



# SHIFTING GEARS: HOW BECOMING A PARENT CHANGES DRIVING FOREVER





## **INTRODUCTION**

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Volvo Car USA has teamed up with The Harris Poll to deepen insights into the American opinion across four core themes: design, safety, technology and environment. These insights are distilled into “Volvo Reports” and will feature a different topic each month.

This edition of Volvo Reports focuses on new parents and explores the challenges they face given the influx of information and mixed messages available regarding child safety. Further amplifying Volvo’s position as the global leader in vehicle safety, this report sought to provide new parents with the necessary resources to aid them in keeping their child safe.

We encourage you to use these statistics freely, properly sourcing Volvo Car USA/The Harris Poll. If you have any questions regarding these findings, or would like to delve deeper into how Volvo is protecting all occupants in the event of an accident, please reach out to Jim Nichols at [jim.nichols@volvocars.com](mailto:jim.nichols@volvocars.com)

### **METHODOLOGY**

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Volvo from July 11-17, 2018, among 1,083 U.S. parents ages 18 and older who have children under 18 that live in their household. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

# BABY ON BOARD-ING

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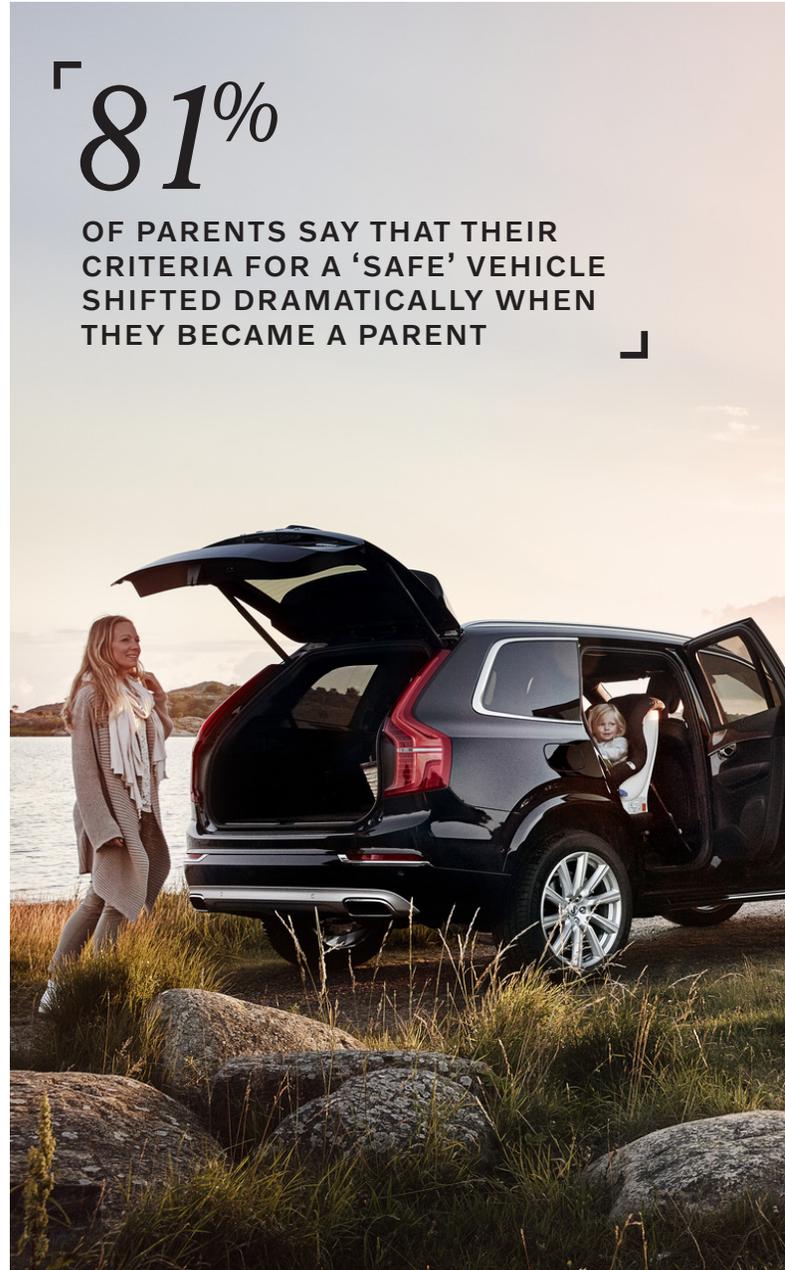
There are few life events that are simultaneously as overwhelming and exhilarating as becoming a parent. Before the arrival of their new baby, parents are tasked with a staggering number of tasks, from baby-proofing the home to reevaluating what a “full night’s sleep” truly is. Driving is no exception. In fact, most parents find their perception of driving to be forever changed with the arrival of a little one.

First and foremost, definitions of “safety” evolve and grow. 81% of parents say their criteria for a “safe” vehicle shifted dramatically when they became a parent. This is truer than ever before in a climate where parents are charged with keeping their kids safe from increasing sources of harm. 79% say potential threats to children’s safety have increased in the last 10 years, putting them under more pressure to find the right vehicle to protect their family.

To help them feel equipped to handle the roads with their new precious cargo, parents are also seeking information and guidance. Most believe this shift is so dramatic that it warrants custom driver education. In fact, 70% wish there was education around safe driving specifically designed for parents.

In an era of plugged-in parenting, increased scrutiny is another reality of life as a new parent. The vast majority of parents agree that people judge how parents care for their children more than they did 10 years ago (84%). This is felt most acutely among those who are new to parenting. Among new parents with children under the age of two, as well as millennial parents, this number rises to 90%.

For one-third of parents, this judgment extends to the type of car their peers drive, saying “the type of car a parent drives says a lot about their parenting style.” Among millennial parents, this number rises to 40%.



# SAFETY GEAR – PARENTING FRIEND OR FOE?

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As parents take on these new challenges and adapt to their new realities, many rely on products to help keep their children safe. With over 60,000 products available in the baby section on Amazon, parents have never had more options or more information available to help them make decisions.

Yet this immense volume often leads to more confusion and stress, particularly for new parents who are increasingly anxious about making the right decision. Two-thirds say “the amount of safety information available to new parents creates new sources of worry, rather than alleviating them.” Almost all (97%) of new parents say they found it overwhelming to research products as a new parent due to the large amount of information and products available.

Car seats are a particularly vexing piece of baby gear, with 63% of new parents citing them as overwhelming to research, far surpassing other products like strollers (42%)

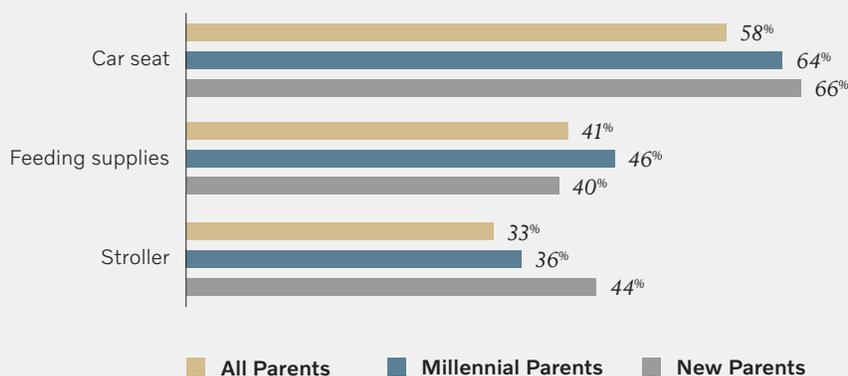
and feeding supplies (40%). Much of this information overload is due to the quantity to choose from: three out of four new parents said the number of car seat models available today is staggeringly high.

The number of criteria that factor into the decision can also be stressful. Finding the safest seat is the top pain point, cited by 36% of parents, followed by installing the seat (20%) and keeping up with recalls (19%).

After the stress of the selection process, many parents still face buyer’s remorse, especially those who have most recently gone through the process. While 32% of parents overall wish they had chosen a different car seat, this number rises among new parents (41%) and millennial parents (47%).

## OVERWHELMING TO RESEARCH AS A NEW PARENT

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Once parents have found the right seat, installation brings a new set of challenges. While the majority of parents reported they read the installation manual when they purchased the seat (64%), slightly more than a quarter say they asked friends or family for advice (27%) or watched videos online (27%). Even fewer say they visited a police or fire station (18%) or a car seat safety technician (12%), but they wish this type of expert help was available. In fact, more than half would use a professional car seat installer if they had access to one (55%). Among millennial parents and new parents, this number rises to 65%.

This expert help is not only desired, but needed, as misinformation about car seat best practices is common. 63% of parents say they use both the LATCH system and seat belt to fasten the seat in place, even though most seats are equipped to buckle into only one, as described in the vehicle's safety manual. According to the Mayo Clinic, car seats should be installed using either the seat belt or Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) system, not both, unless otherwise specified in your car seat and vehicle's safety manual.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the number of tasks required to keep up with car seats from day to day can be a bit much for parents. Roughly half say they regularly make sure the straps are tight under their child's armpit for each ride (55%) and check to

see if the child has outgrown the car seat (50%). When it comes to checking the car seat expiration date and removing the child's coats before putting them into the seat, these numbers drop to 35%. A similar number of parents say they use covers, blankets and other accessories in the car seat (27%), which can detract from the seat's ability to keep kids safe. According to the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, aftermarket, third-party accessories should not be used in car seats unless approved specifically by your car seat manufacturer.<sup>2</sup>

### WOULD USE A PROFESSIONAL CAR SEAT INSTALLER IF THEY HAD ACCESS TO ONE

55%

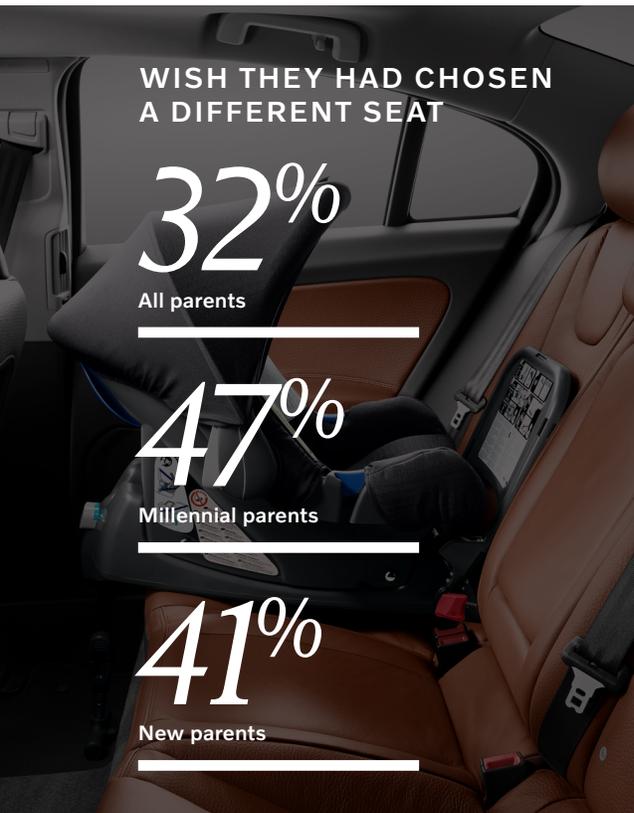
All parents

65%

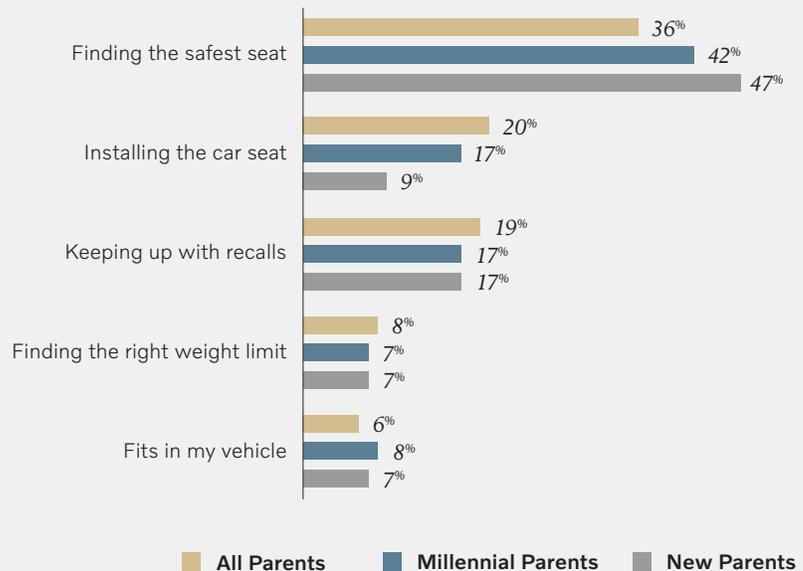
Millennial parents

65%

New parents



### PAIN POINTS IN CHOOSING A CAR SEAT



<sup>1</sup> Car Seat Safety: Avoid 10 Common Mistakes | The Mayo Clinic, Retrieved July 25th, 2018, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/in-depth/car-seat-safety/art-20043939>

<sup>2</sup> The Surprising Factor That Makes Car Seats Less Safe | Motherly, Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, Retrieved July 25th, 2018, <https://www.motherly.com/news/the-surprising-thing-many-parents-do-that-can-void-car-seat-warranty>

## KID-FRIENDLY CARS

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To help improve safety without the hassle, parents are looking for vehicle manufacturers to step up their design. At the top of their vehicle feature wish list is a mirror system to give them visibility of their child in a rear-facing car seat (58%). One-third would like to take this one step further with a modular design that features swivel seats that can access the backseat (32%).

When it comes to car seats, parents are looking for improvements to in-vehicle features and seat design itself. 46% say improved car seat anchors and connectors would elevate their driving experience, while 37% would like car seats designed for their exact vehicle model.

On-demand services that can fit into their busy schedules are also a priority. Parents are more likely to associate the experience of owning a luxury vehicle with a built-in 24/7 on-call service system (50%, compared to 44% non-parents), the ability to switch out or upgrade their vehicle after a certain amount of time (43%, compared to 36% of non-parents), and have fuel automatically delivered to their parked car when it is near empty (39%, compared to 33% of non-parents).



# VOLVO AND CHILD SAFETY

Becoming a parent can be both a joyous and overwhelming moment in life, in more ways than one. A child's safety is of utmost concern to new parents, and an influx of information and product choices can often leave them feeling inundated and confused as to which options are best. Volvo, a leader in vehicle safety for decades, is dedicated to helping new parents feel secure and confident in protecting their children while on the road.

Improving child safety in automobiles has long been a guiding principle at Volvo. Through a unique approach that combines exhaustive research with practical innovation, the automaker is committed to continuous improvements that ultimately produce ultra-safe cars, highlighted by several world firsts including: the three-point safety belt (1959), child restraint prototype (1964), rear-facing child restraint (1972), child safety booster cushion (1978) and many more.

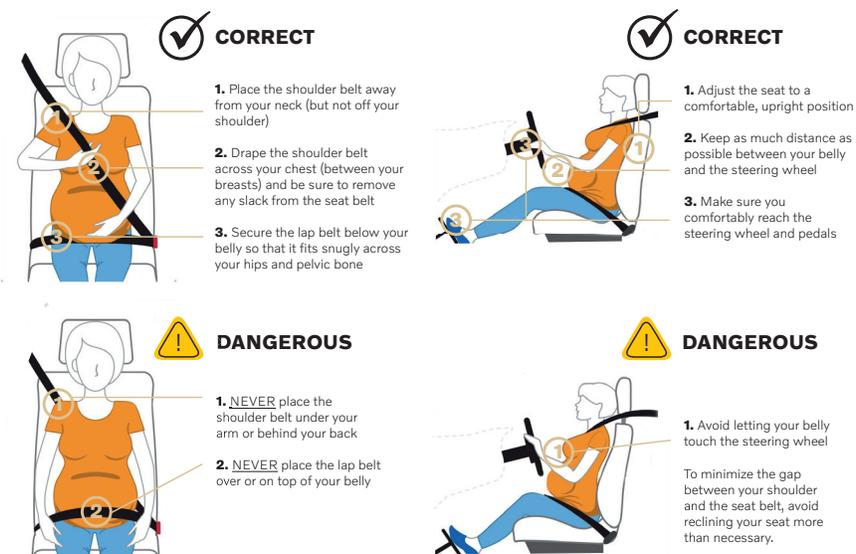
Volvo's knowledge and expertise in the safety category has them driving towards "Vision 2020", which states that no one should be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo car by 2020.

## WEARING A SEATBELT WHILE EXPECTING

While many parents are concerned with safety once a child is born, many expecting mothers are unaware of how to properly wear a seatbelt while pregnant. Since 2001, researchers at Volvo Cars have studied how to keep those expecting both comfortable and safe, using innovative virtual crash testing to simulate frontal impacts in the event of an accident.

The consensus: Pregnant women should always use safety belts positioned as close to the wearer's body as possible while remaining untwisted. The belt should be snug against the mid-shoulder, with the diagonal section of the belt between the breasts and along the side of the belly. The lap section of the belt should be flat against the side of the thigh, as low as possible below the belly, to ensure the occupant is restrained over the body's stronger areas, including the upper torso and pelvis and protecting the soft abdomen area.

## WHAT IS THE CORRECT WAY TO WEAR A SEAT BELT?



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

## FINDING THE RIGHT TYPE OF SEAT

Fitting children into a car seat or booster seat that aligns with their height, body weight and age, is crucial for their safety on the road.

Children under the age of three in the U.S., depending on the state, are required to sit in a rear-facing car seat, however, there is a common misconception that once they surpass this age, they can move to a forward-facing seat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children remain rear-facing until the child reaches the top height and weight restrictions for the car seat<sup>3</sup>, while Volvo offers global guidance that children should remain rear-facing until the age of four. Ultimately, children are most safe in a vehicle when they are rear-facing.

As children grow, how they should safely sit in a car will continue to change. Once a child outgrows a rear-facing seat, they are then required to sit in a forward-facing seat before transitioning to a booster seat. Children may graduate to a seat belt once the lap belt properly lies across the upper thighs, rather than the stomach, and the shoulder belt lies across the shoulder and chest, rather than the neck or face.

When considering their children's safety, it's critical for parents and caregivers to understand that a child is not a smaller version of an adult. A child's head weighs significantly more in proportion to the body, and the neck is weaker. Should a frontal accident occur, children are less likely to experience injury to the neck and head area if they are rear-facing compared to forward-facing.

## INSTALLING A CAR SEAT PROPERLY

Once parents have narrowed down their selections, they must ensure their preferred car seat is compatible with their vehicle of choice. Unfortunately, not all seats fit all vehicles, so NHTSA recommends that parents refer to their vehicle manufacturers' manual to help guide them in choosing one that is compatible.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, NHTSA arms parents with the 'Car Seat Finder' tool that allows them to compare seats and ease-of-use ratings to find the right car seat for their child.<sup>4</sup> Volvo has been testing car seats in its models for over fifty years, in addition to building proprietary car seats that serve children ages newborn to 10-years-old. Outside of the U.S., Volvo also provides parents with the Volvo Child Seat Configurator resource that allows them to select their Volvo model to see which Volvo car seats are compatible.

After selecting an appropriate seat for a child, it is crucial that the seat is installed correctly in the vehicle. While many resources are available for parents to instruct them on proper installation, mixed messages and options can be overwhelming. Parents can utilize the NHTSA 'Car Seat Installation Guide' that provides step by step instructions on how to install 10 types of car seats.<sup>4</sup> NHTSA and Volvo also recommend finding a Car Seat Installation expert or technician in their area to ensure a child seat is properly fitted to their vehicle.<sup>4</sup>

## A LASTING COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

In addition to continuing to research, adjust, and innovate new child safety products in present-day vehicles, Volvo has also looked to the future of child safety, investigating new ways of making life easier for parents through the Excellence child seat concept. Created exclusively for its [XC90 Excellence](#) model, the child seat concept features a rearward-facing seat for optimum protection and comfort that swivels to make it easier to get a child in and out, and allows adults to maintain eye contact with their loved ones.

This year on National Seat Check Saturday (September 29), parents can visit participating local Volvo retailers, regardless of their type of vehicle, and have safety technicians properly install or check an already installed car seat to ensure it is safely placed in the vehicle, free of charge. You can find a list of participating retailers [here](#) or a certified child passenger safety (CPS) technician in your area [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> New Child Passenger Safety Seat Guidance Advises Kids to Ride Rear-Facing As Long As Possible; Drops Age Criterion | AAP News, Retrieved September 10th, 2018, from <http://www.aapublications.org/news/2018/08/30/passengersafety083018>

<sup>4</sup> Car Seats and Booster Seats | National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Retrieved September 10th, 2018, from <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats>