



# Voices of Child Health REPORT

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## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: SAFETY SUMMARY

24% of parents reported that their child used an e-scooter, and 9% reported that their child used an e-bike.

Youth helmet use was lower when using e-scooters compared to ATVs, e-bikes and snowmobiles.

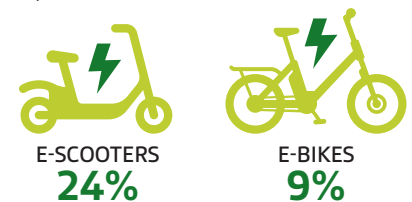
Families with older children were less likely to require helmets than families with young children.

## Use of Motorized Vehicles and Helmets: Safety Practices of Illinois Families

Electric scooters (e-scooters) and electric bicycles (e-bikes) have become a popular and convenient way to travel (Figure 1). They can be rented for rideshare or purchased for personal use.<sup>1</sup> However, all motorized recreational vehicles like e-scooters, e-bikes, ATVs, and snowmobiles come with risks to riders' safety, especially children and adolescent riders. Younger riders are at high risk of injury and death, even when using vehicles under parental supervision.<sup>2</sup> Injuries directly caused by e-scooters have been on the rise in recent years, including head and neck injuries and limb fractures.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, there were 42,200 emergency room visits for injuries caused by e-scooters in 2021, which is a 66% increase from 2020.<sup>4</sup>

This month's *Voices of Child Health Report* explores parents' responses to questions related to the use of e-scooters, e-bikes, ATVs (all-terrain vehicles like four-wheelers) and snowmobiles. We surveyed over 1,000 parents with children less than 18 years old from both urban and rural communities across the state of Illinois.

**Figure 1.** Percentage of Illinois parents who reported their children use e-scooters or e-bikes



### Motorized vehicle use risks

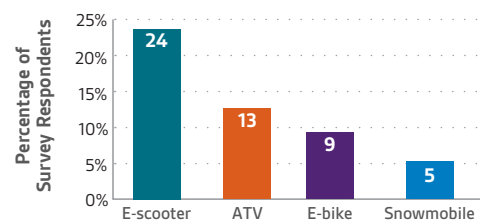
Caregivers and parents should learn the risks of traveling on motorized vehicles to best understand how to protect their children and adolescents from injury. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) warns against the use of e-scooters under the age of 16 because they cannot legally drive; whereas age of recommended use for e-bikes varies by speed and type. Additionally, the AAP discusses crucial safety practices to keep children safe when operating motorized vehicles, like wearing helmets, knee and elbow pads, and riding one person at a time.<sup>4</sup>

Even with these recommendations, there is inconsistent helmet use among Illinois families. In our survey, we found that e-scooters were the motorized vehicle most frequently used by children (24%) (Figure 2). However, helmet use was lowest for e-scooter riders (36%) compared to e-bikes (48%), ATVs (51%) and snowmobiles (63%) (Figure 3).

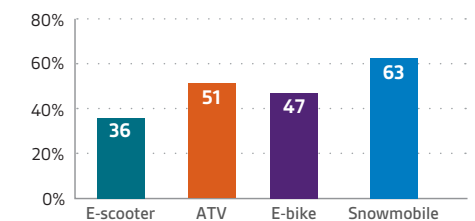
### Safer motorized vehicle use

Children using e-scooters are more likely to be in a traffic incident compared to children using non-electric scooters, possibly due to the higher speeds that these vehicles can reach.<sup>5</sup> The rate of injury to children from e-bikes has increased from 2011 to 2023.<sup>3</sup> In particular, children between 10–13 years old are the most frequently injured age group. Previous research, conducted among bicyclists, has shown that wearing a helmet can decrease the risk of head

**Figure 2.** Percentage of Illinois parents whose children use each type of motorized vehicle



**Figure 3.** Percentage of Illinois parents who always require that their child use a helmet, by vehicle type



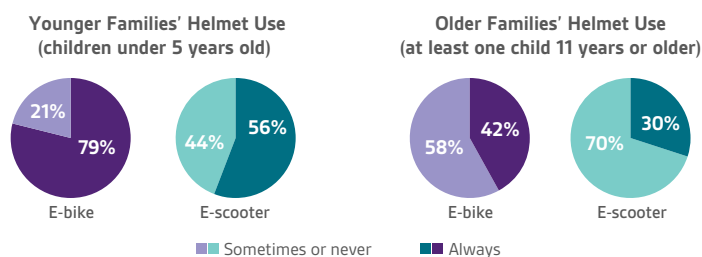
injuries by 85% and facial injuries by 65%.<sup>2</sup> More research is needed to understand the degree to which helmets decrease the risk of injuries among e-bike and e-scooter users.

In our survey, only 36% of Illinois parents reported always encouraging their children to wear a helmet while riding an e-scooter. This is considerably lower than results from a national survey of parents of 5- to 14-year-olds, that found more than half (57%) of parents always encouraged helmet use, indicating that Illinois parents may insist on helmet use less than the national average.

### Age-dependent e-bike and e-scooter safety practices

Families with younger children reported using helmets more than families with older children, which may contribute to adolescents and teens being most vulnerable to injury. In households with only young children (under 5 years old), 79% of children always wore helmets on e-bikes, whereas in families with at least one older child (11 years or older), only 42% of children always wore a helmet on e-bikes. A similar trend occurred for helmet use with e-scooters: 56% of families with only young children always required helmets compared to just 30% of families with at least one older child.

**Figure 4.** Proportion of helmet use for e-bikes and e-scooters, by household child age



### Parent education level and helmet use on e-scooters

Illinois parents responded similarly about helmet use across income level, race and whether they lived in an urban or rural community. However, helmet use differed by parent education level. Parents with a college degree were more likely to report always requiring their child to wear a helmet on an e-scooter (45%) compared to parents without a college degree (29%). This difference highlights a group of children where a higher proportion are at risk for more severe injury.

### Tips for teenage riders<sup>7</sup>

- **Wear protective gear and visible clothing** including helmet, closed-toe shoes, and elbow and knee pads to prevent or reduce the severity of e-scooter injuries. This also includes reflective gear when riding at night and avoiding use in rain, fog and poor-visibility weather.<sup>4</sup>
- **Stay alert and avoid texting** or listening to music while riding. Use both hands to operate the scooter and be aware of your surroundings.
- **Do not ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**
- **Obey all traffic signals**, signs, and street markings, and yield to pedestrians.
- **Use bike lanes when available and avoid pedestrian walkways.** If not available, stay on the right side of least-busy roads and off the highway.<sup>4</sup>
- **Start slow and in a safe location free of cars or pedestrian obstructions.** The accelerator and braking tabs on the handles can take getting used to.<sup>4</sup>
- **Keep speeds below 15 miles per hour**, with slower speed in busy areas. Do not ride in low visibility or poor traction conditions.

### Recommendations for young children

- **Children under 16 should not operate or ride on motorized or e-scooters.** In some Illinois municipalities, it is illegal for kids under 16 to use an e-scooter.<sup>6</sup>
- **Initiate and reinforce good habits** on non-motorized vehicles including tricycles, bicycles and scooters by wearing helmets and leading by example. Adult riders are also at risk for injury or death.<sup>4</sup>

### Public policy

As the use of e-scooters and e-bikes becomes more common, experts push to establish regulations to promote safety. Suburban areas around Chicago began restricting e-bike use in August and September 2025.<sup>8</sup> It is important to inform the public about the potential dangers when children use e-scooters and e-bikes, and to provide information about best practices for safety. Regulations and safety practices for all riders are crucial to helping Illinois families travel safely as transportation technology changes.

### REFERENCES

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### HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey to explore parents' behaviors related to motorized vehicle use and safety. A probability-based sample was drawn from a panel of parents with children aged 0-17 who lived in the state of Illinois. The survey was administered online and by phone, in English or Spanish, by [NORC at the University of Chicago](#). Survey responses were weighted to match demographic benchmarks for Illinois. The survey completion rate was 35%.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

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