

News Release

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BASF analyzes the 2018 automotive color distribution

- **White is still the No.1 global color**
- **Blue is the most popular chromatic color worldwide**
- **Effect coatings create more diverse choices and raise popularity of achromatic colors**

With the “BASF Color Report for Automotive OEM Coatings”, BASF’s Coatings division provides a global analysis of the color distribution in the 2018 automotive market. The achromatic colors – white, black, gray and silver – still dominate the roads. They cover almost 80% of cars produced worldwide. White is the most popular color among them. More than every fourth car in North America and nearly every third vehicle in Europe is painted white, while in Asia Pacific it is more than every second car. Silver’s popularity decreased slightly in comparison to the previous year.

Among the diverse range of color shades, blue is the most popular, followed by red. These chromatic colors tend to be more popular within the smaller vehicle segments, such as compact and subcompact cars. The overall amount of chromatic hues drops off significantly in the larger segments. Here, there was a considerable increase in black and white compared to the previous year.

» [Further information on the global color distribution](#)

Effects create new color variations in Europe

Nearly every fifth car in Europe is painted gray. The color replaced black as the second most popular color. Buyers can choose from more than 110 variations

ranging from light gray to dark metallic anthracites. Blue offers even more options. Approximately 140 shades make blue the region's most diverse color space. With a share of 11%, it overtook silver in 2018, becoming the fourth most desired color in Europe.

A metallic or pearlescent effect also significantly contributes to the unique look of a car. In 2018, two thirds of all vehicles were finished with an effect coating. The larger the car, the more likely it was painted with an effect. Dark colors such as black and gray are mostly formulated to have a metallic effect, whereby lighter colors are primarily solid shades. "The landscape of automotive coatings effects evolves continuously and is shaped by new and inspiring ideas," said Mark Gutjahr, head of Automotive Color Design Europe at BASF's Coatings division.

» [Further information on the European color distribution](#)

White is most popular in Asia Pacific but chromatic colors gain importance

White is more popular in Asia Pacific than in any other region. 53% of all new cars are white. The color's popularity grew significantly in comparison to the previous year. Among chromatic colors, red is still the most popular choice. Blue, however, is closing the gap. An interesting observation is that brown remains especially popular with SUVs but has shown signs of slowing down, indicating that its importance in this segment may have passed.

Car buyers in Asia Pacific are increasingly connecting their color preferences to their attitudes and lifestyles. For example, metallic and sparkling blacks have risen in demand across several body segments. Even in subcompact cars, silvers and grays with dazzling effects are becoming more common. This can be seen in the Chinese market, where a broader palette of colors has emerged. "The diversity of chromatic colors is evident, with red, blue, yellow, brown and gold hues appearing in almost every segment. Chinese consumers readily display their coloristic tastes more so than in the past", said Chiharu Matsuhara, head of Automotive Color Design Asia Pacific.

» [Further information on the Asia Pacific color distribution](#)

Diversity in today's achromatic colors in North America offers a look into the future

In 2018, the achromatics remained the most popular automotive colors for North

America, accounting for roughly 75% of market production. Among the achromatic colors, white maintains its leading position. Besides the achromatic shades, consumers continued to demonstrate a growing affinity for red, specifically within the pickup and sports car segments. The diverse blue color space remained nearly the same compared to the prior year.

Over the last ten years, Crossover Utility Vehicles (CUV) have emerged as a dominant vehicle segment in North America. CUVs combine the qualities of Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs), like safety and driving convenience, with other benefits such as fuel efficiency and therefore offer appealing features to a wide array of drivers. White is the most popular color in this segment, followed by black and gray. Blues and reds are almost equally desired by car buyers. “In coating large surfaces for the CUV segment, the industry looks to bring a suitable visual expression of the vehicle’s perceived use and link it to the brand image,” said Paul Czornij, head of Automotive Color Design for BASF North America.

» [Further information on the North American color](#)

Trend competence and innovative color concepts

BASF’s Coatings division has an excellent understanding of what is trending in materials and colors, and uses this to predict which colors will play a key role in the future automotive market. Every year, the Coatings division’s designers create Automotive Color Trends, an innovative collection of 65 new colors based on extensive research and in-depth analysis of global trends and cultural shifts that will influence automotive colors three to five years into the future.

Color and Sustainability

Integrated into its color design innovations, BASF offers a range of sustainable coatings solutions for the automotive industry. Among these are coatings that enable a shortened application and curing process, which can reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 20 percent, waterborne basecoats that meet strict global regulations to minimize the volatile organic compound (VOC) content, and coatings with a temperature management functionality whereby the car surface does not heat up as much as conventional coatings, minimizing the heat build-up in interiors.

About BASF's Coatings division

The Coatings division of BASF is a global expert in the development, production and marketing of innovative and sustainable automotive OEM and refinish coatings, decorative paints as well as applied surface treatments for metal, plastic and glass substrates in a wide range of industries. The portfolio is completed by the "Innovation Beyond Paint" program which aims at developing new markets and businesses. We create advanced performance solutions and drive performance, design and new applications to meet our partners' needs all over the world. BASF shares skills, knowledge and resources of interdisciplinary and global teams for the benefit of customers by operating a collaborative network of sites in Europe, North America, South America and Asia Pacific. In 2017, the Coatings division achieved global sales of about €3.97 billion.

Solutions beyond your imagination – Coatings by BASF. For more information about the Coatings division of BASF and its products, visit <http://www.basf.com>.

About BASF

At BASF, we create chemistry for a sustainable future. We combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility. The more than 115,000 employees in the BASF Group work on contributing to the success of our customers in nearly all sectors and almost every country in the world. Our portfolio is organized into six segments: Chemicals, Materials, Industrial Solutions, Surface Technologies, Nutrition & Care and Agricultural Solutions. BASF generated sales of more than €60 billion in 2017. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchanges in Frankfurt (BAS), London (BFA) and Zurich (BAS). Further information at www.basf.com.