

Use of safety belts on rear seats

Current status, international best-practices and recommendations for Georgia

Dr. Eva Eichinger-Vill
Vill Consulting Engineers
Vienna, Austria

Gela Kvashilava
Partnership for Road Safety
Tbilisi, Georgia



<https://youtu.be/h-8PBx7isoM>

Introduction

- Three-point safety belts are the easiest and cheapest way to avoid injury in a crash
- Should be worn on all seats also on short trips (most crashes occur within a 15 km radius from home)
- Unbelted back-seat passengers increase the risks of serious injury and death for front-row occupants, drivers and passengers
- Unbelted occupant increases death risks for all vehicle occupants by 40 percent
- A belted driver's risk of dying in a crash with an unbelted passenger behind them increases by 137 percent

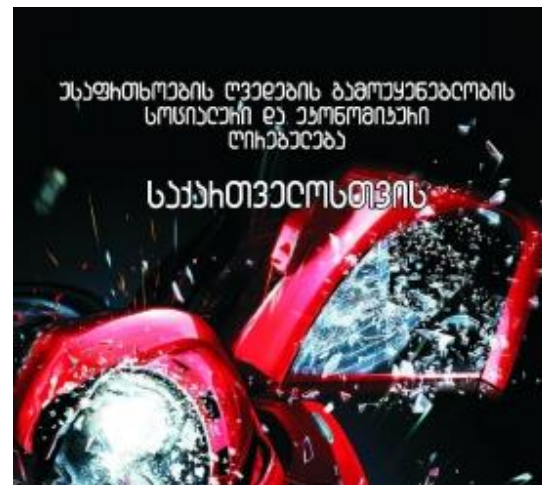
Context and magnitude of the problem

	Front seat	Rear seat	Drivers only	All occupants
Georgia	60	n/a	70	n/a
Best performing-countries in the region				
North Macedonia	19.8	3.1	21	14.6
Serbia	75.1	10.1	77.0	66.2
Best performing-countries globally				
Switzerland	94	86	94	n/a
Norway	95.2	n/a	95.9	94.7
Sweden	96	90	98	97

A study by the World Bank conducted in October 2016, revealed that 73% of drivers, 50% of front seat passengers and 33% of children under the age of 14 years wear safety belts. Safety belt use rates in rear seats were close to 0%. The most recent data from WHO shows safety belt wearing rates of 60% on front seats and 70% for drivers only.

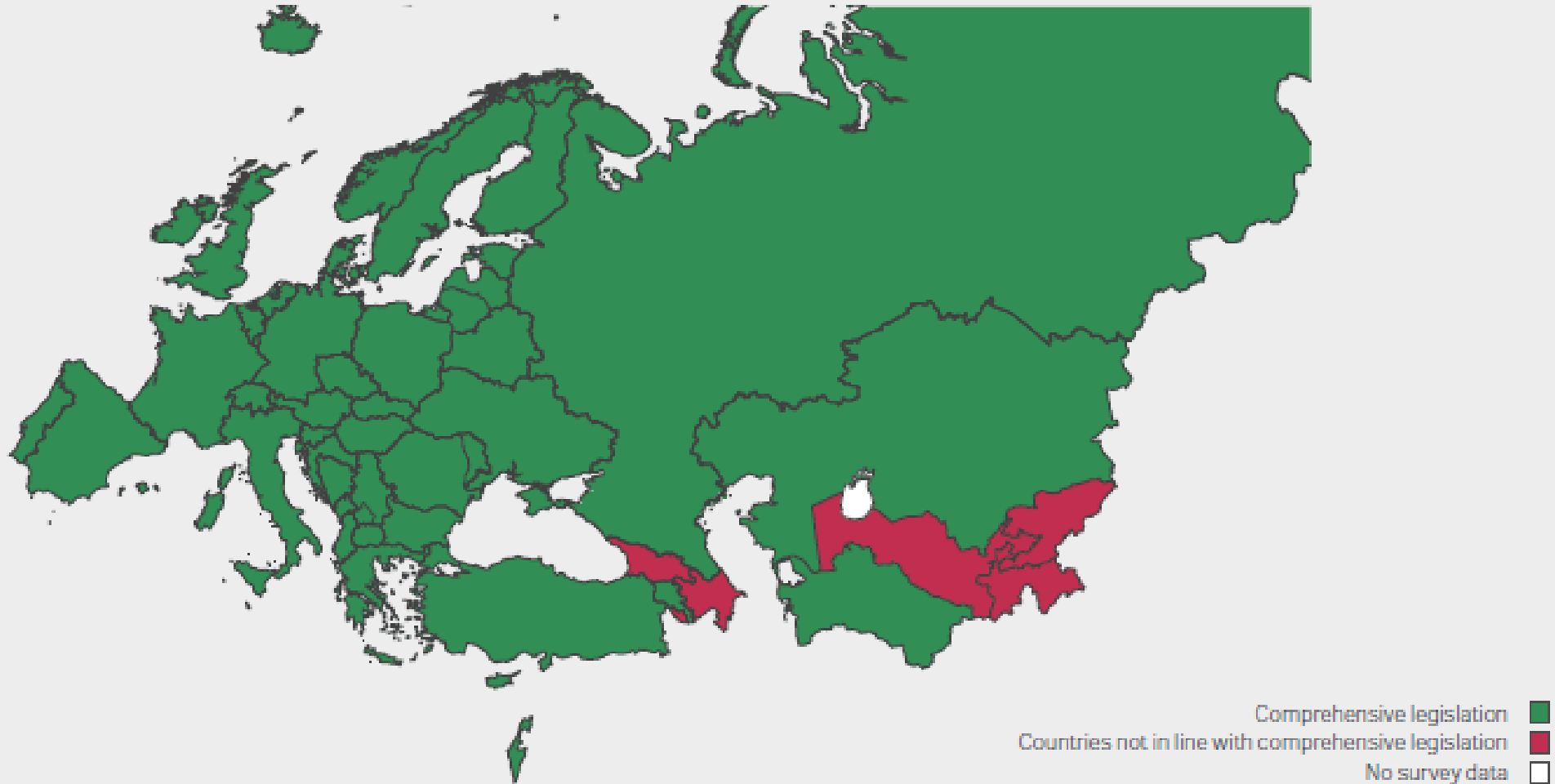
Analysis of legal framework and state-of-the-art in Georgia

- **Georgian Administrative Offences Code:** (front) safety belt regulation first introduced in 2005 in Article 118, which has since been amended several times. Initially, the use of front safety belts was mandatory only on highways, then on roads where it was allowed to drive at a speed of more than 80 km/h. In 2010 front safety belt use became mandatory on all roads and the fine was increased from GEL 20 to GEL 40.
- According to Georgian legislation, passengers in the rear seat of vehicles are currently not required to wear safety belts with the exception of Article 26 of the Georgian Law on Traffic. This Article states that children under the age of three may be transported on the knees of a person (older than 16 years) sitting in the back seat of a car. In that case the passenger is obliged to use a safety belt.



Analysis of legal framework and state-of-the-art on the European and international level

Legislation on use of safety belts in Europe, by country



Source: European regional status report on road safety 2019

Legal framework in the EU

- Since 2006, wearing safety belts is compulsory in all vehicles throughout the EU
- Drivers and passengers must wear a safety belt in any seat fitted with one
- Very limited exemptions in the different member states, e.g., medical reasons, authorities like police or border control
- Pregnant women should always wear a safety belt as they are effective at reducing the risk for the mother and the baby

International best-practice on implementing rear safety belts

(Rear) safety belt legislation

- safety belt fitting by vehicle type and inspection;
- safety belt wearing by vehicle type and passenger location;
- penalties for non-compliance that are serious and enforced consistently enough to deter people from not using the safety belt;
- Exemptions must carefully be considered as they make the law less effective and enforcement more difficult.

International best-practice on implementing rear safety belts

Effective (rear) safety belt enforcement

- Strategic, well-publicized, strict and consistent enforcement approach, including increased visibility and repetition of enforcement campaigns
- Integrate rear safety belt enforcement into other enforcement activities (e.g., activities against drink and drug driving)
- Phased-in enforcement action starting by issuing warnings and explaining the legal changes before issuing fines
- Quick process of penalties regardless of the status of those who have broken the law
- National and local (rear) safety belt wearing targets

International best-practice on implementing rear safety belts

Public campaigns and education

- Public campaigns should be conducted together with enforcement. **They can never replace enforcement.**
- Target those groups which often show the lowest rear safety belt wearing rates (e.g., passengers aged 60 and over)
- Focus on the mistaken perception that rear seats were safer than front seats and on the fact that rear passengers can harm those on the front seat in case of a crash
- Join forces with relevant stakeholders (automobile clubs, insurance companies, etc.) and repeat campaign over a period of months or years

Opportunities and challenges of implementation

- Introduction of **appropriate legislation for rear safety belts** combined with consistent enforcement and targeted public education and social marketing campaigns is of high importance
- During the implementation process the feasibility of **increasing penalties** (in terms of fines or demerit points) for non-use of safety belts should be assessed very carefully.
- **Government organizations could establish a good example** by making rear safety belt use compulsory for their own staff
- Right around the introduction of the new law police **short-term, high-visibility enforcement of rear safety belt laws** with a brief period of increased police efforts (e.g., checkpoints or patrols) should be conducted.
- Integrated **short-term, highly visible night-time enforcement activities** should be carried out to tackle this challenge. These can easily be combined with enforcement of other laws.



Recommendations

- **Transfer the sound legal framework** that already exists in Georgia for safety belt use on front seats to rear safety belt use.
- In this context **abolish Article 26 of the Law on Traffic** stating that children under the age of three may be transported on the knees of a belted back seat passenger older than 16 years.
- Support the introduction of rear safety belt legislation by **adequate enforcement and target-group centred public campaigns**.
- Introduce a **standardized system for collection and analysis of data on road crashes, injuries and fatalities as well as road safety indicators** (safety belt wearing rates (front seat and back seats)) to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and for planning purposes.

Estimation of road safety benefits

It can be estimated for the year 2021 that in Georgia 202 people were killed as car occupants.

If Georgia would have achieved a 99% safety belt wearing rate on front seats, 100 lives could have been saved in 2021.

It is estimated that 10% of fatally or seriously injured car occupants were seated in the back. For Georgia this would be equivalent to 20 persons.

If these persons would have worn a rear safety belt 5 could have been saved in 2021.

**We look forward to your questions
and a fruitful discussion.**

Dr. Eva Eichinger-Vill
Vill Consulting Engineers
Vienna

Gela Kvashilava
Partnership for Road Safety
Tbilisi, Georgia