



# 1. About the report

# 1.1 Preamble

At Axkid, safety is not just a priority—it's our foundation. Rooted in Swedish safety values, we believe that knowledge and innovation are the driving forces behind real change in child car safety.

In that perspective, this report is more than just statistics; it is a wake-up call. While most parents understand the importance of protecting their children in the car, our findings reveal critical knowledge gaps and concerning behaviors. Too many young children are moved to forward-facing seats too soon, and far too many older children travel without the protection they need. The data makes this clear: there is an urgent need for better education, stronger recommendations for child safety, and improved access to life-saving car seats.

As a provider of child restraint systems, we refuse to accept these findings as the status quo. Extensive research and crash test data show that rear-facing travel is the safest option for children—ideally until at least the age of four.

To make this behavior a reality, we must take action: increasing awareness through information, encouraging safer choices by introducing clearer recommendations, and improving compliance through campaigns and incentives.

Our mission has always been to ensure that every child travels as safely as possible, giving parents peace of mind. We hope this report not only informs but inspires new thinking and meaningful

Daniel Johansson, CEO Axkid

# 1.2 How the survey was conducted

The target group for this study comprised men and women, aged 20-65 years with children aged 0-10 years who have access to a car that they drive regularly. A total of 1,006 interviews were conducted in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland during weeks 2-3 of 2025, with a random sample drawn from the data collection company Norstat's representative online panel. In cases where the interviewee had more than one child, the answers were registered per child. The responses therefore reflects the situation of a total of 1,568 British children.

During the online interviews, which lasted an average of nine minutes, parents answered questions concerning habits, behaviours and knowledge regarding child safety in vehicles. As far as we know, this study is unique in terms of its depth and scope.

#### **SWEDISH COMPARATIVE STUDY**

An identical study, using the same methodology and questions, was conducted in Sweden during the same period. Data from the Swedish study has been analysed and is referenced throughout this report for comparative insights.

#### **SOME DEFINITIONS**

In the report we refer to different age groups using the following definitions:

0-1 year = from birth to 1 year and 11 months 2-3 years = from 2 years to 3 years and 11 months 4-7 years = from 4 years to 7 years and 11 months 8-10 years = from 8 years to 10 years and 11 months

The numbers presented are rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, totals that would logically sum to 100% may appear as 99% or 101%.

The term 'child restraint systems' is used throughout this report to refer to the various types of additional protection available today. This includes infant car seats, rearward-facing child car seats, different types of forward-facing child car seats, booster seats/cushions and integrated booster seats/cushions.

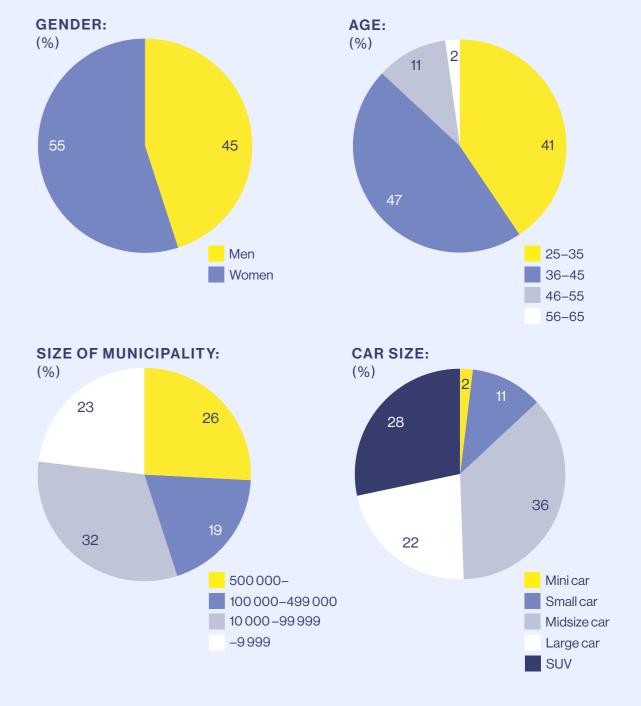
#### **WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

The British and Swedish studies were designed and analysed by the research company Insight Distillery.

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#### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



# 1.3 Summary of results

Unsurprisingly, almost all respondents agree that child safety in cars is important or very important. Nine out of ten parents are aware of laws regarding child car seats, and three out of four of those who are aware also find the laws clear. However, when asked about specific legal requirements, their knowledge is significantly lower. Three out of four parents do not know the minimum age at which a child can travel forward-facing, and only 22% know the age until which a child must use a restraint system.

It is encouraging to see that 74% of British children aged 0–7 years always use some form of restraint system. When including those who use one frequently, nine out of ten children in this age group benefit from additional protection. However, it is concerning that usage declines among older children. Only 51% of 8–10-year-olds always travel using a child restraint system, while as many as 23% in this age group never use one. The most common reason parents give for not using additional protection is that they believe their child is tall enough.

In the UK, the law (according to R129) requires children to travel rear-facing until they are older than 15 months. This survey shows that among children under the age of two, seven out of ten always travel rear-facing, indicating a high level of compliance.

Among children aged 2–3 years, 22% continue to travel rear-facing, indicating that many parents choose to keep their children rear-facing beyond the legal requirement. At the same time, 83% of

British parents would like clearer recommendations—beyond the legal requirements—on how, children should travel safely in cars.

Currently, there are no additional recommendations on rear-facing travel in the UK. However, numerous studies and crash test simulations (see the section on The Plus Test) have demonstrated the superior safety of rear-facing car seats, and experts generally recommend keeping children rear-facing until at least the age of four. From this perspective, it is concerning that most children in the UK stop travelling rear-facing at the age of 2–3, and that only 10% of all four-year-olds continue to do so.

A lack of awareness about regulations, combined with the absence of additional recommendations on how to keep children safe in cars, appears to be a key reason why many parents transition their children to forward-facing too early or choose not to use any additional protection at all. This highlights a significant gap in public knowledge that could put children at greater risk in the event of a crash.

This, in turn, suggests a lack of effective information campaigns on child car safety from UK authorities and organisations such as the Department for Transport or Road Safety GB. The survey also shows that these sources are the ones most parents (63%) prefer to receive information from — indicating a clear need for more proactive communication and guidance to ensure better compliance with safety best practices.





1 in 4 children aged 8-10 years travel without any extra protection

27% travel forward-facing before the age of 2

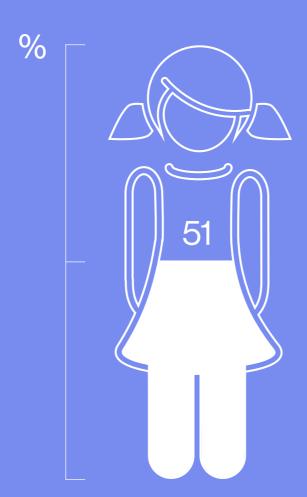
At age of 4
79%
of children travel forward-facing

3 in 4

don't know what age a child should be to sit facing forwards in a car

Only 2 of 10 know what age a child should be to travel without a child restraint system

# The report in brief



Only 51% of children aged 8-10 always use a child restraint system

22% of 2-3 year-olds travel rear-facing in cars

**69% ensure** that their children always travel rearfacing before the age of 2



74%

74% of parents with children up to age of 7 always use some form of child restraint system 83%

of parents want clearer recommendations—beyond legal requirements—on how children should travel safely in cars.

14%

of 0-3-yearolds do not always use a child restraint system when travelling by car





63% prefer to receive child car safety information from government authorities and organisations

# 2. Parents' knowledge

The foundation of most safety measures taken by parents is a shared awareness of, and attitude towards, what is considered safe behaviour. Legislation plays a vital role in establishing the legal framework and informing parents about how to keep their children safe in the car.

In this study, parents were asked not only about their knowledge of the law but also about their attitudes toward legislation and recommendations, as well as where they obtain information about child car safety.

# 2.1 Laws regarding child car safety in the UK

Children must normally use a child car seat until they are 12 years old or 135 centimeters tall, whichever comes first. Children over 12 years or more than 135 centimeters tall must wear a seat belt.

Height-based child car seats, which are approved to UN-R129 and commonly known as 'i-Size' seats, must be rear-facing until the child is 15 months old. After this age, they can transition to a forward-facing child car seat. Note there are height-based child car seats not categorised as i-Size, which still are approved to UN-R129 and therefore, follow the same regulation.

Weight-based car seats approved under UN-R44 must be used rear-facing until the child weighs a minimum of 9 kg and must always be rear-facing when using an infant car seat.

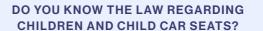
# 2.2 High perceived knowledge, but a need for further recommendations

Nine out of ten parents know there are laws regarding child car seats, and three out of four with this knowledge also believe the law is clear. The proportion of women who claim to know the law is slightly higher than that of men (91% compared to 87%).

Awareness is also higher among residents of major cities with 500,000 or more inhabitants, where 94% report knowing the law, compared to the overall sample (89%).

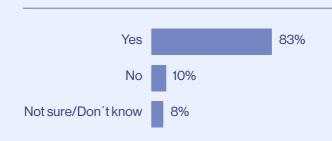
Unsurprisingly, almost all respondents agree that child safety in cars is important or very important. Additionally, a significant majority (83%) believe that, beyond the legal requirements, there should be clearer recommendations on how children should travel safely in cars.



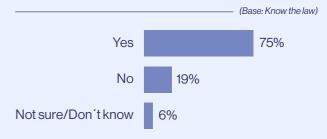




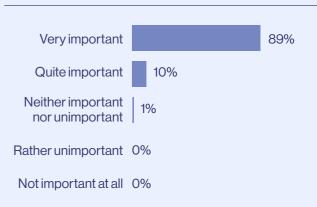
# ASIDE FROM THE LAW, DO YOU THINK THAT THERE SHOULD BE CLEARER RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW CHILDREN SHOULD TRAVEL SAFELY IN CARS?



# DO YOU THINK THAT THE LAW CONCERNING CHILDREN AND CHILD CAR SEATS IS CLEAR?



# HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR CHILDREN TO TRAVEL SAFELY IN CARS?





# 2.3 Low awareness of specific legal requirements

According to UK law, a child must be over 15 months old before travelling forward-facing\*. However, when asked, a significant proportion (44%) of parents were unaware of this requirement. Among those, 82% had previously stated that they know the law regarding children and child car seats.

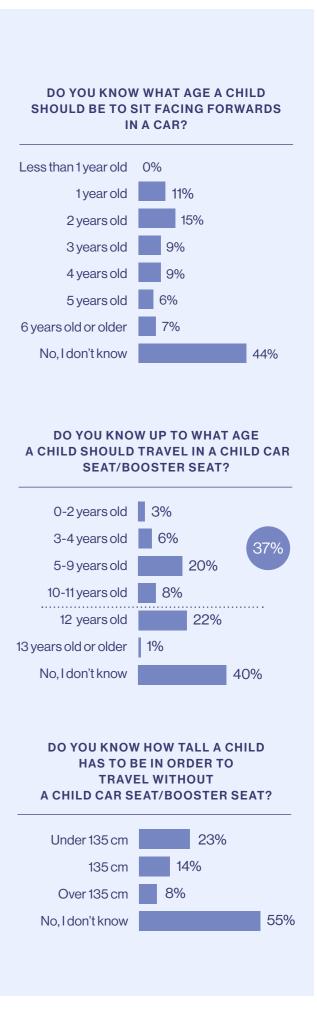
The law also states that children must use a child seat until they are 12 years old or at least 135 centimeters tall. When asked until what age a child should use a car seat or booster seat, more than a third of respondents gave an answer that was too low. When asked how tall a child must be to travel without a car seat or booster seat, nearly a quarter provided a height below the legal requirement.

A high proportion of respondents either did not know or preferred not to guess the required age and height for travelling without a child car seat. Notably, men were significantly more uncertain than women regarding the age requirement (45% compared to 35%). However, there was no major gender difference in uncertainty about the correct height limit.



# Swedish comparison:

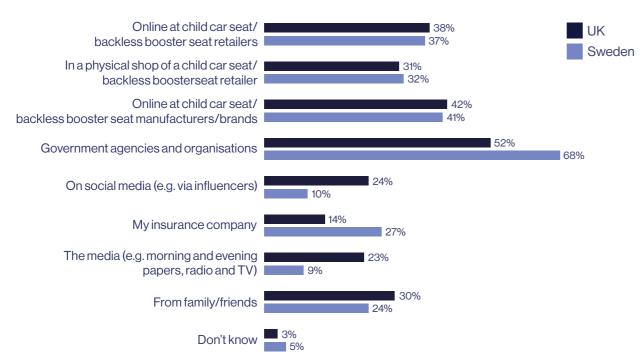
The Swedish study reveals similar patterns, with a high level of perceived knowledge contrasting with a lower level of actual knowledge about the law, particularly regarding rear-facing travel and the use of child restraint systems.



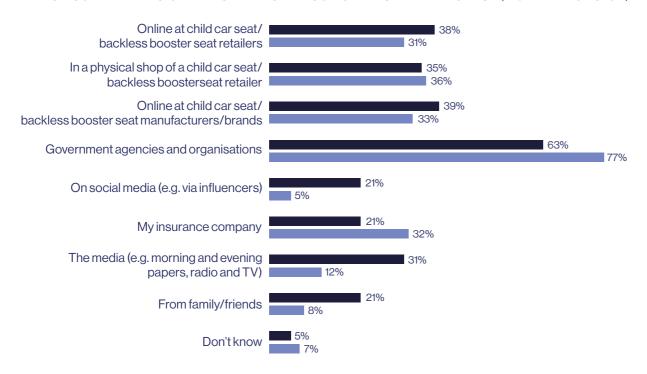
# 2.4 Authorities and organisations: the preferred information channel

Most British parents receive information about child car safety from authorities and organisations, and an even higher proportion would prefer these sources. Other preferred sources include child car seat manufacturers and retailers, while the media plays a smaller role.

#### WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY GET INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SAFETY IN CARS? (MULTIPLE-CHOICE)



#### WHERE DO YOU PREFER TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SAFETY IN CARS? (MULTIPLE-CHOICE)





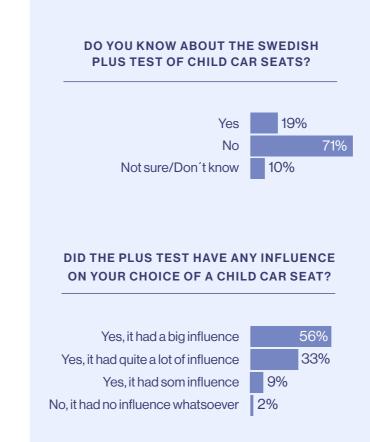
# Swedish comparison:

Swedish parents show an even stronger preference than British parents for obtaining information from authorities and organisations. However, a key difference is that Sweden has national recommendations stating that children should travel rear-facing until at least the age of four, preferably longer. These recommendations have been consistently communicated by authorities, organisations, insurance companies, and child car seat manufacturers, leading to greater awareness and higher usage of rear-facing seats.

# 2.5 The Plus Test

The Plus Test is a supplementary safety test conducted by VTI, the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, on car seats designed for the European market. It is the most rigorous test available today and the only one that guarantees your child will not be exposed to excessive neck forces, which could be life-threatening in a collision.

The study found that one in five respondents was familiar with the Plus Test. Of these, 89% said it had a significant or considerable influence on their choice of child car seat.







# The world's toughest test for child car seats

Tests show protecting the neck is the highest priority for young children up to at least four years of age."

Emily Uddman, research engineer at VTI



**Unlike other tests within the EU**, the Plus Test guarantees that your child car seat also protects the child from high forces on the neck. The test was introduced in 2007 at the initiative of Tommy Pettersson, founder of the crash lab at VTI, the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute in Linköping. It is unique in that it uses a higher speed and a shorter braking distance than the tests required for type approval within the EU.

Emily Uddman at VTI explains why the test was developed:



# What is the background of the test?

We wanted to uphold the Swedish tradition of evaluating and assessing neck protection for young children in the type approval of child car seats within the EU, in accordance with ECE R44 and UN ECE R129. These tests do not currently take into account the forces exerted on a child's neck in a crash. The Plus Test, however, does.

## Why is this important?

Experience from real-life traffic accidents and crash tests shows that protecting the neck is the highest priority for young children up to at least four years of age. This is because they have relatively large heads and weak necks compared to older children and adults.

# How does the Plus Test differ from other tests within the EU?

The Plus Test is voluntary and focuses on one type of crash: a frontal collision. For this, we use a higher level of crash force, meaning a higher speed and a shorter braking distance. If a child car seat passes the test, it is awarded a Plus Test label, indicating to consumers that it has passed this rigorous evaluation.

# You only test rear-facing child car seats. Why?

Our research shows that rear-facing child car seats provide superior protection for young children in a frontal collision, which is the most common and severe type of crash. The purpose of the Plus Test is to help parents choose the most robust and safest car seats for their children.

# 3. Child restraint systems

# 3.1 Introduction

Children's bodies and skeletons are not sufficiently developed to withstand sudden braking or collisions in the same way as an adult's. For this reason, children must use a child restraint system when travelling in a vehicle. To ensure maximum safety, it is essential to use an appropriate restraint system based on the child's age, height, and weight.

In this survey, the following child restraint systems are referred to:

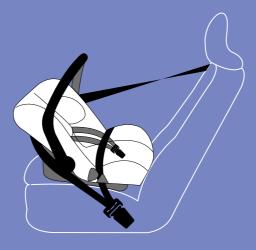
### Rear-facing restraint systems:

- Infant car seat
- Rearward-facing child car seat (isofix or belt installed)

### Forward-facing restraint systems:

- Forward-facing child car seat with impact shield\*
- Forward-facing child car seat with integral belt/ harness\*
- Highback booster seat (Forward-facing child car seat with vehicle seat belt)
- Booster cushion
- Integrated booster seat/cushion (Built in to vehicle)
- \*) Not recommended in Sweden.

# Rear-facing restraint system



Infant car seat



Rear-facing child car seat

# Forward-facing restraint system



Forward-facing child car seat with car seat belt



Booster cushion



(Built in to vehicle)

(isofix or belt installed)



Forward-facing child car seat with integral belt/harness\*



Forward-facing child car seat with impact shield\*

# 3.2 Use of child restraint systems by age

A high proportion of British children aged 0-7 years always use some kind of restraint system when travelling by car. If we include those who use one frequently, more than 9 out of 10 children in this age group benefit from additional protection. However, consistency decreases among older children (8–10 years). Only 5 out of 10 in this age group always travel using a child restraint system, and as many as 23% never use one.

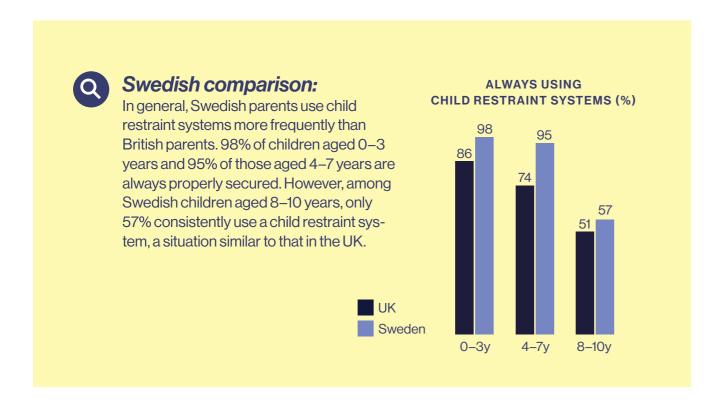
The survey highlights some notable variations. For example, children living in towns and communities smaller than 10,000 inhabitants are more likely to always travel protected than those in larger cities with at least 500,000 inhabitants (76% compared to 65%). Similarly, children whose parents do not have a university education are more likely to always use a restraint system than those with highly educated parents (73% compared to 67%).

The same trend is observed among children with siblings in the relevant age group (0–10 years) compared to those without (71% compared to 65%).

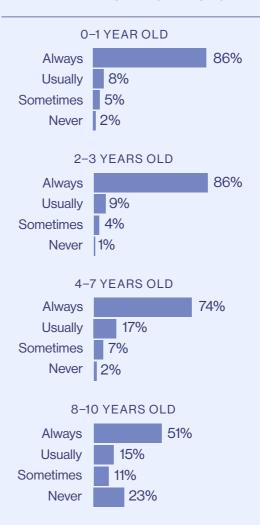
# 3.3 Use of child restraint systems by height

UK Law states that children should use a child restraint system until they are 12 years old or 135 cm tall, whichever comes first. Our survey shows that children aged 5–10 years who are under 135 cm tall are significantly more likely to always travel using a restraint system compared to those of the same age who are taller than 135 cm.

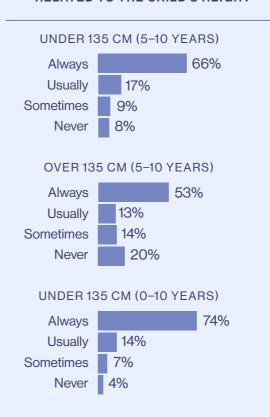
Despite this, a third of the children aged 5-10 years have parents who break the law by failing to ensure they always use a child restraint system. Looking at all children 0-10 years, who are under 135 centimetres tall, 1 of 4 have parents, who at least occasionally, fail to comply with the law.



# THE USE OF CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS RELATED TO THE CHILD'S AGE



# THE USE OF CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS RELATED TO THE CHILD'S HEIGHT







# 3.4 Reasons for not using child restraint systems

We asked parents why they do not use a child restraint system. The most common reason given was that they considered the child tall enough twice as common as believing the child was old enough. Only 1 in 10 stated that the child refused to sit in any kind of restraint.

Among children who never travel with a child restraint system, 87% are 8-10 years of age.



# 4. Rear-facing

# 4.1 One in five travel forwardfacing under the age of one

As mentioned, UK law requires children to travel rear-facing until they are older than 15 months. The study shows that among children under the age of two, 7 out of 10 always travel rear-facing, suggesting a high level of legal compliance – assuming births are evenly distributed throughout the year.

However, only 82% of children under the age of one always travel rear-facing, and among oneyear-olds, this proportion drops to 55%.

Among children aged 2-3 years, 7 out of 10 always travel forward-facing, while 22% continue to travel rear-facing. This suggests that many parents choose to keep their children rear-facing beyond the legal requirements.

# 4.2 Most children stop travelling rear-facing at 2-3 years of age

Among all children who travel forward-facing, approximately 1 in 4 made the switch at the age of two. Just under one-fifth transitioned even earlier, while a similar proportion remained rear-facing until the age of three.

Breaking down the 4-7 age group by individual years shows that forward-facing travel is already widespread among four-year-olds. Among fiveand six-year-olds, the proportion remains consistently high. However, there is a noticeable increase in forward-facing travel among seven-year-olds.

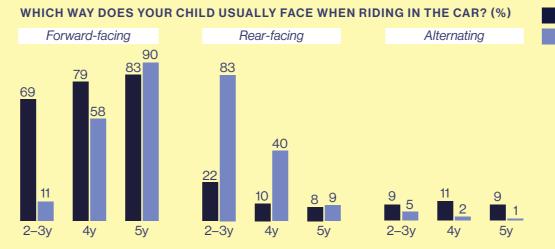




# Swedish comparison:

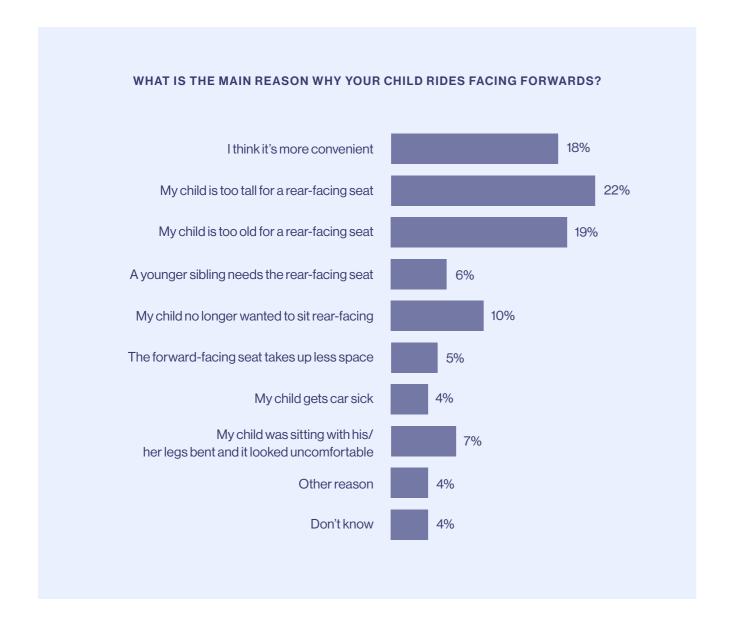
In Sweden, there is a national recommendation for children to travel rear-facing until the age of four, preferably until five. As a result, Swedish parents generally transition their children to forward-facing seats at a later age than British parents.

The Swedish study shows that 83% of children aged 2–3 years and 40% of four-year-olds travel rear-facing. This indicates that most parents switch to forward-facing when their child turns four or is already four years old.



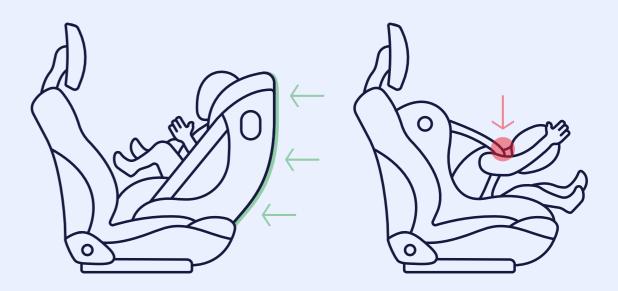
# 4.3 Height and age are the main reasons for forward-facing

When asked why their child travels forward-facing, 22% of parents stated that their child was too tall for a rear-facing seat, while 19% said their child was too old. A considerable proportion (18%) also cited convenience as the main reason for switching to forward-facing travel.



# Five reasons rear-facing car seats are five times as safe

Numerous studies and crash test simulations have demonstrated the superior safety of rear-facing car seats for children. Here are five key reasons why travelling rear-facing is five times safer than forward-facing.



#### 1. Better impact distribution

The forces exerted in a collision can be severe, especially for children under the age of six or seven. Rear-facing car seats distribute these forces evenly across the stronger part of the child's body—the back. This helps absorb and dissipate the energy from the collision, reducing the impact on any specific area of the child's body.

#### 2. Increased protection for neck and head

Rear-facing car seats provide cohesive support for a child's head, neck, and spine, preventing extreme forward motion in a crash and offering significantly better protection than forward-facing seats. This is especially important as young children have proportionally larger heads compared to adults.

#### 3. Better protection of lower body

Rear-facing seats use a five-point harness to

distribute forces away from the abdomen. Combined with the direction of travel, this minimises the risk of 'submarining'— where a child slides under the lap belt during a collision.

#### 4. Secure position

In a rear-facing seat, the child is pushed into the seat throughout the entire collision, keeping them securely positioned. In a forward-facing seat, however, the child is pushed out of the seat.

#### 5. Protective 'shell' design for all impact angles

Rear-facing car seats provide exceptional protection from multiple angles—not just frontal collisions. Their shell-like structure creates a protective cocoon around the child, shielding the head and torso from side impacts and enhancing safety in crashes from almost any direction.

Knowledge

Child restraint

Rear-facing

Forward-facing

# Myths and facts about rear-facing





Here are some common myths about rear-facing travel—and the facts that prove them wrong.

# Myth:

My child will break his/her legs in a collision.

### Fact:

When travelling rear-facing, a child's legs are unlikely to hit hard surfaces in a collision, keeping the risk of leg injuries low. Instead, their legs are pressed against the seat, staying close to the body and well protected.

# Myth:

My child gets motion sickness when sitting rear-facing.

## Fact:

Motion sickness is not necessarily caused by the direction of travel. Instead, it depends on individual factors and varies from child to child. If your child is prone to motion sickness, ensure the car is kept at a comfortable temperature, allow them to see out of the window, and avoid large meals before the journey.

# Myth:

I drive carefully and mostly take short trips.

# Fact:

Many accidents happen close to home, so distance doesn't determine risk. No matter how carefully you drive, you cannot control other drivers or external factors. Never compromise on your child's safety.

# Myth:

My child can't see out of the car when sitting rear-facing.

# Fact:

Rear-facing car seats elevate the child, often improving their view through the side window. Removing the rear headrest can also allow a better view through the back window, in comparison to forward facing where the child only see the back of the front seat.

# Myth:

There isn't enough room for my child's legs.

#### Fact:

Children's bodies are far more flexible than those of adults, allowing them to sit comfortably with their legs bent, crossed, or resting against the seat. What may seem uncomfortable to an adult is usually not an issue for a child. In fact, children often find it less comfortable to sit with their legs fully stretched out.



# 5. Forward-facing

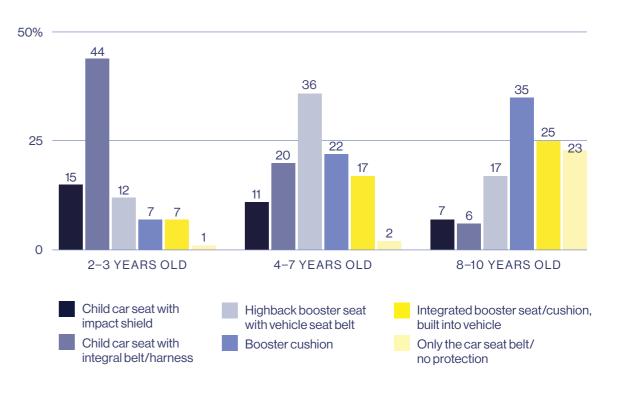
# 5.1 Use of forward-facing child restraint systems

In the UK, most children begin travelling forward-facing at the age of 2–3 years. By the age of 4–7, as many as 84% travel forward-facing at all times. In the 8–10 age group, nearly all children travel forward-facing, with 23% doing so without any additional protection.

The study also highlights differences in the types of forward-facing restraint systems used across age groups. Among 2-3-year-olds, car seats with integral belt/harness are the most commonly used. For 4–7-year-olds, high-back booster seats with the car's seat belt are the most frequent choice, while for 8–10-year-olds, booster cushions are the most widely used option.

Note: Multiple options could be selected per child. The base includes all children in the study.

# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CHILD RESTRAINTS DO YOU USE FOR YOUR CHILD?



# 5.2 Allowing children to fasten their seat belts

Teaching children about safety and how to fasten their seat belt is important. However, it is equally crucial to remember that they are still children, and as a parent, you should always check that the belt is correctly positioned before driving.

For children who travel forward-facing, the study asked whether they are allowed to fasten their own seat belt and, if so, whether their parents check how the belt is positioned afterward.

Among three-year-olds, three out of four are never allowed to fasten their own seat belt. The results regarding parental checks in this age group are based on a small sample and should

therefore be interpreted with caution. However, it is clear that all three-year-olds are checked at least sometimes.

The proportion of children who are not allowed to fasten their own seat belt decreases significantly in the 4-7 age group. One-third have never been allowed to do so, while another third do it frequently. In this group, two out of three are always checked, while only a small number are never monitored.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the number of children who fasten their own seat belt increases sharply in the 8-10 age group. Still, half of them are always monitored, and 9 out of 10 are checked at least occasionally.

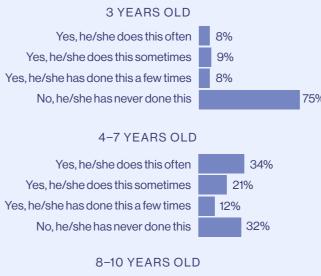


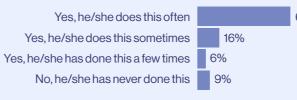
# Swedish comparison:

Swedish patents show similar behaviour, though they generally are more likely to forget or neglect to check their older children after they buckle themselves in.

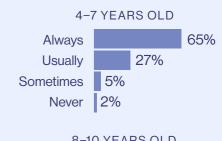


#### DO YOU LET YOUR CHILD BUCKLE **HIMSELF/HERSELF IN?**





#### WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS BUCKLED HIMSELF/HERSELF IN, DO YOU CHECK HOW THE BELT IS SITTING?









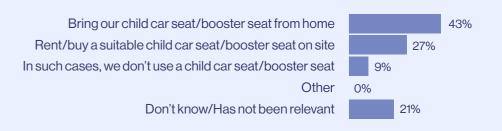
# 5.3 Child restraint systems for car rental or transporting a child's friend

The survey also explored how parents ensure child safety when renting a car, for example, when travelling abroad. The most common approach is to bring a car seat or booster seat/cushion from home. However, many respondents are unsure about what to do, possibly because they have never needed to travel with a child in a rental car. Others state that they have never considered it or refer to varying regulations in other countries.

While the proportion of parents who would forgo a child seat in this situation is relatively low, nearly one in ten would still put their child's safety at risk.

When asked how they would handle a situation where their child's friend needed extra protection while travelling in their car, the most common solutions were either using an extra child car seat or booster seat or transferring the friend's own seat. Relatively few would allow either their own child or their child's friend to travel without a car seat or booster cushion. However, in total, 14% would compromise the safety of one of the children.

# IF YOU RENT A CAR FOR YOUR FAMILY, E.G. FOR A TRIP ABROAD, WHAT DO YOU DO ABOUT A CHILD CAR SEAT/BOOSTER SEAT IN THE RENTAL CAR?



# IF A FRIEND OF YOUR CHILD IS TRAVELLING IN YOUR CAR AND THE FRIEND ALSO NEEDS A CHILD CAR SEAT/BOOSTER SEAT, HOW DO YOU RESOLVE THIS?

