



---

**RESULTS OF TRANSPORT CANADA'S SEPTEMBER 2009 SURVEY  
OF SEAT BELT USE IN RURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY**

---

## **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 2009, Transport Canada conducted an observational survey of seat belt use in rural communities across Canada. 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<sup>1</sup>. 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 252 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 22,642 vehicles and 30,831 occupants were observed during the course of the survey.

---

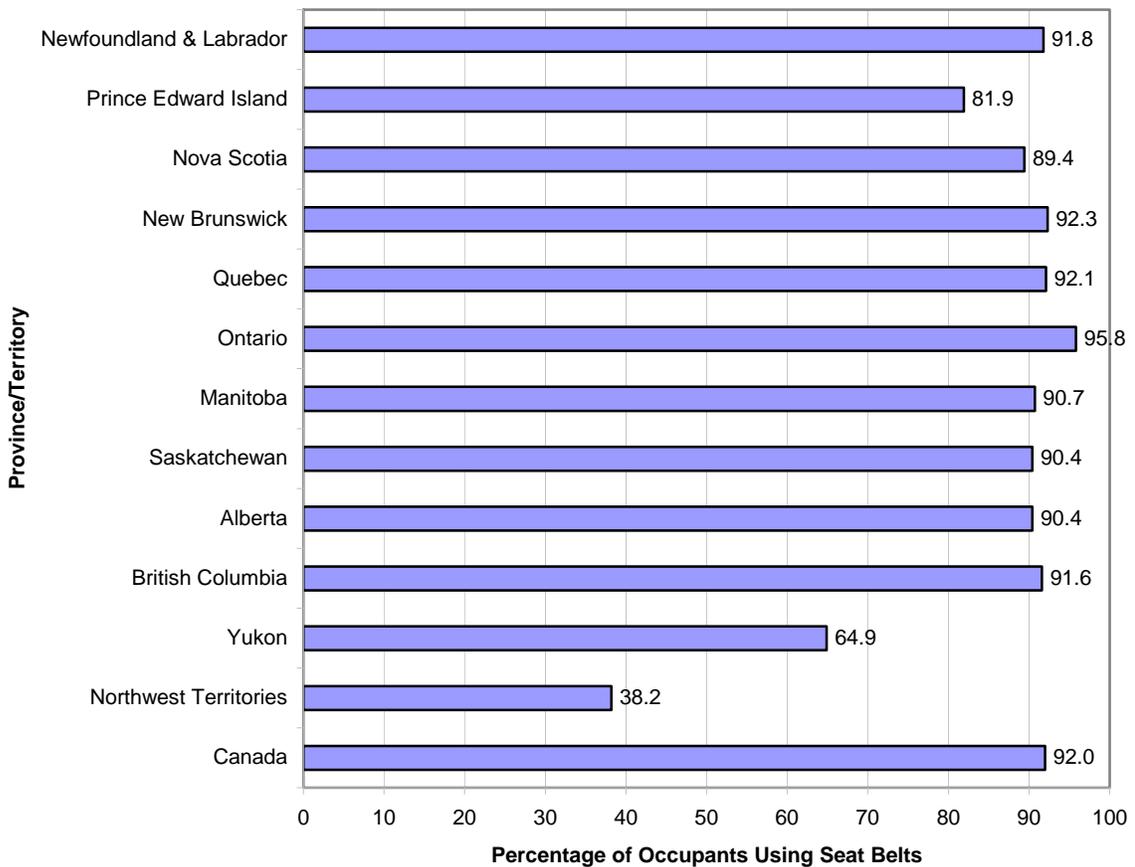
<sup>1</sup> To be more exact, the definition used in this survey also includes those communities that have a population over 10,000 but are not classified as census agglomerations in Statistics Canada 2001 census.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Seat Belt Usage by All Occupants by Province or Territory

- Chart 1 shows that an estimated 92.0% ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ) of all occupants of light-duty vehicles use seat belts. New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario were at or above the national average. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and two of the three territories were below the national average. No data was collected in Nunavut in 2009.

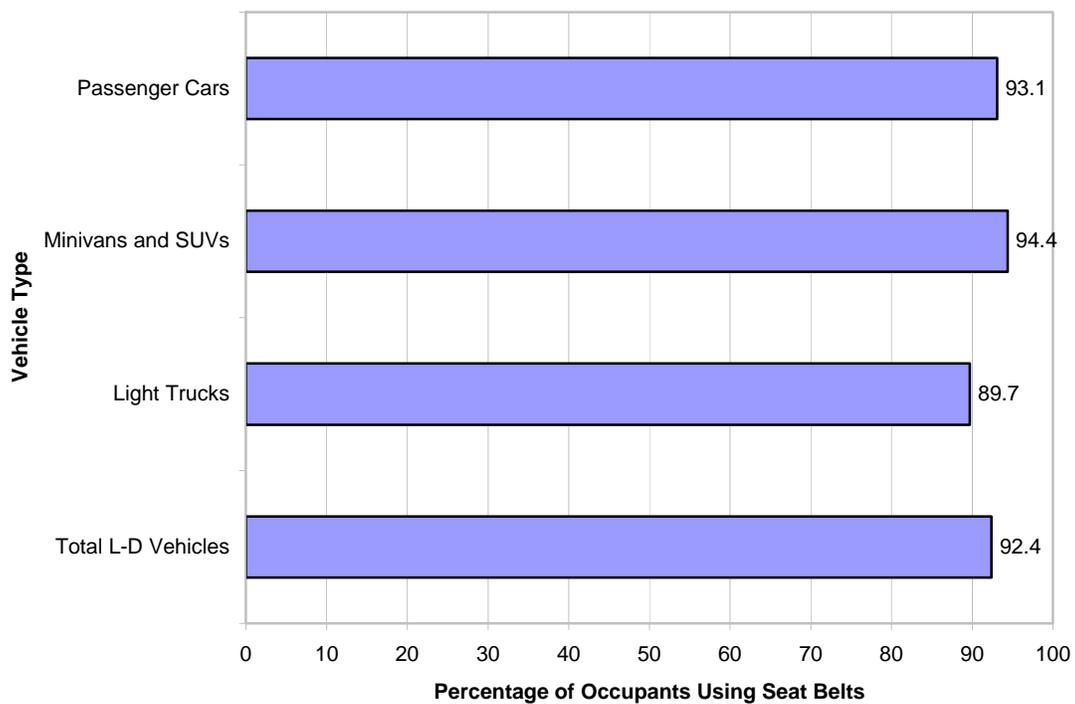
**Chart 1**  
**Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Province/Territory**



### Seat Belt Usage by All Occupants by Light-Duty Vehicle Type

- In the survey, 42.1% of vehicles were passenger cars, 26.8% were minivans and SUVs, and 31.1% were light trucks.
- Chart 2 shows much lower rates of seat belt usage among occupants of light trucks (89.7%) than of passenger cars (93.1%) and minivans and SUVs (94.4%). For drivers specifically, the rates were 93.0% for passenger cars, 94.2% for minivans and SUVs, and 90.2% for light trucks.

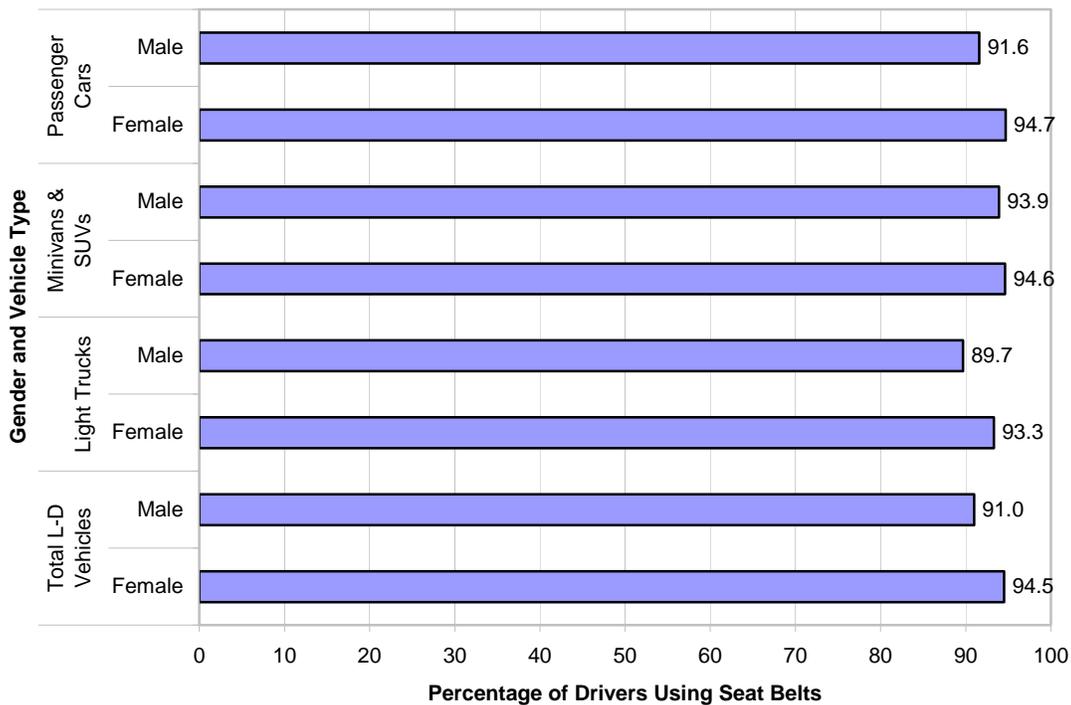
**Chart 2**  
**Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Light-Duty Vehicle Type**



### Seat Belt Usage by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type

- Chart 3 shows a higher percentage of female drivers wearing seat belts (94.5%) than male drivers (91.0%).
- The higher rate of seat belt usage by females was consistent across all three vehicle types. The difference ranged from 0.7 percentage points for minivans and SUVs (94.6% for females vs. 93.9% for males) to 3.6 points for light trucks (93.3% for females vs. 89.7% 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, except Prince Edward Island and the Yukon. Among the provinces and territories with a higher rate of seat belt usage by females, the differences ranged from 1.7 percentage points in Ontario (98.3% for females vs. 96.6% for males) to 31.1 points in the Northwest Territories (64.9% for females vs. 33.8% for males).

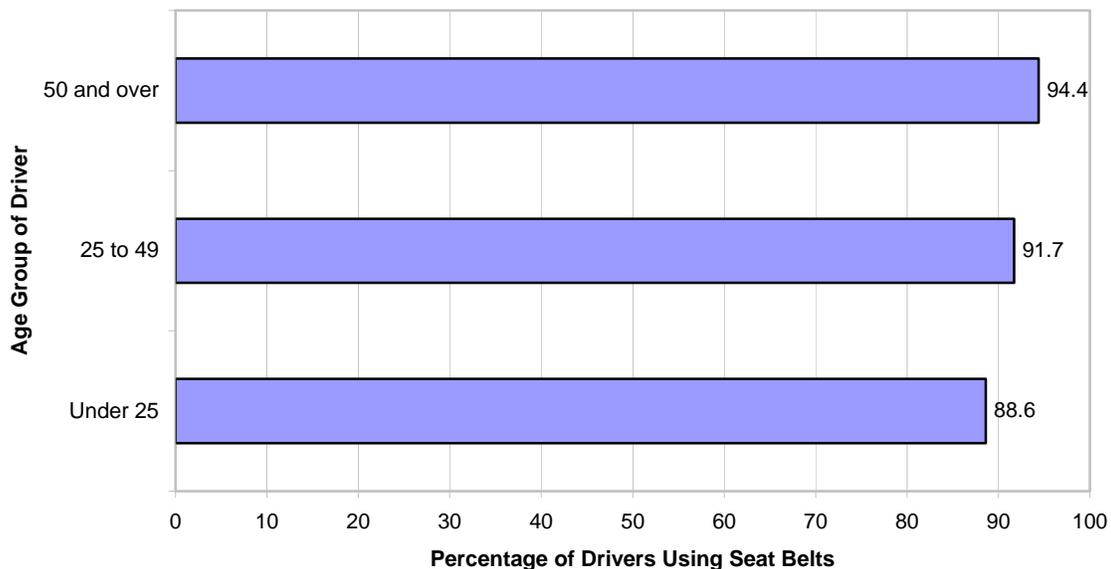
**Chart 3**  
**Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Gender of Driver and Vehicle Type**



## Seat Belt Usage by Age Group of Driver

- Chart 4 shows that the proportion of drivers wearing seat belts increases with age group, from 88.6% of those under 25, to 91.7% of those 25 to 49 and 94.4% 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 95.7% (vs. 89.6% for those under 25 and 92.5% for those 25 to 49).
  - For drivers of minivans and SUVs, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 97.0% (vs. 91.3% for those under 25 and 93.3% for those 25 to 49).
  - For drivers of light trucks, those 50 and older had a usage rate of 90.8% (vs. 86.1% for those under 25 and 89.8% for those 25 to 49).

**Chart 4**  
**Rural Canada Seat Belt Use by Age Group of Driver**



### Comparison of the Rural Survey Results from 2004, 2006 and 2009

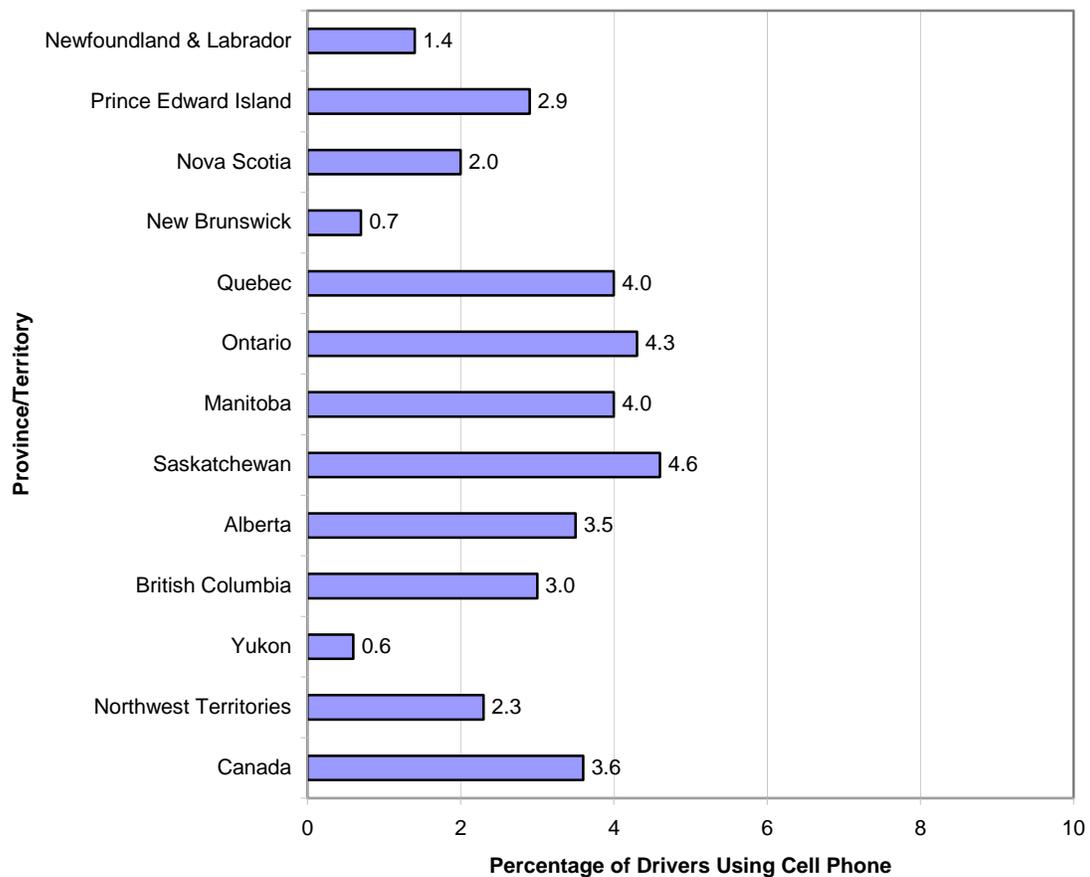
- The 2009 survey comprised communities spread out in 70 geographical regions, while the 2004 and 2006 surveys included 69 regions.
- Communities that have a population over 10,000 but are not classified as census agglomerations have been included in the 2004, 2006 and 2009 surveys.
- Some population strata have been combined.
- The design for the 2009 survey is identical to that of 2004 and 2006.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2009</b>
Newfoundland & Labrador	84.8%	85.5%	91.8%
Prince Edward Island	65.8%	95.5%	81.9%
Nova Scotia	83.4%	90.4%	89.4%
New Brunswick	85.6%	88.8%	92.3%
Quebec	89.1%	91.2%	92.1%
Ontario	87.9%	88.3%	95.8%
Manitoba	90.3%	86.4%	90.7%
Saskatchewan	87.6%	82.5%	90.4%
Alberta	82.4%	86.4%	90.4%
British Columbia	86.6%	87.5%	91.6%
Yukon	66.3%	77.6%	64.9%
Northwest Territories	64.8%	83.1%	38.2%
Nunavut	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rural Canada	86.9%	88.3%	92.0%

## Driver Cell Phone Use by Jurisdiction

- Chart 5 shows that an estimated 3.6% ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ) of drivers were using a cell phone. Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were at or above the national average. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories were below the national average. No data was collected in Nunavut in 2009.

Rural Canada Cell Phone Use by Province/Territory



## 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 92.0% to 95% by 2010.

In the fall of 2010, Transport Canada plans to conduct a survey of urban communities and their rural fringes that will complement the 2009 rural survey.

---

This publication is prepared by the Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Directorate and may be reproduced without permission provided that its use is solely for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary, and the source is fully acknowledged.

To find out more about national road safety programs and initiatives, call Transport Canada at **1 800 333-0371** or **(613) 998-8616** in the Ottawa area, or e-mail us at: **roadsafetywebmail@tc.gc.ca**.

You can also write to us at:      Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Directorate  
Transport Canada, ASF  
330 Sparks Street  
Place de Ville, Tower C  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

or visit our Web site at **[www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety](http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety)**.