

Mazda No. 1 in Consumer Reports 2020 auto reliability survey

November 19 2020, by Tom Krisher



In this June 14, 2020, photograph, a Mazda company logo shines on the front of an unsold 2020 Miata at a Mazda dealership in Littleton, Colo. On Thursday, Nov. 19, Mazda beat traditional winners Lexus and Toyota to win top honors as the most dependable auto brand in Consumer Reports' annual reliability survey. Reports surveyed organization members who own more than 300,000 vehicles from model years 2000 to 2020. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

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the most dependable auto brand in Consumer Reports' annual reliability survey.

Ford and its Lincoln luxury [brand](#) fell in the survey with Lincoln finishing last among 26 brands after introducing new SUVs. Electric car maker Tesla was second from the bottom with reliability troubles on three of its four models.

Mazda took top honors for the first time in the survey, which this year included Consumer Reports organization members who own more than 300,000 vehicles from [model](#) years 2000 to 2020.

The Japanese auto brand benefitted from being among the smallest and lacking capital to continually offer new multi-speed transmissions and infotainment gadgets, said Jake Fisher, senior director of auto testing for the magazine and website.

"A lot of times new technology gives us trouble," Fisher said. "They're a little bit conservative when it comes to new technology."

Some Mazdas don't have touch screens, which often are a source of problems in the surveys, Fisher said. And the company still uses six-speed automatic transmissions while others have gone to more efficient but sometimes glitch-prone continuously variable or nine- and 10-speed transmissions, he said. Yet the company's cars and SUVs are still fun to drive, Fisher said.

After Mazda, Toyota, Lexus, Buick and Honda rounded out the top five brands. Following Lincoln and Tesla, Volkswagen, Mini and Ford were the five lowest-scoring brands.

Normally high-scoring Buick jumped two spots after canceling two unreliable cars, the Regal and Regal TourX, Fisher said.

Consumer Reports said that the Ford Explorer SUV, redesigned for the 2020 model year, is among the lowest-scoring models of any manufacturer with transmission, electronic, and engine issues. The redesigned Ford Escape also was subpar, the magazine said.

Ford's Lincoln [luxury brand](#) shares underpinnings with the Fords, so it dropped to last place after discontinuing two reliable sedans, the Continental and MKZ, Consumer Reports said.

Closely watched Tesla had problems with the newly introduced Model Y SUV, Fisher said, with many owners reporting issues with misaligned body panels and mismatched paint. One owner reported that hair was stuck in the paint, he said. Only the company's Model 3 small car was rated as reliable and recommended by Consumer Reports. "It's surprising with all the technology on Teslas, it's somewhat the basic issues they seem to struggle with," Fisher said.

Dozens of new models came out last year, and that caused a reshuffling of the brands. Nearly half of the new models have much worse than average reliability, Consumer Reports said.

Many buyers check the magazine and website's rankings before making their purchases.

The 2020 rankings were released Thursday at an online meeting of the Automotive Press Association of Detroit.

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