



# Fiat Bravo

Featuring 80SX 1.2



## What's new?

**Fiat's five-door Brava and shorter-but-sportier three-door Bravo look set to lose dual-model identity when their successor emerges in the new millennium. Meantime, the roomy hatches get a mild makeover and a revised model line-up, while Fiat has rung a few changes under the bonnet, too.**

## FOR THOSE STILL FIGHTING TO FATHOM

Fiat's confusing, like-sounding model names, the Brava is the five-door, family-sized hatchback, while Bravo is a 15cm shorter but more sportily slanted three-door variation on the same theme. This "horses-for-courses" approach makes sound sense: the Brava offers more space, five-door practicality and a rounded-off ride for those with a family to consider, while the Bravo's distinctive-but-different styling and subtly revised suspension and specification cater for less-encumbered buyers seeking a more sporting attraction.

Whichever tickles your fancy, though, Fiat has recently given the pair a mild makeover. Staying faithful to the original styling concept, the refettled Fiats are not much different to look at, but every version now offers significant improvements and costs less, or at least no more, than its previous equivalent.

Equipment levels are improved across the board, with the former S version dropped, so that SX now takes on the entry-level mantle. There are two new engines under the bonnet, or rather they're new to the Bravo/Brava pairing, while existing engines have been refettled to improve emissions and economy. Even the entry-level SX comes with an electric sunroof; there are front passenger and now side airbag options to go with the driver's standard-fit one, while top models now boast an automatic climate control system as standard.

Up front, only the five-door Brava receives Fiat's new 1.9 JTD common-rail direct-injection turbo-diesel, though 75 and 100bhp versions of Fiat's indirectly injected oil-burner live on in both body styles. However, our three-door test subject is powered by an 82bhp 1.2-litre 16-valve engine – Fiat's feisty little "FIRE"

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## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds

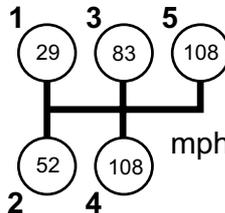
mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>		2.0	4.4	7.8	11.7
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>		7.2	14.0	21.6	31.5
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>		5.5	10.7	17.2	23.8

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>		14.2/11.2		14.4/11.7	
			14.0/10.7		17.5/13

### Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		6550*		6140	5270

\* for best acceleration



## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: Unleaded premium, 95 octane	
<b>Type of use - air conditioning off*</b>	<b>mpg</b>
In the city - heavy traffic	24½
In the country - quiet driving	50
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>39</b>
Realistic tank range †	48 litres/410 miles

\*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2-4% in winter and 4-8% in summer

## FOR THE TECHNICAL

### ENGINE

**Type** front-mounted, transverse four cylinder with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings.

**Size** 70.8 x 78.9mm = 1242cc

**Power** 82bhp at 5500rpm

**Torque** 83 lb ft at 4250rpm

**Valves** twin (belt-driven) overhead camshafts actuating four valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

**Fuel/ignition** electronic multi-point petrol injection integrated with distributorless ignition. 50-litre fuel tank, with low-level warning lamp

### TRANSMISSION

**Type** five-speed manual; front-wheel drive. No automatic option

**Mph per 1000rpm** 20.7 in 5th, 17.6 in 4th

### CHASSIS

**Suspension** front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs and lower arms. Rear: independent by trailing arms and coil springs. Telescopic dampers and anti-roll bars front and rear

**Steering** rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 3.1 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.7m between kerbs, with 15.8m circle for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 5½J steel with 175/65R14 82T tyres (Firestone F-580 on test car); 135/80R14 80P space-saver spare wheel

**Brakes** solid discs front, drums rear, with vacuum servo. Electronic anti-lock control (optional on SX) fitted on test car

## SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

### Seatbelts

front ●●●●○ rear ●●○○○

### Door locking

central locking?    
 remote control?    
 auto window closure?    
 deadlocks?

### Head restraints

front ●●●○○ rear ●●●○○

### Interior

safety padding ●●●○○   
 driver's airbag?    
 other airbags? passenger and side bags optional on all models    
 side impact protection ●●●●○

### Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●○○○

### Alarm

standard on HLX and HGT only    
 engine immobilised?

### Fuel anti-spillage

●●●●○  standard on test car  factory fitted option  not available

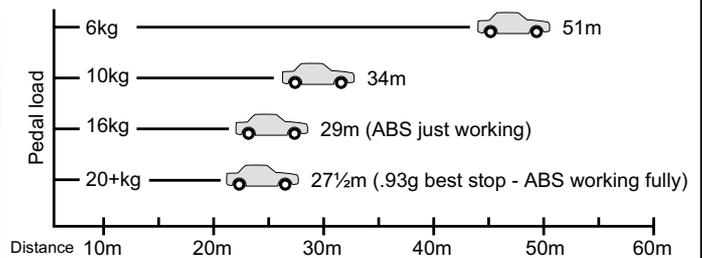
Euro NCAP crash test results - not available

## BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●○○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●○○○ Handbrake ●●●○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with optional ABS)

A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load

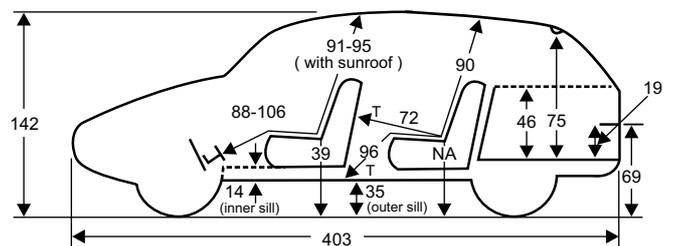


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 10kg at start of test, 14kg at end of test (ideal brakes show no change)

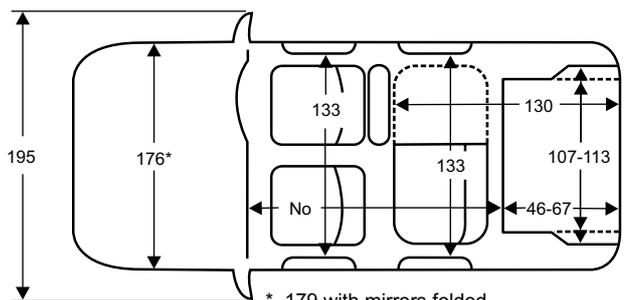
## MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Three-door



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



\* 179 with mirrors folded

cracker that propels the Punto with such delightful brio, and which replaces the 80bhp 12-valve 1.4 unit.

Bolting two hundred fewer ccs (it's a mere 1.2-litre engine we're talking about don't forget) into a bigger, and in this Bravo's case, more sportily slanted body, doesn't bode too well on the face of it. But don't write off the titchy tearaway just yet. For starters it brings 2bhp more to the party than its ousted 1.4 predecessor (delivered 500rpm earlier, too) and musters the same peak pulling power, albeit 1500rpm further round the rev counter. And, going by the official government fuel figures at least, the Bravo 80SX promises 16 per cent (6mpg) better fuel economy than the old 1.4 in the official "combined" fuel consumption cycle.

In the clinical confines of the test track, not unpredictably, the smaller engine does suffer a small drop-off in sprinting power – not when you're "red-lining" it, but at least when the gearstick's left to its own devices. Size, as Renault's Clio TV advert keeps telling us, *does* matter! Stow the stopwatch, though, and slight sluggishness relative to its forerunner is virtually impossible to detect, and that's before you've considered the new unit's smoother, sweeter-sounding nature and eager enthusiasm.

A slightly more pedestrian pace would be all the more understandable, as the 1.2's overall gearing has been raised. This not only helps to quell the Bravo's busy (but never boomy) cruising gait a little, but shouldn't do fuel economy any harm, either. Which, indeed, proves to be the case. Across the board (though by less than the government fuel figures would have you believe) the 1.2-powered Bravo sips less fuel than the old 1.4 model, to the tune of being a couple of mpg more miserly in overall terms (39mpg compared with 37), up to nearly 6mpg more frugal (50mpg compared with 44½) on a quiet, gentle run.

For drivers who like a taut, slightly sportier feel to their family hatch, the Bravo has much to commend it. Despite its on-paper puniness, the 1.2 16-valver nicely complements the Bravo's zippy demeanour, proving a racy little devil at times, but it's rarely raucous. There remain occasional impressions (as with the previous 1.4 model) that 80bhp isn't *quite* enough to do full justice to the Bravo's pert, delightfully poised chassis, but the catalogue stretches to the five-pot 2.0 HGT's 154bhp brawn, if performance is more of a priority.

The three-door Bravo's body is stiffer than the Brava's, with the result that, paradoxically, it soaks up rough road tremors better than its more family-focused

sidekick. It won't seriously threaten the class leaders if a limousine-style, magic carpet ride is the aim, but this sporting stiffness, allied with exemplary body control, is part of the Bravo's appeal in the first place.

The Fiat twins' cabins have been refreshed with darker, more upmarket materials and a new "chromatic" effect, arranging darker colours towards the lower part of the cabin, becoming lighter towards the top. It's more pleasing on the eye, we think, but as before, the quality of the plastics could still stand a little improvement.

Other detail revisions inside include a new look to the facia, which now uses the Bravo's more aesthetically pleasing (and easier-to-read) round dials on both cars. Sadly, though, the Brava's more awkward "half moon" instruments live on when automatic transmission is specified. The dash also brings a mild redesign for the Bravo/Brava's quirky, unique-fit radio, plus altered air vents and speaker grilles, while the new driver's-side electric window switches and internal door handles now have the same tactile, rubber-faced feel as other minor controls.

Discreet pointers to spotting the revised Fiats from outside include a now *de rigueur* black mesh grille for the three door (the Brava wears a chrome insert instead), new-look alloy wheels for mid-level and upper HLX and HGT models, and new wheel trims for the SX.

## VERDICT

**These latest revisions don't advance the state of the art in small family hatchbacks to any earth-shattering degree. They do, however, infuse a little more all-round appeal to the capable and commodious Bravo and Brava, which – as before – remain convincing value-for-money candidates in bidding for your showroom support.**

**On paper, the 80SX's titchy new 16-valve engine has an uphill task on its hands. But in the Bravo, at least, it's gamer to give it a go than you might expect, albeit with not quite the degree of success it achieves in the lighter, more compact Punto.**

**The Fiat pair's dual personality continues to cloud the issue, for some buyers at least – clearly acknowledged by the company's hints that a single-role successor will be tilted more towards the Bravo's sporty, more youthful character. Until then, the contrasting lifestyles represented by the current pair do at least represent logical alternatives and, unlike many car makers, Fiat is at least giving us a choice.**

HOW THE BRAVO 80SX COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/kneerom - rear (cm)	Steering(p) turns/ circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
FIAT BRAVO 1.2 16V 80SX	1242/82	3380	11.7	31.5/23.8	39	27½/20*	106	96/72	3.1/10.7	403
Citroën Xsara 1.4 5dr †	1360/75	3400	14.0	31.9/22.1	38	29/20	107	99/74	3.2/10.8	417
Daewoo Lanos 1.4SE 5dr	1349/75	3190	14.3	39.5/26.3	38½	27/16*	106	96/73	3.0/10.0	408
Mazda 323 1.5LXi 5dr	1498/88	3500	12.0	29.1/21.4	38	24½/18*	109	99/74	2.7/11.2	420
Peugeot 206 1.4LX 5dr	1360/75	3330	12.7	30.3/20.2	43	25/13*	108	94/66	3.3/10.1	384
Rover 214i 8v 3dr	1396/75	3525	13.6	29.3/19.8	39½	28/16*	107	94/65	3.4/10.4	397
† performance/economy figures for estate version						* with ABS		(p) all power-assisted		