

1996
**Motor Vehicle
Occupant Safety Survey**
Volume 5:

Child Safety Seat Report



U.S. Department of Transportation
**National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration**

NTSA
People Saving People
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| <p>The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) commissioned the research firm of Schulman Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI) to conduct the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Between November 4, 1996 and January 5, 1997 SRBI conducted a total of 8,210 telephone interviews among a national population sample. The percentages provided in the report are weighted to accurately reflect a national population sample. This report is a follow-up to the 1994 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, thereby permitting comparisons of the public's attitudes and behavior regarding car seats between 1994 and 1996.</p> <p>As in the 1994 survey, the 1996 version asked drivers about their use (or non-use) of car seats in the vehicle they usually drive; and their attitudes toward the enforcement of car seat laws. Finally, the survey gathered trend data on key items from 1994 and 1996 to explore possible changes in behavior between the two years.</p> | | | | | |
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1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey

Background

In 1994, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducted its first Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Two years later, NHTSA commissioned a follow-up survey, the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. The 1996 survey includes many items from the first survey, which will allow NHTSA to monitor change over time in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to motor vehicle occupant safety, including the use of seat belts, car seats, air bags, and bicycle and motorcycle helmets. The 1996 survey also includes new questions which address emerging areas of interest or concern in occupant safety.

The following report represents that segment of the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey concerning children's car seats. This section explores the public's attitudes and behaviors regarding their use of car seats. Specifically, it explores the following three areas: 1) 1996 car seat use; 2) reasons for car seat use and non-use; and 3) attitudes toward the enforcement of car seat laws. A fourth section examines trends between 1994 and 1996 on selected car seat issues covered in the previous sections of the report.

Methodology

The 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey was conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI), a national survey research organization. SRBI conducted a total of 8,210 telephone interviews among a national population sample. To limit the survey length, SRBI separated the questionnaire into two versions. A total of 4,188 interviews were completed in Version 1 and 4,022 completed interviews in Version 2. Although some questions were used in both versions, each had its own set of distinct topics. Each sample was composed of approximately 4,000 persons age 16 and older, including oversamples of persons age 16-39. The procedures used in the survey yielded national estimates of the target population within specified limits of expected sampling variability, from which valid generalizations can be made to the general public.

The survey was fielded from November 4, 1996 to January 5, 1997. This is approximately the same time period in which the 1994 Occupant Protection Survey was conducted (October 5, 1994 to December 11, 1994). For a complete description of the methodology and sample disposition, including computation of weights and precision of sampling estimates, refer to the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, Volume 1: Methodology Report.

The percentages provided in the following report are weighted to accurately reflect the national population of drivers age 16 or over. Unweighted sample sizes (N's) are included so that readers know the exact number of respondents answering a given question, allowing them to estimate sampling precision. Percentages for some items may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding, or because the question allowed for more than one response.

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 1

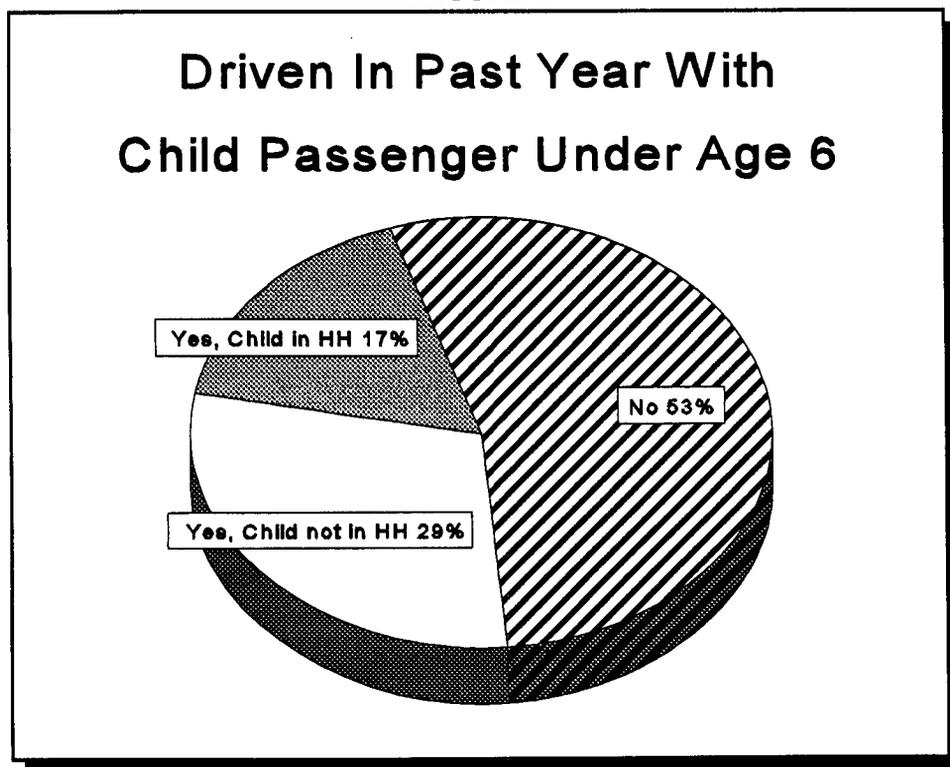
1996 CAR SEAT USE

Child safety seats play an important role in protecting infants and young children from motor vehicle-related injury and death. The 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey collected data on caregiver knowledge and use of child car seats.

Driving With A Child Under Age 6

Nearly half (46%) of drivers age 16 and older in the United States have in the past year driven a vehicle with a child under age 6 as a passenger. About a third of these, or 17% of all drivers, have driven in the past year with a young child who lives in their household. A substantially larger percentage (29%) of drivers who do not have a young child living in their household have nonetheless driven with one at some time in the past year. The fact that substantially more people have driven with a child who does not live with them than with a child who does suggests that efforts to educate the public about the importance of car seat use should include people other than parents among the target audience.

FIGURE 1



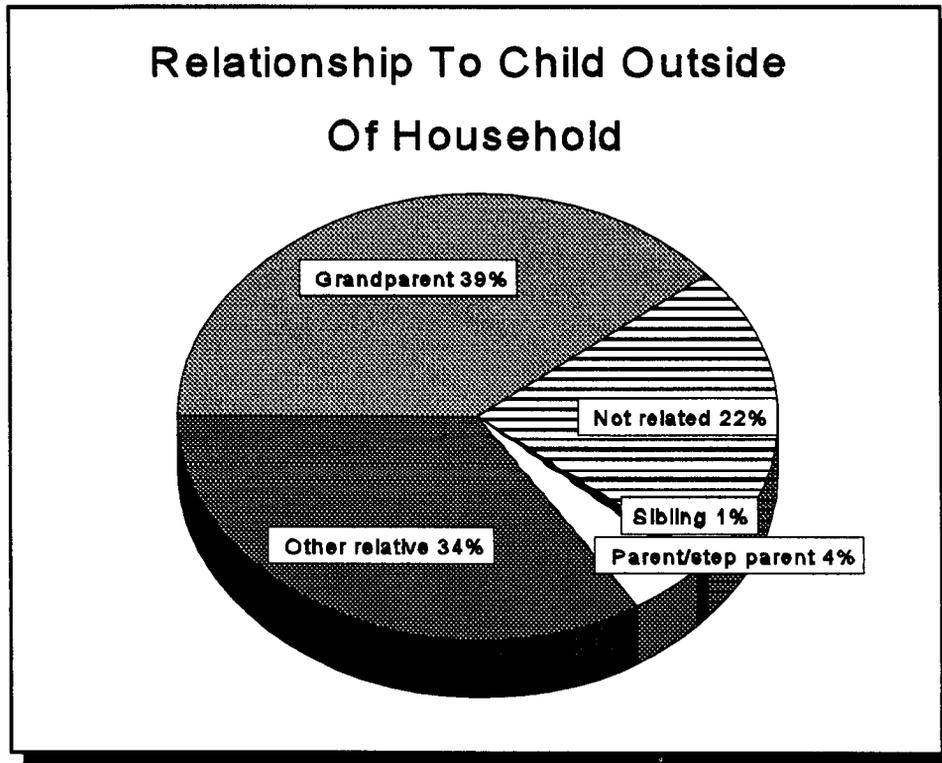
Qx: In the past 12 months, have you driven with any children under age 6?

Base: Drives a motor vehicle

Unweighted N=3,764

Most of those who said they drove in the past year with a child outside their household were related to the child. Nearly four in ten (39%) were grandparents and about one-third (34%) were other relatives besides a parent/step parent or sibling. Four percent were the child's parent or step-parent living outside of the household. About one in five (22%) were not related to the child.

FIGURE 2



Qx: What is your relationship to the child or children under age 6 that you at least sometimes drive with?

Base: Drives children under age six not living in household

Unweighted N=1,082

Parent/Caregiver Subgroup

The survey selected a subgroup of drivers to ask detailed questions about children's use of car seats. These drivers were considered most likely to have significant responsibility for transporting young children ("parents/caregivers"). The respondents were chosen for questioning if they fell into one of the following categories:

- *Parents of children under age 6.* Usually this involved a parent living with their child. In some cases it was a parent not living with their child, but who drove the child at least on occasion during the past year.
- *Non-parents living with children under age 6.* These were respondents who indicated that they at least sometimes drive with a child under age 6 who lives in their household.

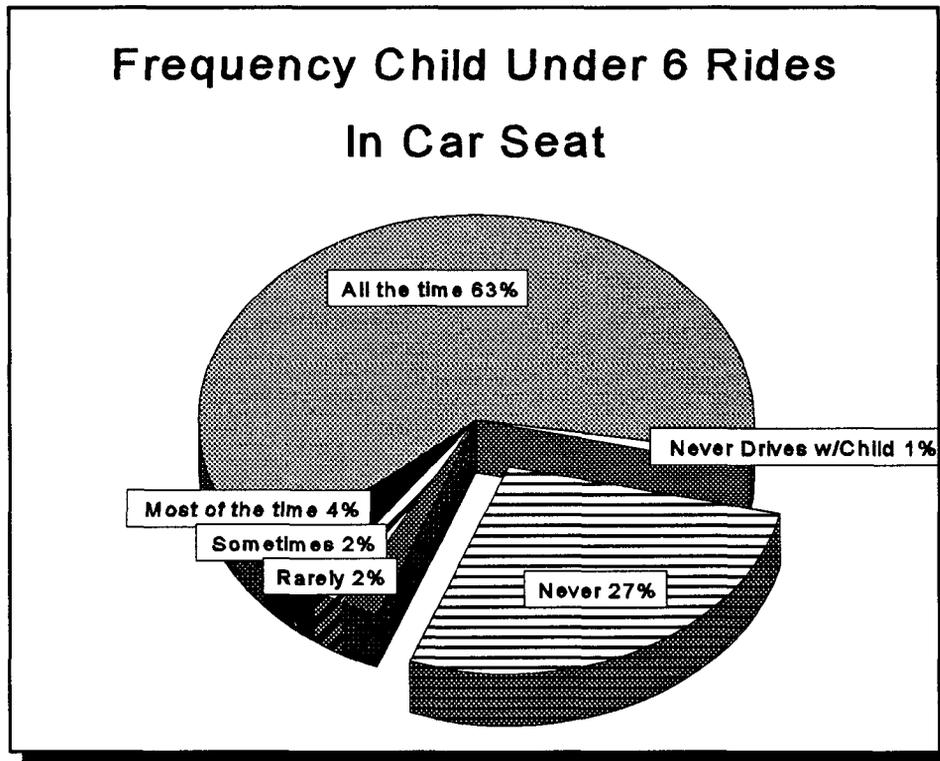
The interviewers asked respondents to focus on one specific child for the questions. If there was more than one child under 6 in the household, one child was randomly selected. Priority, however, was given to selecting from the respondent's own children if other young children were also living in the household. Respondents were asked about car seat use with the selected child. This procedure yields a national sample of drivers for whom car seat usage issues would be most applicable.

Frequency of Car Seat Use

Interviewers asked those drivers how frequently the selected child uses a car seat when riding with them. Responses to this question are to be interpreted with caution, as car seats may not be appropriate for larger children under age 6. The safety restraint system used should be the one appropriate for the child's size. Infants up to about 20 pounds should ride facing the rear of the vehicle in infant-only or convertible safety seats (seats that convert from rear-facing for infants to forward-facing for toddlers). Children weighing about 20 to 40 pounds should ride facing forward in convertible seats or harness systems. Children who have outgrown their convertible seats or harnesses should ride in booster seats until adult belts fit them properly. Older children may wear vehicle seat belts when the lap belt stays low and snug across the hips without riding up over the stomach, and the shoulder belt does not cross the face or neck.

Overall, two-thirds said the selected child uses a car seat either “all of the time” (63%) or “most of the time” (4%) when riding in a motor vehicle with them. Only 2% said the child rides in a car seat “some of the time” with a similar percentage reporting their child rarely used it. About one-fourth (27%) said they never place the identified child in a car seat.

FIGURE 3



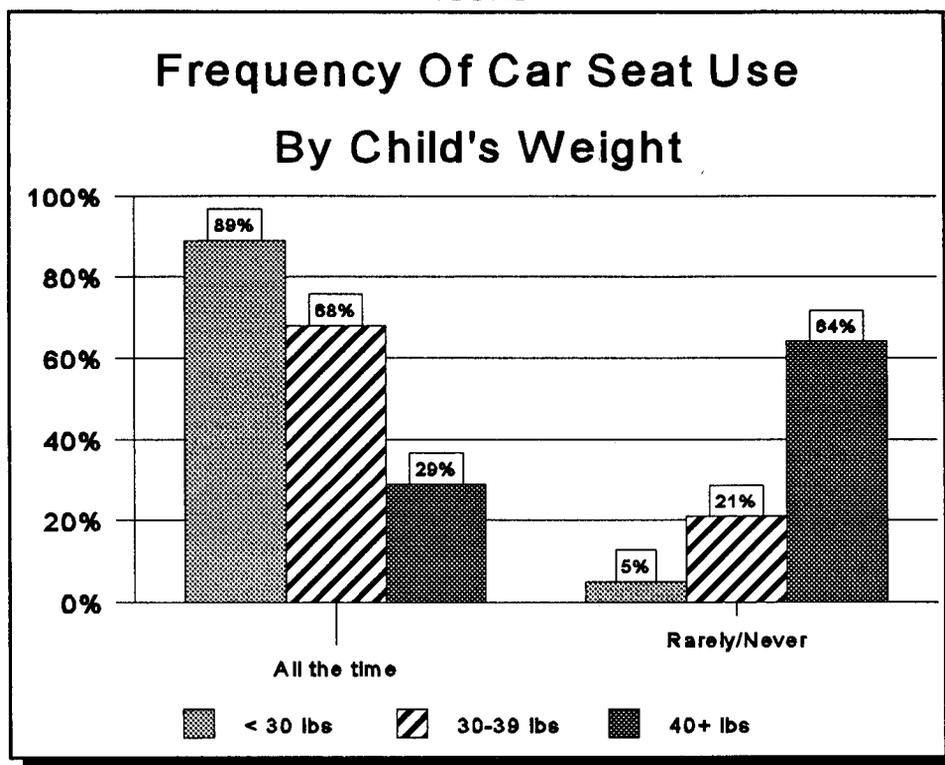
Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4

Unweighted N=773

As would be expected, car seat use varies by the child's weight. Most of those who said they never placed their child in a car seat referred to children weighing 40 pounds or more. Eighty-nine percent of parents/caregivers with children under 30 pounds placed their young children in car seats all of the time, compared to 68% for those between 30 and 39 pounds and 29% for children over 39 pounds. Conversely, very few parents/caregivers with children under 30 pounds (5%) said they rarely or never placed their children in car seats, compared to one-fifth for children weighing between 30 and 39 pounds, and nearly two-thirds (64%) for children weighing 40 pounds or more.

FIGURE 4



Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

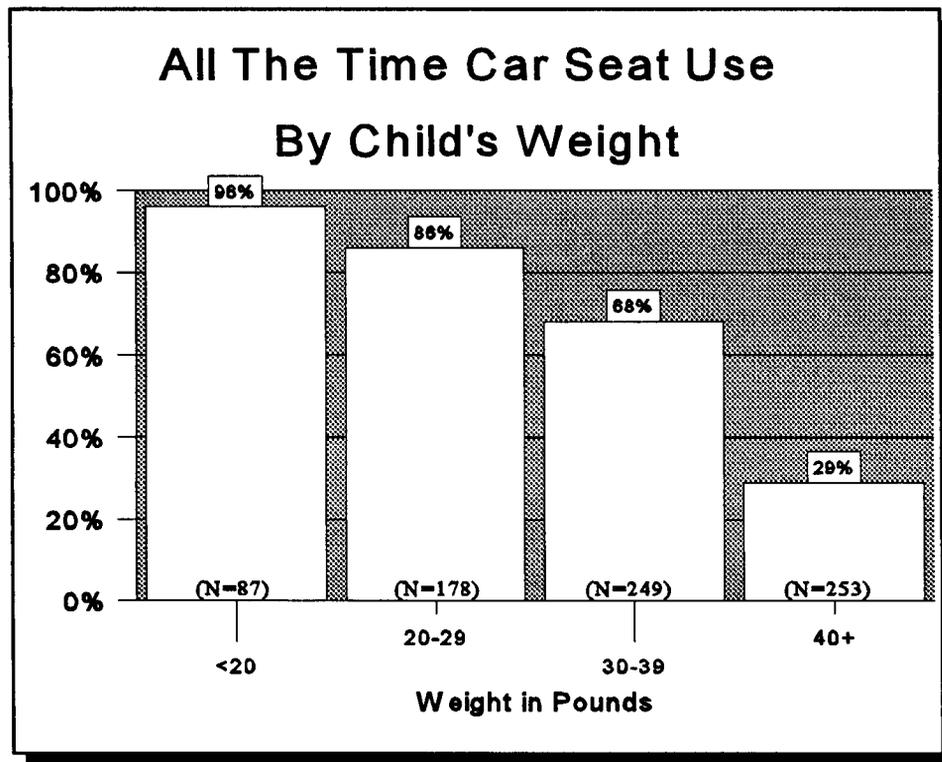
Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4

Unweighted N=773

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Nearly all parents/caregivers (96%) said they place their children in car seats all the time when the identified child weighed less than 20 pounds. This percentage declined to 86% for children weighing between 20 and 29 pounds; 68% for those weighing between 30 and 39 pounds; and 29% for children weighing 40 pounds or more.

FIGURE 5

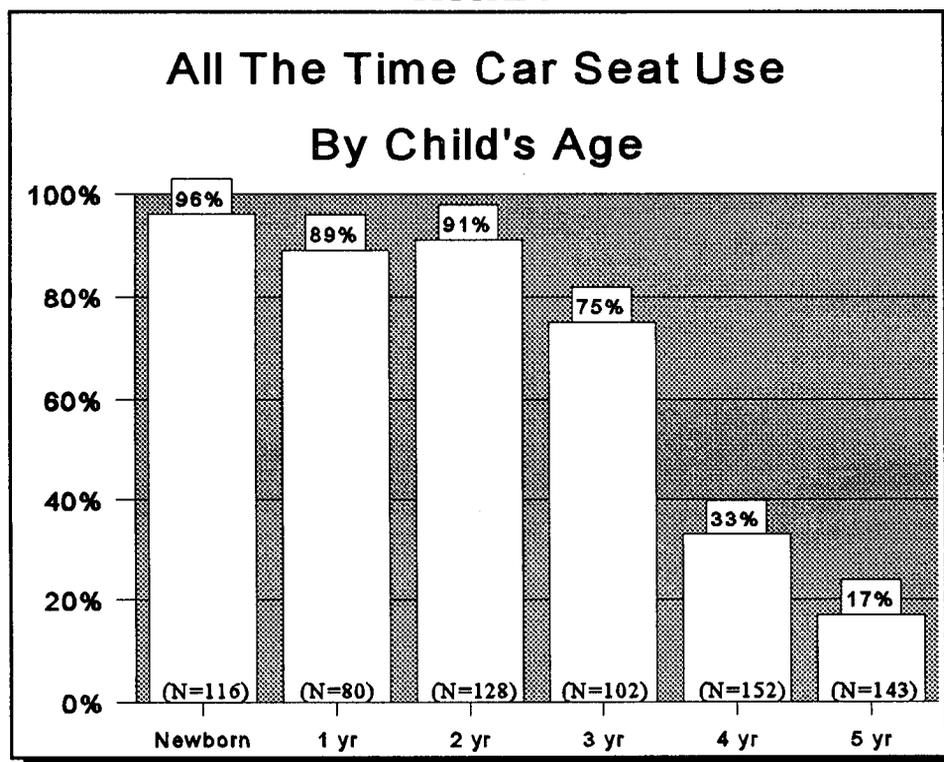


Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

*Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4
Unweighted N's listed above*

Car seat use also shows a correlation with age: younger children used the car seats more frequently, with declining usage beginning at age 3. About 96% of the youngest children (newborn to less than a year old), 89% of one-year-olds, and 91% of two-year-olds reportedly were in their car seats all of the time. The percentage of children using car seats starts to decline beginning at age 3, with 75% using their car seats all the time. Usage then dropped significantly among four-year-olds, with 33% using the seat all of the time. Fewer than one in five 5-year-olds used car seats all the time.

FIGURE 6



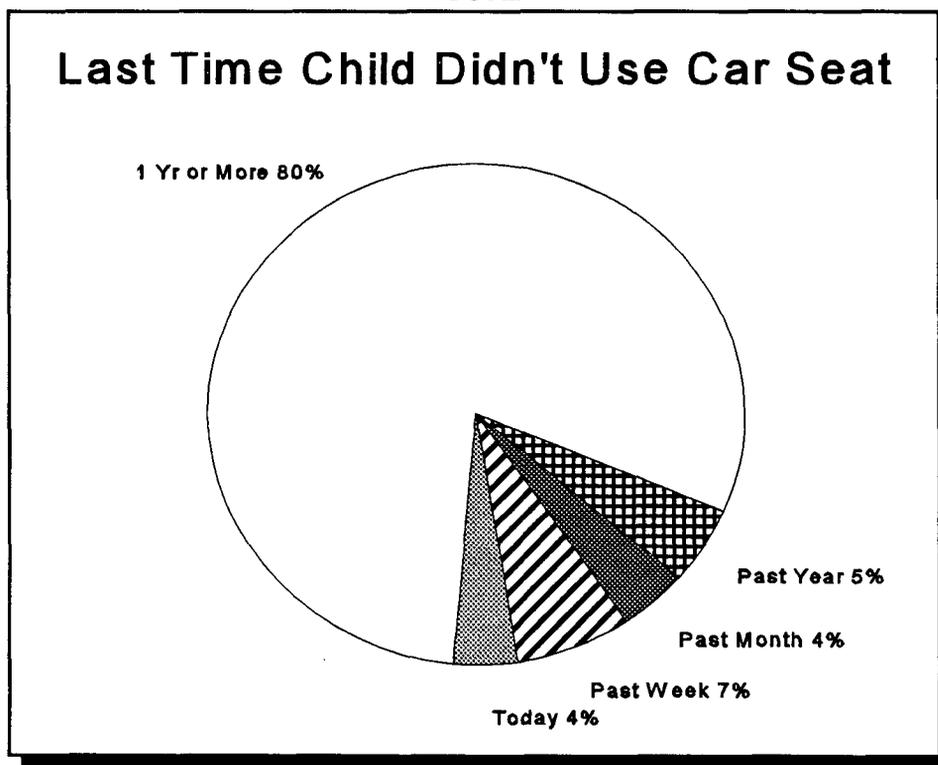
Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

*Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4
Unweighted N's listed above*

Last Time Child Did Not Use Car Seat

Interviewers asked respondents who reported car seat use when was the last time the child rode in the vehicle with them without being in the car seat. Eight out of ten said it had been a year or more since the child rode without being in the car seat. Four percent said it was in the past day, 7% the past week, 4% the past month, and 5% the past year.

FIGURE 7



Qx: When was the last time (he/she) did not ride in a child car seat when you were driving?

Qx: [If "don't know"] Has there been any occasion in the past year when (he/she) did not ride in a car seat when riding with you?

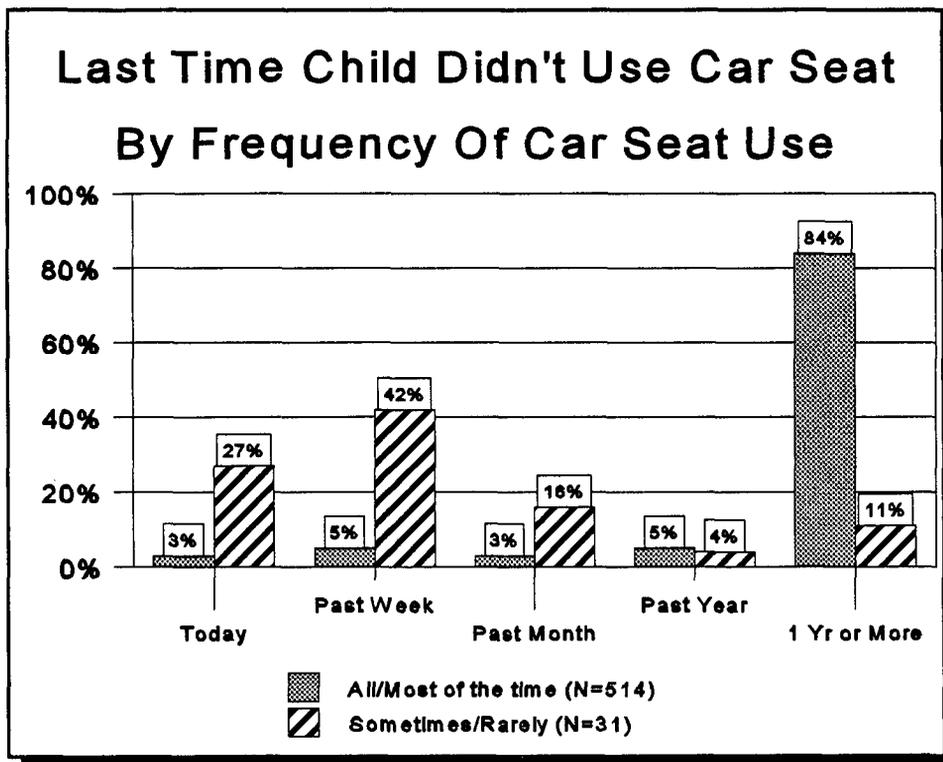
Base: Uses child car seat

Unweighted N=545

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

As expected, the last occasion when the child rode without being in the seat was, in general, more recent for those children who use the car seat less frequently. Only 3% of those who reported using their car seats all or most of the time said that the child had just today ridden without being in the seat, compared with 27% of the sometimes or rare car seat users. Eighty-four percent of those whose children use car seats all or most of the time have gone a year or more since they last didn't use them, compared to 11% of children who sometimes or rarely use car seats. In interpreting this information, readers are cautioned that there are only a small number of cases in the "sometimes/rarely" category.

FIGURE 8



Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

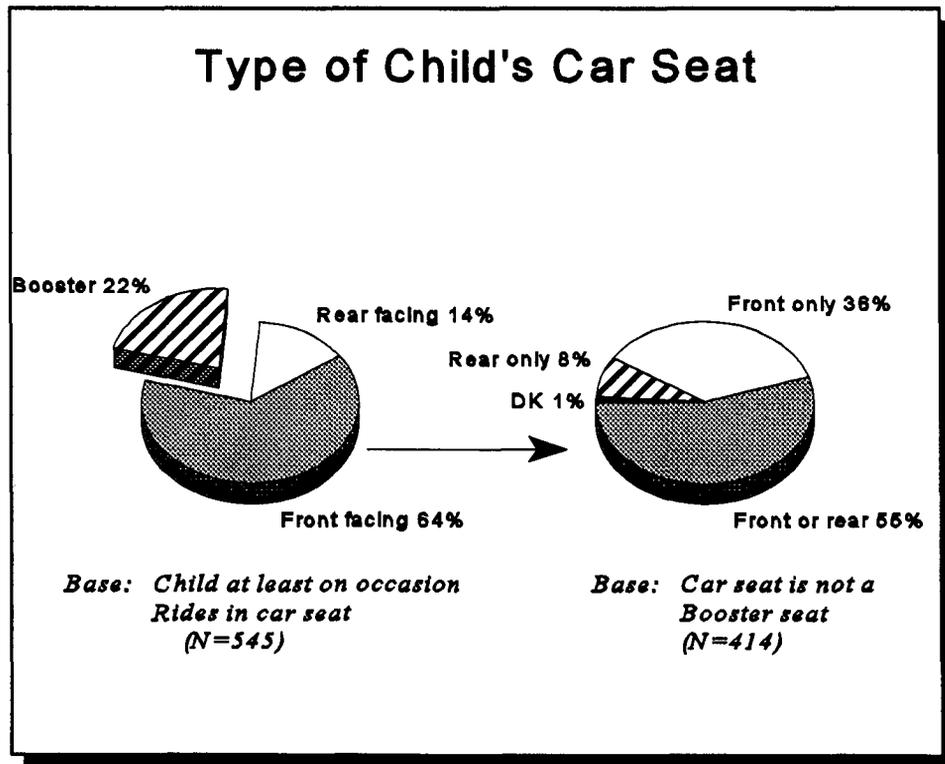
Qx: When was the last time (he/she) did not ride in a child car seat when you were driving?

*Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat
Unweighted N's listed above*

Type and Location of Car Seat

Respondents who reported car seat use were asked to identify its type and how it was being used. From the information provided, the survey determined that 22% are using booster seats (based on responses to questions concerning strap locations on the child). Of the remainder, 64% are operating in a front-facing position and 14% in a rear-facing position. Of those who do not use booster seats, most (55%) indicated that their car seats are reversible, that is, they can be used facing either front or rear. About one-third (36%) indicated having car seats that only faced the front, and 8% had car seats that only faced the rear.

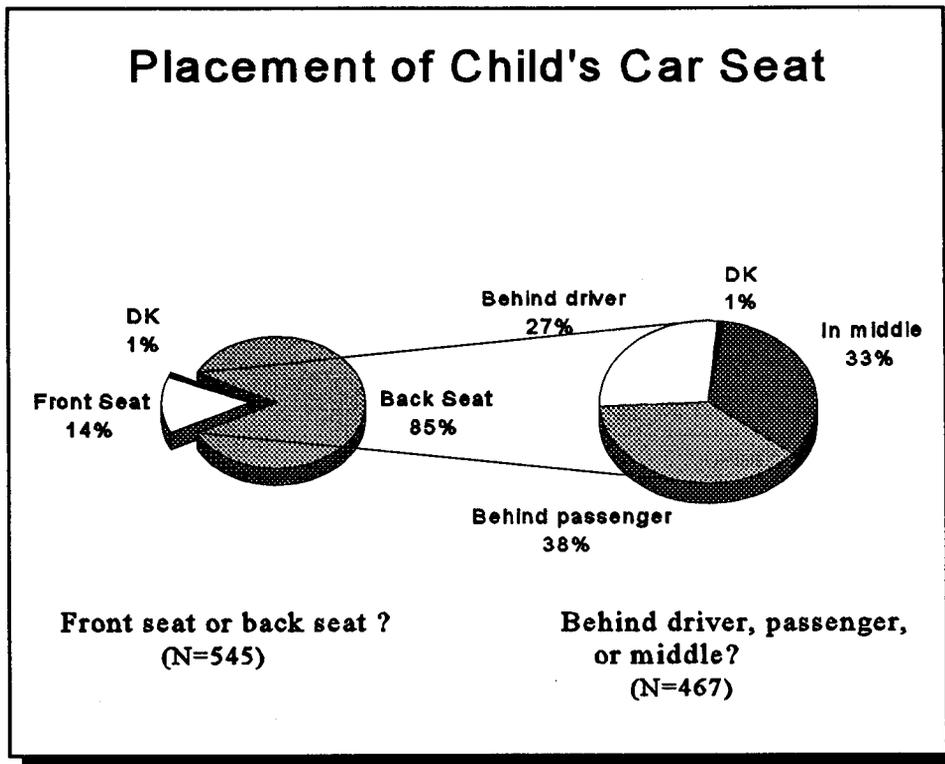
FIGURE 9



- Qx: When he/she is fastened in the child car seat, are there straps over both shoulders, a strap across only one shoulder, or are there no straps over either shoulder?*
- Qx: When you are driving and he/she is riding in the child car seat, is it usually front facing or rear facing?*
- Qx: Can the seat be used in a front facing position only, a rear facing position only or can it be used in either position?*

Eighty-five percent of car seats used by children are usually placed in the vehicle's back seat. One in seven (14%) are usually placed in the front. Only 1% said they do not know where the seat is usually placed. For children who usually ride in the back seat, respondents were asked where the seat was located. Most commonly (38%) it is placed behind the passenger seat. One-third (33%) put the seat in the middle of the back seat. Another 27% put the car seat behind the driver.

FIGURE 10



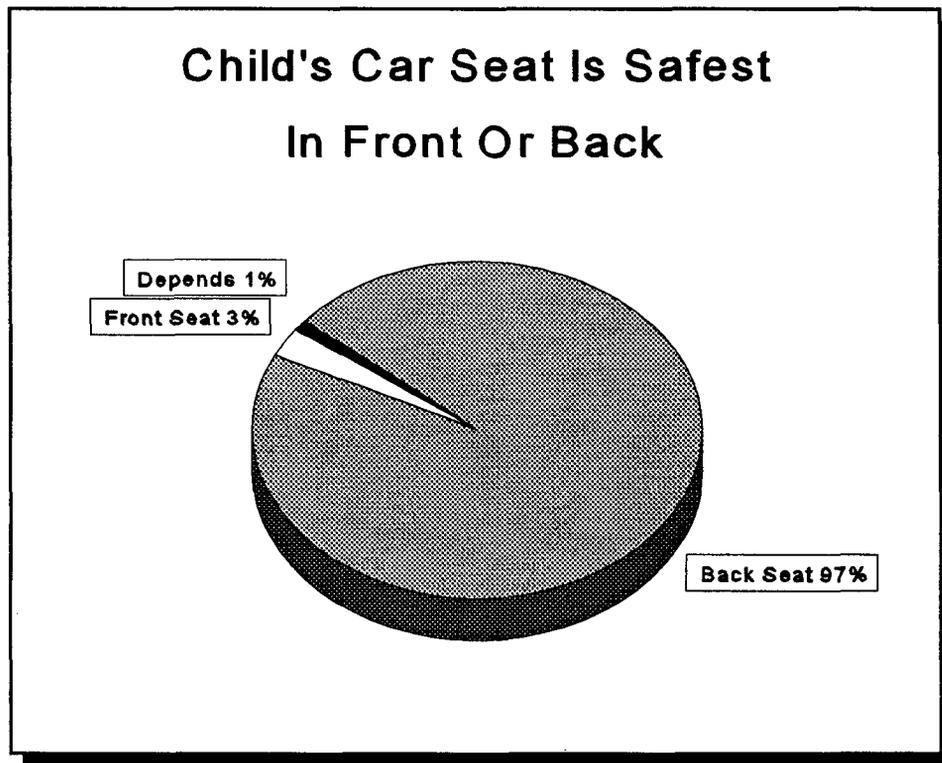
Qx: When you are driving and (he/she) rides in the child car seat, is it usually in the front seat or the back seat?

Qx: Is the child car seat usually behind the driver, behind the passenger or in the middle of the back seat?

Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat
Unweighted N's listed above

Despite the fact that 14% of the parents/caregivers population said they placed their child's car seat in the front seat, only 3% believed the front is the safest place for the child. The vast majority of parents/caregivers (97%) believed that the back seat is the safest location for the car seat.

FIGURE 11



Qx: Where would you say it is safest to place a child car seat in the vehicle . . . in the front seat or in the back seat?

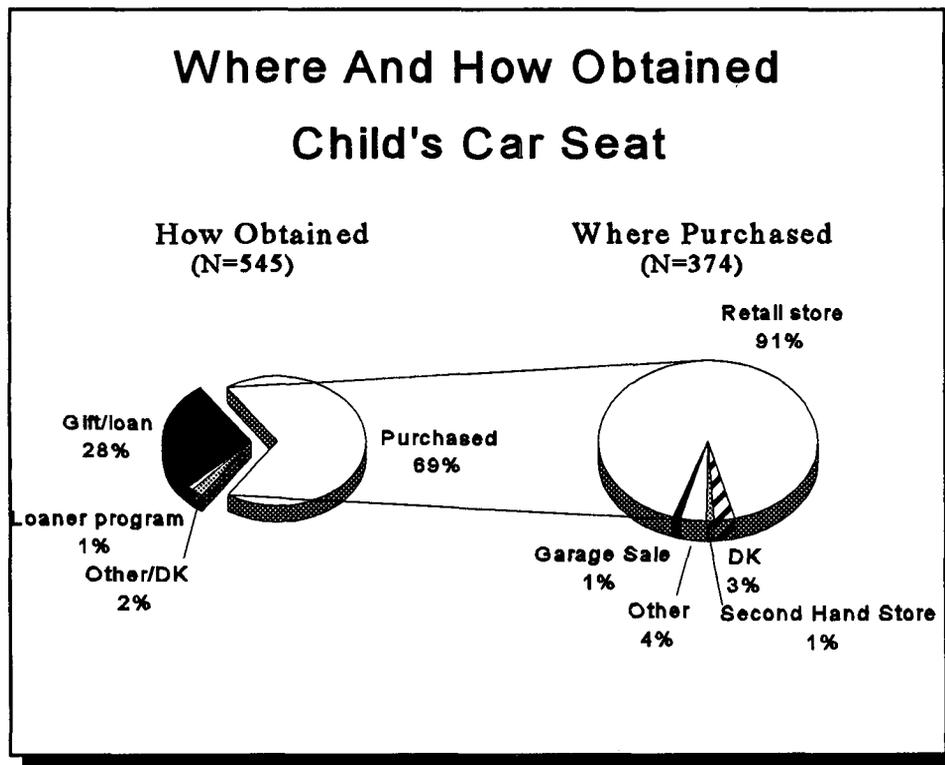
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

Acquisition of Car Seat

The vast majority of car seats (89%) are obtained new, while about one in ten (11%) are used seats of unspecified age. More than two-thirds (69%) were purchased by the respondents. Twenty-eight percent were gifts or loaners from relatives or friends and only about 1% were obtained from a car seat loaner program. Among respondents who purchased their car seat, nine out of ten (91%) purchased their car seat at a retail store of some kind and 3% bought their child's car seat at a place that sells used merchandise such as a second hand store or a garage sale.

FIGURE 12



Qx: Did you purchase the child car seat, did you get it as a gift or loaner from a relative or friend or did you get it from a loaner program?

Qx: Where did you purchase it from?

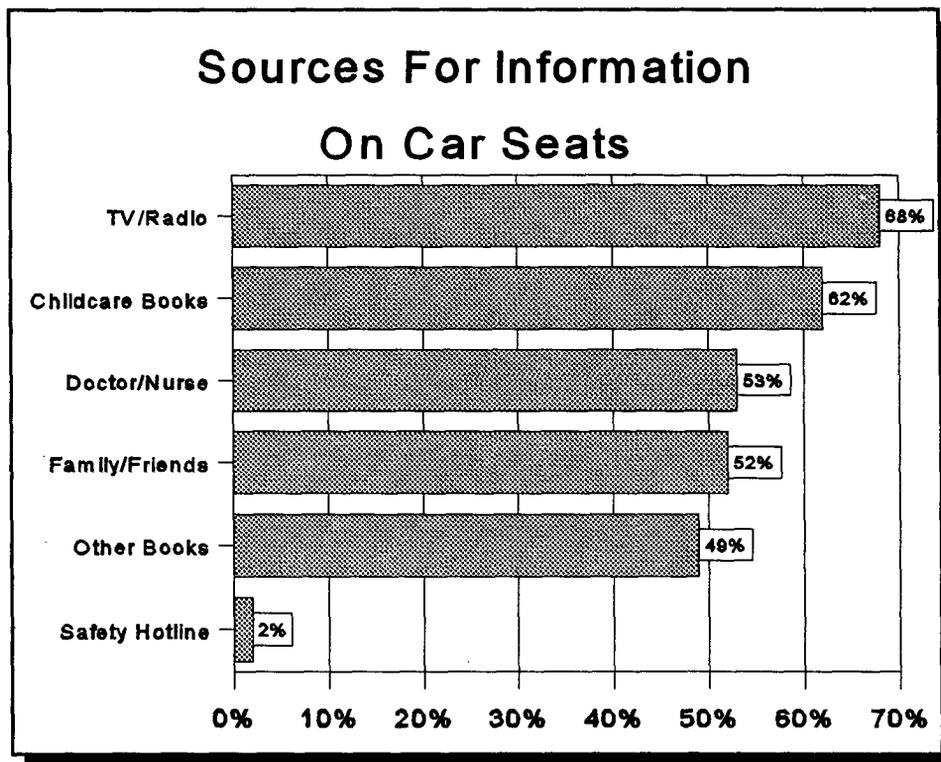
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N's listed above

Safety Information Source For Car Seat

Those who use child safety seats obtained safety information about the seats from a variety of sources. Two-thirds (68%) obtained safety information from radio or television, while 62% obtained information from reading childcare articles or books. About half learned about car seats from a doctor or nurse (53%), family member or friend (52%), or some other type of article or book (49%). About 2% learned about safety seats from a Safety Hotline.

FIGURE 13



Qx: Did you ever read or hear of any information or receive any advice about the need to use child car seats from . . . ?

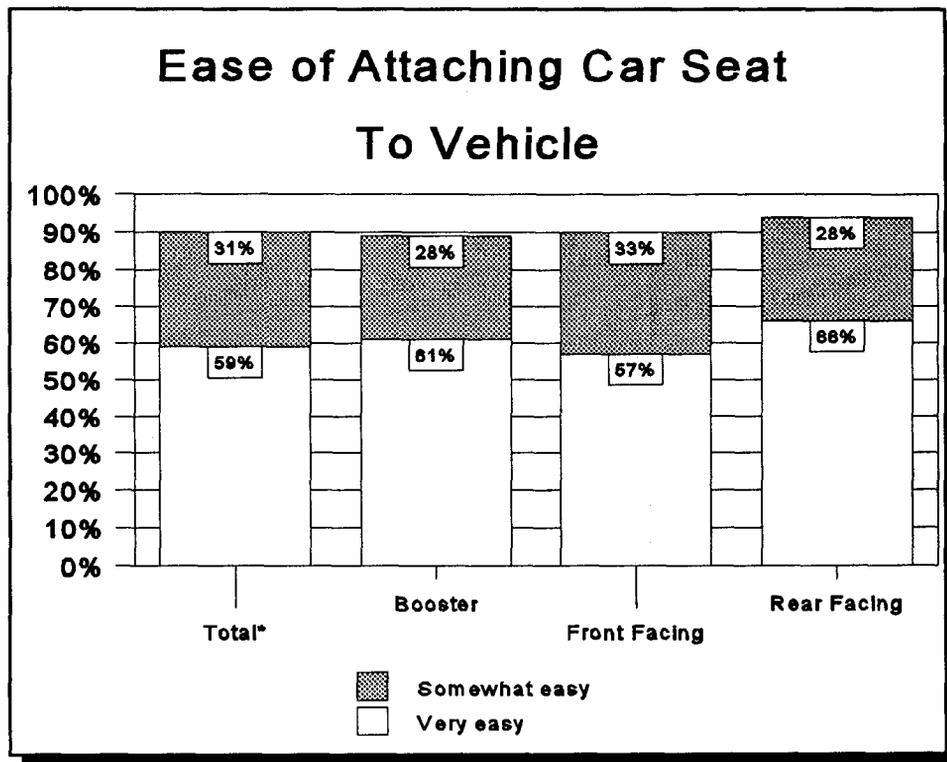
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

Ease Of Use

Overall, parents and caregivers indicate they have relatively little difficulty using their children's car seats. Six out of ten respondents said it is very easy to attach the car seat to their vehicle's seat belt system, with an additional 31% saying the process is somewhat easy. Those who have rear-facing seats were more likely to say that attaching the seat is very easy (66%), followed by those with booster seats (61%), and then by those who have a front-facing seat for their child (57%). Regardless of seat type, 89% or more said their child's safety seat is very or somewhat easy to attach to their vehicle's seat.

FIGURE 14



Qx: How easy is it for you to attach the child car seat to the vehicle you usually drive . . . is it very easy, somewhat easy, or not at all easy?

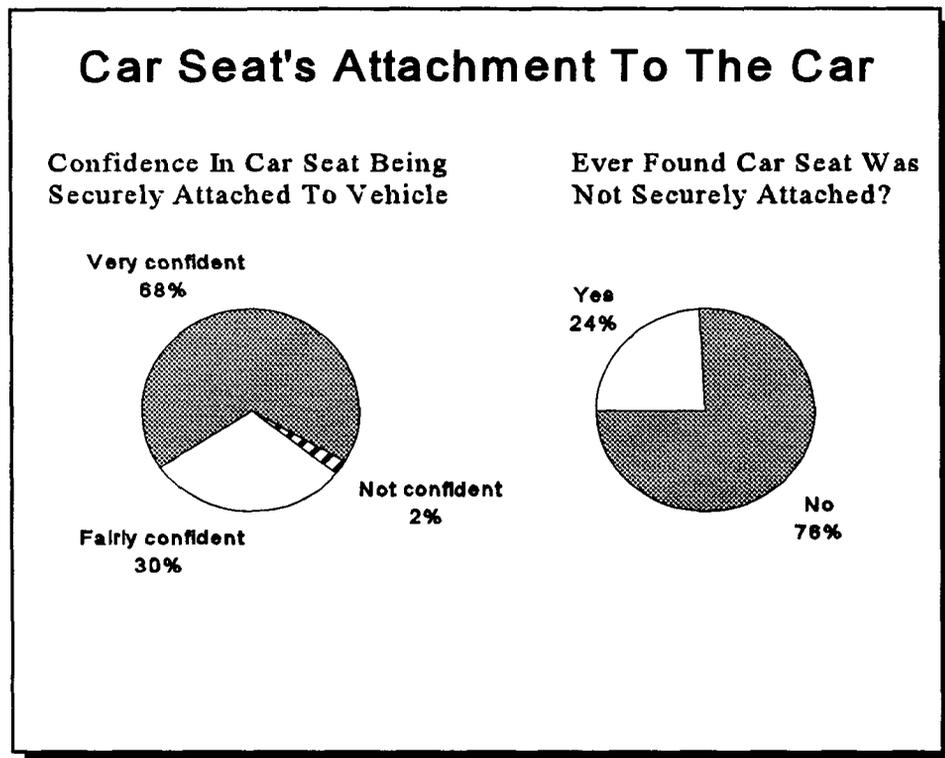
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

* An additional 1% said the car seat came attached to vehicle

Nearly everyone with a car seat that did not come attached to the vehicle (98%) felt confident that they securely attached the car seat to the vehicle. About two-thirds (68%) felt very confident with 30% saying they felt fairly confident that the car seat was securely attached to the vehicle. This, despite the fact that nearly one-fourth (24%) said they had driven their child and discovered that the car seat was not securely attached to the vehicle on at least one occasion.

FIGURE 15



Qx: How confident are you that the car seat is securely attached to the vehicle (that you usually drive) . . . are you usually very confident, fairly confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Qx: Have you ever driven with the child in the car seat and later found that the car seat was not securely attached?

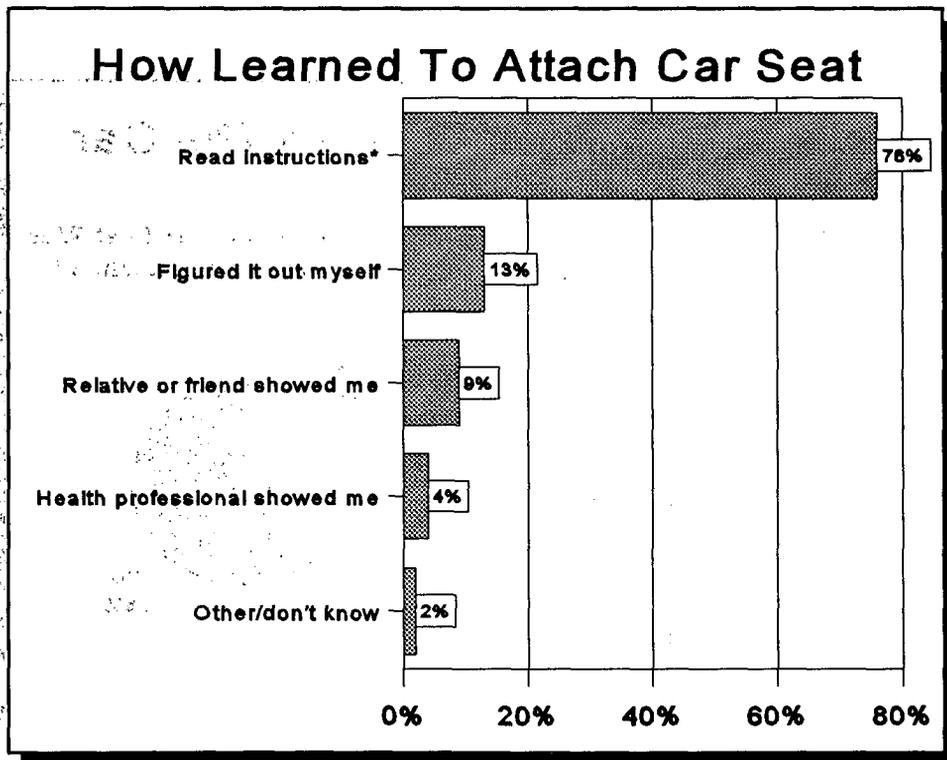
Base: Child seat did not come attached to the vehicle

Unweighted N=539

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Three out of four car seat owners (76%) learned how to attach the seat to the vehicle by reading the instructions. About one in eight (13%) figured it out themselves and 9% had a friend or relative show them how to attach the seat.

FIGURE 16



Qx: How did you learn to attach the child car seat to the vehicle?

Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

Exceeds 100% due to multiple responses

* Those who did not volunteer that they learned how to attach the seat by reading the instructions were asked if they had read the instructions. An additional 11% said that they had, for a total of 87% who had read the car seat installation instructions.

Those who mentioned having some difficulty in attaching the car seat to the vehicle were asked to specify the difficulty. One-half (50%) said that the problem was fitting the vehicle's seat belt through the car seat slot or loop. Thirty-one percent said that they had trouble hooking or attaching the seat belt to its buckle. Fifteen percent specifically cited problems in making sure the belts were tight enough to hold the seat securely.

TABLE 1. Obstacles Attaching Car Seat To Vehicle

Qx: What is difficult about attaching the child car seat to the vehicle?

Base: Child car seat somewhat easy/not at all easy to attach

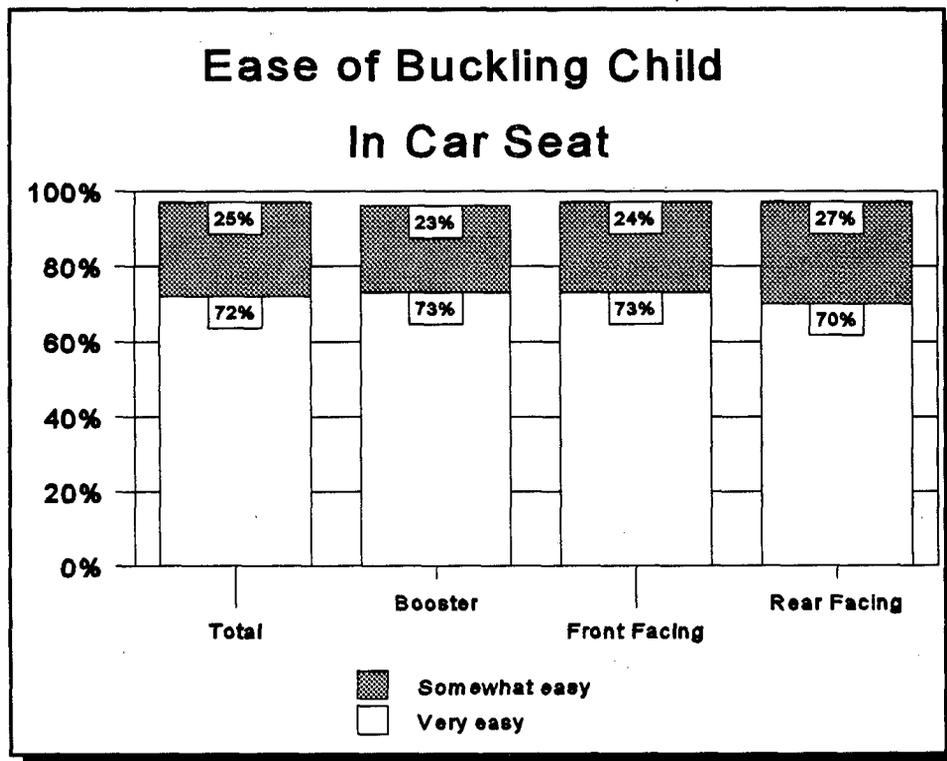
Unweighted N=211

| Obstacle | Percent* |
|--|----------|
| Fitting the seat belt through the car seat hole/loop | 50% |
| Hooking it/Attaching to the seat belt (or buckle) | 31% |
| Other (non-specific) child seat attachment mentions | 2% |
| Adjusting seat belt, making sure it's tight enough | 15% |
| Other (non-specific) adjustment mentions | 2% |
| Miscellaneous | 7% |
| DK/Refused | 3% |

* Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses

Buckling children into a car seat seems to be relatively easy for those who must do it. Nearly three-fourths (72%) said that buckling children into the seat is very easy, and virtually all others (25%) said the process is somewhat easy. Ease of buckling varies little by the type of seat being used. Seventy percent or more of those who use each type of seat said that buckling the child into the seat is very easy, and 96% or more said it was either somewhat or very easy to do.

FIGURE 17



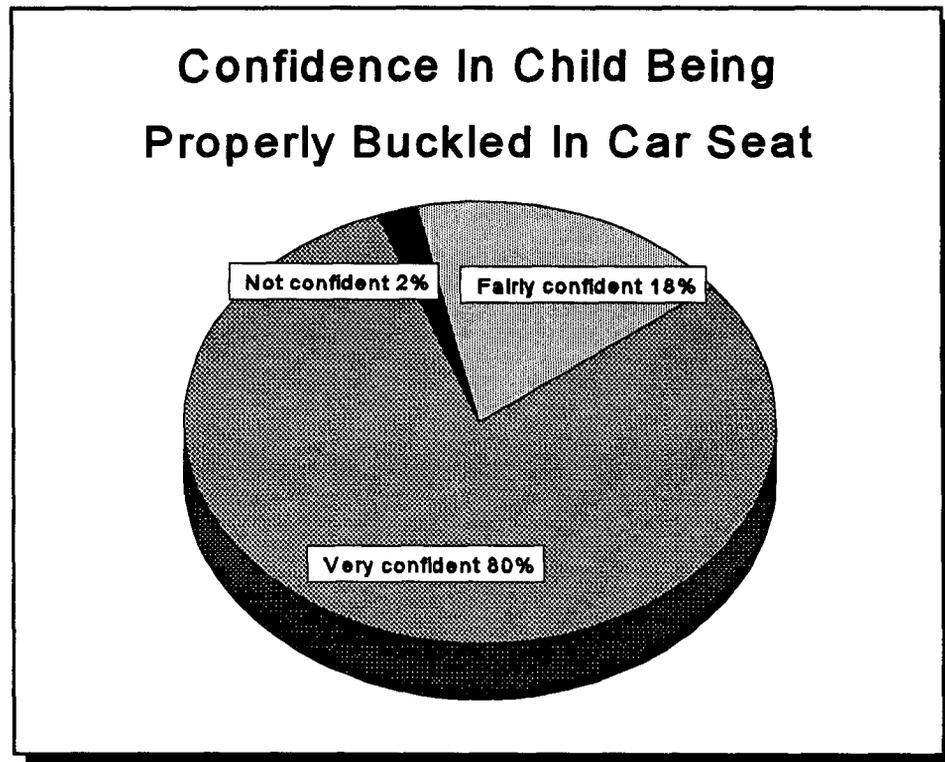
Qx: How easy is it for you to properly buckle your child into the child car seat?

Base: Child at least sometimes rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

Nearly all parents/caregivers (98%) felt confident that their child was properly buckled into the car seat. Eight out of ten felt very confident, with another 18% saying they felt fairly confident that their child was properly buckled into the car seat.

FIGURE 18



Qx: How confident are you that the child is properly buckled into the seat . . . are you usually very confident, fairly confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Base: Child at least sometimes rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N=545

Those who mentioned having some difficulty buckling their children into the car seat were asked to specify the problem. The most frequently mentioned problem, cited by 34% of this group, was that the belt was hard to buckle or snap. One in four (25%) said that the problem was that the child will not sit still or sit down to allow the adult to buckle him or her into the seat. About one in six (17%) identified the problem as adjusting the straps to fit properly or getting the belt's tightness adjusted appropriately. Ten percent said the problem resulted from the child resisting because he or she does not like the seat. Ten percent also said the buckle was difficult to get over the child's head or tended to hit the child in the head as it was being fastened.

TABLE 2. Obstacles Buckling Child In Car Seat

Qx: What is difficult about buckling your child into the child car seat?

Base: Buckling child into car seat is somewhat easy/not at all easy

Unweighted N=147

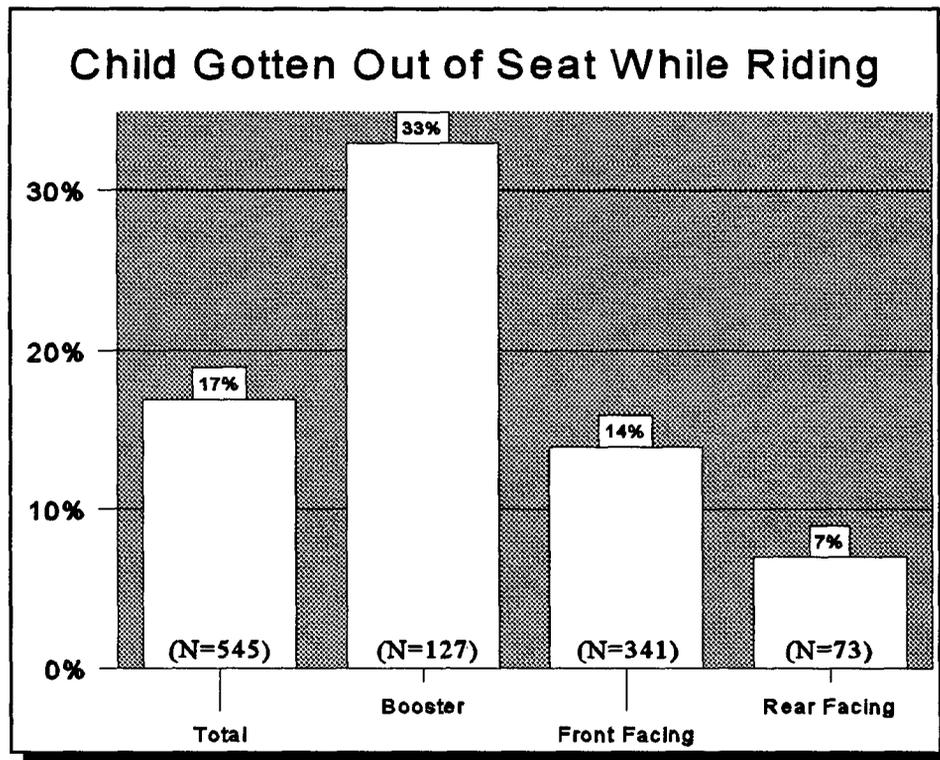
| Obstacle | Percent* |
|--|----------|
| Hard to snap/buckle seat belt | 34% |
| Buckle hits the child in the head/Can't get it over the head | 10% |
| Adjusting shoulder straps to fit properly/Tightness of seat belt | 17% |
| Other (non-specified) adjustment mentions | 1% |
| Child doesn't sit still/down | 25% |
| Child doesn't like car seat | 10% |
| Miscellaneous | 4% |
| Don't know/Refused | 8% |

* Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses

Children Getting Out Of Car Seats

About one in six (17%) respondents reported that the child has gotten out of a car seat while riding in the vehicle. The fewest instances (7%) of this problem occurred with rear-facing seats. The problem rises in significance with children in front-facing seats (14% cited this occurrence), and peaks with children in booster seats, as 33% of the selected children who use booster seats have, at some time, gotten out of their seat while the vehicle was moving.

FIGURE 19



Qx: Has the (THE CHILD) ever gotten himself/herself out of that child car seat when riding with you?

Base: Child at least sometimes rides in a child car seat

Unweighted N's listed above

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 2

1996 REASONS FOR NON-USE OF CAR SEATS

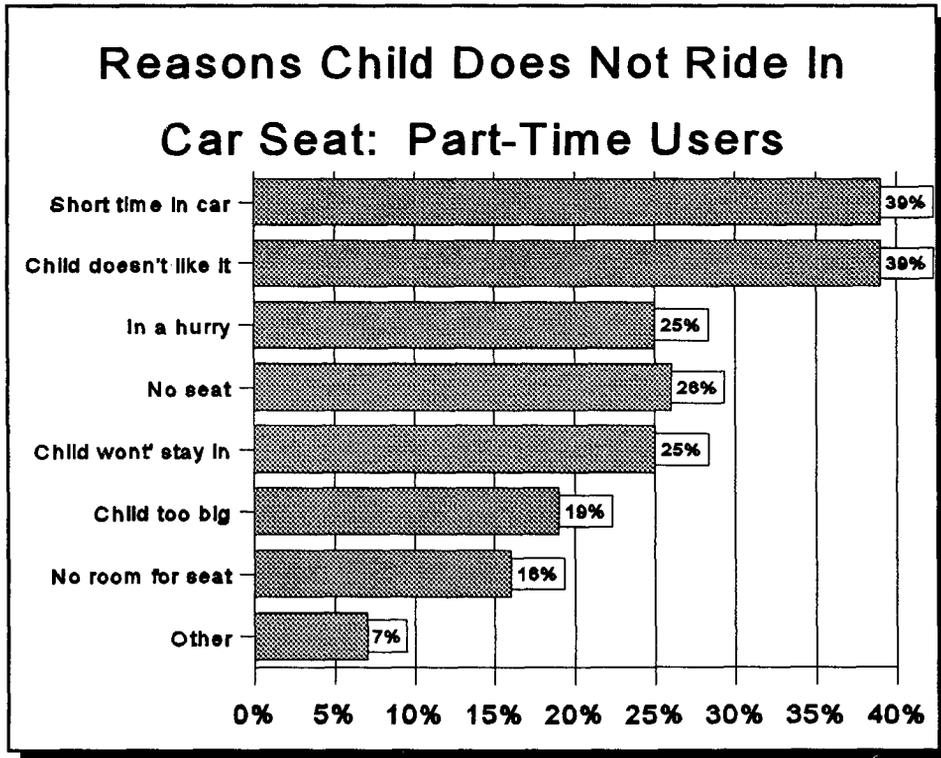
The survey asked a series of questions to identify reasons why children under age 6 were not always riding in car seats. Respondents were selected from the parent/caregiver subgroup defined on page 4. The selected respondents had indicated either that they never used a car seat with the specified child, or else they used a car seat with the child, but less than all the time.

Questionnaire testing plus input from experts had identified a number of likely reasons for non-use of car seats. Survey interviewers read each of these reasons to respondents, asking them whether or not it was a factor in the child not using a car seat.

Part-Time Car Seat Users

One subset of the survey population is respondents who use a child car seat but less than all the time. They are identified as the “part-time” car seat user group. Readers are cautioned that only a small number of cases fall into this group. Part-time car seat users gave several reasons for non-use of car seats. The reasons most frequently mentioned are that they would only be driving in the vehicle for a short time (39%) or that the child doesn’t like the car seat (39%). Four other reasons were cited by between 19% and 26% of part-time car seat users: being in a hurry (25%), not having a car seat to use (26%), the child’s unwillingness or inability to stay in the seat (25%), and the child being too big for the seat (19%). Sixteen percent mentioned not having room for the car seat in their vehicle, and 7% said there was some other reason.

FIGURE 20



Qx: As I'm reading this list, please tell me if this is a reason why the (THE CHILD) does not ride in a child car seat. When my [child] doesn't ride in a child car seat, it is sometimes because . . .

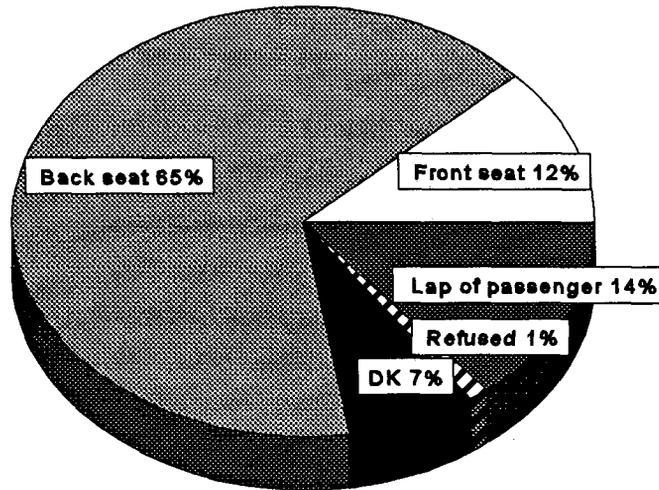
Base: Part-time car seat users

Unweighted N=116

Respondents were asked where the child rides when not in the car seat. Nearly two-thirds (65%) ride in the back seat and about one in eight (12%) ride in the front seat. Another 14% said their child usually rides in someone's lap when not riding in his/her car seat.

FIGURE 21

Where Child Rides While Not In Car Seat



Qx: *When the (child) doesn't ride in the child car seat when riding with you does he/she usually sit on someone's lap, sit by him/herself in the front seat or sit in the back seat?*

Base: *Part-time car seat users*

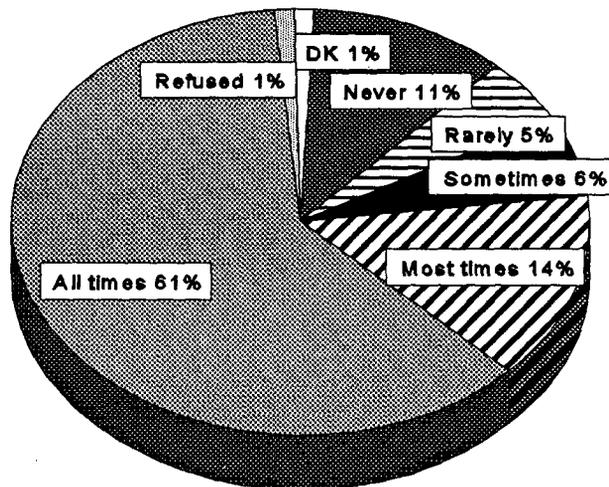
Unweighted N=116

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Most children who are part-time car seat users wear a seat belt when they are not in their car seats. Sixty-one percent reportedly use their seat belt all the time when they are not in their car seat, and 14% use it most of the time. A smaller group (6%) use the belt only sometimes when out of their car seats. While 5% said they rarely use a seat belt on these occasions, about one in ten said the child never wears a seat belt when not in the car seat.

FIGURE 22

Frequency of Seat Belt Use When Child Is Not In Car Seat



Qx: When the (child) doesn't ride in the child car seat when riding with you how often is he/she buckled in a seat belt?

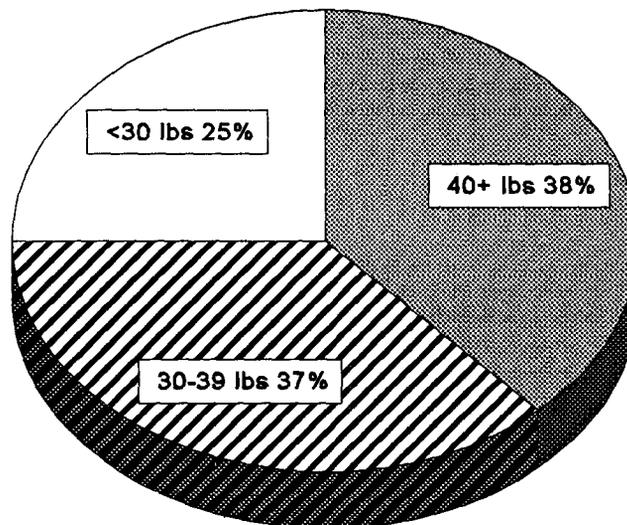
Base: Part-time car seat users

Unweighted N=116

Children who always, most of the time, or sometimes used a seat belt when not in their car seat were not the smallest of the young children but many were too small for the seat belts to fit properly. Most (62%) weighed less than 40 pounds and one in four (25%) weighed less than 30 pounds.

FIGURE 23

**Weight Of Children Who At Least Sometimes
Use A Seat Belt Instead Of A Car Seat**



Qx: When the (child) doesn't ride in the child car seat when riding with you how often is he/she buckled in a seat belt?

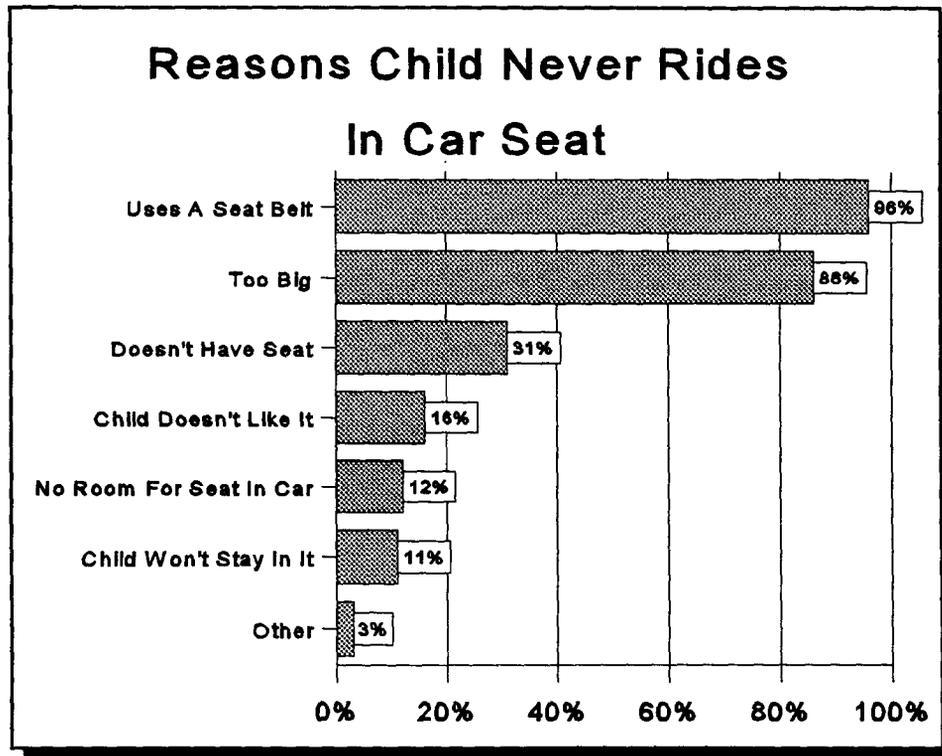
Base: Children who always, most of the time, or sometimes used a seat belt when not in their car seat

Unweighted N=97

Never Users of Car Seats

The children who never use a car seat were mostly larger children. Nearly three-fourths of them (72%) weighed at least 40 pounds. The most common reasons given for non-use were that the child uses a seat belt (96%) or that he/she is too big (86%). Other reasons given for not using a car seat included the child does not have one (31%), he/she doesn't like it (16%), or won't stay in it (11%), and that there is no room in the vehicle for the car seat (12%). About 3% gave some other reason why their child never uses a car seat.

FIGURE 24

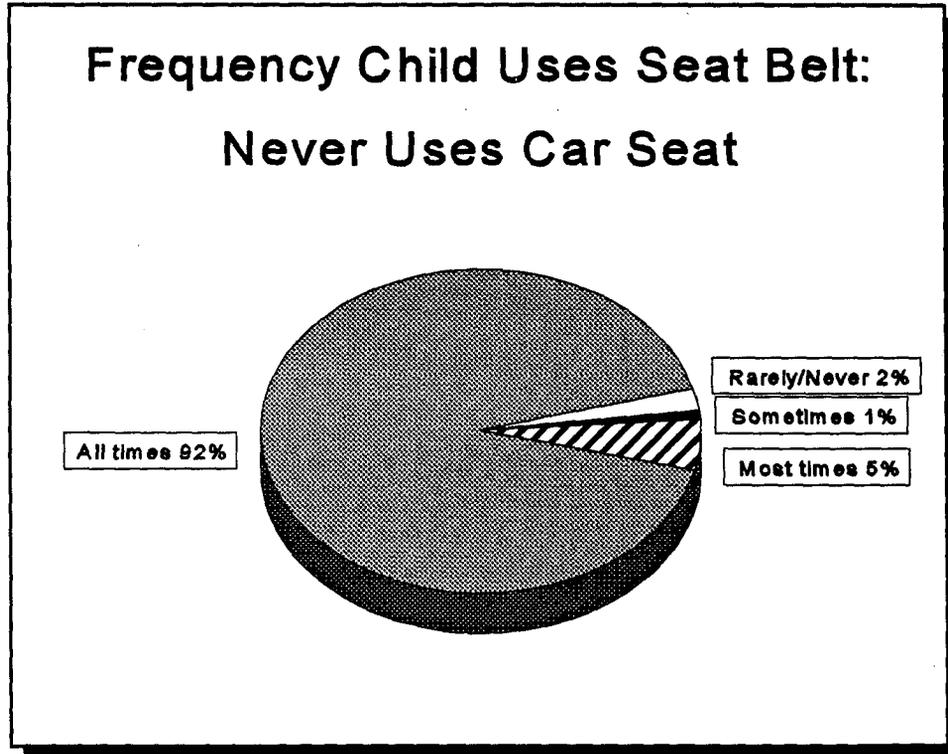


Qx: As I'm reading this list, please tell me if this is a reason why the (child) does not ride in a child car seat. My (child) doesn't ride in a child car seat because . . .

*Base: Child under age 6 never uses car seat
Unweighted N=218*

Respondents whose children never use car seats were asked the frequency with which the child uses a seat belt. More than nine of ten (92%) said that their child uses a seat belt all of the time and another 5% said the child uses a belt most of the time.

FIGURE 25



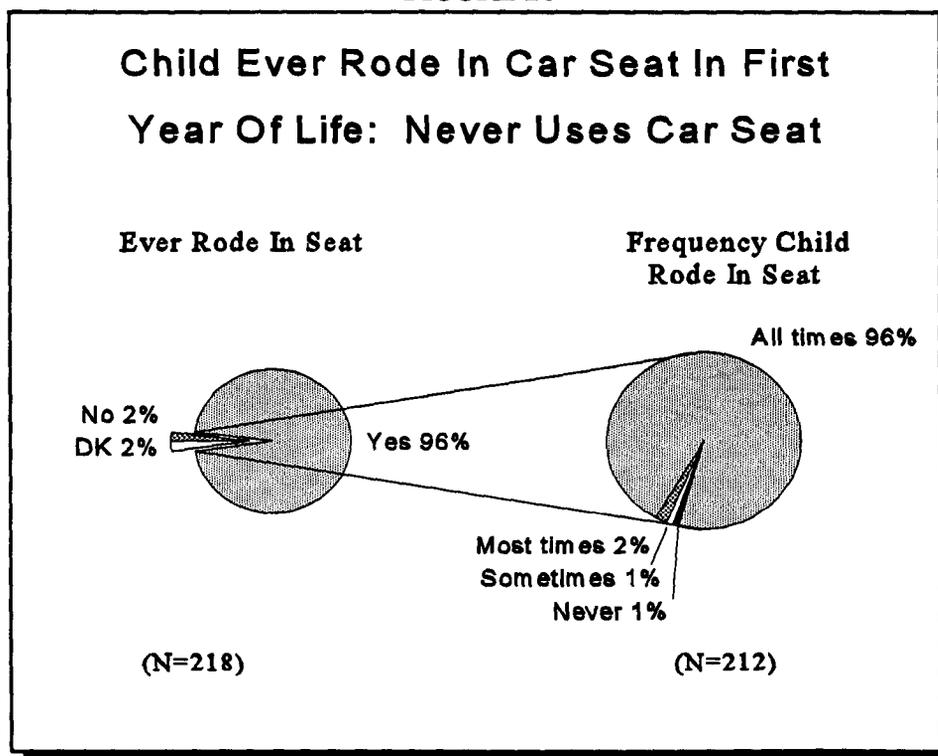
Qx: How often does he/she use a seat belt?

Base: Child under age 6 never uses car seat

Unweighted N=218

Respondents whose children never use car seats were asked whether their child had used a car seat in the first year of his/her life, and if so, how often. The vast majority (96%) had done so. Among these former users, more than nine of ten (96%) used the car seat all the time with their child under age 1 and an additional 2% placed the child in the car seat most of the time. These results suggest that, for those children who never use a car seat, non-use does not stem from parent/caregiver resistance to car seats but rather from other factors.

FIGURE 26

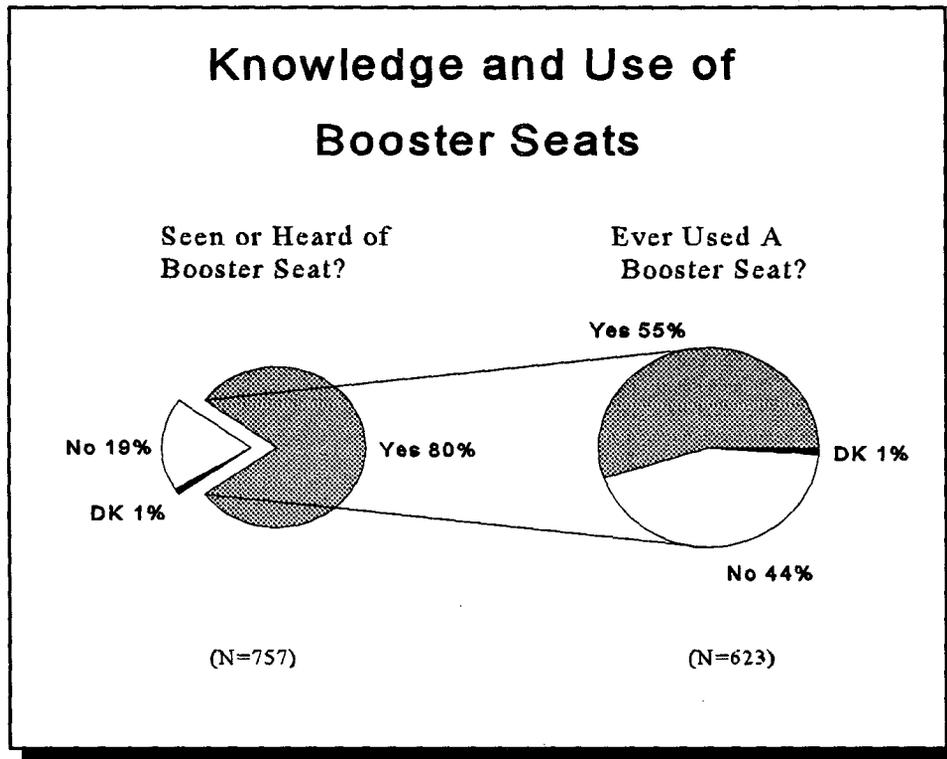


Qx: Did the (child) ever ride in a child car seat during the first year of life?
Qx: How often did he/she use the child car seat during that first year? Would you say . . . all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or rarely?
Base: Child under age 6 never uses car seat
Unweighted N's listed above

Booster Seats

Among persons who have used a car seat (either currently or in the past), 8 out of 10 said they have either seen or heard of child booster seats. Of those who have seen or heard of them, more than one-half (55%) said they have used them.

FIGURE 27



Qx: Have you ever seen or heard of a type of car seat called a booster seat?

Base: Have used a child car seat

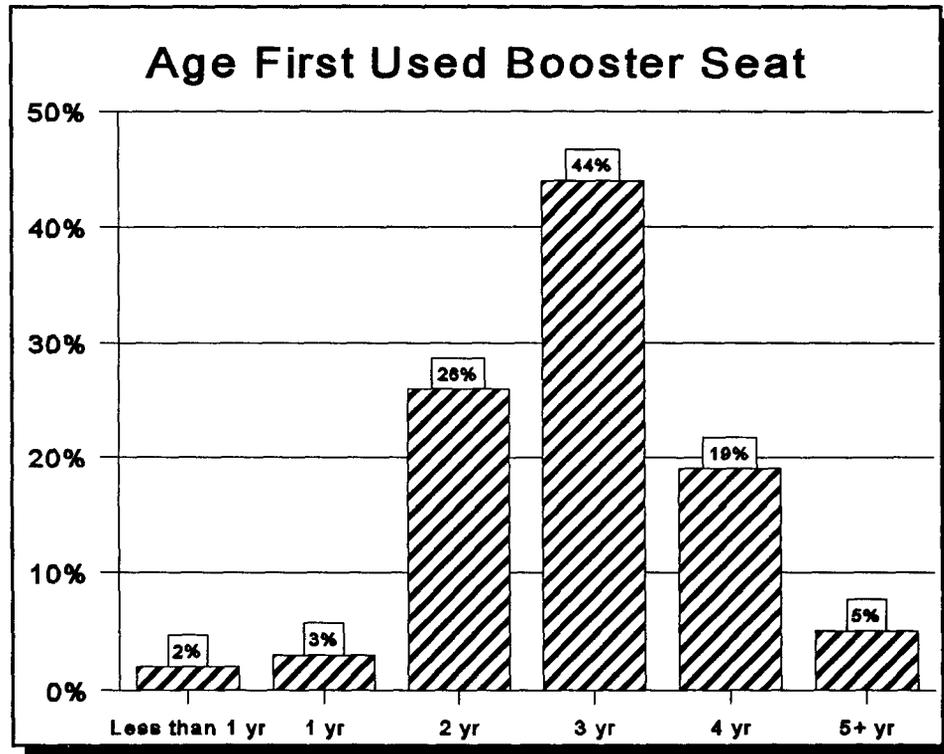
Qx: Have you ever used a booster seat when driving with your children?

Base: Have seen or heard of booster seats

Unweighted N's listed above

Almost all booster seat users (94%) said their children had used a booster before the age of 5. A plurality (44%) said their children first used a booster seat at age 3, followed by age 2 (26%) and age 4 (19%). About 5% said they placed their children in a booster seat before they were 2 years old, including 2% who said their children first rode in a booster seat when they were less than 1 year old.

FIGURE 28



Qx: At what age did you begin using a booster seat for your children?

Base: Have used a booster seat

Unweighted N=350

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 3

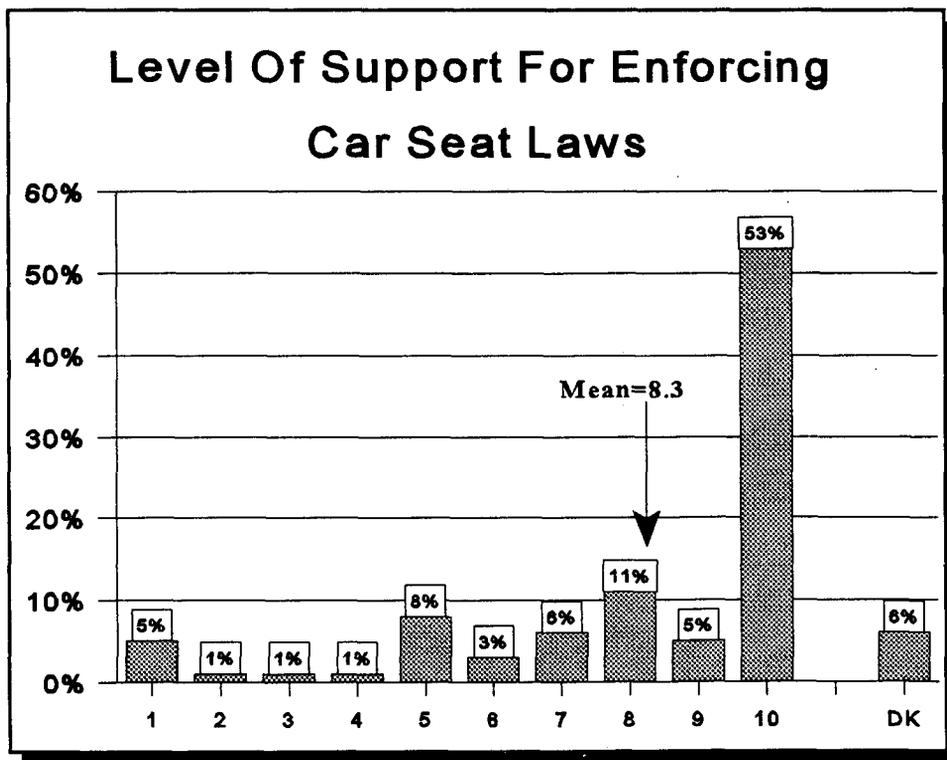
1996 ATTITUDES TOWARD ENFORCEMENT OF CAR SEAT LAWS

Every State in the United States has laws requiring the use of vehicle restraint systems for infants and young children. This chapter examines public attitudes toward the enforcement of these child car seat laws.

Support For Enforcement Of Car Seat Laws

The public (age 16 and older) favors stringent enforcement of car seat laws. Interviewers asked respondents their opinion of how strict police enforcement of child car seat laws should be. Respondents were asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 meant that police should hardly ever give a ticket for a car seat violation and 10 meant that police should give a ticket at every opportunity. Based on the data, more than two-thirds (69%) of the public favored strict enforcement (8-10) of the child car seat laws. More than one-half (53%) favored police ticketing child car seat violations at every opportunity.

FIGURE 29



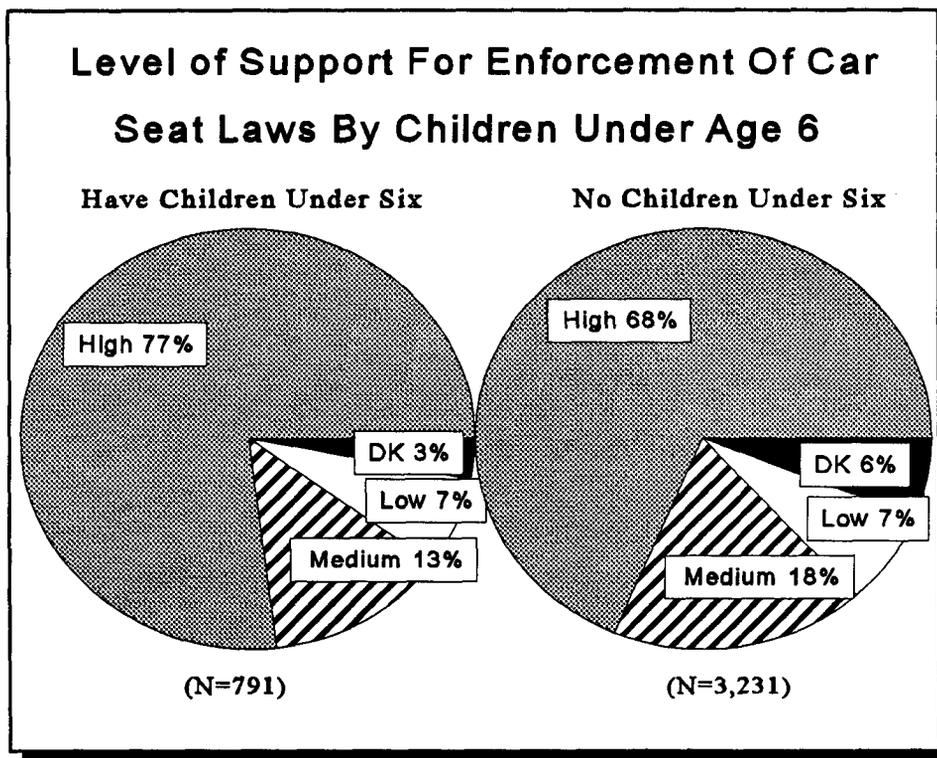
Qx: How do you personally feel about the police enforcement of child car seat laws? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police hardly ever give a ticket for violations of child car seat laws and 10 means police give a ticket at every opportunity for violations of child car seat laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,022

Approval of strict enforcement (ratings of 8 through 10) of car seat laws is found both among those with and those without children under age six in the household. Seventy-seven percent of persons with children under age six favor strict enforcement of the car seat laws. Among the driver age population without children under age six in the household, 68% favor strict enforcement of the law by police.

FIGURE 30



Qx: How do you personally feel about the police enforcement of child car seat laws? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police hardly ever give a ticket for violations of child car seat laws and 10 means police give a ticket at every opportunity for violations of child car seat laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

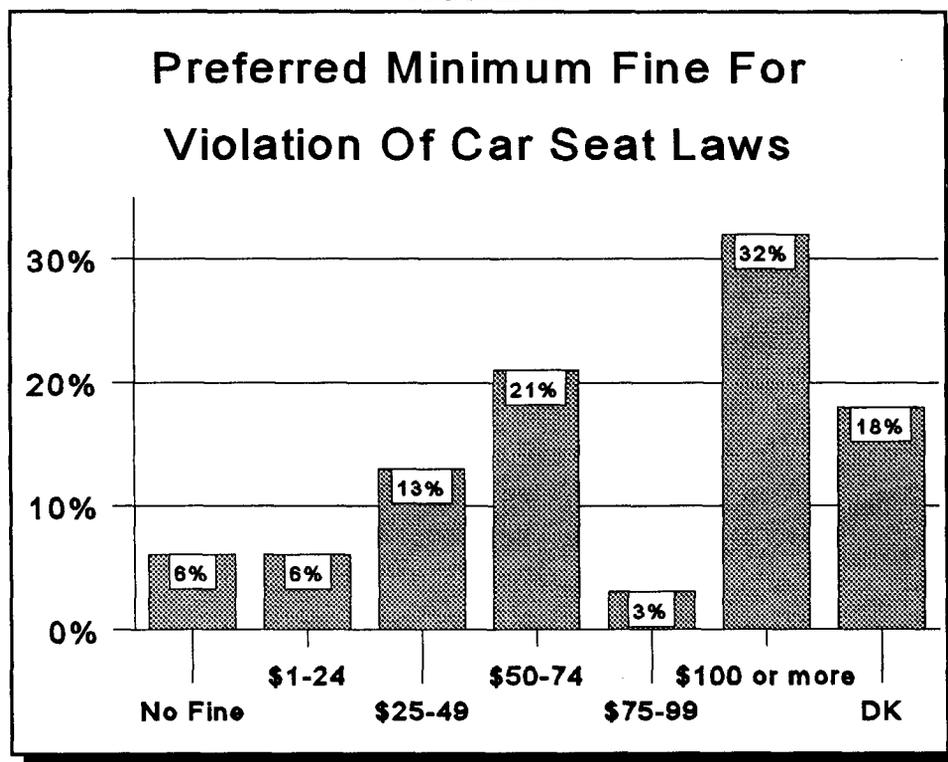
*Base: Total population age 16+
Unweighted N's listed above*

Note: Low (1-3) Medium (4-7) High (8-10)

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Regardless of their attitude about police enforcement of child car seat laws, respondents 16 and older were asked what they thought the minimum fine should be for violation of the laws. At one end of the continuum, about one in eight persons (12%) felt that the minimum fine should be less than \$25. This includes six percent who felt there should be no fine for violating the child car seat law. At the other end, one-third (32%) felt that the minimum fine should be \$100 or more. More than one-half (56%) felt the minimum fine should be \$50 or more. Nearly one out of six people (18%) were not sure what the minimum fine for a violation should be.

FIGURE 31



Qx: What do you think the minimum fine should be for violation of child car seat laws?

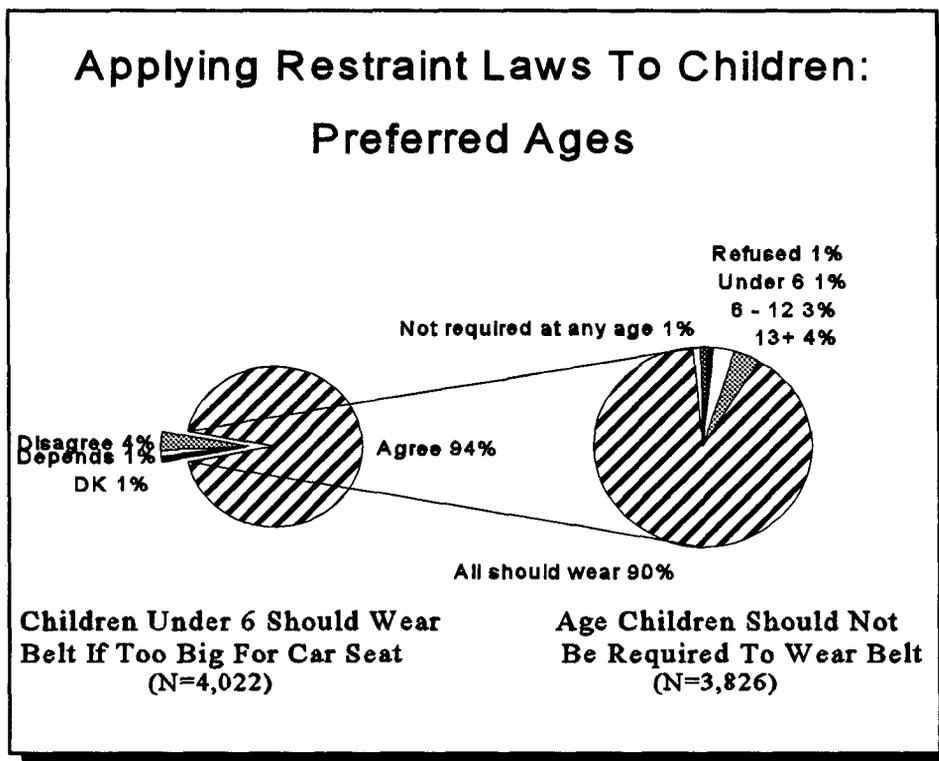
Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,022

After Car Seats

Ninety-four percent of persons age 16 and older agreed that young children should be required to wear a seat belt when they outgrow a car seat, while only 4% disagreed. The remaining 2% were not sure (1%) or felt it depends on the child's age (1%). Those who agreed that young children should wear a seat belt if they have outgrown their car seat were asked how old children should be before they are not required by law to wear seat belts. The vast majority (90%) believed that all children should be required to wear seat belts after they have outgrown car seats.

FIGURE 32



Qx: What about when children under the age of 6 outgrow a child car seat? Do you agree or disagree that they should be required by law to wear seat belts when riding in a vehicle?

Qx: How old do you think children should be before they are not required by law to wear seat belts or do you think all children should wear them?

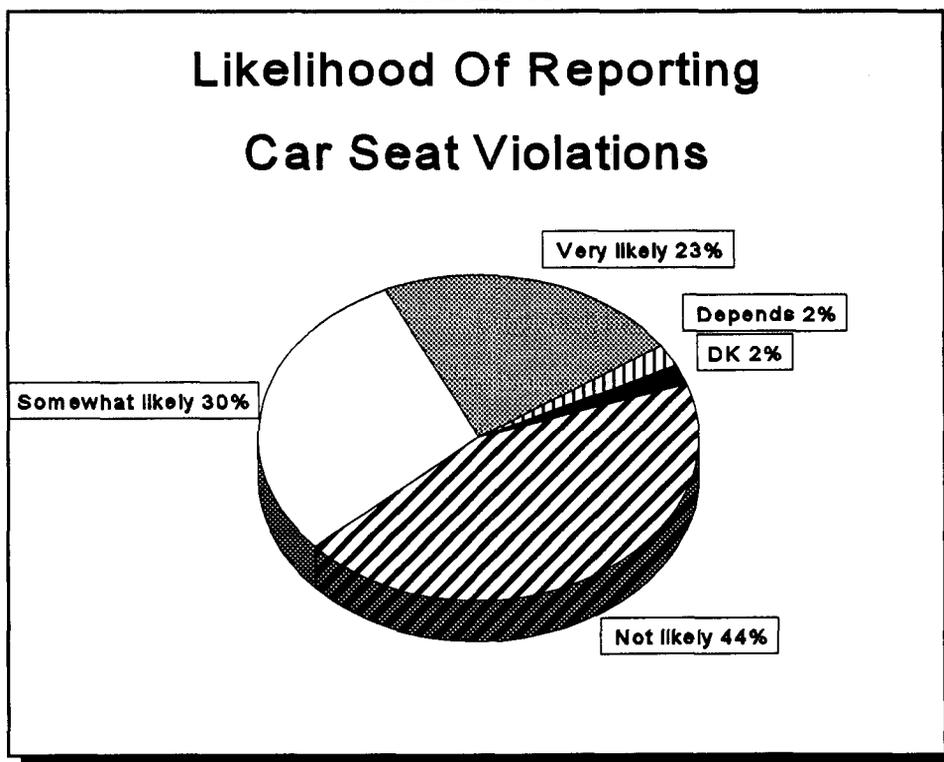
Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N's listed above

Reporting Violations

Although the public favored strict enforcement of car seat laws by police, they were divided on their personal responsibility for enforcing those laws. Nearly one in four (23%) said that, if there was a telephone number they could call to report child car seat violations, they would be very likely to use it if they saw a violation. Another 30% said that they would be somewhat likely to use such a number if they saw a violation. Forty-four percent reported that they would not be very likely to report such violations if they saw them.

FIGURE 33



Qx: If there was a number you could call to report child car seat violations by others, how likely do you think you would be to use it if you saw a violation?

Base: Total population age 16+

Unweighted N=4,022

1996 SURVEY RESULTS

CHAPTER 4

TRENDS

1994 - 1996

Trends in Car Seat Attitudes and Behavior

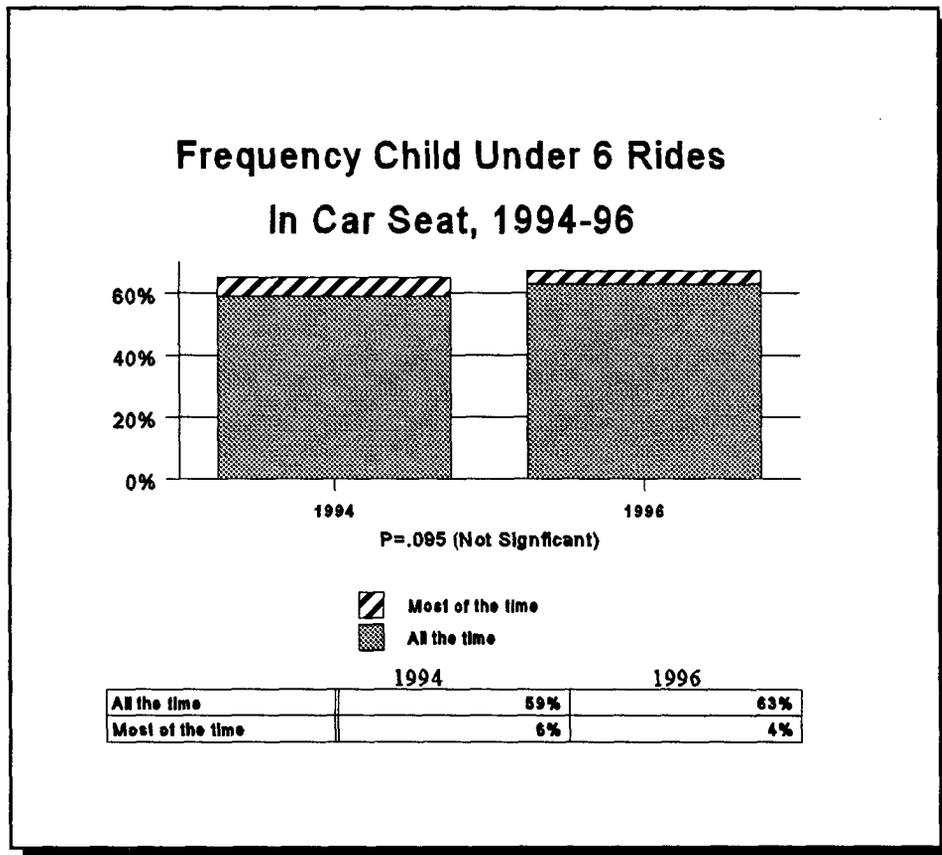
This chapter of the report compares findings from the 1994 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey with the results of the current 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Since both surveys are based upon probability samples of the general population, their estimates are subject to sampling variations. Consequently, in addition to comparing the results of the two surveys on common questions, we have also tested differences in estimates between the two surveys for statistical significance (i.e., the likelihood that differences between the two surveys exceed expected sampling variances).

A Chi squared test is employed to test statistical significance of difference. A p-value (probability) of less than .05 (one in twenty) is treated as statistically significant in this report. In most cases, we have conducted a Chi Squared test of the difference between the two years for the whole variable. The results are presented in the tables as a p-value, with .05 or less treated as statistically significant differences. In the case of open-ended variables, we have tested the difference in the specific response categories between the two years. In those cases where the Chi Squared test indicated a p-value of .05 or less, we have indicated that the difference is statistically significant with an asterisk (*).

Car Seat Use 1994-96

The proportion of those who said their children under 6 ride in a car seat “all of the time” was 59% in 1994 and 63% in 1996.

FIGURE 34



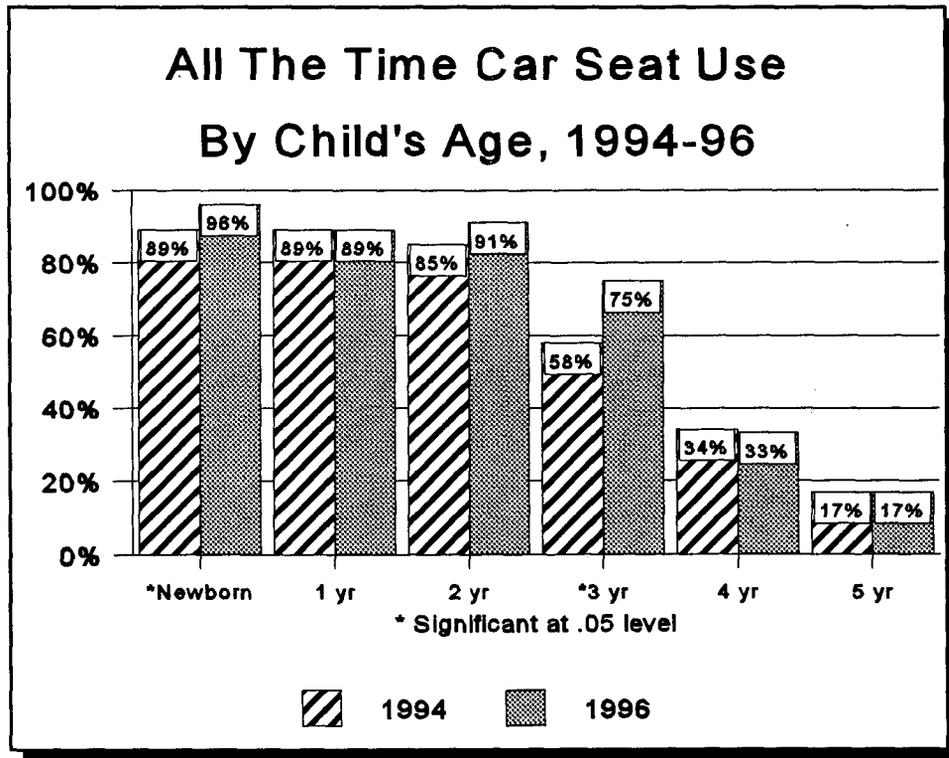
Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

The data suggests that car seat usage in 1996 is higher among children under age 4. In 1996, nearly everyone (96%) said they placed their newborn in a car seat "all of the time" versus 89% in 1994. Although the 1996 percentage who said their three-year-olds ride in a car seat all of the time declines to 75% (from 91% for two-year-olds), this still represents a 17-percentage point increase (from 58% of three-year-olds in 1994). This suggests that drivers may be keeping children in their car seats more often through the first three years of age. Roughly the same percentage of drivers said their four-year-olds ride in their car seat all of the time (33% in 1996 compared to 34% in 1994). The same percentage of drivers also reported their five-year-olds riding in their car seat all of the time (17% in both 1996 and in 1994).

FIGURE 35



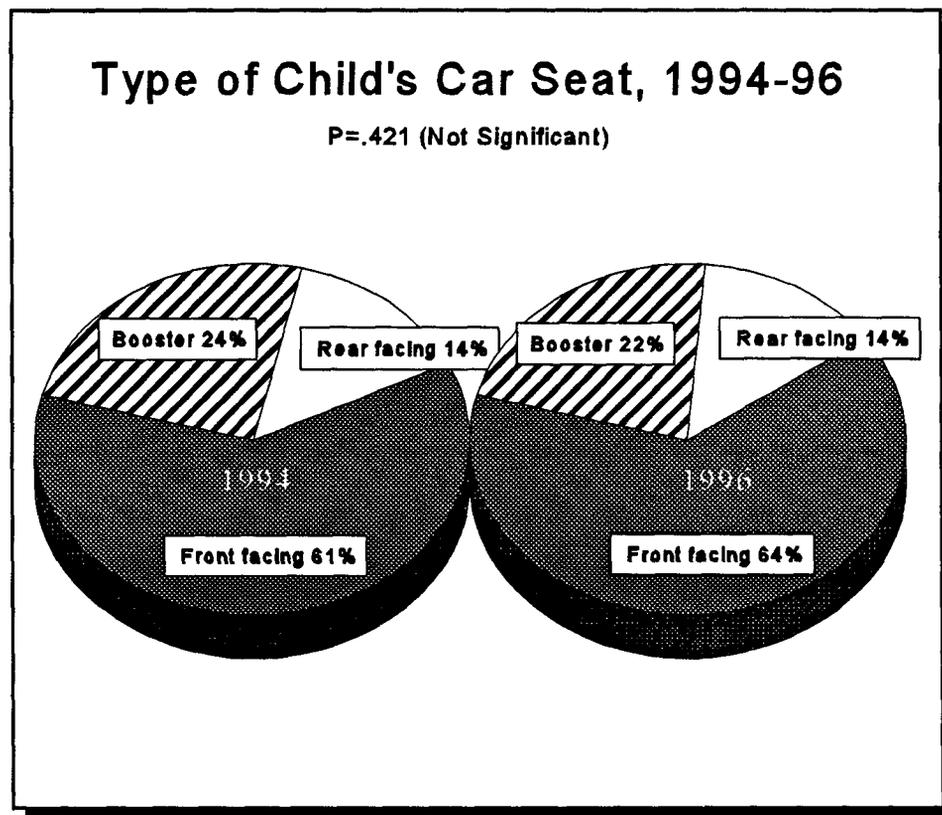
Qx: When you are driving and (THE CHILD) rides in the vehicle with you, how often does (he/she) ride in a child car seat ... would you say all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

Base: Parents/caregivers as defined on page 4

Type and Location Of Car Seat, 1994-96

Sixty-four percent of drivers in 1996 reported using front-facing car seats compared to 61% in 1994. About the same percentage of drivers reported using rear-facing car seats (14% in both years) and booster seats (22% in 1996 versus 24% in 1994).

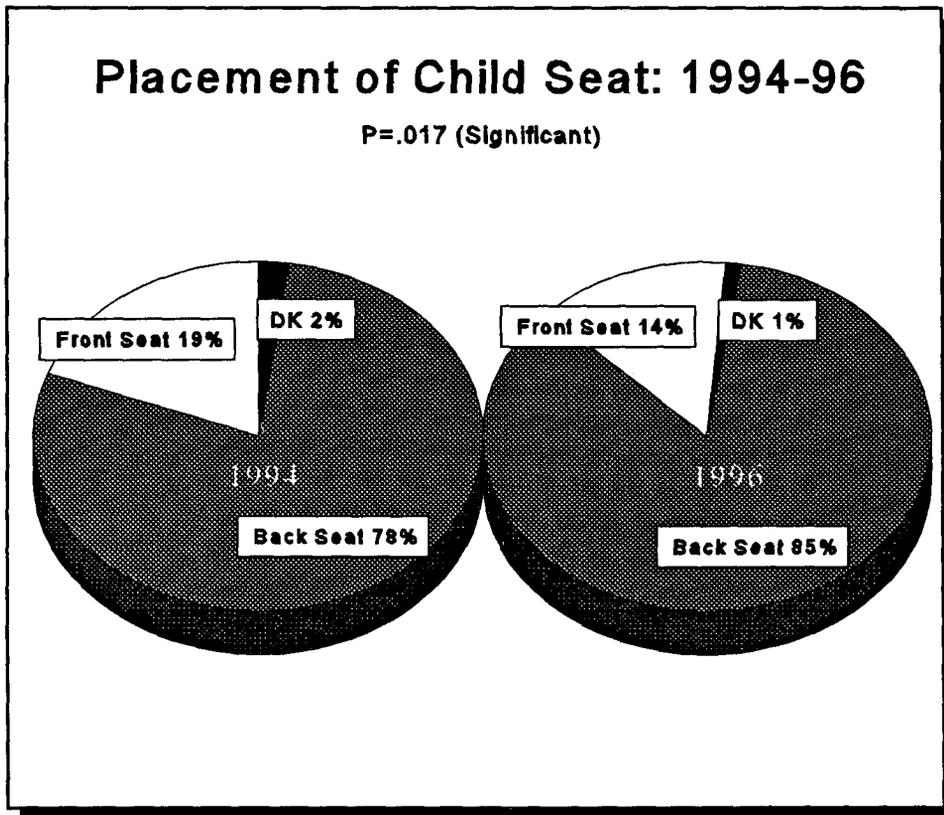
FIGURE 36



- Qx: When he/she is fastened in the child car seat, are there straps over both shoulders, a strap across only one shoulder, or are there no straps over either shoulder?
- Qx: When you are driving and he/she is riding in the child car seat, is it usually front facing or rear facing?
- Qx: Can the seat be used in a front facing position only, a rear facing position only or can it be used in either position?
- Base: Child at least on occasion rides in car seat

More drivers in 1996 (85%) reported placing their child's car seat in the back seat than did drivers in 1994 (78%). Conversely, fewer drivers reported placing their child's car seat in the front seat (14% in 1996 versus 19% in 1994).

FIGURE 37



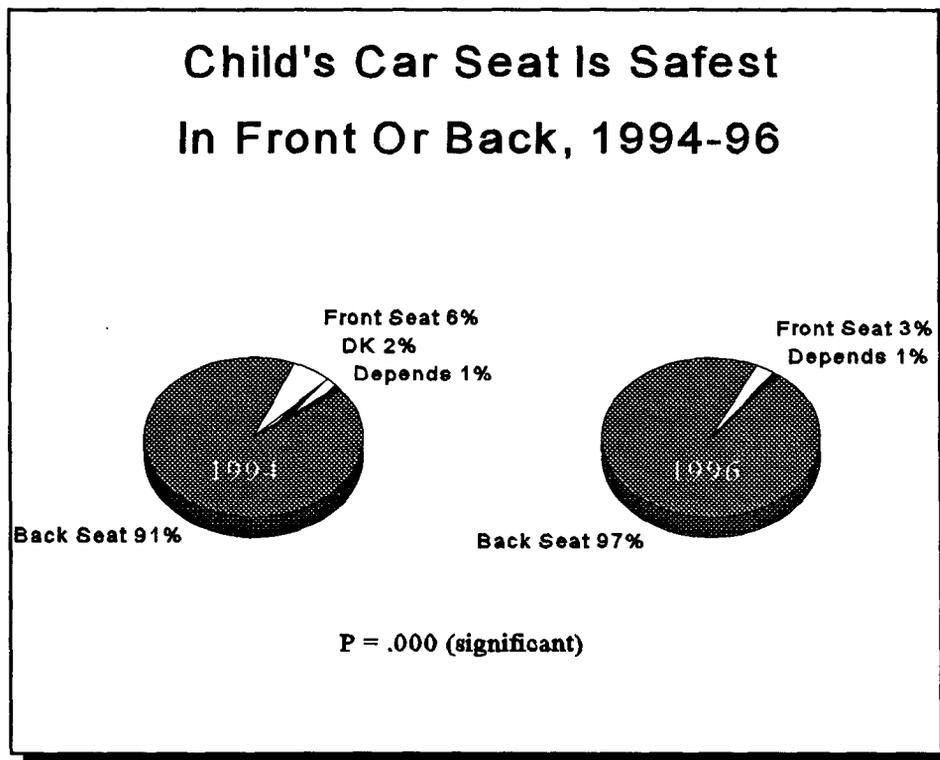
Qx: When you are driving and (he/she) rides in the child car seat, is it usually in the front seat or the back seat?

Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Even though 85% of drivers in 1996 said they usually placed their car seat in the back, nearly everyone (97%) acknowledged that the back seat is the safest part of the vehicle to place the car seat. This marks a 6 percentage point increase from 91% in 1994 who thought the back seat was the safest.

FIGURE 38



Qx: Where would you say it is safest to place a child car seat in the vehicle . . . in the front seat or in the back seat?

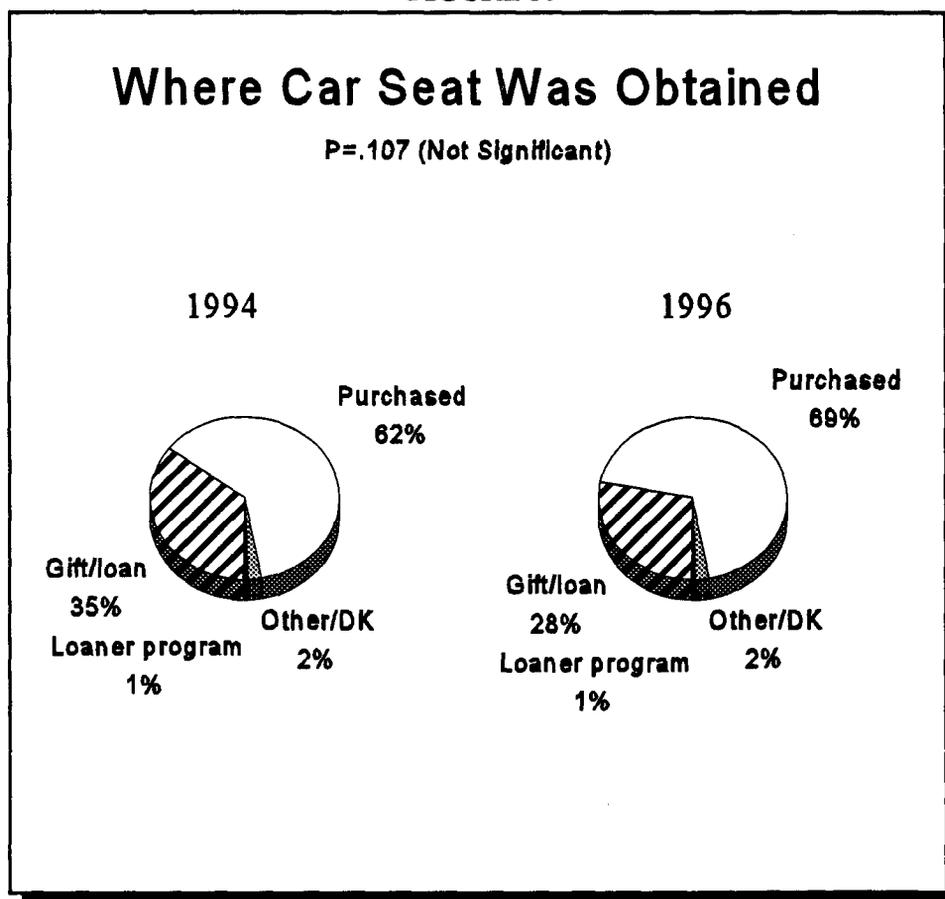
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Acquisition Of Car Seat, 1994-96

More drivers in 1996 (69%) than in 1994 (62%) said they purchased their car seat. Fewer drivers received their car seat as a gift or loan (28% in 1996 versus 35% in 1994). Drivers who purchased their car seats were also more likely in 1996 (91%) than in 1994 (88%) to have obtained their car seat from a retail store.

FIGURE 39



Qx: Did you purchase the child car seat, did you get it as a gift or loaner from a relative or friend or did you get it from a loaner program?

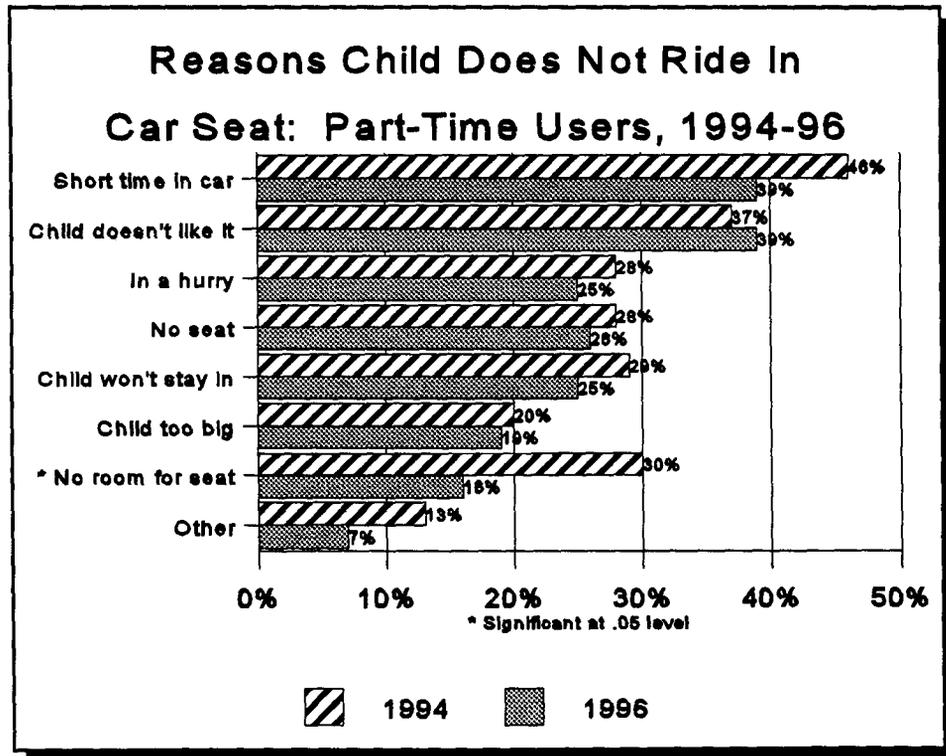
Base: Child at least on occasion rides in a child car seat

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Non-Use Of Car Seats, 1994-96

Staying for a “short time in the car” remained the most frequently mentioned reason that drivers sometimes don’t place their children in car seats. However, fewer drivers in 1996 (39%) than in 1994 (46%) stated this reason. The second most mentioned reason, “the child doesn’t like it” was mentioned by 39% in 1996, up from 37% in 1994. In 1996, 16% mentioned “no room in the car” as a reason they sometimes did not place their child in a car seat, compared to 30% in 1994.

FIGURE 40



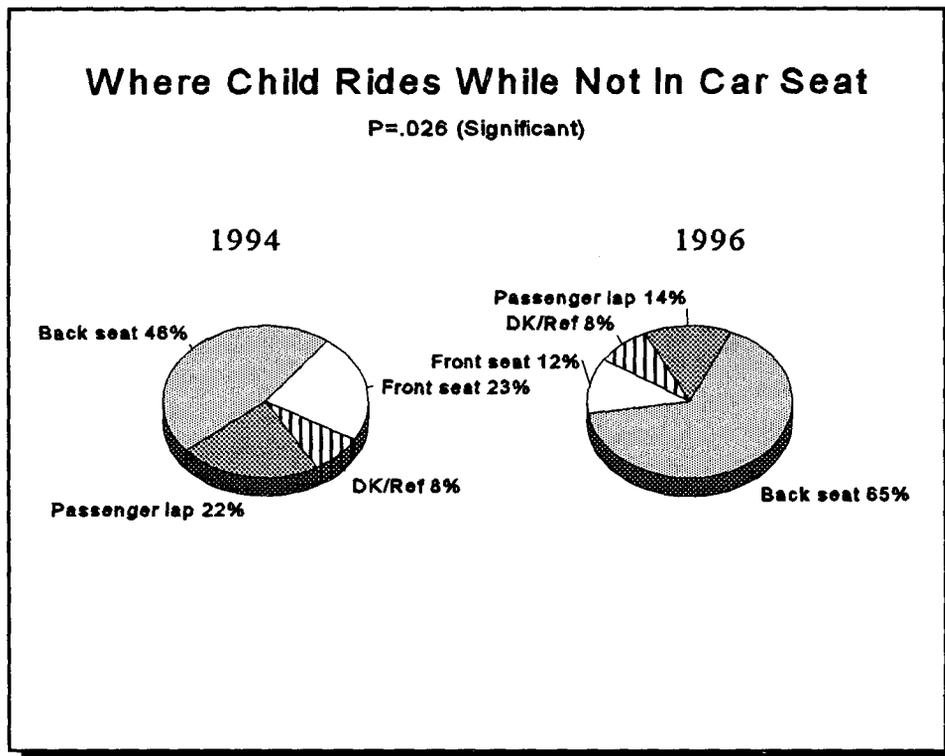
Qx: When my [child] doesn't ride in a child car seat, it is sometimes because . . .

Base: Part-time car seat users

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Drivers in 1996 were more likely (65%) than drivers in 1994 (46%) to have their children in the back seat when they were not in car seats. Similarly, fewer drivers said their children were in the front when not in car seats (12% in 1996 versus 23% in 1994). In addition, fewer drivers in 1996 (14%) than in 1994 (22%) said that children rode in a passenger's lap when they weren't in a car seat.

FIGURE 41



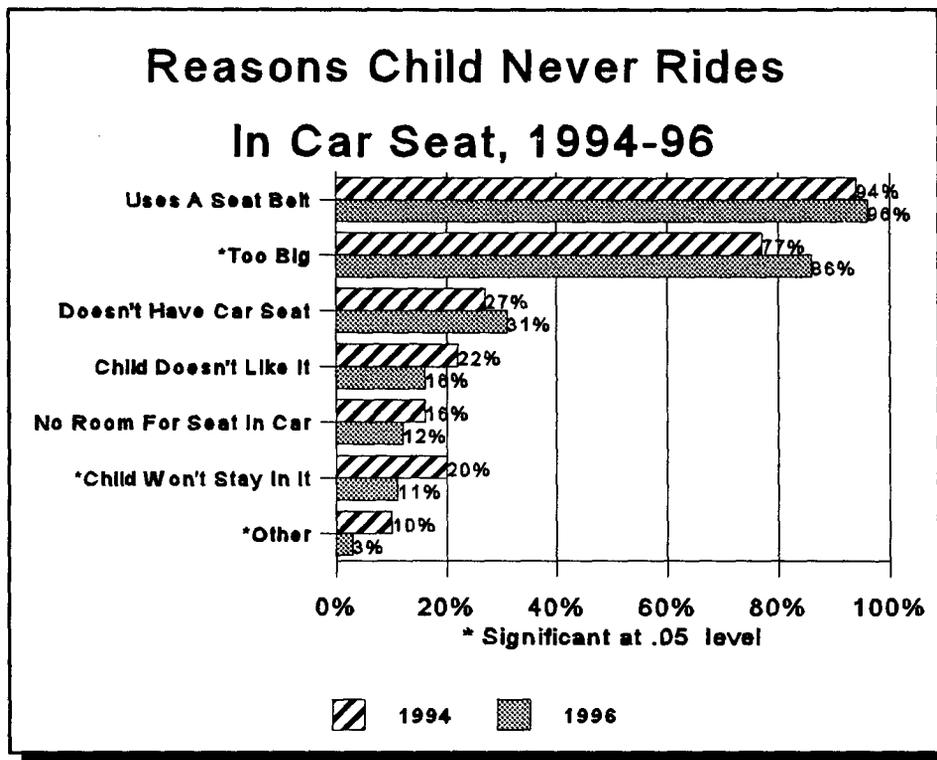
Qx: When the (child) doesn't ride in the child car seat when riding with you does he/she usually sit on someone's lap, sit by him/herself in the front seat or sit in the back seat?

Base: Part-time car seat users

Never Uses A Car Seat, 1994-96

As in 1994, nearly all drivers in 1996 reported “using a seat belt” as the reason their child never uses a car seat (94% in 1994 versus 96% in 1996). “Too big” remained the second most mentioned reason in 1996 at 86%, up from 77% in 1994. Fewer drivers in 1996 mentioned “child doesn’t like it” (16% in 1996 versus 22% in 1994) and “child won’t stay in it” (11% versus 20%). More drivers in 1996 (31%) mentioned “doesn’t have a car seat” than in 1994 (27%).

FIGURE 42



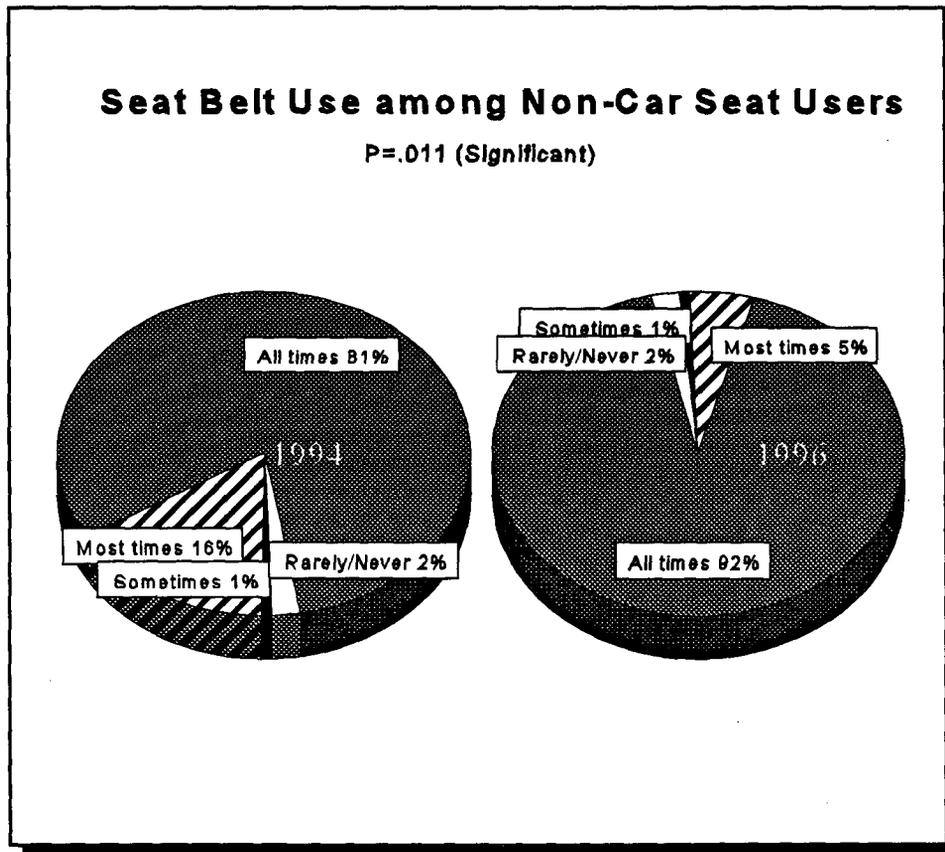
Qx: My (child) doesn't ride in a child car seat because . . .

Base: Child under age 6 never uses car seat

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Drivers whose children never use car seats were more likely in 1996 (92%) than in 1994 (81%) to say their children wear seat belts "all of the time" when riding in the vehicle. They were less likely to say their children wear their seat belt "most of the time" (5% in 1996 compared to 16% in 1994).

FIGURE 43



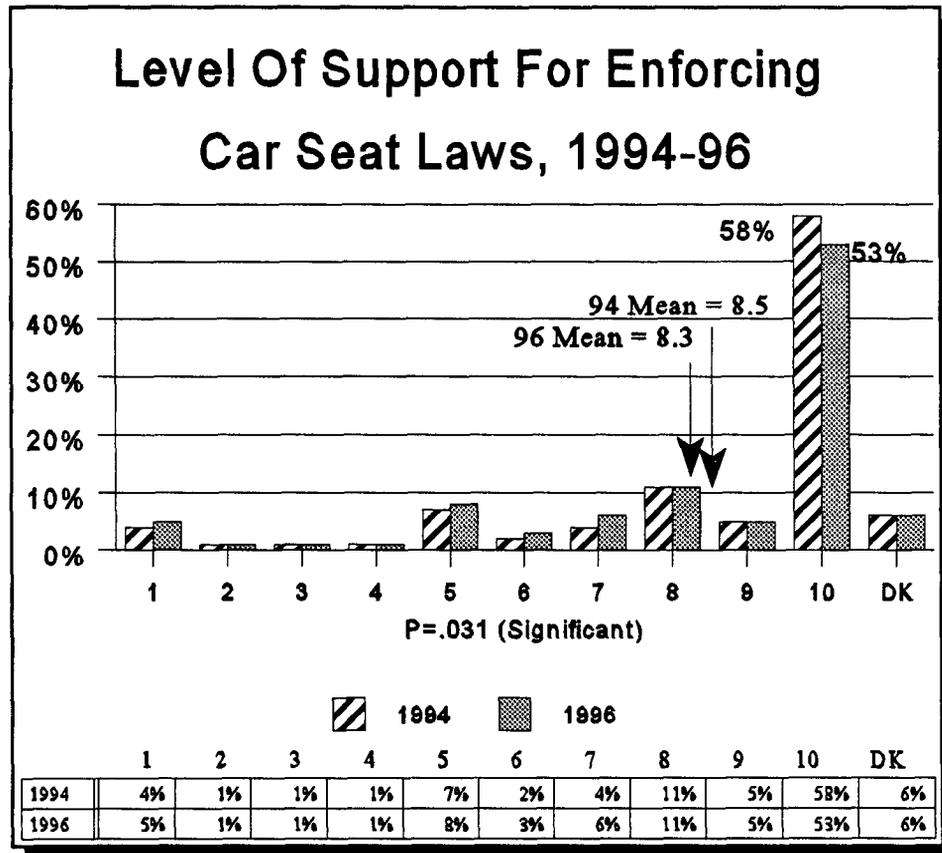
Qx: How often does he/she use a seat belt?
Base: Child under age 6 never uses car seat

1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey: Car Seats

Car Seat Enforcement, 1994-96

Respondents were asked their opinion of how strict police enforcement of child car seat laws should be. They were told to respond on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 meant that police should hardly ever give a ticket for a car seat violation and 10 meant that police should give a ticket at every opportunity. Overall, respondents in 1996 were somewhat less supportive of enforcement, with 53% endorsing maximum enforcement, down from 58% in 1994. The mean rating declined from 8.5 in 1994 to 8.3 in 1996.

FIGURE 44



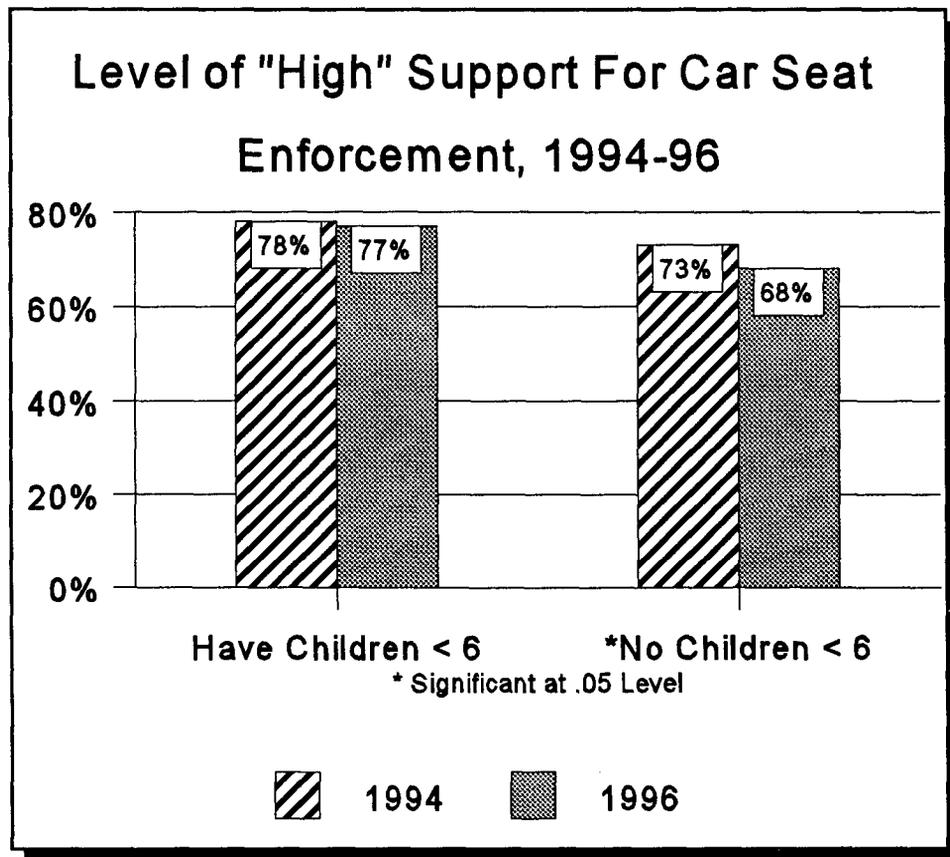
Qx: How do you personally feel about the police enforcement of child car seat laws? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police hardly ever give a ticket for violations of child car seat laws and 10 means police give a ticket at every opportunity for violations of child car seat laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

Base: Total population age 16+

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While support for car seat enforcement remains high among those who have children under age 6 in their household, it has declined among those without children under 6. In 1996, more than three-fourths (77%) of those with young children expressed a high level of support (as defined on page 39) for car seat enforcement, unchanged from the 78% in 1994. However, 68% of those without children under 6 years of age in 1996 supported high levels of enforcement, compared with 73% in 1994.

FIGURE 45



Qx: How do you personally feel about the police enforcement of child car seat laws? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means police hardly ever give a ticket for violations of child car seat laws and 10 means police give a ticket at every opportunity for violations of child car seat laws, how strict should police enforcement be?

Base: Total population age 16+

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In 1996, 94% of the driving age public agreed that children under the age of 6 should be required by law to wear a seat belt when they outgrow their child car seat. This percentage did not change from 1994, when 94% of the driving age public also agreed with the statement.

More people agreeing with this statement in 1996 believed that all children should be required by law to wear seat belts after they have outgrown car seats regardless of age, 90% in 1996 compared to 85% in 1994.

| Table 3. Applying Restraint Laws To Children: Preferred Ages, 1994-96 | | |
|--|------------|------------|
| <i>Qx: What about when children under the age of 6 outgrow a child car seat? Do you agree or disagree that they should be required by law to wear seat belts when riding in a vehicle?</i> | 1994 | 1996 |
| <i>Base: Total population age 16+</i> | | |
| Agree [IF AGREE ASK . . .] | 94% | 94% |
| <i>Qx: How old do you think children should be before they are not required by law to wear seat belts or do you think all children should wear them?</i> | | |
| <i>Base: Agrees that children under 6 should be required by law to wear a seat belt when they outgrow their child car seat.</i> | | |
| | 1994 | 1996 |
| All should wear seat belts | 85% | 90% |
| Under age 6 | 3% | 1% |
| Ages 6 to 12 | 5% | 3% |
| Ages 13 or older | 4% | 4% |
| Don't know/refused | 3% | 1% |
| Not required at any age | NA | 1% |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% |
| Disagree | 4% | 4% |
| Depends On Age | 1% | 1% |
| Don't Know | 1% | 1% |

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the public's support for car seats for children is high. However, the evidence also suggests that children are being moved from car seats to seat belts prematurely. While almost all infants (96%) under 20 pounds were said to be in their car seats "all of the time," this drops to 86 percent for those 20-29 pounds and then to 68% for those 30-39 pounds. Only 29% of children weighing 40 pounds or more were in car seats all the time. Children who did not use car seats all the time usually "never" used car seats. Almost all these non-users were said to wear seat belts all the time (92%). However, seat belts generally will not fit the child appropriately until the child is larger.

Among respondents who used car seats, almost all (97%) knew that it is safest to place a car seat in the back seat of a vehicle. However, only 85% tended to place the car seat in the back. Both numbers are improvements over the 1994 survey, when 91% considered the back seat to be the safest location and 78% tended to place the car seat in the back.

Respondents who used car seats generally considered them easy to use, both in terms of attaching them to the vehicle as well as buckling up the child.

If a child rode in a car seat, but not all the time, the most frequent reasons for non-use were that the child would be in the vehicle only a short time (39%) and that the child doesn't like the car seat (39%). If the child never used a car seat, it most often was because the child was considered too big (86%) and already was using a seat belt (96%).

Support for strict police enforcement of car seat laws declined from 74% in 1994 to 69% in 1996. Most of the drop occurred among those without children under age 6 in the household. While support for strict enforcement remained about the same for those with children in the age range within the household (78% to 77%), support declined from 73% in 1994 to 68% in 1996 among those without young children.

Still, the public overwhelmingly supports child restraint laws. More than nine out of ten (94%) believe that children who outgrow car seats should be required by law to wear seat belts when riding in a motor vehicle. Few believe that there should be an upper age limit where the requirement no longer applies. Rather, the vast majority believe that the requirement should apply to all children.

DOT HS 808-634

