



Child survey results – CPS Week 2008

During Child Passenger Safety week in 2008, surveys were distributed to the preteens before they participated in the Safest Generation activities. At Safe Kids Worldwide we received results from over 2,000 children who had taken part in the events. There were a total of 1,533 results from children ages 11 and 12. The majority were 11 years old in 6th grade. Seventh grade was the second largest group followed by 5th grade. There were equal numbers of boy and girl participants.

The first survey question asked the children how often they wear their seatbelts. Almost 70 percent answered “all the time.” Twenty percent answered “most of the time” and 8 percent answered “sometimes.” While children may report answers that they think are more favorable (they know they should say they always wear a seatbelt even if they don’t), that close to 30 percent said they are irregular seatbelt users shows that there is still a lot of work to be done. NHTSA reports only a 25 percent unrestrained rate for children involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes[1]. That the children from our events report an even higher non-use rate shows the importance of reiterating the need for using seat belt all the time, no matter where they are going, how far, or with whom.

Question five asked if when children are riding with someone other than their parent, how often they wear a seatbelt. Almost 80 percent said they always wear one, 10 percent more than when they were asked the same question without specifying the driver. More than 12 percent answered that they “wear it if I remember to” and 5 percent say they only wear it if they have to. This shows how important it is for all drivers, regardless of their relationship to the passengers, to make sure everyone is buckled up for every ride.

Question two asked children if their parents always wear their seatbelts. More than 75 percent reported that they did and 12 percent reported they did not (10 percent were unsure). These results show that it is important to include parents in the activities so they can hear and learn the important safety messages along with their children.

More than 60 percent of children reported that they decide when they wear a seatbelt or not and 34 percent said their parents decide. Since children of this age are becoming more independent and want to begin making their own decisions, this shows that many feel as if they already are responsible for

some of the important choices they make each day. Similarly, 62 percent of children, when asked who usually decides where they sit in the car, reported that they themselves decide. Thirty-two percent said that their parents still decide.

Sixty-two percent of the participants reported that they notice if their parents make mistakes while driving. Thirty-five said they did not notice. This suggests that the majority of kids at least think that they know something about the rules of driving and are paying attention to their parents when on the road. This may be an interesting fact to share with parents since they may not realize their kids have such a critical eye watching them as passengers.

Question ten asked if the children would feel comfortable telling their parents if they felt unsafe in the car. Almost 60 percent said they always feel safe when their parents are driving. Twenty-seven percent say they would say something and 11 percent would not say anything. Question 11 asks if children would feel uncomfortable telling another driver if they felt unsafe. This time 34 percent said they would tell, and a much higher 28 percent said they would not say anything. (34 percent said they always feel safe) While a smaller number would feel uncomfortable speaking up to their own parents, 28 percent is a large number of children who would feel uncomfortable speaking up to others. Therefore it is important for all children to know that it is okay to speak up whenever they feel unsafe about anything, especially when in a vehicle.

More than half (53 percent) said that it is safe for them, at age 11 and 12 to ride in the front seat. Since Safe Kids USA and NHTSA agree that children should ride in a back seat until at least age 13, this is clearly a message that needs to be communicated better.

Children were next asked if they thought seatbelts should be worn by every passenger when the car is moving. An overwhelming 94 percent of children answered “yes” to this question. This, in contrast to only 70 percent who say they always actually wear a seatbelt on every ride, shows that even though they know that it is the safe thing to do, they may choose not to do it anyway.

Finally, 42 percent of children said that an adult has let them drive or steer a car. While this is a time when children ache for more independence and more freedoms to make their own choices, it is important to remind parents that it is essential to have limitations on what children are allowed to do.

While we asked children to be as honest as possible when answering these questions, it is possible that a child may have chosen the answer they thought was the “right answer” instead of the most truthful

answer. To avoid this bias we made sure they knew the surveys were anonymous and they knew that there were no right or wrong answers. These surveys were distributed at the ninety-six Safest Generation events that took place during CPS week 2008. While not everyone will have given the exact same instructions or provided identical environments, we must assume that instructions were followed as closely as possible.

1 <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810987.PDF>