

The Most—and Least—Reliable Cars You Can Buy

Want to stay out of the repair shop? We got 1 million responses to our survey—and found out which brands you can rely on ... and which are time and budget drainers.

WHEN YOU BUY a new car, the last thing you want is an unscheduled trip back to the dealership to fix some problem the automaker or dealer should have caught before the car was sold. But every year, the Consumer Reports auto-reliability survey tells us that some owners will return over and over again.

Our annual survey collects responses on more than 1 million vehicles from Consumer Reports subscribers, generating enough exclusive data to let us predict which new cars, trucks, and SUVs are likely to be reliable and which are troublesome. It also can spot major problem trends among certain carmakers and component areas.

Who's on Top, Who's Not:

- Most of the top 10 brands were Asian, with Lexus and Toyota leading the league by a comfortable margin. One of the reasons Toyota achieves this level of reliability, we believe, is because it introduces new technologies slowly and on proven platforms. By contrast, manufacturers such as Ford will sometimes launch a top-to-bottom redesign with new technology in many areas of the car; it then takes years to work the bugs out.
- The top European brand was Audi, which continued its reliability renaissance after its third-from-bottom showing in our 2011 survey. Buick was the only domestic brand to break the top 10.
- Though some all-new cars beat the odds with high marks right out of the box, such as the BMW 4 series and Kia Cadenza, many do not. Perhaps the most important new vehicle with a lousy first year was the big-selling Chevrolet Silverado/GMC Sierra 1500 series pickup truck lines. The problems were spread over several areas. Our standing advice: Wait a year or two after the introduction of a new

model before taking the plunge.

The fastest growing number of complaints by far involve infotainment systems: audio, navigation, and in-car communications. Results from previous surveys showed that problem areas most often included unresponsive touch screens or poorly functioning multifunction controllers, inability to sync smart phones with Blue-tooth or the docking port, and trouble in getting the voice-command system to recognize verbal commands.

The worst infotainment offender was the new Infiniti Q50 sedan's InTouch system, with more than one in five owners reporting a problem. Updates and changes to Ford and Lincoln's notorious MyTouch systems have made them much less troublesome each year. Honda seems to have fixed a glitch with its HondaLink. And Chrysler has ironed out reliability wrinkles with updates to its easy-to-use Uconnect system. However, Cadillac's Cue system remains a problem.



BEST	WORST
Cars	Cars
Scion xB	Fiat 500L
Lexus CT 200h	Ford Fiesta
Lexus ES 300h Hybrid	Mercedes-Benz CLA 250
SUVs	SUVs
Mitsubishi Outlander Sport	Jeep Cherokee (4-cyl.)
Toyota Highlander (V6)	Nissan Pathfinder
Lexus RX	Jeep Grand Cherokee (diesel)

Luxury Isn't What It Used to Be. (It's Better)

The saying went that high-end luxury cars were reliably unreliable. If we look back at our surveys from a decade ago, the bottom of the pool was littered with European automakers: BMW, Jaguar, Lincoln, and Mercedes, while Audi, Cadillac, and Volvo were midpack or worse.

Conventional wisdom dictated that because high-end cars have more gadgets, they have more things that can go wrong. Though that maxim was mostly true, the concept was contradicted by Lexus, which had ironclad reliability.

The picture today is quite different. More gadgets don't necessarily equate to more problems, at least when the car is new. Tesla launched its high-tech Model S with average reliability and has remained reliable. And European makers have made great strides to improve their reliability.

In fact, Audi has emerged as one of the top brands. Moreover, in addition to every Lexus and Acura, all Audis, Porsches, and Volvos are apt to have average or better reliability. BMW now has only one model that we predict will be subpar.

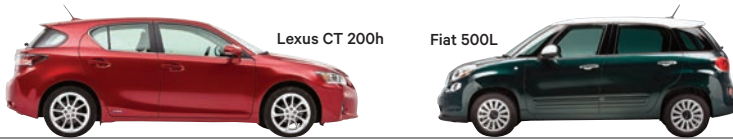
Not that every luxury brand has escalated: Infiniti fell sharply this year, for the same reason that plagued the European luxury brands—too many gadgets with faulty components.

Meanwhile, the car market itself has evolved, with luxury marques adding more small cars and invading the compact SUV market.

However, as luxury high-tech equipment—such as heated seats, rear-view cameras, and complex infotainment systems—has trickled down to mainstream brands, the overall reliability of those vehicles hasn't necessarily suffered. Reliable brands tend to stay that way, despite the addition of all of the toys.

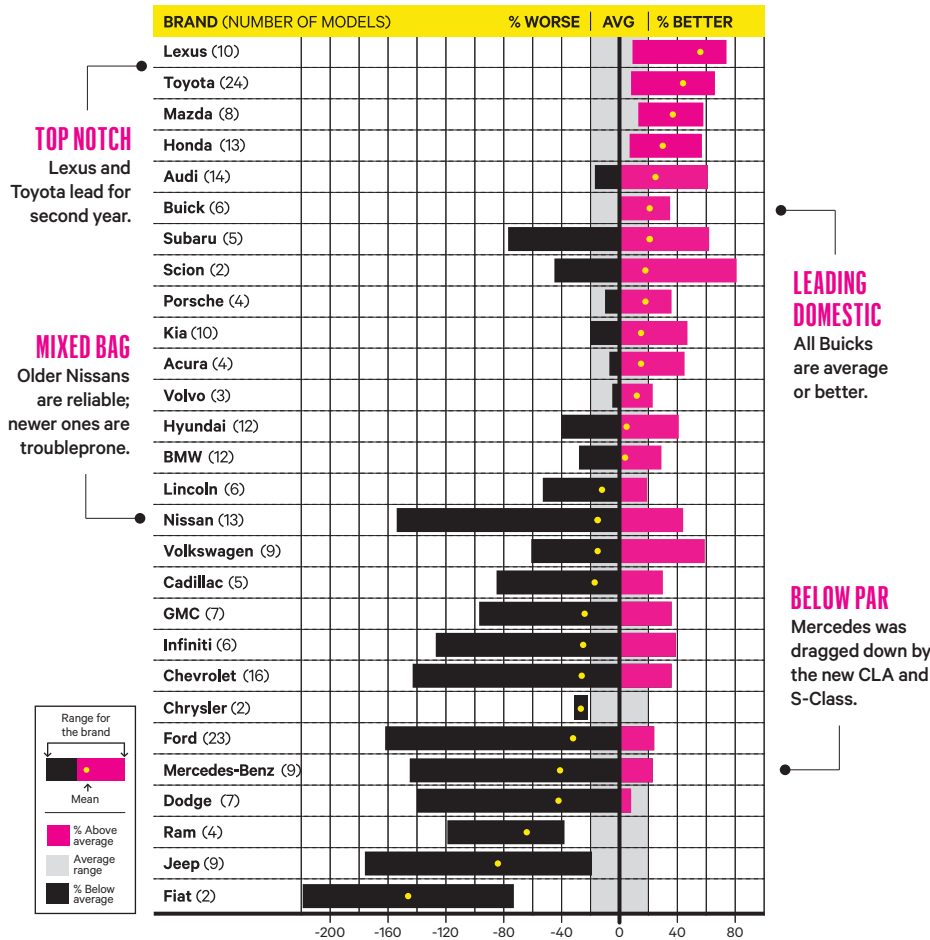
One note: Avoiding gadgets doesn't avoid problems. Many "cheap and cheerful" budget cars performed poorly in the survey.

ROAD REPORT



Reliability: How the Brands Stack Up

This table shows how the brands rank based on the average of their models' predicted-reliability scores. A measure of the brand's consistency can be seen in the span of their scores, cross-referenced by how many different models they produce. The bars illustrate a brand's consistency by showing the reliability range between its most and least reliable models. The numerals indicate the number of models included. To score a brand, we need sufficient data on at least two models. That led us to exclude Jaguar, Land Rover, Mini, Mitsubishi and Tesla.



1,078,364 Number of vehicles in our survey

Most Improved Cars ... and Biggest Losers

- BRANDS THAT GAINED THE MOST:**
- Lincoln
 - Hyundai
 - Kia

This year, Lincoln moved up 12 spots, finishing in 15th place, with four models scoring average and only two below average. Hyundai moved up eight places, finishing 13th. Kia moved up to 10th place, with all models having average or better scores.

- BRANDS THAT FELL THE MOST:**
- Infiniti
 - Mercedes-Benz
 - GMC

Infiniti dropped 14 steps this year to 20th, clobbered by poor showings for its QX60 SUV and Q50 sedan. Mercedes dropped 11 places, dragged down by a dreadful CLA debut. GMC dropped 10 places, finishing 19th, largely because of the Sierra 1500 pickup.

- MODELS THAT GAINED THE MOST:**
- Honda Accord Coupe (V6)
 - Cadillac ATS (V6)
 - Ford Taurus (V6)
 - Ford Explorer (V6, EcoBoost)
 - Honda Accord Coupe (4-cyl)
 - Lincoln MKX

The Cadillac ATS V6 graduated from below average to above average, while the others all improved from much worse than average to average or better. A big reason was revisions to the infotainment systems.

- MODELS THAT FELL THE MOST:**
- Jeep Compass
 - Ram 2500 and 3500 diesel
 - Nissan Sentra
 - Infiniti QX60
 - Cadillac ATS (turbo)
 - Mercedes-Benz GL-Class

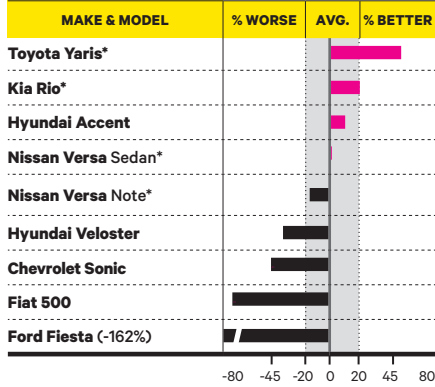
All of these vehicles fell from average or better last year to much worse than average this year. The Compass rating went south for a number of little problems. The Cadillac ATS (turbo) did not share the success of its sibling.

ROAD REPORT: RELIABILITY



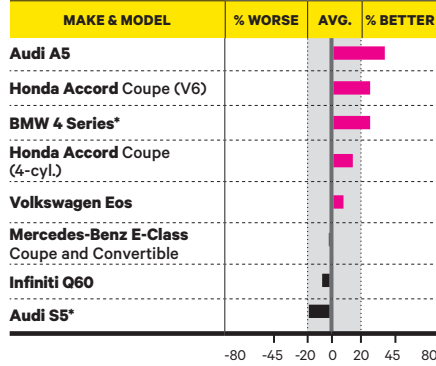
Toyota Yaris

Subcompact Cars



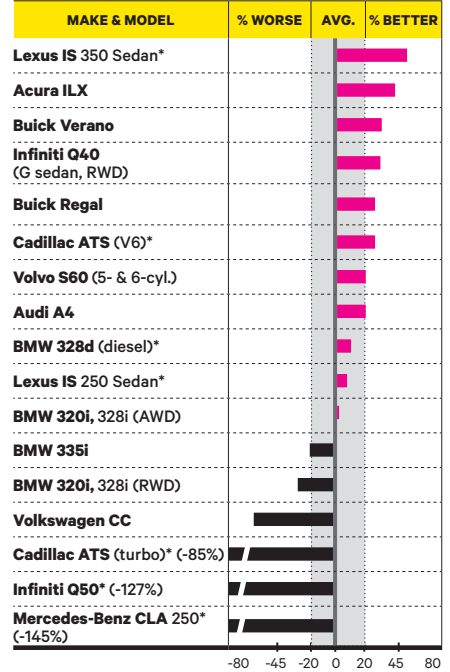
Audi A5

Coupes and Convertibles



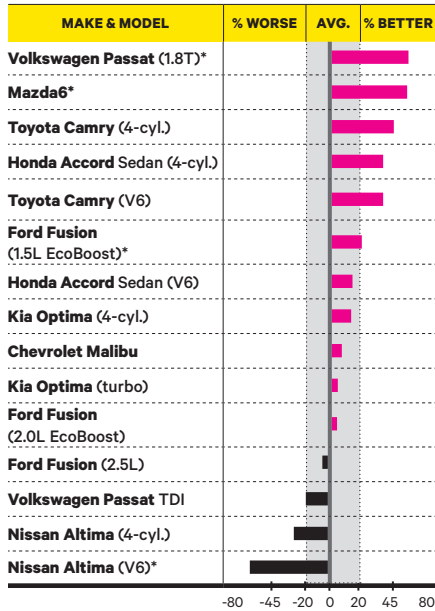
Lexus IS 350

Luxury Compact Cars



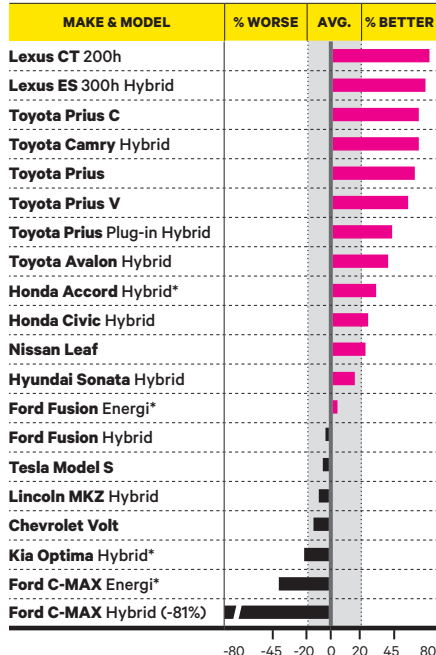
Volkswagen Passat

Midsize Cars



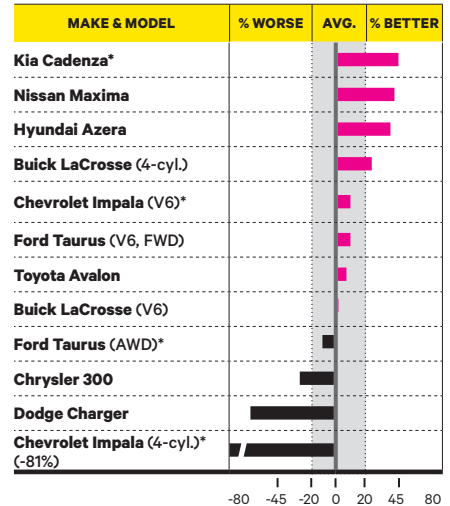
Lexus CT 200h

Hybrid/Electric Cars



Kia Cadenza

Large Cars



How to Use the Charts

The predicted-reliability scores on these pages are derived from the results of an annual Consumer Reports survey of our magazine and online subscribers, who tell us about problems they've experienced with their own cars in the previous 12 months.

This reliability survey is the largest of its kind, spanning nearly 1.1 million vehicles and identifying 17 trouble areas covering a car's components and systems. Respondents identify problems they consider serious, by reason of safety, failure, cost, or time out of service. Even a minor issue counts as serious if it means an unscheduled visit to the dealership.

The reliability Ratings of more than 200 new cars show whether a vehicle is expected to have a trouble rate better or worse than average. The predictions are based on the frequency of problems for the past three model years, provided the vehicle hasn't changed

significantly. Predictions based on a single year's data are marked with an asterisk (*).

The charts' vertical line at zero represents the average for all cars. An "average" Rating goes to cars scoring within 20 percentage points of that line. A bar with a break indicates a score that fell outside the range of the chart.

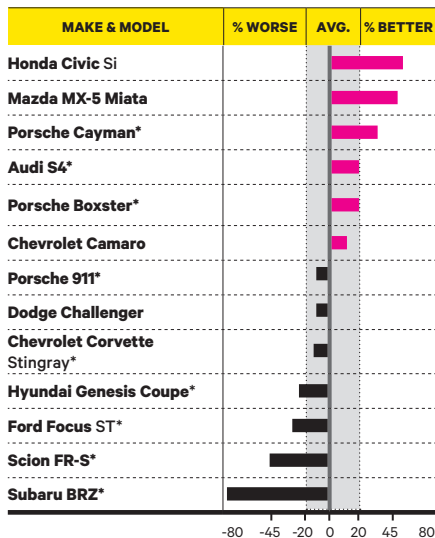
One caveat: Our reliability Ratings and the road-test scores you see elsewhere in Consumer Reports are not related. Road-test Ratings come from cars we have purchased and tested. Reliability information comes solely from our subscribers. Those scores, along with crash-test results, determine which cars we recommend.

So though the Mitsubishi Outlander Sport has excellent reliability, it wasn't recommended in our road tests. Conversely, the Chevrolet Silverado and Mercedes S-Class tested well but showed subpar reliability in our survey.

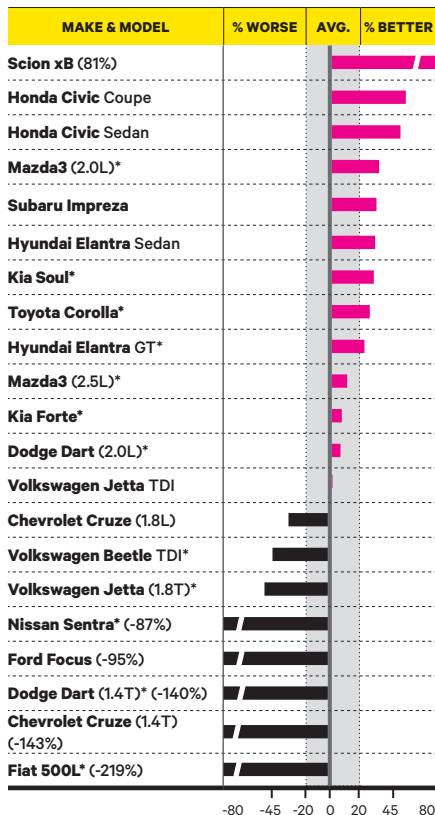
ROAD REPORT: RELIABILITY



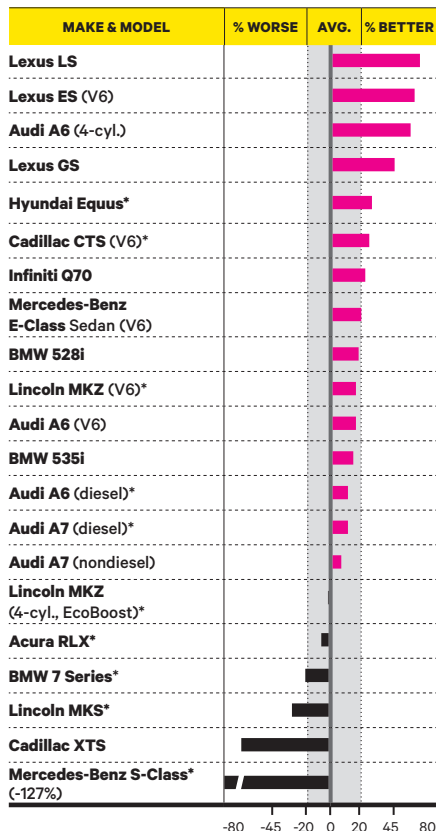
Sporty Cars



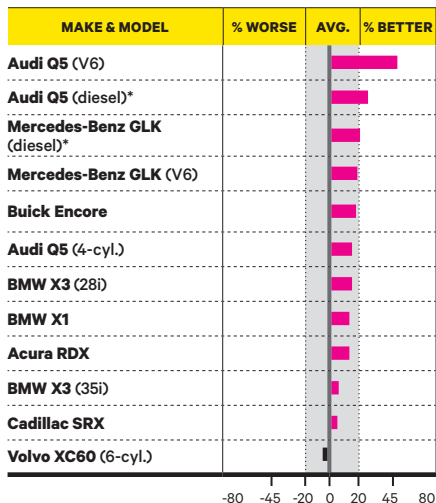
Compact Cars



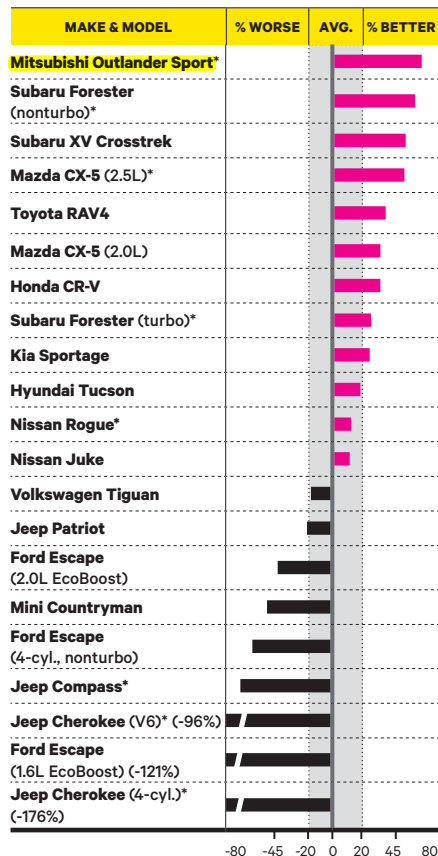
Luxury Midsize/Large Cars



Luxury Compact SUVs



Small SUVs



IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED ...

10%
Complaint rate for 2011 Ford Explorer infotainment system when new

28%
Peak complaint rate for 2011 Ford Explorer since vehicle launch

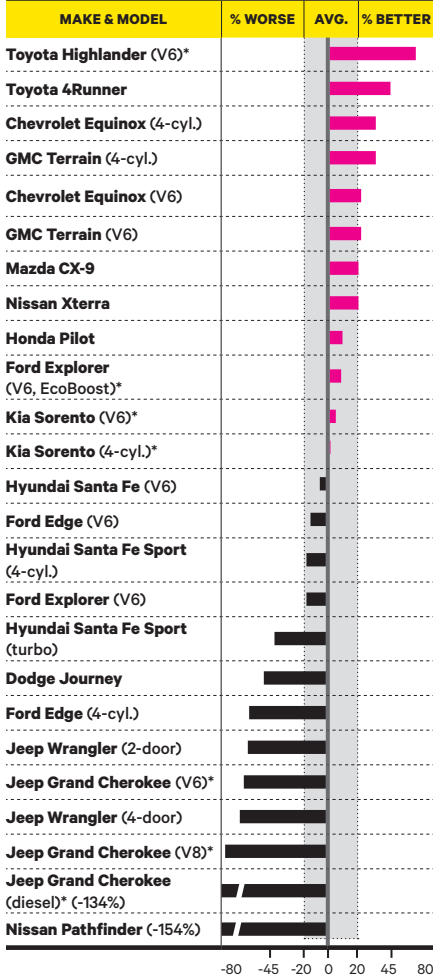
3%
Complaint rate for 2014 Ford Explorer's revised system

ROAD REPORT: RELIABILITY



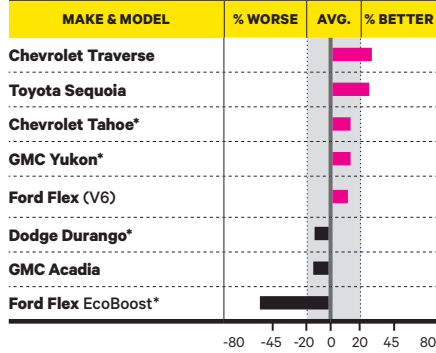
Toyota Highlander

Midsize SUVs



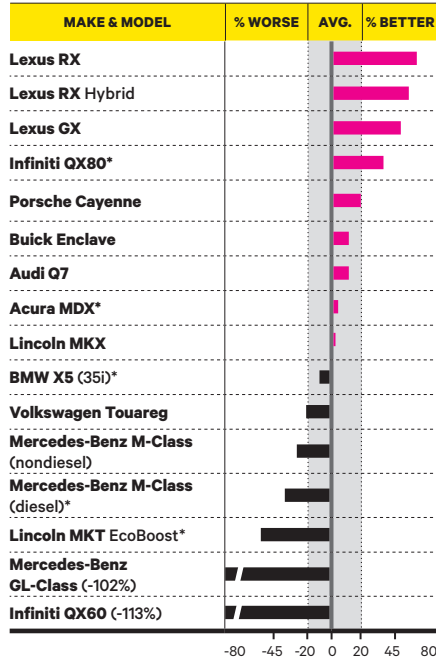
Chevrolet Traverse

Large SUVs



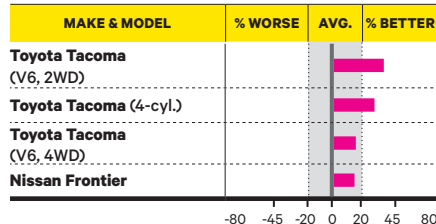
Lexus RX

Luxury Midsize/Large SUVs



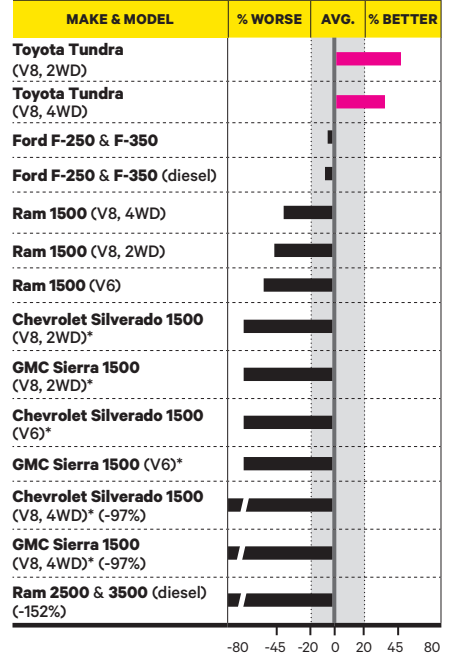
Toyota Tacoma

Compact Pickups



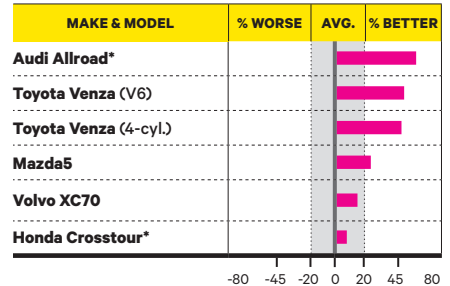
Toyota Tundra

Full-Size Pickups



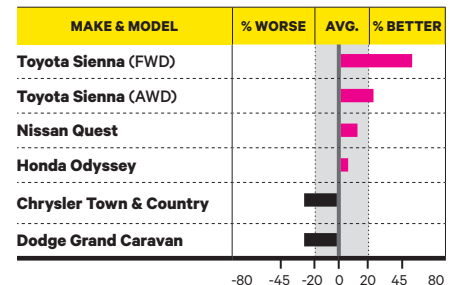
Audi Allroad

Wagons



Toyota Sienna

Minivans



TOP AND BOTTOM

248

Number of models in the Ratings

38

Number of best-scoring models

47

Number of worst-scoring models