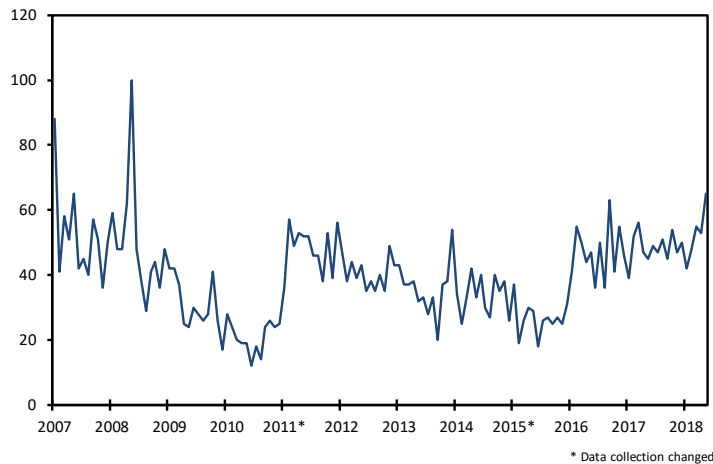


GOOGLE TREND DATA ON LIGHT TRUCKS VERSUS SMALL CARS

In the front sections of this issue we have discussed the shift away from small vehicle production to light pickups, CRVs, and SUVs. These figures show Google Trend data regarding interest in autos in the west Michigan area. Note that data collection methods have changed twice since 2007, causing the index to jump in January 2011 and January 2015.

Percentage Change in Interest in the Google Search Topic “Microcars and City Cars” in West Michigan

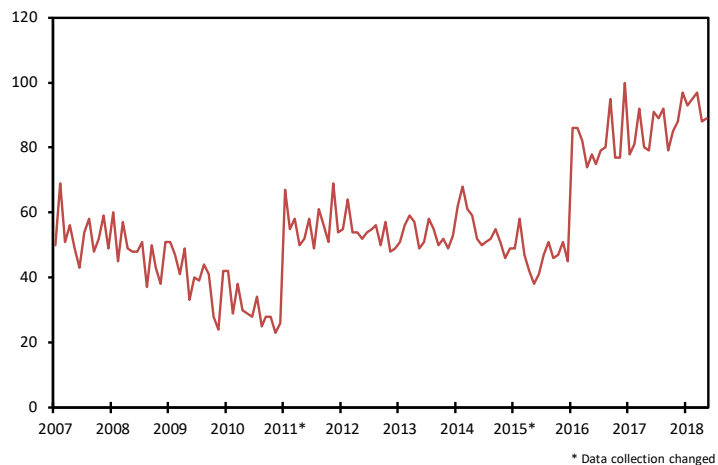


Aside from jumps in 2011 and 2015 when data collection methods changed, the trend measuring interest in small cars has been generally downward, although it has held steady in the past couple of years.

The first figure shows the change in Google searches on small cars, specifically “microcars and city cars,” according to Google Trends. The index spiked in Summer 2008 during a surge in fuel prices that occurred in the middle of the Great Recession, but then began trending downward. Disregarding the sudden jump in 2011 and looking at the interest level from 2011 through 2015, we see that the number of searches for smaller cars continued to decline. Interest appears to have stabilized from 2015 to the present.

For light trucks and SUVs, the pattern looks similar from 2007 to 2011 as it does for small cars, with interest declining. However, from 2011 to 2015, searches for larger vehicles flattened out while small-car searches continued their decline. And for the period from 2015 to the present, interest in larger vehicles has been on the increase. We cannot determine whether interest in SUVs is higher in the area than in 2007, and these data do not reflect national trends in car purchases. But the increase in searches for trucks and SUVs in west Michigan since 2015 suggests that regional residents are more interested in purchasing larger vehicles than they were in the past.

Percentage Change in Interest in the Google Search Topic “Trucks and SUVs” in West Michigan



Interest in light trucks and SUVs, which was falling 10 years ago, stabilized in the early 2010s and now is on the rise.