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Over 1-in-3 in Europe Risk Their Lives by Ignoring Rear Seatbelt Laws, New Ford Survey Shows

- A new Ford-sponsored survey shows that more than one-in-three people in Europe break the law by not wearing a seatbelt in the rear seats of a car
- The survey of more than 7,100 adults from across Europe also reveals nearly one-in-four drivers do not insist that passengers wear rear seatbelts
- Seatbelts are the most important safety device for both front and rear seating positions in all types of crashes. Most European countries require rear passengers to wear a seatbelt
- Those over 40 years old are least likely to wear seatbelts in rear seats; geographically, people in Romania, Spain and Italy ignore seatbelt laws most often
- Ford is committed to providing education on driver and passenger safety; the company's Driving Skills for Life program has provided hands-on driver training to more than 6,100 young drivers across Europe since 2013
- Ford's all-new Mondeo offers segment-first Inflatable Rear Seatbelts, technology that combines airbag and seatbelt attributes and that according to customer feedback are as comfortable or more comfortable than conventional seatbelts

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COLOGNE, Germany, April 8, 2015 – For the vast majority of motorists, wearing a seatbelt in the front seat of a car has become a habit, reflecting progressively tougher seatbelt laws across Europe and increased public awareness of the safety benefits.

A new Ford-sponsored survey, however, reveals this is not the case for significant numbers of people travelling in the rear of a vehicle. The survey of more than 7,100 adults from across Europe revealed that more than one-in-three people in Europe choose not wear a

seatbelt in the rear of the vehicle despite legal requirements that have been in place across Europe for years.

What's more, nearly one-in-four drivers do not insist that passengers wear rear seatbelts. The European Transport Safety Council estimates that in the European Union in 2012 alone, 8,600 deaths in cars were prevented by the wearing of seatbelts. The council also reports that in 2013, of the 1,900 people killed on Europe's motorways, as many as 60 per cent were not wearing seatbelts.*

The survey showed that those over 40 years old are most likely not to wear a seat belt in rear seats (46 per cent). Of people age 24 and under – who grew up in an age when parents were more diligent about using rear seatbelts and car seats – only 21 percent said they don't buckle up in the back seat. Drivers who are over 40 also are the least likely to insist that rear passengers wear seatbelts.

"Learning to drive is not something which stops when you have passed your driving test," said Jim Graham, manager for Ford Driving Skills for Life, which has provided training to more than half a million young people globally since first being launched in the U.S.,12 years ago. "Wearing a seatbelt can be the difference between life and death, whether you are sitting in the front seat or the rear seats, whatever age you are."

The survey of people in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain, and the U.K., also showed that those in Romania were the most likely to travel in the rear without a seatbelt (84 per cent), then Italy (56 per cent), and Spain (39 per cent). Drivers in Romania were the least likely to insist rear passengers wear seatbelts (with only 39 per cent always doing so), then Italy (53 per cent), and Belgium (85 per cent).

Police forces across Europe are targeting seatbelt offenders. The European Traffic Police Network, TIPSOL, staged a week-long crackdown earlier this month; and a similar pan#European operation last September led to penalties for 95,000 drivers and passengers.

TIPSOL president Aidan Reid said: "Failure to wear a seatbelt in the rear of a car will put both you and anyone seated in front at increased risk of injury or death. We strongly urge drivers to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of their passengers by ensuring everyone wears a seatbelt on every journey."

International traffic safety organisation IRTAD ** collates global data about rear seatbelt use. Their findings are that people in Germany (97 per cent) are the most likely to wear a rear seatbelt, and those less likely to wear one include people in Greece (23 per cent), Italy (10 per cent), and Serbia (three per cent).

Ford in the U.S. introduced the first-ever production automobile Inflatable Rear Seatbelt that combines airbag and seatbelt attributes. Ford research shows more than 90 per cent found Inflatable Rear Seatbelts to be similar to, or more comfortable than, a conventional belt – because they found the Inflatable Rear Seatbelt padded and softer.

Now available on the all-new Mondeo, Ford's Inflatable Rear Seatbelt is designed to enhance protection for rear-seat occupants. During a crash, the inflatable belt helps distribute crash forces across more of a passenger's torso than a conventional belt – up to five times more.

Ford's seatbelt reminder technology both displays and sounds warnings if passengers fail to buckle up. The company also is highlighting the risks of not wearing seatbelts as part of the Ford DSFL program that has provided hands-on driver training to more than 6,100 18 to 24#year-olds in the countries surveyed, and has been recently introduced in Russia.

"The importance of wearing seatbelts cannot be over-emphasised," Graham said. "Potentially life-saving technologies as the Inflatable Rear Seatbelt are only effective if they're worn."

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* European Transport Safety Council: Ranking EU Progress on Car Occupant Safety report
http://etsc.eu/12000-killed-in-cars-in-eu-in-2012/
** IRTAD Annual Road Safety Report 2014
http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/transport/road-safety-annual-report_23124571