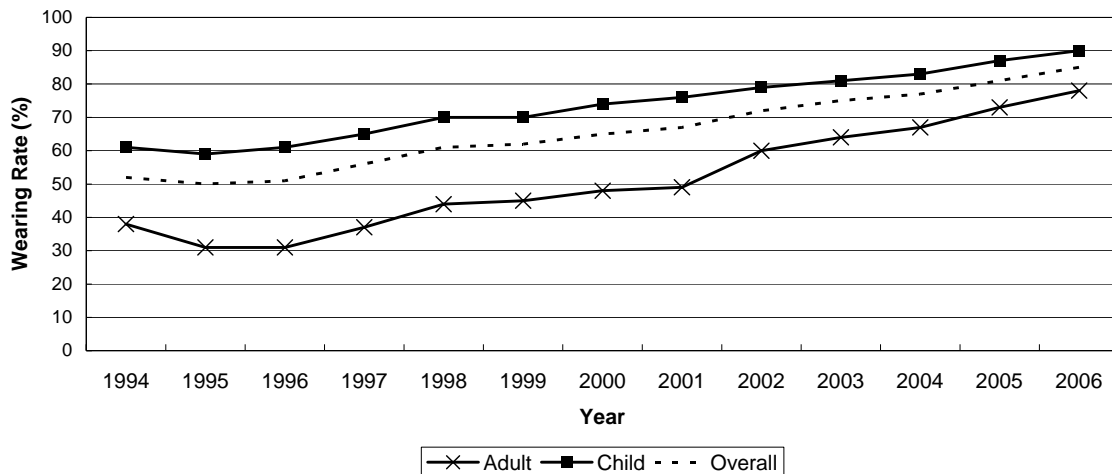
2. Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Age

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 2006 was recorded as 85%. Within this overall rate, the back seat wearing rate for adults (14 years and over) was 78% compared to 90% 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 40 percentage points, from 38% in 1994 to 78% in 2006 and the rate for children increasing from 61% in 1994 to 90% in 2006, a rise of 29 percentage points.

Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers (Adults, Children and Overall): 1994 - 2006



The difference in back seat belt wearing rates between adults and children was relatively constant between 1995 and 2001, with a difference of between 25 and 30 percentage points. However, the marked rise in the adult back seat wearing rates has contributed to a difference of only 12 percentage points in 2006 between adults and children.

Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2006)*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95	97	98	98	96
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85	87	88	92	96
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71	75	77	82	84
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72	75	78	82	86
All Children	61	59	61	65	70	70	74	76	79	81	83	86	90
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59	60	64	68	75
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56	66	68	77	78
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69	74	74	85	85
All Adults	38	31	31	37	44	45	48	49	60	64	67	73	78
All Ages	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77	81	85

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

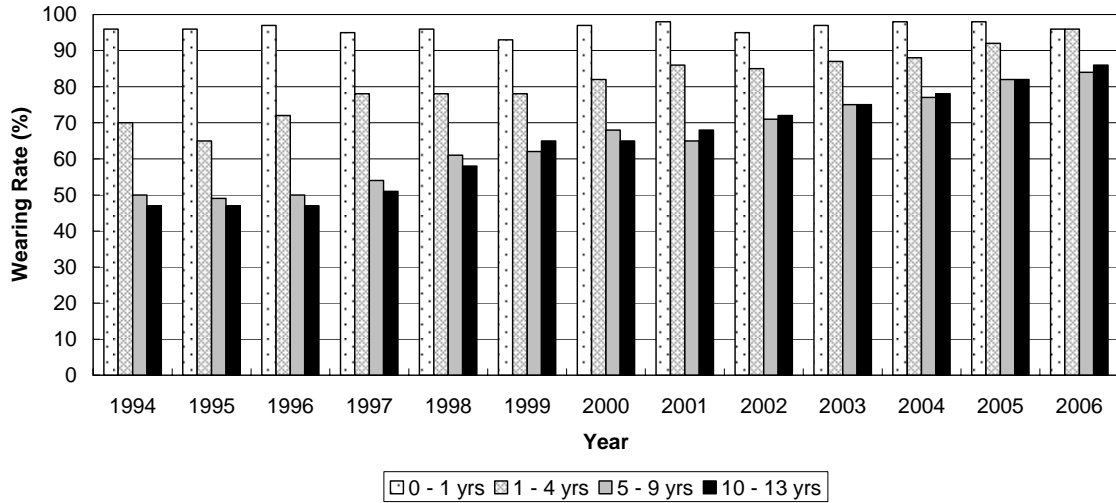
3. Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Throughout the period 1994 to 2006, child back seat passengers aged under one year consistently had the highest rate of seat belt wearing among all back seat passengers. (Chart 3, Table 2).

When the series began in 1994, the wearing rate for back seat passengers aged between one and four years was 70%. Since then, the rate has increased to 96% in 2006 – the highest recorded rate since the series began.

Back seat wearing rates for older children (5 - 9 years and 10 - 13 years) have increased from their 1994 rates of 50% and 47% respectively to 84% and 86%. This is the highest rate recorded for both age groups since the series began in 1994. However, 15% of those aged between 5 and 13 years still travel unrestrained in the back seat.

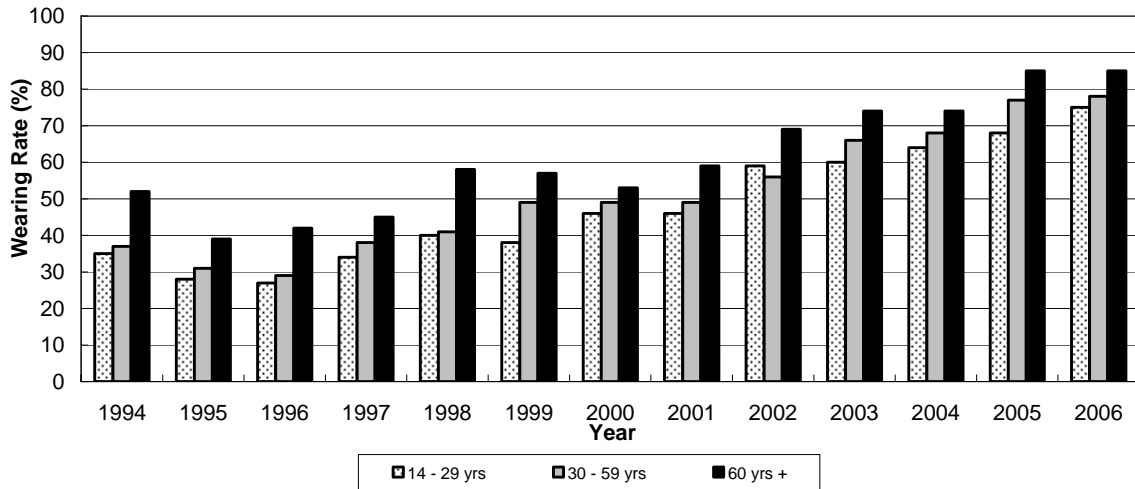
Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers: 1994 - 2006



4. 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 1994, the rate for this age group was 52%, however increases since then have seen the rate increase to 85% in 2005 and 2006, the highest rate recorded to date.

Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat Passengers : 1994 - 2006



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 in most years. Both age groups have seen their back seat wearing rates more than double since from 1994 to 2006, with the 14-29 year old wearing rate increasing from 35% to 75% and the 30-59 year old wearing rate increasing from 37% to 78%.

Over the last year the greatest increase in back seat belt wearing rates for all age groups was recorded amongst those aged 14-29. This showed an increase of seven percentage points from 68% to 75%, the highest recorded rate for that age group since the series began (Chart 4, Table 2).

5. 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.

In 2006 when the driver of a car wore a seatbelt, 95% of front seat passengers were also restrained. However, when the driver did not wear a seat belt, this figure fell to 58% (Table 3).

Table 3: Wearing Rate of Front Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not The Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2006)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Driver Restrained	91	90	91	99	91	91	91	92	92	93	94	95
Driver Unrestrained	50	49	48	55	49	53	49	56	56	54	55	58

A similar scenario was observed in relation to back seat passengers, with 86% of back seat passengers wearing a seat belt when the driver of the car wore one, compared to only 57% when the driver did not (Table 4).

Table 4: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not The Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2006)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Driver Restrained	53	54	60	64	65	69	70	76	78	80	83	86
Driver Unrestrained	23	29	28	28	32	36	37	37	47	40	53	57

This marked increase in wearing rates for both front and back seat passengers has been observed since it was first recorded in 1995.

Additional Information

Electronic and hard copies of this bulletin and the full Northern Ireland Seat Belt Survey Report (April 2006) are available from:

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