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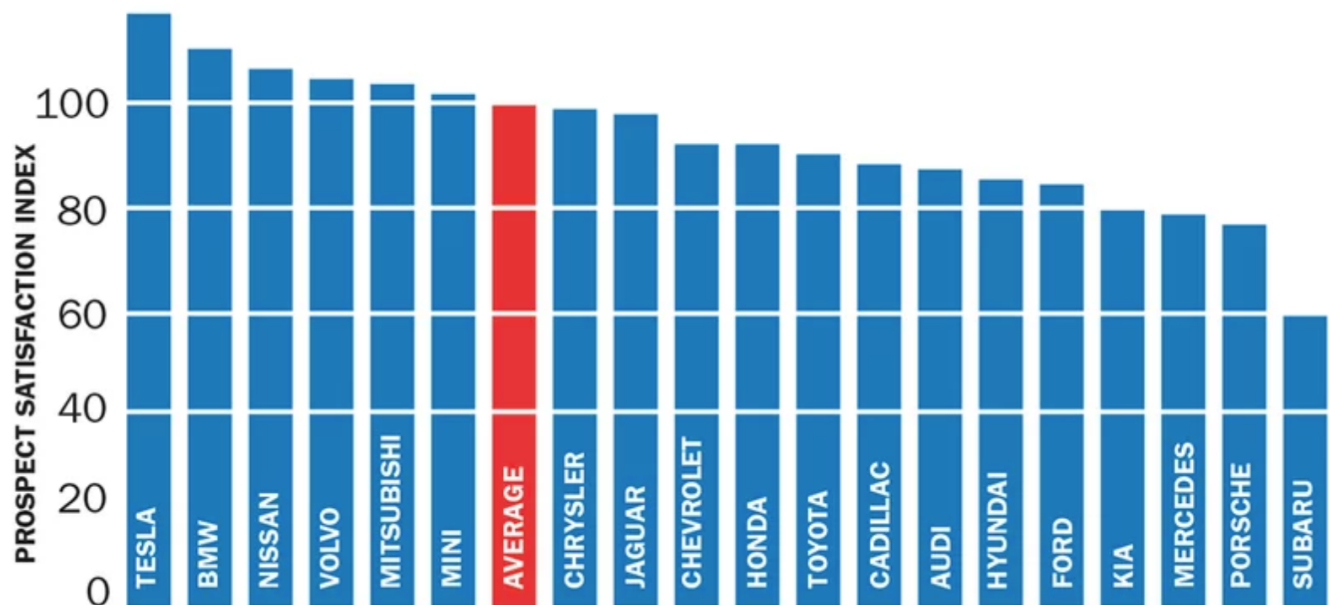
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Plugging EVs just wasn't enough

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Source: 2019 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index

Looking for an EV? Look here

Here's how 19 brands ranked on how well their retail outlets treated shoppers looking for battery electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids.

Some of the most effective advocates for plug-in vehicles are

being unplugged from the business.

This month, **Tesla** said it would close most of its factory-owned stores as a cost-cutting move and switch entirely to online sales. Many employees of those stores and investors were pretty **surprised to hear** the news, Bloomberg reported, especially as it came just weeks after Tesla affirmed the value of its showrooms in a public filing, talking up its plans to "more rapidly expand our retail footprint."

And even more surprising given how well they did the job, according to Pied Piper, which conducts mystery-shopping outings to vehicle dealerships on behalf of manufacturers and large dealership groups. The firm last week ranked 19 brands on how well their retail outlets treat shoppers looking for battery EVs or plug-in hybrids, and put Tesla at No. 1, 18 percent above the industry average on its Prospect Satisfaction Index. It called Tesla's stores "the most helpful to customers interested in plug-in electric cars." BMW and Nissan were also among the top finishers, while Chevy, Honda and Mercedes-Benz fell below the average.

"With EVs, there's so much to talk about that even if the customer attempts to educate themselves, there's still plenty of things for the salesperson to be value-added when the customers come in to the dealership," Fran O'Hagan, CEO of Pied Piper told Automotive News TV. "So in some respects, it's even a step back to what it used to be, making the salesperson more important for selling EVs."

Pied Piper said two-thirds of EV customers are first-time EV buyers.