SOFTWARE & TECH

Nissan Maxima Consumer Reports

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A Deep Dive into the Nissan Maxima: What Consumer Reports Reveals

For decades, the Nissan Maxima has carved out a unique niche in the midsize sedan segment. Billed as a "four-door sports car," it has long appealed to drivers who want more than just basic transportation—they want a dash of performance, a hint of luxury, and a generous dose of style. But how does this ambitious sedan hold up under the rigorous scrutiny of one of the most trusted names in automotive evaluation? That's where **Nissan Maxima Consumer Reports**comes into play. Consumer Reports provides unbiased, data-driven insights into reliability, owner satisfaction, road-test performance, and much more. In this comprehensive article, we'll explore every facet of the Nissan Maxima as examined by Consumer Reports, giving you the information you need to make an informed decision—whether you're considering a new model or a used one.

Overview: Consumer Reports' Take on the Nissan Maxima

Consumer Reports has tested multiple generations of the Nissan Maxima, and the overall verdict is a mixed but generally favorable one. The Maxima consistently earns above-average scores in road-test performance, thanks to its powerful V6 engine and sport-tuned suspension. However, its reliability ratings have fluctuated over the years, with some model years receiving below-average marks for predicted reliability. Owner satisfaction, as measured by the "Would you buy this car again?" survey, tends to be high among those who prioritize driving experience and premium interior features. Nevertheless, the Maxima often trails class leaders like the Toyota Avalon and Honda Accord in overall Consumer Reports scores, largely due to issues with transmission smoothness and infotainment responsiveness in certain model years.

Performance and Driving Dynamics

Engine and Powertrain

One area where the Maxima consistently shines is under the hood. Virtually every modern Maxima is powered by a 3.5-liter V6 engine, producing around 300 horsepower. Consumer Reports praises this engine for its strong acceleration, smooth power delivery, and refined character. In track testing, the Maxima often posts competitive 0–60 mph times, putting it ahead of many rivals in the non-luxury midsize category. However, the continuously variable transmission (CVT) that Nissan pairs with this engine has been a point of contention. While it helps with fuel economy—the Maxima achieves an EPA-rated 20 mpg city and 30 mpg highway—Consumer Reports testers note that the CVT can feel rubbery or drone under hard acceleration, dulling the sporty experience that the engine promises. Some model years, particularly around 2016–2019, have also seen more frequent transmission complaints in Consumer Reports owner surveys.

Handling and Ride Comfort

The Maxima is tuned to be sportier than average for its class. Consumer Reports test drivers find the steering to be well-weighted and responsive, and the chassis provides good grip during cornering. The trade-off, however, is a firm ride. While many buyers appreciate the sporty feel, those seeking a plush, cushioned ride might find the Maxima too harsh over rough pavement. The suspension does a reasonable job of absorbing larger bumps, but smaller imperfections can be transmitted into the cabin. This characteristic is less forgiving than the Avalon's cloud-

like ride, but more engaging than the average sedan.

Fuel Economy and Real-World MPG

According to Consumer Reports' real-world testing, the Maxima's fuel economy usually falls slightly below its EPA estimates, especially in mixed driving. Owners report an average of around 22–24 mpg in combined driving, which is competitive for a V6 sedan but not class-leading. The front-wheel-drive layout and the CVT help keep fuel consumption reasonable, but if maximum efficiency is your priority, a hybrid or four-cylinder rival may be a better choice.

Interior Quality and Comfort

Cabin Materials and Design

Step inside a Maxima, and you'll find an interior that aims for a near-luxury feel. Consumer Reports notes that higher trim levels feature premium materials like soft-touch surfaces, real aluminum trim, and available semi-aniline leather. The "Zero Gravity" front seats, inspired by NASA technology, earn high marks for long-distance comfort and support. The back seat is spacious enough for two adults, but three across can be cramped due to a prominent transmission tunnel and limited shoulder room. Headroom and legroom are adequate, though the sloping roofline slightly reduces rear headroom for taller passengers.

Infotainment and Technology

The infotainment system in the Maxima has evolved over the years. Consumer Reports highlights that newer models (2020 and later) feature a responsive 8-inch touchscreen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration. However, earlier iterations (2016–2019) suffered from slow response times and a cluttered menu interface. The optional Bose premium audio system receives praise for its clarity, and the available dual-panel panoramic moonroof adds an airy feel to the cabin. On the downside, the climate controls are partially integrated into the touchscreen, which some testers find distracting while driving.

Safety and Driver Assistance Features

Crash Test Ratings

The Nissan Maxima has performed well in official crash tests. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) gave the 2024 model Top Safety Pick+ ratings, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) awarded five stars overall. Consumer Reports incorporates these results into its safety score, and the Maxima generally earns a strong rating in crashworthiness. However, Consumer Reports also considers the performance of standard safety equipment, which brings us to driver assistance.

Standard Safety Suite

Nissan's Safety Shield 360 comes standard on the Maxima, a suite that includes automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind-spot warning, rear cross-traffic alert, lane-departure warning, and high-beam assist. Consumer Reports tests these systems and finds that the automatic braking works effectively in many scenarios, though the lane-keeping assist can be overly intrusive on high-speed curves. The adaptive cruise control is smooth in stop-and-go traffic, making the Maxima a competent highway cruiser. For those prioritizing advanced driver aids, the Maxima offers a solid package, though it lacks some of the more sophisticated lane-centering technology found in competitors like the Honda Accord or Hyundai Sonata.

Reliability and Common Problems According to Consumer Reports

Predicted Reliability Ratings

Consumer Reports' predicted reliability rating for the Nissan Maxima has varied significantly by model year. The early seventh-generation models (2016–2018) received below-average reliability scores, with frequent complaints about the CVT transmission, air conditioning failures, and infotainment glitches. The 2019 and 2020 model years showed improvement, but still fell short of the class average. The most recent 2021–2024 models have earned average to slightly above-average ratings, as Nissan addressed some of the earlier quality issues. Consumer Reports recommends checking individual model years carefully and avoiding the 2016 and 2017 years if possible.

Common Owner Complaints

Based on Consumer Reports owner surveys and complaint databases, the following issues appear most frequently:

- CVT transmission woes: Shuddering, hesitation, and premature failure reported in earlier models. Extended warranty or CVT fluid changes may be necessary.
- Infotainment system lag: Slow touchscreen response and occasional freezes in models before 2020.
- Brake issues: Some owners report premature brake pad wear and pulsation in the brake pedal.
- Air conditioning problems: Inconsistent cooling and compressor failures in warmer climates.

On the positive side, Consumer Reports notes that the V6 engine itself is generally robust and reliable, with few major mechanical failures if properly maintained.

Comparisons with Key Rivals

Nissan Maxima vs. Toyota Avalon

The Toyota Avalon consistently tops Consumer Reports rankings in the large sedan category. When comparing **Nissan Maxima Consumer Reports** ratings against the Avalon, the Avalon typically wins on reliability, ride comfort, and fuel economy. The Maxima counters with a sportier driving experience and more distinctive interior design. If you value long-term dependability and a serene ride, the Avalon is the better choice; if you want a more engaging drive and a bit more visual flair, the Maxima may appeal more.

Nissan Maxima vs. Honda Accord 2.0T

The Honda Accord, especially in its 2.0-liter turbocharged form, offers similar power to the Maxima but with a better transmission (10-speed automatic). Consumer Reports rates the Accord higher overall due to its superior reliability, more spacious rear seats, and more intuitive infotainment system. However, the Maxima's interior materials feel more upscale, and its seats are more comfortable on long trips. The Accord also holds its value better, making it a stronger choice for those who plan to resell.

Nissan Maxima vs. Kia K5 GT

The Kia K5 GT is a newer sporty sedan that undercuts the Maxima on price while offering similar horsepower. Consumer Reports finds the K5's ride to be slightly more refined, and its warranty is significantly longer. However, the Maxima has a more luxurious interior and a more mature driving feel. In terms of predicted reliability, both models hover around average, with the K5 showing improvement in recent years.

Should You Buy a Used Nissan Maxima? Consumer Reports Advice

Best Model Years to Consider

If you're in the market for a used Nissan Maxima, Consumer Reports suggests focusing on the 2020 or later model years. These models incorporate updated infotainment hardware, improved CVT calibration, and generally better build quality. The 2021 and 2022 models also benefited from subtle styling refreshes and added standard features.

If budget is tight, the 2019 model is acceptable but be prepared for potential infotainment sluggishness.

Model Years to Avoid

Consumer Reports strongly advises against the 2016 and 2017 Nissan Maxima due to a high frequency of transmission problems and other reliability concerns. The 2018 model is marginal—check for service records showing CVT fluid changes. Any model with over 60,000 miles should have its transmission history carefully reviewed.

What to Look for During a Test Drive

When evaluating a used Maxima, pay close attention to the CVT. Listen for whining or droning noises during acceleration. Test the infotainment system for responsiveness. Check the air conditioning's cooling performance. Also, inspect the interior for premature wear on the driver's seat bolsters, a common complaint. A thorough pre-purchase inspection by a trusted mechanic is highly recommended.

Conclusion

The **Nissan Maxima Consumer Reports**story is one of a car that excels in some areas while falling short in others. It offers a powerful V6 engine, a sporty driving character, and a premium interior that rivals more expensive sedans. However, it is let down by a temperamental CVT in some model years, a firm ride, and reliability that doesn't match the best in class. For drivers who prioritize performance and style over ultimate refinement, the Maxima remains a compelling choice—especially the 2020 and newer models. For those seeking top-tier reliability and resale value, competitors like the Toyota Avalon or Honda Accord still hold the edge. Ultimately, by carefully consulting Consumer Reports and choosing the right model year, you can enjoy the Maxima's unique personality while minimizing potential headaches.

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