



Consumer Satisfaction & Behaviors Among Various Gear Selectors





INTRODUCTION

Consumer Reports continually reviews vehicle technology and uses several inputs to evaluate the design and implementation of these new systems. This report summarizes our findings from five Automatic-Transmission Gear Selector questions in the 2019 Annual Auto Survey among CR members. Our goal in sharing consumer-driven data insights with the industry, our partners, and government regulators is to shape the marketplace in favor of consumers.

METHODOLOGY

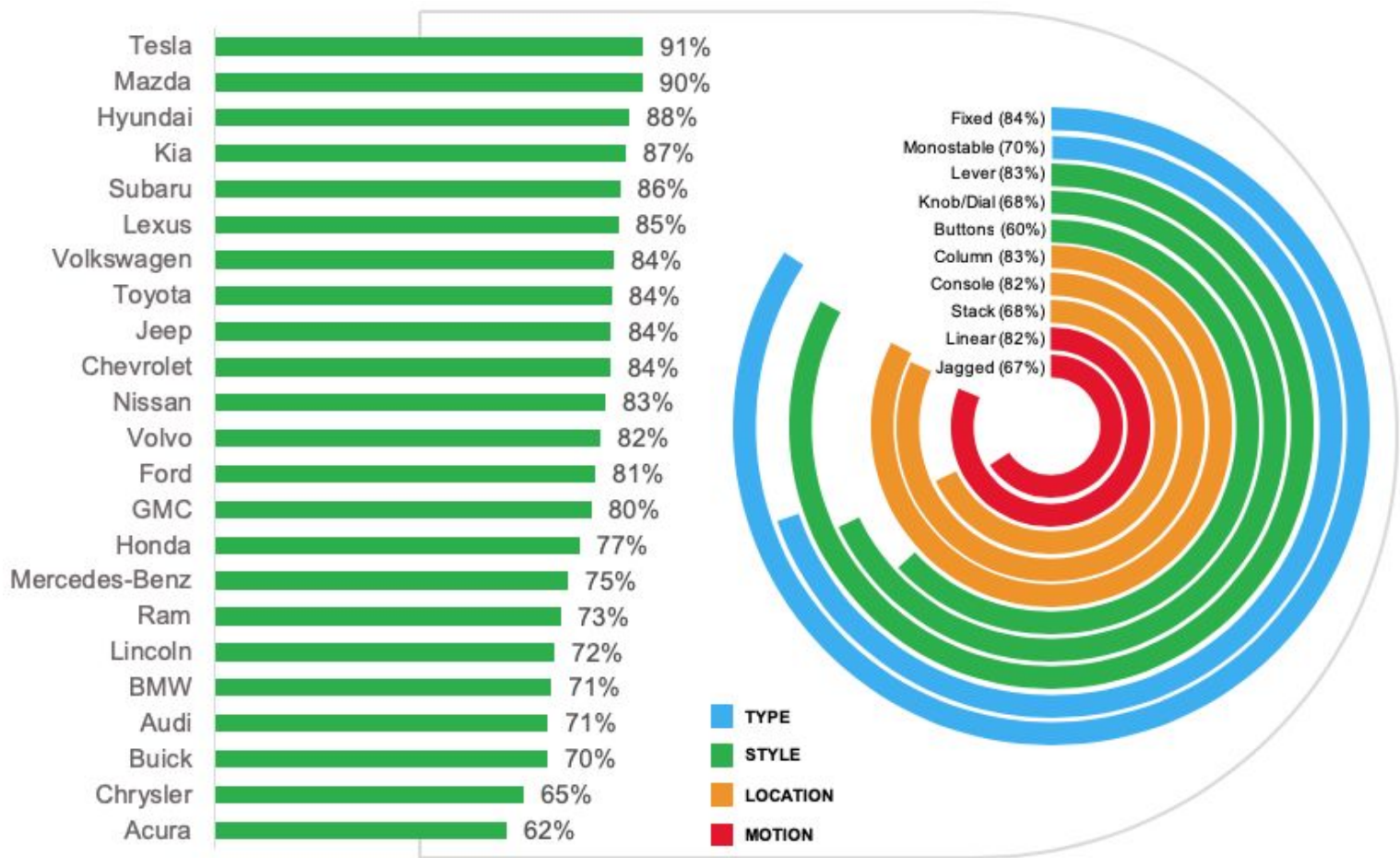
The 2019 Annual Auto Survey of Consumer Reports members was conducted from July to September 2019. Responses were collected from owners of 19,000 vehicles with model years 2017–2020. All survey responses used in this report, were required to have used the Gear Selector in their current vehicles. Each vehicle was tagged with the appropriate gear selector type, style, location, and motion. Brands with sample size of at least 100 are shown in this report.

Gear Selectors were categorized as below.

GEAR SELECTOR CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Type	Fixed: stays in selected location Monostable: returns to same location
Style	Buttons Knob/Dial Lever
Motion	Jagged Linear
Location	Column: steering column Console: center console between seats Stack: center stack attached to dashboard



SATISFACTION WAS MOSTLY DRIVEN BY THE CATEGORY OF GEAR SELECTOR, RATHER THAN THE BRAND. "TRADITIONAL" FIXED LEVER GEAR SELECTORS, WHICH WERE LOCATED ON THE CONSOLE AND MOVED LINEARLY, GENERALLY HAD THE HIGHEST SATISFACTION (85%).



As more brands are moving to non-traditional gear selectors, brands that received low satisfaction ratings suffered from offering vehicles with gear selectors designed with features rated the lowest in each category (Type-Monostable, Style-Buttons, Location-Stack, Motion-Jagged).



IF MANUFACTURERS WANT TO IMPLEMENT A NON-TRADITIONAL GEAR SELECTOR, CR RECOMMENDS PLACING IT ON THE CONSOLE

The Console location lifted the satisfaction ratings of most types, styles, and motions.

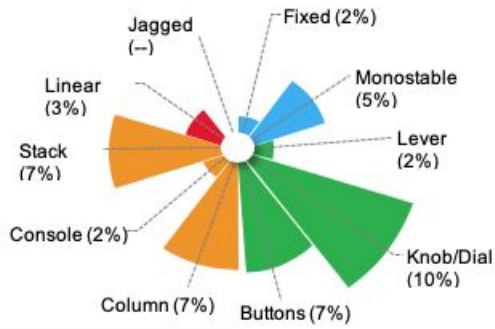
GEAR SELECTORS	CONSOLE	OTHER LOCATIONS	DIFFERENCE
Fixed	85%	76%	↑ 9%
Monostable	66%	75%*	↓ 9%
Lever	83%	81%	↑ 2%
Knob/Dial	69%	67%	↑ 2%
Buttons	63%	58%	↑ 5%
Linear	83%	75%	↑ 8%

*Column had the highest satisfaction

NON-TRADITIONAL GEAR SELECTORS OFTEN CAUSED INADVERTENT DRIVER BEHAVIOR, LEADING TO CONSUMER SAFETY CONCERNS

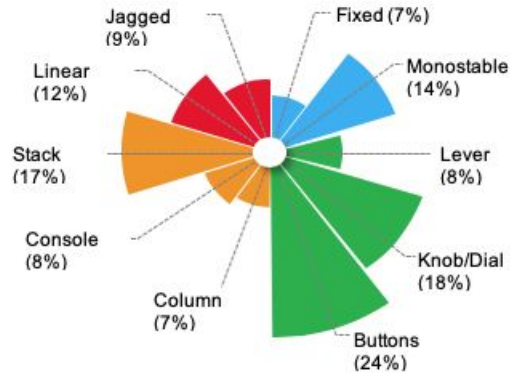
(% saying Always, Often, or Sometimes)

Confused Gear Selector with Another Control

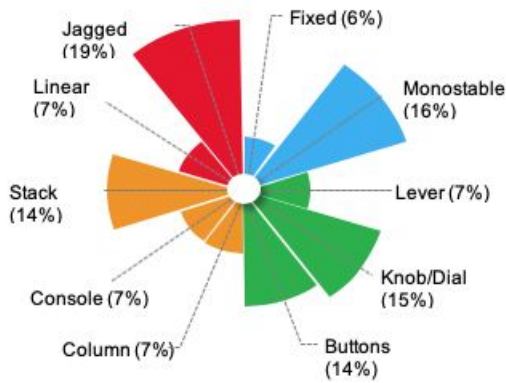


-- Sample size too small

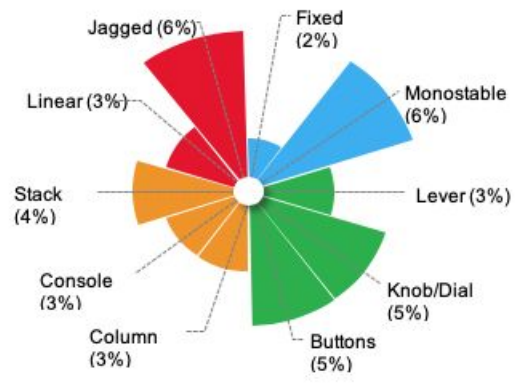
Had to Take Eyes Off the Road



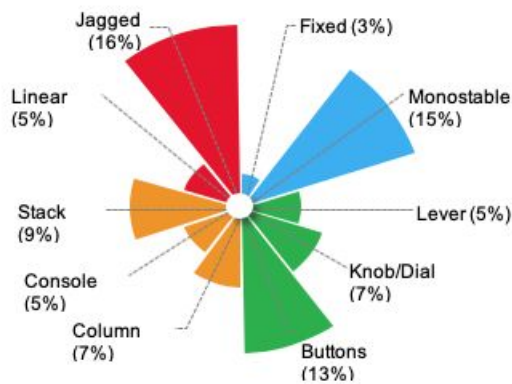
Changed to Incorrect Gear



Changed Gear by Accident



Unsure if Gear Selector Took Selection





SHIFTER MISAPPLICATION TENDED TO BE HIGHER IN LUXURY VEHICLES

	LUXURY VEHICLES	NON-LUXURY VEHICLES	DIFFERENCE
Confused gear selector with another control	5%	2%	↑ 3%
Had to take my eyes off the road to use it	11%	8%	↑ 3%
Moved into the incorrect gear	12%	7%	↑ 5%
Unsure if gear selector took my selection	11%	4%	↑ 7%
Changed gear by accident	5%	2%	↑ 3%
% saying Always, Often, or Sometimes			

Luxury vehicles are much more likely to have non-traditional gear selectors which can lead to misapplication. Loading cars with new technologies and features will lead to clutter and confusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Using non-traditional shifters often ends up confusing drivers as they are unsure which control to use without taking their eyes off the road or they sometimes accidentally use the wrong control.

The location is also important. If the gear selector is placed next to other controls, it is confusing for consumers to differentiate while driving. The console location drove the highest consumer satisfaction.

CR recommends that gear selectors be prominently located and apart from other controls in the vehicle. We recommend making the gear selector unique to other controls in the vehicle, for example: a different shape than the other controls, raised lettering, etc. These shifters also must be designed for the operator to use without taking their eyes off the road.

CR currently penalizes the Overall Score of any vehicle containing a non-traditional gear selector without rollaway prevention. Some automakers have already implemented rollaway prevention on traditional gear selectors. *CR recommends* more manufacturers take this approach. The results of this survey indicated that not only will a traditional gear selector be safer from misapplication, but consumers will also be more satisfied.

For additional analyses and other inquiries, please contact autosafety@consumer.org.