

# INCREASING SEAT-BELT USE

## Progress has been made in tightening up seat-belt laws

Failure to use a seat-belt is a major risk factor for road traffic injuries and deaths among vehicle occupants. When a motor vehicle crash occurs, a car occupant without a seat-belt will continue to move forward at the same speed at which the vehicle was travelling before the collision and will be catapulted forward into the structure of the vehicle – most likely into

the steering wheel column if driving, the dashboard if a front seat passenger, or the back of the front seats if a rear seat passenger (31, 32, 33). Alternatively, failure to use a seat-belt can cause drivers or passengers to be completely ejected from the vehicle, greatly increasing the risk of serious injury or death (4, 20, 34).

Wearing a seat-belt reduces the risk of a fatal injury by 40–50% for drivers and front seat occupants, and between

25–75% for rear seat occupants (20, 35). Seat-belt wearing rates vary greatly between countries, and to a large extent are governed by the existence and enforcement of mandatory seat-belt laws. In many countries, drivers and front seat passengers are legally obliged to use seat-belts, but this does not always apply to rear seat occupants.

While the vast majority of countries have legislation on mandatory seat-belt use, a

## Seat-belts reduce the risk of a fatal injury by up to 50% for front seat occupants, and up to 75% for rear seat occupants.

**Figure 17**  
Seat-belt laws, by country/area

