Vehicle Licensing Statistics

Statistical Release

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Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2012

This Statistical Release presents information on motor vehicles that were licensed, or were subject to a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN), in Great Britain during 2012.

The statistics are derived from data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which administers vehicle registration and licensing records in Great Britain.

PLEASE NOTE: A supplement to these statistics will be released on 13 June (revised from 16 May previously announced). This will contain new experimental tables produced by linking DVLA records with the results of MOT testing held by the Vehicle & Operator Services Agency (VOSA).

Key findings include:

- At the end of 2012 there were 34.5 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 28.7 million (83 per cent) were cars.
- Between 2011 and 2012 the total vehicle stock increased by 0.9 per cent. Since the recession of 2008-09 the annual growth in licensed vehicles has slowed but not stopped, increasing by an average of 0.5 per cent per year since 2008, compared with an average of 2.4 per cent a year between 1996 and 2007.
- 2.47 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2012, 3.7 per cent up on the previous year.
- The number of newly registered cars powered by diesel has continued to rise, exceeding 1 million for the first time in 2012. Just over 50 per cent of new cars were diesels, 48 per cent petrol and 1.4 per cent alternatively fuelled vehicles.
- The average CO_2 emissions of cars newly registered in 2012 fell to 133 grams per kilometre. This is 3.8 per cent down on 2011 and 25 per cent lower than in 2001, when emissions-based banding of Vehicle Excise Duty for cars began.
- The number of private cars with a female registered keeper has increased by 70 per cent since 1994. In 2012, about 40 per cent of privately registered cars were registered with a female keeper.
- At the end of 2012, the most common car in Great Britain remained the Ford Focus (1.4 million), followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million). The Ford Fiesta had most new registrations, followed by the Vauxhall Corsa and Ford Focus.

1. General context

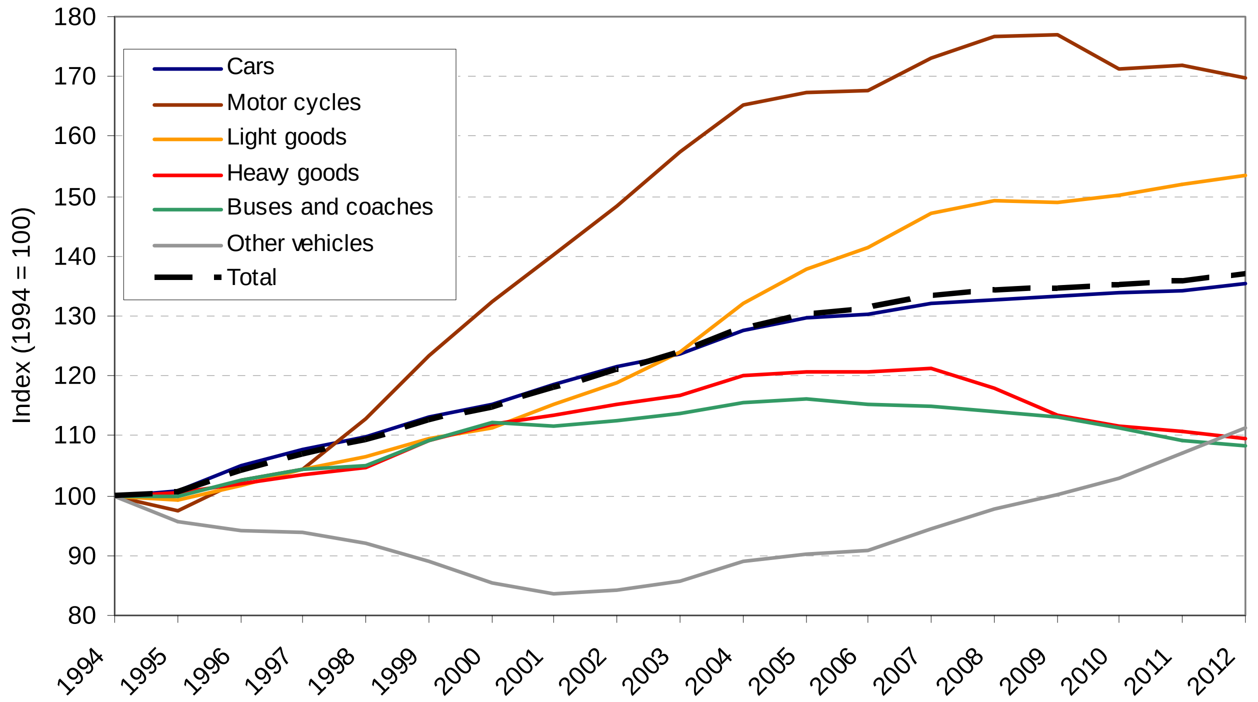
The number of licensed vehicles and number of vehicles registered for the first time continue to be affected by the general economic climate in Britain and further afield. New registrations remain lower than they were before the recession began, so the licensed vehicle stock, while continuing to grow, is growing more slowly.

However, while new car registrations across the European Union as a whole fell by 8 per cent in 2012 according to manufacturers' data, the UK was the only major EU market to show growth. This put the UK ahead of France in 2012 as the second largest new car market in Europe, after Germany.[1]

The numbers of licensed goods vehicles and buses & coaches tend to be more affected by the fluctuations of the economy than any other vehicle type.

2. Licensed vehicle stock

Licensed vehicles by body type: Great Britain, 1994 to 2012 (web table veh0102)



- At the end of 2012 there were 34.5 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 28.7 million were cars. Since 1994, the number of licensed cars in Great Britain has increased by 35 per cent from 21.2 million. Over the same period the number of light vans (light good vehicles / LGVs) and motorcycles have increased by 53 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

- The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in every year since the end of the Second

[1] European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) data http://www.acea.be/collection/statistics

World War except 1991. Between 2011 and 2012 the total vehicle stock increased by 0.9 per cent. Since the recession of 2008-09 the annual growth in licensed vehicles has averaged 0.5 per cent, lower than the 2.4 per cent averaged between 1996 and 2007.

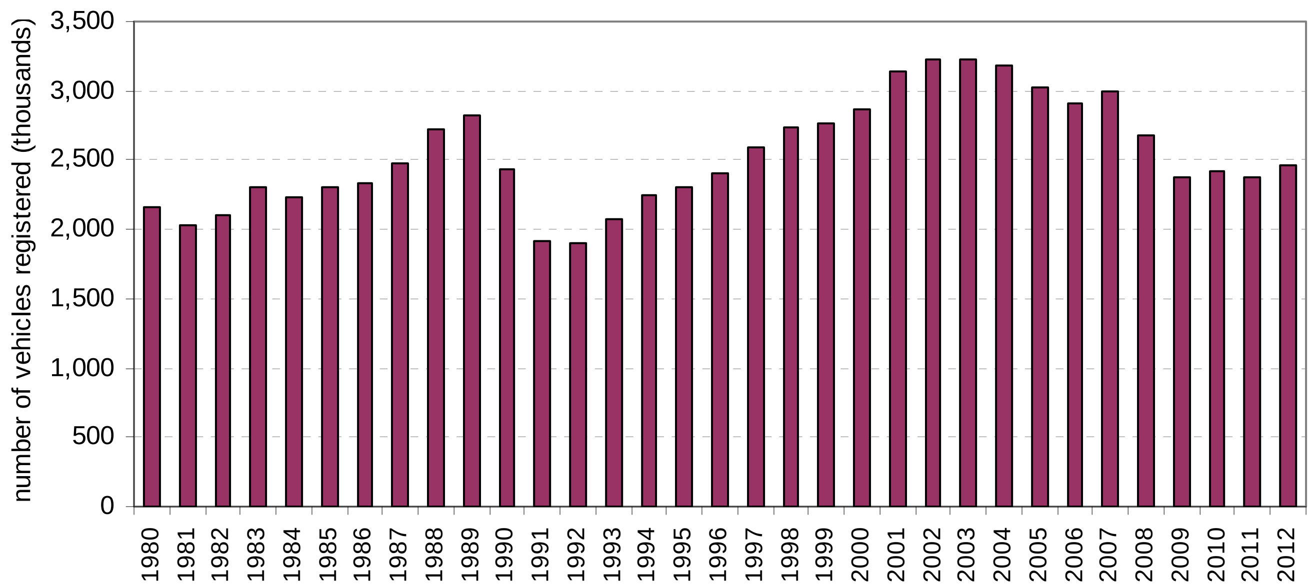
- The numbers of cars and light vans have also continued to grow, but more slowly than before 2007. Although the picture for motorcycles is complicated by a peak centred around 2008-9, the previous rapid growth up to around 2004 seems to have largely levelled off.

- The number of buses and coaches has now fallen for 7 successive years, and there are now 7 per cent fewer buses than in 2005, when the number peaked.

- The decline in HGVs is of slightly shorter duration (5 years) but is even more marked than that for buses. In 2012 the HGV stock was nearly 10 per cent lower than in 2007, and the lowest since 1999. The biggest year-on-year drop for HGVs came in 2009, the first full year after the onset of the recession. However, there is some evidence of hauliers using fewer, larger HGVs (and more large vans), so this reduction in numbers does not necessarily indicate a fall in road freight carrying capacity.

3. Vehicles registered for the first time

Vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain: 1980 to 2012 (web table veh0153)



- Just under 2.47 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2012. This represents an increase of 88 thousand vehicles, or 3.7 per cent, from the previous year. It is higher than each of the previous three years, but remains well below the annual numbers of new registrations seen before the recession, which peaked at 3.23 million in 2003.

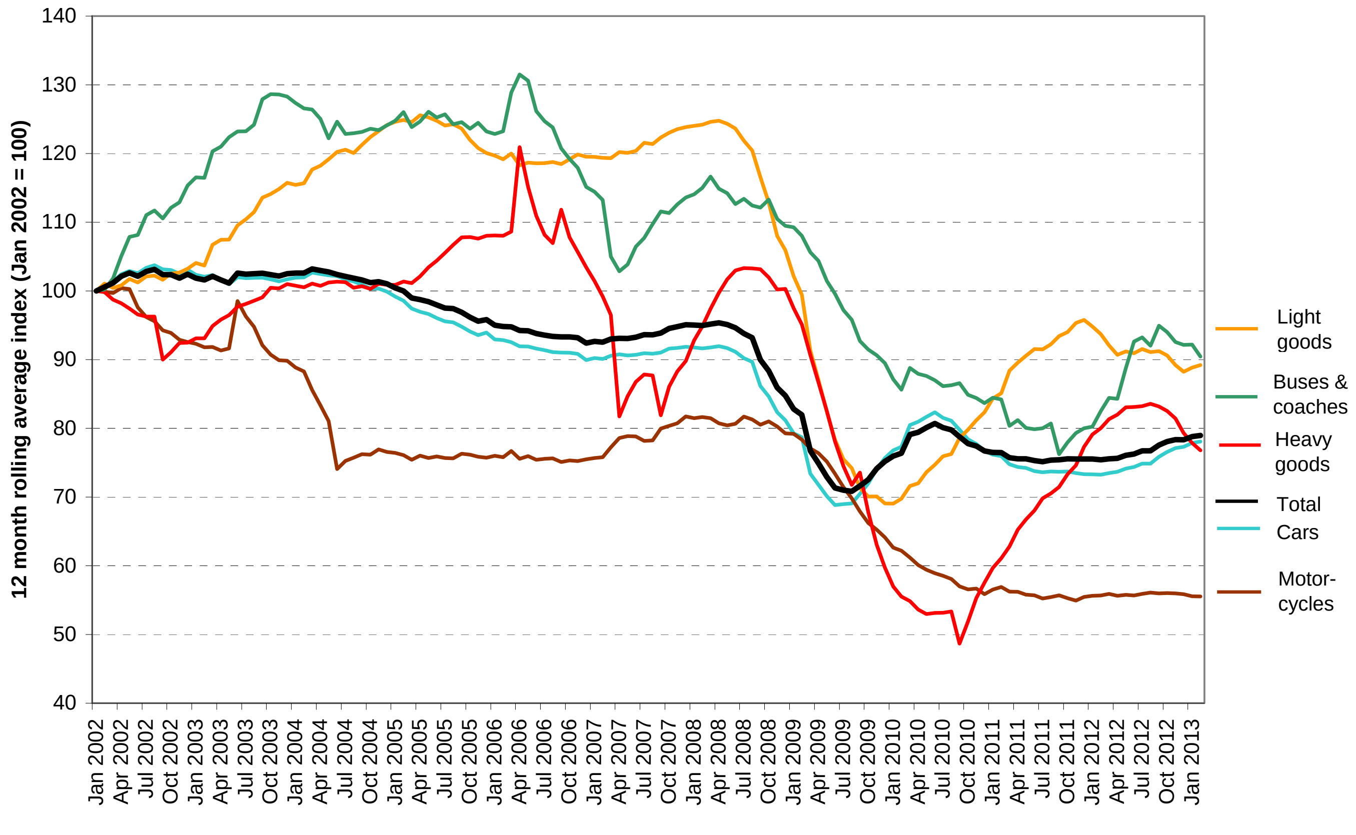
- The economic downturn is likely to have affected the figures from 2008 onwards, but a downward trend was already apparent before the recession began. A ‘Vehicle Scrappage Scheme’ for cars and light vans helped to boost first registrations between May 2009 and April 2010, and may also have had the side effect of slightly depressing registrations briefly either side of this period if prospective buyers changed their plans to take advantage of the scheme.

- The number of cars registered for the first time in 2012 was just over 2 million, the first time since 2008 that the 2 million mark has been exceeded. This was 5.4 per cent, or 103 thousand, higher than in 2011, which was the lowest year on record since body type figures were first produced in 2001.

- The number of light vans registered for the first time dipped again during 2012. The total for the year of 242 thousand was 8 per cent lower than in 2011, but still 28 per cent more than in 2009.[2].

- New registrations of HGVs showed little change in 2012 as a whole, after a large increase in 2011.

12-month rolling average of vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain by body type, indexed to Jan 2002 = 100: January 2002 to February 2013 (web table veh0150)



- The 12-month rolling average chart above suggests that the van and HGV trends have so far responded in a similar way to the recession, but that the trend for HGVs lags up to 9 months behind that for vans. Van registrations started to drop sooner in 2008, but started to recover

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[2] Information about the regulatory and licensing changes that might explain some of the reasons behind the longer term relative changes in light goods and heavy goods vehicle ownership and usage is presented in section 1.6 of the Road Statistics 2007: Traffic, Speeds and Congestion statistical bulletin http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20091204115849/http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/162469/221412/221546/226956/261695/roadstats07tsc.pdf.

sooner, in early 2010 rather than autumn 2010. New van registrations started to drop again at the beginning of 2012, while HGV registrations started to decrease in late 2012.

- Bus registrations were slightly higher in 2012 than in 2011 overall (9,800 compared with 8,500), but the monthly figures suggest at least a levelling off in the second half of the year.

4. Vehicle keepership / ownership

- At the end of 2011, the South West of England had the highest rate of vehicles per person, with 664 vehicles per thousand head of population. However, the South East of England had a higher rate of cars per person than any other region. There were 548 cars per thousand head of population in the South East in comparison with 314 in London, and 402 in the North East of England (the lowest regional rate outside of London).

- The commercial fleet and company car market continues to be the primary driver of first registrations. Fifty six per cent of all car first registrations in 2012 were made by companies. However, the proportion of company registered cars in the whole of the licensed car stock is much lower, at only 8.3 per cent. This indicates that cars tend to move quite swiftly from the company market to the private market.

- Among privately registered cars, the number of female keepers has increased by 70 per cent since 1994, compared with an increase of only 19 per cent in male keepers. Women now account for about 40 per cent of registered keepers of privately registered cars[3].

- It is estimated that there were roughly 9.5 million transfers of keepership of used vehicles during 2012. It is not possible to identify the precise reason for the transfer of keepership from the DVLA data, but a significant majority of these transfers are likely to be second-hand vehicle sales. About 7.7 million of these transactions were for cars, with almost 6.5 million cars changing hands at least once during the year, including 0.96 million which changed hands more than once.

5. Fuel type, CO_2 emissions and engine size

- The proportion of the licensed car fleet that is made up of diesel and alternative fuel vehicles has continued to grow, between them accounting for almost exactly one third of the car fleet by the end of 2012. Most of these (almost 9.4 million) were diesel cars, accounting for nearly 32.7 per cent of all licensed cars, up from only 7.4 per cent in 1994.

- There were 178 thousand alternative fuel vehicles in the licensed car fleet by December 2012, up 23 thousand (or 15 per cent) over the year. This figure has increased fairly steadily by an average of 20 thousand a year over the last six years. These alternative fuel vehicles are able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid electric.

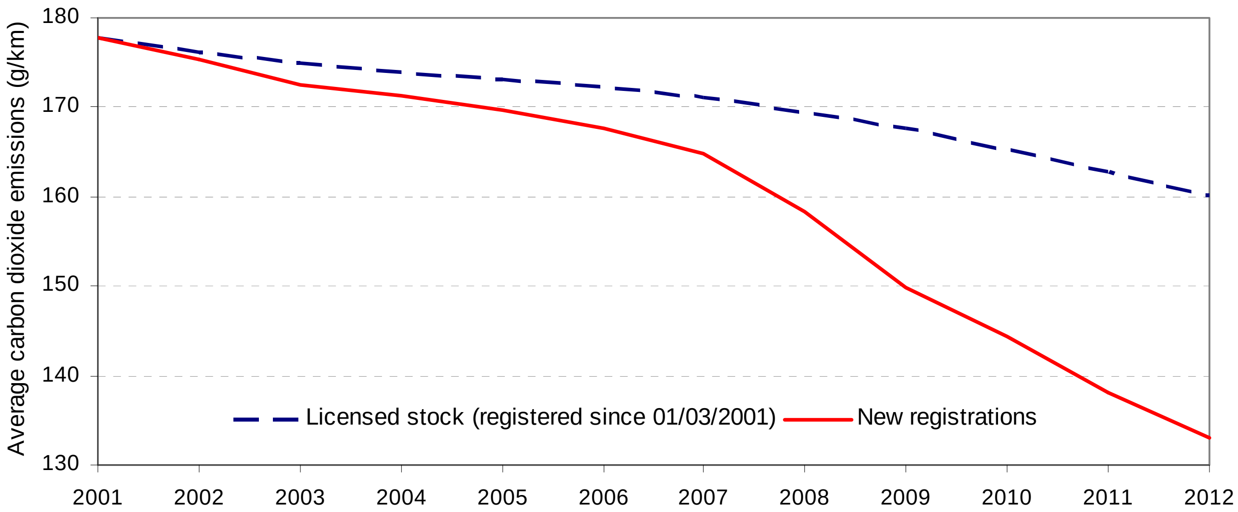
[3] Where the sex of the registered keeper is known

- The number of newly registered cars powered by diesel has continued to rise. For the first time the number of diesel cars registered in one year exceeded 1 million in 2012. For the last two years, more than half of all new cars have been diesels.

- In total, 3,491 new ultra low emission vehicles (vehicles with tailpipe emissions of CO_2 below 75 g/km or with pure electric powertrains) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom in 2012, up from 2,114 in 2011. Most of the increase has been due to vehicles eligible for the plug-in car and van grants introduced in January 2011 and February 2012 respectively [4]. The 2012 registrations included 2,198 cars and 264 vans that were eligible for the grants. These cars included a significant proportion of plug-in hybrid electric cars for the first time as the Vauxhall Ampera (also sold as the Chevrolet Volt) and plug-in Toyota Prius went into series production.

Average CO_2 emissions of licensed and newly registered cars: 2001 to 2012

(web table veh0206 and veh0256)



- Average CO2 emissions from cars continued to fall in 2012. Average emissions from all the licensed cars first registered from 2001 onwards was down by 1.7 per cent from 2011 to an average of 160 g/km. The average CO2 emissions from cars newly registered in the year fell by 3.8 per cent from 2011 to an average figure of 133 g/km. Since 2001 the average emissions of new cars has fallen by 25 per cent.

- Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) for cars licensed after 2001 is charged on the basis of CO_2 emissions. In 2012, 27 per cent of all licensed cars fall into one of the lowest five VED bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km). This compares with under 1 per cent of cars emitting under 140 g/km of CO_2 in 2001 and 8 per cent in 2006. The number in VED Band A (under 100 g/km of CO_2) increased more than five-fold over the last two years to 297 thousand in 2012.

- In 2012, nearly 9 per cent of car first registrations were of cars in VED band A (CO_2 emissions

[4] These grants are designed to provide 25 per cent of the cost of a car (up to £5,000) or 20% of the cost of a van (up to £8,000) for qualifying models. See https://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants/overview for further details.

of up to 100 g/km); this equates to 173 thousand cars, more than double the number in the previous year, and more than in all previous years combined. Seventy two per cent of first registrations, or 1.45 million cars, were in bands A to E (up to 140 g/km).

- The average engine size of all licensed cars has now been falling for 3 years, following an earlier long term gradual increase, and then several years of little change. The overall average in 2012 was 1,735cc compared with 1,750cc in 2009. However, this overall average is affected by the fact that diesel engines tend to have a larger capacity than the equivalent petrol engines, and that the proportion of diesel cars in the stock is increasing. Looking at the two fuel types separately, it can be seen that the average engine size for each actually peaked several years earlier, in 2006 for petrol cars and 2007 for diesel, since when both have been falling.

- There are financial benefits to motorists who switch to cars with smaller engine sizes or lower emissions. Cars with lower CO_2 emissions fall in cheaper VED bands. Cars with smaller engine sizes and / or cars which use diesel rather than petrol tend to have better fuel efficiency. Therefore, financial considerations are likely to be a significant driver of the trends towards cars with smaller engine sizes and lower emissions. Legally binding EU-wide CO2 emission targets for manufacturers were introduced for cars in 2009 and for light vans in 2011 – the first of these targets begin to come into effect for car registrations in 2012 and for van registrations in 2014.

6. Marques and models of vehicles

- At the end of 2012, the most common car in Great Britain was the Ford Focus (1.4 million) followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million), a situation unchanged on the year before. In total, Ford accounted for 15 per cent of all cars and Vauxhall for 12 per cent. The top five marques (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Peugeot and Renault) accounted for 48 per cent of all licensed cars in Great Britain. The next ten (Toyota, BMW, Nissan, Citroen, Honda, Mercedes, Audi, Fiat, Rover and Volvo) take the total to over 81 per cent. There were over 1 million cars licensed from each of the top ten marques (Ford to Honda).

- For the fourth year running, the Ford Fiesta has been the most popular new registration with almost 107 thousand cars registered for the first time during 2012. The Vauxhall Corsa took over second place, pushing the Ford Focus down to third, followed by the Volkswagen Golf and the Vauxhall Astra.

- The top five car marques in terms of new registrations (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, BMW and Audi) accounted for 46 per cent of the new car registrations in 2012. The top five makes remain unchanged from last year.

7. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The DVLA database can be regarded as being virtually complete in terms of the number of licensed vehicles and vehicles with a SORN (Statutory Off-Road Notification). However, there will be some errors in some of the specific details of individual vehicles, mostly less important details. DfT estimates that under 2 per cent of the vehicles records have an inaccuracy in one of the variables used for the statistics published.

Other factors to consider in interpreting these statistics include: changes in legislation, revisions to the series, seasonal variation which affects some vehicle types, vehicle excise duty evasion and other types of failure to inform DVLA of relevant facts about the status of a vehicle, and the fact that Northern Ireland and foreign registered vehicles may also use British roads without being registered with DVLA. Most of these factors will only have a marginal effect for most uses of the data.

For further information see the Notes and Definitions available at https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-vehicle-licensing.

8. Background notes

1. The data tables on which this summary is based, along with links to other related information, can be found on the Vehicle Licensing Statistics web page: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/vehicle-licensing-statistics. A table index and further guidance on using the data are available at: https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-vehicle-licensing.

2. A supplement to this release is due to be published on 13 June 2013 along with the Quarter 1 Vehicle Licensing Statistics release. This will include new experimental statistics derived by linking two data sets held by DfT executive agencies - vehicle licensing records held by DVLA and MOT test results held VOSA. The main purpose of these statistics will be to provide data on average annual mileages for vehicles four or more years old, broken down by various characteristics. This supplement has been postponed from 16 May as originally announced due to greater than expected difficulties in preparing the data – the DfT apologises for any inconvenience caused.

3. All of the statistics published in this series are National Statistics, apart from the exceptions listed on the series technical page: https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-vehicle-licensing. Vehicles statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority and confirmed as National Statistics in April 2012. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

4. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found at https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-vehicle-licensing.