

1996
**Motor Vehicle
Occupant Safety Survey**
Volume 3:

Seat Belt Report



U.S. Department of Transportation
**National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration**

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<p>The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) commissioned the research firm of Schulman Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI) to conduct the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Between November 4, 1996 and January 5, 1997 SRBI conducted a total of 8,210 telephone interviews among a national population sample. The percentages provided in the report are weighted to accurately reflect the national population of drivers age 16 or over. This report is a follow-up to the 1994 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, thereby permitting comparisons of the public's attitudes and behavior regarding air bags between 1994 and 1996.</p> <p>As in the 1994 survey, the 1996 version asked drivers and non-drivers about their use (or non-use) of seat belts in the vehicle they usually drive; and their knowledge and attitudes toward seat belt laws and enforcement. Finally, the survey gathered trend data on key items from 1994 and 1996 to explore possible changes in behavior between the two years.</p>					
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1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Background

In 1994, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducted its first Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Two years later, NHTSA commissioned a follow-up survey, the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. The 1996 survey includes many items from the first survey, which will allow NHTSA to monitor change over time in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to motor vehicle occupant safety, including the use of seat belts, car seats, airbags, and bicycle and motorcycle helmets. The 1996 survey also includes new questions which address emerging areas of interest or concern in occupant safety.

The following report represents that segment of the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey concerning seat belts. This volume explores the public's attitudes and behaviors regarding their use of seat belts. Specifically, it explores the following three areas: 1) 1996 seat belt use; 2) reasons for seat belt use and non-use; and 3) attitudes, knowledge, and experience with seat belt laws and their enforcement. A fourth section examines trends between 1994 and 1996 on selected seat belt issues covered in the previous sections of the report.

Methodology

The 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey was conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI), a national survey research organization. SRBI conducted a total of 8,210 telephone interviews among a national population sample. To limit the survey length, SRBI separated the questionnaire into two versions. A total of 4,188 interviews were completed in Version 1 and 4,022 completed interviews in Version 2. Although some questions were used in both versions, each had its own set of distinct topics. Each sample was composed of approximately 4,000 persons age 16 and older, including oversamples of persons age 16-39. The procedures used in the survey yielded national estimates of the target population within specified limits of expected sampling variability, from which valid generalizations can be made to the general public.

The survey was fielded from November 4, 1996 to January 5, 1997. This is approximately the same time period in which the 1994 Occupant Protection Survey was conducted (October 5, 1994 to December 11, 1994). For a complete description of the methodology and sample disposition, including computation of weights, refer to the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, Volume 1: Methodology Report.

The percentages provided in the following report are weighted to accurately reflect the national population of drivers age 16 or over. Unweighted sample sizes ("N's") are included so that readers know the exact number of respondents answering a given question, allowing them to estimate sampling precision. Percentages for some items may not add to 100 percent due to rounding, or because the question allowed for more than one response.

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 1

SEAT BELT USE

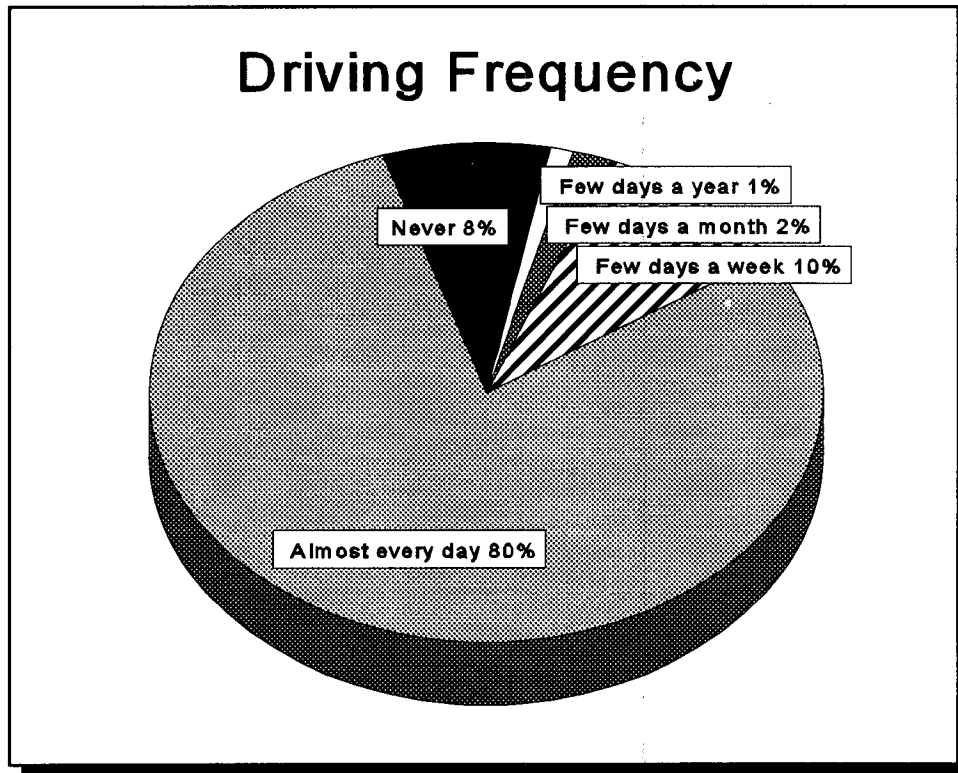
1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The sample for the Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey is drawn from the total population age 16 and older. The survey examined several driving and safety belt use characteristics of this population, including the frequency of driving, type of primary vehicle driven, safety belt configuration in the primary vehicle, and frequency of safety belt use.

Drivers and Vehicles

More than nine out of ten persons age 16 and older drive a motor vehicle. Eight out of ten drive almost every day, while another 10% drive at least a few days a week.

FIGURE 1



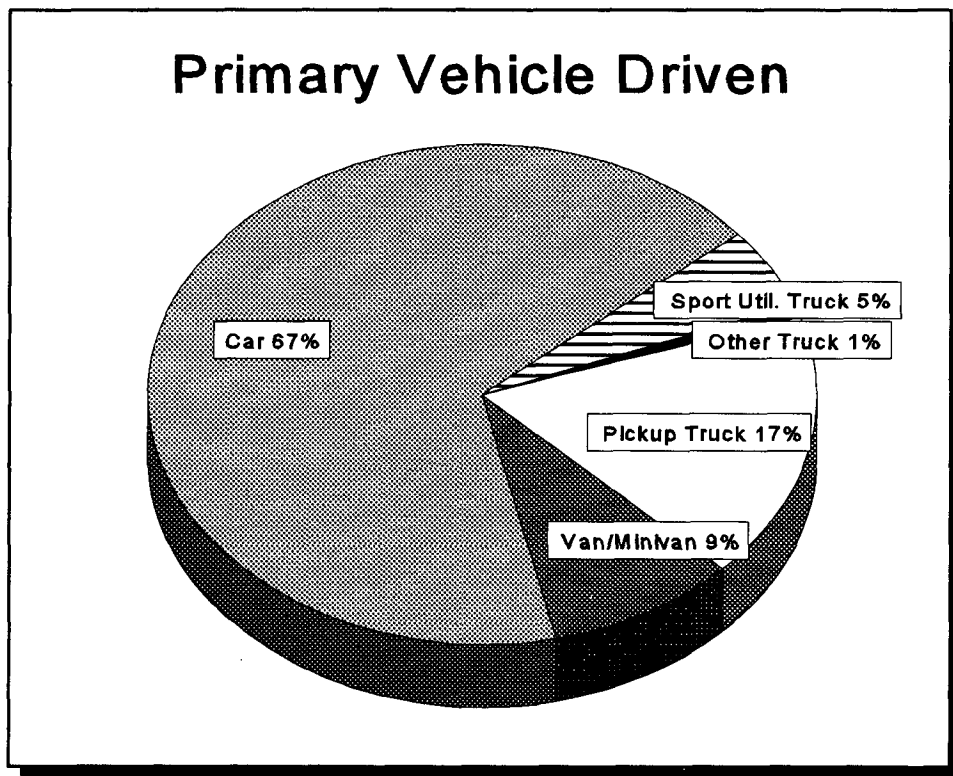
Qx: How often do you drive a motor vehicle?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=8,210

Many households have more than one motor vehicle, so drivers may use more than one. Since the type of safety equipment may vary from one vehicle to another, drivers were asked about the vehicle that they drive most often. Two in three people use a car as their primary vehicle, followed by 17% who drive a pickup truck. Nearly one in ten drive a van or minivan as their primary vehicle, with another 5% driving a jeep or other kind of utility vehicle most often.

FIGURE 2



Qx: Is the vehicle you drive most often a car, van, motorcycle, pickup truck, or other type of truck?

Base: Drive a motor vehicle

Unweighted N=7,627

Driver Seat Belts

Nine out of ten drivers' primary vehicle has seat belts in the front seat that go across both the lap and shoulder. Seven percent have shoulder belts only and 3% have lap belts only. Only ten persons out of more than 7,600 drivers interviewed reported that their primary vehicle has no seat belts at all.

The type of safety belt varies by the type of vehicle driven. The combined shoulder and lap belt were found in 90% of cars, 93% of vans, and 94% of jeeps and other sport utility vehicles identified as the primary vehicle. However, combined shoulder and lap belts were found in only 87% of pickup trucks and 62% of other kinds of trucks.

TABLE 1. Seat Belt Configuration By Type of Primary Vehicle

Qx: For the next series of questions, please answer only for the vehicle you said you usually drive. Do the seat belts in the front seat of the vehicle go across your shoulder only, across your lap only, or across both your shoulder and lap?

Base: Vehicle drive most often is not a motorcycle

	Total	Car	Van/ Minivan	Jeep/Sports Utility	Pickup Truck	Other Truck
	(N=7,609)**	(N=5,122)	(N=692)	(N=396)	(N=1,288)	(N=63)
Across shoulder only	7%	8%	4%	3%	6%	2%
Across lap only	3%	1%	3%	3%	5%	33%
Across both	90%	90%	93%	94%	87%	62%
Vehicle has no belts	*	*	0%	0%	*	0%

* Less than 0.5%

** Includes 48 cases where respondents reported some other type of vehicle besides those listed, or said they don't know the type of vehicle, or refused to respond.

Drivers with both shoulder and lap belts were asked whether these belts were a one-piece unit or two separate belts. According to the data, most shoulder and lap belt systems in primary vehicles are one piece.

TABLE 2. Type of Driver Seat Belt In Primary Vehicle

For the next series of questions, please answer only for the vehicle you said you usually drive.

Qx: Do the seat belts in the front seat of the vehicle go across your shoulder only, across you lap only, or across both your shoulder and lap?

Qx: Are the shoulder and lap belt one piece or are they two separate pieces?

Qx: Are both the shoulder and lap belt automatic, is only the shoulder belt automatic, or is neither the shoulder or lap belt automatic?

Qx: Is the shoulder belt automatic or do you have to fasten it?

N	BELT SYSTEM TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT
	One-Piece Systems	Only one buckle	87%
182	Lap Belt Only	One belt that goes across the driver's lap	3%
5,535	Lap/Shoulder-Manual	Combination system that must be pulled and buckled by the driver	73%
296	Lap/Shoulder-Automatic	Combination system that automatically fastens around the driver	4%
432	Shoulder Only-Manual	One belt that goes across the driver's shoulder that must be pulled and buckled by the driver.	6%
69	Shoulder Only-Automatic	One belt that automatically fastens across the driver's shoulder	1%
	Two-Piece Systems	Two separate buckles for lap & shoulder belts	13%
354	Lap Manual/ Shoulder Manual	Driver must pull and fasten each belt separately	5%
611	Lap Manual/ Shoulder Automatic	Belt automatically fastens across driver's shoulder but driver must pull and fasten lap belt	7%
55	Lap Automatic/ Shoulder Automatic	Each belt automatically fastens around the driver	1%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

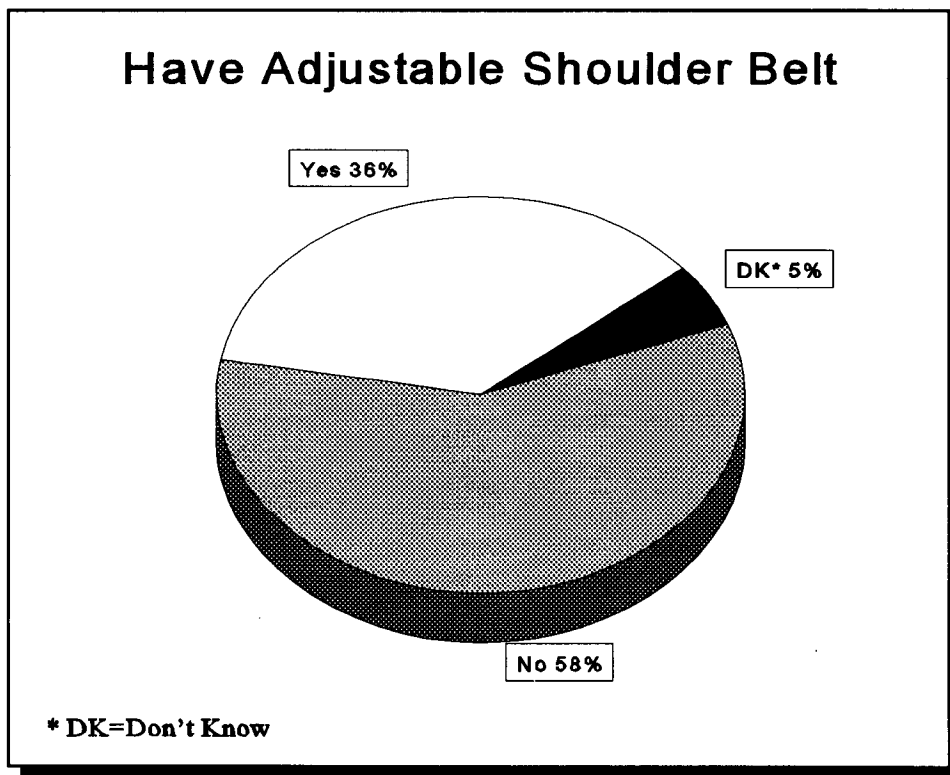
The respondents were also asked whether their seat belts were automatic. Among those with shoulder belts only or one-piece shoulder and lap belts, almost all (94%) of the belts were manual rather than automatic. Among those with separate lap and shoulder belts, 58% of the shoulder belts were automatic. The relatively small proportion of drivers protected by automatic systems (13%) is further reduced by those who disconnect or disable their automatic belts. Self-reported data from the survey indicate that 6% of those with automatic belts disable, disconnect or place the belts behind them. Hence, only 12% of drivers drive motor vehicles with functioning automatic seat belts in their primary vehicle.

Adjustable Shoulder Belt

In 1996, respondents were asked if their shoulder belts were adjustable (i.e. their attachment to the door or frame behind the driver's left shoulder can be moved up or down). This feature allows one to adjust the shoulder strap, depending on the size of the user, to obtain a more comfortable fit.

More than one-third (36%) reported having a shoulder belt that they could adjust, with 58% having the non-adjustable shoulder belts. A small percentage (5%) said they weren't sure.

FIGURE 3



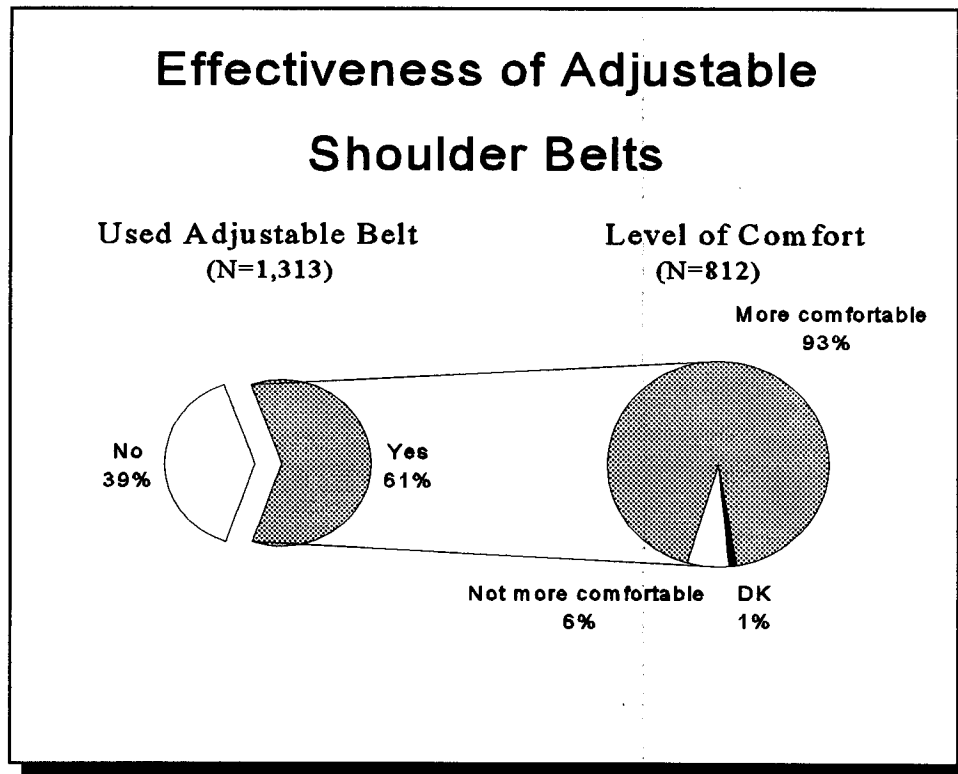
Qx: Shoulder belts are usually attached to the door or frame behind the driver's left shoulder. In some vehicles, this attachment can be moved up or down to adjust the shoulder belt. Is this attachment adjustable in your vehicle?

Base: Vehicle has seat belts across both lap and shoulder or across shoulder only

Unweighted N=3,753

Six in ten people (61%) with adjustable shoulder belts said they have tried to adjust them. More than nine in ten (93%) said their adjustments made the belts more comfortable.

FIGURE 4



Qx: Have you ever tried to adjust it?

Qx: Were you able to make the shoulder belt more comfortable by adjusting it?

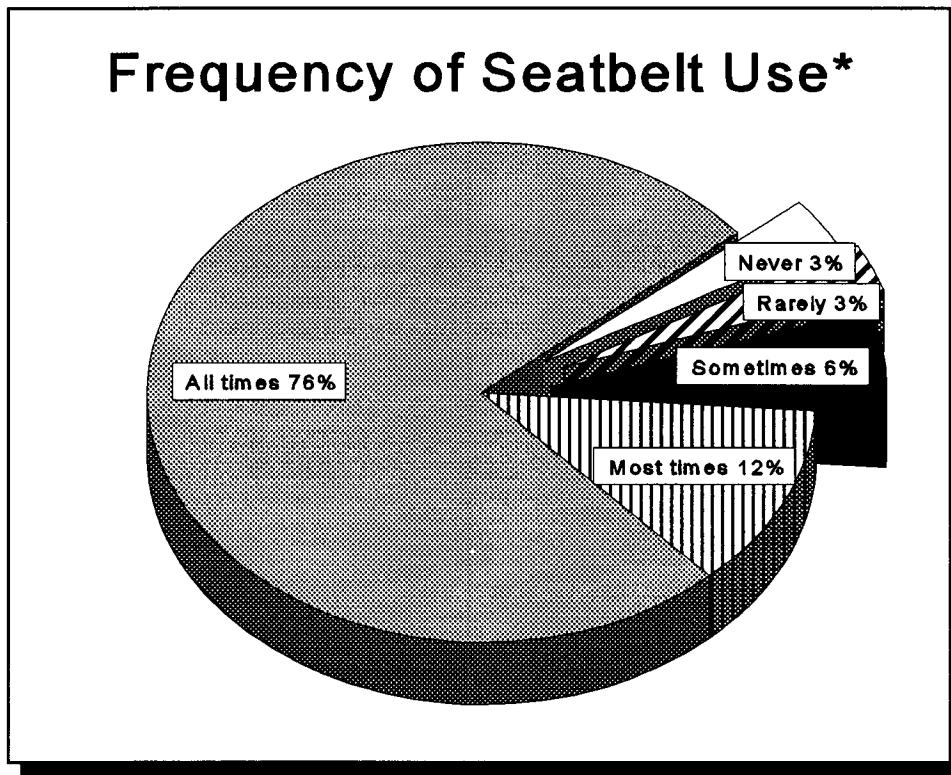
Base: Vehicle has adjustable shoulder belts

Unweighted N's listed above.

Driver's Use of Seat Belts

Overall, three-quarters (76%) of drivers reported using their seat belts "all of the time," and another 12% said they used them at least "most of the time." About one in eight drivers reported wearing their belt some of the time (6%), rarely (3%), or never (3%).

FIGURE 5



Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?

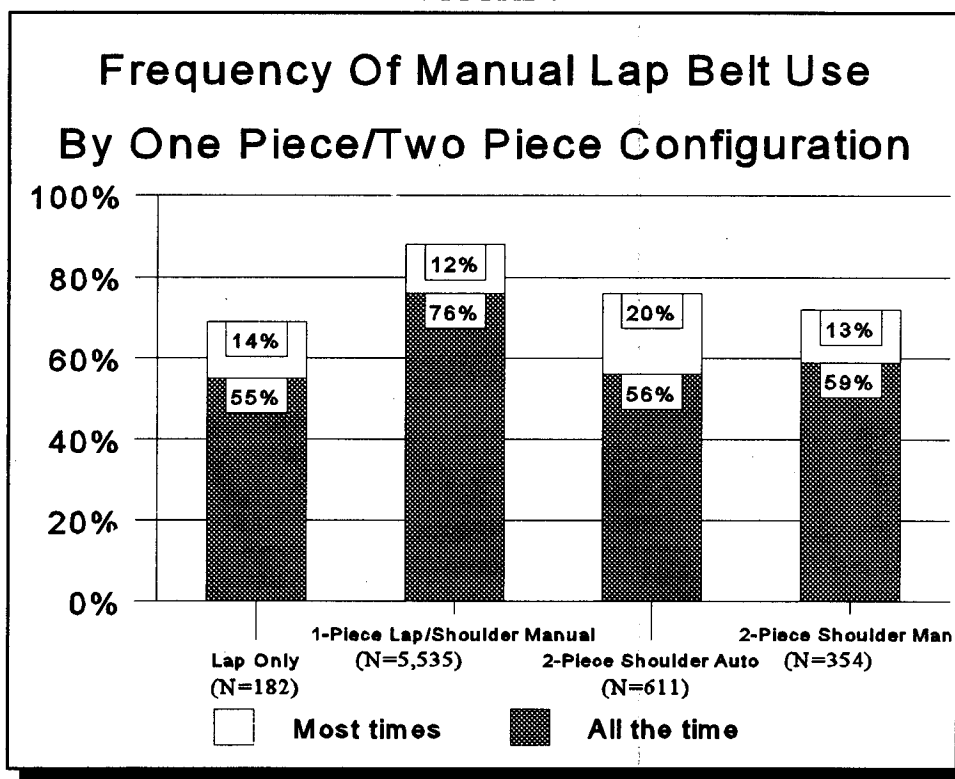
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

Unweighted N=7,576

* Frequency of seat belt use was determined by combining the two questions which asked how often drivers wore their lap belt and their shoulder belt. Values were assigned by taking the highest response for either question. For example: If a respondents stated that they wore their shoulder belt "all the time" but their lap belt "most of the time," they were assigned to the category "all the time."

Of particular concern was the use of lap belts by drivers with separate lap/shoulder belt systems. Drivers with a manual one-piece belt system (76%) were more likely than drivers with lap belts only (55%), automatic shoulder belt systems (56%) or two-piece manual systems (59%) to wear their lap belt “all of the time.” In other words, lap belt use declined on any configuration where the lap and shoulder belts were not part of the same system.

FIGURE 6



Qx: Are the shoulder and lap belt one piece or are they two separate pieces?

Qx: Are both the shoulder and lap belt automatic, is only the shoulder belt automatic or is neither the shoulder or lap belt automatic?

Qx: When driving this [vehicle], how often do you wear your lap belt?

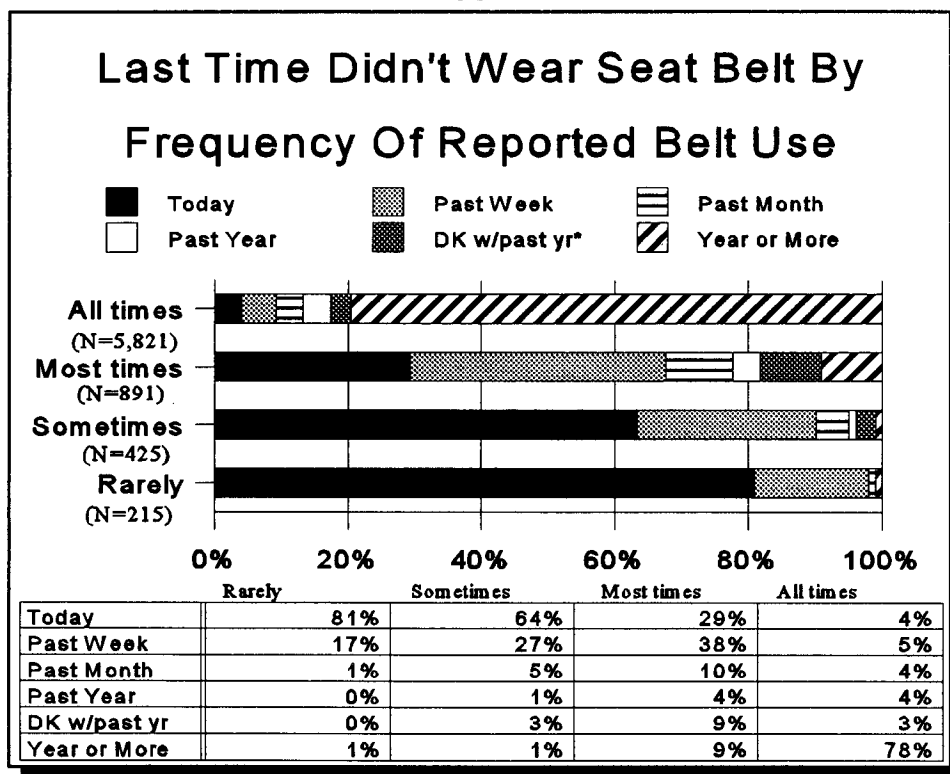
Base: Drivers whose seat belts go across both lap and shoulder

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey - Seatbelts

In previous surveys, the drivers' report of the frequency of seat belt use has been taken at face value. The 1994 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, however, introduced an additional check on this measure of reported belt use. Regardless of the reported frequency of belt use, drivers were asked the last time that they had driven without wearing a seat belt. Nearly eight out of ten (78%) drivers who said that they wear their seat belts "all of the time" when driving have gone more than a year since they last drove without wearing seat belts. However, about one in ten persons who claimed that they wore their seat belts all the time last drove without wearing their seat belts in the past day (4%), or past week (5%).

FIGURE 7



Qx: When was the last time you did not wear your seat belt when driving?
 Base: Drivers
 Unweighted N's listed above

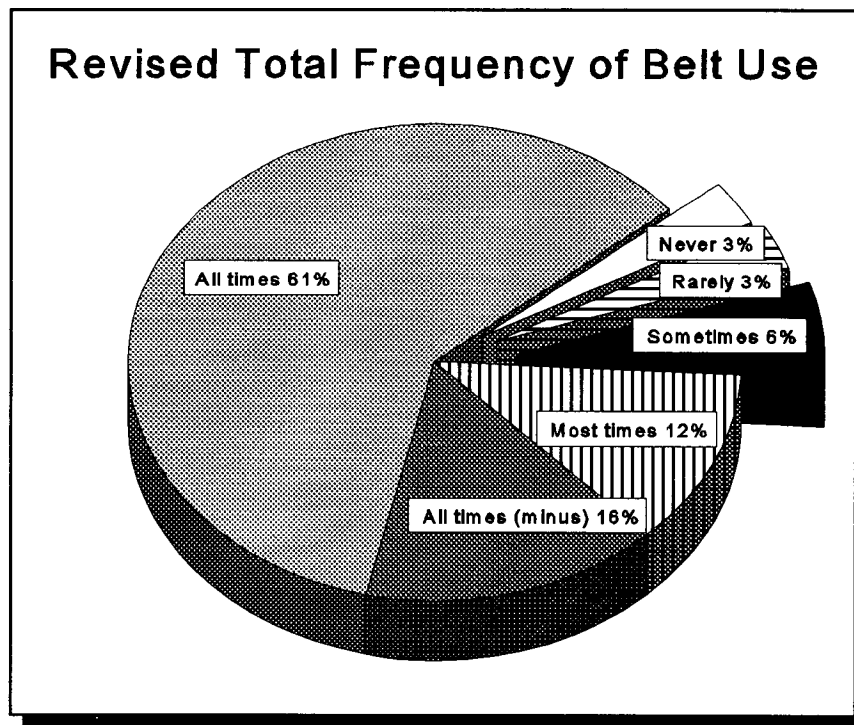
Note: "DK within Past Year" refers to those who weren't sure when asked the last time they did not wear their seat belt, but who recalled not wearing it at some time during the past year.

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Although more than 20% of “all the time” seat belt wearers have driven without wearing seat belts at some time during the past year, the survey data still suggests that there is a substantial difference in seat belt use between them and the other groups. Only 4% of those who wear their seat belts “all of the time” said that they drove without a seat belt on in the past day, compared to 29% of those who wear their seat belts “most of the time,” 64% of those who “sometimes” wear their safety belt, and 81% of those who “rarely” wear their seat belt. In summary, the self-reported frequency of seat belt use overstates actual frequency (see Figure 7).

For this report, the discrepancy in responses to the two usage measures has been used to revise the total estimates of self-reported safety belt use. The drivers who claim to wear their safety belt all of the time when driving have been subdivided into two groups: those who cannot remember any time within the past year when they drove without wearing their seat belts (“all the time”), and those who have driven sometime within the past year without wearing their seat belts (“all the time minus”). Based on this revised estimate, about three out of five (61%) drivers wear their seat belts all of the time, and have not driven without wearing a safety belt in the past year. Another 16% claim to always wear their seat belts, but admit they have driven without wearing seat belts in the past year (“all the time minus”).

FIGURE 8



Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts
Unweighted N=7,576

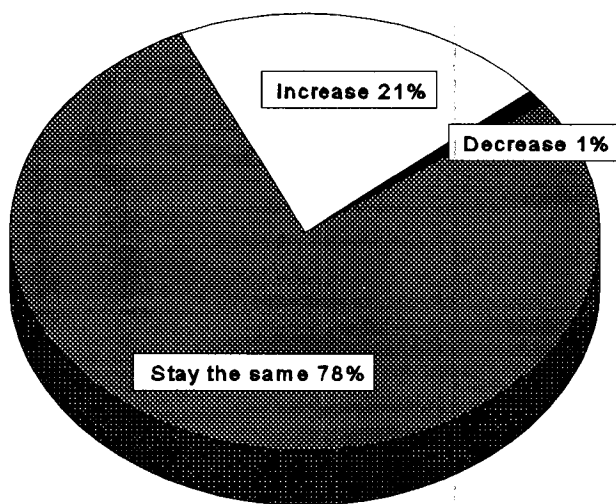
Note: In the 1994 survey, respondents who said “they did not know” when they had last driven without a seat belt were not reclassified on frequency of belt use. In the 1996 survey, those who were “not sure” were probed to determine whether they had driven without a seat belt in the past year. Hence, the 1996 estimate is both more accurate, but more restrictive than the 1994 estimate.

Changes in Belt Use

Most drivers (78%) reported that their seat belt use in their primary vehicle has not changed in the recent past. However, just over one-fifth of drivers (21%) reported increasing their seat belt use in the past year. By contrast, 1% of drivers said they have reduced their use of seat belts in the past year.

FIGURE 9

Change In The Use Of Seatbelts Among Drivers



Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving (car driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

Unweighted N=3,853

NHTSA Regional Differences

The small proportion of drivers who said their seat belt use has declined in the past year is about the same across the ten NHTSA regions (1-3 percent, with 1% or less in 6 out of 10 regions). However, there are regional differences both in the overall levels of seat belt usage and in the percentage of drivers who have increased their use of seat belts in the past year.

TABLE 3. Patterns of Reported Seat Belt Use By NHTSA Region

Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?

Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving [vehicle driven most often] increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has seat belts

NHTSA Region	States	Change In Seat Belt Use Within Past Year (N=3,853)		Percent Of Drivers Reporting Using Seat Belt "All The Time" (N=7,576)
		Increased	Decreased	
I	CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT	21%	2%	71%
II	NY, NJ	18%	1%	76%
III	DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV	19%	1%	75%
IV	AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN	24%	*	77%
V	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI	22%	2%	73%
VI	AR, LA, NM, OK, TX	22%	1%	79%
VII	IA, KS, MO, NE	24%	1%	68%
VIII	CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY	28%	1%	62%
IX	AZ, CA, HI, NV	15%	2%	87%
X	AK, ID, OR, WA	14%	3%	82%
	TOTAL	21%	1%	76%

* Less than 0.5%

The NHTSA regions with the smallest reported increase in belt use in the past year were Regions IX (15%) and X (14%). These are the only two regions where more than 80% of its drivers report using their safety belt all the time. It is not surprising, therefore, that increases in belt use in these regions are less dramatic since the proportion of belt use there is already high. The largest reported increases in usage were in Regions VIII (28%), VII (24%), and IV (24%). Regions VII and VIII were the only two regions whose proportion of drivers wearing their seat belts all the time was less than 70 percent.

Demographic Differences

The survey also found some variation in increased belt use by demographic characteristics. Younger drivers were more likely to have increased their belt use than were older drivers.

One-third of those aged 16-20 and one-fourth of those aged 21-34 reported increasing their belt use in the past year. By comparison, about one-fifth or less of the older age groups increased their belt usage in the past year, with the lowest increase among drivers 65 and older (12%).

A higher percentage of Hispanics (26%) than non-Hispanics (20%) and a higher percentage of blacks (25%) than whites (19%) increased belt use in the past year. People with less education were most likely to have increased their belt use in the past year: nearly one-fourth (24%) of those with a high school education or less increased their use of seat belts in the past year, compared with 21% of those with some college and 15% of people with a college degree.

TABLE 4. Reported Changes In Driver's Use Of Seat Belts In The Past Year By Demographic Characteristics

Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving [vehicle driven most often] increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

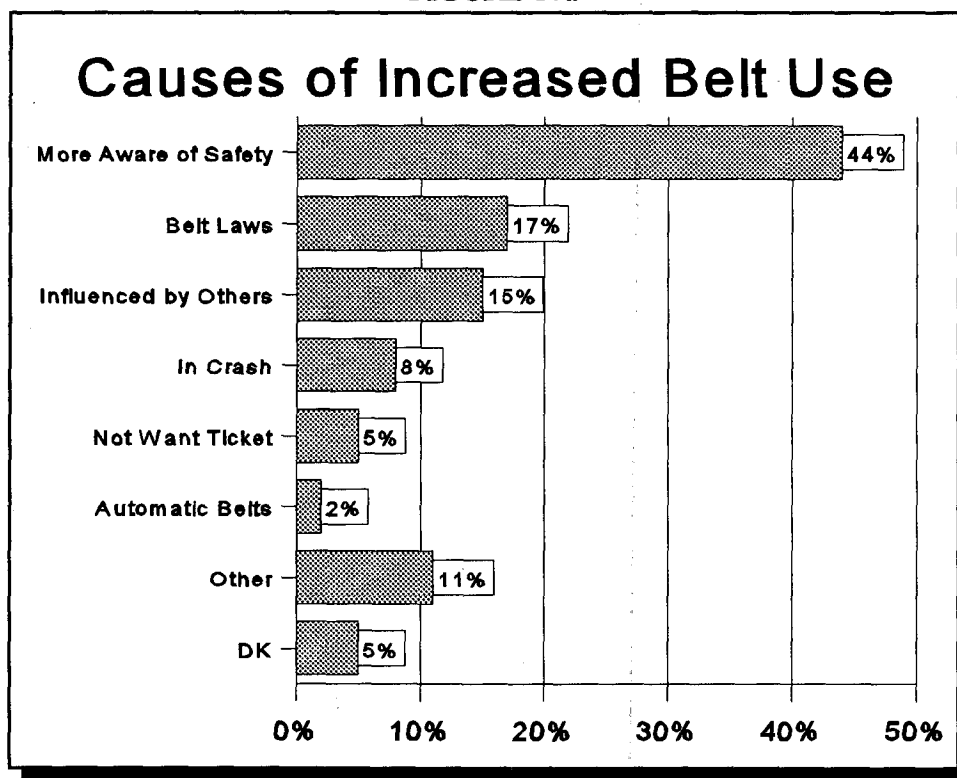
Characteristic	Base	Increased	Decreased	Stayed Same
Age				
16-20	(320)	33%	3%	64%
21-24	(257)	25%	2%	73%
25-34	(968)	25%	2%	73%
35-44	(975)	21%	1%	77%
45-54	(552)	18%	1%	81%
55-64	(343)	16%	*	83%
65+	(382)	12%	*	87%
Gender				
Male	(1,856)	21%	2%	77%
Female	(1,993)	20%	1%	79%
Race				
White	(3,136)	19%	1%	79%
Black	(306)	25%	2%	72%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	(282)	26%	1%	73%
Non-Hispanic	(3,545)	20%	1%	78%
Education				
< H.S.	(446)	24%	2%	73%
H.S. grad.	(1,202)	24%	1%	75%
Some College	(952)	21%	1%	78%
College grad.	(1,219)	15%	1%	83%

* Less than 0.5%

Reasons For Change

Among those whose seat belt use was reported to have increased in the past year, the most common reason given for the change was increased awareness of safety (44%). Nearly one in six, however, cited seat belt laws as their reason for increased seat belt use. Fifteen percent said their seat belt use has changed because of pressure from others and 8% said that their belt use changed because they were in a crash.

FIGURE 10a



Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving (vehicle driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Qx: What caused the change?

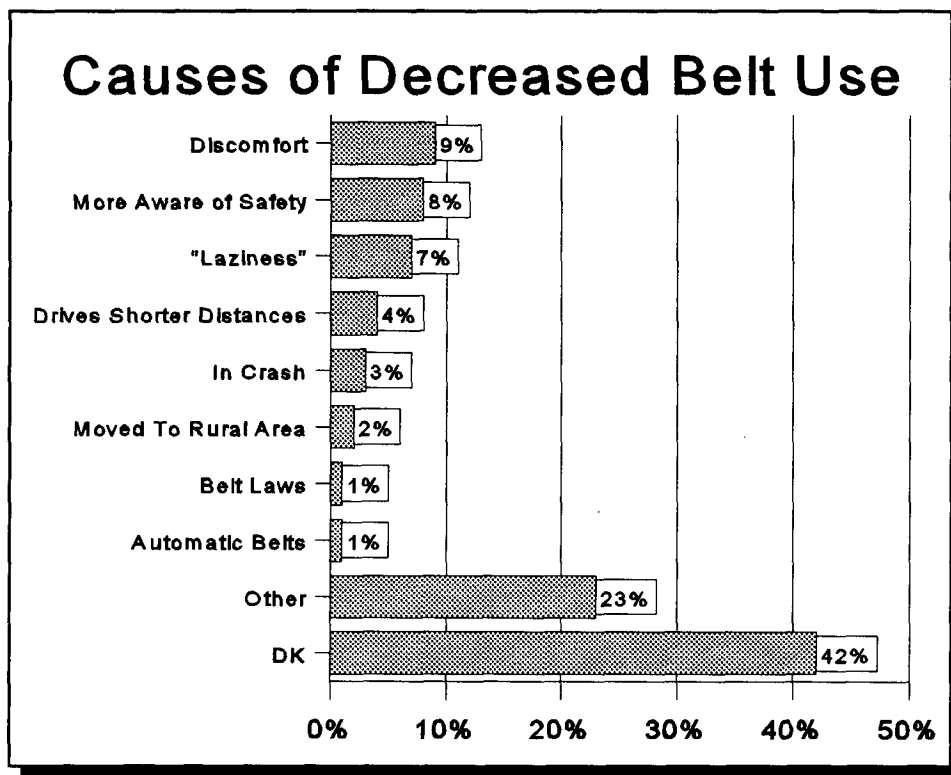
Base: Reported increase in wearing seat belt

Unweighted N=807

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

As stated earlier, about 1% said their belt use decreased within the past year. The most frequently cited reason for decreased belt use (9%) was discomfort. Another 8% mentioned an increased awareness of safety, (it may be that some respondents believe seat belts can be harmful in certain situations). Seven percent cited "laziness," and 4% said they decreased their belt use because they are driving shorter distances. About one-fourth (23%) cited a variety of other reasons, while 42% said they weren't sure.

FIGURE 10b



Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving (vehicle driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Qx: What caused the change?

Base: Reported decrease in wearing seat belt

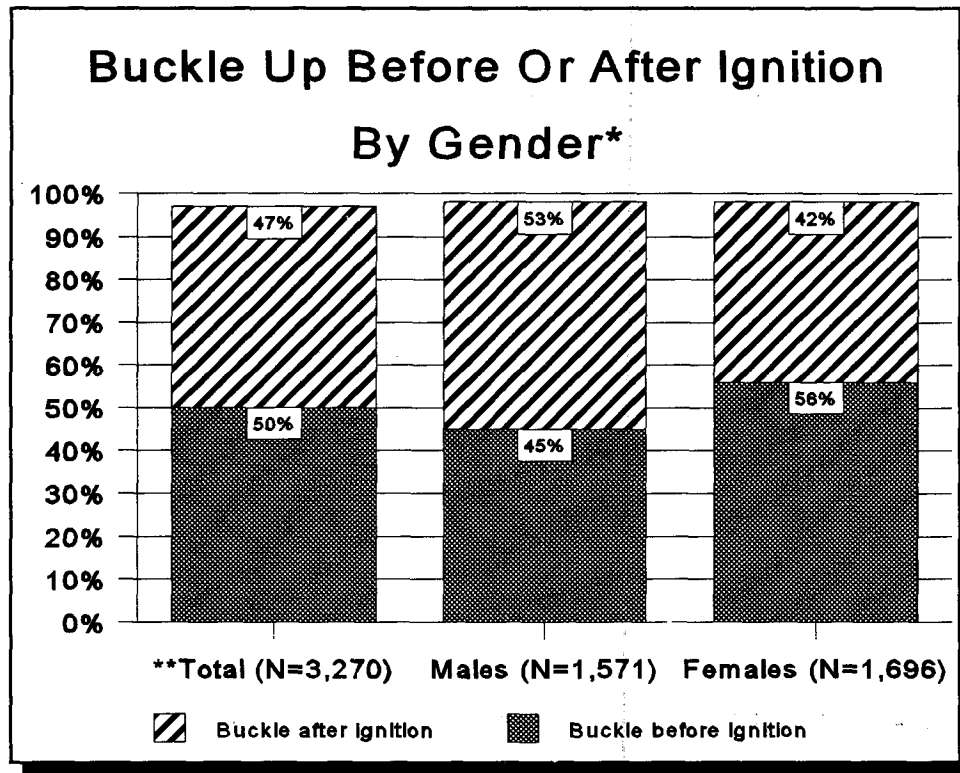
Unweighted N=53

Frequencies of 1% are possible due to case weighting.

The “Buckling Up” Process

Respondents were asked at what point they buckle their seat belt -- before they turn the ignition on or after; and if the latter, before their vehicle starts moving or after. Those who wait until after the vehicle is moving were then asked what event, if any, triggered their buckling their seat belt. One-half of those who drive vehicles with non-automatic seat belts said they normally put their seat belt on before they turn the ignition on. Nearly one-half (47%) said they buckle up after ignition. Females (56%) were more likely than males (45%) to first buckle up and then start the vehicle.

FIGURE 11



Qx: When you drive, do you normally put your seat belt on before or after you turn the ignition on?

Base: Drivers who wear non-automatic seat belts at least sometimes

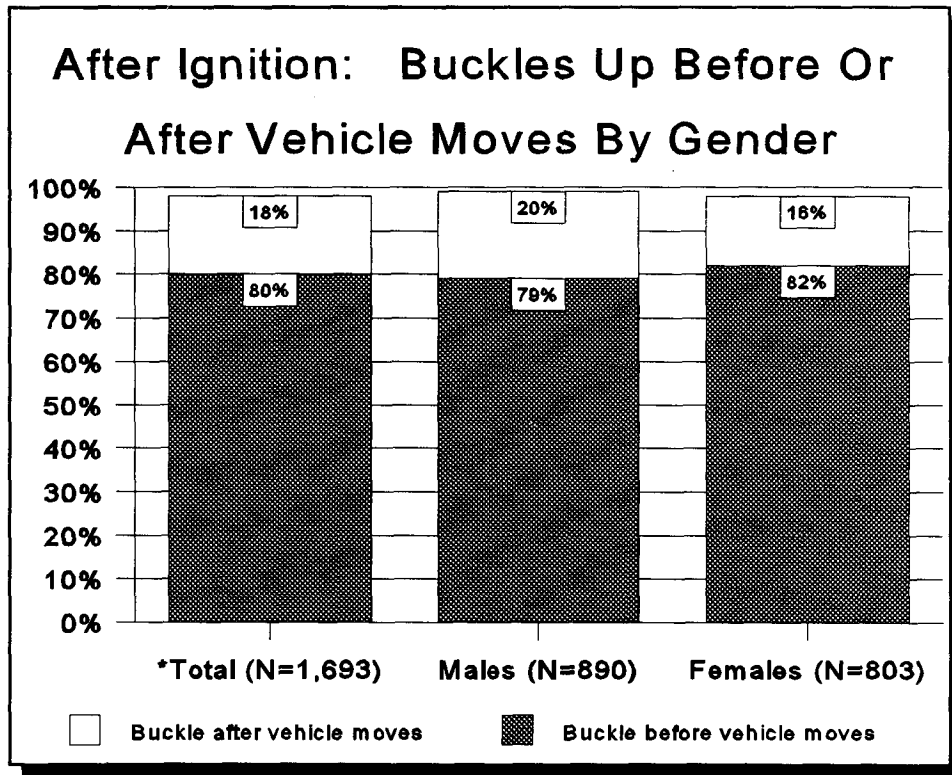
* The total includes 3 cases where gender was undetermined.

** The percentages don't total to 100% due to "don't know" responses to question.

Eighty percent of drivers who wait until after they turn on the ignition said they normally buckle up before the vehicle starts moving. Nearly one in five (18%) said they normally buckle up after the vehicle starts moving. In total, 90% of drivers with non-automatic seat belts said they put on their seat belt before their vehicle starts moving.

Of those who buckle up after they start their vehicle, males (20%) were more likely than females (16%) to wait until the vehicle is moving before they put on their seat belt.

FIGURE 12



Qx: Do you normally put your seat belt on before or after the vehicle starts moving?

Base: Do not normally put on seat belt before ignition

Unweighted N's listed above

* The percentages don't total to 100% due to "don't know" responses to question.

Those who drove any distance in their vehicle before putting on their seat belt were asked how far they went before they buckled up. In general, females tended to buckle up after driving shorter distances than males. For example, females were more likely to say they buckled up after driving 10-20 feet (14% versus 10% of males) or after they reached the end of the driveway (18% versus 7%).

TABLE 5. How Far People Drive Before They Buckle Up

Qx: About how far do you usually drive before you buckle up?

Base: Drivers with non-automatic seat belts who normally put on seat belt after vehicle is moving

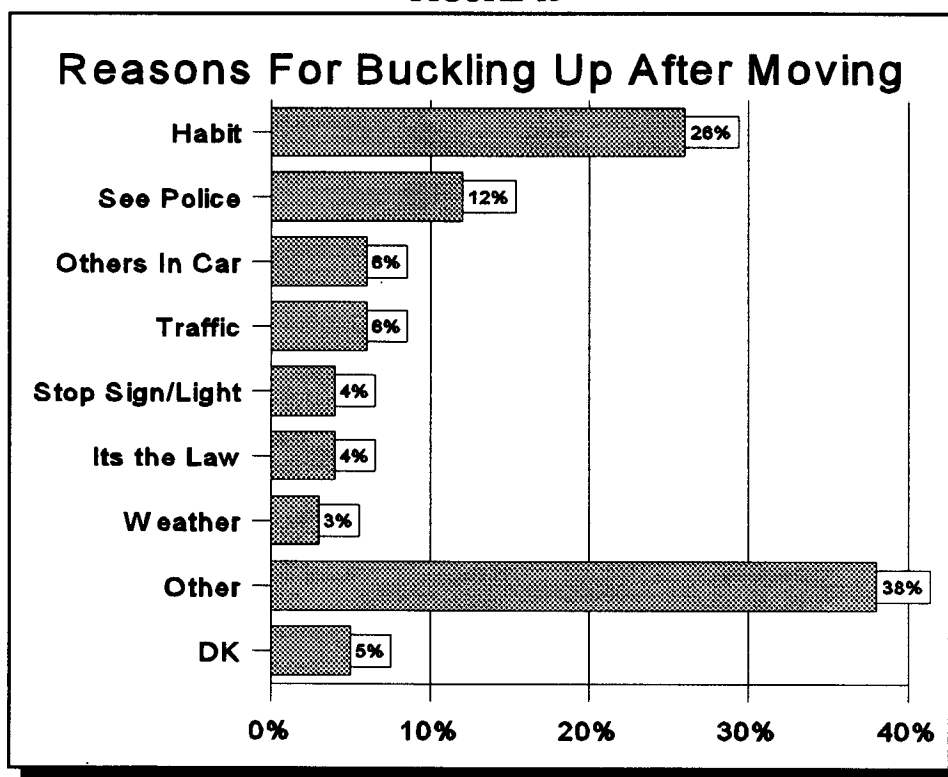
	Total (N=359)	Males (N=202)	Females (N=157)
Distance In Feet (net)	36%	35%	37%
10 Feet	8%	8%	8%
20 Feet	4%	2%	6%
25 Feet	2%	2%	2%
50 Feet	4%	4%	3%
100 Feet	4%	7%	*
Other	14%	12%	18%
Distance In Miles (net)	26%	29%	21%
1/4 Mile	4%	5%	4%
1/2 Mile	6%	7%	3%
1 Mile	7%	7%	7%
2 Miles/Couple of Miles	4%	4%	4%
Other	5%	6%	4%
Distance In Blocks (net)	13%	13%	12%
1/2 Block	2%	2%	2%
1 Block	9%	10%	9%
Other	1%	2%	1%
Miscellaneous (net)	22%	19%	27%
End of Driveway	11%	7%	18%
Out of the Garage	2%	1%	3%
Other	9%	11%	6%
Don't Know/Did Not Respond	6%	6%	6%

* Less than 0.5%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Those who buckle up after the vehicle is moving were then asked what event causes them to finally put on their seat belt. One-fourth (26%) said they buckle up after moving strictly out of habit. One in eight (12%) said they buckle up when they see police. Six percent said they buckle up because of the traffic. The same proportion said they put on their seat belt after moving because others in the vehicle remind them. More than one-third (38%) mentioned a variety of other reasons.

FIGURE 13



Qx: What usually causes you to buckle up at this point?

Base: Drivers with non-automatic seat belts who normally put on belt after vehicle is moving

Unweighted N=359

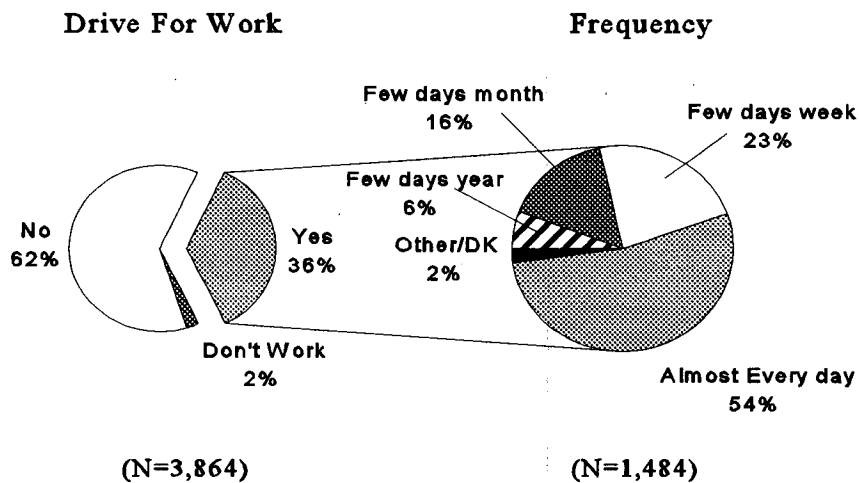
Company Seat Belt Policy

Among those who drive a motor vehicle at all, 36% at least sometimes drive a vehicle as part of a job or business, not including driving to and from work. Business-related driving is found among one-quarter (25%) of female drivers. However, nearly one-half (48%) of male drivers at least sometimes drive a vehicle as part of a job or business.

Over one-half (54%) of those who drive a vehicle as part of a job do so almost every day. About another one quarter (23%) drive a few days a week as part of their job or business. Hence, almost four out of five of those who drive as part of their job or business do so on a fairly regular basis. Stated differently, 28% of all drivers are driving on the job at least a few days a week.

FIGURE 14

Frequency Drive Vehicle As Part Of Job Or Business



Qx: Do you at least sometimes drive a vehicle as part of a job or business?
Do not include driving to and from work.

Qx: How often do you drive a vehicle as part of a job or business?

Base: Drive a motor vehicle

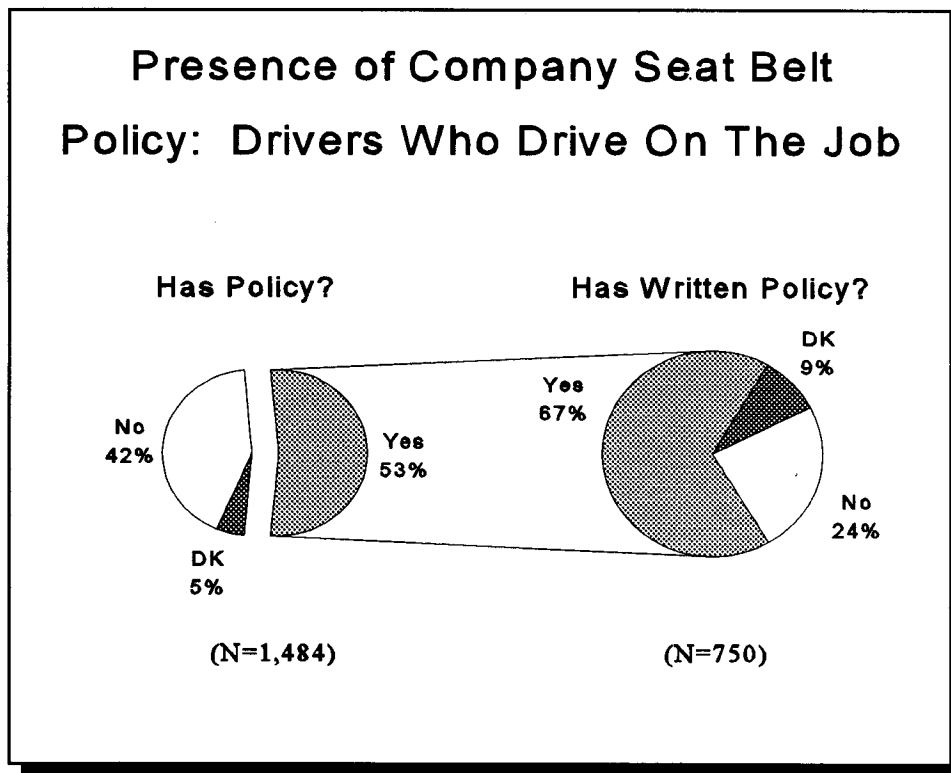
Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Over one-half, (53%) of those who drive as part of their job reported that their company has a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job. Forty-two percent of those who drive on the job reported that their company does not have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job. Another 5% were not sure whether there is any company policy requiring seat belt use.

Among those who are aware of a company policy requiring use of seat belts, about two-thirds, (67%) reported that it is a written policy. Almost one quarter said that the policy is not a written policy. Nine percent were not sure whether there is a written policy or not. In total, only about one-third (35%) of those who drive as part of a job or business reported that their company has a written policy requiring the use of seat belts when driving on the job.

FIGURE 15



Qx: Does your company or business have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job?

Qx: Is that a written policy?

Base: Drivers who drive on the job

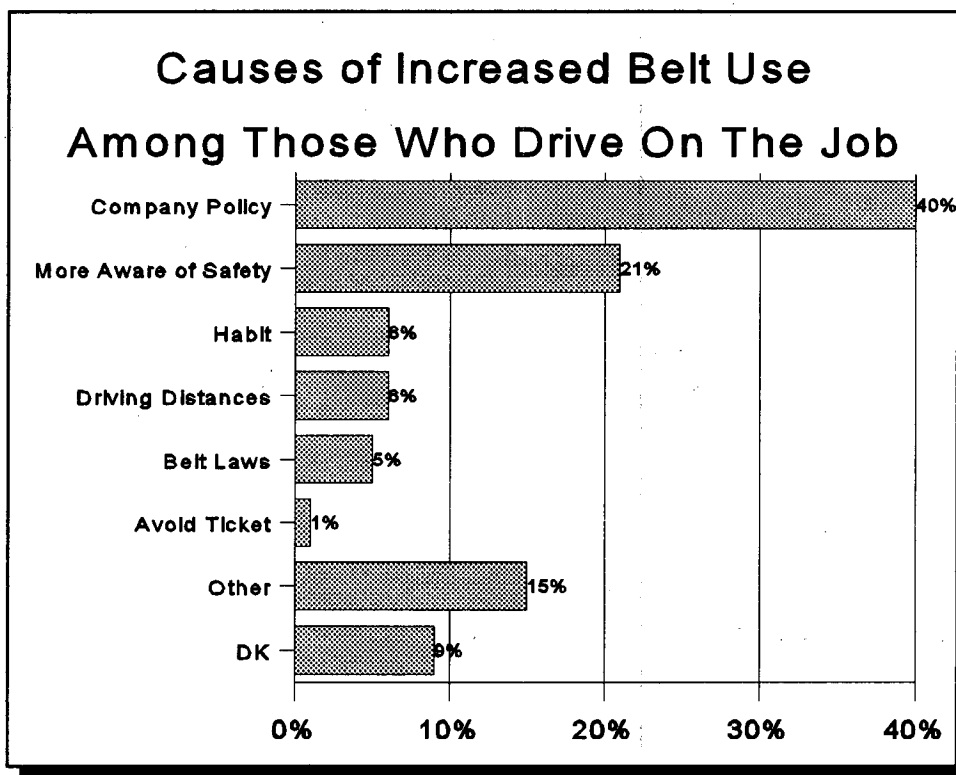
Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Seventy percent of those who drive as part of their jobs said that they are just as likely to wear their seat belts when driving on the job compared to driving for personal use. However, nearly one quarter (24) said that they are more likely to wear seat belts when they drive on the job, compared to driving for personal use. Only 5% were less likely to wear seat belts on the job.

Of those more likely to wear their seat belt when driving for work, 40% said it was because of the company policy. In addition, 21% reported they wear the seat belt more often on the job because of increased awareness of safety. Only 6% wore them more out of habit or because they drive long distances. Concern about the law (5%) or getting tickets (1%) were rarely expressed as reasons for increased use of seat belts on the job compared to elsewhere. People who were less likely to use their seat belt when driving on the job than in their personal driving often said that it was because they are in and out of the vehicle all the time (31%).

FIGURE 16



Qx: Why are you more likely to wear your belt when driving on the job?

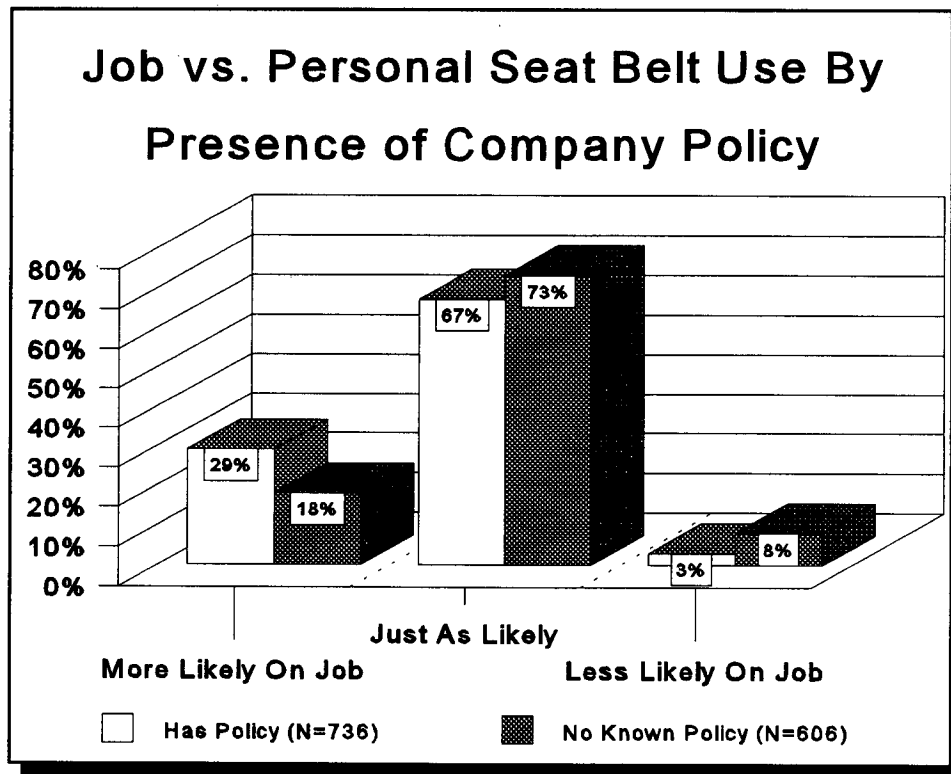
Base: More likely to wear seat belt on job as compared to personal driving

Unweighed N=320

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The survey data support the positive impact of company policy on seat belt use on the job. Among on-the-job drivers who believed there was a company policy requiring seat belts, 29% said that they were more likely to wear a seat belt on the job than when driving for personal use. Only 18% of those in companies without a known policy requiring seat belts said that they were more likely to wear belts while driving on the job. Alternately, 3% of those who believed there was a company policy said that they were less likely to wear a seat belt on the job compared to 8% of those who were unaware of a company policy.

FIGURE 17



Qx: Are you more likely, less likely or just as likely to wear your seat belt when driving on the job as compared to when driving for personal use?

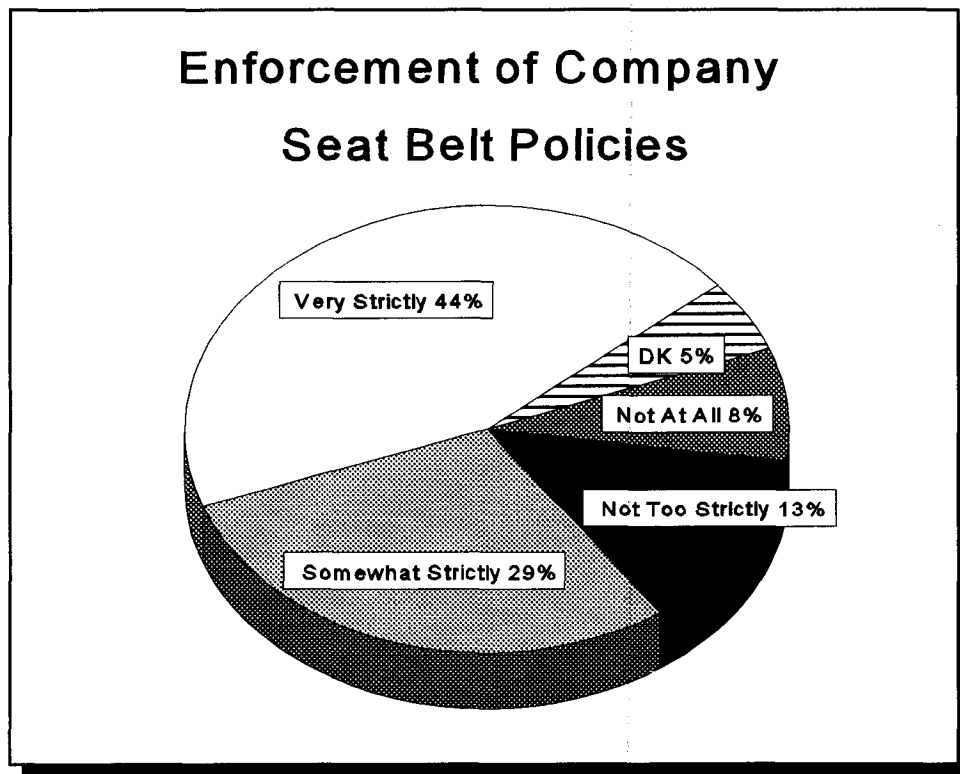
Base: Drive a vehicle as part of job

Unweighted N's listed above

Company Enforcement of Seat Belt Policy

Nearly three out of four (73%) persons who drive on the job and believed they have a company seat belt policy said that the policy is enforced either somewhat strictly or very strictly. A plurality (44%) said their company very strictly enforces the policies. One in five drivers indicated that their company isn't strict about enforcement, with 8% saying their company does not enforce their seat belt policy at all.

FIGURE 18



*Qx: How strictly does your company enforce its policy about wearing seat belts?
Is the policy enforced very strictly, somewhat strictly, not too strictly, or not at all?*

*Base: Drive a vehicle as part of job -- Company has policy on wearing seatbelts
Unweighted N=750*

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey - Seatbelts

Among drivers who reported at least some enforcement of their company seat belt policy nearly one-half said their employers only ask them to wear their seat belts but give no penalties (27%) or they give them warnings (20%). About one in six (18%) said their employers either suspend or dismiss those caught violating the company's policy. Four percent said their employers fine them. More than one-third (36%) mentioned other methods which included: "keeping an eye" on drivers or checking before they leave (20%); left up to the individual or not enforced (9%); and being charged for the ticket (3%).

TABLE 6. How Employer Enforces Seat Belt Policy

Qx: How does your company enforce its seat belt policy?

Base: Company enforces seat belt policy

Unweighted N=641

Method	Percent
Ask To Wear (No Penalty Specified)	27%
Boss/supervisor asks employees to wear their seat belts	10%
Written notices/posted instructions (unspecified)	10%
Written notice in company vehicle	3%
Safety meetings/safety talk every week	6%
Warnings	20%
Boss/supervisor gives daily verbal warning	9%
Written reprimand in file	9%
Initial warning	3%
Warning on vehicle window	2%

TABLE 6. How Employer Enforces Seat Belt Policy

Qx: How does your company enforce its seat belt policy?

Base: Company enforces seat belt policy

Unweighted N=641

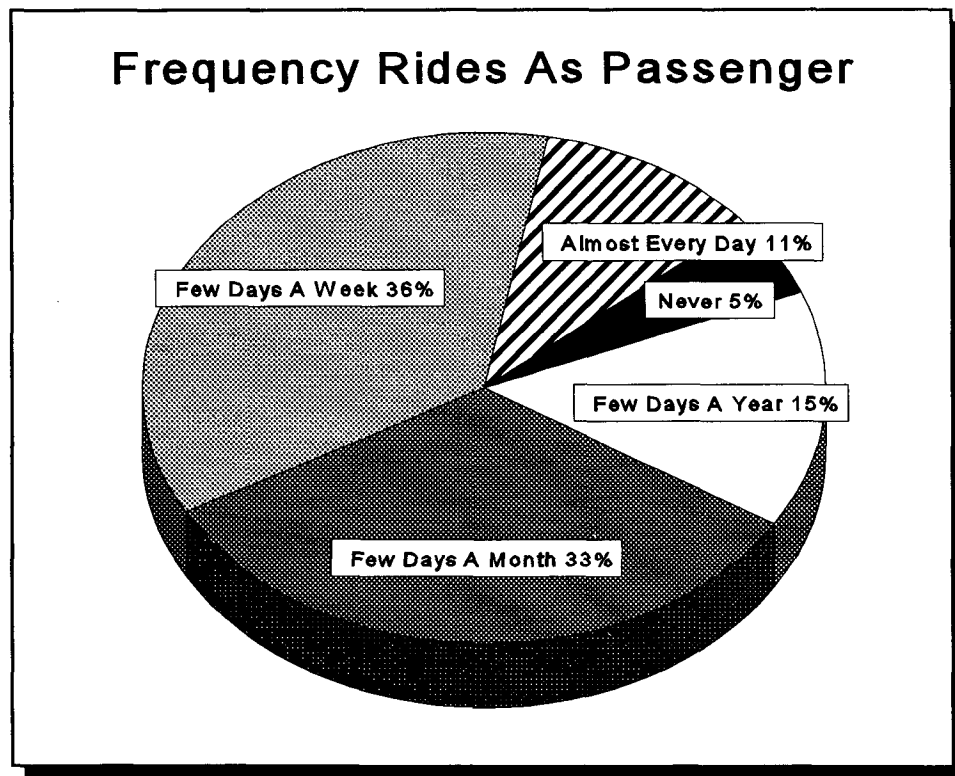
Suspensions/Dismissals	18%
Suspended for non-compliance/suspended after warning	9%
Dismissed after multiple infractions	8%
Dismissed after one infraction	1%
Fined	4%
Fined/fine deducted from paycheck	4%
Miscellaneous	36%
People watch/check you before you leave	20%
Left up to individual/not really enforced	9%
Offender pays ticket	3%
All other miscellaneous mentions	5%
Don't know	14%

Note: Percentages don't equal 100% due to multiple responses

Passenger Use of Belts

Ninety-five percent of the public age 16 and older ride as passengers in motor vehicles at least occasionally. About one in ten (11%) ride as a passenger almost every day. Thirty-six percent ride as passengers a few days week. Hence, nearly one-half (47%) of the public ride as passengers in motor vehicles at least a few times per week.

FIGURE 19



Qx: How often do you ride as a passenger in any kind of car, van or truck?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,188

Ninety percent of those who never drive a motor vehicle ride as passengers in cars, vans or trucks. In fact, among those who never drive, 38% ride as passengers almost every day, and another 35% ride as passengers a few days a week. Less than one percent of the noninstitutionalized population age 16 and older never drive or ride in motor vehicles.

TABLE 7. Frequency Drive Motor Vehicle By Frequency Ride As Passenger

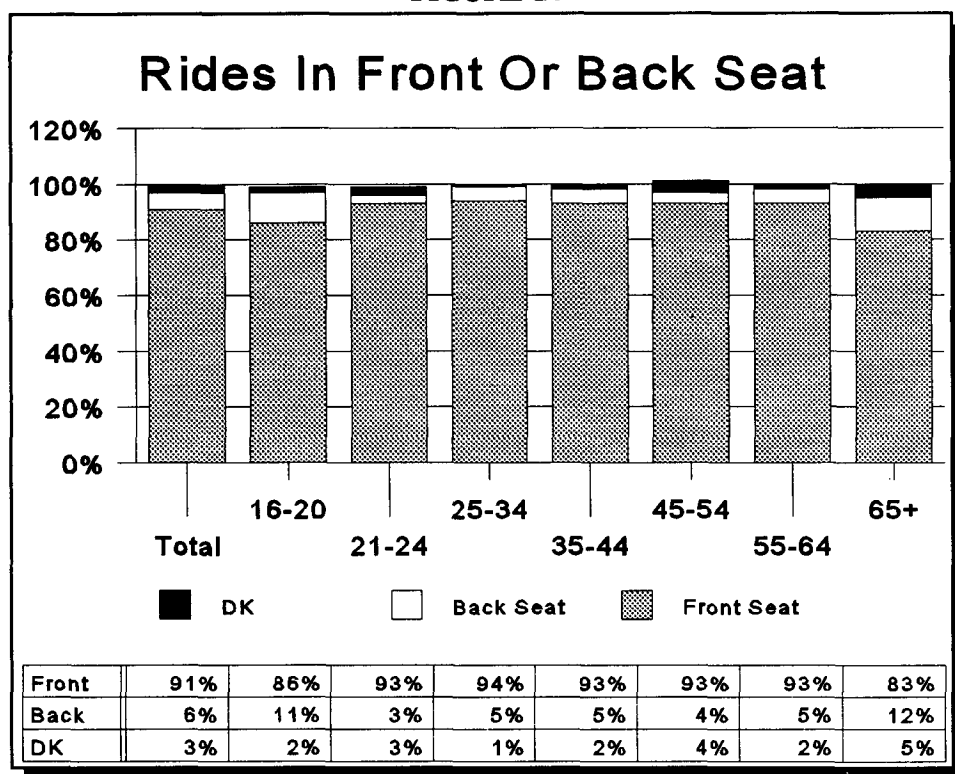
Qx: How often do you drive a motor vehicle?

Qx: How often do you ride as a passenger in any kind of car, van, or truck?

Frequency Ride as Passenger	Frequency Drive Motor Vehicle				
	Almost every day	Few days a week	Few days a month	Few days a year	Never
	(N=3,376)	(N=349)	(N=70)	(N=24)	(N=324)
Almost every day	8%	13%	18%	20%	38%
Few days a week	36%	35%	45%	38%	35%
Few days a month	36%	28%	24%	27%	15%
Few days a year	16%	17%	8%	7%	2%
Never	4%	7%	5%	7%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The vast majority (91%) of persons age 16 and older usually sit in the front seat when riding as passengers in motor vehicles. Only 6% normally ride in the back seat. Riders aged 16-20 (11%) and those aged 65 and older (12%) are more likely than the norm to ride in the back seat.

FIGURE 20



Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?

Base: At least sometimes rides as a passenger

Unweighted N=4,000

People who normally sit in the front seat when riding as a passenger were asked about their use of seat belts on these occasions. Nearly three-fourths (73%) said they wear their safety belt all of the time and another 14% wear their belt most of the time when riding as a front-seat passenger. About the same percentage (71%) of those who usually ride as a passenger in the back seat also said they wear their seat belt all the time when they ride in the front seat.

**TABLE 8. Frequency Wear Seat Belt As *Front Seat* Passenger
By Where Usually Ride As Passenger**

Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?

Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat, how often do you wear your seat belt?

Frequency of Front Seat Passenger Seat belt Use	Where Usually Ride As Passenger		
	Front Seat	Back Seat	Don't Know
	(N=3,641)	(N=251)	(N=101)
All times	73%	71%	76%
Most times	14%	11%	13%
Sometimes	7%	9%	8%
Rarely	3%	2%	0%
Never	3%	4%	2%
Never Ride In Front	*	2%	0%
Don't know	*	*	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* Less than 0.5%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Passenger use of seat belts occurs less frequently in the back seat. Only 41% of people who normally ride in the back seat when a passenger said they wear their seat belts all of the time and 11% wear their seat belts most of the time when riding as a back-seat passenger. Even fewer people who usually ride as a passenger in the front seat wear their seat belts all the time when riding in the back (36%).

**TABLE 9. Frequency Wear Seat Belt As *Back Seat* Passenger
By Where Usually Ride As Passenger**

Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?

Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat, how often do you wear your seat belt?

Frequency of Back Seat Passenger Seat belt Use	Where Usually Ride As Passenger		
	Front Seat	Back Seat	Don't Know
	(N=3,641)	(N=251)	(N=101)
All times	36%	41%	53%
Most times	14%	11%	11%
Sometimes	15%	18%	13%
Rarely	11%	10%	11%
Never	19%	20%	11%
Never Ride In Back	5%	1%	0%
Don't know	*	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* Less than 0.5%

People were fairly consistent in their reported frequency of seat belt use as drivers and front seat passengers. Nearly nine in ten (88%) who said they use their seat belt all the time when driving use a belt all the time when riding as a front seat passenger. Nearly seven in ten (68%) of those who rarely or never use a belt as a driver also rarely or never wear a belt when they are a front seat passenger.

TABLE 10. Frequency of Seat Belt Use As Driver By Frequency of Seat Belt Use As *Front Seat* Passenger

	Belt Use As Driver			
	All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely/ Never
	(N=2,866)	(N=449)	(N=179)	(N=197)
Frequency Of Seat Belt Use As Front Seat Passenger				
All times	88%	31%	15%	11%
Most times	8%	48%	16%	9%
Sometimes	2%	16%	50%	12%
Rarely/Never	1%	5%	18%	68%
Never Rides In Front Seat	*	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Less than 0.5%

Even those who normally wear their seat belts in the front seat are less inclined to wear them when they are back seat passengers. Less than one-half (46%) of those who said they wear their seat belts "all the time" while driving reported wearing them "all the time" as a back seat passenger. Twenty percent said they rarely or never wear them in the back seat.

Nearly six in ten (59%) who said they wear their seat belts some of the time when driving reported rarely or never wearing them when they ride in the back seat. Even 42% of those who said they wear their seat belts most of the time while driving rarely or never wear them as back seat passengers.

TABLE 11. Frequency of Seat Belt Use As Driver By Frequency of Seat Belt Use As *Back Seat* Passenger

	Belt Use As Driver			
	All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely/ Never
	(N=2,866)	(N=449)	(N=179)	(N=197)
Frequency Of Seat Belt Use As Back Seat Passenger				
All times	46%	9%	4%	4%
Most times	15%	21%	5%	2%
Sometimes	15%	21%	23%	5%
Rarely/Never	20%	42%	59%	83%
Never Rides In Back Seat	4%	6%	8%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

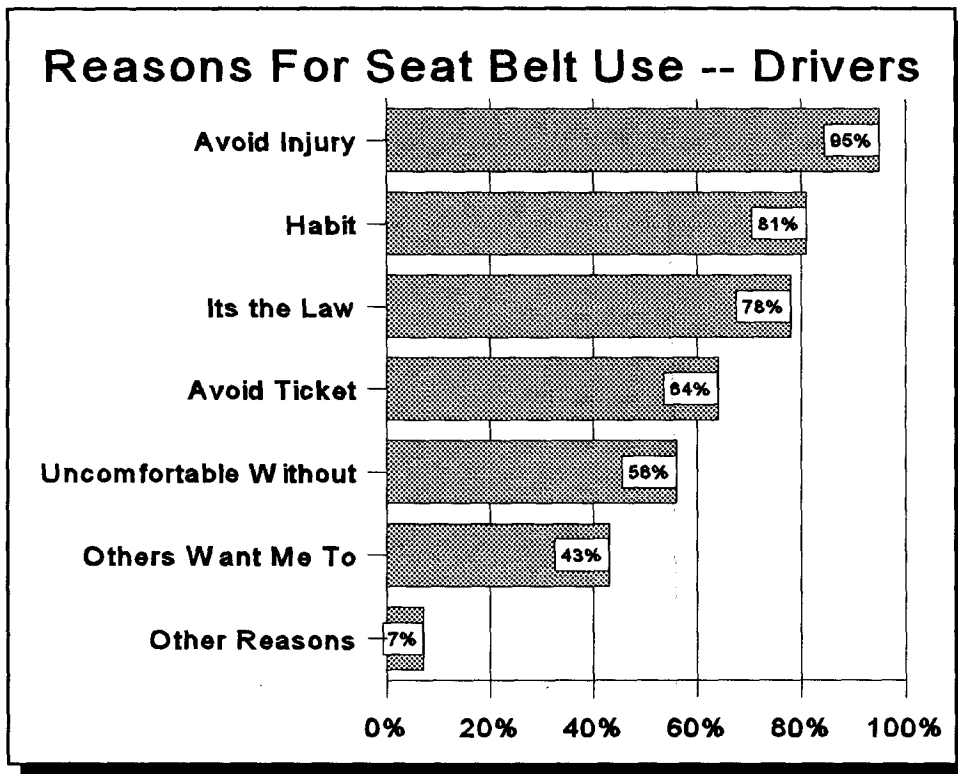
CHAPTER 2

REASONS FOR SEAT BELT USE AND NON-USE

Reasons For Seat Belt Use

Drivers who wear shoulder or lap belts at least on occasion were asked their reasons for wearing seat belts when they drive. Six potential reasons for seat belt use were read, one at a time, to respondents. They were asked whether or not each reason was a factor in their use of safety belts. The respondents were then given an opportunity to volunteer other reasons for their safety belt use. Almost all drivers who wear shoulder or lap belts do so to avoid injury (95%). Roughly four out of five (81%) also wear safety belts because it is a habit or because it is the law (78%). Almost two-thirds of drivers who wear safety belts (64%) agree that they wear seat belts to avoid getting a ticket. Over one-half (56%) wear seat belts because they are uncomfortable without them. A relatively large minority (43%) agree that they wear seat belts because others want them to wear them. Among volunteered reasons, the only response to appear with any appreciable frequency is to provide a good example to children (3%).

FIGURE 21



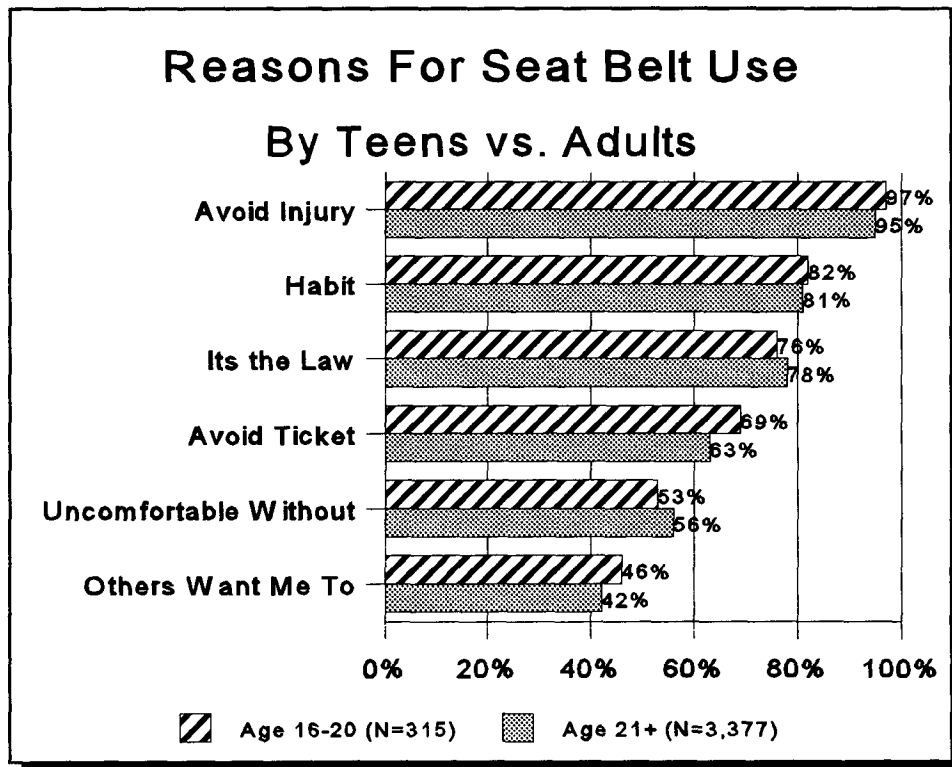
Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .
 Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt
 Unweighted N=3,747

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Since teenagers have the lowest rate of seat belt use, Figure 22 compares them to those 21 and older in their reasons for use. Teenagers were slightly more likely than older persons to agree with most of the reasons for wearing seat belts. The biggest differences were wearing seat belts because “others want me to wear it” (46% to 42%), and fear of sanctions with 69% of those age 16-20 wearing seat belts to avoid tickets, compared to 63% of those age 21 or over.

Older drivers were slightly more likely than those age 16-20 to wear their seat belt because “its the law” (78% to 76%) or because they felt uncomfortable without them (56% to 53%).

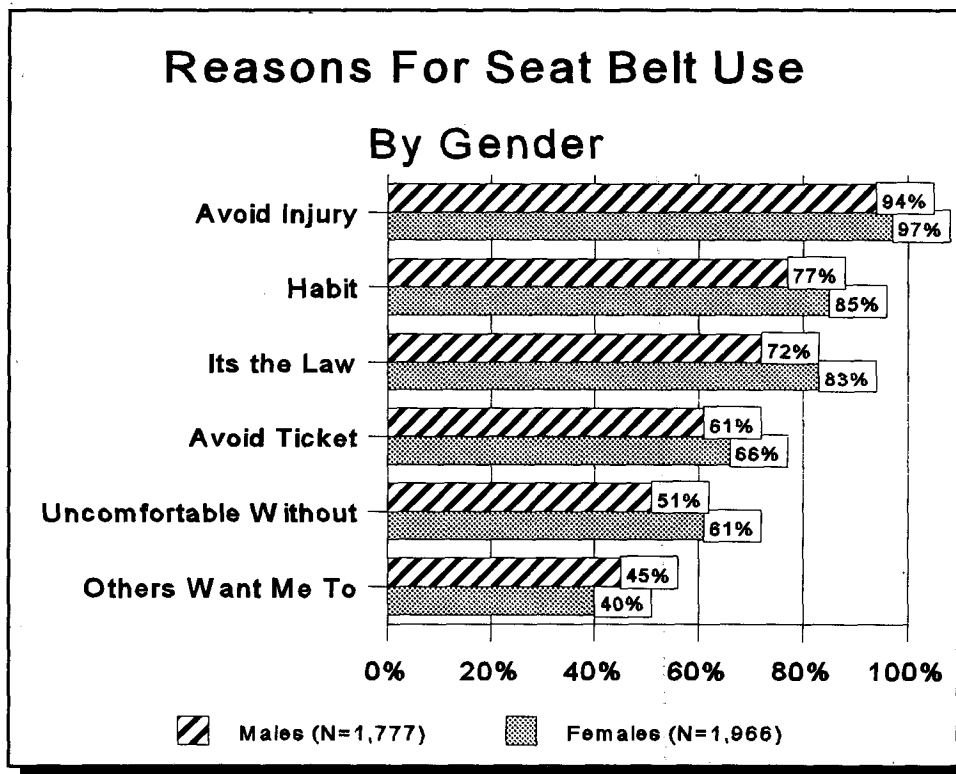
FIGURE 22



Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .
Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt
Unweighted N's listed above

Females were slightly more likely than males to wear seat belts to avoid serious injury (97% to 94%), or because they don't want to get a ticket (66% to 61%). They also were more likely than males to wear seat belts because it's a habit (85% to 77%); because it's the law (83% to 72%); or because they are uncomfortable without it (61% to 51%). "Others want me to wear it," is the only reason for wearing seat belts that is reported by more males than females (45% to 40%).

FIGURE 23

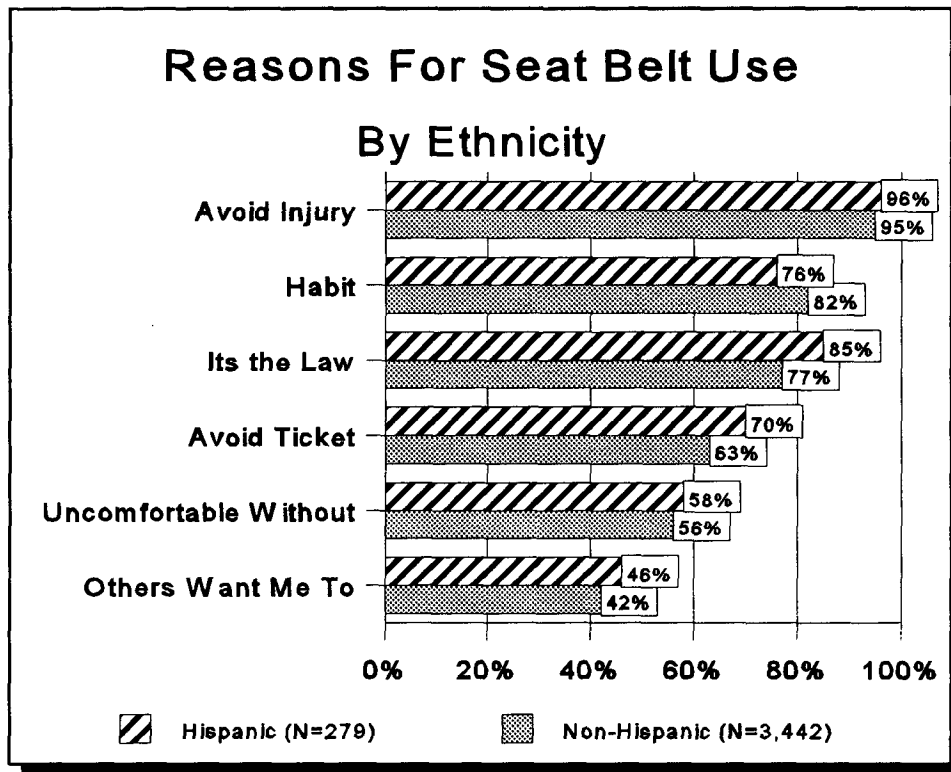


Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .
Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt
Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The survey also found differences in reason for seat belt use by ethnicity. Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to wear seat belts because it is the law (85% to 77%), to avoid getting a ticket (70% to 63%), and because "others want me to wear it" (46% to 42%). Non-Hispanics were more likely than Hispanics to wear seat belts out of habit (82% to 76%).

FIGURE 24



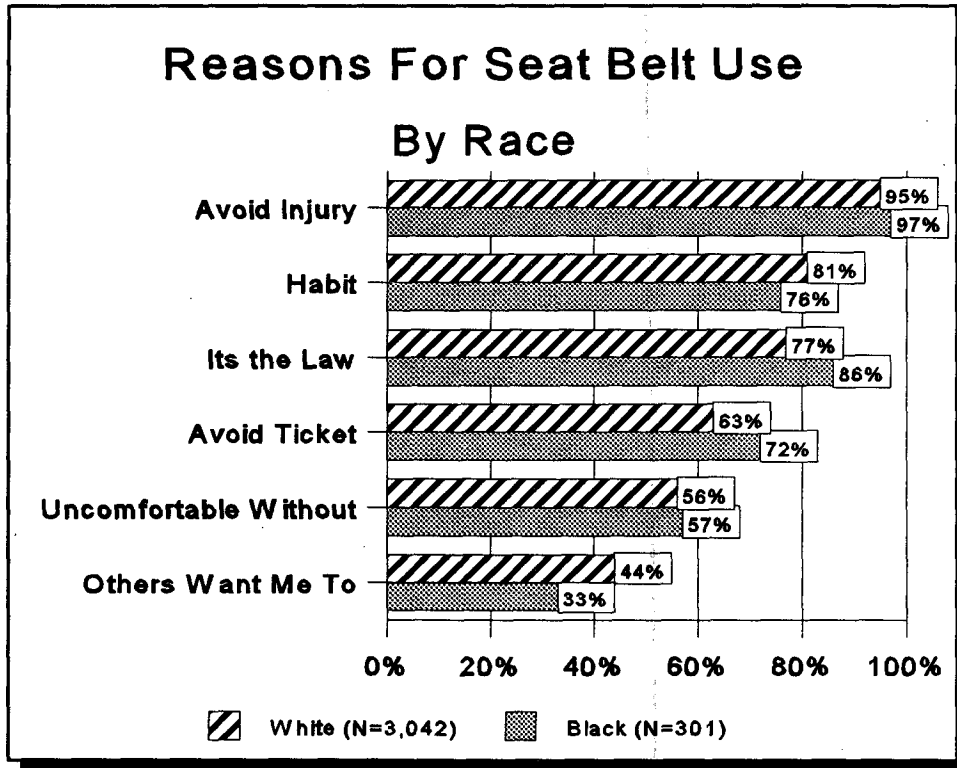
Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .

Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt

Unweighted N's listed above

Blacks were more likely than Whites to wear seat belts because its the law (86% to 77%) and to avoid getting tickets (72% to 63%). Whites were more likely than Blacks to wear seat belts out of habit (81% to 76%) and because others want them to (44% to 33%).

FIGURE 25



Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .

Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt

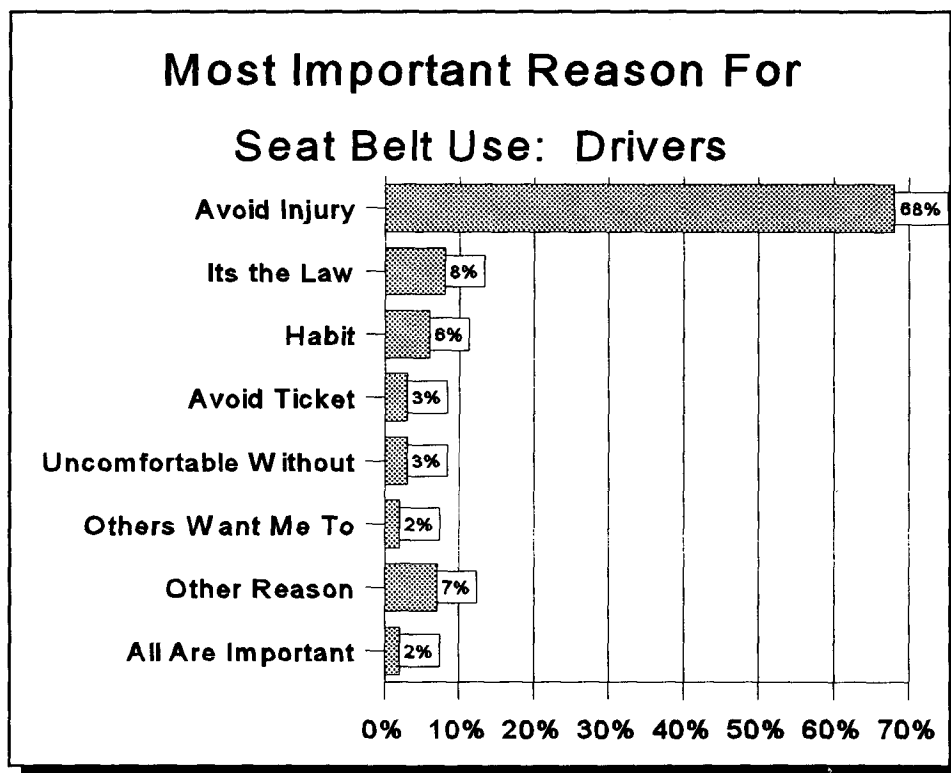
Unweighted N's listed above

Most Important Reason For Seat Belt Use

Although a majority of drivers who wear seat belts identified multiple reasons for usage, one reason clearly emerges when they are asked which is most important. More than two thirds (68%) of drivers who wear seat belts said that the avoidance of serious injury is the most important reason why they wear them.

Fewer than one in ten drivers wearing seat belts said the most important reason for wearing the belt is because it's the law (8%) or because it's a habit (6%). Only 3% reported that avoiding getting a ticket is the most important reason.

FIGURE 26



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

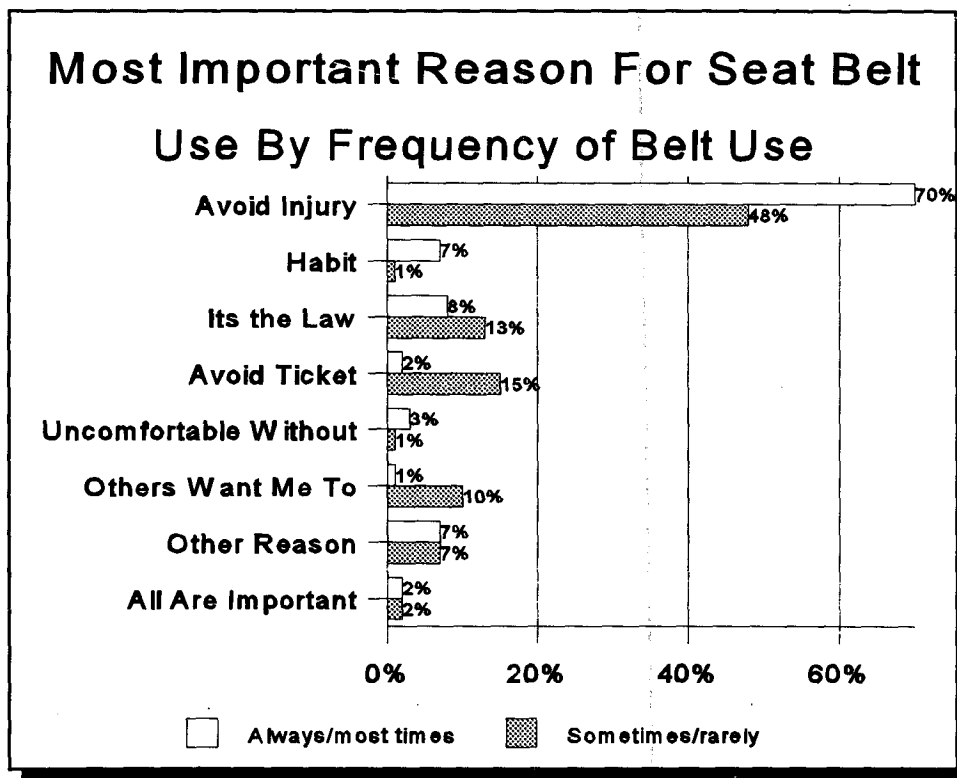
Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

Unweighted N=3,747

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The primary reason given for wearing seat belts differs by the frequency of seat belt use. Among drivers who said they wear seat belts “always” or “most of the time,” 70% indicated that avoidance of injury is their most important reason as compared to just under half (48%) of those who “sometimes” or “rarely” wear their seat belts. Those who said they wear their seat belts only sometimes or rarely were more likely than frequent belt users to say that the most important reason that they wear a seat belt is to avoid a ticket (15% to 2%), because it is the law (13% to 8%), or because others want them to do it (10% to 1%).

FIGURE 27



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

Unweighted N=3,740

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Females (71%) were more likely than males (65%) to report that their primary reason for wearing seat belts is to avoid serious injury. The 16-20 year olds were about as likely to indicate injury avoidance as their main reason for wearing seat belts (66%) as the general population of adult drivers (68%).

TABLE 12. Most Important Reason For Seat Belt Use By Gender And Age

Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

Reason	Gender		Age	
	Male	Female	16-20	21+
	(N=1,777)	(N=1,966)	(N=315)	(N=3,377)
Its a Habit	7%	6%	9%	6%
Don't Want To Get A Ticket	4%	3%	3%	3%
Uncomfortable Without It	3%	3%	7%	3%
Other Want Me To Wear It	3%	1%	5%	2%
It's the Law	9%	8%	6%	8%
Want To Avoid Serious Injury	65%	71%	66%	68%
Other Reason	7%	7%	4%	7%
All Are Important	2%	2%	*	2%

* Less than 0.5%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Drivers with higher levels of formal education were more likely than those with lower levels of education to wear their seat belts to avoid serious injury. More than 7 in 10 college graduates (72%) cited this as the most important reason they wear seat belts, compared to 63% of those without a High School diploma.

Drivers with lower levels of formal education were more likely than those with higher levels of education to wear seat belts because it's the law (14% of non-High School graduates and 10% of High School graduates, compared to 5% of those with college degrees). Those with lower levels of education were also more likely than those with higher levels to wear seat belts to avoid getting tickets (6% of non-High School graduates, compared to 3% for college graduates or those with some college).

TABLE 13. Most Important Reason For Seat Belt Use By Education

Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

Reason	Less Than H.S.	H.S. Grad	Some College	College Grad
	(N=425)	(N=1,152)	(N=932)	(N=1,206)
Its a Habit	5%	6%	6%	8%
Don't Want To Get A Ticket	6%	4%	3%	3%
Uncomfortable Without It	3%	2%	4%	3%
Other Want Me To Wear It	2%	2%	2%	1%
It's the Law	14%	10%	7%	5%
Want To Avoid Serious Injury	63%	66%	68%	72%
Other Reason	5%	8%	7%	6%
All Are Important	2%	2%	2%	1%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Urban and suburban drivers were more likely than rural drivers to wear seat belts in order to avoid serious injury (71% and 70% respectively, versus 61% for rural drivers). Rural drivers (13%) were more likely than either urban or suburban drivers to wear their seat belts because it's the law (8% and 6% respectively).

TABLE 14. Most Important Reason For Seat Belt Use By Residence

Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

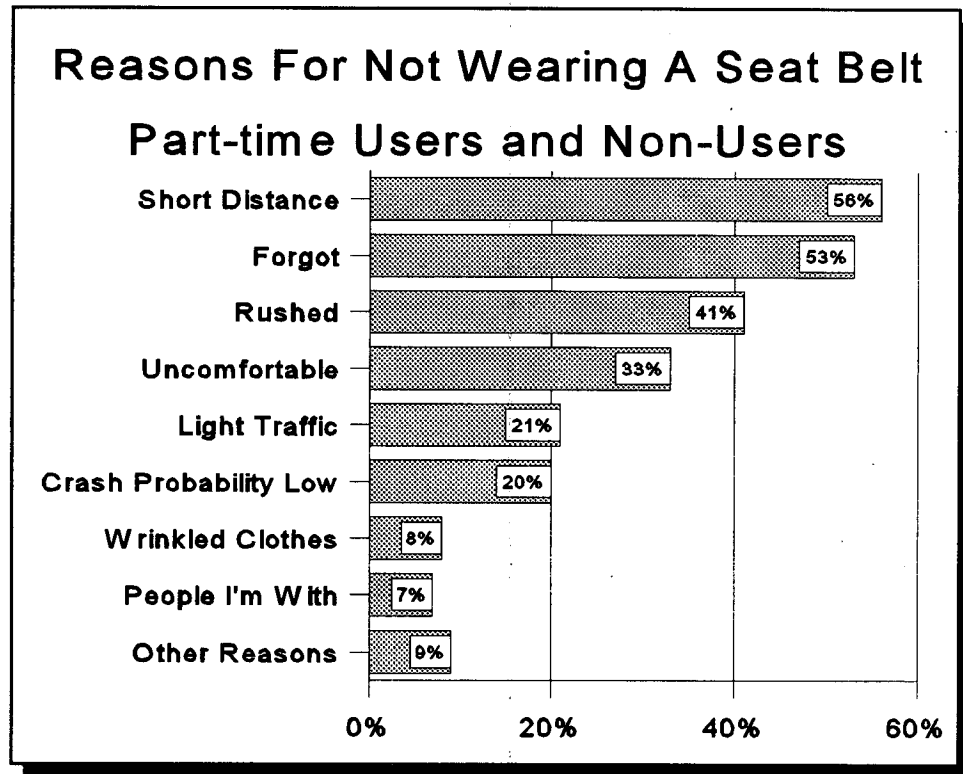
Reason	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	(N=1,137)	(N=1,792)	(818)
Its a Habit	5%	7%	8%
Don't Want To Get A Ticket	3%	3%	4%
Uncomfortable Without It	3%	3%	4%
Other Want Me To Wear It	2%	2%	2%
It's the Law	8%	6%	13%
Want To Avoid Serious Injury	71%	70%	61%
Other Reason	7%	7%	7%
All Are Important	2%	2%	2%

Reasons for Non-Use of Seat Belts

Drivers who did not always wear their seat belt during the past year were asked about their reasons for non-use. Interviewers read eight potential reasons to respondents. For each one, the drivers were asked to agree or disagree that they sometimes did not wear their belt because of that reason. Drivers were then given an opportunity to volunteer other reasons why they did not use their seat belts.

The most frequent reasons drivers gave for not wearing seat belts were that they are driving a short distance (56%) or they forget to put it on (53%). Four in ten (41%) said they do not wear their belt because they are in a rush, while one-third don't wear it because it is uncomfortable. About one-fifth sometimes do not wear a seat belt because they are driving in light traffic (21%) or they believe the probability of being in a crash is too low (20%). One in twelve (8%) sometimes do not wear a seat belt because they don't want to wrinkle their clothes while 7% don't wear them because of the people they are with. Nine percent volunteered other reasons for not wearing their belts.

FIGURE 28



Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .

Base: Drivers who do not wear seat belts all the time

Unweighted N=1,675

There were some notable gender differences in the reasons given for not wearing seat belts. Male drivers (56%) were more likely than female drivers (49%) to not wear seat belts because they forgot. Males were also more likely than females not to wear seat belts because they think the probability of a crash is low (25% compared to 13%). On the other hand, females (12%) were more likely than males (6%) to say that they sometimes don't wear seat belts because they do not want to get their clothes wrinkled.

TABLE 15. Reasons For Drivers Not Wearing Seat Belt By Gender

Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .

Base: Drivers who do not wear safety belts all the time

Reason	Male	Female
	(N=936)	(N=736)
Only Driving A Short Distance	58%	54%
Driving In Light Traffic	23%	19%
In A Rush	41%	40%
Forgot To Put It On	56%	49%
Don't Want Clothes To Get Wrinkled	6%	12%
Seat Belt Is Uncomfortable	33%	32%
Probability of Crash Is Too Low	25%	13%
Of the People I'm With	9%	5%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

There were also a few notable age differences in the reasons given for not wearing seat belts. The youngest drivers (16-20), were more likely than other drivers to say they sometimes don't wear their seat belt because of the people they are with. Compared to other age groups, drivers age 21-24 were less likely to not wear seat belts because they are driving a short distance. Drivers age 55-64 were less likely than other drivers to claim they forgot to wear their seat belt. Drivers age 55-64 were, however, more likely than other drivers not to wear their seat belt because it is uncomfortable. Drivers in the oldest age group (65 or over) were less likely than younger drivers not to wear their seat belt because they are in a rush.

TABLE 16. Reasons For Not Wearing Seat Belt By Age

Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .

Base: Drivers who do not wear safety belts all the time

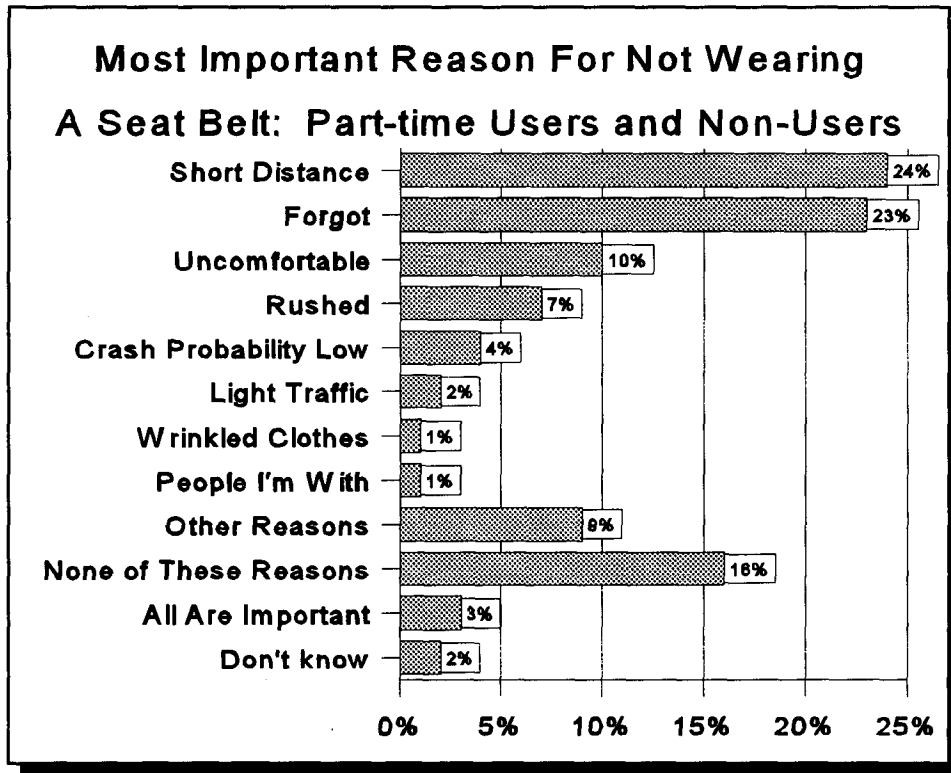
Unweighted N's listed below

	16-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Reason	(164)	(131)	(480)	(400)	(217)	(123)	(145)
Only Driving A Short Distance	60%	47%	58%	54%	58%	59%	58%
Driving In Light Traffic	17%	16%	23%	19%	23%	24%	23%
In A Rush	42%	36%	44%	47%	41%	39%	29%
Forgot To Put It On	55%	49%	54%	57%	54%	41%	53%
Don't Want Clothes To Get Wrinkled	10%	7%	9%	9%	8%	8%	5%
Seat Belt Is Uncomfortable	34%	29%	33%	33%	30%	42%	31%
Probability of Crash Is Too Low	22%	23%	18%	17%	23%	24%	19%
Of the People I'm With	11%	7%	8%	9%	6%	6%	4%

Most Important Reason For Non-Use of Seat Belts

When asked which is the most important reason that they sometimes do not wear a seat belt, drivers most often said because they are only driving a short distance (24%) or because they forgot to put it on (23%). The belt being uncomfortable (10%) ranked third, while being in a rush (7%) ranked fourth. Sixteen percent did not agree that any of the reasons listed below caused them not to wear their belt.

FIGURE 29



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who do not wear seat belts all the time

Unweighted N=1,675

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The primary reason for not wearing seat belts, in general, does not vary a great deal by age. The proportion whose most important reason for not wearing seat belts is because they forgot to put them on declines from 26% of those age 16-20 to 17% of those 65 and older. The proportion whose most important reason for not wearing seat belts is because they are only driving a short distance increases from 23% of those 16-20 years old to 29% of those 65 and older.

TABLE 17. Most Important Reason For Not Wearing Seat Belt By Age

Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who do not wear safety belts all the time

Unweighted N=1,675

Reason	16-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Only Driving A Short Distance	23%	23%	23%	20%	27%	25%	29%
Driving In Light Traffic	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	0%	1%
In A Rush	8%	7%	7%	8%	7%	5%	4%
Forgot To Put It On	26%	24%	26%	25%	20%	18%	17%
Don't Want Clothes To Get Wrinkled	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Seat Belt Is Uncomfortable	13%	6%	10%	10%	7%	12%	9%
Probability of Crash Is Too Low	7%	6%	3%	4%	2%	2%	5%
Of the People I'm With	1%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	*

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The primary reason for not wearing seat belts also differs by the reported frequency of seat belt use. Drivers who wear their seat belt more frequently were more likely than infrequent seat belt users to cite "only driving a short distance" and "forgot to put it on" as the most important reasons they sometimes don't wear their seat belt. Infrequent belt users, on the other hand, were more likely than frequent users to say that belt discomfort is the most important reason they don't wear their seat belt.

TABLE 18. Most Important Reasons For Not Wearing Seat Belt By Belt Use

Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who do not wear safety belts all the time

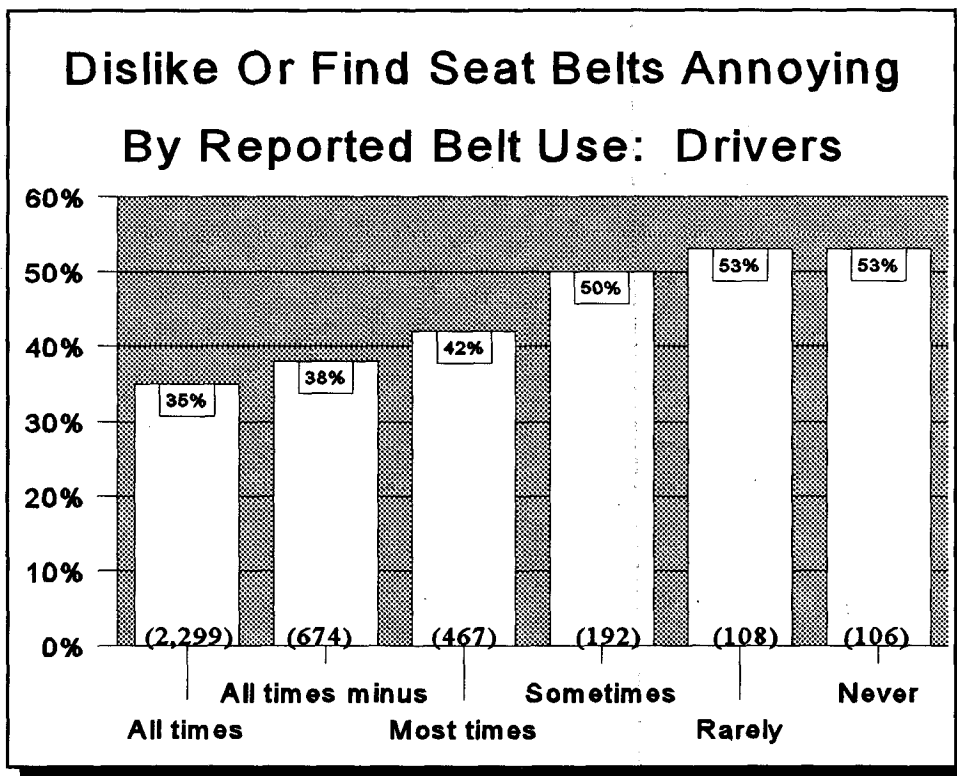
Unweighted N=1,675

Reason	All Times (Minus)	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Only Driving A Short Distance	29%	26%	24%	17%	7%
Driving In Light Traffic	1%	1%	3%	5%	1%
In A Rush	6%	8%	7%	6%	4%
Forgot To Put It On	22%	31%	24%	20%	9%
Don't Want Clothes To Get Wrinkled	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Seat Belt Is Uncomfortable	5%	8%	20%	17%	25%
Probability of Crash Is Too Low	3%	3%	6%	9%	3%
Of the People I'm With	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

What Drivers Dislike or Find Annoying About Seat Belts

All drivers, regardless of whether or not they wear their seat belts regularly, were asked if there was anything that they particularly disliked or found annoying about wearing their seat belt. Nearly four out of ten drivers (38%) affirmed that there are things they dislike or find annoying about wearing their seat belt. The proportion of drivers who find their seat belt annoying increased from 35% of those who said they always wear their seat belts to 52% of those who sometimes, rarely or never wear their seat belts.

FIGURE 30



Qx: Is there anything that you particularly dislike or find annoying about wearing your seat belt?

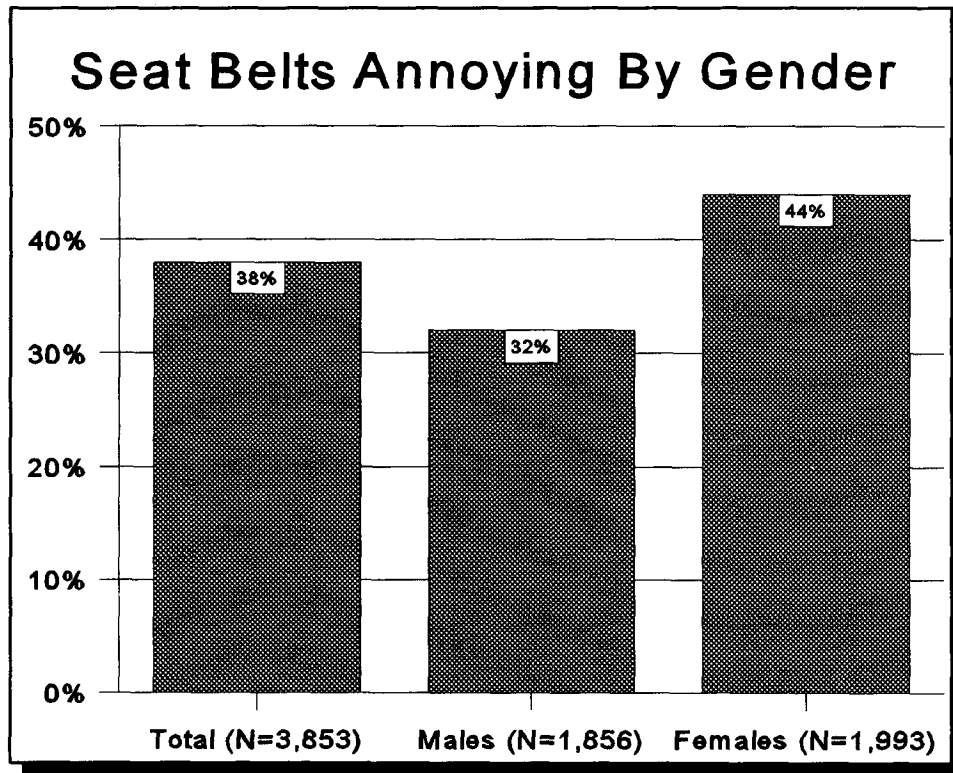
Base: Drives a motor vehicle that has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

There are striking differences by gender in the proportion of drivers who find seat belts annoying. About one-third (32%) of male drivers particularly dislike or find something annoying about wearing seat belts, compared to 44% of female drivers.

FIGURE 31



Qx: Is there anything that you particularly dislike or find annoying about wearing your seat belt?

Base: Drive a motor vehicle that has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The most common complaint among those who had particular dislikes or annoyances with seat belts is physical discomfort. Almost one-half (49%) of those who dislike or find something annoying about seat belts cited specific body pressure, including pressure on the neck (35%) and shoulder pressure or tightness (9%). Twelve percent reported non-specific discomfort (i.e. "uncomfortable"). There are striking gender differences here, too. Slightly less than one-quarter of males (23%) who had a problem with seat belts complained about pressure across the neck, compared to 44% of females.

TABLE 19. What Drivers Dislike or Find Annoying About Seat Belts

Qx: Is there anything that you particularly dislike or find annoying about wearing your seat belt?

Qx: What is it that you dislike or find annoying? Anything else?

Base: Drivers who dislike or find something annoying about seat belts

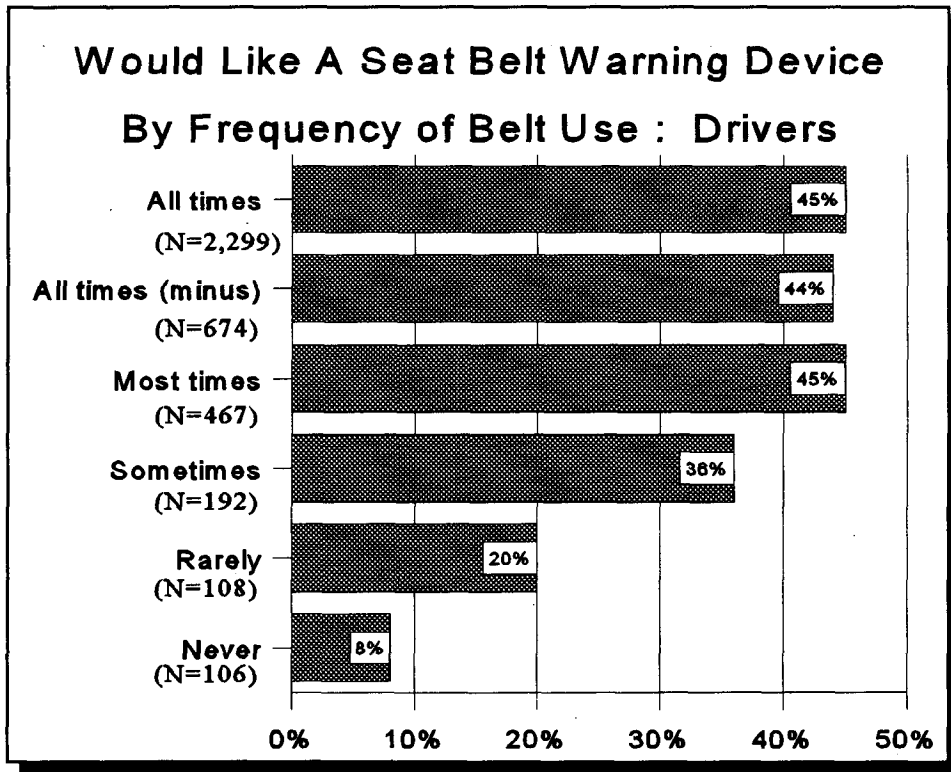
	Total (N=1,470)	Males (N=601)	Females (N=867)
Discomfort: Body Pressure (net)	49%	38%	56%
Pressure on my neck/chokes me/cuts across my neck	35%	23%	44%
Pressure on my shoulder/shoulder strap too tight	9%	10%	9%
Other pressure	8%	9%	8%
Discomfort: In General (net)	18%	21%	16%
Uncomfortable (unspecified)	12%	14%	11%
Discomfort: Confining (net)	12%	14%	10%
Feel restricted/too confining	12%	14%	10%
Other			
Wrinkles my clothes	8%	6%	10%
Invasion of Privacy/Infringes on Constitutional Rights	3%	6%	1%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Since forgetting to put them on is one of the most common reasons given for non-use of seat belts, drivers were asked if they would like a device that would remind them, whenever the vehicle comes to a stop, that their safety belt was not on. About one-half of drivers (51%) said they would dislike such a seat belt warning device. Six percent were not sure. Forty-three percent liked the idea of an automatic seat belt reminder device.

Those who wear their seat belts all or most of the time were most likely to favor the idea of an automatic seat belt reminder device, with little or no difference in the approval rates between those groups. The level of approval then drops sharply as belt use decreases.

FIGURE 32



Qx: Would you like or dislike a device (e.g. a buzzer) that would remind you that your seat belt was not on whenever your motor vehicle comes to a stop?

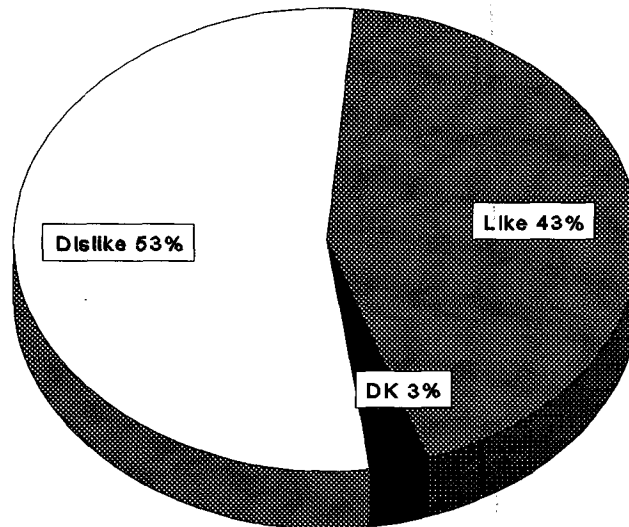
Base: Drives a motor vehicle that has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

Among those who said they sometimes don't wear their seat belt because they forget, less than half (43%) favored a seat belt warning device that would remind them to buckle their belt. Just over one-half (53%) said they would not like the device and 3% weren't sure.

FIGURE 33

**Acceptability of Seat Belt Warning Device:
Those Who "Forget" To Wear Belt**



Qx: Would you like or dislike a device (e.g. a buzzer) that would remind you that your seat belt was not on whenever your motor vehicle comes to a stop?

Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . . I forgot to put it on.

Base: Drivers who sometimes forget to wear their seat belt

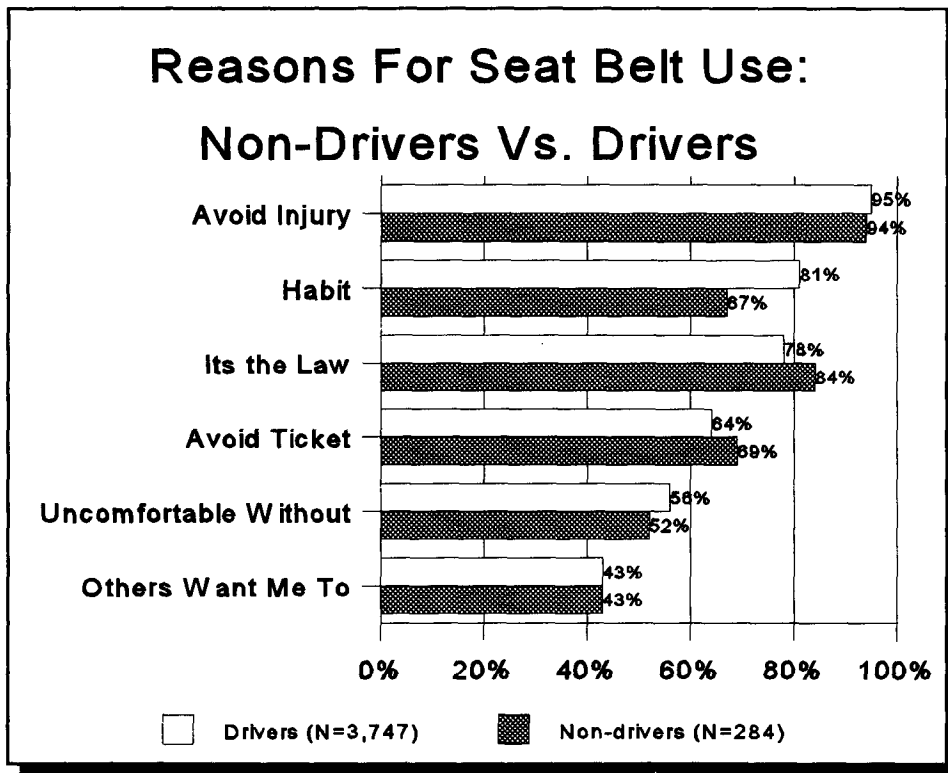
Unweighted N = 886

Reasons for Seat Belt Use By Non-Drivers*

Interviewers asked non-drivers their reasons for using seat belts while riding as passengers in motor vehicles. The survey approach was the same as that used with drivers: six different reasons for seat belt use were read, one at a time, and non-drivers were asked whether or not each reason was a factor in their use of seat belts. Non-drivers were then given an opportunity to volunteer other reasons for their seat belt use.

Non-drivers' reasons for seat belt use were, in general, very similar to those given by drivers, with a few differences. Non-drivers were more likely than drivers (84% vs. 78%) to wear them because it is the law. They were less likely than drivers to wear a seat belt out of habit (67% vs. 81%) or because they are uncomfortable without it (52% vs. 56%).

FIGURE 34



Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .

Base: Drivers and Non-drivers

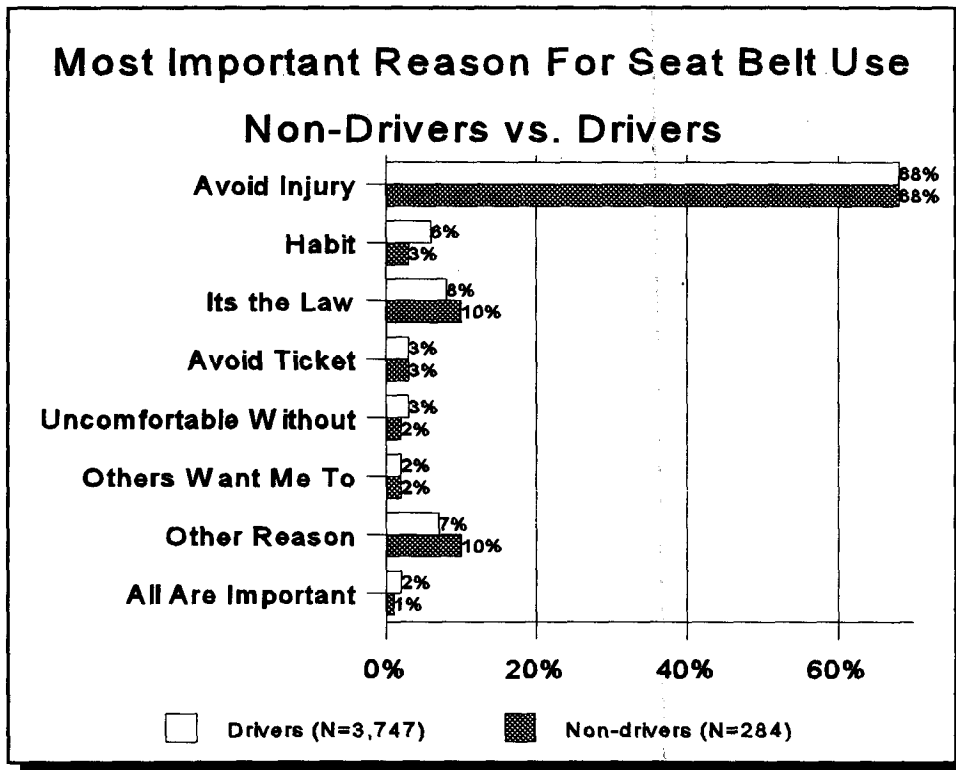
Unweighted N's listed above

* Those stating that their primary vehicle is a motorcycle (N=7) were excluded from the base of drivers and were, therefore, included as non-drivers for the purposes of this study.

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

By far the most important reason for seat belt use among non-drivers (as with drivers) is to avoid serious injury. More than two-thirds (68%) said this was the most important reason. Drivers and non-drivers generally did not differ on any of the reasons cited as the most important reason for using their seat belt.

FIGURE 35



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

*Base: Drivers and Non-drivers who wear a shoulder or lap safety belt
Unweighted N's listed above*

* Those stating that their primary vehicle is a motorcycle (N=7) were excluded from the base of drivers and were, therefore, included as non-drivers for the purposes of this study.

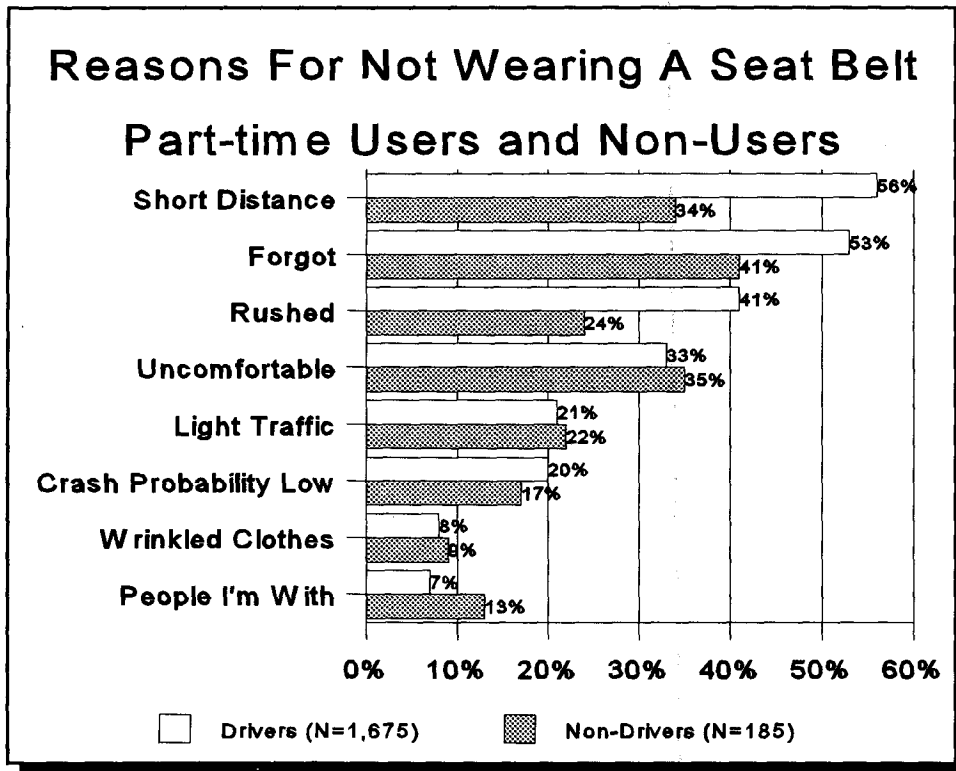
Non-drivers' Reasons for Not Using Seat Belts

Non-drivers who at least sometimes did not wear a seat belt while riding were asked their reasons for non-use. As with drivers, interviewers read eight potential reasons to respondents. For each one, Non-drivers were asked to agree or disagree that they sometimes did not wear their belt for that reason. They were then given an opportunity to volunteer other reasons why they did not use their belts.

The most commonly cited reason was that they forget to wear it (41%). One-third or more said they sometimes do not wear their belt because they are uncomfortable wearing it (35%) or are only riding a short distance (34%). About one-fourth (24%) said they sometimes don't wear it because they are in a rush (24%) or because of light traffic (22%), and about one in six (17%) sometimes did not wear their belt because they believe the probability of a crash is too low (see Figure 36).

Non-drivers (13%) were more likely than drivers (7%) to sometimes not wear their seat belt because of the people they are with. Drivers were more likely than non-drivers to not wear their seat belt because they are going a short distance (56% compared to 34%); because they forgot (53% compared to 41%); because they are rushed (41% compared to 24%); and because they are rushed (41% compared to 24%).

FIGURE 36



Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .
Base: Drivers and Non-drivers who don't always wear safety belts
Unweighted N's listed above

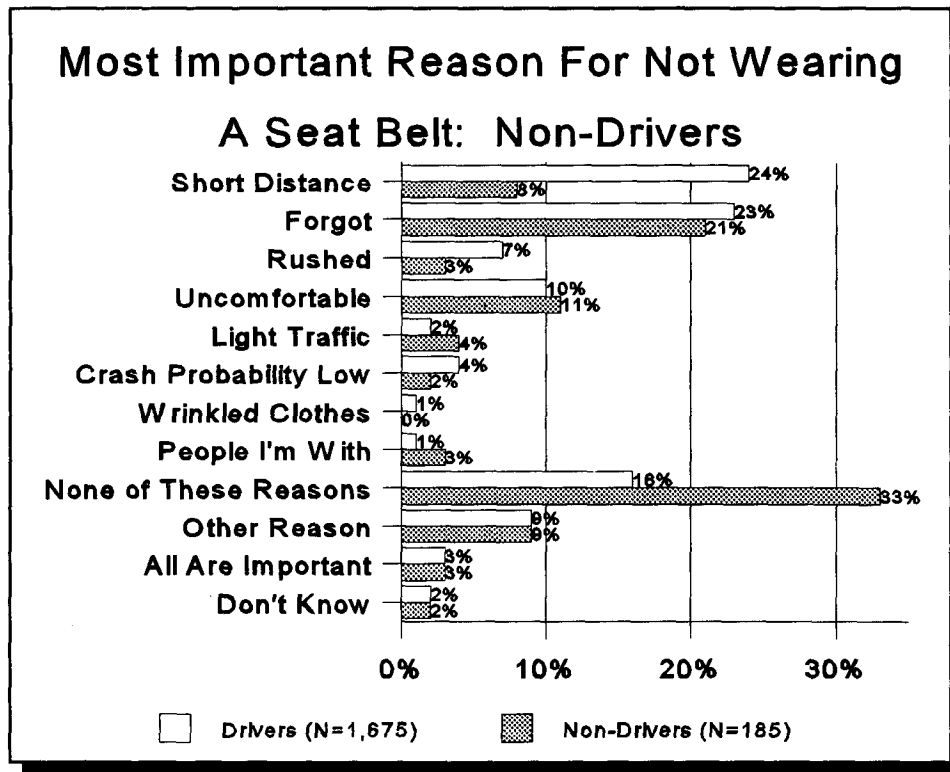
* Those stating that their primary vehicle is a motorcycle (N=7) were excluded from the base of drivers and were, therefore, included as non-drivers for the purposes of this study.

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Interviewers then asked non-drivers which of these reasons for non-use was the most important. "I forgot" emerged as the most frequent response (21%), followed by the belts being uncomfortable (11%) and because they are only riding a short distance (8%). One third of non-drivers did not agree that any of the listed reasons accounted for their non-use of belts.

Non-Drivers (33%) were twice as likely as drivers (16%) to state that none of the listed reasons applied to them. Drivers were more likely than non-drivers to cite "short distance" (24% versus 8%) as the most important reason for not wearing their seat belt.

FIGURE 37



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

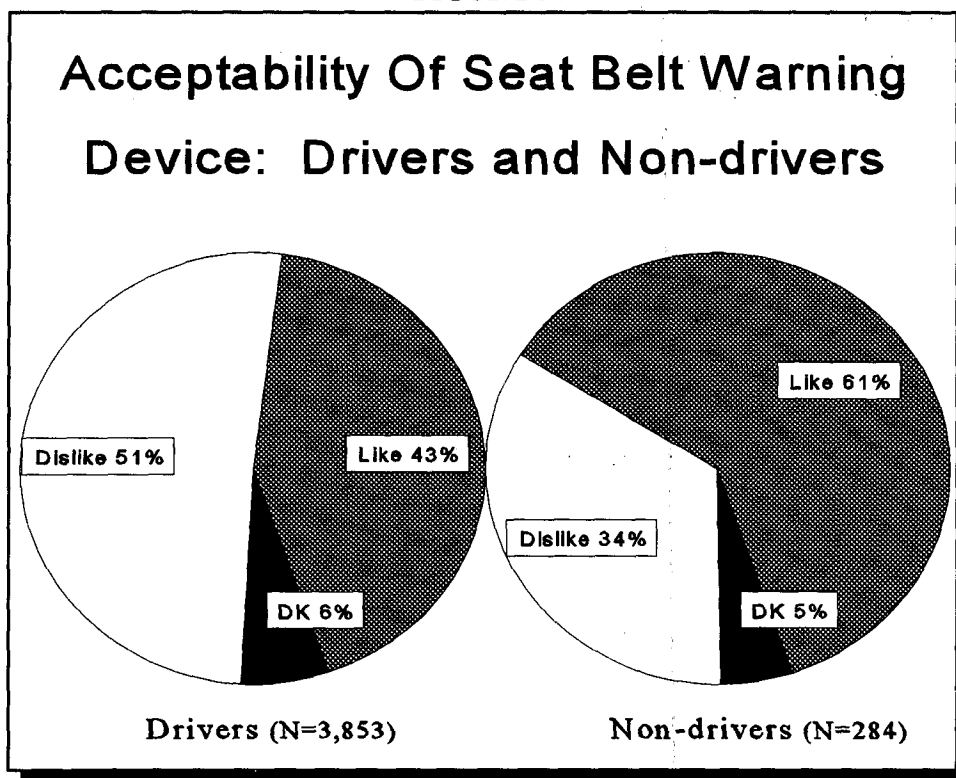
Base: Drivers and Non-drivers who don't always wear their safety belts

Unweighted N's listed above

* Those stating that their primary vehicle is a motorcycle (N=7) were excluded from the base of drivers and were, therefore, included as non-drivers for the purposes of this study.

As with drivers, interviewers asked non-drivers if they would like a warning device that reminds them, whenever the vehicle comes to a stop, that their belt is not on. A majority (61%) of Non-drivers who wear belts as passengers favored such warning devices, compared with 43% of drivers. One-third (34%) said they would dislike such a device and 5% weren't sure.

FIGURE 38



Qx: Would you like or dislike a device (e.g. a buzzer) that would remind you that your seat belt was not on whenever the car comes to a stop?

Base: Vehicle driven most often has safety belts, and Non-drivers who wear a shoulder or lap safety belt

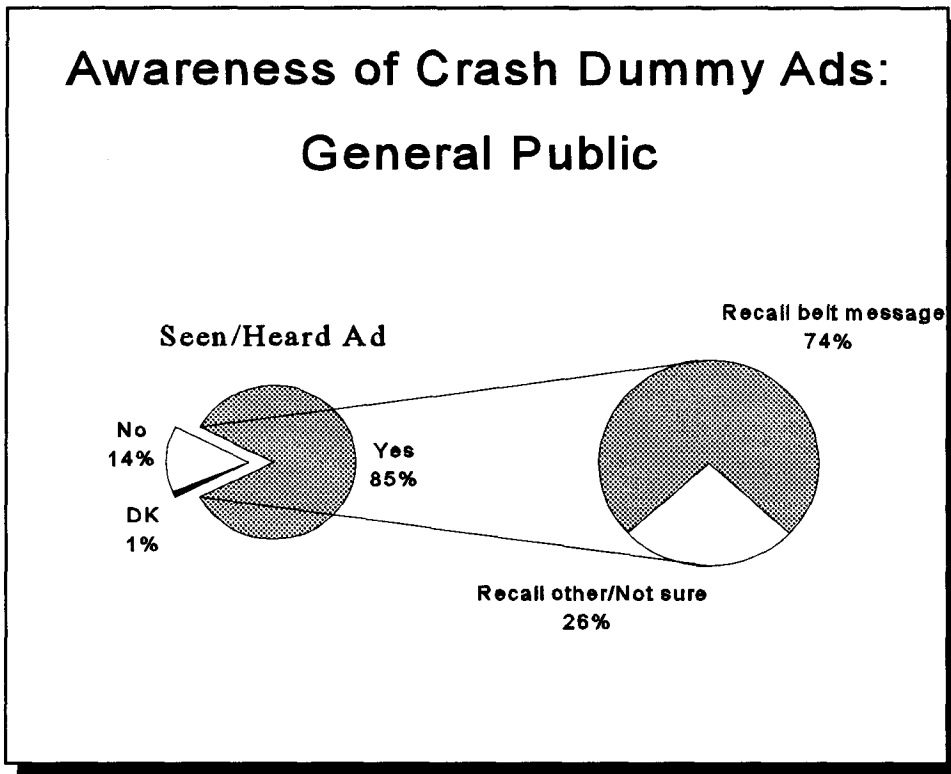
Unweighted N's listed above

* Those stating that their primary vehicle is a motorcycle (N=7) were excluded from the base of drivers and were, therefore, included as non-drivers for the purposes of this study.

Vince and Larry, The Crash Dummies

The critical need to communicate to the public the importance of seat belt use prompted the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to expend substantial resources and energy to develop public service announcements (PSAs) and conduct other safety marketing activities to convey the message to "buckle up." Advertisements about seat belt use in which Vince and Larry, the crash dummies, are the central characters have been a very important part of DOT's effort. This survey provides data on the effectiveness of the crash dummy ads in reaching the public. The survey finds widespread public exposure to the crash dummy ads. Six out of seven persons (85%) recalled seeing or hearing advertisements that use crash dummies. Moreover, three quarters of those who recalled the advertisements identified the message as buckling your seat belts. Hence, the public education campaign has successfully delivered NHTSA's message to 63% of the public age 16 and older.

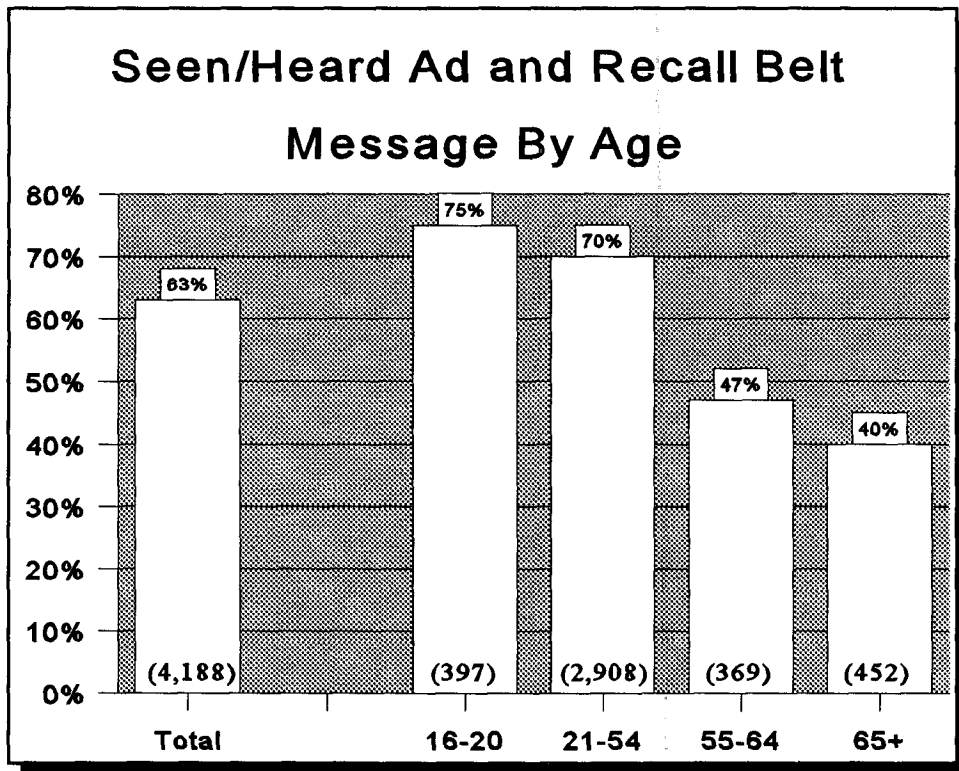
FIGURE 39



Qx: Have you seen or heard any advertisements that use crash dummies?
 Qx: Could you tell me what advice or message the crash dummies advertised?
 Base: Total population age 16+ Unweighted N=4,188

It is particularly noteworthy that the Vince and Larry advertisements seem to have reached one of the key target audiences - - youth. The survey results show that, among the entire general public, about two-thirds (63%) have seen or heard the crash dummy ads and recall a seat belt message. The greatest proportion of the general public both seeing/hearing the ads and recalling the belt message are persons age 16-20 (75%) followed by those age 21-54 (70%), 55-64 (47%) and 65 or older (40%).

FIGURE 40



Qx: Have you seen or heard any advertisements that use crash dummies?

Qx: Could you tell me what advise or message the crash dummies advertised?

Base: Seen or heard advertisement of crash test dummies

Unweighted N's listed above

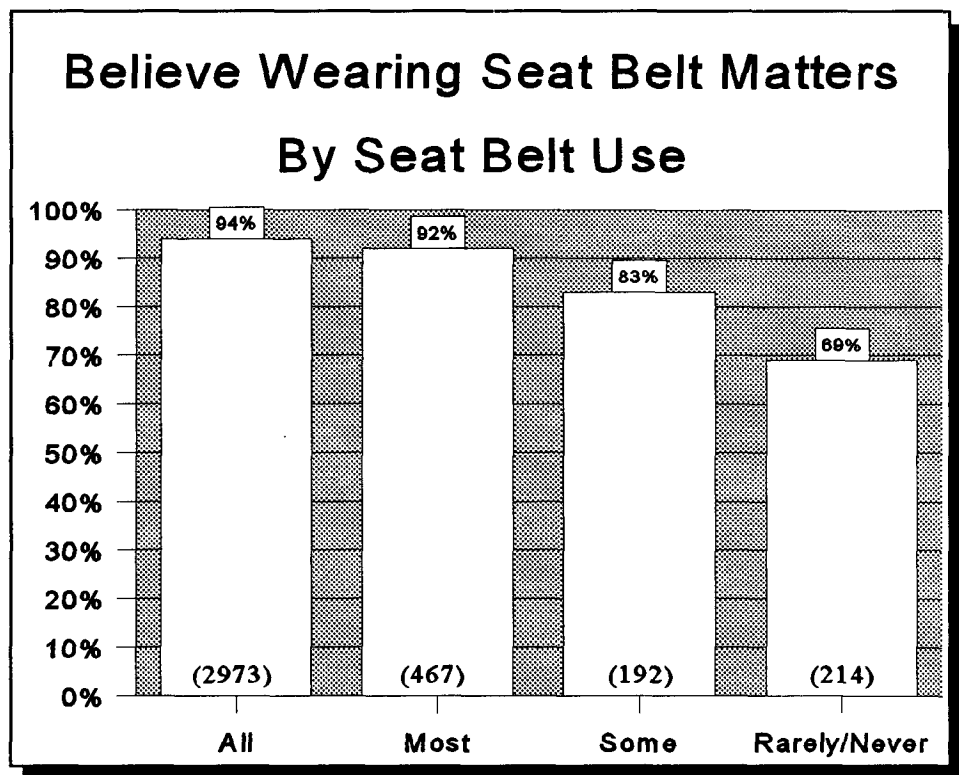
Fatalism and Non-Use of Seat Belts

The survey provides an examination of the possible role of fatalism in seat belt non-use. As noted earlier in this chapter, the primary reason for most drivers to wear seat belts is to avoid serious injury. This reason is cited more often by those who wear seat belts more frequently. Hence, there is a question as to whether those who do not wear seat belts on a regular basis do not recognize the danger, or simply do not believe they can avoid danger.

More than 90% of drivers who wear their seat belts all (94%) or most (92%) of the time agreed with the statement that people have a choice to do what they can to avoid death and serious injury, so wearing a seat belt does matter.

By contrast, 69% of drivers who rarely or never wear seat belts agreed with this notion. Hence, there does appear to be an increased degree of fatalism that distinguishes those who rarely or never wear seat belts from those who at least sometimes wear them.

FIGURE 41



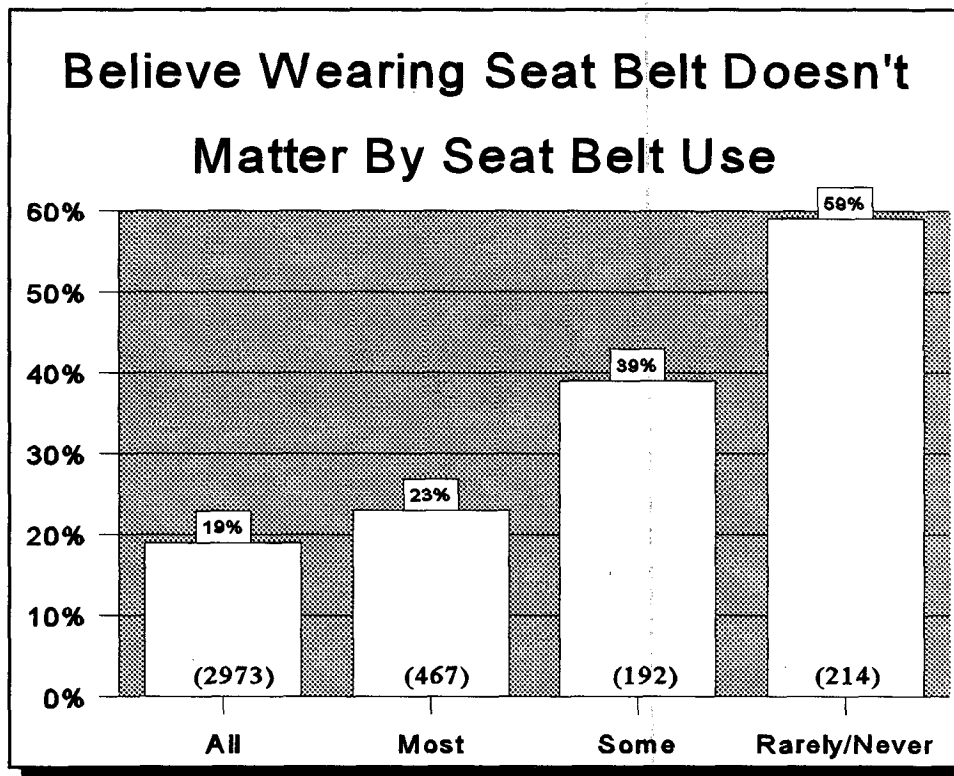
Qx: Do you agree or disagree that people have a choice to do what they can to avoid death and serious injury, so wearing a seat belt does matter?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

In a second question, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “if it is your time to die, you’ll die, so it doesn’t matter whether you wear your seat belt or not.” Again, the survey finds greater evidence of fatalism among less frequent belt users. Only 19% of drivers who wear seat belts all of the time agreed that if it is your time to die, you’ll die whether you wear seat belts or not. Agreement with the statement increases to 23% among those who wear seat belts most of the time, 39% of those who wear it sometimes, and 59% of drivers who rarely or never wear their seat belts.

FIGURE 42



Qx: Do you agree or disagree that if it is your time to die you'll die, so it doesn't matter whether wear your seat belt or not?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

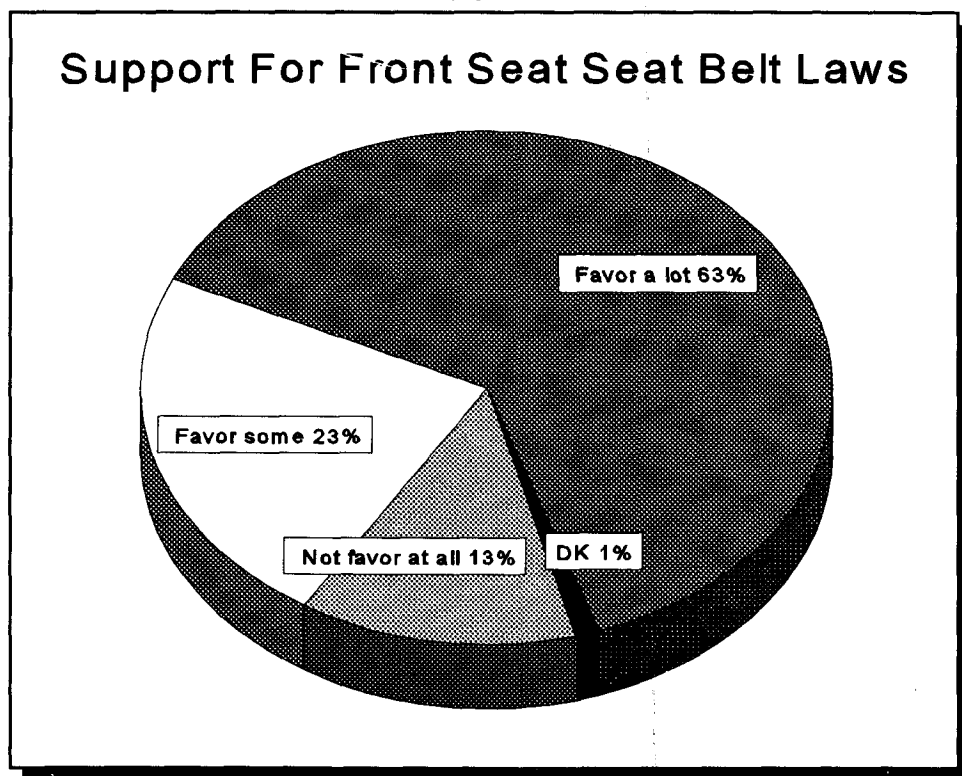
CHAPTER 3

ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE WITH SEAT BELT LAWS AND THEIR ENFORCEMENT

Attitudes Toward Seat Belt Laws

Seat belt laws have been enacted throughout the country to increase safety belt use (see Appendix A). Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward enactment and enforcement of these laws, their knowledge of the seat belt laws within their own State, and their personal experience with seat belt law enforcement. Most persons age 16 and older favored seat belt laws for drivers and front-seat passengers. About two-thirds (63%) favored such laws a lot, and an additional 23% favored them somewhat. Only about one in eight persons (13%) did not favor driver and front-seat passenger belt laws at all.

FIGURE 43



Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

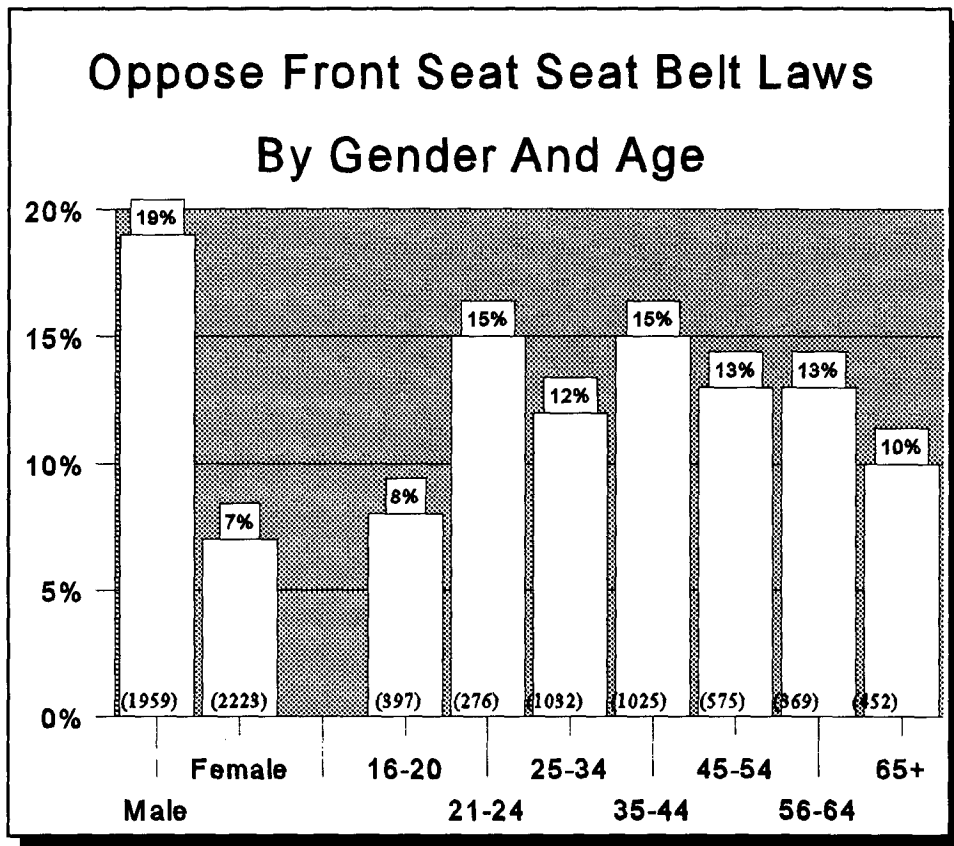
Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,188

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Those who opposed seat belt laws were more likely to be male and were neither the youngest nor the oldest adults. More than twice as many males as females (19% versus 7%) do not favor seat belt laws at all. Only 8% of 16-24 year olds and one in ten persons age 65 and older oppose seat belt laws, compared with 15% of persons age 21-24 and age 35-44. About one in eight (13%) of those aged 45-64 did not favor such laws.

FIGURE 44



Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

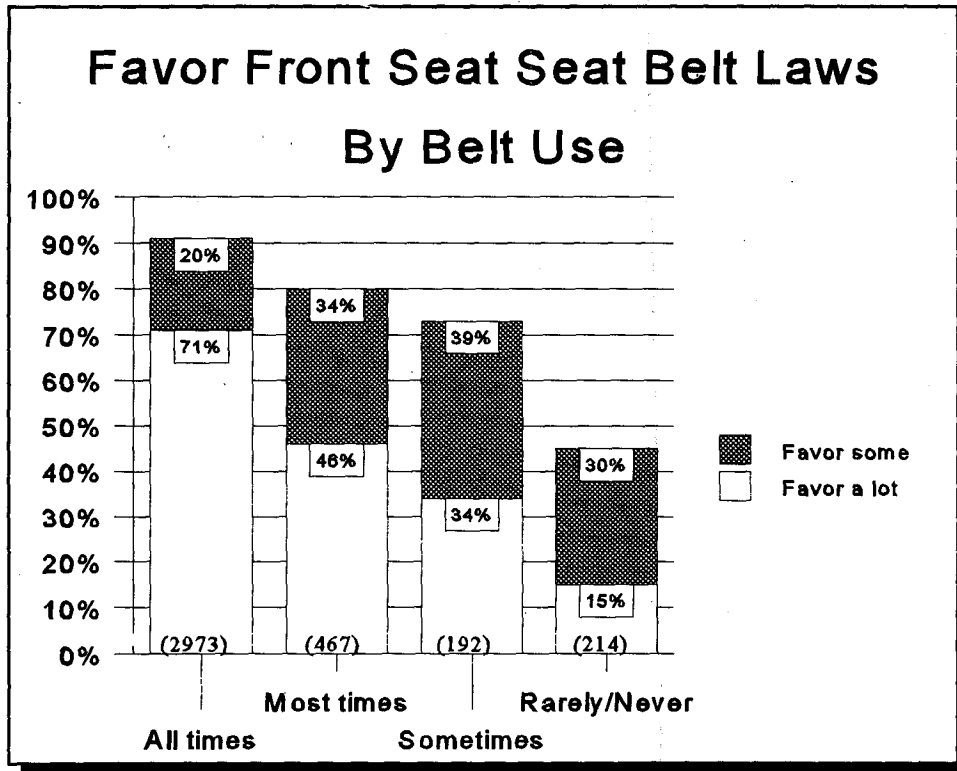
*Base: Total population age 16+
Unweighted N's listed above*

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

As might be expected, support for seat belt laws is strongest among those who use their belt most frequently. Seven in ten (71%) drivers who said they use their seat belt all the time favored front seat belt laws a lot, with an additional 20% favoring such laws somewhat. Support declines steadily as frequency of use declines. Among those who said they use their belt most of the time, less than one-half (46%) favored the laws a lot, declining to one-third (34%) of those who use their seat belt some of the time, and even fewer (15%) of the rare/never belt users.

Despite the comparatively weaker support for seat belt laws by those who rarely or never use their belts, the survey finds that even among this segment of the population, almost one-half (45%) favored belt laws a lot (15%) or some (30%).

FIGURE 45

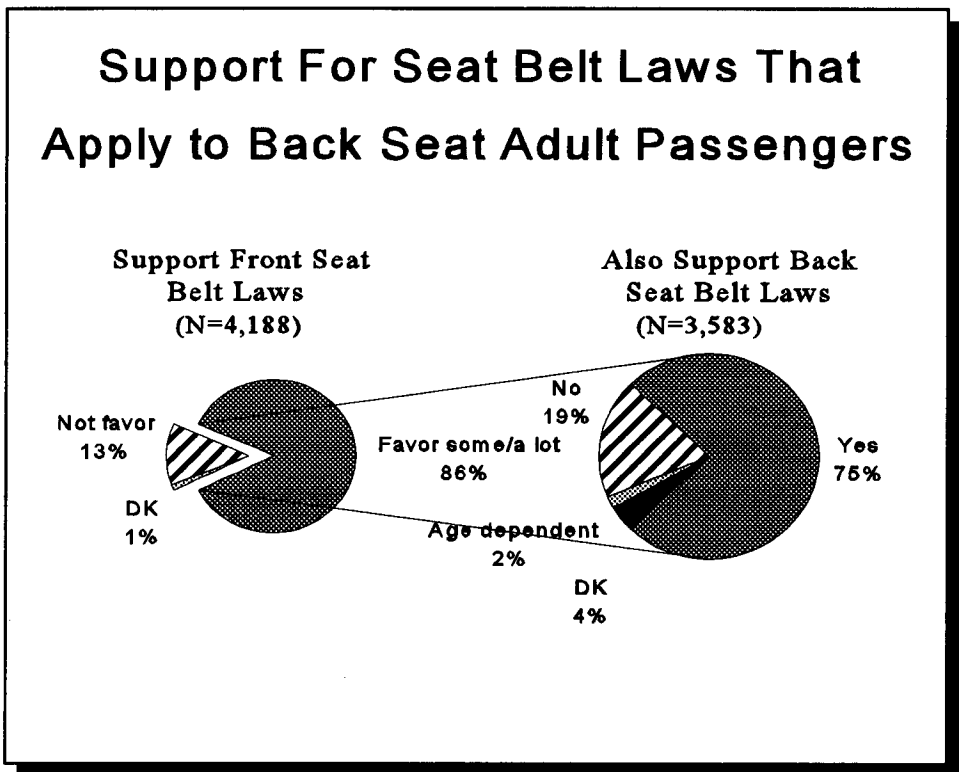


Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

*Base: Drives a motor vehicle that seat belts
Unweighted N's listed above*

Three-fourths (75%) of those who favored front seat seat belt laws also favored the inclusion of adult back seat passengers in seat belt laws. This means that nearly two-thirds (64%) of the total population age 16 and older supported seat belt laws for back-seat passengers. Almost one in five (19%) of those who favored front seat belt laws opposed applying those laws to the vehicle's back seat passengers.

FIGURE 46



Qx: Do you think that seat belt laws should also apply to back seat adult passengers?

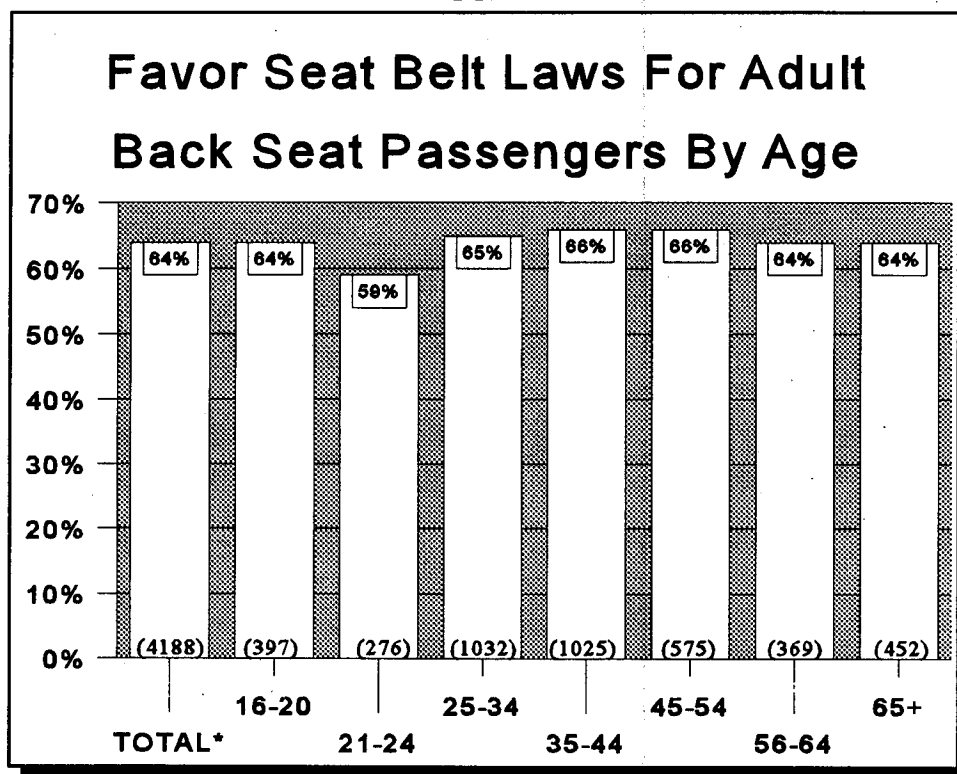
*Base: Pie 1: Total population age 16+
Pie 2: Those who favor front seat seat belt laws*

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Among the total population age 16 and older (including those who do not support seat belt laws for front seat passengers), support for back-seat seat belt laws did not vary by age. Generally, about two-thirds of the public (64% to 66%) across age groups supported back-seat seat belt laws. The lone exception was those ages 20-24, with 59% supporting back seat laws.

FIGURE 47



Qx: Do you think that seat belt laws should also apply to back seat adult passengers?

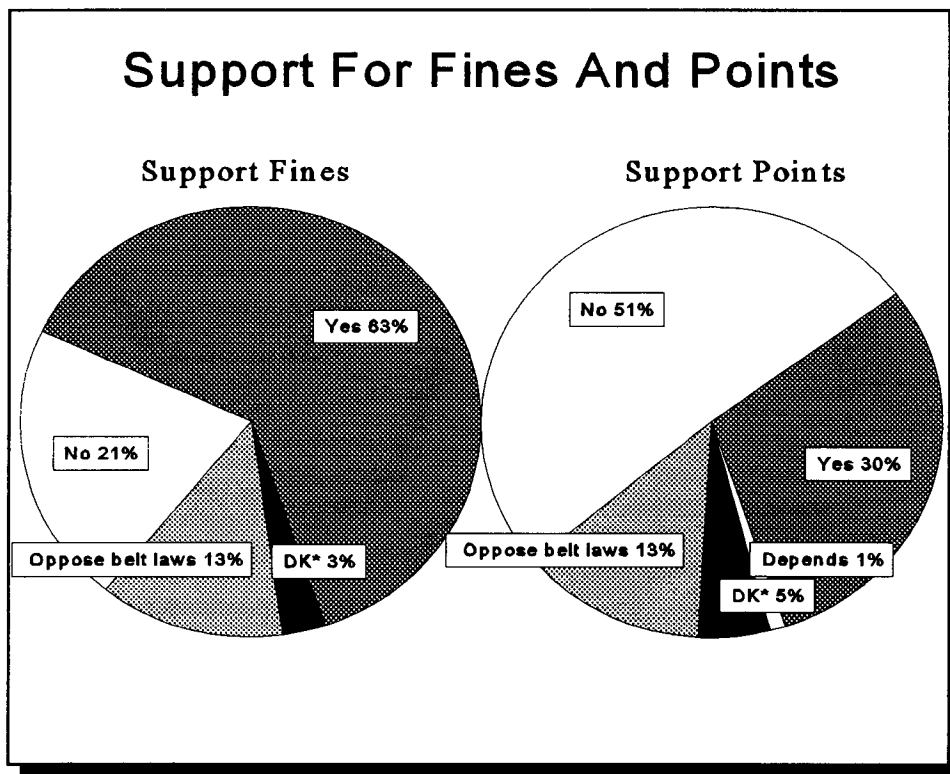
*Base: Total population age 16+ by age
Unweighted N's listed above*

* The total includes some cases where the ages are unknown

Enforcement of Seat Belt Laws

The public tends to favor enforcing seat belt laws with fines but not with points on the driver's license. A majority (63%) supported fines for drivers who do not wear a seat belt. In addition to the 13% of the population age 16 and older who oppose seat belt laws in general, another 21% opposed using fines to enforce belt laws. Less than one-third (30%) supported giving points against a driver's license for violation of a seat belt law. A small percentage (1%) thought it depends on the circumstances. One-half of the public (51%) opposed giving points (although they support belt laws) and 13% were opposed to any seat belt laws.

FIGURE 48



Qx: Do you support fines for drivers who do not wear seat belts?

Qx: Do you favor or oppose receiving points against a license as a penalty for seat belt violations?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,188

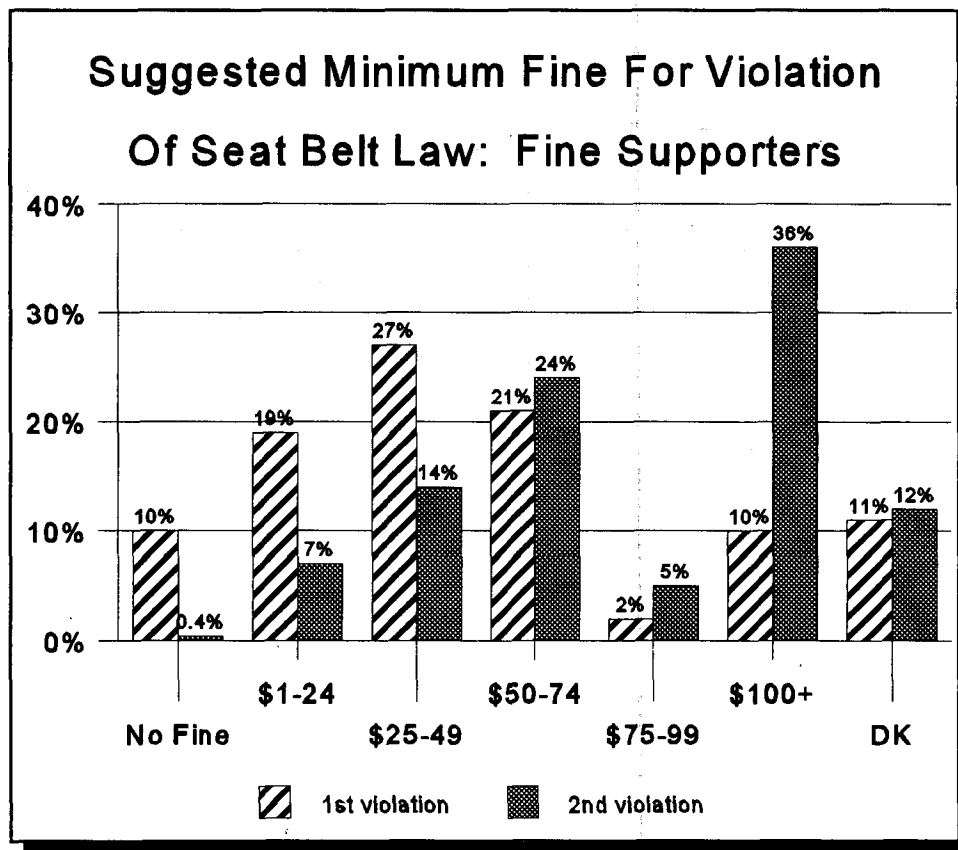
* Includes 1% who did not know if they favored belt laws

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Interviewers asked those who support giving fines for violation of a seat belt law what fine would be appropriate for the first and subsequent offenses. Slightly less than half (45%) recommended a fine under \$50, while another 10% wanted no fine for a first offense. About one-fifth (21%) suggested a fine from \$50 to \$74 for a first offense.

Respondents supported stiffer fines for repeat offenders with more than one-third (36%) recommending a fine of \$100 or more (compared to 10% for first time offenders). However, about one-fifth (22%) still supported fines of less than \$50 even for repeat offenders.

FIGURE 49



Qx: What do you think the minimum fine should be for the first seat belt violation?

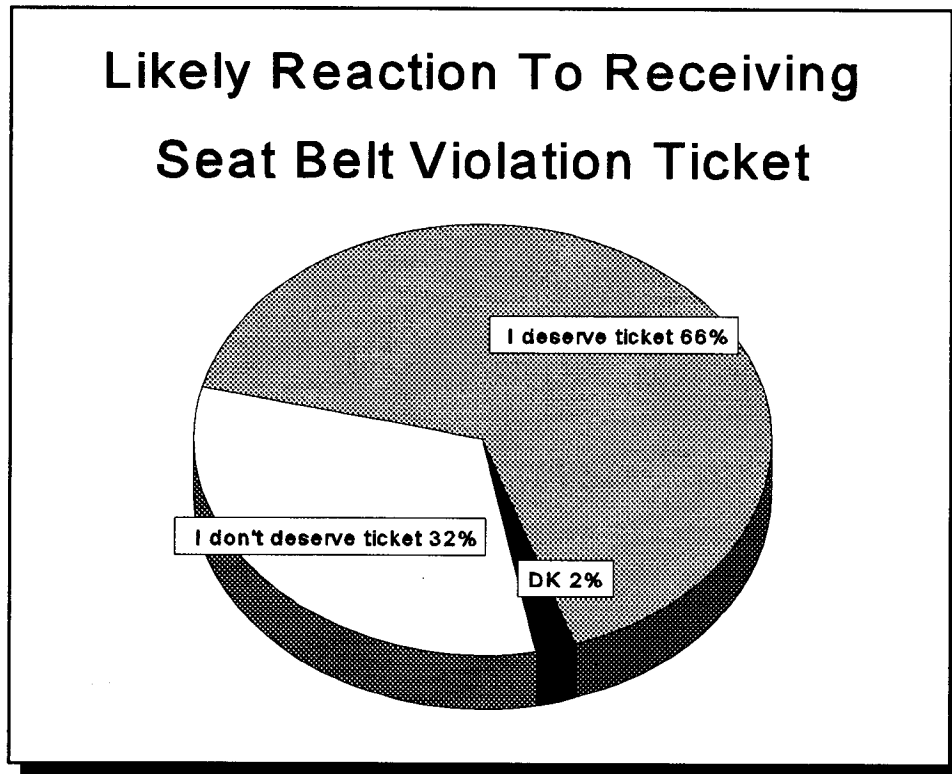
Qx: What do you think the minimum fine should be for repeat seat belt violations?

Base: Support fines for seat belt law violations

Unweighted N=2,610

Respondents were asked how they would likely react to getting a ticket for a seat belt violation. The interviewers gave respondents two choices and asked which was more likely: that they would believe they deserved the ticket because they broke the law, or they would believe the ticket was undeserved because wearing a seat belt should be a personal choice. This question was designed to enable comparison of people's views about seat belt laws from the societal perspective (support for belt laws in principle) and the personal perspective (reaction to personally receiving some punishment for violating the laws). According to the data, two thirds of the public (66%) would be more likely to believe that they deserved the ticket. This compares to the 63% (Figure 48) who support fines.

FIGURE 50



Qx: Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt, which of the following statements better describes your likely reaction? "I deserve the ticket because I broke the law" or "I do not deserve the ticket because wearing seat belts should be a personal choice."

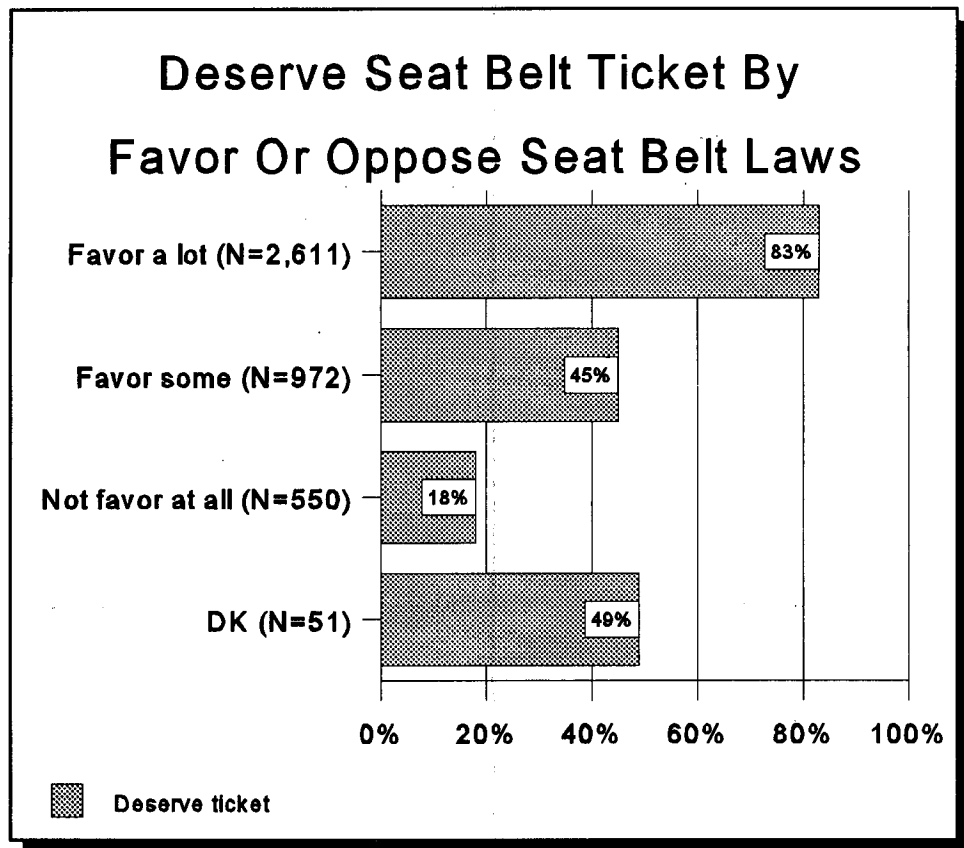
Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,188

Aggregate results suggest that the public is somewhat, but not entirely, consistent, from the societal and personal perspectives, in its views about seat belt laws and their enforcement. In general, the willingness to say that they deserve a ticket for a seat belt law violation correlates with the degree to which people favor seat belt laws.

Five of six (83%) persons who favored seat belt laws a lot believed that, if they received a ticket for a seat belt violation, they would feel they deserved it, compared with 45% of those who favored belt laws somewhat. Despite this clear relationship, the fact remains that almost one-sixth of those who favor belt laws a lot and more than one-half who support them somewhat appear resistant to fines on a personal level. By contrast, nearly one-fifth (18%) of those who oppose seat belt laws believed that they would accept that they deserved the ticket.

FIGURE 51

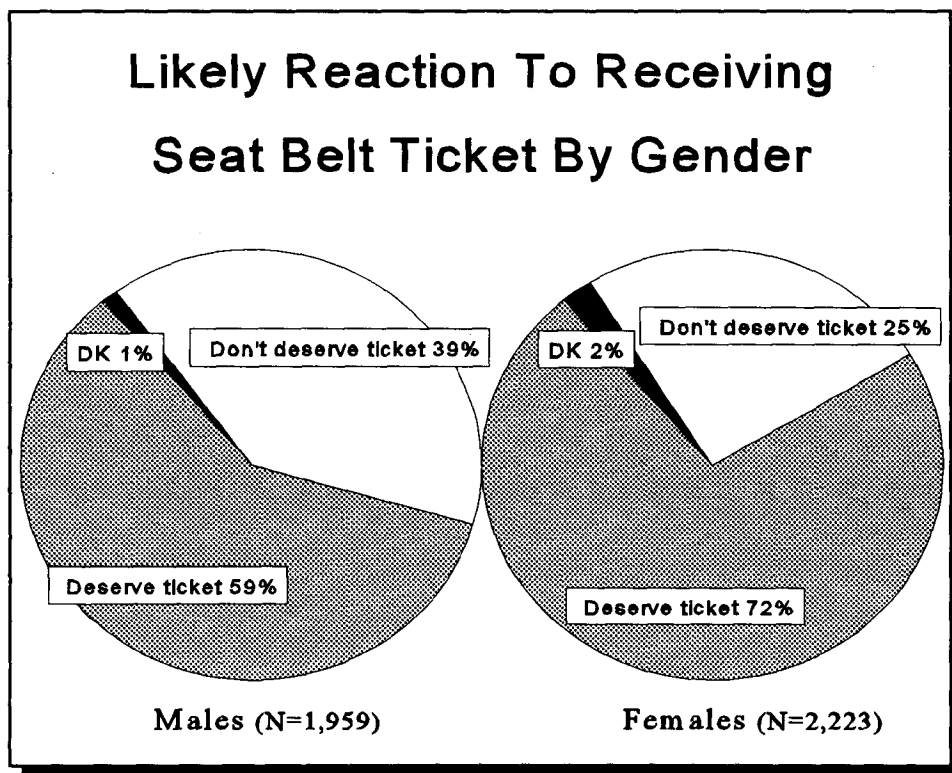


Qx: Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt, which of the following statements better describes your likely reaction? "I deserve the ticket because I broke the law" or "I do not deserve the ticket because wearing seat belts should be a personal choice."

Base: Total population age 16+ Unweighted N's listed above

Females were more likely than males to believe that their reaction would likely be that they deserved the ticket. The data suggested about five out of seven females (72%) would likely think they deserved the ticket, compared with 59% of males.

FIGURE 52



Qx: Suppose you get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt, which of the following statements better describes your likely reaction? "I deserve the ticket because I broke the law" or "I do not deserve the ticket because wearing seat belts should be a personal choice."

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N's listed above

Knowledge of State Seat Belt Laws

Knowledge of the seat belt laws in one's own State of residence can reasonably be expected to have an effect on compliance with the law's requirements. Interviewers asked respondents to say whether or not their State had a seat belt law, and then asked questions about the law's coverage and enforcement guidelines.

Most people (94%) believed their State does indeed have a seat belt law. In order to determine whether or not people were correct in their beliefs, responses to this and subsequent survey questions were compared with data on seat belt laws in each respondent's State of residence.

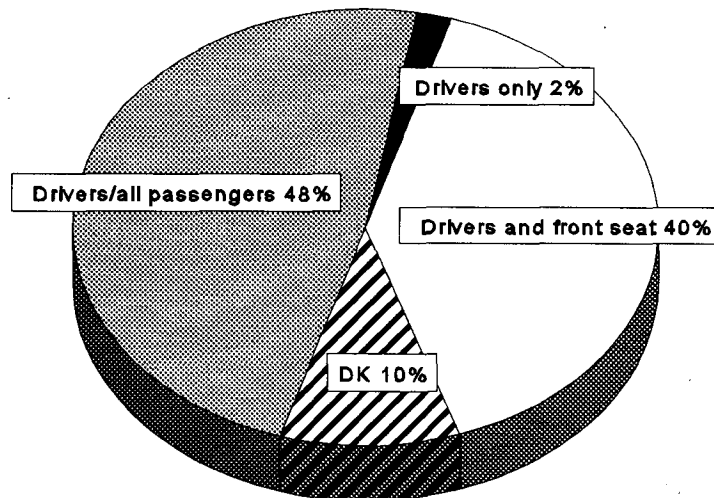
Of those who live in the 49 States (and the District of Columbia) with a seat belt law effective during the time of the survey administration, 94% believed that their State has such a law, reflecting a high correspondence between fact and belief. The only State without such a law (New Hampshire) had just 17 respondents in the Version 1 survey, a number too small upon which to draw any meaningful conclusions.

The survey also included a measure of awareness of State seat belt laws relating to whether police could stop a vehicle solely for violation of the seat belt law ("primary enforcement") or whether the seat belt violation could only be cited after the vehicle had been stopped for another offense ("secondary enforcement"). Almost one-half of the public age 16 and older (49%) thought there was a law in their State that allows police to stop a vehicle for no other reason than a seat belt violation; in other words, primary enforcement is permitted in their State. Among solely those persons aware that their State has some form of belt law (i.e. the 94% of the public identified above), 52% believed that it permitted primary enforcement.

Among those who believed that their State has a seat belt law (whether or not it actually does) 40% believed that the driver and front seat passengers only are required to wear seat belts. Nearly one-half (48%) believed that the driver and all adult passengers are required by their State to use a seat belt. Only 2% thought that their State law requires seat belt use by drivers only.

FIGURE 53

Beliefs About Who Is Required To Wear Seat Belts



Qx: Not including children, who is required to wear seat belts according to your State law?

Base: Believe their State has safety belt law

Unweighted N=3,946

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The survey data suggest that knowledge of seat belt laws may depend on the type of seat belt law in place. Awareness is fairly high in States that require all vehicle occupants to wear seat belts. In such States, 76% of the residents age 16 and older correctly believed that this is what the law requires. One in seven (14%) were incorrect in their belief, thinking drivers and front seat passengers only are covered.

Residents in States that require only front seat occupants to wear seat belts were less knowledgeable about that State's seat belt law requirements. Less than one-half (48%) correctly identified the requirement while nearly four in ten (39%) incorrectly thought that all vehicle occupants were required to wear a seat belt. (Coverage of each State's belt law is presented in the Appendix).

TABLE 20. Beliefs About Who Is Required To Wear Seat Belts By State Laws

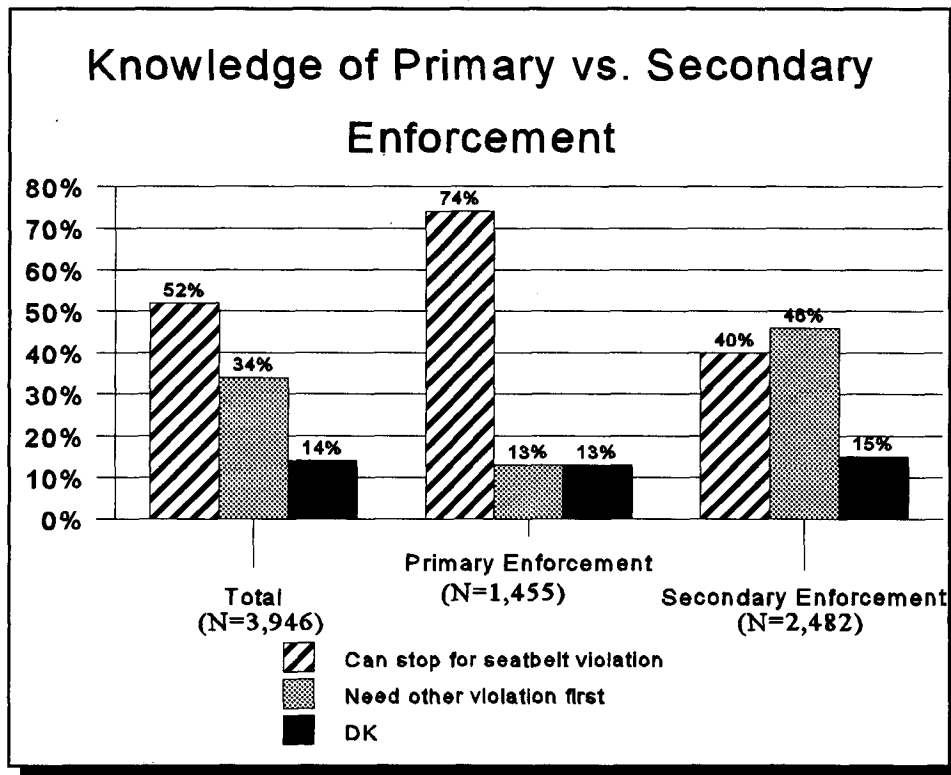
Who Public Believes Is Required To Wear Seat Belts	What State Law Actually Requires	
	Driver and All Passengers To Wear Seat Belts (N=913)	Only Driver and Front Seat Passengers To Wear Seat Belts (N=3,024)
Driver and All Passengers	76%	39%
Driver Only	2%	2%
Driver and Front Seat Passengers	14%	48%
Not Sure	8%	10%
TOTAL	100%	100%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Among those believing that their State had a belt law, three-fourths (74%) in States where primary enforcement is permitted believed (correctly) that their vehicle can be stopped solely for seat belt violations, compared with 13% who thought (incorrectly) that the police must have another reason to stop the vehicle before they can give a citation for a seat belt violation.

Residents of States where only secondary enforcement is permitted were less knowledgeable. Four in ten believed (incorrectly) that their State law permits primary enforcement. Less than one-half (46%) correctly believed that their State law requires another cause for the police to stop the vehicle.

FIGURE 54



Qx: According to your State law, can police stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation or do they have to observe some other offense first in order to stop the vehicle?

Base: Believe their State has safety belt laws

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

Reported use of seat belts differs depending upon the type of seat belt law a State requires. More than 8 out of 10 drivers (81%) in States that require all adult occupants of a vehicle to wear a seat belt reported wearing their seat belt all of the time. By comparison, three-fourths of those in States which require only front seat occupants to wear seat belts reported all the time seat belt use.

The frequency of seat belt use also varies depending on the type of enforcement. Eighty-three percent of drivers in States with primary enforcement reported wearing their seat belt all of the time, compared to 73% of those in States with secondary enforcement.

**TABLE 21. Effects Of State Seat Belt Laws and Enforcement
On Frequency Of Seat Belt Use**

Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?

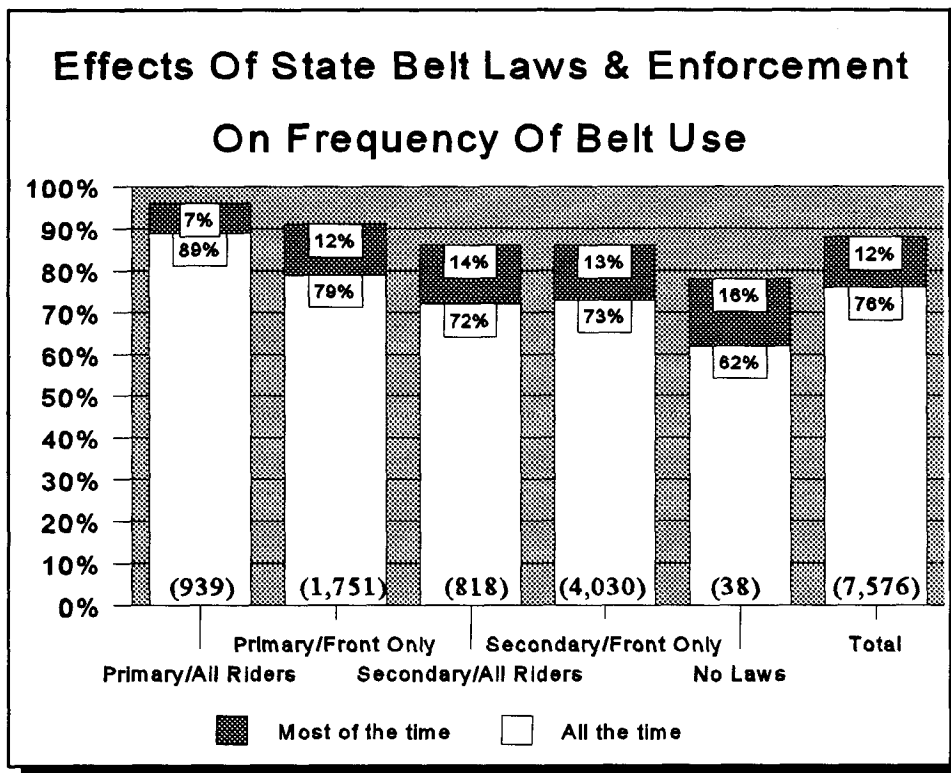
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

	Wear Seat Belt "All of the Time"	Unweighted N
State Law Requirement For Adult Occupants		
Front and Back Occupants	81%	1,757
Front Occupants Only	75%	5,781
No Seat Belt Law	62%	38
Type of State Law Enforcement		
Primary	83%	2,690
Secondary	73%	4,848
TOTAL	76%	7,576

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The biggest influence on reported seat belt usage was the use of primary enforcement. Drivers in States with primary enforcement and which require all vehicle occupants to wear seat belts reported the highest level of seat belt use with 96% saying they wear their belts either most of the time (7%) or all of the time (89%). This is followed by 91% of drivers in States with primary enforcement but which only required front seat occupants to wear seat belts. By comparison, about six out of seven drivers in States with secondary enforcement reported wearing their seat belt at least most of the time.

FIGURE 55



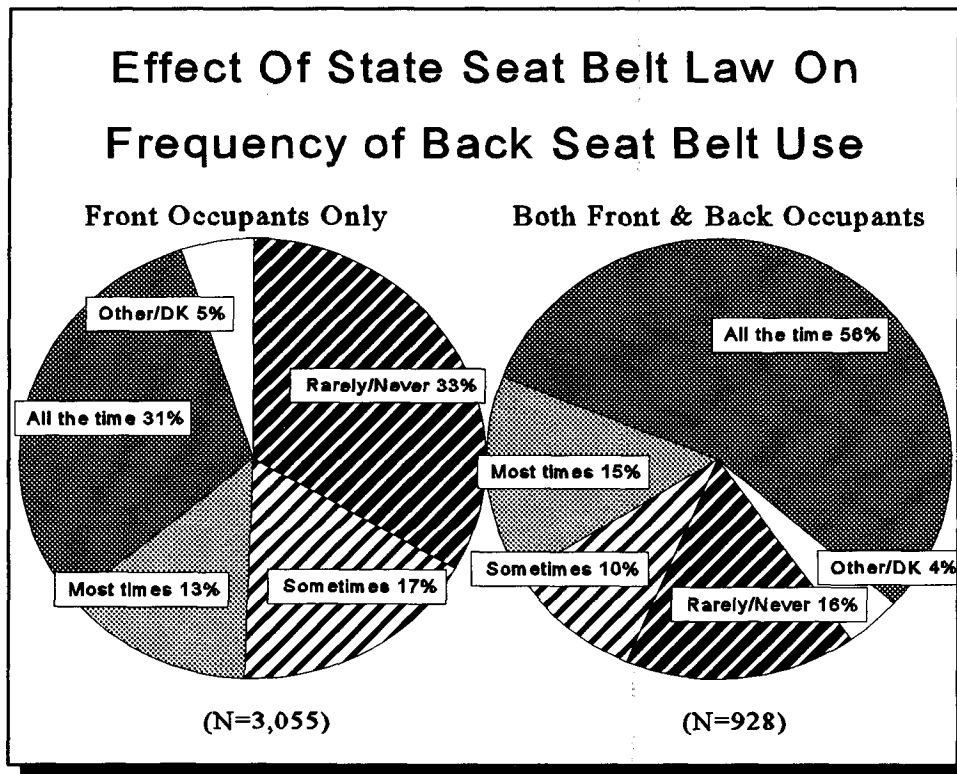
Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

Unweighted N's listed above

Reported belt use in the back seat varied according to the type of seat belt law States adopted. In States that required all occupants to wear their seat belt, 70% reported wearing them either most of the time or all of the time when riding in the back seat. In States that required only front seat occupants to wear seat belts, less than half (45%) reported wearing them either most of the time or all of the time.

FIGURE 56



Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat, how often do you wear your seat belt?

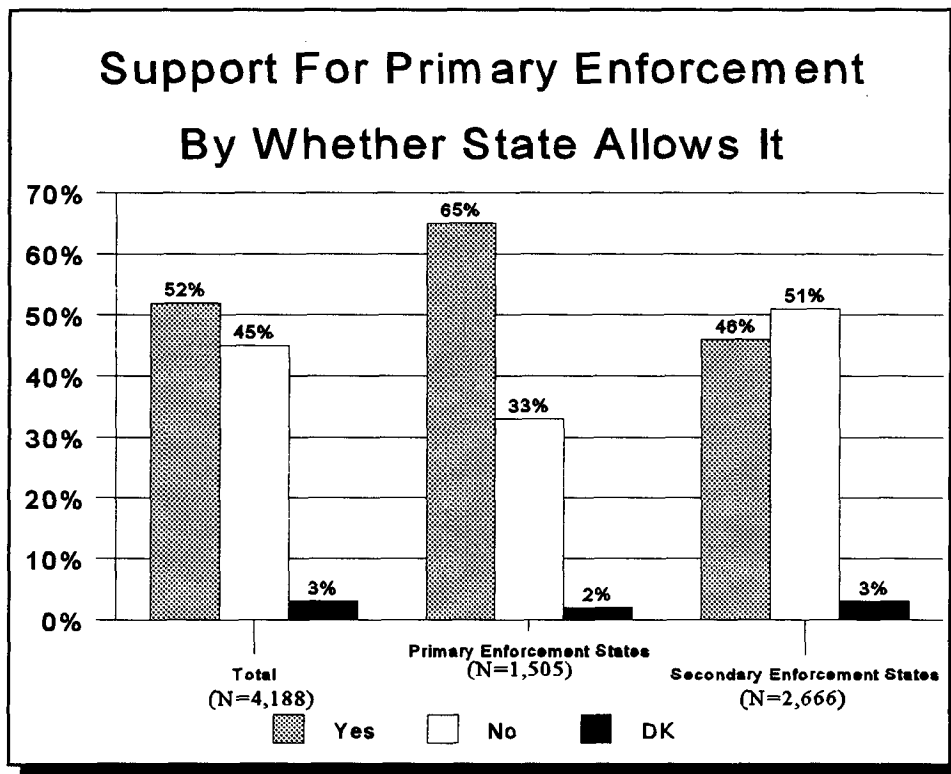
Base: States with seat belt laws requiring either front seat only or front and back seat occupant belt use

Unweighted N's listed above

The public was split over whether the police should have the authority to stop drivers for seat belt violations (primary enforcement). More than one-half (52%) felt that police should be able to stop drivers for seat belt violations with 45% objecting to the practice.

Two-thirds (65%) of those who live in primary enforcement States approved of this practice. By contrast, 46% of those in secondary enforcement States approved of police stopping motorists for seat belt violations.

FIGURE 57



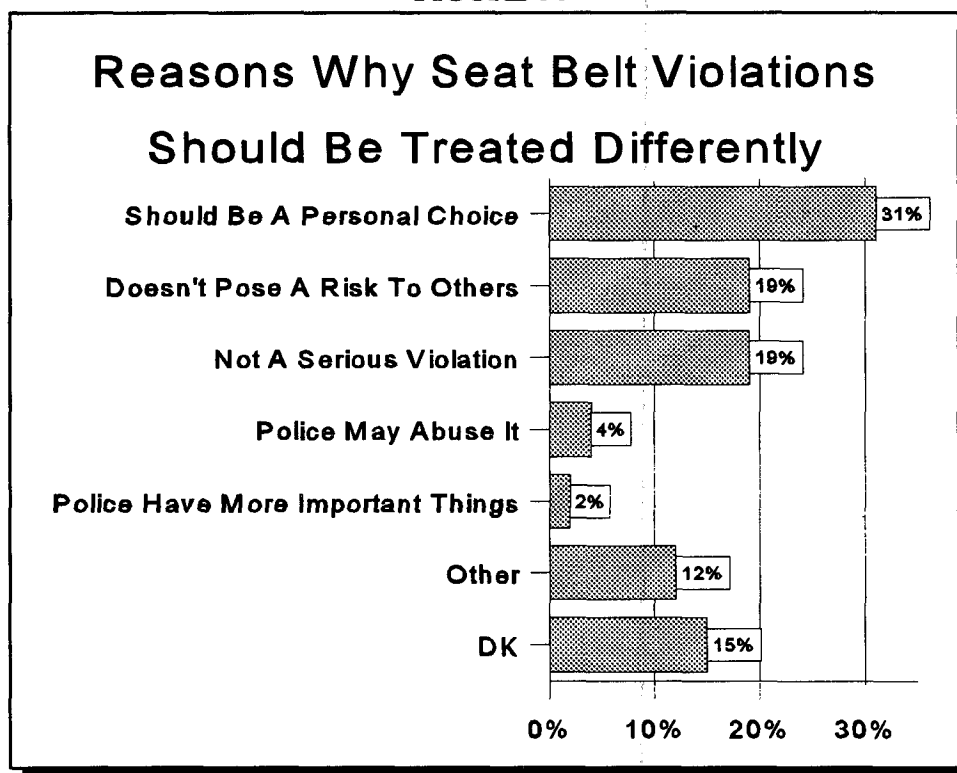
Qx: In your opinion, should police be allowed to stop a vehicle if they observe a seat belt violation when no other traffic laws are being broken?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N's listed above

The most frequently mentioned reason by those who thought police should not have the authority to stop motorists for seat belt violations was that wearing seat belts “should be a personal choice” (31%). Nearly one in five (19%) thought that noncompliance “doesn’t pose a risk to others,” while another 19% felt that it is “not a serious violation.” An additional 2% said that police have more important things to do. Only 4% mentioned potential for police abuse as the reason they objected to this practice.

FIGURE 58



Qx: Most other traffic laws allow police to stop the vehicle whenever they see a violation. Why do you think seat belt violations should be treated differently from other traffic violations?

Base: Those who think police should not be allowed to stop a vehicle for a seat belt violation.

Unweighted N=1,894

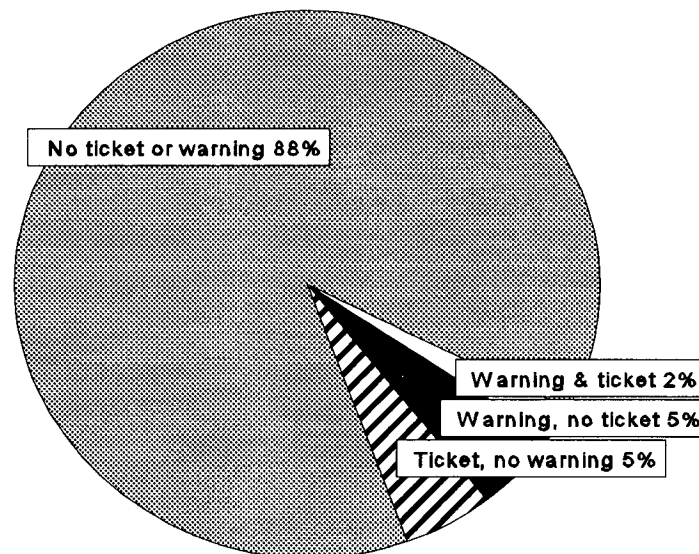
Note: percentages don't sum to 100% due to multiple responses

Experience With Seat Belt Law Enforcement

Most people (88%) have never received either a ticket or a warning for violation of a seat belt law. Similar proportions have received a ticket but never a warning (5%) as have received a warning but never a ticket (5%). Another 2% have received both a ticket and a warning for seat belt violations.

FIGURE 59

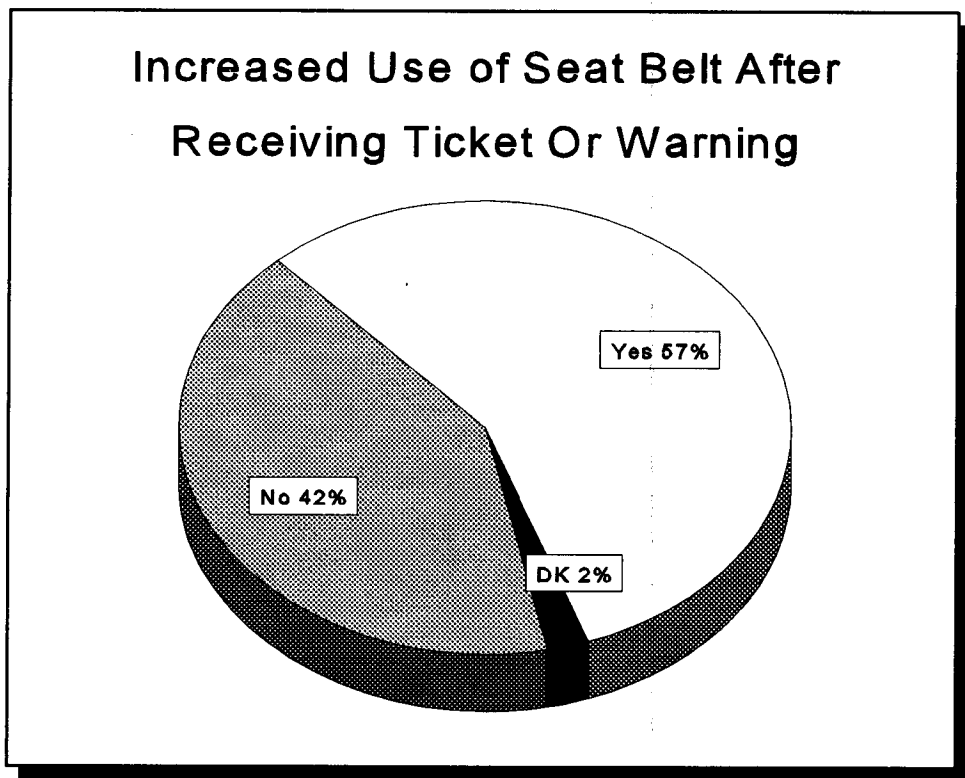
Ever Received Ticket Or Warning For Seat Belt Violation



Qx: Have you ever received a ticket for not wearing seat belts?
Qx: Have you ever received a warning for not wearing seat belts?
Base: Total population age 16+
Unweighted N=4,188

More than one-half (57%) of those who have ever received either a ticket or a warning said the incident caused them to wear their seat belt more often. However, more than 4 in 10 (42%) said getting a ticket or warning did not have an effect on their behavior regarding seat belt use.

FIGURE 60



Qx: Did you start wearing your seat belt more often after receiving the (ticket/warning)?

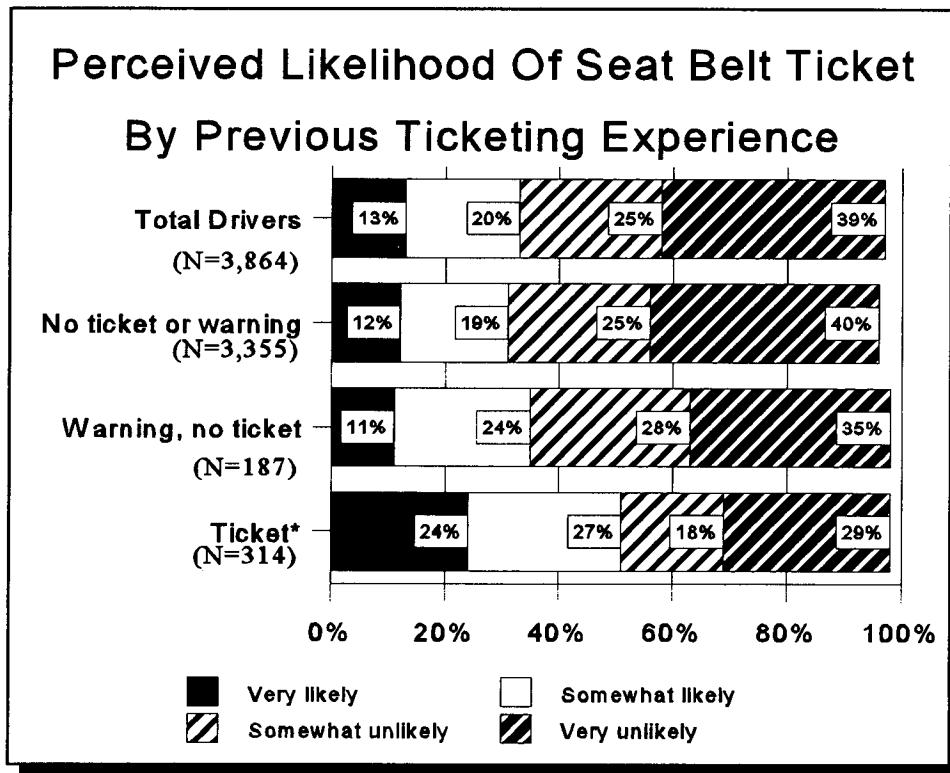
Base: Those who ever received a ticket or warning for not wearing seat belts

Unweighted N=530

Perceived Likelihood of Being Ticketed

Only 13% of all drivers considered it very likely that they would receive a ticket for a seat belt violation if they did not wear their seat belt at all for the next six months. Another 20% considered it somewhat likely. In other words, about two-thirds (64%) of drivers believed that they are unlikely to be ticketed for a seat belt violation during six months of not using their belts. Personal experience with seat belt law enforcement affects drivers' perception of the likelihood of being ticketed. The percentage of drivers who think it is very or somewhat likely they would get a ticket increases from 31% of those never ticketed or warned, to 35% of those warned but not ticketed, to 51% of those ticketed.

FIGURE 61



Qx: Assume that you do not wear your seat belt at all while driving over the next six months. How likely do you think you will be to receive a ticket for not wearing a seat belt?

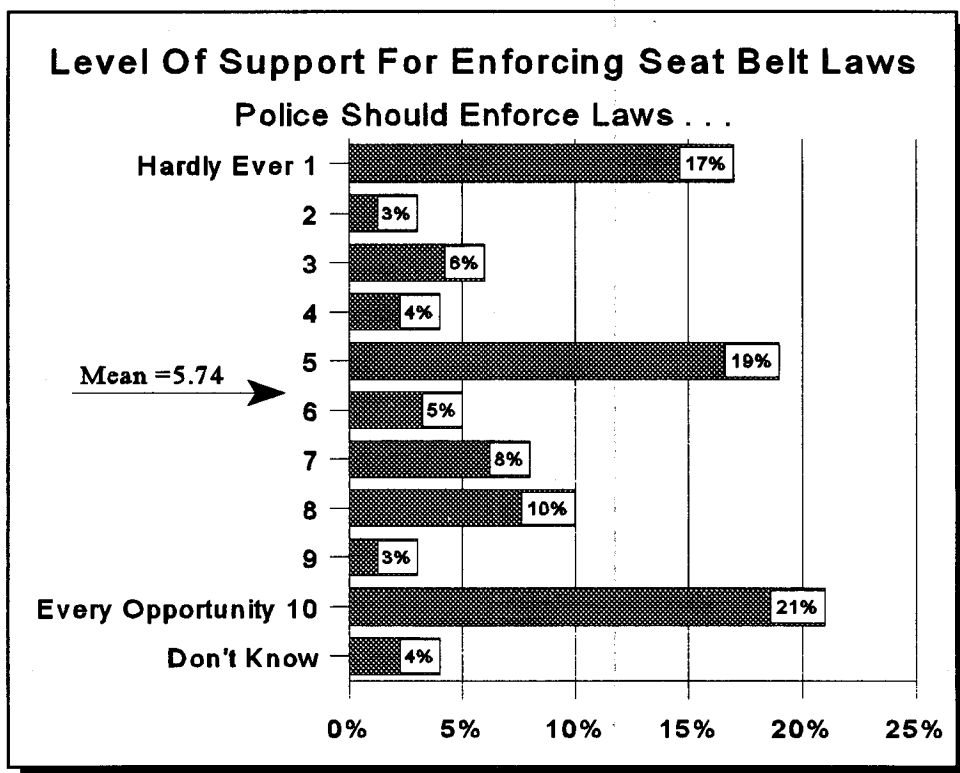
Base: Drives a motor vehicle

* Includes those who received both ticket and warning.

Attitudes About Seat Belt Law Enforcement

Support for seat belt law enforcement was mixed, with some favoring strong enforcement and others wanting little or no enforcement. Interviewers asked respondents how strictly police should enforce belt laws, using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets for seat belt violations and 10 means they should give tickets at every opportunity. The data show public sentiment clustering at both the middle and extremes of the scale. The average score was 5.74.

FIGURE 62

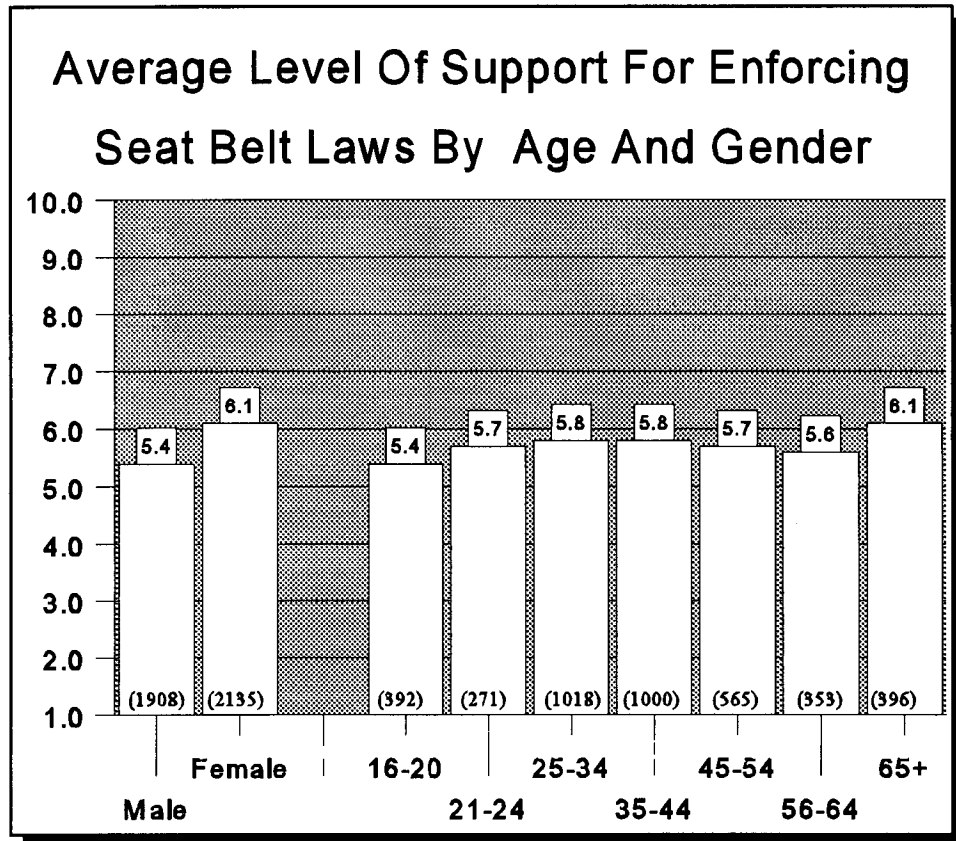


Qx: How often do you think police should ticket for seat belt violations? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws and 10 means police should give tickets at every opportunity when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

*Base: Total population age 16+
 Unweighted N=4,188*

Males tended to be less supportive than females of stronger enforcement. Likewise, the youngest driving group (16-20) tended to be less supportive than older drivers, particularly those age 65 or over.

FIGURE 63



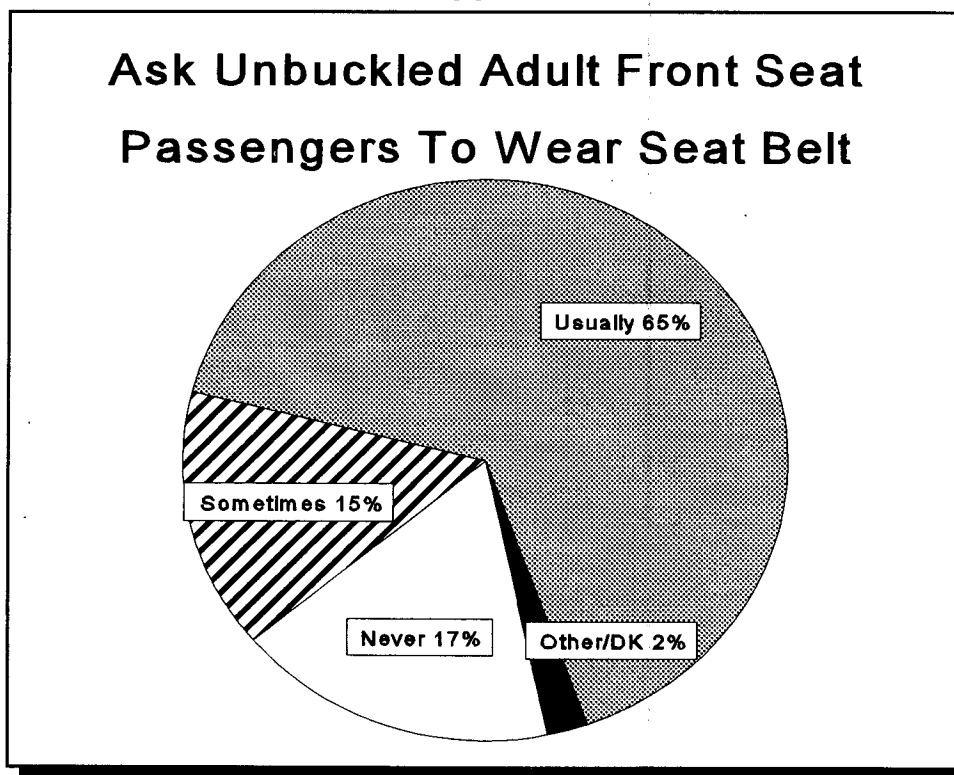
Qx: How often do you think police should ticket for seat belt violations? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police should hardly ever give tickets when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws and 10 means police should give tickets at every opportunity when it comes to enforcing seat belt laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

*Base: Those who gave a 1 to 10 rating for preferred police enforcement
Unweighted N's listed above*

Personal Encouragement Of Seat Belt Use

Perhaps as important as police enforcement of seat belt use is “enforcement” or encouragement of belt use by individual drivers. Nearly two-thirds of drivers (65%) were likely to say that they usually ask unbuckled front-seat adult passengers who are riding with them to wear their seat belt. About 15% said they sometimes ask and 17% said they never ask.

FIGURE 64

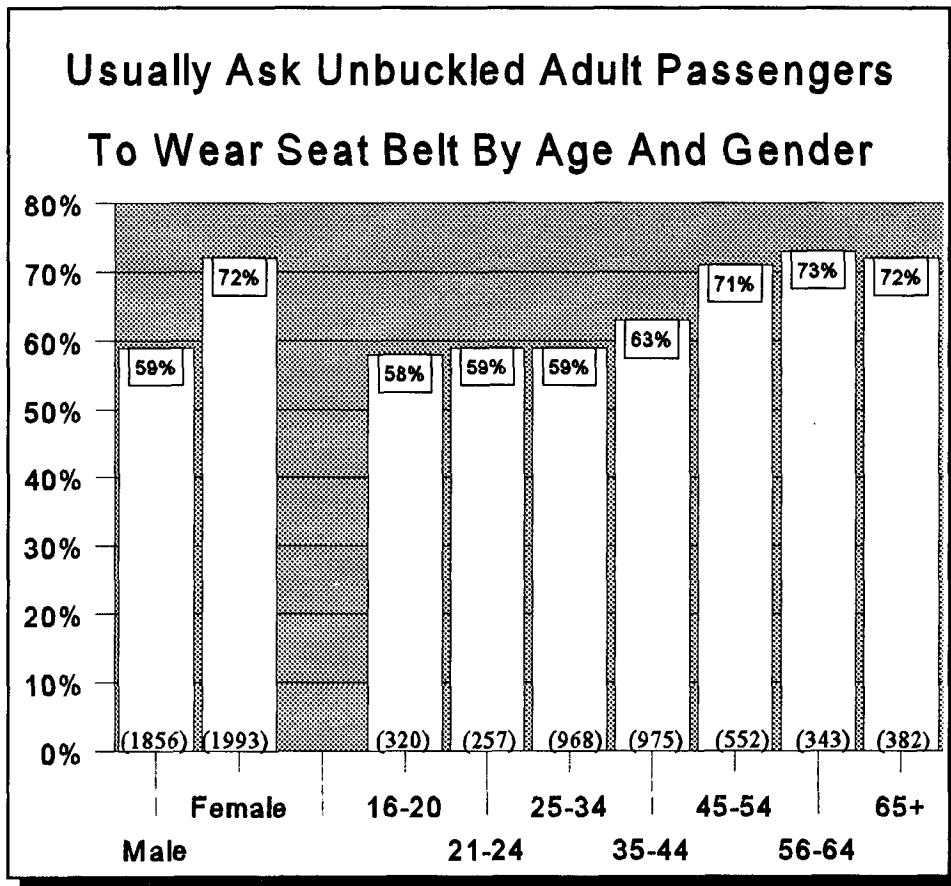


Qx: When you are driving and adult passengers in the front seat do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

*Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts
Unweighted N=3,853*

The likelihood that a driver will ask an unbuckled adult passenger to wear a seat belt varies by gender and age. Females were more likely than males (72% versus 59%) to say they usually ask adult passengers who have not put their seat belt on to wear the belt. Older drivers were more likely than younger drivers to ask their adult passengers to use a belt.

FIGURE 65

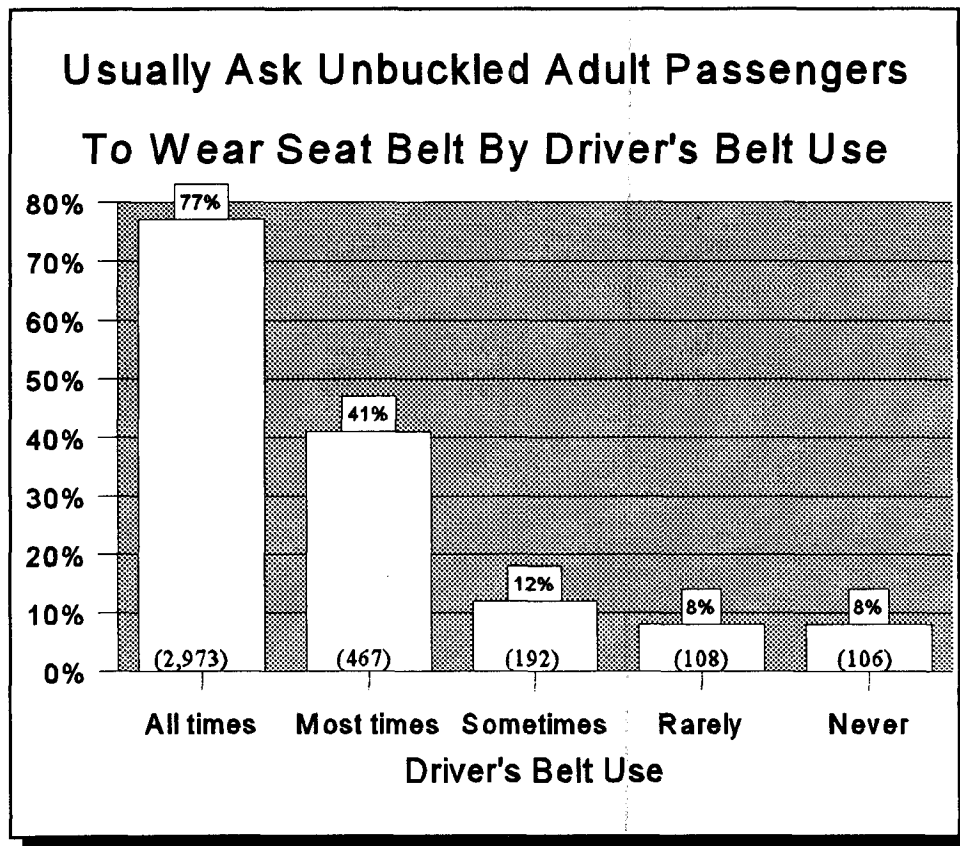


Qx: When you are driving and adult passengers in the front seat do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts
Unweighted N's listed above

Drivers who usually wear their own seat belts were much more likely than less frequent users to ask adult front-seat passengers to wear their belt. According to the data, 77% of drivers who said they wear their seat belt all the time also said they usually ask unbuckled adult passengers to wear their seat belt. The figure drops to 41% of the drivers who wear their seat belt most of the time, and even more dramatically for drivers who wear a seat belt sometimes (12%), rarely (8%) or never (8%).

FIGURE 66



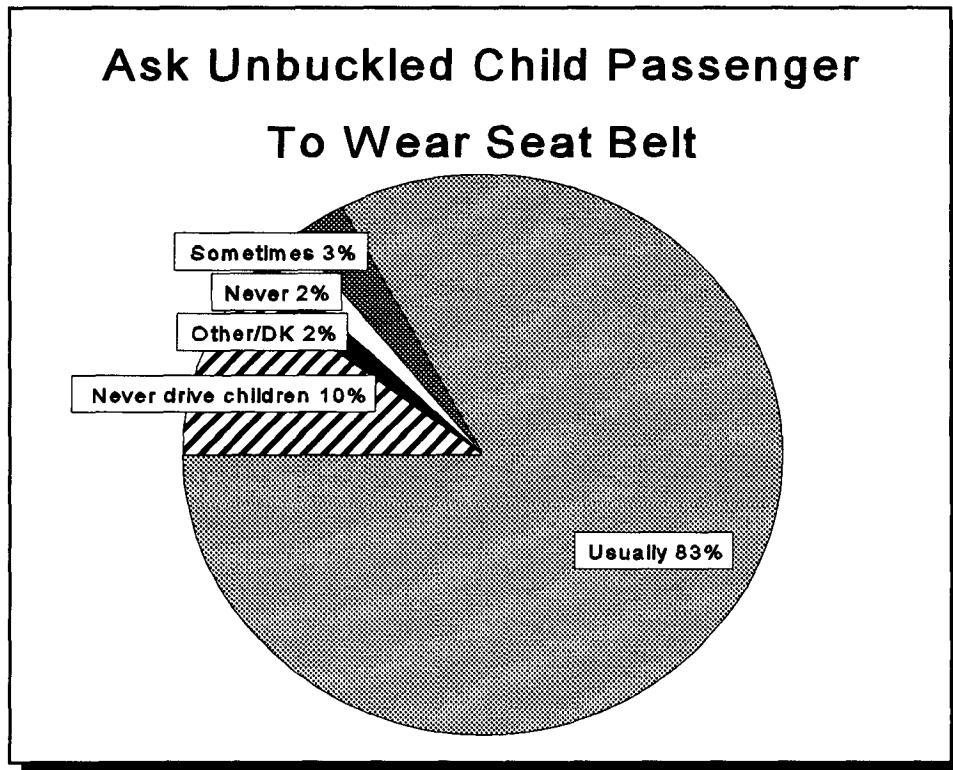
Qx: When you are driving and adult passengers in the front seat do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts

Unweighted N's listed above

Drivers were more willing to insist on seat belt use with child passengers than with adults. The data suggest that five of six drivers (83%) usually ask unbuckled children (age 5 through 12) to put on their seat belt. Most remaining drivers say they never drive with children of this age.

FIGURE 67



Qx: When you are driving and children ages 5 through 12 do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes, or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

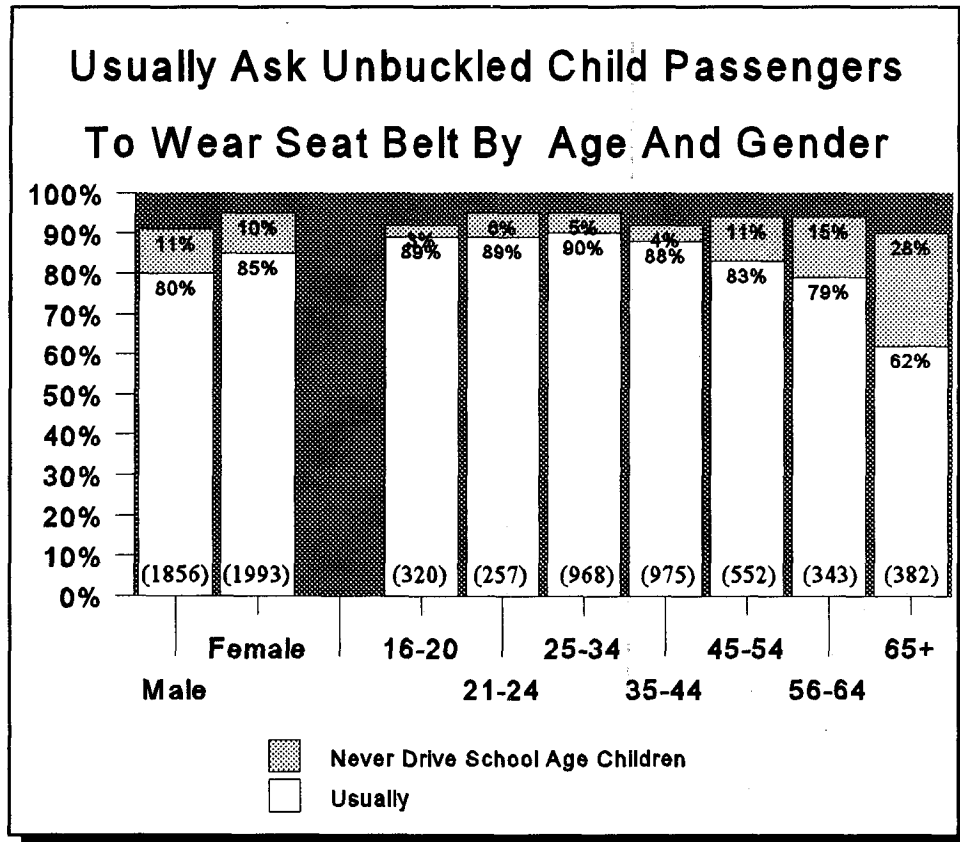
Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts

Unweighted N=3,853

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

There were some demographic differences in the likelihood that drivers will ask a child to wear a seat belt. Females were more likely than males (85% compared to 80%) to say they usually ask a child to wear a seat belt. Drivers age 25-34 were the most likely group of drivers, by age, to ask children to wear a belt (90%). Many older drivers had less opportunity to drive school age children.

FIGURE 68

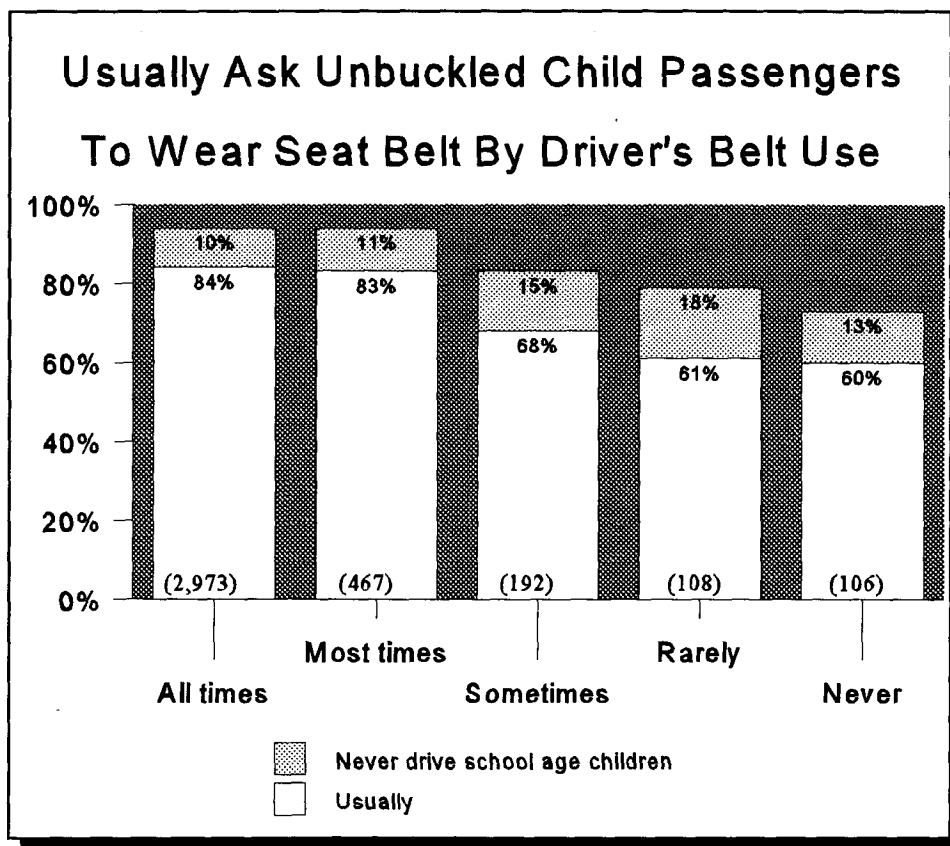


Qx: When you are driving and children ages 5 through 12 do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes, or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

*Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts
Unweighted N's listed above*

The likelihood that a driver will ask a child passenger to wear a seat belt is greatest among those who frequently use their own seat belt. Of drivers who said they always use their belt, 84% also said they usually ask an unbuckled child to wear his/her seat belt if she/he has not put it on. A slightly lesser percentage (83%) of drivers who use their own seat belt most of the time said they usually insist that children wear their seat belt. However, the percentage of drivers who insist children wear their seat belt steadily dropped thereafter, from 68% of those who sometimes wear their seat belt to 60% of those who never wear it.

FIGURE 69



Qx: When you are driving and children ages 5 through 12 do not put on their seat belt, would you say you usually, sometimes, or never ask them to put their seat belt on?

*Base: Vehicle driven most often has seat belts
 Unweighted N's listed above*

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 4

1994-1996 TRENDED RESULTS

Drivers and Vehicles, 1994-96

There was no appreciable change between 1994 and 1996 in the frequency with which the public age 16 and older drive motor vehicles. In 1996, 80% reported driving every day or almost every day, compared to 79% in 1994. Similarly, the proportion who said that they never drive a motor vehicle was 8% in both 1994 and 1996.

The types of motor vehicles being driven by the public, however, shifted somewhat between 1994 and 1996. Cars fell from 71% of primary motor vehicles driven by the public in 1994 to 67% in 1996. By contrast, pickup trucks increased from 15% to 17% of primary motor vehicles between 1994 and 1996, and sport utility vehicles increased from 3% to 5% of primary motor vehicles.

TABLE 22. Type of Primary Motor Vehicle Driven 1994-1996

Qx: Is the vehicle you drive most often a car, van, motorcycle, pickup truck, or other type of truck?
Base: Drives a motor vehicle

TYPE OF PRIMARY MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVEN	1994	1996
Car	71%	67%
Van/minivan	9%	9%
Sport Utility Vehicle	3%	5%
Pickup Truck	15%	17%
Other Truck	1%	1%

Type of Driver-Side Seat Belts 1994-96

There was a slight increase between 1994 and 1996 in the proportion of drivers who have both shoulder and lap belts. In 1996, nine out of ten drivers' primary vehicle (90%) had seat belts in the front seat that go across both the driver's lap and shoulder. Eighty-eight percent of drivers in 1994 had both lap and shoulder belts. The proportion of drivers with shoulder belts only declined from 8% to 7%. The proportion of drivers with lap belts only declined from 4% to 3%.

Less than one percent of drivers in both 1994 and 1996 reported that they had no seat belts in the motor vehicle they drive most often.

TABLE 23. Seat Belt Configuration By Type of Primary Vehicle, 1994-96

Qx: For the next series of questions, please answer only for the vehicle you said you usually drive. Do the seat belts in the front seat of the vehicle go across your shoulder only, across your lap only, or across both your shoulder and lap?

Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has seat belts

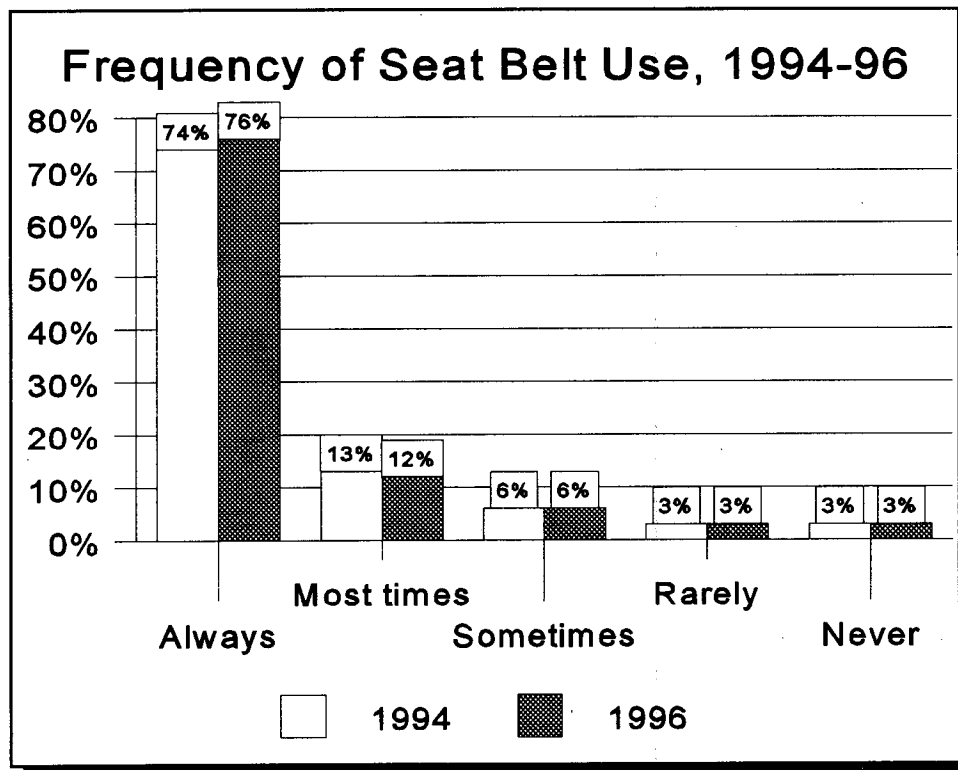
	1994	1996
Across shoulder only	8%	7%
Across lap only	4%	3%
Across both	88%	90%
Vehicle has no belts	*	*

* Less than 0.5%

Driver's Use of Seat Belts, 1994-96

Drivers age 16 and older were asked about their use of seat belts when driving their primary motor vehicle. In 1996, 76% of drivers said that they used their seat belts "all of the time" when driving their primary motor vehicle. In 1994, 74% of drivers reported that they used their seat belts all of the time. There was a slight decline in the proportion of drivers who use their seat belts "most of the time" from 1994 (13%) to 1996 (12%). The same percentages of drivers in 1994 and 1996 said that they wear their seat belts some of the time (6%), rarely (3%), or never (3%).

FIGURE 70

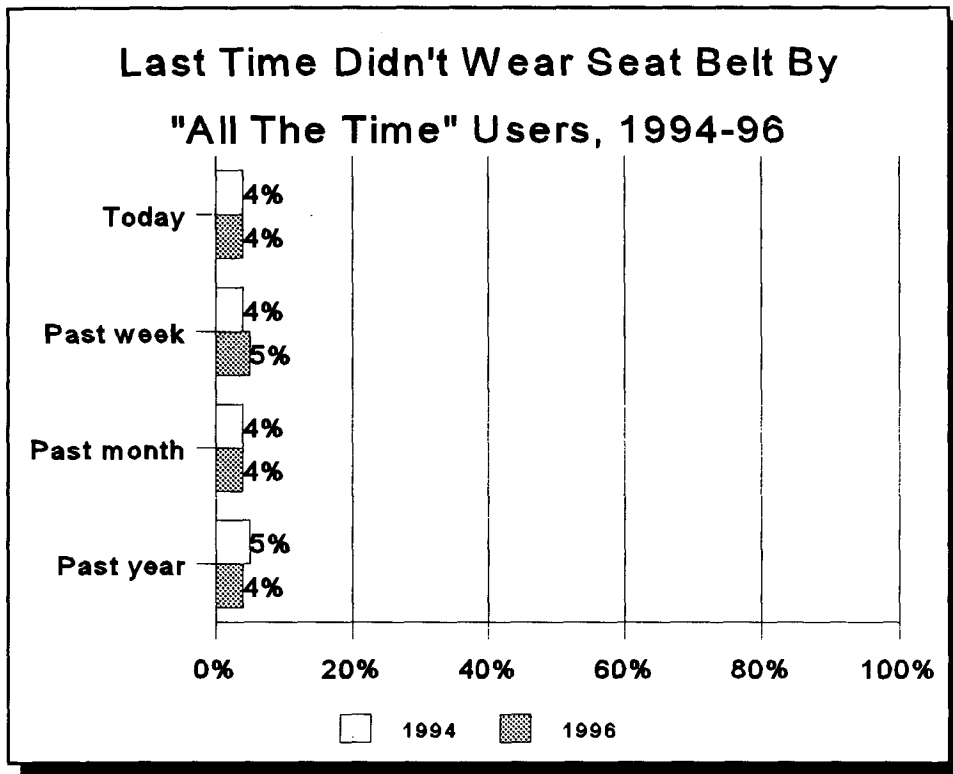


Qx: When driving this vehicle, how often do you wear your lap/shoulder belt?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The self-reported use of seat belts in driver surveys usually exceeds the use of seat belts found in observational studies. One reason is that use of seat belts "all of the time" may fall short of use of seat belts every time one drives. In 1996, about one in six "all of the time" drivers (17%) said they drove without wearing their seat belt at some time during the past year. This is consistent with the 1994 proportion of "all of the time" drivers who recently did not wear their seat belt.

FIGURE 71

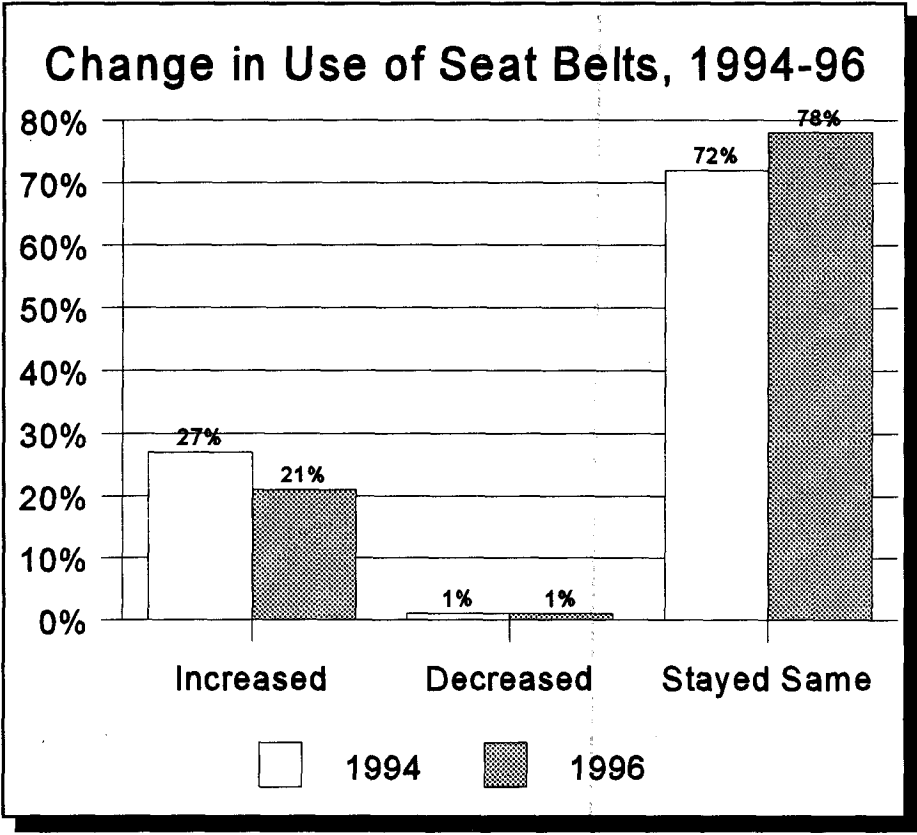


Qx: When was the last time you did not wear your seat belt when driving?
Base: Drivers

Changes in Belt Use, 1994-96

Most drivers in 1996 (78%) reported that their seat belt use had not changed in the past year. However, just over one-fifth of drivers (21%) reported increasing their seat belt use in the past year. By contrast, in 1994, 27% of drivers reported that their seat belt use had increased in the past year. This suggests that the rate of increased seat belt use by drivers is slowing, compared to the past.

FIGURE 72



Qx: In the past year, has your use of seat belts when driving (car driven most often) increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
Base: Drivers whose primary vehicle has safety belts

Company Seat Belt Policy, 1994-96

Among those who drive a motor vehicle at all, 36% at least sometimes drive a vehicle as part of a job or business, not including driving to and from work. This remains unchanged (36%) from 1994.

About one-half (53%) of those who drove as part of their job in 1996 reported that their company has a policy requiring safety belt use when driving on the job. This remains almost unchanged (52%) from the 1994 survey. Among those who were aware of a company policy requiring use of seat belts in 1996, about two thirds, (67%) reported that it is a written policy. The proportion with written company policies requiring seat belt use is effectively unchanged (66%) from 1994.

TABLE 24. Company Seat Belt Policy - - Written Or Unwritten, 1994-96

Qx: Does your company or business have a policy requiring seat belt use when driving on the job?

Qx: Is that a written policy?

Base: Drivers who drive on the job

	1994	1996
Company Has Policy	52%	53%
Policy Is Written: Yes	66%	67%
No	25%	24%
Don't Know	9%	9%
Company Doesn't Have Policy	43%	42%
Don't Know If Company Has Policy	5%	5%

Passenger Use of Belts, 1994-96

Ninety-five percent of the public age 16 and older ride as passengers in cars, vans or trucks, at least occasionally. About one in ten (11%) ride as a passenger almost every day. Thirty-six percent ride as passengers a few days a week. Hence, nearly one-half (47%) of the public ride as passengers in motor vehicles at least a few times per week. Less than one percent of the noninstitutionalized population age 16 and older never drive or ride in motor vehicles.

The survey findings suggest some improvement in the use of seat belts by front seat passengers between 1994 and 1996. Nearly three fourths of those who usually ride in the front seat (73%) in 1996 said that they wear their safety belt all of the time. In 1994, 69% of front seat riders said that they wore their seat belts all of the time.

TABLE 25. Frequency Wear Seat Belt as *Front Seat* Passenger For Those Who Usually Ride in the Front Seat, 1994-96

Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?
Qx: When riding as a passenger in the front seat, how often do you wear your seat belt?
Base: Usually ride in front seat as passenger

Frequency of Front Seat Passenger Seat Belt Use	1994	1996
All times	69 %	73%
Most times	16%	14%
Sometimes	8%	7%
Rarely	4%	3%
Never	4%	3 %
Don't know	*	*
Total	100%	100%

* Less than 0.5%

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The survey data indicate no change in frequency of back seat passengers who wear their seat belts all the time (41% in 1996 and 41% in 1994). However, fewer back seat passengers in 1996 (11%) said they wear seat belt most of time, compared to 16% in 1994. Instead, more back seat passengers in 1996 (18%) than in 1994 (12%) said they wear their seat belt sometimes.

TABLE 26. Frequency Wear Seat Belt As *Back Seat Passenger* For Those Who Usually Ride In The Back Seat, 1994-96

Qx: When you are a passenger, do you usually ride in the front seat or the back seat?

Qx: When riding as a passenger in the back seat, how often do you wear your seat belt?

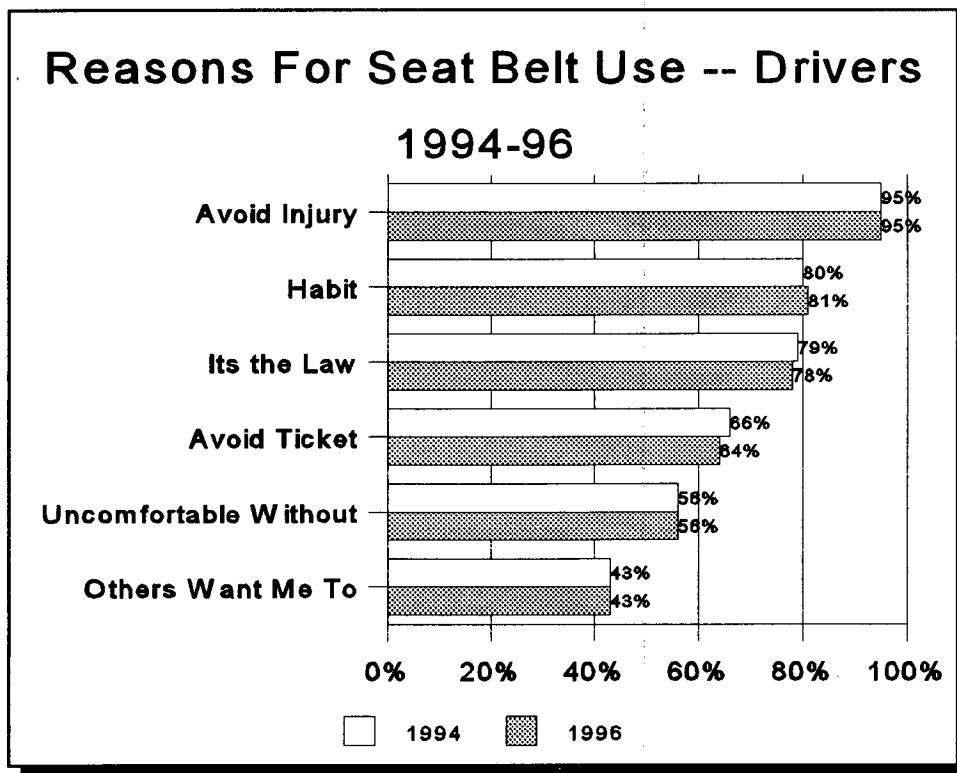
Frequency of Back Seat Passenger Seat Belt Use	1994	1996
All times	41%	41%
Most times	16%	11%
Sometimes	12%	18%
Rarely	11%	10%
Never	19%	20%
Don't know	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%

* Less than 0.5%

Reasons for Seat Belt Use, 1994-96

There has been no change between 1994 and 1996 in the reasons that drivers give for wearing seat belts when they drive. Almost all drivers who wear shoulder or lap belts do so to avoid injury (95%), unchanged between 1994 and 1996. Roughly four out of five (81%) also wear safety belts because it is a habit, also effectively unchanged from 1994 (80%). The proportion of drivers who wear their belt because it is the law in 1996 (78%) is approximately the same as 1994 (79%). Similarly, there is little difference in the proportion of drivers who wear safety belts to avoid getting a ticket in 1996 (64%) and 1994 (66%). There is no difference in the proportion of drivers who wear seat belts because they are uncomfortable without them between 1994 and 1996 (56%). Similarly, the same proportion of drivers in 1994 and 1996 (43%) agree that they wear seat belts because others want them to wear them.

FIGURE 73



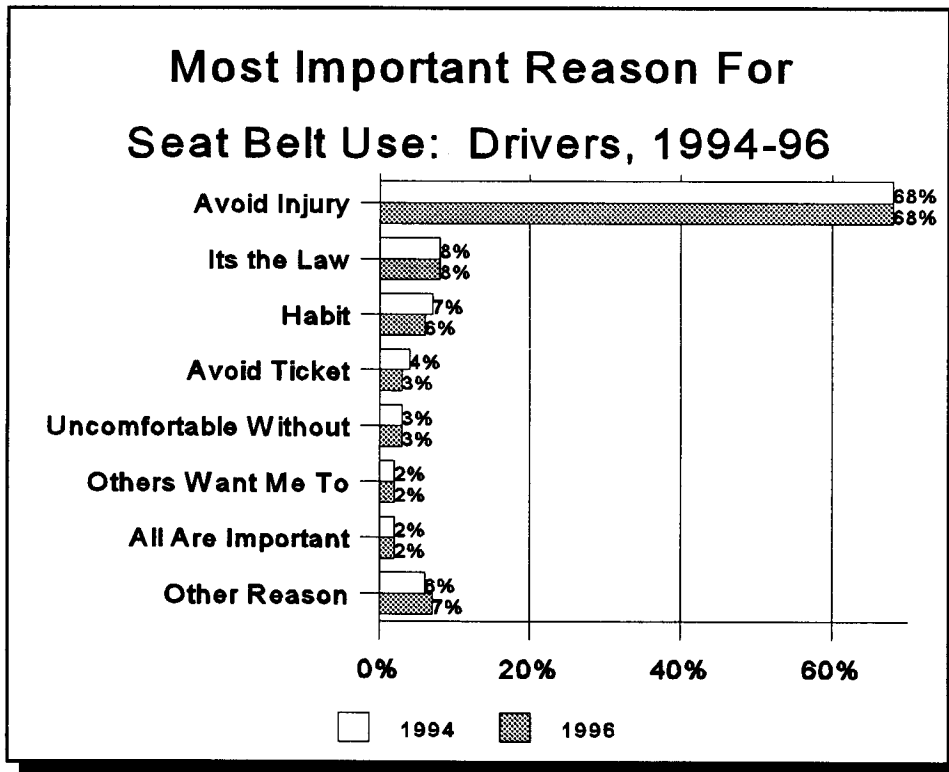
Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .

Base: Drivers who wear a shoulder or lap safety belt

Most Important Reason For Seat Belt Use, 1994-96

Although a majority of drivers who wear seat belts identified multiple reasons for usage, one reason clearly emerges when they are asked which is most important. More than two-thirds (68%) of drivers who wear seat belts say that the avoidance of serious injury is the most important reason why they wear seat belts. Fewer than one in ten drivers wearing seat belts said the most important reason for wearing the belt is because it's the law (8%) or because it's a habit (6%). Only 3% reported that avoiding getting a ticket is the most important reason. There has been absolutely no change between 1994 and 1996 in driver perceptions of the most important reason for wearing seat belts.

FIGURE 74



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

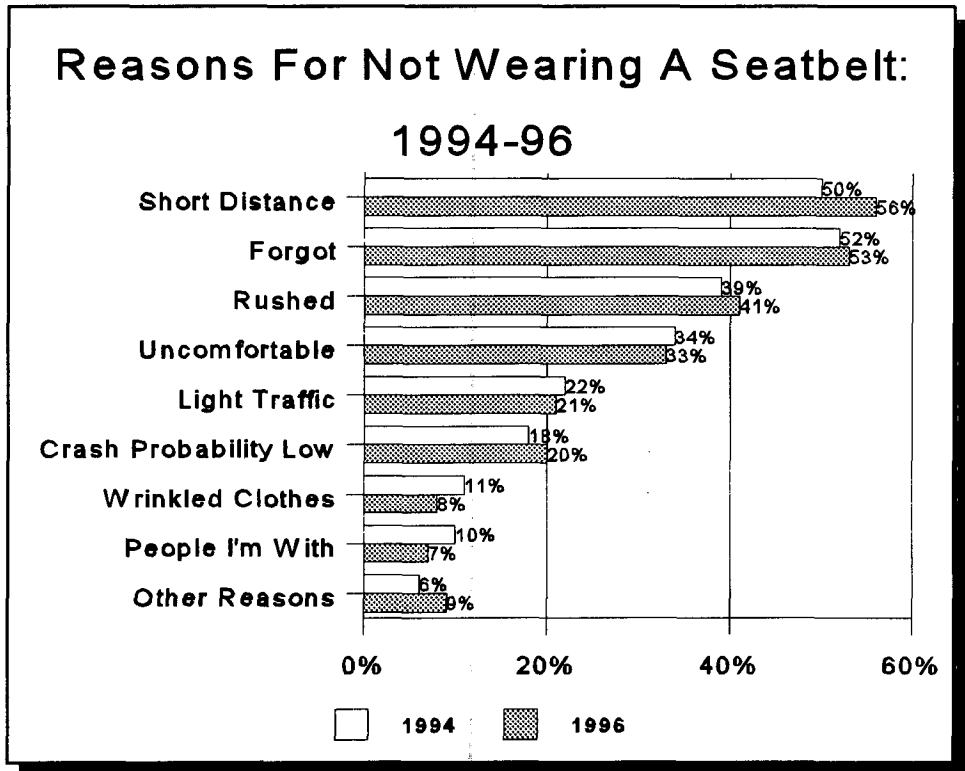
Base: Drivers who wear seat belts

Reasons for Non-Use of Seat Belts, 1994-96

Although there was no change between 1994 and 1996 in the reasons given for wearing seat belts, there was one noticeable difference in the reasons given for sometimes not wearing seat belts. The most frequent reason given by drivers for not wearing their seat belts in 1996 was that they were driving a short distance (56%). In 1994, 50% gave driving a short distance as a reason for non-seat belt use, and it ranked as the second most often given reason for not always wearing a seat belt.

About the same proportion in 1996 (53%) as 1994 (52%) said that they don't wear seat belts because they forget to put it on. About four in ten in both 1996 (41%) and 1994 (39%) do not wear their belt because they are in a rush. About one-third in both 1996 (33%) and 1994 (34%) don't wear it because it is uncomfortable. About one-fifth sometimes do not wear a seat belt because they are driving in light traffic in both 1996 (21%) and 1994 (22%). About one in five in both 1996 (20%) and 1994 (18%) do not always wear their seat belt because they believe the probability of being in a crash is too low. Slightly fewer in 1996 (8%), compared to 1994 (11%) sometimes do not wear a seat belt because they don't want to wrinkle their clothes. And, slightly fewer in 1996 (7%) than in 1994 (10%) say they don't wear them because of the people they are with.

FIGURE 75

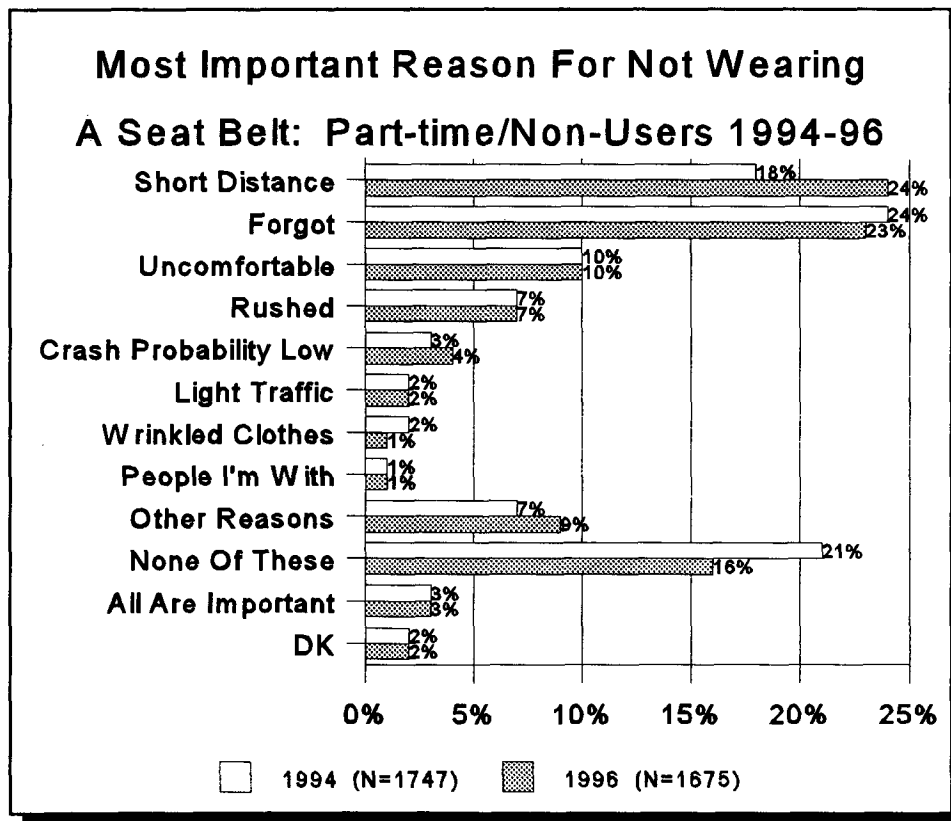


Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .
 Base: Drivers who do not wear seat belts all the time

Most Important Reason For Non-Use of Seat Belts, 1994-96

When asked which is the most important reason that they sometimes do not wear a seat belt, part-time and non-users most often said because they are only driving a short distance (24%) in 1996. This represents a six percentage point increase from those in 1994 who cited this as the most important reason for not wearing their seat belt. This was followed by “forgetting” (23%) and being “uncomfortable” (10%) as the next most frequently mentioned most important reasons. Aside from the increase in citing “driving a short distance” as the most important reason, there was essentially no change among any of the other reasons between the two years. In 1996, about one in six respondents (16%) didn’t agree with any of these as a reason for not wearing a seat belt, down from one in five respondents (21%) in 1994.

FIGURE 76



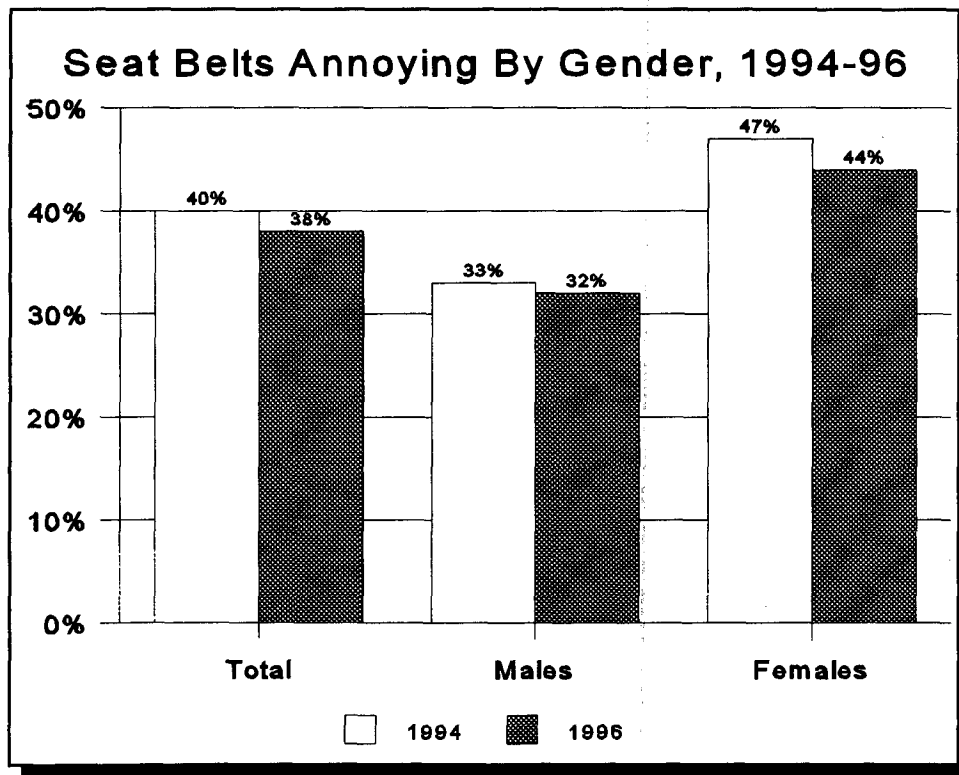
Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Drivers who do not wear seat belts all the time

What Drivers Dislike or Find Annoying About Seat Belts, 1994-96

All drivers, regardless of whether or not they wear their seat belts regularly, were asked if there was anything that they particularly disliked or found annoying about wearing their seat belt. Slightly fewer drivers in 1996 (38%), compared to 1994 (40%) said that there are things they dislike or find annoying about wearing their seat belt. The decline in driver annoyance with seat belts is mostly attributable to females, among whom 44% found seat belts annoying in 1996, compared to 47% in 1994. About one-third of male drivers disliked or found something annoying about wearing seat belts in both 1994 (33%) and 1996 (32%).

FIGURE 77



Qx: Is there anything that you particularly dislike or find annoying about wearing your seat belt?

Base: Drives a motor vehicle that has seat belts

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The most common complaint among those who have particular dislikes or annoyances with seat belts is physical discomfort. Almost one-half (49%) of those who dislike or find something annoying about seat belts cited specific body pressure, including pressure on the neck (35%), and shoulder pressure or tightness (9%). Twelve percent reported non-specific discomfort (“uncomfortable”).

Complaints from females about seat belt pressure on neck, shoulders and elsewhere have declined since 1994. In 1996, 56% of females who dislike or find seat belt annoying say that it is the pressure that bothers them, compared to 63% in 1994.

TABLE 27. What Female Drivers Dislike or Find Annoying About Seat Belts: Drivers Who Dislike or Find Something Annoying About Seat Belts, 1994-96

Qx: Is there anything that you particularly dislike or find annoying about wearing your seat belt?

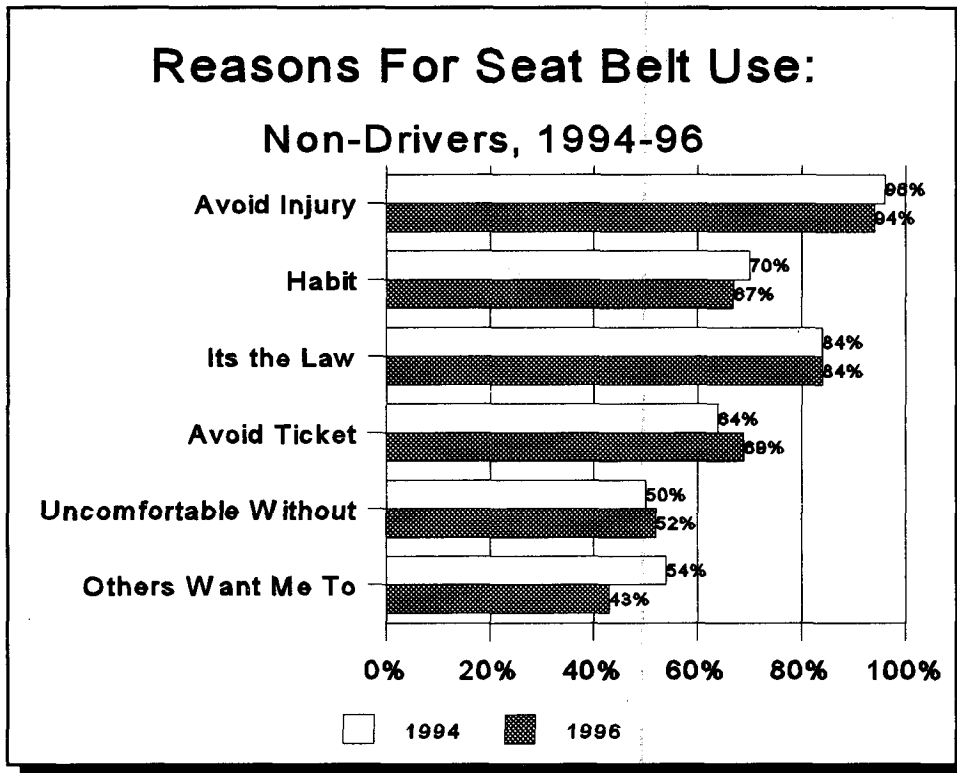
Qx: What is it that you dislike or find annoying? Anything else?

	1994 Females (N=932)	1996 Females (N=867)	1996 Total (N=1,470)
Discomfort: Body Pressure (net)	63%	56%	49%
Pressure on my neck/chokes me/cuts across my neck	47%	44%	35%
Pressure on my shoulder/shoulder strap too tight	11%	9%	9%
Other pressure	10%	8%	8%
Discomfort: In General (net)	12%	16%	18%
Uncomfortable (unspecified)	8%	11%	12%
Discomfort: Confining (net)	7%	10%	12%
Feel restricted/too confining	7%	10%	12%
Other			
Wrinkles my clothes	10%	10%	8%

Reasons for Seat Belt Use By Non-Drivers, 1994-96

Interviewers asked non-drivers their reasons for using seat belts while riding as passengers in motor vehicles. There were few differences between 1994 and 1996. In 1996, non-drivers were more likely than in 1994 to cite avoiding a ticket as a reason to wear a seat belt (69% to 64%), although the proportion who do so because it is the law (84%) remains about the same. On the other hand, non-drivers were more likely to say they wear seat belts because others want them to in 1994 (54%) than in 1996 (43%). The leading reason that non-driving passengers give for wearing seat belts — to avoid injury — has remained essentially the same in both 1996 (94%) and 1994 (96%).

FIGURE 78

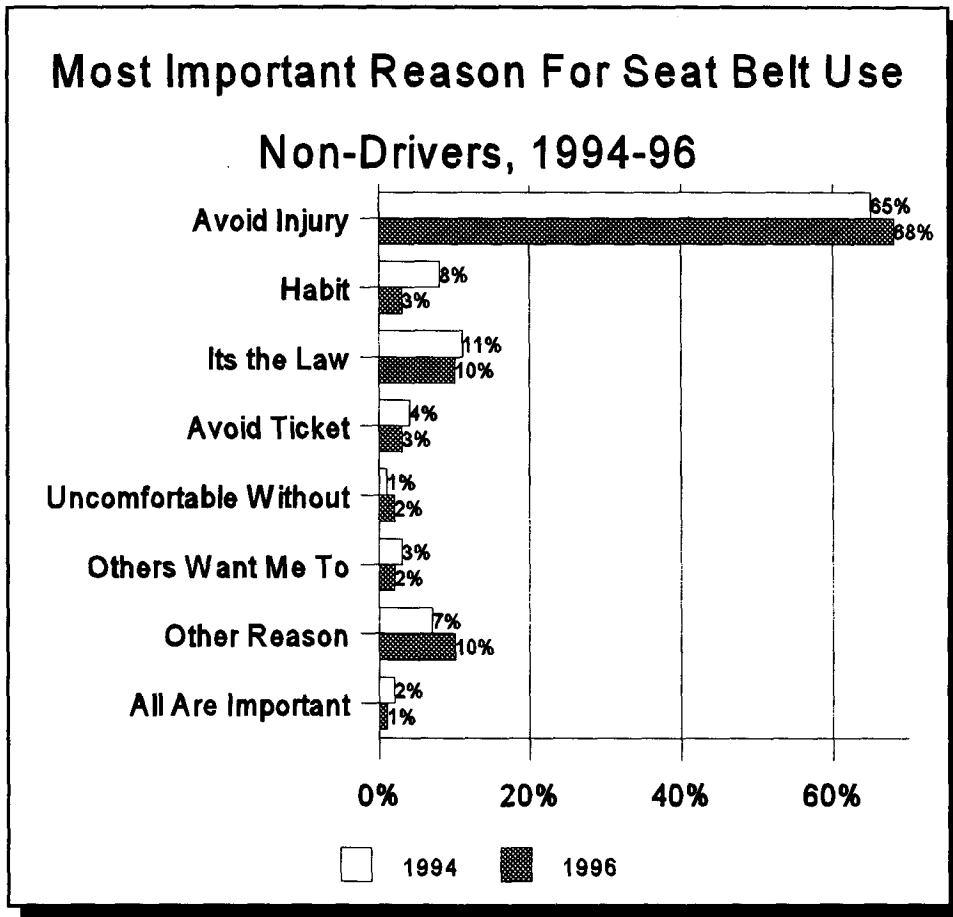


Qx: When I wear my seat belt, I do so because . . .

Most Important Reason For Wearing Seat Belts: Non-Drivers, 1994-96

Avoiding injury is the most important reason that non-drivers give for wearing seat belts as passengers. Indeed, the proportion who feel avoiding injury is the most important reason for wearing a seat belt has increased slightly from 1994 (65%) to 1996 (68%). By contrast, the proportion of non-drivers who wear seat belts primarily because it is a habit has declined from 8% in 1994 to 3% in 1996.

FIGURE 79



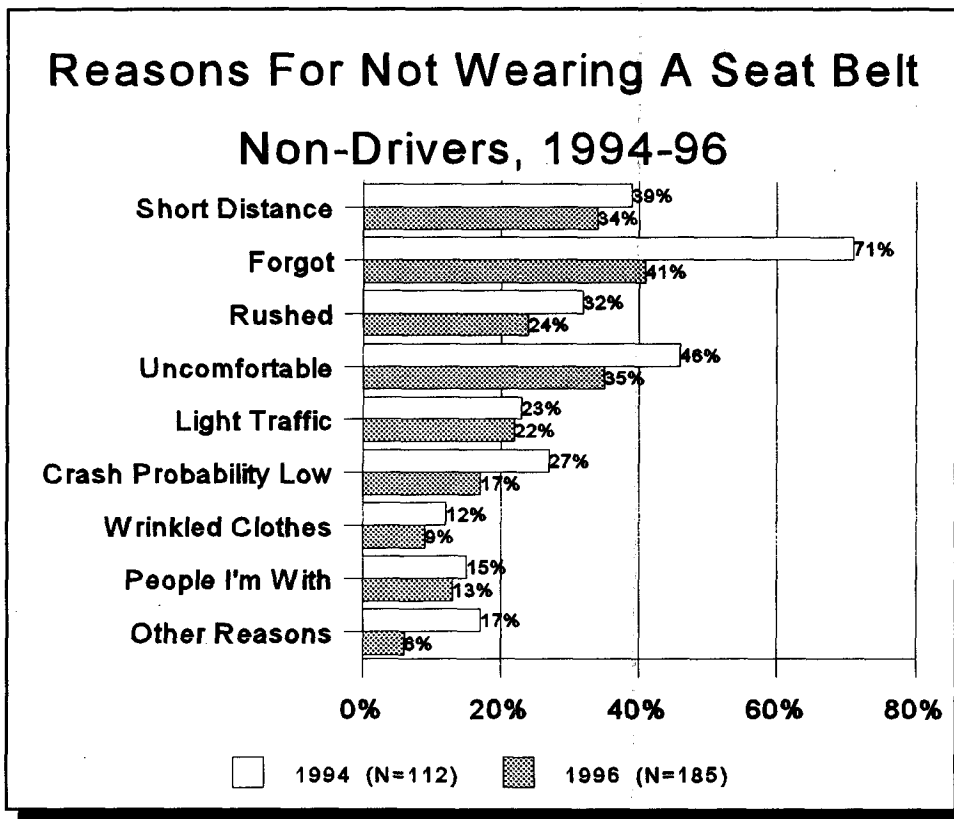
Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

Base: Non-drivers who wear a shoulder or lap seat belt

Non-drivers' Reasons for Not Using Seat Belts, 1994-96

Although forgetting to wear their seat belt remained the most frequently mentioned reason among non-drivers, it dramatically decreased as an explanation for non-use from 71% in 1994 to 41% in 1996. In fact, there was a general decline in respondents who agreed with each of the reasons mentioned. Aside from forgetting to wear them, the largest declines were with discomfort (46% to 35%); low probability of a crash (27% to 17%); being rushed (32% to 24%); and driving a short distance (39% to 34%). However, respondents did not offer additional explanations, with 6% mentioning other reasons in 1996, down from 17% in 1994.

FIGURE 80



Qx: Sometimes I do not wear my seat belt because . . .

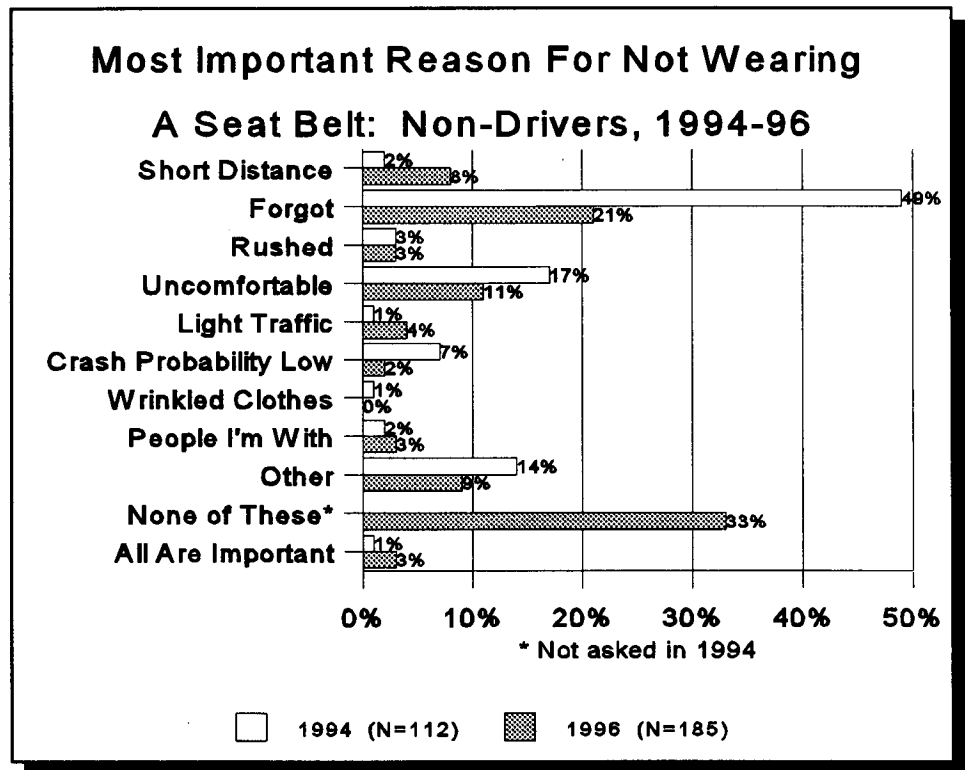
Base: Non-drivers who don't always wear seat belts

Most Important Reason for Non-Use: Non-Drivers, 1994-96

Interviewers asked non-drivers which was the most important reason for non-use. "I forgot" emerged as the top response (21%), followed by the belts being uncomfortable (11%) and because they are only riding a short distance (8%).

In 1994, respondents were prompted to make a specific selection from the list of possible reasons. However, in 1996 respondents were allowed to select "none of these" as the most important reason. Although still the most frequently mentioned reason on the list, the change in questioning procedures caused a dramatic decline in the percentage of people who mentioned "forgetting" as the most important reason. While a large proportion of non-drivers (33%) regarded none of these as the most important reason they didn't use their belt, relatively few (9%) actually stated an alternative.

FIGURE 81



Qx: Of the following reasons you just gave me for not wearing your seat belt, which is the most important?

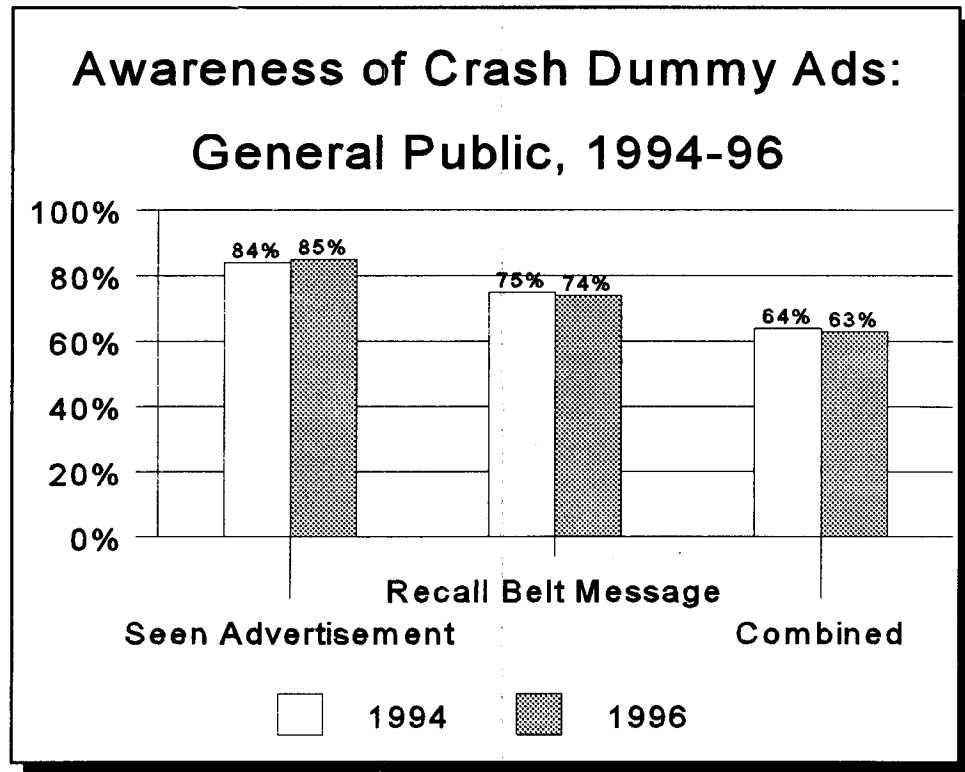
Base: Non-drivers who don't always wear their seat belts

Advertising Awareness: The Crash Dummies, 1994-96

The need to communicate to the public the importance of seat belt use prompted the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to expend substantial resources and energy to develop public service announcements (PSA's) and conduct other safety marketing activities to convey the message to "buckle up." Advertisements about seat belt use in which Vince and Larry, the crash dummies, are the central characters have been a very important part of DOT's effort.

The survey finds no change in public exposure to the crash dummy ads between 1994 and 1996. About six out of seven persons recalled seeing or hearing advertisements that use crash dummies in both 1994 (84%) and 1996 (85%). Approximately three-quarters of those who recalled the advertisements identified the message as buckling your seat belts in both 1994 (75%) and 1996 (74%). Hence, the public education campaign has successfully delivered NHTSA's message to almost two-thirds of the public age 16 and older.

FIGURE 82

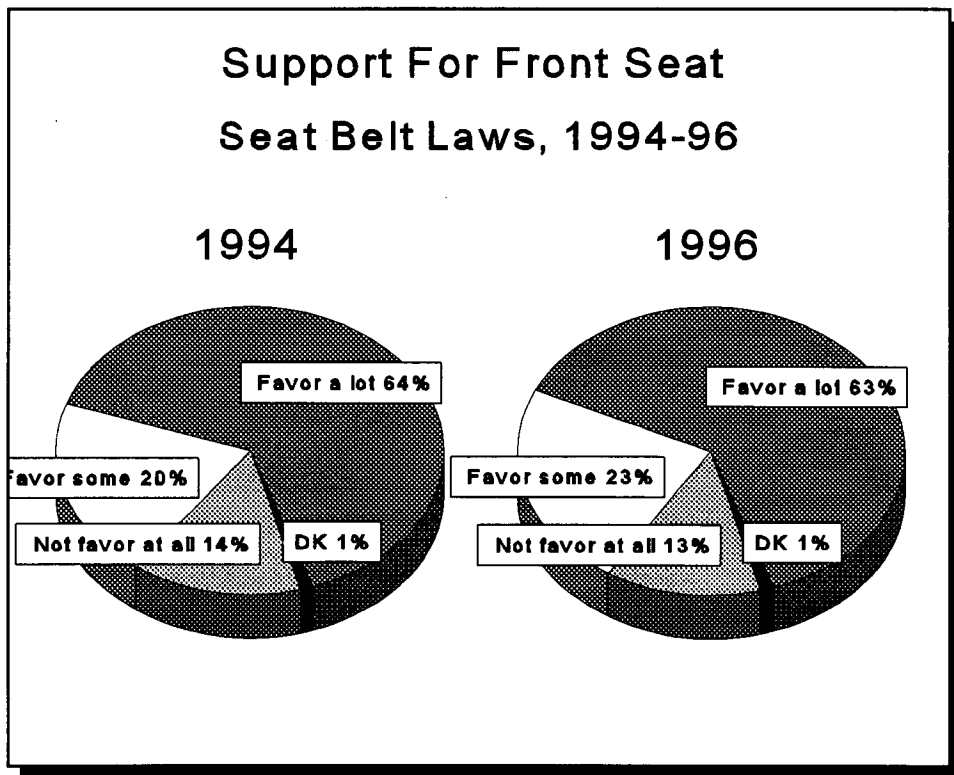


Qx: Have you seen or heard any advertisements that use crash dummies?
Qx: Could you tell me what advice or message the crash dummies advertised?
Base: Total population age 16+

Attitudes Toward Seat Belt Laws, 1994-96

Seat belt laws have been enacted throughout the country to increase safety belt use. In the past two years, there has been little or no change in public approval ratings for these laws. Most persons age 16 and older favored seat belt laws for drivers and front-seat passengers a lot in 1996 (63%), as they did in 1994 (64%). In 1996, an additional 23% of the public favored seat belt laws for drivers and front seat passengers somewhat, compared to 20% in 1994. Only about one in eight persons in 1996 (13%) and 1994 (14%) did not favor driver and front-seat passenger belt laws at all.

FIGURE 83

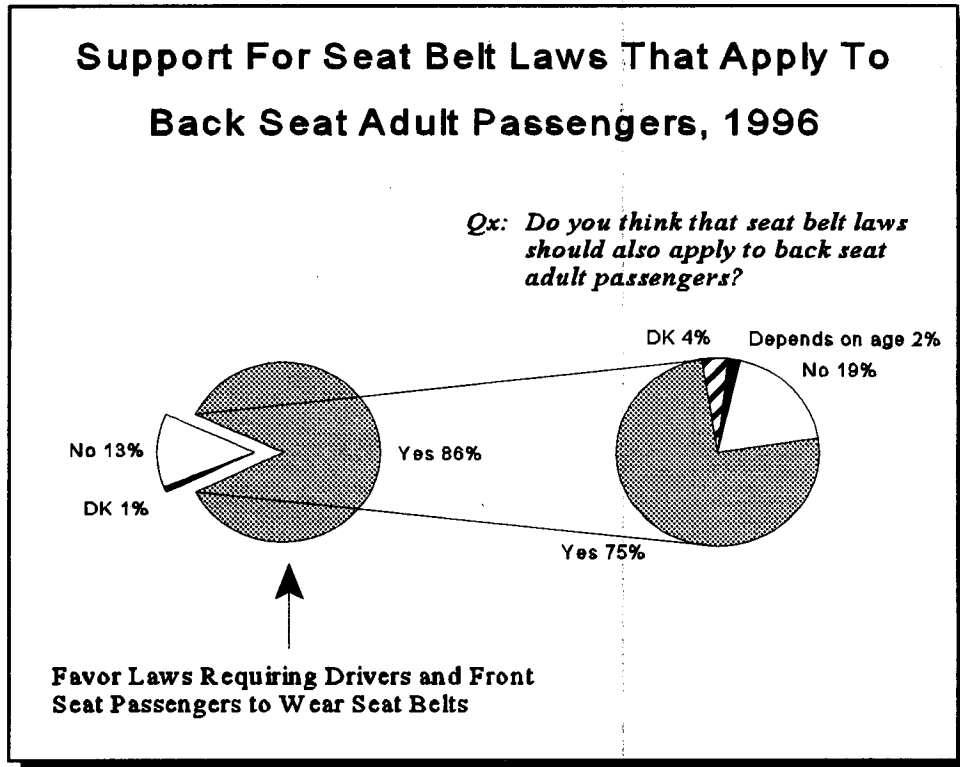


Qx: How do you feel about laws that require drivers and front seat passengers to wear seat belts? Do you favor these laws a lot, do you favor them some, or do you not favor these laws at all?

Base: Total population age 16+

In 1996, three quarters (75%) of those who favored seat belt laws for drivers and front seat passengers, also supported seat belt laws for back seat passengers.

FIGURE 84a

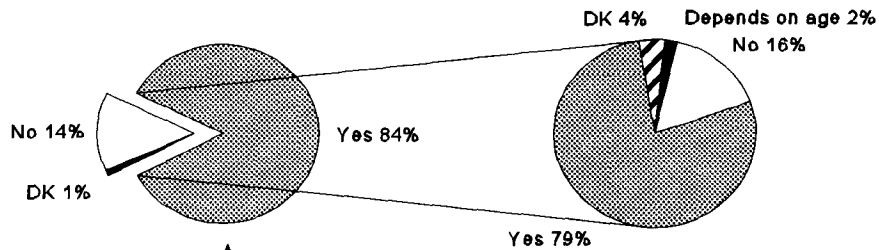


In 1994, 79% who approved of front seat belt laws also favored back seat belt laws. This means that, in 1994 66% of the total public approved seat belt laws for back seat passengers compared to about 64% of the total public in 1996.

FIGURE 84b

Support For Seat Belt Laws That Apply To Back Seat Adult Passengers, 1994

Qx: Do you think that seat belt laws should also apply to back seat adult passengers?

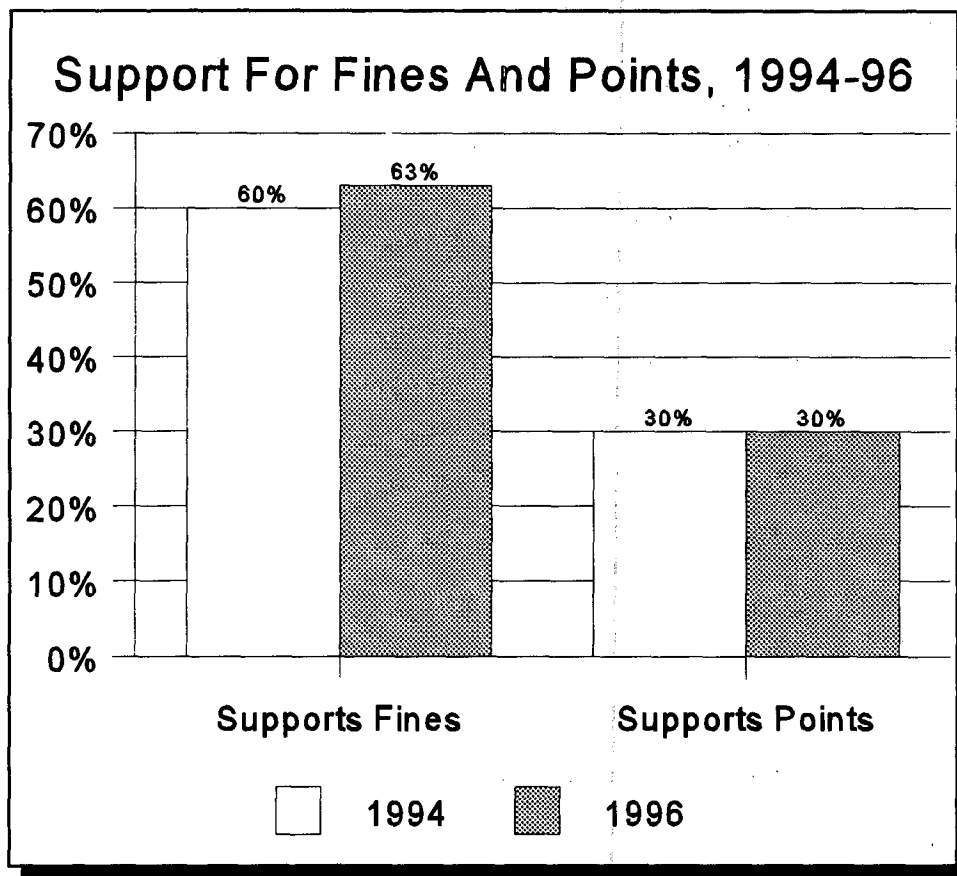


**Favor Laws Requiring Drivers and Front
Seat Passengers to Wear Seat Belts**

Enforcement of Seat Belt Laws, 1994-96

The public tends to favor enforcing seat belt laws with fines but not with points on the driver's license. Slightly more of the public in 1996 (63%) than in 1994 (60%) supported fines for drivers who do not wear a seat belt. In 1996, less than one-third (30%) supported giving points against a driver's license for violation of a seatbelt law, unchanged from 1994.

FIGURE 85



Qx: Do you support fines for drivers who do not wear seat belts?

Qx: Do you favor or oppose receiving points against a license as a penalty for seat belt violations?

Base: Total population age 16+

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the public's stated use of seat belts remains fairly high. Three-fourths of those who drive said they wear seat belts all the time, while another 12% said they wear them most of the time. This represents about the same percentage of drivers in 1996 as there were in 1994 who said they wear their seat belts at least most of the time when they drive (88 percent in 1996 compared to 87 percent in 1994). In general, there was very little change in the public's knowledge, behavior, and usage of seat belts between 1994 and 1996.

Those with separate manual lap belts that are not connected to the shoulder belt wear their lap belt less frequently than those with whose lap belts are combined with the shoulder belt. About 88% of those with a one-piece manual, lap/shoulder belt said they wear their belt at least most of the time. By comparison, only 69% of those with manual lap belts only; 72% of those with separate, manual lap and manual shoulder belts; and 76% of those with manual lap and automatic shoulder belts wear them at least most of the time. Manual, combined lap/shoulder belt configurations account for 73% of all drivers. Those with some form of separate, manual lap belt comprise an additional 16% of the driving population. The data suggests that seat belt use could be increased if all vehicles offered the one-piece, manual lap/shoulder belt combination.

Drivers in 1996 overwhelmingly stated that they wear seat belts to avoid injury, and listed this reason as the most important reason to wear their belts by a large margin. They also mentioned "habit" and "it's the law" as reasons why they wear their belts. These did not change from 1994.

There does, however, appear to be a slight change in the reasons why drivers sometimes don't wear their seat belts. Drivers in 1996 were more likely than those in 1994 not to wear their seat belts because they are driving a short distance. In fact, this reason replaced "forgetting" as the most frequently mentioned reason for not wearing their seat belt. Driving a short distance was also mentioned as the most important reason for not wearing them by 24% of drivers, an increase from 18% in 1994.

There appears to be some differences in the perceived importance of seat belt use depending on where one is riding. While there was an increase in belt usage among front seat passengers in 1996, there was a decrease in usage among back seat passengers. Furthermore, many of those who wear their seat belts as drivers in the front seat wear seat belts less frequently when riding as passengers in the back seat.

Seat belt use among back seat passengers is noticeably higher when States adopt laws requiring all occupants to wear them. In States requiring front seat occupants only to wear seat belts, less than one-third (31%) said they wear them all the time when riding in the back seat. In States that require all vehicle occupants to wear seat belts, more than half (56%) said they wear their seat belt all the time as a back seat passenger.

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Seatbelts

The public's knowledge of its State seat belt enforcement laws are significantly higher in those States where primary enforcement is in effect. Almost everyone (94%) believes their State has a seat belt law. Among these, nearly three-fourths of those in primary enforcement states correctly believed that police could stop them for not wearing their seat belt. By comparison, only 46% of those in secondary enforcement States correctly believed that the police must have another reason to stop them before citing them for not wearing their seat belt.

The percentage of drivers who said they wear their seat belt all of the time is higher in States that employ primary enforcement. Belt use is also higher in States that require all vehicle occupants to wear seat belts. Drivers from States that require all occupants to wear seat belts and use primary enforcement reported the highest level of all the time belt use (89%). In fact, reported belt use was highest in States with primary enforcement, regardless of the type of belt law a State used.

Most drivers stated that their incidence of belt use neither decreased nor increased in the past year. A higher proportion of drivers in 1996 (78%) said their level of belt use remained the same than did drivers in 1994 (72%). This suggests that belt use in the driving population has, at least for the moment, somewhat leveled off. The data from this survey indicate that the biggest gains in constant seat belt use may have to come from changes in the States' laws and their enforcement practices.

APPENDIX

SCOPE AND ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

OF SEAT BELT LAWS

BY STATE

PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY ENFORCEMENT

October, 1996

PRIMARY ENFORCEMENT	SECONDARY ENFORCEMENT	
American Samoa	Arizona	Montana
California	Arkansas	Nebraska
Connecticut	Alabama	Nevada
Guam	Alaska	New Jersey
Hawaii	Colorado	North Dakota
Iowa	Delaware	Ohio
Louisiana	District of Columbia	Oklahoma
Mariana Islands	Florida	Pennsylvania
Georgia	Idaho	Rhode Island
New Mexico	Illinois	South Carolina
New York	Indiana	South Dakota
North Carolina	Kansas	Tennessee
Oregon	Kentucky	Utah
Puerto Rico	Maine	Vermont
Texas	Maryland	Virginia
Virgin Islands	Massachusetts	Washington
Total: 11 States plus Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Marianas, and Virgin Islands	Michigan	West Virginia
	Minnesota	Wisconsin
	Mississippi	Wyoming
	Missouri	Total: 38 States plus the District of Columbia

Primary enforcement: A citation can be written whenever a law officer observes an unbelted driver or passenger.
Secondary enforcement: A citation can only be written after an officer stops the vehicle for some other infraction.

ADULT SEAT BELT USE REQUIREMENTS

December, 1996

FRONT AND BACK SEAT VEHICLE OCCUPANTS	FRONT SEAT OCCUPANTS ONLY	
Alaska	Alabama	Nebraska
American Samoa	Arizona	New Jersey
California	Arkansas	New Mexico
Kentucky	Colorado	New York
Maine	Connecticut	North Carolina
Mariana Islands	Delaware	North Dakota
Massachusetts	District of Columbia	Ohio
Montana	Florida	Oklahoma
Nevada	Georgia	Pennsylvania
Oregon	Guam	Puerto Rico
Rhode Island	Hawaii	South Carolina
Vermont	Idaho	South Dakota
Washington	Illinois	Tennessee
Wisconsin	Indiana	Texas
Total: 12 States plus American Samoa, and the Mariana Islands	Iowa	Utah
	Kansas	Virgin Islands
	Louisiana	Virginia
	Maryland	West Virginia
	Michigan	Wyoming
	Minnesota	Total: 37 States plus the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands
One State, New Hampshire, has no seat belt laws for adults	Mississippi	
	Missouri	

TYPE OF LAW / ENFORCEMENT BY STATE (October, 1996)

Primary/ All Occupants
American Samoa
California
Mariana Islands
Oregon
Primary/Front Seat Occupants Only
Connecticut
Guam
Georgia
Hawaii
Iowa
Louisiana
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
Puerto Rico
Texas
Virgin Islands

Secondary/All Occupants
Alaska
Kentucky
Maine
Massachusetts
Montana
Nevada
Rhode Island
Vermont
Washington
Wisconsin
Secondary/Front Seat Occupants Only
Alabama
Arizona
Arkansas
Colorado
Delaware
District of Columbia
Florida
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana

Secondary/Front Seat Occupants Only (cont'd)
Kansas
Maryland
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Nebraska
New Jersey
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Utah
Virginia
West Virginia
Wyoming

Primary/All Occupants:

Primary/Front Seat Only:

Secondary/All Occupants:

Secondary/Front Seat Only:

2 States, plus American Samoa and the Mariana Islands

9 States, plus Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands

10 States

28 States, plus the District of Columbia

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