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Canadians Looking for an Easier Vehicle Purchasing Experience

Interactions at the dealership a pain point with seven in ten saying they would prefer not to negotiate with commissioned salespeople

Toronto, ON, May 31st, 2022 – While the COVID-19 pandemic may have initially led many Canadians to stay off the roads, Canadians are back behind the wheel with many ready for a new vehicle.¹ However, a recent poll conducted for Clutch.ca shows that 84% of car purchasers² wish the process of shopping for or purchasing a car was easier, with 71% agreeing that they would prefer not to negotiate with commissioned salespeople. Four in ten (43%) outright state they don't enjoy the process of shopping for and purchasing a vehicle and 76% would prefer to spend less time visiting dealerships to find the right car, sentiments that are strongest in the prairies (59% SK/MB don't enjoy the process of shopping/purchasing at a dealership vs. 48% BC, 47% ON, 46% AB, 45% ATL, 28% QC; 88% SK/MB want to spend less time visiting dealerships vs. 79% AB, 78% ATL, 75% ON, 73% BC, 71% QC).

In fact, interactions at the dealership may be one of the biggest speed bumps in the car-buying process: 21% of vehicle purchasers have previously felt taken advantage of while 19% are worried their inexperience with vehicles makes them a good target for commissioned based salespeople to upsell to, perhaps leading to the three in ten (27%) who say they don't trust salespeople.

Lack of Trust Fuelling Difficult Car Buying Experience

Although only 26% of Canadians indicated they recently purchased a car at a dealership, a lack of trust in dealers and dealerships appears to be a driving cause of the difficult car buying experience. Among those who purchased a vehicle at a dealership in the last two years, on average their ideal price for a used vehicle is \$16,476. Three quarters (76%) of vehicle buyers believe there is a lack of transparency between sales reps and customers, a statement that is nearly unanimous in the prairies (91% SK/MB vs. 84% BC, 78% ON, 77% AB, 74% ATL, 64% QC). Eight in ten (79%) indicate they prefer to bring someone with them when visiting the dealership, a figure significantly higher among women (89% women vs. 69% men). Among the 79% who said they prefer to bring someone with them when visiting a dealership, 36% indicate they do so because they don't feel they are taken seriously, highlighting the lack of trust between car buyer and seller.

Furthermore, when asked to describe their level of trust in used car dealers to provide all relevant details about a car and offer a fair price, only 16% of Canadian car purchasers indicate they "trust used car dealers very much" with the majority indicating they "trust somewhat" (49%) or don't trust (34%).

What's driving this lack of trust? Car seekers cite a variety of factors inhibiting them from feeling comfortable at the dealership:

- 39% agree salespeople have more information than they are providing
- 28% state commissioned salespeople prevent them from feeling in control when purchasing a used vehicle





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- 21% believe they are often upsold on features or financing that they're unfamiliar with
- Only 13% state they enjoy the experience and feel like they're totally in control

This data is underpinned by the figures showing that while few Canadians who recently purchased at a dealership consider their experience bad (6% poor, 2% terrible), only a quarter considered their experience excellent (26%), with the majority stating their dealership experience was "good" (65%).

Information Sharing Key for Drivers

Canadians are consuming more information on a daily basis than ever before, and the data suggests that more information might improve the car buying experience. Among those who purchased a vehicle at a dealership in the past 2 years, more than half (55%) cite a sense that they needed more information (as only 45% state they received all the information needed to make my decision confidently).

What are car buyers looking for? A third (30%) highlight a desire for more transparency around the vehicle price and valuation, 21% wish they had more vehicle history information before visiting the dealership, while 15% would like a Carfax report or better pictures and videos of the vehicle before visiting the dealership (14%).

Where do car buyers look for information when looking to buy a new vehicle? While the dealership continues to be the first stop for most so they can speak to people directly (60%), online is favoured by many including the 43% who go to online marketplaces like AutoTrader or CarGurus.ca or the 25% who look at online car-buying retailers like Clutch.ca, CarDoor, or Canada Drives.

What Do Canadians Want in Their Car Buying Experience?

When asked what would improve the traditional dealership experience, pricing transparency is cited by 58%, followed by 38% who want the option to test drive the car for multiple days, 37% who want to not have to interact with commission-based salespeople, and 32% who desire more online options to skip the dealership all together. Only 12% of recent car purchasers state that nothing needs to be changed, that the current dealership experience makes sense.

Is online car purchasing the next step? 61% of recent/future car purchasers indicate they would consider purchasing a car online without seeing it in person first, but not without conditions. Four in ten (39%) of these potential online shoppers would want access to view owner history, vehicle service history etc, or be given reassurance that they'd be able to return the vehicle if they're not entirely happy with it (38%) while a third (36%) would want access to high-quality images of the interior, exterior, and existing vehicle flaws or to speak with a customer support person when choosing their vehicle so they can ask questions (30%).

Dream Guest in a Dream Car



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When asked “if you could drive around in one famous movie car for a day, what would it be?” Canadian car buyers most commonly selected the 1969 Mustang from the John Wick films (29%), followed closely by James Bond's 1964 Aston Martin DB5 (27%), the Batmobile (15%), and Back to the Future's DeLorean (11%). Who would be in the passenger seat? When asked who they'd want to take a cross-country road trip with, Ryan Reynolds was the top choice selected by 28%. Country music star Shania Twain was chosen by 15%, while singer Celine Dion is the passenger of choice for 8% of Canadian vehicle purchasers.





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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between February 2nd-7th, 2022, on behalf of Clutch.ca. For this survey, a sample of 2,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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