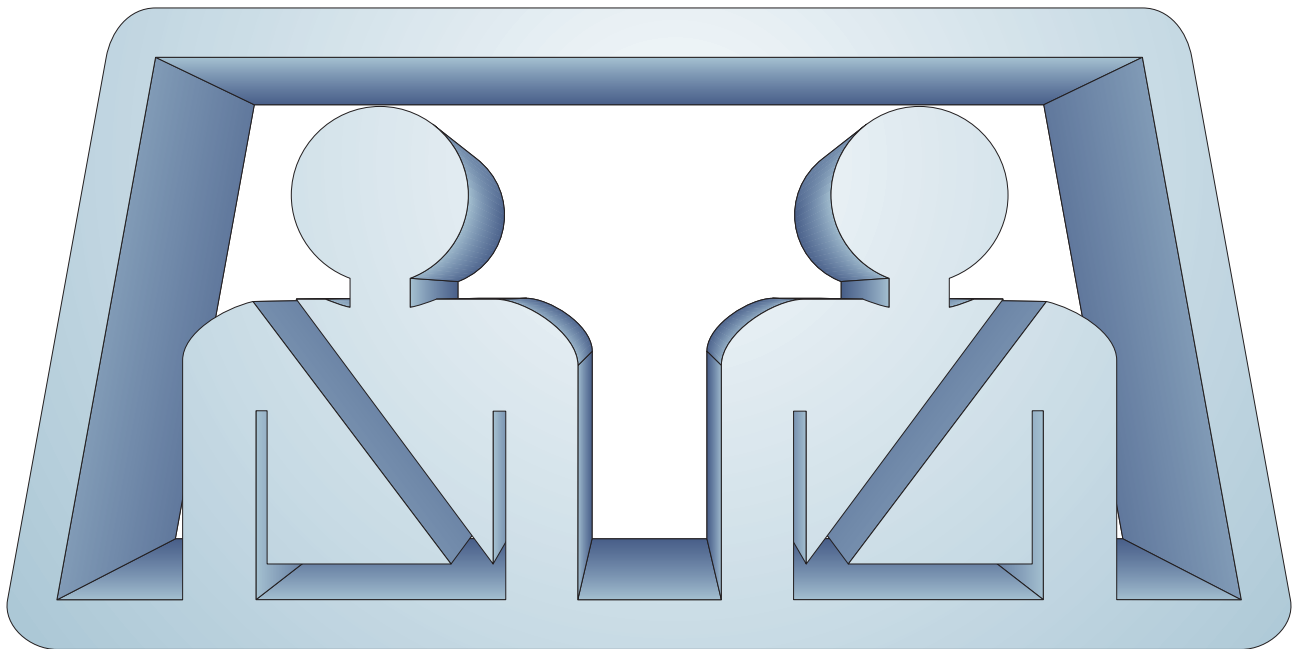


# 1998 Seat Belt Usage Survey



**Site surveys conducted by officers of the  
Iowa State Patrol, Department of Public Safety**

**Statistics compiled and survey written by the  
Office of Driver Services, Iowa Department of Transportation**

# 1998 SEAT BELT USAGE SURVEY

During October 1998, 76.87 percent of motorists surveyed on Iowa roadways were wearing seat belts, an increase of 2.03 percent from last year (see Chart 1—Seat Belt Usage).

**Chart 1 - Seat Belt Usage**

Safety belt usage on the secondary system (county roads) lead the way with a 11.97 percent increase over last year, reversing a two-year downward trend. When taking into account that approximately one-third (33.59 percent) of all motor vehicle crash fatalities occur on the secondary road system, continued efforts toward increased enforcement and public education for the motoring public concerning the importance of safety belt and child safety seat usage on the secondary road system (county roads), even for short-distance trips, must be maintained.

Road Type	1997			1998			Change
	Observed	Used	Percent	Observed	Used	Percent	
<b>Statewide Total*</b>	21,535	16,575	74.85%	20,856	16,140	76.87%	2.03%
<b>Municipal</b>	3,904	2,779	71.18%	5,499	3,853	70.07%	-1.12%
<b>Interstate</b>	8,341	6,972	83.59%	7,584	6,352	83.76%	0.17%
<b>Primary</b>	7,178	5,398	75.20%	6,764	5,133	75.89%	0.69%
<b>Secondary</b>	2,112	1,426	67.52%	1,009	802	79.48%	11.97%

Estimated 1998 statewide total usage weighted by vehicle kilometers traveled (see Chart 21), and 95% confidence intervals for the estimated variance are +/-0.32%

Usage on the primary system (U.S. or state highways) rose 0.69 percent from the previous year. This also is welcome news because almost half of all fatalities (49 percent) occur on the primary road system. Interstate belt use increased slightly (0.17 percent). Interstate usage has traditionally been the highest of all roadway categories presumably because the longer trips, higher travel speeds and vehicle density cause drivers to assume there is greater risk. Safety belt usage on municipal road systems (city streets) has slipped slightly (-1.12 percent). This is unfortunate because more than 45 percent of all motor vehicle crashes occur on city streets. In communities where usage is good, enforcement and public education must be maintained in order to improve further: in communities where usage is low, enforcement and public education must both be increased.

Belt usage for 20,856 front seat occupants of cars, vans and pickups was observed at 100 locations. Belt usage or non-usage could not be determined for an additional 534 front seat occupants. Of these front seat occupants, 77.82 percent of drivers (12,586 out of 16,174) and 75.91 percent of passengers (3,554 out of 4,682) were observed using seat belts.

## Methodology

The methodology of this survey follows prior surveys by using a sample of 100 sites which were selected on the basis of population, geographical location, and statewide vehicle kilometers traveled by road system. (See Chart 17—Site Selection Listing, and Chart 18—Site Selection by County.) The surveys have been done primarily at the same sites consistently since 1988. The development of the survey also follows specifications of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.<sup>2</sup> The survey was conducted by troopers of the Iowa State Patrol, Department of Public Safety, between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Sunday. Observations were made for approximately one hour at each site.

## Belt Law Background

The Iowa law mandating seat belt usage went into effect July 1, 1986. A \$10 fine, plus court costs, was effective January 1, 1987. The law requires front seat occupants, age 6 and older, to properly wear a seat belt in 1966 or newer model motor vehicles. The law allows primary enforcement (i.e., officers can stop a vehicle when non-use of belts is observed). Medical exemptions and other exemptions are allowed. Children under the age of 6 are covered by the child restraint law, which went into effect January 1, 1985. The child restraint usage law requires children under age 3 to be in an approved safety seat, and children ages 3 to 6 must be in a safety seat or seat belt in any position in the vehicle. (Copies of the annual child restraint survey results are also available through the Iowa Department of Transportation.)

## Enforcement

The seat belt law has been actively enforced in the state. There were 79,627 seat belt citations and 4,639 child restraint citations issued in 1997 through law enforcement efforts, a decrease from 84,714 and 4,954, respectively, in 1996. (See Charts 14 through 16

1. Iowa Department of Transportation, 1995 Iowa Crash Facts, Roadway & Environment Conditions, p. 71.

2. "Guidelines for State Observational Surveys of Safety Belt & Motorcycles Helmet Use, Federal Register," Vol. 57 No. 125, June 29, 1992, p. 28903.

for seat belt/child restraint citations issued.) Iowa's seat belt usage rates followed trends similar to those in other states, showing a large increase after fines were first imposed (increasing from 27 percent in June 1986 to 63 percent in April 1987). In September 1987, usage dropped to 56 percent, but enforcement and public education has steadily increased usage to the current 77 percent.

**Chart 2**

**Percentage of Restraint Usage by Year & Road Type**

Survey	All	Municipal	Interstate	Primary	Secondary
JUN 86	27%	20%	43%	27%	24%
SEP 86	46%	34%	62%	48%	42%
APR 87	63%	54%	69%	65%	64%
SEP 87	56%	48%	67%	56%	55%
SEP 88	55%	46%	69%	55%	52%
SEP 89	59%	49%	72%	56%	61%
SEP 90	61%	49%	76%	60%	61%
SEP 91	68%	64%	79%	64%	64%
SEP 92	71%	62%	83%	69%	71%
SEP 93	73%	59%	80%	73%	71%
SEP 94	73%	63%	82%	72%	72%
SEP 95	75%	65%	85%	75%	76%
SEP 96	75%	69%	85%	74%	71%
NOV 97	75%	71%	84%	75%	68%
OCT 98	77%	70%	84%	76%	79%

NOTE: For easier comparison, percentages have been rounded to the nearest full digit.

**Summary**

The 77 percent seat belt usage rate in 1998 (up 6 percent since 1992) reflects active enforcement and education efforts that have occurred in Iowa during the last few years. Through continuing education of the public, an active "Life Toll" campaign, seat belt enforcement, and other cooperative efforts between state and local law enforcement, Iowa will strive to increase the use of seat belts and save lives on Iowa roadways.

**Chart 3**

**Usage Percent by Year - ALL ROAD TYPES**

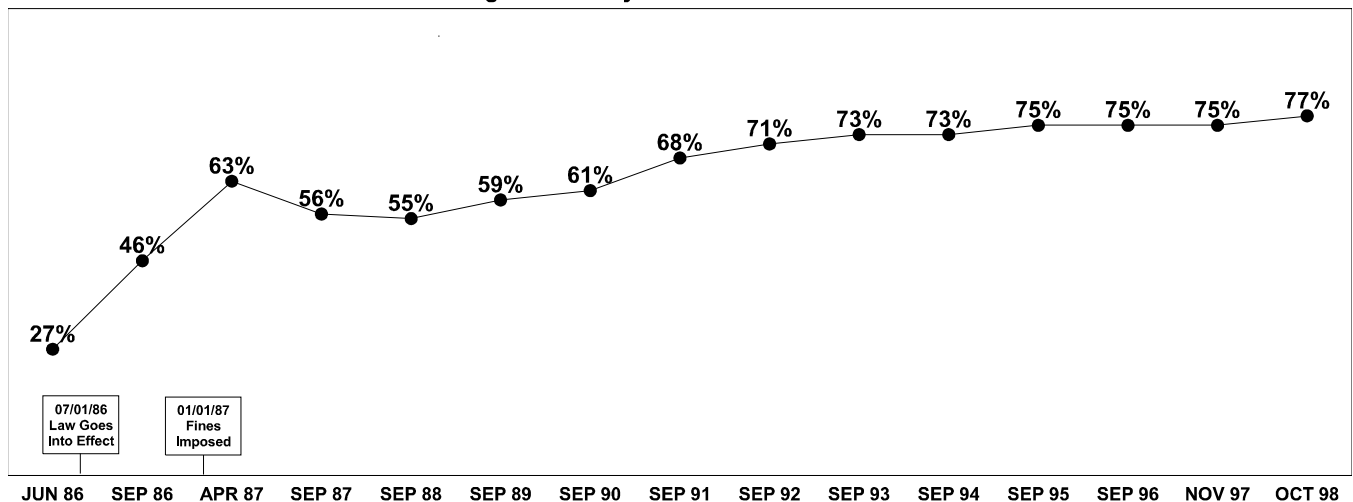


Chart #4  
Usage Percent by Year - MUNICIPAL

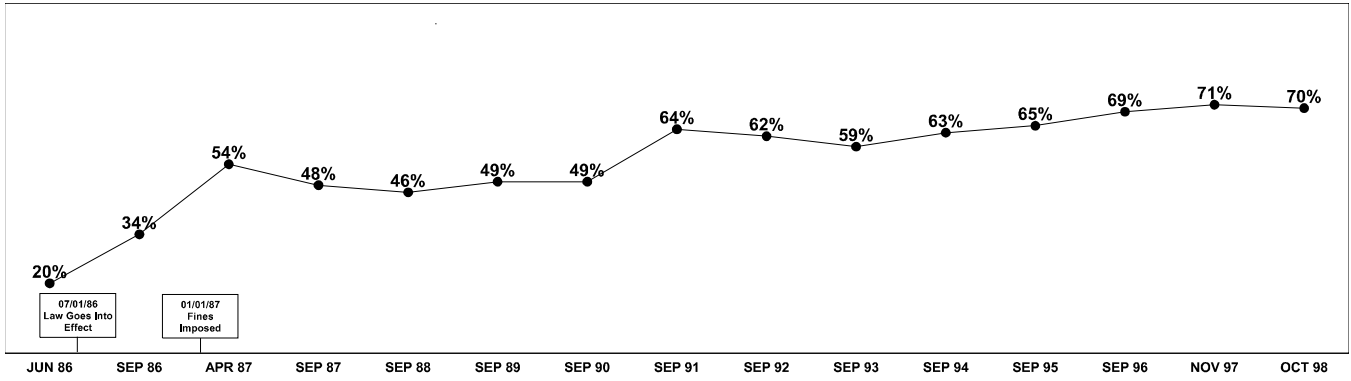


Chart #5  
Usage Percent by Year - INTERSTATE

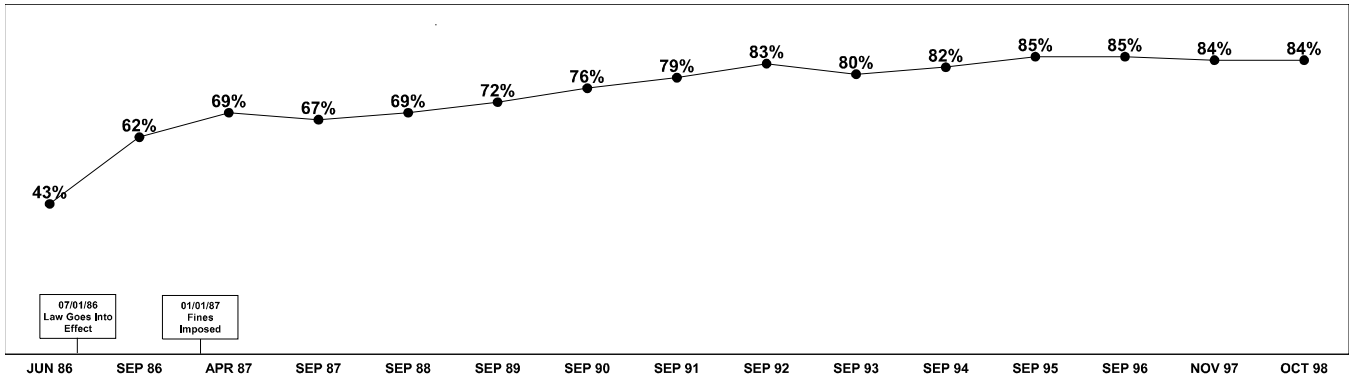


Chart #6  
Usage Percent by Year - PRIMARY

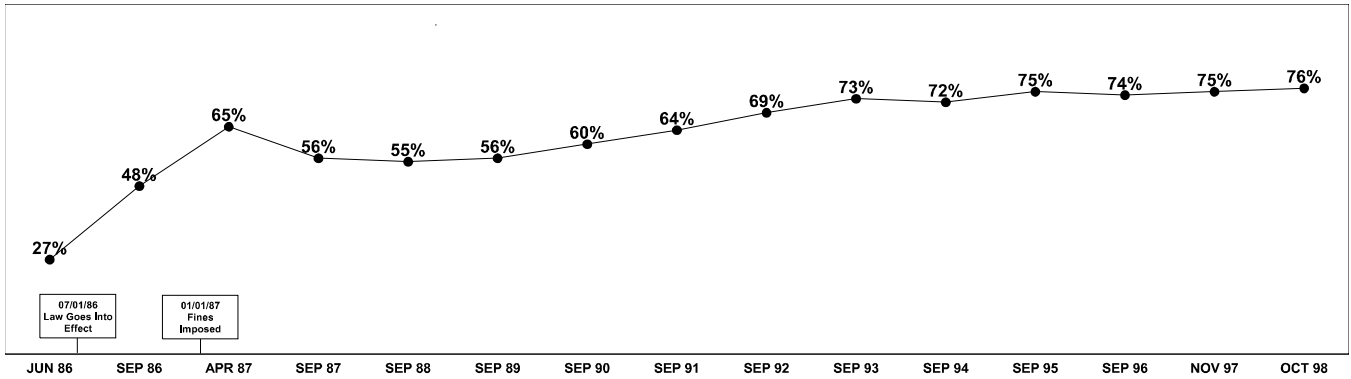
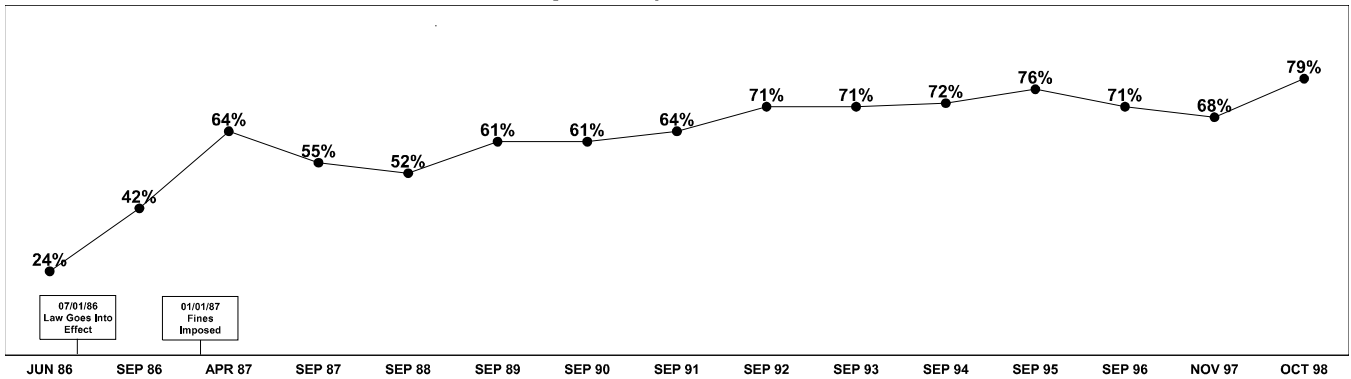


Chart #7  
Usage Percent by Year - SECONDARY



### Chart 14

#### Seat Belt/Child Restraint Citations Issued by Month & Year

Month	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
January	4,058	4,381	3,529	5,163	4,470	4,790	6,334	5,038	4,673
February	3,445	4,605	6,014	6,465	5,236	6,558	7,452	6,778	6,391
March	4,598	5,235	6,950	6,765	6,292	8,071	7,806	10,403	9,785
April	5,110	4,723	7,277	6,920	6,793	8,379	7,263	8,634	8,387
May	5,115	5,666	8,272	7,517	8,457	9,090	8,826	11,266	9,131
June	4,380	4,625	9,029	7,043	7,015	8,070	8,727	9,416	8,367
July	4,452	5,169	6,108	6,556	7,016	8,023	8,504	8,646	9,039
August	4,206	4,241	5,865	5,798	6,017	6,801	7,284	8,887	7,931
September	4,410	4,127	6,215	5,740	6,889	6,381	7,773	6,458	6,489
October	3,504	3,476	4,146	4,095	6,235	5,360	5,399	5,036	5,737
November	3,560	3,186	3,253	3,804	5,499	5,522	6,430	5,387	4,991
December	2,750	1,850	3,491	3,705	5,442	5,191	5,433	4,116	4,345
Total	49,588	51,284	70,149	69,571	75,361	82,236	87,231	90,065	85,266

### Chart 15

#### Total Seat Belt/Child Restraint Citations Issued by Year

