

NATIONAL
SKI AREAS
ASSOCIATION



CONTACT: Dave Byrd
Director of Risk &
Regulatory Affairs
dbyrd@nsaa.org
(720) 963-4213 (office)
(202) 270-3924 (cell)

Helmet Usage and Safety Fact Sheet

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – September 15, 2014 – Helmet usage by skiers and snowboarders at U.S. ski areas once again increased during the 2013-2014 ski season, according to a recent in-depth study completed by the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA). Overall, 73 percent *all* skiers and snowboarders wore helmets during the most recent ski season, setting yet another record for helmet usage at ski areas across the United States. These new statistics reflect an increase in overall usage from last season, when 70 percent of skiers and snowboarders wore helmets (see Figure 1).

For the 12th consecutive year – since NSAA began its helmet usage research starting in the 2002-03 season – helmet usage has increased from 25 percent of skiers and riders to 73 percent of the overall skiing and riding public.

“Ski areas have done an incredible job of encouraging helmet use, and it shows in the dramatic growth we have seen in just over a decade of tracking helmet usage,” said Michael Berry, NSAA president. “The resorts, parents, local medical groups, even the tremendous improvements by helmet manufacturers to enhance the design and comfort – all these factors have helped grow helmet usage. When you think how much we have achieved organically as an industry, without government mandates requiring helmets, it’s quite impressive.”

In 2011, New Jersey (which has two ski areas) became the first, and remains the only, state that requires those under the age of 18 to wear a helmet while skiing or snowboarding.

And the percentage of minors wearing helmets remains very high. According to the NSAA helmet study, 80 percent of skiers and snowboarders ages 17 and under wore helmets during the 2013-2014 season (Figure 2). In fact, nearly 88 percent of children ages 9 and under wore helmets, according to the NSAA study. The NSAA study breaks down helmet usage by nine different age groups (Figure 3). The age group least likely to wear helmets is skiers and riders ages 18 to 24, with

62 percent wearing helmets last season. Nonetheless, this represents dramatic growth from the 2002-2003 season, when only 18 percent of that age group wore helmets.

In the past 12 years, the growth in helmet usage has been remarkable. Since the 2002-03 season, helmet use has nearly tripled, with usage rates increasing by *180 percent*. Similarly, helmet use among minors has also seen sizeable gains over that span: during the 2002-03 season, 32 percent of skiers and riders 17 and under wore helmets; this past season, four out five skiers and riders in this age group (80 percent) wore helmets (Figure 2).

In some regions, the overall percentage of those wearing helmets is even higher. The Northeast region (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, and VT) leads the country in terms of total helmet usage, with 83 percent of skiers and riders wearing helmets last season. Close behind was the Rocky Mountain region (CO, ID, MT, NM, UT, and WY) where 81 percent of all skiers and riders in the region wore helmets last season.

“As an industry, we are deservedly proud of our commitment to safety, and the efforts to promote helmet use by both ski areas and parents alike should be applauded,” Michael Berry stated. “At the same time, though, we want to stress that skiing and riding safely and responsibly – and not simply donning one piece of equipment – is the best way to prevent incidents and injuries out on the mountain.”

Increased helmet usage is being proven to reduce all head injuries, especially potentially serious head injuries (PSHI). According to a recent scientific paper, researchers studied 17 seasons of ski helmet usage data from 1995 through 2012, and concluded that as helmet usage increased, potentially serious head injuries dropped from 4.2 percent of all injuries to 3 percent. (See “Role of Helmets in Mitigation of Head Injuries,” Dr. Jasper Shealy, Dr. Robert Johnson, Carl Ettlinger, Irving Scher, Presented at July 2014 ASTM F-27 conference, Burlington, VT (research paper currently under review). As the study concluded, as helmet usage increased in the last 10 years, there was a dramatic improvement in the decline of potentially serious head injuries, particularly in concussions. According to the study’s authors, three quarters of all PSHI from skiing or snowboarding are mild concussions, and 90 percent of PSHI are typically treated and released from hospitals or clinics within four hours. The study concluded that ski and snowboard helmets are extremely effective at preventing skull fractures, and virtually eliminated scalp lacerations. To contact the lead researcher of this study, contact Dr. Jasper Shealy with the Rochester Institute of Technology, at jeseie@rit.edu, or at (585) 739-4250.

The NSAA helmet study is conducted annually as part of a broader industry demographic analysis. To obtain statistically valid data, NSAA and its research partner, RRC Associates, conducted more than 130,000 in-person interviews at ski areas across the United States. People interviewed were *not* asked if they wore helmets. Rather, to avoid concerns over people feeling pressured to give perceived “acceptable” or politically correct responses, the researchers simply noted during the interviews at ski areas if the individuals were using helmets.

Parents and educators can learn more by visiting www.lidsonkids.org. To request free helmet safety posters from NSAA (Figure 4), contact NSAA at 303-987-1111, or email nsaa@nsaa.org.

Figure 1
NSAA Overall Ski Helmet Use
2002/03 - 2013/14

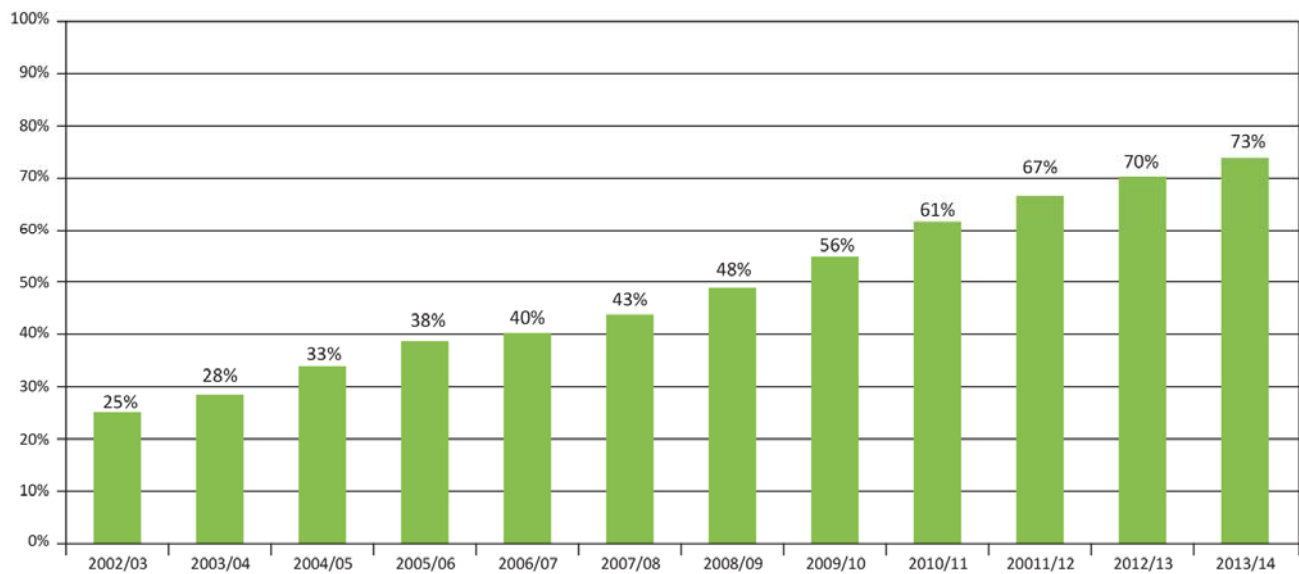


Figure 2
Helmet Use: Age 17 and Under
2002/03 - 2013/14

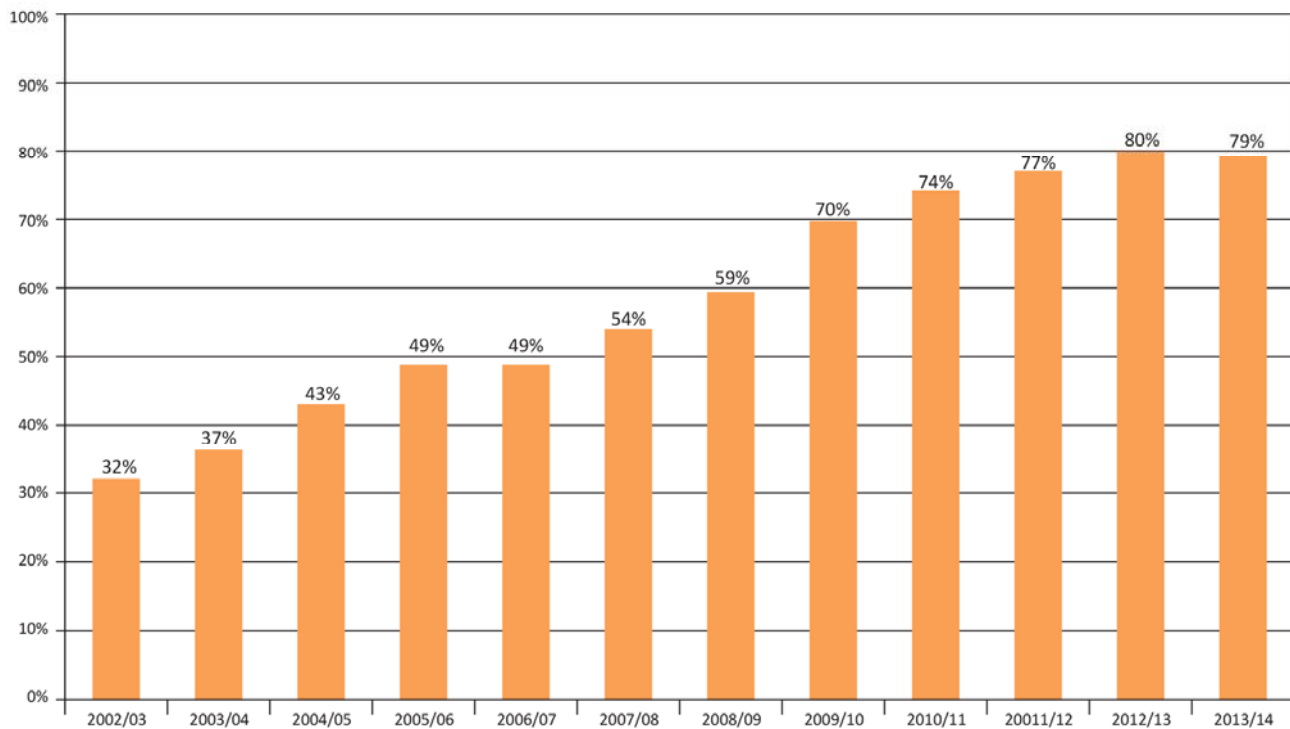


Figure 3
Helmet Usage By Age:
2013/14 Season

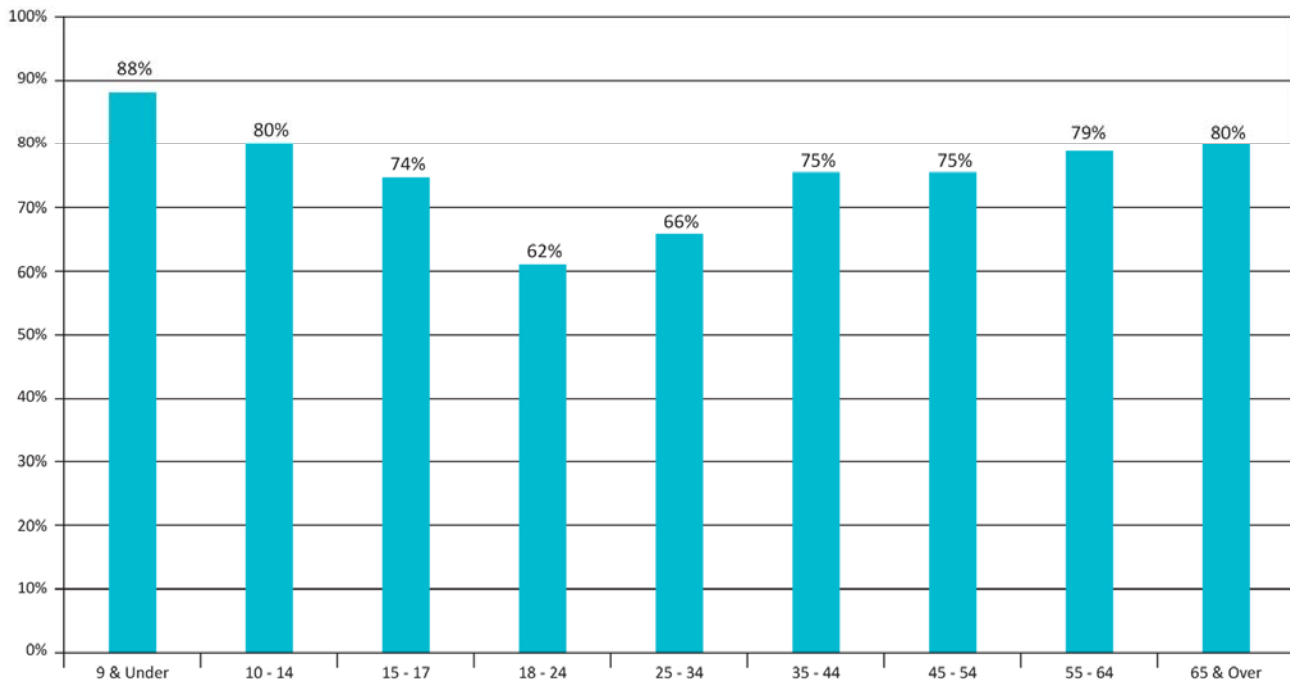


Figure 4

**A HELMET
IT'S A SMART IDEA**

Skiing or boarding responsibly is your first priority. Helmets are a second line of defense! Be able to stop or avoid other people or objects and follow "Your Responsibility Code."

Helmets can reduce head injuries by 30-50%, and may be the difference between a major and minor injury.

Helmets do have limitations. Helmets provide the most protection at slower speeds—but most of us ski and snowboard faster. Check your speed!

Helmets should not give you a false sense of security and do not allow you to take more risks. Wear a helmet, but more importantly, ski or snowboard as if you are not wearing one!

For kids, parents should ensure that the helmet is properly fitted and the chin strap fastened.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.LIDSONKIDS.ORG

THE NATIONAL SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION, LOCATED IN LAKEWOOD, COLO., IS A TRADE ASSOCIATION FORMED IN 1962 FOR SKI AREA OWNERS AND OPERATORS NATIONWIDE.

###