

'Environmentally friendly' cars are worse polluters than five years ago

By David Harrison

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Motorists beware – those cars promoted as "green" may not be as environmentally friendly as you think.

Some new cars are more polluting than the same models were five years ago, according to a new study which is to be published this week.

Among the worst offenders are cars from Renault, Honda and Daihatsu, all manufacturers that claim strong green credentials.

Even models that improved their environmental performance fell well short of the minimum emissions levels now possible, the research found.

In some cases, the poorer performance was the result of "improvements" such as design upgrades, new safety features and changes to the engine, which caused higher levels of CO₂ emissions or pollutants.

The research involved testing a selection of 14 models, including people carriers and mid-range cars, in urban conditions for carbon dioxide emissions and pollutants including nitrogen oxide, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide.

The tests were carried out by the International Automobile Federation (FIA) Foundation's EcoTest, Europe's leading environmental assessment programme for vehicles. The Renault Scénic, touted by its makers as "the UK's greenest car", scored 61 points out of 100 for "greenness" e_SEmD five points worse than it scored in 2003-4.

Honda, which claims on its website to be an "environmental leader" whose green credentials are "seen in every product", saw its Accord Tourer's score fall from 71 to 68.

The Daihatsu Cuore, which was sold in Britain as the Charade until 2006, slipped from 61 to 57. On its website, the manufacturer claims: "Our cars are friendly to the environment."

The study also involved testing diesel engines for emissions of particulates. The best cars showed improvements of up to 20 percentage points when both CO₂ emissions and pollutants were included.

The biggest improvement was achieved by the Honda FR-V, which went up from 47 points to 65 followed by the VW Touran, up 14 points to 62.

The Mazda6 got the highest overall score of 80, up from 74 in 2003-4, followed by the Mercedes C-class, up 10 to 75, and the BMW 3-series on 75 (up from 71). Of those tested, the worst performing car was the Mazda2, which scored 52.

Those tested did not include "hybrid" cars – which have petrol and electric engines – such as the Toyota Prius and the Honda Civic, which are expected to be retested in the next year and which scored more than 80 points last time.

The FIA Foundation said car buyers were "lost in a green vehicles fog".

David Ward, the foundation's director-general said: "The results of our survey are a warning to motorists that all is not what it seems when it comes to buying greener cars.

"The motor industry has a long way to go in order to achieve the lowest levels of CO₂ emissions, pollutants and optimum fuel economy.

"Motorists need independent, accurate and up-to-date information."

John Kingston, environment manager for Honda UK, said: "I am surprised by these findings. We do talk about our green credentials because we are a leader in that field and are always working to make our cars cleaner and greener.

"But we have to meet increasingly stringent EU safety regulations that can have a negative impact on emissions."

Story from Telegraph News:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2022935/Environmentally-friendly-cars-are-worse-polluters-than-five-years-ago.html>

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