



Department for Transport

Vehicle Licensing Statistics: Quarter 1 (Jan - Mar) 2018

About this release

This release presents the latest statistics on licensed motor vehicles. It is part of the [Vehicle Statistics](#) series. Detailed [data tables](#) are available from the web site.

It is based on administrative data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

For a more detailed commentary on vehicle registration statistics, see the annual release.

Except where otherwise stated, the statistics all refer to Great Britain. UK data is available from July 2014.

For further details please refer to the Background Information section below and the separate [technical notes](#).

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ULEVs

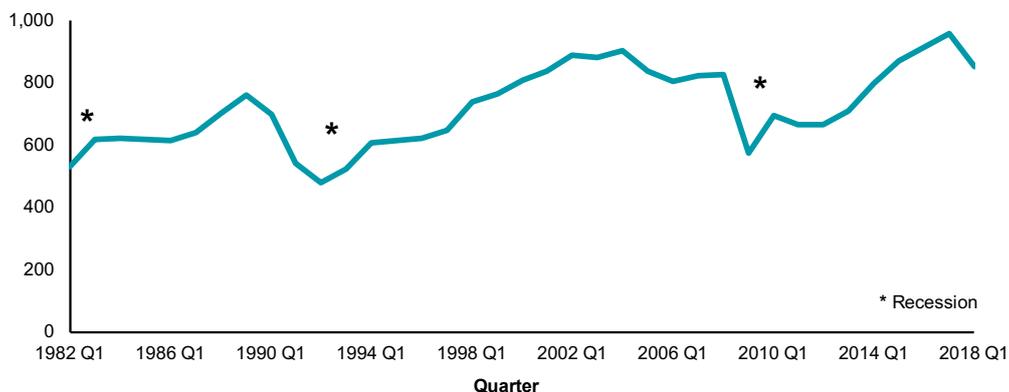
Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) are vehicles that emit less than 75g of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the tailpipe for every kilometre travelled.

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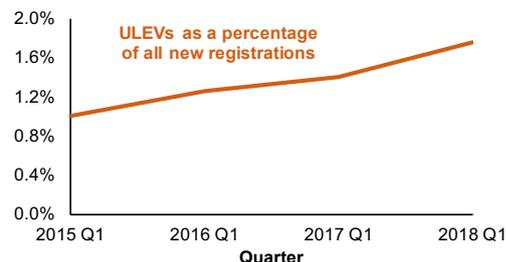


854,000 vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during January to March 2018 (2018 Q1), 11% lower than during the same period in 2017.

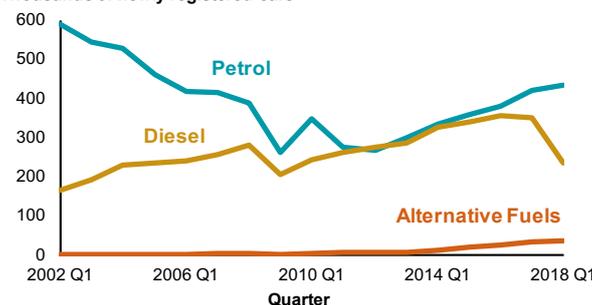
Thousands of newly registered vehicles



During 2018 Q1, over **15,300 new** ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) were registered in the United Kingdom, an increase of 11% on 2017 Q1. ULEVs made up 1.8% of all new registrations.



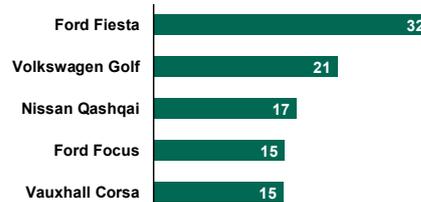
Thousands of newly registered cars



There was a sharp decline in the number of **diesel** cars being registered in 2018 Q1, down 33% compared to 2017 Q1. This was the main contributor to the decline in overall vehicle registrations.



The most **popular** new car model in Great Britain in 2018 Q1 was the Ford Fiesta (32,000), followed by the Volkswagen Golf (21,000), and the Nissan Qashqai (17,000).



New registrations during the year

During January to March 2018, 854,000 vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain.

This was the first decrease in the number of new registrations during the first quarter (Q1) since the 2008/2009 recession. It was 10.9% lower than during 2017 Q1, but still 49.8% higher than during 2009 Q1.

Looking at 12-month rolling totals, there have been fewer vehicles registered for the first time each month from the year ending April 2017 onwards.

This trend might be due, in part, to the change in the amount of Vehicle Excise Duty due for newly registered cars, which came into force on 1st April 2017. This change generally made both the first year and subsequent years of tax more expensive for low emission, non-electric cars.

Vehicle type

Cars typically make up the majority of new registrations. During 2018 Q1, 83% of new registrations were cars, 11% were light goods vehicles (LGVs), 1% were heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), 3% were motorcycles, and 2% were other vehicles.

Overall, there were 707,000 cars, 95,000 light goods vehicles, 11,000 heavy goods vehicles, 26,000 motorcycles, and 15,000 other vehicles first registered in 2018 Q1.

The recent decline in vehicle registrations has been across all vehicle types except motorcycles.

In 2018 Q1, new registrations were 12% lower for cars, 4% lower for light goods vehicles, 5% lower for heavy goods vehicles, and 8% lower for buses & coaches compared to 2017 Q1.

In contrast, new registrations of motorcycles in 2018 Q1 were 5% higher than in 2017 Q1.

Northern Ireland

In 2018 Q1, there were 21,000 vehicles registered for the first time in Northern Ireland, which is 8.4% lower than in 2017 Q1. The total during 2018 Q1 was made up of 17,000 cars, 3,000 light goods vehicles, and 1,000 other vehicles.

In Jan to Mar 2018 **854,000** vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain



Tables

Detailed new registrations data tables updated this quarter:

All vehicles types: [VEH0150, 0160 and 0170](#)

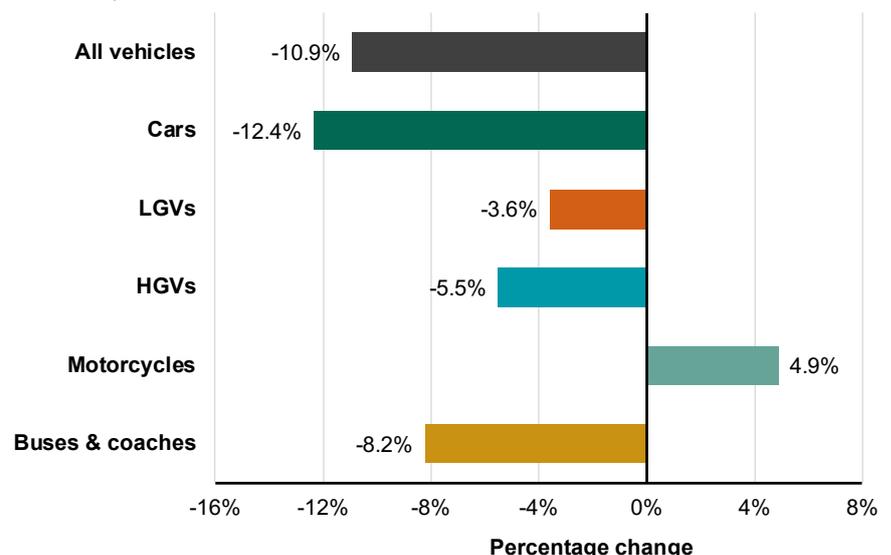
Cars: [VEH0253 and 0256](#)

Registration plates

Up to 1998, new registration plates were issued once a year in August, causing a peak in registrations in that month.

In 1999, this was changed to twice a year, in March and September. This changed the distribution of new registrations through the year, with more registrations in the first and third quarters compared to the second and fourth quarters.

Figure 1: Annual percentage change in vehicles registered for the first time by body type, Great Britain, 2018 Q1



New diesel car registrations continue to fall.



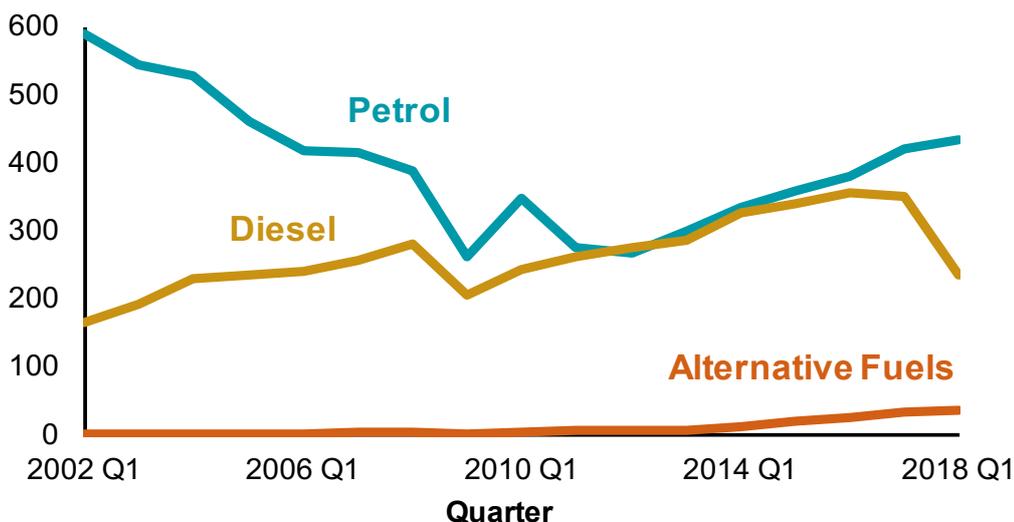
There was a sharp decline in the number of diesel cars being registered for the first time in 2018 Q1, down 33.3% compared to 2017 Q1, with 235,000 registered down from 353,000. This was the main contributor to the decline in overall vehicle registrations and the fourth quarter in a row where an annual decrease of over 20% has been observed. Diesel cars accounted for 44% of all new car registrations in 2017 Q1, which has dropped to just 33% in 2018 Q1.

The recent decline in diesel car registrations could be attributed, in part, to the changes in VED introduced in April 2017 as well as the announcement in July 2017 to end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040.

In contrast, compared to 2017 Q1, new petrol car registrations in 2018 Q1 increased by 3.3% up to 435,000; and new alternative fuel car registrations increased by 10.6% up to 37,000.

Figure 2: Newly registered cars by propulsion type, Great Britain, 2002 Q1 to 2018 Q1

Thousands of newly registered cars



Ultra Low Emission Vehicles continue to increase their share of new registrations in the UK.



In 2018 Q1, 15,388 ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom, up 11% on 2017 Q1 and 30% on 2016 Q1. ULEVs accounted for 1.8% of all new vehicle registrations - up from 1.4% one year previously and 1.3% two years previously.

Most of this increase has been due to vehicles eligible for plug-in car and van grants. New registrations of ULEVs in 2018 Q1 included 12,942 cars and 332 light goods vehicles of models that were eligible for these grants, which was 86% of all ULEVs registered for the first time.

Alternative fuel

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.

End of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040

On 26th July 2017, the government confirmed that it will end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040, as part of the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations.

It is possible that this had an impact on the figures shown here.

For more information, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-for-roadside-no2-concentrations-published>

Tables

Detailed environment data tables updated this quarter:

ULEVs: [VEH0130](#), [0131](#), [0132](#) and [0170](#)

CO₂ cars: [VEH0256](#)

What are plug-in grants?

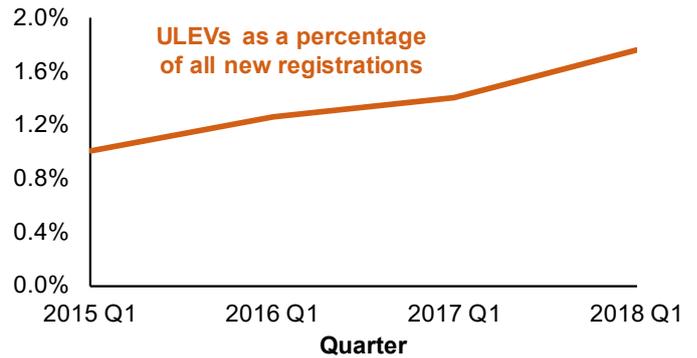
Plug-in car and van grants started in January 2011 and February 2012 respectively, with major changes in March 2016, seeing other vehicle types also being included in the grant.

They provide a grant towards the cost of new qualifying models - see [Plug-in car and van grants](#) for further details.

Looking over the last 12 months, during the year ending March 2018, the most common generic models of ULEV registered for the first time were the Mitsubishi Outlander with 7,697 vehicles, followed by the BMW 3 Series with 5,638 vehicles and the Nissan Leaf with 5,132 vehicles.

These were all plug-in hybrid vehicles; the most common generic model for non plug-in ULEVs was the Toyota Prius with 3,186 non plug-in cars.

Figure 3: Proportion of newly registered vehicles that were Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, United Kingdom, 2015 Q1 to 2018 Q1



VED bands / CO₂ emissions



From April 2017, the VED bands for newly registered cars changed to require much smaller CO₂ emissions to be in the lower bands, whilst making the higher bands larger.

During 2018 Q1, 81% of cars registered for the first time were in one of the lowest five old **Vehicle Excise Duty (VED)** bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km), including 55% in Band C or lower (up to 120 g/km) and 14% in Band A (up to 100 g/km).

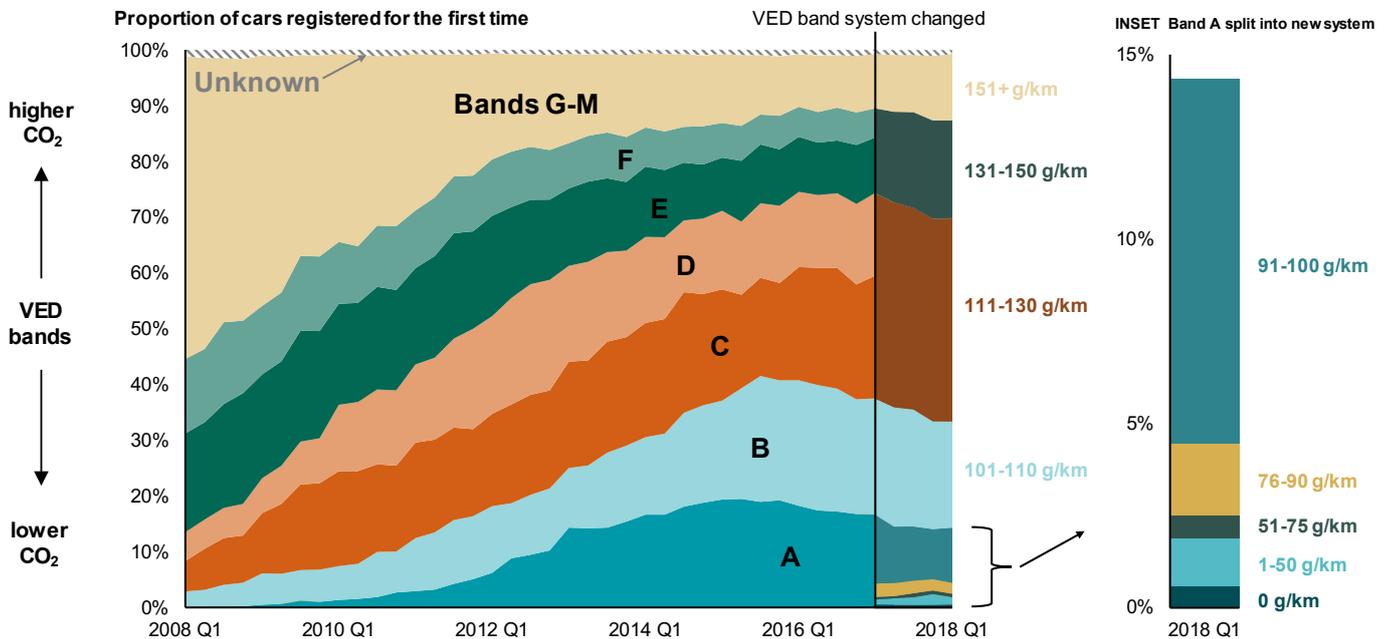
During 2018 Q1, 2.5% of cars registered for the first time were considered Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (up to 75 g/km), compared to 1.9% during 2017 Q1.

VED bands

Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is charged on vehicles registered in the UK.

For cars licensed after March 2001, VED is charged in bands on the basis of their CO₂ emissions. From April 2017 new tax rates apply for cars newly registered after that date - see [Vehicle Tax Rate Tables](#) for further details.

Figure 4: New car registrations by VED band, quarterly, with inset for band A, Great Britain, 2008 Q1 to 2018 Q1



The average CO₂ emissions from cars registered for the first time in 2018 Q1 was 1.7% higher than in 2017 Q1, to an average figure of 122 g/km. One of the many contributing factors to this is an increase in the proportion of larger cars being registered with higher emissions.

In 2018 Q1, the average CO₂ emissions increased for new petrol cars by 1.3% up to 125 g/km and for new diesel cars by 3.6% up to 126 g/km, compared to 2017 Q1.

Total licensed vehicles

At the end of March 2018, there were 37.9 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, which is a 1.0% increase compared to the previous year.

At end of March 2018 **37.9 million** vehicles licensed for use on roads in Great Britain

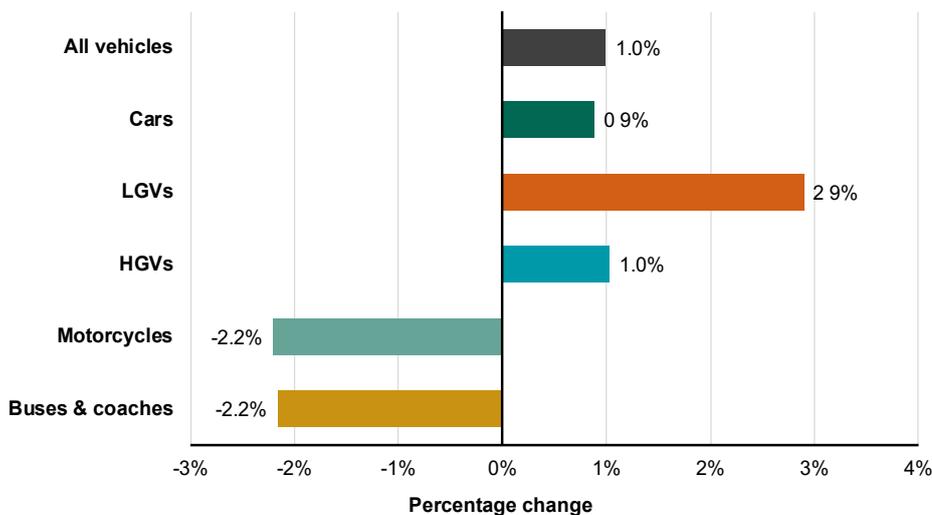


However, not all vehicle types saw an increase. The largest percentage increase was for light goods vehicles at 2.9% followed by heavy goods vehicles at 1.0% and cars at 0.9%. Both motorcycles and buses & coaches fell by 2.2%.

How do these differ from new registrations?

The total number of licensed vehicles, and their characteristics, change much more slowly than the newly registered vehicles as there are many more vehicles that remain licensed.

Figure 5: Annual change in licensed vehicles by body type, Great Britain, 2018 Q1



Tables

Detailed licensed vehicle data tables:

All vehicles types: [VEH0101_0104_0110_0120 to 0123_0128 to 0131 and 0132](#)

Motorcycles: [VEH0301](#)

Vehicle type

Cars make up the majority of licensed vehicles. At the end of March 2018, 83% of licensed vehicles were cars, 10% were light goods vehicles, 1% were heavy goods vehicles, 3% were motorcycles, and 2% were other vehicles. Overall, there were 31.3 million cars, 3.9 million light goods vehicles, 0.5 million heavy goods vehicles, 1.2 million motorcycles, and 0.9 million other vehicles licensed at the end of March 2018.

Figure 6: Licensed vehicles by body type, Great Britain, March 2018



Northern Ireland

At the end of March 2018, there were 1.2 million licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, which is an increase of 2.1% compared to the previous year. The distribution of vehicles by body type was broadly similar to Great Britain, but with a high proportion of heavy goods vehicles (2%) and other vehicles (3%) and a lower proportion of motorcycles (2%).

Car makes and models



The top five makes accounted for 41% of all cars registered for the first time between January and March 2018 in Great Britain.

These makes were Ford (11%), Volkswagen (8%), Vauxhall (8%), Mercedes-Benz (7%), and Audi (7%). BMW was in the top 5 during 2017 Q1, but has been overtaken by Audi, due to a fall of 5% in the number of newly registered BMW cars.

There were thirteen **makes** with over 20 thousand newly registered cars each, accounting for 74% of all newly registered cars.

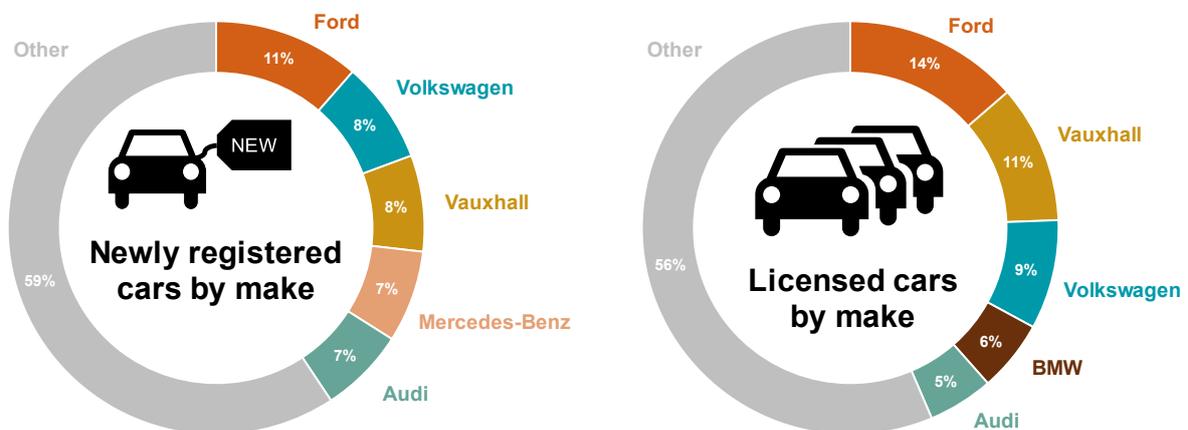
For total licensed stock at the end of March 2018, there was a different top five makes, namely Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, BMW, and Audi, which accounted for 44% of all licensed cars.

Tables

Detailed make and model data tables

[VEH0120, 0121, 0124 to 0129, 0160, 0161](#)

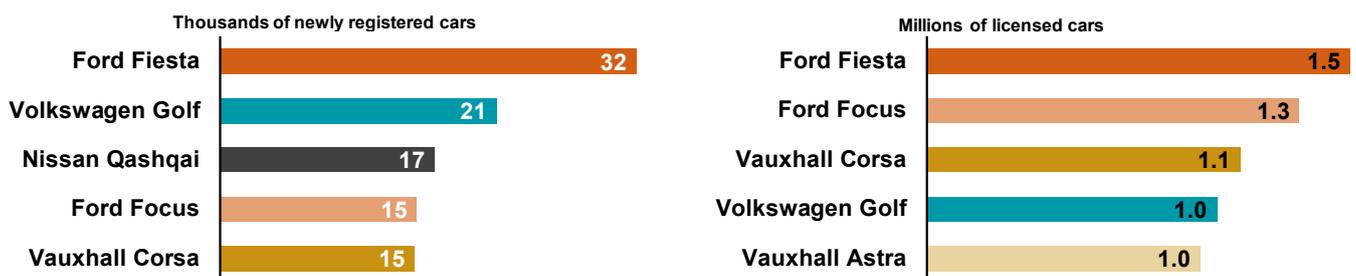
Figure 7: Top five makes out of newly registered cars during January to March 2018 and those licensed at the end of March 2018, Great Britain



The Ford Fiesta was the most common new registration in 2018 Q1 by far, with 32,000 registered for the first time. This was followed by the Volkswagen Golf with 21,000, and the Nissan Qashqai with 17,000. Despite producing the third most common newly registered car model (the Nissan Qashqai), Nissan only accounted for 5% of all newly registered cars.

At the end of March 2018, there were 1.5 million Ford Fiesta cars licenced, followed by the Ford Focus with 1.3 million, and the Vauxhall Corsa with 1.1 million.

Figure 8: Top five generic models out of newly registered cars during January to March 2018 and those licensed at the end of March 2018, Great Britain



Background information

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 the United Kingdom.

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

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.gov.uk.

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% 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 foreign registered vehicles may also use UK roads without being registered with DVLA. Most of these factors will only have a marginal effect for most uses of the data.

In July 2014 vehicle and registration services for Northern Ireland were centralised at DVLA, where these services for Great Britain were already administered. This created a single vehicle register for the United Kingdom, in place of separate registers for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

As a result of these changes, the coverage of the vehicle licensing statistics tables was expanded to cover UK as well as GB where practical. Because of the greater availability of GB time series data, this statistical release will continue to focus mainly on GB rather than UK results for the time being.

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 [collection 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 in September 2018. The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year is accompanied by a larger set of data tables and more detailed commentary.

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](#).

Release of DfT Statistics publications

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