

Appraiser Blog

The Size Increase of Popular Cars: Understanding the Reasons



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The landscape of automobiles is constantly evolving, with larger vehicles dominating U.S. auto showrooms and highways. This shift towards bigger cars is evident in the increasing popularity of SUVs and crossovers, which now command a significant market share. As automakers cater to the demand for larger vehicles, we must consider the implications for road safety, particularly for small cars and pedestrians. In this blog post, we will delve into the size increase of popular cars, explore the reasons behind this trend, and assess its impact on safety and driving preferences.

The Growing Trend of Bigger Cars

The average car size is on the rise, and this shift can be observed across various vehicle types. Sedans, which once dominated the market, are being phased out in favor of larger SUVs and trucks. According to our survey of more than 1,500 Americans, preferences have shifted towards larger vehicles perceived to be safer and more cost-effective to insure. Notably, SUVs are the top choice for many Americans, with 50% of respondents feeling safest in them compared to cars or pickup trucks.

- SUVs are considered the safest vehicles by respondents compared to cars and pickup trucks.
- Women feel significantly safer in SUVs than in pickup trucks, while men tend to feel safer in pickup trucks compared to women.

Understanding Car Size Variations

Car size varies based on several factors, such as passenger space, cargo capacity, and safety features. The length of the average car is around 14.7 feet, with some vehicles extending to nearly 20 feet or more. Widths vary as well, with the average car measuring approximately 5.8 feet wide. Some vehicles, like the Tesla Model X, reach 7.4 feet in width, while heavy-duty pickup trucks like the Ram 3500 can measure an astonishing 8.7 feet wide.

U.S Popular Cars Are Increasing in Size



Toyota Corolla



Toyota Corolla LE - (2023)
182.3L x 70.1W x 56.5H - 106.3WB
Length: 182.3 in

Toyota Corolla (E10) - (1966-1970)
151.4L x 58.1W x 54.3H - 90WB
Length: 151.4 in

↑ 44% Larger

Ford F Series



Ford F Series - (2023)
266.2L x 96.0W x 81.0H - 176WB
Length: 266.2 in

Ford F Series - (1948-1952)
207L x 70.3W x 77.4H - 122WB
Length: 207 in

↑ 75% Larger

Note:

All measurements are in inches / WB = Vehicle wheelbase / The percentage change in size is calculated using the total base area (L x W) of the vehicle platform.

Average Car Length:

- The average car length is approximately 14.7 feet, exemplified by the Nissan Versa sedan.
- Vehicles vary widely in length, with the Chevrolet Spark as the shortest car (just under 12 feet) and the long-wheelbase Rolls-Royce Phantom as the longest (almost 20 feet).
- Full-size pickup trucks like the Ford Super Duty line exceed 22 feet in length.

Average Car Width:

- The average car width is about 5.8 feet.
- Notable width variations include the Chevrolet Spark as the narrowest vehicle (5.2 feet) and the Tesla Model X as the widest outside the ultra-luxury segment (7.4 feet).
- The Ram 3500 with dual rear wheels is the widest noncommercial vehicle, measuring an astonishing 8.7 feet without its mirrors.

The Reasons Behind the Growth

There are three main reasons driving the trend of larger cars. First, the cost of producing small cars used to be significantly lower than that of larger vehicles, but that gap has narrowed, leading to more extensive offerings of larger cars. Second, an increase in imported cars, often larger and designed for wider roads, has contributed to the overall growth in car size. Finally, the advancement of safety features, such as crumple zones and multiple airbags, requires more space in vehicles, prompting manufacturers to design larger cars to accommodate these improvements.

Safety Considerations

While larger cars are preferred by many for their perceived safety benefits, there are concerns to address. Rollover accidents, which are more common in SUVs, account for a significant number of fatal crashes.

Therefore, drivers of larger vehicles should exercise caution and avoid reckless driving. Additionally, as the average car size increases, there is a need to ensure the safety of pedestrians and drivers of smaller vehicles.

The Future of Cars

Considering the trends in size growth among iconic vehicles, it is conceivable that cars will continue to expand in size over time. For instance, if the current rate of growth for the Mini Cooper persists, it could become wider than a Range Rover by 2066. However, with the focus on electric and eco-friendly vehicles, there might be efforts to strike a balance between size, safety, and environmental concerns in the future.

The increase in the size of popular cars is a response to changing consumer preferences, advancements in safety technology, and the influence of the global automotive market. While larger vehicles offer certain benefits, such as perceived safety and comfort, it is crucial to address potential safety risks, especially for pedestrians and drivers of smaller cars. As the automotive industry continues to evolve, finding the right balance between size, safety, and environmental considerations will be essential to ensure a harmonious and secure driving experience for everyone on the road.