

Keep on running

Our reliability survey reveals which brands of white goods and vacuum cleaners should give you years of trouble-free service – and which ones could let you down

In October 2006, a survey of 1,770 Which? online panel members revealed that reliability was the single most important factor when it came to choosing a household product. More than 90 per cent of Which? members would consider our reliability rating when buying a household item. Now, we reveal the brands that you can really trust. And we examine brands you'd recommend.

This year's reliability survey found that freezers were the most reliable product, with an average of 96 per cent of respondents saying they'd had no problems within the first six years. The least reliable were upright vacuum cleaners, with only 74 per cent.

Brand builders

Bosch came top of the reliability charts more often than any other brand and was also the most widely recommended. In every category in which the company features, except cylinder vacs, readers sing its praises. And Bosch, Electrolux and Frigidaire all set shining examples for electric and gas hobs and freezers respectively, by scoring 100 per cent reliability.

Hoover, followed by Hotpoint, lags behind most for reliability. For example, our survey shows Hoover has poor reliability for all its laundry appliances.

Bosch came top of the reliability chart more often than any other brand

OUR SURVEY

Last summer, we sent postal questionnaires to 35,000 Which? members; 13,089 replied. We asked about the reliability of household appliances up to six years old, whether they'd broken down and why. We also asked members whether they'd recommend their brand to a friend. Percentages are adjusted to take into

account the sample size and the product's age, so a brand won't be unfairly penalised if a lot of respondents have five- or six-year-old models.

KEY TO RESULTS

- Good reliability
- Average reliability
- Poor reliability

From washing machines to dishwashers, most of the washing and drying products do well for reliability, with averages of more than 80 per cent. Washer-dryers let the side down a little, with only 75 per cent. However, it's worth remembering they do have two jobs to do.

Washing machines

According to our survey, 15 per cent of washing machines will suffer some sort of breakdown in the first six years. You can reduce your chances of having to 'get someone in', if you choose a Tricity Bendix, Miele, Bosch or Siemens. At the other end of the scale, owning an Ariston, Hoover, Servis, Whirlpool, Indesit or Hotpoint washing machine may mean you're stuck wearing yesterday's clothes – more than one in five suffered a breakdown.



BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 16%** Drum would not rotate
- 13%** Problems with the door
- 11%** Problems with the drain pump/hose

Best Buys

The top-scoring model in our washing machine test is the Miele W3240 (£700).

It gives excellent wash results for cotton and short programs and comes with a free ten-year warranty. See p44-50 for more Miele, Bosch and Siemens Best Buys.

You recommend

A solid 87 per cent of you would definitely recommend your Miele washing machine to a friend. Bosch, Siemens and AEG-Electrolux are also favourites. Despite the fact that Tricity Bendix comes out top of the reliability survey, only half of you would definitely recommend it. Hoover had the lowest number of recommendations: only 30 per cent of owners are willing to give it a good reference.

WASHING MACHINES

Reliability of washing machines up to six years old. Average = 85%

Tricity Bendix	(93)	95%
Miele	(393)	92%
Bosch	(2,104)	91%
Siemens	(146)	91%
AEG/ AEG-Electrolux	(263)	88%
Candy	(93)	85%
Creda	(71)	85%
Zanussi/ Zanussi-Electrolux	(663)	85%
LG	(109)	82%
Ariston	(77)	79%
Hoover	(279)	79%
Servis	(129)	79%
Whirlpool	(173)	79%
Indesit	(274)	78%
Hotpoint	(955)	76%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 6,079 owners

Washer-dryers

Washer-dryers are comparatively unreliable: according to our survey, a quarter will let you down in the first six years. It's worth choosing an AEG-Electrolux or Bosch to reduce your chances of a breakdown.

Of all the appliances in our survey, Hoover and Hotpoint washer-dryers are the most prone to break down, with a third needing repairs in the first six years.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 13% Program failure (eg machine sticks or stops mid-cycle)
- 8% Problem with drain/hose
- 7% Element/heater fault

Best Buys

For a great machine from a reliable brand, go for the freestanding AEG-Electrolux L1 6830. At £479, it's not only the cheapest Best Buy in our last report (*Which?*, October 2006, p52) but was the best for drying clothes.

You recommend

Owners of the two most reliable brands, AEG-Electrolux and Bosch, were the most keen to recommend their model to a friend.

Hotpoint and Hoover are joined by Indesit at the bottom of the heap, with only around 30 per cent of owners happy to give their seal of approval.



Tumble dryers are the most reliable of the laundry appliances

Tumble dryers

Tumble dryers are the most reliable laundry appliance on average: only 12 per cent of those in our survey needed mending. We found that vented dryers are more reliable than condensers.

Vented tumble dryers take the damp air produced by drying clothes and expel it from the room. Condensers cool the moist, hot air in the machine and the resulting water is collected in a removable water reservoir or filtered down a drain.

AEG/AEG-Electrolux and Miele get top scores here – 97 per cent and 92 per cent respectively. Hoover brings up the rear, with more than one in seven needing a repair within the first six years.

Best Buys

With tumble dryers, it seems that reliability and performance go hand in hand. Every Miele or AEG-Electrolux that we've recently tested is a Best Buy. From our latest report (*Which?*, November 2006, p50), choose the Miele T224 Novotronic (£449) if you want a vented tumble dryer. For condensing tumble dryers, pick the Miele T234C Novotronic (£549).

You recommend

Those with Miele, AEG-Electrolux and Bosch are happiest with their machines, with 90 per cent of Miele owners definitely willing to recommend their model.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 21% Elements/heater
- 13% Problems with the door
- 12% Problems with the drive belt



TUMBLE DRYERS

Reliability of tumble dryers up to six years old. Average = 88%

AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(128)	97%
Miele	(140)	92%
Tricity Bendix	(56)	90%
White Knight	(405)	90%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(371)	90%
Bosch	(405)	88%
Creda	(553)	88%
Indesit	(75)	88%
Whirlpool	(182)	88%
Hotpoint	(660)	86%
Hoover	(128)	84%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 3,420 owners

WASHER-DRYERS

Reliability of washer-dryers up to six years old. Average = 75%

AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(63)	83%
Bosch	(119)	83%
Indesit	(71)	75%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(218)	75%
Hoover	(83)	67%
Hotpoint	(151)	67%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 907 owners



HOTPOINT'S A SORE POINT

Peter McCready

49, business development manager
Peter bought a Hotpoint CTD80 condenser tumble dryer in January 2005. Since then, he's had to call out an engineer five times. 'Within months, the dryer stopped drying. The heating element had to be replaced. This was

fine for a few weeks until the problem returned. It was finally agreed that we'd get a new dryer.' But there were more problems with new one. 'Before long we noticed the clothes weren't drying properly and sometimes we'd find water on the floor. This machine's been nothing but trouble.'

Dishwashers

Dishwashers are fairly reliable, with only 13 per cent needing a repair in the first six years. For the most reliable machines, go for Bosch, Neff or Siemens. More than 90 per cent of dishwashers from these brands have had trouble-free lives and need no repairs.

MFI/Diplomat/Hygena, as well as Hotpoint and Indesit, are joined by premium brand Smeg as our least reliable machines. Smeg's inclusion sadly proves that beauty and reliability don't always go together.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 20% Not draining properly
- 13% Control panel problems
- 12% Program failure

Best Buys

The quiet, easy-to-use, built-in Siemens SE55M570GB dishwasher (£520) would make an excellent choice. It cleans expertly and doesn't leave watermarks.

You recommend

Your Miele dishwasher is definitely recommended by 79 per cent of you, but its reliability is still average. Bosch and Siemens both get above-average scores with 69 per cent and 64 per cent respectively.

DISHWASHERS

Reliability of dishwashers up to six years old. Average = 87%

Bosch	(1,606)	93%
Neff	(266)	93%
Siemens	(168)	93%
Miele	(279)	90%
Whirlpool	(205)	87%
AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(189)	84%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(237)	84%
MFI/Diplomat/Hygena	(98)	81%
Hotpoint	(338)	81%
Indesit	(184)	81%
Smeg	(55)	81%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 4,163 owners



Just nine of 100 fridges had to be repaired in the first six years of service

Cold storage products are the most reliable of white goods, which is impressive as they tend to be working all year round.

Fridges

Just nine out of 100 fridges had to be repaired in their first six years. Neff came out top of the brands. Beko, Bosch and Miele also rate well on reliability. Hotpoint is the only brand that scores below average.

Best Buys

Our Best Buy built-in Neff K4624X4GB (£849) would be an excellent choice. It scored a very impressive 91 per cent in our test.

You recommend

Miele, Bosch and Liebherr are the most recommended brands.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top two reasons why your machines broke down

- 28% Thermostat problems
- 26% Problems with the door



FRIDGES

Reliability of fridges up to six years old. Average = 91%

Neff	(110)	98%
Beko	(297)	95%
Bosch	(489)	95%
Miele	(80)	95%
Frigidaire	(128)	93%
Indesit	(51)	93%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(167)	93%
AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(119)	91%
Lec	(170)	91%
MFI/Diplomat/Hygena	(56)	91%
Electrolux	(104)	89%
Liebherr	(66)	89%
Whirlpool	(150)	89%
Hotpoint	(481)	87%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 2,955 owners

Fridge-freezers

These are pretty reliable overall, with only 11 per cent needing repairs in the first six years. Only about one in 20 from top brands Beko, LG and Neff had any problems.

Best Buys

The built-in Neff K9524X4GB (£645) is our only Best Buy from a brand that scores well in our survey.

You recommend

Bosch, Miele, Liebherr, LG, Samsung and Siemens are all above average when it comes to your recommendations, although none scores above 67 per cent.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 21% Thermostat problems
- 17% Problems with the door
- 17% Problems with accessories



FRIDGE-FREEZERS

Reliability of fridge-freezers up to six years old. Average = 89%

Beko	(323)	95%
LG	(200)	95%
Neff	(92)	95%
Candy	(106)	92%
Daewoo	(76)	92%
Lec	(97)	92%
AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(114)	89%
Bosch	(830)	89%
Electrolux	(129)	89%
Hotpoint	(571)	89%
Siemens	(98)	89%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(270)	89%
Indesit	(74)	86%
Liebherr	(65)	86%
MFI/Diplomat/Hygena	(51)	86%
Miele	(80)	86%
Samsung	(235)	86%
Servis	(113)	86%
Whirlpool	(243)	86%
Hoover	(90)	83%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 4,300 owners

Freezers

Freezers are the most reliable of all white goods in our survey. On average only four in a hundred break down in the first six years. None of the brands scored below average – even the lowest scored a very respectable 94 per cent.

So it takes a special brand to achieve an above-average score in such a competitive field. In our survey, that special brand is Frigidaire, scoring 100 per cent.

Best Buys

Sadly, there aren't any Frigidaire Best Buys at the moment but, with such a high average reliability, you won't run much risk of a breakdown if you choose any of our current Best Buys from Bosch, Electrolux, Hotpoint, Whirlpool, Zanussi and Miele (for our latest test, see *Which?*, July 2006, p56-59).

You recommend

Bosch and Miele are the brands most owners feel they'd definitely recommend.

You're less keen on Lec, Norfrost and Proline freezers – fewer than 30 per cent of you would definitely recommend a friend to buy one.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 23% Problems with accessories (eg shelves, drawers, units)
- 20% Problems with the door
- 15% Thermostat problems



FREEZERS

Reliability of freezers up to six years old. Average = 96%

Frigidaire	(127)	100%
Electrolux	(126)	98%
Norfrost	(74)	98%
Bosch	(367)	97%
Beko	(182)	96%
Hotpoint	(377)	96%
Whirlpool	(193)	96%
AEG/AEG-Electrolux	(124)	94%
Iceland/Icepoint/Iceline	(78)	94%
Lec	(113)	94%
Miele	(64)	94%
Proline	(89)	94%
Zanussi/Zanussi-Electrolux	(131)	94%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 2,566 owners

It takes a special brand to achieve 100 per cent. Frigidaire freezers do just that

We're glad to see free-standing cookers, built-in ovens and hobs all come out as pretty reliable.

Freestanding cookers

Topping the charts for reliability are Cannon, Creda, and New World, with only some one in ten needing repairs. Other brands rated average except for Rangemaster, which is the only brand rated poor for reliability – more than a quarter needed attention in their first six years.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top four reasons why your machines broke down

- 19% Problems with door
- 14% Not heating up at all
- 11% Ignition
- 11% Problems with dial

Best Buys

We'll be looking at ranges in August and hope to test freestanding cookers soon.

You recommend

Despite its lowly ranking in our reliability survey, Rangemaster is the only brand with above-average recommendations, but still by only 55 per cent of you. Beko, New World and Tricity Bendix all scored poorly.

FREESTANDING COOKERS

Reliability of freestanding cookers up to six years old. Average = 81%

Cannon	(355)	89%
Creda	(207)	89%
New World	(88)	89%
Parkinson Cowan	(101)	85%
Tricity Bendix	(127)	85%
Belling	(254)	81%
Hotpoint	(115)	81%
Beko	(64)	77%
Indesit	(54)	77%
Leisure	(95)	77%
Stoves	(191)	77%
Zanussi	(106)	77%
Rangemaster	(160)	73%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 2,335 owners

THE 47-YEAR-OLD FRIDGE

John Learmonth

72, retired

John Learmonth's family bought its fridge 47 years ago, just three years after *Which?* was born. It has served four generations and its only repair has been a change of light bulb.

'When I was about 26 years old, my mother bought a Tricity TW461 fridge,' says John. 'There wasn't enough room in our small kitchen, so she got a fridge that looked like a cabinet in wood-grain effect, so it could sit in the hall.'

'It worked for my parents and my brothers, and it is still going strong now for two great-grandchildren.'



Built-in ovens



Built-in ovens are a shade more reliable than freestanding cookers, with just over one in six needing repairs in the first six years. Bosch/Siemens and Whirlpool top the charts, with around 90 per cent reliability in their first six years. Baumatic is the only brand rated as poor.

Best Buys

For single ovens from reliable brands, pick the Whirlpool AKZ650/IX (£456), Whirlpool AKZ497/IX (£458), Bosch HBN 430550B (£580) or the Siemens HB55 M550B (£955). For a double oven, try the Bosch HBN56M550B (£1,030).

You recommend

Bosch/Siemens, Neff and AEG are the top three brands you'd recommend to a friend.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top two reasons why your machines broke down

- 23% Oven will not heat up well
- 16% Problems with the door

BUILT-IN OVENS

Reliability of built-in ovens up to six years old. Average = 83%

Bosch/Siemens	(317)	89%
Whirlpool	(128)	89%
Diplomat	(126)	86%
New World	(56)	86%
Neff	(648)	83%
AEG	(142)	80%
Belling	(94)	80%
Creda	(129)	80%
Electrolux	(126)	80%
Hotpoint	(145)	80%
Stoves	(138)	80%
Zanussi	(182)	80%
Baumatic	(89)	77%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 2,846 owners

Gas hobs

Hobs are the most reliable cooking appliance in our survey, with just 6 per cent needing repairs in the first six years. Electrolux scores 100 per cent for reliability.

Hotpoint can be proud of the reliability of its gas hobs, joining Zanussi scoring 98 per cent. None of the other brands scores below 90 per cent and none scores poorly, so you can be pretty confident in hobs from all these brands.

Best Buys

We don't have any Best Buy gas hobs made by Electrolux, Zanussi or Hotpoint, so instead choose from the Best Buys Whirlpool AKM441 (£319), Neff T2346 (£199) or Neff T2866 (£389).

You recommend

Once again you name Bosch as a brand you'd be happy to see your friends buy. Neff joins it at the top of the heap, too.



GAS HOBS

Reliability of gas hobs up to six years old. Average = 94%

Electrolux	(62)	100%
Hotpoint	(57)	98%
Zanussi	(77)	98%
Baumatic	(79)	96%
Whirlpool	(84)	96%
Belling	(61)	94%
AEG	(56)	92%
Bosch	(133)	92%
MFI/Diplomat/Hygena	(118)	92%
Neff	(326)	92%
Stoves	(102)	92%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 1,594 owners

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top four reasons why your machines broke down

- 56% Ignition problems
- 20% Problems with switches/dials
- 6% Oven will not heat up well
- 6% Gas leaks

Electric hobs

Electric hobs equal their gas counterparts in terms of reliability, although far fewer people actually own one. Bosch hits the top, scoring 100 per cent reliability, but none of the brands scored less than 90 per cent.

Best Buys

In our recent hobs test, there were no Best Buys made by any brands in our survey.

You recommend

Bosch and Neff come top here, with 63 per cent and 58 per cent of you respectively definitely recommending the brand. MFI/Diplomat/Hygena is stuck at the bottom, with an unenthusiastic 22 per cent.

For electric hobs, no brands scores less than 90 per cent reliability

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

- 36% Hob will not heat up effectively
- 21% Hob will not heat up at all
- 17% Cracked hob

ELECTRIC HOBS

Reliability of electric hobs up to six years old. Average = 94%

Bosch	(65)	100%
MFI/Diplomat/Hygena	(52)	97%
Neff	(165)	94%
AEG	(50)	91%
Hotpoint	(54)	91%

Sample size in brackets. Total sample: 818 owners



CANNON AND ON AND ON...

John E Duncan

73, writer

John bought his Cannon A134D/U gas cooker in 1968. He says: 'When we changed to North Sea gas, the automatic pilot light was disengaged, so now I have to use a match to light the oven and burners. Other than that, it's been no trouble, and I've had it for 38 years.'

We have also surveyed members about the reliability of their vacuum cleaners and, overall, we found that cylinder vacs are more reliable than uprights.

Upright vacuum cleaners

Upright vacs are the least reliable appliance in our survey, with more than a quarter needing a repair within the first six years. All the more impressive then is our top brand, Sebo, which scores 92 per cent.

Dyson upright cleaners have again come out as less reliable than other brands. However, this year our survey also showed that the reliability of the newest upright Dyson cleaners – those that are just one and two years old – is better than the average for other brands in the survey.

It's too soon to say whether this improved reliability will hold up in future years, but early signs are hopeful.

Dyson also offers a market-leading free five-year warranty on all its cleaners – cylinders as well as uprights – and it's because

of this warranty that we recommended two upright Dyson cleaners for the first time in our October 2006 vacuum cleaners report (p44).

Best Buys

For an upright vacuum cleaner from a top-scoring brand in our survey, choose the Best Buy Sebo Felix 1 Premium (£229).

You recommend

Almost 75 per cent of owners would definitely recommend a Sebo. And, despite poor reliability, Dyson gets an average number of recommendations.



BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top three reasons why your machines broke down

25%	Split/broken hose
17%	Suction
15%	Motor

UPRIGHT VACS

Reliability of upright vacuum cleaners up to six years old. Average = 74%

Sebo	(261)	92%
Panasonic	(307)	83%
Electrolux	(225)	79%
Hoover	(354)	74%
Vax	(111)	74%
Dyson	(2,156)	70%

Sample size in brackets.
Total sample: 3,880 owners

Cylinder vacuum cleaners

Cylinder vacuum cleaners are far more reliable than uprights. Numatic shares the top slot with Miele.

BREAKDOWN SUMMARY

The top four reasons why your machines broke down

20%	Suction problems
17%	Split/broken hose
11%	Cable problems
11%	Control problems

appliance. The Miele Cat & Dog TT 5000 (£189 – see 'Member Benefit' box below), Miele S380 (£96), Miele S4210 (£130), Miele S4510 (£170) and Miele S5210 (£140) all achieve Best Buy status. Currently there are no Numatic Best Buys.

You recommend

Miele and Numatic are the brands you're most likely to recommend.



CYLINDER VACS

Reliability of cylinder vacuum cleaners up to six years old. Average = 91%

Miele	(1,297)	95%
Numatic	(170)	95%
Bosch	(216)	93%
Panasonic	(64)	91%
Morphy Richards	(70)	89%
Electrolux	(197)	87%
Hoover	(104)	87%
Dyson	(431)	84%

Sample size in brackets.
Total sample: 2,918 owners

REST IN PIECES

Where you can take your white goods when they pass away

In our October 2006 online survey, we also asked about the disposal of white goods. We found that more than a third of you had them picked up by the seller of your new product. Good news, then, that from July, as part of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, shops will have to arrange for the disposal of your old appliance when you buy a new one.

Meanwhile, you can enter your postcode at the Recycle Now website (www.recyclenow.com) to find out where to recycle in your local area. Schemes such as the Freecycle Network (www.freecycle.org) focus on giving away unwanted working items. The British Heart Foundation also accepts electrical goods in good working order and offers free collection. Visit its website (www.bhf.org.uk). See p76 for more on how to recycle.

MEMBER BENEFIT

Five Best Buy vacuum cleaners to be won

Win one of five Best Buy Miele Cat & Dog TT 5000 vacuum cleaners, with vacuum bags, to the value of £245

TO ENTER, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION
What is the average reliability of cylinder vacuums?

(a) 91% (b) 26% (c) 60%



To enter our Best Buy competition online, go to www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition or send your entry on a postcard to

'Best Buy January 07',
Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford X, SG14 1SH.

Include your name, address and postcode,

daytime phone number and Which? membership number (found on your Which? membership card as your user name). Entries received by 2 February 2007 will be entered. Usual rules apply – for a full set of rules see www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition or Which?, December 2006, p79.