



Audi Q3



Ford Focus



Jaguar I-Pace



Mercedes-Benz A Class



Nissan Leaf



Peugeot 508



Volvo V60



Volvo XC40

The ten contenders vying for the What Car? Safety Award 2019

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Thatcham Research reveals the ten safest new drives for 2019

- Safety as relevant for car buyers now as ever, with pedestrian and cyclist road casualties on the increase
- Cars selected on top level crash protection and crash avoidance technology
- Driver Assistance systems which combine Adaptive Cruise Control, Steering Support and Speed Control also a key factor
- Burgeoning small SUV and Electric Vehicle segment well represented

Thatcham Research is today revealing the ten safest new cars vying for the What Car? Safety Award 2019, set to be announced on January 22.

This year, beyond a five-star Euro NCAP rating, the ten cars in the mix for the much-coveted award were also selected by expert judges^[1] on:

- Euro NCAP scores for the highest levels of protection offered to driver, front passenger and rear-seated child passengers in a crash
- Performance in new Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) tests, introduced to address rising numbers of cyclist and pedestrian accidents
- Availability of systems which combine Adaptive Cruise Control, Speed Recognition and Control, and Steering Support – the first step towards vehicle automation
- Sales volume in the UK – will the car make a real impact on road safety?

Matthew Avery, What Car? Safety Award judge and Director of Research at Thatcham Research comments, “It’s clear that occupants of the latest cars are at a lower risk than ever. But not resting on our laurels, we raised the bar in safety testing for 2018. This means the ten cars in this longlist are some of the safest ever made, anywhere in the world.

“Accidents involving our most vulnerable road users have increased 12%^[2] over recent years. This is why the progression seen in safety technology like AEB (Autonomous Emergency Braking) is so fundamental. All the cars in the list not only have AEB systems to prevent or mitigate crashes into other vehicles, but they can also cope with the much tougher challenge of detecting cyclists and pedestrians.”

Avery continues, “All cars in the top ten have systems which can provide highly effective assistance to drivers – by managing speed, offering steering support should a car drift out of lane, and maintaining a safe distance to the car in front. These systems are forming the foundations of Automated Driving and will improve road safety. However, drivers must remember they need to always be in control and avoid [over-relying](#) on them.”

The ten contenders

The ten safest new cars, in alphabetical order, with commentary from Avery:

Audi A6: “Audi has two models in the list, which is testament to the brand’s excellent track record in producing five-star Euro NCAP cars. The Audi A6 has many safety features, including a pop-up bonnet, to protect pedestrians and cyclists in the event of a collision.”

Audi Q3: “The second highest overall Euro NCAP score (87%) in 2018, very good performance in crash testing and the highest score overall (85%) for crash avoidance technology. One of the year’s stand-out performers.”

Ford Focus: “The Ford Focus has always been a top seller, so the latest version with its standard-fit crash avoidance technology is making UK roads safer in volume. In testing, it’s AEB system performed just as well as some of the more expensive buys in the longlist too. It is also fitted with a class-leading Driver Assistance System, to support steering and braking.”

Jaguar I-Pace: “One of two Electric Vehicles among our ten safest cars of the year, successfully allaying concerns around the safety performance of Electric Vehicles. Very high Adult Occupant Protection (94%) and crash avoidance technology (81%) scores too.”

Lexus ES: “A Best in Class Euro NCAP winner in the large family car segment, the Lexus ES is another top safety performer from a carmaker with a consistent approach to safety.”

Mercedes-Benz A-Class: “Top level safety, with the second-lowest price tag in the list. The only car in the top ten to reach 90% in terms of its overall Euro NCAP score. Mercedes has shown that volume sales and market leading safety technology need not be mutually exclusive. It too has a high performing driver assistance system to take some of the burden on long drives, adding to its safety credentials while marking an early step towards automation.”

Nissan LEAF: “The Nissan LEAF was the first car to go through Euro NCAP’s updated testing regime and has a cyclist detection and avoidance system to protect vulnerable road users. Another Electric Vehicle in the top ten, offering further reassurance to anyone with concerns about electric battery compromise in crashes.”

Peugeot 508: “The second highest Adult Occupant Protection score (96%) of the year, and strong performance across all other judging categories. A very good Speed Assistance System too, along with optimal protection for child passengers in the rear.”

Volvo V60/S60: “Every car Volvo has produced has achieved the maximum Euro NCAP star rating, and every car has featured at the top end of the Safety Award longlist since it began in 2015. The Volvo V60 / S60 is of course no different, with an Adult Occupant Protection score of 96%.”

Volvo XC40: “The XC40, Volvo’s offering in the burgeoning small SUV market, offers the highest Adult Occupant Protection score of any car tested last year. It’s ‘Pilot Assist’ system, combining Adaptive Cruise Control and Steering Support, is also very good.”

An overall What Car? Safety Award 2019 winner, along with the cars in second and third place, will be announced at the Car of the Year ceremony on the evening of Tuesday January 22nd 2019.

[1] Matthew Avery, Director of Research, Thatcham Research

Michiel van Ratingen, Secretary General, Euro NCAP

Claire Evans, Consumer Editor, What Car?

Pete Thomas, Professor of Road and Vehicle Safety, Loughborough University

[2] Recorded KSI accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists increased from 6,227 in 2013 to 6,991 in 2017. Data referenced from the .gov site, Table RAS40004: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras40-reported-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties#table-ras40004>

Thatcham Research is the independent voice of automotive safety, security & repair, advising motorists, insurers and vehicle manufacturers to help reduce accident frequency, severity and costs and to realise the vision of ‘Safer cars, fewer crashes’, while driving standards in vehicle security.

As well as its world leading crash and track research, Thatcham Research develops repair methods amongst a number of other products and services within the collision repair industry for insurers, motor manufacturers, equipment manufacturers and suppliers.

In addition, Thatcham Research has administered the Association of British Insurer's (ABI) Group Rating system for the past 50 years. Group Rating is an advisory system intended to provide insurers with the relative risk of private cars and light commercial vehicles.

A founder member of the international Research Council for Automobile Repairs (RCAR), Thatcham Research has also been a member of the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) since 2004.

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