2025

Consumer Insights Report

U.S. shopper trends along the car buying and selling journey

CarGurus®

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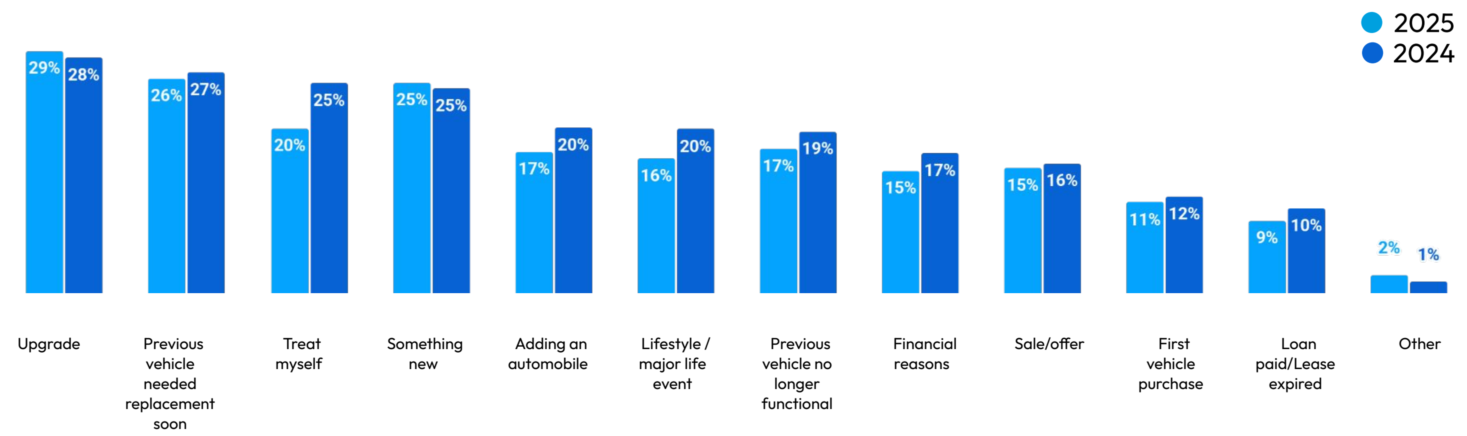
Explore the latest findings from CarGurus' 8th annual path-to-purchase study.

The Consumer Mindset

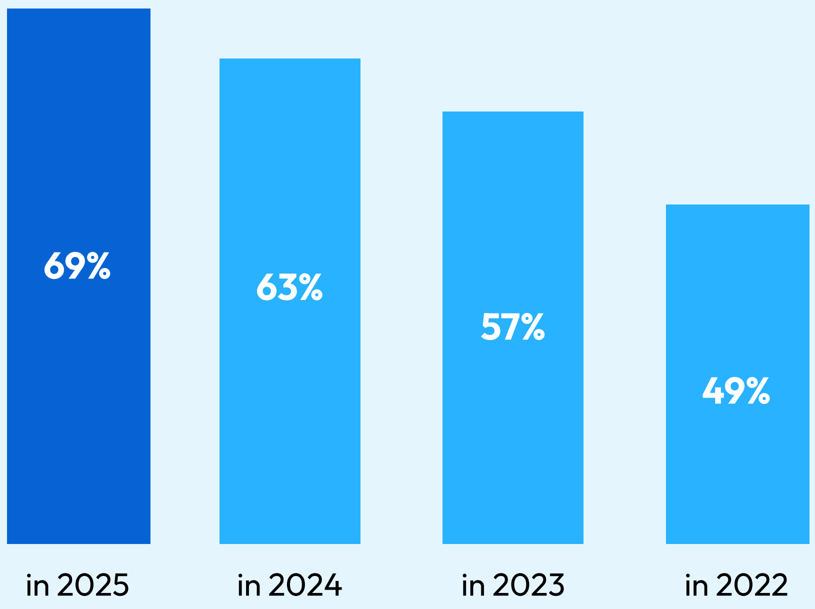
Buyers

More shoppers are treating themselves for their next car purchase. This buying motivator moved to **#3** in 2025, up from #4 in 2024.

Initial reason behind auto purchase



Year after year, more shoppers say a person's vehicle says a lot about who they are.

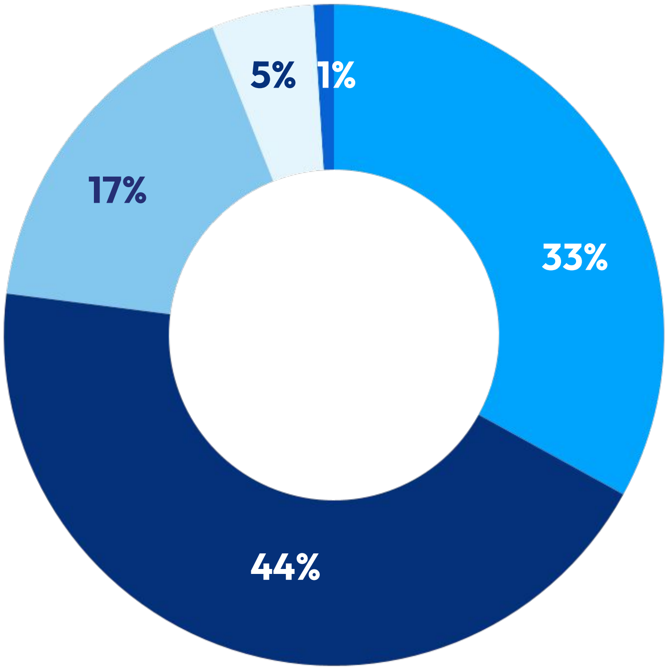


On the whole, though, most continue to cite need-based purchases as their main trigger to buy.

64%
In 2025

62%
In 2024

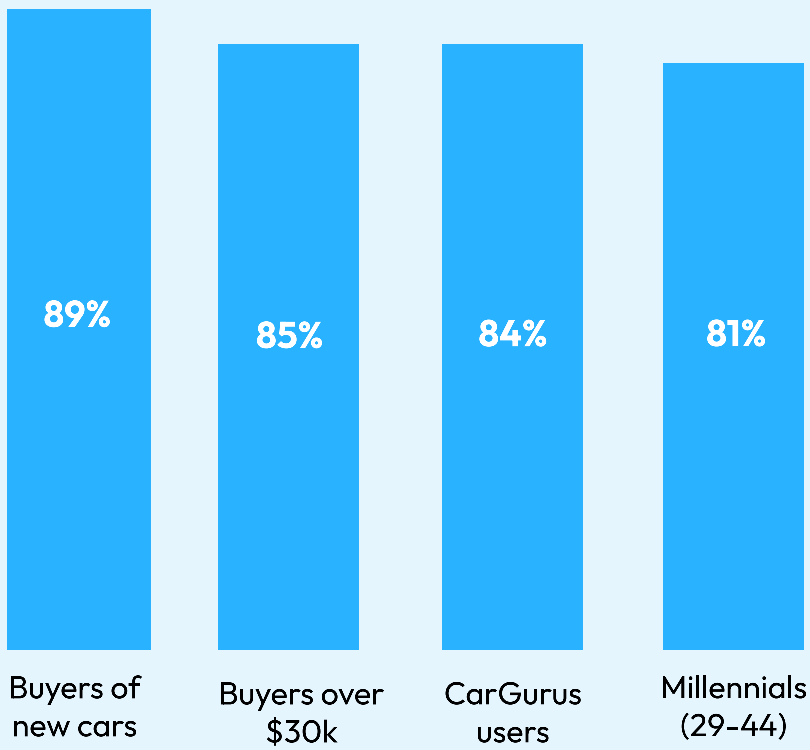
Overall, satisfaction with the car-buying experience remains high. But experiences differ between shopper segments.



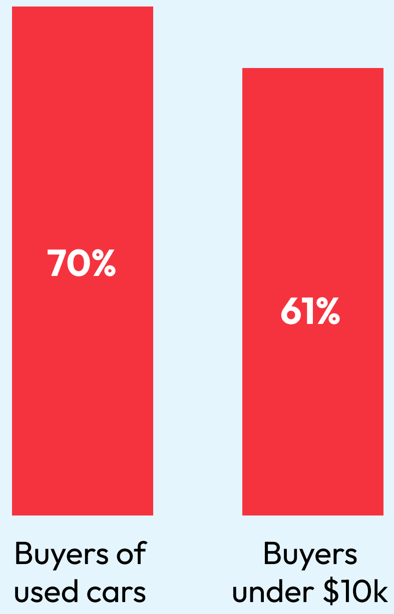
77% Very/Extremely satisfied with buying experience

- Extremely Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- A little Satisfied
- Not at all Satisfied

Buyers with above average satisfaction

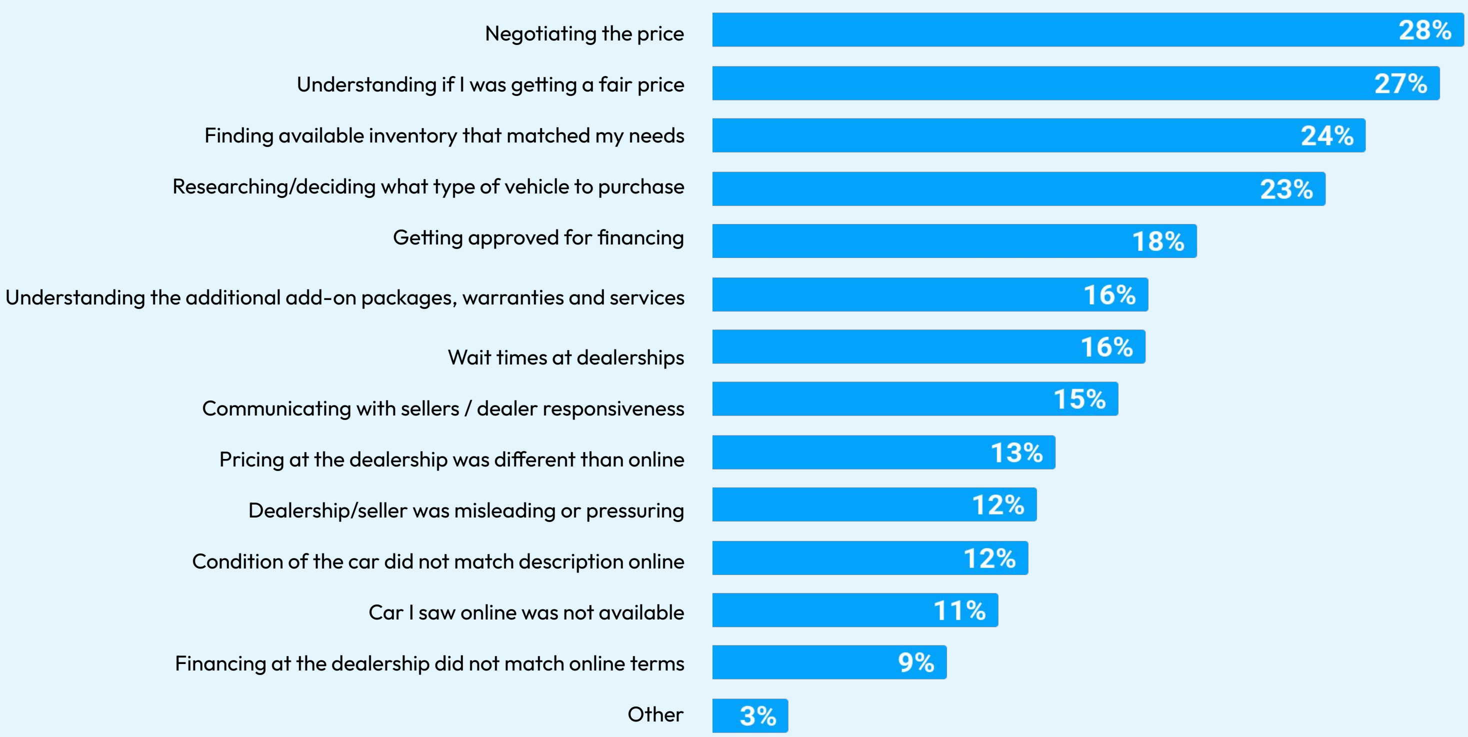


Those with below average satisfaction



Pricing and finding the right car stood out as the biggest pain points in the buying experience.

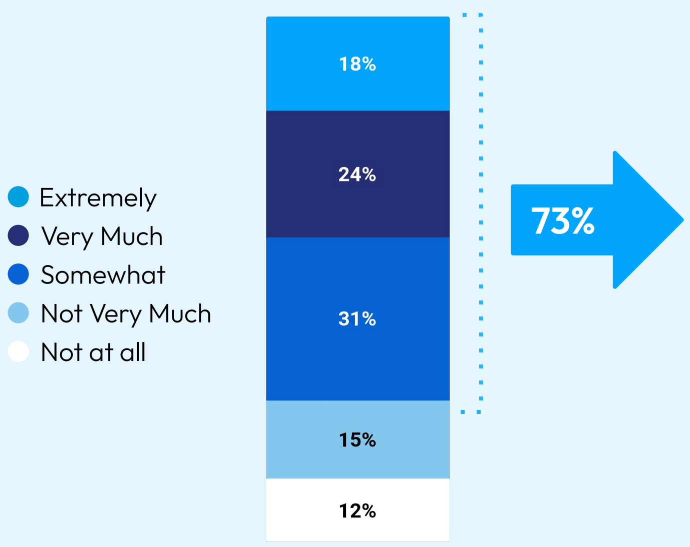
Buying experience challenges



Buyers & Sellers

When surveyed this summer, most shoppers said economic factors played some role in their decision to buy or sell—especially influencing timing. But, final buying and selling timelines were largely consistent with 2024 trends.

Impact of economic factors on vehicle buying/selling

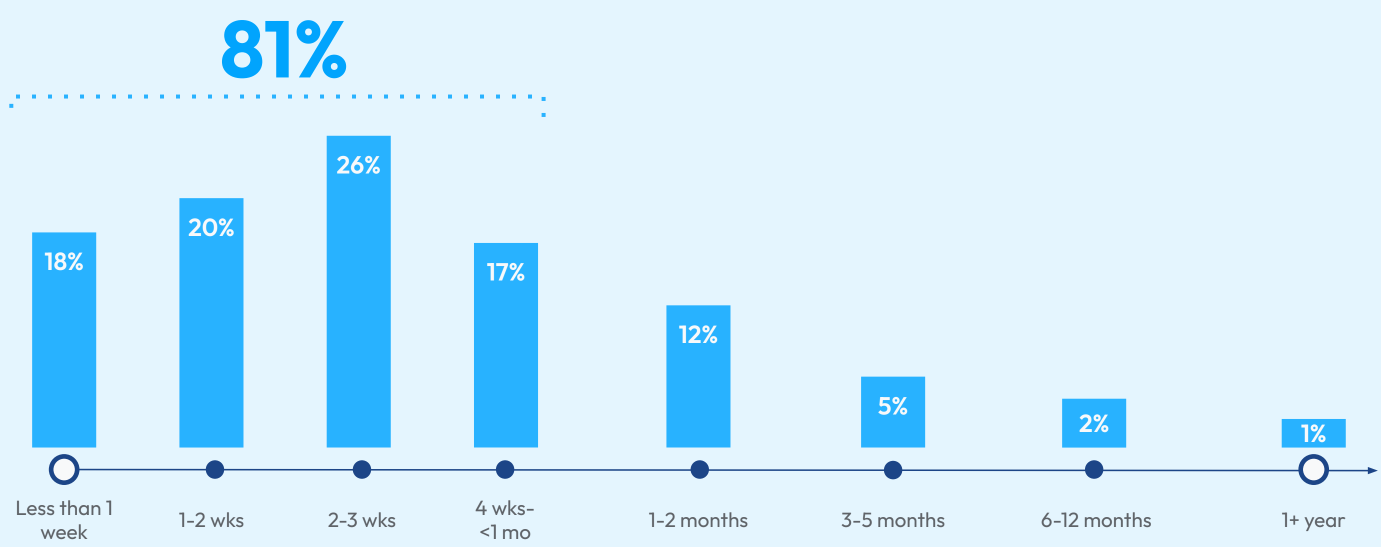


Key ways the economy is influencing car decisions

Buying Used instead of New	31%
Holding on to my car longer than I would have	24%
Delaying my process	23%
Decreasing my car budget	23%
Speeding up my process	22%
Increasing my car budget	20%
Waiting to finance	20%
Buying domestic instead of imported	19%

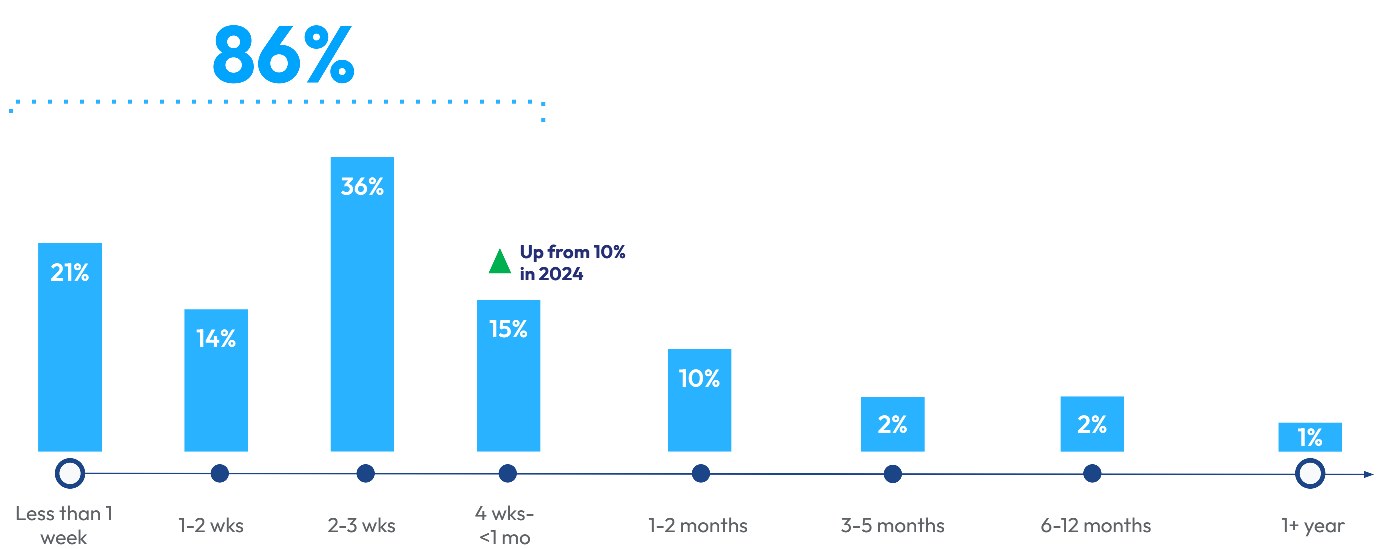
Timeline for Buying Process

Over 80% of buyers completed the process in under a month, consistent with 2024



Timeline for Selling Process

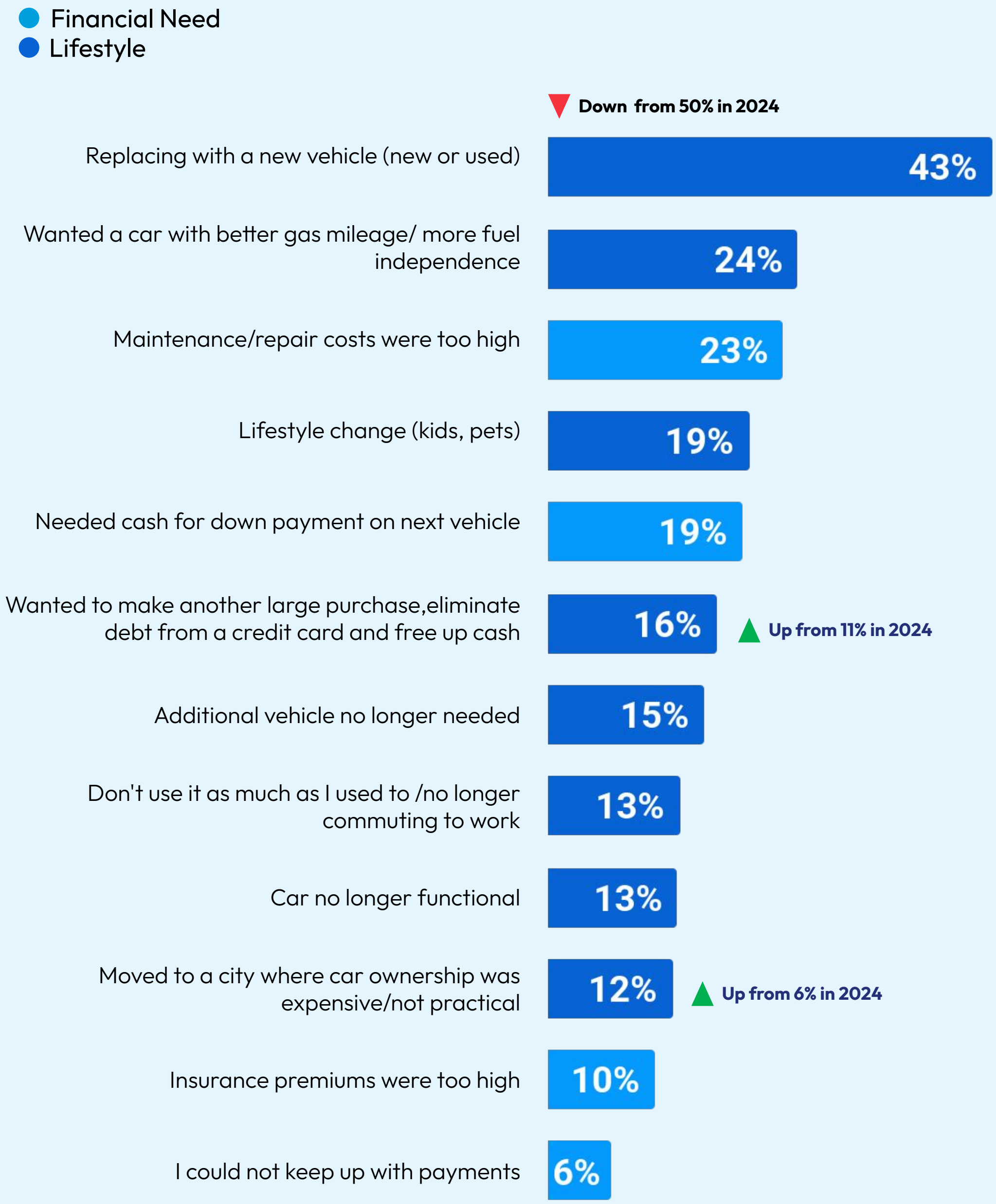
While the majority of sellers finalized transactions within a month, slightly more are taking four weeks to complete: **15%** vs. **10%** in 2024



Sellers

Financial needs played a bigger role in sellers' decisions to sell or trade-in, and a larger share acted as sole decision-makers.

Initial reason(s) to sell or trade-in automobile



Sellers citing financial reasons for a sale or trade-in

57% in 2025 vs

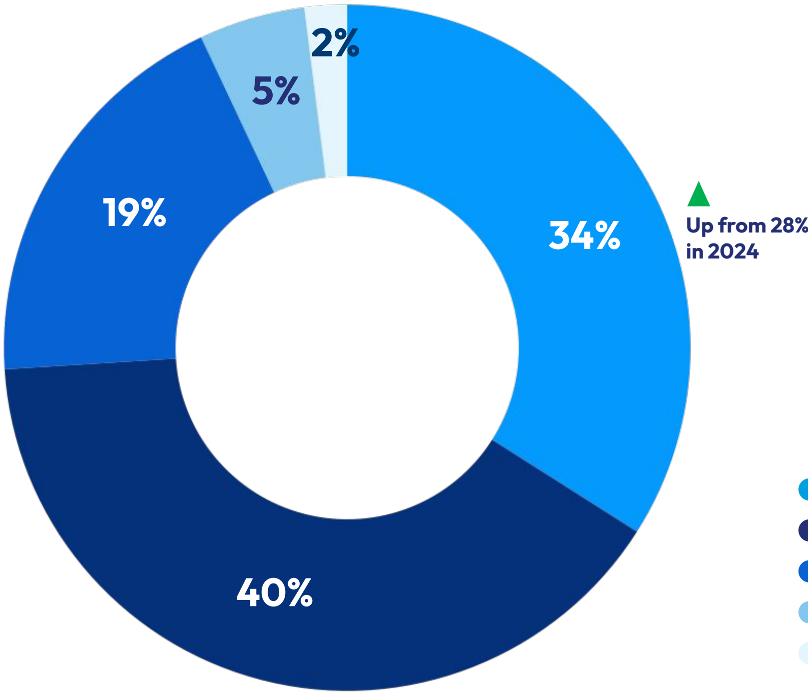
48% in 2024

Sellers who were the sole decision-maker

80% in 2025 vs

73% in 2024

Overall satisfaction with car selling experience

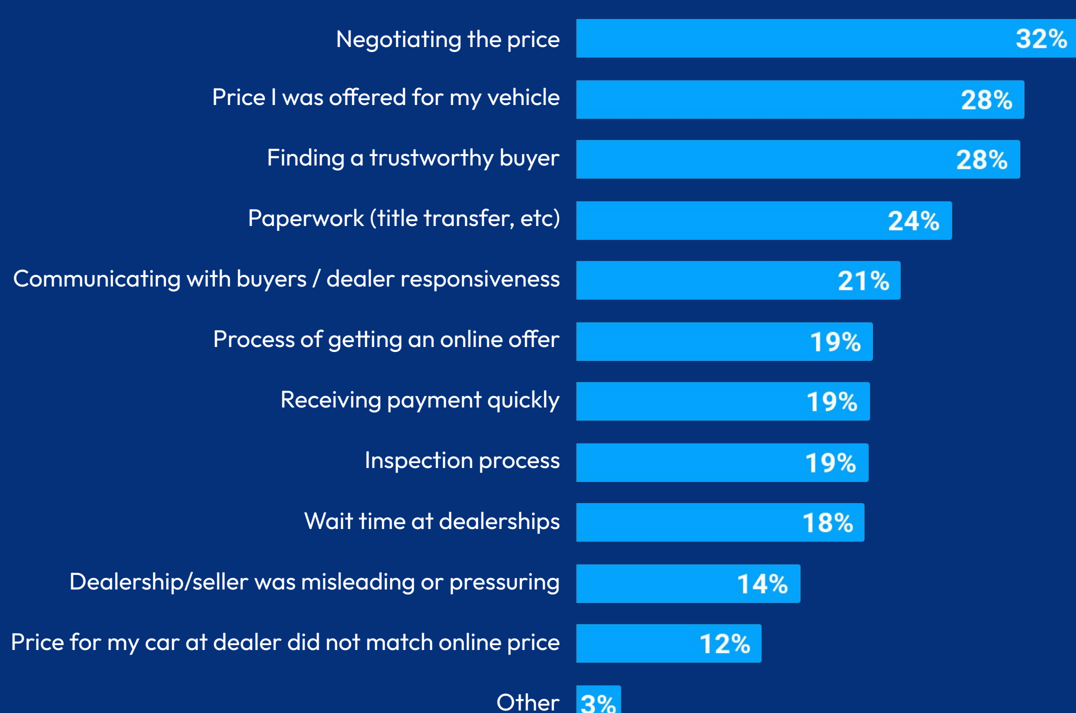


75%
of sellers are very/extremely satisfied, and significantly more are extremely satisfied compared to 2024. Satisfaction was driven by a seamless, efficient experience.

- Extremely Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- A little Satisfied
- Not at all Satisfied

Challenges of vehicle selling experience

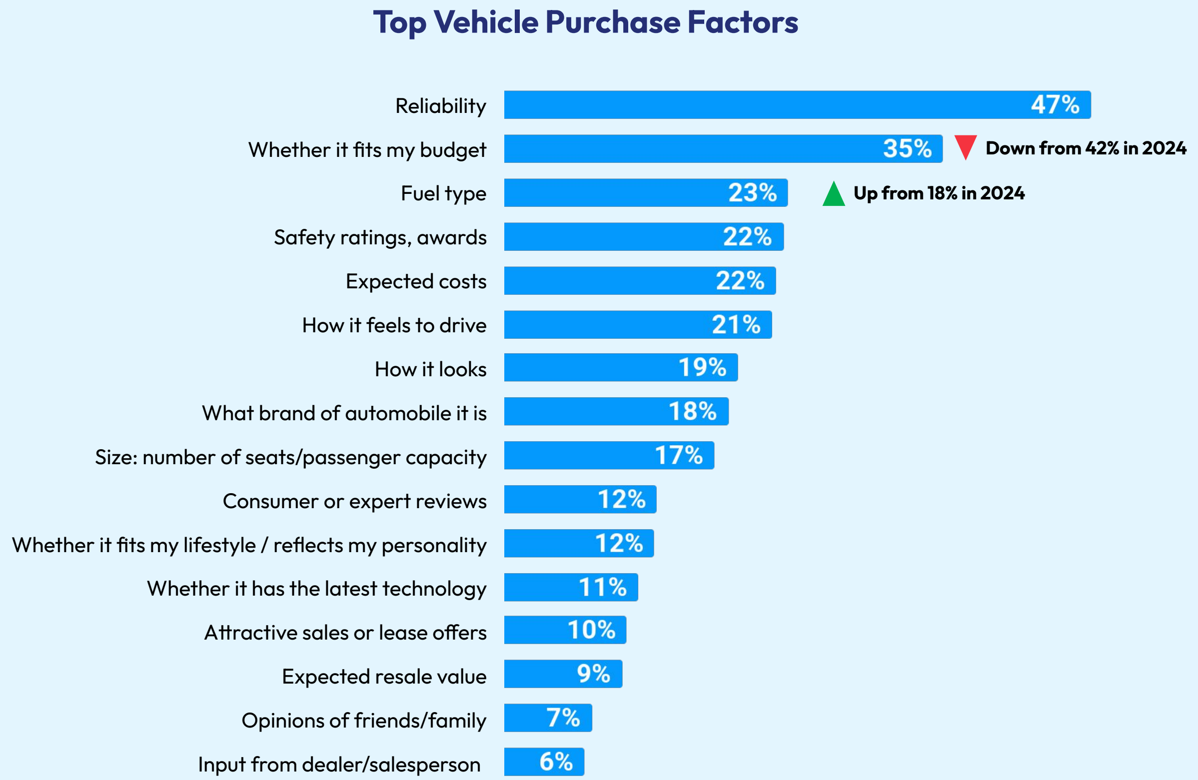
While overall satisfaction is high, key challenges for sellers centered on pricing and finding a trustworthy buyer.

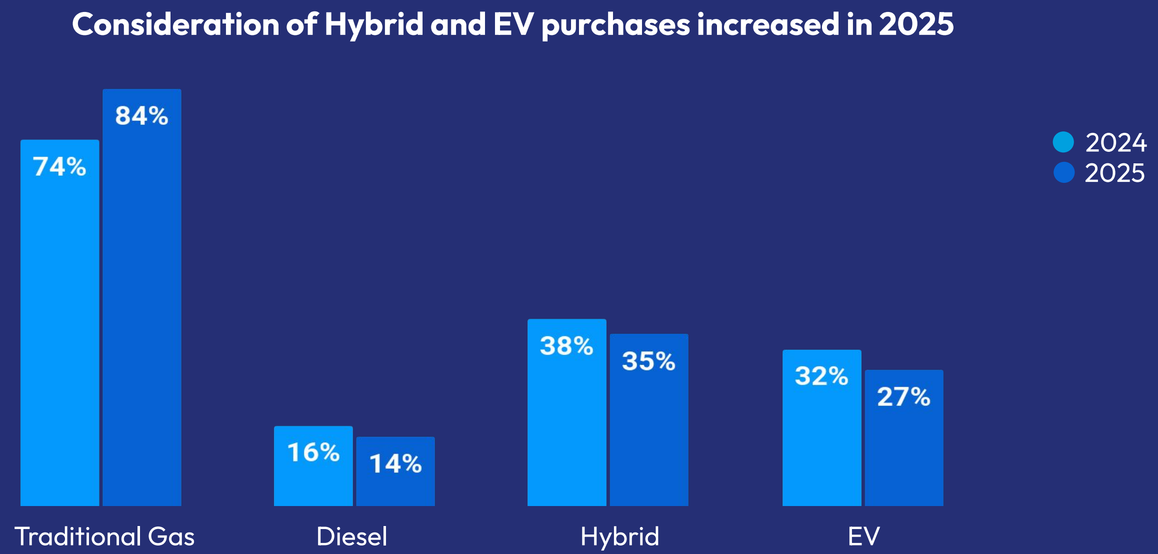


What are buyers looking for?

What they want in their next car

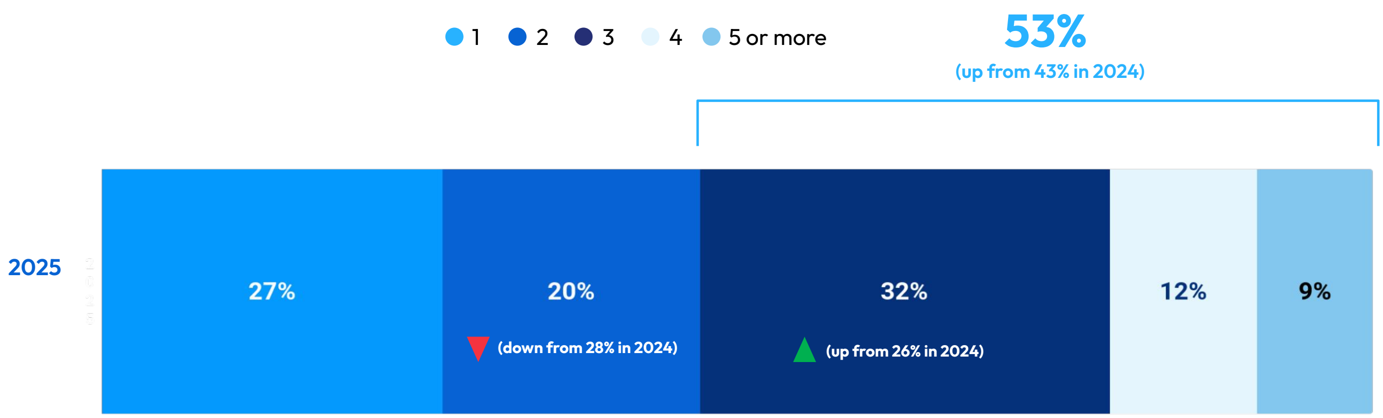
Reliability and budget remain the top factors influencing a purchase, while fuel type rose to #3—up from #6 last year.



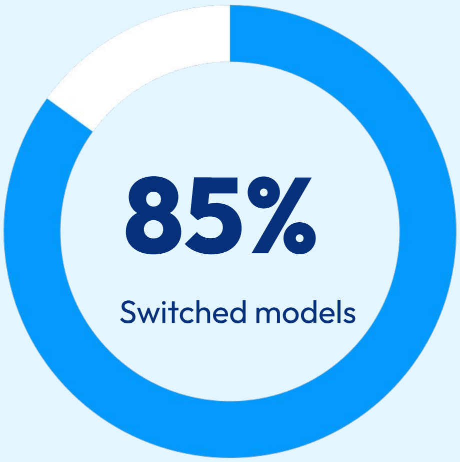


Car buyers are casting a wider net—more are exploring three or more brands, and most say they're open when it comes to make.

Number of makes/brands considered



For those replacing a car, under a third were loyal to the same brand.



66%

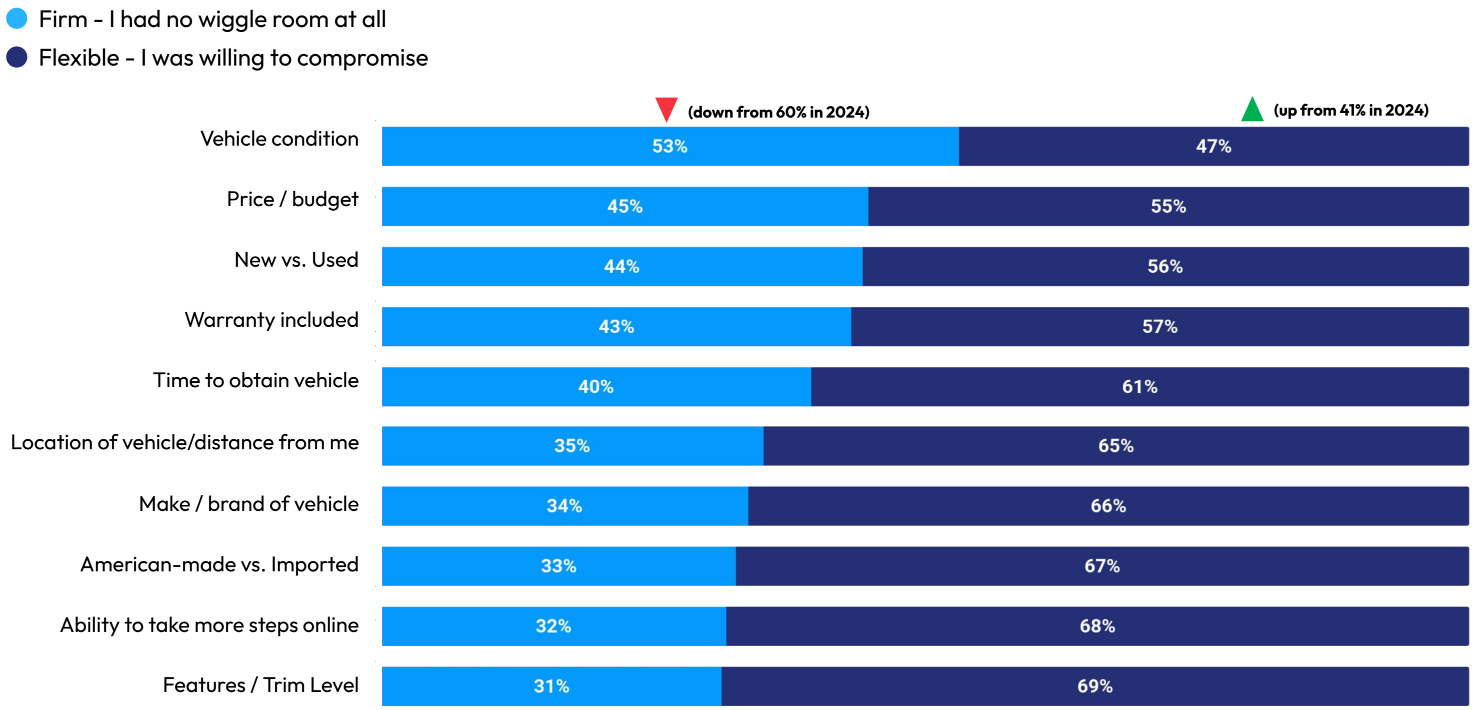
of shoppers were flexible on make/model

2.6

Average number of makes/brands considered

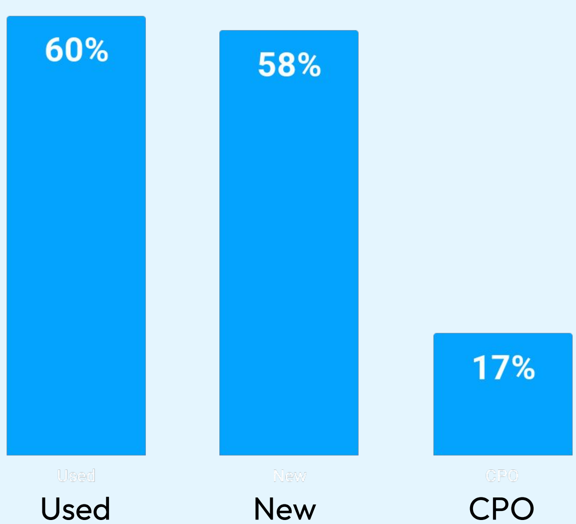
Vehicle condition continues to be the top non-negotiable factor for buyers, even as its importance is declining gradually year-over-year.

Criteria for Final Decision



Vehicles Considered During Buying Process

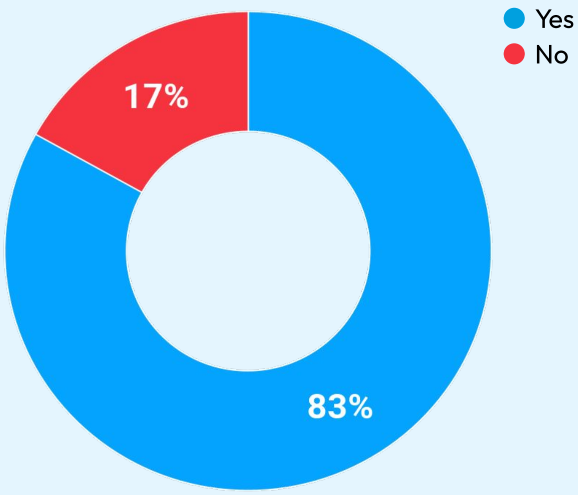
Shoppers considered Used and New equally, much more than CPO.



How they prefer to shop

More buyers now prefer to handle much of the process from home, with a growing number open to completing the entire purchase online.

Preference to do more from home



Openness to doing more online has grown over the years

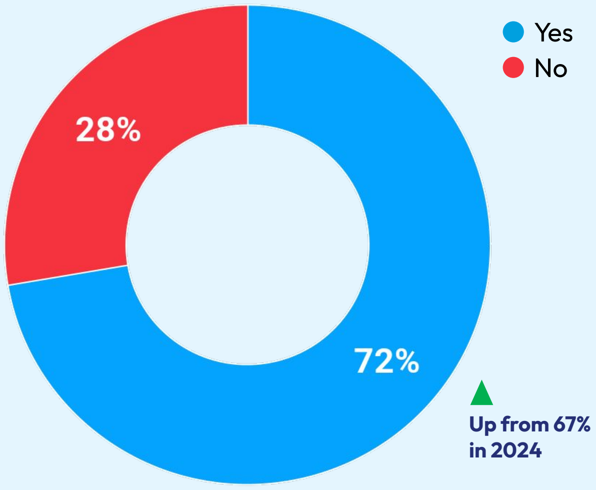
83% In 2025

80% In 2024

69% In 2023

72% In 2022

Openness to Buying Entirely Online

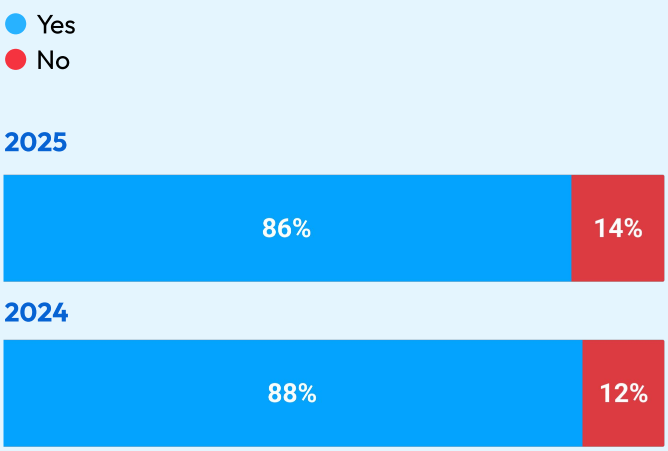


Who's most open to doing more online?

Buyers of Hybrids	90%
Buyers of New Cars	90%
740-799 (Very Good) Credit Score	90%
$30K+ Vehicle Spenders	89%
Males	86%

Even as comfort with online car buying grows, most shoppers prefer a hybrid approach, with nearly 90% seeing the vehicle before buying. Among generations, Gen Z preference to do more in-person has increased.

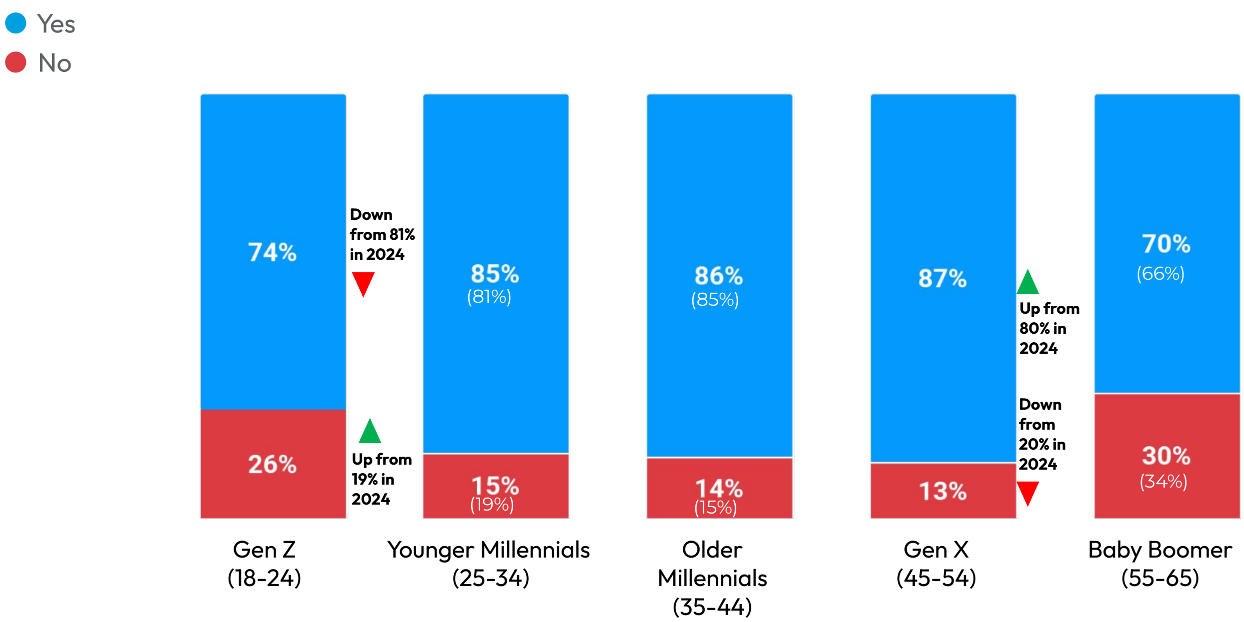
Viewed the car in-person



Purchase steps most preferred in person

Test drive	63%
Price negotiation	38%
Assessment of a car's reliability	33%
Help with financing process	29%
Guidance on service and maintenance	28%

Preference to do more online by generation

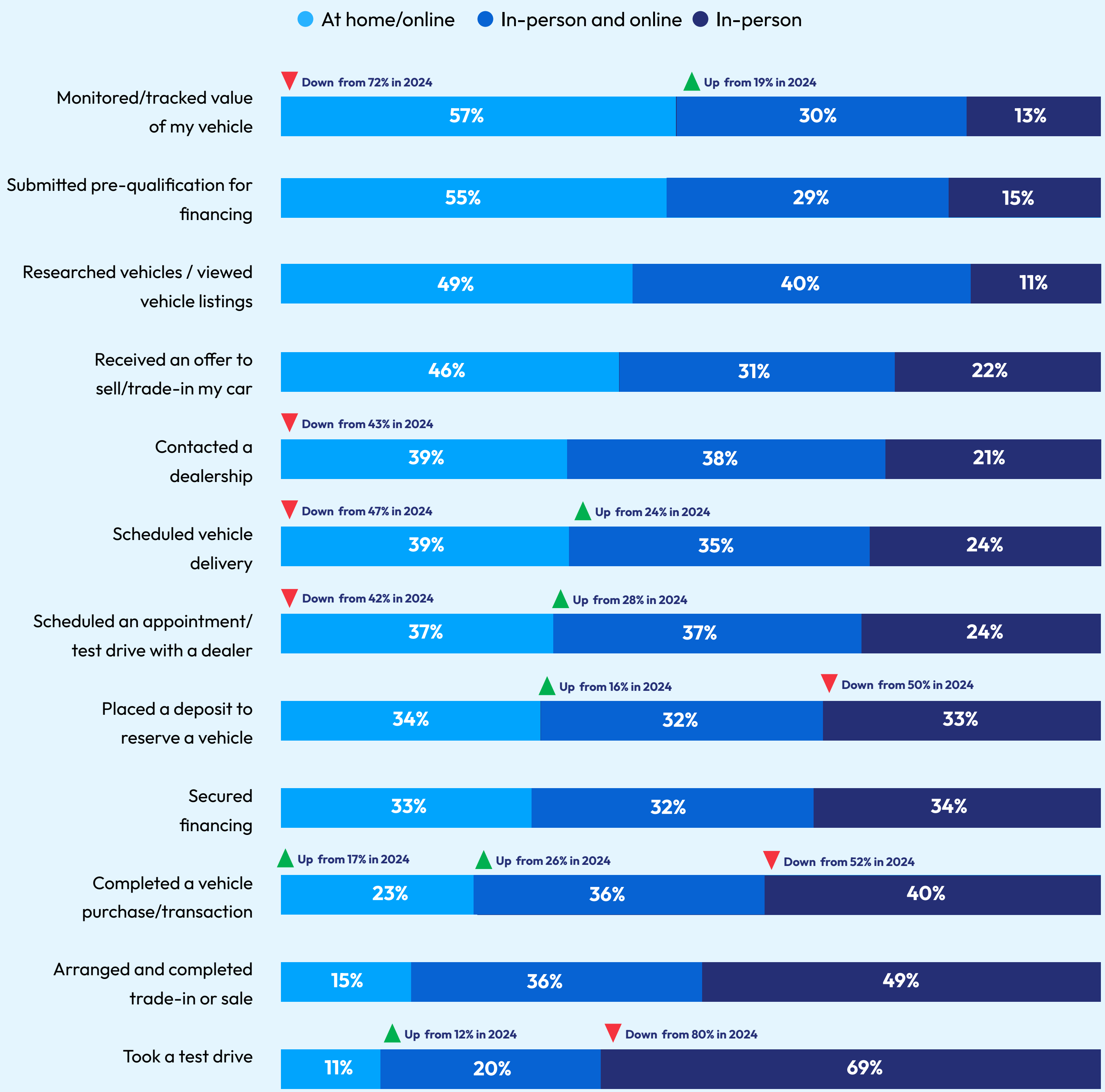


Buyers tend to prefer online resources for discovery and purchase preparation.

Preferred online activities

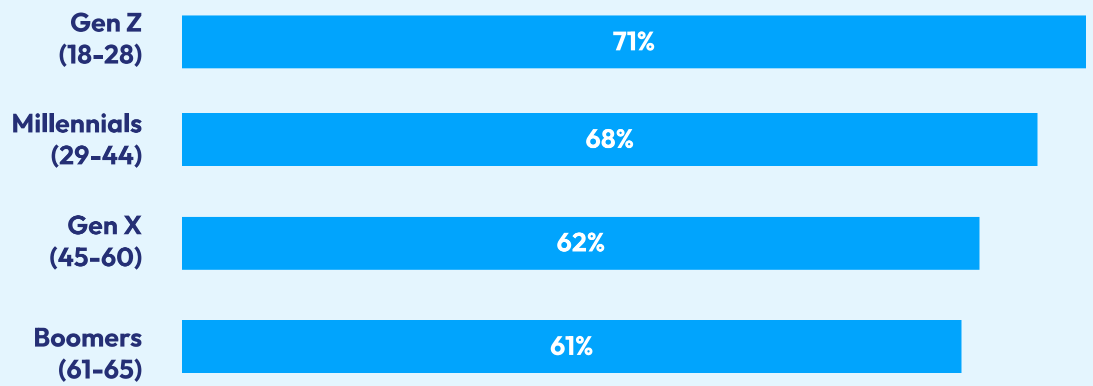
Shoppers are increasingly blending online and in-person steps, reinforcing the rise of a hybrid buying experience across the purchase journey.

Location of purchase journey steps

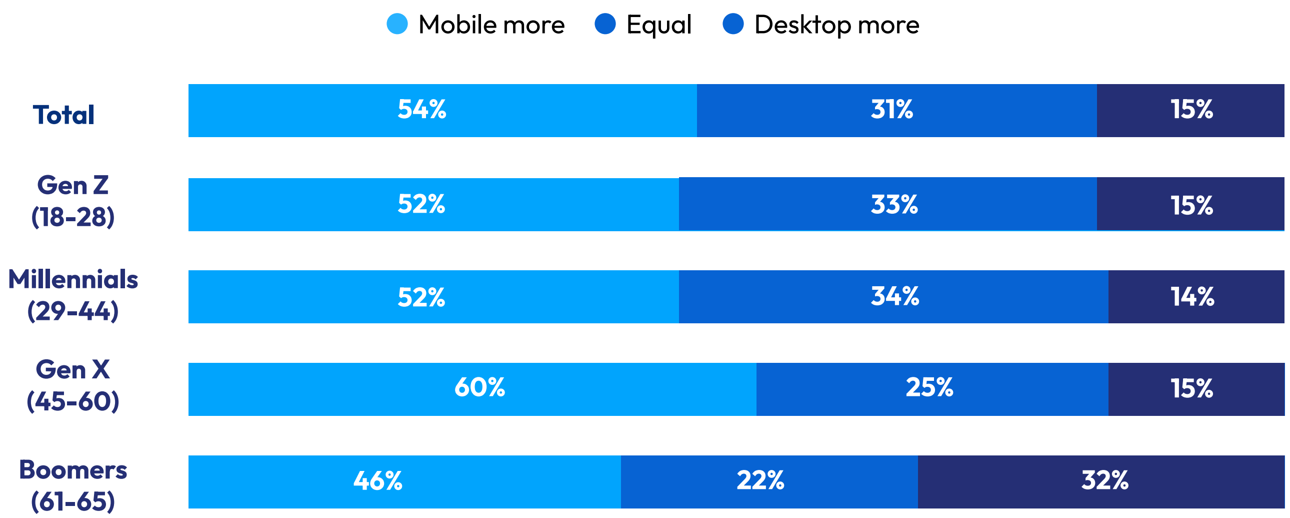


Although preference to do more online declined among Gen Z, younger shoppers still strongly rely on online resources through the purchase journey.

Percentage that mostly used the internet

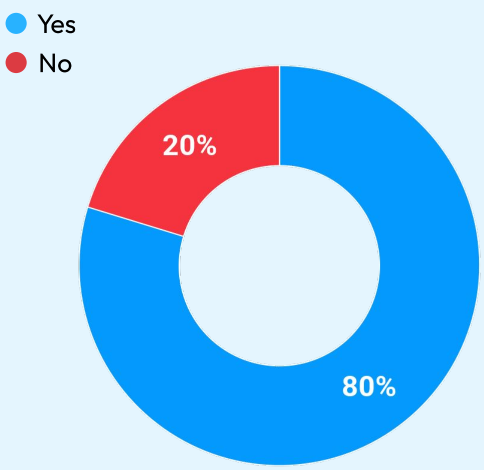


Most tend to use their mobile devices while buying or selling a vehicle, with only **15%** mainly using their desktop.

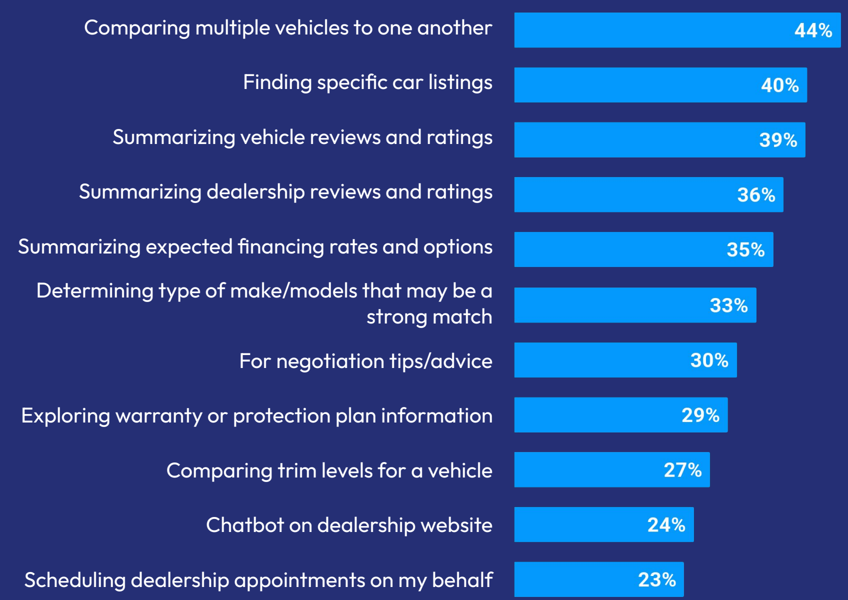


As AI technology improves, 4-in-5 shoppers say they are open to using it during the buying/selling process.

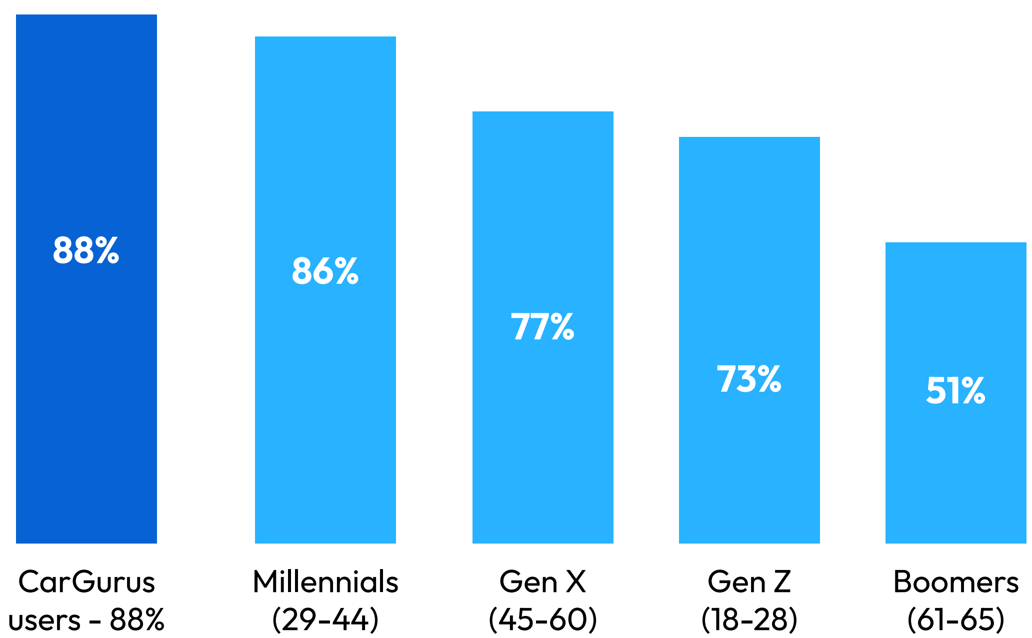
Openness to AI in Vehicle Buying/Selling Process



Interest in AI Tasks for Vehicle Buying/Selling



Consumer segments and their openness to AI

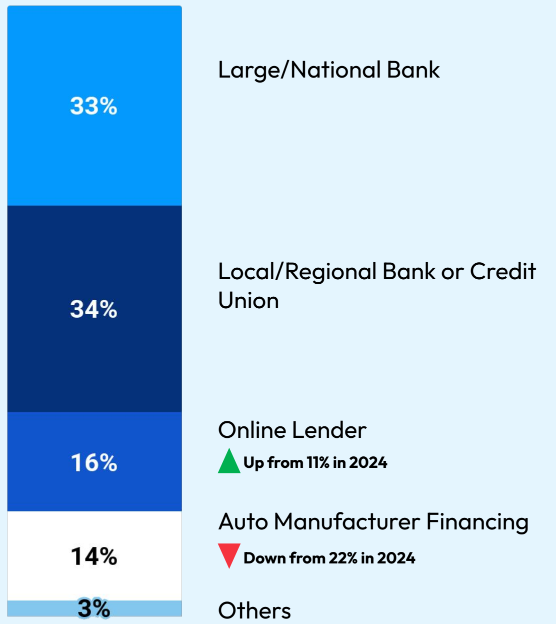


About **1-in-4 shoppers** are already using AI to research and discover listings through tools on shopping sites or stand-alone chatbots,.

Financing preferences

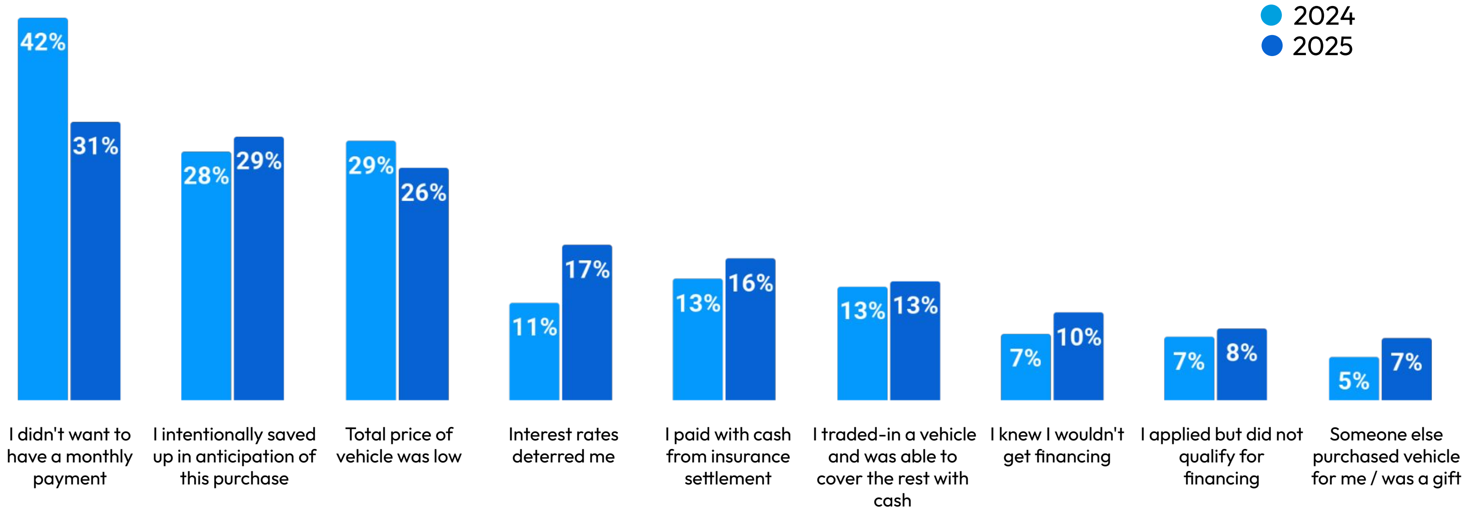
Of those who financed their car purchase, two-thirds used a bank or credit union.

Type of lender



Avoiding monthly payments remained the top reason buyers chose not to finance, though, this motivation declined notably from last year.

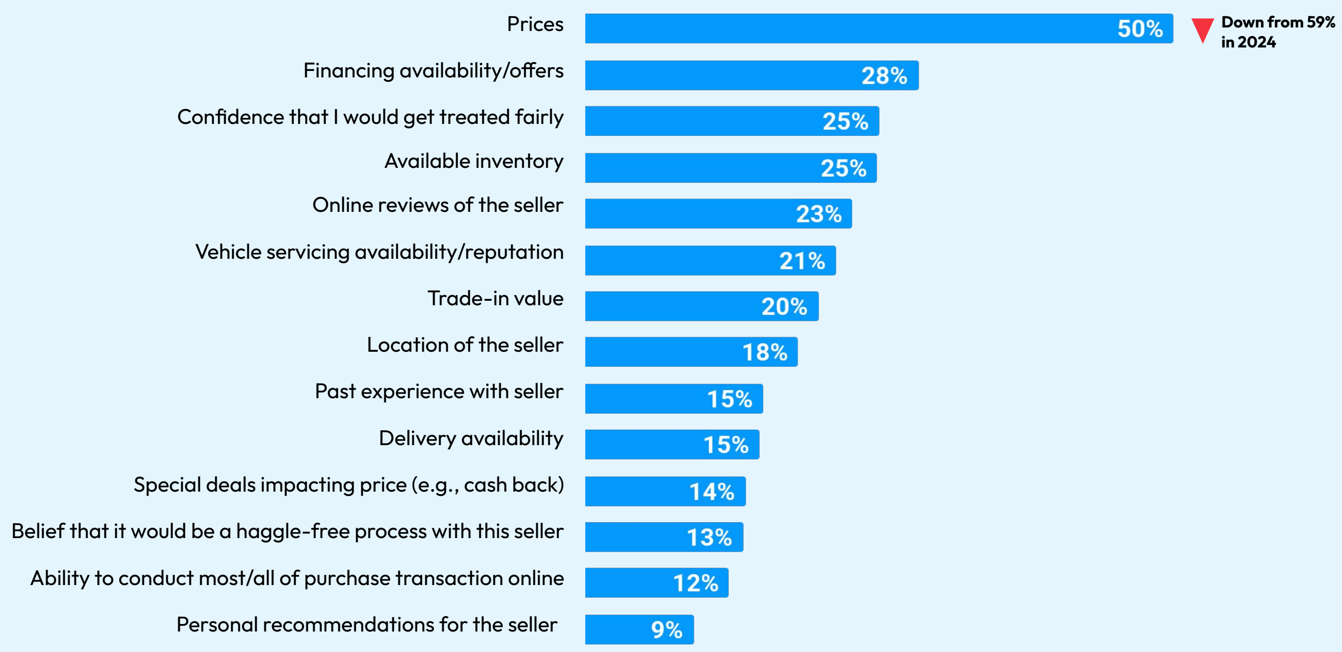
Reason for not financing vehicle



What they look for in a seller

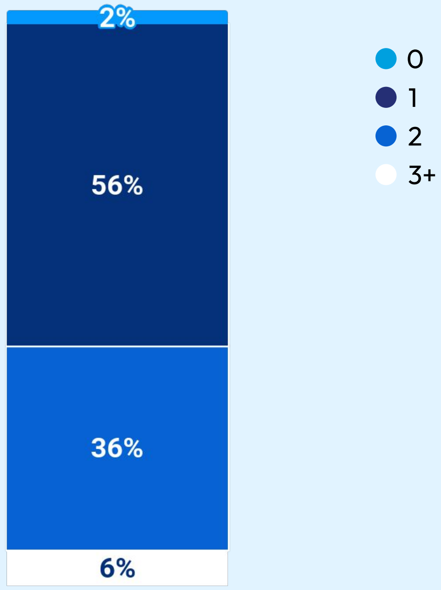
Price and finance availability/offers remain the top factors in deciding where to buy. Confidence in being treated fairly entered the top three, up from #5 in 2024.

Important factors influencing where to buy automobile



On average, shoppers contact two or more dealers and visit two dealerships, a significant increase from last year.

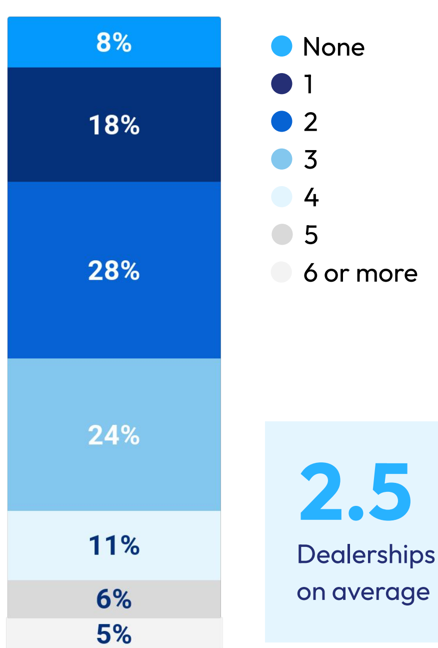
Visits to purchasing dealership



Only 56%

of buyers completed their purchase after visiting the dealership just once.

Dealership outreach



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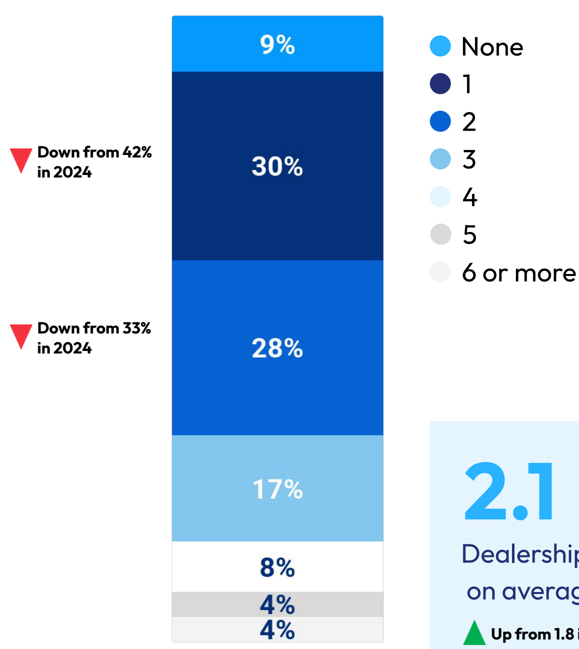
Dealerships contacted on average

Dealership(s) contacted



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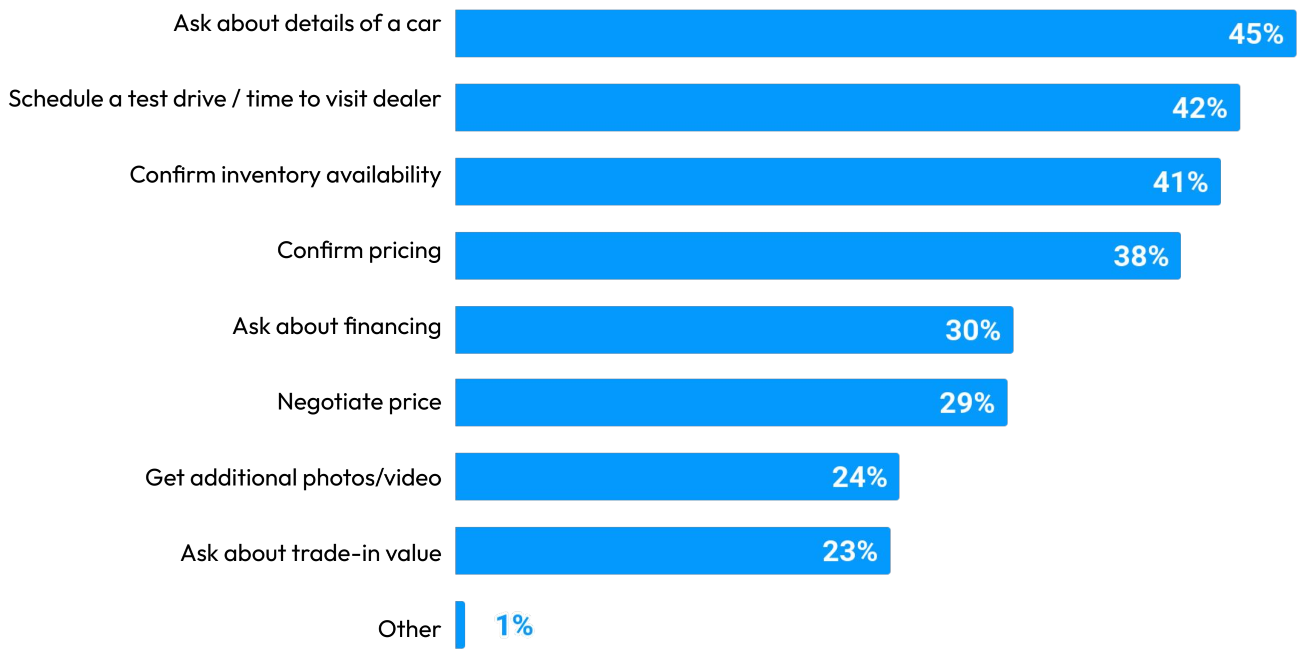
Dealerships visited on average

Up from 1.8 in 2024

Dealership(s) visited

Buyers most often contact dealerships to ask about vehicle details, arrange test drives, and confirm availability.

Reasons for contacting dealership

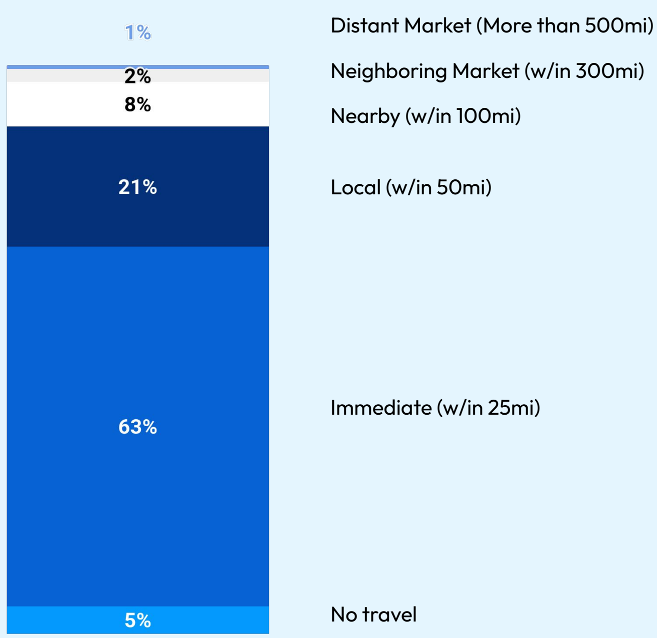


Proximity continues to be important. Almost

90%

of buyers purchased from a dealership within a 50-mile radius of home.

Location of dealer purchased from



What they buy

Most buyers—around three-in-four—remained loyal to their previous fuel type. While gas vehicles still dominate repeat purchases, hybrid models are gaining traction.

Fuel Type Loyalty and Migration

Gas

81%
Stay with gas

11% Switch to diesel (down from 17%)
4% Switch to hybrid (down from 40%)
5% Switch to EV

Diesel

39%
Stay with diesel

11% Switch to gas
37% Switch to hybrid (up from 0%)
13% Switch to EV (up from 0%)

Hybrid

58%
Stay with hybrid (up from 45%)

11% Switch to gas
37% Switch to diesel (up from 17%)
11% Switch to EV

EV

79%
Stay with EV (down from 87%)

6% Switch to gas
13% Switch to diesel (down from 27%)
33% Switch to hybrid (up from 15%)

For most generations, Ford and Chevrolet lead as the most purchased brands.

Top Make Purchased/Leased

Gen Z (18-28)

Brand	2025	Rank Change
Ford	16%	+4
Chevrolet	12%	-1
Honda	12%	+1
Toyota	11%	-2
Nissan	7%	+2

Millennials (28-44)

Brand	2025	Rank Change
Ford	15%	+2
Chevrolet	13%	-1
Toyota	11%	+3
BMW	8%	+5
Honda	7%	-1

Gen X (45-60)

Brand	2025	Rank Change
Toyota	16%	+4
Ford	15%	+2
Chevrolet	12%	-1
Nissan	8%	-3
BMW	6%	+8

Boomers (60-65)

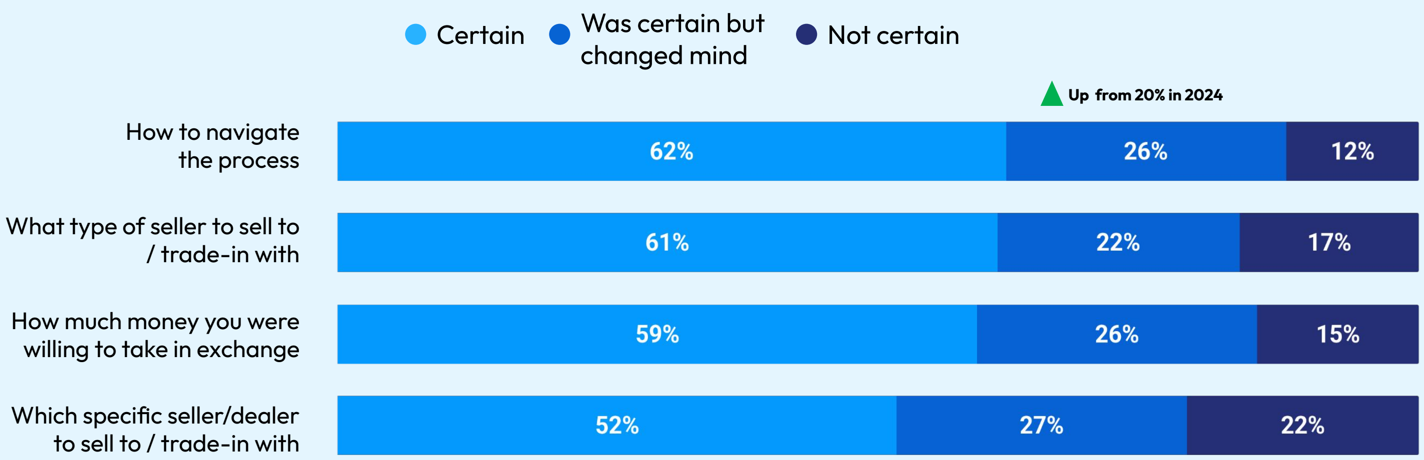
Brand	2025	Rank Change
Chevrolet	17%	+1
Ford	13%	-1
Toyota	9%	+12
Nissan	7%	+14
Tesla	6%	+1

What are sellers looking for?

What Are Sellers Looking For?

Sellers begin their journey feeling confident about navigating the process and identifying the type of buyer or platform to engage.

Certainty about specific factors at selling journey start



Sellers who work with dealers tend to complete the process much faster.

2.6

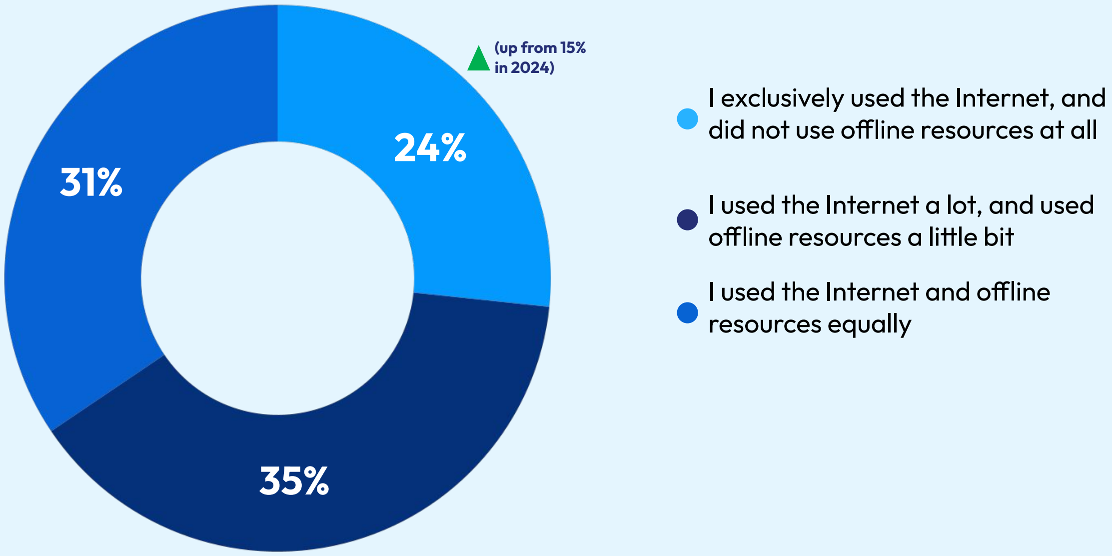
weeks when selling with a dealer

4

weeks when selling privately

While most sellers use a mix of online and offline resources, an increasing number now rely solely on digital tools to explore options and complete a sale.

Internet usage when selling



Key takeaways

Embrace the omni-channel experience

Car buyers are completing more actions online, but most still want in-person guidance for the final steps. Support these shoppers by creating a seamless handoff between home and the dealership with online tools that let buyers handle pre-purchase actions from anywhere—such as pre-qualifying for financing or reserving a vehicle.

→ Sales conversion tools like CarGurus Digital Deal make it easy to offer the flexible, connected shopping experience today's buyers prefer.

Use data for deeper consultation

Today's shoppers are increasingly flexible, focusing on condition and budget over a specific make, model, or trim. This creates an opportunity to serve as a trusted consultant, guiding shoppers toward the best-fit vehicles within your full inventory based on their priorities.

→ Leverage shopper insights from **LeadAI** to see which vehicles they've viewed, tailor your conversations, and re-engage them with personalized recommendations.

Optimize pricing

Negotiating price and understanding a vehicle's fair value remain top challenges for car buyers. Predictive pricing intelligence that's informed by real-time market demand can give your listings a competitive edge—and shoppers greater transparency and confidence in a vehicle's value.

→ Use price recommendations from PriceVantage to improve turn time while holding margin.

Streamline vehicle acquisition

Sellers prioritize a quick, efficient process and increasingly prefer to handle most of it online. But their biggest challenges remain in finding trustworthy buyers and determining a fair price. You can bridge this gap by engaging directly with sellers.

→ With Sell My Car, acquire high-quality local inventory by connecting with consumers online and giving them the option to sell or trade-in their vehicle directly at your dealership.

Background and methodology

Data is primarily sourced from a May/June 2025 study conducted by CarGurus and NielsenIQ, a leading market research firm. The study included a survey of 3,030 past-four-month auto purchasers/sellers of new or used vehicles. Respondents could qualify as both buyers and sellers, are 18 to 65 years old, and weighted to be representative of the U.S. auto market in terms of demographics (age, gender, income, etc.) and market factors (new/used, price point, etc.). In some cases figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

About CarGurus, Inc.

CarGurus (Nasdaq: CARG) is the leading multinational automotive platform helping consumers and dealers confidently buy and sell vehicles. Founded in 2006 with a mission to bring more trust and transparency to car shopping, CarGurus is the No. 1 visited automotive shopping site in the U.S.[1] with the largest selection of inventory and network of dealers.[2] CarGurus' unmatched selection, trusted automotive insights, and data-driven products and solutions support each shopper's journey — from online research and shopping to in-dealership decisions — to empower them at every step. And, by translating data from billions of monthly site interactions, CarGurus provides dealers a personalized, predictive intelligence platform with software solutions that helps them run their businesses more efficiently and profitably at all stages of inventory acquisition and pricing, marketing, and conversion to sale.

CarGurus operates online marketplaces in the U.S., U.K., and Canada. The company's network of brands includes PistonHeads, the largest online motoring community in the U.K.[3], and Autolist, a U.S.- based online marketplace.

To learn more about CarGurus, visit www.cargurus.com.

[1]Similarweb: Traffic and Engagement Report [Cars.com, Autotrader.com, TrueCar.com, CARFAX.com Listings (defined as CARFAX.com Total Visits minus Vehicle History Reports)], Q3 2025, U.S.
[2]Compared to Autotrader.com (YipitData July/August 2025), Cars.com, TrueCar.com (YipitData as of September 30, 2025), and CARFAX (Joreca as of September 30, 2025).
[3]Similarweb: Traffic Insights, Q3 2025, U.K.