

# Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2013



Department  
for Transport

RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN:

Jeremy Grove 020 7944 6142

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Media: 020 7944 3066

Public: 020 7944 3077

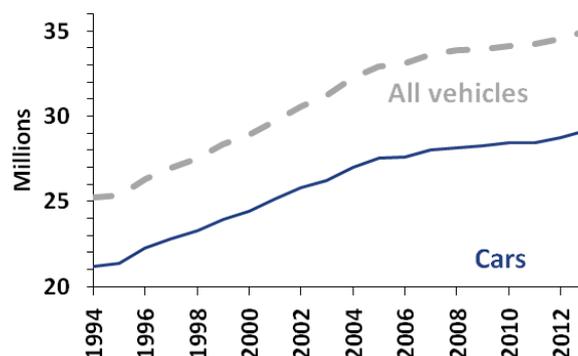
[vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

## Main findings

**At the end of 2013 there were 35.0 million vehicles licensed for use on the road in Great Britain.**

- This is a 1.5 per cent increase on 2012, the biggest annual increase since 2007.
- The total number of licensed vehicles has increased over the long term, but the rate of increase slowed down after about 2005, and slowed further at the onset of the recession in 2008-09.

Licensed vehicles, GB: 1994-2013



The number of licensed vehicles in Great Britain has increased every year since the end of the Second World War, except 1991.



40 per cent of private cars have a female registered keeper.



**2.72 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2013, 10 per cent up on the previous year, but still 16 per cent lower than in the peak year of 2003.**

- During 2013, 4,359 new ultra-low emission vehicles were registered for the first time, up 25 per cent on 2012. These included 3,625 cars and vans eligible for Government Plug-in Grants, 47 per cent more than in 2012.
- The average carbon dioxide emissions of newly registered cars fell by 3.4 per cent in 2013 compared with 2012, to 128 grams per kilometre.

At the end of 2013, the most common car in Great Britain was the Ford Focus (1.5 million), followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million).

## About this release

### CONTENTS

- General context – p2
- Licensed vehicle numbers – p2
- New registrations – p3
- Cars and their owners – p5
- Cars and the environment – p6
- Makes and models of cars – p7
- Background information – p8

A report on motor vehicles in Great Britain based on administrative data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). See [Technical Notes](#) for further details.

This report is part of the [Vehicle Statistics](#) series. Detailed data tables are available from the web site.

## 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.

While new car registrations across the European Union as a whole fell by 1.7 per cent in 2013 according to the [European Automobile Manufacturers' Association](#), the UK was the only major EU market to show double digit growth. The UK was the second largest new car market in Europe in 2013, after Germany. The UK accounted for 19 per cent of new cars registered in the EU in 2013, compared with 17 per cent in 2012.

## Licensed vehicle numbers

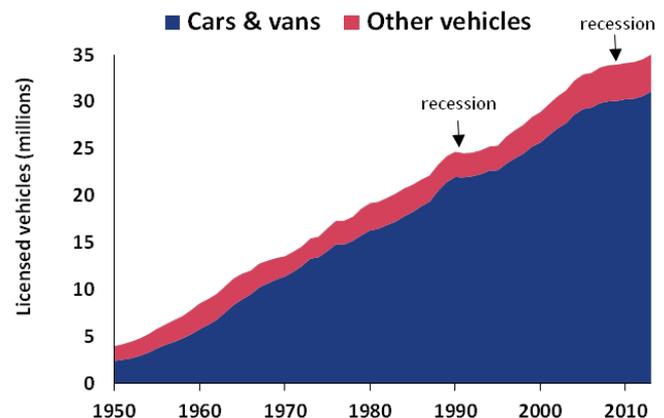
**At the end of 2013 there were 35.0 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 29.1 million were cars.**

The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in every year since the end of the Second World War except 1991.

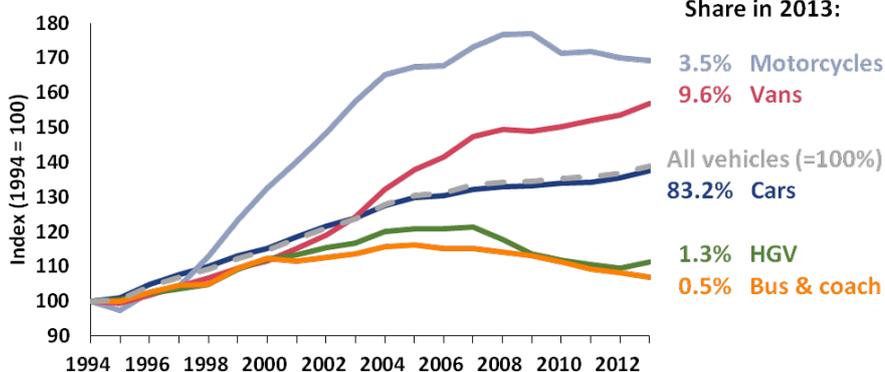
Between 1996 and 2007, the annual growth in licensed vehicles averaged 2.5 per cent a year, although from the mid-2000s it had already begun to slow somewhat. Following the recession of 2008-9 it slowed further, but did not stop, averaging 0.3 per cent a year between 2008 and 2011.

Between 2012 and 2013 the total vehicle stock increased by 1.5 per cent, the first substantial year-on-year increase since 2007.

Licensed vehicles: GB, 1950 – 2013 [Table veh0103]



Licensed vehicles by type: GB, 1994 – 2013 [Table veh0102]



Since 1994, the number of **licensed cars** in Great Britain has increased by 37 per cent.

Over the same period the numbers of **vans** (light goods vehicles / LGVs) and motorcycles have increased by 57 per cent and 69 per cent respectively.

The numbers of cars and vans have both continued to grow in recent years, 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 levelled off.

In contrast, the numbers of heavy goods vehicles (HGV) and buses and coaches have both fallen since 2007.

The number of **HGVs** increased by 1.8 per cent from 2012 to 2013, the first such increase since 2007, but the total remains 8 per cent below the peak in 2007. 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.

The number of **buses and coaches** has now fallen for 8 successive years, and there are now 8 per cent fewer buses than in 2005, when the number peaked.

#### Detailed vehicle stock statistical tables

- [VEH0150 to VEH0130](#) – All vehicle types
- [VEH0252 to VEH0221](#) – Cars
- [VEH0301 to VEH0311, 341](#) – Motorcycles
- [VEH0402 to VEH0411](#) – Light goods vehicles (vans)
- [VEH0504 to VEH0525](#) – Heavy goods vehicles
- [VEH0601 to VEH0611](#) – Buses and coaches

### New registrations in 2013

#### 2.72 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2013.

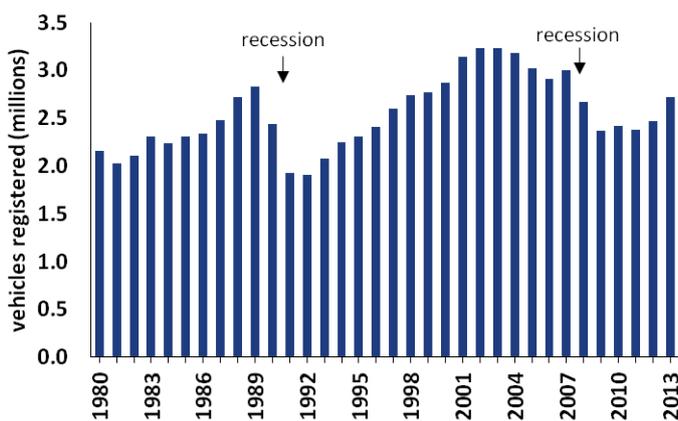
This represents an increase of 246 thousand vehicles, or 10.0 per cent, from the previous year.

It is the highest total since 2007, 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 this.

Vehicles registered for the first time, GB, 1980-2013

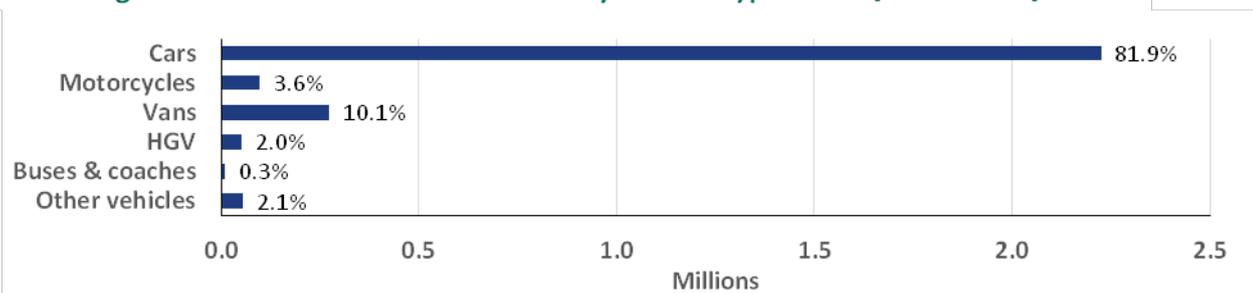
[Table veh0153]



A 'Vehicle Scrappage Scheme' for cars and 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.

#### New registrations in Great Britain in 2013 by vehicle type

[Table veh0150]



The charts to the right show indexed trends in new registrations for each major vehicle type, on the same scale. The impact of the recession in late 2008 and 2009 can be seen.

The number of **cars** registered in 2013 was up 10.7 per cent on 2012, at 2.23 million. The last eighteen months have seen a sustained period of growth. The shorter surge in car registrations during 2010 reflects the effect of the vehicle scrappage scheme mentioned above.

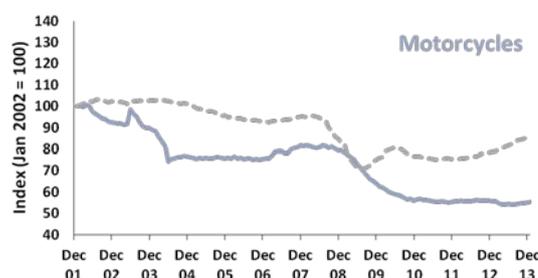
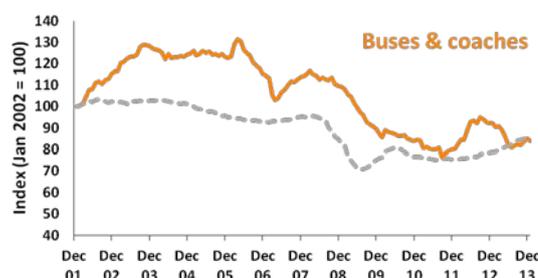
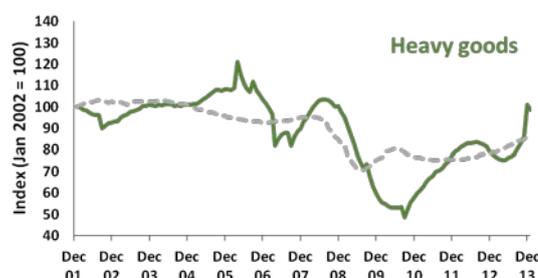
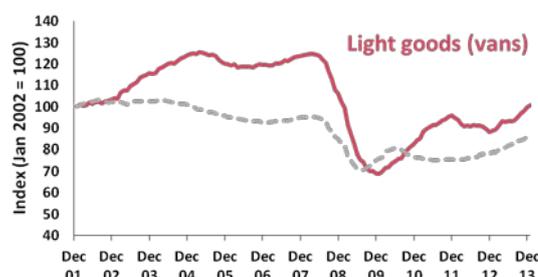
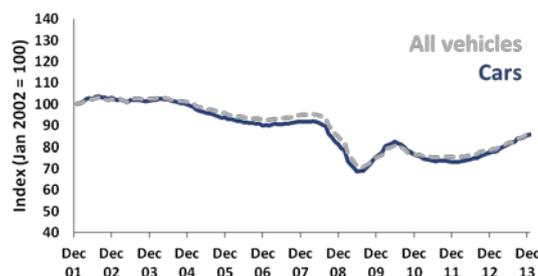
The number of **vans** registered for the first time in 2013 was up 13.4 per cent on 2012, to 274 thousand. The charts show that the recession had a relatively bigger impact on both van and HGV registrations than those of other vehicles. There are similarities between the van and HGV trends, with changes in the HGV trend often lagging some months behind that for vans.

The number of **HGVs** registered for the first time was 27.3 per cent higher than 2012 at 53 thousand, the highest level since 2006. However, this was partly due to a rush to register new vehicles before new environmental standards (Euro 6) came in in January 2014.

New **bus and coach** registrations increased relatively rapidly early in the last decade. While they dropped off less sharply than those of vans or HGVs at the onset of the recession, they have also recovered less since, and at just over 9 thousand in 2013 were 8 per cent down on 2012.

New registrations of **motorcycles** fell relatively rapidly in the first few years of the last decade, before levelling off. The onset of the recession saw a further decrease, followed by another period of relative stability. The 98 thousand new registrations in 2013 was only 1.6 per cent down on 2012, but 45 per cent less than in 2001.

**Vehicles registered for the first time: GB, 2001-13**  
12-month rolling averages, indexed to Jan 2002=100:  
By vehicle type [Table veh0150]



### Detailed new registrations statistical tables

- [VEH0150 to VEH0170](#) – All vehicle types
- [VEH0252 to VEH0261](#) – Cars
- [VEH0320 to VEH0324](#) – Motorcycles
- [VEH0452 to VEH0454](#) – Light goods vehicles (vans)
- [VEH0520 to VEH0556](#) – Heavy goods vehicles
- [VEH0651 to VEH0654](#) – Buses and coaches

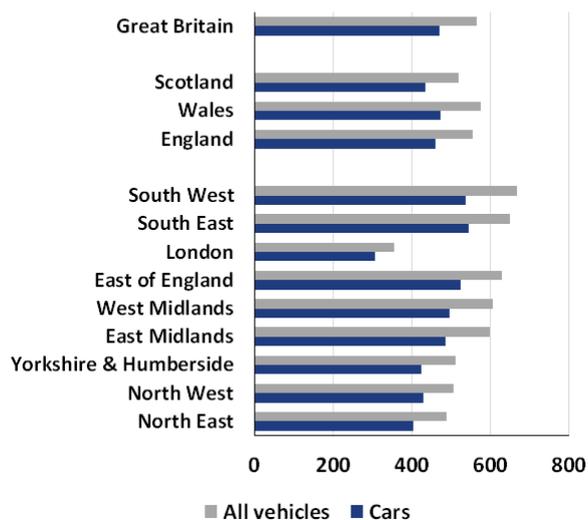
## Cars and their owners

Every registered vehicle, unless it is in the process of changing hands, has a registered keeper, whose details are held by DVLA. Aggregated, anonymised information extracted from the keeper details can provide useful pointers to how the vehicle fleet is being used, although it must be borne in mind that the registered keeper of a vehicle is not always the person who uses it, and the vehicle is not always based at the keeper's contact address. This is particularly true for company or fleet vehicles.

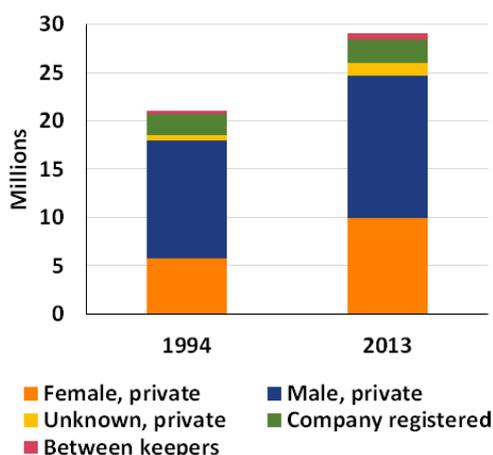
At the end of 2013, the South West of England had the highest rate of **vehicles per person** in any region, with 670 vehicles per person. However, the South East of England had a slightly higher rate of **cars per person**, with 547 per thousand. London had by far the lowest rates of both cars and vehicles per head (307 for cars). Outside London, the lowest rates were in the North East of England (405 cars per head).

The commercial fleet and **company car** market continues to be the primary driver of first registrations. In 2013, 54 per cent of all car first registrations were made by companies. However, the proportion of company registered cars in the whole of the licensed car stock was much lower, at only 8.4 per cent. This indicates that cars tend to move quite swiftly from the company market to the private market.

Vehicles per 1,000 people:  
GB, 2013 [Table veh0104]



Cars by registered keeper:  
GB, 2013 [Table veh0202]



The number of **female registered keepers** of cars has increased by 72 per cent since 1994, compared with an increase of only 21 per cent in male keepers. Women now account for about 40 per cent of registered keepers of privately registered cars .

It is estimated that there were roughly 8.4 million **transfers** of keepership of used vehicles during 2013. 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 will be second-hand vehicle sales. About 7.1 million of these transactions were for cars, with almost 6.3 million cars changing hands at least once during the year, including 0.7 million which changed hands more than once.

### Detailed statistical tables

- [VEH0104](#), [VEH0111](#) and [VEH0202](#), [VEH0252](#)

## Cars and the environment

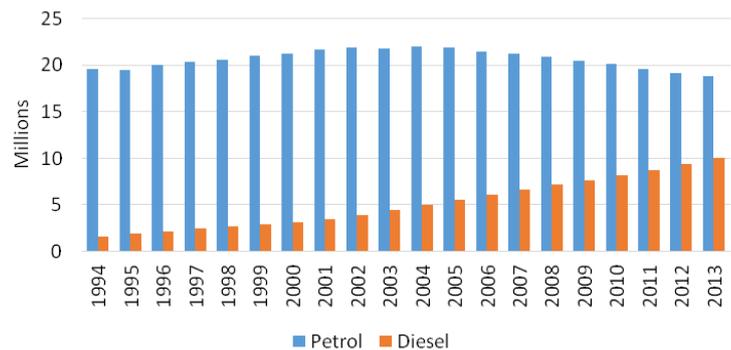
A range of factors have been driving changes in the fuel type, efficiency and emissions of the vehicle fleet. There are financial benefits to motorists who switch to cars with smaller engine sizes or lower emissions. Cars with lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions fall in cheaper Vehicle Excise Duty (car tax) bands. Cars with smaller engines and / or cars which use diesel rather than petrol tend to have better fuel efficiency, and are therefore cheaper to run. In addition, legally binding EU-wide CO<sub>2</sub> emission targets for manufacturers give them added incentives to bring lower emission vehicles to the market.

The proportion of the licensed car fleet that is made up of diesel and alternative fuel vehicles has continued to grow. By 2013 there were 10.1 million **diesel** cars, accounting for 34.5 per cent of the total, up from only 7.4 per cent in 1994. For the last 3 years, more new cars have been diesel than petrol.

**Alternative fuel** vehicles are those 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. There were only 207 thousand alternative fuel cars licensed by December 2013, but this is up 16 per cent over the year.

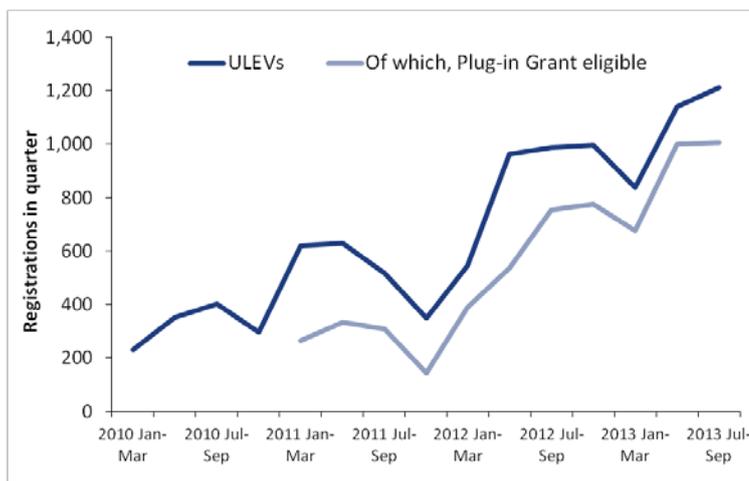
Licensed cars by propulsion type: 1994-2013

[Table veh0203]



New Ultra Low Emission & electric vehicles, UK: 2010-2013

[Table veh0170]



The number of newly registered ultra low emissions vehicles is one of the Department for Transport's [input and impact indicators](#).

In total, 4,359 new **ultra low emission vehicles** (ULEV - vehicles with emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> below 75 g/km, or fully electrically powered) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom in 2013, up 25 per cent from 3,491 in 2012.

Most of this increase has been due to vehicles eligible for the **plug-in car and van grants** introduced in January 2011 and February 2012 respectively.<sup>1</sup> The 2013 registrations included 3,445 cars and 180 vans of models that were eligible for these grants, 47 per cent up on 2012. The largest increases for individual models were for the Nissan Leaf and Renault Zoe.

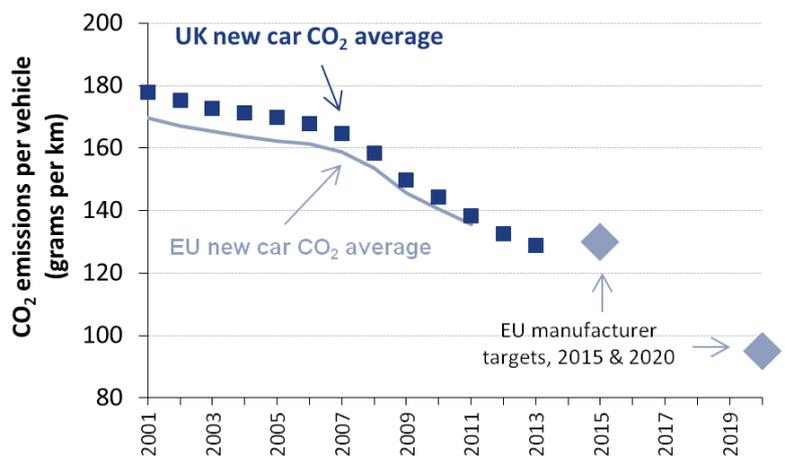
**Vehicle Excise Duty** (VED) for cars licensed after 2001 is charged on the basis of their **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**. In 2013, 32 per cent of all licensed cars fell into one of the lowest five VED bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km), compared with under 1 per cent in 2001. The number in VED Band A (under 100 g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>) increased more than ten-fold over the last three years to 612 thousand in 2013.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars continued to fall in 2013. Average emissions from all licensed cars first registered since 2001 fell by 1.9 per cent over the last year to an average of 157 g/km.

The average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars newly registered in 2013 fell by 3.4 per cent from 2012 to an average figure of 128 g/km. Since 2001 the average emissions of new cars has fallen by 28 per cent.

New car CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, UK: 2001-2013 [Table veh0256]



Average new car CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is one of the Department for Transport's [input and impact indicators](#).

**Detailed statistical tables**

- [VEH0203](#), [VEH0204](#), [VEH0206](#), [VEH0252](#), [VEH0253](#), [VEH0256](#)

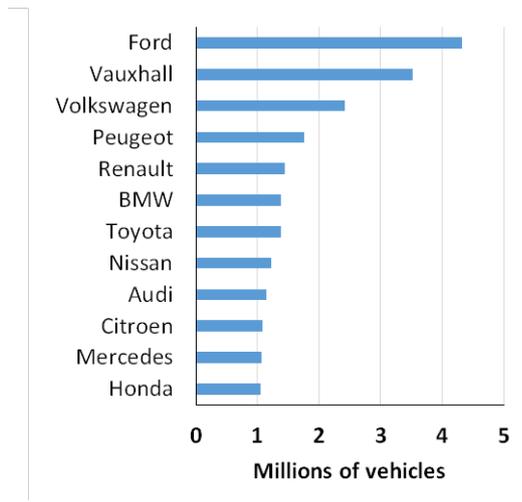
### Makes and models of cars

At the end of 2013, the **most common car model** in Great Britain was the Ford Focus (1.5 million) followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million), a situation unchanged from the year before. In total, Ford accounted for 15 per cent of all cars and Vauxhall for 12 per cent.

The top five makes (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Peugeot and Renault) accounted for 46 per cent of all licensed cars in Great Britain. There were twelve **makes** with over 1 million cars each on the road at the end of 2013, and together these accounted for three quarters of all licensed cars.

For the fifth year running, the Ford Fiesta was the most common new registration with 118 thousand cars registered for the first time during 2013. The Ford Focus took over second place, pushing the Vauxhall Corsa into third, followed by the Vauxhall Astra and the Volkswagen Golf.

Licensed cars, top 12 makes: GB, 2013 [Table veh0210]



The top five car makes in terms of **new registrations** (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Audi and BMW) accounted for 46 per cent of the new car registrations in 2013. These five are unchanged from last year except for Audi replacing BMW in fourth place.

**Detailed statistical tables**

- [VEH0209](#), [VEH0210](#), [VEH0260](#), [VEH0261](#)

## Background information

### Important changes to these statistics from July 2014

Some changes are expected in the vehicle licensing statistics as a result of plans announced in March 2014 to centralise the delivery of vehicle and registration services for Northern Ireland at DVLA in Swansea, where these services for Great Britain are already administered, from July 2014.

This will result in a single vehicle register for the United Kingdom, in place of separate registers for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As a result of this change, it is proposed that the coverage of the VEH series of vehicle licensing statistics tables be expanded to cover UK rather than GB. Where practical, the key time series tables currently published for GB will be expanded to give time series for both UK and GB, at least for a transitional period. Tables currently showing a breakdown of GB statistics into the constituent countries of GB will continue to do so, with an additional split for Northern Ireland being added.

These changes would begin to come into effect for statistical releases produced after July 2014, primarily with the Quarter 3 2014 release. These plans are currently provisional, and subject to change as the details are finalised. If you have any comments on these plans, please send them to [vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk).

Separately from this GB/UK statistical series, the Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland will continue to publish [statistics for vehicles registered in Northern Ireland](#).

### About these statistics

Almost all the statistics in the vehicle licensing statistics series are derived by Department for Transport statisticians from extracts of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) vehicle database. The main purpose of the database is to administer vehicle registration and licensing records in Great Britain.

For further information, please see the detailed [Technical Notes](#). There is also a [Statement of Administrative Sources](#) for the DVLA vehicles database.

### 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. The Department for Transport 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, please see the detailed [Technical Notes](#).

### Users and uses of these statistics

A separate note on this is available from the vehicles statistics guidance [web page](#).

### National Statistics

All of the statistics published in this series are National Statistics, apart from the exceptions listed on the [series page](#). 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.

Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found in the [Pre-release access list](#).

## Next Release

*Vehicle Licensing* statistical releases are published quarterly. The next is due on 12 June 2014. The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year is accompanied by a larger set of data tables. In addition a single table of monthly new vehicle registrations is released on the series page on the second Thursday of each month. Any updates to these plans will be advertised via the [DfT statistical publications schedule](#).

## Request for Feedback

We welcome any feedback on these statistics, to ensure future releases best meet user needs. Feedback can be provided by email to [vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk).