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FOCUS 2019**

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TRAINING, INTERVENTIONS & AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Seat Belts:
The Forgotten Road Safety Priority



Evan Webster and Frank Norbury
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History

The three-point seat belt was invented in 1958 by Nils Bohlin.

The first legal requirement to wear a seat belt in the front seats came into effect in the UK in 1983.

By 1991, seat belt wearing was a legal requirement in all seating positions and driver wearing rates were higher than 90%.

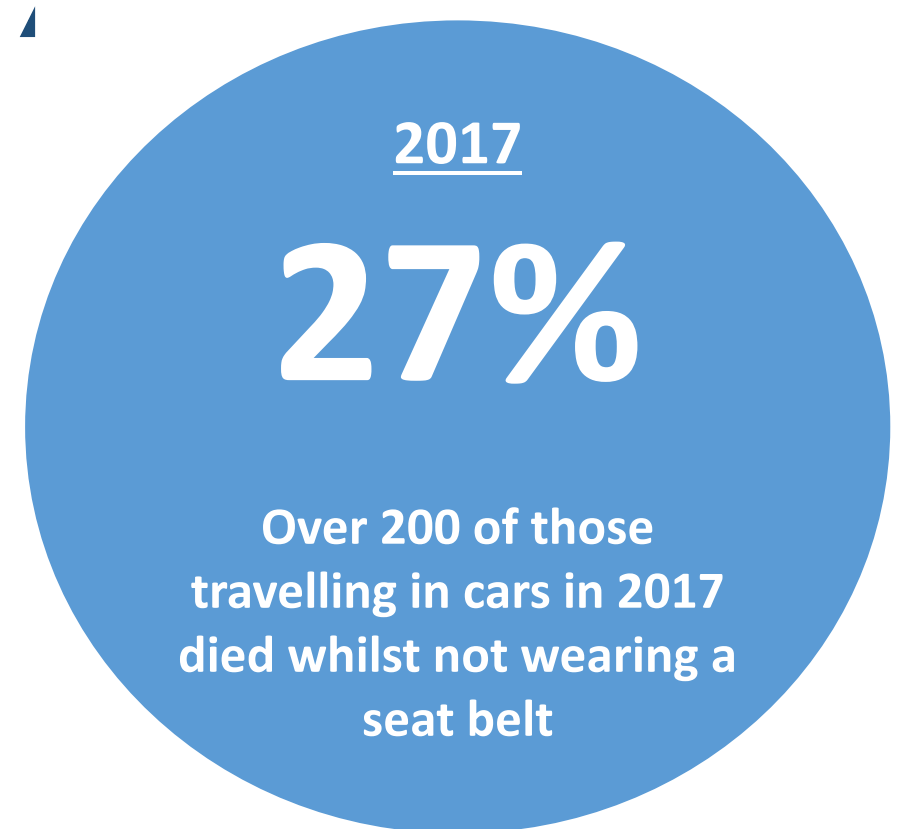
Amongst the road safety community there was a feeling this constituted a 'job well done'.



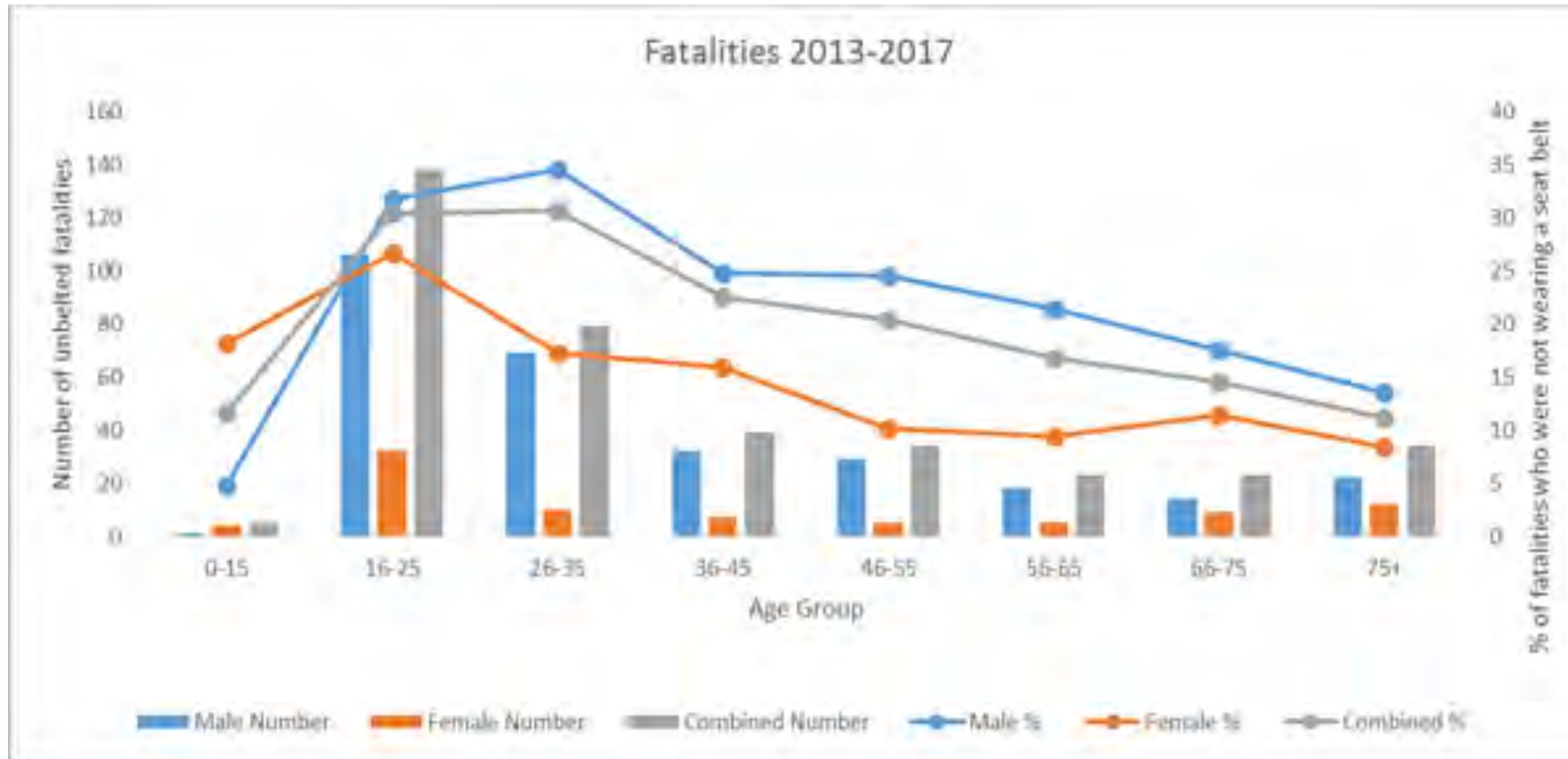
Wearing Rates

Over the last couple of decades, seat belt wearing rates have been increasing in all seating positions (98.6% for car drivers in 2017).

Since 2013, police have started to record seat belt wearing for fatal and serious injury collisions.



Gender and Age



Gender and Age

More men and more women in the 16-25 age group died whilst not wearing a seat belt than any other age group.

Of total fatalities a higher proportion were unbelted for males aged 26-35 and females 16-25

Time of Day and Age

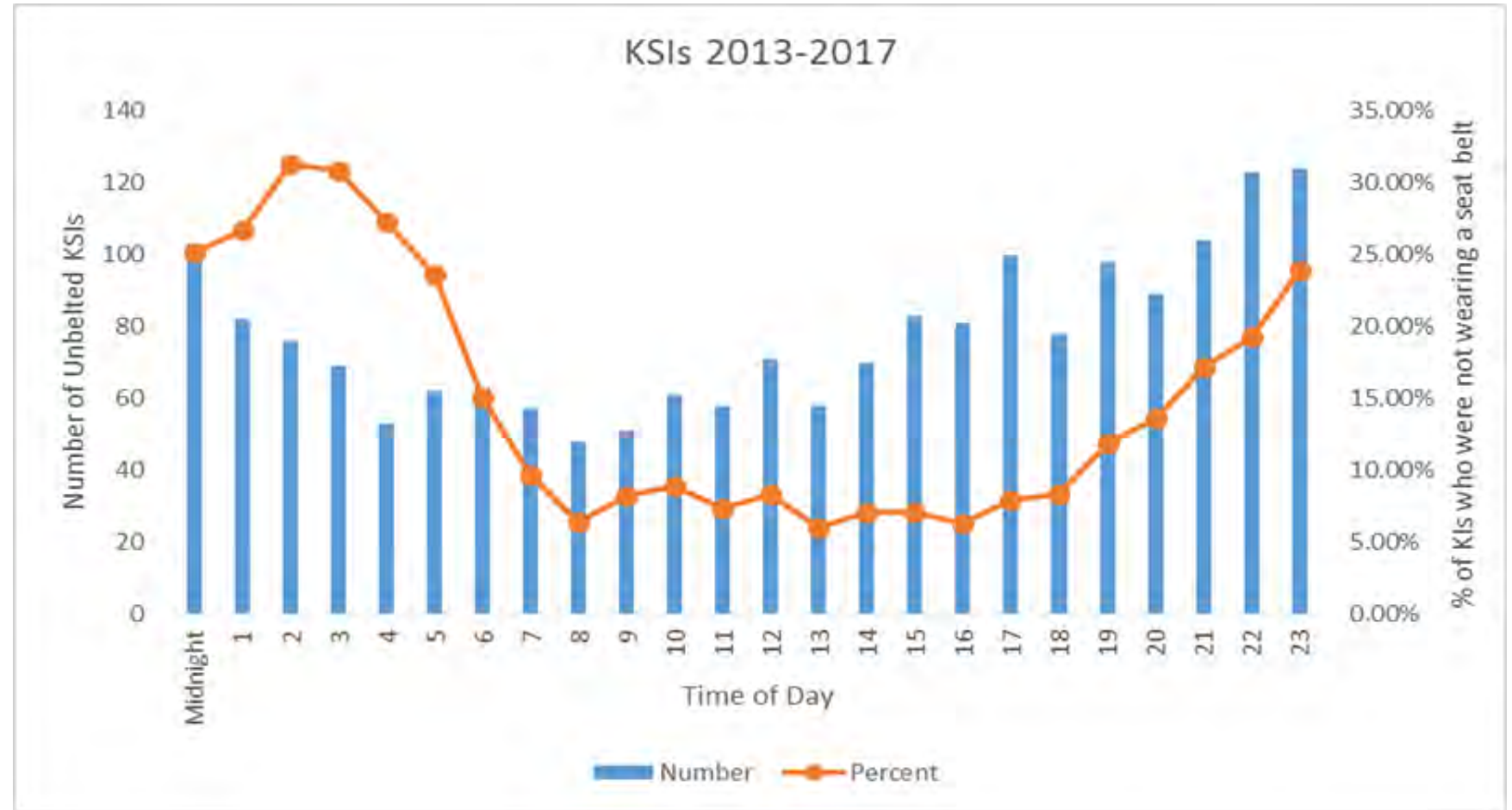
Time of Day

More people KSI'd between 19:00- 7:00 than 7:00-19:00.

Over 30% of those that were KSI'd between 2:00-4:00 were not wearing a seat belt.

Age and Time of Day

Highest number of KSIs for a group was 16-25 between 19:00-23:00 and 03:00-7:00



Contributory Factors

Drink and drug driving

KSIs more than 3x as likely to be not unbelted than 'worn and independently confirmed'

34%

Of KSIs 'impaired by drugs' were unbelted

51%

Of KSIs 'in course of a crime' were unbelted

32%

Of KSIs 'impaired by alcohol' were unbelted

Aggressive driving and speeding

KSIs more than 2x as likely to be unbelted than 'worn and independently confirmed'

28%

Of KSIs with 'aggressive driving' were unbelted

26%

Of KSIs 'exceeding the speed limit' were unbelted

Other findings

What else we found..

Speed Limit

Whilst more people died unbelted on 60mph roads, by proportion 39% of those that died on 30mph were not wearing a seat belt, compared to 19% of those travelling on 60mph roads.

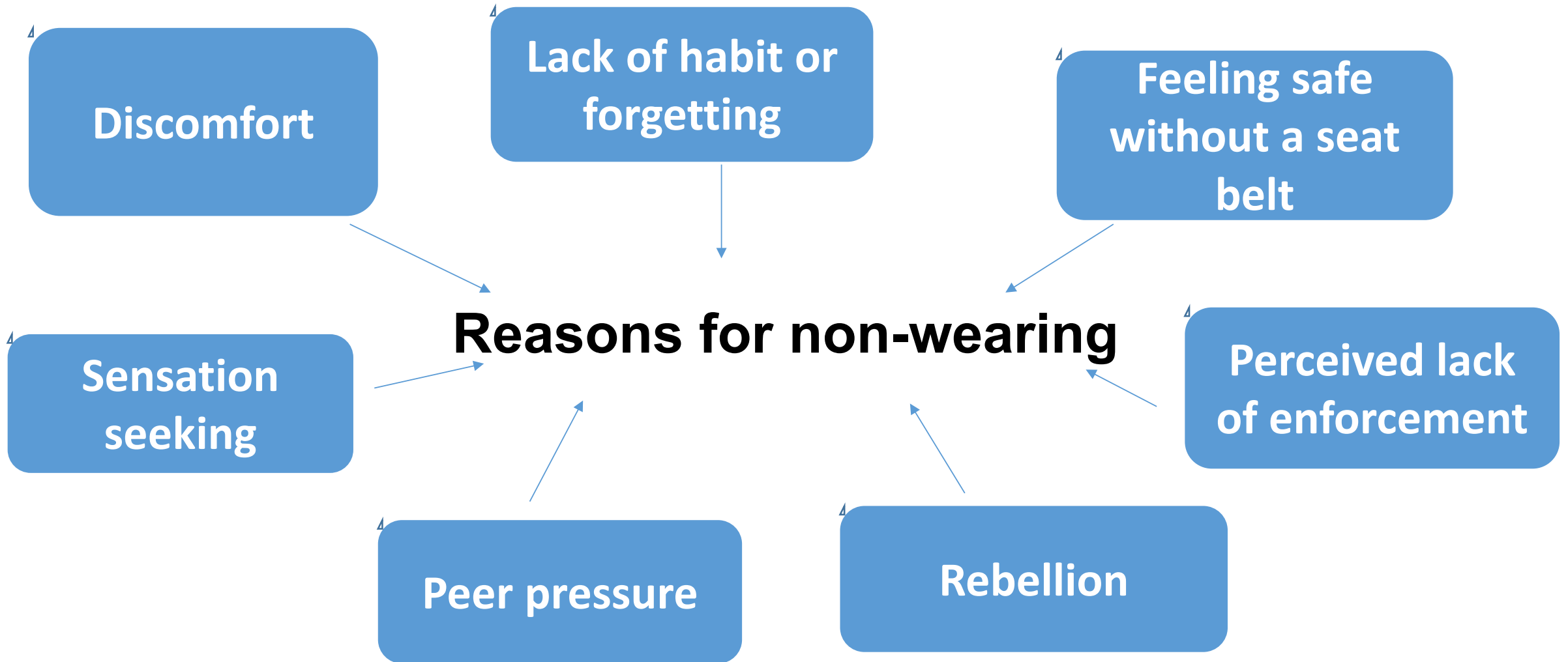
Vehicle Age

More people that were travelling in 11, 12, 13 and 14-year old vehicles were killed or seriously injured whilst not wearing a seat belt than those travelling in vehicles of any other age.

Deprivation

Unbelted KSI's were highest amongst those whose home post codes were registered to be in the most deprived ten percent of areas.

Reasons for Non-wearing



Interventions

Firstly, it's important to know that even a **small change in wearing rates could make massive improvements.**

Even with wearing rates for drivers being above 95%, it still means a distance greater than **30,000 round trips to the moon is being travelled unbelted in Great Britain each year.**

.. And a **0.1% increase in the seat belt wearing rate would be equivalent to 871 trips to the moon being driven belted.**



Interventions

Penalties

- Penalty points ✓
- Increased fines ✗

Conclusion

- Good disincentive
- Evidence of effectiveness
- Signals importance to police
- Requires enforcement to be effective
- May be publicly unpopular

Enforcement

- Increased enforcement ✓
- Improved use of technology ✓

Conclusion

- Strong signal to public to wear seat belt
- Research suggests effectiveness
- Improved tech may reduce costs to police
- Requires police time and investment
- May be ineffective without increased penalty

Interventions

Education

- National Campaigns ✓
- Remedial Training ✓
- Local Authority Education ✓

Conclusion

- Can create public support for enforcement
- Evidence of effectiveness in combination with other interventions
- Little conclusive evidence of effectiveness of previous 'blood and guts'-style education

Technology

- Seat Belt Reminder Systems ✓
- Interlocks and Passive Interlocks ✗ ✓

Conclusion

- Strong evidence of effectiveness of SBRs in increasing wearing rates
- Does not require on-going public sector investment
- Can be countered by 'cheat devices'
- Changes to vehicles take time to penetrate fleet

Recommendations

- Strong steps should be taken to increase seat belt wearing. This should take the form of a cohesive campaign which combines amplified, better designed education; stronger, disincentivising penalties; increased, targeted enforcement and effective technological interventions.
- Not wearing a seat belt should be made an endorsable offence, with three penalty points issued for not wearing a seat belt.
- Enforcement of the seat belt law should be significantly enhanced through intelligence led, targeted measures. The profile of enforcement and the perceived likelihood of being caught should be raised.

Recommendations

- Existing road safety education activities should be reviewed to see if seat belt wearing is given due prominence.
- Euro NCAP and others should continue to encourage manufacturers to develop additional voluntary safety features for new vehicles that could encourage seat belt wearing and improve the effectiveness of seat belts.
- Where a police forensic collision investigation has been undertaken, the investigators review the Stats19 data. This principle should apply to seat belt wearing and could be applied more widely.

Thank you

PACTS Report

‘Seat Belts: The Forgotten Road Safety Priority’

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A full copy of the report can be viewed at:

<http://www.pacts.org.uk/2019/04/pacts-launches-new-report-seat-belts-the-forgotten-road-safety-priority/>

