

Lexus tops auto dependability survey

February 25 2015, by Dee-Ann Durbin



In this Aug. 5, 2011 file photo, the Lexus logo is displayed on a Lexus sedan in the showroom at Lexus of Kendall in Miami. Lexus is the most dependable car brand for the fourth consecutive year in J.D. Power's annual survey, released Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2015. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky, File)

(AP)—Lexus is the most dependable car brand for the fourth consecutive year in rankings that increasingly hinge on high-tech features.

Buick finished second, followed by Toyota and Cadillac. Honda and

Porsche tied to round out the top five spots in the annual survey, released Wednesday by the consulting firm J.D. Power. The survey asked original owners of vehicles from the 2012 model year about problems experienced in the last year.

Lexus owners reported 89 problems per 100 vehicles; the industry average was 147 problems. Fiat was the worst performing brand, with 273 problems per 100 vehicles. Land Rover, Jeep, Mini and Dodge rounded out the bottom five performers.

The top two complaints were technical ones: inability to pair phones to the car and trouble with voice recognition systems, which often misunderstood drivers' commands. That's a change from past years, when design problems like wind noise or mechanical issues like squeaky brakes topped the list.

J.D. Power spokesman John Tews said it's difficult to compare the results to prior years, since J.D. Power changed this year's survey to include more specific questions about technology. But it's clear that high-tech features—and owners' expectations about how they will perform—are increasingly important to overall perceptions of quality.

J.D. Power said 15 percent of respondents avoided a model because it lacked new technology, up from 4 percent in last year's survey.

"Owners clearly want the latest technology in their vehicles, and they don't hesitate to express their disapproval when it doesn't work," said Renee Stephens, vice president of U.S. automotive at J.D. Power.



This Jan. 13, 2014 file photo, shows the Lexus exhibit during media previews at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Lexus is the most dependable car brand for the fourth consecutive year in J.D. Power's annual survey, released Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2015. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya, File)

Wind noise was the third most reported problem on this year's list, followed by hesitating automatic transmissions and excessive road noise.

The rankings are important to automakers, since unhappy customers are more likely to shop other brands when they buy their next vehicle. J.D. Power said 56 percent of owners who reported no problems with their vehicles said they will purchase the same brand next time.



This Feb. 16, 2012 file photo shows the front grill of a 2012 Buick Lacrosse-Series automobile at the Pittsburgh Auto Show, in Pittsburgh. Buick placed second on J.D. Power's annual survey of dependable car brands, released Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2015. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar, File)

In rankings of individual vehicles, General Motors Co. and Toyota Motor Corp. tied with seven segment winners each. GM's Chevrolet Malibu was the most dependable midsize car, while the Toyota Corolla was the highest ranked small car.

More than 34,000 vehicle owners were surveyed for the study in November and December. J.D. Power has been conducting the dependability study since 1989.

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