

Auto reliability up, but battery, shifting trouble persists

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In this Feb. 7, 2019, file photo the Lexus LS500 is displayed during the media preview of the Chicago Auto Show in Chicago. J.D. Power's annual survey found that Lexus was the most dependable brand for the eighth-straight year. (AP photo/Nam Y. Huh, File)

Automobiles are getting more reliable, but J.D. Power's annual survey finds problems with battery failures, transmission shifting and voice recognition systems.

The survey found that Lexus was the most dependable brand for the

eighth-straight year, but some mass-market brands cracked the top five. Porsche and Toyota tied for second, followed by Chevrolet and Buick. The worst performers were Fiat, Land Rover, Volvo, Dodge and a tie between Ram and Acura, the survey said.

J.D. Power measures problems per 100 vehicles after three years of ownership. The company collected 32,952 responses from original owners of 2016 model-year vehicles.

Owners of all brands reported an average of 136 problems per 100 vehicles this year, six problems fewer than in the 2018 survey.

Lexus had 106 problems per 100 vehicles, followed by Porsche and Toyota at 108. Chevrolet had 115 and Buick had 118.

Fiat had 249 problems per 100 vehicles, followed by Land Rover at 221, Volvo at 204, Dodge at 178 and Ram and Honda luxury brand Acura tied at 171.

The survey found that problems with batteries are on the rise as power seats and sunroofs, larger touch-screens and more computers draw power from them.

J.D. Power also found:

— Mass market brands outperformed luxury brands in dependability for the first time. The mainstream brands had 136 problems per 100 vehicles, while luxury brands had 141.

— The Chrysler brand improved the most, cutting 65 problems off last year's total to 146.

— The Porsche 911 was the most reliable vehicle in the survey this year.

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