



We create chemistry

BASF European Color Report For Automotive OEM Coatings 2017

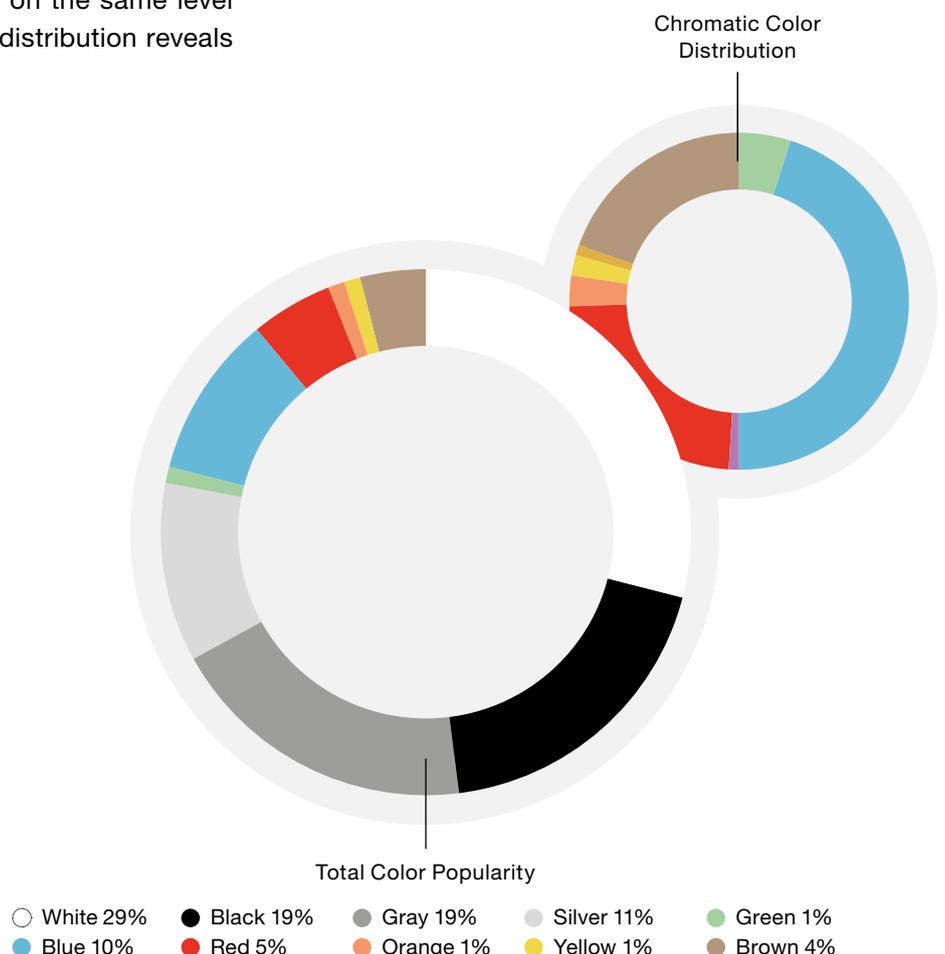
Blue and gray shades strengthen their positions on European roads

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The world of automotive colors is multifaceted and fascinating. Apart from the car's shape, no other factor influences the way a car is perceived like color does. BASF's color designers, in their role as a "trend radar", anticipate global developments in society and industry and translate them into innovative color concepts. In doing so, they influence the look and feel of the latest car models. The analysis of the colors that currently enjoy the most popularity shows that the predicted trends are actually reflected on European roads.

The figures of the European Color Report 2017 reveal that **achromatic colors** are still the most popular. About 78 percent of all cars were painted white, black, gray or silver last year, marking a continuing trend. At 29 percent, white was still the favorite owing to its status as a high-tech color, but remained on the same level as 2016. A closer look at the color distribution reveals further interesting developments. Within the achromatic colors, the proportion of gray increased again. Achieving 19 percent, it has now attained the same popularity as black. The growing share of gray is underlined by the increasing diversity of gray shades. With more than 100 variations, gray has the second highest number of shades – generated by its wide spectrum: it ranges from a dark anthracite to a light gray shade. At the same time, silver's downward trend has continued. The proportion of the former most popular high-tech color dropped to 11 percent, which means that silver and blue have reached nearly the same level of popularity.

This merits a closer analysis of the **chromatic colors**. In this spectrum, the use of blue is an ongoing trend. While the overall share of 10 percent remained stable, the proportion of blue increased considerably in terms of its share in the chromatic palette: nearly every second chromatic car produced in Europe 2017 was blue – a trend predicted by BASF's Coatings automotive color designers and reflected in the numerous blue shades in the most recent color trend collections. The color expresses the rising digitalization of our daily lives with its vibrant and super-chromatic shades, while also being easy on the eye with its silver-blue shades. With nearly 130 different variations, blue also remained number one in terms of color diversity. Red as the second most popular chromatic color has declined again – both in the overall view and within the chromatic colors. The percentage of brownish and beige colors remained relatively stable.



Color popularity by automotive segments

Examining the color preferences connected to certain model types reveals further detailed insights into the European car market. Every car model belongs to a distinctive car segment defined by its length and construction type. Each segment exhibits its own characteristics. Although white was still the most favorite color in 2017, in some segments its share stagnated or even declined. The growing trend of gray as the color of choice can be observed in the premium segment in particular. The bigger and more luxurious a car, the higher the share of gray. The most colorful vehicles were still the subcompact cars.



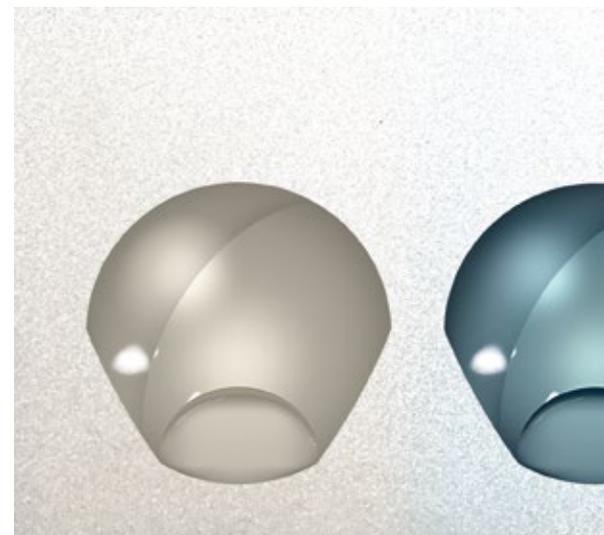
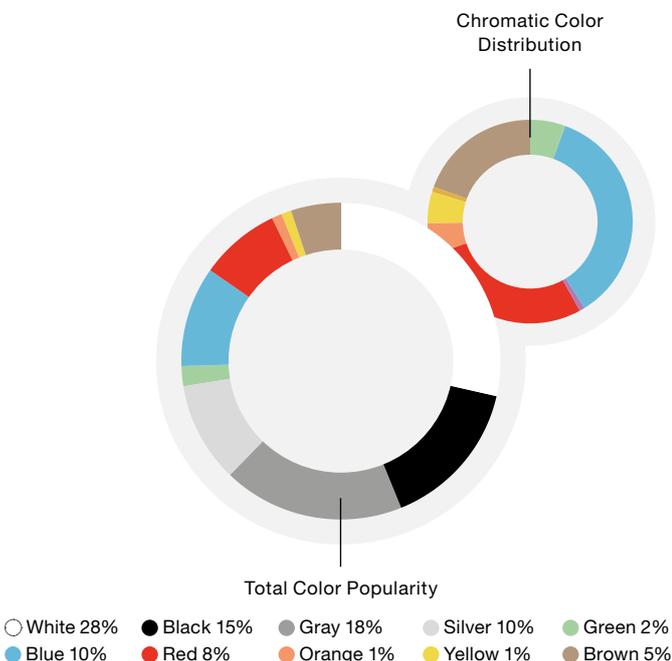
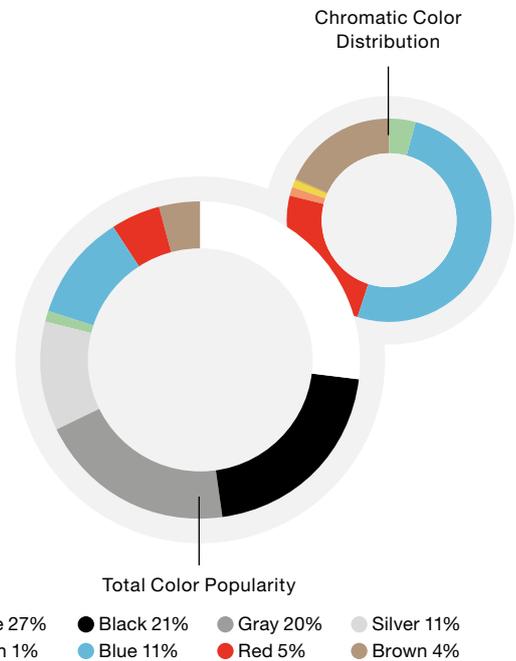
Compact + Midsize

Comprising approximately a third of the market, compact and midsize cars still represent the largest vehicle segment in Europe. Based on its proportion, the color distribution in this segment is very similar to that of the overall popularity. In 2017, achromatic colors dominated this category with an overall share of 79 percent. The number of silver cars dropped in favor of black and gray, whose shares increased. With regard to the chromatic colors, the share of blue remained stable in the overall view and increased its proportion within the chromatic palette. The percentage of brownish and beige colors slightly decreased.



Subcompact

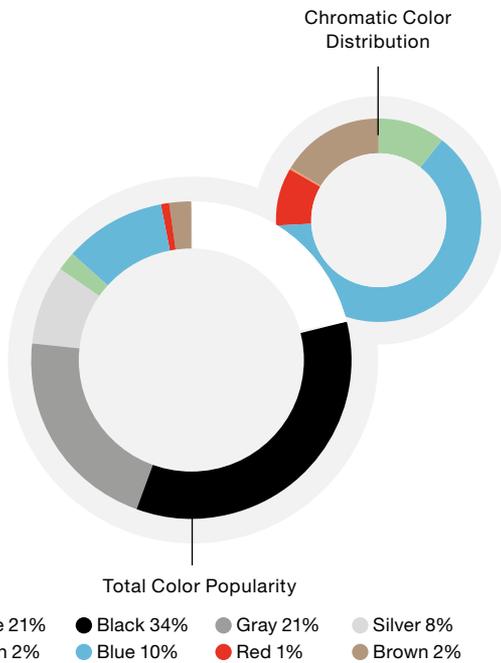
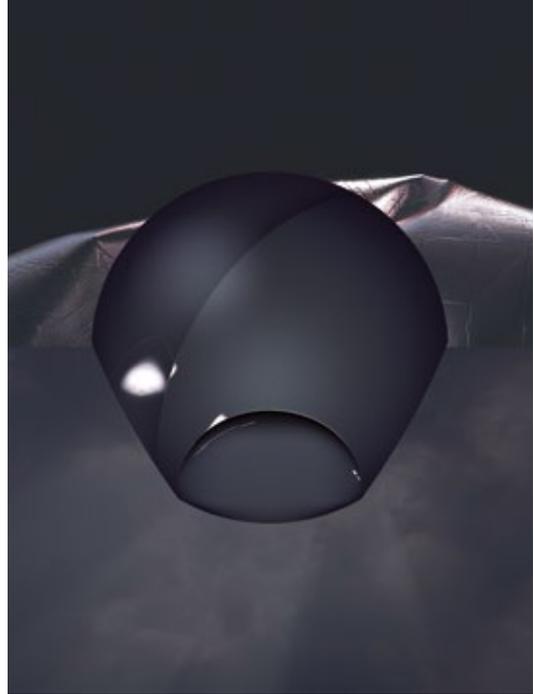
Subcompact cars were the most colorful vehicles, with a 27 percent share of chromatic colors. The percentage of shades like yellow, orange, gold and green increased in particular among these colors, while brownish and beige colors also gained in popularity. Within the achromatic colors, the percentage of white diminished, but still tops the list. The share of gray increased and it was the second most popular color in this segment.





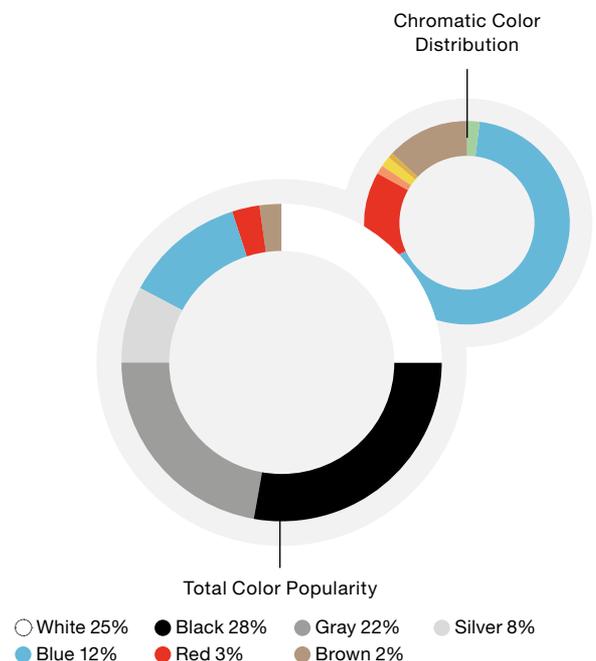
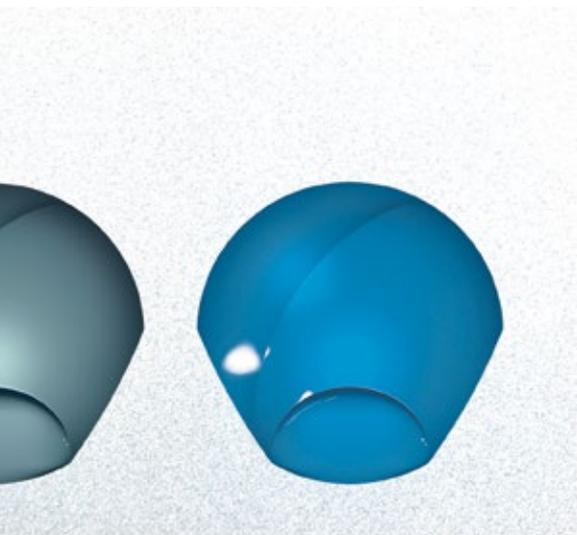
Large + Large-Plus

The luxury color black was the most popular one in this segment. Together with sporty and convertible cars, large and large-plus vehicles were the only ones for which dark shades predominate. Gray considerably gained popularity building up its share up to 21 per cent. Therefore, it can be considered that gray was as preferred as white. Within the chromatic colors, blue increased its share while the percentage of green decreased – a trend that is especially apparent if we analyze the distribution among the chromatic palette.



Sports Cars + Convertibles

The color popularity in this segment is comparable to that of the large and large-plus category. Both segments comprise luxurious cars whose elegant look is accentuated by dark shades. Thus, black was the most popular color in this category too. In addition, the increasing share of blue can be observed among the distribution of chromatic colors. However, silver stood out from the overall trend, exhibiting an increased share in this segment only.



SUV segment continues growth path

As the popularity of sport utility vehicles (SUVs) has not yet reached its peak, their numbers on European roads are still growing. SUVs represent not only the second largest segment but also the one with the highest growth. This segment increased its market share to 26 percent. Already comprising a wide range of shapes and sizes, the momentum in this segment is unbroken. OEMs offer a wide variety of models.

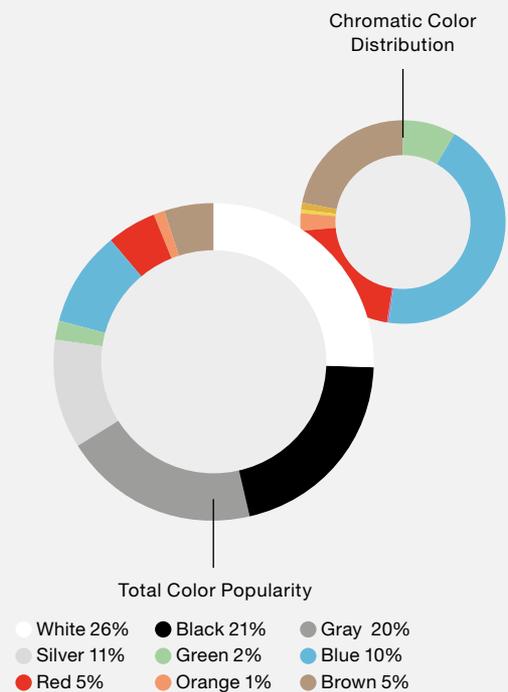
“The SUV segment accounts for a large premium segment. Therefore, the quality of the vehicles and additional equipment for both the interior and exterior allow for the use of premium-looking colors. For instance, precious metal colors like bronze and white-gold emphasize the perception of exclusivity.”

Mark Gutjahr, head of Automotive Color Design EMEA



SUVs

In 2017, white was the most favorite color for SUVs, followed by black and gray. Blue was the first choice among the chromatic colors. However, beige and brownish colors were still a trend in the SUV segment last year, representing the second most popular colors in the chromatic range – together with red. Besides the subcompact segment, the SUV segment had the highest share of beige and brownish colors.



Looking forward to the future makes us look back. The European Color Report for Automotive OEM Coatings shows which trends are reflected on the road. At the same time, color popularity is a starting point for further development and leads to new dynamics in the world of automotive colors.



BASF's Coatings division – No. 1 in color

As the leading European paint supplier, BASF's Coatings division has an excellent sense of trends, predicting which colors play a key role in the future automotive market. Every year, the designers at the Coatings division create the Automotive Color Trends – a collection of 65 up-and-coming colors – conducting extensive research and in-depth analysis. They uncover global trends and cultural shifts that will influence vehicle color choices three to five years down the road. Based on our know-how in the color lab, the Coatings division's expertise comprises not only the creation of innovative and creative colors, but also the knowledge required to translate them into applicable paints.

“Gray – with its associations with concrete and glass – represents the most urban color and has increased strongly over the past years. With shades from light and mid-grays to dark anthracite, it offers a huge variety and in so doing has gained its strong market position.”

Mark Gutjahr, head of Automotive Color Design EMEA



More than 600 colors are currently in the market and include a broad selection of unique effects. Mat or structured textures give cars a special finish. Moreover, functionalities are playing an increasing role. Paints with integrated temperature management for instance strengthen sustainable future mobility. As they minimize the heating of the car surface and prevent the interior from heating up, the savings in energy required for air conditioning reduce fuel consumption and extend the range of electric cars.

Color diversity has increased within the last years and the possibilities for innovative color concepts are multifaceted. BASF works closely with OEMs to create the desired look and feel, underlining the spirit of the automotive brands.

Contact: © BASF Coatings GmbH – Glasuritstraße 1 – 48165 Münster – Germany – www.basf-coatings.com – info-coatings@basf.com

Source: The color distribution referred to in the European Color Report For Automotive OEM Coatings was calculated by BASF's Coatings division on the basis of the available information regarding automotive production and paint application to passenger cars in Europe. The report includes countries in Middle East and Africa (EMEA region). Due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%.

Cover art: © Raum Mannheim/Quantum Oddity