Buyer’s remorse: 29% of global EV owners would switch back to ICE

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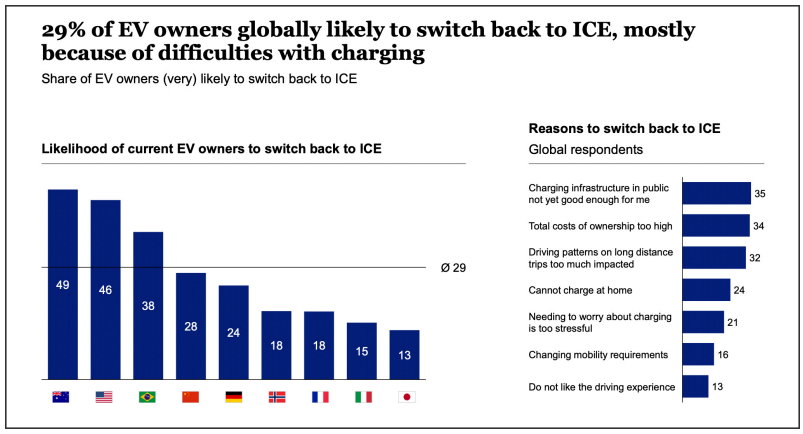
The world's switchover to full-electric mobility hasn't been the smoothest.
PHOTO BY SAM SURLA

Electric vehicles have been touted as these glorious saviors that will rescue us all from certain carbon-monoxide-filled doom brought upon us by our superfluous burning of dinosaur juice. But there seems to be trouble in paradise.



If extrapolated to real-world data, this means over four million of the 14 million EVs registered in 2023 will eventually be replaced by an ICE. SCREENSHOT FROM MCKINSEY & COMPANY

McKinsey & Company released its Mobility Consumer Pulse study last June, and of the vast array of data points presented, one in particular stood out. In a survey conducted among EV owners, an astounding **29%** of respondents said they were "very likely" to switch back to an internal-combustion car.

McKinsey lists seven reasons why early EV adopters would want their gas-guzzlers back, and these reasons shed light on the realities and the difficulties of EV ownership.

Manufacturers have proven that EVs can be just as fun to drive. PHOTOS BY SAM SURLA

First off, we know that EVs drive great, and the data proves it with just 13% of respondents saying they do not like the driving experience.

Compared to the stifled, emissions-compliant, turbocharged small-displacement four cylinders in most ICE cars today, lightning-fast electric motors

with torque curves built like a wall are objectively better.

So, leaving the driving experience out of the equation, we're left with six. And four out of the remaining six reasons all have to do with one thing: **charging**.

Charging infrastructure is a main concern nowadays for EV owners. PHOTOS BY SAM SURLA

Taking the number one spot is "charging infrastructure in public not yet good

enough for me" with 35% of respondents pointing to this as their motivation to switch back to ICE.

While the Philippines was not included in the study, this challenge is certainly true of our public charging infrastructure.

A good chunk of respondents (32%) pointed to the fact that an EV **affects long-distance travel** far too much. And although not explicitly stated, what they're really worrying about is having enough charge to travel far.

Whether it's the fact that they have to modify their routes to pass by charging stations, the overall impact of charging on travel time, or the outright inability to go to a particular destination because of the **lack of charging options**, this is, once again, a charging issue.

There are people like condominium-dwellers who are unable to install chargers at home. PHOTO BY SAM SURLA

Another 24% have said that they are not able to charge at home, and 21% have deemed the mere act of worrying about charging as "too stressful."

Interestingly enough, the second-biggest reason cited was "total cost of ownership too high" at 34%. Ironic since this is the biggest benefit automakers like to brag about with less moving parts and lower maintenance costs.

But if we were to factor in the **initial purchase price** (which tends to be higher than ICE vehicles), the steeper depreciation curve, and the potential cost of having to **replace the battery** when it eventually conks out, this might be a valid reason to ditch EVs.

EV tech will get better and more affordable with time. PHOTO BY SAM SURLA

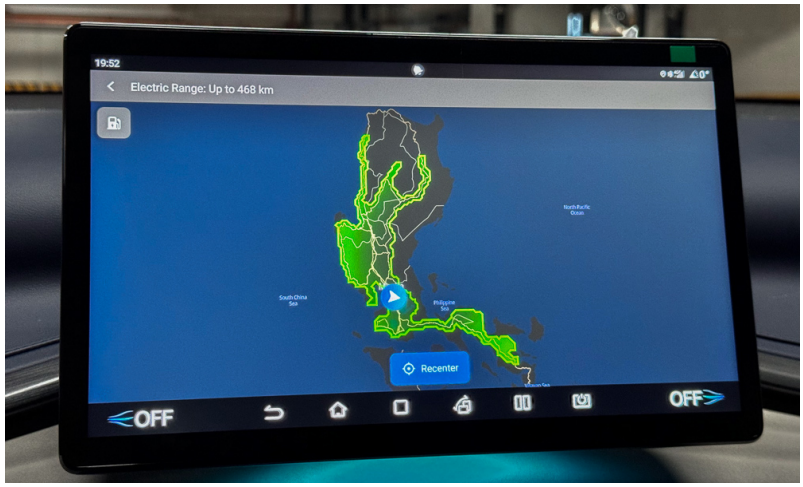
So, what do we take home from this? Are EVs bound to fail?

No.

The industry has made tremendous strides in lowering the cost of EV ownership and improving the batteries when it comes to capacity and charging time, and the technology will surely get even **better over time**. But in the same way that gas stations are out of their hands, so are charging facilities.

Charging is a convoluted thing. The speed not only depends on how fast your car will accept the power, but also on the

charger you have access to. And so long as charging a car is not as mindless as filling up a gas tank or charging a mobile phone, it will be a problem.



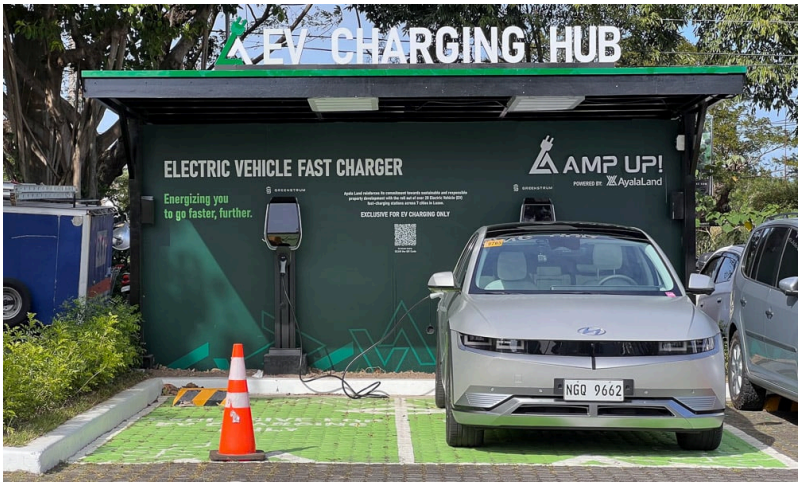
Despite EVs being able to go as far as their ICE counterparts, range anxiety will always be a problem until charging tech can resolve that. PHOTOS BY SAM SURLA

I know that many EVs on the market today can do at least 300-500km on a charge, and EV evangelists will be quick

to point this out. The reality, however, is that **range anxiety** still persists and it will continue to unless charging gets better.

And this is normal consumer behavior when it comes to anything with a battery. See, iPhone 15s are rated for up to 29 hours of video playback, yet we still plug them in any chance we get even if we haven't depleted the battery. We charge in the car. We lay it down on a wireless charging pad in the office. We plug it in right before we go to bed every night.

Heck, we even bring portable power stations called power banks around so we can charge anytime, anywhere.



At the moment, filling up a tank of gas is significantly faster than charging an EV. PHOTO BY SAM SURLA

But the big difference is we don’t feel like charging a phone is a problem because charging does not impede its function.

A car is made **temporarily useless** as it charges for 30 minutes to an hour, and you’re left twiddling your thumbs or spending P200 on a cup of coffee you didn’t intend to buy in the first place.

I’m not saying this is a sign of EVs being just as doomed as ICE cars. But it reveals a question we’ve been forgetting to ask about EVs.

Why do we have to put up with all this? Why do we need to switch to EVs?

Contrary to popular belief, EVs aren't the be-all and end-all against carbon emissions. PHOTO BY SAM SURLA

Everyone will have different answers to this, but if your answer is to save the planet and achieve carbon neutrality, then shouldn’t mankind collectively be looking at any and all things that will get us there, not just EVs?

Why are we as a global society so focused on this one thing when we should really be technologically agnostic so long as it gets us there?

If all you're after is saving money, a hybrid does the same thing without the

range anxiety. PHOTOS BY SAM SURLA

If your answer is to **save money**, then a hybrid does that, too. Electricity isn't free. It costs money, and by extending your mileage with a hybrid, gas could cost just as much as electricity.

Having an ICE to charge the battery also has the added benefit of being the automotive equivalent of having a power bank for your phone.

If anything, these are growing pains related to the transition to greener mobility. McKinsey also says interest in EVs is still growing with **38%** of non-EV owners surveyed saying they would consider a BEV or a PHEV as their next vehicle, but the rest would like to stick to ICE in the short term or are not willing to switch at all.

If you're looking toward carbon neutrality, there are plenty of other ways to reach that goal. PHOTOS BY SAM SURLA

All I’m saying is maybe it’s high time we realize that EVs are good for the environment, but **not a silver bullet** that will cure us of all our woes tomorrow as we can see here. Forcing one solution on everybody will inevitably result in people wanting to switch back because the shoe just doesn’t fit.

There should be room for everybody in this journey toward a greener future: electric, hybrid, hydrogen, synthetic fuels, and yes, even greener ICEs, too. We don’t have to pick one or the other.

Simonn Ang

Simonn is just a regular guy who happens to love cars and motorcycles. He also loves writing about them, too.