

Nissan 350Z most deadly to driver, SUVs safer: study

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Drivers of Nissan 350Z sports car and Titan pickup, as well as the humble Chevrolet Aveo run the most risk of dying in a crash, while Audi's luxury A6 cruised in relative safety, according to an insurance report Thursday.

Meanwhile sports utility vehicles (SUVs), formerly known as rollover death-traps, now have some of the best safety records in the industry, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Bigger is better when it comes to survival for drivers, institute said it found in a study of more than 150 vehicles.

The institute looked at driver death rates for 2005-2008 models during the calendar years 2006-2009.

The odds of a driver dying in a crash in all types of passenger vehicles have improved, but none so dramatically as with sport-utility vehicles, considered death-traps in the 1980s and 1990s because the top-heavy vehicles tended to roll over after sharp turns.

The institute said the SUVs were benefiting from the widespread adoption of [electronic stability control](#), which helps prevent rollovers.

"With the propensity to roll over reduced, SUVs are on balance safer than cars because their bigger size and weight provide greater protection in a crash," the report said.

SUVs trail only minivans in low risk for drivers, the report said, listing the 26 riskiest and safest vehicles.

The Audi A6 shared the lowest driver death rate score -- zero -- with six other vehicles: the Mercedes E-Class luxury [car](#), the Toyota Sienna minivan, and four SUVs -- the Ford Edge, the Nissan Armada, and two Land Rover models (Range Rover Sport and LR3).

For the deadliest, Nissan's 350Z was way ahead of the pack, with a driver death rate at 143 per million registered [vehicle](#) years, ahead of the Nissan Titan pickup truck at 126.

Two Chevrolet small-car models followed, the Aveo and the Cobalt at 119 and 117, respectively.

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