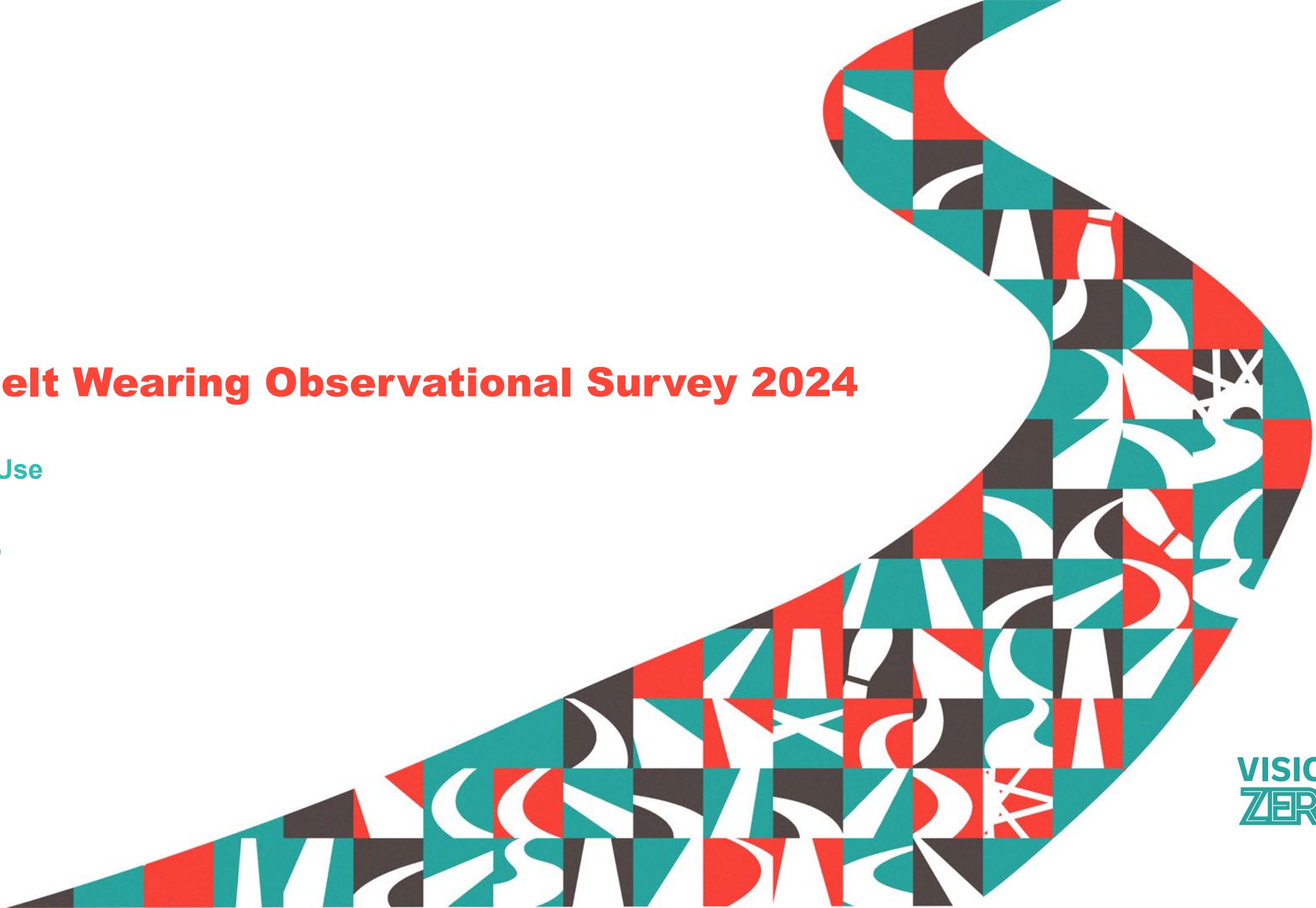




Seat Belt Wearing Observational Survey 2024

Safe Road Use

March 2025



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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

- The non-wearing of seat belts is a particularly dangerous road user behaviour, which has been recognised internationally as a key contributory factor in road traffic collisions and injury severity (WHO, 2018).
- Research conducted by the RSA found that 17%* of car users killed between 2020-2024 were not wearing a seat belt. Further to this, RSA research found that 6% of car users seriously injured between 2020 and 2024 were not wearing a seat belt at the time of the collision. Therefore, tracking seat belt wearing rates is of critical importance.
- The RSA has been conducting seat belt wearing observational surveys since 2006. Wearing rates have improved substantially among all vehicle occupants since then and were at their highest levels in 2022. The 2023 study saw the wearing rates decline, but a rebound was seen in the 2024 study.
- Rates of usage have traditionally been lower among rear seat passengers when compared to drivers and front seat passengers.
- However, this trend has not been noticeable in recent year's studies, with similar rates of seat belt usage observed when comparing rear seat passengers with front seat vehicle occupants.
- 97% of drivers were observed wearing a seat belt in 2024, with this rate dropping to 96% among front and rear seat passengers.

** Figures are provisional and subject to change. Car users include users of private cars, taxis and hackneys. Figures are sourced from the RSA collision database and are current as of 25 March 2025.*



Executive Summary

- In addition to an analysis of seat belt wearing by vehicle occupants, a breakdown by vehicle type, road type, gender, county, time of week, time of day, and a summary of the student survey results is also provided in this report.
- Seat belt wearing rates varied among the different vehicle types, being as low as 94% for occupants of LGVs and as high as 97% for occupants of cars.
- Rates of seat belt wearing among front seat vehicle occupants saw improvements across the various road types surveyed in the 2024 study. The picture was more mixed for rear seat passengers, however.
- Seat belt wearing rates among vehicle occupants by gender improved across all categories in 2024 when compared to the previous year's study. Overall, there were higher seat belt wearing rates among women.
- Improved usage rates were witnessed among almost all vehicle occupants during both weekdays and weekends when compared to the 2023 study.
- A consistent rate of seat belt usage was observed across all time periods of the day in the 2024 study.
- Overall, 96% of children observed as part of the primary and secondary school student surveys were wearing a seat belt, a drop of 1% on the previous year's rate.



Report Overview

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Safety Performance Indicators

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EC Projects

- Ireland participated in the EC Baseline Project from 2020 to 2022. A Baseline Project Report was published in early 2023: [Baseline Project Summary](#).
- Trendline is the follow-up to Baseline and will last until 2025. Further details about this project can be found at <https://trendlineproject.eu/>.
- The main aim of these projects is to ensure that a consistent approach to data collection and SPI reporting is adopted across the Member States.
- A Trendline Project Report will be published by the end of 2025, and individual SPI reports will also be made available.
- A Seat Belt Wearing SPI was included as part of Baseline and has also been included as part of Trendline.



Methodological Approach

Study Objectives

- The aim of this study was to gather observational data of seat belt wearing rates among vehicle occupants, both in the front and rear seats.
- As part of the study, a student survey was also conducted at locations close to primary and secondary schools.
- This report will outline the methodology used for the 2024 seat belt wearing survey and will present the key findings from the study.



Methodology

- A manual observational study of seat belt wearing by drivers and passengers (front and rear) was conducted at 157 sites in October and November 2024.
- A student survey at sites located near primary and secondary schools was also conducted as part of this study.
- The observational procedure involved trained observers standing at the roadside and observing the rate of seat belt usage among occupants of passenger cars and goods vehicles as they passed the site. Observations on urban and rural roads were recorded as the vehicle slowed down and/or stopped at a junction and observations on motorways involved observers recording data from safe locations, such as rest/parking areas.
- Fieldwork was conducted by Nationwide Data Collection (NDC) on behalf of the RSA.
- A nationally representative sample was used as part of this study, and observations took place in all 26 counties.
- The 2024 study included 24,550 observations in total, and followed the methodology specified by Trendline.
- The approach adopted was broadly in line with the method used by the RSA in historic seat belt wearing surveys.
- All route types were included in the study, and observations were made on weekdays and weekends (daylight hours only).



Historic Rates

Historic Seat Belt Wearing Rates

Table 1 - Historic seat belt wearing rates by vehicle occupant

Year	Drivers	Front Passengers	Rear Passengers
2006		*86%	63%
2007		*88%	84%
2008	90%	90%	78%
2009	90%	89%	79%
2011	94%	94%	90%
2012	93%	90%	89%
2013	94%	93%	89%
2014	92%	93%	88%
2015	94%	94%	81%
2016	92%	94%	74%
2017	96%	96%	83%
2018	94%	95%	89%
2021	99%	98%	93%
2022	99%	99%	93%
2023	95%	94%	95%
2024	97%	96%	96%

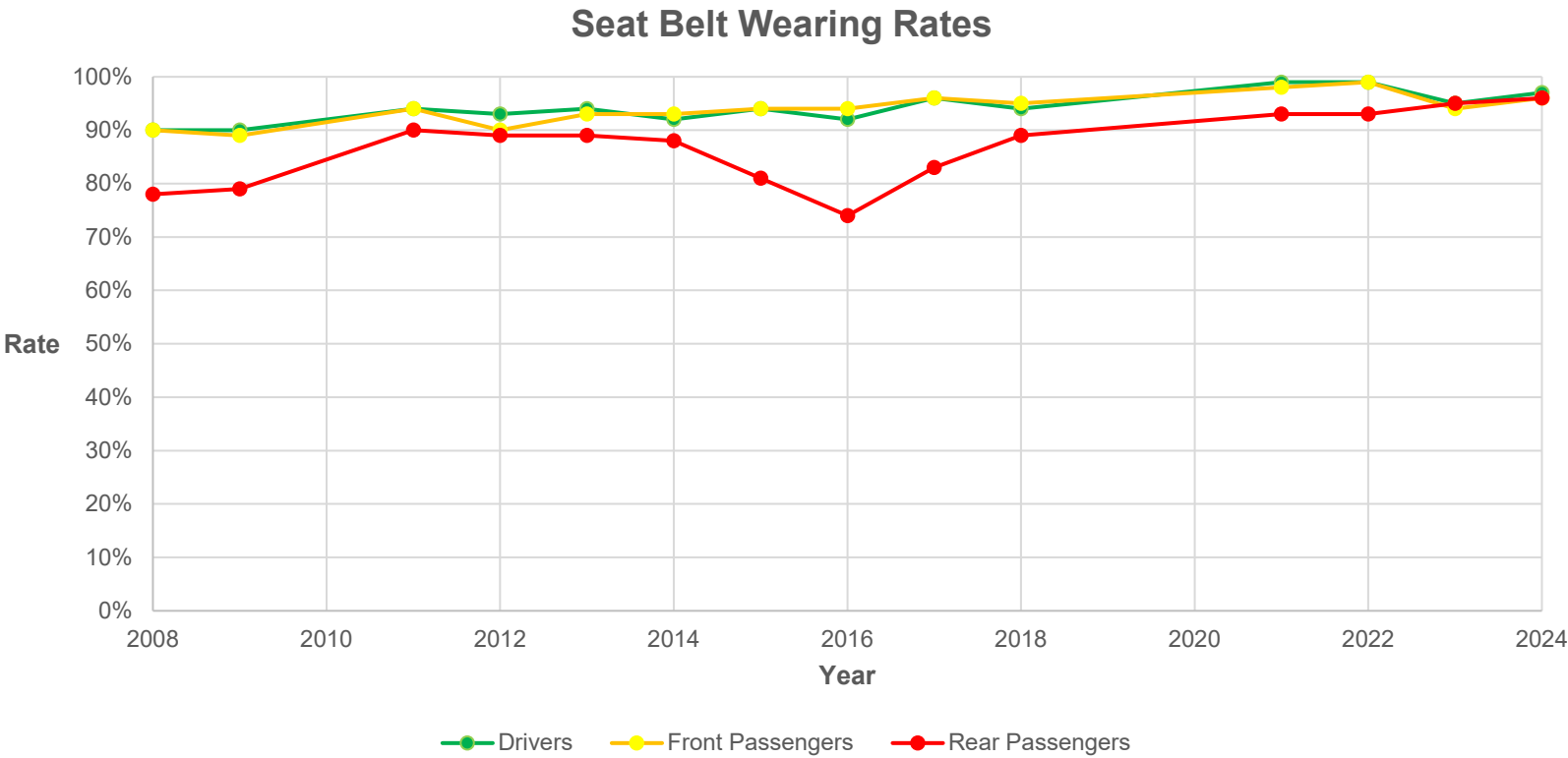
** In the 2006 and 2007 studies, percentages for drivers and front passengers were expressed in terms of front seat occupants.*

This represents a record high rate of seat belt wearing amongst rear seat passengers



Seat Belt Wearing – Historic Rates

- The graph below illustrates the traditionally higher rates of seat belt wearing among front seat vehicle occupants when compared to rear seat occupants.
- In recent year’s studies, however, this difference has not been evident, and the rates have largely converged amongst the various types of vehicle occupants.



Analysis of seat belt wearing

Seat belt wearing by vehicle occupant

- 97% of drivers observed as part of the 2024 study were wearing a seat belt, which represents an increase of 2% when compared to the 2023 study.
- 96% of front passengers observed as part of the 2024 study were wearing a seat belt, and this also represents a 2% increase when compared to the 2023 study.
- 96% of rear passengers observed as part of the 2024 study were wearing a seat belt, and this continues a recent upward trend amongst vehicle occupants in the back seat.
- When interpreting these results, it is important to note that the time of year when the surveys were conducted in 2024 were different. In 2024, the surveys took place in October and November and in 2023 the surveys took place in September and October. However, a consistent methodological and sampling approach was used in both studies.

Table 2 – Seat belt wearing rate by vehicle occupant

Vehicle Occupant	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Driver	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	14,598 (13,739)
Front Passenger	96% (94%)	4% (6%)	5,816 (6,229)
Rear Passenger	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	4,136 (3,914)

Seat belt wearing by vehicle type

- 97% of car occupants were wearing seat belts, with this rate dropping to 96% and 94% for occupants of HGVs and LGVs, respectively.
- The rates of seat belt wearing varied across the vehicle types when compared to the 2023 study, with the rate increasing slightly for occupants of cars, staying the same for occupants of LGVs and dropping slightly for occupants of HGVs.

Table 3 – Seat belt wearing rate by vehicle type

Vehicle Type	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Cars	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	20,081 (20,043)
LGVs	94% (94%)	6% (6%)	3,310 (2,778)
HGVs	96% (98%)	4% (2%)	1,108 (821)

** In addition to the above vehicle types, a small number of observations of occupants of PSVs were also made as part of the 2024 study, but these have not been included in the table due to the relatively small sample size.*



Seat belt wearing by road type

- Rates of seat belt wearing amongst front seat vehicle occupants increased across all road types in the 2024, with exception of front passengers on the motorways, which remained the same.
- Rates of seat belt wearing amongst rear seat passengers increased on urban and rural roads and declined slightly on motorways in the 2024 study. At 97%, rear seat passenger compliance on rural roads showed the biggest rate change across all categories analysed in Table 4 (+5%).

Table 4 – Seat belt wearing rate by road type

Road Type	Vehicle Occupant	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Urban Roads (50km/h and 60km/h)	Driver	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	6,886 (6,536)
	Front Passenger	95% (94%)	5% (6%)	3,566 (4,093)
	Rear Passenger	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	2,857 (2,939)
Rural Roads (80km/h and 100km/h)	Driver	97% (96%)	3% (4%)	5,059 (4,845)
	Front Passenger	95% (93%)	5% (7%)	1,645 (1,529)
	Rear Passenger	97% (92%)	3% (8%)	1,014 (758)
Motorways (120km/h)	Driver	99% (96%)	1% (4%)	2,653 (2,358)
	Front Passenger	98% (98%)	2% (2%)	605 (607)
	Rear Passenger	96% (97%)	4% (3%)	265 (217)



Seat belt wearing by gender

- In the 2024 study, seat belt wearing rates among vehicle occupants by gender ranged from as low as 94% for male front passengers to as high as 99% for female drivers.
- All categories showed improvements in seat belt wearing when compared to the 2023 study.

Table 5 – Seat belt wearing rate by gender

Gender	Vehicle Occupant	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Female	Driver	99% (96%)	1% (4%)	4,383 (4,853)
	Front Passenger	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	3,039 (3,335)
	Rear Passenger	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	2,156 (2,343)
Male	Driver	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	10,215 (8,886)
	Front Passenger	94% (93%)	6% (7%)	2,777 (2,894)
	Rear Passenger	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	1,980 (1,571)



Seat belt wearing by time of week

- In the 2024 study, 97% of drivers and 96% of front passengers were wearing a seat belt during both weekdays and at the weekend.
- 96% of rear passengers were wearing a seat belt during weekdays, with this rate increasing to 97% at the weekend.
- Improvements were seen across all categories when compared to the 2023 study, as Table 6 illustrates.

Table 6 – Seat belt wearing rate by time of week

Time of Week	Vehicle Occupant	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Weekday (Monday to Friday)	Driver	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	13,750 (12,571)
	Front Passenger	96% (94%)	4% (6%)	5,495 (5,707)
	Rear Passenger	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	3,836 (3,545)
Weekend (Saturday and Sunday)	Driver	97% (96%)	% (4%)	848 (1,168)
	Front Passenger	96% (95%)	% (5%)	321 (522)
	Rear Passenger	97% (94%)	% (6%)	300 (369)



Seat belt wearing by time of day

■ In the 2024 study, a consistent rate of seat belt wearing was observed across all times of the day, as can be seen in Table 7, with a slightly lower rate of usage observed during the 2pm-5pm period. This is based on usage rates observed across all vehicle occupants surveyed.

Table 7 – Seat belt wearing rate by time of day

Time of Day	% Wearing Seat Belt	% Not Wearing Seat Belt	Sample Size
8am – 11am	97%	3%	10,315
11am – 2pm	97%	3%	8,438
2pm – 5pm	96%	4%	5,797



Seat belt wearing – student survey

- The following statistics were generated using data from surveys of seat belt wearing compliance by primary and secondary school children. These findings only relate to data regarding children.
- Overall, 96% of the 2,910 children observed as part of these surveys were wearing a seat belt and this represents a 1% decline when compared to the 2023 rate.

Table 8 – Seat belt wearing student survey results

Gender	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Male	96% (97%)	4% (3%)	1,385 (860)
Female	96% (98%)	4% (2%)	1,525 (926)



Seat belt wearing – student survey

- 98% of front passenger children were wearing a seat belt in the 2024 study, consistent with the rate from the 2023 study. However, seat belt wearing rates amongst rear seat children declined by 2% to 95% in 2024.
- Seat belt wearing rates amongst primary school children increased by 1% in the 2024 study to 97%, whilst the rate amongst secondary school children decreased by 2% to 96% in 2024.

Table 9 – Student Seat belt wearing by occupant type

Occupant Type	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Front Passenger	98% (98%)	2% (2%)	1,364 (830)
Rear Passenger	95% (97%)	5% (3%)	1,546 (956)

Table 10 – Student Seat belt wearing by school type

School Type	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Primary	97% (96%)	3% (4%)	1,004 (778)
Secondary	96% (98%)	4% (2%)	1,906 (1,008)



Summary of main findings

Summary of main findings

- A slightly higher rate of seat belt wearing was observed amongst drivers in the 2024 study (97%) as compared to front and rear seat passengers (both at 96%).
- The highest seat belt wearing rates were recorded by car occupants in the 2024 study (97%) and the lowest rate was observed amongst occupants of LGVs at 94%.
- Rates of seat belt wearing among front seat vehicle occupants saw improvements across the various road types surveyed in the 2024 study. Seat belt usage by rear seat passengers improved on urban and rural roads and declined slightly on motorways. Overall, the seat belt wearing rate observed amongst rear seat passengers in 2024 represents an historic high at 96%.
- Rates of seat belt wearing were higher overall on motorways when compared to the other road types in 2023 and 2024.
- Seat belt wearing rates among vehicle occupants by gender improved across all categories in 2024 when compared to the 2023 study. There were higher seat belt wearing rates by female occupants overall in both years.
- Improved usage rates were witnessed among almost all vehicle occupants during both weekdays and weekends when compared to the previous year's study.
- Consistent rates of seat belt usage were observed across all time periods of the day in the 2024 study.
- Overall, 96% of children observed as part of the primary and secondary school student surveys were wearing a seat belt. This represents a 1% decline when compared to the rate in 2023.



Seat Belt Wearing by County

Seat belt wearing by county

Table 11 (a) – Seat belt wearing rate by county – Front Seat Occupants and Rear Seat Passengers

County	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Carlow	95% (97%)	5% (3%)	581 (354)
Cavan	98% (96%)	2% (4%)	390 (352)
Clare	90% (96%)	10% (4%)	249 (556)
Cork	95% (94%)	5% (6%)	2,121 (1,559)
Donegal	97% (93%)	3% (7%)	1,607 (1,541)
Dublin	98% (96%)	2% (4%)	6,020 (6,670)
Galway	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	1,727 (1,980)
Kerry	98% (94%)	2% (6%)	528 (552)
Kildare	97% (94%)	3% (6%)	931 (475)
Kilkenny	93% (94%)	7% (6%)	599 (783)
Laois	94% (96%)	6% (4%)	778 (399)
Leitrim	91% (92%)	9% (8%)	136 (185)
Limerick	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	1,435 (1,682)



Seat belt wearing by county

Table 11 (b) – Seat belt wearing rate by county – Front Seat Occupants and Rear Seat Passengers

County	% Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	% Not Wearing Seat Belt (2023)	Sample Size (2023)
Longford	92% (95%)	8% (5%)	594 (455)
Louth	98% (97%)	2% (3%)	872 (775)
Mayo	99% (94%)	1% (6%)	346 (301)
Meath	99% (94%)	1% (6%)	652 (481)
Monaghan	98% (94%)	2% (6%)	351 (507)
Offaly	98% (92%)	2% (8%)	414 (207)
Roscommon	92% (93%)	8% (7%)	434 (330)
Sligo	97% (98%)	3% (2%)	313 (291)
Tipperary	96% (95%)	4% (5%)	1,500 (1,329)
Waterford	96% (93%)	4% (7%)	705 (710)
Westmeath	97% (94%)	3% (6%)	704 (830)
Wexford	96% (93%)	4% (7%)	343 (369)
Wicklow	97% (95%)	3% (5%)	220 (209)