

Fuel Prices, Economic Concerns Change How Americans Drive and Maintain Their Cars

3M Car Care's "Elbow Grease Economics: A Study of American Driving Trends" Shows that Car Owners Are Driving Less and Tackling More Repair Projects

With fuel prices still on the rise, American car owners are rolling up their sleeves to save money on their driving and car maintenance expenses.

While Americans have abdicated much of their car maintenance and even cleaning to automotive service providers over the past two decades, a new study from 3M Car Care finds that the current economic environment is causing a dramatic shift in how Americans care for their cars.

In the "Elbow Grease Economics", a study of more than 5,000 American consumers, 3M Car Care found that a surprising number of car owners are taking their car maintenance into their own hands -- and on their own driveways.

And with the election on the horizon, survey respondents voted on which presidential candidates were most likely to wash or work on their own car -- Barack Obama won with 46 percent of the vote, while John McCain followed at 44 percent and Hillary Clinton trailed at just 10 percent.

3M Car Care has introduced an entire line of consumer car care products, all based on its high-performance professional products, to make it easier for consumers to take care of routine maintenance and car appearance projects. It also offers easy to use kits for tune-ups, headlight restoration and other tasks with all of the products needed for the job in one package. There also are a number of new products that make the projects easier, such as 3M Performance Finish which lasts for up to 50 washes with no white residue, 3M Scratch Remover to restore vehicle finish and 3M Fuel System Cleaner to improve mileage.

Key findings of 3M Car Care's "Elbow Grease Economics" include:

-- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Americans are washing their own car to save money -- or having someone in their household do it -- and 33 percent are doing the detailing themselves. Even female baby boomers are getting into the car wash spirit -- some 69 percent say they would now do the task at home to pinch pennies

-- Homes with pre-teen and teenage children are taking advantage of the built-in labor pool, with some 69 percent of 45-54 year old women indicating they or someone in their household wash their own cars

-- Families making between \$50,000 and \$75,000 ranked highest (68 percent) in tackling their car washing at home to save money

-- Other tasks car owners are tackling include repairing or replacing windshield wipers or headlights (57 percent), using fuel additives to improve fuel efficiency (17 percent), using at-home tune-up kits instead of paying for tune-ups (16 percent) and making repairs to their car's exterior (11 percent).

-- Americans also say they are driving less to deal with today's higher fuel prices, with 68 percent spending less time on the road. Women lead the pack on preserving fuel, with 71 percent cutting their car time vs. 65 percent of men. Carpooling also appears trendy, with Gen Y and Gen X car owners -- some 30 percent of adults 18-34 and 36 percent of women 18-34 -- sharing rides to shave expenses.

-- Households making less than \$35,000 per year were very focused on cutting their fuel costs -- with 76 percent driving less and 56 percent keeping their cars well-tuned to improve fuel mileage.

-- Car owners are paying more attention to getting more from their car, with 51 percent keeping their cars well-tuned to improve fuel efficiency and nearly 10 percent using fuel additives. Nearly 20 percent of car owners ages 18-34 are looking for a new car that gets better fuel mileage.

-- As it relates to new car sales, more than three-fourths of car owners (77 percent) plan to hang on to their current vehicles -- with 31 percent planning to drive their cars until the wheels fall off and 46 percent set to keep their car as long as it runs well and looks good. Only 4 percent of car owners say they are going to buy another car regardless of the economy while 11 percent are prepared to buy another car as soon as they can afford it.

-- Car owners are nostalgic when it comes to washing their cars. Some 42 percent ranked it as their favorite summertime chore from a list of six tasks when they were growing up, and some 36 percent of those respondents still put washing cars at the top of their list for warm weather tasks today.

This 3M Car Care "Elbow Grease Economics" survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive via its QuickQuery omnibus on behalf of 3M Car Care between March 20-24, 2008 among 2,543 U.S. adults (aged 18 years and older). No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

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A recognized leader in research and development, 3M produces thousands of innovative products for dozens of diverse markets. 3M's core strength is applying its more than 40 distinct technology platforms - often in combination - to a wide array of customer needs. With \$23 billion in sales, 3M employs 75,000 people worldwide and has operations in more than 60 countries.

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