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SAVE BIG ON CAR INSURANCE NOW—HERE'S HOW

BEST DRIP & POD COFFEE MAKERS ■ TOP TV DEALS THIS FALL

NOVEMBER 2019

CR Consumer Reports®

Almond,
Oat &
Soy Milk

35 PRODUCTS
TESTED
& TASTED

■ SPECIAL REPORT

Is Bottled Water Safer?

It may not always be as pure as you think—and your tap water may be cleaner than you realize. **What you need to know.**



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What's in Your Water?



MOST OF US tend to take for granted that we can access a safe glass of drinking water simply by turning on our kitchen tap. But for many Americans, whether by choice or due to health concerns, bottled water has become a ubiquitous household item. This month, we're diving into the data and perceptions about drinking water to help you understand whether

or not purchasing bottles is always a better option.

Our nation's aging water infrastructure, a lack of running water in some communities, and high-profile water crises like those in Flint, Mich., and Newark, N.J. (my hometown), mean that for some consumers, deciding between the faucet and bottles might not feel like a choice at all. But many of us who do have easy access to safe drinking water are nevertheless opting for bottles—to the tune of \$31 billion in 2018. Both for individuals and for society at large, it's worth asking whether all that spending and all that plastic are worthwhile.

This month, we report on the integrity of our public water supply, and share the water sources used by major bottled water companies (you may be surprised), as well as the findings of our national survey about consumer attitudes and behaviors. We also look at the big picture, talking to experts about what needs to be done in the short term to ensure that every community can access safe drinking water—as well as what sustainable solutions there are for the long term.

Nearly 50 years ago, CR's reporting on the failures of water purification systems in the face of rising pollution helped spark new consumer protections, including the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974. As bottled water reaches new highs in popularity, the need for reliable information about drinking water is as important as ever—which is why we're going back to the well to get you the answers you need today.

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
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Preventing Hot Car Deaths

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Fifty-three children died in hot cars last year—the highest number of vehicle heatstroke deaths in 21 years, according to NoHeatStroke.org. And this year's grim count had reached 38 as of Sept. 3.

Some parents and caregivers knowingly leave children in cars “just for a minute,” not realizing how quickly the temperature can rise inside a closed vehicle—even in mild weather. A recent CR test conducted when it was 61° F outside, for example, measured the temperature inside a closed car at more than 105° F after just an hour.

And while it may be hard to imagine, many deaths have occurred when responsible parents unknowingly left their children in the backseat. Stress, lack of sleep, or even a change in routine can lead to such a tragedy.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

Several automakers are installing safety features in new cars to help prevent child heatstroke, an innovation that CR has encouraged.

Hyundai says a rear-seat occupant alert system—currently on two of its models and one Kia model—will become standard on most of its new vehicles by 2022. It uses a “door logic” approach: If a rear door is opened and closed before or during a trip, the driver will later get a visual warning on the dashboard and an audible alert when the car is turned off. A motion-sensing system will be offered as an option on certain models. Meanwhile, other carmakers, including General Motors and Nissan, have also made or say they will make door-logic rear-seat reminder systems standard on more vehicles.

CR is also pushing Congress to pass the bipartisan Hot Cars Act, which would require these systems in all new cars.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Read our latest coverage of the year-round risks of child heatstroke in hot cars at [CR.org/hotcars1119](https://www.consumerreports.org/hotcars1119).

Putting a Stop to Robocalls

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The daily harassment from robocalls has reached epidemic proportions—but some relief may finally be in sight.

An estimated 48 billion automated calls were placed to U.S. phones in 2018 alone. These incessant calls aren't just an annoyance. Many are made by criminals trying to trick people into giving away sensitive personal information or to defraud them out of money.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR advocates have long fought to protect consumers from robocalls, and we've met repeatedly with telecom

executives, tech experts, and legislators on Capitol Hill to seek solutions and demand action by Congress. And in July we delivered some 230,000 petition signatures to the Federal Communications Commission, calling for new standards to require phone companies to implement free, effective tools to stop robocalls. Later that same month, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 429 to 3 for a bill designed to curb abusive robocalling with new consumer protections. (The Senate had approved its own anti-robocall bill in May.)

CR supports both bills, and at press time was working with key lawmakers of both parties to include the strongest parts of each in a final measure for Congress to pass and President Donald Trump to sign into law.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For the latest updates, and tips on guarding against unwanted robocalls, go to [CR.org/robocalls1119](https://www.consumerreports.org/robocalls1119).

Raising Safety Standards

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Too many consumer products present unnecessary dangers to the people who use them—unnecessary because many of the risks could be eliminated through safer designs and stronger regulation.

One example: A 2019 CR investigation linked dozens of infant fatalities to the use of infant inclined sleepers, which are designed to put babies to sleep at an incline of between 10 and 30 degrees—even though the American Academy of Pediatrics has determined that they increase the risk of airway compression, suffocation, and death.

Another example: A child dies an average of once every two weeks when a TV or piece of furniture tips over onto him—even though CR tests have found that manufacturers can design safer and more stable dressers at a range of prices.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

In July a U.S. House committee approved, in a bipartisan vote, a group of CR-endorsed bills that will help protect families from these and other dangerous products. In addition to banning the sale of infant inclined sleep products and requiring mandatory standards for dresser stability, the raft of measures included bills to prohibit the sale of crib bumper pads (a prohibition CR has long sought, citing suffocation risks), improve the safety of portable fuel containers, and promote the use of carbon monoxide detectors. CR is working to get these bills approved by the full House and Senate and signed by the president.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Go to [CR.org/safety1119](https://www.consumerreports.org/safety1119) to ask your House member to support legislation banning inclined sleepers and crib bumper pads, and to pass tougher safety standards for dressers to prevent tip-over deaths.



Crushing Robocalls

Progress is being made on efforts to mandate more protections from phone carriers.



Our September 2019 article “**Cable Wants You Back**” offered smart ways to build the viewing experience you want for less—with or without cable. Our readers sound off on their strategies. To join in, go to [CR.org/TV1119](https://www.consumerreports.org/TV1119).

MY LOCAL CABLE company (Comcast) has been the utility I have loved to hate for many years. Every two years I lock in on a rate and prepare to do battle with account reps by listing how much I could save by piecing together services from other providers. This year customer service stopped me midsentence and informed me that my monthly payment was going down. Not only that but Comcast would add Netflix free of charge. Prior to renewal, Comcast sold us a new iPad for \$200. Perhaps Comcast is starting to “get it!”
—Ray Fournier, Concord, NH

A FEW MONTHS ago, I purchased for \$30 one of the antennas you recommended. I’m getting around 60 channels, a lot of which are in HD, giving me an excellent picture. While I’m not ready to “cut the cord,” I was pleasantly surprised because I didn’t need another cable box to add to my already outrageous cable bill. Thanks for the information.
—Bruce David, Fair Lawn, NJ

THE CABLE COMPANIES make great introductory offers. After the first year is up, you better hold on to your hat (or your wallet!) because your rates will skyrocket. They show zero interest in maintaining customers who have been using their service for years. They refuse to offer discounts or benefits unless customers cancel the service, wait, and then sign up again.
—Cynthia Matthews, Raleigh, NC

A FEW NEWS ITEMS have said that because of the loss of customers, there are more ads on cable. One of the two reasons we left cable was the length and stupidity (if I may) of the ads. The price is an issue, certainly, but the ads were such a drag.
—Richard Diamond, Bay City, OR

A KEY ISSUE: picture quality, which relates to the degree of video compression used by the provider, not the nominal resolution (i.e., HD or 4K). Video providers almost always digitally compress videos to save bandwidth. The problem with compression is that it reduces detail, color depth, and video dynamic range. At its worst, it renders even the best source material as unwatchable cartoon-like images.
—Mike Stamper, Windsor, CT

EDITOR’S NOTE Both the content creator and the service distributing the signal can

compress content—and there are a variety of other factors that contribute to picture quality, too. With streaming, the picture quality can vary based on the speed and reliability of your broadband. And if you connect your TV and/or streaming player via WiFi, the performance of your wireless router can also have an impact on the quality of the picture. Cable may also compress signals, but over-the-air reception via an antenna can be less compressed than cable, so you may get a better picture.

WHERE I SAVE a lot of money streaming is by using my service, PlayStation Vue, in my two homes. I got rid of two cable providers and replaced them with a single streaming service. Plus, I was a Netflix and Prime subscriber while I was a cable customer. I’m saving over \$1,000 a year between my two homes.
—Larry Lief, via [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org)

WE PREFER to record everything and fast forward through the commercials. We mainly watch local channels, so I need a system with a DVR and a program of shows so that I can program recordings. Do you have a recommendation? Thanks so much for your work.
—Rex Adamson, Joplin, MO

EDITOR’S NOTE If you get your local channels from a streaming service, many offer cloud DVRs for recording shows, though sometimes you can’t fast forward through the commercials. If you’re using an antenna, there are several DVRs that let you record over-the-air programs. In fact, we’ll be testing five or six of these systems, such as the Amazon Fire TV Recast and TiVo Bolt OTA, this fall. Stay tuned for our report.

THE VIRTUE for me, with respect to streaming, is that I know my money is not going to the sports channels that I have no interest in. If only cable would separate out the very



WRITE

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.consumerreports.org/lettertoeditor) to share your comments for publication.

high-cost sports channels from the other channels, that would reduce the cost of cable for many of us.
 –Jay Francis, Houston

EDITOR'S NOTE Many of the cable-style streaming services, such as AT&T TV Now and Hulu + Live TV, also include sports channels such as ESPN. In general, subscription rates for these services have been rising. But others, such as Philo TV (\$20 a month), are able to offer low-priced services that don't include sports channels. With others, you may have the option of adding sports channels—or not. That's not always an option with cable plans.

YOU REPORT THAT cable companies are imposing new fees for broadcast TV and regional sports. These networks are raising their fees to all distributors of their content, not just cable. Retransmission fees are tripling in many markets. It's only a matter of time that any streaming service that carries these networks will also raise their rates to cover their costs of this content. If you

look, you will see that most of these streaming services do not carry local broadcast networks or sports channels to keep their monthly rates lower.
 –Tom Lambrecht, Parker, CO

EDITOR'S NOTE We're aware that cable companies, and others, have real costs associated with the programming they offer, and those costs are rising. What we're opposed to, though, is the practice of concealing the real total cost of service for consumers by promoting lower advertised fees, then tacking on additional fees, such as broadcast TV and regional sports charges, that aren't properly disclosed or that are disclosed in fine print. We're asking companies to be more transparent about the total cost of subscribing to a service so that consumers can make more informed decisions.



TEEN SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

“NEW SAFETY TECH for Teens” (CR Insights, September 2019) describes the “teen driver mode” safety feature now incorporated in several new vehicles. I have a question regarding “capping maximum speeds” and how this might hinder a need to accelerate in an avoidance maneuver?
 –Frank Sargent, Carlisle, MA

EDITOR'S NOTE GM's Teen Driver mode's speed limiter function restricts the maximum speed of the vehicle to 85 mph. Similarly, Ford's MyKey system has selectable limits of 65, 70, 75, and 80 mph. Other systems, from Hyundai, Kia, Lexus, and Toyota, include features that alert drivers (or parents) when set speeds have been exceeded. We believe that these speed limits should provide plenty of acceleration even when emergency maneuvers are required.



THE BUZZ ON ELECTRIC CARS

WHILE I FOUND your article (“The Electric Car Comes of Age,” September 2019) to be very informative, I was shocked (pardon the pun) that it did not address the cost of the actual electricity used to charge the batteries, either at home or at a remote charging station. This most certainly should come into play in one's buying decision as to whether or not an all-electric vehicle is the right choice!
 –John F. Mileo, Virginia Beach, VA

EDITOR'S NOTE On average, a gallon of gasoline costs about twice as much as the comparable cost to run an electric car. That's especially true if drivers can take advantage of off-peak electricity rates while charging at home. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the national average cost of electricity is 12.6 cents per kWh. A quick scan of the site PlugShare—a mobile app and online site that shows locations of electric chargers and the fee—shows many options (using Connecticut as an example), from free chargers with a per-car time limit to chargers that have a flat cost or require an account with a service that charges a fee, such as ChargePoint.

I RECENTLY DROVE in Richmond, Va., which has many charms. Parking is not one of them. If cities are serious about welcoming electric vehicles, they need to have charging stations throughout the residential streets and commercial districts. Folks with garages can charge at home. Workers may be able to charge at work. To everyone else, it is a pipe dream.
 –Lynn Harris, via CR.org

HOW MANY OF YOU have been stranded in traffic for up to several hours on the interstates at night in the snow because of an accident? Stopped in this

situation, you may run out of battery power and will be stuck in your car without heat. Now you will need a gasoline-powered vehicle to rescue you, along with the many others in the same situation. Yes, there is no energy required from the batteries in an EV when it is stopped in a traffic jam during daylight hours, but then a gas engine can simply be turned off, therefore negating this possible advantage of the EVs.
 –Richard Pedersen, Bernville, PA

EDITOR'S NOTE As our story noted, EV ranges decrease in cold weather because running the heater uses more battery power than running air conditioning. As to being stranded in an emergency such as a hurricane, Tesla has, in the past, been able to unlock battery reserves in real time in order to extend the range of their cars for owners who are impacted.



HELPFUL HOME MAINTENANCE

REGARDING “Your Fridge's Water Filter” (CR Insights, September 2019), we buy OEM (original equipment manufacturer) replacement filters, but we also purchased an industrial in-line pre-filter that's installed between the water source and refrigerator. (We end up with double filtration.) This keeps the expensive OEM filter clean much longer, extending its life. Saves us a ton of money!
 –George Braun, Gainesville, FL

UNDER MY kitchen sink, I have a reverse osmosis water filter system that connects to a sink spout, as well as to my refrigerator's water dispenser and icemaker. This system eliminates the need for a water filter in my refrigerator, saving me money.
 –Joel Schackne, Fort Lauderdale, FL

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What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Toaster Ovens Under \$100

WE TESTED: 19 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a model bakes cookies and muffins, how well it reheats lasagna, color evenness of toast, ease of cleaning, ease of use, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
 Median: 55
 Range: 31-66

Tops for Toasting
 Cuisinart Toaster Oven Broiler TOB-1010 (6-slice) \$90



66
 OVERALL SCORE

Slim-Profile Money Saver
 Black+Decker (4-slice) TO1755SB \$33



66
 OVERALL SCORE

Big Enough for a 12" Pizza
 Hamilton Beach (6-slice) 31411 \$65



66
 OVERALL SCORE

Wireless and Mesh Routers

WE TESTED: 28 models
WE TEST FOR: Speed or "throughput" at different distances, from 8 to 100 feet away; how well it protects your privacy; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Traditional
 Median: 64, Range: 32-89
Mesh
 Median: 68, Range: 53-81

Powerful Traditional Router
 Synology RT2600ac \$200



89
 OVERALL SCORE

Best-Performing Mesh Set
 Netgear Orbi AC3000 (3-pack) \$400



81
 OVERALL SCORE

Great Value Mesh Set
 TP-Link Deco Whole Home (3-pack) \$230



70
 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

What are these new mesh routers and which households are they best for?



IF YOUR HOME is more than 1,200 square feet or has multiple stories, a single router might not cover all areas well, says Richard Fisco, who oversees router testing at CR. If your router is older than 4 years, try a newer one, such as the Synology above, which has signal technology that's better at overcoming distance and obstacles like insulated walls. Otherwise, try a mesh set like the two above, Fisco says. "Their network is comprised of two or more routers that work in unison, which expands the reach beyond what a single router can do." (All-Access and Digital members can go to [CR.org](https://www.crisp.com) to find additional models that rate Excellent for speed, aka "throughput," at far distances.)

Note: We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All-Access membership can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org).

Nonstick Cookware Sets

WE TESTED: 15 sets

WE TEST FOR: How well frying pans turn out pancakes on a gas range, nonstick durability and how easily food releases from it, how well tomato sauce simmers, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 70
Range: 52-81

Great Cooking Performance

Cuisinart Green Gourmet Hard Anodized GG-12
\$250



81

OVERALL SCORE

Induction Compatible

Zwilling J.A. Henckels Motion Grey (Bed Bath & Beyond, 10 pieces) \$350



78

OVERALL SCORE

Durable Nonstick Coating

Pioneer Woman Vintage Speckle Nonstick (Walmart, 10 pieces) \$90



66

OVERALL SCORE

Marinara Sauces

WE TESTED: 35 products

WE TEST FOR: Flavor and texture. We also evaluate nutrition, including calories, fats, sodium, sugars, fiber, calcium, and more. Prices are per 1/2-cup serving.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 64
Range: 44-81

Low Sodium & Low Cost

The Silver Palate Low Sodium Marinara \$0.83



81

OVERALL SCORE

USDA Organic

Organico Bello Organic Marinara \$1.12



75

OVERALL SCORE

No Added Sugars

Cucina Antica Garlic Marinara \$1.17



74

OVERALL SCORE

Urban-Style Bike Helmets

WE TESTED: 9 models

WE TEST FOR: A helmet's ability to absorb the force of an impact, how well air flows through the helmet during simulated rides, fit adjustments, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 48
Range: 37-72

New WaveCel Technology*

Bontrager Charge WaveCel \$150



72

OVERALL SCORE

Lightweight (MIPS)*

Garneau Vitesse \$150



71

OVERALL SCORE

Reflective Features (MIPS)*

Bell Annex MIPS \$125



63

OVERALL SCORE

Carpet Cleaners

WE TESTED: 17 models

WE TEST FOR: How well a model removes red-clay stain from carpet, how dry or wet it leaves the carpet after cleaning, coverage area, cord length, weight, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 55
Range: 39-71

Best Overall

Bissell ProHeat 2X Lift-Off Pet 15651 \$280



71

OVERALL SCORE

Bargain Price & Easy to Maneuver

Hoover PowerDash Pet FH50700 \$100



69

OVERALL SCORE

Covers More Territory on a Single Tank

Rug Doctor Might Pro X3 \$400



67

OVERALL SCORE

*The Multi-directional Impact Protection System, or MIPS, is a safety technology designed to help reduce the severity of a concussion after certain types of impact. WaveCel safety technology, exclusive to Bontrager, uses a different energy-absorbing material that provides similar protection.



There are so many flavors of hummus at my supermarket. Are all of them equally healthy?

Traditionally made from mashed chickpeas, tahini (sesame seed paste), lemon juice, olive oil, and spices, hummus is inherently pretty healthy stuff. It supplies protein, fiber, and healthy fats. Caramelized onion, roasted red pepper, pine nut, and spinach and artichoke can all be good choices nutritionally. When CR looked at a range of brands and flavors, we found that a 2-tablespoon serving typically has about 60 calories, 1.5 to 6 grams of fat, 1 to 2 grams of fiber, and 2 grams of protein. (The not-so-surprising outlier? Chocolate hummus. While it still has the nutrients from chickpeas, it also has added sugars, as much as 7 grams per serving.)

You should, however, study the sodium content. “That’s where we saw the biggest

differences, ranging from 75 mg per serving to 160 mg,” says Ellen Klosz, M.S., a CR nutritionist. “But of those we looked at, no particular flavor was higher or lower.” Two other healthy habits: Mind the portion size, and stick to fresh veggies rather than crackers or pita to dip with.

Can I use a space heater in my chilly bathroom?

It’s best to keep electrical appliances, such as space heaters, away from water sources, but we get that it’s also not ideal to step out of the shower into a frigid bathroom. So if you use a space heater, exercise caution.

First, make sure your bathroom has ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets, which all bathrooms since 1975 have been required to have. To prevent a fatal electric shock, a GFCI outlet constantly monitors current flowing through a circuit—and will automatically shut the power off if it detects even a small amount of stray current. To identify a GFCI outlet,

look for two buttons that say “test” and “reset.”

It’s also safest if your heater has an appliance leakage current interrupter (ALCI) plug. Chris Regan, who oversees CR’s space heater tests, says that ALCI plugs also monitor and safeguard against differences in current, adding extra protection.

Only two of the 46 space heaters in our ratings today have an ALCI plug, and one of them lacks a tip-over switch—a safety feature that shuts off the heater if it gets knocked over. The DeLonghi HVF3555TB, \$60, has both features and performed well in our tests, though its availability may be limited by the end of the year. And like many space heaters we’ve evaluated, the area where the heat exhausts can get burning hot, so we don’t advise using this model if you have small children or pets.

Why does my car’s engine coolant light illuminate on cold winter mornings?

If your coolant light glows blue when you start your car, it’s a warning that the engine isn’t yet up to its optimal running temperature—so don’t push the engine hard. If you do that when it’s cold, it can reduce your engine’s longevity.

If a yellow coolant light pops on in the winter, it’s probably

because your coolant level is low. “Coolant contracts in colder temperatures, so even if the car’s coolant level has fallen only a bit below normal, it could still trigger the system’s sensor,” says John Ibbotson, CR’s chief mechanic. Add coolant to the reservoir until the fluid reaches the “max cold” or “full cold” line. Do this when the engine is cold (turned off for at least 3 hours).

A red coolant temperature warning light in winter—more typically seen in warmer months—can be critical, because it means the car is overheating. “This is a serious problem, and the engine should be shut off immediately,” Ibbotson says. “Have the car towed to a mechanic.” Also, never unscrew the cooling system’s fill cap when the engine is hot; hot coolant can erupt and cause serious burns.



LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](https://www.consumerreports.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.

CR Insights

In the Know

The Joys of a Classic Camera

If you've bought a smartphone in the last few years, you're carrying around a good—or even great—camera most of the time. But our lab testing reveals that a stand-alone camera—even one that costs \$500 or less—still produces higher-quality photos than most smartphones. “Phone cameras have small sensors and lenses, and compress photos to save file space,” says Artur Pietruch, a CR camera-testing expert. “A dedicated camera’s larger sensor and lens capture high-quality images with fine detail.” They also tend to produce better photos in low light and higher-quality prints. Here are four camera types that can outperform the one on your phone.

For more ratings, All-Access and Digital members can go to [CR.org/cams1119](https://www.crisp.com/cams1119).



81
OVERALL SCORE

SLR
TRY: **\$ Nikon D 3500** \$500
(pictured above)

SLRs have large sensors, detachable lenses, and a viewfinder that lets you see a shot exactly as it will be captured. Many top-rated models cost thousands, but this Nikon offers great performance for less.



81
OVERALL SCORE

MIRRORLESS
TRY: **\$ Panasonic Lumix DMC-G7K** \$500

The SLR's lightweight cousin has a digital viewfinder but still accepts interchangeable lenses. These offer good low-light performance and, like SLRs, can capture fine detail that most phones can't.



84
OVERALL SCORE

ADVANCED DIGITAL POINT-AND-SHOOT
TRY: **\$ Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX10** \$500

A step up in performance and cost from basic point-and-shoots, these offer manual controls and sharper lenses. Some, like this Panasonic, can produce high-resolution photos and 4K video.



71
OVERALL SCORE

BASIC DIGITAL POINT-AND-SHOOT
TRY: **\$ Canon PowerShot ELPH 360** \$200

These compact single-lens cameras are inexpensive and easy to use, and almost always have a better zoom lens than your phone's camera. But they lack the sophisticated controls of other camera types.

PHOTO: T.M. DETWILER

Face-Off

Noise-Canceling Headphones

An effective pair of noise-canceling headphones can tune out loud environments so that you can travel or work in peace. But most wireless over-ear models we've tested cost \$200 to \$400. Our lab tests, though, revealed a budget-friendly contender: The Monoprice (below, right) offers the same level of sound quality and active noise control (ANC) compared with a well-rated Beats by Dre pair (below, left)—for less than a fifth of the price.



✓ **Beats by Dre**
Beats Studio3
Wireless \$350

73 OVERALL SCORE

💰 **Monoprice**
BT-300ANC
\$50

72 OVERALL SCORE

⬆	SOUND QUALITY	⬆
⬆	NOISE REDUCTION	⬆
22 ANC on/40 ANC off	BATTERY LIFE (hr.)	8 ANC on/16 ANC off
1.5 hours	RECHARGE TIME	3 hours



BEST FOR
\$50 OR LESS
SPACE
HEATERS

Some small heaters can cost well over \$100, but our testers found good models that will keep you toasty for much less.

BEST OVERALL

✓ **Honeywell**
HCE311V \$42

71 OVERALL SCORE

QUIETEST CONTENDER

Lasko 5307 \$50
(pictured above)

67 OVERALL SCORE

PERSONAL-SIZE WITH
5-YEAR WARRANTY

Vornado SRTH \$40

62 OVERALL SCORE

SCORES FOR ALL 36
SMALL AND PERSONAL
HEATERS TESTED
Median: 64
Range: 20-86

PHOTOS, BOTTOM FROM LEFT: CONSUMER REPORTS; ROBERT KNUDSEN/WHITE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHS/JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, BOSTON; CONSUMER REPORTS. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: TREVOR PEARSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

CR Time Traveler THANKSGIVING

1948 Thanksgiving turkey is scarce and costly, CR reports. Growers trimmed their flocks because of high feed prices, so the number of holiday birds dropped about 10 percent from 1947.



1952 Some women don't want freezers in their homes, CR reports, but we make a case for them as a place to stash turkey leftovers after Thanksgiving.

1963 President John F. Kennedy famously pardons a turkey, saying, "Let's keep him going."



1967 Our testers cook a wide range of prepared turkey products and are surprised to find that the most expensive ones, such as roasts, shrink substantially during cooking.



Food Sleuth

Making Store-Bought Stuffing Healthier

Stuffing, or dressing as it's called in parts of the South, is a favorite Thanksgiving dish. But in the time-crunched frenzy of the holiday season, preparing made-from-scratch stuffing may be one task too many. CR's food experts share their secrets for upgrading a stuffing mix into a healthier, tastier, more satisfying side—without adding much prep time.

SWAP
YOUR
BROTH



Some packaged stuffings pack in excess of 500 mg of sodium per serving. To cut back, when a recipe calls for chicken broth, we suggest using a reduced sodium version. (Look for broths with labels such as "33 percent less sodium.") Our tasters tried this on a few packaged stuffings and noted that there wasn't a big difference in flavor compared with stuffings made with regular broth.

SPICE
IT NICE



Ellen Klosz, a CR nutritionist, recommends adding fresh herbs, such as oregano, sage or thyme, and sautéed onions—which provide a flavor boost as well as a pinch of vitamins and minerals, without adding sodium.

TOSS
IN
VEGGIES



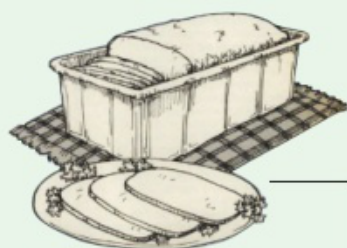
Adding extra veggies increases fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and simultaneously stretches the dish to serve more people. Try a mix of sautéed mushrooms with pecans and chives, or pair sweet potatoes with crystallized ginger and orange zest.

ADD A
PUNCH OF
CRUNCH



Diced apples, carrots, walnuts, chestnuts, and celery are all great options for adding a satisfying crunchy or chewy texture to your stuffing—and give your side the texture of a homemade mix.

1973 CR tests self-basting turkeys, which have oil or fat injected beneath the skin. Though not as good as do-it-yourself basting, they are well-liked overall.



1987 We test three dozen frozen supermarket turkey products, including boneless rolls of turkey meat (above). Our testers say the rolls are "turkey most foul" and "best left in the grocer's freezer."

1992 We explain how to reduce fat and calories from the holiday meal. One tip: Swap pecan pie for pumpkin, which has almost half the fat and adds vitamin A.



✓ **CDN**
ProAccurate
TCT572 \$70

83 OVERALL SCORE



2019 To help cook your bird to a safe 165° F, we recommend the thermometer above. Insert it into the innermost part of the thigh and wing, and the thickest part of the breast meat.



Product Spotlight

Best Ranges for Baking



GAS DOUBLE OVEN

✓ **LG Signature LUTD4919SN** \$3,240

84 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC INDUCTION

✓ **LG LSE4617ST** \$2,400

(pictured left)

81 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP

✓ **Samsung NE59N6650SS** \$990

75 OVERALL SCORE

GAS SINGLE OVEN

✓ **GE JGS760SELSS** \$1,300

73 OVERALL SCORE

THE PERFORMANCE OF your range’s oven can mean the difference between perfect, fluffy confections and unevenly baked or burnt cookies. CR continually buys and tests a wide variety of gas and electric models—and though many ranges do well in our cooktop tests,

baking is a different story. Our baking test is tough by design: CR’s experts don’t rotate the pans or move them to different racks during the baking process, as recipes sometimes recommend, in order to help us identify the models that don’t require a lot of fussing to get great results.

“Ranges that earn an Excellent rating at baking in our tests turn out evenly browned cookies and cakes when those foods are baked on two racks, simultaneously,” says Tara Casaregola, who tests cooking appliances for CR. “We bake thousands of cookies and a few hundred cakes each year.”

The result? Only a small handful of the nearly 150 models in CR’s range ratings excel in baking (and even fewer pair that performance with an equally impressive cooktop). Above, we’ve curated a list of ranges that are tops for baking, without sacrificing cooktop and broiler performance.

NOVEMBER IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...



AIR FRYERS



TELEVISIONS



COFFEE MAKERS



RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT [CR.ORG/MORE](https://www.consumerreports.org/more).



SAFETY UPDATE

LISTERIA IN LEAFY GREENS

A recent Consumer Reports test of 284 samples of fresh greens—lettuce, spinach, and kale—found six samples tainted with *Listeria monocytogenes*, a potentially deadly bacteria.

We decided to test for harmful bacteria because of several outbreaks linked to romaine lettuce and other leafy greens over the past few years. Our samples were purchased at several grocery store chains, including Acme, Costco, Hannaford, and Whole Foods. Two of these samples were packaged, prewashed greens—a spinach and an organic spinach-spring mix. The other four were loose heads or bunches of green kale, green leaf lettuce, red leaf lettuce, and spinach. All were purchased between June 3 and June 19, 2019, in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York.

Though we found *Listeria*, we did not find other bacteria that cause foodborne illness, such as salmonella or *E. coli* O157:H7, in any of the 284 samples we tested.

One sample that we found tainted with *Listeria monocytogenes* had a strain genetically linked to at least two cases of listeriosis (the illness caused by *Listeria*) reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (We do not know whether the people who got sick ate leafy greens.) That product was a “triple-washed” Nature’s Place Organic Spinach Spring Mix purchased at a Hannaford supermarket. A spokesperson for Hannaford said that it had not received any reports of illness associated with that product.

In addition to contacting the companies that marketed the greens and the retailers where we purchased them, CR immediately informed the Food and Drug Administration and the CDC of our test results. In response, the FDA initiated an inspection of the plant that produced Nature’s Place Organic Spinach Spring Mix.

CR’s study represents a snapshot of the market and was not large enough to draw conclusions about the safety of specific brands or retailers. Still, the testing underscores that industry needs to do more to

improve the safety of leafy greens.

And though CR says that most people can continue to eat leafy greens, “it’s important that those most likely to be affected by *Listeria*—older adults, infants and young children, anyone with a compromised immune system, and pregnant women—carefully consider whether to eat *raw* leafy greens, including lettuce,” says James. E. Rogers, Ph.D., director of food safety research and testing at CR. “The safest thing is to stick with greens you can cook.” *Listeria* is killed when it’s exposed to high temperatures.

or as part of a package with the awnings. They were sold directly by SunSetter, through independent dealers nationwide, and through Costco Wholesale between June 1999 and January 2019.

What to do: Do not attempt to install covers for the motorized awnings or remove any installed covers until you get instructions from SunSetter. Call 844-313-0144 or go to [sunsetter.com/safety-clips](https://www.sunsetter.com/safety-clips) for details and safety instructions, and to get free breakaway safety clips that replace the bungee tie-downs provided with the cover.

LEVOLOR WINDOW SHADES

Levolor is recalling about 30,000 Two-Cord Custom Cellular window shades because of a non-breakaway cord connector, which poses a strangulation hazard for young children. The shades were sold at Levolor dealers and online at [levolor.com](https://www.levolor.com) from December 2018 through April 2019 for \$65 to \$1,125.

What to do: Stop using the shades and contact Levolor at 800-752-9677 or go to [levolor.com](https://www.levolor.com) for details and to get a free repair kit.

DOREL INCLINED SLEEPERS

Dorel is recalling about 24,000 Eddie Bauer Slumber and Soothe Rock and Disney Baby Doze and Dream bassinets because infant fatalities have been reported while using other inclined sleep products. The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages the use of any inclined sleep product because they increase the risk of airway compression, suffocation, and death. The bassinets were sold at stores nationwide from November 2014 through February 2017 for about \$60.

What to do: Stop using the inclined sleepers and contact Dorel at 877-657-9546 or go to [safety1st.com](https://www.safety1st.com) for a refund in the form of a \$60 voucher.

TRISTAR MAGNETIC TRIVETS

Tristar Products is recalling about 350,000 magnetic trivets because the magnets they contain can detach, posing an ingestion hazard to children. When two or more magnets are swallowed, they can link together inside the intestines and clamp onto body tissues, causing intestinal obstructions, perforations, sepsis, and death. Internal injury from magnets can pose serious lifelong health effects. The trivets were sold on QVC from October 2017 through October 2018 for \$75 to \$120 as part of a cookware set and \$10 when sold separately.

What to do: Stop using the trivets and place them out of the reach of children. Call 800-718-5136 or go to [tristarproducts.com](https://www.tristarproducts.com) for details and free replacements.

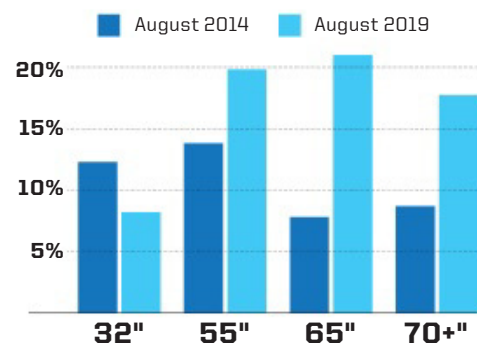
SUNSETTER AWNING COVERS

SunSetter is recalling about 270,000 vinyl covers for motorized awnings because if the awning cover (secured with bungee tie-downs) is removed, the awning can open unexpectedly with enough force to strike you if you’re standing in its path, and could cause a fall and death or serious injury. The covers were sold for about \$100 or distributed as a promotional item,

Product Update

The latest ratings from our labs

The rising percentage of large-screen TVs on store shelves



Source: GAP Intelligence data from walk-in retail stores.



How to Pick a Great TV This Fall

There's no need to pay top dollar for a TV you'll love—and with our ratings and shopping advice, you won't have to.

by James K. Willcox



INSIDE
CR'S LABS

CR's TV labs use both test patterns and real-world content to judge display quality, one part of a set's Overall Score.

WITH SUMMER NOW in the rearview mirror, we're fast approaching the holiday shopping season, when you can expect to find lots of high-quality TVs for sale at great prices. In 2019, those deals may look particularly attractive if you're hankering for a big television.

Over the past few years, the 55-inch TV has emerged as the large-screen standard for many Americans, and 65-inch sets are surging, too, according to The NPD Group, a market research firm.

One reason: The average price of a 55-inch set fell 8 percent from last year, NPD's research shows, while prices for 65-inch sets dropped even more, by 20 percent.

These aggressive price declines are great news for shoppers. Sure, you can pay \$4,000 or more this fall for one of the first generation of 8K models, but we think it's too early to buy into that technology. Some of the top 4K TVs in our ratings are almost that expensive, as well, but you'll find lots of solid choices no matter your budget.

In the following pages, we'll help you through the shopping process—starting with proven techniques for navigating the sales of Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the rest of the holiday season.

How Much Should You Pay?

It's pretty easy to spot the difference between a luxury sedan and a cheap commuter car, but things aren't so obvious with TVs. Even if you're shopping only 65-inch 4K smart TVs, a single brand may offer everything



HOLIDAY SEASON SHOPPING TIPS

1. BEWARE OF SPECIALS

Black Friday doorbuster specials, available in limited quantities and often from lesser-known brands, are designed to get you into a store so that the retailer can sell you a pricier TV instead. Don't fall for this old sales trick.

2. GET BLACK FRIDAY BRIEFINGS

We routinely report on TV sales on CR.org, and CR's online price-and-shop tool displays current TV prices at Amazon, Best Buy, Walmart, and other retailers. (In our surveys, members say they have good experiences shopping for electronics both online and in physical stores.) Also consult Black Friday ads collected on sites such as bfads.net, bestblackfriday.com, dealnews.com, theblackfriday.com, and blackfriday.gottadeal.com.

3. DOWNLOAD SOME APPS

When you're in a store, mobile apps such as BuyVia, Shopkick, ShopSavvy, and Shopular let you scan bar codes or QR codes to compare prices, get discounts, and score coupons. (Done shopping? Deleting apps you don't use can help protect your privacy.)

[CONT. ON PAGE 20]

from basic sets that cost a few hundred bucks up to high-end TVs priced well over \$1,000. Here, roughly, is how TVs change as you move up a typical company's price ladder. (The details and prices vary by brand.)

Basic TVs. Many basic sets are smart TVs, but with access to only a few streaming services. You may get an IR (infrared) remote control, which requires line of sight to the TV, rather than a Bluetooth or RF (radio-frequency) remote, which does not. The screen probably won't have local dimming, a feature that can enhance the depth of the black levels by dividing the TV's backlight into zones that can be darkened independently. And basic TVs generally aren't great at displaying high-dynamic range (HDR) content. (HDR can produce brighter, more colorful and lifelike images.) Audio quality is rarely very good.

RECOMMENDED BASIC-TIER TVs:

LG 65UM7300PUA, \$680;

SAMSUNG UN65RU7100, \$700

Midtier TVs. In this range you'll see more features, such as local dimming, described above. The smart TV system may have access to more streaming services and more-intuitive onscreen navigation. And you may get an enhanced remote control with voice capability. Lots of midtier sets support voice-enabled digital assistants, such as Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant. And because they can hit higher brightness levels, these TVs may deliver

Product Update

a more effective HDR experience. Audio quality is all over the map at this level, from top-notch to just passable.

RECOMMENDED MIDTHIER TVs:

LG 65SM8600PUA, \$1,100;
SONY XBR-65X850G, \$1,130

Flagship TVs. These are the priciest models in a company's lineup. As in the lower-priced tiers, most high-end TV screens are LCDs, but the flagship versions will have full-array LED backlights, spread across the entire TV. The greater number of dimmable zones allows the darkest parts of a picture to look nearly black. This technology doesn't apply to OLED TVs, which top our ratings, where every pixel can be dimmed independently to create very deep black levels. Flagship TVs may have better audio systems and support Dolby Atmos, which creates an immersive sound experience by adding an element of height. These sets typically earn the highest scores from CR on a number of features.

RECOMMENDED FLAGSHIP TVs:

LG OLED65C9PUA, \$2,800;
SAMSUNG QN65Q90R, \$2,800

The 'New Model' Name Game

If you're shopping in a warehouse club such as BJ's or Costco, you may stumble across sets from LG and Samsung that

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19]

4. SIGN UP FOR STORE LOYALTY PROGRAMS

They often offer promotions, and let members earn rewards.

5. EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA

Big retailers' Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter accounts can alert you to exclusive sales and discounts.

6. CHECK STORE POLICIES

Many retailers have a price-match policy. If you buy a TV, then find it on sale for less at the same retailer or elsewhere within a specified period, often two weeks, you can get a refund on the difference. But these policies may be suspended around Black Friday.

7. AVOID PRICEY ACCESSORIES

Don't blow an awesome TV deal by overpaying for an HDMI cable. Just buy one from an online retailer.

8. CONSIDER A "DERIVATIVE" TV

A number of low-priced TVs are made specifically for Black Friday, and sometimes for specific retailers. These sets can be a great value. (Learn more starting at left.)

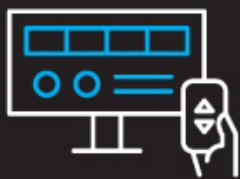
look remarkably similar to others you've seen at Best Buy, but with slightly different model numbers. It's not unusual: Model names for essentially the same TV can vary from one retailer to the next.

This one-TV-but-many-names phenomenon ramps up in the fall, when TV makers start pumping out so-called derivative sets based on models introduced earlier in the year. The TVs usually have lower prices and may have different features, such as a simpler remote control or a smaller number of HDMI ports.

The naming confusion makes it hard on shoppers looking to compare prices. If a store is the only one selling a TV with a particular model name, you can't come in with an ad for that exact TV from a different store. That makes it harder to negotiate on price—although it never hurts to try.

Often, sets with similar model names perform equally well. We don't test all the derivative models on the market, but we do bring a number of near-twins into the lab. For example, one 55-inch, derivative set we tested last year cost about \$170 less than the model it was based on—and the price was the only significant difference.

The lesson? Don't be afraid to buy the near-clone of a highly rated TV if it has the features you want at a great price.



6 TYPES OF SMART TV

Your next TV will probably come installed with one of these six major smart TV systems to access streaming services, such as Netflix. The best systems make lots of great content easier to find. Here are the pros and cons of each.

Amazon Fire TV Edition

BRANDS: Insignia, Toshiba
WHAT WE LIKE: Quick access to Amazon's streaming service. Built-in Alexa assistant for voice interaction.
WHAT WE DON'T: The TVs using this system have done only so-so in our tests. And the interface promotes Amazon Prime content.

Android TV

BRANDS: Hisense, Sony, and more
WHAT WE LIKE: Lots of apps, universal search, and top-notch voice recognition. Built-in Google Assistant for voice control and Chromecast for beaming content from a phone to the TV.
WHAT WE DON'T: Overly complicated interface.

Sponsored apps take up a lot of real estate and can't be deleted.

Roku TV

BRANDS: Hisense, RCA, Sharp, TCL, and more
WHAT WE LIKE: Easy-to-use interface, vast choice of apps, unbiased search. Works with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant voice-powered

Ratings > **Fall Season** In the run-up to the holiday shopping season, we've tested more than 130 new TVs. Here are the results.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

60-INCH AND LARGER TVs

60-INCH AND LARGER TVs *Continued*

✓	1	Sony XBR-65A9G	90	\$3,800	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	2	LG OLED65C9PUA	89	\$2,800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	3	Sony XBR-65A8G	89	\$3,500	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	4	LG OLED65E9PUA	88	\$3,800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	5	LG OLED65C9AUA	88	\$2,750	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	6	Samsung QN65Q90R	86	\$2,800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	7	Samsung QN65Q80R	85	\$2,000	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	8	Samsung QN65Q900R	84	\$4,500	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	9	LG 65SM9500PUA	80	\$2,695	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	10	LG 65SM9000PUA	80	\$1,300	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	11	Samsung QN65Q70R	80	\$1,500	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	12	Sony XBR-65X950G	80	\$1,800	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	13	LG 65SM8600AUA	78	\$1,070	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	14	Samsung QN65Q7DR	77	\$1,500	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	15	LG 65SM8600PUA	77	\$1,100	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑

✓	16	Samsung QN65Q6DR	76	\$1,300	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	17	Samsung UN65RU8000	75	\$1,050	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	18	Samsung UN65RU800D	75	\$1,080	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	19	Samsung QN65Q60R	75	\$1,300	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	20	Sony XBR-65X850G	74	\$1,130	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
✓	21	Samsung QN75Q6DR	73	\$2,200	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	22	Samsung UN65RU7300	73	\$750	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	23	Sony XBR-65X800G	72	\$1,000	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Ⓢ	24	Samsung UN65RU7100	72	\$700	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	25	Samsung UN65RU7200	71	\$700	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	26	LG 70UM7370PUA	71	\$840	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	27	Samsung UN75RU710D	70	\$1,280	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	28	LG 65UM7300PUA	70	\$680	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
	29	Samsung UN75RU7200	69	\$1,300	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
	30	LG 65UM7300AUE	69	\$680	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓

digital assistants. **WHAT WE DON'T:** Roku TVs tend to lack some picture controls, and with some sets you need to use the Roku TV phone app to adjust settings or use voice features.

SmartCast

BRAND: Vizio
WHAT WE LIKE: Built-in Google Chromecast,

so casting content from your phone to the TV is easy. Free shows via Vizio's WatchFree app. **WHAT WE DON'T:** Offloads some smart TV features and streaming apps to your mobile device. Requires an Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant device in order to control the TV using voice commands.

Tizen

BRAND: Samsung
WHAT WE LIKE: Customizable tiles across the bottom of the screen; one row for apps, another for content from the highlighted app. Top-notch smart home integration, with support for Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Samsung's own

Bixby voice assistant. **WHAT WE DON'T:** Some apps are hard to find. To use Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, you need a separate device, such as an Amazon Echo.

WebOS

BRAND: LG
WHAT WE LIKE: Best interface of the bunch, with customizable cards for apps and settings;

a second row with content appears when an app is highlighted. Supports Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and LG ThinQ voice assistant to control smart home devices. **WHAT WE DON'T:** Fewer apps than competing platforms; for example, HBO is missing. Also, voice-enabled Magic Remote is an extra-cost option with some sets.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

60-INCH AND LARGER TVs *Continued*

	31	Vizio PX65-G1	68	\$1,600	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	32	TCL 75S425	64	\$1,000	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
	33	Vizio P759-G1	64	\$2,000	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	34	Vizio P659-G1	63	\$1,250	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	35	Vizio M658-G1	60	\$800	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	36	Vizio V655-G9	59	\$550	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	37	Vizio M657-G0	57	\$800	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	38	Vizio V705-G3	55	\$800	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	39	Philips 65PFL5604	54	\$490	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
	40	Vizio V605-G3	54	\$500	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	41	Hisense 65R7E1	53	\$550	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	42	Hisense 65R6E1	53	\$450	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓

55- TO 59-INCH TVs

✓	1	Sony XBR-55A9G	90	\$2,800	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	2	LG OLED55B9PUA	87	\$1,595	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	3	LG OLED55C9AUA	87	\$1,750	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	4	LG OLED55C9PUA	86	\$1,800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	5	Samsung QN55Q80R	84	\$1,600	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	6	LG 55SM9000PUA	80	\$1,100	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	7	Sony XBR-55X950G	79	\$1,300	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	8	Samsung QN55Q7DR	78	\$1,200	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	9	Samsung QN55Q70R	77	\$1,200	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	10	LG 55SM8100AUA	77	\$750	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	11	LG 55SM8600PUA	76	\$850	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	12	Samsung QN55Q60R	76	\$1,000	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	13	Samsung QN55Q6DR	75	\$1,000	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	14	Samsung UN55RU8000	75	\$750	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	15	Samsung UN58RU7100	74	\$550	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

55- TO 59-INCH TVs *Continued*

✓	16	Sony XBR-55X850G	74	\$930	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
✓	17	Samsung UN55RU800D	73	\$730	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	18	Samsung UN55RU7300	73	\$550	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	19	Samsung UN55RU7100	72	\$500	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	20	Samsung UN55RU7200	72	\$500	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	21	Skyworth 55XA8000	72	\$1,300	—	—	↓	↑	↑
Ⓢ	22	LG 55UM7300PUA	72	\$440	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	23	Samsung UN55RU740D	72	\$600	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
	24	LG 55UM7300AUE	70	\$400	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Ⓢ	25	Samsung UN58RU710D	70	\$530	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
	26	Sharp LC-55LBU711U	61	\$450	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	27	Vizio M558-G1	60	\$700	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	28	Hisense 55H8F	59	\$450	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	29	Vizio M557-G0	58	\$600	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	30	Vizio V555-G1	57	\$400	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	31	Vizio V556-G1	56	\$430	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	32	Philips 55PFL5604	56	\$400	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	33	Hisense 55R7E	54	\$300	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	34	Hitachi 58C61	52	\$330	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
	35	Insignia NS-55D420NA20	51	\$330	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	36	Onn ONA55UB19E06	51	\$290	—	—	↓	↑	↓
	37	JVC LT-55MA888	51	\$300	—	—	↓	↑	↓

46- TO 52-INCH TVs

✓	1	Samsung QN49Q70R	77	\$1,000	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	2	Samsung QN49Q6DR	75	\$800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	3	Samsung QN49Q7DR	75	\$1,000	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	4	Samsung QN49Q60R	74	\$800	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ⓢ	5	Samsung UN50RU7200	73	\$400	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

46- TO 52-INCH TVs *Continued*

\$	6	Samsung UN50RU710D	73	\$380	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
\$	7	Samsung UN50RU7100	73	\$400	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	8	Samsung UN49RU8000	72	\$650	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
✓	9	LG 49SM8600PUA	72	\$650	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
\$	10	LG 50UM7300PUA	71	\$360	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
\$	11	LG 50UM7300AUE	70	\$330	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
✓	12	Sony XBR-49X800G	69	\$700	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
	13	TCL 50S421	63	\$280	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
	14	Toshiba 50LF711U20	61	\$380	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	15	Sharp LC-50LBU711U	59	\$400	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	16	Hisense 50H8F	59	\$380	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	17	Vizio M507-G1	57	\$470	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	18	Philips 50PFL5604	57	\$300	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	19	Magnavox 50MV349R	48	\$270	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	20	Element E4SC5018RKU	46	\$200	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓

39- TO 43-INCH TVs

✓	1	Sony XBR-43X800G	72	\$600	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
✓	2	Samsung QN43Q60R	68	\$700	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
\$	3	Samsung UN43RU7200	67	\$330	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
✓	4	Samsung QN43Q6DR	66	\$700	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
\$	5	LG 43UM7300PUA	64	\$300	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
✓	6	Samsung UN43RU7100	64	\$330	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
	7	LG 43LM5700PUA	62	\$250	↓	↑	NA	↑	↓
	8	TCL 43S421	61	\$220	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
	9	LG 43LM5000PUA	60	\$210	↓	↑	NA	↑	↓

HOW WE TEST: Ultra HD performance, which includes an HDR performance score, is an evaluation of how well a TV reproduces full-quality Ultra High Definition (or 4K) using 4K content. (HDR heightens the difference between the darkest blacks and brightest whites in an image, allowing for more nuanced detail in both the

shadows and bright parts of a scene.) **HD picture quality** is evaluated after a TV is adjusted to produce the highest-fidelity image possible, and encompasses detail, color accuracy, and contrast. **Sound quality** reflects overall clarity of sound, depth of bass, effective volume level, and distortion for dialog and music. **Overall Score**

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		
					Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Ultra HD performance	HD picture quality	Sound quality

39- TO 43-INCH TVs *Continued*

	10	TCL 43S425	60	\$220	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
	11	Vizio V405-G9	58	\$240	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	12	Vizio V436-G1	57	\$300	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓
	13	Insignia NS-43D420NA20	57	\$200	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	14	Vizio V435-G0	57	\$280	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	15	Philips 43PFL5604	56	\$270	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
	16	TCL 43S325	54	\$200	↓	↑	NA	↓	↓
	17	Hisense 43H4030F	53	\$230	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	18	Hisense 40H4030F	50	\$180	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	19	Hitachi 43C61	47	\$200	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

32-INCH TVs

✓	1	LG 32LM620BPUA	62	\$200	↓	↑	NA	↑	↓
✓	2	LG 32LM570BPUA	62	\$170	↓	↑	NA	↑	↓
\$	3	LG 32LM500BPUA	59	\$130	↓	↑	NA	↑	↓
	4	Sanyo FW32R19F	56	\$130	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	5	Hisense 32H5590F	54	\$130	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	6	Toshiba 32L310U20	52	\$130	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	7	Vizio D32h-G9	52	\$140	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	8	Insignia NS-32D220NA20	51	\$100	↓	↓	NA	↑	↓
	9	Philips 32PFL4664	50	\$130	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	10	JVC LT32MAW388	49	\$130	-	-	NA	↓	↓
	11	Hisense 32H4030F	47	\$130	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓
	12	Element ELEFW328C	35	\$100	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓

➤ All-Access and Digital members can find the latest, complete ratings at [CR.org/tvs](https://www.consumerreports.org/tvs).

combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction from CR's 2018 Summer Survey, in which members reported on 97,554 TVs bought new from 2010 through 2018. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that newly purchased models from a given brand will develop problems or

break within the first five years. **Owner satisfaction** reflects the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend the TV they bought. In cases where we have insufficient survey data to provide a brand-level rating, indicated by a gray dash (-), we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction.

Wake Up



KENMORE
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81

OVERALL
SCORE

to Better Coffee

Break out of your daily grind with our guide to the best hot- and cold-brew coffee makers. Plus, savor the knowledge of the health benefits in your cup of joe.

by Daniel Wroclawski Photographs by Lucas Zarebinski



HOME BREWING CAN save you \$4 or \$5 per day, but today's coffee makers give you reasons beyond mere frugality to brew a cup yourself. Your choices include an ever-expanding variety of appliances worthy of a barista, capable of producing beautifully frothed lattes, cappuccinos, espressos—even cold brew—in the comfort of your own kitchen.

But all of those options don't necessarily mean these coffee makers handle the fundamentals of brewing equally well. That's why our experts test dozens of new machines every year, and our comprehensive ratings of roughly 150 models span seven types. And for the first time, we've integrated brand-level predicted reliability and owner satisfaction ratings into the Overall Score for every drip coffee maker we rate, as well as those that use pods (for single-serve appliances).

In our most recent survey, Technivorm is the highest-rated drip coffee-maker brand for owner satisfaction and reliability. But its machines are pricey. The \$220 model we tested was lacking in features (which we factor into our convenience test along with setup, cleaning, and more), especially considering its cost.

Brands that make lower-cost drip machines, such as Bella, generally do well, too. The same can't be said for the makers of pod machines. Of the nine brands we currently rate for reliability, more than half earn a rating so low that we can't recommend any of their models, regardless of their performance scores. That includes the coffee giant Keurig, though it earns an Excellent for owner satisfaction.

We also serve up information on coffee's many health benefits, the cold-brew craze, and our top-rated brewers.



Will Your Coffee Maker Last?

We surveyed our members about the drip and single-serve coffee makers they bought from 2008 through 2018 and used the data to develop ratings for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. Here's how the brands stack up.

DRIP	Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	SINGLE-SERVE	Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction
TECHNIVORM	↑↑	↑↑	NESPRESSO	↑↑	↑↑
BELLA	↑	↓	BELLA	↓	↑
BRIM	↑	↓	MR. COFFEE	↓	↓
CRUX	↑	↓	TRU	↓	↓
FARBERWARE	↑	↓	CUISINART	↓	↑↑
OSTER	↑	↓	KEURIG	↓	↑↑
PROCTOR-SILEX	↑	↓	HAMILTON BEACH	↓↓	↓
BUNN	↓	↑↑	PROCTOR-SILEX	↓↓	↓
CUISINART	↓	↑↑	FARBERWARE	↓↓	↓↓
NINJA	↓	↑↑			
OXO	↓	↑↑			
BLACK+DECKER	↓	↓			
BRAUN	↓	↓			
CALPHALON	↓	↓			
CAPRESSO	↓	↓			
HAMILTON BEACH	↓	↓			
KENMORE	↓	↓			
KITCHENAID	↓	↓			
KRUPS	↓	↓			
MR. COFFEE	↓	↓			
SALTON	↓	↓			
TRU	↓	↓			
COOKS	↓	↓			
BREVILLE	↓↓	↑			
DE'LONGHI	↓↓	↓			

Source: Results are based on Consumer Reports' 2018 Summer Survey of CR members reporting on 80,571 drip and single-serve coffee makers they purchased new from 2008 through 2018.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

Q: What's the best way to store my beans?

A: It depends on how soon you plan to use them. Coffee is hygroscopic, meaning it absorbs moisture, odors, and flavors from surrounding air. In order to retain the fresh roast flavor, it's important to keep beans away from heat, light, air, and moisture. It's best not to freeze or refrigerate beans you're going

to use in the next few weeks because that can expose them to dampness and smells from other foods. Instead, store them in an opaque, airtight container and keep it in a dark, cool location, away from the stove or other heat sources. But for long-term storage, the freezer preserves beans better than the fridge.

Ditch the original packaging, instead sealing small portions of the beans in plastic zipper bags to fend off freezer burn. They can stay put for about a month before the quality deteriorates. When you want to use a bag, defrost it and transfer the beans to an airtight container—and don't refreeze them.

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
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fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>



Why Cold Brew Is So Hot

Percolating at coffee shops for the past few years, the cold-brew coffee trend is still going strong. One in 5 Americans drinks cold-brew coffee regularly or occasionally, the National Coffee Association reports.

Cold brew—not to be confused with hot-brewed iced coffee—refers to a cold or room-temperature brewing method done over a 12- to 24-hour period. It produces a more concentrated drink that's less bitter than standard hot coffee. When ready, you can add cold water, pour it over ice, or mix it with hot water for a stronger warm beverage instead.

A few products dedicated to cold brewing are sold as being simpler to use so you can enjoy a batch at home. To see whether they deliver, CR conducted its first-ever tests of nine cold-brew coffee makers, manual and automatic models. Manuals let time do the brewing, and often look like a French press or large pitcher with a filter and a drain plug. Automatic machines plug in and use various methods, such as continuously circulating water through the grounds, to speed up the process.

The speediest model we tested, the **Gourmia GCM6850 Coffee Maker** (\$40, with an Overall Score of 50), takes just about 5 minutes vs. the 12- to 24-hour brewing time required by manual models. But our testers found it didn't yield a satisfying brew. "Some automatics give similar results to slower manual ones but aren't as easy to clean due to their many parts," says Ginny Lui, CR's test engineer for coffee makers. The best model we tested is the easy-to-clean **Primula Burke Cold Brew Coffee Maker PBPBK-5101** for \$30. It's also the only model in our ratings that calls for a full 24-hour brew time. The results are worth the wait.



Coffee's Healthy Whole-Body Benefits

"The most important thing we've learned about coffee over the past 20 years is that there's very little indication that it's bad for you," says Edward Giovannucci, M.D., a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "If anything, there's more evidence that it may be healthy to drink."

The benefits are probably due to anti-inflammatories and antioxidants found naturally in coffee: polyphenols (such as chlorogenic and quinic acids) and diterpenes (such as cafestol and kahweol). It's likely that many of coffee's health perks extend to decaf, too, because with decaf, only the caffeine, not these other compounds, is removed.

Studies have found that coffee has a positive effect on the risk of a variety of conditions and diseases, including brain health and weight control. But not all of the benefits have the same strength of evidence behind them. (See the table at right.) Of course, adding loads of cream and sugar to your coffee may offset some of the benefits you get from it.

In general, people can safely consume up to 400 mg of caffeine per day, the amount in two to four 8-ounce cups of coffee. For some, too much coffee irritates the stomach, causes anxiety or the jitters, disrupts sleep, and increases the frequency of heart palpitations. Three or more cups per day appears to trigger migraines in people prone to them. And pregnant women, people who are at risk of osteoporosis, and those taking certain drugs (including some antibiotics, antidepressants, and antipsychotics) should limit their intake of caffeinated coffee.

—Jennifer Cook



Coffee Claims —> Edward Giovannucci, M.D., of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health weighs in on where the current research is solid and where more investigation is needed.

STRONGEST EVIDENCE	MODERATE EVIDENCE	SOME EVIDENCE	LIMITED EVIDENCE
<p><i>Lowers the risk of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endometrial cancer • Gallstones • Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and liver cancer • Oral cancers • Type 2 diabetes 	<p><i>Lowers the risk of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorectal cancer • Coronary heart disease, heart failure, and stroke • Melanoma and nonmelanoma skin cancers • Parkinson's disease • Respiratory disease <p><i>Improves:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alertness, concentration, focus, and energy levels • Mood 	<p><i>Lowers the risk of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease • Breast cancer • Depression • Pancreatic cancer • Prostate cancer <p><i>Increases:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variety of healthy bacteria in the gut 	<p><i>Lowers the risk of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls by the elderly, possibly due to caffeine increasing alertness or reaction time • Weight gain

Perfect Perk-Me-Ups

We've "poured" over our expert ratings to pick the appliances that offer you more—from extra-large carafes to bean-grinding and milk-frothing features. Browse here to find the best one for you.

DRIP COFFEE MAKERS

TOP-OF-THE-MORNING DRIP

Cuisinart PerfectTemp 14 Cup Programmable DCC-3200
\$100 (below, left)

85
OVERALL
SCORE

With a 14-cup capacity, this extra-large brewer has topped our ratings for more than two years. It earns an Excellent rating in our brew-performance test and is easy to use. Adjust brew strength with the touch of a button for a bolder cup.

CROWD-PLEASER

Cuisinart Coffee on Demand DCC-3000
\$100

80
OVERALL
SCORE

Handily outscoring many more expensive machines, this 12-cup drip model is great for caffeinating a crowd. Instead of a carafe, the built-in coffee reservoir keeps your java hot, and a tap lets you pour one cup at a time.

SINGLE-SERVE POD COFFEE MAKERS

ESPRESSO AFICIONADO

Nespresso Essenza Mini
\$150

89
OVERALL
SCORE

This space saver can brew three different types of coffee—lungo (an Italian version), espresso, and ristretto (a more concentrated espresso)—depending on the capsules you buy. It serves up strength-controlled cups with speed and is easy to clean.

A HOME BARISTA

Ninja Specialty CM401
\$170

80
OVERALL
SCORE

This stylish Ninja is versatile, with a built-in milk frother and a brew mode for making coffee that's ready to be poured over ice. With excellent brew performance and an easy-to-pour carafe, it's a great way to add variety to your morning cup.

BEST THERMAL CARAFE BREWER

Mr. Coffee Optimal Brew BVMC-PSTX95
\$80 (below, right)

78
OVERALL
SCORE

With an easy-to-handle carafe that keeps coffee hot for 2 to 4 hours, this machine makes 10 cups of excellent brew. It's also programmable, with a cleaning indicator and removable reservoir for easy filling and cleaning.

K-CUP KING

Cuisinart Premium Single-Serve Brewer SS-10
\$150

76
OVERALL
SCORE

It turns out the best brewer for Keurig K-Cups isn't made by Keurig. That honor goes to this Cuisinart, which is easy to use and clean, and brews consistent-sized cups every time. This programmable machine also has a built-in water filter.

FRESH GRINDS IN A FLASH

Cuisinart Burr Grind & Brew DGB-700BC
\$170

73
OVERALL
SCORE

Put whole beans into this model and get up to 12 cups of coffee. Aside from the built-in grinder, this programmable machine offers brew performance that rates Very Good, brew-strength control, and even a built-in water filter.

ONE-MUG MARVEL

Capresso On-the-Go Personal 42505
\$50

54
OVERALL
SCORE

The Capresso uses loose grounds rather than pods, ideal for single servings with more control over quality. While it doesn't top our ratings charts, this mug-brewer is a solid choice thanks to simple controls and an easily accessible reservoir.

A LATTE TO LOVE

Keurig K-Latte Single Serve K-36
\$100

67
OVERALL
SCORE

The Keurig K-Latte can brew hot coffee and lattes with its built-in milk frother. It's pretty speedy for its type and features a "coffee shot" setting for brewing espresso-style shots that are meant to be added to specialty drinks.

FACE-OFF

Thermal Carafes vs. Hot Plates



Cuisinart PerfectTemp, left, and Mr. Coffee Optimal Brew

Traditional drip coffee makers keep coffee hot one of two ways: with a hot plate under a glass carafe or in an insulated thermal carafe, which is often more expensive.

"We find that there isn't a significant difference in temperature loss between the two types," says Ginny Lui, a test engineer. For both types, we measure the temperature

of the coffee after 30 minutes and one hour.

On average, carafes on hot plates can decrease—or increase—the temperature of coffee by about 2.5 degrees after one hour. Thermal carafes lose about 4 degrees after an hour.

We see more of a contrast in our carafe-handling tests, which Lui's team conducts on

both types. Generally, we've seen that thermal carafes are heavier than glass, making them more difficult to pour, and some of them dribble coffee. Thermal carafes can also be more difficult to clean.

Hot plates create a potential burn risk, so a thermal carafe might be best if you have children at home.

Ratings > True Brew Our coffee-maker ratings cover a variety of machines, factoring in the quality of their brew and how easy they are to use on a busy morning.

Recommended	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results			Features				
				Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Brew performance	Convenience	Carafe handling	Brew time (mins.)	Programmable	Thermal carafe/mug	Small-batch setting	Brew-strength control
DRIP COFFEE MAKERS WITH CARAFE													
✓	Cuisinart PerfectTemp 14 Cup Programmable DCC-3200	85	\$100	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	10	•		•	•
✓	Calphalon Special Brew BVCLDCG1	85	\$100	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	10	•			•
✓	Cuisinart Programmable DCC-4000	84	\$95	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•	•
✓	Mr. Coffee BVMC-ABX39	84	\$60	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	10	•		•	•
✓	Bella Pro Series 90061	83	\$60	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•	•
Ⓢ	Hamilton Beach 12-cup Programmable 49465R	82	\$25	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	10	•			
✓	Ninja 12-Cup Programmable CE201	82	\$80	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•	•
✓	Kenmore Elite 12-Cup # 76772	81	\$90	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•	•
✓	Mr. Coffee Programmable BVMC-FBX39	80	\$80	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•	•
✓	Ninja Specialty CM401	80	\$170	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	7	•		•	•
Ⓢ	Bella 14755 with Brew Strength Selector	80	\$40	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•	•
✓	Cuisinart Brew Central DCC-1200	79	\$90	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	9	•		•	
✓	Mr. Coffee Optimal Brew BVMC-PSTX95	78	\$80	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	7	•	•		
✓	Capresso SG220 12-Cup	78	\$50	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	9	•			•
✓	Crux Programmable 14540	78	\$100	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	8	•			•
Ⓢ	Black+Decker CM4000S	78	\$40	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	8	•			•
	KitchenAid 12-Cup with 1-touch Brewing KCM1204	76	\$100	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•	•
	Mr. Coffee BVMC-DMX85 HotShot Station	76	\$70	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	10	•			•
	KitchenAid KCM1202OB	75	\$80	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	8	•		•	•
	Brim Pour Over 50011	75	\$180	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	7				
	Ninja Coffee Bar System CF097	75	\$230	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	9	•	•	•	•
>	All-Access and Digital members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/coffeemakers .												

LABEL LOGIC

Bean Basics

Want to know how your beans were grown? Terms such as "ethically farmed" lack a legal definition, and seals with similar-sounding phrases can have very different meanings. Charlotte Vallaeys, CR's expert on food labels, decodes three important ones.



USDA ORGANIC
The term "organic" is strictly regulated

by the Department of Agriculture. For coffee farms, this seal means that synthetic fertilizers and synthetic pesticides that can be harmful are banned, and soil quality is protected.



FAIRTRADE
This seal indicates that the beans are from small-scale farmers

who are paid a fair price. The certification organization, Fairtrade International, sets a minimum price—enough to cover the costs of sustainable production—that must be paid directly to coffee producers. A premium added to the minimum price is distributed to coffee producers and must be invested in their communities or businesses.



FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED
Unlike Fairtrade, beans with this label can be grown

on large coffee plantations. But they must meet certain standards, including protecting farmworkers from unsafe working conditions. Farms must also pay workers at least the local minimum wage and implement a plan to increase that to a living wage over time.

Recommended	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results							Features	
				Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	First-cup speed	Repeat speed	Temperature consistency	Size consistency	Brewing range	Taste	Convenience	Average coffee temperature (°F)	Maximum mug height (in.)

POD COFFEE MAKERS

✓	Nespresso Pixie Espresso Maker in Aluminum EN125S	90	\$230	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	170	5.75
✓	Nespresso Essenza Mini	89	\$150	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	170	5.25
✓	Nespresso by DeLonghi CitiZ EN267BAE	87	\$300	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	170	6.00
✓	Nespresso by DeLonghi Lattissima One Espresso Maker EN500BW/W	83	\$380	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	170	5.75
✓	Nespresso VertuoLine Evoluo Deluxe	77	\$200	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	150	7.00
✓	Nespresso VertuoPlus	76	\$200	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	155	7.75
	Cuisinart Premium Single-Serve Brewer SS-10	76	\$150	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	180	7.00
	Illy Y3.2 Espresso/Coffee Machine 60296	75	\$150	—	—	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	180	5.75
	Touch Brewer T214B	72	\$150	—	—	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	185	7.25
	KitchenAid Nespresso by KitchenAid KES0504	72	\$450	—	—	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	180	5.75
	Cuisinart Coffee Center SS-15	70	\$200	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	170	7.75
	Viante Cafe Viante Enzo Single Serve Espresso Machine Coffee Maker 3A-C236B	70	\$140	—	—	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	175	5.75
	Keurig K-Elite K90	67	\$170	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	180	7.00
	Keurig K-Latte Single Serve K-36	67	\$100	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	185	7.00

Recommended	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features		
				Convenience	Ease of cleaning	Taste	Brew time	Claimed capacity (oz.)	Dishwasher-safe

MANUAL COLD-BREW COFFEE MAKERS

✓	Primula Burke Cold Brew Coffee Maker PBPBK-5101	78	\$30	↑	↑	↓	24 hr.	51	Carafe (both racks); filter and gasket (upper rack only)
	Asobu Cold Brew Insulated Portable Brewer KB900	73	\$50	↑	↓	↑	12-24 hr.	40	No
	KitchenAid Cold Brew Coffee Maker KCM4212SX	70	\$100	↑	↑	↓	12-24 hr.	28	No
	Toddy Cold Brew System	70	\$40	↓	↑	↓	12-24 hr.	56	Yes
	Oxo Good Grips Cold Brew Coffee Maker	61	\$50	↓	↑	↓	12-24 hr.	40	Carafe only

AUTOMATIC COLD-BREW COFFEE MAKERS

	Cuisinart Automatic Cold Brew Coffeemaker DCB-10	73	\$80	↑	↑	↓	25-45 min.	35	Carafe (both racks); carafe lid and filter, filter basket (upper rack only)
	Ninja Hot & Cold Brewed System CP307	72	\$230	↑	↓	↓	18-20 min.	50	No
	Dash Rapid Cold Brew System DCBCM550BK	67	\$130	↑	↓	↓	5-15 min.	50	No

HOW WE TEST: For drip coffee makers, we judge **Brew performance** by the concentration of coffee in each brew and whether the maker can reach the industry standard of 195° F to 205° F for 5 to 6 minutes. For drip models, we assess **Carafe handling** and **Brew**

time; for pod models, **First-cup speed**, and **Repeat speed** and **consistency** for secondary cups. **Brewing range** tests the ability to vary strength. For pod and cold-brew models, a trained tester judges **Taste**. Cold brew is made to manufacturer instructions.

For drip and pod models, the **Overall Score** combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that new models from a given brand will develop problems or break within the

first four years. **Owner satisfaction** reflects the proportion of CR members extremely likely to recommend their coffee maker. If there's insufficient data, indicated by a gray dash (—), we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction.



1



2



3



4

Almond? Oat? Soy?

In bygone days, we quaintly debated choosing skim or 2 percent cow's milk. Today our options include many plant-based varieties. Are these a healthier choice?

by Rachel Meltzer Warren

SALES OF NONDAIRY MILKS are up 61 percent since 2012, according to a 2018 report from market research firm Mintel. A 2018 Consumer Reports nationally representative survey of 1,003 U.S. adults found that in the previous year about a third of people consumed what are now commonly referred to as “plant milks” in place of cow's milk. And 18 percent of Americans said they buy cow's milk and plant milk equally.

“The biggest reason my patients choose nondairy milk is that they don't tolerate dairy, or want to avoid animal products,” says Lauri Wright, Ph.D., chair of the department of nutrition and dietetics at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. But the trend reaches beyond the lactose-intolerant and vegan crowds. More than half of plant-milk buyers in CR's survey said they think it's healthier than cow's milk.

And yet “many people are confused about plant milks' nutritional profile,” says Ellen Kloss, M.S., a CR nutritionist. So our food testing team evaluated 35 plant milks—almond, coconut, oat, and soy—for nutrition and taste.

Not Purely Plant Parts

Our nutrition rating for plant milks factors in protein. Cow's milk is naturally rich in that nutrient, as well as calcium, potassium, and several B vitamins, and is typically fortified with vitamins A and D. We rated plant milks according to how they stacked up against cow's milk for these vitamins and minerals, but we didn't include that rating in the Overall Score.



HOLY COW! MILK FROM A NUT?

1. Soy Milk

A top-tasting soy milk has a beany or nutty flavor rather than a grassy one, and isn't bitter. Some have caramel or molasses notes.

2. Almond Milk

Those with the best sensory scores had a slight to moderate almond flavor but little to no chalkiness or astringency.

3. Oat Milk

Expect from the best: slightly sweet oat flavor and a smooth texture.

4. Coconut Milk

Texture can be thick or thin, but the coconut flavor comes through in the best.

Note: Flavor descriptions come from the results of CR's sensory testing.

The results? Few of the drinks we tested match cow's milk for nutrition. “Dairy products, including milk, supply the bulk of the calcium people get in their diets, and when you replace it with plant milk, you may be missing out,” Kloss says.

We also gave higher nutrition marks to products that didn't contain certain added ingredients. Chief among them: added sugars. Cow's milk naturally contains lactose, a type of sugar, but no added sugars. Plant milks with “original” or “plain” in their names often contain added sugars, as do flavored milks, so look for “unsweetened” on the label.

Other ingredients of concern are tricalcium phosphate and disodium phosphate, which add calcium and phosphorus to the milk or act as a stabilizer to help keep ingredients from separating. A high intake of these additives may increase the risk of kidney disease, heart disease, and bone loss, especially when calcium is low.

On the positive side, only one product in our tests (Almond Dream Almond Drink Unsweetened Original) contains carrageenan, a seaweed extract used in certain plant milks as a stabilizer or thickener. Carrageenan may trigger inflammation in people who suffer from colitis or other inflammatory bowel disorders. Some report relief when they cut products containing carrageenan out of their diets.

However, many of the nondairy milks we examined use other gums as stabilizers. These can be chemically processed, and in large doses some may cause abdominal discomfort.

Do They Help the Planet?

Not being nutritionally identical to cow's milk doesn't mean plant-based milks are a bad choice, provided you opt for those with the best nutritional profile and the fewest additives. And they can be healthier for the planet—something half of plant-milk buyers in our survey gave as a reason for their purchase—although drawing firm conclusions from studies can be challenging. Soy milk and oat milk may use less water and produce fewer greenhouse gases than dairy milk. Almond milk, though, had a higher water-usage footprint than soy or cow's milk, a University of Wisconsin-Madison study found. No matter which type of plant milk you buy, choosing organic will reduce the environmental impact that results from pesticide use.

Ratings > **'Pouring' Over Plant Milks** Almond is the biggest seller by far, with soy milk a distant second. But coconut and oat are gaining fans.

Product	Overall Score	Test Results				Nutritional Information Per Cup										
		Nutrition	Compare with cow's milk	Sensory quality	Package size (fl. oz.)	Average price per serving	Calories	Total fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (% of daily value)	
COW'S MILK																
Cow's milk has a varied blend of nutrients—protein, calcium potassium, and B vitamins.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	122	5	3	8	12	0	12	115	23	
SOY MILK																
Soy milks have about the same amount of protein as cow's milk (or more) and, if fortified, similar vitamin and mineral profiles. Two earn Excellent scores for vitamins and minerals: Silk Organic Soymilk Unsweet and Silk Soymilk Original. The lowest-scoring soy milk loses points for added sugars and a higher sodium content.	80	↑	↑	↑	64	\$0.44	80	4	0.5	7	3	2	1	75	23	
Edensoy Organic Soymilk Original	79	↑	↓	↑	32	\$0.88	140	5	0.5	11	14	<1	7	105	8	
Silk Soymilk Original	73	↑	↑	↑	64	\$0.44	110	4.5	0.5	8	9	2	6	90	35	
Edensoy Organic Soymilk Unsweetened	69	↑	↓	↓	32	\$0.88	120	6	1	12	5	<1	2	5	3	
WestSoy Organic Soymilk Unsweetened Plain	69	↑	↓	↓	32	\$1.00	100	5	1	9	4	1	3	35	0	
WestSoy Organic Soymilk Original Plain	68	↓	↓	↑	32	\$1.00	130	4	0.5	7	17	<1	12	135	2	
OAT MILK																
Oat milks have slightly more protein than many almond milks but less than soy or cow's milk. Unlike other plant milks or cow's milk, they also have some fiber, but not enough to contribute much to your daily requirement (28 grams).	64	↓	↑	↑	52	\$0.67	90	1.5	0	2	19	2	4	120	27	
Oatly Oat-Milk Original	64	↓	↑	↑	64	\$0.63	120	5	0.5	3	16	2	7	100	27	
Califia Farms Oatmilk Unsweetened	61	↓	↓	↑	48	\$0.92	100	7	1	2	9	1	2	100	19	
Silk Oat Yeah Oatmilk Plain	60	↓	↑	↑	64	\$0.63	90	3.5	0	2	14	1	4	105	35	
Elmhurst Milked Oats	56	↑	↓	↓	32	\$1.50	100	1.5	0	4	18	2	5	120	1	
Pacific Foods Organic Oat Plant-Based Beverage Original	52	↓	↓	↓	32	\$0.75	130	2	0	4	25	2	17	105	9	
COCONUT MILK																
These earn Fair nutrition scores across the board because they have very little or no protein and are high in saturated fat; too much saturated fat raises heart disease risk. All are fortified with vitamin D, but only a few with calcium. Silk Coconutmilk Unsweet ranks higher than the others in terms of its vitamin and mineral content.	51	↓	↓	↑	32	\$0.75	60	4	4	1	5	0	3	120	5	
Pacific Foods Organic Coconut Plant-Based Beverage Original Unsweetened	50	↓	↓	↑	32	\$0.75	45	4	4	0	1	0	0	70	3	
Silk Coconutmilk Unsweet	50	↓	↑	↑	64	\$0.50	40	4	3	0	1	0	0	45	35	
So Delicious Organic Coconutmilk Beverage Original	48	↓	↓	↑	64	\$0.50	70	4.5	4	0	8	0	7	30	8	
So Delicious Organic Coconutmilk Beverage Unsweetened	47	↓	↓	↓	64	\$0.50	45	4.5	4	0	1	0	<1	25	8	
Silk Coconutmilk Original	42	↓	↓	↓	64	\$0.44	70	4.5	4	0	6	0	5	65	35	

ICON: ELIAS STEIN



Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Test Results				Nutritional Information Per Cup									
			Nutrition	Compare with cow's milk ¹	Sensory quality	Package size (fl. oz.)	Average price per serving	Calories	Total fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (% of daily value) ²

ALMOND MILK

None in our tests earn a score higher than Good for nutrition, mainly because of low protein content and poor protein quality. (Manufacturers of brands with higher protein content use more nuts.) Some are relatively high in total fat, but it's primarily healthy fat. Many are fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D but fall short on potassium, vitamin B12, and riboflavin. The top three almond milks are all unsweetened, are not fortified, are lowest in sodium, and have a simple ingredient list, plus the top two are organic.

	Malk Organic Almond Milk Unsweetened	60	I	⬇️	⬆️	28	\$2.00	100	9	1	4	2	1	<1	75	3
	New Barn Organic Almondmilk Unsweetened	60	I	⬇️	⬆️	32	\$1.63	90	8	1	3	1	0	0	55	1
	Elmhurst Milked Almonds Unsweetened	60	I	⬇️	⬆️	32	\$1.50	130	11	1	5	3	0	1	5	1
	Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Almondmilk Original Reduced Sugar	56	I	I	⬆️	64	\$0.50	40	2.5	0	1	4	<1	3	150	35
	So Delicious Almondmilk Beverage Unsweetened	55	I	I	⬆️	32	\$0.88	25	2	0	0	1	<1	0	130	35
	Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Almondmilk Unsweetened Original	55	I	I	⬆️	64	\$0.50	30	2.5	0	1	1	<1	0	170	35
	Mooala Organic Almondmilk Original	55	I	⬇️	I	48	\$1.08	60	3.5	0	2	6	<1	5	120	2
	Elmhurst Milked Almonds	54	I	⬇️	⬆️	32	\$1.50	150	11	1	5	9	0	7	100	0
	Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Almondmilk Original	54	I	I	⬆️	64	\$0.50	60	2.5	0	1	8	<1	7	150	35
	Silk Almondmilk Original	52	⬇️	⬇️	⬆️	64	\$0.38	60	2.5	0	1	8	<1	7	150	8
	Pacific Foods Organic Almond Plant-Based Beverage Original Unsweetened	52	I	⬇️	I	32	\$0.88	40	3	0	1	2	1	0	180	0
	Pacific Foods Organic Almond Plant-Based Beverage Original	51	I	⬇️	I	32	\$0.88	60	3	0	1	8	1	7	170	0
	Califia Farms Almondmilk Unsweetened	48	I	⬇️	I	48	\$0.67	35	3	0	1	1	1	0	160	35
	Silk Almondmilk Unsweetened	47	I	I	I	64	\$0.44	30	2.5	0	1	1	<1	0	125	35
	Califia Farms Almondmilk Original	46	I	⬇️	I	48	\$0.75	60	4	0	1	6	1	5	160	33
	Silk Almondmilk Light Original	46	I	I	I	64	\$0.44	40	1.5	0	1	6	<1	5	160	35
	Almond Dream Almond Drink Unsweetened Original	44	⬇️	⬆️	I	32	\$0.75	50	3.5	0	1	3	<1	<1	135	23

HOW WE TEST: CR evaluated 35 plant milks representing 14 brands for **Nutrition, Sensory quality** (taste and texture), and **Price. Calories,**

Saturated fat, Protein (quality and quantity), **Fiber, Sugars, and Sodium** were factored into our nutrition score, along with ingredient quality

and organic status of the product. **Overall Score** is based on nutrition and sensory quality. Because consumers drink plant milks for

various reasons, fortification with vitamins and minerals was rated separately and didn't factor into the Overall Score.

¹This rating represents how closely the product compares with cow's milk for nutrients that are naturally present in cow's milk (calcium; potassium; riboflavin, or vitamin B2; and vitamin B12) or that are routinely added (vitamins A and D). Many of these nutrients are added to certain plant milks. ²The daily value for calcium is 1,300 mg.

A large industrial water bottling plant. The foreground shows a curved conveyor belt with a blue rubber mat, carrying rows of clear plastic bottles with blue caps. The background shows a complex network of metal pipes, machinery, and overhead lighting in a clean, industrial setting.

SHOULD WE BREAK OUR BOTTLED WATER HABIT?



Differences in purity between bottled and tap water might not be as stark as you think, and yet Americans spent \$31 billion last year on bottled water, in some cases because they believe bottled is safer. Our special investigation may make you rethink what you drink.

BY RYAN FELTON





For a glimpse into America's complicated relationship with drinking water—bottled and tap—consider the town of Hudson, Mass., 40 miles west of Boston. This spring, residents grappled with fallout from routine tests that found chemicals in their tap water known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS (pronounced P-fas). These compounds have been linked to cancer, developmental delays in children, decreased fertility, and other health problems.

In response, Hudson officials began distributing free cases of bottled water to residents, and thought they had enough to last about eight weeks while the contamination was addressed. But demand was so great, with lines at times snaking out of the parking lot where the water was distributed, that the supply was gone in less than a month.

When residents arrived on a weekday in May at the donation site in town, they were greeted by an electronic sign that said, “Bottled Water Program Has Been Suspended.” Remarking on the situation, Thomas Moses, the town's chief administrative officer, says, “There's a lot of panic about the [tap] water—legitimately.”

After several months, the town's tap water was effectively treated for PFAS. But the clamoring among Hudson's residents for bottled water underscores a wider belief among consumers that bottled is safer than what flows out of their taps.

In some cases, as in Hudson, that is true. But a Consumer Reports investigation finds that information about bottled water quality is hard to find, oversight of the industry is inconsistent, and as with tap water, some bottled water can be contaminated.

For evidence, look no further than Spring Hill Dairy Farm, a company 40 miles north of Hudson in Ward Hill, Mass. Until recently, it provided water to several bottled water brands, including Whole Foods' 365 Spring Water and Ice Canyon Spring Water, sold at CVS. But in August, as Hudson was resolving its water crisis, Spring Hill shut down its bottled water business after tests found PFAS chemicals in its spring water. (The bottled water Hudson provided residents was a different brand.)

Fueled in part by concerns about the quality of the nation's tap water—not just in Hudson but also in Flint, Mich., and Newark, N.J., where lead contamination crises have generated national headlines—bottled water has become the country's No. 1 beverage, with the average American consuming 42 gallons in 2018. And sales reached \$31 billion in the same year.

Bottled water's growing popularity stems in part from its convenience but also from the perception that it's higher-quality H₂O. Forty percent of Americans believe bottled is safer than tap, according to a nationally representative 2019 Consumer Reports survey of 4,225 U.S. adults.

That's a perception encouraged by the bottled water industry—even as it relies on municipal supplies: Nearly 64 percent of bottled water sold in the U.S. is filtered tap water, according to a 2018 report from the advocacy group Food & Water Watch. One example:

Earlier this year, Cott, which sells several brands of water, told investors, “We intend to capture new customers as we capitalize on favorable consumer trends,” including “concerns about deteriorating municipal water quality.”

But even as bottled water sales have risen, tap water quality overall doesn’t appear to be getting worse. Since 2013, the percentage of the U.S. population serviced by community water systems with at least one reportable health-based quality violation has stayed below 10 percent, according to the most recent data from the Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates tap water. These systems provide water to more than 90 percent of Americans, according to the EPA. “The United States provides some of the safest drinking water in the world,” an agency spokesperson says.

To be sure, the vast majority of bottled water sold today also appears to be safe. But it isn’t necessarily better overall than tap, and there are some reasons for concern, CR found.

In response, Jill Culora, vice president of communications for the International Bottled Water Association, a trade group, says many Americans drink both bottled and tap and decide “what type of water is best for them,” based on taste, convenience, and quality.

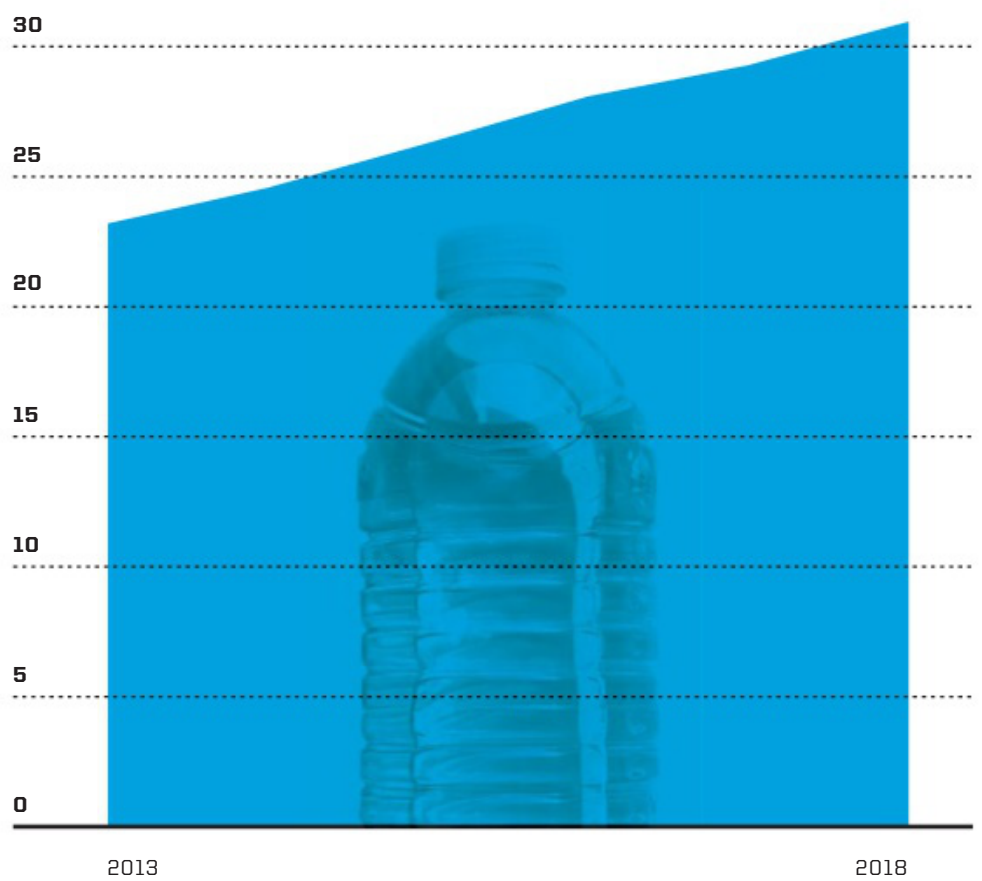
Over the past year, CR has interviewed more than 50 experts and state and federal regulators, and amassed thousands of pages of regulatory filings, lawsuits, consumer complaints, and government documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. CR’s investigation shows that safety inspections of water bottling facilities by the Food and Drug Administration, which regulates bottled water,

The Surge of Bottled Water Sales

Bottled water sales have risen steadily in recent years, as shown in the chart below. That has been driven in part by consumer concerns about the quality of tap water. But despite serious problems in places such as Flint, Mich., and Newark, N.J., the overall quality of the nation’s tap water appears to be stable. More than 90 percent of Americans on municipal water get it from systems that have no reported health-based quality violations, according to data from the Environmental Protection Agency.

BOTTLED WATER ANNUAL SALES

\$35 BILLION



Source: Beverage Marketing Corp.



have declined over the past 15 years.

An FDA spokesperson says the agency takes “prompt action” when it obtains evidence that a product poses a safety risk, adding that federal regulations ensure that bottled water is “safe, wholesome, and truthfully labeled.”

But while the FDA requires companies to test the quality of their products, the agency typically doesn’t conduct its own tests. And companies aren’t required to make the results of their tests available to the public, and often don’t: CR was able to get reports from just 133 bottled water brands, barely half of those we identified.

Moreover, when tests are performed by independent organizations, problems can emerge. For example, CR’s spot tests of three bottled water products in April 2019 helped to prompt one brand—Peñafiel, owned by Keurig Dr Pepper—to take its unflavored mineral spring water off the market after high levels of arsenic, a potentially dangerous heavy metal, were uncovered. (See “What’s in Your Bottled Water?” in the July 2019 issue of *Consumer Reports*, or go to [CR.org/bottledwaterguide1119](https://www.consumerreports.org/bottledwaterguide1119).)

The IBWA says the industry is subject to rigorous oversight. “While bottled water companies strive to make safe, high-quality products, there have been instances when products did not meet FDA standards,” it says. “When that has happened, bottled water companies have taken the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of consumers.”

CR also found that the decision of what to use as your primary drinking water depends on where you live, the health of your municipal supply, and the pipes in your home.

And the long-term solution isn’t for more Americans to turn to bottled



CAN PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES MAKE US SICK?

Some research suggests that the plastic used for bottled water could pose some risks, though the evidence isn’t conclusive.

One concern is microscopic pieces of plastic, which may leach chemicals into water. A 2019 study found that people who drank only bottled water consumed, on average, an additional 90,000 microplastics annually, compared with 4,000 for those who drank only tap water. Chemicals in microplastics could potentially contribute to reproductive problems, obesity, and other issues.

There are also concerns about antimony trioxide, a possible carcinogen that could be released into water if plastic bottles are exposed to hot temperatures long enough. One study revealed antimony levels just above federal limits after five days of exposure at 167° F—a temperature that cars parked in the sun could, in some circumstances, reach after a few hours.

The International Bottled Water Association, a trade group, says there’s no known health risk from water with “occasional small breaches” of antimony limits. But if you regularly drink bottled water, you should store it carefully. Or fill your own nonplastic water bottles with tap water.

water, but to fix the nation’s water infrastructure, advocates say. The EPA says that over the next 20 years, fixing and maintaining the nation’s reservoirs, treatment plants, and pipes would cost about \$24 billion annually—\$7 billion less than what Americans spent on bottled water last year.

“Bottled water is not an acceptable substitute,” says Mary Grant, director of the Public Water for All Campaign at Food & Water Watch. “We need to build resilient water systems.”

The Fate of Public Water

The vast majority of Americans appear to have access to safe tap water—but some communities face real problems. In Hudson, for example, town administrator Thomas Moses spelled out a quandary communities such as his face. While the EPA currently offers voluntary guidance on PFAS chemicals—two common ones should stay below 70 parts per billion—there is currently no federal mandatory limit.

Without federal standards, states and municipalities are left to decide on their own whether to look for the chemicals, and what to do if they find them. Hudson, for example, began testing for PFAS chemicals in 2016 and discovered alarming PFAS levels earlier this year.

It’s easier for public water suppliers to address contaminants that have established limits, Moses says. But emerging threats such as PFAS will always come along. “In the next year, next two years, next decade, it will be something else,” he says.

The concern among Hudson’s residents about the town’s water supply reflects a common view across the U.S. In some places, water infrastructure appears to be at a breaking point, with

some lawmakers seeking an additional \$35 billion per year to maintain it.

The lack of investment is widespread: Detroit public schools shut off all drinking water last year because of high copper and lead levels. A town in West Virginia has been on a boil-water advisory since 2002 because its system is in a state of disrepair. And some Americans live without running water at all: As of 2018, nearly 340,000 homes in the U.S. didn't have

access to running water, according to a CR analysis of federal census records.

What's more, 34 percent of Americans—or 110 million people—say they regularly avoid drinking tap water at home because of safety concerns, according to CR's recent survey. About one-sixth say they don't drink their home tap water at all.

Part of the issue could be a lack of information. Under EPA regulations, people on community water systems

\$31
BILLION

HOW MUCH AMERICANS SPENT
ON BOTTLED WATER IN 2018

\$24
BILLION

ANNUAL COST OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS TO FIX
AND MAINTAIN THE U.S. PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

HOW FEAR FLOWED FROM FLINT

A Flint, Mich., resident loads water into vehicles in April 2019. Nearly 30 percent of Americans who say they are aware of this city's lead contamination crisis started drinking bottled water, purchased a water filter, or made other changes to their water-drinking habits as a result, according to CR's survey.





should receive an annual copy of their Consumer Confidence Report, which spells out the quality of their tap supply. But more than 5,000 such systems were recently cited for violating that rule, EPA data show. Almost 80 percent of people with municipal water say they've never received a CCR, and 60 percent have never heard of it, CR's survey found.

Pushing Back on Plastic

Just 20 miles from Hudson, the town of Concord, population 17,000, has had a different experience with bottled water. Several years ago, it became the first community in the U.S. to ban the sale of single-use plastic bottles of water. In making their case, supporters emphasized the environmental toll of the billions of bottles Americans dispose of each year, as well as the town's long history of safe tap water.

Still, it took supporters more than three years to persuade Concord's residents to support the ban. "We were up against 30 years of marketing by an industry" with endless resources, says Jill Appel, a Concord resident who aided the effort.

As concerns about the environmental harm from plastic water bottles spread, the industry is responding in part by starting to package water in, for example, cardboard cartons. Indeed, you can now buy water in such containers in Concord.

The War Against Tap Water

Even a quarter century ago, buying water in any kind of bottle would have seemed "ludicrous," says James Salzman, environmental law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of the book "Drinking Water: A

History" (Harry N. Abrams, 2012).

Eventually, bottled water came to be seen as chic, Salzman says, in part because of celebrity endorsements. (That trend continues: In the past year, Dwayne Johnson and Gwyneth Paltrow, among others, have partnered with bottled water brands.)

But it wasn't until 1990, when Nestlé introduced the convenience of the single-use PET bottle, that bottled water caught on with the public, according to "Bottled and Sold" (Island Press, 2010), a book by Peter Gleick, cofounder of the Pacific Institute, an environmental group. Over the following decade, the growth of bottled water was also spurred by industry efforts to play up the purity of its new product.

By 1999, consumers browsing the IBWA's website may have seen this question: "Does bottled water contain any harmful chemicals that can pose a threat to human health?" The IBWA's answer: "No." But federal records show that in the 1990s there were around 50 recalls of bottled water for excessive chlorine, mold, and fecal coliforms. The IBWA still defends its statement, saying that it was meant to be "general in nature" and that many of the recalls posed "no meaningful health risk."

Yet independent tests at the time had found contamination. A 1999 study by the National Resources Defense Council of more than 100 brands found that nearly 1 in 4 violated California limits for arsenic or other carcinogenic compounds. And tests CR conducted in 2000 found samples at or above the arsenic limit of 10 ppb, a standard that was finalized in 2005.

The industry's adversarial stance toward tap water intensified from there, a trend documented in Gleick's

book. "At the time," Gleick tells CR, "there was a really explicit campaign to demonize tap water." He quotes Robert Morrison—who was then soon to be chairman of Pepsi's North American Beverage and Food Division—as saying in 2000, "The biggest enemy is tap water ... it just has its place. We think it's good for irrigation and cooking."

The next year, Coca-Cola, which sells Dasani, generated controversy after it was revealed that the company worked with Olive Garden restaurants on a campaign called "H2NO" to push money-making beverages instead of tap. (Notably, Coca-Cola uses public water as its primary source for Dasani.)

Bottlers continued to take shots at tap water, as in a 2006 Fiji ad Gleick also covered in his book: "The label says Fiji because it's not bottled in Cleveland." Cleveland officials later tested the city's public water as well as a bottle of Fiji, and found that the Fiji water contained arsenic while its water did not. (Fiji reportedly said it was only a joke.)

The industry has since tried to dial back the anti-tap rhetoric, framing bottled water as a healthy alternative to sugary drinks. But even now, records show that bottlers view the deterioration of the nation's public water infrastructure in the context of their business prospects.

Some, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, have said in public filings that tap water quality problems could hurt their bottom line by jeopardizing the safety of a primary ingredient for their businesses.

Others see tap problems as a potential boon. Earlier this year, Primo Water, which produces purified bottled water that can be filled at self-service dispensers, wrote in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission,

Where Does the Water in Your Bottle Come From?

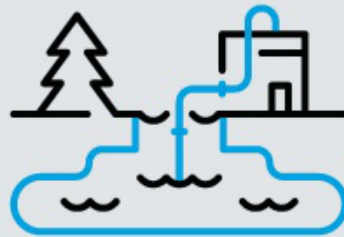
The answers may surprise you—and with growing concerns about access to affordable, safe water, they may raise some thorny questions about who controls, and makes a profit from, the water we drink.



MUNICIPAL WATER

Aquafina and Dasani

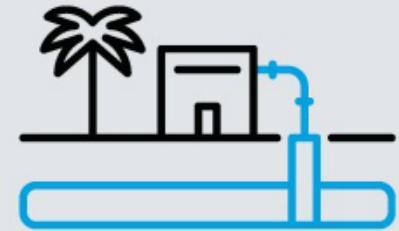
Dasani (owned by Coca-Cola) and Aquafina (Pepsi) primarily use tap water from public water supplies, which is also the source for nearly 64 percent of the bottled water sold in the U.S. Both obtain water from several cities, then treat the water. It appears to be a highly lucrative business model. For example, based on documents obtained through public records requests, we estimate that in 2018 Coca-Cola and Pepsi combined paid Detroit at least \$1.4 million for 198 million gallons of water. Coca-Cola confirmed to CR that the company returns about half the water as waste. (Pepsi did not respond to questions about its wastewater.) At an industry average of \$1.07 to \$2.49 per gallon, that would make the water worth a potential \$110 million to \$256 million—or as much as \$21 million per month.



SPRING WATER

Poland Spring and Zephyrhills Natural Spring Waters

The water in these Nestlé brands comes from springs in the U.S.—eight in Maine for Poland Spring and five in Florida for Zephyrhills Natural Spring Water. But, at least for Poland Spring, Nestlé doesn't gather this water from the mouth of a running spring; rather, it bores into underground supplies that feed its springs. That's central to an ongoing lawsuit alleging that Poland Spring isn't spring water. (Nestlé denies the claims.) The company also generated controversy in Florida over plans to obtain more than a million gallons of water per day, in part for its Zephyrhills Natural Spring Water, from an aquifer that feeds a popular recreation spot. In response, Nestlé has said its springs are sustainably managed. But critics say it benefits a big business while depleting the springs' supply of water.



ARTESIAN WATER

Fiji Water

Artesian water comes from a confined aquifer, an underground source that, unlike spring water, can be reached only through a well. The water is bottled and filtered at the source, in Fiji, an island nation in the South Pacific. A chief criticism: the environmental and economic cost of not only harvesting the water but also shipping it several thousand miles across the ocean. Water is Fiji's biggest export.

“We believe the market for purified water continues to grow due to evolving taste preferences, perceived health benefits, and concerns regarding the quality of municipal tap water.”

Maria Mullen, Primo's vice president of consumer experience, says that many consumers choose bottled water as an alternative to sugary drinks and that the company isn't “choosing to

make municipalities the bad guys.” Rather, it's “reacting” to the market. “You have to have your head in the sand if you don't see there are growing issues related to the quality of municipal tap water,” Mullen says.

Back in Hudson, town administrator Moses says that even with test results showing that Hudson's tap water is safe, some residents just can't be persuaded

to drink it. “The water that we're producing meets all current regulations and health advisories,” he says. “I mean, that's all you can say.”

The H₂O Information Gap

Government regulators generally don't test bottled water themselves, and bottled water makers aren't required to publish their own test results. So over



the past several months, CR assembled a repository of test reports from bottled water brands ourselves. Ultimately, we identified 236 such brands—but were able to get reports from only 133 of them, or 56 percent, either from their website or by contacting the manufacturer directly.

Information on the safety of tap water is also limited. For example, the EPA doesn't regulate private wells, which supply water to 14 percent of Americans,

according to CR's survey. And for some contaminants—notably lead—the EPA's testing provides only a representative sample of each system's quality, not what comes out of each home's tap.

Just over 7 percent of the community water systems regulated by the EPA had at least one instance of violating a health-based standard, recent EPA data shows. That includes exceeding a drinking water contamination limit.

When it comes to bottled water,

precise figures can be even harder to come by. But the reality is that contamination in bottled water exists. It's just difficult for consumers to find out about it.

CR's review of water quality test reports we gathered from companies and regulatory agencies, combined with our spot tests of bottled waters, found that 6 percent of brands had a contaminant that exceeded state or federal limits.

CR also reached out to all 50 states on their bottled water requirements, and 32 provided responses. Of those, only 14 say they require bottlers to notify regulators immediately about test results showing excessive contaminants.

When instances of contamination are documented, regulators can be slow to respond. The lax enforcement contributes to scenarios such as Keurig Dr Pepper's two-month delay earlier this year in pulling Peñafiel from the market, even after the company temporarily suspended production following CR's tests showing arsenic at almost twice the legal limit.

And information about these kinds of problems is not always widely shared. For example, Starkey Water (owned by Whole Foods), withdrew its bottled water twice in 2016 and 2017 because of high arsenic levels. But neither instance shows up in CR's review of archives of company and FDA press releases. (CR tests last spring found Starkey still has about 9 ppb of arsenic, just shy of the federal limit of 10 ppb. Starkey said earlier that it tests every production run of water before it is sold and would "never sell products that do not meet FDA requirements.")

New Jersey regulators have also found bottled water with antimony

WHY CARBONATED WATER OFTEN GETS EVEN LESS OVERSIGHT



Consumers can't get enough water, especially aerated versions, such as seltzer and sparkling water. Demand for plain water's bubbly counterpart is rising fast, with 2018 sales of \$1.98 billion. That's up 39 percent from a year prior, compared with a 6 percent increase for regular bottled water.

But in the eyes of the Food and Drug Administration, most artificially carbonated water—think Bubly and Polar—isn't bottled water. Instead, the FDA treats it as a soft drink.

That's crucial: As soft drinks, these beverages are

exempt from the federal quality standards that apply to bottled water. The reduced oversight means companies usually don't have to adhere to the same federal contaminant limits.

The exceptions: naturally carbonated waters and artificial ones with labels that include certain terms—such as "mineral," "artesian," and "spring"—that the FDA says are covered by federal bottled water standards.

So, for example, Perrier Carbonated Mineral Water is regulated as a bottled water, but LaCroix Sparkling Water is not.

Making matters more confusing, there are lots of kinds of carbonated waters and the terms are sometimes used differently depending on the company.

To sort out what's what, CR provides this general guide.

Carbonated or Sparkling Water

Catchall terms that usually refer to unsweetened or unflavored water that had carbon dioxide injected during production.

Seltzer

This often refers to artificially carbonated water without anything added other than, sometimes, flavors.

Club Soda

An artificially carbonated water, typically with baking soda, potassium salts, or both to provide a tang that goes well with many alcoholic drinks.

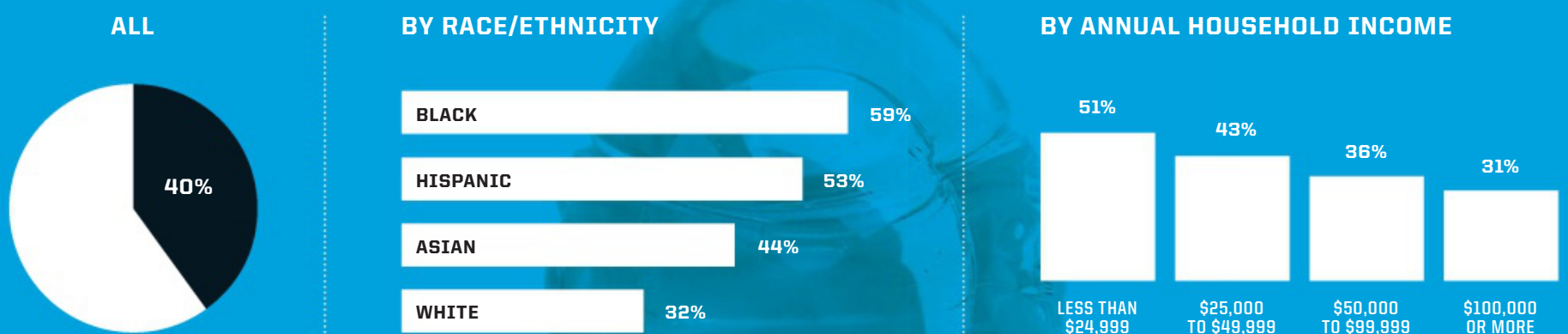
Tonic Water

Another classic mixer, tonic is made with carbonated water and quinine, as well as sugar or artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame. Note that the FDA limits how much quinine can be added.

Who's Worried About Water?

A lot depends on race, ethnicity, and income, according to CR's recent nationally representative survey of 4,225 Americans. How much people know about their drinking water and how much they spend on bottled water also vary based on those factors.

Percentage of people who think bottled water is safer to drink than tap water.



Percentage of people on municipal water who received a water quality report from their tap water supplier.



Median amount spent each month on bottled water, per household.



Note: Race categories (white, black, and Asian) include only respondents of non-Hispanic ethnicity and exclude those who identify as more than one race.



(a potentially harmful heavy metal) at five times the federal limit, arsenic at double the limit, and radium (a radioactive metal), but none of these results appear to have been widely publicized. Massachusetts published a link on its website about the recent contamination of Spring Hill bottled water with PFAS but did not otherwise appear to alert consumers.

Emerging contaminants such as PFAS pose particular reporting problems as regulators try to play catch-up. Michigan, which has been grappling with PFAS in tap water in some communities, implored the IBWA last fall to require its members to start testing for the chemicals. The state's representative said, in a letter obtained through a FOIA request, that it had conversations with unnamed bottlers and that PFAS contamination didn't appear to be a problem. But, the letter added, "that statement is only true of those specific bottlers."

The IBWA says it now requires members to test for PFAS, but it doesn't represent all bottlers. Spring Hill, for one, is not a member.

By comparison, oversight of tap water is more standardized and rigorous, says Gleick at the Pacific Institute. For example, when a community water system discovers a level of a contaminant that potentially poses an immediate health threat, it must notify regulators within 24 hours. That's one reason tap water contamination is an all-too-common feature of evening news broadcasts.

"There's plenty of attention already in the media to the times we have problems with our tap water system," Gleick says. "I think the bottled water companies understand they don't have to do that."

64
PERCENT

THE AMOUNT OF BOTTLED WATER
SOURCED FROM MUNICIPAL
(OR TAP) WATER

A SPRING SHUTS DOWN

A Massachusetts bottler, Spring Hill Dairy Farm, closed its bottled water operations earlier this year after tests showed that its spring water had high levels of PFAS chemicals.



The Future of Drinking Water

Going forward, two things seem certain: The bottled water market will continue to grow, and bottled water is not a long-term solution to the nation's drinking water problem. "If we don't invest in our water infrastructure, we are going to have more people with tap water they cannot drink," says Patty Lovera, assistant director at Food & Water Watch. Her group supports the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act of 2019 now in Congress. The act would increase funding by \$35 billion per year for drinking water

and wastewater improvements.

Another key step: Community water systems need to ensure that the people they serve get easy-to-understand annual water quality reports. In CR's survey, a quarter of people on municipal water who tried to learn about the quality of their local water said they couldn't find the information. The organizers of Concord's ban on single-use water bottles say that municipalities with safe drinking water can and should make it a point to ensure that their residents know about it.

Communities with safe water supplies could consider making it easier for people on the go to refill their own water bottles. That's what Concord did, and today the town has a robust network of businesses in town providing free tap water to anyone who comes in and asks for it.


Hudson's experience suggests that addressing problems with tap water works, too. The town invested in a new filtration system capable of removing PFAS. And testing last August didn't detect any PFAS in the town's water.

For homes, a number of filters that remove toxic substances, such as lead, are available. Pricier options, such as reverse osmosis systems, can be installed, and professional water testing can be performed for as little as \$20. State or local health departments might also offer free water test kits.

If you want to drink bottled water or have to rely on it for any reason, contact the bottler for a copy of its most recent quality report. These results are from the company itself but provide some reassurance.

IBWA's advice: Don't buy products from any company that won't share its water quality report.

Ratings ➤ **Pitcher Water Filters** These filters are meant mainly to improve the taste and smell of water in relatively small amounts. Only two of those we tested remove lead.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features		
					Flavor and odor reduction	Flow rate	Clogging	Cost per year	Certified to NSF standard for reduction of lead	Certified to NSF standard for reduction of chlorine
✓	1	 Brita Stream Rapids OB55	81	\$30	↑	↑↑	↑↑	\$42		●
✓	2	Pur Ultimate With Lead Reduction PPT711W	77	\$30	↑↑	↓	↑↑	\$66	●	●
	3	Pur Basic PPT700W	67	\$17	↑	↓	↓	\$48		●
	4	ZeroWater Ready-Pour ZD-010RP	67	\$30	↓	↑	↑↑	\$90	●	●
	5	Up & Up (Target) 10 Cup Water Filtration Pitcher 1026418	65	\$28	↓	↑↑	↑↑	\$30		●
	6	Brita Everyday OB46	53	\$27	↓	↑↑	↑↑	\$42		●

HOW WE TEST: For **flavor and odor reduction**, CR's expert tasters assess how effectively a filter removes flavor and odor taints added to plain water.

Flow rate assesses how long it takes to filter 1 quart of water. **Clogging** shows whether and how much a filter's flow rate slows as the cartridge reaches

its capacity. **Cost per year** is the price of expected filter replacements. If a pitcher is **Certified to NSF standard for reduction of lead or chlorine**, we

tested to make sure that it removes that compound. **Overall Score** is based on the performance of the product in all our tests.



HOW TO TEST YOUR TAP WATER

It's important to know your local results to decide whether you need to filter your water

How safe is your tap water? Finding out can take some time, effort, and money, but it's worth doing.

Most people on municipal water who pay their own bill should receive an annual water quality report called a CCR, or Consumer Confidence Report. If you don't receive yours, call your local water supplier. And if you rent, contact your landlord.

Systems with 100,000 or more people must also post reports online. You can find them on the Environmental Protection Agency website at epa.gov/ccr.

In the report, look for a summary that shows whether any contaminants were found above government cutoffs

and, if so, what the potential health risks are, what is being done to fix the problem, and what you should do in the meantime. For questions, call your local supplier or the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.

If you're on well water, you won't get a CCR, so you should get your water tested. That's also a good idea if your home was built before lead-free pipes were mandated in 1986: Even if your CCR says that the municipality's water is free of lead, it can leach into your water from the pipes in or leading to your house.

Many kits are available for do-it-yourself tap testing, but it's not always clear what they test for or how accurate they are. The EPA

recommends using a certified lab. Find one at epa.gov/dwlabcert. Testing typically costs \$20 to \$150; your community might provide test kits free of charge.

Once you know what's in your water, choose a filter that suits your needs.

For multiple or high levels of contaminants, reverse osmosis filters are often best. They can remove lead, arsenic, bacteria, and other contaminants. But they take up a lot of space (typically under your sink), require additional plumbing, and often go through several gallons of water for every gallon of filtered water. They're pricey, too, some costing \$1,000 or more. You might also have to pay a

professional to periodically service the system.

For improving taste or odor, or dealing with less serious contamination, a carbon filter can help. But it might not remove all lead.

Regardless of which filter you choose, make sure it's certified to NSF International standards by an independent lab—such as the CSA Group, Underwriters Laboratories (UL), or the Water Quality Association (WQA)—for removing the contaminants you're concerned about.

A pitcher filter is good for drinking water. A filter that attaches to your sink is a good choice for that as well as for water used to cook and wash dishes.

—Perry Santanachote

The Smart Way to Save on Car Insurance

Your loyalty to one company for long stretches of time may be costing you money.

BY TOBIE STANGER

ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK LEGER



REASONS PEOPLE SWITCH INSURANCE COMPANIES

Our survey of more than 90,000 CR members includes 22 percent who said they switched insurers in the past five years. They offered a variety of reasons. Here are some:

62%

NEW INSURER OFFERED BETTER RATES

FROM LEFT:
GEICO, LIBERTY
MUTUAL, ALLSTATE,
AND PROGRESSIVE



40%

PREVIOUS INSURER
RAISED PREMIUMS

18%

REGULARLY SHOP TO
GET THE BEST DEAL

8%

PROBLEMS WITH
COURTESY & HONESTY

5%

RECOMMENDATIONS OF
FAMILY OR FRIENDS

5%

ADVERTISING BY
OTHER COMPANIES

I

IN THE STATE OF COLORADO, steep climbs don't just happen on Rocky Mountain roads. Car insurance premiums there rose more than 78 percent from 2011 through 2018, according to The Zebra, a car insurance search engine. It's not much better in Rhode Island, where prices ballooned more than 54 percent during those eight years. And it's cold comfort to Michiganders that rates there dropped about 6 percent between 2017 and 2018, because the Great Lakes state still has the highest average annual premium in the country: \$2,693.

While there are places in the U.S. where car insurance rates have dropped or stayed about the same, the average annual premium nationwide has risen about 23 percent since 2011.

It's now at its highest: \$1,470 per year.

If you're a driver whose premium is careening out of control, how do you put on the brakes? The answer may well be to put your current carrier in your rearview mirror.

Among the 22 percent of Consumer Reports members who told us they'd switched insurers in the past five years, 62 percent said they'd found a better price. And 77 percent of those who switched said they were highly satisfied with their new carrier.

New Auto Insurance Ratings

That's just one takeaway from Consumer Reports' recent car insurance survey, which is based on the experiences of 90,352 CR members.

CR is now basing its car insurance ratings not only on driver satisfaction with claims settlements—our main gauge in the past—but also on more details about the total consumer experience. Our ratings now encompass satisfaction with claims settlements, premiums, nonclaims service, and other factors. Also for the first time in Consumer Reports' history of rating car insurance, we asked people who switched to tell us about their current company—and judge the one they left in the past five

years. All of this means that some insurers that looked pretty good in the past may seem less stellar now. (See the full ratings, on page 54.)

Seventy-three percent of members told us they were highly satisfied with the carriers that have covered them in the past five years. A remarkable 86 percent were highly satisfied with the way their company handled claims. But only 51 percent said they were satisfied with the price they were paying. What's more, 41 percent told us their current insurer increased their premiums in the preceding 12 months. Premium boosts were responsible, at least in part, for 40 percent of moves to a new insurer.

What Explains Price Hikes?

A number of forces are behind surges in car insurance prices. An increase in severe weather events that damage cars and cause accidents is to blame in some regions. Vehicle thefts are up 7 percent since 2013. High-tech car features have increased car safety but also driven up repair costs. Distracted driving is up, and getting caught texting may cause your premium to rise. And relatively low gas prices have led to more drivers logging more miles—and raised the potential for more accidents.

SHOULD YOU CHANGE THE CHANNEL?

These ubiquitous TV commercials might be burned into your retinas. But the bad news for auto insurers is that the megamillions they spend on brand recognition aren't translating into a superior experience for customers of the insurance itself. CR's overall satisfaction scores for these top five spenders were just so-so.

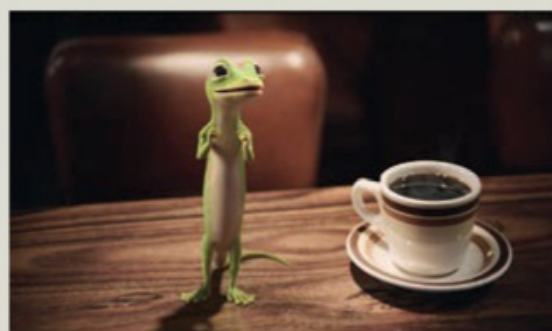
YEARLY AD SPENDING

\$729
MILLION

GEICO

78

OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



\$453
MILLION

PROGRESSIVE

75

OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



Of course, changes in a driver's personal life and driving record also have an impact. Members who saw increases of \$200 or more in the previous year mentioned reasons that included adding a new vehicle or teen driver to a policy, or having one or more recent accidents. The median premium hike for all folks who saw an increase was a whopping 44 percent.

Be Proactive About Price

In spite of that, many people don't look past their current insurer for a better deal. More than half of our members—54 percent—have been with their current company for 15 years or more. Among those who switched in the past five years, only 18 percent said they regularly searched for new coverage.

"It's critical to shop frequently for auto insurance," says Robert Hunter, director of insurance at the Consumer Federation of America, a nonprofit group in Washington, D.C. To get motivated, consumers need to shelve concerns that a new carrier will drop them when they file a claim. "It's not true that new insurers treat you worse than old insurers," Hunter says.

Plus, any loyalty discount you earn may be undermined by an insurance

Don't Skimp on These 4 Important Coverages

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Every state but New Hampshire requires drivers to have a minimum level of liability insurance, which protects your financial assets if you're sued after a car crash. But experts say it's smart to go beyond those minimums if you can afford to do so. In a legal judgment, your wages could be garnished. A more protective amount of coverage is \$100,000 per person, \$300,000 per accident, and \$100,000 for property damage. Also consider an umbrella liability policy, which extends coverage for your car and home.

UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE

In some states, this coverage is optional. But with 1 in 8 drivers going without car insurance—a statistic that's been fairly constant for more than two decades—it's a worthwhile spend. It pays medical bills for you and your passengers after an accident caused by an uninsured, at-fault driver. Why get it in a no-fault state? Because it reimburses for lost wages after a crash. It also covers you and your household as pedestrians, and in hit-and-run accidents.

UNDERINSURED COVERAGE

This indemnifies you after a crash with a driver who has only the state's minimum required liability coverage.

FULL GLASS COVERAGE

Auto glass that integrates advanced driver assist systems is more costly to replace. A mounted lane departure warning camera, for instance, can add \$350 to a windshield's price, plus \$300 for recalibration. This no-deductible coverage is useful when insurance won't fully cover the cost to replace glass. In states where it's offered, it can cost as little as \$10 per year.

\$255
MILLION

LIBERTY MUTUAL

72

OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



\$198
MILLION

STATE FARM

78

OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



\$158
MILLION

ALLSTATE

72

OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



practice called “price optimization.” That’s the mining of data collected about your online and offline shopping behavior to gauge your sensitivity to price. Why would your insurer charge you more even though you’ve been a good driver and loyal customer? Because the data show you won’t bolt. “Your old insurer may offer you a loyalty discount of, say, 10 percent, but it could use price optimization to raise your price 30 percent prior to giving you that ‘great’ discount,” Hunter says.

Price optimization in auto insurance is legal in 30 states, but Consumer

Reports has joined the Consumer Federation of America in advocating for its elimination. (Sign CR’s petition at action.consumerreports.org/fixcarinsurance.)

How to Be a Smarter Shopper

Consider price-shopping annually. Focus on claims-settlement experience and price. In our ratings, those were the best predictors of overall satisfaction. Hunter says to first try “direct writers” that employ their own agents and may have competitive rates. (In CR’s ratings, Amica, Wawanesa,

and USAA are examples of highly rated direct writers.) “Then go to an independent agent with a ‘can you beat this’ attitude,” he says.

Also look beyond the big national carriers. A number of insurers toward the top of our ratings are medium-sized or focus on specific regions, professions, or membership groups.

If you decide to stay put, ask your carrier about reducing your premiums based on your car’s depreciation. That’s a potentially money-saving adjustment the insurer may not be doing on its own.

Do You Want Your Insurer to Be a Backseat Driver?

Could you handle scrutiny of your driving habits in return for a price break on your insurance? That’s the bargain participants in usage-based (or telematics-based) insurance programs are making. In return for driving well and logging low miles, you could save as much as 50 percent off premiums.

On the flip side, **some insurers will charge you more if your driving behavior suggests risk or if you drive more than expected.** Progressive, for instance, says 2 out of 10 drivers in its Snapshot program get a rate increase because of high-risk driving.

To track your driving behavior, your carrier might send you a “smart tag” that you attach to the windshield; it pairs with your smartphone via Bluetooth to transfer your driving data to the insurer. Or you might receive a “dongle” that essentially does the same thing when you plug it into your car’s onboard diagnostic port. (All cars built in 1996 and after have such a port, usually found on the lower dash.) In a newer car, you might connect via smartphone app to the vehicle’s built-in computer systems that facilitate telematics.

As you drive, the system transfers a record of your ride to your carrier, which may offer feedback, or a driving “score.”

Acceleration, braking, cornering, mileage, speed, time of day, and phone use are among the types of information that State Farm’s Drive Safe & Save program collects.

“We include phone use to make people aware of their own behavior and to help them become safer drivers,” a State Farm spokesperson said. “But we also know there are times when a passenger may need to use the phone, so we don’t include this in calculating the discount.”

Usage-based insurance might make you safer behind the wheel. In a study recently published in the journal *Marketing Science*, researchers found that drivers using these programs reduced hard braking

by 21 percent, on average, after six months. Younger drivers improved more than older drivers, and women improved more than men.

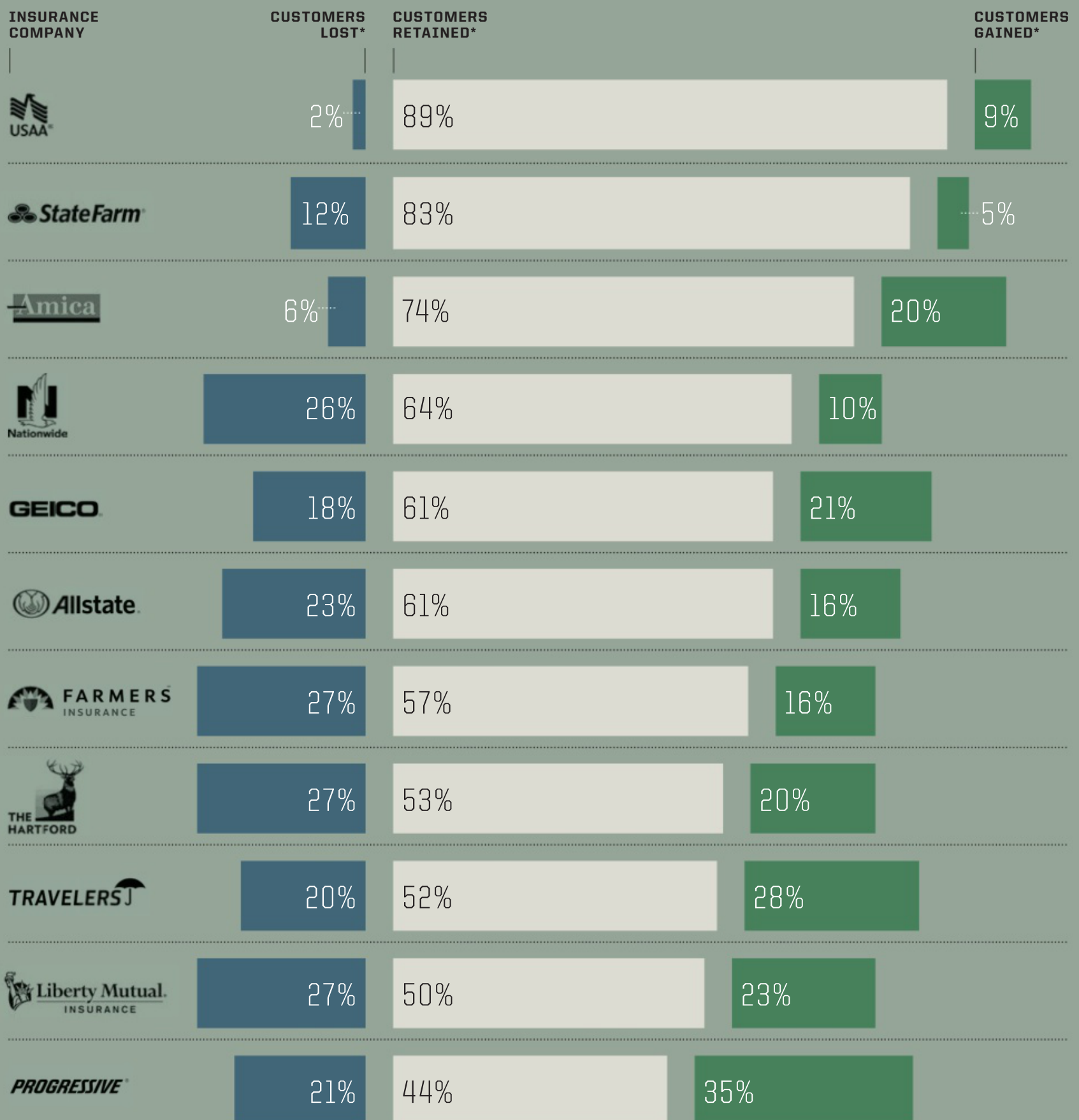
The innovation has other potential benefits—and risks. Using driving patterns to price policies instead of nondriving factors like credit history can be worthwhile, but only if it’s handled right, says Justin Brookman, Consumer Reports’ director of consumer privacy and technology. “If auto insurance prices are transparent, data-driven, and attributed primarily to risk factors under the control of the driver,” he says, “that could lead to more fairness and improved driver performance.”

“But companies must clearly explain how the data will be used so driving scores don’t become a black box obscuring how prices are set,” Brookman adds. “And they must explain how they will constrain sharing of data, establish internal safeguards, and protect consumer rights to see, challenge, correct, or delete the information collected about them.”

How much can you save by using these systems? If you already have a low-mileage discount, maybe not so much. Research by The Zebra, a car insurance search engine, found that drivers in Connecticut using telematics get the largest average discount on an annual policy: \$102. The median for all states and the District of Columbia was \$46.

SHOULD YOU STAY OR SHOULD YOU GO?

Some larger insurers clearly do better than others at attracting and retaining customers, as CR's Fall 2018 Auto Insurance Survey results show. Progressive gained more CR members over the past five years than it lost. At the same time, only 44 percent remained loyal during that time. State Farm lost 12 percent of CR member customers while gaining 5 percent. But 83 percent stayed put. Amica and USAA gained more than they lost and had some of the highest retention numbers. Those companies earned two of our highest overall satisfaction scores.



*In the last 5 years.

Ratings > **Who's Got You Covered?** CR members rate their experiences with providers of auto insurance.

Auto Insurer	Reader Survey Results					
	Overall satisfaction score	Premiums	Claims	Service	Policy review	Proactive help & advice
USAA Group	92	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
NJM Insurance Group	90	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑
Amica Mutual Group	89	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑
Pemco Mutual Insurance Company	87	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑
Automobile Club of Southern California	86	↑	—	↑↑	↑	↑
Erie Insurance Group	86	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑
California Casualty Group	86	↑	↑	↑↑	↑	↑
Chubb INA Group	84	↓	↑↑	↑	↑	↑
West Bend Mutual Insurance Company	84	↓	↑↑	↑	↑	↑
Electric Insurance Company	83	↓	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑
Auto Club Enterprises Insurance Group	83	↓	↑↑	↑	↑	↓
Acuity	82	↓	↑↑	↑	↑	↓
Auto Club Insurance Company of Florida	82	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Westfield Group	81	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Shelter Insurance Companies	81	↓	↑↑	↑	↓	↓
The Cincinnati Insurance Companies	81	↓	↑↑	↑	↓	↓
Wawanesa General Insurance Companies	81	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓
Auto-Owners Insurance Group	81	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance Company	81	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Ameriprise P&C Companies	79	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
CSAA Insurance Group	79	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Country Financial Property Casualty Group	79	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
State Auto Insurance Companies	79	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Donegal Insurance Group	79	↓	↑↑	↑	↓	↓
Enumclaw Insurance Group	79	↓	—	↑	↑	↓
Auto Club Group	79	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓

Auto Insurer	Reader Survey Results					
	Overall satisfaction score	Premiums	Claims	Service	Policy review	Proactive help & advice
State Farm Group	78	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Central Mutual Insurance Company (OH)	78	↓	↑↑	↑	↓	↓
Pekin Insurance Group	78	↓	—	↓	↓	↓
Alfa Insurance Group	78	↓	—	↑	↓	↓
Arbella Insurance Group	78	↓	—	↑	↓	↓
American National P&C Group	78	↓	—	↑	↓	↓
Geico (Berkshire Hathaway Insurance Group)	78	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Plymouth Rock Companies	77	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
American Family Insurance Group	76	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Safety Insurance Group	75	↓	—	↓	↓	↓
Travelers Group	75	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Mercury General Group	75	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Grange Mutual Casualty Pool	75	↓	—	↓	↓	↓
Progressive Insurance Group	75	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Grange Insurance Group	74	↓	—	↑	↓	↓
Mapfre North America Group	74	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Hartford Insurance Group	74	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
National General Companies	74	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Hanover Insurance Group Property & Casualty Companies	74	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Horace Mann Insurance Group	74	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Farmers Insurance Group	72	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
MetLife Auto & Home Group	72	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Kemper PC Companies	72	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Allstate Insurance Group	72	↓↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Liberty Mutual Insurance Companies	72	↓↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Nationwide Group	71	↓↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Esurance Property and Casualty Insurance Company	70	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

HOW WE SURVEY: The ratings are based on responses from 90,352 CR members in our Fall 2018 survey who provided 107,572 reports on their experiences with their auto insurers between 2014 and 2018. For the **Overall satisfaction score**,

100 means all respondents were completely satisfied; 80, very satisfied; 60, somewhat satisfied, on average. Differences of fewer than 4 points aren't meaningful. Ratings for other attributes reflect average scores on a scale from completely

dissatisfied to completely satisfied. **Premiums** is a rating of prices. **Claims** is a rating of claims settlements. **Service** is a rating of nonclaims-related customer service. **Policy review** is a rating of the thoroughness of service insurers provide customers

regarding policy options. **Proactive help & advice** is a rating of what insurers provide customers regarding their policy choices. Results might not be representative of the U.S. population. (—) means sample size was insufficient to provide a rating.



STAY AHEAD
OF THE CURVE
WITH CR AUTO
RATINGS, NEWS
& ADVICE™

ROAD REPORT

ASK OUR EXPERTS

Which crash ratings matter the most?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a federal agency, and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, an independent safety research group sponsored by auto insurers, conduct crash tests and issue safety ratings. (You can find both in the Ratings & Safety section of our auto reviews at CR.org.) NHTSA awards the vast majority of new vehicles four or five stars, which limits the usefulness of its ratings. At CR, we give a little more weight to the IIHS ratings, which are based on **more demanding tests and take into account advanced safety systems**. We recommend choosing a vehicle that the IIHS rates Good or Acceptable in each of its tests.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Shedding Light on LED Technology



LED headlights are quickly replacing halogen ones, but CR testing has found great variation in how LED headlights perform. **“Some provide much better illumination than others,”** says Jennifer Stockburger, director of CR’s Auto Test Center. “Make a night test-drive a priority to ensure the headlights provide adequate light.”

HEADLIGHT SCORES OF SOME NEW LUXURY MODELS WITH LED TECHNOLOGY

SUVs	CADILLAC XT6	LUXURY SEDANS	MERCEDES-BENZ A-CLASS
	VOLVO XC40		VOLKSWAGEN ARTEON

THE VITAL STATISTIC

37%

Percentage of licensed car owners who say fuel economy is the attribute that most needs improvement in their vehicle—more than those who named maintenance costs (26 percent), purchase price (23 percent), or reliability (12 percent).

Source: Consumer Reports 2019 Nationally Representative Automotive Fuel Economy Survey.

RECALL

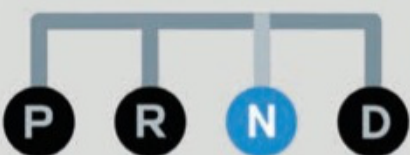
Audi A4 & A5

Volkswagen is recalling 679,027 Jetta sedans; Beetle coupes and convertibles; GTI hatchbacks; and Golf hatchbacks and wagons made between 2012 and 2019. A switch that indicates the position of the shift lever may fail, making it possible to remove the key when the vehicle isn’t in Park, raising the risk that it could roll away.

What to do: Dealers will install replacement parts to fix the problem free of charge. Owners may contact Volkswagen at 800-893-5298. Volkswagen’s number for this recall is 37M2.

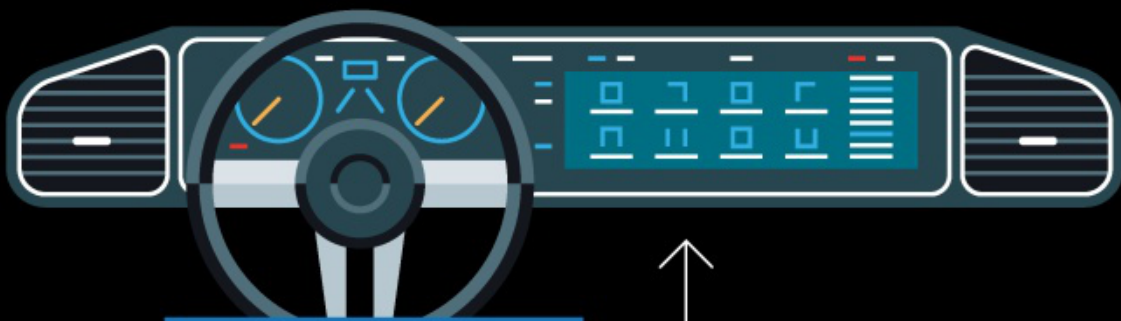
TIPS FROM OUR TEST TRACK

How to Stay Safe in a Stall



More than a million vehicles have been recalled since October 2018 for problems related to stalling. If your car stalls, first turn on your emergency hazard lights, then **shift into Neutral and coast to the side of the road**, if you can do so safely. Remember that without power, braking distances will increase and

your steering wheel will be more difficult to turn. Next, shift into Park (leave cars with a manual transmission in Neutral) and try to start the engine. If it starts, **let it run for a few minutes before driving**. If it won’t start, stay inside the vehicle and call 911 if you’re still on the road. Call a tow truck if you’re safely on the shoulder.



USABILITY + CONTROLS Each year, CR's auto testers see more vehicles with finicky joysticks, big touchpads, and other confusing controls that make tasks a trial.

BRAKING DISTANCE Braking isn't just about easing up to a traffic light. A car that takes 10 feet less to stop can be the difference between maneuvering safely and having a collision.

NOISE The drone of wind, road, or engine noise can vary under different weather and driving conditions. That's why we listen for trouble in every vehicle we test.



Hidden Flaws Even Quality Cars Have

Love at first sight can be fleeting with a new car, especially when a hard-to-detect headache arises later on. We alert you to potential problems in popular models and steer you to better picks—some of which even cost less.

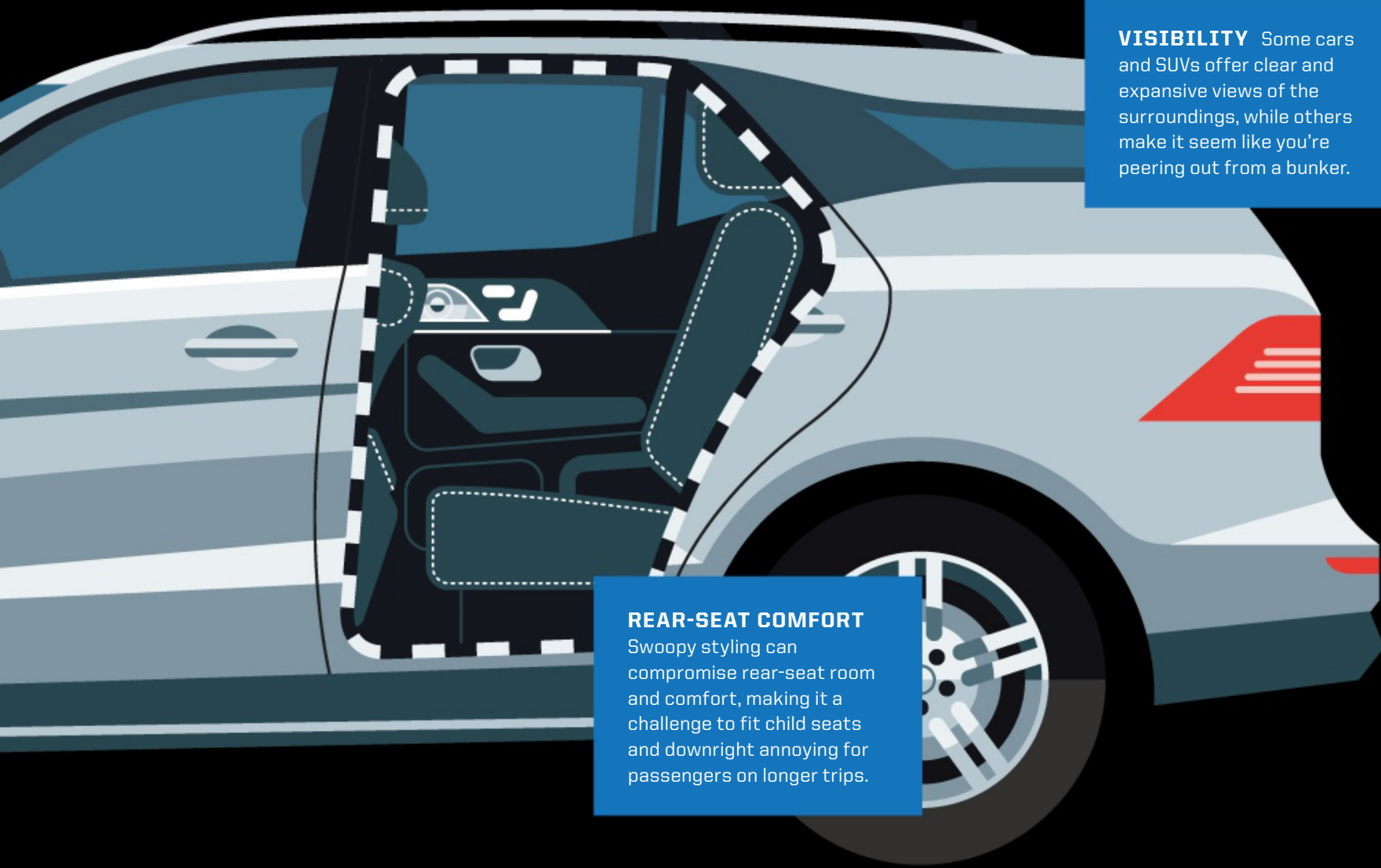
by Jonathan Linkov



IT'S EASY TO BE seduced on a test drive: dazzling high-tech features, sparkling trim, a pristine interior, and that heady new-car smell.

But even new cars with solid CR Overall Scores can have drawbacks that aren't easily apparent on a test drive, ranging from excessive noise and poor visibility to a rear seat that's too tight for adults. These Achilles' heels often become apparent only after weeks—or even months—of driving. At that point, it's too late to do anything but learn to live with them.

Fortunately, CR's auto testers drive every vehicle 2,000 miles to break it in before it goes through our rigorous testing program. This gives us a chance to uncover the flaws shoppers should know about, even on popular cars (some with exclusive nameplates) that



VISIBILITY Some cars and SUVs offer clear and expansive views of the surroundings, while others make it seem like you're peering out from a bunker.

REAR-SEAT COMFORT

Swoopy styling can compromise rear-seat room and comfort, making it a challenge to fit child seats and downright annoying for passengers on longer trips.

wow during a short test drive.

We've combed through CR's extensive road-test data to find vehicles that are popular and have good or very good Overall Scores—but are marred by a drawback that may matter a lot to you. (Note that Overall Scores aren't comparable across vehicle types.) We also suggest an alternate—with a higher rating for the problem area—that we feel drivers will find more satisfying.

Take a Test Drive That Tells More

A quick spin around the neighborhood won't reveal much about your prospective purchase. Use these tips and our ratings to increase your chances of being happy with whatever vehicle you decide to buy. **Rate your current ride.** Make a list of what you like and—more importantly—what you don't like about your current car. Use it as a measuring stick to

evaluate potential purchases.

Try it on for size. Not every car is a good fit for every body type. After adjusting the seat to a comfortable position, make sure the controls are within easy reach. Set the mirrors so that you can clearly see behind and to the sides of the car. During the drive, pay particular attention to seat comfort: Too hard or too soft can accelerate fatigue.

Get familiar with the gadgets. Try using the controls (particularly for the climate and infotainment systems) from the driver's seat. You should be able to easily reach and manipulate them to limit distraction while driving. Redundant buttons on the steering wheel eliminate the need to look at a touch screen or trackpad to make adjustments. If a task requires going through submenus, it will be a distraction when you're driving.

Call all the shots. Drive on roads you

know (rather than a route chosen by the salesperson) so that you can compare the ride's smoothness and the cabin noise with your current car. Check visibility by parallel parking. Tell the dealer you want to return for a nighttime drive to check out cabin lighting and headlights.

Be a backseat sleuth. Examine the rear seat to see whether at least two average-sized adults can fit. The space is too snug if you have to duck down to climb in or if your head grazes the ceiling while you're seated. Make sure the seats provide under-leg support and ample room to place feet under the front seat. If you have kids, bring them along to find out whether they can easily get into the second- or third-row seats. Last, make sure your child safety seat can be easily installed and that the trunk or cargo space is large enough for whatever you tend to carry or pack.



USABILITY + CONTROLS

CR engineers trained in ergonomics evaluate a car's controls and displays to rate how easy it is to interact with vehicle functions, such as audio, climate, phone, and the other various switches and instruments.

FINE BUT FLAWED

MERCEDES-BENZ GLE



66
OVERALL SCORE

80
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER SATISFACTION

↓
USABILITY

\$75,090
PRICE AS TESTED

20 mpg
FUEL

The GLE's hushed, luxurious interior and zippy acceleration win it a lot of fans. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The controls are maddeningly distracting. Many functions are buried deep in multilevel menus (adjusting the front-seat lumbar support is a six-step process), and some climate functions are controlled on a confusing center screen. A touchpad on the center console and smaller pads on the steering wheel only add to the chaos. Standard Android Auto and Apple CarPlay only partially alleviate the confusion.

MIDSIZE SUVs OVERALL SCORE RANGE 35-96

BETTER BET

KIA TELLURIDE



90
OVERALL SCORE

97
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER SATISFACTION

↑
USABILITY

\$40,855
PRICE AS TESTED

21 mpg
FUEL

The Telluride's touch screen is easy to read and intuitive to operate. There are also big, easy-to-use buttons for climate functions and prominent knobs for adjusting the audio volume or station tuning. Most tasks can be performed using the steering wheel buttons, and Android Auto and Apple CarPlay come standard and put the driver's familiar smartphone interface on the center screen. One complaint: The text on some of the dashboard buttons can be difficult to read in daylight because of the lack of contrast.

ALSO CONSIDER: BMW X5

FINE BUT FLAWED

LEXUS LS



73
OVERALL SCORE

72
ROAD TEST

↑
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER SATISFACTION

↓
USABILITY

\$103,899
PRICE AS TESTED

20 mpg
FUEL

After 30 years, the LS still epitomizes ultra-luxury serenity and performance in a sedan, which helps explain its loyal following. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The LS's controls can be unnecessarily complex. Many simple tasks—such as using the seat heaters or adjusting the head restraints—take multiple steps. To select a function, drivers must use a finicky touchpad to move a cursor on the central dashboard display. This requires drivers to take their eyes off the road, which raises the question of safety.

LUXURY CARS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 39-89

BETTER BET

GENESIS G90



81
OVERALL SCORE

89
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER SATISFACTION

↑
USABILITY

\$71,550
PRICE AS TESTED

18 mpg
FUEL

Like most luxury cars, the G90 is packed with features, but unlike much of the competition, the Genesis' driver-friendly controls are easy to reach and use. We particularly like that the G90 has physical buttons to operate the audio and climate systems, and they're placed so that drivers can use them without glancing away from the road. The steering wheel controls make it simple to toggle through menus without having to divert too much attention from driving.

ALSO CONSIDER: Genesis G80



VISIBILITY

For safest driving, you need to have a view of your surroundings unobstructed by roof pillars, head restraints, or small windows. CR's visibility rating is incorporated into the score for driving position in our ratings.

FINE BUT
FLAWED

GMC TERRAIN



60

OVERALL
SCORE

67
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↓
OWNER
SATISFACTION



VISIBILITY

\$36,950

PRICE AS TESTED

22 mpg

FUEL

BETTER
BET



SUBARU FORESTER



89

OVERALL
SCORE

90
ROAD TEST

↑
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION



VISIBILITY

\$29,341

PRICE AS TESTED

28 mpg

FUEL

The Terrain lacks the refinement that we'd expect in an SUV at this price. But its easy front- and rear-seat access and the turbo engine's strong acceleration are enough to tempt many buyers. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The windshield pillars are thick at the bottom and can make it hard to see other cars and pedestrians. The side windows are small, and the back window configuration makes it challenging to merge, back up, or parallel park. The blind spot warning system helps, but it's an option—not standard—on most trims.

SUBCOMPACT AND COMPACT SUVs OVERALL SCORE RANGE 35-89

The Forester may look like a box on wheels, but that shape gives it several advantages: good headroom, plenty of cargo room, and incredible visibility. In fact, it has one of the best outward views of any vehicle we've tested. Every roof pillar is slim, and the windshield and side glass are large. The side mirrors sit low, so it's easy to see pedestrians and cars at traffic intersections. The rear window is also large, but head restraints can block the view somewhat.

ALSO CONSIDER: Honda Passport

FINE BUT
FLAWED

KIA STINGER



67

OVERALL
SCORE

75
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION



VISIBILITY

\$40,400

PRICE AS TESTED

23 mpg

FUEL

BETTER
BET



LEXUS GS



83

OVERALL
SCORE

83
ROAD TEST

↑
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION



VISIBILITY

\$58,858

PRICE AS TESTED

21 mpg

FUEL

The Stinger sports sedan is a sleek, stylish, and nimble crowd-pleaser that's exciting to drive. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** Front visibility isn't bad, but rear and side visibility are extremely limited by the size of the side windows, thick rear roof pillars, and the shallow slope of the rear window. The rearview camera and the standard blind spot warning system both mitigate these problems, but drivers reluctant to rely on technology to compensate for the limited view could well be happier with another choice.

LUXURY CARS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 39-89

The GS was designed in the days before automakers started trying to make their sedans look like coupes, which means it has thin windshield pillars and expansive windows that give drivers generous views out the front and sides. Thickish rear roof pillars and a high rear dash compromise the view out the back to some degree, but the rearview camera and standard blind spot warning system more than make up for it.

ALSO CONSIDER: Audi A4

NOISE

We measure and evaluate noise while driving the test car over various pavement surfaces, including specially built concrete slabs on our test track. Our engineers also note engine, road, and wind noise when driving on local roadways.

FINE BUT
FLAWED

FORD ECOSPORT



NOISE: \$28,130 PRICE AS TESTED 24 mpg FUEL

58

OVERALL SCORE

61 ROAD TEST

↓ RELIABILITY

↓ OWNER SATISFACTION

BETTER
BET

NISSAN ROGUE SPORT



NOISE: \$25,655 PRICE AS TESTED 26 mpg FUEL

67

OVERALL SCORE

72 ROAD TEST

↓ RELIABILITY

↓ OWNER SATISFACTION

The EcoSport is easy to get into and out of, and handles more like a sporty sedan than an SUV. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The engine makes a buzzy hum that becomes excessively loud as it revs up to create more power. Road noise is a constant and unwelcome companion, particularly when driving on rough pavement. Plus its middling fuel economy means that the EcoSport isn't economical at all. Save your eardrums by skipping this Ford.

SUBCOMPACT AND COMPACT SUVs OVERALL SCORE RANGE 35-89

The Rogue Sport stands out from its subcompact competitors because of how well it keeps outside noise at bay. Wind and road noise are both well-muted. The only real sound to speak of is a minor, unobjectionable engine hum in the background. The engine volume becomes truly loud only for brief periods, such as when it is revved during hard acceleration when climbing a hill or quickly merging into traffic. Still, it is quieter than nearly all of its peers.

ALSO CONSIDER: Honda CR-V

FINE BUT
FLAWED

ACURA ILX



NOISE: \$30,820 PRICE AS TESTED 28 mpg FUEL

64

OVERALL SCORE

61 ROAD TEST

↑ RELIABILITY

↓ OWNER SATISFACTION

BETTER
BET

MAZDA3



NOISE: \$24,115 PRICE AS TESTED 30 mpg FUEL

74

OVERALL SCORE

75 ROAD TEST

↑ RELIABILITY

↑ OWNER SATISFACTION

Very good reliability and the low cost of entry to an upscale brand might make the ILX a tempting choice. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The hard ride is unpleasant, but cabin noise is the real deal breaker here. Road noise creates such a din in the ILX that long rides become downright fatiguing. It's built on the same platform as the Honda Civic, which in the top trim costs a few thousand dollars less and delivers everything the ILX does. Now that's a sound choice.

SUBCOMPACT AND COMPACT CARS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 30-80

The Mazda3's interior quality improved dramatically with its 2019 redesign, bringing it in line with a handful of luxury cars, including the ILX. The very quiet cabin enhances the luxury feel. Road and wind noise are minimal, and the engine makes a pleasant purr that's never raucous or tiring. The 2019 model is a major upgrade, and top-trim versions are an affordable alternative to a luxury compact car.

ALSO CONSIDER: Subaru Impreza, Volkswagen Jetta



REAR-SEAT COMFORT

We have male and female testers of various ages and sizes evaluate the roominess of the cabin (front and back), the level of seat support, and ease of entry and exit for every car we rate.

FINE BUT
FLAWED

MAZDA CX-3



58

OVERALL
SCORE

64
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↓
OWNER
SATISFACTION

↓
REAR SEAT

.....

\$25,800
PRICE AS TESTED

.....

28 mpg
FUEL

BETTER
BET

SUBARU CROSSTREK



87

OVERALL
SCORE

87
ROAD TEST

↑
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION

↑
REAR SEAT

.....

\$25,905
PRICE AS TESTED

.....

29 mpg
FUEL

A stylish, well-designed SUV, the CX-3 has agile handling and a spirited powertrain that make it fun to drive. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The small doors and sloping roofline require passengers to practically fold themselves to get into the backseat. It's so snug, in fact, that some families will outgrow the CX-3 before they're ready to buy a new car. Along with the lack of legroom behind the front seats, the ceiling in the rear is so low that adults seated there will find their head brushing against it.

SUBCOMPACT AND COMPACT SUVs OVERALL SCORE RANGE 35-89

The Crosstrek is a well-rounded SUV that treats rear-seat passengers very well. It's reliable and quiet, and has easy-to-use controls and doors that swing open wide, making it incredibly easy to get into. The backseat offers plenty of room—even for long-legged passengers—along with ample headroom, a nicely shaped seat, and good thigh support. There's more than enough space for two adults to travel comfortably on extended trips.

ALSO CONSIDER: Honda HR-V

FINE BUT
FLAWED

GENESIS G70



73

OVERALL
SCORE

74
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION

↓
REAR SEAT

.....

\$43,115
PRICE AS TESTED

.....

23 mpg
FUEL

BETTER
BET

BMW 3 SERIES



77

OVERALL
SCORE

86
ROAD TEST

↓
RELIABILITY

↑
OWNER
SATISFACTION

↓
REAR SEAT

.....

\$52,995
PRICE AS TESTED

.....

29 mpg
FUEL

With comfortable front seats, a well-tuned ride, and a quiet, nicely appointed cabin, the Genesis G70 makes a great first impression. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** The rear seat's leather upholstery looks inviting, but there's so little space back there that it's all but impossible to enjoy. The small door openings and low roofline make it hard for passengers to get in and out, and even average-sized passengers will feel the squeeze. The G70 sets the standard for snug in a class already known for small rear seats.

LUXURY CARS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 39-89

Sporty, compact sedans aren't known for having roomy cabins, but the 3 Series gives rear-seat passengers adequate legroom and knee room, decent foot room under the front seats, and a nicely shaped rear seat that provides good back support. The side bolsters are a nice touch that will help keep each passenger in place in case the driver wants to explore the BMW's impressive handling capabilities.

ALSO CONSIDER: Audi A4, Lexus ES

BRAKING DISTANCE

CR's automotive engineers use a precision GPS device to measure exact braking distances in a series of tests from 60 mph to a standstill on both wet and dry pavement.

FINE BUT FLAWED

FORD RANGER



58 OVERALL SCORE

55 ROAD TEST

↓ RELIABILITY

↑ OWNER SATISFACTION

143 ft.* ↓ BRAKING

\$40,355 PRICE AS TESTED

20 mpg FUEL

BETTER BET

HONDA RIDGELINE



74 OVERALL SCORE

83 ROAD TEST

↑ RELIABILITY

↑↑ OWNER SATISFACTION

134 ft.* ↑ BRAKING

\$36,480 PRICE AS TESTED

20 mpg FUEL

The Ranger returned in 2019 after an eight-year hiatus. With its strong powertrain, standard automatic emergency braking, fuel efficiency, and distinctive lines, there's a lot to like about this compact pickup. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** Its stopping distances are worse even than some of the full-sized trucks CR has tested. It has very long stops on both dry and wet surfaces: 143 feet and 150 feet, respectively. Our testers also noted that the brake pedal has to be pushed a long way until the truck fully stops.

COMPACT PICKUPS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 45-74

The Ridgeline is basically a Honda Pilot SUV with a pickup truck bed at the back. It performs very well in our braking tests, taking just 134 feet to stop on dry pavement and 142 feet on wet—far shorter distances than the Ranger. Add in its smooth, comfortable ride; admirable cornering capability; low noise levels; excellent controls; and competitive payload and towing capacities, and the Ridgeline is a pickup that's easy to live and work with.

FINE BUT FLAWED

NISSAN KICKS



64 OVERALL SCORE

64 ROAD TEST

↓ RELIABILITY

↓ OWNER SATISFACTION

137 ft.* ↑ BRAKING

\$21,050 PRICE AS TESTED

32 mpg FUEL

BETTER BET

KIA SOUL



76 OVERALL SCORE

76 ROAD TEST

↑ RELIABILITY

↑↑ OWNER SATISFACTION

120 ft.* ↑↑ BRAKING

\$25,320 PRICE AS TESTED

28 mpg FUEL

Superb fuel economy, excellent visibility, and a quiet ride at a bargain price make the Kicks an enticing choice. **THE ACHILLES' HEEL:** Compared with other compact SUVs, the braking performance of the Kicks disappoints: It requires 10 or more feet of additional roadway to stop, which could have major implications under certain circumstances. And its brake pedal feels particularly spongy, which many drivers will find unappealing.

SUBCOMPACT AND COMPACT CARS OVERALL SCORE RANGE 30-80

The Soul impressed us in our braking tests, with very short stops on wet and dry surfaces. The brake pedal is firm, and the brakes smoothly and gradually engage rather than suddenly grab the rotors. It took the Soul just 120 feet to stop on a dry surface and 130 on the wet. We think this budget hatchback is a compelling alternative to a sedan or an SUV, with competitive fuel economy, lots of interior room, and simple-to-use controls. **ALSO CONSIDER:** Subaru Impreza, Mazda3

*Dry braking.





LUXURY MIDSIZED SUVs (2-ROW)

Audi E-Tron

Plush and Posh,
Short on Range

81OVERALL
SCORE**ROAD-TEST SCORE 84****HIGHS** Ride, acceleration, seat comfort, fit and finish, no tailpipe emissions, low running costs**LOWS** Charging times, range, charging port door**POWERTRAIN** 355-hp electric motors; 1-speed direct drive transmission; all-wheel drive**RANGE** 204 miles**PRICE AS TESTED** \$80,450

THE AUDI E-TRON, the latest EV from an established automaker, looks like a conventional luxury SUV. It has an understated, classy interior and an excellent ride. We give the Audi high marks, in part because it doesn't compromise on cabin room and controls like its main competitors, the Jaguar I-Pace and Tesla Model X.

Driving the E-Tron is a treat. Its electric motors silently propel the SUV forward in a smooth, dignified manner without the head-snapping lunge off the line we've experienced in some other electric vehicles.

But make no mistake, if a driver needs a quick getaway, a forceful push on the accelerator provides plenty of power.

The standard air suspension delivers a superb ride and

masks every bump and dip in the road. In this regard, the E-Tron is far superior to the Jaguar and Tesla. But this 5,800-pound luxury SUV doesn't corner as nimbly as those rivals.

The EPA rates the E-Tron's range at 204 miles, which lags its peers. Like all EVs, the range is likely to drop in colder months. It took us an agonizingly long 12 hours to fully charge the 95-kWh battery from nearly empty on a 240-volt charger.

The E-Tron has a finicky motorized door covering its charging port that doesn't always open or close at the first push of the button.

Forward collision warning (FCW), automatic emergency braking (AEB), blind spot warning (BSW), and rear cross traffic warning (RCTW) come standard.

LUXURY MIDSIZED SUVs (3-ROW)

Cadillac XT6

Stately SUV Doesn't
Shine Bright

60OVERALL
SCORE**ROAD-TEST SCORE 82****HIGHS** Ride, quietness, transmission**LOWS** Fuel economy, limited seat adjustments, the lack of some luxury features, brand reliability**POWERTRAIN** 310-hp, 3.6-liter V6 engine; 9-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive**FUEL** 18 mpg on regular fuel**PRICE AS TESTED** \$62,515

THE NEW XT6 is a luxury three-row SUV that's positioned as a competitor to premium models such as the Audi Q7 and Lexus RX L.

But this inviting vehicle comes up a bit short. The XT6 lacks some features that buyers might expect in a luxury SUV, and it has disappointing fuel economy. Cadillac's poor brand reliability also hurts the vehicle's Overall Score.

There are some positives, however, including generous interior space and good outward visibility, thanks to the SUV's tall glass. The infotainment technology is well-designed and easy to use, rare in this flashy segment.

The front seats are firm and supportive, but the limited range of seat and steering-wheel adjustments made some CR drivers uncomfortable.

Second-row access is easy, although the seats are a bit flat. The third row is cramped but helpful in a pinch.

Fit and finish is mixed, with mostly high-end materials offset by some cheaper-looking plastic and rough edges.

The V6 engine provides robust, linear acceleration, and the transmission shifts smoothly and responsively. But fuel economy is just 18 mpg overall.

The XT6 handles well, with limited body lean through corners. It also soaks up bumps, and the cabin is quiet.

For those drawn to the XT6, the less expensive and well-executed Buick Enclave and Chevrolet Traverse offer many of the same strengths.

Active safety features, such as FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and lane departure warning, (LDW) come standard.



LUXURY ENTRY-LEVEL CARS

Mercedes-Benz A-Class

High Priced, but Without Polish

54

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 64

HIGHS Handling, braking, fit and finish, front-seat comfort

LOWS Ride, controls, hesitation off the line, rear seat, wimpy A/C

POWERTRAIN 188-hp, 2.0-liter 4-cylinder turbocharged engine; 7-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 27 mpg on premium fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$43,385

THE A-CLASS SEDAN lacks the refined driving experience Mercedes-Benz is known for. This is Mercedes' newest car, but we fail to see the attraction given its stiff ride, drivetrain foibles, confusing controls, and steep price.

The turbocharged engine seems sleepy during low-speed driving, a problem compounded when the dual-clutch transmission hesitates to downshift. The bumpy ride further undermines the car's "affordable luxury" promise.

The seating position is tight for larger drivers, and a sharp edge runs the length of the plastic center console, which can rub against their right knee.

There are multiple ways to interact with the dazzling infotainment system, but it's maddening to use. It's too easy to accidentally brush the small

touch-sensitive buttons on the steering wheel, and the center console touchpad is tricky for drivers to operate without diverting their attention from the road.

The air conditioning is too weak to adequately cool the cabin on hot days, and the low, flat rear seat doesn't provide any underleg support.

It's not all bad. The quiet cabin is attractive, and the artfully designed, turbinelike dash vents have a delightfully fluid feel when adjusted. We also enjoyed the car's handling, with taut steering that suits its sporty character. The supportive front seats are also a high point as well as the 27 mpg overall in CR tests.

Front-wheel drive is standard and all-wheel drive is optional. FCW and AEB are standard, but BSW, RCTW, LDW, and lane keeping assist cost extra.



LUXURY COMPACT CARS

Volkswagen Arteon

Luxury, Style, and Practicality

82

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 91

HIGHS Handling, braking, fit and finish, controls, front-seat comfort, hatchback versatility, cargo space

LOWS Loud engine

POWERTRAIN 268-hp, 2.0-liter 4-cylinder turbocharged engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 24 mpg on premium fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$43,475

VOLKSWAGEN'S ARTEON is meant to fill a unique niche. It's a well-appointed hatchback with sporty handling, generous cargo room, and a sedanlike exterior. If this profile fits your needs, then we've got good news: The Arteon delivers.

Our testers praised the car for how well it blends spirited driving with a composed ride. The Arteon accelerates quickly, with plenty of power to merge into traffic at highway speeds. It had no trouble taking the sharp corners on our test track, and its firm ride is pleasant even on rough roads.

Front-wheel drive comes standard, and all-wheel drive is optional.

In many ways the Arteon feels like a crisper, more stylish VW Passat or a less flashy Audi A5 Sportback.

The Arteon has an impressive cabin that's elegant and practical. The front seats are well-bolstered, and the interior is attractively finished.

The infotainment system's responsive touch screen is easy to use. We like that the climate and audio systems are controlled with physical buttons and knobs rather than through the screen.

There are a couple of small drawbacks. The low roofline makes getting in and out a bit of a challenge. And pressing hard on the accelerator creates loud engine noise that detracts from the VW's otherwise premium feel.

Despite its low-slung looks, the Arteon is versatile thanks to its long, wide cargo area and low loading floor.

Every Arteon gets FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW.

Ratings > **The Luxury Promise** Our latest tests show that some premium models rise to the top while others are a letdown, despite their prestigious pedigrees.

Recommended	Make & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Safety	Road-Test Results										
				As tested	Predicted reliability		Owner satisfaction	Crash prevention	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Acceleration 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking 60-0 mph, ft.	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Routine handling	Ride	Noise	Seat comfort front/rear
LUXURY MIDSIZED SUVs (2-ROW)																	
✓	BMW X5 xDrive40i	88	\$68,730	↓	↑	Std./↑	98	23	6.0	129	52.0	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	36.5
✓	Lexus RX 450h	82	\$57,565	↑	↑	Std./↑	80	29	7.5	138	50.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	30.0
✓	Audi E-Tron Premium Plus	81	\$80,450	↓	↑	Std./↑	84	74 [□]	6.3	131	49.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	28.0
✓	Lincoln Nautilus (2.7T)	75	\$54,945	↓	↓	Std./↑	84	18	7.2	128	53.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	32.5
	Porsche Cayenne Base	70	\$79,280	↓	↑	Std./↑	87	21	6.5	131	49.5	↑	↓	↑	↑/↑	↓	32.0
	Mercedes-Benz GLE450	66	\$75,090	↓	↑	Std./↑	80	20	6.0	132	51.5	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	36.5
	Jaguar I-Pace HSE	58	\$86,841	↓	↑	Std./↑	76	76 [□]	4.3	136	52.0	↑	↓	↑	↑/↑	↓	25.5
	Tesla Model X 100D	55	\$109,200	↓	↑	Std./↑	77	87 [□]	4.9	127	53.5	↑	↓	↑	↑/↓	↓	2+2
LUXURY MIDSIZED SUVs (3-ROW)																	
✓	Audi Q7 Premium Plus	87	\$68,695	↑	↑	Std./↑	96	20	6.7	127	50.0	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	35.5
✓	BMW X7 xDrive40i	85	\$84,095	↓	↑	Std./↑	94	22	6.5	136	52.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	26.0
✓	Lexus RX 350L	81	\$56,518	↑	↑	Std./↑	80	20	7.7	136	51.5	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	31.0
✓	Infiniti QX60 Pure	78	\$51,920	↑	↓	Std./↑	79	19	8.3	137	47.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↓	↑	39.0
	Acura MDX Tech	67	\$51,410	↓	↓	Std./↑	79	21	6.8	135	52.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	34.0
	Volvo XC90 T6 Momentum	62	\$56,805	↓	↓	Std./↑	84	20	7.7	126	52.5	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↓	35.0
	Cadillac XT6 Premium Luxury	60	\$62,515	↓	↑	Std./↑	82	18	7.1	134	51.0	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	40.5
	Buick Enclave Premium	56	\$55,680	↓	↑	Opt.	87	18	7.4	130	53.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	48.5
	Land Rover Discovery HSE	49	\$69,260	↓	↓	Std./↑	71	17	7.3	138	47.5	↓	↑	↑	↑/↓	↓	42.5
LUXURY ENTRY-LEVEL CARS																	
	Audi A3 Premium	68	\$31,495	↓	↓	Std./↑	77	27	8.3	124	53.0	↑	↓	↓	↑/↓	↓	2+1
	Acura ILX Premium	64	\$30,820	↑	↓	Std./↑	61	28	7.5	132	54.5	↓	↓	↓	↑/↓	↓	2+2
	Mercedes-Benz A220 4MATIC	54	\$43,385	↓	↓	Std./↑	64	27	7.3	130	53.0	↑	↓	↑	↑/↓	↓	2+1
	Mercedes-Benz CLA250 (2019)	53	\$36,500	↓	↓	Std./↓	64	28	6.6	124	54.0	↑	↓	↓	↑/↓	↓	2+2
LUXURY COMPACT CARS																	
✓	Volkswagen Arteon SEL (AWD)	82	\$43,475	↓	↑	Std./↑	91	24	7.9	125	53.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	4+1
✓	Buick Regal Essence (2.0T, AWD)	77	\$39,715	↓	↓	Opt.	87	23	7.0	125	55.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↓	↑	3+2
	Genesis G70 Elite (2.0T, AWD)	73	\$43,115	↓	↑	Std./↑	74	23	7.8	137	56.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↓	↑	2+0
	Acura TLX SH-AWD	71	\$42,345	↓	↓	Std./↑	75	25	6.5	129	55.0	↑	↑	↑	↑/↓	↓	2+2
	Kia Stinger Premium (2.0T, AWD)	67	\$40,400	↓	↑	Opt.	75	23	7.5	132	53.5	↑	↓	↑	↑/↓	↑	3+0

[□] Indicates miles-per-gallon equivalent (MPGe).

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **Road-Test Results, Predicted reliability, Owner satisfaction**, and **Safety**, which

includes crash-test results and the availability of crash prevention features, such as forward collision warning and automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and

blind spot warning. NA means no such safety system is offered; Opt. means it's available but not as standard equipment. We also rate models from to based on how

many advanced safety features come standard. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes. Digital or All-Access members can go to [CR.org/cars](https://www.cars.com) for complete ratings.

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Bird-Brained Thanksgiving Deals

These goofy grocery deals are real turkeys

Birds of a Feather?

For those who don't know their farm animals.
Submitted by Stephen Einson, via email



Fowl Play

That's some puzzling poultry pricing.
Submitted by Becky Andrews, via email



Bean Bluff

These sneaky brussels sprouts can't fool us!
Submitted by Micah Donahue, Newburyport, MA



Blanc Check

This copywriter may have sampled the wares before crafting this ad.
Submitted by Nancy Landolf, Baltimore



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