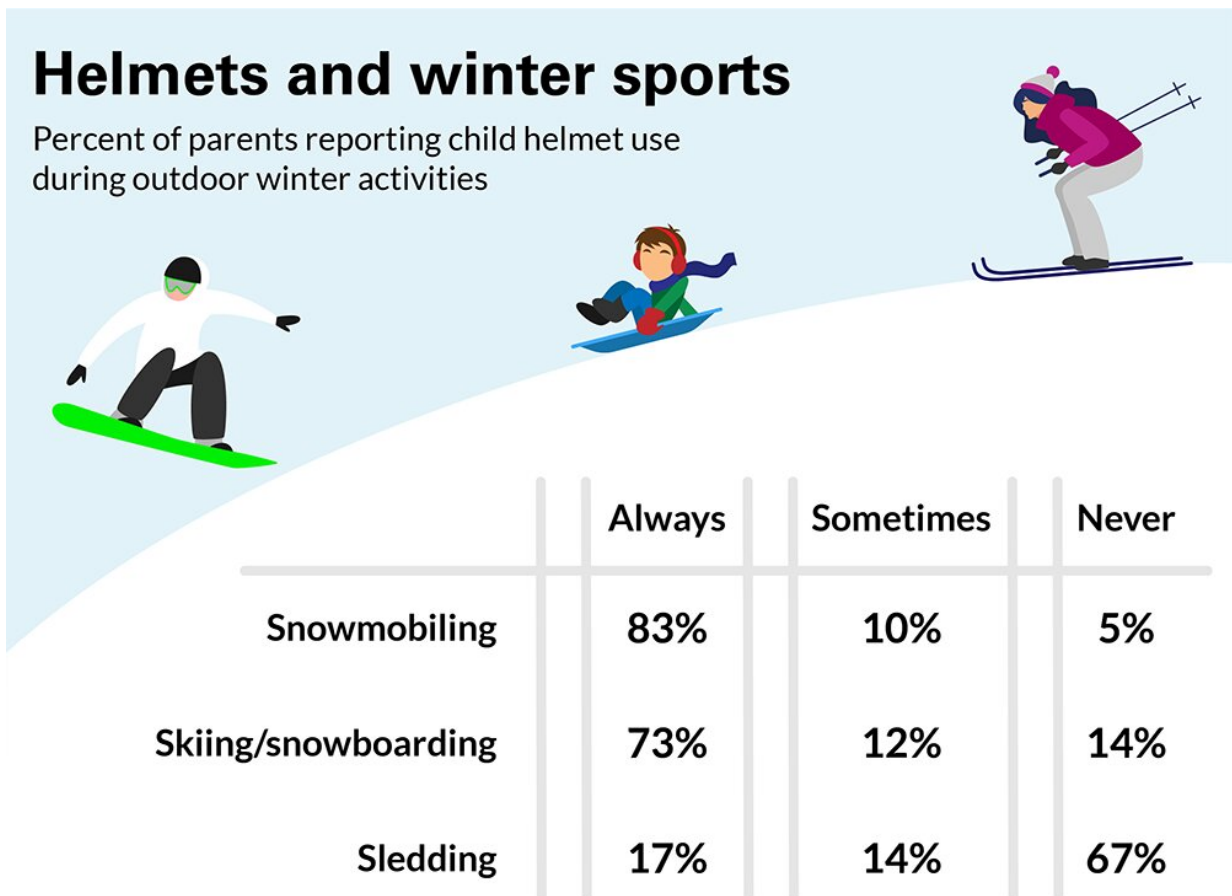


National Poll: Two in three parents don't make kids use helmets when sledding

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Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2022

2 in 3 parents don't make kids use helmets when sledding, and not all parents say their children consistently wear a helmet when downhill skiing or snowboarding. Credit: University of Michigan Health C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

Snow days bring many families to ski slopes and sledding hills for winter fun, but they may also come with injury risks for kids.

And parents may not always consider these risks, a new national poll suggests.

Only three-quarters of parents say their [child](#) consistently wears a helmet when downhill skiing or snowboarding, and nearly 70 % of parents report their child never wears a helmet sledding, according to the University of Michigan Health C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

Parents are also less likely to talk to their child about safety rules when sledding compared to other [winter activities](#).

"Activities like sledding and skiing offer families an exciting way to enjoy the winter months outdoors," said Mott Poll co-director Sarah Clark, M.P.H. "But parents are responsible for taking the right steps to minimize injury risks for their children."

The poll report was based on responses from 1,992 parents with at least one child aged 3-18 in October, 2021.

Many parents overlook sledding risks

Three-quarters of parents polled say their child will experience winter weather, either living in a place that has frequent or occasional cold and snow or when visiting cold-weather places. And sledding was the most common winter activity these parents expected their child to participate in.

But sledding injuries, such as fractures, strains, and sprains, aren't uncommon, with 220,488 patients treated in U.S. emergency departments for sledding-related injuries between 2008 through 2017. Nearly 70% of these patients were children ages 19 years and younger.

Several severe sledding accidents have also been in the news over recent years.

Still, some parents may not consider sledding as dangerous as other winter sports, Clark says. Just one in six parents polled discussed safety rules about sledding with their kids, such as how to avoid collisions and getting off the sled safely at the bottom of the hill.

"Because sledding is so common, parents may overlook important safety concerns," Clark said. "However, to avoid injuries, parents should ensure the sledding area is free of trees or other objects and has a flat runoff area at the bottom of the hill. Parents should also make sure children understand strategies to avoid collisions with other sledders."

Head injuries are the biggest concern if a child falls or collides with another sledder or object. Although only a third of parents report their child wears a helmet when sledding, this may increase over time, Clark notes, similar to the increase in helmet use when skiing. Currently, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents consider having their child wear a helmet when sledding.

Fewer parents polled expect their child will participate in downhill skiing, snowboarding or snowmobiling. Most of those who did say their child wears a helmet when snowmobiling (83% at all times, 10% some of the time) and downhill skiing or snowboarding (73% at all times, 12% some of the time).

Among parents of younger children ages three to nine, nearly all say

their child always has adult supervision when snowmobiling, downhill skiing or snowboarding but less often for [sledding](#).

For older children ages 10-18, parents report more supervision for snowmobiling compared to [downhill skiing](#) or snowboarding.

"Very young children need supervision at all times during winter sports activities, either from a parent or another trusted adult," Clark said.

"This allows parents to ensure children are following [safety rules](#), and to decide to leave if the area is getting too crowded or if other people are acting unsafely."

With older children, parents need to use their judgment on whether the child is mature enough to practice safety strategies, Clark notes. If children do not have adult supervision on site, [parents](#) should ensure children have a cell phone and that a parent will be available to respond quickly should there be an [injury](#) or other emergency.

[See more tips](#) on [winter](#) safety and [children](#) from the Mott Pediatric Trauma Injury Prevention program.

Provided by University of Michigan

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