

AMERICANS' TOWING HABITS

CONSUMER REPORTS NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE PHONE AND INTERNET
SURVEY, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024

REPORT PREPARED DECEMBER 19TH, 2024
CONSUMER REPORTS® SURVEY GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

This nationally representative survey of 2,191 adults residing in the US was conducted by phone (N=147) and internet (N=2,044) by NORC at the University of Chicago from August 26th through September 23rd, 2024.

The purpose of this survey was to assess Americans' beliefs and attitudes about fuel economy, as well as the current fuel economy of the vehicles they drive. Further questions addressed whether they use those vehicles to tow and their awareness and attitudes toward federal policies around fuel economy.

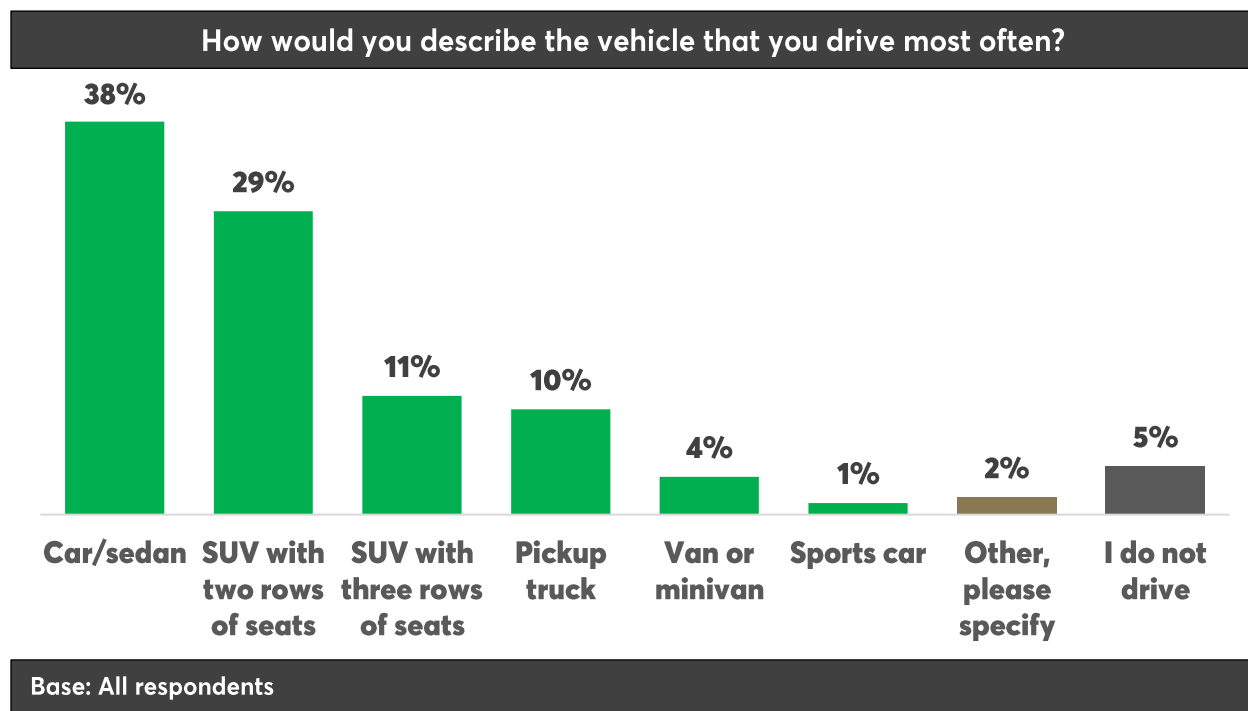
This report covers only a few items from the full survey, those dealing with **towing**.

Toplines for the complete survey are available at the following link:
https://article.images.consumerreports.org/image/upload/v1730394977/prod/content/dam/surveys/Consumer_Reports_Fuel_Economy_August_September_2024.pdf

CONTEXT: AMERICAN DRIVERS AND THEIR VEHICLES

We began the survey by asking Americans about their vehicles and driving habits. **Most Americans drive, and most households have vehicles.**

More than nine in ten Americans (94%) said their household owns or leases at least one vehicle. When we asked what kind of vehicle they drive most often—whether they own this vehicle or not—**four in ten (38%) said it is a sedan. A similar percentage said they most often drive an SUV of some kind**, either with two rows of seats (29%) or three (11%). Ten percent most often drive a pickup truck. Just five percent said they do not drive at all.



Excluding responses of "other" and "I do not drive," we can categorize these into large, medium, and small vehicle types:

- Large: Pickup trucks, vans and minivans, and SUVs with three rows of seats (27% of drivers)
- Medium: SUVs with two rows of seats (31% of drivers)
- Small: Sedans and sports cars (42% of drivers)

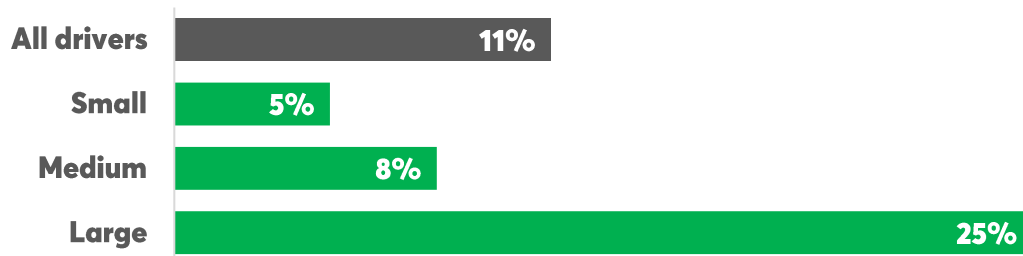
We asked those who gave an answer other than "I do not drive" about the fuel used by the vehicle they drive most often. **Most drivers (91%) said the vehicle they drive most often is a gasoline-powered vehicle.** Overall, **eight percent of American drivers said the vehicle they drive most often is some kind of hybrid vehicle or a fully electric vehicle.** Specifically, five percent said the vehicle they most often drive is a hybrid vehicle, two percent said it is a fully electric vehicle (EV), and a little less than one percent said they most often drive a plug-in hybrid vehicle (PHEV). One percent said they most often drive a diesel-fueled vehicle.

The following questions about towing were asked only of drivers. References to the size or fuel type of the vehicle in the following section are based on these answers about the vehicle each person drives most often.

TOWING

Around one in ten American drivers (11%) said they use the vehicle they drive most often for towing. As might be expected, **this is more common for large vehicles (25%)** than medium-sized or small ones, though it is also more common to tow with medium-sized vehicles (8%) than small ones (5%).¹ When controlling for vehicle body size, there is no difference in whether or not people tow with the vehicle they drive most often by the fuel type of that vehicle.

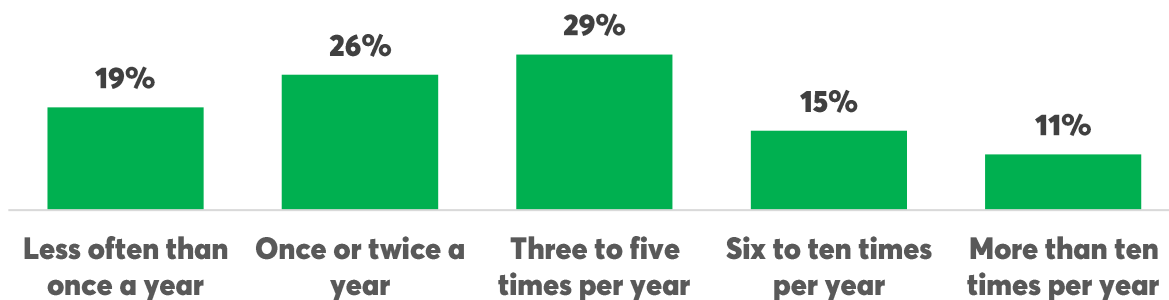
Percentage of drivers who ever use the vehicle they drive most often for towing BY VEHICLE BODY SIZE



Base: Respondents who drive
Respondents were given the additional instruction "This could mean towing a boat or camper, for example."

Those who tow do not generally do so very often, at least with the vehicle we asked about. **Three out of four drivers who ever tow with the vehicle they drive most often said they do so five times a year or less.** Just one in ten (11%) tow more than ten times per year. About twice as many (19%) tow less often than once a year.

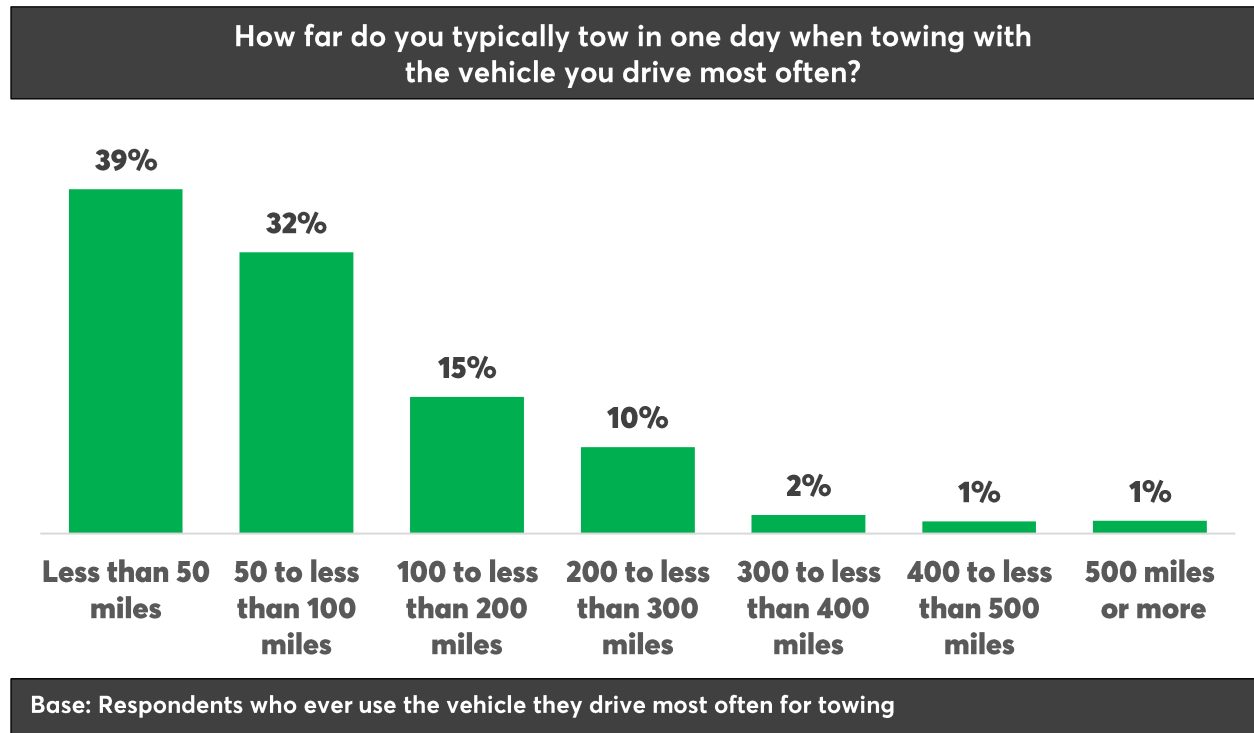
You said you use the vehicle you drive most often for towing. About how often do you use it to tow?



Base: Respondents who ever use the vehicle they drive most often for towing

¹ Differences reported in this paper are statistically significant at the .05 level. Predictors in this model include gender, age, household income, education, race/ethnicity, region, urbanicity, political leaning, vehicle size, and fuel type (gasoline or diesel vs. anything else). Any reported difference in one is statistically significant controlling for all the others.

These drivers also do not typically tow very far when they do. Seven in ten said they typically tow less than 100 miles in one day when they tow with the vehicle they drive most often. In fact, **roughly four in ten (39%) typically tow less than fifty miles in a day**. Just 15% said they typically tow 200 miles or more in a single day.



In summary, it appears that most Americans do not tow often or for long hauls, at least not with the vehicles they drive most frequently. Of course, it is possible that they use different vehicles for this purpose.

METHODOLOGY

This multi-mode survey was fielded by NORC at the University of Chicago using a nationally representative sample. The survey was conducted from August 26th – September 23rd, 2024. Interviews were conducted in English ($n = 2,121$) and in Spanish ($n = 70$), and were administered both online ($n = 2,044$) and by phone ($n = 147$).

A general population sample of U.S adults age 18 and older was selected from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel for this study. Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US household population. Randomly selected US households are sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame. These sampled households are then contacted by US mail, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. While most AmeriSpeak households participate in surveys by web, non-internet households can participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by telephone. Households without conventional internet access but having web access via smartphones are allowed to participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by web. AmeriSpeak panelists participate in NORC studies or studies conducted by NORC on behalf of governmental agencies, academic researchers, and media and commercial organizations.

In total NORC collected 2,191 interviews. The margin of error for the sample of 2,191 is +/- 2.71 at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins. Both web-mode and phone-mode panelists were offered the cash equivalent of \$2 for completing the survey.

Final data are weighted by age, gender, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, education, and Census Division to be proportionally representative of the U.S. adult population. Key demographic characteristics (after weighting is applied) of this sample are presented below:

- 50% female
- Median age of 47 years old
- 61% white, non-Hispanic
- 36% 4-year college graduates
- 62% have an annual household income of \$50,000 or more