

The relation between seat belt use of drivers and passengers

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Abstract

The present study gives input to the theme Safety and Transport, by pointing out a target group for campaigns to reduce the severity of accidents. Seat belt use and sex of both the driver and the passenger were observed. A logistic regression model was used to analyse the relation between seat belt use and the position in the car (driver or passenger), sex of the driver and passenger, time of day and location of driving.

Results show that men used their seat belt less often than women. Drivers with passengers did not wear the seat belt more often or less often than drivers without passengers. However, drivers and passengers often behaved the same. They both wore or did not wear a seat belt. Seat belt use of a male driver depended also on the sex of the passenger. In control condition (outside the centre of the city, and outside of peak hours of a working day), the probability that a male driver without passenger wore a seat belt was 48%. Accompanied by a female passenger (keeping the other variables constant), the probability increased to 59%. Accompanied by a male passenger, the seat belt use of the male driver decreased to 34%. Female drivers seat wearing behaviour was not influenced by the presence nor sex of passenger. Male passengers use the seat belt less often if they are sitting next to a male driver. At present, it is not clear which human factor causes the differences found. It is possible that wearing a seat belt may be due to direct social influence. In that case, the differences are intra-individual. Alternatively, the differences found could be inter-individual. E.g., when two men sitting together in a car they are more often members of social groups that use a seat belt less than average, while male drivers accompanied by female passengers are more often members of social groups that use a seat belt more than average.

In both cases, men are a target group for campaigns for seat belt use. Especially if two men are sitting together in a car, since in that case both driver and passenger have extremely low seat belt use.

Introduction

In Belgium the use of seat belts has been legally compulsory for drivers and front seat passengers since 1975. Yet, based on counts, in 2001 seat belt use in Belgium

In D. de Waard, K.A. Brookhuis, R. van Egmond, and Th. Boersema (Eds.) (2005), *Human Factors in Design, Safety, and Management* (pp. 81 - 92). Maastricht, the Netherlands: Shaker Publishing.