

Cars.com Traffic at an All-Time High, Signaling a Strong Start to the Year for American Auto Buying Interest

Cars.com closes 2018 with full year site traffic up 11 percent YOY and December traffic up 21 percent YOY

Cars.com site traffic analysis reveals that luxury and used vehicles are trending, and that fuel efficiency may have taken a backseat for Americans

CHICAGO, Jan. 15, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Leading digital solutions automotive marketplace [Cars.com](https://www.cars.com)™ (NYSE: CARS) announced today twelve consecutive months of traffic gains, up 11 percent year-over-year in 2018, and a record-breaking month for the company, with a 21 percent year-over-year increase in December traffic. The company also noted a year-over-year increase of 8 percent in visits to its mobile app in Dec. 2018, the No. 1 downloaded app in its category.

What does this mean for American car buyers? The average Cars.com customer takes just under 60 days to complete the car buying process¹, from initial search to signing on the dotted line at a dealership, and the spike in December traffic could indicate a stronger than anticipated start to the year for car buying. For dealers, this means more qualified leads from Cars.com—customers arriving on the lot, ready to buy, with a clear sense of which vehicle is their perfect match. Last year alone, Cars.com total network leads per visit increased 13 percent year-over-year.

"With an average of 19 million active car shoppers on our sites monthly, Cars.com is a strong barometer for consumers' appetite to buy a car. We believe the traffic data could signal a healthier Q1 for car sales than some analysts are predicting, especially for used cars," said Alex Vetter, CEO of Cars.com.

A Cars.com site traffic analysis also revealed the following emerging trends for 2019:

- **Used Car Searches Outpace New Car Searches as Interest Rates Climb & Price Gap Widens:** Despite an unexpected strong finish to the year for new car sales, the price gap between new and used vehicles paired with climbing interest rates will continue to drive car shoppers to used car lots heading into 2019. Last year, 63 percent of searches on Cars.com were for used cars while 15 percent of searches were for new cars, a trend that is expected to continue as car shoppers face increasing affordability challenges. With consumers looking to get the biggest bang for their buck, Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) vehicles are an excellent option. CPO searches were up 6 percent in December 2018.
- **SUV and Truck Searches Surge as Gas Prices Dip:** Stock market volatility and questions about the economy's outlook at the tail end of 2018 have not impacted the current American vehicle buying trend—Americans are going bigger. SUV and truck listings on Cars.com were among the most searched body styles in the last 12 months. While lower gas prices give way to bigger vehicles, crossover vehicles also saw significant traffic and are competing with many smaller cars on fuel economy. At the same time, luxury vehicles also continue to trend in site traffic heading into 2019, and there are a series of highly anticipated new models reaching the market from BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Lexus, Lincoln, Land Rover, Porsche, Audi, and Tesla.
- **Electric Vehicles Face Headwinds as Credits Near an End:** Plug-in vehicle tax credits are beginning to phase out for certain automakers as scheduled. Manufacturers such as General Motors and Tesla are expected to have full expiration of their EV tax credits over the next 18 months. Cars.com anticipates that electric vehicle sales could continue to face headwinds in 2019 despite several new products.

¹ Based on Q4 2018 Cars.com internal data.

ABOUT CARS.COM

Cars.com™ is a leading two-sided digital solutions automotive marketplace that creates meaningful connections between buyers and sellers. Launched in 1998 and headquartered in Chicago, the company empowers consumers with resources and information to make informed buying decisions and enables advertising partners with innovative digital solutions and data-driven intelligence to increase inventory turn and gain market share. A pioneer in online automotive classifieds, the company has evolved into one of the largest digital automotive platforms, connecting thousands of local dealers across the country with millions of consumers. In 2018, Cars.com acquired Dealer Inspire®, a company that builds technology that helps future-proof dealerships for changing consumer behaviors and makes the car buying process faster and easier.

Cars.com properties include DealerRater®, Dealer Inspire®, Auto.com™, PickupTrucks.com® and NewCars.com®. For more information, visit www.cars.com.

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