



 Autotrader

The Car Buyer Project

Equality in the driving seat



This report is a reflective summary of what women have told us about their car buying experiences. As the UK's largest automotive marketplace, Autotrader is an integral element of the car buying experience for many drivers and so it's important that we take responsibility for the part we've played in the current status quo.

Now that we've gathered this information, we're excited to be a part of the solution, and we hope you will join us on the journey.

“ I don’t engage in anything other than driving the car

[Age 64]

“ I just drive from A to B, that’s it²

[Age 63]

Introduction

For more than a century, women¹ have had a rocky relationship with cars. Men have traditionally been the ones to design, engineer, build, advertise, sell, buy, drive, write and read about cars. Meanwhile, women have been sidelined—overlooked, patronised and mansplained to by brands and the industry.

Which is a baffling way to treat half your potential market. Today, women hold 48% of UK driving licences³. They have more disposable income and autonomy than ever before, and they’re the majority consumer - confident in spending on products that reflect their lifestyles, values, aspirations and status.

But cars?

They’re still not making the cut.

¹ Throughout this report we use women/woman and men/man as nouns and female/male as adjectives in relation to the way respondents identified themselves in the survey. Autotrader recognises not everyone fits into these binary categories.

² All qualitative research in this report is from the same source: Women in Car Buying Qualitative Research - Oct 2025. 50 respondents.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders> accessed October 2025. England only.

And the car buying experience? They don't seem to love it...

" I think being a woman, it's very easy to get overwhelmed and intimidated. The car world is mainly men and I hate all aspects of car research. [Age 52]

" It's always intimidating when it comes to buying a car, as a woman, as men do not think women could be decision makers. [Age 51]

" Unfortunately I have only ever heard bad reviews about car dealerships, so I have been reluctant to use them in the past. [Age 55]

...but some progress is being made

Some drivers are having fantastic experiences in the automotive sector:

" I found the process quite pleasant and was pleased not to be talked down at, which is something, as a woman, has happened some years before. [Age 68]

" I have never had a bad experience buying a car. [Age 65]

What about the data?

Despite this progress, we've all heard the anecdotes from women about buying a car – but what about the data? What is the data telling us about the gender gap in the car buying experience? Is there a gender gap?

We think it's time for answers! So, we've combined all our latest research to understand more – to shine a light on what women have told us about their car buying experience and understand how we can all play a part to make it better.

We've separated this into 4 key sections:

1. Researching
2. Buying a car
3. Electric vehicles
4. Money matters

In each section, there are clear gender gaps in the experiences and opinions of people who have bought a car. We've also supplemented this with words from real women who bring the data points to life with their own thoughts and feelings.

We've gathered these insights so you can read, digest and reflect on how you might drive change.

1. Researching



Q: How do women feel about car research?

A: It's hard to find, hard to understand and they don't do it that much

Women find it harder than men to find the right information about cars⁴

30%

Women

21%

Men



There's also a trend for younger people struggling at this stage with 30% of 17-34 year olds agreeing it's hard, although it's still worse for women (39%) than men (26%) in that age group⁵.

// I do not engage with car topics but I do know which cars I am happy to drive and purchase. [Age 80]

// I don't really engage with car related content. [Age 28]

Once they've found the information they need, women also then find it harder to understand it⁶

Women

30%

Men

12%

Again, younger women have a harder time at this stage with 40% of 17-34 year old women struggling⁷

Because women find the research stage more difficult, they do less of it themselves than men⁸

Women

49%

Men

64%

All this difficulty leads to women being more likely to find retailers helpful than men⁹

Women

50%

Men

44%

// We have built up a rapport with our local dealership to the extent that I trust what they say and their advice. [Age 72]

// I used my local dealership. We get excellent service here and they know us. We are always greeted by name. [Age 64]

// I only engage with car content if I am looking at buying a car with my husband. [Age 42]

// My husband does most of the research and I then look at the shortlist online. [Age 42]

However, it's not all rosy...

// I didn't visit any dealerships, but my partner did. I had to stay home with the kids. [Age 36]

// As a woman I find them intimidating so would never visit on my own. I always feel like they are trying to get one over on me. [Age 54]

// I hated my experience at the dealership. [Age 23]

⁴ "I find it hard to find the right information about cars when I'm looking to buy one" 30% women vs. 21% men agree. Drivers Choice Awards 2025. 226,980 respondents.

⁵ 39% of 17-34-year-old women agree, 30% of 17-34 year olds agree. Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

⁶ "I find it hard to understand information about cars" 30% women vs. 12% men. Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

⁷ 40% of 17-34-year-old women agree. Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

⁸ "I do a lot of my own research" 49% of women agree vs 64% of men. Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

⁹ "I find car retailers helpful when I'm buying a car" 50% of women agreed vs 44% of men. Drivers Choice Awards 2025.



" I much prefer to go to a car showroom and speak with the salesperson there

[Age 72]

Q: How do women research?

A: More likely to do it in person and less likely to use AI

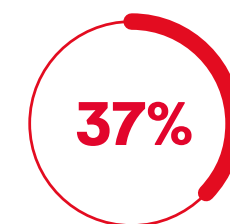
Women are more likely to research mostly or entirely in person¹⁰

Women 28%

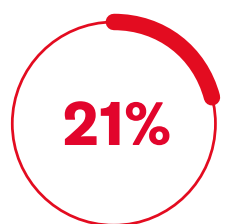
Men 22%

This is likely linked to the finding in the previous section that they are more likely to agree the retailer is helpful than men.

Older women are especially likely to conduct their research in person, reflecting the general trend that older people are more likely to research in person¹¹

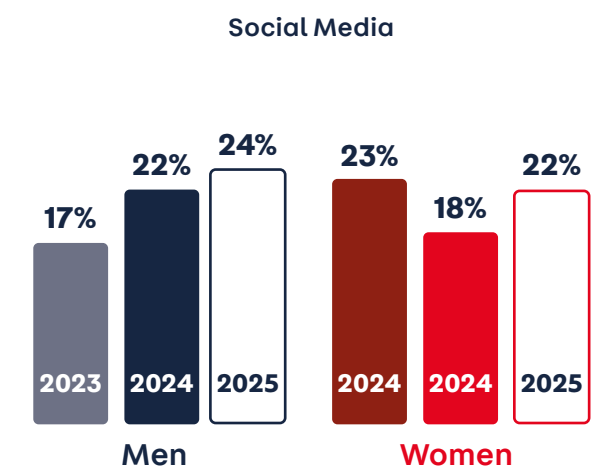
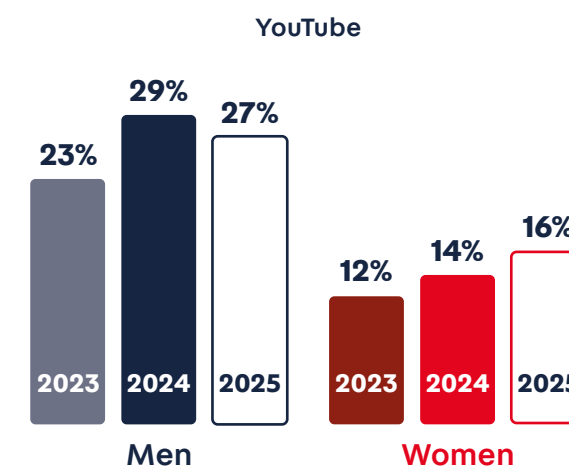


Women aged 55+

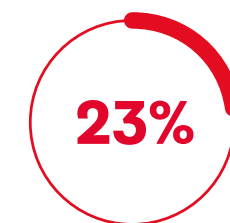


Women aged 17-34

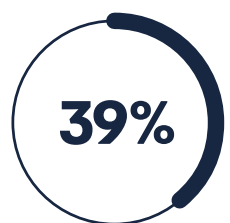
Women are less likely to use online sources for research¹²



Younger car buyers were more likely to use online sources but there's still a big gender divide, check out YouTube usage stats for 17-34 year olds¹³



Women



Men

¹⁰ Drivers Choice Awards 2025.
¹¹ Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

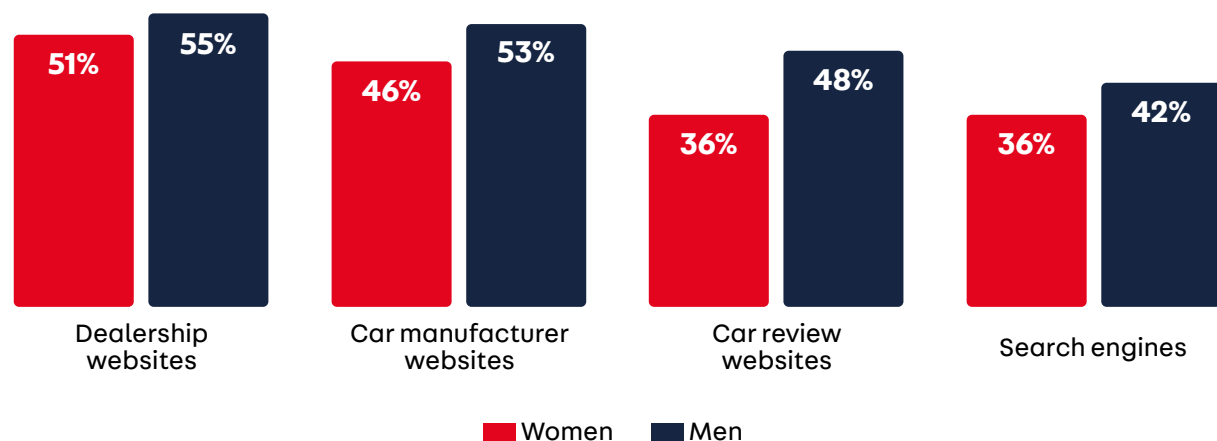
¹² Car Buyers Tracker November 2025, 2,000 respondents.
¹³ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

Women are less likely to use AI in their car buying research¹⁴



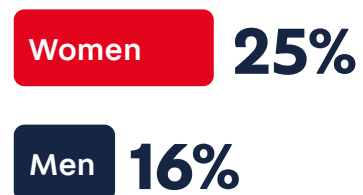
When we asked why they wouldn't use AI, women were more likely to mention lack of human interaction, unreliable information and data privacy issues.¹⁵

Of all the online sources of information, women were most likely to use dealership websites¹⁶



Although these four were the sources most used by women, the graph shows men were more likely to list these as a source of information in their car buying journey.

Women were more likely than men to say they used no websites in their research phases¹⁷



I don't actively engage with car content as I have no interest in it.
[Age 67]



¹⁴ Nationally Representative Tracker April 2025, 2,000 respondents.
¹⁵ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

¹⁶ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.
¹⁷ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

So what do they like?

I enjoy reading articles with real life experiences from people that have recently purchased a new electric vehicle.
[Age 30]

I enjoy reviews, advice on maintenance, technology updates, sustainability features, and lifestyle content like car culture or road trips.
[Age 55]

2. Buying

Q: How do women approach the car buying journey?

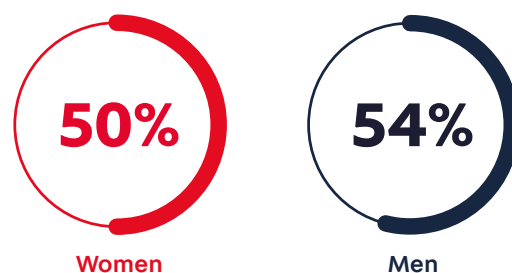
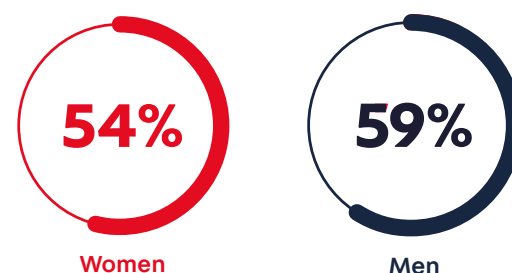
A: They're less likely to know what they want at the start, but more likely to be quicker

Women are less likely to know the make and model of the car they want to buy at the start of their journey.¹⁸

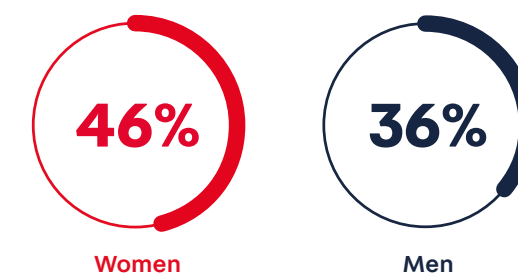
This gap has shrunk slightly, previously the gender gap was 7%, women have become more likely to know what they want.

Women are also less likely to know the retailer they want to buy from the start¹⁹

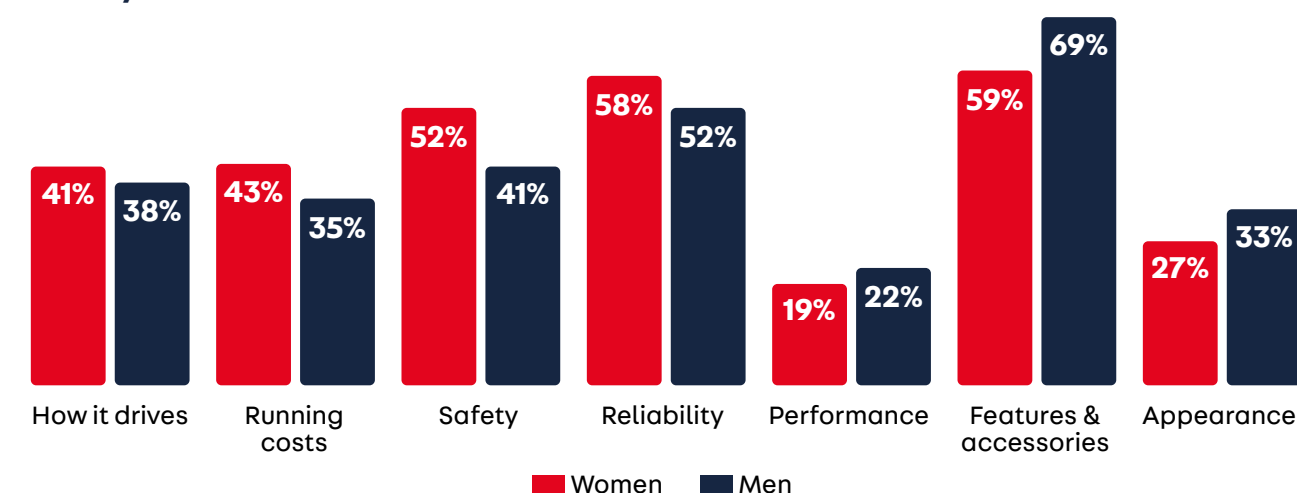
This gap has also slightly reduced, from 6% to 4%.



When it comes to new/used/nearly new, women are less likely to consider multiple types²⁰



Men and women have different priorities when it comes to reasons to buy a car



When it comes to features, some women really know what they want:

“ Reverse camera is always a must. [Age 42]

“ Parking sensor, sat nav, safety features, good options for music and radio. [Age 52]

“ Start stop technology, comfortable seating arm rest. [Age 34]

Whereas other women care less:

“ I did not want anything complicated just with the current standard things. [Age 78]

“ None of this is important. It comes down to reliability and comfort. [Age 44]

“ I don't know much about the kind of things. I left that all up to my partner. [Age 36]

On average, women take less time to buy a car²¹



Age and gender play a big role in the number of dealerships visits²²



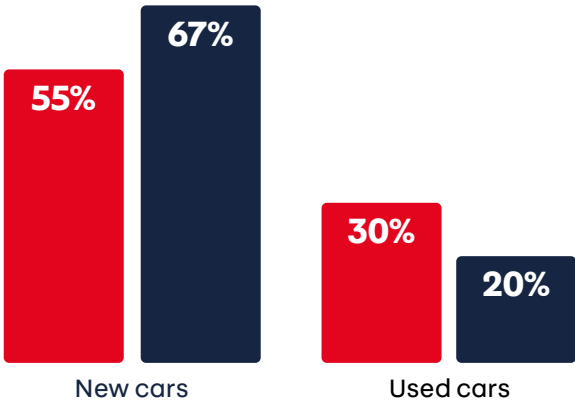
A deep dive into the 17-34 year old age cohort



Women are more likely to buy their car in person



Women are less likely to buy a new car²³

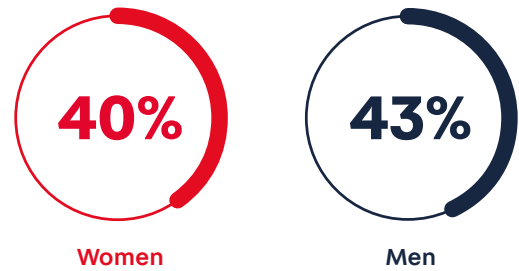


I bought a second hand car to get me from A to B but I did my research and was happy. [Age 32]



Q: Do women feel more brand loyalty?
A: Same loyalty. Different reasons.

Men and women have a similar level of brand loyalty²⁴



I am not very confident or well informed about technology in cars. I just want my car to have comfort and a sat nav. Anything else is extra. [Age 55]

Quality of car is the top reason for both women and men in earning that loyalty²⁵

And maybe unsurprisingly, women care more about safety than tech²⁶

	Women		Men	
1	Quality of car	82%	Quality of car	81%
2	Reputation of brand	51%	Reputation of brand	51%
3	Value for money	48%	Value for money	44%
4	Quality of safety equipment	29%	Quality of tech in car	38%
5	Quality of tech in car	27%	Quality of safety equipment	27%

21

Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

22

Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

23

Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

24

"Thinking about purchasing a car in the future, would you buy this make of car again? 'I would probably buy this again" - Drivers Choice Awards 2026.

25

"Why would you definitely buy this make again?" Drivers Choice Awards 2026.

26

"Why would you definitely buy this make again?" Drivers Choice Awards 2026.

Q: How do women feel about the car buying journey?

A: We've got room to improve

Women are more likely than men to find buying a car a stressful and daunting experience²⁷

Women **48%**

Men **42%**

Although there is a gender gap here, it's important to flag a lot of men also find the car buying experience daunting and stressful – so we have an opportunity to improve the process for everyone.

Women are less likely to believe car dealers are trustworthy and honest²⁸

// *I visited a dealership on my own and was intimidated by the sales person who was a man. [51]*

// *It would help if the sales man was less patronising. [80]*

// *I do find that if I go to a garage different to my local one that the male salesmen are not good with women. I get a better deal if my husband is with me. [72]*

While this may feel contradictory to the earlier finding that women are more likely to use retailers in their research phase, we believe this tension brings to life the way women feel about car buying. It feels difficult and intimidating and they don't know where to turn;

// *Yes I [visit a dealership], I find this the easiest way for me, you have warranty and somewhere to go if there are problems. [64]*

// *I always have assistance as I am disabled, I'm not good at understanding if the deal is good or bad. [42]*

// *Car retailers are pushy and want to make a sale to make commission before they see you*

[Age 41]

27 Nationally Representative Tracker April 2025.

28 "Car dealers are generally honest and can be trusted to offer fair deals", 26% women vs 31% men. agree - Nationally Representative Tracker April 2025.

3. Electric vehicles

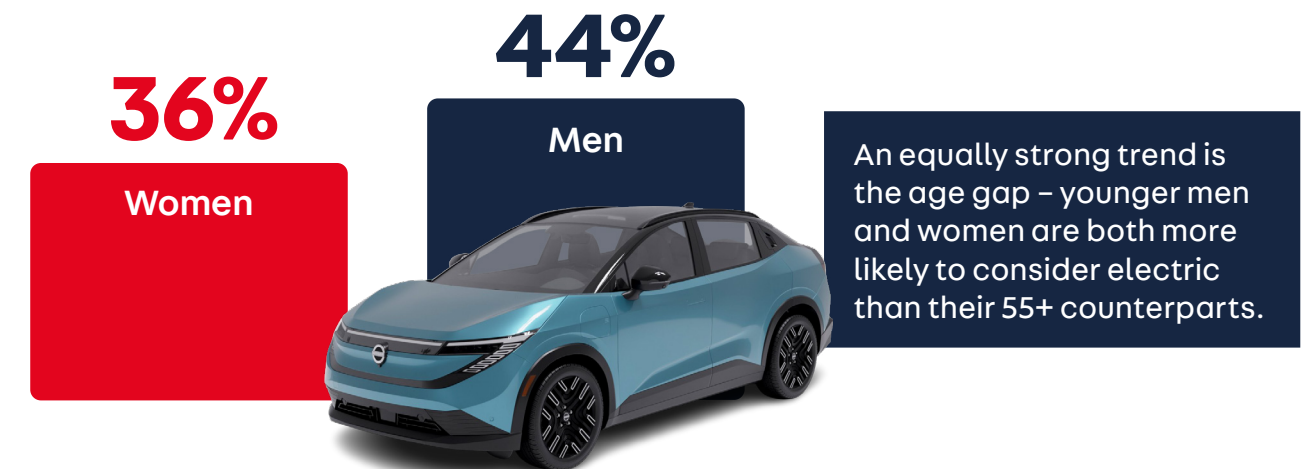


For a deep dive into this topic – the problems and solutions check out our **No Driver Left Behind: Women and the journey to electric** Report.

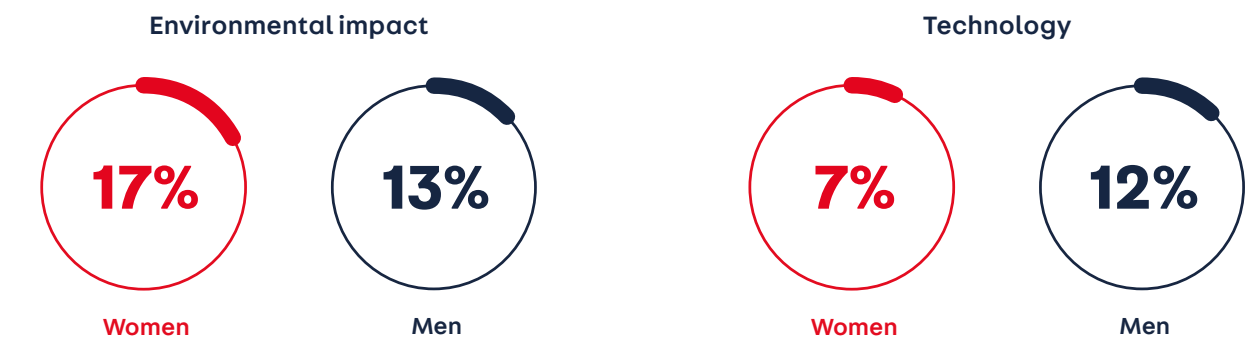
Q: How do women feel about electric cars?

A: They're less likely to consider, and they have different reasons for making the switch

Women are less likely to consider an EV than men²⁹

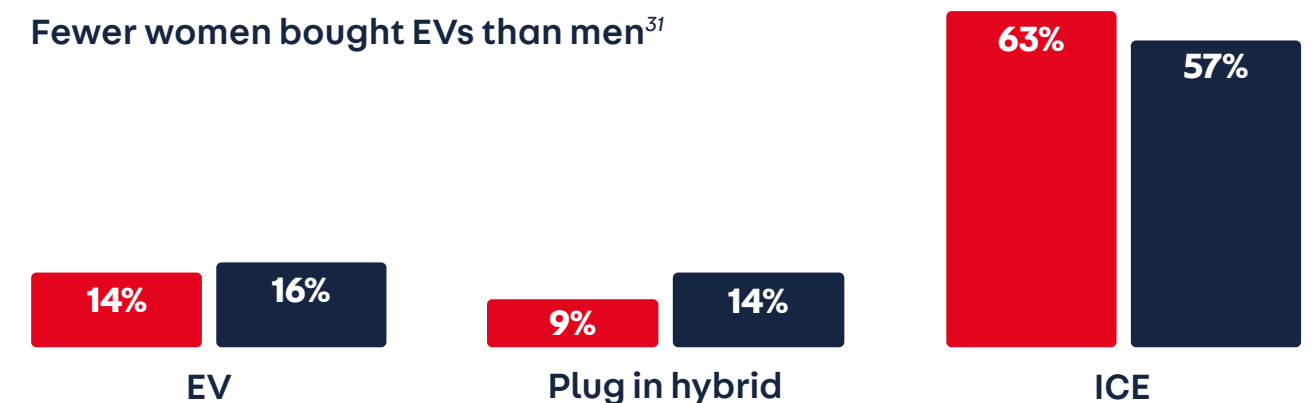


Female electric buyers are more likely to cite environmental impact and less likely to mention technology as a reason to make the switch³⁰



Running costs are equally important to both male and female EV drivers.

Fewer women bought EVs than men³¹



²⁹ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.
³⁰ Drivers Choice Awards 2026

³¹ Car Buyers Tracker April 2025

4. Money matters



Q: How do women feel about money and car buying?

A: Women are more money conscious but are less likely than men to haggle or to feel they are being offered a good finance deal

Women are less likely to increase their budget between car buying cycles³²

Women

59%

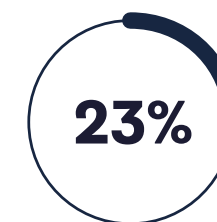
Men

64%

Haggling? A man's game³³



Women



Men

// I hate having to haggle over price but it's the only way to get a good deal. [Age 64]

Haggling for a better price has become less of a reason to visit a retailer for both men and women, the previous gap was 21% vs 27%.

Many women don't like finance

// I did not use car finance, I just didn't like the idea. [Age 30]

// I chose to pay outright to avoid interest and additional complexity. I think using finance could be helpful for managing costs, but it feels a bit confusing with all the jargon and different options. I would feel more confident arranging it if the process were simple and clearly explained. [Age 32]

// I did use finance, it all looks so overwhelming at the time but I end up getting along and figuring out how things work. [Age 41]

// Our last car purchase was a cash purchase. I do not like using other financial arrangements. [Age 80]

But not all women feel the same:

// I use [finance] to buy a nice car and use it to get the very best there is out there. For me and my family. [Age 56]

Women are less likely to be in paid employment due to caring responsibilities³⁴, consider the impact of this on their relationship with finance arrangements.

// Bought [the car] with cash. Didn't really have other choices because it relied on employment status. [Age 36]

³² "Did your budget change compared to the last time you bought a car?" Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

³³ "Why did you visit a dealership?" 19% of women selected "to haggle for a better price" vs 23% of men. Car Buyers Tracker 2026.

³⁴ TUC analysis, 2023. Accessed June 2026. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/women-7-times-more-likely-men-be-out-work-due-caring-commitments>

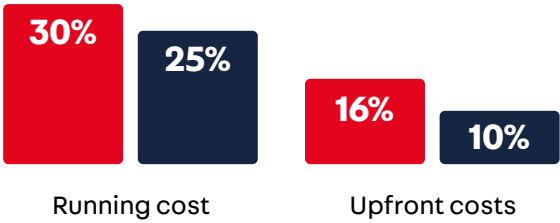
Women and men use finance for different reasons, with women more likely to cite cost as a factor

Reason for using finance	Women	Men
Cost of living means I have to use finance	25%	20%
Rising cost of cars means I have to use finance	28%	20%
I realised I'd get additional warranties if I bought on finance	12%	18%

However, some women are seeing finance as a tool to achieve their goals:

I have not used car finance to purchase a vehicle in the past, as I have always had the funds and ability to pay for it myself. I am currently considering buying a brand new electric vehicle, and financing might be an option on this occasion. [Age 55]

Overall, costs are more important for female drivers³⁵



Why do men use finance? Because they can change their cars frequently (43%) and because "[they] always do" (36%).



Women seem less likely to feel they are being offered a good deal, with less than one fifth saying this is a reason to use finance, compared to a quarter of men³⁶

³⁵ "What had the largest impact when considering what model to purchase?" Drivers Choice Awards 2025.

³⁶ "What made you decide to buy a car using finance?" "I was offered a good deal when I was about to pay", women 19% agreed, men 25% agreed. Car Buyers Tracker April 2025.

Conclusion

It's always good to start with the positives:

// *Car buying is] already a good experience and good choices and options given. [Age 63]*

// *So far I like the journey through which I purchased my car, nothing to change. [Age 30]*

// *There's nothing I would change, I had a very positive experience, nobody talked down to me, I felt I was a valued customer. [Age 59]*

Perhaps it's also important to create space for those who stoically persevere:

// *It might take a while to decide which car to buy but we get there in the end. [Age 56]*

// *Sometimes you feel a little judged as a woman and men will talk down to you but overall it did not bother me and I got the car I wanted. [Age 28]*

And don't forget those who outsource the problem:

// *I don't know what I would change [about the car buying process] as my partner sorted most of it out for me. [Age 36]*



But why not aim higher than outsourcing and perseverance?

Some of the women in our research spoke incredibly highly of their car buying experiences, and that's down to the hard work and dedication of the people in our sector.

However, we've also uncovered some clearly evidenced trends about how the car buying experience is different - worse - for women. The women in the research have told us they find car buying a jarring and disengaging experience and that they feel the industry is still geared towards men. But with women making more and more buying decisions, this needs to be addressed.

We believe in driving change together and this feels like an opportunity to deliver real change. Not just for women, but for everyone. Car buying is incredibly complex, and for a variety of reasons, we don't think it'll ever be easy - but there's no reason it can't be easier than it currently is. And there's no reason it can't be the same experience for everyone.

// *There's nothing at all I would change [about the car buying experience] apart from the sexism involved. [Age 44]*

Through the power of technology, we at Autotrader are trying to address a lot of the inevitable complexity involved in car buying. But we also need people - the industry - to come together to address the gaps we've shone a light on and make this better for everyone.

// *I think the old fashioned way of dealers thinking women don't know anything about cars should be addressed and women should be treated equally. [Age 44]*

We think so too.

How about you, how will you make a difference?

Recommendations

Q: So, there's lots to do... where to start?

A: Take action, Measure impact, Do more.

We employ a take action, measure impact, do more approach which encourages a focus on measurement and continuous improvement. Whatever action you take from this work, make sure you have clear performance indicators – how will you know what good looks like? There will always be something we can improve but build in milestones along the way so you can recognise your progress at each phase of the journey.

Here are some suggestions for how to get started...

...as a retailer or manufacturer:

1. Keep communication clear

Avoid jargon and technical language - make all communication, both online and in person, accessible and easy to understand. Avoid assumptions about prior knowledge and simplify finance processes by explaining options clearly and with empathy.

2. Ensure teams reflect your consumers

Actively promote diversity in hiring and retention, especially in customer-facing roles. Women reported feeling more comfortable and less intimidated when interacting with female staff, and the lack of representation can add to feelings of exclusion.

3. Build trust and transparency

Be upfront about pricing, financing options, and vehicle performance. Allow customers to pick a salesperson and book appointments in advance, so they feel confident and prepared when entering the dealership.

4. Tailor content and highlight what matters

Develop a clear content strategy for each customer segment, ensuring that information is relevant, relatable, and accessible to everyone. Highlight real women's voices and experiences in marketing and product information. Recognise that women are more likely to prioritise safety, reliability, and running costs over technology. Ensure these features are prominent in product design and marketing.

...as an industry:

1. Promote diversity and inclusion initiatives

Support and participate in industry-wide efforts- such as the Automotive 30% Club - to increase gender diversity at all levels, especially in leadership and customer-facing roles.

2. Share best practices and success stories

Showcase authentic stories and case studies of women's positive experiences, both as customers and professionals in the sector. We need to continue normalising women's presence and influence in automotive spaces – the industry now has a plethora of awards for women in our sector, let's amplify these as much as possible.

3. Drive change through technology and people

Use technology to simplify the car buying process but also ensure that human support is available to address the unique challenges women face. The industry can work together to close the gender gap and make the experience easier and more equitable for everyone.



What has Autotrader been doing to improve the car buyer journey?

We spent hours reviewing our search journey with real buyers of varying ages, genders and confidence. This has helped to identify areas where we could make our own search clearer and more effective for more buyers.

We started by addressing our search filters, where we were using unnecessarily technical language and lacking in explanatory content to make the more technical filters meaningful to everyone. For example, we changed the filter label 'Cat S/D/S/N' to 'Previously written off', the simple, natural language made it easier for everyone to understand. We also took the opportunity to include a short explainer to give some more context to write off categories.

We also found that our search results were overwhelming buyers with information that they didn't want so early in their journey, details like BHP or number of previous owners. Through multiple rounds of eye tracking testing, we understood which elements of the vehicle information buyers were consistently looking for in search. Focus was on vehicle imagery, price and fundamental detail like mileage and age. Focusing on these key elements enabled us to create a more impactful vehicle card that addressed buyers'

key needs at that stage of their journey, without overwhelming them with technical details.

Research highlights that a large number of buyers entering the market don't know which model would best suit their needs, so we've been investing in solutions that can help these buyers. We've launched a new way for consumers to connect with their next car. With the introduction of the all-new 'I'm looking for' search categories, buyers can refine their search based on real-world motoring needs, like a first car or a family car, making it easier to locate their perfect next car on Autotrader. These are subjective groupings, informed by data, which create more relatable starting points for buyers who know what they need from a car, but don't know which cars match their needs. We're currently testing these search categories and have seen encouraging results.

We have also utilised an 'interchangeability' data-model (i.e. people who looked at this also looked at that) in order to recommend alternative models in search in the 'You May Also Like' position. This helps buyers to expand their consideration set beyond the models they're currently familiar with.

Helpful resources

Diversity & Inclusion in your business:

Auto 30% Club:

<https://www.automotive30club.co.uk/>

Ben's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training

<https://ben.org.uk/how-we-help/for-my-business/training/equality-diversity-inclusion-training/>

Women in the driving seat podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/@Womeninthedrivingseat/featured>

Top retailers championing women

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/content/features/top-retailers-championing-women>

Explaining finance:

PCP vs HP: Which Is Best For You?

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/content/guides/pcp-vs-hp>

Autotrader Car finance hub

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/finance>

How does car finance work?

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/content/guides/car-finance-explained>

Car finance on Autotrader

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/finance>

Women & Electric:

No Driver Left Behind: Women and the journey to electric Report

<https://www.nodriverleftbehind.co.uk/>

She's Electric

<https://www.sheselectric.co.uk/>

Why aren't women buying electric cars? | Autotrader

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/content/features/why-aren-t-women-buying-electric-cars>

The advantages and disadvantages of electric cars

<https://www.autotrader.co.uk/content/advice/benefits-and-downsides-of-owning-an-electric-or-hybrid-car>

If you have any suggestions for resources, please share with us:
press@autotrader.co.uk



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