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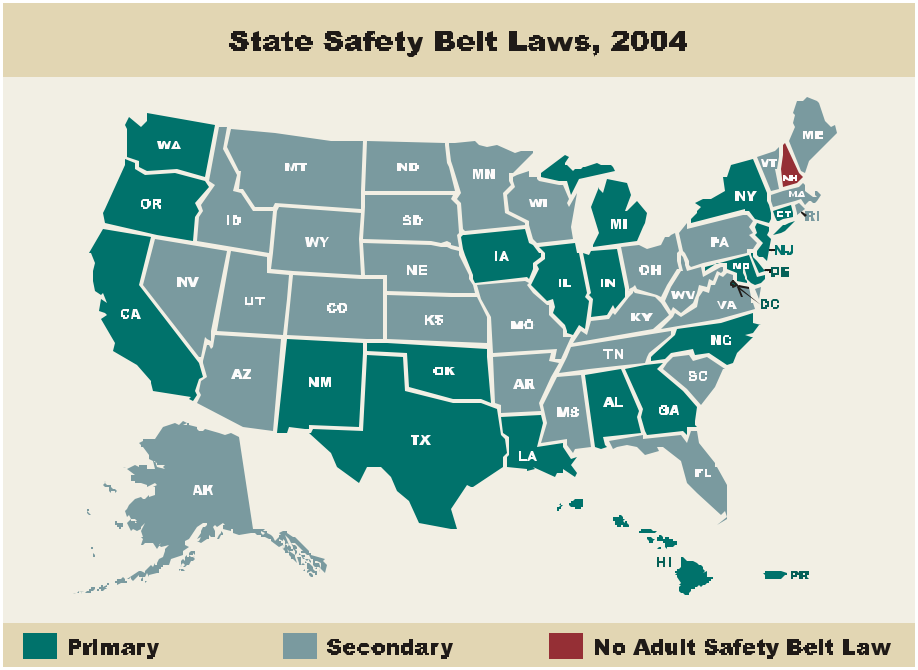
Safety Belt Use in 2003 – Use Rates in the States and Territories



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Abstract

This paper presents and analyzes the level of safety belt use in 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in 2003. We identify states that improved their use rates the most, and examine rates in the light of two key factors affecting belt use – state belt laws and campaigns conducted to get more people to buckle up. We also explain the common methodology followed by the state surveys, a set of criteria established by NHTSA to ensure statistical accuracy and consistency.

In general, the states' use rates are substantially higher in 2003, indicating the success of the unprecedented level of effort to raise use. An additional state (Oregon) reached the 90% milestone, joining three other states with use rates in the 90's, and seven states converted a quarter or more of their nonusers to users in the period 2002-2003.

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1. Executive Summary

Reflecting the success of the 2003 Click It or Ticket campaign, several states and territories saw large increases in safety belt use in 2003. Arizona led the increases, converting nearly one half of its nonusers to users in a single year. Alaska, Georgia, and Indiana also saw large increases in use. States with 90% use or higher generally maintained this high level of usage, and Oregon joined their ranks, achieving 90% use for the first time in 2003. Among the states and territories that submitted use rates, rates ranged from 50% (in New Hampshire) to 95% (in Washington State). These results are from observational surveys of belt use conducted in 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico that have been certified by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for statistical accuracy and consistency.

Two factors that play key roles in a state's use rate are the state's belt law and any campaign conducted in the state to raise use. Use rates in states with stronger, so called *primary*, laws are generally about 11 percentage points higher than those in states with weaker (*secondary*) laws. This pattern has been seen for a number of years, and continues to be demonstrated with the 2003 belt rates. Two states (Illinois and Delaware) strengthened their laws to primary status in 2003, one of whose 2003 rate was measured when the stronger law was in place. This state (Illinois) saw a substantial increase in use from 74% in 2002 to 80% in 2003. See Section 4 for more information on primary and secondary laws.

The other key factor, the belt campaign conducted to raise use, varied in extent from state to state, but the 2003 campaigns were generally much more extensive than the 2002 campaigns. More states ran campaigns and their campaigns involved much greater amounts of the two main components of any belt campaign – publicity and enforcement. In fact, the 2003 campaigns were the largest ever conducted (Solomon et al., 2002; Solomon et al., 2003). Use rates indicate that the increased effort to get the public to buckle up was a success, with most states showing increases in use between the two years and with the nation experiencing an unprecedented 4-point jump in use from 75% in 2002 to 79% in 2003 (Glassbrenner, September 2003).

It is estimated that safety belts save the lives of more than 14,000 motorists each year, and save about $50 billion in medical care, lost productivity and other injury related costs nationwide (Blincoe et al., 2002; Traffic Safety Facts, undated). Each percentage point increase in use saves about 270 additional lives nationwide. Thus low use rates have serious consequences, and there are considerable benefits to getting more motorists to buckle up.

This paper is organized as follows. We describe the 2002 and 2003 belt campaigns in Section 2, identify the best and worst performing states in Section 3, discuss state belt laws in Section 4, present the survey methodologies in Section 5, and discuss belt use nationwide in Section 6. The Appendix contains all state rates from 1998-2003, and summaries of the states' belt laws.

2. The 2003 Click It or Ticket Campaign

Between May 19 and May 26, 2003, NHTSA and state highway safety offices conducted the largest ever campaign to increase the public's use of safety belts, the 2003 Click It or Ticket Mobilization. The campaign involved the dual approach of highly visible enforcement of belt laws by police combined with advertising in major media outlets. Police in 12,000 law enforcement agencies in 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico conducted checkpoints, writing more than 500,000 tickets combined.

NHTSA spent $8 million on 500 television and 350 radio advertisements, warning the public that they may be ticketed and fined for nonuse. States spent an additional $16 million on 89,000 television and 93,000 radio ads (Tyson, 2003). See (Solomon et al., 2003) for more information on the national and state campaigns.

The 2003 campaign was substantially more extensive than the 2002 campaign. In 2002, 10 states conducted the combination of intense publicity and highly visible enforcement activity that NHTSA calls the *Click It or Ticket Model.* Many states followed at least part of the Model, with a total of 41 states spending $5 million combined to advertise their campaigns and 18 states issuing a total of 250,000 tickets for belt nonuse (Solomon et al., 2002). That is, in 2003 more than four times the number of states (and territories) followed the *Click It or Ticket Model*, states spent more than three times more money on advertising, and states reported twice as many tickets being issued.

The campaign's success is indicated by the state use rates displayed in Table 1, with increased usage seen in 37 states and territories. (If one considers the next decimal place then there are 41 increases, 6 decreases, and no unchanged rates.) Nationwide, use jumped from 75% in 2002 to 79% in 2003 (Glassbrenner, September 2003).

There is some evidence suggesting that use rates rise substantially during a campaign and decrease slightly after the campaign ends, resulting in a net gain (Solomon et al., 1999). Use rates in some states might have since dropped slightly from the 2003 rates in Table 1, since most of the surveys in this table were conducted shortly after the Click It or Ticket campaign ended. However, the 2002-2003 increases in use reflect actual annual increases, and not the larger temporary jumps often seen between a campaign's beginning and end, since the 2002 rates were for the most part also obtained shortly after a campaign ended. Contact state highway safety offices for information on when individual surveys were conducted.

3. The Best and Worst States in 2003

Improvement in use rates is best assessed by the percentage reduction in nonuse, which we call the "conversion rate". To illustrate, the conversion rate for Alaska in 2003 was 38%, since this state increased its use from 66% in 2002 to 79% in 2003. That is, nonuse in Alaska declined from 34% in 2002 to 21% in 2003, a 38% reduction.

Intuitively, the conversion rate is roughly the percentage of nonusers that were converted to users. That is, about 38% of Alaskans who did not use belts in 2002 were "converted" to using belts in 2003, a substantial accomplishment. This interpretation would be correct if the two Alaskan use rates were the percentages of the motorist population that used belts to some specified degree (e.g., all the time, or half the time). However the use rates in Table 1 are not quite this, but rather are snapshots of use on Alaskan roads. For example, 79% of motorists that were on Alaskan roads at some particular moment in 2003 were using belts. That is, interpreting the reduction in nonuse of the rates in Table 1 as the percentage of nonusers that were converted to users is not strictly correct, but the interpretation provides an intuitive means to assess the improvements of the states. (The reader should also note when interpreting conversion rates that although the term "conversion" suggests a permanent change in behavior, the use rates in Table 1 may decline over time.)

Conversion rates provide better measures of improvement than increases in use. A 5 percentage point increase from 90% use (i.e. increasing use from 90% to 95%) represents a substantially greater accomplishment than the same increase from 50%, because the increase from 90% requires changing the behavior of a much larger proportion of nonusers. Conversion rates reflect these disparate accomplishments: The conversion rate corresponding to increasing use from 90% to 95% is 50%, while

that for the increase from 50% to 55% use is 10%, indicating that increasing use from 90% to 95% is about five times as difficult as increasing use from 50% to 55%.

As mentioned in the introduction, Arizona, Alaska, Georgia, and Indiana saw the greatest improvement in 2003, with each state converting at least 35% of its nonusers. In addition, Utah, Iowa, and Washington State converted at least a quarter of their nonusers. Conversely, although its use rates are high, Puerto Rico saw the greatest deterioration in use, with a conversion rate of –44%. Puerto Rico dropped from 91% use in 2002 to 87% in 2003.

California, Hawaii, Oregon, and the State of Washington had the highest use rates in 2003, with each state at or above 90% use. Washington State had the highest rate of 95% use, while New Hampshire had the lowest use rate, at 50% use.

These assessments are based on use rates that were certified by NHTSA as compliant with criteria established in Section 157 of Title 23, U.S. Code, which ensure statistical accuracy and consistency. (See Figure 2 for the criteria.) Maine, New Hampshire, Wyoming and the U.S. territories not in Table 1 did not report 2003 rates to NHTSA. However, under a contract jointly funded by NHTSA and the New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency, Preusser Research Group conducted an observational survey of safety belt use in New Hampshire following the May 2003 Click It or Ticket campaign. The result of that survey appears in Table 1. U.S. territories not in Table 1 (such as Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands) are not eligible for the incentives that Section 157 may provide for reporting rates.

In 2002, compliant rates were not submitted for Maine, New Hampshire, and the territories not in Table 1. Minnesota reported a 2002 rate that appeared in (Glassbrenner, May 2003) but was later found not to be compliant with the Section 157 criteria.

Table 1: State Safety Belt Use Rates in 2002 and 2003

State or Territory	2002[1]	2003[1]	Conversion Rate[1,2]	State or Territory	2002[1]	2003[1]	Conversion Rate[1,2]
Alabama	**79%**	**77%**	**-10%**	Montana	78%	80%	9%
Alaska	66%	79%	38%	Nebraska	70%	76%	20%
Arizona	74%	86%	46%	Nevada	75%	79%	16%
Arkansas	64%	63%	-3%	New Hampshire[4]	*	50%[4]	
California	**91%**	**91%**	**0%**	New Jersey	**81%**	**81%**	**0%**
Colorado	73%	78%	19%	New Mexico	**88%**	**87%**	**-8%**
Connecticut	**78%**	**78%**	**0%**	New York	**83%**	**85%**	**12%**
Delaware[3]	71%	**75%**	14%	North Carolina	**84%**	**86%**	**13%**
District of Columbia	**85%**	**85%**	**0%**	North Dakota	63%	64%	3%
Florida	75%	73%	-8%	Ohio	70%	75%	17%
Georgia	**77%**	**85%**	**35%**	Oklahoma	**70%**	**77%**	**23%**
Hawaii	**90%**	**92%**	**20%**	Oregon	**88%**	**90%**	**17%**
Idaho	63%	72%	24%	Pennsylvania	76%	79%	13%
Illinois[3]	74%	**80%**	23%	Rhode Island	71%	74%	10%
Indiana	**72%**	**82%**	**36%**	South Carolina	66%	73%	21%
Iowa	**82%**	**87%**	**28%**	South Dakota	64%	70%	17%
Kansas	61%	64%	8%	Tennessee	67%	69%	6%
Kentucky	62%	66%	11%	Texas	**81%**	**84%**	**16%**
Louisiana	**69%**	**74%**	**16%**	Utah	80%	85%	25%
Maine	*	*		Vermont	85%	82%	-20%
Maryland	**86%**	**88%**	**14%**	Virginia	70%	75%	17%
Massachusetts	51%	62%	22%	Washington	**93%**	**95%**	**29%**
Michigan	**83%**	**85%**	**12%**	West Virginia	72%	74%	7%
Minnesota	*	79%		Wisconsin	66%	70%	12%
Mississippi	62%	62%	0%	Wyoming	67%	*	
Missouri	69%	73%	13%	Puerto Rico	**91%**	**87%**	**-44%**

Source: State safety belt surveys conducted in accordance with Section 157 of Title 23, U.S. Code.

[1] Rates in states with primary belt enforcement laws appear in boldface. If the state had a primary law in both years, then the conversion rate appears in boldface as well. An asterisk denotes that no rate compliant with Section 157 was submitted to NHTSA.

[2] The *conversion rate* is the percentage reduction in belt nonuse.

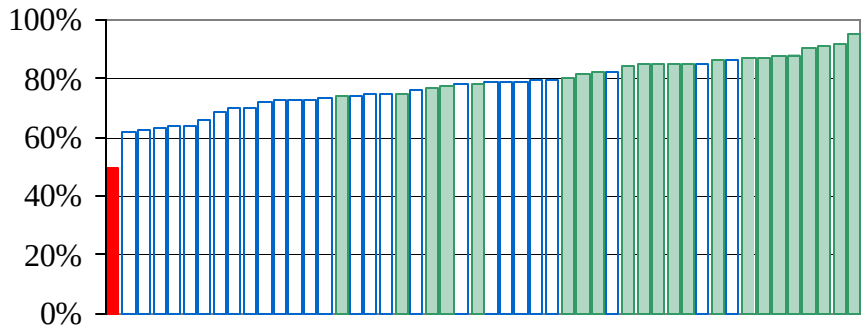
[3] Delaware had a secondary law at the time its 2003 use rate of 75% was obtained. The primary law in Illinois was in effect when its 2003 use rate of 80% was obtained.

[4] Under a contract jointly funded by NHTSA and the New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency, Preusser Research Group conducted an observational survey of safety belt use in New Hampshire following the May 2003 Click It or Ticket campaign. The use rate from this survey was 49.6%.

4. High Use Rates Associated with Strong Enforcement Laws

Use rates are consistently higher in jurisdictions in which police have a greater ability to enforce belt laws. A "primary belt law" allows police to stop and ticket a motorist simply for not using a belt. Police authority is more limited under a "secondary belt law", which requires that a motorist violate an additional law, such as having an expired license tag or, in many jurisdictions, an open container of alcohol, to even be stopped by police.

Figure 1: 2003 Use Rates in States with Primary Belt Laws, Compared to Those with Secondary Laws



Source: State surveys conducted in accordance with Title 13, U.S. Code, certified by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NHTSA

No Adult Law Secondary Law Primary Law

In 2003, 22 of the states and territories in Table 1 had primary enforcement belt laws, while 29 of the others have secondary laws, and one state (New Hampshire) effectively has no belt law. (In New Hampshire, it is legal for motorists who are at least 18 years of age to ride unbelted.) The jurisdictions with primary laws are indicated in boldface in Table 1 and by shading in Table 2.

Two states, Delaware and Illinois, changed their belt enforcement laws from secondary to primary in 2003. The primary law in Illinois was in effect when its 2003 use rate of 80% was obtained. (The primary law took effect in July, and the Illinois conducted its survey in November.) Delaware, however, was still governed by a secondary law when its 2003 rate of 75% was obtained. (Delaware conducted its survey in June and its law took effect in July.) That is, the 2003 rate for Illinois reflects its primary law, while that for Delaware does not.

We note that not all primary laws, and not all secondary laws, are alike. Laws may cover different classes of vehicles and seating positions, and may assess different penalties. For instance, motorists in pickup trucks can legally ride unbelted in Georgia, but not in Alabama. In the District of Columbia, violators are charged a $50 fine and assessed two points on their driver's license, while in Missouri, they are charged only $10 and no points. See Table 3 for key provisions of current state laws. In addition, a law might be more strictly enforced in one state than in another. Despite these differences, use rates in primary states are about 11 percentage points higher than those in secondary states.

5. Survey Methodologies

The estimates in Table 1 satisfy criteria developed by NHTSA to ensure quality and uniformity. The criteria, established in Section 157 of Title 23, U.S. Code, are presented in Figure 2.

In particular, the criteria require that use rates be obtained through observation at road sites selected via probability sampling. Obviously viewing an observable phenomenon, such as the use of safety belts, yields more reliable information than interviewing people about their behavior. (In addition to the possible reluctance to report a behavior that is almost universally illegal, there is some evidence that respondents tend to report safety belt use based on their "usual" trip, such as their commute, where they may usually buckle up, and overlook, e.g., short trips to the local store, where they may not. The 2000 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey finds that a significant number of respondents who report using belts "all the time" also report that they did not use belts on their most recent trip (Block, 2001).) The criteria require probability sampling because this eliminates the overestimation or underestimation that can result from selecting sites through non-probabilistic means.

Note also that the criteria ensure that survey results represent all vehicles on the states' roads, not just those vehicles registered in the state. For instance, Alaska's use rates in Table 1 reflect snapshots of use on Alaskan roads, not the degree of belt use among Alaskan residents or those in vehicles registered in Alaska.

Note that the criteria stipulate that the state use rates reflect the shoulder belt use of the driver and right front passenger in passenger vehicles during daylight hours. Based on data from fatal crashes, belt use is lower in the rear seat than in the front, and is lower at night than during the day. Consequently, the state use estimates might overestimate use in all seating positions and times of day.

State surveys can differ in aspects not specified in Figure 3, such as the time of year in which they are conducted and observation protocols used (e.g., how to obtain data at sites with sufficiently heavy traffic volume that not every vehicle can be observed). For additional information on how individual surveys are conducted, contact the state highway safety offices.

Figure 2: Survey Criteria from Section 157, Title 23, U.S. Code

Belt use rates from the states and territories in this report are based on surveys conducted according to criteria issued in Section 157 of Title 23 of the United States Code. These criteria were established as part of an occupant protection incentive grant program for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The criteria are summarized below:

1. Estimates must be obtained through a survey using actual observation of occupant shoulder belt use in vehicles on roadways. Use rates determined from secondary sources, e.g., police crash reports or use reported through telephone surveys, are not permitted.

2. The survey must be probability based. Statistical procedures must be employed to select sites at which observations of shoulder belt use are made. Following probability-based sampling procedures permits estimates that are "representative" of the use rate in the desired population and makes it possible to calculate their standard errors.

3. The survey must be designed and conducted to permit estimating shoulder belt use for the following population of interest:
   - Front seat, outboard passengers, i.e., the driver and right front seat passenger.
   - All passenger motor vehicles, i.e., automobiles, pickup trucks, vans, minivans, and sport utility vehicles, must be observed, regardless of the State (or county) of registration.
   - Observational sites in the largest geographic areas (usually counties) in the State containing at least 85 percent of the State's population must be included in the sampling frame and have positive probability of selection. This criterion permits the exclusion of large, sparsely populated geographic areas where few observations are expected.
   - Observations must be conducted during all daylight hours and on all days of the week, and must be scheduled without regard to day-of-week and time-of-day (for daylight hours).

4. The survey must be designed to produce an overall estimate of shoulder belt use with a relative precision (the estimated sampling error of the use divided by the estimated use rate) of +/- 5 percent. This ensures that there are a sufficient number of observation sites and observed vehicles to produce a statistically reliable estimate.

5. The survey design and results must be properly documented for evaluation of survey results by NHTSA and others and to determine compliance with Criteria 1-4 listed above.

Source: Section 157 of Title 23, United States Code.

6. Belt Use Nationwide

To put the state results in context, Figure 3 presents belt use rates for the entire nation. Note that the estimates in Figure 3 are not weighted averages of the state use rates, but rather are from an independent

survey, the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS). NOPUS, which is conducted by National Center for Statistics and Analysis in NHTSA, is the sole probability-based observational survey of use nationwide. Its most recent results can be found in (Glassbrenner, September 2003). Like the state surveys, NOPUS observes the shoulder belt use of the driver and right front passenger in passenger vehicles during daylight hours.

Although state surveys provide the best measures of use on a state by state basis, nationwide use is best measured by NOPUS. Under the Section 157 criteria, states may exclude a certain amount of sparsely populated areas and may conduct observations solely at intersections controlled by a stop sign or stoplight. These cost saving measures result in observation sites that are in disproportionately more populated areas, where, as noted in (Glassbrenner, March 2003) belt use is higher. NOPUS does not use either of these measures. Based on comparisons between belt use estimates from the state surveys and NOPUS, it is estimated that these measures can overestimate use by as much as two percentage points.

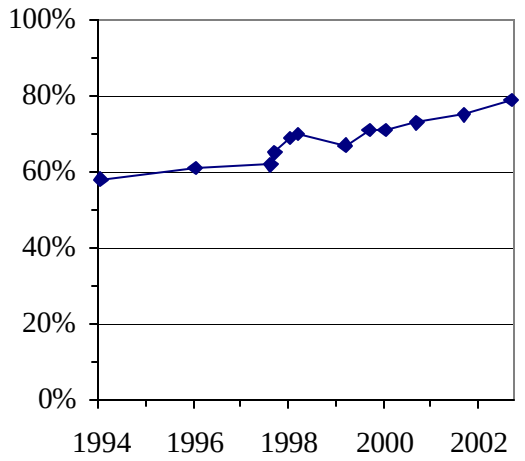
NOPUS incorporates quality control mechanisms not required by the Section 157 criteria. NOPUS uses experienced data collectors who are retrained annually in the data collection procedures, and quality control monitors make unannounced visits to sites during data collection. NOPUS uses statistical editing procedures, and the NOPUS results are scrutinized by experienced statisticians.

As noted, two state surveys may differ in aspects not specified by the Section 157 criteria, such as the particular observation protocols, the degree and frequency of training observers receive, and the time of year in which data is collected. Consequently NOPUS also provides a more consistent national measure.

Section 157 took effect starting with the 1998 data year. Table 2 presents all of the state safety belt rates compliant with Section 157 in 1998 – 2003. Although many states conducted surveys prior to 1998, these surveys were frequently not based on probability samples and frequently differed in the vehicles covered, often observing only those vehicles affected by the state's belt law. The state rates having the highest levels of quality and comparability occurred starting in 1998.

NOPUS has a disadvantage, in that it does not have observation sites in every state. Thus, if a state in which NOPUS does not have an observation site passes a primary law, the jump in use that would likely occur in that state would not be reflected in NOPUS. However on balance, the advantages of NOPUS as a national measure outweigh the disadvantages.

Figure 3: Belt Use in the U.S., 1994 - Present



Date	Belt Use
Fall 1994	58%
Fall 1996	61%
May 1998	62%
June 1998	65%
Fall 1998	69%
Dec 1998	70%
Dec 1999	67%
June 2000	71%
Fall 2000	71%
June 2001	73%
June 2002	75%
June 2003	79%

Source: National Occupant Protection Use Survey, National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NHTSA

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Appendix

Table 2: Safety Belt Use Rates and Conversion Rates Since Section 157 Took Effect

State or Territory	1998[2]	1999[2]	Conversion 1998-1999[1,2]	2000[2]	Conversion 1999-2000[1,2]	2001[2]	Conversion 2000-2001[1,2]	2002[2]	Conversion 2001-2002[1,2]	2003[2]	Conversion 2002-2003[1,2]
Alabama	52%	58%	13%	71%	31%	79%	28%	79%	0%	77%	-10%
Alaska	57%	61%	9%	61%	0%	63%	5%	66%	8%	79%	38%
Arizona	62%	71%	24%	75%	14%	74%	-4%	74%	0%	86%	46%
Arkansas	53%	57%	9%	52%	-12%	55%	6%	64%	20%	63%	-3%
California	89%	89%	0%	89%	0%	91%	18%	91%	0%	91%	0%
Colorado	66%	65%	-3%	65%	0%	72%	20%	73%	4%	78%	19%
Connecticut	70%	73%	10%	76%	11%	78%	8%	78%	0%	78%	0%
Delaware	62%	64%	5%	66%	6%	67%	3%	71%	12%	75%	14%
Dist. Of Columbia	80%	78%	-10%	83%	23%	84%	6%	85%	6%	85%	0%
Florida	57%	59%	5%	65%	15%	70%	14%	75%	17%	73%	-8%
Georgia	74%	74%	0%	74%	0%	79%	19%	77%	-10%	85%	35%
Hawaii	81%	80%	-5%	80%	0%	83%	15%	90%	41%	92%	20%
Idaho	57%	58%	2%	59%	2%	60%	2%	63%	8%	72%	24%
Illinois	65%	66%	3%	70%	12%	71%	3%	74%	10%	80%	23%
Indiana	62%	57%	-13%	62%	12%	67%	13%	72%	15%	82%	36%
Iowa	77%	78%	4%	78%	0%	81%	14%	82%	5%	87%	28%
Kansas	59%	63%	10%	62%	-3%	61%	-3%	61%	0%	64%	8%
Kentucky	54%	59%	11%	60%	2%	62%	5%	62%	0%	66%	11%
Louisiana	66%	67%	3%	68%	3%	68%	0%	69%	3%	74%	16%
Maine	61%	*		*		*		*		*	
Maryland	83%	83%	0%	85%	12%	83%	-13%	86%	18%	88%	14%
Massachusetts	51%	52%	2%	50%	-4%	56%	12%	51%	-11%	62%	22%

State or Territory	1998[2]	1999[2]	Conversion 1998-1999[1,2]	2000[2]	Conversion 1999-2000[1,2]	2001[2]	Conversion 2000-2001[1,2]	2002[2]	Conversion 2001-2002[1,2]	2003[2]	Conversion 2002-2003[1,2]
Michigan	70%	70%	0%	84%	47%	82%	-13%	83%	6%	85%	12%
Minnesota	64%	*[3]		*[3]		*[3]		*[3]		79%	
Mississippi	58%	55%	-7%	50%	-11%	62%	24%	62%	0%	62%	0%
Missouri	60%	61%	3%	68%	18%	68%	0%	69%	3%	73%	13%
Montana	73%	74%	4%	76%	8%	76%	0%	78%	8%	80%	9%
Nebraska	65%	68%	9%	71%	9%	70%	-3%	70%	0%	76%	20%
Nevada	76%	80%	17%	79%	-5%	75%	-19%	75%	0%	79%	16%
New Hampshire	*	*		*		*		*		50%[4]	
New Jersey	63%	63%	0%	74%	30%	78%	15%	81%	14%	81%	0%
New Mexico	83%	88%	29%	87%	-8%	88%	8%	88%	0%	87%	-8%
New York	75%	76%	4%	77%	4%	80%	13%	83%	15%	85%	12%
North Carolina	77%	78%	4%	81%	14%	83%	11%	84%	6%	86%	13%
North Dakota	40%	47%	12%	48%	2%	58%	19%	63%	12%	64%	3%
Ohio	61%	65%	10%	65%	0%	67%	6%	70%	9%	75%	17%
Oklahoma	56%	61%	11%	68%	18%	68%	0%	70%	6%	77%	23%
Oregon	83%	83%	0%	84%	6%	88%	25%	88%	0%	90%	17%
Pennsylvania	68%	70%	6%	71%	3%	71%	0%	76%	17%	79%	13%
Rhode Island	59%	67%	20%	64%	-9%	63%	-3%	71%	22%	74%	10%
South Carolina	65%	65%	0%	74%	26%	70%	-15%	66%	-13%	73%	21%
South Dakota	46%	*		53%		63%	21%	64%	3%	70%	17%
Tennessee	57%	61%	9%	59%	-5%	68%	22%	67%	-3%	69%	6%
Texas	74%	74%	0%	77%	12%	76%	-4%	81%	21%	84%	16%
Utah	67%	67%	0%	76%	27%	78%	8%	80%	9%	85%	25%
Vermont	63%	70%	19%	62%	-27%	67%	13%	85%	55%	82%	-20%
Virginia	74%	70%	-15%	70%	0%	72%	7%	70%	-7%	75%	17%
Washington	79%	81%	10%	82%	5%	83%	6%	93%	59%	95%	29%
West Virginia	57%	52%	-12%	50%	-4%	52%	4%	72%	42%	74%	7%

State or Territory	1998[2]	1999[2]	Conversion 1998-1999[1,2]	2000[2]	Conversion 1999-2000[1,2]	2001[2]	Conversion 2000-2001[1,2]	2002[2]	Conversion 2001-2002[1,2]	2003[2]	Conversion 2002-2003[1,2]
Wisconsin	62%	65%	8%	65%	0%	69%	11%	66%	-10%	70%	12%
Wyoming	50%	*		67%		*		67%		*	
Puerto Rico	78%	78%		87%	41%	83%	-30%	91%	44%	87%	-36%

[1] The conversion rate is the percentage reduction in belt nonuse.

[2] Rates in states with primary belt enforcement laws are shaded. An asterisk indicates that the state did not report a rate compliant with Section 157.

[3] MN's reported rates for 1999-2002 were later found to be noncompliant with Section 157.

[4] The rate for NH in 2003 was not reported by NH. It was obtained by Preusser Research Group using compliant methods.

Table 3: Key Provisions of State Belt Use Laws as of January 2004[1]

State or Territory	Law	Penalty		Coverage		
		Fine[2]	Points	Seating Positions	Persons	Vehicles Exempted
Alabama	Primary	$25		Front	Ages 6+, except those with medical reasons	Vehicles designed for more than 10 passengers, those delivering newspapers and rural mail, and vehicles manufactured before 1965
Alaska	Secondary	$15		All	Ages 16+	School buses
Arizona	Secondary	$10		All	Ages 5+	Vehicles designed for > 10 passengers, or manufactured before 1972
Arkansas	Secondary	$25		Front	All	School, church, and public buses; vehicles manufactured before 1968
California	Primary	$20		All	Ages 16+	None
Colorado	Secondary if driver is over 16, primary if driver is 16	$15		Ages 16+ in the front seat if driver is over 16; all ages and seats if driver is 16		Buses
Connecticut	Primary	$37		All in the front seat and those under 16 in all seats		Trucks and buses over 15,000 lbs.
Delaware	Primary	$25		All	Ages 16+	Postal vehicles
Dist. Of Columbia	Primary	$50	2	All	Ages 16+	Vehicles designed for > 8 passengers
Florida	Secondary	$30		Ages 18+ in the front seat and ages 6-17 in all seats		School buses, public buses, and trucks > 5,000 lbs.
Georgia	Primary	$15		Ages 18+ in the front seat, and ages 5-17 in all seats		Vehicles designed for > 10 passengers, pickup trucks, off-road vehicles, rural letter carriers, and emergency vehicles
Hawaii	Primary	$45		Ages 18+ in the front seat and ages 4-17 in all seats		Buses and school buses over 10,000 lbs.
Idaho	Secondary	$10		All	Ages 4+	Vehicles over 8,000 lbs.

State or Territory	Law	Penalty		Coverage		
		Fine[2]	Points	Seating Positions	Persons	Vehicles Exempted
Illinois	Primary	$25		Front	Ages 4+, except those with medical or physical reasons	Emergency vehicles and vehicles making frequent stops
Indiana	Primary	$25		Ages 12+ in the front seat and ages 4-11 in all seats		Trucks, tractors, and recreational vehicles
Iowa	Primary	$25		Front	Age 6+	None
Kansas	Secondary	$10		Front	Ages 14+	Vehicles designed for >10 people, and trucks over 12,000 lbs
Kentucky	Secondary	$25		All	Persons over 40 inches tall.	Vehicles designed for >10 people, and trucks over 12,000 lbs
Louisiana	Primary	$25 - $50		Front	All	Vehicles manufactured before 1981, and those designed for > 10 people
Maine	Secondary	$25 - $50		All	Ages 4+	Vehicles manufactured without seat belts
Maryland	Primary	$25		Driver and right front seat	Ages 16+, except those with a written medical excuse	Vehicles designated as historic and taxis
Massachusetts	Secondary	$25		All	Ages 5+, except taxi and bus drivers	Trucks > 18,000 lbs and buses
Michigan	Primary	$25		Ages 16+ in the front seat and ages 4-15 in all seats		Taxis and buses
Minnesota	Secondary	$25		Ages 11+ in the front seat and ages 4-10 in all seats		Farm pickup trucks
Mississippi	Secondary	$25		Ages 8+ in the front seat and ages 4-17 in all seats, except people with medical reasons		Farm vehicles, letter carriers, and buses
Missouri	Secondary for ages 16+; primary for those under 16	$10		Ages 16+ in the front seats and ages 4-15 in all seats		Vehicles designed for >10 people, those used for agricultural purposes, trucks over 12,000 lbs, and postal vehicles
Montana	Secondary	$20		All	Ages 4+	None
Nebraska	Secondary	$25		Ages 16+ in the front seat and ages 6-15 in all seats		Vehicles manufactured before 1973

State or Territory	Law	Penalty		Coverage		
		Fine[2]	Points	Seating Positions	Persons	Vehicles Exempted
Nevada	Secondary	$25		All	Ages 5+	Taxis and buses
New Hampshire	No law for ages 18+; primary for those under 18	$25		All	Persons under 18 years old.	School buses, vehicles for hire, and vehicles manufactured before 1968
New Jersey	Primary	$42		Ages 18+ in the front seat and those ages 6-17 that are over 80 lbs in all seats, except persons with medical reasons		Vehicles manufactured before 1966, those not required to have safety belts, and rural letter carriers
New Mexico	Primary	$25	2	All	All	Vehicles over 10,000 lbs.
New York	Primary	$50 - $100	3	Ages 16+ in the front seat and ages 4-15 in all seats		Buses, taxis, emergency vehicles, and rural letter carriers
North Carolina	Primary	$25		Front, except positions without a belt if all belted positions are occupied	Ages 16+, except those with medical reasons	Vehicles designed for > 11 people, farm vehicles, and rural mail carriers
North Dakota	Secondary for ages 18+; primary for those under 18	$20		Ages 18+ in the front seat and those under 18 in all seats		Vehicles designed for > 10 people
Ohio	Secondary	$25		Front	Ages 4+	None
Oklahoma	Primary	$20		Front	All	Farm vehicles, trucks, and recreational vehicles
Oregon	Primary	$75		All	Ages 16+	Police and emergency vehicles in certain situations, delivery vehicles, newspaper and postal carriers, and transit and meter vehicles
Pennsylvania	Secondary	$10		Ages 18+ in the front seat and ages 4-17 in all seats.		Trucks over 7,000 lbs.
Rhode Island	Secondary	$50		All	Ages 13+	None
South Carolina	Secondary	$10		All, except the rear seat in vehicles that do not have belts in the rear seat.	Ages 6+	School buses and public buses

State or Territory	Law	Penalty		Coverage		
		Fine[2]	Points	Seating Positions	Persons	Vehicles Exempted
South Dakota	Secondary for ages 18+; primary for those under 18	$20		Ages 18+ in the front seat and ages 5-17 in all seats, except persons with medical reasons		Buses, rural mail carriers, and newspaper and periodical delivery vehicles
Tennessee	Secondary	$10		Front	Ages 4+	Vehicles over 8,500 lbs.
Texas	Primary	$25 - $200		Front	All	Vehicles designed for >10 people, trucks over 15,000 lbs, and farm vehicles
Utah	Secondary for ages 19+; primary for those under 19	$15 - $45		All, except positions without a belt if all belted positions are occupied	All except those with medical reasons	None
Vermont	Secondary for ages 18+; primary for those under 18	$10		All	Ages 7+	Buses and taxis
Virginia	Secondary	$25		Front	Ages 16+	Vehicles designed for > 10 people and taxis
Washington	Primary	$86		All	All	Vehicles designed for > 10 people
West Virginia	Secondary	$25		Ages 18+ in the front seat and ages 9-17 in all seats		Vehicles designed for > 10 people
Wisconsin	Secondary	$10		All	Ages 4+	Taxis and farm trucks
Wyoming	Secondary	$10 - $25		All, except positions without a belt if all belted positions are occupied	Ages 5+, except those with a written medical excuse	Vehicles not required to have safety belts and postal vehicles
Puerto Rico	Primary	$50		All	All	None

[1] Most states also have laws requiring that certain children be in child safety seats or booster seats. We do not present these laws here. Also state belt laws are more complex than can be conveyed in this Table, and so the reader should consult each state's law for its exact coverage and penalties.

[2] The fines presented here are the fines on the ticket. They do not include court costs and surcharges.

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U.S. Department
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**National Highway
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Administration**