



**RESULTS OF TRANSPORT CANADA'S SEPTEMBER 2004 SURVEY
OF SEAT BELT USE IN RURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY**

BACKGROUND

The National Occupant Restraint Program (NORP 2010) 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 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 promoting seat belt usage is to conduct observational surveys.

In September 2004, Transport Canada conducted an observational survey of seat belt use in rural communities across Canada. This survey was the second one, although there are some differences in the design between the 2002 survey and the 2004 survey.

METHOD

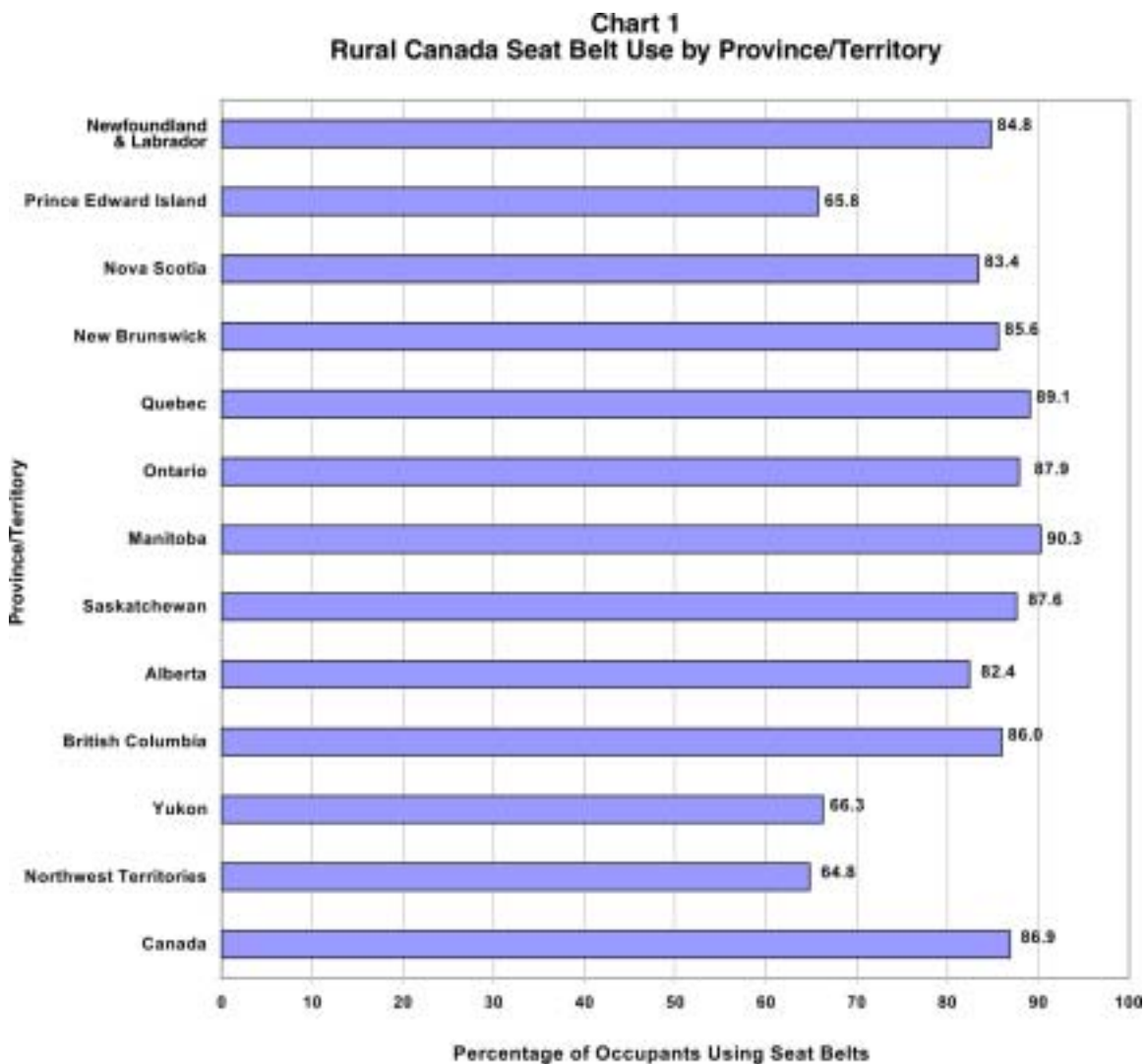
Rural Canada was defined as towns with a population of fewer than 10,000 but more than 1,000 that are located outside any census metropolitan area or census agglomeration¹. The survey targeted all occupants of light-duty vehicles which include passenger cars, light trucks, minivans and sport utility vehicles (SUVs). The survey, which occurred over the week of September 22 to September 28, involved 252 sites. Each observation period was two hours long and took place during daylight hours (between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.). A total of 39,769 vehicles and 58,743 occupants were observed during the course of the survey.

¹ More exactly, the definition used in this survey also include those communities that have a population over 10,000 but are not classified as census agglomerations.

HIGHLIGHTS

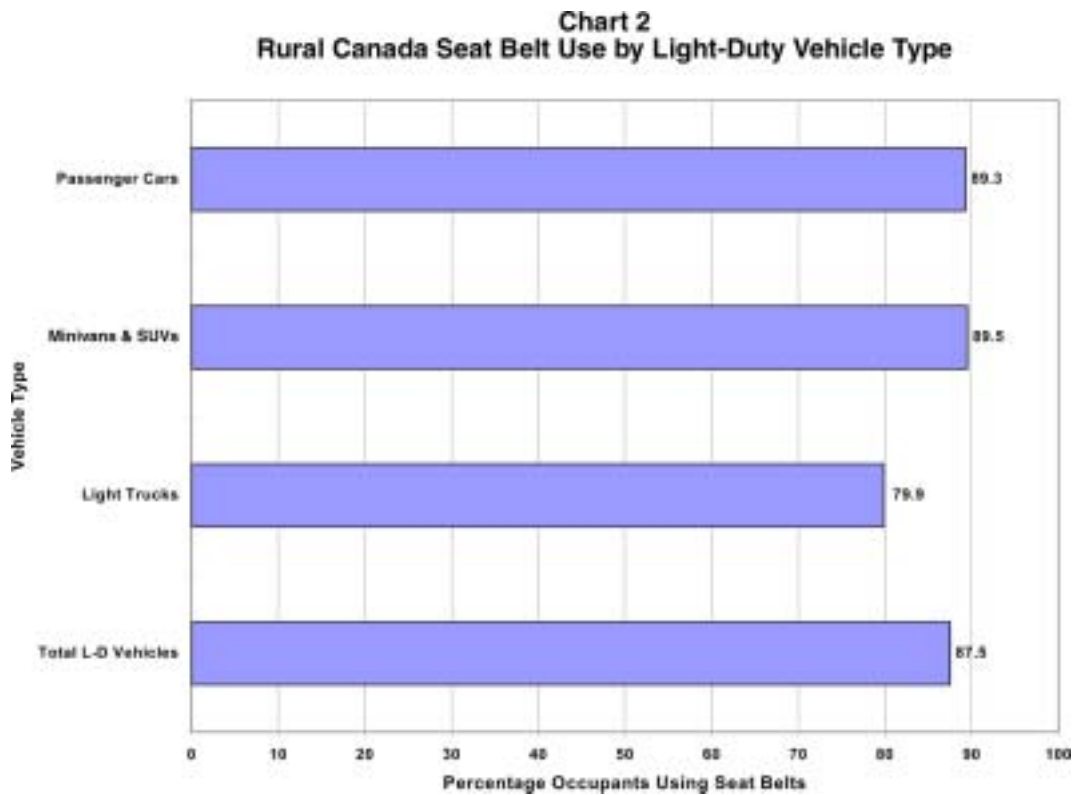
Seat Belt Usage by All Occupants by Province or Territory

- Chart 1 shows that an estimated 86.9% ($\pm 0.7\%$) of all occupants of light-duty vehicles use seat belts. Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were at or above the national average. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, British Columbia, and two of the three territories were below the national average. No data was collected in Nunavut in 2004.



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

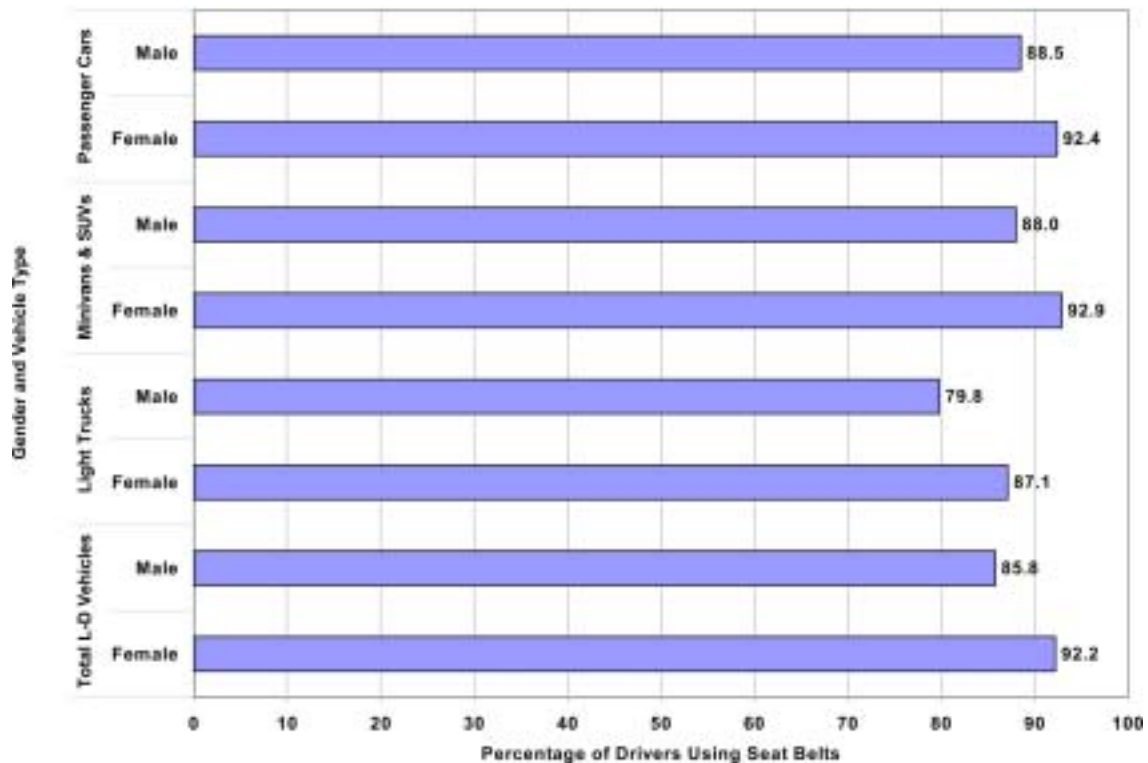
- In the survey, 51.6% of vehicles were passenger cars, 22.1% were minivans and SUVs, and 26.3% were light trucks.
- Chart 2 shows much lower rates of seat belt usage among occupants of light trucks (79.9%) than of passenger cars (89.3%) and minivans and SUVs (89.5%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 90.1% for passenger cars, 89.8% for minivans and SUVs, and 80.7% for light trucks.



Seat Belt Usage by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type

- Chart 3 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (92.2%) than male drivers (85.8%).
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types. The difference ranged from 4.9 percentage points for minivans and SUVs (92.9% for females vs. 88.0% for males) to 7.3 points for light trucks (87.1% for females vs. 79.8% 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, except in the Yukon where it is 64.9% for females and 65.9% for males. Other differences range from 5.1 percentage points in Nova Scotia (92.6% for females vs. 87.5% for males) to 26.7 points in Prince Edward Island (85.7% for females vs. 59.0% for males).

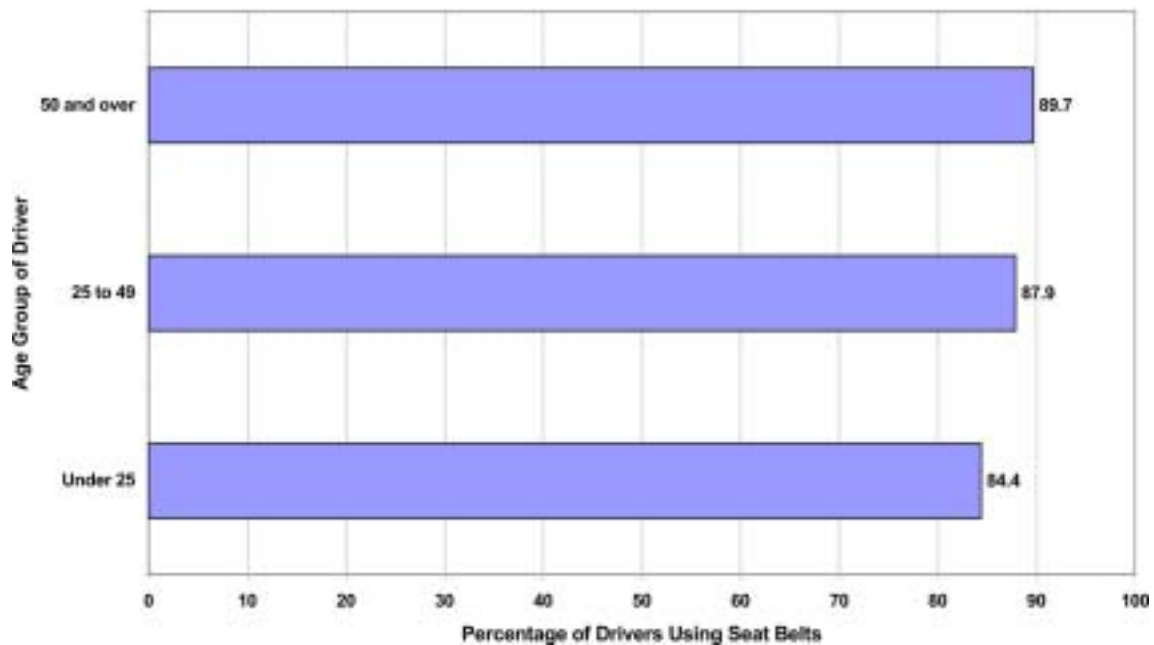
Chart 3
Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type



Seat Belt Usage by Age Group of Driver

- Chart 4 shows that the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts increases with age group, from 84.4% of those under 25, to 87.9% of those 25 to 49 and 89.7% 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 92.1% (vs. 86.0% for those under 25 and 90.1% for those 25 to 49).
 - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 90.6% (vs. 86.0% for those under 25 and 89.8% for those 25 to 49).
 - For drivers of light trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 83.2% (vs. 75.1% for those under 25 and 80.6% for those 25 to 49).

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



Comparison of the rural survey results for 2002 and 2004

- The 2002 rural seat belt survey gathered data only on front seat occupants while the 2004 survey gathered data on all occupants. As a result, the following comparison will be of *front seat occupants only*.
- The 2004 survey comprised communities spread out in 69 geographical regions, while the 2002 survey included 63 regions.
- Communities that have a population over 10,000 but are not classified as census agglomerations have been included in the 2004 survey.
- Some population strata have been combined.
- Rates for each year have an underlying confidence interval. In jurisdictions where the two confidence intervals overlap, the rate is considered not to have changed. In jurisdictions, where the two confidence intervals are completely non-overlapping, the rate is considered to have changed and this is indicated in bold in the table.

Jurisdiction	2002	2004
Newfoundland and Labrador	86.3%	85.0%
Prince Edward Island	76.7%	66.3%
Nova Scotia	90.5%	83.6%
New Brunswick	90.6%	86.5%
Quebec	91.2%	89.3%
Ontario	85.1%	87.9%
Manitoba	80.8%	91.3%
Saskatchewan	85.7%	88.3%
Alberta	77.3%	82.5%
British Columbia	79.7%	86.3%
Yukon	53.9%	65.9%
North West Territories	77.1%	66.4%
Nunavut	22.9%	N/A
Rural Canada	85.0%	87.1%

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 86.9% to 95% by 2010.

In the fall of 2005, Transport Canada plans to conduct a survey of urban communities and their rural fringes that will complement the 2004 rural survey.

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