

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Texas Occupant Protection Use Surveys

#### **Background**

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) conducts observational surveys to measure occupant restraint use in Texas through four different surveys: the Texas Statewide Survey of Seat Belt Use, Front Seat Occupant Restraint Use in 18 Texas Cities, Survey of Child Restraint Use, and Occupant Restraint Use among School Aged Children.

#### **The Surveys**

The Statewide survey uses the NHTSA Uniform Criteria for State Observational Surveys of Seat Belt Use guidelines to measure seat belt use statewide. The 18-city survey measures urban area seat belt use and includes six sites in each city with 200 vehicles per site. The Child Restraint survey measures restraint use of children under the age of 5. Observations are taken at day care centers and shopping centers in 14 cities throughout the state. The School Age survey measures restraint use among children ages 5-16, and is conducted near schools in 18 cities throughout the state.

#### **What the Researchers Did**

The researchers conducted observational surveys of occupant restraint use in motor vehicles throughout the state. Each surveyor collected data at designated locations for a specific period of time or to obtain a certain number of observations.

#### **What They Found**

The 2015 statewide seat belt use was estimated as 90.47% overall. Driver seat belt use was estimated as 90.7% and passengers as 90.0%. Urban area seatbelt use, through the 18-city survey, was 90.2% with Austin topping the list at 94.2%. In the Child Restraint survey 87.2% of the children observed were restrained in some manner; however, about one third of children were not properly restrained. The results of the School Age survey indicated that 63.8% of children observed were restrained in some manner in front and back seating positions.

Table 1: Occupant Restraint Survey Results

Survey	% Restrained
Statewide	90.5%
18-City	90.2%
Child Restraint	87.2%
School Age	63.8%

#### **What This Means**

The results of the statewide and 18-city surveys indicate that 9 out of 10 front seat vehicle occupants were observed wearing their seatbelts. However, the results of the Child Restraint and School Age surveys indicate that children in Texas are at risk of injury or death due to lower levels of restraint use. Tracking these trends over time is particularly useful in understanding the impact of increased awareness and enforcement efforts.

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