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Press Release

Europeans Have Ambivalent Feelings Towards Autonomous Vehicles

A new study in the EU shows that most participants consider autonomous vehicles to be safe and sustainable. However, they fear that using autonomous vehicles on a large scale may lead to infringements of data protection law. The study is part of “PAsCal”, a cooperative EU project, and was conducted by the chair of Consumer Psychology at the University of Mannheim.

The team, consisting of Professor Tobias Vogel, Professor Florian Kutzner and Dr. Celina Kacperski asked 600 participants from four European states (Germany, Italy, France and UK) about their opinion on four aspects: the efficiency of autonomous vehicles, their sustainability, driving safety and compliance with data protection provisions. The result: Most participants agree that autonomous vehicles increase safety on the road and have a positive impact on the environment. Opinions differ on the extent to which these vehicles influence traffic efficiency. The term traffic efficiency describes, inter alia, travel time, travel speed and speed of the vehicles.

The privacy implications are rather negatively perceived by the participants. They doubt that travel data are used correctly and fear the potential surveillance by companies and governments. In this aspect, there are also differences between the countries: Participants from Italy and the UK are more optimistic, whereas the participants in Germany and France are concerned about severe infringements of data protection law.

On the project

“PAsCal” is a collaborative EU project that is part of the program *Horizon 2020*, which is funded by the European Commission with a total of four million euros for three years. The University of Mannheim is the only German institution among the thirteen partner institutions. The project focuses on the opinion of the EU population on connected and autonomous cars, motorcycles, buses and trucks.

Link to the original publication:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1369847821001443>

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