



Seat-belts



Wearing a seat-belt reduces the risk of a fatality among drivers and front-seat occupants by 45–50%, and the risk of minor and serious injuries by 20% and 45% respectively. Among rear-seat occupants seat-belts reduce fatal and serious injuries by 25% and minor injuries by up to 75%.

Key issues

- All countries should have comprehensive seat-belt laws covering both front and rear seat passengers.¹
- Appropriate legislation for seat-belt fitting and wearing, together with consistent enforcement and public education is essential for increasing seatbelt wearing rates.²
- The risk of death and serious injury in a crash or sudden stop is increased significantly if a seatbelt is not worn, even when travelling at low speed.³
- Wearing a seat-belt reduces the risk of a fatality among drivers and front-seat occupants by 45–50%, and the risk of minor and serious injuries by 20% and 45% respectively. Among rear-seat occupants seat-belts reduce fatal and serious injuries by 25% and minor injuries by up to 75%.⁴
- Wearing a seat belt can improve the effectiveness of airbags in reducing death and injury in a crash.^{5,6}
- Children should be seated in a restraint that is designed for their size and body weight. The probability of children aged 1-7 years of being injured in a crash or sudden stop is reduced by about 70% when an appropriate child restraint is used instead of a seat belt only.

For more information on the importance of child restraints in addressing road deaths and serious injuries please refer to the GRSP Child Restraint fact sheet

Key Messages

- All motor vehicles should be fitted with a seat-belt for each seating position in both the front and rear seat.
- Comprehensive seat-belt wearing laws covering both front and rear seat passengers are essential for reducing death and serious injury in a crash or sudden stop.
- Seat-belt laws must be effectively enforced to ensure that they contribute to a reduction in death and serious injury.



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- One of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets (3.6) is to halve the global number of deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020. Appropriate legislation for seat-belt fitting and wearing, together with consistent enforcement and public education is essential to achieve this target.

Components of Strong Seat-belt Policies

- Compulsory seatbelt installation and measures to promote wearing in all motor vehicles for front and rear seat passengers.⁷
- Seat-belts, buckles, anchorage points, and in-vehicle reminder systems need to meet standards that are consistent with internationally accepted good practice.⁸
- Seat-belt laws should require wearing seatbelts in both the front and rear seat where they are fitted. Any exemptions to the laws should be carefully considered and well-defined, such as not wearing a seat-belt for health reasons or for emergency services personnel in certain situations.⁹
- Besides effective enforcement, the penalties for not wearing a seat-belt need to be set high enough and be applied consistently, to deter people from breaking the law.¹⁰

Components Required for Effective Enforcement

- Strong seat-belt laws require effective and consistent police enforcement to act as a strong deterrent to drivers and passengers not wearing a seatbelt.
- The public must have the perception they will be caught by police and receive a penalty if not wearing a seat belt. This is achieved through enforcement campaigns that are:
 - *highly visible, such as through the use of strategically located checkpoints*
 - *repeated, so that there is a perception that it is possible to be caught anywhere at any time*
 - *conducted in a widespread way to create the impression that people can be detected 'anywhere at anytime'.*
 - *enforced consistently with penalties that are appropriate for the country and always applied to anyone not wearing a seatbelt.*¹¹
 - *well-publicized before, during and after.*
- Primary enforcement laws are required that allow police officers to stop a vehicle solely for observed violation of the seat belt law.¹²
- Targeted social marketing campaigns, especially when conducted together with effective police enforcement, can help to increase seatbelt wearing rates and save lives.

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Global Road Safety Partnership secretariat

c/o International Federation of Red
Cross and Red Crescent Societies
P.O. Box 372
17, chemin des Crêts
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0) 22 730 42 49
Fax: +41 (0) 22 733 03 95

E-mail: grsp@ifrc.org
Website: www.grsproadsafety.org