

Report reveals safety not a priority for SA car buyers

Buying a car, new or secondhand, is a big financial commitment and the buyer wants to know they are getting bang for their buck, along with all the things which they most desire in a car.



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Richard Green, national director of the South African Motor Body Repair Association (SAMBRA), says safety may be a consideration, but industry reports indicate factors like reliability, comfort, manufacturer's reputation, warranty, fuel efficiency and purchase price all rank more highly than safety features in the South African market.

"The truth is, we buy what we can afford. Several motorists can only afford entry level cars which come with basic safety features," says Green.

According to an article based on Statista's Global Consumer Survey 2018, by data journalist Martin Armstrong (Most important factors when buying a car, [statista.com](#)), car buyers in the United States rank safety first, followed by fuel efficiency, high quality, good warranty and customer service, suitability for everyday use, high driving comfort, design, low price, spaciousness and whether it is their preferred make.

SAMBRA answers critical questions around vehicle safety:

■ ***Is it right to assume a secondhand car is not as safe as a new car?***

No. A secondhand car which has not been involved in any major accidents, has a complete service record and has been well maintained is as safe as a new car.

However, the latest model cars might have more advanced safety features, such as Forward Collision Warning (FCW), Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), City Automatic Emergency Braking (CAEB), High Speed Automatic Emergency Braking (HAEB) and Blind Spot Warning (BSW), which all make the car safer than a car without these features.

■ ***What safety features do cars have which can prevent a collision and keep motorists safe?***

Today's vehicles are packed with enhanced technology to keep you safe, offering extra layers of protection during your daily commute. When comparing the differences between active versus passive safety features, the biggest difference is

when these unique systems come into play.

In general, active safety features work to prevent accidents, while passive safety features activate during a collision to protect the driver and passengers.

- **Active Safety Systems:** Active safety systems remain active while you drive and are continuously working to prevent you from losing control and as, a result, having an accident. Most are electronic (controlled by a computer) and include traction control, electronic stability control, braking systems and advanced driver assist systems that use sensors (forward collision warning, lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control).
- **Passive Safety Systems:** These features become active during an accident and work to minimise damage and reduce the risk of injury during the time of impact. These systems include seatbelts, air bags and the specialised construction components of the vehicle (crumple zones and safety cage).

It is important to note both the active and passive safety features can be compromised in a collision.

■ ***Why is it important to have the vehicle repaired by a reputable motor body repairer shop after an accident?***

As mentioned, both active and passive safety features can be compromised in an accident. Accredited, reputable and manufacturer-approved repair shops are professionals and meet the necessary standards, ensuring that you receive quality service and workmanship. You can have peace of mind that staff are well trained and have the knowledge and specialised equipment to repair your vehicle to pre-collision condition. Your service plan and/or warranty could be suspended if the incorrect or sub-standard repair process is used in the repair.

■ ***After the repair, what questions should you ask the workshop before paying for the repair?***

- Did the repair work go as planned, as per the authorised estimate received from my insurer?
- Ask the workshop to go through the repair work with you.
- When can I wash my car again after the refinishing process?
- Request the warranty on the repair work in writing.
- Who do I complain to if I am not happy with some of the repairs?

■ ***Does the onus for safety of a vehicle rest solely with the manufacturer? What is the motorist's role in ensuring the safety of themselves and their passengers?***

The largest part of the responsibility lies with the manufacturer, yes. However, safety features should be a priority when a motorist purchases a vehicle. After purchase, the vehicle should be kept in a mint, safe and roadworthy condition at all times and safety features should be made use of when driving.

■ ***What is the most common safety feature in a car motorists neglect to use?***

Seatbelts. Motorists will often drive short distances without a seatbelt or allow passengers to travel without seatbelts. Accidents often happen during short trips and any person not 'strapped in' presents a threat not only to themselves but to the others in the vehicle during an accident.

▀ ***Which safety features of a car are the most effective in preventing an accident?***

Safety systems that combine collision warning and automatic braking are the most effective in preventing accidents.

▀ ***What are the six safety features of a car every motorist must insist on, at least?***

Airbags, Antilock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Traction Control, Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) and adaptive headlights.

▀ ***What, in your opinion, could the manufacturing industry improve on in terms of vehicle safety?***

A safer car with more enhanced safety features costs more money. It was suggested in an Automobile Association report that manufacturers should do away with more of the luxury items in vehicles in exchange for more enhanced safety features.

Green concludes that a recent report considered the safety features of 27 cars available in South Africa priced under R180,000 and found there have been improvements to the safety features in entry level cars, but that more can and must be done in this regard.

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