



The Mercedes GLE was the overall highest scorer in the new Assisted Driving Grading

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## World's first Assisted Driving Grading unveiled

- *New assessment gives consumers clarity on capability and performance of today's assisted driving technology*

Thatcham Research and Euro NCAP have launched brand-new Assisted Driving assessments to give motorists the crucial insight they need to understand how to use today's assisted driving technology safely.

Many new vehicles feature assisted driving systems that have been

developed to support the driver. However, there is significant potential for carmakers to overstate the capability of their current assisted driving technology and for motorists to misuse it.

Confusion around the limitations of these systems has resulted in serious road collisions – and deaths.

Thatcham Research and Euro NCAP have therefore stepped in to bring much-needed clarity and understanding, via the new Assisted Driving Grading.

“The systems that are currently allowed on our roads are there to assist the driver – but do not replace them,” Matthew Avery, Thatcham Research’s director of research, explained. “Unfortunately, there are motorists that believe they can purchase a self-driving car today. This is a dangerous misconception that sees too much control handed to vehicles that are not ready to cope with all situations.

“Clarity is therefore required to make sure drivers understand the capability and performance of current assisted systems. It’s crucial today’s technology is adopted safely before we take the next step on the road to automation. There are safety and insurance implications that must be considered seriously.”

Cars are tested across three performance criteria:

### **Vehicle Assistance**

*How effective are the speed assistance, steering assistance and adaptive cruise control systems which work together to control the vehicle’s speed and steering?*

### **Driver Engagement**

*How accurate is the carmaker’s marketing material? How effectively does the car monitor the driver to ensure they are engaged with the driving process? How easy is it for the driver to interact with the assisted system? How clearly does the car communicate assisted status?*

### **Safety Back-up**

*How well does the car protect the driver in an emergency – this could be a system failure, when the driver becomes unresponsive, or if the car is about to collide with another vehicle? What happens when there is a loss of sensor input?*

They are then awarded an overall rating:

Very good (> 160 points)

Good (> 140 points)

Moderate (> 120 points)

Entry (> 100 points)

“The best systems strike a good balance between the amount of assistance they give to the driver and how much they do to ensure drivers are engaged and aware of their responsibilities behind the wheel,” Avery said.

#### **First batch of vehicle results:**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Car</b>	<b>Vehicle Assistance</b>	<b>Driver Engagement</b>	<b>Safety Back-up</b>	<b>Rating*</b>
<b>1</b>	Mercedes GLE	86	<u>85</u>	89	Very good
<b>2</b>	BMW 3-Series	82	83	90	Very good
<b>3</b>	Audi Q8	83	78	84	Very good
<b>4</b>	Ford Kuga	66	73	86	Good
<b>5</b>	VW Passat	76	79	61	Moderate
<b>6</b>	Tesla Model 3	<u>91</u>	36	<u>95</u>	Moderate
<b>7</b>	Nissan Juke	52	70	72	Moderate

8	Volvo V60	71	78	49	Moderate
9	Renault Clio	62	69	43	Entry
10	Peugeot 2008	61	74	40	Entry

**\*Final rating derived from lowest Vehicle Assistance or Driver Engagement score, plus Safety Back-up score**

The first batch of results inform consumers about the performance and limitations of ten currently available assisted driving systems. These systems combine automatic acceleration, lane keeping and braking to reduce driver fatigue on long journeys, offering steering support while maintaining a set speed and safe distance from the car in front.

However, some vehicles performed better than others when put in the testing spotlight.

The Mercedes GLE emerged as the strongest performer across all three performance criteria, while the BMW 3-Series was just two points behind. Both vehicles achieved a ‘very good’ grading.

The Ford Kuga’s results showed a ‘good’ grading is possible for a mid-class vehicle, thanks to its combination of Vehicle Assistance and Safety Back-up systems. The entry-level Renault Clio and Peugeot 2008 offer effective systems, but lack emergency assist capability which would have boosted their grading.

The Tesla Model 3 was top scorer in the Vehicle Assistance and Safety Back-up assessments, but was the lowest scorer for Driver Engagement, resulting in a ‘moderate’ grading.

“The first batch of results show some car makers have developed robust assisted driving systems and that’s good to see. But there are also significant gaps in capability on other vehicles,” Avery explained.

“For instance, the Tesla Model 3 was the best for vehicle assistance and safety back-up. But lost ground for over selling what its ‘Autopilot’ system is capable of, while actively discouraging drivers from engaging when behind

the wheel.

“Tesla should however be recognised for its ability to update vehicles ‘Over the Air’. Two years ago, it’s safety back-up results would not have been market leading. This unique capability has seen it move the safety game on, across its whole fleet of vehicles.”

## **The Road to Automation**

Looking to the future, the UK government is keen to allow self-driving, automated cars onto the roads – in limited circumstances – during 2021. Thatcham Research and Euro NCAP recognise the potential safety benefits of automated technology and encourage its development.

But they also believe a staged graduation from assisted driving systems to more sophisticated, self-driving technology, is imperative to ensure safety.

“Our assessments highlight that, while today’s assistance systems can support the driver, they are not capable of, nor designed to, take complete control in all critical situations,” Avery said.

## **Thatcham Research Comments on the 10 Cars Tested**

Matthew Avery, director of research, Thatcham Research shares his view on the assessed vehicles:

### **Audi Q8**

“A high-end vehicle, with a high level of vehicle assistance and well-balanced driver engagement. The first of our ‘very good’ performers.”

### **BMW 3 Series**

“Gets a ‘very good’ rating, with one of the best scores in safety back-up

testing. The only vehicle to feature a Driver Monitoring System, which although relatively basic, is increasingly important for driver engagement. BMW is ahead of the game in fitting this technology, which will be essential to the safe introduction of Automated Driving.”

### **Ford Kuga**

“Its vehicle assistance is not quite as strong as some of the other cars tested, but the driver engagement is good, as were the safety back-up systems, earning it a ‘good’ rating overall.”

### **Mercedes GLE**

“Our overall top scorer with consistently high scores across all testing categories. Keeps the driver engaged with plenty of clear communication regarding the assistance offered. Provides really useful assistance, but not so much that drivers will believe the car can drive itself.”

### **Nissan Juke**

“Another small SUV with quite impressive performance. The ProPilot name is not ideal, but it still has good driver engagement and safety back-up systems for the price-point.”

### **Peugeot 2008**

“The small SUV category is one of the fastest growing in the market, so although the system is not quite as sophisticated as those fitted to the more expensive models tested, it’s good to see that buyers at lower price points can still reap some of the safety and comfort benefits of Assisted Driving.”

### **Renault Clio**

“Great to see an entry-level Supermini with a system that gives a generally good amount of vehicle assistance and safety back-up, if required. Although the systems available at the premium end of the market offered more assistance, the Renault Clio has a well-balanced system that successfully keeps the driver engaged.”

## **Tesla Model 3**

“Many aspects of the Model 3 are exemplary; its vehicle assistance is the best we saw in testing and it also aced the safety back up element. However, it achieves a ‘moderate’ rating for poor driver engagement, with a design philosophy that is very much about the vehicle doing the driving. That would be appropriate for an automated vehicle – but this is vehicle assistance. The big ‘self-driving’ sell in its marketing material, combined with the high performing assistance, encourages the driver to relinquish too much control.”

## **Volvo V60**

“A high level of vehicle assistance and good, well-balanced driver engagement. It’s a shame, but the vehicle platform and technology have aged quickly and are no longer state of the art.”

## **VW Passat**

“A moderate performer, offering solid safety back-up systems and a good balance between vehicle assistance and driver engagement. Very close to a ‘good’ rating.”

## **Web and Video**

For more information on the Assisted Driving Grading visit:

<https://www.thatcham.org/what-we-do/car-safety/assisteddrivinggrading>

Watch as Lee McKenzie and Matthew Avery explain how the grading assessment works and describe the performance characteristics of the most effective Assisted Driving systems:



[Watch video on YouTube here](#)

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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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