

Honda steers clear of trouble

It's a Japanese one-two-three in our latest reliability rankings

Readers have told us the good, the bad and the ugly about their cars during the last 12 months of ownership. Our survey gives a unique picture of UK car reliability and, because it covers cars up to eight years old, it's helpful for used car buyers too.

The *Which?* reliability index (right) shows which manufacturers consistently turn out dependable motors – and which carmakers are best avoided.

Eastern promise

The eight most reliable brands all come from the Far East, with Honda in pole position. There's good news for car buyers on a budget, too – with the exception of Lexus and Subaru, all of these manufacturers have brand-new models that start from below £9,000.

The UK car industry has an important role in Honda and Toyota's success – both operate UK factories. Reacting to Honda's table-topping score, Paul Ormond of



1. Honda



2. Toyota



3. Lexus

'Everyone cares how each car is screwed together'

Honda UK told us: 'Achieving number one in the *Which?* reliability survey is great news for us, and for all the people who make Honda cars – they are the secret of our success. Everyone in Honda is called an Associate – and for very good reason: everybody's contribution is important and everyone involved cares how each car is screwed together.'

Value for money?

So, what about the pricier European brands? Well, contrary to their supposedly 'unbreakable' reputations, BMW rates as average, while Audi and Mercedes-Benz are both poor. So it seems, in reliability terms, you don't necessarily get what you pay for.

Need more evidence? Well, Jaguar and Land Rover rank lower than mainstream parent company Ford, while Saab is less reliable than Vauxhall (both are part of General Motors). Skoda, the budget arm of the VW Group, matches the reliability of parent company VW, and is also trustier than its Audi and Seat relatives.

Also among the least reliable carmakers are Alfa Romeo, Citroën, Fiat, Peugeot and Renault – consistent offenders, according to our previous surveys. Lowest-placed Renault said: 'Renault is committed to providing the highest standard of quality for customers. Part of our 'Renault Commitment 2009' will see our next product, the new Laguna, in the top three for product and service quality, in line with our most recent products the Modus and new Clio.'

Finally, Chrysler and Jeep (both part of Daimler-Chrysler, Mercedes' parent company) must also improve to show that they're not just style over substance.

Word of mouth matters

Reliability may not be the most sexy aspect of car ownership – but the fact remains you're unlikely to recommend a car that has let you down. Our survey seems to bear this out. For example, just 38 per cent of Fiat owners would recommend their car to a friend, compared with 89 per cent of Lexus owners. Meanwhile, less than half of all Renault owners (47 per cent) would recommend their model.

Word of mouth aside, you're even less likely to buy the same brand again if you had problems in the past. So it's high time some manufacturers upped their game.

WHICH? RELIABILITY INDEX

Honda	(567)	85%
Toyota	(2802)	84%
Lexus	(54)	83%
Hyundai	(355)	81%
Mazda	(748)	81%
Mitsubishi	(265)	81%
Subaru	(289)	81%
Suzuki	(273)	81%
Daihatsu	(86)	79%
Kia	(193)	79%
Mini	(270)	79%
Nissan	(1856)	77%
BMW	(1376)	76%
Ford	(4012)	76%
Porsche	(66)	76%
Rover	(816)	76%
Skoda	(754)	76%
Vauxhall	(2526)	76%
Volvo	(896)	76%
Volkswagen	(2270)	75%
Audi	(972)	74%
Daewoo/Chevrolet	(184)	74%
Seat	(382)	74%
Smart	(84)	74%
Alfa Romeo	(154)	71%
Chrysler	(122)	71%
Citroën	(1105)	71%
Fiat	(597)	71%
Jaguar	(539)	71%
Jeep	(71)	71%
Land Rover	(403)	71%
Mercedes-Benz	(1207)	71%
MG	(157)	71%
Peugeot	(1576)	71%
Saab	(429)	71%
Renault	(1823)	67%

Sample sizes shown in brackets

Renault must improve



HOW WE RATE RELIABILITY

No fewer than 80,000 surveys are dispatched each year to *Which?* readers, to enable us to produce our comprehensive reliability ratings. We ask about owners' experiences of breakdowns, faults and everyday reliability niggles to give a rounded view of which cars stayed trouble-free in the previous 12 months.

Overall manufacturer scores are based on all cars registered after January 1998, and are weighted on breakdowns (worth 50 per cent), faults (25 per cent) and niggles (25 per cent). We conducted the survey between January and March 2006, and received responses for 32,550 cars. Thank you to all those who took part.

KEY TO RESULTS

Best	Average
Good	Poor