10 Most Reliable Cars

Consumer Reports’ massive annual survey reveals the models that shine for reliability

By Consumer Reports
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Purchasing a car is a long-term investment, with the expectation that the car will provide dependable transportation for the long haul. But as our surveys show, not all cars can fulfill that promise.

Based on our 2017 Annual Auto Survey, these models are the 10 most reliable cars today. We predict that these cars will give owners fewer problems than their competitors, based on data collected on 640,000 vehicles.

Our survey takes a deep dive into the numerous things that can go wrong with a vehicle. We study 17 trouble areas, from nuisances—such as squeaky brakes and broken interior trim—to major bummers, like out-of-warranty transmission repairs or trouble with four-wheel-drive systems. We weight the severity of each type of problem to create a Predicted Reliability Score for each vehicle. (That score is then combined with data collected from our track testing, as well as our owner-satisfaction survey results and safety data, to calculate each test vehicle’s Overall Score.)

Based on that analysis, these models are the most reliable. They are presented in rank order, starting with the most reliable.

Kia Niro

Kia’s five-passenger Niro marries good fuel economy with cargo versatility. This front-wheel-drive hybrid uses a 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine, which, in conjunction with the electric drive unit, puts out a combined 139 hp. This combo is mated to a six-speed dual-clutch transmission. Because the lithium-ion battery is located under the rear seat, that creates a flat cargo floor when the rear seats are folded. We got 43 mpg overall, which is good but not as good as the Hyundai Ioniq or Toyota Prius. The handling lacks agility, and the ride is a bit choppy. The optional power driver seat provides better support than the standard seats do. A suite of advanced safety features is available, including automatic emergency braking, smart cruise control, and blind-spot detection with rear cross-traffic alert, but that tends to push the price to above $30,000.

Subaru BRZ/Toyota 86

Developed with Toyota, Subaru’s first rear-wheel-drive sports car features a 2.0-liter four-cylinder with a choice of a six-speed manual or an automatic. Handling is super-responsive, with cornering precision that makes the BRZ fun to drive. The car turns in promptly, with almost no body lean. The steering is quick and well-weighted. At its limits, the BRZ is slightly more forgiving than its mechanical sibling, the Toyota 86 (the old Scion FR-S). That difference makes the BRZ less prone to sliding its tail during spirited driving. The ride is also a bit more jittery than in the FR-S. The cabin is relatively plain, with well-bolstered sport seats, but the ride and elevated noise can be taxing.

Lexus ES

The Lexus ES has sound handling but falls short of being engaging or fun. Uncharacteristic for Lexus, the ride is on the
stiff side, and the optional 18-inch wheels make it worse. The powerful 3.5-liter V6 and six-speed automatic got a good 25 mpg overall. But we find the hybrid more appealing, thanks to its combination of size and fuel economy, returning a class-leading 36 mpg overall and 44 on the highway in our tests. Inside, the quiet cabin looks good at first, but some cheap touches are apparent. The mouselike infotainment interface is distracting and convoluted. Automatic emergency braking and lane-departure warning are standard.

Lexus GS

The GS competes well, delivering a balanced combination of ride, handling, quietness, and roominess. Engaging to drive, the car’s good handling and taut yet supple ride compete well against German rivals. Its strong 3.5-liter V6 returned 21 mpg overall in our tests. Rear-drive versions get an eight-speed automatic, and AWD versions get a six-speed automatic. A hybrid with a continuously variable transmission is also available. Interior space is on par for the class, and the cabin is nicely furnished. A distracting mouselike controller works the infotainment systems. A high-performance GS F with a 467-hp V8 is available. 2016 brings a rear-drive 200t with a turbo four-cylinder. A blind-spot monitor with rear cross-traffic alert is standard.

Audi Q3

A tidy, compact crossover, the Q3 competes with the BMW X1 and Mercedes-Benz GLA. Overall, it manages to deliver a premium driving experience similar to the Q5 but in a 10-inch-shorter package. The energetic 200-hp, 2.0-liter turbo four-cylinder is mated to a conventional six-speed automatic and returned 22 mpg overall in our tests. This is a quiet SUV with a firm, comfortable ride and responsive handling. The cabin is a bit simplistic-looking, but it gives a sense of quality. Demerits include the tight quarters and cramped driving position. The controls are complicated at first, but they prove to be logical with some familiarity. Front- and all-wheel drive are available.

Toyota RAV4

For years, the RAV4 has consistently been among the top-ranked small SUVs. The current RAV4’s cabin is quieter, the ride is smoother, it has a suite of advanced safety features, and it offers a frugal hybrid version. The energetic 2.5-liter four-cylinder and smooth six-speed automatic returned 24 mpg overall in our tests of an AWD version. The hybrid version gets a terrific 31 mpg overall. Handling is responsive and very secure. Inside, the controls are clear and intuitive. Though the XLE comes with automatic climate control and a sunroof, you must step up to the Limited trim to get adjustable lumbar support and the more comfortable faux-leather seats. Access is very easy, and the rear seat is roomy. Forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking are standard.

Lexus IS

In our tests, the IS came up short as a sports sedan. Handling is secure but not engaging enough to run with the best in the
class. Ride comfort is neither tied down nor plush. Even the punchy IS 350 is underwhelming to drive. A 260-hp V6 powers the IS 300, which gives it more zip, but its fuel economy of 20 mpg overall is uncompetitive in the class. Still, the interior is extremely cramped, and getting in and out is an ungraceful chore. All-wheel-drive versions have a pronounced hump by the driver’s right leg. Fit and finish is okay but not a standout, and the mouselike infotainment controller is distracting to use. A 2.0-liter turbo four-cylinder is available, but only in rear-wheel drive.

**Toyota Prius V**

This wagon version of the previous-generation Prius offers a very roomy rear seat and a generous cargo area. It's about the size of the Ford C-Max, its main competitor. Despite its extra weight and a less aerodynamic shape, the V still got an excellent 41 mpg overall in our tests. The electric motor and engine have to work fairly hard, especially when the car is loaded with cargo. The ride is comfortable, but uneven pavement can cause an annoying side-to-side rocking. Handling is sound and secure but hardly inspiring. Rear visibility is better than in the standard Prius. A larger 4.1-inch dash-top screen for trip computer functions is also new. Forward-collision warning with automatic braking is available but not standard. 2018 is the final year for the Prius V.

**Toyota Prius C**

This smaller, less expensive alternative to the regular Prius feels like a spartan subcompact, but with a hybrid powertrain. In the end, you pretty much get what you pay for, and it is no substitute for the real Prius. The C has a harsh ride, a noisy engine, and slow acceleration. The interior looks and feels cheap, the driving position and rear seats are cramped, and there's little cargo space. However, its 37 mpg makes the Prius C one of the most frugal vehicles we've tested, and its 43 mpg overall is just 1 mpg less than the previous-generation Prius hatchback. Its tiny dimensions make it a natural for urban driving. Automatic emergency braking is standard. 2018 is the final year for the Prius C.

**Infiniti Q70**

Although long in the tooth, the Q70 is still competitive, with a lively 330-hp V6 and a smooth seven-speed automatic that returned 21 mpg overall in our tests. A V8 and a V6 hybrid are also available. Handling is quite agile, with communicative steering. The ride is firm and absorbs bumps well but trails the competition in terms of plushness. The Q70 is also behind the competition in terms of cabin quietness, partly because of the noticeable engine noise under high revs. Very good interior quality, a roomy rear seat, and easy-to-use controls are positives, although cabin ambience is austere. Blind-spot intervention is optional. An extended-length L version with a roomier rear seat is also available. The Q70 might lack some pizzazz, but it generally commands significantly lower prices than its competitors.