

New Harris Interactive AutoTECHCAST Study:

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All-Wheel Drive is Driving Consumer Demand on All Wheels

A new Harris Interactive AutoTECHCAST study finds that one-third of adult vehicle owners would consider purchasing all-wheel drive (AWD) technology on their next new vehicle, not taking into account estimated market prices.

This ranks AWD second in consideration among 67 unique technologies measured in the 2009 AutoTECHCAST study, and it is a 10% point increase over the last time AWD was studied back in November, 2006.

Luxury vehicle owners, both car and SUV, show the most interest in AWD with close to half indicating they would consider it.

Two in five (41%) entry SUV and mid/large SUV owners would also consider the technology. Surprisingly, nearly two in five (37%) mid-size car owners indicate they are likely to consider AWD, making a strong statement to OEMs that this type of technology not only is a selling point for trucks and SUVs, but cars as well.

The new Harris Interactive 2009 AutoTECHCAST study, an annual survey of adult vehicle owners in the United States includes "All-Wheel Drive", as well as 66 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.

While AWD is perhaps not the newest and most advanced vehicle technology studied, it is certainly one of the most impactful.

In addition to ranking second in consideration, it is the top technology, at 68% that if added at no additional cost would make respondents either more likely (28%) or much more likely (40%) to consider a vehicle with the technology over a vehicle without it, assuming all else were the same.

All-Wheel Drive's Appeal

AWD has strong benefits for both performance and safety, with half of those who evaluated the technology indicating they would categorize it as a performance technology, and 43% categorizing it is a safety technology.

Of those at least likely to consider the technology, the top reasons for consideration were enhanced safety (39%), followed by improved handling (30%). The ability to drive in situations you normally wouldn't drive in was also mentioned by a quarter (26%) of considerers.

Drivers with AWD find it important with slightly more than three in five (61%) indicating it is extremely important or very important to have it on their vehicle.

As vehicle buyers are downgrading to smaller vehicles, they are demanding the technologies they became accustomed to, especially those that provide a higher level of performance and safety benefits.

AWD is a technology that as our data and real-world sales data suggest can definitely have an impact on a consumer's vehicle purchase decision. Carol Gstalder, Senior Vice President of Harris Interactive Automotive and Transportation Research Practice states, "Technologies like AWD that promote the benefits of safety are extremely important to people.

To consumers, the benefits of safety translate to key emotional outcomes that drive consumer decision making "such as confidence that the vehicle is durable and can avoid or withstand a crash, keeping families safe, and enhancing peace of mind.

Methodology

The AutoTECHCAST study was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive between February 9, 2009 and February 24, 2009 among 12,622 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 "2004 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.

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