



Summer 2018 Seat Belt Usage Report



PROVIDED TO THE CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY
SEPTEMBER, 2018
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Summer 2018 Executive Summary

2018 is the second year under the revised, resampling guidelines for collecting restraint usage data in California. Under these guidelines, the seat belt survey uses a fatality-based sampling method and includes all roads for sampling. The data included in this report are for the Summer “post-test” portion of the 2018 survey. A Spring “pre-test” was collected as well and the results from these two surveys will be combined for the overall 2018 usage rate for NHTSA.



There were no causes for delays in data collection. The collection occurred between August and September. The Summer data was collected at 204 sites across California. In all 37,557 occupants were observed, but belt use could not be determined for 713 (1.9%) occupants (normally due to dark windows or car speed). Consequently, the survey results were based on 36,844 observations.

In Summer 2018, the combined (i.e., for drivers and front seat passengers) usage rate was 95.99%. This compares to 96.24% in 2017, 96.45% in 2016, and 97.32% in 2015. These results show a gradual decrease in the usage rate over recent years.

The accompanying report provides a further detailed breakdown of restraint usage.

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Usage Rates by Road Type

This data shows the restraint usage rates by the type of road. More specifically, roads are sampled by three different federal classifications from the TIGER database. The TIGER database classifies roads as being “local”, “secondary”, or “primary” (for a detailed description of these road types, please see the last page of this report). There were small differences between restraint usages based on road type during the Summer 2018 survey.

Restraints were used less on local roads than they were on secondary and primary roads. This pattern is consistent with that seen approximately five years ago. More recently, the gap had largely closed between the different road types. This Summer, however, the gap reappeared.



The findings suggests that Californians may be reverting to the thinking of being more concerned about belt use when longer trips are being taken, and using their restraints less frequently for shorter distances on more local roads.

Combined Data – All Occupants

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	95.65	98.22	96.31	95.99
Standard Error	.003	.012	0.017	.005
Sample Sizes	7,673	18,538	10,633	36,844
95% Confidence Interval	95.09-96.21%	95.96-100.0%	92.88-99.74%	95.00-96.98%

Usage Rates for Drivers

The usage rates below indicate that drivers were less likely to wear their belts on local roads and this reversed a recent trend where differences between road types had been negligible. The decrease in local road belt usage is notable because it reverses recent gains in this area.



Driver Only Data

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	95.50	98.15	96.00	95.83
Standard Error	.003	.012	.020	.005
Sample Sizes	6,157	14,286	8,554	28,997
95% Confidence Interval	94.88-96.11%	95.77-100.0%	92.03-99.97%	94.81-96.86%

Usage Rates for Passengers

This data shows the restraint usage rates for front seat passengers. The usage rates for these front seat passengers are estimated in the same way that the combined rates and the driver-only rates are estimated.

The results for passengers showed relatively high and consistent usage across road types.

Overall, the 96.75% belt usage was down from last year's survey (97.76% in 2017) but generally, in line with where results have been in recent years (96.01% in 2016 and 98.05% during 2015 survey).



Passenger Only Data

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	96.41	98.49	97.34	96.75
Standard Error	.002	.010	.011	.004
Sample Sizes	1,516	4,252	2,079	7,847
95% Confidence Interval	95.97-96.85%	96.62-100.0%	95.20-99.48%	95.83-97.67%

Usage Rates by County

This table shows the combined (drivers and passengers) restraint usage rates in each of the counties included in the statewide survey. These specific counties were selected to provide a representative sampling of California, consistent with NHTSA's guidelines. Of the counties, nine were selected from the more populous counties while the remaining eight were selected from the less populated counties. It also includes the counties that were surveyed in previous years that are no longer part of the current survey.

Overall, almost all of the counties have continued to have relatively high usage rates. Notably, however, Orange County was the lowest in 2017 and the second lowest county in 2018. Orange County's low usage rate and high population and amount of traffic suggest that it is an important place to focus enforcement efforts.

County	Summer 2018	Summer 2017	Summer2016	Summer2015
Alameda	99.97	96.60	96.89	96.69%
Los Angeles	99.90	98.46	99.32	99.54%
Sacramento	98.95	96.82	97.37	100.00%
Ventura	98.89	96.86	---	---
San Joaquin	98.74	97.27		
Santa Barbara	98.71	96.51		
Kern	98.38	98.73	99.43	94.67%
Sonoma	98.19	95.25	99.92	98.96%
Monterey	97.56	98.31	99.51	97.18%
Solano	97.45	98.71	---	---
Riverside	96.51	98.67	93.19	99.92%
San Diego	95.90	98.89	96.68	97.29%
San Mateo	95.67	98.91	---	---
Contra Costa	95.60	98.13	---	---
San Luis Obispo	95.28	97.95	---	---
Orange	93.98	90.06	---	---
San Bernardino	91.92	98.17	98.31	93.55%
Merced	---	---	99.27	98.80%
Mendocino	---	---	97.51	97.56%
Fresno	---	---	96.83	99.50%
El Dorado	---	---	96.12	92.57%
Shasta	---	---	95.99	94.97%
Statewide	95.99%	95.91%	97.15%	97.07%

Detailed Description of Road Types

Code	Name	Definition
S1100	Primary Road	Primary roads are generally divided, limited-access highways within the interstate highway system or under state management, and are distinguished by the presence of interchanges. These highways are accessible by ramps and may include some toll highways.
S1200	Secondary Road	Secondary roads are main arteries, usually in the U.S. Highway, State Highway or County Highway system. These roads have one or more lanes of traffic in each direction, may or may not be divided, and usually have at-grade intersections with many other roads and driveways. They often have both a local name and a route number.
S1400	Local Neighborhood Road, Rural Road, City Street	These are generally paved non-arterial streets, roads, or byways that usually have a single lane of traffic in each direction. Roads in this feature class may be privately or publicly maintained. Scenic park roads would be included in this feature class, as would (depending on the region of the country) some unpaved roads.