

Toyota, Honda vehicles hold up well— survey

New-car reliability is one thing, but how well will your car hold up three, five, even 10 years from now?

On average, Toyota and Honda vehicles age best while those made by Volkswagen fare worst, according to new survey information from Consumer Reports.

For the first time, Consumer Reports has reported on the reliability of vehicles built in the past 10 model years (1997-2006). In addition, Consumer Reports has also identified vehicles that are most prone to specific problems to give used-car buyers more information than ever when making a purchase decision.

Detailed Reliability ratings of 248 makes and models can be found in the April issue of Consumer Reports magazine, available March 6 wherever magazines are sold, or by logging in at <http://www.consumerreports.org/>.

Among 10-year-old vehicles, owners of Japanese cars report the fewest problems overall. Toyota, Honda, and Subaru lead the way with an average of 65, 89, and 90 problems per 100 vehicles reported, respectively. The average of all 10-

year-old vehicles is 132 problems per 100 vehicles.

Of the domestic 10-year-old vehicles, those from Ford (including Lincoln and Mercury) remain most reliable, at about 120 problems per 100 vehicles.

Ten-year-old vehicles from GM and Chrysler are nearly neck and neck with about 160 problems per 100 vehicles. Volkswagen (including Audi) owners reported about 175 problems per 100 vehicles, by far worse than any other brand.

The oldest Korean vehicles (eight years old) from Hyundai (including Kia) that CR has sufficient reliability data for are problematic, faring worse than all domestics and half of some European brands. Newer models, however, show improvements.

Of all six-year-old vehicles -- the age at which most vehicles are resold, the 2001 Lexus GS300 was ranked least problematic, with just 25 problems per 100 vehicles. Worst overall was the 2001 Volkswagen Cabrio with 194 problems per 100 vehicles. Below is a breakdown of the best and worst six-year-old models by the manufacturer's nationality.



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Air bags causing increase in foot, ankle injuries, say doctors

Members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) say they've noticed a significant increase in traumatic foot and ankle injuries among patients who survived auto accidents.

The reason? Air bags.

In 1998, the federal government started requiring dual front air bags in passenger cars. Since then, several research studies have documented a corresponding increase in lower extremity injuries. According to a federal report, drivers in airbag-equipped cars suffer more than 17,600 lower extremity injuries every year. One-third of those are to the foot and ankle.

While foot and ankle trauma is not life threatening, victims may

face multiple surgeries, limited mobility and months or years of rehabilitation and physical therapy.

"We see trauma we never saw before," says ACFAS President James L. Thomas, DPM, FACFAS, a foot and ankle trauma surgeon at the University of Alabama, Birmingham Hospital. "A decade ago, these patients would have died from head trauma or other upper body injuries. Now, thanks to seat belts and air bags, they survive."

Foot and ankle surgeons meeting in Orlando recently for the ACFAS Annual Scientific Conference are discussing less-invasive techniques for treating traumatic injuries received in

motor vehicle crashes and other incidents.

A common technique is the use of internal or external fixation devices, which immobilize the foot and ankle, just like a cast.

Internal fixation devices can involve a series of rods, screws and plates attached to bones, stabilizing them and permitting proper healing. External fixation devices appear as scaffolding on a building, with outside rods through the skin attached to bone underneath.

"Many patients who suffer foot and ankle trauma in an auto crash— with or without air bags— face a long road to recovery," says Thomas. "But the good news is, many patients do recover and lead a normal active lifestyle."

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