

January 2010 Hot Topic

Subject: Legislation

Legislation is one of the most effective ways to influence highway safety. With the 2010 Utah Legislative Session starting this month, this edition of the Highway Safety Hot Topic will look at the impact of some recent legislation.

2008 Booster Seat Law

In 2008 legislation passed that increased the age that children were required to use a child restraint device in motor vehicles from younger than four years of age to younger than eight years of age. The law went into effect in May 2008. Since the law impacted occupants 4-7 years that will be the focus of this review.

During the last five years there have been several educational campaigns to increase booster seat use. These campaigns have increased booster seat use among ages 4-7 years in crashes slightly from 27.3% in 2003 to 35.1% in 2007. Booster seat use increased to 45.7% with the passage of the booster seat legislation in 2008 (see chart on page 2). Occupants in traffic crashes ages 4-7 years were 55% more likely to be restrained in a booster seat following passage of legislation.

The chart on page 3 shows changes in child safety seat (CSS) use by age from 2007 to 2008. The passage of the law had no impact on ages 1-3 years as could be expected since they were already required to be restrained in a CSS. The law increased CSS use among 4-year-olds by 9%. It appears the law had the greatest impact on ages 5-8 years. Five-year-olds increased CSS use by 24%, 6-year-olds increased CSS use by 87%, 7-year-olds increased CSS use by 105%, and 8-year-olds increased CSS use by 91% (even though they weren't covered under the new legislation).

The chart on page 4 shows booster seat use for ages 4-7 years by month. Notice that booster seat use started increasing as legislation was discussed by the Utah Legislature and the media. Once the law went into effect booster seat use increased even more dramatically.

Results of 2008 preliminary crash statistics show that the booster seat law significantly increased booster seat use among 4-7 year olds in crashes.

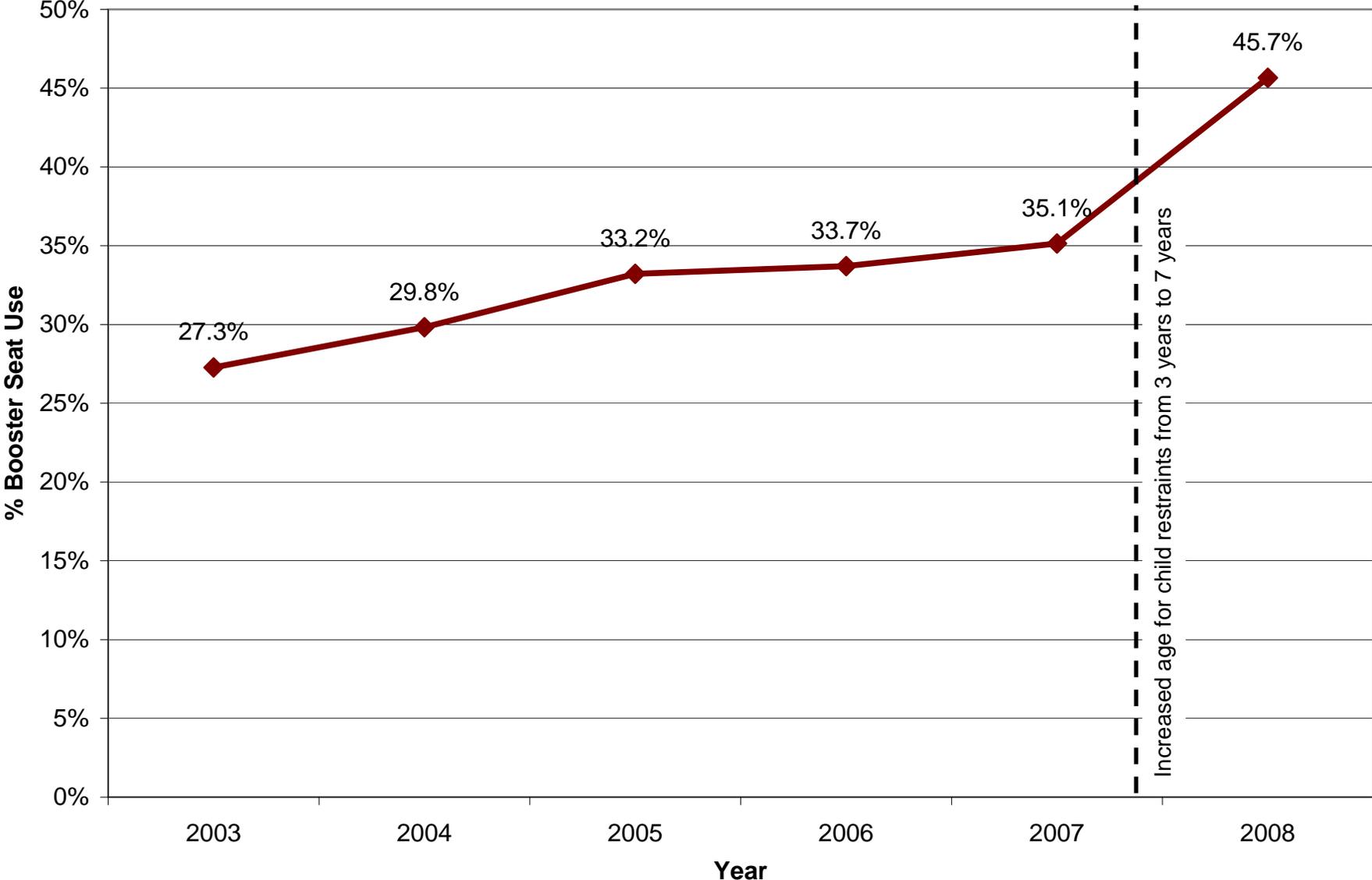
2006 – Learner Permit Age Lowered From 15 Years 6 Months to 15 Years

Drivers age 15 years represented 0.18% of drivers in crashes in 2005, the year before the learner permit age was lowered. Since the learner permit age was lowered drivers age 15 years represent 0.23% of drivers in crashes, an increase of 28% (see chart on page 5). It is estimated that lowering the Learner Permit age in 2006 increased the number of drivers age 15 years in crashes by 101 drivers during 2006-2007. Drivers age 15 years are 26% more likely to get in a crash since the learner permit age was lowered from 15 years 6 months to 15 years. Although the numbers are small, lowering the learner permit age significantly increased crashes involving 15-year-old drivers.

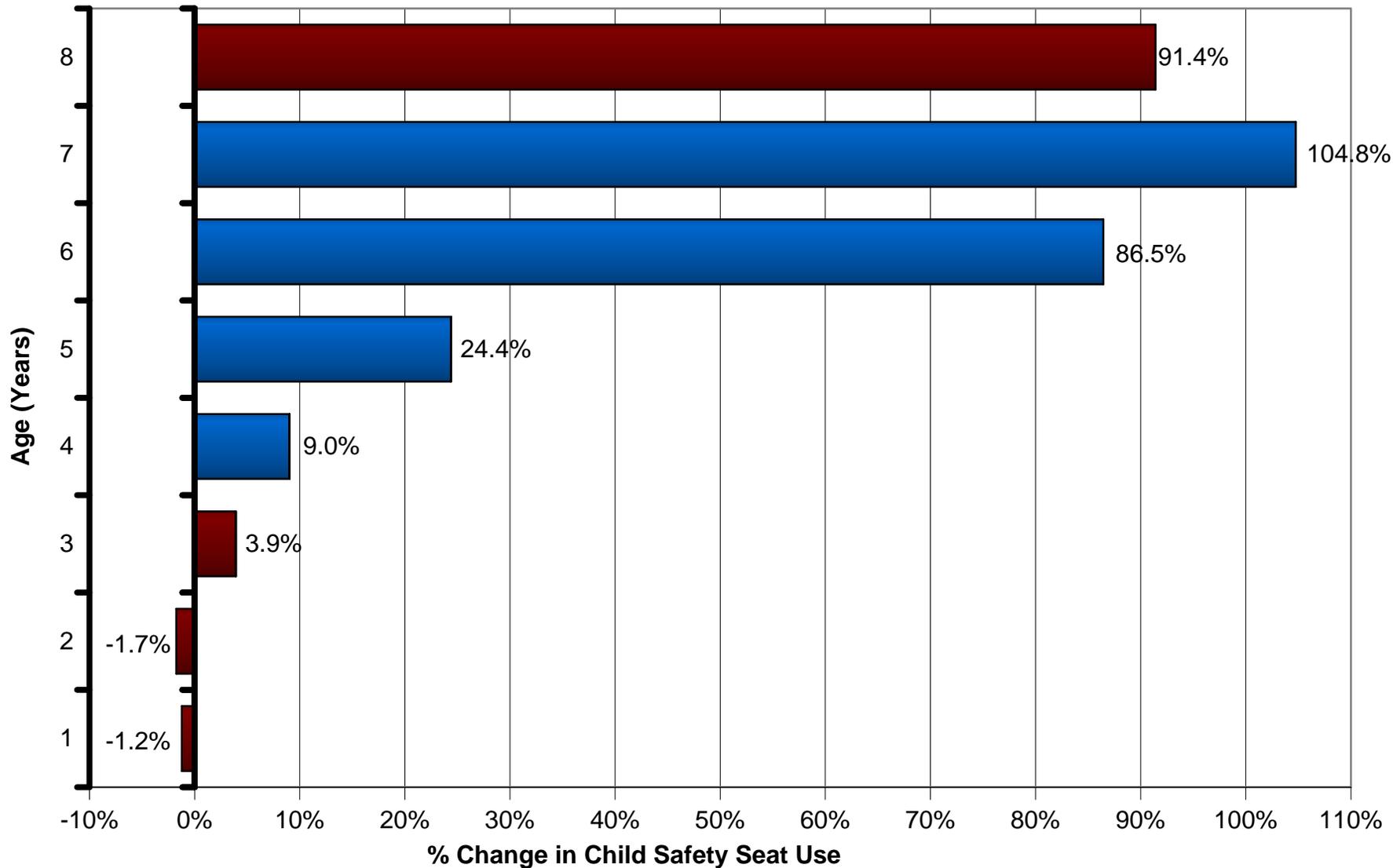
Conclusion

Both of these laws show the immediate impact legislation can have on traffic safety.

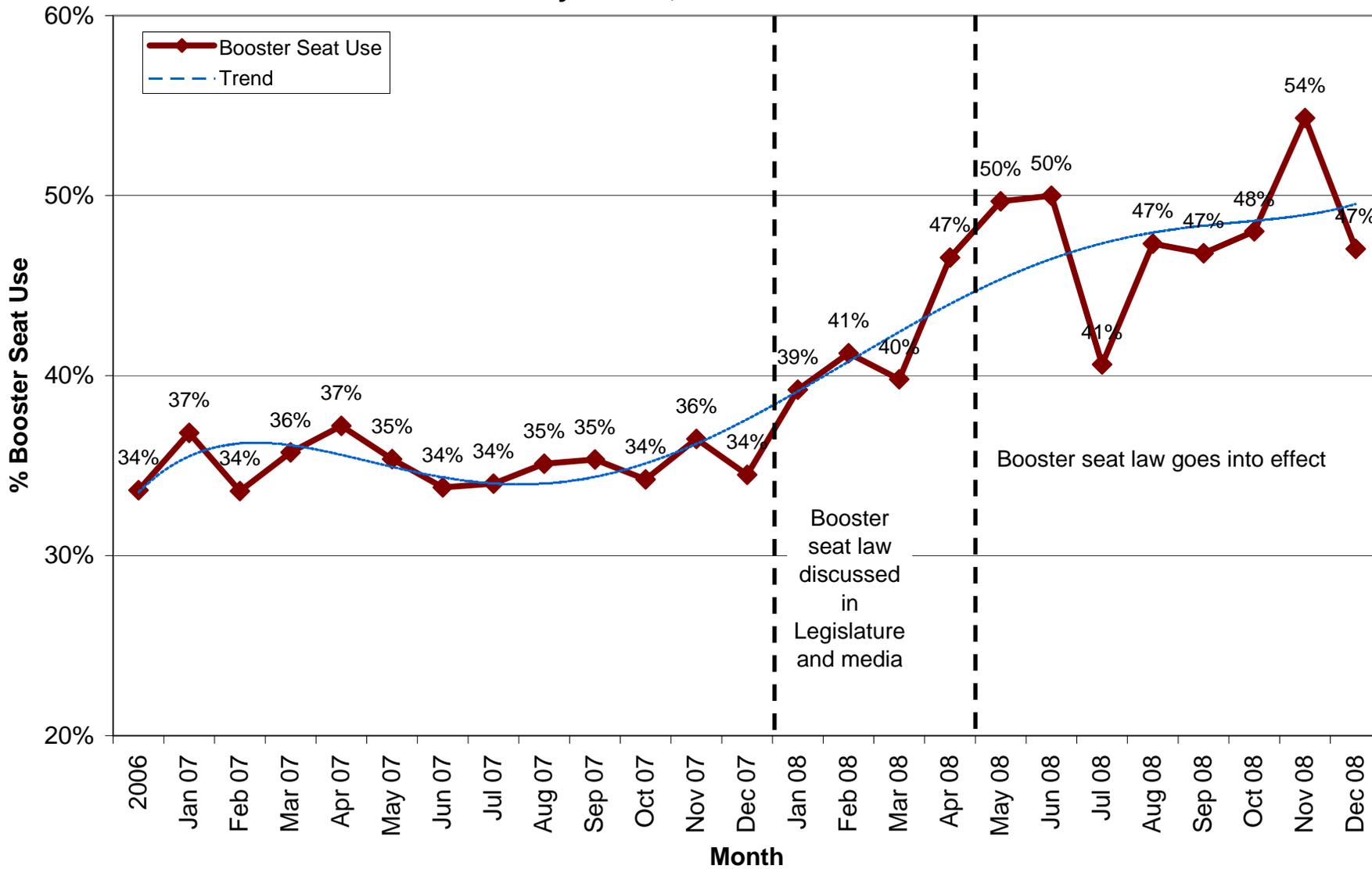
Booster Seat Use Among 4-7-Year-Olds in Utah Traffic Crashes, 2003-2008



Percent Change in Child Safety Seat Use by Ages 1-8 Years in Utah Traffic Crashes, 2007-2008



Booster Seat Use Among 4-7-Year-Olds in Utah Traffic Crashes by Month, 2006-2008



% of Drivers Aged 15 Years in Crashes

