



Research report no. 2018-R-10-SEN

## **Does everyone wear their seatbelts?**

Results of the seatbelt behaviour measurement 2018



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Lequeux, Q., & Pelssers, B. (2018). Tout le monde porte-t-il la ceinture ? – Résultats de la mesure de comportement Vias 2018 sur le port de la ceinture de sécurité, Bruxelles, Belgique : Institut Vias – Centre Connaissance de Sécurité Routière

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## Summary

Despite the obligation to use the seatbelt either as a driver or a front-seat passenger (since 1975) and as a rear-seat passenger (since 1991), this obligation is not being respected by all road users. Wearing a seatbelt requires only a small effort, and it prevents serious injuries in the event of a collision or reduce the severity of injuries.

In 2007, the Federal Commission for Road Safety formulated the target to achieve 95% seatbelt use by drivers and front-seat passengers by 2010. This target was not achieved in 2010; the seatbelt use rate was 86%. In 2012, the rate was also 86%, and it was 92% in 2015. This 95% objective was not reached. In 2018, this objective of 95% is reached for the first time with a measured rate of 95.2%.

Both awareness campaigns and road controls are measures encouraging drivers and passengers to wear their seatbelts more frequently, as this increases their safety.

Since 2003, Vias institute have been conducting behaviour studies on seatbelt use in Belgium. These studies were done yearly between 2003 to 2010, and they were repeated in 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Until 2012, studies conducted by Vias institute only concerned seatbelt use by drivers and front-seat passengers. During the studies conducted in 2015 and 2018, seatbelt use rates by rear-seat passengers have also been measured. These new measurements enlarged the scope of our research. In addition, light commercial vehicles (including van-like vehicles) have also been observed; the observations related to this type of vehicles will be analyzed separately.

Results of this study show that the national rate of seatbelt use by drivers and front-seat passengers is 95.2%. The percentage of seatbelt use by rear-seat passengers is lower than the seatbelt use rate observed in front-seat occupants. The disparities between front-seat occupants are much less perceptible; 95% of drivers wear seatbelt compared to 95.7% of front-seat passengers (Figure B). Despite the obligation to use seatbelt, 5% of the drivers still do not wear it.

European Union regulations make it mandatory for the inclusion of seatbelt reminder alert systems in vehicles. This system is compulsory for drivers, but it remains nevertheless optional for passengers. The development of seatbelt reminder alert systems extended to all the car seats represents a solution for encouraging more passengers - especially rear-seat car passengers - to buckle their seatbelts. Several car manufacturers have already developed such systems reminding rear passengers to use the seatbelt.

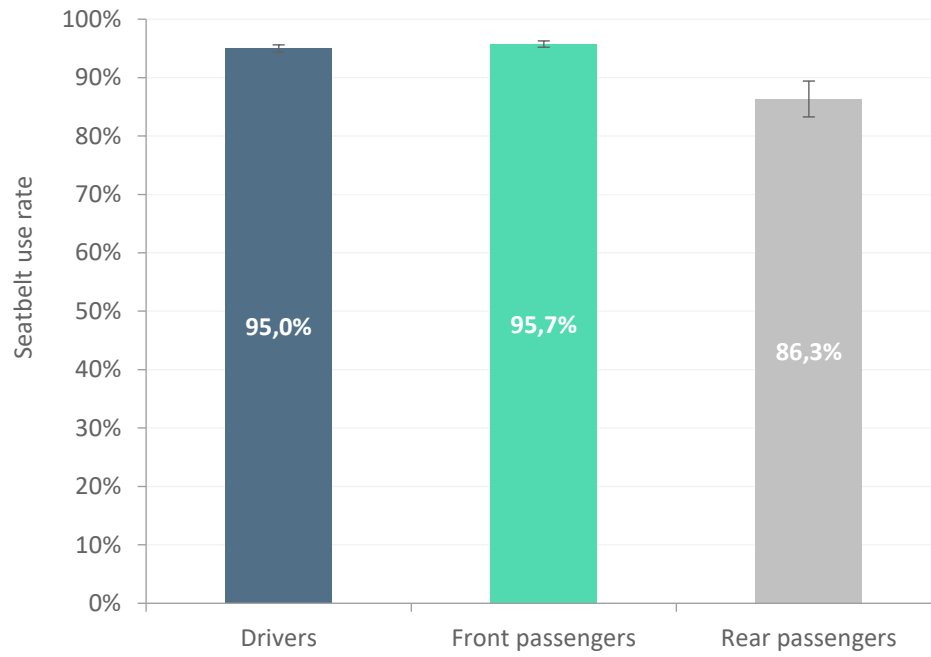
The factors associated with seatbelt use or not are: the type of vehicles (private cars or light commercial vehicles), the driver's behaviour, the demographic characteristics of car occupants (gender and age - an adult or a child), and the maximum authorized speed.

The results of the study actually show that the seatbelt use rate for drivers and front-seat passengers of light commercial vehicles is only 84.7%; it reaches 95.2% in private cars. This difference between these two types of vehicles is visible both in urban areas and on national roads and motorways. Special measures could be implemented in order to promote the use of the seatbelt within light commercial vehicles. For example, companies could be encouraged to develop policy inciting employees to respect safety rules during their business trips.

The use of seatbelt by passengers also depends on the behaviour of drivers. In this regard, the study indicates that the seatbelt use rate of front-seat passengers is much more important when the driver is restrained by the seatbelt (95.4%) than when the driver is not (48.1%).

Finally, the demographic characteristics of occupants (men, women, or children) and the maximum authorized speed are all factors associated with significant differences of behaviour in terms of seatbelt use. The results of the study show that the rate for men is lower than for women: 94.3% of male drivers compared to 96.1% of female drivers. At the regional level, Wallonia has the lowest seatbelt use rate (94.7% compared to 95.9% in Flanders and 96.6% in Brussels). This regional difference is however not significant. Lastly, it can be noted that seatbelt use is more often neglected on 30 km/h roads (92.8%) than those with higher speed limits (>94%).

Figure B. Seatbelt use rates for drivers and passengers in 2018.



Source: Vias institute (2018)

