

Press Release

Seat Belts in the UAE ... still a long way to go! 2026 UAE seat belt survey – Part 1 (Adults)

- The law: since 1-July-2017 it is mandatory that everyone in a vehicle wears a seat belt
- Knowledge: 95% state that seat belts protect drivers and front seat passengers
- Knowledge: 82% state that seat belts protect rear-seat passengers
- Usage: 86% state they always use seat belts when they drive or are front seat passengers
- Usage: 24% state they always use seat belts as rear-seat passengers
- Responsibility: 70% of drivers always ask passengers to buckle up
- Rationale for non-use (top 2): 55% shun seat belts on the rear-seats as they feel safe enough without; 27% don't see the need on short trips
- Trends: Overall positive trends vs. the same study conducted in 2017 prior to the new law introduction

Dubai, 2nd April 2026; The non-use of seat belts represents the biggest opportunity to reduce road fatalities in the UAE and around the world. The latest available numbers of Abu Dhabi Police state that 60% of fatalities happen in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi due to non-use of seat belts. No UAE federal data are available. In the United States, the number stands at 49%, in the European Union between 25%-50% and in the UK at 25%.

“On 1st July 2017, the UAE introduced the ‘holistic seat belt law’ and since then, everyone in a vehicle must wear a seat belt and not only the ones in the front row. Seat belts save lives and spare us from injuries in case of car accidents. Our mission is to protect our customers and our eco-system. We want to demonstrate in a credible and tangible manner how we at Al Wathba Insurance can contribute to safer roads and to better our society. Hence, it is just logical to have worked on this important research project jointly with RoadSafetyUAE, as just one proof point of our responsibility.”, states Muralikrishnan Raman, Chief Financial Officer, Al Wathba Insurance.

“Yes, accidents do happen, but the consequences don't need to be fatal or resulting in severe injuries. Studies show, that seat belts reduce fatalities in vehicle accidents between 45% and 60%, depending on the type of car and the type of impact. For kids, this value increases to up to 80%! All stakeholders must focus on increasing the seat belt wearing rates, as this is the single biggest opportunity we have in order to reduce the number of fatalities on UAE's roads! Despite the fact that the public understanding of the protective powers of the seat belt is reasonably high, the usage figures are not where the law mandates them to be. The focus must be on generating and publishing up-to-date figures about fatalities and injuries linked to on-wearing seat belts, strong awareness initiatives are needed, as well as ever increasing enforcement efforts by means of sophisticated radar installations and utilizing AI.”, adds Thomas Edlmann, Managing Director of RoadSafetyUAE.

Dr. Youssef El Hansali, CEO of Vitronic Middle east explains: “The enforcement of seatbelt laws plays a crucial role in promoting road safety awareness. To support this, VITRONIC has developed an automated seatbelt detection system that enhances safety while significantly reducing the manpower required by enforcement agencies. The system leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) trained on real image data to detect violations with high precision across up to two lanes. It captures images or video footage, including automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), and the AI analyzes the content to determine seatbelt usage as well as other factors, such as mobile phone use.”

The survey was conducted in January 2026 with an international research house and is based on a representative sample of 1,010 UAE residents.

The results are shared with the UAE media in 2 steps due to the big volume of data. This first release sheds light on the overall knowledge with regards to the protective powers of seat belts as well as the use of seat belts by drivers, front-seat passengers and back-seat passengers and it provides insights linked to the role of the responsible driver (asking and prompting passengers to wear seat belts) and the reasons for not using seat belts. The second release will happen in a short while and it will share data points related to ownership and usage of child seats.

A) OVERALL KNOWLEDGE:

Overall, the knowledge level of respondents is sound, with 95% understanding, that seat belts protect drivers and front-seat passengers. Sadly, this level drops to 82% related to the protection of back-seat passengers.

'Do you think, seat belts protect drivers and front-seat passengers in cars in case of accidents?'

Yes 95%	No 2%	Not sure 3%
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'Do you think, seat belts protect back-seat passengers in cars in case of accidents?'

Yes 82%	No 6%	Not sure 13%
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B) USAGE BY DRIVERS:

86% of drivers state, they 'always' buckle up. This is a low number, taking into consideration that drivers not only should know about the law mandating a 100% seat belt wearing rate, but also that we all hold a valid driving license and we studied this vital subject during our driving education!

'When you drive a car, how often do you use your seat belt?'

Never 1%	Rarely 3%	Sometimes 5%	Often 5%	Always 86%
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C) USAGE BY FRONT SEAT PASSENGERS:

86% of front seat passengers ‘always’ use their seat belt. Like for drivers, this is a low rate! It is somehow surprising, considering the much higher values (95%) of understanding the protective powers of seat belts.

‘When you sit in the front seat as a passenger, how often do you use your seat belt?’

Never 1%	Rarely 3%	Sometimes 5%	Often 5%	Always 86%
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D) USAGE BY REAR-SEAT PASSENGERS:

A truly alarming figure is the use of seat belts by rear-seat passengers: only 24% state they ‘always’ use seat belts!

‘When you sit in the back seat (for example in taxis, or in friend’s cars), how often do you use your seat belt?’

Never 17%	Rarely 21%	Sometimes 26%	Often 13%	Always 24%
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E) THE ROLE OF THE RESPONSIBLE DRIVER:

The research uncovers the role of the driver in asking and prompting passengers to buckle up. This makes a driver a responsible driver! Only 70% fall in the category of ‘responsible’ drivers.

‘When you are the driver of a car, do you ask your passengers to use their seat belt?’

Never 2%	Rarely 3%	Sometimes 11%	Often 14%	Always 70%
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F) REASONS FOR NOT USING THE SEAT BELT / NOT PROMPTING PASSENGERS TO USE THE SEAT BELT:

In order to design targeted awareness and education initiatives, it is of paramount importance to understand the mindset for not using / not promoting the use of seat belts. These reasons must be addressed.

'You mentioned that you don't always wear your seat belt or ask your passengers to do so. Please tell us why?'

When I sit on the back seat, I feel safe enough without seat belt	55%
On short trips, it is not needed to wear seat belts	27%
Other safety features like airbags protect just as well as seat belts	16%
Me as driver or whoever drives the vehicle is a safe driver and hence, there is no need for seat belts	12%
Seat belts are inconvenient to wear	10%
Seat belts crinkle my cloths	9%
Other	9%
Religious reasons	5%
It is not part of our culture	4%
Seat belts don't increase safety	4%
I don't like the look of seat belts	3%

G) HISTORICAL TRENDS VS. 2017 (prior to the new holistic seat belt law)

In February 2017, prior to the introduction of the new holistic seat belt law which makes the use of seat belts mandatory also for passengers on the rear-seats as per 1st July 2017, RoadSafetyUAE conducted the same survey already. It is important to note, that all the surveyed dimensions are moving in the right direction, albeit not reaching the desired 100% mark which would be compliant with the law.

	2017 February	2026 January	Trend
	YES	YES	% points
'Do you think, seat belts protect drivers and front-seat passengers in cars in case of accidents?'	91%	95%	+4%
'Do you think, seat belts protect back-seat passengers in cars in case of accidents?'	81%	82%	+1%

	2017 February	2026 January	Trend
	ALWAYS	ALWAYS	% points
'When you drive a car, how often do you use your seat belt?'	78%	86%	+8%
'When you sit in the front seat as a passenger, how often do you use your seat belt?'	71%	86%	+15%
'When you sit in the back seat (for example in taxis, or in friend's cars), how often do you use your seat belt?'	11%	24%	+13%
'When you are the driver of a car, do you ask your passengers to use their seat belt?'	56%	70%	+14%

Details of this study, commissioned by RoadSafetyUAE and Al Wathba Insurance, and conducted by TGM, can be found in the 'featured' section on: <http://www.roadsafetyuae.com/statistics/>.

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About Al Wathba Insurance:

From the very beginning, Al Wathba Insurance has centered its business around people. Al Wathba Insurance has constantly innovated solutions to help manage risk in ways that meet the needs of the customer and the market. Now, with 25+ years of solid experience in servicing the UAE insurance market, a strong capital base and the support of a panel of internationally renowned reinsurers, Al Wathba Insurance is on its way to being the Company of Choice in the UAE, one that creates real tangible value to its stakeholders and provides the needed security and reliability to its customers. The Company is proud to be rated BBB- with a positive outlook by S&P global ratings and to have been recognized by the UAE's insurance regulatory body for 2 consecutive years for its transformative digitized and smart technology.

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About RoadSafetyUAE:

RoadSafetyUAE's vision is to contribute to reducing the number of road traffic fatalities, injuries and accidents in the UAE. RoadSafetyUAE's mission is to raise the awareness for proper conduct on our roads, in an engaging manner and on a broadly communicated and permanent basis. RoadSafetyUAE's award-winning platform engages with the stakeholders traffic participants, governmental entities, the media, and more than 20 corporate social responsibility (CSR) minded partners. 'Tips & Tricks' are the content backbone, provided for more than 60 topics of road safety, all specifically relevant to the UAE. More can be found on www.RoadSafetyUAE.com

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