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WITH SHARON PETERS  
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## WHAT'S IT WORTH?

### QUESTION:

We went to the Subaru dealership and were told Subaru was honored in November as the model that retains the highest value years down the road. Is that true? If so, what group said so and what factors do they evaluate to make that judgment?

### ANSWER:

A firm called ALG (Automotive Lease Guide) releases an annual list of current-year vehicles that it predicts will retain the largest percentage of their list price for three years in each of several segments, such as small SUV, big SUV and compact car.

It's known as the "Residual Value Awards" and it's based on competition within each segment, resale performance and other factors. It is a "predicted" value, meaning, of course, that performance is foreshadowed through the various means they use, but many real-world truths can impact whether the honored vehicles actually live up to the projections.

The Subaru Legacy was the midsize winner, the Subaru Forester was the compact utility vehicle winner and the Subaru Outback was the midsize utility winner. Subaru also received the overall "mainstream brand award" (Infiniti took the overall luxury brand award).

Other firms also forecast resale value. It's one factor to take into account when selecting a new vehicle, but I wouldn't make a buying decision based entirely on a particular model's projected resale value. Emerging competitors, trouble or bad press about a manufacturer and a host of other unexpected turns of events can (and often do) throw monkey wrenches into the way things actually shake out.

### QUESTION:

We've seen information about a couple of cars that have "adaptive cruise control." What is that?

### ANSWER:

Conventional cruise control allows the driver to set a desired speed for the vehicle to maintain. Until you tap on the brakes, that's how fast you'll go. Adaptive cruise control allows you to set the speed you want to maintain, and the car also keeps itself a set distance from the vehicles ahead

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# WHEEL DEALS

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Average wasted hours per year for auto commuters stuck in traffic in the top 15 urban areas

SOURCE: Texas Transportation Institute 2010 Urban Mobility Report  
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## WHAT WOMEN WANT



WOMEN HAVE A LOT ON THEIR MINDS WHEN THEY BUY A CAR. A FAMILY 'TO-DO' LIST IS JUST THE START.

By REBECCA VANDERMEULEN  
CTW FEATURES

Despite all the progress toward equality between the sexes, certain tasks are more likely to fall to women rather than men. Think ferrying the kids to clarinet lessons, stocking up at the grocery store and picking up the dry cleaning.

Women accomplish a lot in their cars. Not surprisingly, this influences how women view their vehicles - and how they decide which to buy.

"It's your living room on wheels," says automotive expert Lauren Fix, a Buffalo, N.Y. automotive author and blogger.

Men and women look for some of the same features in a new vehicle, like durability and fuel efficiency. But while men prefer sporty, rugged vehicles, women tend to look for models that make them feel safe and provide lots of room for kids and groceries. The average man wants to have fun in a car, and the average woman wants to get from one place to another.

"I think that most women see a car as a tool and not a toy," says Rebecca Lindland, an analyst at

research firm IHS Automotive.

According to J.D. Power and Associates, these were the most popular new vehicles among female buyers nationwide between November 2009 and February 2010:

1. Toyota Camry
2. Honda Accord
3. Toyota Corolla
4. Honda C-RV
5. Honda Civic

Lindland isn't surprised at these models' popularity among American women. "They are what we affectionately call 'appliance' vehicles," she says. "They have a perception of being very reliable, solid, A-to-B transportation."

But when women buy cars, they think about more than how much space they have for car-pooling. J.D. Power's director of U.S. automotive research, Raffi Festeckjian, says women also tend to prefer vehicles that are environmentally friendly and have an elegant outside appearance.

Beyond that, Lindland says, women are highly conscious of their personal safety. They're taught to always be aware of their sur-

### TOP 5 CONSIDERATIONS AMONG FEMALE CAR BUYERS:

- Reliability and durability
- Gas mileage
- Safety
- Price or ability to secure financing
- Passenger capacity

Source: J.D. Power and Associates

roundings and be on the lookout for opportunistic criminals. This often manifests itself in a woman's preference for a vehicle that's bigger than she really needs.

"There's always a level of vulnerability with a woman that men will never truly understand," she says. "A lot of times, you look for a way to control your environment. You can do that in your car."

It might also come as a surprise that women like powerful vehicles. Fix says that's because women want to get where they need to be more quickly. According to Lindland, women who make so many practical considerations in the vehicles they buy like the idea

of having fun with the engine.

Women's clout is tough for automakers to ignore. Industry statistics say that women buy 65 percent of new vehicles. Although Lindland says female-centric auto advertising campaigns seem to assume every woman is a mom, car companies are making special efforts to market their offerings to women.

For example, the center console in the new Nissan Quest minivan has a storage compartment just right for a purse. The Ford Taurus now comes with adjustable pedals, which Fix says is a notable acknowledgment that women are usually shorter than men. She adds that several Toyotas come with curved rearview mirrors, which make it easier for drivers to check on the kids in the back seat.

And while she was in Detroit in mid-January for the North American International Auto Show, Fix was impressed by a concept crossover, the Kia KV7. Among its striking features was seats that swivel.

Just like a living room on wheels.

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### SAFETY

## THAT SINKING FEELING

Spring showers may bring May flowers, but they can also cause flooding, so proceed with caution while driving in wet weather. The National Weather Service says nearly half of all flood-related deaths occur in vehicles.

Dips in the road, viaducts and areas adjacent to rivers and streams are especially susceptible to flooding. Motorists should never assume that standing water is shallow enough to nego-

tiate.

According to the National Safety Council, motorists who find themselves suddenly submerged should immediately unlock doors and open windows



while accessories are still working. If the water is deep and the doors won't open, escape through an open window and swim to safety in the direction of

the current. If the windows won't open, try kicking one out. It's prudent to keep a small hammer the glove box for this purpose. If water is filling the cabin,

wait until it's as deep inside as it is outside - when the pressure is equalized - before attempting to open a door. - Jim Gorzelany

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