State of the Market Report

Automotive Technician Tool Purchasing and Usage

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The State of the Market: Automotive Technician Tool Purchasing and Usage

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Introduction

Tools are a crucial part of an automotive technician's career, and having the correct tools affects how efficiently and effectively a repair can be completed. There is a wide variety of tools on the market, and technicians are purchasing different brands and designs to build their ideal tool set. Technicians and shop owners alike are required to buy more specialized tools to service advanced vehicle systems and stay relevant with the recent industry shift to electrification. Generally, it has been assumed that technicians buy tools themselves primarily from mobile tool trucks. However, automotive technicians are exploring other options as the tool market continues to grow.

In May 2026, Endeavor Business Intelligence partnered with AutoZone to survey automotive service technicians on their tool purchasing habits, the tools and service equipment provided by their shop, and their current viewpoints on certifications and service information usage. The survey received 302 qualified responses, fielded May 20 - June 15, 2026. This study focuses on technician tool purchasing habits and viewpoints on emerging technologies. Tool and equipment availability are highlighted to show trends in the automotive industry regarding service tools and equipment.

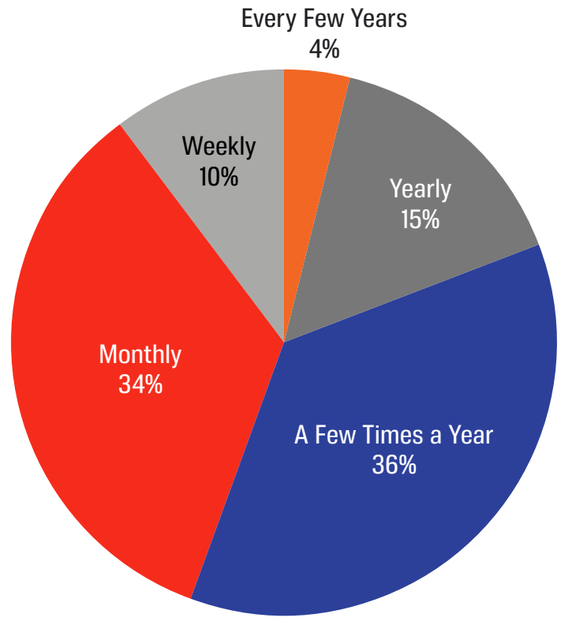


1 Tool Investments

Tool purchases will be among the largest investments an automotive technician will make during their career. Many technicians have spent relatively large sums of money on their tool sets throughout their careers, with 74% spending at least $50,000 on their tools and 32% spending at least $100,000. These tool purchases have been made over a number of years, with 47% of technicians working in the industry for over 20 years and 84% having at least six years of experience working in a shop.

Technicians are adding to their tool collections on a regular basis, despite the large investments most have already made. Thirty-four percent of respondents reported buying new tools monthly, and 96% reported buying tools at least once a year. Technicians also make large tool purchases throughout the year. Fifty-five percent of technicians reported spending at least $5,000 on tool purchases annually. Technicians are serious about making the tool purchases necessary to stay relevant in the industry, and the average technician continues to purchase tools throughout their career.

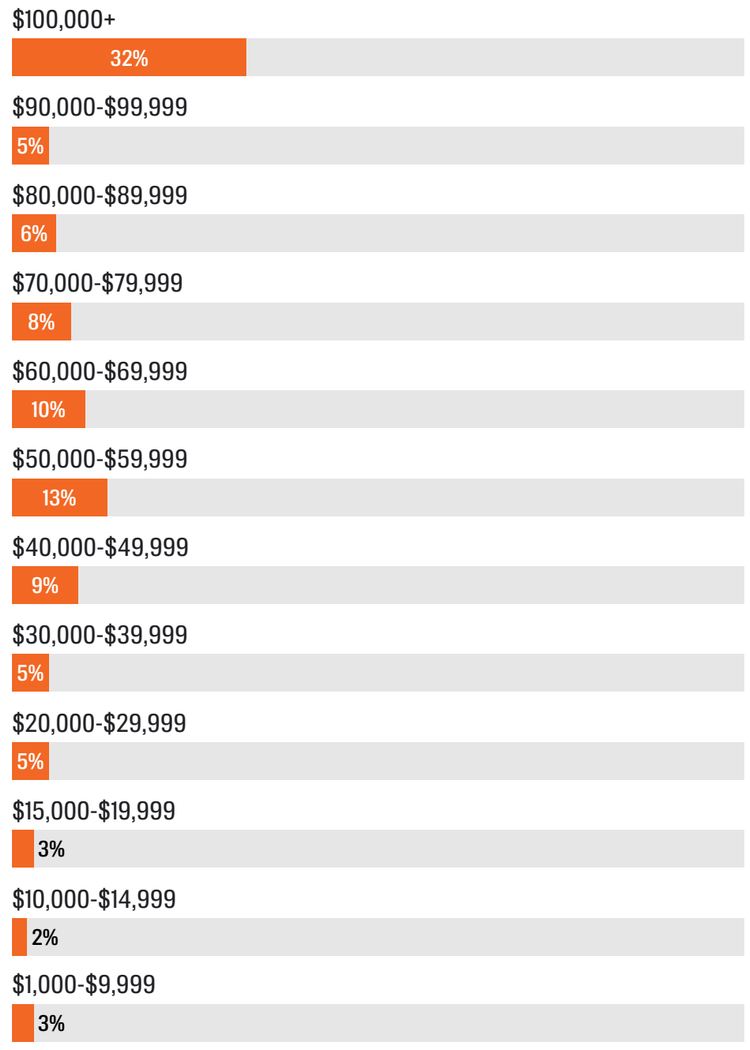
Considering your personal spending, how often do you purchase new auto technician tools for yourself?



All respondents n=302



About how much money have you spent on tools in your career as an automotive technician?

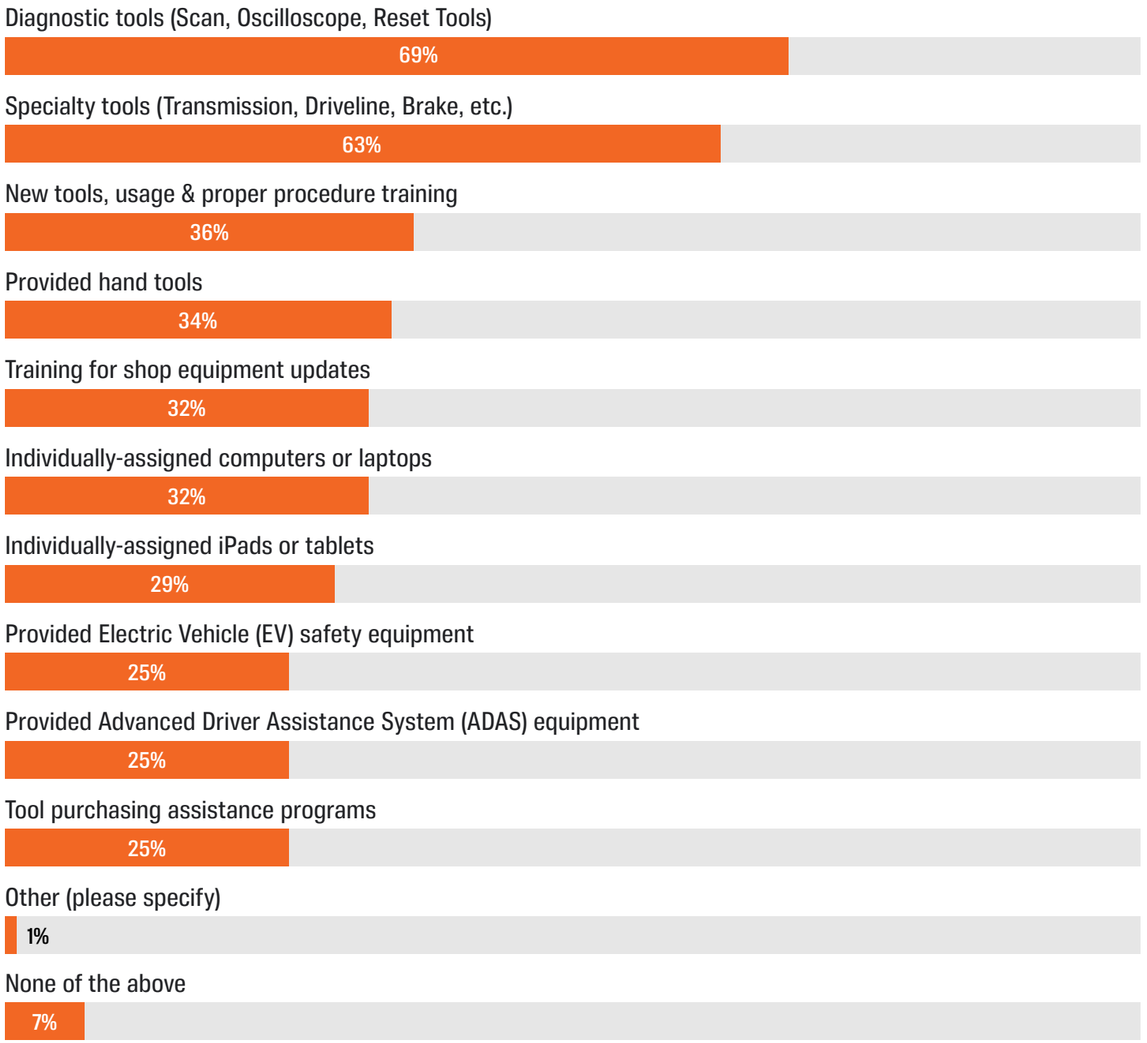


2 Technician Technology Preparedness

The automotive service industry is constantly updating vehicle designs and releasing new technologies that require service or repair. This requires shops and technicians to purchase tools to troubleshoot and service these systems regularly. Technicians are not certain they are prepared to service vehicles equipped with advanced driver assistance or electric vehicle (EV) systems. Only 25% of technicians feel their shop currently has the equipment to service ADAS systems or electric vehicles.

Technicians do not feel confident using the tools required to service emerging vehicle technologies, with only 36% reporting that their shop offers proper procedural training on new tools used for service and repairs. Most technicians are not actively using tools and equipment to service emerging technologies. Only 14% of respondents use ADAS calibration equipment, while only 20% use EV service equipment. However, 47% of technicians at independent shops use equipment like oscilloscopes, and 40% use R-1234yf recovery machines, indicating higher adoption rates than for EV or ADAS systems but still significantly lower than for traditional diagnostic tools such as scan tools and multimeters.

Which of the following does your current shop offer regarding tools and equipment?

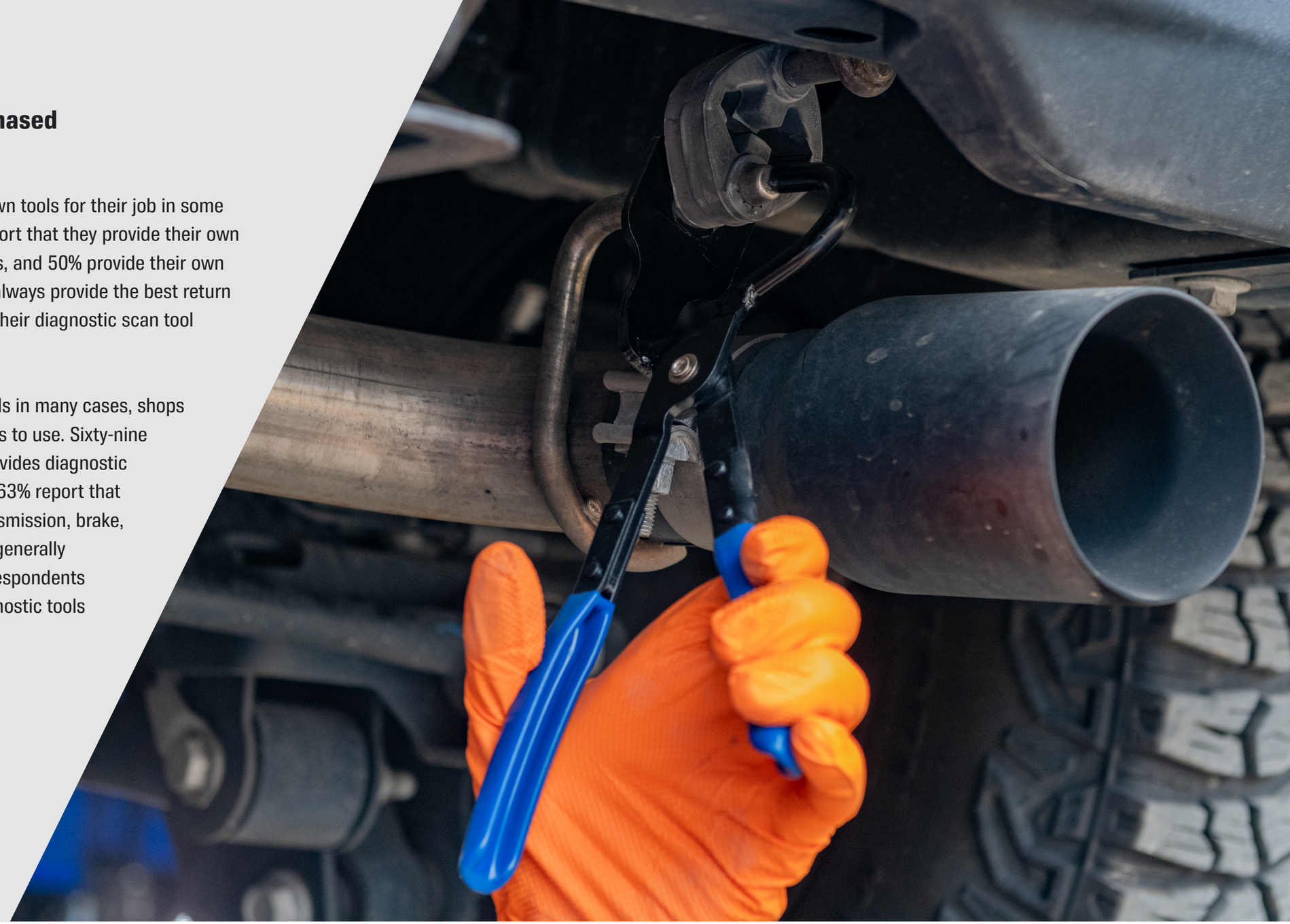


All respondents n=302
Average number of responses = 3.8

3 Tools Provided vs. Tools Purchased

Most technicians are required to provide their own tools for their job in some capacity. Eighty-three percent of technicians report that they provide their own hand tools, 62% provide their own specialty tools, and 50% provide their own diagnostic equipment. These purchases do not always provide the best return on investment for technicians, as 63% feel that their diagnostic scan tool purchase has not been justified.

Even though technicians purchase their own tools in many cases, shops still provide a variety of tools for their technicians to use. Sixty-nine percent of technicians report that their shop provides diagnostic tools such as oscilloscopes and scan tools, and 63% report that their shop provides specialty equipment for transmission, brake, driveline, and other services. While technicians generally expect to provide their own hand tools, 47% of respondents feel that more shop-provided specialty and diagnostic tools would improve their service and repair abilities.

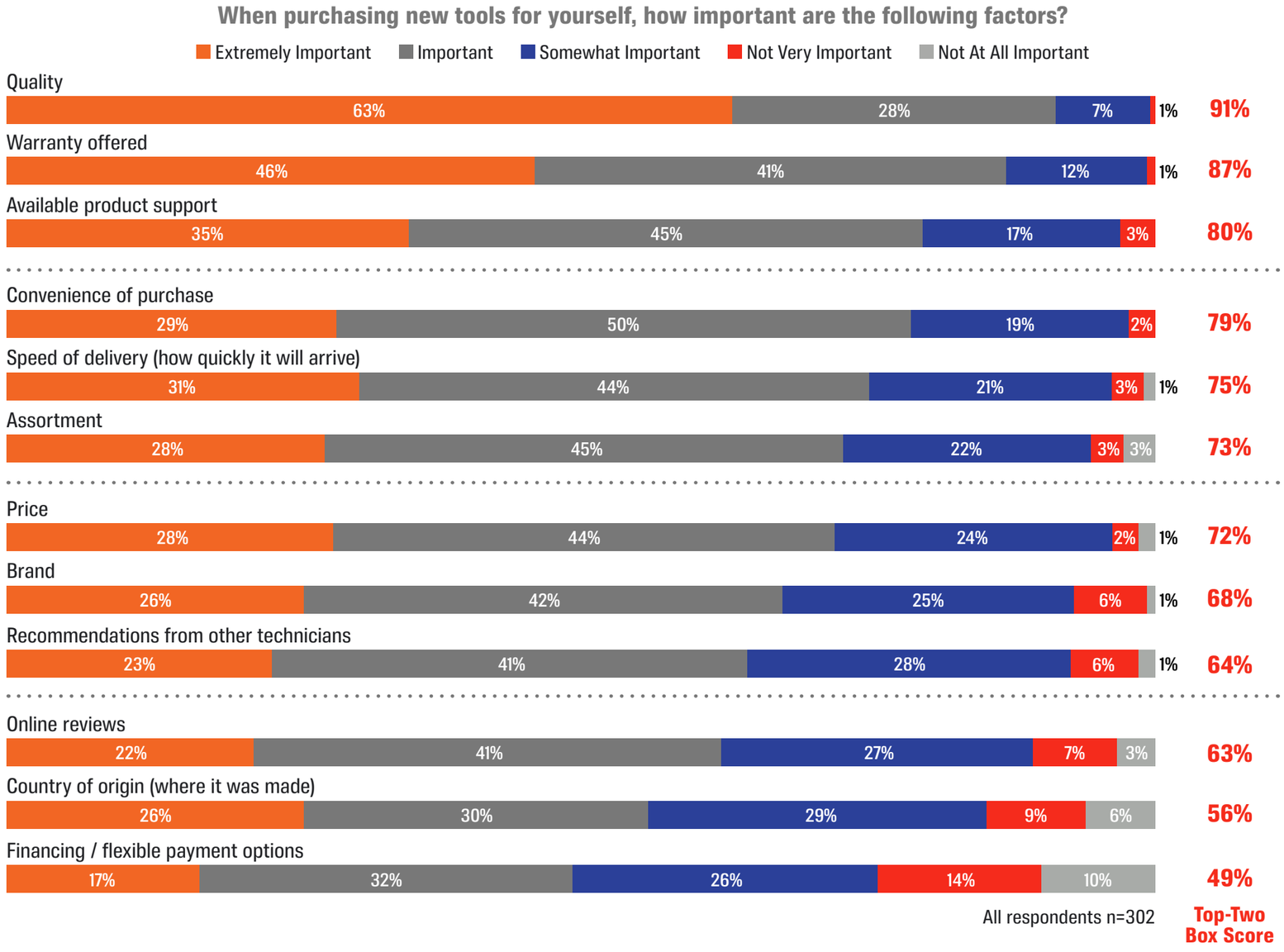


Technician Tool Purchasing and Shop Support

Technician Tool Purchasing Preferences

Technicians have different preferences when making tool purchases. When technicians research new tools on the market, they use a mix of traditional and modern methods. While 57% of technicians reported finding information about new tools through trade magazines and 46% heard about new tools from technicians at other shops, 55% spent time researching new tools by watching online videos. On average, technicians used four different methods to research new tools before purchasing them, signifying that they spend ample time analyzing new tool options before making a purchase.

Technicians were questioned about what factors were most important to them when purchasing new tools, and while some may expect price to be a driving factor, it was not as important as other aspects of a tool purchase. While 72% of technicians agree purchase price is important when purchasing new tools, 91% considered quality an important factor, and 87% agreed that warranty coverage was important. Some of the less prominent considerations for technicians were country of origin, with only 56% considering it important, as well as available financing, with only 49% considering it to be an important factor. Once again, this affirms that pricing and total upfront cost are less important compared to the overall durability and support offered for purchased tools.



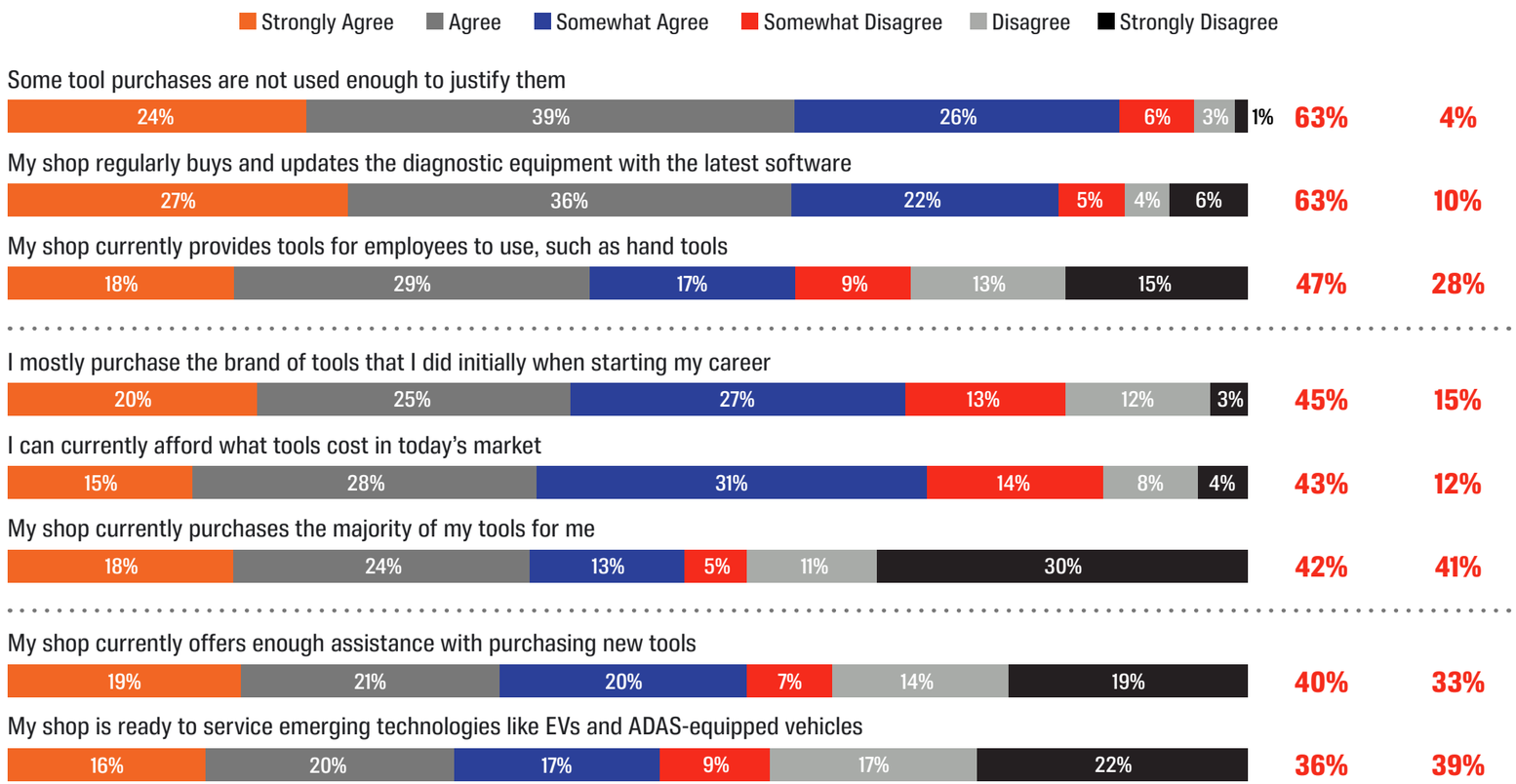
Technician Tool Purchasing Habits

Historically, it has been assumed that technicians have been loyal to one or two different tool brands. However, technicians reported owning eight different brands of tools on average. Most technicians purchase their tools from multiple locations, with the average respondent using three different options to purchase tools. Most technicians, 70%, purchase tools from a tool truck, 64% from an online retailer, and 54% from an automotive parts retailer.

Shop Support for Tools

While technicians purchase the majority of their tool sets, repair shops offer a variety of tools to help technicians complete diagnostics, services, and repairs as efficiently as possible. In the current financial market conditions, many automotive technicians are unsure if they can afford new tool prices. Only 43% of technicians agree they can afford tool purchases in the current market. While shops are offering a variety of tools to their employees, technicians feel that it may not be enough, with only 40% agreeing that their shop currently provides sufficient assistance with purchasing new tools. While most shops offer diagnostic tools for their technicians to use, only 51% feel that the diagnostic equipment owned by the shop is updated with the latest software. This highlights that while shops are offering tools and equipment to technicians, it may not be to the extent technicians require.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding tool purchases?





Technician Tool and Technology Usage

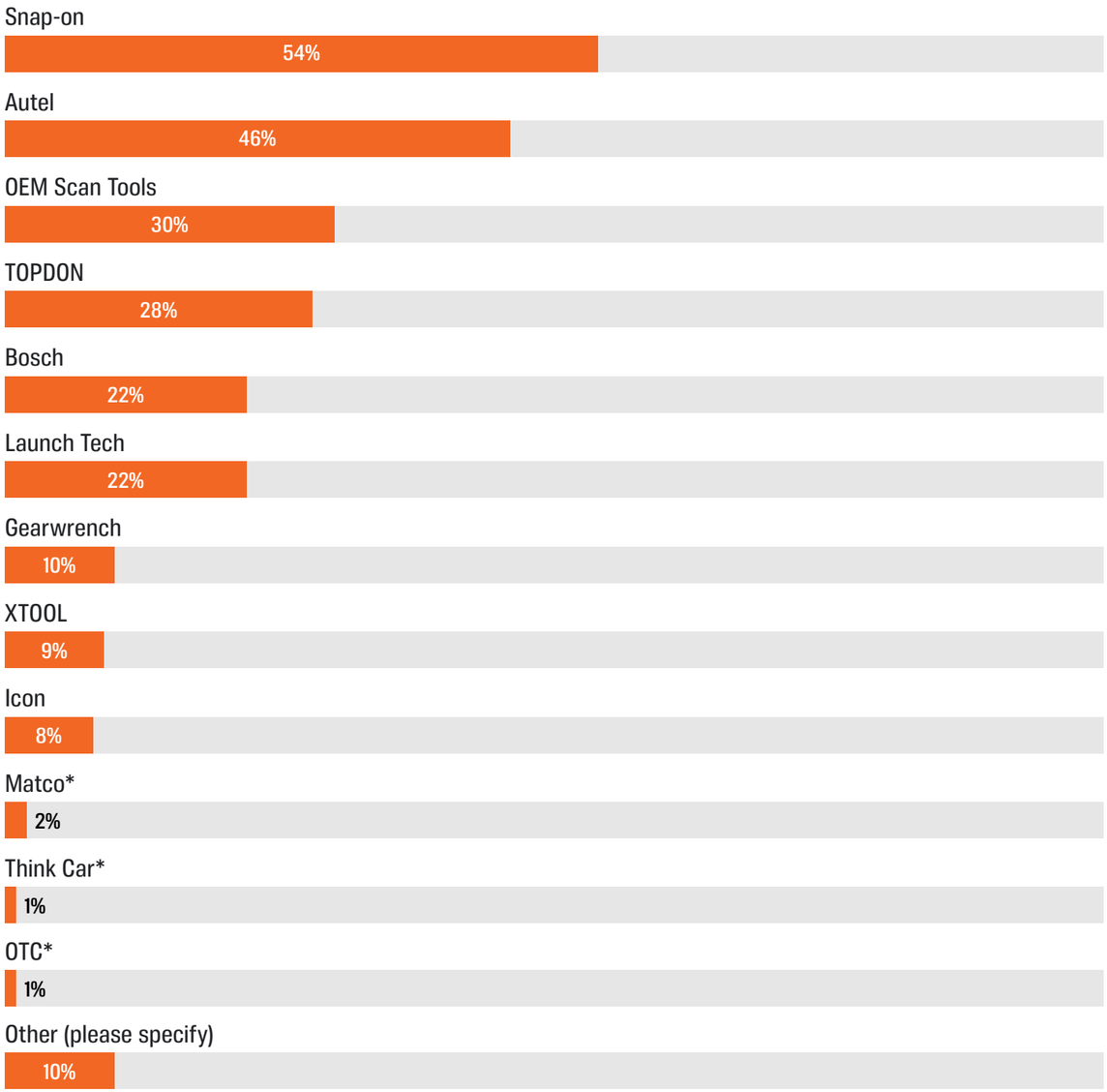
Technician Tool Use Trends

While vehicles continue to become more complex, the equipment needed to service them is too. There are a variety of tools needed to perform comprehensive diagnostics on new vehicles. There is a general trend in the automotive industry toward power tools gaining traction over traditional air tools. When technicians were asked what types of tools they used in the shop, more technicians chose to use power tools compared to their air-powered counterparts.

Diagnostic equipment has become the most important part of a technician's tool set. On average, technicians regularly use nearly seven different diagnostic tools to complete their job responsibilities. Of the top three utilized diagnostic tools, 72% of technicians use battery service equipment, and 69% use scan tools and digital multimeters regularly for diagnostics. Technicians stated their shop, on average, had at least two different types of diagnostic scan tool brands available to use. Snap-on leads shop scan tool ownership (54%) followed closely by Autel (46%). A large number of shops put their trust in vehicle manufacturers as well when performing diagnostics, with 30% of shops utilizing OEM scan tools.

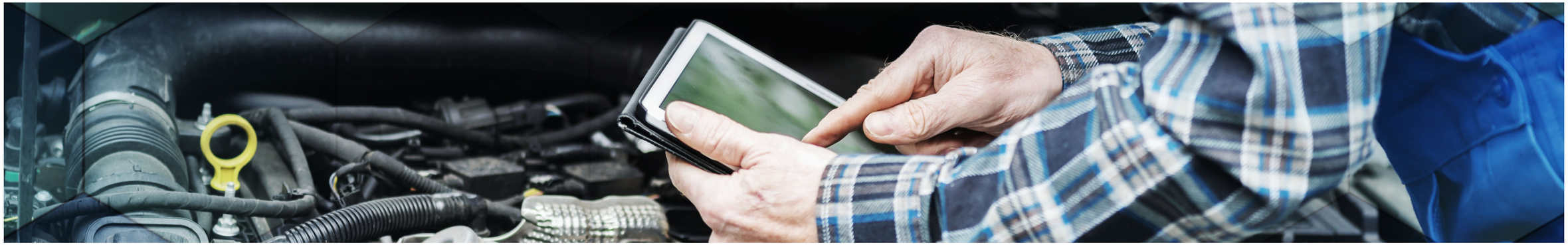
Service information is also a useful tool that technicians often utilize in the shop. On average, technicians use two forms of service information regularly in their job responsibilities. At least 43% of technicians use a major aftermarket service information provider, and 34% are using a form of OEM-specific information. Of the top three aftermarket service information providers, there is only two percentage points difference in overall technician utilization rates: ALLDATA and Mitchell 1 at 43% each and Identifix at 45%.

Which of the following diagnostic scan tool brands does your shop utilize?



**Tallied from "Other (please specify)"*

All respondents n=302
Average number of responses = 2.4

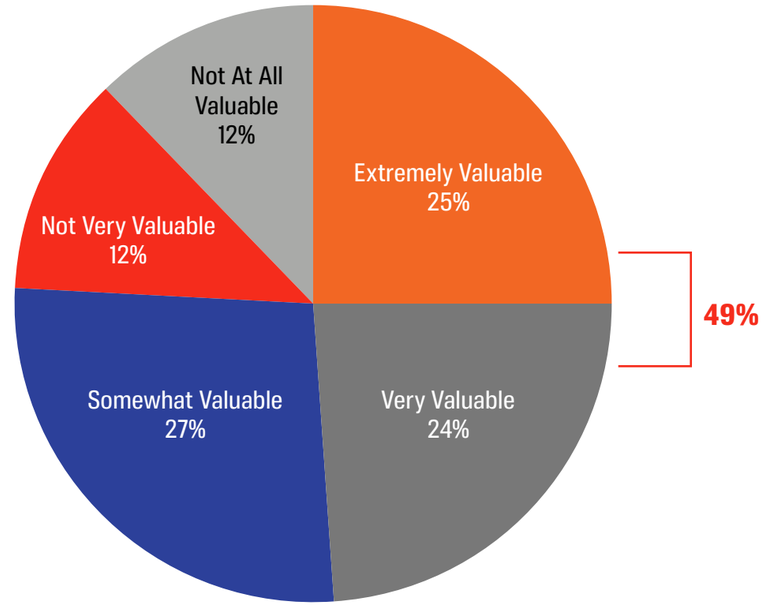


Technicians and Technology

Automotive technicians are at the forefront of technology in the industry. They are normally the first to find and fix issues in the field, which creates mixed viewpoints on emerging technologies. Fifty-seven percent of technicians shared that it is at minimum very likely for them to service an EV within the next five years, and the same percentage reports it is very likely they will service an ADAS-equipped vehicle within the next five years. When respondents were asked about the likelihood of purchasing tools to service EVs or ADAS-equipped vehicles, only 63% were somewhat, very, or extremely likely to purchase EV tools, and 57% said the same for ADAS equipment. This identifies a gap between the number of vehicles expected to be serviced in the future and the level of confidence technicians have when purchasing tools for new technologies.

Overall, technicians have a positive outlook towards emerging technologies and the future they bring to the automotive industry. Seventy-six percent of technicians see the value in pursuing and holding ASE certifications in emerging technologies (ASE L3 and L4), with 49% saying it is extremely or very valuable. Overall, technicians show a desire to learn about technology, but current certification rates for emerging technologies remain low. Only 13% of technicians hold ASE L3 Light Duty Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Specialist, and only 10% hold L4 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems. There is an overall interest in adapting to these new systems, but many technicians are still apprehensive about pursuing advanced certifications for servicing vehicles.

Overall, how valuable is it for you to hold certifications in emerging technology areas such as electric vehicles or ADAS (ASEs or equivalent)?



All respondents n=302

Technician Certifications and Training

Technician Certifications

The careers of automotive technicians require continuous training due to constant advancements and new manufacturing designs released each year. Achieving the proper certifications as a technician adds confidence during the repair process and helps better represent a professional repair facility. Technicians are earning and maintaining certifications, as the average respondent holds an ASE certification in nearly five skill areas. Also, at least 83% of responding technicians hold at least one ASE certification. Most technicians feel that ASE certifications are worth achieving. Eighty-one percent perceive ASE certifications as having value in their career. This is reassuring information that technicians have an interest in achieving certifications and that most of the field is pursuing and maintaining them actively.

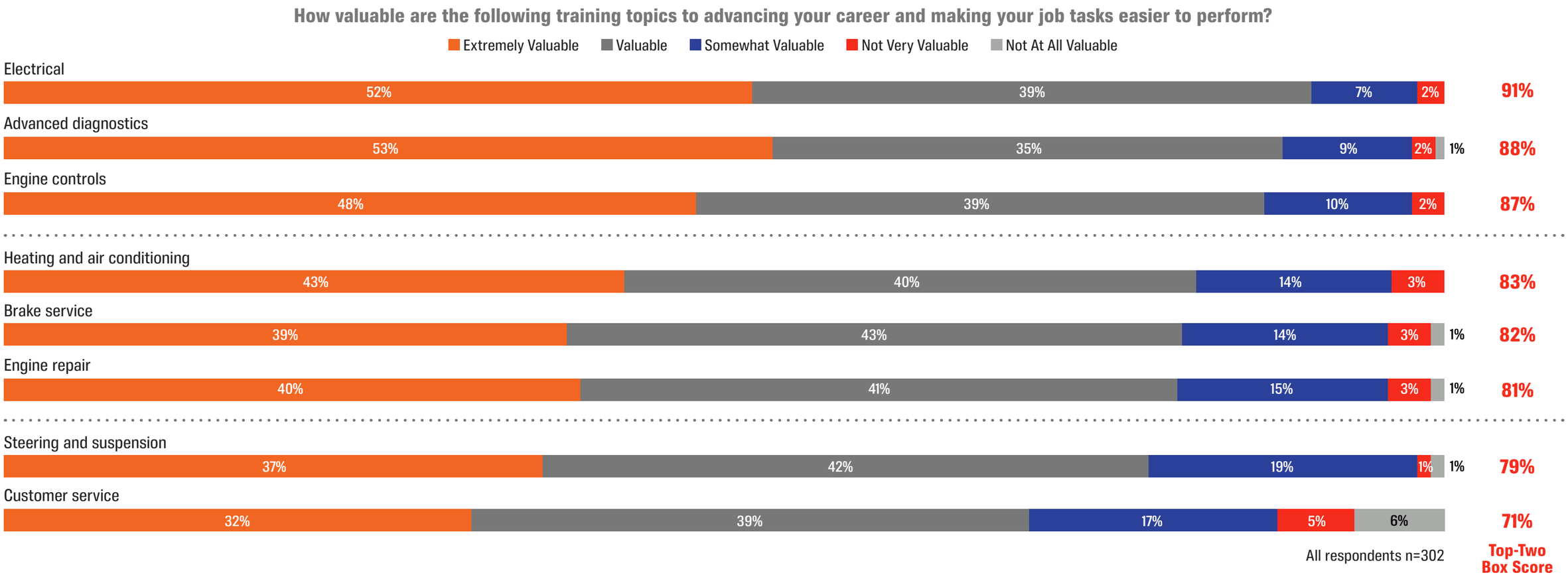
When looking at the individual data for technicians who hold ASEs, it is promising. Forty percent of technicians reported having an ASE certification in all eight main skill areas (A1-A8), which classifies them as master technicians. Technicians identified some barriers to achieving certifications, such as time and testing costs. Forty percent reported not having adequate time to take certification tests, while 31% stated that testing costs kept them from achieving more industry certifications.



Industry Training

Training is a necessity for automotive service technicians due to the constant changes and updates to vehicle technology. Technicians were asked which training skill areas provided the most value to their careers. Ninety-one percent consider training on electrical skills valuable, 88% consider advanced diagnostics valuable, and 87% consider engine controls training to be of value. Technicians want training on vehicle electrical systems and engine drivability more than any other topic, which demonstrates their drive to gain knowledge of electrical concepts and their application.

When asked about their current satisfaction with training opportunities in their workplace, technicians ranked the availability of both ADAS and EV materials the lowest. Currently, less than 50% of respondents are satisfied with training opportunities in ADAS and EV. Technicians do see value in training on emerging technologies, as 83% find EV-related and ADAS-related material to add value to their careers.



Survey Conclusions: The State of the Market Report, Technician Tool Purchasing and Usage

Technicians make large investments in their tools and will continue to spend time researching and purchasing tools as their careers advance. Technicians value quality, warranty, and future support more than the cost of tools. As emerging technologies continue to be released, technicians are optimistic about the technologies themselves, but not necessarily ready to fully invest in service tools for EV and ADAS vehicles. Collectively, most technicians take time to achieve industry certifications and seek out training opportunities to expand their knowledge base. The combination of tool purchases, the need for training, and the continuous maintenance of certifications shows the financial and time commitments technicians make to stay competitive in the industry. The following considerations are for industry professionals to support technicians and grow individuals within the shop:

- On average, most technicians spend $5,000 of their own income on tools in a given year, with a majority spending over $50,000 on tools in their career.
- Most shops are offering diagnostic and specialty tools for employees, but very few offer hand tools for technicians.
- Technicians are using, on average, seven different types of diagnostic tools in their job responsibilities, such as scan tools, oscilloscopes, battery tools, etc.
- Technicians are looking for more training opportunities across the industry, especially for emerging technologies like EVs and ADAS-equipped vehicles.

These considerations can help automotive technicians and industry professionals make decisions related to tool purchases, training, and pursuing certifications.

Recommendations for Industry Professionals in 2026

Industry decision makers, shop owners, and technician mentors alike can consider these recommendations to implement in the workplace to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and morale among technicians. The following can help improve opportunities for technicians in repair facilities as well as enhance the business itself. These recommendations are for industry professionals on how they can properly support technicians during their careers and highlight relevant trends from 2026:

- Shops should consider offering more training opportunities, shop-provided tools, and certification reimbursement to attract top talent.
- Offering specialized equipment and extra training in emerging technologies can provide an extra level of safety and comfort for technicians working on EVs and ADAS equipment.
- A robust tool assistance program can help build a technician's tool set while also relieving some of the financial burden.
- Staying flexible with tool and equipment purchasing can be beneficial, as many technicians are using multiple diagnostic tool types, tool brands, and service information providers regularly.

These recommendations can help build a technician's career from the start, offer more resources to the automotive service industry, and ensure shops are equipped for current and future technologies.

For more information, visit **AutoZonePro.com**.

About AutoZone®

AutoZone is the leading provider of automotive parts, with over 8,000 stores and growing. With a world-class distribution network, AutoZone makes it easy for shops to get the parts they need quickly. They have made significant investments to improve parts availability and expand late-model and import coverage across all business lines. Their dedicated Commercial Service Team is focused on supporting customers to help keep bays turning.



About ALLDATA®

ALLDATA is the industry's #1 choice for unedited mechanical and collision OEM repair information, diagnostic solutions, shop management software, and support services, trusted by more than 400,000 technicians in over 115,000 shops worldwide.

Endeavor Business Intelligence partnered with AutoZone to survey automotive service technicians on their tool purchasing habits, the tools and service equipment provided by their shop, and their current viewpoints on certifications, training, and emerging technologies. The survey received 302 qualified responses, fielded May 20 - June 15, 2026. Participating respondents were auto repair shop technicians at least 18 years old. Respondents were excluded from the study if their facility was described solely as one of the following: autobody shop, collision repair shop, auto accessory shop, or car dealership.

About The Survey