

# Big isn't always a loser in the green car stakes

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Sunday October 9, 2005

## Observer

Motorists can save at least £1,200 a year by choosing more fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly cars without compromising on size, government research shows.

The study, by the government's Energy Saving Trust, illustrates the differences between cars in four classes: superminis, hatchbacks, executive cars and sports utility vehicles (SUVs). It says cars of similar size and type vary hugely in green performance and running costs.

It comes as carmakers are under attack for slowing progress in cutting carbon emissions, and petrol and diesel prices are at record high levels of nearly £1 a litre.

Typically those with the cheapest running costs and lowest carbon emissions are diesel models with smaller engines, and the most expensive and polluting are big petrol drinkers. Toyota makes both the cheapest and cleanest of all the cars - the hybrid petrol-electric Prius family hatchback - and the most expensive and carbon-emitting, the Land Cruiser Amazon, which has a 4.7 litre petrol engine.

Nigel Underwood, the trust's head of transport advice, said the real point of the exercise was to compare cars of a kind. 'We're not trying to encourage everybody to buy the cleanest car, because for many people it won't do the job; if you need a seven-seater [people carrier] you are not going to buy a super-mini,' he said.

'What we set out to do is [say], if you're going to buy this sort of car, try and choose the best of the bunch.'

The trust's league table, to be published in December's issue of What Car? magazine, compares carbon dioxide emissions, miles per gallon and the running cost for an average 10,000 miles a year.

Although the trust's remit is to cut carbon emissions, the financial message will be more powerful, especially when fuel prices are so high, said Edmund King, executive director of the RAC Foundation. 'The \$60 barrel [of oil] is here to stay for some time, so motorists need to get serious about fuel efficiency.'

The differences in performance - which mean the 'best' cars in a category can be cheaper to run and cleaner than the 'worst' in the smaller category below - mostly reflect the size and

weight, streamlining and engine type, said the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

The importance of diesel in improving cost and carbon efficiency is highlighted by the luxury car category, where two versions of the BMW 5 Series - one diesel, the other petrol - are rated 'best' and 'worst' in their class.

This is controversial for the trust, because diesel engines emit more local pollution and historically have been considered more sluggish - though catalytic converters, particulate traps and turbo engines no longer mean that must be so. For this reason 'the best outcome of all is you purchase a diesel with a particulate trap,' said Underwood.

Despite the obvious benefits of diesel, BMW keeps making the more expensive, high-running-cost, carbon-emitting M5 version of its 5 Series and other big petrol engine cars because two-thirds of customers still prefer them, said BMW's media relations manager, Duncan Forrester. 'What it really shows is the diversity of that model range,' he added.

Pursuing a different route to cheap green credentials, Toyota has just launched a petrol-electric hybrid SUV under its upmarket Lexus brand and a similar 'luxury' car is planned for next year. In the longer term, the SMMT believes hydrogen fuel cell or hydrogen-powered cars offer the most environmentally promising future.

Performance though, not nannying, is a better way of persuading people to buy more efficient models, said Toyota spokesman Scott Brownlee. 'The last thing anybody wants to hear is a company saying we'll make what's good for you and you'll buy it ...

'There's a growing number of people interested in a better solution and our job is to make one that offers little or no compromise.'

## So how clean is your vehicle?

### Super-mini

**Best in class:** Citroën C2 1.4 HDi

Diesel, 1.4 litre

CO2: 108 g/km

68.9 mpg

Annual fuel bill: £639

Vehicle excise duty: £85

**Worst in class:** Renault Clio

Petrol, 3.0 litre V6

CO2: 285 g/km

23.7 mpg

Annual fuel bill: £1,819

Vehicle excise duty: £165

## Family hatchback

**Best in class:** Toyota Prius T3

Petrol-electric hybrid, 1.5 litre  
CO2: 104 g/km  
65.7 mpg  
Annual fuel bill: £656  
Vehicle excise duty: £65

**Worst in class:** Alfa Romeo 147

Petrol, 3.2 litre V6  
CO2: 287 g/km  
23.3 mpg  
Annual fuel bill: £1,845  
Vehicle excise duty: £165

## Executive

**Best in class:** BMW 520D

Diesel, 2.0 litre  
CO2: 158 g/km  
47.9 mpg  
Annual fuel bill: £919  
Vehicle excise duty: £135

**Worst in class:** BMW M5

Petrol, 5.0 litre  
CO2: 357 g/km  
19.1 mpg  
Annual fuel bill: £2,256  
Vehicle excise duty: £165

## SUV

**Best in class:** Suzuki Jimmy JLX Soft-top

Petrol, 1.3 litre  
CO2: 174 g/km  
38.7 mpg  
Annual fuel bill: £1,114  
Vehicle excise duty: £150

**Worst in class:** Toyota Land Cruiser Amazon

Petrol, 4.7 litre V8

CO<sub>2</sub>: 387 g/km

17.3 mpg

Annual fuel bill: £2,491

Vehicle excise duty: £165

- Annual fuel bill based on 10,000 miles average, at 95p per litre (petrol) and 97p per litre (diesel).

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