

Rear seat belt surveys (adults) – general instructions for carrying out surveys.

Most adults do not travel as rear seat passengers, so the available sample from passing traffic is considerably smaller than for the front seat surveys. Surveys are usually for no more than 2 hours at any site, giving a sample of 100-200 vehicles, though it can sometimes take 2 hours to get a sample of 50. Survey sites therefore tend to be near larger towns and cities.

Sample size: One survey of two hours duration is conducted at each site. The two-hour survey is designed to provide a sample of between 100 and 200 vehicles.

Site selection: Sites need to be selected to provide reasonably high traffic volumes, as only about 5 - 10% of the vehicles carry adult passengers in the rear. Ideally, sites are at places where traffic slows down or stops after travelling on busy arterial roads or highways. For surveyor safety and to make seeing inside the vehicle practical, the actual sites are normally in 50 km/h zones or in places where traffic is forced to slow down. This is usually at traffic lights or roundabouts. Sites should where possible be chosen where the traffic flow is sufficient to generate a sample of at least 100 vehicles with rear seat passengers in the two hour period.

All sites should be chosen so that the surveyor can observe vehicles as clearly and discreetly as possible. There must be a safe off-road location for the surveyor to stand in. The surveyor must try to be unobtrusive, which can be challenging when you are the only body around standing at traffic lights on the outskirts of town with a clipboard! Rear seat belts are harder to see than front seat belts as you only have a brief side-on view of the passenger. It is easier if you are slightly higher than the cars and can see into them.

Sites should be spread across the region/ area to be surveyed. The same sites should be used each time the survey is run, so that results can be compared over time.

Traffic flow to survey: Choose an inconspicuous location to stand and decide which traffic streams the surveyor will have a good view of. Record the decision so that the same lanes can be surveyed each year. Normally it will be practical to survey only the lane nearest the surveyor, unless visibility is particularly good (eg from an overbridge).

Timing of surveys: Surveys are carried out on weekends, when the number of adults per car is greater, and at sites where traffic is returning to town to make sure that they are mostly locals. The best times are when recreational traffic is returning to town on Sunday, peaking at around 2-4 pm. The Ministry's surveys are conducted for two consecutive hours in recreational traffic on Sunday afternoons, where possible between the hours of 2pm and 4pm.

Sampling frame: Only rear seat adult passengers sitting in the outboard positions in private cars, vans and utes are surveyed. Ignore all children, adults in the centre rear seat, heavy vehicles, light commercial vehicles, taxis and motorcycles. Surveyors should select vehicles with at least one adult rear passenger. This may include older teenagers aged 15 and over. However they should select passengers primarily because they are adults, and then if they are suspiciously young adults tick "teen".

Recording of results: Results are to be recorded on the survey form provided. Surveyors must record gender and age group (teenager or older), whether seatbelts are worn or not,

whether a seatbelt was available if one was not worn, and whether the vehicle was a van. All modern cars have rear seatbelts, but a number of older cars, many vans and "extra" passengers in the back seat may not have a seatbelt available to them. If there is only one rear seat passenger, only one should be filled in and the opposite one left blank.

Results are to be recorded for every eligible vehicle whose details were wholly or partially observed. Surveyors should record the details of each car as it is observed (i.e. do not attempt to memorise the details of several vehicles). Then the details of the very next vehicle should be recorded. This is to avoid unconscious bias towards observing "interesting" vehicles.

General instructions: It is important that surveyors are unobtrusive. It is not uncommon for vehicle occupants to buckle their seatbelts on sighting someone standing at the roadside with a clipboard, so the surveyor must make a real effort not to influence the survey in this way. Surveys should be carried out in stationary or slow moving traffic where possible. Traffic lights, roundabouts and controlled intersections are usually good locations (provided the surveyor can remain unobtrusive).

Personal safety and clothing: for personal security, the surveyor should have a cellphone and/ or a vehicle nearby. Clothing should be fairly inconspicuous and suitable for the weather. Surveyors should carry identification and be prepared to explain why they are observing vehicles. Sunglasses can be helpful in reducing glare off windscreens. High visibility gear should **not** be worn. The surveyor must stay on the footpath or in other off-road place at all times.

Briefing surveyors to ensuring a valid survey

- It's very important that surveyors are unobtrusive. It is not uncommon for vehicle occupants to buckle their seatbelts on sighting someone standing at the roadside with a clipboard, so the surveyor must try not to influence the survey in this way.
- Surveyors must be informed of Health and Safety policies and given adequate training.

For further information contact the Transport Monitoring team at the Ministry of Transport, ph 04 439 9000 or email info@transport.govt.nz.