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Press release

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One in two Belgians plan to buy an electric or hybrid vehicle next

However, nearly half of Belgians who plan to purchase a fully electric or hybrid vehicle would rethink their purchase decision if the rising price of electricity tops the price of fossil fuels

- An increasing number of Belgians (48%) plan to buy an electric or hybrid vehicle next. 10% will choose a fully electric car, 35% hybrid, and 3% alternatives such as hydrogen
- The most important factor in choosing an electric vehicle is the cost of fuel (64%)
- 58% of respondents mention climate change as a main motivator to choose for EV
- 86% prefer to buy a car in a physical store

Brussels, Belgium – 27 January 2022

While 48% of Belgian consumers plan to buy an electric vehicle next, compared to 33% last year, only 10% prefer a fully electric vehicle reveals Deloitte's 2022 Global Automotive Consumer Study, which focuses on private car owners. Thirty-five percent are looking for a hybrid vehicle and 3% are considering alternatives such as hydrogen. However, 46% of the Belgians who plan to acquire an electric vehicle say that they would rethink that decision if the price of electricity would be similar to the price of fossil fuels. This highlights that price, rather than concerns about climate change, is still the main driver in the purchase decision. Education on electric mobility is still required as 45% of Belgians are not yet convinced that switching to battery electric vehicles has a positive impact on the environment. The car remains the preferred personal mobility solution, which preferrably is acquired in-store (86%) rather than online.

"Sustainable mobility is rapidly gaining traction, which is highlighted by the news that more European vehicles were sold with a plug than with a diesel engine for the first time in Q3 2021, however Belgian consumers still prefer vehicles with conventional engines. Only 10% plan to go fully electric while 35% prefer a hybrid vehicle, and more than half still prefer a fully petrol or diesel engine. This raises the question of whether we are moving as fast as we need to be away from the traditional combustion engine and toward a more sustainable automotive ecosystem. Further work is required to address consumer concerns regarding charging infrastructure and the cost-price premium," explained Aled Walker, Automotive Leader at Deloitte Belgium.

Choice for electric mobility—BEV (all-battery electric), PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric) and HEV (hybrid electric)—is not driven by the concern for the environment

While the study confirms that an increased number of consumers (one in two compared to one in three last year) is looking for an EV, hybrid vehicles remain the most popular with 35% choosing hybrid electric (HEV) or plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV), and only 10% all-battery powered electric (BEV). More than half of Belgian consumers (52%) still prefer a fully gasoline/diesel engine. The most important factor in choosing an EV is the cost of fuel (64%) while major detractors remain, besides the price of electricity, the premium price of the vehicle (25% vs 28% in 2021) and the driving range (21% vs 27% in 2021). Consumers expect a driving range of 626 km from a fully charged BEV. This is in line with the expectations in neighbouring countries, 688 km in France and 616 km in Germany. 58% mention climate change and 37% personal health concerns as main motivators. Thirty-nine percent consider extra taxes on internal combustion engines (ICE) and 29% government incentive programmes as a motive to switch to EV.

Charging at home is preferred by 58% compared to a significantly lower but rising number of people mentioning that they would make use of the public charging infrastructure (28%). These numbers were 64% and 19%, respectively, in 2021. There are three common barriers to charging at home: the lack of possibility to install an EV charger (35% of 35 to 54 year-olds), the cost of installation (50% of 18 to 34 year-olds), and the lack of knowledge about how to install an EV charger (42% of 55+ year-olds).

"Education on electric mobility is still required as 45% of Belgians are not yet convinced that switching to fully electric vehicles (BEVs) has a positive impact on the environment. There are also opportunities to provide improved charging solutions for the 58% of consumers who prefer to charge at home. Of these consumers, 40% would connect to the regular power grid whereas 23% would use an alternative power source like solar energy, which is significantly higher than in neighbouring countries like France (14%), Germany (17%), and the UK (7%)," said Aled Walker.

The car remains king

The personal car is still the preferred means of transportation for most Belgian consumers, with only 7% saying that they never use a car. Only 10% use public transport daily, whereas 26% never make use of it. COVID-19 has had a slightly higher impact on the buying behaviour of young consumers with 51% of the 18-34 age group saying that due to COVID-19 they would buy a car to avoid the use of public transport.

"Multimodal mobility, meaning the use of multiple transport means in one trip, is emerging but not yet fully established. Six out of 10 consumers say they opt for it at least a couple of times per year, while only 4% daily. Multimodal mobility is obviously more frequently adopted in an urban environment where there is a higher density of shared scooters, bikes, and cars to complement the public transport network," explained Aled Walker.

In-store buying preferred over online shopping

Eighty-six percent of all those interviewed prefer to buy a car in a physical store over online. Even when purchasing online, authorised dealers (50%) are considered as the preferred partner. For used cars, third party retailers (35%) are an important channel. When opting to buy virtually (only 12%), convenience (35% vs 33% in 2021), speed of transaction (25% vs 32% in 2021), and ease of use (21% vs 11% in 2021) are considered the main reasons. Whereas in 2021 20% mentioned health reasons as one of the drivers to buy online, this figure has declined to only 10% in 2022.

“The main reason for not wanting to purchase a vehicle online is the human factor, including the desire to negotiate the price (48%), the possibility to ask a real person questions (39%), and the personal contact in case something might go wrong (37%). However, a perception of increased convenience and ease of use will likely support continued growth of virtual purchase processes,” said Aled Walker.

Personal data, mobility apps, and vehicle-as-a-service

Even though consumers are becoming increasingly cautious about sharing personal data, when considering the benefits of having a connected vehicle, six out of 10 say that they are willing to share personal data with the manufacturer or a third party if it helps with vehicle maintenance, road safety or when it saves time suggesting alternative routes in case of traffic congestion.

Map and journey planner apps are more frequently used with one out of five using them at least a couple of times per week. The uptake for public transport apps, single mobility service apps, and multimodal apps is still quite low. Thirty-three percent say they never use a public transport app, and half of them say they never use single or multimodal mobility service apps. Mobility app providers can increase customer loyalty by enhancing their service offering in the same app as only 10% of respondents do not want several different services within one app. All users of mobility apps across all age groups however indicate that the price and the ease of use are the most important criteria to use the service.

Interest in a subscription service which would offer the convenience and flexibility to periodically opt for a different vehicle is higher among the younger generation (30% of 18–34-year-olds), provided it would be cheaper (52%) than regular leasing.

About this research

Deloitte’s Global Automotive Study is annual research that has been conducted for more than 10 years and surveys consumer mobility behaviours and their impact on the global automobile sector. For the 2022 edition, over 26,000 consumers in 25 countries have been surveyed of which 1,057 Belgians equally based in urban (31%), suburban (32%) or rural areas (37%).

Discover more on: https://www2.deloitte.com/be/automotive-consumer-study

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