

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**63% of Canadians surveyed support opening Canada to Chinese OEM brands, new research shows**

Despite low familiarity, 38% of surveyed Canadian car buyers are ready to consider a Chinese automotive brand as their next vehicle, with affordability, choice and competition the top reasons cited

MARKHAM, Ontario — August 31, 2026: Nearly two-thirds of recent Canadian new-vehicle buyers support the federal government's policy allowing limited imports of Chinese-made EVs, while 38% say they would consider a Chinese automotive brand for their next vehicle, according to new national research released today.

Designed by Clarify Group and sponsored by Universus Media Group, the **Vehicle Buyer Opinion Study (VBOS)** surveyed 2,007 Canadians who have purchased or leased a new vehicle within the past five years to get a better understanding of a Canadian new-vehicle market in transition.

"By speaking directly to Canadians that have recently gone through the vehicle purchase journey, VBOS provides very specific insights into what is truly impacting the consideration and decisions of Canadian car buyers," said Darren Slind, President, Clarify Group. "What we're seeing is that many consumers want more affordable options — regardless of where they come from — and a clear majority of those surveyed trust the government's policy in balancing the benefits of increased competition with the bigger picture."

Key findings of the study include:

Before any vehicles have even arrived, many Canadians are already weighing the pragmatic benefits that Chinese brands might bring against any potential concerns.

- **63% of those surveyed support the government's policy to allow Chinese brands into the Canadian market**, with 12% having no opinion on the matter
 - More affordable vehicles (72%), greater competition (61%) and more choice (61%) were the top reasons cited for acceptance
 - The five most significant barriers cited relate to practical concerns, such as quality and reliability (43%), service and parts support (40%), lack of experience with the brands (39%), suitability for Canadian conditions (36%) and safety standards (32%)



- Barriers around larger economic and political topics do exist though, with many of those surveyed stating concerns about data privacy (30%) and the impact on Canadian jobs (30%), but only 14% worried about the implications on U.S. trade relations.

The survey also explored where Canadian buyers would prefer acquiring Chinese brands, and found that local dealers with established trust who offer test-drive opportunities will heavily influence whether or not most Canadians will consider a Chinese brand vehicle.

- **Despite very low brand familiarity, 38% of Canadians surveyed would consider a Chinese brand — with dealers emerging as a critical source of trust.**
 - Nearly half (48%) cannot recall a single Chinese OEM brand, but 39% are likely to consider one if their dealer started selling them
 - 37% are interested in test-driving a Chinese brand vehicle — 77% of which would prefer to do so at their local dealership
 - Among those who indicated they would consider a Chinese OEM vehicle, 88% say they will rely on their franchise dealer to help them make their decision

“These findings underscore the important role that dealers play in converting interest into consideration, but that work also needs to start further up the funnel as new brands enter the market,” said Niel Hiscox, CEO of Clarify Group. “Whether selling these new Chinese brand vehicles or competing against them, VBOS provides actionable insights for the industry at a time of great uncertainty.”

Further insights from VBOS can be discussed through interview opportunities with Darren Slind, President, Clarify Group and Niel Hiscox, CEO, Clarify Group.

For interviews and other media inquiries, please contact:

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About the Research

The Canadian Vehicle Buyer Opinion Study (VBOS) is collaboration between two of Canada’s leading industry experts, Universus Media Group and Clarify Group — pairing deep Automotive industry knowledge with independent research expertise. It is designed to provide a national look at a Canadian new-vehicle market in transition —



new powertrains, shifting loyalties, and the arrival of Chinese automotive brands. Its objectives are to identify the vehicle purchase intention of Canadians (timing, bodystyle, powertrain, budget/payment preferences), understand the attitudes, awareness and consideration levels of Canadian consumers toward new Chinese automotive brands, and examine the role of the dealer in supporting the future purchase of Chinese branded vehicles.

The findings are based on the feedback of 2,007 Canadian 18+ adult respondents who have purchased or leased a new vehicle in the last five years. The study was fielded between June 23 and July 10, 2026, with respondents sourced from Canada's largest and most trusted consumer panel Leger Opinion (LEO) with nationally representative coverage by province/region, age and gender.

To learn more about purchasing the full study, please visit clarifygroup.com/vbos/.

About Clarify Group

Clarify Group Inc. is an automotive advisory firm based in the Greater Toronto Area. The Clarify team combines decades of global automotive industry experience with particular expertise in customer-experience research, data analysis, strategic planning and performance improvement. Clarify supports clients across the automotive ecosystem — including OEMs, dealer groups, auto shows, industry associations and retail technology providers — in making data-driven decisions. For more information, please visit clarifygroup.com.

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