

J.D. Power Reports: Manual Lumbar Support on an Otherwise Power Seat Pains New-Vehicle Owners

Johnson Controls and Toyota Boshoku Each Garner Two Segment Awards for Seat Quality

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif: 15 August 2013 — While seat suppliers and automakers try to save costs and reduce weight by having manually adjustable lumbar support in otherwise powered seats, owners of new vehicles equipped with those power/manual seats are not pleased, according to the J.D. Power 2013 Seat Quality and Satisfaction StudySM released today.

While fewer than five percent of new-vehicles are equipped with power seats with manually adjustable lumbar support, owners of those vehicles report more problems with the lumbar support adjustment—1.9 problems per 100 vehicles (PP100), on average—than do owners of vehicles equipped with all seat controls being power including lumbar adjustments (0.4 PP100). Satisfaction among owners of vehicles equipped with these seats is also lower—average overall satisfaction is 8.2 (on a 10-point scale), compared with 8.4 for owners of fully powered seats.

Even owners with seats with all manual controls report a lower average of lumbar adjustment problems (1.1 PP100); however, overall satisfaction is lowest among these owners (7.9).

“Including powered lumbar support controls adds costs to the seat and weight to the overall vehicle, which is why some automakers are opting for manually adjustable lumbar support,” said Mike VanNieuwkuyk, executive director of global automotive at J.D. Power.

VanNieuwkuyk notes that while many drivers set their lumbar support to their desired adjustment and rarely touch it again, part of owners’ dissatisfaction lies in the expectation that a powered seat—one which adjusts forward and backward, up and down, and reclines with the press of a button or lever—also has powered lumbar adjustment. Nearly one-half of all new vehicles are equipped with fully powered seats.

“Customer expectations, especially among premium vehicle owners, are that all adjustments on a ‘power seat’ will be powered, not manual,” said VanNieuwkuyk. “Having manual lumbar controls when other seat controls are powered increases the likelihood that consumers will cite this as a problem and satisfaction decreases. It’s also highly possible that many owners may not realize their power seat has manually adjustable lumbar support until after they purchase the vehicle, which only exacerbates their displeasure.”

Seat Height and Headrest Adjustments Come Up Short for Some Owners

The study finds that seat height and headrest adjustments are also important seat features for vehicle owners, especially those who are shorter than average. Shorter owners (under 5 feet 5 inches tall) experience nearly twice as many problems with their seat height adjustment than their taller counterparts (1.2 PP100 vs. 0.7 PP100, respectively), with a third of these shorter owners indicating the seat does not adjust high enough. Overall satisfaction with their driver seat among owners who indicate a problem with their seat height adjustment is significantly lower than among those who do not have seat height adjustment problem.

Shorter owners also report more problems with headrest adjustments than do taller owners (1.6 PP100 vs. 1.0 PP100, respectively).

Seat height and headrest adjustments not only impact driver comfort, but also are a potential safety issue. Owners who indicate problems with seat height or headrest adjustment are also less satisfied with visibility, particularly visibility out the rear of the vehicle.

“It’s a challenge for suppliers to make a seat that fits all owners,” said VanNieuwkuyk. “Automakers will often integrate other movable features into their vehicles, such as adjustable pedals and tilt-and-telescoping steering column, to enable owners to adjust the seat to their comfort without compromising safety or visibility.”

Seat Supplier Quality Rankings

Among seat suppliers, Johnson Controls and Toyota Boshoku each garner two segment awards for seat quality. Johnson Controls ranks highest in the Mass Market Midsize/Large CUV segment (for its seats in the Toyota Venza) as well as in the Mass Market Truck/Van segment (Ford F-250 and F-350 Super Duty), while Toyota Boshoku ranks highest in seat quality in the Luxury Car segment (Lexus LS) and the Mass Market Midsize/Large Car segment (Toyota Camry assembled at the Lafayette B, IN, plant).

Lear Corporation ranks highest in the Luxury CUV segment (Audi allroad), Magna ranks highest in the Mass Market Compact CUV/MPV segment (Chevrolet Equinox) and Toyo Seat ranks highest in the Mass Market Compact Car segment (Mazda MX-5 Miata).

The 2013 Seat Quality and Satisfaction Study provides automotive manufacturers and suppliers with quality and satisfaction information related to automotive seating systems. New-vehicle owners are asked to rate the quality of their vehicle seats and seat belts based on whether or not they experienced defects/malfunctions or design problems during the first 90 days of ownership. The study is based on responses from more than 83,400 owners of new 2013 model-year cars and light trucks. The study was fielded between February and May 2013.

About J.D. Power

J.D. Power is a global marketing information services company providing performance improvement, social media and customer satisfaction insights and solutions. The company’s quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power has offices in North/South America, Europe and Asia Pacific. For more information on car reviews and ratings, car insurance, health insurance, cell phone ratings, and more, please visit JDPower.com. J.D. Power is a business unit of McGraw Hill Financial.

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(Page 3 of 3)

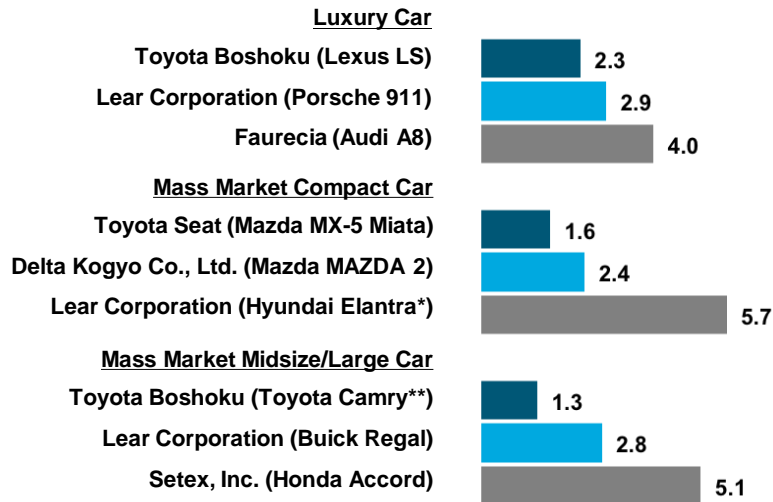
Note: Two charts follow.

J.D. Power

2013 Seat Quality and Satisfaction StudySM

Top Three Seats per Segment Overall Satisfaction

Problems per 100 Vehicles (PP100)



NOTES: *Lear Corporation's ranking in the Mass Market Compact Car Segment is for its seats supplied for the Hyundai Elantra assembled at the Montgomery, AL, plant.

**Toyota Boshoku's ranking in the Mass Market Midsize/Large CUV Segment is for its seats supplied for the Toyota Camry assembled at the Lafayette B, IN, plant.

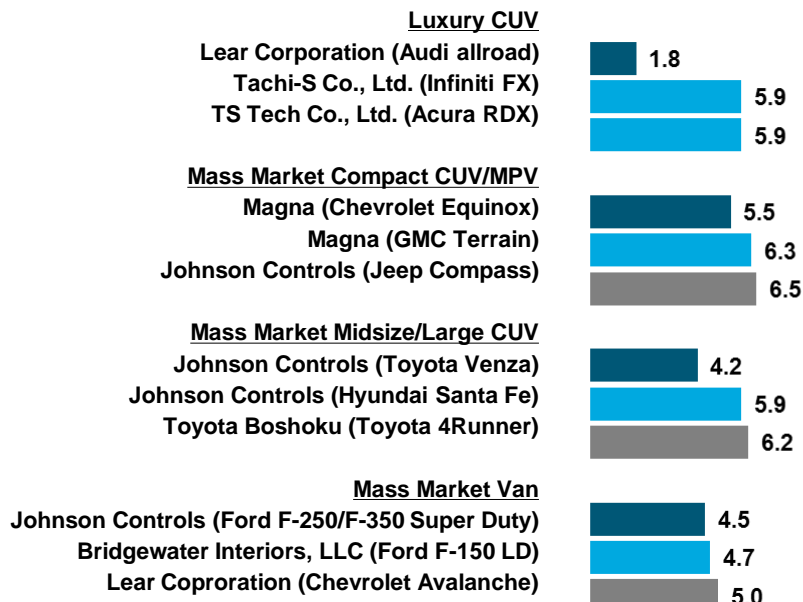
Source: J.D. Power 2013 Seat Quality and Satisfaction StudySM

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Top Three Seats per Segment Overall Satisfaction

Problems per 100 Vehicles (PP100)



NOTES: *Lear Corporation's ranking in the Mass Market Van Segment is for its seats supplied for the Chevrolet Avalanche assembled at the Dearborn, MI, plant.

Source: J.D. Power 2013 Seat Quality and Satisfaction StudySM

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