

CLASSIC CARS, MODERN MARKETS

MARKET OVERVIEW

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS



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What Is a Classic?

We know it when we see it, though there is no universal definition. Do we define a classic by age? Or by the nostalgia we feel when seeing it? Over time, more cars get "old" and our definition of a classic requires change. SEMA Market Research has historically published data defining classics as cars or trucks from 1973 and older. At one time, the idea of pre-gas-crisis or pre-catalytic-converter were reasonable cutoffs. But the vehicle landscape has changed.

With this report, we are expanding our definition to include classics through the '80s. "Wow, are '80s cars really classics?" you ask. Yes, every car from that decade is more than 30 years old now. When many of us look back to our first cars, it wasn't a '60s muscle car. It was a hand-me-down from the '70s, '80s or even '90s. These emerging classics are now sparking those nostalgic feelings among people looking to recapture a piece of their youth.

Classic cars and trucks appeal to both young and old. Many classic owners want to return their cars to their previous glory through restoration. Some are looking to create a statement with a custom hot rod. Increasingly, owners are looking for something that lets them relive the nostalgia of a cool classic without sacrificing the comfort they have become used to. The industry is seeing restomodding as the growth sector in the classic market.

We also have a new generation of classic vehicle owners, who can be at times very different from the customers we're used to. Having grown up with the internet, they are more than comfortable going online to learn the skills they need to work on their classic, shop for parts, and connect with other classic vehicle enthusiasts. But they share the same passion for older vehicles that we often see in classic vehicle owners, and often come into the hobby through parents or friends.

So, there is no universal definition of classic car. And you know what? That's great. The '32 coupes and T-buckets that defined the first wave of hot-rodding have been modified. Unrestored muscle cars and pony cars of the '60s are now barn finds for collectors. There is a new wave of emerging classics, with catalytic converters and fuel injection. What were the hot new cars when you grew up? Do you feel nostalgic for your first car? Whatever that classic is to you, we hope you have it in your garage right now with a growing list of modifications to make.

Gavin Knapp Director, Market Research SEMA

What You Need to Know: What Is a Classic?

A passenger vehicle with model year 1989 or older.

Traditionally SEMA has defined classics as pre-1974 vehicles, but DMVs and insurance companies may use definitions as broad as 20–25 years old. In this report, we're using an expended definition.

There are at least 9.4 million of them on the road.

Our estimates are based on available vehicles in operation data; other organizations (notably Hagerty) may peg the number considerably higher.

Mid-'70s and '80s classics are an emerging opportunity.

While early '70s and older vehicles are the traditional heart of the classic vehicle market, their growing scarcity and price is pushing people toward newer, more accessible vehicles.

They are driven but rarely daily drivers.

Most classic vehicle owners own a more modern vehicle for commuting and everyday tasks; classics are usually taken out for the occasional spin and/or shown off.

They are collected but rarely part of a collection.

It is rare for individuals to own more than one classic vehicle at a time. More often it is a prized possession that is held onto for as long as possible.

What You Need to Know: Why Do People Own a Classic?

They want something different or feel nostalgic.

Owners often buy a classic because they find them fun to drive, they prefer the style or simplicity of older vehicles, or the specific model is a dream car for them.

Many have been "car people" since childhood.

Many classic owners are lifelong enthusiasts or— especially for younger owners—are brought into the hobby by friends or relatives.

The next generation of owners is different.

Younger people are still interested in classics, even if they're not always the same "classics." They are also more likely to shop and engage online and connect with their peers in different ways.

Many, but not all, have a clear vision for their classic.

Many owners have a goal in mind to take their vehicle to the next level. But a good chunk of owners just want a cool car to drive.

Restomodding is on the rise.

A growing number of classic owners, especially younger ones, are gravitating toward preserving the classic look and style of their vehicle but integrating modern performance and comfort.

What You Need to Know: How Do People Work On Their Classic?

Most do a mix of DIY and DIFM.

Generally, specific sections of the vehicle (e.g., chemicals, drivetrain, etc.) are either all DIY or all DIFM, but owners will often hand off difficult work to professionals.

They don't mind getting their hands dirty.

While older owners are a bit more likely to leave things to professionals, many classic owners know their way around a toolbox and enjoy wrenching on their vehicle.

DIY work saves money, adds pride.

Many owners enjoy the process and seeing the results of their work, in addition to the money they save. For younger owners, doing the work themselves is often valued as a way to learn new skills.

Owners look to shops for jobs they can't do themselves.

The biggest reason classic owners hire someone to work on their vehicle is that the job requires tools or skills they don't have at home.

Owners prefer sticking with companies they trust.

Classic owners are often more inclined to keep going back to trusted shops and suppliers rather than shop around for a deal. Do the job right and you will likely have a repeat customer.

What You Need to Know: How Do People Get Parts for Their Classic?

They research online, but value expert advice.

Most owners, especially younger ones, are comfortable researching parts and ideas online. But overall, the most useful resource is a professional they trust.

They buy from a range of different channels.

Parts chains and tire shops are often used, but specialty channels, online marketplaces and even salvage yards or swap meets are important destinations for classic owners.

They often buy both in-person and online.

While some have a strong preference for buying parts inperson or online, most owners do at least some of both.

They spend more than \$1 billion per year.

Owners of pre-1974 vehicles spent \$890 million on parts alone in 2019, and most owners of pre-1990 vehicles either maintained or increased their spending in 2020.

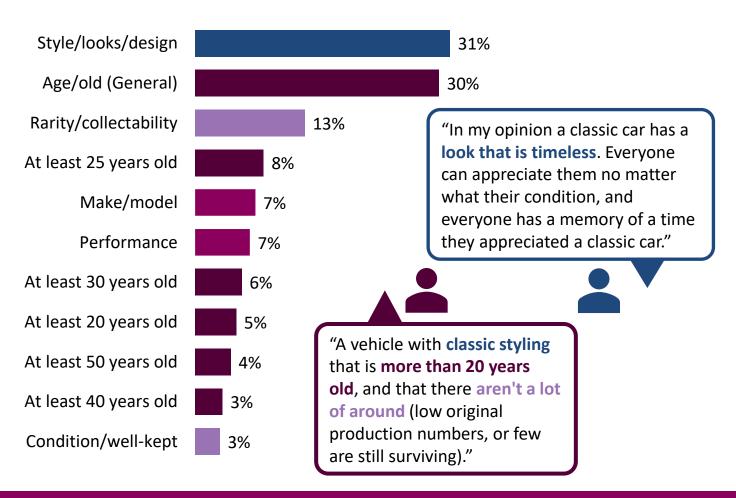
What Is a Classic?

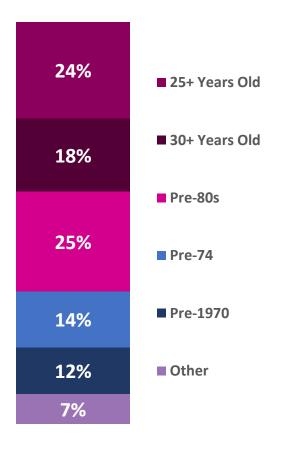
How Consumers and Businesses Define "Classic" Cars and Trucks

We asked both consumers and specialty-aftermarket businesses how <u>they</u> would define what makes a vehicle a "classic." We got a lot of different responses, but common themes included being at least a couple decades old, having an iconic look or style, and holding value well over time.

What Consumers Say Makes a Vehicle "Classic"

What Businesses Say Makes a Vehicle "Classic"





How We Define "Classic" Cars and Trucks

Examples from Selected Organizations

WikipediA





"An older automobile, typically 20 years or older" "American or foreign built, produced only between 1915 and 1948"

"At least 20 years old but not more than 40 years old"

HAGERTY





Cars 1979 or older, trucks 1996 and older

Varies by state

1973 and older

There is no single industry standard.

As a result, definitions can vary widely between organizations that consider classic vehicles part of their purview.

SEMA has historically used a purely age-based definition: Pre-1974.

In previous research, SEMA has defined a "classic" as any vehicle from model year 1973 and older (pre-catalytic converter). However, for this report we are expanding our definition.

For the rest of this report, a "classic" vehicle is a passenger car or truck with a <u>pre-1990 model year</u>.

Focusing on Pre-1990 Vehicles

It's difficult to get good data on the number of older cars still on the road, and population estimates vary by source. SEMA's estimates, based on vehicle registration data, may be on the conservative end of the scale. It is likely there are <u>at least</u> 9.4 million pre-1990 cars and trucks on the road in the United States.



Pre-1970: **3,500,000**

1970s: **1,800,000**

1980s: **4,100,000**

Source: © Experian 2020, SEMA Market Research estimates

Hagerty Estimates

Pre-1950: **800,000**

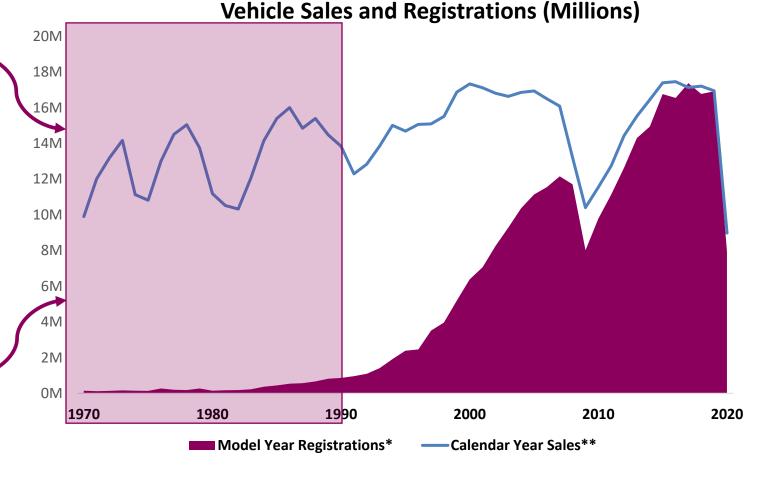
1950s: **1,100,000**

1960s: **3,900,000**

1970s: **6,800,000**

1980s: **5,400,000**

Source: Hagerty Valuation Services (Figures Approximated)



^{*}Source: © Experian 2020, SEMA Market Research estimates

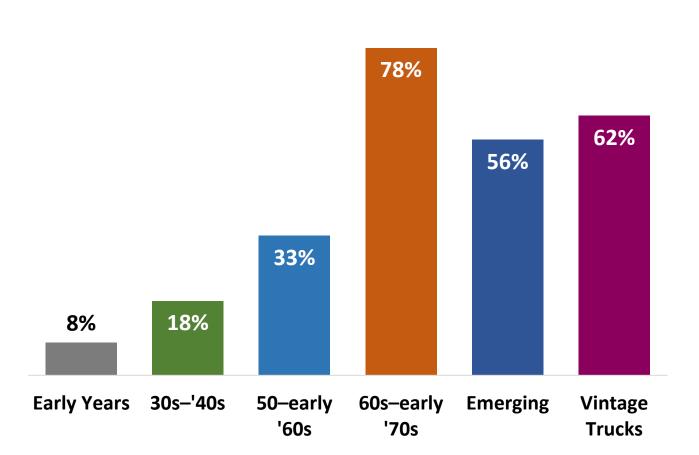
^{**}Source: Informa PLC. Model year sales of new passenger cars and trucks

What the Industry Sees Ahead

While the more traditional pieces of the classic vehicle space aren't going anywhere, newer vehicles and strategies are gaining importance—particularly among the next generation of enthusiasts.

Top Classic Vehicle Segments for the Industry

(Top 3 As Chosen by Businesses)



New generation of owners, new generation of needs:

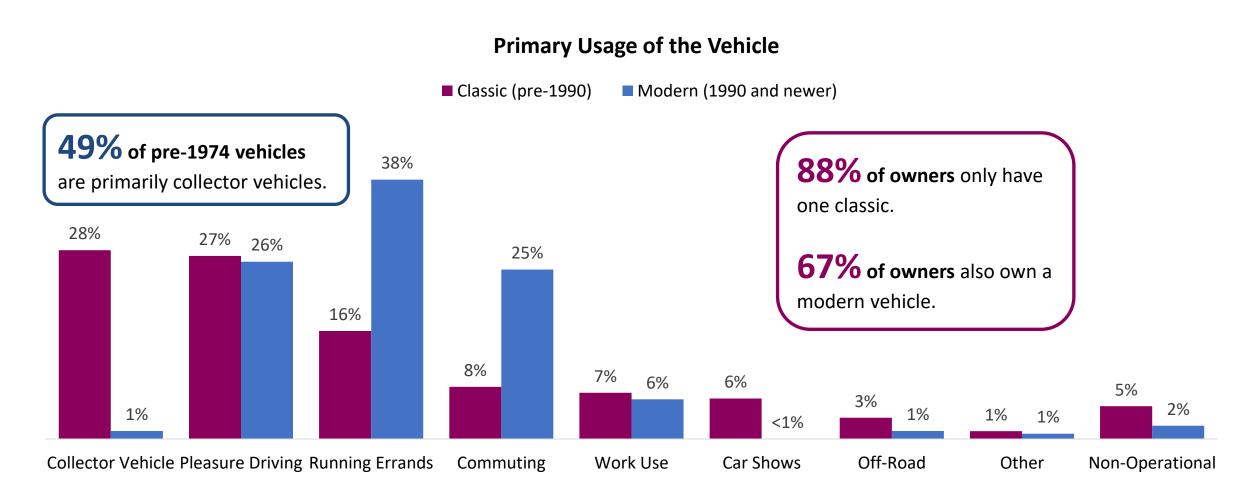
The classic vehicle market has historically been driven by Baby Boomers and the vehicles they care about. But as more Gen Xers and Millennials join the scene, they bring with them a growing interest in '70s, '80s, and even '90s vehicles.

Some of the changes in the market are likely driven by cost and availability as much as preference; Millennials may find themselves priced out of owning a tri-five but able to get their hands on a Fox body.

Younger owners are also seen as being more willing to swap in modern comfort or performance parts, rather than trying to keep everything stock.

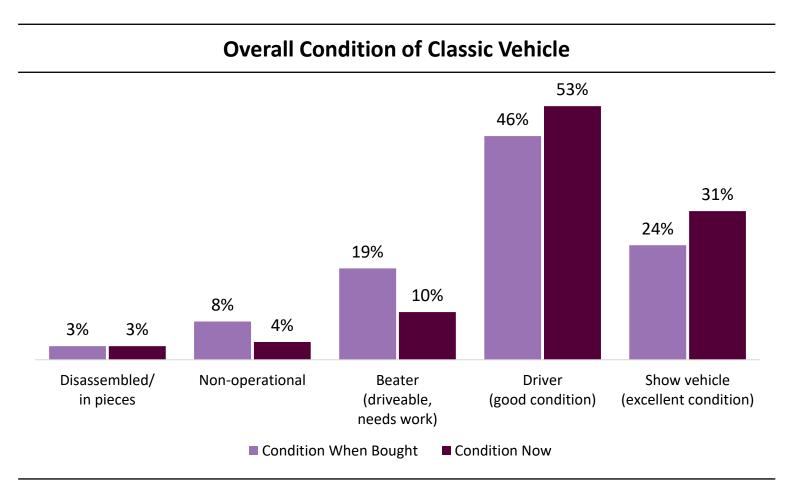
Primary Usage of Vehicle—Classic vs. Modern

Most classic owners have at least one more modern vehicle, which is often their daily driver. For the most part, people own one classic at a time rather than maintaining a collection.



Vehicle Condition

Most classics are at least drivable when bought and some owners work to improve the condition.



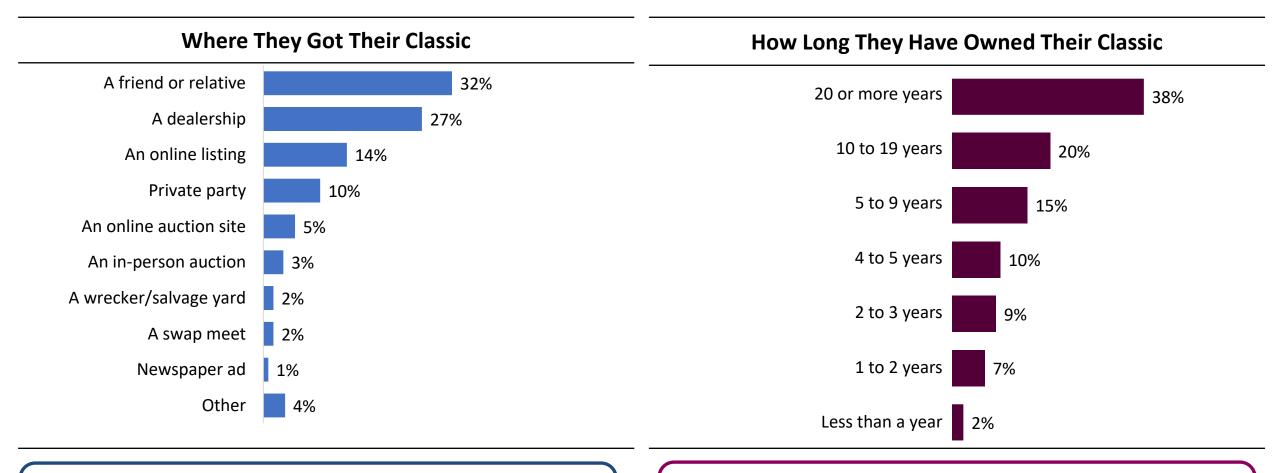
30% of classic vehicles are in <u>better</u> condition than when they were bought.

52% of classic vehicles are in the same condition as when bought.

18% of classic vehicles are in worse condition than when bought.

Taking Ownership of a Classic

Classics are frequently bought from other individuals—friends, family or private listings. Once people get their hands on a classic, they tend to hold onto it.



44% of owners under **45** bought their classic from a friend or relative.

55% of owners aged 65+ have had their classic for 20 or more years.



Many Classic Owners Are Passionate About Their Vehicles

"My wife and I purchased it when we returned from our honeymoon. We took our honeymoon in a MG. We repeated the honeymoon for our 50th in this MGB."



"My bronco has a name; her name is Beastie. She has her quirks, but I love them (most of the time LOL) and she can wheel like crazy. My kids and grandkids love it when I take the top off. We all have had many adventures in my Beastie and many more to come."



"I bought it when I was in my 20s as both a collector and daily driver. Restored it over several years as finances allowed, but it is as close to original as you can get. My kids learned to drive in it and are now grown. Lots of lovely and comical memories in that car."



"Besides my wife & dogs, it's my best friend."

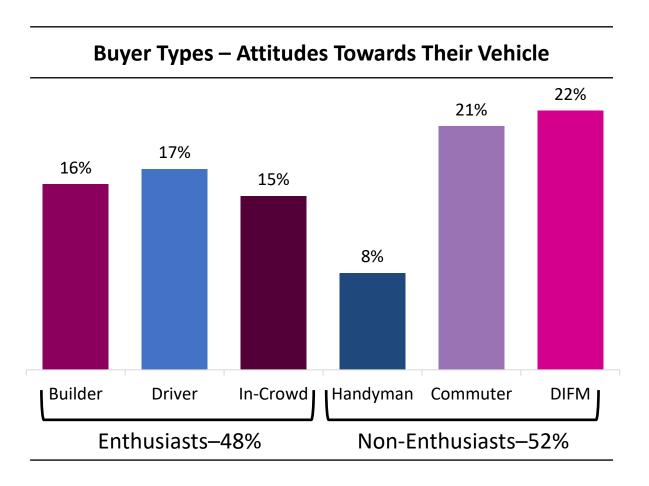


"She (Belle) is my sanctuary, no place I would rather be than having her out on the road."



Classic Owners Have a Range of Philosophies

Nearly half of classic owners are true enthusiasts, who tend to be more engaged in their vehicle and the classic car scene. But a good chunk of the customer base is formed of individuals that are not traditional "car people."



Enthusiasts do more with their vehicles.

On average, builders, drivers, and in-crowd owners spend more on parts, and builders especially are more likely to do complex jobs on their vehicle. However, DIFM are willing to spend money if a professional will get the job done right.

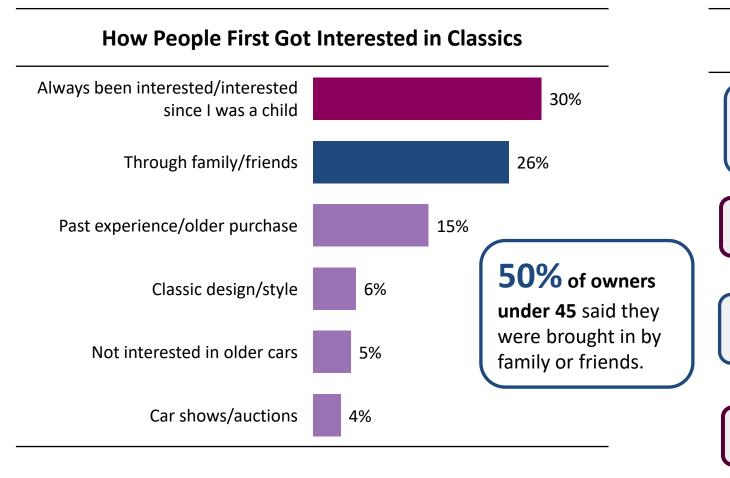
Enthusiasts gravitate toward older vehicles.

Owners of pre-1974 vehicles are especially likely to be Drivers focused on maximizing performance and handling, while 1985–1989 vehicles are more likely to be owned by Commuters who mainly want a reliable, comfortable vehicle.

More information on these buyer types can be found on page 49

A Hobby That's Being Passed Down to the Next Generation

We asked classic vehicle owners to tell us how they first got interested in older vehicles. For some, it's a lifelong passion. Others, particularly younger owners, got drawn in by people they know.



In Their Own Words

"Growing up poor and not being able to own newer vehicles, I learned to work on older vehicles and stuck with it. I also really like the classic designs."

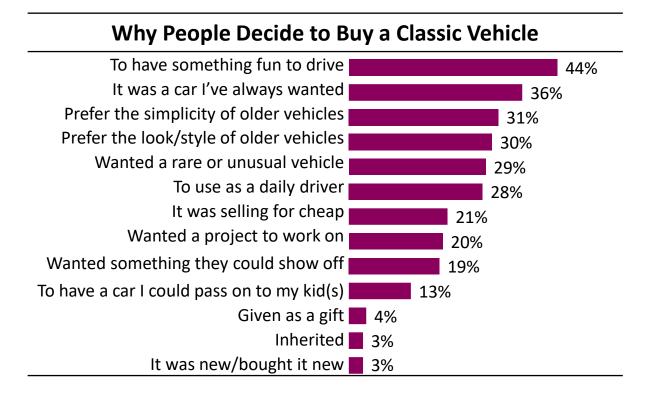
"My dad was obsessed with older cars and it most definitely rubbed off on me!"

"I grew up around them and the stock car circuit in the '80s."

"I always liked Corvairs and had one in the '60s."

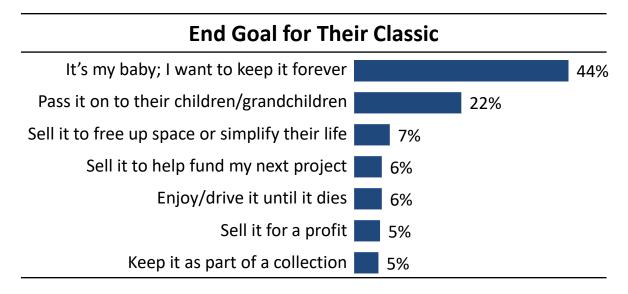
Why They Chose to Buy a Classic

Often what it boils down to is that people want something fun or different, although there are some folks who specifically want a project vehicle. Either way, people tend to view owning a classic as a long-term commitment.



Older vehicles are a labor of love:

Pre-1974 vehicles are more often bought for the fun factor, or because they're a "dream car" that the owner has always wanted.

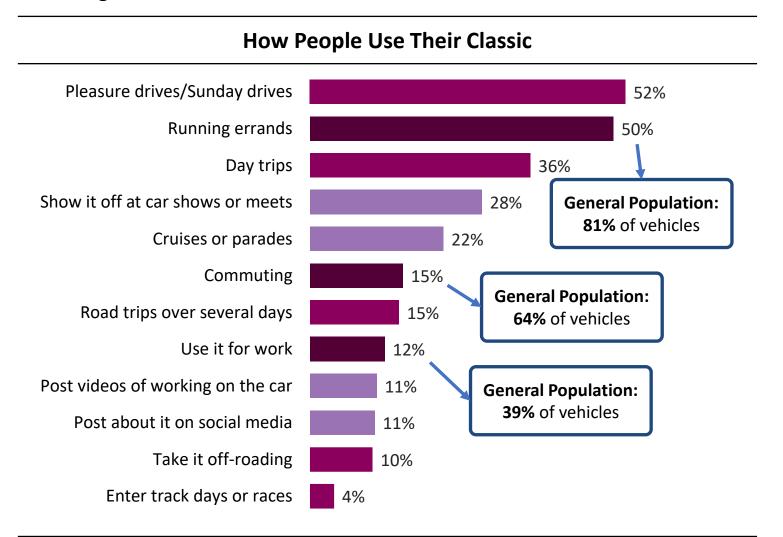


"I have always worked on cars and enjoy bringing them back to life. I do engine transplants as well as rebuilding transmissions and rearends."

> "I have always been interested in older cars because they seem to last longer and run better."

What People Do With Their Classic Vehicle

While some vehicles really are kept as display pieces, most people enjoy driving their classic car or truck at least as much as showing it off.



More of a toy than a workhorse:

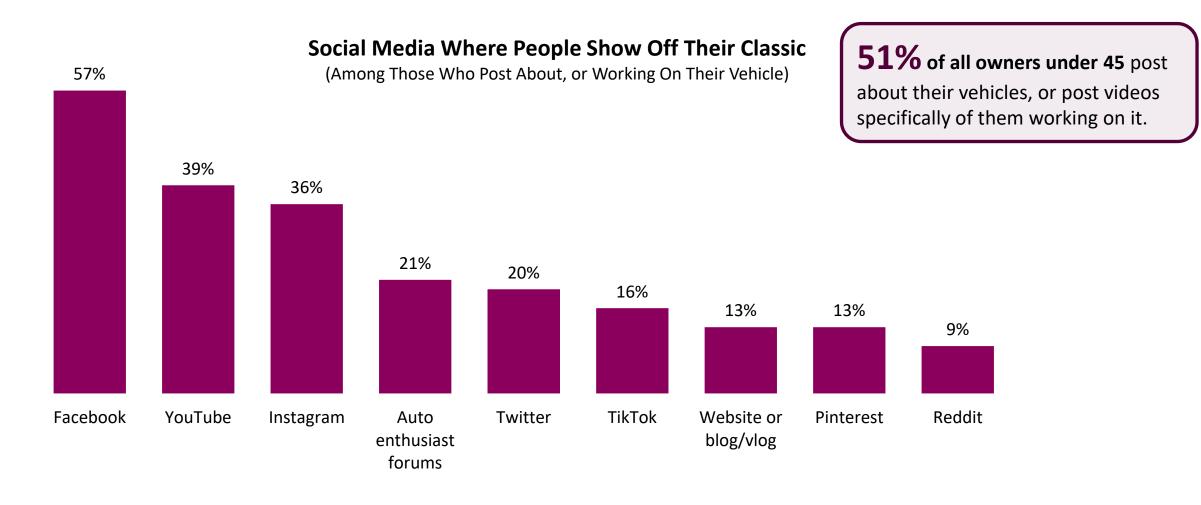
Classic vehicles are much less likely to be used as commuter vehicles than the general population, especially pre-1974 vehicles.

A source of pride:

Some, especially those with pre-1974 vehicles, enjoy showing it off as well as taking it for a spin. Younger owners are more likely to use digital channels to share their vehicle.

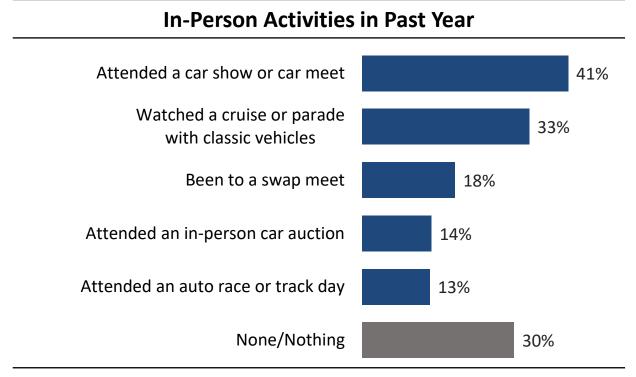
Showing the Vehicle Off

For the most part, it is owners under 45 who show their vehicle off on social media. A strong presence on at least Facebook, YouTube and Instagram can help connect with the younger generation of classic vehicle enthusiasts.



Vehicle Activities

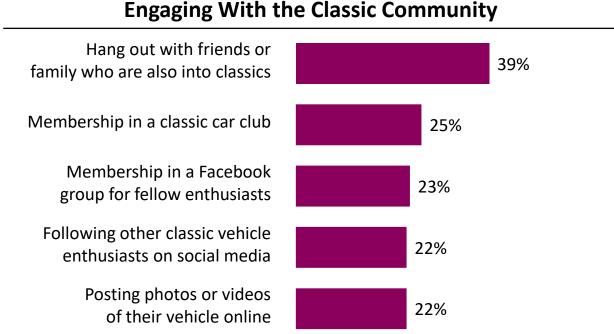
While COVID-19 reduced how often people interact in person, some classic vehicle owners are engaged with the broader community. Auto-related events, car clubs and other enthusiast gatherings or communities can be good ways to reach potential customers.



NOTE: Respondents were interviewed in September and October 2020 and asked what they had done in the year prior.

Pre-1974 vehicle owners are more likely to go to events

Owners of **pre-1974 vehicles** are more likely to have attended a car show or meet, a classic car cruise or parade, or a swap meet.



Younger owners more often engage digitally

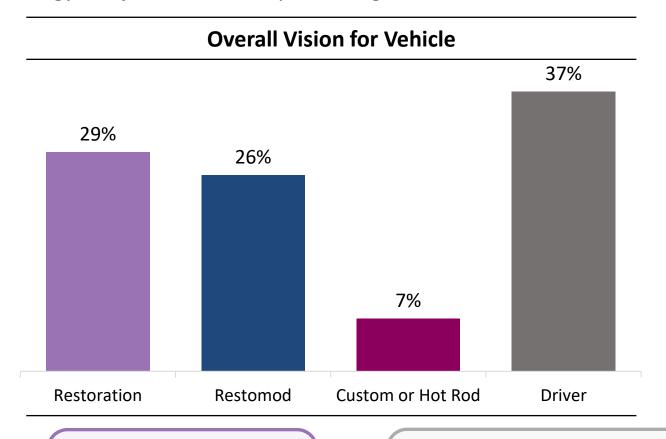
Don't connect with enthusiasts

Owners **under 45** are more likely to be in a classic car Facebook group, post photos or videos of their vehicle online, or follow other classic vehicle enthusiasts.

15%

What's the Ultimate Goal for Their Classic?

Most classic owners have a defined vision for their vehicle, but there is also a sizeable contingent who don't have a grand strategy and just want to keep it driving.



Restoration: Keep it close to 100% original.

Restomod: Keep the classic look, but also make performance or comfort upgrades.

Custom or Hot Rod: Make significant modifications to make the vehicle unique.

Driver: Keep in running condition, but not make significant modifications.

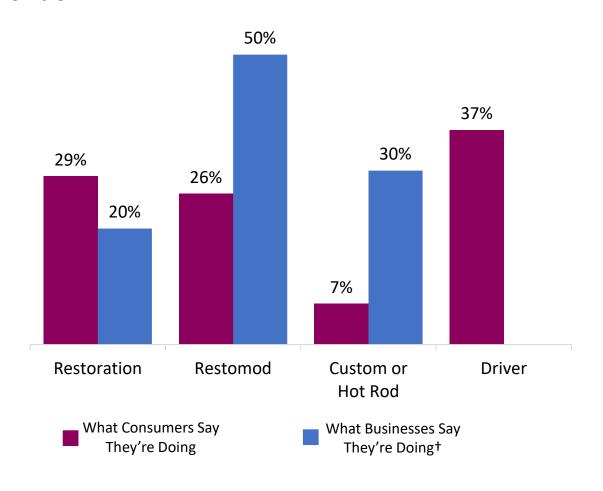
40% of pre-1974 vehicle owners are going for pure restoration.

55% of those who working on a 1985–1989

vehicle indicated they just want a driver, compared to 23% of those working on a pre-1974.

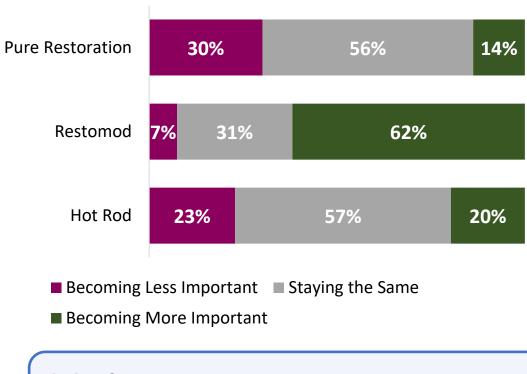
Growth in Restomodding

While pure, numbers-match restoration and hot-rodding are not going away, many classic owners are somewhere in the middle. Businesses see a rise in restomodding and a growing flexibility in terms of what goes under the hood of an older vehicle.



†NOTE: Businesses were only asked about restoration, restomod, and hot rod.

Businesses See Restomodding on the Rise:

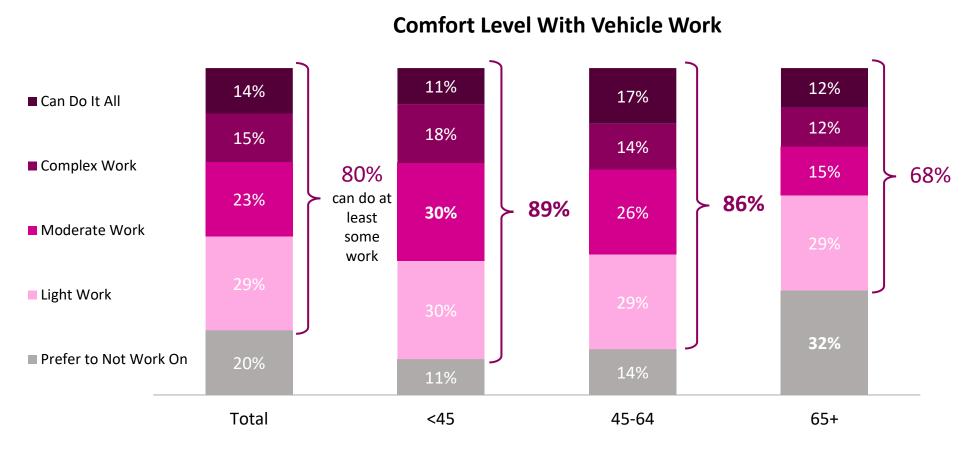


38% of owners under **45** are going for a restomod build, compared to 22% of older owners.



Classic Owners Are Comfortable Working on Their Vehicles

Classic vehicles often attract DIY-oriented owners, and most are comfortable doing at least some maintenance. Younger owners, and in general people who are more passionate about cars, are more likely to be handy with a wrench than those who are less enthusiastic.



Older owners more likely to be hands-off:

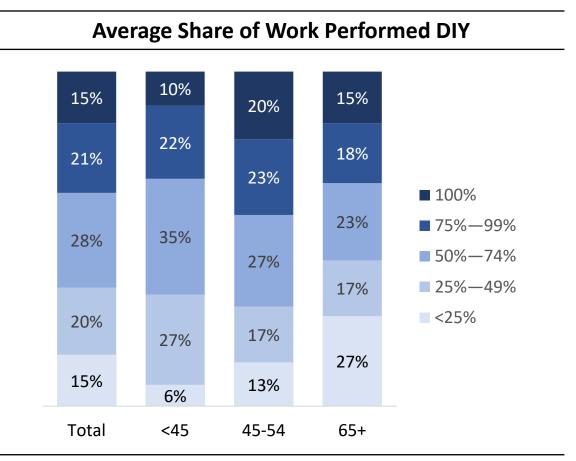
Owners aged 65+ are still often savvy with a wrench but are more likely to prefer leaving the work to professionals.

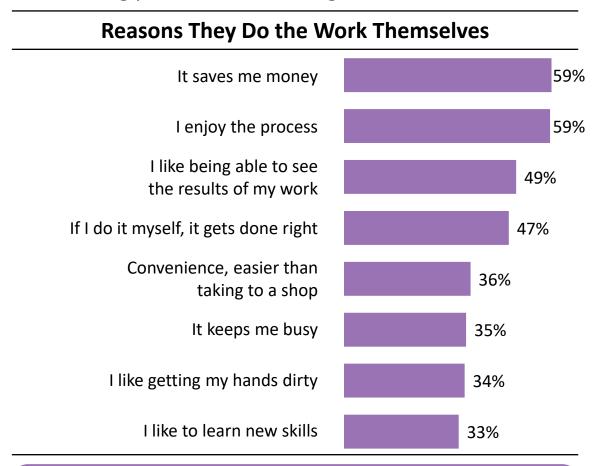
Auto enthusiasts are more hands-on:

45% of Enthusiast owners (builders, drivers or in-crowd) are comfortable tackling more complex work themselves, compared to 13% of non-enthusiasts.

The Appeal of Doing It Yourself

Younger owners, and owners of pre-1974 vehicles, tend do a higher share of work themselves. While saving money is often a motivation, it's just as often because they genuinely enjoy the work, fixing problems and seeing the results.





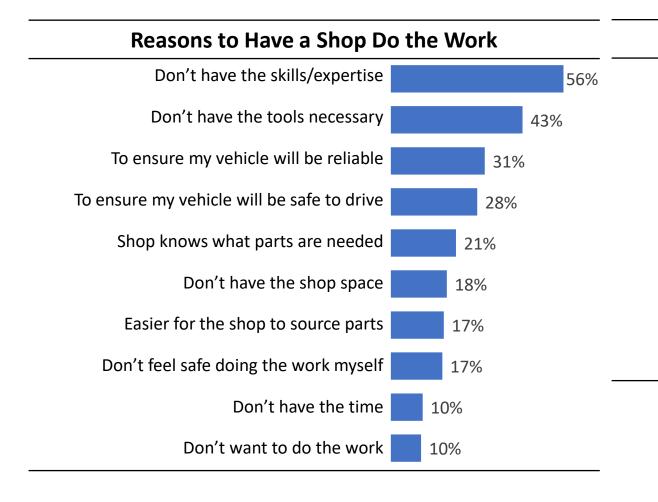
75% of truck owners do the majority of the work themselves.

70% of pre-1974 owners do the majority of the work themselves.

Owners under 45 are more likely to value the opportunity to learn (47%), while owners aged 65+ tend to put more value on the convenience (50%) and saving money (72%).

Why They Take Their Vehicle to a Shop

Classic owners look for shops they know have the skills and expertise to do the jobs they can't. Businesses that provide quality work will often earn the loyalty (and repeat business) of these owners.



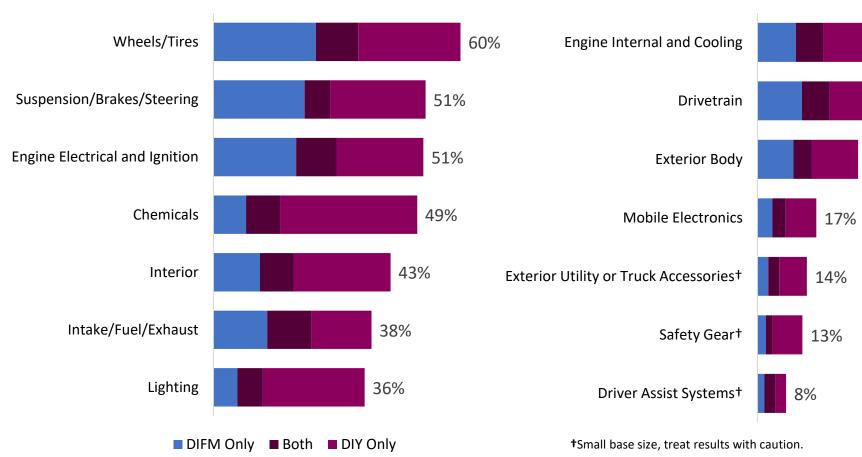


65% say they tend to stick with the same shops or suppliers, rather than shop around for the best price.

Types of Work Done and How Parts Were Installed

Classic owners often DIY their vehicle's interior, lighting and chemicals. Owners tend to go either fully DIY or DIFM on a specific vehicle section, though they usually do at least some of both.

Part Types Purchased and How Installed



Older vehicles have more work done:

35%

34%

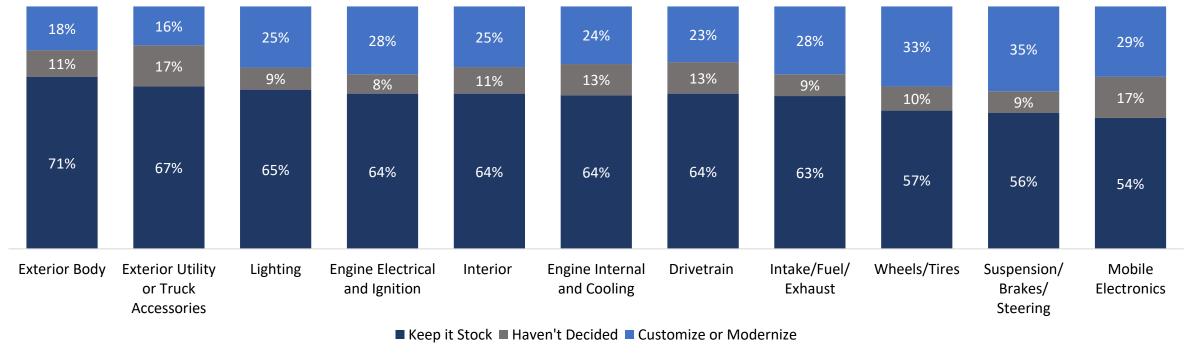
30%

Owners of pre-1974 vehicles tend to work on more sections, particularly the suspension, interior, and powertrain.

Keeping It Stock vs. Customizing

While many classic owners prefer to keep things as stock as possible, people are more willing to modernize or update products that affect performance, handling or comfort.

How They Plan to Handle Vehicle Sections



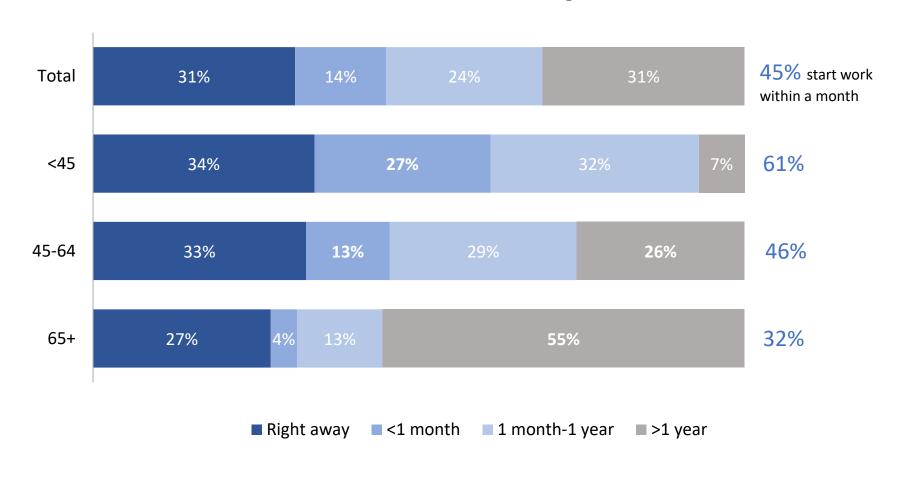
Younger owners are more likely to make changes:

Those under 45 are more likely to indicate they plan to customize vehicle sections, particularly to the powertrain.

Timeframe of Vehicle Work

Many classic owners don't wait long before they start working on their vehicle, whether for maintenance/repair or to start tinkering and modifying. Younger owners, in particular, may start looking for parts almost as soon as they take the vehicle home.

When Owners Start Working on Vehicle



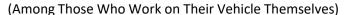
The more work the vehicle needs, the quicker work starts:

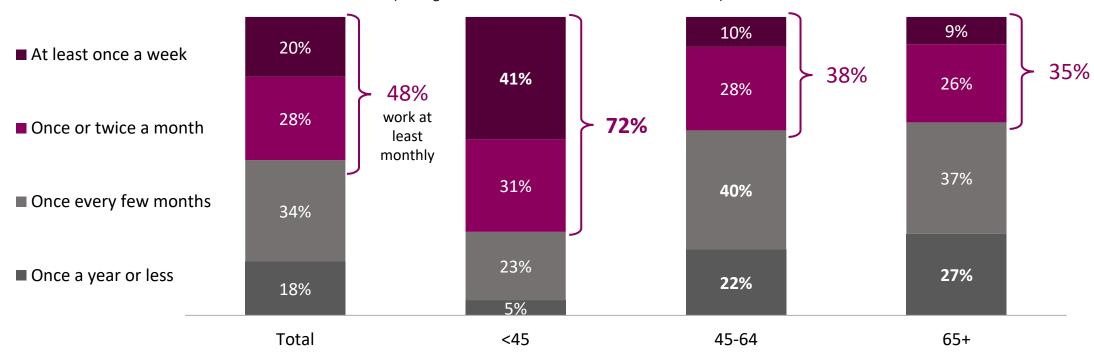
67% of people who bought a beater or undrivable vehicle started within a month, vs. 24% of who bought a show car with no immediate need for work.

Frequency of Vehicle Work

Most classic vehicle owners do at least occasional work themselves, but those under 45 are considerably more likely to treat their classic as an active project vehicle.







Modders are more active:

60% of owners who are working on a restomod or hot rod work on their vehicle at least once a month, compared with 33% who just want a driver.

Stuck at home? Grab a wrench:

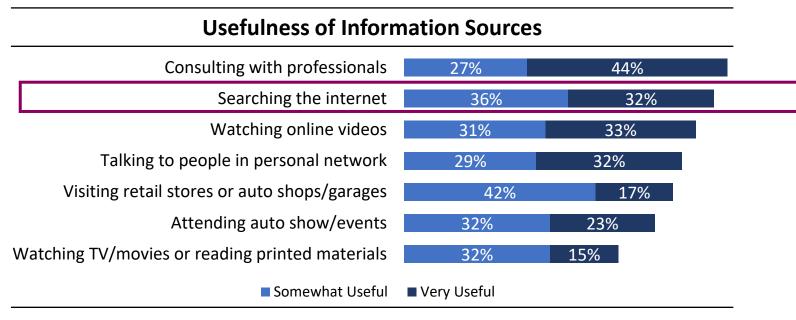
32% of owners under 45 have been working on their vehicle more often during COVID-19.



Where Owners Do Their Research

Classic owners often find value in researching parts or ideas online, but businesses have a real opportunity to win customers by offering expert advice in addition to good product information. Many classic owners consider informed,

trusted professionals to be vital sources of information and recommendations.

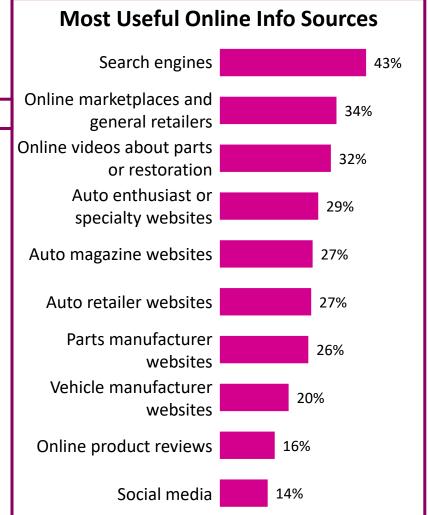


Online videos are a key resource, especially for younger owners:

84% of owners under 45 and **70%** of owners aged 45–64 consider online videos to be a useful source of information on parts or ideas.

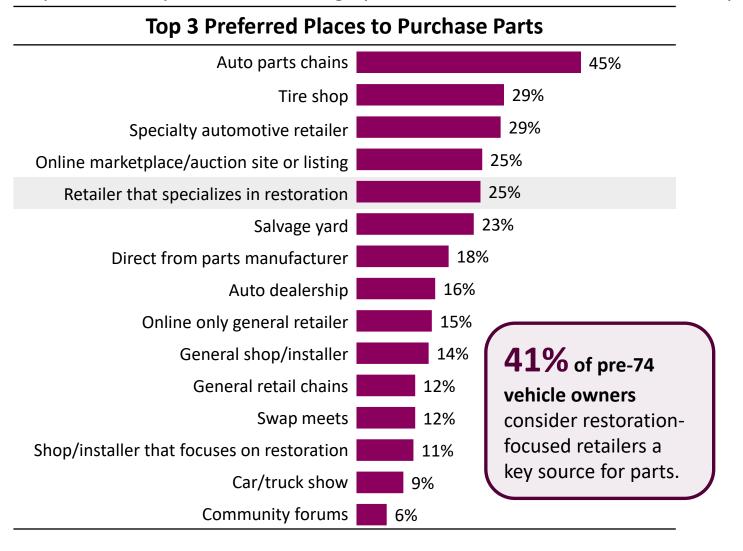
Younger owners more often turn to their community:

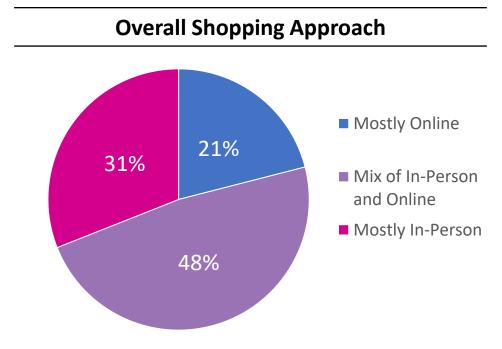
76% of owners under 45 find talking with their friends, family or colleagues to be useful when looking for parts or ideas, compared to **54%** of older owners.



Where They Go to Buy Parts

Classic owners prefer to get their parts from a mixture of channels. Parts chains and tire shops are common options, but specialist shops and even salvage yards are seen as valuable sources of parts for older vehicles.



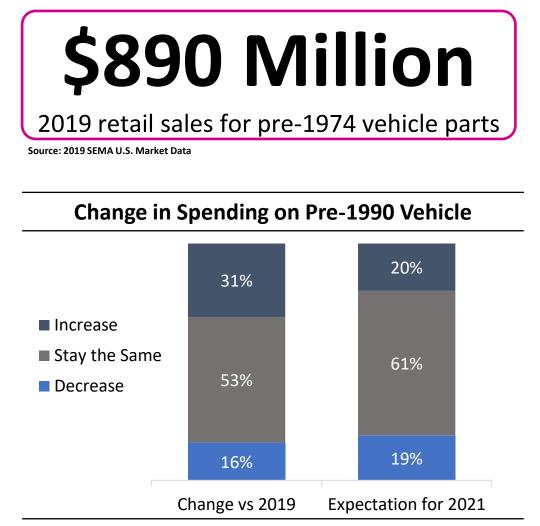


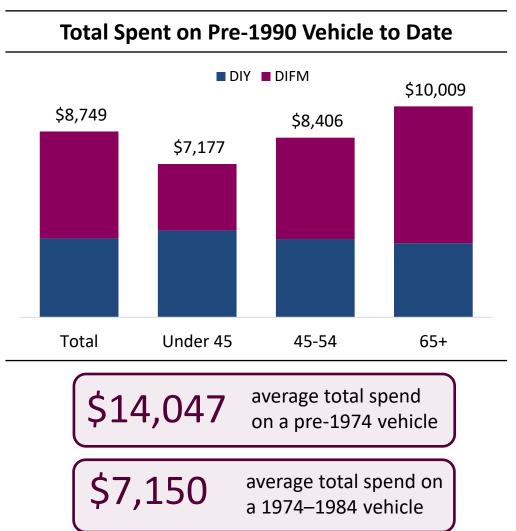
Younger owners are more comfortable online

Just **16%** of owners under 45 get most of their parts in person, compared with **42%** of owners aged 65+.

How Much They Spend

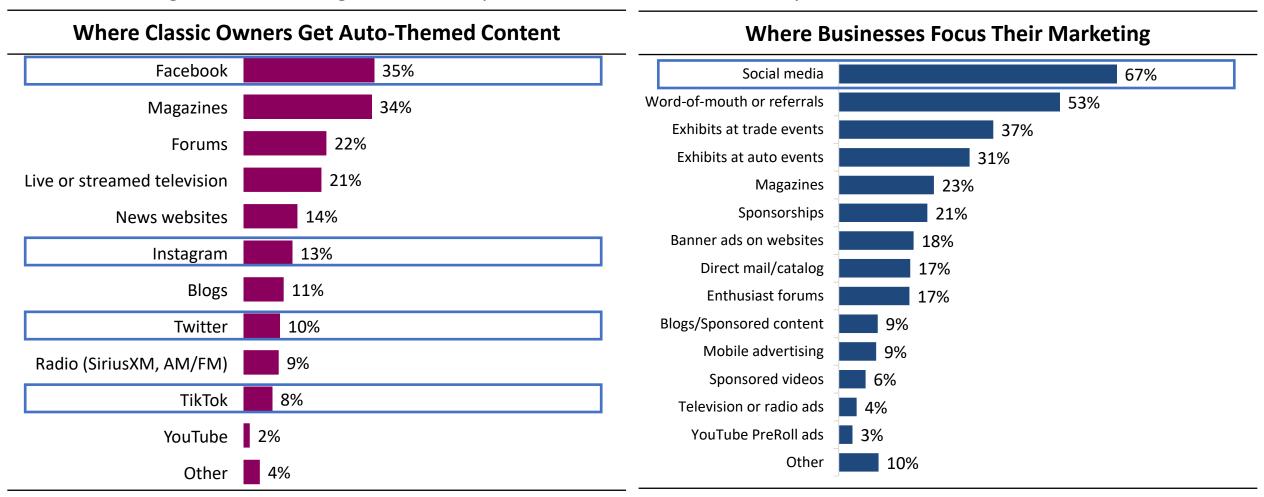
Most owners spent the same or more on their classic in 2020 than in 2019 and expect their spending to be stable or grow in 2021. On average, owners aged 65+ have invested the most in their classic, though this is likely driven by higher do-it-for-me spending and having owned their vehicle longer.





Finding Consumers Online

Businesses recognize that a strong social-media presence can be an effective way to reach classic owners.

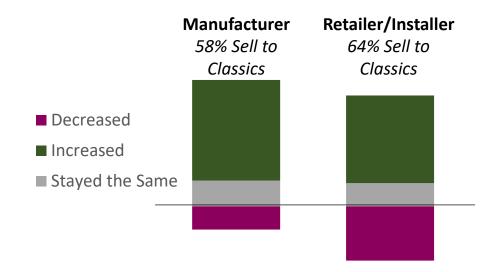


Younger owners consume more auto-related media:

Those **under age 45** are more likely to use most media options, particularly social media, than their older counterparts. Older owners may be tougher to reach through digital channels than by word-of-mouth referrals or print advertising.

Industry Participation in Classics Market

Change in Sales of Classic Vehicle Parts in 2020

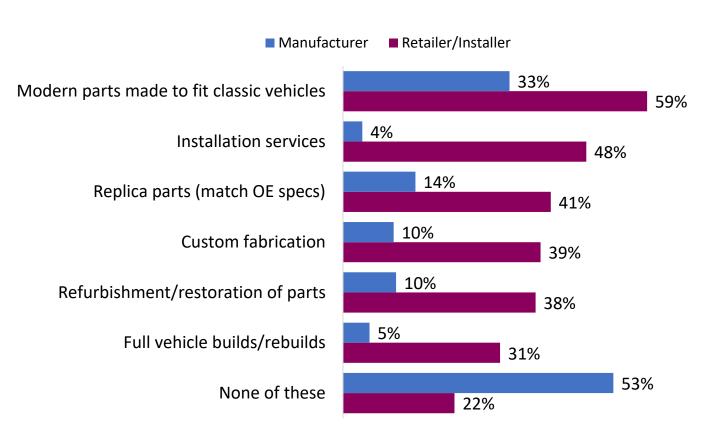


2020 was a big sales year for businesses.

Many manufacturers of classic vehicle parts (68%) reported increased sales vs. 2019, as did a good number of retailers (52%).

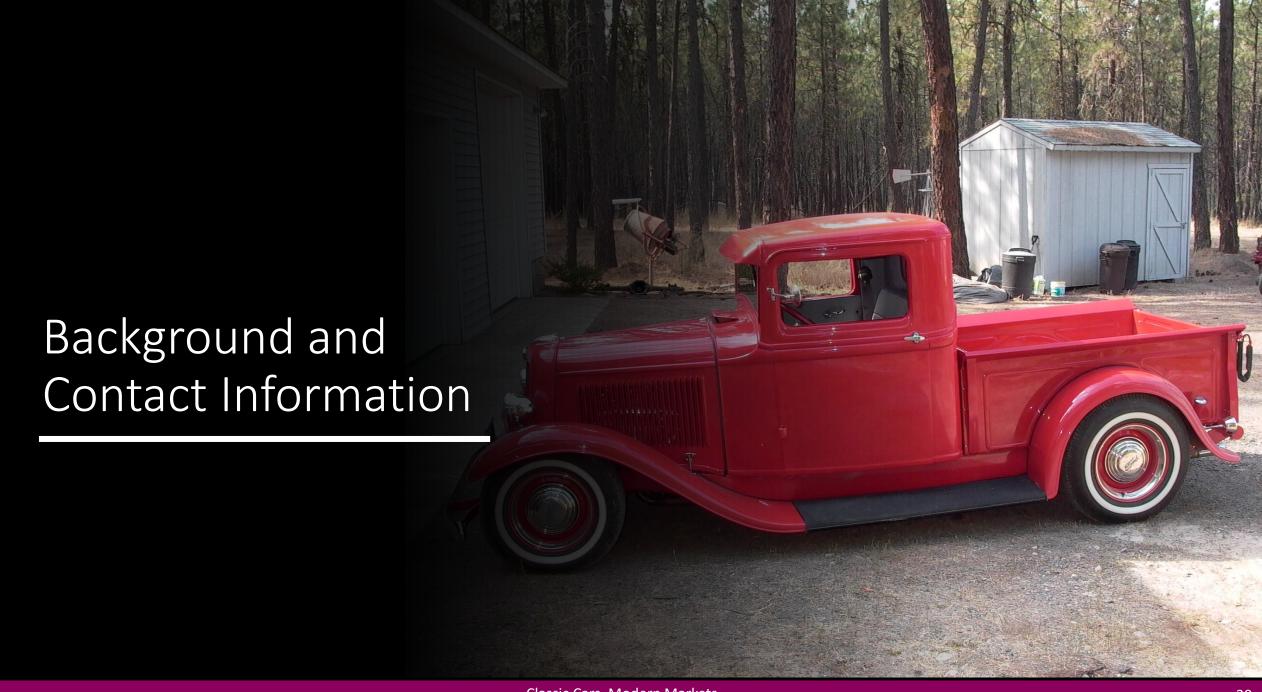
COVID-19-related restrictions on face-to-face interactions and economic disruption did hurt sales for some manufacturers and about a third of retailers. However, both manufacturers and retailers were more likely to report sales growth over 2020 than in the prior three years.

Products and Services Offered for Classic Vehicles



Classic vehicle parts are a niche-within-a-niche market.

Few manufacturers produce true replica parts. While there are those who specialize in numbers-match parts and builds, it's more common to make modern parts fit the vehicle or to refurbish used ones.



How Can This Report Help My Business?

Utilizing the information here can help your business:

- **Profile target consumers**: By looking at accessory purchases, vehicle usage and interests, you can better understand the buyers that are likely to be your company's customers. Understanding the needs of these key consumers can help you better serve your customers.
- **Expand customer base**: Expansion opportunities may exist with customers you haven't previously targeted. By recognizing the similar needs and interests of classic vehicle owners, you may be able to tailor existing products and services to new prospects.
- **Product development**: Vehicle usage, interests/hobbies and parts purchase patterns can spark ideas for new products, line extensions, feature enhancements and cross-selling opportunities for target consumers.
- Marketing: Purchase and research sites, hobbies/interests and vehicle usage can be used to refine your marketing strategy and advertising channels.
- Messaging: Consumer needs and benefits, along with interests and hobbies, can point to refined and targeted messaging that will resonate with your customers.
- Assess market potential: Purchase habits and accessorization patterns can help define the market size and overall
 potential.

This report profiles owners of pre-1990 vehicles who have spent money on general repair and maintenance, restoration work, updating/modernizing, or modifications.

Classic Vehicle Owner Segments

Enthusiast Segments

Builder



16% of our sample. Builders take pride in working on their vehicles. They enjoy the creative stimulation that comes from spending hours on a project. Builders also spend their spare time reading up on new ways to modify their vehicles.

Driver



17% of our sample, Drivers are all about getting the most out of their vehicle. They focus on modifying their car with the goal of maximizing performance and handling. At the end of the day, they are most concerned with having a vehicle that's fun to drive.

In-Crowd



15% of our sample. The In-crowd focuses mainly on keeping up with trends in how their vehicles look. They want their cars to look good, but don't necessarily want to do the work themselves. Modifications are focused around exterior add-ons, lighting and exhaust system upgrades.

Non-Enthusiast Segments

Handyman



8% of our sample. Handymen want to touch and feel the parts being put on their cars. In for the long haul, they need their parts to be safe and reliable. Their main concern is extending vehicle life, and they are willing to do anything to get a few additional miles out of a car.

Commuter



21% of our sample, Commuters are mainly concerned with getting their cars on the road and staying there. They are hyper concerned with price and will shop around to find the best deal. Commuters are interested in purchasing parts on the Internet.

Do It For Me (DIFM)



22% of our sample. This group wants a nice, safe car but doesn't have the experience or interest in doing the work themselves. Their families need to count on their vehicles day in and day out for reliability and safety. Even better if the car looks nice too.

More info on the SEMA Consumer Segmentation is available at: www.sema.org/research

Questions?



Comments and suggestions appreciated.

Happy to provide clarifications.

SEMA Market Research is here to help.

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