

Would You Trust An Autonomous Car To Drive You Around?

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In brief

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There is one particular development that's got everyone frothing at the mouth in anticipation. We've seen glimpses of it in some cars, as well as demos of it close to its full capacity. We're talking, of course, about autonomous vehicles.

What is an Autonomous Vehicle?

Effectively, it's a vehicle with the capabilities to perform different road tasks itself, without the input of a human driver. In theory, you can sit back and relax while your car drives itself. This is full autonomy, and it's the end goal. Most modern vehicles have a lower level of autonomy, typically being categorized as either partial, conditional, or high automation. Essentially, they have the ability to be autonomous in different ways, but they can't do everything without a driver.

This brings us to the main question of the day: would you trust an autonomous car to drive you around? Imagine there was a vehicle that could drive you everywhere, and it didn't even have a wheel for you to take over; would you get inside it?

How safe are Autonomous Cars?

The answer to the overall question pretty much depends on the answer to this one. So, how safe are these cars?

To be honest...we don't really know. There aren't any fully autonomous vehicles out there at the moment to see how safe they are. However, cars like Tesla are filled with autonomous features, and they produce mixed results on the safety front.

The primary concern is whether or not it is safer to drive a car or have it powered autonomously. If you were to ask a car accident lawyer what the main cause of car accidents was, they would likely list a whole bunch of things that are pretty much all down to the driver. Drunk and distracted driving are two examples - wouldn't an autonomous vehicle eliminate these problems?

It would be a good thing, but it would also create unique problems of its own. The number of drunk driving cases would decrease, but would we see a rise in the number of accidents caused by technological malfunctions? After all, these cars are programmed and utilize sensors to perform all their tasks. What happens if there's a slight glitch in the system, won't this cause an accident? We have already seen some semi-autonomous cars cause accidents that would've been avoided with a human driver, so can we really say they're safer?

How reliable are autonomous cars?

Can we ever truly trust the reliability of this technology? How are these cars designed and programmed to work? We know there's a lot of machine learning and AI involved, alongside sensors all around the car. However, can you trust an autonomous car to react in certain situations the same way a driver would?

Primarily, we're thinking about situations where other drivers do something stupid. They pull out with no prior warning, or they make a ridiculous move that nobody should ever make. As a fellow human, you might be able to react better than the car because you're watching the events unfold and can slam your foot on the brakes. Indeed, cars come with automatic braking technology to assist you in this situation anyway.

The question is, would a car that completely acts by itself be able to cope with the randomness of bad drivers?

Not only that, but how reliable are they at getting you from A to B. Perhaps you know sneaky shortcuts that don't show up on any maps. Could the car find a quicker route than you could?

Conclusion

This brings us all the way to the conclusion. Well, do you have an answer? Would you trust an autonomous car to drive you around? Personally, there's too much we don't know about this technology right now. How can we be sure that these cars are significantly safer or more reliable, particularly with other drivers on the roads?

Perhaps we need to reach the point where the roads are littered with autonomous cars, and no humans drive again. At this point, maybe, just maybe, we can trust an autonomous car to drive us around. But, as of right now, I think you'd have to be very brave to let a car do anything other than a park for you.

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