



EMBARGOED UNTIL: 2:00 PM, October 23, 2008

CONTACTS: Russell Datz, *Brandware Public Relations* or Douglas Love, *Consumer Reports*
(516) 594-0062 (914) 378-2437
rdatz@brandwaregroup.com dlove@consumer.org

CONSUMER REPORTS' 2008 ANNUAL CAR RELIABILITY SURVEY: GAS-SAVING MODELS LEAD IN RELIABILITY

**Also, some domestic models are comparable to top Japanese;
luxury European automakers improve**

YONKERS, NY – Fuel-efficient vehicles are a very reliable segment overall, European cars are improving, and, on average, Ford continues to build the most reliable American cars. Those are some of the results of *Consumer Reports'* 2008 Annual Car Reliability Survey announced today at an Automotive Press Association luncheon in Detroit.

More details, and a list of models with the best and worst predicted-reliability Ratings, will appear first on www.ConsumerReports.org. The reliability report will also appear in the December issue of *Consumer Reports*, on sale November 4 and in the latest *Consumer Reports Cars* publication, *Best & Worst for '09*, which also includes predicted-reliability ratings for more than 350 models.

A total of nine hybrid models for which *Consumer Reports* has sufficient data rated above average in predicted reliability, most from Japanese automakers. From the Family Cars category, the Toyota Prius, the Toyota Camry Hybrid, and the Nissan Altima Hybrid, as well as the luxury Lexus GS450h Hybrid sedan are all among the most reliable. The Lexus RX400h and the Toyota Highlander Hybrid are among the most reliable in mid-sized SUVs, while the Ford Escape Hybrid and Mercury Mariner Hybrid small SUVs rated above average in predicted reliability. The Honda Civic Hybrid is also above average. In addition, conventional gas sippers such as the Honda Fit, Scion xD, Smart ForTwo, and Toyota Yaris had few problems.

Ford's three nameplates – Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury – lead the domestic automakers and continue to pull away from the rest of Detroit. Except for some truck-based vehicles, almost all Ford products are now average or better. Excluding those, Ford's reliability is now on par with good Japanese automakers. The Ford Fusion and Mercury Milan continued to rank among the most reliable family cars. The freshened Ford Focus sedan rated above average, a vast improvement from when the new model debuted in 2000 with below-average reliability.



— more —

European automakers, particularly Mercedes-Benz, showed signs of a comeback. Six Mercedes models, including the redesigned C-Class and E-Class (V6) sedans and the ML350 SUV have improved to average reliability and are now recommended. Last year, no Mercedes models had average or better reliability and so could not be recommended by *Consumer Reports*.

Still, Japanese cars are the most reliable overall, leading 15 of 16 categories in *Consumer Reports*' predicted reliability ratings. The Scion xD has the best predicted reliability score for all new cars with about 80% fewer problems than the average model.

European, Japanese Brands Rebound; Korean Brands Excel; Chrysler Struggles

Though Mercedes-Benz has shown improvement, a third of its models still have reliability problems, and no models scored above average. Overall, the brand moved up five places, from last year's 32 to this year's 27, in *Consumer Reports* survey. Audi and BMW also continue to improve. Two-thirds of Audi's lineup scored average or better, while most versions of the BMW 3 Series and some 5 Series are average or better. Volvo also improved leaving only the redesigned XC70 wagon rated below average in reliability.

Last year *Consumer Reports* called out three Toyota models that slipped to below average: the Camry V6, Tundra V8 4WD, and the Lexus GS AWD. But Toyota seems to have rectified some of the problems since all 42 of the Toyota, Lexus, and Scion models in the survey scored average or better. The three models noted above scored average.

Nissan showed striking improvements, with the troublesome Armada SUV, Titan pickup, and Infiniti QX56 SUV finally gaining average reliability. The new Nissan Rogue and Infiniti EX have started out above average. Nissan moved up in the Makes Rankings six places to fourteenth, while Infiniti moved up one spot, to sixth place when compared to last year's results.

The two closely related South Korean nameplates, Hyundai and Kia, rank right up there with the better Japanese makers. Most models scored above average or better.

General Motors is a mixed bag. Among the bright spots is the redesigned Chevrolet Malibu with above-average reliability for the 4-cylinder model and average for the V6. The Buick Lucerne V8 and four-cylinder Pontiac G6 are both above average. The Chevrolet Avalanche is now average. But a quarter of GM models are still well below average. Newer designs that did well in our testing, like the highly rated Cadillac CTS and Buick Enclave, GMC Acadia, and Saturn Outlook SUV triplets, were below average in reliability.

Chrysler trails the pack. Though the Dodge Caliber hatchback and Jeep Patriot SUV are above average, almost two-thirds of its products rate below average. The new Chrysler Town & Country and Dodge Grand Caravan minivans earned low scores, as did the Chrysler Sebring V6 and Dodge Avenger sedans and Jeep Liberty SUV. The Sebring convertible had the worst predicted reliability score: 283% worse than average.

Full reliability history charts and predicted reliability on hundreds of 2009 models, plus a list of what's up and what's down, best and worst models, and a comparison chart of brands can be found online at www.ConsumerReports.org and in the latest *Consumer Reports Cars* publication, *Best & Worst for '09* (\$5.99 U.S./\$6.99 Canada), on sale November 11, 2008 everywhere magazines are sold.

Findings are based on responses on more than 1.4 million vehicles owned or leased by subscribers to *Consumer Reports* or its web site, www.ConsumerReports.org, the biggest response in the Annual Car Reliability Survey's history. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2008 by *Consumer Reports*' National Survey Research Center and covered model years 1999 to 2008.

Consumer Reports' expert team of statisticians and automotive engineers used the survey data to predict reliability of new 2009 models. Predicted reliability is *CR*'s forecast of how well models currently on sale are likely to hold up. To calculate predicted-reliability ratings, *CR* averages the overall reliability scores (used car verdicts) for the most recent three model years, provided that the model remained unchanged in that period and also didn't substantially change for 2009. If a model was new or redesigned in the past couple of years, one or two years' data may be used, or if that's all that's available.

Consumer Reports Annual Car Reliability Survey is used in determining which makes and models are recommended to consumers by *CR*. *Consumer Reports* recommends only models that have performed well in tests conducted at its 327-acre Auto Test Center in Connecticut, and that have average or better predicted reliability based on its annual survey. In addition, vehicles must perform well in government or insurance-industry crash and rollover tests, if tested, in order to be recommended. Occasionally, *Consumer Reports* may recommend a redesigned model too new to have compiled a reliability record if the previous generation, and the manufacturer's reliability track record has been consistently outstanding, and if the model meets the other criteria.

Consumer Reports is one of the most trusted sources for information and advice on consumer products and services. *CR* has the most comprehensive auto-test program of any American magazine or web site; *CR*'s auto experts have decades of experience in driving, testing, and reporting on cars.

— 30 —

2008 CR CAR RELIABILITY SURVEY - APA

The material above is intended for legitimate news entities only; it may not be used for commercial or promotional purposes. Consumer Reports® is published by Consumers Union, an expert, independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to work for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers and to empower consumers to protect themselves. To achieve this mission, we test, inform, and protect. To maintain our independence and impartiality, CU accepts no outside advertising, no free test samples, and has no agenda other than the interests of consumers. CU supports itself through the sale of our information products and services, individual contributions, and a few noncommercial grants.

Best and worst in reliability

These 2009 models earned the highest and lowest predicted-reliability Ratings based on the Consumer Reports 2008 Car

Reliability Survey. Models marked with (2008) have been redesigned for 2009 but their data are still used in the rating.

Most reliable

Listed in order of Ratings score, starting with the best score.

SMALL CARS

Scion xD^o Hyundai Elantra (shown)
 Mini Cooper Clubman^o Smart ForTwo^o
 Suzuki SX4 Mazda3 (sedan)
 Honda Fit (2008) Honda Civic (sedan)
 Toyota Yaris



FAMILY CARS

Toyota Prius Ford Fusion
 Kia Optima Mercury Milan
 Toyota Camry Hybrid (shown) Nissan Altima Hybrid



SPORTY CARS, COUPES & CONVERTIBLES

Lexus SC^o Toyota Camry Solara
 Volvo C30^o (4-cyl.)
 Honda S2000 Nissan 350Z
 Scion tC (shown)



UPSCALE/LUXURY CARS

Infiniti M35 (RWD) Infiniti G35 Sedan (RWD)
 Lexus IS 250 Acura TL (2008)
 Acura TSX (2008) (shown) Lexus GS450h Hybrid^o



WAGONS & MINIVANS

Toyota Matrix^o Subaru Outback (turbo)^o
 Scion xB^o Toyota Sienna
 Pontiac Vibe^o (shown) Honda Odyssey



SMALL SUVs

Honda Element Honda CR-V
 Toyota FJ Cruiser (shown) Infiniti EX^o
 Toyota RAV4 (4-cyl.)



MIDSIZED SUVs

Honda Pilot (2008) (shown)
 Lexus RX400h (hybrid)
 Lincoln MKX (FWD)
 Toyota 4Runner (V6)
 Toyota Highlander Hybrid^o
 Toyota Highlander^o



LARGE SUVs

Toyota Sequoia^o (shown)



PICKUP TRUCKS

Toyota Tundra (V6)^o
 Honda Ridgeline (shown)



Least reliable

Listed in order of Ratings score, starting with worst score.

SMALL CARS

Nissan Versa (sedan)^o

FAMILY CARS

Dodge Avenger^o
 Chrysler Sebring (V6)^o
 Chevrolet Impala (V8)

SPORTY CARS, COUPES & CONVERTIBLES

Chrysler Sebring (convertible)^o Chevrolet Corvette
 Saturn Sky Saab 9-3 (convertible)^o
 Pontiac Solstice

UPSCALE & LUXURY CARS

Cadillac STS (V8)^o
 Mercedes-Benz E-Class (V8)^o

WAGONS & MINIVANS

Chrysler Town & Country^o
 Dodge Grand Caravan^o
 Hyundai Entourage^o

SMALL SUVs

Land Rover LR2^o Suzuki XL-7^o
 Saturn Vue (V6, AWD)^o Jeep Wrangler
 Dodge Nitro

MIDSIZED SUVs

Land Rover Range Rover^o Land Rover LR3^o
 Volkswagen Touareg Jeep Commander (V8)
 Cadillac SRX (V6) Ford Explorer (V8, 2WD)^o
 Mercedes-Benz M-Class (V8)^o Mercury Mountaineer
 BMW X5 (V8) (V8, 2WD)^o
 Land Rover Range Rover Porsche Cayenne^o
 Sport^o Mercedes-Benz R-Class
 Audi Q7 Jeep Grand Cherokee (4WD)

LARGE SUVs

Mercedes-Benz GL-Class (V8) Cadillac Escalade ESV^o
 Mercedes-Benz GL-Class (turbo-diesel)^o GMC Acadia (FWD)
 Saturn Outlook (FWD)
 Cadillac Escalade

PICKUP TRUCKS

Ford F-250 (turbo-diesel 4WD)^o Dodge Ram 2500 (turbo-diesel 4WD)
 Dodge Dakota (4WD) Chevrolet Colorado (4WD)
 Cadillac Escalade EXT^o GMC Canyon (4WD)

^o Based on data for one model year.

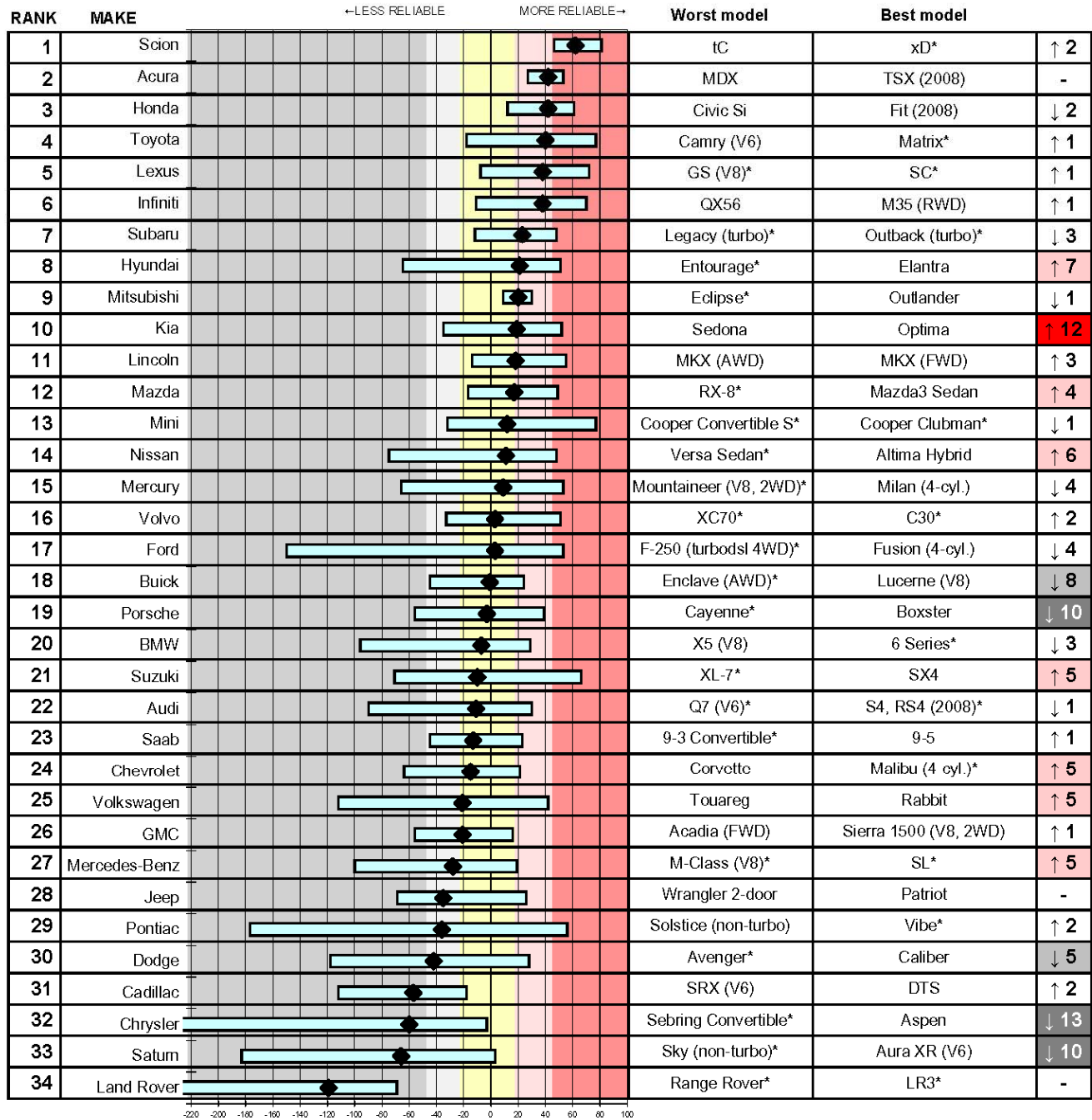


Predicted Reliability: 2009 Models

This graph shows how the makes rank based on average predicted reliability scores, and which models by each make have the highest and lowest ratings. The score is the overall reliability calculated as a percentage better or worse than the average for all cars. The rank order change from last year is noted as well. Large changes are highlighted.



Rank change from last year



* Based on one model year.

© Consumers Union 2008. The material above is intended for legitimate news entities only; it may not be used for commercial or promotional purposes. Consumer Reports® is published by Consumers Union, an expert, independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to work for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers and to empower consumers to protect themselves. To achieve this mission, we test, inform, and protect. To maintain our independence and impartiality, CU accepts no outside advertising, no free test samples, and has no agenda other than the interests of consumers. CU supports itself through the sale of our information products and services, individual contributions, and a few noncommercial grants.