



## AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERING

# FACT SHEET



## Vehicle Technology Survey—Phase III

### BACKGROUND

In 2016, AAA began conducting an annual study to better understand consumer attitudes toward self-driving vehicles. Phase III of this research, released in 2018, reveals how attitudes toward automated vehicles are beginning to shift and U.S. drivers are becoming more comfortable with the idea of riding in a self-driving car.

To help inform the automotive industry, AAA's annual survey also seeks to understand U.S. driver attitudes toward sharing the road with self-driving vehicles, their desire for advanced driver assistance systems in their next vehicle and how they rate their driving skills.

To educate consumers on the effectiveness of emerging vehicle technologies, AAA is committed to the ongoing, unbiased testing of these systems. Previous testing has shown both great promise and great variation. Future AAA testing will look at how well systems work together to achieve higher levels of automation.

To understand consumer attitudes toward autonomous vehicles and similar technology, AAA pursued four lines of inquiry:

1. Are U.S. drivers comfortable with the idea of riding in a self-driving car?
2. Are U.S. drivers comfortable with the idea of sharing the road with a self-driving car?
3. Do U.S. drivers want semi-autonomous technologies in their next vehicle?
4. How confident are U.S. drivers in their driving abilities?

### KEY FINDINGS

**Six-in-ten (63%) U.S. drivers would be afraid to ride in a fully self-driving vehicle, down from 78 percent in early 2017.**

- Three in 10 (28%) U.S. drivers would trust a self-driving vehicle and 9 percent are unsure.
- Women (73%) are more likely to be *afraid* than men (52%).
- Generation X (70%) and baby boomers (68%) drivers are more likely to be *afraid* than millennial drivers (49%).

**Almost half (46%) of U.S. drivers would feel less safe sharing the road with fully self-driving cars while they drive a regular car.**

- Four in 10 (37%) feel it makes no difference, while 13 percent would feel safer and 4 percent are unsure.
- Women (55%) are more likely to *feel less safe* than men (36%).
- Baby Boomer (54%) and Generation X (47%) drivers are more likely to *feel less safe* than millennial drivers (34%).

**One half (51%) of U.S. drivers want semi-autonomous vehicle technology in the next vehicle they buy or lease, down from 59 percent in early 2017.**

- Three in 10 (27%) U.S. drivers would not want this technology in their next vehicle and 23 percent are unsure.

## ASK THE EXPERT

### Why are Americans less afraid of self-driving cars than they were one year ago?

It's impossible to credit one thing with easing fears, but it's likely that more exposure to the technologies, and how they work, has helped.



Greg Brannon  
Director, Automotive  
Engineering

### What will help continue to ease driver fears?

Experience, most likely. AAA has found that drivers who own vehicles equipped with semi-autonomous driver assistance features like adaptive cruise control and automatic emergency braking are, on average, 75 percent more likely to trust the technology than those who do not own it. This suggests that gradual experience with these advanced features can ease consumer fears.

Education also plays a key role in easing fears. The more that drivers understand the capabilities, benefits and limitations of these technologies, the more comfortable they will be.

### How soon will vehicles be ready to drive themselves?

While experts agree that we're unlikely to see a fully self-driving fleet for decades, we may begin to see some highly automated vehicles on U.S. roadways in the next three to four years — whether they are for sale or just for a ride remains to be seen. The systems available for purchase today are not intended to replace an engaged driver, and AAA's testing has shown that these systems fail to perform flawlessly.

### How safe are self-driving cars?

Every year, more than 35,000 people die on U.S. roadways and autonomous vehicle technology is intended to improve safety, mobility and convenience.

It's too soon to tell, but the industry believes that self-driving vehicles will be safer than human-driven vehicles. Humans, after all, contributes to more than 90 percent of crashes.

### Can I buy a car that drives itself?

If you think of autonomous vehicles on a scale—from level 0 to level 5 — you can purchase a vehicle up to level 2. But remember, even the most advanced systems available today require your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.

## KEY FINDINGS, continued

Three-quarters (73%) of U.S. drivers consider themselves better-than-average drivers.

Men (79%) are more likely to consider themselves better-than-average drivers than women (68%).

Baby Boomer drivers (79%) are more likely to consider themselves better-than-average drivers than Generation X (69%) drivers.

Drivers who consider themselves better-than-average drivers cite the following reasons:

- Are cautious (88%)
- Obey the traffic laws (84%)
- Avoid distraction behind the wheel (81%)
- Have more experience (78%)
- Don't get traffic tickets (68%)

Women consider themselves better-than-average because they are cautious (92%) and obey traffic laws (89%) versus men who believe they have more experience (83%).

Baby boomer drivers (87%) are most likely to credit their better-than-average driving skills to avoiding distractions behind the wheel.

## METHODOLOGY

The consumer survey was conducted Dec. 7-10, 2017, using two probability samples: randomly selected landline telephone numbers and randomly selected mobile (cell) phone numbers. The combined sample consists of 1,004 adults (18 years old and older) living in the continental United States. The margin of error for the sample of 1,004 is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level.

Semi-autonomous technology is defined in the survey as advanced safety technology to avoid crashes, including automatic emergency braking, lane keeping assistance, self-parking technology and adaptive cruise control.

Generation groups defined as: Millennials (18–36 years old), Generation X (37–52 years old), and baby boomers (53–71 years old).

