

# Natural Resources Council of Maine's Hybrid Car Owners' Survey Results September 2008

In March 2008, the Natural Resources Council of Maine helped release a report detailing steep increases in global warming pollution in New England, available on our website at [www.nrcm.org](http://www.nrcm.org). Among the results, the report found that between 2001 and 2005, global warming pollution from transportation increased seven percent, accounting for the largest increase in emissions during that time.

**Here in Maine, emissions from transportation have grown more than 20 percent** since 2001, the result of more miles traveled in vehicles that are not fuel-efficient. Fortunately, an increasing number of consumers are making a change. Already, many have made the decision to purchase hybrid cars.



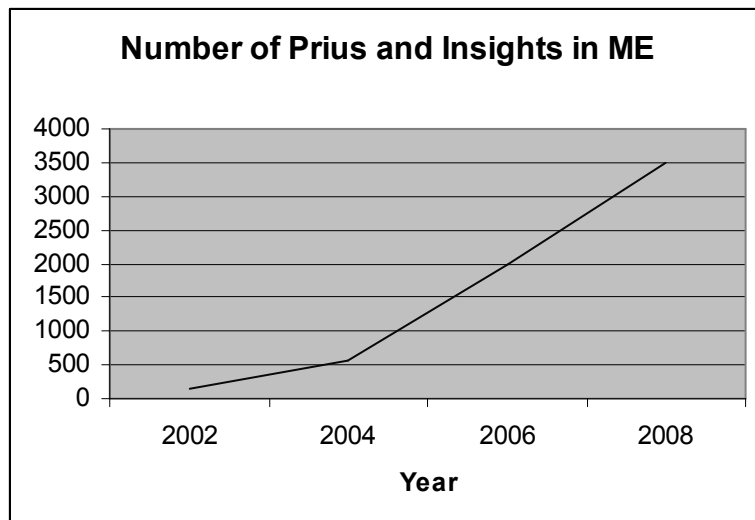
To help NRCM in our work for initiatives that promote more fuel-efficient vehicles, we conducted a survey of Toyota Prius and Honda Insight owners in Maine during the summer of 2008.

Response to our survey was strong — 1,300 hybrid owners responded, a response rate of 36 percent. All of these participants provided clear answers to why they made their purchases. With Honda's discontinuation of the Insight, we were not able to obtain a sample size that would provide statistically significant data for most of the questions on the survey. When a question was not specific to a particular model, we grouped the Prius and Insight drivers together; otherwise the report reflects the results of Prius drivers only. Because the Prius far outsells any other hybrid, the results of our survey provide meaningful data.

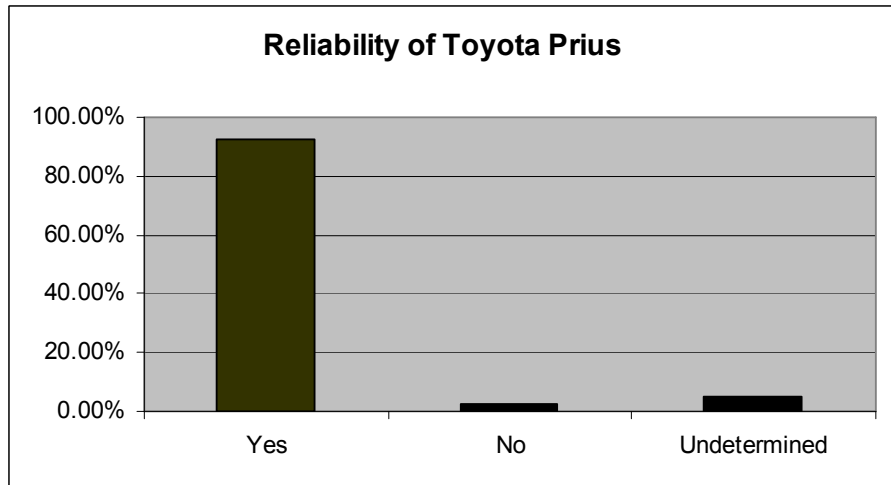
## SURVEY RESULTS

The number of Prius and Insights on Maine roads have increased 2199 percent since 2002 and 548 percent since 2004.

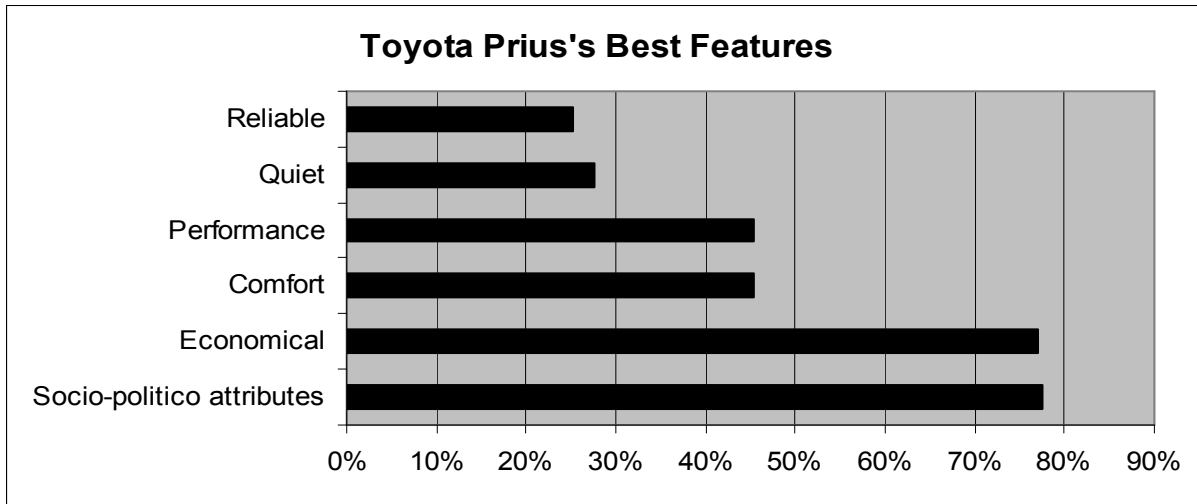
These steep increases are consistent with the high level of overall satisfaction expressed by those surveyed. Some 92 percent



of Prius owners found their car to be reliable. Less than 3 percent did not. The remaining 5 percent said that they had not owned their vehicle long enough to determine reliability. Several Prius owners mentioned the need for snow tires in the winter to ensure reliability.



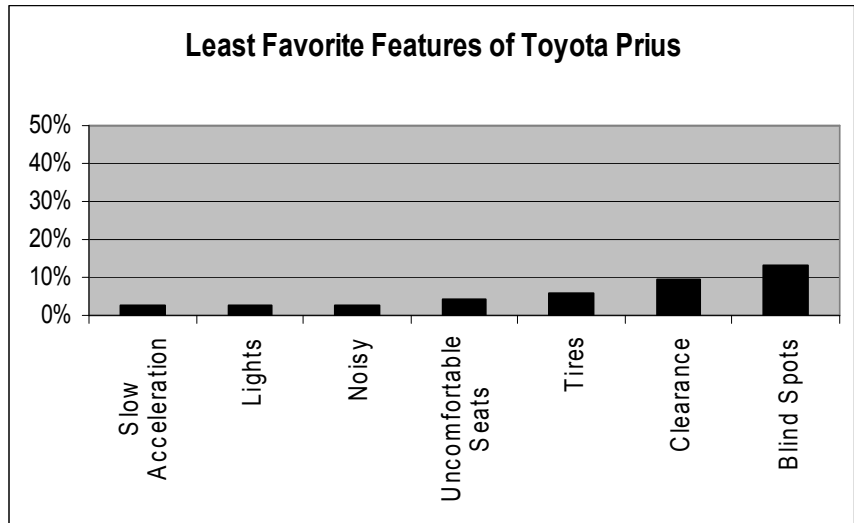
When asked to describe the Prius' best features, 77 percent of owners mentioned its "social" attributes, such as raising environmental consciousness and promoting fuel-efficient technologies. Some 77 percent noted the car's economic advantage, realized by savings on gas purchases. Of the total who responded, 45 percent included driver comfort as one the Prius's best features, and 45 percent mentioned its high performance. About a quarter of respondents — 28 percent — remarked on the quietness of the car as a great feature, and 25 percent were especially pleased with the car's reliability.



Prius owners reported that their car gets 52 miles-per-gallon in the summer and 48 in the winter. Based on our survey data, hybrid owners drive an average of 1,400 miles per month in Maine. **Altogether, Maine Prius drivers are avoiding the use of about 900,000 gallons of gasoline per year—and saving around \$3.3 million at the pump.**

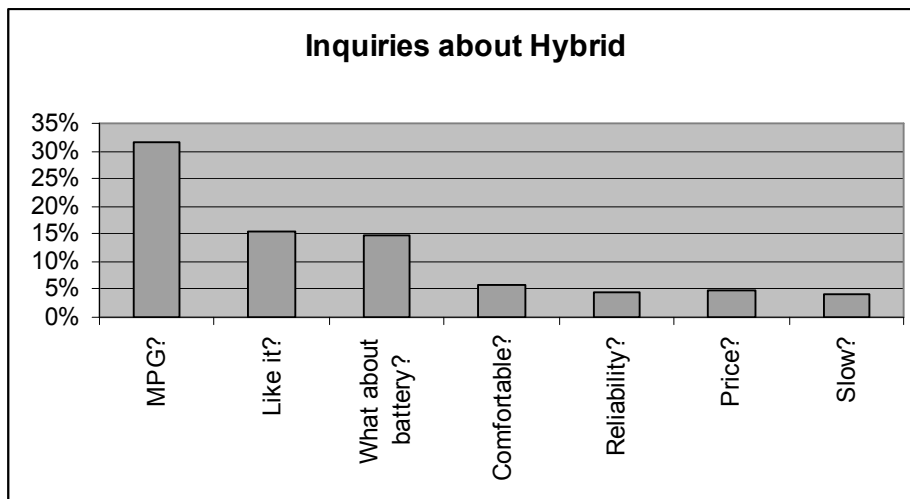
Eighty-nine percent of all hybrid owners surveyed bought their car new, and 11 percent purchased a pre-owned hybrid. Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed had to wait to purchase their Prius, with an average waiting period of three weeks. Waiting periods have ranged considerably over the years.

There were few complaints from either Prius or Insight owners about their car. However, 13 percent of Prius drivers reported that blind spots make visibility more challenging. An additional 9 percent reported low ground clearance, and 6 percent were unhappy with the performance of the tires, particularly in snow. Four percent stated that the seats are uncomfortable, 3 percent noted discomfort with the noise level, 3 percent were unsatisfied with the lights, and 2 percent commented about slow acceleration.



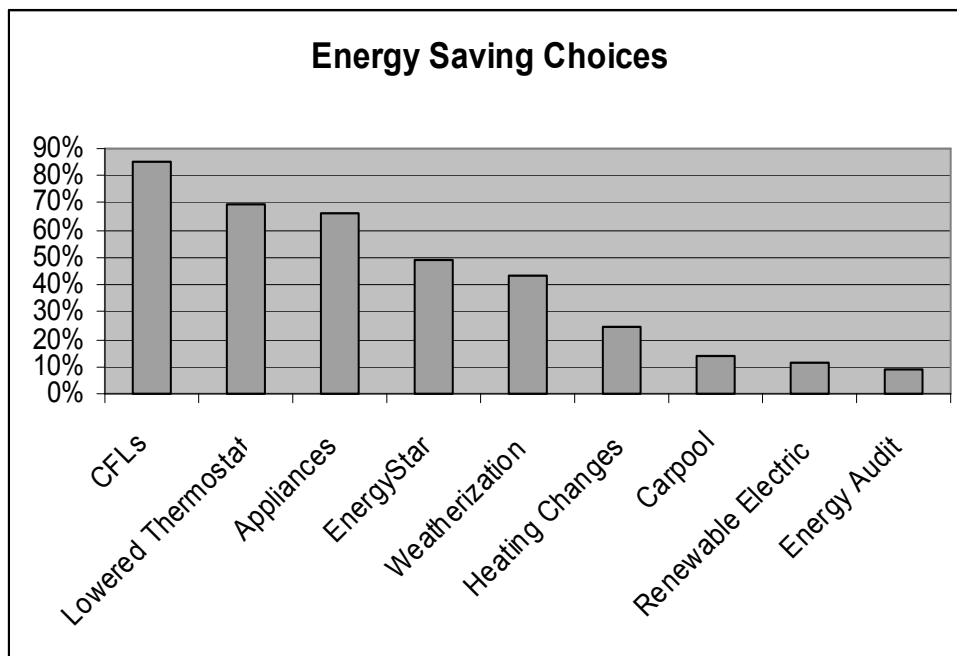
When asked what type of questions hybrid owners receive about their cars,

- 31 percent reported inquiries about the gas mileage,
- 16 percent said that people simply ask whether or not they like the car,
- 15 percent said people ask about the battery,
- 6 percent reported that people ask about the comfort,
- 5 percent said people ask about reliability,
- 5 percent remarked that people ask about the price, and
- 4 percent said they receive questions about the car's acceleration.



We invited hybrid car owners to share with us other energy-saving choices they have recently made. Of those who responded, 85 percent had installed compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) — an impressive total of more than 10,000 CFLs have been installed by these individuals within the past two years. In addition,

- 69 percent lowered their thermostat,
- 66 percent turned off/unplugged appliances more often,
- 49 percent purchased Energy Star appliances,
- 43 percent weatherized their home with new windows/doors, insulation, or air sealing,
- 24 percent switched heating fuels,
- 14 percent carpooled,
- 11 percent switched their electricity supply to renewables, and
- 9 percent had an energy audit.



### Thanks to All Who Participated

The Natural Resources Council of Maine expresses sincere appreciation to all who took the time to participate in this survey. They have provided important data that will help us in our work promoting policies and initiatives that help protect our environment by putting more “clean cars” on Maine roads.

If you have questions or would like more information about the work of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, please contact us at (800) 287-2345.