

BRITAX STATE OF SAFETY **REPORT**

A Pan-European Study

into Parental Attitudes to
Childhood Mobility Safety



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Every year thousands of young babies and children are killed or injured whilst in a vehicle or on the move, the majority in car crashes¹. Some are unavoidable.

However, many could be prevented if more people were equipped and ready to make safe and responsible choices.

With almost 50 years' experience of keeping children safe and with a responsibility to the families we aim to empower, we wanted to shine a light on how parents approach childhood mobility across Europe. To better understand what drives parents and parents-to-be in making crucial decisions about safety and whether they feel informed enough to act in their baby's best interests.

What we discovered is that at every stage of the journey there is a degree of disconnect between good intentions and safety best practice. From getting ready

for the new arrival, right through to when they're growing up, there is considerable confusion and safety can sometimes be overlooked in favour of convenience or cost.

As a parent myself, I understand both the thrills and challenges of embarking on the family journey. From before our children are even born, we experience an overwhelming urge to protect them from potential dangers and as a result, we constantly face a myriad of choices and decisions about how to best ensure their safety.

From making sure that the home presents no dangers through to choosing the family car that fits everyone's needs, there is a seemingly endless tick list of considerations. And we have to make those choices within the context of the time we have available and the guidance we have to hand.

At Britax, we are dedicated to helping make some of those decisions a little easier because we believe family freedom starts with being safe.

From car seat installation systems and impact protection to strollers and pushchairs that combine ultimate safety with maximum style, we are wholly committed to constantly innovating to make sure that families can live without limits.

We hope you find our report into the state of safety of interest and that armed with this insight we can collectively help make the world a safer place.

Paul Gustavsson

Chief Executive Officer
Britax Group Limited

¹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr46/en/>

Executive summary

In this report, Britax analyses the different attitudes across Europe toward child mobility safety, examines behaviours on the road and assesses the extent of confusion surrounding child safety laws and technologies.

Interesting trends were revealed at each stage of mobility decision making:

— **Gearing up for the new arrival:** While a majority of parents across Europe are thinking ahead to baby's first journey, a large proportion aren't clear on the correct measures to take to ensure the car seat is compatible or fitted safely

— **On the road:** Despite car accidents topping the list of child mobility concerns, a worrying number of parents still risk driving without securing their child in a correctly fitted car seat

— **Growing up:** Many parents are making unsafe decisions on when to turn their car seat forward facing or when to switch their child to the next stage seat, and feel in the dark on laws relating to child seat safety

The report concludes by providing recommended simple steps that every parent can take to help them move towards a safer future.

Car accidents

top the list of child safety worries for half of European parents.

Almost a quarter of European parents are leaving it until after the baby is born to buy their first car seat – later than advisable and despite it being illegal to leave hospital without a car seat in some countries.²

24%

38%

Only just over a third of parents got help fitting their first car seat from someone qualified and 12% fitted it with no guidance at all.

Almost a fifth of European parents

spent less than £ 50 on their first car seat and 67% spent more on their mobile phone or tablet.

A third of parents across Europe admit that they have taken a child out in a car without a suitable car seat in place – rising to 46% of 18 – 24 year old parents.

33%

A third of European parents (31%)

have broken the speed limit with a child in the car.

45%

Just under half of parents don't feel up to speed with the latest car seat safety regulation laws.

² Directive 2003/20/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32003L0020&from=EN>

Key Findings

Chapter 1

Gearing up for the new arrival.

Planning for a baby's arrival can be both exciting and daunting. In many cases, pregnancy can seem to go on forever, whilst never giving us quite enough time to prepare.

Yet making sure that the journey home from the hospital runs smoothly should be an important part of any parent to be's checklist. Ensuring that the new arrival is tucked up in a car seat that is both compatible for the car and that has been correctly fitted is an essential step to a safer future

Parents in the UK are Europe's biggest planners

However, it seems that parents are still not clear or confident on when and how to best ready themselves to travel with new-borns.' From selecting the right seat through to making sure it's consistently fit for purpose, a worrying degree of parents are still making decisions that could potentially put their son or daughter in danger.

LEAVING IT LATE TO BUY A CAR SEAT

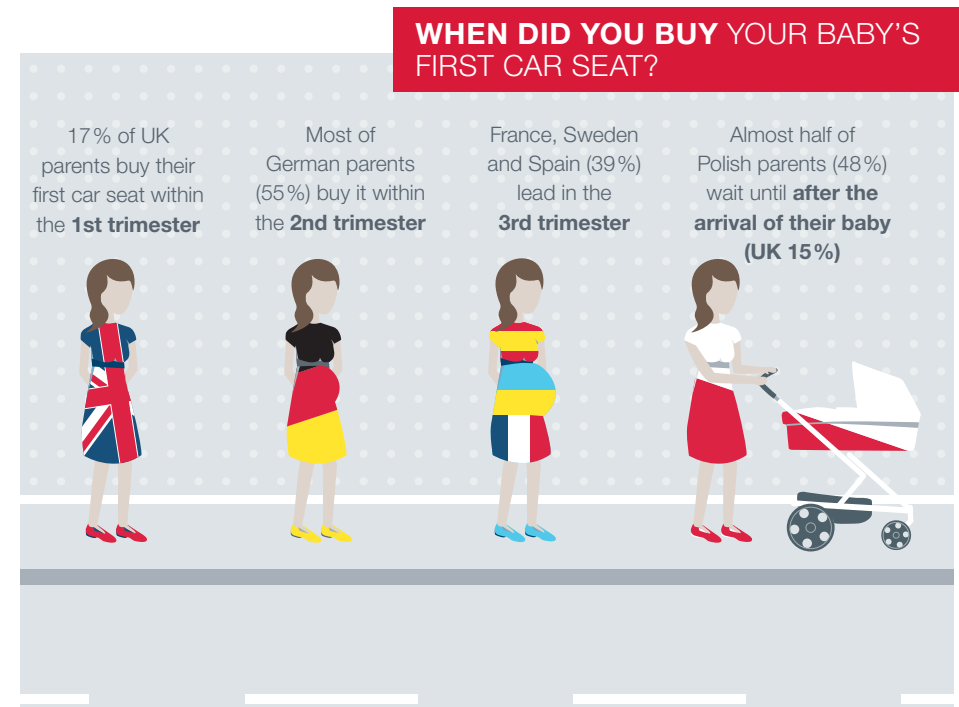
Making sure that a car seat is in place before the baby is born is important, regardless of whether or not you own a car. If the birth is happening at a hospital, it's critical that a safe journey home has been planned in advance. But parents also typically need to be mobile to ensure they can not only make important check-ups but also visit family and friends.

Overall, the majority of parents across Europe (76%) are purchasing their first car seat in good time. Parents in the UK rank as the biggest planners in the process, with 84% purchasing a car seat prior to their baby's arrival – and 17% buying it in their very first trimester.

However, at the other end of the scale, still almost a quarter (24%) of parents are leaving it later than is advisable. This is particularly the case in Poland where just under half (48%) wait until

after the birth to buy a car seat. This could mean that many children are at risk of making their first journeys in an insufficiently safe environment (not secured at all or in an inappropriate or ill-fitting car seat) at a time when due

to their imbalanced proportions they are at their most vulnerable should an accident occur. >



PARENTS NOT PUTTING A PRICE ON SAFETY

Given that choosing the correct car seat is such a crucial decision, combined with the fact there are so many types available, it is concerning that parents spend comparatively little time and money on their choice.

Across Europe, almost a fifth of European parents spent less than £50 on their first car seat and in Poland that figure rose to more than a third (36%).

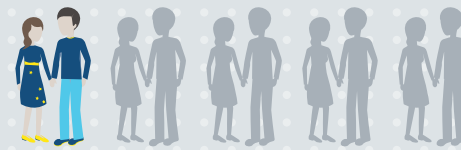
One in five parents (18%) also admitted that it took them under an hour to research their options before making their purchase – and in Sweden, 16% went so far as to say they took ‘no time at all’. Almost half (49%) said that they let their pushchair choice dictate their car seat purchase, implying that brand, aesthetics or compatibility with the chassis took precedence over the safety

merit or compatibility of the car seat.

Putting these findings into further context, nearly a fifth of European parents (18%) said they spent more time considering which new phone or tablet to buy than they did their child’s first car seat and 67% of parents also spent more on their personal mobile device.

In contrast, Spanish parents are by far the nation that takes their selection most seriously with only 5% spending less than £50 on their first car seat. Equally, only 8% took less than a couple of hours to research their purchase while a fifth (20%) took at least a month to decide and 15% said they spent the entire nine month pregnancy period choosing. >

However, a car seat should always be a considered purchase. From European safety standards to car compatibility there are a myriad of factors that need to be taken into account to make sure that every baby is adequately protected from risk.



Across Europe, almost a fifth of European parents spent less than £50 on their first car seat.

32% of European parents spend more money on the 2nd car seat than on the first one.



Nearly a third of European parents spend more than £500 on a pushchair.

Almost half of European parents

said that they let their pushchair choice dictate their car seat purchase.



Only Spanish parents spend more money on their child’s pushchair and car seat than on their personal mobile devices.

Just 15% of European parents search for more than a day when it comes to a first car seat.

TIME AND MONEY

NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

Protection can often be optimised right from its source. For starters, it is always best for parents to buy a new baby car seat to ensure that the history is known and it hasn't already been damaged in some way due to a previous accident or so that it doesn't have outdated safety features.

In this respect, it is reassuring to see that the vast majority of parents (87%) are choosing to buy a brand new seat – and of those, 58% are still actively going into store to make their selection.

However, it's hardly surprising that with the internet becoming so ubiquitous in people's lives and the fact that it often offers the best deals, at least 30% are buying online.

Yet, while buying car seats (known as infant carriers) via the Web can be both a cost and time efficient way of purchasing quality products, going solely online needs to be approached with caution. In many cases, it can cause people to purchase the wrong type of seat for the car, for the child or to fit it incorrectly.

The same is true for second-hand or borrowed seats. These also run the risk of being subject

to wear and tear. Across Europe, more than one in 10 (11%) have bought from a second hand site or borrowed one from friends or family rising to 21% in Sweden.

In fact, the study indicates that many car seats may not be fit for purpose.

Car seats must be matched correctly to the model of the car, yet nearly one in ten (9%) of European parents admitted outright that they didn't check at all that the car seat they had chosen was compatible with their car before purchase and while 19% looked online for guidance they didn't physically check the fit before they bought.

Similarly, despite the fact that installing a car seat for the first time is rarely straight-forward, a large number of parents are still going it alone. Overall, 12% said they had no help at all and had to work it out for themselves – with parents in France topping the chart. As a result, almost a third of parents (30%) took more

than 10 minutes to get the seat in the car unsupervised.

In fact, the study indicates that many car seats may not be fit for purpose.

Only just over a third (38%) of parents got help fitting their first car seat from someone qualified. Parents are also advised to regularly check that car seats continue to fit correctly but while 74% claim that they do, 16% haven't checked since it was first installed, with Swedish parents the least likely to do a spot check. ●

WHERE DID YOU BUY YOUR CAR SEAT?

NURSERY STORE

48%

SUPERMARKET

10%

ONLINE

25%

SECOND HAND ONLINE/BORROWED FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

11%

Chapter 2

Taking risks while on the road

For many parents across Europe, the fear of having an accident whilst driving with a baby on board is an ever-present concern, with half (50%) going as far as to say that it is their primary worry when it comes to childhood safety.

A third of parents across Europe admit that they have taken a child out in a car without a suitable car seat

Drivers assume ultimate responsibility for their smaller passengers so the emphasis is on to ensure that safety best practices are adhered to at all times. Because the fact of the matter is, whether it be driver error, another vehicle's fault or forces out of anyone's control, it only takes a second to have an accident.

PUTTING CONVENIENCE AHEAD OF SAFETY

It is compulsory to use safety belts and child restraint systems in all vehicles in Europe.³ It is also mandatory to use child car seats within the EU for children up to the heights of 1,35 m or 1,5 m – depending upon the member state.

However, a third of parents (33 %) across Europe admit that they have taken a child out in a car without a suitable car seat in place – rising to 46% of 18 – 24 year olds.

In most cases this already counts as breaking the law but no matter what, not securing a child adequately while in a car is always an action that is putting them in danger. Sweden are the worst offenders (43%) while Poland and Spain (27%) are the least likely to take the risk.

HAVE YOU EVER TRAVELLED WITHOUT A SUITABLE CAR SEAT?

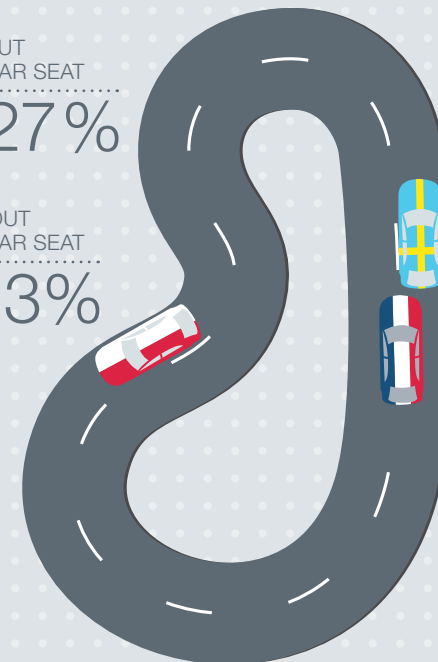
Even more concerning is the fact that for many, these risks aren't just very ill-judged one-offs. Of those that confess they have travelled without a suitable car seat, over a third (35%) have done it at least five times, one in ten on more than twenty journeys. Sweden (13%), France (12%) and Poland (12%) are the biggest repeat offenders.

While a third (32%) claim that they've never travelled for more than five minutes with an insufficiently secured child in the car, nearly half (47%) admit they were on the move for up to 15 minutes and 8% for more than an hour. French parents are by far the most likely to take a risk for longer with a fifth (20%) having travelled with a baby for more than half an hour without a suitable car seat in place. >

³ Directive 2003/20/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32003L0020&from=EN>

MOST WITHOUT A SUITABLE CAR SEAT
SWEDEN 27%
FRANCE 12%

LEAST WITHOUT A SUITABLE CAR SEAT
POLAND 13%
SPAIN 5%



MORE THAN HALF AN HOUR

- FRANCE 20%
- SWEDEN 11%
- GERMANY 10%
- UNITED KINGDOM 9%
- SPAIN 9%
- POLAND 9%

MORE THAN 20 TIMES

- SWEDEN 13%
- FRANCE 12%
- POLAND 12%
- UNITED KINGDOM 10%
- GERMANY 7%
- SPAIN 5%

The main reason given for not ensuring that the child was safe in the car was simply because there was no seat available (44%) or not the correct one (20%). One in ten (12%) either didn't know how to fit the seat or couldn't be bothered to switch it from another car and more than a quarter (28%) actively justify their actions by the fact it was just a short journey.

Driving with children insecurely fastened is also not a trait confined to domestic travel. While a quarter (24%) don't drive abroad, 22% rely on the car hire company to make sure the car seat is fitted properly, more than one in ten (13%) of European parents take their own seat but

don't check compatibility with the car hired and 6% risk not using a seat at all.

In every case, it could be argued that convenience is taking priority rather than a commitment to safety and the harsh truth remains that such decisions are fundamentally putting children in unnecessary danger.

DRIVING WITH DISTRACTIONS

Driving safely with a child in the car also involves so much more than just a properly fitted car seat. Concentration, care and common sense are needed at all times in a moving vehicle, never more so than when your most

precious cargo is on board.

However, figures reveal that bad habits and dangerous decisions are still commonplace while with children in the car.

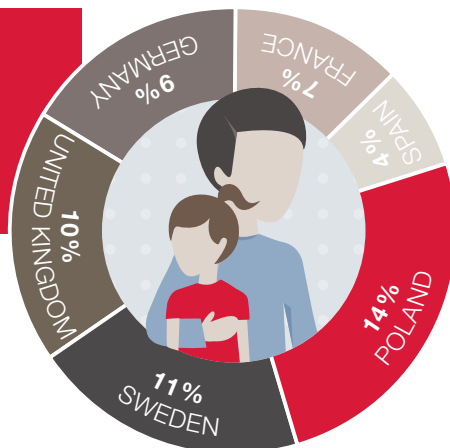
A third of European parents (31%) have broken the speed limit with a child in the car – rising to almost half (46%) in Sweden and 35% in Germany. Men are also more likely than women to exceed legal limits (38% vs 25% respectively). However, a fifth (21%) admit to eating when driving with a child in the car, the UK being the worst for this (26%). Plus 16% have made calls from a mobile without the use of a hands-free kit, rising to almost a quarter

(24%) in Poland and peaking at 38% in Sweden.

Driving safely with a baby in the car also involves so much more than just a properly fitted car seat.

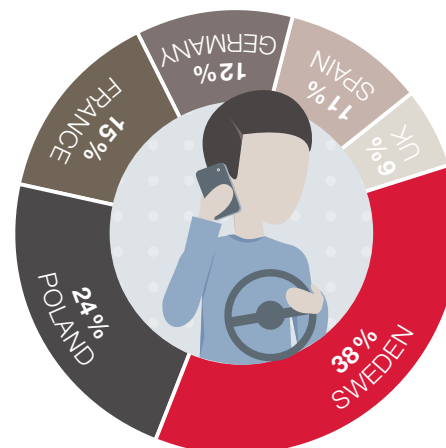
Despite the fact that laws differ depending on where you are in the world when it comes to distractions like eating or picking up a mobile, anything that means you aren't fully focused on the task of driving should be regarded as bad practice as it is effectively endangering lives. ●

ACTIONS TAKEN WHILST WITH A CHILD IN THE CAR



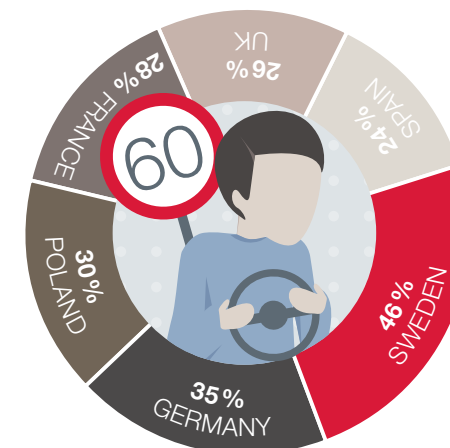
TRAVELLED WITH MY CHILD ON MY LAP

EUROPE: 9%



USED A MOBILE WITHOUT A HANDS FREE KIT

EUROPE: 16%



BROKEN THE SPEED LIMIT

EUROPE: 31%

Chapter 3

Growing up and staying on track

Child safety regulations and laws differ across countries

As their families grow up, parents find themselves in a constant balancing act of making sure their children are kept safe whilst trying to maximise mobility and keep kids happy.

Added to which, child safety regulations and laws differ across countries and continue to evolve. there is also an ever growing range of car seats available offering an often baffling array of features.

It's therefore understandable that parents are often left feeling overwhelmed and not up to speed on how to ensure the future safety of their child.

CONFUSION OVER CAR SEATS

Working out when to move children between car seats as they grow up can see parents faced with a minefield of criteria to make their way through. However, the vast majority (83%) claim to have it clear, particularly in Spain.

However, that still leaves almost a fifth (17%) stating outright that they don't know when to move their child up to the next stage or group seat. French parents in particular are the most likely to be confused.

However, despite the seeming confidence across Europe, the evidence shows that in fact, the move is not always being done for the right reasons.

Almost a quarter (23%) of parents across Europe would change their child to the next car seat just because they've had another child; 21% would upgrade to make more space in the car and 14% would do it purely for hygiene reasons.

These decisions are not based on the height and weight recommendations that determine safety and therefore imply a discrepancy between what parents think they understand and what they are doing in practice.

LOOKING FORWARD TOO SOON

For many though, the main question mark remains over when to change seats from rearward to forward facing.

Understandably parents often believe that babies will be happier facing forward so that they can be seen, travel more comfortably and get a better view of the world. As such, parents are often quick to elect to switch seats round as soon as possible.

However, strictly speaking, children are much better protected facing rearwards in the event of a collision and a number of experts, including Britax, are keen to see governments across Europe advising that parents be kept in rearward facing seats until the age of four.

Yet 41% of European parents said that they'd choose to turn their child at just a year old or younger – with more than half (52%) of French families admit-

ting they'd make the move early.

In fact, only 14% of European parents said they'd wait until their children were the age of four before turning them around.

By far the highest incidence of holding back was in Sweden where two thirds (66%) said they'd turn them after the age of four. However, considering that the four-year old guidance is already standard across the country, it's even more important to note that a third of Swedish parents are still turning too soon.

It seems a general sense of space and babies getting bored of the back seat are winning the battle over best practice safety.

For 40% of parents across Europe, lack of legroom is the main reason for moving a child to a front-facing seat, particularly in the case of Swedish (52%) and German (51%) parents. >

More than 13% claim they'd turn them just to give them the chance to look around and it's largely a guessing game for 12% of parents who say they move them just because they look big and strong enough – with Spain (17%) and France (16%) topping the chart.

None of these are the safest determining factors. It should instead be a combination of height and weight – something only 12% of parents across Europe claimed to consider.

One of the most significant developments in car seat safety is the introduction of ISOFIX.

Again, Sweden seem the most informed in this respect with more than a quarter (26%) stating this as their reason for turning their child whilst just 6% of French parents and 9% of German parents chose this option.

NOT UP TO SPEED WITH CAR SEAT SAFETY

This apparent confusion makes it all the more important for governments and parental advisors to work wherever possible to a common set of laws and offer

clear guidance to parents on how to keep children safe when on the road.

Many parents are quick to admit they are not up to speed with the latest car seat safety laws and don't have a handle on recent innovations and regulations.

Overall, just under half (45%) of parents said they didn't feel up to speed with the latest car seat safety regulation laws, with French parents feeling most in the dark (56%) and those in Spain the most confident by some way (29%).

One of the potential contributing factors is the fact that there has been considerable innovation and broadening of choice over the years combined with a lot of terminology that parents don't seem to have yet been able to get their heads around.

For example, one of the most significant developments in car seat safety is the introduction of ISOFIX.

ISOFIX – which stands for 'International Standards Organisation FIX' – was first introduced by Britax in partnership with Volkswagen for the Golf IV and is an alternative to securing the child car seat with seat belts.

ISOFIX sees standardized anchorage points installed in vehicles that correspond with connectors on child safety seats. With this system the seats are securely, correctly and permanently attached to the vehicle body.

The significant benefit of ISOFIX is that it minimises installation mistakes and optimizes protection by ensuring a solid connection between child safety

seat and vehicle. However, 44% of parents across Europe have either never heard the term or have a limited understanding of its benefits, implying that even though the technology has been around for a while, the message of its importance – and thus its implementation – may still have a long way to go. >

ARE YOU AWARE OF THE LATEST CAR SEAT SAFETY REGULATION LAWS?



YES, WE ARE!



WE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF ISOFIX



WE HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT A NEW I-SIZE REGULATION

Which is why the new European-wide standard for car seats – i-Size (ECE R129) – is critical.

i-Size (ECE R129) is a new regulation for child car seats that will run in parallel to the current regulation ECE R44 for the next few years. It has been in force since July 9th 2013 which means that as of this date child car seat manufacturers can approve car seats according to the new regulation.

It is designed to make it much easier for parents to consistently choose and fit the right seat whilst offering better protection for children.

The legislation states that parents will have to keep their baby rearward facing until they are at least 15 months old and the move will be based on the size and age of the child rather than weight. This classification will help make it easier for parents to know when children are ready to be moved to the next stage car seat.

As yet though, more than half (51%) of European parents have never even heard of i-Size let alone understand what it means. Swedish parents are the most in the dark with almost three-quarters (73%) saying they don't know what it is. In contrast, 64% of Spanish parents have heard about it on some level, though only 27% claim to understand what it means. ●

This shows that there is a big job to be done across Europe in terms of helping educate parents on the latest innovations and regulations to make it simpler for them to select and install car seats safely.

Car seat and stroller manufacture has moved on considerably over recent decades with technological innovation making products better both aesthetically and functionally but also offering improved protection. To reflect these developments, governments are constantly having to adapt and change laws and regulations to make sure that every child is experiencing the benefits of those added layers of safety.

This is all good news and inevitably having an effect on the state of safety.

However, many parents are feeling bewildered at the often baffling array of options and rules and there is a need for everyone in the industry to help explain what really matters and why.

Clearer and more consistent guidelines will allow parents to more easily make informed decisions that will help cut back on the often seemingly small risks that could have a monumental and heart breaking impact on their lives.

We are committed to helping shape a safer future and to helping families live Life without limits.

Conclusion

About Britax

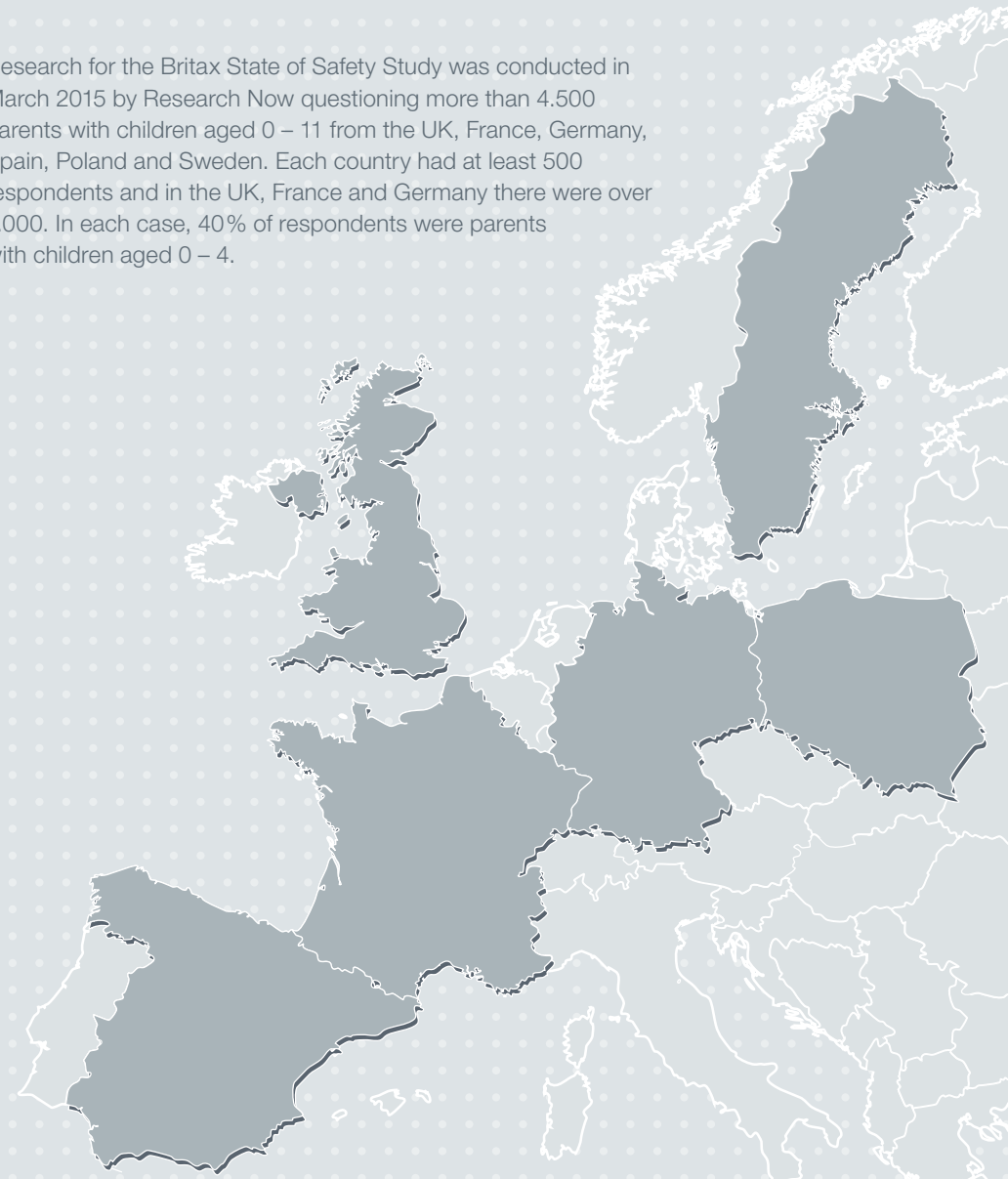
Britax is a global leader and innovator in child mobility dedicated to making family travel safer and easier throughout the journey of parenthood. Specialising in a complete range of premium car seats, strollers, baby carriers and accessories that meet modern family lifestyle needs, Britax's mission is to inspire families to travel more freely, be confident on safety, and sure on style.

Britax was founded in Britain in 1938 focussing initially on safety

developments such as adult seat belts. In the 1960s they launched the company's first child car seat. In 1978, it merged with established German car safety counterpart Römer. More recently, Britax acquired the hugely popular outdoor stroller brand BOB in 2011 and the BRIO pushchair and car safety business in 2013.

Now Britax maintains offices in 12 countries, operates in almost all countries globally and employs more than 1000 people.

Research for the Britax State of Safety Study was conducted in March 2015 by Research Now questioning more than 4.500 parents with children aged 0 – 11 from the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Poland and Sweden. Each country had at least 500 respondents and in the UK, France and Germany there were over 1.000. In each case, 40% of respondents were parents with children aged 0 – 4.



Methodology

