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## **RESULTS OF TRANSPORT CANADA'S SURVEYS OF SEAT BELT USE IN CANADA 2002-2003**

### **BACKGROUND**

The National Occupant Restraint Program (NORP) 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 NORP is to achieve a minimum rate of 95% in seat belt usage and in the proper use of child restraints by all motor vehicle occupants by 2010. Part of Transport Canada's contribution to this program is to conduct observational surveys of seat belt use. In September 2002, Transport Canada conducted an observational survey of seat belt use in rural communities across Canada. In September 2003, the same survey was conducted in urban communities.

### **METHOD**

The September 2002 and September 2003 surveys were the first of their kind: the first to measure the seat belt usage rate separately in rural Canada and urban Canada. Rural Canada was defined as towns with a population of less than 10,000 but more than 1,000 that are located outside any census metropolitan area, as defined by Statistics Canada's 2001 national census. Urban Canada was defined as communities with a population over 10,000, plus those communities with a population of less than 10,000 that are located within a census metropolitan area.

The rural survey targeted front seat occupants of passenger cars, pickup trucks, and minivans and sport utility vehicles (SUVs). It was conducted at intersections with stop signs, which did not provide sufficient vehicle stopping time to observe the back seat occupants. The survey occurred over the week of September 23 to September 29, 2002, and 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.

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The urban survey targeted all occupants of passenger cars, pickup trucks, and minivans and SUVs. Most intersections had traffic lights, which allow sufficient vehicle stopping time to observe all occupants. This survey, which was conducted over the week of September 22 to September 28, 2003, involved two separate observation periods at each of 260 sites. Each observation period was one hour long and took place during daylight hours (between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.). A total of 69,983 vehicles and 103,451 occupants were observed during the course of the study.

During the two surveys, therefore, a total of 105,385 vehicles and 151,566 occupants were observed at 384 sites across Canada. For the purposes of this report, when we combine the data from the two surveys, the rates of seat belt use are calculated only for front seat occupants.

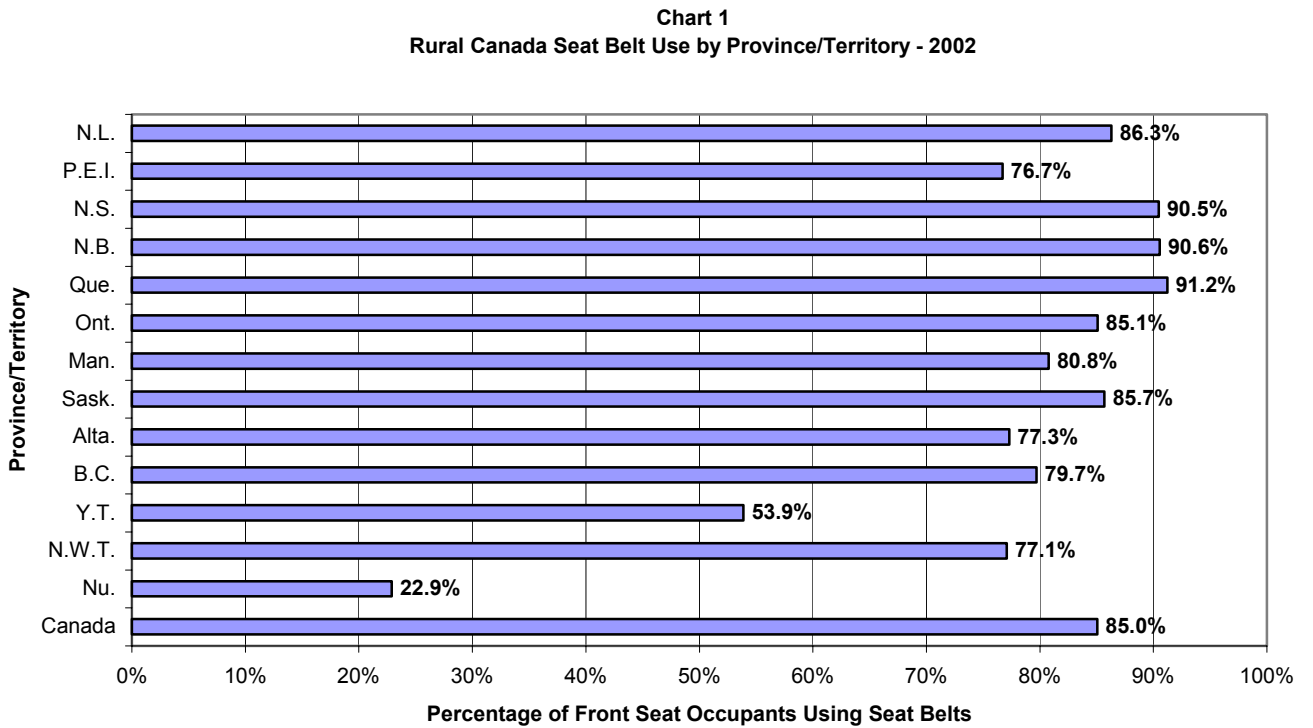
## HIGHLIGHTS

- In Canada, 87.4% ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) of front seat occupants of light-duty vehicles buckle up. In urban communities, an estimated 87.2% ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) of all occupants or 87.6% ( $\pm 1.1\%$ ) of front seat occupants of light-duty vehicles use seat belts, while an estimated 85.0% ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) of front seat occupants of light-duty vehicles in rural communities use seat belts.
- The rate of seat belt usage in Canada is much lower among the front seat occupants of pickup trucks (80.0%) than among the front seat occupants of passenger cars (88.9%) and minivans and SUVs (88.1%). Specifically looking at drivers, the rates were 89.1% for passenger cars, 87.9% for minivans and SUVs, and 79.6% for pickup trucks. Similar findings were evident in both the rural and urban communities of the country.
- A higher percentage of female drivers wore seat belts (89.3%) than male drivers (86.5%) in Canada. The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types and all provinces and territories.
- The proportion of drivers wearing seat belts tends to increase with the driver's age group, but this finding is not consistent across all jurisdictions. In Canada as a whole, the proportion ranges from 85.2% of those under 25, to 88.1% of those 25 to 49 and 87.9% of those 50 and older.

## DETAILED RESULTS

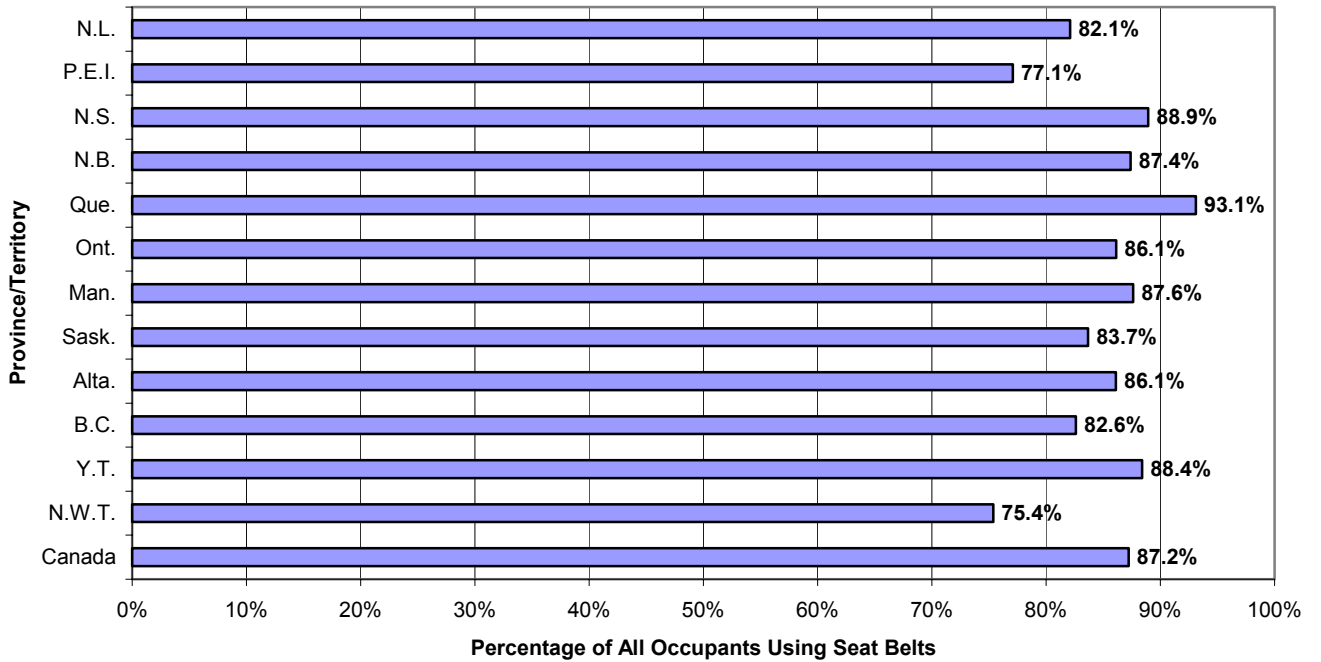
### Seat Belt Usage by Front Seat Occupants by Province/Territory

- Chart 1 shows that in rural communities, 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 and Labrador, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Those below the national average were Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and each of the territories.



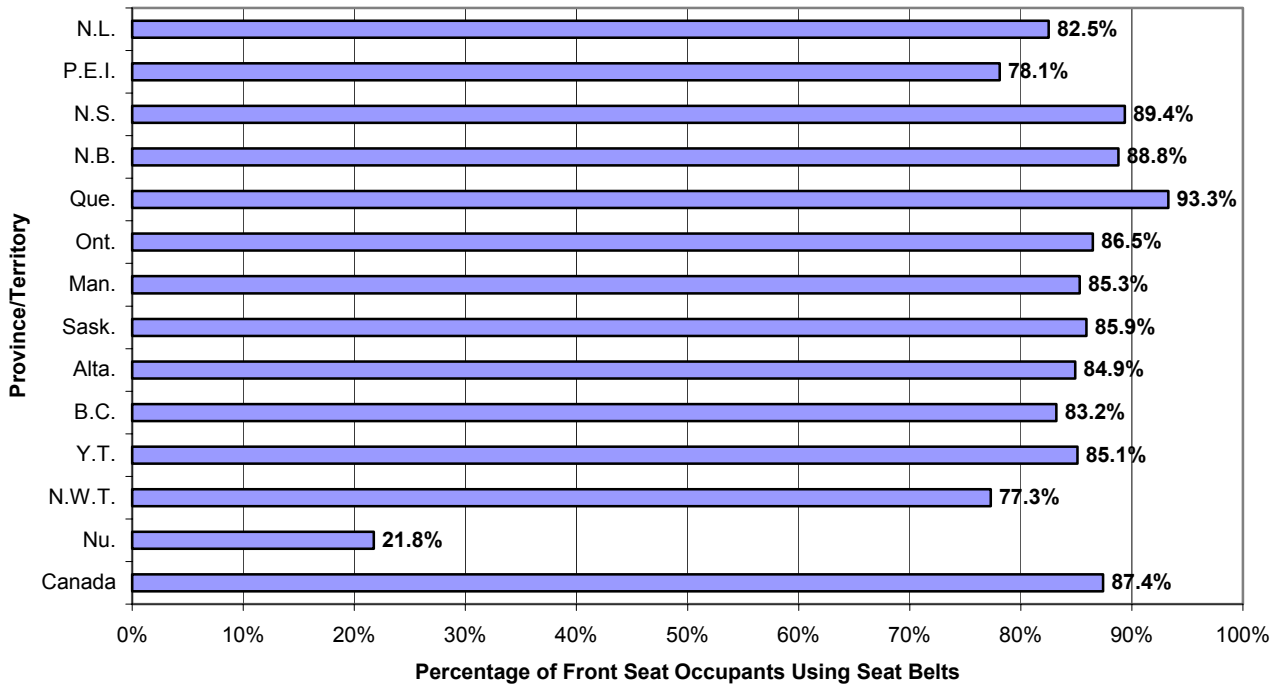
- Chart 2 shows that in urban communities, an estimated 87.2% ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) of all occupants of light-duty vehicles use seat belts. Jurisdictions at or above the national average were Quebec, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, the Yukon Territory and New Brunswick.

**Chart 2**  
**Urban Canada Seat Belt Use by Province/Territory - 2003**



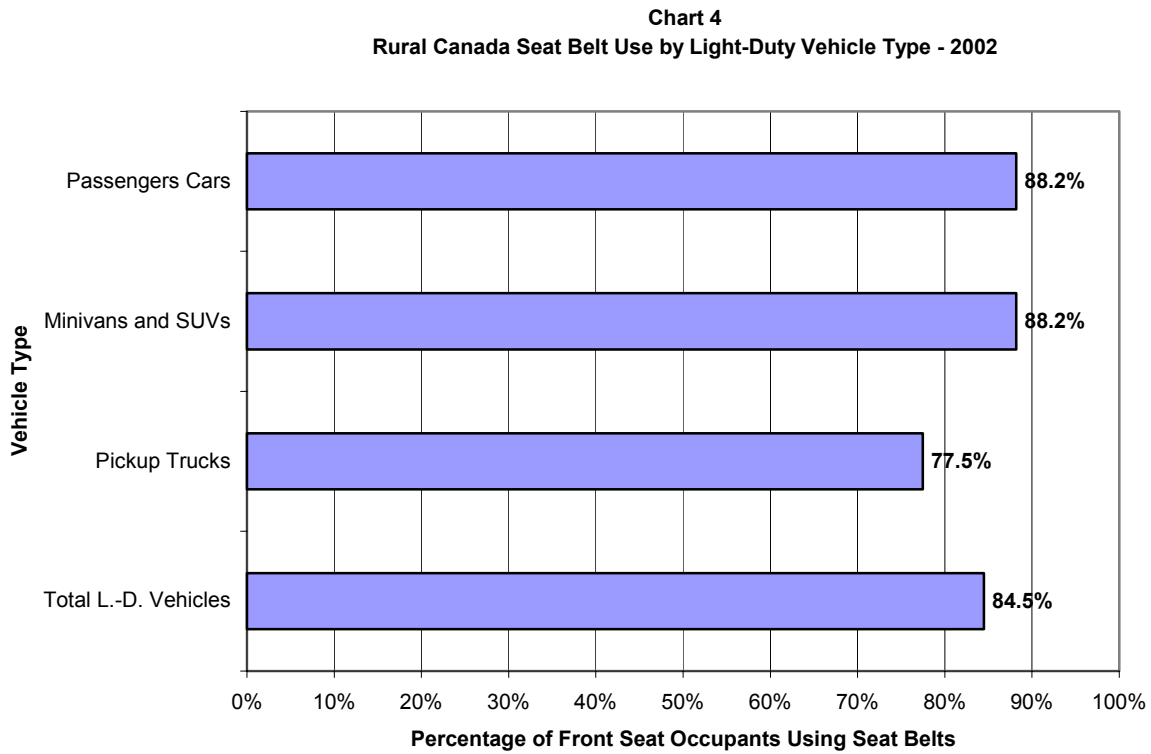
- Chart 3 shows that an estimated 87.4% ( $\pm 1.1\%$ ) of front seat occupants of light-duty vehicles in Canada use seat belts. The jurisdictions at or above the national average were Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

**Chart 3**  
**Canada Seat Belt Use by Province/Territory - 2002-2003**



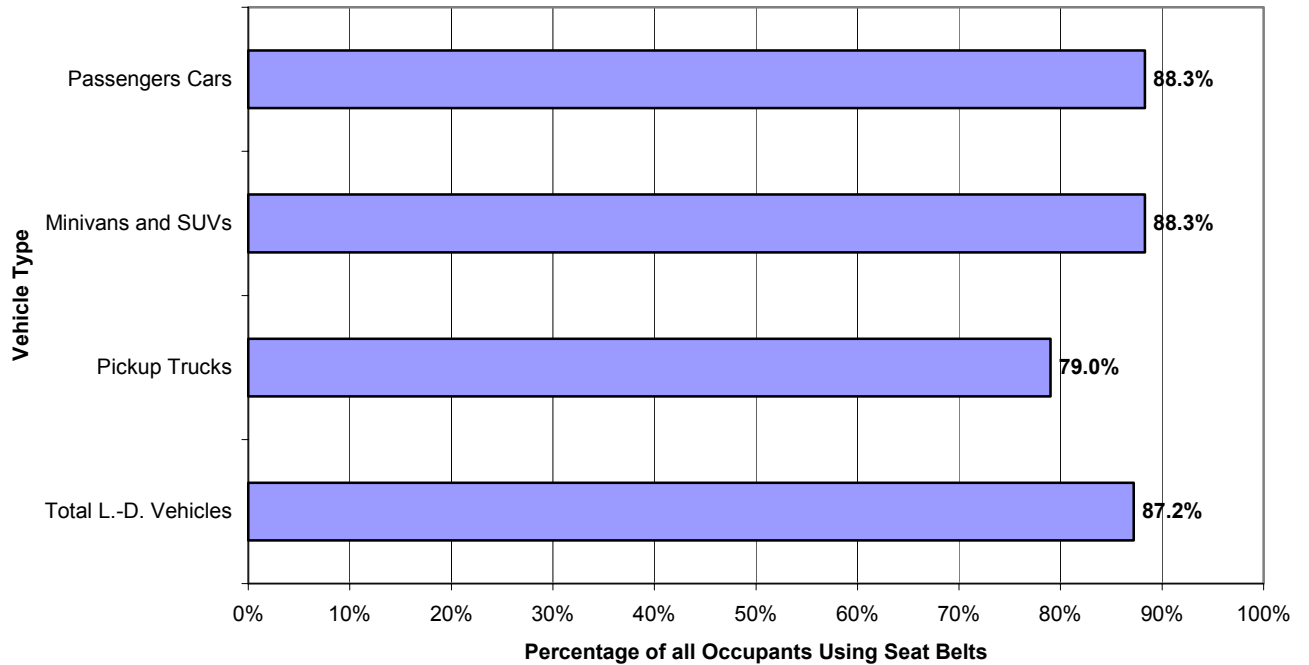
## Seat Belt Usage by Light-Duty Vehicle Type

- Chart 4 shows that in rural communities, the rate of seat belt usage is much lower among front seat occupants of pickup trucks (77.5%) than of passenger cars (88.2%) and minivans and SUVs (also 88.2%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 88.5% for passenger cars, 88.3% for minivans and SUVs and 77.5% for pickup trucks.



- Chart 5 shows that in urban Canada, the rate of seat belt usage is much lower among all occupants of pickup trucks (79.0%) than of passenger cars (88.3%) and minivans and SUVs (88.2%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 89.3% for passenger cars, 87.9% for minivans and SUVs and 79.5% for pickup trucks.

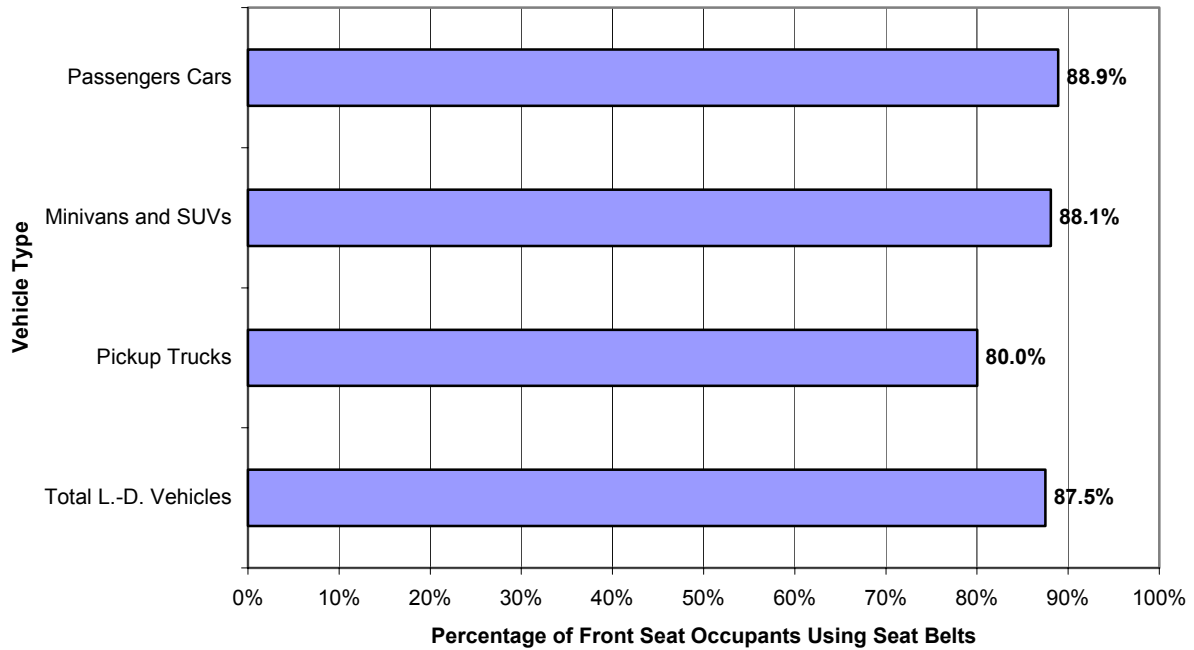
**Chart 5**  
**Urban Canada Seat Belt Use by Light-Duty Vehicle Type - 2003**





- Chart 6 shows that in Canada, the rate of seat belt usage is much lower among the front seat occupants of pickup trucks (80.0%) than among those of passenger cars (88.9%) and minivans and SUVs (88.1%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 89.1% for passenger cars, 87.9% for minivans and SUVs and 79.6% for pickup trucks.

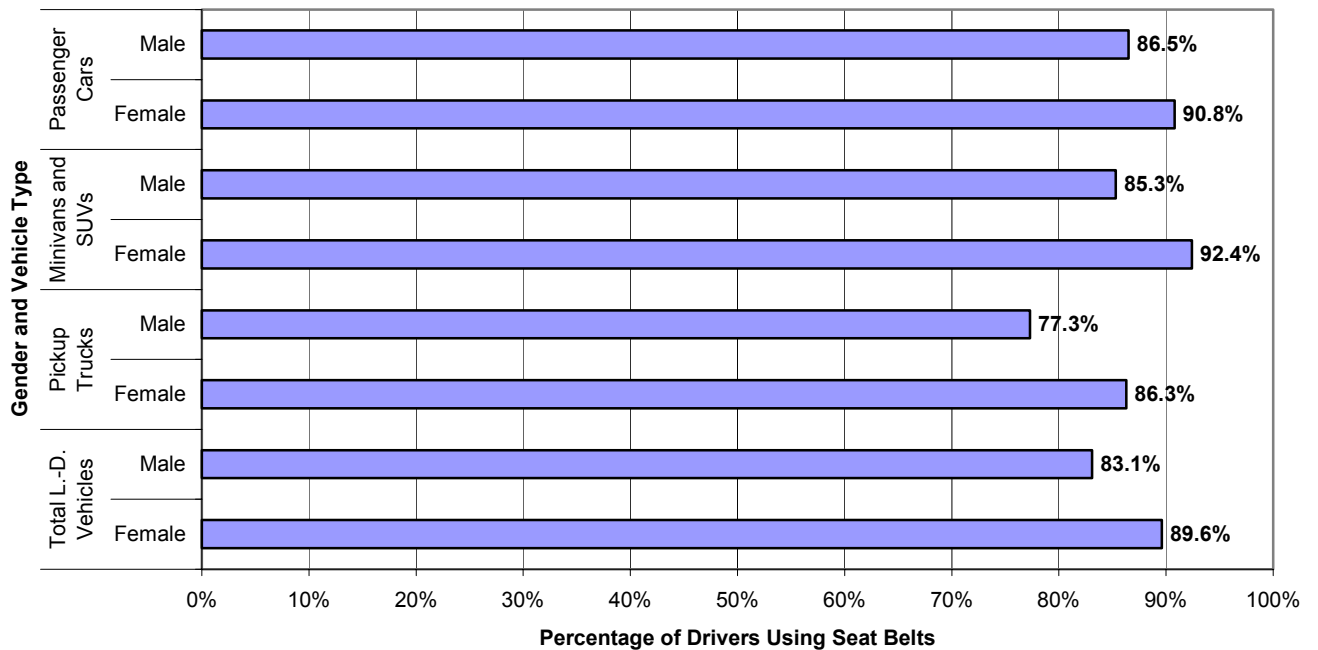
**Chart 6**  
**Canada Seat Belt Use by Light-Duty Vehicle Type - 2002-2003**



## Seat Belt Usage by Gender of Driver

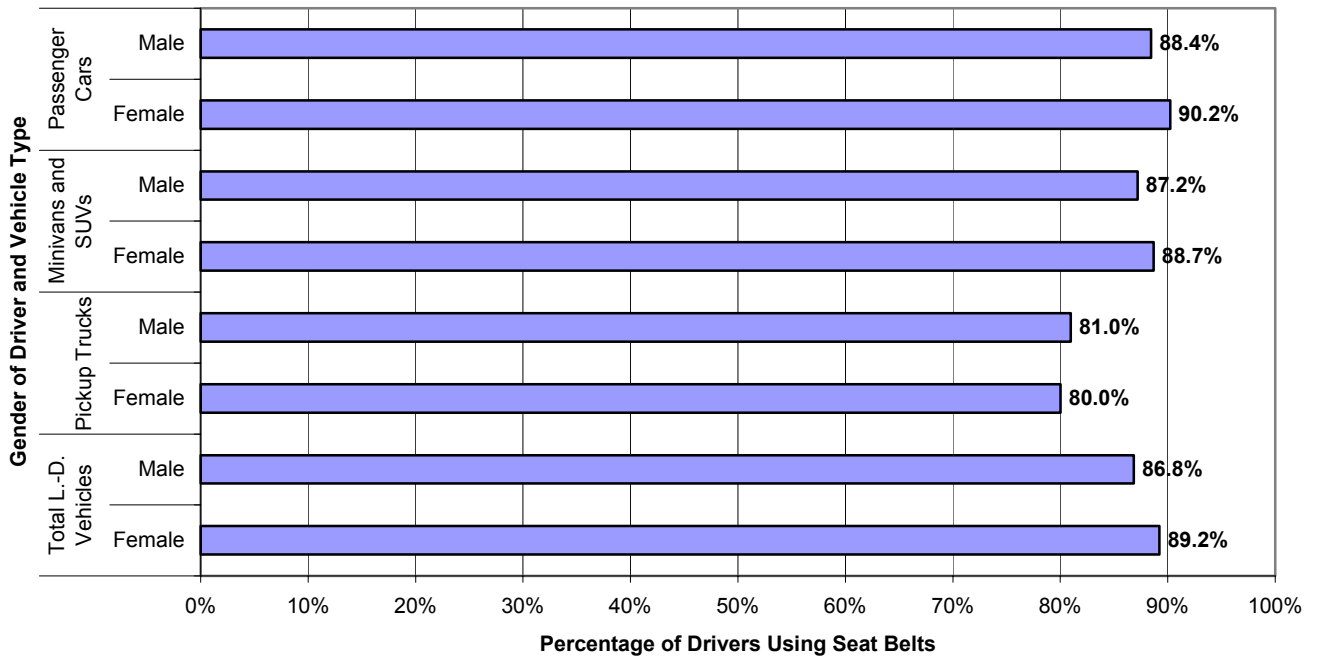
- Chart 7 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (89.6%) than male drivers (83.1%) in rural communities.
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types.
- Other data from the survey show that the higher rate of seat belt usage by females in rural communities is generally consistent across all provinces and territories. The difference ranged 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 7**  
**Rural Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type - 2002**



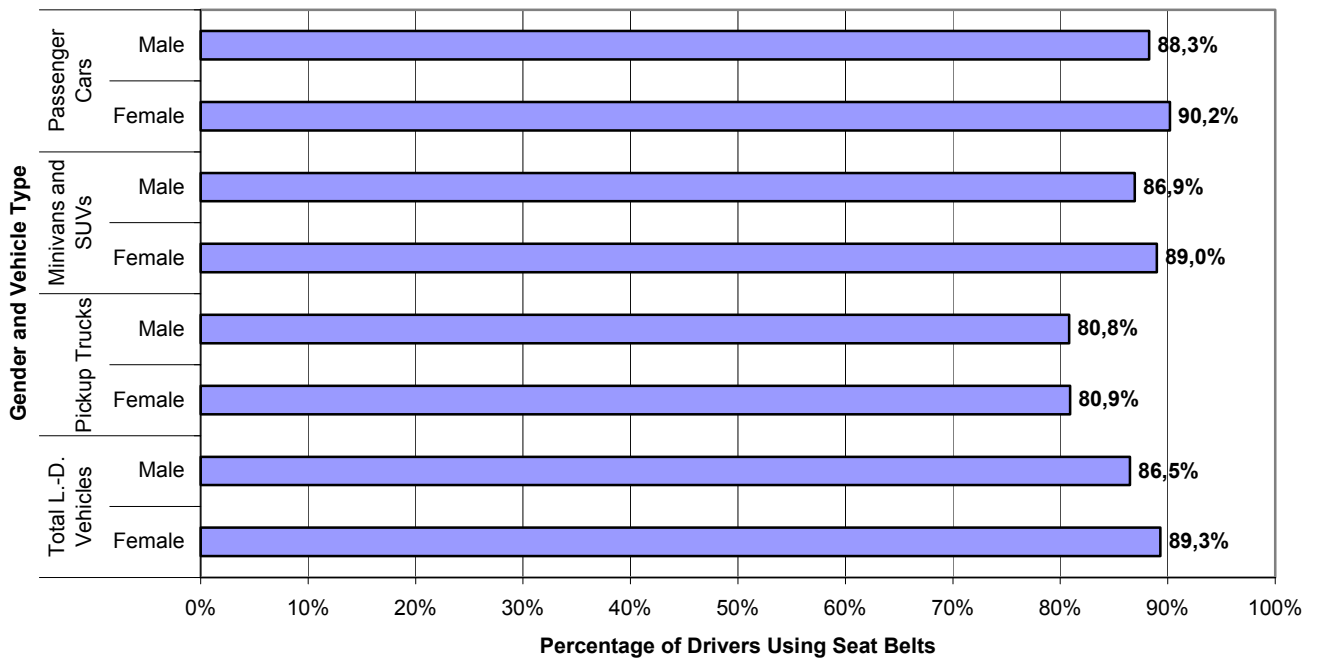
- Chart 8 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (89.2%) than male drivers (86.8%) in urban communities.
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was evident for passenger cars, and minivans and SUVs, but not for pickup trucks.
- Other data from the survey show that the higher rate of seat belt usage by females in urban communities is generally consistent across all provinces and territories. The difference ranged from 8.5 percentage points in the Northwest Territories (82.1% for females vs. 73.6% for males) to 12.4 points in Newfoundland and Labrador (92.5% for females vs. 80.1% for males). Contrary to expectations, more males than females buckled up in Ontario and Alberta.

**Chart 8**  
**Urban Canada Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type - 2003**



- Chart 9 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (89.3%) than male drivers (86.5%) in Canada.
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types.
- 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 difference ranged from 6.5 percentage points in the Yukon (81.9% for females vs. 75.4% for males) to 10.1 points in Newfoundland and Labrador (89.1% for females vs. 79.0% for males).

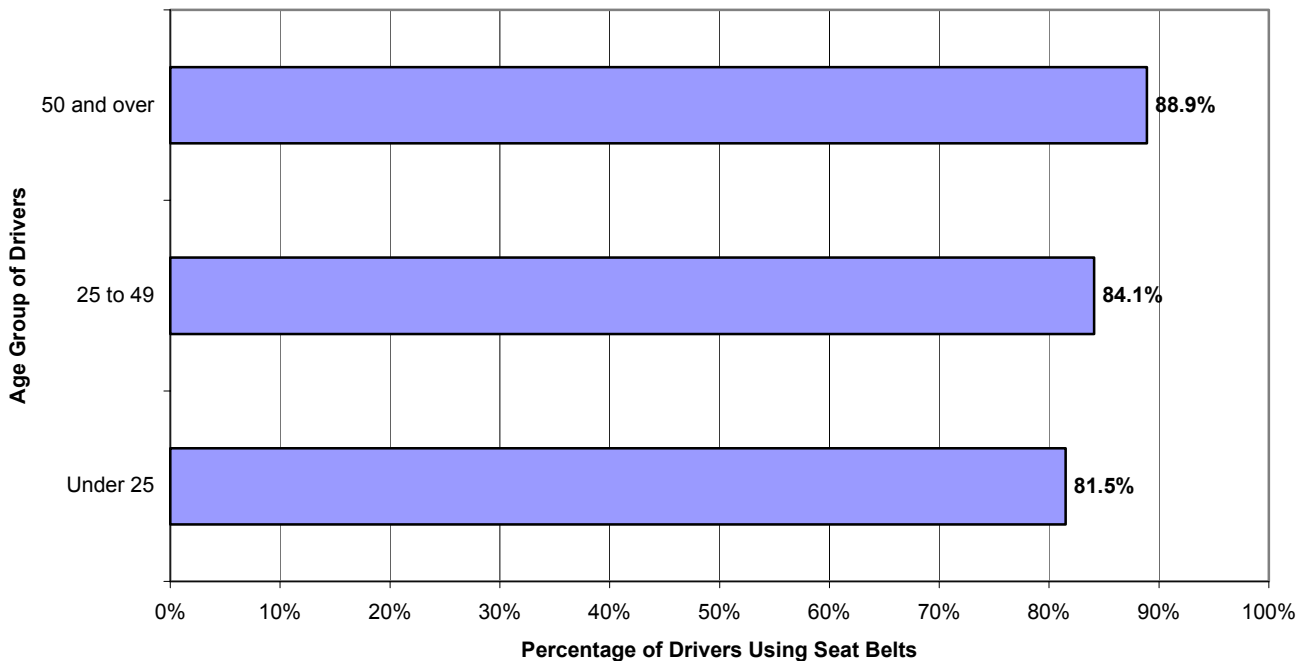
**Chart 9**  
**Canada Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type - 2002-2003**



## Seat Belt Usage by Age Group of Drivers

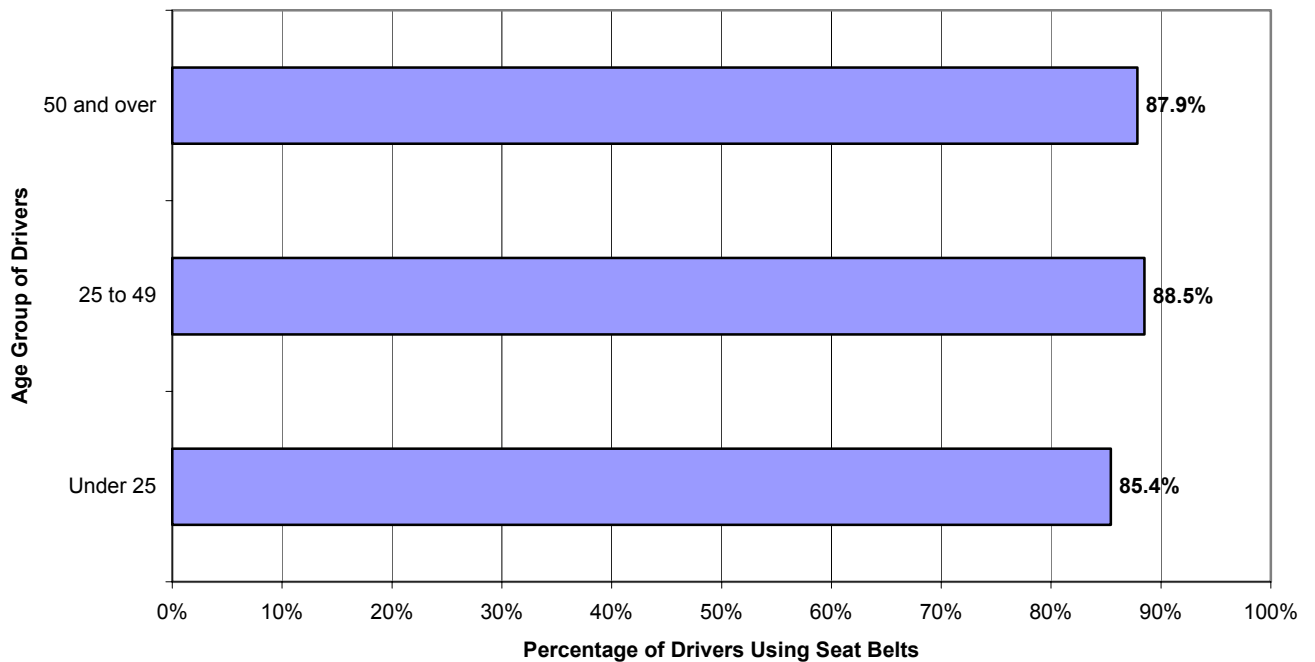
- Chart 10 shows the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts in rural communities, from 81.5% of drivers under 25, to 84.1% of those 25 to 49 and 88.9% of those 50 and older.
- Other data from the rural survey show that the increased rate of seat belt usage with age is generally consistent across the three vehicle types:
  - For drivers of passenger cars, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 90.3% (vs. 88.0% for those 25 to 49 and 87.5% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 91.7% (vs. 87.1% for those 25 to 49 and 89.9% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of pickup trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 85.3% (vs. 77.6% for those 25 to 49 and 69.6% for those under 25).

Chart 10  
Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Age Group of Driver - 2002



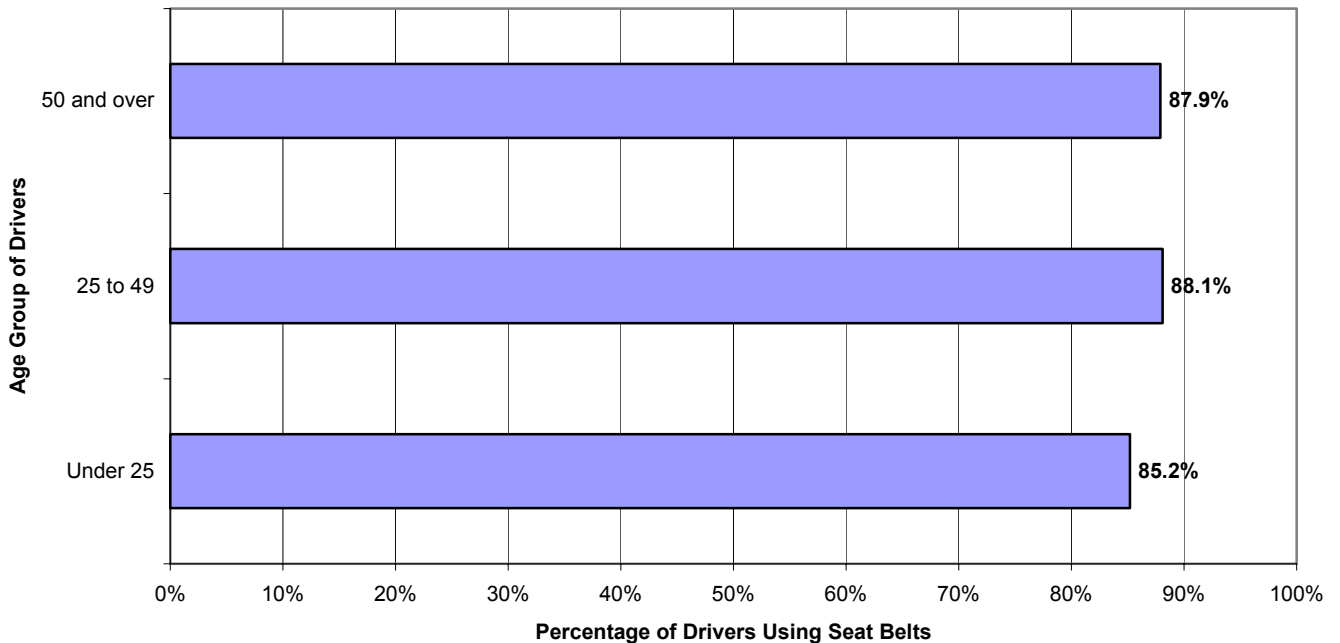
- Chart 11 shows the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts in urban communities, from 85.4% of those under 25, to 88.5% of those 25 to 49 and 87.9% of those 50 and older.
- Other data from the urban survey show that the increased rate of seat belt usage with age is generally consistent across the three vehicle types:
  - For drivers of passenger cars, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 90.5% (vs. 89.7% for those 25 to 49 and 86.5% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 87.2% (vs. 88.9% for those 25 to 49 and 85.2% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of pickup trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 74.3% (vs. 82.9% for those 25 to 49 and 75.5% for those under 25).

**Chart 11**  
**Urban Canada Seat Belt Use by Age Group of Drivers - 2003**



- Chart 12 shows the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts in Canada, from 85.2% of those under 25, to 88.1% of those 25 to 49 and 87.9% 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 90.6% (vs. 89.4% for those 25 to 49 and 86.5% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 87.3% (vs. 88.8% for those 25 to 49 and 85.1% for those under 25).
  - For drivers of pickup trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 75.5% (vs. 82.5% for those 25 to 49 and 75.1% for those under 25).

**Chart 12**  
**Canada Seat Belt Use by Age Group of Drivers - 2002-2003**



## 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 urban and rural seat belt wearing surveys summarized here represent one of a number of important Vision 2010 initiatives undertaken by the NORP Task Force. The survey results will help build a business case for the adoption of measures to increase seat belt usage rates in Canada by 2010.

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