

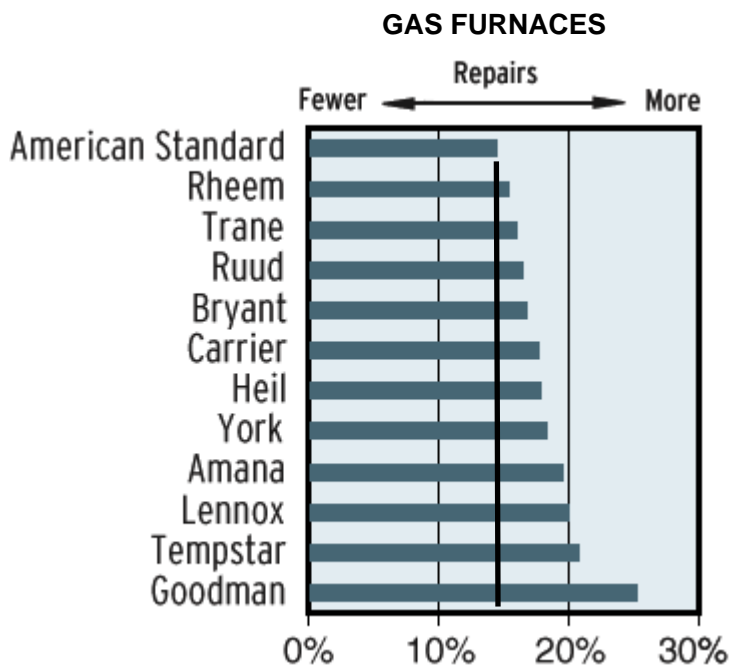
Furnace picks and pans

Buying a reliable furnace has largely been a roll of the dice, but help is at hand. New data from a *Consumer Reports* survey of more than 36,000 homeowners show that some brands of gas furnaces, the most common type by far, may be a better bet than others. Gas furnaces from Goodman, for instance, were among the more repair-prone of the 12 big brands in our 2004 Annual Questionnaire.

Overall, about one-sixth of all furnaces installed in the past eight years had needed repair. We found only minor differences between new installations and replacements. Among our other survey findings:

- Nearly 60 percent of repairs were to furnaces that had failed completely and stopped producing heat.
- Almost 40 percent of repairs involved homes left unheated for at least 24 hours.
- Almost 40 percent of repairs cost \$150 or more.

According to our survey data, the vast majority of repairs involved a problem with the furnace itself, not with its installation. It's important to choose not only a good installer but also a reliable brand.



Data are based on 36,181 central furnaces installed between 1997 and 2004; differences of less than 5 points are not meaningful. Data have been standardized to account for higher use in colder climates and differences in age; repairs to thermostats only were not counted as repairs. Note that models within a brand may vary. Our data cannot always anticipate design or manufacturing changes.