Results of Transport Canada's September 2006 Survey of Seat Belt Use in Rural Areas of the Country

Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation
Transport Canada

Road Safety Fact Sheet
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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 2006, Transport Canada conducted an observational survey of seat belt use in rural communities across Canada. In 2006, for the first time, data on cell phone use by drivers was also collected.

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 agglomeration[1]. 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 15 to September 21, involved 249 sites. Each observation period was two hours long and took place during daylight hours (between 7:30 a.m. and 18:30 p.m.). A total of 41,137 vehicles and 60,616 occupants were observed during the course of the survey.

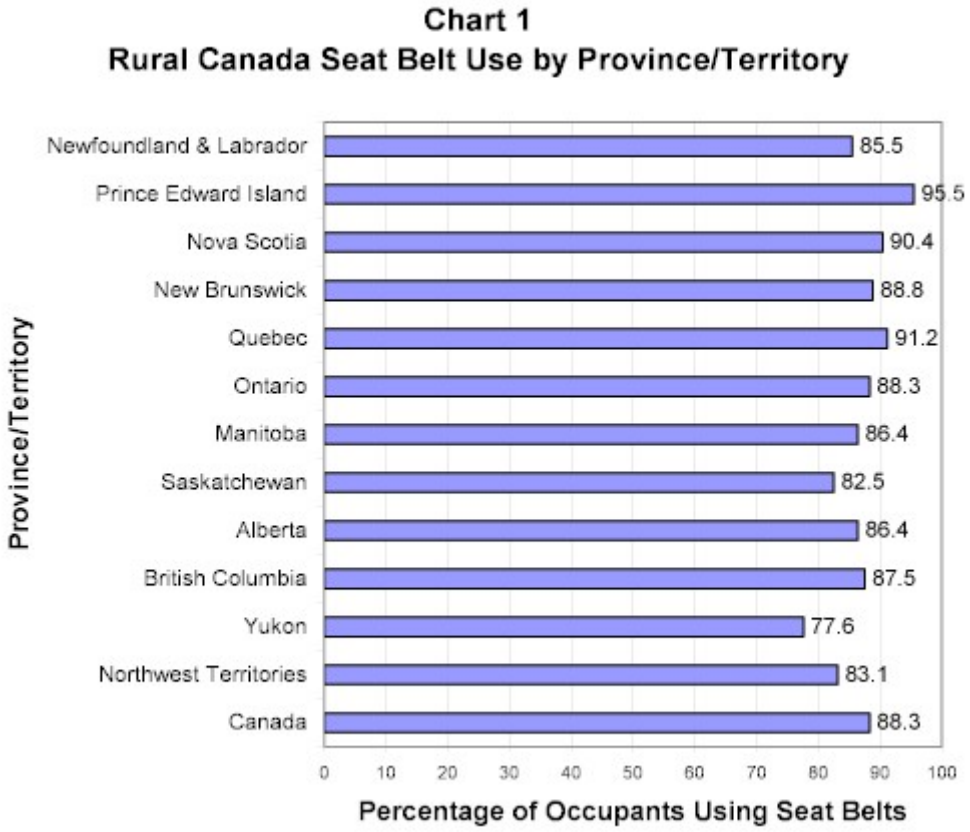
[1.] To be more exact, the definition used in this survey also includes those communities that have a population over 10,000 but are not classified as census agglomerations in Statistics Canada 2001 census.

HIGHLIGHTS

Seat Belt Usage by All Occupants by Province or Territory

- Chart 1 shows that an estimated 88.3% (± 0.3%) of all occupants of light duty vehicles use seat belts. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick Quebec and Ontario were at or above the national average. Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and two of the three territories were below the national average. No data was collected in Nunavut in 2006.

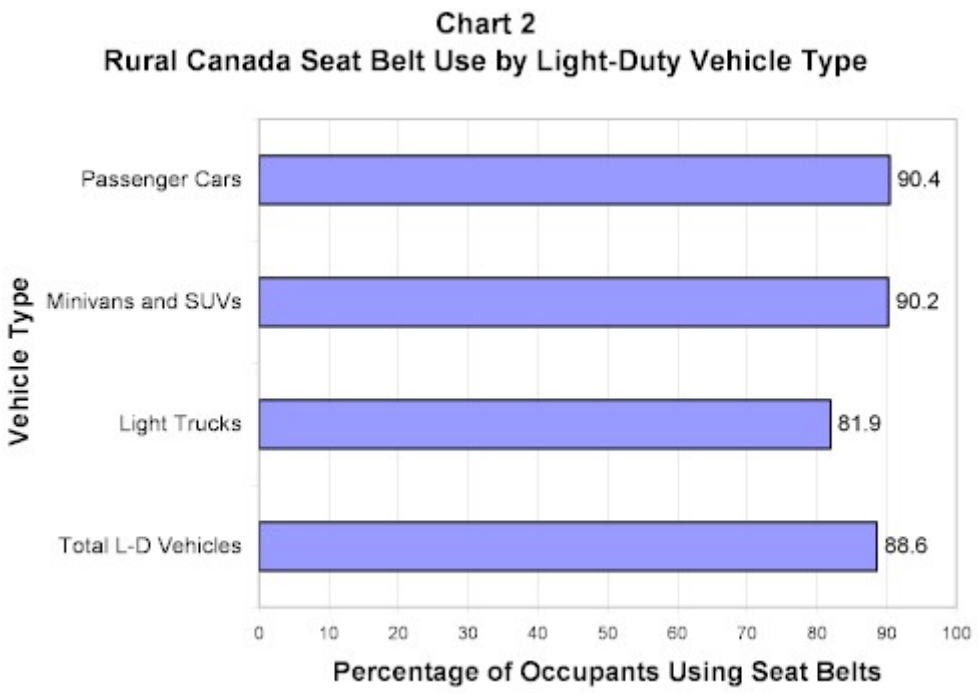
- When compared to the urban survey conducted in 2005, the rural rates are approximately 2.2% lower.



Seat Belt Usage by All Occupants by Light Duty Vehicle Type

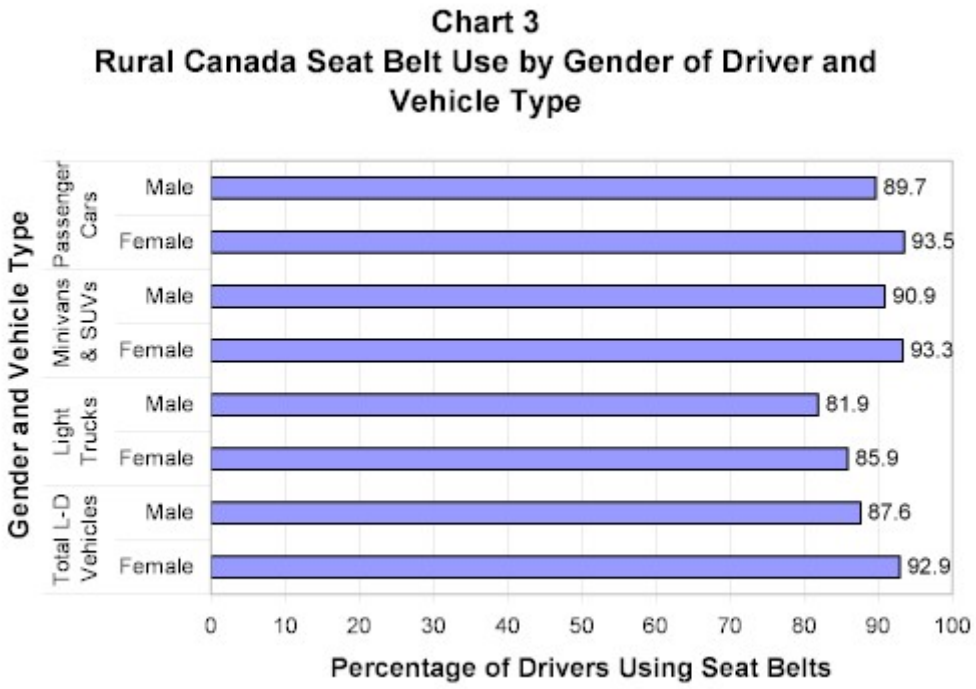
- In the survey, 49.4% of vehicles were passenger cars, 23.8% were minivans and SUVs, and 26.8% were light trucks.

- Chart 2 shows much lower rates of seat belt usage among occupants of light trucks (81.9%) than of passenger cars (90.4%) and minivans and SUVs (90.2%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 91.4% for passenger cars, 91.9% for minivans and SUVs, and 82.3% for light trucks.



Seat Belt Usage by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type

- Chart 3 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wore seat belts (92.9%) than male drivers (87.6%).
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types. The difference ranged from 2.4 percentage points for minivans and SUVs (93.3% for females vs. 90.9% for males) to 4.0 points for light trucks (85.9% for females vs. 81.9% for males).
- Other data from the survey show that the higher rate of seat belt usage by females is consistent across all provinces and territories. The differences ranged from 0.7 percentage points in Prince Edward Island (94.9% for females vs. 94.2% for males) to 13.9 points in Northwest Territories (93.5% for females vs. 79.6% for males).

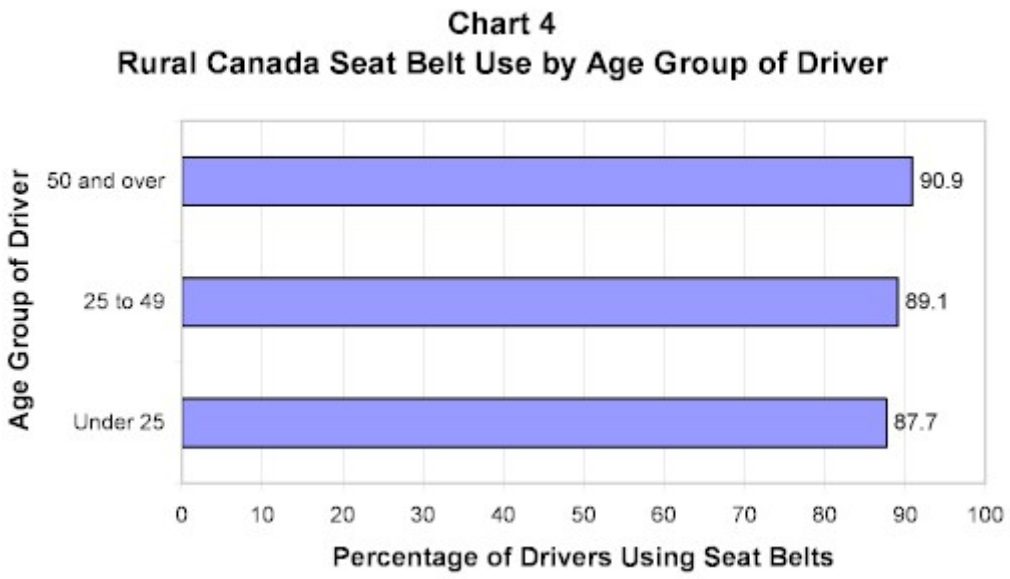


Seat Belt Usage by Age Group of Driver

- Chart 4 shows that the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts increases with age group, from 87.7% of those under 25, to 89.1% of those 25 to 49 and 90.9% 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 92.8% (vs. 88.6% for those under 25 and 91.1% for those 25 to 49).
    - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 93.5% (vs. 89.7% for those under 25 and 91.3% for those 25 to 49).
    - For drivers of light trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 83.9% (vs. 77.9% for those under 25 and 82.1% for those 25 to 49).



Comparison of the Rural Survey Results from 2002, 2004 and 2006

- 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 and 2006 surveys.
- Some population strata have been combined.
- The design for the 2006 survey is identical to that of 2004.

Jurisdiction	2002	2004	2006
Newfoundland and Labrador	86.3%	85.0%	85.4%
Prince Edward Island	76.7%	66.3%	95.3%
Nova Scotia	90.5%	83.6%	90.4%
New Brunswick	90.6%	86.5%	88.9%
Quebec	91.2%	89.3%	91.2%
Ontario	85.1%	87.9%	89.2%
Manitoba	80.8%	91.3%	86.9%
Saskatchewan	85.7%	88.3%	82.8%

Alberta	77.3%	82.5%	86.3%
British Columbia	79.7%	86.3%	87.4%
Yukon	53.9%	65.9%	77.9%
Northwest Territories	77.1%	66.4%	83.9%
Nunavut	22.9%	N/A	N/A
Rural Canada	**85.0%**	**87.1%**	**88.6%**

Comparison of the National Surveys for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006

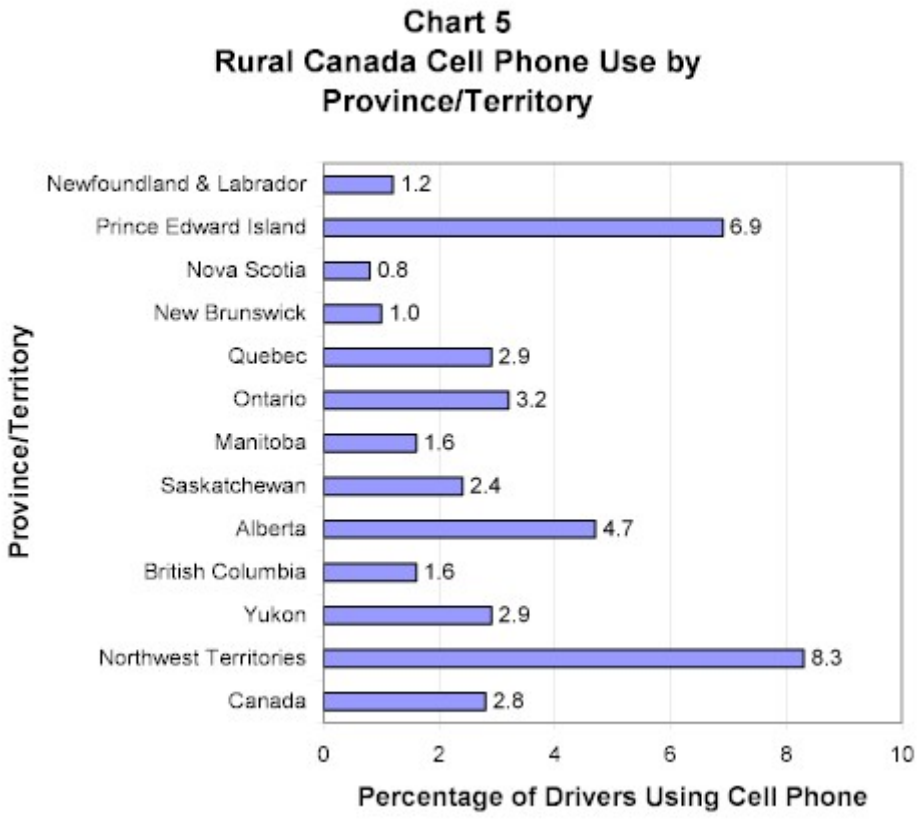
- The 2005 urban survey data was combined with the 2004 and the 2006 rural data to obtain an overall Canadian seat belt usage rate. It represents a weighted average of the urban and rural rates.
- The seat belt usage rate has increased slightly between 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. Most jurisdictions have had an increase in seat belt usage rate except Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.
- In 2005-2006, results show that the seat belt usage rate in the front seat is 91.0% and that in the back seat is 85.3%.

Jurisdiction	2004-2005	2005-2006
Newfoundland and Labrador	87.0%	87.2%
Prince Edward Island	81.4%	88.2%
Nova Scotia	88.7%	91.0%
New Brunswick	85.9%	87.2%
Quebec	90.9%	91.1%
Ontario	92.1%	92.1%
Manitoba	92.1%	91.3%
Saskatchewan	93.7%	92.9%
Alberta	82.9%	83.4%
British Columbia	91.6%	91.7%
Yukon	81.5%	86.9%
Northwest Territories	75.1%	80.2%
Nunavut	N/A	N/A
Canada	**90.5%**	**90.8%**

Driver Cell Phone Use by Jurisdiction

Chart 5 shows that an estimated 2.8% (± 0.2%) of drivers were using a cell phone. Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories were at or above the

national average. Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia were below the national average. No data was collected in Nunavut in 2006.



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 from this survey show that the usage of seat belts in rural Canada continues to be lower than that in urban areas of Canada. 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 88.3% to 95% by 2010.

In the fall of 2007, Transport Canada plans to conduct a survey of urban communities and their rural fringes that will complement the 2006 rural survey.

PDF VERSION

You may download *Results of Transport Canada's September 2006 Survey of Seat Belt Use in Rural Areas of the Country* in Portable Document Format (PDF) (208 Kb). To view PDF documents you must use Adobe® Acrobat Reader. Visit the Adobe site to download the latest, free version.

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