Motor Ombudsman study finds that AI would steer nearly one in five drivers when choosing their next car

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Author:

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The Motor Ombudsman tells us:

(Images and all words from The Motor Ombudsman).

- A Motor Ombudsman poll has found that close to a fifth (18%) of drivers would seek recommendations from an AI tool when choosing their next car
- Prospective electric vehicle (EV) buyers have emerged as the most inclined to consult this ‘virtual assistant’ ahead of making a purchase (27%)

- Just under half of car buyers would turn to AI to get an idea of price and the expected annual running costs (46%)1
- The majority of drivers (56%)2 would feel more confident in their decision for their next car if they used this online resource as part of their research

1 Combines ‘Very likely’ and ‘Likely’.

2 Combines ‘I would feel much more confident’ and ‘I would feel more confident’ and ‘I would feel slightly more confident’.

London, 07 October 2025 With an increasing choice of makes and models across the nation’s forecourts, different fuel types, and a range of technology and prices, settling on an ideal vehicle, new or used, can take time for consumers. Doing research is often the starting point of a car buying journey, and a study of 1,100 UK drivers commissioned by The Motor Ombudsman has revealed that around one in five (18%) motorists would seek recommendations from an AI tool* to assist in that all-important purchase decision.

The survey showed that drivers looking to go fully electric for their next purchase are the most likely to consult AI to help come to a conclusion as to which make and model to go for (27%). This is a higher percentage when compared to prospective hybrid (19%), petrol (16%) and diesel (11%) car buyers. The findings of the latest study equally highlighted that male motorists (24%) would be nearly twice as likely than their female counterparts (13%) to refer to AI as part of their due diligence before signing on the dotted line.

When respondents were quizzed about their principal motives for turning to this kind of online resource, the majority (56%) said that it would offer a fast response in terms of getting the information needed, that it would be a neutral and unbiased platform to help make the right choice (also 56%), and they could ask any questions without fear of judgement from others (55%). Just under half (48%) of the individuals polled explained that AI would provide the means to assist them when whittling down their choice of vehicle, whilst about a third (32%) said they would place a greater degree of trust in the information delivered by this kind of tool versus that received via word of mouth from friends and family, for example.

With several costs associated with running a car – a crucial part of the ownership experience, close to half of drivers (46%)□□1□ would likely turn to AI to request an estimate

of the potential yearly outlay for the makes and models they were interested in, taking into account expenses, such as fuel and or charging, road tax, and maintenance, to help gauge longer-term affordability. Similarly, 51%[1] of drivers would prompt it for the expected purchase price of a vehicle, with those harking from Greater London proving the most inquisitive about this critical aspect of buying a car (77% – nearly eight in ten), in contrast to those residing in the East of England (44%).

Buying a car often involves an element of negotiation between consumers and sales representatives to agree on the amount payable. AI can also now lend a helping hand for those who may ordinarily shy away from such a discussion – around one in four (42%)[1] said that they would probably use it to brush up on their haggling skills, to help them with pointers and advice on how to secure the right deal at the showroom.

Overall, the findings of the latest poll showed that the majority of drivers (56%)[2] would feel more confident making a decision on their next motoring acquisition if they had consulted AI during the research phase, with drivers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, appearing the most assured (72%)[2], followed by those residing in the Scottish city of Glasgow (67%)[2].

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director at The Motor Ombudsman, said: “AI is clearly evolving the landscape of how consumers are doing their research ahead of buying a car, providing a ‘virtual assistant’ that offers rapid and comprehensive guidance drawn from a number of sources instantaneously.

“This may make for better informed customers thanks to having this aggregated information at their fingertips. However, this does not replace the important role that retailers play in being a trusted, transparent and knowledgeable guide to help consumers make an educated decision that meets their requirements for a vehicle at the point of purchase.”

For car retailers that are accredited to The Motor Ombudsman’s Vehicle Sales Code across the UK, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/Business-Finder.

Further information:

AI tools

*Examples of AI tools include ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google Gemini, and Microsoft CoPilot.

Research methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 1,100 full driving licence holders. The data was collected between 29.08.25 to 02.09.25. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

Motor Ombudsman resources

The Motor Ombudsman provides a comprehensive library of impartial motoring resources for consumers embarking on the car buying and ownership journey.

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THE MOTOR OMBUDSMAN
HOW AI IS STEERING THE CAR BUYING JOURNEY
18%
would turn to an AI tool* for make and model recommendations
24%
13%
male drivers are nearly twice as more likely than female car users to consult AI as part of their research
32%
would place a greater degree of trust in AI responses versus word-of-mouth recommendations
27%
of EV buyers would consult AI (versus 19% for hybrid and 16% for petrol) to help make a purchase decision
55%
see AI as a tool to ask questions without fear of judgement from others
48%
said AI could help narrow down their choice of vehicle according to their criteria
56%
would use AI as an unbiased and neutral platform to help make the right purchase choice
56%
would offer a fast response in terms of getting the information needed
Results based on a survey of 1,100 UK drivers (29.08.25 - 02.09.25)
*Examples of AI tools, include ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google Gemini, and Microsoft CoPilot