# You Dont Need to Own a Car to Be Worried About Escalating Fuel Prices

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Consumers worldwide worried about the impact of increasing fuel prices.

Most common ways of coping with price rises: using oneâ€™s vehicle less, combining trips and cutting down on non-essential living expenses.

While 70 percent of Internet-users worldwide claim to have a vehicle for which they must buy fuel, an even greater number are concerned about the impact of ever-rising fuel prices. As many as 82 percent of consumers on the worldâ€™s five continents claim to be feeling the hit to their wallets in a recent online survey by ACNielsen, the worldâ€™s leading market research and information company. In the US, 88 percent of those surveyed claim that fuel prices are affecting them. The survey, conducted in November 2005, polled over 23,500 respondents â€“ regular Internet users â€“ in 42 markets.

You donâ€™t need to own a car to be affected by fuel prices

Car owners arenâ€™t the only ones concerned over growing fuel prices. Consumers evidently realize that, whether they own a car or not, fuel prices affect the economy and cost of living in general. Among the ten countries whose consumers were most concerned about high fuel prices, a number of them claimed not very high car ownership, for example, in the Philippines, Hungary and Chile.

In Asia Pacific, 83 percent acknowledge their dependence on fuel prices, while only 63 percent claim to own a car. Concerns are high even in more well-off countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

It is doubtless, however, that the impact of escalating fuel prices is being acutely felt in the countries with the highest number of vehicles in private possession. In the US, Canada, Belgium, France, Malaysia and South Africa, high levels of concern over price increases corresponded with vehicle ownership (up to 90%).

Only in a small number of countries, namely, Denmark, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand and UAE, did the percentage of those having a vehicle exceed the percentage anxious about the cost of fuel (by +10%).

The five most anxious nations hail from Asia Pacific

Five of the ten countries whose consumers are most worried over high fuel prices hail from Asia-Pacific. Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines top the list with 95 percent concerned, while Taiwan and Malaysia come close with 90 percent. Indonesia and the Philippines also lead the world with the greatest percentage of consumers extremely affected by fuel prices (59% and 57%, respectively), accompanied globally by Hungary (58%) and South Africa (53%).

Of all regions, Europe has the lowest number of Internet users who are feeling the affect of fuel prices â€“ 80 percent versus, for example, an 89 percent average in North America, and 83 percent in Asia-Pacific. However, it is really only the Scandinavian countries that seem less concerned. Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden rank among the Top 10 least worried over fuel prices worldwide. In the rest of Europe, it is only in the Netherlands where less than three quarters of respondents are concerned. In Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Greece, nearly all are concerned about fuel prices to some extent.

Drive less â€“ spend less

Higher fuel prices are changing peopleâ€™s driving habits worldwide. The most obvious response to price hikes is simply driving less (44%) and trying to combine trips (40%), which rank as the highest â€˜coping mechanismsâ€™ in all regions except Latin America. In Latin America, 63 percent of respondents on average say they have a vehicle, but 85 percent are feeling the impact of price rises, the majority coping with it by cutting down on non-essential living expenses. In the US, the most popular strategy cited by consumers was to combine errands/trips (70%).

â€œThe fact that so many US consumers are looking to combine errands and trips in order to economize should inspire retailers to push their convenience and merchandise variety messages,â€• notes Tom Markert, ACNielsenâ€™s chief marketing and client service officer. â€œConcepts like having a bank branch within a supermarket should be actively promoted and further developed.â€•

In some countries where distances are greater in the cities and public transport functions well, people are switching to public transport more often, like in Argentina (36%), Brazil (32%), China (47%), Hong Kong (48%), South Korea (53%), Taiwan (43%), Thailand (43%) and Turkey (40%). Only 8 percent of US respondents noted this approach.

Malaysians (28%), Indians (24%), Thais (23%), Philippines (21%), South Africans (23%), Mexicans (26%), Brazilians (17%), and people living in the UAE (19%) are opting to use their cars when there is less traffic on the roads.

Thais (23%), Malaysians (17%), Finns (19%), Russians (15%), Czechs and Poles (14%) are in agreement about the benefits of car pooling and sharing their trips with friends or relatives. But this way of economizing doesnâ€™t appear to be particularly popular globally (10%).

Only three percent of respondents globally would agree to give up using their vehicle altogether, with the highest number of volunteers (13%) having already done so in Brazil.

The ACNielsen Online Consumer Confidence Survey, the largest twice-yearly global survey of its kind, is aimed to gauge consumersâ€™ current confidence levels, spending habits/intentions and current major concerns. The most recent wave of the survey took place in November 2005 and polled over 23,500 consumers â€“ regular Internet users â€“ in 42 markets: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, United Kingdom, and the United States. The sample size in most markets was approximately 500, although 1,000 consumers were surveyed in each of the following markets: China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4% in markets with a sample size of 500, and plus or minus 3.1% where there was a sample size of 1,000.

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