



# Research Notes

Oregon Department of Transportation

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## Who Doesn't Wear a Seat Belt?

Oregon has one of the top rates of seat belt usage in the United States. The reported seat belt compliance rate for 2005 was 93.3%. With such a high compliance rate, it is becoming difficult to identify the remaining population of drivers who do not wear their seatbelts in order to target them with effective educational programs.

Oregon crash record data contains the status of seat belt usage at the time of the crash, as well as driver age, gender, and a unique crash ID number. The record for 2004 shows approximately 23,000 belted drivers and 1,800 unbelted drivers involved in crashes for the year – a 92.3% rate of belt usage at the time of the crash – a number quite similar to the reported seat belt wearing for the general population.



Matching the crash record entries to the DMV driver record allowed comparison of seat belt wearing to:

- age at time of crash;
- the number of convictions on the driver record;
- the number of driver improvement actions on the driver record;
- the number of address changes on the driver record;
- the number of prior crashes on the driver record; and
- driver gender

### Which Drivers Don't Wear?

Compared to the general driving population:

- Drivers with five or more convictions on their driver record were nearly twice as likely to be unbelted.
- Drivers with four or more driver improvement actions on their driver record were more than twice as likely to be unbelted.
- Drivers with six or more address changes on their driver record were more than twice as likely to be unbelted.

Additionally:

- Compared to female drivers, male drivers were nearly one third more likely to be unbelted.
- Compared to younger drivers, drivers 55 years of age and older were as much as 25% more likely to be unbelted.

And perhaps most interestingly:

- Compared to the general driving population, drivers with four or more prior crashes on their driver record were more than twice as likely to be wearing their seat belt at the time of their 2004 crash.

Perhaps they learned from their prior crashes that wearing a seat belt is a good thing?

This information will be presented to the Oregon Transportation Advisory Committee and will also be distributed to traffic officers working under one of the Oregon Department of Transportation's Overtime Safety Belt Enforcement Grants.



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