Methodology
In April 2020, CarGurus surveyed 722 U.S. shoppers on their sentiments toward car shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these, 73% intend to purchase a vehicle in 2020. The remaining 27% initially planned to, but have delayed their purchase.

Key takeaways

Lagging, but not lost
Auto sales are delayed, but most are not lost. Many shoppers are simply waiting for normal economic activity to return, and actively shopping online in the meantime.

- 79% of respondents expect to purchase later than they initially planned.
- Even among those planning to delay their purchase, over two-thirds (68%) are actively researching.
- Only 8% who were planning to buy this year before the pandemic have now delayed their plans indefinitely.
- Expectations for when economic activity will resume are aligned with purchase plans.
  - Within 3 months, 31% expect normal activity, and 39% plan to purchase.
  - Within 6 months, 61% expect normal activity, and 64% plan to purchase.

Demand creation
Those who previously relied on ride-sharing and public transportation, and those who look forward to treating themselves once things return to normal, may drive new demand.

- 20% of those planning to purchase a car in 2020 had not planned to before the pandemic.
- 39% of those who previously used ride-sharing, and 45% of those who previously used public transportation, expect to decrease their use of these services—or stop using them entirely—when economic activity resumes.
- Among those who will decrease or eliminate their use of these services, 49% expect to increase usage of their personal vehicle, and 41% expect to purchase a vehicle (either to replace their current car, or to purchase an additional vehicle).
- 92% of respondents look forward to treating themselves when businesses reopen, most commonly by visiting restaurants, shopping at their favorite retailers, and indulging in personal care. 42% of 2020’s car buyers see their vehicle purchase as a way to treat themselves.

Contactless & online shopping
Car shoppers are more open, and more likely to prefer, buying online since the spread of COVID-19. However, most still prefer buying in-person. To address this in the near-term, dealers can offer contactless services.

- Before the pandemic, 32% of car buyers were open to buying online. Now, 61% are.
- Before the pandemic, 19% preferred buying online. Now, 39% do.
- Before the pandemic, 36% preferred financing online. Now, 54% do.
- The gap between openness (61%) and preference (39%) shows that many shoppers value and miss the in-store experience.
- 66% of those intending to buy in 2020 would prefer to use contactless services like:
  - Virtual appointments with video tours of the vehicles they're interested in
  - Private dealership appointments that allow for unaccompanied test drives
  - At-home test drives
  - Home delivery
Additional takeaways

Economic uncertainty & vehicle purchases

- Economic uncertainty is cited as the biggest barrier to purchase right now.
  - 31% of those planning to buy this year are worried about economic uncertainty.
  - 22% believe that purchasing now puts people at risk.
  - 21% say it’s a bad time because many dealerships are not open.
- On the other hand, many planning to buy in 2020 believe it’s a good time to do so.
  - 37% expect it to be a favorable time to buy because sellers will offer deals that aren’t usually available. Dealers and manufacturers looking to win more sales in the near-term should consider exclusive deals.
  - 28% say it’s a good time to buy because they want to support local businesses.
- Although many shoppers are experiencing economic hardships (39% say their finances have been negatively impacted by the crisis), 58% of those planning to buy this year say they will maintain, if not increase, their budgets.
- For many, a vehicle purchase is essential. 68% of those planning to buy this year cited the purchase as necessary.

Impact on servicing

- Among those who currently need to service a vehicle, over half (54%) say they have delayed their service or plan.
- Shoppers say they would feel more comfortable taking their car in for service if dealers:
  - Adhere to CDC guidelines (66%)
  - Are transparent about the steps they’re taking (55%)
  - Require that their mechanics wear gloves and masks at all times (51%)
  - Offer contactless pickup and drop-off (47%)

Detailed results

Results are reported among all respondents unless otherwise noted.

Are you planning any delay in your next vehicle purchase as a result of COVID-19?

- Yes 79%
- No 21%

When do you plan to purchase your next vehicle?

- Shortly after restrictions lift 13%
- Within the next month 7%
- 1–3 months from now 18%
- 4–6 months from now 25%
- 7–12 months from now 19%
- More than a year from now 9%
- Not sure 8%
Which of these best describes why you’re planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020? Select up to 3.

- Want an upgrade or something new 33%
- Previous vehicle needs replacement soon 32%
- Want to take advantage of a sale or special offer 22%
- Major life event (new home, new job, expecting a child, etc.) 14%
- Previous vehicle no longer functional (accident, breakdown, etc.) 13%
- Want to treat myself 13%
- Current vehicle no longer suits my lifestyle 13%
- Financial reasons 10%
- Paid off the loan on my current vehicle 10%
- Purchasing my first vehicle or an additional vehicle 9%
- Lease expiring on my current vehicle 7%

Are you actively researching vehicles during this time?
Among those currently planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020

- Yes 77%
- No 23%

Outside of your personal situation, do you think it’s a good or bad time to buy a vehicle right now? Select all that apply.
Among those currently planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020

- It’s a good time. Sellers will offer deals that aren’t usually available. 37%
- It’s a good time. I want to support local business. 28%
- It’s a bad time. There is too much economic uncertainty. 31%
- It’s a bad time. Retail activity puts people at risk. 22%
- It’s a bad time. Many dealerships aren’t open. 21%

Outside of your personal preference, do you think it’s safer to purchase a vehicle from a dealership or a private individual right now?

- It’s safer to purchase from a dealership 61%
- It’s safer to purchase from a private party 16%
- Not sure 23%

How has COVID-19 affected what vehicle condition you’re considering?

- Before, I had planned to purchase...
  - New 39%
  - Used 34%
  - CPO 19%
  - Not Sure 9%
- Now, I plan to purchase...
  - New 37%
  - Used 31%
  - CPO 16%
  - Not Sure 15%

How has COVID-19 affected what body style you plan to purchase?

- Before, I had planned to purchase...
  - SUV/Crossover 43%
  - Pickup Truck 16%
  - Sedan/Hatchback 27%
  - Other 7%
  - Not Sure 8%
- Now, I plan to purchase...
  - SUV/Crossover 40%
  - Pickup Truck 15%
  - Sedan/Hatchback 28%
  - Other 7%
  - Not Sure 10%
How has COVID-19 impacted your car-shopping budget?

- My budget has decreased 39%
- My budget hasn’t changed 44%
- My budget has increased 7%
- Not sure 10%

When you make your next vehicle purchase, would you prefer using contactless options and/or vehicle delivery if the seller offered it?

Among those currently planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020

- Yes 66%
- No 34%

What type(s) of contactless option(s) are you interested in, assuming they’re available and free of charge? Select all that apply.

Among those currently planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020 and interested in contactless options

- Private dealership appointments: A specific time to visit the dealer for an unaccompanied test drive 57%
- Free home drop-offs: The dealer will deliver the vehicle to you free of charge 45%
- Free at-home test drives: A no-commitment, free test drive at home 45%
- Virtual appointments: A virtual meeting with the dealer and a video tour of the vehicle 45%

How open are you to buying a car completely online since the spread of COVID-19?

- I wasn’t open to buying completely online before, and I’m not open now 39%
- I wasn’t open to buying completely online before, but now I am 29%
- I was open to buying completely online before, and I still am 23%
- I was open to buying completely online before, and my interest is even greater now 9%

In your ideal purchase process, which of these steps would happen online instead of in-person? Select all that apply.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Feb 2020*</th>
<th>Apr 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test drive (or similar, such as virtual reality)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade-in valuation</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price negotiation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* February 2020 data from the CarGurus 2020 Buyer Insight study, n=3000

Have you delayed, or do you plan to delay, servicing your vehicle as a result of COVID-19?

Among vehicle owners

- I have delayed servicing my vehicle, or plan to 40%
- I have serviced my vehicle as planned, or intend to 34%
- My vehicle does not currently require servicing 26%
Which of these would make you feel comfortable taking your car in for service right now?
Select all that apply.

Among vehicle owners

They follow CDC sanitation guidelines for door handles, steering wheels, etc. 66%
They’re transparent about the steps they’re taking to address cleanliness 55%
Mechanics wear gloves and masks at all times 51%
They offer contactless pickup and drop-off 47%
They use plastic coverings for vehicle interiors 43%

When do you expect normal economic activity to resume in your area?

Within the next month 5%
1–3 months from now 26%
4–6 months from now 30%
7–12 months from now 19%
A year or more from now 10%
Not sure 10%

When economic activity resumes, do you expect to change how you use taxi or ride-sharing services (e.g. Uber, Lyft)?

Among those who used these services before the spread of COVID-19

I expect to use them more 18%
I expect to use them the same amount 43%
I expect to use them less 28%
I don't expect to use them at all 11%

When economic activity resumes, do you expect to change how you use public transportation?

Among those who used these services before the spread of COVID-19

I expect to use it more 19%
I expect to use it the same amount 36%
I expect to use it less 33%
I don't expect to use it at all 12%

Which of these do you plan to do as a result of decreasing or eliminating your use of public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis? Select all that apply.

Among those who plan to decrease or eliminate usage of these services

Increase usage of my personal vehicle 49%
Replace my personal vehicle 26%
Purchase an additional vehicle for my household 17%
When economic activity resumes, how do you plan to treat yourself? Select all that apply.

Among those currently planning to purchase a vehicle in 2020

- Visit restaurants: 50%
- Retail shopping: 43%
- Vehicle purchase: 42%
- Personal care: 40%
- Travel: 40%
- Large purchase (furniture, appliances): 17%
- Home purchase: 13%

How has your financial situation been impacted by COVID-19?

- I wasn't employed before the crisis: 18%
- I was employed, but I lost my job or am unable to work: 20%
- I'm still employed, but my income has decreased: 20%
- I'm still earning what I was before, but I worry my income will decline: 15%
- I'm still earning what I was before, and I expect I'll continue to: 24%
- I'm earning more than I was before: 3%