

## The Buzz Kiddy Distraction Study

Keep 'em occupied and safe\*

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whaaa!

### Introduction

Aussie parents have reported they get distracted, regularly, by their children while driving. Many say they have either had an accident or a 'near miss.' Kiddy distraction can be dangerous.

**The Buzz** Insurance talked to parents to understand why they're getting distracted by their children. The study aims to raise awareness about the issue and the consequences if parents don't manage this distraction, as well as to provide some helpful information that may prevent distraction in the first place.

**The Buzz** wants to keep kids safe in the car, and to keep other road users safe. **The Buzz** hopes this report helps.

\*\*\* If you have your own **Kiddy Distraction** experience and would like to share some tips with other parents, go to **The Buzz Mums** page on facebook. Or email The Buzz at [exchange@thebuzzinsurance.com.au](mailto:exchange@thebuzzinsurance.com.au)

### Research methodology

**The Buzz** commissioned Newspoll to do a national online survey between 26 and 29 in November among 1200 drivers aged 18-64 of which 267 were a parent of a child aged under eight.

### What parents say kids do that distract them

- "My kids often have something to play with...I've had items thrown at me a number of times while driving."
- "Pretending to choke."
- "Randomly opening the door."
- "Throwing things outside windows."
- "HUNGRY!"
- "Wanting your attention – mum look at this, mum, mum!"

### The Buzz Kiddy Distraction Study findings

Aussie parents have identified being distracted by their children while driving as a significant issue with one in five saying it has led to an accident or 'near miss'.

**Parents are stressed.** Ninety-five percent of parents claim to have experienced problems when driving with children in the car, with 75% finding driving with kids stressful and 40% having difficulty controlling their offspring in the car. Mums feel the heat more than dads as do younger parents more than their older counterparts.

**Distraction things kids do.** Youngsters whining (80%), being impatient (54%), wanting to go to the toilet when there isn't one nearby (51%), crying uncontrollably (49%), fighting (45%), being sick (43%) and taking off their seatbelt or moving around in the car (27%) are the most common distractions.

**The consequences.** As a result, 36% of parents say there have been times when driving with kids that they felt they weren't in complete control of the car, 25% have taken a wrong turn and 19% have had an accident or a 'near miss'.

This is heightened amongst big city drivers with 41% feeling out of control at times and 24% having an accident or a close shave.

**Older kids distract more.** Parents of children aged four to seven have more problems when driving with them than those with babies and toddlers. While tiny tots are more like to wail in their capsule or booster-seat, (57% vs. 44%) older children are worse at winging (87% vs. 77%), being impatient (74% vs. 41%), having trouble 'holding on' (69% vs. 41%), squabbling (63% vs. 34%) and being sick (51% vs. 37%).

Driving outside the state capitals also increases the likelihood of kids being impatient (60%), needing to go to the toilet when there isn't one nearby (54%) and being sick in the car (51%).

**Older kids? Double trouble!** And the more children you have the more likely you are to get angst in the car, for example 88% of parents with multiple children have suffered winging and whining children compared to 73% of parents with one child.

**How mums and dads cope.** Mums have more instances of their littlies whining and crying uncontrollably while dads are more likely to be affected by kids fighting.

To try and quiet down the kids, two thirds of parents have raised their voice, 48% have stopped the car and 17% have turned around and gone back home. Worryingly 27% of parents have turned around to talk to their kids in the back seat while still driving.

### Be aware: and keep 'em safe

- Don't take your eyes off the road to deal with distracting kids
- The non-driver parent or carer should interact with the children – not the driver
- Take regular 'pit stops' and let the kids run around
- Plan some fun games

Any distraction which results in the driver taking their eyes off the road is potentially dangerous.

While we can choose when to use a mobile phone, or be distracted by food or a GPS, screaming or upset children can invoke an instant response from the driver that may take the driver's eye from the road at a critical moment.

Turning around to deal with children, particularly when upset or agitated, may also inadvertently result in turning the wheel at the same time, a potentially lethal situation.

When you take your eyes off the road, even for one second, your car travels nearly 17 metres or almost four car-lengths. At freeway speeds this means your eyes are off the road for more than 30 metres.

In-car DVDs or hand-held computer games with headphones are very useful on long trips to keep kids from getting bored. Spoken games such as '*Spot The Cows*' can also keep kids occupied.

Only the non-driving parent should interact with the children during car trips with the kids encouraged not to talk to daddy or mummy while he or she is driving.

On longer trips, make regular 'pit stops' so kids can take a toilet break and have a run around.

## Be prepared: tips and tools to keep your kids distracted and safe

Parents have various ways of keeping their little ones busy and safe. In-car DVDs or hand-held games are commonly used by parents. Parents say they have played music (done by 75% of parents), got them to play games like I Spy (53%), put on a DVD (30%), or let them play hand-held computer games (27%).

### \*Games to amuse the kids\*

#### ***I spy***

Pick out an objective that everyone can see, then give them a clue by saying "I spy something... (say its shape, colour or size or the letter it starts with). The other players ask questions about what you see and you only answer with "yes" or "no". The first player who guesses right becomes the new spy.

#### ***Sweet and sour***

Wave to the car next to yours. If they wave back, they're sweet and if they don't, they're sour. The passenger with the most 'sweet' responses is the winner. Setting a time limit works best.

#### ***A to Z game***

Pick a topic eg. animal, and get the kids to take turns at naming something for each letter of the alphabet. Other topics that work well include fruit and vegetables, first names, surnames, countries, celebrities, cartoon characters and TV shows.

#### ***The category game***

Play it like the A to Z game but kids don't need to name things in alphabetical order.

#### ***What did I bring on my trip?***

Start this game with one of the kids saying "I'm going on a trip and I'm bringing..." The first player should name an item that starts with the letter "A", the next player repeats what has already been said but adds an item starting with the next letter of the alphabet.

#### ***Straight face game***

This one can be *very* funny. One child is "it" and the others pick a phrase for him. Try "the cat's tail." The others ask him questions, and he must always answer with "the cat's tail." Questions can include:

- What do you brush your teeth with?
- What is your favorite breakfast food?
- What would you write with?
- What do you comb your hair with?

When he laughs, it is someone else's turn to be "it." Other phrases to get the kids going include:

- My monkey's moustache
- Six smelly sneakers