

Grey is the most popular car colour in Europe

According to the 2019 Global Automotive Colour Popularity Report, from the paint manufacturer Axalta, grey came out on top in Europe in 2019.



But how are future trends recognised and how are they then implemented in car paints? And above all, how are those colours then repaired? Whether or not a newly developed colour makes it onto a car can depend on whether it can be properly repaired.

The Axalta, a global manufacturer of liquid and powder coatings, report on the most popular automotive paints in 2019 shows that in Europe, grey took first place last year with 24% for the most popular colour for new cars.

It overtook white, with 23%, but white still reigned supreme worldwide. Black came in third in Europe. Together, these three colours have a two-thirds market share; when silver, with a share of 10%, is added, it is more than three quarters. Blue (10%) and red (6%) are the first “bright” colours.

For Elke Dirks, Automotive OEM Colour Designer for Axalta in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the rise of grey came as no surprise.

"Grey stands for practicality and professionalism, style and elegance," she says. "A grey car signals that the driver does not need to draw attention to themselves with a bright colour. Thanks to new pigments and effects, the previously rather inconspicuous colour is now often very stylish. It takes around two years to completely develop a new colour, so we have to recognise tomorrow's colour trends today."

The Axalta OEM colouristic team evaluates a wide variety of indicators: in addition to analysing colour statistics as well as customer and model-related properties, they also look at fashion and zeitgeist.

Dirks adds, "Trends in clothing, furniture and accessories, even articles in magazines - everything can provide clues."

Nothing works without the right repair paint

But not every shade that Dirks and her colleague Christiane Lüdecke develop makes it onto the car. Sometimes a colour fails due to production-related reasons, and sometimes it is because of the development of a repair formula.

Harald Klöckner, Head of Standox Training EMEA, explains, "The paint development for a car manufacturer does not only include the production paint, but also the right repair paint because at some point body shops must be able to repair paint damage perfectly."

Standox is in regular contact with its OEM paint colleagues. "This cooperation," says Klöckner, "naturally makes the development of suitable repair formulas and paints easier." Such close coordination is not a matter of course: not every production paint manufacturer is active in the refinish area, and vice versa.

60 new mixed formulas every week

The development of a paint repair formula is a lengthy and time-consuming procedure. It includes microscopic analysis to identify pigments, the calculation of mixing formulas and the creation of spray patterns by robotics to obtain a neutral spray pattern. The results obtained are checked again and again and refined. And this is how Standox develops around 60 new mixing formulas every week and deploys them via its online colour software Standowin iQ.

"It is a lot of effort," admits Klöckner. "But we know we can ensure that our partners always achieve the best possible results."

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