



Seat-belts



Key issues

- The risk of death and serious injury in a crash or sudden stop is increased significantly if a seatbelt is not worn.¹
- Not wearing a seat-belt can cause serious injury or death even when travelling at low speed.²
- Seat-belt wearing can reduce the risk of death by:
 - 40-50% for drivers and front seat passengers³
 - 60-70% for rear seat passengers.⁴
- Wearing a seat belt can improve the effectiveness of airbags in reducing death and injury in a crash.^{5,6,7}
- Children should be seated in a restraint that is designed for their size and body weight. See the *Child Restraints Fact Sheet* for further details.
- Not all countries have comprehensive seat-belt laws covering both front and rear seat passengers.⁷
- Appropriate legislation for seat-belt fitting and wearing together with consistent enforcement and public education is essential for increasing seatbelt wearing rates.¹

Key Messages

- Wearing a seat-belt in the front and rear seat significantly reduces the risk of death and serious injury in a crash or sudden stop.
- 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 to reducing death and serious injury in a crash or sudden stop.
- Seat-belt laws must be effectively enforced to reduce death and serious injuries.
- Targeted social marketing campaigns when conducted together with effective police enforcement can help to increase seatbelt wearing rates.



Components for Strong Seat-belt Policies

- Compulsory seatbelt installation in all motor vehicles for front and rear seat passengers.
- Seat-belts, buckles, anchorage points and in-vehicle reminder systems need to meet standards that are consistent with internationally accepted good practice.¹
- Legislation for standards for child restraints and their use need to be consistent with internationally accepted good practice. See the *Child Restraints Fact Sheet* for further details.
- Seat-belt wearing laws need to ensure that seat-belts are worn in both the front and rear seat where they are fitted. Any exceptions 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.¹
- Legislation needs to set penalties for not wearing a seat-belt that are serious enough to deter people from breaking the law.

Components Required for Effective Enforcement

- Strong seat-belt laws require effective, consistent and politically supported police enforcement.
- Police enforcement must 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
 - penalties are always applied to anyone not wearing a seatbelt
 - well-publicized before, during and after.¹
- Targeted social marketing campaigns are needed to promote any seat-belt legislation or policy changes, promote seat-belt wearing messages and to support police enforcement.
- It is necessary to have a system for collection and analysis of data on seat-belt wearing rates to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and for planning purposes.⁷





References

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4. Zhu M, Cummings P, Chu H, Cook LJ. Association of rear seat safety belt use with death in a traffic crash: a matched cohort study. *Injury Prevention*, 2007, 13: 183–185.
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6. Crandall CS, Olson LM, Sklar DP. Mortality Reduction with Air Bag and Seat Belt Use in Head-on Passenger Car Collisions. *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2001, 153 (3): 219-224
7. *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013: Supporting a Decade of Action*. Geneva, World Health Organisation, 2013 (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2013/en/ accessed 23 January 2014)