

AUTOMOTIVE

## Drivers lack interest in electric cars and self-driving tech: J.D. Power

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*Electric cars are all the rage at Jaguar Land Rover, Audi and Porsche. Image courtesy of Jaguar Land Rover*

By ELLEN KELLEHER

From Tesla to Porsche, automakers are pouring resources into developing electric cars and self-driving technology despite drivers' lack of substantive interest in either, according to a new study by [J.D. Power](#).

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American and Canadian drivers remain skeptical about battery-powered cars and self-driving ones simply because they lack experience with both and remain uneducated about their prospects. As a result, automakers may find it difficult to persuade consumers to leave their fuel-driven cars behind.

"It will take decades for battery-powered cars to replace fuel-driven ones, in my opinion," said Kristin Kolodge, executive director of driver interaction and human machine interface research at J.D. Power, Troy, Michigan. "At this point in time, industry experts believe it will take five years before the EV market share increases from its 2 percent market share today to achieve 5 percent in total."

Conducted in September of 2020, the 2020 Q3 Mobility Confidence Index study by J.D. Power and Survey Monkey polled more than 8,500 U.S. and Canadian drivers and experts about electric vehicles and nearly 9,000 about self-driving cars.

As part of the process, two key 100-point scales were devised: The Mobility Confidence Index for battery-electric vehicles and a second for self-driving cars.

It's electric

According to the study, American drivers' opinion on battery-powered cars remains neutral and dropped only slightly to 54 in the third quarter, from 55 in the first quarter. In Canada, drivers are more receptive, as their score jumped to 58 from 57 over the same period.

For attitudes about self-driving vehicles, the index remains perilously low after slipping to 34 from 35 in the U.S. over the same time frame while holding steady at 36 in Canada.

There are roughly 50 electric car models set to debut in the U.S. by the end of 2022, according to J.D. Power's estimates. Just 13 percent of consumers expect to buy one, while 30 percent say they have no intention of

considering a purchase in that two-year period.



*Porsche's Taycan is about to be rolled out in the Middle East. Image courtesy of Porsche*

More than two-thirds of the U.S. and Canadian consumers, 69 percent and 68 percent respectively, still report that they have never been in a battery-powered vehicle. Also posing concern is that 31 percent of U.S. consumers and 22 percent of Canadian drivers admit to knowing very little about electric cars.

When it comes to self-driving vehicles, the research suggests demand is even weaker.

According to consumers, on the list of concerns regarding the new technology are possible technology errors and threat of hacking.

The disruptions triggered by COVID-19 and the surge in remote work are encouraging people to take less of an interest in self-driving technology as well. More than one-third, or 38 percent, of industry experts polled, argue that prospects for self-driving vehicles have diminished in the past three months due to the pandemic.

#### EVs in focus

The risks may outweigh the benefits, but the most prestigious auto brands remain committed to exploring the possibilities with the introduction of electric vehicles.

This month, German automaker Porsche kickstarted the roll-out of its all-electric Taycan with a glitzy light show on the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

The spindly tower which peers over the streets of Dubai is the tallest building in the world at 828 meters, or 2,718 feet, high. Porsche's rental of the building for its display symbolizes all of its aspirations for the first three Taycan models: the 4S, Turbo and Turbo S, to be sold across the Middle East and Africa ([see story](#)).

Over at Audi, the e-tron GT is expected to hit markets in the coming months with an expected price of \$100,000. The car was developed in partnership with Porsche and bears similarities to the Taycan, both sharing 800 volt architecture.

The e-tron GT is part of Audi's drive to electrify one-third of its suite of new models by 2025 ([see story](#)).

Electric cars are being widely embraced for their environmental benefits and speed, but they do come with downsides.

Visually-impaired and blind people's failure to hear them approaching led Jaguar to develop a warning system to alert pedestrians about the arrival of its nearly-silent I-Pace. The British carmaker worked closely with the United Kingdom's Guide Dogs for the Blind to develop the technology ([see story](#)).

"Trust remains an underlying issue for both self-driving vehicle adoption consideration as well as for battery-electric vehicles," Ms. Kolodge said. "The industry has solutions for some of these concerns that the consumers are not aware of; others are yet to be solved."