

The new car lowdown

Reviews of six new cars which arrived too late for *Which? Car* last month – from Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Subaru, Vauxhall and Volkswagen

Car sales may be slowing, but that doesn't stop carmakers launching more models. Here are six of the latest newcomers to have been through our demanding, independent road-test programme.

We have two budget-priced city cars (Hyundai i10 and Vauxhall Agila),

a small-engined supermini (Subaru Justy), a rugged MPV (VW Caddy Maxi Life), a green newcomer (VW Golf BlueMotion) and a family car that occasionally thinks it's a sports car (Mitsubishi Lancer).

Read on to see how well they match up to their existing rivals.

OUR RESEARCH

The cars tested for this report are a selection of recent major launches and niche models hoping to take on the market leaders. We put each car through its paces, testing it in normal driving conditions as well as at the extremes on a track. We calculate the fuel consumption on a rolling road, following precisely prescribed measurement cycles, and we measure the interiors for passenger and luggage space. All star ratings given in the reviews are out of a maximum of five.

Mitsubishi Lancer ★★★

Driving ★★★★★

Few car ranges are as 'Jekyll and Hyde' as the Mitsubishi Lancer. At one extreme, it's a sensible, mid-priced family saloon; at the other, the Evo X version is a fire-breathing turbocharged sports car priced as high as £38,000. The Evo X is stunningly quick and fantastically grippy, but it's clearly aimed at a hardcore enthusiast audience.

Our test of the rather more sedate 1.8 petrol saloon showed it to be a good all-rounder. However, we're not that keen on the engine, which has feeble pulling power below 3,000rpm and needs to be revved hard to extract good performance, when it becomes pretty raucous.

The VW-derived 2.0 diesel engine is the better option, having greater pulling power. In other respects, the Lancer is a credible machine. It has precise, accurate steering; grippy, safe and neutral cornering; reasonable visibility; and a crisp, smooth-acting manual gearbox. Braking, however, is only average – but at least electronic stability control is fitted as standard.

Comfort ★★★★★

Overall build quality looks good, although some of the plastics feel cheap. Getting in and out is hampered a little by the low roofline, something that also restricts rear passengers above about 1.80 metres in height. Otherwise the Lancer is a spacious car for four adults, with supportive seats and an impressive ride (although the centre rear seat is very uncomfortable).



Well built and comfy, but some plastics feel cheap

The boot is reasonable for a car of this size, at 375 litres, and it can be expanded to 725 litres by folding the 60/40 rear seat backs; however, this does leave a sizeable and inconvenient step in the load floor.



Ownership ★★★★★

The new Lancer is competitively priced, starting at around £15,000, although the range-topping Evo X versions look very pricey. Fuel consumption isn't a particularly strong suit: our test of the 1.8 petrol model returned an average of 36.2mpg. However, the 2.0 diesel should be better in this respect.

The reliability of Mitsubishi in the *Which? Car* survey is generally good. However, according to Mitsubishi drivers' responses, they are not always satisfied with their ownership experience.

VERDICT This is a striking-looking newcomer, initially available only as a four-door saloon, but coming soon as a five-door hatchback. It's a solid and good-value all-rounder with decent safety equipment and high specification, and a fun drive. We don't like the weak and thirsty 1.8-litre engine, but the Evo X's turbocharged powerplant is a totally different story.

Score

Total star ratings ignore price and are based on:

Driving	45%	Safety	15%
Reliability	15%	Owner satisfaction	15%
Security	10%	Maximum	★★★★★

Where we don't have model-specific reliability or ownership data for these new cars, we use the overall current record for the brand.

LANCER IN BRIEF

What is it?

Curious straddling of Ford Focus and sports car classes

On-the-road prices £15,224 to £38,454

For Enjoyable to drive, well equipped, good value

Against High fuel consumption, 1.8 engine feels weak and raucous

Engine range 1.8 petrol; 2.0 turbo petrol; 2.0 diesel

Gearbox options 5- or 6-speed manual; 6-speed semi-auto

Model tested 1.8 GS4 manual 4-dr (£17,224)

Test fuel economy (combined) 36.2mpg (36.7 claimed)

Estimated resale value £7,750 (45%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost £18,000 (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCAP crash test scores n/a

WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST

Ford Focus The entry-level Lancer is close to the Focus in price but a much more leftfield choice than Ford's solid all-rounder.

Subaru Impreza The high-powered Lancer Evo X's main rival is the Subaru Impreza STi, which is offered only in hatchback form.

Mazda3 A likeable relative of the Ford Focus that is, like the Lancer, available as a four-door saloon, too. A *Which? Car* Best Buy.



Hyundai i10 ★★★

Driving ★★★

UK consumers get only one i10 engine option: a 1.1-litre 65bhp four-cylinder unit (which is shared with the Kia Picanto). It revs quite happily, but in no way could be described as a powerful performer – and it can make a racket on long journeys, which is made worse by wind noise. The i10 is clearly best suited to city traffic.

We tested the manual gearbox version, which works smoothly enough (the 1.1 Comfort model can be ordered with automatic transmission for an extra £800). To drive, the i10 is a big step forward for Hyundai, with a taut chassis and surprisingly comfortable suspension for a city car.

However, the i10 is not available with electronic stability control, even as an option. In this day and age, we think that's a major shortcoming.

In our obstacle avoidance test, the steering response was too slow to prevent the car from spinning, something that stabi-

ty control could have stopped. It would also help to minimise the i10's tendency to understeer in wet conditions.

Comfort ★★★

Generally speaking, the i10 is pleasant to sit in, and a lot better than the old Hyundai Amica it replaces. There may still be lots of hard plastic, but it looks much better finished and has a user-friendly design.

Overall, this feels like a very well-made car. The controls and instruments are clear and accessible, too. Visibility is clear front and rear, although the rising window-line does obstruct vision over the shoulder.

There's decent space for both front and rear passengers, plus a small (140-litre) boot that can be expanded to 515 litres by folding the rear seats.

Ownership ★★★★★

The i10 model is too new to appear in our reliability rankings but, as a maker, Hyundai has a good rating for both customer satisfaction and brand reliability.

The Euro NCap crash results for the i10

WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST

Citroën C1 This popular city car is all but identical to the Peugeot 107 and Toyota Aygo. All are worth a look.

Fiat Panda The Panda feels more mature than you'd expect. It's quite spacious, but pricier than the i10.

Kia Picanto The sister model to the i10 is offered with a 1.0-litre engine for less money.

Vauxhall Agila See p74.

Overall,
this feels
like a very
well-made
car



i10 IN BRIEF

What is it?

Hyundai's bargain basement replacement for the Amica

On-the-road prices £6,745 to £8,145

For Feels mature, great value

Against No electronic stability control option

Engine range 1.1 65bhp petrol

Gearbox options 5-speed manual; 4-speed auto

Model tested 1.1 Style (£7,845)

Test fuel economy (combined) n/a (claimed 54.3mpg)

Estimated resale value £3,525 (45%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost Not yet available (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCap crash test scores

Adult occupant ★★★★★

Child occupant ★★★★★

Pedestrian ★★★



Surprisingly good ride for a city car

are solid (see above). As for running costs, manual-gearbox 1.1 Classic and Comfort models emit just 119g of CO₂ per kilometre, putting them into the £35-a-year road tax band. However, the 1.1 Style emits 124g/km and the 1.1 Comfort automatic 139g/km, so they sit in a higher tax band – currently £120 a year.

VERDICT Hyundai has made great progress – the new i10 takes its place among the best city cars, particularly in terms of build quality, feel and driving maturity. It's a relatively spacious car, too. However, we'd like to see electronic stability control offered as an urgent priority.



Vauxhall Agila ★★ ★★

Driving ★★ ★★

If you see the words Suzuki a lot in this review, it's because Vauxhall's new Agila is a virtual carbon-copy of the Suzuki Splash. The Agila has 1,242cc petrol or Fiat-built 1,248cc diesel four-cylinder engines, which the Splash shares, but the Vauxhall range also extends to a budget 996cc three-cylinder petrol model that undercuts the cheapest Suzuki.

We tested the 1.2 petrol version and found it performs reasonably well, although you have to rev the engine hard and change gear a lot (especially as top gear is a cruising ratio). Even so, the engine doesn't feel strained and remains quite refined for a small unit, although inevitably it's quite noisy at high revs (and there's plenty of wind noise, too).

The Agila understeers predictably through corners, and our avoidance test produced no concerns, as the electronic stability control acted quickly. But the system is optional at £400 – you get this as standard with Suzuki's Splash.

Befitting its role as a city car, the Agila's



The bright, colourful dash might be an acquired taste

turning circle is very tight, and the steering is precise. However, the car's thick pillars badly affect visibility.

Comfort ★★ ★

We're quite impressed with the Agila's build quality and the materials used. The layout of the controls and switchgear is, with a few exceptions, excellent. Front seat passengers have exceptionally good head- and shoulder-room for a car in this class, but it's a different story for rear-seat passengers. Legroom is at a distinct premium for adults and it can feel quite claustrophobic in the back. The seats themselves are comfortable and supportive.

The boot, at 145 litres, is pretty small, but an extra 40 litres are available under the floor and, once the 60/40 rear seats are folded, total boot capacity grows to 530 litres (up to the window line).

Ownership ★★

As Suzuki actually builds the Agila, it may be better to own than most Vauxhalls.



Split rear seat can be partly folded

AGILA IN BRIEF

What is it? Compact new city car is badged Vauxhall but has Suzuki DNA

On-the-road prices £7,595 to £11,195

For Easy to drive, spacious up front, well made

Against Top models are pricey, limited rear legroom

Engine range 1.0 and 1.2 petrol, 1.3 diesel

Gearbox options 5-speed manual; 4-speed auto

Model tested 1.2 Club manual (£8,895)

Test fuel economy (combined) 46.3mpg (51.4 claimed)

Estimated resale value £3,725 (41%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost £10,440 (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCap crash test scores

Not yet tested, but we expect it to score similarly to the Suzuki Splash, with four stars for adult occupant protection.

In the 2008 *Which? Carsurvey*, Vauxhall's brand reliability isn't great, and Vauxhall owners don't enthuse about their cars – however, Suzukis fare better.

At least the Agila should be cheap to run. We achieved an average of 46.3mpg on our test, although that's some way short of the claimed 51.4mpg. The 1.2 engine has CO₂ emissions of 131g/km, whereas the 1.0 and diesel versions, at 120g/km, sneak into the £35-a-year road tax band.

VERDICT The new Agila is completely different from the old model of the same name – which is a good thing. It bodes well that it's the result of a joint venture with fellow General Motors brand Suzuki, but we think the Splash is better value – stability control is standard, and like-for-like prices are lower.

WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST

Suzuki Splash Shares its chassis and much of its spec with the Agila but doesn't have such a full range of engines to choose from.

Fiat Panda A roomy, mature offering that's cheaper than the Agila.

Hyundai i10 This newcomer (see p73) feels surprisingly grown-up and is excellent value.

Befitting its role as a city car, the Agila's turning circle is very tight



Volkswagen Golf BlueMotion ★★★★★

Driving ★★★★★

The aim of VW's BlueMotion range is to maximise fuel economy – the good news is that this Golf does just that. And it doesn't feel too compromised by the changes made to the suspension, gearing and tyres.

It's powered by VW's 103bhp 1.9 TDI diesel engine – not the world's most refined unit, it must be said, especially at low revs. To save fuel, the gearbox has longer third, fourth and fifth ratios, which takes the edge off the performance of the regular Golf TDI. There's still enough pulling power despite the wider gearing, but you do have to change down from top quite often.

This is a very easy car to drive, with excellent stability – aided by standard electronic stability control – neutral-feeling steering and gently understeering handling.

To improve its aerodynamics, the Golf BlueMotion has lower suspension than standard Golfs. It's still relatively comfortable, although the ride quality on motorways can feel a little thumpy. It's not the most refined when cruising, either, as that engine noise never really goes away.

Comfort ★★★★★

The Golf remains a benchmark for build quality and materials, with tight panel gaps and an excellent finish.

It's very easy to get comfortable behind the wheel, and front seat passengers have a huge amount of space; in the rear, things are pretty good, too. All the seats are well contoured and supportive, although the rear seats could offer more thigh support.

Fuel economy, at 57.6mpg, is a definite strong point

The 350-litre boot is about average for this class, growing to 690 litres (up to the window line) with the rear seats folded. But there's a high lip to load luggage over, and folding the seats leaves a step in the floor.

Ownership ★★★★★

VW as a brand doesn't fare too well in our survey, but the Golf scores much better. It's average for reliability and customers rate it highly. It should hold its value well, too.

The main reason to buy a BlueMotion is fuel economy and, at 57.6mpg in our test, that's a definite strong point. CO₂ emissions of 119g/km bring the BlueMotion into the low £35-a-year road-tax bracket.

VERDICT The BlueMotion may be pricey, but it lives up to its promise of cleaner, greener motoring – with excellent fuel economy, a standard diesel particulate filter and low emissions.



The Golf is still a benchmark for cabin build quality

CARS PHONE-IN

Your car questions answered...

Call us on Friday 7 August

Whether you're confused about 'green' cars, would like some tips on cutting your motoring bills, or advice on getting better service from your dealer – call our cars team on **Friday 7 August**. We'd also welcome your views on *Which? Car 2008*.

Call us on 01992 822800 between 10am and 3pm, quoting your *Which?* membership number.



GOLF BLUEMOTION IN BRIEF

What is it?

Latest addition to VW's BlueMotion range; a low-emissions eco Golf diesel

On-the-road prices £15,590 to £16,770

For Genuine fuel efficiency, low emissions

Against Expensive, unrefined engine, slightly blunted performance

Engine range 1.9 diesel (103bhp)

Gearbox options 5-speed manual

Model tested 1.9 TDI BlueMotion S DPF 5-dr (£16,090)

Test fuel economy (combined) 57.6mpg (61.4 claimed)

Estimated resale value £7,725 (48%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost £14,760 (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCAP crash test scores

Adult occupant ★★★★★
Child occupant ★★★★★
Pedestrian ★★★

WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST

Mazda3 diesel It's ageing a little now but still a Best Buy: high-quality, good to drive, reliable and frugal.

Kia Cee'd diesel Another Best Buy rival in the Golf class with a unique seven-year warranty. It's economical in diesel form.

Toyota Prius Toyota's petrol-electric hybrid has very low emissions, and owners love it – another Best Buy.

Subaru Justy ★★★

Driving ★★★

The Justy is a re-badged version of the Daihatsu Sirion, which was rated highly by owners in our 2008 survey. Its small, 1.0-litre engine is lively and well suited to city use. But it's a pity the gear lever feels imprecise. This car is just about comfortable enough for occasional

longer journeys, although it does become noisy at higher speeds.

The turning circle is tight and the steering is light, if rather numb. The Justy rides well for a small car but it gets a bit bumpy when fully loaded.

While the Justy is capable of relatively high cornering speeds, the rear end can spin out of control if you push too hard – as happened in our obstacle avoidance test. Electronic stability control would help, but it isn't offered as an option.

Comfort ★★★

It's easy to get comfy in the driver's seat, and the instruments and controls are mostly clear and well positioned. The lofty seating position means visibility is good to the front but less impressive to the rear.

The high roofline also means that headroom isn't an issue. Taller

passengers may feel tight on legroom in the back, though.

The boot isn't huge, at 220 litres, but folding the rear seats is easy and leaves a virtually flat load floor. Capacity grows to 570 litres.

Ownership ★★★★★

Satisfaction is high among Subaru owners in our *Which? Car* survey. Subaru's brand reliability is also excellent and the Justy appears very well made. It's pretty frugal, averaging 47.9mpg in our tests (versus a claimed 56.5).

VERDICT The Justy is cheap and well equipped with air-con, alloy wheels and electric windows. But the Daihatsu Sirion and Perodua Myvi are basically the same car for less cash, with more powerful engine options.

JUSTY IN BRIEF

What is it?

Subaru-badged version of the Daihatsu Sirion

On-the-road price £8,995

For Spacious cabin, peppy performance

Against Noisy at speed, no electronic stability control

Engine range 1.0 petrol (67bhp)

Gearbox options 5-speed manual

Model tested 1.0 R (£8,995)

Test fuel economy (combined) 47.9mpg (56.5 claimed)

Estimated resale value £3,675 (41%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost £10,800 (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCAP crash test scores

Not yet tested, but we expect it to score similarly to the Daihatsu Sirion, with four stars for adult occupant protection.



WHAT'S IT UP AGAINST

Honda Jazz The Jazz remains one of our Best Buys, with its excellent space, versatility and reliability. An all-new model is due soon.

Mazda2 This impressive newcomer is a mature and well-rounded hatchback, now available in three- and five-door versions.

Skoda Fabia The Fabia is a well priced, reliable and spacious Best Buy supermini.

CADDY MAXI LIFE IN BRIEF

What is it?

Would-be 'budget' MPV that's one step up from a van; shares many parts and engines with the similar VW Touran

On-the-road prices £16,020 to £17,995

For Huge cabin, sliding rear doors, lots of room, seven seats

Against Too expensive, feels cheap, electronic stability control is a £285 option

Engine range 1.9 diesel (102bhp); 2.0 diesel (138bhp)

Gearbox options 5-speed manual or 6-speed semi-auto (1.9); 6-speed manual (2.0)

Model tested 1.9 TDI manual (£16,020)

Test fuel economy (combined) 42.8mpg (44.8 claimed)

Estimated resale value £8,000 (50%) (3 years/36,000 miles)

Estimated running cost £15,480 (3 years/36,000 miles)

Euro NCAP crash test scores

Adult occupant ★★★★★
Child occupant ★★★★★
Pedestrian ★★

Volkswagen Caddy Maxi Life ★★★★★

Driving ★★★★★

The 102bhp 1.9 diesel we tested is lively enough for most driving conditions, but there's also a very willing 138bhp 2.0 diesel model if you need more power. The five-speed manual gearbox is good to use, but low gearing in top makes motorway cruising a little tiring.

Handling is stable, with a safe tendency to understeer. But in our obstacle avoidance test, the £285 electronic stability control system was needed to prevent the rear end breaking away, particularly when loaded – it really should be standard.

Smooth and responsive steering makes the Caddy fairly easy to drive, despite its size. The suspension is stiff yet comfy, and absorbs bumps well. The engine and wind noise at speed is OK for this type of car.

Comfort ★★★★★

Few cars are as capacious as the Caddy Maxi Life, and access is aided by its sliding rear doors. With five

seats up, there's 600 litres of luggage space and, with the second row folded, that rises to 950 litres (more if you fill right up to the roof). The load floor is very low and flat.

There's a vast amount of headroom and plenty of space up front but less in the rear, and we're not keen on the sliding rear windows.

Ownership ★★

VW as a brand is rated poor for reliability in our survey, and owners aren't overly satisfied with their VWs. For a diesel-engined car with 102bhp, we expected to get more than our test average of 42.8mpg. The Caddy's high purchase prices don't help its cause, either.

VERDICT For a vehicle that's basically a van with seats, the Caddy Maxi Life costs too much. While it's well made, practical and pretty good to drive, you could buy the slightly less utilitarian Touran for similar money.



WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST

Citroën Berlingo Multispace

A sophisticated all-new model is now on sale – look for great discounts on the old-shape Berlingo, now renamed 'First'.

Peugeot Partner The sister model of the Berlingo – the new Partner Tepee replaces the old Partner Combi.

Renault Kangoo Bit of an old warhorse but quite practical. A new Kangoo is due soon.