

# Confidence in Self-Driving Vehicles Remains Stalled as Safety Concerns and Trust Gaps Persist, JD Power Finds

Mobility Confidence Index Research Conducted in Collaboration with the MIT Advanced Vehicle Technology (AVT) Consortium

- Persistent gap continues between growing awareness of automation and rising expectations for safety and transparency
- Lower-level automation remains a critical pathway to broader automated vehicle acceptance
- Real-world use cases reveal both opportunity and limits for adoption

**TROY, Mich.: 11 June 2026** — Awareness of fully automated, self-driving vehicles (AVs) continues to grow, but consumer confidence in the technology is not keeping pace, according to the JD Power 2026 U.S. Mobility Confidence Index (MCI) Study,<sup>SM</sup> released today. Consumer understanding of AVs improves in 2026, with 58% of consumers correctly identifying full automation, up from 43% in 2024. Despite this progress, fundamental concerns around safety, performance and trust continue to slow adoption—and in some cases, deepen hesitation.

Even as consumers become more informed, their expectations are rising faster than their comfort. Today, fewer than one in four consumers say they are comfortable riding in a fully self-driving vehicle, highlighting a persistent gap between awareness and readiness. Trust in such self-driving vehicles remains highly situational. Consumers express greater confidence in lower-risk, predictable scenarios, with 54% indicating high trust for activities such as food pickup, compared with just 31% for transporting children, highlighting how trust declines as perceived risk increases.

“Consumer awareness of automated vehicle technology is improving, but confidence still depends on proven safety, real-world performance and clear consumer value,” said **Lisa Boor, director of auto benchmarking and mobility development at JD Power**. “Consumers need to see that these systems can respond to unexpected situations, perform reliably in real-world conditions and clearly communicate what they are doing. Without that, broader adoption will remain limited.”

While consumer expectations continue to evolve, the path forward increasingly depends on how the AV ecosystem earns and sustains public trust over time.

“Consumers are learning more about fully automated vehicles, but they are not yet becoming more confident in them,” said **Bryan Reimer, Ph.D., research scientist in the AgeLab at the MIT Center for Transportation and Logistics, a founder of MIT’s Advanced Vehicle Technology Consortium**. “That should concern anyone hoping to scale this technology. Automated vehicles need more than engineering progress, larger pilots or public education.

They need a trusted ecosystem built on transparent performance data, governance guardrails and clear accountability. This is where AI governance becomes real: on public roads, in everyday mobility and in systems where trust must be earned over time. As cities and states consider deployment, moving deliberately, setting clear conditions and scaling only where evidence supports confidence may be the best path to durable public acceptance, political support and responsible growth.”

### The following are some key findings of the 2026 Index:

- **The Mobility Confidence Index remains unchanged:** The Index, which measures consumer comfort with fully automated self-driving vehicles and purchase intent, has remained essentially unchanged during the past three years, rising from 37 (on a 100-point scale) in 2023 to 39 in 2024 and holding steady at 39 in 2026.
- **Safety concerns remain a key barrier to adoption:** Personal safety is the leading concern, cited by 60% of consumers, followed by emergency handling (58%) and performance in challenging conditions such as bad weather and heavy traffic (51%).
- **Perceived value of AVs varies significantly by life stage and use case:** Nearly one-third (30%) of consumers say automated vehicles would not be valuable at any point in their lives. Among those who do see value, retirement emerges as the strongest opportunity, with 24% to 28% across demographic groups citing it as the most valuable life stage for AV adoption. Consumers also recognize meaningful value in temporary or situational needs, such as medical appointments or mobility limitations, with 25% indicating high value.
- **Automated commercial trucking presents a confidence paradox:** Comfort with goods transported by self-driving commercial vehicles rises to 46 points in 2026, and is the highest-scoring attribute in the study. However, only 16% of consumers are comfortable sharing the road with fully automated self-driving semi-trucks and 43% of consumers believe they are less safe than human-driven semi-trucks.

The 2026 Mobility Confidence Index (MCI) dataset is based on responses from 2,898 vehicle owners in the United States who are age 18 or older and who completed an online survey. The results are balanced to basic census demographics to be nationally representative. Data was collected in April 2026 and is based on seven unique attributes of consumer comfort with fully automated, self-driving vehicles. Since 2019, JD Power has provided the only comprehensive measurement of consumer readiness for fully automated, self-driving vehicles (AV) in these seven categories: personal vehicles; commercial vehicles; public transit; riding if unable to drive due to age or injury; sharing the road with other AVs; testing of AV technology; and consumer purchase intent. For more information about the Mobility Confidence Index (MCI) Study, visit [U.S. Mobility Confidence Index | JD Power](#).

### About JD Power

JD Power is a proven leader in business-critical data and intelligence to drive auto-related decisions with confidence and clarity. By leveraging unmatched proprietary data, advanced

analytics and deep industry expertise, JD Power fuels original equipment manufacturers, retailers, lenders, insurers and partners to enhance their performance.

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### **About MIT Advanced Vehicle Technology Consortium**

The Advanced Vehicle Technology (AVT) Consortium is an academic-industry partnership founded in 2015 within the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Center for Transportation and Logistics. It has been supported by over 25 different automakers, insurance companies, suppliers, and research organizations through a pre-competitive collaboration designed to develop a data-driven understanding of drivers' behavior with, and utilization of, vehicle automation, driver safety systems, and other technologies. AVT research aims to support a future of safe, convenient, and sustainable mobility through more effective human-centered vehicle technology development and consumer understanding of appropriate technology usage. To learn more about the AVT consortium and its members, visit [avt.mit.edu](http://avt.mit.edu).

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