Rising Gas Prices and the Vehicle Shopper

MAY 2026 SURVEY — CONSUMER INTELLIGENCE DASHBOARD

Survey Date: May 8, 2026
n=1,000 In-Market U.S. Vehicle Shoppers

GAS PRICES PERCEPTION
87%
Say prices are higher than a year ago; 67% say "much higher"

VEHICLE TYPE INFLUENCE
76%
Major or moderate impact on vehicle type decision (No. 2 factor)

BUDGET IMPACT*
68%
Major or moderate impact on monthly budget; 30% say "major"

DELAYING PURCHASE
29%
Plan to postpone vehicle purchase due to gas prices

FUEL-EFFICIENT PULL
74%
More likely to consider a fuel-efficient gas vehicle

THE BOTTOM LINE

Gas prices are a **powerful force on the in-market shopper right now**. They rank as the second most influential factor on vehicle type decisions, they're pushing nearly half of buyers to adjust their purchase timeline (more toward delay than acceleration), and they're boosting consideration of fuel-efficient options across the board.

The strongest pull is toward **fuel-efficient gas vehicles and hybrids rather than full EVs**. Shoppers want to save on gas, but the path of least resistance for most is a more efficient version of what they already know, not a full leap to electric.

The demographic story is about **who has options and who doesn't**. Higher-income, younger shoppers pivot toward alternatives. Lower-income, older shoppers tighten their belts. Both groups feel the pain; their ability to act on it differs substantially.

IMPACT FACTORS — RANKED BY INFLUENCE ON VEHICLE TYPE

% reporting "major" or "moderate" impact on what type of vehicle they plan to buy

Vehicle prices	85%
Gas / fuel prices	**76%**
Inflation / cost of living	75%
Economy overall	73%
Service / maintenance	72%
Insurance cost	64%
Loan interest rates	63%

CONSIDERATION SHIFTS DUE TO GAS PRICES

% saying "much more likely" or "somewhat more likely" to consider

Fuel-efficient gas vehicle	**74%**
Less expensive vehicle	61%
Hybrid / PHEV	56%
Used vehicle	56%
Smaller vehicle	51%
Battery EV	45%

Fuel efficiency dominates over electrification as the primary response

PURCHASE TIMING IMPACT

Has gas prices changed when you plan to buy?

RESPONSE	SHARE	SIGNAL
Delaying purchase	29%	DEMAND DRAG
Buying sooner	20%	EFFICIENCY SEEKERS
No change in timing	48%	STEADY
Not sure	3%	UNCERTAIN

49% total with changed timelines. Net effect: more delay than acceleration.

BUDGET IMPACT → PURCHASE BEHAVIOR*

% delaying purchase, by self-reported budget impact from gas prices

BUDGET IMPACT LEVEL	% DELAYING	SIGNAL
Major impact	49%	HIGH RISK
Moderate impact	29%	ELEVATED
Minor impact	11%	LOW
No impact	7%	MINIMAL

7x delay rate gap between "major" and "no" impact segments. Financial pressure is the primary brake on near-term demand.

SUBGROUP ANALYSIS — KEY DEMOGRAPHIC SPLITS

How the impact of gas prices differs across age, income, employment, and current powertrain segments

SEGMENT	ACCELERATING	DELAYING	WOULD CONSIDER HYBRID	WOULD CONSIDER BEV	SIGNAL	KEY INSIGHT
Ages 18–29**	**33%**	31%	62%	**57%**	ACTION-ORIENTED	5x more likely to accelerate than 60+. Highest BEV openness.
Ages 60+**	**6%**	29%	45%	25%	RESISTANT	82% say "much higher" (top perception) but lowest action rate.
Income Under $50K***	20%	**34%**	52%	39%	SQUEEZED	47% call gas a major factor. Lean used (61%) and cheaper (70%).
Income $100K–$200K***	23%	24%	**63%**	**56%**	OPTIONS AVAILABLE	Highest electrification openness. Can afford the alternatives.
ICE Owners	17%	28%	51%	38%	CAUTIOUS	More likely to delay than accelerate. Modest alt-powertrain pull.
Retired****	**4%**	31%	42%	**19%**	UNMOVED	83% perceive "much higher." Just 19% BEV interest (vs. 56% FT workers).

DOMINANT THEMES

Core patterns across the data

- Fuel Efficiency as Top Priority
- Budget Squeeze → Delay
- Hybrid Pull Over BEV Pull
- Young Buyers Taking Action
- Income Limits Electrification Access
- Gas Is No. 2 Purchase Factor
- Retired: Aware but Unmoved
- Hybrid Owners Accelerating
- Used/Cheaper as Default Response
- Accelerators Seeking Efficiency

Methodology: Survey of 1,000 in-market U.S. vehicle shoppers planning to buy or lease within 12 months, conducted May 8, 2026, via Pollfish. All respondents are primary or shared decision-makers.

* Q10 (budget impact) was asked to current ICE vehicle owners (n=866). Percentages are based on those who received the question.

** Age subgroups: 18–29 (n=215), 30–44 (n=271), 45–59 (n=258), 60+ (n=256).

*** Income subgroups: Under $50K (n=395), $50K–$99K (n=333), $100K–$199K (n=204). "Prefer not to answer" excluded.

**** Employment subgroups: Retired (n=148), Employed full-time (n=502).