Public Concern about Driverless Cars is Strong, and the Support for Performance Requirements is Clear

ENGINE'S CARAVAN SURVEY
Public Opinion Poll

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ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY & AUTO SAFETY

Commissioned by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Founded in 1989, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is an alliance of public health, safety, and consumer organizations, insurers and insurance agents that promotes highway and auto safety through the adoption of safety laws, policies and regulations. Advocates is a unique coalition dedicated to advancing safer vehicles, safer drivers and passengers, and safer roads.

Introduction

Each year motor vehicle crashes kill tens of thousands of people and injure millions more at a cost to society of well over $800 billion. According to the latest statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 36,560 people were killed on our Nation's roads in 2018.

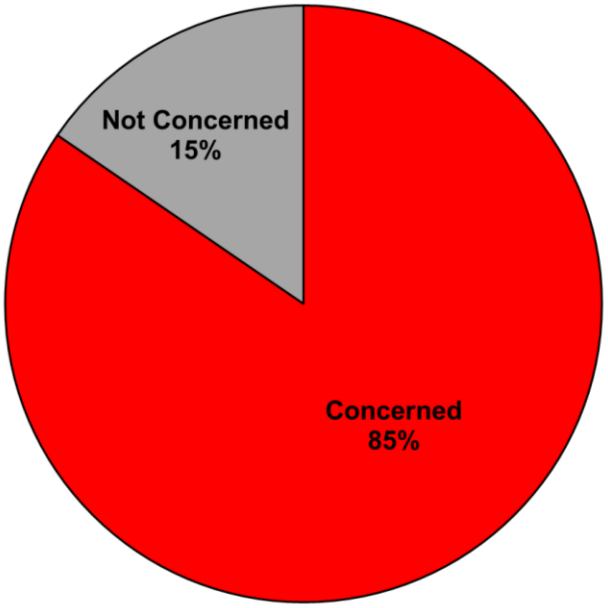
Advocates has always enthusiastically championed proven vehicle safety technology and for good reason -- it is one of the most effective strategies for preventing deaths and injuries. In 2015, NHTSA estimated that since 1960, over 600,000 lives have been saved by motor vehicle safety technologies. So too are we encouraged that autonomous vehicle (AV) technologies may hold tremendous promise to achieve additional safety advances and to decrease the number of motor vehicle crashes, fatalities and injuries. However, selling AVs to the public before they can be safely operated on public roads and without commonsense government oversight and industry accountability is not only reckless and ill-advised, but it will also substantially reduce public confidence in this new technology.

Moreover, a number of crashes involving vehicles equipped with automated driving technology have already occurred on public roads. Those subject to investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) are identified with file numbers.

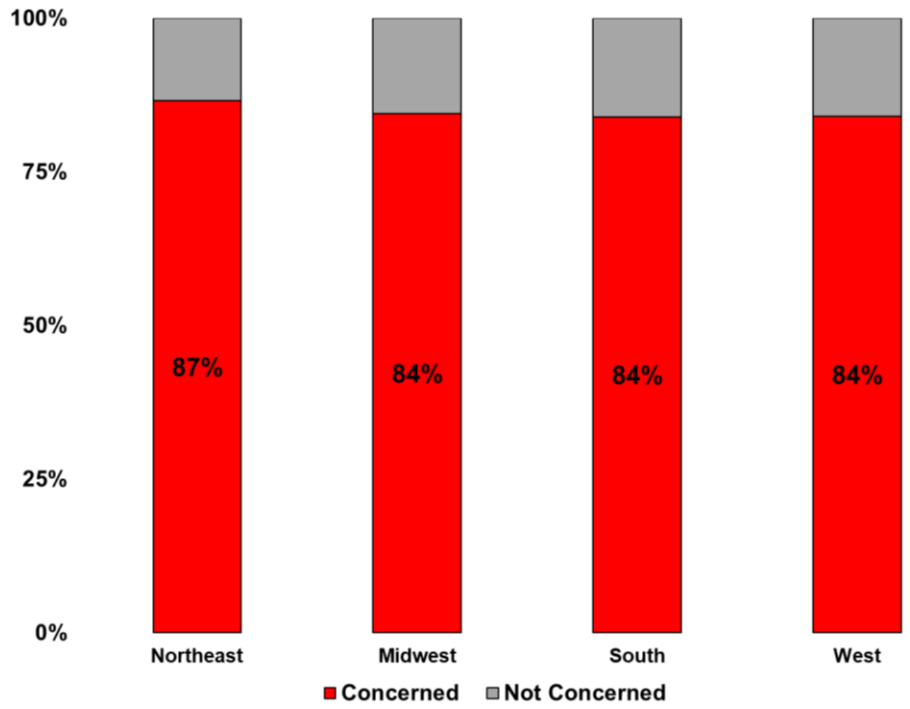
- December 29, 2019, Cloverdale, IN, Tesla Model 3: A Tesla collided with a fire truck killing the passenger in the Tesla. The use of Autopilot has not been determined.
- December 29, 2019, Gardena, CA, Tesla Model S: The Tesla ran a red light and struck another vehicle killing the two occupants in the other vehicle. The use of Autopilot has not been determined.
- December 7, 2019, Norwalk, CT, Tesla Model 3: The Tesla slammed into parked police cruiser and another vehicle. Media reports indicate that Autopilot was engaged at time of crash.
- May 29, 2018, Laguna Beach, CA, Tesla Model S: A Tesla reportedly in Autopilot crashed into a parked Laguna Beach Police Department Vehicle. The Tesla driver suffered minor injuries.
- March 23, 2018, Mountain View, CA, Tesla Model X: While in Autopilot, the vehicle struck a safety barrier, causing the death of the driver. (NTSB Investigation HWY18FH011)
- March 18, 2018, Tempe, AZ, Uber Self-Driving Test Vehicle: The Uber vehicle, which was operating on "self-driving mode," struck and killed a pedestrian walking a bicycle. (NTSB Investigation HWY18MH010)
- January 22, 2018, Culver City, CA, Tesla Model S: The Tesla, reportedly in Autopilot, was traveling at 65 mph when it crashed into the back of a parked fire truck that was responding to the scene of a separate crash. Neither the driver nor the first responders were injured. (NTSB Investigation HWY18FH004)
- November 8, 2017, Las Vegas, NV, Driverless Shuttle Bus: A driverless shuttle was involved in a crash during its first day of service. There were no deaths or injuries. (NTSB Investigation HWY18FH001)
- May 7, 2016, Williston, FL, Tesla Model S: Driver was killed when his vehicle, operating in Autopilot, crashed into the side of a truck tractor combination, traveling underneath the trailer. (NTSB Investigation HWY16FH018)

In 2019, Congressional staff put forth "staff draft" legislation which, if enacted, would set policy on AVs for decades to come. Any legislation considered for the development and deployment of AVs must have the safety of all road users as the top priority.

The public is overwhelmingly concerned about sharing the road with driverless vehicles as motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

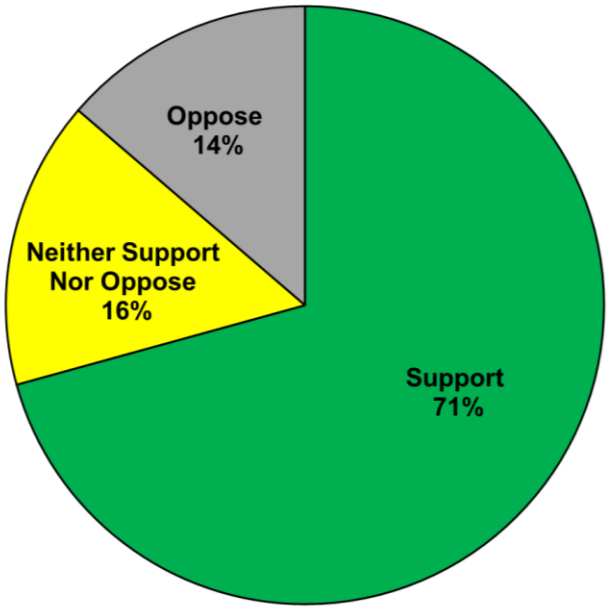


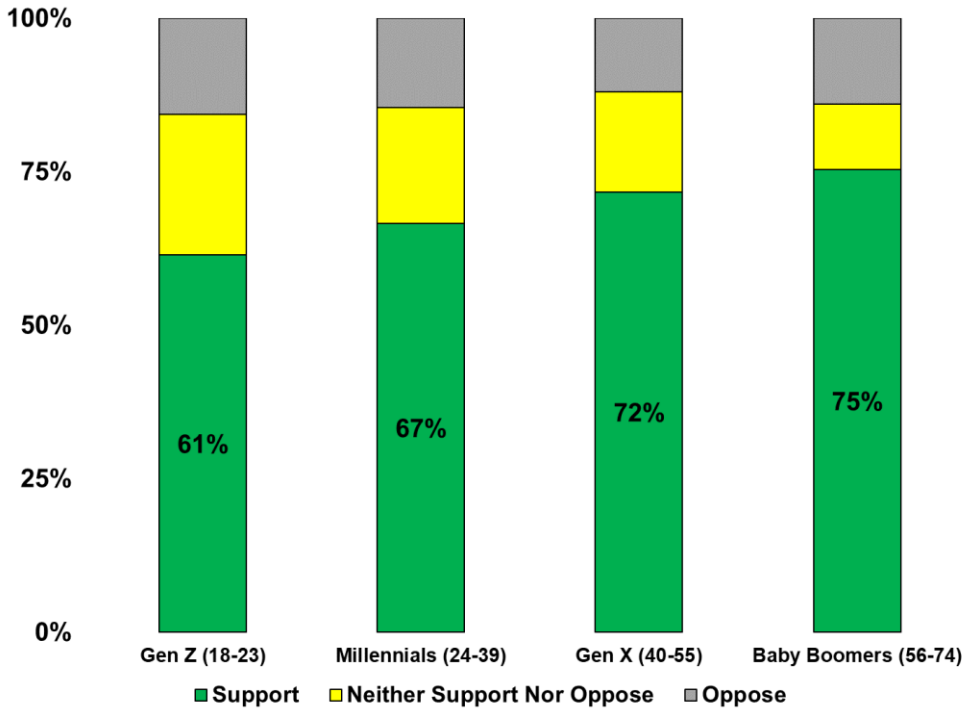
The public has said loud and clear – they are concerned about sharing the road with driverless cars. This apprehension is widespread across demographics including region, generation and type of community (suburban, urban, and rural). Notably, three-quarters of Generation Z (18 - 23) respondents expressed concern, and across the country the level of apprehension was nearly identical.



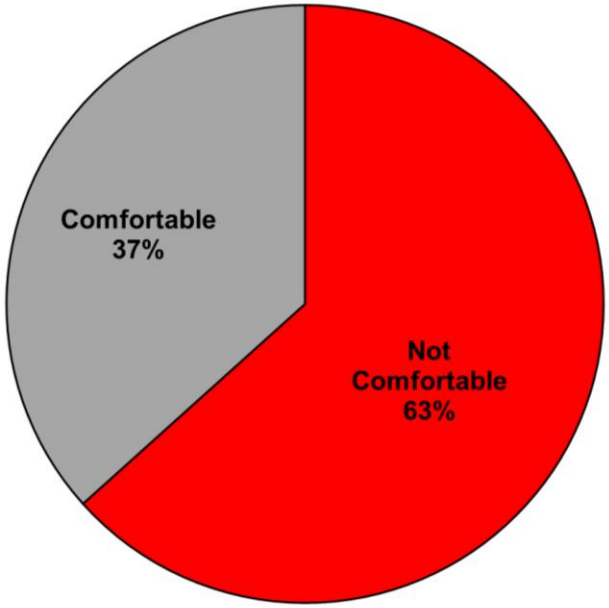
Federal performance requirements are essential.

Respondents strongly support government officials developing minimum performance requirements for new technologies related to the operation of driverless cars. This support spans region, generation and type of community. In fact, opposition to performance requirements never exceeded 17 percent across any of the three demographic categories.

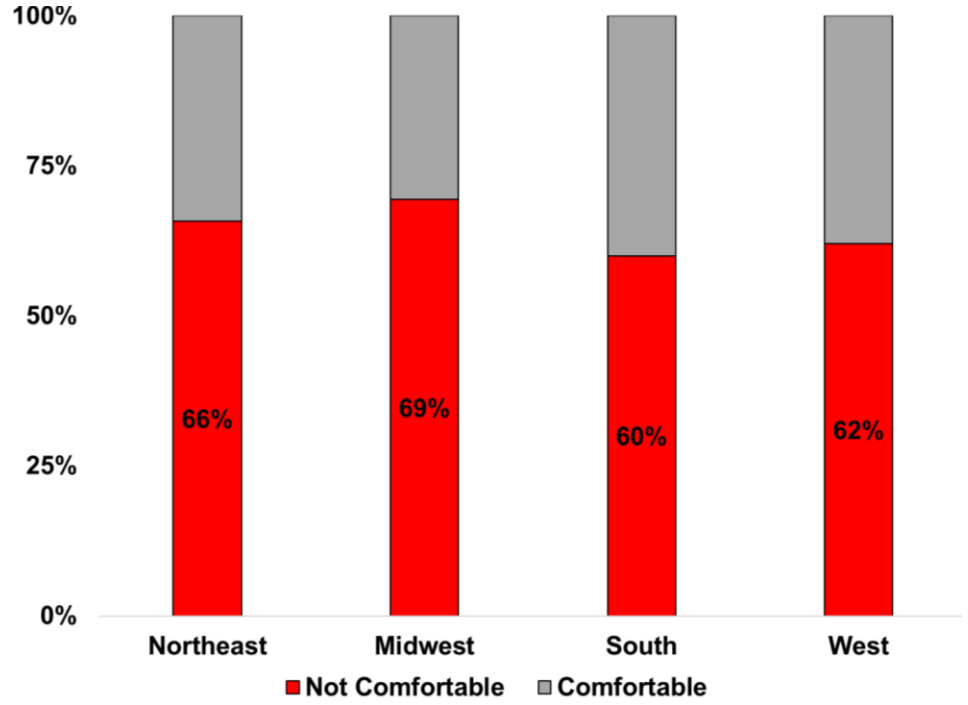




Expanding exemptions to federal safety standards is unwarranted and unwanted.

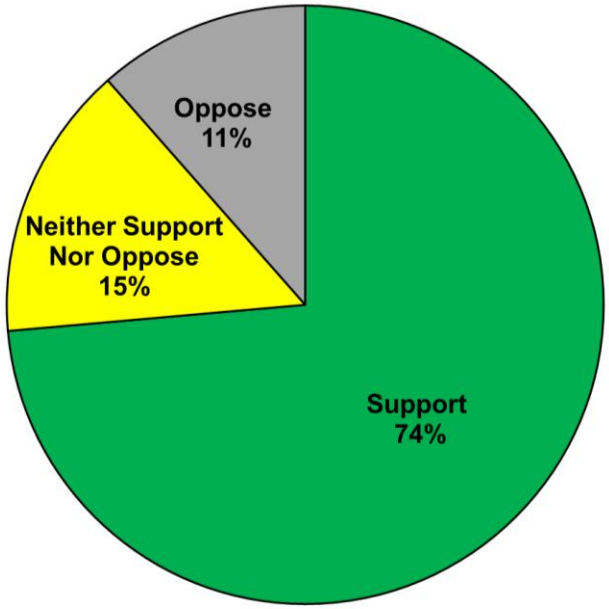


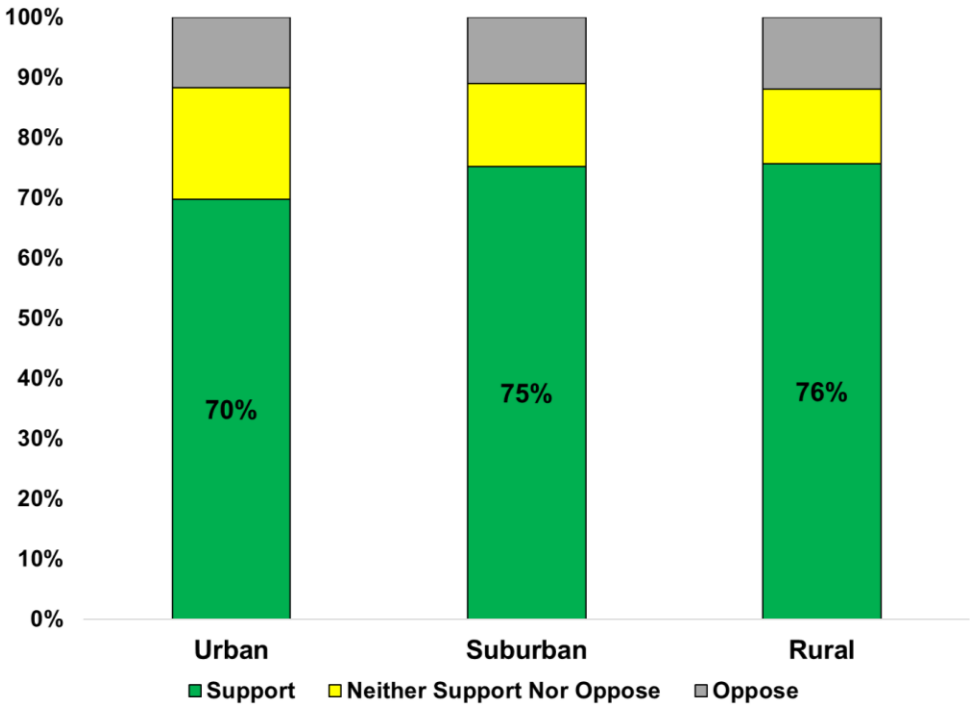
When asked how comfortable they feel with Congress increasing the number of vehicles auto and tech companies are allowed to sell that do not meet existing federal safety standards to as many as 100,000 cars, a strong majority were uncomfortable. This sentiment was reflected among demographics including generation, region and type of community.



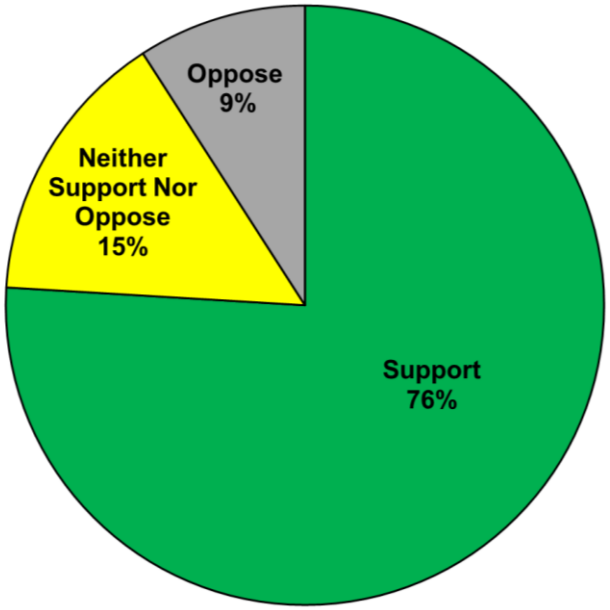
Cybersecurity rules are vital to prevent hacking of driverless cars.

Research and testing have demonstrated the ability of hackers to remotely gain access to computers operating a car. A large majority of respondents support government officials issuing cybersecurity rules to protect against the hacking of AVs. This was consistent among demographics including generation, region and type of community. In fact, support was 70 percent or greater across all three demographic categories.

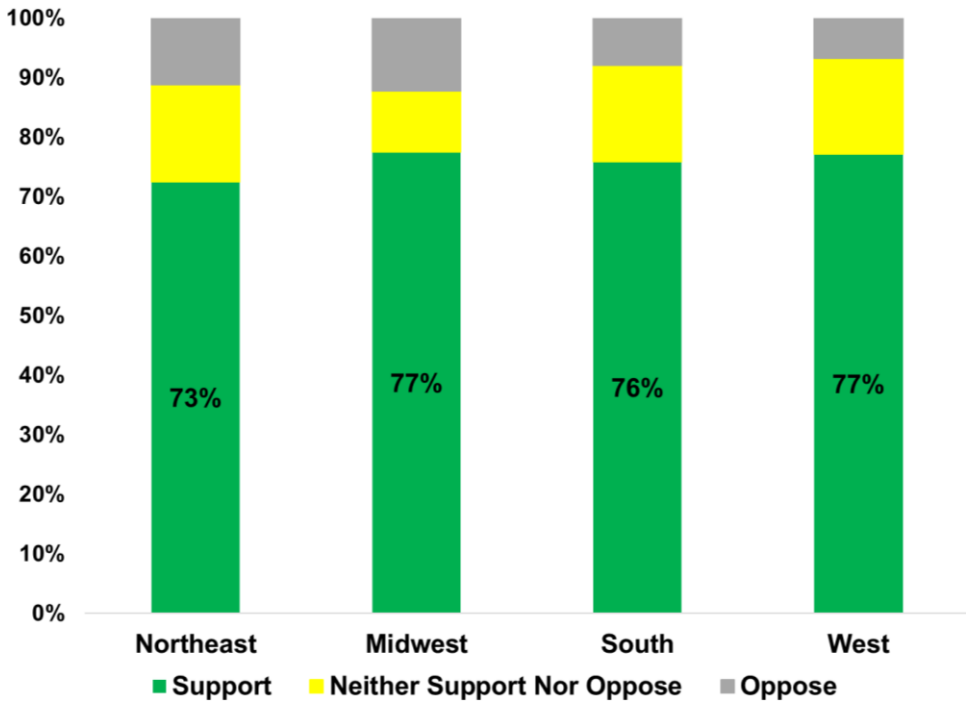




Driverless cars should be required to pass a “vision test” to assure they can see and respond to the operating environment.



As driverless cars will operate at all times of the day and night, in all kinds of weather conditions, on all types of roads, and with other road users, broad support exists for requiring them to pass a “vision test” so they can correctly identify or “see” objects on the road. This support was shared across demographics including generation, region and type of community.



Safety standards could tamper apprehension.

Knowing that companies had to meet minimum safety requirements for their driverless cars before selling them to the public would address a large number of respondents' concerns or apprehension about the technology, regardless of generation, region or type of community. Greater than 60% of respondents agreed with this sentiment across all three demographic categories.