

# Northern Ireland Seat Belt Bulletin April 2007

## 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 24th and Saturday 28th April 2007. In total 16,364 cars were observed and details of 25,121 occupants recorded.

## Key Points

### Seat Belt Wearing Rates

In April 2007, 95% of drivers were recorded as wearing a seat belt. Front seat passengers (95%) were more likely to use a restraint than back seat passengers (90%). The overall wearing rate for all car occupants was 95%.

### Changes in Seat Belt Wearing Rates since April 2006

Over the last year, the seat belt wearing rate recorded for both drivers and front seat passengers has increased from 93% to 95%. The wearing rate for back seat passengers has risen by five percentage points to 90%.

### Back Seat Belt Wearing Rates

The overall seat belt wearing rate for back seat passengers (90%) disguises different wearing rates for adults (14 years and over) and children (13 years and under), with 84% of adults wearing a seat belt in the back, compared to 93% of children. This compares with April 2006, when 78% of adults and 90% 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 groups with the lowest back seat wearing rate were 14 to 29 year olds and 30 to 59 year olds (83%). However this figure represents the highest rate recorded for 14 to 29 year olds and 30 to 59 year olds since the series began in 1994. However, 10% of those aged between 5 and 9 years were recorded as travelling 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

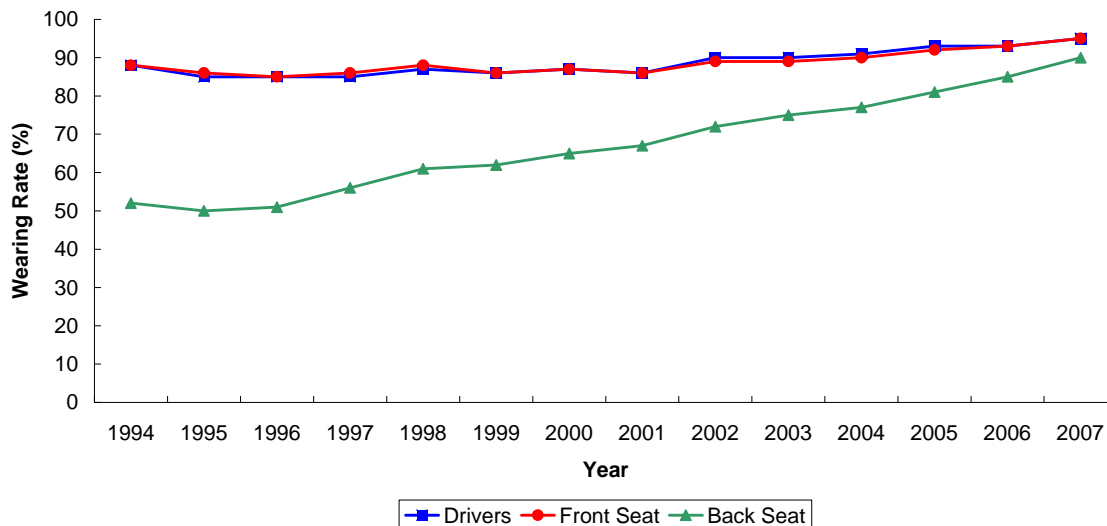
not. 96% of front seat passengers wore a seat belt when the driver was wearing one, compared to 59% when the driver was not. In the back seat, 91% of passengers wore a seat belt when the driver of the vehicle also wore one, compared to 64% when the driver did not.

### Seat Belt Wearing rate by Gender

The overall seat belt wearing rate was recorded as 97% for females and 94% for males. There was little difference in the overall level of back seat restraint usage by gender. In the front seat 92% of males compared to 96% of females were restrained.

## 1. Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Chart 1 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates in Northern Ireland: 1994 - 2007



The seat belt wearing rate for drivers and front seat passengers was recorded as 95%. This figure represents the highest rate recorded for both since the current series of Northern Ireland Seat Belt Surveys began in 1994.

The wearing rate for back seat passengers increased by five percentage points to 90% in April 2007. 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 38 percentage points over the duration of the current series of surveys, from 52% in 1994 to the current high of 90% (See Table 1, Chart 1).

**Table 1: Summary of Key Results from NI Seat Belt Surveys (1994 - 2007)**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Driver	88	85	85	85	87	86	87	86	90	90	91	93	93	95
Front Seat	88	86	85	86	88	86	87	86	89	89	90	92	93	95
Back Seat	52	50	51	56	61	62	65	67	72	75	77	81	85	90
<b>Overall</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>95</b>

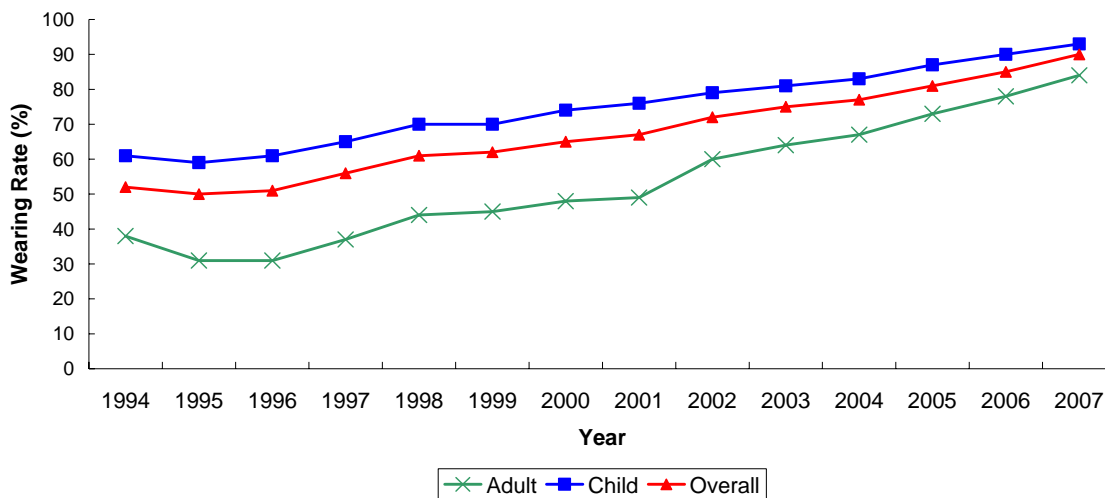
## 2. Comparison of Back Seat Wearing Rates by Age

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 2007 was recorded as 90%. Within this overall rate, the back seat wearing rate for adults (14 years and over) was 84%, compared to 93% for children (13 years and under) (See 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 46 percentage points, from 38% in 1994 to 84% in 2007 and the rate for children increasing from 61% in 1994 to 93% in 2007, a rise of 32 percentage points.

**Chart 2 - Seat Belt Wearing Rates for Back Seat Passengers (Adults, Children and Overall): 1994 - 2007**



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 9 percentage points in 2007 between adults and children.

**Table 2: Wearing Rate of Back Seat Passengers by Age (1994 - 2007)**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0 - 1	96	96	97	95	96	93	97	98	95	97	98	98	96	98
1 - 4	70	65	72	78	78	78	82	86	85	87	88	92	96	96
5 - 9	50	49	50	54	61	62	68	65	71	75	77	82	84	90
10 - 13	47	47	47	51	58	65	65	68	72	75	78	82	86	92
<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>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>93</b>
14 - 29	35	28	27	34	40	38	46	46	59	60	64	68	75	83
30 - 59	37	31	29	38	41	49	49	49	56	66	68	77	78	83
60+	52	39	42	45	58	57	53	59	69	74	74	85	85	86
<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>67</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>84</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>	<b>77</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>90</b>

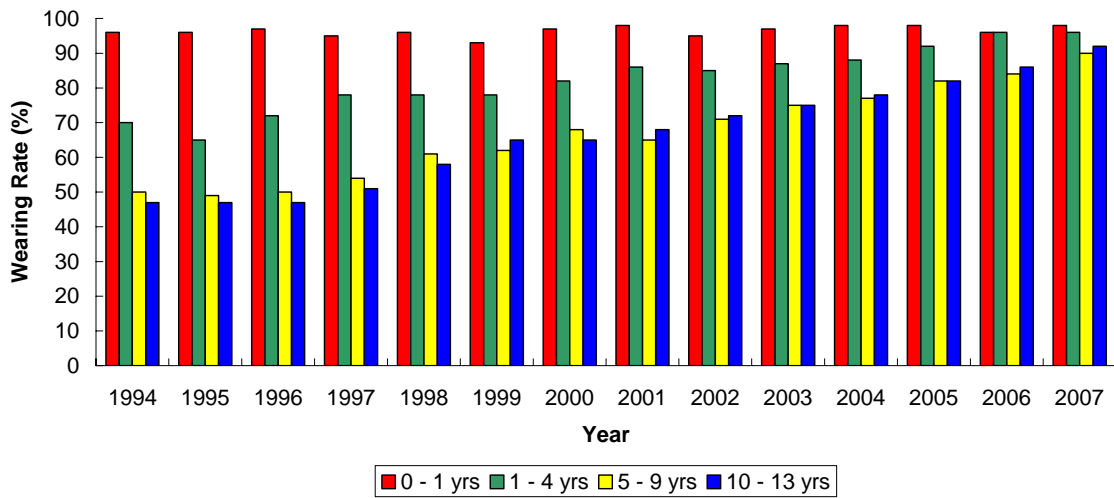
### 3. Back Seat Wearing Rates for Children

Throughout the period 1994 to 2007, child back seat passengers aged under one year consistently had the highest rate of seat belt wearing among all back seat passengers. (See 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 2007 – 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 90% and 92%. This is the highest rate recorded for both age groups since the series began in 1994. However, 10% of those aged between 5 and 9 years were recorded as travelling unrestrained in the back seat.

**Chart 3 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Child Back Seat Passengers: 1994 - 2007**

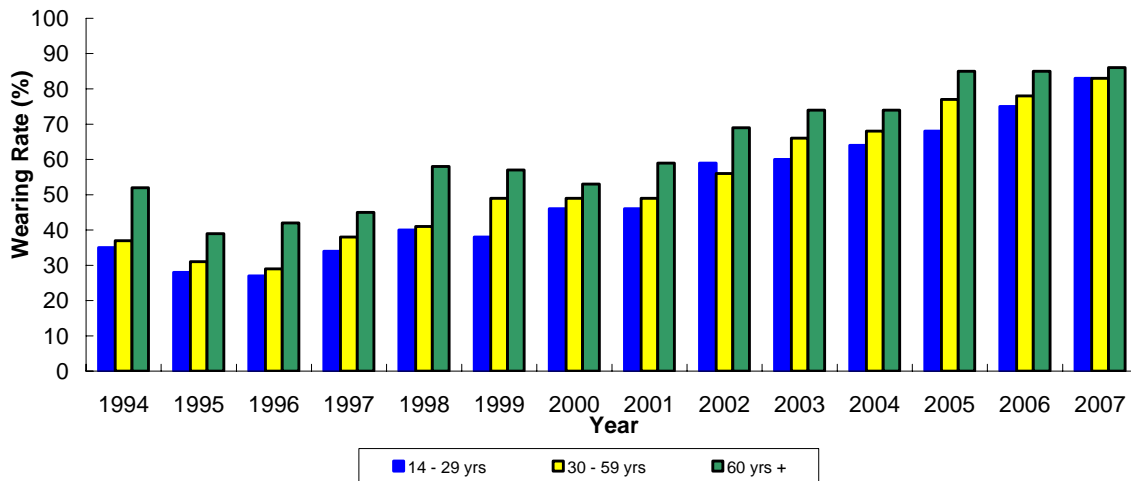


#### 4. Back Seat Wearing Rates for Adults

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 86% in 2007, the highest rate recorded to date.

The overall adult back seat wearing rate has more than doubled, increasing from 38% in 1994 to a high of 84% in April 2007.

**Chart 4 - Seat Belt Wearing Rate for Adult Back Seat Passengers : 1994 - 2007**



The age groups 14 to 29 years and 30 to 59 years have consistently exhibited the lowest back seat wearing rates throughout the series. Both age groups back seat wearing rates have more than doubled since 1994, increasing from 35% and 37% respectively to 83% in 2007.

## 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 2007 when the driver of a car wore a seatbelt, 96% of front seat passengers were also restrained. However, when the driver did not wear a seat belt, this figure fell to 59% (Table 3).

**Table 3: Wearing Rate of Front Seat Passengers Depending Upon Whether or not the Driver is Restrained (1995 - 2007)**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Driver Restrained	91	90	91	99	91	91	91	92	92	93	94	95	96
Driver Unrestrained	50	49	48	55	49	53	49	56	56	54	55	58	59

A similar scenario was observed in relation to back seat passengers, with 91% of back seat passengers wearing a seat belt when the driver of the car wore one, compared to only 64% 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 - 2007)**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Driver Restrained	53	54	60	64	65	69	70	76	78	80	83	86	91
Driver Unrestrained	23	29	40	28	32	36	37	37	47	40	53	57	64

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 2007) are available from:

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