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Recent research conducted by [Ketchum](#), a leading global communications consultancy, suggests that America's longstanding love affair with cars and driving shows no signs of stalling out.

What's more, in what may be a reality check for the automotive and technology industries, the upcoming generation of car buyers is more worried than excited about

the concept of self-driving cars, with concerns about safety, viruses, hacks or other

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[The Next-Gen Guide to the Connected Ride](#) study provides marketing and communications professionals with fresh insights into a segment of young people that is defined by a life stage and a common mindset. A subset of two generations that includes only the youngest millennials (ages 20 to 24 at the time surveyed) and the oldest in Gen Z (ages 16 to 19 at the time surveyed), this narrowly defined “[GenZennial](#)” microgeneration shares many firsts, from getting their driver's license to buying their first car. The report aims to help marketers and technologists better understand, design products for, and communicate with the estimated 39 million GenZennials in the U.S. and identifies four distinct customer segments, from the most traditional to the most futuristic.

“This microgeneration has grown up steeped in technology, so you might expect them to be ahead of the curve in terms of their readiness to embrace the future of transportation,” said [Lisa Sullivan](#), executive vice president and director of Ketchum's North American Technology Practice. “While the data exposes some hesitation, it also helps us identify and understand significant variances, even within this microgeneration. The results provide some clear signposts to both the automotive and technology industries in how to appeal to the upcoming car buyer.”

Among the study's key findings:

GenZennials are set to continue America's love affair with the automobile, with driving and car ownership remaining the norm. Of those who have a driver's license, 78 percent of 21- to 24-year-olds and 58 percent of 16- to 20-year-olds have their own vehicle. Among those who have a license but don't have their own vehicle, 61 percent plan on getting one as soon as they can afford it; another 19 percent plan on getting their own vehicle as soon as they begin their career. Nearly half of those who can drive (45 percent) say they love driving and never want to give it up. The majority (61 percent), especially females (65 percent), say driving makes them feel more

independent, and 53 percent (48 percent male and 58 percent female) see driving as a

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39 percent are worried about self-driving technology, while 29 percent say they are excited; in fact, more respondents (35 percent) are excited about flying cars Only 23 percent of those who have or are planning to get a driver's license say they can see themselves buying a self-driving vehicle (30 percent of males vs. 18 percent of females) Only 25 percent think driverless cars will make the roads safer; 43 percent are concerned that self-driving cars could get hacked Just 18 percent think their next vehicle is more likely to be made by a technology company than a traditional car maker

When shopping for a vehicle, price (75 percent) and safety (74 percent) are top of the list.

GenZennials are three times more likely to choose an environmentally friendly car over a fast one (74 percent vs. 26 percent)

When asked to choose between buying a new car and going on an exotic trip, 61 percent of females would opt for the trip, while 62 percent of males would buy a new car. There is no contest between a personal chef and a driverless car: almost twice as many (65 percent) would rather have someone cook all their meals for them than ride in a self-driving car the rest of their lives (35 percent).

“Emerging from this research are several insights that we hope will help companies build their marketing communications strategy,” said Paul Wood, partner and head of Ketchum's Transportation & Automotive Practice. “Trust is vital to this audience, and their cautious approach to the future of transportation gives us clues as to how to open the dialogue with them. Language choices are critical and message testing is a must; technical information and data are better shown than explained; and absolutely everything must be proven over time. Only once they feel secure that new

technology can play a positive role in their lives can they begin to embrace

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