

O'Malley, P. M., & Wagenaar, A. C. (2004). Effects of safety belt laws on safety belt use by American high school seniors, 1986-2000. *Journal of Safety Research*, 35, 125-130.

Abstract

Problem: This manuscript evaluates the effects of enactment of state laws that required safety belt use in various U.S. states between 1986 and 2000.

Method: Safety belt use was assessed using nationally representative cross-sectional samples of high school seniors; evaluation of the effects of laws used data from over 2,000 high school seniors before and about 3,000 after the laws took effect in 20 states.

Results: Belt use was found to increase significantly between 1986 and 2000, and the laws contributed significantly to that increase. Increases were similar for students differing by gender, race/ethnicity, parent education, grades, truancy, evenings out per week, miles driven per week, and an index of illicit drug use.

Discussion: The data show that although the laws have increased belt use, use is not universal and continued efforts are needed.

Impact on Research, Practice, and Policy: This study shows that many teenagers fail to use belts when there is a secondary use law; an implication is that primary laws would be more efficacious in increasing use among this vulnerable population.