

TRANSURBAN INSIGHTS: ROAD SAFETY REPORT

November 2024

Research

Online survey conducted in mid-2024

3,012 respondents aged 18+ with a driver licence from: Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney

Survey commissioned by Transurban and conducted by Nature

Transurban's Insights Reports use data and research from our business, as well as surveys we commission, to explore issues relevant to road transport. We share these insights with government and industry and use them to inform road-user and community education campaigns. In this Transurban Insights report, we examine some common driving experiences and behaviours. We also look at people's driving decisions and their awareness of critical road safety factors when travelling on Australian roads.



Sharing the road



Identifying blind spots



Slowing for road works and emergencies



Driving with children

Understanding road-user behaviour

Transurban is an industry leader in road safety and an active contributor to road safety efforts in Australia.

Road-user awareness, perceptions and behaviours are key factors we consider in developing safety solutions for our roads. Understanding these behaviours – for example, how road users feel about sharing the road with different types of vehicles, or whether they comply with speed limits in work zones – helps us develop more effective interventions.

After decades of progress, Australian road deaths have increased in recent years.

Tragically, 1,288 people lost their lives on Australian roads in the 12 months ending September 2024, a 5.6% increase on the previous year.¹ Reversing this trend is imperative, and understanding common motorist behaviours can help contribute to a safer driving future for everyone.

Transurban's road safety performance

Transurban commissions the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) to analyse crashes on our Australian roads to determine their comparable safety. MUARC's 2024 analysis found that, compared to like roads in each state (that is, freeways or motorways), our roads are on average at least twice as safe.



Sharing the road

Our research indicates different road-user groups have varying levels of understanding about other users' needs on the road. Understanding these different needs helps us put ourselves in other road-users' shoes and better anticipate their driving decisions.

Sharing the road with trucks


Road freight plays a key role in supporting economies, and trucks are a reality of city life, delivering the goods we all rely on in our work and at home. Understanding how to share the road safely with trucks makes driving safer for everyone – and potentially less stressful for some.

Just over half (53%) of survey respondents report feeling unsafe driving around heavy vehicles (Figure 1). And this year the number of people who feel safe around trucks fell from 35% (2022) to 26%.

With even more trucks expected on the road as both populations and freight demands grow, knowing how to safely share the road with trucks is increasingly important. This includes knowing truck blind spots (see page 4), checking mirrors, not tailgating, keeping left unless overtaking – and not cutting closely in front of trucks when overtaking. (The area directly in front of a truck is a blind spot.)

Also, when driving alongside trucks, keep an eye on surrounding traffic. If a truck

indicates to change (or starts changing) lanes – it's possible the driver has not seen you. Use your horn to alert them and change lanes yourself if necessary. Maintaining awareness of surrounding traffic helps you do this safely.

 **Learn more about driving safely around trucks.**

Sharing the road with motorcyclists


Motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable road users. Being less protected than other road users, they're at high risk of injury in a crash.

Other motorists' confidence in sharing the road with motorcyclists is mixed (Figure 2) and varies across road types. Confidence is highest (60%) when sharing local and suburban main and arterial roads (57%) with motorcyclists, and lowest (53%) in longer tunnels and on rural roads (52%).

When asked about the reasons behind these confidence levels, we found respondents perceive motorcyclists can take more risks on the road and sometimes drive in ways that appear unpredictable. However, many respondents do recognise motorcyclists are vulnerable, and said they drove carefully around them.

Knowing your vehicle's blind spots (see page 4) – and maintaining a safe distance (around three seconds) from motorcycles ahead makes road travel safer. When overtaking, give motorcycles extra space, as hard braking can be especially risky for

motorcyclists. And be sure to check for motorcycles at intersections – they may be closer than they seem.

 **Find out more about sharing the road with motorcyclists.**

Motorcyclists and on-road confidence

To better understand motorcyclists' on-road experiences, this year we asked motorcyclists how confident they felt riding on different road types (Figure 3). We found motorcyclists are, on average, more confident than not. More than 50% report being confident or very confident on all road types, while only 3-5% say they are very unconfident. Confidence levels were highest on local (60%) and suburban arterial (61%) roads.

When riding on high-speed, multi-lane motorways, motorcyclists' confidence is lower, with 54% confident riding on these roads. And 55% are confident in riding on rural roads. Motorcyclists are least confident when riding through longer tunnels, with 51% reporting confidence inside these.

Motorcyclists can increase their safety by maintaining a safe distance from vehicles ahead, wearing protective clothing, adjusting speed to suit road conditions and observing speed limits.

As other motorists might not expect to encounter (legal) lane filtering, including at low speeds, proceeding with caution is safer. And avoid (illegal) lane splitting as this increases risk of high-speed crashes.

Did you know?

It's legal for heavy vehicles to use more than one lane to turn left. If a truck is turning left in front of you, allow it to safely make its turn before proceeding yourself. If you enter the left lane while the truck is turning, you'll be in a blind spot – and the consequences could be severe.

Riding between stopped or slow-moving traffic, known as lane filtering, is legal in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Getting ahead of larger vehicles can increase motorcyclists' visibility, sight lines – and safety. Riding between vehicles at speeds above 30 km/h – known as lane splitting – is illegal in these same states. Lane filtering is a common technique so always check for motorcyclists before you change lanes, even at slow speeds.



Figure 1: Feelings of safety while driving near heavy vehicles

Q. How safe do you feel while driving near heavy vehicles (for example, vehicles larger than vans, box trucks and delivery trucks)?

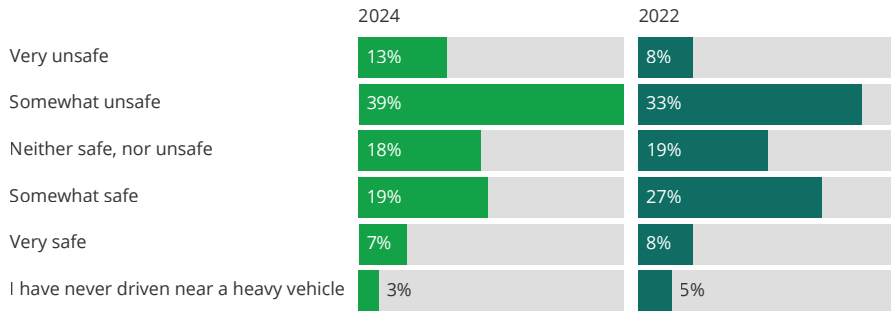


Figure 2: Confidence sharing the road with motorcyclists

Q. How confident do you feel driving with motorcycles on the following road types?

Very unconfident Somewhat unconfident Neither confident, nor unconfident Somewhat confident Very confident

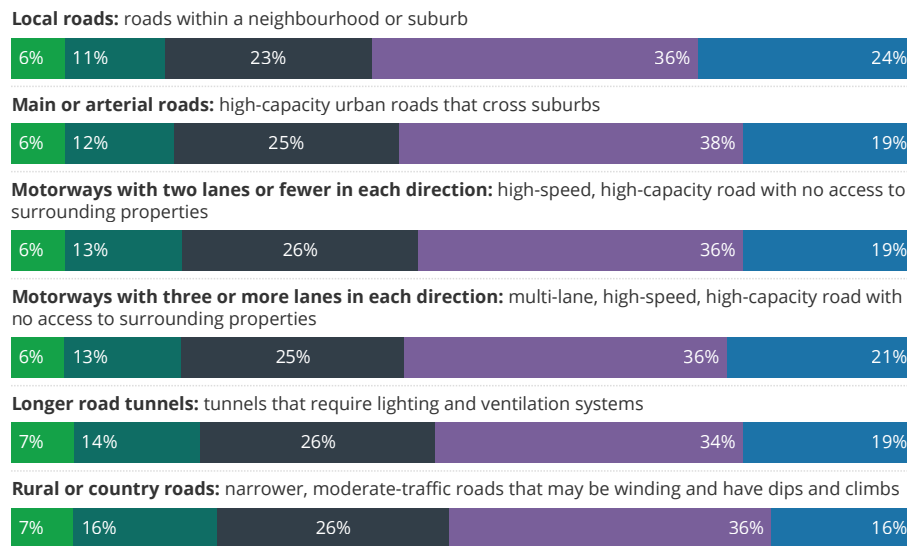
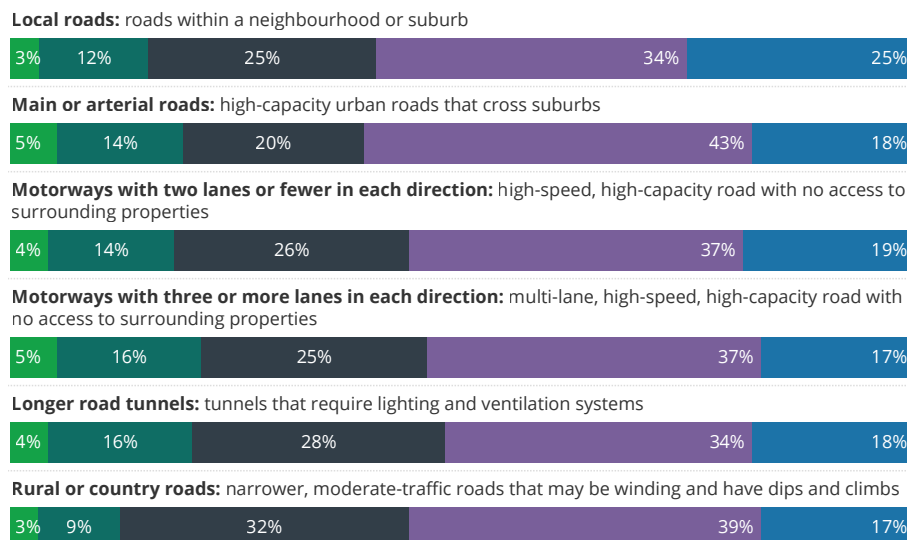


Figure 3: Motorcyclist confidence riding on different road types

Q. How confident do you feel riding your motorcycle on the following road types? (Asked only of motorcycle riders.)

Very unconfident Somewhat unconfident Neither confident, nor unconfident Somewhat confident Very confident





Giving motorcyclists extra space makes road travel safer for everyone



Identifying blind spots

Whether you're driving a car, truck or motorcycle, all vehicles have blind spots.

Low awareness of blind spots can lead to incidents such as sideswipes or rear-end crashes, which are some of the most common incidents Transurban responds to across our road network.

Being aware of the vehicles around you – and knowing when other road-users can and can't see you – increases safety for everyone.

Truck blind spots

Road-user awareness of truck blind spots is strikingly low. Only 3% of respondents could name all five truck blind spots correctly, and only 12% could name three (Figure 4). Noting that awareness of all blind spots needs improvement, this year we also saw a 9% drop in identifying that directly behind a truck is a blind spot.

Colliding with a truck can have severe consequences, so knowing all five blind spots is vital for safety – see Figure 6.

[Learn more about truck blind spots.](#)

Motorcycle and car blind spots

We also asked respondents to identify both car and motorcycle blind spots. And we found awareness of these blind spots is also low – less than half (43%) of respondents could correctly identify the two car blind spots, and only 14% correctly identified the three motorcycle blind spots (Figure 5).

Blind spots are the points in the road where driver and rider views are obscured, including during mirror and head-checks. If you travel in a vehicle's blind spot, its driver may change lanes or brake suddenly, without realising you are there, potentially leading to a crash. Car and motorcycle blind spots are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 4: Number of truck blind spots correctly identified

Q. Please select all areas around the truck that you believe are blind spots (that is, where the driver is unable to see).

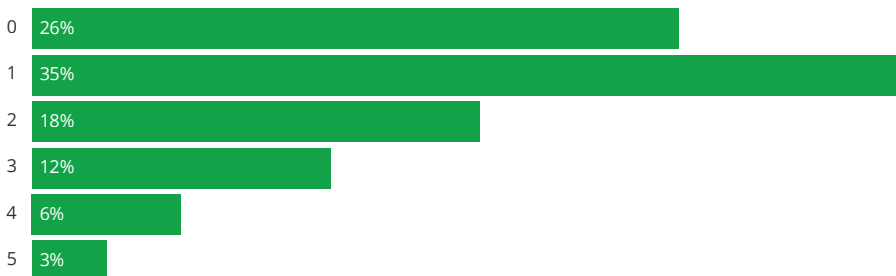


Figure 5: Number of motorcycle and car blind spots correctly identified

Q. Please select all areas around the motorcycle/car that you believe are blind spots (that is, where the driver is unable to see).

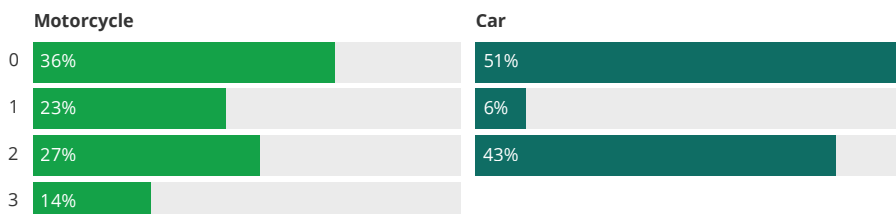
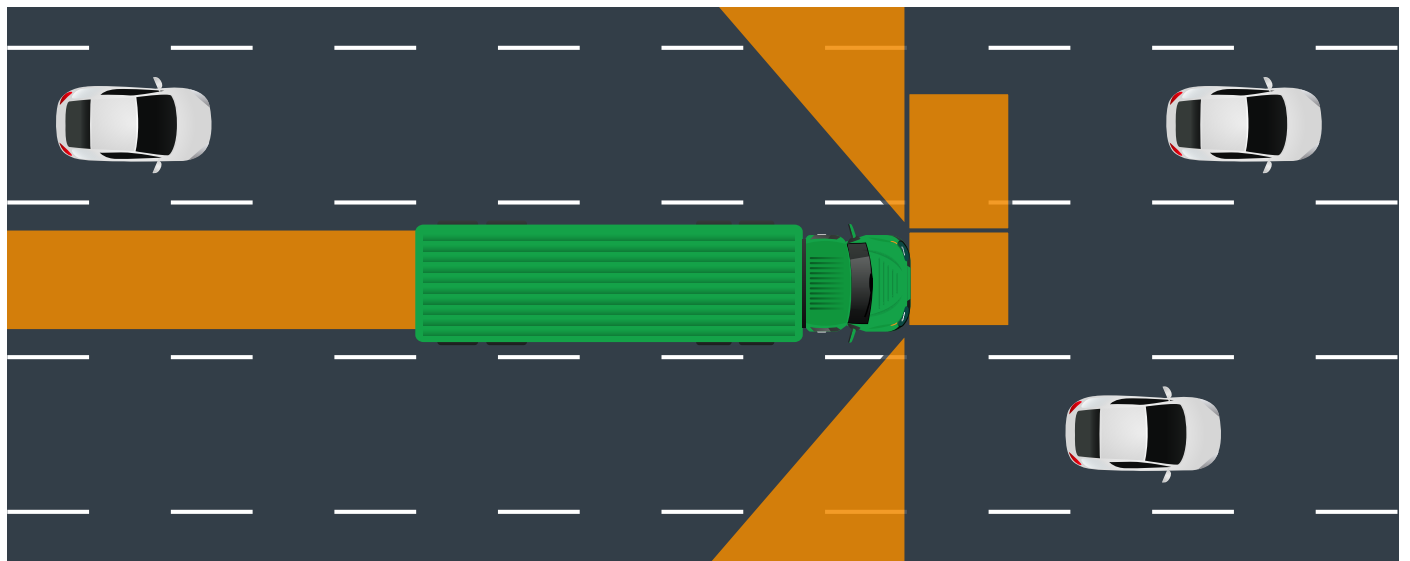
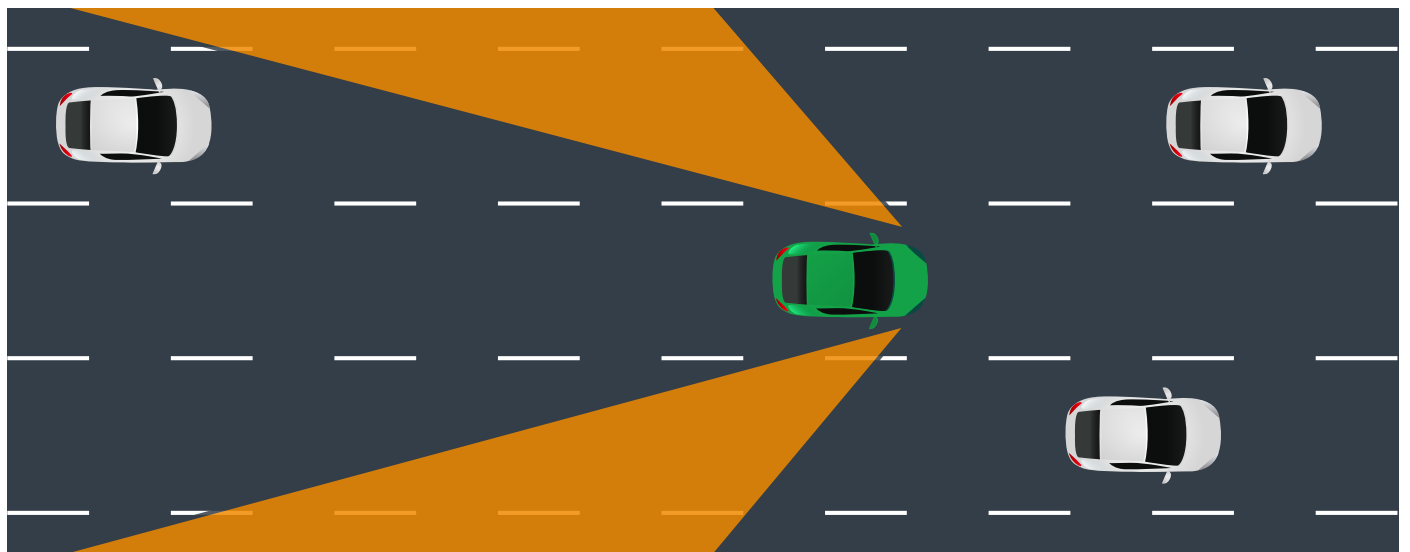


Figure 6: The five truck blind spots

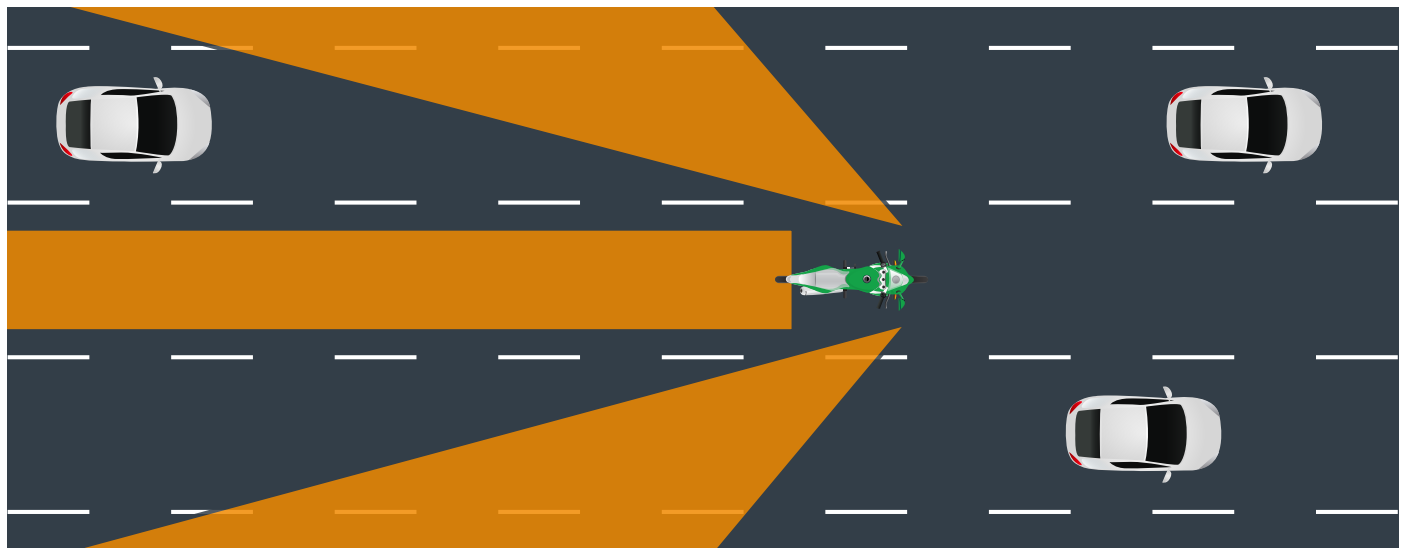


Blind spot

Figure 7: Car and motorcycle blind spots
Cars have two blind spots



Motorcycles have three blind spots



Blind spot



Slowing for road works and emergencies

Slowing down for road works and road-side emergency responders helps keep everyone safe.

People working alongside fast-moving traffic are at risk of injury or death, and slowing down is important even when no workers are visible. Road works can involve temporary or permanent changes to lane-markings, signage and other road infrastructure, and lower speed limits give everyone time to adjust safely.

Regardless of these safety considerations, not all drivers slow when passing road works. 73% of people say they travel at the posted speed limits, but 17% do not comply at night or when road workers do not appear to be present, and a further 9% are deciding for themselves what speed is appropriate. (Figure 8). This concerning trend puts road workers and everyone on the road at risk. Crash injuries are more severe at higher speeds.

During works delivery, Transurban collaborates with enforcement agencies to support the safety of workers and road-users. For example, on our M7-M12 Integration Project, in Sydney, we are monitoring speed-limit compliance using anonymised connected vehicle data, and our contractor is implementing traffic management solutions accordingly. This is improving speed-limit compliance and helping keep our workers safe.

In Melbourne and Sydney, where state laws require motorists to slow to 40km/h when passing road-side emergency responders, only 62-67% say they comply. In Brisbane, where state law requires motorists to slow down and move over for emergency responders, only 63% report complying. Emergency responders can operate in unpredictable circumstances, so giving them space and passing safely allows them to focus on protecting and helping others.

Figure 8: Changes in driving behaviour when driving through works zones

Q. How does your driving behaviour change when driving through road work zones?

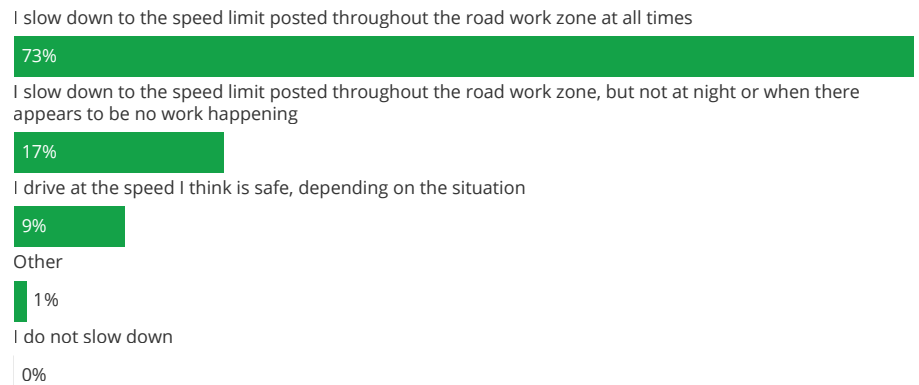
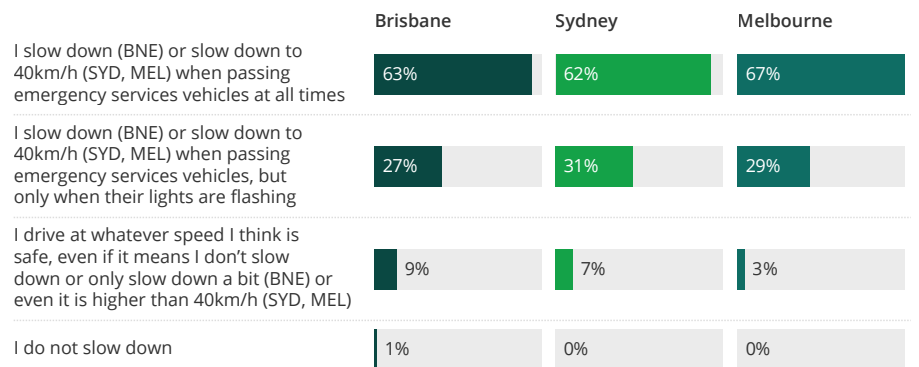


Figure 9: Changes in driving behaviour when driving past emergency vehicles

Q. How does your driving behaviour change when driving past emergency services?



Driving with children

Child car seats help save lives and reduce serious injuries in a crash.¹ Research consistently finds that most child car seats are not fitted correctly, so Transurban partners with a child accident prevention agency, Kidsafe, to offer free child car seat checks.

Our latest research has found transitioning children from child car seats and booster seats to a regular passenger seat can be confusing. Australia's National Child Restraint Guidelines include five criteria that must be met before it's safe to do away with a child's car or booster seat. Our research found these guidelines are not well understood. When presented with a range of criteria, the same amount (between around 20 and 30%) of respondents selected incorrect responses as correct ones, and only 3% could correctly name all five steps.

See Figure 11 for the correct five steps.

Confusion about when a child can travel in a vehicle's front seat has also increased. Road rules in each state restrict children aged under seven years from travelling in the front seat and research shows that children

under 12 are much safer in the back seat. Our research found that, of the people who travel with children, around 56% never permit children in the front seat when the National Child Restraint Guidelines are not met. The other 44% allow children in the front seat for reasons shown in Figure 10.

In Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, children aged 4–7 can travel in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows if all other seats are occupied by children aged under seven. All children, regardless of seat position, must be in the applicable approved restraints.

[Read more about travelling safely with children.](#)

Figure 10: Reasons for permitting children to travel in the front seat

Q. When travelling with a child, which, if any, of the following are reasons you let children travel in the front seat?

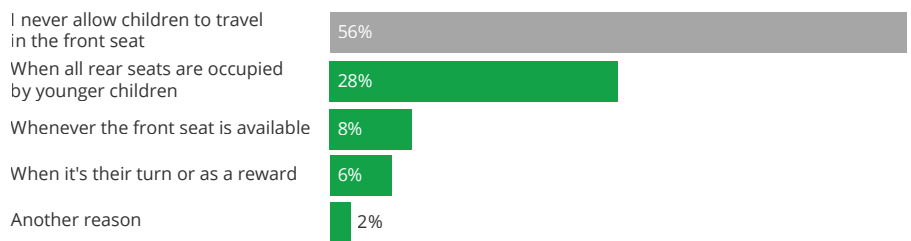


Figure 11: The five-step test for transitioning children to regular 'adult' car seats



¹ Source: NeuRA, *Is your child car seat installed safely*, accessed 7 October 2024

Australia

Melbourne (head office)

Tower 5, Collins Square
727 Collins Street
Docklands, Victoria 3008

Phone +61 3 8656 8900

Fax +61 3 8656 8585

North America

Greater Washington Area

Suite T500, 7900 Westpark Drive
Tysons, VA 22102

Phone +1 571-419-6100

Email corporate@transurban.com

Find us

