The Motor Ombudsman finds that 18- to 27-year-olds are the most emotionally connected generation to their cars

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A recent poll discovers that ‘Gen Zers’ are the most driven to love their cars.

The Motor Ombudsman tells us…

(Photograph and all words from the Motor Ombudsman).

• Ahead of the arrival of Valentine’s Day, research by The Motor Ombudsman has revealed that 18- to 27-year-olds are the most emotionally connected generation to their cars

• Over eight in 10 (82%) Gen Zs have personalised their cars with accessories to make it truly theirs, with seat covers, scented fresheners, and hanging charms, being front and centre

• Gen Zers are also advised by The Motor Ombudsman to show their love for their car through regular ad hoc and routine maintenance, and to use accredited repairers for the best care

London, 11 February 2025.

With Valentine's Day, the annual celebration of love, just round the corner, a UK-wide Censuswide poll of 2,000 respondents commissioned by The Motor Ombudsman, has revealed that 'Gen Zers' (please see notes at the end of this feature) are the most emotionally attached to their cars (18%). They surpass all other age groups in terms of the bond and loyalty shown to their wheels, with their pride and joy playing only second fiddle to their smartphones, which ranked as their number one personal possession (40%), according to the study.

With Zoomers being amongst some of the newest car users on the road, and with getting behind the wheel often allowing them to discover a new found sense of freedom, over a quarter (27%) of the Gen Z car owners polled, expressed most strongly out of any other generation that, being in the driving seat gave them a safe space to escape from the daily grind, and a feeling of independence. In contrast, this sentiment was shared by just 18% of car owners aged between 60 to 78 (i.e. 'Baby Boomers' – again please see notes at the end of this feature) .

Furthermore, with Gen Zs sometimes being termed as 'digital natives' and the 'iGeneration', thanks to social media and apps frequently taking centre stage to stay up to date with the latest and greatest, 17% who said they owned a car, viewed it as a quiet retreat to have some valuable 'me time' – a haven to reflect on the day's events, or to listen to music.

The Motor Ombudsman research equally revealed that, as well being their 'happy place', Gen Zs who have taken the plunge and embarked on a car ownership journey, are the most likely age group to accessorise their motor, and add personal touches to make it truly theirs*, at just over eight in ten (82%), which falls to just one in five for Baby Boomers. From the Gen Zers who stated that they have indulged in using their car as an extension of their personality, a third (33%) have reached for some scented fresheners, with 29% opting for hanging charms, such as on the rear view mirror, whilst nearly a quarter (23%) have dressed their seats with some eye-catching covers.

The latest study also showed that the younger Gen Z age group are the keenest of the generations to christen their car with a name at 28% – a sign of companionship, and the emotional connection they share with such a cherished possession. The passion for giving a car such an identity and making it a part of the family however, dwindles down the ages, with only around two in ten (19%) 'Millennials', and 17% of 'Gen Xers' (please see notes at the end of this feature), craving this desire for an added humanised element of familiarity.

With relationships centred around creating and enjoying special moments together, this affiliation carries through to car ownership for Gen Zers. A third (33%) of these drivers explained that they have transported a loved one during a special moment, for example, bringing a newborn baby home from hospital, or taking a bridal party to a wedding, whilst a similar proportion have experienced road trips, holidays and adventures that are head and shoulders above the rest.

About a quarter (24%) of Gen Z drivers surveyed also explained that their car has accompanied them through some of life's key milestones, such as moving house, or even going off to university.

Whilst Zoomers may appear the most devoted to their vehicles, this also extends to maintaining their motors in line with vehicle manufacturer recommendations and regular checks, such as tyre pressures and tread, and fluid levels. As household budgets are increasingly squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis, a recent survey by The Motor Ombudsman of vehicle repairers across the country, recently reported that more than half (53%) of car owners were forgoing routine servicing to save money, with a similar proportion (56%) of garages expecting motorists to delay essential repairs in 2025. On this point, The Motor Ombudsman warns that vehicle owners forgoing repairs and servicing, could be opening themselves up to higher bills down the line.

Commenting on the survey findings, Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, said: “Gen Zers will be amongst the newest drivers on the road, with their love for their cars fuelled by the ability to enjoy greater independence and freedom, and a car is often for many, a symbol of aspiration and achievement.”

Bill added: “However, with car ownership comes a great responsibility to always be behind the wheel of a safe, legal, and roadworthy vehicle, and this means that it should always be cared for in the best possible hands, both by the owner and when at the garage. This is exactly what our nationwide network of accredited vehicle repairers provides – an unrelenting commitment to the highest levels of work and service, which are key ingredients to building long-term and loyal relationships.”

Further information:

Generational group age ranges referenced in the survey

1. ‘Gen Z’ refers to those aged between 18 and 27.
2. ‘Baby Boomers’ / ‘Boomers’ refers to those aged between 60 and 78.

3. Gen Y' / 'Millennials' refers to those aged between 28 and 43.
4. Gen X' refers to those aged between 44 and 59.

* All 'yes' responses combined for the question asking Gen Z drivers whether they had ever personalised or decorated their car to make it feel unique to them.

Research methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 2,000 nationally representative UK consumers, aged 18+. The data was collected between 24.01.25 – 28.01.25. 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

To help Gen Z, and all drivers, keep their cars running smoothly, The Motor Ombudsman recommends that they:

1. Find trusted help – Use The Motor Ombudsman's online Garage Finder to shop around for ad hoc and routine maintenance, and to enquire about a booking with Motor Ombudsman-accredited repairers.

2. Check their tyres – Under-inflated or worn tyres can increase fuel costs and be dangerous on the road. 3. Book a service – Don't wait for a breakdown – regular servicing prevents costly repairs in the long run. 4. Keep it clean – A clean car isn't just for aesthetics – it helps prevent rust and long-term damage.

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

About The Motor Ombudsman

The Motor Ombudsman is the independent and impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK's motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and ownership experience. ownership experience.

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org