



RESULTS OF TRANSPORT CANADA'S SEPTEMBER 2002 SURVEY OF SEAT BELT USE IN RURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY

BACKGROUND

The National Occupant Restraint Program is an important element of Road Safety Vision 2010—an ambitious partnership approved by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for transportation and highway safety to make Canada's roads the safest in the world. The objective of the National Occupant Restraint Program (NORP 2010) is to achieve a minimum 95% national seat belt usage and the proper use of child restraints by all motor vehicle occupants. Transport Canada's contribution to this program of monitoring seat belt usage is to conduct observational surveys.

In September 2002, Transport Canada conducted an observational survey of seat belt use in rural communities across Canada. The survey was undertaken because of evidence indicating that the majority of motor vehicle fatalities in rural areas involve people who were not wearing seat belts. Also, a survey conducted in rural Alberta in June 2001 found a seat belt usage rate of only 76.8% for drivers and 73.6% for right front seat passengers of light-duty vehicles.

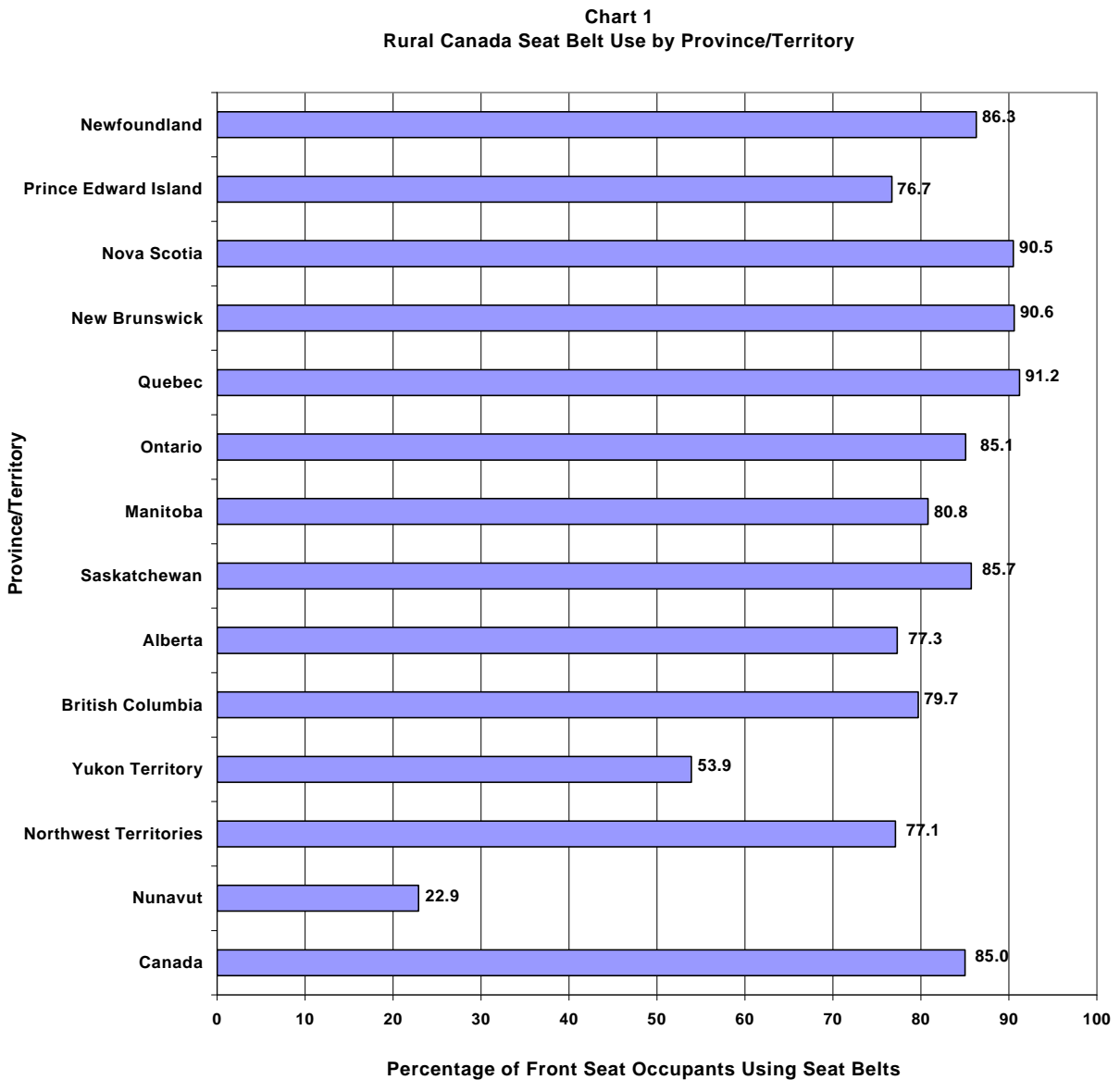
METHOD

The September 2002 survey was the first of its kind: the first to measure the seat belt usage rate in rural Canada only. Rural Canada was defined as towns with a population of fewer than 10,000 but more than 1,000 that are located outside any census metropolitan area or census agglomeration. The survey targeted front seat occupants of passenger cars, light pick-up trucks and minivans. The survey, which occurred over the week of September 23 to September 29, involved two separate observation periods at each of 124 sites. Each observation period was two hours long and took place during daylight hours (between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.). A total of 35,402 vehicles and 48,115 occupants were observed during the course of the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

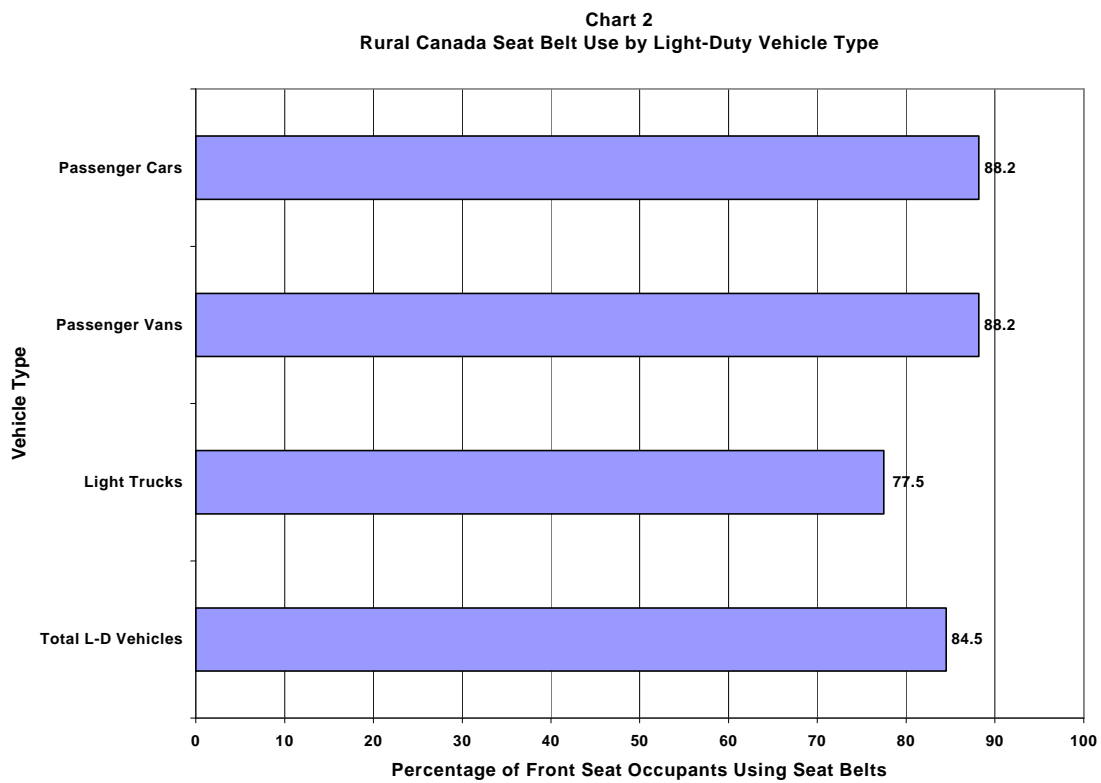
Seat Belt Usage by All Front Seat Occupants by Province/Territory

- Chart 1 shows that an estimated **85.0% ($\pm 1.2\%$)** of front seat occupants of light-duty vehicles use seat belts. Jurisdictions at or above the national average were Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Those below the national average were Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and each of the territories.



Seat Belt Usage by All Front Seat Occupants by Light-Duty Vehicle Type

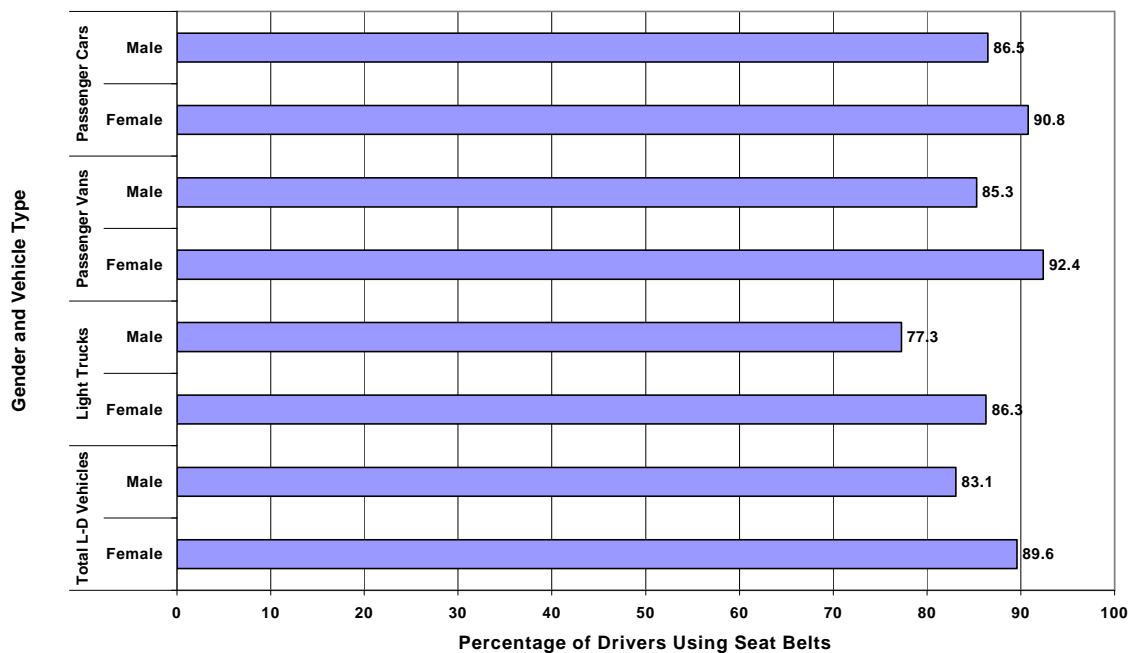
- Chart 2 shows much lower rates of seat belt usage among front seat occupants of light trucks (77.5%) than of passenger cars (88.2%) and passenger vans (also 88.2%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 88.5% for passenger cars, 88.3% for passenger vans and 77.5% for light trucks.
- Other data from the survey show that with only a few exceptions, the seat belt usage rates for each of the three types of vehicles were at or above the national average in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan.



Seat Belt Usage by Gender of Driver

- Chart 3 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (**89.6%**) than male drivers (**83.1%**).
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types. The difference ranged from 4.3 percentage points for passenger cars (90.8% for females vs. 86.5% for males) to 9.0 points for light trucks (86.3% for females vs. 77.3% for males).
- Other data from the survey show that the higher rate of seat belt usage by females is generally consistent across all provinces and territories. The differences range from 5.0 percentage points in Nova Scotia (93.6% for females vs. 88.6% for males) to 15.6 points in the Yukon (64.3% for females vs. 48.7% for males).

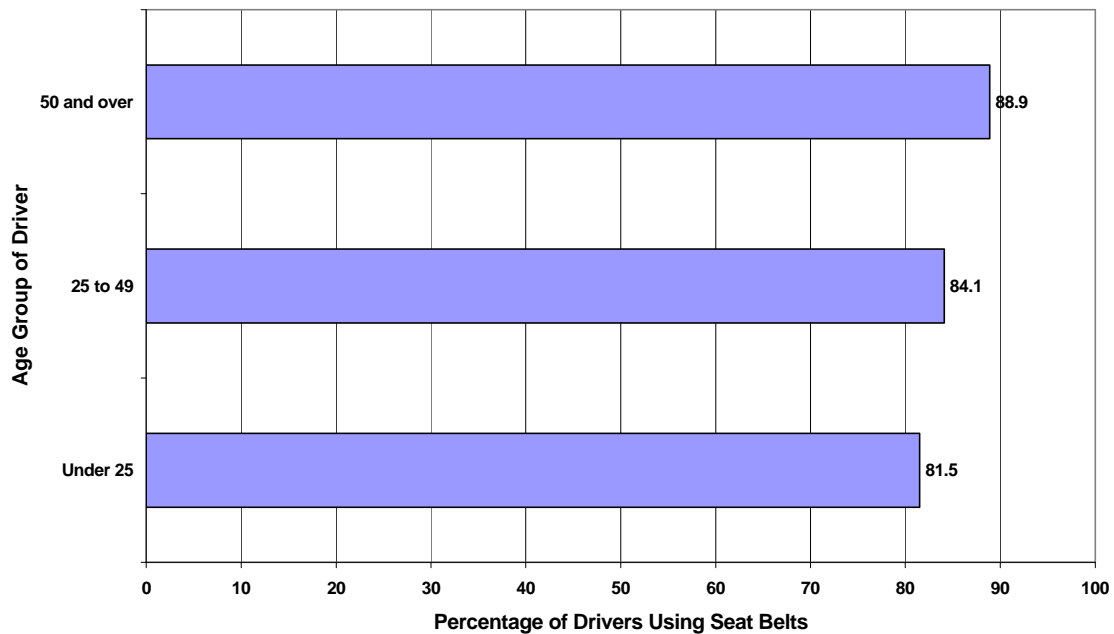
Chart 3
Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type



Seat Belt Usage by Age Group of Driver

- Chart 4 shows that the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts increases with age group, from **81.5%** of those under 25, to **84.1%** of those 25 to 49 and **88.9%** of those 50 and older.
- Other data from the survey show that the increased rate of seat belt usage with age is generally consistent across the three vehicle types:
 - For drivers of passenger cars, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 90.3% (vs. 87.5% for those under 25 and 88.0% for those 25 to 49).
 - For drivers of passenger vans, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 91.7% (vs. 89.9% for those under 25 and 87.1% for those 25 to 49).
 - For drivers of light trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 85.3% (vs. 69.6% for those under 25 and 77.6% for those 25 to 49).

Chart 4
Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Age Group of Driver



CONCLUSION

Road Safety Vision 2010 is targeting a decrease of 30% in the average annual number of road users killed or seriously injured during the 2008-2010 period compared with 1996-2001. Sub-targets include reducing casualties resulting from non-use of restraint systems and decreasing casualties resulting from crashes occurring on rural roadways.

The rural seat belt wearing survey summarized here represents one of a number of important Vision 2010 initiatives undertaken by the National Occupant Restraint Program (NORP 2010) Task Force. The results of this survey will help build a business case for the adoption of measures to meet the NORP 2010 goal of increasing seat belt usage rates in rural Canada from 85% to 95% by 2010.

In the fall of 2003, Transport Canada will conduct a survey of urban communities and their rural fringes that will complement the rural survey.

To find out more about national road safety programs and initiatives, call Transport Canada toll free at **1-800-333-0371** or **(613) 998-8616** if you are calling from the Ottawa area, or e-mail comments or questions to roadsafetywebmail@tc.gc.ca. You can also visit the Transport Canada Web site at www.tc.gc.ca, where you will find links to related sites involving safety, including all provincial sites.