

Americans Choose Gas over Alternatives

Owners choose lower cost technological solutions over higher priced alternative fuels

New York, N.Y. — May 27, 2010 — According to Harris Interactive’s 2010 AutoTECHCAST study, conducted between April 6, 2010 – April 26, 2010, there is greater demand for technologies that provide enhanced fuel economy of existing gasoline driven engines at a lower initial cost, than higher priced alternate fueled engines. One in five Americans¹ indicate they would be extremely or very likely to purchase a start stop system (21 percent) or an ECO drive assistant (19 percent). Both of these systems provide an estimated 10 percent gain in fuel economy. Barely one in six owners say they are extremely or very likely to purchase flexible fuel engines (16 percent) or a clean diesel engine (14 percent).

David Duganne, Sr. Research Director of Harris Interactive Automotive and Transportation Research states “Consideration for clean diesel engines has been consistent over the past several years of the study, while that of flexible fuel engines has decreased. With the current push of clean diesel by European automakers, we anticipate this will start to increase while consideration for flexible fuel will continue to decrease, especially as other alternative fueled engines continue to come to market.”

Even less interest exists for purchasing the newer, more costly and/or fully developed fuel efficient engines. Only one out of 25 vehicle owners are extremely or very likely to consider purchasing fuel cell engines (4 percent), hybrid-electric engines (4 percent), plug-in hybrids (4 percent) and pure electric engines (2 percent). A comparative bright spot is a 10% level of consideration of compressed natural gas engines.

The interest in technology-driven approaches using traditional gas engines is growing. ECO drive assistant doubled its level of consideration from the 2009 study (19 percent in 2010, up from 11 percent in 2009).

While price is certainly a factor for adoption of these newer engine technologies, other barriers also exist. The price of the fuel (where applicable), the lack of an infrastructure for refueling or recharging, concerns about service and repair of the vehicles and in the case of the electric vehicles, how long the charge will last in respect to one’s daily commute are all detrimental to consumer acceptance.

David Pulaski, Vice President of Harris Interactive Automotive and Transportation Research states “Although there are some significant entry barriers, we believe that as consumers become more familiar with alternative fuel approaches, and gasoline costs rise, demand will grow. To raise mass market appeal automakers and government agencies must educate consumers on the benefits they offer, while reducing infrastructure issues. Education must not only address what is being done, but connect with the emotional elements of the concerns. At some point technologies that nip away at enhanced fuel economy aren’t going to provide automakers with the gains needed to keep up with industry requirements.”

¹ Survey of 12,225 U.S. adults ages 18 and over and who own or lease a vehicle, have a valid driver’s license, have at least one household vehicle, own a listed North American model – 2005 or newer, and are at least 50 percent involved in the decision to buy their next household vehicle.

The new Harris Interactive 2010 AutoTECHCAST study, an annual survey of adult vehicle owners in the United States includes start stop system”, “ECO drive assistant”, “clean diesel engine”, “flexible fuel vehicle”, “compressed natural gas engine”, “fuel cell engine”, “plug-in hybrid engine”, “pure electric engine” as well as 61 other unique technologies spanning across several categories that include: *Entertainment, Exterior Comfort & Convenience, Glass, Intelligent Sensing, Interior Comfort & Convenience, Lighting, Powertrain & Alternative Fuels, Ride & Handling, Safety, and Telematics.*

Other Key Findings

The study also finds that there is increasing consideration for voice activated technologies that allow drivers to interact with their audio, navigation or telematics systems while helping them stay focused on the road. Additionally, technologies that provide the ability to customize a vehicle, such as the instrument panel or interior lighting color, have lower levels of consideration and exhibit more niche than mass market appeal.

TABLE 1
LIKELIHOOD TO PURCHASE ALTERNATIVE FUEL TECHNOLOGIES

"How likely would you be to purchase this technology if it added [INSERT PRICE] to the total cost of your vehicle?"

Base: Adults who evaluated each technology

	Clean Diesel Engine	Compressed Natural Gas Engine	ECO Drive Assistant	Flexible Fuel Vehicle	Fuel Cell Engine	Hybrid Electric Engine	Plug-In Hybrid Engine	Pure Electric Engine	Start Stop System
Price	\$1000	\$1000	\$250	\$250	\$5000	\$3500	\$4000	\$4000	\$500
Base	997	981	984	986	986	998	978	983	995
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
TOP 2 BOX (NET)	14	10	19	16	4	4	4	2	21
Extremely Likely	4	4	8	5	2	1	2	1	10
Very Likely	10	6	11	11	2	3	3	2	10
Likely	15	12	14	18	5	13	6	5	12
BOTTOM	70	78	67	67	91	83	91	93	67

2 Box (NET)									
Somewhat Likely	25	25	29	27	23	29	21	18	27
Not At All Likely	45	53	38	40	68	54	70	75	40

(Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding).

Methodology

The AutoTECHCAST study was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive between April 6, 2010 – April 26, 2010 among 12,225 U.S. adults ages 18 and over and who own or lease a vehicle, have a valid driver’s license, have at least one household vehicle, own a listed North American model – 2005 or newer, and are at least 50 percent involved in the decision to buy their next household vehicle. Results were weighted as needed for age, gender, education, region and income and to properly represent U.S. vehicle segment owners. Propensity score weighting also was used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online. Full [data tables and methodology](#) are available at www.harrisinteractive.com

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