

RESEARCH MEMO:

Limited Vehicle Data Access Is the Top Issue Facing Independent Repair Shops

The Auto Care Association, which represents a coast-to-coast network of 500,000 independent manufacturers, distributors, parts stores, and repair shops, released results from a nationwide survey of repair shop owners, technicians, managers, and other representatives that sheds new light on the economic and operational impacts of growing vehicle repair restrictions on independent repair shops. These survey findings reiterate a clear need for the bipartisan Right to Equitable and Professional Auto Industry Repair (REPAIR) Act ([H.R. 906](#)) to support small businesses, promote choice, and encourage competition.

America's vibrant network of local, independent repair shops plays a critical role in ensuring car and commercial truck owners have options when it comes to repairing their vehicles. But, increasing limitations on vehicle repair and maintenance data are making it harder for independent repair shops to offer certain repair services and parts to their customers.

Left with less choice and higher prices, independent repair shops and car owners are focusing in on right to repair solutions that would ensure Americans have the right to choose where and how to fix the things they own. From the halls of Congress to the White House, Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and Department of Justice (DOJ), the right to repair movement has gained undeniable momentum in Washington in recent months.

The bipartisan REPAIR Act, which was unanimously [approved](#) by the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce, will ensure that consumers and repairers of their choice have access to the vehicle data, tools, and software needed to maintain modern vehicles. The REPAIR Act is backed by [independent repair shops](#), [bipartisan lawmakers](#), [attorneys general](#), [consumer advocates](#), car owners, and more.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Independent repair shops are concerned with growing limitations on access to vehicle data, tools, software, and parts needed for modern car repairs.

- Eighty-four percent (84%) of independent repair shops identify vehicle repair and maintenance data access as being “extremely important” or “very important” for their business.
- Vehicle data access ranked as the top issue of concern, surpassing other timely business considerations like technician recruitment and retention (73%) and inflation (68%).

Repair restrictions regularly prevent independent repair shop owners and technicians from being able to repair and service modern cars.

- The majority (63%) of independent repair shops experience difficulties making routine repairs on a daily or weekly basis.
- Routine issues include scan tool or vehicle error messages (34%), restrictions on aftermarket tools (33%), and “see dealer” messages from scan tools or vehicles (29%).

After exhausting available options, independent repair shops are often forced to turn away business.

- Half of independent repair shops (51%) report sending up to 5 vehicles per month to the dealer due to vehicle data limitations.

Independent repair shops are left paying a high price for unfair repair restrictions.

- Vehicle data limitations cost independent repair shops an estimated \$3.1 billion each year.
- Forty-five percent (45%) encounter repairs requiring automaker tools that are “too expensive” on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, and report that these tools can cost upwards of \$2,400 on average.

The Auto Care Association’s new survey was conducted by Hanover Research, an independent market research firm, from February 1-14, 2024 among 407 individuals who work at independent auto repair shops. The study has a margin of error of 5%.

NOTE: In a separate, nationwide survey conducted by Babcox Media, a leading automotive aftermarket media organization, independent repair shops reported concerns with vehicle data access at comparable levels. Notably, Babcox Media found that the average amount of labor hours spent on each vehicle ultimately sent to the dealer is 2-4 hours. This includes the amount of time that an independent repair shop spends trying to resolve the issue before referring the vehicle to the dealer due to data access restrictions – which can leave independent repair shops uncompensated for their labor and time.

Join the Auto Care Association in calling on Congress to take action at repairact.com.