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## Wheels

The Nuts and Bolts of Whatever Moves You

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### Jaguar, the Most Dependable Car. Really.

By CHERYL JENSEN

Bill Pugliano/Getty Images

Just when it seemed the automotive world was in such upheaval that nothing more shocking could happen, **Jaguar** and **Buick** have tied for the top spot in the 2009 J.D. Power Vehicle Dependability Study.

Jaguar, once reliable only for being the butt of cocktail party jokes about poor quality, and Buick have toppled Lexus from first place, which the Japanese brand had held for the last 13 years. (In 2007, Buick shared the top spot with Lexus.)

The 2006 Buick LaCrosse was the highest-ranked vehicle in the midsize car segment, according to the latest J.D. Power study on dependability.

J.D. Power's dependability rankings are determined by the number of problems per 100 vehicles that consumers experience: The lower the number, the better. This year's study is based on responses from more than 46,000 original owners of three-year-old (2006 model year) vehicles.

While vehicle dependability has always been important to consumers, this year it's even more so as consumers hold onto their vehicles longer. The average age of a vehicle when it's traded in has increased to 73 months in 2009, up from 65 months in 2006, according to J.D. Power.

Darren Staples/Reuters Jaguars parked outside a plant in Birmingham, England.

Buick and Jaguar were tied for first place with 122 problems per 100 vehicles; Lexus was second with 126 problems. Toyota at 129 and Mercury, 134, rounded out the top five. The bottom five were, in descending order, Mazda, Isuzu, Land Rover, Volkswagen and Suzuki.

It isn't that something significantly bad has happened to Lexus quality, said Neal Oddes, director of product research and analysis for J.D. Power and Associates, the marketing information services company.

"Their performance is exceptional," Mr. Oddes said. "It's just that other nameplates are coming up and starting to challenge the quality leader, which is great for consumers."

In addition to ranking the 37 brands, J.D. Power gives awards in 19 segments by naming the top three models in each segment.

"Lexus performance at the nameplate ranking may have slipped slightly, but at the model level they are still doing exceptionally well," Mr. Oddes said.

Toyota vehicles ranking the highest in five segments, which was more than any other brand, were the Highlander, Prius, Sequoia, Solara and Tundra. Lexus, Toyota's luxury brand, came next with four segment winners, which were the ES 330 (tied with the Acura

RL), GX 470, LS 430 and SC 430.

The highest ranked vehicles in other segments were the Scion xA, Mazda MX-5 Miata, Buick LaCrosse, Mercury Grand Marquis, Nissan 350Z, Lincoln Zephyr, Honda Element, Ford Ranger, Dodge Caravan and Lincoln Mark LT.

The study also found that Buick, Lincoln, Mercury and Jaguar owners were less likely to have to replace large components than owners of other brands.

All of the top three vehicles in the segments and complete brand rankings are available at [JDPower.com](http://JDPower.com).