

PRESS RELEASE

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VINCI AUTOROUTES FOUNDATION FOR RESPONSIBLE DRIVING/IPSOS STUDY

Do parents set a good example for their children when driving?

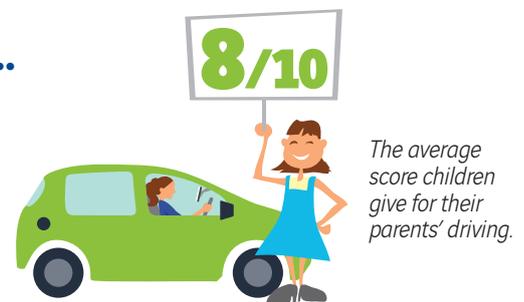
On the eve of the Christmas holidays, a period of family road trips, the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation for Responsible Driving reveals the results of an unprecedented study of parents' driving habits. Do they change their driving habits when children are in the car? How do children see their parents' driving behaviour? How does all this relate to road safety, and more generally to passing on responsible driving and compliance with the road rules to their children?

The study performed by Ipsos for the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation has two interconnected sections: an initial quantitative study of a sample of 1000 parents and children aged 8 to 16, and a subsequent qualitative study involving family interviews compiled with expert child and adolescent psychiatrist Professor Daniel Marcelli.

Children trust their parents' driving behaviour... and parents are very self-confident

Children feel safe in cars and spontaneously demonstrate considerable trust in their parents' driving skills: on average they give them a score of 8/10.

Take for example this 12-year old boy talking about his mother: **"She's an excellent driver and anyway she's my mum and she won't take risks when I'm around"**. Or this 16-year old: **"It's OK, you trust your parents and you are used to their driving, they're in charge. It's all cool"**. Even if the parents give themselves the slightly lower average score of 7.3, they are still very confident about their driving. Take for example, Isabelle, a mother of three: **"I'm a very relaxed driver, I know what I'm doing"**. Or Yoann, father of two: **"I've never had an accident; I'm totally in control"**.



"For children, the car is an extension of the home, a cocoon where they feel safe and relaxed. The parents behave like all other drivers; they enjoy the pleasure conferred by the steering wheel and the at-times overly confident sense of being in control."

Professor Daniel Marcelli, child and adolescent psychiatrist.

How do parents behave when children are in the car?



68%

stick to the speed limit



66%

lose their calm



45%

set off on long trips at night



33%

telephone while driving

Risky driver behaviour: children observe and are not fooled

While parents modify certain behaviour when driving with the family in the car (68% drive more slowly and 66% stay calmer), they are still far from adopting responsible driving practices – and they are aware of the fact:

- 77% admit speeding; behaviour confirmed by 65% of children who find their parents drive too fast
- 59% sometimes forget to indicate when turning; also noted by 59% of children
- 38% of parents fail to stop to allow pedestrians to cross the road. This road rule infringement is noted by 31% of children, who are often themselves pedestrians.

Non-compliance with the road rules or uncivil behaviour are often justified by parents on the grounds of complicated daily lives, increasingly fast lifestyles and the stress that that leads to. For example, Jennifer, a mother of a three-year old daughter and seven-month old son, explains: **“When you have children, you are often in a hurry and tired. You are always having to take them somewhere, I’m always in a rush, so I’m not going to drive at 30 km/h and anyway I know the route I take like the back of my hand”**.

“Children pay particular attention to how their parents drive. They have a well-developed sense of when their parents are rude to other people or break the road rules; their perception coincides perfectly with the reality of their parents’ behaviour. The latter, whether they realise it or not, drive under the keen observation of their children. In this sense, they are in no position to dodge their responsibility as drivers.”

Bernadette Moreau, General Delegate at the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation.

Close-up on the seat belt

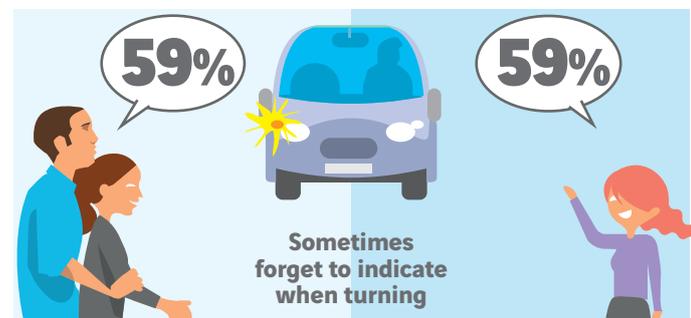
The study also looked at the attention parents’ pay to wearing seat belts, one of the prime reflexes to adopt in cars, and one of the best culturally accepted and developed road rules. While this reflex would seem to have become second nature, the results are in fact not particularly reassuring:

- 22% do not systematically check that their children are wearing their seat belt and 27% of children note this

- 11% of parents say they sometimes do not make their children wear their seat belt for very short trips and 17% of 8 to 11-year olds admit they do not wear a seat belt for everyday trips. This negligent behaviour is disturbing given that 34% of rear passengers killed in 2014 were not wearing a seat belt⁽¹⁾.

1. French inter-ministerial road safety observatory (ONISR).

Behaviour in the car



Parents are concerned about their children's education but tend to forget their duty as a role model

81% of children note that their parents swear when driving, something to which parents themselves freely admit (76%). And yet, they try to make an effort and set an example for their children (2/3 say they try not to get angry when their children are around), like Annabelle, a mother of a 12-year old: **"Driving in town, I used to blast the horn and swear. Now, my son is in the back seat and he understands and repeats what I say. So, now I try and avoid acting like that."** Similarly, Sébastien, father of a little three-year old girl: **"Sometimes she laughs and sometimes she repeats what I say. So, I pay attention to the words I use"**.

While parents are aware of their role with regard to swearing and the risk of their children immediately imitating them, many still break certain road rules. Telephoning while driving in particular stands out:

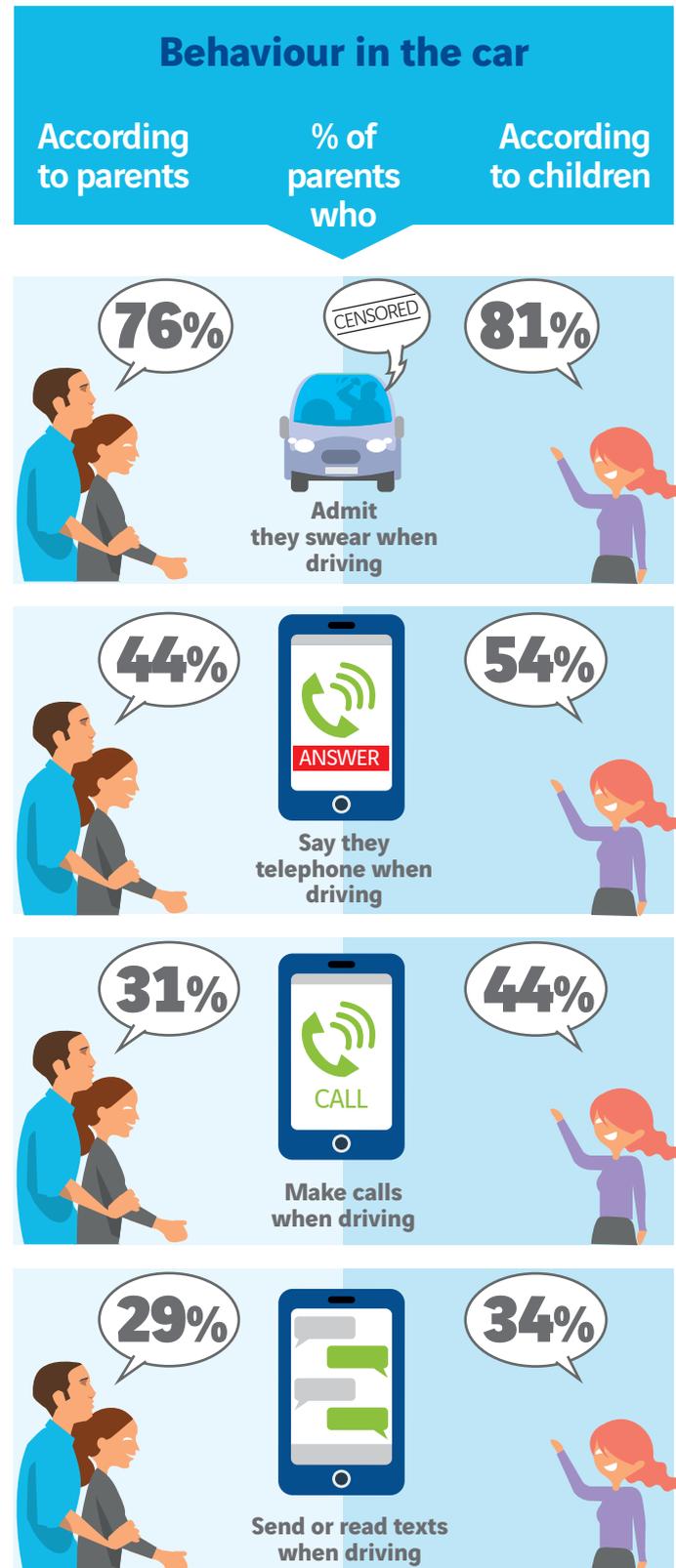
- 44% of parents admit they answer the phone when driving; 54% of children say they have witnessed this behaviour
- 31% of parents make calls on their mobile when driving, which is observed by 44% of children
- 29% of parents send and receive texts while driving (this figure rises to 42% for parents aged under 35); more than one third (34%) of children have observed this behaviour.

Some parents, more aware of the risks, ask their children to answer on their behalf.

Annabelle says: **"Sometimes I give him my phone and ask him to answer for me and to just say that I'm driving and that I'll call back"**.

"The mobile phone has become an extension of the self. Yet, parents and children know that telephoning while driving is one of the leading causes of accidents. Parents need to be aware that they are extremely strong role models for their children. When parents telephone while driving, children learn that you can ignore the rules and laws. Do parents really want to put their children in danger? Do they want to teach them not to respect the law?"

Professor Daniel Marcelli, child and adolescent psychiatrist.



Long family trips: and what if children taught their parents to take a real break?

78% of parents say they take more frequent breaks when travelling with their children. On average, they stop every 2 hours and 36 minutes, that is still 36 minutes more than the recommended average. However, more than one out of 10 parents (13%) wait more than three hours to take a break. Children's moods can then become a salutary warning to remind parents that it is time for the whole family to take a break. When children start to argue, as father of three David says, **"It's stressful, it's the worst. When it happens, I start to shout! If it really gets to me, I stop. They get out and stretch their legs."**

But according to the children, almost one third of parents (32%) just make a mini-break to go to the toilet or fill up with petrol, without taking the time to eat and drink something, play or have a rest.

The survey also reveals that young parents (under 35-year olds) tend to take fewer breaks than the others when travelling with their children (33% compared with 13% of parents on average) and they often drive at night (29% compared with 25% on average).



78%

of parents say they take more breaks when travelling with their children.

"To sit still is not a natural position for children. So, when they start to become restless, it is because sitting still is uncomfortable for them: parents should see restlessness as an important sign that it is time to take a break and let them stretch their little legs."

Professor Daniel Marcelli, child and adolescent psychiatrist.

"While such solutions may appear to make life easier for the parents who make the most of their children's sleep to drive at night, they are not recommended as the lack of regular breaks and night driving are the source of proven risks⁽¹⁾."

Bernadette Moreau, General Delegate at the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation

1. On the motorway, 1 fatality out of 3 is linked to drowsiness and 45.5% of fatalities occur at night, despite this period accounting for just 10% of traffic (ASFA-French Association of Motorway Operators, 2015).



1/3

of children say their parents only stop to go to the toilet or fill-up with petrol.

2 hours and 36 minutes



The average driving time after which parents take a break when travelling with their children, that is 36 minutes longer than the recommended time.



33%
of young parents take fewer breaks when travelling with their children compared with 13% of parents on average.



Close up on learning good behaviour

The study has highlighted different stages in children's learning of good driving behaviour and reflexes. Passing on good reflexes starts at a very early age with the introduction of the basic rules, such as systematically wearing a seat belt. Between 0 and 4, children do not question the standards or framework that is imposed on them. From 5 years on, children become more curious and learn about the road rules from their parents.

Take this mother who explains: ***"I get him interested. I ask him, 'Do you know what this sign means? Do you know why I did this or that? What should I do here? We talk about what's around us. I arouse his curiosity."***

"The enclosed space of a car is an excellent place in which to engage children in a discussion. Children enjoy learning the road rules and good driving practices."

"The enclosed space of a car is an excellent place to engage in a parent/child discussion", says Daniel Marcelli. "Explain what you are doing, the road rules, road and traffic signs... children are interested in that sort of thing and it helps them to focus their attention and to behave better. Children enjoy learning the road rules. At the opposite end of the spectrum, when parents abuse other drivers, children also learn that on the road it is other people who are the source of danger, whereas in fact it is each individual. Being over-confident is a well identified risk factor."

Things change again around 12 years when adolescents start to compare their own points of view with those of their parents. They start to form their own opinions about road safety, which can run counter to their parents' practices, like this 15-year old teenager who says to her mother, ***"Put your seat belt on. You never know the police might be around, or worse, we might have an accident."***

A change that is confirmed by Daniel Marcelli: "Most children admire their parents unreservedly. But that changes when they reach adolescence. They start to criticise, including in the car. Teenagers are very attentive to their parents' behaviour. After all, it's an opportunity for them to check whether their parents 'behave properly', to see whether they do what they say or on the contrary whether they often do something different from what they say. In the latter case, when a teenager gets on his scooter, why should he obey the rules that his parents ignore?"

"Teenagers are very attentive to their parents' behaviour. It's an opportunity for them to check whether their parents do as they say or on the contrary the opposite of what they say."

*Professor Daniel Marcelli,
child and adolescent psychiatrist.*

PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE



0-4 YEARS

*Accept the rules
as givens*

LEARNING



5-11 YEARS

*Observe and ask questions,
make objections*

SELF-ASSERTION



12-17 YEARS

*Speak out with assurance
and rebel*

Study method

- Quantitative study: Ipsos Internet survey from 4 to 10 June 2015 of a sample of 502 children aged between 8 and 16, and 501 parents of children in this same age bracket.
NB: The children and parents did not belong to the same family.
The quota method was used to ensure the representativeness of each sample.
- Qualitative study: 6 home interviews lasting one and a half hours with families in the Paris region and in Rennes (France) between 17 and 25 November 2015.

About the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation for Responsible Driving

Created in February 2011, the VINCI Autoroutes Foundation for Responsible Driving is a laboratory, observatory and source of information specifically focused on improving road safety. It aims to help bring about changes in driver behaviour and to encourage drivers to contribute to their own safety and to that of other road users. Its actions include: information campaigns to raise awareness of road risks; funding for innovative scientific research in certain areas of risky driver behaviour that have not been sufficiently explored or are poorly identified by road users; and finally to fund initiatives by non-profit associations or citizen initiatives aimed at encouraging responsible driving.

<http://fondation.vinci-autoroutes.com> (In French only) and <http://roulons-autrement.com>

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