



2021

The year in numbers

A white badge with a black border. At the top is the "FOR SAFER CARS" logo. Below it, the text "EURO NCAP" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath the text are five yellow stars. At the bottom, the text "TEST 2021" is written in a smaller font.

Star Facts

A photograph showing two white cars on a dark asphalt test track. One car is in the foreground, and another is further down the track. The background shows a clear sky and some distant structures.

Assisted Driving

A photograph of a silver Renault Zoe car, shown from a front-three-quarter view. The car is parked on a white surface.

New Car Sales



Star Facts

SAFETY RATINGS

Car production and sales started to bounce back in 2021 as economies recovered from the pandemic recession. Still, new waves of infections, persistent supply chain disruptions and material shortages continued to pose a challenge to the vehicle industry and caused long delivery times for new cars. Euro NCAP released 59 safety ratings, of which 33 were for new car models tested against the latest protocols and 26 for variants of previously tested models. In addition, Euro NCAP published Assisted Driving gradings of seven more cars equipped with Highway Assist.



BEV, PHEV & HEV

Half of new cars tested in 2021 were battery electric, (plug-in) hybrid or fuel cell. In addition, Euro NCAP extended the ratings of 18 previously tested cars to new electric and hybrid variants.



CENTER AIRBAGS

Among new safety features that made their debut last year are center airbags to mitigate injuries in far-side crashes. Out of 33 new cars tested, 19 offered front-seat center airbags as standard.



Euro Rescue

POST-CRASH RESCUE

The Euro Rescue app now contains Rescue sheets of 1444 cars in the European car fleet. For electric and hybrid cars, also Emergency Response Guides can be downloaded free of charge.



REAR SEAT SAFETY

Most new cars offer standard belt load limiters and pretensioners (89%). I-size anchorages are practically standard on outboard rear positions, but not available on center seats. Rear head restraint Whiplash protection was rated poor to marginal in one out of three cars.



SAFETY ASSIST

Tests revealed large differences in ADAS scores. Best performers were the Subaru Outback and Nissan Qashqai with 95% scores, thanks to sophisticated AEB, lane support, speed and attention assist systems. Bottom-of-the-line are Dacia Spring (32%) and Renault ZOE (14%).



STARS

Overall, the latest models scored very well against the 2021 criteria. 22 cars rated 5 stars (69%) and 7 cars achieved 4 stars (21%). The lower echelon of 2-, 1- and zero-star cars is occupied entirely by Renault and its low-cost brand Dacia.

Assisted Driving

A CLOSER LOOK AT HIGHWAY ASSIST TECHNOLOGY

Following the release in 2020, Euro NCAP evaluated seven more cars that offer Highway Assist as an option in 2021. The range of cars tested demonstrated the growing prevalence of Assisted Driving across the spectrum of vehicle categories. Entry level systems, while offering less functionality than more sophisticated ones, nevertheless provide the driver with a useful level of support, and the fact that they are offered on volume-selling cars shows the direction of travel for automated driving. Overall, the manufacturers represented in this round of tests made clear the level of support their cars can provide and discouraged overreliance on the system.



NEW CAR SALES

Over the last year, the market share of hybrid electric and electrically chargeable cars further expanded in the EU at the expense of petrol and diesel vehicles (ACEA, 2021). Euro NCAP saw this reflected in the increasing number of EVs in the programme, the emergence of new EV-only brands, especially out of China, and the high demand for variant ratings. That 'green' does not always mean 'safe' was demonstrated by the poor result of ZOE and Spring at the end of the year.



The facelifted electric Renault ZOE disappointed with a zero-star rating in Euro NCAP safety tests in 2021.



Of new cars sold in 2021, an estimated 93% have a valid Euro NCAP safety rating, while 7% hold an expired rating or were never rated. In the first three quarters of the calendar year, 9 million passenger cars were sold in the EU, 73% of those were 5-star cars, 16% were rated 4 stars and 11% 3 stars or less. Most new car models today substantially exceed legal safety requirements and already offer more and better safety than will be required by law from July 2022 onwards.

Best practice standards such as Euro NCAP's star ratings have increasingly become recognized across Europe. Star ratings for passenger cars and commercial vans help consumers and businesses compare the safety potential of different models, enabling safety to be included in their purchasing decision. In addition, they advance the regulatory framework to continuously drive improvements in vehicle safety standards.