



AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERING

FACT SHEET



Repair Affordability Survey

BACKGROUND

According to a new AAA survey, 64 million U.S. drivers would not be able to pay for an unexpected vehicle repair without going into debt, indicating Americans may not understand the full cost of owning and operating a vehicle. Additionally, a [previous AAA survey](#) found that one third of Americans skip or delay routine maintenance or repairs, which increases the chances of unanticipated mechanical failure and costly repairs.

When deciding if a vehicle is affordable, many consumers focus on the monthly payment. However, there are other costs associated with owning and operating a vehicle, such as repair, maintenance, insurance premiums and fuel costs. In 2016, AAA found the [annual cost to own and operate](#) a vehicle was \$8,558, with nearly \$800 allotted to vehicle maintenance and repair.

Because repairs are inevitable, and the average vehicle repair is \$500 to \$600, AAA urges drivers to save at least \$50 a month in a car care fund.

To understand consumer attitudes toward the cost of unexpected repair, AAA pursued two lines of inquiry:

1. How much is the average repair bill?
2. Are U.S. drivers able to pay for an unexpected repair without going into debt?

KEY FINDINGS

- **64 million** American drivers would not be able to pay for the average \$500 to \$600 repair bill without going into debt.
 - **Women (62 percent)** are less likely than **men (76 percent)** to say they would be able to afford the unexpected expense.
- According to AAA, the average vehicle repair bill is between **\$500** and **\$600**.
 - Motorists need to save **at least \$50 a month** for repair and maintenance expenses.
- In 2016, AAA rescued nearly **32 million** stranded motorists across North America.



AAA RECOMMENDATIONS

Before a breakdown occurs, AAA recommends vehicle owners:

- Comply with the vehicle manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule to avoid roadside trouble.
- Single out a repair shop you trust. Ask family and friends for recommendations and visit AAA.com/autorepair to locate a AAA Approved Auto Repair facility near you.

If faced with an unexpected auto repair, AAA suggests that drivers:

- Ask for a written estimate for the repair and clarify with the shop the work that needs to be done. Consider getting a second opinion to confirm the diagnosis.
- Negotiate with the repair shop. Look to see if the shop has any discounts or payment plans that might be available.

Average Repair Costs

- ⇒ New timing belt \$400 - \$900
- ⇒ Alternator or starter replacements \$400 - \$600
- ⇒ Brake repair approximately \$500

**Costs can vary depending on vehicle make, model and type of repair.*

METHODOLOGY

Between Sept. 22 and 25, 2016, an omnibus telephone survey was conducted in the continental United States. The sample consists of 1,001 adults who are 18 years old and older.

A dual-frame approach was used that combined landline and cell phone interviews to ensure that adults who primarily communicate via cell phones were properly represented.

Survey responses were weighted by five variables (age, gender, region, race/ethnicity and education) to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the country's total population of those 18 and older.

The study results have an average statistical error rate of +/- 3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.