

## **Summer safety: How ready are Australian parents to prevent and treat accidents and injuries?**



Poll 5, December 2016

### **Detailed report**

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#### **Report highlights:**

- Despite recommendations, over 80% of parents report they allow more than one child at a time to jump on a trampoline
- Over one third of children under six years of age are not always supervised while on a trampoline
- One in six children who jump on a trampoline has sustained an injury
- Despite it being a legal requirement, one in six Australian children do not always wear a helmet when riding a bike
- Almost half of children do not always wear a helmet when riding a scooter or skateboard
- More than 40% of Australian parents report they do not know first aid for a drowning child
- One in four parents report they are not confident to administer CPR to a child

In a survey fielded in October 2016, Australian parents were asked a series of questions relating to prevention of, and response to, childhood accidents and injuries. Parents were asked about safety behaviours relating to common outdoor activities, including riding on bikes and scooters, swimming and the use of trampolines. Parents also reported on their level of first aid knowledge in relation to a range of recreation-related injuries including bleeding wounds, broken bones, broken or dislodged teeth, drowning or near drowning and head injury.

Across a sample population of 2,015 parents, data were collected on a total of 3,608 of their children aged between one month and 18 years. The median number of children per parent was two, with a range from one to ten.

## Trampoline use

Parents collectively reported that 79% of their children engage in the recreational activity of jumping on a trampoline. This was higher than the number of children reported to ride a bicycle (68%) or on a scooter or skateboard (44%). Of those children reported to use a trampoline, one in six (16%) has sustained a trampoline-related injury (such as sprains, strains, cuts, bruises, concussion, broken or fractured bones). Three quarters of parents indicated that the trampoline most often used by their child has a safety net. There was no difference in the frequency of trampoline-related

injuries among children of parents who reported having a trampoline safety net and those without a safety net.

Trampoline use was most common among primary school-aged children (89%) and teenagers (88%), but use was also high among pre-schoolers aged between two and six years (75%). More than a quarter (28%) of children under two years of age have jumped on a trampoline.

The vast majority of parents (81%) indicated that they allow more than one child to jump on a trampoline at the same time. The number of children allowed to jump on the trampoline at the same time ranged from one up to twelve, with one in five parents (19%) reporting they allow four or more children to jump on the trampoline. Those parents who reported that the trampoline used by their child had a safety net were more likely to report allowing multiple children to jump on the trampoline at the same time.

Of those children reported to use a trampoline, only a third (34%) are always supervised by an adult while using the trampoline, and supervision rates decreased with increasing age of child (see figure 1). Parents reported that 20% of children aged less than two years, 42% of pre-schoolers, 72% of primary school-aged children and over 80% of teenagers are not always supervised on the trampoline. Those parents who reported having a safety net on the trampoline were also more likely to report always supervising their child.

## Percentage of children **always** supervised on a trampoline, by age

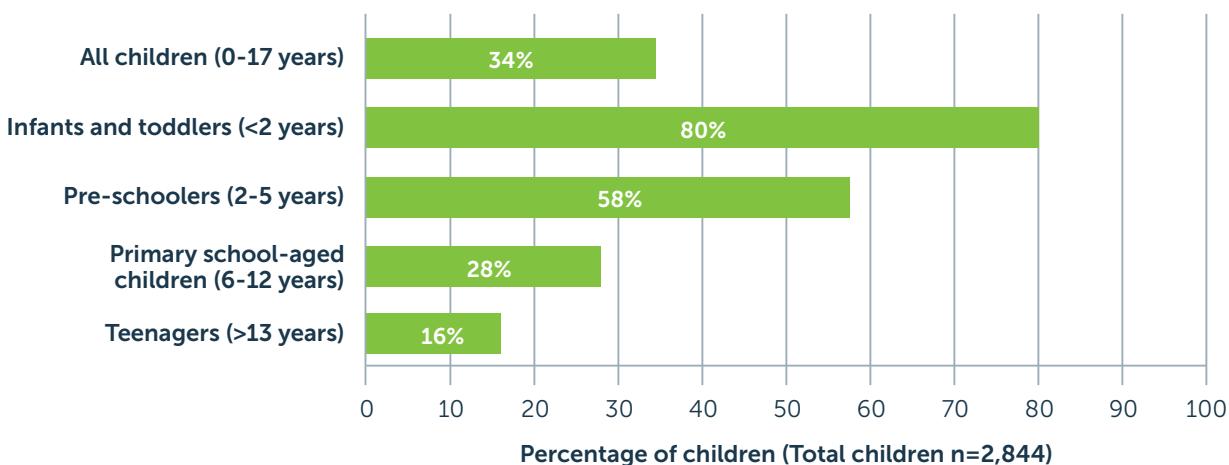
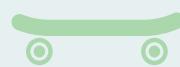


Figure 1.

## Bikes, scooters and helmets

Parents reported that 68% of their children ride a bike, either on their own or as a passenger on an adult's bike. Primary school-aged children were most frequently reported to ride a bike (81%), followed by teenagers (75%), pre-schoolers (62%) and infants and toddlers (16%). Of those children riding bikes, 83% were reported to always wear a helmet (see figure 2). Compliance with helmet-wearing was lowest among children aged less than two years, with over a third not always wearing a helmet when riding a bike (see figure 2).

Forty-four per cent of all children were reported to ride a non-motorised scooter or skateboard, with most frequent use reported in the primary school age group (59%) and teenagers (41%), and less in children under two years (6%). Of those children riding scooters and skateboards, almost half (44%) do not always wear a helmet (see figure 2), with helmet use rates lowest among teenagers; 56% do not always wear a helmet and 23% never wear a helmet.



## Percentage of children who always wear a helmet, by age

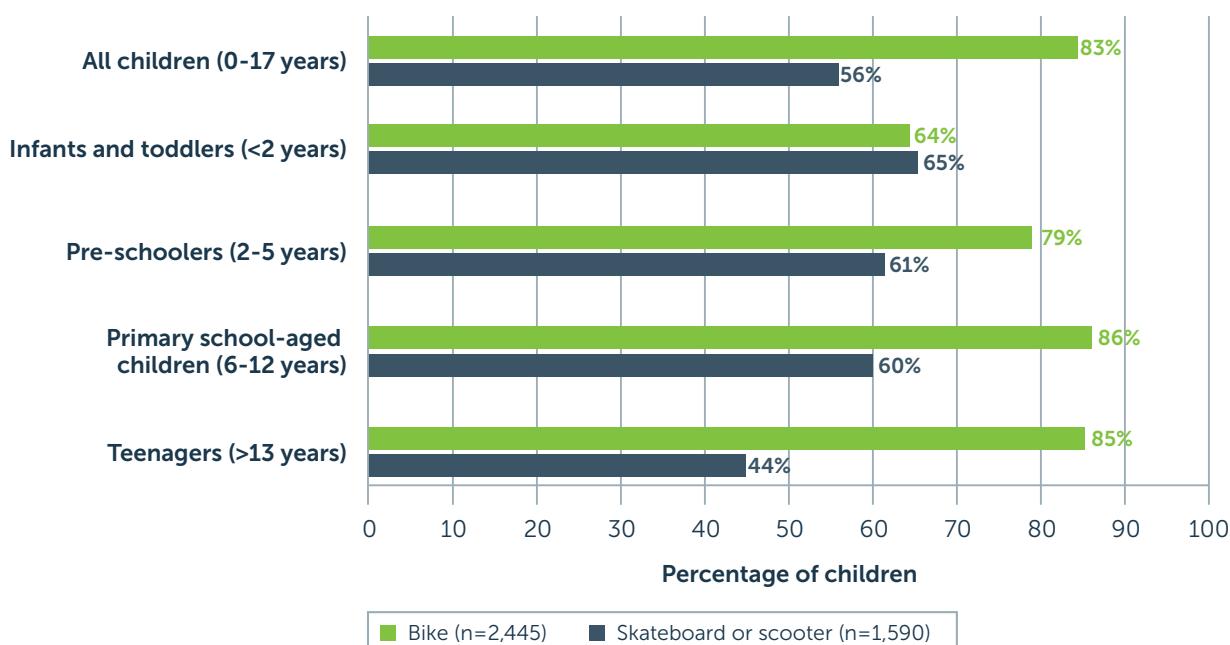


Figure 2.

## Pools, drowning and rescue

Parents were asked to rate their level of confidence in their ability to rescue a child from a swimming pool. Less than half of Australian parents (45%) reported being very confident that they could rescue a child from a pool and one in six reported they were not confident to do so. Of note, respondents who had migrated to Australia within the last ten years were almost four times more likely to report that they were not confident to rescue a child from a pool.

More than 40% of parents reported that they did not know the specific first aid required for a drowning or near-drowning child (see figure 3).

Less than a third of parents (31%) reported being very confident in their ability to administer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation or 'mouth to mouth') to a child if required and a quarter (24%) reported being not confident. Rates of confidence in administering CPR were notably higher among respondents living in the ACT (56%) as compared with all other states and territories (rates ranged from 27% to 38%). Of those parents who reported being confident in their ability to administer CPR to a child, the majority (65%) reported they had acquired their skills from a training course in their workplace.

## First aid for recreation-related injuries

Childhood accidents and injuries are common. Being prepared and knowing what to do in the event of an injury is important. Parents were asked to report whether they know the specific first aid required for a range of recreation-related injuries including a bleeding wound, broken bone, broken or dislodged teeth, drowning or near drowning and head injury (see figure 3). Response options were 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure'. The accuracy of their reported knowledge was not tested.

The majority of parents reported knowing the specific first aid for a bleeding wound (84%) and just over half for a broken bone (55%). Just under half of parents reported knowing the specific first aid for a broken or dislodged tooth (49%), a head injury (49%) or an unconscious child (49%) (see figure 3). Some demographic variation was noted in responses, with parents who had migrated within the last ten years being less likely to report knowing specific first aid for all outlined injuries. Those respondents living in a regional location were more likely to report knowing first aid for the above outlined injuries, as well as having increased confidence in rescuing a child from a pool and administering CPR. 62% of parents reported having a well-stocked first aid kit in their home, and 40% in their car.

The majority of parents reported being either very interested (41%) or somewhat interested (43%) in further education or training in first aid for children.

Lack of time and cost were the most frequently identified barriers to undertaking this training.

## Implications

Keeping active and playing outdoors is an important part of a healthy childhood. But accidents and injuries are common, and unintentional injuries are the biggest cause of death in Australian children under 15 years of age. While it is not possible or realistic to prevent all childhood injuries, safe supervision of play, and attending to injuries if they do occur, is a common and important part of parenthood.

The vast majority of Australian children are reported to jump on a trampoline, including a quarter of children under two years of age and three quarters of pre-schoolers. One in six children is reported to have sustained a trampoline-related injury.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has issued safety guidelines for trampoline use, which include recommendations that only one child at a time use a trampoline, and children be supervised at all times, regardless of age.

## Percentage of parents who report they know the specific first aid for injuries

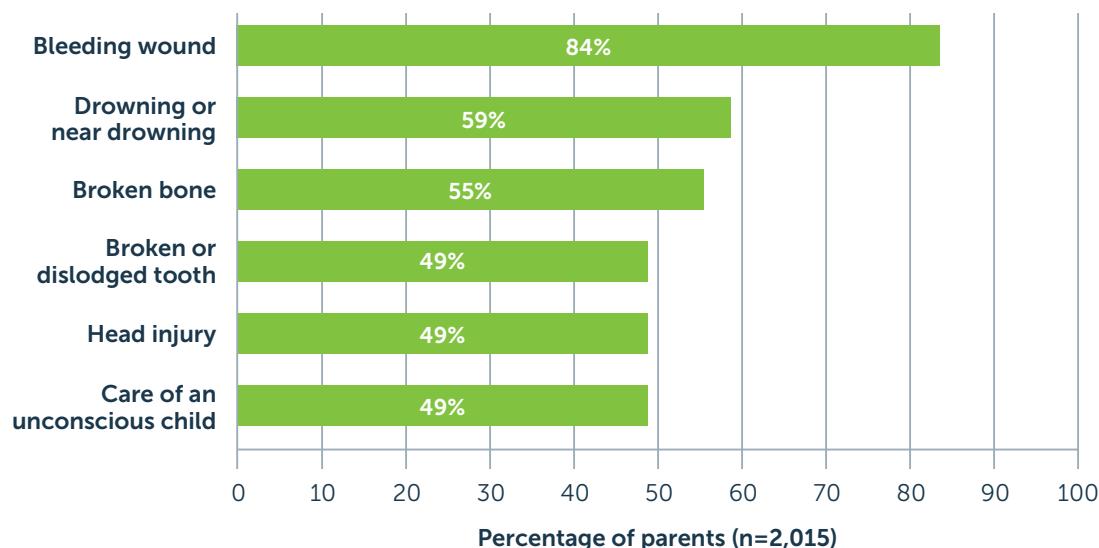


Figure 3.

This poll found that only a third of children are always supervised when using the trampoline and most parents report allowing more than one child to jump on the trampoline at once. Of most concern was the finding that 20% of children under two years of age are not always supervised by an adult when on the trampoline.

It is compulsory in all states and territories in Australia to wear a safety helmet when riding a bicycle, including child passengers on an adult's bike. Wearing a helmet is also recommended when riding a scooter or skateboard, and is compulsory in South Australia.

Falling off is part of riding a bike, scooter or skateboard, and in the event of an accident, a helmet will help to protect a child from a serious head injury. Despite recommendations, this poll found that one in six Australian children do not always wear a helmet when riding a bike and almost half do not always wear a helmet when riding a scooter or skateboard. Helmet compliance on bikes is lowest in children under two years of age, with over a third not always wearing a helmet. Safety behaviours in this very young age group are entirely the responsibility of the supervising adult, and these findings suggest a concerning level of non-compliance for helmet safety among parents.

Rates of helmet-wearing when scooting or skating are lowest among teenagers. This poll was based on parent reporting of adolescent behaviour so it is possible that actual compliance is even lower than that reported here. These findings may reflect the common misconception that riding a scooter or skateboard is safer than riding a bike, and hence does not require a helmet.

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children under five years of age in Australia, with swimming pools being the most common site for drownings. Swimming and water play is a fun and frequent part of summer life for Australian families so it's vital for parents to be well versed on water safety and aware of what to do if a child is drowning. In this poll, less than half of Australian parents report being very confident in their ability to rescue a child from a swimming pool, with those of migrant background reporting the lowest levels of confidence. Almost half do not know the specific first aid required for drowning or near-drowning in a child, and less than a third are confident in their ability to administer CPR to a child. These results bring into focus the suboptimal levels of parental knowledge and skills around water safety and highlight the need for further education in this area.

In the event that accidents and injuries do occur, some injuries can be made less serious with timely administration of appropriate first aid. Over a third of parents report they do not have a well-stocked first aid

kit in their home. Most parents report knowledge of first aid for wounds, but nearly half do not know what to do for many other common injuries. Parents from a migrant background showed notably lower levels of first aid knowledge, suggesting this is a vulnerable group that may benefit from targeted education. The majority of parents indicated interest in further training in child first aid and CPR, with the main barriers to this training being cost and time. Government and business have the potential to facilitate convenient and affordable avenues for parents and carers to access first aid training.

As we enter summer and the holiday season, these findings are a timely reminder for parents to be prepared to help keep their child safe. Health care providers and governments have an important role to play in assisting parents to access accurate and clear child safety information. By familiarising themselves with basic first aid for accidents and injuries, and understanding the guidelines and recommendations to optimise the safety of recreational activities, parents can help keep their children safe and reduce the chance of serious injuries while they play.

## Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by the Online Research Unit for The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. The survey was administered from 13 October to 2 November 2016, to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older ( $n=2,015$ ). All respondents were parents or caregivers to children aged less than 18 years. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect Australian population figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The completion rate was 55% among Online Research Unit panel members contacted to participate.

## References

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