

IMPORT MORE CARS, NOT MORE FUEL?

SURVEY: 9 OUT OF 10 AMERICANS WANT ACCESS TO DOZENS OF CAR MODELS THAT GET HIGH MPG RATINGS ... BUT ARE NOT SOLD IN U.S.

Built-in Market: 2.5 Million Americans Frustrated in Trying to Purchase Fuel-Efficient Cars; Why Do Only 5 Car Models in U.S. Get Combined Mileage of 40mpg or More, When 86 Car Models Not Sold Here Do That Well or Better?

WASHINGTON, D.C.///December 1, 2005///Ever heard of the Ford Fiesta that gets 45mpg in the city and 60mpg on the highway? Not familiar with the Volkswagen Lupo with a combined city/highway rating of 53.5 mpg? Don't remember a car salesman ever offering you a test drive in a GM Opel/Vauxhall Tigra that does better than 60mpg on the open road? Never been passed by the sleek BMW 5 Series Saloon that gets 50mpg on the highway? You are far from alone. According to new research by 40mpg.org/Civil Society Institute, these are just a few of the 86 or more car models that get a combined rating of 40mpg or better ... but are not sold in the U.S., where only five cars are rated as highly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Adding insult to injury: Most of these fuel-efficient vehicles are either made by U.S. manufacturers or foreign car makers with extensive U.S. sales operations.

This situation does not sit well with millions of frustrated Americans consumers who face both high gas prices and often lengthy delays when trying to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles in the U.S. Nine out of 10 Americans (88 percent) say that "U.S. consumers should be able to get the best of the more fuel-efficient vehicles that already are available in other countries," according to a new Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) national opinion poll conducted for 40mpg.org (<http://www.40mpg.org>) and the nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute.

Not only are 40mpg or better vehicles readily available in other nations, but there is a considerable pent-up demand for such autos in the U.S., according to the 40mpg.org/CSI survey. More than 12 percent of Americans – an estimated 2.5 million consumers – say that they "have faced a delay in getting the fuel-efficient car [they] wanted or were concerned enough about reports of delays not to proceed with purchasing such a vehicle." The bottlenecks and shortages in the supplies of more fuel-efficient vehicles in the U.S. is now so great that the number of frustrated American consumers (12 percent) is actually slightly *bigger* than those (11 percent) who have successfully made such a purchase.

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **"This survey and our related research on the ready availability of more fuel-efficient vehicles overseas shows that the emperor truly has no clothes when it comes to a federal 40mpg fuel efficiency standard. Those who claim that the technology doesn't exist are wrong. They are just as off base when they say that consumers don't want these smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. There is a reason why U.S. automakers are laying off people in the tens of thousands and steadily losing ground to foreign competitors. The industry is not listening to consumer demand. And the more consumers make the connection between America's dependence on Middle Eastern oil, the connection to global warming and so on, the more the pressure for change will build. The availability of**

fuel-efficient vehicles in Europe demonstrates clearly that consumer demand and national policies can make an industry respond. Our survey shows the time for that kind of action in the U.S. is now. We need to seriously think about taking immediate emergency steps to get more of these more fuel-efficient cars into the hands of the consumers who want them.”

40mpg.org spokesperson Ailis Aaron, co-editor of “The Ultimate Car Book 2001” and “The Used Car Book 2000-2001,” said: **“It would be one thing if there were just a handful of more fuel-efficient cars available outside the U.S., but the reality is that our research turned up at least 129 car models for sale elsewhere at 35mpg or better for combined city/highway purposes, including 86 rated at 40mpg or better combined. The notion that foreign car buyers are somehow different from U.S. car buyers is just another wrong assumption on the part of Detroit. And you can’t explain away the difference here by safety standards or EPA rules. Most of the best recent safety innovations came from Europe and Japan -- not the United States. And when it comes to pollution, consider this fact: There are two vehicles in the U.S. that get combined city/highway ratings of 50mpg or better and both of them are hybrids. Outside of the U.S., there are 33 vehicles that get 50mpg or better and 30 of them use ‘clean diesel’ technology that the EPA says is more fuel efficient and results in less of the pollutants linked to global warming.”**

Other key 40mpg.org/CSI survey findings: nearly four out of five Americans (79 percent) want to see higher federal fuel efficiency standards for vehicles in order to cut Middle Eastern fuel use and to combat global warming; more than four out of five Americans (82 percent) say the U.S. “has not done enough” to conserve energy through such steps as requiring higher federal fuel efficiency standards for vehicles; and three out of five Americans (57 percent) think “a windfall profits tax should be imposed” despite recent testimony before Congress by oil company executives who denied any role in price gouging at the gas pump. The CSI/40mpg survey found that alternative energy development is favored by more than a two-to-one margin over “subsidies for winter heating bills” (57 versus 26 percent) as the best use of oil windfall profit tax revenues.

Full results from the new ORC survey are available online at <http://www.40mpg.org>.

FOREIGN CAR MILEAGE RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

In analyzing more than a dozen sources of industry and public information outside the United States about fuel efficient vehicles, 40mpg/CSI found the following:

- At least 86 vehicles not for sale in the U.S. achieve combined city/highway fuel efficiency of 40mpg or better. Of these, 65 percent (51) are made by either U.S. auto manufacturers (e.g., Ford and GM) or foreign manufacturers with substantial U.S. sales operations (e.g., Volkswagen, Nissan and Toyota). Some of the most fuel-efficient vehicles are made by foreign manufacturers with little or no U.S. distribution (e.g., PSA Peugeot Citroen, Fiat and Renault). Only five U.S. vehicles are rated by the EPA as having 40mpg or higher combined fuel efficiency. Overall, at least 129 vehicles not sold in the U.S. were found to achieve combined fuel efficiency of 35 mpg or better.

- 34 vehicles not for sale in the U.S. achieve combined city/highway fuel efficiency of 50 mpg or higher. Only two U.S. vehicles are rated by the EPA as having 50mpg or better combined fuel efficiency.
- The most fuel-efficient cars not sold in the U.S. are almost all powered by “clean diesel,” not hybrid technology. Of the 34 vehicles not for sale in the U.S. achieving combined city/highway fuel efficiency of 50 mpg or better, all but three use diesel power. (By contrast, the US EPA has ratings for a *total* of only five diesel-powered vehicles of any kind.) According to the EPA: “Diesel-powered vehicles typically get 30-35 percent more miles per gallon than comparable vehicles powered by gasoline. Diesel engines are inherently more fuel efficient, and diesel fuel contains 10 percent more energy power gallon than gasoline. In addition, new advances in diesel engine technology have improved performance, reduced engine noise and fuel odor, and decreased emissions of harmful air pollutants. New low-sulfur diesel fuels available beginning in 2006 will help reduce emissions from these vehicles even more.”
- Some fuel-efficient vehicles identified by 40mpg/CSI have both a diesel and a gas model over 35 mpg that aren’t sold in U.S. In other cases, some models have a gas version available in the U.S., but also offer a more fuel efficient diesel version outside the U.S.

Aaron noted that CSI took a cautious approach in identifying both car models not for sale in the U.S. and the consistent calculation of gas mileage, in order to permit an apples-to-apples comparison with EPA data. Given the tight standards for putting vehicles on the “not sold in the U.S.” roster, it is likely that there are a number of additional vehicles that could be added to the list.

Commenting on the foreign fuel-efficient vehicle research, Pam Solo said: “The benefits of making 40 miles per gallon the standard for all autos in the United States are obvious to Americans: consumers save money; we reduce our dangerous reliance on Middle Eastern oil, making us more secure in the world; air pollution is reduced; and we can cut the U.S. contribution to global warming by nearly a third. Greater fuel efficiency makes sense, it is technologically possible, the benefits are real and the challenges can be overcome.”

A March 17, 2005 ORC survey commissioned by 40mpg.org and CSI found that two out of three Americans think that it is patriotic to buy a fuel-efficient vehicle that uses less gasoline and, therefore, requires this country to import less oil from the Middle East. Only a third of Americans disagreed with this statement, including 14 percent who did so strongly.

ORC SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a sample of 1,030 adults (521 men and 509 women) aged 18 and over living in private households in the continental United States. Interviewing was completed by Opinion Research Corporation during the period of November 17-20, 2005. Completed interviews of the survey adults were weighted by four variables: age, sex, geographic region, and race, to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total adult population. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the complete sample of 1,030 adults. Smaller sub-groups will have larger error margins.

ABOUT THE GROUPS

Launched in March 2005, the 40mpg.org Web site includes powerful features that permit visitors to: determine how much they would save by getting 40 miles to the gallon; compare and contrast one vehicle's fuel-efficiency ratings with those of others; monitor how individual members of Congress weighed in on the most recent fuel-efficiency standard votes; contact automakers to speak out in favor of more fuel-efficient vehicles; and send a letter to the editor of a local newspaper urging the adoption of a 40 mpg fuel-efficiency standard. 40mpg.org is not affiliated in any way with the maker or makers of any vehicles or fuel-efficiency technology.

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute is a think tank that serves as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business that can help to improve society. The 40mpg.org campaign is a project of CSI. You can find CSI on the Web at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>.

CONTACT: Ailis Aaron, for 40mpg.org and Civil Society Institute, (703) 276-3265 or aaaron@hastingsgroup.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio recording of the news event will be available on the Web as of 4 p.m. ET on December 1, 2005 at <http://www.40mpg.org> and <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>.