



# Most Europeans want tougher car emission rules and are willing to pay

Results of an YouGov survey in 7 European countries

January 2022

## Summary

The European Commission is set to adopt its proposal on new pollutant emission standards for cars, vans, trucks and buses (Euro 7) in April 2022 revising outdated rules set more than a decade ago. This proposal will determine the amount of toxic emissions that almost 100 million new cars with an internal combustion engine (ICE) - expected to hit the road in 2025-2035 - will be allowed to emit. The proposal is the EU's last opportunity to tackle toxic pollution from ICE cars -the largest source of toxic nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions-, align rules with new World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines and avoid tens of thousands of premature deaths from air pollution. A drastic reduction of hazardous pollutant emissions is technically feasible as CLOVE - a team of emission experts tasked by the European Commission - has outlined.

However, carmakers fiercely oppose any ambitious requirements that would be more than a mere cosmetic change to the existing pollutant emission limits. They claim that anything else would de facto kill off the ICE<sup>1</sup> because, for example, improvements to emission control systems would make cars prohibitively expensive and people would not be willing to bear the additional cost. T&E has previously proved such claims wrong<sup>2</sup>.

With that in mind T&E decided to gauge public opinion to understand what EU citizens actually think about this topic. T&E commissioned a representative Pan-European online survey with over eight thousand respondents across seven EU Member States to YouGov<sup>3</sup>, a leading research data and analytics group . The main results are:

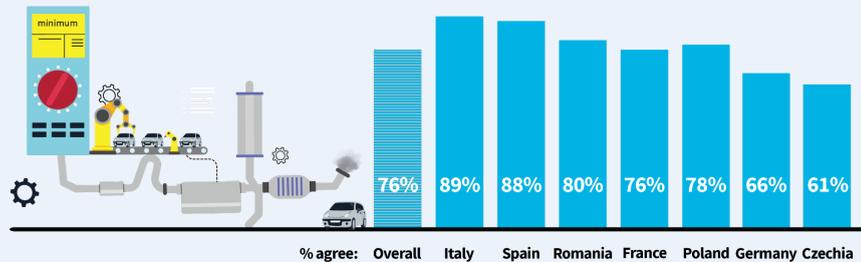
<sup>1</sup> Autocar (28th May 2021) [Analysis: New rules could make ICE engine unavailable by 2026.](#)

<sup>2</sup> T&E. (2021) [The seven \(dirty\) air pollution tricks of the auto industry.](#)

<sup>3</sup> All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 8228 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 15th November 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all seven country [Romania, Italy, Czech Republic, Poland, France, Germany & Spain] adults (aged 18+).

- Across all countries over three-quarters, or **76% of citizens, support the idea** that car manufacturers should be legally obliged to reduce pollution from new diesel and petrol cars to the lowest levels that are technically feasible.

### Car manufacturers should be legally obliged to reduce pollution from new petrol and diesel cars, as much as technically feasible



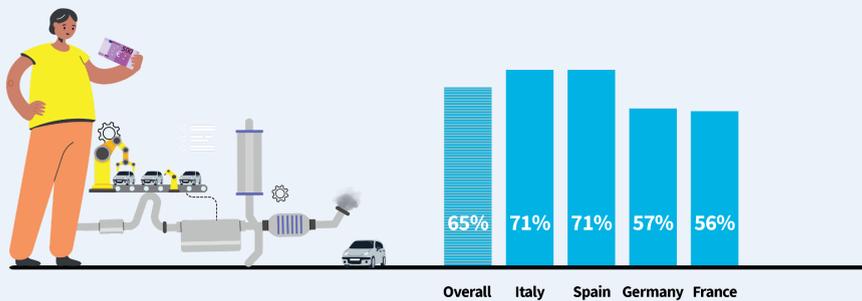
Question: "Road traffic is one of the main sources of air pollution...Do you think car manufacturers should or should not be legally obliged to reduce pollution from new petrol and diesel cars, as much as technically feasible?" % saying should. Total sample size was 8,228 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021.

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Source: YouGov

- Among people who intend to buy a new car<sup>4</sup> **nearly two thirds (65%)** said they would be willing to pay up to 500 euros more for a new car if this would significantly reduce the pollution of the car.

### New car buyers would be willing to pay up to €500 more if carmakers would significantly reduce car pollution



Question: "Car manufacturers can significantly reduce car pollution for less than €500 (cheaper than a paint upgrade), would you be willing to pay this additional cost for a new car?" % willing. Total sample size was 2,112 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021.

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Source: YouGov

- Across all countries, **77% agreed** that cars should meet emissions limits whenever and wherever they are driven.
- **Half** of respondents stated that they also expect used cars to meet the minimum legal pollution limits, while **only 12% said they would not**.

<sup>4</sup> This question was asked only in four countries: Germany, France, Italy and Spain due to low private new car sales volumes in the rest of the sampled countries.

This clearly shows that people across Europe want more ambitious pollutant emission standards for new cars which ensure the lowest possible emissions wherever and whenever a car is driven. Contrary to fear mongering spread by car makers, EU citizens are prepared to pay more for cleaner cars and the additional cost, which is less than that of a paint upgrade on an entry level model like a Ford Fiesta, Renault Clio or VW Polo<sup>5</sup>, is not the dealbreaker. Politicians need to finally listen to people's demands for cleaner air, not carmakers' complaints. That means the European Commission must come up with an ambitious and comprehensive proposal that matches the expectations of the population and finally tackles the toxic air across Europe. National governments and the European Parliament should then speedily adopt this into the final law.

## 1. Context and Methodology

Europe risks putting almost 100 million more high polluting cars on its roads in the decade between 2025 and 2035<sup>6</sup>, unless it seizes its last opportunity to introduce stricter standards to reduce toxic emissions from internal combustion engines (ICE) cars. An ambitious new pollutant emission standard would make air safer to breathe across Europe, and make towns and cities healthier places to live.

Road transport is a major cause of toxic air right across Europe. Air pollution causes an estimated 400,000 premature deaths every year in Europe as well as causing a range of serious illnesses including cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, lower respiratory infections, chronic obstructive respiratory disease, and asthma and costs each city dweller €1,276 rising to as much as €3,000 in Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup>. Poor air quality disproportionately impacts children, the elderly, minorities and low income households.

The EU is currently revising its main law to cut pollution from cars (Euro 6) and developing new emissions standards, Euro 7, to be implemented from 2025. To aid with this task, the Commission assembled emissions experts from across Europe, known as CLOVE, to independently assess the shortfalls in the current car emissions regulation, and propose new emission limits and tests based on what is both economically and technically feasible. Following months of work and consultations, earlier this year CLOVE presented its recommendations for Euro 7 based on what new emissions technologies, such as e-catalysts, can achieve. Key recommendations include a reduction of pollutant emission limits, longer durability requirements and extending the range of driving conditions under which limits have to be met. The proposal from the European Commission is expected to be published in early 2022.

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<sup>5</sup> Price checked on 12/01/2022 on [www.renault.fr](http://www.renault.fr), [www.ford.fr](http://www.ford.fr) and [www.volkswagen.de](http://www.volkswagen.de).

<sup>6</sup> The expected phase-out date for cars and vans with and internal combustion engine

<sup>7</sup>EPHA, (2020), Health costs of air pollution in European cities and the linkage with transport. Retrieved from: <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/final-health-costs-of-air-pollution-in-european-cities-and-the-linkage-with-transport.pdf>

The response from car manufacturers has been to fiercely oppose the CLOVE proposals, and to aggressively lobby against a robust Euro 7. This includes using dirty tricks and unsubstantiated claims to run public and political opinion against a new standard. Claims include that Euro 7 will kill off the internal combustion engine<sup>8</sup>, once again demonstrating how the car industry repeatedly puts profit before people's health

To see how citizens across the EU feel about new and ambitious pollution standards for cars, Transport & Environment commissioned a representative survey from YouGov, a leading research institute.

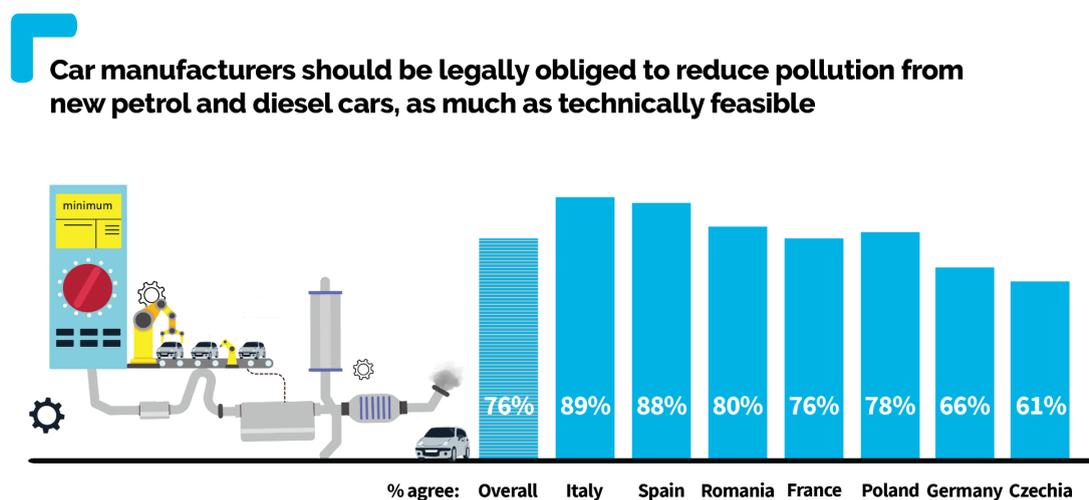
- The survey was undertaken between the 10th to 15th November 2021
- In total 8,228 adults were questioned online in 7 countries across the EU: Germany (2,105), France (1,032), Italy (1,029), Spain (1,058), Poland (sample size 1,001), Romania (sample size 1,002) and Czech Republic (sample size 1,001).
- The survey was carried out online
- The figures have been weighed and are representative of adults in all seven countries (aged 18+)

This briefing presents the results of the survey along with T&E's key recommendations for the new Euro 7 standard.

## 2. Main findings

### 2.1. Support for lowest possible emission limits from cars

The results show very strong support among EU citizens for the EU to legally oblige car manufacturers to reduce pollution from new diesel and petrol cars as much as technically feasible.



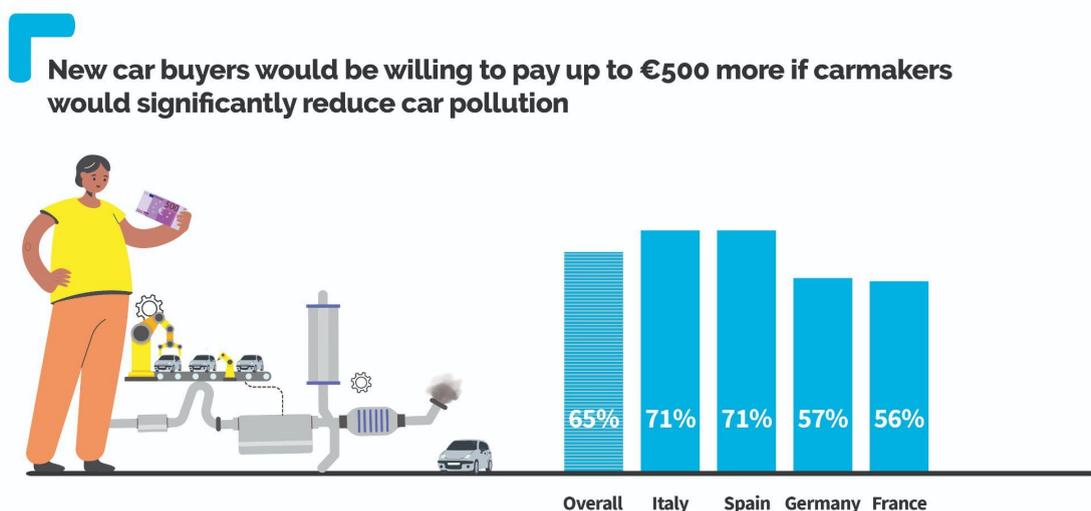
Question: "Road traffic is one of the main sources of air pollution...Do you think car manufacturers should or should not be legally obliged to reduce pollution from new petrol and diesel cars, as much as technically feasible?" % saying should. Total sample size was 8,228 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Autocar (28th May 2021) Retrieved January 14, 2022 from <https://www.autocar.co.uk/car-news/industry-news-tech%2C-development-and-manufacturing/analysis-new-rules-could-make-ice-engines>

- **76% of respondents support** the idea that car manufacturers should be legally obliged to reduce pollution from new diesel and petrol cars as much as technically feasible.
- The support is strongest in Italy where 9 out of 10 people<sup>9</sup> agree that carmakers should reduce pollution as much as possible with Spain (88%), Romania (80%), Poland (78%) and France (76%) also showing strong support for the measure. Even in Germany (66%) and the Czechia (61%) where support was lower than other countries sampled, almost **two in three citizens** would like to see the lowest technically feasible emission limits.

## 2.2. Willingness to pay for less polluting cars

The survey asked whether people would be willing to pay up to 500 euros<sup>10</sup> more if car manufacturers would significantly reduce car pollution. This question was asked in Germany, France, Italy and Spain as together those countries account for 68%<sup>11</sup> of new car sales.



Question: "Car manufacturers can significantly reduce car pollution for less than €500 (cheaper than a paint upgrade), would you be willing to pay this additional cost for a new car?"  
% willing. Total sample size was 2,112 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021.

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Source: YouGov

- Among people who intend to buy a new car **nearly two thirds (65%)** said they would be willing to pay up to 500 euros more for a new car.
- In Italy and Spain 7 out of 10 people would be willing to pay<sup>12</sup>. In Germany and France over half would be willing to do so<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> 89%

<sup>10</sup> Expected maximum amount of additional costs per vehicle.

<sup>11</sup> EEA (2021). CO2 emissions from new passenger cars Retrieved from <http://co2cars.apps.eea.europa.eu/> The share is the same for 2020 and the first half of 2021.

<sup>12</sup> 71%

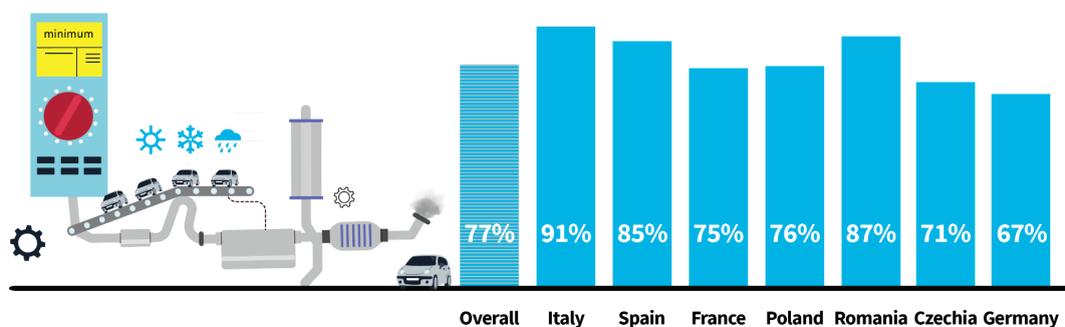
<sup>13</sup> Germany (57%) and France (56%)

The result runs contrary to carmaker claims that the additional cost of putting cleaner cars on the road would be too expensive.

### 2.3. Opinion on when and where limits should be applicable

The third question to all respondents was whether they agree with the statement that “Cars should meet minimum legal pollution limits no matter how, when and where they are driven”. Today new cars don’t have to meet the limits under all driving conditions. For example: Short city trips, driving in hilly regions or driving during temperatures below -7 °C or above 35 °C, are exempted from meeting the legal pollution limits.

#### Cars should meet minimum legal pollution limits no matter how, when and where they are driven



Statement: "Cars should meet minimum legal pollution limits no matter how, when and where they are driven."  
% who strongly agree or tend to agree. Total sample size was 8,228 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021.

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Source: YouGov

- Across all countries, **77% agreed** that cars should meet emissions limits wherever they are driven<sup>14</sup>.
- Particularly strong support was seen in Italy (90%) Romania (87%) and Spain (85%). In France, and Poland<sup>15</sup> 3 out of 4 people agree with the statement and despite slightly lower support in Czechia and Germany the measure is overwhelmingly supported by 71% and 67% of respondents respectively.

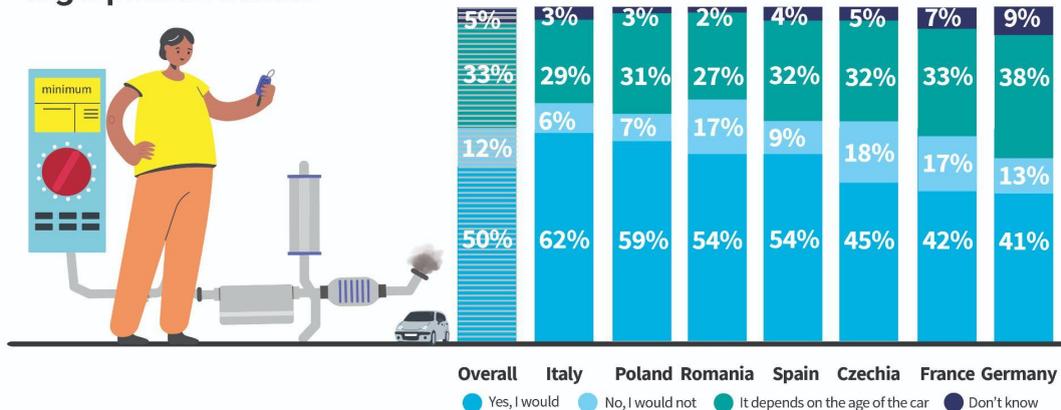
### 2.4. Expectations for used cars

The final question of the survey asked whether people would also expect used cars to meet all limits. Today, new cars only need to comply with legal pollution limits for the first five years or 100,000km.

<sup>14</sup> 48% strongly agreed, 29% tend to agree.

<sup>15</sup> France (76%), Poland (76%)

## If buying a used car, would you expect it to meet a minimum legal pollution limit?



Question: "For the following question please imagine you were purchasing a used car... Would you expect it to meet a minimum legal pollution limit?"  
 % saying yes. Total sample size was 8,228 adults interviewed between 10-15 November 2021. Responses might not add to 100% due to rounding.

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Source: YouGov

- Across all countries, **half**<sup>16</sup> would expect that also used cars would meet the legal pollution limits and another 33% said that it would depend on the age of the car. Only 12% would not expect it.
- The expectation for used cars to be compliant<sup>17</sup> with legal pollution limits is highest in Italy with 62%, Poland with 59%, Spain with 54% and Romania with 54%. While in the Czech Republic with 45%, France with 42% and Germany with 42% the expectation is slightly lower.

### 3. Conclusions

The representative online YouGov survey in 7 EU Member States, commissioned by Transport & Environment, clearly shows that people expect a significantly higher ambition when it comes to the reduction of air pollution from new vehicles compared to current car pollution standards.

In T&E's view this means that:

- EU citizens expect limits that are as ambitious as technically feasible and not just a mere cosmetic change of existing limits.
- The high expense argument coming from car makers against a more ambitious pollution standard is flawed, with a two third majority of those intending to buy a new car are willing to spend up to 500 Euros in addition of the car cost to significantly reduce car pollution
- Most EU citizens expect cars to meet emission limits wherever and however they are driven and not just on paper compliance under a limited range of conditions.

<sup>16</sup> 50%

<sup>17</sup> Italy (Yes: 62% / No: 6% / depends on the age of the car 29%), Poland (59% / 7% / 31%), Spain (54% / 9% / 32%), Romania (54% / 17% / 27%), Czech Republic (45% / 18% / 32%), France (42% / 17% / 33%), Germany (42% / 13% / 38%)

- Half of all surveyed people expect cars to meet legal pollution limits, not just for the first 5 years/100,000km as is the case today only 12% do not.

The European Commission should listen to its citizens and come up with an ambitious and robust Euro 7 proposal that will reduce pollution to the lowest possible levels

## **Further information**

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