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## PRESS RELEASE

### L'OBSERVATOIRE CETELEM DE L'AUTOMOBILE 2023.

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**An international survey conducted in 18 countries on a sample of 16,600 people**

## “Cars: whatever it takes?”

*6 out of 10 French consumers fear they will be unable to afford to own a car in the future*

*The price of new vehicles has been rising steadily for the last decade or so. A marked increase of around 20% was recorded in the United States, China and the United Kingdom between 2005 and 2021. A smaller, but still significant rise of 10% was observed in Europe. In the Europe zone, **car prices have been rising twice as fast as household incomes**, a trend established even before the 2020-2022 price surge triggered by the various global crises and their deleterious impact on supplies.*

### Cars are a necessary luxury for many motorists

**More than 6 out of 10 motorists (61%) believe that the price they paid for their car was reasonable**, but also unsurprising, especially in the case of second-hand cars (77% vs. 57% for a new car). While buying a car may generally seem affordable, it requires sacrifices that reduce the enjoyment of buying a vehicle. Indeed, **7 out of 10 motorists (69%; 73% in France) believe that owning a car involves financial sacrifices.**

These sacrifices seem unavoidable when we consider that **72% of car owners (75% in France) claim that they cannot live without their vehicle. Therefore, it is virtually impossible for them to give up their cars.** It is interesting to note that the difference between rural and urban motorists in terms of car friendliness is not particularly wide (77% and 70%, respectively, cannot imagine living without a car), whereas generational differences are much more pronounced, with 34% of under-35s saying they would be prepared to do without a car (in France, the figure is 4 in 10), compared with 26% of older individuals.

## The rocketing cost of using a car

While consumers may consider the price of vehicles to be relatively reasonable, the same cannot be said for their running costs. **Indeed, almost 6 out of 10 car owners (57%) consider running costs to be high overall.** Of all the European countries surveyed, France (62%), Belgium (66%), Poland (63%) and Spain (61%) are where this cost burden is felt most strongly. Furthermore, **more than 8 out of 10 respondents (82%; 83% in France) consider that these usage costs have increased** in recent years.

The average estimated annual budget devoted to car use (fuel, insurance and repairs) across the 18 countries surveyed is **€2,753 (€2,870 in France).** **By far the largest proportion of individuals consider fuel to be the costliest expense item: 73%, versus 47% for insurance and 41% for repairs.**

## Cutting costs, at any cost

Faced with high transport costs and tight budget constraints, motorists today endeavour to keep their expenses to a minimum. Cost is an issue that affects mobility as a whole. **Nearly 6 out of 10 people say they have previously decided not to travel because of the cost involved.** And if they have not abandoned their vehicle completely, 60% of all respondents and 68% in France **have taken action to limit their vehicle running costs.**

Their efforts to cut costs have concentrated primarily on **minimising the amount they spend on fuel.** This has been the focus for 65% of respondents across the 18 countries surveyed, far ahead of other spending categories: maintenance (28%), parking (26%), insurance (21%) and motorway driving (20%). In France, reducing the amount spent on motorway tolls (37%) is the second-highest priority after cutting fuel costs (67%). Among the main measures taken to contain their fuel costs, **a majority (54%) say that they travel less,** 46% compare prices so as to buy petrol as cheaply as possible, while 44% try to adjust their driving style in the aim of using less fuel.

While motorists are generally willing to take a financial hit, they also expect **action from both governments and manufacturers.** Opinions are fairly consistent across Europe and the rest of the world: **52% of respondents favour a fuel price cap (in France, 67% of respondents in rural areas are in favour of such a measure),** while 38% support a tax cut. Some would also like to see measures taken to develop public transport (23%) or financial incentives to purchase electric vehicles (21%). In a similar vein, **63% are keen for car manufacturers to develop more fuel-efficient vehicles.**

## Although still perceived merely as a complement to car use, soft mobility is gradually becoming part of people's daily lives

**More than 4 out of 10 car owners (41%) use these modes of transport** for their daily journeys. **The figure for France is 1 in 2,** the highest in Europe after Germany (51%) and the UK (52%). It should be noted that the gap between rural and urban areas is significant, with an 18-country average of 56% of individuals who live outside large conurbations, compared with 35% of city dwellers.

Of all the available alternatives to car travel, soft mobility clearly stands out from the pack and is seeing its popularity grow. **Indeed, 36% of Europeans use these forms of mobility more than in the past** (compared with an average of 32% across all 18 countries), as evidenced by the threefold increase in e-bike sales in Europe over the last five years.

## Are cars set to become a source of exclusion?

**Cars are a source of anxiety about what lies ahead: more than 6 out of 10 car owners (63%) fear that they will not be able to afford to own a car in the future. The figure in France is 59%.**

Giving up on car ownership is viewed by the vast majority of respondents as having negative consequences. First and foremost, **58% of motorists believe that it restricts freedom of movement, while 47% consider that it makes travelling less convenient, more time consuming and less comfortable.** The savings that can potentially be achieved by not owning a car are highlighted by less than a quarter of respondents (23%). Meanwhile, only 1 in 5 people (20%) think about the positive impact that it may have on the environment.

With new combustion engine vehicles set to be banned for sale in 2035, and with **7 out of 10 people having given up on the idea of buying an electric vehicle because they consider the price too high,** the potential for exclusion is very much a reality.

*“This 2023 edition of the Observatoire Cetelem reveals that motorists are not prepared to do whatever it takes to own a car. Going electric is one option for them, but not at any price. As it stands today, there is a risk that an economic and social divide will open up over car ownership, further marginalising those who are most dependent on a vehicle in their daily lives. An even greater divide is set to form between those who have the financial resources to access electric cars and those who will be left watching as these innovative vehicles pass them by, out of their financial reach. While it is likely that we will soon see primarily Asian-made, low-cost electric vehicles emerge, giving many more people access to this technology at a more affordable price, there is also a risk that Western carmakers will lose their influence over the long term,”* notes **Flavien Neuvy, Head of the Observatoire Cetelem.**

[Download the full survey](#)

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### Methodology:

The economic and marketing analyses, as well as the forecasts, were performed in conjunction with the survey and consulting firm **C-Ways**, a specialist in Anticipation Marketing.

Quantitative consumer interviews were conducted by **Harris Interactive between 23 June and 8 July 2022 in 18 countries:** Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom, United States and Turkey. In total, **16,600 individuals** were interviewed online (CAWI method). These individuals, aged 18 to 65, were drawn from national samples representative of each country. The quota method was employed to ensure that the sample was representative (gender and age). **3,000 interviews were conducted in France** and 800 in each of the other countries.

### About the Observatoire Cetelem

Founded in 1985 and headed by Flavien Neuvy, the Observatoire Cetelem is an economic research and intelligence unit of BNP Paribas Personal Finance. Its mission is to observe, analyse and interpret shifts in consumption patterns in France and abroad. To fulfil this ambition, the Observatoire Cetelem has set up a range of tools that rely on diverse and complementary content, including:

- The Observatoires: Two highly respected annual surveys conducted internationally: a worldwide survey on the automotive market (18 countries) and a European survey on consumer trends (17 countries).
- The zOOm surveys, which focus on lifestyles and explore major themes (“The French and their finances”, “Treating oneself in times of crisis”, etc.) in three stages, by seeking the opinion of French consumers via three-wave surveys.

For more information and to access all our surveys, visit the Observatoire Cetelem website | @obs\_cetelem

**Press contacts: Rumeur Publique**

Marie Goislard | [leo.chompre@rumeurpublique.fr](mailto:leo.chompre@rumeurpublique.fr) | +33 6 14 35 41 74

Léo Chompré | [leo.chompre@rumeurpublique.fr](mailto:leo.chompre@rumeurpublique.fr) | +33 6 14 35 41 74