

Research on the attitude of active passengers and drivers to the use of seat belt

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1. Summary

The given document represents the report on research of the attitude of active passengers and drivers to the use of seat belt. The research was conducted in October-November 2007. The main goal was to study the attitude of Tbilisi drivers and passengers to the use of seat belt.

The qualitative and quantitative research techniques were applied during the research.

2. Research design

The given chapter describes the main goal and objectives as well as the methodology applied.

2.1. Research goal and objectives

The goal of the research was to study the attitude of active passengers and drivers to the use of seat belt.

The following objectives were set to achieve the goal:

- to identify favorable factors of the seat belt use;
- to determine adverse factors of the seat belt use;

- to study the attitude of respondents in regard to the typical cases and various positions of the use of seat belt
- to reveal the attitude of drivers, active passengers and experts in respect of existing legislation on the use of seat belt;
- to define motivating factors of the seat belt use.

2.2. Technique and Tools/Target Group

The research includes two components – qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative research description

The technique of focus group discussion was used in the qualitative research.

The research target group was represented by car drivers, active passengers and sphere experts.

The Guide – moderator's manual for focus group was taken as a research tool.

In the “Partnership for Road Safety” office 4 focus groups were organized.

1. Female drivers;
2. Male drivers;
3. Active passengers;
4. Sphere experts.

Overall 24 respondents participated in the research.

The duration of focus group session was approximately 1 hour.

The research report is based on the detailed transcript of the focus group.

Quantitative research description

The quantitative research area was Tbilisi, and the target group were Tbilisi inhabitants (18+).

The selection was representative. Overall 1000 respondents were questioned. The direct interviewing technique was used in the research. The interview was conducted with the special structured questionnaire. The duration of questionnaire was approximately 20 minutes.

After the completion of the fieldwork the obtained results were set into and processed by the special statistical analysis software (SPSS.15.0). Final report of the research was prepared based on the statistical analysis of the results.

3. Results, analysis, interpretation

3.1. Drivers and passengers attitude to the use of seat belt

3.1.1. Seat belt typical users

For the purpose of revealing the attitude to the seat belt use the focus group members were asked to present the driver or active passenger, who regularly used the seat belt.

As a result of the research both the positive and negative characteristics of the typical seat belt user image were revealed. The abovementioned image characteristics of this kind are important as they influence the use or no-use of seat belt: the positive characteristics of the typical seat belt user can be considered as motivating, and the negative parameters - as adverse factors of this behaviour.

Positive characteristics	Negative characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Foreigner/European▪ Intellectual/sensible▪ Professional driver/ race-driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inexperienced driver▪ Coward▪ Overly decent

As it is clear from the table, rather dissimilar character of the typical seat belt user can be distinguished. On the one hand, the seat belt use is associated with the behaviour of the European/intelligent person; on the other hand, in the respondents' perception the regular seat belt use indicates the lack of experience and cowardice.

The focus group representatives unambiguously pointed that the use of seat belt is typical for foreigners/particularly Europeans, as this behaviour is binding by the law in the majority of the European countries. Respectively, foreigners have already developed the seat belt use skills and they will mechanically use such behaviour regardless the country they are in.

"Foreigners regularly use seat belts, as the seat belt use is customary abroad and the foreigners are accustomed to this behaviour since childhood. No matter is he in Tbilisi or Strasbourg, he will always use the seat belt. This is a mental feature, he is accustomed to it and can realize better, why he should use it and why does he use it in general. In our office foreigners represent the top management and it is a must to use seat belt when in a car. Otherwise one will be refused to get any assistance." [Male, 26, driver]

Apart from that, a foreigner is associated with the strict adherence to the safety rules. According to the respondents, when driving car in Georgia, foreigner frequently has difficulties due to the disorder on the roads, and because of that, some kind of sense of fear is developed in him. Thus, he will use seat belt for the purpose of self-protection and safety.

“Even if a foreigner does not use seat belt in his home country, he will definitely use it when in Georgia, as the foreigners are not used to the manner of driving that is common in Georgia. When one is passing crossroad in Georgia, even if the traffic lights are flashing green, he/she will anyway look right and then left to check if anyone is coming. It is different abroad, in Europe. If the traffic lights show green one knows that the road is his/hers and goes straight, knowing that no one will rush out. In other words, they are too decent drivers. One cannot physically be such a law-abiding driver here; besides the traffic lights are not in proper order, the road signs on crossroads contradict each other, so if you follow one you will break another. There are places in Tbilisi where it is physically impossible to drive.” [Male, 28, driver]

“The same way as we do not use seat belts, the foreigners do. I asked my acquaintance, who is a foreigner, why he used the seat belt and he frankly answered that he was afraid of how we were driving. He said that communication between our drivers was not performed in terms of law, but rather through mimicry, gestures and hand motions. He said he was really frightened and trembling; he was so much terrified, that’s why he used the seat belt. This is a matter of fear that foreigners have.” [Male, 32, driver]

In a number of cases the use of seat belts is considered as a deliberate behavior of a sensible, intellectual and mature driver.

“In my opinion, one who uses seat belt in a city is a person with European style of thinking, who surpasses others in education and mentality.” [Male, 51, driver]

“To my mind, it is more civil to drive using seat belt. It is not a matter of bad taste or manner, on the contrary, it is a behaviour of a mature, intellectual person.” [Female, 25, driver]

At the same time, in respondents' opinion professional drivers - race-drivers are those, who realize to the utmost the necessity of seat belt use. Therefore, according to the focus group members, the seat belt use is a typical behaviour of race-drivers.

“Racers always use seat belts, and do you know the reason why? If you are a good driver and know how to drive and follow the rules, you should use the seat belt. Otherwise, if you drive a car without it you are a mere imbecile. In other words, this is an approach they have and it should be instilled in here.” [Female, 25, driver]

However, on the other hand, it is considered that inexperienced drivers/ beginners generally use seat belts. According to respondents, in the process of developing car-driving skills the drivers are less self-confident and, consequently, actively use seat belts for safety purposes. In a number of cases, the use of seat belts is considered to be the behaviour of less daring/cowardly person, who cannot rely on oneself and to a certain extent, requires protection – a seat belt. This is the reason why the individuals of this type become the object of derision.

According to respondents, in Georgia drivers generally do not adhere to the traffic rules on roads. Hence, in the focus group members' perception, strict observance of safety and traffic rules when driving a car to a certain extent bears a negative tinge. The frequent user of seat belt is characterised as an extremely law-abiding and overly decent driver, who due to his specific driving manner causes irritation in other drivers.

"I have noticed, that those, who use seat belts are characterised by a specific manner of driving; in other words, they sit straight, with both hands on the steering wheel and will never turn off the road no matter how vigorously you are beeping the horn to them. They are driving at a speed of 60. Those guys get on my nerves. They are overly decent drivers. And in Tbilisi there are always situations when one cannot be so decent when driving, as you might fail and be late somewhere. [Male, 32, driver]

"There are such extremely decent drivers who have this decency instilled. Typical is an individual, who is law-abiding by his consciousness and ideology; a decent person who will never violate the law. He/she is essentially a member of a civil society and will never, even subconsciously, have an intention that will be anarchic." [Male, 32, driver]

3.1.2. Favourable and adverse factors of the seat belt use

As a result of the qualitative research, the ambivalent – both positive and negative attitudes to the seat belt use were revealed. The seat belt was characterised by the bipolar variables, such as comfortable - uncomfortable, safe – dangerous etc. This disposition is presumably conditioned by the lack of information on seat belts – the focus group members were not properly informed and had a rather vague idea of the seat belt function.

As a result of the qualitative research, the following favourable and adverse factors of seat belt use were revealed:

Favourable factors	Adverse factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Law/Fine (penalty) ▪ Safety ▪ Feeling of security ▪ Comfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Absence of skills/unaccustomed ▪ Physical uneasiness ▪ Psychological uneasiness ▪ Unhygienic ▪ Waste of physical and time resources ▪ Absence of seat belts in a vehicle ▪ No necessity ▪ Excessive self-assurance ▪ Negative image of seat belt user ▪ Not commonly used/ typical behaviour for everyone

Favourable factors of seat belt use

Existing legislation

The existing legislation is the main favourable factor of seat belt use. It provides for mandatory use of seat belts by passengers and drivers outside the city. Focus group members use seat belts just to avoid fines.

"I might say, that I use seat belt on the highway 89% because it is obligatory by law and I am afraid of being fined. The rest 29% is probably fear and distrust, especially when you are in another person's, inexperienced driver's car." [Male, 26, driver]

"I use seat belt as I do not want patrol police to fine me." [Female, 27, driver]

"It is necessary to use seat belt outside the city and I do so. Though, sometimes I forget about it and I am fastening it at the sight of patrol police, with one hand, right on my way. I basically use it as the law obliges." [Female, 25, driver]

"I use seat belt on the highway as I has been fined several times on the way, that is why, I am using it." [Male, 28, driver]

"I use it when on the highway as it is obligatory by law to fasten seat belt on the highway." [Female, 47, passenger]

Safety

Alongside with the intention to avoid pecuniary penalty, drivers and active passengers sometimes realize the necessity of using seat belt and use it for safety purposes.

"I personally use the seat belt not only because it is obligatory, but for safety as well." [Female, 47, passenger]

"It is better to use the seat belt rather than not to use it; as it protects you from casualties and there are frequently cases, when a person survives after the car accident just because he/she had a seat belt fastened." [Male, 28, driver]

"The advantage of a seat belt is that it protect you from striking against the steering wheel during the collision, or prevents the front passenger from striking his/her head against the windshield. That's why, safety is certainly one of the reasons for using the seat belt." [Male, 30, driver]

"The seat belt protects you from shifting, one will not strike against anything or hurt himself/herself. If a person has a single chance to survive, when falling from the car he is losing this chance. That is the reason, why it is so important to fasten a seat belt. Driver is obliged to fasten a seat belt when getting into the car. [Male, 62, expert]

Feeling of security

According to the respondents, the main advantage of the seat belt use is that it protects a driver or a passenger from being injured during the car accident. Thus, the use of seat belt evokes the feeling of safety in the respondents and increases their self-confidence.

"We are well aware, what grave consequences might driving without seat belt lead to, even in case of a minor accident. Not necessarily that I will die but I can lose control over the vehicle and will cause the damage to other vehicles. That's why I prefer to use a seat belt. When you have your seat belt fastened, you feel yourself more secure and confident." [Male, 47, expert]

Comfort

In a number of cases, respondents pointed out that the use of seat belt is comfortable. In that case there is no need for a passenger to make efforts to keep himself/herself in his/her seat on braking, turning or in any other situations. In that case a seat belt holds a passenger in his/her position and gives him/her possibility to relax.

"I do not feel any physical uneasiness when using a seat belt. On the contrary, I fasten it to a rear seat, as in the leather compartment of a car the seats are sliding much and I hold myself

with the seat belt, especially, when I get asleep on the highway. The seat belt prevents me from sliding and mechanically bending forward when asleep. And of course it also holds me when braking for the traffic lights." [Female, 47, passenger]

"It will be better if all passengers use seat belts. They will feel themselves better and there would not be any need for them to hold on to anything." [Female, 25, driver]

Adverse factors of seat belt use

Law is not mandatory

The quantitative research revealed, that among other reasons for not using seat belt, the fact that the law is not mandatory and that the seat belt causes discomfort to passengers were emphasized.

Half of the respondents (51%) pointed out, that the main reason for not using seat belts on the city roads was that this behaviour was not prescribed as mandatory by law. It is significant, that the greater part of males (54%) know traffic rules and related laws better, than females (49%).

It should also be mentioned, that three out of nearly ten respondents (27%) are not aware of existing legislation and think, the law does not provide for mandatory use of seat belt outside the city. The part of females who share this opinion (32%) considerably exceeds that of the males (19%). (See pic.#2)

Pic. #2

Why don't you use seat belt in the city?

N=1 000

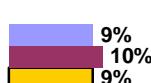
It is not mandatory by law



I do not feel myself comfortable



It's not necessary when you drive slowly



I usually sit on the rear seat

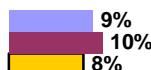


█ Total
█ Male
█ Female

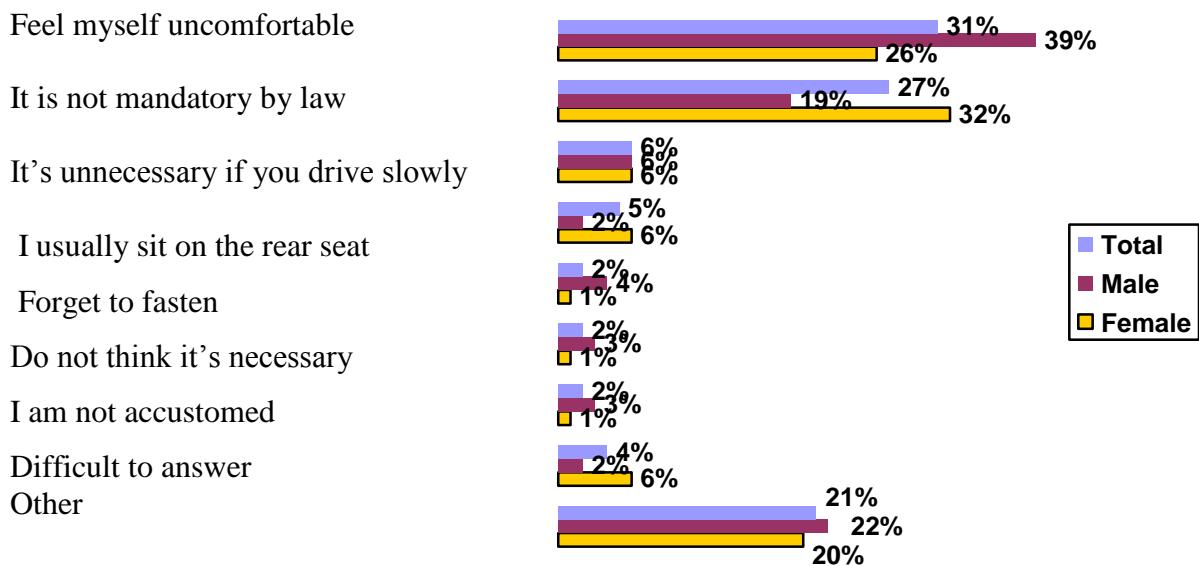
Difficult to answer



Other



Why don't you use seat belt on the highway outside the city?



Discomfort (uneasiness)

Though a seat belt at a certain extent ensures comfort to the passengers, discomfort was named as one of the major adverse factors of the seat belt use:

Among the reasons for not using seat belts on the highways outside the city, as against the reasons for not using seat belts on the city roads, exactly the discomfort to the passengers was frequently pointed out (31%). As compared to the females (26%), the use of seat belts causes the feeling of uneasiness in the larger number males (39%). (See pic.#2).

According to the focus group members, because of high degree of discomfort (pressing the shoulders, rubbing the skin) they experience when using a seat belt, the use of seat belt to them is associated with pain and unpleasant sensation (heavy breathing, suffocation etc.).

"To use a seat belt is something terrible, especially when you are sunburnt and just coming from the seaside. In summer, if you are tanned, the seat belt completely rubs off the tan by rubbing your bare shoulders." [Female, 25, driver]

"It is very unpleasant to use seat belt on the long way. I personally went to the seaside by car. When you are an inexperienced driver, you have a certain discomfort: you have waist pains, your feet are tired and swollen, apart from that a seat belt is rather disturbing you, pressing on your shoulders; you are constrained. In summer, with no air conditioner in a car it is

almost dreadful. It is pinching you shoulders and rubbing off your sunburnt skin." [Female, 25, driver]

The respondents also point out, that a seat belt restrains their motions and hinders their manoeuvring when driving (turning, looking back etc.).

"When using a seat belt, it is difficult to look back, even when parking." [Female, 25, driver]

"It is inconvenient to manoeuvre with a seat belt fastened. You are constrained and are not free as you wish you would. You can do everything with a seat belt on, but you can easily do the same things well enough and more freely without a seat belt as well. You can sit more freely without a seat belt, you are more free to make turns and you are getting less tired when travelling. Using seat belt you are more restrained and riveted to a seat so that you cannot sit with ease, as you are fastened with two straps, that are tight and when you move or bend forward, it is pressing. No, it is definitely uncomfortable to drive with a seat belt on. That is why, I never use it when driving in the city." [Male, 28, driver]

Furthermore, it is said that a seat belt does not give driver or passenger any possibility to relax and position himself/herself comfortably. According to the respondents, when using a seat belt a passenger/driver should sit straight, that in the long run leads to tiredness and inconvenience, especially when driving long distances.

"It is so tiresome to use a seat belt when driving. The muscles are motionless; you are pinned to a seat and simply cannot move. When driving long distances you will probably wish to relax, shift aside, rest your hands upon something; a seat belt will not give this possibility." [Male, 32, driver]

Apart from physical uneasiness, the use of seat belt causes certain psychological discomfort. To the respondents, a seat belt evokes such negative associations like bound, cramped, pinned, chained, captured, glued etc.

A certain constraint of driver's or passenger's motions caused by a seat belt is to some extent associated with a restraint of freedom in general.

"I do not feel comfortable when using a seat belt. As if you are captured somehow, you find it difficult to control yourself; you do not feel yourself free. It has a negative influence on breathing and heart. It is not pleasant. If seat belts were used in the city, than probably human

organism would be adopted to it and we would learn how to get along with it. But as we do not frequently use seat belts this becomes disturbing – you are suffocating.

Conceptually it is good to use seat belt, but technically it is extremely uncomfortable – it is restraining.”[Female, 49, driver]

“The disadvantage of a seat belt is that it is unhandy. You feel as if you are bound with this seat belt fastened tight.”[Female, 49, driver]

“I do not use seat belt, as I do not like when something is restraining me. I do not know, maybe it’s because of my personality or my profession, but when something is restraining, no matter is it a seat belt or any other thing – I cannot stand it. The main reason is that I hate being constrained, that’s why I will never even think of using a seat belt. For my psychological disposition, for me to be efficient at most in my business, in which a car helps me much, I prefer not to use a seat belt.”[Male, 32, driver]

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned adverse factors, in focus group members' perception the use of seat belt in a number of cases has negative influence on the quality of car driving. This is a quite acute problem especially for the beginner/inexperienced and female drivers.

“The seat belt is so uncomfortable, that I drive a car worse and to some extent I am restrained.”[Female, 49, driver]

“I am sure I will not be able to drive a car with a seat belt on. When I had a seat belt fastened, I felt myself glued to the seat and I pulled it away, I could not stand it.”[Female, 33, driver]

Waste of physical and time resources

One of the significant adverse factors of seat belt use is physical and time resource required for fastening and unfastening a seat belt. The given factor makes the use of seat belt especially uncomfortable when driving short distances, mainly in the city. According to the respondents, when driving in the city they have to frequently stop, get out or get into the car and, consequently, to frequently fasten and unfasten a seat belt.

Frequent fastening and unfastening of a seat belt causes discomfort in passenger and driver and often leads to loss of any desire to travel.

“You know what feeling does the use of seat belt in Tbilisi evoke? Every time you get out from the car you should pull up the window and then pull it down when you get back into the car

again. It is the same with a seat belt. You should unfasten it ...and then fasten it again...it is very inconvenient." [Male, 32, driver]

"I never use it in the city as I do not like it, it is very uncomfortable. You should unfasten it when you get out from the car and then fasten it when you get into the car, this fastening-unfastening is very unhandy." [Male, 21, driver]

"As far as driving in Tbilisi is concerned, it is uncomfortable to use a seat belt. You get to the shop, for instance, then stop at some other place, you get out and then get back into the car and every time you have to fasten and unfasten it. In Tbilisi it is difficult to stop every now and then, get out from the car, unfasten a seat belt, then get into the car and fasten it again. It causes uneasiness and you might soon lose any desire to travel at all." [Male, 21, driver]

"The moment of fastening and unfastening a seat belt itself also causes a discomfort. It is another task you have to handle when you get into or out from the car. [Female, 25, driver]

Unhygienic features of seat belt use

Lack of hygiene was named as one of the adverse factors of safety belt use. In terms of a city, a seat belt frequently becomes dirty from dust and exhaust, and its cleaning is quite difficult. Consequently, in a number of cases the use of seat belt is considered less hygienic.

"It is very difficult and less comfortable when everything in a car compartment is burning from heat and you have something close to your body, it is really very uncomfortable. 99% of those who do not have air conditioner in a car have their windows pulled down. Especially in a city like Tbilisi, which is one of the dirtiest cities in the whole world from the environmental point of view, if you put a finger on a seat belt that you have cleaned in the morning you will find that in the evening it is awfully dirty, so is your shirt as well. I cannot change seat belts every day, neither can I wash them. And if you are sweaty and fasten a seat belt, it will leave a trace on your shirt. That's another disadvantage of it." [Male, 47, expert]

Lack of seat belt use skills/want of habit

In the respondents' perception no-use of seat belts is preconditioned by the lack of skills of seat belt use in drivers and passengers. According to the focus group members, they have not learned that it is necessary to use a seat belt and, consequently it is not habitual for them. That is the reason, why the respondents almost never remember to fasten a seat belt when driving.

Want of habit (2%) and forgetfulness (2%) were pointed out by the equal number of respondents to be the main reasons for not using seat belt outside the city. (see pic.#2).

"In our case the problem is that we are not accustomed to using seat belts. If we were used to it from the very beginning, we would definitely use it. When I started driving a car, there was no law on use of seat belts, and as I had to use it now, I found it rather difficult. If we are to use it in the city on a daily basis, we will gradually get used to it." [Female, 27, driver]

"As for the habit, when I was stopped by the police I could not understand why not until they told me. When you are stopped you always think what's the reason, maybe you have broken the rules...I could not even guess, that they stopped me because I did not use a seat belt. So much have I forgotten of its existence." [Male, 21, driver]

"I have never used a seat belt. I have even never thought of using it. I do not even remember, that such thing exists. "[Male, 32, driver]

"It is difficult, there is no culture of using seat belts in our country, but we will probably gradually get used to it. In the city and in the countryside it is not mandatory and I have never used it on my own will, I am not accustomed to it yet." [Male, 30, driver]

"Usually when it is necessary and I do not use a seat belt, it's just because I simply forget and not because it makes me feel myself uncomfortable." [Female, 35, passenger]

"I do not use safety seat belt not because I have not developed those skills from childhood. I simply think to some extent it is disturbing." [Male, 51, expert]

"I do not use a seat belt as no one taught me so. For instance, when you start driving a car you should possess certain skills; get some recommendations. When I was learning driving nobody told me of the necessity of using a seat belt." [Female, 33, driver]

"It never comes to my mind that I should use a seat belt. I have never been showed what it is for. The tutor taught me how to adjust a mirror, then some other things, but he had never mentioned anything about the seat belt." [Female, 27, driver]

Absence of seat belt

In a number of cases the active passengers or drivers do not use seat belt simply because they do not have it physically or it is out of order.

Absence of necessity of seat belt use

As it became evident, the focus group members for the most part do not use seat belts, as they do not see any necessity and importance of using it. In respondents' opinion, it is not so necessary to use a seat belt when driving at a low speed, as even in case of a car accident a driver or a passenger can easily hold himself/herself and avoid serious injuries.

The absence of necessity of seat belt use in the city was pointed out by 9% and on the highway outside the city – by 6% (See pic.#2).

"I do not use a seat belt in the city, as I never drive fast in the city. The traffic is so heavy that the roads are rarely free. And even if you run onto something there is a little chance that you will suffer. That is the reason why I do not use a seat belt." [Male, 65, driver]

"I do use and will always use a seat belt when on a highway. But in the city I do not drive so as to get into a car accident and suffer badly. Someone may hit me, of course, but I myself never drive so and there is no chance that I cannot brake or get in such an accident that a seat belt will save me. In Tbilisi I do not drive so as to strike my head or body and smash the window when using brakes." [Female, 25, driver]

"I think there is no need to use a seat belt. I have never got in car accidents. And those, beside whom I usually sit never drive fast. You can immediately react yourself and hold oneself when a car brakes or there is a minor car accident even without a seat belt." [Female, 26, passenger]

Excessive self-assurance

The focus group members point out the excessive self-assurance of the drivers, which can be regarded as one of the adverse factors of the seat belt use. According to the respondents, reasoning from the human nature, both the drivers and the active passengers have difficulty to presume and imagine beforehand that they can have a car accident and get physical injuries when driving a car.

"I would not use a seat belt when driving if there were no law on seat belt use and regulation signs on roads. It is the matter of our mentality that when you drive you are confident, and no one can make you think that you are not driving properly." [Male, 21, driver]

"I do not use seat belt and I am self-confident enough. Maybe it is not quite a positive feature, but I do think that I drive well and nothing will happen to me. However, I realize that there are others who can drive badly and something might happen because of others. Anyway, I do

not use it. No one can presume, that he/she might have a car accident; and there is such a great inner comfort and tremendous feeling of freedom without a seat belt, that you constantly think that nothing will happen to you. Maybe theoretically it is good to use a seat belt, but at a conscious level this is a discomfort. Thus I will not cause uneasiness to myself.”[Male, 32, driver]

Negative image of seat belt user

In a number of cases the adverse factor of a seat belt use is the negative image of a seat belt user. As it has been already mentioned, the seat belt user is frequently associated with a coward and inexperienced person.

“It is a matter of our mentality and psychology. When you see in the city a person with a seat belt on, you might be surprised and think that he/she is probably a foreigner or have an impression that this is a coward person. Reasoning from the attitudes that we have in Georgia, at this instance the use of a seat belt somehow contradicts public opinion. Georgians do not like using such things for ages. Because of that, as far as I know, special suits with black ribbons that resembled safety belts were sewed in Kutaisi. In 80-th similar T-shirts were also made. In other words this contradicts public opinion from the mental point of view. A seat belt creates an image of a coward person, who is afraid of even driving slowly in the city. What will happen to you when you drive in the city slowly- nothing. Somehow it is humiliating, this is the impression.”[Male, 26, driver]

“I do not use seat belt, first of all because public opinion matters much to me. Of course, no one thinks that if you put the seat belt, others would change their minds or think different of you, but subconsciously such moment exists. Another thing is, that when I drive I am confident and self-assured. I also think that if you drive slowly there is no need for a seat belt. [Male, 28, driver]

“Here people do not have this habit. If one sees a person with a seat belt it is a surprise for him/her and one might think, that this person is crazy.”[Male, 65, driver]

Not commonly used

The focus group members are reluctant to use safety belts and as an explanation point out, that this behaviour is not commonly used. According to the respondents, no one from their acquaintances or friends uses safety belts.

“For many years Georgians drive cars without the seat belts fastened. Accordingly, I also never think of using it myself.” [Female, 27, driver]

“No one from the people I know uses seat belt. Maybe when you do not see others using seat belts you never assume its necessity, particularly when driving in the city.” [Female, 33, driver]

Less safe

Regardless of its name the use of safety (seat) belt in a number of cases is thought to be insecure. The respondents point out such situations, when the use of seat belt may impose danger to the driver or passenger’s life. Particularly, these are the cases, when as a result of a car accident there is a probability of driving/falling down off the road. In such a situation, the respondents think a passenger or a driver will not be able to jump from the car and thus, he/she will lose a single chance to survive.

“Along with advantages there are many disadvantage of using a seat belt. The disadvantage of using a seat belt is that there is a probability of base fracture; and there were such cases; if you shift forward with your body and the belt will hold your body, your head and neck will be broken. There are also cases, when during a car accident if a car is falling down the only chance to survive is to jump out from it; this happens in hundredth of a second so you must be able to manage and jump out. In that case you will waste time trying to undo the seat belt and you will fall with the car, you will not manage to jump out.” [Male, 30, driver]

“If you fall down somewhere you might not even be able to get out. On the contrary, the use of seat belt at the coastal zone is prohibited. The reason is that if you fall down into the water a seat belt will prevent you from getting out from there.” [Male, 26, driver]

“There are cases, when during the car accident, after the car falls down, those, who do not have seat belts on can survive, get from the car and stop the bypassing vehicle. People usually have problems with unfastening seat belts and have difficulties to get out”. [Male, 28, driver]

During the focus group session a supposition was expressed, that a feeling of safety and security gives the drivers more chance for relaxation. According to the respondents, at that moment drivers are less concentrated and, consequently, the likelihood of car accidents increases.

“The biggest disadvantage of using a seat belt is a psychological aspect. One is more relaxed when using seat belt and there is a bigger chance that due to this relaxation a car accident might happen.” [Male, 32, driver]

“As far as the disadvantages of seat belt use is concerned, it has been proved statistically, that those who use a seat belt are more likely to become the victims of car accidents than those, who do not use it. When you put a seat belt on you feel yourself more secure and might drive faster. There was a case in the USA. When law on use of seat belts was introduced, the number of casualties among foot-passengers increased much more than that of the car-passengers. The reason is that the foot-passengers were more exposed to the danger as the drivers were driving faster. The drivers were more confident, less concentrated and more careless. Indeed, when you use a seat belt it brings you more confidence and you think you are a perfect driver; and even if something happens, the seat belt will protect you. Thus, you are becoming more risky in that case.” [Male, 21, driver]

“When you know you are using seat belt, you are tied up and you feel yourself safe and secure; your car has an insurance, you yourself have an insurance, and psychologically you are insurant. You have such a precondition to be well. Exactly because of that you are loosened and are more likely to get in a car accident than in any other situation.” [Male, 32, driver]

3.1.3. Cases of using seat belts

Focus group member experts and in a number of cases the drivers as well think, that the use of seat belts in any situations is necessary and obligatory; in any situation there is a likelihood of a car accident. However, the research revealed certain situations, when the use of a seat belt is more or less necessary.

“Generally, it is always necessary to use a seat belt, as there is always a chance that an accident will happen. Nothing can be excluded. That is why, it is better to always use a seat belt.” [Male, 65, driver]

“There is no alternative to the seat belt. One should always use a seat belt. All four seat belts should be fastened.” [Male, 62, expert]

“It is obligatory to use a safety belt, especially in the city where there are uncontrollable situations and no one knows when and how one would break the rules. There are no guarantees that you will survive. Every time you get into the car you should fasten a seat belt, this is the same like we brush teeth every morning.” [Male, 62, expert]

As a result of the qualitative research the most and less necessary situations for seat belt use were identified.